

SIR WALTER SCOTT
BOOK I
COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS
Chapter the First

LEONTIUS. ———— *That power that kindly spreads
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,
To warn the wandering linnet to the shade,
Beheld without concern expiring Greece,
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.*

DEMETRIUS. *A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it:
A feeble government, eluded laws,
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villany, too strong for justice,
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?*

IRENE, ACT I.

The close observers of vegetable nature have remarked, that when a new graft is taken from an aged tree, it possesses indeed in exterior form the appearance of a youthful shoot, but has in fact attained to the same state of maturity, or even decay, which has been reached by the parent stem. Hence, it is said, arises the general decline and death that about the same season is often observed to spread itself through individual trees of some particular species, all of which, deriving their vital powers from the parent stock, are therefore incapable of protracting their existence longer than it does.

In the same manner, efforts have been made by the mighty of the earth to transplant large cities, states, and communities, by one great and sudden exertion, expecting to secure to the new capital the wealth, the dignity, the magnificent decorations and unlimited extent of the ancient city, which they desire to renovate; while, at the same time, they hope to begin a new succession of ages from the date of the new structure, to last, they imagine, as long, and with as much fame, as its predecessor, which the founder hopes his new metropolis may replace in all its youthful glories. But nature has her laws, which seem to apply to the social, as well as the vegetable system. It appears to be a general rule, that what is to last long should be slowly matured and gradually improved, while every sudden effort, however gigantic, to bring about the speedy execution of a plan calculated to endure for ages, is doomed to exhibit symptoms of premature decay from its very commencement. Thus, in a beautiful Oriental tale, a dervise explains to the sultan how he had reared the magnificent trees among which they walked, by nursing their shoots from the seed; and the prince's pride is damped when he reflects, that those plantations, so simply raised, were gathering new vigour from each returning sun, while his own exhausted cedars, which had been transplanted by one violent effort, were drooping their majestic heads in the Valley of Orez.*

* Tale of Mirglip the Persian, in the Tales of the Genii.]

It has been allowed, I believe, by all men of taste, many of whom have been late visitants of Constantinople, that if it were possible to survey the whole globe with a view to fixing a seat of universal empire, all who are capable of making such a choice, would give their preference to the city of Constantine, as including the great recommendations of beauty, wealth, security, and eminence. Yet with all these advantages of situation and climate, and with all the architectural splendour of its churches and halls, its quarries of marble, and its treasure-houses of gold, the imperial founder must himself have learned, that although he could employ all these rich materials in obedience to his own wish, it was the mind of man itself, those intellectual faculties refined by the ancients to the highest degree, which had produced the specimens of talent at which men paused and wondered, whether as subjects of art or of moral labour. The power of the Emperor might indeed strip other cities of their statues and their shrines, in order to decorate that which he had fixed upon as his new capital; but the men who had performed great actions, and those, almost equally esteemed, by whom such deeds were celebrated, in poetry, in painting, and in music, had ceased to exist. The nation, though still the most civilised in the world, had passed beyond that period of society, when the desire of fair fame is of itself the sole or chief motive for the labour of the historian or the poet, the painter or the statuary. The slavish and despotic constitution introduced into the empire, had long since entirely destroyed that public spirit which animated the free history of Rome, leaving nothing but feeble recollections, which produced no emulation.

To speak as of an animated substance, if Constantine could have regenerated his new metropolis, by transfusing into it the vital and vivifying principles of old Rome — that brilliant spark no longer remained for Constantinople to borrow, or for Rome to lend.

In one most important circumstance, the state of the capital of Constantine had been totally changed, and unspeakably to its advantage. The world was now Christian, and, with the Pagan code, had got rid of its load of disgraceful superstition. Nor is there the least doubt, that the better faith produced its natural and desirable fruits in society, in gradually ameliorating the hearts, and taming the passions, of the people. But while many of the converts were turning meekly towards their new creed, some, in the arrogance of their understanding, were limiting the Scriptures by their own devices, and others failed not to make religious character or spiritual rank the means of rising to temporal power. Thus it happened at this critical period, that the effects of this great change in the religion of the country, although producing an immediate harvest, as well as sowing much good seed which was to grow hereafter, did not, in the fourth century, flourish so as to shed at once that predominating influence which its principles might have taught men to expect.

Even the borrowed splendour, in which Constantine decked his city, bore in it something which seemed to mark premature decay. The imperial founder, in seizing upon the ancient statues, pictures, obelisks, and works of art, acknowledged his own incapacity to supply their place with the productions of later genius; and when the world, and particularly Rome, was plundered to adorn Constantinople, the Emperor, under whom the work was carried on, might be compared to a prodigal youth, who strips an aged parent of her youthful ornaments, in order to decorate a flaunting paramour, on whose brow all must consider them as misplaced.

Constantinople, therefore, when in 324 it first arose in imperial majesty out of the humble Byzantium, showed, even in its birth, and amid its adventitious splendour, as we have already said, some intimations of that speedy decay to which the whole civilised world, then limited within the Roman empire, was internally and imperceptibly tending. Nor was it many ages ere these prognostications of declension were fully verified.

In the year 1080, Alexius Comnenus* ascended the throne of the Empire; that is, he was declared sovereign of Constantinople, its precincts and dependencies; nor, if he was disposed to lead a life of relaxation, would the savage incursions of the Scythians or the Hungarians frequently disturb the imperial slumbers, if limited to his own capital. It may be supposed that this safety did not extend much farther; for it is said that the Empress Pulcheria had built a church to the Virgin Mary, as remote as possible from the gate of the city, to save her devotions from the risk of being interrupted by the hostile yell of the barbarians, and the reigning Emperor had constructed a palace near the same spot, and for the same reason.

* See Gibbon, Chap. xlviii, for the origin and early history of the house of the Comneni.]

Alexius Comnenus was in the condition of a monarch who rather derives consequence from the wealth and importance of his predecessors, and the great extent of their original dominions, than from what remnants of fortune had descended to the present generation. This Emperor, except nominally, no more ruled over his dismembered provinces, than a half-dead horse can exercise power over those limbs, on which the hooded crow and the vulture have already begun to settle and select their prey.

In different parts of his territory, different enemies arose, who waged successful or dubious war against the Emperor; and, of the numerous nations with whom he was engaged in hostilities, whether the Franks from the west, the Turks advancing from the east, the Cumans and Scythians pouring their barbarous numbers and unceasing storm of arrows from the north, and the Saracens, or the tribes into which they were divided, pressing from the south, there was not one for whom the Grecian empire did not spread a tempting repast. Each of these various enemies had their own particular habits of war, and a way of manoeuvring in battle peculiar to themselves. But the Roman, as the unfortunate subject of the Greek empire was still called, was by far the weakest, the most ignorant, and most timid, who could be dragged into the field; and the Emperor was happy in his own good luck, when he found it possible to conduct a defensive war on a counterbalancing principle, making use of the Scythian to repel the Turk, or of both these savage people to drive back the fiery-footed Frank, whom Peter the Hermit had, in the time of Alexius, waked to double fury, by the powerful influence of the crusades.

If, therefore, Alexius Comnenus was, during his anxious seat upon the throne of the East, reduced to use a base and truckling course of policy — if he was sometimes reluctant to fight when he had a conscious doubt of the valour of his troops — if he commonly employed cunning and dissimulation instead of wisdom, and perfidy instead of courage — his expedients were the disgrace of the age, rather than his own.

Again, the Emperor Alexius may be blamed for affecting a degree of state which was closely allied to imbecility. He was proud of assuming in his own person, and of bestowing upon others, the painted show of various orders of nobility, even now, when the rank within the prince's gift was become an additional reason for the free barbarian despising the imperial noble. That the Greek court was encumbered with unmeaning ceremonies, in order to make amends for the want of that veneration which ought to have been called forth by real worth, and the presence of actual power, was not the particular fault of that prince, but belonged to the system of the government of Constantinople for ages. Indeed, in its trumpery etiquette, which provided rules for the most trivial points of a man's behaviour during the day, the Greek empire resembled no existing power in its minute follies, except that of Pekin; both, doubtless, being influenced by the same vain wish, to add seriousness and an appearance of importance to objects, which, from their trivial nature, could admit no such distinction.

Yet thus far we must justify Alexius, that humble as were the expedients he had recourse to, they were more useful to his empire than the measures of a more proud and high-spirited prince might have proved in the same circumstances. He was no champion to break a lance against the breast-plate of his Frankish rival, the famous Bohemond of Antioch,* but there were many occasions on which he hazarded his life freely; and, so far as we can see, from a minute perusal of his achievements, the Emperor of Greece was never so dangerous "under shield," as when any foeman desired to stop him while retreating from a conflict in which he had been worsted.

* Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, the Norman conqueror of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, was, at the time when the first crusade began, Count of Tarentum. Though far advanced in life, he eagerly joined the expedition of the Latins, and became Prince of Antioch. For details of his adventures, death, and extraordinary character, see Gibbon, chap. lix, and Mills' History of the Crusades, vol. i.]

But, besides that he did not hesitate, according to the custom of the time, at least occasionally, to commit his person to the perils of close combat, Alexius also possessed such knowledge of a general's profession, as is required in our modern days. He knew how to occupy military positions to the best advantage, and often covered defeats, or improved dubious conflicts, in a manner highly to the disappointment of those who deemed that the work of war was done only on the field of battle.

If Alexius Comnenus thus understood the evolutions of war, he was still better skilled in those of politics, where, soaring far above the express purpose of his immediate negotiation, the Emperor was sure to gain some important and permanent advantage; though very often he was ultimately defeated by the unblushing fickleness, or avowed treachery of the barbarians, as the Greeks generally termed all other nations, and particularly those tribes, (they can hardly be termed states,) by which their own empire was surrounded.

We may conclude our brief character of Comnenus, by saying, that, had he not been called on to fill the station of a monarch who was under the necessity of making himself dreaded, as one who was exposed to all manner of conspiracies, both in and out of his own family, he might, in all probability, have been regarded as an honest and humane prince. Certainly he showed himself a good-natured man, and dealt less in cutting off heads and extinguishing eyes, than had been the practice of his predecessors, who generally took this method of shortening the ambitious views of competitors.

It remains to be mentioned, that Alexius had his full share of the superstition of the age, which he covered with a species of hypocrisy. It is even said, that his wife, Irene, who of course was best acquainted with the real character of the Emperor, taxed her dying husband with practising, in his last moments, the dissimulation which had been his companion during life.* He took also a deep interest in all matters respecting the Church, where heresy, which the Emperor held, or affected to hold, in great horror, appeared to him to lurk. Nor do we discover in his treatment of the Manichaeans, or Paulicians, that pity for their speculative errors, which modern times might think had been well purchased by the extent of the temporal services of these unfortunate sectaries. Alexius knew no indulgence for those who misinterpreted the mysteries of the Church, or of its doctrines; and the duty of defending religion against schismatics was, in his opinion, as peremptorily demanded from him, as that of protecting the empire against the numberless tribes of barbarians who were encroaching on its boundaries on every side.

* See Gibbon, chap. lvi.]

Such a mixture of sense and weakness, of meanness and dignity, of prudent discretion and poverty of spirit, which last, in the European mode of viewing things, approached to cowardice, formed the leading traits of the character of Alexius Comnenus, at a period when the fate of Greece, and all that was left in that country of art and civilization, was trembling in the balance, and likely to be saved or lost, according to the abilities of the Emperor for playing the very difficult game which was put into his hands.

These few leading circumstances will recall, to any one who is tolerably well read in history, the peculiarities of the period at which we have found a resting-place for the foundation of our story.

Chapter the Second.

OTHUS. ————— *This superb successor
Of the earth's mistress, as thou vainly speakest,
Stands midst these ages as, on the wide ocean,
The last spared fragment, of a spacious land,
That in some grand and awful ministration
Of mighty nature has engulfed been,
Doth lift aloft its dark and rocky cliffs
O'er the wild waste around, and sadly frowns
In lonely majesty.*

CONSTANTINE PALEOLOGUS, SCENE I.

Our scene in the capital of the Eastern Empire opens at what is termed the Golden Gate of Constantinople; and it may be said in passing, that this splendid epithet is not so lightly bestowed as may be expected from the inflated language of the Greeks, which throws such an appearance of exaggeration about them, their buildings, and monuments.

The massive, and seemingly impregnable walls with which Constantine surrounded the city, were greatly improved and added to by Theodosius, called the Great. A triumphal arch, decorated with the architecture of a better, though already a degenerate age, and serving, at the same time, as a useful entrance, introduced the stranger into the city. On the top, a statue of bronze represented Victory, the goddess who had inclined the scales of battle in favour of Theodosius; and, as the artist determined to be wealthy if he could not be tasteful, the gilded ornaments with which the inscriptions were set off, readily led to the popular name of the gate. Figures carved in a distant and happier period of the art, glanced from the walls, without assorting happily with the taste in which these were built. The more modern ornaments of the Golden Gate bore, at the period of our story, an aspect very different from those indicating the "conquest brought back to the city," and

the "eternal peace" which the flattering inscriptions recorded as having been extorted by the sword of Theodosius. Four or five military engines, for throwing darts of the largest size, were placed upon the summit of the arch; and what had been originally designed as a specimen of architectural embellishment, was now applied to the purposes of defence.

It was the hour of evening, and the cool and refreshing breeze from the sea inclined each passenger, whose business was not of a very urgent description, to loiter on his way, and cast a glance at the romantic gateway, and the various interesting objects of nature and art, which the city of Constantinople presented, as well to the inhabitants as to strangers.*

The impression which the imperial city was calculated to make on such visitors as the Crusaders of the West, is given by the ancient French chronicler Villehardouin, who was present at the capture of A. D. 1203. "When we had come," he says, "within three leagues, to a certain Abbey, then we could plainly survey Constantinople. There the ships and the galleys came to anchor; and much did they who had never been in that quarter before, gaze upon the city. That such a city could be in the world they had never conceived, and they were never weary of staring at the high walls and towers with which it was entirely encompassed, the rich palaces and lofty churches, of which there were so many that no one could have believed it, if he had not seen with his own eyes that city, the Queen of all cities. And know that there was not so bold a heart there, that it did not feel some terror at the strength of Constantinople."— Chap. 66.

Again — "And now many of those of the host went to see Constantinople within, and the rich palaces and stately churches, of which it possesses so many, and the riches of the place, which are such as no other city ever equalled. I need not speak of the sanctuaries, which are as many as are in all the world beside."— Chap. 100.]

One individual, however, seemed to indulge more wonder and curiosity than could have been expected from a native of the city, and looked upon the rarities around with a quick and startled eye, that marked an imagination awakened by sights that were new and strange. The appearance of this person bespoke a foreigner of military habits, who seemed, from his complexion, to have his birthplace far from the Grecian metropolis, whatever chance had at present brought him to the Golden Gate, or whatever place he filled in the Emperor's service.

This young man was about two-and-twenty years old, remarkably finely-formed and athletic — qualities well understood by the citizens of Constantinople, whose habits of frequenting the public games had taught them at least an acquaintance with the human person, and where, in the select of their own countrymen, they saw the handsomest specimens of the human race.

These were, however, not generally so tall as the stranger at the Golden Gate, while his piercing blue eyes, and the fair hair which descended from under a light helmet gaily ornamented with silver, bearing on its summit a crest resembling a dragon in the act of expanding his terrible jaws, intimated a northern descent, to which the extreme purity of his complexion also bore witness. His beauty, however, though he was eminently distinguished both in features and in person, was not liable to the charge of effeminacy. From this it was rescued, both by his strength, and by the air of confidence and self-possession with which the youth seemed to regard the wonders around him, not indicating the stupid and helpless gaze of a mind equally inexperienced, and incapable of receiving instruction, but expressing the bold intellect which at once understands the greater part of the information which it receives, and commands the spirit to toil in search of the meaning of that which it has not comprehended, or may fear it has misinterpreted. This look of awakened attention and intelligence gave interest to the young barbarian; and while the bystanders were amazed that a savage from some unknown or remote corner of the universe should possess a noble countenance bespeaking a mind so elevated, they respected him for the composure with which he witnessed so many things, the fashion, the splendour, nay, the very use of which, must have been recently new to him.

The young man's personal equipments exhibited a singular mixture of splendour and effeminacy, and enabled the experienced spectators to ascertain his nation, and the capacity in which he served. We have already mentioned the fanciful and crested helmet, which was a distinction of the foreigner, to which the reader must add in his imagination a small cuirass, or breastplate of silver, so sparingly fashioned as obviously to afford little security to the broad chest, on which it rather hung like an ornament than covered as a buckler; nor, if a well-thrown dart, or strongly-shod arrow, should alight full on this rich piece of armour, was there much hope that it could protect the bosom which it partially shielded.

From betwixt the shoulders hung down over the back what had the appearance of a bearskin; but, when more closely examined, it was only a very skilful imitation, of the spoils of the chase, being in reality a surcoat composed of strong shaggy silk, so woven as to exhibit, at a little distance, no inaccurate representation of a bear's hide. A light crooked sword, or scimitar, sheathed in a scabbard of gold and ivory, hung by the left side of the stranger, the ornamented hilt of which appeared much too small for the large-jointed hand of the young Hercules who was thus gaily attired. A dress, purple in colour, and setting close to the limbs, covered the body of the soldier to a little above the knee; from thence the knees and legs were bare to the calf, to which the reticulated strings of the sandals rose from the instep, the ligatures being there fixed by a golden coin of the reigning Emperor, converted into a species of clasp for the purpose.

But a weapon which seemed more particularly adapted to the young barbarian's size, and incapable of being used by a man of less formidable limbs and sinews, was a battle-axe, the firm iron-guarded staff of which was formed of tough elm, strongly inlaid and defended with brass, while many a plate and ring were indented in the handle, to hold the wood and the steel parts together. The axe itself was composed of two blades, turning different ways, with a sharp steel spike projecting from between them. The steel part, both spike and blade, was burnished as bright as a mirror; and though its ponderous size must have been burdensome to one weaker than himself, yet the young soldier carried it as carelessly along, as if it were but a feather's weight. It was, indeed, a skilfully constructed weapon, so well balanced, that it was much lighter in striking and in recovery, than he who saw it in the hands of another could easily have believed.

The carrying arms of itself showed that the military man was a stranger. The native Greeks had that mark of a civilized people, that they never bore weapons during the time of peace, unless the wearer chanced to be numbered among those whose military profession and employment required them to be always in arms. Such soldiers by profession were easily distinguished from the peaceful citizens; and it was with some evident show of fear as well as dislike, that the passengers observed to each other, that the stranger was a Varangian, an expression which intimated a barbarian of the imperial body-guard.

To supply the deficiency of valour among his own subjects, and to procure soldiers who should be personally dependent on the Emperor, the Greek sovereigns had been, for a great many years, in the custom of maintaining in their pay, as near their person as they could, the steady services of a select number of mercenaries in the capacity of body-guards, which were numerous enough, when their steady discipline and inflexible loyalty were taken in conjunction with their personal strength and indomitable courage, to defeat, not only any traitorous attempt on the imperial person, but to quell open rebellions, unless such were supported by a great proportion of the military force. Their pay was therefore liberal; their rank and established character for prowess gave them a degree of consideration among the people, whose reputation for valour had not for some ages stood high; and if, as foreigners, and the members of a privileged body, the Varangians were sometimes employed in arbitrary and unpopular services, the natives were so apt to fear, while they disliked them, that the hardy strangers disturbed themselves but little about the light in which they were regarded by the inhabitants of Constantinople. Their dress and accoutrements, while within the city, partook of the rich, or rather gaudy costume, which we have described, bearing only a sort of affected resemblance to that which the Varangians wore in their native forests. But the individuals of this select corps were, when their services were required beyond the city, furnished with armour and weapons more resembling those which they were accustomed to wield in their own country, possessing much less of the splendour of war, and a far greater portion of its effective terrors; and thus they were summoned to take the field.

This body of Varangians (which term is, according to one interpretation merely a general expression for barbarians) was, in an early age of the empire, formed of the roving and piratical inhabitants of the north, whom a love of adventure, the greatest perhaps that ever was indulged, and a contempt of danger, which never had a parallel in the history of human nature, drove forth upon the pathless ocean. "Piracy," says Gibbon, with his usual spirit, "was the exercise, the trade, the glory, and the virtue of the Scandinavian youth. Impatient of a bleak climate and narrow limits, they started from the banquet, grasped their arms, sounded their horn, ascended their ships, and explored every coast that promised either spoil or settlement."*

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Chap. lv. vol. x. p. 221, 8vo edition.]

The conquests made in France and Britain by these wild sea-kings, as they were called, have obscured the remembrance of other northern champions, who, long before the time of Comnenus, made excursions as far as Constantinople, and witnessed with their own eyes the wealth and the weakness of the Grecian empire itself. Numbers found their way thither through the pathless wastes of Russia; others navigated the Mediterranean in their sea-serpents, as they termed their piratical vessels. The Emperors, terrified at the appearance of these daring inhabitants of the frozen zone, had recourse to the usual policy of a rich and unwarlike people, bought with gold the service of their swords, and thus formed a corps of satellites more distinguished for valour than the famed Praetorian Bands of Rome, and, perhaps because fewer in number, unalterably loyal to their new princes.

But, at a later period of the empire, it began to be more difficult for the Emperors to obtain recruits for their favourite and selected corps, the northern nations having now in a great measure laid aside the piratical and roving habits, which had driven their ancestors from the straits of Elsinore to those of Sestos and Abydos. The corps of the Varangians must therefore have died out, or have been filled up with less worthy materials, had not the conquests made by the Normans in the far distant west, sent to the aid of Comnenus a large body of the dispossessed inhabitants of the islands of Britain, and particularly of England, who furnished recruits to his chosen body-guard. These were, in fact, Anglo-Saxons; but, in the confused idea of geography received at the court of Constantinople, they were naturally enough called Anglo-Danes, as their native country was confounded with the Thule of the ancients, by which expression the archipelago of Zetland and Orkney is properly to be understood, though, according to the notions of the Greeks, it comprised either Denmark or Britain. The emigrants, however, spoke a language not very dissimilar to the original Varangians, and adopted the name more readily, that it seemed to remind them of their unhappy fate, the appellation being in one sense capable of being interpreted as exiles. Excepting one or two chief commanders, whom the Emperor judged worthy of such high trust, the Varangians were officered by men of their own nation; and with so many privileges, being joined by many of their countrymen from time to time, as the crusades, pilgrimages, or discontent at home, drove fresh supplies of the Anglo-Saxons, or Anglo-Danes, to the east, the Varangians subsisted in strength to the last days of the Greek empire, retaining their native language, along with the unblemished loyalty, and unabated martial spirit, which characterised their fathers.

This account of the Varangian Guard is strictly historical, and might be proved by reference to the Byzantine historians; most of whom, and also Villehardouin's account of the taking of the city of Constantinople by the Franks and Venetians, make repeated mention of this celebrated and singular body of Englishmen, forming a mercenary guard attendant on the person of the Greek Emperors.*

* Ducange has poured forth a tide of learning on this curious subject, which will be found in his Notes on Villehardouin's Constantinople under the French Emperors. — Paris, 1637, folio, p. 196. Gibbon's History may also be consulted, vol. x. p. 231.

Villehardouin, in describing the siege of Constantinople, A. D. 1203, says, “Li murs fu mult garnis d'Anglois et de Danois,” — hence the dissertation of Ducange here quoted, and several articles besides in his Glossarium, as *Varangi*, Warengangi, &c. The etymology of the name is left uncertain, though the German *fort-ganger*, i. e. forth-goer, wanderer, *exile*, seems the most probable. The term occurs in various Italian and Sicilian documents, anterior to the establishment of the Varangian Guards at Constantinople, and collected by Muratori: as, for instance, in an edict of one of the Lombard kings, “Omnes Warengangi, qui de extens finibus in regni nostri finibus advenerint seque sub scuto potestatis nostrae subdiderint, legibus nostris Longobardorum vivere debeant,” — and in another, “De Warengangis, nobilibus, mediocribus, et rusticis hominibus, qui usque nunc in terra vestra fugiti sunt, habeatis eos.” — *Muratori*, vol. ii. p. 261.

With regard to the origin of the Varangian Guard, the most distinct testimony is that of Ordericus Vitalis, who says, “When therefore the English had lost their liberty, they turned themselves with zeal to discover the means of throwing off the unaccustomed yoke. Some fled to Sueno, King of the Danes, to excite him to the recovery of the inheritance of his grandfather, Canute. Not a few fled into exile in other regions, either from the mere desire of escaping from under the Norman rule, or in the hope of acquiring wealth, and so being one day in a condition to renew the struggle at home. Some of these, in the bloom of youth, penetrated into a far distant land, and offered themselves to the military service of the Constantinopolitan Emperor — that wise prince, against whom Robert Guiscard, Duke of Apulia, had then raised all his forces. The English exiles were favourably received, and opposed in battle to the Normans, for whose encounter the Greeks themselves were too weak. Alexius began to build a town for the English, a little above Constantinople, at a place called *Chevelot*, but the trouble of the Normans from Sicily still increasing, he soon recalled them to the capital, and intrusted the princial palace with all its treasures to their keeping. This was the method in which the Saxon English found their way to Ionia, where they still remain, highly valued by the Emperor and the people.” — Book iv. p. 508.]

Having said enough to explain why an individual Varangian should be strolling about the Golden Gate, we may proceed in the story which we have commenced.

Let it not be thought extraordinary, that this soldier of the life-guard should be looked upon with some degree of curiosity by the passing citizens. It must be supposed, that, from their peculiar duties, they were not encouraged to hold frequent intercourse or communication with the inhabitants; and, besides that they had duties of police occasionally to exercise amongst them, which made them generally more dreaded than beloved, they were at the same time conscious, that their high pay, splendid appointments, and immediate dependence on the Emperor, were subjects of envy to the other forces. They, therefore, kept much in the neighbourhood of their own barracks, and were seldom seen straggling remote from them, unless they had a commission of government intrusted to their charge.

This being the case, it was natural that a people so curious as the Greeks should busy themselves in eyeing the stranger as he loitered in one spot, or wandered to and fro, like a man who either could not find some place which he was seeking, or had failed to meet some person with whom he had an appointment, for which the ingenuity of the passengers found a thousand different and inconsistent reasons. “A Varangian,” said one citizen to another, “and upon duty — ahem! Then I presume to say in your ear” —

“What do you imagine is his object?” enquired the party to whom this information was addressed.

“Gods and goddesses! do you think I can tell you? but suppose that he is lurking here to hear what folk say of the Emperor,” answered the *quid-nunc* of Constantinople.

“That is not likely,” said the querist; “these Varangians do not speak our language, and are not extremely well fitted for spies, since few of them pretend to any intelligible notion of the Grecian tongue. It is not likely, I think, that the Emperor would employ as a spy a man who did not understand the language of the country.”

“But if there are, as all men fancy,” answered the politician, “persons among these barbarian soldiers who can speak almost all languages, you will admit that such are excellently qualified for seeing clearly around them, since they possess the talent of beholding and reporting, while no one has the slightest idea of suspecting them.”

“It may well be,” replied his companion; “but since we see so clearly the fox's foot and paws protruding from beneath the seeming sheep's fleece, or rather, by your leave, the *bear's* hide yonder, had we not better be jogging homeward, ere it be pretended we have insulted a Varangian Guard?”

This surmise of danger insinuated by the last speaker, who was a much older and more experienced politician than his friend, determined both on a hasty retreat. They adjusted their cloaks, caught hold of each other's arm, and, speaking fast and thick as they started new subjects of suspicion, they sped, close coupled together, towards their habitations, in a different and distant quarter of the town.

In the meantime, the sunset was high over; and the long shadows of the walls, bulwarks, and arches, were projecting from the westward in deeper and blacker shade. The Varangian seemed tired of the short and lingering circle in which he had now trodden for more than an hour, and in which he still loitered like an unliberated spirit, which cannot leave the haunted spot till licensed by the spell which has brought it hither. Even so the barbarian, casting an impatient glance to the sun, which was setting in a blaze of light behind a rich grove of cypress-trees, looked for some accommodation on the benches of stone which were placed under shadow of the triumphal arch of Theodosius, drew the axe, which was his principal weapon, close to his side, wrapped his cloak about him, and, though his dress was not in other respects a fit attire for slumber, any more than the place well selected for repose, yet in less than three minutes he was fast asleep. The irresistible impulse which induced him to seek for repose in a place very indifferently fitted for the purpose, might be weariness consequent upon the military vigils, which had proved a part of his duty on the preceding evening. At the same time, his spirit was so alive within him, even while he gave way to this transient fit of oblivion, that he remained almost awake even with shut eyes, and no hound ever seemed to sleep more lightly than our Anglo-Saxon at the Golden Gate of Constantinople.

And now the slumberer, as the loiterer had been before, was the subject of observation to the accidental passengers. Two men entered the porch in company. One was a somewhat slight made, but alert-looking man, by name Lysimachus, and by profession a designer. A roll of paper in his hand, with a little satchel containing a few chalks, or pencils, completed his stock in trade; and his acquaintance with the remains of ancient art gave him a power of talking on the subject, which unfortunately bore more than due proportion to his talents of execution. His companion, a magnificent-looking man in form, and so far resembling the young barbarian, but more clownish and peasant-like in the expression of his features, was Stephanos the wrestler, well known in the Palestra.

"Stop here, my friend," said the artist, producing his pencils, "till I make a sketch for my youthful Hercules."

"I thought Hercules had been a Greek," said the wrestler. "This sleeping animal is a barbarian."

The tone intimated some offence, and the designer hastened to soothe the displeasure which he had thoughtlessly excited. Stephanos, known by the surname of Castor, who was highly distinguished for gymnastic exercises, was a sort of patron to the little artist, and not unlikely by his own reputation to bring the talents of his friend into notice.

"Beauty and strength," said the adroit artist, "are of no particular nation; and may our Muse never deign me her prize, but it is my greatest pleasure to compare them, as existing in the uncultivated savage of the north, and when they are found in the darling of an enlightened people, who has added the height of gymnastic skill to the most distinguished natural qualities, such as we can now only see in the works of Phidias and Praxiteles — or in our living model of the gymnastic champions of antiquity."

"Nay, I acknowledge that the Varangian is a proper man," said the athletic hero, softening his tone; "but the poor savage hath not, perhaps, in his lifetime, had a single drop of oil on his bosom! Hercules instituted the Isthmian Games" —

"But hold! what sleeps he with, wrapt so close in his bear-skin?" said the artist. "Is it a club?"

"Away, away, my friend!" cried Stephanos, as they looked closer on the sleeper. "Do you not know that is the instrument of their barbarous office? They do not war with swords or lances, as if destined to attack men of flesh and blood; but with maces and axes, as if they were to hack limbs formed of stone, and sinews of oak. I will wager my crown [of withered parsley] that he lies here to arrest some distinguished commander who has offended the government! He would not have been thus formidably armed otherwise — Away, away, good Lysimachus; let us respect the slumbers of the bear."

So saying, the champion of the Palestra made off with less apparent confidence than his size and strength might have inspired.

Others, now thinly straggling, passed onward as the evening closed, and the shadows of the cypress-trees fell darker around. Two females of the lower rank cast their eyes on the sleeper. "Holy Maria!" said one, "if he does not put me in mind of the Eastern tale, how the Genie brought a gallant young prince from his nuptial chamber in Egypt, and left him sleeping at the gate of Damascus. I will awake the poor lamb, lest he catch harm from the night dew."

"Harm?" answered the older and crosser looking woman. "Ay, such harm as the cold water of the Cydnus does to the wild-swan. A lamb? — ay, forsooth! Why he's a wolf or a bear, at least a Varangian, and no modest matron would exchange a word with such an unmannered barbarian. I'll tell you what one of, these English Danes did to me" —

So saying, she drew on her companion, who followed with some reluctance, seeming to listen to her gabble, while she looked back upon the sleeper.

The total disappearance of the sun, and nearly at the same time the departure of the twilight, which lasts so short time in that tropical region — one of the few advantages which a more temperate climate possesses over it, being the longer continuance of that sweet and placid light — gave signal to the warders of the city to shut the folding leaves of the Golden Gate, leaving a wicket lightly bolted for the passage of those whom business might have detained too late without the walls, and indeed for all who chose to pay a small coin. The position and apparent insensibility of the Varangian did not escape those who had charge of the gate, of whom there was a strong guard, which belonged to the ordinary Greek forces.

"By Castor and by Pollux," said the centurion — for the Greeks swore by the ancient deities, although they no longer worshipped them, and preserved those military distinctions with which "the steady Romans shook the world," although they were altogether degenerated from their original manners — "By Castor and Pollux, comrades, we cannot gather gold in this gate, according as its legend tells us: yet it will be our fault if we cannot glean a goodly crop of silver; and though the golden age be the most ancient and honourable, yet in this degenerate time it is much if we see a glimpse of the inferior metal."

"Unworthy are we to follow the noble centurion Harpax," answered one of the soldiers of the watch, who showed the shaven head and the single tuft* of a Mussulman, "if we do not hold silver a sufficient cause to bestir ourselves, when there has been no gold to be had — as, by the faith of an honest man, I think we can hardly tell its colour — whether out of the imperial treasury, or obtained at the expense of individuals, for many long moons!"

* One tuft is left on the shaven head of the Moslem, for the angel to grasp by when conveying him to Paradise.]

"But this silver," said the centurion, "thou shalt see with thine own eye, and hear it ring a knell in the purse which holds our common stock." "Which *did* hold it, as thou wouldst say, most valiant commander," replied the inferior warder; "but what that purse holds now, save a few miserable oboli for purchasing certain pickled potherbs and salt fish, to relish our allowance of stummed wine, I cannot tell, but willingly give my share of the contents to the devil, if either purse or platter exhibits symptom of any age richer than the age of copper."

"I will replenish our treasury," said the centurion, "were our stock yet lower than it is. Stand up close by the wicket, my masters. Bethink you we are the Imperial Guards, or the guards of the Imperial City, it is all one, and let us have no man rush past us on a sudden; — and now that we are on our guard, I will unfold to you — But stop," said the valiant centurion, "are we all here true brothers? Do all well understand the ancient and laudable customs of our watch — keeping all things secret which concern the profit and advantage of this our vigil, and aiding and abetting the common cause, without information or treachery?"

"You are strangely suspicious to-night," answered the sentinel. "Methinks we have stood by you without tale-telling in matters which were more weighty. Have you forgot the passage of the jeweller — which was neither the gold nor silver age; but if there were a diamond one?"

"Peace, good Ismail the Infidel," said the centurion — "for, I thank Heaven, we are of all religions, so it is to be hoped we must have the true one amongst us — Peace, I say; it is unnecessary to prove thou canst keep new secrets, by ripping up old ones. Come hither — look through the wicket to the stone bench, on the shady side of the grand porch — tell me, old lad, what dost thou see there?"

"A man asleep," said Ismail. "By Heaven, I think from what I can see by the moonlight, that it is one of those barbarians, one of those island dogs, whom the Emperor sets such store by!"

"And can thy fertile brain," said the centurion, "spin nothing out of his present situation, tending towards our advantage?"

"Why, ay," said Ismail; "they have large pay, though they are not only barbarians, but pagan dogs, in comparison with us Moslems and Nazarenes. That fellow hath besotted himself with liquor, and hath not found his way home to his barracks in good time. He will be severely punished, unless we consent to admit him; and to prevail on us to do so, he must empty the contents of his girdle."

"That, at least — that, at least," answered the soldiers of the city watch, but carefully suppressing their voices, though they spoke in an eager tone. "And is that all that you would make of such an opportunity?" said Harpax, scornfully. "No, no, comrades. If this outlandish animal indeed escape us, he must at least leave his fleece behind. See you not the gleams from his headpiece and his cuirass? I presume these betoken substantial silver, though it may be of the thinnest. There lies the silver mine I spoke of, ready to enrich the dexterous hands who shall labour it."

"But," said timidly a young Greek, a companion of their watch lately enlisted in the corps, and unacquainted with their habits, "still this barbarian, as you call him, is a soldier of the Emperor; and if we are convicted of depriving him of his arms, we shall be justly punished for a military crime."

"Hear to a new Lycurgus come to teach us our duty!" said the centurion. "Learn first, young man, that the metropolitan cohort never can commit a crime; and next, of course, that they can never be convicted of one. Suppose we found a straggling barbarian, a Varangian, like this slumberer, perhaps a Frank, or some other of these foreigners bearing unpronounceable names, while they dishonour us by putting on the arms and apparel of the real Roman soldier, are we, placed to defend an important post, to admit a man so suspicious within our postern, when the event may probably be to betray both the Golden Gate and the hearts of gold who guard it — to have the one seized, and the throats of the others handsomely cut?"

"Keep him without side of the gate, then," replied the novice, "if you think him so dangerous. For my part, I should not fear him, were he deprived of that huge double-edged axe, which gleams from under his cloak, having a more deadly glare than the comet which astrologers prophesy such strange things of."

"Nay, then, we agree together," answered Harpax, "and you speak like a youth of modesty and sense; and I promise you the state will lose nothing in the despoiling of this same barbarian. Each of these savages hath a double set of accoutrements, the one wrought with gold, silver, inlaid work, and ivory, as becomes their duties in the prince's household; the other fashioned of triple steel, strong, weighty, and irresistible. Now, in taking from this suspicious character his silver helmet and cuirass, you reduce him to his proper weapons, and you will see him start up in arms fit for duty."

"Yes," said the novice; "but I do not see that this reasoning will do more than warrant our stripping the Varangian of his armour, to be afterwards heedfully returned to him on the morrow, if he prove a true man. How, I know not, but I had adopted some idea that it was to be confiscated for our joint behoof."

"Unquestionably," said Harpax; "for such has been the rule of our watch ever since the days of the excellent centurion Sisyphus, in whose time it first was determined, that all contraband commodities or suspicious weapons, or the like, which were brought into the city during the nightwatch, should be uniformly forfeited to the use of the soldiery of the guard; and where the Emperor finds the goods or arms unjustly seized, I hope he is rich enough to make it up to the sufferer."

"But still — but still," said Sebastes of Mitylene, the young Greek aforesaid, "were the Emperor to discover" —

"Ass!" replied Harpax, "he cannot discover, if he had all the eyes of Argus's tail. — Here are twelve of us sworn according to the rules of the watch, to abide in the same story. Here is a barbarian, who, if he remembers any thing of the matter — which I greatly doubt — his choice of a lodging arguing his familiarity with the wine-pot — tells but a wild tale of losing his armour, which we, my masters," (looking round to his companions,) "deny stoutly — I hope we have courage enough for that — and which party will be believed? The companions of the watch, surely!"

"Quite the contrary," said Sebastes. "I was born at a distance from hence; yet even in the island of Mitylene, the rumour had reached me that the cavaliers of the city-guard of Constantinople were so accomplished in falsehood, that the oath of a single barbarian would outweigh the Christian oath of the whole body, if Christians some of them are — for example, this dark man with a single tuft on his head."

"And if it were even so," said the centurion, with a gloomy and sinister look, "there is another way of making the transaction a safe one."

Sebastes, fixing his eye on his commander, moved his hand to the hilt of an Eastern poniard which he wore, as if to penetrate his exact meaning. The centurion nodded in acquiescence.

"Young as I am," said Sebastes, "I have been already a pirate five years at sea, and a robber three years now in the hills, and it is the first time I have seen or heard a man hesitate, in such a case, to take the only part which is worth a brave man's while to resort to in a pressing affair."

Harpax struck his hand into that of the soldier, as sharing his uncompromising sentiments; but when he spoke, it was in a tremulous voice.

"How shall we deal with him?" said he to Sebastes, who, from the most raw recruit in the corps, had now risen to the highest place in his estimation.

"Any how," returned the islander; "I see bows here and shafts, and if no other person can use them" —

"They are not," said the centurion, "the regular arms of our corps."

"The fitter you to guard the gates of a city," said the young soldier, with a horse-laugh, which had something insulting in it. "Well — be it so. I can shoot like a Scythian," he proceeded; "nod but with your head, one shaft shall crash among the splinters of his skull and his brains; the second shall quiver in his heart."

"Bravo, my noble comrade!" said Harpax, in a tone of affected rapture, always lowering his voice, however, as respecting the slumbers of the Varangian. "Such were the robbers of ancient days, the Diomedes, Corvnetes, Synnes, Scyrons, Procrustes, whom it required demigods to bring to what was miscalled justice, and whose compeers and fellows will remain masters of the continent and isles of Greece, until Hercules and Theseus shall again appear upon earth. Nevertheless, shoot not, my valiant Sebastes — draw not the bow, my invaluable Mitylenian; you may wound and not kill." "I am little wont to do so," said Sebastes, again repeating the hoarse, chuckling, discordant laugh, which grated upon the ears of the centurion, though he could hardly tell the reason why it was so uncommonly unpleasant. "If I look not about me," was his internal reflection, "we shall have two centurions of the watch, instead of one. This Mitylenian, or be he who the devil will, is a bow's length beyond me. I must keep my eye on him." He then spoke aloud, in a tone of authority. "But, come, young man, it is hard to discourage a young beginner. If you have been such a rover of wood and river as you tell us of, you know how to play the Sicarius: there lies your object, drunk or asleep, we know not which; — you will deal with him in either case."

"Will you give me no odds to stab a stupefied or drunken man, most noble centurion?" answered the Greek. "You would perhaps love the commission yourself?" he continued, somewhat ironically.

"Do as you are directed, friend," said Harpax, pointing to the turret staircase which led down from the battlement to the arched entrance underneath the porch.

"He has the true cat-like stealthy pace," half muttered the centurion, as his sentinel descended to do such a crime as he was posted there to prevent. "This cockerel's comb must be cut, or he will become king of the roost. But let us see if his hand be as resolute as his tongue; then we will consider what turn to give to the conclusion."

As Harpax spoke between his teeth, and rather to himself than any of his companions, the Mitylenian emerged from under the archway, treading on tiptoe, yet swiftly, with an admirable mixture of silence and celerity. His poniard, drawn as he descended, gleamed in his hand, which was held a little behind the rest of his person, so as to conceal it. The assassin hovered less than an instant over the sleeper, as if to mark the interval between the ill-fated silver corslet, and the body which it was designed to protect, when, at the instant the blow was rushing to its descent, the Varangian started up at once, arrested the armed hand of the assassin, by striking it upwards with the head of his battle-axe; and while he thus parried the intended stab, struck the Greek a blow heavier than Sebastes had ever learned at the Pancration, which left him scarce the power to cry help to his comrades on the battlements. They saw what had happened, however, and beheld the barbarian set his foot on their companion, and brandish high his formidable weapon, the whistling sound of which made the old arch ring ominously, while he paused an instant, with his weapon upheaved, ere he gave the finishing blow to his enemy. The warders made a bustle, as if some of them would descend to the assistance of Sebastes, without, however, appearing very eager to do so, when Harpax, in a rapid whisper, commanded them to stand fast.

"Each man to his place," he said, "happen what may. Yonder comes a captain of the guard — the secret is our own, if the savage has killed the Mitylenian, as I well trust, for he stirs neither hand nor foot. But if he lives, my comrades, make hard your faces as flints — he is but one man, we are twelve. We know nothing of his purpose, save that he went to see wherefore the barbarian slept so near the post."

While the centurion thus bruited his purpose in busy insinuation to the companions of his watch, the stately figure of a tall soldier, richly armed, and presenting a lofty crest, which glistened as he stepped from the open moonlight into the shade of the vault, became visible beneath. A whisper passed among the warders on the top of the gate.

"Draw bolt, shut gate, come of the Mitylenian what will," said the centurion; "we are lost men if we own him. — Here comes the chief of the Varangian axes, the Follower himself."

"Well, Hereward," said the officer who came last upon the scene, in a sort of *lingua Franca*, generally used by the barbarians of the guard, "hast thou caught a night-hawk?"

"Ay, by Saint George!" answered the soldier; "and yet, in my country, we would call him but a kite."

"What is he?" said the leader.

"He will tell you that himself," replied the Varangian, "when I take my grasp from his windpipe."

"Let him go, then," said the officer.

The Englishman did as he was commanded; but, escaping as soon as he felt himself at liberty, with an alertness which could scarce have been anticipated, the Mitylenian rushed out at the arch, and, availing himself of the complicated ornaments which had originally graced the exterior of the gateway, he fled around buttress and projection, closely pursued by the Varangian, who, encumbered with his armour, was hardly a match in the course for the light-footed Grecian, as he

dodged his pursuer from one skulking place to another. The officer laughed heartily, as the two figures, like shadows appearing and disappearing as suddenly, held rapid flight and chase around the arch of Theodosius.

"By Hercules! it is Hector pursued round the walls of Ilion by Achilles," said the officer; "but my Pelides will scarce overtake the son of Priam. What, ho! goddess-born — son of the white-footed Thetis! — But the allusion is lost on the poor savage — Hollo, Hereward! I say, stop — know thine own most barbarous name." These last words were muttered; then raising his voice, "Do not out-run thy wind, good Hereward. Thou mayst have more occasion for breath to-night."

"If it had been my leader's will," answered the Varangian, coming back in sulky mood, and breathing like one who had been at the top of his speed, "I would have had him as fast as ever grey-hound held hare, ere I left off the chase. Were it not for this foolish armour, which encumbers without defending one, I would not have made two bounds without taking him by the throat."

"As well as it is," said the officer, who was, in fact, the Acoulonthos, or *Follower*, so called because it was the duty of this highly-trusted officer of the Varangian Guards constantly to attend on the person of the Emperor. "But let us now see by what means we are to regain our entrance through the gate; for if, as I suspect, it was one of those warders who was willing to have played thee a trick, his companions may not let us enter willingly." "And is it not," said the Varangian, "your Valour's duty to probe this want of discipline to the bottom?"

"Hush thee here, my simple-minded savage! I have often told you, most ignorant Hereward, that the skulls of those who come from your cold and muddy Boentia of the North, are fitter to bear out twenty blows with a sledge-hammer, than turn off one witty or ingenious idea. But follow me, Hereward, and although I am aware that showing the fine meshes of Grecian policy to the coarse eye of an unpractised barbarian like thee, is much like casting pearls before swine, a thing forbidden in the Blessed Gospel, yet, as thou hast so good a heart, and so trusty, as is scarce to be met with among my Varangians themselves, I care not if, while thou art in attendance on my person, I endeavour to indoctrinate thee in some of that policy by which I myself — the Follower — the chief of the Varangians, and therefore erected by their axes into the most valiant of the valiant, am content to guide myself, although every way qualified to bear me through the cross currents of the court by main pull of oar and press of sail — a condescension in me, to do that by policy, which no man in this imperial court, the chosen sphere of superior wits, could so well accomplish by open force as myself. What think'st thou, good savage?"

"I know," answered the Varangian, who walked about a step and a half behind his leader, like an orderly of the present day behind his officer's shoulder, "I should be sorry to trouble my head with what I could do by my hands at once."

"Did I not say so?" replied the Follower, who had now for some minutes led the way from the Golden Gate, and was seen gliding along the outside of the moonlight walls, as if seeking an entrance elsewhere. "Lo, such is the stuff of what you call your head is made! Your hands and arms are perfect Ahitophels, compared to it. Harken to me, thou most ignorant of all animals — but, for that very reason, thou stoutest of confidants, and bravest of soldiers — I will tell thee the very riddle of this night-work, and yet, even then I doubt if thou canst understand me."

"It is my present duty to try to comprehend your Valour," said the Varangian — "I would say your policy, since you condescend to expound it to me. As for your valour," he added, "I should be unlucky if I did not think I understand its length and breadth already."

The Greek General coloured a little, but replied, with unaltered voice, "True, good Hereward. We have seen each other in battle."

Hereward here could not suppress a short cough, which to those grammarians of the day who were skilful in applying the use of accents, would have implied no peculiar eulogium on his officer's military bravery. Indeed, during their whole intercourse, the conversation of the General, in spite of his tone of affected importance and superiority, displayed an obvious respect for his companion, as one who, in many points of action, might, if brought to the test, prove a more effective soldier than himself. On the other hand, when the powerful Northern warrior replied, although it was with all observance of discipline and duty, yet the discussion might sometimes resemble that between an ignorant macaroni officer, before the Duke of York's reformation of the British army, and a steady sergeant of the regiment in which they both served. There was a consciousness of superiority, disguised by external respect, and half admitted by the leader.

"You will grant me, my simple friend," continued the chief, in the same tone as before, "in order to lead thee by a short passage into the deepest principle of policy which pervades this same court of Constantinople, that the favour of the Emperor" — (here the officer raised his casque, and the soldier made a semblance of doing so also) — "who (be the place where he puts his foot sacred!) is the vivifying principle of the sphere in which we live, as the sun itself is that of humanity" —

"I have heard something like this said by our tribunes," said the Varangian.

"It is their duty so to instruct you," answered the leader; "and I trust that the priests also, in their sphere, forget not to teach my Varangians their constant service to their Emperor."

"They do not omit it," replied the soldier, "though we of the exiles know our duty."

"God forbid I should doubt it," said the commander of the battle-axes. "All I mean is to make thee understand, my dear Hereward, that as there are, though perhaps such do not exist in thy dark and gloomy climate, a race of insects which are born in the first rays of the morning, and expire with those of sunset, (thence called by us ephemeras, as enduring one day only,) such is the case of a favourite at court, while enjoying the smiles of the most sacred Emperor. And happy is he whose favour, rising as the person of the sovereign emerges from the level space which extends around the throne, displays itself in the first imperial blaze of glory, and who, keeping his post during the meridian splendour of the crown, has only the fate to disappear and die with the last beam of imperial brightness."

"Your Valour," said the islander, "speaks higher language than my Northern wits are able to comprehend. Only, methinks, rather than part with life at the sunset, I would, since insect I must needs be, become a moth for two or three dark hours."

"Such is the sordid desire of the vulgar, Hereward," answered the Follower, with assumed superiority, "who are contented to enjoy life, lacking distinction; whereas we, on the other hand, we of choicer quality, who form the nearest and innermost circle around the Imperial Alexius, in which he himself forms the central point, are watchful, to woman's jealousy, of the distribution of his favours, and omit no opportunity, whether by leaguings with or against each other, to recommend ourselves individually to the peliar light of his countenance."

"I think I comprehend what you mean," said the guardsman; "although as for living such a life of intrigue — but that matters not."

"It does indeed matter not, my good Hereward," said his officer, "and thou art lucky in having no appetite for the life I have described. Yet have I seen barbarians rise high in the empire, and if they have not altogether the flexibility, the malleability, as it is called — that happy ductility which can give way to circumstances, I have yet known those of barbaric tribes, especially if bred up at court from their youth, who joined to a limited portion of this flexible quality enough of a certain tough durability of temper, which, if it does not excel in availing itself of opportunity, has no contemptible talent at creating it. But letting comparisons pass, it follows, from this emulation of glory, that is, of royal favour, amongst the servants of the imperial and most sacred court, that each is desirous of distinguishing himself by showing to the Emperor, not only that he fully understands the duties of his own employments, but that he is capable, in case of necessity, of discharging those of others."

"I understand," said the Saxon; "and thence it happens that the under ministers, soldiers, and assistants of the great crown-officers, are perpetually engaged, not in aiding each other, but in acting as spies on their neighbours' actions?"

"Even so," answered the commander; "it is but few days since I had a disagreeable instance of it. Every one, however dull in the intellect, hath understood thus much, that the great Protospathaire,* which title thou knowest signifies the General-in-chief of the forces of the empire, hath me at hatred, because I am the leader of those redoubtable Varangians, who enjoy and well deserve, privileges exempting them from the absolute command which he possesses over all other corps of the army — an authority which becomes Nicanor, notwithstanding the victorious sound of his name, nearly as well as a war-saddle would become a bullock."

* Literally, the First Swordsman.]

"How!" said the Varangian, "does the Protospathaire pretend to any authority over the noble exiles? — By the red dragon, under which we will live and die, we will obey no man alive but Alexius Comnenus himself, and our own officers!"

"Rightly and bravely resolved," said the leader; "but, my good Hereward, let not your just indignation hurry you so far as to name the most sacred Emperor, without raising your hand to your casque, and adding the epithets of his lofty rank."

"I will raise my hand often enough and high enough," said the Norseman, "when the Emperor's service requires it."

"I dare be sworn thou wilt," said Achilles Tatius, the commander of the Varangian Imperial Body Guard, who thought the time was unfavourable for distinguishing himself by insisting on that exact observance of etiquette, which was one of his great pretensions to the name of a soldier. "Yet were it not for the constant vigilance of your leader, my child, the noble Varangians would be trode down, in the common mass of the army, with the heathen cohorts of Huns, Scythians, or those turban'd infidels the renegade Turks; and even for this is your commander here in peril, because he vindicates his axe-men as worthy of being prized above the paltry shafts of the Eastern tribes and the javelins of the Moors, which are only fit to be playthings for children."

"You are exposed to no danger," said the soldier, closing up to Achilles in a confidential manner, "from which these axes can protect you."

"Do I not know it?" said Achilles. "But it is to your arms alone that the Follower of his most sacred Majesty now intrusts his safety."

"In aught that a soldier may do," answered Hereward; "make your own computation, and then reckon this single arm worth two against any man the Emperor has, not being of our own corps."

"Listen, my brave friend," continued Achilles. "This Nicanor was daring enough to throw a reproach on our noble corps, accusing them — gods and goddesses! — of plundering in the field, and, yet more sacrilegious, of drinking the precious wine which was prepared for his most sacred Majesty's own blessed consumption. I, the sacred person of the Emperor being present, proceeded, as thou may'st well believe" —

"To give him the lie in his audacious throat!" burst in the Varangian — "named a place of meeting somewhere in the vicinity, and called the attendance of your poor follower, Hereward of Hampton, who is your bond-slave for life long, for such an honour! I wish only you had told me to get my work-day arms; but, however, I have my battle-axe, and" — Here his companion seized a moment to break in, for he was somewhat abashed at the lively tone of the young soldier.

"Hush thee, my son," said Achilles Tatius; "speak low, my excellent Hereward. Thou mistakest this thing. With thee by my side, I would not, indeed, hesitate to meet five such as Nicanor; but such is not the law of this most hallowed empire, nor the sentiments of the three times illustrious Prince who now rules it. Thou art debauched, my soldier, with the swaggering stories of the Franks, of whom we hear more and more every day."

"I would not willingly borrow any thing from those whom you call Franks, and we Normans," answered the Varangian, in a disappointed, dogged tone.

"Why, listen, then," said the officer as they proceeded on their walk, "listen to the reason of the thing, and consider whether such a custom can obtain, as that which they term the duello, in any country of civilization and common sense, to say nothing of one which is blessed with the domination of the most rare Alexius Comnenus. Two great lords, or high officers, quarrel in the court, and before the reverend person of the Emperor. They dispute about a point of fact. Now, instead of each maintaining his own opinion by argument or evidence, suppose they had adopted the custom of these barbarous Franks — 'Why, thou liest in thy throat,' says the one; 'and thou liest in thy very lungs,' says another; and they measure forth the lists of battle in the next meadow. Each swears to the truth of his quarrel, though probably neither well knows precisely how the fact stands. One, perhaps the hardier, truer, and better man of the two, the Follower of the Emperor, and father of the Varangians, (for death, my faithful follower, spares no man,) lies dead on the ground, and the other comes back to predominate in the court, where, had the matter been enquired into by the rules of common sense and reason, the victor, as he is termed, would have been sent to the gallows. And yet this is the law of arms, as your fancy pleases to call it, friend Hereward!"

"May it please your Valour," answered the barbarian, "there is a show of sense in what you say; but you will sooner convince me that this blessed moonlight is the blackness of a wolf's mouth, than that I ought to hear myself called liar, without cramming the epithet down the speaker's throat with the spike of my battle-axe. The lie is to a man the same as a blow, and a blow degrades him into a slave and a beast of burden, if endured without retaliation."

"Ay, there it is!" said Achilles; "could I but get you to lay aside that inborn barbarism, which leads you, otherwise the most disciplined soldiers who serve the sacred Emperor, into such deadly quarrels and feuds" —

"Sir Captain," said the Varangian, in a sullen tone, "take my advice, and take the Varangians as you have them; for, believe my word, that if you could teach them to endure reproaches, bear the lie, or tolerate stripes, you would hardly find them, when their discipline is completed, worth the single day's salt which they cost to his holiness, if that be his title. I must tell you, moreover, valorous sir, that the Varangians will little thank their leader, who heard them called marauders, drunkards, and what not, and repelled not the charge on the spot."

"Now, if I knew not the humours of my barbarians," thought Tatius, in his own mind, "I should bring on myself a quarrel with these untamed islanders, who the Emperor thinks can be so easily kept in discipline. But I will settle this sport presently." Accordingly, he addressed the Saxon in a soothing tone.

"My faithful soldier," he proceeded aloud, "we Romans, according to the custom of our ancestors, set as much glory on actually telling the truth, as you do in resenting the imputation of falsehood; and I could not with honour return a charge of falsehood upon Nicanor, since what he said was substantially true."

"What! that we Varangians were plunderers, drunkards, and the like?" said Hereward, more impatient than before.

"No, surely, not in that broad sense," said Achilles; "but there was too much foundation for the legend."

"When and where?" asked the Anglo-Saxon.

"You remember," replied his leader, "the long march near Laodicea, where the Varangians beat off a cloud of Turks, and retook a train of the imperial baggage? You know what was done that day — how you quenched your thirst, I mean?"

"I have some reason to remember it," said Hereward of Hampton; "for we were half choked with dust, fatigue, and, which was worst of all, constantly fighting with our faces to the rear, when we found some firkins of wine in certain carriages which were broken down — down our throats it went, as if it had been the best ale in Southampton."

"Ah, unhappy!" said the Follower; "saw you not that the firkins were stamped with the thrice excellent Grand Butler's own inviolable seal, and set apart for the private use of his Imperial Majesty's most sacred lips?"

"By good Saint George of merry England, worth a dozen of your Saint George of Cappadocia, I neither thought nor cared about the matter," answered Hereward.

"And I know your Valour drank a mighty draught yourself out of my head-piece; not this silver bauble, but my steel-cap, which is twice as ample. By the same token, that whereas before you were giving orders to fall back, you were a changed man when you had cleared your throat of the dust, and cried, 'Bide the other brunt, my brave and stout boys of Britain!'"

"Ay," said Achilles, "I know I am but too apt to be venturous in action. But you mistake, good Hereward; the wine I tasted in the extremity of martial fatigue, was not that set apart for his sacred Majesty's own peculiar mouth, but a secondary sort, preserved for the Grand Butler himself, of which, as one of the great officers of the household, I might right lawfully partake — the chance was nevertheless sinfully unhappy."

"On my life," replied Hereward, "I cannot see the infelicity of drinking when we are dying of thirst."

"But cheer up, my noble comrade," said Achilles, after he had hurried over his own exculpation, and without noticing the Varangian's light estimation of the crime, "his Imperial Majesty, in his ineffable graciousness, imputes these ill-advised draughts as a crime to no one who partook of them. He rebuked the Protospathaire for fishing up this accusation, and said, when he had recalled the bustle and confusion of that toilsome day, 'I thought myself well off amid that seven times heated furnace, when we obtained a draught of the barley-wine drunk by my poor Varangians; and I drank their health, as well I might, since, had it not been for their services, I had drunk my last; and well fare their hearts, though they quaffed my wine in return!' And with that he turned off, as one who said, 'I have too much of this, being a finding of matter and ripping up of stories against Achilles Tatius and his gallant Varangians.'"

"Now, may God bless his honest heart for it!" said Hereward, with more downright heartiness than formal respect. "I'll drink to his health in what I put next to my lips that quenches thirst, whether it may be ale, wine, or ditch-water."

"Why, well said, but speak not above thy breath! and remember to put thy hand to thy forehead, when naming, or even thinking of the Emperor! — Well, thou knowest, Hereward, that having thus obtained the advantage, I knew that the moment of a repulsed attack is always that of a successful charge; and so I brought against the Protospathaire, Nicanor, the robberies which have been committed at the Golden Gate, and other entrances of the city, where a merchant was but of late kidnapped and murdered, having on him certain jewels, the property of the Patriarch."

"Ay! indeed?" said the Varangian; "and what said Alex — I mean the most sacred Emperor, when he heard such things said of the city warders? — though he had himself given, as we say in our land, the fox the geese to keep."

"It may be he did," replied Achilles; "but he is a sovereign of deep policy, and was resolved not to proceed against these treacherous warders, or their general, the Protospathaire, without decisive proof. His Sacred Majesty, therefore, charged me to obtain specific circumstantial proof by thy means."

"And that I would have managed in two minutes, had you not called me off the chase of yon cut-throat vagabond. But his grace knows the word of a Varangian, and I can assure him that either lucre of my silver gaberdine, which they nickname a cuirass, or the hatred of my corps, would be sufficient to incite any of these knaves to cut the throat of a Varangian, who appeared to be asleep. — So we go, I suppose, captain, to bear evidence before the Emperor to this night's work?"

"No, my active soldier, hadst thou taken the runaway villain, my first act must have been to set him free again; and my present charge to you is, to forget that such an adventure has ever taken place."

"Ha!" said the Varangian; "this is a change of policy indeed!"

"Why, yes, brave Hereward; ere I left the palace this night, the Patriarch made overtures of reconciliation betwixt me and the Protospathaire, which, as our agreement is of much consequence to the state, I could not very well reject, either as a good soldier or a good Christian. All offences to my honour are to be in the fullest degree repaid, for which the Patriarch interposes his warrant. The Emperor, who will rather wink hard than see disagreements, loves better the matter should be slurred over thus."

"And the reproaches upon the Varangians." said Hereward —

"Shall be fully retracted and atoned for," answered Achilles; "and a weighty donative in gold dealt among the corps of the Anglo-Danish axemen. Thou, my Hereward, mayst be distributor; and thus, if well-managed, mayst plate thy battle-axe with gold."

"I love my axe better as it is," said the Varangian. "My father bore it against the robber Normans at Hastings. Steel instead of gold for my money."

"Thou mayst make thy choice, Hereward," answered his officer; "only, if thou art poor, say the fault was thine own."

But here, in the course of their circuit round Constantinople, the officer and his soldier came to a very small wicket or sallyport, opening on the interior of a large and massive advanced work, which terminated an entrance to the city itself. Here the officer halted, and made his obedience, as a devotee who is about to enter a chapel of peculiar sanctity.

Chapter the Third.

*Here, youth, thy foot unbrace,
Here, youth, thy brow unbraid;
Each tribute that may grace
The threshold here be paid.
Walk with the stealthy pace
Which Nature teaches deer,
When, echoing in the chase,
The hunter's horn they hear.*

THE COURT.

Before entering, Achilles Tatius made various gesticulations, which were imitated roughly and awkwardly by the unpractised Varangian, whose service with his corps had been almost entirely in the field, his routine of duty not having, till very lately, called him to serve as one of the garrison of Constantinople. He was not, therefore, acquainted with the minute observances which the Greeks, who were the most formal and ceremonious soldiers and courtiers in the world, rendered not merely to the Greek Emperor in person, but throughout the sphere which peculiarly partook of his influence.

Achilles, having gesticulated after his own fashion, at length touched the door with a rap, distinct at once and modest. This was thrice repeated, when the captain whispered to his attendant, "The interior! — for thy life, do as thou seest me do." At the same moment he started back, and, stooping his head on his breast, with his hands over his eyes, as if to save them from being dazzled by an expected burst of light, awaited the answer to his summons. The Anglo-Dane, desirous to obey his leader, imitating him as near as he could, stood side by side in the posture of Oriental humiliation. The little portal opened inwards, when no burst of light was seen, but four of the Varangians were made visible in the entrance, holding each his battle-axe, as if about to strike down the intruders who had disturbed the silence of their watch.

"Acoulouthos," said the leader, by way of password.

"Tatius and Acoulouthos," murmured the warders, as a countersign.

Each sentinel sunk his weapon.

Achilles then reared his stately crest, with a conscious dignity at making this display of court influence in the eyes of his soldiers. Hereward observed an undisturbed gravity, to the surprise of his officer, who marvelled in his own mind how he could be such a barbarian as to regard with apathy a scene, which had in his eyes the most impressive and peculiar awe. This indifference he imputed to the stupid insensibility of his companion.

They passed on between the sentinels, who wheeled backward in file, on each side of the portal, and gave the strangers entrance to a long narrow plank, stretched across the city-moat, which was here drawn within the enclosure of an external rampart, projecting beyond the principal wall of the city.

"This," he whispered to Hereward, "is called the Bridge of Peril, and it is said that it has been occasionally smeared with oil, or strewed with dried peas, and that the bodies of men, known to have been in company with the Emperor's most sacred person, have been taken out of the Golden Horn,* into which the moat empties itself."

* The harbour of Constantinople.]

"I would not have thought," said the islander, raising his voice to its usual rough tone, "that Alexius Comnenus" —

"Hush, rash and regardless of your life!" said Achilles Tatius; "to awaken the daughter of the imperial arch,* is to incur deep penalty at all times; but when a rash delinquent has disturbed her with reflections on his most sacred Highness the Emperor, death is a punishment far too light for the effrontery which has interrupted her blessed slumber! — Ill hath been my fate, to have positive commands laid on me, enjoining me to bring into the sacred precincts a creature who hath no more of the salt of civilization in him than to keep his mortal frame from corruption, since of all mental culture he is totally incapable. Consider thyself, Hereward, and bethink thee what thou art. By nature a poor barbarian — thy best boast that thou hast slain certain Mussulmans in thy sacred master's quarrel; and here art thou admitted into the inviolable enclosure of the Blaquernal, and in the hearing not only of the royal daughter of the imperial arch, which means," said the eloquent leader, "the echo of the sublime vaults; but — Heaven be our guide — for what I know, within the natural hearing of the Sacred Ear itself!"

* The daughter of the arch was a courtly expression for the echo, as we find explained by the courtly commander himself.]

"Well, my captain," replied the Varangian, "I cannot presume to speak my mind after the fashion of this place; but I can easily suppose I am but ill qualified to converse in the presence of the court, nor do I mean therefore to say a word till I am spoken to, unless when I shall see no better company than ourselves. To be plain, I find difficulty in modelling my voice to a smoother tone than nature has given it. So, henceforth, my brave captain, I will be mute, unless when you give me a sign to speak."

"You will act wisely," said the captain. "Here be certain persons of high rank, nay, some that have been born in the purple itself, that will, Hereward, (alas, for thee!) prepare to sound with the line of their courtly understanding the depths of thy barbarous and shallow conceit. Do not, therefore, then, join their graceful smiles with thy inhuman bursts of cachinnation, with which thou art wont to thunder forth when opening in chorus with thy messmates."

"I tell thee I will be silent," said the Varangian, moved somewhat beyond his mood. "If you trust my word, so; if you think I am a jackdaw that must be speaking, whether in or out of place and purpose, I am contented to go back again, and therein we can end the matter."

Achilles, conscious perhaps that it was his best policy not to drive his subaltern to extremity, lowered his tone somewhat in reply to the uncourtly note of the soldier, as if allowing something for the rude manners of one whom he considered as not easily matched among the Varangians themselves, for strength and valour; qualities which, in despite of Hereward's discourtesy, Achilles suspected in his heart were fully more valuable than all those nameless graces which a more courtly and accomplished soldier might possess.

The expert navigator of the intricacies of the imperial residence, carried the Varangian through two or three small complicated courts, forming a part of the extensive Palace of the Blaquernal,* and entered the building itself by a side door — watched in like manner by a sentinel of the Varangian Guard, whom they passed on being recognized. In the next apartment was stationed the Court of Guard, where were certain soldiers of the same corps amusing themselves at games somewhat resembling the modern draughts and dice, while they seasoned their pastime with frequent applications to deep flagons of ale, which were furnished to them while passing away their hours of duty. Some glances passed between Hereward and his comrades, and he would have joined them, or at least spoke to them; for, since the adventure of the Mitylenian, Hereward had rather thought himself annoyed than distinguished by his moonlight ramble in the company of his commander, excepting always the short and interesting period during which he conceived they were on the way to fight a duel. Still, however negligent in the strict observance of the ceremonies of the sacred palace, the Varangians had, in their own way, rigid notions of calculating their military duty; in consequence of which Hereward, without speaking to his companions, followed his leader through the guard-room, and one or two antechambers adjacent, the splendid and luxurious furniture of which convinced him that he could be nowhere else save in the sacred residence of his master the Emperor.

* This palace derived its name from the neighbouring Blachernian Gate and Bridge.]

At length, having traversed passages and apartments with which the captain seemed familiar, and which he threaded with a stealthy, silent, and apparently reverential pace, as if, in his own inflated phrase, afraid to awaken the sounding echoes of those lofty and monumental halls, another species of inhabitants began to be visible. In different entrances, and in different apartments, the northern soldier beheld those unfortunate slaves, chiefly of African descent, raised occasionally under the Emperors of Greece to great power and honours, who, in that respect, imitated one of the most barbarous points of Oriental despotism. These slaves were differently occupied; some standing, as if on guard, at gates or in passages, with their drawn sabres in their hands; some were sitting in the Oriental fashion, on carpets, reposing themselves, or playing at various games, all of a character profoundly silent. Not a word passed between the guide of Hereward, and the withered and deformed beings whom they thus encountered. The exchange of a glance with the principal soldier seemed all that was necessary to ensure both an uninterrupted passage.

After making their way through several apartments, empty or thus occupied, they, at length entered one of black marble, or some other dark-coloured stone, much loftier and longer than the rest. Side passages opened into it, so far as the islander could discern, descending from several portals in the wall; but as the oils and gums with which the lamps in these passages were fed diffused a dim vapour around, it was difficult to ascertain, from the imperfect light, either the shape of the hall, or the style of its architecture. At the upper and lower ends of the chamber, there was a stronger and clearer light. It was when they were in the middle of this huge and long apartment, that Achilles said to the soldier, in the sort of cautionary whisper which he appeared to have substituted in place of his natural voice since he had crossed the Bridge of Peril —

"Remain here till I return, and stir from this hall on no account."

"To hear is to obey," answered the Varangian, an expression of obedience, which, like many other phrases and fashions, the empire, which still affected the name of Roman, had borrowed from the barbarians of the East. Achilles Tatius then hastened up the steps which led to one of the side-doors of the hall, which being slightly pressed, its noiseless hinge gave way and admitted him.

Left alone to amuse himself as he best could, within the limits permitted to him, the Varangian visited in succession both ends of the hall, where the objects were more visible than elsewhere. The lower end had in its centre a small low-browed door of iron. Over it was displayed the Greek crucifix in bronze, and around and on every side, the representation of shackles, fetter bolts, and the like, were also executed in bronze, and disposed as appropriate ornaments over the entrance. The door of the dark archway was half open, and Hereward naturally looked in, the orders of his chief not prohibiting his satisfying his curiosity thus far. A dense red light, more like a distant spark than a lamp, affixed to the wall of what seemed a very narrow and winding stair, resembling in shape and size a draw-well, the verge of which opened on the threshold of the iron door, showed a descent which seemed to conduct to the infernal regions. The Varangian, however obtuse he might be considered by the quick-witted Greeks, had no difficulty in comprehending that a staircase having such a gloomy appearance, and the access to which was by a portal decorated in such a melancholy style of architecture, could only lead to the dungeons of the imperial palace, the size and complicated number of which were neither the least remarkable, nor the least awe-imposing portion of the sacred edifice. Listening profoundly, he even thought he caught such accents as befit those graves of living men, the faint echoing of groans and sighs, sounding as it were from the deep abyss beneath. But in this respect his fancy probably filled up the sketch which his conjectures bodied out.

"I have done nothing," he thought, "to merit being immured in one of these subterranean dens. Surely though my captain, Achilles Tatius, is, under favour, little better than an ass, he cannot be so false of word as to train me to prison under false pretexes? I trow he shall first see for the last time how the English axe plays, if such is to be the sport of the evening. But let us see the upper end of this enormous vault; it may bear a better omen."

Thus thinking, and not quite ruling the tramp of his armed footstep according to the ceremonies of the place, the large-limbed Saxon strode to the upper end of the black marble hall. The ornament of the portal here was a small altar, like those in the temples of the heathen deities, which projected above the centre of the arch. On this altar smoked incense of some sort, the fumes of which rose curling in a thin cloud to the roof, and thence extending through the hall, enveloped in its column of smoke a singular emblem, of which the Varangian could make nothing. It was the representation of two human arms and hands, seeming to issue from the wall, having the palms extended and open, as about to confer some boon on those who approached the altar. These arms were formed of bronze, and being placed farther back than the altar with its incense, were seen through the curling smoke by lamps so disposed as to illuminate the whole archway. "The meaning of this," thought the simple barbarian, "I should well know how to explain, were these fists clenched, and were the hall dedicated to the *pancratyon*, which we call boxing; but as even these helpless Greeks use not their hands without their fingers being closed, by St. George I can make out nothing of their meaning."

At this instant Achilles entered the black marble hall at the same door by which he had left it, and came up to his neophyte, as the Varangian might be termed.

"Come with me now, Hereward, for here approaches the thick of the onset. Now, display the utmost courage that thou canst summon up, for believe me thy credit and name also depend on it."

"Fear nothing for either," said Hereward, "if the heart or hand of one man can bear him through the adventure by the help of a toy like this."

"Keep thy voice low and submissive, I have told thee a score of times," said the leader, "and lower thine axe, which, as I bethink me, thou hadst better leave in the outer apartment."

"With your leave, noble captain," replied Hereward, "I am unwilling to lay aside my bread-winner. I am one of those awkward clowns who cannot behave seemly unless I have something to occupy my hands, and my faithful battle-axe comes most natural to me."

"Keep it then; but remember thou dash it not about according to thy custom, nor bellow, nor shout, nor cry as in a battle-field; think of the sacred character of the place, which exaggerates riot into blasphemy, and remember the persons whom thou mayst chance to see, an offence to some of whom, it may be, ranks in the same sense with blasphemy against Heaven itself."

This lecture carried the tutor and the pupil so far as to the side-door, and thence inducted them into a species of anteroom, from which Achilles led his Varangian forward, until a pair of folding-doors, opening into what proved to be a principal apartment of the palace, exhibited to the rough-hewn native of the north a sight equally new and surprising.

It was an apartment of the palace of the Blaquernal, dedicated to the special service of the beloved daughter of the Emperor Alexius, the Princess Anna Comnena, known to our times by her literary talents, which record the history of her father's reign. She was seated, the queen and sovereign of a literary circle,

such as an imperial Princess, porphyrogenita, or born in the sacred purple chamber itself, could assemble in those days, and a glance around will enable us to form an idea of her guests or companions.

The literary Princess herself had the bright eyes, straight features, and comely and pleasing manners, which all would have allowed to the Emperor's daughter, even if she could not have been, with severe truth, said to have possessed them. She was placed upon a small bench, or sofa, the fair sex here not being permitted to recline, as was the fashion of the Roman ladies. A table before her was loaded with books, plants, herbs, and drawings. She sat on a slight elevation, and those who enjoyed the intimacy of the Princess, or to whom she wished to speak in particular, were allowed, during such sublime colloquy, to rest their knees on the little dais, or elevated place where her chair found its station, in a posture half standing, half kneeling. Three other seats, of different heights, were placed on the dais, and under the same canopy of state which overshadowed that of the Princess Anna.

The first, which strictly resembled her own chair in size and convenience, was one designed for her husband, Nicephorus Briennius. He was said to entertain or affect the greatest respect for his wife's erudition, though the courtiers were of opinion he would have liked to absent himself from her evening parties more frequently than was particularly agreeable to the Princess Anna and her imperial parents. This was partly explained by the private tattle of the court, which averred, that the Princess Anna Comnena had been more beautiful when she was less learned; and that, though still a fine woman, she had somewhat lost the charms of her person as she became enriched in her mind.

To atone for the lowly fashion of the seat of Nicephorus Briennius, it was placed as near to his princess as it could possibly be edged by the ushers, so that she might not lose one look of her handsome spouse, nor he the least particle of wisdom which might drop from the lips of his erudite consort.

Two other seats of honour, or rather thrones — for they had footstools placed for the support of the feet, rests for the arms, and embroidered pillows for the comfort of the back, not to mention the glories of the outspreading canopy, were destined for the imperial couple, who frequently attended their daughter's studies, which she prosecuted in public in the way we have intimated. On such occasions, the Empress Irene enjoyed the triumph peculiar to the mother of an accomplished daughter, while Alexius, as it might happen, sometimes listened with complacency to the rehearsal of his own exploits in the inflated language of the Princess, and sometimes mildly nodded over her dialogues upon the mysteries of philosophy, with the Patriarch Zosimus, and other sages.

All these four distinguished seats for the persons of the Imperial family, were occupied at the moment which we have described, excepting that which ought to have been filled by Nicephorus Briennius, the husband of the fair Anna Comnena. To his negligence and absence was perhaps owing the angry spot on the brow of his fair bride. Beside her on the platform were two white-robed nymphs of her household; female slaves, in a word, who reposed themselves on their knees on cushions, when their assistance was not wanted as a species of living book-desks, to support and extend the parchment rolls, in which the Princess recorded her own wisdom, or from which she quoted that of others. One of these young maidens, called Astarte, was so distinguished as a calligrapher, or beautiful writer of various alphabets and languages, that she narrowly escaped being sent as a present to the Caliph, (who could neither read nor write,) at a time when it was necessary to bribe him into peace. Violante, usually called the Muse, the other attendant of the Princess, a mistress of the vocal and instrumental art of music, was actually sent in a compliment to soothe the temper of Robert Guiscard, the Archduke of Apulia, who being aged and stone-deaf, and the girl under ten years old at the time, returned the valued present to the imperial donor, and, with the selfishness which was one of that wily Norman's characteristics, desired to have some one sent him who could contribute to his pleasure, instead of a twangling squalling infant.

Beneath these elevated seats there sat, or reposed on the floor of the hall, such favourites as were admitted. The Patriarch Zosimus, and one or two old men, were permitted the use of certain lowly stools, which were the only seats prepared for the learned members of the Princess's evening parties, as they would have been called in our days. As for the younger magnates, the honour of being permitted to join the imperial conversation was expected to render them far superior to the paltry accommodation of a joint-stool. Five or six courtiers, of different dress and ages, might compose the party, who either stood, or relieved their posture by kneeling, along the verge of an adorned fountain, which shed a mist of such very small rain as to dispel almost insensibly, cooling the fragrant breeze which breathed from the flowers and shrubs, that were so disposed as to send a waste of sweets around. One goodly old man, named Michael Agelastes, big, burly, and dressed like an ancient Cynic philosopher, was distinguished by assuming, in a great measure, the ragged garb and mad bearing of that sect, and by his inflexible practice of the strictest ceremonies exigible by the Imperial family. He was known by an affectation of cynical principle and language, and of republican philosophy, strangely contradicted by his practical deference to the great. It was wonderful how long this man, now sixty years old and upwards, disdained to avail himself of the accustomed privilege of leaning, or supporting his limbs, and with what regularity he maintained either the standing posture or that of absolute kneeling; but the first was so much his usual attitude, that he acquired among his court friends the name of Elephas, or the Elephant, because the ancients had an idea that the half-reasoning animal, as it is called, has joints incapable of kneeling down.

"Yet I have seen them kneel when I was in the country of the Gymnosophists," said a person present on the evening of Hereward's introduction.

"To take up their master on their shoulders? so will ours," said the Patriarch Zosimus, with the slight sneer which was the nearest advance to a sarcasm that the etiquette of the Greek court permitted; for on all ordinary occasions, it would not have offended the Presence more surely, literally, to have drawn a poniard, than to exchange a repartee in the imperial circle. Even the sarcasm, such as it was, would have been thought censurable by that ceremonious court in any but the Patriarch, to whose high rank some license was allowed.

Just as he had thus far offended decorum, Achilles Tatius, and his soldier Hereward, entered the apartment. The former bore him with even more than his usual degree of courtliness, as if to set his own good-breeding off by a comparison with the inexpert bearing of his follower; while, nevertheless, he had a secret pride in exhibiting, as one under his own immediate and distinct command, a man whom he was accustomed to consider as one of the finest soldiers of the army of Alexius, whether appearance or reality were to be considered.

Some astonishment followed the abrupt entrance of the new comers. Achilles indeed glided into the presence with the easy and quiet extremity of respect which intimated his habitude in these regions. But Hereward started on his entrance, and perceiving himself in company of the court, hastily strove to remedy his disorder. His commander, throwing round a scarce visible shrug of apology, made then a confidential and monitory sign to Hereward to mind his conduct. What he meant was, that he should doff his helmet and fall prostrate on the ground. But the Anglo-Saxon, unaccustomed to interpret obscure inferences, naturally thought of his military duties, and advanced in front of the Emperor, as when he rendered his military homage. He made reverence with his knee, half touched his cap, and then recovering and shouldering his axe, stood in advance of the imperial chair, as if on duty as a sentinel.

A gentle smile of surprise went round the circle as they gazed on the manly appearance, and somewhat unceremonious but martial deportment of the northern soldier. The various spectators around consulted the Emperor's face, not knowing whether they were to take the intrusive manner of the Varangian's entrance as matter of ill-breeding, and manifest their horror, or whether they ought rather to consider the bearing of the life-guardsmen as indicating blunt and manly zeal, and therefore to be received with applause.

It was some little time ere the Emperor recovered himself sufficiently to strike a key-note, as was usual upon such occasions. Alexius Comnenus had been wrapt for a moment into some species of slumber, or at least absence of mind. Out of this he had been startled by the sudden appearance of the Varangian; for though he was accustomed to commit the outer guards of the palace to this trusty corps, yet the deformed blacks whom we have mentioned, and who sometimes rose to be ministers of state and commanders of armies, were, on all ordinary occasions, intrusted with the guard of the interior of the palace. Alexius, therefore, awakened from his slumber, and the military phrase of his daughter still ringing in his ears as she was reading a description of the great historical work, in which she had detailed the conflicts of his reign, felt somewhat unprepared for the entrance and military deportment of one of the Saxon guard, with whom he was accustomed to associate, in general, scenes of blows, danger, and death.

After a troubled glance around, his look rested on Achilles Tatius. "Why here," he said, "trusty Follower? why this soldier here at this time of night?" Here, of course, was the moment for modelling the visages *regis ad exemplum*; but, ere the Patriarch could frame his countenance into devout apprehension of danger, Achilles Tatius had spoken a word or two, which reminded Alexius' memory that the soldier had been brought there by his own special orders. "Oh, ay! true, good fellow," said he, smoothing his troubled brow; "we had forgot that passage among the cares of state." He then spoke to the Varangian with a countenance more

frank, and a heartier accent than he used to his courtiers; for, to a despotic monarch, a faithful life-guardsmen is a person of confidence, while an officer of high rank is always in some degree a subject of distrust. "Ha!" said he, "our worthy Anglo-Dane, how fares he?"— This unceremonious salutation surprised all but him to whom it was addressed. Hereward answered, accompanying his words with a military obeisance which partook of heartiness rather than reverence, with a loud unsubdued voice, which startled the presence still more that the language was Saxon, which these foreigners occasionally used, "*Waes hael Kaisar mirrig und machtiht!*"— that is, Be of good health, stout and mighty Emperor. The Emperor, with a smile of intelligence, to show he could speak to his guards in their own foreign language, replied, by the well-known counter-signal —"*Drink hael!*"

Immediately a page brought a silver goblet of wine. The Emperor put his lips to it, though he scarce tasted the liquor, then commanded it to be handed to Hereward, and bade the soldier drink. The Saxon did not wait till he was desired a second time, but took off the contents without hesitation. A gentle smile, decorous as the presence required, passed over the assembly, at a feat which, though by no means wonderful in a hyperborean, seemed prodigious in the estimation of the moderate Greeks. Alexius himself laughed more loudly than his courtiers thought might be becoming on their part, and mustering what few words of Varangian he possessed, which he eked out with Greek, demanded of his life-guardsmen —"Well, my bold Briton, or Edward, as men call thee, dost thou know the flavour of that wine?"

"Yes," answered the Varangian, without change of countenance, "I tasted it once before at Laodicea"—

Here his officer, Achilles Tatius, became sensible that his soldier approached delicate ground, and in vain endeavoured to gain his attention, in order that he might furtively convey to him a hint to be silent, or at least take heed what he said in such a presence. But the soldier, who, with proper military observance, continued to have his eye and attention fixed on the Emperor, as the prince whom he was bound to answer or to serve, saw none of the hints, which Achilles at length suffered to become so broad, that Zosimus and the Protospathaire exchanged expressive glances, as calling on each other to notice the by-play of the leader of the Varangians. In the meanwhile, the dialogue between the Emperor and his soldier continued:—"How," said Alexius, "did this draught relish compared with the former?"

"There is fairer company here, my liege, than that of the Arabian archers," answered Hereward, with a look and bow of instinctive good-breeding; "Nevertheless, there lacks the flavour which the heat of the sun, the dust of the combat, with the fatigue of wielding such a weapon as this" (advancing his axe) "for eight hours together, give to a cup of rare wine."

"Another deficiency there might be," said Agelastes the Elephant, "provided I am pardoned hinting at it," he added, with a look to the throne — "it might be the smaller size of the cup compared with that at Laodicea." "By Taranis, you say true," answered the life-guardsmen; "at Laodicea I used my helmet."

"Let us see the cups compared together, good friend," said Agelastes, continuing his raillery, "that we may be sure thou hast not swallowed the present goblet; for I thought, from the manner of the draught, there was a chance of its going down with its contents."

"There are some things which I do not easily swallow," answered the Varangian, in a calm and indifferent tone; "but they must come from a younger and more active man than you."

The company again smiled to each other, as if to hint that the philosopher, though also parcel wit by profession, had the worst of the encounter. The Emperor at the same time interfered —"Nor did I send for thee hither, good fellow, to be baited by idle taunts."

Here Agelastes shrunk back in the circle, as a hound that has been rebuked by the huntsman for babbling — and the Princess Anna Comnena, who had indicated by her fair features a certain degree of impatience, at length spoke —"Will it then please you, my imperial and much-beloved father, to inform those blessed with admission to the Muses' temple, for what it is that you have ordered this soldier to be this night admitted to a place so far above his rank in life? Permit me to say, we ought not to waste, in frivolous and silly jests, the time which is sacred to the welfare of the empire, as every moment of your leisure must be."

"Our daughter speaks wisely," said the Empress Irene, who, like most mothers who do not possess much talent themselves, and are not very capable of estimating it in others, was, nevertheless, a great admirer of her favourite daughter's accomplishments, and ready to draw them out on all occasions. "Permit me to remark, that in this divine and selected palace of the Muses, dedicated to the studies of our well-beloved and highly-gifted daughter, whose pen will preserve your reputation, our most imperial husband, till the desolation of the universe, and which enlivens and delights this society, the very flower of the wits of our sublime court; — permit me to say, that we have, merely by admitting a single life-guardsmen, given our conversation the character of that which distinguishes a barrack."

Now the Emperor Alexius Comnenus had the same feeling with many an honest man in ordinary life when his wife begins a long oration, especially as the Empress Irene did not always retain the observance consistent with his awful rule and right supremacy, although especially severe in exacting it from all others, in reference to her lord. Therefore, though, he had felt some pleasure in gaining a short release from the monotonous recitation of the Princess's history, he now saw the necessity of resuming it, or of listening to the matrimonial eloquence of the Empress. He sighed, therefore, as he said, "I crave your pardon, good our imperial spouse, and our daughter born in the purple chamber. I remember me, our most amiable and accomplished daughter, that last night you wished to know the particulars of the battle of Laodicea, with the heathenish Arabs, whom Heaven confound. And for certain considerations which moved ourselves to add other enquiries to our own recollection, Achilles Tatius, our most trusty Follower, was commissioned to introduce into this place one of those soldiers under his command, being such a one whose courage and presence of mind could best enable him to remark what passed around him on that remarkable and bloody day. And this I suppose to be the man brought to us for that purpose."

"If I am permitted to speak, and live," answered the Follower, "your Imperial Highness, with those divine Princesses, whose name is to us as those of blessed saints, have in your presence the flower of my Anglo-Danes, or whatsoever unbaptized name is given to my soldiers. He is, as I may say, a barbarian of barbarians; for, although in birth and breeding unfit to soil with his feet the carpet of this precinct of accomplishment and eloquence, he is so brave — so trusty — so devotedly attached — and so unhesitatingly zealous, that"—

"Enough, good Follower," said the Emperor; "let us only know that he is cool and observant, not confused and fluttered during close battle, as we have sometimes observed in you and other great commanders — and, to speak truth, have even felt in our imperial self on extraordinary occasions. Which difference in man's constitution is not owing to any inferiority of courage, but, in us, to a certain consciousness of the importance of our own safety to the welfare of the whole, and to a feeling of the number of duties which at once devolve on us. Speak then, and speak quickly, Tatius; for I discern that our dearest consort, and our thrice fortunate daughter born in the imperial chamber of purple, seem to wax somewhat impatient."

"Hereward," answered Tatius, "is as composed and observant in battle, as another in a festive dance. The dust of war is the breath of his nostrils; and he will prove his worth in combat against any four others, (Varangians excepted,) who shall term themselves your Imperial Highness's bravest servants."

"Follower," said the Emperor, with a displeased look and tone, "instead of instructing these poor, ignorant barbarians in the rules and civilization of our enlightened empire, you foster, by such boastful words, the idle pride and fury of their temper, which hurries them into brawls with the legions of other foreign countries, and even breeds quarrels among themselves."

"If my mouth may be opened in the way of most humble excuse," said the Follower, "I would presume to reply, that I but an hour hence talked with this poor ignorant Anglo-Dane, on the paternal care with which the Imperial Majesty of Greece regards the preservation of that concord which unites the followers of his standard, and how desirous he is to promote that harmony, more especially amongst the various nations who have the happiness to serve you, in spite of the bloodthirsty quarrels of the Franks, and other northern men, who are never free from civil broil. I think the poor youth's understanding can bear witness to this much in my behalf." He then looked towards Hereward, who gravely inclined his head in token of assent to what his captain said. His excuse thus ratified, Achilles proceeded in his apology more firmly. "What I have said even now was spoken without consideration; for, instead of pretending that this Hereward would face four of your Imperial Highness's servants, I ought to have said, that he was willing to defy six of your Imperial Majesty's most deadly *enemies*, and permit them to choose every circumstance of time, arms, and place of combat."

"That hath a better sound," said the Emperor; "and in truth, for the information of my dearest daughter, who piously has undertaken to record the things which I have been the blessed means of doing for the Empire, I earnestly wish that she should remember, that though the sword of Alexius hath not slept in its sheath, yet he hath never sought his own aggrandizement of fame at the price of bloodshed among his subjects."

"I trust," said Anna Comnena, "that in my humble sketch of the life of the princely sire from whom I derive my existence, I have not forgot to notice his love of peace, and care for the lives of his soldiery, and abhorrence of the bloody manners of the heretic Franks, as one of his most distinguishing characteristics."

Assuming then an attitude more commanding, as one who was about to claim the attention of the company, the Princess inclined her head gently around to the audience, and taking a roll of parchment from the fair amanuensis, which she had, in a most beautiful handwriting, engrossed to her mistress's dictation, Anna Comnena prepared to read its contents.

At this moment, the eyes of the Princess rested for an instant on the barbarian Hereward, to whom she deigned this greeting — "Valiant barbarian, of whom my fancy recalls some memory, as if in a dream, thou art now to hear a work, which, if the author be put into comparison with the subject, might be likened to a portrait of Alexander, in executing which, some inferior dauber has usurped the pencil of Apelles; but which essay, however it may appear unworthy of the subject in the eyes of many, must yet command some envy in those who candidly consider its contents, and the difficulty of portraying the great personage concerning whom it is written. Still, I pray thee, give thine attention to what I have now to read, since this account of the battle of Laodicea, the details thereof being principally derived from his Imperial Highness, my excellent father, from the altogether valiant Protospathaire, his invincible general, together with Achilles Tatius, the faithful Follower of our victorious Emperor, may nevertheless be in some circumstances inaccurate. For it is to be thought, that the high offices of those great commanders retained them at a distance from some particularly active parts of the fray, in order that they might have more cool and accurate opportunity to form a judgment upon the whole, and transmit their orders, without being disturbed by any thoughts of personal safety. Even so, brave barbarian, in the art of embroidery, (marvel not that we are a proficient in that mechanical process, since it is patronized by Minerva, whose studies we affect to follow,) we reserve to ourselves the superintendence of the entire web, and commit to our maidens and others the execution of particular parts. Thus, in the same manner, thou, valiant Varangian, being engaged in the very thickest of the affray before Laodicea, mayst point out to us, the unworthy historian of so renowned a war, those chances which befell where men fought hand to hand, and where the fate of war was decided by the edge of the sword. Therefore, dread not, thou bravest of the axe-men to whom we owe that victory, and so many others, to correct any mistake or misapprehension which we may have been led into concerning the details of that glorious event."

"Madam," said the Varangian, "I shall attend with diligence to what your Highness may be pleased to read to me; although, as to presuming to blame the history of a Princess born in the purple, far be such a presumption from me; still less would it become a barbaric Varangian to pass a judgment on the military conduct of the Emperor, by whom he is liberally paid, or of the commander, by whom he is well treated. Before an action, if our advice is required, it is ever faithfully tendered; but according to my rough wit, our censure after the field is fought would be more invidious than useful. Touching the Protospathaire, if it be the duty of a general to absent himself from close action, I can safely say, or swear, were it necessary, that the invincible commander was never seen by me within a javelin's cast of aught that looked like danger."

This speech, boldly and bluntly delivered, had a general effect on the company present. The Emperor himself, and Achilles Tatius, looked like men who had got off from a danger better than they expected. The Protospathaire laboured to conceal a movement of resentment. Agelastes whispered to the Patriarch, near whom he was placed, "The northern battle-axe lacks neither point nor edge."

"Hush!" said Zosimus, "let us hear how this is to end; the Princess is about to speak."

Chapter the Fourth.

*We heard the Tecbir, so these Arabs call
Their shout of onset, when with loud acclaim
They challenged Heaven, as if demanding conquest.
The battle join'd, and through the barb'rous herd,
Fight, fight! and Paradise was all their cry.*

THE SIEGE OF DAMASCUS.

The voice of the northern soldier, although modified by feelings of respect to the Emperor, and even attachment to his captain, had more of a tone of blunt sincerity, nevertheless, than was usually heard by the sacred echoes of the imperial palace; and though the Princess Anna Comnena began to think that she had invoked the opinion of a severe judge, she was sensible, at the same time, by the deference of his manner, that his respect was of a character more real, and his applause, should she gain it, would prove more truly flattering, than the gilded assent of the whole court of her father. She gazed with some surprise and attention on Hereward, already described as a very handsome young man, and felt the natural desire to please, which is easily created in the mind towards a fine person of the other sex. His attitude was easy and bold, but neither clownish nor uncourtly. His title of a barbarian, placed him at once free from the forms of civilized life, and the rules of artificial politeness. But his character for valour, and the noble self-confidence of his bearing, gave him a deeper interest than would have been acquired by a more studied and anxious address, or an excess of reverential awe.

In short, the Princess Anna Comnena, high in rank as she was, and born in the imperial purple, which she herself deemed the first of all attributes, felt herself, nevertheless, in preparing to resume the recitation of her history, more anxious to obtain the approbation of this rude soldier, than that of all the rest of the courteous audience. She knew them well, it is true, and felt nowise solicitous about the applause which the daughter of the Emperor was sure to receive with full hands from those of the Grecian court to whom she might choose to communicate the productions of her father's daughter. But she had now a judge of a new character, whose applause, if bestowed, must have something in it intrinsically real, since it could only be obtained by affecting his head or his heart.

It was perhaps under the influence of these feelings, that the Princess was somewhat longer than usual in finding out the passage in the roll of history at which she purposed to commence. It was also noticed, that she began her recitation with a diffidence and embarrassment surprising to the noble hearers, who had often seen her in full possession of her presence of mind before what they conceived a more distinguished, and even more critical audience.

Neither were the circumstances of the Varangian such as rendered the scene indifferent to him. Anna Comnena had indeed attained her fifth lustre, and that is a period after which Grecian beauty is understood to commence its decline. How long she had passed that critical period, was a secret to all but the trusted ward-women of the purple chamber. Enough, that it was affirmed by the popular tongue, and seemed to be attested by that bent towards philosophy and literature, which is not supposed to be congenial to beauty in its earlier buds, to amount to one or two years more. She might be seven-and-twenty.

Still Anna Comnena was, or had very lately been, a beauty of the very first rank, and must be supposed to have still retained charms to captivate a barbarian of the north; if, indeed, he himself was not careful to maintain an heedful recollection of the immeasurable distance between them. Indeed, even this recollection might hardly have saved Hereward from the charms of this enchantress, bold, free-born, and fearless as he was; for, during that time of strange revolutions, there were many instances of successful generals sharing the couch of imperial princesses, whom perhaps they had themselves rendered widows, in order to make way for their own pretensions. But, besides the influence of other recollections, which the reader may learn hereafter, Hereward, though flattered by the unusual degree of attention which the Princess bestowed upon him, saw in her only the daughter of his Emperor and adopted liege lord, and the wife of a noble prince, whom reason and duty alike forbade him to think of in any other light.

It was after one or two preliminary efforts that the Princess Anna began her reading, with an uncertain voice, which gained strength and fortitude as she proceeded with the following passage from a well-known part of her history of Alexius Comnenus, but which unfortunately has not been republished in the Byzantine historians. The narrative cannot, therefore, be otherwise than acceptable to the antiquarian reader; and the author hopes to receive the thanks of the learned world for the recovery of a curious fragment, which, without his exertions, must probably have passed to the gulf of total oblivion.

THE RETREAT OF LAODICEA.

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE GREEK OF THE PRINCESS COMNENA'S HISTORY OF HER FATHER.

"The sun had betaken himself to his bed in the ocean, ashamed, it would seem, to see the immortal army of our most sacred Emperor Alexius surrounded by those barbarous hordes of unbelieving barbarians, who, as described in our last chapter, had occupied the various passes both in front and rear of the Romans,* secured during the preceding night by the wily barbarians. Although, therefore, a triumphant course of advance had brought us to this point, it now became a serious and doubtful question whether our victorious eagles might be able to penetrate any farther into the country of the enemy, or even to retreat with safety into their own.

* More properly termed the Greeks; but we follow the phraseology of the fair authoress.]

"The extensive acquaintance of the Emperor with military affairs, in which he exceeds most living princes, had induced him, on the preceding evening, to ascertain, with marvellous exactitude and foresight, the precise position of the enemy. In this most necessary service he employed certain light-armed barbarians, whose habits and discipline had been originally derived from the wilds of Syria; and, if I am required to speak according to the dictation of Truth, seeing she ought always to sit upon the pen of a historian, I must needs say they were infidels like their enemies; faithfully attached, however, to the Roman service, and, as I believe, true slaves of the Emperor, to whom they communicated the information required by him respecting the position of his dreaded opponent Jezdegerd. These men did not bring in their information till long after the hour when the Emperor usually betook himself to rest.

"Notwithstanding this derangement of his most sacred time, our imperial father, who had postponed the ceremony of disrobing, so important were the necessities of the moment, continued, until deep in the night, to hold a council of his wisest chiefs, men whose depth of judgment might have saved a sinking world, and who now consulted what was to be done under the pressure of the circumstances in which they were now placed. And so great was the urgency, that all ordinary observances of the household were set aside, since I have heard from those who witnessed the fact, that the royal bed was displayed in the very room where the council assembled, and that the sacred lamp, called the Light of the Council, and which always burns when the Emperor presides in person over the deliberations of his servants, was for that night — a thing unknown in our annals — fed with unperfumed oil!"

The fair speaker here threw her fine form into an attitude which expressed holy horror, and the hearers intimated their sympathy in the exciting cause by corresponding signs of interest; as to which we need only say, that the sigh of Achilles Tatius was the most pathetic; while the groan of Agelastes the Elephant was deepest and most tremendously bestial in its sound. Hereward seemed little moved, except by a slight motion of surprise at the wonder expressed by the others. The Princess, having allowed due time for the sympathy of her hearers to exhibit itself, proceeded as follows:—

"In this melancholy situation, when even the best-established and most sacred rites of the imperial household gave way to the necessity of a hasty provision for the morrow, the opinions of the counsellors were different, according to their tempers and habits; a thing, by the way, which may be remarked as likely to happen among the best and wisest on such occasions of doubt and danger.

"I do not in this place put down the names and opinions of those whose counsels were proposed and rejected, herein paying respect to the secrecy and freedom of debate justly attached to the imperial cabinet. Enough it is to say, that some there were who advised a speedy attack upon the enemy, in the direction of our original advance. Others thought it was safer, and might be easier, to force our way to the rear, and retreat by the same course which had brought us hither; nor must it be concealed, that there were persons of unsuspected fidelity, who proposed a third course, safer indeed than the others, but totally alien to the mind of our most magnanimous father. They recommended that a confidential slave, in company with a minister of the interior of our imperial palace, should be sent to the tent of Jezdegerd, in order to ascertain upon what terms the barbarian would permit our triumphant father to retreat in safety at the head of his victorious army. On learning such opinion, our imperial father was heard to exclaim, 'Sancta Sophia!' being the nearest approach to an adjuration which he has been known to permit himself, and was apparently about to say something violent both concerning the dishonour of the advice, and the cowardice of those by whom, it was preferred, when, recollecting the mutability of human things, and the misfortune of several of his Majesty's gracious predecessors, some of whom had been compelled to surrender their sacred persons to the infidels in the same region, his Imperial Majesty repressed his generous feelings, and only suffered his army counsellors to understand his sentiments by a speech, in which he declared so desperate and so dishonourable a course would be the last which he would adopt, even in the last extremity of danger. Thus did the judgment of this mighty Prince at once reject counsel that seemed shameful to his arms, and thereby encourage the zeal of his troops, while privately he kept this postern in reserve, which in utmost need might serve for a safe, though not altogether, in less urgent circumstances, an honourable retreat.

"When the discussion had reached this melancholy crisis, the renowned Achilles Tatius arrived with the hopeful intelligence, that he himself and some soldiers of his corps had discovered an opening on the left flank of our present encampment, by which, making indeed a considerable circuit, but reaching, if we marched with vigour, the town of Laodicea, we might, by falling back on our resources, be in some measure in surety from the enemy.

"So soon as this ray of hope darted on the troubled mind of our gracious father, he proceeded to make such arrangements as might secure the full benefit of the advantage. His Imperial Highness would not permit the brave Varangians, whose battle-axes he accounted the flower of his imperial army, to take the advanced posts of assailants on the present occasion. He repressed the love of battle by which these generous foreigners have been at all times distinguished, and directed that the Syrian forces in the army, who have been before mentioned, should be assembled with as little noise as possible in the vicinity of the deserted pass, with instructions to occupy it. The good genius of the empire suggested that, as their speech, arms, and appearance, resembled those of the enemy, they might be permitted unopposed to take post in the defile with their light-armed forces, and thus secure it for the passage of the rest of the army, of which he proposed that the Varangians, as immediately attached to his own sacred person, should form the vanguard. The well-known battalions, termed the Immortals, came next, comprising the gross of the army, and forming the centre and rear. Achilles Tatius, the faithful Follower of his Royal Master, although mortified that he was not permitted to assume the charge of the rear, which he had proposed for himself and his valiant troops, as the post of danger at the time, cheerfully acquiesced, nevertheless, in the arrangement proposed by the Emperor, as most fit to effect the imperial safety, and that of the army.

"The imperial orders, as they were sent instantly abroad, were in like manner executed with the readiest punctuality, the rather that they indicated a course of safety which had been almost despaired of even by the oldest soldiers. During the dead period of time, when, as the divine Homer tells us, gods and men are alike asleep, it was found that the vigilance and prudence of a single individual had provided safety for the whole Roman army. The pinnacles of the mountain passes were scarcely touched by the earliest beams of the dawn, when these beams were also reflected from the steel caps and spears of the Syrians, under the command of a captain named Monastras, who, with his tribe, had attached himself to the empire. The Emperor, at the head of his faithful Varangians, defiled through the passes in order to gain that degree of advance on the road to the city of Laodicea which was desired, so as to avoid coming into collision with the barbarians.

"It was a goodly sight to see the dark mass of northern warriors, who now led the van of the army, moving slowly and steadily through the defiles of the mountains, around the insulated rocks and precipices, and surmounting the gentler acclivities, like the course of a strong and mighty river; while the loose bands of archers and javelin-men, armed after the Eastern manner, were dispersed on the steep sides of the defiles, and might be compared to light foam upon the edge of the torrent. In the midst of the squadrons of the life-guard might be seen the proud war-horse of his Imperial Majesty, which pawed the earth indignantly, as if impatient at the delay which separated, him from his august burden. The Emperor Alexius himself travelled in a litter, borne by eight strong African slaves, that he might rise perfectly refreshed if the army should be overtaken by the enemy. The valiant Achilles Tatius rode near the couch of his master, that none of those luminous ideas, by which our august sire so often decided the fate of battle, might be lost for want of instant communication to those whose duty it was to execute them. I may also say, that there were close to the litter of the Emperor, three or four carriages of the same kind; one prepared for the Moon, as she may be termed, of the universe, the gracious Empress Irene. Among the others which might be mentioned, was that which contained the authoress of this history, unworthy as she may be of distinction, save as the daughter of the eminent and sacred persons whom the narration chiefly concerns. In this manner the imperial army pressed on through the dangerous defiles, where their march was exposed to insults from the barbarians. They were happily cleared without any opposition. When we came to the descent of the pass which looks down on the city of Laodicea, the sagacity of the Emperor commanded the van — which, though the soldiers composing the same were heavily armed, had hitherto marched extremely fast — to halt, as well that they themselves might take some repose and

refreshment, as to give the rearward forces time to come up, and close various gaps which the rapid movement of those in front had occasioned in, the line of march.

"The place chosen for this purpose was eminently beautiful, from the small and comparatively insignificant ridge of hills which melt irregularly down into the plains stretching between the pass which we occupied and Laodicea. The town was about one hundred stadia distant, and some of our more sanguine warriors pretended that they could already discern its towers and pinnacles, glittering in the early beams of the sun, which had not as yet risen high into the horizon. A mountain torrent, which found its source at the foot of a huge rock, that yawned to give it birth, as if struck by the rod of the prophet Moses, poured its liquid treasure down to the more level country, nourishing herbage and even large trees, in its descent, until, at the distance of some four or five miles, the stream, at least in dry seasons, was lost amid heaps of sand and stones, which in the rainy season marked the strength and fury of its current.

"It was pleasant to see the attention of the Emperor to the comforts of the companions and guardians of his march. The trumpets from time to time gave license to various parties of the Varangians to lay down their arms, to eat the food which was distributed to them, and quench their thirst at the pure stream, which poured its bounties down the hill, or they might be seen to extend their bulky forms upon the turf around them. The Emperor, his most serene spouse, and the princesses and ladies, were also served with breakfast, at the fountain formed by the small brook in its very birth, and which the reverent feelings of the soldiers had left unpolluted by vulgar touch, for the use of that family, emphatically said to be born in the purple. Our beloved husband was also present on this occasion, and was among the first to detect one of the disasters of the day. For, although all the rest of the repast had been, by the dexterity of the officers of the imperial mouth, so arranged, even on so awful an occasion, as to exhibit little difference from the ordinary provisions of the household, yet, when his Imperial Highness called for wine, behold, not only was the sacred liquor, dedicated to his own peculiar imperial use, wholly exhausted or left behind, but, to use the language of Horace, not the vilest Sabine vintage could be procured; so that his Imperial Highness was glad to accept the offer of a rude Varangian, who proffered his modicum of decocted barley, which these barbarians prefer to the juice of the grape. The Emperor, nevertheless, accepted of this coarse tribute."

"Insert," said the Emperor, who had been hitherto either plunged in deep contemplation or in an incipient slumber, "insert, I say, these very words: 'And with the heat of the morning, and anxiety of so rapid a march, with a numerous enemy in his rear, the Emperor was so thirsty, as never in his life to think beverage more delicious.'"

In obedience to her imperial father's orders, the Princess resigned the manuscript to the beautiful slave by whom it was written, repeating to the fair scribe the commanded addition, requiring her to note it, as made by the express sacred command of the Emperor, and then proceeded thus:—"More had I said here respecting the favourite liquor of your Imperial Highnesses faithful Varangians; but your Highness having once graced it with a word of commendation, this *ail*, as they call it, doubtless because removing all disorders, which they term 'ailments,' becomes a theme too lofty for the discussion of any inferior person. Suffice it to say, that thus were we all pleasantly engaged, the ladies and slaves trying to find some amusement for the imperial ears; the soldiers, in a long line down the ravine, seen in different postures, some straggling to the watercourse, some keeping guard over the arms of their comrades, in which duty they relieved each other, while body after body of the remaining troops, under command of the Protospathaire, and particularly those called Immortals,* joined the main army as they came up. Those soldiers who were already exhausted, were allowed to take a short repose, after which they were sent forward, with directions to advance steadily on the road to Laodicea; while their leader was instructed, so soon as he should open a free communication with that city, to send thither a command for reinforcements and refreshments, not forgetting fitting provision of the sacred wine for the imperial mouth. Accordingly, the Roman bands of Immortals and others had resumed their march, and held some way on their journey, it being the imperial pleasure that the Varangians, lately the vanguard, should now form the rear of the whole army, so as to bring off in safety the Syrian light troops, by whom the hilly pass was still occupied, when we heard upon the other side of this defile, which he had traversed with so much safety, the awful sound of the *Lelies*, as the Arabs name their shout of onset, though in what language it is expressed, it would be hard to say. Perchance some in this audience may enlighten my ignorance."

* The [Greek: Athanatoi], or Immortals, of the army of Constantinople, were a select body, so named, in imitation of the ancient Persians. They were first embodied, according to Ducange, by Michael Ducas]

"May I speak and live," said the Acoulouthos Achilles, proud of his literary knowledge, "the words are, *Alla illa alla, Mohamed resoul alla*.* These, or something like them, contain the Arabs' profession of faith, which they always call out when they join battle; I have heard them many times."

* i. e. "God is god — Mahomet is the prophet of God."]

"And so have I," said the Emperor; "and as thou didst, I warrant me, I have sometimes wished myself anywhere else than within hearing."

All the circle were alive to hear the answer of Achilles Tatius. He was too good a courtier, however, to make any imprudent reply. "It was my duty," he replied, "to desire to be as near your Imperial Highness as your faithful Follower ought, wherever you might wish yourself for the time."

Agelastes and Zosimus exchanged looks, and the Princess Anna Comnena proceeded in her recitation.

"The cause of these ominous sounds, which came in wild confusion up the rocky pass, was soon explained to us by a dozen cavaliers, to whom the task of bringing intelligence had been assigned.

"These informed us, that the barbarians, whose host had been dispersed around the position in which they had encamped the preceding day, had not been enabled to get their forces together until our light troops were evacuating the post they had occupied for securing the retreat of our army. They were then drawing off from the tops of the hills into the pass itself, when, in despite of the rocky ground, they were charged furiously by Jezdegerd, at the head of a large body of his followers, which, after repeated exertions, he had at length brought to operate on the rear of the Syrians. Notwithstanding that the pass was unfavourable for cavalry, the personal exertions of the infidel chief made his followers advance with a degree of resolution unknown to the Syrians of the Roman army, who, finding themselves at a distance from their companions, formed the injurious idea that they were left thereto be sacrificed, and thought of flight in various directions, rather than of a combined and resolute resistance. The state of affairs, therefore, at the further end of the pass, was less favourable than we could wish, and those whose curiosity desired to see something which might be termed the rout of the rear of an army, beheld the Syrians pursued from the hill tops, overwhelmed, and individually cut down and made prisoners by the bands of caitiff Mussulmans.

"His Imperial Highness looked upon the scene of battle for a few minutes, and, much commoved at what he saw, was somewhat hasty in his directions to the Varangians to resume their arms, and precipitate their march towards Laodicea; whereupon one of those northern soldiers said boldly, though in opposition to the imperial command, 'If we attempt to go hastily down this hill, our rear-guard will be confused, not only by our own hurry, but by these runaway scoundrels of Syrians, who in their headlong flight will not fail to mix themselves among our ranks. Let two hundred Varangians, who will live and die for the honour of England, abide in the very throat of this pass with me, while the rest escort the Emperor to this Laodicea, or whatever it is called. We may perish in our defence, but we shall die in our duty; and I have little doubt but we shall furnish such a meal as will stay the stomach of these yelping hounds from seeking any farther banquet this day.'

"My imperial father at once discovered the importance of this advice, though it made him wellnigh weep to see with what unshrinking fidelity these poor barbarians pressed to fill up the number of those who were to undertake this desperate duty — with what kindness they took leave of their comrades, and with what jovial shouts they followed their sovereign with their eyes as he proceeded on his march down the hill, leaving them behind to resist and perish. The Imperial eyes were filled with tears; and I am not ashamed to confess, that amid the terror of the moment, the Empress, and I myself, forgot our rank in paying a similar tribute to these bold and self-devoted men.

"We left their leader carefully arraying his handful of comrades in defence of the pass, where the middle path was occupied by their centre, while their wings on either side were so disposed as to act upon the flanks of the enemy, should he rashly press upon such as appeared opposed to him in the road. We had not proceeded half way towards the plain, when a dreadful shout arose, in which the yells of the Arabs were mingled with the deep and more regular shouts which these strangers usually repeat thrice, as well when bidding hail to their commanders and princes, as when in the act of engaging in battle. Many a look was turned back by their comrades, and many a form was seen in the ranks which might have claimed the chisel of a sculptor, while the soldier hesitated whether to follow

the line of his duty, which called him to march forward with his Emperor, or the impulse of courage, which prompted him to rush back to join his companions. Discipline, however, prevailed, and the main body marched on.

"An hour had elapsed, during which we heard, from time to time, the noise of battle, when a mounted Varangian presented himself at the side of the Emperor's litter. The horse was covered with foam, and had obviously, from his trappings, the fineness of his limbs, and the smallness of his joints, been the charger of some chief of the desert, which had fallen by the chance of battle into the possession of the northern warrior. The broad axe which the Varangian bore was also stained with blood, and the paleness of death itself was upon his countenance. These marks of recent battle were held sufficient to excuse the irregularity of his salutation, while he exclaimed — 'Noble Prince, the Arabs are defeated, and you may pursue your march at more leisure.'

"Where is Jezdegerd?" said the Emperor, who had many reasons for dreading this celebrated chief.

"Jezdegerd," continued the Varangian, 'is where brave men are who fall in their duty.'

"And that is"— said the Emperor, impatient to know distinctly the fate of so formidable an adversary —

"Where I am now going," answered the faithful soldier, who dropped from his horse as he spoke, and expired at the feet of the litter-bearers. The Emperor called to his attendants to see that the body of this faithful retainer, to whom he destined an honourable sepulchre, was not left to the jackal or vulture; and some of his brethren, the Anglo-Saxons, among whom he was a man of no mean repute, raised the body on their shoulders, and resumed their march with this additional encumbrance, prepared to fight for their precious burden, like the valiant Menelaus for the body of Patroclus."

The Princess Anna Comnena here naturally paused; for, having attained what she probably considered as the rounding of a period, she was willing to gather an idea of the feelings of her audience. Indeed, but that she had been intent upon her own manuscript, the emotions of the foreign soldier must have more early attracted her attention. In the beginning of her recitation, he had retained the same attitude which he had at first assumed, stiff and rigid as a sentinel upon duty, and apparently remembering nothing save that he was performing that duty in presence of the imperial court. As the narrative advanced, however, he appeared to take more interest in what was read. The anxious fears expressed by the various leaders in the midnight council, he listened to with a smile of suppressed contempt, and he almost laughed at the praises bestowed upon the leader of his own corps, Achilles Tatius. Nor did, even the name of the Emperor, though listened to respectfully, gain that applause for which his daughter fought so hard, and used so much exaggeration.

Hitherto the Varangian's countenance indicated very slightly any internal emotions; but they appeared to take a deeper hold on his mind as she came to the description of the halt after the main army had cleared the pass; the unexpected advance of the Arabs; the retreat of the column which escorted the Emperor; and the account of the distant engagement. He lost, on hearing the narration of these events, the rigid and constrained look of a soldier, who listened to the history of his Emperor with the same feelings with which he would have mounted guard at his palace. His colour began to come and go; his eyes to fill and to sparkle; his limbs to become more agitated than their owner seemed to assent to; and his whole appearance was changed into that of a listener, highly interested by the recitation which he hears, and insensible, or forgetful, of whatever else is passing before him, as well as of the quality of those who are present.

As the historian proceeded, Hereward became less able to conceal his agitation; and at the moment the Princess looked round, his feelings became so acute, that, forgetting where he was, he dropped his ponderous axe upon the floor, and, clasping his hands together, exclaimed — "My unfortunate brother!"

All were startled by the clang of the falling weapon, and several persons at once attempted to interfere, as called upon to explain a circumstance so unusual. Achilles Tatius made some small progress in a speech designed to apologize for the rough mode of venting his sorrows to which Hereward had given way, by assuring the eminent persons present, that the poor uncultivated barbarian was actually younger brother to him who had commanded and fallen at the memorable defile. The Princess said nothing, but was evidently struck, and affected, and not ill-pleased, perhaps, at having given rise to feelings of interest so flattering to her as an authoress. The others, each in their character, uttered incoherent words of what was meant to be consolation; for distress which flows from a natural cause, generally attracts sympathy even from the most artificial characters. The voice of Alexius silenced all these imperfect speakers: "Hah, my brave soldier, Edward!" said the Emperor, "I must have been blind that I did not sooner recognise thee, as I think there is a memorandum entered, respecting five hundred pieces of gold due from us to Edward the Varangian; we have it in our secret scroll of such liberalities for which we stand indebted to our servitors, nor shall the payment be longer deferred." "Not to me, if it may please you, my liege," said the Anglo-Dane, hastily composing his countenance into its rough gravity of lineament, "lest it should be to one who can claim no interest in your imperial munificence. My name is Hereward; that of Edward is borne by three of my companions, all of them as likely as I to have deserved your Highness's reward for the faithful performance of their duty."

Many a sign was made by Tatius in order to guard his soldier against the folly of declining the liberality of the Emperor. Agelastes spoke more plainly: "Young man," he said, "rejoice in an honour so unexpected, and answer henceforth to no other name save that of Edward, by which it hath pleased the light of the world, as it poured a ray upon thee, to distinguish thee from other barbarians. What is to thee the font-stone, or the priest officiating thereat, shouldst thou have derived from either any epithet different from that by which it hath now pleased the Emperor to distinguish thee from the common mass of humanity, and by which proud distinction thou hast now a right to be known ever afterwards?"

"Hereward was the name of my father," said the soldier, who had now altogether recovered his composure. "I cannot abandon it while I honour his memory in death. Edward is the title of my comrade — I must not run the risk of usurping his interest."

"Peace all!" interrupted the Emperor. "If we have made a mistake, we are rich enough to right it; nor shall Hereward be the poorer, if an Edward shall be found to merit this gratuity."

"Your Highness may trust that to your affectionate consort," answered the Empress Irene.

"His most sacred Highness," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "is so avariciously desirous to do whatever is good and gracious, that he leaves no room even for his nearest connexions to display generosity or munificence. Nevertheless, I, in my degree, will testify my gratitude to this brave man; for where his exploits are mentioned in this history, I will cause to be recorded — 'This feat was done by Hereward the Anglo-Dane, whom it hath pleased his Imperial Majesty to call Edward.' Keep this, good youth," she continued, bestowing at the same time a ring of price, "in token that we will not forget our engagement."

Hereward accepted the token with a profound obeisance, and a discomposure which his station rendered not unbecoming. It was obvious to most persons present, that the gratitude of the beautiful Princess was expressed in a manner more acceptable to the youthful life-guardsmen, than that of Alexius Comnenus. He took the ring with great demonstration of thankfulness:—"Precious relic!" he said, as he saluted this pledge of esteem by pressing it to his lips; "we may not remain long together, but be assured," bending reverently to the Princess, "that death alone shall part us."

"Proceed, our princely daughter," said the Empress Irene; "you have done enough to show that valour is precious to her who can confer fame, whether it be found in a Roman or a barbarian."

The Princess resumed her narrative with some slight appearance of embarrassment.

"Our movement upon Laodicea was now resumed, and continued with good hopes on the part of those engaged in the march. Yet instinctively we could not help casting our eyes to the rear, which had been so long the direction in which we feared attack. At length, to our surprise, a thick cloud of dust was visible on the descent of the hill, half way betwixt us and the place at which we had halted. Some of the troops who composed our retreating body, particularly those in the rear, began to exclaim 'The Arabs! the Arabs!' and their march assumed a more precipitate character when they believed themselves pursued by the enemy. But the Varangian guards affirmed with one voice, that the dust was raised by the remains of their own comrades, who, left in the defence of the pass, had marched off after having so valiantly maintained the station intrusted to them. They fortified their opinion by professional remarks that the cloud of dust was more concentrated than if raised by the Arab horse, and they even pretended to assert, from their knowledge of such cases, that the number of their comrades had been much diminished in the action. Some Syrian horsemen, despatched to reconnoitre the approaching body, brought intelligence corresponding with the opinion of the Varangians in every particular. The portion of the body-guard had beaten back the Arabs, and their gallant leader had slain their chief Jezdegerd, in which service he was mortally wounded, as this history hath already mentioned. The survivors of the detachment, diminished by one half, were now on their march to join the Emperor, as fast as the encumbrance of bearing their wounded to a place of safety would permit.

"The Emperor Alexius, with one of those brilliant and benevolent ideas which mark his paternal character towards his soldiers, ordered all the litters, even that for his own most sacred use, to be instantly sent back to relieve the bold Varangians of the task of bearing the wounded. The shouts of the Varangians' gratitude may be more easily conceived than described, when they beheld the Emperor himself descend from his litter, like an ordinary cavalier, and assume his war-horse, at the same time that the most sacred Empress, as well as the authoress of this history, with other princesses born in the purple, mounted upon mules in order to proceed upon the march, while their litters were unhesitatingly assigned for the accommodation of the wounded men. This was indeed a mark, as well of military sagacity as of humanity; for the relief afforded to the bearers of the wounded, enabled the survivors of those who had defended the defile at the fountain, to join us sooner than would otherwise have been possible.

"It was an awful thing to see those men who had left us in the full splendour which military equipment gives to youth and strength, again appearing in diminished numbers — their armour shattered — their shields full of arrows — their offensive weapons marked with blood, and they themselves exhibiting all the signs of desperate and recent battle. Nor was it less interesting to remark the meeting of the soldiers who had been engaged, with the comrades whom they had rejoined. The Emperor, at the suggestion of the trusty Acoulouthos, permitted them a few moments to leave their ranks, and learn from each other the fate of the battle.

"As the two bands mingled, it seemed a meeting where grief and joy had a contest together. The most rugged of these barbarians — and I who saw it can bear witness to the fact — as he welcomed with a grasp of his strong hand some comrade whom he had given up for lost, had his large blue eyes filled with tears at hearing of the loss of some one whom he had hoped might have survived. Other veterans reviewed the standards which had been in the conflict, satisfied themselves that they had all been brought back in honour and safety, and counted the fresh arrow-shots with which they had been pierced, in addition to similar marks of former battles. All were loud in the praises of the brave young leader they had lost, nor were the acclamations less general in laud of him who had succeeded to the command, who brought up the party of his deceased brother — and whom," said the Princess, in a few words which seemed apparently interpolated for the occasion, "I now assure of the high honour and estimation in which he is held by the author of this history — that is, I would say, by every member of the imperial family — for his gallant services in such an important crisis."

Having hurried over her tribute to her friend the Varangian, in which emotions mingled that are not willingly expressed before so many hearers, Anna Comnena proceeded with composure in the part of her history which was less personal.

"We had not much time to make more observations on what passed among those brave soldiers; for a few minutes having been allowed to their feelings, the trumpet sounded the advance towards Laodicea, and we soon beheld the town, now about four miles from us, in fields which were chiefly covered with trees. Apparently the garrison had already some notice of our approach, for carts and wains were seen advancing from the gates with refreshments, which the heat of the day, the length of the march, and columns of dust, as well as the want of water, had rendered of the last necessity to us. The soldiers joyfully mended their pace in order to meet the sooner with the supplies of which they stood so much in need. But as the cup doth not carry in all cases the liquid treasure to the lips for which it was intended, however much it may be longed for, what was our mortification to behold a cloud of Arabs issue at full gallop from the wooded plain betwixt the Roman army and the city, and throw themselves upon the waggons, slaying the drivers, and making havoc and spoil of the contents! This, we afterwards learned, was a body of the enemy, headed by Varanes, equal in military fame, among those infidels, to Jezdegerd, his slain brother. When this chieftain saw that it was probable that the Varangians would succeed in their desperate defence of the pass, he put himself at the head of a large body of the cavalry; and as these infidels are mounted on horses unmatched either in speed or wind, performed a long circuit, traversed the stony ridge of hills at a more northerly defile, and placed himself in ambuscade in the wooded plain I have mentioned, with the hope of making an unexpected assault upon the Emperor and his army, at the very time when they might be supposed to reckon upon an undisputed retreat. This surprise would certainly have taken place, and it is not easy to say what might have been the consequence, had not the unexpected appearance of the train of waggons awakened the unbridled rapacity of the Arabs, in spite of their commander's prudence, and attempts to restrain them. In this manner the proposed ambuscade was discovered.

"But Varanes, willing still to gain some advantage from the rapidity of his movements, assembled as many of his horsemen as could be collected from the spoil, and pushed forward towards the Romans, who had stopped short on their march at so unlooked for an apparition. There was an uncertainty and wavering in our first ranks which made their hesitation known even to so poor a judge of military demeanour as myself. On the contrary, the Varangians joined in a unanimous cry of 'Bills'* (that is, in their language, battle-axes,) 'to the front!' and the Emperor's most gracious will acceding to their valorous desire, they pressed forward from the rear to the head of the column. I can hardly say how this manoeuvre was executed, but it was doubtless by the wise directions of my most serene father, distinguished for his presence of mind upon such difficult occasions. It was, no doubt, much facilitated by the good will of the troops themselves; the Roman bands, called the Immortals, showing, as it seemed to me, no less desire to fall into the rear, than did the Varangians to occupy the places which the Immortals left vacant in front. The manoeuvre was so happily executed, that before Varanes and his Arabs had arrived at the van of our troops, they found it occupied by the inflexible guard of northern soldiers. I might have seen with my own eyes, and called upon them as sure evidences of that which chanced upon the occasion. But, to confess the truth, my eyes were little used to look upon such sights; for of Varanes's charge I only beheld, as it were, a thick cloud of dust rapidly driven forward, through which were seen the glittering points of lances, and the waving plumes of turban'd cavaliers imperfectly visible. The *tecbir* was so loudly uttered, that I was scarcely aware that kettle-drums and brazen cymbals were sounding in concert with it. But this wild and outrageous storm was met as effectually as if encountered by a rock.

* Villehardouin says, "Les Anglois et Danois mult bien rombattoient avec leurs *haches*."

"The Varangians, unshaken by the furious charge of the Arabs, received horse and rider with a shower of blows from their massive battle-axes, which the bravest of the enemy could not face, nor the strongest endure. The guards strengthened their ranks also, by the hindmost pressing so close upon those that went before, after the manner of the ancient Macedonians, that the fine-limbed, though slight steeds of those Idumeans could not make the least inroad upon the northern phalanx. The bravest men, the most gallant horses, fell in the first rank. The weighty, though short, horse javelins, flung from the rear ranks of the brave Varangians, with good aim and sturdy arm, completed the confusion of the assailants, who turned their back in affright, and fled from the field in total confusion.

"The enemy thus repulsed, we proceeded on our march, and only halted when we recovered our half-plundered waggons. Here, also, some invidious remarks were made by certain officers of the interior of the household, who had been on duty over the stores, and having fled from their posts on the assault of the infidels, had only returned upon their being repulsed. These men, quick in malice, though slow in perilous service, reported that, on this occasion, the Varangians so far forgot their duty as to consume a part of the sacred wine reserved for the imperial lips alone. It would be criminal to deny that this was a great and culpable oversight; nevertheless, our imperial hero passed it over as a pardonable offence; remarking, in a jesting manner, that since he had drunk the *ail*, as they termed it, of his trusty guard, the Varangians had acquired a right to quench the thirst, and to relieve the fatigue, which they had undergone that day in his defence, though they used for these purposes the sacred contents of the imperial cellar.

"In the meantime, the cavalry of the army were despatched in pursuit of the fugitive Arabs; and having succeeded in driving them behind the chain of hills which had so recently divided them from the Romans, the imperial arms might justly be considered as having obtained a complete and glorious victory.

"We are now to mention the rejoicings of the citizens of Laodicea, who, having witnessed from their ramparts, with alternate fear and hope, the fluctuations of the battle, now descended to congratulate the imperial conqueror."

Here the fair narrator was interrupted. The principal entrance of the apartment flew open, noiselessly indeed, but with both folding leaves at once, not as if to accommodate the entrance of an ordinary courtier, studying to create as little disturbance as possible, but as if there was entering a person, who ranked so high as to make it indifferent how much attention was drawn to his motions. It could only be one born in the purple, or nearly allied to it, to whom such freedom was lawful; and most of the guests, knowing who were likely to appear in that Temple of the Muses, anticipated, from the degree of bustle, the arrival of Nicephorus Briennius, the son-in-law of Alexius Comnenus, the husband to the fair historian, and in the rank of Caesar, which, however, did not at that period imply, as in early ages, the dignity of second person in the empire. The policy of Alexius had interposed more than one person of condition between the Caesar and his original rights and rank, which had once been second to those only of the Emperor himself.

Chapter the Fifth.

*The storm increases — 'tis no sunny shower,
Foster'd in the moist breast of March or April,
Or such as parched Summer cools his lip with:
Heaven's windows are flung wide; the inmost deeps
Call in hoarse greeting one upon another;
On comes the flood in all its foaming horrors,
And where's the dike shall stop it!*

THE DELUGE, A POEM.

The distinguished individual who entered was a noble Grecian, of stately presence, whose habit was adorned with every mark of dignity, saving those which Alexius had declared sacred to the Emperor's own person and that of the Sebastocrator, whom he had established as next in rank to the head of the empire. Nicephorus Briennius, who was in the bloom of youth, retained all the marks of that manly beauty which had made the match acceptable to Anna Comnena; while political considerations, and the desire of attaching a powerful house as friendly adherents of the throne, recommended the union to the Emperor.

We have already hinted that the royal bride had, though in no great degree, the very doubtful advantage of years. Of her literary talents we have seen tokens. Yet it was not believed by those who best knew, that, with the aid of those claims to respect, Anna Comnena was successful in possessing the unlimited attachment of her handsome husband. To treat her with apparent neglect, her connexion with the crown rendered impossible; while, on the other hand, the power of Nicephorus's family was too great to permit his being dictated to even by the Emperor himself. He was possessed of talents, as it was believed, calculated both for war and peace. His advice was, therefore, listened to, and his assistance required, so that he claimed complete liberty with respect to his own time, which he sometimes used with less regular attendance upon the Temple of the Muses, than the goddess of the place thought herself entitled to, or than the Empress Irene was disposed to exact on the part of her daughter. The good-humoured Alexius observed a sort of neutrality in this matter, and kept it as much as possible from becoming visible to the public, conscious that it required the whole united strength of his family to maintain his place in so agitated an empire.

He pressed his son-inlaw's hand, as Nicephorus, passing his father-inlaw's seat, bent his knee in token of homage. The constrained manner of the Empress indicated a more cold reception of her son-inlaw, while the fair muse herself scarcely deigned to signify her attention to his arrival, when her handsome mate assumed the vacant seat by her side, which we have already made mention of.

There was an awkward pause, during which the imperial son-inlaw, coldly received when he expected to be welcomed, attempted to enter into some light conversation with the fair slave Astarte, who knelt behind her mistress. This was interrupted by the Princess commanding her attendant to enclose the manuscript within its appropriate casket, and convey it with her own hands to the cabinet of Apollo, the usual scene of the Princess's studies, as the Temple of the Muses was that commonly dedicated to her recitations.

The Emperor himself was the first to break an unpleasant silence. "Fair son-inlaw," he said, "though it now wears something late in the night, you will do yourself wrong if you permit our Anna to send away that volume, with which this company have been so delectably entertained that they may well say, that the desert hath produced roses, and the barren rocks have poured forth milk and honey, so agreeable is the narrative of a toilsome and dangerous campaign, in the language of our daughter."

"The Caesar," said the Empress, "seems to have little taste for such dainties as this family can produce. He hath of late repeatedly absented himself from this Temple of the Muses, and found doubtless more agreeable conversation and amusement elsewhere."

"I trust, madam," said Nicephorus, "that my taste may vindicate me from the charge implied. But it is natural that our sacred father should be most delighted with the milk and honey which is produced for his own special use."

The Princess spoke in the tone of a handsome woman offended by her lover, and feeling the offence, yet not indisposed to a reconciliation.

"If," she said, "the deeds of Nicephorus Briennius are less frequently celebrated in that poor roll of parchment than those of my illustrious father, he must do me the justice to remember that such was his own special request; either proceeding from that modesty which is justly ascribed to him as serving to soften and adorn his other attributes, or because he with justice distrusts his wife's power to compose their eulogium."

"We will then summon back Astarte," said the Empress, "who cannot yet have carried her offering to the cabinet of Apollo."

"With your imperial pleasure," said Nicephorus, "it might incense the Pythian god were a deposit to be recalled of which he alone can fitly estimate the value. I came hither to speak with the Emperor upon pressing affairs of state, and not to hold a literary conversation with a company which I must needs say is something of a miscellaneous description, since I behold an ordinary life-guardsmen in the imperial circle."

"By the rood, son-inlaw," said Alexius, "you do this gallant man wrong. He is the brother of that brave Anglo-Dane who secured the victory at Laodicea by his valiant conduct and death; he himself is that Edmund — or Edward — or Hereward — to whom we are ever bound for securing the success of that victorious day. He was called into our presence, son-inlaw, since it imports that you should know so much, to refresh the memory of any Follower, Achilles Tatius, as well as mine own, concerning some transactions of the day of which we had become in some degree oblivious."

"Truly, imperial sir," answered Briennius, "I grieve that, by having intruded on some such important researches, I may have, in some degree, intercepted a portion of that light which is to illuminate future ages. Methinks that in a battle-field, fought under your imperial guidance, and that of your great captains, your evidence might well supersede the testimony of such a man as this. — Let me know," he added, turning haughtily to the Varangian, "what particular thou canst add, that is unnoticed in the Princess's narrative?"

The Varangian replied instantly, "Only that when we made a halt at the fountain, the music that was there made by the ladies of the Emperor's household, and particularly by those two whom I now behold, was the most exquisite that ever reached my ears."

"Hah! darest thou to speak so audacious an opinion?" exclaimed Nicephorus; "is it for such as thou to suppose for a moment that the music which the wife and daughter of the Emperor might condescend to make, was intended to afford either matter of pleasure or of criticism to every plebeian barbarian who might hear them? Begone from this place! nor dare, on any pretext, again to appear before mine eyes — under allowance always of our imperial father's pleasure."

The Varangian bent his looks upon Achilles Tatius, as the person from whom he was to take his orders to stay or withdraw. But the Emperor himself took up the subject with considerable dignity.

"Son," he said, "we cannot permit this. On account of some love quarrel, as it would seem, betwixt you and our daughter, you allow yourself strangely to forget our imperial rank, and to order from our presence those whom we have pleased to call to attend us. This is neither right nor seemly, nor is it our pleasure that this same Hereward — or Edward — or whatever be his name — either leave us at this present moment, or do at any time hereafter regulate himself by any commands save our own, or those of our Follower, Achilles Tatius. And now, allowing this foolish affair, which I think was blown among us by the wind, to pass as it came, without farther notice, we crave to know the grave matters of state which brought you to our presence at so late an hour. — You look again at this Varangian. — Withhold not your words, I pray you, on account of his presence; for he stands as high in our trust, and we are convinced with as good reason, as any counsellor who has been sworn our domestic servant."

"To hear is to obey," returned the Emperor's son-inlaw, who saw that Alexius was somewhat moved, and knew that in such cases it was neither safe nor expedient to drive him to extremity. "What I have to say," continued he, "must so soon be public news, that it little matters who hears it; and yet the West, so full of strange changes, never sent to the Eastern half of the globe tidings so alarming as those I now come to tell your Imperial Highness. Europe, to borrow an expression from this lady, who honours me by calling me husband, seems loosened from its foundations and about to precipitate itself upon Asia" —

"So I did express myself," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "and, as I trust, not altogether unforcibly, when we first heard that the wild impulse of those restless barbarians of Europe had driven a tempest as of a thousand nations upon our western frontier, with the extravagant purpose, as they pretended, of possessing

themselves of Syria, and the holy places there marked as the sepulchres of prophets, the martyrdom of saints, and the great events detailed in the blessed gospel. But that storm, by all accounts, hath burst and passed away, and we well hoped that the danger had gone with it. Devoutly shall we sorrow to find it otherwise."

"And otherwise we must expect to find it," said her husband. "It is very true, as reported to us, that a huge body of men, of low rank and little understanding, assumed arms at the instigation of a mad hermit, and took the road from Germany to Hungary, expecting miracles to be wrought in their favour, as when Israel was guided through the wilderness by a pillar of flame and a cloud. But no showers of manna or of quails relieved their necessities, or proclaimed them the chosen people of God. No waters gushed from the rock for their refreshment. They were enraged at their sufferings, and endeavoured to obtain supplies by pillaging the country. The Hungarians, and other nations on our western frontiers, Christians, like themselves, did not hesitate to fall upon this disorderly rabble; and immense piles of bones, in wild passes and unfrequented deserts, attest the calamitous defeats which extirpated these unholy pilgrims."

"All this," said the Emperor, "we knew before; — but what new evil now threatens, since we have already escaped so important a one?"

"Knew before?" said the Prince Nicephorus. "We knew nothing of our real danger before, save that a wild herd of animals, as brutal and as furious as wild bulls, threatened to bend their way to a pasture for which they had formed a fancy, and deluged the Grecian empire, and its vicinity, in their passage, expecting that Palestine, with its streams of milk and honey, once more awaited them, as God's predestined people. But so wild and disorderly an invasion had no terrors for a civilized nation like the Romans. The brute herd was terrified by our Greek fire; it was snared and shot down by the wild nations who, while they pretend to independence, cover our frontier as with a protecting fortification. The vile multitude has been consumed even by the very quality of the provisions thrown in their way — those wise means of resistance which were at once suggested by the paternal care of the Emperor, and by his unfailing policy. Thus wisdom has played its part, and the bark over which the tempest had poured its thunder, has escaped, notwithstanding all its violence. But the second storm, by which the former is so closely followed, is of a new descent of these Western nations, more formidable than any which we or our fathers have yet seen. This consists not of the ignorant or of the fanatical — not of the base, the needy, and the improvident. Now — all that wide Europe possesses of what is wise and worthy, brave and noble, are united by the most religious vows, in the same purpose."

"And what is that purpose? Speak plainly," said Alexius. "The destruction of our whole Roman empire, and the blotting out the very name of its chief from among the princes of the earth, among which it has long been predominant, can alone be an adequate motive for a confederacy such as thy speech infers."

"No such design is avowed," said Nicephorus; "and so many princes, wise men, and statesmen of eminence, aim, it is pretended, at nothing else than the same extravagant purpose announced by the brute multitude who first appeared in these regions. Here, most gracious Emperor, is a scroll, in which you will find marked down a list of the various armies which, by different routes, are approaching the vicinity of the empire. Behold, Hugh of Vermandois, called from his dignity Hugh the Great, has set sail from the shores of Italy. Twenty knights have already announced their coming, sheathed in armour of steel, inlaid with gold, bearing this proud greeting:—'Let the Emperor of Greece, and his lieutenants, understand that Hugo, Earl of Vermandois, is approaching his territories. He is brother to the king of kings — The King of France,* namely — and is attended by the flower of the French nobility. He bears the blessed banner of St. Peter, intrusted to his victorious care by the holy successor of the apostle, and warns thee of all this, that thou mayst provide a reception suitable to his rank.'"

* Ducange pours out a whole ocean of authorities to show that the King of France was in those days styled *Rex*, by way of eminence. See his notes on the Alexiad. Anna Comnena in her history makes Hugh, of Vermandois assume to himself the titles which could only, in the most enthusiastic Frenchman's opinion, have been claimed by his older brother, the reigning monarch.]

"Here are sounding words," said the Emperor; "but the wind which whistles loudest is not always most dangerous to the vessel. We know something of this nation of France, and have heard more. They are as petulant at least as they are valiant; we will flatter their vanity till we get time and opportunity for more effectual defence. Tush! if words can pay debt, there is no fear of our exchequer becoming insolvent. — What follows here, Nicephorus? A list, I suppose, of the followers of this great count?"

"My liege, no!" answered Nicephorus Briennius; "so many independent chiefs, as your Imperial Highness sees in that memorial, so many independent European armies are advancing by different routes towards the East, and announce the conquest of Palestine from the infidels as their common object."

"A dreadful enumeration," said the Emperor, as he perused the list; "yet so far happy, that its very length assures us of the impossibility that so many princes can be seriously and consistently united in so wild a project. Thus already my eyes catch the well-known name of an old friend, our enemy — for such are the alternate chances of peace and war — Bohemond of Antioch. Is not he the son of the celebrated Robert of Apulia, so renowned among his countrymen, who raised himself to the rank of grand duke from a simple cavalier, and became sovereign of those of his warlike nation, both in Sicily and Italy? Did not the standards of the German Emperor, of the Roman Pontiff, nay, our own imperial banners, give way before him; until, equally a wily statesman and a brave warrior, he became the terror of Europe, from being a knight whose Norman castle would have been easily garrisoned by six cross-bows, and as many lances? It is a dreadful family, a race of craft as well as power. But Bohemond, the son of old Robert, will follow his father's politics. He may talk of Palestine and of the interests of Christendom, but if I can make his interests the same with mine, he is not likely to be guided by any other object. So then, with the knowledge I already possess of his wishes and projects, it may chance that Heaven sends us an ally in the guise of an enemy. — Whom have we next? Godfrey* Duke of Bouillon — leading, I see, a most formidable band from the banks of a huge river called the Rhine. What is this person's character?"

* Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine — the great Captain of the first Crusade, afterwards King of Jerusalem. See Gibbon — or Mills, *passim*.]

"As we hear," replied Nicephorus, "this Godfrey is one of the wisest, noblest, and bravest of the leaders who have thus strangely put themselves in motion; and among a list of independent princes, as many in number as those who assembled for the siege of Troy, and followed, most of them, by subjects ten times more numerous, this Godfrey may be regarded as the Agamemnon. The princes and counts esteem him, because he is the foremost in the ranks of those whom they fantastically call Knights, and also on account of the good faith and generosity which he practises in all his transactions. The clergy give him credit for the highest zeal for the doctrines of religion, and a corresponding respect for the Church and its dignitaries. Justice, liberality, and frankness, have equally attached to this Godfrey the lower class of the people. His general attention to moral obligations is a pledge to them that his religion is real; and, gifted with so much that is excellent, he is already, although inferior in rank, birth, and power to many chiefs of the crusade, justly regarded as one of its principal leaders."

"Pity," said the Emperor, "that a character such as you describe this Prince to be, should be under the dominion of a fanaticism scarce worthy of Peter the Hermit, or the clownish multitude which he led, or of the very ass which he rode upon! which I am apt to think the wisest of the first multitude whom we beheld, seeing that it ran away towards Europe as soon as water and barley became scarce."

"Might I be permitted here to speak, and yet live," said Agelastes, "I would remark that the Patriarch himself made a similar retreat so soon as blows became plenty and food scarce."

"Thou hast hit it, Agelastes," said the Emperor; "but the question now is, whether an honorable and important principality could not be formed out of part of the provinces of the Lesser Asia, now laid waste by the Turks. Such a principality, methinks, with its various advantages of soil, climate, industrious inhabitants, and a healthy atmosphere, were well worth the morasses of Bouillon. It might be held as a dependence upon the sacred Roman empire, and garrisoned, as it were, by Godfrey and his victorious Franks, would be a bulwark on that point to our just and sacred person. Ha! most holy patriarch, would not such a prospect shake the most devout Crusader's attachment to the burning sands of Palestine?"

"Especially," answered the Patriarch, "if the prince for whom such a rich *theme** was changed into a feudal appanage, should be previously converted to the only true faith, as your Imperial Highness undoubtedly means."

* These provinces were called *Themes*.]

"Certainly — most unquestionably," answered the Emperor, with a due affectation of gravity, notwithstanding he was internally conscious how often he had been compelled, by state necessities, to admit, not only Latin Christians, but Manicheans, and other heretics, nay, Mahomedan barbarians, into the number of his subjects, and that without experiencing opposition from the scruples of the Patriarch. "Here I find," continued the Emperor, "such a numerous list of princes and

principalities in the act of approaching our boundaries, as might well rival the armies of old, who were said to have drunk up rivers, exhausted realms, and trode down forests, in their wasteful advance." As he pronounced these words, a shade of paleness came over the Imperial brow, similar to that which had already clothed in sadness most of his counsellors.

"This war of nations," said Nicephorus, "has also circumstances distinguishing it from every other, save that which his Imperial Highness hath waged in former times against those whom we are accustomed to call Franks. We must go forth against a people to whom the strife of combat is as the breath of their nostrils; who, rather than not be engaged in war, will do battle with their nearest neighbours, and challenge each other to mortal fight, as much in sport as we would defy a comrade to a chariot-race. They are covered with an impenetrable armour of steel, defending them from blows of the lance and sword, and which the uncommon strength of their horses renders them able to support, though one of ours could as well bear Mount Olympus upon his loins. Their foot-ranks carry a missile weapon unknown to us, termed an arblast, or cross-bow. It is not drawn with the right hand, like the bow of other nations, but by placing the feet upon the weapon itself, and pulling with the whole force of the body; and it despatches arrows called bolts, of hard wood pointed with iron, which the strength of the bow can send through the strongest breastplates, and even through stone walls, where not of uncommon thickness."

"Enough," said the Emperor; "we have seen with our own eyes the lances of Frankish knights, and the cross-bows of their infantry. If Heaven has allotted them a degree of bravery, which to other nations seems wellnigh preternatural, the Divine will has given to the Greek councils that wisdom which it hath refused to barbarians; the art of achieving conquest by wisdom rather than brute force — obtaining by our skill in treaty advantages which victory itself could not have procured. If we have not the use of that dreadful weapon, which our son-in-law terms the cross-bow, Heaven, in its favour, has concealed from these western barbarians the composition and use of the Greek fire — well so called, since by Grecian hands alone it is prepared, and by such only can its lightnings be darted upon the astonished foe." The Emperor paused, and looked around him; and although the faces of his counsellors still looked blank, he boldly proceeded:—"But to return yet again to this black scroll, containing the names of those nations who approach our frontier, here occur more than one with which, methinks, old memory should make us familiar, though our recollections are distant and confused. It becomes us to know who these men are, that we may avail ourselves of those feuds and quarrels among them, which, being blown into life, may happily divert them from the prosecution of this extraordinary attempt in which they are now united. Here is, for example, one Robert, styled Duke of Normandy, who commands a goodly band of counts, with which title we are but too well acquainted; of *earls*, a word totally strange to us, but apparently some barbaric title of honour; and of knights whose names are compounded, as we think, chiefly of the French language, but also of another jargon, which we are not ourselves competent to understand. To you, most reverend and most learned Patriarch, we may fittest apply for information on this subject."

"The duties of my station," replied the patriarch Zosimus, "have withheld my riper years from studying the history of distant realms; but the wise Agelastes, who hath read as many volumes as would fill the shelves of the famous Alexandrian library, can no doubt satisfy your Imperial Majesty's enquiries."

Agelastes erected himself on those enduring legs which had procured him the surname of Elephant, and began a reply to the enquiries of the Emperor, rather remarkable for readiness than accuracy. "I have read," said he, "in that brilliant mirror which reflects the time of our fathers, the volumes of the learned Procopius, that the people separately called Normans and Angles are in truth the same race, and that Normandy, sometimes so called, is in fact a part of a district of Gaul. Beyond, and nearly opposite to it, but separated by an arm of the sea, lies a ghastly region, on which clouds and tempests for ever rest, and which is well known to its continental neighbours as the abode to which departed spirits are sent after this life. On one side of the strait dwell a few fishermen, men possessed of a strange charter, and enjoying singular privileges, in consideration of their being the living ferrymen who, performing the office of the heathen Charon, carry the spirits of the departed to the island which is their residence after death. At the dead of night, these fishermen are, in rotation, summoned to perform the duty by which they seem to hold the permission to reside on this strange coast. A knock is heard at the door of his cottage who holds the turn of this singular service, sounded by no mortal hand. A whispering, as of a decaying breeze, summons the ferryman to his duty. He hastens to his bark on the sea-shore, and has no sooner launched it than he perceives its hull sink sensibly in the water, so as to express the weight of the dead with whom it is filled. No form is seen, and though voices are heard, yet the accents are undistinguishable, as of one who speaks in his sleep. Thus he traverses the strait between the continent and the island, impressed with the mysterious awe which affects the living when they are conscious of the presence of the dead. They arrive upon the opposite coast, where the cliffs of white chalk form a strange contrast with the eternal darkness of the atmosphere. They stop at a landing-place appointed, but disembark not, for the land is never trodden by earthly feet. Here the passage-boat is gradually lightened of its unearthly inmates, who wander forth in the way appointed to them, while the mariners slowly return to their own side of the strait, having performed for the time this singular service, by which they hold their fishing-huts and their possessions on that strange coast." Here he ceased, and the Emperor replied —

"If this legend be actually told us by Procopius, most learned Agelastes, it shows that that celebrated historian came more near the heathen than the Christian belief respecting the future state. In truth, this is little more than the old fable of the infernal Styx. Procopius, we believe, lived before the decay of heathenism, and, as we would gladly disbelieve much which he hath told us respecting our ancestor and predecessor Justinian, so we will not pay him much credit in future in point of geographical knowledge. — Meanwhile, what ails thee, Achilles Tatius, and why dost thou whisper with that soldier?"

"My head," answered Achilles Tatius, "is at your imperial command, prompt to pay for the unbecoming trespass of my tongue. I did but ask of this Hereward here what he knew of this matter; for I have heard my Varangians repeatedly call themselves Anglo-Danes, Normans, Britons, or some other barbaric epithet, and I am sure that one or other, or it may be all, of these barbarous sounds, at different times serve to designate the birth-place of these exiles, too happy in being banished from the darkness of barbarism, to the luminous vicinity of your imperial presence."

"Speak, then, Varangian, in the name of Heaven," said the Emperor, "and let us know whether we are to look for friends or enemies in those men of Normandy who are now approaching our frontier. Speak with courage, man; and if thou apprehendest danger, remember thou servest a prince well qualified to protect thee."

"Since I am at liberty to speak," answered the life-guardian, "although my knowledge of the Greek language, which you term the Roman, is but slight, I trust it is enough to demand of his Imperial Highness, in place of all pay, donative, or gift whatsoever, since he has been pleased to talk of designing such for me, that he would place me in the first line of battle which shall be formed against these same Normans, and their Duke Robert; and if he pleases to allow me the aid of such Varangians as, for love of me, or hatred of their ancient tyrants, may be disposed to join their arms to mine, I have little doubt so to settle our long accounts with these men, that the Grecian eagles and wolves shall do them the last office, by tearing the flesh from their bones."

"What dreadful feud is this, my soldier," said the Emperor, "that after so many years still drives thee to such extremities when the very name of Normandy is mentioned?"

"Your Imperial Highness shall be judge!" said the Varangian. "My fathers, and those of most, though not all of the corps to whom I belong, are descended from a valiant race who dwelt in the North of Germany, called Anglo-Saxons. Nobody, save a priest possessed of the art of consulting ancient chronicles, can even guess how long it is since they came to the island of Britain, then distracted with civil war. They came, however, on the petition of the natives of the island, for the aid of the Angles was requested by the southern inhabitants. Provinces were granted in recompense of the aid thus liberally afforded, and the greater proportion of the island became, by degrees, the property of the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied it at first as several principalities, and latterly as one kingdom, speaking the language, and observing the laws, of most of those who now form your imperial body-guard of Varangians, or exiles. In process of time, the Northmen became known to the people of the more southern climates. They were so called from their coming from the distant regions of the Baltic Sea — an immense ocean, sometimes frozen with ice as hard as the cliffs of Mount Caucasus. They came seeking milder regions than nature had assigned them at home; and the climate of France being delightful, and its people slow in battle, they extorted from them the grant of a large province which was, from the name of the new settlers, called Normandy, though I have heard my father say that was not its proper appellation. They settled there under a Duke, who acknowledged the superior authority of the King of France, that is to say, obeying him when it suited his convenience so to do.

"Now, it chanced many years since, while these two nations of Normans and Anglo-Saxons were quietly residing upon different sides of the salt-water channel which divides France from England, that William, Duke of Normandy, suddenly levied a large army, came over to Kent, which is on the opposite side of the

channel, and there defeated in a great battle, Harold, who was at that time King of the Anglo-Saxons. It is but grief to tell what followed. Battles have been fought in old time, that have had dreadful results, which years, nevertheless, could wash away; but at Hastings — O woe's me! — the banner of my country fell, never again to be raised up. Oppression has driven her wheel over us. All that was valiant amongst us have left the land; and of Englishmen — for such is our proper designation — no one remains in England save as the thrall of the invaders. Many men of Danish descent, who had found their way on different occasions to England, were blended in the common calamity. All was laid desolate by the command of the victors. My father's home lies now an undistinguished ruin, amid an extensive forest, composed out of what were formerly fair fields and domestic pastures, where a manly race derived nourishment by cultivating a friendly soil. The fire has destroyed the church where sleep the fathers of my race; and I, the last of their line, am a wanderer in other climates — a fighter of the battles of others — the servant of a foreign, though a kind master; in a word, one of the banished — a Varangian."

"Happier in that station" said Achilles Tatius, "than in all the barbaric simplicity which your forefathers prized so highly, since you are now under the cheering influence of that smile which is the life of the world."

"It avails not talking of this," said the Varangian, with a cold gesture.

"These Normans" said the Emperor, "are then the people by whom the celebrated island of Britain is now conquered and governed?"

"It is but too true" answered the Varangian.

"They are, then, a brave and warlike people?" — said Alexius.

"It would be base and false to say otherwise of an enemy" said Hereward. "Wrong have they done me, and a wrong never to be atoned; but to speak falsehood of them were but a woman's vengeance. Mortal enemies as they are to me, and mingling with all my recollections as that which is hateful and odious, yet were the troops of Europe mustered, as it seems they are likely to be, no nation or tribe dared in gallantry claim the advance of the haughty Norman."

"And this Duke Robert, who is he?"

"That," answered the Varangian, "I cannot so well explain. He is the son — the eldest son, as men say, of the tyrant William, who subdued England when I hardly existed, or was a child in the cradle. That William, the victor of Hastings, is now dead, we are assured by concurring testimony; but while it seems his eldest son Duke Robert has become his heir to the Duchy of Normandy, some other of his children have been so fortunate as to acquire the throne of England — unless, indeed, like the petty farm of some obscure yeoman, the fair kingdom has been divided among the tyrant's issue."

"Concerning this," said the Emperor, "we have heard something, which we shall try to reconcile with the soldier's narrative at leisure, holding the words of this honest Varangian as positive proof, in whatsoever he avers from his own knowledge. — And now, my grave and worthy counsellors, we must close this evening's service in the Temple of the Muses, this distressing news, brought us by our dearest son-in-law the Caesar, having induced us to prolong our worship of these learned goddesses, deeper into the night than is consistent with the health of our beloved wife and daughter; while to ourselves, this intelligence brings subject for grave deliberation."

The courtiers exhausted their ingenuity in forming the most ingenious prayers, that all evil consequences should be averted which could attend this excessive vigilance.

Nicephorus and his fair bride spoke together as a pair equally desirous to close an accidental breach between them. "Some things thou hast said, my Caesar," observed the lady, "in detailing this dreadful intelligence, as elegantly turned as if the nine goddesses, to whom this temple is dedicated, had lent each her aid to the sense and expression."

"I need none of their assistance," answered Nicephorus, "since I possess a muse of my own, in whose genius are included all those attributes which the heathens vainly ascribed to the nine deities of Parnassus!"

"It is well," said the fair historian, retiring by the assistance of her husband's arm; "but if you will load your wife with praises far beyond her merits, you must lend her your arm to support her under the weighty burden you have been pleased to impose." The council parted when the imperial persons had retired, and most of them sought to indemnify themselves in more free though less dignified circles, for the constraint which they had practised in the Temple of the Muses.

Chapter the Sixth.

*Vain man! thou mayst, esteem thy love as fair
As fond hyperboles suffice to raise.
She may be all that's matchless in her person,
And all-divine in soul to match her body;
But take this from me — thou shalt never call her
Superior to her sex, while ONE survives,
And I am her true votary.*

OLD PLAY.

Achilles Tatius, with his faithful Varangian close by his shoulder, melted from the dispersing assembly silently and almost invisibly, as snow is dissolved from its Alpine abodes as the days become more genial. No lordly step, nor clash of armour, betokened the retreat of the military persons. The very idea of the necessity of guards was not ostentatiously brought forward, because, so near the presence of the Emperor, the emanation supposed to flit around that divinity of earthly sovereigns, had credit for rendering it impassive and unassailable. Thus the oldest and most skilful courtiers, among whom our friend Agelastes was not to be forgotten, were of opinion, that, although the Emperor employed the ministry of the Varangians and other guards, it was rather for form's sake, than from any danger of the commission of a crime of a kind so heinous, that it was the fashion to account it almost impossible. And this doctrine, of the rare occurrence of such a crime, was repeated from month to month in those very chambers, where it had oftener than once been perpetrated, and sometimes by the very persons who monthly laid schemes for carrying some dark conspiracy against the reigning Emperor into positive execution.

At length the captain of the life-guardsmen, and his faithful attendant, found themselves on the outside of the Blacquenal Palace. The passage which Achilles found for their exit, was closed by a postern which a single Varangian shut behind, them, drawing, at the same time, bolt and bar with an ill-omened and jarring sound. Looking back at the mass of turrets, battlements, and spires, out of which they had at length emerged, Hereward could not but feel his heart lighten to find "himself once more under the deep blue of a Grecian heaven, where the planets were burning with unusual lustre. He sighed and rubbed his hands with pleasure, like a man newly restored to liberty. He even spoke to his leader, contrary to his custom unless addressed:—"Methinks the air of yonder halls, valorous Captain, carries with it a perfume, which, though it may be well termed sweet, is so suffocating, as to be more suitable to sepulchrous chambers, than to the dwellings of men. Happy I am that I am free, as I trust, from its influences."

"Be happy, then," said Achilles Tatius, "since thy vile, cloddish spirit feels suffocation rather than refreshment in gales, which, instead of causing death, might recall the dead themselves to life. Yet this I will say for thee, Hereward, that, born a barbarian, within the narrow circle of a savage's desires and pleasures, and having no idea of life, save what thou derivest from such vile and base connexions, thou art, nevertheless, designed by nature for better things, and hast this day sustained a trial, in which, I fear me, not even one of mine own noble corps, frozen as they are into lumps of unfashioned barbarity, could have equalled thy bearing. And speak now in true faith, hast not thou been rewarded?"

"That will I never deny," said the Varangian. "The pleasure of knowing, twenty-four hours perhaps before my comrades, that the Normans are coming hither to afford us a full revenge of the bloody day of Hastings, is a lordly recompense, for the task of spending some hours in hearing the lengthened chat of a lady, who has written about she knows not what, and the flattering commentaries of the bystanders, who pretended to give her an account of what they did not themselves stop to witness."

"Hereward, my good youth," said Achilles Tatius, "thou ravest, and I think I should do well to place thee under the custody of some person of skill. Too much hardihood, my valiant soldier, is in soberness allied to over-daring. It was only natural that thou shouldst feel a becoming pride in thy late position; yet, let it but

taint thee with vanity, and the effect will be little short of madness. Why, thou hast looked boldly in the face of a Princess born in the purple, before whom my own eyes, though well used to such spectacles, are never raised beyond the foldings of her veil."

"So be it in the name of Heaven!" replied Hereward. "Nevertheless, handsome faces were made to look upon, and the eyes of young men to see withal."

"If such be their final end," said Achilles, "never did thine, I will freely suppose, find a richer apology for the somewhat overbold license which thou tookest in thy gaze upon the Princess this evening."

"Good leader, or Follower, whichever is your favourite title," said the Anglo-Briton, "drive not to extremity a plain man, who desires to hold his duty in all honour to the imperial family. The Princess, wife of the Caesar, and born, you tell me, of a purple colour, has now inherited, notwithstanding, the features of a most lovely woman. She hath composed a history, of which I presume not to form a judgment, since I cannot understand it; she sings like an angel; and to conclude, after the fashion of the knights of this day — though I deal not ordinarily with their language — I would say cheerfully, that I am ready to place myself in lists against any one whomsoever, who dares detract from the beauty of the imperial Anna Comnena's person, or from the virtues of her mind. Having said this, my noble captain, we have said all that it is competent for you to inquire into, or for me to answer. That there are handsomer women than the Princess, is unquestionable; and I question it the less, that I have myself seen a person whom I think far her superior; and with that let us close the dialogue."

"Thy beauty, thou unparalleled fool," said Achilles, "must, I ween, be the daughter of the large-bodied northern boor, living next door to him upon whose farm was brought up the person of an ass, curst with such intolerable want of judgment."

"You may say your pleasure, captain," replied Hereward: "because it is the safer for us both that thou canst not on such a topic either offend me, who hold thy judgment as light as thou canst esteem mine, or speak any derogation of a person whom you never saw, but whom, if you had seen, perchance I might not so patiently have brooked any reflections upon, even at the hands of a military superior."

Achilles Tatius had a good deal of the penetration necessary for one in his situation. He never provoked to extremity the daring spirits whom he commanded, and never used any freedom with them beyond the extent that he knew their patience could bear. Hereward was a favourite soldier, and had, in that respect at least, a sincere liking and regard for his commander: when, therefore, the Follower, instead of resenting his petulance, good-humouredly apologized for having hurt his feelings, the momentary displeasure between them was at an end; the officer at once reassumed his superiority, and the soldier sunk back with a deep sigh, given to some period which was long past, into his wonted silence and reserve. Indeed the Follower had another and further design upon Hereward, of which he was as yet unwilling to do more than give a distant hint.

After a long pause, during which they approached the barracks, a gloomy fortified building constructed for the residence of their corps, the captain motioned his soldier to draw close up to his side, and proceeded to ask him, in a confidential tone — "Hereward, my friend, although it is scarce to be supposed that in the presence of the imperial family thou shouldst mark any one who did not partake of their blood, or rather, as Homer has it, who did not participate of the divine *ichor*, which, in their sacred persons, supplies the place of that vulgar fluid; yet, during so long an audience, thou mightst possibly, from his uncourtly person and attire, have distinguished Agelastes, whom we courtiers call the Elephant, from his strict observation of the rule which forbids any one to sit down or rest in the Imperial presence?"

"I think," replied the soldier, "I marked the man you mean; his age was some seventy and upwards — a big burly person; — and the baldness which reached to the top of his head was well atoned for by a white beard of prodigious size, which descended in waving curls over his breast, and reached to the towel with which his loins were girded, instead of the silken sash used by other persons of rank."

"Most accurately marked, my Varangian," said the officer. "What else didst thou note about this person?"

"His cloak was in its texture as coarse as that of the meanest of the people, but it was strictly clean, as if it had been the intention of the wearer to exhibit poverty, or carelessness and contempt of dress, avoiding, at the same time, every particular which implied anything negligent, sordid, or disgusting."

"By St. Sophia!" said the officer, "thou astonishest me! The Prophet Baalam was not more surprised when his ass turned round her head and spoke to him! — And what else didst thou note concerning this man? I see those who meet thee must beware of thy observation, as well as of thy battle-axe."

"If it please your Valour" answered the soldier, "we English have eyes as well as hands; but it is only when discharging our duty that we permit our tongues to dwell on what we have observed. I noted but little of this man's conversation, but from what I heard, it seemed he was not unwilling to play what we call the jester, or jack-pudding, in the conversation, a character which, considering the man's age and physiognomy, is not, I should be tempted to say, natural, but assumed for some purpose of deeper import."

"Hereward," answered his officer, "thou hast spoken like an angel sent down to examine men's bosoms: that man, Agelastes, is a contradiction, such as earth has seldom witnessed. Possessing all that wisdom which in former times united the sages of this nation with the gods themselves, Agelastes has the same cunning as the elder Brutus, who disguised his talents under the semblance of an idle jester. He appears to seek no office — he desires no consideration — he pays suit at court only when positively required to do so; yet what shall I say, my soldier, concerning the cause of an influence gained without apparent effort, and extending almost into the very thoughts of men, who appear to act as he would desire, without his soliciting them to that purpose? Men say strange things concerning the extent of his communications with other beings, whom our fathers worshipped with prayer and sacrifice. I am determined, however, to know the road by which he climbs so high and so easily towards the point to which all men aspire at court, and it will go hard but he shall either share his ladder with me, or I will strike its support from under him. Thee, Hereward, I have chosen to assist me in this matter, as the knights among these Frankish infidels select, when going upon an adventure, a sturdy squire, or inferior attendant, to share the dangers and the recompense; and this I am moved to, as much by the shrewdness thou hast this night manifested, as by the courage which thou mayst boast, in common with, or rather beyond, thy companions."

"I am obliged, and I thank your Valour," replied the Varangian, more coldly perhaps than his officer expected; "I am ready, as is my duty, to serve you in anything consistent with God and the Emperor's claims upon my service. I would only say, that, as a sworn inferior soldier, I will do nothing contrary to the laws of the empire, and, as a sincere though ignorant Christian, I will have nothing to do with the gods of the heathens, save to defy them in the name and strength of the holy saints."

"Idiot!" said Achilles Tatius, "dost thou think that I, already possessed of one of the first dignities of the empire, could meditate anything contrary to the interests of Alexius Comnenus? or, what would be scarce more atrocious, that I, the chosen friend and ally of the reverend Patriarch Zosimus, should meddle with anything bearing a relation, however remote, to heresy or idolatry?"

"Truly," answered the Varangian, "no one would be more surprised or grieved than I should; but when we walk in a labyrinth, we must assume and announce that we have a steady and forward purpose, which is one mode at least of keeping a straight path. The people of this country have so many ways of saying the same thing, that one can hardly know at last what is their real meaning. We English, on the other hand, can only express ourselves in one set of words, but it is one out of which all the ingenuity of the world could not extract a double meaning."

"Tis well," said his officer, "tomorrow we will talk more of this, for which purpose thou wilt come to my quarters a little after sunset. And, hark thee, tomorrow, while the sun is in heaven, shall be thine own, either to sport thyself or to repose. Employ thy time in the latter, by my advice, since tomorrow night, like the present, may find us both watchers."

So saying, they entered the barracks, where they parted company — the commander of the life-guards taking his way to a splendid set of apartments which belonged to him in that capacity, and the Anglo-Saxon seeking his humble accommodations as a subaltern officer of the same corps.

Chapter the Seventh.

*Such forces met not, nor so vast a camp,
When Agrican, with all his northern powers,
Besieged Albraeca, as romances tell.
The city of Gallaphron, from thence to win*

*The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
His daughter, sought by many prowess'd knights,
Both Paynim, and the Peers of Charlemagne.*

PARADISE REGAINED.

Early on the morning of the day following that which we have commemorated, the Imperial Council was assembled, where the number of general officers with sounding titles, disguised under a thin veil the real weakness of the Grecian empire. The commanders were numerous and the distinctions of their rank minute, but the soldiers were very few in comparison. The offices formerly filled by prefects, praetors, and questors, were now held by persons who had gradually risen into the authority of those officers, and who, though designated from their domestic duties about the Emperor, yet, from that very circumstance, possessed what, in that despotic court, was the most effectual source of power. A long train of officers entered the great hall of the Castle of Blacquernal, and proceeded so far together as their different grades admitted, while in each chamber through which they passed in succession, a certain number of the train whose rank permitted them to advance no farther, remained behind the others. Thus, when the interior cabinet of audience was gained, which was not until their passage through ten anterooms, five persons only found themselves in the presence of the Emperor in this innermost and most sacred recess of royalty, decorated by all the splendour of the period.

The Emperor Alexius sat upon a stately throne, rich with barbaric gems and gold, and flanked on either hand, in imitation probably of Solomon's magnificence, with the form of a couchant lion in the same precious metal. Not to dwell upon other marks of splendour, a tree whose trunk seemed also of gold, shot up behind the throne, which it over-canopied with its branches. Amid the boughs were birds of various kinds curiously wrought and enamelled, and fruit composed of precious stones seemed to glisten among the leaves. Five officers alone, the highest in the state, had the privilege of entering this sacred recess when the Emperor held council. These were — the Grand Domestic, who might be termed of rank with a modern prime minister — the Logothete, or chancellor — the Protospathaire, or commander of the guards, already mentioned — the Acolyte, or Follower, and leader of the Varangians — and the Patriarch.

The doors of this secret apartment, and the adjacent antechamber, were guarded by six deformed Nubian slaves, whose writhen and withered countenances formed a hideous contrast with their snow-white dresses and splendid equipment. They were mutes, a species of wretches borrowed from the despotism of the East, that they might be unable to proclaim the deeds of tyranny of which they were the unscrupulous agents. They were generally held in a kind of horror, rather than compassion, for men considered that slaves of this sort had a malignant pleasure in avenging upon others the irreparable wrongs which had severed themselves from humanity. It was a general custom, though, like many other usages of the Greeks, it would be held childish in modern times, that by means of machinery easily conceived, the lions, at the entrance of a stranger, were made, as it were, to rouse themselves and roar, after which a wind seemed to rustle the foliage of the tree, the birds hopped from branch to branch, pecked the fruit, and appeared to fill the chamber with their carolling. This display had alarmed many an ignorant foreign ambassador, and even the Grecian counsellors themselves were expected to display the same sensations of fear, succeeded by surprise, when they heard the roar of the lions, followed by the concert of the birds, although perhaps it was for the fiftieth time. On this occasion, as a proof of the urgency of the present meeting of the council, these ceremonies were entirely omitted.

The speech of the Emperor himself seemed to supply by its commencement the bellowing of the lions, while it ended in a strain more resembling the warbling of the birds.

In his first sentences, he treated of the audacity and unheard-of boldness of the millions of Franks, who, under the pretence of wresting Palestine from the infidels, had ventured to invade the sacred territories of the empire. He threatened them with such chastisement as his innumerable forces and officers would, he affirmed, find it easy to inflict. To all this the audience, and especially the military officers, gave symptoms of ready assent. Alexius, however, did not long persist in the warlike intentions which he at first avowed. The Franks, he at length seemed to reflect, were, in profession, Christians. They might possibly be serious in their pretext of the crusade, in which case their motives claimed a degree of indulgence, and, although erring, a certain portion of respect. Their numbers also were great, and their valour could not be despised by those who had seen them fight at Durazzo,* and elsewhere. They might also, by the permission of Supreme Providence, be, in the long run, the instruments of advantage to the most sacred empire, though they approached it with so little ceremony. He had, therefore, mingling the virtues of prudence, humanity, and generosity, with that valour which must always burn in the heart of an Emperor, formed a plan, which he was about to submit to their consideration, for present execution; and, in the first place, he requested of the Grand Domestic, to let him know what forces he might count upon on the western side of the Bosphorus.

* For the battle of Durazzo, Oct. 1081, in which Alexius was defeated with great slaughter by Robert Guiscard, and escaped only by the swiftness of his horse, see Gibbon, ch. 56.]

"Innumerable are the forces of the empire as the stars in heaven, or the sand on the sea-shore," answered the Grand Domestic.

"That is a goodly answer," said the Emperor, "provided there were strangers present at this conference; but since we hold consultation in private, it is necessary that I know precisely to what number that army amounts which I have to rely upon. Reserve your eloquence till some fitter time, and let me know what you, at this present moment, mean by the word *innumerable*?"

The Grand Domestic paused, and hesitated for a short space; but as he became aware that the moment was one in which the Emperor could not be trifled with, (for Alexius Comnenus was at times dangerous,) he answered thus, but not without hesitation. "Imperial master and lord, none better knows that such an answer cannot be hastily made, if it is at the same time to be correct in its results. The number of the imperial host betwixt this city and the western frontier of the empire, deducting those absent on furlough, cannot be counted upon as amounting to more than twenty-five thousand men, or thirty thousand at most."

Alexius struck his forehead with his hand; and the counsellors, seeing him give way to such violent expressions of grief and surprise, began to enter into discussions, which they would otherwise have reserved for a fitter place and time.

"By the trust your Highness reposes in me," said the Logothete, "there has been drawn from your Highness's coffers during the last year, gold enough to pay double the number of the armed warriors whom the Grand Domestic now mentions."

"Your Imperial Highness," retorted the impeached minister, with no small animation, "will at once remember the stationary garrisons, in addition to the movable troops, for which this figure-caster makes no allowance."

"Peace, both of you!" said Alexius, composing himself hastily; "our actual numbers are in truth less than we counted on, but let us not by wrangling augment the difficulties of the time. Let those troops be dispersed in valleys, in passes, behind ridges of hills, and in difficult ground, where a little art being used in the position, can make few men supply the appearance of numbers, between this city and the western frontier of the empire. While this disposal is made, we will continue to adjust with these crusaders, as they call themselves, the terms on which we will consent to let them pass through our dominions; nor are we without hope of negotiating with them, so as to gain great advantage to our kingdom. We will insist that they pass through our country only by armies of perhaps fifty thousand at once, whom we will successively transport into Asia, so that no greater number shall, by assembling beneath our walls, ever endanger the safety of the metropolis of the world.

"On their way towards the banks of the Bosphorus, we will supply them with provisions, if they march peaceably, and in order; and if any straggle from their standards, or insult the country by marauding, we suppose our valiant peasants will not hesitate to repress their excesses, and that without our giving positive orders, since we would not willingly be charged with any thing like a breach of engagement. We suppose, also, that the Scythians, Arabs, Syrians, and other mercenaries in our service, will not suffer our subjects to be overpowered in their own just defence; as, besides that there is no justice in stripping our own country of provisions, in order to feed strangers, we will not be surprised nor unpardonably displeased to learn, that of the ostensible quantity of flour, some sacks should be found filled with chalk, or lime, or some such substance. It is, indeed, truly wonderful, what the stomach of a Frank will digest comfortably. Their guides, also, whom you shall choose with reference to such duty, will take care to conduct the crusaders by difficult and circuitous routes; which will be doing them a real service, by inuring them to the hardships of the country and climate, which they would otherwise have to face without seasoning.

"In the meantime, in your intercourse with their chiefs, whom they call counts, each of whom thinks himself as great as an Emperor, you will take care to give no offence to their natural presumption, and omit no opportunity of informing them of the wealth and bounty of our government. Sums of money may be even given to persons of note, and largesses of less avail to those under them. You, our Logothete, will take good order for this, and you, our Grand Domestic, will take care that such soldiers as may cut off detached parties of the Franks shall be presented, if possible, in savage dress, and under the show of infidels. In commending these injunctions to your care, I purpose that, the crusaders having found the value of our friendship, and also in some sort the danger of our enmity, those whom we shall safely transport to Asia, shall be, however unwieldy, still a smaller and more compact body, whom we may deal with in all Christian prudence. Thus, by using fair words to one, threats to another, gold to the avaricious, power to the ambitious, and reasons to those that are capable of listening to them, we doubt not but to prevail upon those Franks, met as they are from a thousand points, and enemies of each other, to acknowledge us as their common superior, rather than choose a leader among themselves, when they are made aware of the great fact, that every village in Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba, is the original property of the sacred Roman empire, and that whatever Christian goes to war for their recovery, must go as our subject, and hold any conquest which he may make, as our vassal. Vice and virtue, sense and folly, ambition and disinterested devotion, will alike recommend to the survivors of these singular-minded men, to become the feudatories of the empire, not its foe, and the shield, not the enemy, of your paternal Emperor."

There was a general inclination of the head among the courtiers, with the Eastern acclamation of — "Long live the Emperor!"

When the murmur of this applausive exclamation had subsided, Alexius proceeded:—"Once more, I say, that my faithful Grand Domestic, and those who act under him, will take care to commit the execution of such part of these orders as may seem aggressive, to troops of foreign appearance and language, which, I grieve to say, are more numerous in our imperial army than our natural-born and orthodox subjects."

The Patriarch here interposed his opinion. —"There is a consolation," he said, "in the thought, that the genuine Romans in the imperial army are but few, since a trade so bloody as war, is most fitly prosecuted by those whose doctrines, as well as their doings, on earth, merit eternal condemnation in the next world."

"Reverend Patriarch," said the Emperor, "we would not willingly hold with the wild infidels, that Paradise is to be gained by the sabre; nevertheless, we would hope that a Roman dying in battle for his religion and his Emperor, may find as good hope of acceptance, after the mortal pang is over, as a man who dies in peace, and with unbloody hand."

"It is enough for me to say," resumed the Patriarch, "that the Church's doctrine is not so indulgent: she is herself peaceful, and her promises of favour are for those who have been men of peace. Yet think not I bar the gates of Heaven against a soldier, as such, if believing all the doctrines of our Church, and complying with all our observances; far less would I condemn your Imperial Majesty's wise precautions, both for diminishing the power and thinning the ranks of those Latin heretics, who come hither to despoil us, and plunder perhaps both church and temple, under the vain pretext that Heaven would permit them, stained with so many heresies, to reconquer that Holy Land, which true orthodox Christians, your Majesty's sacred predecessors, have not been enabled to retain from the infidel. And well I trust that no settlement made under the Latins will be permitted by your Majesty to establish itself, in which the Cross shall not be elevated with limbs of the same length, instead of that irregular and most damnable error which prolongs, in western churches, the nether limb of that most holy emblem."

"Reverend Patriarch," answered the Emperor, "do not deem that we think lightly of your weighty scruples; but the question is now, not in what manner we may convert these Latin heretics to the true faith, but how we may avoid being overrun by their myriads, which resemble those of the locusts by which their approach was preceded and intimated."

"Your Majesty," said the Patriarch, "will act with your usual wisdom; for my part, I have only stated my doubts, that I may save my own soul alive."

"Our construction," said the Emperor, "does your sentiments no wrong, most reverend Patriarch; and you," addressing himself to the other counsellors, "will attend to these separate charges given out for directing the execution of the commands which have been generally intimated to you. They are written out in the sacred ink, and our sacred subscription is duly marked with the fitting tinge of green and purple. Let them, therefore, be strictly obeyed. Ourselves will assume the command of such of the Immortal Bands as remain in the city, and join to them the cohorts of our faithful Varangians. At the head of these troops, we will await the arrival of these strangers under the walls of the city, and, avoiding combat while our policy can postpone it, we will be ready, in case of the worst, to take whatsoever chance it shall please the Almighty to send us."

Here the council broke up, and the different chiefs began to exert themselves in the execution of their various instructions, civil and military, secret or public, favourable or hostile to the crusaders. The peculiar genius of the Grecian people was seen upon this occasion. Their loud and boastful talking corresponded with the ideas which the Emperor wished to enforce upon the crusaders concerning the extent of his power and resources. Nor is it to be disguised, that the wily selfishness of most of those in the service of Alexius, endeavoured to find some indirect way of applying the imperial instruction, so as might best suit their own private ends.

Meantime, the news had gone abroad in Constantinople of the arrival of the huge miscellaneous army of the west upon the limits of the Grecian empire, arid of their purpose to pass to Palestine. A thousand reports magnified, if that was possible, an event so wonderful. Some said, that their ultimate view was the conquest of Arabia, the destruction of the Prophet's tomb, and the conversion of his green banner into a horse-cloth for the King of France's brother. Others supposed that the ruin and sack of Constantinople was the real object of the war. A third class thought it was in order to compel the Patriarch to submit himself to the Pope, adopt the Latin form of the cross, and put an end to the schism.

The Varangians enjoyed an addition to this wonderful news, seasoned as it everywhere was with something peculiarly suited to the prejudices of the hearers. It was gathered originally from what our friend Hereward, who was one of their inferior officers, called sergeants or constables, had suffered to transpire of what he had heard the preceding evening. Considering that the fact must be soon matter of notoriety, he had no hesitation to give his comrades to understand that a Norman army was coming hither under Duke Robert, the son of the far-famed William the Conqueror, and with hostile intentions, he concluded, against them in particular. Like all other men in peculiar circumstances, the Varangians adopted an explanation applicable to their own condition. These Normans, who hated the Saxon nation, and had done so much to dishonour and oppress them, were now following them, they supposed, to the foreign capital where they had found refuge, with the purpose of making war on the bountiful prince who protected their sad remnant. Under this belief, many a deep oath was sworn in Norse and Anglo-Saxon, that their keen battle-axes should avenge the slaughter of Hastings, and many a pledge, both in wine and ale, was quaffed who should most deeply resent, and most effectually revenge, the wrongs which the Anglo-Saxons of England had received at the hand of their oppressors.

Hereward, the author of this intelligence, began soon to be sorry that he had ever suffered it to escape him, so closely was he cross-examined concerning its precise import, by the enquiries of his comrades, from whom he thought himself obliged to keep concealed the adventures of the preceding evening, and the place in which he had gained his information.

About noon, when he was effectually tired with returning the same answer to the same questions, and evading similar others which were repeatedly put to him, the sound of trumpets announced the presence of the Acolyte, Achilles Tatius, who came immediately, it was industriously whispered, from the sacred Interior, with news of the immediate approach of war.

The Varangians, and the Roman bands called Immortal, it was said, were to form a camp under the city, in order to be prompt to defend it at the shortest notice. This put the whole barracks into commotion, each man making the necessary provision for the approaching campaign. The noise was chiefly that of joyful bustle and acclamation; and it was so general, that Hereward, whose rank permitted him to commit to a page or esquire the task of preparing his equipments, took the opportunity to leave the barracks, in order to seek some distant place apart from his comrades, and enjoy his solitary reflections upon the singular connexion into which he had been drawn, and his direct communication with the Imperial family.

Passing through the narrow streets, then deserted, on account of the heat of the sun, he reached at length one of those broad terraces, which, descending as it were by steps, upon the margin of the Bosphorus, formed one of the most splendid walks in the universe, and still, it is believed, preserved as a public promenade for the pleasure of the Turks, as formerly for that of the Christians. These graduated terraces were planted with many trees, among which the cypress, as usual, was most generally cultivated. Here bands of the inhabitants were to be seen: some passing to and fro, with business and anxiety in their faces; some standing

still in groups, as if discussing the strange and weighty tidings of the day, and some, with the indolent carelessness of an eastern climate, eating their noontide refreshment in the shade, and spending their time as if their sole object was to make much of the day as it passed, and let the cares of tomorrow answer for themselves.

While the Varangian, afraid of meeting some acquaintance in this concourse, which would have been inconsistent with the desire of seclusion which had brought him thither, descended or passed from one terrace to another, all marked him with looks of curiosity and enquiry, considering him to be one, who, from his arms and connexion with the court, must necessarily know more than others concerning the singular invasion by numerous enemies, and from various quarters, which was the news of the day.

None, however, had the hardihood to address the soldier of the guard, though all looked at him with uncommon interest. He walked from the lighter to the darker alleys, from the more closed to the more open terraces, without interruption from any one, yet not without a feeling that he must not consider himself as alone.

The desire that he felt to be solitary rendered him at last somewhat watchful, so that he became sensible that he was dogged by a black slave, a personage not so unfrequent in the streets of Constantinople as to excite any particular notice. His attention, however, being at length fixed on this individual, he began to be desirous to escape his observation; and the change of place which he had at first adopted to avoid society in general, he had now recourse to, in order to rid himself of this distant, though apparently watchful attendant. Still, however, though he by change of place had lost sight of the negro for a few minutes, it was not long ere he again discovered him at a distance too far for a companion, but near enough to serve all the purposes of a spy. Displeased at this, the Varangian turned short in his walk, and choosing a spot where none was in sight but the object of his resentment, walked suddenly up to him, and demanded wherefore, and by whose orders, he presumed to dog his footsteps. The negro answered in a jargon as bad as that in which he was addressed though of a different kind, "that he had orders to remark whither he went."

"Orders from whom?" said the Varangian.

"From my master and yours," answered the negro, boldly.

"Thou infidel villain!" exclaimed the angry soldier, "when was it that we became fellow-servants, and who is it that thou darest to call my master?"

"One who is master of the world," said the slave, "since he commands his own passions."

"I shall scarce command mine," said the Varangian, "if thou repliest to my earnest questions with thine affected quirks of philosophy. Once more, what dost thou want with me? and why hast thou the boldness to watch me?"

"I have told thee already," said the slave, "that I do my master's commands."

"But I must know who thy master is," said Hereward.

"He must tell thee that himself," replied the negro; "he trusts not a poor slave like me with the purpose of the errands on which he sends me."

"He has left thee a tongue, however," said the Varangian, "which some of thy countrymen would. I think, be glad to possess. Do not provoke me to abridge it by refusing me the information which I have a right to demand."

The black meditated, as it seemed from the grin on his face, further evasions, when Hereward cut them short by raising the staff of his battle-axe. "Put me not" he said, "to dishonour myself by striking thee with this weapon, calculated for a use so much more noble."

"I may not do so, valiant sir," said the negro, laying aside an impudent, half-gibing tone which he had hitherto made use of, and betraying personal fear in his manner. "If you beat the poor slave to death, you cannot learn what his master hath forbid him to tell. A short walk will save your honour the stain, and yourself the trouble, of beating what cannot resist, and me the pain of enduring what I can neither retaliate nor avoid."

"Lead on then," said the Varangian. "Be assured thou shalt not fool me by thy fair words, and I will know the person who is impudent enough to assume the right of watching my motions."

The black walked on with a species of leer peculiar to his physiognomy, which might be construed as expressive either of malice or of mere humour. The Varangian followed him with some suspicion, for it happened that he had had little intercourse with the unhappy race of Africa, and had not totally overcome the feeling of surprise with which he had at first regarded them, when he arrived a stranger from the north. So often did this man look back upon him during their walk, and with so penetrating and observing a cast of countenance, that Hereward felt irresistibly renewed in his mind the English prejudices, which assigned to the demons the sable colour and distorted cast of visage of his conductor. The scene into which he was guided, strengthened an association which was not of itself unlikely to occur to the ignorant and martial islander.

The negro led the way from the splendid terraced walks which we have described, to a path descending to the sea-shore, when a place appeared, which, far from being trimmed, like other parts of the coast, into walks of embankments, seemed, on the contrary, abandoned to neglect, and was covered with the mouldering ruins of antiquity, where these had not been overgrown by the luxuriant vegetation of the climate. These fragments of building, occupying a sort of recess of the bay, were hidden by steep banks on each side, and although in fact they formed part of the city, yet they were not seen from any part of it, and, embosomed in the manner we have described, did not in turn command any view of the churches, palaces, towers, and fortifications, amongst which they lay. The sight of this solitary, and apparently deserted spot, encumbered with ruins, and overgrown with cypress and other trees, situated as it was in the midst of a populous city, had something in it impressive and awful to the imagination. The ruins were of an ancient date, and in the style of a foreign people. The gigantic remains of a portico, the mutilated fragments of statues of great size, but executed in a taste and attitude so narrow and barbaric as to seem perfectly the reverse of the Grecian, and the half-defaced hieroglyphics which could be traced on some part of the decayed sculpture, corroborated the popular account of their origin, which we shall briefly detail.

According to tradition, this had been a temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Cybele, built while the Roman Empire was yet heathen, and while Constantinople was still called by the name of Byzantium. It is well known that the superstition of the Egyptians — vulgarly gross in its literal meaning as well as in its mystical interpretation, and peculiarly the foundation of many wild doctrines — was disowned by the principles of general toleration, and the system of polytheism received by Rome, and was excluded by repeated laws from the respect paid by the empire to almost every other religion, however extravagant or absurd. Nevertheless, these Egyptian rites had charms for the curious and the superstitious, and had, after long opposition, obtained a footing in the empire.

Still, although tolerated, the Egyptian priests were rather considered as sorcerers than as pontiffs, and their whole ritual had a nearer relation, to magic in popular estimation, than to any regular system of devotion.

Stained with these accusations, even among the heathen themselves, the worship of Egypt was held in more mortal abhorrence by the Christians, than the other and more rational kinds of heathen devotion; that is, if any at all had a right to be termed so. The brutal worship of Apis and Cybele was regarded, not only as a pretext for obscene and profligate pleasures, but as having a direct tendency to open and encourage a dangerous commerce with evil spirits, who were supposed to take upon themselves, at these unhallowed altars, the names and characters of these foul deities. Not only, therefore, the temple of Cybele, with its gigantic portico, its huge and inelegant statues, and its fantastic hieroglyphics, was thrown down and defaced when the empire was converted to the Christian faith, but the very ground on which it stood was considered as polluted and unhallowed; and no Emperor having yet occupied the site with a Christian church, the place still remained neglected and deserted as we have described it.

The Varangian Hereward was perfectly acquainted with the evil reputation of the place; and when the negro seemed disposed to advance into the interior of the ruins, he hesitated, and addressed his guide thus:—"Hark thee, my black friend, these huge fantastic images, some having dogs' heads, some cows' heads, and some no heads at all, are not held reverently in popular estimation. Your own colour, also, my comrade, is greatly too like that of Satan himself, to render you an unsuspecting companion amid ruins, in which the false spirit, it is said, daily walks his rounds. Midnight and Noon are the times, it is rumoured, of his appearance. I will go no farther with you, unless you assign me a fit reason for so doing."

"In making so childish a proposal" said the negro, "you take from me, in effect, all desire to guide you to my master. I thought I spoke to a man of invincible courage, and of that good sense upon which courage is best founded. But your valour only emboldens you to beat a black slave, who has neither strength nor title to resist you; and your courage is not enough to enable you to look without trembling on the dark side of a wall, even when the sun is in the heavens."

"Thou art insolent," said Hereward, raising his axe.

"And thou art foolish," said the negro, "to attempt to prove thy manhood and thy wisdom by the very mode which gives reason for calling them both in question. I have already said there can be little valour in beating a wretch like me; and no man, surely, who wishes to discover his way, would begin by chasing away his guide."

"I follow thee" said Hereward, stung with the insinuation of cowardice; "but if thou leadest me into a snare, thy free talk shall not save thy bones, if a thousand of thy complexion, from earth or hell, were standing ready to back thee."

"Thou objectest sorely to my complexion," said the negro; "how knowest thou that it is, in fact, a thing to be counted and acted upon as matter of reality? Thine own eyes daily apprise thee, that the colour of the sky nightly changes from bright to black, yet thou knowest that this is by no means owing to any habitual colour of the heavens themselves. The same change that takes place in the hue of the heavens, has existence in the tinge of the deep sea — How canst thou tell, but what the difference of my colour from thine own may be owing to some deceptions change of a similar nature — not real in itself, but only creating an apparent reality?"

"Thou mayst have painted thyself, no doubt," answered the Varangian, upon reflection, "and thy blackness, therefore, may be only apparent; but I think thy old friend himself could hardly have presented these grinning lips, with the white teeth and flattened nose, so much to the life, unless that peculiarity of Nubian physiognomy, as they call it, had accurately and really an existence; and to save thee some trouble, my dark friend, I will tell thee, that though thou speakest to an uneducated Varangian, I am not entirely unskilled in the Grecian art of making subtle words pass upon the hearers instead of reason."

"Ay?" said the negro, doubtfully, and somewhat surprised; "and may the slave Diogenes — for so my master has christened me — enquire into the means by which you reached knowledge so unusual?"

"It is soon told," replied Hereward. "My countryman, Witikind, being a constable of our bands, retired from active service, and spent the end of a long life in this city of Constantinople. Being past all toils of battle, either those of reality, as you word it, or the pomp and fatigue of the exercising ground, the poor old man, in despair of something to pass his time, attended the lectures of the philosophers."

"And what did he learn there?" said the negro; "for a barbarian, grown grey under the helmet, was not, as I think, a very hopeful student in our schools."

"As much though, I should think, as a menial slave, which I understand to be thy condition," replied the soldier. "But I have understood from him, that the masters of this idle science make it their business to substitute, in their argumentations, mere words instead of ideas; and as they never agree upon the precise meaning of the former, their disputes can never arrive at a fair or settled conclusion, since they do not agree in the language in which they express them. Their theories, as they call them, are built on the sand, and the wind and tide shall prevail against them."

"Say so to my master," answered the black, in a serious tone.

"I will," said the Varangian; "and he shall know me as an ignorant soldier, having but few ideas, and those only concerning my religion and my military duty. But out of these opinions I will neither be beaten by a battery of sophisms, nor cheated by the arts or the terrors of the friends of heathenism, either in this world or the next."

"You may speak your mind to him then yourself," said Diogenes. He stepped aside as if to make way for the Varangian, to whom he motioned to go forward.

Hereward advanced accordingly, by a half-worn and almost imperceptible path leading through the long rough grass, and, turning round a half-demolished shrine, which exhibited the remains of Apis, the bovine deity, he came immediately in front of the philosopher, Agelastes, who, sitting among the ruins, reposed his limbs on the grass.

Chapter the Eighth.

*Through the vain webs which puzzle sophists' skill,
Plain sense and honest meaning work their way;
So sink the varying clouds upon the hill,
When the clear dawning — brightens into day.*

DR. WATTS.

The old man rose from the ground with alacrity, as Hereward approached. "My bold Varangian" he said, "thou who valuest men and things not according to the false estimate ascribed to them in this world, but to their real importance and actual value, thou art welcome, whatever has brought thee hither — thou art welcome to a place, where it is held the best business of philosophy to strip man of his borrowed ornaments, and reduce him to the just value of his own attributes of body and mind, singly considered."

"You are a courtier, sir," said the Saxon, "and as a permitted companion of the Emperor's Highness, you must be aware, that there are twenty times more ceremonies than such a man as I can be acquainted with, for regulating the different ranks in society; while a plain man like myself may be well excused from pushing himself into the company of those above him, where he does not exactly know how he should comport himself."

"True," said the philosopher; "but a man like yourself, noble Hereward, merits more consideration in the eyes of a real philosopher, than a thousand of those mere insects, whom the smiles of a court call into life, and whom its frowns reduce to annihilation."

"You are yourself, grave sir, a follower of the court," said Hereward.

"And a most punctilious one," said Agelastes. "There is not, I trust, a subject in the empire who knows better the ten thousand punctilios exigible from those of different ranks, and due to different authorities. The man is yet to be born who has seen me take advantage of any more commodious posture than that of standing in presence of the royal family. But though I use those false scales in society, and so far conform to its errors, my real judgment is of a more grave character, and more worthy of man, as said to be formed in the image of his Creator."

"There can be small occasion," said the Varangian, "to exercise your judgment in any respect upon me, nor am I desirous that any one should think of me otherwise than I am; a poor exile, namely, who endeavours to fix his faith upon Heaven, and to perform his duty to the world he lives in, and to the prince in whose service he is engaged. And now, grave sir, permit me to ask, whether this meeting is by your desire, and for what is its purpose? An African slave, whom I met in the public walks, and who calls himself Diogenes, tells me that you desired to speak with me; he hath somewhat the humour of the old scoffer, and so he may have lied. If so, I will even forgive him the beating which I owe his assurance, and make my excuse at the same time for having broken in upon your retirement, which I am totally unfit to share."

"Diogenes has not played you false," answered Agelastes; "he has his humours, as you remarked even now, and with these some qualities also that put him upon a level with those of fairer complexion and better features."

"And for what," said the Varangian, "have you so employed him? Can your wisdom possibly entertain a wish to converse with me?"

"I am an observer of nature and of humanity," answered the philosopher; "is it not natural that I should tire of those beings who are formed entirely upon artifice, and long to see something more fresh from the hand of nature?"

"You see not that in me," said the Varangian; "the rigour of military discipline, the camp — the centurion — the armour — frame a man's sentiments and limbs to them, as the sea-crab is framed to its shell. See one of us, and you see us all."

"Permit me to doubt that," said Agelastes; "and to suppose that in Hereward, the son of Waltheoff, I see an extraordinary man, although he himself may be ignorant, owing to his modesty, of the rarity of his own good qualities."

"The son of Waltheoff!" answered the Varangian, somewhat startled. — "Do you know my father's name?"

"Be not surprised," answered the philosopher, "at my possessing so simple a piece of information. It has cost me but little trouble to attain it, yet I would gladly hope that the labour I have taken in that matter may convince you of my real desire to call you friend."

"It was indeed an unusual compliment," said Hereward, "that a man of your knowledge and station should be at the trouble to enquire, among the Varangian cohorts, concerning the descent of one of their constables. I scarcely think that my commander, the Acolyte himself, would think such knowledge worthy of being collected or preserved."

"Greater men than he," said Agelastes, "certainly would not —— You know one in high office, who thinks the names of his most faithful soldiers of less moment than those of his hunting dogs or his hawks, and would willingly save himself the trouble of calling them otherwise than by a whistle."

"I may not hear this," answered the Varangian.

"I would not offend you," said the philosopher, "I would not even shake your good opinion of the person I allude to; yet it surprises me that such should be entertained by one of your great qualities."

"A truce with this, grave sir, which is in fact trifling in a person of your character and appearance," answered the Anglo-Saxon. "I am like the rocks of my country; the fierce winds cannot shake me, the soft rains cannot melt me; flattery and loud words are alike lost upon me."

"And it is even for that inflexibility of mind," replied Agelastes, "that steady contempt of every thing that approaches thee, save in the light of a duty, that I demand, almost like a beggar, that personal acquaintance, which thou refusest like a churl."

"Pardon me," said Hereward, "if I doubt this. Whatever stories you may have picked up concerning me, not unexaggerated probably — since the Greeks do not keep the privilege of boasting so entirely to themselves but the Varangians have learned a little of it — you can have heard nothing of me which can authorise your using your present language, excepting in jest."

"You mistake, my son," said Agelastes; "believe me not a person to mix in the idle talk respecting you, with your comrades at the ale-cup. Such as I am, I can strike on this broken image of Anubis" — (here he touched a gigantic fragment of a statue by his side) — "and bid the spirit who long prompted the oracle, descend, and once more reanimate the trembling mass. We that are initiated enjoy high privileges — we stamp upon those ruined vaults, and the echo which dwells there answers to our demand. Do not think, that although I crave thy friendship, I heed therefore supplicate thee for information either respecting thyself or others."

"Your words are wonderful," said the Anglo-Saxon; "but by such promising words I have heard that many souls have been seduced from the path of heaven. My grandsire, Kenelm, was wont to say, that the fair words of the heathen philosophy were more hurtful to the Christian faith than the menaces of the heathen tyrants."

"I know him," said Agelastes. "What avails it whether it was in the body or in the spirit? — He was converted from the faith of Woden by a noble monk, and died a priest at the shrine of saint Augustin."*

* At Canterbury.]

"True" — said Hereward; "all this is certain — and I am the rather bound to remember his words now that he is dead and gone. When I hardly knew his meaning, he bid me beware of the doctrine which causeth to err, which is taught by false prophets, who attest their doctrine by unreal miracles."

"This," said Agelastes, "is mere superstition. Thy grandsire was a good and excellent man, but narrow-minded, like other priests; and, deceived by their example, he wished but to open a small wicket in the gate of truth, and admit the world only on that limited scale. Seest thou, Hereward, thy grandsire and most men of religion would fain narrow our intellect to the consideration of such parts of the Immaterial world as are essential to our moral guidance here, and our final salvation hereafter; but it is not the less true, that man has liberty, provided he has wisdom and courage, to form intimacies with beings more powerful than himself, who can defy the bounds of space by which he is circumscribed, and overcome, by their metaphysical powers, difficulties which, to the timid and unlearned, may appear wild and impossible."

"You talk of a folly," answered Hereward, "at which childhood gapes and manhood smiles."

"On the contrary," said the sage, "I talk of a longing wish which every man feels at the bottom of his heart, to hold communication with beings more powerful than himself, and who are not naturally accessible to our organs. Believe me, Hereward, so ardent and universal an aspiration had not existed in our bosoms, had there not also been means, if steadily and wisely sought, of attaining its accomplishment. I will appeal to thine own heart, and prove to thee even by a single word, that what I say is truth. Thy thoughts are even now upon a being long absent or dead, and with the name of BERTHA, a thousand emotions rush to thy heart, which in thy ignorance thou hadst esteemed furled up for ever, like spoils of the dead hung above a tombstone! — Thou startest and changest thy colour — I joy to see by these signs, that the firmness and indomitable courage which men ascribe to thee, have left the avenues of the heart as free as ever to kindly and to generous affections, while they have barred them against those of fear, uncertainty, and all the caitiff tribe of meatier sensations. I have proffered to esteem thee, and I have no hesitation in proving it. I will tell thee, If thou desirest to know it, the fate of that very Bertha, whose memory thou hast cherished in thy breast in spite of thee, amidst the toil of the day and the repose of the night, in the battle and in the truce, when sporting with thy companions in fields of exercise, or attempting to prosecute the study of Greek learning, in which if thou wouldst advance, I can teach it by a short road."

While Agelastes thus spoke, the Varangian in some degree recovered his composure, and made answer, though his voice was somewhat tremulous — "Who thou art, I know not — what thou wouldst with me, I cannot tell — by what means thou hast gathered intelligence of such consequence to me, and of so little to another, I have no conception — But this I know, that by intention or accident, thou hast pronounced a name which agitates my heart to its deepest recesses; yet am I a Christian and Varangian, and neither to my God nor to my adopted prince will I willingly stagger in my faith. What is to be wrought by idols or by false deities, must be a treason to the real divinity. Nor is it less certain that thou hast let glance some arrows, though the rules of thy allegiance strictly forbid it, at the Emperor himself. Henceforward, therefore, I refuse to communicate with thee, be it for weal or woe. I am the Emperor's waged soldier, and although I affect not the nice precisions of respect and obedience, which are exacted in so many various cases, and by so many various rules, yet I am his defence, and my battle-axe is his body-guard."

"No one doubts it," said the philosopher. "But art not thou also bound to a nearer dependence upon' the great Acolyte, Achilles Tatius?"

"No. He is my general, according to the rules of our service," answered the Varangian; "to me he has always shown himself a kind and good-natured man, and, his dues of rank apart, I may say has deported himself as a friend rather than a commander. He is, however, my master's servant as well as I am; nor do I hold the difference of great amount, which the word of a man can give or take away at pleasure."

"It is nobly spoken," said Agelastes; "and you yourself are surely entitled to stand erect before one whom you supersede in courage and in the art of war."

"Pardon me," returned the Briton, "if I decline the attributed compliment, as what in no respect belongs to me. The Emperor chooses his own officers, in respect of their power of serving him as he desires to be served. In this it is likely I might fail; I have said already, I owe my Emperor my obedience, my duty, and my service, nor does it seem to me necessary to carry our explanation farther."

"Singular man!" said Agelastes; "is there nothing than can move thee but things that are foreign to thyself? The name of thy Emperor and thy commander are no spell upon thee, and even that of the object thou has loved" —

Here the Varangian interrupted him.

"I have thought," he said, "upon the words thou hast spoken — thou hast found the means to shake my heart-strings, but not to unsettle my principles. I will hold no converse with thee on a matter in which thou canst not have interest. — Necromancers, it is said, perform their spells by means of the epithets of the Holiest; no marvel, then, should they use the names of the purest of his creation to serve their unhallowed purposes. I will none of such truckling, disgraceful to the dead perhaps as to the living. Whatever has been thy purpose, old man — for, think not thy strange words have passed unnoticed — be thou assured I bear that in my heart which defies alike the seduction of men and of fiends."

With this the soldier turned, and left the ruined temple, after a slight inclination of his head to the philosopher.

Agelastes, after the departure of the soldier, remained alone, apparently absorbed in meditation, until he was suddenly disturbed by the entrance, into the ruins, of Achilles Tatius. The leader of the Varangians spoke not until he had time to form some result from the philosopher's features. He then said, "Thou remainest, sage Agelastes, confident in the purpose of which we have lately spoke together?"

"I do," said Agelastes, with gravity and firmness.

"But," replied Achilles Tatius, "thou hast not gained to our side that proselyte, whose coolness and courage would serve us better in our hour of need than the service of a thousand cold-hearted slaves?"

"I have not succeeded," answered the philosopher.

"And thou dost not blush to own it?" said the imperial officer in reply.

"Thou, the wisest of those who yet pretend to Grecian wisdom, the most powerful of those who still assert the skill by words, signs, names, periapts, and spells, to exceed the sphere to which thy faculties belong, hast been foiled in thy trade of persuasion, like an infant worsted in debate with its domestic tutor? Out upon thee, that thou canst not sustain in argument the character which thou wouldst so fain, assume to thyself!"

"Peace!" said the Grecian. "I have as yet gained nothing, it is true, over this obstinate and inflexible man; but, Achilles Tatius, neither have I lost. We both stand where yesterday we did, with this advantage on my side, that I have suggested to him such an object of interest as he shall never be able to expel from his mind, until he hath had recourse to me to obtain farther knowledge concerning it. — And now let this singular person remain for a time unmentioned; yet, trust me, though flattery, avarice, and ambition may fail to gain him, a bait nevertheless remains, that shall make him as completely our own as any that is bound within our mystic and inviolable contract. Tell me then, how go on the affairs of the empire? Does this tide of Xiatin warriors, so strangely set aflowing, still rush on to the banks of the Bosphorus? and does Alexius still entertain hopes to diminish and divide the strength of numbers, which he could in vain hope to defy?"

"Something further of intelligence has been gained, even within a very few hours," answered Achilles Tatius. "Bohemond came to the city with some six or eight light horse, and in a species of disguise. Considering how often he had been the Emperor's enemy, his project was a perilous one. But when is it that these Franks draw back on account of danger? The Emperor perceived at once that the Count was come to see what he might obtain, by presenting himself as the very first object of his liberality, and by offering his assistance as mediator with Godfrey of Bouillon and the other princes of the crusade."

"It is a species of policy," answered the sage, "for which he would receive full credit from the Emperor."

Achilles Tatius proceeded:—"Count Bohemond was discovered to the imperial court as if it were by mere accident, and he was welcomed with marks of favour and splendour which had never been even mentioned as being fit for any one of the Frankish race. There was no word of ancient enmity or of former wars, no mention of Bohemond as the ancient usurper of Antioch, and the encroacher upon the empire. But thanks to Heaven were returned on all sides, which had sent a faithful ally to the imperial assistance at a moment of such imminent peril."

"And what said Bohemond?" enquired the philosopher.

"Little or nothing," said the captain of the Varangians, "until, as I learned from the domestic slave Narses, a large sum of gold had been abandoned to him. Considerable districts were afterwards agreed to be ceded to him, and other advantages granted, on condition he should stand on this occasion the steady friend of the empire and its master. Such was the Emperor's munificence towards the greedy barbarian, that a chamber in the palace was, by chance, as it were, left exposed to his view, containing large quantities of manufactured silks, of jewellers' work, of gold and silver, and other articles of great value. When the rapacious Frank could not forbear some expressions of admiration, he was assured, that the contents of the treasure-chamber were his own, provided he valued them as showing forth the warmth and sincerity of his imperial ally towards his friends; and these precious articles were accordingly conveyed to the tent of the Norman leader. By such measures, the Emperor must make himself master of Bohemond, both body and soul, for the Franks themselves say it is strange to see a man of undaunted bravery, and towering ambition, so infected, nevertheless, with avarice, which they term a mean and unnatural vice."

"Bohemond," said Agelastes, "is then the Emperor's for life and death — always, that is, till the recollection of the royal munificence be effaced by a greater gratuity. Alexius, proud as he naturally is of his management with this important chieftain, will no doubt expect to prevail by his counsels, on most of the other crusaders, and even on Godfrey of Bouillon himself, to take an oath of submission and fidelity to the Emperor, which, were it not for the sacred nature of their warfare, the meanest gentleman among them would not submit to, were it to be lord of a province. There, then, we rest. A few days must determine what we have to do. An earlier discovery would be destruction."

"We meet not then to-night?" said the Acolyte.

"No," replied the sage; "unless we are summoned to that foolish stage-play or recitation; and then we meet as playthings in the hand of a silly woman, the spoiled child of a weak-minded parent."

Tatius then took his leave of the philosopher, and, as if fearful of being seen in each other's company, they left their solitary place of meeting by different routes. The Varangian, Hereward, received, shortly after, a summons from his superior, who acquainted him, that he should not, as formerly intimated, require his attendance that evening.

Achilles then paused, and added — "Thou hast something on thy lips thou wouldst say to me, which, nevertheless hesitates to break forth."

"It is only this," answered the soldier: "I have had an interview with the man called Agelastes, and he seems something so different from what he appeared when we last spoke of him, that I cannot forbear mentioning to you what I have seen. He is not an insignificant trifler, whose object it is to raise a laugh at his own expense, or that of any other. He is a deep-thinking and far-reaching man, who, for some reason or other, is desirous of forming friends, and drawing a party to himself. Your own wisdom will teach you to beware of him."

"Thou art an honest fellow, my poor Hereward," said Achilles Tatius, with an affectation of good-natured contempt. "Such men as Agelastes do often frame their severest jests in the shape of formal gravity — they will pretend to possess the most unbounded power over elements and elemental spirits — they will make themselves masters of the names and anecdotes best known to those whom they make their sport; and any one who shall listen to them, shall, in the words of the Divine Homer, only expose himself to a flood of inextinguishable laughter. I have often known him select one of the rawest and most ignorant persons in presence, and to him for the amusement of the rest, he has pretended to cause the absent to appear, the distant to draw near, and the dead themselves to burst the cerements of the grave. Take care, Hereward, that his arts make not a stain on the credit of one of my bravest Varangians."

"There is no danger," answered Hereward. "I shall not be fond of being often with this man. If he jests upon one subject which he hath mentioned to me, I shall be but too likely to teach him seriousness after a rough manner. And if he is serious in his pretensions in such mystical matters, we should, according to the faith of my grandfather, Kenelm, do insult to the deceased, whose name is taken in the mouth of a soothsayer, or impious enchanter. I will not, therefore, again go near this Agelastes, be he wizard, or be he impostor."

"You apprehend me not," said the Acolyte, hastily; "you mistake my meaning. He is a man from whom, if he pleases to converse with such as you, you may derive much knowledge; keeping out of the reach of those pretended secret arts, which he will only use to turn thee into ridicule." With these words, which he himself would perhaps have felt it difficult to reconcile, the leader and his follower parted.

Chapter the Ninth.

*Between the foaming jaws of the white torrent,
The skilful artist draws a sudden mound;
By level long he subdivides their strength,
Stealing the waters from their rocky bed,
First to diminish what he means to conquer;
Then, for the residue he forms a road,
Easy to keep, and painful to desert,*

It would have been easy for Alexius, by a course of avowed suspicion, or any false step in the manner of receiving this tumultuary invasion of the European nations, to have blown into a flame the numerous but smothered grievances under which they laboured; and a similar catastrophe would not have been less certain, had he at once abandoned all thoughts of resistance, and placed his hope of safety in surrendering to the multitudes of the west whatsoever they accounted worth taking. The Emperor chose a middle course; and, unquestionably, in the weakness of the Greek empire, it was the only one which would have given him at once safety, and a great degree of consequence in the eyes of the Frank invaders and those of his own subjects. The means with, which he acted were of various kinds, and, rather from policy than inclination, were often stained with falsehood or meanness; therefore it follows that the measures of the Emperor resembled those of the snake, who twines himself through the grass, with the purpose of stinging insidiously those whom he fears to approach with the step of the bold and generous lion. We are not, however, writing the History of the Crusades, and what we have already said of the Emperor's precautions on the first appearance of Godfrey of Bouillon, and his associates, may suffice for the elucidation of our story.

About four weeks had now passed over, marked by quarrels and reconcilements between the crusaders and the Grecians of the empire. The former were, as Alexius's policy dictated, occasionally and individually, received with extreme honour, and their leaders loaded with respect and favour; while, from time to time, such bodies of them as sought distant or circuitous routes to the capital, were intercepted and cut to pieces by light-armed troops, who easily passed upon their ignorant opponents for Turks, Scythians, or other infidels, and sometimes were actually such, but in the service of the Grecian monarch. Often, too, it happened, that while the more powerful chiefs of the crusade were feasted by the Emperor and his ministers with the richest delicacies, and their thirst slaked with iced wines, their followers were left at a distance, where, intentionally supplied with adulterated flour, tainted provisions, and bad water, they contracted diseases, and died in great numbers, without having once seen a foot of the Holy Land, for the recovery of which they had abandoned their peace, their competence, and their native country. These aggressions did not pass without complaint. Many of the crusading chiefs impugned the fidelity of their allies, exposed the losses sustained by their armies as evils voluntarily inflicted on them by the Greeks, and on more than one occasion, the two nations stood opposed to each other on such terms that a general war seemed to be inevitable.

Alexius, however, though obliged to have recourse to every finesse, still kept his ground, and made peace with the most powerful chiefs, under one pretence or other. The actual losses of the crusaders by the sword he imputed to their own aggressions — their misguidance, to accident and to wilfulness — the effects produced on them by the adulterated provisions, to the vehemence of their own appetite for raw fruits and unripened wines. In short, there was no disaster of any kind whatsoever which could possibly befall the unhappy pilgrims, but the Emperor stood prepared to prove that it was the natural consequence of their own violence, wilfulness of conduct, or hostile precipitancy.

The chiefs, who were not ignorant of their strength, would not, it was likely, have tamely suffered injuries from a power so inferior to their own, were it not that they had formed extravagant ideas of the wealth of the Eastern empire, which Alexius seemed willing to share with them with an excess of bounty as new to the leaders as the rich productions of the East were tempting to their followers.

The French nobles would perhaps have been the most difficult to be brought into order when differences arose; but an accident, which the Emperor might have termed providential, reduced the high-spirited Count of Vermandois to the situation, of a suppliant, when he expected to hold that of a dictator. A fierce tempest surprised his fleet after he set sail from Italy, and he was finally driven on the coast of Greece. Many ships were destroyed, and those troops who got ashore were so much distressed, that they were obliged to surrender themselves to the lieutenants of Alexius. So that the Count of Vermandois, so haughty in his bearing when he first embarked, was sent to the court of Constantinople, not as a prince, but as a prisoner. In this case, the Emperor instantly set the soldiers at liberty, and loaded them with presents.*

* See Mills' History of the Crusades, vol. i, p. 96]

Grateful, therefore, for attentions in which Alexius was unremitting, Count Hugh was by gratitude as well as interest, inclined to join the opinion of those who, for other reasons, desired the subsistence of peace betwixt the crusaders and the empire of Greece. A better principle determined the celebrated Godfrey, Raymond of Thoulouse, and some others, in whom devotion was something more than a mere burst of fanaticism. These princes considered with what scandal their whole journey must be stained, if the first of their exploits should be a war upon the Grecian empire, which might justly be called the barrier of Christendom. If it was weak, and at the same time rich — if at the same time it invited rapine, and was unable to protect itself against it — it was the more their interest and duty, as Christian soldiers, to protect a Christian state, whose existence was of so much consequence to the common cause, even when it could not defend itself. It was the wish of these frank-hearted men to receive the Emperor's professions of friendship with such sincere returns of amity — to return his kindness with so much usury, as to convince him that their purpose towards him was in every respect fair and honourable, and that it would be his interest to abstain from every injurious treatment which might induce or compel them to alter their measures towards him.

It was with this accommodating spirit towards Alexius, which, for many different and complicated reasons, had now animated most of the crusaders, that the chiefs consented to a measure which, in other circumstances, they would probably have refused, as undue to the Greeks, and dishonourable to themselves. This was the famous resolution, that, before crossing the Bosphorus to go in quest of that Palestine which they had vowed to regain, each chief of crusaders would acknowledge individually the Grecian Emperor, originally lord paramount of all these regions, as their liege lord and suzerain.

The Emperor Alexius, with trembling joy, beheld the crusaders approach a conclusion to which he had hoped to bribe them rather by interested means than by reasoning, although much might be said why provinces reconquered from the Turks or Saracens should, if recovered from the infidel, become again a part of the Grecian empire, from which they had been rent without any pretence, save that of violence.

Though fearful, and almost despairing of being able to manage the rude and discordant army of haughty chiefs, who were wholly independent of each other, Alexius failed not, with eagerness and dexterity, to seize upon the admission of Godfrey and his compeers, that the Emperor was entitled to the allegiance of all who should war on Palestine, and natural lord paramount of all the conquests which should be made in the course of the expedition. He was resolved to make this ceremony so public, and to interest men's minds in it by such a display of the imperial pomp and munificence, that it should not either pass unknown, or be readily forgotten.

An extensive terrace, one of the numerous spaces which extend along the coast of the Propontis, was chosen for the site of the magnificent ceremony. Here was placed an elevated and august throne, calculated for the use of the Emperor alone. On this occasion, by suffering no other seats within view of the pageant, the Greeks endeavoured to secure a point of ceremony peculiarly dear to their vanity, namely, that none of that presence, save the Emperor himself, should be seated. Around the throne of Alexius Comnenus were placed in order, but standing, the various dignitaries of his splendid court, in their different ranks, from the Protosebastos and the Caesar, to the Patriarch, splendid in his ecclesiastical robes, and to Agelastes, who, in his simple habit, gave also the necessary attendance. Behind and around the splendid display of the Emperor's court, were drawn many dark circles of the exiled Anglo-Saxons. These, by their own desire, were not, on that memorable day, accoutred in the silver corslets which were the fashion of an idle court, but sheathed in mail and plate. They desired, they said, to be known as warriors to warriors. This was the more readily granted, as there was no knowing what trifle might infringe a truce between parties so inflammable as were now assembled.

Beyond the Varangians, in much greater numbers, were drawn up the bands of Grecians, or Romans, then known by the title of Immortals, which had been borrowed by the Romans originally from the empire of Persia. The stately forms, lofty crests, and splendid apparel of these guards, would have given the foreign princes present a higher idea of their military prowess, had there not occurred in their ranks a frequent indication of loquacity and of motion, forming a strong contrast to the steady composure and death-like silence with which the well-trained Varangians stood in the parade, like statues made of iron.

The reader must then conceive this throne in all the pomp of Oriental greatness, surrounded by the foreign and Roman troops of the empire, and closed on the rear by clouds of light-horse, who shifted their places repeatedly, so as to convey an idea of their multitude, without affording the exact means of estimating it.

Through the dust which they raised by these evolutions, might be seen banners and standards, among which could be discovered by glances, the celebrated LABARUM,* the pledge of conquest to the imperial banners, but whose sacred efficacy had somewhat failed of late days. The rude soldiers of the West, who viewed the Grecian army, maintained that the standards which were exhibited in front of their line, were at least sufficient for the array of ten times the number of soldiers.

Ducange fills half a column of his huge page with the mere names of the authors who have written at length on the *Labarum*, or principal standard of the empire for the time of Constantine. It consisted of a spear of silver, or plated with that metal, having suspended from, a cross beam below the spoke a small square silken banner, adorned with portraits of the reigning family, and over these the famous Monogram which expresses at once the figure of the cross and the initial letters of the name of Christ. The bearer of the *Labarum* was an officer of high rank down to the last days of the Byzantine government. — See Gibbon, chap. 20.

Ducange seems to have proved, from the evidence of coins and triumphal monuments, that a standard of the form of the *Labarum* was used by various barbarous nations long before it was adopted by their Roman conquerors, and he is of opinion that its name also was borrowed from either Teutonic Germany, or Celtic Gaul, or Sclavonic Illyria. It is certain that either the German language or the Welsh may afford at this day a perfectly satisfactory etymon: *Lap-heer* in the former and *Lab-hair* in the latter, having precisely the same meaning — *the cloth of the host*.

The form of the *Labarum* may still be recognised in the banners carried in ecclesiastical processions in all Roman Catholic countries.]

Far on the right, the appearance of a very large body of European cavalry drawn up on the sea-shore, intimated the presence of the crusaders. So great was the desire to follow the example of the chief Princes, Dukes, and Counts, in making the proposed fealty, that the number of independent knights and nobles who were to perform this service, seemed very great when collected together for that purpose; for every crusader who possessed a tower, and led six lances, would have thought himself abridged of his dignity if he had not been called to acknowledge the Grecian Emperor, and hold the lands he should conquer of his throne, as well as Godfrey of Bouillon, or Hugh the Great, Count of Vermandois. And yet, with strange inconsistency, though they pressed to fulfil the homage, as that which was paid by greater persons than themselves, they seemed, at the very same time, desirous to find some mode of intimating that the homage which they rendered they felt as an idle degradation, and in fact held the whole show as a mere piece of mockery.

The order of the procession had been thus settled:— The Crusaders, or, as the Grecians called them, the *Counts* — that being the most common title among them — were to advance from the left of their body, and passing the Emperor one by one, were apprized, that, in passing, each was to render to him, in as few words as possible, the homage which had been previously agreed on. Godfrey of Bouillon, his brother Baldwin, Bohemond of Antioch, and several other crusaders of eminence, were the first to perform the ceremony, alighting when their own part was performed, and remaining in attendance by the Emperor's chair, to prevent, by the awe of their presence, any of their numerous associates from being guilty of petulance or presumption during the solemnity. Other crusaders of less degree retained their station near the Emperor, when they had once gained it, out of mere curiosity, or to show that they were as much at liberty to do so as the greater commanders who assumed that privilege.

Thus two great bodies of troops, Grecian and European, paused at some distance from each other on the banks of the Bosphorus canal, differing in language, arms, and appearance. The small troops of horse which from time to time issued forth from these bodies, resembled the flashes of lightning passing from one thunder-cloud to another, which communicate to each other by such emissaries their overcharged contents. After some halt on the margin of the Bosphorus, the Franks who had performed homage, straggled irregularly forward to a quay on the shore, where innumerable galleys and smaller vessels, provided for the purpose, lay with sails and oars prepared to waft the warlike pilgrims across the passage, and place them on that Asia which they longed so passionately to visit, and from which but few of them were likely to return. The gay appearance of the vessels which were to receive them, the readiness with which they were supplied with refreshments, the narrowness of the strait they had to cross, the near approach of that active service which they had vowed and longed to discharge, put the warriors into gay spirits, and songs and music bore chorus to the departing oars.

While such was the temper of the crusaders, the Grecian Emperor did his best through the whole ceremonial to impress on the armed multitude the highest ideas of his own grandeur, and the importance of the occasion which had brought them together. This was readily admitted by the higher chiefs; some because their vanity had been propitiated — some because their avarice had been gratified — some because their ambition had been inflamed — and a few, a very few, because to remain friends with Alexius was the most probable means of advancing the purposes of their expedition. Accordingly the great lords, from these various motives, practised a humility which perhaps they were far from feeling, and carefully abstained from all which might seem like irreverence at the solemn festival of the Grecians. But there were very many of a different temper.

Of the great number of counts, lords, and knights, under whose variety of banners the crusaders were led to the walls of Constantinople, many were too insignificant to be bribed to this distasteful measure of homage; and these, though they felt it dangerous to oppose resistance, yet mixed their submission with taunts, ridicule, and such contraventions of decorum, as plainly intimated that they entertained resentment and scorn at the step they were about to take, and esteemed it as proclaiming themselves vassals to a prince, heretic in his faith, limited in the exercise of his boasted power, their enemy when he dared to show himself such, and the friend of those only among their number, who were able to compel him to be so; and who, though to them an obsequious ally, was to the others, when occasion offered, an insidious and murderous enemy.

The nobles of Frankish origin and descent were chiefly remarkable for their presumptuous contempt of every other nation engaged in the crusade, as well as for their dauntless bravery, and for the scorn with which they regarded the power and authority of the Greek empire. It was a common saying among them, that if the skies should fall, the French crusaders alone were able to hold them up with their lances. The same bold and arrogant disposition showed itself in occasional quarrels with their unwilling hosts, in which the Greeks, notwithstanding all their art, were often worsted; so that Alexius was determined, at all events, to get rid of these intractable and fiery allies, by ferrying them over the Bosphorus with all manner of diligence. To do this with safety, he availed himself of the presence of the Count of Vermandois, Godfrey of Bouillon, and other chiefs of great influence, to keep in order the lesser Frankish knights, who were so numerous and unruly.*

* See Mills, vol. i. chap. 3.]

Struggling with his feelings of offended pride, tempered by a prudent degree of apprehension, the Emperor endeavoured to receive with complacence a homage tendered in mockery. An incident shortly took place of a character highly descriptive of the nations brought together in so extraordinary a manner, and with such different feelings and sentiments. Several bands of French had passed, in a sort of procession, the throne of the Emperor, and rendered, with some appearance of gravity, the usual homage. On this occasion they bent their knees to Alexius, placed their hands within his, and in that posture paid the ceremonies of feudal fealty. But when it came to the turn of Bohemond of Antioch, already mentioned, to render this fealty, the Emperor, desirous to show every species of honour to this wily person, his former enemy, and now apparently his ally, advanced two or three paces towards the sea-side, where the boats lay as if in readiness for his use.

The distance to which the Emperor moved was very small, and it was assumed as a piece of deference to Bohemond; but it became the means of exposing Alexius himself to a cutting affront, which his guards and subjects felt deeply, as an intentional humiliation. A half score of horsemen, attendants of the Frankish Count who was next to perform the homage, with their lord at their head, set off at full gallop from the right flank of the French squadrons, and arriving before the throne, which was yet empty, they at once halted. The rider at the head of the band was a strong herculean figure, with a decided and stern countenance, though extremely handsome, looking out from thick black curls. His head was surmounted with a barret cap, while his hands, limbs, and feet were covered with garments of chamois leather, over which he in general wore the ponderous and complete armour of his country. This, however, he had laid aside for personal convenience, though in doing so he evinced a total neglect of the ceremonial which marked so important a meeting. He waited not a moment for the Emperor's return, nor regarded the impropriety of obliging Alexius to hurry his steps back to his throne, but sprung from his gigantic horse, and threw the reins loose, which were instantly seized by one of the attendant pages. Without a moment's hesitation the Frank seated himself in the vacant throne of the Emperor, and extending his half-armed and robust figure on the golden cushions which were destined for Alexius, he indolently began to caress a large wolf-hound which had followed him,

and which, feeling itself as much at ease as its master, reposed its grim form on the carpets of silk and gold damask, which tapestried the imperial foot-stool. The very hound stretched itself with a bold, ferocious insolence, and seemed to regard no one with respect, save the stern knight whom it called master.

The Emperor, turning back from the short space which, as a special mark of favour, he had accompanied Bohemond, beheld with astonishment his seat occupied by this insolent Frank. The bands of the half-savage Varangians who were stationed around, would not have hesitated an instant in avenging the insult, by prostrating the violator of their master's throne even in this act of his contempt, had they not been restrained by Achilles Tatius and other officers, who were uncertain what the Emperor would do, and somewhat timorous of taking a resolution for themselves.

Meanwhile, the unceremonious knight spoke aloud, in a speech which, though provincial, might be understood by all to whom the French language was known, while even those who understood it not, gathered its interpretation from his tone and manner. "What churl is this," he said, "who has remained sitting stationary like a block of wood, or the fragment of a rock, when so many noble knights, the flower of chivalry and muster of gallantry, stand uncovered around, among the thrice conquered Varangians?"

A deep, clear accent replied, as if from the bottom of the earth, so like it was to the accents of some being from the other world — "If the Normans desire battle of the Varangians, they will meet them in the lists man to man, without the poor boast of insulting the Emperor of Greece, who is well known to fight only by the battle-axes of his guard."

The astonishment was so great when this answer was heard, as to affect even the knight, whose insult upon the Emperor had occasioned it; and amid the efforts of Achilles to retain his soldiers within the bounds of subordination and silence, a loud murmur seemed to intimate that they would not long remain so. Bohemond returned through the press with a celerity which did not so well suit the dignity of Alexius, and catching the crusader by the arm, he, something between fair means and a gentle degree of force, obliged him to leave the chair of the Emperor, in which he had placed himself so boldly.

"How is it," said Bohemond, "noble Count of Paris? Is there one of this great assembly who can see with patience, that your name, so widely renowned for valour, is now to be quoted in an idle brawl with hirelings, whose utmost boast it is to bear a mercenary battle-axe in the ranks of the Emperor's guards? For shame — for shame — do not, for the discredit of Norman chivalry, let it be so!"

"I know not," said the crusader, rising reluctantly — "I am not nice in choosing the degree of my adversary, when he bears himself like one who is willing and forward in battle. I am good-natured, I tell thee, Count Bohemond; and Turk or Tartar, or wandering Anglo-Saxon, who only escapes from the chain of the Normans to become the slave of the Greek, is equally welcome to whet his blade clean against my armour, if he desires to achieve such an honourable office."

The Emperor had heard what passed — had heard it with indignation, mixed with fear; for he imagined the whole scheme of his policy was about to be overturned at once by a premeditated plan of personal affront, and probably an assault upon his person. He was about to call to arms, when, casting his eyes on the right flank of the crusaders, he saw that all remained quiet after the Frank Baron had transferred himself from thence. He therefore instantly resolved to let the insult pass, as one of the rough pleasantries of the Franks, since the advance of more troops did not give any symptom of an actual onset.

Resolving on his line of conduct with the quickness of thought, he glided back to his canopy, and stood beside his throne, of which, however, he chose not instantly to take possession, lest he should give the insolent stranger some ground for renewing and persisting in a competition for it.

"What bold Vavasour is this," said he to Count Baldwin, "whom, as is apparent from his dignity, I ought to have received seated upon my throne, and who thinks proper thus to vindicate his rank?"

"He is reckoned one of the bravest men in our host," answered Baldwin, "though the brave are as numerous there as the sands of the sea. He will himself tell you his name and rank."

Alexius looked at the Vavasour. He saw nothing in his large, well-formed features, lighted by a wild touch of enthusiasm which spoke in his quick eye, that intimated premeditated insult, and was induced to suppose that what had occurred, so contrary to the form and ceremonial of the Grecian court, was neither an intentional affront, nor designed as the means of introducing a quarrel. He therefore spoke with comparative ease, when he addressed the stranger thus:—"We know not by what dignified name to salute you: but we are aware, from Count Baldwin's information, that we are honoured in having in our presence one of the bravest knights whom a sense of the wrongs done to the Holy Land has brought thus far on his way to Palestine, to free it from its bondage."

"If you mean to ask my name," answered the European knight, "any one of these pilgrims can readily satisfy you, and more gracefully than I can myself; since we use to say in our country, that many a fierce quarrel is prevented from being fought out by an untimely disclosure of names, when men, who might have fought with the fear of God before their eyes, must, when their names are manifested, recognise each other as spiritual allies, by baptism, gossiped, or some such irresistible bond of friendship; whereas, had they fought first and told their names afterwards, they could have had some assurance of each other's valour, and have been able to view their relationship as an honour to both."

"Still," said the Emperor, "methinks I would know if you, who, in this extraordinary press of knights, seem to assert a precedence to yourself, claim the dignity due to a king or prince?"

"How speak you that?" said the Frank, with a brow somewhat over-clouded; "do you feel that I have not left you unjustled by my advance to these squadrons of yours?"

Alexius hastened to answer, that he felt no particular desire to connect the Count with an affront or offence; observing, that in the extreme necessity of the Empire, it was no time for him, who was at the helm, to engage in idle or unnecessary quarrels.

The Frankish knight heard him, and answered drily — "Since such are your sentiments, I wonder that you have ever resided long enough within the hearing of the French language to learn to speak it as you do. I would have thought some of the sentiments of the chivalry of the nation, since you are neither a monk nor a woman, would, at the same time with the words of the dialect, have found their way into your heart." "Hush, Sir Count," said Bohemond, who remained by the Emperor to avert the threatening quarrel. "It is surely requisite to answer the Emperor with civility; and those who are impatient for warfare, will have infidels enough to wage it with. He only demanded your name and lineage, which you of all men can have the least objection to disclose."

"I know not if it will interest this prince, or Emperor as you term him," answered the Frank Count; "but all the account I can give of myself is this:— In the midst of one of the vast forests which, occupy the centre of France, my native country, there stands a chapel, sunk so low into the ground, that it seems as if it were become decrepid by its own great age. The image of the Holy Virgin who presides over its altar, is called by all men our Lady of the Broken Lances, and is accounted through the whole kingdom the most celebrated for military adventures. Four beaten roads, each leading from an opposite point in the compass, meet before the principal door of the chapel; and ever and anon, as a good knight arrives at this place, he passes in to the performance of his devotions in the chapel, having first sounded his horn three times, till ash and oak-tree quiver and ring. Having then kneeled down to his devotions, he seldom arises from the mass of Her of the Broken Lances, but there is attending on his leisure some adventurous knight ready to satisfy the new comer's desire of battle. This station have I held for a month and more against all comers, and all gave me fair thanks for the knightly manner of quitting myself towards them, except one, who had the evil hap to fall from his horse, and did break his neck; and another, who was struck through the body, so that the lance came out behind his back about a cloth-yard, all dripping with blood. Allowing for such accidents, which cannot easily be avoided, my opponents parted with me with fair acknowledgment of the grace I had done them."

"I conceive, Sir Knight," said the Emperor, "that a form like yours, animated by the courage you display, is likely to find few equals even among your adventurous countrymen; far less among men who are taught that to cast away their lives in a senseless quarrel among themselves, is to throw away, like a boy, the gift of Providence."

"You are welcome to your opinion," said the Frank, somewhat contemptuously; "yet I assure you, if you doubt that our gallant strife was unmixed with sullenness and anger, and that we hunt not the hart or the boar with merrier hearts in the evening, than we discharge our task of chivalry by the morn had arisen, before the portal of the old chapel, you do us foul injustice."

"With the Turks you will not enjoy this amiable exchange of courtesies," answered Alexius. "Wherefore I would advise you neither to stray far into the van nor into the rear, but to abide by the standard where the best infidels make their efforts, and the best knights are required to repel them."

"By our Lady of the Broken Lances," said the Crusader, "I would not that the Turks were more courteous than they are Christian, and am well pleased that unbeliever and heathen hound are a proper description for the best of them, as being traitor alike to their God and to the laws of chivalry; and devoutly do I trust that I shall meet with them in the front rank of our army, beside our standard, or elsewhere, and have an open field to my devoir against them, both as the enemies of our Lady and the holy saints, and as, by their evil customs, more expressly my own. Meanwhile you have time to seat yourself and receive my homage, and I will be bound to you for despatching this foolish ceremony with as little waste and delay of time as the occasion will permit."

The Emperor hastily seated himself, and received into his the sinewy hands of the Crusader, who made the acknowledgment of his homage, and was then guided off by Count Baldwin, who walked with the stranger to the ships, and then, apparently well pleased at seeing him in the course of going on board, returned back to the side of the Emperor.

"What is the name," said the Emperor, "of that singular and assuming man?"

"It is Robert, Count of Paris," answered Baldwin, "accounted one of the bravest peers who stand around the throne of France."

After a moment's recollection, Alexius Comnenus issued orders, that the ceremonial of the day should be discontinued, afraid, perhaps, lest the rough and careless humour of the strangers should produce some new quarrel. The crusaders were led, nothing loth, back to palaces in which they had been hospitably received, and readily resumed the interrupted feast, from which they had been called to pay their homage. The trumpets of the various leaders blew the recall of the few troops of an ordinary character who were attendant, together with the host of knights and leaders, who, pleased with the indulgences provided for them, and obscurely foreseeing that the passage of the Bosphorus would be the commencement of their actual suffering, rejoiced in being called to the hither side.

It was not probably intended; but the hero, as he might be styled, of the tumultuous day, Count Robert of Paris, who was already on his road to embarkation on the strait, was disturbed in his purpose by the sound of recall which was echoed around; nor could Bohemond, Godfrey, or any one who took upon him to explain the signal, alter his resolution of returning to Constantinople. He laughed to scorn the threatened displeasure of the Emperor, and seemed to think there would be a peculiar pleasure in braving Alexius at his own board, or, at least, that nothing could be more indifferent than whether he gave offence or not.

To Godfrey of Bouillon, to whom he showed some respect, he was still far from paying deference; and that sagacious prince, having used every argument which might shake his purpose of returning to the imperial city, to the very point of making it a quarrel with him in person, at length abandoned him to his own discretion, and pointed him out to the Count of Thoulouse, as he passed, as a wild knight-errant, incapable of being influenced by any thing save his own wayward fancy. "He brings not five hundred men to the crusade," said Godfrey; "and I dare be sworn, that even in this, the very outset of the undertaking, he knows not where these five hundred men are, and how their wants are provided for. There is an eternal trumpet in his ear sounding to assault, nor has he room or time to hear a milder or more rational signal. See how he strolls along yonder, the very emblem of an idle schoolboy, broke out of the school-bounds upon a holyday, half animated by curiosity and half by love of mischief."

"And," said Raymond, Count of Thoulouse, "with resolution sufficient to support the desperate purpose of the whole army of devoted crusaders. And yet so passionate a Rodomont is Count Robert, that he would rather risk the success of the whole expedition, than omit an opportunity of meeting a worthy antagonist *en champ-clos*, or lose, as he terms it, a chance of worshipping our Lady of the Broken Lances. Who are you with whom he has now met, and who are apparently walking, or rather strolling in the same way with him, back to Constantinople?"

"An armed knight, brilliantly equipped — yet of something less than knightly stature," answered Godfrey. "It is, I suppose, the celebrated lady who won Robert's heart in the lists of battle, by bravery and valour equal to his own; and the pilgrim form in the long vestments may be their daughter or niece."

"A singular spectacle, worthy Knight," said the Count of Thoulouse, "do our days present to us, to which we have had nothing similar, since Gaita,* wife of Robert Guiscard, first took upon her to distinguish herself by manly deeds of emprise, and rival her husband, as well in the front of battle as at the dancing-room or banquet."

This Amazon makes a conspicuous figure in Anna Comnena's account of her father's campaigns against Robert Guiscard. On one occasion (Alexiad, lib. iv. p. 93) she represents her as thus recalling the fugitive soldiery of her husband to their duty — [Greek: Hae de ge Taita Aeallas allae, kan mae Athaenae kat auton megisaen apheisa phonaen, monon ou to Homaerikon epos tae idia dialektio legein eokei. Mechri posou pheuxesthou; ataete aneres ese. Hos de eti pheugontas toutous eora, dory makron enagkalisamenae, holous rhytaeras endousa kata ton pheugonton ietai]. — That is, exhorting them, in all but Homeric language, at the top of her voice; and when this failed, brandishing a long spear, and rushing upon the fugitives at the utmost speed of her horse.

This heroic lady, according to the *Chronique Scandaleuse*, of those days, was afterwards deluded by some cunning overtures of the Greek Emperor, and poisoned her husband in expectation of gaining a place on the throne of Constantinople. Ducange, however, rejects the story, and so does Gibbon.]

"Such is the custom of this pair, most noble knight," answered another Crusader, who had joined them, "and Heaven pity the poor man who has no power to keep domestic peace by an appeal to the stronger hand!"

"Well!" replied Raymond, "if it be rather a mortifying reflection, that the lady of our love is far past the bloom of youth, it is a consolation that she is too old-fashioned to beat us, when we return back with no more of youth or manhood than a long crusade has left. But come, follow on the road to Constantinople, and in the rear of this most doughty knight."

Chapter the Tenth.

*Those were wild times — the antipodes of ours:
Ladies were there, who oftener saw themselves
In the broad lustre of a foeman's shield
Than in a mirror, and who rather sought
To match themselves in battle, than in dalliance
To meet a lover's onset. — But though Nature
Was outraged thus, she was not overcome.*

FEUDAL TIMES.

Brenhilda, Countess of Paris, was one of those stalwart dames who willingly hazarded themselves in the front of battle, which, during the first crusade, was as common as it was possible for a very unnatural custom to be, and, in fact, gave the real instances of the Marphisas and Bradamantes, whom the writers of romance delighted to paint, assigning them sometimes the advantage of invulnerable armour, or a spear whose thrust did not admit of being resisted, in order to soften the improbability of the weaker sex being frequently victorious over the male part of the creation.

But the spell of Brenhilda was of a more simple nature, and rested chiefly in her great beauty.

From a girl she despised the pursuits of her sex; and they who ventured to become suitors for the hand of the young Lady of Aspramonte, to which warlike fief she had succeeded, and which perhaps encouraged her in her fancy, received for answer, that they must first merit it by their good behaviour in the lists. The father of Brenhilda was dead; her mother was of a gentle temper, and easily kept under management by the young lady herself.

Brenhilda's numerous suitors readily agreed to terms which were too much according to the manners of the age to be disputed. A tournament was held at the Castle of Aspramonte, in which one half of the gallant assembly rolled headlong before their successful rivals, and withdrew from the lists mortified and disappointed. The successful party among the suitors were expected to be summoned to joust among themselves. But they were surprised at being made acquainted with the lady's further will. She aspired to wear armour herself, to wield a lance, and back a steed, and prayed the knights that they would permit a lady, whom they professed to honour so highly, to mingle in their games of chivalry. The young knights courteously received their young mistress in the lists, and smiled at the idea of her holding them triumphantly against so many gallant champions of the other sex. But the vassals and old servants of the Count, her father, smiled to each other, and intimated a different result than the gallants anticipated. The knights who encountered the fair Brenhilda were one by one stretched on the sand; nor was it to be denied, that the situation of tilting with one of the handsomest women of the time was an extremely embarrassing one. Each youth was

bent to withhold his charge in full volley, to cause his steed to swerve at the full shock, or in some other way to flinch from doing the utmost which was necessary to gain the victory, lest, in so gaining it, he might cause irreparable injury to the beautiful opponent he tilted with. But the Lady of Aspramonte was not one who could be conquered by less than the exertion of the whole strength and talents of the victor. The defeated suitors departed from the lists the more mortified at their discomfiture, because Robert of Paris arrived at sunset, and, understanding what was going forward, sent his name to the barriers, as that of a knight who would willingly forego the reward of the tournament, in case he had the fortune to gain it, declaring, that neither lauds nor ladies' charms were what he came thither to seek. Brenhilda, piqued and mortified, chose a new lance, mounted her best steed, and advanced into the lists as one determined to avenge upon the new assailant's brow the slight of her charms which he seemed to express. But whether her displeasure had somewhat interfered with her usual skill, or whether she had, like others of her sex, felt a partiality towards one whose heart was not particularly set upon gaining hers — or whether, as is often said on such occasions, her fated hour was come, so it was that Count Robert tilted with his usual address and good fortune. Brenhilda of Aspramonte was unhorsed and unhelmed, and stretched on the earth, and the beautiful face, which faded from very red to deadly pale before the eyes of the victor, produced its natural effect in raising the value of his conquest. He would, in conformity with his resolution, have left the castle after having mortified the vanity of the lady; but her mother opportunely interposed; and when she had satisfied herself that no serious injury had been sustained by the young heiress, she returned her thanks to the stranger knight who had taught her daughter a lesson, which, she trusted, she would not easily forget. Thus tempted to do what he secretly wished, Count Robert gave ear to those sentiments, which naturally whispered to him to be in no hurry to withdraw.

He was of the blood of Charlemagne, and, what was still of more consequence in the young lady's eyes, one of the most renowned of Norman knights in that jousting day. After a residence of ten days in the castle of Aspramonte, the bride and bridegroom set out, for such was Count Robert's will, with a competent train, to our Lady of the Broken Lances, where it pleased him to be wedded. Two knights who were waiting to do battle, as was the custom of the place, were rather disappointed at the nature of the cavalcade, which seemed to interrupt their purpose. But greatly were they surprised when they received a cartel from the betrothed couple, offering to substitute their own persons in the room of other antagonists, and congratulating themselves in commencing their married life in a manner so consistent with that which they had hitherto led. They were victorious as usual; and the only persons having occasion to rue the complaisance of the Count and his bride, were the two strangers, one of whom broke an arm in the rencontre, and the other dislocated a collar-bone.

Count Robert's course of knight-errantry did not seem to be in the least intermitted by his marriage; on the contrary, when he was called upon to support his renown, his wife was often known also in military exploits, nor was she inferior to him in thirst after fame. They both assumed the cross at the same time, that being then the predominating folly in Europe.

The Countess Brenhilda was now above six-and-twenty years old, with as much beauty as can well fall to the share of an Amazon. A figure, of the largest feminine size, was surmounted by a noble countenance, to which even repeated warlike toils had not given more than a sunny hue, relieved by the dazzling whiteness of such parts of her face as were not usually displayed.

As Alexius gave orders that his retinue should return to Constantinople, he spoke in private to the Follower, Achilles Tatius. The Satrap answered with a submissive bend of the head, and separated with a few attendants from the main body of the Emperor's train. The principal road to the city was, of course, filled with the troops, and with the numerous crowds of spectators, all of whom were inconvenienced in some degree by the dust and heat of the weather.

Count Robert of Paris had embarked his horses on board of ship, and all his retinue, except an old squire or valet of his own, and an attendant of his wife. He felt himself more incommoded in this crowd than he desired, especially as his wife shared it with him, and began to look among the scattered trees which fringed the shores, down almost to the tide-mark, to see if he could discern any by-path which might carry them more circuitously, but more pleasantly, to the city, and afford them at the same time, what was their principal object in the East, strange sights, or adventures of chivalry. A broad and beaten path seemed to promise them all the enjoyment which shade could give in a warm climate. The ground through which it wound its way was beautifully broken by the appearance of temples, churches, and kiosks, and here and there a fountain distributed its silver produce, like a benevolent individual, who, self-denying to himself, is liberal to all others who are in necessity. The distant sound of the martial music still regaled their way; and, at the same time, as it detained the populace on the high-road, prevented the strangers from becoming incommoded with fellow-travellers.

Rejoicing in the abated heat of the day-wondering, at the same time, at the various kinds of architecture, the strange features of the landscape, or accidental touches of manners, exhibited by those who met or passed them upon their journey, they strolled easily onwards. One figure particularly caught the attention of the Countess Brenhilda. This was an old man of great stature, engaged, apparently, so deeply with the roll of parchment which he held in his hand, that he paid no attention to the objects which were passing around him. Deep thought appeared to reign on his brow, and his eye was of that piercing kind which seems designed to search and winnow the frivolous from the edifying part of human discussion, and limit its inquiry to the last. Raising his eyes slowly from the parchment on which he had been gazing, the look of Agelastes — for it was the sage himself — encountered those of Count Robert and his lady, and addressing them, with the kindly epithet of "my children," he asked if they had missed their road, or whether there was any thing in which he could do them any pleasure.

"We are strangers, father," was the answer, "from a distant country, and belonging to the army which has passed hither upon pilgrimage; one object brings us here in common, we hope, with all that host. We desire to pay our devotions where the great ransom was paid for us, and to free, by our good swords, enslaved Palestine, from the usurpation and tyranny of the infidel. When we have said this, we have announced our highest human motive. Yet Robert of Paris and his Countess would not willingly set their foot on a land, save what should resound its echo. They have not been accustomed to move in silence upon the face of the earth, and they would purchase an eternal life of fame, though it were at the price of mortal existence."

"You seek, then, to barter safety for fame," said Agelastes, "though you may, perchance, throw death into the scale by which you hope to gain it?"

"Assuredly," said Count Robert; "nor is there one wearing such a belt as this, to whom such a thought is stranger."

"And as I understand," said Agelastes, "your lady shares with your honourable self in these valorous resolutions? — Can this be?"

"You may undervalue my female courage, father, if such is your will," said the Countess; "but I speak in presence of a witness who can attest the truth, when I say that a man of half your years had not doubted the truth with impunity."

"Nay, Heaven protect me from the lightning of your eyes," said Agelastes, "whether in anger or in scorn. I bear an aegis about myself against what I should else have feared. But age, with its incapacities, brings also its apologies. Perhaps, indeed, it is one like me whom you seek to find, and in that case I should be happy to render to you such services as it is my duty to offer to all worthy knights."

"I have already said," replied Count Robert, "that after the accomplishment of my vow," — he looked upwards and crossed himself — "there is nothing on earth to which I am more bound than to celebrate my name in arms as becomes a valiant cavalier. When men die obscurely, they die for ever. Had my ancestor Charles never left the paltry banks of the Saale, he had not now been much better known than any vine-dresser who wielded his pruning-hook in the same territories. But he bore him like a brave man, and his name is deathless in the memory of the worthy."

"Young man," said the old Grecian, "although it is but seldom that such as you, whom I was made to serve and to value, visit this country, it is not the less true that I am well qualified to serve you in the matter which you have so much at heart. My acquaintance with nature has been so perfect and so long, that, during its continuance, she has disappeared, and another world has been spread before me, in which she has but little to do. Thus the curious stores which I have assembled are beyond the researches of other men, and not to be laid before those whose deeds of valour are to be bounded by the ordinary probabilities of everyday nature. No romancer of your romantic country ever devised such extraordinary adventures out of his own imagination, and to feed the idle wonder of those who sat listening around, as those which I know, not of idle invention, but of real positive existence, with the means of achieving and accomplishing the conditions of each adventure."

"If such be your real profession," said the French Count, "you have met one of those whom you chiefly search for; nor will my Countess and I stir farther upon our road until you have pointed out to us some one of those adventures which, it is the business of errant-knights to be industrious in seeking out."

So saying, he sat down by the side of the old man; and his lady, with a degree of reverence which had something in it almost diverting, followed his example.

"We have fallen right, Brenhilda," said Count Robert; "our guardian angel has watched his charge carefully. Here have we come among an ignorant set of pedants, chattering their absurd language, and holding more important the least look that a cowardly Emperor can give, than the best blow that a good knight can deal. Believe me, I was wellnigh thinking that we had done ill to take the cross — God forgive such an impious doubt! Yet here, when we were even despairing to find the road to fame, we have met with one of those excellent men whom the knights of yore were wont to find sitting by springs, by crosses, and by altars, ready to direct the wandering knight where fame was to be found. Disturb him not, my Brenhilda," said the Count, "but let him recall to himself his stories of the ancient time, and thou shalt see he will enrich us with the treasures of his information."

"If," replied Agelastes, after some pause, "I have waited for a longer term than human life is granted to most men, I shall still be overpaid by dedicating what remains of existence to the service of a pair so devoted to chivalry. What first occurs to me is a story of our Greek country, so famous in adventures, and which I shall briefly detail to you:—

"Afar hence, in our renowned Grecian Archipelago, amid storms and whirlpools, rocks which, changing their character, appear to precipitate themselves against each other, and billows that are never in a pacific state, lies the rich island of Zulichium, inhabited, notwithstanding its wealth, by a very few natives, who live only upon the sea-coast. The inland part of the island is one immense mountain, or pile of mountains, amongst which, those who dare approach near enough, may, we are assured, discern the moss-grown and antiquated towers and pinnacles of a stately, but ruinous castle, the habitation of the sovereign of the island, in which she has been, enchanted for a great many years.

"A bold knight, who came upon, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, made a vow to deliver this unhappy victim of pain and sorcery; feeling, with justice, vehemently offended, that the fiends of darkness should exercise any authority near the Holy Land, which might be termed the very fountain of light. Two of the oldest inhabitants of the island undertook to guide him as near to the main gate as they durst, nor did they approach it more closely than the length of a bow-shot. Here, then, abandoned to himself, the brave Frank set forth upon his enterprise, with a stout heart, and Heaven alone to friend. The fabric which he approached showed, by its gigantic size, and splendour of outline, the power and wealth of the potentate who had erected it. The brazen gates unfolded themselves as if with hope and pleasure; and aerial voices swept around the spires and turrets, congratulating the genius of the place, it might be, upon the expected approach of its deliverer.

"The knight passed on, not unmoved with wonder, though untainted by fear; and the Gothic splendours which he saw were of a kind highly to exalt his idea of the beauty of the mistress for whom a prison-house had been so richly decorated. Guards there were in Eastern dress and arms, upon bulwark and buttress, in readiness, it appeared, to bend their bows; but the warriors were motionless and silent, and took no more notice of the armed step of the knight than if a monk or hermit had approached their guarded post. They were living, and yet, as to all power and sense, they might be considered among the dead. If there was truth in the old tradition, the sun had shone and the rain had fallen upon them for more than four hundred changing seasons, without their being sensible of the genial warmth of the one or the coldness of the other. Like the Israelites in the desert, their shoes had not decayed, nor their vestments waxed old. As Time left them, so and without alteration was he again to find them." The philosopher began now to recall what he had heard of the cause of their enchantment.

"The sage to whom this potent charm is imputed, was one of the Magi who followed the tenets of Zoroaster. He had come to the court of this youthful Princess, who received him with every attention which gratified vanity could dictate, so that in a short time her awe of this grave personage was lost in the sense of ascendancy which her beauty gave her over him. It was no difficult matter — in fact it happens every day — for the beautiful woman to lull the wise man into what is not inaptly called a fool's paradise. The sage was induced to attempt feats of youth which his years rendered ridiculous; he could command the elements, but the common course of nature was beyond his power. When, therefore, he exerted his magic strength, the mountains bent and the seas receded; but when the philosopher attempted to lead forth the Princess of Zulichium in the youthful dance, youths and maidens turned their heads aside lest they should make too manifest the ludicrous ideas with which they were impressed.

"Unhappily, as the aged, even the wisest of them, will forget themselves, so the young naturally enter into an alliance to spy out, ridicule, and enjoy their foibles. Many were the glances which the Princess sent among her retinue, intimating the nature of the amusement which she received from the attentions of her formidable lover. In process of time she lost her caution, and a glance was detected, expressing to the old man the ridicule and contempt in which he had been all along held by the object of his affections. Earth has no passion so bitter as love converted to hatred; and while the sage bitterly regretted what he had done, he did not the less resent the light-hearted folly of the Princess by whom he had been duped.

"If, however, he was angry, he possessed the art to conceal it. Not a word, not a look expressed the bitter disappointment which he had received. A shade of melancholy, or rather gloom, upon his brow, alone intimated the coming storm. The Princess became somewhat alarmed; she was besides extremely good-natured, nor had her intentions of leading the old man into what would render him ridiculous, been so accurately planned with malice prepense, as they were the effect of accident and chance. She saw the pain which he suffered, and thought to end it by going up to him, when about to retire, and kindly wishing him good-night.

"'You say well, daughter,' said the sage, 'good-night — but who, of the numbers who hear me, shall say good-morning?'

"The speech drew little attention, although two or three persons to whom the character of the sage was known, fled from the island that very night, and by their report made known the circumstances attending the first infliction of this extraordinary spell on those who remained within the Castle. A sleep like that of death fell upon them, and was not removed. Most of the inhabitants left the island; the few who remained were cautious how they approached the Castle, and watched until some bold adventurer should bring that happy awakening which the speech of the sorcerer seemed in some degree to intimate.

"Never seemed there a fairer opportunity for that awakening to take place than when the proud step of Artavan de Hautlieu was placed upon those enchanted courts. On the left, lay the palace and donjon-keep; but the right, more attractive, seemed to invite to the apartment of the women. At a side door, reclined on a couch, two guards of the haram, with their naked swords grasped in their hands, and features fiendishly contorted between sleep and dissolution, seemed to menace death to any who should venture to approach. This threat deterred not Artavan de Hautlieu. He approached the entrance, when the doors, like those of the great entrance to the Castle, made themselves instantly accessible to him. A guard-room of the same effeminate soldiers received him, nor could the strictest examination have discovered to him whether it was sleep or death which arrested the eyes that seemed to look upon and prohibit his advance. Unheeding the presence of these ghastly sentinels, Artavan pressed forward into an inner apartment, where female slaves of the most distinguished beauty were visible in the attitude of those who had already assumed their dress for the night. There was much in this scene which might have arrested so young a pilgrim as Artavan of Hautlieu; but his heart was fixed on achieving the freedom of the beautiful Princess, nor did he suffer himself to be withdrawn from that object by any inferior consideration. He passed on, therefore, to a little ivory door, which, after a moment's pause, as if in maidenly hesitation, gave way like the rest, and yielded access to the sleeping apartment of the Princess herself. A soft light, resembling that of evening, penetrated into a chamber where every thing seemed contrived to exalt the luxury of slumber. The heaps of cushions, which formed a stately bed, seemed rather to be touched than impressed by the form of a nymph of fifteen, the renowned Princess of Zulichium."

"Without interrupting you, good father," said the Countess Brenhilda, "it seems to me that we can comprehend the picture of a woman asleep without much dilating upon it, and that such a subject is little recommended either by our age or by yours."

"Pardon me, noble lady," answered Agelastes, "the most approved part of my story has ever been this passage, and while I now suppress it in obedience to your command, bear notice, I pray you, that I sacrifice the most beautiful part of the tale."

"Brenhilda," added the Count, "I am surprised you think of interrupting a story which has hitherto proceeded with so much fire; the telling of a few words more or less will surely have a much greater influence upon the sense of the narrative, than such an addition can possibly possess over our sentiments of action."

"As you will," said his lady, throwing herself carelessly back upon the seat; "but methinks the worthy father protracts this discourse, till it becomes of a nature more trifling than interesting."

"Brenhilda," said the Count, "this is the first time I have remarked in you a woman's weakness."

"I may as well say, Count Robert, that it is the first time," answered Brenhilda, "that you have shown to me the inconstancy of your sex."

"Gods and goddesses," said the philosopher, "was ever known a quarrel more absurdly founded! The Countess is jealous of one whom her husband probably never will see, nor is there any prospect that the Princess of Zulichium will be hereafter better known, to the modern world, than if the curtain hung before her tomb."

"Proceed," said Count Robert of Paris; "if Sir Artavan of Hautlieu has not accomplished the enfranchisement of the Princess of Zulichium, I make a vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances,"—

"Remember," said his lady interfering, "that you are already under a vow to free the Sepulchre of God; and to that, methinks, all lighter engagements might give place."

"Well, lady — well," said Count Robert, but half satisfied with this interference, "I will not engage myself, you may be assured, on any adventure which may claim precedence of the enterprise of the Holy Sepulchre, to which we are all bound."

"Alas!" said Agelastes, "the distance of Zulichium from the speediest route to the sepulchre is so small that"—

"Worthy father," said the Countess, "we will, if it pleases you, hear your tale to an end, and then determine what we will do. We Norman ladies, descendants of the old Germans, claim a voice with our lords in the council which precedes the battle; nor has our assistance in the conflict been deemed altogether useless."

The tone in which this was spoken conveyed an awkward innuendo to the philosopher, who began to foresee that the guidance of the Norman knight would be more difficult than he had foreseen, while his consort remained by his side. He took up, therefore, his oratory on somewhat a lower key than before, and avoided those warm descriptions which had given such offence to the Countess Brenhilda.

"Sir Artavan de Hautlieu, says the story, considered in what way he should accost the sleeping damsel, when it occurred to him in what manner the charm would be most likely to be reversed. I am in your judgment, fair lady, if he judged wrong in resolving that the method of his address should be a kiss upon the lips." The colour of Brenhilda was somewhat heightened, but she did not deem the observation worthy of notice.

"Never had so innocent an action," continued the philosopher, "an effect more horrible. The delightful light of a summer evening was instantly changed into a strange lurid hue, which, infected with sulphur, seemed to breathe suffocation through the apartment. The rich hangings, and splendid furniture of the chamber, the very walls themselves, were changed into huge stones tossed together at random, like the inside of a wild beast's den, nor was the den without an inhabitant. The beautiful and innocent lips to which Artavan de Hautlieu had approached his own, were now changed into the hideous and bizarre form, and bestial aspect of a fiery dragon. A moment she hovered upon the wing, and it is said, had Sir Artavan found courage to repeat his salute three times, he would then have remained master of all the wealth, and of the disenchanted princess. But the opportunity was lost, and the dragon, or the creature who seemed such, sailed out at a side window upon its broad pennons, uttering loud wails of disappointment."

Here ended the story of Agelastes. "The Princess," he said, "is still supposed to abide her doom in the Island of Zulichium, and several knights have undertaken the adventure; but I know not whether it was the fear of saluting the sleeping maiden, or that of approaching the dragon into which she was transformed, but so it is, the spell remains unachieved. I know the way, and if you say the word, you may be tomorrow on the road to the castle of enchantment."

The Countess heard this proposal with the deepest anxiety, for she knew that she might, by opposition, determine her husband irrevocably upon following out the enterprise. She stood therefore with a timid and bashful look, strange in a person whose bearing was generally so dauntless, and prudently left it to the uninfluenced mind of Count Robert to form the resolution which should best please him.

"Brenhilda," he said, taking her hand, "fame and honour are dear to thy husband as ever they were to knight who buckled a brand upon his side. Thou hast done, perhaps, I may say, for me, what I might in vain have looked for from ladies of thy condition; and therefore thou mayst well expect a casting voice in such points of deliberation. — Why dost thou wander by the side of a foreign and unhealthy shore, instead of the banks of the lovely Seine? — Why dost thou wear a dress unusual to thy sex? — Why dost thou seek death, and think it little in comparison of shame? — Why? but that the Count of Paris may have a bride worthy of him. — Dost thou think that this affection is thrown away? No, by the saints! Thy knight repays it as he best ought, and sacrifices to thee every thought which thy affection may less than entirely approve."

Poor Brenhilda, confused as she was by the various emotions with which she was agitated, now in vain endeavoured to maintain the heroic deportment which her character as an Amazon required from her. She attempted to assume the proud and lofty look which was properly her own, but failing in the effort, she threw herself into the Count's arms, hung round his neck, and wept like a village maiden, whose true love is pressed for the wars. Her husband, a little ashamed, while he was much moved by this burst of affection in one to whose character it seemed an unusual attribute, was, at the same time, pleased and proud that he could have awakened an affection so genuine and so gentle in a soul so high-spirited and so unbending.

"Not thus," he said, "my Brenhilda! I would not have it thus, either for thine own sake or for mine. Do not let this wise old man suppose that thy heart is made of the malleable stuff which forms that of other maidens; and apologize to him, as may well become thee, for having prevented my undertaking the adventure of Zulichium, which he recommends."

It was not easy for Brenhilda to recover herself, after having afforded so notable an instance how nature can vindicate her rights, with whatever rigour she may have been disciplined and tyrannized over. With a look of ineffable affection, she disjoined herself from her husband, still keeping hold of his hand, and turning to the old man with a countenance in which the half-effaced tears were succeeded by smiles of pleasure and of modesty, she spoke to Agelastes as she would to a person whom she respected, and towards whom she had some offence to atone. "Father," she said, respectfully, "be not angry with me that I should have been an obstacle to one of the best knights that ever spurred steed, undertaking the enterprise of thine enchanted Princess; but the truth is, that in our land, where knighthood and religion agree in permitting only one lady love, and one lady wife, we do not quite so willingly see our husbands run into danger — especially of that kind where lonely ladies are the parties relieved — and — and kisses are the ransom paid. I have as much confidence in my Robert's fidelity, as a lady can have in a loving knight, but still"—

"Lovely lady," said Agelastes, who, notwithstanding his highly artificial character, could not help being moved by the simple and sincere affection of the handsome young pair, "you have done no evil. The state of the Princess is no worse than it was, and there cannot be a doubt that the knight fated to relieve her, will appear at the destined period." The Countess smiled sadly, and shook her head. "You do not know," she said, "how powerful is the aid of which I have unhappily deprived this unfortunate lady, by a jealousy which I now feel to have been alike paltry and unworthy; and, such is my regret, that I could find in my heart to retract my opposition to Count Robert's undertaking this adventure." She looked at her husband with some anxiety, as one that had made an offer she would not willingly see accepted, and did not recover her courage until he said, decidedly, "Brenhilda, that may not be."

"And why, then, may not Brenhilda herself take the adventure," continued the Countess, "since she can neither fear the charms of the Princess nor the terrors of the dragon?"

"Lady," said Agelastes, "the Princess must be awakened by the kiss of love, and not by that of friendship."

"A sufficient reason," said the Countess, smiling, "why a lady may not wish her lord to go forth upon an adventure of which the conditions are so regulated."

"Noble minstrel, or herald, or by whatever name this country calls you," said Count Robert, "accept a small remuneration for an hour pleasantly spent, though spent, unhappily, in vain. I should make some apology for the meanness of my offering, but French knights, you may have occasion to know, are more full of fame than of wealth."

"Not for that, noble sir," replied Agelastes, "would I refuse your munificence; a besant from your worthy hand, or that of your noble-minded lady, were centupled in its value, by the eminence of the persons from whom it came. I would hang it round my neck by a string of pearls, and when I came into the presence of knights and of ladies, I would proclaim that this addition to my achievement of armorial distinction, was bestowed by the renowned Count Robert of Paris, and his unequalled lady." The Knight and the Countess looked on each other, and the lady, taking from her finger a ring of pure gold, prayed the old man to accept of it, as a mark of her esteem and her husband's. "With one other condition," said the philosopher, "which I trust you will not find altogether unsatisfactory. I have, on the

way to the city by the most pleasant road, a small kiosk, or hermitage, where I sometimes receive my friends, who, I venture to say, are among the most respectable personages of this empire. Two or three of these will probably honour my residence today, and partake of the provision it affords. Could I add to these the company of the noble Count and Countess of Paris, I should deem my poor habitation honoured for ever."

"How say you, my noble wife?" said the Count. "The company of a minstrel befits the highest birth, honours the highest rank, and adds to the greatest achievements; and the invitation does us too much credit to be rejected."

"It grows somewhat late," said the Countess: "but we came not here to shun a sinking sun or a darkening sky, and I feel it my duty, as well as my satisfaction, to place at the command of the good father every pleasure which it is in my power to offer to him, for having been the means of your neglecting his advice."

"The path is so short," said Agelastes, "that we had better keep our present mode of travelling, if the lady should not want the assistance of horses."

"No horses on my account," said the Lady Brenhilda. "My waiting-woman, Agatha, has what necessities I may require; and, for the rest, no knight ever travelled so little embarrassed with baggage as my husband."

Agelastes, therefore, led the way through the deepening wood, which was freshened by the cooler breath of evening, and his guests accompanied him.

Chapter the Eleventh.

*Without, a ruin, broken, tangled, cumbrous,
Within, it was a little paradise,
Where Taste had made her dwelling. Statuary,
First-born of human art, moulded her images,
And bade men. mark and worship.*

ANONYMOUS.

The Count of Paris and his lady attended the old man, whose advanced age, his excellence in the use of the French language, which he spoke to admiration — above all, his skill in applying it to poetical and romantic subjects, which was essential to what was then termed history and belles lettres — drew from the noble hearers a degree of applause, which, as Agelastes had seldom been vain enough to consider as his due, so, on the part of the Knight of Paris and his lady, had it been but rarely conferred. They had walked for some time by a path which sometimes seemed to hide itself among the woods that came down to the shore of the Propontis, sometimes emerged from concealment, and skirted the open margin of the strait, while, at every turn, it seemed guided by the desire to select a choice and contrast of beauty. Variety of scenes and manners enlivened, from their novelty, the landscape to the pilgrims. By the sea-shore, nymphs were seen dancing, and shepherds piping, or beating the tambourine to their steps, as represented in some groups of ancient statuary. The very faces had a singular resemblance to the antique. If old, their long robes, their attitudes, and magnificent heads, presented the ideas which distinguish prophets and saints; while, on the other hand, the features of the young recalled the expressive countenances of the heroes of antiquity, and the charms of those lovely females by whom their deeds were inspired. But the race of the Greeks was no longer to be seen, even in its native country, unmixed, or in absolute purity; on the contrary, they saw groups of persons with features which argued a different descent.

In a retiring bosom of the shore, which was traversed by the path, the rocks, receding from the beach, rounded off a spacious portion of level sand, and, in some degree, enclosed it. A party of heathen Scythians whom they beheld, presented the deformed features of the demons they were said to worship — flat noses with expanded nostrils, which seemed to admit the sight to their very brain; faces which extended rather in breadth than length, with strange unintellectual eyes placed in the extremity; figures short and dwarfish, yet garnished with legs and arms of astonishing sinewy strength, disproportioned to their bodies. As the travellers passed, the savages held a species of tournament, as the Count termed it. In this they exercised themselves by darting at each other long reeds, or canes, balanced for the purpose, which, in this rude sport, they threw with such force, as not unfrequently to strike each other from their steeds, and otherwise to cause serious damage. Some of the combatants being, for the time, out of the play, devoured with greedy looks the beauty of the Countess, and eyed her in such a manner, that she said to Count Robert — "I have never known fear, my husband, nor is it for me to acknowledge it now; but if disgust be an ingredient of it, these misformed brutes are qualified to inspire it." "What, ho, Sir Knight!" exclaimed one of the infidels, "your wife, or your lady love, has committed a fault against the privileges of the Imperial Scythians, and not small will be the penalty she has incurred. You may go your way as fast as you will out of this place, which is, for the present; our hippodrome, or atmeidán, call it which you will, as you prize the Roman or the Saracen language; but for your wife, if the sacrament has united you, believe my word, that she parts not so soon or so easy."

"Scoundrel heathen," said the Christian Knight, "dost thou hold that language to a Peer of France?"

Agelastes here interposed, and using the sounding language of a Grecian courtier, reminded the Scythians, (mercenary soldiers, as they seemed, of the empire,) that all violence against the European pilgrims was, by the Imperial orders, strictly prohibited under pain of death.

"I know better," said the exulting savage, shaking one or two javelins with broad steel heads, and wings of the eagle's feather, which last were dabbled in blood.

"Ask the wings of my javelin," he said, "in whose heart's blood these feathers have been dyed. They shall reply to you, that if Alexius Comnenus be the friend of the European pilgrims, it is only while he looks upon them; and we are too exemplary soldiers to serve our Emperor otherwise than he wishes to be served."

"Peace, Toxartis," said the philosopher, "thou beliest thine Emperor."

"Peace thou!" said Toxartis, "or I will do a deed that misbecomes a soldier, and rid the world of a prating old man."

So saying, he put forth his hand to take hold of the Countess's veil. With the readiness which frequent use had given to the warlike lady, she withdrew herself from the heathen's grasp, and with her trenchant sword dealt him so sufficient a blow, that Toxartis lay lifeless on the plain. The Count leapt on the fallen leader's steed, and crying his war-cry, "Son of Charlemagne, to the rescue!" he rode amid the rout of heathen cavaliers with a battle-axe, which he found at the saddlebow of the deceased chieftain, and wielding it with remorseless dexterity, he soon slew or wounded, or compelled to flight, the objects of his resentment; nor was there any of them who abode an instant to support the boast which they had made. "The despicable churls!" said the Countess to Agelastes; "it irks me that a drop of such coward blood should stain the hands of a noble knight. They call their exercise a tournament, although in their whole exertions every blow is aimed behind the back, and not one has the courage to throw his windlestraw while he perceives that of another pointed against himself."

"Such is their custom," said Agelastes; "not perhaps so much from cowardice as from habit, in exercising before his Imperial Majesty. I have seen that Toxartis literally turn his back upon the mark when he bent his bow in full career, and when in the act of galloping the farthest from his object, he pierced it through the very centre with a broad arrow."

"A force of such soldiers," said Count Robert, who had now rejoined his friends, "could not, methinks, be very formidable, where there was but an ounce of genuine courage in the assailants."

"Mean time, let us pass on to my kiosk," said Agelastes, "lest the fugitives find friends to encourage them in thoughts of revenge."

"Such friends," said Count Robert, "methinks the insolent heathens ought not to find in any land which calls itself Christian; and if I survive the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre, I shall make it my first business to enquire by what right your Emperor retains in his service a band of Paynim and unmannerly cut-throats, who dare offer injury upon the highway, which ought to be sacred to the peace of God and the king, and to noble ladies and inoffensive pilgrims. It is one of a list of many questions which, my vow accomplished, I will not fail to put to him; ay, and expecting an answer, as they say, prompt and categorical."

"You shall gain no answer from me though," said Agelastes to himself. "Your demands, Sir Knight, are over-peremptory, and imposed under too rigid conditions, to be replied to by those who can evade them." He changed the conversation, accordingly, with easy dexterity; and they had not proceeded much farther, before they reached a spot, the natural beauties of which called forth the admiration of his foreign companions. A copious brook, gushing out of the woodland, descended to the sea with no small noise and tumult; and, as if disdaining a quieter course, which it might have gained by a little circuit to the right, it took the readiest road to the ocean, plunging over the face of a lofty and barren precipice which overhung the sea-shore, and from thence led its little tribute, with as much noise as if it had the stream of a full river to boast of, to the waters of the Hellespont.

The rock, we have said, was bare, unless in so far as it was clothed with the foaming waters of the cataract; but the banks on each side were covered with plane-trees, walnut-trees, cypresses, and other kinds of large timber proper to the East. The fall of water, always agreeable in a warm climate, and generally produced by artificial means, was here natural, and had been chosen, something like the Sibyl's temple at Tivoli, for the seat of a goddess to whom the invention of Polytheism had assigned a sovereignty over the department around. The shrine was small and circular, like many of the lesser temples of the rustic deities, and enclosed by the wall of an outer court. After its desecration, it had probably been converted into a luxurious summer retreat by Agelastes, or some Epicurean philosopher. As the building, itself of a light, airy, and fantastic character, was dimly seen through the branches and foliage on the edge of the rock, so the mode by which it was accessible was not at first apparent amongst the mist of the cascade. A pathway, a good deal hidden, by vegetation, ascended by a gentle acclivity, and prolonged by the architect by means of a few broad and easy marble steps, making part of the original approach, conducted the passenger to a small, but exquisitely lovely velvet lawn, in front of the turret or temple we have described, the back part of which building overhung the cataract.

Chapter the Twelfth.

*The parties met. The wily, wordy Greek,
Weighing each word, and canvassing each syllable;
Evading, arguing, equivocating.
And the stern Frank came with his two-hand sword,
Watching to see which way the balance sways,
That he may throw it in, and turn the scales.*

PALESTINE.

At a signal made by Agelastes, the door of this romantic retreat was opened by Diogenes, the negro slave, to whom our readers have been already introduced; nor did it escape the wily old man, that the Count and his lady testified some wonder at his form and lineaments, being the first African perhaps whom they had ever seen so closely. The philosopher lost not the opportunity of making an impression on their minds, by a display of the superiority of his knowledge.

"This poor being," he observed, "is of the race of Ham, the undutiful son of Noah; for his transgressions against his parent, he was banished to the sands of Africa, and was condemned to be the father of a race doomed to be the slaves of the issue of his more dutiful brethren."

The knight and his lady gazed on the wonderful appearance before them, and did not, it may be believed, think of doubting the information which was so much of a piece with their prejudices, while their opinion of their host was greatly augmented by the supposed extent of his knowledge.

"It gives pleasure to a man of humanity," continued Agelastes, "when, in old age, or sickness, we must employ the services of others, which is at other times scarce lawful, to choose his assistants out of a race of beings, hewers of wood and drawers of water — from their birth upwards destined to slavery; and to whom, therefore, by employing them as slaves, we render no injury, but carry into effect, in a slight degree, the intentions of the Great Being who made us all."

"Are there many of a race," said the Countess, "so singularly unhappy in their destination? I have hitherto thought the stories of black men as idle as those which minstrels tell of fairies and ghosts."

"Do not believe so," said the philosopher; "the race is numerous as the sands of the sea, neither are they altogether unhappy in discharging the duties which their fate has allotted them. Those who are of worse character suffer even in this life the penance due to their guilt; they become the slaves of the cruel and tyrannical, are beaten, starved, and mutilated. To those whose moral characters are better, better masters are provided, who share with their slaves, as with their children, food and raiment, and the other good things which they themselves enjoy. To some, Heaven allots the favour of kings and of conquerors, and to a few, but those the chief favourites of the species, hath been assigned a place in the mansions of philosophy, where, by availing themselves of the lights which their masters can afford, they gain a prospect into that world which is the residence of true happiness."

"Methinks I understand you," replied the Countess, "and if so, I ought rather to envy our sable friend here than to pity him, for having been allotted in the partition of his kind to the possession of his present master, from whom, doubtless, he has acquired the desirable knowledge which you mention."

"He learns, at least," said Agelastes, modestly, "what I can teach, and, above all, to be contented with his situation. — Diogenes, my good child," said he, changing his address to the slave, "thou seest I have company — What does the poor hermit's larder afford, with which he may regale his honoured guests?"

Hitherto they had advanced no farther than a sort of outer room, or hall of entrance, fitted up with no more expense than might have suited one who desired at some outlay, and more taste, to avail himself of the ancient building for a sequestered and private retirement. The chairs and couches were covered with Eastern wove mats, and were of the simplest and most primitive form. But on touching a spring, an interior apartment was displayed, which had considerable pretension to splendour and magnificence. The furniture and hangings of this apartment were of straw-coloured silk, wrought on the looms of Persia, and crossed with embroidery, which produced a rich, yet simple effect. The ceiling was carved in Arabesque, and the four corners of the apartment were formed into recesses for statuary, which had been produced in a better age of the art than that which existed at the period of our story. In one nook, a shepherd seemed to withdraw himself, as if ashamed to produce his scantily-covered person, while he was willing to afford the audience the music of the reed which he held in his hand. Three damsels, resembling the Graces in the beautiful proportions of their limbs, and the slender clothing which they wore, lurked in different attitudes, each in her own niche, and seemed but to await the first sound of the music, to bound forth from thence and join in the frolic dance. The subject was beautiful, yet somewhat light, to ornament the study of such a sage as Agelastes represented himself to be.

He seemed to be sensible that this might attract observation. — "These figures," he said, "executed at the period of the highest excellence of Grecian art, were considered of old as the choral nymphs assembled to adore the goddess of the place, waiting but the music to join in the worship of the temple. And, in truth, the wisest may be interested in seeing how near to animation the genius of these wonderful men could bring the inflexible marble. Allow but for the absence of the divine afflatus, or breath of animation, and an unenlightened heathen might suppose the miracle of Prometheus was about to be realized. But we," said he, looking upwards, "are taught to form a better judgment between what man can do and the productions of the Deity."

Some subjects of natural history were painted on the walls, and the philosopher fixed the attention of his guests upon the half-reasoning elephant, of which he mentioned several anecdotes, which they listened to with great eagerness.

A distant strain was here heard, as if of music in the woods, penetrating by fits through the hoarse roar of the cascade, which, as it sunk immediately below the windows, filled the apartment with its deep voice.

"Apparently," said Agelastes, "the friends whom I expected are approaching, and bring with them the means of enchanting another sense. It is well they do so, since wisdom tells us that we best honour the Deity by enjoying the gifts he has provided us."

These words called the attention of the philosopher's Frankish guests to the preparations exhibited in this tasteful saloon. These were made for an entertainment in the manner of the ancient Romans, and couches, which were laid beside a table ready decked, announced that the male guests, at least, were to assist at the banquet in the usual recumbent posture of the ancients; while seats, placed among the couches, seemed to say that females were expected, who would observe the Grecian customs, in eating seated. The preparations for good cheer were such as, though limited in extent, could scarce be excelled in quality, either by the splendid dishes which decked Trimalchio's banquet of former days, or the lighter delicacies of Grecian cookery, or the succulent and highly-spiced messes indulged in by the nations of the East, to whichever they happened to give the preference; and it was with an air of some vanity that Agelastes asked his guests to share a poor pilgrim's meal.

"We care little for dainties," said the Count; "nor does our present course of life as pilgrims, bound by a vow, allow us much choice on such subjects. Whatever is food for soldiers, suffices the Countess and myself; for, with our will, we would at every hour be ready for battle, and the less time we use in preparing for the field, it is even so much the better. Sit then, Brenhilda, since the good man will have it so, and let us lose no time in refreshment, lest we waste that which should be otherwise employed." "A moment's forgiveness," said Agelastes, "until the arrival of my other friends, whose music you may now hear is close at hand, and who will not long, I may safely promise, divide you from your meal."

"For that," said the Count, "there is no haste; and since you seem to account it a part of civil manners, Brenhilda and I can with ease postpone our repast, unless you will permit us, what I own would be more pleasing, to take a morsel of bread and a cup of water presently; and, thus refreshed, to leave the space clear for your more curious and more familiar guests."

"The saints above forbid!" said Agelastes; "guests so honoured never before pressed these cushions, nor could do so, if the sacred family of the imperial Alexius himself even now stood at the gate."

He had hardly uttered these words, when the full-blown peal of a trumpet, louder in a tenfold degree than the strains of music they had before heard, was now sounded in the front of the temple, piercing through the murmur of the waterfall, as a Damascus blade penetrates the armour, and assailing the ears of the hearers, as the sword pierces the flesh of him who wears the harness.

"You seem surprised or alarmed, father," said Count Robert. "Is there danger near, and do you distrust our protection?"

"No," said Agelastes, "that would give me confidence in any extremity; but these sounds excite awe, not fear. They tell me that some of the Imperial family are about to be my guests. Yet fear nothing, my noble friends — they, whose look is life, are ready to shower their favours with profusion upon strangers so worthy of honour as they will see here. Meantime, my brow must touch my threshold, in order duly to welcome them." So saying, he hurried to the outer door of the building.

"Each land has its customs," said the Count, as he followed his host, with his wife hanging on his arm; "but, Brenhilda, as they are so various, it is little wonder that they appear unseemly to each other. Here, however, in deference to my entertainer, I stoop my crest, in the manner which seems to be required." So saying, he followed Agelastes into the anteroom, where a new scene awaited them.

Chapter the Thirteenth.

Agelastes gained his threshold before Count Robert of Paris and his lady. He had, therefore, time to make his prostrations before a huge animal, then unknown to the western world, but now universally distinguished as the elephant. On its back was a pavilion or palanquin, within which were enclosed the august persons of the Empress Irene, and her daughter Anna Comnena. Nicephorus Briennius attended the Princesses in the command of a gallant body of light horse, whose splendid armour would have given more pleasure to the crusader, if it had possessed less an air of useless wealth and effeminate magnificence. But the effect which it produced in its appearance was as brilliant as could well be conceived. The officers alone of this *corps de garde* followed Nicephorus to the platform, prostrated themselves while the ladies of the Imperial house descended, and rose up again under a cloud of waving plumes and flashing lances, when they stood secure upon the platform in front of the building. Here the somewhat aged, but commanding form of the Empress, and the still juvenile beauties of the fair historian, were seen to great advantage. In the front of a deep back-ground of spears and waving crests, stood the sounder of the sacred trumpet, conspicuous by his size and the richness of his apparel; he kept his post on a rock above the stone staircase, and, by an occasional note of his instrument, intimated to the squadrons beneath that they should stay their progress, and attend the motions of the Empress and the wife of the Caesar.

The fair form of the Countess Brenhilda, and the fantastic appearance of her half masculine garb, attracted the attention of the ladies of Alexius' family, but was too extraordinary to command their admiration. Agelastes became sensible there was a necessity that he should introduce his guests to each other, if he desired they should meet on satisfactory terms. "May I speak," he said, "and live? The armed strangers whom you find now with me are worthy companions of those myriads, whom zeal for the suffering inhabitants of Palestine has brought from the western extremity of Europe, at once to enjoy the countenance of Alexius Comnenus, and to aid him, since it pleases him to accept their assistance, in expelling the Paynims from the bounds of the sacred empire, and garrison those regions in their stead, as vassals of his Imperial Majesty."

"We are pleased," said the Empress, "worthy Agelastes, that you should be kind to those who are disposed to be so reverent to the Emperor. And We are rather disposed to talk with them ourselves, that our daughter (whom Apollo hath gifted with the choice talent of recording what she sees) may become acquainted with one of those female warriors of the West, of whom we have heard so much by common fame, and yet know so little with certainty."

"Madam," said the Count, "I can but rudely express to you what I have to find fault with in the explanation which this old man hath given of our purpose in coming hither. Certain it is, we neither owe Alexius fealty, nor had we the purpose of paying him any, when we took the vow upon ourselves which brought us against Asia. We came, because we understood that the Holy Land had been torn from the Greek Emperor by the Pagans, Saracens, Turks, and other infidels, from whom we are come to win it back. The wisest and most prudent among us have judged it necessary to acknowledge the Emperor's authority, since there was no such safe way of passing to the discharge of our vow, as that of acknowledging fealty to him, as the best mode of preventing quarrels among Christian States. We, though independent of any earthly king, do not pretend to be greater men than they, and therefore have condescended to pay the same homage."

The Empress coloured several times with indignation in the course of this speech, which, in more passages than one, was at variance with those imperial maxims of the Grecian court, which held its dignity so high, and plainly intimated a tone of opinion which was depreciating to the Emperor's power. But the Empress Irene had received instructions from her imperial spouse to beware how she gave, or even took, any ground of quarrel with the crusaders, who, though coming in the appearance of subjects, were, nevertheless, too punctilious and ready to take fire, to render them safe discussers of delicate differences. She made a graceful reverence accordingly, as if she had scarce understood what the Count of Paris had explained so bluntly.

At this moment the appearance of the principal persons on either hand attracted, in a wonderful degree, the attention of the other party, and there seemed to exist among them a general desire of further acquaintance, and, at the same time, a manifest difficulty in expressing such a wish.

Agelastes — to begin with the master of the house — had risen from the ground indeed, but without venturing to assume an upright posture; he remained before the Imperial ladies with his body and head still bent, his hand interposed between his eyes and their faces, like a man that would shade his eyesight from the level sun, and awaited in silence the commands of those to whom he seemed to think it disrespectful to propose the slightest action, save by testifying in general, that his house and his slaves were at their unlimited command. The Countess of Paris, on the other hand, and her warlike husband, were the peculiar objects of curiosity to Irene, and her accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena; and it occurred to both these Imperial ladies, that they had never seen finer specimens of human strength and beauty; but by a natural instinct, they preferred the manly bearing of the husband to that of the wife, which seemed to her own sex rather too haughty and too masculine to be altogether pleasing.

Count Robert and his lady had also their own object of attention in the newly arrived group, and, to speak truth, it was nothing else than the peculiarities of the monstrous animal which they now saw, for the first time, employed as a beast of burden in the service of the fair Irene and her daughter. The dignity and splendour of the elder Princess, the grace and vivacity of the younger, were alike lost in Brenhilda's earnest inquiries into the history of the elephant, and the use which it made of its trunk, tusks, and huge ears, upon different occasions.

Another person, who took a less direct opportunity to gaze on Brenhilda with a deep degree of interest, was the Caesar, Nicephorus. This Prince kept his eye as steadily upon the Frankish Countess as he could well do, without attracting the attention, and exciting perhaps the suspicions, of his wife and mother-in-law; he therefore endeavoured to restore speech to an interview which would have been awkward without it. "It is possible," he said, "beautiful Countess, that this being your first visit to the Queen, of the world, you have never hitherto seen the singularly curious animal called the elephant."

"Pardon me," said the Countess, "I have been treated by this learned gentleman to a sight, and some account of that wonderful creature."

By all who heard this observation, the Lady Brenhilda was supposed to have made a satirical thrust at the philosopher himself, who, in the imperial court, usually went by the name of the elephant.

"No one could describe the beast more accurately than Agelastes," said the Princess, with a smile of intelligence, which went round her attendants.

"He knows its docility, its sensibility, and its fidelity," said the philosopher, in a subdued tone.

"True, good Agelastes," said the Princess; "we should not criticise the animal which kneels to take us up. — Come, lady of a foreign land," she continued, turning to the Frank Count, and especially his Countess — "and you her gallant lord! When you return to your native country, you shall say you have seen the imperial family partake of their food, and in so far acknowledge themselves to be of the same clay with other mortals, sharing their poorest wants, and relieving them in the same manner."

"That, gentle lady, I can well believe," said Count Robert; "my curiosity would be more indulged by seeing this strange animal at his food."

"You will see the elephant more conveniently at his mess within doors," answered the Princess, looking at Agelastes.

"Lady," said Brenhilda, "I would not willingly refuse an invitation given in courtesy, but the sun has waxed low unnoticed, and we must return to the city."

"Be not afraid," said the fair historian; "you shall have the advantage of our Imperial escort to protect you in your return."

"Fear? — afraid? — escort? — protect? — These are words I know not. Know, lady, that my husband, the noble Count of Paris, is my sufficient escort; and even were he not with me, Brenhilda de Aspramonte fears nothing, and can defend herself."

"Fair daughter," said Agelastes, "if I may be permitted to speak, you mistake the gracious intentions of the Princess, who expresses herself as to a lady of her own land. What she desires is to learn from you some of the most marked habits and manners of the Franks, of which you are so beautiful an example; and in return for such information the illustrious Princess would be glad to procure your entrance to those spacious collections, where animals from all corners of the habitable world have been assembled at the command of our Emperor Alexius, as if to satisfy the wisdom of those sages to whom all creation is known, from the deer so small in size that it is exceeded by an ordinary rat, to that huge and singular inhabitant of Africa that can browse on the tops of trees that are forty feet high, while the length of its hind-legs does not exceed the half of that wondrous height."

"It is enough," said the Countess, with some eagerness; but Agelastes had got a point of discussion after his own mind.

"There is also," he said, "that huge lizard, which, resembling in shape the harmless inhabitant of the moors of other countries, is in Egypt a monster thirty feet in length, clothed in impenetrable scales, and moaning over his prey when he catches it, with the hope and purpose of drawing others within his danger, by mimicking the lamentations of humanity."

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the lady. "My Robert, we will go — will we not, where such objects are to be seen?"

"There is also," said Agelastes, who saw that he would gain his point by addressing himself to the curiosity of the strangers, "the huge animal, wearing on its back an invulnerable vestment, having on its nose a horn, and sometimes two, the folds of whose hide are of the most immense thickness, and which never knight was able to wound."

"We will go, Robert — will we not?" reiterated the Countess.

"Ay," replied the Count, "and teach, these Easterns how to judge of a knight's sword, by a single blow of my trusty Tranchefer."

"And who knows," said Brenhilda, "since this is a land of enchantment, but what some person, who is languishing in a foreign shape, may have their enchantment unexpectedly dissolved by a stroke of the good weapon?"

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the Count. "We will attend this Princess, since such she is, were her whole escort bent to oppose our passage, instead of being by her command to be our guard. For know, all who hear me, thus much of the nature of the Franks, that when you tell us of danger and difficulties, you give us the same desire to travel the road where they lie, as other men have in seeking either pleasure or profit in the paths in which such are to be found."

As the Count pronounced these words, he struck his hand upon his Tranchefer, as an illustration of the manner in which he purposed upon occasion to make good his way. The courtly circle startled somewhat at the clash of steel, and the fiery look of the chivalrous Count Robert. The Empress indulged her alarm by retreating into the inner apartment of the pavilion.

With a grace, which was rarely deigned to any but those in close alliance with the Imperial family, Anna Comnena took the arm of the noble Count. "I see," she said, "that the Imperial Mother has honoured the house of the learned Agelastes, by leading the way; therefore, to teach you Grecian breeding must fall to my share." Saying this she conducted him to the inner apartment.

"Fear not for your wife," she said, as she noticed the Frank look round; "our husband, like ourselves, has pleasure in showing attention to the stranger, and will lead the Countess to our board. It is not the custom of the Imperial family to eat in company with strangers; but we thank Heaven for having instructed us in that civility, which can know no degradation in dispensing with ordinary rules to do honour to strangers of such merit as yours. I know it will be my mother's request, that you will take your places without ceremony; and also, although the grace be somewhat particular, I am sure that it will have my Imperial father's approbation."

"Be it as your ladyship lists," said Count Robert. "There are few men to whom I would yield place at the board, if they had not gone before me in the battle-field. To a lady, especially so fair a one, I willingly yield my place, and bend my knee, whenever I have the good hap to meet her."

The Princess Anna, instead of feeling herself awkward in the discharge of the extraordinary, and, as she might have thought it, degrading office of ushering a barbarian chief to the banquet, felt, on the contrary, flattered, at having bent to her purpose a heart so obstinate as that of Count Robert, and elated, perhaps, with a certain degree of satisfied pride while under his momentary protection.

The Empress Irene had already seated herself at the head of the table. She looked with some astonishment, when her daughter and son-in-law, taking their seats at her right and left hand, invited the Count and Countess of Paris, the former to recline, the latter to sit at the board, in the places next to themselves; but she had received the strictest orders from her husband to be deferential in every respect to the strangers, and did not think it right, therefore, to interpose any ceremonious scruples.

The Countess took her seat, as indicated, beside the Caesar; and the Count, instead of reclining in the mode of the Grecian men, also seated himself in the European fashion by the Princess.

"I will not lie prostrate," said he, laughing, "except in consideration of a blow weighty enough to compel me to do so; nor then either, if I am able to start up and return it."

The service of the table then began, and, to say truth, it appeared to be an important part of the business of the day. The officers who attended to perform their several duties of deckers of the table, sewers of the banquet, removers and tasters to the Imperial family, thronged into the banqueting room, and seemed to vie with each other in calling upon Agelastes for spices, condiments, sauces, and wines of various kinds, the variety and multiplicity of their demands being apparently devised *ex preposito*, for stirring the patience of the philosopher. But Agelastes, who had anticipated the most of their requests, however unusual, supplied them completely, or in the greatest part, by the ready agency of his active slave Diogenes, to whom, at the same time, he contrived to transfer all blame for the absence of such articles as he was unable to provide.

"Be Homer my witness, the accomplished Virgil, and the curious felicity of Horace, that, trifling and unworthy as this banquet was, my note of directions to this thrice unhappy slave gave the instructions to procure every ingredient necessary to convey to each dish its proper gusto. — Ill-omened carrion that thou art, wherefore placedst thou the pickled cucumber so far apart from the boar's head? and why are these superb congers unprovided with a requisite quantity of fennel? The divorce betwixt the shell-fish and the Chian wine, in a presence like this, is worthy of the divorce of thine own soul from thy body; or, to say the least, of a lifelong residence in the Pistrinum." While thus the philosopher proceeded with threats, curses, and menaces against his slave, the stranger might have an opportunity of comparing the little torrent of his domestic eloquence, which the manners of the times did not consider as ill-bred, with the louder and deeper share of adulation towards his guests. They mingled like the oil with the vinegar and pickles which Diogenes mixed for the sauce. Thus the Count and Countess had an opportunity to estimate the happiness and the felicity reserved for those slaves, whom the Omnipotent Jupiter, in the plenitude of compassion for their state, and in guerdon of their good morals, had dedicated to the service of a philosopher. The share they themselves took in the banquet, was finished with a degree of speed which gave surprise not only to their host, but also to the Imperial guests.

The Count helped himself carelessly out of a dish which stood near him, and partaking of a draught of wine, without enquiring whether it was of the vintage which the Greeks held it matter of conscience to mingle with that species of food, he declared himself satisfied; nor could the obliging entreaties of his neighbour, Anna Comnena, induce him to partake of other messes represented as being either delicacies or curiosities. His spouse ate still more moderately of the food which seemed most simply cooked, and stood nearest her at the board, and partook of a cup of crystal water, which she slightly tinged with wine, at the persevering entreaty of the Caesar. They then relinquished the farther business of the banquet, and leaning back upon their seats, occupied themselves in watching the liberal credit done to the feast by the rest of the guests present.

A modern synod of gourmands would hardly have equalled the Imperial family of Greece seated, at a philosophical banquet, whether in the critical knowledge displayed of the science of eating in all its branches, or in the practical cost and patience with which they exercised it. The ladies, indeed, did not eat much of any one dish, but they tasted of almost all that were presented to them, and their name was Legion. Yet, after a short time, in Homeric phrase, the rage of thirst and hunger was assuaged, or, more probably, the Princess Anna Comnena was tired of being an object of some inattention to the guest who sat next her, and who, joining his high military character to his very handsome presence, was a person by whom few ladies would willingly be neglected. There is no new guise, says our father Chaucer, but what resembles an old one; and the address of Anna Comnena to the Frankish Count might resemble that of a modern lady of fashion, in her attempts to engage in conversation the *exquisite*, who sits by her side in an apparently absent fit. "We have piped unto you," said the Princess, "and you have not danced! We have sung to you the jovial chorus of *Evoe, evoe*, and you will neither worship Comus nor Bacchus! Are we then to judge you a follower of the Muses, in whose service, as well as in that of Phoebus, we ourselves pretend to be enlisted?"

"Fair lady," replied the Frank, "be not offended at my stating once for all, in plain terms, that I am a Christian man, spitting at, and bidding defiance to Apollo, Bacchus, Comus, and all other heathen deities whatsoever."

"O! cruel interpretation of my unwary words!" said the Princess; "I did but mention the gods of music, poetry, and eloquence, worshipped by our divine philosophers, and whose names are still used to distinguish the arts and sciences over which they presided — and the Count interprets it seriously into a breach of the second commandment! Our Lady preserve me, we must take care how we speak, when our words are so sharply interpreted."

The Count laughed as the Princess spoke. "I had no offensive meaning, madam," he said, "nor would I wish to interpret your words otherwise than as being most innocent and praiseworthy. I shall suppose that your speech contained all that was fair and blameless. You are, I have understood, one of those who, like our worthy host, express in composition the history and feats of the warlike time in which you live, and give to the posterity which shall succeed us, the knowledge of the brave deeds which have been achieved in our day. I respect the task to which you have dedicated yourself, and know not how a lady could lay after ages under an obligation to her in the same degree, unless, like my wife, Brenhilda, she were herself to be the actress of deeds which she recorded. And, by the way, she now looks towards her neighbour at the table, as if she were about to rise and leave him; her inclinations are towards Constantinople, and, with your ladyship's permission, I cannot allow her to go thither alone."

"That you shall neither of you do," said Anna Comnena; "since we all go to the capital directly, and for the purpose of seeing those wonders of nature, of which numerous examples have been collected by the splendour of my Imperial father. — If my husband seems to have given offence to the Countess, do not suppose that it was intentionally dealt to her; on the contrary, you will find the good man, when you are better acquainted with him, to be one of those simple persons who manage so unhappily what they mean for civilities, that those to whom they are addressed receive them frequently in another sense."

The Countess of Paris, however, refused again to sit down to the table from which she had risen, so that Agelastes and his Imperial guests saw themselves under the necessity either to permit the strangers to depart, which they seemed unwilling to do, or to detain them by force, to attempt which might not perhaps have been either safe or pleasant; or, lastly, to have waived the etiquette of rank and set out along with them, at the same time managing their dignity, so as to take the initiatory step, though the departure took place upon the motion of their wilful guests. Much tumult there was — bustling, disputing, and shouting — among the troops and officers who were thus moved from their repast, two hours at least sooner than had been experienced upon similar occasions in the memory of the oldest among them. A different arrangement of the Imperial party likewise seemed to take place by mutual consent.

Nicephorus Briennius ascended the seat upon the elephant, and remained there placed beside his august mother-in-law. Agelastes, on a sober-minded palfrey, which permitted him to prolong his philosophical harangues at his own pleasure, rode beside the Countess Brenhilda, whom he made the principal object of his oratory. The fair historian, though she usually travelled in a litter, preferred upon this occasion a spirited horse, which enabled her to keep pace with Count Robert of Paris, on whose imagination, if not his feelings, she seemed to have it in view to work a marked impression. The conversation of the Empress with her son-in-law requires no special detail. It was a tissue of criticisms upon the manners and behaviour of the Franks, and a hearty wish that they might be soon transported from the realms of Greece, never more to return. Such was at least the tone of the Empress, nor did the Caesar find it convenient to express any more tolerant opinion of the strangers. On the other hand, Agelastes made a long circuit ere he ventured to approach the subject which he wished to introduce. He spoke of the menagerie of the Emperor as a most superb collection of natural history; he extolled different persons at court for having encouraged Alexius Comnenus in this wise and philosophical amusement. But, finally, the praise of all others was abandoned that the philosopher might dwell upon that of Nicephorus Briennius, to whom the cabinet or collection of Constantinople was indebted, he said, for the principal treasures it contained.

"I am glad it is so," said the haughty Countess, without lowering her voice or affecting any change of manner; "I am glad that he understands some things better worth understanding than whispering with stranger young women. Credit me, if he gives much license to his tongue among such women of nay country as these stirring times may bring hither, some one or other of them will fling him into the cataract which dashes below."

"Pardon me, fair lady," said Agelastes; "no female heart could meditate an action so atrocious against so fine a form as that of the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Put it not on that issue, father," said the offended Countess; "for, by my patroness Saint, our Lady of the Broken Lances, had it not been for regard to these two ladies, who seemed to intend some respect to my husband and myself, that same Nicephorus should have been as perfectly a Lord of the Broken Bones as any Caesar who has borne the title since the great Julius!"

The philosopher, upon this explicit information, began to entertain some personal fear for himself, and hastened, by diverting the conversation, which he did with great dexterity, to the story of Hero and Leander, to put the affront received out of the head of this unscrupulous Amazon.

Meantime, Count Robert of Paris was engrossed, as it may be termed, by the fair Anna Comnena. She spoke on all subjects, on some better, doubtless, others worse, but on none did she suspect herself of any deficiency; while the good Count wished heartily within himself that his companion had been safely in bed with the enchanted Princess of Zulichium. She performed, right or wrong, the part of a panegyrist of the Normans, until at length the Count, tired of hearing her prate of she knew not exactly what, broke in as follows:—

"Lady," he said, "notwithstanding I and my followers are sometimes so named, yet we are not Normans, who come hither as a numerous and separate body of pilgrims, under the command of their Duke Robert, a valiant, though extravagant, thoughtless, and weak man. I say nothing against the fame of these Normans. They conquered, in our fathers' days, a kingdom far stronger than their own, which men call England; I see that you entertain some of the natives of which country in your pay, under the name of Varangians. Although defeated, as I said, by the Normans, they are, nevertheless, a brave race; nor would we think ourselves much dishonoured by mixing in battle with them. Still we are the valiant Franks, who had their dwelling on the eastern banks of the Rhine and of the Saale, who were converted to the Christian faith by the celebrated Clovis, and are sufficient, by our numbers and courage, to re-conquer the Holy Land, should all Europe besides stand neutral in the contest."

There are few things more painful to the vanity of a person like the Princess, than the being detected in an egregious error, at the moment she is taking credit to herself for being peculiarly accurately informed.

"A false slave, who knew not what he was saying, I suppose," said the Princess, "imposed upon me the belief that the Varangians were the natural enemies of the Normans. I see him marching there by the side of Achilles Tatius, the leader of his corps. — Call him hither, you officers! — Yonder tall man, I mean, with the battle-axe upon his shoulder."

Hereward, distinguished by his post at the head of the squadron, was summoned from thence to the presence of the Princess, where he made his military obeisance with a cast of sternness in his aspect, as his glance lighted upon the proud look of the Frenchman who rode beside Anna Comnena.

"Did I not understand thee, fellow," said Anna Comnena, "to have informed me, nearly a month ago, that the Normans and the Franks were the same people, and enemies to the race from which you spring?"

"The Normans are our mortal enemies, Lady," answered Hereward, "by whom we were driven from our native land. The Franks are subjects of the same Lord-Paramount with the Normans, and therefore they neither love the Varangians, nor are beloved by them."

"Good fellow," said the French Count, "you do the Franks wrong, and ascribe to the Varangians, although not unnaturally, an undue degree of importance, when you suppose that a race which has ceased to exist as an independent nation for more than a generation, can be either an object of interest or resentment to such as we are."

"I am no stranger," said the Varangian, "to the pride of your heart, or the precedence which you assume over those who have been less fortunate in war than yourselves. It is God who casteth down and who buildeth up, nor is there in the world a prospect to which the Varangians would look forward with more pleasure than that a hundred of their number should meet in a fair field, either with the oppressive Normans, or their modern compatriots, the vain Frenchmen, and let God be the judge which is most worthy of victory."

"You take an insolent advantage of the chance," said the Count of Paris, "which gives you an unlooked-for opportunity to brave a nobleman."

"It is my sorrow and shame," said the Varangian, "that that opportunity is not complete; and that there is a chain around me which forbids me to say, Slay me, or I'll kill thee before we part from this spot!"

"Why, thou foolish and hot-brained churl," replied the Count, "what right hast thou to the honour of dying by my blade? Thou art mad, or hast drained the ale-cup so deeply that thou knowest not what thou thinkest or sayest."

"Thou liest," said the Varangian; "though such a reproach be the utmost scandal of thy race."

The Frenchman motioned his hand quicker than light to his sword, but instantly withdrew it, and said with dignity, "thou canst not offend me."

"But thou," said the exile, "hast offended me in a matter which can only be atoned by thy manhood."

"Where and how?" answered the Count; "although it is needless to ask the question, which thou canst not answer rationally."

"Thou hast this day," answered the Varangian, "put a mortal affront upon a great prince, whom thy master calls his ally, and by whom thou hast been received with every rite of hospitality. Him thou hast affronted as one peasant at a merry-making would do shame to another, and this dishonour thou hast done to him in the very face of his own chiefs and princes, and the nobles from every court of Europe."

"It was thy master's part to resent my conduct," said the Frenchman, "if in reality he so much felt it as an affront."

"But that," said Hereward, "did not consist with the manners of his country to do. Besides that, we trusty Varangians esteem ourselves bound by our oath as much to defend our Emperor, while the service lasts, on every inch of his honour as on every foot of his territory; I therefore tell thee, Sir Knight, Sir Count, or whatever thou callest thyself, there is mortal quarrel between thee and the Varangian guard, ever and until thou hast fought it out in fair and manly battle, body to body, with one of the said Imperial Varangians, when duty and opportunity shall permit:— and so God schaw the right!"

As this passed in the French language, the meaning escaped the understanding of such Imperialists as were within hearing at the time; and the Princess, who waited with some astonishment till the Crusader and the Varangian had finished their conference, when it was over, said to him with interest, "I trust you feel that poor man's situation to be too much at a distance from your own, to admit of your meeting him in what is termed knightly battle?"

"On such a question," said the knight, "I have but one answer to any lady who does not, like my Brenhilda, cover herself with a shield, and bear a sword by her side, and the heart of a knight in her bosom."

"And suppose for once," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "that I possessed such titles to your confidence, what would your answer be to me?"

"There can be little reason for concealing it," said the Count. "The Varangian is a brave man, and a strong one; it is contrary to my vow to shun his challenge, and perhaps I shall derogate from my rank by accepting it; but the world is wide, and he is yet to be born who has seen Robert of Paris shun the face of mortal man. By means of some gallant officer among the Emperor's guards, this poor fellow, who nourishes so strange an ambition, shall learn that he shall have his wish gratified."

"And then?"— said Anna Comnena.

"Why, then," said the Count, "in the poor man's own language, God schaw the right!"

"Which is to say," said the Princess, "that if my father has an officer of his guards honourable enough to forward so pious and reasonable a purpose, the Emperor must lose an ally, in whose faith he puts confidence, or a most trusty and faithful soldier of his personal guard, who has distinguished himself upon many occasions?"

"I am happy to hear," said the Count, "that the man bears such a character. In truth, his ambition ought to have some foundation. The more I think of it, the rather am I of opinion that there is something generous, rather than derogatory, in giving to the poor exile, whose thoughts are so high and noble, those privileges of a man of rank, which some who were born in such lofty station are too cowardly to avail themselves of. Yet despond not, noble Princess; the challenge is not yet accepted of, and if it was, the issue is in the hand of God. As for me, whose trade is war, the sense that I have something so serious to transact with this resolute man, will keep me from other less honourable quarrels, in which a lack of occupation might be apt to involve me."

The Princess made no farther observation, being resolved, by private remonstrance to Achilles Tatius, to engage him to prevent a meeting which might be fatal to the one or the other of two brave men. The town now darkened before them, sparkling, at the same time, through its obscurity, by the many lights which illuminated the houses of the citizens. The royal cavalcade held their way to the Golden Gate, where the trusty centurion put his guard under arms to receive them.

"We must now break off, fair ladies," said the Count, as the party, having now dismounted, were standing together at the private gate of the Blacquernal Palace, "and find as we can, the lodgings which we occupied last night."

"Under your favour, no," said the Empress. "You must be content to take your supper and repose in quarters more fitting your rank; and," added Irene, "with no worse quartermaster than one of the Imperial family who has been your travelling companion."

This the Count heard, with considerable inclination to accept the hospitality which was so readily offered. Although as devoted as a man could well be to the charms of his Brenhilda, the very idea never having entered his head of preferring another's beauty to hers, yet, nevertheless, he had naturally felt himself flattered by the attentions of a woman of eminent beauty and very high rank; and the praises with which the Princess had loaded him, had not entirely fallen to the ground. He was no longer in the humour in which the morning had found him, disposed to outrage the feelings of the Emperor, and to insult his dignity; but, flattered by the adroit sycophancy which the old philosopher had learned from the schools, and the beautiful Princess had been gifted with by nature, he assented to the Empress's proposal; the more readily, perhaps, that the darkness did not permit him to see that there was distinctly a shade of displeasure on the brow of Brenhilda. Whatever the cause, she cared not to express it, and the married pair had just entered that labyrinth of passages through which Hereward had formerly wandered, when a chamberlain, and a female attendant, richly dressed, bent the knee before them, and offered them the means and place to adjust their attire, ere they entered the Imperial presence. Brenhilda looked upon her apparel and arms, spotted with the blood of the insolent Scythian, and, Amazon as she was, felt the shame of being carelessly and improperly dressed. The arms of the knight were also bloody, and in disarrangement.

"Tell my female squire, Agatha, to give her attendance," said the Countess. "She alone is in the habit of assisting to unarm and to attire me."

"Now, God be praised," thought the Grecian lady of the bed-chamber, "that I am not called to a toilet where smiths' hammers and tongs are like to be the instruments most in request!"

"Tell Marcian, my armourer," said the Count, "to attend with the silver and blue suit of plate and mail which I won in a wager from the Count of Thoulouse."*

* Raymond Count of Thoulouse, and St. Giles, Duke of Carboune, and Marquis of Provence, an aged warrior who had won high distinction in the contests against the Saracens in Spain, was the chief leader of the Crusaders from the south of France. His title of St. Giles is corrupted by Anna Comnena into *Sangles*, by which name she constantly mentions him in the *Alexiad*.]

"Might I not have the honour of adjusting your armour," said a splendidly drest courtier, with some marks of the armourer's profession, "since I have put on that of the Emperor himself? — may his name be sacred!"

"And how many rivets hast thou clenched upon the occasion with this hand," said the Count, catching hold of it, "which looks as if it had never been washed, save with milk of roses — and with this childish toy?" pointing to a hammer with ivory haft and silver head, which, stuck into a milk-white kidskin apron, the official wore as badges of his duty. The armourer fell back in some confusion. "His grasp," he said to another domestic, "is like the seizure of a vice!"

While this little scene passed apart, the Empress Irene, her daughter, and her son-in-law, left the company, under pretence of making a necessary change in their apparel. Immediately after, Agelastes was required to attend the Emperor, and the strangers were conducted to two adjacent chambers of retirement, splendidly fitted up, and placed for the present at their disposal, and that of their attendants. There we shall for a time leave them, assuming, with the assistance of their own attendants, a dress which their ideas regarded as most fit for a great occasion; those of the Grecian court willingly keeping apart from a task which they held nearly as formidable as assisting at the lair of a royal tiger or his bride.

Agelastes found the Emperor sedulously arranging his most splendid court-dress; for, as in the court of Pekin, the change of ceremonial attire was a great part of the ritual observed at Constantinople.

"Thou hast done well, wise Agelastes," said Alexius to the philosopher, as he approached with abundance of prostrations and genuflexions — "Thou hast done well, and we are content with thee. Less than thy wit and address must have failed in separating from their company this tameless bull, and unyoked heifer, over whom, if we obtain influence, we shall command, by every account, no small interest among those who esteem them the bravest in the host."

"My humble understanding," said Agelastes, "had been infinitely inferior to the management of so prudent and sagacious a scheme, had it not been shaped forth and suggested by the inimitable wisdom of your most sacred Imperial Highness."

"We are aware," said Alexius, "that we had the merit of blocking forth the scheme of detaining these persons, either by their choice as allies, or by main force as hostages. Their friends, ere yet they have missed them, will be engaged in war with the Turks, and at no liberty, if the devil should suggest such an undertaking, to take arms against the sacred empire. Thus, Agelastes, we shall obtain hostages at least as important and as valuable as that Count of Vermandois, whose liberty the tremendous Godfrey of Bouillon extorted from us by threats of instant war."

"Pardon," said Agelastes, "if I add another reason to those which of themselves so heavily support your august resolution. It is possible that we may, by observing the greatest caution and courtesy towards these strangers, win them in good earnest to our side."

"I conceive you, I conceive you," — said the Emperor; "and this very night I will exhibit myself to this Count and his lady in the royal presence chamber, in the richest robes which our wardrobe can furnish. The lions of Solomon shall roar, the golden tree of Comnenus shall display its wonders, and the feeble eyes of these Franks shall be altogether dazzled by the splendour of the empire. These spectacles cannot but sink into their minds, and dispose them to become the allies and servants of a nation so much more powerful, skilful, and wealthy than their own — Thou hast something to say, Agelastes. Years and long study have made thee wise; though we have given our opinion, thou mayst speak thine own, and live."

Thrice three times did Agelastes press his brow against the hem of the Emperor's garment, and great seemed his anxiety to find such words as might intimate his dissent from his sovereign, yet save him from the informality of contradicting him expressly.

"These sacred words, in which your sacred Highness has uttered your most just and accurate opinions, are undeniable, and incapable of contradiction, were any vain enough to attempt to impugn them. Nevertheless, be it lawful to say, that men show the wisest arguments in vain to those who do not understand reason, just as you would in vain exhibit a curious piece of limning to the blind, or endeavour to bribe, as scripture saith, a sow by the offer of a precious stone. The fault is not, in such case, in the accuracy of your sacred reasoning, but in the obtuseness and perverseness of the barbarians to whom it is applied."

"Speak more plainly," said the Emperor; "how often must we tell thee, that in cases in which we really want counsel, we know we must be contented to sacrifice ceremony?"

"Then in plain words," said Agelastes, "these European barbarians are like no others under the cope of the universe, either on the things on which they look with desire, or on those which they consider as discouraging. The treasures of this noble empire, so far as they affected their wishes, would merely inspire them with the desire to go to war with a nation possessed of so much wealth, and who, in their self-conceited estimation, were less able to defend, than they themselves are powerful to assail. Of such a description, for instance, is Bohemond of Tarentum — and such, a one is many a crusader less able and sagacious than he; — for I think I need not tell your Imperial Divinity, that he holds his own self-interest to be the devoted guide of his whole conduct through this extraordinary war; and that, therefore, you can justly calculate his course, when once you are aware from which point of the compass the wind of avarice and self-interest breathes with respect to him. But there are spirits among the Franks of a very different nature, and who must be acted upon by very different motives, if we would make ourselves masters of their actions, and the principles by which they are governed. If it were lawful to do so, I would request your Majesty to look at the manner by which an artful juggler of your court achieves his imposition upon the eyes of spectators, yet needfully disguises the means by which he attains his object. This people — I mean the more lofty-minded of these crusaders, who act up to the pretences of the doctrines which they call chivalry — despise the thirst of gold, and gold itself, unless to hilt their swords, or to furnish forth some necessary expenses, as alike useless and contemptible. The man who can be moved by the thirst of gain, they condemn, scorn, and despise, and liken him, in the meanness of his objects, to the most paltry serf that ever followed the plough, or wielded the spade. On the other hand, if it happens that they actually need gold, they are sufficiently unceremonious in taking it where they can most easily find it. Thus, they are neither easily to be bribed by giving them sums of gold, nor to be starved into compliance by withholding what chance may render necessary for them. In the one case, they set no value upon the gift of a little paltry yellow dross; in the other, they are accustomed to take what they want."

"Yellow dross," interrupted Alexius. "Do they call that noble metal, equally respected by Roman and barbarian, by rich and poor, by great and mean, by churchmen and laymen, which all mankind are fighting for, plotting for, planning for, intriguing for, and damning themselves for, both soul and body — by the opprobrious name of yellow dross? They are mad, Agelastes, utterly mad. Perils and dangers, penalties and scourges, are the arguments to which men who are above the universal influence which moves all others, can possibly be accessible."

"Nor are they," said Agelastes, "more accessible to fear than they are to self-interest. They are indeed, from their boyhood, brought up to scorn those passions which influence ordinary minds, whether by means of avarice to impel, or of fear to hold back. So much is this the case, that what is enticing to other men, must, to interest them, have the piquant sauce of extreme danger. I told, for instance, to this very hero, a legend of a Princess of Zulichium, who lay on an enchanted couch, beautiful as an angel, awaiting the chosen knight who should, by dispelling her enchanted slumbers, become master of her person, of her kingdom of Zulichium, and of her countless treasures; and, would your Imperial Majesty believe me, I could scarce get the gallant to attend to my legend or take any interest in the adventure, till I assured him he would have to encounter a winged dragon, compared to which the largest of those in the Frank romances was but like a mere dragon-fly?"

"And did this move the gallant?" said the Emperor.

"So much so," replied the philosopher, "that had I not unfortunately, by the earnestness of my description, awakened the jealousy of his Penthesilea of a Countess, he had forgotten the crusade and all belonging to it, to go in quest of Zulichium and its slumbering sovereign."

"Nay, then," said the Emperor, "we have in our empire (make us sensible of the advantage!) innumerable tale-tellers who are not possessed in the slightest degree of that noble scorn of gold which is proper to the Franks, but shall, for a brace of besants, lie with the devil, and beat him to boot, if in that manner we can gain, as mariners say, the weathergage of the Franks."

"Discretion," said Agelastes, "is in the highest degree necessary. Simply to lie is no very great matter; it is merely a departure from the truth, which is little different from missing a mark at archery, where the whole horizon, one point alone excepted, will alike serve the shooter's purpose; but to move the Frank as is desired, requires a perfect knowledge of his temper and disposition, great caution and presence of mind, and the most versatile readiness in changing from one subject to another. Had I not myself been, somewhat alert, I might have paid the penalty of a false step in your Majesty's service, by being flung into my own cascade by the virago whom I offended."

"A perfect Thalestris!" said the Emperor; "I shall take care what offence I give her."

"If I might speak and live," said Agelastes, "the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius had best adopt the same precaution."

"Nicephorus," said the Emperor, "must settle that with our daughter. I have ever told her that she gives him too much of that history, of which a page or two is sufficiently refreshing; but by our own self we must swear it, Agelastes, that, night after night, hearing nothing else, would subdue the patience of a saint! — Forget, good Agelastes, that them hast heard me say such a thing — more especially, remember it not when thou art in presence of our Imperial wife and daughter."

"Nor were the freedoms taken by the Caesar beyond the bounds of an innocent gallantry," said Agelastes; "but the Countess, I must needs say, is dangerous. She killed this day the Scythian Toxartis, by what seemed a mere fillip on the head."

"Hah!" said the Emperor; "I knew that Toxartis, and he was like enough to deserve his death, being a bold unscrupulous marauder. Take notes, however, how it happened, the names of witnesses, &c., that, if necessary, we may exhibit the fact as a deed of aggression on the part of the Count and Countess of Paris, to the assembly of the crusaders."

"I trust," said Agelastes, "your Imperial Majesty will not easily resign the golden opportunity of gaining to your standard persons whose character stands so very high in chivalry. It would cost you but little to bestow upon them a Grecian island, worth a hundred of their own paltry lordship of Paris; and if it were given under the condition of their expelling the infidels or the disaffected who may have obtained the temporary possession, it would be so much the more likely to be an acceptable offer. I need not say that the whole knowledge, wisdom, and skill of the poor Agelastes is at your Imperial Majesty's disposal."

The Emperor paused for a moment, and then said, as if on full consideration, "Worthy Agelastes, I dare trust thee in this difficult and somewhat dangerous matter; but I will keep my purpose of exhibiting to them the lions of Solomon, and the golden tree of our Imperial house."

"To that there can be no objection," returned the philosopher; "only remember to exhibit few guards, for these Franks are like a fiery horse; when in temper he may be ridden with a silk thread, but when he has taken umbrage or suspicion, as they would likely do if they saw many armed men, a steel bridle would not restrain him."

"I will be cautious," said the Emperor, "in that particular, as well as others. — Sound the silver bell, Agelastes, that the officers of our wardrobe may attend."

"One single word, while your Highness is alone," said Agelastes. "Will your Imperial Majesty transfer to me the direction of your menagerie, or collection of extraordinary creatures?"

"You make me wonder," said the Emperor, taking a signet, bearing upon it a lion, with the legend, *Vicit Leo ex tribu Judae*. "This," he said, "will give thee the command of our dens. And now, be candid for once with thy master — for deception is thy nature even with me — By what charm wilt thou subdue these untamed savages?"

"By the power of falsehood," replied Agelastes, with deep reverence.

"I believe thee an adept in it," said the Emperor. "And to which of their foibles wilt thou address it?"

"To their love of fame," said the philosopher; and retreated backwards out of the royal apartment, as the officers of the wardrobe entered to complete the investment of the Emperor in his Imperial habiliments.

Chapter the Fourteenth.

I will converse with iron-witted fools,

And unrespectful boys; none are for me,

That look into me with considerate eyes; —

High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.

RICHARD III.

As they parted from each other, the Emperor and philosopher had each their own anxious thoughts on the interview which had passed between them; thoughts which they expressed in broken sentences and ejaculations, though for the better understanding of the degree of estimation in which they held each other, we will give them a more regular and intelligible form.

"Thus, then," half muttered half said Alexius, but so low as to hide his meaning from the officers of the wardrobe, who entered to do their office — "thus, then, this bookworm — this remnant of old heathen philosophy, who hardly believes, so God save me, the truth of the Christian creed, has topp'd his part so well that he forces his Emperor to dissemble in his presence. Beginning by being the buffoon of the court, he has wormed himself into all its secrets, made himself master of all its intrigues, conspired with my own son-in-law against me, debauched my guards — indeed so woven his web of deceit, that my life is safe no longer, than he believes me the imperial dolt which I have affected to seem, in order to deceive him; fortunate that even so can I escape his cautionary anticipation of my displeasure, by avoiding to precipitate his measures of violence. But were this sudden storm of the crusade fairly passed over, the ungrateful Caesar, the boastful coward Achilles Tatius, and the bosom serpent Agelastes, shall know whether Alexius Comnenus has been born their dupe. When Greek meets Greek, comes the strife of subtlety, as well as the tug of war." Thus saying, he resigned himself to the officers of his wardrobe, who proceeded to ornament him as the solemnity required,

"I trust him not," said Agelastes, the meaning of whose gestures and exclamations, we, in like manner, render into a connected meaning. "I cannot, and do not trust him — he somewhat overacts his part. He has borne himself upon other occasions with the shrewd wit of his family the Comneni; yet he now trusts to the effect of his trumpery lions upon such a shrewd people as the Franks and Normans, and seems to rely upon me for the character of men with whom he has been engaged in peace and war for many years. This can be but to gain my confidence; for there were imperfect looks, and broken sentences, which seemed to say, 'Agelastes, the Emperor knows thee and confides not in thee.' Yet the plot is successful and undiscovered, as far as can be judged; and were I to attempt to recede now, I were lost for ever. A little time to carry on this intrigue with the Frank, when possibly, by the assistance of this gallant, Alexius shall exchange the crown for a cloister, or a still narrower abode; and then, Agelastes, thou deservest to be blotted from the roll of philosophers, if thou canst not push out of the throne the conceited and luxurious Caesar, and reign in his stead, a second Marcus Antoninus, when the wisdom of thy rule, long unfelt in a world which has been guided by tyrants and voluptuaries, shall soon obliterate recollection of the manner in which thy power was acquired. To work then — be active, and be cautious. The time requires it, and the prize deserves it."

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he arrayed himself, by the assistance of Diogenes, in a clean suit of that simple apparel in which he always frequented the court; a garb as unlike that of a candidate for royalty, as it was a contrast to the magnificent robes with which Alexius was now investing himself. In their separate apartments, or dressing-rooms, the Count of Paris and his lady put on the best apparel which they had prepared to meet such a chance upon their journey. Even in France, Robert was seldom seen in the peaceful cap and sweeping mantle, whose high plumes and flowing folds were the garb of knights in times of peace. He was now arrayed in a splendid suit of armour, all except the head, which was bare otherwise than as covered by his curled locks. The rest of his person was sheathed in the complete mail of the time, richly inlaid with silver, which contrasted with the azure in which the steel was damasked. His spurs were upon his heels — his sword was by his side, and his triangular shield was suspended round his neck, bearing, painted upon it, a number of *fleurs-de-lis semees*, as it is called, upon the field, being the origin of those lily flowers which after times reduced to three only; and which were the terror of Europe, until they suffered so many reverses in our own time.

The extreme height of Count Robert's person adapted him for a garb, which had a tendency to make persons of a lower stature appear rather dwarfish and thick when arrayed *cap-a-pie*. The features, with their self-collected composure, and noble contempt of whatever could have astounded or shaken an ordinary mind, formed a well-fitted capital to the excellently proportioned and vigorous frame which they terminated. The Countess was in more peaceful attire; but her robes were short and succinct, like those of one who might be called to hasty exercise. The upper part of her dress consisted of more than one tunic, sitting close to the body, while a skirt, descending from the girdle, and reaching to the ankles, embroidered elegantly but richly, completed an attire which a lady might have worn in much more modern times. Her tresses were covered with a light steel head-piece, though some of them, escaping, played round her face, and gave relief to those

handsome features which might otherwise have seemed too formal, if closed entirely within the verge of steel. Over these undergarments was flung a rich velvet cloak of a deep green colour, descending from the head, where a species of hood was loosely adjusted over the helmet, deeply laced upon its verges and seams, and so long as to sweep the ground behind. A dagger of rich materials ornamented a girdle of curious goldsmith's work, and was the only offensive weapon which, notwithstanding her military occupation, she bore upon this occasion.

The toilet — as modern times would say — of the Countess, was not nearly so soon ended as that of Count Robert, who occupied his time, as husbands of every period are apt to do, in little sub-acid complaints between jest and earnest, upon the dilatory nature of ladies, and the time which they lose in doffing and donning their garments. But when the Countess Brenhilda came forth in the pride of loveliness, from the inner chamber where she had attired herself, her husband, who was still her lover, clasped her to his breast and expressed his privilege by the kiss which he took as of right from a creature so beautiful. Chiding him for his folly, yet almost returning the kiss which she received, Brenhilda began now to wonder how they were to find their way to the presence of the Emperor.

The query was soon solved, for a gentle knock at the door announced Agelastes, to whom, as best acquainted with the Frankish manners, had been committed, by the Emperor, the charge of introducing the noble strangers. A distant sound, like that of the roaring of a lion, or not unsimilar to a large and deep gong of modern times, intimated the commencement of the ceremonial. The black slaves upon guard, who, as hath been observed, were in small numbers, stood ranged in their state dresses of white and gold, bearing in one hand a naked sabre, and in the other a torch of white wax, which served to guide the Count and Countess through the passages that led to the interior of the palace, and to the most secret hall of audience.

The door of this *sanctum sanctorum* was lower than usual, a simple stratagem devised by some superstitious officer of the Imperial household, to compel the lofty-crested Frank to lower his body, as he presented himself in the Imperial presence. Robert, when the door flew open, and he discovered in the background the Emperor seated upon his throne amidst a glare of light, which was broken and reflected in ten thousand folds by the jewels with which his vestments were covered, stopt short, and demanded the meaning of introducing him through so low an arch? Agelastes pointed to the Emperor by way of shifting from himself a question which he could not have answered. The mute, to apologize for his silence, yawned, and showed the loss of his tongue.

"Holy Virgin!" said the Countess, "what can these unhappy Africans have done, to have deserved a condemnation which involves so cruel a fate?"

"The hour of retribution is perhaps come," said the Count, in a displeased tone, while Agelastes, with such hurry as time and place permitted, entered, making his prostrations and genuflexions, little doubting that the Frank must follow him, and to do so must lower his body to the Emperor. The Count, however, in the height of displeasure at the trick which he conceived had been, intended him, turned himself round, and entered the presence-chamber with his back purposely turned to the sovereign, and did not face Alexius until he reached the middle of the apartment, when he was joined by the Countess, who had made her approach in a more seemly manner. The Emperor, who had prepared to acknowledge the Count's expected homage in the most gracious manner, found himself now even more unpleasantly circumstanced than when this uncompromising Frank had usurped the royal throne in the course of the day.

The officers and nobles who stood around, though a very select number, were more numerous than usual, as the meeting was not held for counsel, but merely for state. These assumed such an appearance of mingled displeasure and confusion as might best suit with the perplexity of Alexius, while the wily features of the Norman-Italian, Bohemond of Tarentum, who was also present, had a singular mixture of fantastical glee and derision. It is the misfortune of the weaker on such occasions, or at least the more timid, to be obliged to take the petty part of winking hard, as if not able to see what they cannot avenge.

Alexius made the signal that the ceremonial of the grand reception should immediately commence. Instantly the lions of Solomon, which had been newly furbished, raised their heads, erected their manes, brandished their tails, until they excited the imagination of Count Robert, who, being already on fire at the circumstances of his reception, conceived the bellowing of these automata to be the actual annunciation of immediate assault. Whether the lions, whose forms he beheld, were actually lords of the forest — whether they were mortals who had suffered transformation — whether they were productions of the skill of an artful juggler or profound naturalist, the Count neither knew nor cared. All that he thought of the danger was, it was worthy of his courage; nor did his heart permit him a moment's irresolution. He strode to the nearest lion, which seemed in the act of springing up, and said, in a tone loud and formidable as its own, "How now, dog!" At the same time he struck the figure with his clenched fist and steel gauntlet with so much force, that its head burst, and the steps and carpet of the throne were covered with wheels, springs, and other machinery, which had been the means of producing its mimic terrors.

On this display of the real nature of the cause of his anger, Count Robert could not but feel a little ashamed of having given way to passion on such an occasion. He was still more confused when Bohemond, descending from his station near the Emperor, addressed him in the Frank language; — "You have done a gallant deed, truly, Count Robert, in freeing the court of Byzantium from an object of fear which has long been used to frighten peevish children and unruly barbarians!" Enthusiasm has no greater enemy than ridicule. "Why, then," said Count Robert, blushing deeply at the same time, "did they exhibit its fantastic terrors to me? I am neither child nor barbarian."

"Address yourself to the Emperor, then, as an intelligent man," answered Bohemond. "Say something to him in excuse of your conduct, and show that our bravery has not entirely run away with our common sense. And hark you also, while I have a moment's speech of you — do you and your wife heedfully follow my example at supper!" These words were spoken with a significant tone and corresponding look.

The opinion of Bohemond, from his long intercourse, both in peace and war, with the Grecian Emperor, gave him great influence with the other crusaders, and Count Robert yielded to his advice. He turned towards the Emperor with something liker an obeisance than he had hitherto paid. "I crave your pardon," he said, "for breaking that gilded piece of pageantry; but, in sooth, the wonders of sorcery, and the portents of accomplished and skilful jugglers, are so numerous in this country, that one does not clearly distinguish what is true from what is false, or what is real from what is illusory."

The Emperor, notwithstanding the presence of mind for which he was remarkable, and the courage in which he was not held by his countrymen to be deficient, received this apology somewhat awkwardly. Perhaps the rueful complaisance with which he accepted the Count's apology, might be best compared to that of a lady of the present day when an awkward guest has broken a valuable piece of china. He muttered something about the machines having been long preserved in the Imperial family, as being made on the model of those which guarded the throne of the wise King of Israel; to which the blunt plain-spoken Count expressed his doubt in reply, whether the wisest prince in the world ever condescended to frighten his subjects or guests by the mimic roarings of a wooden lion. "If," said he, "I too hastily took it for a living creature, I have had the worst, by damaging my excellent gauntlet in dashing to pieces its timber skull."

The Emperor, after a little more had been said, chiefly on the same subject, proposed that they should pass to the banquet-room. Marshalled, accordingly, by the grand sewer of the Imperial table, and attended by all present, excepting the Emperor and the immediate members of his family, the Frankish guests were guided through a labyrinth of apartments, each of which was filled with wonders of nature and art, calculated to enhance their opinion of the wealth and grandeur which had assembled together so much that was wonderful. Their passage being necessarily slow and interrupted, gave the Emperor time to change his dress, according to the ritual of his court, which did not permit his appearing twice in the same vesture before the same spectators. He took the opportunity to summon Agelastes into his presence, and, that their conference might be secret, he used, in assisting his toilet, the agency of some of the mutes destined for the service of the interior.

The temper of Alexius Comnenus was considerably moved, although it was one of the peculiarities of his situation to be ever under the necessity of disguising the emotions of his mind, and of affecting, in presence of his subjects, a superiority to human passion, which he was far from feeling. It was therefore with gravity, and even reprehension, that he asked, "By whose error it was that the wily Bohemond, half-Italian, and half-Norman, was present at this interview? Surely, if there be one in the crusading army likely to conduct that foolish youth and his wife behind the scenes of the exhibition by which we hoped to impose upon them, the Count of Tarentum, as he entitles himself, is that person."

"It was that old man," said Agelastes, "(if I may reply and live,) Michael Cantacuzene, who deemed that his presence was peculiarly desired; but he returns to the camp this very night."

"Yes," said Alexius, "to inform Godfrey, and the rest of the crusaders, that one of the boldest and most highly esteemed of their number is left, with his wife, a hostage in our Imperial city, and to bring back, perhaps, an alternative of instant war, unless they are delivered up!"

"If it is your Imperial Highness's will to think so," said Agelastes, "you can suffer Count Robert and his wife to return to the camp with the Italian-Norman."

"What?" answered the Emperor, "and so lose all the fruits of an enterprise, the preparations for which have already cost us so much in actual expense; and, were our heart made of the same stuff with that of ordinary mortals, would have cost us so much more in vexation and anxiety? No, no; issue warning to the crusaders, who are still on the hither side, that farther rendering of homage is dispensed with, and that they repair to the quays on the banks of the Bosphorus, by peep of light tomorrow. Let our admiral, as he values his head, pass every man of them over to the farther side before noon. Let there be largesses, a princely banquet on the farther bank — all that may increase their anxiety to pass. Then, Agelastes, we will trust to ourselves to meet this additional danger, either by bribing the venality of Bohemond, or by bidding defiance to the crusaders. Their forces are scattered, and the chief of them, with the leaders themselves, are all now — or by far the greater part — on the east side of the Bosphorus. — And now to the banquet! seeing that the change of dress has been made sufficient to answer the statutes of the household; since our ancestors chose to make rules for exhibiting us to our subjects, as priests exhibit their images at their shrines!"

"Under grant of life," said Agelastes, "it was not done inconsiderately, but in order that the Emperor, ruled ever by the same laws from father to son, might ever be regarded as something beyond the common laws of humanity — the divine image of a saint, therefore, rather than a human being."

"We know it, good Agelastes," answered the Emperor, with a smile, "and we are also aware, that many of our subjects, like the worshippers of Bel in holy writ, treat us so far as an image, as to assist us in devouring the revenues of our provinces, which are gathered in our name, and for our use. These things we now only touch lightly, the time not suiting them."

Alexius left the secret council accordingly, after the order for the passage of the crusaders had been written out and subscribed in due form, and in the sacred ink of the Imperial chancery.

Meantime, the rest of the company had arrived in a hall, which, like the other apartments in the palace, was most tastefully as well as gorgeously fitted up, except that a table, which presented a princely banquet, might have been deemed faulty in this respect, that the dishes, which were most splendid, both in the materials of which they were composed, and in the viands which they held, were elevated by means of feet, so as to be upon a level with female guests as they sat, and with men as they lay recumbent at the banquet which it offered.

Around stood a number of black slaves richly attired, while the grand sewer, Michael Cantazucene, arranged the strangers with his golden wand, and conveyed orders to them, by signs, that all should remain standing around the table, until a signal should be given.

The upper end of the board, thus furnished, and thus surrounded, was hidden by a curtain of muslin and silver, which fell from the top of the arch under which the upper part seemed to pass. On this curtain the sewer kept a wary eye; and when he observed it slightly shake, he waved his wand of office, and all expected the result.

As if self-moved, the mystic curtain arose, and discovered behind it a throne eight steps higher than the end of the table, decorated in the most magnificent manner, and having placed before it a small table of ivory inlaid with silver, behind which was seated Alexius Comnenus, in a dress entirely different from what he had worn in the course of the day, and so much more gorgeous than his former vestments, that it seemed not unnatural that his subjects should prostrate themselves before a figure so splendid. His wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law the Caesar, stood behind him with faces bent to the ground, and it was with deep humility, that, descending from the throne at the Emperor's command, they mingled with the guests of the lower table, and, exalted as they were, proceeded to the festive board at the signal of the grand sewer. So that they could not be said to partake of the repast with the Emperor, nor to be placed at the Imperial table, although they supped in his presence, and were encouraged by his repeated request to them to make good cheer. No dishes presented at the lower table were offered at the higher; but wines, and more delicate sorts of food, which arose before the Emperor as if by magic, and seemed designed for his own proper use, were repeatedly sent, by his special directions, to one or other of the guests whom Alexius delighted to honour — among these the Franks being particularly distinguished.

The behaviour of Bohemond was on this occasion particularly remarkable.

Count Robert, who kept an eye upon him, both from his recent words, and owing to an expressive look which he once or twice darted towards him, observed, that in no liquors or food, not even those sent from the Emperor's own table, did this astucious prince choose to indulge. A piece of bread, taken from the canister at random, and a glass of pure water, was the only refreshment of which he was pleased to partake. His alleged excuse was, the veneration due to the Holy Festival of the Advent, which chanced to occur that very night, and which both the Greek and Latin rule agree to hold sacred.

"I had not expected this of you, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor, "that you should have refused my personal hospitality at my own board, on the very day on which you honoured me by entering into my service as vassal for the principality of Antioch."

"Antioch is not yet conquered," said Sir Bohemond; "and conscience, dread sovereign, must always have its exceptions, in whatever temporal contracts we may engage."

"Come, gentle Count," said the Emperor, who obviously regarded Bohemond's inhospitable humour as something arising more from suspicion than devotion, "we invite, though it is not our custom, our children, our noble guests, and our principal officers here present, to a general carouse. Fill the cups called the Nine Muses! let them be brimful of the wine which is said to be sacred to the Imperial lips!"

At the Emperor's command the cups were filled; they were of pure gold, and there was richly engraved upon each the effigy of the Muse to whom it was dedicated.

"You at least," said the Emperor, "my gentle Count Robert, you and your lovely lady, will not have any scruple to pledge your Imperial host?"

"If that scruple is to imply suspicion of the provisions with which we are here served, I disdain to nourish such," said Count Robert. "If it is a sin which I commit by tasting wine to-night, it is a venial one; nor shall I greatly augment my load by carrying it, with the rest of my trespasses, to the next confessional."

"Will you then, Prince Bohemond, not be ruled by the conduct of your friend?" said the Emperor.

"Methinks," replied the Norman-Italian, "my friend might have done better to have been, ruled by mine; but be it as his wisdom pleases. The flavour of such exquisite wine is sufficient for me."

"So saying, he emptied the wine into another goblet, and seemed alternately to admire the carving of the cup, and the flavour of what it had lately contained.

"You are right, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor; "the fabric of that cup is beautiful; it was done by one of the ancient gravers of Greece. The boasted cup of Nestor, which Homer has handed down to us, was a good deal larger perhaps, but neither equalled these in the value of the material, nor the exquisite beauty of the workmanship. Let each one, therefore, of my stranger guests, accept of the cup which he either has or might have drunk out of, as a recollection of me; and may the expedition against the infidels be as propitious as their confidence and courage deserve!"

"If I accept your gift, mighty Emperor," said Bohemond, "it is only to atone for the apparent discourtesy, when my devotion, compels me to decline your Imperial pledge, and to show you that we part on the most intimate terms of friendship."

So saying, he bowed deeply to the Emperor, who answered him with a smile, into which was thrown, a considerable portion of sarcastic expression.

"And I," said the Count of Paris, "having taken upon my conscience the fault of meeting your Imperial pledge, may stand excused from incurring the blame of aiding to dismantle your table of these curious drinking cups. We empty them to your health, and we cannot in any other respect profit by them."

"But Prince Bohemond can," said the Emperor; "to whose quarters they shall be carried, sanctioned by your generous use. And we have still a set for you, and for your lovely Countess, equal to that of the Graces, though no longer matching in number the nymphs of Parnassus. — The evening bell rings, and calls us to remember the hour of rest, that we may be ready to meet the labours of tomorrow."

The party then broke up for the evening. Bohemond left the palace that night, not forgetting the Muses, of whom he was not in general a devotee. The result was, as the wily Greek had intended, that he had established between Bohemond and the Count, not indeed a quarrel, but a kind of difference of opinion; Bohemond feeling that the fiery Count of Paris must think his conduct sordid and avaricious, while Count Robert was far less inclined than before to rely on him as a counsellor.

Chapter the Fifteenth.

The Count of Paris and his lady were that night lodged in the Imperial Palace of the Blacquenal. Their apartments were contiguous, but the communication between them was cut off for the night by the mutual door being locked and barred. They marvelled somewhat at this precaution. The observance, however, of the festival of the Church, was pleaded as an admissible, and not unnatural excuse for this extraordinary circumstance. Neither the Count nor his lady entertained, it may be believed, the slightest personal fear for any thing which could happen to them. Their attendants, Marcian and Agatha, having assisted their master and mistress in the performance of their usual offices, left them, in order to seek the places of repose assigned to them among persons of their degree.

The preceding day had been one of excitation, and of much bustle and interest; perhaps, also, the wine, sacred to the Imperial lips, of which Count Robert had taken a single, indeed, but a deep draught, was more potent than the delicate and high-flavoured juice of the Gascogne grape, to which he was accustomed; at any rate, it seemed to him that, from the time he felt that he had slept, daylight ought to have been broad in his chamber when he awaked, and yet it was still darkness almost palpable. Somewhat surprised, he gazed eagerly around, but could discern nothing, except two balls of red light which shone from among the darkness with a self-emitted brilliancy, like the eyes of a wild animal while it glares upon its prey. The Count started from bed to put on his armour, a necessary precaution if what he saw should really be a wild creature and at liberty; but the instant he stirred, a deep growl was uttered, such as the Count had never heard, but which might be compared to the sound of a thousand monsters at once; and, as the symphony, was heard the clash of iron chains, and the springing of a monstrous creature towards the bedside, which appeared, however, to be withheld by some fastening from attaining the end of its bound. The roars which it uttered now ran thick on each other. They were most tremendous, and must have been heard throughout the whole palace. The creature seemed to gather itself many yards nearer to the bed than by its glaring eyeballs it appeared at first to be stationed, and how much nearer, or what degree of motion, might place him within the monster's reach, the Count was totally uncertain. Its breathing was even heard, and Count Robert thought he felt the heat of its respiration, while his defenceless limbs might not be two yards distant from the fangs which he heard grinding against each other, and the claws which tore up fragments of wood from the oaken floor. The Count of Paris was one of the bravest men who lived in a time when bravery was the universal property of all who claimed a drop of noble blood, and the knight was a descendant of Charlemagne. He was, however, a man, and therefore cannot be said to have endured unappalled a sense of danger so unexpected and so extraordinary. But his was not a sudden alarm or panic, it was a calm sense of extreme peril, qualified by a resolution to exert his faculties to the uttermost, to save his life if it were possible. He withdrew himself within the bed, no longer a place of rest, being thus a few feet further from the two glaring eyeballs which remained so closely fixed upon him, that, in spite of his courage, nature painfully suggested the bitter imagination of his limbs being mangled, torn, and churned with their life-blood, in the jaws of some monstrous beast of prey. One saving thought alone presented itself — this might be a trial, an experiment of the philosopher Agelastes, or of the Emperor his master, for the purpose of proving the courage of which the Christians vaunted so highly, and punishing the thoughtless insult which the Count had been misadvised enough to put upon the Emperor the preceding day.

"Well is it said," he reflected in his agony, "beard not the lion in his den! Perhaps even, now some base slave deliberates whether I have yet tasted enough of the preliminary agonies of death, and whether he shall yet slip the chain which keeps the savage from doing his work. But come death when it will, it shall never be said that Count Robert was heard to receive it with prayers for compassion, or with cries of pain or terror." He turned his face to the wall, and waited, with a strong mental exertion, the death which he conceived to be fast approaching.

His first feelings had been unavoidably of a selfish nature. The danger was too instant, and of a description too horrible, to admit of any which involved a more comprehensive view of his calamity; and other reflections of a more distant kind, were at first swallowed up in the all-engrossing thought of immediate death. But as his ideas became clearer, the safety of his Countess rushed upon his mind — what might she now be suffering! and, while he was subjected to a trial so extraordinary, for what were her weaker frame and female courage reserved? Was she still within a few yards of him, as when he lay down the last night? or had the barbarians, who had devised for him a scene so cruel, availed themselves of his and his lady's incautious confidence to inflict upon her some villany of the same kind, or even yet more perfidious? Did she sleep or wake, or could she sleep within the close hearing of that horrible cry, which shook all around? He resolved to utter her name, warning her, if possible, to be upon her guard, and to answer without venturing rashly into the apartment which contained a guest so horribly perilous.

He uttered, therefore, his wife's name, but in trembling accents, as if he had been afraid of the savage beast overhearing him.

"Brenhilda! Brenhilda! — there is danger-awake, and speak to me, but do not arise." There was no answer. — "What am I become," he said to himself, "that I call upon Brenhilda of Aspramonte, like a child on its sleeping nurse, and all because there is a wild-cat in the same room with me? Shame on thee, Count of Paris! Let thy arms be rent, and thy spurs be hacked from thy heels! — What ho!" he cried aloud, but still with a tremulous voice, "Brenhilda, we are beset, the foe are upon us! — Answer me, but stir not."

A deep growl from the monster which garrisoned his apartment was the only answer. The sound seemed to say, "Thou hast no hope!" and it ran to the knight's bosom as the genuine expression of despair.

"Perhaps, however, I am still too cold in making my misery known. What ho! my love! Brenhilda!"

A voice, hollow and disconsolate as that which might have served an inhabitant of the grave, answered as if from a distance. "What disconsolate wretch art thou, who expectest that the living can answer thee from the habitations of the dead?"

"I am a Christian man, a free noble of the kingdom of France," answered the Count. "Yesterday the captain of five hundred men, the bravest in France — the bravest, that is, who breathe the mortal air — and I am here without a glimpse of light, to direct me how to avoid the corner in which lies a wild tiger-cat, prompt to spring upon and to devour me."

"Thou art an example," replied the voice, "and wilt not long be the last, of the changes of fortune. I, who am now suffering in my third year, was that mighty Ursel, who rivalled Alexius Comnenus for the Crown of Greece, was betrayed by my confederates, and being deprived of that eyesight which is the chief blessing of humanity, I inhabit these vaults, no distant neighbour of the wild animals by whom they are sometimes occupied, and whose cries of joy I hear when unfortunate victims like thyself are delivered up to their fury."

"Didst thou not then hear," said Count Robert, in return, "a warlike guest and his bride conducted hither last night, with sounds as it might seem, of bridal music? — O, Brenhilda! hast thou, so young — so beautiful — been so treacherously done to death by means so unutterably horrible!"

"Think not," answered Ursel, as the voice had called its owner, "that the Greeks pamper their wild beasts on such lordly fare. For their enemies, which term includes not only all that are really such, but all those whom they fear or hate, they have dungeons whose locks never revolve; hot instruments of steel, to sear the eyeballs in the head; lions and tigers, when it pleases them to make a speedy end of their captives — but these are only for the male prisoners. While for the women — if they be young and beautiful, the princes of the land have places in their bed and bower; nor are they employed like the captives of Agamemnon's host, to draw water from an Argive spring, but are admired and adored by those whom fate has made the lords of their destiny."

"Such shall never be the doom of Brenhilda!" exclaimed Count Robert; "her husband still lives to assist her, and should he die, she knows well how to follow him without leaving a blot in the epitaph of either."

The captive did not immediately reply, and a short pause ensued, which was broken by Ursel's voice. "Stranger," he said, "what noise is that I hear?"

"Nay, I hear nothing," said Count Robert.

"But I do," said Ursel. "The cruel deprivation of my eyesight renders my other senses more acute."

"Disquiet not thyself about the matter, fellow-prisoner," answered the Count, "but wait the event in silence."

Suddenly a light arose in the apartment, lurid, red, and smoky. The knight had bethought him of a flint and match which he usually carried about him, and with as little noise as possible had lighted the torch by the bedside; this he instantly applied to the curtains of the bed, which, being of thin muslin, were in a moment in flames. The knight sprung, at the same instant, from his bed. The tiger, for such it was, terrified at the flame, leaped backwards as far as his chain would permit, heedless of any thing save this new object of terror. Count Robert upon this seized on a massive wooden stool, which was the only offensive weapon on which he

could lay his hand, and, marking at those eyes which now reflected the blaze of fire, and which had recently seemed so appalling, he discharged against them this fragment of ponderous oak, with a force which less resembled human strength than the impetus with which an engine hurls a stone. He had employed his instant of time so well, and his aim was so true, that the missile went right to the mark and with incredible force. The skull of the tiger, which might be, perhaps, somewhat exaggerated if described as being of the very largest size, was fractured by the blow, and with the assistance of his dagger, which had fortunately been left with him, the French Count despatched the monster, and had the satisfaction to see him grin his last, and roll, in the agony of death, those eyes which were lately so formidable.

Looking around him, he discovered, by the light of the fire which he had raised, that the apartment in which he now lay was different from that in which he had gone to bed overnight; nor could there be a stronger contrast between the furniture of both, than the flickering half-burnt remains of the thin muslin curtains, and the strong, bare, dungeon-looking walls of the room itself, or the very serviceable wooden stool, of which he had made such good use.

The knight had no leisure to form conclusions upon such a subject. He hastily extinguished the fire, which had, indeed, nothing that it could lay hold of, and proceeded, by the light of the flambeau, to examine the apartment, and its means of entrance. It is scarce necessary to say, that he saw no communication with the room of Brenhilda, which convinced him that they had been separated the evening before under pretence of devotional scruples, in order to accomplish some most villainous design upon one or both of them. His own part of the night's adventure we have already seen, and success, so far, over so formidable a danger, gave him a trembling hope that Brenhilda, by her own worth and valour, would be able to defend herself against all attacks of fraud or force, until he could find his way to her rescue. "I should have paid more regard," he said, "to Bohemond's caution last night, who, I think, intimated to me as plainly as if he had spoke it in direct terms, that that same cup of wine was a drugged potion. But then, fie upon him for an avaricious hound! How was it possible I should think he suspected any such thing, when he spoke not out like a man, but, for sheer coldness of heart, or base self-interest, suffered me to run the risk of being poisoned by the wily despot?"

Here he heard a voice from the same quarter as before. "Ho, there! Ho, stranger! Do you live, or have you been murdered? What means this stifling smell of smoke? For God's sake, answer him who can receive no information from eyes, closed, alas, for ever!"

"I am at liberty," said the Count, "and the monster destined to devour me has groaned its last. I would, my friend Ursel, since such is thy name, thou hadst the advantage of thine eyes, to have borne witness to yonder combat; it had been worth thy while, though thou shouldst have lost them a minute afterwards, and it would have greatly advantaged whoever shall have the task of compiling my history."

While he gave a thought to that vanity which strongly ruled him, he lost no time in seeking some mode of escape from the dungeon, for by that means only might he hope to recover his Countess. At last he found an entrance in the wall, but it was strongly locked and bolted. "I have found the passage,"— he called out; "and its direction is the same in which thy voice is heard — But how shall I undo the door?"

"I'll teach thee that secret," said Ursel. "I would I could as easily unlock each bolt that withholds us from the open air; but, as for thy seclusion within the dungeon, heave up the door by main strength, and thou shalt lift the locks to a place where, pushing then the door from thee, the fastenings will find a grooved passage in the wall, and the door itself will open. Would that I could indeed see thee, not only because, being a gallant man, thou must be a goodly sight, but also because I should thereby know that I was not caverned in darkness for ever."

While he spoke thus, the Count made a bundle of his armour, from which he missed nothing except his sword, Tranchefer, and then proceeded to try what efforts he could make, according to the blind man's instructions, to open the door of his prison-house. Pushing in a direct line was, he soon found, attended with no effect; but when he applied his gigantic strength, and raised the door as high as it would go, he had the satisfaction to find that the bolts yielded, though reluctantly. A space had been cut so as to allow them to move out of the socket into which they had been forced; and without the turn of a key, but by a powerful thrust forwards, a small passage was left open. The knight entered, bearing his armour in his hand.

"I hear thee," said Ursel, "O stranger! and am aware thou art come into my place of captivity. For three years have I been employed in cutting these grooves, corresponding to the sockets which hold these iron bolts, and preserving the knowledge of the secret from the prison-keepers. Twenty such bolts, perhaps, must be sawn through, ere my steps shall approach the upper air. What prospect is there that I shall have strength of mind sufficient to continue the task? Yet, credit me, noble stranger, I rejoice in having been thus far aiding to thy deliverance; for if Heaven blesses not, in any farther degree, our aspirations after freedom, we may still be a comfort to each other, while tyranny permits our mutual life."

Count Robert looked around, and shuddered that a human being should talk of any thing approaching to comfort, connected with his residence in what seemed a living tomb. Ursel's dungeon was not above twelve feet square, vaulted in the roof, and strongly built in the walls by stones which the chisel had morticed closely together. A bed, a coarse footstool, like that which Robert had just launched at the head of the tiger, and a table of equally massive materials, were its only articles of furniture. On a long stone, above the bed, were these few, but terrible words:— Zedekias Ursel, imprisoned here on the Ides of March, A.D. ——. Died and interred on the spot"— A blank was left for filling up the period. The figure of the captive could hardly be discerned amid the wildness of his dress and dishabille. The hair of his head, uncut and uncombed, descended in elf-locks, and mingled with a beard of extravagant length.

"Look on me," said the captive, "and rejoice that thou canst yet see the wretched condition to which iron-hearted tyranny can reduce a fellow-creature, both in mortal existence and in future hope."

"Was it thou," said Count Robert, whose blood ran cold in his veins, "that hadst the heart to spend thy time in sawing through the blocks of stone by which these bolts are secured?"

"Alas!" said Ursel, "what could a blind man do? Busy I must be, if I would preserve my senses. Great as the labour was, it was to me the task of three years; nor can you wonder that I should have devoted to it my whole time, when I had no other means of occupying it. Perhaps, and most likely, my dungeon does not admit the distinction of day and night; but a distant cathedral clock told me how hour after hour fled away, and found me expending them in rubbing one stone against another. But when the door gave way, I found I had only cut an access into a prison more strong than that which held me. I rejoice, nevertheless, since it has brought us together, given thee an entrance to my dungeon, and me a companion in my misery."

"Think better than that," said Count Robert, "think of liberty — think of revenge! I cannot believe such unjust treachery will end successfully, else needs must I say, the heavens are less just than priests tell us of. How art thou supplied with food in this dungeon of thine?"

"A warder," said Ursel, "and who, I think, understands not the Greek language — at least he never either answers or addresses me — brings a loaf and a pitcher of water, enough to supply my miserable life till two days are past. I must, therefore, pray that you will retire for a space into the next prison, so that the warder may have no means of knowing that we can hold correspondence together."

"I see not," said Count Robert, "by what access the barbarian, if he is one, can enter my dungeon without passing through yours; but no matter, I will retire into the inner or outer room, whichever it happens to be, and be thou then well aware that the warder will have some one to grapple with ere he leaves his prison-work today. Meanwhile, think thyself dumb as thou art blind, and be assured that the offer of freedom itself would not induce me to desert the cause of a companion in adversity."

"Alas," said the old man, "I listen to thy promises as I should to those of the morning gale, which tells me that the sun is about to rise, although I know that I at least shall never behold it. Thou art one of those wild and undespairing knights, whom for so many years the west of Europe hath sent forth to attempt impossibilities, and from thee, therefore, I can only hope for such a fabric of relief as an idle boy would blow out of soap bubbles."

"Think better of us, old man," said Count Robert, retiring; "at least let me die with my blood warm, and believing it possible for me to be once more united to my beloved Brenhilda."

So saying, he retired into his own cell, and replaced the door, so that the operations of Ursel, which indeed were only such as three years' solitude could have achieved, should escape observation when again visited by the Warder. "It is ill luck," said he, when once more within his own prison — for that in which the tiger had been secured, he instinctively concluded to be destined for him — "It is ill luck that I had not found a young and able fellow-captive, instead of one decrepit by

imprisonment, blind, and broken down past exertion. But God's will be done! I will not leave behind me the poor wretch whom I have found in such a condition, though he is perfectly unable to assist me in accomplishing my escape, and is rather more likely to retard it. Meantime, before we put out the torch, let us see, if, by close examination, we can discover any door in the wall save that to the blind man's dungeon. If not, I much suspect that my descent has been made through the roof. That cup of wine — that Muse, as they called it, had a taste more like medicine than merry companions' pledge."

He began accordingly a strict survey of the walls, which he resolved to conclude by extinguishing the torch, that he might take the person who should enter his dungeon darkling and by surprise. For a similar reason, he dragged into the darkest corner the carcass of the tiger, and covered it with the remains of the bed-clothes, swearing at the same time, that a half tiger should be his crest in future, if he had the fortune, which his bold heart would not suffer him to doubt, of getting through the present danger. "But," he added, "if these necromantic vassals of hell shall raise the devil upon, me, what shall I do then? And so great is the chance, that methinks I would fain dispense with extinguishing the flambeau. Yet it is childish for one dubbed in the chapel of Our Lady of the Broken Lances, to make much difference between a light room and a dark one. Let them come, as many fiends as the cell can hold, and we shall see if we receive them not as becomes a Christian knight; and surely, Our Lady, to whom I was ever a true votary, will hold it an acceptable sacrifice that I tore myself from my Brenhilda, even for a single moment, in honour of her advent, and thus led the way for our woful separation. Fiends! I defy ye in the body as in the spirit, and I retain the remains of this flambeau until some more convenient opportunity." He dashed it against the wall as he spoke, and then quietly sat down in a corner, to watch what should next happen.

Thought after thought chased each other through his mind. His confidence in his wife's fidelity, and his trust in her uncommon strength and activity, were the greatest comforts which he had; nor could her danger present itself to him in any shape so terrible, but that he found consolation in these reflections: "She is pure," he said, "as the dew of heaven, and heaven will not abandon its own."

Chapter the Sixteenth.

Strange ape of man! who loathes thee while he scorns thee.

Half a reproach to us and half a jest.

What fancies can be ours ere we have pleasure

In viewing our own form, our pride and passions,

Reflected in a shape grotesque as thine!

ANONYMOUS.

Count Robert of Paris having ensconced himself behind the ruins of the bed, so that he could not well be observed, unless a strong light was at once flung upon the place of his retreat, waited with anxiety how and in what manner the warder of the dungeon, charged with the task of bringing food to the prisoners, should make himself visible; nor was it long ere symptoms of his approach began to be heard and observed.

A light was partially seen, as from a trap-door opening in the roof, and a voice was heard to utter these words in Anglo-Saxon, "Leap, sirrah; come, no delay; leap, my good Sylvan, show your honour's activity." A strange chuckling hoarse voice, in a language totally unintelligible to Count Robert, was heard to respond, as if disputing the orders which were received.

"What, sir," said his companion, "you must contest the point, must you? Nay, if thou art so lazy, I must give your honour a ladder, and perhaps a kick to hasten your journey." Something then, of very great size, in the form of a human being, jumped down from the trap-door, though the height might be above fourteen feet.

This figure was gigantic, being upwards of seven feet high. In its left hand it held a torch, and in its right a skein of fine silk, which unwinding itself as it descended, remained unbroken, though it was easy to conceive it could not have afforded a creature so large any support in his descent from the roof. He alighted with perfect safety and activity upon his feet, and, as if rebounding from the floor, he sprung upwards again, so as almost to touch the roof. In this last gambaud the torch which he bore was extinguished; but this extraordinary warder whirled it round his head with infinite velocity, so that it again ignited. The bearer, who appeared to intend the accomplishment of this object, endeavoured to satisfy himself that it was really attained by approaching, as if cautiously, its left hand to the flame of the torch. This practical experiment seemed attended with consequences which the creature had not expected, for it howled with pain, shaking the burnt hand, and chattering as if bemoaning itself.

"Take heed there, Sylvanus!" said the same voice in Anglo-Saxon, and in a tone of rebuke. "Ho, there! mind thy duty, Sylvan! Carry food to the blind man, and stand not there to play thyself, lest I trust thee not again alone on such an errand!"

The creature — for it would have been rash to have termed it a man — turning its eye upwards to the place from whence the voice came, answered with a dreadful grin and shaking of its fist, yet presently began to undo a parcel, and rummage in the pockets of a sort of jerkin and pantaloons which it wore, seeking, it appeared, a bunch of keys, which at length it produced, while it took from the pocket a loaf of bread. Heating the stone of the wall, it affixed the torch to it by a piece of wax, and then cautiously looked out for the entrance to the old man's dungeon, which it opened with a key selected from the bunch. Within the passage it seemed to look for and discover the handle of a pump, at which it filled a pitcher that it bore, and bringing back the fragments of the former loaf, and remains of the pitcher of water, it ate a little, as if it were in sport, and very soon making a frightful grimace, flung the fragments away. The Count of Paris, in the meanwhile, watched anxiously the proceedings of this unknown animal. His first thought was, that the creature, whose limbs were so much larger than humanity, whose grimaces were so frightful, and whose activity seemed supernatural, could be no other than the Devil himself, or some of his imps, whose situation and office in those gloomy regions seemed by no means hard to conjecture. The human voice, however, which he had heard, was less that of a necromancer conjuring a fiend than that of a person giving commands to a wild animal, over whom he had, by training, obtained a great superiority.

"A shame on it," said the Count, "if I suffer a common jackanapes — for such I take this devil-seeming beast to be, although twice as large as any of its fellows whom I have ever seen — to throw an obstacle in the way of my obtaining daylight and freedom! Let us but watch, and the chance is that we make that furry gentleman our guide to the upper regions."

Meantime the creature, which rummaged about everywhere, at length discovered the body of the tiger — touched it, stirred it, with many strange motions, and seemed to lament and wonder at its death. At once it seemed struck with the idea that some one must have slain it, and Count Robert had the mortification to see it once more select the key, and spring towards the door of Ursel's prison with such alacrity, that had its intention been to strangle him, it would have accomplished its purpose before the interference of Count Robert could have prevented its revenge taking place. Apparently, however, it reflected, that for reasons which seemed satisfactory, the death of the tiger could not be caused by the unfortunate Ursel, but had been accomplished by some one concealed within the outer prison.

Slowly grumbling, therefore, and chattering to itself, and peeping anxiously into every corner, the tremendous creature, so like yet so very unlike to the human form, came stealing along the walls, moving whatever he thought could seclude a man from his observation. Its extended legs and arms were protruded forward with great strides, and its sharp eyes, on the watch to discover the object of its search, kept prying, with the assistance of the torch, into every corner.

Considering the vicinity of Alexius's collection of animals, the reader, by this time, can have little doubt that the creature in question, whose appearance seemed to the Count of Paris so very problematical, was a specimen of that gigantic species of ape — if it is not indeed some animal more nearly allied to ourselves — to which, I believe, naturalists have given the name of the Ourang Outang. This creature differs from the rest of its fraternity, in being comparatively more docile and serviceable: and though possessing the power of imitation which is common to the whole race, yet making use of it less in mere mockery, than in the desire of improvement and instruction perfectly unknown to his brethren. The aptitude which it possesses of acquiring information, is surprisingly great, and probably, if placed in a favourable situation, it might admit of being domesticated in a considerable degree; but such advantages the ardour of scientific curiosity has never afforded this creature. The last we have heard of was seen, we believe, in the Island of Sumatra — it was of great size and strength, and upwards of seven feet high. It died defending desperately its innocent life against a party of Europeans, who, we cannot help thinking, might have better employed the superiority which their knowledge gave them over the poor native of the forest. It was probably this creature, seldom seen, but when once seen never forgotten, which occasioned

the ancient belief in the god Pan, with his sylfens and satyrs. Nay, but for the gift of speech, which we cannot suppose any of the family to have attained, we should have believed the satyr seen by St. Anthony in the desert to have belonged to this tribe.

We can, therefore, the more easily credit the annals which attest that the collection of natural history belonging to Alexius Comnenus, preserved an animal of this kind, which had been domesticated and reclaimed to a surprising extent, and showed a degree of intelligence never perhaps to be attained in any other case. These explanations being premised, we return to the thread of our story.

The animal advanced with long noiseless steps; its shadow on the wall, when it held the torch so as to make it visible to the Frank, forming another fiend-resembling mimicry of its own large figure and extravagant-looking members. Count Robert remained in his lurking hole, in no hurry to begin a strife, of which it was impossible to foretell the end. In the meantime, the man of the woods came nigh, and every step by which he approached, caused the Count's heart to vibrate almost audibly, at the idea of meeting danger of a nature so strange and new. At length the creature approached the bed — his hideous eyes were fixed on those of the Count; and, as much surprised at seeing him as Robert was at the meeting, he skipped about fifteen paces backwards at one spring, with a cry of instinctive terror, and then advanced on tiptoe, holding his torch as far forward as he could, between him and the object of his fears, as if to examine him at the safest possible distance. Count Robert caught up a fragment of the bedstead, large enough to form a sort of club, with which he menaced the native of the wilds.

Apparently this poor creature's education, like education of most kinds, had not been acquired without blows, of which the recollection was as fresh as that of the lessons which they enforced. Sir Robert of Paris was a man at once to discover and to avail himself of the advantage obtained by finding that he possessed a degree of ascendancy over his enemy, which he had not suspected. He erected his warlike figure, assumed a step as if triumphant in the lists, and advanced threatening his enemy with his club, as he would have menaced his antagonist with the redoubtable Tranchefer. The man of the woods, on the other hand, obviously gave way, and converted his cautious advance into a retreat no less cautious. Yet apparently the creature had not renounced some plan of resistance; he chattered in an angry and hostile tone, held out his torch in opposition, and seemed about to strike the crusader with it. Count Robert, however, determined to take his opponent at advantage, while his fears influenced him, and for this purpose resolved, if possible, to deprive him of his natural superiority in strength and agility, which his singular form showed he could not but possess over the human species. A master of his weapon, therefore, the Count menaced his savage antagonist with a stroke on the right side of his head, but suddenly averting the blow, struck him with his whole force on the left temple, and in an instant was kneeling above him, when, drawing his dagger, he was about to deprive him of life.

The Ourang Outang, ignorant of the nature of this new weapon with which he was threatened, attempted at one and the same moment, to rise from the ground, overthrow his antagonist, and wrench the dagger from his grasp. In the first attempt, he would probably have succeeded; and as it was, he gained his knees, and seemed likely to prevail in the struggle, when he became sensible that the knight, drawing his poniard sharply through his grasp, had cut his paw severely, and seeing him aim the trenchant weapon at his throat, became probably aware that his enemy had his life at command. He suffered himself to be borne backwards without further resistance, with a deep wailing and melancholy cry, having in it something human, which excited compassion. He covered his eyes with the unwounded hand, as if he would have hid from his own sight the death which seemed approaching him.

Count Robert, notwithstanding his military frenzy, was, in ordinary matters, a calm-tempered and mild man, and particularly benevolent to the lower classes of creation. The thought rushed through his mind, "Why take from this unfortunate monster the breath which is in its nostrils, after which it cannot know another existence? And then, may it not be some prince or knight changed to this grotesque shape, that it may help to guard these vaults, and the wonderful adventures that attach to them? Should I not, then, be guilty of a crime by slaying him, when he has rendered himself, rescue or no rescue, which he has done as completely as his transformed figure permits; and if he be actually a bestial creature, may he not have some touch of gratitude? I have heard the minstrels sing the lay of Androcles and the Lion. I will be on my guard with him."

So saying, he rose from above the man of the woods, and permitted him, also to arise. The creature seemed sensible of the clemency, for he muttered in a low and supplicating tone, which seemed at once to crave for mercy, and to return thanks for what he had already experienced. He wept too, as he saw the blood dropping from his wound, and with an anxious countenance, which had more of the human now that it was composed into an expression of pain and melancholy, seemed to await in terror the doom of a being more powerful than himself.

The pocket which the knight wore under his armour, capable of containing but few things, had, however, some vulnerary balsam, for which its owner had often occasion, a little lint, and a small roll of linen; these the knight took out, and motioned to the animal to hold forth his wounded hand. The man of the woods obeyed with hesitation and reluctance, and Count Robert applied the balsam and the dressings, acquainting his patient, at the same time, in a severe tone of voice, that perhaps he did wrong in putting to his use a balsam compounded for the service of the noblest knights; but that, if he saw the least sign of his making an ungrateful use of the benefit he had conferred, he would bury the dagger, of which he had felt the efficacy, to the very handle, in his body.

The Sylvan looked fixedly upon Count Robert, almost as if he understood the language used to him, and, making one of its native murmurs, it stooped to the earth, kissed the feet of the knight, and embracing his knees, seemed to swear to him eternal gratitude and fidelity. Accordingly, when the Count retired to the bed and assumed his armour, to await the re-opening of the trap-door, the animal sat down by his side, directing its eyes in the line with his, and seemed quietly to wait till the door should open. After waiting about an hour, a slight noise was heard in the upper chamber, and the wild man plucked the Frank by the cloak, as if to call his attention to what was about to happen. The same voice which had before spoken, was, after a whistle or two, heard to call, "Sylvan, Sylvan! where loiterest thou? Come instantly, or, by the rood, thou shalt abye thy sloth!"

The poor monster, as Trinculo might have called him, seemed perfectly aware of the meaning of this threat, and showed his sense of it by pressing close to the side of Count Robert, making at the same time a kind of whining, entreating, it would seem, the knight's protection. Forgetting the great improbability there was, even in his own opinion, that the creature could understand him, Count Robert said, "Why, my friend, thou hast already learned the principal court prayer of this country, by which men. entreat permission, to speak and live. Fear nothing, poor creature — I am thy protector."

"Sylvan! what, hol!" said the voice again; "whom hast thou got for a companion? — some of the fiends, or ghosts of murdered men, who they say are frequent in these dungeons? or dost thou converse with the old blind rebel Grecian? — or, finally, is it true what men say of thee, that thou canst talk intelligibly when thou wilt, and only gibberest and chatterest for fear thou art sent to work? Come, thou lazy rascal! thou shalt have the advantage of the ladder to ascend by, though thou needest it no more than a daw to ascend the steeple of the Cathedral of St. Sophia.* Come along then," he said, putting a ladder down the trap-door, "and put me not to the trouble of descending to fetch thee, else, by St. Swithin, it shall be the worse for thee. Come along, therefore, like a good fellow, and for once I shall spare the whip."

* Now the chief mosque of the Ottoman capital.]

The animal, apparently, was moved by this rhetoric, for, with a doleful look, which Count Robert saw by means of the nearly extinguished torch, he seemed to bid him farewell, and to creep away towards the ladder with the same excellent good-will wherewith a condemned criminal performs the like evolution. But no sooner did the Count look angry, and shake the formidable dagger, than the intelligent animal seemed at once to take his resolution, and clenching his hands firmly together in the fashion of one who has made up his mind, he returned from the ladder's foot, and drew up behind Count Robert — with the air, however, of a deserter, who feels himself but little at home when called into the field against his ancient commander.

In a short time the warder's patience was exhausted, and despairing of the Sylvan's voluntary return, he resolved to descend in quest of him. Down the ladder he came, a bundle of keys in one hand, the other assisting his descent, and a sort of dark lantern, whose bottom was so fashioned that he could wear it upon his head like a hat. He had scarce stepped on the floor, when he was surrounded by the nervous arms of the Count of Paris. At first the warder's idea was, that he was seized by the recusant Sylvan.

"How now, villain!" he said; "let me go, or thou shalt die the death."

"Thou diest thyself," said the Count, who, between the surprise and his own skill in wrestling, felt fully his advantage in the struggle.

"Treason! treason!" cried the warder, hearing by the voice that a stranger had mingled in the contest; "help, ho! above there! help, Hereward — Varangian! — Anglo-Saxon, or whatever accursed name thou callest thyself!"

While he spoke thus, the irresistible grasp of Count Robert seized his throat, and choked his utterance. They fell heavily, the jailor undermost, upon the floor of the dungeon, and Robert of Paris, the necessity of whose case excused the action, plunged his dagger in the throat of the unfortunate. Just as he did so, a noise of armour was heard, and, rattling down the ladder, our acquaintance Hereward stood on the floor of the dungeon. The light, which had rolled from the head of the warder, continued to show him streaming with blood, and in the death-grasp of a stranger. Hereward hesitated not to fly to his assistance, and, seizing upon the Count of Paris at the same advantage which that knight had gained over his own adversary a moment before, held him forcibly down with his face to the earth. Count Robert was one of the strongest men of that military age; but then so was the Varangian; and save that the latter had obtained a decided advantage by having his antagonist beneath him, it could not certainly have been conjectured which way the combat was to go.

"Yield, as your own jargon goes, rescue or no rescue," said the Varangian, "or die on the point of my dagger!"

"A French Count never yields," answered Robert, who began to conjecture with what sort of person he was engaged, "above all to a vagabond slave like thee!" With this he made an effort to rise, so sudden, so strong, so powerful, that he had almost freed himself from the Varangian's grasp, had not Hereward, by a violent exertion of his great strength, preserved the advantage he had gained, and raised his poniard to end the strife for ever; but a loud chuckling laugh of an unearthly sound was at this instant heard. The Varangian's extended arm was seized with vigour, while a rough arm embracing his throat, turned him over on his back, and gave the French Count an opportunity of springing up.

"Death to thee, wretch!" said the Varangian, scarce knowing whom he threatened; but the man of the woods apparently had an awful recollection of the prowess of human beings. He fled, therefore, swiftly up the ladder, and left Hereward and his deliverer to fight it out with what success chance might determine between them.

The circumstances seemed to argue a desperate combat; both were tall, strong, and courageous, both had defensive armour, and the fatal and desperate poniard was their only offensive weapon. They paused facing each other, and examined eagerly into their respective means of defence before hazarding a blow, which, if it missed, its attainment would certainly be fatally required. During this deadly pause, a gleam shone from the trapdoor above, as the wild and alarmed visage of the man of the woods was seen peering down by the light of a newly kindled torch which he held as low into the dungeon as he well could.

"Fight bravely, comrade," said Count Robert of Paris, "for we no longer battle in private; this respectable person, having chosen to constitute himself judge of the field."

Hazardous as his situation was, the Varangian looked up, and was so struck with the wild and terrified expression which the creature had assumed, and the strife between curiosity and terror which its grotesque features exhibited, that he could not help bursting into a fit of laughter.

"Sylvan is among those," said Hereward, "who would rather hold the candle to a dance so formidable than join in it himself."

"Is there then," said Count Robert, "any absolute necessity that thou and I perform this dance at all?"

"None but our own pleasure," answered Hereward; "for I suspect there is not between us any legitimate cause of quarrel demanding to be fought out in such a place, and before such a spectator. Thou art, if I mistake not, the bold Frank, who was yesternight imprisoned in this place with, a tiger, chained within no distant spring of his bed?"

"I am," answered the Count.

"And where is the animal who was opposed to thee?"

"He lies yonder," answered the Count, "never again to be the object of more terror than the deer whom he may have preyed on in his day." He pointed to the body of the tiger, which Hereward examined by the light of the dark lantern already mentioned.

"And this, then, was thy handiwork?" said the wondering Anglo-Saxon.

"Sooth to say it was," answered the Count, with indifference.

"And thou hast slain my comrade of this strange watch?" said the Varangian.

"Mortally wounded him at the least," said Count Robert.

"With your patience, I will be beholden to you for a moment's truce, while I examine his wound," said Hereward.

"Assuredly," answered the Count; "blighted be the arm which strikes a foul blow at an open antagonist!"

Without demanding further security, the Varangian quitted his posture of defence and precaution, and set himself, by the assistance of the dark lantern, to examine the wound of the first warder who appeared on the field, who seemed, by his Roman military dress, to be a soldier of the bands called Immortals. Pie found him in the death-agony, but still able to speak.

"So, Varangian, thou art come at last — and is it to thy sloth or treachery that I am to impute my fate? — Nay, answer me not! — The stranger struck me over the collar-bone — had we lived long together, or met often, I had done the like by thee, to wipe out the memory of certain transactions at the Golden Gate. — I know the use of the knife too well to doubt the effect of a blow aimed over the collar-bone by so strong a hand — I feel it coming. The Immortal, so called, becomes now, if priests say true, an immortal indeed, and Sebastes of Mytilene's bow is broken ere his quiver is half emptied."

The robber Greek sunk back in Hereward's arms, and closed his life with a groan, which was the last sound he uttered. The Varangian laid the body at length on the dungeon floor.

"This is a perplexed matter," he said; "I am certainly not called upon to put to death a brave man, although my national enemy, because he hath killed a miscreant who was privately meditating my own murder. Neither is this a place or a light by which to fight as becomes the champions of two nations. Let that quarrel be still for the present. — How say you then, noble sir, if we adjourn the present dispute till we effect your deliverance from the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and your restoration to your own friends and followers? If a poor Varangian should be of service to you in this matter, would you, when it was settled, refuse to meet him in fair fight, with your national weapons or his own?"

"If," said Count Robert, "whether friend or enemy, thou wilt extend thy assistance to my wife, who is also imprisoned somewhere in this inhospitable palace, be assured, that whatever be thy rank, whatever be thy country, whatever be thy condition, Robert of Paris will, at thy choice, proffer thee his right hand in friendship, or raise it against thee in fair and manly battle — a strife not of hatred, but of honour and esteem; and this I vow by the soul of Charlemagne, my ancestor, and by the shrine of my patroness, Our Lady of the Broken Lances."

"Enough said," replied Hereward. "I am as much bound to the assistance of your Lady Countess, being a poor exile, as if I were the first in the ranks of chivalry; for if any thing can make the cause of worth and bravery yet more obligatory, it must be its being united with that of a helpless and suffering female."

"I ought," said Count Robert, "to be here silent, without loading thy generosity with farther requests; yet thou art a man, whom, if fortune has not smiled at thy birth, by ordaining thee to be born within the ranks of noblesse and knighthood, yet Providence hath done thee more justice by giving thee a more gallant heart than is always possessed, I fear, by those who are inwoven in the gayest wreath of chivalry. There lingers here in these dungeons, for I cannot say he lives — a blind old man, to whom for three years every thing beyond his prison has been a universal blot. His food is bread and water, his intercourse limited to the conversation of a sullen warder, and if death can ever come as a deliverer, it must be to this dark old man. What sayst thou? Shall he, so unutterably miserable, not profit by perhaps the only opportunity of freedom that may ever occur to him?"

"By St. Dunstan," answered the Varangian, "thou keepest over truly the oath thou hast taken as a redresser of wrongs! Thine own case is well-nigh desperate, and thou art willing to make it utterly so by uniting with it that of every unhappy person whom fate throws in thy way!"

"The more of human misery we attempt to relieve," said Robert of Paris, "the more we shall carry with us the blessing of our merciful saints, and Our Lady of the Broken Lances, who views with so much pain every species of human suffering or misfortune, save that which occurs within the enclosure of the lists. But come, valiant Anglo-Saxon, resolve me on my request as speedily as thou canst. There is something in thy face of candour as well as sense, and it is with no small

confidence that I desire to see us set forth in quest of my beloved Countess, who, when her deliverance is once achieved, will be a powerful aid to us in recovering that of others."

"So be it, then," said the Varangian; "we will proceed in quest of the Countess Brenhilda; and if, on recovering her, we find ourselves strong enough to procure the freedom of the dark old man, my cowardice, or want of compassion, shall never stop the attempt."

Chapter the Seventeenth.

*'Tis strange that, in the dark sulphureous mine,
Where wild ambition piles its ripening stores
Of slumbering thunder, Love will interpose
His tiny torch, and cause the stern explosion
To burst, when the deviser's least aware.*

ANONYMOUS.

About noon of the same day, Agelastes met with Achilles Tatius, the commander of the Varangian guard, in those ruins of the Egyptian temple in which we formerly mentioned Hereward having had an interview with the philosopher. They met, as it seemed, in a very different humour. Tatius was gloomy, melancholy, and downcast; while the philosopher maintained the calm indifference which procured for him, and in some sort deserved, the title of the Elephant. "Thou blenchest, Achilles Tatius," said the philosopher, "now that thou hast frankly opposed thyself to all the dangers which stood between thee and greatness. Thou art like the idle boy who turned the mill-stream upon the machine, and that done, instead of making a proper use of it, was terrified at seeing it in motion."

"Thou dost me wrong, Agelastes," answered the Acolyte, "foul wrong; I am but like the mariner, who although determined upon his voyage, yet cannot forbear a sorrowing glance at the shore, before he parts with it, it may be, for ever."

"It may have been right to think of this, but pardon me, valiant Tatius, when I tell you the account should have been made up before; and the grandson of Alguric the Hun ought to have computed chances and consequences ere he stretched his hand to his master's diadem."

"Hush! for Heaven's sake," said Tatius, looking round; "that, thou knowest, is a secret between our two selves; for if Nicephorus, the Caesar, should learn it, where were we and our conspiracy?"

"Our bodies on the gibbet, probably," answered Agelastes, "and our souls divorced from them, and in the way of discovering the secrets which thou hast hitherto taken upon trust."

"Well," said Achilles, "and should not the consciousness of the possibility of this fate render us cautious?"

"Cautious *men*, if you will," answered Agelastes, "but not timid children."

"Stone walls can hear,"— said the Follower, lowering his voice. "Dionysius the tyrant, I have read, had an ear which conveyed to him the secrets spoken within his state-prison at Syracuse."

"And that Ear is still stationary at Syracuse," said the philosopher. "Tell me, my most simple friend, art thou afraid it has been transported hither in one night, as the Latins believe of Our Lady's house of Loretto?"

"No," answered Achilles, "but in an affair so important too much caution cannot be used."

"Well, thou most cautious of candidates for empire, and most cold of military leaders, know that the Caesar, deeming, I think, that there is no chance of the empire falling to any one but himself, hath taken in his head to consider his succession to Alexius as a matter of course, whenever the election takes place. In consequence, as matters of course are usually matters of indifference, he has left all thoughts of securing his interest upon, this material occasion to thee and to me, while the foolish voluptuary hath himself run mad — for what think you? Something between man and woman — female in her lineaments, her limbs, and a part at least of her garments; but, so help me St. George, most masculine in the rest of her attire, in her propensities, and in her exercises."

"The Amazonian wife, thou meanest," said Achilles, "of that iron-handed Frank, who dashed to pieces last night the golden lion of Solomon with a blow of his fist? By St. George, the least which can come of such an amour is broken bones."

"That," said Agelastes, "is not quite so improbable as that Dionysius's Ear should fly hither from Syracuse in a single night; but he is presumptuous in respect of the influence which his supposed good looks have gained him among the Grecian dames."

"He was too presumptuous, I suppose," said Achilles Tatius, "to make a proper allowance for his situation as Caesar, and the prospect of his being Emperor."

"Meantime," said Agelastes, "I have promised him an interview with his Bradamante, who may perhaps reward his tender epithets of *Zoe kai psyche*,* by divorcing his amorous soul from his unrivalled person."

* "Life and Soul."]

"Meantime," said the Follower, "thou obtainest, I conclude, such orders and warrants as the Caesar can give for the furtherance of our plot?"

"Assuredly," said Agelastes, "it is an opportunity not to be lost. This love fit, or mad fit, has blinded him; and without exciting too much attention to the progress of the plot, we can thus in safety conduct matters our own way, without causing malevolent remarks; and though I am conscious that, in doing so, I act somewhat at variance with my age and character, yet the end being to convert a worthy Follower into an Imperial Leader, I shame me not in procuring that interview with the lady, of which the Caesar, as they term him, is so desirous. — What progress, meanwhile, hast thou made with the Varangians, who are, in respect of execution, the very arm of our design?"

"Scarce so good as I could wish," said Achilles Tatius; "yet I have made sure of some two or three score of those whom I found most accessible; nor have I any doubt, that when the Caesar is set aside, their cry will be for Achilles Tatius."

"And what of the gallant who assisted at our prelections?" said Agelastes; "your Edward, as Alexius termed him?"

"I have made no impression upon him," said the Follower; "and I am sorry for it, for he is one whom his comrades think well of, and would gladly follow. Meantime I have placed him as an additional sentinel upon the iron-witted Count of Paris, whom, both having an inveterate love of battle, he is very likely to put to death; and if it is afterwards challenged by the crusaders as a cause of war, it is only delivering up the Varangian, whose personal hatred will needs be represented as having occasioned the catastrophe. All this being prepared beforehand, how and when shall we deal with the Emperor?"

"For that," said Agelastes, "we must consult the Caesar, who, although his expected happiness of today is not more certain than the state preferment that he expects tomorrow, and although his ideas are much more anxiously fixed upon his success with this said Countess than his succession to the empire, will, nevertheless, expect to be treated as the head of the enterprise for accelerating the latter. But, to speak my opinion, valiant Tatius, tomorrow will be the last day that Alexius shall hold the reins of empire."

"Let me know for certain," said the Follower, "as soon as thou canst, that I may warn our brethren, who are to have in readiness the insurgent citizens, and those of the Immortals who are combined with us, in the neighbourhood of the court, and in readiness to act — And, above all, that I may disperse upon distant guards such Varangians as I cannot trust."

"Rely upon me," said Agelastes, "for the most accurate information and instructions, so soon as I have seen Nicephorus Briennius. One word permit me to ask — in what manner is the wife of the Caesar to be disposed of?"

"Somewhere," said the Follower, "where I can never be compelled to hear more of her history. Were it not for that nightly pest of her lectures, I could be good-natured enough to take care of her destiny myself, and teach her the difference betwixt a real emperor and this Briennius, who thinks so much of himself." So saying, they separated; the Follower elated in look and manner considerably above what he had been when they met.

Agelastes looked after his companion with a scornful laugh. "There," he said, "goes a fool, whose lack of sense prevents his eyes from being dazzled by the torch which cannot fail to consume them. A half-bred, half-acting, half-thinking, half-daring caitiff, whose poorest thoughts — and those which deserve that name must be poor indeed — are not the produce of his own understanding. He expects to circumvent the fiery, haughty, and proud Nicephorus Briennius! If he does so, it

will not be by his own policy, and still less by his valour. Nor shall Anna Comnena, the soul of wit and genius, be chained to such an unimaginative log as yonder half-barbarian. No — she shall have a husband of pure Grecian extraction, and well stored with that learning which was studied when Rome was great, and Greece illustrious. Nor will it be the least charm of the Imperial throne, that it is partaken by a partner whose personal studies have taught her to esteem and value those of the Emperor.” He took a step or two with conscious elevation, and then, as conscience-checked, he added, in a suppressed voice, “But then, if Anna were destined for Empress, it follows of course that Alexius must die — no consent could be trusted. — And what then? — the death of an ordinary man is indifferent, when it plants on the throne a philosopher and a historian; and at what time were possessors of the empire curious to enquire when or by whose agency their predecessors died? — Diogenes! Ho, Diogenes!” The slave did not immediately come, so that Agelastes, wrapt in the anticipation of his greatness, had time to add a few more words “Tush — I must reckon with Heaven, say the priests, for many things, so I will throw this also into the account. The death of the Emperor may be twenty ways achieved without my having the blame of it. The blood which we have shed may spot our hand, if closely regarded, but it shall scarce stain our forehead.” Diogenes here entered — “Has the Frank lady been removed?” said the philosopher.

The slave signified his assent.

“How did she bear her removal?”

“As authorised by your lordship, indifferently well. She had resented her separation from her husband, and her being detained in the palace, and committed some violence upon the slaves of the Household, several of whom were said to be slain, although we perhaps ought only to read sorely frightened. She recognised me at once, and when I told her that I came to offer her a day’s retirement in your own lodgings, until it should be in your power to achieve the liberation of her husband, she at once consented, and I deposited her in the secret Cytherean garden-house.”

“Admirably done, my faithful Diogenes,” said the philosopher; “thou art like the genii who attended on the Eastern talisman; I have but to intimate my will to thee, and it is accomplished.”

Diogenes bowed deeply, and withdrew.

“Yet remember, slave!” said Agelastes, speaking to himself; “there is danger in knowing too much — and should my character ever become questioned, too many of my secrets are in the power of Diogenes.”

At this moment a blow thrice repeated, and struck upon one of the images without, which had been so framed as to return a tingling sound, and in so far deserved the praise of being vocal, interrupted his soliloquy.

“There knocks,” said he, “one of our allies; who can it be that comes so late?” He touched the figure of Iris with his staff, and the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius entered in the full Grecian habit, and that graceful dress anxiously arranged to the best advantage. “Let me hope, my Lord,” said Agelastes, receiving the Caesar with an apparently grave and reserved face, “your Highness comes to tell me that your sentiments are changed on reflection, and that whatever you had to confer about with this Frankish lady, may be at least deferred until the principal part of our conspiracy has been successfully executed.”

“Philosopher,” answered the Caesar, “no. My resolution, once taken, is not the sport of circumstances. Believe me, that I have not finished so many labours without being ready to undertake others. The favour of Venus is the reward of the labours of Mars, nor would I think it worth while to worship the god armipotent with the toil and risk attending his service, unless I had previously attained some decided proofs that I was wreathed with the myrtle, intimating the favour of his beautiful mistress.”

“I beg pardon for my boldness,” said Agelastes; “but has your Imperial Highness reflected, that you were wagering, with the wildest rashness, an empire, including thine own life, mine, and all who are joined with us, in a hardy scheme? And against what were they waged? Against the very precarious favour of a woman, who is altogether divided betwixt fiend and female, and in either capacity is most likely to be fatal to our present scheme, either by her good will, or by the offence which she may take. If she prove such as you wish, she will desire to keep her lover by her side, and to spare him the danger of engaging in a perilous conspiracy; and if she remains, as the world believe her, constant to her husband, and to the sentiments she vowed to him at the altar, you may guess what cause of offence you are likely to give, by urging a suit which she has already received so very ill.”

“Pshaw, old man! Thou turnest a dotard, and in the great knowledge thou possessest of other things, hast forgotten the knowledge best worth knowing — that of the beautiful part of the creation. Think of the impression likely to be made by a gallant neither ignoble in situation, nor unacceptable in presence, upon a lady who must fear the consequences of refusal! Come, Agelastes, let me have no more of thy croaking, auguring bad fortune like the raven from the blasted oak on the left hand; but declaim, as well thou canst, how faint heart never won fair lady, and how those best deserve empire who can wreath the myrtles of Venus with the laurels of Mars. Come, man, undo me the secret entrance which combines these magical ruins with groves that are fashioned rather like those of Cytheros or Naxos.”

“It must be as you will!” said the philosopher, with a deep and somewhat affected sigh.

“Here, Diogenes!” called aloud the Caesar; “when thou art summoned, mischief is not far distant. Come, undo the secret entrance. Mischief, my trusty negro, is not so distant but she will answer the first clatter of the stones.”

The negro looked at his master, who returned him a glance acquiescing in the Caesar’s proposal. Diogenes then went to a part of the ruined wall which was covered by some climbing shrubs, all of which he carefully removed. This showed a little postern door, closed irregularly, and filled up, from the threshold to the top, with large square stones, all of which the slave took out and piled aside, as if for the purpose of replacing them. “I leave thee,” said Agelastes to the negro, “to guard this door, and let no one enter, except he has the sign, upon the peril of thy life. It were dangerous it should be left open at this period of the day.”

The obsequious Diogenes put his hand to his sabre and to his head, as if to signify the usual promise of fidelity or death, by which those in his condition generally expressed their answer to their master’s commands. Diogenes then lighted a small lantern, and pulling out a key, opened an inner door of wood, and prepared to step forward.

“Hold, friend Diogenes,” said the Caesar; “thou wantest not my lantern, to discern an honest man, whom, if thou didst seek, I must needs say thou hast come to the wrong place to find one. Nail thou up these creeping shrubs before the entrance of the place, and abide thou there as already directed, till our return, to parry the curiosity of any who may be attracted by the sight of the private passage.”

The black slave drew back as he gave the lamp to the Caesar, and Agelastes followed the light through a long, but narrow, arched passage, well supplied with air from space to space, and not neglected in the inside to the degree which its exterior would have implied.

“I will not enter with you into the Gardens,” said Agelastes, “or to the bower of Cytherea, where I am too old to be a worshipper. Thou thyself, I think, Imperial Caesar, art well aware of the road, having travelled it divers times! and, if I mistake not, for the fairest reasons.”

“The more thanks,” said the Caesar, “are due to mine excellent friend Agelastes, who forgets his own age to accommodate the youth of his friends.”

Chapter the Eighteenth.

We must now return to the dungeon of the Blacquernal, where circumstances had formed at least a temporary union between the stout Varangian and Count Robert of Paris, who had a stronger resemblance to each other in their dispositions than probably either of them would have been willing to admit. The virtues of the Varangian were all of that natural and unrefined kind which Nature herself dictates to a gallant man, to whom a total want of fear, and the most prompt alacrity to meet danger, had been attributes of a life-long standing. The Count, on the other hand, had all that bravery, generosity, and love of adventure, which was possessed by the rude soldier, with the virtues, partly real, partly fantastic, which those of his rank and country acquired from the spirit of chivalry. The one might be compared to the diamond as it came from the mine, before it had yet received the advantages of cutting and setting; the other was the ornamented gem, which, cut into facets and richly set, had lost perhaps a little of its original substance, yet still, at the same time, to the eye of an inspector, had something more showy and splendid than when it was, according to the phrase of lapidaries, *en brut*. In the one case, the value was more artificial; in the other, it was the more natural and real of the two. Chance, therefore, had made a temporary alliance between two men, the foundation of whose characters bore such strong resemblance to each other, that they were only separated by a course of education, which had left rigid prejudices on both sides, and which prejudices were not

unlikely to run counter to each other. The Varangian commenced his conversation with the Count in a tone of familiarity, approaching nearer to rudeness than the speaker was aware of, and much of which, though most innocently intended by Hereward, might be taken amiss by his new brother in arms. The most offensive part of his deportment, however, was a blunt, bold disregard to the title of those whom he addressed, adhering thereby to the manners of the Saxons, from whom he drew his descent, and which was likely to be at least displeasing to the Franks as well as Normans, who had already received and become very tenacious of the privileges of the feudal system, the mummery of heraldry, and the warlike claims assumed by knights, as belonging only to their own order.

Hereward was apt, it must be owned, to think too little of these distinctions; while he had at least a sufficient tendency to think enough of the power and wealth of the Greek empire which he served — of the dignity inherent in Alexius Comnenus, and which he was also disposed to grant to the Grecian officers, who, under the Emperor, commanded his own corps, and particularly to Achilles Tatius. This man Hereward knew to be a coward, and half-suspected to be a villain. Still, however, the Follower was always the direct channel through which the Imperial graces were conferred on the Varangians in general, as well as upon Hereward himself; and he had always the policy to represent such favours as being more or less indirectly the consequence of his own intercession. He was supposed vigorously to espouse the quarrel of the Varangians, in all the disputes between them and the other corps; he was liberal and open-handed; gave every soldier his due; and, bating the trifling circumstance of valour, which was not particularly his forte, it would have been difficult for these strangers to have demanded a leader more to their wishes. Besides this, our friend Hereward was admitted by him into his society, attended him, as we have seen, upon secret expeditions, and shared, therefore, deeply, in what may be termed by an expressive, though vulgar phrase, the sneaking kindness entertained for this new Achilles by the greater part of his myrmidons. Their attachment might be explained, perhaps, as a liking to their commander, as strong as could well exist with a marvellous lack of honour and esteem. The scheme, therefore, formed by Hereward to effect the deliverance of the Count of Paris, comprehended as much faith to the Emperor, and his representative, the Acolyte or Follower, as was consistent with rendering justice to the injured Frank.

In furtherance of this plan, he conducted Count Robert from the subterranean vaults of the Blacquernal, of the intricacies of which he was master, having been repeatedly, of late, stationed sentinel there, for the purpose of acquiring that knowledge of which Tatius promised himself the advantage in the ensuing conspiracy. When they were in the open air, and at some distance from the gloomy towers of the Palace, he bluntly asked the Count of Paris whether he knew Agelastes the Philosopher. The other answered in the negative.

"Look you now, Sir Knight, you hurt yourself in attempting to impose upon me," said Hereward. "You must know him; for I saw you dined with him yesterday."

"O! with that learned old man?" said the Count. "I know nothing of him worth owning or disguising to thee or any one. A wily person he is, half herald and half minstrel."

"Half procurer and whole knave," subjoined the Varangian. "With the mask of apparent good-humour he conceals his pandering to the vices of others; with the specious jargon of philosophy, he has argued himself out of religious belief and moral principle; and, with the appearance of the most devoted loyalty, he will, if he is not checked in time, either argue his too confiding master out of life and empire, or, if he fails in this, reason his simple associates into death and misery."

"And do you know all this," said Count Robert, "and permit this man to go unimpeached?"

"O, content you, sir," replied the Varangian; "I cannot yet form any plot which Agelastes may not countermine; but the time will come, nay it is already approaching, when the Emperor's attention shall be irresistibly turned to the conduct of this man, and then let the philosopher sit fast, or by St. Dunstan the barbarian overthrows him! I would only fain, methinks, save from his clutches a foolish friend, who has listed to his delusions."

"But what have I to do," said the Count, "with this man, or with his plots?"

"Much," said Hereward, "although you know it not. The main supporter of this plot is no other than the Caesar, who ought to be the most faithful of men; but ever since Alexius has named a Sebastocrator, an officer that is higher in rank, and nearer to the throne than the Caesar himself, so long has Nicephorus Briennius been displeased and dissatisfied, though for what length of time he has joined the schemes of the astucious Agelastes it is more difficult to say. This I know, that for many months he has fed liberally, as his riches enable him to do, the vices and prodigality of the Caesar. He has encouraged him to show disrespect to his wife, although the Emperor's daughter; has put ill-will between him and the royal family. And if Briennius bears no longer the fame of a rational man, and the renown of a good leader, he is deprived of both by following the advice of this artful sycophant."

"And what is all this to me?" said, the Frank. "Agelastes may be a true man or a time-serving slave; his master, Alexius Comnenus, is not so much allied to me or mine that I should meddle in the intrigues of his court."

"You may be mistaken in that," said the blunt Varangian; "if these intrigues involve the happiness and virtue" —

"Death of a thousand martyrs!" said the Frank, "doth paltry intrigues and quarrels of slaves involve a single thought of suspicion of the noble Countess of Paris? The oaths of thy whole generation were ineffectual to prove but that one of her hairs had changed its colour to silver!"

"Well imagined, gallant knight," said the Anglo-Saxon; "thou art a husband fitted for the atmosphere of Constantinople, which calls for little vigilance and a strong belief. Thou wilt find many followers and fellows in this court of ours."

"Hark thee, friend," replied the Frank, "let us have no more words, nor walk farther together than just to the most solitary nook of this bewildered city, and let us there set to that work which we left even now unfinished."

"If thou wert a Duke, Sir Count," replied the Varangian, "thou couldst not invite to a combat one who is more ready for it. Yet consider the odds on which we fight. If I fall, my moan is soon made; but will my death set thy wife at liberty if she is under restraint, or restore her honour if it is tarnished? — Will it do any thing more than remove from the world the only person who is willing to give thee aid, at his own risk and danger, and who hopes to unite thee to thy wife, and replace thee at the head of thy forces?"

"I was wrong," said the Count of Paris; "I was entirely wrong; but beware, my good friend, how thou couplest the name of Brenhilda of Aspramonte with the word of dishonour, and tell me, instead of this irritating discourse, whither go we now?"

"To the Cytherean gardens of Agelastes, from which we are not far distant," said the Anglo-Saxon; "yet he hath a nearer way to it than that by which we now travel, else I should be at a loss to account for the short space in which he could exchange the charms of his garden for the gloomy ruins of the Temple of Isis, and the Imperial palace of the Blacquernal."

"And wherefore, and how long," said Count Robert, "dost thou conclude that my Countess is detained in these gardens?"

"Ever since yesterday," replied Hereward. "When both I, and several of my companions, at my request, kept close watch upon the Caesar and your lady, we did plainly perceive passages of fiery admiration on his part, and anger as it seemed on hers, which Agelastes, being Nicephorus's friend, was likely, as usual, to bring to an end, by a separation of you both from the army of the crusaders, that your wife, like many a matron before, might have the pleasure of taking up her residence in the gardens of that worthy sage; while you, my Lord, might take up your own permanently in the castle of Blacquernal."

"Villain! why didst thou not apprise me of this yesterday?"

"A likely thing," said Hereward, "that I should feel myself at liberty to leave the ranks, and make such a communication to a man, whom, far from a friend, I then considered in the light of a personal enemy! Methinks, that instead of such language as this, you should be thankful that so many chance circumstances have at length brought me to befriend and assist you."

Count Robert felt the truth of what was said, though at the same time his fiery temper longed to avenge itself, according to its wont, upon the party which was nearest at hand.

But now they arrived at what the citizens of Constantinople called the Philosopher's Gardens. Here Hereward hoped to obtain entrance, for he had gained a knowledge of some part, at least, of the private signals of Achilles and Agelastes, since he had been introduced to the last at the ruins of the Temple of Isis. They had not indeed admitted him to their entire secret; yet, confident in his connexion with the Follower, they had no hesitation in communicating to him snatches of knowledge, such as, committed to a man of shrewd natural sense like the Anglo-Saxon, could scarce fail, in time and by degrees, to make him master of the

whole. Count Robert and his companion stood before an arched door, the only opening in a high wall, and the Anglo-Saxon was about to knock, when, as if the idea had suddenly struck him —

"What if the wretch Diogenes opens the gate? We must kill him, ere he can fly back and betray us. Well, it is a matter of necessity, and the villain has deserved his death by a hundred horrid crimes."

"Kill him then, thyself," retorted Count Robert; "he is nearer thy degree, and assuredly I will not defile the name of Charlemagne with the blood of a black slave."

"Nay, God-a-mercy!" answered the Anglo-Saxon, "but you must bestir yourself in the action, supposing there come rescue, and that I be over-borne by odds."

"Such odds," said the knight, "will render the action more like a *melee*, or general battle; and assure yourself, I will not be slack when I may, with my honour, be active."

"I doubt it not," said the Varangian; "but the distinction seems a strange one, that before permitting a man to defend himself, or annoy his enemy, requires him to demand the pedigree of his ancestor."

"Fear you not, sir," said Count Robert. "The strict rule of chivalry indeed bears what I tell thee, but when the question is, Fight or not? there is great allowance to be made for a decision in the affirmative."

"Let me give then the exorciser's rap," replied Hereward, "and see what fiend will appear."

So saying, he knocked in a particular manner, and the door opened inwards; a dwarfish negress stood in the gap — her white hair contrasted singularly with her dark complexion, and with the broad laughing look peculiar to those slaves. She had something in her physiognomy which, severely construed, might argue malice, and a delight in human misery.

"Is Agelastes" — said the Varangian; but he had not completed the sentence, when she answered him, by pointing down a shadowed walk.

The Anglo-Saxon and Frank turned in that direction, when the hag rather muttered, than said distinctly, "You are one of the initiated, Varangian; take heed whom you take with you, when you may hardly, peradventure, be welcomed even going alone."

Hereward made a sign that he understood her, and they were instantly out of her sight. The path winded beautifully through the shades of an Eastern garden, where clumps of flowers and labyrinths of flowering shrubs, and the tall boughs of the forest trees, rendered even the breath of noon cool and acceptable.

"Here we must use our utmost caution," said Hereward, speaking in a low tone of voice; "for here it is most likely the deer that we seek has found its refuge. Better allow me to pass before, since you are too deeply agitated to possess the coolness necessary for a scout. Keep concealed beneath yon oak, and let no vain scruples of honour deter you from creeping beneath the underwood, or beneath the earth itself, if you should hear a footfall. If the lovers have agreed, Agelastes, it is probable, walks his round, to prevent intrusion."

"Death and furies! it cannot be!" exclaimed the fiery Frank. — "Lady of the Broken Lances, take thy votary's life, ere thou torment him with this agony!"

He saw, however, the necessity of keeping a strong force upon himself, and permitted, without further remonstrance, the Varangian to pursue his way, looking, however, earnestly after him.

By advancing forward a little, he could observe Hereward draw near to a pavilion which arose at no great distance from the place where they had parted. Here he observed him apply, first his eye, and then his ear, to one of the casements, which were in a great measure grown over, and excluded from the light, by various flowering shrubs. He almost thought he saw a grave interest take place in the countenance of the Varangian, and he longed to have his share of the information which he had doubtless obtained.

He crept, therefore, with noiseless steps, through the same labyrinth of foliage which had covered the approaches of Hereward; and so silent were his movements, that he touched the Anglo-Saxon, in order to make him aware of his presence, before he observed his approach.

Hereward, not aware at first by whom he was approached, turned on the intruder with a countenance like a burning coal. Seeing, however, that it was the Frank, he shrugged his shoulders, as if pitying the impatience which could not be kept under prudent restraint, and drawing himself back allowed the Count the privilege of a peeping place through plinths of the casement, which could not be discerned by the sharpest eye from the inner side. The sombre character of the light which penetrated into this abode of pleasure, was suited to that species of thought to which a Temple of Cytherea was supposed to be dedicated. Portraits and groups of statuary were also to be seen, in the taste of those which they had beheld at the Kiosk of the waterfall, yet something more free in the ideas which they conveyed than were to be found at their first resting-place. Shortly after, the door of the pavilion opened, and the Countess entered, followed by her attendant Agatha. The lady threw herself on a couch as she came in, while her attendant, who was a young and very handsome woman, kept herself modestly in the background, so much so as hardly to be distinguished.

"What dost thou think," said the Countess, "of so suspicious a friend as Agelastes? so gallant an enemy as the Caesar, as he is called?"

"What should I think," returned the damsel, "except that what the old man calls friendship is hatred, and what the Caesar terms a patriotic love for his country, which will not permit him to set its enemies at liberty, is in fact too strong an affection for his fair captive?"

"For such an affection," said the Countess, "he shall have the same requital as if it were indeed the hostility of which he would give it the colour. — My true and noble lord; hadst thou an idea of the calamities to which they have subjected me, how soon wouldst thou break through every restraint to hasten to my relief?"

"Art thou a man," said Count Robert to his companion; "and canst thou advise me to remain still and hear this?"

"I am one man," said the Anglo-Saxon; "you, sir, are another; but all our arithmetic will not make us more than two; and in this place, it is probable that a whistle from the Caesar, or a scream from Agelastes, would bring a thousand to match us, if we were as bold as Bevis of Hampton. — Stand still and keep quiet. I counsel this, less as respecting my own life, which, by embarking upon a wild-geese chase with so strange a partner, I have shown I put at little value, than for thy safety, and that of the lady thy Countess, who shows herself as virtuous as beautiful."

"I was imposed on at first," said the Lady Brenhilda to her attendant. "Affectation of severe morals, of deep learning, and of rigid rectitude, assumed by this wicked old man, made me believe in part the character which he pretended; but the gloss is rubbed off since he let me see into his alliance with the unworthy Caesar, and the ugly picture remains in its native loathsomeness. Nevertheless, if I can, by address or subtlety, deceive this arch-deceiver — as he has taken from me, in a great measure, every other kind of assistance — I will not refuse that of craft, which he may find perhaps equal to his own?"

"Hear you that?" said the Varangian to the Count of Paris. "Do not let your impatience mar the web of your lady's prudence. I will weigh a woman's wit against a man's valour where there is ought to do! Let us not come in with our assistance until time shall show us that it is necessary for her safety and our success."

"Amen," said the Count of Paris; "but hope not, Sir Saxon, that thy prudence shall persuade me to leave this garden without taking full vengeance on that unworthy Caesar, and the pretended philosopher, if indeed he turns out to have assumed a character" — The Count was here beginning to raise his voice, when the Saxon, without ceremony, placed his hand on his mouth. "Thou takest a liberty," said Count Robert, lowering however his tones.

"Ay, truly," said Hereward; "when the house is on fire, I do not stop to ask whether the water which I pour on it be perfumed or no."

This recalled the Frank to a sense of his situation; and if not contented with the Saxon's mode of making an apology, he was at least silenced. A distant noise was now heard — the Countess listened, and changed colour. "Agatha," she said, "we are like champions in the lists, and here comes the adversary. Let us retreat into this side apartment, and so for a while put off an encounter thus alarming." So saying, the two females withdrew into a sort of anteroom, which opened from the principal apartment behind the seat which Brenhilda had occupied.

They had scarcely disappeared, when, as the stage direction has it, enter from the other side the Caesar and Agelastes. They had perhaps heard the last words of Brenhilda, for the Caesar repeated in a low tone —

"Militat omnis amans, habet et sua castra Cupido."

"What, has our fair opponent withdrawn her forces? No matter, it shows she thinks of the warfare, though the enemy be not in sight. Well, thou shalt not have to upbraid me this time, Agelastes, with precipitating my amours, and depriving myself of the pleasure of pursuit. By Heavens, I will be as regular in my progress as if

in reality I bore on my shoulders the whole load of years which make the difference between us; for I shrewdly suspect that with thee, old man, it is that envious churl Time that hath plucked the wings of Cupid."

"Say not so, mighty Caesar," said the old man; "it is the hand of Prudence, which, depriving Cupid's wing of some wild feathers, leaves him still enough to fly with an equal and steady flight."

"Thy flight, however, was less measured, Agelastes, when thou didst collect that armoury — that magazine of Cupid's panoply, out of which thy kindness permitted me but now to arm myself, or rather to repair my accoutrements."

So saying, he glanced his eye over his own person, blazing with gems, and adorned with a chain of gold, bracelets, rings, and other ornaments, which, with a new and splendid habit, assumed since his arrival at these Cytherean gardens, tended to set off his very handsome figure.

"I am glad," said Agelastes, "if you have found among toys, which I now never wear, and seldom made use of even when life was young with me, anything which may set off your natural advantages. Remember only this slight condition, that such of these trifles as have made part of your wearing apparel on this distinguished day, cannot return to a meaner owner, but must of necessity remain the property of that greatness of which they had once formed the ornament."

"I cannot consent to this, my worthy friend," said the Caesar; "I know thou valuest these jewels only in so far as a philosopher may value them; that is, for nothing save the remembrances which attach to them. This large seal-ring, for instance, was — I have heard you say — the property of Socrates; if so, you cannot view it save with devout thankfulness, that your own philosophy has never been tried with the exercise of a Xantippe. These clasps released, in older times, the lovely bosom of Phryne; and they now belong to one who could do better homage to the beauties they concealed or discovered than could the cynic Diogenes. These buckles, too" —

"I will spare thy ingenuity, good youth," said Agelastes, somewhat nettled; "or rather, noble Caesar. Keep thy wit — thou wilt have ample occasion for it."

"Fear not me," said the Caesar. "Let us proceed, since you will, to exercise the gifts which we possess, such as they are, either natural or bequeathed to us by our dear and respected friend. Hah!" he said, the door opening suddenly, and the Countess almost meeting him, "our wishes are here anticipated."

He bowed accordingly with the deepest deference to the Lady Brenhilda, who, having made some alterations to enhance the splendour of her attire, now moved forward from the withdrawing-room into which she had retreated.

"Hail, noble lady," said the Caesar, "whom I have visited with the intention of apologizing for detaining you, in some degree against your will, in those strange regions in which yon unexpectedly find yourself."

"Not in some degree," answered the lady, "but entirely contrary to my inclinations, which are, to be with my husband, the Count of Paris, and the followers who have taken the cross under his banner."

"Such, doubtless, were your thoughts when you left the land of the west," said Agelastes; "but, fair Countess, have they experienced no change? You have left a shore streaming with human blood when the slightest provocation occurred, and thou hast come to one whose principal maxim is to increase the sum of human happiness by every mode which can be invented. In the west yonder, he or she is respected most who can best exercise their tyrannical strength in making others miserable, while, in these more placid realms, we reserve our garlands for the ingenious youth, or lovely lady, who can best make happy the person whose affection is fixed upon her."

"But, reverend philosopher," said the Countess, "who labourest so artificially in recommending the yoke of pleasure, know that you contradict every notion which I have been taught from my infancy. In the land where my nurture lay, so far are we from acknowledging your doctrines, that we match not, except like the lion and the lioness, when the male has compelled the female to acknowledge his superior worth and valour. Such is our rule, that a damsel, even of mean degree, would think herself heinously undermatched, if wedded to a gallant whose fame in arms was yet unknown."

"But, noble lady," said the Caesar, "a dying man may then find room for some faint hope. Were there but a chance that distinction in arms could gain those affections which have been stolen, rather than fairly conferred, how many are there who would willingly enter into the competition where the prize is so fair! What is the enterprise too bold to be under-taken on such a condition! And where is the individual whose heart would not feel, that in baring his sword for the prize, he made vow never to return it to the scabbard, without the proud boast, What I have not yet won, I have deserved!"

"You see, lady," said Agelastes, who, apprehending that the last speech of the Caesar had made some impression, hastened to follow it up with a suitable observation — "You see that the fire of chivalry burns as gallantly in the bosom of the Grecians as in that of the western nations."

"Yes," answered Brenhilda, "and I have heard of the celebrated siege of Troy, on which occasion a dastardly coward carried off the wife of a brave man, shunned every proffer of encounter with the husband whom he had wronged, and finally caused the death of his numerous brothers, the destruction of his native city, with all the wealth which it contained, and died himself the death of a pitiful poltroon, lamented only by his worthless leman, to show how well the rules of chivalry were understood by your predecessors."

"Lady, you mistake," said the Caesar; "the offences of Paris were those of a dissolute Asiatic; the courage which avenged them was that of the Greek Empire."

"You are learned, sir," said the lady; "but think not that I will trust your words until you produce before me a Grecian knight, gallant enough to look upon the armed crest of my husband without quaking."

"That, methinks, were not extremely difficult," returned the Caesar; "if they have not flattered me, I have myself been thought equal in battle to more dangerous men than him who has been strangely mated with the Lady Brenhilda."

"That is soon tried," answered the Countess. "You will hardly, I think, deny, that my husband, separated from me by some unworthy trick, is still at thy command, and could be produced at thy pleasure. I will ask no armour for him save what he wears, no weapon but his good sword Tranchefer; then place him in this chamber, or any other lists equally narrow, and if he flinch, or cry craven, or remain dead under shield, let Brenhilda be the prize of the conqueror. — Merciful Heaven!" she concluded, as she sunk back upon her seat, "forgive me for the crime of even imagining such a termination, which is equal almost to doubting thine unerring judgment!"

"Let me, however," said the Caesar, "catch up these precious words before they fall to the ground — Let me hope that he, to whom the heavens shall give power and strength to conquer this highly-esteemed Count of Paris, shall succeed him in the affections of Brenhilda; and believe me, the sun plunges not through the sky to his resting-place, with the same celerity that I shall hasten to the encounter."

"Now, by Heaven!" said Count Robert, in an anxious whisper to Hereward, "it is too much to expect me to stand by and hear a contemptible Greek, who durst not stand even the rattling farewell which Tranchefer takes of his scabbard, brave me in my absence, and affect to make love to my lady *par amours*! And she, too — methinks Brenhilda allows more license than she is wont to do to yonder chattering popinjay. By the rood! I will spring into the apartment, front them with my personal appearance, and confute yonder braggart in a manner he is like to remember."

"Under favour," said the Varangian, who was the only auditor of this violent speech, "you shall be ruled by calm reason while I am with you. When we are separated, let the devil of knight-errantry, which has such possession of thee, take thee upon his shoulders, and carry thee full tilt wheresoever he lists."

"Thou art a brute," said the Count, looking at him with a contempt corresponding to the expression he made use of; "not only without humanity, but without the sense of natural honour or natural shame. The most despicable of animals stands not by tamely and sees another assail his mate. The bull offers his horns to a rival — the mastiff uses his jaws — and even the timid stag becomes furious, and gores."

"Because they are beasts," said the Varangian, "and their mistresses also creatures without shame or reason, who are not aware of the sanctity of a choice. But thou, too, Count, canst thou not see the obvious purpose of this poor lady, forsaken by all the world, to keep her faith towards thee, by eluding the snares with which wicked men have beset her? By the souls of my fathers! my heart is so much moved by her ingenuity, mingled as I see it is with the most perfect candour and faith, that I myself, in fault of a better champion, would willingly raise the axe in her behalf!"

"I thank thee, my good friend," said the Count; "I thank thee as heartily as if it were possible thou shouldst be left to do that good office for Brenhilda, the beloved of many a noble lord, the mistress of many a powerful vassal; and, what is more, much more than thanks, I crave thy pardon for the wrong I did thee but now."

"My pardon you cannot need" said the Varangian; "for I take no offence that is not seriously meant. — Stay, they speak again."

"It is strange it should be so," said the Caesar, as he paced the apartment; "but methinks, nay, I am almost certain, Agelastes, that I hear voices in the vicinity of this apartment of thy privacy." "It is impossible," said Agelastes; "but I will go and see." Perceiving him to leave the pavilion, the Varangian made the Frank sensible that they must crouch down among a little thicket of evergreens, where they lay completely obscured. The philosopher made his rounds with a heavy step, but a watchful eye; and the two listeners were obliged to observe the strictest silence, without motion of any kind, until he had completed an ineffectual search, and returned into the pavilion. "By my faith, brave man," said the Count, "ere we return to our skulking-place, I must tell thee in thine ear, that never, in my life, was temptation so strong upon me, as that which prompted me to beat out that old hypocrite's brains, provided I could have reconciled it with my honour; and heartily do I wish that thou, whose honour no way withheld thee, had experienced and given way to some impulse of a similar nature."

"Such fancies have passed through my head," said the Varangian; "but I will not follow them till they are consistent both with our own safety, and more particularly with that of the Countess."

"I thank thee again for thy good-will to her," said Count Robert; "and, by Heaven! if fight we must at length, as it seems likely, I will neither grudge thee an honourable antagonist, nor fair quarter if the combat goes against thee."

"Thou hast my thanks," was the reply of Hereward; "only, for Heaven's sake, be silent in this conjecture, and do what thou wilt afterwards." Before the Varangian and the Count had again resumed their posture of listeners, the parties within the pavilion, conceiving themselves unwatched, had resumed their conversation, speaking low, yet with considerable animation.

"It is in vain you would persuade me," said the Countess, "that you know not where my husband is, or that you have not the most absolute influence over his captivity. Who else could have an interest in banishing or putting to death the husband, but he that affects to admire the wife?" "You do me wrong, beautiful lady," answered the Caesar, "and forget that I can in no shape be termed the moving-spring of this empire; that my father-in-law, Alexius, is the Emperor; and that the woman who terms herself my wife, is jealous as a fiend can be of my slightest motion. — What possibility was there that I should work the captivity of your husband and your own? The open affront which the Count of Paris put upon the Emperor, was one which he was likely to avenge, either by secret guile or by open force. Me it no way touched, save as the humble vassal of thy charms; and it was by the wisdom and the art of the sage Agelastes, that I was able to extricate thee from the gulf in which thou hadst else certainly perished. Nay, weep not, lady, for as yet we know not the fate of Count Robert; but, credit me, it is wisdom to choose a better protector, and consider him as no more."

"A better than him," said Brenhilda, "I can never have, were I to choose out of the knighthood of all the world!"

"This hand," said the Caesar, drawing himself into a martial attitude, "should decide that question, were the man of whom thou thinkest so much yet moving on the face of this earth and at liberty."

"Thou art," said Brenhilda, looking fixedly at him with the fire of indignation flashing from every feature — "thou art — but it avails not telling thee what is thy real name; believe me, the world shall one day ring with it, and be justly sensible of its value. Observe what I am about to say — Robert of Paris is gone — or captive, I know not where. He cannot fight the match of which thou seemest so desirous — but here stands Brenhilda, born heiress of Aspramonte, by marriage the wedded wife of the good Count of Paris. She was never matched in the lists by mortal man, except the valiant Count, and since thou art so grieved that thou canst not meet her husband in battle, thou canst not surely object, if she is willing to meet thee in his stead!"

"How, madam?" said the Caesar, astonished; "do you propose yourself to hold the lists against me?"

"Against you!" said the Countess; "against all the Grecian Empire, if they shall affirm that Robert of Paris is justly used and lawfully confined."

"And are the conditions," said the Caesar, "the same as if Count Robert himself held the lists? The vanquished must then be at the pleasure of the conqueror for good or evil."

"It would seem so," said the Countess, "nor do I refuse the hazard; only, that if the other champion shall bite the dust, the noble Count Robert shall be set at liberty, and permitted to depart with all suitable honours."

"This I refuse not," said the Caesar, "provided it is in my power."

A deep growling sound, like that of a modern gong, here interrupted the conference.

Chapter the Nineteenth.

The Varangian and Count Robert, at every risk of discovery, had remained so near as fully to conjecture, though they could not expressly overhear, the purport of the conversation.

"He has accepted her challenge!" said the Count of Paris.

"And with apparent willingness," said Hereward.

"O, doubtless, doubtless," — answered the Crusader; "but he knows not the skill in war which a woman may attain; for my part, God knows I have enough depending upon the issue of this contest, yet such is my confidence, that I would to God I had more. I vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances, that I desire every furrow of land I possess — every honour which I can call my own, from the Countship of Paris, down to the leather that binds my spur, were dependent and at issue upon this fair field, between your Caesar, as men term him, and Brenhilda of Aspramonte."

"It is a noble confidence," said the Varangian, "nor durst I say it is a rash one; only I cannot but remember that the Caesar is a strong man, as well as a handsome, expert in the use of arms, and, above all, less strictly bound than you esteem yourself by the rules of honour. There are many ways in which advantage may be given and taken, which will not, in the Caesar's estimation, alter the character of the field from an equal one, although it might do so in the opinion of the chivalrous Count of Paris, or even in that of the poor Varangian. But first let me conduct you to some place of safety, for your escape must be soon, if it is not already, detected. The sounds which we heard intimate that some of his confederate plotters have visited the garden on other than love affairs. I will guide thee to another avenue than that by which we entered. But you would hardly, I suppose, be pleased to adopt the wisest alternative?"

"And what may that be?" said the Count.

"To give thy purse, though it were thine all, to some poor ferryman to waft thee over the Hellespont, then hasten to carry thy complaint to Godfrey of Bouillon, and what friends thou mayst have among thy brethren crusaders, and determine, as thou easily canst, on a sufficient number of them to come back and menace the city with instant war, unless the Emperor should deliver up thy lady, most unfairly made prisoner, and prevent, by his authority, this absurd and unnatural combat."

"And would you have me, then," said Count Robert, "move the crusaders to break a fairly appointed field of battle? Do you think that Godfrey of Bouillon would turn back upon his pilgrimage for such an unworthy purpose; or that the Countess of Paris would accept as a service, means of safety which would stain her honour for ever, by breaking an appointment solemnly made on her own challenge? — Never!"

"My judgment is then at fault," said the Varangian, "for I see I can hammer out no expedient which is not, in some extravagant manner or another, controlled by your foolish notions. Here is a man who has been trapped into the power of his enemy, that he might not interfere to prevent a base stratagem upon his lady, involving both her life and honour; yet he thinks it a matter of necessity that he keeps faith as precisely with these midnight poisoners, as he would had it been pledged to the most honourable men!"

"Thou say'st a painful truth," said Count Robert; "but my word is the emblem of my faith; and if it pass to a dishonourable or faithless foe, it is imprudently done on my part; but if I break it, being once pledged, it is a dishonourable action, and the disgrace can never be washed from my shield."

"Do you mean, then," said the Varangian, "to suffer your wife's honour to remain pledged as it at present is, on the event of an unequal combat?"

"God and the saints pardon thee such a thought!" said the Count of Paris. "I will go to see this combat with a heart as firm, if not as light, as any time I ever saw spears splintered. If by the influence of any accident or treachery — for fairly, and with such an antagonist, Brenhilda of Aspramonte cannot be overthrown — I step into the lists, proclaim the Caesar as he is — a villain — show the falsehood of his conduct from beginning to end — appeal to every noble heart that hears me, and then — God show the right!"

Hereward paused, and shook his head. "All this," he said, "might be feasible enough provided the combat were to be fought in the presence of your own countrymen, or even, by the mass! if the Varangians were to be guards of the lists. But treachery of every kind is so familiar to the Greeks, that I question if they would view the conduct of their Caesar as any thing else than a pardonable and natural stratagem of Dan Cupid, to be smiled at, rather than subjected to disgrace or punishment."

"A nation," said Count Robert, "who could smile at such a jest, may heaven refuse them sympathy at their utmost need, when their sword is broken in their hand, and their wives and daughters shrieking in the relentless grasp of a barbarous enemy!"

Hereward looked upon his companion, whose flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes bore witness to his enthusiasm.

"I see," he said, "you are resolved, and I know that your resolution can in justice be called by no other name than an act of heroic folly:— What then? it is long since life has been bitter to the Varangian exile. Morn has raised him from a joyless bed, which night has seen him lie down upon, wearied with wielding a mercenary weapon in the wars of strangers. He has longed to lay down his life in an honourable cause, and this is one in which the extremity and very essence of honour is implicated. It tallies also with my scheme of saving the Emperor, which will be greatly facilitated by the downfall of his ungrateful son-in-law." Then addressing himself to the Count, he continued, "Well, Sir Count, as thou art the person principally concerned, I am willing to yield to thy reasoning in this affair; but I hope you will permit me to mingle with your resolution some advices of a more everyday and less fantastic nature. For example, thy escape from the dungeons of the Blacquernal must soon be generally known. In prudence, indeed, I myself must be the first to communicate it, since otherwise the suspicion will fall on me — Where do you think of concealing yourself? for assuredly the search will be close and general."

"For that," said the Count of Paris, "I must be indebted to thy suggestion, with thanks for every lie which thou findest thyself obliged to make, to contrive, and produce in my behalf, entreating thee only to render them as few as possible, they being a coin which I myself never fabricate."

"Sir knight," answered Hereward, "let me begin first by saying, that no knight that ever belted sword is more a slave to truth, when truth is observed towards him, than the poor soldier who talks to thee; but when the game depends not upon fair play, but upon lulling men's cautiousness asleep by falsehood, and drugging their senses by opiate draughts, they who would scruple at no means of deceiving me, can hardly expect that I, who am paid in such base money, should pass nothing on my part but what is lawful and genuine. For the present thou must remain concealed within my poor apartment, in the barracks of the Varangians, which is the last place where they will think of seeking for thee. Take this, my upper cloak, and follow me; and now that we are about to leave these gardens, thou mayst follow me unsuspected as a sentinel attending his officer; for, take it along with you, noble Count, that we Varangians are a sort of persons upon whom the Greeks care not to look very long or fixedly."

They now reached the gate where they had been admitted by the negress, and Hereward, who was intrusted with the power, it seems, of letting himself out of the philosopher's premises, though not of entering without assistance from the portress, took out a key which turned the lock on the garden side, so that they soon found themselves at liberty. They then proceeded by by-paths through the city, Hereward leading the way, and the Count following, without speech or remonstrance, until they stood before the portal of the barracks of the Varangians.

"Make haste," said the sentinel who was on duty, "dinner is already begun." The communication sounded joyfully in the ears of Hereward, who was much afraid that his companion might have been stopt and examined. By a side passage he reached his own quarters, and introduced the Count into a small room, the sleeping chamber of his squire, where he apologized for leaving him for some time; and, going out, locked the door, for fear, as he said, of intrusion.

The demon of suspicion was not very likely to molest a mind so frankly constituted as that of Count Robert, and yet the last action of Hereward did not fail to occasion some painful reflections.

"This man," he said, "had needs be true, for I have reposed in him a mighty trust, which few hirelings in his situation would honourably discharge. What is to prevent him to report to the principal officer of his watch, that the Frank prisoner, Robert, Count of Paris, whose wife stands engaged for so desperate a combat with the Caesar, has escaped, indeed, this morning, from the prisons of the Blacquernal, but has suffered himself to be trepanned at noon, and is again a captive in the barracks of the Varangian Guard? — what means of defence are mine, were I discovered to these mercenaries? — What man could do, by the favour of our Lady of the Broken Lances, I have not failed to achieve. I have slain a tiger in single combat — I have killed one warder, and conquered the desperate and gigantic creature by whom he was supported. I have had terms enough at command to bring over this Varangian to my side, in appearance at least; yet all this does not encourage me to hope that I could long keep at bay ten or a dozen such men as these beef-fed knaves appear to be, led in upon me by a fellow of thewes and sinews such as those of my late companion. — Yet for shame, Robert! such thoughts are unworthy a descendant of Charlemagne. When wert thou wont so curiously to count thine enemies, and when wert thou wont to be suspicious, since he, whose bosom may truly boast itself incapable of fraud, ought in honesty to be the last to expect it in another? The Varangian's look is open, his coolness in danger is striking, his speech is more frank and ready than ever was that of a traitor. If he is false, there is no faith in the hand of nature, for truth, sincerity, and courage are written upon his forehead."

While Count Robert was thus reflecting upon his condition, and combating the thick-coming doubts and suspicions which its uncertainties gave rise to, he began to be sensible that he had not eaten for many hours; and amidst many doubts and fears of a more heroic nature, he half entertained a lurking suspicion, that they meant to let hunger undermine his strength before they adventured into the apartment to deal with him.

We shall best see how far these doubts were deserved by Hereward, or how far they were unjust, by following his course after he left his barrack-room. Snatching a morsel of dinner, which he ate with an affectation of great hunger, but, in fact, that his attention to his food might be a pretence for dispensing with disagreeable questions, or with conversation of any kind, he pleaded duty, and immediately leaving his comrades, directed his course to the lodgings of Achilles Tatius, which were a part of the same building. A Syrian slave, who opened the door, after a deep reverence to Hereward, whom he knew as a favourite attendant of the Acolyte, said to him that his master was gone forth, but had desired him to say, that if he wished to see him, he would find him at the Philosopher's Gardens, so called, as belonging to the sage Agelastes.

Hereward turned about instantly, and availing himself of his knowledge of Constantinople to thread its streets in the shortest time possible, at length stood alone before the door in the garden-wall, at which he and the Count of Paris had previously been admitted in the earlier part of the day. The same negress appeared at the same private signal, and when he asked for Achilles Tatius, she replied, with some sharpness, "Since you were here this morning, I marvel you did not meet him, or that, having business with him, you did not stay till he arrived. Sure I am, that not long after you entered the garden the Acolyte was enquiring for you."

"It skills not, old woman" said the Varangian; "I communicate the reason of my motions to my commander, but not to thee." He entered the garden accordingly, and avoiding the twilight path that led to the Bower of Love — so was the pavilion named in which he had overheard the dialogue between the Caesar and the Countess of Paris — he arrived before a simple garden-house, whose humble and modest front seemed to announce that it was the abode of philosophy and learning. Here, passing before the windows, he made some little noise, expecting to attract the attention either of Achilles Tatius, or his accomplice Agelastes, as chance should determine. It was the first who heard, and who replied. The door opened; a lofty plume stooped itself, that its owner might cross the threshold, and the stately form of Achilles Tatius entered the gardens. "What now," he said, "our trusty sentinel? what hast thou, at this time of day, come to report to us? Thou art our good friend, and highly esteemed soldier, and well we wot thine errand must be of importance, since thou hast brought it thyself, and at an hour so unusual."

"Pray Heaven," said Hereward, "that the news I have brought deserve a welcome."

"Speak them instantly," said the Acolyte, "good or bad; thou speakest to a man to whom fear is unknown." But his eye, which quailed as he looked on the soldier — his colour, which went and came — his hands, which busied themselves in an uncertain manner in adjusting the belt of his sword — all argued a state of mind very different from that which his tone of defiance would fain have implied. "Courage," he said, "my trusty soldier! speak the news to me. I can bear the worst thou hast to tell."

"In a word, then," said the Varangian, "your Valour directed me this morning to play the office of master of the rounds upon those dungeons of the Blacquernal palace, where last night the boisterous Count Robert of Paris was incarcerated" —

"I remember well," said Achilles Tatius. — "What then?"

"As I reposed me," said Hereward, "in an apartment above the vaults, I heard cries from beneath, of a kind which attracted my attention. I hastened to examine, and my surprise was extreme, when looking down into the dungeon, though I could see nothing distinctly, yet, by the wailing and whimpering sounds, I conceived that the Man of the Forest, the animal called Sylvan, whom our soldiers have so far indoctrinated in our Saxon tongue as to make him useful in the wards of the prison, was bemoaning himself on account of some violent injury. Descending with a torch, I found the bed on which the prisoner had been let down burnt to cinders; the tiger which had been chained within a spring of it, with its skull broken to pieces; the creature called Sylvan, prostrate, and writhing under great pain and terror, and no prisoner whatever in the dungeon. There were marks that all the fastenings had been withdrawn by a Mytilenian soldier, companion of my watch, when he visited the dungeon at the usual hour; and as, in my anxious search, I at length found his dead body, slain apparently by a stab in the throat, I was obliged to believe that while I was examining the cell, he, this Count Robert, with whose daring life the adventure is well consistent, had escaped into the upper air, by means, doubtless, of the ladder and trap-door by which I had descended."

"And wherefore didst thou not instantly call treason, and raise the hue and cry?" demanded the Acolyte.

"I dared not venture to do so," replied the Varangian, "till I had instructions from your Valour. The alarming cry of treason, and the various rumours likely at this moment to ensue, might have involved a search so close, as perchance would have discovered matters in which the Acolyte himself would have been rendered subject to suspicion."

"Thou art right," said Achilles Tatius, in a whisper: "and yet it will be necessary that we do not pretend any longer to conceal the flight of this important prisoner, if we would not pass for being his accomplices. Where thinkest thou this unhappy fugitive can have taken refuge?"

"That I was in hopes of learning from your Valour's greater wisdom," said Hereward.

"Thinkest thou not," said Achilles, "that he may have crossed the Hellespont, in order to rejoin his own countrymen and adherents?"

"It is much to be dreaded," said Hereward. "Undoubtedly, if the Count listened to the advice of any one who knew the face of the country, such would be the very counsel he would receive."

"The danger, then, of his return at the head of a vengeful body of Franks," said the Acolyte, "is not so immediate as I apprehended at first, for the Emperor gave positive orders that the boats and galleys which yesterday transported the crusaders to the shores of Asia should recross the strait, and bring back no single one of them from the step upon their journey on which he had so far furthered them. — Besides, they all — their leaders, that is to say — made their vows before crossing, that they would not turn back so much as a foot's pace, now that they had set actually forth on the road to Palestine."

"So, therefore," said Hereward, "one of the two propositions is unquestionable; either Count Robert is on the eastern side of the strait, having no means of returning with his brethren to avenge the usage he has received, and may therefore be securely set, at defiance — or else he lurks somewhere in Constantinople, without a friend or ally to take his part, or encourage him openly to state his supposed wrongs; in either case, there can, I think, be no tact in conveying to the palace the news that he has freed himself, since it would only alarm the court, and afford the Emperor ground for many suspicions. — But it is not for an ignorant barbarian like me to prescribe a course of conduct to your valour and wisdom, and methinks the sage Agelastes were a fitter counsellor than such as I am."

"No, no, no," said the Acolyte, in a hurried whisper; "the philosopher and I are right good friends, sworn good friends, very especially bound together; but should it come to this, that one of us must needs throw before the footstool of the Emperor the head of the other, I think thou wouldst not advise that I, whose hairs have not a trace of silver, should be the last in making the offering; therefore we will say nothing of this mishap, but give thee full power, and the highest charge to seek for Count Robert of Paris, be he dead or alive, to secure him within the dungeons set apart for the discipline of our own corps, and when thou hast done so, to bring me notice. I may make him my friend in many ways, by extricating his wife from danger by the axes of my Varangians. What is there in this metropolis that they have to oppose them?"

"When raised in a just cause," answered Hereward, "nothing."

"Hah! — say'st thou?" said the Acolyte; "how meanest thou by that? — but I know — Thou art scrupulous about having the just and lawful command of thy officer in every action in which thou art engaged, and, thinking in that dutiful and soldierlike manner, it is my duty as thine Acolyte to see thy scruples satisfied. A warrant shalt thou have, with full powers, to seek for and imprison this foreign Count of whom we have been speaking — And, hark thee, my excellent friend," he continued, with some hesitation, "I think thou hadst better begone, and begin, or rather continue thy search. It is unnecessary to inform our friend Agelastes of what has happened, until his advice be more needful than as yet it is on the occasion. Home — home to the barracks; I will account to him for thy appearance here, if he be curious on the subject, which, as a suspicious old man, he is likely to be. Go to the barracks, and act as if thou hadst a warrant in every respect full and ample. I will provide thee with one when I come back to my quarters."

The Varangian turned hastily homewards.

"Now, is it not," he said, "a strange thing, and enough to make a man a rogue for life — to observe how the devil encourages young beginners in falsehood! I have told a greater lie — at least I have suppressed more truth — than on any occasion before in my whole life — and what is the consequence? Why, my commander throws almost at my head a warrant sufficient to guarantee and protect me in all I have done, or propose to do! If the foul fiend were thus regular in protecting his votaries, methinks they would have little reason to complain of him, or better men to be astonished at their number. But a time comes, they say, when he seldom fails to desert them. Therefore, get thee behind me, Satan! If I have seemed to be thy servant for a short time, it is but with an honest and Christian purpose."

As he entertained these thoughts, he looked back upon the path, and was startled at an apparition of a creature of a much greater size, and a stranger shape than human, covered, all but the face, with a reddish dun fur; his expression an ugly, and yet a sad melancholy; a cloth was wrapped round one hand, and an air of pain and languor bespoke suffering from a wound. So much was Hereward pre-occupied with his own reflections, that at first he thought his imagination had actually raised the devil; but after a sudden start of surprise, he recognised his acquaintance Sylvan. "Hah! old friend," he said, "I am happy thou hast made thy escape to a place where them wilt find plenty of fruit to support thee. Take my advice — keep out of the way of discovery — Keep thy friend's counsel."

The Man of the Wood uttered a chattering noise in return to this address.

"I understand thee," said Hereward, "thou wilt tell no tales, thou sayest; and faith, I will trust thee rather than the better part of my own two-legged race, who are eternally circumventing or murdering each other."

A minute after the creature was out of sight, Hereward heard the shriek of a female, and a voice which cried for help. The accents must have been uncommonly interesting to the Varangian, since, forgetting his own dangerous situation, he immediately turned and flew to the suppliant's assistance.

Chapter the Twentieth.

*She comes! she comes! in all the charms of youth,
Unequall'd love, and unsuspected truth!*

Hereward was not long in tracing the cry through the wooded walks, when a female rushed into his arms; alarmed, as it appeared, by Sylvan, who was pursuing her closely. The figure of Hereward, with his axe uplifted, put an instant stop to his career, and with a terrified note of his native cries, he withdrew into the thickest of the adjoining foliage.

Relieved from his presence, Hereward had time to look at the female whom he had succoured: She was arrayed in a dress which consisted of several colours, that which predominated being a pale yellow; her tunic was of this colour, and, like a modern gown, was closely fitted to the body, which, in the present case, was that of a tall, but very well-formed person. The mantle, or upper garment, in which the whole figure was wrapped, was of fine cloth; and the kind of hood which was attached to it having flown back with the rapidity of her motion, gave to view the hair beautifully adorned and twisted into a natural head-dress. Beneath this natural head-gear appeared a face pale as death, from a sense of the supposed danger, but which preserved, even amidst its terrors, an exquisite degree of beauty.

Hereward was thunderstruck at this apparition. The dress was neither Grecian, Italian, nor of the costume of the Franks; — it was *Saxon!* — connected by a thousand tender remembrances with Hereward's childhood and youth. The circumstance was most extraordinary. Saxon women, indeed, there were in Constantinople, who had united their fortunes with those of the Varangians; and those often chose to wear their national dress in the city, because the character and conduct of their husbands secured them a degree of respect, which they might not have met with either as Grecian or as stranger females of a similar rank. But almost all these were personally known to Hereward. It was no time, however, for reverie — he was himself in danger — the situation of the young female might be no safe one. In every case, it was judicious to quit the more public part of the gardens; he therefore lost not a moment in conveying the fainting Saxon to a retreat he fortunately was acquainted with. A covered path, obscured by vegetation, led through a species of labyrinth to an artificial cave, at the bottom of which, half-paved with shells, moss, and spar, lay the gigantic and half-recumbent statue of a river deity, with its usual attributes — that is, its front crowned with water-lilies and sedges, and its ample hand half-resting upon an empty urn. The attitude of the whole figure corresponded with the motto — "I SLEEP— AWAKE ME NOT."

"Accursed relic of paganism," said Hereward, who was, in proportion to his light, a zealous Christian — "brutish stock or stone that thou art! I will wake thee with a vengeance." So saying, he struck the head of the slumbering deity with his battle-axe, and deranged the play of the fountain so much that the water began to pour into the basin.

"Thou art a good block, nevertheless," said the Varangian, "to send succour so needful to the aid of my poor countrywoman. Thou shalt give her also, with thy leave, a portion of thy couch." So saying he arranged his fair burden, who was as yet insensible, upon the pedestal where the figure of the River God reclined. In doing this, his attention was recalled to her face, and again and again he was thrilled with an emotion of hope, but so excessively like fear, that it could only be compared to the flickering of a torch, uncertain whether it is to light up or be instantly extinguished. With a sort of mechanical attention, he continued to make such efforts as he could to recall the intellect of the beautiful creature before him. His feelings were those of the astronomical sage, to whom the rise of the moon slowly restores the contemplation of that heaven, which is at once, as a Christian, his hope of felicity, and, as a philosopher, the source of his knowledge. The blood returned to her cheek, and reanimation, and even recollection, took place in her earlier than in the astonished Varangian.

"Blessed Mary!" she said, "have I indeed tasted the last bitter cup, and is it here where thou reunitest thy votaries after death! — Speak, Hereward! if thou art aught but an empty creature of the imagination! — speak, and tell me, if I have but dreamed of that monstrous ogre!"

"Collect thyself, my beloved Bertha," said the Anglo-Saxon, recalled by the sound of her voice, "and prepare to endure what thou livest to witness, and thy Hereward survives to tell. That hideous thing exists — nay, do not start, and look for a hiding-place — thy own gentle hand with a riding rod is sufficient to tame its courage. And am I not here, Bertha? Wouldst thou wish another safeguard?"

"No — no," exclaimed she, seizing on the arm of her recovered lover. "Do I not know you now?"

"And is it but now you know me, Bertha?" said Hereward.

"I suspected before," she said, casting down her eyes; "but I know with certainty that mark of the boar's tusk."

Hereward suffered her imagination to clear itself from the shock it had received so suddenly, before he ventured to enter upon present events, in which there was so much both to doubt and to fear. He permitted her, therefore, to recall to her memory all the circumstances of the rousing the hideous animal, assisted by the tribes of both their fathers. She mentioned in broken words the flight of arrows discharged against the boar by young and old, male and female, and how her own well aimed, but feeble shaft, wounded him sharply; she forgot not how, incensed at the pain, the creature rushed upon her as the cause, laid her palfrey dead upon the spot, and would soon have slain her, had not Hereward, when every attempt failed to bring his horse up to the monster, thrown himself from his seat, and interposed personally between the boar and Bertha. The battle was not decided without a desperate struggle; the boar was slain, but Hereward received the deep gash upon his brow which she whom he had saved now recalled to her memory. "Alas!" she said, "what have we been to each other since that period? and what are we now, in this foreign land?"

"Answer for thyself, my Bertha," said the Varangian, "if thou canst; — and if thou canst with truth say that thou art the same Bertha who vowed affection to Hereward, believe me, it were sinful to suppose that the saints have brought us together with a view of our being afterwards separated."

"Hereward," said Bertha, "you have not preserved the bird in your bosom safer than I have; at home or abroad, in servitude or in freedom, amidst sorrow or joy, plenty or want, my thought was always on the troth I had plighted to Hereward at the stone of Odin."

"Say no more of that," said Hereward; "it was an impious rite, and good could not come of it."

"Was it then so impious?" she said, the unbidden tear rushing into her large blue eyes. — "Alas! it was a pleasure to reflect that Hereward was mine by that solemn engagement!"

"Listen to me, my Bertha," said Hereward, taking her hand: "We were then almost children; and though our vow was in itself innocent, yet it was so far wrong, as being sworn in the presence of a dumb idol, representing one who was, while alive, a bloody and cruel magician. But we will, the instant an opportunity offers itself, renew our vow before a shrine of real sanctity, and promise suitable penance for our ignorant acknowledgment of Odin, to propitiate the real Deity, who can bear us through those storms of adversity which are like to surround us."

Leaving them for the time to their love-discourse, of a nature pure, simple, and interesting, we shall give, in a few words, all that the reader needs to know of their separate history between the boar's hunt and the time of their meeting in the gardens of Agelastes.

In that doubtful state experienced by outlaws, Waltheoff, the father of Hereward, and Engelred, the parent of Bertha, used to assemble their unsubdued tribes, sometimes in the fertile regions of Devonshire, sometimes in the dark wooded solitudes of Hampshire, but as much as possible within the call of the bugle of the famous Eddic the Forester, so long leader of the insurgent Saxons. The chiefs we have mentioned were among the last bold men who asserted the independence of the Saxon race of England; and like their captain Eddic, they were generally known by the name of Foresters, as men who lived by hunting, when their power of making excursions was checked and repelled. Hence they made a step backwards in civilization, and became more like to their remote ancestors of German descent, than they were to their more immediate and civilized predecessors, who before the battle of Hastings, had advanced considerably in the arts of civilized life.

Old superstitions had begun to revive among them, and hence the practice of youths and maidens plighting their troth at the stone circles dedicated, as it was supposed, to Odin, in whom, however, they had long ceased to nourish any of the sincere belief which was entertained by their heathen ancestors.

In another respect these outlaws were fast resuming a striking peculiarity of the ancient Germans. Their circumstances naturally brought the youth of both sexes much together, and by early marriage, or less permanent connexions, the population would have increased far beyond the means which the outlaws had to maintain, or even to protect themselves. The laws of the Foresters, therefore, strictly enjoined that marriages should be prohibited until the bridegroom was twenty-one years complete. Future alliances were indeed often formed by the young people, nor was this discountenanced by their parents, provided that the lovers waited until the period when the majority of the bridegroom should permit them to marry. Such youths as infringed this rule, incurred the dishonourable epithet of *niddering*, or worthless — an epithet of a nature so insulting, that men were known to have slain themselves, rather than endure life under such opprobrium. But the offenders were very few amidst a race trained in moderation and self-denial; and hence it was that woman, worshipped for so many years like something sacred, was received, when she became the head of a family, into the arms and heart of a husband who had so long expected her, was treated as something more elevated than the mere idol of the moment; and feeling the rate at which she was valued, endeavoured by her actions to make her life correspond with it.

It was by the whole population of these tribes, as well as their parents, that after the adventure of the boar hunt, Hereward and Bertha were considered as lovers whose alliance was pointed out by Heaven, and they were encouraged to approximate as much as their mutual inclinations prompted them. The youths of the tribe avoided asking Martha's hand at the dance, and the maidens used no maidenly entreaty or artifice to detain Hereward beside them, if Bertha was present at the feast. They clasped each other's hands through the perforated stone, which they called the altar of Odin, though later ages have ascribed it to the Druids, and

they implored that if they broke their faith to each other, their fault might be avenged by the twelve swords which were now drawn around them during the ceremony by as many youths, and that their misfortunes might be so many as twelve maidens, who stood around with their hair loosened, should be unable to recount, either in prose or verse.

The torch of the Saxon Cupid shone for some years as brilliant as when it was first lighted. The time, however, came when they were to be tried by adversity, though undeserved by the perfidy of either. Years had gone past, and Hereward had to count with anxiety how many months and weeks were to separate him from the bride, who was beginning already by degrees to shrink less shyly from the expressions and caresses of one who was soon to term her all his own. William Rufus, however, had formed a plan of totally extirpating the Foresters, whose implacable hatred, and restless love of freedom, had so often disturbed the quiet of his kingdom, and despised his forest laws. He assembled his Norman forces, and united to them a body of Saxons who had submitted to his rule. He thus brought an overpowering force upon the bands of Waltheoff and Engelred, who found no resource but to throw the females of their tribe, and such as could, not bear arms, into a convent dedicated to St. Augustin, of which Kenelm their relation was prior, and then turning to the battle, vindicated their ancient valour by fighting it to the last. Both the unfortunate chiefs remained dead on the field, and Hereward and his brother had wellnigh shared their fate; but some Saxon inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who adventured on the field of battle, which the victors had left bare of every thing save the booty of the kites and the ravens, found the bodies of the youths still retaining life. As they were generally well known and much beloved by these people, Hereward and his brother were taken care of till their wounds began to close, and their strength returned. Hereward then heard the doleful news of the death of his father and Engelred. His next enquiry was concerning his betrothed bride and her mother. The poor inhabitants could give him little information. Some of the females who had taken refuge in the convent, the Norman knights and nobles had seized upon as their slaves, and the rest, with the monks who had harboured them, were turned adrift, and their place of retreat was completely sacked and burnt to the ground.

Half-dead himself at hearing these tidings, Hereward sallied out, and at every risk of death, for the Saxon Foresters were treated as outlaws, commenced enquiries after those so dear to him. He asked concerning the particular fate of Bertha and her mother, among the miserable creatures who yet hovered about the neighbourhood of the convent, like a few half-scorched bees about their smothered hive. But, in the magnitude of their own terrors, none had retained eyes for their neighbours, and all that they could say was, that the wife and daughter of Engelred were certainly lost; and their imaginations suggested so many heart-rending details to this conclusion, that Hereward gave up all thoughts of further researches, likely to terminate so uselessly and so horribly.

The young Saxon had been all his life bred up in a patriotic hatred to the Normans, who did not, it was likely, become dearer to his thoughts in consequence of this victory. He dreamed at first of crossing the strait, to make war against the hated enemy in their own country; but an idea so extravagant did not long retain possession of his mind. His fate was decided by his encountering an aged palmer, who knew or pretended to have known, his father, and to be a native of England. This man was a disguised Varangian, selected for the purpose, possessed of art and dexterity, and well provided with money. He had little difficulty in persuading Hereward, in the hopeless desolation of his condition, to join the Varangian Guard, at this moment at war with the Normans, under which name it suited Hereward's prepossessions to represent the Emperor's wars with Robert Guiscard, his son Bohemond, and other adventurers, in Italy, Greece, or Sicily. A journey to the East also inferred a pilgrimage, and gave the unfortunate Hereward the chance of purchasing pardon for his sins by visiting the Holy Land. In gaining Hereward, the recruiter also secured the services of his elder brother, who had vowed not to separate from him.

The high character of both brothers for courage, induced this wily agent to consider them as a great prize, and it was from the memoranda respecting the history and character of those whom he recruited, in which the elder had been unreservedly communicative, that Agelastes picked up the information respecting Hereward's family and circumstances, which, at their first secret interview, he made use of to impress upon the Varangian the idea of his supernatural knowledge. Several of his companions in arms were thus gained over; for it will easily be guessed, that these memorials were intrusted to the keeping of Achilles Tatius, and he, to further their joint purposes, imparted them to Agelastes, who thus obtained a general credit for supernatural knowledge among these ignorant men. But Hereward's blunt faith and honesty enabled him to shun the snare.

Such being the fortunes of Hereward, those of Bertha formed the subject of a broken and passionate communication between the lovers, broken like an April day, and mingled with many a tender caress, such as modesty permits to lovers when they meet again unexpectedly after a separation, which threatened to be eternal. But the story may be comprehended in few words. Amid the general sack of the monastery, an old Norman knight seized upon Bertha as his prize. Struck with her beauty, he designed her as an attendant upon his daughter, just then come out of the years of childhood, and the very apple of her father's eye, being the only child of his beloved Countess, and sent late in life to bless their marriage-bed. It was in the order of things that the lady of Aspramonte, who was considerably younger than the knight, should govern her husband, and that Brenhilda, their daughter, should govern both her parents.

The Knight of Aspramonte, however, it may be observed, entertained some desire to direct his young offspring to more feminine amusements than those which began already to put her life frequently in danger. Contradiction was not to be thought of, as the good old knight knew by experience. The influence and example of a companion a little older than herself might be of some avail, and it was with this view that, in the confusion of the sack, Aspramonte seized upon the youthful Bertha. Terrified to the utmost degree, she clung to her mother, and the Knight of Aspramonte, who had a softer heart than was then usually found under a steel cuirass, moved by the affliction of the mother and daughter, and recollecting that the former might also be a useful attendant upon his lady, extended his protection to both, and conveying them out of the press, paid the soldiers who ventured to dispute the spoil with him, partly in some small pieces of money, and partly in dry blows with the reverse of his lance.

The well-natured knight soon after returned to his own castle, and being a man of an orderly life and virtuous habits, the charming beauties of the Saxon virgin, and the more ripened charms of her mother, did not prevent their travelling in all honour as well as safety to his family fortress, the castle of Aspramonte. Here such masters as could be procured were got together to teach the young Bertha every sort of female accomplishment, in the hope that her mistress, Brenhilda, might be inspired with a desire to partake in her education; but although this so far succeeded, that the Saxon captive became highly skilled in such music, needle-work, and other female accomplishments as were known to the time, yet her young mistress, Brenhilda, retained the taste for those martial amusements which had so sensibly grieved her father, but to which her mother, who herself had nourished such fancies in her youth, readily gave sanction.

The captives, however, were kindly treated. Brenhilda became infinitely attached to the young Anglo-Saxon, whom she loved less for her ingenuity in arts, than for her activity in field sports, to which her early state of independence had trained her.

The Lady of Aspramonte was also kind to both the captives; but, in one particular, she exercised a piece of petty tyranny over them. She had imbibed an idea, strengthened by an old doting father-confessor, that the Saxons were heathens at that time, or at least heretics, and made a positive point with her husband that the bondswoman and girl who were to attend on her person and that of her daughter, should be qualified for the office by being anew admitted into the Christian Church by baptism.

Though feeling the falsehood and injustice of the accusation, the mother had sense enough to submit to necessity, and received the name of Martha in all form at the altar, to which she answered during the rest of her life.

But Bertha showed a character upon this occasion inconsistent with the general docility and gentleness of her temper. She boldly refused to be admitted anew into the pale of the Church, of which her conscience told her she was already a member, or to exchange for another the name originally given her at the font. It was in vain that the old knight commanded, that the lady threatened, and that her mother advised and entreated. More closely pressed in private by her mother, she let her motive be known, which had not before been suspected. "I know," she said, with a flood of tears, "that my father would have died ere I was subjected to this insult; and then — who shall assure me that vows which were made to the Saxon Bertha, will be binding if a French Agatha be substituted in her stead? They may banish me," she said, "or kill me if they will, but if the son of Waltheoff should again meet with the daughter of Engelred, he shall meet that Bertha whom he knew in the forests of Hampton."

All argument was in vain; the Saxon maiden remained obstinate, and to try to break her resolution, the Lady of Aspramonte at length spoke of dismissing her from the service of her young mistress, and banishing her from the castle. To this also she had made up her mind, and she answered firmly though respectfully, that

she would sorrow bitterly at parting with her young lady; but as to the rest, she would rather beg under her own name, than be recreant to the faith of her fathers and condemn it as heresy, by assigning one of Frank origin. The Lady Brenhilda, in the meantime, entered the chamber, where her mother was just about to pass the threatened doom of banishment. — “Do not stop for my entrance, madam,” said the dauntless young lady; “I am as much concerned in the doom which you are about to pass as is Bertha; If she crosses the drawbridge of Aspramonte as an exile, so will I, when she has dried her tears, of which even my petulance could never wring one from her eyes. She shall be my squire and body attendant, and Launcelot, the bard, shall follow with my spear and shield.”

“And you will return, mistress,” said her mother, “from so foolish an expedition, before the sun sets?”

“So heaven further me in my purpose, lady,” answered the young heiress, “the sun shall neither rise nor set that sees us return, till this name of Bertha, and of her mistress, Brenhilda, are wafted as far as the trumpet of fame can sound them. — Cheer up, my sweetest Bertha!” she said, taking her attendant by the hand, “If heaven hath torn thee from thy country and thy plighted troth, it hath given thee a sister and a friend, with whom thy fame shall be forever blended.”

The Lady of Aspramonte was confounded: She knew that her daughter was perfectly capable of the wild course which she had announced, and that she herself, even with her husband’s assistance, would be unable to prevent her following it. She passively listened, therefore, while the Saxon matron, formerly Urica, but now Martha, addressed her daughter. “My child,” she said, “as you value honour, virtue, safety, and gratitude, soften your heart towards your master and mistress, and follow the advice of a parent, who has more years and more judgment than you. And you, my dearest young lady, let not your lady-mother think that an attachment to the exercises you excel in, has destroyed in your bosom filial affection, and a regard to the delicacy of your sex! — As they seem both obstinate, madam,” continued the matron, after watching the influence of this advice upon the young woman, “perhaps, if it may be permitted me. I could state an alternative, which might, in the meanwhile, satisfy your ladyship’s wishes, accommodate itself to the wilfulness of my obstinate daughter, and answer the kind purpose of her generous mistress.” The Lady of Aspramonte signed to the Saxon matron to proceed. She went on accordingly: “The Saxons, dearest lady, of the present day, are neither pagans nor heretics; they are, in the time of keeping Easter, as well as in all other disputable doctrine, humbly obedient to the Pope of Rome; and this our good Bishop well knows, since he upbraided some of the domestics for calling me an old heathen. Yet our names are uncouth in the ears of the Franks, and bear, perhaps, a heathenish sound. If it be not exacted that my daughter submit to a new rite of baptism, she will lay aside her Saxon name of Bertha upon all occasions while in your honourable household. This will cut short a debate which, with forgiveness, I think is scarce of importance enough to break the peace of this castle. I will engage that, in gratitude for this indulgence of a trifling scruple, my daughter, if possible, shall double the zeal and assiduity of her service to her young lady.”

The Lady of Aspramonte was glad to embrace the means which this offer presented, of extricating herself from the dispute with as little compromise of dignity as could well be. “If the good Lord Bishop approved of such a compromise,” she said, “she would for herself withdraw her opposition.” The prelate approved accordingly, the more readily that he was informed that the young heiress desired earnestly such an agreement. The peace of the castle was restored, and Bertha recognized her new name of Agatha as a name of service, but not a name of baptism.

One effect the dispute certainly produced, and that was, increasing in an enthusiastic degree the love of Bertha for her young mistress. With that amiable failing of attached domestics and humble friends, she endeavoured to serve her as she knew she loved to be served; and therefore indulged, her mistress in those chivalrous fancies which distinguished her even in her own age, and in ours would have rendered her a female Quixote. Bertha, indeed, never caught the frenzy of her mistress; but, strong, willing, and able-bodied, she readily qualified herself to act upon occasion as a squire of the body to a Lady Adventuress; and, accustomed from her childhood to see blows dealt, blood flowing, and men dying, she could look with an undazzled eye upon the dangers which her mistress encountered, and seldom teased her with remonstrances, unless when those were unusually great. This compliance on most occasions, gave Bertha a right of advice upon some, which, always given with the best intentions and at fitting times, strengthened her influence with her mistress, which a course of conduct savouring of diametrical opposition would certainly have destroyed.

A few more words serve to announce the death of the Knight of Aspramonte — the romantic marriage of the young lady with the Count of Paris — their engagement in the crusade — and the detail of events with which the reader is acquainted.

Hereward did not exactly comprehend some of the later incidents of the story, owing to a slight strife which arose between Bertha and him during the course of her narrative. When she avowed the girlish simplicity with which she obstinately refused to change her name, because, in her apprehension, the troth-plight betwixt her and her lover might be thereby prejudiced, it was impossible for Hereward not to acknowledge her tenderness, by snatching her to his bosom, and impressing his grateful thanks upon her lips. She extricated herself immediately from his grasp, however, with cheeks more crimsoned in modesty than in anger, and gravely addressed her lover thus: “Enough, enough, Hereward! this may be pardoned to so unexpected a meeting; but we must in future remember, that we are probably the last of our race; and let it not be said, that the manners of their ancestors were forgotten by Hereward and by Bertha; think, that though we are alone, the shades of our fathers are not far off, and watch to see what use we make of the meeting, which, perhaps, their intercession has procured us.”

“You wrong me, Bertha,” said Hereward, “if you think me capable of forgetting my own duty and yours, at a moment when our thanks are due to Heaven, to be testified very differently than by infringing on its behests, or the commands of our parents. The question is now, How we shall rejoin each other when we separate? since separate, I fear, we must.”

“O! do not say so!” exclaimed the unfortunate Bertha.

“It must be so,” said Hereward, “for a time; but I swear to thee by the hilt of my sword, and the handle of my battle-axe, that blade was never so true to shaft as I will be to thee!”

“But wherefore, then, leave me, Hereward?” said the maiden; “and oh! wherefore not assist me in the release of my mistress?”

“Of thy mistress!” said Hereward. “Shame! that thou canst give that name to mortal woman!”

“But she *is* my mistress,” answered Bertha, “and by a thousand kind ties which cannot be separated so long as gratitude is the reward of kindness.”

“And what is her danger,” said Hereward; “what is it she wants, this accomplished lady whom thou callest mistress?”

“Her honour, her life, are alike in danger,” said Bertha. “She has agreed to meet the Caesar in the field, and he will not hesitate, like a baseborn miscreant, to take every advantage in the encounter, which, I grieve to say, may in all likelihood be fatal to my mistress.”

“Why dost thou think so?” answered Hereward. “This lady has won many single combats, unless she is belied, against adversaries more formidable than the Caesar.”

“True,” said the Saxon maiden; “but you speak of things that passed in a far different land, where faith and honour are not empty sounds; as, alas! they seem but too surely to be here. Trust me, it is no girlish terror which sends me out in this disguise of my country dress, which, they say, finds respect at Constantinople: I go to let the chiefs of the Crusade know the peril in which the noble lady stands, and trust to their humanity, to their religion, to their love of honour, and fear of disgrace, for assistance in this hour of need; and now that I have had the blessing of meeting with thee, all besides will go well — all will go well — and I will back to my mistress and report whom I have seen.”

“Tarry yet another moment, my recovered treasure!” said Hereward, “and let me balance this matter carefully. This Frankish lady holds the Saxons like the very dust that thou brushest from the hem of her garment. She treats — she regards — the Saxons as pagans and heretics. She has dared to impose slavish tasks upon thee, born in freedom. Her father’s sword has been embued to the hilt with Anglo-Saxon blood — perhaps that of Walthoeff and Engelred has added death to the stain! She has been, besides, a presumptuous fool, usurping for herself the trophies and warlike character which belong to the other sex. Lastly, it will be hard to find a champion to fight in her stead, since all the crusaders have passed over to Asia, which is the land, they say, in which they have come to war; and by orders of the Emperor, no means of return to the hither shore will be permitted to any of them.”

“Alas! alas!” said Bertha, “how does this world change us! The son of Walthoeff I once knew brave, ready to assist distress, bold and generous. Such was what I pictured him to myself during his absence. I have met him again, and he is calculating, cold, and selfish!”

"Hush, damsel," said the Varangian, "and know him of whom thou speakest, ere thou judgest him. The Countess of Paris is such as I have said; yet let her appear boldly in the lists, and when the trumpet shall sound thrice, another shall reply, which shall announce the arrival of her own noble lord to do battle in her stead; or should he fail to appear — I will requite her kindness to thee, Bertha, and be ready in his place."

"Wilt thou? wilt thou indeed?" said the damsel; "that was spoken like the son of Waltheoff — like the genuine stock! I will home, and comfort my mistress; for surely if the judgment of God ever directed the issue of a judicial combat, its influence will descend upon this. But you hint that the Count is here — that he is at liberty — she will enquire about that."

"She must be satisfied," replied Hereward, "to know that her husband is under the guidance of a friend, who will endeavour to protect him from his own extravagances and follies; or, at all events, of one who, if he cannot properly be called a friend, has certainly not acted, and will not act, towards him the part of an enemy. — And now, farewell, long lost — long loved!" — Before he could say more, the Saxon maiden, after two or three vain attempts to express her gratitude, threw herself into her lover's arms, and despite the coyness which she had recently shown, impressed upon his lips the thanks which she could not speak.

They parted, Bertha returning to her mistress at the lodge, which she had left both with trouble and danger, and Hereward by the portal kept by the negro-portress, who, complimenting the handsome Varangian on his success among the fair, intimated, that she had been in some sort a witness of his meeting with the Saxon damsel. A piece of gold, part of a late largesse, amply served to bribe her tongue; and the soldier, clear of the gardens of the philosopher, sped back as he might to the barrack — judging that it was full time to carry some supply to Count Robert, who had been left without food the whole day.

It is a common popular saying, that as the sensation of hunger is not connected with any pleasing or gentle emotion, so it is particularly remarkable for irritating those of anger and spleen. It is not, therefore, very surprising that Count Robert, who had been so unusually long without sustenance, should receive Hereward with a degree of impatience beyond what the occasion merited, and injurious certainly to the honest Varangian, who had repeatedly exposed his life that day for the interest of the Countess and the Count himself.

"Soh, sir!" he said, in that accent of affected restraint by which a superior modifies his displeasure against his inferior into a cold and scornful expression — "You have played a liberal host to us! — Not that it is of consequence; but methinks a Count of the most Christian kingdom dines not every day with a mercenary soldier, and might expect, if not the ostentatious, at least the needful part of hospitality."

"And methinks," replied the Varangian, "O most Christian Count, that such of your high rank as, by choice or fate, become the guests of such as I, may think themselves pleased, and blame not their host's niggardliness, but the difficulty of his circumstances, if dinner should not present itself oftener than once in four-and-twenty hours." So saying, he clapt his hands together, and his domestic Edric entered. His guest looked astonished at the entrance of this third party into their retirement. "I will answer for this man," said Hereward, and addressed him in the following words:—"What food hast thou, Edric, to place before the honourable Count?"

"Nothing but the cold pasty," replied the attendant, "marvellously damaged by your honour's encounter at breakfast."

The military domestic, as intimated, brought forward a large pasty, but which had already that morning sustained a furious attack, insomuch, that Count Robert of Paris, who, like all noble Normans, was somewhat nice and delicate in his eating, was in some doubt whether his scrupulousness should not prevail over his hunger; but on looking more closely, sight, smell, and a fast of twenty hours, joined to convince him that the pasty was an excellent one, and that the charger on which it was presented possessed corners yet untouched. At length, having suppressed his scruples, and made bold inroad upon the remains of the dish, he paused to partake of a flask of strong red wine which stood invitingly beside him, and a lusty draught increased the good-humour which had begun to take place towards Hereward, in exchange for the displeasure with which he had received him.

"Now, by heaven!" he said, "I myself ought to be ashamed to lack the courtesy which I recommend to others! Here have I, with the manners of a Flemish boor, been devouring the provisions of my gallant host, without even asking him to sit down at his own table, and to partake of his own good cheer!"

"I will not strain courtesies with you for that," said Hereward; and thrusting his hand into the pasty, he proceeded with great speed and dexterity to devour the miscellaneous contents, a handful of which was enclosed in his grasp. The Count now withdrew from the table, partly in disgust at the rustic proceedings of Hereward, who, however, by now calling Edric to join him in his attack upon the pasty, showed that he had, in fact, according to his manners, subjected himself previously to some observance of respect towards his guest; while the assistance of his attendant enabled him to make a clear cacaabulum of what was left. Count Robert at length summoned up courage sufficient to put a question, which had been trembling upon his lips ever since Hereward had returned.

"Have thine enquiries, my gallant friend, learned more concerning my unfortunate wife, my faithful Brenhilda?"

"Tidings I have," said the Anglo-Saxon, "but whether pleasing or not, yourself must be the judge. This much I have learned; — she hath, as you know, come under an engagement to meet the Caesar in arms in the lists, but under conditions which you may perhaps think strange; these, however, she hath entertained without scruple."

"Let me know these terms," said the Count of Paris; "they will, I think, appear less strange in my eyes than in thine."

But while he affected to speak with the utmost coolness, the husband's sparkling eye and crimsoned cheek betrayed the alteration which had taken place in his feelings. "The lady and the Caesar," said Hereward, "as you partly heard yourself, are to meet in fight; if the Countess wins, of course she remains the wife of the noble Count of Paris; if she loses, she becomes the paramour of the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Saints and angels forbid!" said Count Robert; "were they to permit such treason to triumph, we might be pardoned for doubting their divinity!"

"Yet methinks," said the Anglo-Saxon, "it were no disgraceful precaution that both you and I, with other friends, if we can obtain such, should be seen under shield in the lists on the morning of the conflict. To triumph, or to be defeated, is in the hand of fate; but what we cannot fail to witness is, whether or not the lady receives that fair play which is the due of an honourable combatant, and which, as you have yourself seen, can be sometimes basely transgressed in this Grecian empire."

"On that condition," said the Count, "and protesting, that not even the extreme danger of my lady shall make me break through the rule of a fair fight, I will surely attend the lists, if thou, brave Saxon, canst find me any means of doing so. — Yet stay," he continued, after reflecting for a moment, "thou shalt promise not to let her know that her Count is on the field, far less to point him out to her eye among the press of warriors. O, thou dost not know that the sight of the beloved will sometimes steal from us our courage, even when it has most to achieve!"

"We will endeavour," said the Varangian, "to arrange matters according to thy pleasure, so that thou findest out no more fantastical difficulties; for, by my word, an affair so complicated in itself, requires not to be confused by the fine-spun whims of thy national gallantry. Meantime, much must be done this night; and while I go about it, thou, Sir Knight, hadst best remain here, with such disguise of garments, and such food, as Edric may be able to procure for thee. Fear nothing from intrusion on the part of thy neighbours. We Varangians respect each other's secrets, of whatever nature they may chance to be."

Chapter the Twenty-First.

*But for our trusty brother-in-law-and the Abbot,
With all the rest of that consorted crew —
Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels:—
Good uncle, help to order several powers
To Oxford, or where'er these traitors are:
They shall not live within this world, I swear.*

RICHARD II.

As Hereward spoke the last words narrated in the foregoing chapter, he left the count in his apartment, and proceeded to the Blacquernal Palace. We traced his first entrance into the court, but since then he had frequently been summoned, not only by order of the Princess Anna Comnena, who delighted in asking him questions concerning the customs of his native country, and marking down the replies in her own inflated language; but also by the direct command of the Emperor himself, who had the humour of many princes, that of desiring to obtain direct information from persons in a very inferior station in their Court. The ring

which the Princess had given to the Varangian, served as a pass-token more than once, and was now so generally known by the slaves of the palace, that Hereward had only to slip it into the hand of a principal person among them, and was introduced into a small chamber, not distant from the saloon already mentioned, dedicated to the Muses. In this small apartment, the Emperor, his spouse Irene, and their accomplished daughter Anna Comnena, were seated together, clad in very ordinary apparel, as indeed the furniture of the room itself was of the kind used by respectable citizens, saving that mattresses, composed of eiderdown, hung before each door to prevent the risk of eavesdropping.

"Our trusty Varangian," said the Empress.

"My guide and tutor respecting the manners of those steel-clad men," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "of whom it is so necessary that I should form an accurate idea."

"Your Imperial Majesty," said the Empress, "will not, I trust, think your consort and your muse-inspired daughter, are too many to share with you the intelligence brought by this brave and loyal man?"

"Dearest wife and daughter," returned the Emperor, "I have hitherto spared you the burden of a painful secret, which I have locked in my own bosom, at whatever expense of solitary sorrow and unimpaired anxiety. Noble daughter, you in particular will feel this calamity, learning, as you must learn, to think odiously of one, of whom it has hitherto been your duty to hold a very different opinion."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Rally yourself," said the Emperor; "remember you are a child of the purple chamber, born, not to weep for your father's wrongs, but to avenge them — not to regard even him who has lain by your side as half so important as the sacred Imperial grandeur, of which you are yourself a partaker."

"What can such words preface?" said Anna Comnena, in great agitation.

"They say," answered the Emperor, "that the Caesar is an ungrateful man to all my bounties, and even to that which annexed him to my own house, and made him by adoption my own son. He hath consorted himself with a knot of traitors, whose very names are enough to raise the foul fiend, as if to snatch his assured prey!"

"Could Nicephorus do this?" said the astonished and forlorn Princess; "Nicephorus, who has so often called my eyes the lights by which he steered his path? Could he do this to my father, to whose exploits he has listened hour after hour, protesting that he knew not whether it was the beauty of the language, or the heroism of the action, which most enchanted him? Thinking with the same thought, seeing with the same eye, loving with the same heart — O, my father! it is impossible that he could be so false. Think of the neighbouring Temple of the Muses!"

"And if I did," murmured Alexius in his heart, "I should think of the only apology which could be proposed for the traitor. A little is well enough, but the full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Then speaking aloud, "My daughter," he said, "be comforted; we ourselves were unwilling to believe the shameful truth; but our guards have been debauched; their commander, that ungrateful Achilles Tatius, with the equal traitor, Agelastes, have been seduced to favour our imprisonment or murder; and, alas for Greece in the very moment when she required the fostering care of a parent, she was to be deprived of him by a sudden and merciless blow!"

Here the Emperor wept, whether for the loss to be sustained by his subjects, or of his own life, it is hard to say.

"Methinks," said Irene, "your Imperial Highness is slow in taking measures against the danger."

"Under your gracious permission, mother," answered the Princess, "I would rather say he was hasty in giving belief to it. Methinks the evidence of a Varangian, granting him to be ever so stout a man-at-arms, is but a frail guarantee against the honour of your son-inlaw — the approved bravery and fidelity of the captain of your guards — the deep sense, virtue, and profound wisdom, of the greatest of your philosophers —"

"And the conceit of an over-educated daughter," said the Emperor, "who will not allow her parent to judge in what most concerns him. I will tell thee, Anna, I know every one of them, and the trust which may be reposed in them; the honour of your Nicephorus — the bravery and fidelity of the Acolyte — and the virtue and wisdom of Agelastes — have I not had them all in my purse? And had my purse continued well filled, and my arm strong as it was of late, there they would have still remained. But the butterflies went off as the weather became cold, and I must meet the tempest without their assistance. You talk of want of proof? I have proof sufficient when I see danger; this honest soldier brought me indications which corresponded with my own private remarks, made on purpose. Varangian he shall be of Varangians; Acolyte he shall be named, in place of the present traitor; and who knows what may come thereafter?"

"May it please your Highness," said the Varangian, who had been hitherto silent, "many men in this empire rise to dignity by the fall of their original patrons, but it is a road to greatness to which I cannot reconcile my conscience; moreover, having recovered a friend, from whom I was long ago separated, I shall require, in short space, your Imperial license for going hence, where I shall leave thousands of enemies behind me, and spending my life, like many of my countrymen, under the banner of King William of Scotland —"

"Part with *thee*, most inimitable man!" cried the Emperor, with emphasis; "where shall I get a soldier — a champion — a friend — so faithful?"

"Noble sir," replied the Anglo-Saxon, "I am every way sensible to your goodness and munificence; but let me entreat you to call me by my own name, and to promise me nothing but your forgiveness, for my having been the agent of such confusion among your Imperial servants. Not only is the threatened fate of Achilles Tatius, my benefactor; of the Caesar, whom I think my well-wisher; and even of Agelastes himself, painful, so far as it is of my bringing round; but also I have known it somehow happen, that those on whom your Imperial Majesty has lavished the most valuable expressions of your favour one day, were the next day food to fatten the chough and crow. And this, I acknowledge, is a purpose, for which I would not willingly have it said I had brought my English limbs to these Grecian shores."

"Call thee by thine own name, my Edward," said the Emperor, (while he muttered aside — "by Heaven, I have again forgot the name of the barbarian!") — "by thine own name certainly for the present, but only until we shall devise one more fitted for the trust we repose in thee. Meantime, look at this scroll, which contains, I think, all the particulars which we have been able to learn of this plot, and give it to these unbelieving women, who will not credit that an Emperor is in danger, till the blades of the conspirators' poniards are clashing within his ribs."

Hereward did as he was commanded, and having looked at the scroll, and signified, by bending his head, his acquiescence in its contents, he presented it to Irene, who had not read long, ere, with a countenance so embittered that she had difficulty in pointing out the cause of her displeasure to her daughter, she bade her, with animation, "Read that — read that, and judge of the gratitude and affection of thy Caesar!"

The Princess Anna Comnena awoke from a state of profound and overpowering melancholy, and looked at the passage pointed out to her, at first with an air of languid curiosity, which presently deepened into the most intense interest. She clutched the scroll as a falcon does his prey, her eye lightened with indignation; and it was with the cry of the bird when in fury that she exclaimed, "Bloody-minded, double-hearted traitor! what wouldst thou have? Yes, father," she said, rising in fury, "it is no longer the voice of a deceived princess that shall intercede to avert from the traitor Nicephorus the doom he has deserved! Did he think that one born in the purple chamber could be divorced — murdered, perhaps — with the petty formula of the Romans, 'Restore the keys — be no longer my domestic drudge?'" Was a daughter of the blood of Comnenus liable to such insults as the meanest of Quirites might bestow on a family housekeeper!"

* The laconic form of the Roman divorce.]

So saying, she dashed the tears from her eyes, and her countenance, naturally that of beauty and gentleness, became animated with the expression of a fury. Hereward looked at her with a mixture of fear, dislike and compassion. She again burst forth, for nature having given her considerable abilities, had lent her at the same time an energy of passion, far superior in power to the cold ambition of Irene, or the wily, ambidexter, shuffling policy of the Emperor.

"He shall abye it," said the Princess; "he shall dearly abye it! False, smiling, cozening traitor! — and for that unfeminine barbarian! Something of this I guessed, even at that old fool's banqueting-house; and yet if this unworthy Caesar submits his body to the chance of arms, he is less prudent than I have some reason to believe. Think you he will have the madness to brand us with such open neglect, my father? and will you not invent some mode of ensuring our revenge?"

"Soh!" thought the Emperor, "this difficulty is over; she will run down hill to her revenge, and will need the snaffle and curb more than the lash. If every jealous dame in Constantinople were to pursue her fury as unrelentingly, our laws should be written, like Draco's, not in ink, but in blood. — Attend to me now," he said aloud, "my wife, my daughter, and thou, dear Edward, and you shall learn, and you three only, my mode of navigating the vessel of the state through these shoals."

"Let us see distinctly," continued Alexius, "the means by which they propose to act, and these shall instruct us how to meet them. A certain number of the Varangians are unhappily seduced, under pretence of wrongs, artfully stirred up by their villanous general. A part of them are studiously to be arranged nigh our person — the traitor Ursel, some of them suppose, is dead, but if it were so, his name is sufficient to draw together his old factionaries — I have a means of satisfying them on that point, on which I shall remain silent for the present. — A considerable body of the Immortal Guards have also given way to seduction; they are to be placed to support the handful of treacherous Varangians, who are in the plot to attack our person. — Now, a slight change in the stations of the soldiery, which thou, my faithful Edward — or — a — a — whatever thou art named — for which thou, I say, shalt have full authority, will derange the plans of the traitors, and place the true men in such position around them as to cut them to pieces with little trouble."

"And the combat, my lord?" said the Saxon.

"Thou hadst been no true Varangian hadst thou not enquired after that," said the Emperor, nodding good-humouredly towards him. "As to the combat, the Caesar has devised it, and it shall be my care that he shall not retreat from the dangerous part of it. He cannot in honour avoid fighting with this woman, strange as the combat is; and however it ends, the conspiracy will break forth, and as assuredly as it comes against persons prepared, and in arms, shall it be stifled in the blood of the conspirators!"

"My revenge does not require this," said the Princess; "and your Imperial honour is also interested that this Countess shall be protected."

"It is little business of mine," said the Emperor. "She comes here with her husband altogether uninvited. He behaves with insolence in my presence, and deserves whatever may be the issue to himself or his lady of their mad adventure. In sooth, I desired little more than to give him a fright with those animals whom their ignorance judged enchanted, and to give his wife a slight alarm about the impetuosity of a Grecian lover, and there my vengeance should have ended. But it may be that his wife may be taken under my protection, now that little revenge is over."

"And a paltry revenge it was," said the Empress, "that you, a man past middle life, and with a wife who might command some attention, should constitute yourself the object of alarm to such a handsome man as Count Robert, and the Amazon his wife."

"By your favour, dame Irene, no," said the Emperor. "I left that part of the proposed comedy to my son-in-law the Caesar."

But when the poor Emperor had in some measure stopt one floodgate, he effectually opened another, and one which was more formidable. "The more shame to your Imperial wisdom, my father!" exclaimed the Princess Anna Comnena; "it is a shame, that with wisdom and a beard like yours, you should be meddling in such indecent follies as admit disturbance into private families, and that family your own daughter's! Who can say that the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius ever looked astray towards another woman than his wife, till the Emperor taught him to do so, and involved him in a web of intrigue and treachery, in which he has endangered the life of his father-in-law?"

"Daughter! daughter! daughter!" — said the Empress; "daughter of a she-wolf, I think, to goad her parent at such an unhappy time, when all the leisure he has is too little to defend his life!"

"Peace, I pray you, women both, with your senseless clamours," answered Alexius, "and let me at least swim for my life undisturbed with your folly. God knows if I am a man to encourage, I will not say the reality of wrong, but even its mere appearance!"

These words he uttered, crossing himself, with a devout groan. His wife Irene, in the meantime, stepped before him, and said, with a bitterness in her looks and accent, which only long-concealed nuptial hatred breaking forth at once could convey — "Alexius, terminate this affair how it will, you have lived a hypocrite, and thou wilt not fail to die one." So saying, with an air of noble indignation, and carrying her daughter along with her, she swept out of the apartment.

The Emperor looked after her in some confusion. He soon, however, recovered his self-possession, and turning to Hereward, with a look of injured majesty, said, "Ah! my dear Edward," — for the word had become rooted in his mind, instead of the less euphonic name of Hereward — "thou seest how it is even with the greatest, and that the Emperor, in moments of difficulty, is a subject of misconstruction, as well as the meanest burgess of Constantinople; nevertheless, my trust is so great in thee, Edward, that I would have thee believe, that my daughter, Anna Comnena, is not of the temper of her mother, but rather of my own; honouring, thou mayst see, with religious fidelity, the unworthy ties which I hope soon to break, and assort her with other fetters of Cupid, which shall be borne more lightly. Edward, my main trust is in thee. Accident presents us with an opportunity, happy of the happiest, so it be rightly improved, of having all the traitors before us assembled on one fair field. Think, *then*, on that day, as the Franks say at their tournaments, that fair eyes behold thee. Thou canst not devise a gift within my power, but I will gladly load thee with it."

"It needs not," said the Varangian, somewhat coldly; "my highest ambition is to merit the epitaph upon my tomb, 'Hereward was faithful.' I am about, however, to demand a proof of your imperial confidence, which, perhaps, you may think a startling one."

"Indeed!" said the Emperor. "What, in one word, is thy demand?"

"Permission," replied Hereward, "to go to the Duke of Bouillon's encampment, and entreat his presence in the lists, to witness this extraordinary combat."

"That he may return with his crusading madmen," said the Emperor, "and sack Constantinople, under pretence of doing justice to his Confederates? This, Varangian, is at least speaking thy mind openly."

"No, by Heavens!" said Hereward suddenly; "the Duke of Bouillon shall come with no more knights than may be a reasonable guard, should treachery be offered to the Countess of Paris."

"Well, even in this," said the Emperor, "will I be conformable; and if thou, Edward, betrayest my trust, think that thou forfeitest all that my friendship has promised, and dost incur, besides, the damnation that is due to the traitor who betrays with a kiss."

"For thy reward, noble sir," answered the Varangian, "I hereby renounce all claim to it. When the diadem is once more firmly fixed upon thy brow, and the sceptre in thy hand, if I am then alive, if my poor services should deserve so much, I will petition thee for the means of leaving this court, and returning to the distant island in which I was born. Meanwhile, think me not unfaithful, because I have for a time the means of being so with effect. Your Imperial Highness shall learn that Hereward is as true as is your right hand to your left." — So saying, he took his leave with a profound obeisance.

The Emperor gazed after him with a countenance in which doubt was mingled with admiration.

"I have trusted him," he said, "with all he asked, and with the power of ruining me entirely, if such be his purpose. He has but to breathe a whisper, and the whole mad crew of crusaders, kept in humour at the expense of so much current falsehood, and so much more gold, will return with fire and sword to burn down Constantinople, and sow with salt the place where it stood. I have done what I had resolved never to do — I have ventured kingdom and life on the faith of a man born of woman. How often have I said, nay, sworn, that I would not hazard myself on such peril, and yet, step by step, I have done so! I cannot tell — there is in that man's looks and words a good faith which overwhelms me; and, what is almost incredible, my belief in him has increased in proportion to his showing me how slight my power was over him. I threw, like the wily angler, every bait I could devise, and some of them such as a king would scarcely have disdained; to none of these would he rise; but yet he gorges, I may say, the bare hook, and enters upon my service without a shadow of self-interest. — Can this be double-distilled treachery? — or can it be what men call disinterestedness? — If I thought him false, the moment is not yet past — he has not yet crossed the bridge — he has not passed the guards of the palace, who have no hesitation, and know no disobedience — But no — I were then alone in the land, and without a friend or confidant. — I hear the sound of the outer gate unclose, the sense of danger certainly renders my ears more acute than usual. — It shuts again — the die is cast. He is at liberty — and Alexius Comnenus must stand or fall, according to the uncertain faith of a mercenary Varangian." He clapt his hands; a slave appeared, of whom he demanded wine. He drank, and his heart was cheered within him. "I am decided," he said, "and will abide with resolution the cast of the throw, for good or for evil." So saying, he retired to his apartment, and was not again seen during that night.

And aye, as if for death, some lonely trumpet peal'd.

CAMPBELL.

The Varangian, his head agitated with the weighty matters which imposed on him, stopt from time to time as he journeyed through the moonlight streets, to arrest passing ideas as they shot through his mind, and consider them with accuracy in all their bearings. His thoughts were such as animated or alarmed him alternately, each followed by a confused throng of accompaniments which it suggested, and banished again in its turn by reflections of another description. It was one of those conjunctures when the minds of ordinary men feel themselves unable to support a burden which is suddenly flung upon them, and when, on the contrary, those of uncommon fortitude, and that best of Heaven's gifts, good sense, founded on presence of mind, feel their talents awakened and regulated for the occasion, like a good steed under the management of a rider of courage and experience.

As he stood in one of those fits of reverie, which repeatedly during that night arrested his stern military march, Hereward thought that his ear caught the note of a distant trumpet. This surprised him; a trumpet blown at that late hour, and in the streets of Constantinople, argued something extraordinary; for as all military movements were the subject of special ordinance, the etiquette of the night could hardly have been transgressed without some great cause. The question was, what that cause could be?

Had the insurrection broken out unexpectedly, and in a different manner from what the conspirators proposed to themselves? — If so, his meeting with his plighted bride, after so many years' absence, was but a delusive preface to their separating for ever. Or had the crusaders, a race of men upon whose motions it was difficult to calculate, suddenly taken arms and returned from the opposite shore to surprise the city? This might very possibly be the case; so numerous had been the different causes of complaint afforded to the crusaders, that, when they were now for the first time assembled into one body, and had heard the stories which they could reciprocally tell concerning the perfidy of the Greeks, nothing was so likely, so natural, even perhaps so justifiable, as that they should study revenge.

But the sound rather resembled a point of war regularly blown, than the tumultuous blare of bugle-horns and trumpets, the accompaniments at once, and the announcement, of a taken town, in which the horrid circumstances of storm had not yet given place to such stern peace as the victors' weariness of slaughter and rapine allows at length to the wretched inhabitants. Whatever it was, it was necessary that Hereward should learn its purport, and therefore he made his way into a broad street near the barracks, from, which the sound seemed to come, to which point, indeed, his way was directed for other reasons.

The inhabitants of that quarter of the town did not appear violently startled by this military signal. The moonlight slept on the street, crossed by the gigantic shadowy towers of Sancta Sophia. No human being appeared in the streets, and such as for an instant looked from their doors or from their lattices, seemed to have their curiosity quickly satisfied, for they withdrew their heads, and secured the opening through which they had peeped.

Hereward could not help remembering the traditions which were recounted by the fathers of his tribe, in the deep woods, of Hampshire, and which spoke of invisible huntsmen, who were heard to follow with viewless horses and hounds the unseen chase through the depths of the forests of Germany. Such it seemed were the sounds with which these haunted woods were wont to ring while the wild chase was up; and with such apparent terror did the hearers listen to their clamour.

"Fie!" he said, as he suppressed within him a tendency to the same superstitious fears; "do such childish fancies belong to a man trusted with so much, and from whom so much is expected?" He paced down the street, therefore, with his battle-axe over his shoulder, and the first person whom he saw venturing to look out of his door, he questioned concerning the cause of this military music at such an unaccustomed hour.

"I cannot tell, so please you, my lord," said the citizen, unwilling, it appeared, to remain in the open air, or to enter into conversation, and greatly disposed to decline further questioning. This was the political citizen of Constantinople whom we met with at the beginning of this history, and who, hastily stepping into his habitation, eschewed all further conversation.

The wrestler Stephanos showed himself at the next door, which was garlanded with oak and ivy leaves, in honour of some recent victory. He stood unshrinking, partly encouraged by the consciousness of personal strength, and partly by a rugged surliness of temper, which is often mistaken among persons of this kind for real courage. His admirer and flatterer, Lysimachus, kept himself ensconced behind his ample shoulders.

As Hereward passed, he put the same question as he did to the former citizen — "Know you the meaning of these trumpets sounding so late?"

"You should know best yourself," answered Stephanos, doggedly; "for, to judge by your axe and helmet, they are your trumpets, and not ours, which disturb honest men in their first sleep."

"Varlet!" answered the Varangian, with an emphasis which made the prizier start — "but — when that trumpet sounds, it is no time for a soldier to punish insolence as it deserves."

The Greek started back and bolted into his house, nearly overthrowing in the speed of his retreat the artist Lysimachus, who was listening to what passed.

Hereward passed on to the barracks, where the military music had seemed to halt; but on the Varangian crossing the threshold of the ample courtyard, it broke forth again with a tremendous burst, whose clangour almost stunned him, though well accustomed to the sounds. "What is the meaning of this, Engelbrecht?" he said to the Varangian sentinel, who paced axe in hand before the entrance.

"The proclamation of a challenge and combat," answered Engelbrecht. "Strange things towards, comrade; the frantic crusaders have bit the Grecians, and infected them with their humour of tilting, as they say dogs do each other with madness."

Hereward made no reply to the sentinel's speech, but pressed forward into a knot of his fellow-soldiers who were assembled in the court, half-armed, or, more properly, in total disarray, as just arisen from their beds, and huddled around the trumpets of their corps, which were drawn out in full pomp. He of the gigantic instrument, whose duty it was to intimate the express commands of the Emperor, was not wanting in his place, and the musicians were supported by a band of the Varangians in arms, headed by Achilles Tatius himself. Hereward could also notice, on approaching nearer, as his comrades made way for him, that six of the Imperial heralds were on duty on this occasion; four of these (two acting at the same time) had already made proclamation, which was to be repeated for the third time by the two last, as was the usual fashion in Constantinople with Imperial mandates of great consequence. Achilles Tatius, the moment he saw his confidant, made him a sign, which Hereward understood as conveying a desire to speak with him after the proclamation was over. The herald, after the flourish of trumpets was finished, commenced in these words:

"By the authority of the resplendent and divine Prince Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of the most holy Roman Empire, his Imperial Majesty desires it to be made known to all and sundry the subjects of his empire, whatever their race of blood may be, or at whatever shrine of divinity they happen, to bend — Know ye, therefore, that upon the second day after this is dated, our beloved son-in-law, the much esteemed Caesar, hath taken upon, him to do battle with our sworn enemy, Robert, Count of Paris, on account of his insolent conduct, by presuming publicly to occupy our royal seat, and no less by breaking, in our Imperial presence, those curious specimens of art, ornamenting our throne, called by tradition the Lions of Solomon. And that there may not remain a man in Europe who shall dare to say that the Grecians are behind other parts of the world in any of the manly exercises which Christian nations use, the said noble enemies, renouncing all assistance from falsehood, from spells, or from magic, shall debate this quarrel in three courses with grinded spears, and three passages of arms with sharpened swords; the field to be at the judgment of the honourable Emperor, and to be decided at his most gracious and unerring pleasure. And so God show the right!"

Another formidable flourish of the trumpets concluded the ceremony. Achilles then dismissed the attendant troops, as well as the heralds and musicians, to their respective quarters; and having got Hereward close to his side, enquired of him whether he had learned any thing of the prisoner, Robert, Count of Paris.

"Nothing," said the Varangian, "save the tidings your proclamation contains."

"You think, then," said Achilles, "that the Count has been a party to it."

"He ought to have been so," answered the Varangian. "I know no one but himself entitled to take burden for his appearance in the lists."

"Why, look you," said the Acolyte, "my most excellent, though blunt-witted Hereward, this Caesar of ours hath had the extravagance to venture his tender wit in comparison to that of Achilles Tatius. He stands upon his honour, too, this ineffable fool, and is displeased with the idea of being supposed either to challenge a woman, or to receive a challenge at her hand. He has substituted, therefore, the name of the lord instead of the lady. If the Count fail to appear, the Caesar walks forward challenger and successful combatant at a cheap rate, since no one has encountered him, and claims that the lady should be delivered up to him as a captive of his dreaded bow and spear. This will be the signal for a general tumult, in which, if the Emperor be not slain on the spot, he will be conveyed to the dungeon of his own Blacquernal, there to endure the doom which his cruelty has inflicted upon so many others."

"But" — said the Varangian.

"But — but — but," said his officer; "but thou art a fool. Canst thou not see that this gallant Caesar is willing to avoid the risk of encountering with this lady, while he earnestly desires to be supposed willing to meet her husband? It is our business to fix the combat in such a shape as to bring all who are prepared for insurrection together in arms to play their parts. Do thou only see that our trusty friends are placed near to the Emperor's person, and in such a manner as to keep from him the officious and meddling portion of guards, who may be disposed to assist him; and whether the Caesar fights a combat with lord or lady, or whether there be any combat at all or not, the revolution shall be accomplished, and the Tatii shall replace the Comneni upon the Imperial throne of Constantinople. Go, my trusty Hereward. Thou wilt not forget that the signal word of the insurrection is Ursel, who lives in the affections of the people, although his body, it is said, has long lain a corpse in the dungeons of the Blacquernal."

"What was this Ursel," said Hereward, "of whom I hear men talk so variously?"

"A competitor for the crown with Alexius Comnenus — good, brave, and honest; but overpowered by the cunning, rather than the skill or bravery of his foe. He died, as I believe, in the Blacquernal; though when, or how, there are few that can say. But, up and be doing, my Hereward! Speak encouragement to the Varangians — Interest whomsoever thou canst to join us. Of the Immortals, as they are called, and of the discontented citizens, enough are prepared to fill up the cry, and follow in the wake of those on whom we must rely as the beginners of the enterprise. No longer shall Alexius's cunning, in avoiding popular assemblies, avail to protect him; he cannot, with regard to his honour, avoid being present at a combat to be fought beneath his own eye; and Mercury be praised for the eloquence which inspired him, after some hesitation, to determine for the proclamation!"

"You have seen him, then, this evening?" said the Varangian.

"Seen him! Unquestionably," answered the Acolyte. "Had I ordered these trumpets to be sounded without his knowledge, the blast had blown the head from my shoulders."

"I had wellnigh met you at the palace," said Hereward; while his heart throbbed almost as high as if he had actually had such a dangerous encounter.

"I heard something of it," said Achilles; "that you came to take the parting orders of him who now acts the sovereign. Surely, had I seen you there, with that steadfast, open, seemingly honest countenance, cheating the wily Greek by very dint of bluntness, I had not forborne laughing at the contrast between that and the thoughts of thy heart."

"God alone," said Hereward, "knows the thoughts of our hearts; but I take him to witness, that I am faithful to my promise, and will discharge the task intrusted to me."

"Bravo! mine honest Anglo-Saxon," said Achilles. "I pray thee to call my slaves to unarm me; and when thou thyself doffest those weapons of an ordinary life-guardsman, tell them they never shall above twice more enclose the limbs of one for whom fate has much more fitting garments in store."

Hereward dared not intrust his voice with an answer to so critical a speech; he bowed profoundly, and retired to his own quarters in the building.

Upon entering the apartment, he was immediately saluted by the voice of Count Robert, in joyful accents, not suppressed by the fear of making himself heard, though prudence should have made that uppermost in his mind.

"Hast thou heard it, my dear Hereward," he said — "hast thou heard the proclamation, by which this Greek antelope hath defied me to tilting with grinded spears, and fighting three passages of arms with sharpened swords? Yet there is something strange, too, that he should not think it safer to hold my lady to the encounter! He may think, perhaps, that the crusaders would not permit such a battle to be fought. But, by our Lady of the Broken Lances! he little knows that the men of the West hold their ladies' character for courage as jealously as they do their own. This whole night have I been considering in what armour I shall clothe me; what shift I shall make for a steed; and whether I shall not honour him sufficiently by using Tranchefer, as my only weapon, against his whole armour, offensive and defensive."

"I shall take care, however," said Hereward, "that, thou art better provided in case of need. — Thou knowest not the Greeks."

Chapter the Twenty-Third.

The Varangian did not leave the Count of Paris until the latter had in his hands his signet-ring, *semeé*, (as the heralds express it,) *with lances splintered*, and bearing the proud motto, "Mine yet unscathed." Provided with this symbol of confidence, it was now his business to take order for communicating the approaching solemnity to the leader of the crusading army, and demanding from him, in the name of Robert of Paris, and the Lady Brenhilda, such a detachment of western cavaliers as might ensure strict observance of honour and honesty in the arrangement of the lists, and during the progress of the combat. The duties imposed on Hereward were such as to render it impossible for him to proceed personally to the camp of Godfrey: and though there were many of the Varangians in whose fidelity he could have trusted, he knew of none among those under his immediate command whose intelligence, on so novel an occasion, might be entirely depended on. In this perplexity, he strolled, perhaps without well knowing why, to the gardens of Agelastes, where fortune once more produced him an interview with Bertha.

No sooner had Hereward made her aware of his difficulty, than the faithful bower-maiden's resolution was taken.

"I see," said she, "that the peril of this part of the adventure must rest with me; and wherefore should it not? My mistress, in the bosom of prosperity, offered herself to go forth into the wide world for my sake; I will for hers go to the camp of this Frankish lord. He is an honourable man, and a pious Christian, and his followers are faithful pilgrims. A woman can have nothing to fear who goes to such men upon such an errand."

The Varangian, however, was too well acquainted with the manners of camps to permit the fair Bertha to go alone. He provided, therefore, for her safe-guard a trusty old soldier, bound to his person by long kindness and confidence, and having thoroughly possessed her of the particulars of the message she was to deliver, and desired her to be in readiness without the enclosure at peep of dawn, returned once more to his barracks.

With the earliest light, Hereward was again at the spot where he had parted overnight with Bertha, accompanied by the honest soldier to whose care he meant to confide her. In a short time, he had seen them safely on board of a ferry-boat lying in the harbour; the master of which readily admitted them, after some examination of their license, to pass to Scutari, which was forged in the name of the Acolyte, as authorised by that foul conspirator, and which agreed with the appearance of old Osmund and his young charge.

The morning was lovely; and erelong the town of Scutari opened on the view of the travellers, glittering, as now, with a variety of architecture, which, though it might be termed fantastical, could not be denied the praise of beauty. These buildings rose boldly out of a thick grove of cypresses, and other huge trees, the larger, probably, as they were respected for filling the cemeteries, and being the guardians of the dead.

At the period we mention, another circumstance, no less striking than beautiful, rendered doubly interesting a scene which must have been at all times greatly so. A large portion of that miscellaneous army which came to regain the holy places of Palestine, and the blessed Sepulchre itself, from the infidels, had established themselves in a camp within a mile, or thereabouts, of Scutari. Although, therefore, the crusaders were destitute in a great measure of the use of tents, the army (excepting the pavilions of some leaders of high rank) had constructed for themselves temporary huts, not unpleasing to the eye, being decorated with leaves and flowers, while the tall pennons and banners that floated over them with various devices, showed that the flower of Europe were assembled at that place. A loud and varied murmur, resembling that of a thronged hive, floated from the camp of the crusaders to the neighbouring town of Scutari, and every now and then the deep tone was broken by some shriller sound, the note of some musical instrument, or the treble scream of some child or female, in fear or in gaiety.

The party at length landed in safety; and as they approached one of the gates of the camp, there sallied forth a brisk array of gallant cavaliers, pages, and squires, exercising their masters' horses or their own. From the noise they made, conversing at the very top of their voices, galloping, curvetting, and prancing their palfreys, it seemed as if their early discipline had called them to exercise ere the fumes of last night's revel were thoroughly dissipated by repose. So soon as they saw Bertha and her party, they approached them with cries which marked their country was Italy — "Al'erta! al'erta! — Roba de guadagno, cameradi!"*

* That is — "Take heed! take heed! there is booty, comrades!"]

They gathered round the Anglo-Saxon maiden and her companions, repeating their cries in a manner which made Bertha tremble. Their general demand was, "What was her business in their camp?"

"I would to the general-inchief, cavaliers," answered Bertha, "having a secret message to his ear."

"For whose ear?" said a leader of the party, a handsome youth of about eighteen years of age, who seemed either to have a sounder brain than his fellows, or to have overflowed it with less wine. "Which of our leaders do you come hither to see?" he demanded.

"Godfrey of Bouillon."

"Indeed!" said the page who had spoken first; "can nothing of less consequence serve thy turn? Take a look amongst us; young are we all, and reasonably wealthy. My Lord of Bouillon is old, and if he has any sequins, he is not like to lavish them in this way."

"Still I have a token to Godfrey of Bouillon," answered Bertha, "an assured one; and he will little thank any who obstructs my free passage to him;" and therewithal showing a little case, in which the signet of the Count of Paris was enclosed, "I will trust it in your hands," she said, "if you promise not to open it, but to give me free access to the noble leader of the crusaders."

"I will," said the youth, "and if such be the Duke's pleasure, thou shalt be admitted to him."

"Ernest the Apulian, thy dainty Italian wit is caught in a trap," said one of his companions.

"Thou art an ultramontane fool, Polydore," returned Ernest; "there may be more in this than either thy wit or mine is able to fathom. This maiden and one of her attendants wear a dress belonging to the Varangian Imperial guard. They have perhaps been intrusted with a message from the Emperor, and it is not irreconcilable with Alexius's politics to send it through such messengers as these. Let us, therefore, convey them in all honour to the General's tent."

"With all my heart," said Polydore. "A blue-eyed wench is a pretty thing, but I like not the sauce of the camp-marshal, nor his taste in attiring men who gave way to temptation.* Yet, ere I prove a fool like my companion, I would ask who or what this pretty maiden is, who comes to put noble princes and holy pilgrims in mind that they have in their time had the follies of men?"

* Persons among the Crusaders found guilty of certain offences, did penance in a dress of tar and feathers though it is supposed a punishment of modern invention.]

Bertha advanced and whispered in the ear of Ernest. Meantime joke followed jest, among Polydore and the rest of the gay youths, in riotous and ribald succession, which, however characteristic of the rude speakers, may as well be omitted here. Their effect was to shake in some degree the fortitude of the Saxon maiden, who had some difficulty in mustering courage to address them. "As you have mothers, gentlemen," she said, "as you have fair sisters, whom you would protect from dishonour with your best blood — as you love and honour those holy places which you are sworn to free from the infidel enemy, have compassion on me, that you may merit success in your undertaking!"

"Fear nothing, maiden," said Ernest, "I will be your protector; and you, my comrades, be ruled by me. I have, during your brawling, taken a view, though somewhat against my promise, of the pledge which she bears, and if she who presents it is affronted or maltreated, be assured Godfrey of Bouillon will severely avenge the wrong done her."

"Nay, comrade, if thou canst warrant us so much," said Polydore, "I will myself be most anxious to conduct the young woman in honour and safety to Sir Godfrey's tent."

"The Princes," said Ernest, "must be nigh meeting there in council. What I have said I will warrant and uphold with hand and life. More I might guess, but I conclude this sensible young maiden can speak for herself."

"Now, Heaven bless thee, gallant squire," said Bertha, "and make thee alike brave and fortunate! Embarrass yourself no farther about me, than to deliver me safe to your leader, Godfrey."

"We spend time," said Ernest, springing from his horse. "You are no soft Eastern, fair maid, and I presume you will find yourself under no difficulty in managing a quiet horse?"

"Not the least," said Bertha, as, wrapping herself in her cassock, she sprung from the ground, and alighted upon the spirited palfrey, as a linnet stoops upon a rose-bush. "And now, sir, as my business really brooks no delay, I will be indebted to you to show me instantly to the tent of Duke Godfrey of Bouillon."

By availing herself of this courtesy of the young Apulian, Bertha imprudently separated herself from the old Varangian; but the intentions of the youth were honourable, and he conducted her through the tents and huts to the pavilion of the celebrated General-inchief of the Crusade.

"Here," he said, "you must tarry for a space, under the guardianship of my companions," (for two or three of the pages had accompanied them, out of curiosity to see the issue,) "and I will take the commands of the Duke of Bouillon upon the subject."

To this nothing could be objected, and Bertha had nothing better to do, than to admire the outside of the tent, which, in one of Alexius's fits of generosity and munificence, had been presented by the Greek Emperor to the Chief of the Franks. It was raised upon tall spear-shaped poles, which had the semblance of gold; its curtains were of thick stuff, manufactured of silk, cotton, and gold thread. The warders who stood round, were (at least during the time that the council was held) old grave men, the personal squires of the body, most of them, of the sovereigns who had taken the Cross, and who could, therefore, be trusted as a guard over the assembly, without danger of their blabbing what they might overhear. Their appearance was serious and considerate, and they looked like men who had taken upon them the Cross, not as an idle adventure of arms, but as a purpose of the most solemn and serious nature. One of these stopt the Italian, and demanded what business authorized him to press forward into the council of the crusaders, who were already taking their seats. The page answered by giving his name, "Ernest of Otranto, page of Prince Tancred;" and stated that he announced a young woman, who bore a token to the Duke of Bouillon, adding that it was accompanied by a message for his own ear.

Bertha, meantime, laid aside her mantle, or upper garment, and disposed the rest of her dress according to the Anglo-Saxon costume. She had hardly completed this task, before the page of Prince Tancred returned, to conduct her into the presence of the council of the Crusade. She followed his signal; while the other young men who had accompanied her, wondering at the apparent ease with which she gained admittance, drew back to a respectful distance from the tent, and there canvassed the singularity of their morning's adventure.

In the meanwhile, the ambassadress herself entered the council chamber, exhibiting an agreeable mixture of shamefacedness and reserve, together with a bold determination to do her duty at all events. There were about fifteen of the principal crusaders assembled in council, with their chieftain Godfrey. He himself was a tall strong man, arrived at that period of life in which men are supposed to have lost none of their resolution, while they have acquired a wisdom and circumspection unknown to their earlier years. The countenance of Godfrey bespoke both prudence and boldness, and resembled his hair, where a few threads of silver were already mingled with his raven locks.

Tancred, the noblest knight of the Christian chivalry, sat at no great distance from him, with Hugh, Earl of Vermandois, generally called the Great Count, the selfish and wily Bohemond, the powerful Raymond of Provence, and others of the principal crusaders, all more or less completely sheathed in armour.

Bertha did not allow her courage to be broken down, but advancing with a timid grace towards Godfrey, she placed in his hands the signet which had been restored to her by the young page, and after a deep obeisance, spoke these words: "Godfrey, Count of Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine the Lower, Chief of the Holy Enterprise called the Crusade, and you, his gallant comrades, peers, and companions, by whatever titles you may be honoured, I, an humble maiden of England, daughter of Engelred, originally a franklin of Hampshire, and since Chieftain of the Foresters, or free Anglo-Saxons, under the command of the celebrated Edric,

do claim what credence is due to the bearer of the true pledge which I put into your hand, on the part of one not the least considerable of your own body, Count Robert of Paris"——

"Our most honourable confederate," said Godfrey, looking at the ring. "Most of you, my lords, must, I think, know this signet — a field sown with the fragments of many splintered lances." The signet was handed from one of the Assembly to another, and generally recognised.

When Godfrey had signified so much, the maiden resumed her message. "To all true crusaders, therefore, comrades of Godfrey of Bouillon, and especially to the Duke himself — to all, I say, excepting Bohemond of Tarentum, whom he counts unworthy of his notice"——

"Hah! me unworthy of his notice," said Bohemond. "What mean you by that, damsel? — But the Count of Paris shall answer it to me."

"Under your favour, Sir Bohemond," said Godfrey, "no. Our articles renounce the sending of challenges among ourselves, and the matter, if not dropt betwixt the parties, must be referred to the voice of this honourable council."

"I think I guess the business now, my lord," said Bohemond. "The Count of Paris is disposed to turn and tear me, because I offered him good counsel on the evening before we left Constantinople, when he neglected to accept or be guided by it"——

"It will be the more easily explained when we have heard his message," said Godfrey. —"Speak forth Lord Robert of Paris's charge, damsel, that we may take some order with that which now seems a perplexed business."

Bertha resumed her message; and, having briefly narrated the recent events, thus concluded:—"The battle is to be done tomorrow, about two hours after daybreak, and the Count entreats of the noble Duke of Lorraine that he will permit some fifty of the lances of France to attend the deed of arms, and secure that fair and honourable conduct which he has otherwise some doubts of receiving at the hands of his adversary. Or if any young and gallant knight should, of his own free will, wish to view the said combat, the Count will feel his presence as an honour; always he desires that the name of such knight be numbered carefully with the armed crusaders who shall attend in the lists, and that the whole shall be limited, by Duke Godfrey's own inspection, to fifty lances only, which are enough to obtain the protection required, while more would be considered as a preparation for aggression upon the Grecians, and occasion the revival of disputes which are now happily at rest."

Bertha had no sooner finished delivering her manifesto, and made with great grace her obeisance to the council, than a sort of whisper took place in the assembly, which soon assumed a more lively tone.

Their solemn vow not to turn their back upon Palestine, now that they had set their hands to the plough, was strongly urged by some of the elder knights of the council, and two or three high prelates, who had by this time entered to take share in the deliberations. The young knights, on the other hand, were fired with indignation on hearing the manner in which their comrade had been trepanned; and few of them could think of missing a combat in the lists in a country in which such sights were so rare, and where one was to be fought so near them.

Godfrey rested his brow on his hand, and seemed in great perplexity. To break with the Greeks, after having suffered so many injuries in order to maintain the advantage of keeping the peace with them, seemed very impolitic, and a sacrifice of all he had obtained by a long course of painful forbearance towards Alexius Comnenus. On the other hand, he was bound as a man of honour to resent the injury offered to Count Robert of Paris, whose reckless spirit of chivalry made him the darling of the army. It was the cause, too, of a beautiful lady, and a brave one: every knight in the host would think himself bound, by his vow, to hasten to her defence. When Godfrey spoke, it was to complain of the difficulty of the determination, and the short time there was to consider the case.

"With submission to my Lord Duke of Lorraine," said Tancred, "I was a knight ere I was a crusader, and took on me the vows of chivalry, ere I placed this blessed, sign upon my shoulder: the vow first made must be first discharged. I will therefore do penance for neglecting, for a space, the obligations of the second vow, while I observe that which recalls me to the first duty of knighthood — the relief of a distressed lady in the hands of men whose conduct towards her, and towards this host, in every respect entitles me to call them treacherous faitours."

"If my kinsman Tancred," said Bohemond, "will check his impetuosity, and you, my lords, will listen, as you have sometimes deigned to do, to my advice, I think I can direct you how to keep clear of any breach of your oath, and yet fully to relieve our distressed fellow-pilgrims. — I see some suspicious looks are cast towards me, which are caused perhaps by the churlish manner in which this violent, and, in this case, almost insane young warrior, has protested against receiving my assistance. My great offence is the having given him warning, by precept and example, of the treachery which was about to be practised against him, and instructed him to use forbearance and temperance. My warning he altogether contemned — my example he neglected to follow, and fell into the snare which was spread, as it were, before his very eyes. Yet the Count of Paris, in rashly contemning me, has acted only from a temper which misfortune and disappointment have rendered irrational and frantic. I am so far from bearing him ill-will, that, with your lordship's permission, and that of the present council, I will haste to the place of rendezvous with fifty lances, making up the retinue which attends upon each to at least ten men, which will make the stipulated auxiliary force equal to five hundred; and with these I can have little doubt of rescuing the Count and his lady."

"Nobly proposed," said the Duke of Bouillon; "and with a charitable forgiveness of injuries which becomes our Christian expedition. But thou hast forgot the main difficulty, brother Bohemond, that we are sworn never to turn back upon the sacred journey."

"If we can elude that oath upon the present occasion," said Bohemond, "it becomes our duty to do so. Are we such bad horsemen, or are our steeds so awkward, that we cannot rein them back from this to the landing-place at Scutari? We can get them on shipboard in the same retrograde manner, and when we arrive in Europe, where our vow binds us no longer, the Count and Countess of Paris are rescued, and our vow remains entire in the Chancery of Heaven."

A general shout arose — "Long life to the gallant Bohemond! — Shame to us if we do not fly to the assistance of so valiant a knight, and a lady so lovely, since we can do so without breach of our vow."

"The question," said Godfrey, "appears to me to be eluded rather than solved; yet such evasions have been admitted by the most learned and scrupulous clerks; nor do I hesitate to admit of Bohemond's expedient, any more than if the enemy had attacked our rear, which might have occasioned our countermarching to be a case of absolute necessity."

Some there were in the assembly, particularly the churchmen, inclined to think that the oath by which the crusaders had solemnly bound themselves, ought to be as literally obeyed. But Peter the Hermit, who had a place in the council, and possessed great weight, declared it as his opinion, "That since the precise observance of their vow would tend to diminish the forces of the crusade, it was in fact unlawful, and should not be kept according to the literal meaning, if, by a fair construction, it could be eluded."

He offered himself to back the animal which he bestrode — that is, his ass; and though he was diverted from showing this example by the remonstrances of Godfrey of Bouillon, who was afraid of his becoming a scandal in the eyes of the heathen, yet he so prevailed by his arguments, that the knights, far from scrupling to countermarch, eagerly contended which should have the honour of making one of the party which should retrograde to Constantinople, see the combat, and bring back to the host in safety the valorous Count of Paris, of whose victory no one doubted, and his Amazonian Countess.

This emulation was also put an end to by the authority of Godfrey, who himself selected the fifty knights who were to compose the party. They were chosen from different nations, and the command of the whole was given to young Tancred of Otranto. Notwithstanding the claim of Bohemond, Godfrey detained the latter, under the pretext that his knowledge of the country and people was absolutely necessary to enable the council to form the plan of the campaign in Syria; but in reality he dreaded the selfishness of a man of great ingenuity as well as military skill, who, finding himself in a separate command, might be tempted, should opportunities arise, to enlarge his own power and dominion, at the expense of the pious purposes of the crusade in general. The younger men of the expedition were chiefly anxious to procure such horses as had been thoroughly trained, and could go through with ease and temper the manoeuvre of equitation, by which it was designed to render legitimate the movement which they had recourse to. The selection was at length made, and the detachment ordered to draw up in the rear, or upon the eastward line of the Christian encampment. In the meanwhile, Godfrey charged Bertha with a message for the Count of Paris, in which, slightly censuring him for not observing more caution in his intercourse with the Greeks, he informed him that he had sent a detachment of fifty lances, with the corresponding squires, pages, men-at-arms, and cross-bows, five hundred in number, commanded by the valiant Tancred, to his assistance. The Duke also

informed him, that he had added a suit of armour of the best temper Milan could afford, together with a trusty war-horse, which he entreated him to use upon the field of battle; for Bertha had not omitted to intimate Count Robert's want of the means of knightly equipment. The horse was brought before the pavilion accordingly, completely barbed or armed in steel, and laden with armour for the knight's body. Godfrey himself put the bridle into Bertha's hand.

"Thou need'st not fear to trust thyself with this steed, he is as gentle and docile as he is fleet and brave. Place thyself on his back, and take heed thou stir not from the side of the noble Prince Tancred of Otranto, who will be the faithful defender of a maiden that has this day shown dexterity, courage, and fidelity."

Bertha bowed low, as her cheeks glowed at praise from one whose talents and worth were in such general esteem, as to have raised him to the distinguished situation of leader of a host which numbered in it the bravest and most distinguished captains of Christendom.

"Who are you two persons?" continued Godfrey, speaking of the companions of Bertha, whom he saw in the distance before the tent.

"The one," answered the damsel, "is the master of the ferry-boat which brought me over; and the other an old Varangian who came hither as my protector."

"As they may come to employ their eyes here, and their tongues on the opposite side," returned the general of the crusaders, "I do not think it prudent to let them accompany you. They shall remain here for some short time. The citizens of Scutari will not comprehend for some space what our intention is, and I could wish Prince Tancred and his attendants to be the first to announce their own arrival."

Bertha accordingly intimated the pleasure of the French general to the parties, without naming his motives; when the ferryman began to exclaim on the hardship of intercepting him in his trade; and Osmund to complain of being detained from his duties. But Bertha, by the orders of Godfrey, left them, with the assurance that they would be soon at liberty. Finding themselves thus abandoned, each applied himself to his favourite amusement. The ferryman occupied himself in staring about at all that was new; and Osmund, having in the meantime accepted an offer of breakfast from some of the domestics, was presently engaged with a flask of such red wine as would have reconciled him to a worse lot than that which he at present experienced.

The detachment of Tancred, fifty spears and their armed retinue, which amounted fully to five hundred men, after having taken a short and hasty refreshment, were in arms and mounted before the sultry hour of noon. After some manoeuvres, of which the Greeks of Scutari, whose curiosity was awakened by the preparations of the detachment, were at a loss to comprehend the purpose, they formed into a single column, having four men in front. When the horses were in this position, the whole riders at once began to rein back. The action was one to which both the cavaliers and their horses were well accustomed, nor did it at first afford much surprise to the spectators; but when the same retrograde evolution was continued, and the body of crusaders seemed about to enter the town of Scutari in so extraordinary a fashion, some idea of the truth began to occupy the citizens. The cry at length was general, when Tancred and a few others, whose horses were unusually well-trained, arrived at the port, and possessed themselves of a galley, into which they led their horses, and, disregarding all opposition from the Imperial officers of the haven, pushed the vessel off from the shore.

Other cavaliers did not accomplish their purpose so easily; the riders, or the horses, were less accustomed to continue in the constrained pace for such a considerable length of time, so that many of the knights, having retrograded for one or two hundred yards, thought their vow was sufficiently observed by having so far deferred to it, and riding in the ordinary manner into the town, seized without farther ceremony on some vessels, which, notwithstanding the orders of the Greek Emperor, had been allowed to remain on the Asiatic side of the strait. Some less able horsemen met with various accidents; for though it was a proverb of the time, that nothing was so bold as a blind horse, yet from this mode of equitation, where neither horse nor rider saw the way he was going, some steeds were overthrown, others backed upon dangerous obstacles; and the bones of the cavaliers themselves suffered much more than would have been the case in an ordinary march.

Those horsemen, also, who met with falls, incurred the danger of being slain by the Greeks, had not Godfrey, surmounting his religious scruples, despatched a squadron to extricate them — a task which they performed with great ease. The greater part of Tancred's followers succeeded in embarking, as was intended, nor was there more than a score or two finally amissing. To accomplish their voyage, however, even the Prince of Otranto himself, and most of his followers, were obliged to betake themselves to the unknighly labours of the oar. This they found extremely difficult, as well from the state both of the tide and the wind, as from the want of practice at the exercise. Godfrey in person viewed their progress anxiously, from a neighbouring height, and perceived with regret the difficulty which they found in making their way, which was still more increased by the necessity for their keeping in a body, and waiting for the slowest and worst manned vessels, which considerably detained those that were more expeditious. They made some progress, however; nor had the commander-in-chief the least doubt, that before sunset they would safely reach the opposite side of the strait.

He retired at length from his post of observation, having placed a careful sentinel in his stead, with directions to bring him word the instant that the detachment reached the opposite shore. This the soldier could easily discern by the eye, if it was daylight at the time; if, on the contrary, it was night before they could arrive, the Prince of Otranto had orders to show certain lights, which, in case of their meeting resistance from the Greeks, should be arranged in a peculiar manner, so as to indicate danger.

Godfrey then explained to the Greek authorities of Scutari, whom he summoned before him, the necessity there was that he should keep in readiness such vessels as could be procured, with which, in case of need, he was determined to transport a strong division from his army to support those who had gone before. He then rode back to his camp, the confused murmurs of which, rendered more noisy by the various discussions concerning the events of the day, rolled off from the numerous host of the crusaders, and mingled with the hoarse sound of the many-billowed Hellespont.

Chapter the Twentieth-Fourth.

*All is prepared — the chambers of the mine
Are cramm'd with the combustible, which, harmless
While yet unkindled, as the sable sand,
Needs but a spark to change its nature so,
That he who wakes it from its slumbrous mood,
Dreads scarce the explosion less than he who knows
That 'tis his towers which meet its fury.*

ANONYMOUS.

When the sky is darkened suddenly, and the atmosphere grows thick and stifling, the lower ranks of creation entertain the ominous sense of a coming tempest. The birds fly to the thickets, the wild creatures retreat to the closest covers which their instinct gives them the habit of frequenting, and domestic animals show their apprehension of the approaching thunderstorm by singular actions and movements inferring fear and disturbance.

It seems that human nature, when its original habits are cultivated and attended to, possesses, on similar occasions, something of that prescient foreboding, which announces the approaching tempest to the inferior ranks of creation. The cultivation of our intellectual powers goes perhaps too far, when it teaches us entirely to suppress and disregard those natural feelings, which were originally designed as sentinels by which nature warned us of impending danger.

Something of the kind, however, still remains, and that species of feeling which announces to us sorrowful or alarming tidings, may be said, like the prophecies of the weird sisters, to come over us like a sudden cloud.

During the fatal day which was to precede the combat of the Caesar with the Count of Paris, there were current through the city of Constantinople the most contradictory, and at the same time the most terrific reports. Privy conspiracy, it was alleged, was on the very eve of breaking out; open war, it was reported by others, was about to shake her banners over the devoted city; the precise cause was not agreed upon, any more than the nature of the enemy. Some said that the barbarians from the borders of Thracia, the Hungarians, as they were termed, and the Comani, were on their march from the frontiers to surprise the city; another report stated that the Turks, who, during this period, were established in Asia, had resolved to prevent the threatened attack of the crusaders upon Palestine, by surprising not only the Western Pilgrims, but the Christians of the East, by one of their innumerable invasions, executed with their characteristic rapidity.

Another report, approaching more near to the truth, declared that the crusaders themselves, having discovered their various causes of complaint against Alexius Comnenus, had resolved to march back their united forces to the capital, with a view of dethroning or chastising him; and the citizens were dreadfully alarmed for the consequences of the resentment of men so fierce in their habits and so strange in their manners. In short, although they did not all agree on the precise cause of danger, it was yet generally allowed that something of a dreadful kind was impending, which appeared to be in a certain degree confirmed by the motions that were taking place among the troops. The Varangians, as well as the Immortals, were gradually assembled, and placed in occupation of the strongest parts of the city, until at length the fleet of galleys, row-boats, and transports, occupied by Tancred and his party, were observed to put themselves in motion from Scutari, and attempt to gain such a height in the narrow sea, as upon the turn of the tide should transport them to the port of the capital.

Alexius Comnenus was himself struck at this unexpected movement on the part of the crusaders. Yet, after some conversation with Hereward, on whom he had determined to repose his confidence, and had now gone too far to retreat, he became reassured, the more especially by the limited size of the detachment which seemed to meditate so bold a measure as an attack upon his capital. To those around him he said with carelessness, that it was hardly to be supposed that a trumpet could blow to the charge, within hearing of the crusaders' camp, without some out of so many knights coming forth to see the cause and the issue of the conflict.

The conspirators also had their secret fears when the little armament of Tancred had been seen on the straits. Agelastes mounted a mule, and went to the shore of the sea, at the place now called Galata. He met Bertha's old ferryman, whom Godfrey had set at liberty, partly in contempt, and partly that the report he was likely to make, might serve to amuse the conspirators in the city. Closely examined by Agelastes, he confessed that the present detachment, so far as he understood, was despatched at the instance of Bohemond, and was under the command of his kinsman Tancred, whose well-known banner was floating from the headmost vessel. This gave courage to Agelastes, who, in the course of his intrigues, had opened a private communication with the wily and ever mercenary Prince of Antioch. The object of the philosopher had been to obtain from Bohemond a body of his followers to co-operate in the intended conspiracy, and fortify the party of insurgents. It is true, that Bohemond had returned no answer, but the account now given by the ferryman, and the sight of Tancred the kinsman of Bohemond's banner displayed on the straits, satisfied the philosopher that his offers, his presents, and his promises, had gained to his side the avaricious Italian, and that this band had been selected by Bohemond, and were coming to act in his favour.

As Agelastes turned to go off, he almost jostled a person, as much muffled up, and apparently as unwilling to be known, as the philosopher himself. Alexius Comnenus, however — for it was the Emperor himself — knew Agelastes, though rather from his stature and gestures, than his countenance; and could not forbear whispering in his ear, as he passed, the well-known lines, to which the pretended sage's various acquisitions gave some degree of point:—

"Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,

Augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus; omnia novit.

Graeculus esuriens in caelum, jusseris, ibit."

The lines of Juvenal imitated by Johnson in his *London* —

"All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,

And bid him go to hell — to hell he goes."]

Agelastes first started at the unexpected sound of the Emperor's voice, yet immediately recovered presence of mind, the want of which had made him suspect himself betrayed; and without taking notice of the rank of the person to whom he spoke, he answered by a quotation which should return the alarm he had received. The speech that suggested itself was said to be that which the Phantom of Cleonice dinned into the ears of the tyrant who murdered her:—

"Tu cole justitiam; toque atque alios manet ultor."

"Do thou cultivate justice: for thee and for others there remains an avenger."— *Ovid. Met.*]

The sentence, and the recollections which accompanied it, thrilled through the heart of the Emperor, who walked on, however, without any notice or reply.

"The vile conspirator," he said, "had his associates around him, otherwise he had not hazarded that threat. Or it may have been worse — Agelastes himself, on the very brink of this world, may have obtained that singular glance into futurity proper to that situation, and perhaps speaks less from his own reflection than from a strange spirit of prescience, which dictates his words. Have I then in earnest sinned so far in my imperial duty, as to make it just to apply to me the warning used by the injured Cleonice to her ravisher and murderer? Methinks I have not. Methinks that at less expense than that of a just severity, I could ill have kept my seat in the high place where Heaven has been pleased to seat me, and where, as a ruler, I am bound to maintain my station. Methinks the sum of those who have experienced my clemency may be well numbered with that of such as have sustained the deserved punishments of their guilt — But has that vengeance, however deserved in itself, been always taken in a legal or justifiable manner? My conscience, I doubt, will hardly answer so home a question; and where is the man, had he the virtues of Antoninus himself, that can hold so high and responsible a place, yet sustain such an interrogation as is implied in that sort of warning which I have received from this traitor? *Tu cole justitiam* — we all need to use justice to others — *Teque atque alios manet ultor* — we are all amenable to an avenging being — I will see the Patriarch — instantly will I see him; and by confessing my transgressions to the Church, I will, by her plenary indulgence, acquire the right of spending the last day of my reign in a consciousness of innocence, or at least of pardon — a state of mind rarely the lot of those whose lines have fallen in lofty places."

So saying, he passed to the palace of Zosimus the Patriarch, to whom he could unbosom himself with more safety, because he had long considered Agelastes as a private enemy to the Church, and a man attached to the ancient doctrines of heathenism. In the councils of the state they were also opposed to each other, nor did the Emperor doubt, that in communicating the secret of the conspiracy to the Patriarch, he was sure to attain a loyal and firm supporter in the defence which he proposed to himself. He therefore gave a signal by a low whistle, and a confidential officer, well mounted, approached him, who attended him in his ride, though unostentatiously, and at some distance.

In this manner, therefore, Alexius Comnenus proceeded to the palace of the Patriarch, with as much speed as was consistent with his purpose of avoiding to attract any particular notice as he passed through the street. During the whole ride, the warning of Agelastes repeatedly occurred to him, and his conscience reminded him of too many actions of his reign which could only be justified by necessity, emphatically said to be the tyrant's plea, and which were of themselves deserving the dire vengeance so long delayed.

When he came in sight of the splendid towers which adorned the front of the patriarchal palace, he turned aside from the lofty gates, repaired to a narrow court, and again giving his mule to his attendant, he stopt before a postern, whose low arch and humble architrave seemed to exclude the possibility of its leading to any place of importance. On knocking, however, a priest of an inferior order opened the door, who, with a deep reverence, received the Emperor so soon as he had made himself known, and conducted him into the interior of the palace. Demanding a secret interview with the Patriarch, Alexius was then ushered into his private library, where he was received by the aged priest with the deepest respect, which the nature of his communication soon changed into horror and astonishment.

Although Alexius was supposed by many of his own court, and particularly by some members of his own family, to be little better than a hypocrite in his religious professions, yet such severe observers were unjust in branding him with a name so odious. He was indeed aware of the great support which he received from the good opinion of the clergy, and to them he was willing to make sacrifices for the advantage of the Church, or of individual prelates who manifested fidelity to the crown; but though, on the one hand, such sacrifices were rarely made by Alexius, without a view to temporal policy, yet, on the other, he regarded them as recommended by his devotional feelings, and took credit to himself for various grants and actions, as dictated by sincere piety, which, in another aspect, were the fruits of temporal policy. His mode of looking on these measures was that of a person with oblique vision, who sees an object in a different manner, according to the point from which he chances to contemplate it.

The Emperor placed his own errors of government before the Patriarch in his confession, giving due weight to every branch of morality as it occurred, and stripping from them the lineaments and palliative circumstances which had in his own imagination lessened their guilt. The Patriarch heard, to his astonishment, the real thread of many a court intrigue, which had borne a very different appearance, till the Emperor's narrative either justified his conduct upon the occasion, or

left it totally unjustifiable. Upon the whole, the balance was certainly more in favour of Alexius than the Patriarch had supposed likely in that more distant view he had taken of the intrigues of the court, when, as usual, the ministers and the courtiers endeavoured to make up for the applause which they had given in council in the most blameable actions of the absolute monarch, by elsewhere imputing to his motives greater guilt than really belonged to them. Many men who had fallen sacrifices, it was supposed to the personal spleen or jealousy of the Emperor, appeared to have been in fact removed from life, or from liberty, because their enjoying either was inconsistent with the quiet of the state and the safety of the monarch.

Zosimus also learned, what he perhaps already suspected, that amidst the profound silence of despotism which seemed to pervade the Grecian empire, it heaved frequently with convulsive throes, which ever and anon made obvious the existence of a volcano under the surface. Thus, while smaller delinquencies, or avowed discontent with the Imperial government, seldom occurred, and were severely punished when they did, the deepest and most mortal conspiracies against the life and the authority of the Emperor were cherished by those nearest to his person; and he was often himself aware of them, though it was not until they approached an explosion that he dared act upon his knowledge, and punish the conspirators.

The whole treason of the Caesar, with his associates, Agelastes and Achilles Tatius, was heard by the Patriarch with wonder and astonishment, and he was particularly surprised at the dexterity with which the Emperor, knowing the existence of so dangerous a conspiracy at home, had been able to parry the danger from the crusaders occurring at the same moment.

"In that respect," said the Emperor, to whom indeed the churchman hinted his surprise, "I have been singularly unfortunate. Had I been secure of the forces of my own empire, I might have taken one out of two manly and open courses with these frantic warriors of the west — I might, my reverend father, have devoted the sums paid to Bohemond and other of the more selfish among the crusaders, to the honest and open support of the army of western Christians, and safely transported them to Palestine, without exposing them to the great loss which they are likely to sustain by the opposition of the Infidels; their success would have been in fact my own, and a Latin kingdom in Palestine, defended by its steel-clad warriors, would have been a safe and unexpugnable barrier of the empire against the Saracens. Or, if it was thought more expedient for the protection of the empire and the holy Church, over which you are ruler, we might at once, and by open force, have defended the frontiers of our states, against a host commanded by so many different and discordant chiefs, and advancing upon us with such equivocal intentions. If the first swarm of these locusts, under him whom they called Walter the Penniless, was thinned by the Hungarians, and totally destroyed by the Turks, as the pyramids of bones on the frontiers of the country still keep in memory, surely the united forces of the Grecian empire would have had little difficulty in scattering this second flight, though commanded by these Godfreys, Bohemonds, and Tancreds."

The Patriarch was silent, for though he disliked, or rather detested the crusaders, as members of the Latin Church, he yet thought it highly doubtful that in feats of battle they could have been met and overcome by the Grecian forces.

"At any rate," said Alexius, rightly interpreting his silence, "if vanquished, I had fallen under my shield as a Greek emperor should, nor had I been forced into these mean measures of attacking men by stealth, and with forces disguised as infidels; while the lives of the faithful soldiers of the empire, who have fallen in obscure skirmishes, had better, both for them and me, been lost bravely in their ranks, avowedly fighting for their native emperor and their native country. Now, and as the matter stands, I shall be handed down to posterity as a wily tyrant, who engaged his subjects in fatal feuds for the safety of his own obscure life. Patriarch! these crimes rest not with me, but with the rebels whose intrigues compelled me into such courses — What, reverend father, will be my fate hereafter? — and in what light shall I descend to posterity, the author of so many disasters?"

"For futurity," said the Patriarch, "your grace hath referred yourself to the holy Church, which hath power to bind and loose; your means of propitiating her are ample, and I have already indicated such as she may reasonably expect, in consequence of your repentance and forgiveness."

"They shall be granted," replied the Emperor, "in their fullest extent; nor will I injure you in doubting their effect in the next world. In this present state of existence, however, the favourable opinion of the Church may do much for me during this important crisis. If we understand each other, good Zosimus, her doctors and bishops are to thunder in my behalf, nor is my benefit from her pardon, to be deferred till the funeral monument closes upon me?"

"Certainly not," said Zosimus; "the conditions which I have already stipulated being strictly attended to."

"And my memory in history," said Alexius, "in what manner is that to be preserved?"

"For that," answered the Patriarch, "your Imperial Majesty must trust to the filial piety and literary talents of your accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena."

The Emperor shook his head. "This unhappy Caesar," he said, "is like to make a quarrel between us; for I shall scarce pardon so ungrateful a rebel as he is, because my daughter clings to him with a woman's fondness. Besides, good Zosimus, it is not, I believe, the page of a historian such as my daughter that is most likely to be received without challenge by posterity. Some Procopius, some philosophical slave, starving in a garret, aspires to write the life of an Emperor whom he durst not approach; and although the principal merit of his production be, that it contains particulars upon the subject which no man durst have promulgated while the prince was living, yet no man hesitates to admit such as true when he has passed from the scene."

"On that subject," said Zosimus, "I can neither afford your Imperial Majesty relief or protection. If, however, your memory is unjustly slandered upon earth, it will be a matter of indifference to your Highness, who will be then, I trust, enjoying a state of beatitude which idle slander cannot assail. The only way, indeed, to avoid it while on this side of time, would be to write your Majesty's own memoirs while you are yet in the body; so convinced am I that it is in your power to assign legitimate excuses for those actions of your life, which, without your doing so, would seem most worthy of censure."

"Change we the subject," said the Emperor; "and since the danger is imminent, let us take care for the present, and leave future ages to judge for themselves. — What circumstance is it, reverend father, in your opinion, which encourages these conspirators to make so audacious an appeal to the populace and the Grecian soldiers?"

"Certainly," answered the Patriarch, "the most irritating incident of your highness's reign was the fate of Ursel, who, submitting, it is said, upon capitulation, for life, limb, and liberty, was starved to death by your orders, in the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and whose courage, liberality, and other popular virtues, are still fondly remembered by the citizens of this metropolis, and by the soldiers of the guard, called Immortal."

"And this," said the Emperor, fixing his eye upon his confessor, "your reverence esteems actually the most dangerous point of the popular tumult?"

"I cannot doubt," said the Patriarch, "that his very name, boldly pronounced, and artfully repeated, will be the watchword, as has been plotted, of a horrible tumult."

"I thank Heaven!" said the Emperor; "on that particular I will be on my guard. Good-night to your reverence! and, believe me, that all in this scroll, to which I have set my hand, shall be with the utmost fidelity accomplished. Be not, however, over-impatient in this business; — such a shower of benefits falling at once upon the Church, would make men suspicious that the prelates and ministers proceeded rather as acting upon a bargain between the Emperor and Patriarch, than as paying or receiving an atonement offered by a sinner in excuse of his crimes. This would be injurious, father, both to yourself and me."

"All regular delay," said the Patriarch, "shall be interposed at your highness's pleasure; and we shall trust to you for recollection that the bargain, if it could be termed one, was of your own seeking, and that the benefit to the Church was contingent upon the pardon and the support which she has afforded to your majesty."

"True," said the Emperor — "most true — nor shall I forget it. Once more adieu, and forget not what I have told thee. This is a night, Zosimus, in which the Emperor must toil like a slave, if he means not to return to the humble Alexius Comnenus, and even then there were no resting-place."

So saying, he took leave of the Patriarch, who was highly gratified with the advantages he had obtained for the Church, which many of his predecessors had struggled for in vain. He resolved, therefore, to support the staggering Alexius.

Chapter the Twenty-Fifth.

*Heaven knows its time; the bullet has its billet,
Arrow and javelin each its destined purpose;
The fated beasts of Nature's lower strain
Have each their separate task.*

Agelastes, after crossing the Emperor in the manner we have already described, and after having taken such measures as occurred to him to ensure the success of the conspiracy, returned to the lodge of his garden, where the lady of the Count of Paris still remained, her only companion being an old woman named Vexhelia, the wife of the soldier who accompanied Bertha to the camp of the Crusaders; the kind-hearted maiden having stipulated that, during her absence, her mistress was not to be left without an attendant, and that attendant connected with the Varangian guard. He had been all day playing the part of the ambitious politician, the selfish time-server, the dark and subtle conspirator; and now it seemed, as if to exhaust the catalogue of his various parts in the human drama, he chose to exhibit himself in the character of the wily sophist, and justify, or seem to justify, the arts by which he had risen to wealth and eminence, and hoped even now to arise to royalty itself.

"Fair Countess," he said, "what occasion is there for your wearing this veil of sadness over a countenance so lovely?"

"Do you suppose me," said Brenhilda, "a stock, or stone, or a creature without the feelings of a sensitive being, that I should endure mortification, imprisonment, danger and distress, without expressing the natural feelings of humanity? Do you imagine that to a lady like me, as free as the unreclaimed falcon, you can offer the insult of captivity, without my being sensible to the disgrace, or incensed against the authors of it? And dost thou think that I will receive consolation at thy hands — at thine — one of the most active artificers in this web of treachery in which I am so basely entangled?"

"Not entangled certainly by my means" — answered Agelastes; "clap your hands, call for what you wish, and the slave who refuses instant obedience had better been unborn. Had I not, with reference to your safety and your honour, agreed for a short time to be your keeper, that office would have been usurped by the Caesar, whose object you know, and may partly guess the modes by which it would be pursued. Why then dost thou childishly weep at being held for a short space in an honourable restraint, which the renowned arms of your husband will probably put an end to long ere tomorrow at noon?"

"Canst thou not comprehend," said the Countess, "thou man of many words, but of few honourable thoughts, that a heart like mine, which has been trained in the feelings of reliance upon my own worth and valour, must be necessarily affected with shame at being obliged to accept, even from the sword of a husband, that safety which I would gladly have owed only to my own?"

"Thou art misled, Countess," answered the philosopher, "by thy pride, a failing predominant in woman. Thinkest thou there has been no offensive assumption in laying aside the character of a mother and a wife, and adopting that of one of those brain-sick female fools, who, like the bravoës of the other sex, sacrifice every thing that is honourable or useful to a frantic and insane affectation of courage? Believe me, fair lady, that the true system of virtue consists in filling thine own place gracefully in society, breeding up thy children, and delighting those of the other sex, and any thing beyond this, may well render thee hateful or terrible, but can add nothing to thy amiable qualities."

"Thou pretendest," said the Countess, "to be a philosopher; methinks thou shouldst know, that the fame which hangs its chaplet on the tomb of a brave hero or heroine, is worth all the petty engagements in which ordinary persons spend the current of their time. One hour of life, crowded to the full with glorious action, and filled with noble risks, is worth whole years of those mean observances of paltry decorum, in which men steal through existence, like sluggish waters through a marsh, without either honour or observation."

"Daughter," said Agelastes, approaching near to the lady, "it is with pain I see you bewildered in errors which a little calm reflection might remove. We may flatter ourselves, and human vanity usually does so, that beings infinitely more powerful than those belonging to mere humanity, are employed daily in measuring out the good and evil of this world, the termination of combats, or the fate of empires, according to their own ideas of what is right or wrong, or, more properly, according to what we ourselves conceive to be such. The Greek heathens, renowned for their wisdom, and glorious for their actions, explained to men of ordinary minds the supposed existence of Jupiter and his Pantheon, where various deities presided over various virtues and vices, and regulated the temporal fortune and future happiness of such as practised them. The more learned and wise of the ancients rejected such the vulgar interpretation, and wisely, although affecting a deference to the public faith, denied before their disciples in private, the gross fallacies of Tartarus and Olympus, the vain doctrines concerning the gods themselves, and the extravagant expectations which the vulgar entertained of an immortality, supposed to be possessed by creatures who were in every respect mortal, both in the conformation of their bodies, and in the internal belief of their souls. Of these wise and good men some granted the existence of the supposed deities, but denied that they cared about the actions of mankind any more than those of the inferior animals. A merry, jovial, careless life, such as the followers of Epicurus would choose for themselves, was what they assigned for those gods whose being they admitted. Others, more bold or more consistent, entirely denied the existence of deities who apparently had no proper object or purpose, and believed that such of them, whose being and attributes were proved to us by no supernatural appearances, had in reality no existence whatever."

"Stop, wretch!" said the Countess, "and know that thou speakest not to one of those blinded heathens, of whose abominable doctrines you are detailing the result. Know, that if an erring, I am nevertheless a sincere daughter of the Church, and this cross displayed on my shoulder, is a sufficient emblem of the vows I have undertaken in its cause. Be therefore wary, as thou art wily; for, believe me, if thou scoffest or utterest reproach against my holy religion, what I am unable to answer in language, I will reply to, without hesitation, with the point of my dagger."

"To that argument" said Agelastes, drawing back from the neighbourhood of Brenhilda, "believe me, fair lady, I am very willing to urge your gentleness. But although I shall not venture to say any thing of those superior and benevolent powers to whom you ascribe the management of the world, you will surely not take offence at my noticing those base superstitions which have been adopted in explanation of what is called by the Magi, the Evil Principle. Was there ever received into a human creed, a being so mean — almost so ridiculous — as the Christian Satan? A goatish figure and limbs, with grotesque features, formed to express the most execrable passions; a degree of power scarce inferior to that of the Deity; and a talent at the same time scarce equal to that of the stupidest of the lowest order! What is he, this being, who is at least the second arbiter of the human race, save an immortal spirit, with the petty spleen and spite of a vindictive old man or old woman?"

Agelastes made a singular pause in this part of his discourse. A mirror of considerable size hung in the apartment, so that the philosopher could see in its reflection the figure of Brenhilda, and remark the change of her countenance, though she had averted her face from him in hatred of the doctrines which he promulgated. On this glass the philosopher had his eyes naturally fixed, and he was confounded at perceiving a figure glide from behind the shadow of a curtain, and glare at him with the supposed mien and expression of the Satan of monkish mythology, or a satyr of the heathen age.

"Man!" said Brenhilda, whose attention was attracted by this extraordinary apparition, as it seemed, of the fiend, "have thy wicked words, and still more wicked thoughts, brought the devil amongst us? If so, dismiss him instantly, else, by Our Lady of the Broken Lances! thou shalt know better than at present, what is the temper of a Frankish maiden, when in presence of the fiend himself, and those who pretend skill to raise him! I wish not to enter into a contest unless compelled; but if I am obliged to join battle with an enemy so horrible, believe me, no one shall say that Brenildha feared him."

Agelastes, after looking with surprise and horror at the figure as reflected in the glass, turned back his head to examine the substance, of which the reflection was so strange. The object, however, had disappeared behind the curtain, under which it probably lay hid, and it was after a minute or two that the half-gibing, half-scowling countenance showed itself again in the same position in the mirror.

"By the gods!" said Agelastes —

"In whom but now," said the Countess, "you professed unbelief."

"By the gods!" repeated Agelastes, in part recovering himself, "it is Sylvan! that singular mockery of humanity, who was said to have been brought from Taprobana. I warrant he also believes in his jolly god Pan, or the veteran Sylvanus. He is to the uninitiated a creature whose appearance is full of terrors, but he shrinks before the philosopher like ignorance before knowledge." So saying, he with one hand pulled down the curtain, under which the animal had nestled itself when it entered from the garden-window of the pavilion, and with the other, in which he had a staff uplifted, threatened to chastise the creature, with the words —

"How now, Sylvanus! what insolence is this? — To your place!"

As, in uttering these words, he struck the animal, the blow unluckily lighted upon his wounded hand, and recalled its bitter smart. The wild temper of the creature returned, unsubdued for the moment by any awe of man; uttering a fierce, and, at the same time, stifled cry, it flew on the philosopher, and clasped its strong and sinewy arms about his throat with the utmost fury. The old man twisted and struggled to deliver himself from the creature's grasp, but in vain. Sylvan kept hold of his prize, compressed his sinewy arms, and abode by his purpose of not quitting his hold of the philosopher's throat till he had breathed his last. Two more bitter yells, accompanied each with a desperate contortion of the countenance, and squeeze of the hands, concluded, in less than five minutes, the dreadful strife. Agelastes lay dead upon the ground, and his assassin Sylvan, springing from the body as if terrified and alarmed at what he had done, made his escape by the window. The Countess stood in astonishment, not knowing exactly whether she had witnessed a supernatural display of the judgment of Heaven, or an instance of its vengeance by mere mortal means. Her new attendant Vexhelia was no less astonished, though her acquaintance with the animal was considerably more intimate.

"Lady," she said, "that gigantic creature is an animal of great strength, resembling mankind in form, but huge in its size, and, encouraged by its immense power, sometimes malevolent in its intercourse with mortals. I have heard the Varangians often talk of it as belonging to the Imperial museum. It is fitting we remove the body of this unhappy man, and hide it in a plot of shrubbery in the garden. It is not likely that he will be missed to-night, and tomorrow there will be other matter astir, which will probably prevent much enquiry about him." The Countess Brenhilda assented, for she was not one of those timorous females to whom the countenances of the dead are objects of terror.

Trusting to the parole which she had given, Agelastes had permitted the Countess and her attendant the freedom of his gardens, of that part at least adjacent to the pavilion. They therefore were in little risk of interruption as they bore forth the dead body between them, and without much trouble disposed of it in the thickest part of one of the bosquets with which the garden was studded.

As they returned to their place of abode or confinement, the Countess, half speaking to herself, half addressing Vexhelia, said, "I am sorry for this; not that the infamous wretch did not deserve the full punishment of Heaven coming upon him in the very moment of blasphemy and infidelity, but because the courage and truth of the unfortunate Brenhilda may be brought into suspicion, as his slaughter took place when he was alone with her and her attendant, and as no one was witness of the singular manner in which the old blasphemer met his end. — Thou knowest," she added, addressing herself to Heaven — "thou! blessed Lady of the Broken Lances, the protectress both of Brenhilda and her husband, well knowest, that whatever faults may be mine, I am free from the slightest suspicion of treachery; and into thy hands I put my cause, with a perfect reliance upon thy wisdom and bounty to bear evidence in my favour." So saying, they returned to the lodge unseen, and with pious and submissive prayers, the Countess closed that eventful evening.

Chapter the Twenty-Sixth.

*Will you hear of a Spanish lady,
How she wooed an Englishman?
Garments gay, as rich as may be,
Deck'd with jewels she had on.
Of a comely countenance and grace was she,
And by birth and parentage of high degree.*

OLD BALLAD.

We left Alexius Comnenus after he had unloaded his conscience in the ears of the Patriarch, and received from him a faithful assurance of the pardon and patronage of the national Church. He took leave of the dignitary with some exulting exclamations, so unexplicitly expressed, however, that it was by no means easy to conceive the meaning of what he said. His first enquiry, when he reached the Blacquernal, being for his daughter, he was directed to the room encrusted with beautifully carved marble, from which she herself, and many of her race, derived the proud appellation of *Porphyrogenita*, or born in the purple. Her countenance was clouded with anxiety, which, at the sight of her father, broke out into open and uncontrollable grief.

"Daughter," said the Emperor, with a harshness little common to his manner, and a seriousness which he sternly maintained, instead of sympathizing with his daughter's affliction, "as you would prevent the silly fool with whom you are connected, from displaying himself to the public both as an ungrateful monster and a traitor, you will not fail to exhort him, by due submission, to make his petition for pardon, accompanied with a full confession of his crimes, or, by my sceptre and my crown, he shall die the death! Nor will I pardon any who rushes upon his doom in an open tone of defiance, under such a standard of rebellion as my ungrateful son-in-law has hoisted.

"What can you require of me, father?" said the Princess. "Can you expect that I am to dip my own hands in the blood of this unfortunate man; or wilt thou seek a revenge yet more bloody than that which was exacted by the deities of antiquity, upon those criminals who offended against their divine power?"

"Think not so, my daughter!" said the Emperor; "but rather believe that thou hast the last opportunity afforded by my filial affection, of rescuing, perhaps from death, that silly fool thy husband, who has so richly deserved it."

"My father," said the Princess, "God knows it is not at your risk that I would wish to purchase the life of Nicephorus; but he has been the father of my children, though they are now no more, and women cannot forget that such a tie has existed, even though it has been broken by fate. Permit me only to hope that the unfortunate culprit shall have an opportunity of retrieving his errors; nor shall it, believe me, be my fault, if he resumes those practices, treasonable at once, and unnatural, by which his life is at present endangered."

"Follow me, then, daughter," said the Emperor, "and know, that to thee alone I am about to intrust a secret, upon which the safety of my life and crown, as well as the pardon of my son-in-law's life, will be found eventually to depend."

He then assumed in haste the garment of a slave of the Seraglio, and commanded his daughter to arrange her dress in a more succinct form, and to take in her hand a lighted lamp.

"Whither are we going, my father?" said Anna Comnena.

"It matters not," replied her father, "since my destiny calls me, and since thine ordains thee to be my torch-bearer. Believe it, and record it, if thou darest, in thy book, that Alexius Comnenus does not, without alarm, descend into those awful dungeons — which his predecessors built for men, even when his intentions are innocent, and free from harm. — Be silent, and should we meet any inhabitant of those inferior regions, speak not a word nor make any observation upon his appearance."

Passing through the intricate apartments of the palace, they now came to that large hall through which Hereward had passed on the first night of his introduction to the place of Anna's recitation called the Temple of the Muses. It was constructed, as we have said, of black marble, dimly illuminated. At the upper end of the apartment was a small altar, on which was laid some incense, while over the smoke was suspended, as if projecting from the wall, two imitations of human hands and arms, which were but imperfectly seen.

At the bottom of this hall, a small iron door led to a narrow and winding staircase, resembling a draw-well in shape and size, the steps of which were excessively steep, and which the Emperor, after a solemn gesture to his daughter commanding her attendance, began to descend with the imperfect light, and by the narrow and difficult steps by which those who visited the under regions of the Blacquernal seemed to bid adieu to the light of day. Door after door they passed in their descent, leading, it was probable, to different ranges of dungeons, from which was obscurely heard the stifled voice of groans and sighs, such as attracted Hereward's attention on a former occasion. The Emperor took no notice of these signs of human misery, and three stories or ranges of dungeons had been already passed, ere the father and daughter arrived at the lowest story of the building, the base of which was the solid rock, roughly carved, upon which were erected the side-walls and arches of solid but unpolished marble.

"Here," said Alexius Comnenus, "all hope, all expectation takes farewell, at the turn of a hinge or the grating of a lock. Yet shall not this be always the case — the dead shall revive and resume their right, and the disinherited of these regions shall again prefer their claim to inhabit the upper world. If I cannot entreat Heaven to

my assistance, be assured, my daughter, that rather than be the poor animal which I have stooped to be thought, and even to be painted in thy history, I would sooner brave every danger of the multitude which now erect themselves betwixt me and safety. Nothing is resolved save that I will live and die an Emperor; and thou, Anna, be assured, that if there is power in the beauty or in the talents, of which so much has been boasted, that power shall be this evening exercised to the advantage of thy parent, from whom it is derived."

"What is it that you mean, Imperial father? — Holy Virgin! is this the promise you made me to save the life of the unfortunate Nicephorus?"

"And so I will," said the Emperor; "and I am now about that action of benevolence. But think not I will once more warm in my bosom the household snake which had so nearly stung me to death. No, daughter, I have provided for thee a fitting husband, in one who is able to maintain and defend the rights of the Emperor thy father; — and beware how thou opposest an obstacle to what is my pleasure! for behold these walls of marble, though unpolished, and recollect it is as possible to die within the marble as to be born there."

The Princess Anna Comnena was frightened at seeing her father in a state of mind entirely different from any which she had before witnessed. "O, heaven! that my mother were here!" she ejaculated, in the terror of something she hardly knew what.

"Anna," said the Emperor, "your fears and your screams are alike in vain. I am one of those, who, on ordinary occasions, hardly nourish a wish of my own, and account myself obliged to those who, like my wife and daughter, take care to save me all the trouble of free judgment. But when the vessel is among the breakers, and the master is called to the helm, believe that no meaner hand shall be permitted to interfere with him, nor will the wife and daughter, whom he indulged in prosperity, be allowed to thwart his will while he can yet call it his own. Thou couldst scarcely fail to understand that I was almost prepared to have given thee, as a mark of my sincerity, to yonder obscure Varangian, without asking question of either birth or blood. Thou mayst hear when I next promise thee to a three years' inhabitant of these vaults, who shall be Caesar in Briennius's stead, if I can move him to accept a princess for his bride, and an imperial crown for his inheritance, in place of a starving dungeon."

"I tremble at your words, father," said Anna Comnena; "how canst thou trust a man who has felt thy cruelty? — How canst thou dream that aught can ever in sincerity reconcile thee to one whom thou hast deprived of his eyesight?"

"Care not for that," said Alexius; "he becomes mine, or he shall never know what it is to be again his own. — And thou, girl, mayst rest assured that, if I will it, thou art next day the bride of my present captive, or thou retirest to the most severe nunnery, never again to mix with society. Be silent, therefore, and await thy doom, as it shall come, and hope not that thy utmost endeavours can avert the current of thy destiny."

As he concluded this singular dialogue, in which he had assumed a tone to which his daughter was a stranger, and before which she trembled, he passed on through more than one strictly fastened door, while his daughter, with a faltering step, illuminated him on the obscure road. At length he found admittance by another passage into the cell in which Ursel was confined, and found him reclining in hopeless misery — all those expectations having faded from his heart which the Count of Paris had by his indomitable gallantry for a time excited. He turned his sightless eyes towards the place where he heard the moving of bolts and the approach of steps.

"A new feature," he said, "in my imprisonment — a man comes with a heavy and determined step, and a woman or a child with one that scarcely presses the floor! — is it my death that you bring? — Believe me, that I have lived long enough in these dungeons to bid my doom welcome."

"It is not thy death, noble Ursel," said the Emperor, in a voice somewhat disguised. Life, liberty, whatever the world has to give, is placed by the Emperor Alexius at the feet of his noble enemy, and he trusts that many years of happiness and power, together with the command of a large share of the empire, will soon obliterate the recollection of the dungeons of the Blacquernal."

"It cannot be," said Ursel, with a sigh. "He upon whose eyes the sun has set even at middle day, can have nothing left to hope from the most advantageous change of circumstances."

"You are not entirely assured of that," said the Emperor; "allow us to convince you that what is intended towards you is truly favourable and liberal, and I hope you will be rewarded by finding that there is more possibility of amendment in your case, than your first apprehensions are willing to receive. Make an effort, and try whether your eyes are not sensible of the light of the lamp."

"Do with, me," said Ursel, "according to your pleasure; I have neither strength to remonstrate, nor the force of mind equal to make me set your cruelty at defiance. Of something like light I am sensible; but whether it is reality or illusion, I cannot determine. If you are come to deliver me from this living sepulchre, I pray God to requite you; and if, under such deceitful pretence, you mean to take my life, I can only commend my soul to Heaven, and the vengeance due to my death to Him who can behold the darkest places in which injustice can shroud itself."

So saying, and the revulsion of his spirits rendering him unable to give almost any other signs of existence, Ursel sunk back upon his seat of captivity, and spoke not another word during the time that Alexius disembarassed him of those chains which had so long hung about him, that they almost seemed to make a part of his person.

"This is an affair in which thy aid can scarce be sufficient, Anna," said the Emperor; "it would have been well if you and I could have borne him into the open air by our joint strength, for there is little wisdom in showing the secrets of this prison-house to those to whom they are not yet known; nevertheless, go, my child, and at a short distance from the head of the staircase which we descended, thou wilt find Edward, the bold and trusty Varangian, who on your communicating to him my orders, will come hither and render his assistance; and see that you send also the experienced leech, Douban." Terrified, half-stifled, and half struck with horror, the lady yet felt a degree of relief from the somewhat milder tone in which her father addressed her. With tottering steps, yet in some measure encouraged by the tenor of her instructions, she ascended the staircase which yawned upon these infernal dungeons. As she approached the top, a large and strong figure threw its broad shadow between the lamp and the opening of the hall. Frightened nearly to death at the thoughts of becoming the wife of a squalid wretch like Ursel, a moment of weakness seized upon the Princess's mind, and when she considered the melancholy option which her father had placed before her, she could not but think that the handsome and gallant Varangian, who had already rescued the royal family from such imminent danger, was a fitter person with whom to unite herself, if she must needs make a second choice, than the singular and disgusting being whom her father's policy had raked from the bottom of the Blacquernal dungeons.

I will not say of poor Anna Comnena, who was a timid but not an unfeeling woman, that she would have embraced such a proposal, had not the life of her present husband Nicephorus Briennius been in extreme danger; and it was obviously the determination of the Emperor, that if he spared him, it should be on the sole condition of unloosing his daughter's hand, and binding her to some one of better faith, and possessed of a greater desire to prove an affectionate son-in-law. Neither did the plan of adopting the Varangian as a second husband, enter decidedly into the mind of the Princess. The present was a moment of danger, in which her rescue to be successful must be sudden, and perhaps, if once achieved, the lady might have had an opportunity of freeing herself both from Ursel and the Varangian, without disjoining either of them from her father's assistance, or of herself losing it. At any rate, the surest means of safety were to secure, if possible, the young soldier, whose features and appearance were of a kind which rendered the task no way disagreeable to a beautiful woman. The schemes of conquest are so natural to the fair sex, and the whole idea passed so quickly through Anna Comnena's mind, that having first entered while the soldier's shadow was interposed between her and the lamp, it had fully occupied her quick imagination, when, with deep reverence and great surprise at her sudden appearance on the ladder of Acheron, the Varangian advancing, knelt down, and lent his arm to the assistance of the fair lady, in order to help her out of the dreary staircase.

"Dearest Hereward," said the lady, with a degree of intimacy which seemed unusual, "how much do I rejoice, in this dreadful night, to have fallen under your protection! I have been in places which the spirit of hell appears to have contrived for the human race." The alarm of the Princess, the familiarity of a beautiful woman, who, while in mortal fear, seeks refuge, like a frightened dove, in the bosom of the strong and the brave, must be the excuse of Anna Comnena for the tender epithet with which she greeted Hereward; nor, if he had chosen to answer in the same tone, which, faithful as he was, might have proved the case if the meeting had chanced before he saw Bertha, would the daughter of Alexius have been, to say the truth, irreconcilably offended. Exhausted as she was, she suffered herself to repose upon, the broad breast and shoulder of the Anglo-Saxon; nor did she make an attempt to recover herself, although the decorum of her

sex and station seemed to recommend such an exertion. Hereward was obliged himself to ask her, with the unimpassioned and reverential demeanour of a private soldier to a princess, whether he ought to summon her female attendants? to which she faintly uttered a negative. "No, no," said she, "I have a duty to execute for my father, and I must not summon eye-witnesses; — he knows me to be in safety, Hereward, since he knows I am with thee; and if I am a burden to you in my present state of weakness, I shall soon recover, if you will set me down upon the marble steps."

"Heaven forbid, lady," said Hereward, "that I were thus neglectful of your Highness's gracious health! I see your two young ladies, Astarte and Violante, are in quest of you — Permit me to summon them hither, and I will keep watch upon you, if you are unable to retire to your chamber, where, methinks, the present disorder of your nerves will be most properly treated."

"Do as thou wilt, barbarian," said the Princess, rallying herself, with a certain degree of pique, arising perhaps from her not thinking *moredramatis personae* were appropriate to the scene, than the two who were already upon the stage. Then, as if for the first time, appearing to recollect the message with which she had been commissioned, she exhorted the Varangian to repair instantly to her father.

On such occasions, the slightest circumstances have their effect on the actors. The Anglo-Saxon was sensible that the Princess was somewhat offended, though whether she was so, on account of her being actually in Hereward's arms, or whether the cause of her anger was the being nearly discovered there by the two young maidens, the sentinel did not presume to guess, but departed for the gloomy vaults to join Alexius, with the never-failing double-edged axe, the bane of many a Turk, glittering upon his shoulder.

Astarte and her companion had been despatched by the Empress Irene in search of Anna Comnena, through those apartments of the palace which she was wont to inhabit. The daughter of Alexius could nowhere be found, although the business on which they were seeking her was described by the Empress as of the most pressing nature. Nothing, however, in a palace, passes altogether unespied, so that the Empress's messengers at length received information that their mistress and the Emperor had been seen to descend that gloomy access to the dungeons, which, by allusion to the classical infernal regions, was termed the Pit of Acheron. They came thither, accordingly, and we have related the consequences. Hereward thought it necessary to say that her Imperial Highness had swooned upon being suddenly brought into the upper air. The Princess, on the other part, briskly shook off her juvenile attendants, and declared herself ready to proceed to the chamber of her mother. The obeisance which she made Hereward at parting, had something in it of haughtiness, yet evidently qualified by a look of friendship and regard. As she passed an apartment in which some of the royal slaves were in waiting, she addressed to one of them, an old respectable man, of medical skill, a private and hurried order, desiring him to go to the assistance of her father, whom he would find at the bottom of the staircase called the Pit of Acheron, and to take his scimitar along with him. To hear, as usual, was to obey, and Douban, for that was his name, only replied by that significant sign which indicates immediate acquiescence. In the meantime, Anna Comnena herself hastened onward to her mother's apartments, in which she found the Empress alone.

"Go hence, maidens," said Irene, "and do not let any one have access to these apartments, even if the Emperor himself should command it. Shut the door," she said, "Anna Comnena; and if the jealousy of the stronger sex do not allow us the masculine privileges of bolts and bars, to secure the insides of our apartments, let us avail ourselves, as quickly as may be, of such opportunities as are permitted us; and remember, Princess, that however implicit your duty to your father, it is yet more so to me, who am of the same sex with thyself, and may truly call thee, even according to the letter, blood of my blood, and bone of my bone. Be assured thy father knows not, at this moment, the feelings of a woman. Neither he nor any man alive can justly conceive the pangs of the heart which beats under a woman's robe. These men, Anna, would tear asunder without scruple the tenderest ties of affection, the whole structure of domestic felicity, in which lie a woman's cares, her joy, her pain, her love, and her despair. Trust, therefore, to me, my daughter, and believe me, I will at once save thy father's crown and thy happiness. The conduct of thy husband has been wrong, most cruelly wrong; but, Anna, he is a man — and in calling him such, I lay to his charge, as natural frailties, thoughtless treachery, wanton infidelity, every species of folly and inconsistency, to which his race is subject. You ought not, therefore, to think of his faults, unless it be to forgive them."

"Madam," said Anna Comnena, "forgive me if I remind you that you recommend to a princess, born in the purple itself, a line of conduct which would hardly become the female who carries the pitcher for the needful supply of water to the village well. All who are around me have been taught to pay me the obeisance due to my birth, and while this Nicephorus Briennius crept on his knees to your daughter's hand, which you extended towards him, he was rather receiving the yoke of a mistress than accepting a household alliance with a wife. He has incurred his doom, without a touch even of that temptation which may be pled by lesser culprits in his condition; and if it is the will of my father that he should die, or suffer banishment, or imprisonment, for the crime he has committed, it is not the business of Anna Comnena to interfere, she being the most injured among the imperial family, who have in so many, and such gross respects, the right to complain of his falsehood."

"Daughter," replied the Empress, "so far I agree with you, that the treason of Nicephorus towards your father and myself has been in a great degree unpardonable; nor do I easily see on what footing, save that of generosity, his life could be saved. But still you are yourself in different circumstances from me, and may, as an affectionate and fond wife, compare the intimacies of your former habits with the bloody change which is so soon to be the consequence and the conclusion of his crimes. He is possessed of that person and of those features which women most readily recall to their memory, whether alive or dead. Think what it will cost you to recollect that the rugged executioner received his last salute — that the shapely neck had no better repose than the rough block — that the tongue, the sound of which you used to prefer to the choicest instruments of music, is silent in the dust!"

Anna, who was not insensible to the personal graces of her husband, was much affected by this forcible appeal. "Why distress me thus, mother?" she replied in a weeping accent. "Did I not feel as acutely as you would have me to do, this moment, however awful, would be easily borne. I had but to think of him as he is, to contrast his personal qualities with those of the mind, by which they are more than overbalanced, and resign myself to his deserved fate with unresisting submission to my father's will."

"And that," said the Empress, "would be to bind thee, by his sole fiat, to some obscure wretch, whose habits of plotting and intriguing had, by some miserable chance, given him the opportunity of becoming of importance to the Emperor, and who is, therefore, to be rewarded by the hand of Anna Comnena."

"Do not think so meanly of me, madam," said the Princess — "I know, as well as ever Grecian maiden did, how I should free myself from dishonour; and, you may trust me, you shall never blush for your daughter."

"Tell me not that," said the Empress, "since I shall blush alike for the relentless cruelty which gives up a once beloved husband to an ignominious death, and for the passion, for which I want a name, which would replace him by an obscure barbarian from the extremity of Thule, or some wretch escaped from the Blacquernal dungeons."

The Princess was astonished to perceive that her mother was acquainted with the purposes, even the most private, which her father had formed for his governance during this emergency. She was ignorant that Alexius and his royal consort, in other respects living together with a decency ever exemplary in people of their rank, had, sometimes, on interesting occasions, family debates, in which the husband, provoked by the seeming unbelief of his partner, was tempted to let her guess more of his real purposes than he would have coolly imparted of his own calm choice.

The Princess was affected at the anticipation of the death of her husband, nor could this have been reasonably supposed to be otherwise; but she was still more hurt and affronted by her mother taking it for granted that she designed upon the instant to replace the Caesar by an uncertain, and at all events an unworthy successor. Whatever considerations had operated to make Hereward her choice, their effect was lost when the match was placed in this odious and degrading point of view; besides which is to be remembered, that women almost instinctively deny their first thoughts in favour of a suitor, and seldom willingly reveal them, unless time and circumstance concur to favour them. She called Heaven therefore passionately to witness, while she repelled the charge.

"Bear witness," she said, "Our Lady, Queen of Heaven! Bear witness, saints and martyrs all, ye blessed ones, who are, more than ourselves, the guardians of our mental purity! that I know no passion which I dare not avow, and that if Nicephorus's life depended on my entreaty to God and men, all his injurious acts towards me disregarded and despised, it should be as long as Heaven gave to those servants whom it snatched from the earth without suffering the pangs of mortality!"

"You have sworn boldly," said the Empress. "See, Anna Comnena, that you keep your word, for believe me it will be tried."

"What will be tried, mother?" said the Princess; "or what have I to do to pronounce the doom of the Caesar, who is not subject to my power?"

"I will show you," said the Empress, gravely; and, leading her towards a sort of wardrobe, which formed a closet in the wall, she withdrew a curtain which hung before it, and placed before her her unfortunate husband, Nicephorus Briennius, half-attired, with his sword drawn in his hand. Looking upon him as an enemy, and conscious of some schemes with respect to him which had passed through her mind in the course of these troubles, the Princess screamed faintly, upon perceiving him so near her with a weapon in his hand.

"Be more composed," said the Empress, "or this wretched man, if discovered, falls no less a victim to thy idle fears than to thy baneful revenge."

Nicephorus at this speech seemed to have adopted his cue, for, dropping the point of his sword, and falling on his knees before the Princess, he clasped his hands to entreat for mercy.

"What hast thou to ask from me?" said his wife, naturally assured, by her husband's prostration, that the stronger force was upon her own side — "what hast thou to ask from me, that outraged gratitude, betrayed affection, the most solemn vows violated, and the fondest ties of nature torn asunder like the spider's broken web, will permit thee to put in words for very shame?"

"Do not suppose, Anna," replied the suppliant, "that I am at this eventful period of my life to play the hypocrite, for the purpose of saving the wretched remnant of a dishonoured existence. I am but desirous to part in charity with thee, to make my peace with Heaven, and to nourish the last hope of making my way, though burdened with many crimes, to those regions in which alone I can find thy beauty, thy talents, equalled at least, if not excelled."

"You hear him, daughter?" said Irene; "his boon is for forgiveness alone; thy condition is the more godlike, since thou mayst unite the safety of his life with the pardon of his offences."

"Thou art deceived, mother," answered Anna. "It is not mine to pardon his guilt, far less to remit his punishment. You have taught me to think of myself as future ages shall know me; what will they say of me, those future ages, when I am described as the unfeeling daughter, who pardoned the intended assassin of her father, because she saw in him her own unfaithful husband?"

"See there," said the Caesar, "is not that, most serene Empress, the very point of despair? and have I not in vain offered my life-blood to wipe out the stain of parricide and ingratitude? Have I not also vindicated myself from the most unpardonable part of the accusation, which charged me with attempting the murder of the godlike Emperor? Have I not sworn by all that is sacred to man, that my purpose went no farther than to sequester Alexius for a little time from the fatigues of empire, and place him where he should quietly enjoy ease and tranquillity? while, at the same time, his empire should be as implicitly regulated by himself, his sacred pleasure being transmitted through me, as in any respect, or at any period, it had ever been?"

"Erring man!" said the Princess, "hast thou approached so near to the footstool of Alexius Comnenus, and durst thou form so false an estimate of him, as to conceive it possible that he would consent to be a mere puppet by whose intervention you might have brought his empire into submission? Know that the blood of Comnenus is not so poor; my father would have resisted the treason in arms; and by the death of thy benefactor only couldst thou have gratified the suggestions of thy criminal ambition."

"Be such your belief," said the Caesar; "I have said enough for a life which is not and ought not to be dear to me. Call your guards, and let them take the life of the unfortunate Briennius, since it has become hateful to his once beloved Anna Comnena. Be not afraid that any resistance of mine shall render the scene of my apprehension dubious or fatal. Nicephorus Briennius is Caesar no longer, and he thus throws at the feet of his Princess and spouse, the only poor means which he has of resisting the just doom which is therefore at her pleasure to pass."

He cast his sword before the feet of the Princess, while Irene exclaimed, weeping, or seeming to weep bitterly, "I have indeed read of such scenes! but could I ever have thought that my own daughter would have been the principal actress in one of them — could I ever have thought that her mind, admired by every one as a palace for the occupation of Apollo and the Muses, should not have had room enough for the humbler, but more amiable virtue of feminine charity and compassion, which builds itself a nest in the bosom of the lowest village girl? Do thy gifts, accomplishments, and talents, spread hardness as well as polish over thy heart? If so, a hundred times better renounce them all, and retain in their stead those gentle and domestic virtues which are the first honours of the female heart. A woman who is pitiless, is a worse monster than one who is unsexed by any other passion."

"What would you have me do?" said Anna. "You, mother, ought to know better than I, that the life of my father is hardly consistent with the existence of this bold and cruel man. O, I am sure he still meditates his purpose of conspiracy! He that could deceive a woman in the manner he has done me, will not relinquish a plan which is founded upon the death of his benefactor."

"You do me injustice, Anna," said Briennius, starting up, and imprinting a kiss upon her lips ere she was aware. "By this caress, the last that will pass between us, I swear, that if in my life I have yielded to folly, I have, notwithstanding, never been guilty of a treason of the heart towards a woman as superior to the rest of the female world in talents and accomplishments, as in personal beauty."

The Princess, much softened, shook her head, as she replied — "Ah, Nicephorus! — such were once your words! such, perhaps, were then your thoughts! But who, or what, shall now warrant to me the veracity of either?"

"Those very accomplishments, and that very beauty itself," replied Nicephorus.

"And if more is wanting," said Irene, "thy mother will enter her security for him. Deem her not an insufficient pledge in this affair; she is thy mother, and the wife of Alexius Comnenus, interested beyond all human beings in the growth and increase of the power and dignity of her husband and her child; and one who sees on this occasion an opportunity for exercising generosity, for soldering up the breaches of the Imperial house, and reconstructing the frame of government upon a basis, which, if there be faith and gratitude in man, shall never be again exposed to hazard."

"To the reality of that faith and gratitude, then," said the Princess, "we must trust implicitly, as it is your will, mother; although even my own knowledge of the subject, both through study and experience of the world, has called me to observe the rashness of such confidence. But although we two may forgive Nicephorus's errors, the Emperor is still the person to whom the final reference must be had, both as to pardon and favour."

"Fear not Alexius," answered her mother; "he will speak determinedly and decidedly; but, if he acts not in the very moment of forming the resolution, it is no more to be relied on than an icicle in time of thaw. Do thou apprise me, if thou canst, what the Emperor is at present doing, and take my word I will find means to bring him round to our opinion."

"Must I then betray secrets which my father has intrusted to me?" said the Princess; "and to one who has so lately held the character of his avowed enemy?"

"Call it not betray," said Irene, "since it is written thou shalt betray no one, least of all thy father, and the father of the empire. Yet again it is written, by the holy Luke, that men shall be betrayed, both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends, and therefore surely also by daughters; by which I only mean thou shalt discover to us thy father's secrets, so far as may enable us to save the life of thy husband. The necessity of the case excuses whatever may be otherwise considered as irregular."

"Be it so then, mother. Having yielded my consent perhaps too easily, to snatch this malefactor from my father's justice, I am sensible I must secure his safety by such means as are in my power. I left my father at the bottom of those stairs, called the Pit of Acheron, in the cell of a blind man, to whom he gave the name of Ursel."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Empress, "thou hast named a name which has been long unspoken in the open air."

"Has the Emperor's sense of his danger from the living," said the Caesar, "induced him to invoke the dead? — for Ursel has been no living man for the space of three years."

"It matters not," said Anna Comnena; "I tell you true. My father even now held conference with a miserable-looking prisoner, whom he so named."

"It is a danger the more," said the Caesar; "he cannot have forgotten the zeal with which I embraced the cause of the present Emperor against his own; and so soon as he is at liberty, he will study to avenge it. For this we must endeavour to make some provision, though it increases our difficulties. — Sit down then, my

gentle, my beneficent mother; and thou, my wife, who hast preferred thy love for an unworthy husband to the suggestions of jealous passion and of headlong revenge, sit down, and let us see in what manner it may be in our power, consistently with your duty to the Emperor, to bring our broken vessel securely into port." He employed much natural grace of manner in handing the mother and daughter to their seats; and, taking his place confidentially between them, all were soon engaged in concerting what measures should be taken for the morrow, not forgetting such as should at once have the effect of preserving the Caesar's life, and at the same time of securing the Grecian empire against the conspiracy of which he had been the chief instigator. Briennius ventured to hint, that perhaps the best way would be to suffer the conspiracy to proceed as originally intended, pledging his own faith that the rights of Alexius should be held inviolate during the struggle; but his influence over the Empress and her daughter did not extend to obtaining so great a trust. They plainly protested against permitting him to leave the palace, or taking the least share in the confusion which tomorrow was certain to witness.

"You forget, noble ladies," said the Caesar, "that my honour is concerned in meeting the Count of Paris."

"Pshaw! tell me not of your honour, Briennius," said Anna Comnena; "do I not well know, that although the honour of the western knights be a species of Moloch, a flesh-devouring, blood-quaffing demon, yet that which is the god of idolatry to the eastern warriors, though equally loud and noisy in the hall, is far less implacable in the field? Believe not that I have forgiven great injuries and insults, in order to take such false coin as *honour* in payment; your ingenuity is but poor, if you cannot devise some excuse which will satisfy the Greeks; and in good sooth, Briennius, to this battle you go not, whether for your good or for your ill. Believe not that I will consent to your meeting either Count or Countess, whether in warlike combat or amorous parley. So you may at a word count upon remaining prisoner here until the hour appointed for such gross folly be past and over."

The Caesar, perhaps, was not in his heart angry that his wife's pleasure was so bluntly and resolutely expressed against the intended combat. "If," said he, "you are determined to take my honour into your own keeping, I am here for the present your prisoner, nor have I the means of interfering with your pleasure. When once at liberty, the free exercise of my valour and my lance is once more my own."

"Be it so, Sir Paladin," said the Princess, very composedly. "I have good hope that neither of them will involve you with any of yon dare-devils of Paris, whether male or female, and that we will regulate the pitch to which your courage soars, by the estimation of Greek philosophy, and the judgment of our blessed Lady of Mercy, not her of the Broken Lances."

At this moment an authoritative knock at the door alarmed the consultation of the Caesar and the ladies.

Chapter the Twenty-Seventh.

*Physician. Be comforted, good madam; the great rage,
You see is cured in him: and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in: trouble him no more,
Till further settling.*

KING LEAR.

We left the Emperor Alexius Comnenus at the bottom of a subterranean vault, with a lamp expiring, and having charge of a prisoner, who seemed himself nearly reduced to the same extremity. For the first two or three moments, he listened after his daughter's retiring footsteps. He grew impatient, and began to long for her return before it was possible she could have traversed the path betwixt him and the summit of these gloomy stairs. A minute or two he endured with patience the absence of the assistance which he had sent her to summon; but strange suspicions began to cross his imagination. Could it be possible? Had she changed her purpose on account of the hard words which he had used towards her? Had she resolved to leave her father to his fate in his hour of utmost need? and was he to rely no longer upon the assistance which he had implored her to send?

The short time which the Princess trifled away in a sort of gallantry with the Varangian Hereward, was magnified tenfold by the impatience of the Emperor, who began to think that she was gone to fetch the accomplices of the Caesar to assault their prince in his defenceless condition, and carry into effect their half-disconcerted conspiracy.

After a considerable time, filled up with this feeling of agonizing uncertainty, he began at length, more composedly, to recollect the little chance there was that the Princess would, even for her own sake, resentful as she was in the highest degree of her husband's ill behaviour, join her resources to his, to the destruction of one who had so generally showed himself an indulgent and affectionate father. When he had adopted this better mood, a step was heard upon the staircase, and after a long and unequal descent, Hereward, in his heavy armour, at length coolly arrived at the bottom of the steps. Behind him, panting and trembling, partly with cold and partly with terror, came Douban, the slave well skilled in medicine.

"Welcome, good Edward! Welcome, Douban!" he said, "whose medical skill is sufficiently able to counterbalance the weight of years which hang upon him."

"Your Highness is gracious," said Douban — but what he would have farther said was cut off by a violent fit of coughing, the consequence of his age, of his feeble habit, of the damps of the dungeon, and the rugged exercise of descending the long and difficult staircase.

"Thou art unaccustomed to visit thy patients in so rough an abode," said Alexius; "and, nevertheless, to the damps of these dreary regions state necessity obliges us to confine many, who are no less our beloved subjects in reality than they are in title."

The medical man continued his cough, perhaps as an apology for not giving that answer of assent, with which his conscience did not easily permit him to reply to an observation, which, though stated by one who should know the fact, seemed not to be in itself altogether likely.

"Yes, my Douban," said the Emperor, "in this strong case of steel and adamant have we found it necessary to enclose the redoubted Ursel, whose fame is spread through the whole world, both for military skill, political wisdom, personal bravery, and other noble gifts, which we have been obliged to obscure for a time, in order that we might, at the fittest conjuncture, which is now arrived, restore them to the world in their full lustre. Feel his pulse, therefore, Douban — consider him as one who hath suffered severe confinement, with all its privations, and is about to be suddenly restored to the full enjoyment of life, and whatever renders life valuable."

"I will do my best," said Douban; "but your Majesty must consider, that we work upon a frail and exhausted subject, whose health seems already wellnigh gone, and may perhaps vanish in an instant — like this pale and trembling light, whose precarious condition the life-breath of this unfortunate patient seems closely to resemble."

"Desire, therefore, good Douban, one or two of the mutes who serve in the interior, and who have repeatedly been thy assistants in such cases — or stay — Edward, thy motions will be more speedy; do thou go for the mutes — make them bring some kind of litter to transport the patient; and, Douban, do thou superintend the whole. Transport him instantly to a suitable apartment, only taking care that it be secret, and let him enjoy the comforts of the bath, and whatever else may tend to restore his feeble animation — keeping in mind, that he must, if possible, appear tomorrow in the field."

"That will be hard," said Douban, "after having been, it would appear, subjected to such fare and such usage as his fluctuating pulse intimates but too plainly."

"'Twas a mistake of the dungeon-keeper, the inhuman villain, who should not go without his reward," continued the Emperor, "had not Heaven already bestowed it by the strange means of a sylvan man, or native of the woods, who yesterday put to death the jailor who meditated the death of his prisoner — Yes, my dear Douban, a private sentinel of our guards called the Immortal, had wellnigh annihilated this flower of our trust, whom for a time we were compelled to immure in secret. Then, indeed, a rude hammer had dashed to pieces an unparalleled brilliant, but the fates have arrested such a misfortune."

The assistance having arrived, the physician, who seemed more accustomed to act than to speak, directed a bath to be prepared with medicated herbs, and gave it as his opinion, that the patient should not be disturbed till tomorrow's sun was high in the heavens. Ursel accordingly was assisted to the bath, which was employed according to the directions of the physician; but without affording any material symptoms of recovery. From thence he was transferred to a cheerful bedchamber, opening by an ample window to one of the terraces of the palace, which commanded an extensive prospect. These operations were performed upon a frame so extremely stupified by previous suffering, so dead to the usual sensations of existence, that it was not till the sensibility should be gradually restored by friction of the stiffened limbs, and other means, that the leech hoped the mists of the intellect should at length begin to clear away.

Douban readily undertook to obey the commands of the Emperor, and remained by the bed of the patient until the dawn of morning, ready to support nature as far as the skill of leechcraft admitted.

From the mutes, much more accustomed to be the executioners of the Emperor's displeasure than of his humanity, Douban selected one man of milder mood, and by Alexius's order, made him understand, that the ask in which he was engaged was to be kept most strictly secret, while the hardened slave was astonished to find that the attentions paid to the sick were to be rendered with yet more mystery than the bloody offices of death and torture.

The passive patient received the various acts of attention which were rendered to him in silence; and if not totally without consciousness, at least without a distinct comprehension of their object. After the soothing operation of the bath, and the voluptuous exchange of the rude and musty pile of straw, on which he had stretched himself for years, for a couch of the softest down, Ursel was presented with a sedative draught, slightly tintured with an opiate. The balmy restorer of nature came thus invoked, and the captive sunk into a delicious slumber long unknown to him, and which seemed to occupy equally his mental faculties and his bodily frame, while the features were released from their rigid tenor, and the posture of the limbs, no longer disturbed by fits of cramp, and sudden and agonizing twists and throes, seemed changed for a placid state of the most perfect ease and tranquillity.

The morn was already colouring the horizon, and the freshness of the breeze of dawn had insinuated itself into the lofty halls of the palace of the Blacquernal, when a gentle tap at the door of the chamber awakened Douban, who, undisturbed from the calm state of his patient, had indulged himself in a brief repose. The door opened, and a figure appeared, disguised in the robes worn by an officer of the palace, and concealed, beneath an artificial beard of great size, and of a white colour, the features of the Emperor himself. "Douban," said Alexius, "how fares it with thy patient, whose safety is this day of such consequence to the Grecian state?"

"Well, my lord," replied the physician, "excellently well; and if he is not now disturbed, I will wager whatever skill I possess, that nature, assisted by the art of the physician, will triumph over the damps and the unwholesome air of the impure dungeon. Only be prudent, my lord, and let not an untimely haste bring this Ursel forward into the contest ere he has arranged the disturbed current of his ideas, and recovered, in some degree, the spring of his mind, and the powers of his body."

"I will rule my impatience," said the Emperor, "or rather, Douban, I will be ruled by thee. Thinkest thou he is awake?"

"I am inclined to think so," said the leech, "but he opens not his eyes, and seems to me as if he absolutely resisted the natural impulse to rouse himself and look around him."

"Speak to him," said the Emperor, "and let us know what is passing in his mind."

"It is at some risk," replied the physician, "but you shall be obeyed. — Ursel," he said, approaching the bed of his blind patient, and then, in a louder tone, he repeated again, "Ursel! Ursel!"

"Peace — Hush!" muttered the patient; "disturb not the blest in their ecstasy — nor again recall the most miserable of mortals to finish the draught of bitterness which his fate had compelled him to commence."

"Again, again," said the Emperor, aside to Douban, "try him yet again; it is of importance for me to know in what degree he possesses his senses, or in what measure they have disappeared from him."

"I would not, however," said the physician, "be the rash and guilty person, who, by an ill-timed urgency, should produce a total alienation of mind and plunge him back either into absolute lunacy, or produce a stupor in which he might remain for a long period."

"Surely not," replied the Emperor: "my commands are those of one Christian to another, nor do I wish them farther obeyed than as they are consistent with the laws of God and man."

He paused for a moment after this declaration, and yet but few minutes had elapsed ere he again urged the leech to pursue the interrogation of his patient. "If you hold me not competent," said Douban, somewhat vain of the trust necessarily reposed in him, "to judge of the treatment of my patient, your Imperial Highness must take the risk and the trouble upon yourself."

"Marry, I shall," said the Emperor, "for the scruples of leeches are not to be indulged, when the fate of kingdoms and the lives of monarchs are placed against them in the scales. — Rouse thee, my noble Ursel! hear a voice, with which thy ears were once well acquainted, welcome thee back to glory and command! Look around thee, and see how the world smiles to welcome thee back from imprisonment to empire!"

"Cunning fiend!" said Ursel, "who usest the most wily baits in order to augment the misery of the wretched! Know, tempter, that I am conscious of the whole trick of the soothing images of last night — thy baths — thy beds — and thy bowers of bliss. — But sooner shalt thou be able to bring a smile upon the cheek of St. Anthony the Eremite, than induce me to curl mine after the fashion of earthly voluptuaries."

"Try it, foolish man," insisted the Emperor, "and trust to the evidence of thy senses for the reality of the pleasures by which thou art now surrounded; or, if thou art obstinate in thy lack of faith, tarry as thou art for a single moment, and I will bring with me a being so unparalleled in her loveliness, that a single glance of her were worth the restoration of thine eyes, were it only to look upon her for a moment." So saying he left the apartment.

"Traitor," said Ursel, "and deceiver of old, bring no one hither! and strive not, by shadowy and ideal forms of beauty, to increase the delusion that gilds my prison-house for a moment, in order, doubtless, to destroy totally the spark of reason, and then exchange this earthly hell for a dungeon in the infernal regions themselves."

"His mind is somewhat shattered," mused the physician, "which is often the consequence of a long solitary confinement. I marvel much," was his farther thought, "if the Emperor can shape out any rational service which this man can render him, after being so long immured in so horrible a dungeon. — Thou thinkest, then," continued he, addressing the patient, "that the seeming release of last night, with its baths and refreshments, was only a delusive dream, without any reality?"

"Ay — what else?" answered Ursel.

"And that the arousing thyself, as we desire thee to do, would be but a resigning to a vain temptation, in order to wake to more unhappiness than formerly?"

"Even so," returned the patient.

"What, then, are thy thoughts of the Emperor by whose command thou sufferest so severe a restraint?"

Perhaps Douban wished he had forborne this question, for, in the very moment when he put it, the door of the chamber opened, and the Emperor entered, with his daughter hanging upon his arm, dressed with simplicity, yet with becoming splendour. She had found time, it seems, to change her dress for a white robe, which resembled a kind of mourning, the chief ornament of which was a diamond chaplet, of inestimable value, which surrounded and bound the long sable tresses, that reached from her head to her waist. Terrified almost to death, she had been surprised by her father in the company of her husband the Caesar, and her mother; and the same thundering mandate had at once ordered Briennius, in the character of a more than suspected traitor, under the custody of a strong guard of Varangians, and commanded her to attend her father to the bedchamber of Ursel, in which she now stood; resolved, however, that she would stick by the sinking fortunes of her husband, even in the last extremity, yet no less determined that she would not rely upon her own entreaties or remonstrances, until she should see whether her father's interference was likely to reassume a resolved and positive character. Hastily as the plans of Alexius had been formed, and hastily as they had been disconcerted by accident, there remained no slight chance that he might be forced to come round to the purpose on which his wife and daughter had fixed their heart, the forgiveness, namely, of the guilty Nicephorus Briennius. To his astonishment, and not perhaps greatly to his satisfaction, he heard the patient deeply engaged with the physician in canvassing his own character.

"Think not," said Ursel in reply to him, "that though I am immured in this dungeon, and treated as something worse than an outcast of humanity — and although I am, moreover, deprived of my eyesight, the dearest gift of Heaven — think not, I say, though I suffer all this by the cruel will of Alexius Comnenus, that therefore I hold him to be mine enemy; on the contrary, it is by his means that the blinded and miserable prisoner has been taught to seek a liberty far more unconstrained than this poor earth can afford, and a vision far more clear than any Mount Pisgah on this wretched side of the grave can give us: Shall I therefore account the

Emperor among mine enemies? He who has taught me the vanity of earthly things — the nothingness of earthly enjoyments — and the pure hope of a better world, as a certain exchange for the misery of the present? No!"

The Emperor had stood somewhat disconcerted at the beginning of this speech, but hearing it so very unexpectedly terminate, as he was willing to suppose, much in his own favour, he threw himself into an attitude which was partly that of a modest person listening to his own praises, and partly that of a man highly struck with the commendations heaped upon him by a generous adversary.

"My friend," he said aloud, "how truly do you read my purpose, when you suppose that the knowledge which men of your disposition can extract from evil, was all the experience which I wished you to derive from a captivity protracted by adverse circumstances, far, very far, beyond my wishes! Let me embrace the generous man who knows so well how to construe the purpose of a perplexed, but still faithful friend."

The patient raised himself in his bed.

"Hold there!" he said, "methinks my faculties begin to collect themselves. Yes," he muttered, "that is the treacherous voice which first bid me welcome as a friend, and then commanded fiercely that I should be deprived of the sight of my eyes! — Increase thy rigour if thou wilt, Comnenus — add, if thou canst, to the torture of my confinement — but since I cannot see thy hypocritical and inhuman features, spare me, in mercy, the sound of a voice, more distressing to mine ear than toads, than serpents — than whatever nature has most offensive and disgusting!"

This speech was delivered with so much energy, that it was in vain that the Emperor strove to interrupt its tenor; although he himself, as well as Douban and his daughter, heard a great deal more of the language of unadorned and natural passion than he had counted upon.

"Raise thy head, rash man," he said, "and charm thy tongue, ere it proceed in a strain which may cost thee dear. Look at me, and see if I have not reserved a reward capable of atoning for all the evil which thy folly may charge to my account."

Hitherto the prisoner had remained with his eyes obstinately shut, regarding the imperfect recollection he had of sights which had been before his eyes the foregoing evening, as the mere suggestion of a deluded imagination, if not actually presented by some seducing spirit. But now when his eyes fairly encountered the stately figure of the Emperor, and the graceful form of his lovely daughter, painted in the tender rays of the morning dawn, he ejaculated faintly, "I see! — I see!" — And with that ejaculation fell back on the pillow in a swoon, which instantly found employment for Douban and his restoratives.

"A most wonderful cure indeed!" exclaimed the physician; "and the height of my wishes would be to possess such another miraculous restorative."

"Fool!" said the Emperor; "canst thou not conceive that what has never been taken away is restored with little difficulty? He was made," he said, lowering his voice, "to undergo a painful operation, which led him to believe that the organs of sight were destroyed; and as light scarcely ever visited him, and when it did, only in doubtful and invisible glimmerings, the prevailing darkness, both physical and mental, that surrounded him, prevented him from being sensible of the existence of that precious faculty, of which he imagined himself bereft. Perhaps thou wilt ask my reason for inflicting upon him so strange a deception? — Simply it was, that being by it conceived incapable of reigning, his memory might pass out of the minds of the public, while, at the same time, I reserved his eyesight, that in case occasion should call, it might be in my power once more to liberate him from his dungeon, and employ, as I now propose to do, his courage and talents in the service of the empire, to counterbalance those of other conspirators."

"And can your imperial Highness," said Douban, "hope that you have acquired this man's duty and affection by the conduct you have observed to him?"

"I cannot tell," answered the Emperor; "that must be as futurity shall determine. All I know is, that it is no fault of mine, if Ursel does not reckon freedom and a long course of Empire — perhaps sanctioned by an alliance with our own blood — and the continued enjoyment of the precious organs of eyesight, of which a less scrupulous man would have deprived him, against a maimed and darkened existence."

"Since such is your Highness's opinion and resolution," said Douban, "it is for me to aid, and not to counteract it. Permit me, therefore, to pray your Highness and the Princess to withdraw, that I may use such remedies as may confirm a mind which has been so strangely shaken, and restore to him fully the use of those eyes, of which he has been so long deprived."

"I am content, Douban," said the Emperor; "but take notice, Ursel is not totally at liberty until he has expressed the resolution to become actually mine. It may behove both him and thee to know, that although there is no purpose of remitting him to the dungeons of the Blacquernal palace, yet if he, or any on his part, should aspire to head a party in these feverish times — by the honour of a gentleman, to swear a Frankish oath, he shall find that he is not out of the reach of the battle-axes of my Varangians. I trust to thee to communicate this fact, which concerns alike him and all who have interest in his fortunes. — Come, daughter, we will withdraw, and leave the leech with his patient — Take notice, Douban, it is of importance that you acquaint me the very first moment when the patient can hold rational communication with me."

Alexius and his accomplished daughter departed accordingly.

Chapter the Twenty-Eighth.

*Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Bears yet a precious jewel in its head.*

AS YOU LIKE IT.

From a terraced roof of the Blacquernal palace, accessible by a sash-door, which opened from the bed-chamber of Ursel, there was commanded one of the most lovely and striking views which the romantic neighbourhood of Constantinople afforded.

After suffering him to repose and rest his agitated faculties, it was to this place that the physician led his patient; for when somewhat composed, he had of himself requested to be permitted to verify the truth of his restored eyesight, by looking out once more upon the majestic face of nature.

On the one hand, the scene which he beheld was a masterpiece of human art. The proud city, ornamented with stately buildings, as became the capital of the world, showed a succession of glittering spires and orders of architecture, some of them chaste and simple, like those the capitals of which were borrowed from baskets-full of acanthus; some deriving the fluting of their shafts from the props made originally to support the lances of the earlier Greeks — forms simple, yet more graceful in their simplicity, than any which human ingenuity has been able since to invent. With the most splendid specimens which ancient art could afford of those strictly classical models were associated those of a later age, where more modern taste had endeavoured at improvement, and, by mixing the various orders, had produced such as were either composite, or totally out of rule. The size of the buildings in which they were displayed, however, procured them respect; nor could even the most perfect judge of architecture avoid being struck by the grandeur of their extent and effect, although hurt by the incorrectness of the taste in which they were executed. Arches of triumph, towers, obelisks, and spires, designed for various purposes, rose up into the air in confused magnificence; while the lower view was filled by the streets of the city, the domestic habitations forming long narrow alleys, on either side of which the houses arose to various and unequal heights, but, being generally finished with terraced coverings, thick set with plants and flowers, and fountains, had, when seen from an eminence, a more noble and interesting aspect than is ever afforded by the sloping and uniform roofs of streets in the capitals of the north of Europe.

It has taken us some time to give, in words, the idea which was at a single glance conveyed to Ursel, and affected him at first with great pain. His eyeballs had been long strangers to that daily exercise, which teaches us the habit of correcting the scenes as they appear to our sight, by the knowledge which we derive from the use of our other senses. His idea of distance was so confused, that it seemed as if all the spires, turrets, and minarets which he beheld, were crowded forward upon his eyeballs, and almost touching them. With a shriek of horror, Ursel turned himself to the further side, and cast his eyes upon a different scene. Here also he saw towers, steeples, and turrets, but they were those of the churches and public buildings beneath his feet, reflected from the dazzling piece of water which formed the harbour of Constantinople, and which, from the abundance of wealth which it transported to the city, was well termed the Golden Horn. In one place, this superb basin was lined with quays, where stately dromonds and argosies unloaded their wealth, while, by the shore of the haven, galleys, feluccas, and other small craft, idly flapped the singularly shaped and snow-white pinions which served them for sails. In other places the Golden Horn lay shrouded in a verdant

mantle of trees, where the private gardens of wealthy or distinguished individuals, or places of public recreation, shot down upon and were bounded by the glassy waters.

On the Bosphorus, which might be seen in the distance, the little fleet of Tancred was lying in the same station they had gained during the night, which was fitted to command the opposite landing; this their general had preferred to a midnight descent upon Constantinople, not knowing whether, so coming, they might be received as friends or enemies. This delay, however, had given the Greeks an opportunity, either by the orders of Alexius, or the equally powerful mandates of some of the conspirators, to tow six ships of war, full of armed men, and provided with the maritime offensive weapons peculiar to the Greeks at that period, which they had moored so as exactly to cover the place where the troops of Tancred must necessarily land.

This preparation gave some surprise to the valiant Tancred, who did not know that such vessels had arrived in the harbour from Lemnos on the preceding night. The undaunted courage of that prince was, however, in no respect to be shaken by the degree of unexpected danger with which his adventure now appeared to be attended.

This splendid view, from the description of which we have in some degree digressed, was seen by the physician and Ursel from a terrace, the loftiest almost on the palace of the Blacquernal. To the city-ward, it was bounded by a solid wall, of considerable height, giving a resting-place for the roof of a lower building, which, sloping outward, broke to the view the vast height unobscured otherwise save by a high and massy balustrade, composed of bronze, which, to the havenward, sunk sheer down upon an uninterrupted precipice.

No sooner, therefore, had Ursel turned his eyes that way, than, though placed far from the brink of the terrace, he exclaimed, with a shriek, "Save me — save me! if you are not indeed the destined executors of the Emperor's will."

"We are indeed such," said Douban, "to save, and if possible to bring you to complete recovery; but by no means to do you injury, or to suffer it to be offered by others."

"Guard me then from myself," said Ursel, "and save me from the reeling and insane desire which I feel to plunge myself into the abyss, to the edge of which you have guided me."

"Such a giddy and dangerous temptation is," said the physician, "common to those who have not for a long time looked down from precipitous heights, and are suddenly brought to them. Nature, however bounteous, hath not provided for the cessation of our faculties for years, and for their sudden resumption in full strength and vigour. An interval, longer or shorter, must needs intervene. Can you not believe this terrace a safe station while you have my support and that of this faithful slave?"

"Certainly," said Ursel; "but permit me to turn my face towards this stone wall, for I cannot bear to look at the flimsy piece of wire, which is the only battlement of defence that interposes betwixt me and the precipice." He spoke of the bronze balustrade, six feet high, and massive in proportion. Thus saying, and holding fast by the physician's arm, Ursel, though himself a younger and more able man, trembled, and moved his feet as slowly as if made of lead, until he reached the sashed-door, where stood a kind of balcony-seat, in which he placed himself. —"Here," he said, "will I remain."

"And here," said Douban, "will I make the communication of the Emperor, which it is necessary you should be prepared to reply to. It places you, you will observe, at your own disposal for liberty or captivity, but it conditions for your resigning that sweet but sinful morsel termed revenge, which, I must not conceal from you, chance appears willing to put into your hand. You know the degree of rivalry in which you have been held by the Emperor, and you know the measure of evil you have sustained at his hand. The question is, Can you forgive what has taken place?"

"Let me wrap my head round with my mantle," said Ursel, "to dispel this dizziness which still oppresses my poor brain, and as soon as the power of recollection is granted me, you shall know my sentiments."

He sunk upon the seat, muffled in the way which he described, and after a few minutes' reflection, with a trepidation which argued the patient still to be under the nervous feeling of extreme horror mixed with terror, he addressed Douban thus: "The operation of wrong and cruelty, in the moment when they are first inflicted, excites, of course, the utmost resentment of the sufferer; nor is there, perhaps, a passion which lives so long in his bosom as the natural desire of revenge. If, then, during the first month, when I lay stretched upon my bed of want and misery, you had offered me an opportunity of revenge upon my cruel oppressor, the remnant of miserable life which remained to me should have been willingly bestowed to purchase it. But a suffering of weeks, or even months, must not be compared in effect with that of years. For a short space of endurance, the body, as well as the mind, retains that vigorous habit which holds the prisoner still connected with life, and teaches him to thrill at the long-forgotten chain of hopes, of wishes, of disappointments, and mortifications, which affected his former existence. But the wounds become callous as they harden, and other and better feelings occupy their place, while they gradually die away in forgetfulness. The enjoyments, the amusements of this world, occupy no part of his time upon whom the gates of despair have once closed. I tell thee, my kind physician, that for a season, in an insane attempt to effect my liberty, I cut through a large portion of the living rock. But Heaven cured me of so foolish an idea; and if I did not actually come to love Alexius Comnenus — for how could that have been a possible effect in any rational state of my intellects? — yet as I became convinced of my own crimes, sins, and follies, the more and more I was also persuaded that Alexius was but the agent through whom Heaven exercised a dearly-purchased right of punishing me for my manifold offences and transgressions; and that it was not therefore upon the Emperor that my resentment ought to visit itself. And I can now say to thee, that so far as a man who has undergone so dreadful a change can be supposed to know his own mind, I feel no desire either to rival Alexius in a race for empire, or to avail myself of any of the various proffers which he proposes to me as the price of withdrawing my claim. Let him keep unpurchased the crown, for which he has paid, in my opinion, a price which it is not worth."

"This is extraordinary stoicism, noble Ursel," answered the physician Douban. "Am I then to understand that you reject the fair offers of Alexius, and desire, instead of all which he is willing — nay, anxious to bestow — to be committed safely back to thy old blinded dungeon in the Blacquernal, that you may continue at ease those pietistic meditations which have already conducted thee to so extravagant a conclusion?"

"Physician," said Ursel, while a shuddering fit that affected his whole body testified his alarm at the alternative proposed — "one would imagine thine own profession might have taught thee, that no mere mortal man, unless predestined to be a glorified saint, could ever prefer darkness to the light of day; blindness itself to the enjoyment of the power of sight; the pangs of starving to competent sustenance, or the damps of a dungeon to the free air of God's creation. No! — it may be virtue to do so, but to such a pitch mine does not soar. All I require of the Emperor for standing by him with all the power my name can give him at this crisis is, that he will provide for my reception as a monk in some of those pleasant and well endowed seminaries of piety, to which his devotion, or his fears, have given rise. Let me not be again the object of his suspicion, the operation of which is more dreadful than that of being the object of his hate. Forgotten by power, as I have myself lost the remembrance of those that wielded it, let me find my way to the grave, unnoticed, unconstrained, at liberty, in possession of my dim and disused organs of sight, and, above all, at peace."

"If such be thy serious and earnest wish, noble Ursel," said the physician, "I myself have no hesitation to warrant to thee the full accomplishment of thy religious and moderate desires. But, bethink thee, thou art once more an inhabitant of the court, in which thou mayst obtain what thou wilt today; while tomorrow, shouldst thou regret thy indifference, it may be thy utmost entreaty will not suffice to gain for thee the slightest extension of thy present conditions."

"Be it so," said Ursel; "I will then stipulate for another condition, which indeed has only reference to this day. I will solicit his Imperial Majesty, with all humility, to spare me the pain of a personal treaty between himself and me, and that he will be satisfied with the solemn assurance that I am most willing to do in his favour all that he is desirous of dictating; while, on the other hand, I desire only the execution of those moderate conditions of my future aliment which I have already told thee at length."

"But wherefore," said Douban, "shouldst thou be afraid of announcing to the Emperor thy disposition to an agreement, which cannot be esteemed otherwise than extremely moderate on thy part? Indeed, I fear the Emperor will insist on a brief personal conference."

"I am not ashamed," said Ursel, "to confess the truth. It is true, that I have, or think I have, renounced what the Scripture calls the pride of life; but the old Adam still lives within us, and maintains against the better part of our nature an inextinguishable quarrel, easy to be aroused from its slumber, but as difficult to be again

couched in peace. While last night I but half understood that mine enemy was in my presence, and while my faculties performed but half their duty in recalling his deceitful and hated accents, did not my heart throb in my bosom with all the agitation of a taken bird, and shall I again have to enter into a personal treaty with the man who, be his general conduct what it may, has been, the constant and unprovoked cause of my unequalled misery? Douban, no! — to listen to his voice again, were to hear an alarm sounded to every violent and vindictive passion, of my heart; and though, may Heaven so help me as my intentions towards him are upright, yet it is impossible for me to listen to his professions with a chance of safety either to him or to myself."

"If you be so minded," replied Douban, "I shall only repeat to him your stipulation, and you must swear to him that you will strictly observe it. Without this being done, it must be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to settle the league of which both are desirous."

"Amen!" said Ursel; "and as I am pure in my purpose, and resolved to keep it to the uttermost, so may Heaven guard me from the influence of precipitate revenge, ancient grudge, or new quarrel!"

An authoritative knock at the door of the sleeping chamber was now heard, and Ursel, relieved by more powerful feelings, from the giddiness of which he had complained, walked firmly into the bedroom, and seating himself, waited with averted eyes the entrance of the person who demanded admittance, and who proved to be no other than Alexius Comnenus.

The Emperor appeared at the door in a warlike dress, suited for the decoration of a prince who was to witness a combat in the lists fought out before him.

"Sage Douban," he said, "has our esteemed prisoner, Ursel, made his choice between our peace and enmity?"

"He hath, my lord," replied the physician, "embraced the lot of that happy portion of mankind, whose hearts and lives are devoted to the service of your Majesty's government."

"He will then this day," continued the Emperor, "render me the office of putting down all those who may pretend to abet insurrection in his name, and under pretext of his wrongs?"

"He will, my lord," replied the physician, "act to the fullest the part which you require."

"And in what way," said the Emperor, adopting his most gracious tone of voice, "would our faithful Ursel desire that services like these, rendered in the hour of extreme need; should be acknowledged by the Emperor?"

"Simply," answered Douban, "by saying nothing upon the subject. He desires only that all jealousies between you and him may be henceforth forgotten, and that he may be admitted into one of your Highness's monastic institutions, with leave to dedicate the rest of his life to the worship of Heaven and its saints."

"Hath he persuaded thee of this, Douban?" — said the Emperor, in a low and altered voice. "By Heaven! when I consider from what prison he was brought, and in what guise he inhabited it, I cannot believe in this gall-less disposition. He must at least speak to me himself, ere I can believe, in some degree, the transformation of the fiery Ursel into a being so little capable of feeling the ordinary impulses of mankind."

"Hear me, Alexius Comnenus," said the prisoner; "and so may thine own prayers to Heaven find access and acceptance, as thou believest the words which I speak to thee in simplicity of heart. If thine empire of Greece were made of coined gold, it would hold out no bait for my acceptance; nor, I thank Heaven, have even the injuries I have experienced at thy hand, cruel and extensive as they have been, impressed upon me the slightest desire of requiting treachery with treachery. Think of me as thou wilt, so thou seek'st not again to exchange words with me; and believe me, that when thou hast put me under the most rigid of thy ecclesiastical foundations, the discipline, the fare, and the vigils, will be far superior to the existence falling to the share of those whom the King delights to honour, and who therefore must afford the King their society whenever they are summoned to do so."

"It is hardly for me," said the physician, "to interpose in so high a matter; yet, as trusted both by the noble Ursel, and by his Highness the Emperor, I have made a brief abstract of these short conditions to be kept by the high parties towards each other, *sub crimine falsi*."

The Emperor protracted the intercourse with Ursel, until he more fully explained to him the occasion which he should have that very day for his services. When they parted, Alexius, with a great show of affection, embraced his late prisoner, while it required all the self-command and stoicism of Ursel to avoid expressing in plain terms the extent to which he abhorred the person who thus caressed him.

Chapter the Twenty-Ninth.

*** O, *Conspiracy!*

Sham'st thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,

When evils are most free? O, then, by day,

Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough

To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, Conspiracy;

Hide it in smiles and affability;

For if thou path thy native semblance on,

Not Erebus itself were dim enough

To hide thee from prevention.

JULIUS CAESAR

The important morning at last arrived, on which, by the Imperial proclamation, the combat between the Caesar and Count Robert of Paris was appointed to take place. This was a circumstance in a great measure foreign to the Grecian manners, and to which, therefore, the people annexed different ideas from those which were associated with the same solemn decision of God, as the Latins called it, by the Western nations. The consequence was a vague, but excessive agitation among the people, who connected the extraordinary strife which they were to witness, with the various causes which had been whispered abroad as likely to give occasion to some general insurrection of a great and terrible nature.

By the Imperial order, regular lists had been prepared for the combat, with opposite gates, or entrances, as was usual, for the admittance of the two champions; and it was understood that the appeal was to be made to the Divinity by each, according to the forms prescribed by the Church of which the combatants were respectively members. The situation of these lists was on the side of the shore adjoining on the west to the continent. At no great distance, the walls of the city were seen, of various architecture, composed of lime and of stone, and furnished with no less than four-and-twenty gates, or posterns, five of which regarded the land, and nineteen the water. All this formed a beautiful prospect, much of which is still visible. The town itself is about nineteen miles in circumference; and as it is on all sides surrounded with lofty cypresses, its general appearance is that of a city arising out of a stately wood of these magnificent trees, partly shrouding the pinnacles, obelisks, and minarets, which then marked the site of many noble Christian temples; but now, generally speaking, intimate the position of as many Mahomedan mosques.

These lists, for the convenience of spectators, were surrounded on all sides by long rows of seats, sloping downwards. In the middle of these seats, and exactly opposite the centre of the lists, was a high throne, erected for the Emperor himself; and which was separated from the more vulgar galleries by a circuit of wooden barricades, which an experienced eye could perceive, might, in case of need, be made serviceable for purposes of defence.

The lists were sixty yards in length, by perhaps about forty in breadth, and these afforded ample space for the exercise of the combat, both on horseback and on foot. Numerous bands of the Greek citizens began, with the very break of day, to issue from the gates and posterns of the city, to examine and wonder at the construction of the lists, pass their criticisms upon the purposes of the peculiar parts of the fabric, and occupy places, to secure them for the spectacle. Shortly after arrived a large band of those soldiers who were called the Roman Immortals. These entered without ceremony, and placed themselves on either hand of the wooden barricade which fenced the Emperor's seat. Some of them took even a greater liberty; for, affecting to be pressed against the boundary, there were individuals who approached the partition itself, and seemed to meditate climbing over it, and placing themselves on the same side with the Emperor. Some old domestic slaves of the household now showed themselves, as if for the purpose of preserving this sacred circle for Alexius and his court; and, in proportion as the Immortals began to show themselves encroaching and turbulent, the strength of the defenders of the prohibited precincts seemed gradually to increase.

There was, though scarcely to be observed, besides the grand access to the Imperial seat from without, another opening also from the outside, secured by a very strong door, by which different persons received admission beneath the seats destined for the Imperial party. These persons, by their length of limb, breadth of shoulders, by the fur of their cloaks, and especially by the redoubted battle-axes which all of them bore, appeared to be Varangians; but, although neither dressed in their usual habit of pomp, nor in their more effectual garb of war, still, when narrowly examined, they might be seen to possess their usual offensive weapons. These men, entering in separate and straggling parties, might be observed to join the slaves of the interior of the palace in opposing the intrusion of the Immortals upon the seat of the Emperor, and the benches around. Two or three Immortals, who had actually made good their frolic, and climbed over the division, were flung back again, very unceremoniously, by the barbaric strength and sinewy arms of the Varangians.

The people around, and in the adjacent galleries, most of whom had the air of citizens in their holiday dresses, commented a good deal on these proceedings, and were inclined strongly to make part with the Immortals. "It was a shame to the Emperor," they said, "to encourage these British barbarians to interpose themselves by violence between his person and the Immortal cohorts of the city, who were in some sort his own children."

Stephanos, the gymnastic, whose bulky strength and stature rendered him conspicuous amid this party, said, without hesitation, "If there are two people here who will join in saying that the Immortals are unjustly deprived of their right of guarding the Emperor's person, here is the hand that shall place them beside the Imperial chair."

"Not so," quoth a centurion of the Immortals, whom we have already introduced to our readers by the name of Harpax; "Not so, Stephanos; that happy time may arrive, but it is not yet come, my gem of the circus. Thou knowest that on this occasion it is one of these Counts, or western Franks, who undertakes the combat; and the Varangians, who call these people their enemies, have some reason to claim a precedence in guarding the lists, which it might not at this moment be convenient to dispute with them. Why, man, if thou wert half so witty as thou art long, thou wouldst be sensible that it were bad woodmanship to raise the hollo upon the game, ere it had been driven within compass of the nets."

While the athlete rolled his huge grey eyes as if to conjure out the sense of this intimation, his little friend Lysimachus, the artist, putting himself to pain to stand upon his tiptoe, and look intelligent, said, approaching as near as he could to Harpax's ear, "Thou mayst trust me, gallant centurion, that this man. of mould and muscle shall neither start like a babbling hound on a false scent, nor become mute and inert, when the general signal is given. But tell me," said he, speaking very low, and for that purpose mounting a bench, which brought him on a level with the centurion's ear, "would it not have been better that a strong guard of the valiant Immortals had been placed in this wooden citadel, to ensure the object of the day?"

"Without question," said the centurion, "it was so meant; but these strolling Varangians have altered their station of their own authority."

"Were it not — well," said Lysimachus, "that you, who are greatly more numerous than the barbarians, should begin a fray before more of these strangers arrive?"

"Content ye, friend," said the centurion, coldly, "we know our time. An attack commenced too early would be worse than thrown away, nor would an opportunity occur of executing our project in the fitting time, if an alarm were prematurely given at this moment."

So saying, he shuffled off among his fellow-soldiers, so as to avoid suspicious intercourse with such persons as were only concerned with the civic portion of the conspirators.

As the morning advanced, and the sun took a higher station in the horizon, the various persons whom curiosity, or some more decided motive, brought to see the proposed combat, were seen streaming from different parts of the town, and rushing to occupy such accommodation as the circuit round the lists afforded them. In their road to the place where preparation for combat was made, they had to ascend a sort of cape, which, in the form of a small hill, projected into the Hellespont, and the butt of which, connecting it with the shore, afforded a considerable ascent, and of course a more commanding view of the strait between Europe and Asia, than either the immediate vicinity of the city, or the still lower ground upon which the lists were erected. In passing this height, the earlier visitants of the lists made little or no halt; but after a time, when it became obvious that those who had hurried forward to the place of combat were lingering there without any object or occupation, they that followed them in the same route, with natural curiosity, paid a tribute to the landscape, bestowing some attention on its beauty, and paused to see what auguries could be collected from the water, which were likely to have any concern in indicating the fate of the events that were to take place. Some straggling seamen were the first who remarked that a squadron of the Greek small craft (being that of Tancred) were in the act of making their way from Asia, and threatening a descent upon Constantinople.

"It is strange," said a person, by rank the captain of a galley, "that these small vessels, which were ordered to return to Constantinople as soon as they disembarked the Latins, should have remained so long at Scutari, and should not be rowing back to the imperial city until this time, on the second day after their departure from thence."

"I pray to Heaven," said another of the same profession, "that these seamen may come alone. It seems to me as if their ensign-staffs, bowsprits, and topmasts were decorated with the same ensigns, or nearly the same, with those which the Latins displayed upon them, when, by the Emperor's order, they were transported towards Palestine; so methinks the voyage back again resembles that of a fleet of merchant vessels, who have been prevented from discharging their cargo at the place of their destination."

"There is little good," said one of the politicians whom we formerly noticed, "in dealing with such commodities, whether they are imported or exported. Yon ample banner which streams over the foremost galley, intimates the presence of a chieftain of no small rank among the Counts, whether it be for valour or for nobility."

The seafaring leader added, with the voice of one who hints alarming tidings, "They seem to have got to a point in the straits as high as will enable them to run down — with the tide, and clear the cape which we stand on, although with what purpose they aim to land so close beneath the walls of the city, he is a wiser man than I who pretends to determine."

"Assuredly," returned his comrade, "the intention is not a kind one. The wealth of the city has temptations to a poor people, who only value the iron which they possess as affording them the means of procuring the gold which they covet."

"Ay, brother," answered Demetrius the politician, "but see you not, lying at anchor within this bay which is formed by the cape, and at the very point where these heretics are likely to be carried by the tide, six strong vessels, having the power of sending forth, not merely showers of darts and arrows, but of Grecian fire, as it is called, from their hollow decks? If these Frank gentry continue directing their course upon the Imperial city, being, as they are,

———'propago

Contemptrix Superum sane, saevaeque avidissima caedis

Et violenta;*

* Ovid, Met.]

we shall speedily see a combat better worth witnessing than that announced by the great trumpet of the Varangians. If you love me, let us sit down here for a moment, and see how this matter is to end."

"An excellent motion, my ingenious friend," said Lascaris, which was the name of the other citizen; "but bethink you, shall we not be in danger from the missiles with which the audacious Latins will not fail to return the Greek fire, if, according to your conjecture, it shall be poured upon them by the Imperial squadron?"

"That is not ill argued, my friend," said Demetrius; "but know that you have to do with a man who has been in such extremities before now; and if such a discharge should open from the sea, I would propose to you to step back some fifty yards inland, and thus to interpose the very crest of the cape between us and the discharge of missiles; a mere child might thus learn to face them without any alarm."

"You are a wise man, neighbour," said Lascaris, "and possess such a mixture of valour and knowledge as becomes a man whom a friend might be supposed safely to risk his life with. There be those, for instance, who cannot show you the slightest glimpse of what is going on, without bringing you within peril of your life; whereas you, my worthy friend Demetrius, between your accurate knowledge of military affairs, and your regard for your friend, are sure to show him all that is to be seen without the least risk to a person, who is naturally unwilling to think of exposing himself to injury. But, Holy Virgin! what is the meaning of that red flag which the Greek Admiral has this instant hoisted?"

"Why, you see, neighbour," answered Demetrius, "yonder western heretic continues to advance without minding the various signs which our Admiral has made to him to desist, and now he hoists the bloody colours, as if a man should clench his fist and say, If you persevere in your uncivil intention, I will do so and so."

"By St. Sophia," said Lascaris, "and that is giving him fair warning. But what is it the Imperial Admiral is about to do?"

"Run! run! friend Lascaris," said Demetrius, "or you will see more of that than perchance you have any curiosity for."

Accordingly, to add the strength of example to precept, Demetrius himself girt up his loins, and retreated with the most edifying speed to the opposite side of the ridge, accompanied by the greater part of the crowd, who had tarried there to witness the contest which the newsmonger promised, and were determined to take his word for their own safety. The sound and sight which had alarmed Demetrius, was the discharge of a large portion of Greek fire, which perhaps may be best compared to one of those immense Congreve rockets of the present day, which takes on its shoulders a small grapnel or anchor, and proceeds groaning through the air, like a fiend overburdened by the mandate of some inexorable magician, and of which the operation was so terrifying, that the crews of the vessels attacked by this strange weapon frequently forsook every means of defence, and ran themselves ashore. One of the principal ingredients of this dreadful fire was supposed to be naphtha, or the bitumen which is collected on the banks of the Dead Sea, and which, when in a state of ignition, could only be extinguished by a very singular mixture, and which it was not likely to come in contact with. It produced a thick smoke and loud explosion, and was capable, says Gibbon, of communicating its flames with equal vehemence in descent or lateral progress.* In sieges, it was poured from the ramparts, or launched like our bombs, in red-hot balls of stone or iron, or it was darted in flax twisted round arrows and in javelins. It was considered as a state secret of the greatest importance; and for wellnigh four centuries it was unknown to the Mahomedans. But at length the composition was discovered by the Saracens, and used by them for repelling the crusaders, and overpowering the Greeks, upon whose side it had at one time been the most formidable implement of defence. Some exaggeration — we must allow for a barbarous period; but there seems no doubt that the general description of the crusader Joinville should be admitted as correct:—"It came flying through the air," says that good knight, "like a winged dragon, about the thickness of a hogshead, with the report of thunder and the speed of lightning, and the darkness of the night was dispelled by this horrible illumination."

* For a full account of the Greek fire, see Gibbon, chapter 53]

Not only the bold Demetrius and his pupil Lascaris, but all the crowd whom they influenced, fled manfully when the commodore of the Greeks fired the first discharge; and as the other vessels in the squadron followed his example, the heavens were filled with the unusual and outrageous noise, while the smoke was so thick as to darken the very air. As the fugitives passed the crest of the hill, they saw the seaman, whom we formerly mentioned as a spectator, snugly reclining under cover of a dry ditch, where he managed so as to secure himself as far as possible from any accident. He could not, however, omit breaking his jest on the politicians.

"What, ho!" he cried, "my good friends," without raising himself above the counterscarp of his ditch, "will you not remain upon your station long enough to finish that hopeful lecture upon battle by sea and land, which you had so happy an opportunity of commencing? Believe me, the noise is more alarming than hurtful; the fire is all pointed in a direction opposite to yours, and if one of those dragons which you see does happen to fly landward instead of seaward, it is but the mistake of some cabin-boy, who has used his linstock with more willingness than ability."

Demetrius and Lascaris just heard enough of the naval hero's harangue, to acquaint them with the new danger with which they might be assailed by the possible misdirection of the weapons, and, rushing clown towards the lists at the head of a crowd half-desperate with fear, they hastily propagated the appalling news, that the Latins were coming back from Asia with the purpose of landing in arms, pillaging, and burning the city. The uproar, in the meantime, of this unexpected occurrence, was such as altogether to vindicate, in public opinion, the reported cause, however exaggerated. The thunder of the Greek fire came successively, one hard upon the other, and each, in its turn, spread a blot of black smoke upon the face of the landscape, which, thickened by so many successive clouds, seemed at last, like that raised by a sustained fire of modern artillery to overshadow the whole horizon.

The small squadron of Tancred were completely hid from view in the surging volumes of darkness, which the breath of the weapons of the enemy had spread around him; and it seemed by a red light, which began to show itself among the thickest of the veil of darkness, that one of the flotilla at least had caught fire. Yet the Latins resisted, with an obstinacy worthy of their own courage, and the fame of their celebrated leader. Some advantage they had, on account of their small size, and their lowness in the water, as well as the clouded state of the atmosphere, which rendered them difficult marks for the fire of the Greeks.

To increase these advantages, Tancred, as well by boats as by the kind of rude signals made use of at the period, dispersed orders to his fleet, that each bark, disregarding the fate of the others, should press forward individually, and that the men from each should be put on shore wheresoever and howsoever they could effect that manoeuvre. Tancred himself set a noble example; he was on board a stout vessel, fenced in some degree against the effect of the Greek fire by being in a great measure covered with raw hides, which hides had also been recently steeped in water. This vessel contained upwards of a hundred valiant warriors, several of them of knightly order, who had all night toiled at the humble labours of the oar, and now in the morning applied their chivalrous hands to the arblast and to the bow, which were in general accounted the weapons of persons of a lower rank. Thus armed, and thus manned. Prince Tancred bestowed upon his bark the full velocity which wind, and tide, and oar, could enable her to obtain, and placing her in the situation to profit by them as much as his maritime skill could direct, he drove with the speed of lightning among the vessels of Lemnos, plying on either side, bows, crossbows, javelins, and military missiles of every kind, with the greater advantage that the Greeks, trusting to their artificial fire, had omitted arming themselves with other weapons; so that when the valiant Crusader bore down on them with so much fury, repaying the terrors of their fire with a storm of bolts and arrows no less formidable, they began to feel that their own advantage was much less than they had supposed, and that, like most other dangers, the maritime fire of the Greeks, when undauntedly confronted, lost at least one-half of its terrors. The Grecian sailors, too, when they observed the vessels approach so near, filled with the steel-clad Latins, began to shrink from a contest to be maintained hand to hand with so terrible an enemy.

By degrees, smoke began to issue from the sides of the great Grecian argosy, and the voice of Tancred announced to his soldiers that the Grecian Admiral's vessel had taken fire, owing to negligence in the management of the means of destruction she possessed, and that all they had now to do was to maintain such a distance as to avoid sharing her fate. Sparkles and flashes of flame were next seen leaping from place to place on board of the great hulk, as if the element had had the sense and purpose of spreading wider the consternation, and disabling the few who still paid attention to the commands of their Admiral, and endeavoured to extinguish the fire. The consciousness of the combustible nature of the freight, began to add despair to terror; from the boltsprit, the rigging, the yards, the sides, and every part of the vessel, the unfortunate crew were seen dropping themselves, to exchange for the most part a watery death for one by the more dreadful agency of fire. The crew of Tancred's bark, ceasing, by that generous prince's commands, to offer any additional annoyance to an enemy who was at once threatened by the perils of the ocean and of conflagration, ran their vessel ashore in a smooth part of the bay, and jumping into the shallow sea, made the land without difficulty; many of their steeds being, by the exertions of the owners, and the docility of the animals, brought ashore at the same time with their masters. Their commander lost no time in forming their serried ranks into a phalanx of lancers, few indeed at first, but perpetually increasing as ship after ship of the little flotilla ran ashore, or, having more deliberately moored their barks, landed their men, and joined their companions.

The cloud which had been raised by the conflict was now driven to leeward before the wind, and the strait exhibited only the relics of the combat. Here tossed upon the billows the scattered and broken remains of one or two of the Latin vessels which had been burnt at the commencement of the combat, though their crews, by the exertions of their comrades, had in general been saved. Lower down were seen the remaining five vessels of the Lemnos squadron, holding a disorderly and difficult retreat, with the purpose of gaining the harbour of Constantinople. In the place so late the scene of combat, lay moored the hulk of the Grecian Admiral, burnt to the water's edge, and still sending forth a black smoke from its scathed beams and planks. The flotilla of Tancred, busied in discharging its troops, lay irregularly scattered along the bay, the men making ashore as they could, and taking their course to join the standard of their leader. Various black substances floated on the surface of the water, nearer, or more distant to the shore; some proved to be the wreck of the vessels which had been destroyed, and others, more ominous still, the lifeless bodies of mariners who had fallen in the conflict.

The standard had been borne ashore by the Prince's favourite page, Ernest of Apulia, so soon as the keel of Tancred's galley had grazed upon the sand. It was then pitched on the top of that elevated cape between Constantinople and the lists, where Lascar, Demetrius, and other gossips, had held their station at the commencement of the engagement, but from which all had fled, between the mingled dread of the Greek fire and the missiles of the Latin crusaders.

Chapter the Thirtieth.

Sheathed in complete armour, and supporting with his right hand the standard of his fathers, Tancred remained with his handful of warriors like so many statues of steel, expecting some sort of attack from the Grecian party which had occupied the lists, or from the numbers whom the city gates began now to pour forth — soldiers some of them, and others citizens, many of whom were arrayed as if for conflict. These persons, alarmed by the various accounts which were given of the combatants, and the progress of the fight, rushed towards the standard of Prince Tancred, with the intention of beating it to the earth, and dispersing the guards who owed it homage and defence. But if the reader shall have happened to have ridden at any time through a pastoral country, with a clog of a noble race following him, he must have remarked, in the deference ultimately paid to the high-bred animal by the shepherd's cur as he crosses the lonely glen, of which the latter conceives himself the lord and guardian, something very similar to the demeanour of the incensed Greeks, when they approached near to the little band of Franks. At the first symptom of the intrusion of a stranger, the dog of the shepherd starts from his slumbers, and rushes towards the noble intruder with a clamorous declaration of war; but when the diminution of distance between them shows to the aggressor the size and strength of his opponent, he becomes like a cruiser, who, in a chase, has, to his surprise and alarm, found two tier of guns opposed to him instead of one. He halts — suspends his clamorous yelping, and, in fine, ingloriously retreats to his master, with, all the dishonourable marks of positively declining the combat.

It was in this manner that the troops of the noisy Greeks, with much hallooing and many a boastful shout, hastened both from the town and from the lists, with the apparent intention of sweeping from the field the few companions of Tancred. As they advanced, however, within the power of remarking the calm and regular order of those men who had landed, and arranged themselves under this noble chieftain's banner, their minds were altogether changed as to the resolution of instant combat; their advance became an uncertain and staggering gait, their heads were more frequently turned back to the point from which they came, than towards the enemy; and their desire to provoke an instant scuffle vanished totally, when there did not appear the least symptom that their opponents cared about the matter.

It added to the extreme confidence with which the Latins kept their ground, that they were receiving frequent, though small reinforcements from their comrades, who were landing by detachments all along the beach; and that, in the course of a short hour, their amount had been raised, on horseback and foot, to a number, allowing for a few casualties, not much less than that which set sail from Scutari.

Another reason why the Latins remained unassailed, was certainly the indisposition of the two principal armed parties on shore to enter into a quarrel with them. The guards of every kind, who were faithful to the Emperor, more especially the Varangians, had their orders to remain firm at their posts, some in the lists, and others at various places of rendezvous in Constantinople, where their presence was necessary to prevent the effects of the sudden insurrection which Alexius knew to be meditated against him. These, therefore, made no hostile demonstration towards the band of Latins, nor was it the purpose of the Emperor they should do so.

On the other hand, the greater part of the Immortal Guards, and those citizens who were prepared to play a part in the conspiracy, had been impressed by the agents of the deceased Agelastes with the opinion, that this band of Latins, commanded by Tancred, the relative of Bohemond, had been despatched by the latter to their assistance. These men, therefore, stood still, and made no attempt to guide or direct the popular efforts of such as inclined to attack these unexpected visitors; in which purpose, therefore, no very great party were united, while the majority were willing enough to find an apology for remaining quiet.

In the meantime, the Emperor, from his palace of Blaquernal, observed what passed upon the straits, and beheld his navy from Lemnos totally foiled in their attempt, by means of the Greek fire, to check, the intended passage of Tancred and his men. He had no sooner seen the leading ship of the squadron, begin to beacon the darkness with its own fire, than the Emperor formed a secret resolution to disown the unfortunate Admiral, and make peace with the Latins, if that should be absolutely necessary, by sending them his head. He had hardly, therefore, seen the flames burst forth, and the rest of the vessels retreat from their moorings, than in his own mind, the doom of the unfortunate Phraortes, for such was the name of the Admiral, was signed and sealed.

Achilles Tatius, at the same instant, determining to keep a close eye upon the Emperor at this important crisis, came precipitately into the palace, with an appearance of great alarm.

"My Lord! — my Imperial Lord! I am unhappy to be the messenger of such unlucky news; but the Latins have in great numbers succeeded in crossing the strait from Scutari. The Lemnos squadron endeavoured to stop them, as was last night determined upon in the Imperial Council of War. By a heavy discharge of the Greek fire, one or two of the crusaders' vessels were consumed, but by far the greater number of them pushed on their course, burnt the leading ship of the unfortunate Phraortes, and It is strongly reported he has himself perished, with almost all his men. The rest have cut their cables, and abandoned the defence of the passage of the Hellespont."

"And you, Achilles Tatius," said the Emperor, "with what purpose is it that you now bring me this melancholy news, at a period so late, when I cannot amend the consequences!"

"Under favour, most gracious Emperor," replied the conspirator, not without colouring and stammering, "such was not my intention — I had hoped to submit a plan, by which I might easily have prepared the way for correcting this little error."

"Well, your plan, sir?" said the Emperor, dryly.

"With your sacred Majesty's leave," said the Acolyte, "I would myself have undertaken instantly to lead against this Tancred and his Italians the battle-axes of the faithful Varangian guard, who will make no more account of the small number of Franks who have come ashore, than the farmer holds of the hordes of rats and mice, and such like mischievous vermin, who have harboured in his granaries."

"And what mean you," said the Emperor, "that I am to do, while my Anglo-Saxons fight for my sake?"

"Your Majesty," replied Achilles, not exactly satisfied with the dry and caustic manner in which the Emperor addressed him, "may put yourself at the head of the Immortal cohorts of Constantinople; and I am your security, that you may either perfect the victory over the Latins, or at least redeem the most distant chance of a defeat, by advancing at the head of this choice body of domestic troops, should the day appear doubtful."

"You, yourself, Achilles Tatius," returned the Emperor, "have repeatedly assured us, that these Immortals retain a perverse attachment to our rebel Ursel. How is it, then, you would have us intrust our defence to these bands, when we have engaged our valiant Varangians in the proposed conflict with the flower of the western army? — Did you think of this risk, Sir Follower?"

Achilles Tatius, much alarmed at an intimation indicative of his purpose being known, answered, "That in his haste he had been more anxious to recommend the plan which should expose his own person to the greater danger, than that perhaps which was most attended with personal safety to his Imperial Master."

"I thank you for so doing," said the Emperor; "you have anticipated my wishes, though it is not in my power at present to follow the advice you have given me. I would have been well contented, undoubtedly, had these Latins measured their way over the strait again, as suggested by last night's council; but since they have arrived, and stand embattled on our shores, it is better that we pay them with money and with spoil, than with the lives of our gallant subjects. We cannot, after all, believe that they come with any serious intention of doing us injury; it is but the insane desire of witnessing feats of battle and single combat, which is to them the breath of their nostrils, that can have impelled them to this partial countermarch. I impose upon you, Achilles Tatius, combining the Protospathaire in the same commission with you, the duty of riding up to yonder standard, and learning of their chief, called the Prince Tancred, if he is there in person, the purpose of his return, and the cause of his entering into debate with Phraortes and the Lemnos squadron. If they send us any reasonable excuse, we shall not be averse to receive it at their hands; for we have not made so many sacrifices for the preservation of peace, to break forth into war, if, after all, so great an evil can be avoided. Thou wilt receive, therefore, with a candid and complacent mind, such apologies as they may incline to bring forward; and, be assured, that the sight of this puppet-show of a single combat, will be enough of itself to banish every other consideration from the reflection of these giddy crusaders."

A knock was at this moment heard at the door of the Emperor's apartment; and upon the word being given to enter, the Protospathaire made his appearance. He was arrayed in a splendid suit of ancient Roman fashioned armour. The want of a visor left his countenance entirely visible; which, pale and anxious as it was, did not well become the martial crest and dancing plume with which it was decorated. He received the commission already mentioned with the less alacrity, because the Acolyte was added to him as his colleague; for, as the reader may have observed, these two officers were of separate factions in the army, and on indifferent terms with each other. Neither did the Acolyte consider his being united in commission with the Protospathaire, as a mark either of the Emperor's confidence, or of his own safety. He was, however, in the meantime, in the Blacquernal, where the slaves of the interior made not the least hesitation, when ordered, to execute any officer of the court. The two generals had, therefore, no other alternative, than that which is allowed to two greyhounds who are reluctantly coupled together. The hope of Achilles Tatius was, that he might get safely through his mission to Tancred, after which he thought the successful explosion of the conspiracy might take place and have its course, either as a matter desired and countenanced by those Latins, or passed over as a thing in which they took no interest on either side. By the parting order of the Emperor, they were to mount on horseback at the sounding of the great Varangian trumpet, put themselves at the head of those Anglo-Saxon guards in the court-yard of their barrack, and await the Emperor's further orders.

There was something in this arrangement which pressed hard on the conscience of Achilles Tatius, yet he was at a loss to justify his apprehensions to himself, unless from a conscious feeling of his own guilt, he felt, however, that in being detained, under pretence of an honourable mission, at the head of the Varangians, he was deprived of the liberty of disposing of himself, by which he had hoped to communicate with the Caesar and Hereward, whom he reckoned upon as his active accomplices, not knowing that the first was at this moment a prisoner in the Blacquernal, where Alexius had arrested him in the apartments of the Empress, and that the second was the most important support of Comnenus during the whole of that eventful day.

When the gigantic trumpet of the Varangian guards sent forth its deep signal through the city, the Protospathaire hurried Achilles along with him to the rendezvous of the Varangians, and on the way said to him, in an easy and indifferent tone, "As the Emperor is in the field in person, you, his representative, or Follower, will of course transmit no orders to the body guard, except such as shall receive their origin from himself, so that you will consider your authority as this day suspended."

"I regret," said Achilles, "that there should have seemed any cause for such precautions; I had hoped my own truth and fidelity — but — I am obsequious to his imperial pleasure in all things."

"Such are his orders," said the other officer, "and you know under what penalty obedience is enforced."

"If I did not," said Achilles, "the composition of this body of guards would remind me, since it comprehends not only great part of those Varangians, who are the immediate defenders of the Emperor's throne, but those slaves of the interior, who are the executioners of his pleasure." To this the Protospathaire returned no answer, while the more closely the Acolyte looked upon the guard which attended, to the unusual number of nearly three thousand men, the more had he reason to believe that he might esteem himself fortunate, if, by the intervention of either the Caesar, Agelastes, or Hereward, he could pass to the conspirators a signal to suspend the intended explosion, which seemed to be provided against by the Emperor with unusual caution. He would have given the full dream of empire, with which he had been for a short time lulled to sleep, to have seen but a glimpse of the azure plume of Nicephorus, the white mantle of the philosopher, or even a glimmer of Hereward's battle-axe. No such objects could be seen anywhere, and not a little was the faithless Follower displeased to see that whichever way he turned his eyes, those of the Protospathaire, but especially of the trusty domestic officers of the empire, seemed to follow and watch their occupation.

Amidst the numerous soldiers whom he saw on all sides, his eye did not recognise a single man with whom he could exchange a friendly or confidential glance, and he stood in all that agony of terror, which is rendered the more discomfiting, because the traitor is conscious that, beset by various foes, his own fears are the most likely of all to betray him. Internally, as the danger seemed to increase, and as his alarmed imagination attempted to discern new reasons for it, he could only conclude that either one of the three principal conspirators, or at least some of the inferiors, had turned informers; and his doubt was, whether he should not screen his own share of what had been premeditated, by flinging himself at the feet of the Emperor, and making a full confession. But still the fear of being premature in having recourse to such base means of saving himself, joined to the absence of the Emperor, united to keep within his lips a secret, which concerned not only all his future fortunes, but life itself. He was in the meantime, therefore, plunged as it were in a sea of trouble and uncertainty, while the specks of land, which seemed to promise him refuge, were distant, dimly seen, and extremely difficult of attainment.

Chapter the Thirty-First.

*To-morrow — oh, that's sudden! Spare him, spare him!
He's not prepared to die.*

SHAKSPEARE.

At the moment when Achilles Tatius, with a feeling of much insecurity, awaited the unwinding of the perilous skein of state politics, a private council of the Imperial family was held in the hall termed the Temple of the Muses, repeatedly distinguished as the apartment in which the Princess Anna Comnena was wont to make her evening recitations to those who were permitted the honour of hearing prelections of her history. The council consisted of the Empress Irene, the Princess herself, and the Emperor, with the Patriarch of the Greek Church, as a sort of mediator between a course of severity and a dangerous degree of lenity.

"Tell not me, Irene," said the Emperor, "of the fine things attached to the praise of mercy. Here have I sacrificed my just revenge over my rival Ursel, and what good do I obtain by it? Why, the old obstinate man, instead of being tractable, and sensible of the generosity which has spared his life and eyes, can be with difficulty brought to exert himself in favour of the Prince to whom he owes them. I used to think that eyesight and the breath of life were things which one would preserve at any sacrifice; but, on the contrary, I now believe men value them like mere toys. Talk not to me, therefore, of the gratitude to be excited by saving this ungrateful cub; and believe me, girl," turning to Anna, "that not only will all my subjects, should I follow your advice, laugh at me for sparing a man so predetermined to work my ruin, but even thou thyself wilt be the first to upbraid me with the foolish kindness thou art now so anxious to extort from me."

"Your Imperial pleasure, then," said the Patriarch, "is fixed that your unfortunate son-inlaw shall suffer death for his accession to this conspiracy, deluded by that heathen villain Agelastes, and the traitorous Achilles Tatius?"

"Such is my purpose," said the Emperor; "and in evidence that I mean not again to pass over a sentence of this kind with a seeming execution only, as in the case of Ursel, this ungrateful traitor of ours shall be led from the top of the staircase, or ladder of Acheron, as it is called, through the large chamber named the Hall of Judgment, at the upper end of which are arranged the apparatus for execution, by which I swear" —

"Swear not at all!" said the Patriarch; "I forbid thee, in the name of that Heaven whose voice (though unworthy) speaks in my person, to quench the smoking flax, or destroy the slight hope which there may remain, that you may finally be persuaded to alter your purpose respecting your misguided son-inlaw, within the space allotted to him to sue for your mercy. Remember, I pray you, the remorse of Constantine."

"What means your reverence?" said Irene.

"A trifle," replied the Emperor, "not worthy being quoted from such a mouth as the Patriarch's, being, as it probably is, a relic of paganism."

"What is it?" exclaimed the females anxiously, in the hope of hearing something which might strengthen their side of the argument, and something moved, perhaps, by curiosity, a motive which seldom slumbers in a female bosom, even when the stronger passions are in arms.

"The Patriarch will tell you," answered Alexius, "since you must needs know; though I promise you, you will not receive any assistance in your argument from a silly legendary tale."

"Hear it, however," said the Patriarch; "for though it is a tale of the olden time, and sometimes supposed to refer to the period when heathenism predominated, it is no less true, that it was a vow made and registered in the chancery of the rightful Deity, by an Emperor of Greece."

"What I am now to relate to you," continued he, "is, in truth, a tale not only of a Christian Emperor, but of him who made the whole empire Christian; and of that very Constantine, who was also the first who declared Constantinople to be the metropolis of the empire. This hero, remarkable alike for his zeal for religion and for his warlike achievements, was crowned by Heaven with repeated victory, and with all manner of blessings, save that unity in his family which wise men are most ambitious to possess. Not only was the blessing of concord among brethren denied to the family of this triumphant Emperor, but a deserving son of mature

age, who had been supposed to aspire to share the throne with his father, was suddenly, and at midnight, called upon to enter his defence against a capital charge of treason. You will readily excuse my referring to the arts by which the son was rendered guilty in the eyes of the father. Be it enough to say, that the unfortunate young man fell a victim to the guilt of his step-mother, Fausta, and that he disdained to exculpate himself from a charge so gross and so erroneous. It is said, that the anger of the Emperor was kept up against his son by the sycophants who called upon Constantine to observe that the culprit disdained even to supplicate for mercy, or vindicate his innocence from so foul a charge.

"But the death-blow had no sooner struck the innocent youth, than his father obtained proof of the rashness with which he had acted. He had at this period been engaged in constructing the subterranean parts of the Blacquernal palace, which his remorse appointed to contain a record of his paternal grief and contrition. At the upper part of the staircase, called the Pit of Acheron, he caused to be constructed a large chamber, still called the Hall of Judgment, for the purpose of execution. A passage through an archway in the upper wall leads from the hall to the place of misery, where the axe, or other engine, is disposed for the execution of state prisoners of consequence. Over this archway was placed a species of marble altar, surmounted by an image of the unfortunate Crispus — the materials were gold, and it bore the memorable inscription, TO MY SON, WHOM I RASHLY CONDEMNED, AND TOO HASTILY EXECUTED. When constructing this passage, Constantine made a vow, that he himself and his posterity, being reigning Emperors, would stand beside the statue of Crispus, at the time when any individual of their family should be led to execution, and before they suffered him to pass from the Hall of Judgment to the Chamber of Death, that they should themselves be personally convinced of the truth of the charge under which he suffered.

"Time rolled on — the memory of Constantine was remembered almost like that of a saint, and the respect paid to it threw into shadow the anecdote of his son's death. The exigencies of the state rendered it difficult to keep so large a sum in specie invested in a statue, which called to mind the unpleasant failings of so great a man. Your Imperial Highness's predecessors applied the metal which formed the statue to support the Turkish wars; and the remorse and penance of Constantine died away in an obscure tradition of the Church or of the palace. Still, however, unless your Imperial Majesty has strong reasons to the contrary, I shall give it as my opinion, that you will hardly achieve what is due to the memory of the greatest of your predecessors, unless you give this unfortunate criminal, being so near a relation of your own, an opportunity of pleading his cause before passing by the altar of refuge; being the name which is commonly given to the monument of the unfortunate Crispus, son of Constantine, although now deprived both of the golden letters which composed the inscription, and the golden image which represented the royal sufferer."

A mournful strain of music was now heard to ascend the stair so often mentioned.

"If I must hear the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius, ere he pass the altar of refuge, there must be no loss of time," said the Emperor; "for these melancholy sounds announce that he has already approached the Hall of Judgment."

Both the Imperial ladies began instantly, with the utmost earnestness, to deprecate the execution of the Caesar's doom, and to conjure Alexius, as he hoped for quiet in his household, and the everlasting gratitude of his wife and daughter, that he would listen to their entreaties in behalf of an unfortunate man, who had been seduced into guilt, but not from his heart.

"I will at least see him," said the Emperor, "and the holy vow of Constantine shall be in the present instance strictly observed. But remember, you foolish women, that the state of Crispus and the present Caesar, is as different as guilt from innocence, and that their fates, therefore, may be justly decided upon opposite principles, and with opposite results. But I will confront this criminal; and you, Patriarch, may be present to render what help is in your power to a dying man; for you, the wife and mother of the traitor, you will, methinks, do well to retire to the church, and pray God for the soul of the deceased, rather than disturb his last moments with unavailing lamentations."

"Alexius," said the Empress Irene, "I beseech you to be contented; be assured that we will not leave you in this dogged humour of blood-shedding, lest you make such materials for history as are fitter for the time of Nero than of Constantine."

The Emperor, without reply, led the way into the Hall of Judgment, where a much stronger light than usual was already shining up the stair of Acheron, from which were heard to sound, by sullen and intermitted fits, the penitential psalms which the Greek Church has appointed to be sung at executions. Twenty mute slaves, the pale colour of whose turbans gave a ghastly look to the withered cast of their features, and the glaring whiteness of their eyeballs, ascended two by two, as it were from the bowels of the earth, each of them bearing in one hand a naked sabre, and in the other a lighted torch. After these came the unfortunate Nicephorus; his looks were those of a man half-dead from the terror of immediate dissolution, and what he possessed of remaining attention, was turned successively to two black-stoled monks, who were anxiously repeating religious passages to him alternately from the Greek scripture, and the form of devotion adopted by the court of Constantinople. The Caesar's dress also corresponded to his mournful fortunes: His legs and arms were bare, and a simple white tunic, the neck of which was already open, showed that he had assumed the garments which were to serve his last turn. A tall muscular Nubian slave, who considered himself obviously as the principal person in the procession, bore on his shoulder a large heavy headsman's axe, and, like a demon waiting on a sorcerer, stalked step for step after his victim. The rear of the procession was closed by a band of four priests, each of whom chanted from time to time the devotional psalm which was thundered forth on the occasion; and another of slaves, armed with bows and quivers, and with lances, to resist any attempt at rescue, if such should be offered.

It would have required a harder heart than that of the unlucky princess to have resisted this gloomy apparatus of fear and sorrow, surrounding, at the same time directed against, a beloved object, the lover of her youth, and the husband of her bosom, within a few minutes of the termination of his mortal career.

As the mournful train approached towards the altar of refuge, half-encircled as it now was by the two great and expanded arms which projected from the wall, the Emperor, who stood directly in the passage, threw upon the flame of the altar some chips of aromatic wood, steeped in spirit of wine, which, leaping at once into a blaze, illuminated the doleful procession, the figure of the principal culprit, and the slaves, who had most of them extinguished their flambeaux so soon as they had served the purpose of lighting them up the staircase.

The sudden light spread from the altar failed not to make the Emperor and the Princess visible to the mournful group which approached through the hall. All halted — all were silent. It was a meeting, as the Princess has expressed herself in her historical work, such as took place betwixt Ulysses and the inhabitants of the other world, who, when they tasted of the blood of his sacrifices, recognised him indeed, but with empty lamentations, and gestures feeble and shadowy. The hymn of contrition sunk also into silence; and, of the whole group, the only figure rendered more distinct, was the gigantic executioner, whose high and furrowed forehead, as well as the broad steel of his axe, caught and reflected back the bright gleam from the altar. Alexius saw the necessity of breaking the silence which ensued, lest it should, give the intercessors for the prisoner an opportunity of renewing their entreaties.

"Nicephorus Briennius," he said, with a voice which, although generally interrupted by a slight hesitation, which procured him, among his enemies, the nickname of the Stutterer, yet, upon important occasions like the present, was so judiciously tuned and balanced in its sentences, that no such defect was at all visible — "Nicephorus Briennius," he said, "late Caesar, the lawful doom hath been spoken, that, having conspired against the life of thy rightful sovereign and affectionate father, Alexius Comnenus, thou shalt suffer the appropriate sentence, by having thy head struck from thy body. Here, therefore, at the last altar of refuge, I meet thee, according to the vow of the immortal Constantine, for the purpose of demanding whether thou hast any thing to allege why thy doom should not be executed? Even at this eleventh hour, thy tongue is unloosed to speak with freedom what may concern thy life. All is prepared in this world and in the next. Look forward beyond yon archway — the block is fixed. Look behind thee, thou seest the axe already sharpened — thy place for good or evil in the next world is already determined — time flies — eternity approaches. If thou hast aught to say, speak it freely — if nought, confess the justice of thy sentence, and pass on to death."

The Emperor commenced this oration, with those looks described by his daughter as so piercing, that they dazzled like lightning, and his periods, if not precisely flowing like burning lava, were yet the accents of a man having the power of absolute command, and as such produced an effect not only on the criminal, but also upon the Prince himself, whose watery eyes and faltering voice acknowledged his sense and feeling of the fatal import of the present moment.

Rousing himself to the conclusion of what he had commenced, the Emperor again demanded whether the prisoner had any thing to say in his own defence.

Nicephorus was not one of those hardened criminals who may be termed the very prodigies of history, from the coolness with which they contemplated the consummation of their crimes, whether in their own punishment, or the misfortunes of others. "I have been tempted," he said, dropping on his knees, "and I have fallen. I have nothing to allege in excuse of my folly and ingratitude; but I stand prepared to die to expiate my guilt." A deep sigh, almost amounting to a scream, was here heard, close behind the Emperor, and its cause assigned by the sudden exclamation of Irene — "My lord! my lord! your daughter is gone!" And in fact Anna Comnena had sunk into her mother's arms without either sense or motion. The father's attention was instantly called to support his swooning child, while the unhappy husband strove with the guards to be permitted to go to the assistance of his wife. "Give me but five minutes of that time which the law has abridged — let my efforts but assist in recalling her to a life which should be as long as her virtues and her talents deserve; and then let me die at her feet, for I care not to go an inch beyond."

The Emperor, who in fact had been more astonished at the boldness and rashness of Nicephorus, than alarmed by his power, considered him as a man rather misled than misleading others, and felt, therefore, the full effect of this last interview. He was, besides, not naturally cruel, where severities were to be enforced under his own eye.

"The divine and immortal Constantine," he said, "did not, I am persuaded, subject his descendants to this severe trial, in order further to search out the innocence of the criminals, but rather to give to those who came after him an opportunity of generously forgiving a crime which could not, without pardon — the express pardon of the Prince — escape unpunished. I rejoice that I am born of the willow rather than of the oak, and I acknowledge my weakness, that not even the safety of my own life, or resentment of this unhappy man's treasonable machinations, have the same effect with me as the tears of my wife, and the swooning of my daughter. Rise up, Nicephorus Briennius, freely pardoned, and restored even to the rank of Caesar. We will direct thy pardon to be made out by the great Logothete, and sealed with the golden bull. For four-and-twenty hours thou art a prisoner, until an arrangement is made for preserving the public peace. Meanwhile, thou wilt remain under the charge of the Patriarch, who will be answerable for thy forthcoming. — Daughter and wife, you must now go hence to your own apartment; a future time will come, during which you may have enough of weeping and embracing, mourning and rejoicing. Pray Heaven that I, who, having been trained on till I have sacrificed justice and true policy to uxorious compassion and paternal tenderness of heart, may not have cause at last for grieving in good earnest for all the events of this miscellaneous drama."

The pardoned Caesar, who endeavoured to regulate his ideas according to this unexpected change, found it as difficult to reconcile himself to the reality of his situation as Ursel to the face of nature, after having been long deprived of enjoying it; so much do the dizziness and confusion of ideas, occasioned by moral and physical causes of surprise and terror, resemble each other in their effects on the understanding.

At length he stammered forth a request that he might be permitted to go to the field with the Emperor, and divert, by the interposition of his own body, the traitorous blows which some desperate man might aim against that of his Prince, in a day which was too likely to be one of danger and bloodshed.

"Hold there!" said Alexius Comnenus; — "we will not begin thy newly-redeemed life by renewed doubts of thine allegiance; yet it is but fitting to remind thee, that thou art still the nominal and ostensible head of those who expect to take a part in this day's insurrection, and it will be the safest course to trust its pacification to others than to thee. Go, sir, compare notes with the Patriarch, and merit your pardon by confessing to him any traitorous intentions concerning this foul conspiracy with which we may be as yet unacquainted. — Daughter and wife, farewell! I must now depart for the lists, where I have to speak with the traitor Achilles Tatius and the heathenish infidel Agelastes, if he still lives, but of whose providential death I hear a confirmed rumour."

"Yet do not go, my dearest father!" said the Princess; "but let me rather go to encourage the loyal subjects in your behalf. The extreme kindness which you have extended towards my guilty husband, convinces me of the extent of your affection towards your unworthy daughter, and the greatness of the sacrifice which you have made to her almost childish affection for an ungrateful man who put your life in danger."

"That is to say, daughter," said the Emperor, smiling, "that the pardon of your husband is a boon which has lost its merit when it is granted. Take my advice, Anna, and think otherwise; wives and their husbands ought in prudence to forget their offences towards each other as soon as human nature will permit them. Life is too short, and conjugal tranquillity too uncertain, to admit of dwelling long upon such irritating subjects. To your apartments, Princesses, and prepare the scarlet-buskings, and the embroidery which is displayed on the cuffs and collars of the Caesar's robe, indicative of his high rank. He must not be seen without them on the morrow. — Reverend father, I remind you once more that the Caesar is in your personal custody from this moment until tomorrow at the same hour."

They parted; the Emperor repairing to put himself at the head of his Varangian guards — the Caesar, under the superintendence of the Patriarch, withdrawing into the interior of the Blacquernal Palace, where Nicephorus Briennius was under the necessity of "unthreading the rude eye of rebellion," and throwing such lights as were in his power upon the progress of the conspiracy.

"Agelastes," he said, "Achilles Tatius, and Hereward the Varangian, were the persons principally entrusted in its progress. But whether they had been all true to their engagements, he did not pretend to be assured."

In the female apartments, there was a violent discussion betwixt Anna Comnena and her mother. The Princess had undergone during the day many changes of sentiment and feeling; and though they had finally united themselves into one strong interest in her husband's favour, yet no sooner was the fear of his punishment removed, than the sense of his ungrateful behaviour began to revive. She became sensible also that a woman of her extraordinary attainments, who had been by a universal course of flattery disposed to entertain a very high opinion of her own consequence, made rather a poor figure when she had been the passive subject of a long series of intrigues, by which she was destined to be disposed of in one way or the other, according to the humour of a set of subordinate conspirators, who never so much as dreamed of regarding her as a being capable of forming a wish in her own behalf, or even yielding or refusing a consent. Her father's authority over her, and right to dispose of her, was less questionable; but even then it was something derogatory to the dignity of a Princess born in the purple — an authoress besides, and giver of immortality — to be, without her own consent, thrown, as it were, at the head now of one suitor, now of another, however mean or disgusting, whose alliance could for the time benefit the Emperor. The consequence of these moody reflections, was that Anna Comnena deeply toiled in spirit for the discovery of some means by which she might assert her sullied dignity, and various were the expedients which she revolved.

Chapter the Thirty-Second.

*But now the hand of fate is on the curtain,
And brings the scene to light.*

DON SEBASTIAN.

The gigantic trumpet of the Varangians sounded its loudest note of march, and the squadrons of the faithful guards, sheathed in complete mail, and enclosing in their centre the person of their Imperial master, set forth upon their procession through the streets of Constantinople. The form of Alexius, glittering in his splendid armour, seemed no unmeet central point for the force of an empire; and while the citizens crowded in the train of him and his escort, there might be seen a visible difference between those who came with the premeditated intention of tumult, and the greater part, who, like the multitude of every great city, thrust each other and shout for rapture on account of any cause for which a crowd may be collected together. The hope of the conspirators was lodged chiefly in the Immortal Guards, who were levied principally for the defence of Constantinople, partook of the general prejudices of the citizens, and had been particularly influenced by those in favour of Ursel, by whom, previous to his imprisonment, they had themselves been commanded. The conspirators had determined that those of this body who were considered as most discontented, should early in the morning take possession of the posts in the lists most favourable for their purpose of assaulting the Emperor's person. But, in spite of all efforts short of actual violence, for which the time did not seem to be come, they found themselves disappointed in this purpose, by parties of the Varangian guards, planted with apparent carelessness, but in fact, with perfect skill, for the prevention of their enterprise. Somewhat confounded at perceiving that a design, which they could not suppose to be suspected, was, nevertheless, on every part controlled and counter-checked, the conspirators began to look for the principal persons of their own party, on whom they depended for orders in this emergency; but neither the Caesar nor Agelastes was to be seen, whether in the lists or on the military march from Constantinople: and though Achilles Tatius rode in the latter assembly, yet it might be clearly observed that he was rather attending upon the Protospathaire, than, assuming that independence as an officer which he loved to affect.

In this manner, as the Emperor with his glittering bands approached the phalanx of Tancred and his followers, who were drawn up, it will be remembered, upon a rising cape between the city and the lists, the main body of the Imperial procession deflected in some degree from the straight road, in order to march past them without interruption; while the Protospathaire and the Acolyte passed under the escort of a band of Varangians, to bear the Emperor's inquiries to Prince Tancred, concerning the purpose of his being there with his band. The short march was soon performed — the large trumpet which attended the two officers sounded a parley, and Tancred himself, remarkable for that personal beauty which Tasso has preferred to any of the crusaders, except Rinaldo d'Este, the creatures of his own poetical imagination, advanced to parley with them.

"The Emperor of Greece," said the Protospathaire to Tancred, "requires the Prince of Otranto to show, by the two high officers who shall deliver him this message, with what purpose he has returned, contrary to his oath, to the right side of these straits; assuring Prince Tancred at the same time, that nothing will so much please the Emperor, as to receive an answer not at variance with his treaty with the Duke of Bouillon, and the oath which was taken by the crusading nobles and their soldiers; since that would enable the Emperor, in conformity to his own wishes, by his kind reception of Prince Tancred and his troop, to show how high is his estimation of the dignity of the one, and the bravery of both — We wait an answer."

The tone of the message had nothing in it very alarming, and its substance cost Prince Tancred very little trouble to answer. "The cause," he said, "of the Prince of Otranto appearing here with fifty lances, is this cartel, in which a combat is appointed betwixt Nicephorus Briennius, called the Caesar, a high member of this empire, and a worthy knight of great fame, the partner of the Pilgrims who have taken the Cross, in their high vow to rescue Palestine from the infidels. The name of the said Knight is the redoubted Robert of Paris. It becomes, therefore, an obligation, indispensable upon the Holy Pilgrims of the Crusade, to send one chief of their number, with a body of men-at-arms, sufficient to see, as is usual, fair play between the combatants. That such is their intention, may be seen from, their sending no more than fifty lances, with their furniture and following; whereas it would have cost them no trouble to have detached ten times the number, had they nourished any purpose of interfering by force, or disturbing the fair combat which is about to take place. The Prince of Otranto, therefore, and his followers, will place themselves at the disposal of the Imperial Court, and witness the proceedings of the combat, with the most perfect confidence that the rules of fair battle will be punctually observed."

The two Grecian officers transmitted this reply to the Emperor, who heard it with pleasure, and immediately proceeding to act upon the principle which he had laid down, of maintaining peace, if possible, with the crusaders, named Prince Tancred with the Protospathaire as Field Marshals of the lists, fully empowered, under the Emperor, to decide all the terms of the combat, and to have recourse to Alexius himself where their opinions disagreed. This was made known to the assistants, who were thus prepared for the entry into the lists of the Grecian officer and the Italian Prince in full armour, while a proclamation announced to all the spectators their solemn office. The same annunciation commanded the assistants of every kind to clear a convenient part of the seats which surrounded the lists on one side, that it might serve for the accommodation of Prince Tancred's followers.

Achilles Tatius, who was a heedful observer of all these passages, saw with alarm, that by the last collocation the armed Latins were interposed between the Immortal Guards and the discontented citizens, which made it most probable that the conspiracy was discovered, and that Alexius found he had a good right to reckon upon the assistance of Tancred and his forces in the task of suppressing it. This, added to the cold and caustic manner in which the Emperor communicated his commands to him, made the Acolyte of opinion, that his best chance of escape from the danger in which he was now placed, was, that the whole conspiracy should fall to the ground, and that the day should pass without the least attempt to shake the throne of Alexius Comnenus. Even then it continued highly doubtful, whether a despot, so wily and so suspicious as the Emperor, would think it sufficient to rest satisfied with the private knowledge of the undertaking, and its failure, with which he appeared to be possessed, without putting into exercise the bow-strings and the blinding-irons of the mutes of the interior. There was, however, little possibility either of flight or of resistance. The least attempt to withdraw himself from the neighbourhood of those faithful followers of the Emperor, personal foes of his own, by whom he was gradually and more closely surrounded, became each moment more perilous, and more certain to provoke a rupture, which it was the interest of the weaker party to delay, with whatever difficulty. And while the soldiers under Achilles's immediate authority seemed still to treat him as their superior officer, and appeal to him for the word of command, it became more and more evident that the slightest degree of suspicion which should be excited, would be the instant signal for his being placed under arrest. With a trembling heart, therefore, and eyes dimmed by the powerful idea of soon parting with the light of day, and all that it made visible, the Acolyte saw himself condemned to watch the turn of circumstances over which he could have no influence, and to content himself with waiting the result of a drama, in which his own life was concerned, although the piece was played by others. Indeed, it seemed as if through the whole assembly some signal was waited for, which no one was in readiness to give.

The discontented citizens and soldiers looked in vain for Agelastes and the Caesar, and when they observed the condition of Achilles Tatius, it seemed such as rather to express doubt and consternation, than to give encouragement to the hopes they had entertained. Many of the lower classes, however, felt too secure in their own insignificance to fear the personal consequences of a tumult, and were desirous, therefore, to provoke the disturbance, which seemed hushing itself to sleep.

A hoarse murmur, which attained almost the importance of a shout, exclaimed — "Justice, justice! — Ursel, Ursel! — The rights of the Immortal Guards!" &c. At this the trumpet of the Varangians awoke, and its tremendous tones were heard to peal loudly over the whole assembly, as the voice of its presiding deity. A dead silence prevailed in the multitude, and the voice of a herald announced, in the name of Alexius Comnenus, his sovereign will and pleasure.

"Citizens of the Roman Empire, your complaints, stirred up by factious men, have reached the ear of your Emperor; you shall yourselves be witness to his power of gratifying his people. At your request, and before your own sight, the visual ray which hath been quenched shall be re-illuminated — the mind whose efforts were restricted to the imperfect supply of individual wants shall be again extended, if such is the owner's will, to the charge of an ample Theme or division of the empire. Political jealousy, more hard to receive conviction than the blind to receive sight, shall yield itself conquered, by the Emperor's paternal love of his people, and his desire to give them satisfaction. Ursel, the darling of your wishes, supposed to be long dead, or at least believed to exist in blinded seclusion, is restored to you well in health, clear in eyesight, and possessed of every faculty necessary to adorn the Emperor's favour, or merit the affection of the people."

As the herald thus spoke, a figure, which had hitherto stood shrouded behind some officers of the interior, now stepped forth, and flinging from him a dusky veil, in which he was wrapt, appeared in a dazzling scarlet garment, of which the sleeves and buskins displayed those ornaments which expressed a rank nearly adjacent to that of the Emperor himself. He held in his hand a silver truncheon, the badge of delegated command over the Immortal Guards, and kneeling before the Emperor, presented it to his hands, intimating a virtual resignation of the command which it implied. The whole assembly were electrified at the appearance of a person long supposed either dead, or by cruel means rendered incapable of public trust. Some recognised the man, whose appearance and features were not easily forgot, and gratulated him upon his most unexpected return to the service of his country. Others stood suspended in amazement, not knowing whether to trust their eyes, while a few determined malecontents eagerly pressed upon the assembly an allegation that the person presented as Ursel was only a counterfeit, and the whole a trick of the Emperor.

"Speak to them, noble Ursel," said the Emperor. "Tell them, that if I have sinned against thee, it has been because I was deceived, and that my disposition to make thee amends is as ample as ever was my purpose of doing thee wrong."

"Friends and countrymen," said Ursel, turning himself to the assembly, "his Imperial Majesty permits me to offer my assurance, that if in any former part of my life I have suffered at his hand, it is more than wiped out by the feelings of a moment so glorious as this; and that I am well satisfied, from the present instant, to spend what remains of my life in the service of the most generous and beneficent of sovereigns, or, with his permission, to bestow it in preparing, by devotional exercises, for an infinite immortality to be spent in the society of saints and angels. Whichever choice I shall make, I reckon that you, my beloved countrymen, who have remembered me so kindly during years of darkness and captivity, will not fail to afford me the advantage of your prayers."

This sudden apparition of the long-lost Ursel had too much of that which elevates and surprises not to captivate the multitude, and they sealed their reconciliation with three tremendous shouts, which are said to have shaken the air, that birds, incapable of sustaining themselves, sunk down exhausted out of their native element.

"What, leave the combat out!" exclaimed the knight.

"Yea! or we must renounce the Stagyrite.

So large a crowd the stage will ne'er contain."

—"Then build a new, or act it on a plain."

POPE.

The sounds of the gratulating shout had expanded over the distant shores of the Bosphorus by mountain and forest, and died at length in the farthest echoes, when the people, in the silence which ensued, appeared to ask each other what next scene was about to adorn a pause so solemn and a stage so august. The pause would probably have soon given place to some new clamour, for a multitude, from whatever cause assembled, seldom remains long silent, had not a new signal from the Varangian trumpet given notice of a fresh purpose to solicit their attention. The blast had something in its tone spirit-stirring and yet melancholy, partaking both of the character of a point of war, and of the doleful sounds which might be chosen to announce an execution of peculiar solemnity. Its notes were high and widely extended, and prolonged and long dwelt upon, as if the brazen clamour had been waked by something more tremendous than the lungs of mere mortals.

The multitude appeared to acknowledge these awful sounds, which were indeed such as habitually solicited their attention to Imperial edicts, of melancholy import, by which rebellions were announced, dooms of treason discharged, and other tidings of a great and affecting import intimated to the people of Constantinople. When the trumpet had in its turn ceased, with its thrilling and doleful notes, to agitate the immense assembly, the voice of the herald again addressed them.

It announced in a grave and affecting strain, that it sometimes chanced how the people failed in their duty to a sovereign, who was unto them as a father, and how it became the painful duty of the prince to use the rod of correction rather than the olive sceptre of mercy.

"Fortunate," continued the herald, "it is, when the supreme Deity having taken on himself the preservation of a throne, in beneficence and justice resembling his own, has also assumed the most painful task of his earthly delegate, by punishing those whom his unerring judgment acknowledges as most guilty, and leaving to his substitute the more agreeable task of pardoning such of those as art has misled, and treachery hath involved in its snares.

"Such being the case, Greece and its accompanying Themes are called upon to listen and learn that a villain, namely Agelastes, who had insinuated himself into the favour of the Emperor, by affection of deep knowledge and severe virtue, had formed a treacherous plan for the murder of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus, and a revolution in the state. This person, who, under pretended wisdom, hid the doctrines of a heretic and the vices of a sensualist, had found proselytes to his doctrines even among the Emperor's household, and those persons who were most bound to him, and down to the lower order, to excite the last of whom were dispersed a multitude of forged rumours, similar to those concerning Ursol's death and blindness, of which your own eyes have witnessed the falsehood."

The people, who had hitherto listened in silence, upon this appeal broke forth in a clamorous assent. They had scarcely been again silent, ere the iron-voiced herald continued his proclamation.

"Not Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," he said, "had more justly, or more directly fallen under the doom of an offended Deity, than this villain, Agelastes. The steadfast earth gaped to devour the apostate sons of Israel, but the termination of this wretched man's existence has been, as far as can now be known, by the direct means of an evil spirit, whom his own arts had evoked into the upper air. By the spirit, as would appear by the testimony of a noble lady, and other females, who witnessed the termination of his life, Agelastes was strangled, a fate well-becoming his odious crimes. Such a death, even of a guilty man, must, indeed, be most painful to the humane feelings of the Emperor, because it involves suffering beyond this world. But the awful catastrophe carries with it this comfort, that it absolves the Emperor from the necessity of carrying any farther a vengeance which Heaven itself seems to have limited to the exemplary punishment of the principal conspirator. Some changes of offices and situations shall be made, for the sake of safety and good order; but the secret who had or who had not, been concerned in this awful crime, shall sleep in the bosoms of the persons themselves implicated, since the Emperor is determined to dismiss their offence from his memory, as the effect of a transient delusion. Let all, therefore, who now hear me, whatever consciousness they may possess of a knowledge of what was this day intended, return to their houses, assured that their own thoughts will be their only punishment. Let them rejoice that Almighty goodness has saved them from the meditations of their own hearts, and, according to the affecting language of Scripture — 'Let them repent and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall them.'"

The voice of the herald then ceased, and was again answered by the shouts of the audience. These were unanimous; for circumstances contributed to convince the malecontent party that they stood at the Sovereign's mercy, and the edict that they heard having shown his acquaintance with their guilt, it lay at his pleasure to let loose upon them the strength of the Varangians, while, from the terms on which it had pleased him to receive Tancred, it was probable that the Apuleian forces were also at his disposal.

The voices, therefore, of the bulky Stephanos, of Harpax the centurion, and other rebels, both of the camp and city, were the first to thunder forth their gratitude for the clemency of the Emperor, and their thanks to Heaven for his preservation.

The audience, reconciled to the thoughts of the discovered and frustrated conspiracy, began meantime, according to their custom, to turn themselves to the consideration of the matter which had more avowedly called them together, and private whispers, swelling by degrees into murmurs, began to express the dissatisfaction of the citizens at being thus long assembled, without receiving any communication respecting the announced purpose of their meeting.

Alexius was not slow to perceive the tendency of their thoughts; and, on a signal from his hand, the trumpets blew a point of war, in sounds far more lively than those which had prefaced the Imperial edict. "Robert, Count of Paris," then said a herald, "art thou here in thy place, or by knightly proxy, to answer the challenge brought against thee by his Imperial Highness Nicephorus Briennius, Caesar of this empire?"

The Emperor conceived himself to have equally provided against the actual appearance at this call of either of the parties named, and had prepared an exhibition of another kind, namely, certain cages, tenanted by wild animals, which being now loosened should do their pleasure with each other in the eyes of the assembly. His astonishment and confusion, therefore, were great, when, as the last note of the proclamation died in the echo, Count Robert of Paris stood forth, armed cap-a-pie, his mailed charger led behind him from within the curtained enclosure, at one end of the lists, as if ready to mount at the signal of the marshal.

The alarm and the shame that were visible in every countenance near the Imperial presence when no Caesar came forth in like fashion to confront the formidable Frank, were not of long duration. Hardly had the style and title of the Count of Paris been duly announced by the heralds, and their second summons of his antagonist uttered in due form, when a person, dressed like one of the Varangian Guards, sprung into the lists, and announced himself as ready to do battle in the name and place of the Caesar Nicephorus Briennius, and for the honour of the empire.

Alexius, with the utmost joy, beheld this unexpected assistance, and readily gave his consent to the bold soldier who stood thus forward in the hour of utmost need, to take upon himself the dangerous office of champion. He the more readily acquiesced, as, from the size and appearance of the soldier, and the gallant bearing he displayed, he had no doubt of his individual person, and fully confided in his valour. But Prince Tancred interposed his opposition.

"The lists," he said, "were only open to knights and nobles; or, at any rate, men were not permitted to meet therein who were not of some equality of birth and blood; nor could he remain a silent witness where the laws of chivalry are in such respects forgotten."

"Let Count Robert of Paris," said the Varangian, "look upon my countenance, and say whether he has not, by promise, removed all objection to our contest which might be founded upon an inequality of condition, and let him be judge himself, whether, by meeting me in this field, he will do more than comply with a compact which he has long since become bound by."

Count Robert, upon this appeal, advanced and acknowledged, without further debate, that, notwithstanding their difference of rank, he held himself bound by his solemn word to give this valiant soldier a meeting in the field. That he regretted, on account of this gallant man's eminent virtues, and the high services he had received at his hands, that they should now stand upon terms of such bloody arbitration; but since nothing was more common, than that the fate of war called on friends to meet each other in mortal combat, he would not shrink from the engagement he had pledged himself to; nor did he think his quality in the slightest

degree infringed or diminished, by meeting in battle a warrior so well known and of such good account as Hereward, the brave Varangian. He added, that "he willingly admitted that the combat should take place on foot, and with the battle-axe, which was the ordinary weapon of the Varangian guard."

Hereward had stood still, almost like a statue, while this discourse passed; but when the Count of Paris had made this speech, he inclined himself towards him with a grateful obeisance, and expressed himself honoured and gratified by the manly manner in which the Count acquitted himself, according to his promise, with complete honour and fidelity.

"What we are to do," said Count Robert, with a sigh of regret, which even his love of battle could not prevent, "let us do quickly; the heart may be affected, but the hand must do its duty."

Hereward assented, with the additional remark, "Let us then lose no more time, which is already flying fast." And, grasping his axe, he stood prepared for combat.

"I also am ready," said Count Robert of Paris, taking the same weapon from a Varangian soldier, who stood by the lists. Both were immediately upon the alert, nor did further forms or circumstances put off the intended duel.

The first blows were given and parried with great caution, and Prince Tancred and others thought that on the part of Count Robert the caution was much greater than usual; but, in combat as in food, the appetite increases with the exercise. The fiercer passions began, as usual, to awaken with the clash of arms and the sense of deadly blows, some of which were made with great fury on either side, and parried with considerable difficulty, and not so completely but that blood flowed on both their parts. The Greeks looked with astonishment on a single combat, such as they had seldom witnessed, and held their breath as they beheld the furious blows dealt by either warrior, and expected with each stroke the annihilation of one or other of the combatants. As yet their strength and agility seemed somewhat equally matched, although those who judged with more pretension to knowledge, were of opinion, that Count Robert spared putting forth some part of the military skill for which he was celebrated; and the remark was generally made and allowed that he had surrendered a great advantage by not insisting upon his right to fight upon horseback. On the other hand, it was the general opinion that the gallant Varangian omitted to take advantage of one or two opportunities afforded him by the heat of Count Robert's temper, who obviously was incensed at the duration of the combat.

Accident at length seemed about to decide what had been hitherto an equal contest. Count Robert, making a feint on one side of his antagonist, struck him on the other, which was uncovered, with the edge of his weapon, so that the Varangian reeled, and seemed in the act of falling to the earth. The usual sound made by spectators at the sight of any painful or unpleasant circumstance, by drawing the breath between the teeth, was suddenly heard to pass through the assembly, while a female voice loud and eagerly exclaimed — "Count Robert of Paris! — forget not this day that thou owest a life to Heaven and me." The Count was in the act of again seconding his blow, with what effect could hardly be judged, when this cry reached his ears, and apparently took away his disposition for farther combat.

"I acknowledge the debt," he said, sinking his battle-axe, and retreating two steps from his antagonist, who stood in astonishment, scarcely recovered from the stunning effect of the blow by which he was so nearly prostrated. He sank the blade of his battle-axe in imitation of his antagonist, and seemed to wait in suspense what was to be the next process of the combat. "I acknowledge my debt," said the valiant Count of Paris, "alike to Bertha of Britain and to the Almighty, who has preserved me from the crime of ungrateful blood-guiltiness. — You have seen the fight, gentlemen," turning to Tancred and his chivalry, "and can testify, on your honour, that it has been maintained fairly on both sides, and without advantage on either. I presume my honourable antagonist has by this time satisfied the desire which brought me under his challenge, and which certainly had no taste in it of personal or private quarrel. On my part, I retain towards him such a sense of personal obligation as would render my continuing this combat, unless compelled to it by self-defence, a shameful and sinful action."

Alexius gladly embraced the terms of truce, which he was far from expecting, and threw down his warder, in signal that the duel was ended. Tancred, though somewhat surprised, and perhaps even scandalized, that a private soldier of the Emperor's guard should have so long resisted the utmost efforts of so approved a knight, could not but own that the combat had been fought with perfect fairness and equality, and decided upon terms dishonourable to neither party. The Count's character being well known and established amongst the crusaders, they were compelled to believe that some motive of a most potent nature formed the principle upon which, very contrary to his general practice, he had proposed a cessation of the combat before it was brought to a deadly, or at least to a decisive conclusion. The edict of the Emperor upon the occasion, therefore, passed into a law, acknowledged by the assent of the chiefs present, and especially affirmed and gratulated by the shouts of the assembled spectators.

But perhaps the most interesting figure in the assembly was that of the bold Varangian, arrived so suddenly at a promotion of military renown, which the extreme difficulty he had experienced in keeping his ground against Count Robert had prevented him from anticipating, although his modesty had not diminished the indomitable courage with which he maintained the contest. He stood in the middle of the lists, his face ruddy with the exertion of the combat, and not less so from the modest consciousness proper to the plainness and simplicity of his character, which was disconcerted by finding himself the central point of the gaze of the multitude.

"Speak to me, my soldier," said Alexius, strongly affected by the gratitude which he felt was due to Hereward upon so singular an occasion, "speak to thine Emperor as his superior, for such thou art at this moment, and tell him if there is any manner, even at the expense of half his kingdom, to atone for his own life saved, and, what is yet dearer, for the honour of his country, which thou hast so manfully defended and preserved?"

"My Lord," answered Hereward, "your Imperial Highness values my poor services over highly, and ought to attribute them to the noble Count of Paris, first, for his condescending to accept of an antagonist so mean in quality as myself; and next, in generously relinquishing victory when he might have achieved it by an additional blow; for I here confess before your Majesty, my brethren, and the assembled Grecians, that my power of protracting the combat was ended, when the gallant Count, by his generosity, put a stop to it."

"Do not thyself that wrong, brave man," said Count Robert; "for I vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances, that the combat was yet within the undetermined doom of Providence, when the pressure of my own feelings rendered me incapable of continuing it, to the necessary harm, perhaps to the mortal damage, of an antagonist to whom I owe so much kindness. Choose, therefore, the recompense which the generosity of thy Emperor offers in a manner so just and grateful, and fear not lest mortal voice pronounces that reward unmerited which Robert of Paris shall avouch with his sword to have been gallantly won upon his own crest."

"You are too great, my lord, and too noble," answered the Anglo-Saxon, "to be gainsaid by such as I am, and I must not awaken new strife between us by contesting the circumstances under which our combat so suddenly closed, nor would it be wise or prudent in me further to contradict you. My noble Emperor generously offers me the right of naming what he calls my recompense; but let not his generosity be dispraised, although it is from you, my lord, and not from his Imperial Highness, that I am to ask a boon, to me the dearest to which my voice can give utterance."

"And that," said the Count, "has reference to Bertha, the faithful attendant of my wife?"

"Even so," said Hereward; "it is my proposal to request my discharge from the Varangian guard, and permission to share in your lordship's pious and honourable vow for the recovery of Palestine, with liberty to fight under your honoured banner, and permission from time to time to recommend my love-suit to Bertha, the attendant of the Countess of Paris, and the hope that it may find favour in the eyes of her noble lord and lady. I may thus finally hope to be restored to a country, which I have never ceased to love over the rest of the world."

"Thy service, noble soldier," said the Count, "shall be as acceptable to me as that of a born earl; nor is there an opportunity of acquiring honour which I can shape for thee, to which, as it occurs, I will not gladly prefer thee. I will not boast of what interest I have with the King of England, but something I can do with him, and it shall be strained to the uttermost to settle thee in thine own beloved native country."

The Emperor then spoke. "Bear witness, heaven and earth, and you my faithful subjects, and you my gallant allies; above all, you my bold and true Varangian Guard, that we would rather have lost the brightest jewel from our Imperial crown, than have relinquished the service of this true and faithful Anglo-Saxon. But since go he must and will, it shall be my study to distinguish him by such marks of beneficence as may make it known through his future life, that he is the person to whom the Emperor Alexius Comnenus acknowledged a debt larger than his empire could discharge. You, my Lord Tancred, and your principal leaders, will sup

with us this evening, and tomorrow resume your honourable and religious purpose of pilgrimage. We trust both the combatants will also oblige us by their presence. — Trumpets, give the signal for dismissal.”

The trumpets sounded accordingly, and the different classes of spectators, armed and unarmed, broke up into various parties, or formed into their military ranks, for the purpose of their return to the city.

The screams of women suddenly and strangely raised, was the first thing that arrested the departure of the multitude, when those who glanced their eyes back, saw Sylvan, the great ourang-outang, produce himself in the lists, to their surprise and astonishment. The women, and many of the men who were present, unaccustomed to the ghastly look and savage appearance of a creature so extraordinary, raised a yell of terror so loud, that it discomposed the animal who was the occasion of its being raised. Sylvan, in the course of the night, having escaped over the garden-wall of Agelastes, and clambered over the rampart of the city, found no difficulty in hiding himself in the lists which were in the act of being raised, having found a lurking-place in some dark corner under the seats of the spectators. From this he was probably dislodged by the tumult of the dispersing multitude, and had been compelled, therefore, to make an appearance in public when he least desired it, not unlike that of the celebrated Puliccinello, at the conclusion of his own drama, when he enters in mortal strife with the foul fiend himself, a scene which scarcely excites more terror among the juvenile audience, than did the unexpected apparition of Sylvan among the spectators of the duel. Bows were bent, and javelins pointed by the braver part of the soldiery, against an animal of an appearance so ambiguous, and whom his uncommon size and grizzly look caused most who beheld him to suppose either the devil himself, or the apparition of some fiendish deity of ancient days, whom the heathens worshipped. Sylvan had so far improved such opportunities as had been afforded him, as to become sufficiently aware that the attitudes assumed by so many military men, inferred immediate danger to his person, from which he hastened to shelter himself by flying to the protection of Hereward, with whom he had been in some degree familiarized. He seized him, accordingly, by the cloak, and, by the absurd and alarmed look of his fantastic features, and a certain wild and gibbering chatter, endeavoured to express his fear and to ask protection. Hereward understood the terrified creature, and turning to the Emperor's throne, said aloud — “Poor frightened being, turn thy petition, and gestures, and tones, to a quarter which, having today pardoned so many offences which were wilfully and maliciously schemed, will not be, I am sure, obdurate to such as thou, in thy half-reasoning capacity, may have been capable of committing.”

The creature, as is the nature of its tribe, caught from Hereward himself the mode of applying with most effect his gestures and pitiable supplication, while the Emperor, notwithstanding the serious scene which had just past, could not help laughing at the touch of comedy flung into it by this last incident.

“My trusty Hereward,” — he said aside, (“I will not again call him Edward if I can help it”) — thou art the refuge of the distressed, whether it be man or beast, and nothing that sues through thy intercession, while thou remainest in our service, shall find its supplication in vain. Do thou, good Hereward,” for the name was now pretty well established in his Imperial memory, “and such of thy companions as know the habits of the creature, lead him back to his old quarters in the Blacquernal; and that done, my friend, observe that we request thy company, and that of thy faithful mate Bertha, to partake supper at our court, with our wife and daughter, and such of our servants and allies as we shall request to share the same honour. Be assured, that while thou remainest with us, there is no point of dignity which shall not be willingly paid to thee. — And do thou approach, Achilles Tatius, as much favoured by thine Emperor as before this day dawned. What charges are against thee have been only whispered in a friendly ear, which remembers them not, unless (which Heaven forefend!) their remembrance is renewed by fresh offences.”

Achilles Tatius bowed till the plume of his helmet mingled with the mane of his fiery horse, but held it wisest to forbear any answer in words, leaving his crime and his pardon to stand upon those general terms in which the Emperor had expressed them.

Once more the multitude of all ranks returned on their way to the city, nor did any second interruption arrest their march. Sylvan, accompanied by one or two Varangians, who led him in a sort of captivity, took his way to the vaults of the Blacquernal, which were in fact his proper habitation.

Upon the road to the city, Harpax, the notorious corporal of the Immortal Guards, held a discourse with one or two of his own soldiers, and of the citizens who had been members of the late conspiracy.

“So,” said Stephanos, the prize-fighter, “a fine affair we have made of it, to suffer ourselves to be all anticipated and betrayed by a thick-sculled Varangian; every chance turning against us as they would against Corydon, the shoemaker, if he were to defy me to the circus. Ursel, whose death made so much work, turns out not to be dead after all; and what is worse, he lives not to our advantage. This fellow Hereward, who was yesterday no better than myself — What do I say? — better! — he was a great deal worse — an insignificant nobody in every respect! — is now crammed with honours, praises, and gifts, till he wellnigh returns what they have given him, and the Caesar and the Acolyte, our associates, have lost the Emperor's love and confidence, and if they are suffered to survive, it must be like the tame domestic poultry, whom we pamper with food, one day, that upon the next their necks may be twisted for spit or spot.”

“Stephanos,” replied the centurion, “thy form of body fits thee well for the Palaestra, but thy mind is not so acutely formed as to detect that which is real from that which is only probable, in the political world, of which thou art now judging. Considering the risk incurred by lending a man's ear to a conspiracy, thou oughtest to reckon it a saving in every particular, where he escapes with his life and character safe. This has been the case with Achilles Tatius, and with the Caesar. They have remained also in their high places of trust and power, and maybe confident that the Emperor will hardly dare to remove them at a future period, since the possession of the full knowledge of their guilt has not emboldened him to do so. Their power, thus left with them, is in fact ours; nor is there a circumstance to be supposed, which can induce them to betray their confederates to the government. It is much more likely that they will remember them with the probability of renewing, at a finer time, the alliance which binds them together. Cheer up thy noble resolution, therefore, my Prince of the Circus, and think that thou shalt still retain that predominant influence which the favourites of the amphitheatre are sure to possess over the citizens of Constantinople.”

“I cannot tell,” answered Stephanos; “but it gnaws at my heart like the worm that dieth not, to see this beggarly foreigner betray the noblest blood in the land, not to mention the best athlete in the Palaestra, and move off not only without punishment for his treachery, but with praise, honour, and preferment.”

“True,” said Harpax; “but observe, my friend, that he does move off to purpose. He leaves the land, quits the corps in which he might claim preferment and a few vain honours, being valued at what such trifles amount to. Hereward, in the course of one or two days, shall be little better than a disbanded soldier, subsisting by the poor bread which he can obtain as a follower of this beggarly Count, or which he is rather bound to dispute with the infidel, by encountering with his battle-axe the Turkish sabres. What will it avail him amidst the disasters, the slaughter, and the famine of Palestine, that he once upon a time was admitted to supper with the Emperor? We know Alexius Comnenus — he is willing to discharge, at the highest cost, such obligations as are incurred to men like this Hereward; and, believe me, I think that I see the wily despot shrug his shoulders in derision, when one morning he is saluted with the news of a battle in Palestine lost by the crusaders in which his old acquaintance has fallen a dead man. I will not insult thee, by telling thee how easy it might be to acquire the favour of a gentlewoman in waiting upon a lady of quality; nor do I think it would be difficult, should that be the object of the prize-fighter, to acquire the property of a large baboon like Sylvan, which no doubt would set up as a juggler any Frank who had meanness of spirit to propose to gain his bread in such a capacity, from the alms of the starving chivalry of Europe. But he who can stoop to envy the lot of such a person, ought not to be one whose chief personal distinctions are sufficient to place him first in rank over all the favourites of the amphitheatre.”

There was something in this sophistical kind of reasoning, which was but half satisfactory to the obtuse intellect of the prize-fighter, to whom it was addressed, although the only answer which he attempted was couched in this observation:—

“Ay, but, noble centurion, you forget that, besides empty honours, this Varangian Hereward, or Edward, whichever is his name, is promised a mighty donative of gold.”

“Marry, you touch me there,” said the centurion; “and when you tell me that the promise is fulfilled, I will willingly agree that the Anglo-Saxon hath gained something to be envied for; but while it remains in the shape of a naked promise, you shall pardon me, my worthy Stephanos, if I hold it of no more account than the mere pledges which are distributed among ourselves as well as to the Varangians, promising upon future occasions mints of money, which we are likely to receive at the same time with the last year's snow. Keep up your heart, therefore, noble Stephanos, and believe not that your affairs are worse for the miscarriage of this day; and let not thy gallant courage sink, but remembering those principles upon which it was called into action, believe that thy objects are not the less

secure because fate has removed their acquisition to a more distant day." The veteran and unbending conspirator, Harpax, thus strengthened for some future renewal of their enterprise the failing spirits of Stephanos.

After this, such leaders as were included in the invitation given by the Emperor, repaired to the evening meal, and, from the general content and complaisance expressed by Alexius and his guests of every description, it could little have been supposed that the day just passed over was one which had inferred a purpose so dangerous and treacherous.

The absence of the Countess Brenhilda, during this eventful day, created no small surprise to the Emperor and those in his immediate confidence, who knew her enterprising spirit, and the interest she must have felt in the issue of the combat. Bertha had made an early communication to the Count, that his lady, agitated with the many anxieties of the few preceding days, was unable to leave her apartment. The valiant knight, therefore, lost no time in acquainting his faithful Countess of his safety; and afterwards joining those who partook of the banquet at the palace, he bore himself as if the least recollection did not remain on his mind of the perfidious conduct of the Emperor at the conclusion of the last entertainment. He knew, in truth, that the knights of Prince Tancred not only maintained a strict watch round the house where Brenhilda remained, but also that they preserved a severe ward in the neighbourhood of the Blacquernal, as well for the safety of their heroic leader, as for that of Count Robert, the respected companion of their military pilgrimage.

It was the general principle of the European chivalry, that distrust was rarely permitted to survive open quarrels, and that whatever was forgiven, was dismissed from their recollection, as unlikely to recur; but on the present occasion there was a more than usual assemblage of troops, which the occurrences of the day had drawn together, so that the crusaders were called upon to be particularly watchful.

It may be believed that the evening passed over without any attempt to renew the ceremonial in the council chamber of the Lions, which had been upon a former occasion terminated in such misunderstanding. Indeed it would have been lucky if the explanation between the mighty Emperor of Greece and the chivalrous Knight of Paris had taken place earlier; for reflection on what had passed, had convinced the Emperor that the Franks were not a people to be imposed upon by pieces of clockwork, and similar trifles, and that what they did not understand, was sure, instead of procuring their awe or admiration, to excite their anger and defiance. Nor had it altogether escaped Count Robert, that the manners of the Eastern people were upon a different scale from those to which he had been accustomed; that they neither were so deeply affected by the spirit of chivalry, nor, in his own language, was the worship of the Lady of the Broken Lances so congenial a subject of adoration. This notwithstanding, Count Robert observed, that Alexius Comnenus was a wise and politic prince; his wisdom perhaps too much allied to cunning, but yet aiding him to maintain with great address that empire over the minds of his subjects, which was necessary for their good, and for maintaining his own authority. He therefore resolved to receive with equanimity whatever should be offered by the Emperor, either in civility or in the way of jest, and not again to disturb an understanding which might be of advantage to Christendom, by a quarrel founded upon misconception of terms or misapprehension of manners. To this prudent resolution the Count of Paris adhered during the whole evening; with some difficulty, however, since it was somewhat inconsistent with his own fiery and inquisitive temper, which was equally desirous to know the precise amount of whatever was addressed to him, and to take umbrage at it, should it appear in the least degree offensive, whether so intended or not.

Chapter the Thirty-Fourth.

It was not until after the conquest of Jerusalem that Count Robert of Paris returned to Constantinople, and with his wife, and such proportion of his followers as the sword and pestilence had left after that bloody warfare, resumed his course to his native kingdom. Upon reaching Italy, the first care of the noble Count and Countess was to celebrate in princely style the marriage of Hereward and his faithful Bertha, who had added to their other claims upon their master and mistress, those acquired by Hereward's faithful services in Palestine, and no less by Bertha's affectionate ministry to her lady in Constantinople.

As to the fate of Alexius Comnenus, it may be read at large in the history of his daughter Anna, who has represented him as the hero of many a victory, achieved, says the purple-born, in the third chapter and fifteenth book of her history, sometimes by his arms and sometimes by his prudence.

"His boldness alone has gained some battles, at other times his success has been won by stratagem. He has erected the most illustrious of his trophies by confronting danger, by combating like a simple soldier, and throwing himself bareheaded into the thickest of the foe. But there are others," continues the accomplished lady, "which he gained an opportunity of erecting by assuming the appearance of terror, and even of retreat. In a word, he knew alike how to triumph either in flight or in pursuit, and remained upright even before those enemies who appeared to have struck him down; resembling the military implement termed the calthrop, which remains always upright in whatever direction it is thrown on the ground."

It would be unjust to deprive the Princess of the defence she herself makes against the obvious charge of partiality.

"I must still once more repel the reproach which some bring against me, as if my history was composed merely according to the dictates of the natural love for parents which is engraved in the hearts of children. In truth, it is not the effect of that affection which I bear to mine, but it is the evidence of matter of fact, which obliges me to speak as I have done. Is it not possible that one can have at the same time an affection for the memory of a father and for truth? For myself, I have never directed my attempt to write history, otherwise than for the ascertainment of the matter of fact. With this purpose, I have taken for my subject the history of a worthy man. Is it just, that, by the single accident of his being the author of my birth, his quality of my father ought to form a prejudice against me, which would ruin my credit with my readers? I have given, upon other occasions, proofs sufficiently strong of the ardour which I had for the defence of my father's interests, which those that know me can never doubt but, on the present, I have been limited by the inviolable fidelity with which I respect the truth, which I should have felt conscience to have veiled, under pretence of serving the renown of my father."—*Alexiad*, chap. iii. book xv.

This much we have deemed it our duty to quote, in justice to the fair historian; we will extract also her description of the Emperor's death, and are not unwilling to allow, that the character assigned to the Princess by our own Gibbon, has in it a great deal of fairness and of truth.

Notwithstanding her repeated protests of sacrificing rather to the exact and absolute truth than to the memory of her deceased parent, Gibbon remarks truly, that "instead of the simplicity of style and narrative which wins a belief, an elaborate affectation of rhetoric and science betrays in every page the vanity of a female author. The genuine character of Alexius is lost in a vague constellation of virtues; and the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology awakens our jealousy to question the veracity of the historian, and the merit of the hero. We cannot, however, refuse her judicious and important remark, that the disorders of the times were the misfortune and the glory of Alexius; and that every calamity which can afflict a declining empire was accumulated on his reign by the justice of Heaven and the vices of his predecessors."—GIBBON'S *Roman Empire*, vol. ix. p. 83, foot-note.

The Princess accordingly feels the utmost assurance, that a number of signs which appeared in heaven and on earth, were interpreted by the soothsayers of the day as foreboding the death of the Emperor. By these means, Anna Comnena assigned to her father those indications of consequence, which ancient historians represent as necessary intimations of the sympathy of nature, with the removal of great characters from the world; but she fails not to inform the Christian reader that her father's belief attached to none of these prognostics, and that even on the following remarkable occasion he maintained his incredulity:—A splendid statue, supposed generally to be a relic of paganism, holding in its hand a golden sceptre, and standing upon a base of porphyry, was overturned by a tempest, and was generally believed to be an intimation of the death of the Emperor. This, however, he generously repelled. Phidias, he said, and other great sculptors of antiquity, had the talent of imitating the human frame with surprising accuracy; but to suppose that the power of foretelling future events was reposed in these master-pieces of art, would be to ascribe to their makers the faculties reserved by the Deity for himself, when he says, "It is I who kill and make alive." During his latter days, the Emperor was greatly afflicted with the gout, the nature of which has exercised the wit of many persons of science as well as of Anna Comnena. The poor patient was so much exhausted, that when the Empress was talking of most eloquent persons who should assist in the composition of his history, he said, with a natural contempt of such vanities, "The passages of my unhappy life call rather for tears and lamentation than for the praises you speak of."

A species of asthma having come to the assistance of the gout, the remedies of the physicians became as vain as the intercession of the monks and clergy, as well as the alms which were indiscriminately lavished. Two or three deep successive swoons gave ominous warning of the approaching blow; and at length was terminated the reign and life of Alexius Comnenus, a prince who, with all the faults which may be imputed to him, still possesses a real right, from the purity of his general intentions, to be accounted one of the best sovereigns of the Lower Empire.

For some time, the historian forgot her pride of literary rank, and, like an ordinary person, burst into tears and shrieks, tore her hair, and defaced her countenance, while the Empress Irene cast from her princely habits, cut off her hair, changed her purple buskins for black mourning shoes, and her daughter Mary, who had herself been a widow, took a black robe from one of her own wardrobes, and presented it to her mother. "Even in the moment when she put it on," says Anna Comnena, "the Emperor gave up the ghost, and in that moment the sun of my life set."

We shall not pursue her lamentations farther. She upbraids herself that, after the death of her father, that light of the world, she had also survived Irene, the delight alike of the east and of the west, and survived her husband also. "I am indignant," she said, "that my soul, suffering under such torrents of misfortune, should still deign to animate my body. Have I not," said she, "been more hard and unfeeling than the rocks themselves; and is it not just that one, who could survive such a father and mother, and such a husband, should be subjected to the influence of so much calamity? But let me finish this history, rather than any longer fatigue my readers with my unavailing and tragical lamentation."

Having thus concluded her history, she adds the following two lines:—

"The learned Comnena lays her pen aside,
What time her subject and her father died."

Laexen hopou biotoio Alexios d Komnaenos

Entha kalae thygataer laexen Alexiados.

These quotations will probably give the readers as much as they wish to know of the real character of this Imperial historian. Fewer words will suffice to dispose of the other parties who have been selected from her pages, as persons in the foregoing drama.

There is very little doubt that the Count Robert of Paris, whose audacity in seating himself upon the throne of the Emperor gives a peculiar interest to his character, was in fact a person of the highest rank; being no other, as has been conjectured by the learned Du Cange, than an ancestor of the house of Bourbon, which has so long given Kings to France. He was a successor, it has been conceived, of the Counts of Paris, by whom the city was valiantly defended against the Normans, and an ancestor of Hugh Capet. There are several hypotheses upon this subject, deriving the well-known Hugh Capet, first, from the family of Saxony; secondly, from St. Arnoul, afterwards Bishop of Autun; third, from Nibilong; fourth, from the Duke of Bavaria; and fifth, from a natural son of the Emperor Charlemagne. Various placed, but in each of these contested pedigrees, appears this Robert surnamed the *Strong*, who was Count of that district, of which Paris was the capital, most peculiarly styled the County, or Isle of France. Anna Comnena, who has recorded the bold usurpation of the Emperor's seat by this haughty chieftain, has also acquainted us with his receiving a severe, if not a mortal wound, at the battle of Dorylseum, owing to his neglecting the warlike instructions with which her father had favoured him on the subject of the Turkish wars. The antiquary who is disposed to investigate this subject, may consult the late Lord Ashburnham's elaborate Genealogy of the Royal House of France; also a note of Du Cange's on the Princess's history, p. 362, arguing for the identity of her "Robert of Paris, a haughty barbarian," with the "Robert called the Strong," mentioned as an ancestor of Hugh Capet. Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 52, may also be consulted. The French antiquary and the English historian seem alike disposed to find the church, called in the tale that of the Lady of the Broken Lances, in that dedicated to St. Drusas, or Drosin of Soissons, who was supposed to have peculiar influence on the issue of combats, and to be in the habit of determining them in favour of such champions as spent the night preceding at his shrine.

In consideration of the sex of one of the parties concerned, the author has selected our Lady of the Broken Lances as a more appropriate patroness than St. Drusas himself, for the Amazons, who were not uncommon in that age. Gaita, for example, the wife of Robert Guiscard, a redoubted hero, and the parent of a most heroic race of sons, was herself an Amazon, fought in the foremost ranks of the Normans, and is repeatedly commemorated by our Imperial historian, Anna Comnena.

The reader can easily conceive to himself that Robert of Paris distinguished himself among his brethren-at-arms and fellow-crusaders. His fame resounded from the walls of Antioch; but at the battle of Dorylaeum, he was so desperately wounded, as to be disabled from taking a part in the grandest scene of the expedition. His heroic Countess, however, enjoyed the great satisfaction of mounting the walls of Jerusalem, and in so far discharging her own vows and those of her husband. This was the more fortunate, as the sentence of the physicians pronounced that the wounds of the Count had been inflicted by a poisoned weapon, and that complete recovery was only to be hoped for by having recourse to his native air. After some time spent in the vain hope of averting by patience this unpleasant alternative, Count Robert subjected himself to necessity, or what was represented as such, and, with his wife and the faithful Hereward, and all others of his followers who had been like himself disabled from combat, took the way to Europe by sea.

A light galley, procured at a high rate, conducted them safely to Venice, and from that then glorious city, the moderate portion of spoil which had fallen to the Count's share among the conquerors of Palestine, served to convey them to his own dominions, which, more fortunate than those of most of his fellow-pilgrims, had been left uninjured by their neighbours during the time of their proprietor's absence on the Crusade. The report that the Count had lost his health, and the power of continuing his homage to the Lady of the Broken Lances, brought upon him the hostilities of one or two ambitious or envious neighbours, whose covetousness was, however, sufficiently repressed by the brave resistance of the Countess and the resolute Hereward. Less than a twelvemonth was required to restore the Count of Paris to his full health, and to render him, as formerly, the assured protector of his own vassals, and the subject in whom the possessors of the French throne reposed the utmost confidence. This latter capacity enabled Count Robert to discharge his debt towards Hereward in a manner as ample as he could have hoped or expected. Being now respected alike for his wisdom and his sagacity, as much as he always was for his intrepidity and his character as a successful crusader, he was repeatedly employed by the Court of France in settling the troublesome and intricate affairs in which the Norman possessions of the English crown involved the rival nations. William Rufus was not insensible to his merit, nor blind to the importance of gaining his good will; and finding out his anxiety that Hereward should be restored to the land of his fathers, he took, or made an opportunity, by the forfeiture of some rebellious noble, of conferring upon our Varangian a large district adjacent to the New Forest, being part of the scenes which his father chiefly frequented, and where it is said the descendants of the valiant squire and his Bertha have subsisted for many a long year, surviving turns of time and chance, which are in general fatal to the continuance of more distinguished families.

BOOK II THE BETROTHED

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Now in these days were hotte wars upon the Marches of Wales.

LEWIS'S *History*.

The Chronicles, from which this narrative is extracted, assure us, that during the long period when the Welsh princes maintained their independence, the year 1187 was peculiarly marked as favourable to peace betwixt them and their warlike neighbours, the Lords Marchers, who inhabited those formidable castles on the frontiers of the ancient British, on the ruins of which the traveller gazes with wonder. This was the time when Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied by the learned Giraldus de Barri, afterwards Bishop of Saint David's, preached the Crusade from castle to castle, from town to town; awakened the inmost valleys of his native Cambria with the call to arms for recovery of the Holy Sepulchre; and, while he deprecated the feuds and wars of Christian men against each other, held out to the martial spirit of the age a general object of ambition, and a scene of adventure, where the favour of Heaven, as well as earthy renown, was to reward the successful champions.

Yet the British chieftains, among the thousands whom this spirit-stirring summons called from their native land to a distant and perilous expedition, had perhaps the best excuse for declining the summons. The superior skill of the Anglo-Norman knights, who were engaged in constant inroads on the Welsh frontier, and who were frequently detaching from it large portions, which they fortified with castles, thus making good what they had won, was avenged, indeed, but not compensated, by the furious inroads of the British, who, like the billows of a retiring tide, rolled on successively, with noise, fury, and devastation; but, on each retreat, yielded ground insensibly to their invaders.

A union among the native princes might have opposed a strong and permanent barrier to the encroachments of the strangers; but they were, unhappily, as much at discord among themselves as they were with the Normans, and were constantly engaged in private war with each other, of which the common enemy had the sole advantage.

The invitation to the Crusade promised something at least of novelty to a nation peculiarly ardent in their temper; and it was accepted by many, regardless of the consequences which must ensue, to the country which they left defenceless. Even the most celebrated enemies of the Saxon and Norman race laid aside their enmity against the invaders of their country, to enrol themselves under the banners of the Crusade.

Amongst these was reckoned Gwenwyn, (or more properly Gwenwynwen, though we retain the briefer appellation,) a British prince who continued exercising a precarious sovereignty over such parts of Powys-Land as had not been subjugated by the Mortimers, Guarines, Latimers, FitzAlans, and other Norman nobles, who, under various pretexts, and sometimes contemning all other save the open avowal of superior force, had severed and appropriated large portions of that once extensive and independent principality, which, when Wales was unhappily divided into three parts on the death of Roderick Mawr, fell to the lot of his youngest son, Mervyn. The undaunted resolution and stubborn ferocity of Gwenwyn, descendant of that prince, had long made him beloved among the "Tall men" or Champions of Wales; and he was enabled, more by the number of those who served under him, attracted by his reputation, than by the natural strength of his dilapidated principality, to retaliate the encroachments of the English by the most wasteful inroads.

Yet even Gwenwyn on the present occasion seemed to forget his deeply sworn hatred against his dangerous neighbours. The Torch of Pengwern (for so Gwenwyn was called, from his frequently laying the province of Shrewsbury in conflagration) seemed at present to burn as calmly as a taper in the bower of a lady; and the Wolf of Plinlimmon, another name with which the bards had graced Gwenwyn, now slumbered as peacefully as the shepherd's dog on the domestic hearth.

But it was not alone the eloquence of Baldwin or of Girald which had lulled into peace a spirit so restless and fierce. It is true, their exhortations had done more towards it than Gwenwyn's followers had thought possible. The Archbishop had induced the British Chief to break bread, and to mingle in silvan sports, with his nearest, and hitherto one of his most determined enemies, the old Norman warrior Sir Raymond Berenger, who, sometimes beaten, sometimes victorious, but never subdued, had, in spite of Gwenwyn's hottest incursions, maintained his Castle of Garde Doloureuse, upon the marches of Wales; a place strong by nature, and well fortified by art, which the Welsh prince had found it impossible to conquer, either by open force or by stratagem, and which, remaining with a strong garrison in his rear, often checked his incursions, by rendering his retreat precarious. On this account, Gwenwyn of Powys-Land had an hundred times vowed the death of Raymond Berenger, and the demolition of his castle; but the policy of the sagacious old warrior, and his long experience in all warlike practice, were such as, with the aid of his more powerful countrymen, enabled him to defy the attempts of his fiery neighbour. If there was a man, therefore, throughout England, whom Gwenwyn hated more than another, it was Raymond Berenger; and yet the good Archbishop Baldwin could prevail on the Welsh prince to meet him as a friend and ally in the cause of the Cross. He even invited Raymond to the autumn festivities of his Welsh palace, where the old knight, in all honourable courtesy, feasted and hunted for more than a week in the dominions of his hereditary foe.

To requite this hospitality, Raymond invited the Prince of Powys, with a chosen but limited train, during the ensuing Christmas, to the Garde Doloureuse, which some antiquaries have endeavoured to identify with the Castle of Colune, on the river of the same name. But the length of time, and some geographical difficulties, throw doubts upon this ingenious conjecture.

As the Welshman crossed the drawbridge, he was observed by his faithful bard to shudder with involuntary emotion; nor did Cadwallon, experienced as he was in life, and well acquainted with the character of his master, make any doubt that he was at that moment strongly urged by the apparent opportunity, to seize upon the strong fortress which had been so long the object of his cupidity, even at the expense of violating his good faith.

Dreading lest the struggle of his master's conscience and his ambition should terminate unfavourably for his fame, the bard arrested his attention by whispering in their native language, that "the teeth which bite hardest are those which are out of sight;" and Gwenwyn looking around him, became aware that, though, only unarmed squires and pages appeared in the courtyard, yet the towers and battlements connecting them were garnished with archers and men-at-arms.

They proceeded to the banquet, at which Gwenwyn, for the first time, beheld Eveline Berenger, the sole child of the Norman castellane, the inheritor of his domains and of his supposed wealth, aged only sixteen, and the most beautiful damsel upon the Welsh marches. Many a spear had already been shattered in maintenance of her charms; and the gallant Hugo de Lacy, Constable of Chester, one of the most redoubted warriors of the time, had laid at Eveline's feet the prize which his chivalry had gained in a great tournament held near that ancient town. Gwenwyn considered these triumphs as so many additional recommendations to Eveline; her beauty was incontestable, and she was heiress of the fortress which he so much longed to possess, and which he began now to think might be acquired by means more smooth than those with which he was in the use of working out his will.

Again, the hatred which subsisted between the British and their Saxon and Norman invaders; his long and ill-extinguished feud with this very Raymond Berenger; a general recollection that alliances between the Welsh and English had rarely been happy; and a consciousness that the measure which he meditated would be unpopular among his followers, and appear a dereliction of the systematic principles on which he had hitherto acted, restrained him from speaking his wishes to Raymond or his daughter. The idea of the rejection of his suit did not for a moment occur to him; he was convinced he had but to speak his wishes, and that the daughter of a Norman, castellane, whose rank or power were not of the highest order among the nobles of the frontiers, must be delighted and honoured by a proposal for allying his family with that of the sovereign of a hundred mountains.

There was indeed another objection, which in later times would have been of considerable weight—Gwenwyn was already married. But Brengwain was a childless bride; sovereigns (and among sovereigns the Welsh prince ranked himself) marry for lineage, and the Pope was not likely to be scrupulous, where the question was to oblige a prince who had assumed the Cross with such ready zeal, even although, in fact, his thoughts had been much more on the Garde Doloureuse than on Jerusalem. In the meanwhile, if Raymond Berenger (as was suspected) was not liberal enough in his opinions to permit Eveline to hold the temporary rank of concubine, which the manners of Wales warranted Gwenwyn to offer as an interim, arrangement, he had only to wait for a few months, and sue for a divorce through the Bishop of Saint David's, or some other intercessor at the Court of Rome.

Agitating these thoughts in his mind, Gwenwyn prolonged his residence at the Castle of Berenger, from Christmas till Twelfthday; and endured the presence of the Norman cavaliers who resorted to Raymond's festal halls, although, regarding themselves, in virtue of their rank of knighthood, equal to the most potent sovereigns, they made small account of the long descent of the Welsh prince, who, in their eyes, was but the chief of a semibarbarous province; while he, on his part, considered them little better than a sort of privileged robbers, and with the utmost difficulty restrained himself from manifesting his open hatred, when he beheld them careering in the exercises of chivalry, the habitual use of which rendered them such formidable enemies to his country. At length, the term of feasting was ended, and knight and squire departed from the castle, which once more assumed the aspect of a solitary and guarded frontier fort.

But the Prince of Powys-Land, while pursuing his sports on his own mountains and valleys, found that even the abundance of the game, as well as his release from the society of the Norman chivalry, who affected to treat him as an equal, profited him nothing so long as the light and beautiful form of Eveline, on her white palfrey, was banished from the train of sportsmen. In short, he hesitated no longer, but took into his confidence his chaplain, an able and sagacious man, whose pride was flattered by his patron's communication, and who, besides, saw in the proposed scheme some contingent advantages for himself and his order. By his counsel, the proceedings for Gwenwyn's divorce were prosecuted under favourable auspices, and the unfortunate Brengwain was removed to a nunnery, which perhaps she found a more cheerful habitation than the lonely retreat in which she had led a neglected life, ever since Gwenwyn had despaired of her bed being blessed with issue. Father Einion also dealt with the chiefs and elders of the land, and represented to them the advantage which in future wars they were certain to obtain by the possession of the Garde Doloureuse, which had for more than a century covered and protected a considerable tract of country, rendered their advance difficult, and their retreat perilous, and, in a word, prevented their carrying their incursions as far as the gates of Shrewsbury. As for the union with the Saxon damsel, the fetters which it was to form might not (the good father hinted) be found more permanent than those which had bound Gwenwyn to her predecessor, Brengwain.

These arguments, mingled with others adapted to the views and wishes of different individuals, were so prevailing, that the chaplain in the course of a few weeks was able to report to his princely patron, that this proposed match would meet with no opposition from the elders and nobles of his dominions. A golden bracelet, six ounces in weight, was the instant reward of the priest's dexterity in negotiation, and he was appointed by Gwenwyn to commit to paper those proposals, which he doubted not were to throw the Castle of Garde Doloureuse, notwithstanding its melancholy name, into an ecstasy of joy. With some difficulty the chaplain prevailed on his patron to say nothing in this letter upon his temporary plan of concubinage, which he wisely judged might be considered as an affront both by Eveline and her father. The matter of the divorce he represented as almost entirely settled, and wound up his letter with a moral application, in which were many allusions to Vashti, Esther, and Ahasuerus.

Having despatched this letter by a swift and trusty messenger, the British prince opened in all solemnity the feast of Easter, which had come round during the course of these external and internal negotiations.

Upon the approaching Holy-tide, to propitiate the minds of his subjects and vassals, they were invited in large numbers to partake of a princely festivity at Castell-Coch, or the Red-Castle, as it was then called, since better known by the name of Powys-Castle, and in latter times the princely seat of the Duke of Beaufort. The architectural magnificence of this noble residence is of a much later period than that of Gwenwyn, whose palace, at the time we speak of, was a low, long-roofed edifice of red stone, whence the castle derived its name; while a ditch and palisade were, in addition to the commanding situation, its most important defences.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

In	Madoc's	tent	the	clarion	sounds,
With	rapid	clangor	hurried	far;	
Each	hill	and	dale	the	note
But	when	return	the	sons	of
Thou,	born	of	stern		Necessity,
Dull	Peace!	the	valley	yields	to
And	owns	thy	melancholy		thee,
					sway.

WELSH POEM.

The feasts of the ancient British princes usually exhibited all the rude splendour and liberal indulgence of mountain hospitality, and Gwenwyn was, on the present occasion, anxious to purchase popularity by even an unusual display of profusion; for he was sensible that the alliance which he meditated might indeed be tolerated, but could not be approved, by his subjects and followers.

The following incident, trifling in itself, confirmed his apprehensions. Passing one evening, when it was become nearly dark, by the open window of a guard-room, usually occupied by some few of his most celebrated soldiers, who relieved each other in watching his palace, he heard Morgan, a man distinguished for strength, courage, and ferocity, say to the companion with whom he was sitting by the watch-fire, "Gwenwyn is turned to a priest, or a woman! When was it before these last months, that a follower of his was obliged to gnaw the meat from the bone so closely, as I am now peeling the morsel which I hold in my hand?" [Footnote: It is said in Highland tradition, that one of the Macdonalds of the Isles, who had suffered his broadsword to remain sheathed for some months after his marriage with a beautiful woman, was stirred to a sudden and furious expedition against the mainland by hearing conversation to the above purpose among his bodyguard.]

"Wait but awhile," replied his comrade, "till the Norman match be accomplished; and so small will be the prey we shall then drive from the Saxon churls, that we may be glad to swallow, like hungry dogs, the very bones themselves."

Gwenwyn heard no more of their conversation; but this was enough to alarm his pride as a soldier, and his jealousy as a prince. He was sensible, that the people over whom he ruled were at once fickle in their disposition, impatient of long repose, and full of hatred against their neighbours; and he almost dreaded the consequences of the inactivity to which a long truce might reduce them. The risk was now incurred, however; and to display even more than his wonted splendour and liberality, seemed the best way of reconciling the wavering affections of his subjects.

A Norman would have despised the barbarous magnificence of an entertainment, consisting of kine and sheep roasted whole, of goat's flesh and deer's flesh seethed in the skins of the animals themselves; for the Normans piqued themselves on the quality rather than the quantity of their food, and, eating rather delicately than largely, ridiculed the coarser taste of the Britons, although the last were in their banquets much more moderate than were the Saxons; nor would the oceans of *Crw* and hydromel, which overwhelmed the guests like a deluge, have made up, in their opinion, for the absence of the more elegant and costly beverage which they had learnt to love in the south of Europe. Milk, prepared in various ways, was another material of the British entertainment, which would not have received their approbation, although a nutriment which, on ordinary occasions, often supplied the Avant of all others among the ancient inhabitants, whose country was rich in flocks and herds, but poor in agricultural produce.

The banquet was spread in a long low hall, built of rough wood lined with shingles, having a fire at each end, the smoke of which, unable to find its way through the imperfect chimneys in the roof, rolled in cloudy billows above the heads of the revellers, who sat on low seats, purposely to avoid its stifling fumes. [Footnote: The Welsh houses, like those of the cognate tribes in Ireland and in the Highlands of Scotland, were very imperfectly supplied with chimneys. Hence, in the History of the Gwydir Family, the striking expression of a Welsh chieftain who, the house being assaulted and set on fire by his enemies, exhorted his friends to stand to their defence, saying he had seen as much smoke in the hall upon a Christmas even.] The mien and appearance of the company assembled was wild, and, even in their social hours, almost terrific. Their prince himself had the gigantic port and fiery eye fitted to sway an unruly people, whose delight was in the field of battle; and the long mustaches which he and most of his champions wore, added to the formidable dignity of his presence. Like most of those present, Gwenwyn was clad in a simple tunic of white linen cloth, a remnant of the dress which the Romans had introduced into provincial Britain; and he was distinguished by the Eudorchawg, or chain of twisted gold links, with which the Celtic tribes always decorated their chiefs. The collar, indeed, representing in form the species of links made by children out of rushes, was common to chieftains of inferior rank, many of whom bore it in virtue of their birth, or had won it by military exploits; but a ring of gold, bent around the head, intermingled with Gwenwyn's hair—for he claimed the rank of one of three diademed princes of Wales, and his armlets and

anklets, of the same metal, were peculiar to the Prince of Powys, as an independent sovereign. Two squires of his body, who dedicated their whole attention to his service, stood at the Prince's back; and at his feet sat a page, whose duty it was to keep them warm by chafing and by wrapping them in his mantle. The same right of sovereignty, which assigned to Gwenwyn his golden crownlet, gave him a title to the attendance of the foot-bearer, or youth, who lay on the rushes, and whose duty it was to cherish the Prince's feet in his lap or bosom. [Footnote: See Madoc for this literal *foot page's* office and duties. Mr. Southey's notes inform us: "The foot-bearer shall hold the feet of the King in his lap, from the time he reclines at the board till he goes to rest, and he shall chafe them with a towel; and during all that time shall watch that no harm befalls the King. He shall eat of the shame dish from which the King takes his food; he shall light the first candle before the King." Such are the instructions given for this part of royal ceremonial in the laws of Howell Dha. It may be added, that probably upon this Celtic custom was founded one of those absurd and incredible representations which were propagated at the time of the French revolution, to stir up the peasants against their feudal superiors. It was pretended that some feudal seigneurs asserted their right to kill and disembowel a peasant, in order to put their own feet within the expiring body, and so recover them from the chill.]

Notwithstanding the military disposition of the guests, and the danger arising from the feuds into which they were divided, few of the feasters wore any defensive armour, except the light goat-skin buckler, which hung behind each man's seat. On the other hand, they were well provided with offensive weapons; for the broad, sharp, short, two-edged sword was another legacy of the Romans. Most added a wood-knife or poniard; and there were store of javelins, darts, bows, and arrows, pikes, halberds, Danish axes, and Welsh hooks and bills; so, in case of ill-blood arising during the banquet, there was no lack of weapons to work mischief. But although the form of the feast was somewhat disorderly, and that the revellers were unrestrained by the stricter rules of good-breeding which the laws of chivalry imposed, the Easter banquet of Gwenwyn possessed, in the attendance of twelve eminent bards, one source of the most exalted pleasure, in a much higher degree than the proud Normans could themselves boast. The latter, it is true, had their minstrels, a race of men trained to the profession of poetry, song, and music; but although those arts were highly honoured, and the individual professors, when they attained to eminence, were often richly rewarded, and treated with distinction, the order of minstrels, as such, was held in low esteem, being composed chiefly of worthless and dissolute strollers, by whom the art was assumed, in order to escape from the necessity of labour, and to have the means of pursuing a wandering and dissipated course of life. Such, in all times, has been the censure upon the calling of those who dedicate themselves to the public amusement; among whom those distinguished by individual excellence are sometimes raised high in the social circle, while far the more numerous professors, who only reach mediocrity, are sunk into the lower scale. But such was not the case with the order of bards in Wales, who, succeeding to the dignity of the Druids, under whom they had originally formed a subordinate fraternity, had many immunities, were held in the highest reverence and esteem, and exercised much influence with their countrymen. Their power over the public mind even rivalled that of the priests themselves, to whom indeed they bore some resemblance; for they never wore arms, were initiated into their order by secret and mystic solemnities, and homage was rendered to their *Awen*, or flow of poetic inspiration, as if it had been indeed marked with a divine character. Thus possessed of power and consequence, the bards were not unwilling to exercise their privileges, and sometimes, in doing so, their manners frequently savoured of caprice.

This was perhaps the case with Cadwallon, the chief bard of Gwenwyn, and who, as such, was expected to have poured forth the tide of song in the banquetting-hall of his prince. But neither the anxious and breathless expectation of the assembled chiefs and champions—neither the dead silence which stilled the roaring hall, when his harp was reverently placed before him by his attendant—nor even the commands or entreaties of the Prince himself—could extract from Cadwallon more than a short and interrupted prelude upon the instrument, the notes of which arranged themselves into an air inexpressibly mournful, and died away in silence. The Prince frowned darkly on the bard, who was himself far too deeply lost in gloomy thought, to offer any apology, or even to observe his displeasure. Again he touched a few wild notes, and, raising his looks upward, seemed to be on the very point of bursting forth into a tide of song similar to those with which this master of his art was wont to enchant his hearers. But the effort was in vain—he declared that his right hand was withered, and pushed the instrument from him.

A murmur went round the company, and Gwenwyn read in their aspects that they received the unusual silence of Cadwallon on this high occasion as a bad omen. He called hastily on a young and ambitious bard, named Caradoc of Menwygent, whose rising fame was likely soon to vie with the established reputation of Cadwallon, and summoned him to sing something which might command the applause of his sovereign and the gratitude of the company. The young man was ambitious, and understood the arts of a courtier. He commenced a poem, in which, although under a feigned name, he drew such a poetic picture of Eveline Berenger, that Gwenwyn was enraptured; and while all who had seen the beautiful original at once recognized the resemblance, the eyes of the Prince confessed at once his passion for the subject, and his admiration of the poet. The figures of Celtic poetry, in themselves highly imaginative, were scarce sufficient for the enthusiasm of the ambitious bard, rising in his tone as he perceived the feelings which he was exciting. The praises of the Prince mingled with those of the Norman beauty; and "as a lion," said the poet, "can only be led by the hand of a chaste and beautiful maiden, so a chief can only acknowledge the empire of the most virtuous, the most lovely of her sex. Who asks of the noonday sun, in what quarter of the world he was born? and who shall ask of such charms as hers, to what country they owe their birth?"

Enthusiasts in pleasure as in war, and possessed of imaginations which answered readily to the summons of their poets, the Welsh chiefs and leaders united in acclamations of applause; and the song of the bard went farther to render popular the intended alliance of the Prince, than had all the graver arguments of his priestly precursor in the same topic.

Gwenwyn himself, in a transport of delight, tore off the golden bracelets which he wore, to bestow them upon a bard whose song had produced an effect so desirable; and said, as he looked at the silent and sullen Cadwallon, "The silent harp was never strung with golden wires."

"Prince," answered the bard, whose pride was at least equal to that of Gwenwyn himself, "you pervert the proverb of Taliessin—it is the flattering harp which never lacked golden strings."

Gwenwyn, turning sternly towards him, was about to make an angry answer, when the sudden appearance of Jorworth, the messenger whom he had despatched to Raymond Berenger, arrested his purpose. This rude envoy entered the hall bare-legged, excepting the sandals of goat-skin which he wore, and having on his shoulder a cloak of the same, and a short javelin in his hand. The dust on his garments, and the flush on his brow, showed with what hasty zeal his errand had been executed. Gwenwyn demanded of him eagerly, "What news from Garde Doloureuse, Jorworth ap Jevan?"

"I bear them in my bosom," said the son of Jevan; and, with much reverence, he delivered to the Prince a packet, bound with silk, and sealed with the impression of a swan, the ancient cognizance of the House of Berenger. Himself ignorant of writing or reading, Gwenwyn, in anxious haste, delivered the letter to Cadwallon, who usually acted as secretary when the chaplain was not in presence, as chanced then to be the case. Cadwallon, looking at the letter, said briefly, "I read no Latin. Ill betide the Norman, who writes to a Prince of Powys in other language than that of Britain! and well was the hour, when that noble tongue alone was spoken from Tintadgel to Cairleoil!"

Gwenwyn only replied to him with an angry glance.

"Where is Father Einion?" said the impatient Prince.

"He assists in the church," replied one of his attendants, "for it is the feast of Saint—"

"Were it the feast of Saint David," said Gwenwyn, "and were the pyx between his hands, he must come hither to me instantly!"

One of the chief henchmen sprung off, to command his attendance, and, in the meantime, Gwenwyn eyed the letter containing the secret of his fate, but which it required an interpreter to read, with such eagerness and anxiety, that Caradoc, elated by his former success, threw in a few notes to divert, if possible, the tenor of his patron's thoughts during the interval. A light and lively air, touched by a hand which seemed to hesitate, like the submissive voice of an inferior, fearing to interrupt his master's meditations, introduced a stanza or two applicable to the subject.

"And what though thou, O scroll," he said, apostrophizing the letter, which lay on the table before his master, "dost speak with the tongue of the stranger? Hath not the cuckoo a harsh note, and yet she tells us of green buds and springing flowers? What if thy language be that of the stoled priest, is it not the same which binds hearts and hands together at the altar? And what though thou delayest to render up thy treasures, are not all pleasures most sweet, when enhanced by

expectation? What were the chase, if the deer dropped at our feet the instant he started from the cover—or what value were there in the love of the maiden, were it yielded without coy delay?"

The song of the bard was here broken short by the entrance of the priest, who, hasty in obeying the summons of his impatient master, had not tarried to lay aside even the stole, which he had worn in the holy service; and many of the elders thought it was no good omen, that, so habited, a priest should appear in a festive assembly, and amid profane minstrelsy.

The priest opened the letter of the Norman Baron, and, struck with surprise at the contents, lifted his eyes in silence.

"Read it!" exclaimed the fierce Gwenwyn.

"So please you," replied the more prudent chaplain, "a smaller company were a fitter audience."

"Read it aloud!" repeated the Prince, in a still higher tone; "there sit none here who respect not the honour of their prince, or who deserve not his confidence. Read it, I say, aloud! and by Saint David, if Raymond the Norman hath dared—"

He stopped short, and, reclining on his seat, composed himself to an attitude of attention; but it was easy for his followers to fill up the breach in his exclamation which prudence had recommended.

The voice of the chaplain was low and ill-assured as he read the following epistle:—

"Raymond Berenger, the noble Norman Knight, Seneschal of the Garde Doloureuse, to Gwenwyn, Prince of Powys, (may peace be between them!) sendeth health.

"Your letter, craving the hand of our daughter Eveline Berenger, was safely delivered to us by your servant, Jorworth ap Jevan, and we thank you heartily for the good meaning therein expressed to us and to ours. But, considering within ourselves the difference of blood and lineage, with the impediments and causes of offence which have often arisen in like cases, we hold it fitter to match our daughter among our own people; and this by no case in disparagement of you, but solely for the weal of you, of ourselves, and of our mutual dependants, who will be the more safe from the risk of quarrel betwixt us, that we essay not to draw the bonds of our intimacy more close than beseemeth. The sheep and the goats feed together in peace on the same pastures, but they mingle not in blood, or race, the one with the other. Moreover, our daughter Eveline hath been sought in marriage by a noble and potent Lord of the Marches, Hugo de Lacy, the Constable of Chester, to which most honourable suit we have returned a favourable answer. It is therefore impossible that we should in this matter grant to you the boon you seek; nevertheless, you shall at all times find us, in other matters, willing to pleasure you; and hereunto we call God, and Our Lady, and Saint Mary Magdalene of Quatford, to witness; to whose keeping we heartily recommend you.

"Written by our command, at our Castle of Garde Doloureuse, within the Marches of Wales, by a reverend priest, Father Aldrovand, a black monk of the house of Wenlock; and to which we have appended our seal, upon the eve of the blessed martyr Saint Alphegius, to whom be honour and glory!"

The voice of Father Einion faltered, and the scroll which he held in his hand trembled in his grasp, as he arrived at the conclusion of this epistle; for well he knew that insults more slight than Gwenwyn would hold the least word it contained, were sure to put every drop of his British blood into the most vehement commotion. Nor did it fail to do so. The Prince had gradually drawn himself up from the posture of repose in which he had prepared to listen to the epistle; and when it concluded, he sprung on his feet like a startled lion, spurning from him as he rose the foot-bearer, who rolled at some distance on the floor. "Priest," he said, "hast thou read that accursed scroll fairly? for if thou hast added, or diminished, one word, or one letter, I will have thine eyes so handled, that thou shalt never read letter more!"

The monk replied, trembling, (for he was well aware that the sacerdotal character was not uniformly respected among the irascible Welshmen,) "By the oath of my order, mighty prince, I have read word for word, and letter for letter."

There was a momentary pause, while the fury of Gwenwyn, at this unexpected affront, offered to him in the presence of all his Uckelwyr, (*i.e.* noble chiefs, literally men of high stature,) seemed too big for utterance, when the silence was broken by a few notes from the hitherto mute harp of Cadwallon. The Prince looked round at first with displeasure at the interruption, for he was himself about to speak; but when he beheld the bard bending over his harp with an air of inspiration, and blending together, with unexampled skill, the wildest and most exalted tones of his art, he himself became an auditor instead of a speaker, and Cadwallon, not the Prince, seemed to become the central point of the assembly, on whom all eyes were bent, and to whom each ear was turned with breathless eagerness, as if his strains were the responses of an oracle.

"We wed not with the stranger,"—thus burst the song from the lips of the poet. "Vortigern wedded with the stranger; thence came the first wo upon Britain, and a sword upon her nobles, and a thunderbolt upon her palace. We wed not with the enslaved Saxon—the free and princely stag seeks not for his bride the heifer whose neck the yoke hath worn. We wed not with the rapacious Norman—the noble hound scorns to seek a mate from the herd of ravening wolves. When was it heard that the Cymry, the descendants of Brute, the true children of the soil of fair Britain, were plundered, oppressed, bereft of their birthright, and insulted even in their last retreats?—when, but since they stretched their hand in friendship to the stranger, and clasped to their bosoms the daughter of the Saxon? Which of the two is feared?—the empty water-course of summer, or the channel of the headlong winter torrent?—A maiden smiles at the summer-shrunk brook while she crosses it, but a barbed horse and his rider will fear to stem the wintry flood. Men of Mathravel and Powys, be the dreaded flood of winter—Gwenwyn, son of Cyverliock!—may thy plume be the topmost of its waves!"

All thoughts of peace, thoughts which, in themselves, were foreign to the hearts of the warlike British, passed before the song of Cadwallon like dust before the whirlwind, and the unanimous shout of the assembly declared for instant war. The Prince himself spoke not, but, looking proudly around him, flung abroad his arm, as one who cheers his followers to the attack.

The priest, had he dared, might have reminded Gwenwyn, that the Cross which he had assumed on his shoulder, had consecrated his arm to the Holy War, and precluded his engaging in any civil strife. But the task was too dangerous for Father Einion's courage, and he shrunk from the hall to the seclusion of his own convent. Caradoc, whose brief hour of popularity was past, also retired, with humbled and dejected looks, and not without a glance of indignation at his triumphant rival, who had so judiciously reserved his display of art for the theme of war, that was ever most popular with the audience.

The chiefs resumed their seats no longer for the purpose of festivity, but to fix, in the hasty manner customary among these prompt warriors, where they were to assemble their forces, which, upon such occasions, comprehended almost all the able-bodied males of the country,—for all, excepting the priests and the bards, were soldiers,—and to settle the order of their descent upon the devoted marches, where they proposed to signalize, by general ravage, their sense of the insult which their Prince had received, by the rejection of his suit.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

The	sands	are	number'd,	that	make	up	my	life;	
Here	must	I	stay,	and	here	my	life	must	end.

HENRY VI. ACT. I. SCENE IV.

When Raymond Berenger had despatched his mission to the Prince of Powys, he was not unsuspicious, though altogether fearless, of the result. He sent messengers to the several dependants who held their fiefs by the tenure of *cornage*, and warned them to be on the alert, that he might receive instant notice of the approach of the enemy. These vassals, as is well known, occupied the numerous towers, which, like so many falcon-nests, had been built on the points most convenient to defend the frontiers, and were bound to give signal of any incursion of the Welsh, by blowing their horns; which sounds, answered from tower to tower, and from station to station, gave the alarm for general defence. But although Raymond considered these precautions as necessary, from the fickle and precarious temper of his neighbours, and for maintaining his own credit as a soldier, he was far from believing the danger to be imminent; for the preparations of the Welsh; though on a much more extensive scale than had lately been usual, were as secret, as their resolution of war had been suddenly adopted.

It was upon the second morning after the memorable festival of Castell-Coch, that the tempest broke on the Norman frontier. At first a single, long, and keen bugle-blast, announced the approach of the enemy; presently the signals of alarm were echoed from every castle and tower on the borders of Shropshire, where

every place of habitation was then a fortress. Beacons were lighted upon crags and eminences, the bells were rung backward in the churches and towns, while the general and earnest summons to arms announced an extremity of danger which even the inhabitants of that unsettled country had not hitherto experienced. Amid this general alarm, Raymond Berenger, having busied himself in arranging his few but gallant followers and adherents, and taken such modes of procuring intelligence of the enemy's strength and motions as were in his power, at length ascended the watch-tower of the castle, to observe in person the country around, already obscured in several places by the clouds of smoke, which announced the progress and the ravages of the invaders. He was speedily joined by his favourite squire, to whom the unusual heaviness of his master's looks was cause of much surprise, for till now they had ever been blithest at the hour of battle. The squire held in his hand his master's helmet, for Sir Raymond was all armed, saving the head.

"Dennis Morolt," said the veteran soldier, "are our vassals and liegemen all mustered?"

"All, noble sir, but the Flemings, who are not yet come in."

"The lazy hounds, why tarry they?" said Raymond. "Ill policy it is to plant such sluggish natures in our borders. They are like their own steers, fitter to tug a plough than for aught that requires mettle."

"With your favour," said Dennis, "the knaves can do good service notwithstanding. That Wilkin Flammock of the Green can strike like the hammers of his own fulling-mill."

"He will fight, I believe, when he cannot help it," said Raymond; "but he has no stomach for such exercise, and is as slow and as stubborn as a mule."

"And therefore are his countrymen rightly matched against the Welsh," replied Dennis Morolt, "that their solid and unyielding temper may be a fit foil to the fiery and headlong dispositions of our dangerous neighbours, just as restless waves are best opposed by steadfast rocks.—Hark, sir, I hear Wilkin Flammock's step ascending the turret-stair, as deliberately as ever monk mounted to matins."

Step by step the heavy sound approached, until the form of the huge and substantial Fleming at length issued from the turret-door to the platform where they were conversing. Wilkin Flammock was cased in bright armour, of unusual weight and thickness, and cleaned with exceeding care, which marked the neatness of his nation; but, contrary to the custom of the Normans, entirely plain, and void of carving, gilding, or any sort of ornament. The basenet, or steel-cap, had no visor, and left exposed a broad countenance, with heavy and unpliant features, which announced the character of his temper and understanding. He carried in his hand a heavy mace.

"So, Sir Fleming," said the Castellane, "you are in no hurry, methinks, to repair to the rendezvous."

"So please you," answered the Fleming, "we were compelled to tarry, that we might load our wains with our bales of cloth and other property."

"Ha! wains?—how many wains have you brought with you?"

"Six, noble sir," replied Wilkin.

"And how many men?" demanded Raymond Berenger.

"Twelve, valiant sir," answered Flammock.

"Only two men to each baggage-wain? I wonder you would thus encumber yourself," said Berenger.

"Under your favour, sir, once more," replied Wilkin, "it is only the value which I and my comrades set upon our goods, that inclines us to defend them with our bodies; and, had we been obliged to leave our cloth to the plundering clutches of yonder vagabonds, I should have seen small policy in stopping here to give them the opportunity of adding murder to robbery. Gloucester should have been my first halting-place."

The Norman knight gazed on the Flemish artisan, for such was Wilkin Flammock, with such a mixture of surprise and contempt, as excluded indignation. "I have heard much," he said, "but this is the first time that I have heard one with a beard on his lip avouch himself a coward."

"Nor do you hear it now," answered Flammock, with the utmost composure—"I am always ready to fight for life and property; and my coming to this country, where they are both in constant danger, shows that I care not much how often I do so. But a sound skin is better than a slashed one, for all that."

"Well," said Raymond Berenger, "fight after thine own fashion, so thou wilt but fight stoutly with that long body of thine. We are like to have need for all that we can do.—Saw you aught of these rascaille Welsh?—have they Gwenwyn's banner amongst them?"

"I saw it with the white dragon displayed," replied Wilkin; "I could not but know it, since it was brodered in my own loom."

Raymond looked so grave upon this intelligence, that Dennis Morolt, unwilling the Fleming should mark it, thought it necessary to withdraw his attention. "I can tell thee," he said to Flammock, "that when the Constable of Chester joins us with his lances, you shall see your handiwork, the dragon, fly faster homeward than ever flew the shuttle which wove it."

"It must fly before the Constable comes up, Dennis Morolt," said Berenger, "else it will fly triumphant over all our bodies."

"In the name of God and the Holy Virgin!" said Dennis, "what may you mean, Sir Knight?—not that we should fight with the Welsh before the Constable joins us?"—He paused, and then, well understanding the firm, yet melancholy glance, with which his master answered the question, he proceeded, with yet more vehement earnestness—"You cannot mean it—you cannot intend that we shall quit this castle, which we have so often made good against them, and contend in the field with two hundred men against thousands?—Think better of it, my beloved master, and let not the rashness of your old age blemish that character for wisdom and warlike skill, which your former life has so nobly won."

"I am not angry with you for blaming my purpose, Dennis," answered the Norman, "for I know you do it in love to me and mine. But, Dennis Morolt, this thing must be—we must fight the Welshmen within these three hours, or the name of Raymond Berenger must be blotted from the genealogy of his house."

"And so we will—we will fight them, my noble master," said the esquire; "fear not cold counsel from Dennis Morolt, where battle is the theme. But we will fight them under the walls of the castle, with honest Wilkin Flammock and his crossbows on the wall to protect our flanks, and afford us some balance against the numerous odds."

"Not so, Dennis," answered his master—"In the open field we must fight them, or thy master must rank but as a mansworn knight. Know, that when I feasted yonder wily savage in my halls at Christmas, and when the wine was flowing fastest around, Gwenwyn threw out some praises of the fastness and strength of my castle, in a manner which intimated it was these advantages alone that had secured me in former wars from defeat and captivity. I spoke in answer, when I had far better been silent; for what availed my idle boast, but as a fetter to bind me to a deed next to madness? If, I said, a prince of the Cymry shall come in hostile fashion before the Garde Doloureuse, let him pitch his standard down in yonder plain by the bridge, and, by the word of a good knight, and the faith of a Christian man, Raymond Berenger will meet him as willingly, be he many or be he few, as ever Welshman was met withal."

Dennis was struck speechless when he heard of a promise so rash, so fatal; but his was not the casuistry which could release his master from the fetters with which his unwary confidence had bound him. It was otherwise with Wilkin Flammock. He stared—he almost laughed, notwithstanding the reverence due to the Castellane, and his own insensibility to risible emotions. "And is this all?" he said. "If your honour had pledged yourself to pay one hundred florins to a Jew or to a Lombard, no doubt you must have kept the day, or forfeited your pledge; but surely one day is as good as another to keep a promise for fighting, and that day is best in which the promiser is strongest. But indeed, after all, what signifies any promise over a wine flagon?"

"It signifies as much as a promise can do that is given elsewhere. The promiser," said Berenger, "escapes not the sin of a word-breaker, because he hath been a drunken braggart."

"For the sin," said Dennis, "sure I am, that rather than you should do such a deed of dole, the Abbot of Glastonbury would absolve you for a florin."

"But what shall wipe out the shame?" demanded Berenger—"how shall I dare to show myself again among press of knights, who have broken my word of battle pledged, for fear of a Welshman and his naked savages? No! Dennis Morolt, speak on it no more. Be it for weal or wo, we fight them to-day, and upon yonder fair field."

"It may be," said Flammock, "that Gwenwyn may have forgotten the promise, and so fail to appear to claim it in the appointed space; for, as we heard, your wines of France flooded his Welsh brains deeply."

"He again alluded to it on the morning after it was made," said the Castellane—"trust me, he will not forget what will give him such a chance of removing me from his path for ever."

As he spoke, they observed that large clouds of dust, which had been seen at different points of the landscape, were drawing down towards the opposite side of the river, over which an ancient bridge extended itself to the appointed place of combat. They were at no loss to conjecture the cause. It was evident that Gwenwyn, recalling the parties who had been engaged in partial devastation, was bending with his whole forces towards the bridge and the plain beyond it.

"Let us rush down and secure the pass," said Dennis Morolt; "we may debate with them with some equality by the advantage of defending the bridge. Your word bound you to the plain as to a field of battle, but it did not oblige you to forego such advantages as the passage of the bridge would afford. Our men, our horses, are ready—let our bowmen secure the banks, and my life on the issue."

"When I promised to meet him in yonder field, I meant," replied Raymond Berenger, "to give the Welshman the full advantage of equality of ground. I so meant it—he so understood it; and what avails keeping my word in the letter, if I break it in the sense? We move not till the last Welshman has crossed the bridge; and then—"

"And then," said Dennis, "we move to our death!—May God forgive our sins!—But—"

"But what?" said Berenger; "something sticks in thy mind that should have vent."

"My young lady, your daughter the Lady Eveline—"

"I have told her what is to be. She shall remain in the castle, where I will leave a few chosen veterans, with you, Dennis, to command them. In twenty-four hours the siege will be relieved, and we have defended it longer with a slighter garrison. Then to her aunt, the Abbess of the Benedictine sisters—thou, Dennis, wilt see her placed there in honour and safety, and my sister will care for her future provision as her wisdom shall determine." "I leave you at this pinch!" said Dennis Morolt, bursting into tears—"I shut myself up within walls, when my master rides to his last of battles!—I become esquire to a lady, even though it be to the Lady Eveline, when he lies dead under his shield!—Raymond Berenger, is it for this that I have buckled thy armour so often?"

The tears gushed from the old warrior's eyes as fast as from those of a girl who weeps for her lover; and Raymond, taking him kindly by the hand, said, in a soothing tone, "Do not think, my good old servant, that, were honour to be won, I would drive thee from my side. But this is a wild and an inconsiderate deed, to which my fate or my folly has bound me. I die to save my name from dishonour; but, alas! I must leave on my memory the charge of imprudence."

"Let me share your imprudence, my dearest master," said Dennis Morolt, earnestly—"the poor esquire has no business to be thought wiser than his master. In many a battle my valour derived some little fame from partaking in thee deeds which won your renown—deny me not the right to share in that blame which your temerity may incur; let them not say, that so rash was his action, even his old esquire was not permitted to partake in it! I am part of yourself—it is murder to every man whom you take with you, if you leave me behind."

"Dennis," said Berenger, "you make me feel yet more bitterly the folly I have yielded to. I would grant you the boon you ask, sad as it is—But my daughter—"

"Sir Knight," said the Fleming, who had listened to this dialogue with somewhat less than his usual apathy, "it is not my purpose this day to leave this castle; now, if you could trust my troth to do what a plain man may for the protection of my Lady Eveline—"

"How, sirrah!" said Raymond; "you do not propose to leave the castle? Who gives you right to propose or dispose in the case, until my pleasure is known?"

"I shall be sorry to have words with you, Sir Castellane," said the imperturbable Fleming;—"but I hold here, in this township, certain mills, tenements, cloth-yards, and so forth, for which I am to pay man-service in defending this Castle of the Garde Doloureuse, and in this I am ready. But if you call on me to march from hence, leaving the same castle defenceless, and to offer up my life in a battle which you acknowledge to be desperate, I must needs say my tenure binds me not to obey thee."

"Base mechanic!" said Morolt, laying his hand on his dagger, and menacing the Fleming.

But Raymond Berenger interfered with voice and hand—"Harm him not, Morolt, and blame him not. He hath a sense of duty, though not after our manner; and he and his knaves will fight best behind stone walls. They are taught also, these Flemings, by the practice of their own country, the attack and defence of walled cities and fortresses, and are especially skilful in working of mangonels and military engines. There are several of his countrymen in the castle, besides his own followers. These I propose to leave behind; and I think they will obey him more readily than any but thyself—how think'st thou? Thou wouldst not, I know, from a misconstrued point of honour, or a blind love to me, leave this important place, and the safety of Eveline, in doubtful hands?"

"Wilkin Flammock is but a Flemish clown, noble sir," answered Dennis, as much overjoyed as if he had obtained some important advantage; "but I must needs say he is as stout and true as any whom you might trust; and, besides, his own shrewdness will teach him there is more to be gained by defending such a castle as this, than by yielding it to strangers, who may not be likely to keep the terms of surrender, however fairly they may offer them."

"It is fixed then," said Raymond Berenger. "Then, Dennis, thou shalt go with me, and he shall remain behind.—Wilkin Flammock," he said, addressing the Fleming solemnly, "I speak not to thee the language of chivalry, of which thou knowest nothing; but, as thou art an honest man, and a true Christian, I conjure thee to stand to the defence of this castle. Let no promise of the enemy draw thee to any base composition—no threat to any surrender. Relief must speedily arrive, if you fulfil your trust to me and to my daughter, Hugo de Lacy will reward you richly—if you fail, he will punish you severely."

"Sir Knight," said Flammock, "I am pleased you have put your trust so far in a plain handicraftsman. For the Welsh, I am come from a land for which we were compelled—yearly compelled—to struggle with the sea; and they who can deal with the waves in a tempest, need not fear an undisciplined people in their fury. Your daughter shall be as dear to me as mine own; and in that faith you may prick forth—if, indeed, you will not still, like a wiser man, shut gate, down portcullis, up drawbridge, and let your archers and my crossbows man the wall, and tell the knaves you are not the fool that they take you for."

"Good fellow, that must not be," said the Knight. "I hear my daughter's voice," he added hastily; "I would not again meet her, again to part from her. To Heaven's keeping I commit thee, honest Fleming.—Follow me, Dennis Morolt."

The old Castellane descended the stair of the southern tower hastily, just as his daughter Eveline ascended that of the eastern turret, to throw herself at his feet once more. She was followed by the Father Aldrovand, chaplain of her father; by an old and almost invalid huntsman, whose more active services in the field and the chase had been for some time chiefly limited to the superintendence of the Knight's kennels, and the charge especially of his more favourite hounds; and by Rose Flammock, the daughter of Wilkin, a blue-eyed Flemish maiden, round, plump, and shy as a partridge, who had been for some time permitted to keep company with the high-born Norman damsel, in a doubtful station, betwixt that of an humble friend and a superior domestic. Eveline rushed upon the battlements, her hair dishevelled, and her eyes drowned in tears, and eagerly demanded of the Fleming where her father was.

Flammock made a clumsy reverence, and attempted some answer; but his voice seemed to fail him. He turned his back upon Eveline without ceremony, and totally disregarding the anxious inquiries of the huntsman and the chaplain, he said hastily to his daughter, in his own language, "Mad work! mad work! look to the poor maiden, Roschen—*Der alter Herr ist verruckt*." [Footnote: The old lord is frantic.]

Without farther speech he descended the stairs, and never paused till he reached the buttery. Here he called like a lion for the controller of these regions, by the various names of Kammerer, Keller-master, and so forth, to which the old Reinold, an ancient Norman esquire, answered not, until the Netherlander fortunately recollected his Anglo-Norman title of butler. This, his regular name of office, was the key to the buttery-hatch, and the old man instantly appeared, with his gray cassock and high rolled hose, a ponderous bunch of keys suspended by a silver chain to his broad leathern girdle, which, in consideration of the emergency of the time, he had thought it right to balance on the left side with a huge falchion, which seemed much too weighty for his old arm to wield.

"What is your will," he said, "Master Flammock? or what are your commands, since it is my lord's pleasure that they shall be laws to me for a time?"

"Only a cup of wine, good Meister Keller-master—butler, I mean."

"I am glad you remember the name of mine office," said Reinold, with some of the petty resentment of a spoiled domestic, who thinks that a stranger has been irregularly put in command over him.

"A flagon of Rhenish, if you love me," answered the Fleming, "for my heart is low and poor within me, and I must needs drink of the best."

"And drink you shall," said Reinold, "if drink will give you the courage which perhaps you want."—He descended to the secret crypts, of which he was the guardian, and returned with a silver flagon, which might contain about a quart.—"Here is such wine," said Reinold, "as thou hast seldom tasted," and was about to pour it out into a cup.

"Nay, the flagon—the flagon, friend Reinold; I love a deep and solemn draught when the business is weighty," said Wilkin. He seized on the flagon accordingly, and drinking a preparatory mouthful, paused as if to estimate the strength and flavour of the generous liquor. Apparently he was pleased with both, for he nodded in approbation to the butler; and, raising the flagon to his mouth once more, he slowly and gradually brought the bottom of the vessel parallel with the roof of the apartment, without suffering one drop of the contents to escape him.

"That hath savour, Herr Keller-master," said he, while he was recovering his breath by intervals, after so long a suspense of respiration; "but, may Heaven forgive you for thinking it the best I have ever tasted! You little know the cellars of Ghent and of Ypres."

"And I care not for them," said Reinold; "those of gentle Norman blood hold the wines of Gascony and France, generous, light, and cordial, worth all the acid potations of the Rhine and the Neckar."

"All is matter of taste," said the Fleming; "but hark ye—Is there much of this wine in the cellar?"

"Methought but now it pleased not your dainty palate?" said Reinold.

"Nay, nay, my friend," said Wilkin, "I said it had savour—I may have drunk better—but this is right good, where better may not be had.—Again, how much of it hast thou?"

"The whole butt, man," answered the butler; "I have broached a fresh piece for you."

"Good," replied Flammock; "get the quart-pot of Christian measure; heave the cask up into this same buttery, and let each soldier of this castle be served with such a cup as I have here swallowed. I feel it hath done me much good—my heart was sinking when I saw the black smoke arising from mine own fulling-mills yonder. Let each man, I say, have a full quart-pot—men defend not castles on thin liquors."

"I must do as you will, good Wilkin Flammock," said the butler; "but I pray you, remember all men are not alike. That which will but warm your Flemish hearts, will put wildfire into Norman brains; and what may only encourage your countrymen to man the walls, will make ours fly over the battlements."

"Well, you know the conditions of your own countrymen best; serve out to them what wines and measure you list—only let each Fleming have a solemn quart of Rhenish.—But what will you do for the English churls, of whom there are a right many left with us?"

The old butler paused, and rubbed his brow.—"There will be a strange waste of liquor," he said; "and yet I may not deny that the emergency may defend the expenditure. But for the English, they are, as you wot, a mixed breed, having much of your German sullenness, together with a plentiful touch of the hot blood of yonder Welsh furies. Light wines stir them not; strong heavy draughts would madden them. What think you of ale, an invigorating, strengthening liquor, that warms the heart without inflaming the brain?"

"Ale!" said the Fleming.—"Hum—ha—is your ale mighty, Sir Butler?—is it double ale?"

"Do you doubt my skill?" said the butler.—"March and October have witnessed me ever as they came round, for thirty years, deal with the best barley in Shropshire.—You shall judge."

He filled, from a large hogshead in the corner of the buttery, the flagon which the Fleming had just emptied, and which was no sooner replenished than Wilkin again drained it to the bottom.

"Good ware," he said, "Master Butler, strong stinging ware. The English churls will fight like devils upon it—let them be furnished with mighty ale along with their beef and brown bread. And now, having given you your charge, Master Reinold, it is time I should look after mine own."

Wilkin Flammock left the buttery, and with a mien and judgment alike undisturbed by the deep potations in which he had so recently indulged, undisturbed also by the various rumours concerning what was passing without doors, he made the round of the castle and its outworks, mustered the little garrison, and assigned to each their posts, reserving to his own countrymen the management of the arblasts, or crossbows, and of the military engines which were contrived by the proud Normans, and were incomprehensible to the ignorant English, or, more properly, Anglo-Saxons, of the period, but which his more adroit countrymen managed with great address. The jealousies entertained by both the Normans and English, at being placed under the temporary command of a Fleming, gradually yielded to the military and mechanical skill which he displayed, as well as to a sense of the emergency, which became greater with every moment.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Beside yon brigg out ower yon burn,
Where the water bickereth bright and sheen,
Shall many a falling courser spurn,
And knights shall die in battle keen.

PROPHECY OF THOMAS THE RHYMER.

The daughter of Raymond Berenger, with the attendants whom we have mentioned, continued to remain upon the battlements of the Garde Doloureuse, in spite of the exhortations of the priest that she would rather await the issue of this terrible interval in the chapel, and amid the rites of religion. He perceived, at length, that she was incapable, from grief and fear, of attending to, or understanding his advice; and, sitting down beside her, while the huntsman and Rose Flammock stood by, endeavoured to suggest such comfort as perhaps he scarcely felt himself.

"This is but a sally of your noble father's," he said; "and though it may seem it is made on great hazard, yet who ever questioned Sir Raymond Berenger's policy of wars?—He is close and secret in his purposes. I guess right well he had not marched out as he proposes, unless he knew that the noble Earl of Arundel, or the mighty Constable of Chester, were close at hand."

"Think you this assuredly, good father?—Go, Raoul—go, my dearest Rose—look to the east—see if you cannot descry banners or clouds of dust.—Listen—listen—hear you no trumpets from that quarter?"

"Alas! my lady," said Raoul, "the thunder of heaven could scarce be heard amid the howling of yonder Welsh wolves." Eveline turned as he spoke, and looking towards the bridge, she beheld an appalling spectacle. The river, whose stream washes on three sides the base of the proud eminence on which the castle is situated, curves away from the fortress and its corresponding village on the west, and the hill sinks downward to an extensive plain, so extremely level as to indicate its alluvial origin. Lower down, at the extremity of this plain, where the banks again close on the river, were situated the manufacturing houses of the stout Flemings, which were now burning in a bright flame. The bridge, a high, narrow combination of arches of unequal size, was about half a mile distant from the castle, in the very centre of the plain. The river itself ran in a deep rocky channel, was often unfordable, and at all times difficult of passage, giving considerable advantage to the defenders of the castle, who had spent on other occasions many a dear drop of blood to defend the pass, which Raymond Berenger's fantastic scruples now induced him to abandon. The Welshmen, seizing the opportunity with the avidity with which men grasp an unexpected benefit, were fast crowding

over the high and steep arches, while new bands, collecting from different points upon the farther bank, increased the continued stream of warriors, who, passing leisurely and uninterrupted, formed their line of battle on the plain opposite to the castle.

At first Father Aldrovand viewed their motions without anxiety, nay, with the scornful smile of one who observes an enemy in the act of falling into the snare spread for them by superior skill. Raymond Berenger, with his little body of infantry and cavalry, were drawn up on the easy hill which is betwixt the castle and the plain, ascending from the former towards the fortress; and it seemed clear to the Dominican, who had not entirely forgotten in the cloister his ancient military experience, that it was the Knight's purpose to attack the disordered enemy when a certain number had crossed the river, and the others were partly on the farther side, and partly engaged in the slow and perilous manoeuvre of effecting their passage. But when large bodies of the white-mantled Welshmen were permitted without interruption to take such order on the plain as their habits of fighting recommended, the monk's countenance, though he still endeavoured to speak encouragement to the terrified Eveline, assumed a different and an anxious expression; and his acquired habits of resignation contended strenuously with his ancient military ardour. "Be patient," he said, "my daughter, and be of good comfort; thine eyes shall behold the dismay of yonder barbarous enemy. Let but a minute elapse, and thou shalt see them scattered like dust.—Saint George! they will surely cry thy name now, or never!"

The monk's beads passed meanwhile rapidly through his hands, but many an expression of military impatience mingled itself with his orisons. He could not conceive the cause why each successive throng of mountaineers, led under their different banners, and headed by their respective chieftains, was permitted, without interruption, to pass the difficult defile, and extend themselves in battle array on the near side of the bridge, while the English, or rather Anglo-Norman cavalry, remained stationary, without so much as laying their lances in rest. There remained, as he thought, but one hope—one only rational explanation of this unaccountable inactivity—this voluntary surrender of every advantage of ground, when that of numbers was so tremendously on the side of the enemy. Father Aldrovand concluded, that the succours of the Constable of Chester, and other Lord Marchers, must be in the immediate vicinity, and that the Welsh were only permitted to pass the river without opposition, that their retreat might be the more effectually cut off, and their defeat, with a deep river in their rear, rendered the more signally calamitous. But even while he clung to this hope, the monk's heart sunk within him, as, looking in every direction from which the expected succours might arrive, he could neither see nor hear the slightest token which announced their approach. In a frame of mind approaching more nearly to despair than to hope, the old man continued alternately to tell his beads, to gaze anxiously around, and to address some words of consolation in broken phrases to the young lady, until the general shout of the Welsh, ringing from the bank of the river to the battlements of the castle, warned him, in a note of exultation, that the very last of the British had defiled through the pass, and that their whole formidable array stood prompt for action upon the hither side of the river.

This thrilling and astounding clamour, to which each Welshman lent his voice with all the energy of defiance, thirst of battle, and hope of conquest, was at length answered by the blast of the Norman trumpets,—the first sign of activity which had been exhibited on the part of Raymond Berenger. But cheerily as they rang, the trumpets, in comparison of the shout which they answered, sounded like the silver whistle of the stout boatswain amid the howling of the tempest.

At the same moment when the trumpets were blown, Berenger gave signal to the archers to discharge their arrows, and the men-at-arms to advance under a hail-storm of shafts, javelins, and stones, shot, darted, and slung by the Welsh against their steel-clad assailants.

The veterans of Raymond, on the other hand, stimulated by so many victorious recollections, confident in the talents of their accomplished leader, and undismayed even by the desperation of their circumstances, charged the mass of the Welshmen with their usual determined valour. It was a gallant sight to see this little body of cavalry advance to the onset, their plumes floating above their helmets, their lances in rest, and projecting six feet in length before the breasts of their coursers; their shields hanging from their necks, that their left hands might have freedom to guide their horses; and the whole body rushing on with an equal front, and a momentum of speed which increased with every second. Such an onset might have startled naked men, (for such were the Welsh, in respect of the mail-sheathed Normans,) but it brought no terrors to the ancient British, who had long made it their boast that they exposed their bare bosoms and white tunics to the lances and swords of the men-at-arms, with as much confidence as if they had been born invulnerable. It was not indeed in their power to withstand the weight of the first shock, which, breaking their ranks, densely as they were arranged, carried the barbed horses into the very centre of their host, and well-nigh up to the fatal standard, to which Raymond Berenger, bound by his fatal vow, had that day conceded so much vantage-ground. But they yielded like the billows, which give way, indeed, to the gallant ship, but only to assail her sides, and to unite in her wake. With wild and horrible clamours, they closed their tumultuous ranks around Berenger and his devoted followers, and a deadly scene of strife ensued.

The best warriors of Wales had on this occasion joined the standard of Gwenwyn; the arrows of the men of Gwentland, whose skill in archery almost equalled that of the Normans themselves, rattled on the helmets of the men-at-arms; and the spears of the people of Deheubarth, renowned for the sharpness and temper of their steel heads, were employed against the cuirasses not without fatal effect, notwithstanding the protection, which these afforded to the rider.

It was in vain that the archery belonging to Raymond's little band, stout yeomen, who, for the most part, held possession by military tenure, exhausted their quivers on the broad mark afforded them by the Welsh army. It is probable, that every shaft carried a Welshman's life on its point; yet, to have afforded important relief to the cavalry, now closely and inextricably engaged, the slaughter ought to have been twenty-fold at least. Meantime, the Welsh, galled by this incessant discharge, answered it by volleys from their own archers, whose numbers made some amends for their inferiority, and who were supported by numerous bodies of darters and slingers. So that the Norman archers, who had more than once attempted to descend from their position to operate a diversion in favour of Raymond and his devoted band, were now so closely engaged in front, as obliged them to abandon all thoughts of such a movement.

Meanwhile, that chivalrous leader, who from the first had hoped for no more than an honourable death, laboured with all his power to render his fate signal, by involving in it that of the Welsh Prince, the author of the war. He cautiously avoided the expenditure of his strength by hewing among the British; but, with the shock of his managed horse, repelled the numbers who pressed on him, and leaving the plebeians to the swords of his companions, shouted his war-cry, and made his way towards the fatal standard of Gwenwyn, beside which, discharging at once the duties of a skilful leader and a brave soldier, the Prince had stationed himself. Raymond's experience of the Welsh disposition, subject equally to the highest flood, and most sudden ebb of passion, gave him some hope that a successful attack upon this point, followed by the death or capture of the Prince, and the downfall of his standard, might even yet strike such a panic, as should change the fortunes of the day, otherwise so nearly desperate. The veteran, therefore, animated his comrades to the charge by voice and example; and, in spite of all opposition, forced his way gradually onward. But Gwenwyn in person, surrounded by his best and noblest champions, offered a defence as obstinate as the assault was intrepid. In vain they were borne to the earth by the barbed horses, or hewed down by the invulnerable riders. Wounded and overthrown, the Britons continued their resistance, clung round the legs of the Norman steeds, and cumbered their advance while their brethren, thrusting with pikes, proved every joint and crevice of the plate and mail, or grappling with the men-at-arms, strove to pull them from their horses by main force, or beat them down with their bills and Welsh hooks. And wo betide those who were by these various means dismounted, for the long sharp knives worn by the Welsh, soon pierced them with a hundred wounds, and were then only merciful when the first inflicted was deadly.

The combat was at this point, and had raged for more than half an hour, when Berenger, having forced his horse within two spears' length of the British standard, he and Gwenwyn were so near to each other as to exchange tokens of mutual defiance.

"Turn thee, Wolf of Wales," said Berenger, "and abide, if thou darest, one blow of a good knight's sword! Raymond Berenger spits at thee and thy banner."

"False Norman churl!" said Gwenwyn, swinging around his head a mace of prodigious weight, and already clotted with blood, "thy iron headpiece shall ill protect thy lying tongue, with which I will this day feed the ravens."

Raymond made no farther answer, but pushed his horse towards the Prince, who advanced to meet him with equal readiness. But ere they came within reach of each other's weapons, a Welsh champion, devoted like the Romans who opposed the elephants of Pyrrhus, finding that the armour of Raymond's horse resisted the repeated thrusts of his spear, threw himself under the animal, and stabbed him in the belly with his long knife. The noble horse reared and fell, crushing with his weight the Briton who had wounded him; the helmet of the rider burst its clasps in the fall, and rolled away from his head, giving to view his noble features and gray hairs. He made more than one effort to extricate himself from the fallen horse, but ere he could succeed, received his death-wound from the hand of Gwenwyn, who hesitated not to strike him down with his mace while in the act of extricating himself.

During the whole of this bloody day, Dennis Morolt's horse had kept pace for pace, and his arm blow for blow, with his master's. It seemed as if two different bodies had been moving under one act of volition. He husbanded his strength, or put it forth, exactly as he observed his knight did, and was close by his side, when he made the last deadly effort. At that fatal moment, when Raymond Berenger rushed on the chief, the brave squire forced his way up to the standard, and, grasping it firmly, struggled for possession of it with a gigantic Briton, to whose care it had been confided, and who now exerted his utmost strength to defend it. But even while engaged in this mortal struggle, the eye of Morolt scarcely left his master; and when he saw him fall, his own force seemed by sympathy to abandon him, and the British champion had no longer any trouble in laying him prostrate among the slain.

The victory of the British was now complete. Upon the fall of their leader, the followers of Raymond Berenger would willingly have fled or surrendered. But the first was impossible, so closely had they been enveloped; and in the cruel wars maintained by the Welsh upon their frontiers, quarter to the vanquished was out of question. A few of the men-at-arms were lucky enough to disentangle themselves from the tumult, and, not even attempting to enter the castle, fled in various directions, to carry their own fears among the inhabitants of the marches, by announcing the loss of the battle, and the fate of the far-renowned Raymond Berenger.

The archers of the fallen leader, as they had never been so deeply involved in the combat, which had been chiefly maintained by the cavalry, became now, in their turn, the sole object of the enemy's attack. But when they saw the multitude come roaring towards them like a sea, with all its waves, they abandoned the bank which they had hitherto bravely defended, and began a regular retreat to the castle in the best order which they could, as the only remaining means of securing their lives. A few of their lightfooted enemies attempted to intercept them, during the execution of this prudent manoeuvre, by outstripping them in their march, and throwing themselves into the hollow way which led to the castle, to oppose their retreat. But the coolness of the English archers, accustomed to extremities of every kind, supported them on the present occasion. While a part of them, armed with glaives and bills, dislodged the Welsh from the hollow way, the others, facing in the opposite direction, and parted into divisions, which alternately halted and retreated, maintained such a countenance as to check pursuit, and exchange a severe discharge of missiles with the Welsh, by which both parties were considerable sufferers.

At length, having left more than two-thirds of their brave companions behind them, the yeomanry attained the point, which, being commanded by arrows and engines from the battlements, might be considered as that of comparative safety. A volley of large stones, and square-headed bolts of great size and thickness, effectually stopped the farther progress of the pursuit, and those who had led it drew back their desultory forces to the plain, where, with shouts of jubilee and exultation, their countrymen were employed in securing the plunder of the field; while some, impelled by hatred and revenge, mangled and mutilated the limbs of the dead Normans, in a manner unworthy of their national cause and their own courage. The fearful yells with which this dreadful work was consummated, while it struck horror into the minds of the slender garrison of the Garde Doloureuse, inspired them at the same time with the resolution rather to defend the fortress to the last extremity, than to submit to the mercy of so vengeful an enemy. [Footnote: This is by no means exaggerated in the text. A very honourable testimony was given to their valour by King Henry II., in a letter to the Greek Emperor, Emanuel Commenus. This prince having desired that an account might be sent him of all that was remarkable in the island of Great Britain, Henry, in answer to that request, was pleased to take notice, among other particulars, of the extraordinary courage and fierceness of the Welsh, who were not afraid to fight unarmed with enemies armed at all points, valiantly shedding their blood in the cause of their country, and purchasing glory at the expense of their lives.]

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

That	baron	he	to	his	castle	fled,
To	Barnard	Castle	then		fled	he;
The	uttermost	walls	were	eathe	to	win,
The	Earls	have	won	them		speedilie;-
The	uttermost	walls	were	stone	and	brick;
But	though	they	won	them	soon	anon,
Long	ere	they	won	the	inmost	walls,
For	they	were	hewn	in	rock	of
						stone.

PERCY'S RELICS OF ANCIENT POETRY.

The unhappy fate of the battle was soon evident to the anxious spectators upon the watch-towers of the Garde Doloureuse, which name the castle that day too well deserved. With difficulty the confessor mastered his own emotions to control those of the females on whom he attended, and who were now joined in their lamentation by many others—women, children, and infirm old men, the relatives of those whom they saw engaged in this unavailing contest. These helpless beings had been admitted to the castle for security's sake, and they had now thronged to the battlements, from which Father Aldrovand found difficulty in making them descend, aware that the sight of them on the towers, that should have appeared lined with armed men, would be an additional encouragement to the exertions of the assailants. He urged the Lady Eveline to set an example to this group of helpless, yet intractable mourners.

Preserving, at least endeavouring to preserve, even in the extremity of grief, that composure which the manners of the times enjoined—for chivalry had its stoicism as well as philosophy—Eveline replied in a voice which she would fain have rendered firm, and which was tremulous in her despatch—"Yes, father, you say well—here is no longer aught left for maidens to look upon. Warlike meed and honoured deed sunk when yonder white plume touched the bloody ground.—Come, maidens, there is no longer aught left us to see—To mass, to mass—the tourney is over!"

There was wildness in her tone, and when she rose, with the air of one who would lead out a procession, she staggered, and would have fallen, but for the support of the confessor. Hastily wrapping her head in her mantle, as if ashamed of the agony of grief which she could not restrain, and of which her sobs and the low moaning sounds that issued from under the folds enveloping her face, declared the excess, she suffered Father Aldrovand to conduct her whither he would.

"Our gold," he said, "has changed to brass, our silver to dross, our wisdom, to folly—it is His will, who confounds the counsels of the wise, and shortens the arm of the mighty. To the chapel—to the chapel, Lady Eveline; and instead of vain repining, let us pray to God and the saints to turn away their displeasure, and to save the feeble remnant from the jaws of the devouring wolf."

Thus speaking, he half led, half supported Eveline, who was at the moment almost incapable of thought and action, to the castle-chapel, where, sinking before the altar, she assumed the attitude at least of devotion, though her thoughts, despite the pious words which her tongue faltered out mechanically, were upon the field of battle, beside the body of her slaughtered parent. The rest of the mourners imitated their young lady in her devotional posture, and in the absence of her thoughts. The consciousness that so many of the garrison had been cut off in Raymond's incautious sally, added to their sorrows the sense of personal insecurity, which was exaggerated by the cruelties which were too often exercised by the enemy, who, in the heat of victory, were accustomed to spare neither sex nor age.

The monk, however, assumed among them the tone of authority which his character warranted, rebuked their wailing and ineffectual complaints, and having, as he thought, brought them to such a state of mind as better became their condition, he left them to their private devotions to indulge his own anxious curiosity by inquiring into the defences of the castle. Upon the outward walls he found Wilkin Flammock, who, having done the office of a good and skilful captain in the mode of managing his artillery, and beating back, as we have already seen, the advanced guard of the enemy, was now with his own hand measuring out to his little garrison no stinted allowance of wine.

"Have a care, good Wilkin," said the father, "that thou dost not exceed in this matter. Wine is, thou knowest, like fire and water, an excellent servant, but a very bad master."

"It will be long ere it overflow the deep and solid skulls of my countrymen," said Wilkin Flammock. "Our Flemish courage is like our Flanders horses—the one needs the spur, and the other must have a taste of the winepot; but, credit me, father, they are of an enduring generation, and will not shrink in the washing.—But indeed, if I were to give the knaves a cup more than enough, it were not altogether amiss, since they are like to have a platter the less."

"How do you mean!" cried the monk, starting; "I trust in the saints the provisions have been cared for?"

"Not so well as in your convent, good father," replied Wilkin, with the same immovable stolidity of countenance. "We had kept, as you know, too jolly a Christmas to have a very fat Easter. Yon Welsh hounds, who helped to eat up our victuals, are now like to get into our hold for the lack of them."

"Thou talkest mere folly," answered the monk; "orders were last evening given by our lord (whose soul God assoilzie!) to fetch in the necessary supplies from the country around!

"Ay, but the Welsh were too sharp set to permit us to do that at our ease this morning, which should have been done weeks and months since. Our lord deceased, if deceased he be, was one of those who trusted to the edge of the sword, and even so hath come of it. Commend me to a crossbow and a well-victualled castle, if I must needs fight at all.—You look pale, my good father, a cup of wine will revive you."

The monk motioned away from him the untasted cup, which Wilkin pressed him to with clownish civility. "We have now, indeed," he said, "no refuge, save in prayer!"

"Most true, good father," again replied the impassible Fleming; "pray therefore as much as you will. I will content myself with fasting, which will come whether I will or no."—At this moment a horn was heard before the gate.—"Look to the portcullis and the gate, ye knaves!—What news, Neil Hansen?"

"A messenger from the Welsh tarries at the Mill-hill, just within shot of the cross-bows; he has a white flag, and demands admittance."

"Admit him not, upon thy life, till we be prepared for him," said Wilkin. "Bend the bonny mangonel upon the place, and shoot him if he dare to stir from the spot where he stands till we get all prepared to receive him," said Flammock in his native language. "And, Neil, thou houndsfoot, bestir thyself—let every pike, lance, and pole in the castle be ranged along the battlements, and pointed through the shot-holes—cut up some tapestry into the shape of banners, and show them from the highest towers.—Be ready when I give a signal, to strike *naker*, [Footnote: *Naker*,—Drum.] and blow trumpets, if we have any; if not, some cow-horns—anything for a noise. And hark ye, Neil Hansen, do you, and four or five of your fellows, go to the armoury and slip on coats-of-mail; our Netherlandish corslets do not appal them so much. Then let the Welsh thief be blindfolded and brought in amongst us—Do you hold up your heads and keep silence—leave me to deal with him—only have a care there be no English among us."

The monk, who in his travels had acquired some slight knowledge of the Flemish language, had well-nigh started when he heard the last article in Wilkin's instructions to his countryman, but commanded himself, although a little surprised, both at this suspicious circumstance, and at the readiness and dexterity with which the rough-hewn Fleming seemed to adapt his preparations to the rules of war and of sound policy.

Wilkin, on his part, was not very certain whether the monk had not heard and understood more of what he said to his countryman, than what he had intended. As if to lull asleep any suspicion which Father Aldrovand might entertain, he repeated to him in English most of the directions which he had given, adding, "Well, good father, what think you of it?"

"Excellent well," answered the father, "and done as if you had practised war from the cradle, instead of weaving broad-cloth."

"Nay, spare not your jibes, father," answered Wilkin.—"I know full well that you English think that Flemings have nought in their brainpan but sodden beef and cabbage; yet you see there goes wisdom to weaving of webs."

"Right, Master Wilkin Flammock," answered the father; "but, good Fleming, wilt thou tell me what answer thou wilt make to the Welsh Prince's summons?"

"Reverend father, first tell me what the summons will be," replied the Fleming.

"To surrender this castle upon the instant," answered the monk.

"What will be your reply?"

"My answer will be, Nay—unless upon good composition."

"How, Sir Fleming! dare you mention composition and the castle of the Garde Doloureuse in one sentence?" said the monk.

"Not if I may do better," answered the Fleming. "But would your reverence have me dally until the question amongst the garrison be, whether a plump priest or a fat Fleming will be the better flesh to furnish their shambles?"

"Pshaw!" replied Father Aldrovand, "thou canst not mean such folly. Relief must arrive within twenty-four hours at farthest. Raymond Berenger expected it for certain within such a space."

"Raymond Berenger has been deceived this morning in more matters than one," answered the Fleming.

"Hark thee, Flanderkin," answered the monk, whose retreat from the world had not altogether quenched his military habits and propensities, "I counsel thee to deal uprightly in this matter, as thou dost regard thine own life; for here are as many English left alive, notwithstanding the slaughter of to-day, as may well suffice to fling the Flemish bull-frogs into the castle-ditch, should they have cause to think thou meanest falsely, in the keeping of this castle, and the defence of the Lady Eveline."

"Let not your reverence be moved with unnecessary and idle fears," replied Wilkin Flammock—"I am castellane in this house, by command of its lord, and what I hold for the advantage of mine service, that will I do."

"But I," said the angry monk, "I am the servant of the Pope—the chaplain of this castle, with power to bind and unloose. I fear me thou art no true Christian, Wilkin Flammock, but dost lean to the heresy of the mountaineers. Thou hast refused to take the blessed cross—thou hast breakfasted, and drunk both ale and wine, ere thou hast heard mass. Thou art not to be trusted, man, and I will not trust thee—I demand to be present at the conference betwixt thee and the Welshman."

"It may not be, good father," said Wilkin, with the same smiling, heavy countenance, which he maintained on all occasions of life, however urgent. "It is true, as thou sayest, good father, that I have mine own reasons for not marching quite so far as the gates of Jericho at present; and lucky I have such reasons, since I had not else been here to defend the gate of the Garde Doloureuse. It is also true that I may have been sometimes obliged to visit my mills earlier than the chaplain was called by his zeal to the altar, and that my stomach brooks not working ere I break my fast. But for this, father, I have paid a mulet even to your worshipful reverence, and methinks since you are pleased to remember the confession so exactly, you should not forget the penance and the absolution."

The monk, in alluding to the secrets of the confessional, had gone a step beyond what the rules of his order and of the church permitted. He was baffled by the Fleming's reply, and finding him unmoved by the charge of heresy, he could only answer, in some confusion, "You refuse, then, to admit me to the conference with the Welshman?"

"Reverend father," said Wilkin, "it altogether respecteth secular matters. If aught of religious tenor should intervene, you shall be summoned without delay."

"I will be there in spite of thee, thou Flemish ox," muttered the monk to himself, but in a tone not to be heard by the by-standers; and so speaking he left the battlements.

Wilkin Flammock, a few minutes afterwards, having first seen that all was arranged on the battlements, so as to give an imposing idea of a strength which did not exist, descended to a small guard-room, betwixt the outer and inner gate, where he was attended by half-a-dozen of his own people, disguised in the Norman armour which they had found in the armoury of the castle,—their strong, tall, and bulky forms, and motionless postures, causing them to look rather like trophies of some past age, than living and existing soldiers. Surrounded by these huge and inanimate figures, in a little vaulted room which almost excluded daylight, Flammock received the Welsh envoy, who was led in blindfolded betwixt two Flemings, yet not so carefully watched but that they permitted him to have a glimpse of the preparations on the battlements, which had, in fact, been made chiefly for the purpose of imposing on him. For the same purpose an occasional clatter of arms was made without; voices were heard as if officers were going their rounds; and other sounds of active preparation seemed to announce that a numerous and regular garrison was preparing to receive an attack.

When the bandage was removed from Jorworth's eyes,—for the same individual who had formerly brought Gwenwyn's offer of alliance, now bare his summons of surrender,—he looked haughtily around him and demanded to whom he was to deliver the commands of his master, the Gwenwyn, son of Cyvelioc, Prince of Powys.

"His indifference of Flammock's highness, answered in manner, "must be contented to his usual smiling of the the Fulling-mills, deputed governor of the Wilkin Garde Doloureux."

"Thou deputed governor!" exclaimed Jorworth; "thou?—a Low-country weaver!—it is impossible. Low as they are, the English Crogan [Footnote: This is a somewhat contumelious epithet applied by the Welsh to the English.] cannot have sunk to a point so low, as to be commanded by *thee*!—these men seem English, to them I will deliver my message."

"You may if you will," replied Wilkin, "but if they return you any answer save by signs, you shall call me *schelm*."

"Is this true?" said the Welsh envoy, looking towards the men-at-arms, as they seemed, by whom Flammock was attended; "are you really come to this pass? I thought that the mere having been born on British earth, though the children of spoilers and invaders, had inspired you with too much pride to brook the yoke of a base mechanic. Or, if you are not courageous, should you not be cautious?—Well speaks the proverb, Wo to him that will trust a stranger! Still mute—still silent?—answer me by word or sign—Do you really call and acknowledge him as your leader?"

The men in armour with one accord nodded their casques in reply to Jorworth's question, and then remained motionless as before.

The Welshman, with the acute genius of his country, suspected there was something in this which he could not entirely comprehend, but, preparing himself to be upon his guard, he proceeded as follows: "Be it as it may, I care not who hears the message of my sovereign, since it brings pardon and mercy to the inhabitants of this Castell an Carrig, [Footnote: Castle of the Craig.] which you have called the Garde Doloureux, to cover the usurpation of the territory by the change of the name. Upon surrender of the same to the Prince of Powys, with its dependencies, and with the arms which it contains, and with the maiden Eveline Berenger, all within the castle shall depart unmolested, and have safe-conduct wheresoever they will, to go beyond the marches of the Cymry."

"And how, if we obey not this summons?" said the imperturbable Wilkin Flammock.

"Then shall your portion be with Raymond Berenger, your late leader," replied Jorworth, his eyes, while he was speaking, glancing with the vindictive ferocity which dictated his answer. "So many strangers as be here amongst ye, so many bodies to the ravens, so many heads to the gibbet!—It is long since the kites have had such a banquet of lurdane Flemings and false Saxons."

"Friend Jorworth," said Wilkin, "if such be thy only message, bear mine answer back to thy master, That wise men trust not to the words of others that safety, which they can secure by their own deeds. We have walls high and strong enough, deep moats, and plenty of munition, both longbow and arblast. We will keep the castle, trusting the castle will keep us, till God shall send us succour."

"Do not peril your lives on such an issue," said the Welsh emissary, changing his language to the Flemish, which, from occasional communication with those of that nation in Pembrokeshire, he spoke fluently, and which he now adopted, as if to conceal the purport of his discourse from the supposed English in the apartment. "Hark thee hither," he proceeded, "good Fleming. Knowest thou not that he in whom is your trust, the Constable De Lacy, hath bound himself by his vow to engage in no quarrel till he crosses the sea, and cannot come to your aid without perjury? He and the other Lords Marchers have drawn their forces far northward to join the host of Crusaders. What will it avail you to put us to the toil and trouble of a long siege, when you can hope no rescue?"

"And what will it avail me more," said Wilkin, answering in his native language and looking at the Welshman fixedly, yet with a countenance from which all expression seemed studiously banished, and which exhibited, upon features otherwise tolerable, a remarkable compound of dulness and simplicity, "what will it avail me whether your trouble be great or small?"

"Come, friend Flammock," said the Welshman, "frame not thyself more unapprehensive than nature hath formed thee. The glen is dark, but a sunbeam can light the side of it. Thy utmost efforts cannot prevent the fall of this castle; but thou mayst hasten it, and the doing so shall avail thee much." Thus speaking, he drew close up to Wilkin, and sunk his voice to an insinuating whisper, as he said, "Never did the withdrawing of a bar, or the raising of a portcullis, bring such vantage to Fleming as they may to thee, if thou wilt."

"I only know," said Wilkin, "that the drawing the one, and the dropping the other, have cost me my whole worldly subsistence."

"Fleming, it shall be compensated to thee with an overflowing measure. The liberality of Gwenwyn is as the summer rain."

"My whole mills and buildings have been this morning burnt to the earth—"

"Thou shalt have a thousand marks of silver, man, in the place of thy goods," said the Welshman; but the Fleming continued, without seeming to hear him, to number up his losses.

"My lands are forayed, twenty kine driven off, and—"

"Threescore shall replace them," interrupted Jorworth, "chosen from the most bright-skinned of the spoil."

"But my daughter—but the Lady Eveline"—said the Fleming, with some slight change in his monotonous voice, which seemed to express doubt and perplexity—

"You are cruel conquerors, and—"

"To those who resist us we are fearful," said Jorworth, "but not to such as shall deserve clemency by surrender. Gwenwyn will forget the contumelies of Raymond, and raise his daughter to high honour among the daughters of the Cymry. For thine own child, form but a wish for her advantage, and it shall be fulfilled to the uttermost. Now, Fleming, we understand each other."

"I understand thee, at least," said Flammock.

"And I thee, I trust?" said Jorworth, bending his keen, wild blue eye on the stolid and unexpressive face of the Netherlander, like an eager student who seeks to discover some hidden and mysterious meaning in a passage of a classic author, the direct import of which seems trite and trivial.

"You believe that you understand me," said Wilkin; "but here lies the difficulty,—which of us shall trust the other?"

"Darest thou ask?" answered Jorworth. "Is it for thee, or such as thee, to express doubt of the purposes of the Prince of Powys?"

"I know them not, good Jorworth, but through thee; and well I wot thou art not one who will let thy traffic miscarry for want of aid from the breath of thy mouth."

"As I am a Christian man," said Jorworth, hurrying asseveration on asseveration—"by the soul of my father—by the faith of my mother—by the black rood of—"

"Stop, good Jorworth—thou heapest thine oaths too thickly on each other, for me to value them to the right estimate," said Flammock; "that which is so lightly pledged, is sometimes not thought worth redeeming. Some part of the promised guerdon in hand the whilst, were worth an hundred oaths."

"Thou suspicious churl, darest thou doubt my word?"

"No—by no means," answered Wilkin;—"nevertheless, I will believe thy deed more readily."

"To the point, Fleming," said Jorworth—"What wouldst thou have of me?"

"Let me have some present sight of the money thou didst promise, and I will think of the rest of thy proposal."

"Base silver-broker!" answered Jorworth, "thinkest thou the Prince of Powys has as many money-bags, as the merchants of thy land of sale and barter? He gathers treasures by his conquests, as the waterspout sucks up water by its strength, but it is to disperse them among his followers, as the cloudy column restores its contents to earth and ocean. The silver that I promise thee has yet to be gathered out of the Saxon chests—nay, the casket of Berenger himself must be ransacked to make up the tale."

"Methinks I could do that myself, (having full power in the castle,) and so save you a labour," said the Fleming.

"True," answered Jorworth, "but it would be at the expense of a cord and a noose, whether the Welsh took the place or the Normans relieved it—the one would expect their booty entire—the other their countryman's treasures to be delivered undiminished."

"I may not gainsay that," said the Fleming. "Well, say I were content to trust you thus far, why not return my cattle, which are in your own hands, and at your disposal? If you do not pleasure me in something beforehand, what can I expect of you afterwards?"

"I would pleasure you in a greater matter," answered the equally suspicious Welshman. "But what would it avail thee to have thy cattle within the fortress? They can be better cared for on the plain beneath."

"In faith," replied the Fleming, "thou sayst truth—they will be but a trouble to us here, where we have so many already provided for the use of the garrison.—And yet, when I consider it more closely, we have enough of forage to maintain all we have, and more. Now, my cattle are of a peculiar stock, brought from the rich pastures of Flanders, and I desire to have them restored ere your axes and Welsh hooks be busy with their hides."

"You shall have them this night, hide and horn," said Jorworth; "it is but a small earnest of a great boon."

"Thanks to your munificence," said the Fleming; "I am a simple-minded man, and bound my wishes to the recovery of my own property."

"Thou wilt be ready, then, to deliver the castle?" said Jorworth.

"Of that we will talk farther to-morrow," said Wilkin Flammock; "if these English and Normans should suspect such a purpose, we should have wild work—they must be fully dispersed ere I can hold farther communication on the subject. Meanwhile, I pray thee, depart suddenly, and as if offended with the tenor of our discourse."

"Yet would I fain know something more fixed and absolute," said Jorworth.

"Impossible—impossible," said the Fleming: "see you not yonder tall fellow begins already to handle his dagger—Go hence in haste, and angrily—and forget not the cattle."

"I will not forget them," said Jorworth; "but if thou keep not faith with us—"

So speaking, he left the apartment with a gesture of menace, partly really directed to Wilkin himself, partly assumed in consequence of his advice. Flammock replied in English, as if that all around might understand, what he said,

"Do thy worst, Sir Welshman! I am a true man; I defy the proposals of rendition, and will hold out this castle to thy shame and thy master's!—Here—let him be blindfolded once more, and returned in safety to his attendants without; the next Welshman who appears before the gate of the Garde Doloureuse, shall be more sharply received."

The Welshman was blindfolded and withdrawn, when, as Wilkin Flammock himself left the guardroom, one of the seeming men-at-arms, who had been present at this interview, said in his ear, in English, "Thou art a false traitor, Flammock, and shalt die a traitor's death!"

Startled at this, the Fleming would have questioned the man farther, but he had disappeared so soon as the words were uttered. Flammock was disconcerted by this circumstance, which showed him that his interview with Jorworth had been observed, and its purpose known or conjectured, by some one who was a stranger to his confidence, and might thwart his intentions; and he quickly after learned that this was the case.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

Blessed		Mary,		mother		dear,
To	a	maiden		bend	thine	ear,
Virgin		undefiled,		to		thee
A	wretched	virgin		bends	the	knee.

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

The daughter of the slaughtered Raymond had descended from the elevated station whence she had beheld the field of battle, in the agony of grief natural to a child whose eyes have beheld the death of an honoured and beloved father. But her station, and the principles of chivalry in which she had been trained up, did not permit any prolonged or needless indulgence of inactive sorrow. In raising the young and beautiful of the female sex to the rank of princesses, or rather goddesses, the spirit of that singular system exacted from them, in requital, a tone of character, and a line of conduct, superior and something contradictory to that of natural or merely human feeling. Its heroines frequently resembled portraits shown by an artificial light—strong and luminous, and which placed in high relief the objects on which it was turned; but having still something of adventitious splendour, which, compared with that of the natural day, seemed glaring and exaggerated.

It was not permitted to the orphan of the Garde Doloureuse, the daughter of a line of heroes, whose stem was to be found in the race of Thor, Balder, Odin, and other deified warriors of the North, whose beauty was the theme of a hundred minstrels, and her eyes the leading star of half the chivalry of the warlike marches of Wales, to mourn her sire with the ineffectual tears of a village maiden. Young as she was, and horrible as was the incident which she had but that instant witnessed, it was not altogether so appalling to her as to a maiden whose eye had not been accustomed to the rough, and often fatal sports of chivalry, and whose residence had not been among scenes and men where war and death had been the unceasing theme of every tongue, whose imagination had not been familiarized with wild and bloody events, or, finally, who had not been trained up to consider an honourable "death under shield," as that of a field of battle was termed, as a more desirable termination to the life of a warrior, than that lingering and unhonoured fate which comes slowly on, to conclude the listless and helpless inactivity of prolonged old age. Eveline, while she wept for her father, felt her bosom glow when she recollected that he died in the blaze of his fame, and amidst heaps of his slaughtered enemies; and when she thought of the exigencies of her own situation, it was with the determination to defend her own liberty, and to avenge her father's death, by every means which Heaven had left within her power.

The aids of religion were not forgotten; and according to the custom of the times, and the doctrines of the Roman church, she endeavoured to propitiate the favour of Heaven by vows as well as prayers. In a small crypt, or oratory, adjoining to the chapel, was hung over an altar-piece, on which a lamp constantly burned, a small picture of the Virgin Mary, revered as a household and peculiar deity by the family of Berenger, one of whose ancestors had brought it from the Holy Land, whither he had gone upon pilgrimage. It was of the period of the Lower Empire, a Grecian painting, not unlike those which in Catholic countries are often imputed to the Evangelist Luke. The crypt in which it was placed was accounted a shrine of uncommon sanctity—nay, supposed to have displayed miraculous powers; and Eveline, by the daily garland of flowers which she offered before the painting, and by the constant prayers with which they were accompanied, had constituted herself the peculiar votaress of Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, for so the picture was named.

Now, apart from others, alone, and in secrecy, sinking in the extremity of her sorrow before the shrine of her patroness, she besought the protection of kindred purity for the defence of her freedom and honour, and invoked vengeance on the wild and treacherous chieftain who had slain her father, and was now beleaguering her place of strength. Not only did she vow a large donative in lands to the shrine of the protectress whose aid she implored; but the oath passed her lips, (even though they faltered, and though something within her remonstrated against the vow,) that whatsoever favoured knight Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse might employ for her rescue, should obtain from her in guerdon whatever boon she might honourably grant, were it that of her virgin hand at the holy altar. Taught as she was to believe, by the assurances of many a knight, that such a surrender was the highest boon which Heaven could bestow, she felt as discharging a debt of gratitude when she placed herself entirely at the disposal of the pure and blessed patroness in whose aid she confided. Perhaps there lurked in this devotion some earthly hope of which she was herself scarce conscious, and which reconciled her to the indefinite sacrifice thus freely offered. The Virgin, (this flattering hope might insinuate,) kindest and most benevolent of patronesses, will use compassionately the power resigned to her, and *he* will be the favoured champion of Maria, upon whom her votaress would most willingly confer favour.

But if there was such a hope, as something selfish will often mingle with our noblest and purest emotions, it arose unconscious of Eveline herself, who, in the full assurance of implicit faith, and fixing on the representative of her adoration, eyes in which the most earnest supplication, the most humble confidence, struggled with unbidden tears, was perhaps more beautiful than when, young as she was, she was selected to bestow the prize of chivalry in the lists of Chester. It was no wonder that, in such a moment of high excitement, when prostrated in devotion before a being of whose power to protect her, and to make her protection assured

by a visible sign, she doubted nothing, the Lady Eveline conceived she saw with her own eyes the acceptance of her vow. As she gazed on the picture with an over-strained eye, and an imagination heated with enthusiasm, the expression seemed to alter from the hard outline, fashioned by the Greek painter; the eyes appeared to become animated, and to return with looks of compassion the suppliant entreaties of the votaress, and the mouth visibly arranged itself into a smile of inexpressible sweetness. It even seemed to her that the head made a gentle inclination.

Overpowered by supernatural awe at appearances, of which her faith permitted her not to question the reality, the Lady Eveline folded her arms on her bosom, and prostrated her forehead on the pavement, as the posture most fitting to listen to divine communication.

But her vision went not so far; there was neither sound nor voice, and when, after stealing her eyes all around the crypt in which she knelt, she again raised them to the figure of Our Lady, the features seemed to be in the form in which the limner had sketched them, saving that, to Eveline's imagination, they still retained an august and yet gracious expression, which she had not before remarked upon the countenance. With awful reverence, almost amounting to fear, yet comforted, and even elated, with the visitation she had witnessed, the maiden repeated again and again the orisons which she thought most grateful to the ear of her benefactress; and rising at length, retired backwards, as from the presence of a sovereign, until she attained the outer chapel.

Here one or two females still knelt before the saints which the walls and niches presented for adoration; but the rest of the terrified suppliants, too anxious to prolong their devotions, had dispersed through the castle to learn tidings of their friends, and to obtain some refreshment, or at least some place of repose for themselves and their families.

Bowing her head, and muttering an ave to each saint as she passed his image, (for impending danger makes men observant of the rites of devotion,) the Lady Eveline had almost reached the door of the chapel, when a man-at-arms, as he seemed, entered hastily; and, with a louder voice than suited the holy place, unless when need was most urgent, demanded the Lady Eveline. Impressed with the feelings of veneration which the late scene had produced, she was about to rebuke his military rudeness, when he spoke again, and in anxious haste, "Daughter, we are betrayed!" and though the form, and the coat-of-mail which covered it, were those of a soldier, the voice was that of Father Aldrovand, who, eager and anxious at the same time, disengaged himself from the mail hood, and showed his countenance.

"Father," she said, "what means this? Have you forgotten the confidence in Heaven which you are wont to recommend, that you bear other arms than your order assigns to you?"

"It may come to that ere long," said Father Aldrovand; "for I was a soldier ere I was a monk. But now I have donned this harness to discover treachery, not to resist force. Ah! my beloved daughter— we are dreadfully beset—foemen without—traitors within!—The false Fleming, Wilkin Flammock, is treating for the surrender of the castle!"

"Who dares say so?" said a veiled female, who had been kneeling unnoticed in a sequestered corner of the chapel, but who now started up and came boldly betwixt Lady Eveline and the monk.

"Go hence, thou saucy minion," said the monk, surprised at this bold interruption; "this concerns not thee."

"But it *doth* concern me," said the damsel, throwing back her veil, and discovering the juvenile countenance of Rose, the daughter of Wilkin Flammock, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks blushing with anger, the vehemence of which made a singular contrast with the very fair complexion, and almost infantine features of the speaker, whose whole form and figure was that of a girl who has scarce emerged from childhood, and indeed whose general manners were as gentle and bashful as they now seemed bold, impassioned, and undaunted.—"Doth it not concern me," she said, "that my father's honest name should be tainted with treason? Doth it not concern the stream when the fountain is troubled? It *doth* concern me, and I will know the author of the calumny."

"Damsel," said Eveline, "restrain thy useless passion; the good father, though he cannot intentionally calumniate thy father, speaks, it may be, from false report."

"As I am an unworthy priest," said the father, "I speak from the report of my own ears. Upon the oath of my order, myself heard this Wilkin Flammock chaffering with the Welshman for the surrender of the Garde Doloureuse. By help of this hauberk and mail hood, I gained admittance to a conference where he thought there were no English ears. They spoke Flemish too, but I knew the jargon of old."

"The Flemish," said the angry maiden, whose headstrong passion led her to speak first in answer to the last insult offered, "is no jargon like your piebald English, half Norman, half Saxon, but a noble Gothic tongue, spoken by the brave warriors who fought against the Roman Kaisars, when Britain bent the neck to them—and as for this he has said of Wilkin Flammock," she continued, collecting her ideas into more order as she went on, "believe it not, my dearest lady; but, as you value the honour of your own noble father, confide, as in the Evangelists, in the honesty of mine!" This she spoke with an imploring tone of voice, mingled with sobs, as if her heart had been breaking.

Eveline endeavoured to soothe her attendant. "Rose," she said, "in this evil time suspicions will light on the best men, and misunderstandings will arise among the best friends.—Let us hear the good father state what he hath to charge upon your parent. Fear not but that Wilkin shall be heard in his defence. Thou wert wont to be quiet and reasonable."

"I am neither quiet nor reasonable on this matter," said Rose, with redoubled indignation; "and it is ill of you, lady, to listen to the falsehoods of that reverend mummer, who is neither true priest nor true soldier. But I will fetch one who shall confront him either in casque or cowl." So saying, she went hastily out of the chapel, while the monk, after some pedantic circumlocution, acquainted the Lady Eveline with what he had overheard betwixt Jorworth and Wilkin; and proposed to her to draw together the few English who were in the castle, and take possession of the innermost square tower; a keep which, as usual in Gothic fortresses of the Norman period, was situated so as to make considerable defence, even after the exterior works of the castle, which it commanded, were in the hand of the enemy.

"Father," said Eveline, still confident in the vision she had lately witnessed, "this were good counsel in extremity; but otherwise, it were to create the very evil we fear, by seating our garrison at odds amongst themselves. I have a strong, and not unwarranted confidence, good father, in our blessed Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, that we shall attain at once vengeance on our barbarous enemies, and escape from our present jeopardy; and I call you to witness the vow I have made, that to him whom Our Lady should employ to work us succour, I will refuse nothing, were it my father's inheritance, or the hand of his daughter."

"*Ave Maria! Ave Regina Coeli!*" said the priest; "on a rock more sure you could not have founded your trust.—But, daughter," he continued after the proper ejaculation had been made, "have you never heard, even by a hint, that there was a treaty for your hand betwixt our much honoured lord, of whom we are cruelly bereft, (may God assilzie his soul!) and the great house of Lacy?"

"Something I may have heard," said Eveline, dropping her eyes, while a slight tinge suffused her cheek; "but I refer me to the disposal of our Lady of Succour and Consolation."

As she spoke, Rose entered the chapel with the same vivacity she had shown in leaving it, leading by the hand her father, whose sluggish though firm step, vacant countenance, and heavy demeanour, formed the strongest contrast to the rapidity of her motions, and the anxious animation of her address. Her task of dragging him forward might have reminded the spectator of some of those ancient monuments, on which a small cherub, singularly inadequate to the task, is often represented as hoisting upward towards the empyrean the fleshy bulk of some ponderous tenant of the tomb, whose disproportioned weight bids fair to render ineffectual the benevolent and spirited exertions of its fluttering guide and assistant.

"Roschen—my child—what grieves thee?" said the Netherlander, as he yielded to his daughter's violence with a smile, which, being on the countenance of a father, had more of expression and feeling than those which seemed to have made their constant dwelling upon his lips.

"Here stands my father," said the impatient maiden; "impeach him with treason, who can or dare! There stands Wilkin Flammock, son of Dieterick, the Cramer of Antwerp,—let those accuse him to his face who slandered him behind his back!"

"Speak, Father Aldrovand," said the Lady Eveline; "we are young in our lordship, and, alas! the duty hath descended upon us in an evil hour; yet we will, so may God and Our Lady help us, hear and judge of your accusation to the utmost of our power."

"This Wilkin Flammock," said the monk, "however bold he hath made himself in villany, dares not deny that I heard him with my own ears treat for the surrender of the castle."

"Strike him, father!" said the indignant Rose,— "strike the disguised mummer! The steel hauberk may be struck, though not the monk's frock—strike him, or tell him that he lies foully!"

"Peace, Roschen, thou art mad," said her father, angrily; "the monk hath more truth than sense about him, and I would his ears had been farther off when he thrust them into what concerned him not."

Rose's countenance fell when she heard her father bluntly avow the treasonable communication of which she had thought him incapable— she dropt the hand by which she had dragged him into the chapel, and stared on the Lady Eveline, with eyes which seemed starting from their sockets, and a countenance from which the blood, with which it was so lately highly coloured, had retreated to garrison the heart.

Eveline looked upon the culprit with a countenance in which sweetness and dignity were mingled with sorrow. "Wilkin," she said, "I could not have believed this. What! on the very day of thy confiding benefactor's death, canst thou have been tampering with his murderers, to deliver up the castle, and betray thy trust!—But I will not upbraid thee—I deprive thee of the trust reposed in so unworthy a person, and appoint thee to be kept in ward in the western tower, till God send us relief; when, it may be, thy daughter's merits shall atone for thy offences, and save farther punishment.—See that our commands be presently obeyed."

"Yes—yes—yes!" exclaimed Rose, hurrying one word on the other as fast and vehemently as she could articulate—"Let us go—let us go to the darkest dungeon—darkness befits us better than light."

The monk, on the other hand, perceiving that the Fleming made no motion to obey the mandate of arrest, came forward, in a manner more suiting his ancient profession, and present disguise, than his spiritual character; and with the words, "I attach thee, Wilkin Flammock, of acknowledged treason to your liege lady," would have laid hand upon him, had not the Fleming stepped back and warned him off, with a menacing and determined gesture, while he said,— "Ye are mad!—all of you English are mad when the moon is full, and my silly girl hath caught the malady.—Lady, your honoured father gave me a charge, which I propose to execute to the best for all parties, and you cannot, being a minor, deprive me of it at your idle pleasure.—Father Aldrovand, a monk makes no lawful arrests.—Daughter Roschen, hold your peace and dry your eyes—you are a fool."

"I am, I am," said Rose, drying her eyes and regaining her elasticity of manner—"I am indeed a fool, and worse than a fool, for a moment to doubt my father's probity.—Confide in him, dearest lady; he is wise though he is grave, and kind though he is plain and homely in his speech. Should he prove false he will fare the worse! for I will plunge myself from the pinnacle of the Warder's Tower to the bottom of the moat, and he shall lose his own daughter for betraying his master's."

"This is all frenzy," said the monk—"Who trusts avowed traitors? —Here, Normans, English, to the rescue of your liege lady—Bows and bills—bows and bills!"

"You may spare your throat for your next homily, good father," said the Netherlander, "or call in good Flemish, since you understand it, for to no other language will those within hearing reply."

He then approached the Lady Eveline with a real or affected air of clumsy kindness, and something as nearly approaching to courtesy as his manners and features could assume. He bade her good-night, and assuring her that he would act for the best, left the chapel. The monk was about to break forth into revilings, but Eveline, with more prudence, checked his zeal.

"I cannot," she said, "but hope that this man's intentions are honest—"

"Now, God's blessing on you, lady, for that very word!" said Rose, eagerly interrupting her, and kissing her hand.

"But if unhappily they are doubtful," continued Eveline, "it is not by reproach that we can bring him to a better purpose. Good father, give an eye to the preparations for resistance, and see nought omitted that our means furnish for the defence of the castle."

"Fear nothing, my dearest daughter," said Aldrovand; "there are still some English hearts amongst us, and we will rather kill and eat the Flemings themselves, than surrender the castle."

"That were food as dangerous to come by as bear's venison, father," answered Rose, bitterly, still on fire with the idea that the monk treated her nation with suspicion and contumely.

On these terms they separated—the women to indulge their fears and sorrows in private grief, or alleviate them by private devotion; the monk to try to discover what were the real purposes of Wilkin Flammock, and to counteract them if possible, should they seem to indicate treachery. His eye, however, though sharpened by strong suspicion, saw nothing to strengthen his fears, excepting that the Fleming had, with considerable military skill, placed the principal posts of the castle in the charge of his own countrymen which must make any attempt to dispossess him of his present authority both difficult and dangerous. The monk at length retired, summoned by the duties of the evening service, and with the determination to be stirring with the light the next morning.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

Oh,	sadly	shines	the	morning	sun
On		leaguer'd			wall,
When	bastion,		tower,	and	battlement,
Seemed	nodding		to	their	fall.

OLD BALLAD.

True to his resolution, and telling his beads as he went, that he might lose no time, Father Aldrovand began his rounds in the castle so soon as daylight had touched the top of the eastern horizon. A natural instinct led him first to those stalls which, had the fortress been properly victualled for a siege, ought to have been tenanted by cattle; and great was his delight to see more than a score of fat kine and bullocks in the place which had last night been empty! One of them had already been carried to the shambles, and a Fleming or two, who played butchers on the occasion, were dividing the carcass for the cook's use. The good father had well-nigh cried out, a miracle; but, not to be too precipitate, he limited his transport to a private exclamation in honour of Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse.

"Who talks of lack of provender?—who speaks of surrender now?" he said. "Here is enough to maintain us till Hugo de Lacy arrives, were he to sail back from Cyprus to our relief. I did purpose to have fasted this morning, as well to save victuals as on a religious score; but the blessings of the saints must not be slighted.—Sir Cook, let me have half a yard or so of broiled beef presently; bid the pantler send me a manchet, and the butler a cup of wine. I will take a running breakfast on the western battlements." [Footnote: Old Henry Jenkins, in his Recollections of the Abbacies before their dissolution, has preserved the fact that roast-beef was delivered out to the guests not by weight, but by measure.]

At this place, which was rather the weakest point of the Garde Doloureuse, the good father found Wilkin Flammock anxiously superintending the necessary measures of defence. He greeted him courteously, congratulated him on the stock of provisions with which the castle had been supplied during the night, and was inquiring how they had been so happily introduced through the Welsh besiegers, when Wilkin took the first occasion to interrupt him.

"Of all this another time, good father; but I wish at present, and before other discourse, to consult thee on a matter which presses my conscience, and moreover deeply concerns my worldly estate."

"Speak on, my excellent son," said the father, conceiving that he should thus gain the key to Wilkin's real intentions. "Oh, a tender conscience is a jewel! and he that will not listen when it saith, 'Pour out thy doubts into the ear of the priest,' shall one day have his own dolorous outcries choked with fire and brimstone. Thou wert ever of a tender conscience, son Wilkin, though thou hast but a rough and borrel bearing."

"Well, then," said Wilkin, "you are to know, good father, that I have had some dealings with my neighbour, Jan Vanwelt, concerning my daughter Rose, and that he has paid me certain gilders on condition I will match her to him."

"Pshaw, pshaw! my good son," said the disappointed confessor, "this gear can lie over—this is no time for marrying or giving in marriage, when we are all like to be murdered."

"Nay, but hear me, good father," said the Fleming, "for this point of conscience concerns the present case more nearly than you wot of.—You must know I have no will to bestow Rose on this same Jan Vanwelt, who is old, and of ill conditions; and I would know of you whether I may, in conscience, refuse him my consent?"

"Truly," said Father Aldrovand, "Rose is a pretty lass, though somewhat hasty; and I think you may honestly withdraw your consent, always on paying back the gilders you have received."

"But there lies the pinch, good father," said the Fleming—"the refunding this money will reduce me to utter poverty. The Welsh have destroyed my substance; and this handful of money is all, God help me! on which I must begin the world again."

"Nevertheless, son Wilkin," said Aldrovand, "thou must keep thy word, or pay the forfeit; for what saith the text? *Quis habitabit in tabernaculo, quis requiescet in monte sancta?*—Who shall ascend to the tabernacle, and dwell in the holy mountain? Is it not answered again, *Qui jurat proximo et non decipit?*—Go to, my son—break not thy plighted word for a little filthy lucre—better is an empty stomach and an hungry heart with a clear conscience, than a fatted ox with iniquity and wordbreaking.—Sawest thou not our late noble lord, who (may his soul be happy!) chose rather to die in unequal battle, like a true knight, than live a perjured man, though he had but spoken a rash word to a Welshman over a wine flask?"

"Alas! then," said the Fleming, "this is even what I feared! We must e'en render up the castle, or restore to the Welshman, Jorworth, the cattle, by means of which I had schemed to victual and defend it."

"How—wherefore—what dost thou mean?" said the monk, in astonishment. "I speak to thee of Rose Flammock, and Jan Van- devil, or whatever you call him, and you reply with talk about cattle and castles, and I wot not what!"

"So please you, holy father, I did but speak in parables. This castle was the daughter I had promised to deliver over—the Welshman is Jan Vanwelt, and the gilders were the cattle he has sent in, as a part-payment beforehand of my guerdon."

"Parables!" said the monk, colouring with anger at the trick put on him; "what has a boor like thee to do with parables?—But I forgive thee—I forgive thee."

"I am therefore to yield the castle to the Welshman, or restore him his cattle?" said the impenetrable Dutchman.

"Sooner yield thy soul to Satan!" replied the monk.

"I fear it must be the alternative," said the Fleming; "for the example of thy honourable lord—"

"The example of an honourable fool!"—answered the monk; then presently subjoined, "Our Lady be with her servant!—This Belgic- brained boor makes me forget what I would say."

"Nay, but the holy text which your reverence cited to me even now," continued the Fleming.

"Go to," said the monk; "what hast thou to do to presume to think of texts?—knowest thou not the letter of the Scripture slayeth, and that it is the exposition which maketh to live?—Art thou not like one who, coming to a physician, conceals from him half the symptoms of the disease?—I tell thee, thou foolish Fleming, the text speaketh but of promises made unto Christians, and there is in the Rubric a special exception of such as are made to Welshmen." At this commentary the Fleming grinned so broadly as to show his whole case of broad strong white teeth. Father Aldrovand himself grinned in sympathy, and then proceeded to say,—"*Come, come, I see how it is. Thou hast studied some small revenge on me for doubting of thy truth; and, in verity, I think thou hast taken it wittily enough. But wherefore didst thou not let me into the secret from the beginning? I promise thee I had foul suspicions of thee.*"

"What!" said the Fleming, "is it possible I could ever think of involving your reverence in a little matter of deceit? Surely Heaven hath sent me more grace and manners.—Hark, I hear Jorworth's horn at the gate."

"He blows like a town swineherd," said Aldrovand, in disdain.

"It is not your reverence's pleasure that I should restore the cattle unto them, then?" said Flammock.

"Yes, thus far. Prithee, deliver him straightway over the walls such a tub of boiling water as shall scald the hair from his goatskin cloak. And, hark thee, do thou, in the first place, try the temperature of the kettle with thy forefinger, and that shall be thy penance for the trick thou hast played me."

The Fleming answered this with another broad grin of intelligence, and they proceeded to the outer gate, to which Jorworth had come alone. Placing himself at the wicket, which, however, he kept carefully barred, and speaking through a small opening, contrived for such purpose, Wilkin Flammock demanded of the Welshman his business.

"To receive rendition of the castle, agreeable to promise," said Jorworth.

"Ay? and art thou come on such errand alone?" said Wilkin.

"No, truly," answered Jorworth; "I have some two score of men concealed among yonder bushes."

"Then thou hadst best lead them away quickly," answered Wilkin, "before our archers let fly a sheaf of arrows among them."

"How, villain! Dost thou not mean to keep thy promise?" said the Welshman.

"I gave thee none," said the Fleming; "I promised but to think on what thou didst say. I have done so, and have communicated with my ghostly father, who will in no respect hear of my listening to thy proposal."

"And wilt thou," said Jorworth, "keep the cattle, which I simply sent into the castle on the faith of our agreement?"

"I will excommunicate and deliver him over to Satan," said the monk, unable to wait the phlegmatic and lingering answer of the Fleming, "if he give horn, hoof, or hair of them, to such an uncircumcised Philistine as thou or thy master."

"It is well, shorn priest," answered Jorworth in great anger. "But mark me—reckon not on your frock for ransom. When Gwenwyn hath taken this castle, as it shall not longer shelter such a pair of faithless traitors, I will have you sewed up each into the carcass of one of these kine, for which your penitent has forsworn himself, and lay you where wolf and eagle shall be your only companions."

"Thou wilt work thy will when it is matched with thy power," said the sedate Netherlander.

"False Welshman, we defy thee to thy teeth!" answered, in the same breath, the more irascible monk. "I trust to see hounds gnaw thy joints ere that day come that ye talk of so proudly."

By way of answer to both, Jorworth drew back his arm with his levelled javelin, and shaking the shaft till it acquired a vibratory motion, he hurled it with equal strength and dexterity right against the aperture in the wicket. It whizzed through the opening at which it was aimed, and flew (harmlessly, however) between the heads of the monk and the Fleming; the former of whom started back, while the latter only said, as he looked at the javelin, which stood quivering in the door of the guard-room, "That was well aimed, and happily balked."

Jorworth, the instant he had flung his dart, hastened to the ambush which he had prepared, and gave them at once the signal and the example of a rapid retreat down the hill. Father Aldrovand would willingly have followed them with a volley of arrows, but the Fleming observed that ammunition was too precious with them to be wasted on a few runaways. Perhaps the honest man remembered that they had come within the danger of such a salutation, in some measure, on his own assurance. When the noise of the hasty retreat of Jorworth and his followers had died away, there ensued a dead silence, well corresponding with the coolness and calmness of that early hour in the morning.

"This will not last long," said Wilkin to the monk, in a tone of foreboding seriousness, which found an echo in the good father's bosom.

"It will not, and it cannot," answered Aldrovand; "and we must expect a shrewd attack, which I should mind little, but that their numbers are great, ours few; the extent of the walls considerable, and the obstinacy of these Welsh fiends almost equal to their fury. But we will do the best. I will to the Lady Eveline—She must

show herself upon the battlements—She is fairer in feature than becometh a man of my order to speak of; and she has withal a breathing of her father's lofty spirit. The look and the word of such a lady will give a man double strength in the hour of need."

"It may be," said the Fleming; "and I will go see that the good breakfast which I have appointed be presently served forth; it will give my Flemings more strength than the sight of the ten thousand virgins—may their help be with us!—were they all arranged on a fair field."

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

'Twas	when	ye	raised,'	mid	sap	and	siege,
The	banner		of	your		rightful	liege
At	your		she		captain's		call,
Who,		miracle			of		womankind,
Lent	mettle		to	the		meanest	hind
That	mann'd		her		castle		wall.

WILLIAM STEWART ROSE.

The morning light was scarce fully spread abroad, when Eveline Berenger, in compliance with her confessor's advice, commenced her progress around the walls and battlements of the beleaguered castle, to confirm, by her personal entreaties, the minds of the valiant, and to rouse the more timid to hope and to exertion. She wore a rich collar and bracelets, as ornaments which indicated her rank—and high descent; and her under tunic, in the manner of the times, was gathered around her slender waist by a girdle, embroidered with precious stones, and secured by a large buckle of gold. From one side of the girdle was suspended a pouch or purse, splendidly adorned with needle-work, and on the left side it sustained a small dagger of exquisite workmanship. A dark-coloured mantle, chosen as emblematic of her clouded fortunes, was flung loosely around her; and its hood was brought forward, so as to shadow, but not hide, her beautiful countenance. Her looks had lost the high and ecstatic expression which had been inspired by supposed revelation, but they retained a sorrowful and mild, yet determined character—and, in addressing the soldiers, she used a mixture of entreaty and command—now throwing herself upon their protection—now demanding in her aid the just tribute of their allegiance.

The garrison was divided, as military skill dictated, in groups, on the points most liable to attack, or from which an assailing enemy might be best annoyed; and it was this unavoidable separation of their force into small detachments, which showed to disadvantage the extent of walls, compared with the number of the defenders; and though Wilkin Flammock had contrived several means of concealing this deficiency of force from the enemy, he could not disguise it from the defenders of the castle, who cast mournful glances on the length of battlements which were unoccupied save by sentinels, and then looked out to the fatal field of battle, loaded with the bodies of those who ought to have been their comrades in this hour of peril.

The presence of Eveline did much to rouse the garrison from this state of discouragement. She glided from post to post, from tower to tower of the old gray fortress, as a gleam of light passes over a clouded landscape, and touching its various points in succession, calls them out to beauty and effect. Sorrow and fear sometimes make sufferers eloquent. She addressed the various nations who composed her little garrison, each in appropriate language. To the English, she spoke as children of the soil—to the Flemings, as men who had become denizens by the right of hospitality—to the Normans, as descendants of that victorious race, whose sword had made them the nobles and sovereigns of every land where its edge had been tried. To them she used the language of chivalry, by whose rules the meanest of that nation regulated, or affected to regulate, his actions. The English she reminded of their good faith and honesty of heart; and to the Flemings she spoke of the destruction of their property, the fruits of their honest industry. To all she proposed vengeance for the death of their leader and his followers—to all she recommended confidence in God and Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse; and she ventured to assure all, of the strong and victorious bands that were already in march to their relief.

"Will the gallant champions of the cross," she said, "think of leaving their native land, while the wail of women and of orphans is in their ears?—it were to convert their pious purpose into mortal sin, and to derogate from the high fame they have so well won. Yes—fight but valiantly, and perhaps, before the very sun that is now slowly rising shall sink in the sea, you will see it shining on the ranks of Shrewsbury and Chester. When did the Welshmen wait to hear the clangour of their trumpets, or the rustling of their silken banners? Fight bravely—fight freely but awhile!—our castle is strong—our munition ample—your hearts are good—your arms are powerful—God is nigh to us, and our friends are not far distant. Fight, then, in the name of all that is good and holy—fight for yourselves, for your wives, for your children, and for your property—and oh! fight for an orphan maiden, who hath no other defenders but what a sense of her sorrows, and the remembrance of her father, may raise up among you."

Such speeches as these made a powerful impression on the men to whom they were addressed, already hardened, by habits and sentiments, against a sense of danger. The chivalrous Normans swore, on the cross of their swords, they would die to a man ere they would surrender their posts—the blunter Anglo-Saxons cried, "Shame on him who would render up such a lamb as Eveline to a Welsh wolf, while he could make her a bulwark with his body!"— Even the cold Flemings caught a spark of the enthusiasm with which the others were animated, and muttered to each other praises of the young lady's beauty, and short but honest resolves to do the best they might in her defence.

Rose Flammock, who accompanied her lady with one or two attendants upon her circuit around the castle, seemed to have relapsed into her natural character of a shy and timid girl, out of the excited state into which she had been brought by the suspicions which in the evening before had attached to her father's character. She tripped closely but respectfully after Eveline, and listened to what she said from time to time, with the awe and admiration of a child listening to its tutor, while only her moistened eye expressed how far she felt or comprehended the extent of the danger, or the force of the exhortations. There was, however, a moment when the youthful maiden's eye became more bright, her step more confident, her looks more elevated. This was when they approached the spot where her father, having discharged the duties of commander of the garrison, was now exercising those of engineer, and displaying great skill, as well as wonderful personal strength, in directing and assisting the establishment of a large mangonel, (a military engine used for casting stones,) upon a station commanding an exposed postern gate, which led from the western side of the castle down to the plain; and where a severe assault was naturally to be expected. The greater part of his armour lay beside him, but covered with his cassock to screen it from morning dew; while in his leathern doublet, with arms bare to the shoulder, and a huge sledge-hammer in his hand, he set an example to the mechanics who worked under his direction.

In slow and solid natures there is usually a touch of shamefacedness, and a sensitiveness to the breach of petty observances. Wilkin Flammock had been unmoved even to insensibility at the imputation of treason so lately cast upon him; but he coloured high, and was confused, while, hastily throwing on his cassock, he endeavoured, to conceal the dishabille in which he had been surprised by the Lady Eveline. Not so his daughter. Proud of her father's zeal, her eye gleamed from him to her mistress with a look of triumph, which seemed to say, "And this faithful follower is he who was suspected of treachery!"

Eveline's own bosom made her the same reproach; and anxious to atone for her momentary doubt of his fidelity, she offered for his acceptance a ring of value; "in small amends," she said, "of a momentary misconstruction." "It needs not, lady," said Flammock, with his usual bluntness, "unless I have the freedom to bestow the gaud on Rose; for I think she was grieved enough at that which moved me little,—as why should it?"

"Dispose of it as thou wilt," said Eveline; "the stone it bears is as true as thine own faith."

Here Eveline paused, and looking on the broad expanded plain which extended between the site of the castle and the river, observed how silent and still the morning was rising over what had so lately been a scene of such extensive slaughter.

"It will not be so long," answered Flammock; "we shall have noise enough, and that nearer to our ears than yesterday."

"Which way lie the enemy?" said Eveline; "methinks I can spy neither tents nor pavilions."

"They use none, lady," answered Wilkin Flammock. "Heaven has denied them the grace and knowledge to weave linen enough for such a purpose—Yonder they lie on both sides of the river, covered with nought but their white mantles. Would one think that a host of thieves and cut-throats could look so like the finest object in nature—a well-spread bleaching-field!—Hark!—hark—the wasps are beginning to buzz; they will soon be plying their stings."

In fact, there was heard among the Welsh army a low and indistinct murmur, like that of "Bees alarmed and arming in their hives."

Terrified at the hollow menacing sound, which grew louder every moment, Rose, who had all the irritability of a sensitive temperament, clung to her father's arm, saying, in a terrified whisper, "It is like the sound of the sea the night before the great inundation."

"And it betokens too rough weather for woman to be abroad in," said Flammock. "Go to your chamber, Lady Eveline, if it be your will—and go you too, Roschen—God bless you both—ye do but keep us idle here."

And, indeed, conscious that she had done all that was incumbent upon her, and fearful lest the chill which she felt creeping over her own heart should infect others, Eveline took her vassal's advice, and withdrew slowly to her own apartment, often casting back her eye to the place where the Welsh, now drawn out and under arms, were advancing their ridgy battalions, like the waves of an approaching tide.

The Prince of Powys had, with considerable military skill, adopted a plan of attack suitable to the fiery genius of his followers, and calculated to alarm on every point the feeble garrison.

The three sides of the castle which were defended by the river, were watched each by a numerous body of the British, with instructions to confine themselves to the discharge of arrows, unless they should observe that some favourable opportunity of close attack should occur. But far the greater part of Gwenwyn's forces, consisting of three columns of great strength, advanced along the plain on the western side of the castle, and menaced, with a desperate assault, the walls, which, in that direction, were deprived of the defence of the river. The first of these formidable bodies consisted entirely of archers, who dispersed themselves in front of the beleaguered place, and took advantage of every bush and rising ground which could afford them shelter; and then began to bend their bows and shower their arrows on the battlements and loop-holes, suffering, however, a great deal more damage than they were able to inflict, as the garrison returned their shot in comparative safety, and with more secure and deliberate aim. [Footnote: The Welsh were excellent bowmen; but, under favour of Lord Lyttleton, they probably did not use the long bow, the formidable weapon of the Normans, and afterwards of the English yeomen. That of the Welsh most likely rather resembled the bow of the cognate Celtic tribes of Ireland, and of the Highlanders of Scotland. It was shorter than the Norman long bow, as being drawn to the breast, not to the ear, more loosely strung, and the arrow having a heavy iron head; altogether, in short, a less effective weapon. It appears, from the following anecdote, that there was a difference between the Welsh arrow and those of the English.

In 1122, Henry the II., marching into Powys-Land to chastise Meredith ap Blethyn and certain rebels, in passing a defile, was struck by an arrow on the breast. Repelled by the excellence of his breast-plate, the shaft fell to the ground. When the King felt the blow, and saw the shaft, he swore his usual oath, by the death of our Lord, that the arrow came not from a Welsh but an English bow; and, influenced by this belief hastily put an end to the war.] Under cover, however, of their discharge of arrows, two very strong bodies of Welsh attempted to carry the outer defences of the castle by storm. They had axes to destroy the palisades, then called barriers; faggots to fill up the external ditches; torches to set fire to aught combustible which they might find; and, above all, ladders to scale the walls.

These detachments rushed with incredible fury towards the point of attack, despite a most obstinate defence, and the great loss which they sustained by missiles of every kind, and continued the assault for nearly an hour, supplied by reinforcements which more than recruited their diminished numbers. When they were at last compelled to retreat, they seemed to adopt a new and yet more harassing species of attack. A large body assaulted one exposed point of the fortress with such fury as to draw thither as many of the besieged as could possibly be spared from other defended posts, and when there appeared a point less strongly manned than was adequate to defence, that, in its turn, was furiously assailed by a separate body of the enemy.

Thus the defenders of the Garde Doloureuse resembled the embarrassed traveller, engaged in repelling a swarm of hornets, which, while he brushes them, from one part, fix in swarms upon another, and drive him to despair by their numbers, and the boldness and multiplicity of their attacks. The postern being of course a principal point of attack, Father Aldrovand, whose anxiety would not permit him to be absent from the walls, and who, indeed, where decency would permit, took an occasional share in the active defence of the place, hasted thither, as the point chiefly in danger.

Here he found the Fleming, like a second Ajax, grim with dust and blood, working with his own hands the great engine which he had lately helped to erect, and at the same time giving heedful eye to all the exigencies around.

"How thinkest thou of this day's work?" said the monk in a whisper.

"What skills it talking of it, father?" replied Flammock; "thou art no soldier, and I have no time for words."

"Nay, take thy breath," said the monk, tucking up the sleeves of his frock; "I will try to help thee the whilst—although, our Lady pity me, I know nothing of these strange devices—not even the names. But our rule commands us to labour; there can be no harm therefore, in turning this winch—or in placing this steel-headed piece of wood opposite to the chord, (suited his actions to his words,) nor see I aught uncanonical in adjusting the lever thus, or in touching the spring."

The large bolt whizzed through the air as he spoke, and was so successfully aimed, that it struck down a Welsh chief of eminence, to which Gwenwyn himself was in the act of giving some important charge.

"Well driven, *trebuchet*—well flown, *quarrel*!" cried the monk, unable to contain his delight, and giving in his triumph, the true technical names to the engine, and the javelin which it discharged.

"And well aimed, monk," added Wilkin Flammock; "I think thou knowest more than is in thy breviary."

"Care not thou for that," said the father; "and now that thou seest I can work an engine, and that the Welsh knaves seem something low in stomach, what think'st thou of our estate?"

"Well enough—for a bad one—if we may hope for speedy succour; but men's bodies are of flesh, not of iron, and we may be at last wearied out by numbers. Only one soldier to four yards of wall, is a fearful odds; and the villains are aware of it, and keep us to sharp work."

The renewal of the assault here broke off their conversation, nor did the active enemy permit them to enjoy much repose until sunset; for, alarming them with repeated menaces of attack upon different points, besides making two or three formidable and furious assaults, they left them scarce time to breathe, or to take a moment's refreshment. Yet the Welsh paid a severe price for their temerity; for, while nothing could exceed the bravery with which their men repeatedly advanced to the attack, those which were made latest in the day had less of animated desperation than their first onset; and it is probable, that the sense of having sustained great loss, and apprehension of its effects on the spirits of his people, made nightfall, and the interruption of the contest, as acceptable to Gwenwyn as to the exhausted garrison of the Garde Doloureuse.

But in the camp or leaguer of the Welsh there was glee and triumph, for the loss of the past day was forgotten in recollection of the signal victory which had preceded this siege; and the dispirited garrison could hear from their walls the laugh and the song, the sound of harping and gaiety, which triumphed by anticipation over their surrender.

The sun was for some time sunk, the twilight deepened, and night closed with a blue and cloudless sky, in which the thousand spangles that deck the firmament received double brilliancy from some slight touch of frost, although the paler planet, their mistress, was but in her first quarter. The necessities of the garrison were considerably aggravated by that of keeping a very strong and watchful guard, ill according with the weakness of their numbers, at a time which appeared favourable to any sudden nocturnal alarm; and, so urgent was this duty, that those who had been more slightly wounded on the preceding day, were obliged to take their share in it, notwithstanding their hurts. The monk and Fleming, who now perfectly understood each other, went in company around the walls at midnight, exhorting the warders to be watchful, and examining with their own eyes the state of the fortress. It was in the course of these rounds, and as they were ascending an elevated platform by a range of narrow and uneven steps, something galling to the monk's tread, that they perceived on the summit to which they were ascending, instead of the black corslet of the Flemish sentinel who had been placed there, two white forms, the appearance of which struck Wilkin Flammock with more dismay than he had shown during any of the doubtful events of the preceding day's fight.

"Father," he said, "betake yourself to your tools—*es spuckt*—there are hobgoblins here."

The good father had not learned as a priest to defy the spiritual host, whom, as a soldier, he had dreaded more than any mortal enemy; but he began to recite, with chattering teeth, the exorcism of the church, "*Conjuro vos omnes, spiritus maligni, magni, atque parvi,*"—when he was interrupted by the voice of Eveline, who called out, "Is it you, Father Aldrovand?"

Much lightened at heart by finding they had no ghost to deal with, Wilkin Flammock and the priest advanced hastily to the platform, where they found the lady with her faithful Rose, the former with a half-pike in her hand, like a sentinel on duty.

"How is this, daughter?" said the monk; "how came you here, and thus armed? and where is the sentinel,—the lazy Flemish hound, that should have kept the post?"

"May he not be a lazy hound, yet not a Flemish one, father?" said Rose, who was ever awakened by anything which seemed a reflection upon her country; "methinks I have heard of such curs of English breed."

"Go to, Rose, you are too malapert for a young maiden," said her father. "Once more, where is Peterkin Vorst, who should have kept this post?"

"Let him not be blamed for my fault," said Eveline, pointing to a place where the Flemish sentinel lay in the shade of the battlement fast asleep—"He was overcome with toil—had fought hard through the day, and when I saw him asleep as I came hither, like a wandering spirit that cannot take slumber or repose, I would not disturb the rest which I envied. As he had fought for me, I might, I thought, watch an hour for him; so I took his weapon with the purpose of remaining here till some one should come to relieve him."

"I will relieve the schelm, with a vengeance!" said Wilkin Flammock, and saluted the slumbering and prostrate warder with two kicks, which made his corslet clatter. The man started to his feet in no small alarm, which he would have communicated to the next sentinels and to the whole garrison, by crying out that the Welsh were upon the walls, had not the monk covered his broad mouth with his hand just as the roar was issuing forth.—"Peace, and get thee down to the under bayley," said he;—"thou deservest death, by all the policies of war—but, look ye, varlet, and see who has saved your worthless neck, by watching while you were dreaming of swine's flesh and beer-pots."

The Fleming, although as yet but half awake, was sufficiently conscious of his situation, to sneak off without reply, after two or three awkward congees, as well to Eveline as to those by whom his repose had been so unceremoniously interrupted.

"He deserves to be tied neck and heel, the houndsfoot," said Wilkin. "But what would you have, lady? My countrymen cannot live without rest or sleep." So saying, he gave a yawn so wide, as if he had proposed to swallow one of the turrets at an angle of the platform on which he stood, as if it had only garnished a Christmas pasty.

"True, good Wilkin," said Eveline; "and do you therefore take some rest, and trust to my watchfulness, at least till the guards are relieved. I cannot sleep if I would, and I would not if I could."

"Thanks, lady," said Flammock; "and in truth, as this is a central place, and the rounds must pass in an hour at farthest, I will e'en close my eyes for such a space, for the lids feel as heavy as flood-gates."

"Oh, father, father!" exclaimed Rose, alive to her sire's unceremonious neglect of decorum—"think where you are, and in whose presence!"

"Ay, ay, good Flammock," said the monk, "remember the presence of a noble Norman maiden is no place for folding of cloaks and donning of night-caps."

"Let him alone, father," said Eveline, who in another moment might have smiled at the readiness with which Wilkin Flammock folded himself in his huge cloak, extended his substantial form on the stone bench, and gave the most decided tokens of profound repose, long ere the monk had done speaking.—"Forms and fashions of respect," she continued, "are for times of ease and nicety;—when in danger, the soldier's bedchamber is wherever he can find leisure for an hour's sleep—his eating-hall, wherever he can obtain food. Sit thou down by Rose and me, good father, and tell us of some holy lesson which may pass away these hours of weariness and calamity."

The father obeyed; but however willing to afford consolation, his ingenuity and theological skill suggested nothing better than a recitation of the penitentiary psalms, in which task he continued until fatigue became too powerful for him also, when he committed the same breach of decorum for which he had upbraided Wilkin Flammock, and fell fast asleep in the midst of his devotions.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

"Oh,	night	of	wo,"	she	said,	and	wept,
"Oh,		night			foreboding		sorrow!
"Oh,	night	of	wo,"	she	said	and	wept,
"But	more	I		dread		the	morrow!"

SIR GILBERT ELLIOT.

The fatigue which had exhausted Flammock and the monk, was unfelt by the two anxious maidens, who remained with their eyes bent, now upon the dim landscape, now on the stars by which it was lighted, as if they could have read there the events which the morrow was to bring forth. It was a placid and melancholy scene. Tree and field, and hill and plain, lay before them in doubtful light, while at greater distance, their eye could with difficulty trace one or two places where the river, hidden in general by banks and trees, spread its more expanded bosom to the stars, and the pale crescent. All was still, excepting the solemn rush of the waters, and now and then the shrill tinkle of a harp, which, heard from more than a mile's distance through the midnight silence, announced that some of the Welshmen still protracted their most beloved amusement. The wild notes, partially heard, seemed like the voice of some passing spirit; and, connected as they were with ideas of fierce and unrelenting hostility, thrilled on Eveline's ear, as if prophetic of war and wo, captivity and death. The only other sounds which disturbed the extreme stillness of the night, were the occasional step of a sentinel upon his post, or the hooting of the owls, which seemed to wail the approaching downfall of the moonlight turrets, in which they had established their ancient habitations.

The calmness of all around seemed to press like a weight on the bosom of the unhappy Eveline, and brought to her mind a deeper sense of present grief, and keener apprehension of future horrors, than had reigned there during the bustle, blood, and confusion of the preceding day. She rose up—she sat down—she moved to and fro on the platform—she remained fixed like a statue to a single spot, as if she were trying by variety of posture to divert her internal sense of fear and sorrow.

At length, looking at the monk and the Fleming as they slept soundly under the shade of the battlement, she could no longer forbear breaking silence. "Men are happy," she said, "my beloved Rose; their anxious thoughts are either diverted by toilsome exertion, or drowned in the insensibility which follows it. They may encounter wounds and death, but it is we who feel in the spirit a more keen anguish than the body knows, and in the gnawing sense of present ill and fear of future misery, suffer a living death, more cruel than that which ends our woes at once."

"Do not be thus downcast, my noble lady," said Rose; "be rather what you were yesterday, caring for the wounded, for the aged, for every one but yourself—exposing even your dear life among the showers of the Welsh arrows, when doing so could give courage to others; while I—shame on me—could but tremble, sob, and weep, and needed all the little wit I have to prevent my shouting with the wild cries of the Welsh, or screaming and groaning with those of our friends who fell around me."

"Alas! Rose," answered her mistress, "you may at pleasure indulge your fears to the verge of distraction itself—you have a father to fight and watch for you. Mine—my kind, noble, and honoured parent, lies dead on yonder field, and all which remains for me is to act as may best become his memory. But this moment is at least mine, to think upon and to mourn for him."

So saying, and overpowered by the long-repressed burst of filial sorrow, she sunk down on the banquette which ran along the inside of the embattled parapet of the platform, and murmuring to herself, "He is gone for ever!" abandoned herself to the extremity of grief. One hand grasped unconsciously the weapon which she held, and served, at the same time, to prop her forehead, while the tears, by which she was now for the first time relieved, flowed in torrents from her eyes, and her sobs seemed so convulsive, that Rose almost feared her heart was bursting. Her affection and sympathy dictated at once the kindest course which Eveline's

condition permitted. Without attempting to control the torrent of grief in its full current, she gently sat her down beside the mourner, and possessing herself of the hand which had sunk motionless by her side, she alternately pressed it to her lips, her bosom, and her brow—now covered it with kisses, now bedewed it with tears, and amid these tokens of the most devoted and humble sympathy, waited a more composed moment to offer her little stock of consolation in such deep silence and stillness, that, as the pale light fell upon the two beautiful young women, it seemed rather to show a group of statuary, the work of some eminent sculptor, than beings whose eyes still wept, and whose hearts still throbbed. At a little distance, the gleaming corslet of the Fleming, and the dark garments of Father Aldrovand, as they lay prostrate on the stone steps, might represent the bodies of those for whom the principal figures were mourning.

After a deep agony of many minutes, it seemed that the sorrows of Eveline were assuming a more composed character; her convulsive sobs were changed for long, low, profound sighs, and the course of her tears, though they still flowed, was milder and less violent. Her kind attendant, availing herself of these gentler symptoms, tried softly to win the spear from her lady's grasp. "Let me be sentinel for a while," she said, "my sweet lady—I will at least scream louder than you, if any danger should approach." She ventured to kiss her cheek, and throw her arms around Eveline's neck while she spoke; but a mute caress, which expressed her sense of the faithful girl's kind intentions to minister if possible to her repose, was the only answer returned. They remained for many minutes silent in the same posture,—Eveline, like an upright and tender poplar,—Rose, who encircled her lady in her arms, like the woodbine which twines around it.

At length Rose suddenly felt her young mistress shiver in her embrace, and then Eveline's hand grasped her arm rigidly as she whispered, "Do you hear nothing?" "No—nothing but the hooting of the owl," answered Rose, timorously.

"I heard a distant sound," said Eveline,—"*I* thought I heard it—hark, it comes again!—Look from the battlements, Rose, while I awaken the priest and thy father."

"Dearest lady," said Rose, "I dare not—what can this sound be that is heard by one only?—You are deceived by the rush of the river."

"I would not alarm the castle unnecessarily," said Eveline, pausing, "or even break your father's needful slumbers, by a fancy of mine—But hark—I hear it again—distinct amidst the intermitting sounds of the rushing water—a low tremulous sound, mingled with a tinkling like smiths or armourers at work upon their anvils."

Rose had by this time sprung up on the banquette, and flinging back her rich tresses of fair hair, had applied her hand behind her ear to collect the distant sound. "I hear it," she cried, "and it increases—Awake them, for Heaven's sake, and without a moment's delay!"

Eveline accordingly stirred the sleepers with the reversed end of the lance, and as they started to their feet in haste, she whispered in a hasty but cautious voice, "To arms—the Welsh are upon us!" "What—where?" said Wilkin Flammock,—"*where* be they?"

"Listen, and you will hear them arming," she replied.

"The noise is but in thine own fancy, lady," said the Fleming, whose organs were of the same heavy character with his form and his disposition. "I would I had not gone to sleep at all, since I was to be awakened so soon."

"Nay, but listen, good Flammock—the sound of armour comes from the north-east."

"The Welsh lie not in that quarter, lady," said Wilkin; "and besides, they wear no armour."

"I hear it—I hear it!" said Father Aldrovand, who had been listening for some time. "All praise to St. Benedict!—Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse has been gracious to her servants as ever!—It is the tramp of horses—it is the clash of armour—the chivalry of the Marches are coming to our relief—Kyrie Eleison!"

"I hear something too," said Flammock,—"*something* like the hollow sound of the great sea, when it burst into my neighbour Klinkerman's warehouse, and rolled his pots and pans against each other. But it were an evil mistake, father, to take foes for friends—we were best rouse the people."

"Tush!" said the priest, "talk to me of pots and kettles?—Was I, squire of the body to Count Stephen Mauleverer for twenty years, and do I not know the tramp of a war-horse, or the clash of a mail-coat?—But call the men to the walls at any rate, and have me the best drawn up at the base-court—we may help them by a sally."

"That will not be rashly undertaken with my consent," murmured the Fleming; "but to the wall if you will, and 111 good time. But keep your Normans and English silent, Sir Priest, else their unruly and noisy joy will awaken the Welsh camp, and prepare them for their unwelcome visitors."

The monk laid his finger on his lip in sign of obedience, and they parted in opposite directions, each to rouse the defenders of the castle, who were soon heard drawing from all quarters to their posts upon the walls, with hearts in a very different mood from that in which they had descended from them. The utmost caution being used to prevent noise, the manning of the walls was accomplished in silence, and the garrison awaited in, breathless expectation the success of the forces who were rapidly advancing to their relief.

The character of the sounds which now loudly awakened the silence of this eventful night, could no longer be mistaken. They were distinguishable from the rushing of a mighty river, or from the muttering sound of distant thunder, by the sharp and angry notes which the clashing of the rider's arms mingled with the deep bass of the horses' rapid tread. From the long continuance of the sounds, their loudness, and the extent of horizon from which they seemed to come, all in the castle were satisfied that the approaching relief consisted of several very strong bodies of horse. [Footnote: Even the sharp and angry clang made by the iron scabbards of modern cavalry ringing against the steel-tipp'd saddles and stirrup, betrays their approach from a distance. The clash of the armour of knights, armed *cap-a-pie*, must have been much more easily discernible.] At once this mighty sound ceased, as if the earth on which they trod had either devoured the armed squadrons or had become incapable of resounding to their tramp. The defenders of the Garde Doloureuse concluded that their friends had made a sudden halt, to give their horses breath, examine the leaguer of the enemy, and settle the order of attack upon them. The pause, however was but momentary.

The British, so alert at surprising their enemies, were themselves, on many occasions, liable to surprise. Their men were undisciplined, and sometimes negligent of the patient duties of the sentinel; and, besides, their foragers and flying parties, who scoured the country during the preceding day, had brought back tidings which had lulled them into fatal security. Their camp had been therefore carelessly guarded, and confident in the smallness of the garrison, they had altogether neglected the important military duty of establishing patrols and outposts at a proper distance from their main body. Thus the cavalry of the Lords Marchers, notwithstanding the noise which accompanied their advance, had approached very near the British camp without exciting the least alarm. But while they were arranging their forces into separate columns, in order to commence the assault, a loud and increasing clamour among the Welsh announced that they were at length aware of their danger. The shrill and discordant cries by which they endeavoured to assemble their men, each under the banner of his chief, resounded from their leaguer. But these rallying shouts were soon converted into screams, and clamours of horror and dismay, when the thundering charge of the barbed horses and heavily armed cavalry of the Anglo-Normans surprised their undefended camp.

Yet not even under circumstances so adverse did the descendants of the ancient Britons renounce their defence, or forfeit their old hereditary privilege, to be called the bravest of mankind. Their cries of defiance and resistance were heard resounding above the groans of the wounded, the shouts of the triumphant assailants, and the universal tumult of the night-battle. It was not until the morning light began to peep forth, that the slaughter or dispersion of Gwenwyn's forces was complete, and that the "earthquake voice of victory" arose in uncontrolled and unmingled energy of exultation.

Then the besieged, if they could be still so termed, looking from their towers over the expanded country beneath, witnessed nothing but one widespread scene of desultory flight and unrelaxed pursuit. That the Welsh had been permitted to encamp in fancied security upon the hither side of the river, now rendered their discomfiture more dreadfully fatal. The single pass by which they could cross to the other side was soon completely choked by fugitives, on whose rear raged the swords of the victorious Normans. Many threw themselves into the river, upon the precarious chance of gaining the farther side, and, except a few, who were uncommonly strong, skilful, and active, perished among the rocks and in the currents; others, more fortunate, escaped by fords, with which they had accidentally been made acquainted; many dispersed, or, in small bands, fled in reckless despair towards the castle, as if the fortress, which had beat them off when victorious, could be a place of refuge to them in their present forlorn condition; while others roamed wildly over the plain, seeking only escape from immediate and instant danger, without knowing whither they ran.

The Normans, meanwhile, divided into small parties, followed and slaughtered them at pleasure; while, as a rallying point for the victors, the banner of Hugo de Lacy streamed from a small mount, on which Gwenwyn had lately pitched his own, and surrounded by a competent force, both of infantry and horsemen, which the experienced Baron permitted on no account to wander far from it.

The rest, as we have already said, followed the chase with shouts of exultation and of vengeance, ringing around the battlements, which resounded with the cries, "Ha, Saint Edward!—Ha, Saint Dennis!—Strike—slay—no quarter to the Welsh wolves—think on Raymond Berenger!"

The soldiers on the walls joined in these vengeful and victorious clamours, and discharged several sheaves of arrows upon such fugitives, as, in their extremity, approached too near the castle. They would fain have sallied to give more active assistance in the work of destruction; but the communication being now open with the Constable of Chester's forces, Wilkin Flammock considered himself and the garrison to be under the orders of that renowned chief, and refused to listen to the eager admonitions of Father Aldrovand, who would, notwithstanding his sacerdotal character, have willingly himself taken charge of the sally which he proposed.

At length, the scene of slaughter seemed at an end. The retreat was blown on many a bugle, and knights halted on the plain to collect their personal followers, muster them under their proper pennon, and then march them slowly back to the great standard of their leader, around which the main body were again to be assembled, like the clouds which gather around the evening sun—a fanciful simile, which might yet be drawn farther, in respect of the level rays of strong lurid light which shot from those dark battalions, as the beams were flung back from their polished armour.

The plain was in this manner soon cleared of the horsemen, and remained occupied only by the dead bodies of the slaughtered Welshmen. The bands who had followed the pursuit to a greater distance were also now seen returning, driving before them, or dragging after them, dejected and unhappy captives, to whom they had given quarter when their thirst of blood was satiated.

It was then that, desirous to attract the attention of his liberators, Wilkin Flammock commanded all the banners of the castle to be displayed, under a general shout of acclamation from those who had fought under them. It was answered by a universal cry of joy from De Lacy's army, which rung so wide, as might even yet have startled such of the Welsh fugitives, as, far distant from this disastrous field of flight, might have ventured to halt for a moment's repose.

Presently after this greeting had been exchanged, a single rider advanced from the Constable's army towards the castle, showing, even at a distance, an unusual dexterity of horsemanship and grace of deportment. He arrived at the drawbridge, which was instantly lowered to receive him, whilst Flammock and the monk (for the latter, as far as he could, associated himself with the former in all acts of authority) hastened to receive the envoy of their liberator. They found him just alighted from the raven-coloured horse, which was slightly flecked with blood as well as foam, and still panted with the exertions of the evening; though, answering to the caressing hand of its youthful rider, he arched his neck, shook his steel caparison, and snorted to announce his unabated mettle and unwearied love of combat. The young man's eagle look bore the same token of unabated vigour, mingled with the signs of recent exertion. His helmet hanging at his saddle-bow, showed a gallant countenance, coloured highly, but not inflamed, which looked out from a rich profusion of short chestnut-curls; and although his armour was of a massive and simple form, he moved under it with such elasticity and ease, that it seemed a graceful attire, not a burden or encumbrance. A furred mantle had not sat on him with more easy grace than the heavy hauberk, which complied with every gesture of his noble form. Yet his countenance was so juvenile, that only the down on the upper lip announced decisively the approach to manhood. The females, who thronged into the court to see the first envoy of their deliverers, could not forbear mixing praises of his beauty with blessings on his valour; and one comely middle-aged dame, in particular, distinguished by the tightness with which her scarlet hose sat on a well-shaped leg and ankle, and by the cleanness of her coif, pressed close up to the young squire, and, more forward than, the rest, doubled the crimson hue of his cheek, by crying aloud, that Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse had sent them news of their redemption by an angel from the sanctuary;—a speech which, although Father Aldrovand shook his head, was received by her companions with such general acclamation, as greatly embarrassed the young man's modesty.

"Peace, all of ye!" said Wilkin Flammock—"Know you no respects, you women, or have you never seen a young gentleman before, that you hang on him like flies on a honeycomb? Stand back, I say, and let us hear in peace what are the commands of the noble Lord of Lacy."

"These," said the young man, "I can only deliver in the presence of the right noble demoiselle, Eveline Berenger, if I may be thought worthy of such honour."

"That thou art, noble sir," said the same forward dame, who had before expressed her admiration so energetically; "I will uphold thee worthy of her presence, and whatever other grace a lady can do thee."

"Now, hold thy tongue, with a wanion!" said the monk; while in the same breath the Fleming exclaimed, "Beware the cucking-stool, Dame Scant-o'-Grace!" while he conducted the noble youth across the court. "Let my good horse be cared for," said the cavalier, as he put the bridle into the hand of a menial; and in doing so got rid of some part of his female retinue, who began to pat and praise the steed as much as they had done the rider; and some, in the enthusiasm of their joy, hardly abstained from kissing the stirrups and horse furniture.

But Dame Gillian was not so easily diverted from her own point as were some of her companions. She continued to repeat the word *cucking-stool*, till the Fleming was out of hearing, and then became more specific in her objurgation.—"And why *cucking-stool*, I pray, Sir Wilkin Butterfirkin? You are the man would stop an English mouth with a Flemish damask napkin, I trow! Marry quep, my cousin the weaver! And why the cucking-stool, I pray?—because my young lady is comely, and the young squire is a man of mettle, reverence to his beard that is to come yet! Have we not eyes to see, and have we not a mouth and a tongue?"

"In troth, Dame Gillian, they do you wrong who doubt it," said Eveline's nurse, who stood by; "but I prithee, keep it shut now, were it but for womanhood."

"How now, mannerly Mrs. Margery?" replied the incorrigible Gillian; "is your heart so high, because you dandled our young lady on your knee fifteen years since?—Let me tell you, the cat will find its way to the cream, though it was brought up on an abbess's lap."

"Home, housewife—home!" exclaimed her husband, the old huntsman, who was weary of this public exhibition of his domestic termagant —"home, or I will give you a taste of my dog lash—Here are both the confessor and Wilkin Flammock wondering at your impudence."

"Indeed!" replied Gillian; "and are not two fools enough for wonderment, that you must come with your grave pate to make up the number three?"

There was a general laugh at the huntsman's expense, under cover of which he prudently withdrew his spouse, without attempting to continue the war of tongues, in which she had shown such a decided superiority. This controversy, so light is the change in human spirits, especially among the lower class, awakened bursts of idle mirth among beings, who had so lately been in the jaws of danger, if not of absolute despair.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

They	bore	him	barefaced	on	his	bier,
Six			youths		and	tall,
And	many	a	tear	bedew'd	his	grave
Within		yon		kirkyard		wall.

THE FRIAR OF ORDERS GRAY.

While these matters took place in the castle-yard, the young squire, Damian Lacy, obtained the audience which he had requested of Eveline Berenger, who received him in the great hall of the castle, seated beneath the dais, or canopy, and waited upon by Rose and other female attendants; of whom the first alone was permitted to use a tabouret or small stool in her presence, so strict were the Norman maidens of quality in maintaining their claims to high rank and observance.

The youth was introduced by the confessor and Flammock, as the spiritual character of the one, and the trust reposed by her late father in the other, authorized them to be present upon the occasion. Eveline naturally blushed, as she advanced two steps to receive the handsome youthful envoy; and her bashfulness seemed infectious, for it was with some confusion that Damian went through the ceremony of saluting the hand which she extended towards him in token of welcome. Eveline was under the necessity of speaking first.

"We advance as far as our limits will permit us," she said, "to greet with our thanks the messenger who brings us tidings of safety. We speak—unless we err—to the noble Damian of Lacy?"

"To the humblest of your servants," answered Damian, falling with some difficulty into the tone of courtesy which his errand and character required, "who approaches you on behalf of his noble uncle, Hugo de Lacy, Constable of Chester."

"Will not our noble deliverer in person honour with his presence the poor dwelling which he has saved?"

"My noble kinsman," answered Damian, "is now God's soldier, and bound by a vow not to come beneath a roof until he embark for the Holy Land. But by my voice he congratulates you on the defeat of your savage enemies, and sends you these tokens that the comrade and friend of your noble father hath not left his lamentable death many hours unavenged." So saying, he drew forth and laid before Eveline the gold bracelets, the coronet, and the eudorchawg, or chain of linked gold, which had distinguished the rank of the Welsh Prince. [Footnote: Eudorchawg, or Gold Chains of the Welsh. These were the distinguished marks of rank and valour among the numerous tribes of Celtic extraction. Manlius, the Roman Champion, gained the name of Torquatus, or he of the chain, on account of an ornament of this kind, won, in single combat, from a gigantic Gaul. Aneurin, the Welsh bard, mentions, in his poem on the battle of Catterath, that no less than three hundred of the British, who fell there, had their necks wreathed with the Eudorchawg. This seems to infer that the chain was a badge of distinction, and valour perhaps, but not of royalty; otherwise there would scarce have been so many kings present in one battle. This chain has been found accordingly in Ireland and Wales, and sometimes, though more rarely, in Scotland. Doubtless it was of too precious materials not to be usually converted into money by the enemy into whose hands it fell.]

"Gwenwyn hath then fallen?" said Eveline, a natural shudder combating with the feelings of gratified vengeance, as she beheld that the trophies were speckled with blood,— "The slayer of my father is no more!"

"My kinsman's lance transfixed the Briton as he endeavoured to rally his flying people—he died grimly on the weapon which had passed more than a fathom through his body, and exerted his last strength in a furious but ineffectual blow with his mace." "Heaven is just," said Eveline; "may his sins be forgiven to the man of blood, since he hath fallen by a death so bloody!—One question I would ask you, noble sir. My father's remains—" She paused unable to proceed. "An hour will place them at your disposal, most honoured lady," replied the squire, in the tone of sympathy which the sorrows of so young and so fair an orphan called irresistibly forth. "Such preparations as time admitted were making even when I left the host, to transport what was mortal of the noble Berenger from the field on which we found him amid a monument of slain which his own sword had raised. My kinsman's vow will not allow him to pass your portcullis; but, with your permission, I will represent him, if such be your pleasure, at these honoured obsequies, having charge to that effect."

"My brave and noble father," said Eveline, making an effort to restrain her tears, "will be best mourned by the noble and the brave." She would have continued, but her voice failed her, and she was obliged to withdraw abruptly, in order to give vent to her sorrow, and prepare for the funeral rites with such ceremony as circumstances should permit. Damian bowed to the departing mourner as reverently as he would have done to a divinity, and taking his horse, returned to his uncle's host, which had encamped hastily on the recent field of battle.

The sun was now high, and the whole plain presented the appearance of a bustle, equally different from the solitude of the early morning, and from the roar and fury of the subsequent engagement. The news of Hugo de Lacy's victory every where spread abroad with all alacrity of triumph, and had induced many of the inhabitants of the country, who had fled before the fury of the Wolf of Plinlimmon, to return to their desolate habitations. Numbers also of the loose and profligate characters which abound in a country subject to the frequent changes of war, had flocked thither in quest of spoil, or to gratify a spirit of restless curiosity. The Jew and the Lombard, despising danger where there was a chance of gain, might be already seen bartering liquors and wares with the victorious men-at-arms, for the blood-stained ornaments of gold lately worn by the defeated British. Others acted as brokers betwixt the Welsh captives and their captors; and where they could trust the means and good faith of the former, sometimes became bound for, or even advanced in ready money, the sums necessary for their ransom; whilst a more numerous class became themselves the purchasers of those prisoners who had no immediate means of settling with their conquerors.

That the spoil thus acquired might not long encumber the soldier, or blunt his ardour for farther enterprise, the usual means of dissipating military spoils were already at hand. Courtezans, mimes, jugglers, minstrels, and tale-tellers of every description, had accompanied the night-march; and, secure in the military reputation of the celebrated De Lacy, had rested fearlessly at some little distance until the battle was fought and won. These now approached, in many a joyous group, to congratulate the victors. Close to the parties which they formed for the dance, the song, or the tale, upon the yet bloody field, the countrymen, summoned in for the purpose, were opening large trenches for depositing the dead—leeches were seen tending the wounded—priests and monks confessing those in extremity—soldiers transporting from the field the bodies of the more honoured among the slain—peasants mourning over their trampled crops and plundered habitations—and widows and orphans searching for the bodies of husbands and parents, amid the promiscuous carnage of two combats. Thus wo mingled her wildest notes with those of jubilee and bacchanal triumph, and the plain of the Garde Doloureuse formed a singular parallel to the varied maze of human life, where joy and grief are so strangely mixed, and where the confines of mirth and pleasure often border on those of sorrow and of death.

About noon these various noises were at once silenced, and the attention alike of those who rejoiced or grieved was arrested by the loud and mournful sound of six trumpets, which, uplifting and uniting their thrilling tones in a wild and melancholy death-note, apprised all, that the obsequies of the valiant Raymond Berenger were about to commence. From a tent, which had been hastily pitched for the immediate reception of the body, twelve black monks, the inhabitants of a neighbouring convent, began to file out in pairs, headed by their abbot, who bore a large cross, and thundered forth the sublime notes of the Catholic *Miserere me, Domine*. Then came a chosen body of men-at-arms, trailing their lances, with their points reversed and pointed to the earth; and after them the body of the valiant Berenger, wrapped in his own knightly banner, which, regained from the hands of the Welsh, now served its noble owner instead of a funeral pall. The most gallant Knights of the Constable's household (for, like other great nobles of that period, he had formed it upon a scale which approached to that of royalty) walked as mourners and supporters of the corpse, which was borne upon lances; and the Constable of Chester himself, alone and fully armed, excepting the head, followed as chief mourner. A chosen body of squires, men-at-arms, and pages of noble descent, brought up the rear of the procession; while their nakers and trumpets echoed back, from time to time, the melancholy song of the monks, by replying in a note as lugubrious as their own.

The course of pleasure was arrested, and even that of sorrow was for a moment turned from her own griefs, to witness the last honours bestowed on him, who had been in life the father and guardian of his people.

The mournful procession traversed slowly the plain which had been within a few hours the scene of such varied events; and, pausing before the outer gate of the barricades of the castle, invited, by a prolonged and solemn flourish, the fortress to receive the remains of its late gallant defender. The melancholy summons was answered by the warder's horn—the drawbridge sunk—the portcullis rose—and Father Aldrovand appeared in the middle of the gateway, arrayed in his sacerdotal habit, whilst a little way behind him stood the orphaned damsel, in such weeds of mourning as time admitted, supported by her attendant Rose, and followed by the females of the household.

The Constable of Chester paused upon the threshold of the outer gate, and, pointing to the cross signed in white cloth upon his left shoulder, with a lowly reverence resigned to his nephew, Damian, the task of attending the remains of Raymond Berenger to the chapel within the castle. The soldiers of Hugo de Lacy, most of whom were bound by the same vow with himself, also halted without the castle gate, and remained under arms, while the death-peal of the chapel bell announced from within the progress of the procession.

It winded on through those narrow entrances, which were skilfully contrived to interrupt the progress of an enemy, even should he succeed in forcing the outer gate, and arrived at length in the great court-yard, where most of the inhabitants of the fortress, and those who, under recent circumstances, had taken refuge there, were drawn up, in order to look, for the last time, on their departed lord. Among these were mingled a few of the motley crowd from without, whom curiosity, or the expectation of a dole, had brought to the castle gate, and who, by one argument or another, had obtained from the warder permission to enter the interior.

The body was here set down before the door of the chapel, the ancient Gothic front of which formed one side of the court-yard, until certain prayers were recited by the priests, in which the crowd around were supposed to join with becoming reverence.

It was during this interval, that a man, whose peaked beard, embroidered girdle, and high-crowned hat of gray felt, gave him the air of a Lombard merchant, addressed Margery, the nurse of Eveline, in a whispering tone, and with a foreign accent.—"I am a travelling merchant, good sister, and am come hither in quest of gain—can you tell me whether I can have any custom in this castle?"

"You are come at an evil time, Sir Stranger—you may yourself see that this is a place for mourning and not for merchandise."

"Yet mourning times have their own commerce," said the stranger, approaching still closer to the side of Margery, and lowering his voice to a tone yet more confidential. "I have sable scarfs of Persian silk—black bugles, in which a princess might mourn for a deceased monarch—cyprus, such as the East hath seldom sent forth —black cloth for mourning hangings—all that may express sorrow and reverence in fashion and attire; and I know how to be grateful to those who help me to custom. Come, bethink you, good dame—such things must be had—I will sell as good ware and as cheap as another; and a kirtle to yourself, or, at your pleasure, a purse with five florins, shall be the meed of your kindness."

"I prithee peace, friend," said Margery, "and choose a better time for vaunting your wares—you neglect both place and season; and if you be farther importunate, I must speak to those who will show you the outward side of the castle gate. I marvel the warders would admit pedlars upon a day such as this—they would drive a gainful bargain by the bedside of their mother, were she dying, I trow." So saying, she turned scornfully from him.

While thus angrily rejected on the one side, the merchant felt his cloak receive an intelligent twitch upon the other, and, looking round upon the signal, he saw a dame, whose black kerchief was affectedly disposed, so as to give an appearance of solemnity to a set of light laughing features, which must have been captivating when young, since they retained so many good points when at least forty years had passed over them. She winked to the merchant, touching at the same time her under lip with her forefinger, to announce the propriety of silence and secrecy; then gliding from the crowd, retreated to a small recess formed by a projecting buttress of the chapel, as if to avoid the pressure likely to take place at the moment when the bier should be lifted. The merchant failed not to follow her example, and was soon by her side, when she did not give him the trouble of opening his affairs, but commenced the conversation herself.

"I have heard what you said to our Dame Margery—Mannerly Margery, as I call her—heard as much, at least, as led me to guess the rest, for I have got an eye in my head, I promise you."

"A pair of them, my pretty dame, and as bright as drops of dew in a May morning."

"Oh, you say so, because I have been weeping," said the scarlet- hosed Gillian, for it was even herself who spoke; "and to be sure, I have good cause, for our lord was always my very good lord, and would sometimes chuck me under the chin, and call me buxom Gillian of Croydon—not that the good gentleman was ever uncivil, for he would thrust a silver twopennies into my hand at the same time.— Oh! the friend that I have lost!—And I have had anger on his account too—I have seen old Raoul as sour as vinegar, and fit for no place but the kennel for a whole day about it; but, as I said to him, it was not for the like of me, to be affronting our master, and a great baron, about a chuck under the chin, or a kiss, or such like."

"No wonder you are so sorry for so kind a master, dame," said the merchant.

"No wonder, indeed," replied the dame, with a sigh; "and then what is to become of us?—It is like my young mistress will go to her aunt—or she will marry one of these Lacys that they talk so much of—or, at any rate, she will leave the castle; and it's like old Raoul and I will be turned to grass with the lord's old chargers. The Lord knows, they may as well hang him up with the old hounds, for he is both footless and fangless, and fit for nothing on earth that I know of."

"Your young mistress is that lady in the mourning mantle," said the merchant, "who so nearly sunk down upon the body just now?"

"In good troth is she, sir—and much cause she has to sink down. I am sure she will be to seek for such another father."

"I see you are a most discerning woman, gossip Gillian," answered the merchant; "and yonder youth that supported her is her bridegroom?"

"Much need she has for some one to support her," said Gillian; "and so have I for that matter, for what can poor old rusty Raoul do?"

"But as to your young lady's marriage?" said the merchant.

"No one knows more, than that such a thing was in treaty between our late lord and the great Constable of Chester, that came to-day but just in time to prevent the Welsh from cutting all our throats, and doing the Lord knoweth what mischief beside. But there is a marriage talked of, that is certain—and most folk think it must be for this smooth-cheeked boy, Damian, as they call him; for though the Constable has gotten a beard, which his nephew hath not, it is something too grizzled for a bridegroom's chin— Besides, he goes to the Holy Wars—fittest place for all elderly warriors—I wish he would take Raoul with him.—But what is all this to what you were saying about your mourning wares even now?— It is a sad truth, that my poor lord is gone—But what then?— Well-a-day, you know the good old saw,—

'Cloth	must	be	wear,
Eat	beef	and	beer,
Though the dead go to bier.'			

And for your merchandising, I am as like to help you with my good word as Mannerly Margery, provided you bid fair for it; since, if the lady loves me not so much, I can turn the steward round my finger."

"Take this in part of your bargain, pretty Mistress Gillian," said the merchant; "and when my wains come up, I will consider you amply, if I get good sale by your favourable report.—But how shall I get into the castle again? for I would wish to consult you, being a sensible woman, before I come in with my luggage."

"Why," answered the complaisant dame, "if our English be on guard, you have only to ask for Gillian, and they will open the wicket to any single man at once; for we English stick all together, were it but to spite the Normans;—but if a Norman be on duty, you must ask for old Raoul, and say you come to speak of dogs and hawks for sale, and I warrant you come to speech of me that way. If the sentinel be a Fleming, you have but to say you are a merchant, and he will let you in for the love of trade."

The merchant repeated his thankful acknowledgment, glided from her side, and mixed among the spectators, leaving her to congratulate herself on having gained a brace of florins by the indulgence of her natural talkative humour; for which, on other occasions, she had sometimes dearly paid.

The ceasing of the heavy toll of the castle bell now gave intimation that the noble Raymond Berenger had been laid in the vault with his fathers. That part of the funeral attendants who had come from the host of De Lacy, now proceeded to the castle hall, where they partook, but with temperance, of some refreshments which were offered as a death-meal; and presently after left the castle, headed by young Damian, in the same slow and melancholy form in which they had entered. The monks remained within the castle to sing repeated services for the soul of the deceased, and for those of his faithful men-at-arms who had fallen around him, and who had been so much mangled during, and after, the contest with the Welsh, that it was scarce possible to know one individual from another; otherwise the body of Dennis Morolt would have obtained, as his faith well deserved, the honours of a separate funeral. [Footnote: The Welsh, a fierce and barbarous people, were often accused of mangling the bodies of their slain antagonists. Every one must remember Shakspeare's account, how

——"the	noble	Mortimer,						
Leading	the	men	of	Herefordshire	to	fight,		
Against	the	irregular	and	wild	Glendower—			
Was,	by	the	rude	hands	of	that	Welshman	taken,
And a thousand of his people butchered;								
Upon	whose	dead	corpse	there	was	such	misuse,	
Such		beastly,		shameless			transformation,	
By	these	Welshwomen	done,	as	may	not	be,	
Without much shame, retold or spoken of."]								

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

——The	funeral	baked	meats			
Did	coldly	furnish	forth	the	marriage	table.
HAMLET.						

The religious rites which followed the funeral of Raymond Berenger, endured without interruption for the period of six days; during which, alms were distributed to the poor, and relief administered, at the expense of the Lady Eveline, to all those who had suffered by the late inroad. Death-meals, as they were termed, were

also spread in honour of the deceased; but the lady herself, and most of her attendants, observed a stern course of vigil, discipline, and fasts, which appeared to the Normans a more decorous manner of testifying their respect for the dead, than the Saxon and Flemish custom of banqueting and drinking inordinately upon such occasions.

Meanwhile, the Constable De Lacy retained a large body of his men encamped under the walls of the Garde Doloureuse, for protection against some new irruption of the Welsh, while with the rest he took advantage of his victory, and struck terror into the British by many well-conducted forays, marked with ravages scarcely less hurtful than their own. Among the enemy, the evils of discord were added to those of defeat and invasion; for two distant relations of Gwenwyn contended for the throne he had lately occupied, and on this, as on many other occasions, the Britons suffered as much from internal dissension as from the sword of the Normans. A worse politician, and a less celebrated soldier, than the sagacious and successful De Lacy, could not have failed, under such circumstances, to negotiate as he did an advantageous peace, which, while it deprived Powys of a part of its frontier, and the command of some important passes, in which it was the Constable's purpose to build castles, rendered the Garde Doloureuse more secure than formerly, from any sudden attack on the part of their fiery and restless neighbours. De Lacy's care also went to re-establishing those settlers who had fled from their possessions, and putting the whole lordship, which now descended upon an unprotected female, into a state of defence as perfect as its situation on a hostile frontier could possibly permit.

Whilst thus anxiously provident in the affairs of the orphan of the Garde Doloureuse, De Lacy during the space we have mentioned, sought not to disturb her filial grief by any personal intercourse. His nephew, indeed, was despatched by times every morning to lay before her his uncle's *devoirs*, in the high-flown language of the day, and acquaint her with the steps which he had taken in her affairs. As a meed due to his relative's high services, Damian was always admitted to see Eveline on such occasions, and returned charged with her grateful thanks, and her implicit acquiescence in whatever the Constable proposed for her consideration.

But when the days of rigid mourning were elapsed, the young de Lacy stated, on the part of his kinsman, that his treaty with the Welsh being concluded, and all things in the district arranged as well as circumstances would permit, the Constable of Chester now proposed to return into his own territory, in order to resume his instant preparations for the Holy Land, which the duty of chastising her enemies had for some days interrupted.

"And will not the noble Constable, before he departs from this place," said Eveline, with a burst of gratitude which the occasion well merited, "receive the personal thanks of her that was ready to perish, when he so valiantly came to her aid?"

"It was even on that point that I was commissioned to speak," replied Damian; "but my noble kinsman feels diffident to propose to you that which he most earnestly desires—the privilege of speaking to your own ear certain matters of high import, and with which he judges it fit to intrust no third party."

"Surely," said the maiden, blushing, "there can be nought beyond the bounds of maidenhood, in my seeing the noble Constable whenever such is his pleasure."

"But his vow," replied Damian, "binds my kinsman not to come beneath a roof until he sets sail for Palestine; and in order to meet him, you must grace him so far as to visit his pavilion;—a condescension which, as a knight and Norman noble, he can scarcely ask of a damsel of high degree."

"And is that all?" said Eveline, who, educated in a remote situation, was a stranger to some of the nice points of etiquette which the damsels of the time observed in keeping their state towards the other sex. "Shall I not," she said, "go to render my thanks to my deliverer, since he cannot come hither to receive them? Tell the noble Hugo de Lacy, that, next to my gratitude to Heaven, it is due to him, and to his brave companions in arms. I will come to his tent as to a holy shrine; and, could such homage please him, I would come barefooted, were the road strewn with flints and with thorns."

"My uncle will be equally honoured and delighted with your resolve," said Damian; "but it will be his study to save you all unnecessary trouble, and with that view a pavilion shall be instantly planted before your castle gate, which, if it please you to grace it with your presence, may be the place for the desired interview."

Eveline readily acquiesced in what was proposed, as the expedient agreeable to the Constable, and recommended by Damian; but, in the simplicity of her heart, she saw no good reason why, under the guardianship of the latter, she should not instantly, and without farther form, have traversed the little familiar plain on which, when a child, she used to chase butterflies and gather king's-cups, and where of later years she was wont to exercise her palfrey on this well-known plain, being the only space, and that of small extent, which separated her from the camp of the Constable.

The youthful emissary, with whose presence she had now become familiar, retired to acquaint his kinsman and lord with the success of his commission; and Eveline experienced the first sensation of anxiety upon her own account which had agitated her bosom, since the defeat and death of Gwenwyn gave her permission to dedicate her thoughts exclusively to grief, for the loss which she had sustained in the person of her noble father. But now, when that grief, though not satiated, was blunted by solitary indulgence—now that she was to appear before the person of whose fame she had heard so much, of whose powerful protection she had received such recent proofs, her mind insensibly turned upon the nature and consequences of that important interview. She had seen Hugo de Lacy, indeed, at the great tournament at Chester, where his valour and skill were the theme of every tongue, and she had received the homage which he rendered her beauty when he assigned to her the prize, with all the gay flutterings of youthful vanity; but of his person and figure she had no distinct idea, excepting that he was a middle-sized man, dressed in peculiarly rich armour, and that the countenance, which looked out from under the shade of his raised visor, seemed to her juvenile estimate very nearly as old as that of her father. This person, of whom she had such slight recollection, had been the chosen instrument employed by her tutelar protectress in rescuing her from captivity, and in avenging the loss of a father, and she was bound by her vow to consider him as the arbiter of her fate, if indeed he should deem it worth his while to become so. She wearied her memory with vain efforts to recollect so much of his features as might give her some means of guessing at his disposition, and her judgment toiled in conjecturing what line of conduct he was likely to pursue towards her.

The great Baron himself seemed to attach to their meeting a degree of consequence, which was intimated by the formal preparations which he made for it. Eveline had imagined that he might have ridden to the gate of the castle in five minutes, and that, if a pavilion were actually necessary to the decorum of their interview, a tent could have been transferred from his leaguer to the castle gate, and pitched there in ten minutes more. But it was plain that the Constable considered much more form and ceremony as essential to their meeting; for in about half an hour after Damian de Lacy had left the castle, not fewer than twenty soldiers and artificers, under the direction of a pursuivant, whose tabard was decorated with the armorial bearings of the house of Lacy, were employed in erecting before the gate of the Garde Doloureuse one of those splendid pavilions, which were employed at tournaments and other occasions of public state. It was of purple silk, valanced with gold embroidery, having the chords of the same rich materials. The door-way was formed by six lances, the staves of which were plaited with silver, and the blades composed of the same precious metal. These were pitched into the ground by couples, and crossed at the top, so as to form a sort of succession of arches, which were covered by drapery of sea-green silk, forming a pleasing contrast with the purple and gold.

The interior of the tent was declared by Dame Gillian and others, whose curiosity induced them to visit it, to be of a splendour agreeing with the outside. There were Oriental carpets, and there were tapestries of Ghent and Bruges mingled in gay profusion, while the top of the pavilion, covered with sky-blue silk, was arranged so as to resemble the firmament, and richly studded with a sun, moon, and stars, composed of solid silver. This gorgeous pavilion had been made for the use of the celebrated William of Ypres, who acquired such great wealth as general of the mercenaries of King Stephen, and was by him created Earl of Albemarle; but the chance of War had assigned it to De Lacy, after one of the dreadful engagements, so many of which occurred during the civil wars betwixt Stephen and the Empress Maude, or Matilda. The Constable had never before been known to use it; for although wealthy and powerful, Hugo de Lacy was, on most occasions, plain and unostentatious; which, to those who knew him, made his present conduct seem the more remarkable. At the hour of noon he arrived, nobly mounted, at the gate of the castle, and drawing up a small body of servants, pages, and equerries, who attended him in their richest liveries, placed himself at their head, and directed his nephew to intimate to the Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, that the humblest of her servants awaited the honour of her presence at the castle gate.

Among the spectators who witnessed his arrival, there were many who thought that some part of the state and splendour attached to his pavilion and his retinue, had been better applied to set forth the person of the Constable himself, as his attire was simple even to meanness, and his person by no means of such distinguished bearing as might altogether dispense with the advantages of dress and ornament. The opinion became yet more prevalent, when he descended from horseback, until which time his masterly management of the noble animal he bestrode, gave a dignity to his person and figure, which he lost upon

dismounting from his steel saddle. In height, the celebrated Constable scarce attained the middle size, and his limbs, though strongly built and well knit, were deficient in grace and ease of movement. His legs were slightly curved outwards, which gave him advantage as a horseman, but showed unfavourably when he was upon foot. He halted, though very slightly, in consequence of one of his legs having been broken by the fall of a charger, and inartificially set by an inexperienced surgeon. This, also, was a blemish in his deportment; and though his broad shoulders, sinewy arms, and expanded chest, betokened the strength which he often displayed, it was strength of a clumsy and ungraceful character. His language and gestures were those of one seldom used to converse with equals, more seldom still with superiors; short, abrupt, and decisive, almost to the verge of sternness. In the judgment of those who were habitually acquainted with the Constable, there was both dignity and kindness in his keen eye and expanded brow; but such as saw him for the first time judged less favourably, and pretended to discover a harsh and passionate expression, although they allowed his countenance to have, on the whole, a bold and martial character. His age was in reality not more than five-and-forty, but the fatigues of war and of climate had added in appearance ten years to that period of time. By far the plainest dressed man of his train, he wore only a short Norman mantle, over the close dress of shamois-leather, which, almost always covered by his armour, was in some places slightly soiled by its pressure. A brown hat, in which he wore a sprig of rosemary in memory of his vow, served for his head-gear—his good sword and dagger hung at a belt made of seal-skin.

Thus accoutred, and at the head of a glittering and gilded band of retainers, who watched his lightest glance, the Constable of Chester awaited the arrival of the Lady Eveline Berenger, at the gate of her castle of Garde Doloureuse.

The trumpets from within announced her presence—the bridge fell, and, led by Damian de Lacy in his gayest habit, and followed by her train of females, and menial or vassal attendants, she came forth in her loveliness from under the massive and antique portal of her paternal fortress. She was dressed without ornaments of any kind, and in deep mourning weeds, as best befitted her recent loss; forming, in this respect, a strong contrast with the rich attire of her conductor, whose costly dress gleamed with jewels and embroidery, while their age and personal beauty made them in every other respect the fair counterpart of each other; a circumstance which probably gave rise to the delighted murmur and buzz which passed through the bystanders on their appearance, and which only respect for the deep mourning of Eveline prevented from breaking out into shouts of applause.

The instant that the fair foot of Eveline had made a step beyond the palisades which formed the outward barrier of the castle, the Constable de Lacy stepped forward to meet her, and, bending his right knee to the earth, craved pardon for the discourtesy which his vow had imposed on him, while he expressed his sense of the honour with which she now graced him, as one for which his life, devoted to her service, would be an inadequate acknowledgment.

The action and speech, though both in consistence with the romantic gallantry of the times, embarrassed Eveline; and the rather that this homage was so publicly rendered. She entreated the Constable to stand up, and not to add to the confusion of one who was already sufficiently at a loss how to acquit herself of the heavy debt of gratitude which she owed him. The Constable arose accordingly, after saluting her hand, which she extended to him, and prayed her, since she was so far condescending, to deign to enter the poor hut he had prepared for her shelter, and to grant him the honour of the audience he had solicited. Eveline, without farther answer than a bow, yielded him her hand, and desiring the rest of her train to remain where they were, commanded the attendance of Rose Flammock.

"Lady," said the Constable, "the matters of which I am compelled thus hastily to speak, are of a nature the most private."

"This maiden," replied Eveline, "is my bower-woman, and acquainted with my most inward thoughts; I beseech you to permit her presence at our conference."

"It were better otherwise," said Hugo de Lacy, with some embarrassment; "but your pleasure shall be obeyed."

He led the Lady Eveline into the tent, and entreated her to be seated on a large pile of cushions, covered with rich Venetian silk. Rose placed herself behind her mistress, half kneeling upon the same cushions, and watched the motions of the all-accomplished soldier and statesman, whom the voice of fame lauded so loudly; enjoying his embarrassment as a triumph of her sex, and scarcely of opinion that his shamois doublet and square form accorded with the splendour of the scene, or the almost angelic beauty of Eveline, the other actor therein.

"Lady," said the Constable, after some hesitation, "I would willingly say what it is my lot to tell you, in such terms as ladies love to listen to, and which surely your excellent beauty more especially deserves; but I have been too long trained in camps and councils to express my meaning otherwise than simply and plainly."

"I shall the more easily understand you, my lord," said Eveline, trembling, though she scarce knew why.

"My story, then, must be a blunt one. Something there passed between your honourable father and myself, touching a union of our houses."—He paused, as if he wished or expected Eveline to say something, but, as she was silent, he proceeded. "I would to God, that, as he was at the beginning of this treaty, it had pleased Heaven he should have conducted and concluded it with his usual wisdom; but what remedy?—he has gone the path which we must all tread."

"Your lordship," said Eveline, "has nobly avenged the death of your noble friend."

"I have but done my devoir, lady, as a good knight, in defence of an endangered maiden—a Lord Marcher in protection of the frontier—and a friend in avenging his friend. But to the point.—Our long and noble line draws near to a close. Of my remote kinsman, Randal Lacy, I will not speak; for in him I see nothing that is good or hopeful, nor have we been at one for many years. My nephew, Damian, gives hopeful promise to be a worthy branch of our ancient tree—but he is scarce twenty years old, and hath a long career of adventure and peril to encounter, ere he can honourably propose to himself the duties of domestic privacy or matrimonial engagements. His mother also is English, some abatement perhaps in the escutcheon of his arms; yet, had ten years more passed over him with the honours of chivalry, I should have proposed Damian de Lacy for the happiness to which I at present myself aspire."

"You—you, my lord!—it is impossible!" said Eveline, endeavouring at the same time to suppress all that could be offensive in the surprise which she could not help exhibiting.

"I do not wonder," replied the Constable, calmly,—for the ice being now broken, he resumed the natural steadiness of his manner and character,—"that you express surprise at this daring proposal. I have not perhaps the form that pleases a lady's eye, and I have forgotten,—that is, if I ever knew them,—the terms and phrases which please a lady's ear; but, noble Eveline, the Lady of Hugh de Lacy will be one of the foremost among the matronage of England."

"It will the better become the individual to whom so high a dignity is offered," said Eveline, "to consider how far she is capable of discharging its duties."

"Of that I fear nothing," said De Lacy. "She who hath been so excellent a daughter, cannot be less estimable in every other relation in life."

"I do not find that confidence in myself my lord," replied the embarrassed maiden, "with which you are so willing to load me—And I—forgive me—must crave time for other inquiries, as well as those which respect myself."

"Your father, noble lady, had this union warmly at heart. This scroll, signed with his own hand, will show it." He bent his knee as he gave the paper. "The wife of De Lacy will have, as the daughter of Raymond Berenger merits, the rank of a princess; his widow, the dowry of a queen."

"Mock me not with your knee, my lord, while you plead to me the paternal commands, which, joined to other circumstances"—she paused, and sighed deeply—"leave me, perhaps, but little room for free will!"

Imboldened by this answer, De Lacy, who had hitherto remained on his knee, rose gently, and assuming a seat beside the Lady Eveline, continued to press his suit,—not, indeed, in the language of passion, but of a plain-spoken man, eagerly urging a proposal on which his happiness depended. The vision of the miraculous image was, it may be supposed, uppermost in the mind of Eveline, who, tied down by the solemn vow she had made on that occasion, felt herself constrained to return evasive answers, where she might perhaps have given a direct negative, had her own wishes alone been to decide her reply.

"You cannot," she said, "expect from me, my lord, in this my so recent orphan state, that I should come to a speedy determination upon an affair of such deep importance. Give me leisure of your nobleness for consideration with myself—for consultation with my friends."

"Alas! fair Eveline," said the Baron, "do not be offended at my urgency. I cannot long delay setting forward on a distant and perilous expedition; and the short time left me for soliciting your favour, must be an apology for my importunity."

"And is it in these circumstances, noble De Lacy, that you would encumber yourself with family ties?" asked the maiden, timidly.

"I am God's soldier," said the Constable, "and He, in whose cause I fight in Palestine, will defend my wife in England."

"Hear then my present answer, my lord," said Eveline Berenger, rising from her seat. "To-morrow I proceed to the Benedictine nunnery at Gloucester, where resides my honoured father's sister, who is Abbess of that reverend house. To her guidance I will commit myself in this matter."

"A fair and maidenly resolution," answered De Lacy, who seemed, on his part, rather glad that the conference was abridged, "and, as I trust, not altogether unfavourable to the suit of your humble suppliant, since the good Lady Abbess hath been long my honoured friend." He then turned to Rose, who was about to attend her lady:—"Pretty maiden," he said, offering a chain of gold, "let this carcanet encircle thy neck, and buy thy good will."

"My good will cannot be purchased, my lord," said Rose, putting back the gift which he proffered.

"Your fair word, then," said the Constable, again pressing it upon her.

"Fair words are easily bought," said Rose, still rejecting the chain, "but they are seldom worth the purchase-money."

"Do you scorn my proffer, damsel?" said De Lacy: "it has graced the neck of a Norman count."

"Give it to a Norman countess then, my lord," said the damsel; "I am plain Rose Flammock, the weaver's daughter. I keep my good word to go with my good will, and a latten chain will become me as well as beaten gold."

"Peace, Rose," said her lady; "you are over malapert to talk thus to the Lord Constable.—And you, my lord," she continued, "permit me now to depart, since you are possessed of my answer to your present proposal. I regret it had not been of some less delicate nature, that by granting it at once, and without delay, I might have shown my sense of your services."

The lady was handed forth by the Constable of Chester, with the same ceremony which had been observed at their entrance, and she returned to her own castle, sad and anxious in mind for the event of this important conference. She gathered closely round her the great mourning veil, that the alteration of her countenance might not be observed; and, without pausing to speak even to Father Aldrovand, she instantly withdrew to the privacy of her own bower.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

Now	all	ye	ladies	of	fair	Scotland,
And	ladies	of	England	that	happy	prove,
Marry	never	for	houses,	nor	marry	land,
Nor	marry	for	nothing	but	only	love.

FAMILY QUARRELS.

When the Lady Eveline had retired into her own private chamber, Rose Flammock followed her unbidden, and proffered her assistance in removing the large veil which she had worn while she was abroad; but the lady refused her permission, saying, "You are forward with service, maiden, when it is not required of you."

"You are displeased with me, lady!" said Rose.

"And if I am, I have cause," replied Eveline. "You know my difficulties—you know what my duty demands; yet, instead of aiding me to make the sacrifice, you render it more difficult."

"Would I had influence to guide your path!" said Rose; "you should find it a smooth one—ay, an honest and straight one, to boot."

"How mean you, maiden?" said Eveline.

"I would have you," answered Rose, "recall the encouragement—the consent, I may almost call it, you have yielded to this proud baron. He is too great to be loved himself—too haughty to love you as you deserve. If you wed him, you wed gilded misery, and, it may be, dishonour as well as discontent."

"Remember, damsel," answered Eveline Berenger, "his services towards us."

"His services?" answered Rose. "He ventured his life for us; indeed, but so did every soldier in his host. And am I bound to wed any ruffling blade among them, because he fought when the trumpet sounded? I wonder what, is the meaning of their *devoir*, as they call it, when it shames them not to claim the highest reward woman can bestow, merely for discharging the duty of a gentleman, by a distressed creature. A gentleman, said I?—The coarsest boor in Flanders would hardly expect thanks for doing the duty of a man by women in such a case."

"But my father's wishes?" said the young lady.

"They had reference, without doubt, to the inclination of your father's daughter," answered the attendant. "I will not do my late noble lord—(may God assoilzie him!)—the injustice to suppose he would have urged aught in this matter which squared not with your free choice."

"Then my vow—my fatal vow, as I had well nigh called it?" said Eveline. "May Heaven forgive me my ingratitude to my patroness!"

"Even this shakes me not," said Rose; "I will never believe our Lady of Mercy would exact such a penalty for her protection, as to desire me to wed the man I could not love. She smiled, you say, upon your prayer. Go—lay at her feet these difficulties which oppress you, and see if she will not smile again. Or seek a dispensation from your vow—seek it at the expense of the half of your estate,—seek it at the expense of your whole property. Go a pilgrimage barefooted to Rome—do any thing but give your hand where you cannot give your heart."

"You speak warmly, Rose," said Eveline, still sighing as she spoke.

"Alas! my sweet lady, I have cause. Have I not seen a household where love was not—where, although there was worth and good will, and enough of the means of life, all was imbittered by regrets, which were not only vain, but criminal?"

"Yet, methinks, Rose, a sense of what is due to ourselves and to others may, if listened to, guide and comfort us under such feelings even as thou hast described."

"It will save us from sin, lady, but not from sorrow," answered Rose; "and wherefore should we, with our eyes open, rush into circumstances where duty must war with inclination?" Why row against wind and tide, when you may as easily take advantage of the breeze?"

"Because the voyage of my life lies where winds and currents oppose me," answered Eveline. "It is my fate, Rose."

"Not unless you make it such by choice," answered Rose. "Oh, could you but have seen the pale cheek, sunken eye, and dejected bearing of my poor mother!—I have said too much."

"It was then your mother," said her young lady, "of whose unhappy wedlock you have spoken?"

"It was—it was," said Rose, bursting into tears. "I have exposed my own shame to save you from sorrow. Unhappy she was, though most guiltless—so unhappy, that the breach of the dike, and the inundation in which she perished, were, but for my sake, to her welcome as night to the weary labourer. She had a heart like yours, formed to love and be loved; and it would be doing honour to yonder proud Baron, to say he had such worth as my father's.—Yet was she most unhappy. Oh! my sweet lady, be warned, and break off this ill-omened match!"

Eveline returned the pressure with which the affectionate girl, as she clung to her hand, enforced her well-meant advice, and then muttered with a profound sigh,—"Rose, it is too late."

"Never—never," said Rose, looking eagerly round the room. "Where are those writing materials?—Let me bring Father Aldrovand, and instruct him of your pleasure—or, stay, the good father hath himself an eye on the splendours of the world which he thinks he has abandoned—he will be no safe secretary.—I will go myself to the Lord Constable—*me* his rank cannot dazzle, or his wealth bribe, or his power overawe. I will tell him he doth no knightly part towards you, to press his contract with your father in such an hour of helpless sorrow—no pious part, in delaying the execution of his vows for the purpose of marrying or giving in marriage—no honest part, to press himself on a maiden whose heart has not decided in his favour—no wise part, to marry one whom he must presently abandon, either to solitude, or to the dangers of a profligate court."

"You have not courage for such an embassy, Rose," said her mistress, sadly smiling through her tears at her youthful attendant's zeal.

"Not courage for it!—and wherefore not?—Try me," answered the Flemish maiden, in return. "I am neither Saracen nor Welshman—his lance and sword scare me not. I follow not his banner—his voice of command concerns me not. I could, with your leave, boldly tell him he is a selfish man, veiling with fair and honourable

pretexts his pursuit of objects which concern his own pride and gratification, and founding high claims on having rendered the services which common humanity demanded. And all for what?— Forsooth the great De Lacy must have an heir to his noble house, and his fair nephew is not good enough to be his representative, because his mother was of Anglo-Saxon strain, and the real heir must be pure unmixed Norman; and for this, Lady Eveline Berenger, in the first bloom of youth, must be wedded to a man who might be her father, and who, after leaving her unprotected for years, will return in such guise as might beseem her grandfather!" "Since he is thus scrupulous concerning purity of lineage," said Eveline, "perhaps he may call to mind, what so good a herald as he is cannot fail to know—that I am of Saxon strain by my father's mother."

"Oh," replied Rose, "he will forgive that blot in the heiress of the Garde Doloureuse."

"Fie, Rose," answered her mistress, "thou dost him wrong in taxing him with avarice."

"Perhaps so," answered Rose; "but he is undeniably ambitious; and Avarice, I have heard, is Ambition's bastard brother, though Ambition be sometimes ashamed of the relationship."

"You speak too boldly, damsel," said Eveline; "and, while I acknowledge your affection, it becomes me to check your mode of expression."

"Nay, take that tone, and I have done," said Rose.—"To Eveline, whom I love, and who loves me, I can speak freely—but to the Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, the proud Norman damsel, (which when you choose to be you can be,) I can curtsy as low as my station demands, and speak as little truth as she cares to hear."

"Thou art a wild but a kind girl," said Eveline; "no one who did not know thee would think that soft and childish exterior covered such a soul of fire. Thy mother must indeed have been the being of feeling and passion you paint her; for thy father—nay, nay, never arm in his defence until he be attacked—I only meant to say, that his solid sense and sound judgment are his most distinguished qualities."

"And I would you would avail yourself of them, lady," said Rose.

"In fitting things I will; but he were rather an unmeet counsellor in that which we now treat of," said Eveline.

"You mistake him," answered Rose Flammock, "and underrate his value. Sound judgment is like to the graduated measuring-wand, which, though usually applied only to coarser cloths, will give with equal truth the dimensions of Indian silk, or of cloth of gold."

"Well—well—this affair presses not instantly at least," said the young lady. "Leave me now, Rose, and send Gillian the tirewoman hither—I have directions to give about the packing and removal of my wardrobe."

"That Gillian the tirewoman hath been a mighty favourite of late," said Rose; "time was when it was otherwise."

"I like her manners as little as thou dost," said Eveline; "but she is old Raoul's wife—she was a sort of half favourite with my dear father—who, like other men, was perhaps taken by that very freedom which we think unseemly in persons of our sex; and then there is no other woman in the Castle that hath such skill in empacketing clothes without the risk of their being injured."

"That last reason alone," said Rose, smiling, "is, I admit, an irresistible pretension to favour, and Dame Gillian shall presently attend you.—But take my advice, lady—keep her to her bales and her mails, and let her not prate to you on what concerns her not."

So saying, Rose left the apartment, and her young lady looked after her in silence—then murmured to herself—"Rose loves me truly; but she would willingly be more of the mistress than the maiden; and then she is somewhat jealous of every other person that approaches me.—It is strange, that I have not seen Damian de Lacy since my interview with the Constable. He anticipates, I suppose, the chance of his finding in me a severe aunt!"

But the domestics, who crowded for orders with reference to her removal early on the morrow, began now to divert the current of their lady's thoughts from the consideration of her own particular situation, which, as the prospect presented nothing pleasant, with the elastic spirit of youth, she willingly postponed till farther leisure.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

Too much rest is rust,
There's ever cheer in changing;
We tyne by too much trust,
So we'll be up and ranging.

OLD SONG.

Early on the subsequent morning, a gallant company, saddened indeed by the deep mourning which their principals wore, left the well-defended Castle of the Garde Doloureuse, which had been so lately the scene of such remarkable events.

The sun was just beginning to exhale the heavy dews which had fallen during the night, and to disperse the thin gray mist which eddied around towers and battlements, when Wilkin Flammock, with six crossbowmen on horseback, and as many spearmen on foot, sallied forth from under the Gothic gate-way, and crossed the sounding drawbridge. After this advanced guard, came four household servants well mounted, and after them, as many inferior female attendants, all in mourning. Then rode forth the young Lady Eveline herself, occupying the centre of the little procession, and her long black robes formed a striking contrast to the colour of her milk-white palfrey. Beside her, on a Spanish jennet, the gift of her affectionate father,—who had procured it at a high rate, and who would have given half his substance to gratify his daughter,—sat the girlish form of Rose Flammock, who had so much of juvenile shyness in her manner, so much of feeling and of judgment in her thoughts and actions. Dame Margery followed, mixed in the party escorted by Father Aldrovand, whose company she chiefly frequented; for Margery affected a little the character of the devotee, and her influence in the family, as having been Eveline's nurse, was so great as to render her no improper companion for the chaplain, when her lady did not require her attendance on her own person. Then came old Raoul the huntsman, his wife, and two or three other officers of Raymond Berenger's household; the steward, with his golden chain, velvet cassock, and white wand, bringing up the rear, which was closed by a small band of archers, and four men-at-arms. The guards, and indeed the greater part of the attendants, were only designed to give the necessary degree of honour to the young lady's movements, by accompanying her a short space from the castle, where they were met by the Constable of Chester, who, with a retinue of thirty lances, proposed himself to escort Eveline as far as Gloucester, the place of her destination. Under his protection no danger was to be apprehended, even if the severe defeat so lately sustained by the Welsh had not of itself been likely to prevent any attempt, on the part of those hostile mountaineers, to disturb the safety of the marches for some time to come. In pursuance of this arrangement, which permitted the armed part of Eveline's retinue to return for the protection of the castle, and the restoration of order in the district around, the Constable awaited her at the fatal bridge, at the head of the gallant band of selected horsemen whom he had ordered to attend upon him. The parties halted, as if to salute each other; but the Constable, observing that Eveline drew her veil more closely around her, and recollecting the loss she had so lately sustained on that luckless spot, had the judgment to confine his greeting to a mute reverence, so low that the lofty plume which he wore, (for he was now in complete armour,) mingled with the flowing mane of his gallant horse. Wilkin Flammock next halted, to ask the lady if she had any farther commands.

"None, good Wilkin," said Eveline; "but to be, as ever, true and watchful."

"The properties of a good mastiff," said Flammock. "Some rude sagacity, and a stout hand instead of a sharp case of teeth, are all that I can claim to be added to them—I will do my best.—Fare thee well, Roschen! Thou art going among strangers—forget not the qualities which made thee loved at home. The saints bless thee—farewell!"

The steward next approached to take his leave, but in doing so, had nearly met with a fatal accident. It had been the pleasure of Raoul, who was in his own disposition cross-grained, and in person rheumatic, to accommodate himself with an old Arab horse, which had been kept for the sake of the breed, as lean, and almost as lame as himself, and with a temper as vicious as that of a fiend. Betwixt the rider and the horse was a constant misunderstanding, testified on Raoul's part by oaths, rough checks with the curb, and severe digging with the spurs, which Mahound (so paganishly was the horse named) answered by plunging, bounding, and endeavouring by all expedients to unseat his rider, as well as striking and lashing out furiously at whatever else approached him. It was thought by

many of the household, that Raoul preferred this vicious cross-tempered animal upon all occasions when he travelled in company with his wife, in order to take advantage by the chance, that amongst the various kicks, plunges, gambades, lashings out, and other eccentricities of Mahound, his heels might come in contact with Dame Gillian's ribs. And now, when as the important steward spurred up his palfrey to kiss his young lady's hand, and to take his leave, it seemed to the bystanders as if Raoul so managed his bridle and spur, that Mahound jerked out his hoofs at the same moment, one of which coming in contact with the steward's thigh, would have splintered it like a rotten reed, had the parties been a couple of inches nearer to each other. As it was, the steward sustained considerable damage; and they that observed the grin upon Raoul's vinegar countenance entertained little doubt, that Mahound's heels then and there avenged certain nods, and winks, and wreathed smiles, which had passed betwixt the gold-chained functionary and the coquettish tirewoman, since the party left the castle.

This incident abridged the painful solemnity of parting betwixt the Lady Eveline and her dependents, and lessened, at the same time, the formality of her meeting with the Constable, and, as it were, resigning herself to his protection.

Hugo de Lacy, having commanded six of his men-at-arms to proceed as an advanced-guard, remained himself to see the steward properly deposited on a litter, and then, with the rest of his followers, marched in military fashion about one hundred yards in the rear of Lady Eveline and her retinue, judiciously forbearing to present himself to her society while she was engaged in the orisons which the place where they met naturally suggested, and waiting patiently until the elasticity of youthful temper should require some diversion of the gloomy thoughts which the scene inspired.

Guided by this policy, the Constable did not approach the ladies until the advance of the morning rendered it politeness to remind them, that a pleasant spot for breaking their fast occurred in the neighbourhood, where he had ventured to make some preparations for rest and refreshment. Immediately after the Lady Eveline had intimated her acceptance of this courtesy, they came in sight of the spot he alluded to, marked by an ancient oak, which, spreading its broad branches far and wide, reminded the traveller of that of Mamre, under which celestial beings accepted the hospitality of the patriarch. Across two of these huge projecting arms was flung a piece of rose-coloured sarsanet, as a canopy to keep off the morning beams, which were already rising high. Cushions of silk, interchanged with others covered with the furs of animals of the chase, were arranged round a repast, which a Norman cook had done his utmost to distinguish, by the superior delicacy of his art, from the gross meals of the Saxons, and the penurious simplicity of the Welsh tables. A fountain, which bubbled from under a large mossy stone at some distance, refreshed the air with its sound, and the taste with its liquid crystal; while, at the same time, it formed a cistern for cooling two or three flasks of Gascon wine and hippocras, which were at that time the necessary accompaniments of the morning meal.

When Eveline, with Rose, the Confessor, and at some farther distance her faithful nurse, was seated at this silvan banquet, the leaves rustling to a gentle breeze, the water bubbling in the background, the birds twittering around, while the half-heard sounds of conversation and laughter at a distance announced that their guard was in the vicinity, she could not avoid making the Constable some natural compliment on his happy selection of a place of repose.

"You do me more than justice," replied the Baron; "the spot was selected by my nephew, who hath a fancy like a minstrel. Myself am but slow in imagining such devices."

Rose looked full at her mistress, as if she endeavoured to look into her very inmost soul; but Eveline answered with the utmost simplicity,—"*And wherefore hath not the noble Damian waited to join us at the entertainment which he hath directed?*"

"He prefers riding onward," said the Baron, "with some light- horsemen; for, notwithstanding there are now no Welsh knaves stirring, yet the marches are never free from robbers and outlaws; and though there is nothing to fear for a band like ours, yet you should not be alarmed even by the approach of danger."

"I have indeed seen but too much of it lately," said Eveline; and relapsed into the melancholy mood from which the novelty of the scene had for a moment awakened her.

Meanwhile, the Constable, removing, with the assistance of his squire, his mailed hood and its steel crest, as well as his gauntlets, remained in his flexible coat of mail, composed entirely of rings of steel curiously interwoven, his hands bare, and his brows covered with a velvet bonnet of a peculiar fashion, appropriated to the use of knights, and called a *mortier*, which permitted him both to converse and to eat more easily than when he wore the full defensive armour. His discourse was plain, sensible, and manly; and, turning upon the state of the country, and the precautions to be observed for governing and defending so disorderly a frontier, it became gradually interesting to Eveline, one of whose warmest wishes was to be the protectress of her father's vassals. De Lacy, on his part, seemed much pleased; for, young as Eveline was, her questions showed intelligence, and her mode of answering, both apprehension and docility. In short, familiarity was so far established betwixt them, that in the next stage of their journey, the Constable seemed to think his appropriate place was at the Lady Eveline's bridle-rein; and although she certainly did not countenance his attendance, yet neither did she seem willing to discourage it. Himself no ardent lover, although captivated both by the beauty and the amiable qualities of the fair orphan, De Lacy was satisfied with being endured as a companion, and made no efforts to improve the opportunity which this familiarity afforded him, by recurring to any of the topics of the preceding day.

A halt was made at noon in a small village, where the same purveyor had made preparations for their accommodation, and particularly for that of the Lady Eveline; but, something to her surprise, he himself remained invisible. The conversation of the Constable of Chester was, doubtless, in the highest degree instructive; but at Eveline's years, a maiden might be excused for wishing some addition to the society in the person of a younger and less serious attendant; and when she recollected the regularity with which Damian Lacy had hitherto made his respects to her, she rather wondered at his continued absence. But her reflection went no deeper than the passing thought of one who was not quite so much delighted with her present company, as not to believe it capable of an agreeable addition. She was lending a patient ear to the account which the Constable gave her of the descent and pedigree of a gallant knight of the distinguished family of Herbert, at whose castle he proposed to repose during the night, when one of the retinue announced a messenger from the Lady of Baldringham.

"My honoured father's aunt," said Eveline, arising to testify that respect for age and relationship which the manners of the time required.

"I knew not," said the Constable, "that my gallant friend had such a relative."

"She was my grandmother's sister," answered Eveline, "a noble Saxon lady; but she disliked the match formed with a Norman house, and never saw her sister after the period of her marriage."

She broke off, as the messenger, who had the appearance of the steward of a person of consequence, entered the presence, and, bending his knee reverently, delivered a letter, which, being examined by Father Aldrovand, was found to contain the following invitation, expressed, not in French, then the general language of communication amongst the gentry, but in the old Saxon language, modified as it now was by some intermixture of French.

"If the grand-daughter of Aelfried of Baldringham hath so much of the old Saxon strain as to desire to see an ancient relation, who still dwells in the house of her forefathers, and lives after their manner, she is thus invited to repose for the night in the dwelling of Ermengarde of Baldringham."

"Your pleasure will be, doubtless, to decline the present hospitality?" said the Constable De Lacy; "the noble Herbert expects us, and has made great preparation."

"Your presence, my lord," said Eveline, "will more than console him for my absence. It is fitting and proper that I should meet my aunt's advances to reconciliation, since she has condescended to make them."

De Lacy's brow was slightly clouded, for seldom had he met with anything approaching to contradiction of his pleasure. "I pray you to reflect, Lady Eveline," he said, "that your aunt's house is probably defenceless, or at least very imperfectly guarded.—Would it not be your pleasure that I should continue my dutiful attendance?"

"Of that, my lord, mine aunt can, in her own house, be the sole judge; and methinks, as she has not deemed it necessary to request the honour of your lordship's company, it were unbecoming in me to permit you to take the trouble of attendance;—you have already had but too much on my account."

"But for the sake of your own safety, madam," said De Lacy, unwilling to leave his charge.

"My safety, my lord, cannot be endangered in the house of so near a relative; whatever precautions she may take on her own behalf, will doubtless be amply sufficient for mine."

"I hope it will be found so," said De Lacy; "and I will at least add to them the security of a patrol around the castle during your abode in it." He stopped, and then proceeded with some hesitation to express his hope, that Eveline, now about to visit a kinswoman whose prejudices against the Norman race were generally known, would be on her guard against what she might hear upon that subject.

Eveline answered with dignity, that the daughter of Raymond Berenger was unlikely to listen to any opinions which would affect the dignity of that good knight's nation and descent; and with this assurance, the Constable, finding it impossible to obtain any which had more special reference to himself and his suit, was compelled to remain satisfied. He recollected also that the castle of Herbert was within two miles of the habitation of the Lady of Baldringham, and that his separation from Eveline was but for one night; yet a sense of the difference betwixt their years, and perhaps of his own deficiency in those lighter qualifications by which the female heart is supposed to be most frequently won, rendered even this temporary absence matter of anxious thought and apprehension; so that, during their afternoon journey, he rode in silence by Eveline's side, rather meditating what might chance to-morrow, than endeavouring to avail himself of present opportunity. In this unsocial manner they travelled on until the point was reached where they were to separate for the evening.

This was an elevated spot, from which they could see, on the right hand, the castle of Amelot Herbert, rising high upon an eminence, with all its Gothic pinnacles and turrets; and on the left, low-embowered amongst oaken woods, the rude and lonely dwelling in which the Lady of Baldringham still maintained the customs of the Anglo-Saxons, and looked with contempt and hatred on all innovations that had been introduced since the battle of Hastings.

Here the Constable De Lacy, having charged a part of his men to attend the Lady Eveline to the house of her relation, and to keep watch around it with the utmost vigilance, but at such a distance as might not give offence or inconvenience to the family, kissed her hand, and took a reluctant leave. Eveline proceeded onwards by a path so little trodden, as to show the solitary condition of the mansion to which it led. Large kine, of an uncommon and valuable breed, were feeding in the rich pastures around; and now and then fallow deer, which appeared to have lost the shyness of their nature, tripped across the glades of the woodland, or stood and lay in small groups under some great oak. The transient pleasure which such a scene of rural quiet was calculated to afford, changed to more serious feelings, when a sudden turn brought her at once in front of the mansion-house, of which she had seen nothing since she first beheld it from the point where she parted with the Constable, and which she had more than one reason for regarding with some apprehension.

The house, for it could not be termed a castle, was only two stories high, low and massively built, with doors and windows forming the heavy round arch which is usually called Saxon;—the walls were mantled with various creeping plants, which had crept along them undisturbed—grass grew up to the very threshold, at which hung a buffalo's horn, suspended by a brass chain. A massive door of black oak closed a gate, which much resembled the ancient entrance to a ruined sepulchre, and not a soul appeared to acknowledge or greet their arrival.

"Were I you, my Lady Eveline," said the officious dame Gillian, "I would turn bridle yet; for this old dungeon seems little likely to afford food or shelter to Christian folk."

Eveline imposed silence on her indiscreet attendant, though herself exchanging a look with Rose which confessed something like timidity, as she commanded Raoul to blow the horn at the gate. "I have heard," she said, "that my aunt loves the ancient customs so well, that she is loath to admit into her halls any thing younger than the time of Edward the Confessor."

Raoul, in the meantime, cursing the rude instrument which baffled his skill in sounding a regular call, and gave voice only to a tremulous and discordant roar, which seemed to shake the old walls, thick as they were, repeated his summons three times before they obtained admittance. On the third sounding, the gate opened, and a numerous retinue of servants of both sexes appeared in the dark and narrow hall, at the upper end of which a great fire of wood was sending its furnace-blast up an antique chimney, whose front, as extensive as that of a modern kitchen, was carved over with ornaments of massive stone, and garnished on the top with a long range of niches, from each of which frowned the image of some Saxon Saint, whose barbarous name was scarce to be found in the Romish calendar.

The same officer who had brought the invitation from his lady to Eveline, now stepped forward, as she supposed, to assist her from her palfrey; but it was in reality to lead it by the bridle-rein into the paved hall itself, and up to a raised platform, or dais, at the upper end of which she was at length permitted to dismount. Two matrons of advanced years, and four young women of gentle birth, educated by the bounty of Ermengarde, attended with reverence the arrival of her kinswoman. Eveline would have inquired of them for her grand-aunt, but the matrons with much respect laid their fingers on their mouths, as if to enjoin her silence; a gesture which, united to the singularity of her reception in other respects, still farther excited her curiosity to see her venerable relative.

It was soon gratified; for, through a pair of folding doors, which opened not far from the platform on which she stood, she was ushered into a large low apartment hung with arras; at the upper end of which, under a species of canopy, was seated the ancient Lady of Baldringham. Fourscore years had not quenched the brightness of her eyes, or bent an inch of her stately height; her gray hair was still so profuse as to form a tier, combined as it was with a chaplet of ivy leaves; her long dark-coloured gown fell in ample folds, and the brodered girdle, which gathered it around her, was fastened by a buckle of gold, studded with precious stones, which were worth an Earl's ransom; her features, which had once been beautiful, or rather majestic, bore still, though faded and wrinkled, an air of melancholy and stern grandeur, that assorted well with her garb and deportment. She had a staff of ebony in her hand; at her feet rested a large aged wolf-dog, who pricked his ears and bristled up his neck, as the step of a stranger, a sound so seldom heard in those halls, approached the chair in which his aged mistress sat motionless.

"Peace, Thryme," said the venerable dame; "and thou, daughter of the house of Baldringham, approach, and fear not their ancient servant."

The hound sunk down to his couchant posture when she spoke, and, excepting the red glare of his eyes, might have seemed a hieroglyphical emblem, lying at the feet of some ancient priestess of Woden or Freya; so strongly did the appearance of Ermengarde, with her rod and her chaplet, correspond with the ideas of the days of Paganism. Yet he who had thus deemed of her would have done therein much injustice to a venerable Christian matron, who had given many a hide of land to holy church, in honour of God and Saint Dunstan.

Ermengarde's reception of Eveline was of the same antiquated and formal cast with her mansion and her exterior. She did not at first arise from her seat when the noble maiden approached her, nor did she even admit her to the salute which she advanced to offer; but, laying her hand on Eveline's arm, stopped her as she advanced, and perused her countenance with an earnest and unsparing eye of minute observation.

"Berwine," she said to the most favoured of the two attendants, "our niece hath the skin and eyes of the Saxon hue; but the hue of her eye-brows and hair is from the foreigner and alien.—Thou art, nevertheless,—welcome to my house, maiden," she added, addressing Eveline, "especially if thou canst bear to hear that thou art not absolutely a perfect creature, as doubtless these flatterers around thee have taught thee to believe."

So saying, she at length arose, and saluted her niece with a kiss on the forehead. She released her not, however, from her grasp, but proceeded to give the attention to her garments which she had hitherto bestowed upon her features.

"Saint Dunstan keep us from vanity!" she said; "and so this is the new guise—and modest maidens wear such tunics as these, showing the shape of their persons as plain as if (Saint Mary defend us!) they were altogether without garments? And see, Berwine, these gauds on the neck, and that neck itself uncovered as low as the shoulder—these be the guises which strangers have brought into merry England! and this pouch, like a player's placket, hath but little to do with housewifery, I wot; and that dagger, too, like a glee-man's wife, that rides a mumming in masculine apparel—dost thou ever go to the wars, maiden, that thou wearest steel at thy girdle?"

Eveline, equally surprised and disobliged by the depreciating catalogue of her apparel, replied to the last question with some spirit,—"The mode may have altered, madam; but I only wear such garments as are now worn by those of my age and condition. For the poniard, may it please you, it is not many days since I regarded it as the last resource betwixt me and dishonour."

"The maiden speaks well and boldly, Berwine," said Dame Ermengarde; "and, in truth, pass we but over some of these vain fripperies, is attired in a comely fashion. Thy father, I hear, fell knight-like in the field of battle."

"He did so," answered Eveline, her eyes filling with tears at the recollection of her recent loss.

"I never saw him," continued Dame Ermengarde; "he carried the old Norman scorn towards the Saxon stock, whom they wed but for what they can make by them, as the bramble clings to the elm;—nay, never seek to vindicate him," she continued, observing that Eveline was about to speak, "I have known the Norman spirit for many a year ere thou wert born."

At this moment the steward appeared in the chamber, and, after a long genuflection, asked his lady's pleasure concerning the guard of Norman soldiers who remained without the mansion.

"Norman soldiers so near the house of Baldringham!" said the old lady, fiercely; "who brings them hither, and for what purpose?"

"They came, as I think," said the steward, "to wait on and guard this gracious young lady."

"What, my daughter," said Ermengarde, in a tone of melancholy reproach, "darest thou not trust thyself unguarded for one night in the castle of thy forefathers?"

"God forbid else!" said Eveline. "But these men are not mine, nor under my authority. They are part of the train of the Constable de Lacy, who left them to watch around the castle, thinking there might be danger from robbers."

"Robbers," said Ermengarde, "have never harmed the house of Baldringham, since a Norman robber stole from it its best treasure in the person of thy grandmother—And so, poor bird, thou art already captive—unhappy flutterer! But it is thy lot, and wherefore should I wonder or repine? When was there fair maiden, with a wealthy dower, but she was ere maturity destined to be the slave of some of those petty kings, who allow us to call nothing ours that their passions can covet? Well—I cannot aid thee—I am but a poor and neglected woman, feeble both from sex and age.—And to which of these De Lacys art thou the destined household drudge?"

A question so asked, and by one whose prejudices were of such a determined character, was not likely to draw from Eveline any confession of the real circumstances in which she was placed, since it was but too plain her Saxon relation could have afforded her neither sound counsel nor useful assistance. She replied therefore briefly, that as the Lacys, and the Normans in general, were unwelcome to her kinswoman, she would entreat of the commander of the patrol to withdraw it from the neighbourhood of Baldringham.

"Not so, my niece," said the old lady; "as we cannot escape the Norman neighbourhood, or get beyond the sound of their curfew, it signifies not whether they be near our walls or more far off, so that they enter them, not. And, Berwine, bid Hundwolf drench the Normans with liquor, and gorge them with food—the food of the best, and liquor of the strongest. Let them not say the old Saxon hag is churlish of her hospitality. Broach a piece of wine, for I warrant their gentle stomachs brook no ale."

Berwine, her huge bunch of keys jangling at her girdle, withdrew to give the necessary directions, and presently returned. Meanwhile Ermengarde proceeded to question her niece more closely. "Is it that thou wilt not, or canst not, tell me to which of the De Lacys thou art to be bondswoman?—to the overweening Constable, who, sheathed in impenetrable armour, and mounted on a swift and strong horse as invulnerable as himself, takes pride that he rides down and stabs at his ease, and with perfect safety, the naked Welshmen?—or is it to his nephew, the beardless Damian?—or must thy possessions go to mend a breach in the fortunes of that other cousin, Randal Lacy, the decayed reveller, who, they say, can no longer ruffle it among the debauched crusaders for want of means?"

"My honoured aunt," replied Eveline, naturally displeased with this discourse, "to none of the Lacy's, and I trust to none other, Saxon or Norman, will your kinswoman become a household drudge."

"There was, before the death of my honoured father, some treaty betwixt him and the Constable, on which account I cannot at present decline his attendance; but what may be the issue of it, fate must determine."

"But I can show thee, niece, how the balance of fate inclines," said Ermengarde, in a low and mysterious voice. "Those united with us by blood have, in some sort, the privilege of looking forward beyond the points of present time, and seeing in their very bud the thorns or flowers which are one day to encircle their head."

"For my own sake, noble kinswoman," answered Eveline, "I would decline such foreknowledge, even were it possible to acquire it without transgressing the rules of the Church. Could I have foreseen what has befallen me within these last unhappy days, I had lost the enjoyment of every happy moment before that time."

"Nevertheless, daughter," said the Lady of Baldringham, "thou, like others of thy race, must within this house conform to the rule, of passing one night within the chamber of the Red-Finger.—Berwine, see that it be prepared for my niece's reception."

"I—I—have heard speak of that chamber, gracious aunt," said Eveline, timidly, "and if it may consist with your good pleasure, I would not now choose to pass the night there. My health has suffered by my late perils and fatigues, and with your good-will I will delay to another time the usage, which I have heard is peculiar to the daughters of the house of Baldringham."

"And which, notwithstanding, you would willingly avoid," said the old Saxon lady, bending her brows angrily. "Has not such disobedience cost your house enough already?"

"Indeed, honoured and gracious lady," said Berwine, unable to forbear interference, though well knowing the obstinacy of her patroness, "that chamber is in disrepair, and cannot easily on a sudden be made fit for the Lady Eveline; and the noble damsel looks so pale, and hath lately suffered so much, that, might I have the permission to advise, this were better delayed."

"Thou art a fool, Berwine," said the old lady, sternly; "thinkest thou I will bring anger and misfortune on my house, by suffering this girl to leave it without rendering the usual homage to the Red-Finger? Go to—let the room be made ready—small preparation may serve, if she cherish not the Norman nicety about bed and lodging. Do not reply; but do as I command thee.—And you, Eveline—are you so far degenerated from the brave spirit of your ancestry, that you dare not pass a few hours in an ancient apartment?"

"You are my hostess, gracious madam," said Eveline, "and must assign my apartment where you judge proper—my courage is such as innocence and some pride of blood and birth have given me. It has been, of late, severely tried; but, since such is your pleasure, and the custom of your house, my heart is yet strong enough to encounter what you propose to subject me to."

She paused here in displeasure; for she resented, in some measure, her aunt's conduct, as unkind and inhospitable. And yet when she reflected upon the foundation of the legend of the chamber to which she was consigned, she could not but regard the Lady of Baldringham as having considerable reason for her conduct, according to the traditions of the family, and the belief of the times, in which Eveline herself was devout.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

Sometimes,	methinks,	I	hear	the	groans	of	ghosts,
Then	hollow	sounds	and		lamentable		screams;
Then,	like	a	dying	echo		from	afar,
My	mother's	voice,	that	cries,	"Wed	not,	Almeyda—
Forewand,	Almeyda,	marriage		is	thy		crime."
DON SEBASTIAN.							

The evening at Baldringham would have seemed of portentous and unendurable length, had it not been that apprehended danger makes times pass quickly betwixt us and the dreaded hour, and that if Eveline felt little interested or amused by the conversation of her aunt and Berwine, which turned upon the long deduction of their ancestors from the warlike Horsa, and the feats of Saxon champions, and the miracles of Saxon monks, she was still better pleased to listen to these legends, than to anticipate her retreat to the destined and dreaded apartment where she was to pass the night. There lacked not, however, such amusement as the house of Baldringham could afford, to pass away the evening. Blessed by a grave old Saxon monk, the chaplain of the house, a sumptuous entertainment, which might have sufficed twenty hungry men, was served up before Ermengarde and her niece, whose sole assistants, beside the reverend man, were Berwine and Rose Flammock. Eveline was the less inclined to do justice to this excess of hospitality, that the dishes were all of the gross and substantial nature which the Saxons admired, but which contrasted disadvantageously with the refined and delicate cookery of the Normans, as did the moderate cup of light

and high-flavoured Gascon wine, tempered with more than half its quantity of the purest water, with the mighty ale, the high-spiced pigment and hippocras, and the other potent liquors, which, one after another, were in vain proffered for her acceptance by the steward Hundwolf, in honour of the hospitality of Baldringham. Neither were the stated amusements of evening more congenial to Eveline's taste, than the profusion of her aunt's solid refecton. When the boards and tresses, on which the viands had been served, were withdrawn from the apartment, the menials, under direction of the steward, proceeded to light several long waxen torches, one of which was graduated for the purpose of marking the passing time, and dividing it into portions. These were announced by means of brazen balls, suspended by threads from the torch, the spaces betwixt them being calculated to occupy a certain time in burning; so that, when the flame reached the thread, and the balls fell, each in succession, into a brazen basin placed for its reception, the office of a modern clock was in some degree discharged. By this light the party was arranged for the evening.

The ancient Ermengarde's lofty and ample chair was removed, according to ancient custom, from the middle of the apartment to the warmest side of a large grate, filled with charcoal, and her guest was placed on her right, as the seat of honour. Berwine then arranged in due order the females of the household, and, having seen that each was engaged with her own proper task, sat herself down to ply the spindle and distaff. The men, in a more remote circle, betook themselves to the repairing of their implements of husbandry, or new furbishing weapons of the chase, under the direction of the steward Hundwolf. For the amusement of the family thus assembled, an old glee-man sung to a harp, which had but four strings, a long and apparently interminable legend, upon some religious subject, which was rendered almost unintelligible to Eveline, by the extreme and complicated affectation of the poet, who, in order to indulge in the alliteration which was accounted one great ornament of Saxon poetry, had sacrificed sense to sound, and used words in the most forced and remote sense, provided they could be compelled into his service. There was also all the obscurity arising from elision, and from the most extravagant and hyperbolic epithets.

Eveline, though well acquainted with the Saxon language, soon left off listening to the singer, to reflect for a moment on the gay fabliaux and imaginative *lais* of the Norman minstrels, and then to anticipate, with anxious apprehension, what nature of visitation she might be exposed to in the mysterious chamber in which she was doomed to pass the night.

The hour of parting at length approached. At half an hour before mid-night, a period ascertained by the consumption of the huge waxen torch, the ball which was secured to it fell clanging into the brazen basin placed beneath, and announced to all the hour of rest. The old glee-man paused in his song, instantaneously, and in the middle of a stanza, and the household were all on foot at the signal, some retiring to their own apartments, others lighting torches or bearing lamps to conduct the visitors to their places of repose. Among these last was a bevy of bower-women, to whom the duty was assigned of conveying the Lady Eveline to her chamber for the night. Her aunt took a solemn leave of her, crossed her forehead, kissed it, and whispered in her ear, "Be courageous, and be fortunate."

"May not my bower-maiden, Rose Flammock, or my tire-woman, Dame Gillian, Raoul's wife, remain in the apartment with me for this night?" said Eveline.

"Flammock-Raoul!" repeated Ermengarde, angrily; "is thy household thus made up? The Flemings are the cold palsy to Britain, the Normans the burning fever."

"And the poor Welsh will add," said Rose, whose resentment began to surpass her awe for the ancient Saxon dame, "that the Anglo-Saxons were the original disease, and resemble a wasting pestilence."

"Thou art too bold, sweetheart," said the Lady Ermengarde, looking at the Flemish maiden from under her dark brows; "and yet there is wit in thy words. Saxon, Dane, and Norman, have rolled like successive billows over the land, each having strength to subdue what they lacked wisdom to keep. When shall it be otherwise?"

"When, Saxon, and Briton, and Norman, and Fleming," answered Rose, boldly, "shall learn to call themselves by one name, and think themselves alike children of the land they were born in."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Lady of Baldringham, in the tone of one half surprised, half-pleased. Then turning to her relation, she said, "There are words and wit in this maiden; see that she use but do not abuse them."

"She is as kind and faithful, as she is prompt and ready-witted," said Eveline. "I pray you, dearest aunt, let me use her company for this night."

"It may not be—it were dangerous to both. Alone you must learn your destiny, as have all the females of our race, excepting your grandmother, and what have been the consequences of her neglecting the rules of our house? Lo! her descendant stands before me an orphan in the very bloom of youth."

"I will go, then," said Eveline with a sigh of resignation; "and it shall never be said I incurred future woe, to shun present terror."

"Your attendants," said the Lady Ermengarde, "may occupy the anteroom, and be almost within your call. Berwine will show you the apartment—I cannot; for we, thou knowest, who have once entered it, return not thither again. Farewell, my child, and may heaven bless thee!"

With more of human emotion and sympathy than she had yet shown, the Lady again saluted Eveline, and signed to her to follow Berwine, who, attended by two damsels bearing torches, waited to conduct her to the dreaded apartment.

Their torches glared along the rudely built walls and dark arched roofs of one or two long winding passages; these by their light enabled them to descend the steps of a winding stair, whose inequality and ruggedness showed its antiquity; and finally led into a tolerably large chamber on the lower story of the edifice, to which some old hangings, a lively fire on the hearth, the moonbeams stealing through a latticed window, and the boughs of a myrtle plant which grew around the casement, gave no uncomfortable appearance. "This," said Berwine, "is the resting-place of your attendants," and she pointed to the couches which had been prepared for Rose and Dame Gillian; "we," she added, "proceed farther."

She then took a torch from the attendant maidens, both of whom seemed to shrink back with fear, which was readily caught by Dame Gillian, although she was not probably aware of the cause. But Rose Flammock, unbidden, followed her mistress without hesitation, as Berwine conducted her through a small wicket at the upper end of the apartment, clenched with many an iron nail, into a second but smaller anteroom or wardrobe, at the end of which was a similar door. This wardrobe had also its casement mantled with evergreens, and, like the former, it was faintly enlightened by the moonbeams.

Berwine paused here, and, pointing to Rose, demanded of Eveline, "Why does she follow?"

"To share my mistress's danger, be it what it may," answered Rose, with her characteristic readiness of speech and resolution.

"Speak," she said, "my dearest lady," grasping Eveline's hand, while she addressed her; "you will not drive your Rose from you? If I am less high-minded than one of your boasted race, I am bold and quick-witted in all honest service.—You tremble like the aspen! Do not go into this apartment—do not be gulled by all this pomp and mystery of terrible preparation; bid defiance to this antiquated, and, I think, half-pagan superstition."

"The Lady Eveline must go, minion," replied Berwine, sternly; "and she must go without any malapert adviser or companion."

"Must go—*must go!*" repeated Rose. "Is this language to a free and noble maiden?—Sweet lady, give me once but the least hint that you wish it, and their '*must go*' shall be put to the trial. I will call from the casement on the Norman cavaliers, and tell them we have fallen, into a den of witches, instead of a house of hospitality."

"Silence, madwoman," said Berwine, her voice quivering with anger and fear; "you know not who dwells in the next chamber."

"I will call those who will soon see to that," said Rose, flying to the casement, when Eveline, seizing her arm in her turn, compelled her to stop.

"I thank thy kindness, Rose," she said, "but it cannot help me in this matter. She who enters yonder door, must do so alone."

"Then I will enter it in your stead, my dearest lady," said Rose. "You are pale—you are cold—you will die with terror if you go on. There may be as much of trick as of supernatural agency in this matter—me they shall not deceive—or if some stern spirit craves a victim,—better Rose than her lady."

"Forbear, forbear," said Eveline, rousing up her own spirits; "you make me ashamed of myself. This is an ancient ordeal, which regards the females descended from the house of Baldringham as far as in the third degree, and them only. I did not indeed expect, in my present circumstances, to have been called upon to undergo it; but, since the hour summons me, I will meet it as freely as any of my ancestors."

So saying, she took the torch from the hand of Berwine, and wishing good-night to her and Rose, gently disengaged herself from the hold of the latter, and advanced into the mysterious chamber. Rose pressed after her so far as to see that it was an apartment of moderate dimensions, resembling that through which

they had last passed, and lighted by the moonbeams, which came through a window lying on the same range with those of the anterooms. More she could not see, for Eveline turned on the threshold, and kissing her at the same time, thrust her gently back into the smaller apartment which she had just left, shut the door of communication, and barred and bolted it, as if in security against her well-meant intrusion.

Berwine now exhorted Rose, as she valued her life, to retire into the first anteroom, where the beds were prepared, and betake herself, if not to rest, at least to silence and devotion; but the faithful Flemish girl stoutly refused her entreaties, and resisted her commands.

"Talk not to me of danger," she said; "here I remain, that I may be at least within hearing of my mistress's danger, and wo betide those who shall offer her injury!—Take notice, that twenty Norman spears surround this inhospitable dwelling, prompt to avenge whatsoever injury shall be offered to the daughter of Raymond Berenger."

"Reserve your threats for those who are mortal," said Berwine, in a low, but piercing whisper; "the owner of yonder chamber fears them not. Farewell—thy danger be on thine own head!"

She departed, leaving Rose strangely agitated by what had passed, and somewhat appalled at her last words. "These Saxons," said the maiden, within herself, "are but half converted after all, and hold many of their old hellish rites in the worship of elementary spirits. Their very saints are unlike to the saints of any Christian country, and have, as it were, a look of something savage and fiendish—their very names sound pagan and diabolical. It is fearful being alone here—and all is silent as death in the apartment into which my lady has been thus strangely compelled. Shall I call up Gillian?—but no—she has neither sense, nor courage, nor principle, to aid me on such an occasion—better alone than have a false friend for company. I will see if the Normans are on their post, since it is to them I must trust, if a moment of need should arrive."

Thus reflecting, Rose Flammock went to the window of the little apartment, in order to satisfy herself of the vigilance of the sentinels, and to ascertain the exact situation of the corps de garde. The moon was at the full, and enabled her to see with accuracy the nature of the ground without. In the first place, she was rather disappointed to find, that instead of being so near the earth as she supposed, the range of windows which gave light as well to the two anterooms as to the mysterious chamber itself, looked down upon an ancient moat, by which they were divided from the level ground on the farther side. The defence which this fosse afforded seemed to have been long neglected, and the bottom, entirely dry, was choked in many places with bushes and low trees, which rose up against the wall of the castle, and by means of which it seemed to Rose the windows might be easily scaled, and the mansion entered. From the level plain beyond, the space adjoining to the castle was in a considerable degree clear, and the moonbeams slumbered on its close and beautiful turf, mixed with long shadows of the towers and trees. Beyond this esplanade lay the forest ground, with a few gigantic oaks scattered individually along the skirt of its dark and ample domain, like champions, who take their ground of defiance in front of a line of arrayed battle.

The calm beauty and repose of a scene so lovely, the stillness of all around, and the more matured reflections which the whole suggested, quieted, in some measure, the apprehensions which the events of the evening had inspired. "After all," she reflected, "why should I be so anxious on account of the Lady Eveline? There is among the proud Normans and the dogged Saxons scarce a single family of note, but must needs be held distinguished from others by some superstitious observance peculiar to their race, as if they thought it scorn to go to Heaven like a poor simple Fleming, such as I am.—Could I but see the Norman sentinel, I would hold myself satisfied with my mistress's security.—And yonder one stalks along the gloom, wrapt in his long white mantle, and the moon tipping the point of his lance with silver.—What ho, Sir Cavalier!"

The Norman turned his steps, and approached the ditch as she spoke. "What is your pleasure, damsel?" he demanded.

"The window next to mine is that of the Lady Eveline Berenger, whom you are appointed to guard. Please to give heedful watch upon this side of the castle."

"Doubt it not, lady," answered the cavalier; and enveloping himself in his long *chappe*, or military watch-cloak, he withdrew to a large oak tree at some distance, and stood there with folded arms, and leaning on his lance, more like a trophy of armour than a living warrior.

Imboldened by the consciousness, that in case of need succour was close at hand, Rose drew back into her little chamber, and having ascertained, by listening, that there was no noise or stirring in that of Eveline, she began to make some preparations for her own repose. For this purpose she went into the outward ante-room, where Dame Gillian, whose fears had given way to the soporiferous effects of a copious draught of *lithe-alos*, (mild ale, of the first strength and quality,) slept as sound a sleep as that generous Saxon beverage could procure.

Muttering an indignant censure on her sloth and indifference, Rose caught, from the empty couch which had been destined for her own use, the upper covering, and dragging it with her into the inner ante-room, disposed it so as, with the assistance of the rushes which strewed that apartment, to form a sort of couch, upon which, half seated, half reclined, she resolved to pass the night in as close attendance upon her mistress as circumstances permitted. Thus seated, her eye on the pale planet which sailed in full glory through the blue sky of midnight, she proposed to herself that sleep should not visit her eyelids till the dawn of morning should assure her of Eveline's safety.

Her thoughts, meanwhile, rested on the boundless and shadowy world beyond the grave, and on the great and perhaps yet undecided question, whether the separation of its inhabitants from those of this temporal sphere is absolute and decided, or whether, influenced by motives which we cannot appreciate, they continue to hold shadowy communication with those yet existing in earthly reality of flesh and blood? To have denied this, would, in the age of crusades and of miracles, have incurred the guilt of heresy; but Rose's firm good sense led her to doubt at least the frequency of supernatural interference, and she comforted herself with an opinion, contradicted, however, by her own involuntary starts and shudderings at every leaf which moved, that, in submitting to the performance of the rite imposed on her, Eveline incurred no real danger, and only sacrificed to an obsolete family superstition.

As this conviction strengthened on Rose's mind, her purpose of vigilance began to decline—her thoughts wandered to objects towards which they were not directed, like sheep which stray beyond the charge of their shepherd—her eyes no longer brought back to her a distinct apprehension of the broad, round, silvery orb on which they continued to gaze. At length they closed, and seated on the folded mantle, her back resting against the wall of the apartment, and her white arms folded on her bosom, Rose Flammock fell fast asleep.

Her repose was fearfully broken by a shrill and piercing shriek from the apartment where her lady reposed. To start up and fly to the door was the work of a moment with the generous girl, who never permitted fear to struggle with love or duty. The door was secured with both bar and bolt; and another fainter scream, or rather groan, seemed to say, aid must be instant, or in vain. Rose next rushed to the window, and screamed rather than called to the Norman soldier, who, distinguished by the white folds of his watch-cloak, still retained his position under the old oak-tree.

At the cry of "Help, help!—the Lady Eveline is murdered!" the seeming statue, starting at once into active exertion, sped with the swiftness of a race-horse to the brink of the moat, and was about to cross it, opposite to the spot where Rose stood at the open casement, urging him to speed by voice and gesture.

"Not here—not here!" she exclaimed, with breathless precipitation, as she saw him make towards her—"the window to the right—scale it, for God's sake, and undo the door of communication."

The soldier seemed to comprehend her—he dashed into the moat without hesitation, securing himself by catching at the boughs of trees as he descended. In one moment he vanished among the underwood; and in another, availing himself of the branches of a dwarf oak, Rose saw him upon her right, and close to the window of the fatal apartment. One fear remained—the casement might be secured against entrance from without—but no! at the thrust of the Norman it yielded, and its clasps or fastenings being worn with time, fell inward with a crash which even Dame Gillian's slumbers were unable to resist.

Echoing scream upon scream, in the usual fashion of fools and cowards, she entered the cabinet from the ante-room, just as the door of Eveline's chamber opened, and the soldier appeared, bearing in his arms the half-undressed and lifeless form of the Norman maiden herself. Without speaking a word, he placed her in Rose's arms, and with the same precipitation with which he had entered, threw himself out of the opened window from which Rose had summoned him.

Gillian, half distracted with fear and wonder, heaped exclamations on questions, and mingled questions with cries for help, till Rose sternly rebuked her in a tone which seemed to recall her scattered senses. She became then composed enough to fetch a lamp which remained lighted in the room she had left, and to render herself at least partly useful in suggesting and applying the usual modes for recalling the suspended sense. In this they at length succeeded, for Eveline fetched a

fuller sigh, and opened her eyes; but presently shut them again, and letting her head drop on Rose's bosom, fell into a strong shuddering fit; while her faithful damsel, chafing her hands and her temples alternately with affectionate assiduity, and mingling caresses with these efforts, exclaimed aloud, "She lives!—She is recovering!—Praised be God!"

"Praised be God!" was echoed in a solemn tone from the window of the apartment; and turning towards it in terror, Rose beheld the armed and plumed head of the soldier who had come so opportunely to their assistance, and who, supported by his arms, had raised himself so high as to be able to look into the interior of the cabinet.

Rose immediately ran towards him. "Go—go—good friend," she said; "the lady recovers—your reward shall await you another time. Go— begone!—yet stay—keep on your post, and I will call you if there is farther need. Begone—be faithful, and be secret."

The soldier obeyed without answering a word, and she presently saw him descend into the moat. Rose then returned back to her mistress, whom she found supported by Gillian, moaning feebly, and muttering hurried and unintelligible ejaculations, all intimating that she had laboured under a violent shock sustained from some alarming cause.

Dame Gillian had no sooner recovered some degree of self- possession, than her curiosity became active in proportion. "What means all this?" she said to Rose; "what has been doing among you?"

"I do not know," replied Rose.

"If you do not," said Gillian, "who should?—Shall I call the other women, and raise the house?"

"Not for your life," said Rose, "till my lady is able to give her own orders; and for this apartment, so help me Heaven, as I will do my best to discover the secrets it contains!—Support my mistress the whilst."

So saying, she took the lamp in her hand, and, crossing her brow, stepped boldly across the mysterious threshold, and, holding up the light, surveyed the apartment.

It was merely an old vaulted chamber, of very moderate dimensions. In one corner was an image of the Virgin, rudely cut, and placed above a Saxon font of curious workmanship. There were two seats and a couch, covered with coarse tapestry, on which it seemed that Eveline had been reposing. The fragments of the shattered casement lay on the floor; but that opening had been only made when the soldier forced it in, and she saw no other access by which a stranger could have entered an apartment, the ordinary access to which was barred and bolted.

Rose felt the influence of those terrors which she had hitherto surmounted; she cast her mantle hastily around her head, as if to shroud her sight from some blighting vision, and tripping back to the cabinet, with more speed and a less firm step than when she left it, she directed Gillian to lend her assistance in conveying Eveline to the next room; and having done so, carefully secured the door of communication, as if to put a barrier betwixt them, and the suspected danger.

The Lady Eveline was now so far recovered that she could sit up, and was trying to speak, though but faintly. "Rose," she said at length, "I have seen her—my doom is sealed."

Rose immediately recollected the imprudence of suffering Gillian to hear what her mistress might say at such an awful moment, and hastily adopting the proposal she had before declined, desired her to go and call other two maidens of their mistress's household.

"And where am I to find them in this house," said Dame Gillian, "where strange men run about one chamber at midnight, and devils, for aught I know, frequent the rest of the habitation?"

"Find them where you can," said Rose, sharply; "but begone presently."

Gillian withdrew lingeringly, and muttering at the same time something which could not distinctly be understood. No sooner was she gone, than Rose, giving way to the enthusiastic affection which she felt for her mistress, implored her, in the most tender terms, to open her eyes, (for she had again closed them,) and speak to Rose, her own Rose, who was ready, if necessary, to die by her mistress's side.

"To-morrow—to-morrow, Rose," murmured Eveline—"I cannot speak at present."

"Only disburden your mind with one word—tell what has thus alarmed you—what danger you apprehend."

"I have seen her," answered Eveline—"I have seen the tenant of yonder chamber—the vision fatal to my race!—Urge me no more—to- morrow you shall know all." [Footnote: The idea of the Bahr-Geist was taken from a passage in the Memoirs of Lady Fanshaw, which have since been given to the public, and received with deserved approbation.

The original runs as follows. Lady Fanshaw, shifting among her friends in Ireland, like other sound loyalists of the period, tells her story thus:—

"From thence we went to the Lady Honor O'Brien's, a lady that went for a maid, but few believed it. She was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Thomond. There we staid three nights—the first of which I was surprised at being laid in a chamber, where, when about one o'clock, I heard a voice that awakened me. I drew the curtain, and in the casement of the window I saw, by the light of the moon, a woman leaning through the casement into the room, in white, with red hair and pale and ghastly complexion. She spoke loud, and in a tone I had never heard, thrice. "A horse;" and then, with a sigh more like the wind than breath, she vanished, and to me her body looked more like a thick cloud than substance. I was so much frightened, that my hair stood on end, and my night- clothes fell off. I pulled and pinched your father, who never awoke during the disorder I was in, but at last was much surprised to see me in this fright, and more so when I related the story and showed him the window opened. Neither of us slept any more that night; but he entertained me by telling me how much more these apparitions were common in this country than in England; and we concluded the cause to be the great superstition of the Irish, and the want of that knowing faith which should defend them from the power of the devil, which he exercises among them very much. About five o'clock the lady of the house came to see us, saying, she had not been in bed all night, because a cousin O'Brien of hers, whose ancestors had owned that house, had desired her to stay with him in his chamber, and that he died at two o'clock; and she said, I wish you to have had no disturbance, for 'tis the custom of the place, that when any of the family are dying, the shape of a woman appears every night in the window until they be dead. This woman was many ages ago got with child by the owner of this place, who murdered her in his garden, and flung her into the river under the window; but truly I thought not of it when I lodged you here, it being the best room in the house! We made little reply to her speech, but disposed ourselves to be gone suddenly."]

As Gillian entered with two of the maidens of her mistress's household, they removed the Lady Eveline, by Rose's directions, into a chamber at some distance which the latter had occupied, and placed her in one of their beds, where Rose, dismissing the others (Gillian excepted) to seek repose where they could find it, continued to watch her mistress. For some time she continued very much disturbed, but, gradually, fatigue, and the influence of some narcotic which Gillian had sense enough to recommend and prepare, seemed to compose her spirits. She fell into a deep slumber, from which she did not awaken until the sun was high over the distant hills.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

I	see	a	hand	you	cannot	see,
Which		beckons		me		away;
I	hear	a	voice	you	cannot	hear,
Which	says	I	must		not	stay.

MALLET.

When Eveline first opened her eyes, it seemed to be without any recollection of what had passed on the night preceding. She looked round the apartment, which was coarsely and scantily furnished, as one destined for the use of domestics and menials, and said to Rose, with a smile, "Our good kinswoman maintains the ancient Saxon hospitality at a homely rate, so far as lodging is concerned. I could have willingly parted with last night's profuse supper, to have obtained a bed of a softer texture. Methinks my limbs feel as if I had been under all the flails of a Franklin's barn-yard."

"I am glad to see you so pleasant, madam," answered Rose, discreetly avoiding any reference to the events of the night before.

Dame Gillian was not so scrupulous. "Your ladyship last night lay down on a better bed than this," she said, "unless I am much mistaken; and Rose Flammock and yourself know best why you left it."

If a look could have killed, Dame Gillian would have been in deadly peril from that which Rose shot at her, by way of rebuke for this ill-advised communication. It had instantly the effect which was to be apprehended, for Lady Eveline seemed at first surprised and confused; then, as recollections of the past arranged themselves in her memory, she folded her hands, looked on the ground, and wept bitterly, with much agitation.

Rose entreated her to be comforted, and offered to fetch the old Saxon chaplain of the house to administer spiritual consolation, if her grief rejected temporal comfort.

"No—call him not," said Eveline, raising her head and drying her eyes—"I have had enough of Saxon kindness. What a fool was I to expect, in that hard and unfeeling woman, any commiseration for my youth—my late sufferings—my orphan condition! I will not permit her a poor triumph over the Norman blood of Berenger, by letting her see how much I have suffered under her inhuman infliction. But first, Rose, answer me truly, was any inmate of Baldringham witness to my distress last night?"

Rose assured her that she had been tended exclusively by her own retinue, herself and Gillian, Blanche and Ternotte. She seemed to receive satisfaction from this assurance. "Hear me, both of you," she said, "and observe my words, as you love and as you fear me. Let no syllable be breathed from your lips of what has happened this night. Carry the same charge to my maidens. Lend me thine instant aid, Gillian, and thine, my dearest Rose, to change these disordered garments, and arrange this dishevelled hair. It was a poor vengeance she sought, and all because of my country. I am resolved she shall not see the slightest trace of the sufferings she has inflicted."

As she spoke thus, her eyes flashed with indignation, which seemed to dry up the tears that had before filled them. Rose saw the change of her manner with a mixture of pleasure and concern, being aware that her mistress's predominant failing was incident to her, as a spoiled child, who, accustomed to be treated with kindness, deference, and indulgence, by all around her, was apt to resent warmly whatever resembled neglect or contradiction.

"God knows," said the faithful bower-maiden, "I would hold my hand out to catch drops of molten lead, rather than endure your tears; and yet, my sweet mistress, I would rather at present see you grieved than angry. This ancient lady hath, it would seem, but acted according to some old superstitious rite of her family, which is in part yours. Her name is respectable, both from her conduct and possessions; and hard pressed as you are by the Normans, with whom your kinswoman, the Prioress, is sure to take part. I was in hope you might have had some shelter and countenance from the Lady of Baldringham."

"Never, Rose, never," answered Eveline; "you know not—you cannot guess what she has made me suffer—exposing me to witchcraft and fiends. Thyselself said it, and said it truly—the Saxons are still half Pagans, void of Christianity, as of nurture and kindness."

"Ay, but," replied Rose, "I spoke then to dissuade you from a danger now that the danger is passed and over, I may judge of it otherwise."

"Speak not for them, Rose," replied Eveline, angrily; "no innocent victim was ever offered up at the altar of a fiend with more indifference than my father's kinswoman delivered up me—me, an orphan, bereaved of my natural and powerful support. I hate her cruelty—I hate her house—I hate the thought of all that has happened here—of all, Rose, except thy matchless faith and fearless attachment. Go, bid our train saddle directly—I will be gone instantly—I will not attire myself" she added, rejecting the assistance she had at first required—"I will have no ceremony—tarry for no leave-taking."

In the hurried and agitated manner of her mistress, Rose recognized with anxiety another mood of the same irritable and excited temperament, which had before discharged itself in tears and fits. But perceiving, at the same time, that remonstrance was in vain, she gave the necessary orders for collecting their company, saddling, and preparing for departure; hoping, that as her mistress removed to a farther distance from the scene where her mind had received so severe a shock, her equanimity might, by degrees, be restored.

Dame Gillian, accordingly, was busied with arranging the packages of her lady, and all the rest of Lady Eveline's retinue in preparing for instant departure, when, preceded by her steward, who acted also as a sort of gentleman-usher, leaning upon her confidential Berwine, and followed by two or three more of the most distinguished of her household, with looks of displeasure on her ancient yet lofty brow, the Lady Ermengarde entered the apartment.

Eveline, with a trembling and hurried hand, a burning cheek, and other signs of agitation, was herself busied about the arrangement of some baggage, when her relation made her appearance. At once, to Rose's great surprise, she exerted a strong command over herself, and, repressing every external appearance of disorder, she advanced to meet her relation, with a calm and haughty stateliness equal to her own.

"I come to give you good morning, our niece," said Ermengarde, haughtily indeed, yet with more deference than she seemed at first to have intended, so much did the bearing of Eveline impose respect upon her;—"I find that you have been pleased to shift that chamber which was assigned you, in conformity with the ancient custom of this household, and betake yourself to the apartment of a menial."

"Are you surprised at that, lady?" demanded Eveline in her turn; "or are you disappointed that you find me not a corpse, within the limits of the chamber which your hospitality and affection allotted to me?"

"Your sleep, then, has been broken?" said Ermengarde, looking fixedly at the Lady Eveline, as she spoke.

"If I complain not, madam, the evil must be deemed of little consequence. What has happened is over and passed, and it is not my intention to trouble you with the recital."

"She of the ruddy finger," replied Ermengarde, triumphantly, "loves not the blood of the stranger."

"She had less reason, while she walked the earth, to love that of the Saxon," said Eveline, "unless her legend speaks false in that matter; and unless, as I well suspect, your house is haunted, not by the soul of the dead who suffered within its walls, but by evil spirits, such as the descendants of Hengist and Horsa are said still in secret to worship."

"You are pleasant, maiden," replied the old lady, scornfully, "or, if your words are meant in earnest, the shaft of your censure has glanced aside. A house, blessed by the holy Saint Dunstan, and by the royal and holy Confessor, is no abode for evil spirits."

"The house of Baldringham," replied Eveline, "is no abode for those who fear such spirits; and as I will, with all humility, avow myself of the number, I shall presently leave it to the custody of Saint Dunstan."

"Not till you have broken your fast, I trust?" said the Lady of Baldringham; "you will not, I hope, do my years and our relationship such foul disgrace?"

"Pardon me, madam," replied the Lady Eveline; "those who have experienced your hospitality at night, have little occasion for breakfast in the morning.—Rose, are not those loitering knaves assembled in the court-yard, or are they yet on their couches, making up for the slumber they have lost by midnight disturbances?"

Rose announced that her train was in the court, and mounted; when, with a low reverence, Eveline endeavoured to pass her relation, and leave the apartment without farther ceremony. Ermengarde at first confronted her with a grim and furious glance, which seemed to show a soul fraught with more rage than the thin blood and rigid features of extreme old age had the power of expressing, and raised her ebony staff as if about even to proceed to some act of personal violence. But she changed her purpose, and suddenly made way for Eveline, who passed without farther parley; and as she descended the staircase, which conducted from the apartment to the gateway, she heard the voice of her aunt behind her, like that of an aged and offended sibyl, denouncing wrath and woe upon her insolence and presumption.

"Pride," she exclaimed, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. She who scorneth the house of her forefathers, a stone from its battlements shall crush her! She who mocks the gray hairs of a parent, never shall one of her own locks be silvered with age! She who wed's with a man of war and of blood, her end shall neither be peaceful nor bloodless!"

Hurrying to escape from these and other ominous denunciations, Eveline rushed from the house, mounted her palfrey with the precipitation of a fugitive, and, surrounded by her attendants, who had caught a part of her alarm, though without conjecturing the cause, rode hastily into the forest; old Raoul, who was well acquainted with the country, acting as their guide.

Agitated more than she was willing to confess to herself, by thus leaving the habitation of so near a relation, loaded with maledictions, instead of the blessings which are usually bestowed on a departing kinswoman, Eveline hastened forward, until the huge oak-trees with intervening arms had hidden from her view the fatal mansion.

The trampling and galloping of horse was soon after heard, announcing the approach of the patrol left by the Constable for the protection of the mansion, and who now, collecting from their different stations, came prepared to attend the Lady Eveline on her farther road to Gloucester, great part of which lay through the extensive forest of Deane, then a silvan region of large extent, though now much denuded of trees for the service of the iron mines. The Cavaliers came up to join the retinue of Lady Eveline, with armour glittering in the morning rays, trumpets sounding, horses prancing, neighing, and thrown, each by his chivalrous rider, into the attitude best qualified to exhibit the beauty of the steed and dexterity of the horseman; while their lances, streaming with long penoncelles, were brandished in every manner which could display elation of heart and readiness of hand. The sense of the military character of her countrymen of Normandy gave to Eveline a feeling at once of security and of triumph, which operated towards the dispelling of her gloomy thoughts, and of the feverish disorder which affected her nerves. The rising sun also—the song of the birds among the bowers—the lowing of the cattle as they were driven to pasture—the sight of the hind, who, with her fawn trotting by her side, often crossed some forest glade within view of the travellers,—all contributed to dispel the terror of Eveline's nocturnal visions, and soothe to rest the more angry passions which had agitated her bosom at her departure from Baldringham. She suffered her palfrey to slacken his pace, and, with female attention to propriety, began to adjust her riding robes, and compose her head-dress, disordered in her hasty departure. Rose saw her cheek assume a paler but more settled hue, instead of the angry hectic which had coloured it—saw her eye become more steady as she looked with a sort of triumph upon her military attendants, and pardoned (what on other occasions she would probably have made some reply to) her enthusiastic exclamations in praise of her countrymen.

"We journey safe," said Eveline, "under the care of the princely and victorious Normans. Theirs is the noble wrath of the lion, which destroys or is appeased at once—there is no guile in their romantic affection, no sullenness mixed with their generous indignation—they know the duties of the hall as well as those of battle; and were they to be surpassed in the arts of war, (which will only be when Plinlimmon is removed from its base,) they would still remain superior to every other people in generosity and courtesy."

"If I do not feel all their merits so strongly as if I shared their blood," said Rose, "I am at least glad to see them around us, in woods which are said to abound with dangers of various kinds. And I confess, my heart is the lighter, that I can now no longer observe the least vestige of that ancient mansion, in which we passed so unpleasant a night, and the recollection of which will always be odious to me."

Eveline looked sharply at her. "Confess the truth, Rose; thou wouldst give thy best kirtle to know all of my horrible adventure."

"It is but confessing that I am a woman," answered Rose; "and did I say a man, I dare say the difference of sex would imply but a small abatement of curiosity."

"Thou makest no parade of other feelings, which prompt thee to inquire into my fortunes," said Eveline; "but, sweet Rose, I give thee not the less credit for them. Believe me, thou shalt know all—but, I think, not now."

"At your pleasure," said Rose; "and yet, methinks, the bearing in your solitary bosom such a fearful secret will only render the weight more intolerable. On my silence you may rely as on that of the Holy Image, which hears us confess what it never reveals. Besides, such things become familiar to the imagination when they have been spoken of, and that which is familiar gradually becomes stripped of its terrors."

"Thou speakest with reason, my prudent Rose; and surely in this gallant troop, borne like a flower on a bush by my good palfrey Yseulte—fresh gales blowing round us, flowers opening and birds singing, and having thee by my bridle-rein, I ought to feel this a fitting time to communicate what thou hast so good a title to know. And—yes!—thou shalt know all!—Thou art not, I presume, ignorant of the qualities of what the Saxons of this land call a *Bahrgeist*?"

"Pardon me, lady," answered Rose, "my father discouraged my listening to such discourses. I might see evil spirits enough, he said, without my imagination being taught to form, such as were fantastical. The word *Bahr-geist*, I have heard used by Gillian and other Saxons; but to me it only conveys some idea of indefinite terror, of which I never asked nor received an explanation."

"Know then," said Eveline, "it is a spectre, usually the image of a departed person, who, either for wrong sustained in some particular place during life, or through treasure hidden there, or from some such other cause, haunts the spot from time to time, becomes familiar to those who dwell there, takes an interest in their fate, occasionally for good, in other instances or times for evil. The *Bahr-geist* is, therefore, sometimes regarded as the good genius, sometimes as the avenging fiend, attached to particular families and classes of men. It is the lot of the family of Baldringham (of no mean note in other respects) to be subject to the visits of such a being."

"May I ask the cause (if it be known) of such visitation?" said Rose, desirous to avail herself to the uttermost of the communicative mood of her young lady, which might not perhaps last very long.

"I know the legend but imperfectly," replied Eveline, proceeding with a degree of calmness, the result of strong exertion over her mental anxiety, "but in general it runs thus:—Baldrick, the Saxon hero who first possessed yonder dwelling, became enamoured of a fair Briton, said to have been descended from those Druids of whom the Welsh speak so much, and deemed not unacquainted with the arts of sorcery which they practised, when they offered up human sacrifices amid those circles of unhewn and living rock, of which thou hast seen so many. After more than two years' wedlock, Baldrick became weary of his wife to such a point, that he formed the cruel resolution of putting her to death. Some say he doubted her fidelity—some that the matter was pressed on him by the church, as she was suspected of heresy—some that he removed her to make way for a more wealthy marriage—but all agree in the result. He sent two of his Cnichts to the house of Baldringham, to put to death the unfortunate Vanda, and commanded them to bring him the ring which had circled her finger on the day of wedlock, in token that his orders were accomplished. The men were ruthless in their office; they strangled Vanda in yonder apartment, and as the hand was so swollen that no effort could draw off the ring, they obtained possession of it by severing the finger. But long before the return of those cruel perpetrators of her death, the shadow of Vanda had appeared before her appalled husband, and holding up to him her bloody hand, made him fearfully sensible how well his savage commands had been obeyed. After haunting him in peace and war, in desert, court, and camp, until he died despairingly on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the *Bahr-geist*, or ghost of the murdered Vanda, became so terrible in the House of Baldringham, that the succour of Saint Dunstan was itself scarcely sufficient to put bounds to her visitation. Yea, the blessed saint, when he had succeeded in his exorcism, did, in requital of Baldrick's crime, impose a strong and enduring penalty upon every female descendant of the house in the third degree; namely, that once in their lives, and before their twenty-first year, they should each spend a solitary night in the chamber of the murdered Vanda, saying therein certain prayers, as well for her repose, as for the suffering soul of her murderer. During that awful space, it is generally believed that the spirit of the murdered person appears to the female who observes the vigil, and shows some sign of her future good or bad fortune. If favourable, she appears with a smiling aspect, and crosses them with her unbloodied hand; but she announces evil fortune by showing the hand from which the finger was severed, with a stern countenance, as if resenting upon the descendant of her husband his inhuman cruelty. Sometimes she is said to speak. These particulars I learned long since from an old Saxon dame, the mother of our Margery, who had been an attendant on my grandmother, and left the House of Baldringham when she made her escape from it with my father's father."

"Did your grandmother ever render this homage," said Rose, "which seems to me—under favour of St. Dunstan—to bring humanity into too close intercourse with a being of a doubtful nature?"

"My grandfather thought so, and never permitted my grandmother to revisit the house of Baldringham after her marriage; hence disunion betwixt him and his son on the one part, and the members of that family on the other. They laid sundry misfortunes, and particularly the loss of male heirs which at that time befell them, to my parent's not having done the hereditary homage to the bloody-fingered *Bahr-geist*."

"And how could you, my dearest lady," said Rose, "knowing that they held among them a usage so hideous, think of accepting the invitation of Lady Ermengarde?"

"I can hardly answer you the question," answered Eveline. "Partly I feared my father's recent calamity, to be slain (as I have heard him say his aunt once prophesied of him) by the enemy he most despised, might be the result of this rite having been neglected; and partly I hoped, that if my mind should be appalled

at the danger, when it presented itself closer to my eye, it could not be urged on me in courtesy and humanity. You saw how soon my cruel- hearted relative pounced upon the opportunity, and how impossible it became for me, bearing the name, and, I trust, the spirit of Berenger, to escape from the net in which I had involved myself."

"No regard for name or rank should have engaged me," replied Rose, "to place myself where apprehension alone, even without the terrors of a real visitation, might have punished my presumption with insanity. But what, in the name of Heaven, did you see at this horrible rendezvous?"

"Ay, there is the question," said Eveline, raising her hand to her brow—"how I could witness that which I distinctly saw, yet be able to retain command of thought and intellect!—I had recited the prescribed devotions for the murderer and his victim, and sitting down on the couch which was assigned me, had laid aside such of my clothes as might impede my rest—I had surmounted, in short, the first shock which I experienced in committing myself to this mysterious chamber, and I hoped to pass the night in slumber as sound as my thoughts were innocent. But I was fearfully disappointed. I cannot judge how long I had slept, when my bosom was oppressed by an unusual weight, which seemed at once to stifle my voice, stop the beating of my heart, and prevent me from drawing my breath; and when I looked up to discover the cause of this horrible suffocation, the form of the murdered British matron stood over my couch taller than life, shadowy, and with a countenance where traits of dignity and beauty were mingled with a fierce expression of vengeful exultation. She held over me the hand which bore the bloody marks of her husband's cruelty, and seemed as if she signed the cross, devoting me to destruction; while, with an unearthly tone, she uttered these words:—

Widow'd wife, and married maid,
Betrothed, betrayer, and betray'd!

The phantom stooped over me as she spoke, and lowered her gory fingers, as if to touch my face, when, terror giving me the power of which it at first deprived me, I screamed aloud—the casement of the apartment was thrown open with a loud noise,—and—But what signifies my telling all this to thee, Rose, who show so plainly, by the movement of eye and lip, that you consider me as a silly and childish dreamer?"

"Be not angry, my dear lady," said Rose; "I do indeed believe that the witch we call Mara [Footnote: Ephialtes, or Nightmare] has been dealing with you; but she, you know, is by leeches considered as no real phantom, but solely the creation of our own imagination, disordered by causes which arise from bodily indisposition."

"Thou art learned, maiden," said Eveline, rather peevishly; "but when I assure thee that my better angel came to my assistance in a human form.—that at his appearance the fiend vanished—and that he transported me in his arms out of the chamber of terror, I think thou wilt, as a good Christian, put more faith in that which I tell you."

"Indeed, indeed, my sweetest mistress, I cannot," replied Rose. "It is even that circumstance of the guardian angel which makes me consider the whole as a dream. A Norman sentinel, whom I myself called from his post on purpose, did indeed come to your assistance, and, breaking into your apartment, transported you to that where I myself received you from his arms in a lifeless condition."

"A Norman soldier, ha!" said Eveline, colouring extremely; "and to whom, maiden, did you dare give commission to break into my sleeping chamber?"

"Your eyes flash anger, madam, but is it reasonable they should?— Did I not hear your screams of agony, and was I to stand fettered by ceremony at such a moment?—no more than if the castle had been on fire."

"I ask you again, Rose," said her mistress, still with discomposure, though less angrily than at first, "whom you directed to break into my apartment?"

"Indeed, I know not, lady," said Rose; "for beside that he was muffled in his mantle, little chance was there of my knowing his features, even had I seen them fully. But I can soon discover the cavalier; and I will set about it, that I may give him the reward I promised, and warn him to be silent and discreet in this matter."

"Do so," said Eveline; "and if you find him among those soldiers who attend us, I will indeed lean to thine opinion, and think that fantasy had the chief share in the evils I have endured the last night."

Rose struck her palfrey with the rod, and, accompanied by her mistress, rode up to Philip Guarine, the Constable's squire, who for the present commanded their little escort. "Good Guarine," she said, "I had talk with one of these sentinels last night from my window, and he did me some service, for which I promised him recompense—Will you inquire for the man, that I may pay him his guerdon?"

"Truly, I will owe him a guerdon, also, pretty maiden," answered the squire; "for if a lance of them approached near enough the house to hold speech from the windows, he transgressed the precise orders of his watch."

"Tush! you must forgive that for my sake," said Rose. "I warrant, had I called on yourself, stout Guarine, I should have had influence to bring you under my chamber window."

Guarine laughed, and shrugged his shoulders. "True it is," he said, "when women are in place, discipline is in danger."

He then went to make the necessary inquiries among his band, and returned with the assurance, that his soldiers, generally and severally, denied having approached the mansion of the Lady Ermengarde on the preceding night.

"Thou seest, Rose," said Eveline, with a significant look to her attendant.

"The poor rogues are afraid of Guarine's severity," said Rose, "and dare not tell the truth—I shall have some one in private claiming the reward of me."

"I would I had the privilege myself, damsel," said Guarine; "but for these fellows, they are not so timorous as you suppose them, being even too ready to avouch their roguery when it hath less excuse—Besides, I promised them impunity.—Have you any thing farther to order?"

"Nothing, good Guarine," said Eveline; "only this small donative to procure wine for thy soldiers, that they may spend the next night more merrily than the last.— And now he is gone,—Maiden, thou must, I think, be now well aware, that what thou sawest was no earthly being?"

"I must believe mine own ears and eyes, madam," replied Rose.

"Do—but allow me the same privilege," answered Eveline. "Believe me that my deliverer (for so I must call him) bore the features of one who neither was, nor could be, in the neighbourhood of Baldringham. Tell me but one thing—What dost thou think of this extraordinary prediction—

Widow'd wife, and wedded maid,
Betrothed, betrayer, and betray'd!

Thou wilt say it is an idle invention of my brain—but think it for a moment the speech of a true diviner, and what wouldst thou say of it?"

"That you may be betrayed, my dearest lady, but never can be a betrayer," answered Rose, with animation.

Eveline reached her hand out to her friend, and as she pressed affectionately that which Rose gave in return, she whispered to her with energy, "I thank thee for the judgment, which my own heart confirms."

A cloud of dust now announced the approach of the Constable of Chester and his retinue, augmented by the attendance of his host Sir William Herbert, and some of his neighbours and kinsmen, who came to pay their respects to the orphan of the Garde Doloureuse, by which appellation Eveline was known upon her passage through their territory.

Eveline remarked, that, at their greeting, De Lacy looked with displeased surprise at the disarrangement of her dress and equipage, which her hasty departure from Baldringham had necessarily occasioned; and she was, on her part, struck with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, "I am not to be treated as an ordinary person, who may be received with negligence, and treated slightly with impunity." For the first time, she thought that, though always deficient in grace and beauty, the Constable's countenance was formed to express the more angry passions with force and vivacity, and that she who shared his rank and name must lay her account with the implicit surrender of her will and wishes to those of an arbitrary lord and master.

But the cloud soon passed from the Constable's brow; and in the conversation which he afterwards maintained with Herbert and the other knights and gentlemen, who from time to time came to greet and accompany them for a little way on their journey, Eveline had occasion to admire his superiority, both of sense and expression, and to remark the attention and deference with which his words were listened to by men too high in rank, and too proud, readily to admit any pre-eminence that was not founded on acknowledged merit. The regard of women is generally much influenced by the estimation which an individual maintains in the

opinion of men; and Eveline, when she concluded her journey in the Benedictine nunnery in Gloucester, could not think without respect upon the renowned warrior, and celebrated politician, whose acknowledged abilities appeared to place him above every one whom she had seen approach him. His wife, Eveline thought, (and she was not without ambition,) if relinquishing some of those qualities in a husband which are in youth most captivating to the female imagination, must be still generally honoured and respected, and have contentment, if not romantic felicity, within her reach.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

The Lady Eveline remained nearly four months with her aunt, the Abbess of the Benedictine nunnery, under whose auspices the Constable of Chester saw his suit advance and prosper as it would probably have done under that of the deceased Raymond Berenger, her brother. It is probable, however, that, but for the supposed vision of the Virgin, and the vow of gratitude which that supposed vision had called forth, the natural dislike of so young a person to a match so unequal in years, might have effectually opposed his success. Indeed Eveline, while honouring the Constable's virtues, doing justice to his high character, and admiring his talents, could never altogether divest herself of a secret fear of him, which, while it prevented her from expressing any direct disapprobation of his addresses, caused her sometimes to shudder, she scarce knew why, at the idea of their becoming successful.

The ominous words, "betraying and betrayed," would then occur to her memory; and when her aunt (the period of the deepest mourning being elapsed) had fixed a period for her betrothal, she looked forward to it with a feeling of terror, for which she was unable to account to herself, and which, as well as the particulars of her dream, she concealed even from Father Aldrovand in the hours of confession. It was not aversion to the Constable—it was far less preference to any other suitor—it was one of those instinctive movements and emotions by which Nature seems to warn us of approaching danger, though furnishing no information respecting its nature, and suggesting no means of escaping from it.

So strong were these intervals of apprehension, that if they had been seconded by the remonstrances of Rose Flammock, as formerly, they might perhaps have led to Eveline's yet forming some resolution unfavourable to the suit of the Constable. But, still more zealous for her lady's honour than even for her happiness, Rose had strictly forborne every effort which could affect Eveline's purpose, when she had once expressed her approbation of De Lacy's addresses; and whatever she thought or anticipated concerning the proposed marriage, she seemed from that moment to consider it as an event which must necessarily take place.

De Lacy himself, as he learned more intimately to know the merit of the prize which he was desirous of possessing, looked forward with different feelings towards the union, than those with which he had first proposed the measure to Raymond Berenger. It was then a mere match of interest and convenience, which had occurred to the mind of a proud and politic feudal lord, as the best mode of consolidating the power and perpetuating the line of his family. Nor did even the splendour of Eveline's beauty make that impression upon De Lacy, which it was calculated to do on the fiery and impassioned chivalry of the age. He was past that period of life when the wise are captivated by outward form, and might have said with truth, as well as with discretion, that he could have wished his beautiful bride several years older, and possessed of a more moderate portion of personal charms, in order to have rendered the match more fitted for his own age and disposition. This stoicism, however, vanished, when, on repeated interviews with his destined bride, he found that she was indeed inexperienced in life, but desirous to be guided by superior wisdom; and that, although gifted with high spirit, and a disposition which began to recover its natural elastic gaiety, she was gentle, docile, and, above all, endowed with a firmness of principle, which seemed to give assurance that she would tread uprightly, and without spot, the slippery paths in which youth, rank, and beauty, are doomed to move.

As feelings of a warmer and more impassioned kind towards Eveline began to glow in De Lacy's bosom, his engagements as a crusader became more and more burdensome to him. The Benedictine Abbess, the natural guardian of Eveline's happiness, added to these feelings by her reasoning and remonstrances. Although a nun and a devotee, she held in reverence the holy state of matrimony, and comprehended so much of it as to be aware, that its important purposes could not be accomplished while the whole continent of Europe was interposed betwixt the married pair; for as to a hint from the Constable, that his young spouse might accompany him into the dangerous and dissolute precincts of the Crusader's camp, the good lady crossed herself with horror at the proposal, and never permitted it to be a second time mentioned in her presence.

It was not, however, uncommon for kings, princes, and other persons of high consequence, who had taken upon them the vow to rescue Jerusalem, to obtain delays, and even a total remission of their engagement, by proper application to the Church of Rome. The Constable was sure to possess the full advantage of his sovereign's interest and countenance, in seeking permission to remain in England, for he was the noble to whose valour and policy Henry had chiefly intrusted the defence of the disorderly Welsh marches; and it was by no means with his good-will that so useful a subject had ever assumed the cross.

It was settled, therefore, in private betwixt the Abbess and the Constable, that the latter should solicit at Rome, and with the Pope's Legate in England, a remission of his vow for at least two years; a favour which it was thought could scarce be refused to one of his wealth and influence, backed as it was with the most liberal offers of assistance towards the redemption of the Holy Land. His offers were indeed munificent; for he proposed, if his own personal attendance were dispensed with, to send an hundred lances at his own cost, each lance accompanied by two squires, three archers, and a varlet or horse-boy; being double the retinue by which his own person was to have been accompanied. He offered besides to deposit the sum of two thousand bezants to the general expenses of the expedition, to surrender to the use of the Christian armament those equipped vessels which he had provided, and which even now awaited the embarkation of himself and his followers.

Yet, while making these magnificent proffers, the Constable could not help feeling they would be inadequate to the expectations of the rigid prelate Baldwin, who, as he had himself preached the crusade, and brought the Constable and many others into that holy engagement, must needs see with displeasure the work of his eloquence endangered, by the retreat of so important an associate from his favourite enterprise. To soften, therefore, his disappointment as much as possible, the Constable offered to the Archbishop, that, in the event of his obtaining license to remain in Britain, his forces should be led by his nephew, Danxian Lacy, already renowned for his early feats of chivalry, the present hope of his house, and, failing heirs of his own body, its future head and support.

The Constable took the most prudent method of communicating this proposal to the Archbishop Baldwin, through a mutual friend, on whose good offices he could depend, and whose interest with the Prelate was regarded as great. But notwithstanding the splendour of the proposal, the Prelate heard it with sullen and obstinate silence, and referred for answer to a personal conference with the Constable at an appointed day, when concerns of the church would call the Archbishop to the city of Gloucester. The report of the mediator was such as induced the Constable to expect a severe struggle with the proud and powerful churchman; but, himself proud and powerful, and backed by the favour of his sovereign, he did not expect to be foiled in the contest.

The necessity that this point should be previously adjusted, as well as the recent loss of Eveline's father, gave an air of privacy to De Lacy's courtship, and prevented its being signalized by tournaments and feats of military skill, in which he would have been otherwise desirous to display his address in the eyes of his mistress. The rules of the convent prevented his giving entertainments of dancing, music, or other more pacific revels; and although the Constable displayed his affection by the most splendid gifts to his future bride and her attendants, the whole affair, in the opinion of the experienced Dame Gillian, proceeded more with the solemnity of a funeral, than the light pace of an approaching bridal.

The bride herself felt something of this, and thought occasionally it might have been lightened by the visits of young Damian, in whose age, so nearly corresponding to her own, she might have expected some relief from the formal courtship of his graver uncle. But he came not; and from what the Constable said concerning him, she was led to imagine that the relations had, for a time at least, exchanged occupations and character. The elder De Lacy continued, indeed, in nominal observance of his vow, to dwell in a pavilion by the gates of Gloucester; but he seldom donned his armour, substituted costly damask and silk for his war-worn shamois doublet, and affected at his advanced time of life more gaiety of attire than his contemporaries remembered as distinguishing his early youth. His nephew, on the contrary, resided almost constantly on the marches of Wales, occupied in settling by prudence, or subduing by main force, the various disturbances by which these provinces were continually agitated; and Eveline learned with surprise, that it was with difficulty his uncle had prevailed on him to be present at the ceremony of their being betrothed to each other, or, as the Normans entitled the ceremony, their *fiancailles*. This engagement, which preceded the actual marriage for a space more or less, according to circumstances, was usually celebrated with a solemnity corresponding to the rank of the contracting parties.

The Constable added, with expressions of regret, that Damian gave himself too little rest, considering his early youth, slept too little, and indulged in too restless a disposition—that his health was suffering—and that a learned Jewish leech, whose opinion had been taken, had given his advice that the warmth of a more genial climate was necessary to restore his constitution to its general and natural vigour.

Eveline heard this with much regret, for she remembered Damian as the angel of good tidings, who first brought her news of deliverance from the forces of the Welsh; and the occasions on which they had met, though mournful, brought a sort of pleasure in recollection, so gentle had been the youth's deportment, and so consoling his expressions of sympathy. She wished she could see him, that she might herself judge of the nature of his illness; for, like other damsels of that age, she was not entirely ignorant of the art of healing, and had been taught by Father Aldrovand, himself no mean physician, how to extract healing essences from plants and herbs gathered under planetary hours. She thought it possible that her talents in this art, slight as they were, might perhaps be of service to one already her friend and liberator, and soon about to become her very near relation.

It was therefore with a sensation of pleasure mingled with some confusion, (at the idea, doubtless, of assuming the part of medical adviser to so young a patient,) that one evening, while the convent was assembled about some business of their chapter, she heard Gillian announce that the kinsman of the Lord Constable desired to speak with her. She snatched up the veil, which she wore in compliance with the customs of the house, and hastily descended to the parlour, commanding the attendance of Gillian, who, nevertheless, did not think proper to obey the signal.

When she entered the apartment, a man whom she had never seen before advanced, kneeling on one knee, and taking up the hem of her veil, saluted it with an air of the most profound respect. She stepped back, surprised and alarmed, although there was nothing in the appearance of the stranger to justify her apprehension. He seemed to be about thirty years of age, tall of stature, and bearing a noble though wasted form, and a countenance on which disease, or perhaps youthful indulgence, had anticipated the traces of age. His demeanour seemed courteous and respectful, even in a degree which approached to excess. He observed Eveline's surprise, and said, in a tone of pride, mingled with emotion, "I fear that I have been mistaken, and that my visit is regarded as an unwelcome intrusion."

"Arise, sir," answered Eveline, "and let me know your name and business I was summoned to a kinsman of the Constable of Chester."

"And you expected the stripling Damian," answered the stranger. "But the match with which England rings will connect you with others of the house besides that young person; and amongst these, with the luckless Randal de Lacy. Perhaps," continued he, "the fair Eveline Berenger may not even have heard his name breathed by his more fortunate kinsman—more fortunate in every respect, but *most* fortunate in his present prospects."

This compliment was accompanied by a deep reverence, and Eveline stood much embarrassed how to reply to his civilities; for although she now remembered to have heard this Randal slightly mentioned by the Constable when speaking of his family, it was in terms which implied there was no good understanding betwixt them. She therefore only returned his courtesy by general thanks for the honour of his visit, trusting he would then retire; but such was not his purpose.

"I comprehend," he said, "from the coldness with which the Lady Eveline Berenger receives me, that what she has heard of me from my kinsman (if indeed he thought me worthy of being mentioned to her at all) has been, to say the least, unfavourable. And yet my name once stood as high in fields and courts, as that of the Constable; nor is it aught more disgraceful than what is indeed often esteemed the worst of disgraces—poverty, which prevents my still aspiring to places of honour and fame. If my youthful follies have been numerous, I have paid for them by the loss of my fortune, and the degradation of my condition; and therein, my happy kinsman might, if he pleased, do me some aid—I mean not with his purse or estate; for, poor as I am, I would not live on alms extorted from the reluctant hand of an estranged friend; but his countenance would put him to no cost, and, in so far, I might expect some favour."

"In that my Lord Constable," said Eveline, "must judge for himself. I have—as yet, at least—no right to interfere in his family affairs; and if I should ever have such right, it will well become me to be cautious how I use it."

"It is prudently answered," replied Randal; "but what I ask of you is merely, that you, in your gentleness, would please to convey to my cousin a suit, which I find it hard to bring my ruder tongue to utter with sufficient submission. The usurers, whose claims have eaten like a canker into my means, now menace me with a dungeon—a threat which they dared not mutter, far less attempt to execute, were it not that they see me an outcast, unprotected by the natural head of my family, and regard me rather as they would some unfriended vagrant, than as a descendant of the powerful house of Lacy."

"It is a sad necessity," replied Eveline; "but I see not how I can help you in such extremity."

"Easily," replied Randal de Lacy. "The day of your betrothal is fixed, as I hear reported; and it is your right to select what witnesses you please to the solemnity, which may the saints bless! To every one but myself, presence or absence upon that occasion is a matter of mere ceremony—to me it is almost life or death. So an I situated, that the marked instance of slight or contempt, implied by my exclusion from this meeting of our family, will be held for the signal of my final expulsion from the House of the De Lacy's, and for a thousand bloodhounds to assail me without mercy or forbearance, whom, cowards as they are, even the slightest show of countenance from my powerful kinsman would compel to stand at bay. But why should I occupy your time in talking thus?—Farewell, madam—be happy—and do not think of me the more harshly, that for a few minutes I have broken the tenor of your happy thoughts, by forcing my misfortunes on your notice."

"Stay, sir," said Eveline, affected by the tone and manner of the noble suppliant; "you shall not have it to say that you have told your distress to Eveline Berenger, without receiving such aid as is in her power to give. I will mention your request to the Constable of Chester."

"You must do more, if you really mean to assist me," said Randal de Lacy, "you must make that request your own. You do not know," said he, continuing to bend on her a fixed and expressive look, "how hard it is to change the fixed purpose of a De Lacy—a twelvemonth hence you will probably be better acquainted with the firm texture of our resolutions. But, at present, what can withstand your wish should you deign to express it?"

"Your suit, sir, shall not be lost for want of my advancing it with my good word and good wishes," replied Eveline; "but you must be well aware that its success or failure must rest with the Constable himself."

Randal de Lacy took his leave with the same air of deep reverence which had marked his entrance; only that, as he then saluted the skirt of Eveline's robe, he now rendered the same homage by touching her hand with his lip. She saw him depart with a mixture of emotions, in which compassion was predominant; although in his complaints of the Constable's unkindness to him there was something offensive, and his avowal of follies and excess seemed uttered rather in the spirit of wounded pride, than in that of contrition.

When Eveline next saw the Constable, she told him of the visit of Randal and of his request; and strictly observing his countenance while she spoke, she saw, that at the first mention of his kinsman's name, a gleam of anger shot along his features. He soon subdued it, however, and, fixing his eyes on the ground, listened to Eveline's detailed account of the visit, and her request "that Randal might be one of the invited witnesses to their *fiancailles*."

The Constable paused for a moment, as if he were considering how to elude the solicitation. At length he replied, "You do not know for whom you ask this, or you would perhaps have forborne your request; neither are you apprized of its full import, though my crafty cousin well knows, that when I do him this grace which he asks, I bind myself, as it were, in the eye of the world once more—and it will be for the third time—to interfere in his affairs, and place them on such a footing as may afford him the means of re-establishing his fallen consequence, and repairing his numerous errors."

"And wherefore not, my lord?" said the generous Eveline. "If he has been ruined only through follies, he is now of an age when these are no longer tempting snares; and if his heart and hand be good, he may yet be an honour to the House of De Lacy."

The Constable shook his head. "He hath indeed," he said, "a heart and hand fit for service, God knoweth, whether in good or evil. But never shall it be said that you, my fair Eveline, made request of Hugh de Lacy, which he was not to his uttermost willing to comply with. Randal shall attend at our *fiancailles*; there is indeed the more cause for his attendance, as I somewhat fear we may lack that of our valued nephew Damian, whose malady rather increases than declines, and, as I hear, with strange symptoms of unwonted disturbance of mind and starts of temper, to which the youth had not hitherto been subject."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

Ring out the merry bell, the bride approaches,
The blush upon her cheek has the shamed the morning,
For that is dawning palely. Grant, good saints,
These clouds betoken nought of evil omen!

OLD PLAY.

The day of the _fiancailles, or espousals, was now approaching; and it seems that neither the profession of the Abbess, nor her practice at least, were so rigid as to prevent her selecting the great parlour of the convent for that holy rite, although necessarily introducing many male guests within those vestal precincts, and notwithstanding that the rite itself was the preliminary to a state which the inmates of the cloister had renounced for ever.

The Abbess's Norman pride of birth, and the real interest which she took in her niece's advancement, overcame all scruples; and the venerable mother might be seen in unwonted bustle, now giving orders to the gardener for decking the apartment with flowers—now to her cellaress, her precentrix, and the lay-sisters of the kitchen, for preparing a splendid banquet, mingling her commands on these worldly subjects with an occasional ejaculation on their vanity and worthlessness, and every now and then converting the busy and anxious looks which she threw upon her preparations into a solemn turning upward of eyes and folding of hands, as one who sighed over the mere earthly pomp which she took such trouble in superintending. At another time the good lady might have been seen in close consultation with Father Aldrovand, upon the ceremonial, civil and religious, which was to accompany a solemnity of such consequence to her family.

Meanwhile the reins of discipline, although relaxed for a season, were not entirely thrown loose. The outer court of the convent was indeed for the time opened for the reception of the male sex; but the younger sisters and novices of the house being carefully secluded in the more inner apartments of the extensive building, under the immediate eye of a grim old nun, or, as the conventual rule designed her, an ancient, sad, and virtuous person, termed Mistress of the Novices, were not permitted to pollute their eyes by looking on waving plumes and rustling mantles. A few sisters, indeed, of the Abbess's own standing, were left at liberty, being such goods as it was thought could not, in shopman's phrase, take harm from the air, and which are therefore left lying on the counter. These antiquated dames went mumping about with much affected indifference, and a great deal of real curiosity, endeavouring indirectly to get information concerning names, and dresses, and decorations, without daring to show such interest in these vanities as actual questions on the subject might have implied.

A stout band of the Constable's spearmen guarded the gate of the nunnery, admitting within the hallowed precinct the few only who were to be present at the solemnity, with their principal attendants, and while the former were ushered with all due ceremony into the apartments dressed out for the occasion, the attendants, although detained in the outer court, were liberally supplied with refreshments of the most substantial kind; and had the amusement, so dear to the menial classes, of examining and criticising their masters and mistresses, as they passed into the interior apartments prepared for their reception.

Amongst the domestics who were thus employed were old Raoul the huntsman and his jolly dame—he gay and glorious, in a new cassock of green velvet, she gracious and comely, in a kirtle of yellow silk, fringed with minivair, and that at no mean cost, were equally busied in beholding the gay spectacle. The most inveterate wars have their occasional terms of truce; the most bitter and boisterous weather its hours of warmth and of calmness; and so was it with the matrimonial horizon of this amiable pair, which, usually cloudy, had now for brief space cleared up. The splendour of their new apparel, the mirth of the spectacle around them, with the aid, perhaps, of a bowl of muscadine quaffed by Raoul, and a cup of hippocras sipped by his wife, had rendered them rather more agreeable in each other's eyes than was their wont; good cheer being in such cases, as oil is to a rusty lock, the means of making those valves move smoothly and glibly, which otherwise work not together at all, or by shrieks and groans express their reluctance to move in union. The pair had stuck themselves into a kind of niche, three or four steps from the ground, which contained a small stone bench, whence their curious eyes could scrutinize with advantage every guest who entered the court.

Thus placed, and in their present state of temporary concord, Raoul with his frosty visage formed no unapt representative of January, the bitter father of the year; and though Gillian was past the delicate bloom of youthful May, yet the melting fire of a full black eye, and the genial glow of a ripe and crimson cheek, made her a lively type of the fruitful and jovial August. Dame Gillian used to make it her boast, that she could please every body with her gossip, when she chose it, from Raymond Berenger down to Robin the horse-boy; and like a good housewife, who, to keep her hand in use, will sometimes even condescend to dress a dish for her husband's sole eating, she now thought proper to practise her powers of pleasing on old Raoul, fairly conquering, in her successful sallies of mirth and satire, not only his cynical temperament towards all human kind, but his peculiar and special disposition to be testy with his spouse. Her jokes, such as they were, and the coquetry with which they were enforced, had such an effect on this Timon of the woods, that he curled up his cynical nose, displayed his few straggling teeth like a cur about to bite, broke out into a barking laugh, which was more like the cry of one of his own hounds—stopped short in the explosion, as if he had suddenly recollected that it was out of character; yet, ere he resumed his acrimonious gravity, shot such a glance at Gillian as made his nut-cracker jaws, pinched eyes, and convolved nose, bear no small resemblance to one of those fantastic faces which decorate the upper end of old bass viols.

"Is not this better than laying your dog-leash on your loving wife, as if she were a brach of the kennel?" said August to January.

"In troth is it," answered January, in a frost-bitten tone;—"and so it is also better than doing the brach-tricks which bring the leash into exercise."

"Humph!" said Gillian, in the tone of one who thought her husband's proposition might bear being disputed; but instantly changing the note to that of tender complaint, "Ah! Raoul," she said, "do you not remember how you once beat me because our late lord—Our Lady assoilzie him!—took my crimson breast-knot for a peony rose?"

"Ay, ay," said the huntsman; "I remember our old master would make such mistakes—Our Lady assoilzie him! as you say—The best hound will hunt counter."

"And how could you think, dearest Raoul, to let the wife of thy bosom go so long without a new kirtle?" said his helpmate.

"Why, thou hast got one from our young lady that might serve a countess," said Raoul, his concord jarred by her touching this chord—"how many kirtles wouldst thou have?"

"Only two, kind Raoul; just that folk may not count their children's age by the date of Dame Gillian's last new gown."

"Well, well—it is hard that a man cannot be in good-humour once and away without being made to pay for it. But thou shalt have a new kirtle at Michaelmas, when I sell the buck's hides for the season. The very antlers should bring a good penny this year."

"Ay, ay," said Gillian; "I ever tell thee, husband, the horns would be worth the hide in a fair market."

Raoul turned briskly round as if a wasp had stung him, and there is no guessing what his reply might have been to this seemingly innocent observation, had not a gallant horseman at that instant entered the court, and, dismounting like the others, gave his horse to the charge of a squire, or equerry, whose attire blazed with embroidery.

"By Saint Hubert, a proper horseman, and a *destrier* for an earl," said Raoul; "and my Lord Constable's liveries withal—yet I know not the gallant."

"But I do," said Gillian; "it is Randal de Lacy, the Constable's kinsman, and as good a man as ever came of the name!"

"Oh! by Saint Hubert, I have heard of him—men say he is a reveller, and a jangler, and a waster of his goods."

"Men lie now and then," said Gillian dryly.

"And women also," replied Raoul;—"why, methinks he winked on thee just now."

"That right eye of thine saw never true since our good lord-Saint Mary rest him!—flung a cup of wine in thy face, for pressing over boldly into his withdrawing-room."

"I marvel," said Raoul, as if he heard her not, "that yonder ruffler comes hither. I have heard that he is suspected to have attempted the Constable's life, and that they have not spoken together for five years."

"He comes on my young lady's invitation, and that I know full well," said Dame Gillian; "and he is less like to do the Constable wrong than to have wrong at his hand, poor gentleman, as indeed he has had enough of that already."

"And who told thee so?" said Raoul, bitterly.

"No matter, it was one who knew all about it very well," said the dame, who began to fear that, in displaying her triumph of superior information, she had been rather over-communicative.

"It must have been the devil, or Randal himself" said Raoul, "for no other mouth is large enough for such a lie.—But hark ye, Dame Gillian, who is he that presses forward next, like a man that scarce sees how he goes?"

"Even your angel of grace, my young Squire Damian" said Dame Gillian.

"It is impossible!" answered Raoul—"call me blind if thou wilt;— but I have never seen man so changed in a few weeks—and his attire is flung on him so wildly as if he wore a horse-cloth round him instead of a mantle—What can ail the youth?—he has made a dead pause at the door, as if he saw something on the threshold that debarred his entrance—Saint Hubert, but he looks as if he were elf-stricken!"

"You ever thought him such a treasure!" said Gillian; "and now look at him as he stands by the side of a real gentleman, how he stares and trembles as if he were distraught."

"I will speak to him," said Raoul, forgetting his lameness, and springing from his elevated station—"I will speak to him; and if he be unwell, I have my lancets and fleams to bleed man as well as brute."

"And a fit physician for such a patient," muttered Gillian,— "a dog-leech for a dreamy madman, that neither knows his own disease nor the way to cure it."

Meanwhile the old huntsman made his way towards the entrance, before which Damian remained standing, in apparent uncertainty whether he should enter or not, regardless of the crowd around, and at the same time attracting their attention by the singularity of his deportment.

Raoul had a private regard for Damiah; for which, perhaps, it was a chief reason, that of late his wife had been in the habit of speaking of him in a tone more disrespectful than she usually applied to handsome young men. Besides, he understood the youth was a second Sir Tristrem in silvan sports by wood and river, and there needed no more to fetter Raoul's soul to him with bands of steel. He saw with great concern his conduct attract general notice, mixed with some ridicule.

"He stands," said the town-jester, who had crowded into the gay throng, "before the gate, like Balaam's ass in the Mystery, when the animal sees so much more than can be seen by any one else."

A cut from Raoul's ready leash rewarded the felicity of this application, and sent the fool howling off to seek a more favourable audience, for his pleasantry. At the same time Raoul pressed up to Damian, and with an earnestness very different from his usual dry causticity of manner, begged him for God's sake not to make himself the general spectacle, by standing there as if the devil sat on the doorway, but either to enter, or, what might be as becoming, to retire, and make himself more fit in apparel for attending on a solemnity so nearly concerning his house.

"And what ails my apparel, old man?" said Damian, turning sternly on the huntsman, as one who has been hastily and uncivilly roused from a reverie.

"Only, with respect to your valour," answered the huntsman, "men do not usually put old mantles over new doublets; and methinks, with submission, that of yours neither accords with your dress, nor is fitted for this noble presence."

"Thou art a fool!" answered Damian, "and as green in wit as gray in years. Know you not that in these days the young and old consort together—contract together—wed together? and should we take more care to make our apparel consistent than our actions?"

"For God's sake, my lord," said Raoul, "forbear these wild and dangerous words! they may be heard by other ears than mine, and construed by worse interpreters. There may be here those who will pretend to track mischief from light words, as I would find a buck from his frayings. Your cheek is pale, my lord, your eye is blood- shot; for Heaven's sake, retire!"

"I will not retire," said Damian, with yet more distemper of manner, "till I have seen the Lady Eveline."

"For the sake of all the saints," ejaculated Raoul, "not now!—You will do my lady incredible injury by forcing yourself into her presence in this condition."

"Do you think so!" said Damian, the remark seeming to operate as a sedative which enabled him to collect his scattered thoughts.—"Do you really think so?—I thought that to have looked upon her once more—but no—you are in the right, old man."

He turned from the door as if to withdraw, but ere he could accomplish his purpose, he turned yet more pale than before, staggered, and fell on the pavement ere Raoul could afford him his support, useless as that might have proved. Those who raised him were surprised to observe that his garments were soiled with blood, and that the stains upon his cloak, which had been criticised by Raoul, were of the same complexion. A grave-looking personage, wrapped in a sad-coloured mantle, came forth from the crowd.

"I knew how it would be," he said; "I made venesection this morning, and commanded repose and sleep according to the aphorisms of Hippocrates; but if young gentlemen will neglect the ordinance of their physician, medicine will avenge herself. It is impossible that my bandage or ligature, knit by these fingers, should have started, but to avenge the neglect of the precepts of art."

"What means this prate?" said the voice of the Constable, before which all others were silent. He had been summoned forth just as the rite of espousal or betrothing was concluded, on the confusion occasioned by Damian's situation, and now sternly commanded the physician to replace the bandages which had slipped from his nephew's arm, himself assisting in the task of supporting the patient, with the anxious and deeply agitated feelings of one who saw a near and justly valued relative—as yet, the heir of his fame and family—stretched before him in a condition so dangerous.

But the griefs of the powerful and the fortunate are often mingled with impatience of interrupted prosperity. "What means this?" he demanded sternly of the leech.

"I sent you this morning to attend my nephew on the first tidings of his illness, and commanded that he should make no attempt to be present on this day's solemnity, yet I find him in this state, and in this place."

"So please your lordship," replied the leech, with a conscious self-importance, which even the presence of the Constable could not subdue—" *Curatio est canonica, non coacta*; which signifieth, my lord, that the physician acteth his cure by rules of art and science—by advice and prescription, but not by force or violence upon the patient, who cannot be at all benefited unless he be voluntarily amenable to the orders of his medicum."

"Tell me not of your jargon," said De Lacy; "if my nephew was lightheaded enough to attempt to come hither in the heat of a delirious distemper, you should have had sense to prevent him, had it been by actual force."

"It may be," said, Randal de Lacy, joining the crowd, who, forgetting the cause which had brought them together, were now assembled about Damian, "that more powerful was the magnet which drew our kinsman hither, than aught the leech could do to withhold him."

The Constable, still busied about his nephew, looked up as Randal spoke, and, when he was done, asked, with formal coldness of manner, "Ha, fair kinsman, of what magnet do you speak?"

"Surely of your nephew's love and regard to your lordship," answered Randal, "which, not to mention his respect for the lady Eveline, must have compelled him hither, if his limbs were able to bear him.—And here the bride comes, I think, in charity, to thank him for his zeal."

"What unhappy case is this?" said the Lady Eveline, pressing forward, much disordered with the intelligence of Damian's danger, which had been suddenly conveyed to her. "Is there nothing in which my poor service may avail?"

"Nothing, lady," said the Constable, rising from beside his nephew, and taking her hand; "your kindness is here mistimed. This motley assembly, this unseemly confusion, become not your presence."

"Unless it could be helpful, my lord," said Eveline, eagerly. "It is your nephew who is in danger—my deliverer—one of my deliverers, I would say."

"He is fitly attended by his chirurgeon," said the Constable, leading back his reluctant bride to the convent, while the medical attendant triumphantly exclaimed,

"Well judgeth my Lord Constable, to withdraw his noble Lady from the host of petticoated empirics, who, like so many Amazons, break in upon and derange the regular course of physical practice, with their petulant prognostics, their rash recipes, their mithridate, their febrifuges, their amulets, and their charms. Well speaketh the Ethnic poet,

'Non audet, nisi qua didicit, dare quod medicorum est;
Promittunt medici—tractant fabrilis fabri,'"

As he repeated these lines with much emphasis, the doctor permitted his patient's arm to drop from his hand, that he might aid the cadence with a flourish of his own. "There," said he to the spectators, "is what none of you understand—no, by Saint Luke, nor the Constable himself."

"But he knows how to whip in a hound that babbles when he should be busy," said Raoul; and, silenced by this hint, the surgeon betook himself to his proper duty, of superintending the removal of young Damian to an apartment in the neighbouring street, where the symptoms of his disorder seemed rather to increase than diminish, and speedily required all the skill and attention which the leech could bestow.

The subscription of the contract of marriage had, as already noticed, been just concluded, when the company assembled on the occasion were interrupted by the news of Damian's illness. When the Constable led his bride from the court-yard into the apartment where the company was assembled, there was discomposure and uneasiness on the countenance of both; and it was not a little increased by the bride pulling her hand hastily from the hold of the bridegroom, on observing that the latter was stained with recent blood, and had in truth left the same stamp upon her own. With a faint exclamation she showed the marks to Rose, saying at the same time, "What bodes this?—Is this the revenge of the Bloody-finger already commencing?"

"It bodes nothing, my dearest lady," said Rose—"it is our fears that are prophets, not those trifles which we take for augury. For God's sake, speak to my lord! He is surprised at your agitation."

"Let him ask me the cause himself," said Eveline; "fitter it should be told at his bidding, than be offered by me unasked."

The Constable, while his bride stood thus conversing with her maiden, had also observed, that in his anxiety to assist his nephew, he had transferred part of his blood from his own hands to Eveline's dress. He came forward to apologize for what at such a moment seemed almost ominous. "Fair lady," said he, "the blood of a true De Lacy can never bode aught but peace and happiness to you."

Eveline seemed as if she would have answered, but could not immediately find words. The faithful Rose, at the risk of incurring the censure of being over forward, hastened to reply to the compliment. "Every damsel is bound to believe what you say, my noble lord," was her answer, "knowing how readily that blood hath ever flowed for protecting the distressed, and so lately for our own relief."

"It is well spoken, little one," answered the Constable; "and the Lady Eveline is happy in a maiden who so well knows how to speak when it is her own pleasure to be silent.—Come, lady," he added, "let us hope this mishap of my kinsman is but like a sacrifice to fortune, which permits not the brightest hour to pass without some intervening shadow. Damian, I trust, will speedily recover; and be we mindful that the blood-drops which alarm you have been drawn by a friendly steel, and are symptoms rather of recovery than of illness.—Come, dearest lady, your silence discourages our friends, and wakes in them doubts whether we be sincere in the welcome due to them. Let me be your sewer," he said; and, taking a silver ewer and napkin from the standing cupboard, which was loaded with plate, he presented them on his knee to his bride.

Exerting herself to shake off the alarm into which she had been thrown by some supposed coincidence of the present accident with the apparition at Baldringham, Eveline, entering into her betrothed husband's humour, was about to raise him from the ground, when she was interrupted by the arrival of a hasty messenger, who, coming into the room without ceremony, informed the Constable that his nephew was so extremely ill, that if he hoped to see him alive, it would be necessary he should come to his lodgings instantly.

The Constable started up, made a brief adieu to Eveline and to the guests, who, dismayed at this new and disastrous intelligence, were preparing to disperse themselves, when, as he advanced towards the door, he was met by a Paritor, or Summoner of the Ecclesiastical Court, whose official dress had procured him unobstructed entrance into the precincts of the abbey.

"*Deus vobiscum*," said the paritor; "I would know which of this fair company is the Constable of Chester?"

"I am he," answered the elder De Lacy; "but if thy business be not the more hasty, I cannot now speak with thee—I am bound on matters of life and death."

"I take all Christian people to witness that I have discharged my duty," said the paritor, putting into the hand of the Constable a slip of parchment.

"How is this, fellow?" said the Constable, in great indignation—"for whom or what does your master the Archbishop take me, that he deals with me in this uncourteous fashion, citing me to compear before him more like a delinquent than a friend or a nobleman?"

"My gracious lord," answered the paritor, haughtily, "is accountable to no one but our Holy Father the Pope, for the exercise of the power which is intrusted to him by the canons of the Church. Your lordship's answer to my citation?"

"Is the Archbishop present in this city?" said the Constable, after a moment's reflection—"I knew not of his purpose to travel hither, still less of his purpose to exercise authority within these bounds."

"My gracious lord the Archbishop," said the paritor, "is but now arrived in this city, of which he is metropolitan; and, besides, by his apostolical commission, a legate *a latere* hath plenary jurisdiction throughout all England, as those may find (whatsoever be their degree) who may dare to disobey his summons."

"Hark thee, fellow," said the Constable, regarding the paritor with a grim and angry countenance, "were it not for certain respects, which I promise thee thy tawny hood hath little to do with, thou wert better have swallowed thy citation, seal and all, than delivered it to me with the addition of such saucy terms. Go hence, and tell your master I will see him within the space of an hour, during which time I am delayed by the necessity of attending a sick relation."

The paritor left the apartment with more humility in his manner than when he had entered, and left the assembled guests to look upon each other in silence and dismay.

The reader cannot fail to remember how severely the yoke of the Roman supremacy pressed both on the clergy and laity of England during the reign of Henry II. Even the attempt of that wise and courageous monarch to make a stand for the independence of his throne in the memorable case of Thomas a Becket, had such an unhappy issue, that, like a suppressed rebellion, it was found to add new strength to the domination of the Church. Since the submission of the king in that ill-fated struggle, the voice of Rome had double potency whenever it was heard, and the boldest peers of England held it more wise to submit to her imperious dictates, than to provoke a spiritual censure which had so many secular consequences. Hence the slight and scornful manner in which the Constable was treated by the prelate Baldwin struck a chill of astonishment into the assembly of friends whom he had collected to witness his espousals; and as he glanced his haughty eye around, he saw that many who would have stood by him through life and death in any other quarrel, had it even been with his sovereign, were turning pale at the very thought of a collision with the Church. Embarrassed, and at the same time incensed at their timidity, the Constable hastened to dismiss them, with the general assurance that all would be well—that his nephew's indisposition was a trifling complaint, exaggerated by a conceited physician, and by his own want of care—and that the message of the Archbishop, so uncereemoniously delivered, was but the consequence of their mutual and friendly familiarity, which induced them sometimes, for the jest's sake, to reverse or neglect the ordinary forms of intercourse.—"If I wanted to speak with the prelate Baldwin on express business and in haste, such is the humility and indifference to form of that worthy pillar of the Church, that I should not fear offence," said the Constable, "did I send the meanest horseboy in my troop to ask an audience of him."

So he spoke—but there was something in his countenance which contradicted his words; and his friends and relations retired from the splendid and joyful ceremony of his espousals as from a funeral feast, with anxious thoughts and with downcast eyes.

Randal was the only person, who, having attentively watched the whole progress of the affair during the evening, ventured to approach his cousin as he left the house, and asked him, "in the name of their reunited friendship, whether he had nothing to command him?" assuring him, with a look more expressive than his words, that he would not find him cold in his service.

"I have nought which can exercise your zeal, fair cousin," replied the Constable, with the air of one who partly questioned the speaker's sincerity; and the parting reverence with which he accompanied his words, left Randal no pretext for continuing his attendance, as he seemed to have designed.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

Oh, were I seated high as my ambition,
I'd place this naked foot on necks of monarchs!
MYSTERIOUS MOTHER.

The most anxious and unhappy moment of Hugo de Lacy's life, was unquestionably that in which, by espousing Eveline with all civil and religious solemnity, he seemed to approach to what for some time he had considered as the prime object of his wishes. He was assured of the early possession of a beautiful and amiable wife, endowed with such advantage of worldly goods, as gratified his ambition as well as his affections—Yet, even in this fortunate moment, the horizon darkened around him, in a manner which presaged nought but storm and calamity. At his nephew's lodging he learned that the pulse of the patient had risen, and his delirium had augmented, and all around him spoke very doubtfully of his chance of recovery, or surviving a crisis which seemed speedily approaching. The Constable stole towards the door of the apartment which his feelings permitted him not to enter, and listened to the raving which the fever gave rise to. Nothing can be more melancholy than to hear the mind at work concerning its ordinary occupations, when the body is stretched in pain and danger upon the couch of severe sickness; the contrast betwixt the ordinary state of health, its joys or its labours, renders doubly affecting the actual helplessness of the patient before whom these visions are rising, and we feel a corresponding degree of compassion for the sufferer whose thoughts are wandering so far from his real condition.

The Constable felt this acutely, as he heard his nephew shout the war-cry of the family repeatedly, appearing, by the words of command and direction, which he uttered from time to time, to be actively engaged in leading his men-at-arms against the Welsh. At another time he uttered various terms of the *manège*, of falconry, and of the chase—he mentioned his uncle's name repeatedly on these occasions, as if the idea of his kinsman had been connected alike with his martial encounters, and with his sports by wood and river. Other sounds there were, which he muttered so low as to be altogether undistinguishable.

With a heart even still more softened towards his kinsman's sufferings from hearing the points on which his mind wandered, the Constable twice applied his hand to the latch of the door, in order to enter the bedroom, and twice forebore, his eyes running faster with tears than he chose should be witnessed by the attendants. At length, relinquishing his purpose, he hastily left the house, mounted his horse, and followed only by four of his personal attendants, rode towards the palace of the Bishop, where, as he learned from public rumour, the Archprelate Baldwin had taken up his temporary residence.

The train of riders and of led-horses, of sumpter mules, and of menials and attendants, both lay and ecclesiastical, which thronged around the gate of the Episcopal mansion, together with the gaping crowd of inhabitants who had gathered around, some to gaze upon the splendid show, some to have the chance of receiving the benediction of the Holy Prelate, was so great as to impede the Constable's approach to the palace-door; and when this obstacle was surmounted, he found another in the obstinacy of the Archbishop's attendants, who permitted him not, though announced by name and title, to cross the threshold of the mansion, until they should receive the express command of their master to that effect.

The Constable felt the full effect of this slighting reception. He had dismounted from his horse in full confidence of being instantly admitted into the palace at least, if not into the Prelate's presence; and as he now stood on foot among the squires, grooms, and horseboys of the spiritual lord, he was so much disgusted, that his first impulse was to remount his horse, and return to his pavilion, pitched for the time before the city walls, leaving it to the Bishop to seek him there, if he really desired an interview. But the necessity of conciliation almost immediately rushed on his mind, and subdued the first haughty impulse of his offended pride. "If our wise King," he said to himself, "hath held the stirrup of one Prelate of Canterbury when living, and submitted to the most degrading observances before his shrine when dead, surely I need not be more scrupulous towards his priestly successor in the same overgrown authority." Another thought, which he dared hardly to acknowledge, recommended the same humble and submissive course. He could not but feel that, in endeavouring to evade his vows as a crusader, he was incurring some just censure from the Church; and he was not unwilling to hope, that his present cold and scornful reception on Baldwin's part, might be meant as a part of the penance which his conscience informed him his conduct was about to receive.

After a short interval, De Lacy was at length invited to enter the palace of the Bishop of Gloucester, in which he was to meet the Primate of England; but there was more than one brief pause, in hall and anteroom, ere he at length was admitted to Baldwin's presence.

The successor of the celebrated Becket had neither the extensive views, nor the aspiring spirit, of that redoubted personage; but, on the other hand, saint as the latter had become, it may be questioned, whether, in his professions for the weal of Christendom, he was half so sincere as was the present Archbishop. Baldwin was, in truth, a man well qualified to defend the powers which the Church had gained, though perhaps of a character too sincere and candid to be active in extending them. The advancement of the Crusade was the chief business of his life, his success the principal cause of his pride; and, if the sense of possessing the powers of eloquent persuasion, and skill to bend the minds of men to his purpose, was blended with his religious zeal, still the tenor of his life, and afterwards his death before Ptolemais, showed that the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels was the unfeigned object of all his exertions. Hugo de Lacy well knew this; and the difficulty of managing such a temper appeared much greater to him on the eve of the interview in which the attempt was to be made, than he had suffered himself to suppose when the crisis was yet distant.

The Prelate, a man of a handsome and stately form, with features rather too severe to be pleasing, received the Constable in all the pomp of ecclesiastical dignity. He was seated on a chair of oak, richly carved with Gothic ornaments, and placed above the rest of the floor under a niche of the same workmanship. His dress was the rich episcopal robe, ornamented with costly embroidery, and fringed around the neck and cuffs; it opened from the throat and in the middle, and showed an under vestment of embroidery, betwixt the folds of which, as if imperfectly concealed, peeped the close shirt of hair-cloth which the Prelate constantly wore under all his pompous attire. His mitre was placed beside him on an oaken table of the same workmanship with his throne, against which also rested his pastoral staff, representing a shepherd's crook of the simplest form, yet which had proved more powerful and fearful than lance or scimeter, when wielded by the hand of Thomas a Becket. A chaplain in a white surplice kneeled at a little distance before a desk, and read forth from an illuminated volume some portion of a theological treatise, in which Baldwin appeared so deeply interested, that he did not appear to notice the entrance of the Constable, who, highly displeased at this additional slight, stood on the floor of the hall, undetermined whether to interrupt the reader, and address the Prelate at once, or to withdraw without saluting him at all. Ere he had formed a resolution, the chaplain had arrived at some convenient pause in the lecture, where the Archbishop stopped him with, "*Satis est, mi fili.*"

It was in vain that the proud secular Baron strove to conceal the embarrassment with which he approached the Prelate, whose attitude was plainly assumed for the purpose of impressing him with awe and solicitude. He tried, indeed, to exhibit a demeanour of such ease as might characterize their old friendship, or at least of such indifference as might infer the possession of perfect tranquillity; but he failed in both, and his address expressed mortified pride, mixed with no ordinary degree of embarrassment. The genius of the Catholic Church was on such occasions sure to predominate over the haughtiest of the laity.

"I perceive," said De Lacy, collecting his thoughts, and ashamed to find he had difficulty in doing so,—"*I perceive that an old friendship is here dissolved. Methinks Hugo de Lacy might have expected another messenger to summon him to this reverend presence, and that another welcome should wait him on his arrival.*"

The Archbishop raised himself slowly in his seat, and made a half-inclination towards the Constable, who, by an instinctive desire of conciliation, returned it lower than he had intended, or than the scanty courtesy merited. The Prelate at the same time signing to his chaplain, the latter rose to withdraw, and receiving permission in the phrase "*Do veniam*," retreated reverentially, without either turning his back or looking upwards, his eyes fixed on the ground, his hands still folded in his habit, and crossed over his bosom.

When this mute attendant had disappeared, the Prelate's brow became more open, yet retained a dark shade of grave displeasure, and he replied to the address of De Lacy, but still without rising from his seat. "It skills not now, my lord, to say what the brave Constable of Chester has been to the poor priest Baldwin, or with what love and pride we beheld him assume the holy sign of salvation, and, to honour Him by whom he has himself been raised to honour, vow himself to the deliverance of the Holy Land. If I still see that noble lord before me, in the same holy resolution, let me know the joyful truth, and I will lay aside rochet and mitre, and tend his horse like a groom, if it be necessary by such menial service to show the cordial respect I bear to him."

"Reverend father," answered De Lacy, with hesitation, "I had hoped that the propositions which were made to you on my part by the Dean of Hereford, might have seemed more satisfactory in your eyes." Then, regaining his native confidence, he proceeded with more assurance in speech and manner; for the cold inflexible

looks of the Archbishop irritated him. "If these proposals can be amended, my lord, let me know in what points, and, if possible, your pleasure shall be done, even if it should prove somewhat unreasonable. I would have peace, my lord, with Holy Church, and am the last who would despise her mandates. This has been known by my deeds in field, and counsels in the state; nor can I think my services have merited cold looks and cold language from the Primate of England."

"Do you upbraid the Church with your services, vain man?" said Baldwin. "I tell thee, Hugo de Lacy, that what Heaven hath wrought for the Church by thy hand, could, had it been the divine pleasure, have been achieved with as much ease by the meanest horseboy in thy host. It is *thou* that art honoured, in being the chosen instrument by which great things have been wrought in Israel.—Nay, interrupt me not—I tell thee, proud baron, that, in the sight of Heaven, thy wisdom is but as folly—thy courage, which thou dost boast, but the cowardice of a village maiden—thy strength weakness—thy spear an osier, and thy sword a bulrush."

"All this I know, good father," said the Constable, "and have ever heard it repeated when such poor services as I may have rendered are gone and past. Marry, when there was need for my helping hand, I was the very good lord of priest and prelate, and one who should be honoured and prayed for with patrons and founders who sleep in the choir and under the high altar. There was no thought, I trow, of osier or of bulrush, when I have been prayed to couch my lance or draw my weapon; it is only when they are needless that they and their owner are undervalued. Well, my reverend father, be it so,—if the Church can cast the Saracens from the Holy Land by grooms and horseboys, wherefore do you preach knights and nobles from the homes and the countries which they are born to protect and defend?"

The Archbishop looked steadily on him as he replied, "Not for the sake of their fleshly arm do we disturb your knights and barons in their prosecution of barbarous festivities, and murderous feuds, which you call enjoying their homes and protecting their domains, —not that Omnipotence requires their arm of flesh to execute the great predestined work of liberation—but for the weal of their immortal souls." These last words he pronounced with great emphasis.

The Constable paced the floor impatiently, and muttered to himself, "Such is the airy guerdon for which hosts on hosts have been drawn from Europe to drench the sands of Palestine with their gore—such the vain promises for which we are called upon to barter our country, our lands, and our lives!"

"Is it Hugo de Lacy speaks thus?" said the Archbishop, arising from his seat, and qualifying his tone of censure with the appearance of shame and of regret—"Is it he who underprizes the renown of a knight—the virtue of a Christian—the advancement of his earthly honour—the more incalculable profit of his immortal soul?—Is it he who desires a solid and substantial recompense in lands or treasures, to be won by warring on his less powerful neighbours at home, while knightly honour and religious faith, his vow as a knight and his baptism as a Christian, call him to a more glorious and more dangerous strife?—Can it be indeed Hugo de Lacy, the mirror of the Anglo-Norman chivalry, whose thoughts can conceive such sentiments, whose words can utter them?"

"Flattery and fair speech, suitably mixed with taunts and reproaches, my lord," answered the Constable, colouring and biting his lip, "may carry your point with others; but I am of a temper too solid to be either wheedled or goaded into measures of importance. Forbear, therefore, this strain of affected amazement; and believe me, that whether he goes to the Crusade or abides at home, the character of Hugo de Lacy will remain as unimpeached in point of courage as that of the Archbishop Baldwin in point of sanctitude."

"May it stand much higher," said the Archbishop, "than the reputation with which you vouchsafe to compare it! but a blaze may be extinguished as well as a spark; and I tell the Constable of Chester, that the fame which has set on his basnet for so many years, may flit from it in one moment, never to be recalled."

"Who dares to say so?" said the Constable, tremblingly alive to the honour for which he had encountered so many dangers.

"A friend," said the Prelate, "whose stripes should be received as benefits. You think of pay, Sir Constable, and of guerdon, as if you still stood in the market, free to chaffer on the terms of your service. I tell you, you are no longer your own master—you are, by the blessed badge you have voluntarily assumed, the soldier of God himself; nor can you fly from your standard without such infamy as even coistrels or grooms are unwilling to incur."

"You deal all too hardly with us, my lord," said Hugo de Lacy, stopping short in his troubled walk. "You of the spirituality make us laymen the pack-horses of your own concerns, and climb to ambitious heights by the help of our over-burdened shoulders; but all hath its limits—Becket transgressed it, and——"

A gloomy and expressive look corresponded with the tone in which he spoke this broken sentence; and the Prelate, at no loss to comprehend his meaning, replied, in a firm and determined voice, "And he was *murdered*!—that is what you dare to hint to me— even to me, the successor of that glorified saint—as a motive for complying with your fickle and selfish wish to withdraw your hand from the plough. You know not to whom you address such a threat. True, Becket, from a saint militant on earth, arrived, by the bloody path of martyrdom, to the dignity of a saint in Heaven; and no less true is it, that, to attain a seat a thousand degrees beneath that of his blessed predecessor, the unworthy Baldwin were willing to submit, under Our Lady's protection, to whatever the worst of wicked men can inflict on his earthly frame."

"There needs not this show of courage, reverend father," said Lacy, recollecting himself, "where there neither is, nor can be, danger. I pray you, let us debate this matter more deliberately. I have never meant to break off my purpose for the Holy Land, but only to postpone it. Methinks the offers that I have made are fair, and ought to obtain for me what has been granted to others in the like case—a slight delay in the time of my departure."

"A slight delay on the part of such a leader as you, noble De Lacy," answered the Prelate, "were a death-blow to our holy and most gallant enterprise. To meaner men we might have granted the privilege of marrying and giving in marriage, even although they care not for the sorrows of Jacob; but you, my lord, are a main prop of our enterprise, and, being withdrawn, the whole fabric may fall to the ground. Who in England will deem himself obliged to press forward, when Hugo de Lacy falls back? Think, my lord, less upon your plighted bride, and more on your plighted word; and believe not that a union can ever come to good, which shakes your purpose towards our blessed undertaking for the honour of Christendom."

The Constable was embarrassed by the pertinacity of the Prelate, and began to give way to his arguments, though most reluctantly, and only because the habits and opinions of the time left him no means of combating his arguments, otherwise than by solicitation. "I admit," he said, "my engagements for the Crusade, nor have I—I repeat it—farther desire than that brief interval which may be necessary to place my important affairs in order. Meanwhile, my vassals, led by my nephew——"

"Promise that which is within thy power," said the Prelate. "Who knows whether, in resentment of thy seeking after other things than HIS most holy cause, thy nephew may not be called hence, even while we speak together?"

"God forbid!" said the Baron, starting up, as if about to fly to his nephew's assistance; then suddenly pausing, he turned on the Prelate a keen and investigating glance. "It is not well," he said, "that your reverence should thus trifle with the dangers which threaten my house. Damian is dear to me for his own good qualities—dear for the sake of my only brother.—May God forgive us both! he died when we were in unkindness with each other.—My lord, your words import that my beloved nephew suffers pain and incurs danger on account of my offences?" The Archbishop perceived he had at length touched the chord to which his refractory penitent's heart-strings must needs vibrate. He replied with circumspection, as well knowing with whom he had to deal,—"Far be it from me to presume to interpret the counsels of Heaven! but we read in Scripture, that when the fathers eat sour grapes, the teeth of the children are set on edge. What so reasonable as that we should be punished for our pride and contumacy, by a judgment specially calculated to abate and bend that spirit of surquedry? [Footnote: Self-importance, or assumption.] You yourself best know if this disease clung to thy nephew before you had meditated defection from the banner of the Cross."

Hugo de Lacy hastily recollected himself, and found that it was indeed true, that, until he thought of his union with Eveline, there had appeared no change in his nephew's health. His silence and confusion did not escape the artful Prelate. He took the hand of the warrior as he stood before him overwhelmed in doubt, lest his preference of the continuance of his own house to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre should have been punished by the disease which threatened his nephew's life. "Come," he said, "noble De Lacy—the judgment provoked by a moment's presumption may be even yet averted by prayer and penitence. The dial went back at the prayer of the good King Hezekiah—down, down upon thy knees, and doubt not that, with confession, and penance, and absolution, thou mayst yet atone for thy falling away from the cause of Heaven."

Borne down by the dictates of the religion in which he had been educated, and by the fears lest his delay was punished by his nephew's indisposition and danger, the Constable sunk on his knees before the Prelate, whom he had shortly before well-nigh braved, confessed, as a sin to be deeply repented of, his purpose of delaying his departure for Palestine, and received, with patience at least, if not with willing acquiescence, the penance inflicted by the Archbishop; which consisted

in a prohibition to proceed farther in his proposed wedlock with the Lady Eveline, until he was returned from Palestine, where he was bound by his vow to abide for the term of three years.

"And now, noble De Lacy," said the Prelate, "once more my best beloved and most honoured friend—is not thy bosom lighter since thou hast thus nobly acquitted thee of thy debt to Heaven, and cleansed thy gallant spirit from those selfish and earthly stains which dimmed its brightness?"

The Constable sighed. "My happiest thoughts at this moment," he said, "would arise from knowledge that my nephew's health is amended."

"Be not discomforted on the score of the noble Damian, your hopeful and valorous kinsman," said the Archbishop, "for well I trust shortly ye shall hear of his recovery; or that, if it shall please God to remove him to a better world, the passage shall be so easy, and his arrival in yonder haven of bliss so speedy, that it were better for him to have died than to have lived."

The Constable looked at him, as if to gather from his countenance more certainty of his nephew's fate than his words seemed to imply; and the Prelate, to escape being farther pressed on the subject on which he was perhaps conscious he had ventured too far, rung a silver bell which stood before him on the table, and commanded the chaplain who entered at the summons, that he should despatch a careful messenger to the lodging of Damian Lacy to bring particular accounts of his health.

"A stranger," answered the chaplain, "just come from the sick chamber of the noble Damian Lacy, waits here even now to have speech of my Lord Constable."

"Admit him instantly," said the Archbishop—"my mind tells me he brings us joyful tidings.—Never knew I such humble penitence,— such willing resignation of natural affections and desires to the doing of Heaven's service, but it was rewarded with a guerdon either temporal or spiritual."

As he spoke, a man singularly dressed entered the apartment. His garments, of various colours, and showily disposed, were none of the newest or cleanest, neither were they altogether fitting for the presence in which he now stood.

"How now, sirrah!" said the Prelate; "when was it that jugglers and minstrels pressed into the company of such as we without permission?"

"So please you," said the man, "my instant business was not with your reverend lordship, but with my lord the Constable, to whom I will hope that my good news may atone for my evil apparel."

"Speak, sirrah, does my kinsman live?" said the Constable eagerly.

"And is like to live, my lord," answered the man—"a favourable crisis (so the leeches call it) hath taken place in his disorder, and they are no longer under any apprehensions for his life."

"Now, God be praised, that hath granted me so much mercy!" said the Constable.

"Amen, amen!" replied the Archbishop solemnly.—"About what period did this blessed change take place?"

"Scarcely a quarter of an hour since," said the messenger, "a soft sleep fell on the sick youth, like dew upon a parched field in summer—he breathed freely—the burning heat abated—and, as I said, the leeches no longer fear for his life."

"Marked you the hour, my Lord Constable?" said the Bishop, with exultation—"Even then you stooped to those counsels which Heaven suggested through the meanest of its servants! But two words avouching penitence—but one brief prayer—and some kind saint has interceded for an instant hearing, and a liberal granting of thy petition. Noble Hugo," he continued, grasping his hand in a species of enthusiasm, "surely Heaven designs to work high things by the hand of him whose faults are thus readily forgiven—whose prayer is thus instantly heard. For this shall *Te Deum Laudamus* be said in each church, and each convent in Gloucester, ere the world be a day older."

The Constable, no less joyful, though perhaps less able to perceive an especial providence in his nephew's recovery, expressed his gratitude to the messenger of the good tidings, by throwing him his purse.

"I thank you, noble lord," said the man; "but if I stoop to pick up this taste of your bounty, it is only to restore it again to the donor."

"How now, sir?" said the Constable, "methinks thy coat seems not so well lined as needs make thee spurn at such a guerdon."

"He that designs to catch larks, my lord," replied the messenger, "must not close his net upon sparrows—I have a greater boon to ask of your lordship, and therefore I decline your present gratuity."

"A greater boon, ha!" said the Constable,—"I am no knight-errant, to bind myself by promise to grant it ere I know its import; but do thou come to my pavilion to-morrow, and thou wilt not find me unwilling to do what is reason."

So saying, he took leave of the Prelate, and returned homeward, failing not to visit his nephew's lodging as he passed, where he received the same pleasant assurances which had been communicated by the messenger of the particoloured mantle.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

He	was	a	minstrel—in	his	mood
Was	wisdom	mix'd	with	folly;	
A	tame	companion	to	the	good,
But	wild	and	fierce	among	the
And	jovial	with	the	jolly.	

ARCHIBALD ARMSTRONG.

The events of the preceding day had been of a nature so interesting, and latterly so harassing, that the Constable felt weary as after a severely contested battle-field, and slept soundly until the earliest beams of dawn saluted him through the opening of the tent. It was then that, with a mingled feeling of pain and satisfaction, he began to review the change which had taken place in his condition since the preceding morning. He had then risen an ardent bridegroom, anxious to find favour in the eyes of his fair bride, and scrupulous about his dress and appointments, as if he had been as young in years as in hopes and wishes. This was over, and he had now before him the painful task of leaving his betrothed for a term of years, even before wedlock had united them indissolubly, and of reflecting that she was exposed to all the dangers which assail female constancy in a situation thus critical. When the immediate anxiety for his nephew was removed, he was tempted to think that he had been something hasty in listening to the arguments of the Archbishop, and in believing that Damian's death or recovery depended upon his own accomplishing, to the letter, and without delay, his vow for the Holy Land. "How many princes and kings," he thought to himself, "have assumed the Cross, and delayed or renounced it, yet lived and died in wealth and honour, without sustaining such a visitation as that with which Baldwin threatened me; and in what case or particular did such men deserve more indulgence than I? But the die is now cast, and it signifies little to inquire whether my obedience to the mandates of the Church has saved the life of my nephew, or whether I have not fallen, as laymen are wont to fall, whenever there is an encounter of wits betwixt them and those of the spirituality. I would to God it may prove otherwise, since, girding on my sword as Heaven's champion, I might the better expect Heaven's protection for her whom I must unhappily leave behind me."

As these reflections passed through his mind, he heard the warders at the entrance of his tent challenge some one whose footsteps were heard approaching it. The person stopped on their challenge, and presently after was heard the sound of a rote, (a small species of lute,) the strings of which were managed by means of a small wheel. After a short prelude, a manly voice, of good compass, sung verses, which, translated into modern language, might run nearly thus:

I.

"Soldier,	wake—the	day	is	peeping:.
Honour	ne'er	was	won	in
Never	when	the	sunbeams	still
Lay	unreflected	on	the	hill:
'Tis	when	they	are	glinted
From	axe	and	armour,	spear
				and
				jack,

That		they		promise		future		story
Many	a		page		of	deathless		glory.
Shields	that		are	the		foe	man's	terror,
Ever	are	the	morning's	mirror.				

II.

"Arm		and		up—the		morning		beam
Hath	call'd		the	rustic		to	his	team,
Hath	call'd		the	falc'ner		to	the	lake,
Hath	call'd		the	huntsman		to	the	brake;
The		early		student			ponders	o'er
His	dusty		tomes		of		ancient	lore.
Soldier,			wake—thy			harvest,		fame;
Thy	study,		conquest;		war,		thy	game.
Shield,	that		would		be		foeman's	terror,
Still	should	gleam	the	morning's	mirror.			

III.

"Poor		hire		repays		the		rustic's	pain;
More		paltry		still		the		sportsman's	gain;
Vainest		of		all,		the		student's	theme
End		in			gome		metaphysic		dream.
Yet	each		is	up,		and	each	has	toil'd
Since	first		the	peep		of	dawn	has	smiled;
And	each		is		eagerer		in	his	aim
Than	he		who		barbers		life	for	fame.
Up,	up,		and	arm		thee,	son	of	terror!

Be thy bright shield the morning's mirror."

When the song was finished, the Constable heard some talking without, and presently Philip Guarine entered the pavilion to tell that a person, come hither as he said by the Constable's appointment, waited permission to speak with him.

"By my appointment?" said De Lacy; "admit him immediately."

The messenger of the preceding evening entered the tent, holding in one hand his small cap and feather, in the other the rote on which he had been just playing. His attire was fantastic, consisting of more than one inner dress of various colours, all of the brightest and richest dyes, and disposed so as to contrast with each other—the upper garment was a very short Norman cloak, in bright green. An embroidered girdle sustained, in lieu of offensive weapons, an inkhorn with its appurtenances on the one side, on the other a knife for the purposes of the table. His hair was cut in imitation of the clerical tonsure, which was designed to intimate that he had arrived to a certain rank in his profession; for the Joyous Science, as the profession of minstrelsy was termed, had its various ranks, like the degrees in the church and in chivalry. The features and the manners of the man seemed to be at variance with his profession and habit; for, as the latter was gay and fantastic, the former had a cast of gravity, and almost of sternness, which, unless when kindled by the enthusiasm of his poetical and musical exertions, seemed rather to indicate deep reflection, than the thoughtless vivacity of observation which characterized most of his brethren. His countenance, though not handsome, had therefore something in it striking and impressive, even from its very contrast with the particoloured hues and fluttering shape of his vestments; and the Constable felt something inclined to patronize him, as he said, "Good-morrow, friend, and I thank thee for thy morning greeting; it was well sung and well meant, for when we call forth any one to bethink him how time passes, we do him the credit of supposing that he can employ to advantage that flitting treasure." The man, who had listened in silence, seemed to pause and make an effort ere he replied, "My intentions, at least, were good, when I ventured to disturb my lord thus early; and I am glad to learn that my boldness hath not been evil received at his hand."

"True," said the Constable, "you had a boon to ask of me. Be speedy, and say thy request—my leisure is short."

"It is for permission to follow you to the Holy Land, my lord," said the man.

"Thou hast asked what I can hardly grant, my friend," answered De Lacy—"Thou art a minstrel, art thou not?"

"An unworthy graduate of the Gay Science, my lord," said the musician; "yet let me say for myself, that I will not yield to the king of minstrels, Geoffrey Rudel, though the King of England hath given him four manors for one song. I would be willing to contend with him in romance, lay, or fable, were the judge to be King Henry himself."

"You have your own good word, doubtless," said De Lacy; "nevertheless, Sir Minstrel, thou goest not with me. The Crusade has been already too much encumbered by men of thy idle profession; and if thou dost add to the number, it shall not be under my protection. I am too old to be charmed by thy art, charm thou never so wisely."

"He that is young enough to seek for, and to win, the love of beauty," said the minstrel, but in a submissive tone, as if fearing his freedom might give offence, "should not term himself too old to feel the charms of minstrelsy."

The Constable smiled, not insensible to the flattery which assigned to him the character of a younger gallant. "Thou art a jester," he said, "I warrant me, in addition to thy other qualities."

"No," replied the minstrel, "it is a branch of our profession which I have for some time renounced—my fortunes have put me out of tune for jesting."

"Nay, comrade," said the Constable, "if thou hast been hardly dealt within the world, and canst comply with the rules of a family so strictly ordered as mine, it is possible we may agree together better than I thought. What is thy name and country? thy speech, methinks, sounds somewhat foreign."

"I am an Armorican, my lord, from the merry shores of Morbihan; and hence my tongue hath some touch of my country speech. My name is Renault Vidal."

"Such being the case, Renault," said the Constable, "thou shalt follow me, and I will give orders to the master of my household to have thee attired something according to thy function, but in more orderly guise than thou now appearest in. Dost thou understand the use of a weapon?"

"Indifferently, my lord," said the Armorican; at the same time taking a sword from the wall, he drew, and made a pass with it so close to the Constable's body as he sat on the couch, that he started up, crying, "Villain, forbear!"

"La you! noble sir," replied Vidal, lowering with all submission the point of his weapon—"I have already given you a proof of sleight which has alarmed even your experience—I have an hundred other besides."

"It may be so," said De Lacy, somewhat ashamed at having shown himself moved by the sudden and lively action of the juggler; "but I love not jesting with edge-tools, and have too much to do with sword and sword-blows in earnest, to toy with them; so I pray you let us have no more of this, but call me my squire and my chamberlain, for I am about to array me and go to mass."

The religious duties of the morning performed, it was the Constable's intention to visit the Lady Abbess, and communicate, with the necessary precautions and qualifications, the altered relations in which he was placed towards her niece, by the resolution he had been compelled to adopt, of departing for the Crusade before accomplishing his marriage, in the terms of the precontract already entered into. He was conscious that it would be difficult to reconcile the good lady to

this change of measures, and he delayed some time ere he could think of the best mode of communicating and softening the unpleasant intelligence. An interval was also spent in a visit to his nephew, whose state of convalescence continued to be as favourable, as if in truth it had been a miraculous consequence of the Constable's having complied with the advice of the Archbishop.

From the lodging of Damian, the Constable proceeded to the convent of the Benedictine Abbess. But she had been already made acquainted with the circumstances which he came to communicate, by a still earlier visit from the Archbishop Baldwin himself. The Primate had undertaken the office of mediator on this occasion, conscious that his success of the evening before must have placed the Constable in a delicate situation with the relations of his betrothed bride, and willing, by his countenance and authority, to reconcile the disputes which might ensue. Perhaps he had better have left Hugo de Lacy to plead his own cause; for the Abbess, though she listened to the communication with all the respect due to the highest dignitary of the English Church, drew consequences from the Constable's change of resolution which the Primate had not expected. She ventured to oppose no obstacle to De Lacy's accomplishment of his vows, but strongly argued that the contract with her niece should be entirely set aside, and each, party left at liberty to form a new choice.

It was in vain that the Archbishop endeavoured to dazzle the Abbess with the future honours to be won by the Constable in the Holy Land; the splendour of which would attach not to his lady alone, but to all in the remotest degree allied to or connected with her. All his eloquence was to no purpose, though upon so favourite a topic he exerted it to the utmost. The Abbess, it is true, remained silent for a moment after his arguments had been exhausted, but it was only to consider how she should intimate in a suitable and reverent manner, that children, the usual attendants of a happy union, and the existence of which she looked to for the continuation of the house of her father and brother, could not be hoped for with any probability, unless the precontract was followed by marriage, and the residence of the married parties in the same country. She therefore insisted, that the Constable having altered his intentions in this most important particular, the *fiancailles* should be entirely abrogated and set aside; and she demanded of the Primate, as an act of justice, that, as he had interfered to prevent the bridegroom's execution of his original purpose, he should now assist with his influence wholly to dissolve an engagement which had been thus materially innovated upon.

The Primate, who was sensible he had himself occasioned De Lacy's breach of contract, felt himself bound in honour and reputation to prevent consequences so disagreeable to his friend, as the dissolution of an engagement in which his interest and inclinations were alike concerned. He reproved the Lady Abbess for the carnal and secular views which she, a dignitary of the church, entertained upon the subject of matrimony, and concerning the interest of her house. He even upbraided her with selfishly preferring the continuation of the line of Berenger to the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, and denounced to her that Heaven would be avenged of the shortsighted and merely human policy, which postponed the interests of Christendom to those of an individual family.

After this severe homily, the Prelate took his departure, leaving the Abbess highly incensed, though she prudently forbore returning any irreverent answer to his paternal admonition.

In this humour the venerable lady was found by the Constable himself, when with some embarrassment, he proceeded to explain to her the necessity of his present departure for Palestine.

She received the communication with sullen dignity; her ample black robe and scapular seeming, as it were, to swell out in yet prouder folds as she listened to the reasons and the emergencies which compelled the Constable of Chester to defer the marriage which he avowed was the dearest wish of his heart, until after his return from the Crusade, for which he was about to set forth.

"Methinks," replied the Abbess, with much coldness, "if this communication is meant for earnest,—and it were no fit business— I myself no fit person,—for jesting with—methinks the Constable's resolution should have been proclaimed to us yesterday before the *fiancailles* had united his troth with that of Eveline Berenger, under expectations very different from those which he now announces."

"On the word of a knight and a gentleman, reverend lady," said the Constable, "I had not then the slightest thought that I should be called upon to take a step no less distressing to me, than, as I see with pain, it is displeasing to you."

"I can scarcely conceive," replied the Abbess, "the cogent reasons, which, existing as they must have done yesterday, have nevertheless delayed their operation until to-day."

"I own," said De Lacy, reluctantly, "that I entertained too ready hopes of obtaining a remission from my vow, which my Lord of Canterbury hath, in his zeal for Heaven's service, deemed it necessary to refuse me."

"At least, then," said the Abbess, veiling her resentment under the appearance of extreme coldness, "your lordship will do us the justice to place us in the same situation in which we stood yesterday morning; and, by joining with my niece and her friends in desiring the abrogation of a marriage contract, entered into with very different views from those which you now entertain, put a young person in that state of liberty of which she is at present deprived by her contract with you."

"Ah, madam!" said the Constable, "what do you ask of me? and in a tone how cold and indifferent do you demand me to resign hopes, the dearest which my bosom ever entertained since the life-blood warmed it!"

"I am unacquainted with language belonging to such feelings, my lord," replied the Abbess; "but methinks the prospects which could be so easily adjourned for years, might, by a little, and a very little, farther self-control, be altogether abandoned."

Hugo de Lacy paced the room in agitation, nor did he answer until after a considerable pause. "If your niece, madam, shares the sentiments which you have expressed, I could not, indeed, with justice to her, or perhaps to myself, desire to retain that interest in her, which our solemn espousals have given me. But I must know my doom from her own lips; and if it is as severe as that which your expressions lead me to fear, I will go to Palestine the better soldier of Heaven, that I shall have little left on earth that can interest me."

The Abbess, without farther answer, called on her Praecentrix, and desired her to command her niece's attendance immediately. The Praecentrix bowed reverently, and withdrew.

"May I presume to inquire," said De Lacy, "whether the Lady Eveline hath been possessed of the circumstances which have occasioned this unhappy alteration in my purpose?"

"I have communicated the whole to her from point to point," said the Abbess, "even as it was explained to me this morning by my Lord of Canterbury, (for with him I have already spoken upon the subject,) and confirmed but now by your lordship's own mouth."

"I am little obliged to the Archbishop," said the Constable, "for having forestalled my excuses in the quarter where it was most important for me that they should be accurately stated, and favourably received."

"That," said the Abbess, "is but an item of the account betwixt you and the Prelate,—it concerns not us."

"Dare I venture to hope," continued De Lacy, without taking offence at the dryness of the Abbess's manner, "that Lady Eveline has heard this most unhappy change of circumstances without emotion,—I would say, without displeasure?"

"She is the daughter of a Berenger, my lord," answered the Abbess, "and it is our custom to punish a breach of faith or to condemn it—never to grieve over it. What my niece may do in this case, I know not. I am a woman of religion, sequestered from the world, and would advise peace and Christian forgiveness, with a proper sense of contempt for the unworthy treatment which she has received. She has followers and vassals, and friends, doubtless, and advisers, who may not, in blinded zeal for worldly honour, recommend to her to sit down slightly with this injury, but desire she should rather appeal to the King, or to the arms of her father's followers, unless her liberty is restored to her by the surrender of the contract into which she has been enticed.—But she comes, to answer for herself."

Eveline entered at the moment, leaning on Rose's arm. She had laid aside mourning since the ceremony of the *fiancailles*, and was dressed in a kirtle of white, with an upper robe of pale blue. Her head was covered with a veil of white gauze, so thin, as to float about her like the misty cloud usually painted around the countenance of a seraph. But the face of Eveline, though in beauty not unworthy one of that angelic order, was at present far from resembling that of a seraph in tranquillity of expression. Her limbs trembled, her cheeks were pale, the tinge of red around the eyelids expressed recent tears; yet amidst these natural signs of distress and uncertainty, there was an air of profound resignation—a resolution to discharge her duty in every emergence reigning in the solemn expression of her

eye and eyebrow, and showing her prepared to govern the agitation which she could not entirely subdue. And so well were these opposing qualities of timidity and resolution mingled on her cheek, that Eveline, in the utmost pride of her beauty, never looked more fascinating than at that instant; and Hugo de Lacy, hitherto rather an unimpassioned lover, stood in her presence with feelings as if all the exaggerations of romance were realized, and his mistress were a being of a higher sphere, from whose doom he was to receive happiness or misery, life or death.

It was under the influence of such a feeling, that the warrior dropped on one knee before Eveline, took the hand which she rather resigned than gave to him, pressed it to his lips fervently, and, ere he parted with it, moistened it with one of the few tears which he was ever known to shed. But, although surprised, and carried out of his character by a sudden impulse, he regained his composure on observing that the Abbess regarded his humiliation, if it can be so termed, with an air of triumph; and he entered on his defence before Eveline with a manly earnestness, not devoid of fervour, nor free from agitation, yet made in a tone of firmness and pride, which seemed assumed to meet and control that of the offended Abbess.

"Lady," he said, addressing Eveline, "you have heard from the venerable Abbess in what unhappy position I have been placed since yesterday by the rigour of the Archbishop—perhaps I should rather say by his just though severe interpretation of my engagement in the Crusade. I cannot doubt that all this has been stated with accurate truth by the venerable lady; but as I must no longer call her my friend, let me fear whether she has done me justice in her commentary upon the unhappy necessity which must presently compel me to leave my country, and with my country to forego—at best to postpone—the fairest hopes which man ever entertained. The venerable lady hath upbraided me, that being myself the cause that the execution of yesterday's contract is postponed, I would fain keep it suspended over your head for an indefinite term of years. No one resigns willingly such rights as yesterday gave me; and, let me speak a boastful word, sooner than yield them up to man or woman born, I would hold a fair field against all comers, with grinded sword and sharp spear, from sunrise to sunset, for three days' space. But what I would retain at the price of a thousand lives, I am willing to renounce if it would cost you a single sigh. If, therefore, you think you cannot remain happy as the betrothed of De Lacy, you may command my assistance to have the contract annulled, and make some more fortunate man happy." He would have gone on, but felt the danger of being overpowered again by those feelings of tenderness so new to his steady nature, that he blushed to give way to them.

Eveline remained silent. The Abbess took the word. "Kinswoman," she said, "you hear that the generosity—or the justice—of the Constable of Chester, proposes, in consequence of his departure upon a distant and perilous expedition, to cancel a contract entered into upon the specific and precise understanding that he was to remain in England for its fulfilment. You cannot, methinks, hesitate to accept of the freedom which he offers you, with thanks for his bounty. For my part, I will reserve mine own, until I shall see that your joint application is sufficient to win to your purpose his Grace of Canterbury, who may again interfere with the actions of his friend the Lord Constable, over whom he has already exerted so much influence—for the weal, doubtless, of his spiritual concerns."

"If it is meant by your words, venerable lady," said the Constable, "that I have any purpose of sheltering myself behind the Prelate's authority, to avoid doing that which I proclaim my readiness, though not my willingness, to do, I can only say, that you are the first who has doubted the faith of Hugo de Lacy."—And while the proud Baron thus addressed a female and a recluse, he could not prevent his eye from sparkling, and his cheek from flushing.

"My gracious and venerable kinswoman," said Eveline, summoning together her resolution, "and you, my kind lord, be not offended if I pray you not to increase by groundless suspicions and hasty resentments your difficulties and mine. My lord, the obligations which I lie under to you are such as I can never discharge, since they comprehend fortune, life, and honour. Know that, in my anguish of mind, when besieged by the Welsh in my castle of the Garde Doloureuse, I vowed to the Virgin, that (my honour safe) I would place myself at the disposal of him whom our Lady should employ as her instrument to relieve me from yonder hour of agony. In giving me a deliverer, she gave me a master; nor could I desire a more noble one than Hugo de Lacy."

"God forbid, lady," said the Constable, speaking eagerly, as if he was afraid his resolution should fail ere he could get the renunciation uttered, "that I should, by such a tie, to which you subjected yourself in the extremity of your distress, bind you to any resolution in my favour which can put force on your own inclinations!"

The Abbess herself could not help expressing her applause of this sentiment, declaring it was spoken like a Norman gentleman; but at the same time, her eyes, turned towards her niece, seemed to exhort her to beware how she declined to profit by the candour of De Lacy.

But Eveline proceeded, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and a slight colour overspreading her face, to state her own sentiments, without listening to the suggestions of any one. "I will own, noble sir," she said, "that when your valour had rescued me from approaching destruction, I could have wished—honouring and respecting you, as I had done your late friend, my excellent father—that you could have accepted a daughter's service from me. I do not pretend entirely to have surmounted these sentiments, although I have combated them, as being unworthy of me, and ungrateful to you. But, from the moment you were pleased to honour me by a claim on this poor hand, I have studiously examined my sentiments towards you, and taught myself so far to make them coincide with my duty, that I may call myself assured that De Lacy would not find in Eveline Berenger an indifferent, far less an unworthy bride. In this, sir, you may boldly confide, whether the union you have sought for takes place instantly, or is delayed till a longer season. Still farther, I must acknowledge that the postponement of these nuptials will be more agreeable to me than their immediate accomplishment. I am at present very young, and totally inexperienced. Two or three years will, I trust, render me yet more worthy the regard of a man of honour."

At this declaration in his favour, however cold and qualified, De Lacy had as much difficulty to restrain his transports as formerly to moderate his agitation.

"Angel of bounty and of kindness!" he said, kneeling once more, and again possessing himself of her hand, "perhaps I ought in honour to resign voluntarily those hopes which you decline to ravish from me forcibly. But who could be capable of such unrelenting magnanimity?—Let me hope that my devoted attachment—that which you shall hear of me when at a distance—that which you shall know of me when near you—may give to your sentiments a more tender warmth than they now express; and, in the meanwhile, blame me not that I accept your plighted faith anew, under the conditions which you attach to it. I am conscious my wooing has been too late in life to expect the animated returns proper to youthful passion—Blame me not if I remain satisfied with those calmer sentiments which make life happy, though they cannot make possession rapturous. Your hand remains in my grasp, but it acknowledges not my pressure—Can it be that it refuses to ratify what your lips have said?"

"Never, noble De Lacy!" said Eveline, with more animation than she had yet expressed; and it appeared that the tone was at length sufficiently encouraging, since her lover was emboldened to take the lips themselves for guarantee.

It was with an air of pride, mingled with respect, that, after having received this pledge of fidelity, he turned to conciliate and to appease the offended Abbess. "I trust, venerable mother," he said, "that you will resume your former kind thoughts of me, which I am aware were only interrupted by your tender anxiety for the interest of her who should be dearest to us both. Let me hope that I may leave this fair flower under protection of the honoured lady who is her nest in blood, happy and secure as she must ever be, while listening to your counsels, and residing within these sacred walls."

But the Abbess was too deeply displeased to be propitiated by a compliment, which perhaps it had been better policy to have delayed till a calmer season. "My lord," she said, "and you, fair kinswoman, you ought needs to be aware how little my counsels—not frequently given where they are unwillingly listened to—can be of avail to those embarked in worldly affairs. I am a woman dedicated to religion, to solitude, and seclusion—to the service, in brief, of Our Lady and Saint Benedict. I have been already censured by my superior because I have, for love of you, fair niece, mixed more deeply in secular affairs than became the head of a convent of recluses—I will merit no farther blame on such an account; nor can you expect it of me. My brother's daughter, unfettered by worldly ties, had been the welcome sharer of my poor solicitude. But this house is too mean for the residence of the vowed bride of a mighty baron; nor do I, in my lowliness and inexperience, feel fitness to exercise over such an one that authority, which must belong to me over every one whom this roof protects. The grave tenor of our devotions, and the serener contemplation to which the females of this house are devoted," continued the Abbess, with increasing heat and vehemence, "shall not, for the sake of my worldly connections, be disturbed by the intrusion of one whose thoughts must needs be on the worldly toys of love and marriage."

"I do indeed believe, reverend mother," said the Constable, in his turn giving way to displeasure, "that a richly-dowered maiden, unwedded, and unlikely to wed, were a fitter and more welcome inmate to the convent, than one who cannot be separated from the world, and whose wealth is not likely to increase the House's revenues."

The Constable did the Abbess great injury in this hasty insinuation, and it only went to confirm her purpose of rejecting all charge of her niece during his absence. She was in truth as disinterested as haughty; and her only reason for anger against her niece was, that her advice had not been adopted without hesitation, although the matter regarded Eveline's happiness exclusively.

The ill-timed reflection of the Constable confirmed her in the resolution which she had already, and hastily adopted. "May Heaven forgive you, Sir Knight," she replied, "your injurious thoughts of His servants! It is indeed time, for your soul's sake, that you do penance in the Holy Land, having such rash judgments to repent of.—For you, my niece, you cannot want that hospitality, which, without verifying, or seeming to verify, unjust suspicions, I cannot now grant to you, while you have, in your kinswoman of Baldringham, a secular relation, whose nearness of blood approaches mine, and who may open her gates to you without incurring the unworthy censure, that she means to enrich herself at your cost."

The Constable saw the deadly paleness which, came over Eveline's cheek at this proposal, and, without knowing the cause of her repugnance, he hastened to relieve her from the apprehensions which she seemed evidently to entertain. "No, reverend mother," he said, "since *you* so harshly reject the care of your kinswoman, she shall not be a burden to any of her other relatives. While Hugo de Lacy hath six gallant castles, and many a manor besides, to maintain fire upon their hearths, his betrothed bride shall burden no one with her society, who may regard it as otherwise than a great honour; and methinks I were much poorer than Heaven hath made me, could I not furnish friends and followers sufficient to serve, obey, and protect her."

"No, my lord," said Eveline, recovering from the dejection into which she had been thrown by the unkindness of her relative; "since some unhappy destiny separates me from the protection of my father's sister, to whom I could so securely have resigned myself, I will neither apply for shelter to any more distant relation, nor accept of that which you, my lord, so generously offer; since my doing so might excite harsh, and, I am sure, undeserved reproaches, against her by whom I was driven to choose a less advisable dwelling-place. I have made my resolution. I have, it is true, only one friend left, but she is a powerful one, and is able to protect me against the particular evil fate which seems to follow me, as well as against the ordinary evils of human life."

"The Queen, I suppose?" said the Abbess, interrupting her impatiently.

"The Queen of Heaven! venerable kinswoman," answered Eveline; "our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, ever gracious to our house, and so lately my especial guardian and protectress. Methinks, since the vowed votaress of the Virgin rejects me, it is to her holy patroness whom I ought to apply for succour."

The venerable dame, taken somewhat at unawares by this answer, pronounced the interjection "Umph!" in a tone better befitting a Lollard or an Iconoclast, than a Catholic Abbess, and a daughter of the House of Berenger. Truth is, the Lady Abbess's hereditary devotion to the Lady of the Garde Doloureuse was much decayed since she had known the full merits of another gifted image, the property of her own convent.

Recollecting herself, however, she remained silent, while the Constable alleged the vicinity of the Welsh, as what might possibly again render the abode of his betrothed bride at the Garde Doloureuse as perilous as she had on a former occasion found it. To this Eveline replied, by reminding him of the great strength of her native fortress—the various sieges which it had withstood—and the important circumstance, that, upon the late occasion, it was only endangered, because, in compliance with a point of honour, her father Raymond had sallied out with the garrison, and fought at disadvantage a battle under the walls. She farther suggested, that it was easy for the Constable to name, from among his own vassals or hers, a seneschal of such approved prudence and valour, as might ensure the safety of the place, and of its lady.

Ere De Lacy could reply to her arguments the Abbess rose, and, pleading her total inability to give counsel in secular affairs, and the rules of her order, which called her, as she said, with a heightened colour and raised voice, "to the simple and peaceful discharge of her conventual duties," she left the betrothed parties in the locutory, or parlour, without any company, save Rose, who prudently remained at some distance.

The issue of their private conference seemed agreeable to both; and when Eveline told Rose that they were to return presently to the Garde Doloureuse, under a sufficient escort, and were to remain there during the period of the Crusade, it was in a tone of heartfelt satisfaction, which her follower had not heard her make use of for many days. She spoke also highly in praise of the kind acquiescence of the Constable in her wishes, and of his whole conduct, with a warmth of gratitude approaching to a more tender feeling.

"And yet, my dearest lady," said Rose, "if you will speak unfeignedly, you must, I am convinced, allow that you look upon this interval of years, interposed betwixt your contract and your marriage, rather as a respite than in any other light."

"I confess it," said Eveline, "nor have I concealed from, my future lord that such are my feelings, ungracious as they may seem. But it is my youth, Rose, my extreme youth, which makes me fear the duties of De Lacy's wife. Then those evil auguries hang strangely about me. Devoted to evil by one kinswoman, expelled almost from the roof of another, I seem to myself, at present, a creature who must carry distress with her, pass where she will. This evil hour, and, what is more, the apprehensions of it, will give way to time. When I shall have attained the age of twenty, Rose, I shall be a full-grown woman, with all the soul of a Berenger strong within me, to overcome those doubts and tremors which agitate the girl of seventeen."

"Ah! my sweet mistress," answered Rose, "may God and our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse guide all for the best!—But I would that this contract had not taken place, or, having taken place, that it could have been fulfilled by your immediate union."

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

The	Kiugr	call'd	down	his	merry	men	all,
By	one,	and	by	two,	and	three;	
Earl	Marshal	was	wont	to	be	the	foremost
But	the	hindmost	man	was	he.		

OLD BALLAD.

If the Lady Eveline retired satisfied and pleased from her private interview with De Lacy, the joy on the part of the Constable rose to a higher pitch of rapture than he was in the habit of feeling or expressing; and it was augmented by a visit of the leeches who attended his nephew, from whom he received a minute and particular account of his present disorder, with every assurance of a speedy recovery.

The Constable caused alms to be distributed to the convents and to the poor, masses to be said, and tapers to be lighted. He visited the Archbishop, and received from him his full approbation of the course which he proposed to pursue, with the promise, that out of the plenary power which he held from the Pope, the Prelate was willing, in consideration of his instant obedience, to limit his stay in the Holy Land to the term of three years, to become current from his leaving Britain, and to include the space necessary for his return to his native country. Indeed, having succeeded in the main point, the Archbishop judged it wise to concede every inferior consideration to a person of the Constable's rank and character, whose good-will to the proposed expedition was perhaps as essential to its success as his bodily presence.

In short, the Constable returned to his pavilion highly satisfied with the manner in which he had extricated himself from those difficulties which in the morning seemed almost insuperable; and when his officers assembled to disrobe him, (for great feudal lords had their levees and couchees, in imitation of sovereign princes,) he distributed gratuities amongst them, and jested and laughed in a much gayer humour than they had ever before witnessed.

"For thee," he said, turning to Vidal the minstrel, who, sumptuously dressed, stood to pay his respects among the other attendants, "I will give thee nought at present; but do thou remain by my bedside until I am asleep, and I will next morning reward thy minstrelsy as I like it."

"My lord," said Vidal, "I am already rewarded, both by the honour, and by the liveries, which better befit a royal minstrel than one of my mean fame; but assign me a subject, and I will do my best, not out of greed of future largess, but gratitude for past favours."

"Gramercy, good fellow," said the Constable. "Guarine," he added, addressing his squire, "let the watch be posted, and do thou remain within the tent—stretch thyself on the bear-hide, and sleep, or listen to the minstrelsy, as thou likest best. Thou thinkest thyself a judge, I have heard, of such gear."

It was usual, in those insecure times, for some faithful domestic to sleep at night within the tent of every great baron, that, if danger arose, he might not be unsupported or unprotected. Guarine accordingly drew his sword, and, taking it in his hand, stretched himself on the ground in such a manner, that, on the

slightest alarm, he could spring up, sword in hand. His broad black eyes, in which sleep contended with a desire to listen to the music, were fixed on Vidal, who saw them glittering in the reflection of the silver lamp, like those of a dragon or a basilisk.

After a few preliminary touches on the chords of his rote, the minstrel requested of the Constable to name the subject on which he desired the exercise of his powers.

"The truth of woman," answered Hugo de Lacy, as he laid his head upon his pillow.

After a short prelude, the minstrel obeyed, by singing nearly as follows:—

"Woman's	faith,	and	woman's	trust—	
Write	the	characters	in	dust;	
Stamp	them	on	the	stream,	
Print	on	the	running	best,	
And	each	the	moon's	letter,	
Shall	be	clearer,	evanescent	letter,	
And	more	permanent,	firmer,	better,	
Than the thing those letters mean.			I	ween,	
I	have	strain'd	the	spider's	thread
'Gainst	the	promise	of	a	maid;
I	have	weigh'd	a	grain	sand
'Gainst	her	plight	of	heart	and
I	told	my	true	love	the
How	her	faith	proved	light,	token,
Again	her	word	and	her	broken
		and	truth	word	plight,
				she	

And I believed them again ere night."

"How now, sir knave," said the Constable, raising himself on his elbow, from what drunken rhymer did you learn that half-witted satire?"

"From an old, ragged, crossgrained friend of mine, called Experience," answered Vidal. "I pray Heaven, he may never take your lordship, or any other worthy man, under his tuition."

"Go to, fellow," said the Constable, in reply; "thou art one of those wiseacres, I warrant me, that would fain be thought witty, because thou canst make a jest of those things which wiser men hold worthy of most worship—the honour of men, and the truth of women. Dost thou call thyself a minstrel, and hast no tale of female fidelity?"

"I had right many a one, noble sir, but I laid them aside when I disused my practice of the jesting part of the Joyous Science. Nevertheless, if it pleases your nobleness to listen, I can sing you an established lay upon such a subject."

De Lacy made a sign of acquiescence, and laid himself as if to slumber; while Vidal began one of those interminable and almost innumerable adventures concerning that paragon of true lovers, fair Ysolte; and of the constant and uninterrupted faith and affection which she displayed in numerous situations of difficulty and peril, to her paramour, the gallant Sir Tristrem, at the expense of her less favoured husband, the luckless King Mark of Cornwall; to whom, as all the world knows, Sir Tristrem was nephew.

This was not the lay of love and fidelity which De Lacy would have chosen; but a feeling like shame prevented his interrupting it, perhaps because he was unwilling to yield to or acknowledge the displeasing sensations excited by the tenor of the tale. He soon fell asleep, or feigned to do so; and the harper, continuing for a time his monotonous chant, began at length himself to feel the influence of slumber; his words, and the notes which he continued to touch upon the harp, were broken and interrupted, and seemed to escape drowsily from his fingers and voice. At length the sounds ceased entirely, and the minstrel seemed to have sunk into profound repose, with his head reclining on his breast, and one arm dropped down by his side, while the other rested on his harp. His slumber, however, was not very long, and when he awoke from it, and cast his eyes around him, reconnoitering, by the light of the night-lamp, whatever was in the tent, he felt a heavy hand, which pressed his shoulder as if gently to solicit his attention. At the same time the voice of the vigilant Philip Guarine whispered in his ear, "Thine office for the night is ended—depart to thine own quarters with all the silence thou mayst."

The minstrel wrapt himself in his cloak without reply, though perhaps not without feeling some resentment at a dismissal so unceremonious.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

Oh!	then	I	see	Queen	Mab	has	been	with	you.
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ROMEO AND JULIET.

The subject on which the mind has last been engaged at night is apt to occupy our thoughts even during slumber, when Imagination, uncorrected by the organs of sense, weaves her own fantastic web out of whatever ideas rise at random in the sleeper. It is not surprising, therefore, that De Lacy in his dreams had some confused idea of being identified with the unlucky Mark of Cornwall; and that he awakened from such unpleasant visions with a brow more clouded than when he was preparing for his couch on the evening before. He was silent, and seemed lost in thought, while his squire assisted at his levee with the respect now only paid to sovereigns. "Guarine," at length he said, "know you the stout Fleming, who was said to have borne him so well at the siege of the Garde Doloureuse?—a tall, big, brawny man."

"Surely, my lord," answered his squire; "I know Wilkin Flammock—I saw him but yesterday."

"Indeed!" replied the Constable—"Here, meanest thou?—In this city of Gloucester?"

"Assuredly, my good lord. He came hither partly about his merchandise, partly, I think, to see his daughter Rose, who is in attendance on the gracious young Lady Eveline."

"He is a stout soldier, is he not?"

"Like most of his kind—a rampart to a castle, but rubbish in the field," said the Norman squire.

"Faithful, also, is he not?" continued the Constable.

"Faithful as most Flemings, while you can pay for their faith," replied Guarine, wondering a little at the unusual interest taken in one whom he esteemed a being of an inferior order; when, after some farther inquiries, the Constable ordered the Fleming's attendance to be presently commanded.

Other business of the morning now occurred, (for his speedy departure required many arrangements to be hastily adopted,) when, as the Constable was giving audience to several officers of his troops, the bulky figure of Wilkin Flammock was seen at the entrance of the pavilion, in jerkin of white cloth, and having only a knife by his side.

"Leave the tent, my masters," said De Lacy, "but continue in attendance in the neighbourhood; for here comes one I must speak to in private." The officers withdrew, and the Constable and Fleming were left alone. "You are Wilkin Mammock, who fought well against the Welsh at the Garde Doloureuse?"

"I did my best, my lord," answered Wilkin—"I was bound to it by my bargain; and I hope ever to act like a man of credit."

"Methinks" said the Constable, "that you, so stout of limb, and, as I hear, so bold in spirit, might look a little higher than this weaving trade of thine."

"No one is reluctant to mend his station, my lord," said Wilkin; "yet I am so far from complaining of mine, that I would willingly consent it should never be better, on condition I could be assured it were never worse."

"Nay, but, Flammock," said the Constable, "I mean higher things for you than your modesty apprehends—I mean to leave thee in a charge of great trust."

"Let it concern bales of drapery, my lord, and no one will perform it better," said the Fleming.

"Away! thou art too lowly minded," said the Constable. "What think'st thou of being dubbed knight, as thy valour well deserves, and left as Chattelain of the Garde Doloureuse?"

"For the knighthood, my lord, I should crave your forgiveness; for it would sit on me like a gilded helmet on a hog. For any charge, whether of castle or cottage, I trust I might discharge it as well as another."

"I fear me thy rank must be in some way mended," said the Constable, surveying the unmilitary dress of the figure before him; "it is at present too mean to befit the protector and guardian of a young lady of high birth and rank."

"I the guardian of a young lady of birth and rank!" said Flammock, his light large eyes turning larger, lighter, and rounder as he spoke.

"Even thou," said the Constable. "The Lady Eveline proposes to take up her residence in her castle of the Garde Doloureuse. I have been casting about to whom I may intrust the keeping of her person as well as of the stronghold. Were I to choose some knight of name, as I have many in my household, he would be setting about to do deeds of vassalage upon the Welsh, and engaging himself in turmoils, which would render the safety of the castle precarious; or he would be absent on feats of chivalry, tournaments, and hunting parties; or he would, perchance, have shows of that light nature under the walls, or even within the courts of the castle, turning the secluded and quiet abode, which becomes the situation of the Lady Eveline, into the misrule of a dissolute revel.—Thee I can confide in—thou wilt fight when it is requisite, yet wilt not provoke danger for the sake of danger itself—thy birth, thy habits, will lead thee to avoid those gaities, which, however fascinating to others, cannot but be distasteful to thee—thy management will be as regular, as I will take care that it shall be honourable; and thy relation to her favourite, Rose, will render thy guardianship more agreeable to the Lady Eveline, than, perchance, one of her own rank—And, to speak to thee a language which, thy nation readily comprehends, the reward, Fleming, for the regular discharge of this most weighty trust, shall be beyond thy most flattering hope."

The Fleming had listened to the first part of this discourse with an expression of surprise, which gradually gave way to one of deep and anxious reflection. He gazed fixedly on the earth for a minute after the Constable had ceased speaking, and then raising up his eyes suddenly, said, "It is needless to seek for round-about excuses. This cannot be your earnest, my lord—but if it is, the scheme is naught."

"How and wherefore?" asked the Constable, with displeased surprise.

"Another man may grasp at your bounty," continued Wilkin, "and leave you to take chance of the value you were to receive for it; but I am a downright dealer, I will not take payment for service I cannot render."

"But I demand, once more, wherefore thou canst not, or rather wilt not, accept this trust?" said the Constable. "Surely, if I am willing to confer such confidence, it is well thy part to answer it."

"True, my lord," said the Fleming; "but methinks the noble Lord de Lacy should feel, and the wise Lord de Lacy should foresee, that a Flemish weaver is no fitting guardian for his plighted bride. Think her shut up in yonder solitary castle, under such respectable protection, and reflect how long the place will be solitary in this land of love and of adventure! We shall have minstrels singing ballads by the threave under our windows, and such twangling of harps as would be enough to frighten our walls from their foundations, as clerks say happened to those of Jericho—We shall have as many knights-errant around us as ever had Charlemagne, or King Arthur. Mercy on me! A less matter than a fine and noble recluse immured—so will they term it—in a tower, under the guardianship of an old Flemish weaver, would bring half the chivalry in England round us, to break lances, vow vows, display love-liveries, and I know not what follies besides.—Think you such gallants, with the blood flying through their veins like quicksilver, would much mind *my* bidding them begone?"

"Draw bolts, up with the drawbridge, drop portcullis," said the Constable, with a constrained smile.

"And thinks your lordship such gallants would mind these impediments? such are the very essence of the adventures which they come to seek.—The Knight of the Swan would swim through the moat—he of the Eagle would fly over the walls—he of the Thunderbolt would burst open the gates."

"Ply crossbow and mangonel," said de Lacy.

"And be besieged in form," said the Fleming, "like the Castle of Tintadgel in the old hangings, all for the love of fair lady?—And then those gay dames and demoiselles, who go upon adventure from castle to castle, from tournament to tournament, with bare bosoms, flaunting plumes, poniards at their sides, and javelins in their hands, chattering like magpies, and fluttering like jays, and, ever and anon, cooing like doves—how am I to exclude such from the Lady Eveline's privacy?"

"By keeping doors shut, I tell thee," answered the Constable, still in the same tone of forced jocularity; "a wooden bar will be thy warrant."

"Ay, but," answered Flammock, "if the Flemish weaver say *shut*, when the Norman young lady says *open*, think which has best chance of being obeyed. At a word, my lord, for the matter of guardianship, and such like, I wash my hands of it—I would not undertake to be guardian to the chaste Susannah, though she lived in an enchanted castle, which no living thing could approach."

"Thou holdest the language and thoughts," said De Lacy, "of a vulgar debauchee, who laughs at female constancy, because he has lived only with the most worthless of the sex. Yet thou shouldst know the contrary, having, as I know, a most virtuous daughter—"

"Whose mother was not less so," said Wilkin, breaking in upon the Constable's speech with somewhat more emotion than he usually displayed, "But law, my lord, gave me authority to govern and direct my wife, as both law and nature give me power and charge over my daughter. That which I can govern, I can be answerable for; but how to discharge me so well of a delegated trust, is another question.—Stay at home, my good lord," continued the honest Fleming, observing that his speech made some impression upon De Lacy; "let a fool's advice for once be of avail to change a wise man's purpose, taken, let me say, in no wise hour. Remain in your own land, rule your own vassals, and protect your own bride. You only can claim her cheerful love and ready obedience; and sure I am, that, without pretending to guess what she may do if separated from you, she will, under your own eye, do the duty of a faithful and a loving spouse."

"And the Holy Sepulchre?" said the Constable, with a sigh, his heart confessing the wisdom of the advice, which circumstances prevented him from following.

"Let those who lost the Holy Sepulchre regain it, my lord," replied Flammock. "If those Latins and Greeks, as they call them, are no better men than I have heard, it signifies very little whether they or the heathen have the country that has cost Europe so much blood and treasure." "In good faith," said the Constable, "there is sense in what thou say'st; but I caution thee to repeat it not, lest thou be taken for a heretic or a Jew. For me, my word and oath are pledged beyond retreat, and I have only to consider whom I may best name for that important station, which thy caution has—not without some shadow of reason—induced thee to decline."

"There is no man to whom your lordship can so naturally or honourably transfer such a charge," said Wilkin Flammock, "as to the kinsman near to you, and possessed of your trust; yet much better would it be were there no such trust to be reposed in any one."

"If," said the Constable, "by my near kinsman, you mean Randal de Lacy, I care not if I tell you, that I consider him as totally worthless, and undeserving of honourable confidence."

"Nay, I mean another," said Flammock, "nearer to you by blood, and, unless I greatly mistake, much nigher also in affection—I had in mind your lordship's nephew, Damian de Lacy."

The Constable started as if a wasp had stung him; but instantly replied, with forced composure, "Damian was to have gone in my stead to Palestine—it now seems I must go in his; for, since this last illness, the leeches have totally changed their minds, and consider that warmth of the climate as dangerous, which they formerly decided to be salutary. But our learned doctors, like our learned priests, must ever be in the right, change their counsels as they may; and we poor laymen still in the wrong. I can, it is true, rely on Damian with the utmost confidence; but he is young, Flammock—very young—and in that particular, resembles but too nearly the party who might be otherwise committed to his charge."

"Then once more, my lord," said the plain-spoken Fleming, "remain at home, and be yourself the protector of what is naturally so dear to you."

"Once more, I repeat, that I cannot," answered the Constable. "The step which I have adopted as a great duty, may perhaps be a great error—I only know that it is irretrievable."

"Trust your nephew, then, my lord," replied Wilkin—"he is honest and true; and it is better trusting young lions than old wolves. He may err, perhaps, but it will not be from premeditated treachery."

"Thou art right, Flammock," said the Constable; "and perhaps I ought to wish I had sooner asked thy counsel, blunt as it is. But let what has passed be a secret betwixt us; and bethink thee of something that may advantage thee more than the privilege of speaking about my affairs."

"That account will be easily settled, my lord," replied Flammock; "for my object was to ask your lordship's favour to obtain certain extensions of our privileges, in yonder wild corner where we Flemings have made our retreat."

"Thou shalt have them, so they be not exorbitant," said the Constable. And the honest Fleming, among whose good qualities scrupulous delicacy was not the foremost, hastened to detail, with great minuteness, the particulars of his request or petition, long pursued in vain, but to which this interview was the means of insuring success.

The Constable, eager to execute the resolution which he had formed, hastened to the lodging of Damian de Lacy, and to the no small astonishment of his nephew, intimated to him his change of destination; alleging his own hurried departure, Damian's late and present illness, together with the necessary protection to be afforded to the Lady Eveline, as reasons why his nephew must needs remain behind him—to represent him during his absence—to protect the family rights, and assert the family honour of the house of De Lacy—above all, to act as the guardian of the young and beautiful bride, whom his uncle and patron had been in some measure compelled to abandon for a time.

Damian yet occupied his bed while the Constable communicated this change of purpose. Perhaps he might think the circumstance fortunate, that in this position he could conceal from his uncle's observation the various emotions which he could not help feeling; while the Constable, with the eagerness of one who is desirous of hastily finishing what he has to say on an unpleasant subject, hurried over an account of the arrangements which he had made, in order that his nephew might have the means of discharging, with sufficient effect, the important trust committed to him.

The youth listened as to a voice in a dream, which he had not the power of interrupting, though there was something within him which whispered there would be both prudence and integrity in remonstrating against his uncle's alteration of plan. Something he accordingly attempted to say, when the Constable at length paused; but it was too feebly spoken to shake a resolution fully though hastily adopted and explicitly announced, by one not in the use to speak before his purpose was fixed, or to alter it when it was declared.

The remonstrance of Damian, besides, if it could be termed such, was spoken in terms too contradictory to be intelligible. In one moment he professed his regret for the laurels which he had hoped to gather in Palestine, and implored his uncle not to alter his purpose, but permit him to attend his banner thither; and in the next sentence, he professed his readiness to defend the safety of Lady Eveline with the last drop of his blood. De Lacy saw nothing inconsistent in these feelings, though they were for the moment contradictory to each other. It was natural, he thought, that a young knight should be desirous to win honour—natural also that he should willingly assume a charge so honourable and important as that with which he proposed to invest him; and therefore he thought that it was no wonder that, assuming his new office willingly, the young man should yet feel regret at losing the prospect of honourable adventure, which he must abandon. He therefore only smiled in reply to the broken expostulations of his nephew; and, having confirmed his former arrangement, left the young man to reflect at leisure on his change of destination, while he himself, in a second visit to the Benedictine Abbey, communicated the purpose which he had adopted, to the Abbess, and to his bride-elect.

The displeasure of the former lady was in no measure abated by this communication; in which, indeed, she affected to take very little interest. She pleaded her religious duties, and her want of knowledge of secular affairs, if she should chance to mistake the usages of the world; yet she had always, she said, understood, that the guardians of the young and beautiful of her own sex were chosen from the more mature of the other.

"Your own unkindness, lady," answered the Constable, "leaves me no better choice than I have made. Since the Lady Eveline's nearest friends deny her the privilege of their roof, on account of the claim with which she has honoured me, I, on my side, were worse than ungrateful did I not secure for her the protection of my nearest male heir. Damian is young, but he is true and honourable; nor does the chivalry of England afford me a better choice."

Eveline seemed surprised, and even struck with consternation, at the resolution which her bridegroom thus suddenly announced; and perhaps it was fortunate that the remark of the Lady Abbess made the answer of the Constable necessary, and prevented him from observing that her colour shifted more than once from pale to deep red. Rose, who was not excluded from the conference, drew close up to her mistress; and, by affecting to adjust her veil, while in secret she strongly pressed her hand, gave her time and encouragement to compose her mind for a reply. It was brief and decisive, and announced with a firmness which showed that the uncertainty of the moment had passed away or been suppressed. "In case of danger," she said, "she would not fail to apply to Damian de Lacy to come to her aid, as he had once done before; but she did not apprehend any danger at present, within her own secure castle of the Garde Doloureuse, where it was her purpose to dwell, attended only by her own household. She was resolved," she continued, "in consideration of her peculiar condition, to observe the strictest retirement, which she expected would not be violated even by the noble young knight who was to act as her guardian, unless some apprehension for her safety made his visit unavoidable."

The Abbess acquiesced, though coldly, in a proposal, which her ideas of decorum recommended; and preparations were hastily made for the Lady Eveline's return to the castle of her father. Two interviews which intervened before her leaving the convent, were in their nature painful. The first was when Damian was formally presented to her by his uncle, as the delegate to whom he had committed the charge of his own property, and, which was much dearer to him, as he affirmed, the protection of her person and interest.

Eveline scarce trusted herself with one glance; but that single look comprehended and reported to her the ravage which disease, aided by secret grief, had made on the manly form and handsome countenance of the youth before her. She received his salutation in a manner as embarrassed as that in which it was made; and, to his hesitating proffer of service, answered, that she trusted only to be obliged to him for his good-will during the interval of his uncle's absence.

Her parting with the Constable was the next trial which she was to undergo. It was not without emotion, although she preserved her modest composure, and De Lacy his calm gravity of deportment. His voice faltered, however, when he came to announce, "that it were unjust she should be bound by the engagement which she had been graciously contented to abide under. Three years he had assigned for its term; to which space the Arch-bishop Baldwin had consented to shorten the period of his absence. If I appear not when these are elapsed," he said, "let the Lady Eveline conclude that the grave holds De Lacy, and seek out for her mate some happier man. She cannot find one more grateful, though there are many who better deserve her."

On these terms they parted; and the Constable, speedily afterwards embarking, ploughed the narrow seas for the shores of Flanders, where he proposed to unite his forces with the Count of that rich and warlike country, who had lately taken the Cross, and to proceed by the route which should be found most practicable on their destination for the Holy Land. The broad pennon, with the arms of the Lacys, streamed forward with a favourable wind from the prow of the vessel, as if pointing to the quarter of the horizon where its renown was to be augmented; and, considering the fame of the leader, and the excellence of the soldiers who followed him, a more gallant band, in proportion to their numbers, never went to avenge on the Saracens the evils endured by the Latins of Palestine.

Meanwhile Eveline, after a cold parting with the Abbess, whose offended dignity had not yet forgiven the slight regard which she had paid to her opinion, resumed her journey homeward to her paternal castle, where her household was to be arranged in a manner suggested by the Constable, and approved of by herself.

The same preparations were made for her accommodation at every halting place which she had experienced upon her journey to Gloucester, and, as before, the purveyor was invisible, although she could be at little loss to guess his name. Yet it appeared as if the character of these preparations was in some degree altered. All the realities of convenience and accommodation, with the most perfect assurances of safety, accompanied her every where on the route; but they were no longer mingled with that display of tender gallantry and taste, which marked that the attentions were paid to a young and beautiful female. The clearest fountain-head, and the most shady grove, were no longer selected for the noontide repast; but the house of some franklin, or a small abbey, afforded the necessary hospitality. All seemed to be ordered with the most severe attention to rank and decorum—it seemed as if a nun of some strict order, rather than a

young maiden of high quality and a rich inheritance, had been journeying through the land, and Eveline, though pleased with the delicacy which seemed thus to respect her unprotected and peculiar condition, would sometimes think it unnecessary, that, by so many indirect hints, it should be forced on her recollection. She thought it strange also, that Damian, to whose care she had been so solemnly committed, did not even pay his respects to her on the road. Something there was which whispered to her, that close and frequent intercourse might be unbecoming—even dangerous; but surely the ordinary duties of a knight and gentleman enjoined him some personal communication with the maiden under his escort, were it only to ask if her accommodations had been made to her satisfaction, or if she had any special wish which was ungratified. The only intercourse, however, which took place betwixt them, was through means of Amelot, Damian de Lacy's youthful page, who came at morning and evening to receive Eveline's commands concerning their route, and the hours of journey and repose. These formalities rendered the solitude of Eveline's return less endurable; and had it not been for the society of Rose, she would have found herself under an intolerably irksome degree of constraint. She even hazarded to her attendant some remarks upon the singularity of De Lacy's conduct, who, authorized as he was by his situation, seemed yet as much afraid to approach her as if she had been a basilisk.

Rose let the first observation of this nature pass as if it had been unheard; but when her mistress made a second remark to the same purpose, she answered, with the truth and freedom of her character, though perhaps with less of her usual prudence, "Damian de Lacy judges well, noble lady. He to whom the safe keeping of a royal treasure is intrusted, should not indulge himself too often by gazing upon it."

Eveline blushed, wrapt herself closer in her veil, nor did she again during their journey mention the name of Damian de Lacy.

When the gray turrets of the Garde Doloureuse greeted her sight on the evening of the second day, and she once more beheld her father's banner floating from its highest watch-tower in honour of her approach, her sensations were mingled with pain; but, upon the whole, she looked towards that ancient home as a place of refuge, where she might indulge the new train of thoughts which circumstances had opened to her, amid the same scenes which had sheltered her infancy and childhood.

She pressed forward her palfrey, to reach the ancient portal as soon as possible, bowed hastily to the well-known faces which showed themselves on all sides, but spoke to no one, until, dismounting at the chapel door, she had penetrated to the crypt, in which was preserved the miraculous painting. There, prostrate on the ground, she implored the guidance and protection of the Holy Virgin through those intricacies in which she had involved herself, by the fulfilment of the vow which she had made in her anguish before the same shrine. If the prayer was misdirected, its purport was virtuous and sincere; nor are we disposed to doubt that it attained that Heaven towards which it was devoutly addressed.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

The	Virgin's	image	falls—yet	some,	I	ween,
Not	unforgiven	the	suppliant	knee	might	bend,
As	to	a	power,	in	which	blend
All	that	was	mix'd,	and	reconciled	in
Of	mother's	love,	with	celestial	maiden's	with
Of	high	with	low,	celestial	with	terrene.

WORDSWORTH.

The household of the Lady Eveline, though of an establishment becoming her present and future rank, was of a solemn and sequestered character, corresponding to her place of residence, and the privacy connected with her situation, retired as she was from the class of maidens who are yet unengaged, and yet not united with that of matrons, who enjoy the protection of a married name. Her immediate female attendants, with whom the reader is already acquainted, constituted almost her whole society. The garrison of the castle, besides household servants, consisted of veterans of tried faith, the followers of Berenger and of De Lacy in many a bloody field, to whom the duties of watching and warding were as familiar as any of their more ordinary occupations, and whose courage, nevertheless, tempered by age and experience, was not likely to engage in any rash adventure or accidental quarrel. These men maintained a constant and watchful guard, commanded by the steward, but under the eye of Father Aldrovand, who, besides discharging his ecclesiastical functions, was at times pleased to show some sparkles of his ancient military education.

Whilst this garrison afforded security against any sudden attempt on the part of the Welsh to surprise the castle, a strong body of forces were disposed within a few miles of the Garde Doloureuse, ready, on the least alarm, to advance to defend the place against any more numerous body of invaders, who, undeterred by the fate of Gwenwyn, might have the hardihood to form a regular siege. To this band, which, under the eye of Damian de Lacy himself, was kept in constant readiness for action, could be added on occasion all the military force of the Marches, comprising numerous bodies of Flemings, and other foreigners, who held their establishments by military tenure.

While the fortress was thus secure from hostile violence, the life of its inmates was so unvaried and simple, as might have excused youth and beauty for wishing for variety, even at the expense of some danger. The labours of the needle were only relieved by a walk round the battlements, where Eveline, as she passed arm in arm with Rose, received a military salute from each sentinel in turn, or in the court-yard, where the caps and bonnets of the domestics paid her the same respect which she received above from the pikes and javelins of the warders. Did they wish to extend their airing beyond the castle gate, it was not sufficient that doors and bridges were to be opened and lowered; there was, besides, an escort to get under arms, who, on foot or horseback as the case might require, attended for the security of the Lady Eveline's person. Without this military attendance they could not in safety move even so far as the mills, where honest Wilkin Flammock, his warlike deeds forgotten, was occupied with his mechanical labours. But if a farther disport was intended, and the Lady of the Garde Doloureuse proposed to hunt or hawk for a few hours, her safety was not confided to a guard so feeble as the garrison of the castle might afford. It was necessary that Raoul should announce her purpose to Damian by a special messenger despatched the evening before, that there might be time before daybreak to scour, with a body of light cavalry, the region in which she intended to take her pleasure; and sentinels were placed in all suspicious places while she continued in the field. In truth, she tried, upon one or two occasions, to make an excursion, without any formal annunciation of her intention; but all her purposes seemed to be known to Damian as soon as they were formed, and she was no sooner abroad than parties of archers and spearmen from his camp were seen scouring the valleys, and guarding the mountain-pass, and Damian's own, plume was usually beheld conspicuous among the distant soldiers.

The formality of these preparations so much allayed the pleasure derived from the sport, that Eveline seldom resorted to amusement which was attended with such bustle, and put in motion so many persons.

The day being worn out as it best might, in the evening Father Aldrovand was wont to read out of some holy legend, or from the homilies of some departed saint, such passages as he deemed fit for the hearing of his little congregation. Sometimes also he read and expounded a chapter of the Holy Scripture; but in such cases, the good man's attention was so magically turned to the military part of the Jewish history, that he was never able to quit the books of Judges and of Kings, together with the triumphs of Judas Maccabeus; although the manner in which he illustrated the victories of the children of Israel was much more amusing to himself than edifying to his female audience.

Sometimes, but rarely, Rose obtained permission for a strolling minstrel to entertain an hour with his ditty of love and chivalry; sometimes a pilgrim from a distant shrine, repaid by long tales of the wonders which he had seen in other lands, the hospitality which the Garde Doloureuse afforded; and sometimes also it happened, that the interest and intercession of the tiring-woman obtained admission for travelling merchants, or pedlars, who, at the risk of their lives, found profit by carrying from castle to castle the materials of rich dresses and female ornaments.

The usual visits of mendicants, of jugglers, of travelling jesters, are not to be forgotten in this list of amusements; and though his nation subjected him to close watch and observation, even the Welsh bard, with his huge harp strung with horse-hair, was sometimes admitted to vary the uniformity of their secluded life. But, saving such amusements, and saving also the regular attendance upon the religious duties at the chapel, it was impossible for life to glide away in more wearisome monotony than at the castle of the Garde Doloureuse. Since the death of its brave owner, to whom feasting and hospitality seemed as natural as

thoughts of honour and deeds of chivalry, the gloom of a convent might be said to have enveloped the ancient mansion of Raymond Berenger, were it not that the presence of so many armed warders, stalking in solemn state on the battlements, gave it rather the aspect of a state-prison; and the temper of the inhabitants gradually became infected by the character of their dwelling.

The spirits of Eveline in particular felt a depression, which her naturally lively temper was quite inadequate to resist; and as her ruminations became graver, had caught that calm and contemplative manner, which is so often united with an ardent and enthusiastical temperament. She meditated deeply upon the former accidents of her life; nor can it be wondered that her thoughts repeatedly wandered back to the two several periods on which she had witnessed, or supposed that she had witnessed, a supernatural appearance. Then it was that it often seemed to her, as if a good and evil power strove for mastery over her destiny.

Solitude is favourable to feelings of self-importance; and it is when alone, and occupied only with their own thoughts, that fanatics have reveries, and imagined saints lose themselves in imaginary ecstasies. With Eveline the influence of enthusiasm went not such a length, yet it seemed to her as if in the vision of the night she saw sometimes the aspect of the Lady of the Garde Doloureuse, bending upon her glances of pity, comfort, and protection; sometimes the ominous form of the Saxon castle of Baldringbam, holding up the bloody hand as witness of the injuries with which she had been treated while in life, and menacing with revenge the descendant of her murderer.

On awaking from such dreams, Eveline would reflect that she was the last branch of her house—a house to which the tutelage and protection of the miraculous Image, and the enmity and evil influence of the revengeful Vanda, had been peculiarly attached for ages. It seemed to her as if she were the prize, for the disposal of which the benign saint and vindictive fiend were now to play their last and keenest game.

Thus thinking, and experiencing little interruption of her meditations from any external circumstance of interest and amusement, she became pensive, absent, wrapt herself up in contemplations which withdrew her attention from the conversation around her, and walked in the world of reality like one who is still in a dream. When she thought of her engagement with the Constable of Chester, it was with resignation, but without a wish, and almost without an expectation, that she would be called upon to fulfil it. She had accomplished her vow by accepting the faith of her deliverer in exchange for her own; and although she held herself willing to redeem the pledge—nay, would scarce confess to herself the reluctance with which she thought of doing so—yet it is certain that she entertained unavowed hopes that Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse would not be a severe creditor; but, satisfied with the readiness she had shown to accomplish her vow, would not insist upon her claim in its full rigour. It would have been the blackest ingratitude, to have wished that her gallant deliverer, whom she had so much cause to pray for, should experience any of those fatalities which in the Holy Land so often changed the laurel-wreath into cypress; but other accidents chanced, when men had been long abroad, to alter those purposes with which they had left home.

A strolling minstrel, who sought the Garde Doloureuse, had recited, for the amusement of the lady and household, the celebrated lay of the Count of Gleichen, who, already married in his own country, laid himself under so many obligations in the East to a Saracen princess, through whose means he achieved his freedom, that he married her also. The Pope and his conclave were pleased to approve of the double wedlock, in a case so extraordinary; and the good Count of Gleichen shared his nuptial bed between two wives of equal rank, and now sleeps between them under the same monument. The commentaries of the inmates of the castle had been various and discrepant upon this legend. Father Aldrovand considered it as altogether false, and an unworthy calumny on the head of the church, in affirming his Holiness would countenance such irregularity. Old Margery, with the tender-heartedness of an ancient nurse, wept bitterly for pity during the tale, and never questioning either the power of the Pope or the propriety of his decision, was pleased that a mode of extrication was found for a complication of love distresses which seemed almost inextricable. Dame Gillian declared it unreasonable, that, since a woman was only allowed one husband, a man should, under any circumstances, be permitted to have two wives; while Raoul, glancing towards her a look of verjuice, pitied the deplorable idiocy of the man who could be fool enough to avail himself of such a privilege.

"Peace, all the rest of you," said the Lady Eveline; "and do you, my dear Rose, tell me your judgment upon the Count of Gleichen and his two wives."

Rose blushed, and replied, "She was not much accustomed to think of such matters; but that, in her apprehension, the wife who could be contented with but one half of her husband's affections, had never deserved to engage the slightest share of them."

"Thou art partly right, Rose," said Eveline; "and methinks the European lady, when she found herself outshone by the young and beautiful foreign princess, would have best consulted her own dignity in resigning the place, and giving the Holy Father no more trouble than in annulling the marriage, as has been done in cases of more frequent occurrence."

This she said with an air of indifference and even gaiety, which intimated to her faithful attendant with how little effort she herself could have made such a sacrifice, and served to indicate the state of her affections towards the Constable. But there was another than the Constable on whom her thoughts turned more frequently, though involuntarily, than perhaps in prudence they should have done.

The recollections of Damian de Lacy had not been erased from Eveline's mind. They were, indeed, renewed by hearing his name so often mentioned, and by knowing that he was almost constantly in the neighbourhood, with his whole attention fixed upon her convenience, interest, and safety; whilst, on the other hand, so far from waiting on her in person, he never even attempted, by a direct communication with herself, to consult her pleasure, even upon what most concerned her.

The messages conveyed by Father Aldrovand, or by Rose, to Amelot, Damian's page, while they gave an air of formality to their intercourse, which Eveline thought unnecessary, and even unkind, yet served to fix her attention upon the connection between them, and to keep it ever present to her memory. The remark by which Rose had vindicated the distance observed by her youthful guardian, sometimes arose to her recollection; and while her soul repelled with scorn the suspicion, that, in any case, his presence, whether at intervals or constantly, could be prejudicial to his uncle's interest, she conjured up various arguments for giving him a frequent place in her memory.—Was it not her duty to think of Damian often and kindly, as the Constable's nearest, best beloved, and most trusted relative?—Was he not her former deliverer and her present guardian?—And might he not be considered as an instrument specially employed by her divine patroness, in rendering effectual the protection with which she had graced her in more than one emergency?

Eveline's mind mutinied against the restrictions which were laid on their intercourse, as against something which inferred suspicion and degradation, like the compelled seclusion to which she had heard the Paynim infidels of the East subjected their females. Why should she see her guardian only in the benefits which he conferred upon her, and the cares he took for her safety, and hear his sentiments only by the mouth of others, as if one of them had been infected with the plague, or some other fatal or infectious disorder, which might render their meeting dangerous to the other?—And if they did meet occasionally, what else could be the consequence, save that the care of a brother towards a sister —of a trusty and kind guardian to the betrothed bride of his near relative and honoured patron, might render the melancholy seclusion of the Garde Doloureuse more easy to be endured by one so young in years, and, though dejected by present circumstances, naturally so gay in temper?

Yet, though this train of reasoning appeared to Eveline, when tracing it in her own mind, so conclusive, that she several times resolved to communicate her view of the case to Rose Flammock, it so chanced that, whenever she looked on the calm steady blue eye of the Flemish maiden, and remembered that her unblemished faith was mixed with a sincerity and plain dealing proof against every consideration, she feared lest she might be subjected in the opinion of her attendant to suspicions from which her own mind freed her; and her proud Norman spirit revolted at the idea of being obliged to justify herself to another, when she stood self-acquitted to her own mind. "Let things be as they are," she said; "and let us endure all the weariness of a life which might be so easily rendered more cheerful, rather than that this zealous but punctilious friend should, in the strictness and nicety of her feelings on my account, conceive me capable of encouraging an intercourse which could lead to a less worthy thought of me in the mind of the most scrupulous of man—or of womankind." But even this vacillation of opinion and resolution tended to bring the image of the handsome young Damian more frequently before the Lady Eveline's fancy, than perhaps his uncle, had he known it, would altogether have approved of. In such reflections, however, she never indulged long, ere a sense of the singular destiny which had hitherto attended her, led her back into the more melancholy contemplations from which the buoyancy of her youthful fancy had for a short time emancipated her.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD

—Ours is the skie,
Where at what fowl we please our hawk shall flie.
RANDOLPH.

One bright September morning, old Raoul was busy in the mews where he kept his hawks, grumbling all the while to himself as he surveyed the condition of each bird, and blaming alternately the carelessness of the under-falconer, and the situation of the building, and the weather, and the wind, and all things around him, for the dilapidation which time and disease had made in the neglected hawking establishment of the Garde Doloureuse. While in these unpleasing meditations, he was surprised by the voice of his beloved Dame Gillian, who seldom was an early riser, and yet more rarely visited him when he was in his sphere of peculiar authority. "Raoul, Raoul! where art thou, man?—Ever to seek for, when thou canst make aught of advantage for thyself or me!"

"And what want'st thou, dame?" said Raoul, "what means thy screaming worse than the seagull before wet weather? A murrain on thy voice! it is enough to fray every hawk from the perch."

"Hawk!" answered Dame Gillian; "it is time to be looking for hawks, when here is a cast of the bravest falcons come hither for sale, that ever flew by lake, brook, or meadow!"

"Kites! like her that brings the news," said Raoul.

"No, nor kestrels like him that hears it," replied Gillian; "but brave jersfalcons, with large nares, strongly armed, and beaks short and something bluish—"

"Pshaw, with thy jargon!—Where came they from?" said Raoul, interested in the tidings, but unwilling to give his wife the satisfaction of seeing that he was so.

"From the Isle of Man," replied Gillian.

"They must be good, then, though it was a woman brought tidings of them," said Raoul, smiling grimly at his own wit; then, leaving the mews, he demanded to know where this famous falcon-merchant was to be met withal.

"Why, between the barriers and the inner gate," replied Gillian, "where other men are admitted that have wares to utter—Where should he be?"

"And who let him in?" demanded the suspicious Raoul.

"Why, Master Steward, thou owl!" said Gillian; "he came but now to my chamber, and sent me hither to call you."

"Oh, the steward—the steward—I might have guessed as much. And he came to thy chamber, doubtless, because he could not have as easily come hither to me himself.—Was it not so, sweetheart?"

"I do not know why he chose to come to me rather than to you, Raoul," said Gillian; "and if I did know, perhaps I would not tell you. Go to—miss your bargain, or make your bargain, I care not which—the man will not wait for you—he has good proffers from the Seneschal of Malpas, and the Welsh Lord of Dinevawr."

"I come—I come," said Raoul, who felt the necessity of embracing this opportunity of improving his hawking establishment, and hastened to the gate, where he met the merchant, attended by a servant, who kept in separate cages the three falcons which he offered for sale.

The first glance satisfied Raoul that they were of the best breed in Europe, and that, if their education were in correspondence to their race, there could scarce be a more valuable addition even to a royal mews. The merchant did not fail to enlarge upon all their points of excellence; the breadth of their shoulders, the strength of their train, their full and fierce dark eyes, the boldness with which they endured the approach of strangers, and the lively spirit and vigour with which they pruned their plumes, and shook, or, as it was technically termed, roused themselves. He expatiated on the difficulty and danger with which they were obtained from the rock of Ramsey, on which they were bred, and which was an every unrivalled even on the coast of Norway.

Raoul turned apparently a deaf ear to all these commendations. "Friend merchant," said he, "I know a falcon as well as thou dost, and I will not deny that thine are fine ones; but if they be not carefully trained and reclaimed, I would rather have a goss-hawk on my perch than the fairest falcon that ever stretched wing to weather."

"I grant ye," said the merchant; "but if we agree on the price, for that is the main matter, thou shalt see the birds fly if thou wilt, and then buy them or not as thou likest. I am no true merchant if thou ever saw'st birds beat them, whether at the mount or the stoop."

"That I call fair," said Raoul, "if the price be equally so."

"It shall be corresponding," said the hawk-merchant; "for I have brought six casts from the island, by the good favour of good King Reginald of Man, and I have sold every feather of them save these; and so, having emptied my cages and filled my purse, I desire not to be troubled longer with the residue; and if a good fellow and a judge, as thou seemest to be, should like the hawks when he has seen them fly, he shall have the price of his own making."

"Go to," said Raoul, "we will have no blind bargains; my lady, if the hawks be suitable, is more able to pay for them than thou to give them away. Will a bezant be a conformable price for the cast?"

"A bezant, Master Falconer!—By my faith, you are no bold bodesman! nevertheless, double your offer, and I will consider it."

"If the hawks are well reclaimed," said Raoul, "I will give you a bezant and a half; but I will see them strike a heron ere I will be so rash as to deal with you."

"It is well," said the merchant, "and I had better take your offer than be longer cumbered with them; for were I to carry them into Wales, I might get paid in a worse fashion by some of their long knives.—Will you to horse presently?"

"Assuredly," said Raoul; "and, though March be the fitter month for hawking at the heron, yet I will show you one of these frogpeckers for the trouble of riding the matter of a mile by the water-side."

"Content, Sir Falconer," said the merchant. "But are we to go alone, or is there no lord or lady in the castle who would take pleasure to see a piece of game gallantly struck? I am not afraid to show these hawks to a countess." "My lady used to love the sport well enough," said Raoul; "but, I wot not why, she is moped and mazed ever since her father's death, and lives in her fair castle like a nun in a cloister, without disport or revelry of any kind. Nevertheless, Gillian, thou canst do something with her—good now, do a kind deed for once, and move her to come out and look on this morning's sport—the poor heart hath seen no pastime this summer."

"That I will do," quoth Gillian; "and, moreover, I will show her such a new riding-tire for the head, that no woman born could ever look at without the wish to toss it a little in the wind."

As Gillian spoke, it appeared to her jealous-pated husband that he surprised a glance of more intelligence exchanged betwixt her and the trader than brief acquaintance seemed to warrant, even when allowance was made for the extreme frankness of Dame Gillian's disposition. He thought also, that, on looking more closely at the merchant, his lineaments were not totally unknown to him; and proceeded to say to him dryly, "We have met before, friend, but I cannot call to remembrance where."

"Like enough," said the merchant; "I have used this country often, and may have taken money of you in the way of trade. If I were in fitting place, I would gladly bestow a bottle of wine to our better acquaintance."

"Not so fast, friend," said the old huntsman; "ere I drink to better acquaintance with any one, I must be well pleased with what I already know of him. We will see thy hawks fly, and if their breeding match thy bragging, we may perhaps crush a cup together. —And here come grooms and equerries, in faith—my lady has consented to come forth."

The opportunity of seeing this rural pastime had offered itself to Eveline, at a time when the delightful brilliancy of the day, the temperance of the air, and the joyous work of harvest, proceeding in every direction around, made the temptation to exercise almost irresistible.

As they proposed to go no farther than the side of the neighbouring river, near the fatal bridge, over which a small guard of infantry was constantly maintained, Eveline dispensed with any farther escort, and, contrary to the custom of the castle, took no one in her train save Rose and Gillian, and one or two servants, who led spaniels, or carried appurtenances of the chase. Raoul, the merchant, and an equerry, attended her of course, each holding a hawk on his wrist, and anxiously adjusting the mode in which they should throw them off, so as best to ascertain the extent of their powers and training.

When these important points had been adjusted, the party rode down the river, carefully looking on every side for the object of their game; but no heron was seen stalking on the usual haunts of the bird, although there was a heronry at no great distance.

Few disappointments of a small nature are more teasing than that of a sportsman, who, having set out with all means and appliances for destruction of game, finds that there is none to be met with; because he conceives himself, with his full shooting trim, and his empty game-pouch, to be subjected to the sneer of every passing rustic. The party of the Lady Eveline felt all the degradation of such disappointment.

"A fair country this," said the merchant, "where, on two miles of river, you cannot find one poor heron!"

"It is the clatter those d—d Flemings make with their water-mills and fulling-mills," said Raoul; "they destroy good sport and good company wherever they come. But were my lady willing to ride a mile or so farther to the Red Pool, I could show you a long-shanked fellow who would make your hawks cancelier till their brains were giddy."

"The Red Pool!" said Rose; "thou knowest it is more than three miles beyond the bridge, and lies up towards the hills."

"Ay, ay," said Raoul, "another Flemish freak to spoil pastime! They are not so scarce on the Marches these Flemish wenches, that they should fear being hawked at by Welsh haggards."

"Raoul is right, Rose," answered Eveline; "it is absurd to be cooped up like birds in a cage, when all around us has been so uniformly quiet. I am determined to break out of bounds for once, and see sport in our old fashion, without being surrounded with armed men like prisoners of state. We will merrily to the Red Pool, wench, and kill a heron like free maids of the Marches."

"Let me but tell my father, at least, to mount and follow us," said Rose—for they were now near the re-established manufacturing houses of the stout Fleming.

"I care not if thou dost, Rose," said Eveline; "yet credit me, girl, we will be at the Red Pool, and thus far on our way home again, ere thy father has donned his best doublet, girded on his two-handed sword, and accoutred his strong Flanderkin elephant of a horse, which he judiciously names Sloth—nay, frown not, and lose not, in justifying thy father, the time that may be better spent in calling him out."

Rose rode to the mills accordingly, when Wilkin Flammock, at the command of his liege mistress, readily hastened to get his steel cap and habergeon, and ordered half-a-dozen of his kinsmen and servants to get on horseback. Rose remained with him, to urge him to more despatch than his methodical disposition rendered natural to him; but in spite of all her efforts to stimulate him, the Lady Eveline had passed the bridge more than half an hour ere her escort was prepared to follow her.

Meanwhile, apprehensive of no evil, and riding gaily on, with the sensation of one escaped from confinement, Eveline moved forward on her lively jennet, as light as a lark; the plumes with which Dame Gillian had decked her riding-bonnet dancing in the wind, and her attendants galloping behind her, with dogs, pouches, lines, and all other appurtenances of the royal sport of hawking. After passing the river, the wild green-sward path which they pursued began to wind upward among small eminences, some-times bare and craggy, sometimes overgrown with hazel, sloethorn, and other dwarf shrubs, and at length suddenly descending, brought them to the verge of a mountain rivulet, that, like a lamb at play, leapt merrily from rock to rock, seemingly uncertain which way to run.

"This little stream was always my favourite, Dame Gillian," said Eveline, "and now methinks it leaps the lighter that it sees me again."

"Ah! lady," said Dame Gillian, whose turn for conversation never extended in such cases beyond a few phrases of gross flattery, "many a fair knight would leap shoulder-height for leave to look on you as free as the brook may! more especially now that you have donned that riding-cap, which, in exquisite delicacy of invention, methinks, is a bow-shot before aught that I ever invented—What thinkest thou, Raoul?"

"I think," answered her well-natured helpmate, "that women's tongues were contrived to drive all the game out of the country.—Here we come near to the spot where we hope to speed, or no where; wherefore, pray, my sweet lady, be silent yourself, and keep your followers as much so as their natures will permit, while we steal along the bank of the pool, under the wind, with our hawks' hoods cast loose, all ready for a flight."

As he spoke, they advanced about a hundred yards up the brawling stream, until the little vale through which it flowed, making a very sudden turn to one side, showed them the Red Pool, the superfluous water of which formed the rivulet itself.

This mountain-lake, or tarn, as it is called in some countries, was a deep basin of about a mile in circumference, but rather oblong than circular. On the side next to our falconers arose a ridge of rock, of a dark red hue, giving name to the pool, which, reflecting this massive and dusky barrier, appeared to partake of its colour. On the opposite side was a heathy hill, whose autumnal bloom had not yet faded from purple to russet; its surface was varied by the dark green furze and the fern, and in many places gray cliffs, or loose stones of the same colour, formed a contrast to the ruddy precipice to which they lay opposed. A natural road of beautiful sand was formed by a beach, which, extending all the way around the lake, separated its waters from the precipitous rock on the one hand, and on the other from the steep and broken hill; and being no where less than five or six yards in breadth, and in most places greatly more, offered around its whole circuit a tempting opportunity to the rider, who desired to exercise and breathe the horse on which he was mounted. The verge of the pool on the rocky side was here and there strewn with fragments of large size, detached from the precipice above, but not in such quantity as to encumber this pleasant horse-course. Many of these rocky masses, having passed the margin of the water in their fall, lay immersed there like small islets; and, placed amongst a little archipelago, the quick eye of Raoul detected the heron which they were in search of.

A moment's consultation was held to consider in what manner they should approach the sad and solitary bird, which, unconscious that itself was the object of a formidable ambuscade, stood motionless on a stone, by the brink of the lake, watching for such small fish or water-reptiles as might chance to pass by its lonely station. A brief debate took place betwixt Raoul and the hawk-merchant on the best mode of starting the quarry, so as to allow Lady Eveline and her attendants the most perfect view of the flight. The facility of killing the heron at the *far jettee* or at the *jettee ferre*—that is, upon the hither or farther side of the pool—was anxiously debated in language of breathless importance, as if some great and perilous enterprise was about to be executed.

At length the arrangements were fixed, and the party began to advance towards the aquatic hermit, who, by this time aware of their approach, drew himself up to his full height, erected his long lean neck, spread his broad fan-like wings, uttered his usual clanging cry, and, projecting his length of thin legs far behind him, rose upon the gentle breeze. It was then, with a loud whoop of encouragement, that the merchant threw off the noble hawk he bore, having first unhooded her to give her a view of her quarry.

Eager as a frigate in chase of some rich galleon, darted the falcon towards the enemy, which she had been taught to pursue; while, preparing for defence, if he should be unable to escape by flight, the heron exerted all his powers of speed to escape from an enemy so formidable. Plying his almost unequalled strength of wing, he ascended high and higher in the air, by short gyrations, that the hawk might gain no vantage ground for pouncing at him; while his spiked beak, at the extremity of so long a neck as enabled him to strike an object at a yard's distance in every direction, possessed for any less spirited assailant all the terrors of a Moorish javelin.

Another hawk was now thrown off, and encouraged by the halloos of the falconer to join her companion. Both kept mounting, or scaling the air, as it were, by a succession of small circles, endeavoring to gain that superior height which the heron on his part was bent to preserve; and to the exquisite delight of the spectators, the contest was continued until all three were well-nigh mingled with the fleecy clouds, from which was occasionally heard the harsh and plaintive cry of the quarry, appealing as it were to the heaven which he was approaching, against the wanton cruelty of those by whom he was persecuted.

At length one of the falcons had reached a pitch from which she ventured to stoop at the heron; but so judiciously did the quarry maintain his defence, as to receive on his beak the stroke which the falcon, shooting down at full descent, had made against his right wing; so that one of his enemies, spiked through the body by his own weight, fell fluttering into the lake, very near the land, on the side farthest from the falconers, and perished there.

"There goes a gallant falcon to the fishes," said Raoul.

"Merchant, thy cake is dough."

Even as he spoke, however, the remaining bird had avenged the fate of her sister; for the success which the heron met with on one side, did not prevent his being assailed on the other wing; and the falcon stooping boldly, and grappling with, or, as it is called in falconry, *binding* his prey, both came tumbling down together,

from a great height in the air. It was then no small object on the part of the falconers to come in as soon as possible, lest the falcon should receive hurt from the beak or talons of the heron; and the whole party, the men setting spurs, and the females switching their palfreys, went off like the wind, sweeping along the fair and smooth beach betwixt the rock and the water.

Lady Eveline, far better mounted than any of her train, her spirits elated by the sport, and by the speed at which she moved, was much sooner than any of her attendants at the spot where the falcon and heron, still engaged in their mortal struggle, lay fighting upon the moss; the wing of the latter having been broken by the stoop of the former. The duty of a falconer in such a crisis was to run in and assist the hawk, by thrusting the heron's bill into the earth, and breaking his legs, and thus permitting the falcon to dispatch him on easy terms.

Neither would the sex nor quality of the Lady Eveline have excused her becoming second to the falcon in this cruel manner; but, just as she had dismounted for that purpose, she was surprised to find herself seized on by wild form, who exclaimed in Welsh, that he seized her as a *waif*, for hawking on the demesnes of Dawfyd with the one eye. At the same time many other Welshmen, to the number of more than a score, showed them-selves from behind crags and bushes, all armed at point with the axes called Welsh hooks, long knives, darts, and bows and arrows.

Eveline screamed to her attendants for assistance, and at the same time made use of what Welsh phrases she possessed, to move the fears or excite the compassion of the outlawed mountaineers, for she doubted not that she had fallen under the power of such a party. When she found her requests were unheeded, and she perceived it was their purpose to detain her prisoner, she disdained to use farther entreaties, but demanded at their peril that they should treat her with respect, promising in that case that she would pay them a large ransom, and threatening them with the vengeance of the Lords Marchers, and particularly of Sir Damian de Lacy, if they ventured to use her otherwise.

The men seemed to understand her, and although they proceeded to tie a bandage over her eyes, and to bind her arms with her own veil, yet they observed in these acts of violence a certain delicacy and attention both to her feelings and her safety, which led her to hope that her request had had some effect on them. They secured her to the saddle of her palfrey, and led her away with them through the recesses of the hills; while she had the additional distress to hear behind her the noise of a conflict, occasioned by the fruitless efforts of her retinue to procure her rescue.

Astonishment had at first seized the hawking party, when they saw from some distance their sport interrupted by a violent assault on their mistress. Old Raoul valiantly put spurs to his horse, and calling on the rest to follow him to the rescue, rode furiously towards the banditti; but, having no other arms save a hawking-pole and short sword, he and those who followed him in his meritorious but ineffectual attempt were easily foiled, and Raoul and one or two of the foremost severely beaten; the banditti exercising upon them their own poles till they were broken to splinters, but generously abstaining from the use of more dangerous weapons. The rest of the retinue, completely discouraged, dispersed to give the alarm, and the merchant and Dame Gillian remained by the lake, filling the air with shrieks of useless fear and sorrow. The outlaws, meanwhile, drawing together in a body, shot a few arrows at the fugitives, but more to alarm than to injure them, and then marched off in a body, as if to cover their companions who had gone before, with the Lady Eveline in their custody.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

Four	ruffians	seized	me	yester	morn—
Alas!	a	maiden	most	forlorn!	
They	choked	my	cries	with	wicked
And bound me on a palfrey white.					COLERIDGE.

Such adventures as are now only recorded in works of mere fiction, were not uncommon in the feudal ages, when might was so universally superior to right; and it followed that those whose conditions exposed them to frequent violence, were more prompt in repelling, and more patient in enduring it, than could otherwise have been expected from their sex and age.

The Lady Eveline felt that she was a prisoner, nor was she devoid of fears concerning the purposes of this assault; but she suffered neither her alarm, nor the violence with which she was hurried along, to deprive her of the power of observing and reflecting. From the noise of hoofs which now increased around, she concluded that the greater part of the ruffians by whom she had been seized had betaken themselves to their horses. This she knew was consonant to the practice of the Welsh marauders, who, although the small size and slightness of their nags made them totally unfit for service in battle, availed themselves of their activity and sureness of foot to transport them with the necessary celerity to and from the scenes of their rapine; ensuring thus a rapid and unperceived approach, and a secure and speedy retreat. These animals traversed without difficulty, and beneath the load of a heavy soldier, the wild mountain paths by which the country was intersected, and in one of which Lady Eveline Berenger concluded she was now engaged, from the manner in which her own palfrey, supported by a man on foot at either rein, seemed now to labour up some precipice, and anon to descend with still greater risk on the other side.

At one of those moments, a voice which she had not yet distinguished addressed her in the Anglo-Norman language, and asked, with apparent interest, if she sat safely on her saddle, offering at the same time to have her accoutrements altered at her pleasure and convenience.

"Insult not my condition with the mention of safety," said Eveline; "you may well believe that I hold my safety altogether irreconcilable with these deeds of violence. If I or my vassals have done injury to any of the *Gymry*, [Footnote: Cymbri, or Welsh.] let me know, and it shall be amended—If it is ransom which you desire, name the sum, and I will send an order to treat for it; but detain me not prisoner, for that can but injure me, and will avail you nothing."

"The Lady Eveline," answered the voice, still in a tone of courtesy inconsistent with the violence which she sustained, "will speedily find that our actions are more rough than purposes."

"If you know who I am," said Eveline, "you cannot doubt that this atrocity will be avenged—you must know by whose banner my lands are at present protected."

"Under	De	Lacy's,"	answered	the	voice,	with	a	tone	of	indifference
"Be it so—falcons fear not falcons."										

At this moment there was a halt, and a confused murmur arose amongst those around her, who had hitherto been silent, unless when muttering to each other in Welsh, and as briefly as possible, directions which way to hold, or encouragement to use haste.

These murmurs ceased, and there was a pause of several minutes; at length Eveline again heard the voice which formerly addressed her, giving directions which she could not understand. He then spoke to herself, "You will presently see," he said, "whether I have spoken truly, when I said I scorned the ties by which you are fettered. But you are at once the cause of strife and the reward of victory— your safety must be cared for as time will admit; and, strange as the mode of protection is to which we are to intrust you, I trust the victor in the approaching struggle will find you uninjured."

"Do not, for the sake of the blessed Virgin, let there be strife and bloodshed!" said Eveline; "rather unbind my eyes, and let me speak to those whose approach you dread. If friends, as it would seem to me, I will be the means of peace between you."

"I despise peace," replied the speaker. "I have not undertaken a resolute and daring adventure, to resign it as a child doth his plaything, at the first frown of fortune. Please to alight, noble lady; or rather be not offended that I thus lift you from thy seat, and place you on the greensward."

As he spoke, Eveline felt herself lifted from her palfrey, and placed carefully and safely on the ground, in a sitting posture. A moment after, the same peremptory valet who had aided her to dismount, disrobed her of her cap, the masterpiece of Dame Gillian, and of her upper mantle. "I must yet farther require you," said the bandit leader, "to creep on hands and knees into this narrow aperture. Believe me, I regret the nature of the singular fortification to which I commit your person for safety."

Eveline crept forwards as directed, conceiving resistance to be of no avail, and thinking that compliance with the request of one who spoke like a person of consequence, might find her protection against the unbridled fury of the Welsh, to whom she was obnoxious, as being the cause of Gwenwyn's death, and the defeat of the Britons under the walls of the Garde Doloureuse.

She crept then forwards through a narrow and damp passage, built on either side with rough stones, and so low that she could not have entered it in any other posture. When she had proceeded about two or three yards, the passage opened into a concavity or apartment, high enough to permit her to sit at her ease, and

of irregular, but narrow, dimensions. At the same time she became sensible, from the noise which she heard behind her, that the ruffians were stopping up the passage by which she had been thus introduced into the bowels of the earth. She could distinctly hear the clattering of stone with which they closed the entrance, and she became sensible that the current of fresh air, which had rushed through the opening, was gradually failing, and that the atmosphere of the subterranean apartment became yet more damp, earthy, and oppressive than at first.

At this moment came a distant sound from without, in which Eveline thought she could distinguish cries, blows, the trampling of horse, the oaths, shouts, and screams of the combatants, but all deadened by the rude walls of her prison, into a confused hollow murmur, conveying such intelligence to her ears as we may suppose the dead to hear from the world they have quitted.

Influenced by desperation, under circumstances so dreadful, Eveline struggled for liberty with such frantic energy, that she partly effected her purpose by forcing her arms from the bonds which confined them. But this only convinced her of the impossibility to escape; for, rending off the veil which wrapped her head, she found herself in total darkness, and flinging her arms hastily around her, she discovered she was cooped up in a subterranean cavern, of very narrow dimensions. Her hands, which groped around, encountered only pieces of decayed metal, and a substance which, at another moment, would have made her shudder, being, in truth, the mouldering bones of the dead. At present, not even this circumstance could add to her fears, immured as she seemed to be, to perish by a strange and subterranean death, while her friends and deliverers were probably within a few yards of her. She flung her arms wildly around in search of some avenue of escape, but every effort she made for liberating herself from the ponderous circumvallation, was as ineffectual as if directed against the dome of a cathedral.

The noise by which her ears were at first assailed increased rapidly, and at one moment it seemed as if the covering of the vault under which she lay sounded repeatedly to blows, or the shock of substances which had fallen, or been thrown, against it. It was impossible that a human brain could have withstood these terrors, operating upon it so immediately; but happily this extremity lasted not long. Sounds, more hollow, and dying away in distance, argued that one or other of the parties had retreated; and at length all was silent.

Eveline was now left to the undisturbed contemplation of her own disastrous situation. The fight was over, and, as circumstances led her to infer, her own friends were conquerors; for otherwise the victor would have relieved her from her place of confinement, and carried her away captive with him, as his words had menaced. But what could the success of her faithful friends and followers avail Eveline, who, pent up under a place of concealment which, whatever was its character, must have escaped their observation, was left on the field of battle, to become again the prize of the enemy, should their band venture to return, or die in darkness and privation, a death as horrid as ever tyrant invented, or martyr underwent, and which the unfortunate young lady could not even bear to think of without a prayer that her agony might at least be shortened.

In this hour of dread she recollected the poniard which she wore, and the dark thought crossed her mind, that, when life became hopeless, a speedy death was at least within her reach. As her soul shuddered at so dreadful an alternative, the question suddenly occurred, might not this weapon be put to a more hallowed use, and aid her emancipation, instead of abridging her sufferings?

This hope once adopted, the daughter of Raymond Berenger hastened to prove the experiment, and by repeated efforts succeeded, though with difficulty, in changing her posture, so as to admit of her inspecting her place of confinement all around, but particularly the passage by which she had entered, and by which she now attempted again to return to the light of day. She crept to the extremity, and found it, as she expected, strongly blocked up with large stones and earth, rammed together in such a manner as nearly to extinguish all hope of escape. The work, however, had been hastily performed, and life and liberty were prizes to stimulate exertion. With her poniard she cleared away the earth and sods—with her hands, little accustomed to such labour, she removed several stones, and advanced in her task so far as to obtain a glimmering of light, and, what was scarce less precious, a supply of purer air. But, at the same time, she had the misfortune to ascertain, that, from the size and massiveness of a huge stone which closed the extremity of the passage, there was no hope that her unassisted strength could effect her extrication. Yet her condition was improved by the admission of air and light, as well as by the opportunity afforded of calling out for assistance.

Such cries, indeed, were for some time uttered in vain—the field had probably been left to the dead and the dying; for low and indistinct groans were the only answer which she received for several minutes. At length, as she repeated her exclamation, a voice, faint as that of one just awakened from a swoon, pronounced these words in answer:—"Edris of the Earthen House, dost thou call from thy tomb to the wretch who just hastens to his own?—Are the boundaries broken down which connect me with the living?—And do I already hear, with fleshly ears, the faint and screaming accents of the dead?"

"It is no spirit who speaks," replied Eveline, overjoyed at finding she could at least communicate her existence to a living person—"no spirit, but a most unhappy maiden, Eveline Berenger by name, immured beneath this dark vault, and in danger to perish horribly, unless God send me rescue!"

"Eveline Berenger!" exclaimed he whom she addressed, in the accents of wonder. "It is impossible!—I watched her green mantle—I watched her plumed bonnet as I saw her hurried from the field, and felt my own inability to follow to the rescue; nor did force or exertion altogether leave me till the waving of the robe and the dancing of the feathers were lost to my eyes, and all hope of rescuing her abandoned my heart."

"Faithful vassal, or right true friend, or courteous stranger, whichever I may name thee," answered Eveline, "know thou hast been abused by the artifices of these Welsh banditti—the mantle and head-gear of Eveline Berenger they have indeed with them, and may have used them to mislead those true friends, who, like thee, are anxious for my fate. Wherefore, brave sir, devise some succour, if thou canst, for thyself and me; since I dread that these ruffians, when they shall have escaped immediate pursuit, will return hither, like the robber to the hoard where he has deposited his stolen booty."

"Now, the Holy Virgin be praised," said the wounded man, "that I can spend the last breath of my life in thy just and honourable service! I would not before blow my bugle, lest I recalled from the pursuit to the aid of my worthless self some of those who might be effectually engaged in thy rescue; may Heaven grant that the recall may now be heard, that my eyes may yet see the Lady Eveline in safety and liberty!"

The words, though spoken in a feeble tone, breathed a spirit of enthusiasm, and were followed by the blast of a horn, faintly winded, to which no answer was made save the echoing of the dell. A sharper and louder blast was then sent forth, but sunk so suddenly, that it seemed the breath of him who sounded the instrument had failed in the effort.—A strange thought crossed Eveline's mind even in that moment of uncertainty and terror. "That," she said, "was the note of a De Lacy—surely you cannot be my gentle kinsman, Sir Damian?"

"I am that unhappy wretch, deserving of death for the evil care which I have taken of the treasure intrusted to me.—What was my business to trust to reports and messengers? I should have worshipped the saint who was committed to my keeping, with such vigilance as avarice bestows on the dross which he calls treasure—I should have rested no where, save at your gate; outwatched the brightest stars in the horizon; unseen and unknown myself, I should never have parted from your neighbourhood; then had you not been in the present danger, and—much less important consequence—thou, Damian de Lacy, had not filled the grave of a forsworn and negligent caitiff!"

"Alas! noble Damian," said Eveline, "break not my heart by blaming yourself for an imprudence which is altogether my own. Thy succour was ever near when I intimated the least want of it; and it embitters my own misfortune to know that my rashness has been the cause of your disaster. Answer me, gentle kinsman, and give me to hope that the wounds you have suffered are such as may be cured.—Alas! how much of your blood have I seen spilled, and what a fate is mine, that I should ever bring distress on all for whom I would most willingly sacrifice my own happiness!—But do not let us embitter the moments given us in mercy, by fruitless repinings—Try what you can to stop thine ebbing blood, which is so dear to England—to Eveline—and to thine uncle."

Damian groaned as she spoke, and was silent; while, maddened with the idea that he might be perishing for want of aid, Eveline repeated her efforts to extricate herself for her kinsman's assistance as well as her own. It was all in vain, and she had ceased the attempt in despair; and, passing from one hideous subject of terror to another, she sat listening, with sharpened ear, for the dying groan of Damian, when—feeling of ecstasy!—the ground was shaken with horses' feet advancing rapidly. Yet this joyful sound, if decisive of life, did not assure her of liberty—it might be the banditti of the mountains returning to seek their captive. Even then they would surely allow her leave to look upon and bind up the wounds of Damian de Lacy; for to keep him as a captive might vantage them more in

many degrees, than could his death. A horseman came up—Eveline invoked his assistance, and the first word she heard was an exclamation in Flemish from the faithful Wilkin Flammock, which nothing save some spectacle of the most unusual kind was ever known to compel from that phlegmatic person.

His presence, indeed, was particularly useful on this occasion; for, being informed by the Lady Eveline in what condition she was placed, and implored at the same time to look to the situation of Sir Damian de Lacy, he began, with admirable composure and some skill, to stop the wounds of the one, while his attendants collected levers, left by the Welsh as they retreated, and were soon ready to attempt the liberation of Eveline. With much caution, and under the experienced direction of Flammock, the stone was at length so much raised, that the Lady Eveline was visible, to the delight of all, and especially of the faithful Rose, who, regardless of the risk of personal harm, fluttered around her mistress's place of confinement, like a bird robbed of her nestlings around the cage in which the truant urchin has imprisoned them. Precaution was necessary to remove the stone, lest falling inwards it might do the lady injury.

At length the rocky fragment was so much displaced that she could issue forth; while her people, as in hatred of the coercion which she had sustained, ceased not to heave, with bar and lever, till, totally destroying the balance of the heavy mass, it turned over from the little flat on which it had been placed at the mouth of the subterranean entrance, and, acquiring force as it revolved down a steep declivity, was at length put into rapid motion, and rolled, crashed, and thundered, down the hill, amid flashes of fire which it forced from the rocks, and clouds of smoke and dust, until it alighted in the channel of a brook, where it broke into several massive fragments, with a noise that might have been heard some miles off.

With garments rent and soiled through the violence which she had sustained; with dishevelled hair, and disordered dress; faint from the stifling effect of her confinement, and exhausted by the efforts she had made to relieve herself, Eveline did not, nevertheless, waste a single minute in considering her own condition; but with the eagerness of a sister hastening to the assistance of her only brother, betook herself to examine the several severe wounds of Damian de Lacy, and to use proper means to stanch the blood and recall him from his swoon. We have said elsewhere, that, like other ladies of the time, Eveline was not altogether unacquainted with the surgical art, and she now displayed a greater share of knowledge than she had been thought capable of exerting. There was prudence, foresight, and tenderness, in every direction which she gave, and the softness of the female sex, with their officious humanity, ever ready to assist in alleviating human misery, seemed in her enhanced, and rendered dignified, by the sagacity of a strong and powerful understanding. After hearing with wonder for a minute or two the prudent and ready-witted directions of her mistress, Rose seemed at once to recollect that the patient should not be left to the exclusive care of the Lady Eveline, and joining, therefore, in the task, she rendered what assistance she could, while the attendants were employed in forming a litter, on which the wounded knight was to be conveyed to the castle of the Garde Doloureuse.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

A merry place, 'tis said, in times of yore,
But something ails it now—the place is cursed.

WORDSWORTH.

The place on which the skirmish had occurred, and the deliverance of the Lady Eveline had been effected, was a wild and singular spot, being a small level plain, forming a sort of stage, or resting-place, between two very rough paths, one of which winded up the rivulet from below, and another continued the ascent above. Being surrounded by hills and woods, it was a celebrated spot for finding game, and, in former days, a Welsh prince, renowned for his universal hospitality, his love of *crw* and of the chase, had erected a forest-lodge, where he used to feast his friends and followers with a profusion unexampled in Cambria. The fancy of the bards, always captivated with magnificence, and having no objections to the peculiar species of profusion practised by this potentate, gave him the surname of Edris of the Goblets; and celebrated him in their odes in terms as high as those which exalt the heroes of the famous Hirlas Horn. The subject of their praises, however, fell finally a victim to his propensities, having been stabbed to the heart in one of those scenes of confusion and drunkenness which were frequently the conclusion of his renowned banquets. Shocked at this catastrophe, the assembled Britons interred the relics of the Prince on the place where he had died, within the narrow vault where Eveline had been confined, and having barricaded the entrance of the sepulchre with fragments of rock, heaped over it an immense *caim*, or pile of stones, on the summit of which they put the assassin to death. Superstition guarded the spot; and for many a year this memorial of Edris remained unviolated, although the lodge had gone to ruin, and its vestiges had totally decayed.

In latter years, some prowling band of Welsh robbers had discovered the secret entrance, and opened it with the view of ransacking the tomb for arms and treasures, which were in ancient times often buried with the dead. These marauders were disappointed, and obtained nothing by the violation of the grave of Edris, excepting the knowledge of a secret place, which might be used for depositing their booty, or even as a place of retreat for one of their number in a case of emergency.

When the followers of Damian, five or six in number, explained their part of the history of the day to Wilkin Flammock, it appeared that Damian had ordered them to horse at break of day, with a more considerable body, to act, as they understood, against a party of insurgent peasants, when of a sudden he had altered his mind, and, dividing his force into small bands, employed himself and them in reconnoitring more than one mountain-pass betwixt Wales and the Marches of the English country, in the neighbourhood of the Garde Doloureuse.

This was an occupation so ordinary for him, that it excited no particular notice. These manoeuvres were frequently undertaken by the warlike marchers, for the purpose of intimidating the Welsh, in general, more especially the bands of outlaws, who, independent of any regular government, infested these wild frontiers. Yet it escaped not comment, that, in undertaking such service at this moment, Damian seemed to abandon that of dispersing the insurgents, which had been considered as the chief object of the day.

It was about noon, when, falling in, as good fortune would have it, with one of the fugitive grooms, Damian and his immediate attendants received information of the violence committed on the Lady Eveline, and, by their perfect knowledge of the country, were able to intercept the ruffians at the Pass of Edris, as it was called, by which the Welsh rovers ordinarily returned to their strongholds in the interior. It is probable that the banditti were not aware of the small force which Damian headed in person, and at the same time knew that there would be an immediate and hot pursuit in their rear; and these circumstances led their leader to adopt the singular expedient of hiding Eveline in the tomb, while one of their own number, dressed in her clothes, might serve as a decoy to deceive their assailants, and lead them, from the spot where she was really concealed, to which it was no doubt the purpose of the banditti to return, when they had eluded their pursuers.

Accordingly, the robbers had already drawn up before the tomb for the purpose of regularly retreating, until they should find some suitable place either for making a stand, or where, if overmatched, they might, by abandoning their horses, and dispersing among the rocks, evade the attack of the Norman cavalry. Their plan had been defeated by the precipitation of Damian, who, beholding as he thought the plumes and mantle of the Lady Eveline in the rear of the party, charged them without considering either the odds of numbers, or the lightness of his own armour, which, consisting only of a headpiece and a buff surcoat, offered but imperfect resistance to the Welsh knives and glaives. He was accordingly wounded severely at the onset, and would have been slain, but for the exertions of his few followers, and the fears of the Welsh, that, while thus continuing the battle in front, they might be assaulted in the rear by the followers of Eveline, whom they must now suppose were all in arms and motion. They retreated, therefore, or rather fled, and the attendants of Damian were despatched after them by their fallen master, with directions to let no consideration induce them to leave off the chase, until the captive Lady of the Garde Doloureuse was delivered from her ravishers. The outlaws, secure in their knowledge of the paths, and the activity of their small Welsh horses, made an orderly retreat, with the exception of two or three of their rear-guard, cut down by Damian in his furious onset. They shot arrows, from time to time, at the men-at-arms, and laughed at the ineffectual efforts which these heavy-armed warriors, with their barbed horses, made to overtake them. But the scene was changed by the appearance of Wilkin Flammock, on his puissant war-horse, who was beginning to ascend the pass, leading a party consisting both of foot and horse. The fear of being intercepted caused the outlaws to have recourse to their last stratagem, and, abandoning their Welsh nags, they betook themselves to the cliffs, and, by superior activity and dexterity, baffled, generally speaking, the attempts of their pursuers on either hand. All of them, however, were not equally fortunate, for two or three fell into the hands of Flammock's party; amongst others, the person upon whom Eveline's clothes had been placed, and who now, to the great disappointment of those who had

attached themselves to his pursuit, proved to be, not the lady whom they were emulous to deliver, but a fair-haired young Welshman, whose wild looks, and incoherent speech, seemed to argue a disturbed imagination. This would not have saved him from immediate death, the usual doom of captives taken in such skirmishes, had not the faint blast of Damian's horn, sounding from above, recalled his own party, and summoned that of Wilkin Flammock to the spot; while, in the confusion and hurry of their obeying the signal, the pity or the contempt of his guards suffered the prisoner to escape. They had, indeed, little to learn from him, even had he been disposed to give intelligence, or capable of communicating it. All were well assured that their lady had fallen into an ambuscade, formed by Dawfyd the one-eyed, a redoubted freebooter of the period, who had ventured upon this hardy enterprise in the hope of obtaining a large ransom for the captive Eveline, and all, incensed at his extreme insolence and audacity, devoted his head and limbs to the eagles and the ravens.

These were the particulars which the followers of Flammock and of Damian learned by comparing notes with each other, on the incidents of the day. As they returned by the Red Pool they were joined by Dame Gillian, who, after many exclamations of joy at the unexpected liberation of her lady, and as many of sorrow at the unexpected disaster of Damian, proceeded to inform the men-at-arms, that the merchant, whose hawks had been the original cause of these adventures, had been taken prisoner by two or three of the Welsh in their retreat, and that she herself and the wounded Raoul would have shared the same fate, but that they had no horse left to mount her upon, and did not consider old Raoul as worth either ransom or the trouble of killing. One had, indeed, flung a stone at him as he lay on the hill-side, but happily, as his dame said, it fell something short of him—"It was but a little fellow who threw it," she said—"there was a big man amongst them—if he had tried, it's like, by our Lady's grace, he had cast it a thought farther." So saying, the dame gathered herself up, and adjusted her dress for again mounting on horseback.

The wounded Damian was placed on a litter, hastily constructed of boughs, and, with the females, was placed in the centre of the little troop, augmented by the rest of the young knight's followers, who began to rejoin his standard. The united body now marched with military order and precaution, and winded through the passes with the attention of men prepared to meet and to repel injury.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

What!	fair	and	young-	and	faithful	too?
A	miracle	if	this	be	true.	

WALLER.

Rose, by nature one of the most disinterested and affectionate maidens that ever breathed, was the first who, hastily considering the peculiar condition in which her lady was placed, and the marked degree of restraint which had hitherto characterized her intercourse with her youthful guardian, became anxious to know how the wounded knight was to be disposed of; and when she came to Eveline's side for the purpose of asking this important question, her resolution well-nigh failed her.

The appearance of Eveline was indeed such as might have made it almost cruelty to intrude upon her any other subject of anxious consideration than those with which her mind had been so lately assailed, and was still occupied. Her countenance was as pale as death could have made it, unless where it was specked with drops of blood; her veil, torn and disordered, was soiled with dust and with gore; her hair, wildly dishevelled, fell in, elf-locks on her brow and shoulders, and a single broken and ragged feather, which was all that remained of her headgear, had been twisted among her tresses and still flowed there, as if in mockery, rather than ornament. Her eyes were fixed on the litter where Damian was deposited, and she rode close beside it, without apparently wasting a thought on any thing, save the danger of him who was extended there.

Rose plainly saw that her lady was under feelings of excitation, which might render it difficult for her to take a wise and prudent view of her own situation. She endeavoured gradually to awaken her to a sense of it. "Dearest lady," said Rose, "will it please you to take my mantle?"

"Torment me not," answered Eveline, with some sharpness in her accent.

"Indeed, my lady," said Dame Gillian, bustling up as one who feared her functions as mistress of the robes might be interfered with—"indeed, my lady, Rose Flammock speaks truth; and neither your kirtle nor your gown are sitting as they should do; and, to speak truth, they are but barely decent. And so, if Rose will turn herself, and put her horse out of my way," continued the tire-woman, "I will put your dress in better order in the sticking in of a bodkin, than any Fleming of them all could do in twelve hours."

"I care not for my dress," replied Eveline, in the same manner as before.

"Care then for your honour—for your fame," said Rose, riding close to her mistress, and whispering in her ear; "think, and that hastily, how you are to dispose of this wounded young man."

"To the castle," answered Eveline aloud, as if scorning the affectation of secrecy; "lead to the castle, and that straight as you can."

"Why not rather to his own camp, or to Malpas?" said Rose—"dearest lady, believe, it will be for the best."

"Wherefore not—wherefore not?—wherefore not leave him on the way-side at once, to the knife of the Welshman, and the teeth of the wolf?—Once—twice—three times has he been my preserver. Where I go, he shall go; nor will I be in safety myself a moment sooner than I know that he is so."

Rose saw that she could make no impression on her mistress, and her own reflection told her that the wounded man's life might be endangered by a longer transportation than was absolutely necessary. An expedient occurred to her, by which she imagined this objection might be obviated; but it was necessary she should consult her father. She struck her palfrey with her riding-rod, and in a moment her diminutive, though beautiful figure, and her spirited little jennet, were by the side of the gigantic Fleming and his tall black horse, and riding, as it were, in their vast shadow. "My dearest father," said Rose, "the lady intends that Sir Damian be transported to the castle, where it is like he may be a long sojourner;—what think you?—is that wholesome counsel?"

"Wholesome for the youth, surely, Roschen," answered the Fleming, "because he will escape the better risk of a fever."

"True; but is it wise for my lady?" continued Rose.

"Wise enough, if she deal wisely. But wherefore shouldst thou doubt her, Roschen?"

"I know not," said Rose, unwilling to breathe even to her father the fears and doubts which she herself entertained; "but where there are evil tongues, there may be evil rehearsing. Sir Damian and my lady are both very young—Methinks it were better, dearest father, would you offer the shelter of your roof to the wounded knight, in the stead of his being carried to the castle."

"That I shall not, wench," answered the Fleming, hastily—"that I shall not, if I may help. Norman shall not cross my quiet threshold, nor Englishman neither, to mock my quiet thrift, and consume my substance. Thou dost not know them, because thou art ever with thy lady, and hast her good favour; but I know them well; and the best I can get from them is Lazy Flanderkin, and Greedy Flanderkin, and Flemish, sot—I thank the saints they cannot say Coward Flanderkin, since Gwenwyn's Welsh uproar."

"I had ever thought, my father," answered Rose, "that your spirit was too calm to regard these base calumnies. Bethink you we are under this lady's banner, and that she has been my loving mistress, and her father was your good lord; to the Constable, too, are you beholden, for enlarged privileges. Money may pay debt, but kindness only can requite kindness; and I forebode that you will never have such an opportunity to do kindness to the houses of Berenger and De Lacy, as by opening the doors of your house to this wounded knight."

"The doors of my house!" answered the Fleming—"do I know how long I may call that, or any house upon earth, my own? Alas, my daughter, we came hither to fly from the rage of the elements, but who knows how soon we may perish by the wrath of men!"

"You speak strangely, my father," said Rose; "it holds not with your solid wisdom to augur such general evil from the rash enterprise of a Welsh outlaw."

"I think not of the One-eyed robber," said Wilkin; "although the increase and audacity of such robbers as Dawfyd is no good sign of a quiet country. But thou, who livest within yonder walls, hearest but little of what passes without, and your estate is less anxious;—you had known nothing of the news from me, unless in case I had found it necessary to remove to another country."

"To remove, my dearest father, from the land where your thrift and industry have gained you an honourable competency?"

"Ay, and where the hunger of wicked men, who envy me the produce of my thrift, may likely bring me to a dishonourable death. There have been tumults among the English rabble in more than one county, and their wrath is directed against those of our nation, as if we were Jews or heathens, and not better Christians and better men than themselves. They have, at York, Bristol, and elsewhere, sacked the houses of the Flemings, spoiled their goods, misused their families, and murdered themselves.—And why?—except that we have brought among them the skill and industry which they possessed not; and because wealth, which they would never else have seen in Britain, was the reward of our art and our toil. Roschen, this evil spirit is spreading wider daily. Here we are more safe than elsewhere, because we form a colony of some numbers and strength. But I confide not in our neighbours; and hadst not thou, Rose, been in security, I would long ere this have given up all, and left Britain."

"Given up all, and left Britain!"—The words sounded prodigious in the ears of his daughter, who knew better than any one how successful her father had been in his industry, and how unlikely one of his firm and sedate temper was to abandon known and present advantages for the dread of distant or contingent peril. At length she replied, "If such be your peril, my father, methinks your house and goods cannot have a better protection than, the presence of this noble knight. Where lives the man who dare aught of violence against the house which harbours Damian de Lacy?"

"I know not that," said the Fleming, in the same composed and steady, but ominous tone—"May Heaven forgive it me, if it be sin! but I see little save folly in these Crusades, which the priesthood have preached up so successfully. Here has the Constable been absent for nearly three years, and no certain tidings of his life or death, victory or defeat. He marched from hence, as if he meant not to draw bridle or sheathe sword until the Holy Sepulchre was won from the Saracens, yet we can hear with no certainty whether even a hamlet has been taken from the Saracens. In the mean-while, the people that are at home grow discontented; their lords, with the better part of their followers, are in Palestine—dead or alive we scarcely know; the people themselves are oppressed and flayed by stewards and deputies, whose yoke is neither so light nor so lightly endured as that of the actual lord. The commons, who naturally hate the knights and gentry, think it no bad time to make some head against them—ay, and there be some of noble blood who would not care to be their leaders, that they may have their share in the spoil; for foreign expeditions and profligate habits have made many poor; and he that is poor will murder his father for money. I hate poor people; and I would the devil had every man who cannot keep himself by the work of his own hand!"

The Fleming concluded, with this characteristic imprecation, a speech which gave Rose a more frightful view of the state of England, than, shut up as she was within the Garde Doloureuse, she had before had an opportunity of learning. "Surely," she said—"surely these violences of which you speak are not to be dreaded by those who live under the banner of De Lacy and of Berenger?"

"Berenger subsists but in name," answered Wilkin Flammock, "and Damian, though a brave youth, hath not his uncle's ascendancy of character, and authority. His men also complain that they are harassed with the duty of watching for protection of a castle, in itself impregnable, and sufficiently garrisoned, and that they lose all opportunity of honourable enterprise, as they call it— that is, of fight and spoil—in this inactive and inglorious manner of life. They say that Damian the beardless was a man, but that Damian with the mustache is no better than a woman; and that age, which has darkened his upper lip, hath at the same time blenched his courage.—And they say more, which were but wearisome to tell."

"Nay, but, let me know what they say; let me know it, for Heaven's sake!" answered Rose, "if it concern, as it must concern, my dear lady."

"Even so, Roschen," answered Wilkin. "There are many among the Norman men-at-arms who talk, over their wine-cups, how that Damian de Lacy is in love with his uncle's betrothed bride; ay, and that they correspond together by art magic."

"By art magic, indeed, it must be," said Rose, smiling scornfully, "for by no earthly means do they correspond, as I, for one, can bear witness."

"To art magic, accordingly, they impute it," quoth Wilkin Flammock, "that so soon as ever my lady stirs beyond the portal of her castle, De Lacy is in the saddle with a party of his cavalry, though they are positively certain that he has received no messenger, letter, or other ordinary notice of her purpose; nor have they ever, on such occasions, scoured the passes long, ere they have seen or heard of my Lady Eveline's being abroad."

"This has not escaped me," said Rose; "and my lady has expressed herself even displeased at the accuracy which Damian displayed in procuring a knowledge of her motions, as well as at the officious punctuality with which he has attended and guarded them. To-day has, however, shown," she continued, "that his vigilance may serve a good purpose; and as they never met upon these occasions, but continued at such distance as excluded even the possibility of intercourse, methinks they might have escaped the censure of the most suspicious."

"Ay, my daughter Roschen," replied Wilkin; "but it is possible to drive caution so far as to excite suspicion. Why, say the men-at-arms, should these two observe such constant, yet such guarded intelligence with one another? Why should their approach be so near, and why, yet, should they never meet? If they had been merely the nephew, and the uncle's bride, they must have had interviews avowedly and frankly; and, on the other hand, if they be two secret lovers, there is reason to believe that they do find their own private places of meeting, though they have art sufficient to conceal them."

"Every word that you speak, my father," replied the generous Rose, "increases the absolute necessity that you receive this wounded youth into your house. Be the evils you dread ever so great, yet, may you rely upon it, that they cannot be augmented by admitting him, with a few of his faithful followers."

"Not one follower," said the Fleming, hastily, "not one beef-fed knave of them, save the page that is to tend him, and the doctor that is to attempt his cure."

"But I may offer the shelter of your roof to these three, at least?" answered Rose.

"Do as thou wilt, do as thou wilt," said the doating father. "By my faith, Roschen, it is well for thee thou hast sense and moderation in asking, since I am so foolishly prompt in granting. This is one of your freaks, now, of honour or generosity—but commend me to prudence and honesty.—Ah! Rose, Rose, those who would do what is better than good, sometimes bring about what is worse than bad!—But I think I shall be quit of the trouble for the fear; and that thy mistress, who is, with reverence, something of a damsel errant, will stand stoutly for the chivalrous privilege of lodging her knight in her own bower, and tending him in person."

The Fleming prophesied true. Rose had no sooner made the proposal to Eveline, that the wounded Damian should be left at her father's house for his recovery, than her mistress briefly and positively rejected the proposal. "He has been my preserver," she said, "and if there be one being left for whom the gates of the Garde Doloureuse should of themselves fly open, it is to Damian de Lacy. Nay, damsel, look not upon me with that suspicious and yet sorrowful countenance—they that are beyond disguise, my girl, condemn suspicion—It is to God and Our Lady that I must answer, and to them my bosom lies open!"

They proceeded in silence to the castle gate, when the Lady Eveline issued her orders that her Guardian, as she emphatically termed Damian, should be lodged in her father's apartment; and, with the prudence of more advanced age, she gave the necessary direction for the reception and accommodation of his followers, and the arrangements which such an accession of guests required in the fortress. All this she did with the utmost composure and presence of mind, even before she altered or arranged her own disordered dress.

Another step still remained to be taken. She, hastened to the Chapel of the Virgin, and prostrating herself before her divine protectress, returned thanks for her second deliverance, and implored her guidance and direction, and, through her intercession, that of Almighty God, for the disposal and regulation of her conduct.

"Thou knowest," she said, "that from no confidence in my own strength, have I thrust myself into danger. Oh, make me strong where I am most weak—Let not my gratitude and my compassion be a snare to me; and while I strive to discharge the duties which thankfulness imposes on me, save me from the evil tongues of men—and save—oh, save me from the insidious devices of my own heart!"

She then told her rosary with devout fervour, and retiring from the chapel to her own apartment, summoned her women to adjust her dress, and remove the external appearance of the violence to which she had been so lately subjected.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH

Julia.—Gentle sir,

You	are	our	captive—but	we'll	use	you	so,	
That	you	shall	think	your	prison	joys	may	match
Whate'er your liberty hath known of pleasure.								

Roderick.
No, fairest, we to have trifled here too long;
And, lingering to see your roses blossom,
I've let my laurels wither.

OLD PLAY.

Arrayed in garments of a mourning colour, and of a fashion more matronly than perhaps altogether befitted her youth—plain to an extremity, and devoid of all ornament, save her rosary—Eveline now performed the duty of waiting upon her wounded deliverer; a duty which the etiquette of the time not only permitted, but peremptorily enjoined. She was attended by Rose and Dame Gillian. Margery, whose element was a sick-chamber, had been already despatched to that of the young knight, to attend to whatever his condition might require.

Eveline entered the room with a light step, as if unwilling to disturb the patient. She paused at the door, and cast her eyes around her. It had been her father's chamber; nor had she entered it since his violent death. Around the walls hung a part of his armour and weapons, with hawking gloves, hunting-poles, and other instruments of silvan sport. These relics brought as it were in living form before her the stately presence of old Sir Raymond. "Frown not, my father,"—her lips formed the words, though her voice did not utter them—"Frown not—Eveline will never be unworthy of thee."

Father Aldrovand, and Amelot, the page of Damian, were seated by the bedside. They rose as Lady Eveline entered; and the first, who meddled a little with the healing art, said to Eveline "that the knight had slumbered for some time, and was now about to awake."

Amelot at the same time came forward, and in a hasty and low voice, begged that the chamber might be kept quiet, and the spectators requested to retire. "My lord," he said, "ever since his illness at Gloucester, is apt to speak something wildly as he awakes from sleep, and will be displeased with me should I permit any one to be near him."

Eveline accordingly caused her women and the monk to retire into the anteroom, while she herself remained standing by the door—communication which connected the apartments, and heard Damian mention her name as he turned himself painfully on his couch. "Is she safe and unharmed?" was his first question, and it was asked with an eagerness which intimated how far it preceded all other considerations. When Amelot replied in the affirmative, he sighed, as one whose bosom is relieved from some weighty load, and in a less animated voice, asked of the page where they were. "This apartment," he said, "with its furniture, are all strange to me."

"My dear master," said Amelot, "you are at present too weak to ask questions and receive explanations."

"Be I where I will," said Damian, as if recovering his recollection, "I am not in the place where my duty calls me. Tell my trumpets to sound to horse—to horse, and let Ralph Genvil carry my banner. To horse—to horse! we have not a moment to lose!"

The wounded knight made some effort to rise, which, in his state of weakness, Amelot was easily able to frustrate. "Thou art right," he said, as he sunk back into his reclining posture—"thou art right—I am weak—but why should strength remain when honour is lost?" The unhappy young man covered his face with his hands, and groaned in agony, which seemed more that of the mind than of the body. Lady Eveline approached his bedside with unassured steps, fearing she knew not what, yet earnest to testify the interest she felt in the distresses of the sufferer. Damian looked up and beheld her, and again hid his face with his hands.

"What means this strange passion, Sir Knight?" said Eveline, with a voice which, at first weak and trembling, gradually obtained steadiness and composure. "Ought it to grieve you so much, sworn as you are to the duties of chivalry, that Heaven hath twice made you its instrument to save the unfortunate Eveline Berenger?"

"Oh no, no!" he exclaimed with rapidity; "since you are saved, all is well—but time presses—it is necessary I should presently depart—no-where ought I now to tarry—least of all, within this castle—Once more, Amelot, let them get to horse!"

"Nay, my good lord," said the damsel, "this must not be. As your ward, I cannot let my guardian part thus suddenly—as a physician, I cannot allow my patient to destroy himself—It is impossible that you can brook the saddle."

"A litter—a bier—a cart, to drag forth the dishonoured knight and traitor—all were too good for me—a coffin were best of all! —But see, Amelot, that it be framed like that of the meanest churl—no spurs displayed on the pall—no shield with the ancient coat of the De Lacys—no helmet with their knightly crest must deck the hearse of him whose name is dishonoured!"

"Is his brain unsettled?" said Eveline, looking with terror from the wounded man to his attendant; "or is there some dreadful mystery in these broken words?—If so, speak it forth; and if it may be amended by life or goods, my deliverer will sustain no wrong."

Amelot regarded her with a dejected and melancholy air, shook his head, and looked down on his master with a countenance which seemed to express, that the questions which she asked could not be prudently answered in Sir Damian's presence. The Lady Eveline, observing this gesture, stepped back into the outer apartment, and made Amelot a sign to follow her. He obeyed, after a glance at his master, who remained in the same disconsolate posture as formerly, with his hands crossed over his eyes, like one who wished to exclude the light, and all which the light made visible.

When Amelot was in the wardrobe, Eveline, making signs to her attendants to keep at such distance as the room permitted, questioned him closely on the cause of his master's desperate expression of terror and remorse. "Thou knowest," she said, "that I am bound to succour thy lord, if I may, both from gratitude, as one whom he hath served to the peril of his life—and also from kinsmanship. Tell me, therefore, in what case he stands, that I may help him if I can—that is," she added, her pale cheeks deeply colouring, "if the cause of the distress be fitting for me to hear."

The page bowed low, yet showed such embarrassment when he began to speak, as produced a corresponding degree of confusion in the Lady Eveline, who, nevertheless, urged him as before "to speak without scruple or delay—so that the tenor of his discourse was fitting for her ears."

"Believe me, noble lady," said Amelot, "your commands had been instantly obeyed, but that I fear my master's displeasure if I talk of his affairs without his warrant; nevertheless, on your command, whom I know he honours above all earthly beings, I will speak thus far, that if his life be safe from the wounds he has received, his honour and worship may be in great danger, if it please not Heaven to send a remedy."

"Speak on," said Eveline; "and be assured you will do Sir Damian de Lacy no prejudice by the confidence you may rest in me."

"I well believe it, lady," said the page. "Know, then, if it be not already known to you, that the clowns and rabble, who have taken arms against the nobles in the west, pretend to be favoured in their insurrection, not only by Randal Lacy, but by my master, Sir Damian."

"They lie that dare charge him with such foul treason to his own blood, as well as to his sovereign!" replied Eveline.

"Well do I believe they lie," said Amelot; "but this hinders not their falsehoods from being believed by those who know him less inwardly. More than one runaway from our troop have joined this rabblement, and that gives some credit to the scandal. And then they say—they say—that—in short, that my master longs to possess the lands in his proper right which he occupies as his uncle's administrator; and that if the old Constable—I crave your pardon, madam—should return from Palestine, he should find it difficult to obtain possession of his own again."

"The sordid wretches judge of others by their own base minds, and conceive those temptations too powerful for men of worth, which they are themselves conscious they would be unable to resist. But are the insurgents then so insolent and so powerful? We have heard of their violences, but only as if it had been some popular tumult."

"We had notice last night that they have drawn together in great force, and besieged or blockaded Wild Wenlock, with his men-at-arms, in a village about ten miles hence. He hath sent to my master, as his kinsman and companion-at-arms, to come to his assistance. We were on horseback this morning to march to the rescue—when—"

He paused, and seemed unwilling to proceed. Eveline caught at the word. "When you heard of my danger?" she said. "I would ye had rather heard of my death!"

"Surely, noble lady," said the page, with his eyes fixed on the ground, "nothing but so strong a cause could have made my master halt his troop, and carry the better part of them to the Welsh mountains, when his countryman's distress, and the commands of the King's Lieutenant, so peremptorily demanded his presence elsewhere."

"I knew it," she said—"I knew I was born to be his destruction! yet methinks this is worse than I dreamed of, when the worst was in my thoughts. I feared to occasion his death, not his loss of fame. For God's sake, young Amelot, do what thou canst, and that without loss of time! Get thee straightway to horse, and join to thy own men as many as thou canst gather of mine—Go—ride, my brave youth—show thy master's banner, and let them see that his forces and his heart are with them, though his person be absent. Haste, haste, for the time is precious."

"But the safety of this castle—But your own safety?" said the page. "God knows how willingly I would do aught to save his fame! But I know my master's mood; and were you to suffer by my leaving the Garde Doloureuse, even although I were to save him lands, life, and honour, by my doing so, I should be more like to taste of his dagger, than of his thanks or bounty."

"Go, nevertheless, dear Amelot," said she; "gather what force thou canst make, and begone."

"You spur a willing horse, madam," said the page, springing to his feet; "and in the condition of my master, I see nothing better than that his banner should be displayed against these churls."

"To arms, then," said Eveline, hastily; "to arms, and win thy spurs. Bring me assurance that thy master's honour is safe, and I will myself buckle them on thy heels. Here—take this blessed rosary—bind it on thy crest, and be the thought of the Virgin of the Garde Doloureuse, that never failed a votary, strong with thee in the hour of conflict."

She had scarcely ended, ere Amelot flew from her presence, and summoning together such horse as he could assemble, both of his master's, and of those belonging to the castle, there were soon forty cavaliers mounted in the court-yard.

But although the page was thus far readily obeyed, yet when the soldiers heard they were to go forth on a dangerous expedition, with no more experienced general than a youth of fifteen, they showed a decided reluctance to move from the castle. The old soldiers of De Lacy said, Damian himself was almost too youthful to command them, and had no right to delegate his authority to a mere boy; while the followers of Berenger said, their mistress might be satisfied with her deliverance of the morning, without trying farther dangerous conclusions by diminishing the garrison of her castle—"The times," they said, "were stormy, and it was wisest to keep a stone roof over their heads."

The more the soldiers communicated their ideas and apprehensions to each other, the stronger their disinclination to the undertaking became; and when Amelot, who, page-like, had gone to see that his own horse was accoutred and brought forth, returned to the castle-yard, he found them standing confusedly together, some mounted, some on foot, all men speaking loud, and all in a state of disorder. Ralph Genvil, a veteran whose face had been seamed with many a scar, and who had long followed the trade of a soldier of fortune, stood apart from the rest, holding his horse's bridle in one hand, and in the other the banner-spear, around which the banner of De Lacy was still folded.

"What means this, Genvil?" said the page, angrily. "Why do you not mount your horse and display the banner? and what occasions all this confusion?"

"Truly, Sir Page," said Genvil, composedly, "I am not in my saddle, because I have some regard for this old silken rag, which I have borne to honour in my time, and I will not willingly carry it where men are unwilling to follow and defend it."

"No march—no sally—no lifting of banner to-day" cried the soldiers, by way of burden to the banner-man's discourse. "How now, cowards! do you mutiny?" said Amelot, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Menace not me, Sir Boy," said Genvil; "nor shake your sword my way. I tell thee, Amelot, were my weapon to cross with yours, never flail sent abroad more chaff than I would make splinters of your hatched and gilded toasting-iron. Look you, there are gray-bearded men here that care not to be led about on any boy's humour. For me, I stand little upon that; and I care not whether one boy or another commands me. But I am the Lacy's man for the time; and I am not sure that, in marching to the aid of this Wild Wenlock, we shall do an errand the Lacy will thank us for. Why led he us not thither in the morning when we were commanded off into the mountains?"

"You well know the cause," said the page.

"Yes, we do know the cause; or, if we do not, we can guess it," answered the banner-man, with a horse laugh, which was echoed by several of his companions.

"I will cram the calumny down thy false throat, Genvil!" said the page; and, drawing his sword, threw himself headlong on the banner-man, without considering their great difference of strength.

Genvil was contented to foil his attack by one, and, as it seemed, a slight movement of his gigantic arm, with which he forced the page aside, parrying, at the same time, his blow with the standard-spear.

There was another loud laugh, and Amelot, feeling all his efforts baffled, threw his sword from him, and weeping in pride and indignation, hastened back to tell the Lady Eveline of his bad success. "All," he said, "is lost—the cowardly villains have mutinied, and will not move; and the blame of their sloth and faintheartedness will be laid on my dear master."

"That shall never be," said Eveline, "should I die to prevent it. —Follow me, Amelot."

She hastily threw a scarlet scarf over her dark garments, and hastened down to the court-yard, followed by Gillian, assuming, as she went, various attitudes and actions expressing astonishment and pity, and by Rose, carefully suppressing all appearance of—the feelings which she really entertained.

Eveline entered the castle-court, with the kindling eye and glowing brow which her ancestors were wont to bear in danger and extremity, when their soul was arming to meet the storm, and displayed in their mien and looks high command and contempt of danger. She seemed at the moment taller than her usual size; and it was with a voice distinct and clearly heard, though not exceeding the delicacy of feminine tone, that the mutineers heard her address them. "How is this, my masters?" she said; and as she spoke, the bulky forms of the armed soldiers seemed to draw closer together, as if to escape her individual censure. It was like a group of heavy water-fowl, when they close to avoid the stoop of the slight and beautiful merlin, dreading the superiority of its nature and breeding over their own inert physical strength.—"How now?" again she demanded of them; "is it a time, think ye, to mutiny, when your lord is absent, and his nephew and lieutenant lies stretched on a bed of sickness?—Is it thus you keep your oaths?—Thus ye merit your leader's bounty?—Shame on ye, craven hounds, that quail and give back the instant you lose sight of the huntsman!"

There was a pause—the soldiers looked on each other, and then again on Eveline, as if ashamed alike to hold out in their mutiny, or to return to their usual discipline.

"I see how it is, my brave friends—ye lack a leader here; but stay not for that—I will guide you myself, and, woman as I am, there need not a man of you fear disgrace where a Berenger commands.—Trap my palfrey with a steel saddle," she said, "and that instantly." She snatched from the ground the page's light head-piece, and threw it over her hair, caught up his drawn sword, and went on. "Here I promise you my countenance and guidance—this gentleman," she pointed to Genvil, "shall supply my lack of military skill. He looks like a man that hath seen many a day of battle, and can well teach a young leader her devoir."

"Certes," said the old soldier, smiling in spite of himself, and shaking his head at the same time, "many a battle have I seen, but never under such a commander."

"Nevertheless," said Eveline, seeing how the eyes of the rest turned on Genvil, "you do not—cannot—will not—refuse to follow me? You do not as a soldier, for my weak voice supplies your captain's orders—you cannot as a gentleman, for a lady, a forlorn and distressed female, asks you a boon—you will not as an Englishman, for your country requires your sword, and your comrades are in danger. Unfurl your banner, then, and march."

"I would do so, upon my soul, fair lady," answered Genvil, as if preparing to unfold the banner—"And Amelot might lead us well enough, with advantage of some lessons from me, But I wot not whether you are sending us on the right road."

"Surely, surely," said Eveline, earnestly, "it must be the right road which conducts you to the relief of Wenlock and his followers, besieged by the insurgent boors."

"I know not," said Genvil, still hesitating. "Our leader here, Sir Damian de Lacy, protects the commons—men say he befriends them— and I know he quarrelled with Wild Wenlock once for some petty wrong he did to the miller's wife at Twyford. We should be finely off, when our fiery young leader is on foot again, if he should find we had been fighting against the side he favoured."

"Assure yourself," said the maiden, anxiously, "the more he would protect the commons against oppression, the more he would put them down when oppressing others. Mount and ride—save Wenlock and his men—there is life and death in every moment. I will warrant, with my life and lands, that whatsoever you do will be held good service to De Lacy. Come, then, follow me."

"None surely can know Sir Damian's purpose better than you, fair damsel," answered Genvil; "nay, for that matter, you can make him change as ye list,—And so I will march with the men, and we will aid Wenlock, if it is yet time, as I trust it may; for he is a rugged wolf, and when he turns to bay, will cost the boors blood enough ere they sound a mort. But do you remain within the castle, fair lady, and trust to Amelot and me.—Come, Sir Page, assume the command, since so it must be; though, by my faith, it is pity to take the headpiece from that pretty head, and the sword from that pretty hand—By Saint George! to see them there is a credit to the soldier's profession."

The Lady accordingly surrendered the weapons to Amelot, exhorting him in few words to forget the offence he had received, and do his devoir manfully. Meanwhile Genvil slowly unrolled the pennon—then shook it abroad, and without putting his foot in the stirrup, aided himself a little with resting on the spear, and threw himself into the saddle, heavily armed as he was. "We are ready now, an it like your juvenility," said he to Amelot; and then, while the page was putting the band into order, he whispered to his nearest comrade, "Methinks, instead of this old swallow's tail, [Footnote: The pennon of a Knight was, in shape, a long streamer, and forked like a swallow's tail: the banner of a Banneret was square, and was formed into the other by cutting the ends from the pennon. It was thus the ceremony was performed on the pennon of John Chandos, by the Black Prince, before the battle of Nejava.] we should muster rarely under a brodered petticoat—a furbelowed petticoat has no fellow in my mind.—Look you, Stephen Pontoys—I can forgive Damian now for forgetting his uncle and his own credit, about this wench; for, by my faith, she is one I could have doated to death upon *par amours*. Ah! evil luck be the women's portion!—they govern us at every turn, Stephen," and at every age. When they are young, they bribe us with fair looks, and sugared words, sweet kisses and love tokens; and when they are of middle age, they work us to their will by presents and courtesies, red wine and red gold; and when they are old, we are fain to run their errands to get out of sight of their old leathern visages. Well, old De Lacy should have staid at home and watched his falcon. But it is all one to us, Stephen, and we may make some vantage to-day, for these boors have plundered more than one castle."

"Ay, ay," answered Pontoys, "the boor to the booty, and the banner-man to the boor, a right pithy proverb. But, prithee, canst thou say why his pageship leads us not forward yet?"

"Pshaw!" answered Genvil, "the shake I gave him has addled his brains—or perchance he has not swallowed all his tears yet; sloth it is not, for 'tis a forward cockeril for his years, wherever honour is to be won.—See, they now begin to move.—Well, it is a singular thing this gentle blood, Stephen; for here is a child whom I but now baffled like a schoolboy, must lead us gray beards where we may get our heads broken, and that at the command of a light lady."

"I warrant Sir Damian is secretary to my pretty lady," answered Stephen Pontoys, "as this springald Amelot is to Sir Damian; and so we poor men must obey and keep our mouths shut."

"But our eyes open, Stephen Pontoys—forget not that."

They were by this time out of the gates of the castle, and upon the road leading to the village, in which, as they understood by the intelligence of the morning, Wenlock was besieged or blockaded by a greatly superior number of the insurgent commons. Amelot rode at the head of the troop, still embarrassed at the affront which he had received in presence of the soldiers, and lost in meditating how he was to eke out that deficiency of experience, which on former occasions had been supplied by the counsels of the banner-man, with whom he was ashamed to seek a reconciliation. But Genvil was not of a nature absolutely sullen, though a habitual grumbler. He rode up to the page, and having made his obeisance, respectfully asked him whether it were not well that some one or two of their number pricked forward upon good horses to learn how it stood with Wenlock, and whether they should be able to come up in time to his assistance.

"Methinks, banner-man," answered Amelot, "you should take the ruling of the troop, since you know so fittingly what should be done. You may be the fitter to command, because—But I will not upbraid you."

"Because I know so ill how to obey," replied Genvil; "that is what you would say; and, by my faith, I cannot deny but there may be some truth in it. But is it not peevish in thee to let a fair expedition be unwisely conducted, because of a foolish word or a sudden action?—Come, let it be peace with us."

"With all my heart," answered Amelot; "and I will send out an advanced party upon the adventure, as thou hast advised me."

"Let it be old Stephen Pontoys and two of the Chester spears—he is as wily as an old fox, and neither hope nor fear will draw him a hairbreadth farther than judgment warrants."

Amelot eagerly embraced the hint, and, at his command, Pontoys and two lances started forward to reconnoitre the road before them, and inquire into the condition of those whom they were advancing to succour. "And now that we are on the old terms, Sir Page," said the banner-man, "tell me, if thou canst, doth not yonder fair lady love our handsome knight *par amours*?"

"It is a false calumny," said Amelot, indignantly; "betrothed as she is to his uncle, I am convinced she would rather die than have such a thought, and so would our master. I have noted this heretical belief in thee before now, Genvil, and I have prayed thee to check it. You know the thing cannot be, for you know they have scarce ever met."

"How should I know that," said Genvil, "or thou either? Watch them ever so close—much water slides past the mill that Hob Miller never wots of. They do correspond; that, at least, thou canst not deny?"

"I do deny it," said Amelot, "as I deny all that can touch their honour."

"Then how, in Heaven's name, does he by such perfect knowledge of her motions, as he has displayed no longer since than the morning?"

"How should I tell?" answered the page; "there be such things, surely, as saints and good angels, and if there be one on earth deserves their protection, it is Dame Eveline Berenger."

"Well said, Master Counsel-keeper," replied Genvil, laughing; "but that will hardly pass on an old trooper.—Saint and angels, quotha? most saint-like doings, I warrant you."

The page was about to continue his angry vindication, when Stephen Pontoys and his followers returned upon the spur. "Wenlock holds out bravely," he exclaimed, "though he is felly girded in with these boors. The large crossbows are doing good service; and I little doubt his making his place good till we come up, if it please you to ride something sharply. They have assailed the barriers, and were close up to them even now, but were driven back with small success."

The party were now put in as rapid motion as might consist with order, and soon reached the top of a small eminence, beneath which lay the village where Wenlock was making his defence. The air rung with the cries and shouts of the insurgents, who, numerous as bees, and possessed of that dogged spirit of courage so peculiar to the English, thronged like ants to the barriers, and endeavoured to break down the palisades, or to climb over them, in despite of the showers of stones and arrows from within, by which they suffered great loss, as well as by the swords and battle-axes of the men-at-arms, whenever they came to hand-blows.

"We are in time, we are in time," said Amelot, dropping the reins of his bridle, and joyfully clapping his hands; "shake thy banner abroad, Genvil—give Wenlock and his fellows a fair view of it.—Comrades, halt—breathe your horses for a moment.—Hark hither, Genvil—If we descend by yonder broad pathway into the meadow where the cattle are—" "Bravo, my young falcon" replied Genvil, whose love of battle, like that of the war-horse of Job, kindled at the sight of the spears, and at the sound of the trumpet; "we shall have then an easy field for a charge on yonder knaves."

"What a thick black cloud the villains make" said Amelot; "but we will let daylight through it with our lances—See, Genvil, the defenders hoist a signal to show they have seen us."

"A signal to us?" exclaimed Genvil. "By Heaven, it is a white flag—a signal of surrender!"

"Surrender! they cannot dream of it, when we are advancing to their succour," replied Amelot; when two or three melancholy notes from the trumpets of the besieged, with a thundering and tumultuous acclamation from the besiegers, rendered the fact indisputable.

"Down goes Wenlock's pennon," said Genvil, "and the churls enter the barricades on all points.—Here has been cowardice or treachery—What is to be done?"

"Advance on them," said Amelot, "retake the place, and deliver the prisoners."

"Advance, indeed!" answered the banner-man—"Not a horse's length by my counsel—we should have every nail in our corslets counted with arrow-shot, before we got down the hill in the face of such a multitude and the place to storm afterwards—it were mere insanity."

"Yet come a little forward along with me," said the page; "perhaps we may find some path by which we could descend unperceived."

Accordingly they rode forward a little way to reconnoitre the face of the hill, the page still urging the possibility of descending it unperceived amid the confusion, when Genvil answered impatiently, "Unperceived!—you are already perceived—here comes a fellow, pricking towards us as fast as his beast may trot."

As he spoke, the rider came up to them. He was a short, thick-set peasant, in an ordinary frieze jacket and hose, with a blue cap on his head, which he had been scarcely able to pull over a shock head of red hair, that seemed in arms to repel the covering. The man's hands were bloody, and he carried at his saddlebow a linen bag, which was also stained with blood. "Ye be of Damian de Lacy's company, be ye not?" said this rude messenger; and, when they answered in the affirmative, he proceeded with the same blunt courtesy, "Hob Miller of Twyford commends him to Damian de Lacy, and knowing his purpose to amend disorders in the commonwealth, Hob Miller sends him toll of the grist which he has grinded," and with that he took from the bag a human head, and tendered it to Amelot.

"It is Wenlock's head," said Genvil—"how his eyes stare!"

"They will stare after no more wenches now," said the boor—"I have cured him of caterwauling."

"Thou!" said Amelot, stepping back in disgust and indignation.

"Yes, I myself," replied the peasant; "I am Grand Justiciary of the Commons, for lack of a better."

"Grand hangman, thou wouldst say," replied Genvil.

"Call it what thou list," replied the peasant. "Truly, it behoves men in state to give good example. I'll bid no man do that I am not ready to do myself. It is as easy to hang a man, as to say hang him; we will have no splitting of offices in this new world, which is happily set up in old England."

"Wretch!" said Amelot, "take back thy bloody token to them that sent thee! Hadst thou not come upon assurance, I had pinned thee to the earth with my lance—But, be assured, your cruelty shall be fearfully avenged.—Come, Genvil, let us to our men; there is no farther use in abiding here."

The fellow, who had expected a very different reception, stood staring after them for a few moments, then replaced his bloody trophy in the wallet, and rode back to those who sent him.

"This comes of meddling with men's *amourettes*," said Genvil; "Sir Damian would needs brawl with Wenlock about his dealings with this miller's daughter, and you see they account him a favourer of their enterprise; it will be well if others do not take up the same opinion.—I wish we were rid of the trouble which such suspicions may bring upon us—ay, were it at the price of my best horse—I am like to lose him at any rate with the day's hard service, and I would it were the worst it is to cost us."

The party returned, wearied and discomforted, to the castle of the Garde Doloureuse, and not without losing several of their number by the way, some straggling owing to the weariness of their horses, and others taking the opportunity of desertion, in order to join the bands of insurgents and plunderers, who had now gathered together in different quarters, and were augmented by recruits from the dissolute soldiery.

Amelot, on his return to the castle, found that the state of his master was still very precarious, and that the Lady Eveline, though much exhausted, had not yet retired to rest, but was awaiting his return with impatience. He was introduced to her accordingly, and, with a heavy heart, mentioned the ineffectual event of his expedition.

"Now the saints have pity upon us!" said the Lady Eveline; "for it seems as if a plague or pest attached to me, and extended itself to all who interest themselves in my welfare. From the moment they do so, their very virtues become snares to them; and what would, in every other case, recommend them to honour, is turned to destruction to the friends of Eveline Berenger."

"Fear not, fair lady," said Amelot; "there are still men enough in my master's camp to put down these disturbers of the public peace. I will but abide to receive his instructions, and will hence to-morrow, and draw out a force to restore quiet in this part of the country."

"Alas! you know not yet the worst of it," replied Eveline. "Since you went hence, we have received certain notice, that when the soldiers at Sir Damian's camp heard of the accident which he this morning met with, already discontented with the inactive life which they had of late led, and dispirited by the hurts and reported death of their leader, they have altogether broken up and dispersed their forces. Yet be of good courage, Amelot," she said; "this house is strong enough to bear out a worse tempest than any that is likely to be poured on it; and if all men desert your master in wounds and affliction, it becomes yet more the part of Eveline Berenger to shelter and protect her deliverer."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH

Let	our	proud	trumpet	shako	their	castle	wall,
Menacing			death		and		ruin.
OTWAY							

The evil news with which the last chapter concluded were necessarily told to Damian de Lacy, as the person whom they chiefly concerned; and Lady Eveline herself undertook the task of communicating them, mingling what she said with tears, and again interrupting those tears to suggest topics of hope and comfort, which carried no consolation to her own bosom.

The wounded knight continued with his face turned towards her, listening to the disastrous tidings, as one who was not otherwise affected by them, than as they regarded her who told the story. When she had done speaking, he continued as in a reverie, with his eyes so intently fixed upon her, that she rose up, with the purpose of withdrawing from looks by which she felt herself embarrassed. He hastened to speak, that he might prevent her departure. "All that you have said, fair lady," he replied, "had been enough, if told by another, to have broken my heart; for it tells me that the power and honour of my house, so solemnly committed to my charge, have been blasted in my misfortunes. But when I look upon you, and hear your voice, I forget every thing, saving that you have been rescued, and are here in honour and safety. Let me therefore pray of your goodness that I may be removed from the castle which holds you, and sent elsewhere. I am in no shape worthy of your farther care, since I have no longer the swords of others at my disposal, and am totally unable for the present to draw my own."

"And if you are generous enough to think of me in your own misfortunes, noble knight," answered Eveline, "can you suppose that I forget wherefore, and in whose rescue, these wounds were incurred? No, Damian, speak not of removal—while there is a turret of the Garde Doloureuse standing, within that turret shall you find shelter and protection. Such, I am well assured, would be the pleasure of your uncle, were he here in person."

It seemed as if a sudden pang of his wound had seized upon Damian; for, repeating the words "My uncle!" he writhed himself round, and averted his face from Eveline; then again composing himself, replied, "Alas! knew my uncle how ill I have obeyed his precepts, instead of sheltering me within this house, he would command me to be flung from the battlements!"

"Fear not his displeasure," said Eveline, again preparing to withdraw; "but endeavour, by the composure of your spirit, to aid the healing of your wounds; when, I doubt not, you will be able again to establish good order in the Constable's jurisdiction, long before his return."

She coloured as she pronounced the last words, and hastily left the apartment. When she was in her own chamber, she dismissed her other attendants and retained Rose. "What dost thou think of these things, my wise maiden and monitress?" said she.

"I would," replied Rose, "either that this young knight had never entered this castle—or that, being here, he could presently leave it—or, that he could honourably remain here for ever."

"What dost thou mean by remaining here for ever?" said Eveline sharply and hastily. "Let me answer that question with another— How long has the Constable of Chester been absent from England?"

"Three years come Saint Clement's day," said Eveline; "and what of that?"

"Nay, nothing; but——"

"But what?—I command you to speak out."

"A few weeks will place your hand at your own disposal."

"And think you, Rose," said Eveline, rising with dignity, "that there are no bonds save those which are drawn by the scribe's pen?—We know little of the Constable's adventures; but we know enough to show that his towering hopes have fallen, and his sword and courage proved too weak to change the fortunes of the Sultan Saladin. Suppose him returning some brief time hence, as we have seen so many crusaders regain their homes, poor and broken in health—suppose that he finds his lands laid waste, and his followers dispersed, by the consequence of their late misfortunes, how would it sound should he also find that his betrothed bride had wedded and endowed with her substance the nephew whom he most trusted?—Dost thou think such an engagement is like a Lombard's mortgage, which must be redeemed on the very day, else forfeiture is sure to be awarded?"

"I cannot tell, madam," replied Rose; "but they that keep their covenant to the letter, are, in my country, held bound to no more."

"That is a Flemish fashion, Rose," said her mistress; "but the honour of a Norman is not satisfied with an observance so limited. What! wouldst thou have my honour, my affections, my duty, all that is most valuable to a woman, depend on the same progress of the kalendar which an usurer watches for the purpose of seizing on a forfeited pledge?—Am I such a mere commodity, that I must belong to one man if he claims me before Michaelmas, to another if he comes afterwards?—No, Rose; I did not thus interpret my engagement, sanctioned as it was by the special providence of Our Lady of the Garde Doloureuse."

"It is a feeling worthy of you, my dearest lady," answered the attendant; "yet you are so young—so beset with perils—so much exposed to calumny—that I, at least, looking forward to the time when you may have a legal companion and protector, see it as an extrication from much doubt and danger." "Do not think of it, Rose," answered Eveline; "do not liken your mistress to those provident dames, who, while one husband yet lives, though in old age or weak health, are prudently engaged in plotting for another."

"Enough, my dearest lady," said Rose;—"yet not so. Permit me one word more. Since you are determined not to avail yourself of your freedom, even when the fatal period of your engagement is expired, why suffer this young man to share our solitude?—He is surely well enough to be removed to some other place of security. Let us resume our former sequestered mode of life, until Providence send us some better or more certain prospects."

Eveline sighed—looked down—then looking upwards, once more had opened her lips to express her willingness to enforce so reasonable an arrangement, but for Damian's recent wounds, and the distracted state of the country, when she was interrupted by the shrill sound of trumpets, blown before the gate of the castle; and Raoul, with anxiety on his brow, came limping to inform his lady, that a knight, attended by a pursuivant-at-arms, in the royal livery, with a strong guard, was in front of the castle, and demanded admittance in the name of the King.

Eveline paused a moment ere she replied, "Not even to the King's order shall the castle of my ancestors be opened, until we are well assured of the person by whom, and the purpose for which, it is demanded. We will ourself to the gate, and learn the meaning of this summons—My veil, Rose; and call my women.—Again that trumpet sounds! Alas! it rings like a signal to death and ruin."

The prophetic apprehensions of Eveline were not false; for scarce had she reached the door of the apartment, when she was met by the page Amelot, in a state of such disordered apprehension as an eleve of chivalry was scarce on any occasion permitted to display. "Lady, noble lady," he said, hastily bending his knee to Eveline, "save my dearest master!—You, and you alone, can save him at this extremity."

"!" said Eveline, in astonishment—"I save him?—And from what danger?—God knows how willingly!"

There she stopped short, as if afraid to trust herself with expressing what rose to her lips.

"Guy Monthermer, lady, is at the gate, with a pursuivant and the royal banner. The hereditary enemy of the House of Lacy, thus accompanied, comes hither for no good—the extent of the evil I know not, but for evil he comes. My master slew his nephew at the field of Malpas, and therefore"——He was here interrupted by another flourish of trumpets, which rung, as if in shrill impatience, through the vaults of the ancient fortress.

The Lady Eveline hastened to the gate, and found that the wardens, and others who attended there, were looking on each other with doubtful and alarmed countenances, which they turned upon her at her arrival, as if to seek from, their mistress the comfort and the courage which they could not communicate to each other. Without the gate, mounted, and in complete armour, was an elderly and stately knight, whose raised visor and beaver depressed, showed a beard already grizzled. Beside him appeared the pursuivant on horseback, the royal arms embroidered on his heraldic dress of office, and all the importance of offended consequence on his countenance, which was shaded by his barret-cap and triple plume. They were attended by a body of about fifty soldiers, arranged under the guidon of England.

When the Lady Eveline appeared at the barrier, the knight, after a slight reverence, which seemed more informal courtesy than in kindness, demanded if he saw the daughter of Raymond Berenger. "And is it," he continued, when he had received an answer in the affirmative, "before the castle of that approved and favoured servant of the House of Anjou, that King Henry's trumpets have thrice sounded, without obtaining an entrance for those who are honoured with their Sovereign's command?"

"My condition," answered Eveline, "must excuse my caution. I am a lone maiden, residing in a frontier fortress. I may admit no one without inquiring his purpose, and being assured that his entrance consists with the safety of the place, and mine own honour."

"Since you are so punctilious, lady," replied Monthermer, "know, that in the present distracted state of the country, it is his Grace the King's pleasure to place within your walls a body of men-at-arms, sufficient to guard this important castle, both from the insurgent peasants, who burn and slay, and from the Welsh, who, it must be expected, will, according to their wont in time of disturbance, make incursions on the frontiers. Undo your gates, then, Lady of Berenger, and suffer his Grace's forces to enter the castle."

"Sir Knight," answered the lady, "this castle, like every other fortress in England, is the King's by law; but by law also I am the keeper and defender of it; and it is the tenure by which my ancestors held these lands. I have men enough to maintain the Garde Doloureuse in my time, as my father, and my grandfather before him, defended it in theirs. The King is gracious to send me succours, but I need not the aid of hirelings; neither do I think it safe to admit such into my castle, who may, in this lawless time, make themselves master of it for other than its lawful mistress."

"Lady," replied the old warrior, "his Grace is not ignorant of the motives which produce a contumacy like this. It is not any apprehension for the royal forces which influences you, a royal vassal, in this refractory conduct. I might proceed upon your refusal to proclaim you a traitor to the Crown, but the King remembers the services of your father. Know, then, we are not ignorant that Damian de Lacy, accused of instigating and heading this insurrection, and of deserting his duty in the field, and abandoning a noble comrade to the swords of the brutal peasants, has found shelter under this roof, with little credit to your loyalty as vassal, or your conduct as a high-born maiden. Deliver him up to us, and I will draw off these men-at-arms, and dispense, though I may scarce answer doing so, with the occupation of the castle."

"Guy de Monthermer," answered Eveline, "he that throws a stain on my name, speaks falsely and unworthily; as for Damian de Lacy, he knows how to defend his own fame. This only let me say, that, while he takes his abode in the castle of the betrothed of his kinsman, she delivers him to no one, least of all to his well-known feudal enemy—Drop the portcullis, wardens, and let it not be raised without my special order."

The portcullis, as she spoke, fell rattling and clanging to the ground, and Monthermer, in baffled spite, remained excluded from the castle. "Un-worthy lady"—he began in passion, then, checking himself, said calmly to the pursuivant, "Ye are witness that she hath admitted that the traitor is within that castle,—ye are witness that, lawfully summoned, this Eveline Berenger refuses to deliver him up. Do your duty, Sir Pursuivant, as is usual in such cases."

"Philip," said De Lacy, "I am sorry for thee—sorry, from my soul, to see such a predominating and causeless jealousy occupy the brain of a gallant old soldier. Here, in this last misfortune, to recall no more ancient proofs of his fidelity, could he mean otherwise than well with us, when, thrown by shipwreck upon the coast of Wales, we would have been doomed to instant death, had the Cymri recognized in me the Constable of Chester, and in thee his trusty esquire, the executioner of his commands against the Welsh in so many instances?"

"I acknowledge," said Philip Guarine, "death had surely been our fortune, had not that man's ingenuity represented us as pilgrims, and, under that character, acted as our interpreter—and in that character he entirely precluded us from getting information from any one respecting the state of things here, which it behoved your lordship much to know, and which I must needs say looks gloomy and suspicious enough."

"Still art thou a fool, Guarine," said the Constable; "for, look you, had Vidal meant ill by us, why should he not have betrayed us to the Welsh, or suffered us, by showing such knowledge as thou and I may have of their gibberish, to betray ourselves?"

"Well, my lord," said Guarine, "I may be silenced, but not satisfied. All the fair words he can speak—all the fine tunes he can play—Renault Vidal will be to my eyes ever a dark and suspicious man, with features always ready to mould themselves into the fittest form to attract confidence; with a tongue framed to utter the most flattering and agreeable words at one time, and at another to play shrewd plainness or blunt honesty; and an eye which, when he thinks himself unobserved, contradicts every assumed expression of features, every protestation of honesty, and every word of courtesy or cordiality to which his tongue has given utterance. But I speak not more on the subject; only I am an old mastiff, of the true breed—I love my master, but cannot endure some of those whom he favours; and yonder, as I judge, comes Vidal, to give us such an account of our situation as it shall please him."

A horseman was indeed seen advancing in the path towards the Kist-vaen, with a hasty pace; and his dress, in which something of the Eastern fashion was manifest, with the fantastic attire usually worn by men of his profession, made the Constable aware that the minstrel, of whom they were speaking, was rapidly approaching them.

Although Hugo de Lacy rendered this attendant no more than what in justice he supposed his services demanded, when he vindicated him from the suspicions thrown out by Guarine, yet at the bottom of his heart he had sometimes shared those suspicions, and was often angry at himself, as a just and honest man, for censuring, on the slight testimony of looks, and sometimes casual expressions, a fidelity which seemed to be proved by many acts of zeal and integrity.

When Vidal approached and dismounted to make his obeisance, his master hastened to speak to him in words of favour, as if conscious he had been partly sharing Guarine's unjust judgment upon him, by even listening to it. "Welcome, my trusty Vidal," he said; "thou hast been the raven that fed us on the mountains of Wales, be now the dove that brings us good tidings from the Marches.—Thou art silent. What mean these downcast looks—that embarrassed carriage—that cap plucked down o'er thine eyes?—In God's name, man, speak!—Fear not for me—I can bear worse than tongue of man may tell. Thou hast seen me in the wars of Palestine, when my brave followers fell, man by man, around me, and when I was left well-nigh alone—and did I blench then?—Thou hast seen me when the ship's keel lay grating on the rock, and the billows flew in foam over her deck—did I blench then?—No—nor will I now."

"Boast not," said the minstrel, looking fixedly upon the Constable, as the former assumed the port and countenance of one who sets Fortune and her utmost malice at defiance—"boast not, lest thy bands be made strong." There was a pause of a minute, during which the group formed at this instant a singular picture.

Afraid to ask, yet ashamed to seem to fear the ill tidings which impended, the Constable confronted his messenger with person erect, arms folded, and brow expanded with resolution: while the minstrel, carried beyond his usual and guarded apathy by the interest of the moment, bent on his master a keen fixed glance, as if to observe whether his courage was real or assumed.

Philip Guarine, on the other hand, to whom Heaven, in assigning him a rough exterior, had denied neither sense nor observation, kept his eye in turn, firmly fixed on Vidal, as if endeavouring to determine what was the character of that deep interest which gleamed in the minstrel's looks apparently, and was unable to ascertain whether it was that of a faithful domestic sympathetically agitated by the bad news with which he was about to afflict his master, or that of an executioner standing with his knife suspended over his victim, deferring his blow until he should discover where it would be most sensibly felt. In Guarine's mind, prejudiced, perhaps, by the previous opinion he had entertained, the latter sentiment so decidedly predominated, that he longed to raise his staff, and strike down to the earth the servant, who seemed thus to enjoy the protracted sufferings of their common master.

At length a convulsive movement crossed the brow of the Constable, and Guarine, when he beheld a sardonic smile begin to curl Vidal's lip, could keep silence no longer. "Vidal," he said, "thou art a—"

"A bearer of bad tidings," said Vidal, interrupting him, "therefore subject to the misconstruction of every fool who cannot distinguish between the author of harm, and him who unwillingly reports it."

"To what purpose this delay?" said the Constable. "Come, Sir Minstrel, I will spare you a pang—Eveline has forsaken and forgotten me?" The minstrel assented by a low inclination.

Hugo de Lacy paced a short turn before the stone monument, endeavouring to conquer the deep emotion which he felt. "I forgive her," he said. "Forgive, did I say—Alas! I have nothing to forgive. She used but the right I left in her hand—yes—our date of engagement was out—she had heard of my losses—my defeats—the destruction of my hopes—the expenditure of my wealth; and has taken the first opportunity which strict law afforded to break off her engagement with one bankrupt in fortune and fame. Many a maiden would have done—perhaps in prudence should have done—this;—but that woman's name should not have been Eveline Berenger."

He leaned on his esquire's arm, and for an instant laid his head on his shoulder with a depth of emotion which Guarine had never before seen him betray, and which, in awkward kindness, he could only attempt to console, by bidding his master "be of good courage—he had lost but a woman."

"This is no selfish emotion, Philip," said the Constable, resuming self-command. "I grieve less that she has left me, than that she has misjudged me—that she has treated me as the pawnbroker does his wretched creditor, who arrests the pledge as the very moment elapses within which it might have been relieved. Did she then think that I in my turn would have been a creditor so rigid?—that I, who, since I knew her, scarce deemed myself worthy of her when I had wealth and fame, should insist on her sharing my diminished and degraded fortunes? How little she ever knew me, or how selfish must she have supposed my misfortunes to have made me! But be it so—she is gone, and may she be happy. The thought that she disturbed me shall pass from my mind; and I will think she has done that which I myself, as her best friend, must in honour have advised."

So saying, his countenance, to the surprise of his attendants, resumed its usual firm composure.

"I give you joy," said the esquire, in a whisper to the minstrel; "your evil news have wounded less deeply than, doubtless, you believed was possible."

"Alas!" replied the minstrel, "I have others and worse behind." This answer was made in an equivocal tone of voice, corresponding to the peculiarity of his manner, and like that seeming emotion of a deep but very doubtful character.

"Eveline Berenger is then married," said the Constable; "and, let me make a wild guess,—she has not abandoned the family, though she has forsaken the individual—she is still a Lacy? ha?—Dolt that thou art, wilt thou not understand me? She is married to Damian de Lacy—to my nephew?"

The effort with which the Constable gave breath to this supposition formed a strange contrast to the constrained smile to which he compelled his features while he uttered it. With such a smile a man about to drink poison might name a health, as he put the fatal beverage to his lips. "No, my lord—not married," answered the minstrel, with an emphasis on the word, which the Constable knew how to interpret.

"No, no," he replied quickly, "not married, perhaps, but engaged—troth-plighted. Wherefore not? The date of her old alliance was out, why not enter into a new engagement?"

"The Lady Eveline and Sir Damian de Lacy are not affianced that I know of," answered his attendant.

This reply drove De Lacy's patience to extremity.

"Dog! dost thou trifle with me?" he exclaimed: "Vile wire-pincher, thou torturest me! Speak the worst at once, or I will presently make thee minstrel to the household of Satan."

Calm and collected did the minstrel reply,—*"The Lady Eveline and Sir Damian are neither married nor affianced, my lord. They have loved and lived together—par amours."*

"Dog, and son of a dog," said De Lacy, "thou liest!" And, seizing the minstrel by the breast, the exasperated baron shook him with his whole strength. But great as that strength was, it was unable to stagger Vidal, a practised wrestler, in the firm posture which he had assumed, any more than his master's wrath could disturb the composure of the minstrel's bearing.

"Confess thou hast lied," said the Constable, releasing him, after having effected by his violence no greater degree of agitation than the exertion of human force produces upon the Rocking Stones of the Druids, which may be shaken, indeed, but not displaced.

"Were a lie to buy my own life, yea, the lives of all my tribe," said the minstrel, "I would not tell one. But truth itself is ever termed falsehood when it counteracts the train of our passions."

"Hear him, Philip Guarine, hear him!" exclaimed the Constable, turning hastily to his squire: "He tells me of my disgrace—of the dishonour of my house—of the depravity of those whom I have loved the best in the world—he tells me of it with a calm look, an eye composed, an unfaltering tongue.—Is this—can it be natural? Is De Lacy sunk so low, that his dishonour shall be told by a common strolling minstrel, as calmly as if it were a theme for a vain ballad? Perhaps thou wilt make it one, ha!" as he concluded, darting a furious glance at the minstrel.

"Perhaps I might, my lord," replied the minstrel, "were it not that I must record therein the disgrace of Renault Vidal, who served a lord without either patience to bear insults and wrongs, or spirit to revenge them on the authors of his shame."

"Thou art right, thou art right, good fellow," said the Constable, hastily; "it is vengeance now alone which is left us—And yet upon whom?"

As he spoke he walked shortly and hastily to and fro; and, becoming suddenly silent, stood still and wrung his hands with deep emotion.

"I told thee," said the minstrel to Guarine, "that my muse would find a tender part at last. Dost thou remember the bull-fight we saw in Spain? A thousand little darts perplexed and annoyed the noble animal, ere he received the last deadly thrust from the lance of the Moorish Cavalier."

"Man, or fiend, be which thou wilt," replied Guarine, "that can thus drink in with pleasure, and contemplate at your ease, the misery of another, I bid thee beware of me! Utter thy cold-blooded taunts in some other ear; for if my tongue be blunt, I wear a sword that is sharp enough."

"Thou hast seen me amongst swords," answered the minstrel, "and knowest how little terror they have for such as I am." Yet as he spoke he drew off from the esquire. He had, in fact, only addressed him in that sort of fulness of heart, which would have vented itself in soliloquy if alone, and now poured itself out on the nearest auditor, without the speaker being entirely conscious of the sentiments which his speech excited.

Few minutes had elapsed before the Constable of Chester had regained the calm external semblance with which, until this last dreadful wound, he had borne all the inflictions of fortune. He turned towards his followers, and addressed the minstrel with his usual calmness, "Thou art right, good fellow," he said, "in what thou saidst to me but now, and I forgive thee the taunt which accompanied thy good counsel. Speak out, in God's name! and speak to one prepared to endure the evil which God hath sent him. Certes, a good knight is best known in battle, and a Christian in the time of trouble and adversity."

The tone in which the Constable spoke, seemed to produce a corresponding effect upon the deportment of his followers. The minstrel dropped at once the cynical and audacious tone in which he had hitherto seemed to tamper with the passions of his master; and in language simple and respectful, and which even approached to sympathy, informed him of the evil news which he had collected during his absence. It was indeed disastrous.

The refusal of the Lady Eveline Berengor to admit Monthermer and his forces into her castle, had of course given circulation and credence to all the calumnies which had been circulated to her prejudice, and that of Damian de Lacy; and there were many who, for various causes, were interested in spreading and supporting these slanders. A large force had been sent into the country to subdue the insurgent peasants; and the knights and nobles despatched for that purpose, failed not to avenge to the uttermost, upon the wretched plebeians, the noble blood which they had spilled during their temporary triumph.

The followers of the unfortunate Wenlock were infected with the same persuasion. Blamed by many for a hasty and cowardly surrender of a post which might have been defended, they endeavoured to vindicate themselves by alleging the hostile demonstrations of De Lacy's cavalry as the sole cause of their premature submission.

These rumours, supported by such interested testimony, spread wide and far through the land; and, joined to the undeniable fact that Damian had sought refuge in the strong castle of Garde Doloureuse, which was now defending itself against the royal arms, animated the numerous enemies of the house of De Lacy, and drove its vassals and friends almost to despair, as men reduced either to disown their feudal allegiance, or renounce that still more sacred fealty which they owed to their sovereign.

At this crisis they received intelligence that the wise and active monarch by whom the sceptre of England was then swayed, was moving towards that part of England, at the head of a large body of soldiers, for the purpose at once of pressing the siege of the Garde Doloureuse, and completing the suppression of the insurrection of the peasantry, which Guy Monthermer had nearly accomplished.

In this emergency, and when the friends and dependents of the House of Lacy scarcely knew which hand to turn to, Randal, the Constable's kinsman, and, after Damian, his heir, suddenly appeared amongst them, with a royal commission to raise and command such followers of the family as might not desire to be involved in the supposed treason of the Constable's delegate. In troublesome times, men's vices are forgotten, provided they display activity, courage, and prudence, the virtues then most required; and the appearance of Randal, who was by no means deficient in any of these attributes, was received as a good omen by the followers of his cousin. They quickly gathered around him, surrendered to the royal mandate such strongholds as they possessed, and, to vindicate themselves from any participation in the alleged crimes of Damian, they distinguished themselves, under Randal's command, against such scattered bodies of peasantry as still kept the field, or lurked in the mountains and passes; and conducted themselves with such severity after success, as made the troops even of Monthermer appear gentle and clement in comparison with those of De Lacy. Finally, with the banner of his ancient house displayed, and five hundred good men assembled under it, Randal appeared before the Garde Poloureuse, and joined Henry's camp there.

The castle was already hardly pressed, and the few defenders, disabled by wounds, watching, and privation, had now the additional discouragement to see displayed against their walls the only banner in England under which they had hoped forces might be mustered for their aid.

The high-spirited entreaties of Eveline, unbent by adversity and want, gradually lost effect on the defenders of the castle; and proposals for surrender were urged and discussed by a tumultuary council, into which not only the inferior officers, but many of the common men, had thrust themselves, as in a period of such general distress as unlooses all the bonds of discipline, and leaves each man at liberty to speak and act for himself. To their surprise, in the midst of their discussions, Damian de Lacy, arisen from the sick-bed to which he had been so long confined, appeared among them, pale and feeble, his cheek tinged with the ghastly look which is left by long illness—he leaned on his page Amelot. "Gentlemen," he said, "and soldiers—yet why should I call you either?—Gentlemen are ever ready to die in behalf of a lady—soldiers hold life in scorn compared to their honour."

"Out upon him! out upon him!" exclaimed some of the soldiers, interrupting him; "he would have us, who are innocent, die the death of traitors, and be hanged in our armour over the walls, rather than part with his leman."

"Peace, irreverent slave!" said Damian, in a voice like thunder, "or my last blow shall be a mean one, aimed against such a caitiff as thou art.—And you," he continued, addressing the rest,— "you, who are shrinking from the toils of your profession, because if you persist in a course of honour, death may close them a few years sooner than it needs must— you, who are scared like children at the sight of a death's-head, do not suppose that Damian de Lacy would desire to shelter himself at the expense of those lives which you hold so dear. Make your bargain with King Henry. Deliver me up to his justice, or his severity; or, if you like it better, strike my head from my body, and hurl it, as a peace-offering, from the walls of the castle. To God, in his good time, will I trust for the clearance of mine honour. In a word, surrender me, dead or alive, or open the gates and permit me to surrender myself. Only, as ye are men, since I may not say better of ye, care at least for the safety of your mistress, and make such terms as may secure HER safety, and save yourselves from the dishonour of being held cowardly and perjured caitiffs in your graves."

"Methinks the youth speaks well and reasonably," said William Flammock. "Let us e'en make a grace of surrendering his body up to the King, and assure thereby such terms as we can for ourselves and the lady, ere the last morsel of our provision is consumed."

"I would hardly have proposed this measure," said, or rather mumbled, Father Aldrovand, who had recently lost four of his front teeth by a stone from a sling,—
"yet, being so generously offered by the party principally concerned, I hold with the learned scholiast, *Volenti non fit injuria*."

"Priest and Fleming," said the old banner-man, Ralph Genvil, "I see how the wind stirreth you; but you deceive yourselves if you think to make our young master, Sir Damian, a scape-goat for your light lady.—Nay, never frown nor fume, Sir Damian; if you know not your safest course, we know it for you.—Followers of De Lacy, throw yourselves on your horses, and two men on one, if it be necessary—we will take this stubborn boy in the midst of us, and the dainty squire Amelot shall be prisoner too, if he trouble us with his peevish opposition. Then, let us make a fair sally upon the siegers. Those who can cut their way through will shift well enough; those who fall, will be provided for."

A shout from the troopers of Lacy's band approved this proposal. Whilst the followers of Berenger expostulated in loud and angry tone, Eveline, summoned by the tumult, in vain endeavoured to appease it; and the anger and entreaties of Damian were equally lost on his followers. To each and either the answer was the same.

"Have you no care of it—Because you love *par amours*, is it reasonable you should throw away your life and ours?" So exclaimed Genvil to De Lacy; and in softer language, but with equal obstinacy, the followers of Raymond Berenger refused on the present occasion to listen, to the commands or prayers of his daughter.

Wilkin Flammock had retreated from the tumult, when he saw the turn which matters had taken. He left the castle by a sally-port, of which he had been intrusted with the key, and proceeded without observation or opposition to the royal camp, where he requested access to the Sovereign. This was easily obtained, and Wilkin speedily found himself in the presence of King Henry. The monarch was in his royal pavilion, attended by two of his sons, Richard and John, who afterwards swayed the sceptre of England with very different auspices.

"How now?—What art thou?" was the royal question.

"An honest man, from the castle of the Garde Doloureuse."

"Thou may'st be honest," replied the Sovereign, "but thou comest from a nest of traitors."

"Such as they are, my lord, it is my purpose to put them at your royal disposal; for they have no longer the wisdom to guide themselves, and lack alike prudence to hold out, and grace to submit. But I would first know of your grace to what terms you will admit the defenders of yonder garrison?"

"To such as kings give to traitors," said Henry, sternly—"sharp knives and tough cords."

"Nay, my gracious lord, you must be kinder than that amounts to, if the castle is to be rendered by my means; else will your cords and knives have only my poor body to work upon, and you will be as far as ever from the inside of the Garde Doloureuse."

The King looked at him fixedly. "Thou knowest," he said, "the law of arms. Here, provost-marshal, stands a traitor, and yonder stands a tree."

"And here is a throat," said the stout-hearted Fleming, unbuttoning the collar of his doublet.

"By mine honour," said Prince Richard, "a sturdy and faithful yeoman! It were better send such fellows their dinners, and then buffet it out with them for the castle, than to starve them as the beggarly Frenchmen famish their hounds."

"Peace, Richard," said his father; "thy wit is over green, and thy blood over hot, to make thee my counsellor here.—And you, knave, speak you some reasonable terms, and we will not be over strict with thee."

"First, then," said the Fleming, "I stipulate full and free pardon for life, limb, body, and goods, to me, Wilkin Flammock, and my daughter Rose."

"A true Fleming," said Prince John; "he takes care of himself in the first instance."

"His request," said the King, "is reasonable. What next?"

"Safety in life, honour, and land, for the demoiselle Eveline Berenger."

"How, sir knave!" said the King, angrily, "is it for such as thou to dictate to our judgment or clemency in the case of a noble Norman Lady? Confine thy mediation to such as thyself; or rather render us this castle without farther delay; and be assured thy doing so will be of more service to the traitors within, than weeks more of resistance, which must and shall be bootless."

The Fleming stood silent, unwilling to surrender without some specific terms, yet half convinced, from the situation in which he had left the garrison of the Garde Doloureuse, that his admitting the King's forces would be, perhaps, the best he could do for Lady Eveline.

"I like thy fidelity, fellow," said the King, whose acute eye perceived the struggle in the Fleming's bosom; "but carry not thy stubbornness too far. Have we not said we will be gracious to yonder offenders, as far as our royal duty will permit?"

"And, royal father," said Prince John, interposing, "I pray you let me have the grace to take first possession, of the Garde Doloureuse, and the wardship or forfeiture of the offending lady."

"I pray you also, my royal father, to grant John's boon," said his brother Richard, in a tone of mockery. "Consider, royal father, it is the first desire he hath shown to approach the barriers of the castle, though we have attacked them forty times at least. Marry, crossbow and mangonel were busy on the former occasions, and it is like they will be silent now."

"Peace, Richard," said the King; "your words, aimed at thy brother's honour, pierce my heart.—John, thou hast thy boon as concerns the castle; for the unhappy young lady, we will take her in our own charge.—Fleming, how many men wilt thou undertake to admit?"

Ere Flammock could answer, a squire approached Prince Richard, and whispered in his ear, yet so as to be heard by all present, "We have discovered that some internal disturbance, or other cause unknown, has withdrawn many of the warders from the castle walls, and that a sudden attack might—"

"Dost thou hear that, John?" exclaimed Richard. "Ladders, man—get ladders, and to the wall. How I should delight to see thee on the highest round—thy knees shaking—thy hands grasping convulsively, like those of one in an ague fit—all air around thee, save a baton or two of wood—the moat below—half-a-dozen pikes at thy throat—"

"Peace, Richard, for shame, if not for charity!" said his father, in a tone of anger, mingled with grief. "And thou, John, get ready for the assault."

"As soon as I have put on my armour, father," answered the Prince; and withdrew slowly, with a visage so blank as to promise no speed in his preparations.

His brother laughed as he retired, and said to his squire, "It were no bad jest, Alberick, to carry the place ere John can change his silk doublet for a steel one."

So saying, he hastily withdrew, and his father exclaimed in paternal distress, "Out, alas! as much too hot as his brother is too cold; but it is the manlier fault.—Gloucester," said he to that celebrated earl, "take sufficient strength, and follow Prince Richard to guard and sustain him. If any one can rule him, it must be a knight of thy established fame. Alas, alas! for what sin have I deserved the affliction of these cruel family feuds!"

"Be comforted, my lord," said the chancellor, who was also in attendance.

"Speak not of comfort to a father, whose sons are at discord with each other, and agree only in their disobedience to him!"

Thus spoke Henry the Second, than whom no wiser, or, generally speaking, more fortunate monarch ever sat upon the throne of England; yet whose life is a striking illustration, how family dissensions can tarnish the most brilliant lot to which Heaven permits humanity to aspire; and how little gratified ambition, extended power, and the highest reputation in war and in peace, can do towards curing the wounds of domestic affliction.

The sudden and fiery attack of Richard, who hastened to the escalade at the head of a score of followers, collected at random, had the complete effect of surprise; and having surmounted the walls with their ladders, before the contending parties within were almost aware of the assault, the assailants burst open the gates, and admitted Gloucester, who had hastily followed with a strong body of men-at-arms. The garrison, in their state of surprise, confusion, and disunion, offered but little resistance, and would have been put to the sword, and the place plundered, had not Henry himself entered it, and by his personal exertions and authority, restrained the excesses of the dissolute soldiery.

The King conducted himself, considering the times and the provocation, with laudable moderation. He contented himself with disarming and dismissing the common soldiers, giving them some trifle to carry them out of the country, lest want should lead them to form themselves into bands of robbers. The officers were

more severely treated, being for the greater part thrown into dungeons, to abide the course of the law. In particular, imprisonment was the lot of Damian de Lacy, against whom, believing the various charges with which he was loaded, Henry was so highly incensed, that he purposed to make him an example to all false knights and disloyal subjects. To the Lady Eveline Berenger he assigned her own apartment as a prison, in which she was honourably attended by Rose and Alice, but guarded with the utmost strictness. It was generally reported that her demesnes would be declared a forfeiture to the crown, and bestowed, at least in part, upon Randal de Lacy, who had done good service during the siege. Her person, it was thought, was destined to the seclusion of some distant French nunnery, where she might at leisure repent her of her follies and her rashness.

Father Aldrovand was delivered up to the discipline of the convent, long experience having very effectually taught Henry the imprudence of infringing on the privileges of the church; although, when the King first beheld him with a rusty corslet clasped over his frock, he with difficulty repressed the desire to cause him to be hanged over the battlements, to preach to the ravens.

With Wilkin Flammock, Henry held much conference, particularly on his subject of manufactures and commerce; on which the sound-headed, though blunt-spoken Fleming, was well qualified to instruct an intelligent monarch. "Thy intentions," he said, "shall not be forgotten, good fellow, though they have been anticipated by the headlong valour of my son Richard, which has cost some poor caitiffs their lives—Richard loves not to sheathe a bloodless weapon. But thou and thy countrymen shall return to thy mills yonder, with a full pardon for past offences, so that you meddle no more with such treasonable matters."

"And our privileges and duties, my liege?" said Flammock. "Your Majesty knows well we are vassals to the lord of this castle, and must follow him in battle."

"It shall no longer be so," said Henry; "I will form a community of Flemings here, and thou, Flammock, shalt be Mayor, that thou may'st not plead feudal obedience for a relapse into treason."

"Treason, my liege!" said Flammock, longing, yet scarce venturing, to interpose a word in behalf of Lady Eveline, for whom, despite the constitutional coolness of his temperament, he really felt much interest—"I would that your Grace but justly knew how many threads went to that woof."

"Peace, sirrah!—meddle with your loom," said Henry; "and if we deign to speak to thee concerning the mechanical arts which thou dost profess, take it for no warrant to intrude farther on our privacy."

The Fleming retired, rebuked, and in silence; and the fate of the unhappy prisoners remained in the King's bosom. He himself took up his lodging in the castle of the Garde Doloureuse, as a convenient station for sending abroad parties to suppress and extinguish all the embers of rebellion; and so active was Randal de Lacy on these occasions, that he appeared daily to rise in the King's grace, and was gratified with considerable grants out of the domains of Berenger and Lacy, which the King seemed already to treat as forfeited property. Most men considered this growing favour of Randal as a perilous omen, both for the life of young De Lacy, and for the fate of the unfortunate Eveline.

CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH

A	vow,	a	vow—I	have	a	vow	in	Heaven.
Shall	I	bring	perjury	upon	my	soul?		
No,		not		for		Venice.		

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

The conclusion of the last chapter contains the tidings with which the minstrel greeted his unhappy master, Hugo de Lacy; not indeed with the same detail of circumstances with which we have been able to invest the narrative, but so as to infer the general and appalling facts, that his betrothed bride, and beloved and trusted kinsman, had leagued together for his dishonour—had raised the banner of rebellion against their lawful sovereign, and, failing in their audacious attempt, had brought the life of one of them, at least, into the most imminent danger, and the fortunes of the House of Lacy, unless some instant remedy could be found, to the very verge of ruin.

Vidal marked the countenance of his master as he spoke, with the same keen observation which the surgeon gives to the progress of his dissecting-knife. There was grief on the Constable's features—deep grief—but without the expression of abasement or prostration which usually accompanies it; anger and shame were there—but they were both of a noble character, seemingly excited by his bride and nephew's transgressing the laws of allegiance, honour, and virtue, rather than by the disgrace and damage which he himself sustained through their crime.

The minstrel was so much astonished at this change of deportment, from the sensitive acuteness of agony which attended the beginning of his narrative, that he stepped back two paces, and gazing on the Constable with wonder, mixed with admiration, exclaimed, "We have heard of martyrs in Palestine, but this exceeds them!"

"Wonder not so much, good friend," said the Constable, patiently; "it is the first blow of the lance or mace which pierces or stuns—those which follow are little felt." [Footnote: Such an expression is said to have been used by Mandrin, the celebrated smuggler, while in the act of being broken upon the wheel. This dreadful punishment consists in the executioner, with a bar of iron, breaking the shoulder-bones, arms, thigh-bones, and legs of the criminal, taking—his alternate sides. The punishment is concluded by a blow across the breast, called the *coup de grace*, because it removes the sufferer from his agony. When Mandrin received the second blow over the left shoulder-bone, he laughed. His confessor inquired the reason of demeanour so unbecoming—his situation. "I only lavish at my own folly, my father," answered Mandrin, "who could suppose that sensibility of pain should continue after the nervous system had been completely deranged by the first blow.]

"Think, my lord," said Vidal, "all is lost—love, dominion, high office, and bright fame—so late a chief among nobles, now a poor palmer!"

"Wouldst thou make sport with my misery?" said Hugo, sternly; "but even that comes of course behind my back, and why should it not be endured when said to my face?—Know, then, minstrel, and put it in song if you list, that Hugo de Lacy, having lost all he carried to Palestine, and all which he left at home, is still lord of his own mind; and adversity can no more shake him, than the breeze which strips the oak of its leaves can tear up the trunk by the roots."

"Now, by the tomb of my father," said the minstrel, rapturously, "this man's nobleness is too much for my resolve!" and stepping hastily to the Constable, he kneeled on one knee, and caught his hand more freely than the state maintained by men of De Lacy's rank usually permitted. "Here," said Vidal, "on this hand—this noble hand—I renounce—" But ere he could utter another word, Hugo de Lacy, who, perhaps, felt the freedom of the action as an intrusion on his fallen condition, pulled back his hand, and bid the minstrel, with as stern frown, arise, and remember that misfortune made not De Lacy a fit personage for a mummery. Renault Vidal rose rebuked. "I had forgot," he said, "the distance between an Armorican violer and a high Norman baron. I thought that the same depth of sorrow, the same burst of joy, levelled, for a moment at least, those artificial barriers by which men are divided. But it is well as it is. Live within the limits of your rank, as heretofore within your donjon tower and your fosses, my lord, undisturbed by the sympathy of any mean man like me. I, too, have my duties to discharge."

"And now to the Garde Doloureuse," said the baron, turning to Philip Guarine—"God knoweth how well it deserveth the name!—there to learn, with our own eyes and ears, the truth of these woful tidings. Dismount, minstrel, and give me thy palfrey—I would, Guarine, that I had one for thee—as for Vidal, his attendance is less necessary. I will face my foes, or my misfortunes, like a man—that be assured of, violer; and look not so sullen, knave—I will not forget old adherents."

"One of them, at least, will not forget you, my lord," replied the minstrel, with his usual dubious tone of look and emphasis.

But just as the Constable was about to prick forwards, two persons appeared on the path, mounted on one horse, who, hidden by some dwarf-wood, had come very near them without being perceived. They were male and female; and the man, who rode foremost, was such a picture of famine, as the eyes of the pilgrims had scarce witnessed in all the wasted land through which they had travelled. His features, naturally sharp and thin, had disappeared almost entirely among the uncombed gray beard and hairs with which they were overshadowed; and it was but the glimpse of a long nose, that seemed as sharp as the edge of a knife, and the twinkling glimpse of his gray eyes, which gave any intimation of his lineaments. His leg, in the wide old boot which enclosed it, looked like the handle of a mop left by chance in a pail—his arms were about the thickness of riding-rods—and such parts of his person as were not concealed by the tatters of a huntsman's cassock, seemed rather the appendages of a mummy than a live man.

The female who sat behind this spectre exhibited also some symptoms of extenuation; but being a brave jolly dame naturally, famine had not been able to render her a spectacle so rueful as the anatomy behind which she rode. Dame Gillian's cheek (for it was the reader's old acquaintance) had indeed lost the rosy hue of good cheer, and the smoothness of complexion which art and easy living had formerly substituted for the more delicate bloom of youth; her eyes were sunken, and had lost much of their bold and roguish lustre; but she was still in some measure herself, and the remnants of former finery, together with the tight-drawn scarlet hose, though sorely faded, showed still a remnant of coquettish pretension.

So soon as she came within sight of the pilgrims, she began to punch Raoul with the end of her riding-rod. "Try thy new trade, man, since thou art unfit for any other—to the good man—to them—crave their charity."

"Beg from beggars?" muttered Raoul; "that were hawking at sparrows, dame."

"It will bring our hand in use though," said Gillian; and commenced, in a whining tone, "God love you, holy men, who have had the grace to go to the Holy Land, and, what is more, have had the grace to come back again; I pray, bestow some of your alms upon my poor old husband, who is a miserable object, as you see, and upon one who has the bad luck to be his wife—Heaven help me!"

"Peace, woman, and hear what I have to say," said the Constable, laying his hand upon the bridle of the horse—"I have present occasion for that horse, and——"

"By the hunting-horn of St. Hubert, but thou gettest him not without blows!" answered the old huntsman "A fine world it is, when palmers turn horse-stealers."

"Peace, fellow" said the Constable, sternly,— "I say I have occasion presently for the service of thy horse. Here be two gold bezants for a day's use of the brute; it is well worth the fee-simple of him, were he never returned."

"But the palfrey is an old acquaintance, master," said Raoul; "and if perchance——"

"Out upon *if* and *perchance* both," said the dame, giving her husband so determined a thrust as well-nigh pushed him out of the saddle. "Off the horse! and thank God and this worthy man for the help he hath sent us in this extremity. What signifies the palfrey, when we have not enough to get food either for the brute or ourselves? not though we would eat grass and corn with him, like King Somebody, whom the good father used to read us to sleep about."

"A truce with your prating, dame," said Raoul, offering his assistance to help her from the croupe; but she preferred that of Guarine, who, though advanced in years, retained the advantage of his stout soldierly figure. "I humbly thank your goodness," said she, as, (having first kissed her,) the squire set her on the ground.

"And, pray, sir, are ye come from the Holy Land?—Heard ye any tidings there of him that was Constable of Chester?"

De Lacy, who was engaged in removing the pillion from behind the saddle, stopped short in his task, and said, "Ha, dame! what would you with him?"

"A great deal, good palmer, an I could light on him; for his lands and offices are all to be given, it's like, to that false thief, his kinsman."

"What!—to Damian, his nephew?" exclaimed the Constable, in a harsh and hasty tone.

"Lord, how you startle me, sir!" said Gillian; then continued, turning to Philip Guarine, "Your friend is a hasty man, belike.;"

"It is the fault of the sun he has lived under so long," said the squire; "but look you answer his questions truly, and he will make it the better for you."

Gillian instantly took the hint. "Was it Damian de Lacy you asked after?—Alas I poor young gentleman! no offices or lands for him— more likely to have a gallows-cast, poor lad—and all for nought, as I am a true dame. Damian!—no, no, it is not Damian, or damson neither—but Randal Lacy, that must rule the roast, and have all the old man's lands, and livings, and lordships."

"What?" said the Constable—"before they know whether the old man. is dead or no?—Methinks that were against law and reason both."

"Ay, but Randal Lacy has brought about less likely matters. Look you, he hath sworn to the King that they have true tidings of the Constable's death—ay, and let him alone to make them soothfast enough, if the Constable were once within his danger."

"Indeed!" said the Constable. "But you are forging tales on a noble gentleman. Come, come, dame, you say this because you like not Randal Lacy."

"Like him not!—And what reason have I to like him, I trow?" answered Gillian. "Is it because he seduced my simplicity to let him into the castle of the Garde Doloureuse—ay, oftener than once or twice either,—when he was disguised as a pedlar, and told him all the secrets of the family, and how the boy Damian, and the girl Eveline, were dying of love with each other, but had not courage to say a word of it, for fear of the Constable, though he were a thousand miles off?—You seem concerned, worthy sir—may I offer your reverend worship a trifling sup from my bottle, which is sovereign for *tremor cordis*, and fits of the spleen?"

"No, no," ejaculated De Lacy—"I was but grieved with the shooting of an old wound. But, dame, I warrant me this Damian and Eveline, as you call them, became better, closer friends, in time?"

"They?—not they indeed, poor simpletons!" answered the dame; "they wanted some wise counsellor to go between and advise them. For, look you, sir, if old Hugo be dead, as is most like, it were more natural that his bride and his nephew should inherit his lands, than this same Randal who is but a distant kinsman, and a foresworn caitiff to boot.—Would you think it, reverend pilgrim, after the mountains of gold he promised me?—when the castle was taken, and he saw I could serve him no more, he called me old beldame, and spoke of the beadle and the cucking-stool.—Yes, reverend sir, old beldame and cucking-stool were his best words, when he knew I had no one to take my part, save old Raoul, who cannot take his own. But if grim old Hugh bring back his weatherbeaten carcass from Palestine, and have but half the devil in him which he had when he was fool enough to go away, Saint Mary, but I will do his kinsman's office to him!"

There was a pause when she had done speaking.

"Thou	say'st,"	at	length	exclaimed	the	Constable,	"that	Damian	de
Lacy	and	Eveline	love	each	other,	yet	are	unconscious	of
falsehood,	or	ingratitude	to	me—I	would	say,	to	their	relative
Palestine!"									in

"Love, sir!—in troth and so it is—they do love each other," said Gillian; "but it is like angels—or like lambs—or like fools, if you will; for they would never so much as have spoken together, but for a prank of that same Randal Lacy's."

"How!" demanded the Constable—"a prank of Randal's?—What motive had he that these two should meet?"

"Nay, their meeting was none of his seeking; but he had formed a plan to carry off the Lady Eveline himself, for he was a wild rover, this same Randal; and so he came disguised as a merchant of falcons, and trained out my old stupid Raoul, and the Lady Eveline, and all of us, as if to have an hour's mirth in hawking at the heron. But he had a band of Welsh kites in readiness to pounce upon us; and but for the sudden making in of Damian to our rescue, it is undescrivable to think what might have come of us; and Damian being hurt in the onslaught, was carried to the Garde Doloureuse in mere necessity; and but to save his life, it is my belief my lady would never have asked him to cross the drawbridge, even if he had offered."

"Woman," said the Constable, "think what thou say'st! If thou hast done evil in these matters heretofore, as I suspect from thine own story, think not to put it right by a train of new falsehoods, merely from spite at missing thy reward."

"Palmer," said old Raoul, with his broken-toned voice, cracked by many a hollo, "I am wont to leave the business of tale-bearing to my wife Gillian, who will tongue-pad it with any shrew in Christendom. But thou speak'st like one having some interest in these matters, and therefore I will tell thee plainly, that although this woman has published her own shame in avowing her correspondence with that same Randal Lacy, yet what she has said is true as the gospel; and, were it my last word, I would say that Damian and the Lady Eveline are innocent of all treason and all dishonesty, as is the babe unborn.—But what avails what the like of us say, who are even driven to the very begging for mere support, after having lived at a good house, and in a good lord's service—blessing be with him!"

"But hark you," continued the Constable, "are there left no ancient servants of the House, that could speak out as well as you?" "Humph!" answered the huntsman—"men are not willing to babble when Randal Lacy is cracking his thong above their heads. Many are slain, or starved to death—some disposed of—some spirited away. But there are the weaver Flammock and his daughter Rose, who know as much of the matter as we do."

"What!—Wilkin Flammock the stout Netherlander?" said the Constable; "he and his blunt but true daughter Rose?—I will venture my life on their faith. Where dwell they?—What has been their lot amidst these changes?" "And in God's name who are you that ask these questions?" said Dame Gillian. "Husband, husband— we have been too free; there is something in that look and that tone which I should remember."

"Yes, look at me more fixedly," said the Constable, throwing "back the hood which had hitherto in some degree obscured his features.

"On your knees—on your knees, Raoul!" exclaimed Gillian, dropping on her own at the same time; "it is the Constable himself, and he has heard me call him old Hugh!"

"It is all that is left of him who was the Constable, at least," replied De Lacy; "and old Hugh willingly forgives your freedom, in consideration of your good news. Where are Flammock and his daughter?"

"Rose is with the Lady Eveline," said Dame Gillian; "her ladyship, belike, chose her for bower-woman in place of me, although Rose was never fit to attire so much as a Dutch doll."

"The faithful girl!" said the Constable. "And where is Flammock?"

"Oh, for him, he has pardon and favour from the King," said Raoul; "and is at his own house, with his rabble of weavers, close beside the Battle-bridge, as they now call the place where your lordship quelled the Welsh."

"Thither will I then," said the Constable; "and will then see what welcome King Henry of Anjou has for an old servant. You two must accompany me."

"My lord," said Gillian, with hesitation, "you know poor folk are little thanked for interference with great men's affairs. I trust your lordship will be able to protect us if we speak the truth; and that you will not look back with displeasure on what I did, acting for the best."

"Peace, dame, with a wanion to ye!" said Raoul. "Will you think of your own old sinful carcass, when you should be saving your sweet young mistress from shame and oppression?—And for thy ill tongue, and worse practices, his lordship knows they are bred in the bone of thee."

"Peace, good fellow!" said the Constable; "we will not look back on thy wife's errors, and your fidelity shall be rewarded.—For you, my faithful followers," he said, turning towards Guarine and Vidal, "when De Lacy shall receive his rights, of which he doubts nothing, his first wish shall be to reward your fidelity."

"Mine, such as it is, has been and shall be its own reward," said Vidal. "I will not accept favours from him in prosperity, who, in adversity, refused me his hand—our account stands yet open."

"Go to, thou art a fool; but thy profession hath a privilege to be humorous," said the Constable, whose weatherbeaten and homely features looked even handsome, when animated by gratitude to Heaven and benevolence towards mankind. "We will meet," he said, "at Battle-bridge, an hour before vespers—I shall have much achieved before that time."

"The space is short," said his esquire.

"I have won a battle in yet shorter," replied the Constable.

"In which," said the minstrel, "many a man has died that thought himself well assured of life and victory."

"Even so shall my dangerous cousin Randal find his schemes of ambition blighted," answered the Constable; and rode forwards, accompanied by Raoul and his wife, who had remounted their palfrey, while the minstrel and squire followed a-foot, and, of course, much more slowly.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST

"Oh,	fear	not,	fear	not,	good	Lord	John,
That		I	would		you		betray,
Or	sue		requital		for	a	debt,
Which		nature			cannot		pay.
Bear	witness,		all	ye		sacred	powers—
Ye	lights		that	'gin		to	shine—
This	night	shall	prove		the	sacred	tie
That	binds		your	faith		and	mine."

ANCIENT SCOTTISH BALLAD.

Left behind by their master, the two dependants of Hugh de Lacy marched on in sullen silence, like men who dislike and distrust each other, though bound to one common service, and partners, therefore, in the same hopes and fears. The dislike, indeed, was chiefly upon Guarine's side; for nothing could be more indifferent to Renault Vidal than was his companion, farther than as he was conscious that Philip loved him not, and was not unlikely, so far as lay in his power, to thwart some plans which he had nearly at heart. He took little notice of his companion, but hummed over to himself, as for the exercise of his memory, romances and songs, many of which were composed in languages which Guarine, who had only an ear for his native Norman, did not understand.

They had proceeded together in this sullen manner for nearly two hours, when they were met by a groom on horseback, leading a saddled palfrey. "Pilgrims," said the man, after looking at them with some attention, "which of you is called Philip Guarine?"

"I, for fault of a better," said the esquire, "reply to that name."

"Thy lord, in that case, commends him to you," said the groom; "and sends you this token, by which you shall know that I am his true messenger."

He showed the esquire a rosary, which Philip instantly recognized as that used by the Constable.

"I acknowledge the token," he said; "speak my master's pleasure."

"He bids me say," replied the rider, "that his visit thrives as well as is possible, and that this very evening, by time that the sun sets, he will be possessed of his own. He desires, therefore, you will mount this palfrey, and come with me to the Garde Doloureuse, as your presence would be wanted there."

"It is well, and I obey him," said the esquire, much pleased with the Import of the message, and not dissatisfied at being separated from his travelling companion.

"And what charge for me?" said the minstrel, addressing the messenger.

"If you, as I guess, are the minstrel, Renault Vidal, you are to abide your master at the Battle-bridge, according to the charge formerly given."

"I will meet him, as in duty bound," was Vidal's answer; and scarce was it uttered, ere the two horsemen, turning their backs on him, rode briskly forward, and were speedily out of sight.

It was now four hours past noon, and the sun was declining, yet there was more than three hours' space to the time of rendezvous, and the distance from the place did not now exceed four miles. Vidal, therefore, either for the sake of rest or reflection, withdrew from the path into a thicket on the left hand, from which gushed the waters of a streamlet, fed by a small fountain that bubbled up amongst the trees. Here the traveller sat himself down, and with an air which seemed unconscious of what he was doing, bent his eye on the little sparkling font for more than half an hour, without change of posture; so that he might, in Pagan times, have represented the statue of a water-god bending over his urn, and attentive only to the supplies which it was pouring forth. At length, however, he seemed to recall himself from this state of deep abstraction, drew himself up, and took some coarse food from his pilgrim's scrip, as if suddenly reminded that life is not supported without means. But he had probably something at his heart which affected his throat or appetite. After a vain attempt to swallow a morsel, he threw it from him in disgust, and applied him to a small flask, in which he had some wine or other liquor. But seemingly this also turned distasteful, for he threw from him both scrip and bottle, and, bending down to the spring, drank deeply of the pure element, bathed in it his hands and face, and arising from the fountain apparently refreshed, moved slowly on his way, singing as he went, but in a low and saddened tone, wild fragments of ancient poetry, in a tongue equally ancient.

Journeying on in this melancholy manner, he at length came in sight of the Battle-bridge; near to which arose, in proud and gloomy strength, the celebrated castle of the Garde Doloureuse. "Here, then," he said—"here, then, I am to await the proud De Lacy. Be it so, in God's name!—he shall know me better ere we part."

So saying, he strode, with long and resolved steps, across the bridge, and ascending a mound which arose on the opposite side at some distance, he gazed for a time upon the scene beneath—the beautiful river, rich with the reflected tints of the western sky—the trees, which were already brightened to the eye, and saddened to the fancy, with the hue of autumn—and the darksome walls and towers of the feudal castle, from which, at times, flashed a glimpse of splendour, as some sentinel's arms caught and gave back a transient ray of the setting sun.

The countenance of the minstrel, which had hitherto been dark and troubled, seemed softened by the quiet of the scene. He threw loose his pilgrim's dress, yet suffering part of its dark folds to hang around him mantle-wise; under which appeared his minstrel's tabard. He took from his side a *rote*, and striking, from time to time, a "Welsh descant, sung at others a lay, of which we can offer only a few fragments, literally translated from the ancient language in which they were chanted, premising that they are in that excursive symbolical style of poetry, which Taliessin, Llewarch Hen, and other bards, had derived perhaps from the time of the Druids.

"I asked of my harp, 'Who hath injured thy chords?'
 And she replied, 'The crooked finger, which I mocked in my tune.'
 A blade of silver may be bended—a blade of steel abideth—
 Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."
 "The sweet taste of mead passeth from the lips,
 But they are long to the corroded mead by the juice of the wormwood;
 The lamb is brought to the shambles, but the wolf rangeth the mountain;
 Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."
 "I asked the red-hot iron, when it glimmered on the anvil,
 'Wherefore glowest thou longer than the firebrand?'—
 'I was born in the dark mine, and the brand in the pleasant greenwood.'
 Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."
 "I asked the green oak of the assembly, wherefore its boughs
 were dry and seared like the horns of the stag?
 And it showed me that a small worm had gnawed its roots.
 The boy who remembered the scourge, undid the wicket of the castle
 at midnight.
 Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."
 "Lightning destroyeth temples, though their spires pierce the clouds;
 Storms destroy armadas, though their sails intercept the gale.
 He that is in his glory falleth, and that by a contemptible enemy.
 Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."

More of the same wild images were thrown out, each bearing some analogy, however fanciful and remote, to the theme, which occurred like a chorus at the close of each stanza; so that the poetry resembled a piece of music, which, after repeated excursions through fanciful variations, returns ever and anon to the simple melody which is the subject of ornament.

As the minstrel sung, his eyes were fixed on the bridge and its vicinity; but when, near the close of his chant, he raised up his eyes towards the distant towers of the Garde Doloureuse, he saw that the gates were opened, and that there was a mustering of guards and attendants without the barriers, as if some expedition were about to set forth, or some person of importance to appear on the scene. At the same time, glancing his eyes around, he discovered that the landscape, so solitary when he first took his seat on the gray stone from which he overlooked it, was now becoming filled with figures.

During his reverie, several persons, solitary and in groups, men, women, and children, had begun to assemble themselves on both sides of the river, and were loitering there, as if expecting some spectacle. There was also much bustling at the Fleming's mills, which, though at some distance, were also completely under his eye. A procession seemed to be arranging itself there, which soon began to move forward, with pipe and tabor, and various other instruments of music, and soon approached, in regular order, the place where Vidal was seated.

It appeared the business in hand was of a pacific character; for the gray-bearded old men of the little settlement, in their decent russet gowns, came first after the rustic band of music, walking in ranks of three and three, supported by their staves, and regulating the motion of the whole procession by their sober and staid pace. After these fathers of the settlement came Wilkin Flammock, mounted on his mighty war-horse, and in complete armor, save his head, like a vassal prepared to do military service for his lord. After him followed, and in battle rank, the flower of the little colony, consisting of thirty men, well armed and appointed, whose steady march, as well as their clean and glittering armour, showed steadiness and discipline, although they lacked alike the fiery glance of the French soldiery, or the look of dogged defiance which characterized the English, or the wild ecstatic impetuosity of eye which then distinguished the Welsh. The mothers and the maidens of the colony came next; then followed the children, with faces as chubby, and features as serious, and steps as grave as their parents; and last, as a rear-guard, came the youths from fourteen to twenty, armed with light lances, bows, and similar weapons becoming their age.

This procession wheeled around the base of the mound or embankment on which the minstrel was seated; crossed the bridge with the same slow and regular pace, and formed themselves into a double line, facing inwards, as if to receive some person of consequence, or witness some ceremonial. Flammock remained at the extremity of the avenue thus formed by his countrymen, and quietly, yet earnestly, engaged in making arrangements and preparations.

In the meanwhile, stragglers of different countries began to draw together, apparently brought there by mere curiosity, and formed a motley assemblage at the farther end of the bridge, which was that nearest to the castle. Two English peasants passed very near the stone on which Vidal sat—"Wilt thou sing us a song, minstrel," said one of them, "and here is a tester for thee?" throwing into his hat a small silver coin.

"I am under a vow," answered the minstrel, "and may not practise the gay science at present."

"Or you are too proud to play to English churls," said the elder peasant, "for thy tongue smacks of the Norman."

"Keep the coin, nevertheless," said the younger man. "Let the palmer have what the minstrel refuses to earn."

"I pray you reserve your bounty, kind friend," said Vidal, "I need it not;—and tell me of your kindness, instead, what matters are going forward here."

"Why, know you not that we have got our Constable de Lacy again, and that he is to grant solemn investiture to the Flemish weavers of all these fine things Harry of Anjou has given?—Had Edward the Confessor been alive, to give the Netherland knaves their guerdon, it would have been a cast of the gallows-tree. But come, neighbour, we shall lose the show."

So saying, they pressed down the hill. Vidal fixed his eyes on the gates of the distant castle; and the distant waving of banners, and mustering of men on horseback, though imperfectly seen at such a distance, apprized him that one of note was about to set forth at the head of a considerable train of military attendants. Distant flourishes of trumpets, which came faintly yet distinctly on his ear, seemed to attest the same. Presently he perceived, by the dust which began to arise in columns betwixt the castle and the bridge, as well as by the nearer sound of the clarions, that the troop was advancing towards him in procession.

Vidal, on his own part, seemed as if irresolute whether to retain his present position, where he commanded a full but remote view of the whole scene, or to obtain a nearer but more partial one, by involving himself in the crowd which now closed around on either hand of the bridge, unless where the avenue was kept open by the armed and arrayed Flemings.

A monk next hurried past Vidal, and on his enquiring as formerly the cause of the assembly, answered, in a muttering tone, from beneath his hood, that it was the Constable de Lacy, who, as the first act of his authority, was then and there to deliver to the Flemings a royal charter of their immunities. "He is in haste to exercise his authority, methinks," said the minstrel.

"He that has just gotten a sword is impatient to draw it," replied the monk, who added more which the minstrel understood imperfectly; for Father Aldrovand had not recovered the injury which he had received during the siege.

Vidal, however, understood him to say, that he was to meet the Constable there, to beg his favourable intercession.

"I also will meet him," said Renault Vidal, rising suddenly from the stone which he occupied.

"Follow me, then," mumbled the priest; "the Flemings know me, and will let me forward."

But Father Aldrovand being in disgrace, his influence was not so potent as he had flattered himself; and both he and the minstrel were jostled to and fro in the crowd, and separated from each other.

Vidal, however, was recognized by the English peasants who had before spoke to him. "Canst thou do any jugglers' feats, minstrel?" said one. "Thou may'st earn a fair largess, for our Norman masters love *jonglerie*."

"I know but one," said Vidal, "and I will show it, if you will yield me some room."

They crowded a little off from him, and gave him time to throw aside his onnet, bare his legs and knees, by stripping off the leathern buskins which swathed them, and retaining only his sandals. He then tied a parti-coloured handkerchief around his swarthy and sunburnt hair, and casting off his upper doublet, showed his brawny and nervous arms naked to the shoulder.

But while he amused those immediately about him with these preparations, a commotion and rush among the crowd, together with the close sound of trumpets, answered by all the Flemish instruments of music, as well as the shouts in Norman and English, of "Long live the gallant Constable!—Our Lady for the bold De Lacy!" announced that the Constable was close at hand.

Vidal made incredible exertions to approach the leader of the procession, whose morion, distinguished by its lofty plumes, and right hand holding his truncheon, or leading-staff, was all he could see, on account of the crowd of officers and armed men around him. At length his exertions prevailed, and he came within three yards of the Constable, who was then in a small circle which had been with difficulty kept clear for the purpose of the ceremonial of the day. His back was towards the minstrel, and he was in the act of bending from his horse to deliver the royal charter to Wilkin Flammock, who had knelt on one knee to receive it the more reverentially. His discharge of this duty occasioned the Constable to stoop so low that his plume seemed in the act of mixing with the flowing mane of his noble charger.

At this moment, Vidal threw himself, with singular agility, over the heads of the Flemings who guarded the circle; and, ere an eye could twinkle, his right knee was on the croupe of the Constable's horse—the grasp of his left hand on the collar of De Lacy's buff-coat; then, clinging to its prey like a tiger after its leap, he drew, in the same instant of time, a short, sharp dagger—and buried it in the back of the neck, just where the spine, which was severed by the stroke, serves to convey to the trunk of the human body the mysterious influences of the brain. The blow was struck with the utmost accuracy of aim and strength of arm. The unhappy horseman dropped from his saddle, without groan or struggle, like a bull in the amphitheatre, under the steel of the tauridor; and in the same saddle sat his murderer, brandishing the bloody poniard, and urging the horse to speed.

There was indeed a possibility of his having achieved his escape, so much were those around paralyzed for the moment by the suddenness and audacity of the enterprise; but Flammock's presence of mind did not forsake him—he seized the horse by the bridle, and, aided by those who wanted but an example, made the rider prisoner, bound his arms, and called aloud that he must be carried before King Henry. This proposal, uttered in Flammock's strong and decided tone of voice, silenced a thousand wild cries of murder and treason, which had arisen while the different and hostile natives, of which the crowd was composed, threw upon each other reciprocally the charge of treachery.

All the streams, however, now assembled in one channel, and poured with unanimous assent towards the Garde Doloureuse, excepting a few of the murdered nobleman's train, who remained to transport their master's body, in decent solemnity of mourning, from the spot which he had sought with so much pomp and triumph.

When Flammock reached the Garde Doloureuse, he was readily admitted with his prisoner, and with such witnesses as he had selected to prove the execution of the crime. To his request of an audience, he was answered, that the King had commanded that none should be admitted to him for some time; yet so singular were the tidings of the Constable's slaughter, that the captain of the guard ventured to interrupt Henry's privacy, in order to communicate that event; and returned with orders that Flammock and his prisoner should be instantly admitted to the royal apartment. Here they found Henry, attended by several persons, who stood respectfully behind the royal seat, in a darkened part of the room.

When Flammock entered, his large bulk and massive limbs were strangely contrasted with cheeks pale with horror at what he had just witnessed, and with awe at finding himself in the royal presence-chamber. Beside him stood his prisoner, undaunted by the situation in which he was placed. The blood of his victim, which had spirited from the wound, was visible on his bare limbs and his scanty garments; but particularly upon his brow and the handkerchief with which it was bound.

Henry gazed on him with a stern look, which the other not only endured without dismay, but seemed to return with a frown of defiance.

"Does no one know this caitiff?" said Henry, looking around him.

There was no immediate answer, until Philip Guarine, stepping from the group which stood behind the royal chair, said, though with hesitation, "So please you, my liege, but for the strange guise in which he is now arrayed, I should say there was a household minstrel of my master, by name Renault Vidal."

"Thou art deceived, Norman," replied the minstrel; "my menial place and base lineage were but assumed!—I am Cadwallon the Briton—Cadwallon of the Nine Lays—Cadwallon, the chief bard of Gwenwyn of Powys-land—and his avenger!"

As he uttered the last word, his looks encountered those of a palmer, who had gradually advanced from the recess in which the attendants were stationed, and now confronted him.

The Welshman's eyes looked eagerly ghastly, as if flying from their sockets, while he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, mingled with horror, "Do the dead come before monarchs?—Or, if thou art alive, *whom* have I slain?—I dreamed not, surely, of that bound, and of that home-blow?—yet my victim, stands before me! Have I not slain the Constable of Chester?"

"Thou hast indeed slain the Constable," answered the King; "but know, Welshman, it was Randal de Lacy, on whom that charge was this morning conferred, by our belief of our loyal and faithful Hugh de Lacy's having been lost upon his return from the Holy Land, as the vessel in which he had taken passage was reported to have suffered shipwreck. Thou hast cut short Randal's brief elevation but by a few hours; for to-morrow's sun would have again seen him without land or lordship."

The prisoner dropped his head on his bosom in evident despair. "I thought," he murmured, "that he had changed his slough, and come forth so glorious, all too soon. May the eyes drop out that were cheated with those baubles, a plumed cap and a lacquered baton!"

"I will take care, Welshman, thine eyes cheat thee not again," said the King, sternly; "before the night is an hour older, they shall be closed on all that is earthly."

"May I request of your nobleness," said the Constable, "that you will permit me to ask the unhappy man a few questions?"

"When I have demanded of him myself," said the King, "why he has dipt his hands in the blood of a noble Norman."

"Because he at whom I aimed my blow," said the Briton, his eye glancing fiercely from the King to De Lacy, and back, "had spilled the blood of the descendant of a thousand kings; to which his own gore, or thine, proud Count of Anjou, is but as the puddle of the highway to the silver fountain."

Henry's eye menaced the audacious speaker; but the King reined in his wrath when he beheld the imploring look of his servant.—"What wouldst thou ask of him?" he said; "be brief, for his time is short."

"So please you, my liege, I would but demand wherefore he has for years forborne to take the life he aimed at, when it was in his power—nay, when it must have been lost but for his seemingly faithful service?"

"Norman," said Cadwallon, "I will answer thee. When I first took upon me thy service, it was well my purpose to have slain thee that night. There stands the man," pointing to Philip Guarine, "to whose vigilance thou owedst thy safety."

"Indeed," said De Lacy, "I do remember some indications of such a purpose; but why didst thou forego it, when following opportunities put it in thy power?"

"When the slayer of my sovereign became God's soldier," answered Cadwallon, "and served his cause in Palestine, he was safe from my earthly vengeance."

"A wonderful forbearance on the part of a Welsh assassin!" said the King, scornfully.

"Ay," answered Cadwallon; "and which certain Christian princes have scarce attained to, who have never neglected the chance of pillage or conquest afforded by the absence of a rival in the Holy Crusade."

"Now, by the Holy Rood"—said Henry, on the point of bursting out, for the insult affected him peculiarly; but, suddenly stopping, he said, with an air of contempt, "To the gallows with the knave!"

"But one other question," said De Lacy, "Renault, or by whatever name thou art called. Ever since my return thou hast rendered me service inconsistent with thy stern resolution upon my life—thou didst aid me in my shipwreck—and didst guide me safely through Wales, where my name would have ensured my death; and all this after the crusade was accomplished?"

"I could explain thy doubt," said the bard, "but that it might be thought I was pleading for my life."

"Hesitate riot for that," said the King; "for were our Holy Father to Intercede for thee, his prayer were in vain."

"Well then," said the bard, "know the truth—I was too proud to permit either wave or Welshman to share in my revenge. Know also, what is perhaps Cadwallon's weakness—use and habit had divided my feelings towards De Lacy, between aversion and admiration. I still contemplated my revenge, but as something which I might never complete, and which seemed rather an image in the clouds, than an object to which I must one day draw near. And when I beheld thee," he said, turning to De Lacy, "this very day so determined, so sternly resolved, to bear thy impending fate like a man—that you seemed to me to resemble the last tower of a ruined palace, still holding its head to heaven, when its walls of splendour, and its bowers of delight, lay in desolation around—may I perish, I said to myself in secret, ere I perfect its ruin! Yes, De Lacy, then, even then—but some hours since—hadst thou accepted my proffered hand, I had served thee as never follower served master. You rejected it with scorn—and yet notwithstanding that insult, it required that I should have seen you, as I thought, trampling over the field in which you slew my master, in the full pride of Norman insolence, to animate my resolution to strike the blow, which, meant for you, has slain at least one of your usurping race.—I will answer no more questions—lead on to axe or gallows—it is indifferent to Cadwallon—my soul will soon be with my free and noble ancestry, and with my beloved and royal patron."

"My liege and prince," said De Lacy, bending his knee to Henry, "can you hear this, and refuse your ancient servant one request?— Spare this man!—Extinguish not such a light, because it is devious and wild."

"Rise, rise, De Lacy; and shame thee of thy petition," said the King. "Thy kinsman's blood—the blood of a noble Norman, is on the Welshman's hands and brow. As I am crowned King, he shall die ere it is wiped off.—Here! have him to present execution!"

Cadwallon was instantly withdrawn under a guard. The Constable seemed, by action rather than words, to continue his intercession.

"Thou art mad, De Lacy—thou art mad, mine old and true friend, to urge me thus," said the King, compelling De Lacy to rise. "See'st thou not that my care in this matter is for thee?—This Randal, by largesses and promises, hath made many friends, who will not, perhaps, easily again be brought to your allegiance, returning as thou dost, diminished in power and wealth. Had he lived, we might have had hard work to deprive him entirely of the power which he had acquired. We thank the Welsh assassin who hath rid us of him; but his adherents would cry foul play were the murderer spared. When blood is paid for blood, all will be forgotten, and their loyalty will once more flow in its proper channel to thee, their lawful lord."

Hugo de Lacy arose from his knees, and endeavoured respectfully to combat the politic reasons of his wily sovereign, which he plainly saw were resorted to less for his sake than with the prudent purpose of effecting the change of feudal authority, with the least possible trouble to the country or Sovereign.

Henry listened to De Lacy's arguments patiently, and combated them with temper, until the death-drum began—to beat, and the castle bell to toll. He then led De Lacy to the window; on which, for it was now dark, a strong ruddy light began to gleam from without. A body of men-at-arms, each holding in his hand a blazing torch, were returning along the terrace from the execution of the wild but high-soul'd Briton, with cries of "Long live King Henry! and so perish all enemies of the gentle Norman men!"

CONCLUSION

A sun hath set-a star hath risen,
O, Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.

COLERIDGE.

Popular fame had erred in assigning to Eveline Berenger, after the capture of her castle, any confinement more severe than that of her aunt the Lady Abbess of the Cisterians' convent afforded. Yet that was severe enough; for maiden aunts, whether abbesses or no, are not tolerant of the species of errors of which Eveline was accused; and the innocent damosel was brought in many ways to eat her bread in shame of countenance and bitterness of heart. Every day of her confinement was rendered less and less endurable by taunts, in the various forms of sympathy, consolation, and exhortation; but which, stript of their assumed forms, were undisguised anger and insult. The company of Rose was all which Eveline had to sustain her under these inflictions, and that was at length withdrawn on the very morning when so many important events took place at the Garde Doloureuse.

The unfortunate young lady inquired in vain of a grim-faced nun, who appeared in Rose's place to assist her to dress, why her companion and friend was debarred attendance. The nun observed on that score an obstinate silence, but threw out many hints on the importance attached to the vain ornaments of a frail child of clay, and on the hardship that even a spouse of Heaven was compelled to divert her thoughts from her higher duties, and condescend to fasten clasps and adjust veils.

The Lady Abbess, however, told her niece after matins, that her attendant had not been withdrawn from her for a space only, but was likely to be shut up in a house of the severest profession, for having afforded her mistress assistance in receiving Damian de Lacy into her sleeping apartment at the castle of Baldringham.

A soldier of De Lacy's band, who had hitherto kept what he had observed a secret, being off his post that night, had now in Damian's disgrace found he might benefit himself by telling the story. This new blow, so unexpected, so afflictive—this new charge, which it was so difficult to explain, and so impossible utterly to deny, seemed to Eveline to seal Damian's fate and her own; while the thought that she had involved in ruin her single-hearted and high-soul'd attendant, was all that had been wanting to produce a state which approached to the apathy of despair. "Think of me what you will," she said to her aunt, "I will no longer defend myself—say what you will, I will no longer reply— carry me where you will, I will no longer resist—God will, in his good time, clear my fame—may he forgive my persecutors!"

After this, and during several hours of that unhappy day, the Lady Eveline, pale, cold, silent, glided from chapel to refectory, from refectory to chapel again, at the slightest beck of the Abbess or her official sisters, and seemed to regard the various privations, penances, admonitions, and reprehences, of which she, in the course of that day, was subjected to an extraordinary share, no more than a marble statue minds the inclemency of the external air, or the rain-drops which fall upon it, though they must in time waste and consume it.

The Abbess, who loved her niece, although her affection showed itself often in a vexatious manner, became at length alarmed— countermanded her orders for removing Eveline to an inferior cell— attended herself to see her laid in bed, (in which, as in every thing else, the young lady seemed entirely passive,) and, with

something like reviving tenderness, kissed and blessed her on leaving the apartment. Slight as the mark of kindness was, it was unexpected, and, like the rod of Moses, opened the hidden fountains of waters. Eveline wept, a resource which had been that day denied to her—she prayed—and, finally, sobbed herself to sleep, like an infant, with a mind somewhat tranquillized by having given way to this tide of natural emotion.

She awoke more than once in the night to recall mingled and gloomy dreams of cells and of castles, of funerals and of bridals, of coronets and of racks and gibbets; but towards morning she fell into sleep more sound than she had hitherto enjoyed, and her visions partook of its soothing character. The Lady of the Garde Doloureuse seemed to smile on her amid her dreams, and to promise her votress protection. The shade of her father was there also; and with the boldness of a dreamer, she saw the paternal resemblance with awe, but without fear: his lips moved, and she heard words—their import she did not fully comprehend, save that they spoke of hope, consolation, and approaching happiness. There also glided in, with bright blue eyes fixed upon hers, dressed in a tunic of saffron-coloured silk, with a mantle of cerulean blue of antique fashion, the form of a female, resplendent in that delicate species of beauty which attends the fairest complexion. It was, she thought, the Britoness Vanda; but her countenance was no longer resentful—her long yellow hair flew not loose on her shoulders, but was mysteriously braided with oak and mistletoe; above all, her right hand was gracefully disposed of under her mantle; and it was an unmutated, unspotted, and beautifully formed hand which crossed the brow of Eveline. Yet, under these assurances of favour, a thrill of fear passed over her as the vision seemed to repeat, or chant,

"Widow'd	wife	and	wedded	maid,
Betrothed,	betrayed,	and	betray'd,	
All	is	done	that	has
Vanda's	wrong	has	been	wroken—

Take her pardon by this token."

She bent down, as if to kiss Eveline, who started at that instant, and then awoke. Her hand was indeed gently pressed, by one as pure and white as her own. The blue eyes and fair hair of a lovely female face, with half-veiled bosom and dishevelled locks, flitted through her vision, and indeed its lips approached to those of the lovely sleeper at the moment of her awakening; but it was Rose in whose arms her mistress found herself pressed, and who moistened her face with tears, as in a passion of affection she covered it with kisses.

"What means this, Rose?" said Eveline; "thank God, you are restored to me!—But what mean these bursts of weeping?"

"Let me weep—let me weep," said Rose; "it is long since I have wept for joy, and long, I trust, it will be ere I again weep for sorrow. News are come on the spur from the Garde Doloureuse—Amelot has brought them—he is at liberty—so is his master, and in high favour with Henry. Hear yet more, but let me not tell it too hastily—You grow pale."

"No, no," said Eveline; "go on—go on—I think I understand you—I think I do."

"The villain Randal de Lacy, the master-mover of all our sorrows, will plague you no more; he was slain by an honest Welshman, and grieved am I that they have hanged the poor man for his good service. Above all, the stout old Constable is himself returned from Palestine, as worthy, and somewhat wiser, than he was; for it is thought he will renounce his contract with your ladyship."

"Silly girl," said Eveline, crimsoning as high as she had been before pale, "jest not amidst such a tale.—But can this be reality?—Is Randal indeed slain?—and the Constable returned?"

These were hasty and hurried questions, answered as hastily and confusedly, and broken with ejaculations of surprise and thanks to Heaven, and to Our Lady, until the ecstasy of delight sobered down into a sort of tranquil wonder.

Meanwhile Damian Lacy also had his explanations to receive, and the mode in which they were conveyed had something remarkable. Damian had for some time been the inhabitant of what our age would have termed a dungeon, but which, in the ancient days, they called a prison. We are perhaps censurable in making the dwelling and the food of acknowledged and convicted guilt more comfortable and palatable than what the parties could have gained by any exertions when at large, and supporting themselves by honest labour; but this is a venial error compared to that of our ancestors, who, considering a charge and a conviction as synonymous, treated the accused before sentence in a manner which would have been of itself a severe punishment after he was found guilty. Damian, therefore, notwithstanding his high birth and distinguished rank, was confined after the manner of the most atrocious criminal, was heavily fettered, fed on the coarsest food, and experienced only this alleviation, that he was permitted to indulge his misery in a solitary and separate cell, the wretched furniture of which was a mean bedstead, and a broken table and chair. A coffin—and his own arms and initials were painted upon it—stood in one corner, to remind him of his approaching fate; and a crucifix was placed in another, to intimate to him that there was a world beyond that which must soon close upon him. No noise could penetrate into the iron silence of his prison—no rumour, either touching his own fate or that of his friends. Charged with being taken in open arms against the King, he was subject to military law, and to be put to death even without the formality of a hearing; and he foresaw no milder conclusion to his imprisonment.

This melancholy dwelling had been the abode of Damian for nearly a month, when, strange as it may seem, his health, which had suffered much from his wounds, began gradually to improve, either benefited by the abstemious diet to which he was reduced, or that certainty, however melancholy, is an evil better endured by many constitutions than the feverish contrast betwixt passion and duty. But the term of his imprisonment seemed drawing speedily to a close; his jailer, a sullen Saxon of the lowest order, in more words than he had yet used to him, warned him to look to a speedy change of dwelling; and the tone in which he spoke convinced the prisoner there was no time to be lost. He demanded a confessor, and the jailer, though he withdrew without reply, seemed to intimate by his manner that the boon would be granted.

Next morning, at an unusually early hour, the chains and bolts of the cell were heard to clash and groan, and Damian was startled from a broken sleep, which he had not enjoyed for above two hours. His eyes were bent on the slowly opening door, as if he had expected the headsman and his assistants; but the jailer ushered in a stout man in a pilgrim's habit. "Is it a priest whom you bring me, warden?" said the unhappy prisoner.

"He can best answer the question himself," said the surly official, and presently withdrew.

The pilgrim remained standing on the floor, with his back to the small window, or rather loophole, by which the cell was imperfectly lighted, and gazed intently upon. Damian, who was seated on the side of his bed; his pale cheek and dishevelled hair bearing a melancholy correspondence to his heavy irons. He returned the pilgrim's gaze, but the imperfect light only showed him that his visiter was a stout old man, who wore the scallop-shell on his bonnet, as a token that he had passed the sea, and carried a palm branch in his hand, to show he had visited the Holy Land.

"Benedictine, reverend father," said the unhappy young man; "are you a priest come to unburden my conscience?"

"I am not a priest," replied the Palmer, "but one who brings you news of discomfort."

"You bring them to one to whom comfort has been long a stranger, and to a place which perchance never knew it," replied Damian.

"I may be the bolder in my communication," said the Palmer; "those in sorrow will better hear ill news than those whom they surprise in the possession of content and happiness."

"Yet even the situation of the wretched," said Damian, "can be rendered more wretched by suspense. I pray you, reverend sir, to speak the worst at once—if you come to announce the doom of this poor frame, may God be gracious to the spirit which must be violently dismissed from it!"

"I have no such charge," said the Palmer. "I come from the Holy Land, and have the more grief in finding you thus, because my message to you was one addressed to a free man, and a wealthy one."

"For my freedom," said Damian, "let these fetters speak, and this apartment for my wealth.—But speak out thy news—should my uncle—for I fear thy tale regards him—want either my arm or my fortune, this dungeon and my degradation have farther pangs than I had yet supposed, as they render me unable to aid him."

"Your uncle, young man," said the Palmer, "is prisoner, I should rather say slave, to the great Soldan, taken in a battle in which he did his duty, though unable to avert the defeat of the Christians, with which it was concluded. He was made prisoner while covering the retreat, but not until he had slain with his own hand, for

his misfortune as it has proved, Hassan Ali, a favourite of the Soldan. The cruel pagan has caused the worthy knight to be loaded with irons heavier than those you wear, and the dungeon to which he is confined would make this seem a palace. The infidel's first resolution was to put the valiant Constable to the most dreadful death which his tormentors could devise. But fame told him that Hugo de Lacy was a man of great power and wealth; and he has demanded a ransom of ten thousand bezants of gold. Your uncle replied that the payment would totally impoverish him, and oblige him to dispose of his whole estates; even then he pleaded, time must be allowed him to convert them into money. The Soldan replied, that it imported little to him whether a hound like the Constable were fat or lean, and that he therefore insisted upon the full amount of the ransom. But he so far relaxed as to make it payable in three portions, on condition that, along with the first portion of the price, the nearest of kin and heir of De Lacy must be placed in his hands as a hostage for what remained due. On these conditions he consented your uncle should be put at liberty so soon as you arrive in Palestine with the gold."

"Now may I indeed call myself unhappy," said Damian, "that I cannot show my love and duty to my noble uncle, who hath ever been a father to me in my orphan state."

"It will be a heavy disappointment, doubtless, to the Constable," said the Palmer, "because he was eager to return to this happy country, to fulfil a contract of marriage which he had formed with a lady of great beauty and fortune."

Damian shrunk together in such sort that his fetters clashed, but he made no answer.

"Were he not your uncle," continued the Pilgrim, "and well known as a wise man, I should think he is not quite prudent in this matter. Whatever he was before he left England, two summers spent in the wars of Palestine, and another amid the tortures and restraints of a heathen prison, have made him a sorry bridegroom."

"Peace, pilgrim," said De Lacy, with a commanding tone. "It is not thy part to censure such a noble knight as my uncle, nor is it meet that I should listen to your strictures."

"I crave your pardon, young man," said the Palmer. "I spoke not without some view to your interest, which, methinks, does not so well consort with thine uncle having an heir of his body."

"Peace, base man!" said Damian. "By Heaven, I think worse of my cell than I did before, since its doors opened to such a counsellor, and of my chains, since they restrain me from chastising him.—Depart, I pray thee."

"Not till I have your answer for your uncle," answered the Palmer. "My age scorns the anger of thy youth, as the rock despises the foam of the rivulet dashed against it."

"Then, say to my uncle," answered Damian, "I am a prisoner, or I would have come to him—I am a confiscated beggar, or I would have sent him my all."

"Such virtuous purposes are easily and boldly announced," said the Palmer, "when he who speaks them knows that he cannot be called upon, to make good the boast of his tongue. But could I tell thee of thy restoration to freedom and wealth, I trow thou wouldst consider twice ere thy act confirmed the sacrifice thou hast in thy present state promised so glibly."

"Leave me, I prithee, old man," said Damian; "thy thought cannot comprehend the tenor of mine—go, and add not to my distress insults which I have not the means to avenge."

"But what if I had it in my power to place thee in the situation of a free and wealthy man, would it please thee then to be reminded of thy present boast? for if not, thou may'st rely on my discretion never to mention the difference of sentiment between Damian bound and Damian at liberty."

"How meanest thou?—or hast thou any meaning, save to torment me?" said the youth.

"Not so," replied the old Palmer, plucking from his bosom, a parchment scroll to which a heavy seal was attached.—"Know that thy cousin Randal hath been strangely slain, and his treacheries towards the Constable and thee as strangely discovered. The King, in requital of thy sufferings, hath sent thee this full pardon, and endowed thee with a third part of those ample estates, which, by his death, revert to the crown."

"And hath the King also restored my freedom and my right of blood?" exclaimed Damian.

"From this moment, forthwith," said the Palmer—"look upon the parchment—behold the royal hand and seal."

"I must have better proof.—Here," he exclaimed, loudly clashing his irons at the same time, "Here, thou Dogget-warder, son of a Saxon wolfhound!"

The Palmer, striking on the door, seconded the previous exertions for summoning the jailer, who entered accordingly.

"Warder," said Damian de Lacy, in a stern tone, "am I yet thy prisoner, or no?"

The sullen jailer consulted the Palmer by a look, and then answered to Damian that he was a free man.

"Then, death of thy heart, slave," said Damian, impatiently, "why hang these fetters on the free limbs of a Norman noble? each moment they con-fine him are worth a lifetime of bondage to such a serf as thou!"

"They are soon rid of, Sir Damian," said the man; "and I pray you to take some patience, when you remember that ten minutes since you had little right to think these bracelets would have been removed for any other purpose than your progress to the scaffold."

"Peace, ban-dog," said Damian, "and be speedy;—And thou, who hast brought me these good tidings, I forgive thy former bearing—thou thoughtest, doubtless, that it was prudent to extort from me professions during my bondage which might in honour decide my conduct when at large. The suspicion inferred in it was somewhat offensive, but thy motive was to ensure my uncle's liberty."

"And it is really your purpose," said the Palmer, "to employ your newly-gained freedom in a voyage to Syria, and to exchange your English prison for the dungeon of the Soldan?"

"If thou thyself wilt act as my guide," answered the undaunted youth, "you shall not say I dally by the way."

"And the ransom," said the Palmer, "how is that to be provided?"

"How, but from the estates, which, nominally restored to me, remain in truth and justice my uncle's, and must be applied to his use in the first instance? If I mistake not greatly, there is not a Jew or Lombard who would not advance the necessary sums on such security.—Therefore, dog," he continued, addressing the jailer, "hasten thy unclenching and undoing of rivets, and be not dainty of giving me a little pain, so thou break no limb, for I cannot afford to be stayed on my journey."

The Palmer looked on a little while, as if surprised at Damian's determination, then exclaimed, "I can keep the old man's secret no longer—such high-souled generosity must not be sacrificed.—Hark thee, brave Sir Damian, I have a mighty secret still to impart, and as this Saxon churl understands no French, this is no unfit opportunity to communicate it. Know that thine uncle is a changed man in mind, as he is debilitated and broken down in body. Peevishness and jealousy have possessed themselves of a heart which was once strong and generous; his life is now on the dregs, and I grieve to speak it, these dregs are foul and bitter."

"Is this thy mighty secret?" said Damian. "That men grow old, I know; and if with infirmity of body comes infirmity of temper and mind, their case the more strongly claims the dutiful observance of those who are bound to them in blood or affection."

"Ay," replied the Pilgrim, "but the Constable's mind has been poisoned against thee by rumours which have reached his ear from England, that there have been thoughts of affection betwixt thee and his betrothed bride, Eveline Berenger.—Ha! have I touched you now?"

"Not a whit," said Damian, putting on the strongest resolution with which his virtue could supply him—"it was but this fellow who struck my shin-bone somewhat sharply with his hammer. Proceed. My uncle heard such a report, and believed it?"

"He did," said the Palmer—"I can well aver it, since he concealed no thought from me. But he prayed me carefully to hide his suspicions from you, 'otherwise,' said he, 'the young wolf-cub will never thrust himself into the trap for the deliverance of the old he-wolf. Were he once in my prison-house,' your uncle continued to speak of you, 'he should rot and die ere I sent one penny of ransom to set at liberty the lover of my betrothed bride.'"

"Could this be my uncle's sincere purpose?" said Damian, all aghast. "Could he plan so much treachery towards me as to leave me in the captivity into which I threw myself for his redemption?—Tush! it cannot be."

"Flatter not yourself with such a vain opinion," said the Palmer—"if you go to Syria, you go to eternal captivity, while your uncle returns to possession of wealth little diminished—and of Eveline Berenger."

"Ha!" ejaculated Damian; and looking down for an instant, demanded of the Palmer, in a subdued voice, what he would have him do in such an extremity.

"The case is plain, according to my poor judgment," replied the Palmer. "No one is bound to faith with those who mean to observe none with him. Anticipate this treachery of your uncle, and let his now short and infirm existence moulder out in the pestiferous cell to which he would condemn your youthful strength. The royal grant has assigned you lands enough for your honourable support; and wherefore not unite with them those of the Garde Doloureuse?—Eveline Berenger, if I do not greatly mistake, will scarcely say nay. Ay, more—I vouch it on my soul that she will say yes, for I have sure information of her mind; and for her precontract, a word from Henry to his Holiness, now that they are in the heyday of their reconciliation, will obliterate the name Hugh from the parchment, and insert Damian in its stead."

"Now, by my faith," said Damian, arising and placing his foot upon the stool, that the warder might more easily strike off the last ring by which he was encumbered,—"I have heard of such things as this—I have heard of beings who, with seeming gravity of word and aspect—with subtle counsels, artfully applied to the frailties of human nature—have haunted the cells of despairing men, and made them many a fair promise, if they would but exchange for their by-ways the paths of salvation. Such are the fiend's dearest agents, and in such a guise hath the fiend himself been known to appear. In the name of God, old man, if human thou art, begone!—I like not thy words or thy presence—I spit at thy counsels. And mark me," he added, with a menacing gesture, "Look to thine own safety—I shall presently be at liberty!"

"Boy," replied the Palmer, folding his arms contemptuously in his cloak, "I scorn thy menaces—I leave thee not till we know each other better!"

"I too," said Damian, "would fain know whether thou be'st man or fiend; and now for the trial!" As he spoke, the last shackle fell from his leg, and clashed on the pavement, and at the same moment he sprung on the Palmer, caught him by the waist, and exclaimed, as he made three distinct and separate attempts to lift him up, and dash him headlong to the earth, "This for maligning a nobleman—this for doubting the honour of a knight—and this (with a yet more violent exertion) for belying a lady!"

Each effort of Damian seemed equal to have rooted up a tree; yet though they staggered the old man, they overthrew him not; and while Damian panted with his last exertion, he replied, "And take this, for so roughly entreating thy father's brother."

As he spoke, Damian de Lacy, the best youthful wrestler in Cheshire, received no soft fall on the floor of the dungeon. He arose slowly and astounded; but the Palmer had now thrown back both hood and dalmatique, and the features, though bearing marks of age and climate, were those of his uncle the Constable, who calmly observed, "I think, Damian, thou art become stronger, or I weaker, since my breast was last pressed against yours in our country's celebrated sport. Thou hadst nigh had me down in that last turn, but that I knew the old De Lacy's back-trip as well as thou.—But wherefore kneel, man?" He raised him with much kindness, kissed his cheek, and proceeded; "Think not, my dearest nephew, that I meant in my late disguise to try your faith, which I myself never doubted. But evil tongues had been busy, and it was this which made me resolve on an experiment, the result of which has been, as I expected, most honourable for you. And know, (for these walls have sometimes ears, even according to the letter,) there are ears and eyes not far distant which have heard and seen the whole. Marry, I wish though, thy last hug had not been so severe a one. My ribs still feel the impression of thy knuckles."

"Dearest and honoured uncle," said Damian—"excuse——"

"There is nothing to excuse," replied his uncle, interrupting him. "Have we not wrestled a turn before now?—But there remains yet one trial for thee to go through—Get thee out of this hole speedily—don thy best array to accompany me to the Church at noon; for, Damian, thou must be present at the marriage of the Lady Eveline Berenger."

This proposal at once struck to the earth the unhappy young man. "For mercy's sake," he exclaimed, "hold me excused in this, my gracious uncle!—I have been of late severely wounded, and am very weak."

"As my bones can testify," said his uncle. "Why, man, thou hast the strength of a Norway bear."

"Passion," answered Damian, "might give me strength for a moment; but, dearest uncle, ask any thing of me rather than this. Methinks, if I have been faulty, some other punishment might suffice."

"I tell thee," said the Constable, "thy presence is necessary—indispensably necessary. Strange reports have been abroad, which thy absence on this occasion would go far to confirm, Eveline's character and mine own are concerned in this."

"If so," said Damian, "if it be indeed so, no task will be too hard for me. But I trust, when the ceremony is over, you will not refuse me your consent to take the cross, unless you should prefer my joining the troops destined, as I heard, for the conquest of Ireland."

"Ay, ay," said the Constable; "if Eveline grant you permission, I will not withhold mine."

"Uncle," said Damian, somewhat sternly, "you do not know the feelings which you jest with."

"Nay," said the Constable, "I compel nothing; for if thou goest to the church, and likest not the match, thou may'st put a stop to it if thou wilt—the sacrament cannot proceed without the bridegroom's consent."

"I understand you not, uncle," said Damian; "you have already consented."

"Yes, Damian," he said, "I have—to withdraw my claim, and to relinquish it in thy favour; for if Eveline Berenger is wedded to-day, thou art her bridegroom! The Church has given her sanction—the King his approbation—the lady says not nay—and the question only now remains, whether the bridegroom will say yes."

The nature of the answer may be easily conceived; nor is it necessary to dwell upon the splendour of the ceremonial, which, to atone for his late unmerited severity, Henry honoured with his own presence. Amelot and Rose were shortly afterwards united, old Flammock having been previously created a gentleman of coat armour, that the gentle Norman blood might without utter derogation, mingle with the meaner stream that coloured the cheek with crimson, and meandered in azure over the lovely neck and bosom of the fair Fleming. There was nothing in the manner of the Constable towards his nephew and his bride, which could infer a regret of the generous self-denial which he had exercised in favour of their youthful passion. But he soon after accepted a high command in the troops destined to invade Ireland; and his name is found amongst the highest in the roll of the chivalrous Normans who first united that fair island to the English crown.

Eveline, restored to her own fair castle and domains, failed not to provide for her Confessor, as well as for her old soldiers, servants, and retainers, forgetting their errors, and remembering their fidelity. The Confessor was restored to the flesh-pots of Egypt, more congenial to his habits than the meagre fare of his convent. Even Gillian had the means of subsistence, since to punish her would have been to distress the faithful Raoul. They quarrelled for the future part of their lives in plenty, just as they had formerly quarrelled in poverty; for wrangling curs will fight over a banquet as fiercely as over a bare bone. Raoul died first, and Gillian having lost her whetstone, found that as her youthful looks decayed her wit turned somewhat blunt. She therefore prudently commenced devotee, and spent hours in long panegyrics on her departed husband.

The only serious cause of vexation which I can trace the Lady Eveline having been tried with, arose from a visit of her Saxon relative, made with much form, but, unfortunately, at the very time which the Lady Abbess had selected for that same purpose. The discord which arose between these honoured personages was of a double character, for they were Norman and Saxon, and, moreover, differed in opinion concerning the time of holding Easter. This, however, was but a slight gale to disturb the general serenity of Eveline; for with her unhopd-for union with Damian, ended the trials and sorrows of THE BETROTHED.

BOOK III
THE TALISMAN
CHAPTER I

*They, too, retired
To the wilderness, but 'twas with arms.
PARADISE REGAINED.*

The burning sun of Syria had not yet attained its highest point in the horizon, when a knight of the Red Cross, who had left his distant northern home and joined the host of the Crusaders in Palestine, was pacing slowly along the sandy deserts which lie in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, or, as it is called, the Lake Asphaltites, where the waves of the Jordan pour themselves into an inland sea, from which there is no discharge of waters.

The warlike pilgrim had toiled among cliffs and precipices during the earlier part of the morning. More lately, issuing from those rocky and dangerous defiles, he had entered upon that great plain, where the accursed cities provoked, in ancient days, the direct and dreadful vengeance of the Omnipotent.

The toil, the thirst, the dangers of the way, were forgotten, as the traveller recalled the fearful catastrophe which had converted into an arid and dismal wilderness the fair and fertile valley of Siddim, once well watered, even as the Garden of the Lord, now a parched and blighted waste, condemned to eternal sterility.

Crossing himself, as he viewed the dark mass of rolling waters, in colour as in duality unlike those of any other lake, the traveller shuddered as he remembered that beneath these sluggish waves lay the once proud cities of the plain, whose grave was dug by the thunder of the heavens, or the eruption of subterraneous fire, and whose remains were hid, even by that sea which holds no living fish in its bosom, bears no skiff on its surface, and, as if its own dreadful bed were the only fit receptacle for its sullen waters, sends not, like other lakes, a tribute to the ocean. The whole land around, as in the days of Moses, was "brimstone and salt; it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon." The land as well as the lake might be termed dead, as producing nothing having resemblance to vegetation, and even the very air was entirely devoid of its ordinary winged inhabitants, deterred probably by the odour of bitumen and sulphur which the burning sun exhaled from the waters of the lake in steaming clouds, frequently assuming the appearance of waterspouts. Masses of the slimy and sulphureous substance called naphtha, which floated idly on the sluggish and sullen waves, supplied those rolling clouds with new vapours, and afforded awful testimony to the truth of the Mosaic history.

Upon this scene of desolation the sun shone with almost intolerable splendour, and all living nature seemed to have hidden itself from the rays, excepting the solitary figure which moved through the flitting sand at a foot's pace, and appeared the sole breathing thing on the wide surface of the plain. The dress of the rider and the accoutrements of his horse were peculiarly unfit for the traveller in such a country. A coat of linked mail, with long sleeves, plated gauntlets, and a steel breastplate, had not been esteemed a sufficient weight of armour; there were also his triangular shield suspended round his neck, and his barred helmet of steel, over which he had a hood and collar of mail, which was drawn around the warrior's shoulders and throat, and filled up the vacancy between the hauberk and the headpiece. His lower limbs were sheathed, like his body, in flexible mail, securing the legs and thighs, while the feet rested in plated shoes, which corresponded with the gauntlets. A long, broad, straight-shaped, double-edged falchion, with a handle formed like a cross, corresponded with a stout poniard on the other side. The knight also bore, secured to his saddle, with one end resting on his stirrup, the long steel-headed lance, his own proper weapon, which, as he rode, projected backwards, and displayed its little pennoncelle, to dally with the faint breeze, or drop in the dead calm. To this cumbrous equipment must be added a surcoat of embroidered cloth, much frayed and worn, which was thus far useful that it excluded the burning rays of the sun from the armour, which they would otherwise have rendered intolerable to the wearer. The surcoat bore, in several places, the arms of the owner, although much defaced. These seemed to be a couchant leopard, with the motto, "I sleep; wake me not." An outline of the same device might be traced on his shield, though many a blow had almost effaced the painting. The flat top of his cumbrous cylindrical helmet was unadorned with any crest. In retaining their own unwieldy defensive armour, the Northern Crusaders seemed to set at defiance the nature of the climate and country to which they had come to war.

The accoutrements of the horse were scarcely less massive and unwieldy than those of the rider. The animal had a heavy saddle plated with steel, uniting in front with a species of breastplate, and behind with defensive armour made to cover the loins. Then there was a steel axe, or hammer, called a mace-of-arms, and which hung to the saddle-bow. The reins were secured by chain-work, and the front-stall of the bridle was a steel plate, with apertures for the eyes and nostrils, having in the midst a short, sharp pike, projecting from the forehead of the horse like the horn of the fabulous unicorn.

But habit had made the endurance of this load of panoply a second nature, both to the knight and his gallant charger. Numbers, indeed, of the Western warriors who hurried to Palestine died ere they became inured to the burning climate; but there were others to whom that climate became innocent and even friendly, and among this fortunate number was the solitary horseman who now traversed the border of the Dead Sea.

Nature, which cast his limbs in a mould of uncommon strength, fitted to wear his linked hauberk with as much ease as if the meshes had been formed of cobwebs, had endowed him with a constitution as strong as his limbs, and which bade defiance to almost all changes of climate, as well as to fatigue and privations of every kind. His disposition seemed, in some degree, to partake of the qualities of his bodily frame; and as the one possessed great strength and endurance, united with the power of violent exertion, the other, under a calm and undisturbed semblance, had much of the fiery and enthusiastic love of glory which constituted the principal attribute of the renowned Norman line, and had rendered them sovereigns in every corner of Europe where they had drawn their adventurous swords.

It was not, however, to all the race that fortune proposed such tempting rewards; and those obtained by the solitary knight during two years' campaign in Palestine had been only temporal fame, and, as he was taught to believe, spiritual privileges. Meantime, his slender stock of money had melted away, the rather that he did not pursue any of the ordinary modes by which the followers of the Crusade condescended to recruit their diminished resources at the expense of the people of Palestine—he exacted no gifts from the wretched natives for sparing their possessions when engaged in warfare with the Saracens, and he had not availed himself of any opportunity of enriching himself by the ransom of prisoners of consequence. The small train which had followed him from his native country had been gradually diminished, as the means of maintaining them disappeared, and his only remaining squire was at present on a sick-bed, and unable to attend his master, who travelled, as we have seen, singly and alone. This was of little consequence to the Crusader, who was accustomed to consider his good sword as his safest escort, and devout thoughts as his best companion.

Nature had, however, her demands for refreshment and repose even on the iron frame and patient disposition of the Knight of the Sleeping Leopard; and at noon, when the Dead Sea lay at some distance on his right, he joyfully hailed the sight of two or three palm-trees, which arose beside the well which was assigned for his mid-day station. His good horse, too, which had plodded forward with the steady endurance of his master, now lifted his head, expanded his nostrils, and quickened his pace, as if he snuffed afar off the living waters which marked the place of repose and refreshment. But labour and danger were doomed to intervene ere the horse or horseman reached the desired spot.

As the Knight of the Couchant Leopard continued to fix his eyes attentively on the yet distant cluster of palm-trees, it seemed to him as if some object was moving among them. The distant form separated itself from the trees, which partly hid its motions, and advanced towards the knight with a speed which soon showed a mounted horseman, whom his turban, long spear, and green caftan floating in the wind, on his nearer approach showed to be a Saracen cavalier. "In the desert," saith an Eastern proverb, "no man meets a friend." The Crusader was totally indifferent whether the infidel, who now approached on his gallant barb as if borne on the wings of an eagle, came as friend or foe—perhaps, as a vowed champion of the Cross, he might rather have preferred the latter. He disengaged his lance from his saddle, seized it with the right hand, placed it in rest with its point half elevated, gathered up the reins in the left, waked his horse's mettle with the spur, and prepared to encounter the stranger with the calm self-confidence belonging to the victor in many contests.

The Saracen came on at the speedy gallop of an Arab horseman, managing his steed more by his limbs and the inflection of his body than by any use of the reins, which hung loose in his left hand; so that he was enabled to wield the light, round buckler of the skin of the rhinoceros, ornamented with silver loops, which he wore on his arm, swinging it as if he meant to oppose its slender circle to the formidable thrust of the Western lance. His own long spear was not couched or levelled like that of his antagonist, but grasped by the middle with his right hand, and brandished at arm's-length above his head. As the cavalier approached his

enemy at full career, he seemed to expect that the Knight of the Leopard should put his horse to the gallop to encounter him. But the Christian knight, well acquainted with the customs of Eastern warriors, did not mean to exhaust his good horse by any unnecessary exertion; and, on the contrary, made a dead halt, confident that if the enemy advanced to the actual shock, his own weight, and that of his powerful charger, would give him sufficient advantage, without the additional momentum of rapid motion. Equally sensible and apprehensive of such a probable result, the Saracen cavalier, when he had approached towards the Christian within twice the length of his lance, wheeled his steed to the left with inimitable dexterity, and rode twice around his antagonist, who, turning without quitting his ground, and presenting his front constantly to his enemy, frustrated his attempts to attack him on an unguarded point; so that the Saracen, wheeling his horse, was fain to retreat to the distance of a hundred yards. A second time, like a hawk attacking a heron, the heathen renewed the charge, and a second time was fain to retreat without coming to a close struggle. A third time he approached in the same manner, when the Christian knight, desirous to terminate this illusory warfare, in which he might at length have been worn out by the activity of his foeman, suddenly seized the mace which hung at his saddle-bow, and, with a strong hand and unerring aim, hurled it against the head of the Emir, for such and not less his enemy appeared. The Saracen was just aware of the formidable missile in time to interpose his light buckler betwixt the mace and his head; but the violence of the blow forced the buckler down on his turban, and though that defence also contributed to deaden its violence, the Saracen was beaten from his horse. Ere the Christian could avail himself of this mishap, his nimble foeman sprung from the ground, and, calling on his steed, which instantly returned to his side, he leaped into his seat without touching the stirrup, and regained all the advantage of which the Knight of the Leopard hoped to deprive him. But the latter had in the meanwhile recovered his mace, and the Eastern cavalier, who remembered the strength and dexterity with which his antagonist had aimed it, seemed to keep cautiously out of reach of that weapon of which he had so lately felt the force, while he showed his purpose of waging a distant warfare with missile weapons of his own. Planting his long spear in the sand at a distance from the scene of combat, he strung, with great address, a short bow, which he carried at his back; and putting his horse to the gallop, once more described two or three circles of a wider extent than formerly, in the course of which he discharged six arrows at the Christian with such unerring skill that the goodness of his harness alone saved him from being wounded in as many places. The seventh shaft apparently found a less perfect part of the armour, and the Christian dropped heavily from his horse. But what was the surprise of the Saracen, when, dismounting to examine the condition of his prostrate enemy, he found himself suddenly within the grasp of the European, who had had recourse to this artifice to bring his enemy within his reach! Even in this deadly grapple the Saracen was saved by his agility and presence of mind. He unloosed the sword-belt, in which the Knight of the Leopard had fixed his hold, and, thus eluding his fatal grasp, mounted his horse, which seemed to watch his motions with the intelligence of a human being, and again rode off. But in the last encounter the Saracen had lost his sword and his quiver of arrows, both of which were attached to the girdle which he was obliged to abandon. He had also lost his turban in the struggle.

These disadvantages seemed to incline the Moslem to a truce. He approached the Christian with his right hand extended, but no longer in a menacing attitude.

"There is truce betwixt our nations," he said, in the *lingua franca* commonly used for the purpose of communication with the Crusaders; "wherefore should there be war betwixt thee and me? Let there be peace betwixt us."

"I am well contented," answered he of the Couchant Leopard; "but what security dost thou offer that thou wilt observe the truce?"

"The word of a follower of the Prophet was never broken," answered the Emir. "It is thou, brave Nazarene, from whom I should demand security, did I not know that treason seldom dwells with courage."

The Crusader felt that the confidence of the Moslem made him ashamed of his own doubts.

"By the cross of my sword," he said, laying his hand on the weapon as he spoke, "I will be true companion to thee, Saracen, while our fortune wills that we remain in company together."

"By Mohammed, Prophet of God, and by Allah, God of the Prophet," replied his late foeman, "there is not treachery in my heart towards thee. And now wend we to yonder fountain, for the hour of rest is at hand, and the stream had hardly touched my lip when I was called to battle by thy approach."

The Knight of the Couchant Leopard yielded a ready and courteous assent; and the late foes, without an angry look or gesture of doubt, rode side by side to the little cluster of palm-trees.

CHAPTER II.

Times of danger have always, and in a peculiar degree, their seasons of good-will and security; and this was particularly so in the ancient feudal ages, in which, as the manners of the period had assigned war to be the chief and most worthy occupation of mankind, the intervals of peace, or rather of truce, were highly relished by those warriors to whom they were seldom granted, and endeared by the very circumstances which rendered them transitory. It is not worth while preserving any permanent enmity against a foe whom a champion has fought with to-day, and may again stand in bloody opposition to on the next morning. The time and situation afforded so much room for the ebullition of violent passions, that men, unless when peculiarly opposed to each other, or provoked by the recollection of private and individual wrongs, cheerfully enjoyed in each other's society the brief intervals of pacific intercourse which a warlike life admitted.

The distinction of religions, nay, the fanatical zeal which animated the followers of the Cross and of the Crescent against each other, was much softened by a feeling so natural to generous combatants, and especially cherished by the spirit of chivalry. This last strong impulse had extended itself gradually from the Christians to their mortal enemies the Saracens, both of Spain and of Palestine. The latter were, indeed, no longer the fanatical savages who had burst from the centre of Arabian deserts, with the sabre in one hand and the Koran in the other, to inflict death or the faith of Mohammed, or, at the best, slavery and tribute, upon all who dared to oppose the belief of the prophet of Mecca. These alternatives indeed had been offered to the unwarlike Greeks and Syrians; but in contending with the Western Christians, animated by a zeal as fiery as their own, and possessed of as unconquerable courage, address, and success in arms, the Saracens gradually caught a part of their manners, and especially of those chivalrous observances which were so well calculated to charm the minds of a proud and conquering people. They had their tournaments and games of chivalry; they had even their knights, or some rank analogous; and above all, the Saracens observed their plighted faith with an accuracy which might sometimes put to shame those who owned a better religion. Their truces, whether national or betwixt individuals, were faithfully observed; and thus it was that war, in itself perhaps the greatest of evils, yet gave occasion for display of good faith, generosity, clemency, and even kindly affections, which less frequently occur in more tranquil periods, where the passions of men, experiencing wrongs or entertaining quarrels which cannot be brought to instant decision, are apt to smoulder for a length of time in the bosoms of those who are so unhappy as to be their prey.

It was under the influence of these milder feelings which soften the horrors of warfare that the Christian and Saracen, who had so lately done their best for each other's mutual destruction, rode at a slow pace towards the fountain of palm-trees to which the Knight of the Couchant Leopard had been tending, when interrupted in mid-passage by his fleet and dangerous adversary. Each was wrapt for some time in his own reflections, and took breath after an encounter which had threatened to be fatal to one or both; and their good horses seemed no less to enjoy the interval of repose.

That of the Saracen, however, though he had been forced into much the more violent and extended sphere of motion, appeared to have suffered less from fatigue than the charger of the European knight. The sweat hung still clammy on the limbs of the latter, when those of the noble Arab were completely dried by the interval of tranquil exercise, all saving the foam-flakes which were still visible on his bridle and housings. The loose soil on which he trod so much augmented the distress of the Christian's horse, heavily loaded by his own armour and the weight of his rider, that the latter jumped from his saddle, and led his charger along the deep dust of the loamy soil, which was burnt in the sun into a substance more impalpable than the finest sand, and thus gave the faithful horse refreshment at the expense of his own additional toil; for, iron-sheathed as he was, he sunk over the mailed shoes at every step which he placed on a surface so light and unresisting.

"You are right," said the Saracen—and it was the first word that either had spoken since their truce was concluded; "your strong horse deserves your care. But what do you in the desert with an animal which sinks over the fetlock at every step as if he would plant each foot deep as the root of a date-tree?"

"Thou speakest rightly, Saracen," said the Christian knight, not delighted at the tone with which the infidel criticized his favourite steed—"rightly, according to thy knowledge and observation. But my good horse hath ere now borne me, in mine own land, over as wide a lake as thou seest yonder spread out behind us, yet not wet one hair above his hoof."

The Saracen looked at him with as much surprise as his manners permitted him to testify, which was only expressed by a slight approach to a disdainful smile, that hardly curled perceptibly the broad, thick moustache which enveloped his upper lip.

"It is justly spoken," he said, instantly composing himself to his usual serene gravity; "List to a Frank, and hear a fable."

"Thou art not courteous, misbeliever," replied the Crusader, "to doubt the word of a dubbed knight; and were it not that thou speakest in ignorance, and not in malice, our truce had its ending ere it is well begun. Thinkest thou I tell thee an untruth when I say that I, one of five hundred horsemen, armed in complete mail, have ridden—ay, and ridden for miles, upon water as solid as the crystal, and ten times less brittle?"

"What wouldst thou tell me?" answered the Moslem. "Yonder inland sea thou dost point at is peculiar in this, that, by the especial curse of God, it suffereth nothing to sink in its waves, but wafts them away, and casts them on its margin; but neither the Dead Sea, nor any of the seven oceans which environ the earth, will endure on their surface the pressure of a horse's foot, more than the Red Sea endured to sustain the advance of Pharaoh and his host."

"You speak truth after your knowledge, Saracen," said the Christian knight; "and yet, trust me, I fable not, according to mine. Heat, in this climate, converts the soil into something almost as unstable as water; and in my land cold often converts the water itself into a substance as hard as rock. Let us speak of this no longer, for the thoughts of the calm, clear, blue refulgence of a winter's lake, glimmering to stars and moonbeam, aggravate the horrors of this fiery desert, where, methinks, the very air which we breathe is like the vapour of a fiery furnace seven times heated."

The Saracen looked on him with some attention, as if to discover in what sense he was to understand words which, to him, must have appeared either to contain something of mystery or of imposition. At length he seemed determined in what manner to receive the language of his new companion.

"You are," he said, "of a nation that loves to laugh, and you make sport with yourselves, and with others, by telling what is impossible, and reporting what never chanced. Thou art one of the knights of France, who hold it for glee and pastime to GAB, as they term it, of exploits that are beyond human power. [Gaber. This French word signified a sort of sport much used among the French chivalry, which consisted in vying with each other in making the most romantic gasconades. The verb and the meaning are retained in Scottish.] I were wrong to challenge, for the time, the privilege of thy speech, since boasting is more natural to thee than truth."

"I am not of their land, neither of their fashion," said the Knight, "which is, as thou well sayest, to GAB of that which they dare not undertake—or, undertaking, cannot perfect. But in this I have imitated their folly, brave Saracen, that in talking to thee of what thou canst not comprehend, I have, even in speaking most simple truth, fully incurred the character of a braggart in thy eyes; so, I pray you, let my words pass."

They had now arrived at the knot of palm-trees and the fountain which welled out from beneath their shade in sparkling profusion.

We have spoken of a moment of truce in the midst of war; and this, a spot of beauty in the midst of a sterile desert, was scarce less dear to the imagination. It was a scene which, perhaps, would elsewhere have deserved little notice; but as the single speck, in a boundless horizon, which promised the refreshment of shade and living water, these blessings, held cheap where they are common, rendered the fountain and its neighbourhood a little paradise. Some generous or charitable hand, ere yet the evil days of Palestine began, had walled in and arched over the fountain, to preserve it from being absorbed in the earth, or choked by the flitting clouds of dust with which the least breath of wind covered the desert. The arch was now broken, and partly ruinous; but it still so far projected over and covered in the fountain that it excluded the sun in a great measure from its waters, which, hardly touched by a straggling beam, while all around was blazing, lay in a steady repose, alike delightful to the eye and the imagination. Stealing from under the arch, they were first received in a marble basin, much defaced indeed, but still cheering the eye, by showing that the place was anciently considered as a station, that the hand of man had been there and that man's accommodation had been in some measure attended to. The thirsty and weary traveller was reminded by these signs that others had suffered similar difficulties, reposed in the same spot, and, doubtless, found their way in safety to a more fertile country. Again, the scarce visible current which escaped from the basin served to nourish the few trees which surrounded the fountain, and where it sunk into the ground and disappeared, its refreshing presence was acknowledged by a carpet of velvet verdure.

In this delightful spot the two warriors halted, and each, after his own fashion, proceeded to relieve his horse from saddle, bit, and rein, and permitted the animals to drink at the basin, ere they refreshed themselves from the fountain head, which arose under the vault. They then suffered the steeds to go loose, confident that their interest, as well as their domesticated habits, would prevent their straying from the pure water and fresh grass.

Christian and Saracen next sat down together on the turf, and produced each the small allowance of store which they carried for their own refreshment. Yet, ere they severally proceeded to their scanty meal, they eyed each other with that curiosity which the close and doubtful conflict in which they had been so lately engaged was calculated to inspire. Each was desirous to measure the strength, and form some estimate of the character, of an adversary so formidable; and each was compelled to acknowledge that, had he fallen in the conflict, it had been by a noble hand.

The champions formed a striking contrast to each other in person and features, and might have formed no inaccurate representatives of their different nations. The Frank seemed a powerful man, built after the ancient Gothic cast of form, with light brown hair, which, on the removal of his helmet, was seen to curl thick and profusely over his head. His features had acquired, from the hot climate, a hue much darker than those parts of his neck which were less frequently exposed to view, or than was warranted by his full and well-opened blue eye, the colour of his hair, and of the moustaches which thickly shaded his upper lip, while his chin was carefully divested of beard, after the Norman fashion. His nose was Grecian and well formed; his mouth rather large in proportion, but filled with well-set, strong, and beautifully white teeth; his head small, and set upon the neck with much grace. His age could not exceed thirty, but if the effects of toil and climate were allowed for, might be three or four years under that period. His form was tall, powerful, and athletic, like that of a man whose strength might, in later life, become unwieldy, but which was hitherto united with lightness and activity. His hands, when he withdrew the mailed gloves, were long, fair, and well-proportioned; the wrist-bones peculiarly large and strong; and the arms remarkably well-shaped and brawny. A military hardihood and careless frankness of expression characterized his language and his motions; and his voice had the tone of one more accustomed to command than to obey, and who was in the habit of expressing his sentiments aloud and boldly, whenever he was called upon to announce them.

The Saracen Emir formed a marked and striking contrast with the Western Crusader. His stature was indeed above the middle size, but he was at least three inches shorter than the European, whose size approached the gigantic. His slender limbs and long, spare hands and arms, though well proportioned to his person, and suited to the style of his countenance, did not at first aspect promise the display of vigour and elasticity which the Emir had lately exhibited. But on looking more closely, his limbs, where exposed to view, seemed divested of all that was fleshy or cumbersome; so that nothing being left but bone, brawn, and sinew, it was a frame fitted for exertion and fatigue, far beyond that of a bulky champion, whose strength and size are counterbalanced by weight, and who is exhausted by his own exertions. The countenance of the Saracen naturally bore a general national resemblance to the Eastern tribe from whom he descended, and was as unlike as possible to the exaggerated terms in which the minstrels of the day were wont to represent the infidel champions, and the fabulous description which a sister art still presents as the Saracen's Head upon signposts. His features were small, well-formed, and delicate, though deeply embrowned by the Eastern sun, and terminated by a flowing and curled black beard, which seemed trimmed with peculiar care. The nose was straight and regular, the eyes keen, deep-set, black, and glowing, and his teeth equalled in beauty the ivory of his deserts. The person and proportions of the Saracen, in short, stretched on the turf near to his powerful antagonist, might have been compared to his sheeny and crescent-formed sabre, with its narrow and light but bright and keen Damascus blade, contrasted with the long and ponderous Gothic war-sword which was flung unbuckled on the same sod. The Emir was in the very flower of his age, and might perhaps have been termed eminently beautiful, but for the narrowness of his forehead and something of too much thinness and sharpness of feature, or at least what might have seemed such in a European estimate of beauty.

The manners of the Eastern warrior were grave, graceful, and decorous; indicating, however, in some particulars, the habitual restraint which men of warm and choleric tempers often set as a guard upon their native impetuosity of disposition, and at the same time a sense of his own dignity, which seemed to impose a certain formality of behaviour in him who entertained it.

This haughty feeling of superiority was perhaps equally entertained by his new European acquaintance, but the effect was different; and the same feeling, which dictated to the Christian knight a bold, blunt, and somewhat careless bearing, as one too conscious of his own importance to be anxious about the opinions of others, appeared to prescribe to the Saracen a style of courtesy more studiously and formally observant of ceremony. Both were courteous; but the courtesy of the Christian seemed to flow rather from a good humoured sense of what was due to others; that of the Moslem, from a high feeling of what was to be expected from himself.

The provision which each had made for his refreshment was simple, but the meal of the Saracen was abstemious. A handful of dates and a morsel of coarse barley-bread sufficed to relieve the hunger of the latter, whose education had habituated them to the fare of the desert, although, since their Syrian conquests, the Arabian simplicity of life frequently gave place to the most unbounded profusion of luxury. A few draughts from the lovely fountain by which they reposed completed his meal. That of the Christian, though coarse, was more genial. Dried hog's flesh, the abomination of the Moslemah, was the chief part of his repast; and his drink, derived from a leathern bottle, contained something better than pure element. He fed with more display of appetite, and drank with more appearance of satisfaction, than the Saracen judged it becoming to show in the performance of a mere bodily function; and, doubtless, the secret contempt which each entertained for the other, as the follower of a false religion, was considerably increased by the marked difference of their diet and manners. But each had found the weight of his opponent's arm, and the mutual respect which the bold struggle had created was sufficient to subdue other and inferior considerations. Yet the Saracen could not help remarking the circumstances which displeased him in the Christian's conduct and manners; and, after he had witnessed for some time in silence the keen appetite which protracted the knight's banquet long after his own was concluded, he thus addressed him:—

"Valiant Nazarene, is it fitting that one who can fight like a man should feed like a dog or a wolf? Even a misbelieving Jew would shudder at the food which you seem to eat with as much relish as if it were fruit from the trees of Paradise."

"Valiant Saracen," answered the Christian, looking up with some surprise at the accusation thus unexpectedly brought, "know thou that I exercise my Christian freedom in using that which is forbidden to the Jews, being, as they esteem themselves, under the bondage of the old law of Moses. We, Saracen, be it known to thee, have a better warrant for what we do—Ave Maria!—be we thankful." And, as if in defiance of his companion's scruples, he concluded a short Latin grace with a long draught from the leathern bottle.

"That, too, you call a part of your liberty," said the Saracen; "and as you feed like the brutes, so you degrade yourself to the bestial condition by drinking a poisonous liquor which even they refuse!"

"Know, foolish Saracen," replied the Christian, without hesitation, "that thou blasphemest the gifts of God, even with the blasphemy of thy father Ishmael. The juice of the grape is given to him that will use it wisely, as that which cheers the heart of man after toil, refreshes him in sickness, and comforts him in sorrow. He who so enjoyeth it may thank God for his winecup as for his daily bread; and he who abuseth the gift of Heaven is not a greater fool in his intoxication than thou in thine abstinence."

The keen eye of the Saracen kindled at this sarcasm, and his hand sought the hilt of his poniard. It was but a momentary thought, however, and died away in the recollection of the powerful champion with whom he had to deal, and the desperate grapple, the impression of which still throbbed in his limbs and veins; and he contented himself with pursuing the contest in colloquy, as more convenient for the time.

"Thy words" he said, "O Nazarene, might create anger, did not thy ignorance raise compassion. Seest thou not, O thou more blind than any who asks alms at the door of the Mosque, that the liberty thou dost boast of is restrained even in that which is dearest to man's happiness and to his household; and that thy law, if thou dost practise it, binds thee in marriage to one single mate, be she sick or healthy, be she fruitful or barren, bring she comfort and joy, or clamour and strife, to thy table and to thy bed? This, Nazarene, I do indeed call slavery; whereas, to the faithful, hath the Prophet assigned upon earth the patriarchal privileges of Abraham our father, and of Solomon, the wisest of mankind, having given us here a succession of beauty at our pleasure, and beyond the grave the black-eyed hours of Paradise."

"Now, by His name that I most reverence in heaven," said the Christian, "and by hers whom I most worship on earth, thou art but a blinded and a bewildered infidel!—That diamond signet which thou wearest on thy finger, thou holdest it, doubtless, as of inestimable value?"

"Balsora and Bagdad cannot show the like," replied the Saracen; "but what avails it to our purpose?"

"Much," replied the Frank, "as thou shalt thyself confess. Take my war-axe and dash the stone into twenty shivers: would each fragment be as valuable as the original gem, or would they, all collected, bear the tenth part of its estimation?"

"That is a child's question," answered the Saracen; "the fragments of such a stone would not equal the entire jewel in the degree of hundreds to one."

"Saracen," replied the Christian warrior, "the love which a true knight binds on one only, fair and faithful, is the gem entire; the affection thou flingest among thy enslaved wives and half-wedded slaves is worthless, comparatively, as the sparkling shivers of the broken diamond."

"Now, by the Holy Caaba," said the Emir, "thou art a madman who hugs his chain of iron as if it were of gold! Look more closely. This ring of mine would lose half its beauty were not the signet encircled and enchased with these lesser brilliants, which grace it and set it off. The central diamond is man, firm and entire, his value depending on himself alone; and this circle of lesser jewels are women, borrowing his lustre, which he deals out to them as best suits his pleasure or his convenience. Take the central stone from the signet, and the diamond itself remains as valuable as ever, while the lesser gems are comparatively of little value. And this is the true reading of thy parable; for what sayeth the poet Mansour: 'It is the favour of man which giveth beauty and comeliness to woman, as the stream glitters no longer when the sun ceaseth to shine.'"

"Saracen," replied the Crusader, "thou speakest like one who never saw a woman worthy the affection of a soldier. Believe me, couldst thou look upon those of Europe, to whom, after Heaven, we of the order of knighthood vow fealty and devotion, thou wouldst loathe for ever the poor sensual slaves who form thy haram. The beauty of our fair ones gives point to our spears and edge to our swords; their words are our law; and as soon will a lamp shed lustre when unkindled, as a knight distinguish himself by feats of arms, having no mistress of his affection."

"I have heard of this frenzy among the warriors of the West," said the Emir, "and have ever accounted it one of the accompanying symptoms of that insanity which brings you hither to obtain possession of an empty sepulchre. But yet, methinks, so highly have the Franks whom I have met with extolled the beauty of their women, I could be well contented to behold with mine own eyes those charms which can transform such brave warriors into the tools of their pleasure."

"Brave Saracen," said the Knight, "if I were not on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, it should be my pride to conduct you, on assurance of safety, to the camp of Richard of England, than whom none knows better how to do honour to a noble foe; and though I be poor and unattended yet have I interest to secure for thee, or any such as thou seemest, not safety only, but respect and esteem. There shouldst thou see several of the fairest beauties of France and Britain form a small circle, the brilliancy of which exceeds ten-thousandfold the lustre of mines of diamonds such as thine."

"Now, by the corner-stone of the Caaba!" said the Saracen, "I will accept thy invitation as freely as it is given, if thou wilt postpone thy present intent; and, credit me, brave Nazarene, it were better for thyself to turn back thy horse's head towards the camp of thy people, for to travel towards Jerusalem without a passport is but a wilful casting-away of thy life."

"I have a pass," answered the Knight, producing a parchment, "Under Saladin's hand and signet."

The Saracen bent his head to the dust as he recognized the seal and handwriting of the renowned Soldan of Egypt and Syria; and having kissed the paper with profound respect, he pressed it to his forehead, then returned it to the Christian, saying, "Rash Frank, thou hast sinned against thine own blood and mine, for not showing this to me when we met."

"You came with levelled spear," said the Knight. "Had a troop of Saracens so assailed me, it might have stood with my honour to have shown the Soldan's pass, but never to one man."

"And yet one man," said the Saracen haughtily, "was enough to interrupt your journey."

"True, brave Moslem," replied the Christian; "but there are few such as thou art. Such falcons fly not in flocks; or, if they do, they pounce not in numbers upon one."

"Thou dost us but justice," said the Saracen, evidently gratified by the compliment, as he had been touched by the implied scorn of the European's previous boast; "from us thou shouldst have had no wrong. But well was it for me that I failed to slay thee, with the safeguard of the king of kings upon thy person. Certain it were, that the cord or the sabre had justly avenged such guilt."

"I am glad to hear that its influence shall be availing to me," said the Knight; "for I have heard that the road is infested with robber-tribes, who regard nothing in comparison of an opportunity of plunder."

"The truth has been told to thee, brave Christian," said the Saracen; "but I swear to thee, by the turban of the Prophet, that shouldst thou miscarry in any haunt of such villains, I will myself undertake thy revenge with five thousand horse. I will slay every male of them, and send their women into such distant captivity that the name of their tribe shall never again be heard within five hundred miles of Damascus. I will sow with salt the foundations of their village, and there shall never live thing dwell there, even from that time forward."

"I had rather the trouble which you design for yourself were in revenge of some other more important person than of me, noble Emir," replied the Knight; "but my vow is recorded in heaven, for good or for evil, and I must be indebted to you for pointing me out the way to my resting-place for this evening."

"That," said the Saracen, "must be under the black covering of my father's tent."

"This night," answered the Christian, "I must pass in prayer and penitence with a holy man, Theodorick of Engaddi, who dwells amongst these wilds, and spends his life in the service of God."

"I will at least see you safe thither," said the Saracen.

"That would be pleasant convoy for me," said the Christian; "yet might endanger the future security of the good father; for the cruel hand of your people has been red with the blood of the servants of the Lord, and therefore do we come hither in plate and mail, with sword and lance, to open the road to the Holy Sepulchre, and protect the chosen saints and anchorites who yet dwell in this land of promise and of miracle."

"Nazarene," said the Moslem, "in this the Greeks and Syrians have much belied us, seeing we do but after the word of Abubeker Alwakel, the successor of the Prophet, and, after him, the first commander of true believers. 'Go forth,' he said, 'Yezed Ben Sophian,' when he sent that renowned general to take Syria from the infidels; 'quit yourselves like men in battle, but slay neither the aged, the infirm, the women, nor the children. Waste not the land, neither destroy corn and fruit-trees; they are the gifts of Allah. Keep faith when you have made any covenant, even if it be to your own harm. If ye find holy men labouring with their hands, and serving God in the desert, hurt them not, neither destroy their dwellings. But when you find them with shaven crowns, they are of the synagogue of Satan! Smite with the sabre, slay, cease not till they become believers or tributaries.' As the Caliph, companion of the Prophet, hath told us, so have we done, and those whom our justice has smitten are but the priests of Satan. But unto the good men who, without stirring up nation against nation, worship sincerely in the faith of Issa Ben Mariam, we are a shadow and a shield; and such being he whom you seek, even though the light of the Prophet hath not reached him, from me he will only have love, favour, and regard."

"The anchorite whom I would now visit," said the warlike pilgrim, "is, I have heard, no priest; but were he of that anointed and sacred order, I would prove with my good lance, against paynim and infidel—"

"Let us not defy each other, brother," interrupted the Saracen; "we shall find, either of us, enough of Franks or of Moslemah on whom to exercise both sword and lance. This Theodorick is protected both by Turk and Arab; and, though one of strange conditions at intervals, yet, on the whole, he bears himself so well as the follower of his own prophet, that he merits the protection of him who was sent—"

"Now, by Our Lady, Saracen," exclaimed the Christian, "if thou darest name in the same breath the camel-driver of Mecca with—"

An electrical shock of passion thrilled through the form of the Emir; but it was only momentary, and the calmness of his reply had both dignity and reason in it, when he said, "Slander not him whom thou knowest not—the rather that we venerate the founder of thy religion, while we condemn the doctrine which your priests have spun from it. I will myself guide thee to the cavern of the hermit, which, methinks, without my help, thou wouldst find it a hard matter to reach. And, on the way, let us leave to mollahs and to monks to dispute about the divinity of our faith, and speak on themes which belong to youthful warriors—upon battles, upon beautiful women, upon sharp swords, and upon bright armour."

CHAPTER III.

The warriors arose from their place of brief rest and simple refreshment, and courteously aided each other while they carefully replaced and adjusted the harness from which they had relieved for the time their trusty steeds. Each seemed familiar with an employment which at that time was a part of necessary and, indeed, of indispensable duty. Each also seemed to possess, as far as the difference betwixt the animal and rational species admitted, the confidence and affection of the horse which was the constant companion of his travels and his warfare. With the Saracen this familiar intimacy was a part of his early habits; for, in the tents of the Eastern military tribes, the horse of the soldier ranks next to, and almost equal in importance with, his wife and his family; and with the European warrior, circumstances, and indeed necessity, rendered his war-horse scarcely less than his brother in arms. The steeds, therefore, suffered themselves quietly to be taken from their food and liberty, and neighed and snuffled fondly around their masters, while they were adjusting their accoutrements for further travel and additional toil. And each warrior, as he prosecuted his own task, or assisted with courtesy his companion, looked with observant curiosity at the equipments of his fellow-traveller, and noted particularly what struck him as peculiar in the fashion in which he arranged his riding accoutrements.

Ere they remounted to resume their journey, the Christian Knight again moistened his lips and dipped his hands in the living fountain, and said to his pagan associate of the journey, "I would I knew the name of this delicious fountain, that I might hold it in my grateful remembrance; for never did water slake more deliciously a more oppressive thirst than I have this day experienced."

"It is called in the Arabic language," answered the Saracen, "by a name which signifies the Diamond of the Desert."

"And well is it so named," replied the Christian. "My native valley hath a thousand springs, but not to one of them shall I attach hereafter such precious recollection as to this solitary fount, which bestows its liquid treasures where they are not only delightful, but nearly indispensable."

"You say truth," said the Saracen; "for the curse is still on yonder sea of death, and neither man nor beast drinks of its waves, nor of the river which feeds without filling it, until this inhospitable desert be passed."

They mounted, and pursued their journey across the sandy waste. The ardour of noon was now past, and a light breeze somewhat alleviated the terrors of the desert, though not without bearing on its wings an impalpable dust, which the Saracen little heeded, though his heavily-armed companion felt it as such an annoyance that he hung his iron casque at his saddle-bow, and substituted the light riding-cap, termed in the language of the time a MORTIER, from its resemblance in shape to an ordinary mortar. They rode together for some time in silence, the Saracen performing the part of director and guide of the journey, which he did by observing minute marks and bearings of the distant rocks, to a ridge of which they were gradually approaching. For a little time he seemed absorbed in the task, as a pilot when navigating a vessel through a difficult channel; but they had not proceeded half a league when he seemed secure of his route, and disposed, with more frankness than was usual to his nation, to enter into conversation.

"You have asked the name," he said, "of a mute fountain, which hath the semblance, but not the reality, of a living thing. Let me be pardoned to ask the name of the companion with whom I have this day encountered, both in danger and in repose, and which I cannot fancy unknown even here among the deserts of Palestine?"

"It is not yet worth publishing," said the Christian. "Know, however, that among the soldiers of the Cross I am called Kenneth—Kenneth of the Couching Leopard; at home I have other titles, but they would sound harsh in an Eastern ear. Brave Saracen, let me ask which of the tribes of Arabia claims your descent, and by what name you are known?"

"Sir Kenneth," said the Moslem, "I joy that your name is such as my lips can easily utter. For me, I am no Arab, yet derive my descent from a line neither less wild nor less warlike. Know, Sir Knight of the Leopard, that I am Sheerkohf, the Lion of the Mountain, and that Kurdistan, from which I derive my descent, holds no family more noble than that of Seljook."

"I have heard," answered the Christian, "that your great Soldan claims his blood from the same source?"

"Thanks to the Prophet that hath so far honoured our mountains as to send from their bosom him whose word is victory," answered the paynim. "I am but as a worm before the King of Egypt and Syria, and yet in my own land something my name may avail. Stranger, with how many men didst thou come on this warfare?"

"By my faith," said Sir Kenneth, "with aid of friends and kinsmen, I was hardly pinched to furnish forth ten well-appointed lances, with maybe some fifty more men, archers and varlets included. Some have deserted my unlucky pennon—some have fallen in battle—several have died of disease—and one trusty armour-bearer, for whose life I am now doing my pilgrimage, lies on the bed of sickness."

"Christian," said Sheerkohf, "here I have five arrows in my quiver, each feathered from the wing of an eagle. When I send one of them to my tents, a thousand warriors mount on horseback—when I send another, an equal force will arise—for the five, I can command five thousand men; and if I send my bow, ten thousand mounted riders will shake the desert. And with thy fifty followers thou hast come to invade a land in which I am one of the meanest!"

"Now, by the rood, Saracen," retorted the Western warrior, "thou shouldst know, ere thou vauntest thyself, that one steel glove can crush a whole handful of hornets."

"Ay, but it must first enclose them within its grasp," said the Saracen, with a smile which might have endangered their new alliance, had he not changed the subject by adding, "And is bravery so much esteemed amongst the Christian princes that thou, thus void of means and of men, canst offer, as thou didst of late, to be my protector and security in the camp of thy brethren?"

"Know, Saracen," said the Christian, "since such is thy style, that the name of a knight, and the blood of a gentleman, entitle him to place himself on the same rank with sovereigns even of the first degree, in so far as regards all but regal authority and dominion. Were Richard of England himself to wound the honour of a knight as poor as I am, he could not, by the law of chivalry, deny him the combat."

"Methinks I should like to look upon so strange a scene," said the Emir, "in which a leathern belt and a pair of spurs put the poorest on a level with the most powerful."

"You must add free blood and a fearless heart," said the Christian; "then, perhaps, you will not have spoken untruly of the dignity of knighthood."

"And mix you as boldly amongst the females of your chiefs and leaders?" asked the Saracen.

"God forbid," said the Knight of the Leopard, "that the poorest knight in Christendom should not be free, in all honourable service, to devote his hand and sword, the fame of his actions, and the fixed devotion of his heart, to the fairest princess who ever wore coronet on her brow!"

"But a little while since," said the Saracen, "and you described love as the highest treasure of the heart—thine hath undoubtedly been high and nobly bestowed?"

"Stranger," answered the Christian, blushing deeply as he spoke, "we tell not rashly where it is we have bestowed our choicest treasures. It is enough for thee to know that, as thou sayest, my love is highly and nobly bestowed—most highly—most nobly; but if thou wouldst hear of love and broken lances, venture thyself, as thou sayest, to the camp of the Crusaders, and thou wilt find exercise for thine ears, and, if thou wilt, for thy hands too."

The Eastern warrior, raising himself in his stirrups, and shaking aloft his lance, replied, "Hardly, I fear, shall I find one with a crossed shoulder who will exchange with me the cast of the jerrid."

"I will not promise for that," replied the Knight; "though there be in the camp certain Spaniards, who have right good skill in your Eastern game of hurling the javelin."

"Dogs, and sons of dogs!" ejaculated the Saracen; "what have these Spaniards to do to come hither to combat the true believers, who, in their own land, are their lords and taskmasters? with them I would mix in no warlike pastime."

"Let not the knights of Leon or Asturias hear you speak thus of them," said the Knight of the Leopard. "But," added he, smiling at the recollection of the morning's combat, "if, instead of a reed, you were inclined to stand the cast of a battle-axe, there are enough of Western warriors who would gratify your longing."

"By the beard of my father, sir," said the Saracen, with an approach to laughter, "the game is too rough for mere sport. I will never shun them in battle, but my head" (pressing his hand to his brow) "will not, for a while, permit me to seek them in sport."

"I would you saw the axe of King Richard," answered the Western warrior, "to which that which hangs at my saddle-bow weighs but as a feather."

"We hear much of that island sovereign," said the Saracen. "Art thou one of his subjects?"

"One of his followers I am, for this expedition," answered the Knight, "and honoured in the service; but not born his subject, although a native of the island in which he reigns."

"How mean you? " said the Eastern soldier; "have you then two kings in one poor island?"

"As thou sayest," said the Scot, for such was Sir Kenneth by birth. "It is even so; and yet, although the inhabitants of the two extremities of that island are engaged in frequent war, the country can, as thou seest, furnish forth such a body of men-at-arms as may go far to shake the unholy hold which your master hath laid on the cities of Zion."

"By the beard of Saladin, Nazarene, but that it is a thoughtless and boyish folly, I could laugh at the simplicity of your great Sultan, who comes hither to make conquests of deserts and rocks, and dispute the possession of them with those who have tenfold numbers at command, while he leaves a part of his narrow islet, in which he was born a sovereign, to the dominion of another sceptre than his. Surely, Sir Kenneth, you and the other good men of your country should have submitted yourselves to the dominion of this King Richard ere you left your native land, divided against itself, to set forth on this expedition?"

Hasty and fierce was Kenneth's answer. "No, by the bright light of Heaven! If the King of England had not set forth to the Crusade till he was sovereign of Scotland, the Crescent might, for me, and all true-hearted Scots, glimmer for ever on the walls of Zion."

Thus far he had proceeded, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he muttered, "MEA CULPA! MEA CULPA! what have I, a soldier of the Cross, to do with recollection of war betwixt Christian nations!"

The rapid expression of feeling corrected by the dictates of duty did not escape the Moslem, who, if he did not entirely understand all which it conveyed, saw enough to convince him with the assurance that Christians, as well as Moslemah, had private feelings of personal pique, and national quarrels, which were not entirely reconcilable. But the Saracens were a race, polished, perhaps, to the utmost extent which their religion permitted, and particularly capable of entertaining high ideas of courtesy and politeness; and such sentiments prevented his taking any notice of the inconsistency of Sir Kenneth's feelings in the opposite characters of a Scot and a Crusader.

Meanwhile, as they advanced, the scene began to change around them. They were now turning to the eastward, and had reached the range of steep and barren hills which binds in that quarter the naked plain, and varies the surface of the country, without changing its sterile character. Sharp, rocky eminences began to rise around them, and, in a short time, deep declivities and ascents, both formidable in height and difficult from the narrowness of the path, offered to the travellers obstacles of a different kind from those with which they had recently contended.

Dark caverns and chasms amongst the rocks—those grottoes so often alluded to in Scripture—yawned fearfully on either side as they proceeded, and the Scottish knight was informed by the Emir that these were often the refuge of beasts of prey, or of men still more ferocious, who, driven to desperation by the constant war, and the oppression exercised by the soldiery, as well of the Cross as of the Crescent, had become robbers, and spared neither rank nor religion, neither sex nor age, in their depredations.

The Scottish knight listened with indifference to the accounts of ravages committed by wild beasts or wicked men, secure as he felt himself in his own valour and personal strength; but he was struck with mysterious dread when he recollected that he was now in the awful wilderness of the forty days' fast, and the scene of the actual personal temptation, wherewith the Evil Principle was permitted to assail the Son of Man. He withdrew his attention gradually from the light and worldly conversation of the infidel warrior beside him, and, however acceptable his gay and gallant bravery would have rendered him as a companion elsewhere, Sir Kenneth felt as if, in those wildernesses the waste and dry places in which the foul spirits were wont to wander when expelled the mortals whose forms they possessed, a bare-footed friar would have been a better associate than the gay but unbelieving paynim.

These feelings embarrassed him the rather that the Saracen's spirits appeared to rise with the journey, and because the farther he penetrated into the gloomy recesses of the mountains, the lighter became his conversation, and when he found that unanswered, the louder grew his song. Sir Kenneth knew enough of the Eastern languages to be assured that he chanted sonnets of love, containing all the glowing praises of beauty in which the Oriental poets are so fond of luxuriating, and which, therefore, were peculiarly unfitted for a serious or devotional strain of thought, the feeling best becoming the Wilderness of the Temptation. With inconsistency enough, the Saracen also sung lays in praise of wine, the liquid ruby of the Persian poets; and his gaiety at length became so unsuitable to the Christian knight's contrary train of sentiments, as, but for the promise of amity which they had exchanged, would most likely have made Sir Kenneth take measures to change his note. As it was, the Crusader felt as if he had by his side some gay, licentious fiend, who endeavoured to ensnare his soul, and endanger his immortal salvation, by inspiring loose thoughts of earthly pleasure, and thus polluting his devotion, at a time when his faith as a Christian and his vow as a pilgrim called on him for a serious and penitential state of mind. He was thus greatly perplexed, and undecided how to act; and it was in a tone of hasty displeasure that, at length breaking silence, he interrupted the lay of the celebrated Rudpiki, in which he prefers the mole on his mistress's bosom to all the wealth of Bokhara and Samarcand.

"Saracen," said the Crusader sternly, "blinded as thou art, and plunged amidst the errors of a false law, thou shouldst yet comprehend that there are some places more holy than others, and that there are some scenes also in which the Evil One hath more than ordinary power over sinful mortals. I will not tell thee for what awful reason this place—these rocks—these caverns with their gloomy arches, leading as it were to the central abyss—are held an especial haunt of Satan and his angels. It is enough that I have been long warned to beware of this place by wise and holy men, to whom the qualities of the unholy region are well known. Wherefore, Saracen, forbear thy foolish and ill-timed levity, and turn thy thoughts to things more suited to the spot—although, alas for thee! thy best prayers are but as blasphemy and sin."

The Saracen listened with some surprise, and then replied, with good-humour and gaiety, only so far repressed as courtesy required, "Good Sir Kenneth, methinks you deal unequally by your companion, or else ceremony is but indifferently taught amongst your Western tribes. I took no offence when I saw you gorge hog's flesh and drink wine, and permitted you to enjoy a treat which you called your Christian liberty, only pitying in my heart your foul pastimes. Wherefore, then, shouldst thou take scandal, because I cheer, to the best of my power, a gloomy road with a cheerful verse? What saith the poet, 'Song is like the dews of heaven on the bosom of the desert; it cools the path of the traveller.'"

"Friend Saracen," said the Christian, "I blame not the love of minstrelsy and of the GAI SCIENCE; albeit, we yield unto it even too much room in our thoughts when they should be bent on better things. But prayers and holy psalms are better fitting than LAIS of love, or of wine-cups, when men walk in this Valley of the Shadow of Death, full of fiends and demons, whom the prayers of holy men have driven forth from the haunts of humanity to wander amidst scenes as accursed as themselves."

"Speak not thus of the Genii, Christian," answered the Saracen, "for know thou speakest to one whose line and nation drew their origin from the immortal race which your sect fear and blaspheme."

"I well thought," answered the Crusader, "that your blinded race had their descent from the foul fiend, without whose aid you would never have been able to maintain this blessed land of Palestine against so many valiant soldiers of God. I speak not thus of thee in particular, Saracen, but generally of thy people and religion. Strange is it to me, however, not that you should have the descent from the Evil One, but that you should boast of it."

"From whom should the bravest boast of descending, saving from him that is bravest?" said the Saracen; "from whom should the proudest trace their line so well as from the Dark Spirit, which would rather fall headlong by force than bend the knee by his will? Eblis may be hated, stranger, but he must be feared; and such as Eblis are his descendants of Kurdistan."

Tales of magic and of necromancy were the learning of the period, and Sir Kenneth heard his companion's confession of diabolical descent without any disbelief, and without much wonder; yet not without a secret shudder at finding himself in this fearful place, in the company of one who avouched himself to belong to such a lineage. Naturally insusceptible, however, of fear, he crossed himself, and stoutly demanded of the Saracen an account of the pedigree which he had boasted. The latter readily complied.

"Know, brave stranger," he said, "that when the cruel Zohauk, one of the descendants of Giamschid, held the throne of Persia, he formed a league with the Powers of Darkness, amidst the secret vaults of Istakhar, vaults which the hands of the elementary spirits had hewn out of the living rock long before Adam himself had an existence. Here he fed, with daily oblations of human blood, two devouring serpents, which had become, according to the poets, a part of himself, and to sustain whom he levied a tax of daily human sacrifices, till the exhausted patience of his subjects caused some to raise up the scimitar of resistance, like the valiant Blacksmith and the victorious Feridoun, by whom the tyrant was at length dethroned, and imprisoned for ever in the dismal caverns of the mountain Damavend. But ere that deliverance had taken place, and whilst the power of the bloodthirsty tyrant was at its height, the band of ravening slaves whom he had sent forth to purvey victims for his daily sacrifice brought to the vaults of the palace of Istakhar seven sisters so beautiful that they seemed seven hours. These seven maidens were the daughters of a sage, who had no treasures save those beauties and his own wisdom. The last was not sufficient to foresee this misfortune, the former seemed ineffectual to prevent it. The eldest exceeded not her twentieth year, the youngest had scarce attained her thirteenth; and so like were they to each other that they could not have been distinguished but for the difference of height, in which they gradually rose in easy gradation above each other, like the ascent which leads to the gates of Paradise. So lovely were these seven sisters when they stood in the darksome vault, disrobed of all clothing saving a cymar of white silk, that their charms moved the hearts of those who were not mortal. Thunder muttered, the earth shook, the wall of the vault was rent, and at the chasm entered one dressed like a hunter, with bow and shafts, and followed by six others, his brethren. They were tall men, and, though dark, yet comely to behold; but their eyes had more the glare of those of the dead than the light which lives under the eyelids of the living. 'Zeineb,' said the leader of the band—and as he spoke he took the eldest sister by the hand, and his voice was soft, low, and melancholy—"I am Cothro, king of the subterranean world, and supreme chief of Ginnistan. I and my brethren are of those who, created out of the pure elementary fire, disdained, even at the command of Omnipotence, to do homage to a clod of earth, because it was called Man. Thou mayest have heard of us as cruel, unrelenting, and persecuting. It is false. We are by nature kind and generous; only vengeful when insulted, only cruel when affronted. We are true to those who trust us; and we have heard the invocations of thy father, the sage Mithrasp, who wisely worships not alone the Origin of Good, but that which is called the Source of Evil. You and your sisters are on the eve of death; but let each give to us one hair from your fair tresses, in token of fealty, and we will carry you many miles from hence to a place of safety, where you may bid defiance to Zohauk and his ministers.' The fear of instant death, saith the poet, is like the rod of the prophet Haroun, which devoured all other rods when transformed into snakes before the King of Pharaoh; and the daughters of the Persian sage were less apt than others to be afraid of the addresses of a spirit. They gave the tribute which Cothro demanded, and in an instant the sisters were transported to an enchanted castle on the mountains of Tugrut, in Kurdistan, and were never again seen by mortal eye. But in process of time seven youths, distinguished in the war and in the chase, appeared in the environs of the castle of the demons. They

were darker, taller, fiercer, and more resolute than any of the scattered inhabitants of the valleys of Kurdistan; and they took to themselves wives, and became fathers of the seven tribes of the Kurdmans, whose valour is known throughout the universe."

The Christian knight heard with wonder the wild tale, of which Kurdistan still possesses the traces, and, after a moment's thought, replied, "Verily, Sir Knight, you have spoken well—your genealogy may be dreaded and hated, but it cannot be contemned. Neither do I any longer wonder at your obstinacy in a false faith, since, doubtless, it is part of the fiendish disposition which hath descended from your ancestors, those infernal huntsmen, as you have described them, to love falsehood rather than truth; and I no longer marvel that your spirits become high and exalted, and vent themselves in verse and in tunes, when you approach to the places encumbered by the haunting of evil spirits, which must excite in you that joyous feeling which others experience when approaching the land of their human ancestry."

"By my father's beard, I think thou hast the right," said the Saracen, rather amused than offended by the freedom with which the Christian had uttered his reflections; "for, though the Prophet (blessed be his name!) hath sown amongst us the seed of a better faith than our ancestors learned in the ghostly halls of Tugrut, yet we are not willing, like other Moslemah, to pass hasty doom on the lofty and powerful elementary spirits from whom we claim our origin. These Genii, according to our belief and hope, are not altogether reprobate, but are still in the way of probation, and may hereafter be punished or rewarded. Leave we this to the mollahs and the imauns. Enough that with us the reverence for these spirits is not altogether effaced by what we have learned from the Koran, and that many of us still sing, in memorial of our fathers' more ancient faith, such verses as these."

So saying, he proceeded to chant verses, very ancient in the language and structure, which some have thought derive their source from the worshippers of Arimanes, the Evil Principle.

AHRIMAN.

*Dark Ahriman, whom Irak still
Holds origin of woe and ill!
When, bending at thy shrine,
We view the world with troubled eye,
Where see we 'neath the extended sky,
An empire matching thine!*

*If the Benigner Power can yield
A fountain in the desert field,
Where weary pilgrims drink;
Thine are the waves that lash the rock,
Thine the tornado's deadly shock,
Where countless navies sink!*

*Or if he bid the soil dispense
Balsams to cheer the sinking sense,
How few can they deliver
From lingering pains, or pang intense,
Red Fever, spotted Pestilence,
The arrows of thy quiver!*

*Chief in Man's bosom sits thy sway,
And frequent, while in words we pray
Before another throne,
Whate'er of specious form be there,
The secret meaning of the prayer
Is, Ahriman, thine own.*

*Say, hast thou feeling, sense, and form,
Thunder thy voice, thy garments storm,
As Eastern Magi say;
With sentient soul of hate and wrath,
And wings to sweep thy deadly path,
And fangs to tear thy prey?*

*Or art thou mix'd in Nature's source,
An ever-operating force,
Converting good to ill;
An evil principle innate,
Contending with our better fate,
And, oh! victorious still?*

*Howe'er it be, dispute is vain.
On all without thou hold'st thy reign,
Nor less on all within;
Each mortal passion's fierce career,
Love, hate, ambition, joy, and fear,
Thou goadest into sin.*

*Whene'er a sunny gleam appears,
To brighten up our vale of tears,
Thou art not distant far;
'Mid such brief solace of our lives,
Thou whett'st our very banquet-knives*

To tools of death and war.

Thus, from the moment of our birth,
Long as we linger on the earth,
Thou rulest the fate of men;
Thine are the pangs of life's last hour,
And—who dare answer?—is thy power,
Dark Spirit! ended THEN?

[The worthy and learned clergyman by whom this species of hymn has been translated desires, that, for fear of misconception, we should warn the reader to recollect that it is composed by a heathen, to whom the real causes of moral and physical evil are unknown, and who views their predominance in the system of the universe as all must view that appalling fact who have not the benefit of the Christian revelation. On our own part, we beg to add, that we understand the style of the translator is more paraphrastic than can be approved by those who are acquainted with the singularly curious original. The translator seems to have despaired of rendering into English verse the flights of Oriental poetry; and, possibly, like many learned and ingenious men, finding it impossible to discover the sense of the original, he may have tacitly substituted his own.]

These verses may perhaps have been the not unnatural effusion of some half-enlightened philosopher, who, in the fabled deity, Arimanes, saw but the prevalence of moral and physical evil; but in the ears of Sir Kenneth of the Leopard they had a different effect, and, sung as they were by one who had just boasted himself a descendant of demons, sounded very like an address of worship to the arch-fiend himself. He weighed within himself whether, on hearing such blasphemy in the very desert where Satan had stood rebuked for demanding homage, taking an abrupt leave of the Saracen was sufficient to testify his abhorrence; or whether he was not rather constrained by his vow as a Crusader to defy the infidel to combat on the spot, and leave him food for the beasts of the wilderness, when his attention was suddenly caught by an unexpected apparition.

The light was now verging low, yet served the knight still to discern that they two were no longer alone in the desert, but were closely watched by a figure of great height and very thin, which skipped over rocks and bushes with so much agility as, added to the wild and hirsute appearance of the individual, reminded him of the fauns and silvans, whose images he had seen in the ancient temples of Rome. As the single-hearted Scottishman had never for a moment doubted these gods of the ancient Gentiles to be actually devils, so he now hesitated not to believe that the blasphemous hymn of the Saracen had raised up an infernal spirit.

"But what recks it?" said stout Sir Kenneth to himself; "down with the fiend and his worshippers!"

He did not, however, think it necessary to give the same warning of defiance to two enemies as he would unquestionably have afforded to one. His hand was upon his mace, and perhaps the unwary Saracen would have been paid for his Persian poetry by having his brains dashed out on the spot, without any reason assigned for it; but the Scottish Knight was spared from committing what would have been a sore blot in his shield of arms. The apparition, on which his eyes had been fixed for some time, had at first appeared to dog their path by concealing itself behind rocks and shrubs, using those advantages of the ground with great address, and surmounting its irregularities with surprising agility. At length, just as the Saracen paused in his song, the figure, which was that of a tall man clothed in goat-skins, sprung into the midst of the path, and seized a rein of the Saracen's bridle in either hand, confronting thus and bearing back the noble horse, which, unable to endure the manner in which this sudden assailant pressed the long-armed bit, and the severe curb, which, according to the Eastern fashion, was a solid ring of iron, reared upright, and finally fell backwards on his master, who, however, avoided the peril of the fall by lightly throwing himself to one side.

The assailant then shifted his grasp from the bridle of the horse to the throat of the rider, flung himself above the struggling Saracen, and, despite of his youth and activity kept him undermost, wreathing his long arms above those of his prisoner, who called out angrily, and yet half-laughing at the same time—"Hamako—fool—unloose me—this passes thy privilege—unloose me, or I will use my dagger."

"Thy dagger!—infidel dog!" said the figure in the goat-skins, "hold it in thy gripe if thou canst!" and in an instant he wrenched the Saracen's weapon out of its owner's hand, and brandished it over his head.

"Help, Nazarene!" cried Sheerkohf, now seriously alarmed; "help, or the Hamako will slay me."

"Slay thee!" replied the dweller of the desert; "and well hast thou merited death, for singing thy blasphemous hymns, not only to the praise of thy false prophet, who is the foul fiend's harbinger, but to that of the Author of Evil himself."

The Christian Knight had hitherto looked on as one stupefied, so strangely had this rencontre contradicted, in its progress and event, all that he had previously conjectured. He felt, however, at length, that it touched his honour to interfere in behalf of his discomfited companion, and therefore addressed himself to the victorious figure in the goat-skins.

"Whosoe'er thou art," he said, "and whether of good or of evil, know that I am sworn for the time to be true companion to the Saracen whom thou holdest under thee; therefore, I pray thee to let him arise, else I will do battle with thee in his behalf."

"And a proper quarrel it were," answered the Hamako, "for a Crusader to do battle in—for the sake of an unbaptized dog, to combat one of his own holy faith! Art thou come forth to the wilderness to fight for the Crescent against the Cross? A goodly soldier of God art thou to listen to those who sing the praises of Satan!"

Yet, while he spoke thus, he arose himself, and, suffering the Saracen to rise also, returned him his cangiar, or poniard.

"Thou seest to what a point of peril thy presumption hath brought thee," continued he of the goat-skins, now addressing Sheerkohf, "and by what weak means thy practised skill and boasted agility can be foiled, when such is Heaven's pleasure. Wherefore, beware, O Ilderim! for know that, were there not a twinkle in the star of thy nativity which promises for thee something that is good and gracious in Heaven's good time, we two had not parted till I had torn asunder the throat which so lately trilled forth blasphemies."

"Hamako," said the Saracen, without any appearance of resenting the violent language and yet more violent assault to which he had been subjected, "I pray thee, good Hamako, to beware how thou dost again urge thy privilege over far; for though, as a good Moslem, I respect those whom Heaven hath deprived of ordinary reason, in order to endow them with the spirit of prophecy, yet I like not other men's hands on the bridle of my horse, neither upon my own person. Speak, therefore, what thou wilt, secure of any resentment from me; but gather so much sense as to apprehend that if thou shalt again proffer me any violence, I will strike thy shagged head from thy meagre shoulders.—and to thee, friend Kenneth," he added, as he remounted his steed, "I must needs say, that in a companion through the desert, I love friendly deeds better than fair words. Of the last thou hast given me enough; but it had been better to have aided me more speedily in my struggle with this Hamako, who had well-nigh taken my life in his frenzy."

"By my faith," said the Knight, "I did somewhat fail—was somewhat tardy in rendering thee instant help; but the strangeness of the assailant, the suddenness of the scene—it was as if thy wild and wicked lay had raised the devil among us—and such was my confusion, that two or three minutes elapsed ere I could take to my weapon."

"Thou art but a cold and considerate friend," said the Saracen; "and, had the Hamako been one grain more frantic, thy companion had been slain by thy side, to thy eternal dishonour, without thy stirring a finger in his aid, although thou satest by, mounted, and in arms."

"By my word, Saracen," said the Christian, "if thou wilt have it in plain terms, I thought that strange figure was the devil; and being of thy lineage, I knew not what family secret you might be communicating to each other, as you lay lovingly rolling together on the sand."

"Thy gibe is no answer, brother Kenneth," said the Saracen; "for know, that had my assailant been in very deed the Prince of Darkness, thou wert bound not the less to enter into combat with him in thy comrade's behalf. Know, also, that whatever there may be of foul or of fiendish about the Hamako belongs more to your lineage than to mine—this Hamako being, in truth, the anchorite whom thou art come hither to visit."

"This!" said Sir Kenneth, looking at the athletic yet wasted figure before him—"this! Thou mockest, Saracen—this cannot be the venerable Theodorick!"

"Ask himself, if thou wilt not believe me," answered Sheerkohf; and ere the words had left his mouth, the hermit gave evidence in his own behalf.

"I am Theodorick of Engaddi," he said—"I am the walker of the desert—I am friend of the Cross, and flail of all infidels, heretics, and devil-worshippers. Avoid ye, avoid ye! Down with Mahound, Termagaunt, and all their adherents!"—So saying, he pulled from under his shaggy garment a sort of flail or jointed club, bound with iron, which he brandished round his head with singular dexterity.

"Thou seest thy saint," said the Saracen, laughing, for the first time, at the unmitigated astonishment with which Sir Kenneth looked on the wild gestures and heard the wayward muttering of Theodorick, who, after swinging his flail in every direction, apparently quite reckless whether it encountered the head of either of his companions, finally showed his own strength, and the soundness of the weapon, by striking into fragments a large stone which lay near him.

"This is a madman," said Sir Kenneth.

"Not the worse saint," returned the Moslem, speaking according to the well-known Eastern belief, that madmen are under the influence of immediate inspiration.

"Know, Christian, that when one eye is extinguished, the other becomes more keen; when one hand is cut off, the other becomes more powerful; so, when our reason in human things is disturbed or destroyed, our view heavenward becomes more acute and perfect."

Here the voice of the Saracen was drowned in that of the hermit, who began to holler aloud in a wild, chanting tone, "I am Theodorick of Engaddi—I am the torch-brand of the desert—I am the flail of the infidels! The lion and the leopard shall be my comrades, and draw nigh to my cell for shelter; neither shall the goat be afraid of their fangs. I am the torch and the lantern—Kyrie Eleison!"

He closed his song by a short race, and ended that again by three forward bounds, which would have done him great credit in a gymnastic academy, but became his character of hermit so indifferently that the Scottish Knight was altogether confounded and bewildered.

The Saracen seemed to understand him better. "You see," he said, "that he expects us to follow him to his cell, which, indeed, is our only place of refuge for the night. You are the leopard, from the portrait on your shield; I am the lion, as my name imports; and by the goat, alluding to his garb of goat-skins, he means himself. We must keep him in sight, however, for he is as fleet as a dromedary."

In fact, the task was a difficult one, for though the reverend guide stopped from time to time, and waved his hand, as if to encourage them to come on, yet, well acquainted with all the winding dells and passes of the desert, and gifted with uncommon activity, which, perhaps, an unsettled state of mind kept in constant exercise, he led the knights through chasms and along footpaths where even the light-armed Saracen, with his well-trained barb, was in considerable risk, and where the iron-sheathed European and his over-burdened steed found themselves in such imminent peril as the rider would gladly have exchanged for the dangers of a general action. Glad he was when, at length, after this wild race, he beheld the holy man who had led it standing in front of a cavern, with a large torch in his hand, composed of a piece of wood dipped in bitumen, which cast a broad and flickering light, and emitted a strong sulphureous smell.

Undeterred by the stifling vapour, the knight threw himself from his horse and entered the cavern, which afforded small appearance of accommodation. The cell was divided into two parts, in the outward of which were an altar of stone and a crucifix made of reeds: this served the anchorite for his chapel. On one side of this outward cave the Christian knight, though not without scruple, arising from religious reverence to the objects around, fastened up his horse, and arranged him for the night, in imitation of the Saracen, who gave him to understand that such was the custom of the place. The hermit, meanwhile, was busied putting his inner apartment in order to receive his guests, and there they soon joined him. At the bottom of the outer cave, a small aperture, closed with a door of rough plank, led into the sleeping apartment of the hermit, which was more commodious. The floor had been brought to a rough level by the labour of the inhabitant, and then strewn with white sand, which he daily sprinkled with water from a small fountain which bubbled out of the rock in one corner, affording in that stifling climate, refreshment alike to the ear and the taste. Mattresses, wrought of twisted flags, lay by the side of the cell; the sides, like the floor, had been roughly brought to shape, and several herbs and flowers were hung around them. Two waxen torches, which the hermit lighted, gave a cheerful air to the place, which was rendered agreeable by its fragrance and coolness.

There were implements of labour in one corner of the apartment, in another was a niche for a rude statue of the Virgin. A table and two chairs showed that they must be the handiwork of the anchorite, being different in their form from Oriental accommodations. The former was covered, not only with reeds and pulse, but also with dried flesh, which Theodorick assiduously placed in such arrangement as should invite the appetite of his guests. This appearance of courtesy, though mute, and expressed by gestures only, seemed to Sir Kenneth something entirely irreconcilable with his former wild and violent demeanour. The movements of the hermit were now become composed, and apparently it was only a sense of religious humiliation which prevented his features, emaciated as they were by his austere mode of life, from being majestic and noble. He trod his cell as one who seemed born to rule over men, but who had abdicated his empire to become the servant of Heaven. Still, it must be allowed that his gigantic size, the length of his unshaven locks and beard, and the fire of a deep-set and wild eye were rather attributes of a soldier than of a recluse.

Even the Saracen seemed to regard the anchorite with some veneration, while he was thus employed, and he whispered in a low tone to Sir Kenneth, "The Hamako is now in his better mind, but he will not speak until we have eaten—such is his vow."

It was in silence, accordingly, that Theodorick motioned to the Scot to take his place on one of the low chairs, while Sheerkohf placed himself, after the custom of his nation, upon a cushion of mats. The hermit then held up both hands, as if blessing the refreshment which he had placed before his guests, and they proceeded to eat in silence as profound as his own. To the Saracen this gravity was natural; and the Christian imitated his taciturnity, while he employed his thoughts on the singularity of his own situation, and the contrast betwixt the wild, furious gesticulations, loud cries, and fierce actions of Theodorick, when they first met him, and the demure, solemn, decorous assiduity with which he now performed the duties of hospitality.

When their meal was ended, the hermit, who had not himself eaten a morsel, removed the fragments from the table, and placing before the Saracen a pitcher of sherbet, assigned to the Scot a flask of wine.

"Drink," he said, "my children"—they were the first words he had spoken—"the gifts of God are to be enjoyed, when the Giver is remembered."

Having said this, he retired to the outward cell, probably for performance of his devotions, and left his guests together in the inner apartment; when Sir Kenneth endeavoured, by various questions, to draw from Sheerkohf what that Emir knew concerning his host. He was interested by more than mere curiosity in these inquiries. Difficult as it was to reconcile the outrageous demeanour of the recluse at his first appearance with his present humble and placid behaviour, it seemed yet more impossible to think it consistent with the high consideration in which, according to what Sir Kenneth had learned, this hermit was held by the most enlightened divines of the Christian world. Theodorick, the hermit of Engaddi, had, in that character, been the correspondent of popes and councils; to whom his letters, full of eloquent fervour, had described the miseries imposed by the unbelievers upon the Latin Christians in the Holy Land, in colours scarce inferior to those employed at the Council of Clermont by the Hermit Peter, when he preached the first Crusade. To find, in a person so reverend and so much revered, the

frantic gestures of a mad fakir, induced the Christian knight to pause ere he could resolve to communicate to him certain important matters, which he had in charge from some of the leaders of the Crusade.

It had been a main object of Sir Kenneth's pilgrimage, attempted by a route so unusual, to make such communications; but what he had that night seen induced him to pause and reflect ere he proceeded to the execution of his commission. From the Emir he could not extract much information, but the general tenor was as follows:—That, as he had heard, the hermit had been once a brave and valiant soldier, wise in council and fortunate in battle, which last he could easily believe from the great strength and agility which he had often seen him display; that he had appeared at Jerusalem in the character not of a pilgrim, but in that of one who had devoted himself to dwell for the remainder of his life in the Holy Land. Shortly afterwards, he fixed his residence amid the scenes of desolation where they now found him, respected by the Latins for his austere devotion, and by the Turks and Arabs on account of the symptoms of insanity which he displayed, and which they ascribed to inspiration. It was from them he had the name of Hamako, which expresses such a character in the Turkish language. Sheerkohf himself seemed at a loss how to rank their host. He had been, he said, a wise man, and could often for many hours together speak lessons of virtue or wisdom, without the slightest appearance of inaccuracy. At other times he was wild and violent, but never before had he seen him so mischievously disposed as he had that day appeared to be. His rage was chiefly provoked by any affront to his religion; and there was a story of some wandering Arabs, who had insulted his worship and defaced his altar, and whom he had on that account attacked and slain with the short flail which he carried with him in lieu of all other weapons. This incident had made a great noise, and it was as much the fear of the hermit's iron flail as regard for his character as a Hamako which caused the roving tribes to respect his dwelling and his chapel. His fame had spread so far that Saladin had issued particular orders that he should be spared and protected. He himself, and other Moslem lords of rank, had visited the cell more than once, partly from curiosity, partly that they expected from a man so learned as the Christian Hamako some insight into the secrets of futurity. "He had," continued the Saracen, "a rashid, or observatory, of great height, contrived to view the heavenly bodies, and particularly the planetary system—by whose movements and influences, as both Christian and Moslem believed, the course of human events was regulated, and might be predicted."

This was the substance of the Emir Sheerkohf's information, and it left Sir Kenneth in doubt whether the character of insanity arose from the occasional excessive fervour of the hermit's zeal, or whether it was not altogether fictitious, and assumed for the sake of the immunities which it afforded. Yet it seemed that the infidels had carried their complaisance towards him to an uncommon length, considering the fanaticism of the followers of Mohammed, in the midst of whom he was living, though the professed enemy of their faith. He thought also there was more intimacy of acquaintance betwixt the hermit and the Saracen than the words of the latter had induced him to anticipate; and it had not escaped him that the former had called the latter by a name different from that which he himself had assumed. All these considerations authorized caution, if not suspicion. He determined to observe his host closely, and not to be over-hasty in communicating with him on the important charge entrusted to him.

"Beware, Saracen," he said; "methinks our host's imagination wanders as well on the subject of names as upon other matters. Thy name is Sheerkohf, and he called thee but now by another."

"My name, when in the tent of my father," replied the Kurdman, "was Ilderim, and by this I am still distinguished by many. In the field, and to soldiers, I am known as the Lion of the Mountain, being the name my good sword hath won for me. But hush, the Hamako comes—it is to warn us to rest. I know his custom; none must watch him at his vigils."

The anchorite accordingly entered, and folding his arms on his bosom as he stood before them, said with a solemn voice, "Blessed be His name, who hath appointed the quiet night to follow the busy day, and the calm sleep to refresh the wearied limbs and to compose the troubled spirit!"

Both warriors replied "Amen!" and, arising from the table, prepared to betake themselves to the couches, which their host indicated by waving his hand, as, making a reverence to each, he again withdrew from the apartment.

The Knight of the Leopard then disarmed himself of his heavy panoply, his Saracen companion kindly assisting him to undo his buckler and clasps, until he remained in the close dress of chamois leather, which knights and men-at-arms used to wear under their harness. The Saracen, if he had admired the strength of his adversary when sheathed in steel, was now no less struck with the accuracy of proportion displayed in his nervous and well-compacted figure. The knight, on the other hand, as, in exchange of courtesy, he assisted the Saracen to disrobe himself of his upper garments, that he might sleep with more convenience, was, on his side, at a loss to conceive how such slender proportions and slimness of figure could be reconciled with the vigour he had displayed in personal contest.

Each warrior prayed ere he addressed himself to his place of rest. The Moslem turned towards his KEBLAH, the point to which the prayer of each follower of the Prophet was to be addressed, and murmured his heathen orisons; while the Christian, withdrawing from the contamination of the infidel's neighbourhood, placed his huge cross-handled sword upright, and kneeling before it as the sign of salvation, told his rosary with a devotion which was enhanced by the recollection of the scenes through which he had passed, and the dangers from which he had been rescued, in the course of the day. Both warriors, worn by toil and travel, were soon fast asleep, each on his separate pallet.

CHAPTER IV.

Kenneth the Scot was uncertain how long his senses had been lost in profound repose, when he was roused to recollection by a sense of oppression on his chest, which at first suggested a flirting dream of struggling with a powerful opponent, and at length recalled him fully to his senses. He was about to demand who was there, when, opening his eyes, he beheld the figure of the anchorite, wild and savage-looking as we have described him, standing by his bedside, and pressing his right hand upon his breast, while he held a small silver lamp in the other.

"Be silent," said the hermit, as the prostrate knight looked up in surprise; "I have that to say to you which yonder infidel must not hear."

These words he spoke in the French language, and not in the lingua franca, or compound of Eastern and European dialects, which had hitherto been used amongst them.

"Arise," he continued, "put on thy mantle; speak not, but tread lightly, and follow me."

Sir Kenneth arose, and took his sword.

"It needs not," answered the anchorite, in a whisper; "we are going where spiritual arms avail much, and fleshly weapons are but as the reed and the decayed gourd."

The knight deposited his sword by the bedside as before, and, armed only with his dagger, from which in this perilous country he never parted, prepared to attend his mysterious host.

The hermit then moved slowly forwards, and was followed by the knight, still under some uncertainty whether the dark form which glided on before to show him the path was not, in fact, the creation of a disturbed dream. They passed, like shadows, into the outer apartment, without disturbing the paynim Emir, who lay still buried in repose. Before the cross and altar, in the outward room, a lamp was still burning, a missal was displayed, and on the floor lay a discipline, or penitential scourge of small cord and wire, the lashes of which were recently stained with blood—a token, no doubt, of the severe penance of the recluse. Here Theodorick kneeled down, and pointed to the knight to take his place beside him upon the sharp flints, which seemed placed for the purpose of rendering the posture of reverential devotion as uneasy as possible. He read many prayers of the Catholic Church, and chanted, in a low but earnest voice, three of the penitential psalms. These last he intermixed with sighs, and tears, and convulsive throbs, which bore witness how deeply he felt the divine poetry which he recited. The Scottish knight assisted with profound sincerity at these acts of devotion, his opinion of his host beginning, in the meantime, to be so much changed, that he doubted whether, from the severity of his penance and the ardour of his prayers, he ought not to regard him as a saint; and when they arose from the ground, he stood with reverence before him, as a pupil before an honoured master. The hermit was, on his side, silent and abstracted for the space of a few minutes.

"Look into yonder recess, my son," he said, pointing to the farther corner of the cell; "there thou wilt find a veil—bring it hither."

The knight obeyed, and in a small aperture cut out of the wall, and secured with a door of wicker, he found the veil inquired for. When he brought it to the light, he discovered that it was torn, and soiled in some places with some dark substance. The anchorite looked at it with a deep but smothered emotion, and ere he could speak to the Scottish knight, was compelled to vent his feelings in a convulsive groan.

"Thou art now about to look upon the richest treasure that the earth possesses," he at length said; "woe is me, that my eyes are unworthy to be lifted towards it! Alas! I am but the vile and despised sign, which points out to the wearied traveller a harbour of rest and security, but must itself remain for ever without doors. In vain have I fled to the very depths of the rocks, and the very bosom of the thirsty desert. Mine enemy hath found me—even he whom I have denied has pursued me to my fortresses."

He paused again for a moment, and turning to the Scottish knight, said, in a firmer tone of voice, "You bring me a greeting from Richard of England?"

"I come from the Council of Christian Princes," said the knight; "but the King of England being indisposed, I am not honoured with his Majesty's commands."

"Your token?" demanded the recluse.

Sir Kenneth hesitated. Former suspicions, and the marks of insanity which the hermit had formerly exhibited, rushed suddenly on his thoughts; but how suspect a man whose manners were so saintly? "My password," he said at length, "is this—Kings begged of a beggar."

"It is right," said the hermit, while he paused. "I know you well; but the sentinel upon his post—and mine is an important one—challenges friend as well as foe."

He then moved forward with the lamp, leading the way into the room which they had left. The Saracen lay on his couch, still fast asleep. The hermit paused by his side, and looked down on him.

"He sleeps," he said, "in darkness, and must not be awakened."

The attitude of the Emir did indeed convey the idea of profound repose. One arm, flung across his body, as he lay with his face half turned to the wall, concealed, with its loose and long sleeve, the greater part of his face; but the high forehead was yet visible. Its nerves, which during his waking hours were so uncommonly active, were now motionless, as if the face had been composed of dark marble, and his long silken eyelashes closed over his piercing and hawklike eyes. The open and relaxed hand, and the deep, regular, and soft breathing, all gave tokens of the most profound repose. The slumberer formed a singular group along with the tall forms of the hermit in his shaggy dress of goat-skins, bearing the lamp, and the knight in his close leathern coat—the former with an austere expression of ascetic gloom, the latter with anxious curiosity deeply impressed on his manly features.

"He sleeps soundly," said the hermit, in the same low tone as before; and repeating the words, though he had changed the meaning from that which is literal to a metaphorical sense—"he sleeps in darkness, but there shall be for him a dayspring.—O Ilderim, thy waking thoughts are yet as vain and wild as those which are wheeling their giddy dance through thy sleeping brain; but the trumpet shall be heard, and the dream shall be dissolved."

So saying, and making the knight a sign to follow him, the hermit went towards the altar, and passing behind it, pressed a spring, which, opening without noise, showed a small iron door wrought in the side of the cavern, so as to be almost imperceptible, unless upon the most severe scrutiny. The hermit, ere he ventured fully to open the door, dropped some oil on the hinges, which the lamp supplied. A small staircase, hewn in the rock, was discovered, when the iron door was at length completely opened.

"Take the veil which I hold," said the hermit, in a melancholy tone, "and blind mine eyes; For I may not look on the treasure which thou art presently to behold, without sin and presumption."

Without reply, the knight hastily muffled the recluse's head in the veil, and the latter began to ascend the staircase as one too much accustomed to the way to require the use of light, while at the same time he held the lamp to the Scot, who followed him for many steps up the narrow ascent. At length they rested in a small vault of irregular form, in one nook of which the staircase terminated, while in another corner a corresponding stair was seen to continue the ascent. In a third angle was a Gothic door, very rudely ornamented with the usual attributes of clustered columns and carving, and defended by a wicket, strongly guarded with iron, and studded with large nails. To this last point the hermit directed his steps, which seemed to falter as he approached it.

"Put off thy shoes," he said to his attendant; "the ground on which thou standest is holy. Banish from thy innermost heart each profane and carnal thought, for to harbour such while in this place were a deadly impiety."

The knight laid aside his shoes as he was commanded, and the hermit stood in the meanwhile as if communing with his soul in secret prayer, and when he again moved, commanded the knight to knock at the wicket three times. He did so. The door opened spontaneously—at least Sir Kenneth beheld no one—and his senses were at once assailed by a stream of the purest light, and by a strong and almost oppressive sense of the richest perfumes. He stepped two or three paces back, and it was the space of a minute ere he recovered the dazzling and overpowering effects of the sudden change from darkness to light.

When he entered the apartment in which this brilliant lustre was displayed, he perceived that the light proceeded from a combination of silver lamps, fed with purest oil, and sending forth the richest odours, hanging by silver chains from the roof of a small Gothic chapel, hewn, like most part of the hermit's singular mansion, out of the sound and solid rock. But whereas, in every other place which Sir Kenneth had seen, the labour employed upon the rock had been of the simplest and coarsest description, it had in this chapel employed the invention and the chisels of the most able architects. The groined roofs rose from six columns on each side, carved with the rarest skill; and the manner in which the crossings of the concave arches were bound together, as it were, with appropriate ornaments, were all in the finest tone of the architecture of the age. Corresponding to the line of pillars, there were on each side six richly-wrought niches, each of which contained the image of one of the twelve apostles.

At the upper and eastern end of the chapel stood the altar, behind which a very rich curtain of Persian silk, embroidered deeply with gold, covered a recess, containing, unquestionably, some image or relic of no ordinary sanctity, in honour of which this singular place of worship had been erected, Under the persuasion that this must be the case, the knight advanced to the shrine, and kneeling down before it, repeated his devotions with fervency, during which his attention was disturbed by the curtain being suddenly raised, or rather pulled aside, how or by whom he saw not; but in the niche which was thus disclosed he beheld a cabinet of silver and ebony, with a double folding-door, the whole formed into the miniature resemblance of a Gothic church.

As he gazed with anxious curiosity on the shrine, the two folding-doors also flew open, discovering a large piece of wood, on which were blazoned the words, VERA CRUX; at the same time a choir of female voices sung GLORIA PATRI. The instant the strain had ceased, the shrine was closed, and the curtain again drawn, and the knight who knelt at the altar might now continue his devotions undisturbed, in honour of the holy relic which had been just disclosed to his view. He did this under the profound impression of one who had witnessed, with his own eyes, an awful evidence of the truth of his religion; and it was some time ere, concluding his orisons, he arose, and ventured to look around him for the hermit, who had guided him to this sacred and mysterious spot. He beheld him, his head still muffled in the veil which he had himself wrapped around it, crouching, like a rated hound, upon the threshold of the chapel; but, apparently, without venturing to cross it—the holiest reverence, the most penitential remorse, was expressed by his posture, which seemed that of a man borne down and crushed to the earth by the burden of his inward feelings. It seemed to the Scot that only the sense of the deepest penitence, remorse, and humiliation could have thus prostrated a frame so strong and a spirit so fiery.

He approached him as if to speak; but the recluse anticipated his purpose, murmuring in stifled tones, from beneath the fold in which his head was muffled, and which sounded like a voice proceeding from the cerements of a corpse,—*"Abide, abide—happy thou that mayest—the vision is not yet ended."* So saying, he reared himself from the ground, drew back from the threshold on which he had hitherto lain prostrate, and closed the door of the chapel, which, secured by a spring bolt within, the snap of which resounded through the place, appeared so much like a part of the living rock from which the cavern was hewn, that Kenneth could hardly discern where the aperture had been. He was now alone in the lighted chapel which contained the relic to which he had lately rendered his homage, without other arms than his dagger, or other companion than his pious thoughts and dauntless courage.

Uncertain what was next to happen, but resolved to abide the course of events, Sir Kenneth paced the solitary chapel till about the time of the earliest cock-crowing. At this dead season, when night and morning met together, he heard, but from what quarter he could not discover, the sound of such a small silver bell

as is rung at the elevation of the host in the ceremony, or sacrifice, as it has been called, of the mass. The hour and the place rendered the sound fearfully solemn, and, bold as he was, the knight withdrew himself into the farther nook of the chapel, at the end opposite to the altar, in order to observe, without interruption, the consequences of this unexpected signal.

He did not wait long ere the silken curtain was again withdrawn, and the relic again presented to his view. As he sunk reverentially on his knee, he heard the sound of the lauds, or earliest office of the Catholic Church, sung by female voices, which united together in the performance as they had done in the former service. The knight was soon aware that the voices were no longer stationary in the distance, but approached the chapel and became louder, when a door, imperceptible when closed, like that by which he had himself entered, opened on the other side of the vault, and gave the tones of the choir more room to swell along the ribbed arches of the roof.

The knight fixed his eyes on the opening with breathless anxiety, and, continuing to kneel in the attitude of devotion which the place and scene required, expected the consequence of these preparations. A procession appeared about to issue from the door. First, four beautiful boys, whose arms, necks, and legs were bare, showing the bronze complexion of the East, and contrasting with the snow-white tunics which they wore, entered the chapel by two and two. The first pair bore censers, which they swung from side to side, adding double fragrance to the odours with which the chapel already was impregnated. The second pair scattered flowers.

After these followed, in due and majestic order, the females who composed the choir—six, who from their black scapularies, and black veils over their white garments, appeared to be professed nuns of the order of Mount Carmel; and as many whose veils, being white, argued them to be novices, or occasional inhabitants in the cloister, who were not as yet bound to it by vows. The former held in their hands large rosaries, while the younger and lighter figures who followed carried each a chaplet of red and white roses. They moved in procession around the chapel, without appearing to take the slightest notice of Kenneth, although passing so near him that their robes almost touched him, while they continued to sing. The knight doubted not that he was in one of those cloisters where the noble Christian maidens had formerly openly devoted themselves to the services of the church. Most of them had been suppressed since the Mohammedans had reconquered Palestine, but many, purchasing connivance by presents, or receiving it from the clemency or contempt of the victors, still continued to observe in private the ritual to which their vows had consecrated them. Yet, though Kenneth knew this to be the case, the solemnity of the place and hour, the surprise at the sudden appearance of these votaresses, and the visionary manner in which they moved past him, had such influence on his imagination that he could scarce conceive that the fair procession which he beheld was formed of creatures of this world, so much did they resemble a choir of supernatural beings, rendering homage to the universal object of adoration.

Such was the knight's first idea, as the procession passed him, scarce moving, save just sufficiently to continue their progress; so that, seen by the shadowy and religious light which the lamps shed through the clouds of incense which darkened the apartment, they appeared rather to glide than to walk.

But as a second time, in surrounding the chapel, they passed the spot on which he knelt, one of the white-stoled maidens, as she glided by him, detached from the chaplet which she carried a rosebud, which dropped from her fingers, perhaps unconsciously, on the foot of Sir Kenneth. The knight started as if a dart had suddenly struck his person; for, when the mind is wound up to a high pitch of feeling and expectation, the slightest incident, if unexpected, gives fire to the train which imagination has already laid. But he suppressed his emotion, recollecting how easily an incident so indifferent might have happened, and that it was only the uniform monotony of the movement of the choristers which made the incident in the slightest degree remarkable.

Still, while the procession, for the third time, surrounded the chapel, the thoughts and the eyes of Kenneth followed exclusively the one among the novices who had dropped the rosebud. Her step, her face, her form were so completely assimilated to the rest of the choristers that it was impossible to perceive the least marks of individuality; and yet Kenneth's heart throbbed like a bird that would burst from its cage, as if to assure him, by its sympathetic suggestions, that the female who held the right file on the second rank of the novices was dearer to him, not only than all the rest that were present, but than the whole sex besides. The romantic passion of love, as it was cherished, and indeed enjoined, by the rules of chivalry, associated well with the no less romantic feelings of devotion; and they might be said much more to enhance than to counteract each other. It was, therefore, with a glow of expectation that had something even of a religious character that Sir Kenneth, his sensations thrilling from his heart to the ends of his fingers, expected some second sign of the presence of one who, he strongly fancied, had already bestowed on him the first. Short as the space was during which the procession again completed a third perambulation of the chapel, it seemed an eternity to Kenneth. At length the form which he had watched with such devoted attention drew nigh. There was no difference betwixt that shrouded figure and the others, with whom it moved in concert and in unison, until, just as she passed for the third time the kneeling Crusader, a part of a little and well-proportioned hand, so beautifully formed as to give the highest idea of the perfect proportions of the form to which it belonged, stole through the folds of the gauze, like a moonbeam through the fleecy cloud of a summer night, and again a rosebud lay at the feet of the Knight of the Leopard.

This second intimation could not be accidental—it could not be fortuitous, the resemblance of that half-seen but beautiful female hand with one which his lips had once touched, and, while they touched it, had internally sworn allegiance to the lovely owner. Had further proof been wanting, there was the glimmer of that matchless ruby ring on that snow-white finger, whose invaluable worth Kenneth would yet have prized less than the slightest sign which that finger could have made; and, veiled too, as she was, he might see, by chance or by favour, a stray curl of the dark tresses, each hair of which was dearer to him a hundred times than a chain of massive gold. It was the lady of his love! But that she should be here—in the savage and sequestered desert—among vestals, who rendered themselves habitants of wilds and of caverns, that they might perform in secret those Christian rites which they dared not assist in openly; that this should be so, in truth and in reality, seemed too incredible—it must be a dream—a delusive trance of the imagination. While these thoughts passed through the mind of Kenneth, the same passage, by which the procession had entered the chapel, received them on their return. The young sacristans, the sable nuns, vanished successively through the open door. At length she from whom he had received this double intimation passed also; yet, in passing, turned her head, slightly indeed, but perceptibly, towards the place where he remained fixed as an image. He marked the last wave of her veil—it was gone—and a darkness sunk upon his soul, scarce less palpable than that which almost immediately enveloped his external sense; for the last chorister had no sooner crossed the threshold of the door than it shut with a loud sound, and at the same instant the voices of the choir were silent, the lights of the chapel were at once extinguished, and Sir Kenneth remained solitary and in total darkness. But to Kenneth, solitude, and darkness, and the uncertainty of his mysterious situation were as nothing—he thought not of them—cared not for them—cared for nought in the world save the flitting vision which had just glided past him, and the tokens of her favour which she had bestowed. To grope on the floor for the buds which she had dropped—to press them to his lips, to his bosom, now alternately, now together—to rivet his lips to the cold stones on which, as near as he could judge, she had so lately stepped—to play all the extravagances which strong affection suggests and vindicates to those who yield themselves up to it, were but the tokens of passionate love common to all ages. But it was peculiar to the times of chivalry that, in his wildest rapture, the knight imagined of no attempt to follow or to trace the object of such romantic attachment; that he thought of her as of a deity, who, having deigned to show herself for an instant to her devoted worshipper, had again returned to the darkness of her sanctuary—or as an influential planet, which, having darted in some auspicious minute one favourable ray, wrapped itself again in its veil of mist. The motions of the lady of his love were to him those of a superior being, who was to move without watch or control, rejoice him by her appearance, or depress him by her absence, animate him by her kindness, or drive him to despair by her cruelty—all at her own free will, and without other importunity or remonstrance than that expressed by the most devoted services of the heart and sword of the champion, whose sole object in life was to fulfil her commands, and, by the splendour of his own achievements, to exalt her fame.

Such were the rules of chivalry, and of the love which was its ruling principle. But Sir Kenneth's attachment was rendered romantic by other and still more peculiar circumstances. He had never even heard the sound of his lady's voice, though he had often beheld her beauty with rapture. She moved in a circle which his rank of knighthood permitted him indeed to approach, but not to mingle with; and highly as he stood distinguished for warlike skill and enterprise, still the poor Scottish soldier was compelled to worship his divinity at a distance almost as great as divides the Persian from the sun which he adores. But when was the pride of woman too lofty to overlook the passionate devotion of a lover, however inferior in degree? Her eye had been on him in the tournament, her ear had heard his praises in the report of the battles which were daily fought; and while count, duke, and lord contended for her grace, it flowed, unwillingly perhaps at first, or even

unconsciously, towards the poor Knight of the Leopard, who, to support his rank, had little besides his sword. When she looked, and when she listened, the lady saw and heard enough to encourage her in a partiality which had at first crept on her unawares. If a knight's personal beauty was praised, even the most prudish dames of the military court of England would make an exception in favour of the Scottish Kenneth; and it oftentimes happened that, notwithstanding the very considerable largesses which princes and peers bestowed on the minstrels, an impartial spirit of independence would seize the poet, and the harp was swept to the heroism of one who had neither palfreys nor garments to bestow in guerdon of his applause.

The moments when she listened to the praises of her lover became gradually more and more dear to the high-born Edith, relieving the flattery with which her ear was weary, and presenting to her a subject of secret contemplation, more worthy, as he seemed by general report, than those who surpassed him in rank and in the gifts of fortune. As her attention became constantly, though cautiously, fixed on Sir Kenneth, she grew more and more convinced of his personal devotion to herself and more and more certain in her mind that in Kenneth of Scotland she beheld the fated knight doomed to share with her through weal and woe—and the prospect looked gloomy and dangerous—the passionate attachment to which the poets of the age ascribed such universal dominion, and which its manners and morals placed nearly on the same rank with devotion itself.

Let us not disguise the truth from our readers. When Edith became aware of the state of her own sentiments, chivalrous as were her sentiments, becoming a maiden not distant from the throne of England—gratified as her pride must have been with the mute though unceasing homage rendered to her by the knight whom she had distinguished, there were moments when the feelings of the woman, loving and beloved, murmured against the restraints of state and form by which she was surrounded, and when she almost blamed the timidity of her lover, who seemed resolved not to infringe them. The etiquette, to use a modern phrase, of birth and rank, had drawn around her a magical circle, beyond which Sir Kenneth might indeed bow and gaze, but within which he could no more pass than an evoked spirit can transgress the boundaries prescribed by the rod of a powerful enchanter. The thought involuntarily pressed on her that she herself must venture, were it but the point of her fairy foot, beyond the prescribed boundary, if she ever hoped to give a lover so reserved and bashful an opportunity of so slight a favour as but to salute her shoe-tie. There was an example—the noted precedent of the "King's daughter of Hungary," who thus generously encouraged the "squire of low degree;" and Edith, though of kingly blood, was no king's daughter, any more than her lover was of low degree—fortune had put no such extreme barrier in obstacle to their affections. Something, however, within the maiden's bosom—that modest pride which throws fetters even on love itself forbade her, notwithstanding the superiority of her condition, to make those advances, which, in every case, delicacy assigns to the other sex; above all, Sir Kenneth was a knight so gentle and honourable, so highly accomplished, as her imagination at least suggested, together with the strictest feelings of what was due to himself and to her, that however constrained her attitude might be while receiving his adorations, like the image of some deity, who is neither supposed to feel nor to reply to the homage of its votaries, still the idol feared that to step prematurely from her pedestal would be to degrade herself in the eyes of her devoted worshipper.

Yet the devout adorer of an actual idol can even discover signs of approbation in the rigid and immovable features of a marble image; and it is no wonder that something, which could be as favourably interpreted, glanced from the bright eye of the lovely Edith, whose beauty, indeed, consisted rather more in that very power of expression, than an absolute regularity of contour or brilliancy of complexion. Some slight marks of distinction had escaped from her, notwithstanding her own jealous vigilance, else how could Sir Kenneth have so readily and so undoubtingly recognized the lovely hand, of which scarce two fingers were visible from under the veil, or how could he have rested so thoroughly assured that two flowers, successively dropped on the spot, were intended as a recognition on the part of his lady-love? By what train of observation—by what secret signs, looks, or gestures—by what instinctive freemasonry of love, this degree of intelligence came to subsist between Edith and her lover, we cannot attempt to trace; for we are old, and such slight vestiges of affection, quickly discovered by younger eyes, defy the power of ours. Enough that such affection did subsist between parties who had never even spoken to one another—though, on the side of Edith, it was checked by a deep sense of the difficulties and dangers which must necessarily attend the further progress of their attachment; and upon that of the knight by a thousand doubts and fears lest he had overestimated the slight tokens of the lady's notice, varied, as they necessarily were, by long intervals of apparent coldness, during which either the fear of exciting the observation of others, and thus drawing danger upon her lover, or that of sinking in his esteem by seeming too willing to be won, made her behave with indifference, and as if unobservant of his presence.

This narrative, tedious perhaps, but which the story renders necessary, may serve to explain the state of intelligence, if it deserves so strong a name, betwixt the lovers, when Edith's unexpected appearance in the chapel produced so powerful an effect on the feelings of her knight.

CHAPTER V.

*Their necromantic forms in vain
Haunt us on the tented plain;
We bid these spectre shapes avaunt,
Ashtaroth and Termagaunt.* WARTON.

The most profound silence, the deepest darkness, continued to brood for more than an hour over the chapel in which we left the Knight of the Leopard still kneeling, alternately expressing thanks to Heaven and gratitude to his lady for the boon which had been vouchsafed to him. His own safety, his own destiny, for which he was at all times little anxious, had not now the weight of a grain of dust in his reflections. He was in the neighbourhood of Lady Edith; he had received tokens of her grace; he was in a place hallowed by relics of the most awful sanctity. A Christian soldier, a devoted lover, could fear nothing, think of nothing, but his duty to Heaven and his devoir to his lady.

At the lapse of the space of time which we have noticed, a shrill whistle, like that with which a falconer calls his hawk, was heard to ring sharply through the vaulted chapel. It was a sound ill suited to the place, and reminded Sir Kenneth how necessary it was he should be upon his guard. He started from his knee, and laid his hand upon his poniard. A creaking sound, as of a screw or pulleys, succeeded, and a light streaming upwards, as from an opening in the floor, showed that a trap-door had been raised or depressed. In less than a minute a long, skinny arm, partly naked, partly clothed in a sleeve of red samite, arose out of the aperture, holding a lamp as high as it could stretch upwards, and the figure to which the arm belonged ascended step by step to the level of the chapel floor. The form and face of the being who thus presented himself were those of a frightful dwarf, with a large head, a cap fantastically adorned with three peacock feathers, a dress of red samite, the richness of which rendered his ugliness more conspicuous, distinguished by gold bracelets and armlets, and a white silk sash, in which he wore a gold-hilted dagger. This singular figure had in his left hand a kind of broom. So soon as he had stepped from the aperture through which he arose, he stood still, and, as if to show himself more distinctly, moved the lamp which he held slowly over his face and person, successively illuminating his wild and fantastic features, and his misshapen but nervous limbs. Though disproportioned in person, the dwarf was not so distorted as to argue any want of strength or activity. While Sir Kenneth gazed on this disagreeable object, the popular creed occurred to his remembrance concerning the gnomes or earthly spirits which make their abode in the caverns of the earth; and so much did this figure correspond with ideas he had formed of their appearance, that he looked on it with disgust, mingled not indeed with fear, but that sort of awe which the presence of a supernatural creature may infuse into the most steady bosom.

The dwarf again whistled, and summoned from beneath a companion. This second figure ascended in the same manner as the first; but it was a female arm in this second instance which upheld the lamp from the subterranean vault out of which these presentments arose, and it was a female form, much resembling the first in shape and proportions, which slowly emerged from the floor. Her dress was also of red samite, fantastically cut and flounced, as if she had been dressed for some exhibition of mimes or jugglers; and with the same minuteness which her predecessor had exhibited, she passed the lamp over her face and person, which seemed to rival the male's in ugliness. But with all this most unfavourable exterior, there was one trait in the features of both which argued alertness and intelligence in the most uncommon degree. This arose from the brilliancy of their eyes, which, deep-set beneath black and shaggy brows, gleamed with a lustre which, like that in the eye of the toad, seemed to make some amends for the extreme ugliness of countenance and person.

Sir Kenneth remained as if spellbound, while this unlovely pair, moving round the chapel close to each other, appeared to perform the duty of sweeping it, like menials; but as they used only one hand, the floor was not much benefited by the exercise, which they plied with such oddity of gestures and manner as befitted their bizarre and fantastic appearance. When they approached near to the knight in the course of their occupation, they ceased to use their brooms; and placing themselves side by side, directly opposite to Sir Kenneth, they again slowly shifted the lights which they held, so as to allow him distinctly to survey features which were not rendered more agreeable by being brought nearer, and to observe the extreme quickness and keenness with which their black and glittering eyes flashed back the light of the lamps. They then turned the gleam of both lights upon the knight, and having accurately surveyed him, turned their faces to each other, and set up a loud, yelling laugh, which resounded in his ears. The sound was so ghastly that Sir Kenneth started at hearing it, and hastily demanded, in the name of God, who they were who profaned that holy place with such antic gestures and elritch exclamations.

"I am the dwarf Nectabanus," said the abortion-seeming male, in a voice corresponding to his figure, and resembling the voice of the night-crow more than any sound which is heard by daylight.

"And I am Guenevra, his lady and his love," replied the female, in tones which, being shriller, were yet wilder than those of her companion.

"Wherefore are you here?" again demanded the knight, scarcely yet assured that they were human beings which he saw before him.

"I am," replied the male dwarf, with much assumed gravity and dignity, "the twelfth Imaum. I am Mohammed Mohadi, the guide and the conductor of the faithful. A hundred horses stand ready saddled for me and my train at the Holy City, and as many at the City of Refuge. I am he who shall bear witness, and this is one of my hours."

"Thou liest!" answered the female, interrupting her companion, in tones yet shriller than his own; "I am none of thy hours, and thou art no such infidel trash as the Mohammed of whom thou speakest. May my curse rest upon his coffin! I tell thee, thou ass of Issachar, thou art King Arthur of Britain, whom the fairies stole away from the field of Avalon; and I am Dame Guenevra, famed for her beauty."

"But in truth, noble sir," said the male, "we are distressed princes, dwelling under the wing of King Guy of Jerusalem, until he was driven out from his own nest by the foul infidels—Heaven's bolts consume them!"

"Hush," said a voice from the side upon which the knight had entered—"hush, fools, and begone; your ministry is ended."

The dwarfs had no sooner heard the command than, gibbering in discordant whispers to each other, they blew out their lights at once, and left the knight in utter darkness, which, when the pattering of their retiring feet had died away, was soon accompanied by its fittest companion, total silence.

The knight felt the departure of these unfortunate creatures a relief. He could not, from their language, manners, and appearance, doubt that they belonged to the degraded class of beings whom deformity of person and weakness of intellect recommended to the painful situation of appendages to great families, where their personal appearance and imbecility were food for merriment to the household. Superior in no respect to the ideas and manners of his time, the Scottish knight might, at another period, have been much amused by the mummary of these poor effigies of humanity; but now their appearance, gesticulations, and language broke the train of deep and solemn feeling with which he was impressed, and he rejoiced in the disappearance of the unhappy objects.

A few minutes after they had retired, the door at which he had entered opened slowly, and remaining ajar, discovered a faint light arising from a lantern placed upon the threshold. Its doubtful and wavering gleam showed a dark form reclined beside the entrance, but without its precincts, which, on approaching it more nearly, he recognized to be the hermit, crouching in the same humble posture in which he had at first laid himself down, and which, doubtless, he had retained during the whole time of his guest's continuing in the chapel.

"All is over," said the hermit, as he heard the knight approaching, "and the most wretched of earthly sinners, with him who should think himself most honoured and most happy among the race of humanity, must retire from this place. Take the light, and guide me down the descent, for I must not uncover my eyes until I am far from this hallowed spot."

The Scottish knight obeyed in silence, for a solemn and yet ecstatic sense of what he had seen had silenced even the eager workings of curiosity. He led the way, with considerable accuracy, through the various secret passages and stairs by which they had ascended, until at length they found themselves in the outward cell of the hermit's cavern.

"The condemned criminal is restored to his dungeon, reprieved from one miserable day to another, until his awful Judge shall at length appoint the well-deserved sentence to be carried into execution."

As the hermit spoke these words, he laid aside the veil with which his eyes had been bound, and looked at it with a suppressed and hollow sigh. No sooner had he restored it to the crypt from which he had caused the Scot to bring it, than he said hastily and sternly to his companion; "Begone, begone—to rest, to rest. You may sleep—you can sleep—I neither can nor may."

Respecting the profound agitation with which this was spoken, the knight retired into the inner cell; but casting back his eye as he left the exterior grotto, he beheld the anchorite stripping his shoulders with frantic haste of their shaggy mantle, and ere he could shut the frail door which separated the two compartments of the cavern, he heard the clang of the scourge and the groans of the penitent under his self-inflicted penance. A cold shudder came over the knight as he reflected what could be the foulness of the sin, what the depth of the remorse, which, apparently, such severe penance could neither cleanse nor assuage. He told his beads devoutly, and flung himself on his rude couch, after a glance at the still sleeping Moslem, and, wearied by the various scenes of the day and the night, soon slept as sound as infancy. Upon his awaking in the morning, he held certain conferences with the hermit upon matters of importance, and the result of their intercourse induced him to remain for two days longer in the grotto. He was regular, as became a pilgrim, in his devotional exercises, but was not again admitted to the chapel in which he had seen such wonders.

CHAPTER VI.

Now change the scene—and let the trumpets sound,

For we must rouse the lion from his lair. OLD PLAY.

The scene must change, as our programme has announced, from the mountain wilderness of Jordan to the camp of King Richard of England, then stationed betwixt Jean d'Acre and Ascalon, and containing that army with which he of the lion heart had promised himself a triumphant march to Jerusalem, and in which he would probably have succeeded, if not hindered by the jealousies of the Christian princes engaged in the same enterprise, and the offence taken by them at the uncurbed haughtiness of the English monarch, and Richard's unveiled contempt for his brother sovereigns, who, his equals in rank, were yet far his inferiors in courage, hardihood, and military talents. Such discords, and particularly those betwixt Richard and Philip of France, created disputes and obstacles which impeded every active measure proposed by the heroic though impetuous Richard, while the ranks of the Crusaders were daily thinned, not only by the desertion of individuals, but of entire bands, headed by their respective feudal leaders, who withdrew from a contest in which they had ceased to hope for success.

The effects of the climate became, as usual, fatal to soldiers from the north, and the more so that the dissolute license of the Crusaders, forming a singular contrast to the principles and purpose of their taking up arms, rendered them more easy victims to the insalubrious influence of burning heat and chilling dews. To these discouraging causes of loss was to be added the sword of the enemy. Saladin, than whom no greater name is recorded in Eastern history, had learned, to his fatal experience, that his light-armed followers were little able to meet in close encounter with the iron-clad Franks, and had been taught, at the same time, to apprehend and dread the adventurous character of his antagonist Richard. But if his armies were more than once routed with great slaughter, his numbers gave the Saracen the advantage in those lighter skirmishes, of which many were inevitable.

As the army of his assailants decreased, the enterprises of the Sultan became more numerous and more bold in this species of petty warfare. The camp of the Crusaders was surrounded, and almost besieged, by clouds of light cavalry, resembling swarms of wasps, easily crushed when they are once grasped, but

furnished with wings to elude superior strength, and stings to inflict harm and mischief. There was perpetual warfare of posts and foragers, in which many valuable lives were lost, without any corresponding object being gained; convoys were intercepted, and communications were cut off. The Crusaders had to purchase the means of sustaining life, by life itself; and water, like that of the well of Bethlehem, longed for by King David, one of its ancient monarchs, was then, as before, only obtained by the expenditure of blood.

These evils were in a great measure counterbalanced by the stern resolution and restless activity of King Richard, who, with some of his best knights, was ever on horseback, ready to repair to any point where danger occurred, and often not only bringing unexpected succour to the Christians, but discomfiting the infidels when they seemed most secure of victory. But even the iron frame of Coeur de Lion could not support without injury the alternations of the unwholesome climate, joined to ceaseless exertions of body and mind. He became afflicted with one of those slow and wasting fevers peculiar to Asia, and in despite of his great strength and still greater courage, grew first unfit to mount on horseback, and then unable to attend the councils of war which were from time to time held by the Crusaders. It was difficult to say whether this state of personal inactivity was rendered more galling or more endurable to the English monarch by the resolution of the council to engage in a truce of thirty days with the Sultan Saladin; for on the one hand, if he was incensed at the delay which this interposed to the progress of the great enterprise, he was, on the other, somewhat consoled by knowing that others were not acquiring laurels while he remained inactive upon a sick-bed.

That, however, which Coeur de Lion could least excuse was the general inactivity which prevailed in the camp of the Crusaders so soon as his illness assumed a serious aspect; and the reports which he extracted from his unwilling attendants gave him to understand that the hopes of the host had abated in proportion to his illness, and that the interval of truce was employed, not in recruiting their numbers, reanimating their courage, fostering their spirit of conquest, and preparing for a speedy and determined advance upon the Holy City, which was the object of their expedition, but in securing the camp occupied by their diminished followers with trenches, palisades, and other fortifications, as if preparing rather to repel an attack from a powerful enemy so soon as hostilities should recommence, than to assume the proud character of conquerors and assailants.

The English king chafed under these reports, like the imprisoned lion viewing his prey from the iron barriers of his cage. Naturally rash and impetuous, the irritability of his temper preyed on itself. He was dreaded by his attendants and even the medical assistants feared to assume the necessary authority which a physician, to do justice to his patient, must needs exercise over him. One faithful baron, who, perhaps, from the congenial nature of his disposition, was devoutly attached to the King's person, dared alone to come between the dragon and his wrath, and quietly, but firmly, maintained a control which no other dared assume over the dangerous invalid, and which Thomas de Multon only exercised because he esteemed his sovereign's life and honour more than he did the degree of favour which he might lose, or even the risk which he might incur, in nursing a patient so intractable, and whose displeasure was so perilous.

Sir Thomas was the Lord of Gilsland, in Cumberland, and in an age when surnames and titles were not distinctly attached, as now, to the individuals who bore them, he was called by the Normans the Lord de Vaux; and in English by the Saxons, who clung to their native language, and were proud of the share of Saxon blood in this renowned warrior's veins, he was termed Thomas, or, more familiarly, Thom of the Gills, or Narrow Valleys, from which his extensive domains derived their well-known appellation.

This chief had been exercised in almost all the wars, whether waged betwixt England and Scotland, or amongst the various domestic factions which then tore the former country asunder, and in all had been distinguished, as well from his military conduct as his personal prowess. He was, in other respects, a rude soldier, blunt and careless in his bearing, and taciturn—nay, almost sullen—in his habits of society, and seeming, at least, to disclaim all knowledge of policy and of courtly art. There were men, however, who pretended to look deeply into character, who asserted that the Lord de Vaux was not less shrewd and aspiring than he was blunt and bold, and who thought that, while he assimilated himself to the king's own character of blunt hardihood, it was, in some degree at least, with an eye to establish his favour, and to gratify his own hopes of deep-laid ambition. But no one cared to thwart his schemes, if such he had, by rivalling him in the dangerous occupation of daily attendance on the sick-bed of a patient whose disease was pronounced infectious, and more especially when it was remembered that the patient was Coeur de Lion, suffering under all the furious impatience of a soldier withheld from battle, and a sovereign sequestered from authority; and the common soldiers, at least in the English army, were generally of opinion that De Vaux attended on the King like comrade upon comrade, in the honest and disinterested frankness of military friendship contracted between the partakers of daily dangers.

It was on the decline of a Syrian day that Richard lay on his couch of sickness, loathing it as much in mind as his illness made it irksome to his body. His bright blue eye, which at all times shone with uncommon keenness and splendour, had its vivacity augmented by fever and mental impatience, and glanced from among his curled and unshorn locks of yellow hair as fitfully and as vividly as the last gleams of the sun shoot through the clouds of an approaching thunderstorm, which still, however, are gilded by its beams. His manly features showed the progress of wasting illness, and his beard, neglected and untrimmed, had overgrown both lips and chin. Casting himself from side to side, now clutching towards him the coverings, which at the next moment he flung as impatiently from him, his tossed couch and impatient gestures showed at once the energy and the reckless impatience of a disposition whose natural sphere was that of the most active exertion.

Beside his couch stood Thomas de Vaux, in face, attitude, and manner the strongest possible contrast to the suffering monarch. His stature approached the gigantic, and his hair in thickness might have resembled that of Samson, though only after the Israelitish champion's locks had passed under the shears of the Philistines, for those of De Vaux were cut short, that they might be enclosed under his helmet. The light of his broad, large hazel eye resembled that of the autumn morn; and it was only perturbed for a moment, when from time to time it was attracted by Richard's vehement marks of agitation and restlessness. His features, though massive like his person, might have been handsome before they were defaced with scars; his upper lip, after the fashion of the Normans, was covered with thick moustaches, which grew so long and luxuriantly as to mingle with his hair, and, like his hair, were dark brown, slightly brindled with grey. His frame seemed of that kind which most readily defies both toil and climate, for he was thin-flanked, broad-chested, long-armed, deep-breathed, and strong-limbed. He had not laid aside his buff-coat, which displayed the cross cut on the shoulder, for more than three nights, enjoying but such momentary repose as the warder of a sick monarch's couch might by snatches indulge. This Baron rarely changed his posture, except to administer to Richard the medicine or refreshments which none of his less favoured attendants could persuade the impatient monarch to take; and there was something affecting in the kindly yet awkward manner in which he discharged offices so strangely contrasted with his blunt and soldierly habits and manners.

The pavilion in which these personages were, had, as became the time, as well as the personal character of Richard, more of a warlike than a sumptuous or royal character. Weapons offensive and defensive, several of them of strange and newly-invented construction, were scattered about the tented apartment, or disposed upon the pillars which supported it. Skins of animals slain in the chase were stretched on the ground, or extended along the sides of the pavilion; and upon a heap of these silvan spoils lay three ALANS, as they were then called (wolf-greyhounds, that is), of the largest size, and as white as snow. Their faces, marked with many a scar from clutch and fang, showed their share in collecting the trophies upon which they reposed; and their eyes, fixed from time to time with an expressive stretch and yawn upon the bed of Richard, evinced how much they marvelled at and regretted the unwonted inactivity which they were compelled to share. These were but the accompaniments of the soldier and huntsman; but on a small table close by the bed was placed a shield of wrought steel, of triangular form, bearing the three lions passant first assumed by the chivalrous monarch, and before it the golden circlet, resembling much a ducal coronet, only that it was higher in front than behind, which, with the purple velvet and embroidered tiara that lined it, formed then the emblem of England's sovereignty. Beside it, as if prompt for defending the regal symbol, lay a mighty curtal-axe, which would have wearied the arm of any other than Coeur de Lion.

In an outer partition of the pavilion waited two or three officers of the royal household, depressed, anxious for their master's health, and not less so for their own safety, in case of his decease. Their gloomy apprehensions spread themselves to the warders without, who paced about in downcast and silent contemplation, or, resting on their halberds, stood motionless on their post, rather like armed trophies than living warriors.

"So thou hast no better news to bring me from without, Sir Thomas!" said the King, after a long and perturbed silence, spent in the feverish agitation which we have endeavoured to describe. "All our knights turned women, and our ladies become devotees, and neither a spark of valour nor of gallantry to enlighten a camp which contains the choicest of Europe's chivalry—ha!"

"The truce, my lord," said De Vaux, with the same patience with which he had twenty times repeated the explanation—"the truce prevents us bearing ourselves as men of action; and for the ladies, I am no great reveller, as is well known to your Majesty, and seldom exchange steel and buff for velvet and gold—but thus far I know, that our choicest beauties are waiting upon the Queen's Majesty and the Princess, to a pilgrimage to the convent of Engaddi, to accomplish their vows for your Highness's deliverance from this trouble."

"And is it thus," said Richard, with the impatience of indisposition, "that royal matrons and maidens should risk themselves, where the dogs who defile the land have as little truth to man as they have faith towards God?"

"Nay, my lord," said De Vaux, "they have Saladin's word for their safety."

"True, true!" replied Richard; "and I did the heathen Soldan injustice—I owe him reparation for it. Would God I were but fit to offer it him upon my body between the two hosts—Christendom and heathenesse both looking on!"

As Richard spoke, he thrust his right arm out of bed naked to the shoulder, and painfully raising himself in his couch, shook his clenched hand, as if it grasped sword or battle-axe, and was then brandished over the jewelled turban of the Soldan. It was not without a gentle degree of violence, which the King would scarce have endured from another, that De Vaux, in his character of sick-nurse, compelled his royal master to replace himself in the couch, and covered his sinewy arm, neck, and shoulders with the care which a mother bestows upon an impatient child.

"Thou art a rough nurse, though a willing one, De Vaux," said the King, laughing with a bitter expression, while he submitted to the strength which he was unable to resist; "methinks a coif would become thy lowering features as well as a child's biggin would beseem mine. We should be a babe and nurse to frighten girls with."

"We have frightened men in our time, my liege," said De Vaux; "and, I trust, may live to frighten them again. What is a fever-fit, that we should not endure it patiently, in order to get rid of it easily?"

"Fever-fit!" exclaimed Richard impetuously; "thou mayest think, and justly, that it is a fever-fit with me; but what is it with all the other Christian princes—with Philip of France, with that dull Austrian, with him of Montserrat, with the Hospitallers, with the Templars—what is it with all them? I will tell thee. It is a cold palsy, a dead lethargy, a disease that deprives them of speech and action, a canker that has eaten into the heart of all that is noble, and chivalrous, and virtuous among them—that has made them false to the noblest vow ever knights were sworn to—has made them indifferent to their fame, and forgetful of their God!"

"For the love of Heaven, my liege," said De Vaux, "take it less violently—you will be heard without doors, where such speeches are but too current already among the common soldiery, and engender discord and contention in the Christian host. Bethink you that your illness mars the mainspring of their enterprise; a mangonel will work without screw and lever better than the Christian host without King Richard."

"Thou flatterest me, De Vaux," said Richard, and not insensible to the power of praise, he reclined his head on the pillow with a more deliberate attempt to repose than he had yet exhibited. But Thomas de Vaux was no courtier; the phrase which had offered had risen spontaneously to his lips, and he knew not how to pursue the pleasing theme so as to soothe and prolong the vein which he had excited. He was silent, therefore, until, relapsing into his moody contemplations, the King demanded of him sharply, "Despardieux! This is smoothly said to soothe a sick man; but does a league of monarchs, an assemblage of nobles, a convocation of all the chivalry of Europe, droop with the sickness of one man, though he chances to be King of England? Why should Richard's illness, or Richard's death, check the march of thirty thousand men as brave as himself? When the master stag is struck down, the herd do not disperse upon his fall; when the falcon strikes the leading crane, another takes the guidance of the phalanx. Why do not the powers assemble and choose some one to whom they may entrust the guidance of the host?"

"Forsooth, and if it please your Majesty," said De Vaux, "I hear consultations have been held among the royal leaders for some such purpose."

"Ha!" exclaimed Richard, his jealousy awakened, giving his mental irritation another direction, "am I forgot by my allies ere I have taken the last sacrament? Do they hold me dead already? But no, no, they are right. And whom do they select as leader of the Christian host?"

"Rank and dignity," said De Vaux, "point to the King of France."

"Oh, ay," answered the English monarch, "Philip of France and Navarre—Denis Mountjoie—his most Christian Majesty! Mouth-filling words these! There is but one risk—that he might mistake the words EN ARRIERE for EN AVANT, and lead us back to Paris, instead of marching to Jerusalem. His politic head has learned by this time that there is more to be gotten by oppressing his feudatories, and pillaging his allies, than fighting with the Turks for the Holy Sepulchre."

"They might choose the Archduke of Austria," said De Vaux.

"What! because he is big and burly like thyself, Thomas—nearly as thick-headed, but without thy indifference to danger and carelessness of offence? I tell thee that Austria has in all that mass of flesh no bolder animation than is afforded by the peevishness of a wasp and the courage of a wren. Out upon him! He a leader of chivalry to deeds of glory! Give him a flagon of Rhenish to drink with his besmirched baaren-hauters and lance-knechts."

"There is the Grand Master of the Templars," continued the baron, not sorry to keep his master's attention engaged on other topics than his own illness, though at the expense of the characters of prince and potentate. "There is the Grand Master of the Templars," he continued, "undaunted, skilful, brave in battle, and sage in council, having no separate kingdoms of his own to divert his exertions from the recovery of the Holy Land—what thinks your Majesty of the Master as a general leader of the Christian host?"

"Ha, Beau-Seant?" answered the King. "Oh, no exception can be taken to Brother Giles Amaury; he understands the ordering of a battle, and the fighting in front when it begins. But, Sir Thomas, were it fair to take the Holy Land from the heathen Saladin, so full of all the virtues which may distinguish unchristened man, and give it to Giles Amaury, a worse pagan than himself, an idolater, a devil-worshipper, a necromancer, who practises crimes the most dark and unnatural in the vaults and secret places of abomination and darkness?"

"The Grand Master of the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem is not tainted by fame, either with heresy or magic," said Thomas de Vaux.

"But is he not a sordid miser?" said Richard hastily; "has he not been suspected—ay, more than suspected—of selling to the infidels those advantages which they would never have won by fair force? Tush, man, better give the army to be made merchandise of by Venetian skippers and Lombardy pedlars, than trust it to the Grand Master of St. John."

"Well, then, I will venture but another guess," said the Baron de Vaux. "What say you to the gallant Marquis of Montserrat, so wise, so elegant, such a good man-at-arms?"

"Wise?—cunning, you would say," replied Richard; "elegant in a lady's chamber, if you will. Oh, ay, Conrade of Montserrat—who knows not the popinjay? Politic and versatile, he will change you his purposes as often as the trimmings of his doublet, and you shall never be able to guess the hue of his inmost vestments from their outward colours. A man-at-arms? Ay, a fine figure on horseback, and can bear him well in the tilt-yard, and at the barriers, when swords are blunted at point and edge, and spears are tipped with trenchers of wood instead of steel pikes. Wert thou not with me when I said to that same gay Marquis, 'Here we be, three good Christians, and on yonder plain there pricks a band of some threescore Saracens—what say you to charge them briskly? There are but twenty unbelieving miscreants to each true knight.'"

"I recollect the Marquis replied," said De Vaux, "that his limbs were of flesh, not of iron, and that he would rather bear the heart of a man than of a beast, though that beast were the lion, But I see how it is—we shall end where we began, without hope of praying at the Sepulchre until Heaven shall restore King Richard to health."

At this grave remark Richard burst out into a hearty fit of laughter, the first which he had for some time indulged in. "Why what a thing is conscience," he said, "that through its means even such a thick-witted northern lord as thou canst bring thy sovereign to confess his folly! It is true that, did they not propose themselves as fit to hold my leading-staff, little should I care for plucking the silken trappings off the puppets thou hast shown me in succession. What concerns it me what fine tinsel robes they swagger in, unless when they are named as rivals in the glorious enterprise to which I have vowed myself? Yes, De Vaux, I confess my weakness, and the wilfulness of my ambition. The Christian camp contains, doubtless, many a better knight than Richard of England, and it would be wise and

worthy to assign to the best of them the leading of the host. But," continued the warlike monarch, raising himself in his bed, and shaking the cover from his head, while his eyes sparkled as they were wont to do on the eve of battle, "were such a knight to plant the banner of the Cross on the Temple of Jerusalem while I was unable to bear my share in the noble task, he should, so soon as I was fit to lay lance in rest, undergo my challenge to mortal combat, for having diminished my fame, and pressed in before to the object of my enterprise. But hark, what trumpets are those at a distance?"

"Those of King Philip, as I guess, my liege," said the stout Englishman.

"Thou art dull of ear, Thomas," said the King, endeavouring to start up; "hearest thou not that clash and clang? By Heaven, the Turks are in the camp—I hear their LELIES." [The war-cries of the Moslemah.]

He again endeavoured to get out of bed, and De Vaux was obliged to exercise his own great strength, and also to summon the assistance of the chamberlains from the inner tent, to restrain him.

"Thou art a false traitor, De Vaux," said the incensed monarch, when, breathless and exhausted with struggling, he was compelled to submit to superior strength, and to repose in quiet on his couch. "I would I were—I would I were but strong enough to dash thy brains out with my battle-axe!"

"I would you had the strength, my liege," said De Vaux, "and would even take the risk of its being so employed. The odds would be great in favour of Christendom were Thomas Multon dead and Coeur de Lion himself again."

"Mine honest faithful servant," said Richard, extending his hand, which the baron reverentially saluted, "forgive thy master's impatience of mood. It is this burning fever which chides thee, and not thy kind master, Richard of England. But go, I prithee, and bring me word what strangers are in the camp, for these sounds are not of Christendom."

De Vaux left the pavilion on the errand assigned, and in his absence, which he had resolved should be brief, he charged the chamberlains, pages, and attendants to redouble their attention on their sovereign, with threats of holding them to responsibility, which rather added to than diminished their timid anxiety in the discharge of their duty; for next, perhaps, to the ire of the monarch himself, they dreaded that of the stern and inexorable Lord of Gilsland. [Sir Thomas Multon of Gilsland.]

CHAPTER VII.

*There never was a time on the march parts yet,
When Scottish with English met,
But it was marvel if the red blood ran not
As the rain does in the street.
—BATTLE OF OTTERBOURNE.*

A considerable band of Scottish warriors had joined the Crusaders, and had naturally placed themselves under the command of the English monarch, being, like his native troops, most of them of Saxon and Norman descent, speaking the same languages, possessed, some of them, of English as well as Scottish demesnes, and allied in some cases by blood and intermarriage. The period also preceded that when the grasping ambition of Edward I. gave a deadly and envenomed character to the wars betwixt the two nations—the English fighting for the subjugation of Scotland, and the Scottish, with all the stern determination and obstinacy which has ever characterized their nation, for the defence of their independence, by the most violent means, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, and at the most extreme hazard. As yet, wars betwixt the two nations, though fierce and frequent, had been conducted on principles of fair hostility, and admitted of those softening shades by which courtesy and the respect for open and generous foemen qualify and mitigate the horrors of war. In time of peace, therefore, and especially when both, as at present, were engaged in war, waged in behalf of a common cause, and rendered dear to them by their ideas of religion, the adventurers of both countries frequently fought side by side, their national emulation serving only to stimulate them to excel each other in their efforts against the common enemy.

The frank and martial character of Richard, who made no distinction betwixt his own subjects and those of William of Scotland, excepting as they bore themselves in the field of battle, tended much to conciliate the troops of both nations. But upon his illness, and the disadvantageous circumstances in which the Crusaders were placed, the national disunion between the various bands united in the Crusade, began to display itself, just as old wounds break out afresh in the human body when under the influence of disease or debility.

The Scottish and English, equally jealous and high-spirited, and apt to take offence—the former the more so, because the poorer and the weaker nation—began to fill up by internal dissension the period when the truce forbade them to wreak their united vengeance on the Saracens. Like the contending Roman chiefs of old, the Scottish would admit no superiority, and their southern neighbours would brook no equality. There were charges and recriminations, and both the common soldiery and their leaders and commanders, who had been good comrades in time of victory, lowered on each other in the period of adversity, as if their union had not been then more essential than ever, not only to the success of their common cause, but to their joint safety. The same disunion had begun to show itself betwixt the French and English, the Italians and the Germans, and even between the Danes and Swedes; but it is only that which divided the two nations whom one island bred, and who seemed more animated against each other for the very reason, that our narrative is principally concerned with.

Of all the English nobles who had followed their King to Palestine, De Vaux was most prejudiced against the Scottish. They were his near neighbours, with whom he had been engaged during his whole life in private or public warfare, and on whom he had inflicted many calamities, while he had sustained at their hands not a few. His love and devotion to the King was like the vivid affection of the old English mastiff to his master, leaving him churlish and inaccessible to all others even towards those to whom he was indifferent—and rough and dangerous to any against whom he entertained a prejudice. De Vaux had never observed without jealousy and displeasure his King exhibit any mark of courtesy or favour to the wicked, deceitful, and ferocious race born on the other side of a river, or an imaginary line drawn through waste and wilderness; and he even doubted the success of a Crusade in which they were suffered to bear arms, holding them in his secret soul little better than the Saracens whom he came to combat. It may be added that, as being himself a blunt and downright Englishman, unaccustomed to conceal the slightest movement either of love or of dislike, he accounted the fair-spoken courtesy which the Scots had learned, either from imitation of their frequent allies, the French, or which might have arisen from their own proud and reserved character, as a false and astucious mark of the most dangerous designs against their neighbours, over whom he believed, with genuine English confidence, they could, by fair manhood, never obtain any advantage.

Yet, though De Vaux entertained these sentiments concerning his Northern neighbours, and extended them, with little mitigation, even to such as had assumed the Cross, his respect for the King, and a sense of the duty imposed by his vow as a Crusader, prevented him from displaying them otherwise than by regularly shunning all intercourse with his Scottish brethren-at-arms as far as possible, by observing a sullen taciturnity when compelled to meet them occasionally, and by looking scornfully upon them when they encountered on the march and in camp. The Scottish barons and knights were not men to bear his scorn unobserved or unrepplied to; and it came to that pass that he was regarded as the determined and active enemy of a nation, whom, after all, he only disliked, and in some sort despised. Nay, it was remarked by close observers that, if he had not towards them the charity of Scripture, which suffereth long, and judges kindly, he was by no means deficient in the subordinate and limited virtue, which alleviates and relieves the wants of others. The wealth of Thomas of Gilsland procured supplies of provisions and medicines, and some of these usually flowed by secret channels into the quarters of the Scottish—his surly benevolence proceeding on the principle that, next to a man's friend, his foe was of most importance to him, passing over all the intermediate relations as too indifferent to merit even a thought. This explanation is necessary, in order that the reader may fully understand what we are now to detail.

Thomas de Vaux had not made many steps beyond the entrance of the royal pavilion when he was aware of what the far more acute ear of the English monarch—no mean proficient in the art of minstrelsy—had instantly discovered, that the musical strains, namely, which had reached their ears, were produced by

the pipes, shalms, and kettle-drums of the Saracens; and at the bottom of an avenue of tents, which formed a broad access to the pavilion of Richard, he could see a crowd of idle soldiers assembled around the spot from which the music was heard, almost in the centre of the camp; and he saw, with great surprise, mingled amid the helmets of various forms worn by the Crusaders of different nations, white turbans and long pikes, announcing the presence of armed Saracens, and the huge deformed heads of several camels or dromedaries, overlooking the multitude by aid of their long, disproportioned necks.

Wondering, and displeased at a sight so unexpected and singular—for it was customary to leave all flags of truce and other communications from the enemy at an appointed place without the barriers—the baron looked eagerly round for some one of whom he might inquire the cause of this alarming novelty.

The first person whom he met advancing to him he set down at once, by his grave and haughty step, as a Spaniard or a Scot; and presently after muttered to himself, "And a Scot it is—he of the Leopard. I have seen him fight indifferently well, for one of his country."

Loath to ask even a passing question, he was about to pass Sir Kenneth, with that sullen and lowering port which seems to say, "I know thee, but I will hold no communication with thee." But his purpose was defeated by the Northern Knight, who moved forward directly to him, and accosting him with formal courtesy, said, "My Lord de Vaux of Gilsland, I have in charge to speak with you."

"Ha!" returned the English baron, "with me? But say your pleasure, so it be shortly spoken—I am on the King's errand."

"Mine touches King Richard yet more nearly," answered Sir Kenneth; "I bring him, I trust, health."

The Lord of Gilsland measured the Scot with incredulous eyes, and replied, "Thou art no leech, I think, Sir Scot; I had as soon thought of your bringing the King of England wealth."

Sir Kenneth, though displeased with the manner of the baron's reply, answered calmly, "Health to Richard is glory and wealth to Christendom.—But my time presses; I pray you, may I see the King?"

"Surely not, fair sir," said the baron, "until your errand be told more distinctly. The sick chambers of princes open not to all who inquire, like a northern hostelry."

"My lord," said Kenneth, "the cross which I wear in common with yourself, and the importance of what I have to tell, must, for the present, cause me to pass over a bearing which else I were unapt to endure. In plain language, then, I bring with me a Moorish physician, who undertakes to work a cure on King Richard."

"A Moorish physician!" said De Vaux; "and who will warrant that he brings not poisons instead of remedies?"

"His own life, my lord—his head, which he offers as a guarantee."

"I have known many a resolute ruffian," said De Vaux, "who valued his own life as little as it deserved, and would troop to the gallows as merrily as if the hangman were his partner in a dance."

"But thus it is, my lord," replied the Scot. "Saladin, to whom none will deny the credit of a generous and valiant enemy, hath sent this leech hither with an honourable retinue and guard, befitting the high estimation in which El Hakim [The Physician] is held by the Soldan, and with fruits and refreshments for the King's private chamber, and such message as may pass betwixt honourable enemies, praying him to be recovered of his fever, that he may be the fitter to receive a visit from the Soldan, with his naked scimitar in his hand, and a hundred thousand cavaliers at his back. Will it please you, who are of the King's secret council, to cause these camels to be discharged of their burdens, and some order taken as to the reception of the learned physician?"

"Wonderful!" said De Vaux, as speaking to himself.—"And who will vouch for the honour of Saladin, in a case when bad faith would rid him at once of his most powerful adversary?"

"I myself," replied Sir Kenneth, "will be his guarantee, with honour, life, and fortune."

"Strange!" again ejaculated De Vaux; "the North vouches for the South—the Scot for the Turk! May I crave of you, Sir Knight, how you became concerned in this affair?"

"I have been absent on a pilgrimage, in the course of which," replied Sir Kenneth "I had a message to discharge towards the holy hermit of Engaddi."

"May I not be entrusted with it, Sir Kenneth, and with the answer of the holy man?"

"It may not be, my lord," answered the Scot.

"I am of the secret council of England," said the Englishman haughtily.

"To which land I owe no allegiance," said Kenneth. "Though I have voluntarily followed in this war the personal fortunes of England's sovereign, I was dispatched by the General Council of the kings, princes, and supreme leaders of the army of the Blessed Cross, and to them only I render my errand."

"Ha! sayest thou?" said the proud Baron de Vaux. "But know, messenger of the kings and princes as thou mayest be, no leech shall approach the sick-bed of Richard of England without the consent of him of Gilsland; and they will come on evil errand who dare to intrude themselves against it."

He was turning loftily away, when the Scot, placing himself closer, and more opposite to him, asked, in a calm voice, yet not without expressing his share of pride, whether the Lord of Gilsland esteemed him a gentleman and a good knight.

"All Scots are ennobled by their birthright," answered Thomas de Vaux, something ironically; but sensible of his own injustice, and perceiving that Kenneth's colour rose, he added, "For a good knight it were sin to doubt you, in one at least who has seen you well and bravely discharge your devoir."

"Well, then," said the Scottish knight, satisfied with the frankness of the last admission, "and let me swear to you, Thomas of Gilsland, that, as I am true Scottish man, which I hold a privilege equal to my ancient gentry, and as sure as I am a belted knight, and come hither to acquire LOS [Los—laus, praise, or renown] and fame in this mortal life, and forgiveness of my sins in that which is to come—so truly, and by the blessed Cross which I wear, do I protest unto you that I desire but the safety of Richard Coeur de Lion, in recommending the ministry of this Moslem physician."

The Englishman was struck with the solemnity of the obtestation, and answered with more cordiality than he had yet exhibited, "Tell me, Sir Knight of the Leopard, granting (which I do not doubt) that thou art thyself satisfied in this matter, shall I do well, in a land where the art of poisoning is as general as that of cooking, to bring this unknown physician to practise with his drugs on a health so valuable to Christendom?"

"My lord," replied the Scot, "thus only can I reply—that my squire, the only one of my retinue whom war and disease had left in attendance on me, has been of late suffering dangerously under this same fever, which, in valiant King Richard, has disabled the principal limb of our holy enterprise. This leech, this El Hakim, hath ministered remedies to him not two hours since, and already he hath fallen into a refreshing sleep. That he can cure the disorder, which has proved so fatal, I nothing doubt; that he hath the purpose to do it is, I think, warranted by his mission from the royal Soldan, who is true-hearted and loyal, so far as a blinded infidel may be called so; and for his eventual success, the certainty of reward in case of succeeding, and punishment in case of voluntary failure, may be a sufficient guarantee."

The Englishman listened with downcast looks, as one who doubted, yet was not unwilling to receive conviction. At length he looked up and said, "May I see your sick squire, fair sir?"

The Scottish knight hesitated and coloured, yet answered at last, "Willingly, my Lord of Gilsland. But you must remember, when you see my poor quarter, that the nobles and knights of Scotland feed not so high, sleep not so soft, and care not for the magnificence of lodgment which is Proper to their southern neighbours. I am POORLY lodged, my Lord of Gilsland," he added, with a haughty emphasis on the word, while, with some unwillingness, he led the way to his temporary place of abode.

Whatever were the prejudices of De Vaux against the nation of his new acquaintance, and though we undertake not to deny that some of these were excited by its proverbial poverty, he had too much nobleness of disposition to enjoy the mortification of a brave individual thus compelled to make known wants which his pride would gladly have concealed.

"Shame to the soldier of the Cross," he said, "who thinks of worldly splendour, or of luxurious accommodation, when pressing forward to the conquest of the Holy City. Fare as hard as we may, we shall yet be better than the host of martyrs and of saints, who, having trod these scenes before us, now hold golden lamps and evergreen palms."

This was the most metaphorical speech which Thomas of Gilsland was ever known to utter, the rather, perhaps (as will sometimes happen), that it did not entirely express his own sentiments, being somewhat a lover of good cheer and splendid accommodation. By this time they reached the place of the camp where the Knight of the Leopard had assumed his abode.

Appearances here did indeed promise no breach of the laws of mortification, to which the Crusaders, according to the opinion expressed by him of Gilsland, ought to subject themselves. A space of ground, large enough to accommodate perhaps thirty tents, according to the Crusaders' rules of castrametation, was partly vacant—because, in ostentation, the knight had demanded ground to the extent of his original retinue—partly occupied by a few miserable huts, hastily constructed of boughs, and covered with palm-leaves. These habitations seemed entirely deserted, and several of them were ruinous. The central hut, which represented the pavilion of the leader, was distinguished by his swallow-tailed pennon, placed on the point of a spear, from which its long folds dropped motionless to the ground, as if sickening under the scorching rays of the Asiatic sun. But no pages or squires—not even a solitary warder—was placed by the emblem of feudal power and knightly degree. If its reputation defended it not from insult, it had no other guard.

Sir Kenneth cast a melancholy look around him, but suppressing his feelings, entered the hut, making a sign to the Baron of Gilsland to follow. He also cast around a glance of examination, which implied pity not altogether unmingled with contempt, to which, perhaps, it is as nearly akin as it is said to be to love. He then stooped his lofty crest, and entered a lowly hut, which his bulky form seemed almost entirely to fill.

The interior of the hut was chiefly occupied by two beds. One was empty, but composed of collected leaves, and spread with an antelope's hide. It seemed, from the articles of armour laid beside it, and from a crucifix of silver, carefully and reverentially disposed at the head, to be the couch of the knight himself. The other contained the invalid, of whom Sir Kenneth had spoken, a strong-built and harsh-featured man, past, as his looks betokened, the middle age of life. His couch was trimmed more softly than his master's, and it was plain that the more courtly garments of the latter, the loose robe in which the knights showed themselves on pacific occasions, and the other little spare articles of dress and adornment, had been applied by Sir Kenneth to the accommodation of his sick domestic. In an outward part of the hut, which yet was within the range of the English baron's eye, a boy, rudely attired with buskins of deer's hide, a blue cap or bonnet, and a doublet, whose original finery was much tarnished, sat on his knees by a chafing-dish filled with charcoal, cooking upon a plate of iron the cakes of barley-bread, which were then, and still are, a favourite food with the Scottish people. Part of an antelope was suspended against one of the main props of the hut. Nor was it difficult to know how it had been procured; for a large stag greyhound, nobler in size and appearance than those even which guarded King Richard's sick-bed, lay eyeing the process of baking the cake. The sagacious animal, on their first entrance, uttered a stifled growl, which sounded from his deep chest like distant thunder. But he saw his master, and acknowledged his presence by wagging his tail and couching his head, abstaining from more tumultuous or noisy greeting, as if his noble instinct had taught him the propriety of silence in a sick man's chamber.

Beside the couch sat on a cushion, also composed of skins, the Moorish physician of whom Sir Kenneth had spoken, cross-legged, after the Eastern fashion. The imperfect light showed little of him, save that the lower part of his face was covered with a long, black beard, which descended over his breast; that he wore a high TOLPACH, a Tartar cap of the lamb's wool manufactured at Astracan, bearing the same dusky colour; and that his ample caftan, or Turkish robe, was also of a dark hue. Two piercing eyes, which gleamed with unusual lustre, were the only lineaments of his visage that could be discerned amid the darkness in which he was enveloped.

The English lord stood silent with a sort of reverential awe; for notwithstanding the roughness of his general bearing, a scene of distress and poverty, firmly endured without complaint or murmur, would at any time have claimed more reverence from Thomas de Vaux than would all the splendid formalities of a royal presence-chamber, unless that presence-chamber were King Richard's own. Nothing was for a time heard but the heavy and regular breathings of the invalid, who seemed in profound repose.

"He hath not slept for six nights before," said Sir Kenneth, "as I am assured by the youth, his attendant."

"Noble Scot," said Thomas de Vaux, grasping the Scottish knight's hand, with a pressure which had more of cordiality than he permitted his words to utter, "this gear must be amended. Your esquire is but too evil fed and looked to."

In the latter part of this speech he naturally raised his voice to its usual decided tone, The sick man was disturbed in his slumbers.

"My master," he said, murmuring as in a dream, "noble Sir Kenneth, taste not, to you as to me, the waters of the Clyde cold and refreshing after the brackish springs of Palestine?"

"He dreams of his native land, and is happy in his slumbers," whispered Sir Kenneth to De Vaux; but had scarce uttered the words, when the physician, arising from the place which he had taken near the couch of the sick, and laying the hand of the patient, whose pulse he had been carefully watching, quietly upon the couch, came to the two knights, and taking them each by the arm, while he intimated to them to remain silent, led them to the front of the hut.

"In the name of Issa Ben Mariam," he said, "whom we honour as you, though not with the same blinded superstition, disturb not the effect of the blessed medicine of which he hath partaken. To awaken him now is death or deprivation of reason; but return at the hour when the muezzin calls from the minaret to evening prayer in the mosque, and if left undisturbed until then, I promise you this same Frankish soldier shall be able, without prejudice to his health, to hold some brief converse with you on any matters on which either, and especially his master, may have to question him."

The knights retreated before the authoritative commands of the leech, who seemed fully to comprehend the importance of the Eastern proverb that the sick chamber of the patient is the kingdom of the physician.

They paused, and remained standing together at the door of the hut—Sir Kenneth with the air of one who expected his visitor to say farewell, and De Vaux as if he had something on his mind which prevented him from doing so. The hound, however, had pressed out of the tent after them, and now thrust his long, rough countenance into the hand of his master, as if modestly soliciting some mark of his kindness. He had no sooner received the notice which he desired, in the shape of a kind word and slight caress, than, eager to acknowledge his gratitude and joy for his master's return, he flew off at full speed, galloping in full career, and with outstretched tail, here and there, about and around, cross-ways and endlong, through the decayed huts and the esplanade we have described, but never transgressing those precincts which his sagacity knew were protected by his master's pennon. After a few gambols of this kind, the dog, coming close up to his master, laid at once aside his frolicsome mood, relapsed into his usual gravity and slowness of gesture and deportment, and looked as if he were ashamed that anything should have moved him to depart so far out of his sober self-control.

Both knights looked on with pleasure; for Sir Kenneth was justly proud of his noble hound, and the northern English baron was, of course, an admirer of the chase, and a judge of the animal's merits.

"A right able dog," he said. "I think, fair sir, King Richard hath not an ALAN which may match him, if he be as stanch as he is swift. But let me pray you—speaking in all honour and kindness—have you not heard the proclamation that no one under the rank of earl shall keep hunting dogs within King Richard's camp without the royal license, which, I think, Sir Kenneth, hath not been issued to you? I speak as Master of the Horse."

"And I answer as a free Scottish knight," said Kenneth sternly. "For the present I follow the banner of England, but I cannot remember that I have ever subjected myself to the forest-laws of that kingdom, nor have I such respect for them as would incline me to do so. When the trumpet sounds to arms, my foot is in the stirrup as soon as any—when it clangs for the charge, my lance has not yet been the last laid in the rest. But for my hours of liberty or of idleness King Richard has no title to bar my recreation."

"Nevertheless," said De Vaux, "it is a folly to disobey the King's ordinance; so, with your good leave, I, as having authority in that matter, will send you a protection for my friend here."

"I thank you," said the Scot coldly; "but he knows my allotted quarters, and within these I can protect him myself.—And yet," he said, suddenly changing his manner, "this is but a cold return for a well-meant kindness. I thank you, my lord, most heartily. The King's equeries or prickers might find Roswal at disadvantage, and do him some injury, which I should not, perhaps, be slow in returning, and so ill might come of it. You have seen so much of my house-keeping, my lord," he added, with a smile, "that I need not shame to say that Roswal is our principal purveyor, and well I hope our Lion Richard will not be like the lion in the

minstrel fable, that went a-hunting, and kept the whole booty to himself. I cannot think he would grudge a poor gentleman, who follows him faithfully, his hour of sport and his morsel of game, more especially when other food is hard enough to come by."

"By my faith, you do the King no more than justice; and yet," said the baron, "there is something in these words, vert and venison, that turns the very brains of our Norman princes."

"We have heard of late," said the Scot, "by minstrels and pilgrims, that your outlawed yeomen have formed great bands in the shires of York and Nottingham, having at their head a most stout archer, called Robin Hood, with his lieutenant, Little John. Methinks it were better that Richard relaxed his forest-code in England, than endeavour to enforce it in the Holy Land."

"Wild work, Sir Kenneth," replied De Vaux, shrugging his shoulders, as one who would avoid a perilous or unpleasing topic—"a mad world, sir. I must now bid you adieu, having presently to return to the King's pavilion. At vespers I will again, with your leave, visit your quarters, and speak with this same infidel physician. I would, in the meantime, were it no offence, willingly send you what would somewhat mend your cheer."

"I thank you, sir," said Sir Kenneth, "but it needs not. Roswal hath already stocked my larder for two weeks, since the sun of Palestine, if it brings diseases, serves also to dry venison."

The two warriors parted much better friends than they had met; but ere they separated, Thomas de Vaux informed himself at more length of the circumstances attending the mission of the Eastern physician, and received from the Scottish knight the credentials which he had brought to King Richard on the part of Saladin.

CHAPTER VIII.

*A wise physician, skilled our wounds to heal,
Is more than armies to the common weal.*

POPE'S ILLIAD.

"This is a strange tale, Sir Thomas," said the sick monarch, when he had heard the report of the trusty Baron of Gilsland. "Art thou sure this Scottish man is a tall man and true?"

"I cannot say, my lord," replied the jealous Borderer. "I live a little too near the Scots to gather much truth among them, having found them ever fair and false. But this man's bearing is that of a true man, were he a devil as well as a Scot; that I must needs say for him in conscience."

"And for his carriage as a knight, how sayest thou, De Vaux?" demanded the King.

"It is your Majesty's business more than mine to note men's bearings; and I warrant you have noted the manner in which this man of the Leopard hath borne himself. He hath been full well spoken of."

"And justly, Thomas," said the King. "We have ourselves witnessed him. It is indeed our purpose in placing ourselves ever in the front of battle, to see how our liegemen and followers acquit themselves, and not from a desire to accumulate vainglory to ourselves, as some have supposed. We know the vanity of the praise of man, which is but a vapour, and buckle on our armour for other purposes than to win it."

De Vaux was alarmed when he heard the King make a declaration so inconsistent with his nature, and believed at first that nothing short of the approach of death could have brought him to speak in depreciating terms of military renown, which was the very breath of his nostrils. But recollecting he had met the royal confessor in the outer pavilion, he was shrewd enough to place this temporary self-abasement to the effect of the reverend man's lesson, and suffered the King to proceed without reply.

"Yes," continued Richard, "I have indeed marked the manner in which this knight does his devoir. My leading-staff were not worth a fool's bauble had he escaped my notice; and he had ere now tasted of our bounty, but that I have also marked his overweening and audacious presumption."

"My liege," said the Baron of Gilsland, observing the King's countenance change, "I fear I have transgressed your pleasure in lending some countenance to his transgression."

"How, De Multon, thou?" said the King, contracting his brows, and speaking in a tone of angry surprise. "Thou countenance his insolence? It cannot be."

"Nay, your Majesty will pardon me to remind you that I have by mine office right to grant liberty to men of gentle blood to keep them a hound or two within camp, just to cherish the noble art of venerie; and besides, it were a sin to have maimed or harmed a thing so noble as this gentleman's dog."

"Has he, then, a dog so handsome?" said the King.

"A most perfect creature of Heaven," said the baron, who was an enthusiast in field-sports—"of the noblest Northern breed—deep in the chest, strong in the stern—black colour, and brindled on the breast and legs, not spotted with white, but just shaded into grey—strength to pull down a bull, swiftness to cote an antelope."

The King laughed at his enthusiasm. "Well, thou hast given him leave to keep the hound, so there is an end of it. Be not, however, liberal of your licenses among those knights adventurers who have no prince or leader to depend upon; they are ungovernable, and leave no game in Palestine.—But to this piece of learned heathenesse—sayest thou the Scot met him in the desert?"

"No, my liege; the Scot's tale runs thus. He was dispatched to the old hermit of Engaddi, of whom men talk so much—"

"Sdeath and hell!" said Richard, starting up. "By whom dispatched, and for what? Who dared send any one thither, when our Queen was in the Convent of Engaddi, upon her pilgrimage for our recovery?"

"The Council of the Crusade sent him, my lord," answered the Baron de Vaux; "for what purpose, he declined to account to me. I think it is scarce known in the camp that your royal consort is on a pilgrimage; and even the princes may not have been aware, as the Queen has been sequestered from company since your love prohibited her attendance in case of infection."

"Well, it shall be looked into," said Richard. "So this Scottish man, this envoy, met with a wandering physician at the grotto of Engaddi—ha?"

"Not so my liege," replied De Vaux; "but he met, I think, near that place, with a Saracen Emir with whom he had some MELEE in the way of proof of valour, and finding him worthy to bear brave men company, they went together, as errant knights are wont, to the grotto of Engaddi."

Here De Vaux stopped, for he was not one of those who can tell a long story in a sentence.

"And did they there meet the physician?" demanded the King impatiently.

"No, my liege," replied De Vaux; "but the Saracen, learning your Majesty's grievous illness, undertook that Saladin should send his own physician to you, and with many assurances of his eminent skill; and he came to the grotto accordingly, after the Scottish knight had tarried a day for him and more. He is attended as if he were a prince, with drums and atabals, and servants on horse and foot, and brings with him letters of credence from Saladin."

"Have they been examined by Giacomo Loredani?"

"I showed them to the interpreter ere bringing them hither, and behold their contents in English."

Richard took a scroll, in which were inscribed these words: The blessing of Allah and his Prophet Mohammed ["Out upon the hound!" said Richard, spitting in contempt, by way of interjection], Saladin, king of kings, Saldan of Egypt and of Syria, the light and refuge of the earth, to the great Melech Ric, Richard of England, greeting. Whereas, we have been informed that the hand of sickness hath been heavy upon thee, our royal brother, and that thou hast with thee only such Nazarene and Jewish mediciners as work without the blessing of Allah and our holy Prophet ["Confusion on his head!" again muttered the English monarch], we have therefore sent to tend and wait upon thee at this time the physician to our own person, Adonbec el Hakim, before whose face the angel Azrael [The Angel of Death.] spreads his wings and departs from the sick chamber; who knows the virtues of herbs and stones, the path of the sun, moon, and stars, and can save man from all that is not written on his forehead. And this we do, praying you heartily to honour and make use of his skill; not only that we may do service to thy

worth and valour, which is the glory of all the nations of Frangistan, but that we may bring the controversy which is at present between us to an end, either by honourable agreement, or by open trial thereof with our weapons, in a fair field—seeing that it neither becomes thy place and courage to die the death of a slave who hath been overwrought by his taskmaster, nor befits it our fame that a brave adversary be snatched from our weapon by such a disease. And, therefore, may the holy—"

"Hold, hold," said Richard, "I will have no more of his dog of a prophet! It makes me sick to think the valiant and worthy Soldan should believe in a dead dog. Yes, I will see his physician. I will put myself into the charge of this Hakim—I will repay the noble Soldan his generosity—I will meet Saladin in the field, as he so worthily proposes, and he shall have no cause to term Richard of England ungrateful. I will strike him to the earth with my battle-axe—I will convert him to Holy Church with such blows as he has rarely endured. He shall recant his errors before my good cross-handled sword, and I will have him baptized on the battle-field, from my own helmet, though the cleansing waters were mixed with the blood of us both.—Haste, De Vaux, why dost thou delay a conclusion so pleasing? Fetch the Hakim hither."

"My lord," said the baron, who perhaps saw some accession of fever in this overflow of confidence, "bethink you, the Soldan is a pagan, and that you are his most formidable enemy—"

"For which reason he is the more bound to do me service in this matter, lest a paltry fever end the quarrel betwixt two such kings. I tell thee he loves me as I love him—as noble adversaries ever love each other. By my honour, it were sin to doubt his good faith!"

"Nevertheless, my lord, it were well to wait the issue of these medicines upon the Scottish squire," said the Lord of Gilsland. "My own life depends upon it, for worthy were I to die like a dog did I proceed rashly in this matter, and make shipwreck of the weal of Christendom."

"I never knew thee before hesitate for fear of life," said Richard upbraidingly.

"Nor would I now, my liege," replied the stout-hearted baron, "save that yours lies at pledge as well as my own."

"Well, thou suspicious mortal," answered Richard, "begone then, and watch the progress of this remedy. I could almost wish it might either cure or kill me, for I am weary of lying here like an ox dying of the murrain, when tambours are beating, horses stamping, and trumpets sounding without."

The baron hastily departed, resolved, however, to communicate his errand to some churchman, as he felt something burdened in conscience at the idea of his master being attended by an unbeliever.

The Archbishop of Tyre was the first to whom he confided his doubts, knowing his interest with his master, Richard, who both loved and honoured that sagacious prelate. The bishop heard the doubts which De Vaux stated, with that acuteness of intelligence which distinguishes the Roman Catholic clergy. The religious scruples of De Vaux he treated with as much lightness as propriety permitted him to exhibit on such a subject to a layman.

"Mediciners," he said, "like the medicines which they employed, were often useful, though the one were by birth or manners the vilest of humanity, as the others are, in many cases, extracted from the basest materials. Men may use the assistance of pagans and infidels," he continued, "in their need, and there is reason to think that one cause of their being permitted to remain on earth is that they might minister to the convenience of true Christians. Thus we lawfully make slaves of heathen captives. Again," proceeded the prelate, "there is no doubt that the primitive Christians used the services of the unconverted heathen. Thus in the ship of Alexandria, in which the blessed Apostle Paul sailed to Italy, the sailors were doubtless pagans; yet what said the holy saint when their ministry was needful?—'NISI HI IN NAVI MANERINT, VOS SALVI FIERI NON POTESTIS'—Unless these men abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Again, Jews are infidels to Christianity, as well as Mohammedans. But there are few physicians in the camp excepting Jews, and such are employed without scandal or scruple. Therefore, Mohammedans may be used for their service in that capacity—QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM."

This reasoning entirely removed the scruples of Thomas de Vaux, who was particularly moved by the Latin quotation, as he did not understand a word of it.

But the bishop proceeded with far less fluency when he considered the possibility of the Saracen's acting with bad faith; and here he came not to a speedy decision. The baron showed him the letters of credence. He read and re-read them, and compared the original with the translation.

"It is a dish choicely cooked," he said, "to the palate of King Richard, and I cannot but have my suspicions of the wily Saracen. They are curious in the art of poisons, and can so temper them that they shall be weeks in acting upon the party, during which time the perpetrator has leisure to escape. They can impregnate cloth and leather, nay, even paper and parchment, with the most subtle venom. Our Lady forgive me! And wherefore, knowing this, hold I these letters of credence so close to my face? Take them, Sir Thomas—take them speedily!"

Here he gave them at arm's-length, and with some appearance of haste, to the baron. "But come, my Lord de Vaux," he continued, "wend we to the tent of this sick squire, where we shall learn whether this Hakim hath really the art of curing which he professeth, ere we consider whether there be safety in permitting him to exercise his art upon King Richard.—Yet, hold! let me first take my pouncet-box, for these fevers spread like an infection. I would advise you to use dried rosemary steeped in vinegar, my lord. I, too, know something of the healing art."

"I thank your reverend lordship," replied Thomas of Gilsland; "but had I been accessible to the fever, I had caught it long since by the bed of my master."

The Bishop of Tyre blushed, for he had rather avoided the presence of the sick monarch; and he bid the baron lead on.

As they paused before the wretched hut in which Kenneth of the Leopard and his follower abode, the bishop said to De Vaux, "Now, of a surety, my lord, these Scottish Knights have worse care of their followers than we of our dogs. Here is a knight, valiant, they say, in battle, and thought fitting to be graced with charges of weight in time of truce, whose esquire of the body is lodged worse than in the worst dog-kennel in England. What say you of your neighbours?"

"That a master doth well enough for his servant when he lodgeth him in no worse dwelling than his own," said De Vaux, and entered the hut.

The bishop followed, not without evident reluctance; for though he lacked not courage in some respects, yet it was tempered with a strong and lively regard for his own safety. He recollected, however, the necessity there was for judging personally of the skill of the Arabian physician, and entered the hut with a stateliness of manner calculated, as he thought, to impose respect on the stranger.

The prelate was, indeed, a striking and commanding figure. In his youth he had been eminently handsome, and even in age was unwilling to appear less so. His episcopal dress was of the richest fashion, trimmed with costly fur, and surrounded by a cope of curious needlework. The rings on his fingers were worth a goodly barony, and the hood which he wore, though now unclasped and thrown back for heat, had studs of pure gold to fasten it around his throat and under his chin when he so inclined. His long beard, now silvered with age, descended over his breast. One of two youthful acolytes who attended him created an artificial shade, peculiar then to the East, by bearing over his head an umbrella of palmetto leaves, while the other refreshed his reverend master by agitating a fan of peacock-feathers.

When the Bishop of Tyre entered the hut of the Scottish knight, the master was absent, and the Moorish physician, whom he had come to see, sat in the very posture in which De Vaux had left him several hours before, cross-legged upon a mat made of twisted leaves, by the side of the patient, who appeared in deep slumber, and whose pulse he felt from time to time. The bishop remained standing before him in silence for two or three minutes, as if expecting some honourable salutation, or at least that the Saracen would seem struck with the dignity of his appearance. But Adonbec el Hakim took no notice of him beyond a passing glance, and when the prelate at length saluted him in the lingua franca current in the country, he only replied by the ordinary Oriental greeting, "SALAM ALICUM—Peace be with you."

"Art thou a physician, infidel?" said the bishop, somewhat mortified at this cold reception. "I would speak with thee on that art."

"If thou knewest aught of medicine," answered El Hakim, "thou wouldst be aware that physicians hold no counsel or debate in the sick chamber of their patient. Hear," he added, as the low growling of the staghound was heard from the inner hut, "even the dog might teach thee reason, Ulemat. His instinct teaches him to suppress his barking in the sick man's hearing. Come without the tent," said he, rising and leading the way, "if thou hast ought to say with me."

Notwithstanding the plainness of the Saracen leech's dress, and his inferiority of size when contrasted with the tall prelate and gigantic English baron, there was something striking in his manner and countenance, which prevented the Bishop of Tyre from expressing strongly the displeasure he felt at this uncereceremonious rebuke. When without the hut, he gazed upon Adonbec in silence for several minutes before he could fix on the best manner to renew the conversation. No locks

were seen under the high bonnet of the Arabian, which hid also part of a brow that seemed lofty and expanded, smooth, and free from wrinkles, as were his cheeks, where they were seen under the shade of his long beard. We have elsewhere noticed the piercing quality of his dark eyes.

The prelate, struck with his apparent youth, at length broke a pause, which the other seemed in no haste to interrupt, by demanding of the Arabian how old he was?

"The years of ordinary men," said the Saracen, "are counted by their wrinkles; those of sages by their studies. I dare not call myself older than a hundred revolutions of the Hegira." [Meaning that his attainments were those which might have been made in a hundred years.]

The Baron of Gilsland, who took this for a literal assertion that he was a century old, looked doubtfully upon the prelate, who, though he better understood the meaning of El Hakim, answered his glance by mysteriously shaking his head. He resumed an air of importance when he again authoritatively demanded what evidence Adonbec could produce of his medical proficiency.

"Ye have the word of the mighty Saladin," said the sage, touching his cap in sign of reverence—"a word which was never broken towards friend or foe. What, Nazarene, wouldst thou demand more?"

"I would have ocular proof of thy skill," said the baron, "and without it thou approachest not to the couch of King Richard."

"The praise of the physician," said the Arabian, "is in the recovery of his patient. Behold this sergeant, whose blood has been dried up by the fever which has whitened your camp with skeletons, and against which the art of your Nazarene leeches hath been like a silken doublet against a lance of steel. Look at his fingers and arms, wasted like the claws and shanks of the crane. Death had this morning his clutch on him; but had Azrael been on one side of the couch, I being on the other, his soul should not have been left from his body. Disturb me not with further questions, but await the critical minute, and behold in silent wonder the marvellous event."

The physician had then recourse to his astrolabe, the oracle of Eastern science, and watching with grave precision until the precise time of the evening prayer had arrived, he sunk on his knees, with his face turned to Mecca, and recited the petitions which close the Moslemah's day of toil. The bishop and the English baron looked on each other, meanwhile, with symptoms of contempt and indignation, but neither judged it fit to interrupt El Hakim in his devotions, unholy as they considered them to be.

The Arab arose from the earth, on which he had prostrated himself, and walking into the hut where the patient lay extended, he drew a sponge from a small silver box, dipped perhaps in some aromatic distillation, for when he put it to the sleeper's nose, he sneezed, awoke, and looked wildly around. He was a ghastly spectacle as he sat up almost naked on his couch, the bones and cartilages as visible through the surface of his skin as if they had never been clothed with flesh. His face was long, and furrowed with wrinkles; but his eye, though it wandered at first, became gradually more settled. He seemed to be aware of the presence of his dignified visitors, for he attempted feebly to pull the covering from his head in token of reverence, as he inquired, in a subdued and submissive voice, for his master.

"Do you know us, vassal?" said the Lord of Gilsland.

"Not perfectly, my lord," replied the squire faintly. "My sleep has been long and full of dreams. Yet I know that you are a great English lord, as seemeth by the red cross, and this a holy prelate, whose blessing I crave on me a poor sinner."

"Thou hast it—BENEDICTIO DOMINI SIT VOBISCUM," said the prelate, making the sign of the cross, but without approaching nearer to the patient's bed.

"Your eyes witness," said the Arabian, "the fever hath been subdued. He speaks with calmness and recollection—his pulse beats composedly as yours—try its pulsations yourself."

The prelate declined the experiment; but Thomas of Gilsland, more determined on making the trial, did so, and satisfied himself that the fever was indeed gone.

"This is most wonderful," said the knight, looking to the bishop; "the man is assuredly cured. I must conduct this mediciner presently to King Richard's tent. What thinks your reverence?"

"Stay, let me finish one cure ere I commence another," said the Arab; "I will pass with you when I have given my patient the second cup of this most holy elixir."

So saying he pulled out a silver cup, and filling it with water from a gourd which stood by the bedside, he next drew forth a small silken bag made of network, twisted with silver, the contents of which the bystanders could not discover, and immersing it in the cup, continued to watch it in silence during the space of five minutes. It seemed to the spectators as if some effervescence took place during the operation; but if so, it instantly subsided.

"Drink," said the physician to the sick man—"sleep, and awaken free from malady."

"And with this simple-seeming draught thou wilt undertake to cure a monarch?" said the Bishop of Tyre.

"I have cured a beggar, as you may behold," replied the sage. "Are the Kings of Frangistan made of other clay than the meanest of their subjects?"

"Let us have him presently to the King," said the Baron of Gilsland. "He hath shown that he possesses the secret which may restore his health. If he fails to exercise it, I will put himself past the power of medicine."

As they were about to leave the hut, the sick man, raising his voice as much as his weakness permitted, exclaimed, "Reverend father, noble knight, and you, kind leech, if you would have me sleep and recover, tell me in charity what is become of my dear master?"

"He is upon a distant expedition, friend," replied the prelate—"on an honourable embassy, which may detain him for some days."

"Nay," said the Baron of Gilsland, "why deceive the poor fellow?—Friend, thy master has returned to the camp, and you will presently see him."

The invalid held up, as if in thankfulness, his wasted hands to Heaven, and resisting no longer the soporiferous operation of the elixir, sunk down in a gentle sleep.

"You are a better physician than I, Sir Thomas," said the prelate—"a soothing falsehood is fitter for a sick-room than an unpleasing truth."

"How mean you, my reverend lord?" said De Vaux hastily. "Think you I would tell a falsehood to save the lives of a dozen such as he?"

"You said," replied the bishop, with manifest symptoms of alarm—"you said the esquire's master was returned—he, I mean, of the Couchant Leopard."

"And he IS returned," said De Vaux. "I spoke with him but a few hours since. This leared leech came in his company."

"Holy Virgin! why told you not of his return to me?" said the bishop, in evident perturbation.

"Did I not say that this same Knight of the Leopard had returned in company with the physician? I thought I had," replied De Vaux carelessly. "But what signified his return to the skill of the physician, or the cure of his Majesty?"

"Much, Sir Thomas—it signified much," said the bishop, clenching his hands, pressing his foot against the earth, and giving signs of impatience, as if in an involuntary manner. "But where can he be gone now, this same knight? God be with us—here may be some fatal errors!"

"Yonder serf in the outer space," said De Vaux, not without wonder at the bishop's emotion, "can probably tell us whither his master has gone."

The lad was summoned, and in a language nearly incomprehensible to them, gave them at length to understand that an officer had summoned his master to the royal tent some time before their arrival at that of his master. The anxiety of the bishop appeared to rise to the highest, and became evident to De Vaux, though, neither an acute observer nor of a suspicious temper. But with his anxiety seemed to increase his wish to keep it subdued and unobserved. He took a hasty leave of De Vaux, who looked after him with astonishment, and after shrugging his shoulders in silent wonder, proceeded to conduct the Arabian physician to the tent of King Richard.

CHAPTER IX.

*This is the prince of leeches; fever, plague,
Cold rheum, and hot podagra, do but look on him,
And quit their grasp upon the tortured sinews.*

ANONYMOUS.

The Baron of Gilsland walked with slow step and an anxious countenance towards the royal pavilion. He had much diffidence of his own capacity, except in a field of battle, and conscious of no very acute intellect, was usually contented to wonder at circumstances which a man of livelier imagination would have endeavoured to investigate and understand, or at least would have made the subject of speculation. But it seemed very extraordinary, even to him, that the attention of the bishop should have been at once abstracted from all reflection on the marvellous cure which they had witnessed, and upon the probability it afforded of Richard being restored to health, by what seemed a very trivial piece of information announcing the motions of a beggardly Scottish knight, than whom Thomas of Gilsland knew nothing within the circle of gentle blood more unimportant or contemptible; and despite his usual habit of passively beholding passing events, the baron's spirit toiled with unwonted attempts to form conjectures on the cause.

At length the idea occurred at once to him that the whole might be a conspiracy against King Richard, formed within the camp of the allies, and to which the bishop, who was by some represented as a politic and unscrupulous person, was not unlikely to have been accessory. It was true that, in his own opinion, there existed no character so perfect as that of his master; for Richard being the flower of chivalry, and the chief of Christian leaders, and obeying in all points the commands of Holy Church, De Vaux's ideas of perfection went no further. Still, he knew that, however unworthily, it had been always his master's fate to draw as much reproach and dislike as honour and attachment from the display of his great qualities; and that in the very camp, and amongst those princes bound by oath to the Crusade, were many who would have sacrificed all hope of victory over the Saracens to the pleasure of ruining, or at least of humbling, Richard of England. "Wherefore," said the baron to himself, "it is in no sense impossible that this El Hakim, with this his cure, or seeming cure, wrought on the body of the Scottish squire, may mean nothing but a trick, to which he of the Leopard may be accessory, and wherein the Bishop of Tyre, prelate as he is, may have some share."

This hypothesis, indeed, could not be so easily reconciled with the alarm manifested by the bishop on learning that, contrary to his expectation, the Scottish knight had suddenly returned to the Crusaders' camp. But De Vaux was influenced only by his general prejudices, which dictated to him the assured belief that a wily Italian priest, a false-hearted Scot, and an infidel physician, formed a set of ingredients from which all evil, and no good, was likely to be extracted. He resolved, however, to lay his scruples bluntly before the King, of whose judgment he had nearly as high an opinion as of his valour.

Meantime, events had taken place very contrary to the suppositions which Thomas de Vaux had entertained. Scarce had he left the royal pavilion, when, betwixt the impatience of the fever, and that which was natural to his disposition, Richard began to murmur at his delay, and express an earnest desire for his return. He had seen enough to try to reason himself out of this irritation, which greatly increased his bodily malady. He wearied his attendants by demanding from them amusements, and the breviary of the priest, the romance of the clerk, even the harp of his favourite minstrel, were had recourse to in vain. At length, some two hours before sundown, and long, therefore, ere he could expect a satisfactory account of the process of the cure which the Moor or Arabian had undertaken, he sent, as we have already heard, a messenger commanding the attendance of the Knight of the Leopard, determined to soothe his impatience by obtaining from Sir Kenneth a more particular account of the cause of his absence from the camp, and the circumstances of his meeting with this celebrated physician.

The Scottish knight, thus summoned, entered the royal presence as one who was no stranger to such scenes. He was scarcely known to the King of England, even by sight, although, tenacious of his rank, as devout in the adoration of the lady of his secret heart, he had never been absent on those occasions when the munificence and hospitality of England opened the Court of its monarch to all who held a certain rank in chivalry. The King gazed fixedly on Sir Kenneth approaching his bedside, while the knight bent his knee for a moment, then arose, and stood before him in a posture of deference, but not of subservience or humility, as became an officer in the presence of his sovereign.

"Thy name," said the King, "is Kenneth of the Leopard—from whom hadst thou degree of knighthood?"

"I took it from the sword of William the Lion, King of Scotland," replied the Scot.

"A weapon," said the King, "well worthy to confer honour; nor has it been laid on an undeserving shoulder. We have seen thee bear thyself knightly and valiantly in press of battle, when most need there was; and thou hadst not been yet to learn that thy deserts were known to us, but that thy presumption in other points has been such that thy services can challenge no better reward than that of pardon for thy transgression. What sayest thou—ha?"

Kenneth attempted to speak, but was unable to express himself distinctly; the consciousness of his too ambitious love, and the keen, falcon glance with which Coeur de Lion seemed to penetrate his inmost soul, combining to disconcert him.

"And yet," said the King, "although soldiers should obey command, and vassals be respectful towards their superiors, we might forgive a brave knight greater offence than the keeping a simple hound, though it were contrary to our express public ordinance."

Richard kept his eye fixed on the Scot's face, beheld and beholding, smiling inwardly at the relief produced by the turn he had given to his general accusation.

"So please you, my lord," said the Scot, "your majesty must be good to us poor gentlemen of Scotland in this matter. We are far from home, scant of revenues, and cannot support ourselves as your wealthy nobles, who have credit of the Lombards. The Saracens shall feel our blows the harder that we eat a piece of dried venison from time to time with our herbs and barley-cakes."

"It skills not asking my leave," said Richard, "since Thomas de Vaux, who doth, like all around me, that which is fittest in his own eyes, hath already given thee permission for hunting and hawking."

"For hunting only, and please you," said the Scot. "But if it please your Majesty to indulge me with the privilege of hawking also, and you list to trust me with a falcon on fist, I trust I could supply your royal mess with some choice waterfowl."

"I dread me, if thou hadst but the falcon," said the King, "thou wouldst scarce wait for the permission. I wot well it is said abroad that we of the line of Anjou resent offence against our forest-laws as highly as we would do treason against our crown. To brave and worthy men, however, we could pardon either misdemeanour.—But enough of this. I desire to know of you, Sir Knight, wherefore, and by whose authority, you took this recent journey to the wilderness of the Dead Sea and Engaddi?"

"By order," replied the knight, "of the Council of Princes of the Holy Crusade."

"And how dared any one to give such an order, when I—not the least, surely, in the league—was unacquainted with it?"

"It was not my part, please your highness," said the Scot, "to inquire into such particulars. I am a soldier of the Cross—serving, doubtless, for the present, under your highness's banner, and proud of the permission to do so, but still one who hath taken on him the holy symbol for the rights of Christianity and the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, and bound, therefore, to obey without question the orders of the princes and chiefs by whom the blessed enterprise is directed. That indisposition should seclude, I trust for but a short time, your highness from their councils, in which you hold so potential a voice, I must lament with all Christendom; but, as a soldier, I must obey those on whom the lawful right of command devolves, or set but an evil example in the Christian camp."

"Thou sayest well," said King Richard; "and the blame rests not with thee, but with those with whom, when it shall please Heaven to raise me from this accursed bed of pain and inactivity, I hope to reckon roundly. What was the purport of thy message?"

"Methinks, and please your highness," replied Sir Kenneth, "that were best asked of those who sent me, and who can render the reasons of mine errand; whereas I can only tell its outward form and purport."

"Palter not with me, Sir Scot—it were ill for thy safety," said the irritable monarch.

"My safety, my lord," replied the knight firmly, "I cast behind me as a regardless thing when I vowed myself to this enterprise, looking rather to my immortal welfare than to that which concerns my earthly body."

"By the mass," said King Richard, "thou art a brave fellow! Hark thee, Sir Knight, I love the Scottish people; they are hardy, though dogged and stubborn, and, I think, true men in the main, though the necessity of state has sometimes constrained them to be dissemblers. I deserve some love at their hand, for I have voluntarily done what they could not by arms have extorted from me any more than from my predecessors, I have re-established the fortresses of Roxburgh and Berwick, which lay in pledge to England; I have restored your ancient boundaries; and, finally, I have renounced a claim to homage upon the crown of England,

which I thought unjustly forced on you. I have endeavoured to make honourable and independent friends, where former kings of England attempted only to compel unwilling and rebellious vassals."

"All this you have done, my Lord King," said Sir Kenneth, bowing—"all this you have done, by your royal treaty with our sovereign at Canterbury. Therefore have you me, and many better Scottish men, making war against the infidels, under your banners, who would else have been ravaging your frontiers in England. If their numbers are now few, it is because their lives have been freely waged and wasted."

"I grant it true," said the King; "and for the good offices I have done your land I require you to remember that, as a principal member of the Christian league, I have a right to know the negotiations of my confederates. Do me, therefore, the justice to tell me what I have a title to be acquainted with, and which I am certain to know more truly from you than from others."

"My lord," said the Scot, "thus conjured, I will speak the truth; for I well believe that your purposes towards the principal object of our expedition are single-hearted and honest, and it is more than I dare warrant for others of the Holy League. Be pleased, therefore, to know my charge was to propose, through the medium of the hermit of Engaddi—a holy man, respected and protected by Saladin himself—"

"A continuation of the truce, I doubt not," said Richard, hastily interrupting him.

"No, by Saint Andrew, my liege," said the Scottish knight; "but the establishment of a lasting peace, and the withdrawing our armies from Palestine."

"Saint George!" said Richard, in astonishment. "Ill as I have justly thought of them, I could not have dreamed they would have humbled themselves to such dishonour. Speak, Sir Kenneth, with what will did you carry such a message?"

"With right good will, my lord," said Kenneth; "because, when we had lost our noble leader, under whose guidance alone I hoped for victory, I saw none who could succeed him likely to lead us to conquest, and I accounted it well in such circumstances to avoid defeat."

"And on what conditions was this hopeful peace to be contracted?" said King Richard, painfully suppressing the passion with which his heart was almost bursting.

"These were not entrusted to me, my lord," answered the Knight of the Couchant Leopard. "I delivered them sealed to the hermit."

"And for what hold you this reverend hermit—for fool, madman, traitor, or saint?" said Richard.

"His folly, sire," replied the shrewd Scottish man, "I hold to be assumed to win favour and reverence from the Paynimrie, who regard madmen as the inspired of Heaven—at least it seemed to me as exhibited only occasionally, and not as mixing, like natural folly, with the general tenor of his mind."

"Shrewdly replied," said the monarch, throwing himself back on his couch, from which he had half-raised himself. "Now of his penitence?"

"His penitence," continued Kenneth, "appears to me sincere, and the fruits of remorse for some dreadful crime, for which he seems, in his own opinion, condemned to reprobation."

"And for his policy?" said King Richard.

"Methinks, my lord," said the Scottish knight, "he despairs of the security of Palestine, as of his own salvation, by any means short of a miracle—at least, since the arm of Richard of England hath ceased to strike for it."

"And, therefore, the coward policy of this hermit is like that of these miserable princes, who, forgetful of their knighthood and their faith, are only resolved and determined when the question is retreat, and rather than go forward against an armed Saracen, would trample in their flight over a dying ally!"

"Might I so far presume, my Lord King," said the Scottish knight, "this discourse but heats your disease, the enemy from which Christendom dreads more evil than from armed hosts of infidels."

The countenance of King Richard was, indeed, more flushed, and his action became more feverishly vehement, as, with clenched hand, extended arm, and flashing eyes, he seemed at once to suffer under bodily pain, and at the same time under vexation of mind, while his high spirit led him to speak on, as if in contempt of both.

"You can flatter, Sir Knight," he said, "but you escape me not. I must know more from you than you have yet told me. Saw you my royal consort when at Engaddi?"

"To my knowledge—no, my lord," replied Sir Kenneth, with considerable perturbation, for he remembered the midnight procession in the chapel of the rocks.

"I ask you," said the King, in a sterner voice, "whether you were not in the chapel of the Carmelite nuns at Engaddi, and there saw Berengaria, Queen of England, and the ladies of her Court, who went thither on pilgrimage?"

"My lord," said Sir Kenneth, "I will speak the truth as in the confessional. In a subterranean chapel, to which the anchorite conducted me, I beheld a choir of ladies do homage to a relic of the highest sanctity; but as I saw not their faces, nor heard their voices, unless in the hymns which they chanted, I cannot tell whether the Queen of England was of the bevy."

"And was there no one of these ladies known to you?"

Sir Kenneth stood silent.

"I ask you," said Richard, raising himself on his elbow, "as a knight and a gentleman—and I shall know by your answer how you value either character—did you, or did you not, know any lady amongst that band of worshippers?"

"My lord," said Kenneth, not without much hesitation, "I might guess."

"And I also may guess," said the King, frowning sternly; "but it is enough. Leopard as you are, Sir Knight, beware tempting the lion's paw. Hark ye—to become enamoured of the moon would be but an act of folly; but to leap from the battlements of a lofty tower, in the wild hope of coming within her sphere, were self-destructive madness."

At this moment some bustling was heard in the outer apartment, and the King, hastily changing to his more natural manner, said, "Enough—begone—speed to De Vaux, and send him hither with the Arabian physician. My life for the faith of the Soldan! Would he but abjure his false law, I would aid him with my sword to drive this scum of French and Austrians from his dominions, and think Palestine as well ruled by him as when her kings were anointed by the decree of Heaven itself."

The Knight of the Leopard retired, and presently afterwards the chamberlain announced a deputation from the Council, who had come to wait on the Majesty of England.

"It is well they allow that I am living yet," was his reply. "Who are the reverend ambassadors?"

"The Grand Master of the Templars and the Marquis of Montserrat."

"Our brother of France loves not sick-beds," said Richard; "yet, had Philip been ill, I had stood by his couch long since.—Jocelyn, lay me the couch more fairly—it is tumbled like a stormy sea. Reach me yonder steel mirror—pass a comb through my hair and beard. They look, indeed, liker a lion's mane than a Christian man's locks. Bring water."

"My lord," said the trembling chamberlain, "the leeches say that cold water may be fatal."

"To the foul fiend with the leeches!" replied the monarch; "if they cannot cure me, think you I will allow them to torment me?—There, then," he said, after having made his ablutions, "admit the worshipful envoys; they will now, I think, scarcely see that disease has made Richard negligent of his person."

The celebrated Master of the Templars was a tall, thin, war-worn man, with a slow yet penetrating eye, and a brow on which a thousand dark intrigues had stamped a portion of their obscurity. At the head of that singular body, to whom their order was everything, and their individuality nothing—seeking the advancement of its power, even at the hazard of that very religion which the fraternity were originally associated to protect—accused of heresy and witchcraft, although by their character Christian priests—suspected of secret league with the Soldan, though by oath devoted to the protection of the Holy Temple, or its recovery—the whole order, and the whole personal character of its commander, or Grand Master, was a riddle, at the exposition of which most men shuddered. The Grand Master was dressed in his white robes of solemnity, and he bore the ABACUS, a mystic staff of office, the peculiar form of which has given rise to such singular conjectures and commentaries, leading to suspicions that this celebrated fraternity of Christian knights were embodied under the foulest symbols of paganism.

Conrade of Montserrat had a much more pleasing exterior than the dark and mysterious priest-soldier by whom he was accompanied. He was a handsome man, of middle age, or something past that term, bold in the field, sagacious in council, gay and gallant in times of festivity; but, on the other hand, he was generally accused of versatility, of a narrow and selfish ambition, of a desire to extend his own principality, without regard to the weal of the Latin kingdom of Palestine, and of seeking his own interest, by private negotiations with Saladin, to the prejudice of the Christian leaguers.

When the usual salutations had been made by these dignitaries, and courteously returned by King Richard, the Marquis of Montserrat commenced an explanation of the motives of their visit, sent, as he said they were, by the anxious kings and princes who composed the Council of the Crusaders, "to inquire into the health of their magnanimous ally, the valiant King of England."

"We know the importance in which the princes of the Council hold our health," replied the English King; "and are well aware how much they must have suffered by suppressing all curiosity concerning it for fourteen days, for fear, doubtless, of aggravating our disorder, by showing their anxiety regarding the event."

The flow of the Marquis's eloquence being checked, and he himself thrown into some confusion by this reply, his more austere companion took up the thread of the conversation, and with as much dry and brief gravity as was consistent with the presence which he addressed, informed the King that they came from the Council, to pray, in the name of Christendom, "that he would not suffer his health to be tampered with by an infidel physician, said to be dispatched by Saladin, until the Council had taken measures to remove or confirm the suspicion which they at present conceived did attach itself to the mission of such a person."

"Grand Master of the Holy and Valiant Order of Knights Templars, and you, most noble Marquis of Montserrat," replied Richard, "if it please you to retire into the adjoining pavilion, you shall presently see what account we make of the tender remonstrances of our royal and princely colleagues in this religious warfare."

The Marquis and Grand Master retired accordingly; nor had they been many minutes in the outward pavilion when the Eastern physician arrived, accompanied by the Baron of Gilsland and Kenneth of Scotland. The baron, however, was a little later of entering the tent than the other two, stopping, perchance, to issue some orders to the warders without.

As the Arabian physician entered, he made his obeisance, after the Oriental fashion, to the Marquis and Grand Master, whose dignity was apparent, both from their appearance and their bearing. The Grand Master returned the salutation with an expression of disdainful coldness, the Marquis with the popular courtesy which he habitually practised to men of every rank and nation. There was a pause, for the Scottish knight, waiting for the arrival of De Vaux, presumed not, of his own authority, to enter the tent of the King of England; and during this interval the Grand Master sternly demanded of the Moslem, "Infidel, hast thou the courage to practise thine art upon the person of an anointed sovereign of the Christian host?"

"The sun of Allah," answered the sage, "shines on the Nazarene as well as on the true believer, and His servant dare make no distinction betwixt them when called on to exercise the art of healing."

"Misbelieving Hakim," said the Grand Master, "or whatsoever they call thee for an unbaptized slave of darkness, dost thou well know that thou shalt be torn asunder by wild horses should King Richard die under thy charge?"

"That were hard justice," answered the physician, "seeing that I can but use human means, and that the issue is written in the book of light."

"Nay, reverend and valiant Grand Master," said the Marquis of Montserrat, "consider that this learned man is not acquainted with our Christian order, adopted in the fear of God, and for the safety of His anointed.—Be it known to thee, grave physician, whose skill we doubt not, that your wisest course is to repair to the presence of the illustrious Council of our Holy League, and there to give account and reckoning to such wise and learned leeches as they shall nominate, concerning your means of process and cure of this illustrious patient; so shall you escape all the danger which, rashly taking such a high matter upon your sole answer, you may else most likely incur."

"My lords," said El Hakim, "I understand you well. But knowledge hath its champions as well as your military art—nay, hath sometimes had its martyrs as well as religion. I have the command of my sovereign, the Soldan Saladin, to heal this Nazarene King, and, with the blessing of the Prophet, I will obey his commands. If I fail, ye wear swords thirsting for the blood of the faithful, and I proffer my body to your weapons. But I will not reason with one uncircumcised upon the virtue of the medicines of which I have obtained knowledge through the grace of the Prophet, and I pray you interpose no delay between me and my office."

"Who talks of delay?" said the Baron de Vaux, hastily entering the tent; "we have had but too much already. I salute you, my Lord of Montserrat, and you, valiant Grand Master. But I must presently pass with this learned physician to the bedside of my master."

"My lord," said the Marquis, in Norman-French, or the language of Ouie, as it was then called, "are you well advised that we came to expostulate, on the part of the Council of the Monarchs and Princes of the Crusade, against the risk of permitting an infidel and Eastern physician to tamper with a health so valuable as that of your master, King Richard?"

"Noble Lord Marquis," replied the Englishman bluntly, "I can neither use many words, nor do I delight in listening to them; moreover, I am much more ready to believe what my eyes have seen than what my ears have heard. I am satisfied that this heathen can cure the sickness of King Richard, and I believe and trust he will labour to do so. Time is precious. If Mohammed—may God's curse be on him! stood at the door of the tent, with such fair purpose as this Adonbec el Hakim entertains, I would hold it sin to delay him for a minute. So, give ye God'en, my lords."

"Nay, but," said Conrade of Montserrat, "the King himself said we should be present when this same physician dealt upon him."

The baron whispered the chamberlain, probably to know whether the Marquis spoke truly, and then replied, "My lords, if you will hold your patience, you are welcome to enter with us; but if you interrupt, by action or threat, this accomplished physician in his duty, be it known that, without respect to your high quality, I will enforce your absence from Richard's tent; for know, I am so well satisfied of the virtue of this man's medicines, that were Richard himself to refuse them, by our Lady of Lanercost, I think I could find in my heart to force him to take the means of his cure whether he would or no.—Move onward, El Hakim."

The last word was spoken in the lingua franca, and instantly obeyed by the physician. The Grand Master looked grimly on the unceremonious old soldier, but, on exchanging a glance with the Marquis, smoothed his frowning brow as well as he could, and both followed De Vaux and the Arabian into the inner tent, where Richard lay expecting them, with that impatience with which the sick man watches the step of his physician. Sir Kenneth, whose attendance seemed neither asked nor prohibited, felt himself, by the circumstances in which he stood, entitled to follow these high dignitaries; but, conscious of his inferior power and rank, remained aloof during the scene which took place.

Richard, when they entered his apartment, immediately exclaimed, "So ho! a goodly fellowship come to see Richard take his leap in the dark. My noble allies, I greet you as the representatives of our assembled league; Richard will again be amongst you in his former fashion, or ye shall bear to the grave what is left of him.—De Vaux, lives he or dies he, thou hast the thanks of thy prince. There is yet another—but this fever hath wasted my eyesight. What, the bold Scot, who would climb heaven without a ladder! He is welcome too.—Come, Sir Hakim, to the work, to the work!"

The physician, who had already informed himself of the various symptoms of the King's illness, now felt his pulse for a long time, and with deep attention, while all around stood silent, and in breathless expectation. The sage next filled a cup with spring water, and dipped into it the small red purse, which, as formerly, he took from his bosom. When he seemed to think it sufficiently medicated, he was about to offer it to the sovereign, who prevented him by saying, "Hold an instant. Thou hast felt my pulse—let me lay my finger on thine. I too, as becomes a good knight, know something of thine art."

The Arabian yielded his hand without hesitation, and his long, slender dark fingers were for an instant enclosed, and almost buried, in the large enfoldment of King Richard's hand.

"His blood beats calm as an infant's," said the King; "so throbs not theirs who poison princes. De Vaux, whether we live or die, dismiss this Hakim with honour and safety.—Commend us, friend, to the noble Saladin. Should I die, it is without doubt of his faith; should I live, it will be to thank him as a warrior would desire to be thanked."

He then raised himself in bed, took the cup in his hand, and turning to the Marquis and the Grand Master—"Mark what I say, and let my royal brethren pledge me in Cyprus wine, 'To the immortal honour of the first Crusader who shall strike lance or sword on the gate of Jerusalem; and to the shame and eternal infamy of whomsoever shall turn back from the plough on which he hath laid his hand!'"

He drained the cup to the bottom, resigned it to the Arabian, and sunk back, as if exhausted, upon the cushions which were arranged to receive him. The physician then, with silent but expressive signs, directed that all should leave the tent excepting himself and De Vaux, whom no remonstrance could induce to withdraw. The apartment was cleared accordingly.

CHAPTER X.

*And now I will unclasp a secret book,
And, to your quick-conceiving discontent,
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous.*

HENRY IV., PART I.

The Marquis of Montserrat and the Grand Master of the Knights Templars stood together in the front of the royal pavilion, within which this singular scene had passed, and beheld a strong guard of bills and bows drawn out to form a circle around it, and keep at distance all which might disturb the sleeping monarch. The soldiers wore the downcast, silent, and sullen looks with which they trail their arms at a funeral, and stepped with such caution that you could not hear a buckler ring or a sword clatter, though so many men in armour were moving around the tent. They lowered their weapons in deep reverence as the dignitaries passed through their files, but with the same profound silence.

"There is a change of cheer among these island dogs," said the Grand Master to Conrade, when they had passed Richard's guards. "What hoarse tumult and revel used to be before this pavilion!—nought but pitching the bar, hurling the ball, wrestling, roaring of songs, clattering of wine pots, and quaffing of flagons among these burly yeomen, as if they were holding some country wake, with a Maypole in the midst of them instead of a royal standard."

"Mastiffs are a faithful race," said Conrade; "and the King their Master has won their love by being ready to wrestle, brawl, or revel amongst the foremost of them, whenever the humour seized him."

"He is totally compounded of humours," said the Grand Master. "Marked you the pledge he gave us! instead of a prayer, over his grace-cup yonder."

"He would have felt it a grace-cup, and a well-spiced one too," said the Marquis, "were Saladin like any other Turk that ever wore turban, or turned him to Mecca at call of the muezzin. But he affects faith, and honour, and generosity, as if it were for an unbaptized dog like him to practise the virtuous bearing of a Christian knight. It is said he hath applied to Richard to be admitted within the pale of chivalry."

"By Saint Bernard!" exclaimed the Grand Master, "it were time then to throw off our belts and spurs, Sir Conrade, deface our armorial bearings, and renounce our burgonets, if the highest honour of Christianity were conferred on an unchristened Turk of tencepence."

"You rate the Soldan cheap," replied the Marquis; "yet though he be a likely man, I have seen a better heathen sold for forty pence at the bagnio."

They were now near their horses, which stood at some distance from the royal tent, prancing among the gallant train of esquires and pages by whom they were attended, when Conrade, after a moment's pause, proposed that they should enjoy the coolness of the evening breeze which had arisen, and, dismissing their steeds and attendants, walk homewards to their own quarters through the lines of the extended Christian camp. The Grand Master assented, and they proceeded to walk together accordingly, avoiding, as if by mutual consent, the more inhabited parts of the canvas city, and tracing the broad esplanade which lay between the tents and the external defences, where they could converse in private, and unmarked, save by the sentinels as they passed them.

They spoke for a time upon the military points and preparations for defence; but this sort of discourse, in which neither seemed to take interest, at length died away, and there was a long pause, which terminated by the Marquis of Montserrat stopping short, like a man who has formed a sudden resolution, and gazing for some moments on the dark, inflexible countenance of the Grand Master, he at length addressed him thus: "Might it consist with your valour and sanctity, reverend Sir Giles Amaury, I would pray you for once to lay aside the dark visor which you wear, and to converse with a friend barefaced."

The Templar half smiled.

"There are light-coloured masks," he said, "as well as dark visors, and the one conceals the natural features as completely as the other."

"Be it so," said the Marquis, putting his hand to his chin, and withdrawing it with the action of one who unmasks himself; "there lies my disguise. And now, what think you, as touching the interests of your own order, of the prospects of this Crusade?"

"This is tearing the veil from my thoughts rather than exposing your own," said the Grand Master; "yet I will reply with a parable told to me by a santan of the desert. 'A certain farmer prayed to Heaven for rain, and murmured when it fell not at his need. To punish his impatience, Allah,' said the santan, 'sent the Euphrates upon his farm, and he was destroyed, with all his possessions, even by the granting of his own wishes.'"

"Most truly spoken," said the Marquis Conrade. "Would that the ocean had swallowed up nineteen parts of the armaments of these Western princes! What remained would better have served the purpose of the Christian nobles of Palestine, the wretched remnant of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. Left to ourselves, we might have bent to the storm; or, moderately supported with money and troops, we might have compelled Saladin to respect our valour, and grant us peace and protection on easy terms. But from the extremity of danger with which this powerful Crusade threatens the Soldan, we cannot suppose, should it pass over, that the Saracen will suffer any one of us to hold possessions or principalities in Syria, far less permit the existence of the Christian military fraternities, from whom they have experienced so much mischief."

"Ay, but," said the Templar, "these adventurous Crusaders may succeed, and again plant the Cross on the bulwarks of Zion."

"And what will that advantage either the Order of the Templars, or Conrade of Montserrat?" said the Marquis.

"You it may advantage," replied the Grand Master. "Conrade of Montserrat might become Conrade King of Jerusalem."

"That sounds like something," said the Marquis, "and yet it rings but hollow. Godfrey of Bouillon might well choose the crown of thorns for his emblem. Grand Master, I will confess to you I have caught some attachment to the Eastern form of government—a pure and simple monarchy should consist but of king and subjects. Such is the simple and primitive structure—a shepherd and his flock. All this internal chain of feudal dependance is artificial and sophisticated; and I would rather hold the baton of my poor marquisate with a firm gripe, and wield it after my pleasure, than the sceptre of a monarch, to be in effect restrained and curbed by the will of as many proud feudal barons as hold land under the Assizes of Jerusalem. [The Assises de Jerusalem were the digest of feudal law, composed by Godfrey of Boulogne, for the government of the Latin kingdom of Palestine, when reconquered from the Saracens. "It was composed with advice of the patriarch and barons, the clergy and laity, and is," says the historian Gibbon, "a precious monument of feudatory jurisprudence, founded upon those principles of freedom which were essential to the system."] A king should tread freely, Grand Master, and should not be controlled by here a ditch, and there a fence—here a feudal privilege, and there a mail-clad baron with his sword in his hand to maintain it. To sum the whole, I am aware that Guy de Lusignan's claims to the throne would be preferred to mine, if Richard recovers, and has aught to say in the choice."

"Enough," said the Grand Master; "thou hast indeed convinced me of thy sincerity. Others may hold the same opinions, but few, save Conrade of Montserrat, dared frankly avow that he desires not the restitution of the kingdom of Jerusalem, but rather prefers being master of a portion of its fragments—like the barbarous islanders, who labour not for the deliverance of a goodly vessel from the billows, expecting rather to enrich themselves at the expense of the wreck."

"Thou wilt not betray my counsel?" said Conrade, looking sharply and suspiciously. "Know, for certain, that my tongue shall never wrong my head, nor my hand forsake the defence of either. Impeach me if thou wilt—I am prepared to defend myself in the lists against the best Templar who ever laid lance in rest."

"Yet thou start'st somewhat suddenly for so bold a steed," said the Grand Master. "However, I swear to thee by the Holy Temple, which our Order is sworn to defend, that I will keep counsel with thee as a true comrade."

"By which Temple?" said the Marquis of Montserrat, whose love of sarcasm often outran his policy and discretion; "swarest thou by that on the hill of Zion, which was built by King Solomon, or by that symbolical, emblematical edifice, which is said to be spoken of in the councils held in the vaults of your Preceptories, as something which infers the aggrandizement of thy valiant and venerable Order?"

The Templar scowled upon him with an eye of death, but answered calmly, "By whatever Temple I swear, be assured, Lord Marquis, my oath is sacred. I would I knew how to bind THEE by one of equal obligation."

"I will swear truth to thee," said the Marquis, laughing, "by the earl's coronet, which I hope to convert, ere these wars are over, into something better. It feels cold on my brow, that same slight coronal; a duke's cap of maintenance were a better protection against such a night-breeze as now blows, and a king's crown more preferable still, being lined with comfortable ermine and velvet. In a word, our interests bind us together; for think not, Lord Grand Master, that, were these allied princes to regain Jerusalem, and place a king of their own choosing there, they would suffer your Order, any more than my poor marquissate, to retain the independence which we now hold. No, by Our Lady! In such case, the proud Knights of Saint John must again spread plasters and dress plague sores in the hospitals; and you, most puissant and venerable Knights of the Temple, must return to your condition of simple men-at-arms, sleep three on a pallet, and mount two upon one horse, as your present seal still expresses to have been your ancient most simple custom."

"The rank, privileges, and opulence of our Order prevent so much degradation as you threaten," said the Templar haughtily.

"These are your bane," said Conrade of Montserrat; "and you, as well as I, reverend Grand Master, know that, were the allied princes to be successful in Palestine, it would be their first point of policy to abate the independence of your Order, which, but for the protection of our holy father the Pope, and the necessity of employing your valour in the conquest of Palestine, you would long since have experienced. Give them complete success, and you will be flung aside, as the splinters of a broken lance are tossed out of the tilt-yard."

"There may be truth in what you say," said the Templar, darkly smiling. "But what were our hopes should the allies withdraw their forces, and leave Palestine in the grasp of Saladin?"

"Great and assured," replied Conrade. "The Soldan would give large provinces to maintain at his behest a body of well-appointed Frankish lances. In Egypt, in Persia, a hundred such auxiliaries, joined to his own light cavalry, would turn the battle against the most fearful odds. This dependence would be but for a time—perhaps during the life of this enterprising Soldan; but in the East empires arise like mushrooms. Suppose him dead, and us strengthened with a constant succession of fiery and adventurous spirits from Europe, what might we not hope to achieve, uncontrolled by these monarchs, whose dignity throws us at present into the shade—and, were they to remain here, and succeed in this expedition, would willingly consign us for ever to degradation and dependence?"

"You say well, my Lord Marquis," said the Grand Master, "and your words find an echo in my bosom. Yet must we be cautious—Philip of France is wise as well as valiant."

"True, and will be therefore the more easily diverted from an expedition to which, in a moment of enthusiasm, or urged by his nobles, he rashly bound himself. He is jealous of King Richard, his natural enemy, and longs to return to prosecute plans of ambition nearer to Paris than Palestine. Any fair pretence will serve him for withdrawing from a scene in which he is aware he is wasting the force of his kingdom."

"And the Duke of Austria?" said the Templar.

"Oh, touching the Duke," returned Conrade, "his self-conceit and folly lead him to the same conclusions as do Philip's policy and wisdom. He conceives himself, God help the while, ungratefully treated, because men's mouths—even those of his own MINNE-SINGERS [The German minstrels were so termed.]—are filled with the praises of King Richard, whom he fears and hates, and in whose harm he would rejoice, like those unbred, dastardly curs, who, if the foremost of the pack is hurt by the gripe of the wolf, are much more likely to assail the sufferer from behind than to come to his assistance. But wherefore tell I this to thee, save to show that I am in sincerity in desiring that this league be broken up, and the country freed of these great monarchs with their hosts? And thou well knowest, and hast thyself seen, how all the princes of influence and power, one alone excepted, are eager to enter into treaty with the Soldan."

"I acknowledge it," said the Templar; "he were blind that had not seen this in their last deliberations. But lift yet thy mask an inch higher, and tell me thy real reason for pressing upon the Council that Northern Englishman, or Scot, or whatever you call yonder Knight of the Leopard, to carry their proposals for a treaty?"

"There was a policy in it," replied the Italian. "His character of native of Britain was sufficient to meet what Saladin required, who knew him to belong to the band of Richard; while his character of Scot, and certain other personal grudges which I wot of, rendered it most unlikely that our envoy should, on his return, hold any communication with the sick-bed of Richard, to whom his presence was ever unacceptable."

"Oh, too finespun policy," said the Grand Master; "trust me, that Italian spiders' webs will never bind this unshorn Samson of the Isle—well if you can do it with new cords, and those of the toughest. See you not that the envoy whom you have selected so carefully hath brought us, in this physician, the means of restoring the lion-hearted, bull-necked Englishman to prosecute his Crusading enterprise. And so soon as he is able once more to rush on, which of the princes dare hold back? They must follow him for very shame, although they would march under the banner of Satan as soon."

"Be content," said Conrade of Montserrat; "ere this physician, if he work by anything short of miraculous agency, can accomplish Richard's cure, it may be possible to put some open rupture betwixt the Frenchman—at least the Austrian—and his allies of England, so that the breach shall be irreconcilable; and Richard may arise from his bed, perhaps to command his own native troops, but never again, by his sole energy, to wield the force of the whole Crusade."

"Thou art a willing archer," said the Templar; "but, Conrade of Montserrat, thy bow is over-slack to carry an arrow to the mark."

He then stopped short, cast a suspicious glance to see that no one overheard him, and taking Conrade by the hand, pressed it eagerly as he looked the Italian in the face, and repeated slowly, "Richard arise from his bed, sayest thou? Conrade, he must never arise!"

The Marquis of Montserrat started. "What! spoke you of Richard of England—of Coeur de Lion—the champion of Christendom?"

His cheek turned pale and his knees trembled as he spoke. The Templar looked at him, with his iron visage contorted into a smile of contempt.

"Knowest thou what thou look'st like, Sir Conrade, at this moment? Not like the politic and valiant Marquis of Montserrat, not like him who would direct the Council of Princes and determine the fate of empires—but like a novice, who, stumbling upon a conjuration in his master's book of gramarye, has raised the devil when he least thought of it, and now stands terrified at the spirit which appears before him."

"I grant you," said Conrade, recovering himself, "that—unless some other sure road could be discovered—thou hast hinted at that which leads most direct to our purpose. But, blessed Mary! we shall become the curse of all Europe, the malediction of every one, from the Pope on his throne to the very beggar at the church gate, who, ragged and leprous, in the last extremity of human wretchedness, shall bless himself that he is neither Giles Amaury nor Conrade of Montserrat."

"If thou takest it thus," said the Grand Master, with the same composure which characterized him all through this remarkable dialogue, "let us hold there has nothing passed between us—that we have spoken in our sleep—have awakened, and the vision is gone."

"It never can depart," answered Conrade.

"Visions of ducal crowns and kingly diadems are, indeed, somewhat tenacious of their place in the imagination," replied the Grand Master.

"Well," answered Conrade, "let me but first try to break peace between Austria and England."

They parted. Conrade remained standing still upon the spot, and watching the flowing white cloak of the Templar as he stalked slowly away, and gradually disappeared amid the fast-sinking darkness of the Oriental night. Proud, ambitious, unscrupulous, and politic, the Marquis of Montserrat was yet not cruel by nature. He was a voluptuary and an epicurean, and, like many who profess this character, was averse, even upon selfish motives, from inflicting pain or witnessing acts of cruelty; and he retained also a general sense of respect for his own reputation, which sometimes supplies the want of the better principle by which reputation is to be maintained.

"I have," he said, as his eyes still watched the point at which he had seen the last slight wave of the Templar's mantle—"I have, in truth, raised the devil with a vengeance! Who would have thought this stern, ascetic Grand Master, whose whole fortune and misfortune is merged in that of his order, would be willing to do

more for its advancement than I who labour for my own interest? To check this wild Crusade was my motive, indeed, but I durst not think on the ready mode which this determined priest has dared to suggest. Yet it is the surest—perhaps even the safest."

Such were the Marquis's meditations, when his muttered soliloquy was broken by a voice from a little distance, which proclaimed with the emphatic tone of a herald, "Remember the Holy Sepulchre!"

The exhortation was echoed from post to post, for it was the duty of the sentinels to raise this cry from time to time upon their periodical watch, that the host of the Crusaders might always have in their remembrance the purpose of their being in arms. But though Conrade was familiar with the custom, and had heard the warning voice on all former occasions as a matter of habit, yet it came at the present moment so strongly in contact with his own train of thought, that it seemed a voice from Heaven warning him against the iniquity which his heart meditated. He looked around anxiously, as if, like the patriarch of old, though from very different circumstances, he was expecting some ram caught in a thicket some substitution for the sacrifice which his comrade proposed to offer, not to the Supreme Being, but to the Moloch of their own ambition. As he looked, the broad folds of the ensign of England, heavily distending itself to the failing night-breeze, caught his eye. It was displayed upon an artificial mound, nearly in the midst of the camp, which perhaps of old some Hebrew chief or champion had chosen as a memorial of his place of rest. If so, the name was now forgotten, and the Crusaders had christened it Saint George's Mount, because from that commanding height the banner of England was supereminently displayed, as if an emblem of sovereignty over the many distinguished, noble, and even royal ensigns, which floated in lower situations.

A quick intellect like that of Conrade catches ideas from the glance of a moment. A single look on the standard seemed to dispel the uncertainty of mind which had affected him. He walked to his pavilion with the hasty and determined step of one who has adopted a plan which he is resolved to achieve, dismissed the almost princely train who waited to attend him, and, as he committed himself to his couch, muttered his amended resolution, that the milder means are to be tried before the more desperate are resorted to.

"To-morrow," he said, "I sit at the board of the Archduke of Austria. We will see what can be done to advance our purpose before prosecuting the dark suggestions of this Templar."

CHAPTER XI.

*One thing is certain in our Northern land—
Allow that birth or valour, wealth or wit,
Give each precedence to their possessor,
Envy, that follows on such eminence,
As comes the lyme-hound on the roebuck's trace,
Shall pull them down each one.*

SIR DAVID LINDSAY.

Leopold, Grand Duke of Austria, was the first possessor of that noble country to whom the princely rank belonged. He had been raised to the ducal sway in the German Empire on account of his near relationship to the Emperor, Henry the Stern, and held under his government the finest provinces which are watered by the Danube. His character has been stained in history on account of one action of violence and perfidy, which arose out of these very transactions in the Holy Land; and yet the shame of having made Richard a prisoner when he returned through his dominions; unattended and in disguise, was not one which flowed from Leopold's natural disposition. He was rather a weak and a vain than an ambitious or tyrannical prince. His mental powers resembled the qualities of his person. He was tall, strong, and handsome, with a complexion in which red and white were strongly contrasted, and had long flowing locks of fair hair. But there was an awkwardness in his gait which seemed as if his size was not animated by energy sufficient to put in motion such a mass; and in the same manner, wearing the richest dresses, it always seemed as if they became him not. As a prince, he appeared too little familiar with his own dignity; and being often at a loss how to assert his authority when the occasion demanded it, he frequently thought himself obliged to recover, by acts and expressions of ill-timed violence, the ground which might have been easily and gracefully maintained by a little more presence of mind in the beginning of the controversy.

Not only were these deficiencies visible to others, but the Archduke himself could not but sometimes entertain a painful consciousness that he was not altogether fit to maintain and assert the high rank which he had acquired; and to this was joined the strong, and sometimes the just, suspicion that others esteemed him lightly accordingly.

When he first joined the Crusade, with a most princely attendance, Leopold had desired much to enjoy the friendship and intimacy of Richard, and had made such advances towards cultivating his regard as the King of England ought, in policy, to have received and answered. But the Archduke, though not deficient in bravery, was so infinitely inferior to Coeur de Lion in that ardour of mind which wooed danger as a bride, that the King very soon held him in a certain degree of contempt. Richard, also, as a Norman prince, a people with whom temperance was habitual, despised the inclination of the German for the pleasures of the table, and particularly his liberal indulgence in the use of wine. For these, and other personal reasons, the King of England very soon looked upon the Austrian Prince with feelings of contempt, which he was at no pains to conceal or modify, and which, therefore, were speedily remarked, and returned with deep hatred, by the suspicious Leopold. The discord between them was fanned by the secret and politic arts of Philip of France, one of the most sagacious monarchs of the time, who, dreading the fiery and overbearing character of Richard, considering him as his natural rival, and feeling offended, moreover, at the dictatorial manner in which he, a vassal of France for his Continental domains, conducted himself towards his liege lord, endeavoured to strengthen his own party, and weaken that of Richard, by uniting the Crusading princes of inferior degree in resistance to what he termed the usurping authority of the King of England. Such was the state of politics and opinions entertained by the Archduke of Austria, when Conrade of Montserrat resolved upon employing his jealousy of England as the means of dissolving, or loosening at least, the league of the Crusaders.

The time which he chose for his visit was noon; and the pretence, to present the Archduke with some choice Cyprus wine which had lately fallen into his hands, and discuss its comparative merits with those of Hungary and of the Rhine. An intimation of his purpose was, of course, answered by a courteous invitation to partake of the Archducal meal, and every effort was used to render it fitting the splendour of a sovereign prince. Yet the refined taste of the Italian saw more cumbrous profusion than elegance or splendour in the display of provisions under which the board groaned.

The Germans, though still possessing the martial and frank character of their ancestors—who subdued the Roman Empire—had retained withal no slight tinge of their barbarism. The practices and principles of chivalry were not carried to such a nice pitch amongst them as amongst the French and English knights, nor were they strict observers of the prescribed rules of society, which among those nations were supposed to express the height of civilization. Sitting at the table of the Archduke, Conrade was at once stunned and amused with the clang of Teutonic sounds assailing his ears on all sides, notwithstanding the solemnity of a princely banquet. Their dress seemed equally fantastic to him, many of the Austrian nobles retaining their long beards, and almost all of them wearing short jerkins of various colours, cut, and flourished, and fringed in a manner not common in Western Europe.

Numbers of dependants, old and young, attended in the pavilion, mingled at times in the conversation, received from their masters the relics of the entertainment, and devoured them as they stood behind the backs of the company. Jesters, dwarfs, and minstrels were there in unusual numbers, and more noisy and intrusive than they were permitted to be in better regulated society. As they were allowed to share freely in the wine, which flowed round in large quantities, their licensed tumult was the more excessive.

All this while, and in the midst of a clamour and confusion which would better have become a German tavern during a fair than the tent of a sovereign prince, the Archduke was waited upon with a minuteness of form and observance which showed how anxious he was to maintain rigidly the state and character to which his

elevation had entitled him. He was served on the knee, and only by pages of noble blood, fed upon plate of silver, and drank his Tokay and Rhenish wines from a cup of gold. His ducal mantle was splendidly adorned with ermine, his coronet might have equalled in value a royal crown, and his feet, cased in velvet shoes (the length of which, peaks included, might be two feet), rested upon a footstool of solid silver. But it served partly to intimate the character of the man, that, although desirous to show attention to the Marquis of Montserrat, whom he had courteously placed at his right hand, he gave much more of his attention to his SPRUCH-SPRECHER—that is, his man of conversation, or SAYER-OF-SAYINGS—who stood behind the Duke's right shoulder.

This personage was well attired in a cloak and doublet of black velvet, the last of which was decorated with various silver and gold coins stitched upon it, in memory of the munificent princes who had conferred them, and bearing a short staff to which also bunches of silver coins were attached by rings, which he jingled by way of attracting attention when he was about to say anything which he judged worthy of it. This person's capacity in the household of the Archduke was somewhat betwixt that of a minstrel and a counsellor. He was by turns a flatterer, a poet, and an orator; and those who desired to be well with the Duke generally studied to gain the good-will of the SPRUCH-SPRECHER.

Lest too much of this officer's wisdom should become tiresome, the Duke's other shoulder was occupied by his HOFF-NARR, or court-jester, called Jonas Schwanker, who made almost as much noise with his fool's cap, bells, and bauble, as did the orator, or man of talk, with his jingling baton.

These two personages threw out grave and comic nonsense alternately; while their master, laughing or applauding them himself, yet carefully watched the countenance of his noble guest, to discern what impressions so accomplished a cavalier received from this display of Austrian eloquence and wit. It is hard to say whether the man of wisdom or the man of folly contributed most to the amusement of the party, or stood highest in the estimation of their princely master; but the sallies of both seemed excellently well received. Sometimes they became rivals for the conversation, and clanged their flappers in emulation of each other with a most alarming contention; but, in general, they seemed on such good terms, and so accustomed to support each other's play, that the SPRUCH-SPRECHER often condescended to follow up the jester's witticisms with an explanation, to render them more obvious to the capacity of the audience, so that his wisdom became a sort of commentary on the buffoon's folly. And sometimes, in requital, the HOFF-NARR, with a pithy jest, wound up the conclusion of the orator's tedious harangue.

Whatever his real sentiments might be, Conrade took especial care that his countenance should express nothing but satisfaction with what he heard, and smiled or applauded as zealously, to all appearance, as the Archduke himself at the solemn folly of the SPRUCH-SPRECHER and the gibbering wit of the fool. In fact, he watched carefully until the one or other should introduce some topic favourable to the purpose which was uppermost in his mind.

It was not long ere the King of England was brought on the carpet by the jester, who had been accustomed to consider Dickon of the Broom (which irreverent epithet he substituted for Richard Plantagenet) as a subject of mirth, acceptable and inexhaustible. The orator, indeed, was silent, and it was only when applied to by Conrade that he observed, "The GENISTA, or broom-plant, was an emblem of humility; and it would be well when those who wore it would remember the warning."

The allusion to the illustrious badge of Plantagenet was thus rendered sufficiently manifest, and Jonas Schwanker observed that they who humbled themselves had been exalted with a vengeance. "Honour unto whom honour is due," answered the Marquis of Montserrat. "We have all had some part in these marches and battles, and methinks other princes might share a little in the renown which Richard of England engrosses amongst minstrels and MINNE-SINGERS. Has no one of the joyeuse science here present a song in praise of the royal Archduke of Austria, our princely entertainer?"

Three minstrels emulously stepped forward with voice and harp. Two were silenced with difficulty by the SPRUCH-SPRECHER, who seemed to act as master of the revels, and a hearing was at length procured for the poet preferred, who sung, in high German, stanzas which may be thus translated:—

"What brave chief shall head the forces, Where the red-cross legions gather? Best of horsemen, best of horses, Highest head and fairest feather."

Here the orator, jingling his staff, interrupted the bard to intimate to the party—what they might not have inferred from the description—that their royal host was the party indicated, and a full-crowned goblet went round to the acclamation, HOCH LEBE DER HERZOG LEOPOLD! Another stanza followed:—

"Ask not Austria why, 'midst princes, Still her banner rises highest; Ask as well the strong-wing'd eagle, Why to heaven he soars the highest."

"The eagle," said the expounder of dark sayings, "is the cognizance of our noble lord the Archduke—of his royal Grace, I would say—and the eagle flies the highest and nearest to the sun of all the feathered creation."

"The lion hath taken a spring above the eagle," said Conrade carelessly.

The Archduke reddened, and fixed his eyes on the speaker, while the SPRUCH-SPRECHER answered, after a minute's consideration, "The Lord Marquis will pardon me—a lion cannot fly above an eagle, because no lion hath got wings."

"Except the lion of Saint Mark," responded the jester.

"That is the Venetian's banner," said the Duke; "but assuredly that amphibious race, half nobles, half merchants, will not dare to place their rank in comparison with ours."

"Nay, it was not of the Venetian lion that I spoke," said the Marquis of Montserrat, "but of the three lions passant of England. Formerly, it is said, they were leopards; but now they are become lions at all points, and must take precedence of beast, fish, or fowl, or woe worth the gainstander."

"Mean you seriously, my lord?" said the Austrian, now considerably flushed with wine. "Think you that Richard of England asserts any pre-eminence over the free sovereigns who have been his voluntary allies in this Crusade?"

"I know not but from circumstances," answered Conrade. "Yonder hangs his banner alone in the midst of our camp, as if he were king and generalissimo of our whole Christian army."

"And do you endure this so patiently, and speak of it so coldly?" said the Archduke.

"Nay, my lord," answered Conrade, "it cannot concern the poor Marquis of Montserrat to contend against an injury patiently submitted to by such potent princes as Philip of France and Leopold of Austria. What dishonour you are pleased to submit to cannot be a disgrace to me."

Leopold closed his fist, and struck on the table with violence.

"I have told Philip of this," he said. "I have often told him that it was our duty to protect the inferior princes against the usurpation of this islander; but he answers me ever with cold respects of their relations together as suzerain and vassal, and that it were impolitic in him to make an open breach at this time and period."

"The world knows that Philip is wise," said Conrade, "and will judge his submission to be policy. Yours, my lord, you can yourself alone account for; but I doubt not you have deep reasons for submitting to English domination."

"I submit!" said Leopold indignantly—"I, the Archduke of Austria, so important and vital a limb of the Holy Roman Empire—I submit myself to this king of half an island, this grandson of a Norman bastard! No, by Heaven! The camp and all Christendom shall see that I know how to right myself, and whether I yield ground one inch to the English bandog.—Up, my lieges and merry men; up and follow me! We will—and that without losing one instant—place the eagle of Austria where she shall float as high as ever floated the cognizance of king or kaiser."

With that he started from his seat, and amidst the tumultuous cheering of his guests and followers, made for the door of the pavilion, and seized his own banner, which stood pitched before it.

"Nay, my lord," said Conrade, affecting to interfere, "it will blemish your wisdom to make an affray in the camp at this hour; and perhaps it is better to submit to the usurpation of England a little longer than to—"

"Not an hour, not a moment longer," vociferated the Duke; and with the banner in his hand, and followed by his shouting guests and attendants, marched hastily to the central mount, from which the banner of England floated, and laid his hand on the standard-spear, as if to pluck it from the ground.

"My master, my dear master!" said Jonas Schwanker, throwing his arms about the Duke, "take heed—lions have teeth—"

"And eagles have claws," said the Duke, not relinquishing his hold on the banner-staff, yet hesitating to pull it from the ground.

The speaker of sentences, notwithstanding such was his occupation, had nevertheless some intervals of sound sense. He clashed his staff loudly, and Leopold, as if by habit, turned his head towards his man of counsel.

"The eagle is king among the fowls of the air," said the SPRUCH-SPRECHER, "as is the lion among the beasts of the field—each has his dominion, separated as wide as England and Germany. Do thou, noble eagle, no dishonour to the princely lion, but let your banners remain floating in peace side by side."

Leopold withdrew his hand from the banner-spear, and looked round for Conrade of Montserrat, but he saw him not; for the Marquis, so soon as he saw the mischief afoot, had withdrawn himself from the crowd, taking care, in the first place, to express before several neutral persons his regret that the Archduke should have chosen the hours after dinner to avenge any wrong of which he might think he had a right to complain. Not seeing his guest, to whom he wished more particularly to have addressed himself, the Archduke said aloud that, having no wish to breed dissension in the army of the Cross, he did but vindicate his own privileges and right to stand upon an equality with the King of England, without desiring, as he might have done, to advance his banner—which he derived from emperors, his progenitors—above that of a mere descendant of the Counts of Anjou; and in the meantime he commanded a cask of wine to be brought hither and pierced, for regaling the bystanders, who, with tuck of drum and sound of music, quaffed many a carouse round the Austrian standard.

This disorderly scene was not acted without a degree of noise, which alarmed the whole camp.

The critical hour had arrived at which the physician, according to the rules of his art, had predicted that his royal patient might be awakened with safety, and the sponge had been applied for that purpose; and the leech had not made many observations ere he assured the Baron of Gilsland that the fever had entirely left his sovereign, and that, such was the happy strength of his constitution, it would not be even necessary, as in most cases, to give a second dose of the powerful medicine. Richard himself seemed to be of the same opinion, for, sitting up and rubbing his eyes, he demanded of De Vaux what present sum of money was in the royal coffers.

The baron could not exactly inform him of the amount.

"It matters not," said Richard; "be it greater or smaller, bestow it all on this learned leech, who hath, I trust, given me back again to the service of the Crusade. If it be less than a thousand byzants, let him have jewels to make it up."

"I sell not the wisdom with which Allah has endowed me," answered the Arabian physician; "and be it known to you, great Prince, that the divine medicine of which you have partaken would lose its effects in my unworthy hands did I exchange its virtues either for gold or diamonds."

"The Physician refuseth a gratuity!" said De Vaux to himself. "This is more extraordinary than his being a hundred years old."

"Thomas de Vaux," said Richard, "thou knowest no courage but what belongs to the sword, no bounty and virtue but what are used in chivalry. I tell thee that this Moor, in his independence, might set an example to them who account themselves the flower of knighthood."

"It is reward enough for me," said the Moor, folding his arms on his bosom, and maintaining an attitude at once respectful and dignified, "that so great a king as the Melech Ric [Richard was thus called by the Eastern nations.] should thus speak of his servant.—But now let me pray you again to compose yourself on your couch; for though I think there needs no further repetition of the divine draught, yet injury might ensue from any too early exertion ere your strength be entirely restored."

"I must obey thee, Hakim," said the King; "yet believe me, my bosom feels so free from the wasting fire which for so many days hath scorched it, that I care not how soon I expose it to a brave man's lance.—But hark! what mean these shouts, and that distant music, in the camp? Go, Thomas de Vaux, and make inquiry."

"It is the Archduke Leopold," said De Vaux, returning after a minute's absence, "who makes with his pot-companions some procession through the camp."

"The drunken fool!" exclaimed King Richard; "can he not keep his brutal inebriety within the veil of his pavilion, that he must needs show his shame to all Christendom?—What say you, Sir Marquis?" he added, addressing himself to Conrade of Montserrat, who at that moment entered the tent.

"Thus much, honoured Prince," answered the Marquis, "that I delight to see your Majesty so well, and so far recovered; and that is a long speech for any one to make who has partaken of the Duke of Austria's hospitality."

"What! you have been dining with the Teutonic wine-skin!" said the monarch. "And what frolic has he found out to cause all this disturbance? Truly, Sir Conrade, I have still held you so good a reveller that I wonder at your quitting the game."

De Vaux, who had got a little behind the King, now exerted himself by look and sign to make the Marquis understand that he should say nothing to Richard of what was passing without. But Conrade understood not, or heeded not, the prohibition.

"What the Archduke does," he said, "is of little consequence to any one, least of all to himself, since he probably knows not what he is acting; yet, to say truth, it is a gambol I should not like to share in, since he is pulling down the banner of England from Saint George's Mount, in the centre of the camp yonder, and displaying his own in its stead."

"WHAT sayest thou?" exclaimed the King, in a tone which might have waked the dead.

"Nay," said the Marquis, "let it not chafe your Highness that a fool should act according to his folly—"

"Speak not to me," said Richard, springing from his couch, and casting on his clothes with a dispatch which seemed marvellous—"Speak not to me, Lord Marquis!—De Multon, I command thee speak not a word to me—he that breathes but a syllable is no friend to Richard Plantagenet.—Hakim, be silent, I charge thee!"

All this while the King was hastily clothing himself, and, with the last word, snatched his sword from the pillar of the tent, and without any other weapon, or calling any attendance, he rushed out of his pavilion. Conrade, holding up his hands as if in astonishment, seemed willing to enter into conversation with De Vaux; but Sir Thomas pushed rudely past him, and calling to one of the royal equerries, said hastily, "Fly to Lord Salisbury's quarters, and let him get his men together and follow me instantly to Saint George's Mount. Tell him the King's fever has left his blood and settled in his brain."

Imperfectly heard, and still more imperfectly comprehended, by the startled attendant whom De Vaux addressed thus hastily, the equerry and his fellow-servants of the royal chamber rushed hastily into the tents of the neighbouring nobility, and quickly spread an alarm, as general as the cause seemed vague, through the whole British forces. The English soldiers, waked in alarm from that noonday rest which the heat of the climate had taught them to enjoy as a luxury, hastily asked each other the cause of the tumult, and without waiting an answer, supplied by the force of their own fancy the want of information. Some said the Saracens were in the camp, some that the King's life was attempted, some that he had died of the fever the preceding night, many that he was assassinated by the Duke of Austria. The nobles and officers, at an equal loss with the common men to ascertain the real cause of the disorder, laboured only to get their followers under arms and under authority, lest their rashness should occasion some great misfortune to the Crusading army. The English trumpets sounded loud, shrill, and continuously. The alarm-cry of "Bows and bills, bows and bills!" was heard from quarter to quarter, again and again shouted, and again and again answered by the presence of the ready warriors, and their national invocation, "Saint George for merry England!"

The alarm went through the nearest quarter of the camp, and men of all the various nations assembled, where, perhaps, every people in Christendom had their representatives, flew to arms, and drew together under circumstances of general confusion, of which they knew neither the cause nor the object. It was, however, lucky, amid a scene so threatening, that the Earl of Salisbury, while he hurried after De Vaux's summons with a few only of the readiest English men-at-arms, directed the rest of the English host to be drawn up and kept under arms, to advance to Richard's succour if necessity should require, but in fit array and under due command, and not with the tumultuary haste which their own alarm and zeal for the King's safety might have dictated.

In the meanwhile, without regarding for one instant the shouts, the cries, the tumult which began to thicken around him, Richard, with his dress in the last disorder, and his sheathed blade under his arm, pursued his way with the utmost speed, followed only by De Vaux and one or two household servants, to Saint George's Mount.

He outsped even the alarm which his impetuosity only had excited, and passed the quarter of his own gallant troops of Normandy, Poitou, Gascony, and Anjou before the disturbance had reached them, although the noise accompanying the German revel had induced many of the soldiery to get on foot to listen. The handful of Scots were also quartered in the vicinity, nor had they been disturbed by the uproar. But the King's person and his haste were both remarked by the

Knight of the Leopard, who, aware that danger must be afoot, and hastening to share in it, snatched his shield and sword, and united himself to De Vaux, who with some difficulty kept pace with his impatient and fiery master. De Vaux answered a look of curiosity, which the Scottish knight directed towards him, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and they continued, side by side, to pursue Richard's steps.

The King was soon at the foot of Saint George's Mount, the sides as well as platform of which were now surrounded and crowded, partly by those belonging to the Duke of Austria's retinue, who were celebrating, with shouts of jubilee, the act which they considered as an assertion of national honour; partly by bystanders of different nations, whom dislike to the English, or mere curiosity, had assembled together to witness the end of these extraordinary proceedings. Through this disorderly troop Richard burst his way, like a goodly ship under full sail, which cleaves her forcible passage through the rolling billows, and heeds not that they unite after her passage and roar upon her stern.

The summit of the eminence was a small level space, on which were pitched the rival banners, surrounded still by the Archduke's friends and retinue. In the midst of the circle was Leopold himself, still contemplating with self-satisfaction the deed he had done, and still listening to the shouts of applause which his partisans bestowed with no sparing breath. While he was in this state of self-gratulation, Richard burst into the circle, attended, indeed, only by two men, but in his own headlong energies an irresistible host.

"Who has dared," he said, laying his hands upon the Austrian standard, and speaking in a voice like the sound which precedes an earthquake—"Who has dared to place this paltry rag beside the banner of England?"

The Archduke wanted not personal courage, and it was impossible he could hear this question without reply. Yet so much was he troubled and surprised by the unexpected arrival of Richard, and affected by the general awe inspired by his ardent and unyielding character, that the demand was twice repeated, in a tone which seemed to challenge heaven and earth, ere the Archduke replied, with such firmness as he could command, "It was I, Leopold of Austria."

"Then shall Leopold of Austria," replied Richard, "presently see the rate at which his banner and his pretensions are held by Richard of England."

So saying, he pulled up the standard-spear, splintered it to pieces, threw the banner itself on the ground, and placed his foot upon it.

"Thus," said he, "I trample on the banner of Austria. Is there a knight among your Teutonic chivalry dare impeach my deed?"

There was a momentary silence; but there are no braver men than the Germans.

"I," and "I," and "I," was heard from several knights of the Duke's followers; and he himself added his voice to those which accepted the King of England's defiance.

"Why do we dally thus?" said the Earl Wallenrode, a gigantic warrior from the frontiers of Hungary. "Brethren and noble gentlemen, this man's foot is on the honour of your country—let us rescue it from violation, and down with the pride of England!"

So saying, he drew his sword, and struck at the King a blow which might have proved fatal, had not the Scot intercepted and caught it upon his shield.

"I have sworn," said King Richard—and his voice was heard above all the tumult, which now waxed wild and loud—"never to strike one whose shoulder bears the cross; therefore live, Wallenrode—but live to remember Richard of England."

As he spoke, he grasped the tall Hungarian round the waist, and, unmatched in wrestling, as in other military exercises, hurled him backwards with such violence that the mass flew as if discharged from a military engine, not only through the ring of spectators who witnessed the extraordinary scene, but over the edge of the mount itself, down the steep side of which Wallenrode rolled headlong, until, pitching at length upon his shoulder, he dislocated the bone, and lay like one dead. This almost supernatural display of strength did not encourage either the Duke or any of his followers to renew a personal contest so inauspiciously commenced. Those who stood farthest back did, indeed, clash their swords, and cry out, "Cut the island mastiff to pieces!" but those who were nearer veiled, perhaps, their personal fears under an affected regard for order, and cried, for the most part, "Peace! Peace! the peace of the Cross—the peace of Holy Church and our Father the Pope!"

These various cries of the assailants, contradicting each other, showed their irresolution; while Richard, his foot still on the archducal banner, glared round him with an eye that seemed to seek an enemy, and from which the angry nobles shrunk appalled, as from the threatened grasp of a lion. De Vaux and the Knight of the Leopard kept their places beside him; and though the swords which they held were still sheathed, it was plain that they were prompt to protect Richard's person to the very last, and their size and remarkable strength plainly showed the defence would be a desperate one.

Salisbury and his attendants were also now drawing near, with bills and partisans brandished, and bows already bended.

At this moment King Philip of France, attended by one or two of his nobles, came on the platform to inquire the cause of the disturbance, and made gestures of surprise at finding the King of England raised from his sick-bed, and confronting their common ally, the Duke of Austria, in such a menacing and insulting posture. Richard himself blushed at being discovered by Philip, whose sagacity he respected as much as he disliked his person, in an attitude neither becoming his character as a monarch, nor as a Crusader; and it was observed that he withdrew his foot, as if accidentally, from the dishonoured banner, and exchanged his look of violent emotion for one of affected composure and indifference. Leopold also struggled to attain some degree of calmness, mortified as he was by having been seen by Philip in the act of passively submitting to the insults of the fiery King of England.

Possessed of many of those royal qualities for which he was termed by his subjects the August, Philip might be termed the Ulysses, as Richard was indisputably the Achilles, of the Crusade. The King of France was sagacious, wise, deliberate in council, steady and calm in action, seeing clearly, and steadily pursuing, the measures most for the interest of his kingdom—dignified and royal in his deportment, brave in person, but a politician rather than a warrior. The Crusade would have been no choice of his own; but the spirit was contagious, and the expedition was enforced upon him by the church, and by the unanimous wish of his nobility. In any other situation, or in a milder age, his character might have stood higher than that of the adventurous Coeur de Lion. But in the Crusade, itself an undertaking wholly irrational, sound reason was the quality of all others least estimated, and the chivalric valour which both the age and the enterprise demanded was considered as debased if mingled with the least touch of discretion. So that the merit of Philip, compared with that of his haughty rival, showed like the clear but minute flame of a lamp placed near the glare of a huge, blazing torch, which, not possessing half the utility, makes ten times more impression on the eye. Philip felt his inferiority in public opinion with the pain natural to a high-spirited prince; and it cannot be wondered at if he took such opportunities as offered for placing his own character in more advantageous contrast with that of his rival. The present seemed one of those occasions in which prudence and calmness might reasonably expect to triumph over obstinacy and impetuous violence.

"What means this unseemly broil betwixt the sworn brethren of the Cross—the royal Majesty of England and the princely Duke Leopold? How is it possible that those who are the chiefs and pillars of this holy expedition—"

"A truce with thy remonstrance, France," said Richard, enraged inwardly at finding himself placed on a sort of equality with Leopold, yet not knowing how to resent it. "This duke, or prince, or pillar, if you will, hath been insolent, and I have chastised him—that is all. Here is a coil, forsooth, because of spurning a hound!"

"Majesty of France," said the Duke, "I appeal to you and every sovereign prince against the foul indignity which I have sustained. This King of England hath pulled down my banner-torn and trampled on it."

"Because he had the audacity to plant it beside mine," said Richard.

"My rank as thine equal entitled me," replied the Duke, emboldened by the presence of Philip.

"Assert such equality for thy person," said King Richard, "and, by Saint George, I will treat thy person as I did thy brodered kerchief there, fit but for the meanest use to which kerchief may be put."

"Nay, but patience, brother of England," said Philip, "and I will presently show Austria that he is wrong in this matter.—Do not think, noble Duke," he continued, "that, in permitting the standard of England to occupy the highest point in our camp, we, the independent sovereigns of the Crusade, acknowledge any inferiority to the royal Richard. It were inconsistent to think so, since even the Oriflamme itself—the great banner of France, to which the royal Richard himself, in respect of his French possessions, is but a vassal—holds for the present an inferior place to the Lions of England. But as sworn brethren of the Cross, military pilgrims, who, laying aside the pomp and pride of this world, are hewing with our swords the way to the Holy Sepulchre, I myself, and the other princes, have renounced to King

Richard, from respect to his high renown and great feats of arms, that precedence which elsewhere, and upon other motives, would not have been yielded. I am satisfied that, when your royal grace of Austria shall have considered this, you will express sorrow for having placed your banner on this spot, and that the royal Majesty of England will then give satisfaction for the insult he has offered."

The SPRUCH-SPRECHER and the jester had both retired to a safe distance when matters seemed coming to blows; but returned when words, their own commodity, seemed again about to become the order of the day.

The man of proverbs was so delighted with Philip's politic speech that he clashed his baton at the conclusion, by way of emphasis, and forgot the presence in which he was, so far as to say aloud that he himself had never said a wiser thing in his life.

"It may be so," whispered Jonas Schwanker, "but we shall be whipped if you speak so loud."

The Duke answered sullenly that he would refer his quarrel to the General Council of the Crusade—a motion which Philip highly applauded, as qualified to take away a scandal most harmful to Christendom.

Richard, retaining the same careless attitude, listened to Philip until his oratory seemed exhausted, and then said aloud, "I am drowsy—this fever hangs about me still. Brother of France, thou art acquainted with my humour, and that I have at all times but few words to spare. Know, therefore, at once, I will submit a matter touching the honour of England neither to Prince, Pope, nor Council. Here stands my banner—whatsoever pennon shall be reared within three butts' length of it—ay, were it the Oriflamme, of which you were, I think, but now speaking—shall be treated as that dishonoured rag; nor will I yield other satisfaction than that which these poor limbs can render in the lists to any bold challenge—ay, were it against five champions instead of one."

"Now," said the jester, whispering his companion, "that is as complete a piece of folly as if I myself had said it; but yet, I think, there may be in this matter a greater fool than Richard yet."

"And who may that be?" asked the man of wisdom.

"Philip," said the jester, "or our own Royal Duke, should either accept the challenge. But oh, most sage SPRUCH-SPECHER, what excellent kings wouldst thou and I have made, since those on whose heads these crowns have fallen can play the proverb-monger and the fool as completely as ourselves!"

While these worthies plied their offices apart, Philip answered calmly to the almost injurious defiance of Richard, "I came not hither to awaken fresh quarrels, contrary to the oath we have sworn, and the holy cause in which we have engaged. I part from my brother of England as brothers should part, and the only strife between the Lions of England and the Lilies of France shall be which shall be carried deepest into the ranks of the infidels."

"It is a bargain, my royal brother," said Richard, stretching out his hand with all the frankness which belonged to his rash but generous disposition; "and soon may we have the opportunity to try this gallant and fraternal wager."

"Let this noble Duke also partake in the friendship of this happy moment," said Philip; and the Duke approached half-sullenly, half-willing to enter into some accommodation.

"I think not of fools, nor of their folly," said Richard carelessly; and the Archduke, turning his back on him, withdrew from the ground.

Richard looked after him as he retired.

"There is a sort of glow-worm courage," he said, "that shows only by night. I must not leave this banner unguarded in darkness; by daylight the look of the Lions will alone defend it. Here, Thomas of Gilsland, I give thee the charge of the standard—watch over the honour of England."

"Her safety is yet more dear to me," said De Vaux, "and the life of Richard is the safety of England. I must have your Highness back to your tent, and that without further tarriance."

"Thou art a rough and peremptory nurse, De Vaux," said the king, smiling; and then added, addressing Sir Kenneth, "Valiant Scot, I owe thee a boon, and I will pay it richly. There stands the banner of England! Watch it as novice does his armour on the night before he is dubbed. Stir not from it three spears' length, and defend it with thy body against injury or insult. Sound thy bugle if thou art assailed by more than three at once. Dost thou undertake the charge?"

"Willingly," said Kenneth; "and will discharge it upon penalty of my head. I will but arm me, and return hither instantly."

The Kings of France and England then took formal leave of each other, hiding, under an appearance of courtesy, the grounds of complaint which either had against the other—Richard against Philip, for what he deemed an officious interference betwixt him and Austria, and Philip against Coeur de Lion, for the disrespectful manner in which his mediation had been received. Those whom this disturbance had assembled now drew off in different directions, leaving the contested mount in the same solitude which had subsisted till interrupted by the Austrian bravado. Men judged of the events of the day according to their partialities, and while the English charged the Austrian with having afforded the first ground of quarrel, those of other nations concurred in casting the greater blame upon the insular haughtiness and assuming character of Richard.

"Thou seest," said the Marquis of Montserrat to the Grand Master of the Templars, "that subtle courses are more effective than violence. I have unloosed the bonds which held together this bunch of sceptres and lances—thou wilt see them shortly fall asunder."

"I would have called thy plan a good one," said the Templar, "had there been but one man of courage among yonder cold-blooded Austrians to sever the bonds of which you speak with his sword. A knot that is unloosed may again be fastened, but not so the cord which has been cut to pieces."

CHAPTER XII.

'Tis woman that seduces all mankind.

GAY.

In the days of chivalry, a dangerous post or a perilous adventure was a reward frequently assigned to military bravery as a compensation for its former trials; just as, in ascending a precipice, the surmounting one crag only lifts the climber to points yet more dangerous.

It was midnight, and the moon rode clear and high in heaven, when Kenneth of Scotland stood upon his watch on Saint George's Mount, beside the banner of England, a solitary sentinel, to protect the emblem of that nation against the insults which might be meditated among the thousands whom Richard's pride had made his enemies. High thoughts rolled, one after each other, upon the mind of the warrior. It seemed to him as if he had gained some favour in the eyes of the chivalrous monarch, who till now had not seemed to distinguish him among the crowds of brave men whom his renown had assembled under his banner, and Sir Kenneth little recked that the display of royal regard consisted in placing him upon a post so perilous. The devotion of his ambitious and high-placed affection inflamed his military enthusiasm. Hopeless as that attachment was in almost any conceivable circumstances, those which had lately occurred had, in some degree, diminished the distance between Edith and himself. He upon whom Richard had conferred the distinction of guarding his banner was no longer an adventurer of slight note, but placed within the regard of a princess, although he was as far as ever from her level. An unknown and obscure fate could not now be his. If he was surprised and slain on the post which had been assigned him, his death—and he resolved it should be glorious—must deserve the praises as well as call down the vengeance of Coeur de Lion, and be followed by the regrets, and even the tears, of the high-born beauties of the English Court. He had now no longer reason to fear that he should die as a fool dieth.

Sir Kenneth had full leisure to enjoy these and similar high-souled thoughts, fostered by that wild spirit of chivalry, which, amid its most extravagant and fantastic flights, was still pure from all selfish alloy—generous, devoted, and perhaps only thus far censurable, that it proposed objects and courses of action inconsistent with the frailties and imperfections of man. All nature around him slept in calm moon-shine or in deep shadow. The long rows of tents and pavilions, glimmering or darkening as they lay in the moonlight or in the shade, were still and silent as the streets of a deserted city. Beside the banner-staff lay the large staghound already mentioned, the sole companion of Kenneth's watch, on whose vigilance he trusted for early warning of the approach of any hostile footstep. The noble animal seemed to understand the purpose of their watch; for he looked from time to time at the rich folds of the heavy pennon, and, when the cry of the sentinels

came from the distant lines and defences of the camp, he answered them with one deep and reiterated bark, as if to affirm that he too was vigilant in his duty. From time to time, also, he lowered his lofty head, and wagged his tail, as his master passed and repassed him in the short turns which he took upon his post; or, when the knight stood silent and abstracted leaning on his lance, and looking up towards heaven, his faithful attendant ventured sometimes, in the phrase of romance, "to disturb his thoughts," and awaken him from his reverie, by thrusting his large rough snout into the knight's gauntleted hand, to solicit a transitory caress.

Thus passed two hours of the knight's watch without anything remarkable occurring. At length, and upon a sudden, the gallant staghound bayed furiously, and seemed about to dash forward where the shadow lay the darkest, yet waited, as if in the slips, till he should know the pleasure of his master.

"Who goes there?" said Sir Kenneth, aware that there was something creeping forward on the shadowy side of the mount.

"In the name of Merlin and Maugis," answered a hoarse, disagreeable voice, "tie up your fourfooted demon there, or I come not at you."

"And who art thou that would approach my post?" said Sir Kenneth, bending his eyes as keenly as he could on some object, which he could just observe at the bottom of the ascent, without being able to distinguish its form. "Beware—I am here for death and life."

"Take up thy long-fanged Sathanas," said the voice, "or I will conjure him with a bolt from my arblast."

At the same time was heard the sound of a spring or check, as when a crossbow is bent.

"Unbend thy arblast, and come into the moonlight," said the Scot, "or, by Saint Andrew, I will pin thee to the earth, be what or whom thou wilt!"

As he spoke he poised his long lance by the middle, and, fixing his eye upon the object, which seemed to move, he brandished the weapon, as if meditating to cast it from his hand—a use of the weapon sometimes, though rarely, resorted to when a missile was necessary. But Sir Kenneth was ashamed of his purpose, and grounded his weapon, when there stepped from the shadow into the moonlight, like an actor entering upon the stage, a stunted, decrepit creature, whom, by his fantastic dress and deformity, he recognized, even at some distance, for the male of the two dwarfs whom he had seen in the chapel at Engaddi. Recollecting, at the same moment, the other and far different visions of that extraordinary night, he gave his dog a signal, which he instantly understood, and, returning to the standard, laid himself down beside it with a stifled growl.

The little, distorted miniature of humanity, assured of his safety from an enemy so formidable, came panting up the ascent, which the shortness of his legs rendered laborious, and, when he arrived on the platform at the top, shifted to his left hand the little crossbow, which was just such a toy as children at that period were permitted to shoot small birds with, and, assuming an attitude of great dignity, gracefully extended his right hand to Sir Kenneth, in an attitude as if he expected he would salute it. But such a result not following, he demanded, in a sharp and angry tone of voice, "Soldier, wherefore renderest thou not to Nectabanus the homage due to his dignity? Or is it possible that thou canst have forgotten him?"

"Great Nectabanus," answered the knight, willing to soothe the creature's humour, "that were difficult for any one who has ever looked upon thee. Pardon me, however, that, being a soldier upon my post, with my lance in my hand, I may not give to one of thy puissance the advantage of coming within my guard, or of mastering my weapon. Suffice it that I reverence thy dignity, and submit myself to thee as humbly as a man-at-arms in my place may."

"It shall suffice," said Nectabanus, "so that you presently attend me to the presence of those who have sent me hither to summon you."

"Great sir," replied the knight, "neither in this can I gratify thee, for my orders are to abide by this banner till daybreak—so I pray you to hold me excused in that matter also."

So saying, he resumed his walk upon the platform; but the dwarf did not suffer him so easily to escape from his importunity.

"Look you," he said, placing himself before Sir Kenneth, so as to interrupt his way, "either obey me, Sir Knight, as in duty bound, or I will lay the command upon thee, in the name of one whose beauty could call down the genii from their sphere, and whose grandeur could command the immortal race when they had descended."

A wild and improbable conjecture arose in the knight's mind, but he repelled it. It was impossible, he thought, that the lady of his love should have sent him such a message by such a messenger; yet his voice trembled as he said, "Go to, Nectabanus. Tell me at once, and as a true man, whether this sublime lady of whom thou speakest be other than the houri with whose assistance I beheld thee sweeping the chapel at Engaddi?"

"How! presumptuous Knight," replied the dwarf, "think'st thou the mistress of our own royal affections, the sharer of our greatness, and the partner of our comeliness, would demean herself by laying charge on such a vassal as thou? No; highly as thou art honoured, thou hast not yet deserved the notice of Queen Guenevra, the lovely bride of Arthur, from whose high seat even princes seem but pigmies. But look thou here, and as thou knowest or disownest this token, so obey or refuse her commands who hath deigned to impose them on thee."

So saying, he placed in the knight's hand a ruby ring, which, even in the moonlight, he had no difficulty to recognize as that which usually graced the finger of the high-born lady to whose service he had devoted himself. Could he have doubted the truth of the token, he would have been convinced by the small knot of carnation-coloured ribbon which was fastened to the ring. This was his lady's favourite colour, and more than once had he himself, assuming it for that of his own liveries, caused the carnation to triumph over all other hues in the lists and in the battle.

Sir Kenneth was struck nearly mute by seeing such a token in such hands.

"In the name of all that is sacred, from whom didst thou receive this witness?" said the knight. "Bring, if thou canst, thy wavering understanding to a right settlement for a minute or two, and tell me the person by whom thou art sent, and the real purpose of thy message, and take heed what thou sayest, for this is no subject for buffoonery."

"Fond and foolish Knight," said the dwarf, "wouldst thou know more of this matter than that thou art honoured with commands from a princess, delivered to thee by a king? We list not to parley with thee further than to command thee, in the name and by the power of that ring, to follow us to her who is the owner of the ring. Every minute that thou tarriest is a crime against thy allegiance."

"Good Nectabanus, bethink thyself," said the knight. "Can my lady know where and upon what duty I am this night engaged? Is she aware that my life—pshaw, why should I speak of life—but that my honour depends on my guarding this banner till daybreak; and can it be her wish that I should leave it even to pay homage to her? It is impossible—the princess is pleased to be merry with her servant in sending him such a message; and I must think so the rather that she hath chosen such a messenger."

"Oh, keep your belief," said Nectabanus, turning round as if to leave the platform; "it is little to me whether you be traitor or true man to this royal lady—so fare thee well."

"Stay, stay—I entreat you stay," said Sir Kenneth. "Answer me but one question: is the lady who sent thee near to this place?"

"What signifies it?" said the dwarf. "Ought fidelity to reckon furlongs, or miles, or leagues—like the poor courier, who is paid for his labour by the distance which he traverses? Nevertheless, thou soul of suspicion, I tell thee, the fair owner of the ring now sent to so unworthy a vassal, in whom there is neither truth nor courage, is not more distant from this place than this arblast can send a bolt."

The knight gazed again on that ring, as if to ascertain that there was no possible falsehood in the token. "Tell me," he said to the dwarf, "is my presence required for any length of time?"

"Time!" answered Nectabanus, in his flighty manner; "what call you time? I see it not—I feel it not—it is but a shadowy name—a succession of breathings measured forth by night by the clank of a bell, by day by a shadow crossing along a dial-stone. Knowest thou not a true knight's time should only be reckoned by the deeds that he performs in behalf of God and his lady?"

"The words of truth, though in the mouth of folly," said the knight. "And doth my lady really summon me to some deed of action, in her name and for her sake?—and may it not be postponed for even the few hours till daybreak?"

"She requires thy presence instantly," said the dwarf, "and without the loss of so much time as would be told by ten grains of the sandglass. Harken, thou cold-blooded and suspicious knight, these are her very words—Tell him that the hand which dropped roses can bestow laurels."

This allusion to their meeting in the chapel of Engaddi sent a thousand recollections through Sir Kenneth's brain, and convinced him that the message delivered by the dwarf was genuine. The rosebuds, withered as they were, were still treasured under his cuirass, and nearest to his heart. He paused, and could not resolve to forego an opportunity, the only one which might ever offer, to gain grace in her eyes whom he had installed as sovereign of his affections. The dwarf, in the meantime, augmented his confusion by insisting either that he must return the ring or instantly attend him.

"Hold, hold, yet a moment hold," said the knight, and proceeded to mutter to himself, "Am I either the subject or slave of King Richard, more than as a free knight sworn to the service of the Crusade? And whom have I come hither to honour with lance and sword? Our holy cause and my transcendent lady!"

"The ring! the ring!" exclaimed the dwarf impatiently; "false and slothful knight, return the ring, which thou art unworthy to touch or to look upon."

"A moment, a moment, good Nectabanus," said Sir Kenneth; "disturb not my thoughts.—What if the Saracens were just now to attack our lines? Should I stay here like a sworn vassal of England, watching that her king's pride suffered no humiliation; or should I speed to the breach, and fight for the Cross? To the breach, assuredly; and next to the cause of God come the commands of my liege lady. And yet, Coeur de Lion's behest—my own promise! Nectabanus, I conjure thee once more to say, are you to conduct me far from hence?"

"But to yonder pavilion; and, since you must needs know," replied Nectabanus, "the moon is glimmering on the gilded ball which crowns its roof, and which is worth a king's ransom."

"I can return in an instant," said the knight, shutting his eyes desperately to all further consequences, "I can hear from thence the bay of my dog if any one approaches the standard. I will throw myself at my lady's feet, and pray her leave to return to conclude my watch.—Here, Roswal" (calling his hound, and throwing down his mantle by the side of the standard-spear), "watch thou here, and let no one approach."

The majestic dog looked in his master's face, as if to be sure that he understood his charge, then sat down beside the mantle, with ears erect and head raised, like a sentinel, understanding perfectly the purpose for which he was stationed there.

"Come now, good Nectabanus," said the knight, "let us hasten to obey the commands thou hast brought."

"Haste he that will," said the dwarf sullenly; "thou hast not been in haste to obey my summons, nor can I walk fast enough to follow your long strides—you do not walk like a man, but bound like an ostrich in the desert."

There were but two ways of conquering the obstinacy of Nectabanus, who, as he spoke, diminished his walk into a snail's pace. For bribes Sir Kenneth had no means—for soothing no time; so in his impatience he snatched the dwarf up from the ground, and bearing him along, notwithstanding his entreaties and his fear, reached nearly to the pavilion pointed out as that of the Queen. In approaching it, however, the Scot observed there was a small guard of soldiers sitting on the ground, who had been concealed from him by the intervening tents. Wondering that the clash of his own armour had not yet attracted their attention, and supposing that his motions might, on the present occasion, require to be conducted with secrecy, he placed the little panting guide upon the ground to recover his breath, and point out what was next to be done. Nectabanus was both frightened and angry; but he had felt himself as completely in the power of the robust knight as an owl in the claws of an eagle, and therefore cared not to provoke him to any further display of his strength.

He made no complaints, therefore, of the usage he had received; but, turning amongst the labyrinth of tents, he led the knight in silence to the opposite side of the pavilion, which thus screened them from the observation of the warders, who seemed either too negligent or too sleepy to discharge their duty with much accuracy. Arrived there, the dwarf raised the under part of the canvas from the ground, and made signs to Sir Kenneth that he should introduce himself to the inside of the tent, by creeping under it. The knight hesitated. There seemed an indecorum in thus privately introducing himself into a pavilion pitched, doubtless, for the accommodation of noble ladies; but he recalled to remembrance the assured tokens which the dwarf had exhibited, and concluded that it was not for him to dispute his lady's pleasure.

He stooped accordingly, crept beneath the canvas enclosure of the tent, and heard the dwarf whisper from without, "Remain here until I call thee."

CHAPTER XIII.

You talk of Gaiety and Innocence!

The moment when the fatal fruit was eaten,

They parted ne'er to meet again; and Malice

Has ever since been playmate to light Gaiety,

From the first moment when the smiling infant

Destroys the flower or butterfly he toys with,

To the last chuckle of the dying miser,

Who on his deathbed laughs his last to hear

His wealthy neighbour has become a bankrupt.

OLD PLAY.

Sir Kenneth was left for some minutes alone and in darkness. Here was another interruption which must prolong his absence from his post, and he began almost to repent the facility with which he had been induced to quit it. But to return without seeing the Lady Edith was now not to be thought of. He had committed a breach of military discipline, and was determined at least to prove the reality of the seductive expectations which had tempted him to do so. Meanwhile his situation was unpleasant. There was no light to show him into what sort of apartment he had been led—the Lady Edith was in immediate attendance on the Queen of England—and the discovery of his having introduced himself thus furtively into the royal pavilion might, were it discovered; lead to much and dangerous suspicion. While he gave way to these unpleasant reflections, and began almost to wish that he could achieve his retreat unobserved, he heard a noise of female voices, laughing, whispering, and speaking, in an adjoining apartment, from which, as the sounds gave him reason to judge, he could only be separated by a canvas partition. Lamps were burning, as he might perceive by the shadowy light which extended itself even to his side of the veil which divided the tent, and he could see shades of several figures sitting and moving in the adjoining apartment. It cannot be termed discourtesy in Sir Kenneth that, situated as he was, he overheard a conversation in which he found himself deeply interested.

"Call her—call her, for Our Lady's sake," said the voice of one of these laughing invisibles. "Nectabanus, thou shalt be made ambassador to Prester John's court, to show them how wisely thou canst discharge thee of a mission."

The shrill tone of the dwarf was heard, yet so much subdued that Sir Kenneth could not understand what he said, except that he spoke something of the means of merriment given to the guard.

"But how shall we rid us of the spirit which Nectabanus hath raised, my maidens?"

"Hear me, royal madam," said another voice. "If the sage and princely Nectabanus be not over-jealous of his most transcendent bride and empress, let us send her to get us rid of this insolent knight-errant, who can be so easily persuaded that high-born dames may need the use of his insolent and overweening valour."

"It were but justice, methinks," replied another, "that the Princess Guenever should dismiss, by her courtesy, him whom her husband's wisdom has been able to entice hither."

Struck to the heart with shame and resentment at what he had heard, Sir Kenneth was about to attempt his escape from the tent at all hazards, when what followed arrested his purpose.

"Nay, truly," said the first speaker, "our cousin Edith must first learn how this vaunted wight hath conducted himself, and we must reserve the power of giving her ocular proof that he hath failed in his duty. It may be a lesson will do good upon her; for, credit me, Calista, I have sometimes thought she has let this Northern adventurer sit nearer her heart than prudence would sanction."

One of the other voices was then heard to mutter something of the Lady Edith's prudence and wisdom.

"Prudence, wench!" was the reply. "It is mere pride, and the desire to be thought more rigid than any of us. Nay, I will not quit my advantage. You know well that when she has us at fault no one can, in a civil way, lay your error before you more precisely than can my Lady Edith. But here she comes."

A figure, as if entering the apartment, cast upon the partition a shade, which glided along slowly until it mixed with those which already clouded it. Despite of the bitter disappointment which he had experienced—despite the insult and injury with which it seemed he had been visited by the malice, or, at best, by the idle humour of Queen Berengaria (for he already concluded that she who spoke loudest, and in a commanding tone, was the wife of Richard), the knight felt something so soothing to his feelings in learning that Edith had been no partner to the fraud practised on him, and so interesting to his curiosity in the scene which was about to take place, that, instead of prosecuting his more prudent purpose of an instant retreat, he looked anxiously, on the contrary, for some rent or crevice by means of which he might be made eye as well as ear witness to what was to go forward.

"Surely," said he to himself, "the Queen, who hath been pleased for an idle frolic to endanger my reputation, and perhaps my life, cannot complain if I avail myself of the chance which fortune seems willing to afford me to obtain knowledge of her further intentions."

It seemed, in the meanwhile, as if Edith were waiting for the commands of the Queen, and as if the other were reluctant to speak for fear of being unable to command her laughter and that of her companions; for Sir Kenneth could only distinguish a sound as of suppressed tittering and merriment.

"Your Majesty," said Edith at last, "seems in a merry mood, though, methinks, the hour of night prompts a sleepy one. I was well disposed bedward when I had your Majesty's commands to attend you."

"I will not long delay you, cousin, from your repose," said the Queen, "though I fear you will sleep less soundly when I tell you your wager is lost."

"Nay, royal madam," said Edith, "this, surely, is dwelling on a jest which has rather been worn out, I laid no wager, however it was your Majesty's pleasure to suppose, or to insist, that I did so."

"Nay, now, despite our pilgrimage, Satan is strong with you, my gentle cousin, and prompts thee to leasing. Can you deny that you gaged your ruby ring against my golden bracelet that yonder Knight of the Libbard, or how call you him, could not be seduced from his post?"

"Your Majesty is too great for me to gainsay you," replied Edith, "but these ladies can, if they will, bear me witness that it was your Highness who proposed such a wager, and took the ring from my finger, even while I was declaring that I did not think it maidenly to gage anything on such a subject."

"Nay, but, my Lady Edith," said another voice, "you must needs grant, under your favour, that you expressed yourself very confident of the valour of that same Knight of the Leopard."

"And if I did, minion," said Edith angrily, "is that a good reason why thou shouldst put in thy word to flatter her Majesty's humour? I spoke of that knight but as all men speak who have seen him in the field, and had no more interest in defending than thou in detracting from him. In a camp, what can women speak of save soldiers and deeds of arms?"

"The noble Lady Edith," said a third voice, "hath never forgiven Calista and me, since we told your Majesty that she dropped two rosebuds in the chapel."

"If your Majesty," said Edith, in a tone which Sir Kenneth could judge to be that of respectful remonstrance, "have no other commands for me than to hear the gibes of your waiting-women, I must crave your permission to withdraw."

"Silence, Florise," said the Queen, "and let not our indulgence lead you to forget the difference betwixt yourself and the kinswoman of England.—But you, my dear cousin," she continued, resuming her tone of raillery, "how can you, who are so good-natured, begrudge us poor wretches a few minutes' laughing, when we have had so many days devoted to weeping and gnashing of teeth?"

"Great be your mirth, royal lady," said Edith; "yet would I be content not to smile for the rest of my life, rather than—"

She stopped, apparently out of respect; but Sir Kenneth could hear that she was in much agitation.

"Forgive me," said Berengaria, a thoughtless but good-humoured princess of the House of Navarre; "but what is the great offence, after all? A young knight has been wiled hither—has stolen, or has been stolen, from his post, which no one will disturb in his absence—for the sake of a fair lady; for, to do your champion justice, sweet one, the wisdom of Nectabanus could conjure him hither in no name but yours."

"Gracious Heaven! your Majesty does not say so?" said Edith, in a voice of alarm quite different from the agitation she had previously evinced,— "you cannot say so consistently with respect for your own honour and for mine, your husband's kinswoman! Say you were jesting with me, my royal mistress, and forgive me that I could, even for a moment, think it possible you could be in earnest!"

"The Lady Edith," said the Queen, in a displeased tone of voice, "regrets the ring we have won of her. We will restore the pledge to you, gentle cousin; only you must not grudge us in turn a little triumph over the wisdom which has been so often spread over us, as a banner over a host."

"A triumph!" exclaimed Edith indignantly—"a triumph! The triumph will be with the infidel, when he hears that the Queen of England can make the reputation of her husband's kinswoman the subject of a light frolic."

"You are angry, fair cousin, at losing your favourite ring," said the Queen. "Come, since you grudge to pay your wager, we will renounce our right; it was your name and that pledge brought him hither, and we care not for the bait after the fish is caught."

"Madam," replied Edith impatiently, "you know well that your Grace could not wish for anything of mine but it becomes instantly yours. But I would give a bushel of rubies ere ring or name of mine had been used to bring a brave man into a fault, and perhaps to disgrace and punishment."

"Oh, it is for the safety of our true knight that we fear!" said the Queen. "You rate our power too low, fair cousin, when you speak of a life being lost for a frolic of ours. O Lady Edith, others have influence on the iron breasts of warriors as well as you—the heart even of a lion is made of flesh, not of stone; and, believe me, I have interest enough with Richard to save this knight, in whose fate Lady Edith is so deeply concerned, from the penalty of disobeying his royal commands."

"For the love of the blessed Cross, most royal lady," said Edith—and Sir Kenneth, with feelings which it were hard to unravel, heard her prostrate herself at the Queen's feet—"for the love of our blessed Lady, and of every holy saint in the calendar, beware what you do! You know not King Richard—you have been but shortly wedded to him. Your breath might as well combat the west wind when it is wildest, as your words persuade my royal kinsman to pardon a military offence. Oh, for God's sake, dismiss this gentleman, if indeed you have lured him hither! I could almost be content to rest with the shame of having invited him, did I know that he was returned again where his duty calls him!"

"Arise, cousin, arise," said Queen Berengaria, "and be assured all will be better than you think. Rise, dear Edith. I am sorry I have played my foolery with a knight in whom you take such deep interest. Nay, wring not thy hands; I will believe thou carest not for him—believe anything rather than see thee look so wretchedly miserable. I tell thee I will take the blame on myself with King Richard in behalf of thy fair Northern friend—thine acquaintance, I would say, since thou own'st him not as a friend. Nay, look not so reproachfully. We will send Nectabanus to dismiss this Knight of the Standard to his post; and we ourselves will grace him on some future day, to make amends for his wild-goose chase. He is, I warrant, but lying perdu in some neighbouring tent."

"By my crown of lilies, and my sceptre of a specially good water-reed," said Nectabanus, "your Majesty is mistaken, He is nearer at hand than you wot—he lieth ensconced there behind that canvas partition."

"And within hearing of each word we have said!" exclaimed the Queen, in her turn violently surprised and agitated. "Out, monster of folly and malignity!"

As she uttered these words, Nectabanus fled from the pavilion with a yell of such a nature as leaves it still doubtful whether Berengaria had confined her rebuke to words, or added some more emphatic expression of her displeasure.

"What can now be done?" said the Queen to Edith, in a whisper of undisguised uneasiness.

"That which must," said Edith firmly. "We must see this gentleman and place ourselves in his mercy."

So saying, she began hastily to undo a curtain, which at one place covered an entrance or communication.

"For Heaven's sake, forbear—consider," said the Queen—"my apartment—our dress—the hour—my honour!"

But ere she could detail her remonstrances, the curtain fell, and there was no division any longer betwixt the armed knight and the party of ladies. The warmth of an Eastern night occasioned the undress of Queen Berengaria and her household to be rather more simple and unstudied than their station, and the presence of a male spectator of rank, required. This the Queen remembered, and with a loud shriek fled from the apartment where Sir Kenneth was disclosed to view in a compartment of the ample pavilion, now no longer separated from that in which they stood. The grief and agitation of the Lady Edith, as well as the deep interest she felt in a hasty explanation with the Scottish knight, perhaps occasioned her forgetting that her locks were more dishevelled and her person less heedfully covered than was the wont of high-born damsels, in an age which was not, after all, the most prudish or scrupulous period of the ancient time. A thin, loose garment of pink-coloured silk made the principal part of her vestments, with Oriental slippers, into which she had hastily thrust her bare feet, and a scarf hurriedly and loosely thrown about her shoulders. Her head had no other covering than the veil of rich and dishevelled locks falling round it on every side, that half hid a countenance which a mingled sense of modesty and of resentment, and other deep and agitated feelings, had covered with crimson.

But although Edith felt her situation with all that delicacy which is her sex's greatest charm, it did not seem that for a moment she placed her own bashfulness in comparison with the duty which, as she thought, she owed to him who had been led into error and danger on her account. She drew, indeed, her scarf more closely over her neck and bosom, and she hastily laid from her hand a lamp which shed too much lustre over her figure; but, while Sir Kenneth stood motionless on the same spot in which he was first discovered, she rather stepped towards than retired from him, as she exclaimed, "Hasten to your post, valiant knight!—you are deceived in being trained hither—ask no questions."

"I need ask none," said the knight, sinking upon one knee, with the reverential devotion of a saint at the altar, and bending his eyes on the ground, lest his looks should increase the lady's embarrassment.

"Have you heard all?" said Edith impatiently. "Gracious saints! then wherefore wait you here, when each minute that passes is loaded with dishonour!"

"I have heard that I am dishonoured, lady, and I have heard it from you," answered Kenneth. "What reck I how soon punishment follows? I have but one petition to you; and then I seek, among the sabres of the infidels, whether dishonour may not be washed out with blood."

"Do not so, neither," said the lady. "Be wise—dally not here; all may yet be well, if you will but use dispatch."

"I wait but for your forgiveness," said the knight, still kneeling, "for my presumption in believing that my poor services could have been required or valued by you."

"I do forgive you—oh, I have nothing to forgive! have been the means of injuring you. But oh, begone! I will forgive—I will value you—that is, as I value every brave Crusader—if you will but begone!"

"Receive, first, this precious yet fatal pledge," said the knight, tendering the ring to Edith, who now showed gestures of impatience.

"Oh, no, no " she said, declining to receive it. "Keep it—keep it as a mark of my regard—my regret, I would say. Oh, begone, if not for your own sake, for mine!"

Almost recompensed for the loss even of honour, which her voice had denounced to him, by the interest which she seemed to testify in his safety, Sir Kenneth rose from his knee, and, casting a momentary glance on Edith, bowed low, and seemed about to withdraw. At the same instant, that maidenly bashfulness, which the energy of Edith's feelings had till then triumphed over, became conqueror in its turn, and she hastened from the apartment, extinguishing her lamp as she went, and leaving, in Sir Kenneth's thoughts, both mental and natural gloom behind her.

She must be obeyed, was the first distinct idea which waked him from his reverie, and he hastened to the place by which he had entered the pavilion. To pass under the canvas in the manner he had entered required time and attention, and he made a readier aperture by slitting the canvas wall with his poniard. When in the free air, he felt rather stupefied and overpowered by a conflict of sensations, than able to ascertain what was the real import of the whole. He was obliged to spur himself to action by recollecting that the commands of the Lady Edith had required haste. Even then, engaged as he was amongst tent-ropes and tents, he was compelled to move with caution until he should regain the path or avenue, aside from which the dwarf had led him, in order to escape the observation of the guards before the Queen's pavilion; and he was obliged also to move slowly, and with precaution, to avoid giving an alarm, either by falling or by the clashing of his armour. A thin cloud had obscured the moon, too, at the very instant of his leaving the tent, and Sir Kenneth had to struggle with this inconvenience at a moment when the dizziness of his head and the fullness of his heart scarce left him powers of intelligence sufficient to direct his motions.

But at once sounds came upon his ear which instantly recalled him to the full energy of his faculties. These proceeded from the Mount of Saint George. He heard first a single, fierce, angry, and savage bark, which was immediately followed by a yell of agony. No deer ever bounded with a wilder start at the voice of Roswal than did Sir Kenneth at what he feared was the death-cry of that noble hound, from whom no ordinary injury could have extracted even the slightest acknowledgment of pain. He surmounted the space which divided him from the avenue, and, having attained it, began to run towards the mount, although loaded with his mail, faster than most men could have accompanied him even if unarmed, relaxed not his pace for the steep sides of the artificial mound, and in a few minutes stood on the platform upon its summit.

The moon broke forth at this moment, and showed him that the Standard of England was vanished, that the spear on which it had floated lay broken on the ground, and beside it was his faithful hound, apparently in the agonies of death.

CHAPTER XIV.

*All my long arrear of honour lost,
Heap'd up in youth, and hoarded up for age.
Hath Honour's fountain then suck'd up the stream?
He hath—and hooting boys may barefoot pass,
And gather pebbles from the naked ford!*

DON SEBASTIAN.

After a torrent of afflicting sensations, by which he was at first almost stunned and confounded, Sir Kenneth's first thought was to look for the authors of this violation of the English banner; but in no direction could he see traces of them. His next, which to some persons, but scarce to any who have made intimate acquaintances among the canine race, may appear strange, was to examine the condition of his faithful Roswal, mortally wounded, as it seemed, in discharging the duty which his master had been seduced to abandon. He caressed the dying animal, who, faithful to the last, seemed to forget his own pain in the satisfaction he received from his master's presence, and continued wagging his tail and licking his hand, even while by low moanings he expressed that his agony was increased by the attempts which Sir Kenneth made to withdraw from the wound the fragment of the lance or javelin with which it had been inflicted; then redoubled his feeble endearments, as if fearing he had offended his master by showing a sense of the pain to which his interference had subjected him. There was something in the display of the dying creature's attachment which mixed as a bitter ingredient with the sense of disgrace and desolation by which Sir Kenneth was oppressed. His only friend seemed removed from him, just when he had incurred the contempt and hatred of all besides. The knight's strength of mind gave way to a burst of agonized distress, and he groaned and wept aloud.

While he thus indulged his grief, a clear and solemn voice, close beside him, pronounced these words in the sonorous tone of the readers of the mosque, and in the lingua franca mutually understood by Christians and Saracens:—

"Adversity is like the period of the former and of the latter rain—cold, comfortless, unfriendly to man and to animal; yet from that season have their birth the flower and the fruit, the date, the rose, and the pomegranate."

Sir Kenneth of the Leopard turned towards the speaker, and beheld the Arabian physician, who, approaching unheard, had seated himself a little behind him cross-legged, and uttered with gravity, yet not without a tone of sympathy, the moral sentences of consolation with which the Koran and its commentators supplied him; for, in the East, wisdom is held to consist less in a display of the sage's own inventive talents, than in his ready memory and happy application of and reference to "that which is written."

Ashamed at being surprised in a womanlike expression of sorrow, Sir Kenneth dashed his tears indignantly aside, and again busied himself with his dying favourite.

"The poet hath said," continued the Arab, without noticing the knight's averted looks and sullen deportment, "the ox for the field, and the camel for the desert. Were not the hand of the leech fitter than that of the soldier to cure wounds, though less able to inflict them?"

"This patient, Hakim, is beyond thy help," said Sir Kenneth; "and, besides, he is, by thy law, an unclean animal."

"Where Allah hath deigned to bestow life, and a sense of pain and pleasure," said the physician, "it were sinful pride should the sage, whom He has enlightened, refuse to prolong existence or assuage agony. To the sage, the cure of a miserable groom, of a poor dog and of a conquering monarch, are events of little distinction. Let me examine this wounded animal."

Sir Kenneth acceded in silence, and the physician inspected and handled Roswal's wound with as much care and attention as if he had been a human being. He then took forth a case of instruments, and, by the judicious and skilful application of pincers, withdrew from the wounded shoulder the fragment of the weapon, and stopped with styptics and bandages the effusion of blood which followed; the creature all the while suffering him patiently to perform these kind offices, as if he had been aware of his kind intentions.

"The animal may be cured," said El Hakim, addressing himself to Sir Kenneth, "if you will permit me to carry him to my tent, and treat him with the care which the nobleness of his nature deserves. For know, that thy servant Adonbec is no less skilful in the race and pedigree and distinctions of good dogs and of noble steeds than in the diseases which afflict the human race."

"Take him with you," said the knight. "I bestow him on you freely, if he recovers. I owe thee a reward for attendance on my squire, and have nothing else to pay it with. For myself, I will never again wind bugle or halloo to hound!"

The Arabian made no reply, but gave a signal with a clapping of his hands, which was instantly answered by the appearance of two black slaves. He gave them his orders in Arabic, received the answer that "to hear was to obey," when, taking the animal in their arms, they removed him, without much resistance on his part; for though his eyes turned to his master, he was too weak to struggle.

"Fare thee well, Roswal, then," said Sir Kenneth—"fare thee well, my last and only friend—thou art too noble a possession to be retained by one such as I must in future call myself—I would," he said, as the slaves retired, "that, dying as he is, I could exchange conditions with that noble animal!"

"It is written," answered the Arabian, although the exclamation had not been addressed to him, "that all creatures are fashioned for the service of man; and the master of the earth speaketh folly when he would exchange, in his impatience, his hopes here and to come for the servile condition of an inferior being."

"A dog who dies in discharging his duty," said the knight sternly, "is better than a man who survives the desertion of it. Leave me, Hakim; thou hast, on this side of miracle, the most wonderful science which man ever possessed, but the wounds of the spirit are beyond thy power."

"Not if the patient will explain his calamity, and be guided by the physician," said Adonbec el Hakim.

"Know, then," said Sir Kenneth, "since thou art so importunate, that last night the Banner of England was displayed from this mound—I was its appointed guardian—morning is now breaking—there lies the broken banner-spear, the standard itself is lost, and here sit I a living man!"

"How!" said El Hakim, examining him; "thy armour is whole—there is no blood on thy weapons, and report speaks thee one unlikely to return thus from fight. Thou hast been trained from thy post—ay, trained by the rosy cheek and black eye of one of those houris, to whom you Nazarenes vow rather such service as is due to Allah, than such love as may lawfully be rendered to forms of clay like our own. It has been thus assuredly; for so hath man ever fallen, even since the days of Sultan Adam."

"And if it were so, physician," said Sir Kenneth sullenly, "what remedy?"

"Knowledge is the parent of power," said El Hakim, "as valour supplies strength. Listen to me. Man is not as a tree, bound to one spot of earth; nor is he framed to cling to one bare rock, like the scarce animated shell-fish. Thine own Christian writings command thee, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another; and we Moslem also know that Mohammed, the Prophet of Allah, driven forth from the holy city of Mecca, found his refuge and his helpmates at Medina."

"And what does this concern me?" said the Scot.

"Much," answered the physician. "Even the sage flies the tempest which he cannot control. Use thy speed, therefore, and fly from the vengeance of Richard to the shadow of Saladin's victorious banner."

"I might indeed hide my dishonour," said Sir Kenneth ironically, "in a camp of infidel heathens, where the very phrase is unknown. But had I not better partake more fully in their reproach? Does not thy advice stretch so far as to recommend me to take the turban? Methinks I want but apostasy to consummate my infamy."

"Blaspheme not, Nazarene," said the physician sternly. "Saladin makes no converts to the law of the Prophet, save those on whom its precepts shall work conviction. Open thine eyes to the light, and the great Soldan, whose liberality is as boundless as his power, may bestow on thee a kingdom; remain blinded if thou wilt, and, being one whose second life is doomed to misery, Saladin will yet, for this span of present time, make thee rich and happy. But fear not that thy brows shall be bound with the turban, save at thine own free choice."

"My choice were rather," said the knight, "that my writhen features should blacken, as they are like to do, in this evening's setting sun."

"Yet thou art not wise, Nazarene," said El Hakim, "to reject this fair offer; for I have power with Saladin, and can raise thee high in his grace. Look you, my son—this Crusade, as you call your wild enterprise, is like a large dromond [The largest sort of vessels then known were termed dromond's, or dromedaries.] parting asunder in the waves. Thou thyself hast borne terms of truce from the kings and princes, whose force is here assembled, to the mighty Soldan, and knewest not, perchance, the full tenor of thine own errand."

"I knew not, and I care not," said the knight impatiently. "What avails it to me that I have been of late the envoy of princes, when, ere night, I shall be a gibbeted and dishonoured corpse?"

"Nay, I speak that it may not be so with thee," said the physician. "Saladin is courted on all sides. The combined princes of this league formed against him have made such proposals of composition and peace, as, in other circumstances, it might have become his honour to have granted to them. Others have made private offers, on their own separate account, to disjoin their forces from the camp of the Kings of Frangistan, and even to lend their arms to the defence of the standard of the Prophet. But Saladin will not be served by such treacherous and interested defection. The king of kings will treat only with the Lion King. Saladin will hold treaty with none but the Melech Ric, and with him he will treat like a prince, or fight like a champion. To Richard he will yield such conditions of his free liberality as the swords of all Europe could never compel from him by force or terror. He will permit a free pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and all the places where the Nazarenes list to worship; nay, he will so far share even his empire with his brother Richard, that he will allow Christian garrisons in the six strongest cities of Palestine, and one in Jerusalem itself, and suffer them to be under the immediate command of the officers of Richard, who, he consents, shall bear the name of King Guardian of Jerusalem. Yet further, strange and incredible as you may think it, know, Sir Knight—for to your honour I can commit even that almost incredible secret—know that Saladin will put a sacred seal on this happy union betwixt the bravest and noblest of Frangistan and Asia, by raising to the rank of his royal spouse a Christian damsel, allied in blood to King Richard, and known by the name of the Lady Edith of Plantagenet." [This may appear so extraordinary and improbable a proposition that it is necessary to say such a one was actually made. The historians, however, substitute the widowed Queen of Naples, sister of Richard, for the bride, and Saladin's brother for the bridegroom. They appear to have been ignorant of the existence of Edith of Plantagenet.—See MILL'S History of the Crusades, vol. ii., p. 61.]

"Ha!—sayest thou?" exclaimed Sir Kenneth, who, listening with indifference and apathy to the preceding part of El Hakim's speech, was touched by this last communication, as the thrill of a nerve, unexpectedly jarred, will awaken the sensation of agony, even in the torpor of palsy. Then, moderating his tone, by dint of much effort he restrained his indignation, and, veiling it under the appearance of contemptuous doubt, he prosecuted the conversation, in order to get as much knowledge as possible of the plot, as he deemed it, against the honour and happiness of her whom he loved not the less that his passion had ruined, apparently, his fortunes, at once, and his honour.—"And what Christian," he said, With tolerable calmness, "would sanction a union so unnatural as that of a Christian maiden with an unbelieving Saracen?"

"Thou art but an ignorant, bigoted Nazarene," said the Hakim. "Seest thou not how the Mohammedan princes daily intermarry with the noble Nazarene maidens in Spain, without scandal either to Moor or Christian? And the noble Soldan will, in his full confidence in the blood of Richard, permit the English maid the freedom which your Frankish manners have assigned to women. He will allow her the free exercise of her religion, seeing that, in very truth, it signifies but little to which faith females are addicted; and he will assign her such place and rank over all the women of his zenana, that she shall be in every respect his sole and absolute queen."

"What!" said Sir Kenneth, "darest thou think, Moslem, that Richard would give his kinswoman—a high-born and virtuous princess—to be, at best, the foremost concubine in the haram of a misbeliever? Know, Hakim, the meanest free Christian noble would scorn, on his child's behalf, such splendid ignominy."

"Thou errest," said the Hakim. "Philip of France, and Henry of Champagne, and others of Richard's principal allies, have heard the proposal without starting, and have promised, as far as they may, to forward an alliance that may end these wasteful wars; and the wise arch-priest of Tyre hath undertaken to break the proposal to Richard, not doubting that he shall be able to bring the plan to good issue. The Soldan's wisdom hath as yet kept his proposition secret from others, such as he of Montserrat, and the Master of the Templars, because he knows they seek to thrive by Richard's death or disgrace, not by his life or honour. Up, therefore, Sir Knight, and to horse. I will give thee a scroll which shall advance thee highly with the Soldan; and deem not that you are leaving your country, or her cause, or her religion, since the interest of the two monarchs will speedily be the same. To Saladin thy counsel will be most acceptable, since thou canst make him aware of much concerning the marriages of the Christians, the treatment of their wives, and other points of their laws and usages, which, in the course of such treaty, it much concerns him that he should know. The right hand of the Soldan grasps the treasures of the East, and it is the fountain of generosity. Or, if thou desirest it, Saladin, when allied with England, can have but little difficulty to obtain from Richard, not only thy pardon and restoration to favour, but an honourable command in the troops which may be left of the King of England's host, to maintain their joint government in Palestine. Up, then, and mount—there lies a plain path before thee."

"Hakim," said the Scottish knight, "thou art a man of peace; also thou hast saved the life of Richard of England—and, moreover, of my own poor esquire, Strauchan. I have, therefore, heard to an end a matter which, being propounded by another Moslem than thyself, I would have cut short with a blow of my dagger! Hakim, in return for thy kindness, I advise thee to see that the Saracen who shall propose to Richard a union betwixt the blood of Plantagenet and that of his accursed race do put on a helmet which is capable to endure such a blow of a battle-axe as that which struck down the gate of Acre. Certes, he will be otherwise placed beyond the reach even of thy skill."

"Thou art, then, wilfully determined not to fly to the Saracen host?" said the physician. "Yet, remember, thou stayest to certain destruction; and the writings of thy law, as well as ours, prohibit man from breaking into the tabernacle of his own life."

"God forbid!" replied the Scot, crossing himself; "but we are also forbidden to avoid the punishment which our crimes have deserved. And since so poor are thy thoughts of fidelity, Hakim, it grudges me that I have bestowed my good hound on thee, for, should he live, he will have a master ignorant of his value."

"A gift that is begrudged is already recalled," said El Hakim; "only we physicians are sworn not to send away a patient uncured. If the dog recover, he is once more yours."

"Go to, Hakim," answered Sir Kenneth; "men speak not of hawk and hound when there is but an hour of day-breaking betwixt them and death. Leave me to recollect my sins, and reconcile myself to Heaven."

"I leave thee in thine obstinacy," said the physician; "the mist hides the precipice from those who are doomed to fall over it."

He withdrew slowly, turning from time to time his head, as if to observe whether the devoted knight might not recall him either by word or signal. At last his turbaned figure was lost among the labyrinth of tents which lay extended beneath, whitening in the pale light of the dawning, before which the moonbeam had now faded away.

But although the physician Adonbec's words had not made that impression upon Kenneth which the sage desired, they had inspired the Scot with a motive for desiring life, which, dishonoured as he conceived himself to be, he was before willing to part from as from a sullied vestment no longer becoming his wear. Much that had passed betwixt himself and the hermit, besides what he had observed between the anchorite and Sheerkohf (or Ilderim), he now recalled to recollection, and tended to confirm what the Hakim had told him of the secret article of the treaty.

"The reverend impostor!" he exclaimed to himself; "the hoary hypocrite! He spoke of the unbelieving husband converted by the believing wife; and what do I know but that the traitor exhibited to the Saracen, accursed of God, the beauties of Edith Plantagenet, that the hound might judge if the princely Christian lady were fit to be admitted into the haram of a misbeliever? If I had yonder infidel Ilderim, or whatsoever he is called, again in the gripe with which I once held him fast as ever hound held hare, never again should HE at least come on errand disgraceful to the honour of Christian king or noble and virtuous maiden. But I—my hours are fast dwindling into minutes—yet, while I have life and breath, something must be done, and speedily."

He paused for a few minutes, threw from him his helmet, then strode down the hill, and took the road to King Richard's pavilion.

CHAPTER XV.

*The feather'd songster, chanticleer,
Had wound his bugle-horn,
And told the early villager
The coming of the morn.
King Edward saw the ruddy streaks
Of light eclipse the grey,
And heard the raven's croaking throat
Proclaim the fated day.
"Thou'rt right," he said, "for, by the God
That sits enthron'd on high,
Charles Baldwin, and his fellows twain,
This day shall surely die."*

CHATTERTON.

On the evening on which Sir Kenneth assumed his post, Richard, after the stormy event which disturbed its tranquillity, had retired to rest in the plenitude of confidence inspired by his unbounded courage and the superiority which he had displayed in carrying the point he aimed at in presence of the whole Christian host and its leaders, many of whom, he was aware, regarded in their secret souls the disgrace of the Austrian Duke as a triumph over themselves; so that his pride felt gratified, that in prostrating one enemy he had mortified a hundred.

Another monarch would have doubled his guards on the evening after such a scene, and kept at least a part of his troops under arms. But Coeur de Lion dismissed, upon the occasion, even his ordinary watch, and assigned to his soldiers a donative of wine to celebrate his recovery, and to drink to the Banner of Saint George; and his quarter of the camp would have assumed a character totally devoid of vigilance and military preparation, but that Sir Thomas de Vaux, the Earl of Salisbury, and other nobles, took precautions to preserve order and discipline among the revellers.

The physician attended the King from his retiring to bed till midnight was past, and twice administered medicine to him during that period, always previously observing the quarter of heaven occupied by the full moon, whose influences he declared to be most sovereign, or most baleful, to the effect of his drugs. It was three hours after midnight ere El Hakim withdrew from the royal tent, to one which had been pitched for himself and his retinue. In his way thither he visited the tent of Sir Kenneth of the Leopard, in order to see the condition of his first patient in the Christian camp, old Strauchan, as the knight's esquire was named. Inquiring there for Sir Kenneth himself, El Hakim learned on what duty he was employed, and probably this information led him to Saint George's Mount, where he found him whom he sought in the disastrous circumstances alluded to in the last chapter.

It was about the hour of sunrise, when a slow, armed tread was heard approaching the King's pavilion; and ere De Vaux, who slumbered beside his master's bed as lightly as ever sleep sat upon the eyes of a watch-dog, had time to do more than arise and say, "Who comes?" the Knight of the Leopard entered the tent, with a deep and devoted gloom seated upon his manly features.

"Whence this bold intrusion, Sir Knight?" said De Vaux sternly, yet in a tone which respected his master's slumbers.

"Hold! De Vaux," said Richard, awaking on the instant; "Sir Kenneth cometh like a good soldier to render an account of his guard. To such the general's tent is ever accessible." Then rising from his slumbering posture, and leaning on his elbow, he fixed his large bright eye upon the warrior—"Speak, Sir Scot; thou comest to tell me of a vigilant, safe, and honourable watch, dost thou not? The rustling of the folds of the Banner of England were enough to guard it, even without the body of such a knight as men hold thee."

"As men will hold me no more," said Sir Kenneth. "My watch hath neither been vigilant, safe, nor honourable. The Banner of England has been carried off."

"And thou alive to tell it!" said Richard, in a tone of derisive incredulity. "Away, it cannot be. There is not even a scratch on thy face. Why dost thou stand thus mute? Speak the truth—it is ill jesting with a king; yet I will forgive thee if thou hast lied."

"Lied, Sir King!" returned the unfortunate knight, with fierce emphasis, and one glance of fire from his eye, bright and transient as the flash from the cold and stony flint. "But this also must be endured. I have spoken the truth."

"By God and by Saint George!" said the King, bursting into fury, which, however, he instantly checked. "De Vaux, go view the spot. This fever has disturbed his brain. This cannot be. The man's courage is proof. It CANNOT be! Go speedily—or send, if thou wilt not go."

The King was interrupted by Sir Henry Neville, who came, breathless, to say that the banner was gone, and the knight who guarded it overpowered, and most probably murdered, as there was a pool of blood where the banner-spear lay shivered.

"But whom do I see here?" said Neville, his eyes suddenly resting upon Sir Kenneth.

"A traitor," said the King, starting to his feet, and seizing the curtal-axe, which was ever near his bed—"a traitor! whom thou shalt see die a traitor's death." And he drew back the weapon as in act to strike.

Colourless, but firm as a marble statue, the Scot stood before him, with his bare head uncovered by any protection, his eyes cast down to the earth, his lips scarcely moving, yet muttering probably in prayer. Opposite to him, and within the due reach for a blow, stood King Richard, his large person wrapt in the folds of his camiscia, or ample gown of linen, except where the violence of his action had flung the covering from his right arm, shoulder, and a part of his breast, leaving to view a specimen of a frame which might have merited his Saxon predecessor's epithet of Ironside. He stood for an instant, prompt to strike; then sinking the head of the weapon towards the ground, he exclaimed, "But there was blood, Neville—there was blood upon the place. Hark thee, Sir Scot—brave thou wert once, for I have seen thee fight. Say thou hast slain two of the thieves in defence of the Standard—say but one—say thou hast struck but a good blow in our behalf, and get thee out of the camp with thy life and thy infamy!"

"You have called me liar, my Lord King," replied Kenneth firmly; "and therein, at least, you have done me wrong. Know that there was no blood shed in defence of the Standard save that of a poor hound, which, more faithful than his master, defended the charge which he deserted."

"Now, by Saint George!" said Richard, again heaving up his arm. But De Vaux threw himself between the King and the object of his vengeance, and spoke with the blunt truth of his character, "My liege, this must not be—here, nor by your hand. It is enough of folly for one night and day to have entrusted your banner to a Scot. Said I not they were ever fair and false?" [Such were the terms in which the English used to speak of their poor northern neighbours, forgetting that their own encroachments upon the independence of Scotland obliged the weaker nation to defend themselves by policy as well as force. The disgrace must be divided between Edward I. and Edward III., who enforced their domination over a free country, and the Scots, who were compelled to take compulsory oaths, without any purpose of keeping them.]

"Thou didst, De Vaux; thou wast right, and I confess it," said Richard. "I should have known him better—I should have remembered how the fox William deceived me touching this Crusade."

"My lord," said Sir Kenneth, "William of Scotland never deceived; but circumstances prevented his bringing his forces."

"Peace, shameless!" said the King; "thou sulliest the name of a prince, even by speaking it.—And yet, De Vaux, it is strange," he added, "to see the bearing of the man. Coward or traitor he must be, yet he abode the blow of Richard Plantagenet as our arm had been raised to lay knighthood on his shoulder. Had he shown the slightest sign of fear, had but a joint trembled or an eyelid quivered, I had shattered his head like a crystal goblet. But I cannot strike where there is neither fear nor resistance."

There was a pause.

"My lord," said Kenneth—

"Ha!" replied Richard, interrupting him, "hast thou found thy speech? Ask grace from Heaven, but none from me; for England is dishonoured through thy fault, and wert thou mine own and only brother, there is no pardon for thy fault."

"I speak not to demand grace of mortal man," said the Scot; "it is in your Grace's pleasure to give or refuse me time for Christian shrift—if man denies it, may God grant me the absolution which I would otherwise ask of His church! But whether I die on the instant, or half an hour hence, I equally beseech your Grace for one moment's opportunity to speak that to your royal person which highly concerns your fame as a Christian king."

"Say on," said the King, making no doubt that he was about to hear some confession concerning the loss of the Banner.

"What I have to speak," said Sir Kenneth, "touches the royalty of England, and must be said to no ears but thine own."

"Begone with yourselves, sirs," said the King to Neville and De Vaux.

The first obeyed, but the latter would not stir from the King's presence.

"If you said I was in the right," replied De Vaux to his sovereign, "I will be treated as one should be who hath been found to be right—that is, I will have my own will. I leave you not with this false Scot."

"How! De Vaux," said Richard angrily, and stamping slightly, "darest thou not venture our person with one traitor?"

"It is in vain you frown and stamp, my lord," said De Vaux; "I venture not a sick man with a sound one, a naked man with one armed in proof."

"It matters not," said the Scottish knight; "I seek no excuse to put off time. I will speak in presence of the Lord of Gilsland. He is good lord and true."

"But half an hour since," said De Vaux, with a groan, implying a mixture of sorrow and vexation, "and I had said as much for thee!"

"There is treason around you, King of England," continued Sir Kenneth.

"It may well be as thou sayest," replied Richard; "I have a pregnant example."

"Treason that will injure thee more deeply than the loss of a hundred banners in a pitched field. The—the—" Sir Kenneth hesitated, and at length continued, in a lower tone, "The Lady Edith—"

"Ha!" said the King, drawing himself suddenly into a state of haughty attention, and fixing his eye firmly on the supposed criminal; "what of her? what of her? What has she to do with this matter?"

"My lord," said the Scot, "there is a scheme on foot to disgrace your royal lineage, by bestowing the hand of the Lady Edith on the Saracen Soldan, and thereby to purchase a peace most dishonourable to Christendom, by an alliance most shameful to England."

This communication had precisely the contrary effect from that which Sir Kenneth expected. Richard Plantagenet was one of those who, in Iago's words, would not serve God because it was the devil who bade him; advice or information often affected him less according to its real import, than through the tinge which it took from the supposed character and views of those by whom it was communicated. Unfortunately, the mention of his relative's name renewed his recollection of what he had considered as extreme presumption in the Knight of the Leopard, even when he stood high in the roll of chivalry, but which, in his present condition, appeared an insult sufficient to drive the fiery monarch into a frenzy of passion.

"Silence," he said, "infamous and audacious! By Heaven, I will have thy tongue torn out with hot pincers, for mentioning the very name of a noble Christian damsel! Know, degenerate traitor, that I was already aware to what height thou hadst dared to raise thine eyes, and endured it, though it were insolence, even when thou hadst cheated us—for thou art all a deceit—into holding thee as of some name and fame. But now, with lips blistered with the confession of thine own dishonour—that thou shouldst NOW dare to name our noble kinswoman as one in whose fate thou hast part or interest! What is it to thee if she marry Saracen or Christian? What is it to thee if, in a camp where princes turn cowards by day and robbers by night—where brave knights turn to paltry deserters and traitors—what is it, I say, to thee, or any one, if I should please to ally myself to truth and to valour, in the person of Saladin?"

"Little to me, indeed, to whom all the world will soon be as nothing," answered Sir Kenneth boldly; "but were I now stretched on the rack, I would tell thee that what I have said is much to thine own conscience and thine own fame. I tell thee, Sir King, that if thou dost but in thought entertain the purpose of wedding thy kinswoman, the Lady Edith—"

"Name her not—and for an instant think not of her," said the King, again straining the curtal-axe in his gripe, until the muscles started above his brawny arm, like cordage formed by the ivy around the limb of an oak.

"Not name—not think of her!" answered Sir Kenneth, his spirits, stunned as they were by self-depression, beginning to recover their elasticity from this species of controversy. "Now, by the Cross, on which I place my hope, her name shall be the last word in my mouth, her image the last thought in my mind. Try thy boasted strength on this bare brow, and see if thou canst prevent my purpose."

"He will drive me mad!" said Richard, who, in his despite, was once more staggered in his purpose by the dauntless determination of the criminal.

Ere Thomas of Gilsland could reply, some bustle was heard without, and the arrival of the Queen was announced from the outer part of the pavilion.

"Detain her—detain her, Neville," cried the King; "this is no sight for women.—Fie, that I have suffered such a paltry traitor to chafe me thus!—Away with him, De Vaux," he whispered, "through the back entrance of our tent; coop him up close, and answer for his safe custody with your life. And hark ye—he is presently to die—let him have a ghostly father—we would not kill soul and body. And stay—hark thee—we will not have him dishonoured—he shall die knightlike, in his belt and spurs; for if his treachery be as black as hell, his boldness may match that of the devil himself."

De Vaux, right glad, if the truth may be guessed, that the scene ended without Richard's descending to the unkingly act of himself slaying an unresisting prisoner, made haste to remove Sir Kenneth by a private issue to a separate tent, where he was disarmed, and put in fetters for security. De Vaux looked on with a steady and melancholy attention, while the provost's officers, to whom Sir Kenneth was now committed, took these severe precautions.

When they were ended, he said solemnly to the unhappy criminal, "It is King Richard's pleasure that you die undegraded—without mutilation of your body, or shame to your arms—and that your head be severed from the trunk by the sword of the executioner."

"It is kind," said the knight, in a low and rather submissive tone of voice, as one who received an unexpected favour; "my family will not then hear the worst of the tale. Oh, my father—my father!"

This muttered invocation did not escape the blunt but kindly-natured Englishman, and he brushed the back of his large hand over his rough features ere he could proceed.

"It is Richard of England's further pleasure," he said at length, "that you have speech with a holy man; and I have met on the passage hither with a Carmelite friar, who may fit you for your passage. He waits without, until you are in a frame of mind to receive him."

"Let it be instantly," said the knight. "In this also Richard is kind. I cannot be more fit to see the good father at any time than now; for life and I have taken farewell, as two travellers who have arrived at the crossway, where their roads separate."

"It is well," said De Vaux slowly and solemnly; "for it irks me somewhat to say that which sums my message. It is King Richard's pleasure that you prepare for instant death."

"God's pleasure and the King's be done," replied the knight patiently. "I neither contest the justice of the sentence, nor desire delay of the execution."

De Vaux began to leave the tent, but very slowly—paused at the door, and looked back at the Scot, from whose aspect thoughts of the world seemed banished, as if he was composing himself into deep devotion. The feelings of the stout English baron were in general none of the most acute, and yet, on the present occasion, his sympathy overpowered him in an unusual manner. He came hastily back to the bundle of reeds on which the captive lay, took one of his fettered hands, and said, with as much softness as his rough voice was capable of expressing, "Sir Kenneth, thou art yet young—thou hast a father. My Ralph, whom I left training his little galloway nag on the banks of the Irthing, may one day attain thy years, and, but for last night, would to God I saw his youth bear such promise as thine! Can nothing be said or done in thy behalf?"

"Nothing," was the melancholy answer. "I have deserted my charge—the banner entrusted to me is lost. When the headsman and block are prepared, the head and trunk are ready to part company."

"Nay, then, God have mercy!" said De Vaux. "Yet would I rather than my best horse I had taken that watch myself. There is mystery in it, young man, as a plain man may descry, though he cannot see through it. Cowardice? Pshaw! No coward ever fought as I have seen thee do. Treachery? I cannot think traitors die in their treason so calmly. Thou hast been trained from thy post by some deep guile—some well-devised stratagem—the cry of some distressed maiden has caught thine ear, or the laughful look of some merry one has taken thine eye. Never blush for it; we have all been led aside by such gear. Come, I pray thee, make a clean conscience of it to me, instead of the priest. Richard is merciful when his mood is abated. Hast thou nothing to entrust to me?"

The unfortunate knight turned his face from the kind warrior, and answered, "NOTHING."

And De Vaux, who had exhausted his topics of persuasion, arose and left the tent, with folded arms, and in melancholy deeper than he thought the occasion merited—even angry with himself to find that so simple a matter as the death of a Scottish man could affect him so nearly.

"Yet," as he said to himself, "though the rough-footed knaves be our enemies in Cumberland, in Palestine one almost considers them as brethren."

CHAPTER XVI.

*'Tis not her sense, for sure in that
There's nothing more than common;
And all her wit is only chat,
Like any other woman.*

SONG.

The high-born Berengaria, daughter of Sanchez, King of Navarre, and the Queen-Consort of the heroic Richard, was accounted one of the most beautiful women of the period. Her form was slight, though exquisitely moulded. She was graced with a complexion not common in her country, a profusion of fair hair, and features so extremely juvenile as to make her look several years younger than she really was, though in reality she was not above one-and-twenty. Perhaps it was under the consciousness of this extremely juvenile appearance that she affected, or at least practised, a little childish petulance and wilfulness of manner, not unbefitting, she might suppose, a youthful bride, whose rank and age gave her a right to have her fantasies indulged and attended to. She was by nature perfectly good-humoured, and if her due share of admiration and homage (in her opinion a very large one) was duly resigned to her, no one could possess better temper or a more friendly disposition; but then, like all despots, the more power that was voluntarily yielded to her, the more she desired to extend her sway. Sometimes, even when all her ambition was gratified, she chose to be a little out of health, and a little out of spirits; and physicians had to toil their wits to invent names for imaginary maladies, while her ladies racked their imagination for new games, new head-gear, and new court-scandal, to pass away those unpleasant hours, during which their own situation was scarce to be greatly envied. Their most frequent resource for diverting this malady was some trick or piece of mischief practised upon each other; and the good Queen, in the buoyancy of her reviving spirits, was, to speak truth, rather too indifferent whether the frolics thus practised were entirely befitting her own dignity, or whether the pain which those suffered upon whom they were inflicted was not beyond the proportion of pleasure which she herself derived from them. She was confident in her husband's favour, in her high rank, and in her supposed power to make good whatever such pranks might cost others. In a word, she gambolled with the freedom of a young lioness, who is unconscious of the weight of her own paws when laid on those whom she sports with.

The Queen Berengaria loved her husband passionately, but she feared the loftiness and roughness of his character; and as she felt herself not to be his match in intellect, was not much pleased to see that he would often talk with Edith Plantagenet in preference to herself, simply because he found more amusement in her conversation, a more comprehensive understanding, and a more noble cast of thoughts and sentiments, than his beautiful consort exhibited. Berengaria did not hate Edith on this account, far less meditate her any harm; for, allowing for some selfishness, her character was, on the whole, innocent and generous. But the ladies of her train, sharp-sighted in such matters, had for some time discovered that a poignant jest at the expense of the Lady Edith was a specific for relieving her Grace of England's low spirits, and the discovery saved their imagination much toil.

There was something ungenerous in this, because the Lady Edith was understood to be an orphan; and though she was called Plantagenet, and the fair Maid of Anjou, and admitted by Richard to certain privileges only granted to the royal family, and held her place in the circle accordingly, yet few knew, and none acquainted with the Court of England ventured to ask, in what exact degree of relationship she stood to Coeur de Lion. She had come with Eleanor, the celebrated Queen Mother of England, and joined Richard at Messina, as one of the ladies destined to attend on Berengaria, whose nuptials then approached. Richard treated his kinswoman with much respectful observance, and the Queen made her her most constant attendant, and, even in despite of the petty jealousy which we have observed, treated her, generally, with suitable respect.

The ladies of the household had, for a long time, no further advantage over Edith than might be afforded by an opportunity of censuring a less artfully disposed head attire or an unbecoming robe; for the lady was judged to be inferior in these mysteries. The silent devotion of the Scottish knight did not, indeed, pass unnoticed; his liveries, his cognizances, his feats of arms, his mottoes and devices, were nearly watched, and occasionally made the subject of a passing jest. But then came the pilgrimage of the Queen and her ladies to Engaddi, a journey which the Queen had undertaken under a vow for the recovery of her husband's health, and which she had been encouraged to carry into effect by the Archbishop of Tyre for a political purpose. It was then, and in the chapel at that holy place, connected from above with a Carmelite nunnery, from beneath with the cell of the anchorite, that one of the Queen's attendants remarked that secret sign of intelligence which Edith had made to her lover, and failed not instantly to communicate it to her Majesty. The Queen returned from her pilgrimage enriched with this admirable recipe against dullness or ennui; and her train was at the same time augmented by a present of two wretched dwarfs from the dethroned Queen of Jerusalem, as deformed and as crazy (the excellence of that unhappy species) as any Queen could have desired. One of Berengaria's idle amusements had been to try the effect of the sudden appearance of such ghastly and fantastic forms on the nerves of the Knight when left alone in the chapel; but the jest had been lost by the composure of the Scot and the interference of the anchorite. She had now tried another, of which the consequences promised to be more serious.

The ladies again met after Sir Kenneth had retired from the tent, and the Queen, at first little moved by Edith's angry expostulations, only replied to her by upbraiding her prudery, and by indulging her wit at the expense of the garb, nation, and, above all the poverty of the Knight of the Leopard, in which she displayed a good deal of playful malice, mingled with some humour, until Edith was compelled to carry her anxiety to her separate apartment. But when, in the morning, a female whom Edith had entrusted to make inquiry brought word that the Standard was missing, and its champion vanished, she burst into the Queen's apartment, and implored her to rise and proceed to the King's tent without delay, and use her powerful mediation to prevent the evil consequences of her jest.

The Queen, frightened in her turn, cast, as is usual, the blame of her own folly on those around her, and endeavoured to comfort Edith's grief, and appease her displeasure, by a thousand inconsistent arguments. She was sure no harm had chanced—the knight was sleeping, she fancied, after his night-watch. What though, for fear of the King's displeasure, he had deserted with the Standard—it was but a piece of silk, and he but a needy adventurer; or if he was put under warding for a time, she would soon get the King to pardon him—it was but waiting to let Richard's mood pass away.

Thus she continued talking thick and fast, and heaping together all sorts of inconsistencies, with the vain expectation of persuading both Edith and herself that no harm could come of a frolic which in her heart she now bitterly repented. But while Edith in vain strove to intercept this torrent of idle talk, she caught the eye of one of the ladies who entered the Queen's apartment. There was death in her look of affright and horror, and Edith, at the first glance of her countenance, had sunk at once on the earth, had not strong necessity and her own elevation of character enabled her to maintain at least external composure.

"Madam," she said to the Queen, "lose not another word in speaking, but save life—if, indeed," she added, her voice choking as she said it, "life may yet be saved."

"It may, it may," answered the Lady Calista. "I have just heard that he has been brought before the King. It is not yet over—but," she added, bursting into a vehement flood of weeping, in which personal apprehensions had some share, "it will soon, unless some course be taken."

"I will vow a golden candlestick to the Holy Sepulchre, a shrine of silver to our Lady of Engaddi, a pall, worth one hundred byzants, to Saint Thomas of Orthez," said the Queen in extremity.

"Up, up, madam!" said Edith; "call on the saints if you list, but be your own best saint."

"Indeed, madam," said the terrified attendant, "the Lady Edith speaks truth. Up, madam, and let us to King Richard's tent and beg the poor gentleman's life."

"I will go—I will go instantly," said the Queen, rising and trembling excessively; while her women, in as great confusion as herself, were unable to render her those duties which were indispensable to her levee. Calm, composed, only pale as death, Edith ministered to the Queen with her own hand, and alone supplied the deficiencies of her numerous attendants.

"How you wait, wenches!" said the Queen, not able even then to forget frivolous distinctions. "Suffer ye the Lady Edith to do the duties of your attendance? Seest thou, Edith, they can do nothing; I shall never be attired in time. We will send for the Archbishop of Tyre, and employ him as a mediator."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Edith. "Go yourself madam; you have done the evil, do you confer the remedy."

"I will go—I will go," said the Queen; "but if Richard be in his mood, I dare not speak to him—he will kill me!"

"Yet go, gracious madam," said the Lady Calista, who best knew her mistress's temper; "not a lion, in his fury, could look upon such a face and form, and retain so much as an angry thought, far less a love-true knight like the royal Richard, to whom your slightest word would be a command."

"Dost thou think so, Calista?" said the Queen. "Ah, thou little knowest yet I will go. But see you here, what means this? You have bedizened me in green, a colour he detests. Lo you! let me have a blue robe, and—search for the ruby carcanet, which was part of the King of Cyprus's ransom; it is either in the steel casket, or somewhere else."

"This, and a man's life at stake!" said Edith indignantly; "it passes human patience. Remain at your ease, madam; I will go to King Richard. I am a party interested. I will know if the honour of a poor maiden of his blood is to be so far tampered with that her name shall be abused to train a brave gentleman from his duty, bring him within the compass of death and infamy, and make, at the same time, the glory of England a laughing-stock to the whole Christian army." At this unexpected burst of passion, Berengaria listened with an almost stupefied look of fear and wonder. But as Edith was about to leave the tent, she exclaimed, though faintly, "Stop her, stop her!" "You must indeed stop, noble Lady Edith," said Calista, taking her arm gently; "and you, royal madam, I am sure, will go, and without further dallying. If the Lady Edith goes alone to the King, he will be dreadfully incensed, nor will it be one life that will stay his fury." "I will go—I will go," said the Queen, yielding to necessity; and Edith reluctantly halted to wait her movements. They were now as speedy as she could have desired. The Queen hastily wrapped herself in a large loose mantle, which covered all inaccuracies of the toilet. In this guise, attended by Edith and her women, and preceded and followed by a few officers and men-at-arms, she hastened to the tent of her lionlike husband.

CHAPTER XVII.

*Were every hair upon his head a life,
And every life were to be supplicated
By numbers equal to those hairs quadrupled,
Life after life should out like waning stars
Before the daybreak—or as festive lamps,
Which have lent lustre to the midnight revel,
Each after each are quench'd when guests depart!*

OLD PLAY

The entrance of Queen Berengaria into the interior of Richard's pavilion was withstood—in the most respectful and reverential manner indeed, but still withstood—by the chamberlains who watched in the outer tent. She could hear the stern command of the King from within, prohibiting their entrance.

"You see," said the Queen, appealing to Edith, as if she had exhausted all means of intercession in her power; "I knew it—the King will not receive us."

At the same time, they heard Richard speak to some one within:—"Go, speed thine office quickly, sirrah, for in that consists thy mercy—ten byzants if thou dealest on him at one blow. And hark thee, villain, observe if his cheek loses colour, or his eye falters; mark me the smallest twitch of the features, or wink of the eyelid. I love to know how brave souls meet death."

"If he sees my blade waved aloft without shrinking, he is the first ever did so," answered a harsh, deep voice, which a sense of unusual awe had softened into a sound much lower than its usual coarse tones.

Edith could remain silent no longer. "If your Grace," she said to the Queen, "make not your own way, I make it for you; or if not for your Majesty, for myself at least.—Chamberlain, the Queen demands to see King Richard—the wife to speak with her husband."

"Noble lady," said the officer, lowering his wand of office, "it grieves me to gainsay you, but his Majesty is busied on matters of life and death."

"And we seek also to speak with him on matters of life and death," said Edith. "I will make entrance for your Grace." And putting aside the chamberlain with one hand, she laid hold on the curtain with the other.

"I dare not gainsay her Majesty's pleasure," said the chamberlain, yielding to the vehemence of the fair petitioner; and as he gave way, the Queen found herself obliged to enter the apartment of Richard.

The Monarch was lying on his couch, and at some distance, as awaiting his further commands, stood a man whose profession it was not difficult to conjecture. He was clothed in a jerkin of red cloth, which reached scanty below the shoulders, leaving the arms bare from about half way above the elbow; and as an upper garment, he wore, when about as at present to betake himself to his dreadful office, a coat or tabard without sleeves, something like that of a herald, made of dressed bull's hide, and stained in the front with many a broad spot and speckle of dull crimson. The jerkin, and the tabard over it, reached the knee; and the nether stocks, or covering of the legs, were of the same leather which composed the tabard. A cap of rough shag served to hide the upper part of a visage which, like that of a screech owl, seemed desirous to conceal itself from light, the lower part of the face being obscured by a huge red beard, mingling with shaggy locks of the same colour. What features were seen were stern and misanthropical. The man's figure was short, strongly made, with a neck like a bull, very broad shoulders, arms of great and disproportioned length, a huge square trunk, and thick bandy legs. This truculent official leant on a sword, the blade of which was nearly four feet and a half in length, while the handle of twenty inches, surrounded by a ring of lead plummets to counterpoise the weight of such a blade, rose considerably above the man's head as he rested his arm upon its hilt, waiting for King Richard's further directions.

On the sudden entrance of the ladies, Richard, who was then lying on his couch with his face towards the entrance, and resting on his elbow as he spoke to his grisly attendant, flung himself hastily, as if displeased and surprised, to the other side, turning his back to the Queen and the females of her train, and drawing around him the covering of his couch, which, by his own choice, or more probably the flattering selection of his chamberlains, consisted of two large lions' skins, dressed in Venice with such admirable skill that they seemed softer than the hide of the deer.

Berengaria, such as we have described her, knew well—what woman knows not?—her own road to victory. After a hurried glance of undisguised and unaffected terror at the ghastly companion of her husband's secret counsels, she rushed at once to the side of Richard's couch, dropped on her knees, flung her mantle from her shoulders, showing, as they hung down at their full length, her beautiful golden tresses, and while her countenance seemed like the sun bursting through a cloud, yet bearing on its pallid front traces that its splendours have been obscured, she seized upon the right hand of the King, which, as he assumed his wonted posture, had been employed in dragging the covering of his couch, and gradually pulling it to her with a force which was resisted, though but faintly, she possessed herself of that arm, the prop of Christendom and the dread of Heathenesse, and imprisoning its strength in both her little fairy hands, she bent upon it her brow, and united to it her lips.

"What needs this, Berengaria?" said Richard, his head still averted, but his hand remaining under her control.

"Send away that man, his look kills me!" muttered Berengaria.

"Begone, sirrah," said Richard, still without looking round, "What wait'st thou for? art thou fit to look on these ladies?"

"Your Highness's pleasure touching the head," said the man.

"Out with thee, dog!" answered Richard—"a Christian burial!" The man disappeared, after casting a look upon the beautiful Queen, in her deranged dress and natural loveliness, with a smile of admiration more hideous in its expression than even his usual scowl of cynical hatred against humanity.

"And now, foolish wench, what wishest thou?" said Richard, turning slowly and half reluctantly round to his royal suppliant.

But it was not in nature for any one, far less an admirer of beauty like Richard, to whom it stood only in the second rank to glory, to look without emotion on the countenance and the tremor of a creature so beautiful as Berengaria, or to feel, without sympathy, that her lips, her brow, were on his hand, and that it was wetted by her tears. By degrees, he turned on her his manly countenance, with the softest expression of which his large blue eye, which so often gleamed with insufferable light, was capable. Caressing her fair head, and mingling his large fingers in her beautiful and dishevelled locks, he raised and tenderly kissed the cherub countenance which seemed desirous to hide itself in his hand. The robust form, the broad, noble brow and majestic looks, the naked arm and shoulder, the lions' skins among which he lay, and the fair, fragile feminine creature that kneeled by his side, might have served for a model of Hercules reconciling himself, after a quarrel, to his wife Dejanira.

"And, once more, what seeks the lady of my heart in her knight's pavilion at this early and unwonted hour?"

"Pardon, my most gracious liege—pardon!" said the Queen, whose fears began again to unfit her for the duty of intercessor.

"Pardon—for what?" asked the King.

"First, for entering your royal presence too boldly and unadvisedly—"

She stopped.

"THOU too boldly!—the sun might as well ask pardon because his rays entered the windows of some wretch's dungeon. But I was busied with work unfit for thee to witness, my gentle one; and I was unwilling, besides, that thou shouldst risk thy precious health where sickness had been so lately rife."

"But thou art now well?" said the Queen, still delaying the communication which she feared to make.

"Well enough to break a lance on the bold crest of that champion who shall refuse to acknowledge thee the fairest dame in Christendom."

"Thou wilt not then refuse me one boon—only one—only a poor life?"

"Ha!—proceed," said King Richard, bending his brows.

"This unhappy Scottish knight—" murmured the Queen.

"Speak not of him, madam," exclaimed Richard sternly; "he dies—his doom is fixed."

"Nay, my royal liege and love, 'tis but a silken banner neglected. Berengaria will give thee another brodered with her own hand, and rich as ever dallied with the wind. Every pearl I have shall go to bedeck it, and with every pearl I will drop a tear of thankfulness to my generous knight."

"Thou knowest not what thou sayest," said the King, interrupting her in anger. "Pearls! can all the pearls of the East atone for a speck upon England's honour—all the tears that ever woman's eye wept wash away a stain on Richard's fame? Go to, madam, know your place, and your time, and your sphere. At present we have duties in which you cannot be our partner."

"Thou hearest, Edith," whispered the Queen; "we shall but incense him."

"Be it so," said Edith, stepping forward.—"My lord, I, your poor kinswoman, crave you for justice rather than mercy; and to the cry of justice the ears of a monarch should be open at every time, place, and circumstance."

"Ha! our cousin Edith?" said Richard, rising and sitting upright on the side of his couch, covered with his long camiscia. "She speaks ever kinglike, and kinglike will I answer her, so she bring no request unworthy herself or me."

The beauty of Edith was of a more intellectual and less voluptuous cast than that of the Queen; but impatience and anxiety had given her countenance a glow which it sometimes wanted, and her mien had a character of energetic dignity that imposed silence for a moment even on Richard himself, who, to judge by his looks, would willingly have interrupted her.

"My lord," she said, "this good knight, whose blood you are about to spill, hath done, in his time, service to Christendom. He has fallen from his duty through a snare set for him in mere folly and idleness of spirit. A message sent to him in the name of one who—why should I not speak it?—it was in my own—induced him for an instant to leave his post. And what knight in the Christian camp might not have thus far transgressed at command of a maiden, who, poor howsoever in other qualities, hath yet the blood of Plantagenet in her veins?"

"And you saw him, then, cousin?" replied the King, biting his lips to keep down his passion.

"I did, my liege," said Edith. "It is no time to explain wherefore. I am here neither to exculpate myself nor to blame others."

"And where did you do him such a grace?"

"In the tent of her Majesty the Queen."

"Of our royal consort!" said Richard. "Now by Heaven, by Saint George of England, and every other saint that treads its crystal floor, this is too audacious! I have noticed and overlooked this warrior's insolent admiration of one so far above him, and I grudged him not that one of my blood should shed from her high-born sphere such influence as the sun bestows on the world beneath. But, heaven and earth! that you should have admitted him to an audience by night, in the very tent of our royal consort!—and dare to offer this as an excuse for his disobedience and desertion! By my father's soul, Edith, thou shalt rue this thy life long in a monastery!"

"My liege," said Edith, "your greatness licenses tyranny. My honour, Lord King, is as little touched as yours, and my Lady the Queen can prove it if she think fit. But I have already said I am not here to excuse myself or inculpate others. I ask you but to extend to one, whose fault was committed under strong temptation, that mercy, which even you yourself, Lord King, must one day supplicate at a higher tribunal, and for faults, perhaps, less venial."

"Can this be Edith Plantagenet?" said the King bitterly—"Edith Plantagenet, the wise and the noble? Or is it some lovesick woman who cares not for her own fame in comparison of the life of her paramour? Now, by King Henry's soul! little hinders but I order thy minion's skull to be brought from the gibbet, and fixed as a perpetual ornament by the crucifix in thy cell!"

"And if thou dost send it from the gibbet to be placed for ever in my sight," said Edith, "I will say it is a relic of a good knight, cruelly and unworthily done to death by" (she checked herself)—"by one of whom I shall only say, he should have known better how to reward chivalry. Minion callest thou him?" she continued, with increasing vehemence. "He was indeed my lover, and a most true one; but never sought he grace from me by look or word—contented with such humble observance as men pay to the saints. And the good—the valiant—the faithful must die for this!"

"Oh, peace, peace, for pity's sake," whispered the Queen, "you do but offend him more!"

"I care not," said Edith; "the spotless virgin fears not the raging lion. Let him work his will on this worthy knight. Edith, for whom he dies, will know how to weep his memory. To me no one shall speak more of politic alliances to be sanctioned with this poor hand. I could not—I would not—have been his bride living—our degrees were too distant. But death unites the high and the low—I am henceforward the spouse of the grave."

The King was about to answer with much anger, when a Carmelite monk entered the apartment hastily, his head and person muffled in the long mantle and hood of striped cloth of the coarsest texture which distinguished his order, and, flinging himself on his knees before the King, conjured him, by every holy word and sign, to stop the execution.

"Now, by both sword and sceptre," said Richard, "the world is leagued to drive me mad!—fools, women, and monks cross me at every step. How comes he to live still?"

"My gracious liege," said the monk, "I entreated of the Lord of Gilsland to stay the execution until I had thrown myself at your royal—"

"And he was wilful enough to grant thy request," said the King; "but it is of a piece with his wonted obstinacy. And what is it thou hast to say? Speak, in the fiend's name!"

"My lord, there is a weighty secret, but it rests under the seal of confession. I dare not tell or even whisper it; but I swear to thee by my holy order, by the habit which I wear, by the blessed Elias, our founder, even him who was translated without suffering the ordinary pangs of mortality, that this youth hath divulged to me a secret, which, if I might confide it to thee, would utterly turn thee from thy bloody purpose in regard to him."

"Good father," said Richard, "that I reverence the church, let the arms which I now wear for her sake bear witness. Give me to know this secret, and I will do what shall seem fitting in the matter. But I am no blind Bayard, to take a leap in the dark under the stroke of a pair of priestly spurs."

"My lord," said the holy man, throwing back his cowl and upper vesture, and discovering under the latter a garment of goatskin, and from beneath the former a visage so wildly wasted by climate, fast, and penance, as to resemble rather the apparition of an animated skeleton than a human face, "for twenty years have I macerated this miserable body in the caverns of Engaddi, doing penance for a great crime. Think you I, who am dead to the world, would contrive a falsehood to endanger my own soul; or that one, bound by the most sacred oaths to the contrary—one such as I, who have but one longing wish connected with earth, to wit, the rebuilding of our Christian Zion—would betray the secrets of the confessional? Both are alike abhorrent to my very soul."

"So," answered the King, "thou art that hermit of whom men speak so much? Thou art, I confess, like enough to those spirits which walk in dry places; but Richard fears no hobgoblins. And thou art he, too, as I bethink me, to whom the Christian princes sent this very criminal to open a communication with the Soldan, even while I, who ought to have been first consulted, lay on my sick-bed? Thou and they may content themselves—I will not put my neck into the loop of a Carmelite's girdle. And, for your envoy, he shall die the rather and the sooner that thou dost entreat for him."

"Now God be gracious to thee, Lord King!" said the hermit, with much emotion; "thou art setting that mischief on foot which thou wilt hereafter wish thou hadst stopped, though it had cost thee a limb. Rash, blinded man, yet forbear!"

"Away, away," cried the King, stamping; "the sun has risen on the dishonour of England, and it is not yet avenged.—Ladies and priest, withdraw, if you would not hear orders which would displease you; for, by St. George, I swear—"

"Swear NOT!" said the voice of one who had just then entered the pavilion.

"Ha! my learned Hakim," said the King, "come, I hope, to tax our generosity."

"I come to request instant speech with you—instant—and touching matters of deep interest."

"First look on my wife, Hakim, and let her know in you the preserver of her husband."

"It is not for me," said the physician, folding his arms with an air of Oriental modesty and reverence, and bending his eyes on the ground—"it is not for me to look upon beauty unveiled, and armed in its splendours."

"Retire, then, Berengaria," said the Monarch; "and, Edith, do you retire also;—nay, renew not your importunities! This I give to them that the execution shall not be till high noon. Go and be pacified—dearest Berengaria, begone.—Edith," he added, with a glance which struck terror even into the courageous soul of his kinswoman, "go, if you are wise."

The females withdrew, or rather hurried from the tent, rank and ceremony forgotten, much like a flock of wild-fowl huddled together, against whom the falcon has made a recent stoop.

They returned from thence to the Queen's pavilion to indulge in regrets and recriminations, equally unavailing. Edith was the only one who seemed to disdain these ordinary channels of sorrow. Without a sigh, without a tear, without a word of upbraiding, she attended upon the Queen, whose weak temperament showed her sorrow in violent hysterical ecstasies and passionate hypochondriacal effusions, in the course of which Edith sedulously and even affectionately attended her.

"It is impossible she can have loved this knight," said Florise to Calista, her senior in attendance upon the Queen's person. "We have been mistaken; she is but sorry for his fate, as for a stranger who has come to trouble on her account."

"Hush, hush," answered her more experienced and more observant comrade; "she is of that proud house of Plantagenet who never own that a hurt grieves them. While they have themselves been bleeding to death, under a mortal wound, they have been known to bind up the scratches sustained by their more faint-hearted comrades. Florise, we have done frightfully wrong, and, for my own part, I would buy with every jewel I have that our fatal jest had remained unacted."

CHAPTER XVIII.

*This work desires a planetary intelligence
Of Jupiter and Sol; and those great spirits
Are proud, fantastical. It asks great charges
To entice them from the guiding of their spheres,
To wait on mortals.*

ALBUMAZAR.

The hermit followed the ladies from the pavilion of Richard, as shadow follows a beam of sunshine when the clouds are driving over the face of the sun. But he turned on the threshold, and held up his hand towards the King in a warning, or almost a menacing posture, as he said, "Woe to him who rejects the counsel of the church, and betaketh himself to the foul divan of the infidel! King Richard, I do not yet shake the dust from my feet and depart from thy encampment; the sword falls not—but it hangs but by a hair. Haughty monarch, we shall meet again."

"Be it so, haughty priest," returned Richard, "prouder in thy goatskins than princes in purple and fine linen."

The hermit vanished from the tent, and the King continued, addressing the Arabian, "Do the dervises of the East, wise Hakim, use such familiarity with their princes?"

"The dervise," replied Adonbec, "should be either a sage or a madman; there is no middle course for him who wears the khirkhah, [Literally, the torn robe. The habit of the dervises is so called.] who watches by night, and fasts by day. Hence hath he either wisdom enough to bear himself discreetly in the presence of princes; or else, having no reason bestowed on him, he is not responsible for his own actions."

"Methinks our monks have adopted chiefly the latter character," said Richard. "But to the matter. In what can I pleasure you, my learned physician?"

"Great King," said El Hakim, making his profound Oriental obeisance, "let thy servant speak one word, and yet live. I would remind thee that thou owest—not to me, their humble instrument—but to the Intelligences, whose benefits I dispense to mortals, a life—"

"And I warrant me thou wouldst have another in requital, ha?" interrupted the King.

"Such is my humble prayer," said the Hakim, "to the great Melech Ric—even the life of this good knight, who is doomed to die, and but for such fault as was committed by the Sultan Adam, surnamed Aboulbeschar, or the father of all men."

"And thy wisdom might remind thee, Hakim, that Adam died for it," said the King, somewhat sternly, and then began to pace the narrow space of his tent with some emotion, and to talk to himself. "Why, God-a-mercy, I knew what he desired as soon as ever he entered the pavilion! Here is one poor life justly condemned to extinction, and I, a king and a soldier, who have slain thousands by my command, and scores with my own hand, am to have no power over it, although the honour of my arms, of my house, of my very Queen, hath been attained by the culprit. By Saint George, it makes me laugh! By Saint Louis, it reminds me of Blondel's tale of an enchanted castle, where the destined knight was withstood successively in his purpose of entrance by forms and figures the most dissimilar, but all hostile to his undertaking! No sooner one sunk than another appeared! Wife—kinswoman—hermit—Hakim—each appears in the lists as soon as the other is defeated! Why, this is a single knight fighting against the whole MELEE of the tournament—ha! ha! ha!" And Richard laughed aloud; for he had, in fact, begun to change his mood, his resentment being usually too violent to be of long endurance.

The physician meanwhile looked on him with a countenance of surprise, not unmingled with contempt; for the Eastern people make no allowance for these mercurial changes in the temper, and consider open laughter, upon almost any account, as derogatory to the dignity of man, and becoming only to women and children. At length the sage addressed the King when he saw him more composed:—

"A doom of death should not issue from laughing lips. Let thy servant hope that thou hast granted him this man's life."

"Take the freedom of a thousand captives instead," said Richard; "restore so many of thy countrymen to their tents and families, and I will give the warrant instantly. This man's life can avail thee nothing, and it is forfeited."

"All our lives are forfeited," said the Hakim, putting his hand to his cap. "But the great Creditor is merciful, and exacts not the pledge rigorously nor untimely."

"Thou canst show me," said Richard, "no special interest thou hast to become intercessor betwixt me and the execution of justice, to which I am sworn as a crowned king."

"Thou art sworn to the dealing forth mercy as well as justice," said El Hakim; "but what thou seekest, great King, is the execution of thine own will. And for the concern I have in this request, know that many a man's life depends upon thy granting this boon."

"Explain thy words," said Richard; "but think not to impose upon me by false pretexts."

"Be it far from thy servant!" said Adonbec. "Know, then, that the medicine to which thou, Sir King, and many one besides, owe their recovery, is a talisman, composed under certain aspects of the heavens, when the Divine Intelligences are most propitious. I am but the poor administrator of its virtues. I dip it in a cup of water, observe the fitting hour to administer it to the patient, and the potency of the draught works the cure."

"A most rare medicine," said the King, "and a commodious! and, as it may be carried in the leech's purse, would save the whole caravan of camels which they require to convey drugs and physic stuff; I marvel there is any other in use."

"It is written," answered the Hakim, with imperturbable gravity, "'Abuse not the steed which hath borne thee from the battle.' Know that such talismans might indeed be framed, but rare has been the number of adepts who have dared to undertake the application of their virtue. Severe restrictions, painful observances, fasts, and penance, are necessary on the part of the sage who uses this mode of cure; and if, through neglect of these preparations, by his love of ease, or his indulgence of sensual appetite, he omits to cure at least twelve persons within the course of each moon, the virtue of the divine gift departs from the amulet, and both the last patient and the physician will be exposed to speedy misfortune, neither will they survive the year. I require yet one life to make up the appointed number."

"Go out into the camp, good Hakim, where thou wilt find a-many," said the King, "and do not seek to rob my headsman of HIS patients; it is unbecoming a mediciner of thine eminence to interfere with the practice of another. Besides, I cannot see how delivering a criminal from the death he deserves should go to make up thy tale of miraculous cures."

"When thou canst show why a draught of cold water should have cured thee when the most precious drugs failed," said the Hakim, "thou mayest reason on the other mysteries attendant on this matter. For myself, I am inefficient to the great work, having this morning touched an unclean animal. Ask, therefore, no further questions; it is enough that, by sparing this man's life at my request, you will deliver yourself, great King, and thy servant, from a great danger."

"Hark thee, Adonbec," replied the King, "I have no objection that leeches should wrap their words in mist, and pretend to derive knowledge from the stars; but when you bid Richard Plantagenet fear that a danger will fall upon HIM from some idle omen, or omitted ceremonial, you speak to no ignorant Saxon, or doting old woman, who foregoes her purpose because a hare crosses the path, a raven croaks, or a cat sneezes."

"I cannot hinder your doubt of my words," said Adonbec; "but yet let my Lord the King grant that truth is on the tongue of his servant—will he think it just to deprive the world, and every wretch who may suffer by the pains which so lately reduced him to that couch, of the benefit of this most virtuous talisman, rather than extend his forgiveness to one poor criminal? Bethink you, Lord King, that, though thou canst slay thousands, thou canst not restore one man to health. Kings have the power of Satan to torment, sages that of Allah to heal—beware how thou hinderest the good to humanity which thou canst not thyself render. Thou canst cut off the head, but not cure the aching tooth."

"This is over-insolent," said the King, hardening himself, as the Hakim assumed a more lofty and almost a commanding tone. "We took thee for our leech, not for our counsellor or conscience-keeper."

"And is it thus the most renowned Prince of Frangistan repays benefit done to his royal person?" said El Hakim, exchanging the humble and stooping posture in which he had hitherto solicited the King, for an attitude lofty and commanding. "Know, then," he said, "that: through every court of Europe and Asia—to Moslem and Nazarene—to knight and lady—wherever harp is heard and sword worn—wherever honour is loved and infamy detested—to every quarter of the world—will I denounce thee, Melech Ric, as thankless and ungenerous; and even the lands—if there be any such—that never heard of thy renown shall yet be acquainted with thy shame!"

"Are these terms to me, vile infidel?" said Richard, striding up to him in fury. "Art weary of thy life?"

"Strike!" said El Hakim; "thine own deed shall then paint thee more worthless than could my words, though each had a hornet's sting."

Richard turned fiercely from him, folded his arms, traversed the tent as before, and then exclaimed, "Thankless and ungenerous!—as well be termed coward and infidel! Hakim, thou hast chosen thy boon; and though I had rather thou hadst asked my crown jewels, yet I may not, kinglike, refuse thee. Take this Scot, therefore, to thy keeping; the provost will deliver him to thee on this warrant."

He hastily traced one or two lines, and gave them to the physician. "Use him as thy bond-slave, to be disposed of as thou wilt—only, let him beware how he comes before the eyes of Richard. Hark thee—thou art wise—he hath been over-bold among those in whose fair looks and weak judgments we trust our honour, as you of the East lodge your treasures in caskets of silver wire, as fine and as frail as the web of a gossamer."

"Thy servant understands the words of the King," said the sage, at once resuming the reverent style of address in which he had commenced. "When the rich carpet is soiled, the fool pointeth to the stain—the wise man covers it with his mantle. I have heard my lord's pleasure, and to hear is to obey."

"It is well," said the King; "let him consult his own safety, and never appear in my presence more. Is there aught else in which I may do thee pleasure?"

"The bounty of the King hath filled my cup to the brim," said the sage—"yea, it hath been abundant as the fountain which sprung up amid the camp of the descendants of Israel when the rock was stricken by the rod of Moussa Ben Amram."

"Ay, but," said the King, smiling, "it required, as in the desert, a hard blow on the rock ere it yielded its treasures. I would that I knew something to pleasure thee, which I might yield as freely as the natural fountain sends forth its waters."

"Let me touch that victorious hand," said the sage, "in token that if Adonbec el Hakim should hereafter demand a boon of Richard of England, he may do so, yet plead his command."

"Thou hast hand and glove upon it, man," replied Richard; "only, if thou couldst consistently make up thy tale of patients without craving me to deliver from punishment those who have deserved it, I would more willingly discharge my debt in some other form."

"May thy days be multiplied!" answered the Hakim, and withdrew from the apartment after the usual deep obeisance.

King Richard gazed after him as he departed, like one but half-satisfied with what had passed.

"Strange pertinacity," he said, "in this Hakim, and a wonderful chance to interfere between that audacious Scot and the chastisement he has merited so richly. Yet let him live! there is one brave man the more in the world. And now for the Austrian. Ho! is the Baron of Gilsland there without?"

Sir Thomas de Vaux thus summoned, his bulky form speedily darkened the opening of the pavilion, while behind him glided as a spectre, unannounced, yet unopposed, the savage form of the hermit of Engaddi, wrapped in his goatskin mantle.

Richard, without noticing his presence, called in a loud tone to the baron, "Sir Thomas de Vaux, of Lanercost and Gilsland, take trumpet and herald, and go instantly to the tent of him whom they call Archduke of Austria, and see that it be when the press of his knights and vassals is greatest around him, as is likely at this hour, for the German boar breakfasts ere he hears mass—enter his presence with as little reverence as thou mayest, and impeach him, on the part of Richard of England, that he hath this night, by his own hand, or that of others, stolen from its staff the Banner of England. Wherefore say to him our pleasure that within an hour from the time of my speaking he restore the said banner with all reverence—he himself and his principal barons waiting the whilst with heads uncovered, and without their robes of honour. And that, moreover, he pitch beside it, on the one hand, his own Banner of Austria reversed, as that which hath been dishonoured by theft and felony, and on the other, a lance, bearing the bloody head of him who was his nearest counsellor, or assistant, in this base injury. And say, that such our behests being punctually discharged we will, for the sake of our vow and the weal of the Holy Land, forgive his other forfeits."

"And how if the Duke of Austria deny all accession to this act of wrong and of felony?" said Thomas de Vaux.

"Tell him," replied the King, "we will prove it upon his body—ay, were he backed with his two bravest champions. Knightlike will we prove it, on foot or on horse, in the desert or in the field, time, place, and arms all at his own choice."

"Bethink you of the peace of God and the church, my liege lord," said the Baron of Gilsland, "among those princes engaged in this holy Crusade."

"Bethink you how to execute my commands, my liege vassal," answered Richard impatiently. "Methinks men expect to turn our purpose by their breath, as boys blow feathers to and fro. Peace of the church! Who, I prithee, minds it? The peace of the church, among Crusaders, implies war with the Saracens, with whom the

princes have made truce; and the one ends with the other. And besides, see you not how every prince of them is seeking his own several ends? I will seek mine also—and that is honour. For honour I came hither; and if I may not win it upon the Saracens, at least I will not lose a jot from any respect to this paltry Duke, though he were bulwarked and buttressed by every prince in the Crusade."

De Vaux turned to obey the King's mandate, shrugging his shoulders at the same time, the bluntness of his nature being unable to conceal that its tenor went against his judgment. But the hermit of Engaddi stepped forward, and assumed the air of one charged with higher commands than those of a mere earthly potentate. Indeed, his dress of shaggy skins, his uncombed and untrimmed hair and beard, his lean, wild, and contorted features, and the almost insane fire which gleamed from under his bushy eyebrows, made him approach nearly to our idea of some seer of Scripture, who, charged with high mission to the sinful Kings of Judah or Israel, descended from the rocks and caverns in which he dwelt in abstracted solitude, to abash earthly tyrants in the midst of their pride, by discharging on them the blighting denunciations of Divine Majesty, even as the cloud discharges the lightnings with which it is fraught on the pinnacles and towers of castles and palaces. In the midst of his most wayward mood, Richard respected the church and its ministers; and though offended at the intrusion of the hermit into his tent, he greeted him with respect—at the same time, however, making a sign to Sir Thomas de Vaux to hasten on his message.

But the hermit prohibited the baron, by gesture, look, and word, to stir a yard on such an errand; and holding up his bare arm, from which the goatskin mantle fell back in the violence of his action, he waved it aloft, meagre with famine, and wealed with the blows of the discipline.

"In the name of God, and of the most holy Father, the vicegerent of the Christian Church upon earth, I prohibit this most profane, bloodthirsty, and brutal defiance betwixt two Christian princes, whose shoulders are signed with the blessed mark under which they swore brotherhood. Woe to him by whom it is broken!—Richard of England, recall the most unhallowed message thou hast given to that baron. Danger and death are nigh thee!—the dagger is glancing at thy very throat!—"

"Danger and death are playmates to Richard," answered the Monarch proudly; "and he hath braved too many swords to fear a dagger."

"Danger and death are near," replied the seer, and sinking his voice to a hollow, unearthly tone, he added, "And after death the judgment!"

"Good and holy father," said Richard, "I reverence thy person and thy sanctity—"

"Reverence not me!" interrupted the hermit; "reverence sooner the vilest insect that crawls by the shores of the Dead Sea, and feeds upon its accursed slime. But reverence Him whose commands I speak—reverence Him whose sepulchre you have vowed to rescue—revere the oath of concord which you have sworn, and break not the silver cord of union and fidelity with which you have bound yourself to your princely confederates."

"Good father," said the King, "you of the church seem to me to presume somewhat, if a layman may say so much, upon the dignity of your holy character. Without challenging your right to take charge of our conscience, methinks you might leave us the charge of our own honour."

"Presume!" repeated the hermit. "Is it for me to presume, royal Richard, who am but the bell obeying the hand of the sexton—but the senseless and worthless trumpet carrying the command of him who sounds it? See, on my knees I throw myself before thee, imploring thee to have mercy on Christendom, on England, and on thyself!"

"Rise, rise," said Richard, compelling him to stand up; "it beseems not that knees which are so frequently bended to the Deity should press the ground in honour of man. What danger awaits us, reverend father? and when stood the power of England so low that the noisy bluster of this new-made Duke's displeasure should alarm her or her monarch?"

"I have looked forth from my mountain turret upon the starry host of heaven, as each in his midnight circuit uttered wisdom to another, and knowledge to the few who can understand their voice. There sits an enemy in thy House of Life, Lord King, malign at once to thy fame and thy prosperity—an emanation of Saturn, menacing thee with instant and bloody peril, and which, but thou yield thy proud will to the rule of thy duty, will presently crush thee even in thy pride."

"Away, away—this is heathen science," said the King. "Christians practise it not—wise men believe it not. Old man, thou dost."

"I dote not, Richard," answered the hermit—"I am not so happy. I know my condition, and that some portion of reason is yet permitted me, not for my own use, but that of the Church and the advancement of the Cross. I am the blind man who holds a torch to others, though it yields no light to himself. Ask me touching what concerns the weal of Christendom, and of this Crusade, and I will speak with thee as the wisest counsellor on whose tongue persuasion ever sat. Speak to me of my own wretched being, and my words shall be those of the maniac outcast which I am."

"I would not break the bands of unity asunder among the princes of the Crusade," said Richard, with a mitigated tone and manner; "but what atonement can they render me for the injustice and insult which I have sustained?"

"Even of that I am prepared and commissioned to speak by the Council, which, meeting hastily at the summons of Philip of France, have taken measures for that effect."

"Strange," replied Richard, "that others should treat of what is due to the wounded majesty of England!"

"They are willing to anticipate your demands, if it be possible," answered the hermit. "In a body, they consent that the Banner of England be replaced on Saint George's Mount; and they lay under ban and condemnation the audacious criminal, or criminals, by whom it was outraged, and will announce a princely reward to any who shall denounce the delinquent's guilt, and give his flesh to the wolves and ravens."

"And Austria," said Richard, "upon whom rest such strong presumptions that he was the author of the deed?"

"To prevent discord in the host," replied the hermit, "Austria will clear himself of the suspicion by submitting to whatsoever ordeal the Patriarch of Jerusalem shall impose."

"Will he clear himself by the trial by combat?" said King Richard.

"His oath prohibits it," said the hermit; "and, moreover, the Council of the Princes—"

"Will neither authorize battle against the Saracens," interrupted Richard, "nor against any one else. But it is enough, father—thou hast shown me the folly of proceeding as I designed in this matter. You shall sooner light your torch in a puddle of rain than bring a spark out of a cold-blooded coward. There is no honour to be gained on Austria, and so let him pass. I will have him perjure himself, however; I will insist on the ordeal. How I shall laugh to hear his clumsy fingers hiss, as he grasps the red-hot globe of iron! Ay, or his huge mouth riven, and his gullet swelling to suffocation, as he endeavours to swallow the consecrated bread!"

"Peace, Richard," said the hermit—"oh, peace, for shame, if not for charity! Who shall praise or honour princes who insult and calumniate each other? Alas! that a creature so noble as thou art—so accomplished in princely thoughts and princely daring—so fitted to honour Christendom by thy actions, and, in thy calmer mood, to rule her by thy wisdom, should yet have the brute and wild fury of the lion mingled with the dignity and courage of that king of the forest!"

He remained an instant musing with his eyes fixed on the ground, and then proceeded—"But Heaven, that knows our imperfect nature, accepts of our imperfect obedience, and hath delayed, though not averted, the bloody end of thy daring life. The destroying angel hath stood still, as of old by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and the blade is drawn in his hand, by which, at no distant date, Richard, the lion-hearted, shall be as low as the meanest peasant."

"Must it, then, be so soon?" said Richard. "Yet, even so be it. May my course be bright, if it be but brief!"

"Alas! noble King," said the solitary, and it seemed as if a tear (unwonted guest) were gathering in his dry and glazed eye, "short and melancholy, marked with mortification, and calamity, and captivity, is the span that divides thee from the grave which yawns for thee—a grave in which thou shalt be laid without lineage to succeed thee—without the tears of a people, exhausted by thy ceaseless wars, to lament thee—without having extended the knowledge of thy subjects—without having done aught to enlarge their happiness."

"But not without renown, monk—not without the tears of the lady of my love! These consolations, which thou canst neither know nor estimate, await upon Richard to his grave."

"DO I not know, CAN I not estimate the value of minstrel's praise and of lady's love?" retorted the hermit, in a tone which for a moment seemed to emulate the enthusiasm of Richard himself. "King of England," he continued, extending his emaciated arm, "the blood which boils in thy blue veins is not more noble than that

which stagnates in mine. Few and cold as the drops are, they still are of the blood of the royal Lusignan—of the heroic and sainted Godfrey. I am—that is, I was when in the world—Alberick Mortemar—"

"Whose deeds," said Richard, "have so often filled Fame's trumpet! Is it so?—can it be so? Could such a light as thine fall from the horizon of chivalry, and yet men be uncertain where its embers had alighted?"

"Seek a fallen star," said the hermit, "and thou shalt only light on some foul jelly, which, in shooting through the horizon, has assumed for a moment an appearance of splendour. Richard, if I thought that rending the bloody veil from my horrible fate could make thy proud heart stoop to the discipline of the church, I could find in my heart to tell thee a tale, which I have hitherto kept gnawing at my vitals in concealment, like the self-devoted youth of heathenness. Listen, then, Richard, and may the grief and despair which cannot avail this wretched remnant of what was once a man be powerful as an example to so noble, yet so wild, a being as thou art! Yes—I will—I WILL tear open the long-hidden wounds, although in thy very presence they should bleed to death!"

King Richard, upon whom the history of Alberick of Mortemar had made a deep impression in his early years, when minstrels were regaling his father's halls with legends of the Holy Land, listened with respect to the outlines of a tale, which, darkly and imperfectly sketched, indicated sufficiently the cause of the partial insanity of this singular and most unhappy being.

"I need not," he said, "tell thee that I was noble in birth, high in fortune, strong in arms, wise in counsel. All these I was. But while the noblest ladies in Palestine strove which should wind garlands for my helmet, my love was fixed—unalterably and devotedly fixed—on a maiden of low degree. Her father, an ancient soldier of the Cross, saw our passion, and knowing the difference betwixt us, saw no other refuge for his daughter's honour than to place her within the shadow of the cloister. I returned from a distant expedition, loaded with spoils and honour, to find my happiness was destroyed for ever! I too sought the cloister; and Satan, who had marked me for his own, breathed into my heart a vapour of spiritual pride, which could only have had its source in his own infernal regions. I had risen as high in the church as before in the state. I was, forsooth, the wise, the self-sufficient, the impeccable!—I was the counsellor of councils—I was the director of prelates. How should I stumble?—wherefore should I fear temptation? Alas! I became confessor to a sisterhood, and amongst that sisterhood I found the long-loved—the long-lost. Spare me further confession!—A fallen nun, whose guilt was avenged by self-murder, sleeps soundly in the vaults of Engaddi; while, above her very grave, gibbers, moans, and roars a creature to whom but so much reason is left as may suffice to render him completely sensible to his fate!"

"Unhappy man!" said Richard, "I wonder no longer at thy misery. How didst thou escape the doom which the canons denounce against thy offence?"

"Ask one who is yet in the gall of worldly bitterness," said the hermit, "and he will speak of a life spared for personal respects, and from consideration to high birth. But, Richard, I tell thee that Providence hath preserved me to lift me on high as a light and beacon, whose ashes, when this earthly fuel is burnt out, must yet be flung into Tophet. Withered and shrunk as this poor form is, it is yet animated with two spirits—one active, shrewd, and piercing, to advocate the cause of the Church of Jerusalem; one mean, abject, and despairing, fluctuating between madness and misery, to mourn over my own wretchedness, and to guard holy relics on which it would be most sinful for me even to cast my eye. Pity me not!—it is but sin to pity the loss of such an abject; pity me not, but profit by my example. Thou standest on the highest, and, therefore, on the most dangerous pinnacle occupied by any Christian prince. Thou art proud of heart, loose of life, bloody of hand. Put from thee the sins which are to thee as daughters—though they be dear to the sinful Adam, expel these adopted furies from thy breast—thy pride, thy luxury, thy bloodthirstiness."

"He raves," said Richard, turning from the solitary to De Vaux, as one who felt some pain from a sarcasm which yet he could not resent; then turned him calmly, and somewhat scornfully, to the anchorite, as he replied, "Thou hast found a fair bevy of daughters, reverend father, to one who hath been but few months married; but since I must put them from my roof, it were but like a father to provide them with suitable matches. Therefore, I will part with my pride to the noble canons of the church—my luxury, as thou callest it, to the monks of the rule—and my bloodthirstiness to the Knights of the Temple."

"O heart of steel, and hand of iron," said the anchorite, "upon whom example, as well as advice, is alike thrown away! Yet shalt thou be spared for a season, in case it so be thou shouldst turn, and do that which is acceptable in the sight of Heaven. For me I must return to my place. Kyrie Eleison! I am he through whom the rays of heavenly grace dart like those of the sun through a burning-glass, concentrating them on other objects, until they kindle and blaze, while the glass itself remains cold and uninfluenced. Kyrie Eleison!—the poor must be called, for the rich have refused the banquet—Kyrie Eleison!"

So saying, he burst from the tent, uttering loud cries.

"A mad priest!" said Richard, from whose mind the frantic exclamations of the hermit had partly obliterated the impression produced by the detail of his personal history and misfortunes. "After him, De Vaux, and see he comes to no harm; for, Crusaders as we are, a juggler hath more reverence amongst our varlets than a priest or a saint, and they may, perchance, put some scorn upon him."

The knight obeyed, and Richard presently gave way to the thoughts which the wild prophecy of the monk had inspired. "To die early—without lineage—without lamentation! A heavy sentence, and well that it is not passed by a more competent judge. Yet the Saracens, who are accomplished in mystical knowledge, will often maintain that He, in whose eyes the wisdom of the sage is but as folly, inspires wisdom and prophecy into the seeming folly of the madman. Yonder hermit is said to read the stars, too, an art generally practised in these lands, where the heavenly host was of yore the object of idolatry. I would I had asked him touching the loss of my banner; for not the blessed Tishbite, the founder of his order, could seem more wildly rapt out of himself, or speak with a tongue more resembling that of a prophet.—How now, De Vaux, what news of the mad priest?"

"Mad priest, call you him, my lord?" answered De Vaux. "Methinks he resembles more the blessed Baptist himself, just issued from the wilderness. He has placed himself on one of the military engines, and from thence he preaches to the soldiers as never man preached since the time of Peter the Hermit. The camp, alarmed by his cries, crowd around him in thousands; and breaking off every now and then from the main thread of his discourse, he addresses the several nations, each in their own language, and presses upon each the arguments best qualified to urge them to perseverance in the delivery of Palestine."

"By this light, a noble hermit!" said King Richard. "But what else could come from the blood of Godfrey? HE despair of safety, because he hath in former days lived PAR AMOURS? I will have the Pope send him an ample remission, and I would not less willingly be intercessor had his BELLE AMIE been an abbess."

As he spoke, the Archbishop of Tyre craved audience, for the purpose of requesting Richard's attendance, should his health permit, on a secret conclave of the chiefs of the Crusade, and to explain to him the military and political incidents which had occurred during his illness.

CHAPTER XIX.

*Must we then sheathe our still victorious sword;
Turn back our forward step, which ever trod
O'er foemen's necks the onward path of glory;
Unclasp the mail, which with a solemn vow,
In God's own house, we hung upon our shoulders—
That vow, as unaccomplish'd as the promise
Which village nurses make to still their children,
And after think no more of?*

THE CRUSADE, A TRAGEDY.

The Archbishop of Tyre was an emissary well chosen to communicate to Richard tidings, which from another voice the lion-hearted King would not have brooked to hear without the most unbounded explosions of resentment. Even this sagacious and reverend prelate found difficulty in inducing him to listen to news which

destroyed all his hopes of gaining back the Holy Sepulchre by force of arms, and acquiring the renown which the universal all-hail of Christendom was ready to confer upon him as the Champion of the Cross.

But, by the Archbishop's report, it appeared that Saladin was assembling all the force of his hundred tribes, and that the monarchs of Europe, already disgusted from various motives with the expedition, which had proved so hazardous, and was daily growing more so, had resolved to abandon their purpose. In this they were countenanced by the example of Philip of France, who, with many protestations of regard, and assurances that he would first see his brother of England in safety, declared his intention to return to Europe. His great vassal, the Earl of Champagne, had adopted the same resolution; and it could not excite surprise that Leopold of Austria, affronted as he had been by Richard, was glad to embrace an opportunity of deserting a cause in which his haughty opponent was to be considered as chief. Others announced the same purpose; so that it was plain that the King of England was to be left, if he chose to remain, supported only by such volunteers as might, under such depressing circumstances, join themselves to the English army, and by the doubtful aid of Conrade of Montserrat and the military orders of the Temple and of Saint John, who, though they were sworn to wage battle against the Saracens, were at least equally jealous of any European monarch achieving the conquest of Palestine, where, with shortsighted and selfish policy, they proposed to establish independent dominions of their own.

It needed not many arguments to show Richard the truth of his situation; and indeed, after his first burst of passion, he sat him calmly down, and with gloomy looks, head depressed, and arms folded on his bosom, listened to the Archbishop's reasoning on the impossibility of his carrying on the Crusade when deserted by his companions. Nay, he forbore interruption, even when the prelate ventured, in measured terms, to hint that Richard's own impetuosity had been one main cause of disgusting the princes with the expedition.

"CONFITEOR," answered Richard, with a dejected look, and something of a melancholy smile—"I confess, reverend father, that I ought on some accounts to sing CULPA MEA. But is it not hard that my frailties of temper should be visited with such a penance—that, for a burst or two of natural passion, I should be doomed to see fade before me ungathered such a rich harvest of glory to God and honour to chivalry? But it shall NOT fade. By the soul of the Conqueror, I will plant the Cross on the towers of Jerusalem, or it shall be planted over Richard's grave!"

"Thou mayest do it," said the prelate, "yet not another drop of Christian blood be shed in the quarrel."

"Ah, you speak of compromise, Lord Prelate; but the blood of the infidel hounds must also cease to flow," said Richard.

"There will be glory enough," replied the Archbishop, "in having extorted from Saladin, by force of arms, and by the respect inspired by your fame, such conditions as at once restore the Holy Sepulchre, open the Holy Land to pilgrims, secure their safety by strong fortresses, and, stronger than all, assure the safety of the Holy City, by conferring on Richard the title of King Guardian of Jerusalem."

"How!" said Richard, his eyes sparkling with unusual light. "I—I—the King Guardian of the Holy City! Victory itself, but that it is victory, could not gain more—scarce so much, when won with unwilling and disunited forces. But Saladin still proposes to retain his interest in the Holy Land?"

"As a joint sovereign, the sworn ally," replied the prelate, "of the mighty Richard—his relative, if it may be permitted, by marriage."

"By marriage!" said Richard, surprised, yet less so than the prelate had expected. "Ha!—ay—Edith Plantagenet. Did I dream this? or did some one tell me? My head is still weak from this fever, and has been agitated. Was it the Scot, or the Hakim, or yonder holy hermit, that hinted such a wild bargain?"

"The hermit of Engaddi, most likely," said the Archbishop, "for he hath toiled much in this matter; and since the discontent of the princes has become apparent, and a separation of their forces unavoidable, he hath had many consultations, both with Christian and pagan, for arranging such a pacification as may give to Christendom, at least in part, the objects of this holy warfare."

"My kinswoman to an infidel—ha!" exclaimed Richard, as his eyes began to sparkle.

The prelate hastened to avert his wrath.

"The Pope's consent must doubtless be first attained, and the holy hermit, who is well known at Rome, will treat with the holy Father."

"How?—without our consent first given?" said the King.

"Surely no," said the Bishop, in a quieting and insinuating tone of voice—"only with and under your especial sanction."

"My sanction to marry my kinswoman to an infidel!" said Richard; yet he spoke rather in a tone of doubt than as distinctly reprobating the measure proposed. "Could I have dreamed of such a composition when I leaped upon the Syrian shore from the prow of my galley, even as a lion springs on his prey! And now—But proceed—I will hear with patience."

Equally delighted and surprised to find his task so much easier than he had apprehended, the Archbishop hastened to pour forth before Richard the instances of such alliances in Spain—not without countenance from the Holy See; the incalculable advantages which all Christendom would derive from the union of Richard and Saladin by a bond so sacred; and, above all, he spoke with great vehemence and uncton on the probability that Saladin would, in case of the proposed alliance, exchange his false faith for the true one.

"Hath the Soldan shown any disposition to become Christian?" said Richard. "If so, the king lives not on earth to whom I would grant the hand of a kinswoman, ay, or sister, sooner than to my noble Saladin—ay, though the one came to lay crown and sceptre at her feet, and the other had nothing to offer but his good sword and better heart!"

"Saladin hath heard our Christian teachers," said the Bishop, somewhat evasively—"my unworthy self, and others—and as he listens with patience, and replies with calmness, it can hardly be but that he be snatched as a brand from the burning. MAGNA EST VERITAS, ET PREVALEBIT! moreover, the hermit of Engaddi, few of whose words have fallen fruitless to the ground, is possessed fully with the belief that there is a calling of the Saracens and the other heathen approaching, to which this marriage shall be matter of induction. He readeth the course of the stars; and dwelling, with maceration of the flesh, in those divine places which the saints have trodden of old, the spirit of Elijah the Tishbite, the founder of his blessed order, hath been with him as it was with the prophet Elisha, the son of Shaphat, when he spread his mantle over him."

King Richard listened to the Prelate's reasoning with a downcast brow and a troubled look.

"I cannot tell," he said, "How, it is with me, but methinks these cold counsels of the Princes of Christendom have infected me too with a lethargy of spirit. The time hath been that, had a layman proposed such alliance to me, I had struck him to earth—if a churchman, I had spit at him as a renegade and priest of Baal; yet now this counsel sounds not so strange in mine ear. For why should I not seek for brotherhood and alliance with a Saracen, brave, just, generous—who loves and honours a worthy foe, as if he were a friend—whilst the Princes of Christendom shrink from the side of their allies, and forsake the cause of Heaven and good knighthood? But I will possess my patience, and will not think of them. Only one attempt will I make to keep this gallant brotherhood together, if it be possible; and if I fail, Lord Archbishop, we will speak together of thy counsel, which, as now, I neither accept nor altogether reject. Wend we to the Council, my lord—the hour calls us. Thou sayest Richard is hasty and proud—thou shalt see him humble himself like the lowly broom-plant from which he derives his surname."

With the assistance of those of his privy chamber, the King then hastily robed himself in a doublet and mantle of a dark and uniform colour; and without any mark of regal dignity, excepting a ring of gold upon his head, he hastened with the Archbishop of Tyre to attend the Council, which waited but his presence to commence its sitting.

The pavilion of the Council was an ample tent, having before it the large Banner of the Cross displayed, and another, on which was portrayed a female kneeling, with dishevelled hair and disordered dress, meant to represent the desolate and distressed Church of Jerusalem, and bearing the motto, AFFLICTAE SPONSAE NE OBLIVISCARIS. Warders, carefully selected, kept every one at a distance from the neighbourhood of this tent, lest the debates, which were sometimes of a loud and stormy character, should reach other ears than those they were designed for.

Here, therefore, the princes of the Crusade were assembled awaiting Richard's arrival. And even the brief delay which was thus interposed was turned to his disadvantage by his enemies, various instances being circulated of his pride and undue assumption of superiority, of which even the necessity of the present short pause was quoted as an instance. Men strove to fortify each other in their evil opinion of the King of England, and vindicated the offence which each had taken, by

putting the most severe construction upon circumstances the most trifling; and all this, perhaps, because they were conscious of an instinctive reverence for the heroic monarch, which it would require more than ordinary efforts to overcome.

They had settled, accordingly, that they should receive him on his entrance with slight notice, and no more respect than was exactly necessary to keep within the bounds of cold ceremonial. But when they beheld that noble form, that princely countenance, somewhat pale from his late illness—the eye which had been called by minstrels the bright star of battle and victory—when his feats, almost surpassing human strength and valour, rushed on their recollection, the Council of Princes simultaneously arose—even the jealous King of France and the sullen and offended Duke of Austria—arose with one consent, and the assembled princes burst forth with one voice in the acclamation, "God save King Richard of England! Long life to the valiant Lion's-heart!"

With a countenance frank and open as the summer sun when it rises, Richard distributed his thanks around, and congratulated himself on being once more among his royal brethren of the Crusade.

"Some brief words he desired to say," such was his address to the assembly, "though on a subject so unworthy as himself, even at the risk of delaying for a few minutes their consultations for the weal of Christendom and the advancement of their holy enterprise."

The assembled princes resumed their seats, and there was a profound silence.

"This day," continued the King of England, "is a high festival of the church, and it well becomes Christian men, at such a tide, to reconcile themselves with their brethren, and confess their faults to each other. Noble princes and fathers of this holy expedition, Richard is a soldier—his hand is ever readier than his tongue—and his tongue is but too much used to the rough language of his trade. But do not, for Plantagenet's hasty speeches and ill-considered actions, forsake the noble cause of the redemption of Palestine—do not throw away earthly renown and eternal salvation, to be won here if ever they can be won by man, because the act of a soldier may have been hasty, and his speech as hard as the iron which he has worn from childhood. Is Richard in default to any of you, Richard will make compensation both by word and action.—Noble brother of France, have I been so unlucky as to offend you?"

"The Majesty of France has no atonement to seek from that of England," answered Philip, with kingly dignity, accepting, at the same time, the offered hand of Richard; "and whatever opinion I may adopt concerning the prosecution of this enterprise will depend on reasons arising out of the state of my own kingdom—certainly on no jealousy or disgust at my royal and most valorous brother."

"Austria," said Richard, walking up to the Archduke, with a mixture of frankness and dignity, while Leopold arose from his seat, as if involuntarily, and with the action of an automaton, whose motions depended upon some external impulse—"Austria thinks he hath reason to be offended with England; England, that he hath cause to complain of Austria. Let them exchange forgiveness, that the peace of Europe and the concord of this host may remain unbroken. We are now joint supporters of a more glorious banner than ever blazed before an earthly prince, even the Banner of Salvation. Let not, therefore, strife be betwixt us for the symbol of our more worldly dignities; but let Leopold restore the pennon of England, if he has it in his power, and Richard will say, though from no motive save his love for Holy Church, that he repents him of the hasty mood in which he did insult the standard of Austria."

The Archduke stood still, sullen and discontented, with his eyes fixed on the floor, and his countenance lowering with smothered displeasure, which awe, mingled with awkwardness, prevented his giving vent to in words.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem hastened to break the embarrassing silence, and to bear witness for the Archduke of Austria that he had exculpated himself, by a solemn oath, from all knowledge, direct or indirect, of the aggression done to the Banner of England.

"Then we have done the noble Archduke the greater wrong," said Richard; "and craving his pardon for imputing to him an outrage so cowardly, we extend our hand to him in token of renewed peace and amity. But how is this? Austria refuses our uncovered hand, as he formerly refused our mailed glove? What! are we neither to be his mate in peace nor his antagonist in war? Well, let it be so. We will take the slight esteem in which he holds us as a penance for aught which we may have done against him in heat of blood, and will therefore hold the account between us cleared."

So saying, he turned from the Archduke with an air rather of dignity than scorn, leaving the Austrian apparently as much relieved by the removal of his eye as is a sullen and truant schoolboy when the glance of his severe pedagogue is withdrawn.

"Noble Earl of Champagne—princely Marquis of Montserrat—valiant Grand Master of the Templars—I am here a penitent in the confessional. Do any of you bring a charge or claim amends from me?"

"I know not on what we could ground any," said the smooth-tongued Conrade, "unless it were that the King of England carries off from his poor brothers of the war all the fame which they might have hoped to gain in the expedition."

"My charge, if I am called on to make one," said the Master of the Templars, "is graver and deeper than that of the Marquis of Montserrat. It may be thought ill to beseech a military monk such as I to raise his voice where so many noble princes remain silent; but it concerns our whole host, and not least this noble King of England, that he should hear from some one to his face those charges which there are enough to bring against him in his absence. We laud and honour the courage and high achievements of the King of England; but we feel aggrieved that he should on all occasions seize and maintain a precedence and superiority over us, which it becomes not independent princes to submit to. Much we might yield of our free will to his bravery, his zeal, his wealth, and his power; but he who snatches all as matter of right, and leaves nothing to grant out of courtesy and favour, degrades us from allies into retainers and vassals, and sullies in the eyes of our soldiers and subjects the lustre of our authority, which is no longer independently exercised. Since the royal Richard has asked the truth from us, he must neither be surprised nor angry when he hears one, to whom worldly pomp is prohibited, and secular authority is nothing, saving so far as it advances the prosperity of God's Temple, and the prostration of the lion which goeth about seeking whom he may devour—when he hears, I say, such a one as I tell him the truth in reply to his question; which truth, even while I speak it, is, I know, confirmed by the heart of every one who hears me, however respect may stifle their voices."

Richard coloured very highly while the Grand Master was making this direct and unvarnished attack upon his conduct, and the murmur of assent which followed it showed plainly that almost all who were present acquiesced in the justice of the accusation. Incensed, and at the same time mortified, he yet foresaw that to give way to his headlong resentment would be to give the cold and wary accuser the advantage over him which it was the Templar's principal object to obtain. He therefore, with a strong effort, remained silent till he had repeated a pater noster, being the course which his confessor had enjoined him to pursue when anger was likely to obtain dominion over him. The King then spoke with composure, though not without an embittered tone, especially at the outset:—

"And is it even so? And are our brethren at such pains to note the infirmities of our natural temper, and the rough precipitance of our zeal, which may sometimes have urged us to issue commands when there was little time to hold council? I could not have thought that offences, casual and unpremeditated like mine, could find such deep root in the hearts of my allies in this most holy cause; that for my sake they should withdraw their hands from the plough when the furrow was near the end—for my sake turn aside from the direct path to Jerusalem, which their swords have opened. I vainly thought that my small services might have outweighed my rash errors—that if it were remembered that I pressed to the van in an assault, it would not be forgotten that I was ever the last in the retreat—that, if I elevated my banner upon conquered fields of battle, it was all the advantage that I sought, while others were dividing the spoil. I may have called the conquered city by my name, but it was to others that I yielded the dominion. If I have been headstrong in urging bold counsels, I have not, methinks, spared my own blood or my people's in carrying them into as bold execution; or if I have, in the hurry of march or battle, assumed a command over the soldiers of others, such have been ever treated as my own when my wealth purchased the provisions and medicines which their own sovereigns could not procure. But it shames me to remind you of what all but myself seem to have forgotten. Let us rather look forward to our future measures; and believe me, brethren," he continued, his face kindling with eagerness, "you shall not find the pride, or the wrath, or the ambition of Richard a stumbling-block of offence in the path to which religion and glory summon you as with the trumpet of an archangel. Oh, no, no! never would I survive the thought that my frailties and infirmities had been the means to sever this goodly fellowship of assembled princes. I would cut off my left hand with my right, could my doing so attest my sincerity. I will yield up, voluntarily, all right to command in the host—even mine own liege subjects. They shall be led by such sovereigns as you may nominate; and their King, ever but too apt to exchange the leader's baton for the adventurer's lance, will serve under the banner of Beau-Seant among the Templars—ay, or under that of Austria, if Austria will name a brave

man to lead his forces. Or if ye are yourselves a-weary of this war, and feel your armour chafe your tender bodies, leave but with Richard some ten or fifteen thousand of your soldiers to work out the accomplishment of your vow; and when Zion is won," he exclaimed, waving his hand aloft, as if displaying the standard of the Cross over Jerusalem—"when Zion is won, we will write upon her gates, NOT the name of Richard Plantagenet, but of those generous princes who entrusted him with the means of conquest!"

The rough eloquence and determined expression of the military monarch at once roused the drooping spirits of the Crusaders, reanimated their devotion, and, fixing their attention on the principal object of the expedition, made most of them who were present blush for having been moved by such petty subjects of complaint as had before engrossed them. Eye caught fire from eye, voice lent courage to voice. They resumed, as with one accord, the war-cry with which the sermon of Peter the Hermit was echoed back, and shouted aloud, "Lead us on, gallant Lion's-heart; none so worthy to lead where brave men follow. Lead us on—to Jerusalem—to Jerusalem! It is the will of God—it is the will of God! Blessed is he who shall lend an arm to its fulfilment!"

The shout, so suddenly and generally raised, was heard beyond the ring of sentinels who guarded the pavilion of Council, and spread among the soldiers of the host, who, inactive and dispirited by disease and climate, had begun, like their leaders, to droop in resolution; but the reappearance of Richard in renewed vigour, and the well-known shout which echoed from the assembly of the princes, at once rekindled their enthusiasm, and thousands and tens of thousands answered with the same shout of "Zion, Zion! War, war! Instant battle with the infidels! It is the will of God—it is the will of God!"

The acclamations from without increased in their turn the enthusiasm which prevailed within the pavilion. Those who did not actually catch the flame were afraid—at least for the time—to seem colder than others. There was no more speech except of a proud advance towards Jerusalem upon the expiry of the truce, and the measures to be taken in the meantime for supplying and recruiting the army. The Council broke up, all apparently filled with the same enthusiastic purpose—which, however, soon faded in the bosom of most, and never had an existence in that of others.

Of the latter class were the Marquis Conrade and the Grand Master of the Templars, who retired together to their quarters ill at ease, and malcontent with the events of the day.

"I ever told it to thee," said the latter, with the cold, sardonic expression peculiar to him, "that Richard would burst through the flimsy wiles you spread for him, as would a lion through a spider's web. Thou seest he has but to speak, and his breath agitates these fickle fools as easily as the whirlwind catcheth scattered straws, and sweeps them together, or disperses them at its pleasure."

"When the blast has passed away," said Conrade, "the straws, which it made dance to its pipe, will settle to earth again."

"But knowest thou not besides," said the Templar, "that it seems, if this new purpose of conquest shall be abandoned and pass away, and each mighty prince shall again be left to such guidance as his own scanty brain can supply, Richard may yet probably become King of Jerusalem by compact, and establish those terms of treaty with the Soldan which thou thyself thought'st him so likely to spurn at?"

"Now, by Mahound and Termagaunt, for Christian oaths are out of fashion," said Conrade, "sayest thou the proud King of England would unite his blood with a heathen Soldan? My policy threw in that ingredient to make the whole treaty an abomination to him. As bad for us that he become our master by an agreement, as by victory."

"Thy policy hath ill calculated Richard's digestion," answered the Templar; "I know his mind by a whisper from the Archbishop. And then thy master-stroke respecting yonder banner—it has passed off with no more respect than two cubits of embroidered silk merited. Marquis Conrade, thy wit begins to halt; I will trust thy finespun measures no longer, but will try my own. Knowest thou not the people whom the Saracens call Charegites?"

"Surely," answered the Marquis; "they are desperate and besotted enthusiasts, who devote their lives to the advancement of religion—somewhat like Templars, only they are never known to pause in the race of their calling."

"Jest not," answered the scowling monk. "Know that one of these men has set down in his bloody vow the name of the Island Emperor yonder, to be hewn down as the chief enemy of the Moslem faith."

"A most judicious paynim," said Conrade. "May Mohammed send him his paradise for a reward!"

"He was taken in the camp by one of our squires, and in private examination frankly avowed his fixed and determined purpose to me," said the Grand Master.

"Now the heavens pardon them who prevented the purpose of this most judicious Charegite!" answered Conrade.

"He is my prisoner," added the Templar, "and secluded from speech with others, as thou mayest suppose; but prisons have been broken—"

"Chains left unlocked, and captives have escaped," answered the Marquis. "It is an ancient saying, no sure dungeon but the grave."

"When loose, he resumes his quest," continued the military priest; "for it is the nature of this sort of blood hound never to quit the suit of the prey he has once scented."

"Say no more of it," said the Marquis; "I see thy policy—it is dreadful, but the emergency is imminent."

"I only told thee of it," said the Templar, "that thou mayest keep thyself on thy guard; for the uproar will be dreadful, and there is no knowing on whom the English may vent their rage. Ay, and there is another risk. My page knows the counsels of this Charegite," he continued; "and, moreover, he is a peevish, self-willed fool, whom I would I were rid of, as he thwarts me by presuming to see with his own eyes, not mine. But our holy order gives me power to put a remedy to such inconvenience. Or stay—the Saracen may find a good dagger in his cell, and I warrant you he uses it as he breaks forth, which will be of a surety so soon as the page enters with his food."

"It will give the affair a colour," said Conrade; "and yet—"

"YET and BUT," said the Templar, "are words for fools; wise men neither hesitate nor retract—they resolve and they execute."

CHAPTER XX.

*When beauty leads the lion in her toils,
Such are her charms, he dare not raise his mane,
Far less expand the terror of his fangs.
So great Alcides made his club a distaff,
And spun to please fair Omphale.*

ANONYMOUS.

Richard, the unsuspecting object of the dark treachery detailed in the closing part of the last chapter, having effected, for the present at least, the triumphant union of the Crusading princes in a resolution to prosecute the war with vigour, had it next at heart to establish tranquillity in his own family; and, now that he could judge more temperately, to inquire distinctly into the circumstances leading to the loss of his banner, and the nature and the extent of the connection betwixt his kinswoman Edith and the banished adventurer from Scotland.

Accordingly, the Queen and her household were startled with a visit from Sir Thomas de Vaux, requesting the present attendance of the Lady Calista of Montfaucon, the Queen's principal bower-woman, upon King Richard.

"What am I to say, madam?" said the trembling attendant to the Queen, "He will slay us all."

"Nay, fear not, madam," said De Vaux. "His Majesty hath spared the life of the Scottish knight, who was the chief offender, and bestowed him upon the Moorish physician. He will not be severe upon a lady, though faulty."

"Devise some cunning tale, wench," said Berengaria. "My husband hath too little time to make inquiry into the truth."

"Tell the tale as it really happened," said Edith, "lest I tell it for thee."

"With humble permission of her Majesty," said De Vaux, "I would say Lady Edith adviseth well; for although King Richard is pleased to believe what it pleases your Grace to tell him, yet I doubt his having the same deference for the Lady Calista, and in this especial matter."

"The Lord of Gilsland is right," said the Lady Calista, much agitated at the thoughts of the investigation which was to take place; "and besides, if I had presence of mind enough to forge a plausible story, beshrew me if I think I should have the courage to tell it."

In this candid humour, the Lady Calista was conducted by De Vaux to the King, and made, as she had proposed, a full confession of the decoy by which the unfortunate Knight of the Leopard had been induced to desert his post; exculpating the Lady Edith, who, she was aware, would not fail to exculpate herself, and laying the full burden on the Queen, her mistress, whose share of the frolic, she well knew, would appear the most venial in the eyes of Coeur de Lion. In truth, Richard was a fond, almost a uxorious husband. The first burst of his wrath had long since passed away, and he was not disposed severely to censure what could not now be amended. The wily Lady Calista, accustomed from her earliest childhood to fathom the intrigues of a court, and watch the indications of a sovereign's will, hastened back to the Queen with the speed of a lapwing, charged with the King's commands that she should expect a speedy visit from him; to which the bower-lady added a commentary founded on her own observation, tending to show that Richard meant just to preserve so much severity as might bring his royal consort to repent of her frolic, and then to extend to her and all concerned his gracious pardon.

"Sits the wind in that corner, wench?" said the Queen, much relieved by this intelligence. "Believe me that, great commander as he is, Richard will find it hard to circumvent us in this matter, and that, as the Pyrenean shepherds are wont to say in my native Navarre, Many a one comes for wool, and goes back shorn."

Having possessed herself of all the information which Calista could communicate, the royal Berengaria arrayed herself in her most becoming dress, and awaited with confidence the arrival of the heroic Richard.

He arrived, and found himself in the situation of a prince entering an offending province, in the confidence that his business will only be to inflict rebuke, and receive submission, when he unexpectedly finds it in a state of complete defiance and insurrection. Berengaria well knew the power of her charms and the extent of Richard's affection, and felt assured that she could make her own terms good, now that the first tremendous explosion of his anger had expended itself without mischief. Far from listening to the King's intended rebuke, as what the levity of her conduct had justly deserved, she extenuated, nay, defended as a harmless frolic, that which she was accused of. She denied, indeed, with many a pretty form of negation, that she had directed Nectabanus absolutely to entice the knight farther than the brink of the Mount on which he kept watch—and, indeed, this was so far true, that she had not designed Sir Kenneth to be introduced into her tent—and then, eloquent in urging her own defence, the Queen was far more so in pressing upon Richard the charge of unkindness, in refusing her so poor a boon as the life of an unfortunate knight, who, by her thoughtless prank, had been brought within the danger of martial law. She wept and sobbed while she enlarged on her husband's obduracy on this score, as a rigour which had threatened to make her unhappy for life, whenever she should reflect that she had given, unthinkingly, the remote cause for such a tragedy. The vision of the slaughtered victim would have haunted her dreams—nay, for aught she knew, since such things often happened, his actual spectre might have stood by her waking couch. To all this misery of the mind was she exposed by the severity of one who, while he pretended to dote upon her slightest glance, would not forego one act of poor revenge, though the issue was to render her miserable.

All this flow of female eloquence was accompanied with the usual arguments of tears and sighs, and uttered with such tone and action as seemed to show that the Queen's resentment arose neither from pride nor sullenness, but from feelings hurt at finding her consequence with her husband less than she had expected to possess.

The good King Richard was considerably embarrassed. He tried in vain to reason with one whose very jealousy of his affection rendered her incapable of listening to argument, nor could he bring himself to use the restraint of lawful authority to a creature so beautiful in the midst of her unreasonable displeasure. He was therefore reduced to the defensive, endeavoured gently to chide her suspicions and soothe her displeasure, and recalled to her mind that she need not look back upon the past with recollections either of remorse or supernatural fear, since Sir Kenneth was alive and well, and had been bestowed by him upon the great Arabian physician, who, doubtless, of all men, knew best how to keep him living. But this seemed the unkindest cut of all, and the Queen's sorrow was renewed at the idea of a Saracen—a mediciner—obtaining a boon for which, with bare head and on bended knee, she had petitioned her husband in vain. At this new charge Richard's patience began rather to give way, and he said, in a serious tone of voice, "Berengaria, the physician saved my life. If it is of value in your eyes, you will not grudge him a higher recompense than the only one I could prevail on him to accept."

The Queen was satisfied she had urged her coquettish displeasure to the verge of safety.

"My Richard," she said, "why brought you not that sage to me, that England's Queen might show how she esteemed him who could save from extinction the lamp of chivalry, the glory of England, and the light of poor Berengaria's life and hope?"

In a word, the matrimonial dispute was ended; but, that some penalty might be paid to justice, both King and Queen accorded in laying the whole blame on the agent Nectabanus, who (the Queen being by this time well weary of the poor dwarf's humour) was, with his royal consort Guenevra, sentenced to be banished from the Court; and the unlucky dwarf only escaped a supplementary whipping, from the Queen's assurances that he had already sustained personal chastisement. It was decreed further that, as an envoy was shortly to be dispatched to Saladin, acquainting him with the resolution of the Council to resume hostilities so soon as the truce was ended, and as Richard proposed to send a valuable present to the Soldan, in acknowledgment of the high benefit he had derived from the services of El Hakim, the two unhappy creatures should be added to it as curiosities, which, from their extremely grotesque appearance, and the shattered state of their intellect, were gifts that might well pass between sovereign and sovereign.

Richard had that day yet another female encounter to sustain; but he advanced to it with comparative indifference, for Edith, though beautiful and highly esteemed by her royal relative—nay, although she had from his unjust suspicions actually sustained the injury of which Berengaria only affected to complain—still was neither Richard's wife nor mistress, and he feared her reproaches less, although founded in reason, than those of the Queen, though unjust and fantastical. Having requested to speak with her apart, he was ushered into her apartment, adjoining that of the Queen, whose two female Coptic slaves remained on their knees in the most remote corner during the interview. A thin black veil extended its ample folds over the tall and graceful form of the high-born maiden, and she wore not upon her person any female ornament of what kind soever. She arose and made a low reverence when Richard entered, resumed her seat at his command, and, when he sat down beside her, waited, without uttering a syllable, until he should communicate his pleasure.

Richard, whose custom it was to be familiar with Edith, as their relationship authorized, felt this reception chilling, and opened the conversation with some embarrassment.

"Our fair cousin," he at length said, "is angry with us; and we own that strong circumstances have induced us, without cause, to suspect her of conduct alien to what we have ever known in her course of life. But while we walk in this misty valley of humanity, men will mistake shadows for substances. Can my fair cousin not forgive her somewhat vehement kinsman Richard?"

"Who can refuse forgiveness to RICHARD," answered Edith, "provided Richard can obtain pardon of the KING?"

"Come, my kinswoman," replied Coeur de Lion, "this is all too solemn. By Our Lady, such a melancholy countenance, and this ample sable veil, might make men think thou wert a new-made widow, or had lost a betrothed lover, at least. Cheer up! Thou hast heard, doubtless, that there is no real cause for woe; why, then, keep up the form of mourning?"

"For the departed honour of Plantagenet—for the glory which hath left my father's house."

Richard frowned. "Departed honour! glory which hath left our house!" he repeated angrily. "But my cousin Edith is privileged. I have judged her too hastily; she has therefore a right to deem of me too harshly. But tell me at least in what I have faulted."

"Plantagenet," said Edith, "should have either pardoned an offence, or punished it. It misbecomes him to assign free men, Christians, and brave knights, to the fetters of the infidels. It becomes him not to compromise and barter, or to grunt life under the forfeiture of liberty. To have doomed the unfortunate to death might have been severity, but had a show of justice; to condemn him to slavery and exile was barefaced tyranny."

"I see, my fair cousin," said Richard, "you are of those pretty ones who think an absent lover as bad as none, or as a dead one. Be patient; half a score of light horsemen may yet follow and redeem the error, if thy gallant have in keeping any secret which might render his death more convenient than his banishment."

"Peace with thy scurrile jests!" answered Edith, colouring deeply. "Think, rather, that for the indulgence of thy mood thou hast lopped from this great enterprise one goodly limb, deprived the Cross of one of its most brave supporters, and placed a servant of the true God in the hands of the heathen; hast given, too, to minds as suspicious as thou hast shown thine own in this matter, some right to say that Richard Coeur de Lion banished the bravest soldier in his camp lest his name in battle might match his own."

"I—I!" exclaimed Richard, now indeed greatly moved—"am I one to be jealous of renown? I would he were here to profess such an equality! I would waive my rank and my crown, and meet him, manlike, in the lists, that it might appear whether Richard Plantagenet had room to fear or to envy the prowess of mortal man. Come, Edith, thou think'st not as thou sayest. Let not anger or grief for the absence of thy lover make thee unjust to thy kinsman, who, notwithstanding all thy techiness, values thy good report as high as that of any one living."

"The absence of my lover?" said the Lady Edith, "But yes, he may be well termed my lover, who hath paid so dear for the title. Unworthy as I might be of such homage, I was to him like a light, leading him forward in the noble path of chivalry; but that I forgot my rank, or that he presumed beyond his, is false, were a king to speak it."

"My fair cousin," said Richard, "do not put words in my mouth which I have not spoken. I said not you had graced this man beyond the favour which a good knight may earn, even from a princess, whatever be his native condition. But, by Our Lady, I know something of this love-gear. It begins with mute respect and distant reverence; but when opportunities occur, familiarity increases, and so—But it skills not talking with one who thinks herself wiser than all the world."

"My kinsman's counsels I willingly listen to, when they are such," said Edith, "as convey no insult to my rank and character."

"Kings, my fair cousin, do not counsel, but rather command," said Richard.

"Soldans do indeed command," said Edith, "but it is because they have slaves to govern."

"Come, you might learn to lay aside this scorn of Soldanrie, when you hold so high of a Scot," said the King. "I hold Saladin to be truer to his word than this William of Scotland, who must needs be called a Lion, forsooth; he hath foully faulted towards me in failing to send the auxiliary aid he promised. Let me tell thee, Edith, thou mayest live to prefer a true Turk to a false Scot."

"No—never!" answered Edith—"not should Richard himself embrace the false religion, which he crossed the seas to expel from Palestine."

"Thou wilt have the last word," said Richard, "and thou shalt have it. Even think of me what thou wilt, pretty Edith. I shall not forget that we are near and dear cousins."

So saying, he took his leave in fair fashion, but very little satisfied with the result of his visit.

It was the fourth day after Sir Kenneth had been dismissed from the camp, and King Richard sat in his pavilion, enjoying an evening breeze from the west, which, with unusual coolness on her wings, seemed breathed from merry England for the refreshment of her adventurous Monarch, as he was gradually recovering the full strength which was necessary to carry on his gigantic projects. There was no one with him, De Vaux having been sent to Ascalon to bring up reinforcements and supplies of military munition, and most of his other attendants being occupied in different departments, all preparing for the re-opening of hostilities, and for a grand preparatory review of the army of the Crusaders, which was to take place the next day. The King sat listening to the busy hum among the soldiery, the clatter from the forges, where horseshoes were preparing, and from the tents of the armourers, who were repairing harness. The voice of the soldiers, too, as they passed and repassed, was loud and cheerful, carrying with its very tone an assurance of high and excited courage, and an omen of approaching victory. While Richard's ear drank in these sounds with delight, and while he yielded himself to the visions of conquest and of glory which they suggested, an equerry told him that a messenger from Saladin waited without.

"Admit him instantly," said the King, "and with due honour, Josceline."

The English knight accordingly introduced a person, apparently of no higher rank than a Nubian slave, whose appearance was nevertheless highly interesting. He was of superb stature and nobly formed, and his commanding features, although almost jet-black, showed nothing of negro descent. He wore over his coal-black locks a milk-white turban, and over his shoulders a short mantle of the same colour, open in front and at the sleeves, under which appeared a doublet of dressed leopard's skin reaching within a handbreadth of the knee. The rest of his muscular limbs, both legs and arms, were bare, excepting that he had sandals on his feet, and wore a collar and bracelets of silver. A straight broadsword, with a handle of box-wood and a sheath covered with snakeskin, was suspended from his waist. In his right hand he held a short javelin, with a broad, bright steel head, of a span in length, and in his left he led by a leash of twisted silk and gold a large and noble staghound.

The messenger prostrated himself, at the same time partially uncovering his shoulders, in sign of humiliation, and having touched the earth with his forehead, arose so far as to rest on one knee, while he delivered to the King a silken napkin, enclosing another of cloth of gold, within which was a letter from Saladin in the original Arabic, with a translation into Norman-English, which may be modernized thus:—

"Saladin, King of Kings, to Melech Ric, the Lion of England. Whereas, we are informed by thy last message that thou hast chosen war rather than peace, and our enmity rather than our friendship, we account thee as one blinded in this matter, and trust shortly to convince thee of thine error, by the help of our invincible forces of the thousand tribes, when Mohammed, the Prophet of God, and Allah, the God of the Prophet, shall judge the controversy betwixt us. In what remains, we make noble account of thee, and of the gifts which thou hast sent us, and of the two dwarfs, singular in their deformity as Ysop, and mirthful as the lute of Isaack. And in requital of these tokens from the treasure-house of thy bounty, behold we have sent thee a Nubian slave, named Zohauk, of whom judge not by his complexion, according to the foolish ones of the earth, in respect the dark-rinded fruit hath the most exquisite flavour. Know that he is strong to execute the will of his master, as Rustan of Zablestan; also he is wise to give counsel when thou shalt learn to hold communication with him, for the Lord of Speech hath been stricken with silence betwixt the ivory walls of his palace. We commend him to thy care, hoping the hour may not be distant when he may render thee good service. And herewith we bid thee farewell; trusting that our most holy Prophet may yet call thee to a sight of the truth, failing which illumination, our desire is for the speedy restoration of thy royal health, that Allah may judge between thee and us in a plain field of battle."

And the missive was sanctioned by the signature and seal of the Soldan.

Richard surveyed the Nubian in silence as he stood before him, his looks bent upon the ground, his arms folded on his bosom, with the appearance of a black marble statue of the most exquisite workmanship, waiting life from the touch of a Prometheus. The King of England, who, as it was emphatically said of his successor Henry the Eighth, loved to look upon A MAN, was well pleased with the thews, sinews, and symmetry of him whom he now surveyed, and questioned him in the lingua franca, "Art thou a pagan?"

The slave shook his head, and raising his finger to his brow, crossed himself in token of his Christianity, then resumed his posture of motionless humility.

"A Nubian Christian, doubtless," said Richard, "and mutilated of the organ of speech by these heathen dogs?"

The mute again slowly shook his head, in token of negative, pointed with his forefinger to Heaven, and then laid it upon his own lips.

"I understand thee," said Richard; "thou dost suffer under the infliction of God, not by the cruelty of man. Canst thou clean an armour and belt, and buckle it in time of need?"

The mute nodded, and stepping towards the coat of mail, which hung with the shield and helmet of the chivalrous monarch upon the pillar of the tent, he handled it with such nicety of address as sufficiently to show that he fully understood the business of an armour-bearer.

"Thou art an apt, and wilt doubtless be a useful knave. Thou shalt wait in my chamber, and on my person," said the King, "to show how much I value the gift of the royal Soldan. If thou hast no tongue, it follows thou canst carry no tales, neither provoke me to be sudden by any unfit reply."

The Nubian again prostrated himself till his brow touched the earth, then stood erect, at some paces distant, as waiting for his new master's commands.

"Nay, thou shalt commence thy office presently," said Richard, "for I see a speck of rust darkening on that shield; and when I shake it in the face of Saladin, it should be bright and unsullied as the Soldan's honour and mine own."

A horn was winded without, and presently Sir Henry Neville entered with a packet of dispatches. "From England, my lord," he said, as he delivered it.

"From England—our own England!" repeated Richard, in a tone of melancholy enthusiasm. "Alas! they little think how hard their Sovereign has been beset by sickness and sorrow—faint friends and forward enemies." Then opening the dispatches, he said hastily, "Ha! this comes from no peaceful land—they too have their feuds. Neville, begone; I must peruse these tidings alone, and at leisure."

Neville withdrew accordingly, and Richard was soon absorbed in the melancholy details which had been conveyed to him from England, concerning the factions that were tearing to pieces his native dominions—the disunion of his brothers John and Geoffrey, and the quarrels of both with the High Justiciary Longchamp, Bishop of Ely—the oppressions practised by the nobles upon the peasantry, and rebellion of the latter against their masters, which had produced everywhere scenes of discord, and in some instances the effusion of blood. Details of incidents mortifying to his pride, and derogatory from his authority, were intermingled with the earnest advice of his wisest and most attached counsellors that he should presently return to England, as his presence offered the only hope of saving the Kingdom from all the horrors of civil discord, of which France and Scotland were likely to avail themselves. Filled with the most painful anxiety, Richard read, and again read, the ill-omened letters; compared the intelligence which some of them contained with the same facts as differently stated in others; and soon became totally insensible to whatever was passing around him, although seated, for the sake of coolness, close to the entrance of his tent, and having the curtains withdrawn, so that he could see and be seen by the guards and others who were stationed without.

Deeper in the shadow of the pavilion, and busied with the task his new master had imposed, sat the Nubian slave, with his back rather turned towards the King. He had finished adjusting and cleaning the hauberk and brigandine, and was now busily employed on a broad pavesse, or buckler, of unusual size, and covered with steel-plating, which Richard often used in reconnoitring, or actually storming fortified places, as a more effectual protection against missile weapons than the narrow triangular shield used on horseback. This pavesse bore neither the royal lions of England, nor any other device, to attract the observation of the defenders of the walls against which it was advanced; the care, therefore, of the armourer was addressed to causing its surface to shine as bright as crystal, in which he seemed to be peculiarly successful. Beyond the Nubian, and scarce visible from without, lay the large dog, which might be termed his brother slave, and which, as if he felt awed by being transferred to a royal owner, was couched close to the side of the mute, with head and ears on the ground, and his limbs and tail drawn close around and under him.

While the Monarch and his new attendant were thus occupied, another actor crept upon the scene, and mingled among the group of English yeomen, about a score of whom, respecting the unusually pensive posture and close occupation of their Sovereign, were, contrary to their wont, keeping a silent guard in front of his tent. It was not, however, more vigilant than usual. Some were playing at games of hazard with small pebbles, others spoke together in whispers of the approaching day of battle, and several lay asleep, their bulky limbs folded in their green mantles.

Amid these careless warders glided the puny form of a little old Turk, poorly dressed like a marabout or santon of the desert—a sort of enthusiasts, who sometimes ventured into the camp of the Crusaders, though treated always with contumely, and often with violence. Indeed, the luxury and profligate indulgence of the Christian leaders had occasioned a motley concourse in their tents of musicians, courtesans, Jewish merchants, Copts, Turks, and all the varied refuse of the Eastern nations; so that the caftan and turban, though to drive both from the Holy Land was the professed object of the expedition, were, nevertheless, neither an uncommon nor an alarming sight in the camp of the Crusaders. When, however, the little insignificant figure we have described approached so nigh as to receive some interruption from the warders, he dashed his dusky green turban from his head, showed that his beard and eyebrows were shaved like those of a professed buffoon, and that the expression of his fantastic and writhen features, as well as of his little black eyes, which glittered like jet, was that of a crazed imagination.

"Dance, marabout," cried the soldiers, acquainted with the manners of these wandering enthusiasts, "dance, or we will scourge thee with our bow-strings till thou spin as never top did under schoolboy's lash." Thus shouted the reckless warders, as much delighted at having a subject to tease as a child when he catches a butterfly, or a schoolboy upon discovering a bird's nest.

The marabout, as if happy to do their behests, bounded from the earth, and spun his giddy round before them with singular agility, which, when contrasted with his slight and wasted figure, and diminutive appearance, made him resemble a withered leaf twirled round and round at the pleasure of the winter's breeze. His single lock of hair streamed upwards from his bald and shaven head, as if some genie upheld him by it; and indeed it seemed as if supernatural art were necessary to the execution of the wild, whirling dance, in which scarce the tiptoe of the performer was seen to touch the ground. Amid the vagaries of his performance he flew here and there, from one spot to another, still approaching, however, though almost imperceptibly, to the entrance of the royal tent; so that, when at length he sunk exhausted on the earth, after two or three bounds still higher than those which he had yet executed, he was not above thirty yards from the King's person.

"Give him water," said one yeoman; "they always crave a drink after their merry-go-round."

"Aha, water, sayest thou, Long Allen?" exclaimed another archer, with a most scornful emphasis on the despised element; "how wouldst like such beverage thyself, after such a morrice dancing?"

"The devil a water-drop he gets here," said a third. "We will teach the light-footed old infidel to be a good Christian, and drink wine of Cyprus."

"Ay, ay," said a fourth; "and in case he be restive, fetch thou Dick Hunter's horn, that he drenches his mare withal."

A circle was instantly formed around the prostrate and exhausted dervise, and while one tall yeoman raised his feeble form from the ground, another presented to him a huge flagon of wine. Incapable of speech, the old man shook his head, and waved away from him with his hand the liquor forbidden by the Prophet. But his tormentors were not thus to be appeased.

"The horn, the horn!" exclaimed one. "Little difference between a Turk and a Turkish horse, and we will use him conforming."

"By Saint George, you will choke him!" said Long Allen; "and besides, it is a sin to throw away upon a heathen dog as much wine as would serve a good Christian for a treble night-cap."

"Thou knowest not the nature of these Turks and pagans, Long Allen," replied Henry Woodstall. "I tell thee, man, that this flagon of Cyprus will set his brains a-spinning, just in the opposite direction that they went whirling in the dancing, and so bring him, as it were, to himself again. Choke? He will no more choke on it than Ben's black bitch on the pound of butter."

"And for grudging it," said Tomalin Blacklees, "why shouldst thou grudge the poor paynim devil a drop of drink on earth, since thou knowest he is not to have a drop to cool the tip of his tongue through a long eternity?"

"That were hard laws, look ye," said Long Allen, "only for being a Turk, as his father was before him. Had he been Christian turned heathen, I grant you the hottest corner had been good winter quarters for him."

"Hold thy peace, Long Allen," said Henry Woodstall. "I tell thee that tongue of thine is not the shortest limb about thee, and I prophesy that it will bring thee into disgrace with Father Francis, as once about the black-eyed Syrian wench. But here comes the horn. Be active a bit, man, wilt thou, and just force open his teeth with the haft of thy dudgeon-dagger."

"Hold, hold—he is conformable," said Tomalin; "see, see, he signs for the goblet—give him room, boys! OOP SEY ES, quoth the Dutchman—down it goes like lamb's-wool! Nay, they are true toppers when once they begin—your Turk never coughs in his cup, or stints in his liquoring."

In fact, the dervise, or whatever he was, drank—or at least seemed to drink—the large flagon to the very bottom at a single pull; and when he took it from his lips after the whole contents were exhausted, only uttered, with a deep sigh, the words, ALLAH KERIM, or God is merciful. There was a laugh among the yeomen who witnessed this pottle-deep potation, so obstreperous as to rouse and disturb the King, who, raising his finger, said angrily, "How, knaves, no respect, no observance?"

All were at once hushed into silence, well acquainted with the temper of Richard, which at some times admitted of much military familiarity, and at others exacted the most precise respect, although the latter humour was of much more rare occurrence. Hastening to a more reverent distance from the royal person, they attempted to drag along with them the marabout, who, exhausted apparently by previous fatigue, or overpowered by the potent draught he had just swallowed, resisted being moved from the spot, both with struggles and groans.

"Leave him still, ye fools," whispered Long Allen to his mates; "by Saint Christopher, you will make our Dickon go beside himself, and we shall have his dagger presently fly at our costards. Leave him alone; in less than a minute he will sleep like a dormouse."

At the same moment the Monarch darted another impatient glance to the spot, and all retreated in haste, leaving the dervise on the ground, unable, as it seemed, to stir a single limb or joint of his body. In a moment afterward all was as still and quiet as it had been before the intrusion.

CHAPTER XXI

*—and wither'd Murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost.*

MACBETH.

For the space of a quarter of an hour, or longer, after the incident related, all remained perfectly quiet in the front of the royal habitation. The King read and mused in the entrance of his pavilion; behind, and with his back turned to the same entrance, the Nubian slave still burnished the ample pavesse; in front of all, at a hundred paces distant, the yeomen of the guard stood, sat, or lay extended on the grass, attentive to their own sports, but pursuing them in silence, while on the esplanade betwixt them and the front of the tent lay, scarcely to be distinguished from a bundle of rags, the senseless form of the marabout.

But the Nubian had the advantage of a mirror from the brilliant reflection which the surface of the highly-polished shield now afforded, by means of which he beheld, to his alarm and surprise, that the marabout raised his head gently from the ground, so as to survey all around him, moving with a well-adjusted precaution which seemed entirely inconsistent with a state of ebriety. He couched his head instantly, as if satisfied he was unobserved, and began, with the slightest possible appearance of voluntary effort, to drag himself, as if by chance, ever nearer and nearer to the King, but stopping and remaining fixed at intervals, like the spider, which, moving towards her object, collapses into apparent lifelessness when she thinks she is the subject of observation. This species of movement appeared suspicious to the Ethiopian, who, on his part, prepared himself, as quietly as possible, to interfere, the instant that interference should seem to be necessary.

The marabout, meanwhile, glided on gradually and imperceptibly, serpent-like, or rather snail-like, till he was about ten yards distant from Richard's person, when, starting on his feet, he sprung forward with the bound of a tiger, stood at the King's back in less than an instant, and brandished aloft the cangiar, or poniard, which he had hidden in his sleeve. Not the presence of his whole army could have saved their heroic Monarch; but the motions of the Nubian had been as well calculated as those of the enthusiast, and ere the latter could strike, the former caught his uplifted arm. Turning his fanatical wrath upon what thus unexpectedly interposed betwixt him and his object, the Charegite, for such was the seeming marabout, dealt the Nubian a blow with the dagger, which, however, only grazed his arm, while the far superior strength of the Ethiopian easily dashed him to the ground. Aware of what had passed, Richard had now arisen, and with little more of surprise, anger, or interest of any kind in his countenance than an ordinary man would show in brushing off and crushing an intrusive wasp, caught up the stool on which he had been sitting, and exclaiming only, "Ha, dog!" dashed almost to pieces the skull of the assassin, who uttered twice, once in a loud, and once in a broken tone, the words ALLAH ACKBAR!—God is victorious—and expired at the King's feet.

"Ye are careful warders," said Richard to his archers, in a tone of scornful reproach, as, aroused by the bustle of what had passed, in terror and tumult they now rushed into his tent; "watchful sentinels ye are, to leave me to do such hangman's work with my own hand. Be silent, all of you, and cease your senseless clamour!—saw ye never a dead Turk before? Here, cast that carrion out of the camp, strike the head from the trunk, and stick it on a lance, taking care to turn the face to Mecca, that he may the easier tell the foul impostor on whose inspiration he came hither how he has sped on his errand.—For thee, my swart and silent friend," he added, turning to the Ethiopian—"but how's this? Thou art wounded—and with a poisoned weapon, I warrant me, for by force of stab so weak an animal as that could scarce hope to do more than raze the lion's hide.—Suck the poison from his wound one of you—the venom is harmless on the lips, though fatal when it mingles with the blood."

The yeomen looked on each other confusedly and with hesitation, the apprehension of so strange a danger prevailing with those who feared no other.

"How now, sirrahs," continued the King, "are you dainty-lipped, or do you fear death, that you daily thus?"

"Not the death of a man," said Long Allen, to whom the King looked as he spoke; "but methinks I would not die like a poisoned rat for the sake of a black chattel there, that is bought and sold in a market like a Martlemas ox."

"His Grace speaks to men of sucking poison," muttered another yeoman, "as if he said, 'Go to, swallow a gooseberry!'"

"Nay," said Richard, "I never bade man do that which I would not do myself."

And without further ceremony, and in spite of the general expostulations of those around, and the respectful opposition of the Nubian himself, the King of England applied his lips to the wound of the black slave, treating with ridicule all remonstrances, and overpowering all resistance. He had no sooner intermitted his singular occupation, than the Nubian started from him, and casting a scarf over his arm, intimated by gestures, as firm in purpose as they were respectful in manner, his determination not to permit the Monarch to renew so degrading an employment. Long Allen also interposed, saying that, if it were necessary to prevent the King engaging again in a treatment of this kind, his own lips, tongue, and teeth were at the service of the negro (as he called the Ethiopian), and that he would eat him up bodily, rather than King Richard's mouth should again approach him.

Neville, who entered with other officers, added his remonstrances.

"Nay, nay, make not a needless halloo about a hart that the hounds have lost, or a danger when it is over," said the King. "The wound will be a trifle, for the blood is scarce drawn—an angry cat had dealt a deeper scratch. And for me, I have but to take a drachm of orvietan by way of precaution, though it is needless."

Thus spoke Richard, a little ashamed, perhaps, of his own condescension, though sanctioned both by humanity and gratitude. But when Neville continued to make remonstrances on the peril to his royal person, the King imposed silence on him.

"Peace, I prithee—make no more of it. I did it but to show these ignorant, prejudiced knaves how they might help each other when these cowardly caitiffs come against us with sarbacanes and poisoned shafts. But," he added, "take thee this Nubian to thy quarters, Neville—I have changed my mind touching him—let him be well cared for. But hark in thine ear; see that he escapes thee not—there is more in him than seems. Let him have all liberty, so that he leave not the camp.—And you, ye beef-devouring, wine-swilling English mastiffs, get ye to your guard again, and be sure you keep it more warily. Think not you are now in your own

land of fair play, where men speak before they strike, and shake hands ere they cut throats. Danger in our land walks openly, and with his blade drawn, and defies the foe whom he means to assault; but here he challenges you with a silk glove instead of a steel gauntlet, cuts your throat with the feather of a turtle-dove, stabs you with the tongue of a priest's brooch, or throttles you with the lace of my lady's boddice. Go to—keep your eyes open and your mouths shut—drink less, and look sharper about you; or I will place your huge stomachs on such short allowance as would pinch the stomach of a patient Scottish man."

The yeomen, abashed and mortified, withdrew to their post, and Neville was beginning to remonstrate with his master upon the risk of passing over thus slightly their negligence upon their duty, and the propriety of an example in a case so peculiarly aggravated as the permitting one so suspicious as the marabout to approach within dagger's length of his person, when Richard interrupted him with, "Speak not of it, Neville—wouldst thou have me avenge a petty risk to myself more severely than the loss of England's banner? It has been stolen—stolen by a thief, or delivered up by a traitor, and no blood has been shed for it.—My sable friend, thou art an expounder of mysteries, saith the illustrious Soldan—now would I give thee thine own weight in gold, if, by raising one still blacker than thyself or by what other means thou wilt, thou couldst show me the thief who did mine honour that wrong. What sayest thou, ha?"

The mute seemed desirous to speak, but uttered only that imperfect sound proper to his melancholy condition; then folded his arms, looked on the King with an eye of intelligence, and nodded in answer to his question.

"How!" said Richard, with joyful impatience. "Wilt thou undertake to make discovery in this matter?"

The Nubian slave repeated the same motion.

"But how shall we understand each other?" said the King. "Canst thou write, good fellow?"

The slave again nodded in assent.

"Give him writing-tools," said the King. "They were readier in my father's tent than mine; but they be somewhere about, if this scorching climate have not dried up the ink.—Why, this fellow is a jewel—a black diamond, Neville."

"So please you, my liege," said Neville, "if I might speak my poor mind, it were ill dealing in this ware. This man must be a wizard, and wizards deal with the Enemy, who hath most interest to sow tares among the wheat, and bring dissension into our councils, and—"

"Peace, Neville," said Richard. "Hello to your northern hound when he is close on the haunch of the deer, and hope to recall him, but seek not to stop Plantagenet when he hath hope to retrieve his honour."

The slave, who during this discussion had been writing, in which art he seemed skilful, now arose, and pressing what he had written to his brow, prostrated himself as usual, ere he delivered it into the King's hands. The scroll was in French, although their intercourse had hitherto been conducted by Richard in the *lingua franca*.

"To Richard, the conquering and invincible King of England, this from the humblest of his slaves. Mysteries are the sealed caskets of Heaven, but wisdom may devise means to open the lock. Were your slave stationed where the leaders of the Christian host were made to pass before him in order, doubt nothing that if he who did the injury whereof my King complains shall be among the number, he may be made manifest in his iniquity, though it be hidden under seven veils."

"Now, by Saint George!" said King Richard, "thou hast spoken most opportunely.—Neville, thou knowest that when we muster our troops to-morrow the princes have agreed that, to expiate the affront offered to England in the theft of her banner, the leaders should pass our new standard as it floats on Saint George's Mount, and salute it with formal regard. Believe me, the secret traitor will not dare to absent himself from an expurgation so solemn, lest his very absence should be matter of suspicion. There will we place our sable man of counsel, and if his art can detect the villain, leave me to deal with him."

"My liege," said Neville, with the frankness of an English baron, "beware what work you begin. Here is the concord of our holy league unexpectedly renewed—you, upon such suspicion as a negro slave can instil, tear open wounds so lately closed? Or will you use the solemn procession, adopted for the reparation of your honour and establishment of unanimity amongst the discording princes, as the means of again finding out new cause of offence, or reviving ancient quarrels? It were scarce too strong to say this were a breach of the declaration your Grace made to the assembled Council of the Crusade."

"Neville," said the King, sternly interrupting him, "thy zeal makes thee presumptuous and unmannerly. Never did I promise to abstain from taking whatever means were most promising to discover the infamous author of the attack on my honour. Ere I had done so, I would have renounced my kingdom, my life. All my declarations were under this necessary and absolute qualification;—only, if Austria had stepped forth and owned the injury like a man, I proffered, for the sake of Christendom, to have forgiven HIM."

"But," continued the baron anxiously, "what hope that this juggling slave of Saladin will not palter with your Grace?"

"Peace, Neville," said the King; "thou thinkest thyself mighty wise, and art but a fool. Mind thou my charge touching this fellow; there is more in him than thy Westmoreland wit can fathom.—And thou, smart and silent, prepare to perform the feat thou hast promised, and, by the word of a King, thou shalt choose thine own recompense.—Lo, he writes again."

The mute accordingly wrote and delivered to the King, with the same form as before, another slip of paper, containing these words, "The will of the King is the law to his slave; nor doth it become him to ask guerdon for discharge of his devoir."

"GUERDON and DEVOIR!" said the King, interrupting himself as he read, and speaking to Neville in the English tongue with some emphasis on the words. "These Eastern people will profit by the Crusaders—they are acquiring the language of chivalry! And see, Neville, how discomposed that fellow looks! were it not for his colour he would blush. I should not think it strange if he understood what I say—they are perilous linguists."

"The poor slave cannot endure your Grace's eye," said Neville; "it is nothing more."

"Well, but," continued the King, striking the paper with his finger as he proceeded, "this bold scroll proceeds to say that our trusty mute is charged with a message from Saladin to the Lady Edith Plantagenet, and craves means and opportunity to deliver it. What thinkest thou of a request so modest—ha, Neville?"

"I cannot say," said Neville, "how such freedom may relish with your Grace; but the lease of the messenger's neck would be a short one, who should carry such a request to the Soldan on the part of your Majesty."

"Nay, I thank Heaven that I covet none of his sunburnt beauties," said Richard; "and for punishing this fellow for discharging his master's errand, and that when he has just saved my life—methinks it were something too summary. I'll tell thee, Neville, a secret; for although our sable and mute minister be present, he cannot, thou knowest, tell it over again, even if he should chance to understand us. I tell thee that, for this fortnight past, I have been under a strange spell, and I would I were disenchanted. There has no sooner any one done me good service, but, lo you, he cancels his interest in me by some deep injury; and, on the other hand, he who hath deserved death at my hands for some treachery or some insult, is sure to be the very person of all others who confers upon me some obligation that overbalances his demerits, and renders respite of his sentence a debt due from my honour. Thus, thou seest, I am deprived of the best part of my royal function, since I can neither punish men nor reward them. Until the influence of this disqualifying planet be passed away, I will say nothing concerning the request of this our sable attendant, save that it is an unusually bold one, and that his best chance of finding grace in our eyes will be to endeavour to make the discovery which he proposes to achieve in our behalf. Meanwhile, Neville, do thou look well to him, and let him be honourably cared for. And hark thee once more," he said, in a low whisper, "seek out yonder hermit of Engaddi, and bring him to me forthwith, be he saint or savage, madman or sane. Let me see him privately."

Neville retired from the royal tent, signing to the Nubian to follow him, and much surprised at what he had seen and heard, and especially at the unusual demeanour of the King. In general, no task was so easy as to discover Richard's immediate course of sentiment and feeling, though it might, in some cases, be difficult to calculate its duration; for no weathercock obeyed the changing wind more readily than the King his gusts of passion. But on the present occasion his manner seemed unusually constrained and mysterious; nor was it easy to guess whether displeasure or kindness predominated in his conduct towards his new dependant, or in the looks with which, from time to time, he regarded him. The ready service which the King had rendered to counteract the bad effects of the Nubian's wound might seem to balance the obligation conferred on him by the slave when he intercepted the blow of the assassin; but it seemed, as a much longer account remained to be arranged between them, that the Monarch was doubtful whether the settlement might leave him, upon the whole, debtor or creditor, and that, therefore, he assumed in the meantime a neutral demeanour, which might suit with either character. As for the Nubian, by whatever means he had

acquired the art of writing the European languages, the King remained convinced that the English tongue at least was unknown to him, since, having watched him closely during the last part of the interview, he conceived it impossible for any one understanding a conversation, of which he was himself the subject, to have so completely avoided the appearance of taking an interest in it.

CHAPTER XXII.

*Who's there!—Approach—'tis kindly done—
My learned physician and a friend.*

SIR EUSTACE GREY.

Our narrative retrogrades to a period shortly previous to the incidents last mentioned, when, as the reader must remember, the unfortunate Knight of the Leopard, bestowed upon the Arabian physician by King Richard, rather as a slave than in any other capacity, was exiled from the camp of the Crusaders, in whose ranks he had so often and so brilliantly distinguished himself. He followed his new master—for so he must now term the Hakim—to the Moorish tents which contained his retinue and his property, with the stupefied feelings of one who, fallen from the summit of a precipice, and escaping unexpectedly with life, is just able to drag himself from the fatal spot, but without the power of estimating the extent of the damage which he has sustained. Arrived at the tent, he threw himself, without speech of any kind, upon a couch of dressed buffalo's hide, which was pointed out to him by his conductor, and hiding his face betwixt his hands, groaned heavily, as if his heart were on the point of bursting. The physician heard him, as he was giving orders to his numerous domestics to prepare for their departure the next morning before daybreak, and, moved with compassion, interrupted his occupation to sit down, cross-legged, by the side of his couch, and administer comfort according to the Oriental manner.

"My friend," he said, "be of good comfort; for what saith the poet—it is better that a man should be the servant of a kind master than the slave of his own wild passions. Again, be of good courage; because, whereas Ysouf Ben Yagoube was sold to a king by his brethren, even to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, thy king hath, on the other hand, bestowed thee on one who will be to thee as a brother."

Sir Kenneth made an effort to thank the Hakim, but his heart was too full, and the indistinct sounds which accompanied his abortive attempts to reply induced the kind physician to desist from his premature endeavours at consolation. He left his new domestic, or guest, in quiet, to indulge his sorrows, and having commanded all the necessary preparations for their departure on the morning, sat down upon the carpet of the tent, and indulged himself in a moderate repast. After he had thus refreshed himself, similar viands were offered to the Scottish knight; but though the slaves let him understand that the next day would be far advanced ere they would halt for the purpose of refreshment, Sir Kenneth could not overcome the disgust which he felt against swallowing any nourishment, and could be prevailed upon to taste nothing, saving a draught of cold water.

He was awake long after his Arab host had performed his usual devotions and betaken himself to his repose; nor had sleep visited him at the hour of midnight, when a movement took place among the domestics, which, though attended with no speech, and very little noise, made him aware they were loading the camels and preparing for departure. In the course of these preparations, the last person who was disturbed, excepting the physician himself, was the knight of Scotland, whom, about three in the morning, a sort of major-domo, or master of the household, acquainted that he must arise. He did so, without further answer, and followed him into the moonlight, where stood the camels, most of which were already loaded, and one only remained kneeling until its burden should be completed.

A little apart from the camels stood a number of horses ready bridled and saddled, and the Hakim himself, coming forth, mounted on one of them with as much agility as the grave decorum of his character permitted, and directed another, which he pointed out, to be led towards Sir Kenneth. An English officer was in attendance, to escort them through the camp of the Crusaders, and to ensure their leaving it in safety; and all was ready for their departure. The pavilion which they had left was, in the meanwhile, struck with singular dispatch, and the tent-poles and coverings composed the burden of the last camel—when the physician, pronouncing solemnly the verse of the Koran, "God be our guide, and Mohammed our protector, in the desert as in the watered field," the whole cavalcade was instantly in motion.

In traversing the camp, they were challenged by the various sentinels who maintained guard there, and suffered to proceed in silence, or with a muttered curse upon their prophet, as they passed the post of some more zealous Crusader. At length the last barriers were left behind them, and the party formed themselves for the march with military precaution. Two or three horsemen advanced in front as a vanguard; one or two remained a bow-shot in the rear; and, wherever the ground admitted, others were detached to keep an outlook on the flanks. In this manner they proceeded onward; while Sir Kenneth, looking back on the moonlit camp, might now indeed seem banished, deprived at once of honour and of liberty, from the glimmering banners under which he had hoped to gain additional renown, and the tented dwellings of chivalry, of Christianity, and—of Edith Plantagenet.

The Hakim, who rode by his side, observed, in his usual tone of sententious consolation, "It is unwise to look back when the journey lieth forward;" and as he spoke, the horse of the knight made such a perilous stumble as threatened to add a practical moral to the tale.

The knight was compelled by this hint to give more attention to the management of his steed, which more than once required the assistance and support of the check-bridle, although, in other respects, nothing could be more easy at once, and active, than the ambling pace at which the animal (which was a mare) proceeded.

"The conditions of that horse," observed the sententious physician, "are like those of human fortune—seeing that, amidst his most swift and easy pace, the rider must guard himself against a fall, and that it is when prosperity is at the highest that our prudence should be awake and vigilant to prevent misfortune."

The overloaded appetite loathes even the honeycomb, and it is scarce a wonder that the knight, mortified and harassed with misfortunes and abasement, became something impatient of hearing his misery made, at every turn, the ground of proverbs and apothegms, however just and apposite.

"Methinks," he said, rather peevishly, "I wanted no additional illustration of the instability of fortune though I would thank thee, Sir Hakim, for the choice of a steed for me, would the jade but stumble so effectually as at once to break my neck and her own."

"My brother," answered the Arab sage, with imperturbable gravity, "thou speakest as one of the foolish. Thou sayest in thy heart that the sage should have given you, as his guest, the younger and better horse, and reserved the old one for himself. But know that the defects of the older steed may be compensated by the energies of the young rider, whereas the violence of the young horse requires to be moderated by the cold temper of the older."

So spoke the sage; but neither to this observation did Sir Kenneth return any answer which could lead to a continuance of their conversation, and the physician, wearied, perhaps, of administering comfort to one who would not be comforted, signed to one of his retinue.

"Hassan," he said, "hast thou nothing wherewith to beguile the way?"

Hassan, story-teller and poet by profession, spurred up, upon this summons, to exercise his calling. "Lord of the palace of life," he said, addressing the physician, "thou, before whom the angel Azrael spreadeth his wings for flight—thou, wiser than Solimaun Ben Daoud, upon whose signet was inscribed the REAL NAME which controls the spirits of the elements—forbid it, Heaven, that while thou travellest upon the track of benevolence, bearing healing and hope wherever thou comest, thine own course should be saddened for lack of the tale and of the song. Behold, while thy servant is at thy side, he will pour forth the treasures of his memory, as the fountain sendeth her stream beside the pathway, for the refreshment of him that walketh thereon."

After this exordium, Hassan uplifted his voice, and began a tale of love and magic, intermixed with feats of warlike achievement, and ornamented with abundant quotations from the Persian poets, with whose compositions the orator seemed familiar. The retinue of the physician, such excepted as were necessarily detained in attendance on the camels, thronged up to the narrator, and pressed as close as deference for their master permitted, to enjoy the delight which the inhabitants of the East have ever derived from this species of exhibition.

At another time, notwithstanding his imperfect knowledge of the language, Sir Kenneth might have been interested in the recitation, which, though dictated by a more extravagant imagination, and expressed in more inflated and metaphorical language, bore yet a strong resemblance to the romances of chivalry then so fashionable in Europe. But as matters stood with him, he was scarcely even sensible that a man in the centre of the cavalcade recited and sung, in a low tone, for nearly two hours, modulating his voice to the various moods of passion introduced into the tale, and receiving, in return, now low murmurs of applause, now muttered expressions of wonder, now sighs and tears, and sometimes, what it was far more difficult to extract from such an audience, a tribute of smiles, and even laughter.

During the recitation, the attention of the exile, however abstracted by his own deep sorrow, was occasionally awakened by the low wail of a dog, secured in a wicker enclosure suspended on one of the camels, which, as an experienced woodsman, he had no hesitation in recognizing to be that of his own faithful hound; and from the plaintive tone of the animal, he had no doubt that he was sensible of his master's vicinity, and, in his way, invoking his assistance for liberty and rescue.

"Alas! poor Roswal," he said, "thou callest for aid and sympathy upon one in stricter bondage than thou thyself art. I will not seem to heed thee or return thy affection, since it would serve but to load our parting with yet more bitterness."

Thus passed the hours of night and the space of dim hazy dawn which forms the twilight of a Syrian morning. But when the very first line of the sun's disk began to rise above the level horizon, and when the very first level ray shot glimmering in dew along the surface of the desert, which the travellers had now attained, the sonorous voice of El Hakim himself overpowered and cut short the narrative of the tale-teller, while he caused to resound along the sands the solemn summons, which the muezzins thunder at morning from the minaret of every mosque.

"To prayer—to prayer! God is the one God.—To prayer—to prayer! Mohammed is the Prophet of God.—To prayer—to prayer! Time is flying from you.—To prayer—to prayer! Judgment is drawing nigh to you."

In an instant each Moslem cast himself from his horse, turned his face towards Mecca, and performed with sand an imitation of those ablutions, which were elsewhere required to be made with water, while each individual, in brief but fervent ejaculations, recommended himself to the care, and his sins to the forgiveness, of God and the Prophet.

Even Sir Kenneth, whose reason at once and prejudices were offended by seeing his companions in that which he considered as an act of idolatry, could not help respecting the sincerity of their misguided zeal, and being stimulated by their fervour to apply supplications to Heaven in a purer form, wondering, meanwhile, what new-born feelings could teach him to accompany in prayer, though with varied invocation, those very Saracens, whose heathenish worship he had conceived a crime dishonourable to the land in which high miracles had been wrought, and where the day-star of redemption had arisen.

The act of devotion, however, though rendered in such strange society, burst purely from his natural feelings of religious duty, and had its usual effect in composing the spirits which had been long harassed by so rapid a succession of calamities. The sincere and earnest approach of the Christian to the throne of the Almighty teaches the best lesson of patience under affliction; since wherefore should we mock the Deity with supplications, when we insult him by murmuring under His decrees? or how, while our prayers have in every word admitted the vanity and nothingness of the things of time in comparison to those of eternity, should we hope to deceive the Searcher of Hearts, by permitting the world and worldly passions to reassume the reins even immediately after a solemn address to Heaven! But Sir Kenneth was not of these. He felt himself comforted and strengthened, and better prepared to execute or submit to whatever his destiny might call upon him to do or to suffer.

Meanwhile, the party of Saracens regained their saddles, and continued their route, and the tale-teller, Hassan, resumed the thread of his narrative; but it was no longer to the same attentive audience. A horseman, who had ascended some high ground on the right hand of the little column, had returned on a speedy gallop to El Hakim, and communicated with him. Four or five more cavaliers had then been dispatched, and the little band, which might consist of about twenty or thirty persons, began to follow them with their eyes, as men from whose gestures, and advance or retreat, they were to augur good or evil. Hassan, finding his audience inattentive, or being himself attracted by the dubious appearances on the flank, stinted in his song; and the march became silent, save when a camel-driver called out to his patient charge, or some anxious follower of the Hakim communicated with his next neighbour in a hurried and low whisper.

This suspense continued until they had rounded a ridge, composed of hillocks of sand, which concealed from their main body the object that had created this alarm among their scouts. Sir Kenneth could now see, at the distance of a mile or more, a dark object moving rapidly on the bosom of the desert, which his experienced eye recognized for a party of cavalry, much superior to their own in numbers, and, from the thick and frequent flashes which flung back the level beams of the rising sun, it was plain that these were Europeans in their complete panoply.

The anxious looks which the horsemen of El Hakim now cast upon their leader seemed to indicate deep apprehension; while he, with gravity as undisturbed as when he called his followers to prayer, detached two of his best-mounted cavaliers, with instructions to approach as closely as prudence permitted to these travellers of the desert, and observe more minutely their numbers, their character, and, if possible, their purpose. The approach of danger, or what was feared as such, was like a stimulating draught to one in apathy, and recalled Sir Kenneth to himself and his situation.

"What fear you from these Christian horsemen, for such they seem?" he said to the Hakim.

"Fear!" said El Hakim, repeating the word disdainfully. "The sage fears nothing but Heaven, but ever expects from wicked men the worst which they can do."

"They are Christians," said Sir Kenneth, "and it is the time of truce—why should you fear a breach of faith?"

"They are the priestly soldiers of the Temple," answered El Hakim, "whose vow limits them to know neither truce nor faith with the worshippers of Islam. May the Prophet blight them, both root, branch, and twig! Their peace is war, and their faith is falsehood. Other invaders of Palestine have their times and moods of courtesy. The lion Richard will spare when he has conquered, the eagle Philip will close his wing when he has stricken a prey, even the Austrian bear will sleep when he is gorged; but this horde of ever-hungry wolves know neither pause nor satiety in their rapine. Seest thou not that they are detaching a party from their main body, and that they take an eastern direction? Yon are their pages and squires, whom they train up in their accursed mysteries, and whom, as lighter mounted, they send to cut us off from our watering-place. But they will be disappointed. I know the war of the desert yet better than they."

He spoke a few words to his principal officer, and his whole demeanour and countenance was at once changed from the solemn repose of an Eastern sage accustomed more to contemplation than to action, into the prompt and proud expression of a gallant soldier whose energies are roused by the near approach of a danger which he at once foresees and despises.

To Sir Kenneth's eyes the approaching crisis had a different aspect, and when Adonbec said to him, "Thou must tarry close by my side," he answered solemnly in the negative.

"Yonder," he said, "are my comrades in arms—the men in whose society I have vowed to fight or fall. On their banner gleams the sign of our most blessed redemption—I cannot fly from the Cross in company with the Crescent."

"Fool!" said the Hakim; "their first action would be to do thee to death, were it only to conceal their breach of the truce."

"Of that I must take my chance," replied Sir Kenneth; "but I wear not the bonds of the infidels an instant longer than I can cast them from me."

"Then will I compel thee to follow me," said El Hakim.

"Compel!" answered Sir Kenneth angrily. "Wert thou not my benefactor, or one who has showed will to be such, and were it not that it is to thy confidence I owe the freedom of these hands, which thou mightst have loaded with fetters, I would show thee that, unarmed as I am, compulsion would be no easy task."

"Enough, enough," replied the Arabian physician, "we lose time even when it is becoming precious."

So saying, he threw his arm aloft, and uttered a loud and shrill cry, as a signal to his retinue, who instantly dispersed themselves on the face of the desert, in as many different directions as a chaplet of beads when the string is broken. Sir Kenneth had no time to note what ensued; for, at the same instant, the Hakim seized the rein of his steed, and putting his own to its mettle, both sprung forth at once with the suddenness of light, and at a pitch of velocity which almost deprived the Scottish knight of the power of respiration, and left him absolutely incapable, had he been desirous, to have checked the career of his guide. Practised as Sir

Kenneth was in horsemanship from his earliest youth, the speediest horse he had ever mounted was a tortoise in comparison to those of the Arabian sage. They spurned the sand from behind them; they seemed to devour the desert before them; miles flew away with minutes—and yet their strength seemed unabated, and their respiration as free as when they first started upon the wonderful race. The motion, too, as easy as it was swift, seemed more like flying through the air than riding on the earth, and was attended with no unpleasant sensation, save the awe naturally felt by one who is moving at such astonishing speed, and the difficulty of breathing occasioned by their passing through the air so rapidly.

It was not until after an hour of this portentous motion, and when all human pursuit was far, far behind, that the Hakim at length relaxed his speed, and, slackening the pace of the horses into a hand-gallop, began, in a voice as composed and even as if he had been walking for the last hour, a descant upon the excellence of his coursers to the Scot, who, breathless, half blind, half deaf, and altogether giddy; from the rapidity of this singular ride, hardly comprehended the words which flowed so freely from his companion.

"These horses," he said, "are of the breed called the Winged, equal in speed to aught excepting the Borak of the Prophet. They are fed on the golden barley of Yemen, mixed with spices and with a small portion of dried sheep's flesh. Kings have given provinces to possess them, and their age is active as their youth. Thou, Nazarene, art the first, save a true believer, that ever had beneath his loins one of this noble race, a gift of the Prophet himself to the blessed Ali, his kinsman and lieutenant, well called the Lion of God. Time lays his touch so lightly on these generous steeds, that the mare on which thou now sittest has seen five times five years pass over her, yet retains her pristine speed and vigour, only that in the career the support of a bridle, managed by a hand more experienced than thine, hath now become necessary. May the Prophet be blessed, who hath bestowed on the true believers the means of advance and retreat, which causeth their iron-clothed enemies to be worn out with their own ponderous weight! How the horses of yonder dog Templars must have snorted and blown, when they had toiled fetlock-deep in the desert for one-twentieth part of the space which these brave steeds have left behind them, without one thick pant, or a drop of moisture upon their sleek and velvet coats!"

The Scottish knight, who had now begun to recover his breath and powers of attention, could not help acknowledging in his heart the advantage possessed by these Eastern warriors in a race of animals, alike proper for advance or retreat, and so admirably adapted to the level and sandy deserts of Arabia and Syria. But he did not choose to augment the pride of the Moslem by acquiescing in his proud claim of superiority, and therefore suffered the conversation to drop, and, looking around him, could now, at the more moderate pace at which they moved, distinguish that he was in a country not unknown to him.

The blighted borders and sullen waters of the Dead Sea, the ragged and precipitous chain of mountains arising on the left, the two or three palms clustered together, forming the single green speck on the bosom of the waste wilderness—objects which, once seen, were scarcely to be forgotten—showed to Sir Kenneth that they were approaching the fountain called the Diamond of the Desert, which had been the scene of his interview on a former occasion with the Saracen Emir Sheerkohf, or Ilderim. In a few minutes they checked their horses beside the spring, and the Hakim invited Sir Kenneth to descend from horseback and repose himself as in a place of safety. They unbridled their steeds, El Hakim observing that further care of them was unnecessary, since they would be speedily joined by some of the best mounted among his slaves, who would do what further was needful.

"Meantime," he said, spreading some food on the grass, "eat and drink, and be not discouraged. Fortune may raise up or abase the ordinary mortal, but the sage and the soldier should have minds beyond her control."

The Scottish knight endeavoured to testify his thanks by showing himself docile; but though he strove to eat out of complaisance, the singular contrast between his present situation and that which he had occupied on the same spot when the envoy of princes and the victor in combat, came like a cloud over his mind, and fasting, lassitude, and fatigue oppressed his bodily powers. El Hakim examined his hurried pulse, his red and inflamed eye, his heated hand, and his shortened respiration.

"The mind," he said, "grows wise by watching, but her sister the body, of coarser materials, needs the support of repose. Thou must sleep; and that thou mayest do so to refreshment, thou must take a draught mingled with this elixir."

He drew from his bosom a small crystal vial, cased in silver filigree-work, and dropped into a little golden drinking-cup a small portion of a dark-coloured fluid.

"This," he said, "is one of those productions which Allah hath sent on earth for a blessing, though man's weakness and wickedness have sometimes converted it into a curse. It is powerful as the wine-cup of the Nazarene to drop the curtain on the sleepless eye, and to relieve the burden of the overloaded bosom; but when applied to the purposes of indulgence and debauchery, it rends the nerves, destroys the strength, weakens the intellect, and undermines life. But fear not thou to use its virtues in the time of need, for the wise man warms him by the same firebrand with which the madman burneth the tent." [Some preparation of opium seems to be intimated.]

"I have seen too much of thy skill, sage Hakim," said Sir Kenneth, "to debate thine hest;" and swallowed the narcotic, mingled as it was with some water from the spring, then wrapped him in the haik, or Arab cloak, which had been fastened to his saddle-pommel, and, according to the directions of the physician, stretched himself at ease in the shade to await the promised repose. Sleep came not at first, but in her stead a train of pleasing yet not rousing or awakening sensations. A state ensued in which, still conscious of his own identity and his own condition, the knight felt enabled to consider them not only without alarm and sorrow, but as composedly as he might have viewed the story of his misfortunes acted upon a stage—or rather as a disembodied spirit might regard the transactions of its past existence. From this state of repose, amounting almost to apathy respecting the past, his thoughts were carried forward to the future, which, in spite of all that existed to overcloud the prospect, glittered with such hues as, under much happier auspices, his unstimulated imagination had not been able to produce, even in its most exalted state. Liberty, fame, successful love, appeared to be the certain and not very distant prospect of the enslaved exile, the dishonoured knight, even of the despairing lover who had placed his hopes of happiness so far beyond the prospect of chance, in her wildest possibilities, serving to countenance his wishes. Gradually as the intellectual sight became overclouded, these gay visions became obscure, like the dying hues of sunset, until they were at last lost in total oblivion; and Sir Kenneth lay extended at the feet of El Hakim, to all appearance, but for his deep respiration, as inanimate a corpse as if life had actually departed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*'Mid these wild scenes Enchantment waves her hand,
To change the face of the mysterious land;
Till the bewildering scenes around us seem
The Vain productions of a feverish dream.
ASTOLPHO, A ROMANCE.*

When the Knight of the Leopard awoke from his long and profound repose, he found himself in circumstances so different from those in which he had lain down to sleep, that he doubted whether he was not still dreaming, or whether the scene had not been changed by magic. Instead of the damp grass, he lay on a couch of more than Oriental luxury; and some kind hands had, during his repose, stripped him of the cassock of chamois which he wore under his armour, and substituted a night-dress of the finest linen and a loose gown of silk. He had been canopied only by the palm-trees of the desert, but now he lay beneath a silken pavilion, which blazed with the richest colours of the Chinese loom, while a slight curtain of gauze, displayed around his couch, was calculated to protect his repose from the insects, to which he had, ever since his arrival in these climates, been a constant and passive prey. He looked around, as if to convince himself that he was actually awake; and all that fell beneath his eye partook of the splendour of his dormitory. A portable bath of cedar, lined with silver, was ready for use, and steamed with the odours which had been used in preparing it. On a small stand of ebony beside the couch stood a silver vase, containing sherbet of the most exquisite quality, cold as snow, and which the thirst that followed the use of the strong narcotic rendered peculiarly delicious. Still further to dispel the dregs of

intoxication which it had left behind, the knight resolved to use the bath, and experienced in doing so a delightful refreshment. Having dried himself with napkins of the Indian wool, he would willingly have resumed his own coarse garments, that he might go forth to see whether the world was as much changed without as within the place of his repose. These, however, were nowhere to be seen, but in their place he found a Saracen dress of rich materials, with sabre and poniard, and all befitting an emir of distinction. He was able to suggest no motive to himself for this exuberance of care, excepting a suspicion that these attentions were intended to shake him in his religious profession—as indeed it was well known that the high esteem of the European knowledge and courage made the Soldan unbounded in his gifts to those who, having become his prisoners, had been induced to take the turban. Sir Kenneth, therefore, crossing himself devoutly, resolved to set all such snares at defiance; and that he might do so the more firmly, conscientiously determined to avail himself as moderately as possible of the attentions and luxuries thus liberally heaped upon him. Still, however, he felt his head oppressed and sleepy; and aware, too, that his undress was not fit for appearing abroad, he reclined upon the couch, and was again locked in the arms of slumber.

But this time his rest was not unbroken, for he was awakened by the voice of the physician at the door of the tent, inquiring after his health, and whether he had rested sufficiently. "May I enter your tent?" he concluded, "for the curtain is drawn before the entrance."

"The master," replied Sir Kenneth, determined to show that he was not surprised into forgetfulness of his own condition, "need demand no permission to enter the tent of the slave."

"But if I come not as a master?" said El Hakim, still without entering.

"The physician," answered the knight, "hath free access to the bedside of his patient."

"Neither come I now as a physician," replied El Hakim; "and therefore I still request permission, ere I come under the covering of thy tent."

"Whoever comes as a friend," said Sir Kenneth, "and such thou hast hitherto shown thyself to me, the habitation of the friend is ever open to him."

"Yet once again," said the Eastern sage, after the periphrastical manner of his countrymen, "supposing that I come not as a friend?"

"Come as thou wilt," said the Scottish knight, somewhat impatient of this circumlocution; "be what thou wilt—thou knowest well it is neither in my power nor my inclination to refuse thee entrance."

"I come, then," said El Hakim, "as your ancient foe, but a fair and a generous one."

He entered as he spoke; and when he stood before the bedside of Sir Kenneth, the voice continued to be that of Adonbec, the Arabian physician, but the form, dress, and features were those of Ilderim of Kurdistan, called Sheerkohf. Sir Kenneth gazed upon him as if he expected the vision to depart, like something created by his imagination.

"Doth it so surprise thee," said Ilderim, "and thou an approved warrior, to see that a soldier knows somewhat of the art of healing? I say to thee, Nazarene, that an accomplished cavalier should know how to dress his steed, as well as how to ride him; how to forge his sword upon the stithy, as well as how to use it in battle; how to burnish his arms, as well as how to wear them; and, above all, how to cure wounds, as well as how to inflict them."

As he spoke, the Christian knight repeatedly shut his eyes, and while they remained closed, the idea of the Hakim, with his long, flowing dark robes, high Tartar cap, and grave gestures was present to his imagination; but so soon as he opened them, the graceful and richly-gemmed turban, the light hauberk of steel rings entwined with silver, which glanced brilliantly as it obeyed every inflection of the body, the features freed from their formal expression, less swarthy, and no longer shadowed by the mass of hair (now limited to a well-trimmed beard), announced the soldier and not the sage.

"Art thou still so much surprised," said the Emir, "and hast thou walked in the world with such little observance, as to wonder that men are not always what they seem? Thou thyself—art thou what thou seemest?"

"No, by Saint Andrew!" exclaimed the knight; "for to the whole Christian camp I seem a traitor, and I know myself to be a true though an erring man."

"Even so I judged thee," said Ilderim; "and as we had eaten salt together, I deemed myself bound to rescue thee from death and contumely. But wherefore lie you still on your couch, since the sun is high in the heavens? or are the vestments which my sumpter-camels have afforded unworthy of your wearing?"

"Not unworthy, surely, but unfitting for it," replied the Scot. "Give me the dress of a slave, noble Ilderim, and I will don it with pleasure; but I cannot brook to wear the habit of the free Eastern warrior with the turban of the Moslem."

"Nazarene," answered the Emir, "thy nation so easily entertain suspicion that it may well render themselves suspected. Have I not told thee that Saladin desires no converts saving those whom the holy Prophet shall dispose to submit themselves to his law? violence and bribery are alike alien to his plan for extending the true faith. Harken to me, my brother. When the blind man was miraculously restored to sight, the scales dropped from his eyes at the Divine pleasure. Think'st thou that any earthly leech could have removed them? No. Such mediciner might have tormented the patient with his instruments, or perhaps soothed him with his balsams and cordials, but dark as he was must the darkened man have remained; and it is even so with the blindness of the understanding. If there be those among the Franks who, for the sake of worldly lucre, have assumed the turban of the Prophet, and followed the laws of Islam, with their own consciences be the blame. Themselves sought out the bait; it was not flung to them by the Soldan. And when they shall hereafter be sentenced, as hypocrites, to the lowest gulf of hell, below Christian and Jew, magician and idolater, and condemned to eat the fruit of the tree Yacoun, which is the heads of demons, to themselves, not to the Soldan, shall their guilt and their punishment be attributed. Wherefore wear, without doubt or scruple, the vesture prepared for you, since, if you proceed to the camp of Saladin, your own native dress will expose you to troublesome observation, and perhaps to insult."

"If I go to the camp of Saladin?" said Sir Kenneth, repeating the words of the Emir; "alas! am I a free agent, and rather must I NOT go wherever your pleasure carries me?"

"Thine own will may guide thine own motions," said the Emir, "as freely as the wind which moveth the dust of the desert in what direction it chooseth. The noble enemy who met and well-nigh mastered my sword cannot become my slave like him who has crouched beneath it. If wealth and power would tempt thee to join our people, I could ensure thy possessing them; but the man who refused the favours of the Soldan when the axe was at his head, will not, I fear, now accept them, when I tell him he has his free choice."

"Complete your generosity, noble Emir," said Sir Kenneth, "by forbearing to show me a mode of requital which conscience forbids me to comply with. Permit me rather to express, as bound in courtesy, my gratitude for this most chivalrous bounty, this undeserved generosity."

"Say not undeserved," replied the Emir Ilderim. "Was it not through thy conversation, and thy account of the beauties which grace the court of the Melech Ric, that I ventured me thither in disguise, and thereby procured a sight the most blessed that I have ever enjoyed—that I ever shall enjoy, until the glories of Paradise beam on my eyes?"

"I understand you not," said Sir Kenneth, colouring alternately, and turning pale, as one who felt that the conversation was taking a tone of the most painful delicacy.

"Not understand me!" exclaimed the Emir. "If the sight I saw in the tent of King Richard escaped thine observation, I will account it duller than the edge of a buffoon's wooden falchion. True, thou wert under sentence of death at the time; but, in my case, had my head been dropping from the trunk, the last strained glances of my eyeballs had distinguished with delight such a vision of loveliness, and the head would have rolled itself towards the incomparable houris, to kiss with its quivering lips the hem of their vestments. Yonder royalty of England, who for her superior loveliness deserves to be Queen of the universe—what tenderness in her blue eye, what lustre in her tresses of dishevelled gold! By the tomb of the Prophet, I scarce think that the houri who shall present to me the diamond cup of immortality will deserve so warm a caress!"

"Saracen," said Sir Kenneth sternly, "thou speakest of the wife of Richard of England, of whom men think not and speak not as a woman to be won, but as a Queen to be revered."

"I cry you mercy," said the Saracen. "I had forgotten your superstitious veneration for the sex, which you consider rather fit to be wondered at and worshipped than wooed and possessed. I warrant, since thou exactest such profound respect to yonder tender piece of frailty, whose every motion, step, and look bespeaks her very woman, less than absolute adoration must not be yielded to her of the dark tresses and nobly speaking eye. SHE indeed, I will allow, hath in her noble port

and majestic mien something at once pure and firm; yet even she, when pressed by opportunity and a forward lover, would, I warrant thee, thank him in her heart rather for treating her as a mortal than as a goddess."

"Respect the kinswoman of Coeur de Lion!" said Sir Kenneth, in a tone of unrepressed anger.

"Respect her!" answered the Emir in scorn; "by the Caaba, and if I do, it shall be rather as the bride of Saladin."

"The infidel Soldan is unworthy to salute even a spot that has been pressed by the foot of Edith Plantagenet!" exclaimed the Christian, springing from his couch.

"Ha! what said the Giaour?" exclaimed the Emir, laying his hand on his poniard hilt, while his forehead glowed like glancing copper, and the muscles of his lips and cheeks wrought till each curl of his beard seemed to twist and screw itself, as if alive with instinctive wrath. But the Scottish knight, who had stood the lion-anger of Richard, was unappalled at the tigerlike mood of the chafed Saracen.

"What I have said," continued Sir Kenneth, with folded arms and dauntless look, "I would, were my hands loose, maintain on foot or horseback against all mortals; and would hold it not the most memorable deed of my life to support it with my good broadsword against a score of these sickles and bodkins," pointing at the curved sabre and small poniard of the Emir.

The Saracen recovered his composure as the Christian spoke, so far as to withdraw his hand from his weapon, as if the motion had been without meaning, but still continued in deep ire.

"By the sword of the Prophet," he said, "which is the key both of heaven and hell, he little values his own life, brother, who uses the language thou dost! Believe me, that were thine hands loose, as thou term'st it, one single true believer would find them so much to do that thou wouldst soon wish them fettered again in manacles of iron."

"Sooner would I wish them hewn off by the shoulder-blades!" replied Sir Kenneth.

"Well. Thy hands are bound at present," said the Saracen, in a more amicable tone—"bound by thine own gentle sense of courtesy; nor have I any present purpose of setting them at liberty. We have proved each other's strength and courage ere now, and we may again meet in a fair field—and shame befall him who shall be the first to part from his foeman! But now we are friends, and I look for aid from thee rather than hard terms or defiance."

"We ARE friends," repeated the knight; and there was a pause, during which the fiery Saracen paced the tent, like the lion, who, after violent irritation, is said to take that method of cooling the distemperature of his blood, ere he stretches himself to repose in his den. The colder European remained unaltered in posture and aspect; yet he, doubtless, was also engaged in subduing the angry feelings which had been so unexpectedly awakened.

"Let us reason of this calmly," said the Saracen. "I am a physician, as thou knowest, and it is written that he who would have his wound cured must not shrink when the leech probes and tests it. Seest thou, I am about to lay my finger on the sore. Thou lovest this kinswoman of the Melech Ric. Unfold the veil that shrouds thy thoughts—or unfold it not if thou wilt, for mine eyes see through its coverings."

"I LOVED her," answered Sir Kenneth, after a pause, "as a man loves Heaven's grace, and sued for her favour like a sinner for Heaven's pardon."

"And you love her no longer?" said the Saracen.

"Alas," answered Sir Kenneth, "I am no longer worthy to love her. I pray thee cease this discourse—thy words are poniards to me."

"Pardon me but a moment," continued Ilderim. "When thou, a poor and obscure soldier, didst so boldly and so highly fix thine affection, tell me, hadst thou good hope of its issue?"

"Love exists not without hope," replied the knight; "but mine was as nearly allied to despair as that of the sailor swimming for his life, who, as he surmounts billow after billow, catches by intervals some gleam of the distant beacon, which shows him there is land in sight, though his sinking heart and wearied limbs assure him that he shall never reach it."

"And now," said Ilderim, "these hopes are sunk—that solitary light is quenched for ever?"

"For ever," answered Sir Kenneth, in the tone of an echo from the bosom of a ruined sepulchre.

"Methinks," said the Saracen, "if all thou lackest were some such distant meteoric glimpse of happiness as thou hadst formerly, thy beacon-light might be rekindled, thy hope fished up from the ocean in which it has sunk, and thou thyself, good knight, restored to the exercise and amusement of nourishing thy fantastic fashion upon a diet as unsubstantial as moonlight; for, if thou stood'st tomorrow fair in reputation as ever thou wert, she whom thou lovest will not be less the daughter of princes and the elected bride of Saladin."

"I would it so stood," said the Scot, "and if I did not—"

He stopped short, like a man who is afraid of boasting under circumstances which did not permit his being put to the test. The Saracen smiled as he concluded the sentence.

"Thou wouldst challenge the Soldan to single combat?" said he.

"And if I did," said Sir Kenneth haughtily, "Saladin's would neither be the first nor the best turban that I have couched lance at."

"Ay, but methinks the Soldan might regard it as too unequal a mode of perilling the chance of a royal bride and the event of a great war," said the Emir.

"He may be met with in the front of battle," said the knight, his eyes gleaming with the ideas which such a thought inspired.

"He has been ever found there," said Ilderim; "nor is it his wont to turn his horse's head from any brave encounter. But it was not of the Soldan that I meant to speak. In a word, if it will content thee to be placed in such reputation as may be attained by detection of the thief who stole the Banner of England, I can put thee in a fair way of achieving this task—that is, if thou wilt be governed; for what says Lokman, 'If the child would walk, the nurse must lead him; if the ignorant would understand, the wise must instruct.'"

"And thou art wise, Ilderim," said the Scot—"wise though a Saracen, and generous though an infidel. I have witnessed that thou art both. Take, then, the guidance of this matter; and so thou ask nothing of me contrary to my loyalty and my Christian faith, I, will obey thee punctually. Do what thou hast said, and take my life when it is accomplished."

"Listen thou to me, then," said the Saracen. "Thy noble hound is now recovered, by the blessing of that divine medicine which healeth man and beast; and by his sagacity shall those who assailed him be discovered."

"Ha!" said the knight, "methinks I comprehend thee. I was dull not to think of this!"

"But tell me," added the Emir, "hast thou any followers or retainers in the camp by whom the animal may be known?"

"I dismissed," said Sir Kenneth, "my old attendant, thy patient, with a varlet that waited on him, at the time when I expected to suffer death, giving him letters for my friends in Scotland; there are none other to whom the dog is familiar. But then my own person is well known—my very speech will betray me, in a camp where I have played no mean part for many months."

"Both he and thou shalt be disguised, so as to escape even close examination. I tell thee," said the Saracen, "that not thy brother in arms—not thy brother in blood—shall discover thee, if thou be guided by my counsels. Thou hast seen me do matters more difficult—he that can call the dying from the darkness of the shadow of death can easily cast a mist before the eyes of the living. But mark me: there is still the condition annexed to this service—that thou deliver a letter of Saladin to the niece of the Melech Ric, whose name is as difficult to our Eastern tongue and lips, as her beauty is delightful to our eyes."

Sir Kenneth paused before he answered, and the Saracen observing his hesitation, demanded of him, "if he feared to undertake this message?"

"Not if there were death in the execution," said Sir Kenneth. "I do but pause to consider whether it consists with my honour to bear the letter of the Soldan, or with that of the Lady Edith to receive it from a heathen prince."

"By the head of Mohammed, and by the honour of a soldier—by the tomb at Mecca, and by the soul of my father," said the Emir, "I swear to thee that the letter is written in all honour and respect. The song of the nightingale will sooner blight the rose-bower she loves than will the words of the Soldan offend the ears of the lovely kinswoman of England."

"Then," said the knight, "I will bear the Soldan's letter faithfully, as if I were his born vassal—understanding, that beyond this simple act of service, which I will render with fidelity, from me of all men he can least expect mediation or advice in this his strange love-suit."

"Saladin is noble," answered the Emir, "and will not spur a generous horse to a leap which he cannot achieve. Come with me to my tent," he added, "and thou shalt be presently equipped with a disguise as unsearchable as midnight, so thou mayest walk the camp of the Nazarenes as if thou hadst on thy finger the signet of Giaougi." [Perhaps the same with Gyges.]

CHAPTER XXIV

A grain of dust

Soiling our cup, will make our sense reject

Fastidiously the draught which we did thirst for;

A rusted nail, placed near the faithful compass,

Will sway it from the truth, and wreck the argosy.

Even this small cause of anger and disgust

Will break the bonds of amity 'mongst princes,

And wreck their noblest purposes.

THE CRUSADE.

The reader can now have little doubt who the Ethiopian slave really was, with what purpose he had sought Richard's camp, and wherefore and with what hope he now stood close to the person of that Monarch, as, surrounded by his valiant peers of England and Normandy, Coeur de Lion stood on the summit of Saint George's Mount, with the Banner of England by his side, borne by the most goodly person in the army, being his own natural brother, William with the Long Sword, Earl of Salisbury, the offspring of Henry the Second's amour with the celebrated Rosamond of Woodstock.

From several expressions in the King's conversation with Neville on the preceding day, the Nubian was left in anxious doubt whether his disguise had not been penetrated, especially as that the King seemed to be aware in what manner the agency of the dog was expected to discover the thief who stole the banner, although the circumstance of such an animal's having been wounded on the occasion had been scarce mentioned in Richard's presence. Nevertheless, as the King continued to treat him in no other manner than his exterior required, the Nubian remained uncertain whether he was or was not discovered, and determined not to throw his disguise aside voluntarily.

Meanwhile, the powers of the various Crusading princes, arrayed under their royal and princely leaders, swept in long order around the base of the little mound; and as those of each different country passed by, their commanders advanced a step or two up the hill, and made a signal of courtesy to Richard and to the Standard of England, "in sign of regard and amity," as the protocol of the ceremony heedfully expressed it, "not of subjection or vassalage." The spiritual dignitaries, who in those days veiled not their bonnets to created being, bestowed on the King and his symbol of command their blessing instead of rendering obeisance.

Thus the long files marched on, and, diminished as they were by so many causes, appeared still an iron host, to whom the conquest of Palestine might seem an easy task. The soldiers, inspired by the consciousness of united strength, sat erect in their steel saddles; while it seemed that the trumpets sounded more cheerfully shrill, and the steeds, refreshed by rest and provender, chafed on the bit, and trod the ground more proudly. On they passed, troop after troop, banners waving, spears glancing, plumes dancing, in long perspective—a host composed of different nations, complexions, languages, arms, and appearances, but all fired, for the time, with the holy yet romantic purpose of rescuing the distressed daughter of Zion from her thralldom, and redeeming the sacred earth, which more than mortal had trodden, from the yoke of the unbelieving pagan. And it must be owned that if, in other circumstances, the species of courtesy rendered to the King of England by so many warriors, from whom he claimed no natural allegiance, had in it something that might have been thought humiliating, yet the nature and cause of the war was so fitted to his pre-eminently chivalrous character and renowned feats in arms, that claims which might elsewhere have been urged were there forgotten, and the brave did willing homage to the bravest, in an expedition where the most undaunted and energetic courage was necessary to success.

The good King was seated on horseback about half way up the mount, a morion on his head, surmounted by a crown, which left his manly features exposed to public view, as, with cool and considerate eye, he perused each rank as it passed him, and returned the salutation of the leaders. His tunic was of sky-coloured velvet, covered with plates of silver, and his hose of crimson silk, slashed with cloth of gold. By his side stood the seeming Ethiopian slave, holding the noble dog in a leash, such as was used in woodcraft. It was a circumstance which attracted no notice, for many of the princes of the Crusade had introduced black slaves into their household, in imitation of the barbarous splendour of the Saracens. Over the King's head streamed the large folds of the banner, and, as he looked to it from time to time, he seemed to regard a ceremony, indifferent to himself personally, as important, when considered as atoning an indignity offered to the kingdom which he ruled. In the background, and on the very summit of the Mount, a wooden turret, erected for the occasion, held the Queen Berengaria and the principal ladies of the Court. To this the King looked from time to time; and then ever and anon his eyes were turned on the Nubian and the dog, but only when such leaders approached, as, from circumstances of previous ill-will, he suspected of being accessory to the theft of the standard, or whom he judged capable of a crime so mean.

Thus, he did not look in that direction when Philip Augustus of France approached at the head of his splendid troops of Gallic chivalry—nay, he anticipated the motions of the French King, by descending the Mount as the latter came up the ascent, so that they met in the middle space, and blended their greetings so gracefully that it appeared they met in fraternal equality. The sight of the two greatest princes in Europe, in rank at once and power, thus publicly avowing their concord, called forth bursts of thundering acclaim from the Crusading host at many miles distance, and made the roving Arab scouts of the desert alarm the camp of Saladin with intelligence that the army of the Christians was in motion. Yet who but the King of kings can read the hearts of monarchs? Under this smooth show of courtesy, Richard nourished displeasure and suspicion against Philip, and Philip meditated withdrawing himself and his host from the army of the Cross, and leaving Richard to accomplish or fail in the enterprise with his own unassisted forces.

Richard's demeanour was different when the dark-armed knights and squires of the Temple chivalry approached—men with countenances bronzed to Asiatic blackness by the suns of Palestine, and the admirable state of whose horses and appointments far surpassed even that of the choicest troops of France and England. The King cast a hasty glance aside; but the Nubian stood quiet, and his trusty dog sat at his feet, watching, with a sagacious yet pleased look, the ranks which now passed before them. The King's look turned again on the chivalrous Templars, as the Grand Master, availing himself of his mingled character, bestowed his benediction on Richard as a priest, instead of doing him reverence as a military leader.

"The misproud and amphibious caitiff puts the monk upon me," said Richard to the Earl of Salisbury. "But, Longsword, we will let it pass. A punctilio must not lose Christendom the services of these experienced lances, because their victories have rendered them overweening. Lo you, here comes our valiant adversary, the Duke of Austria. Mark his manner and bearing, Longsword—and thou, Nubian, let the hound have full view of him. By Heaven, he brings his buffoons along with him!"

In fact, whether from habit, or, which is more likely, to intimate contempt of the ceremonial he was about to comply with, Leopold was attended by his SPRUCH-SPRECHER and his jester; and as he advanced towards Richard, he whistled in what he wished to be considered as an indifferent manner, though his heavy features evinced the sullenness, mixed with the fear, with which a truant schoolboy may be seen to approach his master. As the reluctant dignitary made, with discomposed and sulky look, the obeisance required, the SPRUCH-SPRECHER shook his baton, and proclaimed, like a herald, that, in what he was now doing,

the Archduke of Austria was not to be held derogating from the rank and privileges of a sovereign prince; to which the jester answered with a sonorous AMEN, which provoked much laughter among the bystanders.

King Richard looked more than once at the Nubian and his dog; but the former moved not, nor did the latter strain at the leash, so that Richard said to the slave with some scorn, "Thy success in this enterprise, my sable friend, even though thou hast brought thy hound's sagacity to back thine own, will not, I fear, place thee high in the rank of wizards, or much augment thy merits towards our person."

The Nubian answered, as usual, only by a lowly obeisance.

Meantime the troops of the Marquis of Montserrat next passed in order before the King of England. That powerful and wily baron, to make the greater display of his forces, had divided them into two bodies. At the head of the first, consisting of his vassals and followers, and levied from his Syrian possessions, came his brother Enguerrand; and he himself followed, leading on a gallant band of twelve hundred Stradiots, a kind of light cavalry raised by the Venetians in their Dalmatian possessions, and of which they had entrusted the command to the Marquis, with whom the republic had many bonds of connection. These Stradiots were clothed in a fashion partly European, but partaking chiefly of the Eastern fashion. They wore, indeed, short hauberks, but had over them party-coloured tunics of rich stuffs, with large wide pantaloons and half-boots. On their heads were straight upright caps, similar to those of the Greeks; and they carried small round targets, bows and arrows, scimitars, and poniards. They were mounted on horses carefully selected, and well maintained at the expense of the State of Venice; their saddles and appointments resembled those of the Turks, and they rode in the same manner, with short stirrups and upon a high seat. These troops were of great use in skirmishing with the Arabs, though unable to engage in close combat, like the iron-sheathed men-at-arms of Western and Northern Europe.

Before this goodly band came Conrade, in the same garb with the Stradiots, but of such rich stuff that he seemed to blaze with gold and silver, and the milk-white plume fastened in his cap by a clasp of diamonds seemed tall enough to sweep the clouds. The noble steed which he reined bounded and caracoled, and displayed his spirit and agility in a manner which might have troubled a less admirable horseman than the Marquis, who gracefully ruled him with the one hand, while the other displayed the baton, whose predominancy over the ranks which he led seemed equally absolute. Yet his authority over the Stradiots was more in show than in substance; for there paced beside him, on an ambling palfrey of soberest mood, a little old man, dressed entirely in black, without beard or moustaches, and having an appearance altogether mean and insignificant when compared with the blaze of splendour around him. But this mean-looking old man was one of those deputies whom the Venetian government sent into camps to overlook the conduct of the generals to whom the leading was consigned, and to maintain that jealous system of espial and control which had long distinguished the policy of the republic.

Conrade, who, by cultivating Richard's humour, had attained a certain degree of favour with him, no sooner was come within his ken than the King of England descended a step or two to meet him, exclaiming, at the same time, "Ha, Lord Marquis, thou at the head of the fleet Stradiots, and thy black shadow attending thee as usual, whether the sun shines or not! May not one ask thee whether the rule of the troops remains with the shadow or the substance?"

Conrade was commencing his reply with a smile, when Roswal, the noble hound, uttering a furious and savage yell, sprung forward. The Nubian, at the same time, slipped the leash, and the hound, rushing on, leapt upon Conrade's noble charger, and, seizing the Marquis by the throat, pulled him down from the saddle. The plumed rider lay rolling on the sand, and the frightened horse fled in wild career through the camp.

"Thy hound hath pulled down the right quarry, I warrant him," said the King to the Nubian, "and I vow to Saint George he is a stag of ten tynes! Pluck the dog off; lest he throttle him."

The Ethiopian, accordingly, though not without difficulty, disengaged the dog from Conrade, and fastened him up, still highly excited, and struggling in the leash. Meanwhile many crowded to the spot, especially followers of Conrade and officers of the Stradiots, who, as they saw their leader lie gazing wildly on the sky, raised him up amid a tumultuary cry of "Cut the slave and his hound to pieces!"

But the voice of Richard, loud and sonorous, was heard clear above all other exclamations. "He dies the death who injures the hound! He hath but done his duty, after the sagacity with which God and nature have endowed the brave animal.—Stand forward for a false traitor, thou Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat! I impeach thee of treason."

Several of the Syrian leaders had now come up, and Conrade—vexation, and shame, and confusion struggling with passion in his manner and voice—exclaimed, "What means this? With what am I charged? Why this base usage and these reproachful terms? Is this the league of concord which England renewed but so lately?"

"Are the Princes of the Crusade turned hares or deers in the eyes of King Richard that he should slip hounds on them?" said the sepulchral voice of the Grand Master of the Templars.

"It must be some singular accident—some fatal mistake," said Philip of France, who rode up at the same moment.

"Some deceit of the Enemy," said the Archbishop of Tyre.

"A stratagem of the Saracens," cried Henry of Champagne. "It were well to hang up the dog, and put the slave to the torture."

"Let no man lay hand upon them," said Richard, "as he loves his own life! Conrade, stand forth, if thou darest, and deny the accusation which this mute animal hath in his noble instinct brought against thee, of injury done to him, and foul scorn to England!"

"I never touched the banner," said Conrade hastily.

"Thy words betray thee, Conrade!" said Richard, "for how didst thou know, save from conscious guilt, that the question is concerning the banner?"

"Hast thou then not kept the camp in turmoil on that and no other score?" answered Conrade; "and dost thou impute to a prince and an ally a crime which, after all, was probably committed by some paltry felon for the sake of the gold thread? Or wouldst thou now impeach a confederate on the credit of a dog?"

By this time the alarm was becoming general, so that Philip of France interposed.

"Princes and nobles," he said, "you speak in presence of those whose swords will soon be at the throats of each other if they hear their leaders at such terms together. In the name of Heaven, let us draw off each his own troops into their separate quarters, and ourselves meet an hour hence in the Pavilion of Council to take some order in this new state of confusion."

"Content," said King Richard, "though I should have liked to have interrogated that caitiff while his gay doublet was yet besmirched with sand. But the pleasure of France shall be ours in this matter."

The leaders separated as was proposed, each prince placing himself at the head of his own forces; and then was heard on all sides the crying of war-cries and the sounding of gathering-notes upon bugles and trumpets, by which the different stragglers were summoned to their prince's banner, and the troops were shortly seen in motion, each taking different routes through the camp to their own quarters. But although any immediate act of violence was thus prevented, yet the accident which had taken place dwelt on every mind; and those foreigners who had that morning hailed Richard as the worthiest to lead their army, now resumed their prejudices against his pride and intolerance, while the English, conceiving the honour of their country connected with the quarrel, of which various reports had gone about, considered the natives of other countries jealous of the fame of England and her King, and disposed to undermine it by the meanest arts of intrigue. Many and various were the rumours spread upon the occasion, and there was one which averred that the Queen and her ladies had been much alarmed by the tumult, and that one of them had swooned.

The Council assembled at the appointed hour. Conrade had in the meanwhile laid aside his dishonoured dress, and with it the shame and confusion which, in spite of his talents and promptitude, had at first overwhelmed him, owing to the strangeness of the accident and suddenness of the accusation. He was now robed like a prince; and entered the council-chamber attended by the Archduke of Austria, the Grand Masters both of the Temple and of the Order of Saint John, and several other potentates, who made a show of supporting him and defending his cause, chiefly perhaps from political motives, or because they themselves nourished a personal enmity against Richard.

This appearance of union in favour of Conrade was far from influencing the King of England. He entered the Council with his usual indifference of manner, and in the same dress in which he had just alighted from horseback. He cast a careless and somewhat scornful glance on the leaders, who had with studied affectation

arranged themselves around Conrade as if owning his cause, and in the most direct terms charged Conrade of Montserrat with having stolen the Banner of England, and wounded the faithful animal who stood in its defence.

Conrade arose boldly to answer, and in despite, as he expressed himself, of man and brute, king or dog, avouched his innocence of the crime charged.

"Brother of England," said Philip, who willingly assumed the character of moderator of the assembly, "this is an unusual impeachment. We do not hear you avouch your own knowledge of this matter, further than your belief resting upon the demeanour of this hound towards the Marquis of Montserrat. Surely the word of a knight and a prince should bear him out against the barking of a cur?"

"Royal brother," returned Richard, "recollect that the Almighty, who gave the dog to be companion of our pleasures and our toils, hath invested him with a nature noble and incapable of deceit. He forgets neither friend nor foe—remembers, and with accuracy, both benefit and injury. He hath a share of man's intelligence, but no share of man's falsehood. You may bribe a soldier to slay a man with his sword, or a witness to take life by false accusation; but you cannot make a hound tear his benefactor. He is the friend of man, save when man justly incurs his enmity. Dress yonder marquis in what peacock-robos you will, disguise his appearance, alter his complexion with drugs and washes, hide him amidst a hundred men,—I will yet pawn my sceptre that the hound detects him, and expresses his resentment, as you have this day beheld. This is no new incident, although a strange one. Murderers and robbers have been ere now convicted, and suffered death under such evidence, and men have said that the finger of God was in it. In thine own land, royal brother, and upon such an occasion, the matter was tried by a solemn duel betwixt the man and the dog, as appellant and defendant in a challenge of murder. The dog was victorious, the man was punished, and the crime was confessed. Credit me, royal brother, that hidden crimes have often been brought to light by the testimony even of inanimate substances, not to mention animals far inferior in instinctive sagacity to the dog, who is the friend and companion of our race."

"Such a duel there hath indeed been, royal brother," answered Philip, "and that in the reign of one of our predecessors, to whom God be gracious. But it was in the olden time, nor can we hold it a precedent fitting for this occasion. The defendant in that case was a private gentleman of small rank or respect; his offensive weapons were only a club, his defensive a leathern jerkin. But we cannot degrade a prince to the disgrace of using such rude arms, or to the ignominy of such a combat."

"I never meant that you should," said King Richard; "it were foul play to hazard the good hound's life against that of such a double-faced traitor as this Conrade hath proved himself. But there lies our own glove; we appeal him to the combat in respect of the evidence we brought forth against him. A king, at least, is more than the mate of a marquis."

Conrade made no hasty effort to seize on the pledge which Richard cast into the middle of the assembly, and King Philip had time to reply ere the marquis made a motion to lift the glove.

"A king," said he of France, "is as much more than a match for the Marquis Conrade as a dog would be less. Royal Richard, this cannot be permitted. You are the leader of our expedition—the sword and buckler of Christendom."

"I protest against such a combat," said the Venetian proveditore, "until the King of England shall have repaid the fifty thousand byzants which he is indebted to the republic. It is enough to be threatened with loss of our debt, should our debtor fall by the hands of the pagans, without the additional risk of his being slain in brawls amongst Christians concerning dogs and banners."

"And I," said William with the Long Sword, Earl of Salisbury, "protest in my turn against my royal brother perilling his life, which is the property of the people of England, in such a cause. Here, noble brother, receive back your glove, and think only as if the wind had blown it from your hand. Mine shall lie in its stead. A king's son, though with the bar sinister on his shield, is at least a match for this marmoset of a marquis."

"Princes and nobles," said Conrade, "I will not accept of King Richard's defiance. He hath been chosen our leader against the Saracens, and if his conscience can answer the accusation of provoking an ally to the field on a quarrel so frivolous, mine, at least, cannot endure the reproach of accepting it. But touching his bastard brother, William of Woodstock, or against any other who shall adopt or shall dare to stand godfather to this most false charge, I will defend my honour in the lists, and prove whosoever impeaches it a false liar."

"The Marquis of Montserrat," said the Archbishop of Tyre, "hath spoken like a wise and moderate gentleman; and methinks this controversy might, without dishonour to any party, end at this point."

"Methinks it might so terminate," said the King of France, "provided King Richard will recall his accusation as made upon over-slight grounds."

"Philip of France," answered Coeur de Lion, "my words shall never do my thoughts so much injury. I have charged yonder Conrade as a thief, who, under cloud of night, stole from its place the emblem of England's dignity. I still believe and charge him to be such; and when a day is appointed for the combat, doubt not that, since Conrade declines to meet us in person, I will find a champion to appear in support of my challenge—for thou, William, must not thrust thy long sword into this quarrel without our special license."

"Since my rank makes me arbiter in this most unhappy matter," said Philip of France, "I appoint the fifth day from hence for the decision thereof, by way of combat, according to knightly usage—Richard, King of England, to appear by his champion as appellant, and Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat, in his own person, as defendant. Yet I own I know not where to find neutral ground where such a quarrel may be fought out; for it must not be in the neighbourhood of this camp, where the soldiers would make faction on the different sides."

"It were well," said Richard, "to apply to the generosity of the royal Saladin, since, heathen as he is, I have never known knight more fulfilled of nobleness, or to whose good faith we may so peremptorily entrust ourselves. I speak thus for those who may be doubtful of mishap; for myself, wherever I see my foe, I make that spot my battle-ground."

"Be it so," said Philip; "we will make this matter known to Saladin, although it be showing to an enemy the unhappy spirit of discord which we would willingly hide from even ourselves, were it possible. Meanwhile, I dismiss this assembly, and charge you all, as Christian men and noble knights, that ye let this unhappy feud breed no further brawling in the camp, but regard it as a thing solemnly referred to the judgment of God, to whom each of you should pray that He will dispose of victory in the combat according to the truth of the quarrel; and therewith may His will be done!"

"Amen, amen!" was answered on all sides; while the Templar whispered the Marquis, "Conrade, wilt thou not add a petition to be delivered from the power of the dog, as the Psalmist hath it?"

"Peace, thou—!" replied the Marquis; "there is a revealing demon abroad which may report, amongst other tidings, how far thou dost carry the motto of thy order—'FERIATUR LEO'."

"Thou wilt stand the brunt of challenge?" said the Templar.

"Doubt me not," said Conrade. "I would not, indeed, have willingly met the iron arm of Richard himself, and I shame not to confess that I rejoice to be free of his encounter; but, from his bastard brother downward, the man breathes not in his ranks whom I fear to meet."

"It is well you are so confident," continued the Templar; "and, in that case, the fangs of yonder hound have done more to dissolve this league of princes than either thy devices or the dagger of the Charegite. Seest thou how, under a brow studiously overclouded, Philip cannot conceal the satisfaction which he feels at the prospect of release from the alliance which sat so heavy on him? Mark how Henry of Champagne smiles to himself, like a sparkling goblet of his own wine; and see the chuckling delight of Austria, who thinks his quarrel is about to be avenged without risk or trouble of his own. Hush! he approaches.—A most grievous chance, most royal Austria, that these breaches in the walls of our Zion—"

"If thou meanest this Crusade," replied the Duke, "I would it were crumbled to pieces, and each were safe at home! I speak this in confidence."

"But," said the Marquis of Montserrat, "to think this disunion should be made by the hands of King Richard, for whose pleasure we have been contented to endure so much, and to whom we have been as submissive as slaves to a master, in hopes that he would use his valour against our enemies, instead of exercising it upon our friends!"

"I see not that he is so much more valorous than others," said the Archduke. "I believe, had the noble Marquis met him in the lists, he would have had the better; for though the islander deals heavy blows with the pole-axe, he is not so very dexterous with the lance. I should have cared little to have met him myself on our old quarrel, had the weal of Christendom permitted to sovereign princes to breathe themselves in the lists; and if thou desirest it, noble Marquis, I will myself be your godfather in this combat."

"And I also," said the Grand Master.

"Come, then, and take your nooning in our tent, noble sirs," said the Duke, "and we'll speak of this business over some right NIERENSTEIN."

They entered together accordingly.

"What said our patron and these great folks together?" said Jonas Schwanker to his companion, the SPRUCH-SPRECHER, who had used the freedom to press nigh to his master when the Council was dismissed, while the jester waited at a more respectful distance.

"Servant of Folly," said the SPRUCH-SPRECHER, "moderate thy curiosity; it beseems not that I should tell to thee the counsels of our master."

"Man of wisdom, you mistake," answered Jonas. "We are both the constant attendants on our patron, and it concerns us alike to know whether thou or I—Wisdom or Folly—have the deeper interest in him."

"He told to the Marquis," answered the SPRUCH-SPRECHER, "and to the Grand Master, that he was aware of these wars, and would be glad he was safe at home."

"That is a drawn cast, and counts for nothing in the game," said the jester; "it was most wise to think thus, but great folly to tell it to others—proceed."

"Ha, hem!" said the SPRUCH-SPRECHER; "he next said to them that Richard was not more valorous than others, or over-dexterous in the tilt-yard."

"Woodcock of my side," said Schwanker, "this was egregious folly. What next?"

"Nay, I am something oblivious," replied the man of wisdom—"he invited them to a goblet of NIERENSTEIN."

"That hath a show of wisdom in it," said Jonas. "Thou mayest mark it to thy credit in the meantime; but an he drink too much, as is most likely, I will have it pass to mine. Anything more?"

"Nothing worth memory," answered the orator; "only he wished he had taken the occasion to meet Richard in the lists."

"Out upon it—out upon it!" said Jonas; "this is such dotage of folly that I am well-nigh ashamed of winning the game by it. Ne'ertheless, fool as he is, we will follow him, most sage SPRUCH-SPRECHER, and have our share of the wine of NIERENSTEIN."

CHAPTER XXV.

*Yet this inconstancy is such,
As thou, too, shalt adore;
I could not love thee, love so much,
Loved I not honour more.*

MONTROSE'S LINES.

When King Richard returned to his tent, he commanded the Nubian to be brought before him. He entered with his usual ceremonial reverence, and having prostrated himself, remained standing before the King in the attitude of a slave awaiting the orders of his master. It was perhaps well for him that the preservation of his character required his eyes to be fixed on the ground, since the keen glance with which Richard for some time surveyed him in silence would, if fully encountered, have been difficult to sustain.

"Thou canst well of woodcraft," said the King, after a pause, "and hast started thy game and brought him to bay as ably as if Tristrem himself had taught thee. [A universal tradition ascribed to Sir Tristrem, famous for his love of the fair Queen Yseult, the laws concerning the practice of woodcraft, or VENERIE, as it was called, being those that related to the rules of the chase, which were deemed of much consequence during the Middle Ages.] But this is not all—he must be brought down at force. I myself would have liked to have levelled my hunting-spear at him. There are, it seems, respects which prevent this. Thou art about to return to the camp of the Soldan, bearing a letter, requiring of his courtesy to appoint neutral ground for the deed of chivalry, and should it consist with his pleasure, to concur with us in witnessing it. Now, speaking conjecturally, we think thou mightst find in that camp some cavalier who, for the love of truth and his own augmentation of honour, will do battle with this same traitor of Montserrat."

The Nubian raised his eyes and fixed them on the King with a look of eager ardour; then raised them to Heaven with such solemn gratitude that the water soon glistened in them; then bent his head, as affirming what Richard desired, and resumed his usual posture of submissive attention.

"It is well," said the King; "and I see thy desire to oblige me in this matter. And herein, I must needs say, lies the excellence of such a servant as thou, who hast not speech either to debate our purpose or to require explanation of what we have determined. An English serving man in thy place had given me his dogged advice to trust the combat with some good lance of my household, who, from my brother Longsword downwards, are all on fire to do battle in my cause; and a chattering Frenchman had made a thousand attempts to discover wherefore I look for a champion from the camp of the infidels. But thou, my silent agent, canst do mine errand without questioning or comprehending it; with thee to hear is to obey."

A bend of the body and a genuflection were the appropriate answer of the Ethiopian to these observations.

"And now to another point," said the King, and speaking suddenly and rapidly—"have you yet seen Edith Plantagenet?"

The mute looked up as in the act of being about to speak—nay, his lips had begun to utter a distinct negative—when the abortive attempt died away in the imperfect murmurs of the dumb.

"Why, lo you there!" said the King, "the very sound of the name of a royal maiden of beauty so surpassing as that of our lovely cousin seems to have power enough well-nigh to make the dumb speak. What miracles then might her eye work upon such a subject! I will make the experiment, friend slave. Thou shalt see this choice beauty of our Court, and do the errand of the princely Soldan."

Again a joyful glance—again a genuflection—but, as he arose, the King laid his hand heavily on his shoulder, and proceeded with stern gravity thus: "Let me in one thing warn you, my sable envoy. Even if thou shouldst feel that the kindly influence of her whom thou art soon to behold should loosen the bonds of thy tongue, presently imprisoned, as the good Soldan expresses it, within the ivory walls of its castle, beware how thou changest thy taciturn character, or speakest a word in her presence, even if thy powers of utterance were to be miraculously restored. Believe me that I should have thy tongue extracted by the roots, and its ivory palace—that is, I presume, its range of teeth—drawn out one by one. Wherefore, be wise and silent still."

The Nubian, so soon as the King had removed his heavy grasp from his shoulder, bent his head, and laid his hand on his lips, in token of silent obedience.

But Richard again laid his hand on him more gently, and added, "This behest we lay on thee as on a slave. Wert thou knight and gentleman, we would require thine honour in pledge of thy silence, which is one especial condition of our present trust."

The Ethiopian raised his body proudly, looked full at the King, and laid his right hand on his heart.

Richard then summoned his chamberlain.

"Go, Neville," he said, "with this slave to the tent of our royal consort, and say it is our pleasure that he have an audience—a private audience—of our cousin Edith. He is charged with a commission to her. Thou canst show him the way also, in case he requires thy guidance, though thou mayst have observed it is wonderful how familiar he already seems to be with the purlieu of our camp.—And thou, too, friend Ethiop," the King continued, "what thou dost do quickly, and return hither within the half-hour."

"I stand discovered," thought the seeming Nubian, as, with downcast looks and folded arms, he followed the hasty stride of Neville towards the tent of Queen Berengaria—"I stand undoubtedly discovered and unfolded to King Richard; yet I cannot perceive that his resentment is hot against me. If I understand his words—and surely it is impossible to misinterpret them—he gives me a noble chance of redeeming my honour upon the crest of this false Marquis, whose guilt I read in his craven eye and quivering lip when the charge was made against him.—Roswal, faithfully hast thou served thy master, and most dearly shall thy wrong be avenged!—But what is the meaning of my present permission to look upon her whom I had despaired ever to see again? And why, or how, can the royal Plantagenet consent that I should see his divine kinswoman, either as the messenger of the heathen Saladin, or as the guilty exile whom he so lately expelled from his camp—his audacious avowal of the affection which is his pride being the greatest enhancement of his guilt? That Richard should consent to her receiving a letter from an infidel lover by the hands of one of such disproportioned rank are either of them circumstances equally incredible, and, at the same time, inconsistent with each other. But Richard, when unmoved by his heady passions, is liberal, generous, and truly noble; and as such I will deal with him, and act according to his instructions, direct or implied, seeking to know no more than may gradually unfold itself without my officious inquiry. To him who has given me so brave an opportunity to vindicate my tarnished honour, I owe acquiescence and obedience; and painful as it may be, the debt shall be paid. And yet"—thus the proud swelling of his heart further suggested—"Coeur de Lion, as he is called, might have measured the feelings of others by his own. I urge an address to his kinswoman! I, who never spoke word to her when I took a royal prize from her hand—when I was accounted not the lowest in feats of chivalry among the defenders of the Cross! I approach her when in a base disguise, and in a servile habit—and, alas! when my actual condition is that of a slave, with a spot of dishonour on that which was once my shield! I do this! He little knows me. Yet I thank him for the opportunity which may make us all better acquainted with each other."

As he arrived at this conclusion, they paused before the entrance of the Queen's pavilion.

They were of course admitted by the guards, and Neville, leaving the Nubian in a small apartment, or antechamber, which was but too well remembered by him, passed into that which was used as the Queen's presence-chamber. He communicated his royal master's pleasure in a low and respectful tone of voice, very different from the bluntness of Thomas de Vaux, to whom Richard was everything and the rest of the Court, including Berengaria herself, was nothing. A burst of laughter followed the communication of his errand.

"And what like is the Nubian slave who comes ambassador on such an errand from the Soldan?—a negro, De Neville, is he not?" said a female voice, easily recognized for that of Berengaria. "A negro, is he not, De Neville, with black skin, a head curled like a ram's, a flat nose, and blubber lips—ha, worthy Sir Henry?"

"Let not your Grace forget the shin-bones," said another voice, "bent outwards like the edge of a Saracen scimitar."

"Rather like the bow of a Cupid, since he comes upon a lover's errand," said the Queen.—"Gentle Neville, thou art ever prompt to pleasure us poor women, who have so little to pass away our idle moments. We must see this messenger of love. Turks and Moors have I seen many, but negro never."

"I am created to obey your Grace's commands, so you will bear me out with my Sovereign for doing so," answered the debonair knight. "Yet, let me assure your Grace you will see something different from what you expect."

"So much the better—uglier yet than our imaginations can fancy, yet the chosen love-messenger of this gallant Soldan!"

"Gracious madam," said the Lady Calista, "may I implore you would permit the good knight to carry this messenger straight to the Lady Edith, to whom his credentials are addressed? We have already escaped hardly for such a frolic."

"Escaped?" repeated the Queen scornfully. "Yet thou mayest be right, Calista, in thy caution. Let this Nubian, as thou callest him, first do his errand to our cousin—besides, he is mute too, is he not?"

"He is, gracious madam," answered the knight.

"Royal sport have these Eastern ladies," said Berengaria, "attended by those before whom they may say anything, yet who can report nothing. Whereas in our camp, as the Prelate of Saint Jude's is wont to say, a bird of the air will carry the matter."

"Because," said De Neville, "your Grace forgets that you speak within canvas walls."

The voices sunk on this observation, and after a little whispering, the English knight again returned to the Ethiopian, and made him a sign to follow. He did so, and Neville conducted him to a pavilion, pitched somewhat apart from that of the Queen, for the accommodation, it seemed, of the Lady Edith and her attendants. One of her Coptic maidens received the message communicated by Sir Henry Neville, and in the space of a very few minutes the Nubian was ushered into Edith's presence, while Neville was left on the outside of the tent. The slave who introduced him withdrew on a signal from her mistress, and it was with humiliation, not of the posture only but of the very inmost soul, that the unfortunate knight, thus strangely disguised, threw himself on one knee, with looks bent on the ground and arms folded on his bosom, like a criminal who expects his doom. Edith was clad in the same manner as when she received King Richard, her long, transparent dark veil hanging around her like the shade of a summer night on a beautiful landscape, disguising and rendering obscure the beauties which it could not hide. She held in her hand a silver lamp, fed with some aromatic spirit, which burned with unusual brightness.

When Edith came within a step of the kneeling and motionless slave, she held the light towards his face, as if to peruse his features more attentively, then turned from him, and placed her lamp so as to throw the shadow of his face in profile upon the curtain which hung beside. She at length spoke in a voice composed, yet deeply sorrowful,

"Is it you? It is indeed you, brave Knight of the Leopard—gallant Sir Kenneth of Scotland; is it indeed you?—thus servilely disguised—thus surrounded by a hundred dangers."

At hearing the tones of his lady's voice thus unexpectedly addressed to him, and in a tone of compassion approaching to tenderness, a corresponding reply rushed to the knight's lips, and scarce could Richard's commands and his own promised silence prevent his answering that the sight he saw, the sounds he just heard, were sufficient to recompense the slavery of a life, and dangers which threatened that life every hour. He did recollect himself, however, and a deep and impassioned sigh was his only reply to the high-born Edith's question.

"I see—I know I have guessed right," continued Edith. "I marked you from your first appearance near the platform on which I stood with the Queen. I knew, too, your valiant hound. She is no true lady, and is unworthy of the service of such a knight as thou art, from whom disguises of dress or hue could conceal a faithful servant. Speak, then, without fear to Edith Plantagenet. She knows how to grace in adversity the good knight who served, honoured, and did deeds of arms in her name, when fortune befriended him.—Still silent! Is it fear or shame that keeps thee so! Fear should be unknown to thee; and for shame, let it remain with those who have wronged thee."

The knight, in despair at being obliged to play the mute in an interview so interesting, could only express his mortification by sighing deeply, and laying his finger upon his lips. Edith stepped back, as if somewhat displeased.

"What!" she said, "the Asiatic mute in very deed, as well as in attire? This I looked not for. Or thou mayest scorn me, perhaps, for thus boldly acknowledging that I have heedfully observed the homage thou hast paid me? Hold no unworthy thoughts of Edith on that account. She knows well the bounds which reserve and modesty prescribe to high-born maidens, and she knows when and how far they should give place to gratitude—to a sincere desire that it were in her power to repay services and repair injuries arising from the devotion which a good knight bore towards her. Why fold thy hands together, and wring them with so much passion? Can it be," she added, shrinking back at the idea, "that their cruelty has actually deprived thee of speech? Thou shakest thy head. Be it a spell—be it obstinacy, I question thee no further, but leave thee to do thine errand after thine own fashion. I also can be mute."

The disguised knight made an action as if at once lamenting his own condition and deprecating her displeasure, while at the same time he presented to her, wrapped, as usual, in fine silk and cloth of gold, the letter of the Soldan. She took it, surveyed it carelessly, then laid it aside, and bending her eyes once more on the knight, she said in a low tone, "Not even a word to do thine errand to me?"

He pressed both his hands to his brow, as if to intimate the pain which he felt at being unable to obey her; but she turned from him in anger.

"Begone!" she said. "I have spoken enough—too much—to one who will not waste on me a word in reply. Begone!—and say, if I have wronged thee, I have done penance; for if I have been the unhappy means of dragging thee down from a station of honour, I have, in this interview, forgotten my own worth, and lowered myself in thy eyes and in my own."

She covered her eyes with her hands, and seemed deeply agitated. Sir Kenneth would have approached, but she waved him back.

"Stand off! thou whose soul Heaven hath suited to its new station! Aught less dull and fearful than a slavish mute had spoken a word of gratitude, were it but to reconcile me to my own degradation. Why pause you?—begone!"

The disguised knight almost involuntarily looked towards the letter as an apology for protracting his stay. She snatched it up, saying in a tone of irony and contempt, "I had forgotten—the dutiful slave waits an answer to his message. How's this—from the Soldan!"

She hastily ran over the contents, which were expressed both in Arabic and French, and when she had done, she laughed in bitter anger.

"Now this passes imagination!" she said; "no jongleur can show so deft a transmutation! His legerdmain can transform zechins and byzants into doits and maravedis; but can his art convert a Christian knight, ever esteemed among the bravest of the Holy Crusade, into the dust-kissing slave of a heathen Soldan—the bearer of a paynim's insolent proposals to a Christian maiden—nay, forgetting the laws of honourable chivalry, as well as of religion? But it avails not talking to the willing slave of a heathen hound. Tell your master, when his scourge shall have found thee a tongue, that which thou hast seen me do"—so saying, she threw the Soldan's letter on the ground, and placed her foot upon it—"and say to him, that Edith Plantagenet scorns the homage of an unchristened pagan."

With these words she was about to shoot from the knight, when, kneeling at her feet in bitter agony, he ventured to lay his hand upon her robe and oppose her departure.

"Heard'st thou not what I said, dull slave?" she said, turning short round on him, and speaking with emphasis. "Tell the heathen Soldan, thy master, that I scorn his suit as much as I despise the prostration of a worthless renegade to religion and chivalry—to God and to his lady!"

So saying, she burst from him, tore her garment from his grasp, and left the tent.

The voice of Neville, at the same time, summoned him from without. Exhausted and stupefied by the distress he had undergone during this interview, from which he could only have extricated himself by breach of the engagement which he had formed with King Richard, the unfortunate knight staggered rather than walked after the English baron, till they reached the royal pavilion, before which a party of horsemen had just dismounted. There were light and motion within the tent, and when Neville entered with his disguised attendant, they found the King, with several of his nobility, engaged in welcoming those who were newly arrived.

CHAPTER XXVI.

*"The tears I shed must ever fall.
I weep not for an absent swain;
For time may happier hours recall,
And parted lovers meet again.*

*"I weep not for the silent dead.
Their pains are past, their sorrows o'er;
And those that loved their steps must tread,
When death shall join to part no more."*

*But worse than absence, worse than death,
She wept her lover's sullied fame,
And, fired with all the pride of birth,
She wept a soldier's injured name.
BALLAD.*

The frank and bold voice of Richard was heard in joyous gratulation.

"Thomas de Vaux! stout Tom of the Gills! by the head of King Henry, thou art welcome to me as ever was flask of wine to a jolly toper! I should scarce have known how to order my battle-array, unless I had thy bulky form in mine eye as a landmark to form my ranks upon. We shall have blows anon, Thomas, if the saints be gracious to us; and had we fought in thine absence, I would have looked to hear of thy being found hanging upon an elder-tree."

"I should have borne my disappointment with more Christian patience, I trust," said Thomas de Vaux, "than to have died the death of an apostate. But I thank your Grace for my welcome, which is the more generous, as it respects a banquet of blows, of which, saving your pleasure, you are ever too apt to engross the larger share. But here have I brought one to whom your Grace will, I know, give a yet warmer welcome."

The person who now stepped forward to make obeisance to Richard was a young man of low stature and slight form. His dress was as modest as his figure was unimpressive; but he bore on his bonnet a gold buckle, with a gem, the lustre of which could only be rivalled by the brilliancy of the eye which the bonnet shaded. It was the only striking feature in his countenance; but when once noticed, it ever made a strong impression on the spectator. About his neck there hung in a scarf of sky-blue silk a WREST as it was called—that is, the key with which a harp is tuned, and which was of solid gold.

This personage would have kneeled reverently to Richard, but the Monarch raised him in joyful haste, pressed him to his bosom warmly, and kissed him on either side of the face.

"Blondel de Nesle!" he exclaimed joyfully—"welcome from Cyprus, my king of minstrels!—welcome to the King of England, who rates not his own dignity more highly than he does thine. I have been sick, man, and, by my soul, I believe it was for lack of thee; for, were I half way to the gate of heaven, methinks thy strains could call me back. And what news, my gentle master, from the land of the lyre? Anything fresh from the TROUVEURS of Provence? Anything from the minstrels of merry Normandy? Above all, hast thou thyself been busy? But I need not ask thee—thou canst not be idle if thou wouldst; thy noble qualities are like a fire burning within, and compel thee to pour thyself out in music and song."

"Something I have learned, and something I have done, noble King," answered the celebrated Blondel, with a retiring modesty which all Richard's enthusiastic admiration of his skill had been unable to banish.

"We will hear thee, man—we will hear thee instantly," said the King. Then, touching Blondel's shoulder kindly, he added, "That is, if thou art not fatigued with thy journey; for I would sooner ride my best horse to death than injure a note of thy voice."

"My voice is, as ever, at the service of my royal patron," said Blondel; "but your Majesty," he added, looking at some papers on the table, "seems more importantly engaged, and the hour waxes late."

"Not a whit, man, not a whit, my dearest Blondel. I did but sketch an array of battle against the Saracens, a thing of a moment, almost as soon done as the routing of them."

"Methinks, however," said Thomas de Vaux, "it were not unfit to inquire what soldiers your Grace hath to array. I bring reports on that subject from Ascalon."

"Thou art a mule, Thomas," said the King—"a very mule for dullness and obstinacy! Come, nobles—a hall—a hall—range ye around him! Give Blondel the tabouret. Where is his harp-bearer?—or, soft, lend him my harp, his own may be damaged by the journey."

"I would your Grace would take my report," said Thomas de Vaux. "I have ridden far, and have more list to my bed than to have my ears tickled."

"THY ears tickled!" said the King; "that must be with a woodcock's feather, and not with sweet sounds. Hark thee, Thomas, do thine ears know the singing of Blondel from the braying of an ass?"

"In faith, my liege," replied Thomas, "I cannot well say; but setting Blondel out of the question, who is a born gentleman, and doubtless of high acquirements, I shall never, for the sake of your Grace's question, look on a minstrel but I shall think upon an ass."

"And might not your manners," said Richard, "have excepted me, who am a gentleman born as well as Blondel, and, like him, a guild-brother of the joyeuse science?"

"Your Grace should remember," said De Vaux, smiling, "that 'tis useless asking for manners from a mule."

"Most truly spoken," said the King; "and an ill-conditioned animal thou art. But come hither, master mule, and be unloaded, that thou mayest get thee to thy litter, without any music being wasted on thee. Meantime do thou, good brother of Salisbury, go to our consort's tent, and tell her that Blondel has arrived, with his budget fraught with the newest minstrelsy. Bid her come hither instantly, and do thou escort her, and see that our cousin, Edith Plantagenet, remain not behind."

His eye then rested for a moment on the Nubian, with that expression of doubtful meaning which his countenance usually displayed when he looked at him.

"Ha, our silent and secret messenger returned?—Stand up, slave, behind the back of De Neville, and thou shalt hear presently sounds which will make thee bless God that He afflicted thee rather with dumbness than deafness."

So saying, he turned from the rest of the company towards De Vaux, and plunged instantly into the military details which that baron laid before him.

About the time that the Lord of Gilsland had finished his audience, a messenger announced that the Queen and her attendants were approaching the royal tent.—

"A flask of wine, ho!" said the King; "of old King Isaac's long-saved Cyprus, which we won when we stormed Famagosta. Fill to the stout Lord of Gilsland, gentles—a more careful and faithful servant never had any prince."

"I am glad," said Thomas de Vaux, "that your Grace finds the mule a useful slave, though his voice be less musical than horse-hair or wire."

"What, thou canst not yet digest that quip of the mule?" said Richard. "Wash it down with a brimming flagon, man, or thou wilt choke upon it. Why, so—well pulled!—and now I will tell thee, thou art a soldier as well as I, and we must brook each other's jests in the hall as each other's blows in the tourney, and love each other the harder we hit. By my faith, if thou didst not hit me as hard as I did thee in our late encounter! thou gavest all thy wit to the thrust. But here lies the difference betwixt thee and Blondel. Thou art but my comrade—I might say my pupil—in the art of war; Blondel is my master in the science of minstrelsy and music. To thee I permit the freedom of intimacy; to him I must do reverence, as to my superior in his art. Come, man, be not peevish, but remain and hear our glee."

"To see your Majesty in such cheerful mood," said the Lord of Gilsland, "by my faith, I could remain till Blondel had achieved the great romance of King Arthur, which lasts for three days."

"We will not tax your patience so deeply," said the King. "But see, yonder glare of torches without shows that our consort approaches. Away to receive her, man, and win thyself grace in the brightest eyes of Christendom. Nay, never stop to adjust thy cloak. See, thou hast let Neville come between the wind and the sails of thy galley."

"He was never before me in the field of battle," said De Vaux, not greatly pleased to see himself anticipated by the more active service of the chamberlain.

"No, neither he nor any one went before thee there, my good Tom of the Gills," said the King, "unless it was myself, now and then."

"Ay, my liege," said De Vaux, "and let us do justice to the unfortunate. The unhappy Knight of the Leopard hath been before me too, at a season; for, look you, he weighs less on horseback, and so—"

"Hush!" said the King, interrupting him in a peremptory tone, "not a word of him," and instantly stepped forward to greet his royal consort; and when he had done so, he presented to her Blondel, as king of minstrelsy and his master in the gay science. Berengaria, who well knew that her royal husband's passion for poetry and music almost equalled his appetite for warlike fame, and that Blondel was his especial favourite, took anxious care to receive him with all the flattering distinctions due to one whom the King delighted to honour. Yet it was evident that, though Blondel made suitable returns to the compliments showered on him something too abundantly by the royal beauty, he owned with deeper reverence and more humble gratitude the simple and graceful welcome of Edith, whose kindly greeting appeared to him, perhaps, sincere in proportion to its brevity and simplicity.

Both the Queen and her royal husband were aware of this distinction, and Richard, seeing his consort somewhat piqued at the preference assigned to his cousin, by which perhaps he himself did not feel much gratified, said in the hearing of both, "We minstrels, Berengaria, as thou mayest see by the bearing of our master Blondel, pay more reverence to a severe judge like our kinswoman than to a kindly, partial friend like thyself, who is willing to take our worth upon trust."

Edith was moved by this sarcasm of her royal kinsman, and hesitated not to reply that, "To be a harsh and severe judge was not an attribute proper to her alone of all the Plantagenets."

She had perhaps said more, having some touch of the temper of that house, which, deriving their name and cognizance from the lowly broom (PLANTA GENISTA), assumed as an emblem of humility, were perhaps one of the proudest families that ever ruled in England; but her eye, when kindling in her reply, suddenly caught those of the Nubian, although he endeavoured to conceal himself behind the nobles who were present, and she sunk upon a seat, turning so pale that Queen Berengaria deemed herself obliged to call for water and essences, and to go through the other ceremonies appropriate to a lady's swoon. Richard, who better estimated Edith's strength of mind, called to Blondel to assume his seat and commence his lay, declaring that minstrelsy was worth every other recipe to recall a Plantagenet to life. "Sing us," he said, "that song of the Bloody Vest, of which thou didst formerly give me the argument ere I left Cyprus. Thou must be perfect in it by this time, or, as our yeomen say, thy bow is broken."

The anxious eye of the minstrel, however, dwelt on Edith, and it was not till he observed her returning colour that he obeyed the repeated commands of the King. Then, accompanying his voice with the harp, so as to grace, but yet not drown, the sense of what he sung, he chanted in a sort of recitative one of those ancient adventures of love and knighthood which were wont of yore to win the public attention. So soon as he began to prelude, the insignificance of his personal appearance seemed to disappear, and his countenance glowed with energy and inspiration. His full, manly, mellow voice, so absolutely under command of the purest taste, thrilled on every ear and to every heart. Richard, rejoiced as after victory, called out the appropriate summons for silence, "Listen, lords, in bower and hall"; while, with the zeal of a patron at once and a pupil, he arranged the circle around, and hushed them into silence; and he himself sat down with an air of expectation and interest, not altogether unmixed with the gravity of the professed critic. The courtiers turned their eyes on the King, that they might be ready to trace and imitate the emotions his features should express, and Thomas de Vaux yawned tremendously, as one who submitted unwillingly to a wearisome penance. The song of Blondel was of course in the Norman language, but the verses which follow express its meaning and its manner.

THE BLOODY VEST.

*'Twas near the fair city of Benevent,
When the sun was setting on bough and bent,
And knights were preparing in bower and tent,
On the eve of the Baptist's tournament;
When in Lincoln green a stripling gent,
Well seeming a page by a princess sent,
Wander'd the camp, and, still as he went,
Inquired for the Englishman, Thomas a Kent.*

Far hath he far'd, and farther must fare,

*Till he finds his pavilion nor stately nor rare,—
Little save iron and steel was there;
And, as lacking the coin to pay armourer's care,
With his sinewy arms to the shoulders bare,
The good knight with hammer and file did repair
The mail that to-morrow must see him wear,
For the honour of Saint John and his lady fair.*

*"Thus speaks my lady," the page said he,
And the knight bent lowly both head and knee,
"She is Benevent's Princess so high in degree,
And thou art as lowly as knight may well be—
He that would climb so lofty a tree,
Or spring such a gulf as divides her from thee,
Must dare some high deed, by which all men may see
His ambition is back'd by his hie chivalrie.*

*"Therefore thus speaks my lady," the fair page he said,
And the knight lowly louted with hand and with head,
"Fling aside the good armour in which thou art clad,
And don thou this weed of her night-gear instead,
For a hauberk of steel, a kirtle of thread;
And charge, thus attir'd, in the tournament dread,
And fight as thy wont is where most blood is shed,
And bring honour away, or remain with the dead."*

Untroubled in his look, and untroubled in his breast, The knight the weed hath taken, and reverently hath kiss'd. "Now blessed be the moment, the messenger be blest! Much honour'd do I hold me in my lady's high behest; And say unto my lady, in this dear night-weed dress'd, To the best armed champion I will not veil my crest; But if I live and bear me well 'tis her turn to take the test." Here, gentles, ends the foremost fyfte of the Lay of the Bloody Vest.

"Thou hast changed the measure upon us unawares in that last couplet, my Blondel," said the King.

"Most true, my lord," said Blondel. "I rendered the verses from the Italian of an old harper whom I met in Cyprus, and not having had time either to translate it accurately or commit it to memory, I am fain to supply gaps in the music and the verse as I can upon the spur of the moment, as you see boors mend a quickset fence with a fagot."

"Nay, on my faith," said the King, "I like these rattling, rolling Alexandrines. Methinks they come more twangingly off to the music than that briefer measure."

"Both are licensed, as is well known to your Grace," answered Blondel.

"They are so, Blondel," said Richard, "yet methinks the scene where there is like to be fighting will go best on in these same thundering Alexandrines, which sound like the charge of cavalry, while the other measure is but like the sidelong amble of a lady's palfrey."

"It shall be as your Grace pleases," replied Blondel, and began again to prelude.

"Nay, first cherish thy fancy with a cup of fiery Chios wine," said the King. "And hark thee, I would have thee fling away that new-fangled restriction of thine, of terminating in accurate and similar rhymes. They are a constraint on thy flow of fancy, and make thee resemble a man dancing in fetters."

"The fetters are easily flung off, at least," said Blondel, again sweeping his fingers over the strings, as one who would rather have played than listened to criticism.

"But why put them on, man?" continued the King. "Wherefore thrust thy genius into iron bracelets? I marvel how you got forward at all. I am sure I should not have been able to compose a stanza in yonder hampered measure."

Blondel looked down, and busied himself with the strings of his harp, to hide an involuntary smile which crept over his features; but it escaped not Richard's observation.

"By my faith, thou laughest at me, Blondel," he said; "and, in good truth, every man deserves it who presumes to play the master when he should be the pupil. But we kings get bad habits of self-opinion. Come, on with thy lay, dearest Blondel—on after thine own fashion, better than aught that we can suggest, though we must needs be talking."

Blondel resumed the lay; but as extemporaneous composition was familiar to him, he failed not to comply with the King's hints, and was perhaps not displeased to show with how much ease he could new-model a poem, even while in the act of recitation.

THE BLOODY VEST.

FYTTE SECOND.

*The Baptist's fair morrow beheld gallant feats—
There was winning of honour and losing of seats;
There was hewing with falchions and splintering of staves—
The victors won glory, the vanquish'd won graves.
Oh, many a knight there fought bravely and well,
Yet one was accounted his peers to excel,
And 'twas he whose sole armour on body and breast
Seem'd the weed of a damsel when bouned for her rest.*

*There were some dealt him wounds that were bloody and sore,
But others respected his plight, and forbore.
"It is some oath of honour," they said, "and I trow,
'Twere unknighly to slay him achieving his vow."
Then the Prince, for his sake, bade the tournament cease—
He flung down his warder, the trumpets sung peace;
And the judges declare, and competitors yield,
That the Knight of the Night-gear was first in the field.*

The feast it was nigh, and the mass it was nigher,

*When before the fair Princess low looted a squire,
And deliver'd a garment unseemly to view,
With sword-cut and spear-thrust, all hack'd and pierc'd through;
All rent and all tatter'd, all clotted with blood,
With foam of the horses, with dust, and with mud;
Not the point of that lady's small finger, I ween,
Could have rested on spot was unsullied and clean.*

*"This token my master, Sir Thomas a Kent,
Restores to the Princess of fair Benevent;
He that climbs the tall tree has won right to the fruit,
He that leaps the wide gulf should prevail in his suit;
Through life's utmost peril the prize I have won,
And now must the faith of my mistress be shown:
For she who prompts knights on such danger to run
Must avouch his true service in front of the sun.*

*"'I restore,' says my master, 'the garment I've worn,
And I claim of the Princess to don it in turn;
For its stains and its rents she should prize it the more,
Since by shame 'tis unsullied, though crimson'd with gore.'
Then deep blush'd the Princess—yet kiss'd she and press'd
The blood-spotted robes to her lips and her breast.
'Go tell my true knight, church and chamber shall show
If I value the blood on this garment or no."*

*And when it was time for the nobles to pass,
In solemn procession to minster and mass,
The first walk'd the Princess in purple and pall,
But the blood-besmeared night-robe she wore over all;
And eke, in the hall, where they all sat at dine,
When she knelt to her father and proffer'd the wine,
Over all her rich robes and state jewels she wore
That wimple unseemly bedabbled with gore.*

*Then lords whisper'd ladies, as well you may think,
And ladies replied with nod, titter, and wink;
And the Prince, who in anger and shame had look'd down,
Turn'd at length to his daughter, and spoke with a frown:
'Now since thou hast publish'd thy folly and guilt,
E'en atone with thy hand for the blood thou hast spilt;
Yet sore for your boldness you both will repent,
When you wander as exiles from fair Benevent."*

*Then out spoke stout Thomas, in hall where he stood,
Exhausted and feeble, but dauntless of mood:
'The blood that I lost for this daughter of thine,
I pour'd forth as freely as flask gives its wine;
And if for my sake she brooks penance and blame,
Do not doubt I will save her from suffering and shame;
And light will she reckon of thy princedom and rent,
When I hail her, in England, the Countess of Kent."*

A murmur of applause ran through the assembly, following the example of Richard himself, who loaded with praises his favourite minstrel, and ended by presenting him with a ring of considerable value. The Queen hastened to distinguish the favourite by a rich bracelet, and many of the nobles who were present followed the royal example.

"Is our cousin Edith," said the King, "become insensible to the sound of the harp she once loved?"

"She thanks Blondel for his lay," replied Edith, "but doubly the kindness of the kinsman who suggested it."

"Thou art angry, cousin," said the King; "angry because thou hast heard of a woman more wayward than thyself. But you escape me not. I will walk a space homeward with you towards the Queen's pavilion. We must have conference together ere the night has waned into morning."

The Queen and her attendants were now on foot, and the other guests withdrew from the royal tent. A train with blazing torches, and an escort of archers, awaited Berengaria without the pavilion, and she was soon on her way homeward. Richard, as he had proposed, walked beside his kinswoman, and compelled her to accept of his arm as her support, so that they could speak to each other without being overheard.

"What answer, then, am I to return to the noble Soldan?" said Richard. "The kings and princes are falling from me, Edith; this new quarrel hath alienated them once more. I would do something for the Holy Sepulchre by composition, if not by victory; and the chance of my doing this depends, alas, on the caprice of a woman. I would lay my single spear in the rest against ten of the best lances in Christendom, rather than argue with a wilful wench who knows not what is for her own good. What answer, coz, am I to return to the Soldan? It must be decisive."

"Tell him," said Edith, "that the poorest of the Plantagenets will rather wed with misery than with misbelief."

"Shall I say with slavery, Edith?" said the King. "Methinks that is nearer thy thoughts."

"There is no room," said Edith, "for the suspicion you so grossly insinuate. Slavery of the body might have been pitied, but that of the soul is only to be despised. Shame to thee, King of merry England. Thou hast enthralled both the limbs and the spirit of a knight, one scarce less famed than thyself."

"Should I not prevent my kinswoman from drinking poison, by sullyng the vessel which contained it, if I saw no other means of disgusting her with the fatal liquor?" replied the King.

"It is thyself," answered Edith, "that would press me to drink poison, because it is proffered in a golden chalice."

"Edith," said Richard, "I cannot force thy resolution; but beware you shut not the door which Heaven opens. The hermit of Engaddi—he whom Popes and Councils have regarded as a prophet—hath read in the stars that thy marriage shall reconcile me with a powerful enemy, and that thy husband shall be Christian, leaving thus the fairest ground to hope that the conversion of the Soldan, and the bringing in of the sons of Ishmael to the pale of the church, will be the consequence of thy wedding with Saladin. Come, thou must make some sacrifice rather than mar such happy prospects."

"Men may sacrifice rams and goats," said Edith, "but not honour and conscience. I have heard that it was the dishonour of a Christian maiden which brought the Saracens into Spain; the shame of another is no likely mode of expelling them from Palestine."

"Dost thou call it shame to become an empress?" said the King.

"I call it shame and dishonour to profane a Christian sacrament by entering into it with an infidel whom it cannot bind; and I call it foul dishonour that I, the descendant of a Christian princess, should become of free will the head of a haram of heathen concubines."

"Well, kinswoman," said the King, after a pause, "I must not quarrel with thee, though I think thy dependent condition might have dictated more compliance."

"My liege," replied Edith, "your Grace hath worthily succeeded to all the wealth, dignity, and dominion of the House of Plantagenet—do not, therefore, begrudge your poor kinswoman some small share of their pride."

"By my faith, wench," said the King, "thou hast unhorsed me with that very word, so we will kiss and be friends. I will presently dispatch thy answer to Saladin. But after all, coz, were it not better to suspend your answer till you have seen him? Men say he is pre-eminently handsome."

"There is no chance of our meeting, my lord," said Edith.

"By Saint George, but there is next to a certainty of it," said the King; "for Saladin will doubtless afford us a free field for the doing of this new battle of the Standard, and will witness it himself. Berengaria is wild to behold it also; and I dare be sworn not a feather of you, her companions and attendants, will remain behind—least of all thou thyself, fair coz. But come, we have reached the pavilion, and must part; not in unkindness thou, oh—nay, thou must seal it with thy lip as well as thy hand, sweet Edith—it is my right as a sovereign to kiss my pretty vassals."

He embraced her respectfully and affectionately, and returned through the moonlit camp, humming to himself such snatches of Blondel's lay as he could recollect. On his arrival he lost no time in making up his dispatches for Saladin, and delivered them to the Nubian, with a charge to set out by peep of day on his return to the Soldan.

CHAPTER XXVII.

*We heard the Techir—so these Arabs call
Their shout of onset, when, with loud acclaim,
They challenge Heaven to give them victory.
SIEGE OF DAMASCUS.*

On the subsequent morning Richard was invited to a conference by Philip of France, in which the latter, with many expressions of his high esteem for his brother of England, communicated to him in terms extremely courteous, but too explicit to be misunderstood, his positive intention to return to Europe, and to the cares of his kingdom, as entirely despairing of future success in their undertaking, with their diminished forces and civil discords. Richard remonstrated, but in vain; and when the conference ended he received without surprise a manifesto from the Duke of Austria, and several other princes, announcing a resolution similar to that of Philip, and in no modified terms, assigning, for their defection from the cause of the Cross, the inordinate ambition and arbitrary domination of Richard of England. All hopes of continuing the war with any prospect of ultimate success were now abandoned; and Richard, while he shed bitter tears over his disappointed hopes of glory, was little consoled by the recollection that the failure was in some degree to be imputed to the advantages which he had given his enemies by his own hasty and imprudent temper.

"They had not dared to have deserted my father thus," he said to De Vaux, in the bitterness of his resentment. "No slanders they could have uttered against so wise a king would have been believed in Christendom; whereas—fool that I am!—I have not only afforded them a pretext for deserting me, but even a colour for casting all the blame of the rupture upon my unhappy foibles."

These thoughts were so deeply galling to the King, that De Vaux was rejoiced when the arrival of an ambassador from Saladin turned his reflections into a different channel.

This new envoy was an Emir much respected by the Soldan, whose name was Abdallah el Hadgi. He derived his descent from the family of the Prophet, and the race or tribe of Hashem, in witness of which genealogy he wore a green turban of large dimensions. He had also three times performed the journey to Mecca, from which he derived his epithet of El Hadgi, or the Pilgrim. Notwithstanding these various pretensions to sanctity, Abdallah was (for an Arab) a boon companion, who enjoyed a merry tale, and laid aside his gravity so far as to quaff a blithe flagon when secrecy ensured him against scandal. He was likewise a statesman, whose abilities had been used by Saladin in various negotiations with the Christian princes, and particularly with Richard, to whom El Hadgi was personally known and acceptable. Animated by the cheerful acquiescence with which the envoy of Saladin afforded a fair field for the combat, a safe conduct for all who might choose to witness it, and offered his own person as a guarantee of his fidelity, Richard soon forgot his disappointed hopes, and the approaching dissolution of the Christian league, in the interesting discussions preceding a combat in the lists.

The station called the Diamond of the Desert was assigned for the place of conflict, as being nearly at an equal distance betwixt the Christian and Saracen camps. It was agreed that Conrade of Montserrat, the defendant, with his godfathers, the Archduke of Austria and the Grand Master of the Templars, should appear there on the day fixed for the combat, with a hundred armed followers, and no more; that Richard of England and his brother Salisbury, who supported the accusation, should attend with the same number, to protect his champion; and that the Soldan should bring with him a guard of five hundred chosen followers, a band considered as not more than equal to the two hundred Christian lances. Such persons of consideration as either party chose to invite to witness the contest were to wear no other weapons than their swords, and to come without defensive armour. The Soldan undertook the preparation of the lists, and to provide accommodations and refreshments of every kind for all who were to assist at the solemnity; and his letters expressed with much courtesy the pleasure which he anticipated in the prospect of a personal and peaceful meeting with the Melech Ric, and his anxious desire to render his reception as agreeable as possible.

All preliminaries being arranged and communicated to the defendant and his godfathers, Abdullah the Hadgi was admitted to a more private interview, where he heard with delight the strains of Blondel. Having first carefully put his green turban out of sight, and assumed a Greek cap in its stead, he requited the Norman minstrel's music with a drinking song from the Persian, and quaffed a hearty flagon of Cyprus wine, to show that his practice matched his principles. On the next day, grave and sober as the water-drinker Mirglip, he bent his brow to the ground before Saladin's footstool, and rendered to the Soldan an account of his embassy.

On the day before that appointed for the combat Conrade and his friends set off by daybreak to repair to the place assigned, and Richard left the camp at the same hour and for the same purpose; but, as had been agreed upon, he took his journey by a different route—a precaution which had been judged necessary, to prevent the possibility of a quarrel betwixt their armed attendants.

The good King himself was in no humour for quarrelling with any one. Nothing could have added to his pleasurable anticipations of a desperate and bloody combat in the lists, except his being in his own royal person one of the combatants; and he was half in charity again even with Conrade of Montserrat. Lightly armed, richly dressed, and gay as a bridegroom on the eve of his nuptials, Richard caracoled along by the side of Queen Berengaria's litter, pointing out to her the various scenes through which they passed, and cheering with tale and song the bosom of the inhospitable wilderness. The former route of the Queen's pilgrimage

to Engaddi had been on the other side of the chain of mountains, so that the ladies were strangers to the scenery of the desert; and though Berengaria knew her husband's disposition too well not to endeavour to seem interested in what he was pleased either to say or to sing, she could not help indulging some female fears when she found herself in the howling wilderness with so small an escort, which seemed almost like a moving speck on the bosom of the plain, and knew at the same time they were not so distant from the camp of Saladin, but what they might be in a moment surprised and swept off by an overpowering host of his fiery-footed cavalry, should the pagan be faithless enough to embrace an opportunity thus tempting. But when she hinted these suspicions to Richard he repelled them with displeasure and disdain. "It were worse than ingratitude," he said, "to doubt the good faith of the generous Soldan."

Yet the same doubts and fears recurred more than once, not to the timid mind of the Queen alone, but to the firmer and more candid soul of Edith Plantagenet, who had no such confidence in the faith of the Moslem as to render her perfectly at ease when so much in their power; and her surprise had been far less than her terror, if the desert around had suddenly resounded with the shout of ALLAH HU! and a band of Arab cavalry had pounced on them like vultures on their prey. Nor were these suspicions lessened when, as evening approached, they were aware of a single Arab horseman, distinguished by his turban and long lance, hovering on the edge of a small eminence like a hawk poised in the air, and who instantly, on the appearance of the royal retinue, darted off with the speed of the same bird when it shoots down the wind and disappears from the horizon.

"We must be near the station," said King Richard; "and yonder cavalier is one of Saladin's outposts—methinks I hear the noise of the Moorish horns and cymbals. Get you into order, my hearts, and form yourselves around the ladies soldierlike and firmly."

As he spoke, each knight, squire, and archer hastily closed in upon his appointed ground, and they proceeded in the most compact order, which made their numbers appear still smaller. And to say the truth, though there might be no fear, there was anxiety as well as curiosity in the attention with which they listened to the wild bursts of Moorish music, which came ever and anon more distinctly from the quarter in which the Arab horseman had been seen to disappear.

De Vaux spoke in a whisper to the King. "Were it not well, my liege, to send a page to the top of that sand-bank? Or would it stand with your pleasure that I prick forward? Methinks, by all yonder clash and clang, if there be no more than five hundred men beyond the sand-hills, half of the Soldan's retinue must be drummers and cymbal-tossers. Shall I spur on?"

The baron had checked his horse with the bit, and was just about to strike him with the spurs when the King exclaimed, "Not for the world. Such a caution would express suspicion, and could do little to prevent surprise, which, however, I apprehend not."

They advanced accordingly in close and firm order till they surmounted the line of low sand-hills, and came in sight of the appointed station, when a splendid, but at the same time a startling, spectacle awaited them.

The Diamond of the Desert, so lately a solitary fountain, distinguished only amid the waste by solitary groups of palm-trees, was now the centre of an encampment, the embroidered flags and gilded ornaments of which glittered far and wide, and reflected a thousand rich tints against the setting sun. The coverings of the large pavilions were of the gayest colours—scarlet, bright yellow, pale blue, and other gaudy and gleaming hues—and the tops of their pillars, or tent-poles, were decorated with golden pomegranates and small silken flags. But besides these distinguished pavilions, there were what Thomas de Vaux considered as a portentous number of the ordinary black tents of the Arabs, being sufficient, as he conceived, to accommodate, according to the Eastern fashion, a host of five thousand men. A number of Arabs and Kurds, fully corresponding to the extent of the encampment, were hastily assembling, each leading his horse in his hand, and their muster was accompanied by an astonishing clamour of their noisy instruments of martial music, by which, in all ages, the warfare of the Arabs has been animated.

They soon formed a deep and confused mass of dismounted cavalry in front of their encampment, when, at the signal of a shrill cry, which arose high over the clangour of the music, each cavalier sprung to his saddle. A cloud of dust arising at the moment of this manoeuvre hid from Richard and his attendants the camp, the palm-trees, and the distant ridge of mountains, as well as the troops whose sudden movement had raised the cloud, and, ascending high over their heads, formed itself into the fantastic forms of writhed pillars, domes, and minarets. Another shrill yell was heard from the bosom of this cloudy tabernacle. It was the signal for the cavalry to advance, which they did at full gallop, disposing themselves as they came forward so as to come in at once on the front, flanks, and rear of Richard's little bodyguard, who were thus surrounded, and almost choked by the dense clouds of dust enveloping them on each side, through which were seen alternately, and lost, the grim forms and wild faces of the Saracens, brandishing and tossing their lances in every possible direction with the wildest cries and halloos, and frequently only reining up their horses when within a spear's length of the Christians, while those in the rear discharged over the heads of both parties thick volleys of arrows. One of these struck the litter in which the Queen was seated, who loudly screamed, and the red spot was on Richard's brow in an instant.

"Ha! Saint George," he exclaimed, "we must take some order with this infidel scum!"

But Edith, whose litter was near, thrust her head out, and with her hand holding one of the shafts, exclaimed, "Royal Richard, beware what you do! see, these arrows are headless!"

"Noble, sensible wench!" exclaimed Richard; "by Heaven, thou shamest us all by thy readiness of thought and eye.—Be not moved, my English hearts," he exclaimed to his followers; "their arrows have no heads—and their spears, too, lack the steel points. It is but a wild welcome, after their savage fashion, though doubtless they would rejoice to see us daunted or disturbed. Move onward, slow and steady."

The little phalanx moved forward accordingly, accompanied on all sides by the Arabs, with the shrillest and most piercing cries, the bowmen, meanwhile, displaying their agility by shooting as near the crests of the Christians as was possible, without actually hitting them, while the lancers charged each other with such rude blows of their blunt weapons that more than one of them lost his saddle, and well-nigh his life, in this rough sport. All this, though designed to express welcome, had rather a doubtful appearance in the eyes of the Europeans.

As they had advanced nearly half way towards the camp, King Richard and his suite forming, as it were, the nucleus round which this tumultuary body of horsemen howled, whooped, skirmished, and galloped, creating a scene of indescribable confusion, another shrill cry was heard, on which all these irregulars, who were on the front and upon the flanks of the little body of Europeans, wheeled off; and forming themselves into a long and deep column, followed with comparative order and silence in the rear of Richard's troops. The dust began now to dissipate in their front, when there advanced to meet them through that cloudy veil a body of cavalry of a different and more regular description, completely armed with offensive and defensive weapons, and who might well have served as a bodyguard to the proudest of Eastern monarchs. This splendid troop consisted of five hundred men and each horse which it contained was worth an earl's ransom. The riders were Georgian and Circassian slaves in the very prime of life. Their helmets and hauberks were formed of steel rings, so bright that they shone like silver; their vestures were of the gayest colours, and some of cloth of gold or silver; the sashes were twisted with silk and gold, their rich turbans were plumed and jewelled, and their sabres and poniards, of Damascene steel, were adorned with gold and gems on hilt and scabbard.

This splendid array advanced to the sound of military music, and when they met the Christian body they opened their files to the right and left, and let them enter between their ranks. Richard now assumed the foremost place in his troop, aware that Saladin himself was approaching. Nor was it long when, in the centre of his bodyguard, surrounded by his domestic officers and those hideous negroes who guard the Eastern haram, and whose misshapen forms were rendered yet more frightful by the richness of their attire, came the Soldan, with the look and manners of one on whose brow Nature had written, This is a King! In his snow-white turban, vest, and wide Eastern trousers, wearing a sash of scarlet silk, without any other ornament, Saladin might have seemed the plainest-dressed man in his own guard. But closer inspection discerned in his turban that inestimable gem which was called by the poets the Sea of Light; the diamond on which his signet was engraved, and which he wore in a ring, was probably worth all the jewels of the English crown; and a sapphire which terminated the hilt of his cangiar was not of much inferior value. It should be added that, to protect himself from the dust, which in the vicinity of the Dead Sea resembles the finest ashes, or, perhaps, out of Oriental pride, the Soldan wore a sort of veil attached to his turban, which partly obscured the view of his noble features. He rode a milk-white Arabian, which bore him as if conscious and proud of his noble burden.

There was no need of further introduction. The two heroic monarchs—for such they both were—threw themselves at once from horseback, and the troops halting and the music suddenly ceasing, they advanced to meet each other in profound silence, and after a courteous inclination on either side they embraced as

brethren and equals. The pomp and display upon both sides attracted no further notice—no one saw aught save Richard and Saladin, and they too beheld nothing but each other. The looks with which Richard surveyed Saladin were, however, more intently curious than those which the Soldan fixed upon him; and the Soldan also was the first to break silence.

"The Melech Ric is welcome to Saladin as water to this desert. I trust he hath no distrust of this numerous array. Excepting the armed slaves of my household, those who surround you with eyes of wonder and of welcome are—even the humblest of them—the privileged nobles of my thousand tribes; for who that could claim a title to be present would remain at home when such a Prince was to be seen as Richard, with the terrors of whose name, even on the sands of Yemen, the nurse stills her child, and the free Arab subdues his restive steed!"

"And these are all nobles of Araby?" said Richard, looking around on wild forms with their persons covered with haiks, their countenance swart with the sunbeams, their teeth as white as ivory, their black eyes glancing with fierce and preternatural lustre from under the shade of their turbans, and their dress being in general simple even to meanness.

"They claim such rank," said Saladin; "but though numerous, they are within the conditions of the treaty, and bear no arms but the sabre—even the iron of their lances is left behind."

"I fear," muttered De Vaux in English, "they have left them where they can be soon found. A most flourishing House of Peers, I confess, and would find Westminster Hall something too narrow for them."

"Hush, De Vaux," said Richard, "I command thee.—Noble Saladin," he said, "suspicion and thou cannot exist on the same ground. Seest thou," pointing to the litters, "I too have brought some champions with me, though armed, perhaps, in breach of agreement; for bright eyes and fair features are weapons which cannot be left behind."

The Soldan, turning to the litters, made an obeisance as lowly as if looking towards Mecca, and kissed the sand in token of respect.

"Nay," said Richard, "they will not fear a closer encounter, brother; wilt thou not ride towards their litters, and the curtains will be presently withdrawn?"

"That may Allah prohibit!" said Saladin, "since not an Arab looks on who would not think it shame to the noble ladies to be seen with their faces uncovered."

"Thou shalt see them, then, in private, brother," answered Richard.

"To what purpose?" answered Saladin mournfully. "Thy last letter was, to the hopes which I had entertained, like water to fire; and wherefore should I again light a flame which may indeed consume, but cannot cheer me? But will not my brother pass to the tent which his servant hath prepared for him? My principal black slave hath taken order for the reception of the Princesses, the officers of my household will attend your followers, and ourself will be the chamberlain of the royal Richard."

He led the way accordingly to a splendid pavilion, where was everything that royal luxury could devise. De Vaux, who was in attendance, then removed the chappe (CAPA), or long riding-cloak, which Richard wore, and he stood before Saladin in the close dress which showed to advantage the strength and symmetry of his person, while it bore a strong contrast to the flowing robes which disguised the thin frame of the Eastern monarch. It was Richard's two-handed sword that chiefly attracted the attention of the Saracen—a broad, straight blade, the seemingly unwieldy length of which extended well-nigh from the shoulder to the heel of the wearer.

"Had I not," said Saladin, "seen this brand flaming in the front of battle, like that of Azrael, I had scarce believed that human arm could wield it. Might I request to see the Melech Ric strike one blow with it in peace, and in pure trial of strength?"

"Willingly, noble Saladin," answered Richard; and looking around for something whereon to exercise his strength, he saw a steel mace held by one of the attendants, the handle being of the same metal, and about an inch and a half in diameter. This he placed on a block of wood.

The anxiety of De Vaux for his master's honour led him to whisper in English, "For the blessed Virgin's sake, beware what you attempt, my liege! Your full strength is not as yet returned—give no triumph to the infidel."

"Peace, fool!" said Richard, standing firm on his ground, and casting a fierce glance around; "thinkest thou that I can fail in HIS presence?"

The glittering broadsword, wielded by both his hands, rose aloft to the King's left shoulder, circled round his head, descended with the sway of some terrific engine, and the bar of iron rolled on the ground in two pieces, as a woodsman would sever a sapling with a hedging-bill.

"By the head of the Prophet, a most wonderful blow!" said the Soldan, critically and accurately examining the iron bar which had been cut asunder; and the blade of the sword was so well tempered as to exhibit not the least token of having suffered by the feat it had performed. He then took the King's hand, and looking on the size and muscular strength which it exhibited, laughed as he placed it beside his own, so lank and thin, so inferior in brawn and sinew.

"Ay, look well," said De Vaux in English, "it will be long ere your long jackanape's fingers do such a feat with your fine gilded reaping-hook there."

"Silence, De Vaux," said Richard; "by Our Lady, he understands or guesses thy meaning—be not so broad, I pray thee."

The Soldan, indeed, presently said, "Something I would fain attempt—though wherefore should the weak show their inferiority in presence of the strong? Yet each land hath its own exercises, and this may be new to the Melech Ric." So saying, he took from the floor a cushion of silk and down, and placed it upright on one end. "Can thy weapon, my brother, sever that cushion?" he said to King Richard.

"No, surely," replied the King; "no sword on earth, were it the Excalibur of King Arthur, can cut that which opposes no steady resistance to the blow."

"Mark, then," said Saladin; and tucking up the sleeve of his gown, showed his arm, thin indeed and spare, but which constant exercise had hardened into a mass consisting of nought but bone, brawn, and sinew. He unsheathed his scimitar, a curved and narrow blade, which glittered not like the swords of the Franks, but was, on the contrary, of a dull blue colour, marked with ten millions of meandering lines, which showed how anxiously the metal had been welded by the armourer. Wielding this weapon, apparently so inefficient when compared to that of Richard, the Soldan stood resting his weight upon his left foot, which was slightly advanced; he balanced himself a little, as if to steady his aim; then stepping at once forward, drew the scimitar across the cushion, applying the edge so dexterously, and with so little apparent effort, that the cushion seemed rather to fall asunder than to be divided by violence.

"It is a juggler's trick," said De Vaux, darting forward and snatching up the portion of the cushion which had been cut off, as if to assure himself of the reality of the feat; "there is gramarye in this."

The Soldan seemed to comprehend him, for he undid the sort of veil which he had hitherto worn, laid it double along the edge of his sabre, extended the weapon edgeways in the air, and drawing it suddenly through the veil, although it hung on the blade entirely loose, severed that also into two parts, which floated to different sides of the tent, equally displaying the extreme temper and sharpness of the weapon, and the exquisite dexterity of him who used it.

"Now, in good faith, my brother," said Richard, "thou art even matchless at the trick of the sword, and right perilous were it to meet thee! Still, however, I put some faith in a downright English blow, and what we cannot do by sleight we eke out by strength. Nevertheless, in truth thou art as expert in inflicting wounds as my sage Hakim in curing them. I trust I shall see the learned leech. I have much to thank him for, and had brought some small present."

As he spoke, Saladin exchanged his turban for a Tartar cap. He had no sooner done so, than De Vaux opened at once his extended mouth and his large, round eyes, and Richard gazed with scarce less astonishment, while the Soldan spoke in a grave and altered voice: "The sick man, saith the poet, while he is yet infirm, knoweth the physician by his step; but when he is recovered, he knoweth not even his face when he looks upon him."

"A miracle!—a miracle!" exclaimed Richard.

"Of Mahound's working, doubtless," said Thomas de Vaux.

"That I should lose my learned Hakim," said Richard, "merely by absence of his cap and robe, and that I should find him again in my royal brother Saladin!"

"Such is oft the fashion of the world," answered the Soldan; "the tattered robe makes not always the dervise."

"And it was through thy intercession," said Richard, "that yonder Knight of the Leopard was saved from death, and by thy artifice that he revisited my camp in disguise?"

"Even so," replied Saladin. "I was physician enough to know that, unless the wounds of his bleeding honour were stanch'd, the days of his life must be few. His disguise was more easily penetrated than I had expected from the success of my own."

"An accident," said King Richard (probably alluding to the circumstance of his applying his lips to the wound of the supposed Nubian), "let me first know that his skin was artificially discoloured; and that hint once taken, detection became easy, for his form and person are not to be forgotten. I confidently expect that he will do battle on the morrow."

"He is full in preparation, and high in hope," said the Soldan. "I have furnished him with weapons and horse, thinking nobly of him from what I have seen under various disguises."

"Knows he now," said Richard, "to whom he lies under obligation?"

"He doth," replied the Saracen. "I was obliged to confess my person when I unfolded my purpose."

"And confessed he aught to you?" said the King of England.

"Nothing explicit," replied the Soldan; "but from much that passed between us, I conceive his love is too highly placed to be happy in its issue."

"And thou knowest that his daring and insolent passion crossed thine own wishes?" said Richard.

"I might guess so much," said Saladin; "but his passion had existed ere my wishes had been formed—and, I must now add, is likely to survive them. I cannot, in honour, revenge me for my disappointment on him who had no hand in it. Or, if this high-born dame loved him better than myself, who can say that she did not justice to a knight of her own religion, who is full of nobleness?"

"Yet of too mean lineage to mix with the blood of Plantagenet," said Richard haughtily.

"Such may be your maxims in Frangistan," replied the Soldan. "Our poets of the Eastern countries say that a valiant camel-driver is worthy to kiss the lip of a fair Queen, when a cowardly prince is not worthy to salute the hem of her garment. But with your permission, noble brother, I must take leave of thee for the present, to receive the Duke of Austria and yonder Nazarene knight, much less worthy of hospitality, but who must yet be suitably entreated, not for their sakes, but for mine own honour—for what saith the sage Lokman? 'Say not that the food is lost unto thee which is given to the stranger; for if his body be strengthened and fattened therewithal, not less is thine own worship and good name cherished and augmented.'"

The Saracen Monarch departed from King Richard's tent, and having indicated to him, rather with signs than with speech, where the pavilion of the Queen and her attendants was pitched, he went to receive the Marquis of Montserrat and his attendants, for whom, with less goodwill, but with equal splendour, the magnificent Soldan had provided accommodations. The most ample refreshments, both in the Oriental and after the European fashion, were spread before the royal and princely guests of Saladin, each in their own separate pavilion; and so attentive was the Soldan to the habits and taste of his visitors, that Grecian slaves were stationed to present them with the goblet, which is the abomination of the sect of Mohammed. Ere Richard had finished his meal, the ancient Omrah, who had brought the Soldan's letter to the Christian camp, entered with a plan of the ceremonial to be observed on the succeeding day of combat. Richard, who knew the taste of his old acquaintance, invited him to pledge him in a flagon of wine of Shiraz; but Abdallah gave him to understand, with a rueful aspect, that self-denial in the present circumstances was a matter in which his life was concerned, for that Saladin, tolerant in many respects, both observed and enforced by high penalties the laws of the Prophet.

"Nay, then," said Richard, "if he loves not wine, that lightener of the human heart, his conversion is not to be hoped for, and the prediction of the mad priest of Engaddi goes like chaff down the wind."

The King then addressed himself to settle the articles of combat, which cost a considerable time, as it was necessary on some points to consult with the opposite parties, as well as with the Soldan.

They were at length finally agreed upon, and adjusted by a protocol in French and in Arabian, which was subscribed by Saladin as umpire of the field, and by Richard and Leopold as guarantees for the two combatants. As the Omrah took his final leave of King Richard for the evening, De Vaux entered.

"The good knight," he said, "who is to do battle tomorrow requests to know whether he may not to-night pay duty to his royal godfather!"

"Hast thou seen him, De Vaux?" said the King, smiling; "and didst thou know an ancient acquaintance?"

"By our Lady of Lanercost," answered De Vaux, "there are so many surprises and changes in this land that my poor brain turns. I scarce knew Sir Kenneth of Scotland, till his good hound, that had been for a short while under my care, came and fawned on me; and even then I only knew the tyke by the depth of his chest, the roundness of his foot, and his manner of baying, for the poor gazehound was painted like any Venetian courtesan."

"Thou art better skilled in brutes than men, De Vaux," said the King.

"I will not deny," said De Vaux, "I have found them oftentimes the honestest animals. Also, your Grace is pleased to term me sometimes a brute myself; besides that, I serve the Lion, whom all men acknowledge the king of brutes."

"By Saint George, there thou brokest thy lance fairly on my brow," said the King. "I have ever said thou hast a sort of wit, De Vaux; marry, one must strike thee with a sledge-hammer ere it can be made to sparkle. But to the present gear—is the good knight well armed and equipped?"

"Fully, my liege, and nobly," answered De Vaux. "I know the armour well; it is that which the Venetian commissary offered your highness, just ere you became ill, for five hundred byzants."

"And he hath sold it to the infidel Soldan, I warrant me, for a few ducats more, and present payment. These Venetians would sell the Sepulchre itself!"

"The armour will never be borne in a nobler cause," said De Vaux.

"Thanks to the nobleness of the Saracen," said the King, "not to the avarice of the Venetians."

"I would to God your Grace would be more cautious," said the anxious De Vaux. "Here are we deserted by all our allies, for points of offence given to one or another; we cannot hope to prosper upon the land; and we have only to quarrel with the amphibious republic, to lose the means of retreat by sea!"

"I will take care," said Richard impatiently; "but school me no more. Tell me rather, for it is of interest, hath the knight a confessor?"

"He hath," answered De Vaux; "the hermit of Engaddi, who erst did him that office when preparing for death, attends him on the present occasion, the fame of the duel having brought him hither."

"Tis well," said Richard; "and now for the knight's request. Say to him, Richard will receive him when the discharge of his devoir beside the Diamond of the Desert shall have atoned for his fault beside the Mount of Saint George; and as thou passest through the camp, let the Queen know I will visit her pavilion—and tell Blondel to meet me there."

De Vaux departed, and in about an hour afterwards, Richard, wrapping his mantle around him, and taking his ghittern in his hand, walked in the direction of the Queen's pavilion. Several Arabs passed him, but always with averted heads and looks fixed upon the earth, though he could observe that all gazed earnestly after him when he was past. This led him justly to conjecture that his person was known to them; but that either the Soldan's commands, or their own Oriental politeness, forbade them to seem to notice a sovereign who desired to remain incognito.

When the King reached the pavilion of his Queen he found it guarded by those unhappy officials whom Eastern jealousy places around the zenana. Blondel was walking before the door, and touched his rote from time to time in a manner which made the Africans show their ivory teeth, and bear burden with their strange gestures and shrill, unnatural voices.

"What art thou after with this herd of black cattle, Blondel?" said the King; "wherefore goest thou not into the tent?"

"Because my trade can neither spare the head nor the fingers," said Blondel, "and these honest blackamoors threatened to cut me joint from joint if I pressed forward."

"Well, enter with me," said the King, "and I will be thy safeguard."

The blacks accordingly lowered pikes and swords to King Richard, and bent their eyes on the ground, as if unworthy to look upon him. In the interior of the pavilion they found Thomas de Vaux in attendance on the Queen. While Berengaria welcomed Blondel, King Richard spoke for some time secretly and apart with his fair kinswoman.

At length, "Are we still foes, my fair Edith?" he said, in a whisper.

"No, my liege," said Edith, in a voice just so low as not to interrupt the music; "none can bear enmity against King Richard when he deigns to show himself, as he really is, generous and noble, as well as valiant and honourable."

So saying, she extended her hand to him. The King kissed it in token of reconciliation, and then proceeded.

"You think, my sweet cousin, that my anger in this matter was feigned; but you are deceived. The punishment I inflicted upon this knight was just; for he had betrayed—no matter for how tempting a bribe, fair cousin—the trust committed to him. But I rejoice, perchance as much as you, that to-morrow gives him a chance to win the field, and throw back the stain which for a time clung to him upon the actual thief and traitor. No!—future times may blame Richard for impetuous folly, but they shall say that in rendering judgment he was just when he should and merciful when he could."

"Laud not thyself, cousin King," said Edith. "They may call thy justice cruelty, thy mercy caprice."

"And do not thou pride thyself," said the King, "as if thy knight, who hath not yet buckled on his armour, were unbelting it in triumph—Conrade of Montserrat is held a good lance. What if the Scot should lose the day?"

"It is impossible!" said Edith firmly. "My own eyes saw yonder Conrade tremble and change colour like a base thief; he is guilty, and the trial by combat is an appeal to the justice of God. I myself, in such a cause, would encounter him without fear."

"By the mass, I think thou wouldst, wench," said the King, "and beat him to boot, for there never breathed a truer Plantagenet than thou."

He paused, and added in a very serious tone, "See that thou continue to remember what is due to thy birth."

"What means that advice, so seriously given at this moment?" said Edith. "Am I of such light nature as to forget my name—my condition?"

"I will speak plainly, Edith," answered the King, "and as to a friend. What will this knight be to you, should he come off victor from yonder lists?"

"To me?" said Edith, blushing deep with shame and displeasure. "What can he be to me more than an honoured knight, worthy of such grace as Queen Berengaria might confer on him, had he selected her for his lady, instead of a more unworthy choice? The meanest knight may devote himself to the service of an empress, but the glory of his choice," she said proudly, "must be his reward."

"Yet he hath served and suffered much for you," said the King.

"I have paid his services with honour and applause, and his sufferings with tears," answered Edith. "Had he desired other reward, he would have done wisely to have bestowed his affections within his own degree."

"You would not, then, wear the bloody night-gear for his sake?" said King Richard.

"No more," answered Edith, "than I would have required him to expose his life by an action in which there was more madness than honour."

"Maidens talk ever thus," said the King; "but when the favoured lover presses his suit, she says, with a sigh, her stars had decreed otherwise."

"Your Grace has now, for the second time, threatened me with the influence of my horoscope," Edith replied, with dignity. "Trust me, my liege, whatever be the power of the stars, your poor kinswoman will never wed either infidel or obscure adventurer. Permit me that I listen to the music of Blondel, for the tone of your royal admonitions is scarce so grateful to the ear."

The conclusion of the evening offered nothing worthy of notice.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?*
GRAY.

It had been agreed, on account of the heat of the climate, that the judicial combat which was the cause of the present assemblage of various nations at the Diamond of the Desert should take place at one hour after sunrise. The wide lists, which had been constructed under the inspection of the Knight of the Leopard, enclosed a space of hard sand, which was one hundred and twenty yards long by forty in width. They extended in length from north to south, so as to give both parties the equal advantage of the rising sun. Saladin's royal seat was erected on the western side of the enclosure, just in the centre, where the combatants were expected to meet in mid encounter. Opposed to this was a gallery with closed casements, so contrived that the ladies, for whose accommodation it was erected, might see the fight without being themselves exposed to view. At either extremity of the lists was a barrier, which could be opened or shut at pleasure. Thrones had been also erected, but the Archduke, perceiving that his was lower than King Richard's, refused to occupy it; and Coeur de Lion, who would have submitted to much ere any formality should have interfered with the combat, readily agreed that the sponsors, as they were called, should remain on horseback during the fight. At one extremity of the lists were placed the followers of Richard, and opposed to them were those who accompanied the defender Conrade. Around the throne destined for the Soldan were ranged his splendid Georgian Guards, and the rest of the enclosure was occupied by Christian and Mohammedan spectators. Long before daybreak the lists were surrounded by even a larger number of Saracens than Richard had seen on the preceding evening. When the first ray of the sun's glorious orb arose above the desert, the sonorous call, "To prayer—to prayer!" was poured forth by the Soldan himself, and answered by others, whose rank and zeal entitled them to act as muezzins. It was a striking spectacle to see them all sink to earth, for the purpose of repeating their devotions, with their faces turned to Mecca. But when they arose from the ground, the sun's rays, now strengthening fast, seemed to confirm the Lord of Gilsland's conjecture of the night before. They were flashed back from many a spearhead, for the pointless lances of the preceding day were certainly no longer such. De Vaux pointed it out to his master, who answered with impatience that he had perfect confidence in the good faith of the Soldan; but if De Vaux was afraid of his bulky body, he might retire. Soon after this the noise of timbrels was heard, at the sound of which the whole Saracen cavaliers threw themselves from their horses, and prostrated themselves, as if for a second morning prayer. This was to give an opportunity to the Queen, with Edith and her attendants, to pass from the pavilion to the gallery intended for them. Fifty guards of Saladin's seraglio escorted them with naked sabres, whose orders were to cut to pieces whomsoever, were he prince or peasant, should venture to gaze on the ladies as they passed, or even presume to raise his head until the cessation of the music should make all men aware that they were lodged in their gallery, not to be gazed on by the curious eye.

This superstitious observance of Oriental reverence to the fair sex called forth from Queen Berengaria some criticisms very unfavourable to Saladin and his country. But their den, as the royal fair called it, being securely closed and guarded by their sable attendants, she was under the necessity of contenting herself with seeing, and laying aside for the present the still more exquisite pleasure of being seen.

Meantime the sponsors of both champions went, as was their duty, to see that they were duly armed and prepared for combat. The Archduke of Austria was in no hurry to perform this part of the ceremony, having had rather an unusually severe debauch upon wine of Shiraz the preceding evening. But the Grand Master of the Temple, more deeply concerned in the event of the combat, was early before the tent of Conrade of Montserrat. To his great surprise, the attendants refused him admittance.

"Do you not know me, ye knaves?" said the Grand Master, in great anger.

"We do, most valiant and reverend," answered Conrade's squire; "but even you may not at present enter—the Marquis is about to confess himself."

"Confess himself!" exclaimed the Templar, in a tone where alarm mingled with surprise and scorn—"and to whom, I pray thee?"

"My master bid me be secret," said the squire; on which the Grand Master pushed past him, and entered the tent almost by force.

The Marquis of Montserrat was kneeling at the feet of the hermit of Engaddi, and in the act of beginning his confession.

"What means this, Marquis?" said the Grand Master; "up, for shame—or, if you must needs confess, am not I here?"

"I have confessed to you too often already," replied Conrade, with a pale cheek and a faltering voice. "For God's sake, Grand Master, begone, and let me unfold my conscience to this holy man."

"In what is he holier than I am?" said the Grand Master.—"Hermit, prophet, madman—say, if thou darest, in what thou excellest me?"

"Bold and bad man," replied the hermit, "know that I am like the latticed window, and the divine light passes through to avail others, though, alas! it helpeth not me. Thou art like the iron stanchions, which neither receive light themselves, nor communicate it to any one."

"Prate not to me, but depart from this tent," said the Grand Master; "the Marquis shall not confess this morning, unless it be to me, for I part not from his side."

"Is this YOUR pleasure?" said the hermit to Conrade; "for think not I will obey that proud man, if you continue to desire my assistance."

"Alas," said Conrade irresolutely, "what would you have me say? Farewell for a while—we will speak anon."

"O procrastination!" exclaimed the hermit, "thou art a soul-murderer!—Unhappy man, farewell—not for a while, but until we shall both meet no matter where. And for thee," he added, turning to the Grand Master, "TREMBLE!"

"Tremble!" replied the Templar contemptuously, "I cannot if I would."

The hermit heard not his answer, having left the tent.

"Come! to this gear hastily," said the Grand Master, "since thou wilt needs go through the foolery. Hark thee—I think I know most of thy frailties by heart, so we may omit the detail, which may be somewhat a long one, and begin with the absolution. What signifies counting the spots of dirt that we are about to wash from our hands?"

"Knowing what thou art thyself," said Conrade, "it is blasphemous to speak of pardoning another."

"That is not according to the canon, Lord Marquis," said the Templar; "thou art more scrupulous than orthodox. The absolution of the wicked priest is as effectual as if he were himself a saint—otherwise, God help the poor penitent! What wounded man inquires whether the surgeon that tends his gashes has clean hands or no? Come, shall we to this toy?"

"No," said Conrade, "I will rather die unconfessed than mock the sacrament."

"Come, noble Marquis," said the Templar, "rouse up your courage, and speak not thus. In an hour's time thou shalt stand victorious in the lists, or confess thee in thy helmet, like a valiant knight."

"Alas, Grand Master," answered Conrade, "all augurs ill for this affair, the strange discovery by the instinct of a dog—the revival of this Scottish knight, who comes into the lists like a spectre—all betokens evil."

"Pshaw," said the Templar, "I have seen thee bend thy lance boldly against him in sport, and with equal chance of success. Think thou art but in a tournament, and who bears him better in the tilt-yard than thou?—Come, squires and armourers, your master must be accoutred for the field."

The attendants entered accordingly, and began to arm the Marquis.

"What morning is without?" said Conrade.

"The sun rises dimly," answered a squire.

"Thou seest, Grand Master," said Conrade, "nought smiles on us."

"Thou wilt fight the more coolly, my son," answered the Templar; "thank Heaven, that hath tempered the sun of Palestine to suit thine occasion."

Thus jested the Grand Master. But his jests had lost their influence on the harassed mind of the Marquis, and notwithstanding his attempts to seem gay, his gloom communicated itself to the Templar.

"This craven," he thought, "will lose the day in pure faintness and cowardice of heart, which he calls tender conscience. I, whom visions and auguries shake not—who am firm in my purpose as the living rock—I should have fought the combat myself. Would to God the Scot may strike him dead on the spot; it were next best to his winning the victory. But come what will, he must have no other confessor than myself—our sins are too much in common, and he might confess my share with his own."

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he continued to assist the Marquis in arming, but it was in silence.

The hour at length arrived; the trumpets sounded; the knights rode into the lists armed at all points, and mounted like men who were to do battle for a kingdom's honour. They wore their visors up, and riding around the lists three times, showed themselves to the spectators. Both were goodly persons, and both had noble countenances. But there was an air of manly confidence on the brow of the Scot—a radiancy of hope, which amounted even to cheerfulness; while, although pride and effort had recalled much of Conrade's natural courage, there lowered still on his brow a cloud of ominous despondence. Even his steed seemed to tread less lightly and blithely to the trumpet-sound than the noble Arab which was bestrode by Sir Kenneth; and the SPRUCH-SPRECHER shook his head while he observed that, while the challenger rode around the lists in the course of the sun—that is, from right to left—the defender made the same circuit WIDDERSINS—that is, from left to right—which is in most countries held ominous.

A temporary altar was erected just beneath the gallery occupied by the Queen, and beside it stood the hermit in the dress of his order as a Carmelite friar. Other churchmen were also present. To this altar the challenger and defender were successively brought forward, conducted by their respective sponsors. Dismounting before it, each knight avouched the justice of his cause by a solemn oath on the Evangelists, and prayed that his success might be according to the truth or falsehood of what he then swore. They also made oath that they came to do battle in knightly guise, and with the usual weapons, disclaiming the use of spells, charms, or magical devices to incline victory to their side. The challenger pronounced his vow with a firm and manly voice, and a bold and cheerful countenance. When the ceremony was finished, the Scottish Knight looked at the gallery, and bent his head to the earth, as if in honour of those invisible beauties which were enclosed within; then, loaded with armour as he was, sprung to the saddle without the use of the stirrup, and made his courser carry him in a succession of caracoles to his station at the eastern extremity of the lists. Conrade also presented himself before the altar with boldness enough; but his voice as he took the oath sounded hollow, as if drowned in his helmet. The lips with which he appealed to Heaven to adjudge victory to the just quarrel grew white as they uttered the impious mockery. As he turned to remount his horse, the Grand Master approached him closer, as if to rectify something about the sitting of his gorget, and whispered, "Coward and fool! recall thy senses, and do me this battle bravely, else, by Heaven, shouldst thou escape him, thou escapest not ME!"

The savage tone in which this was whispered perhaps completed the confusion of the Marquis's nerves, for he stumbled as he made to horse; and though he recovered his feet, sprung to the saddle with his usual agility, and displayed his address in horsemanship as he assumed his position opposite to the challenger's, yet the accident did not escape those who were on the watch for omens which might predict the fate of the day.

The priests, after a solemn prayer that God would show the rightful quarrel, departed from the lists. The trumpets of the challenger then rung a flourish, and a herald-at-arms proclaimed at the eastern end of the lists—"Here stands a good knight, Sir Kenneth of Scotland, champion for the royal King Richard of England, who accuseth Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat, of foul treason and dishonour done to the said King."

When the words Kenneth of Scotland announced the name and character of the champion, hitherto scarce generally known, a loud and cheerful acclaim burst from the followers of King Richard, and hardly, notwithstanding repeated commands of silence, suffered the reply of the defendant to be heard. He, of course, avouched his innocence, and offered his body for battle. The esquires of the combatants now approached, and delivered to each his shield and lance, assisting to hang the former around his neck, that his two hands might remain free, one for the management of the bridle, the other to direct the lance.

The shield of the Scot displayed his old bearing, the leopard, but with the addition of a collar and broken chain, in allusion to his late captivity. The shield of the Marquis bore, in reference to his title, a serrated and rocky mountain. Each shook his lance aloft, as if to ascertain the weight and toughness of the unwieldy weapon, and then laid it in the rest. The sponsors, heralds, and squires now retired to the barriers, and the combatants sat opposite to each other, face to face, with couched lance and closed visor, the human form so completely enclosed, that they looked more like statues of molten iron than beings of flesh and blood. The silence of suspense was now general. Men breathed thicker, and their very souls seemed seated in their eyes; while not a sound was to be heard save the snorting and pawing of the good steeds, who, sensible of what was about to happen, were impatient to dash into career. They stood thus for perhaps three minutes, when, at a signal given by the Soldan, a hundred instruments rent the air with their brazen clamours, and each champion striking his horse with the spurs, and slacking the rein, the horses started into full gallop, and the knights met in mid space with a shock like a thunderbolt. The victory was not in doubt—no, not one moment. Conrade, indeed, showed himself a practised warrior; for he struck his antagonist knightly in the midst of his shield, bearing his lance so straight and true that it shivered into splinters from the steel spear-head up to the very gauntlet. The horse of Sir Kenneth recoiled two or three yards and fell on his haunches; but the rider easily raised him with hand and rein. But for Conrade there was no recovery. Sir Kenneth's lance had pierced through the shield, through a plated corselet of Milan steel, through a SECRET, or coat of linked mail, worn beneath the corselet, had wounded him deep in the bosom, and borne him from his saddle, leaving the truncheon of the lance fixed in his wound. The sponsors, heralds, and Saladin himself, descending from his throne, crowded around the wounded man; while Sir Kenneth, who had drawn his sword ere yet he discovered his antagonist was totally helpless, now commanded him to avow his guilt. The helmet was hastily unclosed, and the wounded man, gazing wildly on the skies, replied, "What would you more? God hath decided justly—I am guilty; but there are worse traitors in the camp than I. In pity to my soul, let me have a confessor!"

He revived as he uttered these words.

"The talisman—the powerful remedy, royal brother!" said King Richard to Saladin.

"The traitor," answered the Soldan, "is more fit to be dragged from the lists to the gallows by the heels, than to profit by its virtues. And some such fate is in his look," he added, after gazing fixedly upon the wounded man; "for though his wound may be cured, yet Azrael's seal is on the wretch's brow."

"Nevertheless," said Richard, "I pray you do for him what you may, that he may at least have time for confession. Slay not soul and body! To him one half hour of time may be worth more, by ten thousandfold, than the life of the oldest patriarch."

"My royal brother's wish shall be obeyed," said Saladin.—"Slaves, bear this wounded man to our tent."

"Do not so," said the Templar, who had hitherto stood gloomily looking on in silence. "The royal Duke of Austria and myself will not permit this unhappy Christian prince to be delivered over to the Saracens, that they may try their spells upon him. We are his sponsors, and demand that he be assigned to our care."

"That is, you refuse the certain means offered to recover him?" said Richard.

"Not so," said the Grand Master, recollecting himself. "If the Soldan useth lawful medicines, he may attend the patient in my tent."

"Do so, I pray thee, good brother," said Richard to Saladin, "though the permission be ungraciously yielded.—But now to a more glorious work. Sound, trumpets—shout, England—in honour of England's champion!"

Drum, clarion, trumpet, and cymbal rung forth at once, and the deep and regular shout, which for ages has been the English acclamation, sounded amidst the shrill and irregular yells of the Arabs, like the diapason of the organ amid the howling of a storm. There was silence at length.

"Brave Knight of the Leopard," resumed Coeur de Lion, "thou hast shown that the Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, though clerks quote Scripture for the impossibility. Yet I have more to say to you when I have conducted you to the presence of the ladies, the best judges and best rewarders of deeds of chivalry."

The Knight of the Leopard bowed assent.

"And thou, princely Saladin, wilt also attend them. I promise thee our Queen will not think herself welcome, if she lacks the opportunity to thank her royal host for her most princely reception."

Saladin bent his head gracefully, but declined the invitation.

"I must attend the wounded man," he said. "The leech leaves not his patient more than the champion the lists, even if he be summoned to a bower like those of Paradise. And further, royal Richard, know that the blood of the East flows not so temperately in the presence of beauty as that of your land. What saith the Book itself?—Her eye is as the edge of the sword of the Prophet, who shall look upon it? He that would not be burnt avoideth to tread on hot embers—wise men spread not the flax before a flickering torch. He, saith the sage, who hath forfeited a treasure, doth not wisely to turn back his head to gaze at it."

Richard, it may be believed, respected the motives of delicacy which flowed from manners so different from his own, and urged his request no further.

"At noon," said the Soldan, as he departed, "I trust ye will all accept a collation under the black camel-skin tent of a chief of Kurdistan."

The same invitation was circulated among the Christians, comprehending all those of sufficient importance to be admitted to sit at a feast made for princes.

"Hark!" said Richard, "the timbrels announce that our Queen and her attendants are leaving their gallery—and see, the turbans sink on the ground, as if struck down by a destroying angel. All lie prostrate, as if the glance of an Arab's eye could sully the lustre of a lady's cheek! Come, we will to the pavilion, and lead our conqueror thither in triumph. How I pity that noble Soldan, who knows but of love as it is known to those of inferior nature!"

Blondel tuned his harp to his boldest measure, to welcome the introduction of the victor into the pavilion of Queen Berengaria. He entered, supported on either side by his sponsors, Richard and Thomas Longsword, and knelt gracefully down before the Queen, though more than half the homage was silently rendered to Edith, who sat on her right hand.

"Unarm him, my mistresses," said the King, whose delight was in the execution of such chivalrous usages; "let Beauty honour Chivalry! Undo his spurs, Berengaria; Queen though thou be, thou owest him what marks of favour thou canst give.—Unlace his helmet, Edith;—by this hand thou shalt, wert thou the proudest Plantagenet of the line, and he the poorest knight on earth!"

Both ladies obeyed the royal commands—Berengaria with bustling assiduity, as anxious to gratify her husband's humour, and Edith blushing and growing pale alternately, as, slowly and awkwardly, she undid, with Longsword's assistance, the fastenings which secured the helmet to the gorget.

"And what expect you from beneath this iron shell?" said Richard, as the removal of the casque gave to view the noble countenance of Sir Kenneth, his face glowing with recent exertion, and not less so with present emotion. "What think ye of him, gallants and beauties?" said Richard. "Doth he resemble an Ethiopian slave, or doth he present the face of an obscure and nameless adventurer? No, by my good sword! Here terminate his various disguises. He hath knelt down before you unknown, save by his worth; he arises equally distinguished by birth and by fortune. The adventurous knight, Kenneth, arises David, Earl of Huntingdon, Prince Royal of Scotland!"

There was a general exclamation of surprise, and Edith dropped from her hand the helmet which she had just received.

"Yes, my masters," said the King, "it is even so. Ye know how Scotland deceived us when she proposed to send this valiant Earl, with a bold company of her best and noblest, to aid our arms in this conquest of Palestine, but failed to comply with her engagements. This noble youth, under whom the Scottish Crusaders were to have been arrayed, thought foul scorn that his arm should be withheld from the holy warfare, and joined us at Sicily with a small train of devoted and faithful attendants, which was augmented by many of his countrymen to whom the rank of their leader was unknown. The confidants of the Royal Prince had all, save one old follower, fallen by death, when his secret, but too well kept, had nearly occasioned my cutting off, in a Scottish adventurer, one of the noblest hopes of Europe.—Why did you not mention your rank, noble Huntingdon, when endangered by my hasty and passionate sentence? Was it that you thought Richard capable of abusing the advantage I possessed over the heir of a King whom I have so often found hostile?"

"I did you not that injustice, royal Richard," answered the Earl of Huntingdon; "but my pride brooked not that I should avow myself Prince of Scotland in order to save my life, endangered for default of loyalty. And, moreover, I had made my vow to preserve my rank unknown till the Crusade should be accomplished; nor did I mention it save IN ARTICULO MORTIS, and under the seal of confession, to yonder reverend hermit."

"It was the knowledge of that secret, then, which made the good man so urgent with me to recall my severe sentence?" said Richard. "Well did he say that, had this good knight fallen by my mandate, I should have wished the deed undone though it had cost me a limb. A limb! I should have wished it undone had it cost me my life—since the world would have said that Richard had abused the condition in which the heir of Scotland had placed himself by his confidence in his generosity."

"Yet, may we know of your Grace by what strange and happy chance this riddle was at length read?" said the Queen Berengaria.

"Letters were brought to us from England," said the King, "in which we learned, among other unpleasant news, that the King of Scotland had seized upon three of our nobles, when on a pilgrimage to Saint Ninian, and alleged, as a cause, that his heir, being supposed to be fighting in the ranks of the Teutonic Knights against the heathen of Borussia, was, in fact, in our camp, and in our power; and, therefore, William proposed to hold these nobles as hostages for his safety. This gave me the first light on the real rank of the Knight of the Leopard; and my suspicions were confirmed by De Vaux, who, on his return from Ascalon, brought back with him the Earl of Huntingdon's sole attendant, a thick-skulled slave, who had gone thirty miles to unfold to De Vaux a secret he should have told to me."

"Old Strauchan must be excused," said the Lord of Gilsland. "He knew from experience that my heart is somewhat softer than if I wrote myself Plantagenet."

"Thy heart soft? thou commodity of old iron and Cumberland flint, that thou art!" exclaimed the King.—"It is we Plantagenets who boast soft and feeling hearts. Edith," turning to his cousin with an expression which called the blood into her cheek, "give me thy hand, my fair cousin, and, Prince of Scotland, thine."

"Forbear, my lord," said Edith, hanging back, and endeavouring to hide her confusion under an attempt to rally her royal kinsman's credulity. "Remember you not that my hand was to be the signal of converting to the Christian faith the Saracen and Arab, Saladin and all his turbaned host?"

"Ay, but the wind of prophecy hath chopped about, and sits now in another corner," replied Richard.

"Mock not, lest your bonds be made strong," said the hermit stepping forward. "The heavenly host write nothing but truth in their brilliant records. It is man's eyes which are too weak to read their characters aright. Know, that when Saladin and Kenneth of Scotland slept in my grotto, I read in the stars that there rested under my roof a prince, the natural foe of Richard, with whom the fate of Edith Plantagenet was to be united. Could I doubt that this must be the Soldan, whose rank was well known to me, as he often visited my cell to converse on the revolutions of the heavenly bodies? Again, the lights of the firmament proclaimed that this prince, the husband of Edith Plantagenet, should be a Christian; and I—weak and wild interpreter!—argued thence the conversion of the noble Saladin, whose good qualities seemed often to incline him towards the better faith. The sense of my weakness hath humbled me to the dust; but in the dust I have found comfort! I have not read aright the fate of others—who can assure me but that I may have miscalculated mine own? God will not have us break into His council-house, or spy out His hidden mysteries. We must wait His time with watching and prayer—with fear and with hope. I came hither the stern seer—the proud prophet—skilled, as I thought, to instruct princes, and gifted even with supernatural powers, but burdened with a weight which I deemed no shoulders but mine could have borne. But my bands have been broken! I go hence humble in mine ignorance, penitent—and not hopeless."

With these words he withdrew from the assembly; and it is recorded that from that period his frenzy fits seldom occurred, and his penances were of a milder character, and accompanied with better hopes of the future. So much is there of self-opinion, even in insanity, that the conviction of his having entertained and expressed an unfounded prediction with so much vehemence seemed to operate like loss of blood on the human frame, to modify and lower the fever of the brain. It is needless to follow into further particulars the conferences at the royal tent, or to inquire whether David, Earl of Huntingdon, was as mute in the presence of Edith Plantagenet as when he was bound to act under the character of an obscure and nameless adventurer. It may be well believed that he there expressed with suitable earnestness the passion to which he had so often before found it difficult to give words.

The hour of noon now approached, and Saladin waited to receive the Princes of Christendom in a tent, which, but for its large size, differed little from that of the ordinary shelter of the common Kurdman, or Arab; yet beneath its ample and sable covering was prepared a banquet after the most gorgeous fashion of the East, extended upon carpets of the richest stuffs, with cushions laid for the guests. But we cannot stop to describe the cloth of gold and silver—the superb embroidery in arabesque—the shawls of Kashmere and the muslins of India, which were here unfolded in all their splendour; far less to tell the different sweetmeats, ragouts edged with rice coloured in various manners, with all the other niceties of Eastern cookery. Lambs roasted whole, and game and poultry dressed in pilaus, were piled in vessels of gold, and silver, and porcelain, and intermixed with large mazers of sherbet, cooled in snow and ice from the caverns of Mount Lebanon. A magnificent pile of cushions at the head of the banquet seemed prepared for the master of the feast, and such dignitaries as he might call to share that place of distinction; while from the roof of the tent in all quarters, but over this seat of eminence in particular, waved many a banner and pennon, the trophies of battles won and kingdoms overthrown. But amongst and above them all, a long lance displayed a shroud, the banner of Death, with this impressive inscription—"SALADIN, KING OF KINGS—SALADIN, VICTOR OF VICTORS—SALADIN MUST DIE." Amid these preparations, the slaves who had arranged the refreshments stood with drooped heads and folded arms, mute and motionless as monumental statuary, or as automata, which waited the touch of the artist to put them in motion.

Expecting the approach of his princely guests, the Soldan, imbued, as most were, with the superstitions of his time, paused over a horoscope and corresponding scroll, which had been sent to him by the hermit of Engaddi when he departed from the camp.

"Strange and mysterious science," he muttered to himself, "which, pretending to draw the curtain of futurity, misleads those whom it seems to guide, and darkens the scene which it pretends to illuminate! Who would not have said that I was that enemy most dangerous to Richard, whose enmity was to be ended by marriage with his kinswoman? Yet it now appears that a union betwixt this gallant Earl and the lady will bring about friendship betwixt Richard and Scotland, an enemy more dangerous than I, as a wildcat in a chamber is more to be dreaded than a lion in a distant desert. But then," he continued to mutter to himself, "the combination intimates that this husband was to be Christian.—Christian!" he repeated, after a pause. "That gave the insane fanatic star-gazer hopes that I might renounce my faith! But me, the faithful follower of our Prophet—me it should have undeceived. Lie there, mysterious scroll," he added, thrusting it under the pile of cushions; "strange are thy bodements and fatal, since, even when true in themselves, they work upon those who attempt to decipher their meaning all the effects of falsehood.—How now! what means this intrusion?"

He spoke to the dwarf Nectabanus, who rushed into the tent fearfully agitated, with each strange and disproportioned feature wrenched by horror into still more extravagant ugliness—his mouth open, his eyes staring, his hands, with their shrivelled and deformed fingers, wildly expanded.

"What now?" said the Soldan sternly.

"ACCIPE HOC!" groaned out the dwarf.

"Ha! sayest thou?" answered Saladin.

"ACCIPE HOC!" replied the panic-struck creature, unconscious, perhaps, that he repeated the same words as before.

"Hence, I am in no vein for foolery," said the Emperor.

"Nor am I further fool," said the dwarf, "than to make my folly help out my wits to earn my bread, poor, helpless wretch! Hear, hear me, great Soldan!"

"Nay, if thou hast actual wrong to complain of," said Saladin, "fool or wise, thou art entitled to the ear of a King. Retire hither with me;" and he led him into the inner tent.

Whatever their conference related to, it was soon broken off by the fanfare of the trumpets announcing the arrival of the various Christian princes, whom Saladin welcomed to his tent with a royal courtesy well becoming their rank and his own; but chiefly he saluted the young Earl of Huntingdon, and generously congratulated him upon prospects which seemed to have interfered with and overclouded those which he had himself entertained.

"But think not," said the Soldan, "thou noble youth, that the Prince of Scotland is more welcome to Saladin than was Kenneth to the solitary Ilderim when they met in the desert, or the distressed Ethiop to the Hakim Adonbec. A brave and generous disposition like thine hath a value independent of condition and birth, as the cool draught, which I here proffer thee, is as delicious from an earthen vessel as from a goblet of gold."

The Earl of Huntingdon made a suitable reply, gratefully acknowledging the various important services he had received from the generous Soldan; but when he had pledged Saladin in the bowl of sherbet which the Soldan had proffered to him, he could not help remarking with a smile, "The brave cavalier Ilderim knew not of the formation of ice, but the munificent Soldan cools his sherbet with snow."

"Wouldst thou have an Arab or a Kurdman as wise as a Hakim?" said the Soldan. "He who does on a disguise must make the sentiments of his heart and the learning of his head accord with the dress which he assumes. I desired to see how a brave and single-hearted cavalier of Frangistan would conduct himself in debate with such a chief as I then seemed; and I questioned the truth of a well-known fact, to know by what arguments thou wouldst support thy assertion."

While they were speaking, the Archduke of Austria, who stood a little apart, was struck with the mention of iced sherbet, and took with pleasure and some bluntness the deep goblet, as the Earl of Huntingdon was about to replace it.

"Most delicious!" he exclaimed, after a deep draught, which the heat of the weather, and the feverishness following the debauch of the preceding day, had rendered doubly acceptable. He sighed as he handed the cup to the Grand Master of the Templars. Saladin made a sign to the dwarf, who advanced and pronounced, with a harsh voice, the words, ACCIPE HOC! The Templar started, like a steed who sees a lion under a bush beside the pathway; yet instantly recovered, and to hide, perhaps, his confusion, raised the goblet to his lips. But those lips never touched that goblet's rim. The sabre of Saladin left its sheath as lightning leaves the cloud. It was waved in the air, and the head of the Grand Master rolled to the extremity of the tent, while the trunk remained for a second standing, with the goblet still clenched in its grasp, then fell, the liquor mingling with the blood that spouted from the veins.

There was a general exclamation of treason, and Austria, nearest to whom Saladin stood with the bloody sabre in his hand, started back as if apprehensive that his turn was to come next. Richard and others laid hand on their swords.

"Fear nothing, noble Austria," said Saladin, as composedly as if nothing had happened,— "nor you, royal England, be wroth at what you have seen. Not for his manifold treasons—not for the attempt which, as may be vouched by his own squire, he instigated against King Richard's life—not that he pursued the Prince of Scotland and myself in the desert, reducing us to save our lives by the speed of our horses—not that he had stirred up the Maronites to attack us upon this very occasion, had I not brought up unexpectedly so many Arabs as rendered the scheme abortive—not for any or all of these crimes does he now lie there, although each were deserving such a doom—but because, scarce half an hour ere he polluted our presence, as the simoom empoisons the atmosphere, he poniarded his comrade and accomplice, Conrade of Montserrat, lest he should confess the infamous plots in which they had both been engaged."

"How! Conrade murdered?—And by the Grand Master, his sponsor and most intimate friend!" exclaimed Richard. "Noble Soldan, I would not doubt thee; yet this must be proved, otherwise—"

"There stands the evidence," said Saladin, pointing to the terrified dwarf. "Allah, who sends the fire-fly to illuminate the night season, can discover secret crimes by the most contemptible means."

The Soldan proceeded to tell the dwarf's story, which amounted to this. In his foolish curiosity, or, as he partly confessed, with some thoughts of pilfering, Nectabanus had strayed into the tent of Conrade, which had been deserted by his attendants, some of whom had left the encampment to carry the news of his defeat to his brother, and others were availing themselves of the means which Saladin had supplied for revelling. The wounded man slept under the influence of Saladin's wonderful talisman, so that the dwarf had opportunity to pry about at pleasure until he was frightened into concealment by the sound of a heavy step. He skulked behind a curtain, yet could see the motions, and hear the words, of the Grand Master, who entered, and carefully secured the covering of the pavilion behind him. His victim started from sleep, and it would appear that he instantly suspected the purpose of his old associate, for it was in a tone of alarm that he demanded wherefore he disturbed him.

"I come to confess and to absolve thee," answered the Grand Master.

Of their further speech the terrified dwarf remembered little, save that Conrade implored the Grand Master not to break a wounded reed, and that the Templar struck him to the heart with a Turkish dagger, with the words ACCIPE HOC!—words which long afterwards haunted the terrified imagination of the concealed witness.

"I verified the tale," said Saladin, "by causing the body to be examined; and I made this unhappy being, whom Allah hath made the discoverer of the crime, repeat in your own presence the words which the murderer spoke; and you yourselves saw the effect which they produced upon his conscience!"

The Soldan paused, and the King of England broke silence.

"If this be true, as I doubt not, we have witnessed a great act of justice, though it bore a different aspect. But wherefore in this presence? wherefore with thine own hand?"

"I had designed otherwise," said Saladin. "But had I not hastened his doom, it had been altogether averted, since, if I had permitted him to taste of my cup, as he was about to do, how could I, without incurring the brand of inhospitality, have done him to death as he deserved? Had he murdered my father, and afterwards partaken of my food and my bowl, not a hair of his head could have been injured by me. But enough of him—let his carcass and his memory be removed from amongst us."

The body was carried away, and the marks of the slaughter obliterated or concealed with such ready dexterity, as showed that the case was not altogether so uncommon as to paralyze the assistants and officers of Saladin's household.

But the Christian princes felt that the scene which they had beheld weighed heavily on their spirits, and although, at the courteous invitation of the Soldan, they assumed their seats at the banquet, yet it was with the silence of doubt and amazement. The spirits of Richard alone surmounted all cause for suspicion or embarrassment. Yet he too seemed to ruminate on some proposition, as if he were desirous of making it in the most insinuating and acceptable manner which was possible. At length he drank off a large bowl of wine, and addressing the Soldan, desired to know whether it was not true that he had honoured the Earl of Huntingdon with a personal encounter.

Saladin answered with a smile that he had proved his horse and his weapons with the heir of Scotland, as cavaliers are wont to do with each other when they meet in the desert; and modestly added that, though the combat was not entirely decisive, he had not on his part much reason to pride himself on the event. The Scot, on the other hand, disclaimed the attributed superiority, and wished to assign it to the Soldan.

"Enough of honour thou hast had in the encounter," said Richard, "and I envy thee more for that than for the smiles of Edith Plantagenet, though one of them might reward a bloody day's work.—But what say you, noble princes? Is it fitting that such a royal ring of chivalry should break up without something being done for future times to speak of? What is the overthrow and death of a traitor to such a fair garland of honour as is here assembled, and which ought not to part without witnessing something more worthy of their regard?—How say you, princely Soldan? What if we two should now, and before this fair company, decide the long-contended question for this land of Palestine, and end at once these tedious wars? Yonder are the lists ready, nor can Paynimrie ever hope a better champion than thou. I, unless worthier offers, will lay down my gauntlet in behalf of Christendom, and in all love and honour we will do mortal battle for the possession of Jerusalem."

There was a deep pause for the Soldan's answer. His cheek and brow coloured highly, and it was the opinion of many present that he hesitated whether he should accept the challenge. At length he said, "Fighting for the Holy City against those whom we regard as idolaters and worshippers of stocks and stones and graven images, I might confide that Allah would strengthen my arm; or if I fell beneath the sword of the Melech Ric, I could not pass to Paradise by a more glorious death. But Allah has already given Jerusalem to the true believers, and it were a tempting the God of the Prophet to peril, upon my own personal strength and skill, that which I hold securely by the superiority of my forces."

"If not for Jerusalem, then," said Richard, in the tone of one who would entreat a favour of an intimate friend, "yet, for the love of honour, let us run at least three courses with grinded lances?"

"Even this," said Saladin, half smiling at Coeur de Lion's affectionate earnestness for the combat—"even this I may not lawfully do. The master places the shepherd over the flock not for the shepherd's own sake, but for the sake of the sheep. Had I a son to hold the sceptre when I fell, I might have had the liberty, as I have the will, to brave this bold encounter; but your own Scripture saith that when the herdsman is smitten, the sheep are scattered."

"Thou hast had all the fortune," said Richard, turning to the Earl of Huntingdon with a sigh. "I would have given the best year in my life for that one half hour beside the Diamond of the Desert!"

The chivalrous extravagance of Richard awakened the spirits of the assembly, and when at length they arose to depart Saladin advanced and took Coeur de Lion by the hand.

"Noble King of England," he said, "we now part, never to meet again. That your league is dissolved, no more to be reunited, and that your native forces are far too few to enable you to prosecute your enterprise, is as well known to me as to yourself. I may not yield you up that Jerusalem which you so much desire to hold—it is to us, as to you, a Holy City. But whatever other terms Richard demands of Saladin shall be as willingly yielded as yonder fountain yields its waters. Ay and the same should be as frankly afforded by Saladin if Richard stood in the desert with but two archers in his train!"

The next day saw Richard's return to his own camp, and in a short space afterwards the young Earl of Huntingdon was espoused by Edith Plantagenet. The Soldan sent, as a nuptial present on this occasion, the celebrated TALISMAN. But though many cures were wrought by means of it in Europe, none equalled in success and celebrity those which the Soldan achieved. It is still in existence, having been bequeathed by the Earl of Huntingdon to a brave knight of Scotland, Sir Simon of the Lee, in whose ancient and highly honoured family it is still preserved; and although charmed stones have been dismissed from the modern Pharmacopoeia, its virtues are still applied to for stopping blood, and in cases of canine madness.

Our Story closes here, as the terms on which Richard relinquished his conquests are to be found in every history of the period.

BOOK IV
IVANHOE
CHAPTER I

*Thus communed these; while to their lowly dome,
The full-fed swine return'd with evening home;
Compell'd, reluctant, to the several sties,
With din obstreperous, and ungrateful cries.
Pope's Odyssey*

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. The remains of this extensive wood are still to be seen at the noble seats of Wentworth, of Warncliffe Park, and around Rotherham. Here haunted of yore the fabulous Dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I., when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression. The nobles, whose power had become exorbitant during the reign of Stephen, and whom the prudence of Henry the Second had scarce reduced to some degree of subjection to the crown, had now resumed their ancient license in its utmost extent; despising the feeble interference of the English Council of State, fortifying their castles, increasing the number of their dependants, reducing all around them to a state of vassalage, and striving by every means in their power, to place themselves each at the head of such forces as might enable him to make a figure in the national convulsions which appeared to be impending.

The situation of the inferior gentry, or Franklins, as they were called, who, by the law and spirit of the English constitution, were entitled to hold themselves independent of feudal tyranny, became now unusually precarious. If, as was most generally the case, they placed themselves under the protection of any of the petty kings in their vicinity, accepted of feudal offices in his household, or bound themselves by mutual treaties of alliance and protection, to support him in his enterprises, they might indeed purchase temporary repose; but it must be with the sacrifice of that independence which was so dear to every English bosom, and at the certain hazard of being involved as a party in whatever rash expedition the ambition of their protector might lead him to undertake. On the other hand, such and so multiplied were the means of vexation and oppression possessed by the great Barons, that they never wanted the pretext, and seldom the will, to harass and pursue, even to the very edge of destruction, any of their less powerful neighbours, who attempted to separate themselves from their authority, and to trust for their protection, during the dangers of the times, to their own inoffensive conduct, and to the laws of the land.

A circumstance which greatly tended to enhance the tyranny of the nobility, and the sufferings of the inferior classes, arose from the consequences of the Conquest by Duke William of Normandy. Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat. The power had been completely placed in the hands of the Norman nobility, by the event of the battle of Hastings, and it had been used, as our histories assure us, with no moderate hand. The whole race of Saxon princes and nobles had been extirpated or disinherited, with few or no exceptions; nor were the numbers great who possessed land in the country of their fathers, even as proprietors of the second, or of yet inferior classes. The royal policy had long been to weaken, by every means, legal or illegal, the strength of a part of the population which was justly considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to their victor. All the monarchs of the Norman race had shown the most marked predilection for their Norman subjects; the laws of the chase, and many others equally unknown to the milder and more free spirit of the Saxon constitution, had been fixed upon the necks of the subjugated inhabitants, to add weight, as it were, to the feudal chains with which they were loaded. At court, and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of a court was emulated, Norman-French was the only language employed; in courts of law, the pleadings and judgments were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other. Still, however, the necessary intercourse between the lords of the soil, and those oppressed inferior beings by whom that soil was cultivated, occasioned the gradual formation of a dialect, compounded betwixt the French and the Anglo-Saxon, in which they could render themselves mutually intelligible to each other; and from this necessity arose by degrees the structure of our present English language, in which the speech of the victors and the vanquished have been so happily blended together; and which has since been so richly improved by importations from the classical languages, and from those spoken by the southern nations of Europe.

This state of things I have thought it necessary to premise for the information of the general reader, who might be apt to forget, that, although no great historical events, such as war or insurrection, mark the existence of the Anglo-Saxons as a separate people subsequent to the reign of William the Second; yet the great national distinctions betwixt them and their conquerors, the recollection of what they had formerly been, and to what they were now reduced, continued down to the reign of Edward the Third, to keep open the wounds which the Conquest had inflicted, and to maintain a line of separation betwixt the descendants of the victor Normans and the vanquished Saxons.

The sun was setting upon one of the rich grassy glades of that forest, which we have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious green sward; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies, and copsewood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas, in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silvan solitude. Here the red rays of the sun shot a broken and discoloured light, that partially hung upon the shattered boughs and mossy trunks of the trees, and there they illuminated in brilliant patches the portions of turf to which they made their way. A considerable open space, in the midst of this glade, seemed formerly to have been dedicated to the rites of Druidical superstition; for, on the summit of a hillock, so regular as to seem artificial, there still remained part of a circle of rough unhewn stones, of large dimensions. Seven stood upright; the rest had been dislodged from their places, probably by the zeal of some convert to Christianity, and lay, some prostrate near their former site, and others on the side of the hill. One large stone only had found its way to the bottom, and in stopping the course of a small brook, which glided smoothly round the foot of the eminence, gave, by its opposition, a feeble voice of murmur to the placid and elsewhere silent streamlet.

The human figures which completed this landscape, were in number two, partaking, in their dress and appearance, of that wild and rustic character, which belonged to the woodlands of the West-Riding of Yorkshire at that early period. The eldest of these men had a stern, savage, and wild aspect. His garment was of the simplest form imaginable, being a close jacket with sleeves, composed of the tanned skin of some animal, on which the hair had been originally left, but which had been worn off in so many places, that it would have been difficult to distinguish from the patches that remained, to what creature the fur had belonged. This primeval vestment reached from the throat to the knees, and served at once all the usual purposes of body-clothing; there was no wider opening at the collar, than was necessary to admit the passage of the head, from which it may be inferred, that it was put on by slipping it over the head and shoulders, in the manner of a modern shirt, or ancient hauberk. Sandals, bound with thongs made of boars' hide, protected the feet, and a roll of thin leather was twined artificially round the legs, and, ascending above the calf, left the knees bare, like those of a Scottish Highlander. To make the jacket sit yet more close to the body, it was gathered at the middle by a broad leathern belt, secured by a brass buckle; to one side of which was attached a sort of scrip, and to the other a ram's horn, accoutred with a mouthpiece, for the purpose of blowing. In the same belt was stuck one of those long, broad, sharp-pointed, and two-edged knives, with a buck's-horn handle, which were fabricated in the neighbourhood, and bore even at this early period the name of a Sheffield whittle. The man had no covering upon his head, which was only defended by his own thick hair, matted and twisted together, and scorched by the influence of the sun into a rusty dark-red colour, forming a contrast with the overgrown beard upon his cheeks, which was rather of a yellow or amber hue. One part of his dress only remains, but it is too remarkable to be

suppressed; it was a brass ring, resembling a dog's collar, but without any opening, and soldered fast round his neck, so loose as to form no impediment to his breathing, yet so tight as to be incapable of being removed, excepting by the use of the file. On this singular gorget was engraved, in Saxon characters, an inscription of the following purport:—"Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood."

Beside the swine-herd, for such was Gurth's occupation, was seated, upon one of the fallen Druidical monuments, a person about ten years younger in appearance, and whose dress, though resembling his companion's in form, was of better materials, and of a more fantastic appearance. His jacket had been stained of a bright purple hue, upon which there had been some attempt to paint grotesque ornaments in different colours. To the jacket he added a short cloak, which scarcely reached half way down his thigh; it was of crimson cloth, though a good deal soiled, lined with bright yellow; and as he could transfer it from one shoulder to the other, or at his pleasure draw it all around him, its width, contrasted with its want of longitude, formed a fantastic piece of drapery. He had thin silver bracelets upon his arms, and on his neck a collar of the same metal bearing the inscription, "Wamba, the son of Witless, is the thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood." This personage had the same sort of sandals with his companion, but instead of the roll of leather thong, his legs were cased in a sort of gaiters, of which one was red and the other yellow. He was provided also with a cap, having around it more than one bell, about the size of those attached to hawks, which jingled as he turned his head to one side or other; and as he seldom remained a minute in the same posture, the sound might be considered as incessant. Around the edge of this cap was a stiff bandeau of leather, cut at the top into open work, resembling a coronet, while a prolonged bag arose from within it, and fell down on one shoulder like an old-fashioned nightcap, or a jelly-bag, or the head-gear of a modern hussar. It was to this part of the cap that the bells were attached; which circumstance, as well as the shape of his head-dress, and his own half-crazed, half-cunning expression of countenance, sufficiently pointed him out as belonging to the race of domestic clowns or jesters, maintained in the houses of the wealthy, to help away the tedium of those lingering hours which they were obliged to spend within doors. He bore, like his companion, a scrip, attached to his belt, but had neither horn nor knife, being probably considered as belonging to a class whom it is esteemed dangerous to intrust with edge-tools. In place of these, he was equipped with a sword of lath, resembling that with which Harlequin operates his wonders upon the modern stage.

The outward appearance of these two men formed scarce a stronger contrast than their look and demeanour. That of the serf, or bondsman, was sad and sullen; his aspect was bent on the ground with an appearance of deep dejection, which might be almost construed into apathy, had not the fire which occasionally sparkled in his red eye manifested that there slumbered, under the appearance of sullen despondency, a sense of oppression, and a disposition to resistance. The looks of Wamba, on the other hand, indicated, as usual with his class, a sort of vacant curiosity, and fidgetty impatience of any posture of repose, together with the utmost self-satisfaction respecting his own situation, and the appearance which he made. The dialogue which they maintained between them, was carried on in Anglo-Saxon, which, as we said before, was universally spoken by the inferior classes, excepting the Norman soldiers, and the immediate personal dependants of the great feudal nobles. But to give their conversation in the original would convey but little information to the modern reader, for whose benefit we beg to offer the following translation:

"The curse of St Withold upon these infernal porkers!" said the swine-herd, after blowing his horn obstreperously, to collect together the scattered herd of swine, which, answering his call with notes equally melodious, made, however, no haste to remove themselves from the luxurious banquet of beech-mast and acorns on which they had fattened, or to forsake the marshy banks of the rivulet, where several of them, half plunged in mud, lay stretched at their ease, altogether regardless of the voice of their keeper. "The curse of St Withold upon them and upon me!" said Gurth; "if the two-legged wolf snap not up some of them ere nightfall, I am no true man. Here, Fangs! Fangs!" he ejaculated at the top of his voice to a ragged wolfish-looking dog, a sort of lurcher, half mastiff, half greyhound, which ran limping about as if with the purpose of seconding his master in collecting the refractory grunTERS; but which, in fact, from misapprehension of the swine-herd's signals, ignorance of his own duty, or malice prepense, only drove them hither and thither, and increased the evil which he seemed to design to remedy. "A devil draw the teeth of him," said Gurth, "and the mother of mischief confound the Ranger of the forest, that cuts the foreclaws off our dogs, and makes them unfit for their trade! 8 Wamba, up and help me an thou be'st a man; take a turn round the back o' the hill to gain the wind on them; and when thou'st got the weather-gage, thou mayst drive them before thee as gently as so many innocent lambs."

"Truly," said Wamba, without stirring from the spot, "I have consulted my legs upon this matter, and they are altogether of opinion, that to carry my gay garments through these sloughs, would be an act of unfriendship to my sovereign person and royal wardrobe; wherefore, Gurth, I advise thee to call off Fangs, and leave the herd to their destiny, which, whether they meet with bands of travelling soldiers, or of outlaws, or of wandering pilgrims, can be little else than to be converted into Normans before morning, to thy no small ease and comfort."

"The swine turned Normans to my comfort!" quoth Gurth; "expound that to me, Wamba, for my brain is too dull, and my mind too vexed, to read riddles."

"Why, how call you those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine," said the herd, "every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon," said the Jester; "but how call you the sow when she is flayed, and drawn, and quartered, and hung up by the heels, like a traitor?"

"Pork," answered the swine-herd.

"I am very glad every fool knows that too," said Wamba, "and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in the charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman, and is called pork, when she is carried to the Castle-hall to feast among the nobles; what dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?"

"It is but too true doctrine, friend Wamba, however it got into thy fool's pate."

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba, in the same tone; "there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet, while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."

"By St Dunstan," answered Gurth, "thou speakest but sad truths; little is left to us but the air we breathe, and that appears to have been reserved with much hesitation, solely for the purpose of enabling us to endure the tasks they lay upon our shoulders. The finest and the fattest is for their board; the loveliest is for their couch; the best and bravest supply their foreign masters with soldiers, and whiten distant lands with their bones, leaving few here who have either will or the power to protect the unfortunate Saxon. God's blessing on our master Cedric, he hath done the work of a man in standing in the gap; but Reginald Front-de-Boeuf is coming down to this country in person, and we shall soon see how little Cedric's trouble will avail him.—Here, here," he exclaimed again, raising his voice, "So ho! so ho! well done, Fangs! thou hast them all before thee now, and bring'st them on bravely, lad."

"Gurth," said the Jester, "I know thou thinkest me a fool, or thou wouldst not be so rash in putting thy head into my mouth. One word to Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, or Philip de Malvoisin, that thou hast spoken treason against the Norman,—and thou art but a cast-away swineherd,—thou wouldst waver on one of these trees as a terror to all evil speakers against dignities."

"Dog, thou wouldst not betray me," said Gurth, "after having led me on to speak so much at disadvantage?"

"Betray thee!" answered the Jester; "no, that were the trick of a wise man; a fool cannot half so well help himself—but soft, whom have we here?" he said, listening to the trampling of several horses which became then audible.

"Never mind whom," answered Gurth, who had now got his herd before him, and, with the aid of Fangs, was driving them down one of the long dim vistas which we have endeavoured to describe.

"Nay, but I must see the riders," answered Wamba; "perhaps they are come from Fairy-land with a message from King Oberon."

"A murrain take thee," rejoined the swine-herd; "wilt thou talk of such things, while a terrible storm of thunder and lightning is raging within a few miles of us? Hark, how the thunder rumbles! and for summer rain, I never saw such broad downright flat drops fall out of the clouds; the oaks, too, notwithstanding the calm weather, sob and creak with their great boughs as if announcing a tempest. Thou canst play the rational if thou wilt; credit me for once, and let us home ere the storm begins to rage, for the night will be fearful."

Wamba seemed to feel the force of this appeal, and accompanied his companion, who began his journey after catching up a long quarter-staff which lay upon the grass beside him. This second Eumaeus strode hastily down the forest glade, driving before him, with the assistance of Fangs, the whole herd of his inharmonious charge.

CHAPTER II

*A Monk there was, a fayre for the maistrie,
An outrider that loved venerie;
A manly man, to be an Abbot able,
Full many a daintie horse had he in stable:
And whan he rode, men might his bridle hear
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud, as doth the chapell bell,
There as this lord was keeper of the cell.
—Chaucer.*

Notwithstanding the occasional exhortation and chiding of his companion, the noise of the horsemen's feet continuing to approach, Wamba could not be prevented from lingering occasionally on the road, upon every pretence which occurred; now catching from the hazel a cluster of half-ripe nuts, and now turning his head to leer after a cottage maiden who crossed their path. The horsemen, therefore, soon overtook them on the road.

Their numbers amounted to ten men, of whom the two who rode foremost seemed to be persons of considerable importance, and the others their attendants. It was not difficult to ascertain the condition and character of one of these personages. He was obviously an ecclesiastic of high rank; his dress was that of a Cistercian Monk, but composed of materials much finer than those which the rule of that order admitted. His mantle and hood were of the best Flanders cloth, and fell in ample, and not ungraceful folds, around a handsome, though somewhat corpulent person. His countenance bore as little the marks of self-denial, as his habit indicated contempt of worldly splendour. His features might have been called good, had there not lurked under the pent-house of his eye, that sly epicurean twinkle which indicates the cautious voluptuary. In other respects, his profession and situation had taught him a ready command over his countenance, which he could contract at pleasure into solemnity, although its natural expression was that of good-humoured social indulgence. In defiance of conventual rules, and the edicts of popes and councils, the sleeves of this dignitary were lined and turned up with rich furs, his mantle secured at the throat with a golden clasp, and the whole dress proper to his order as much refined upon and ornamented, as that of a quaker beauty of the present day, who, while she retains the garb and costume of her sect continues to give to its simplicity, by the choice of materials and the mode of disposing them, a certain air of coquettish attraction, savouring but too much of the vanities of the world.

This worthy churchman rode upon a well-fed ambling mule, whose furniture was highly decorated, and whose bridle, according to the fashion of the day, was ornamented with silver bells. In his seat he had nothing of the awkwardness of the convent, but displayed the easy and habitual grace of a well-trained horseman. Indeed, it seemed that so humble a conveyance as a mule, in however good case, and however well broken to a pleasant and accommodating amble, was only used by the gallant monk for travelling on the road. A lay brother, one of those who followed in the train, had, for his use on other occasions, one of the most handsome Spanish jennets ever bred at Andalusia, which merchants used at that time to import, with great trouble and risk, for the use of persons of wealth and distinction. The saddle and housings of this superb palfrey were covered by a long foot-cloth, which reached nearly to the ground, and on which were richly embroidered, mitres, crosses, and other ecclesiastical emblems. Another lay brother led a sumpter mule, loaded probably with his superior's baggage; and two monks of his own order, of inferior station, rode together in the rear, laughing and conversing with each other, without taking much notice of the other members of the cavalcade.

The companion of the church dignitary was a man past forty, thin, strong, tall, and muscular; an athletic figure, which long fatigue and constant exercise seemed to have left none of the softer part of the human form, having reduced the whole to brawn, bones, and sinews, which had sustained a thousand toils, and were ready to dare a thousand more. His head was covered with a scarlet cap, faced with fur—of that kind which the French call "mortier", from its resemblance to the shape of an inverted mortar. His countenance was therefore fully displayed, and its expression was calculated to impress a degree of awe, if not of fear, upon strangers. High features, naturally strong and powerfully expressive, had been burnt almost into Negro blackness by constant exposure to the tropical sun, and might, in their ordinary state, be said to slumber after the storm of passion had passed away; but the projection of the veins of the forehead, the readiness with which the upper lip and its thick black moustaches quivered upon the slightest emotion, plainly intimated that the tempest might be again and easily awakened. His keen, piercing, dark eyes, told in every glance a history of difficulties subdued, and dangers dared, and seemed to challenge opposition to his wishes, for the pleasure of sweeping it from his road by a determined exertion of courage and of will; a deep scar on his brow gave additional sternness to his countenance, and a sinister expression to one of his eyes, which had been slightly injured on the same occasion, and of which the vision, though perfect, was in a slight and partial degree distorted.

The upper dress of this personage resembled that of his companion in shape, being a long monastic mantle; but the colour, being scarlet, showed that he did not belong to any of the four regular orders of monks. On the right shoulder of the mantle there was cut, in white cloth, a cross of a peculiar form. This upper robe concealed what at first view seemed rather inconsistent with its form, a shirt, namely, of linked mail, with sleeves and gloves of the same, curiously plaited and interwoven, as flexible to the body as those which are now wrought in the stocking-loom, out of less obdurate materials. The fore-part of his thighs, where the folds of his mantle permitted them to be seen, were also covered with linked mail; the knees and feet were defended by splints, or thin plates of steel, ingeniously jointed upon each other; and mail hose, reaching from the ankle to the knee, effectually protected the legs, and completed the rider's defensive armour. In his girdle he wore a long and double-edged dagger, which was the only offensive weapon about his person.

He rode, not a mule, like his companion, but a strong hackney for the road, to save his gallant war-horse, which a squire led behind, fully accoutred for battle, with a chamfron or plaited head-piece upon his head, having a short spike projecting from the front. On one side of the saddle hung a short battle-axe, richly inlaid with Damascene carving; on the other the rider's plumed head-piece and hood of mail, with a long two-handed sword, used by the chivalry of the period. A second squire held aloft his master's lance, from the extremity of which fluttered a small banderole, or streamer, bearing a cross of the same form with that embroidered upon his cloak. He also carried his small triangular shield, broad enough at the top to protect the breast, and from thence diminishing to a point. It was covered with a scarlet cloth, which prevented the device from being seen.

These two squires were followed by two attendants, whose dark visages, white turbans, and the Oriental form of their garments, showed them to be natives of some distant Eastern country. 9

The whole appearance of this warrior and his retinue was wild and outlandish; the dress of his squires was gorgeous, and his Eastern attendants wore silver collars round their throats, and bracelets of the same metal upon their swarthy arms and legs, of which the former were naked from the elbow, and the latter from mid-leg to ankle. Silk and embroidery distinguished their dresses, and marked the wealth and importance of their master; forming, at the same time, a striking contrast with the martial simplicity of his own attire. They were armed with crooked sabres, having the hilt and baldric inlaid with gold, and matched with Turkish daggers of yet more costly workmanship. Each of them bore at his saddle-bow a bundle of darts or javelins, about four feet in length, having sharp steel heads, a weapon much in use among the Saracens, and of which the memory is yet preserved in the martial exercise called "El Jerrid", still practised in the Eastern countries.

The steeds of these attendants were in appearance as foreign as their riders. They were of Saracen origin, and consequently of Arabian descent; and their fine slender limbs, small fetlocks, thin manes, and easy springy motion, formed a marked contrast with the large-jointed, heavy horses, of which the race was cultivated in Flanders and in Normandy, for mounting the men-at-arms of the period in all the panoply of plate and mail; and which, placed by the side of those Eastern coursers, might have passed for a personification of substance and of shadow.

The singular appearance of this cavalcade not only attracted the curiosity of Wamba, but excited even that of his less volatile companion. The monk he instantly knew to be the Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey, well known for many miles around as a lover of the chase, of the banquet, and, if fame did him not wrong, of other worldly pleasures still more inconsistent with his monastic vows.

Yet so loose were the ideas of the times respecting the conduct of the clergy, whether secular or regular, that the Prior Aymer maintained a fair character in the neighbourhood of his abbey. His free and jovial temper, and the readiness with which he granted absolution from all ordinary delinquencies, rendered him a favourite among the nobility and principal gentry, to several of whom he was allied by birth, being of a distinguished Norman family. The ladies, in particular, were not disposed to scan too nicely the morals of a man who was a professed admirer of their sex, and who possessed many means of dispelling the ennui which was too apt to intrude upon the halls and bowers of an ancient feudal castle. The Prior mingled in the sports of the field with more than due eagerness, and was allowed to possess the best-trained hawks, and the fleetest greyhounds in the North Riding; circumstances which strongly recommended him to the youthful gentry. With the old, he had another part to play, which, when needful, he could sustain with great decorum. His knowledge of books, however superficial, was sufficient to impress upon their ignorance respect for his supposed learning; and the gravity of his deportment and language, with the high tone which he exerted in setting forth the authority of the church and of the priesthood, impressed them no less with an opinion of his sanctity. Even the common people, the severest critics of the conduct of their betters, had commiseration with the follies of Prior Aymer. He was generous; and charity, as it is well known, covereth a multitude of sins, in another sense than that in which it is said to do so in Scripture. The revenues of the monastery, of which a large part was at his disposal, while they gave him the means of supplying his own very considerable expenses, afforded also those largesses which he bestowed among the peasantry, and with which he frequently relieved the distresses of the oppressed. If Prior Aymer rode hard in the chase, or remained long at the banquet,—if Prior Aymer was seen, at the early peep of dawn, to enter the postern of the abbey, as he glided home from some rendezvous which had occupied the hours of darkness, men only shrugged up their shoulders, and reconciled themselves to his irregularities, by recollecting that the same were practised by many of his brethren who had no redeeming qualities whatsoever to atone for them. Prior Aymer, therefore, and his character, were well known to our Saxon serfs, who made their rude obeisance, and received his "benedicite, mes filz," in return.

But the singular appearance of his companion and his attendants, arrested their attention and excited their wonder, and they could scarcely attend to the Prior of Jorvaulx' question, when he demanded if they knew of any place of harbourage in the vicinity; so much were they surprised at the half monastic, half military appearance of the swarthy stranger, and at the uncouth dress and arms of his Eastern attendants. It is probable, too, that the language in which the benediction was conferred, and the information asked, sounded ungracious, though not probably unintelligible, in the ears of the Saxon peasants.

"I asked you, my children," said the Prior, raising his voice, and using the lingua Franca, or mixed language, in which the Norman and Saxon races conversed with each other, "if there be in this neighbourhood any good man, who, for the love of God, and devotion to Mother Church, will give two of her humblest servants, with their train, a night's hospitality and refreshment?"

This he spoke with a tone of conscious importance, which formed a strong contrast to the modest terms which he thought it proper to employ.

"Two of the humblest servants of Mother Church!" repeated Wamba to himself,—but, fool as he was, taking care not to make his observation audible; "I should like to see her seneschals, her chief butlers, and other principal domestics!"

After this internal commentary on the Prior's speech, he raised his eyes, and replied to the question which had been put.

"If the reverend fathers," he said, "loved good cheer and soft lodging, few miles of riding would carry them to the Priory of Brinxworth, where their quality could not but secure them the most honourable reception; or if they preferred spending a penitential evening, they might turn down yonder wild glade, which would bring them to the hermitage of Copmanhurst, where a pious anchoret would make them sharers for the night of the shelter of his roof and the benefit of his prayers."

The Prior shook his head at both proposals.

"Mine honest friend," said he, "if the jangling of thy bells had not dizzied thine understanding, thou mightst know "*Clericus clericum non decimat*"; that is to say, we churchmen do not exhaust each other's hospitality, but rather require that of the laity, giving them thus an opportunity to serve God in honouring and relieving his appointed servants."

"It is true," replied Wamba, "that I, being but an ass, am, nevertheless, honoured to hear the bells as well as your reverence's mule; notwithstanding, I did conceive that the charity of Mother Church and her servants might be said, with other charity, to begin at home."

"A truce to thine insolence, fellow," said the armed rider, breaking in on his prattle with a high and stern voice, "and tell us, if thou canst, the road to—How call'd you your Franklin, Prior Aymer?"

"Cedric," answered the Prior; "Cedric the Saxon.—Tell me, good fellow, are we near his dwelling, and can you show us the road?"

"The road will be uneasy to find," answered Gurth, who broke silence for the first time, "and the family of Cedric retire early to rest."

"Tush, tell not me, fellow," said the military rider; "'tis easy for them to arise and supply the wants of travellers such as we are, who will not stoop to beg the hospitality which we have a right to command."

"I know not," said Gurth, sullenly, "if I should show the way to my master's house, to those who demand as a right, the shelter which most are fain to ask as a favour."

"Do you dispute with me, slave!" said the soldier; and, setting spurs to his horse, he caused him make a demivolte across the path, raising at the same time the riding rod which he held in his hand, with a purpose of chastising what he considered as the insolence of the peasant.

Gurth darted at him a savage and revengeful scowl, and with a fierce, yet hesitating motion, laid his hand on the haft of his knife; but the interference of Prior Aymer, who pushed his mule betwixt his companion and the swineherd, prevented the meditated violence.

"Nay, by St Mary, brother Brian, you must not think you are now in Palestine, predominating over heathen Turks and infidel Saracens; we islanders love not blows, save those of holy Church, who chasteneth whom she loveth.—Tell me, good fellow," said he to Wamba, and seconded his speech by a small piece of silver coin, "the way to Cedric the Saxon's; you cannot be ignorant of it, and it is your duty to direct the wanderer even when his character is less sanctified than ours."

"In truth, venerable father," answered the Jester, "the Saracen head of your right reverend companion has frightened out of mine the way home—I am not sure I shall get there to-night myself."

"Tush," said the Abbot, "thou canst tell us if thou wilt. This reverend brother has been all his life engaged in fighting among the Saracens for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre; he is of the order of Knights Templars, whom you may have heard of; he is half a monk, half a soldier."

"If he is but half a monk," said the Jester, "he should not be wholly unreasonable with those whom he meets upon the road, even if they should be in no hurry to answer questions that no way concern them."

"I forgive thy wit," replied the Abbot, "on condition thou wilt show me the way to Cedric's mansion."

"Well, then," answered Wamba, "your reverences must hold on this path till you come to a sunken cross, of which scarce a cubit's length remains above ground; then take the path to the left, for there are four which meet at Sunken Cross, and I trust your reverences will obtain shelter before the storm comes on."

The Abbot thanked his sage adviser; and the cavalcade, setting spurs to their horses, rode on as men do who wish to reach their inn before the bursting of a night-storm. As their horses' hoofs died away, Gurth said to his companion, "If they follow thy wise direction, the reverend fathers will hardly reach Rotherwood this night."

"No," said the Jester, grinning, "but they may reach Sheffield if they have good luck, and that is as fit a place for them. I am not so bad a woodsman as to show the dog where the deer lies, if I have no mind he should chase him."

"Thou art right," said Gurth; "it were ill that Aymer saw the Lady Rowena; and it were worse, it may be, for Cedric to quarrel, as is most likely he would, with this military monk. But, like good servants let us hear and see, and say nothing."

We return to the riders, who had soon left the bondsmen far behind them, and who maintained the following conversation in the Norman-French language, usually employed by the superior classes, with the exception of the few who were still inclined to boast their Saxon descent.

"What mean these fellows by their capricious insolence?" said the Templar to the Benedictine, "and why did you prevent me from chastising it?"

"Marry, brother Brian," replied the Prior, "touching the one of them, it were hard for me to render a reason for a fool speaking according to his folly; and the other churl is of that savage, fierce, intractable race, some of whom, as I have often told you, are still to be found among the descendants of the conquered Saxons, and whose supreme pleasure it is to testify, by all means in their power, their aversion to their conquerors."

"I would soon have beat him into courtesy," observed Brian; "I am accustomed to deal with such spirits: Our Turkish captives are as fierce and intractable as Odin himself could have been; yet two months in my household, under the management of my master of the slaves, has made them humble, submissive, serviceable, and observant of your will. Marry, sir, you must be aware of the poison and the dagger; for they use either with free will when you give them the slightest opportunity."

"Ay, but," answered Prior Aymer, "every land has its own manners and fashions; and, besides that beating this fellow could procure us no information respecting the road to Cedric's house, it would have been sure to have established a quarrel betwixt you and him had we found our way thither. Remember what I told you: this wealthy franklin is proud, fierce, jealous, and irritable, a withstander of the nobility, and even of his neighbors, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and Philip Malvoisin, who are no babies to strive with. He stands up sternly for the privileges of his race, and is so proud of his uninterrupted descent from Hereward, a renowned champion of the Heptarchy, that he is universally called Cedric the Saxon; and makes a boast of his belonging to a people from whom many others endeavor to hide their descent, lest they should encounter a share of the 'vae victis,' or severities imposed upon the vanquished."

"Prior Aymer," said the Templar, "you are a man of gallantry, learned in the study of beauty, and as expert as a troubadour in all matters concerning the 'arrets' of love; but I shall expect much beauty in this celebrated Rowena to counterbalance the self-denial and forbearance which I must exert if I am to court the favor of such a seditious churl as you have described her father Cedric."

"Cedric is not her father," replied the Prior, "and is but of remote relation: she is descended from higher blood than even he pretends to, and is but distantly connected with him by birth. Her guardian, however, he is, self-constituted as I believe; but his ward is as dear to him as if she were his own child. Of her beauty you shall soon be judge; and if the purity of her complexion, and the majestic, yet soft expression of a mild blue eye, do not chase from your memory the black-tressed girls of Palestine, ay, or the houris of old Mahound's paradise, I am an infidel, and no true son of the church."

"Should your boasted beauty," said the Templar, "be weighed in the balance and found wanting, you know our wager?"

"My gold collar," answered the Prior, "against ten butts of Chian wine;—they are mine as securely as if they were already in the convent vaults, under the key of old Dennis the cellarer."

"And I am myself to be judge," said the Templar, "and am only to be convicted on my own admission, that I have seen no maiden so beautiful since Pentecost was a twelvemonth. Ran it not so?—Prior, your collar is in danger; I will wear it over my gorget in the lists of Ashby-de-la-Zouche."

"Win it fairly," said the Prior, "and wear it as ye will; I will trust your giving true response, on your word as a knight and as a churchman. Yet, brother, take my advice, and file your tongue to a little more courtesy than your habits of predominating over infidel captives and Eastern bondsmen have accustomed you. Cedric the Saxon, if offended,—and he is noway slack in taking offence,—is a man who, without respect to your knighthood, my high office, or the sanctity of either, would clear his house of us, and send us to lodge with the larks, though the hour were midnight. And be careful how you look on Rowena, whom he cherishes with the most jealous care; an he take the least alarm in that quarter we are but lost men. It is said he banished his only son from his family for lifting his eyes in the way of affection towards this beauty, who may be worshipped, it seems, at a distance, but is not to be approached with other thoughts than such as we bring to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin."

"Well, you have said enough," answered the Templar; "I will for a night put on the needful restraint, and deport me as meekly as a maiden; but as for the fear of his expelling us by violence, myself and squires, with Hamet and Abdalla, will warrant you against that disgrace. Doubt not that we shall be strong enough to make good our quarters."

"We must not let it come so far," answered the Prior; "but here is the clown's sunken cross, and the night is so dark that we can hardly see which of the roads we are to follow. He bid us turn, I think to the left."

"To the right," said Brian, "to the best of my remembrance."

"To the left, certainly, the left; I remember his pointing with his wooden sword."

"Ay, but he held his sword in his left hand, and so pointed across his body with it," said the Templar.

Each maintained his opinion with sufficient obstinacy, as is usual in all such cases; the attendants were appealed to, but they had not been near enough to hear Wamba's directions. At length Brian remarked, what had at first escaped him in the twilight; "Here is some one either asleep, or lying dead at the foot of this cross—Hugo, stir him with the butt-end of thy lance."

This was no sooner done than the figure arose, exclaiming in good French, "Whosoever thou art, it is discourteous in you to disturb my thoughts."

"We did but wish to ask you," said the Prior, "the road to Rotherwood, the abode of Cedric the Saxon."

"I myself am bound thither," replied the stranger; "and if I had a horse, I would be your guide, for the way is somewhat intricate, though perfectly well known to me."

"Thou shalt have both thanks and reward, my friend," said the Prior, "if thou wilt bring us to Cedric's in safety."

And he caused one of his attendants to mount his own led horse, and give that upon which he had hitherto ridden to the stranger, who was to serve for a guide.

Their conductor pursued an opposite road from that which Wamba had recommended, for the purpose of misleading them. The path soon led deeper into the woodland, and crossed more than one brook, the approach to which was rendered perilous by the marshes through which it flowed; but the stranger seemed to know, as if by instinct, the soundest ground and the safest points of passage; and by dint of caution and attention, brought the party safely into a wilder avenue than any they had yet seen; and, pointing to a large low irregular building at the upper extremity, he said to the Prior, "Yonder is Rotherwood, the dwelling of Cedric the Saxon."

This was a joyful intimation to Aymer, whose nerves were none of the strongest, and who had suffered such agitation and alarm in the course of passing through the dangerous bogs, that he had not yet had the curiosity to ask his guide a single question. Finding himself now at his ease and near shelter, his curiosity began to awake, and he demanded of the guide who and what he was.

"A Palmer, just returned from the Holy Land," was the answer.

"You had better have tarried there to fight for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre," said the Templar.

"True, Reverend Sir Knight," answered the Palmer, to whom the appearance of the Templar seemed perfectly familiar; "but when those who are under oath to recover the holy city, are found travelling at such a distance from the scene of their duties, can you wonder that a peaceful peasant like me should decline the task which they have abandoned?"

The Templar would have made an angry reply, but was interrupted by the Prior, who again expressed his astonishment, that their guide, after such long absence, should be so perfectly acquainted with the passes of the forest.

"I was born a native of these parts," answered their guide, and as he made the reply they stood before the mansion of Cedric;—a low irregular building, containing several court-yards or enclosures, extending over a considerable space of ground, and which, though its size argued the inhabitant to be a person of wealth, differed entirely from the tall, turreted, and castellated buildings in which the Norman nobility resided, and which had become the universal style of architecture throughout England.

Rotherwood was not, however, without defences; no habitation, in that disturbed period, could have been so, without the risk of being plundered and burnt before the next morning. A deep fosse, or ditch, was drawn round the whole building, and filled with water from a neighbouring stream. A double stockade, or palisade, composed of pointed beams, which the adjacent forest supplied, defended the outer and inner bank of the trench. There was an entrance from the west through the outer stockade, which communicated by a drawbridge, with a similar opening in the interior defences. Some precautions had been taken to place those entrances under the protection of projecting angles, by which they might be flanked in case of need by archers or slingers.

Before this entrance the Templar wound his horn loudly; for the rain, which had long threatened, began now to descend with great violence.

CHAPTER III

*Then (sad relief!) from the bleak coast that hears
The German Ocean roar, deep-blooming, strong,
And yellow hair'd, the blue-eyed Saxon came.
Thomson's Liberty*

In a hall, the height of which was greatly disproportioned to its extreme length and width, a long oaken table, formed of planks rough-hewn from the forest, and which had scarcely received any polish, stood ready prepared for the evening meal of Cedric the Saxon. The roof, composed of beams and rafters, had nothing to divide the apartment from the sky excepting the plank and thatch; there was a huge fireplace at either end of the hall, but as the chimneys were constructed in a very clumsy manner, at least as much of the smoke found its way into the apartment as escaped by the proper vent. The constant vapour which this occasioned, had polished the rafters and beams of the low-browed hall, by encrusting them with a black varnish of soot. On the sides of the apartment hung implements of war and of the chase, and there were at each corner folding doors, which gave access to other parts of the extensive building.

The other appointments of the mansion partook of the rude simplicity of the Saxon period, which Cedric piqued himself upon maintaining. The floor was composed of earth mixed with lime, trodden into a hard substance, such as is often employed in flooring our modern barns. For about one quarter of the length of the apartment, the floor was raised by a step, and this space, which was called the dais, was occupied only by the principal members of the family, and visitors of distinction. For this purpose, a table richly covered with scarlet cloth was placed transversely across the platform, from the middle of which ran the longer and lower board, at which the domestics and inferior persons fed, down towards the bottom of the hall. The whole resembled the form of the letter T, or some of those ancient dinner-tables, which, arranged on the same principles, may be still seen in the antique Colleges of Oxford or Cambridge. Massive chairs and settles of carved oak were placed upon the dais, and over these seats and the more elevated table was fastened a canopy of cloth, which served in some degree to protect the dignitaries who occupied that distinguished station from the weather, and especially from the rain, which in some places found its way through the ill-constructed roof.

The walls of this upper end of the hall, as far as the dais extended, were covered with hangings or curtains, and upon the floor there was a carpet, both of which were adorned with some attempts at tapestry, or embroidery, executed with brilliant or rather gaudy colouring. Over the lower range of table, the roof, as we have noticed, had no covering; the rough plastered walls were left bare, and the rude earthen floor was uncarpeted; the board was uncovered by a cloth, and rude massive benches supplied the place of chairs.

In the centre of the upper table, were placed two chairs more elevated than the rest, for the master and mistress of the family, who presided over the scene of hospitality, and from doing so derived their Saxon title of honour, which signifies "the Dividers of Bread."

To each of these chairs was added a footstool, curiously carved and inlaid with ivory, which mark of distinction was peculiar to them. One of these seats was at present occupied by Cedric the Saxon, who, though but in rank athane, or, as the Normans called him, a Franklin, felt, at the delay of his evening meal, an irritable impatience, which might have become an alderman, whether of ancient or of modern times.

It appeared, indeed, from the countenance of this proprietor, that he was of a frank, but hasty and choleric temper. He was not above the middle stature, but broad-shouldered, long-armed, and powerfully made, like one accustomed to endure the fatigue of war or of the chase; his face was broad, with large blue eyes, open and frank features, fine teeth, and a well formed head, altogether expressive of that sort of good-humour which often lodges with a sudden and hasty temper. Pride and jealousy there was in his eye, for his life had been spent in asserting rights which were constantly liable to invasion; and the prompt, fiery, and resolute disposition of the man, had been kept constantly upon the alert by the circumstances of his situation. His long yellow hair was equally divided on the top of his head and upon his brow, and combed down on each side to the length of his shoulders; it had but little tendency to grey, although Cedric was approaching to his sixtieth year.

His dress was a tunic of forest green, furred at the throat and cuffs with what was called minever; a kind of fur inferior in quality to ermine, and formed, it is believed, of the skin of the grey squirrel. This doublet hung unbuttoned over a close dress of scarlet which sat tight to his body; he had breeches of the same, but they did not reach below the lower part of the thigh, leaving the knee exposed. His feet had sandals of the same fashion with the peasants, but of finer materials, and secured in the front with golden clasps. He had bracelets of gold upon his arms, and a broad collar of the same precious metal around his neck. About his waist he wore a richly-studded belt, in which was stuck a short straight two-edged sword, with a sharp point, so disposed as to hang almost perpendicularly by his side. Behind his seat was hung a scarlet cloth cloak lined with fur, and a cap of the same materials richly embroidered, which completed the dress of the opulent landholder when he chose to go forth. A short boar-spear, with a broad and bright steel head, also reclined against the back of his chair, which served him, when he walked abroad, for the purposes of a staff or of a weapon, as chance might require.

Several domestics, whose dress held various proportions betwixt the richness of their master's, and the coarse and simple attire of Gurth the swine-herd, watched the looks and waited the commands of the Saxon dignitary. Two or three servants of a superior order stood behind their master upon the dais; the rest occupied the lower part of the hall. Other attendants there were of a different description; two or three large and shaggy greyhounds, such as were then employed in hunting the stag and wolf; as many slow-hounds of a large bony breed, with thick necks, large heads, and long ears; and one or two of the smaller dogs, now called terriers, which waited with impatience the arrival of the supper; but, with the sagacious knowledge of physiognomy peculiar to their race, forbore to intrude upon the moody silence of their master, apprehensive probably of a small white truncheon which lay by Cedric's trencher, for the purpose of repelling the advances of his four-legged dependants. One grisly old wolf-dog alone, with the liberty of an indulged favourite, had planted himself close by the chair of state, and occasionally ventured to solicit notice by putting his large hairy head upon his master's knee, or pushing his nose into his hand. Even he was repelled by the stern command, "Down, Balder, down! I am not in the humour for foolery."

In fact, Cedric, as we have observed, was in no very placid state of mind. The Lady Rowena, who had been absent to attend an evening mass at a distant church, had but just returned, and was changing her garments, which had been wetted by the storm. There were as yet no tidings of Gurth and his charge, which should long since have been driven home from the forest and such was the insecurity of the period, as to render it probable that the delay might be explained by some depreciation of the outlaws, with whom the adjacent forest abounded, or by the violence of some neighbouring baron, whose consciousness of strength made him equally negligent of the laws of property. The matter was of consequence, for great part of the domestic wealth of the Saxon proprietors consisted in numerous herds of swine, especially in forest-land, where those animals easily found their food.

Besides these subjects of anxiety, the Saxon thane was impatient for the presence of his favourite clown Wamba, whose jests, such as they were, served for a sort of seasoning to his evening meal, and to the deep draughts of ale and wine with which he was in the habit of accompanying it. Add to all this, Cedric had fasted since noon, and his usual supper hour was long past, a cause of irritation common to country squires, both in ancient and modern times. His displeasure was expressed in broken sentences, partly muttered to himself, partly addressed to the domestics who stood around; and particularly to his cupbearer, who offered him from time to time, as a sedative, a silver goblet filled with wine—"Why tarries the Lady Rowena?"

"She is but changing her head-gear," replied a female attendant, with as much confidence as the favourite lady's-maid usually answers the master of a modern family; "you would not wish her to sit down to the banquet in her hood and kirtle? and no lady within the shire can be quicker in arraying herself than my mistress." This undeniable argument produced a sort of acquiescent umph! on the part of the Saxon, with the addition, "I wish her devotion may choose fair weather for the next visit to St John's Kirk;—but what, in the name of ten devils," continued he, turning to the cupbearer, and raising his voice as if happy to have found a channel into which he might divert his indignation without fear or control—"what, in the name of ten devils, keeps Gurth so long afield? I suppose we shall have an evil account of the herd; he was wont to be a faithful and cautious drudge, and I had destined him for something better; perchance I might even have made him one of my warders." 11

Oswald the cupbearer modestly suggested, "that it was scarce an hour since the tolling of the curfew;" an ill-chosen apology, since it turned upon a topic so harsh to Saxon ears.

"The foul fiend," exclaimed Cedric, "take the curfew-bell, and the tyrannical bastard by whom it was devised, and the heartless slave who names it with a Saxon tongue to a Saxon ear! The curfew!" he added, pausing, "ay, the curfew; which compels true men to extinguish their lights, that thieves and robbers may work their deeds in darkness!—Ay, the curfew;—Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and Philip de Malvoisin know the use of the curfew as well as William the Bastard himself, or e'er a Norman adventurer that fought at Hastings. I shall hear, I guess, that my property has been swept off to save from starving the hungry banditti, whom they cannot support but by theft and robbery. My faithful slave is murdered, and my goods are taken for a prey—and Wamba—where is Wamba? Said not some one he had gone forth with Gurth?"

Oswald replied in the affirmative.

"Ay? why this is better and better! he is carried off too, the Saxon fool, to serve the Norman lord. Fools are we all indeed that serve them, and fitter subjects for their scorn and laughter, than if we were born with but half our wits. But I will be avenged," he added, starting from his chair in impatience at the supposed injury, and catching hold of his boar-spear; "I will go with my complaint to the great council; I have friends, I have followers—man to man will I appeal the Norman to the lists; let him come in his plate and his mail, and all that can render cowardice bold; I have sent such a javelin as this through a stronger fence than three of their war shields!—Haply they think me old; but they shall find, alone and childless as I am, the blood of Hereward is in the veins of Cedric.—Ah, Wilfred, Wilfred!" he exclaimed in a lower tone, "couldst thou have ruled thine unreasonable passion, thy father had not been left in his age like the solitary oak that throws out its shattered and unprotected branches against the full sweep of the tempest!" The reflection seemed to conjure into sadness his irritated feelings. Replacing his javelin, he resumed his seat, bent his looks downward, and appeared to be absorbed in melancholy reflection.

From his musing, Cedric was suddenly awakened by the blast of a horn, which was replied to by the clamorous yells and barking of all the dogs in the hall, and some twenty or thirty which were quartered in other parts of the building. It cost some exercise of the white truncheon, well seconded by the exertions of the domestics, to silence this canine clamour.

"To the gate, knaves!" said the Saxon, hastily, as soon as the tumult was so much appeased that the dependants could hear his voice. "See what tidings that horn tells us of—to announce, I ween, some hership 12 and robbery which has been done upon my lands."

Returning in less than three minutes, a warder announced "that the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx, and the good knight Brian de Bois-Guilbert, commander of the valiant and venerable order of Knights Templars, with a small retinue, requested hospitality and lodging for the night, being on their way to a tournament which was to be held not far from Ashby-de-la-Zouche, on the second day from the present."

"Aymer, the Prior Aymer? Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"—muttered Cedric; "Normans both;—but Norman or Saxon, the hospitality of Rotherwood must not be impeached; they are welcome, since they have chosen to halt—more welcome would they have been to have ridden further on their way—But it were unworthy to murmur for a night's lodging and a night's food; in the quality of guests, at least, even Normans must suppress their insolence.—Go, Hundebert," he added, to a sort of major-domo who stood behind him with a white wand; "take six of the attendants, and introduce the strangers to the guests' lodging. Look after their horses and mules, and see their train lack nothing. Let them have change of vestments if they require it, and fire, and water to wash, and wine and ale; and bid the cooks add what they hastily can to our evening meal; and let it be put on the board when those strangers are ready to share it. Say to them, Hundebert, that Cedric would himself bid them welcome, but he is under a vow never to step more than three steps from the dais of his own hall to meet any who shares not the blood of Saxon royalty. Begone! see them carefully tended; let them not say in their pride, the Saxon churl has shown at once his poverty and his avarice."

The major-domo departed with several attendants, to execute his master's commands.

"The Prior Aymer!" repeated Cedric, looking to Oswald, "the brother, if I mistake not, of Giles de Mauleverer, now lord of Middleham?"

Oswald made a respectful sign of assent. "His brother sits in the seat, and usurps the patrimony, of a better race, the race of Ulfgar of Middleham; but what Norman lord doth not the same? This Prior is, they say, a free and jovial priest, who loves the wine-cup and the bugle-horn better than bell and book: Good; let him come, he shall be welcome. How named ye the Templar?"

"Brian de Bois-Guilbert."

"Bois-Guilbert," said Cedric, still in the musing, half-arguing tone, which the habit of living among dependants had accustomed him to employ, and which resembled a man who talks to himself rather than to those around him—"Bois-Guilbert? that name has been spread wide both for good and evil. They say he is valiant as the bravest of his order; but stained with their usual vices, pride, arrogance, cruelty, and voluptuousness; a hard-hearted man, who knows neither fear of earth, nor awe of heaven. So say the few warriors who have returned from Palestine.—Well; it is but for one night; he shall be welcome too.—Oswald, broach the oldest wine-cask; place the best mead, the mightiest ale, the richest morat, the most sparkling cider, the most odoriferous pigments, upon the board; fill the largest horns 13 —Templars and Abbots love good wines and good measure.—Elgitha, let thy Lady Rowena, know we shall not this night expect her in the hall, unless such be her especial pleasure."

"But it will be her especial pleasure," answered Elgitha, with great readiness, "for she is ever desirous to hear the latest news from Palestine."

Cedric darted at the forward damsel a glance of hasty resentment; but Rowena, and whatever belonged to her, were privileged and secure from his anger. He only replied, "Silence, maiden; thy tongue outruns thy discretion. Say my message to thy mistress, and let her do her pleasure. Here, at least, the descendant of Alfred still reigns a princess." Elgitha left the apartment.

"Palestine!" repeated the Saxon; "Palestine! how many ears are turned to the tales which dissolute crusaders, or hypocritical pilgrims, bring from that fatal land! I too might ask—I too might enquire—I too might listen with a beating heart to fables which the wily strollers devise to cheat us into hospitality—but no—The son who has disobeyed me is no longer mine; nor will I concern myself more for his fate than for that of the most worthless among the millions that ever shaped the cross on their shoulder, rushed into excess and blood-guiltiness, and called it an accomplishment of the will of God."

He knit his brows, and fixed his eyes for an instant on the ground; as he raised them, the folding doors at the bottom of the hall were cast wide, and, preceded by the major-domo with his wand, and four domestics bearing blazing torches, the guests of the evening entered the apartment.

*With sheep and shaggy goats the porkers bled,
And the proud steer was on the marble spread;
With fire prepared, they deal the morsels round,
Wine rosy bright the brimming goblets crown'd.*

*Disposed apart, Ulysses shares the treat;
A trivet table and ignobler seat,
The Prince assigns—
—Odyssey, Book XXI*

The Prior Aymer had taken the opportunity afforded him, of changing his riding robe for one of yet more costly materials, over which he wore a cope curiously embroidered. Besides the massive golden signet ring, which marked his ecclesiastical dignity, his fingers, though contrary to the canon, were loaded with precious gems; his sandals were of the finest leather which was imported from Spain; his beard trimmed to as small dimensions as his order would possibly permit, and his shaven crown concealed by a scarlet cap richly embroidered.

The appearance of the Knight Templar was also changed; and, though less studiously bedecked with ornament, his dress was as rich, and his appearance far more commanding, than that of his companion. He had exchanged his shirt of mail for an under tunic of dark purple silk, garnished with furs, over which flowed his long robe of spotless white, in ample folds. The eight-pointed cross of his order was cut on the shoulder of his mantle in black velvet. The high cap no longer invested his brows, which were only shaded by short and thick curled hair of a raven blackness, corresponding to his unusually swart complexion. Nothing could be more gracefully majestic than his step and manner, had they not been marked by a predominant air of haughtiness, easily acquired by the exercise of unresisted authority.

These two dignified persons were followed by their respective attendants, and at a more humble distance by their guide, whose figure had nothing more remarkable than it derived from the usual weeds of a pilgrim. A cloak or mantle of coarse black serge, enveloped his whole body. It was in shape something like the cloak of a modern hussar, having similar flaps for covering the arms, and was called a "Sclaveyn", or "Sclavonian". Coarse sandals, bound with thongs, on his bare feet; a broad and shadowy hat, with cockle-shells stitched on its brim, and a long staff shod with iron, to the upper end of which was attached a branch of palm, completed the palmer's attire. He followed modestly the last of the train which entered the hall, and, observing that the lower table scarce afforded room sufficient for the domestics of Cedric and the retinue of his guests, he withdrew to a settle placed beside and almost under one of the large chimneys, and seemed to employ himself in drying his garments, until the retreat of some one should make room at the board, or the hospitality of the steward should supply him with refreshments in the place he had chosen apart.

Cedric rose to receive his guests with an air of dignified hospitality, and, descending from the dais, or elevated part of his hall, made three steps towards them, and then awaited their approach.

"I grieve," he said, "reverend Prior, that my vow binds me to advance no farther upon this floor of my fathers, even to receive such guests as you, and this valiant Knight of the Holy Temple. But my steward has expounded to you the cause of my seeming discourtesy. Let me also pray, that you will excuse my speaking to you in my native language, and that you will reply in the same if your knowledge of it permits; if not, I sufficiently understand Norman to follow your meaning."

"Vows," said the Abbot, "must be unloosed, worthy Franklin, or permit me rather to say, worthy Thane, though the title is antiquated. Vows are the knots which tie us to Heaven—they are the cords which bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar,—and are therefore,—as I said before,—to be unloosened and discharged, unless our holy Mother Church shall pronounce the contrary. And respecting language, I willingly hold communication in that spoken by my respected grandmother, Hilda of Middleham, who died in odour of sanctity, little short, if we may presume to say so, of her glorious namesake, the blessed Saint Hilda of Whitby, God be gracious to her soul!"

When the Prior had ceased what he meant as a conciliatory harangue, his companion said briefly and emphatically, "I speak ever French, the language of King Richard and his nobles; but I understand English sufficiently to communicate with the natives of the country."

Cedric darted at the speaker one of those hasty and impatient glances, which comparisons between the two rival nations seldom failed to call forth; but, recollecting the duties of hospitality, he suppressed further show of resentment, and, motioning with his hand, caused his guests to assume two seats a little lower than his own, but placed close beside him, and gave a signal that the evening meal should be placed upon the board.

While the attendants hastened to obey Cedric's commands, his eye distinguished Gurth the swineherd, who, with his companion Wamba, had just entered the hall. "Send these loitering knaves up hither," said the Saxon, impatiently. And when the culprits came before the dais,—"How comes it, villains! that you have loitered abroad so late as this? Hast thou brought home thy charge, sirrah Gurth, or hast thou left them to robbers and marauders?"

"The herd is safe, so please ye," said Gurth.

"But it does not please me, thou knave," said Cedric, "that I should be made to suppose otherwise for two hours, and sit here devising vengeance against my neighbours for wrongs they have not done me. I tell thee, shackles and the prison-house shall punish the next offence of this kind."

Gurth, knowing his master's irritable temper, attempted no exculpation; but the Jester, who could presume upon Cedric's tolerance, by virtue of his privileges as a fool, replied for them both; "In troth, uncle Cedric, you are neither wise nor reasonable to-night."

"How, sir?" said his master; "you shall to the porter's lodge, and taste of the discipline there, if you give your foolery such license."

"First let your wisdom tell me," said Wamba, "is it just and reasonable to punish one person for the fault of another?"

"Certainly not, fool," answered Cedric.

"Then why should you shackle poor Gurth, uncle, for the fault of his dog Fangs? for I dare be sworn we lost not a minute by the way, when we had got our herd together, which Fangs did not manage until we heard the vesper-bell."

"Then hang up Fangs," said Cedric, turning hastily towards the swineherd, "if the fault is his, and get thee another dog."

"Under favour, uncle," said the Jester, "that were still somewhat on the bow-hand of fair justice; for it was no fault of Fangs that he was lame and could not gather the herd, but the fault of those that struck off two of his fore-claws, an operation for which, if the poor fellow had been consulted, he would scarce have given his voice."

"And who dared to lame an animal which belonged to my bondsman?" said the Saxon, kindling in wrath.

"Marry, that did old Hubert," said Wamba, "Sir Philip de Malvoisin's keeper of the chase. He caught Fangs strolling in the forest, and said he chased the deer contrary to his master's right, as warden of the walk."

"The foul fiend take Malvoisin," answered the Saxon, "and his keeper both! I will teach them that the wood was disforested in terms of the great Forest Charter. But enough of this. Go to, knave, go to thy place—and thou, Gurth, get thee another dog, and should the keeper dare to touch it, I will mar his archery; the curse of a coward on my head, if I strike not off the forefinger of his right hand!—he shall draw bowstring no more.—I crave your pardon, my worthy guests. I am beset here with neighbours that match your infidels, Sir Knight, in Holy Land. But your homely fare is before you; feed, and let welcome make amends for hard fare."

The feast, however, which was spread upon the board, needed no apologies from the lord of the mansion. Swine's flesh, dressed in several modes, appeared on the lower part of the board, as also that of fowls, deer, goats, and hares, and various kinds of fish, together with huge loaves and cakes of bread, and sundry confections made of fruits and honey. The smaller sorts of wild-fowl, of which there was abundance, were not served up in platters, but brought in upon small wooden spits or broaches, and offered by the pages and domestics who bore them, to each guest in succession, who cut from them such a portion as he pleased. Beside each person of rank was placed a goblet of silver; the lower board was accommodated with large drinking horns.

When the repast was about to commence, the major-domo, or steward, suddenly raising his wand, said aloud,—"Forbear!—Place for the Lady Rowena."

A side-door at the upper end of the hall now opened behind the banquet table, and Rowena, followed by four female attendants, entered the apartment. Cedric, though surprised, and perhaps not altogether agreeably so, at his ward appearing in public on this occasion, hastened to meet her, and to conduct her, with respectful ceremony, to the elevated seat at his own right hand, appropriated to the lady of the mansion. All stood up to receive her; and, replying to their courtesy by a mute gesture of salutation, she moved gracefully forward to assume her place at the board. Ere she had time to do so, the Templar whispered to the Prior, "I shall wear no collar of gold of yours at the tournament. The Chian wine is your own."

"Said I not so?" answered the Prior; "but check your raptures, the Franklin observes you."

Unheeding this remonstrance, and accustomed only to act upon the immediate impulse of his own wishes, Brian de Bois-Guilbert kept his eyes riveted on the Saxon beauty, more striking perhaps to his imagination, because differing widely from those of the Eastern sultanas.

Formed in the best proportions of her sex, Rowena was tall in stature, yet not so much so as to attract observation on account of superior height. Her complexion was exquisitely fair, but the noble cast of her head and features prevented the insipidity which sometimes attaches to fair beauties. Her clear blue eye, which sat enshrined beneath a graceful eyebrow of brown sufficiently marked to give expression to the forehead, seemed capable to kindle as well as melt, to command as well as to beseech. If mildness were the more natural expression of such a combination of features, it was plain, that in the present instance, the exercise of habitual superiority, and the reception of general homage, had given to the Saxon lady a loftier character, which mingled with and qualified that bestowed by nature. Her profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and flaxen, was arranged in a fanciful and graceful manner in numerous ringlets, to form which art had probably aided nature. These locks were braided with gems, and, being worn at full length, intimated the noble birth and free-born condition of the maiden. A golden chain, to which was attached a small reliquary of the same metal, hung round her neck. She wore bracelets on her arms, which were bare. Her dress was an under-gown and kirtle of pale sea-green silk, over which hung a long loose robe, which reached to the ground, having very wide sleeves, which came down, however, very little below the elbow. This robe was crimson, and manufactured out of the very finest wool. A veil of silk, interwoven with gold, was attached to the upper part of it, which could be, at the wearer's pleasure, either drawn over the face and bosom after the Spanish fashion, or disposed as a sort of drapery round the shoulders.

When Rowena perceived the Knight Templar's eyes bent on her with an ardour, that, compared with the dark caverns under which they moved, gave them the effect of lighted charcoal, she drew with dignity the veil around her face, as an intimation that the determined freedom of his glance was disagreeable. Cedric saw the motion and its cause. "Sir Templar," said he, "the cheeks of our Saxon maidens have seen too little of the sun to enable them to bear the fixed glance of a crusader."

"If I have offended," replied Sir Brian, "I crave your pardon,—that is, I crave the Lady Rowena's pardon,—for my humility will carry me no lower."

"The Lady Rowena," said the Prior, "has punished us all, in chastising the boldness of my friend. Let me hope she will be less cruel to the splendid train which are to meet at the tournament."

"Our going thither," said Cedric, "is uncertain. I love not these vanities, which were unknown to my fathers when England was free."

"Let us hope, nevertheless," said the Prior, "our company may determine you to travel thitherward; when the roads are so unsafe, the escort of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is not to be despised."

"Sir Prior," answered the Saxon, "wheresoever I have travelled in this land, I have hitherto found myself, with the assistance of my good sword and faithful followers, in no respect needful of other aid. At present, if we indeed journey to Ashby-de-la-Zouche, we do so with my noble neighbour and countryman Athelstane of Coningsburgh, and with such a train as would set outlaws and feudal enemies at defiance.—I drink to you, Sir Prior, in this cup of wine, which I trust your taste will approve, and I thank you for your courtesy. Should you be so rigid in adhering to monastic rule," he added, "as to prefer your acid preparation of milk, I hope you will not strain courtesy to do me reason."

"Nay," said the Priest, laughing, "it is only in our abbey that we confine ourselves to the 'lac dulce' or the 'lac acidum' either. Conversing with, the world, we use the world's fashions, and therefore I answer your pledge in this honest wine, and leave the weaker liquor to my lay-brother."

"And I," said the Templar, filling his goblet, "drink wassail to the fair Rowena; for since her namesake introduced the word into England, has never been one more worthy of such a tribute. By my faith, I could pardon the unhappy Vortigern, had he half the cause that we now witness, for making shipwreck of his honour and his kingdom."

"I will spare your courtesy, Sir Knight," said Rowena with dignity, and without unveiling herself; "or rather I will tax it so far as to require of you the latest news from Palestine, a theme more agreeable to our English ears than the compliments which your French breeding teaches."

"I have little of importance to say, lady," answered Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "excepting the confirmed tidings of a truce with Saladin."

He was interrupted by Wamba, who had taken his appropriated seat upon a chair, the back of which was decorated with two ass's ears, and which was placed about two steps behind that of his master, who, from time to time, supplied him with victuals from his own trencher; a favour, however, which the Jester shared with the favourite dogs, of whom, as we have already noticed, there were several in attendance. Here sat Wamba, with a small table before him, his heels tucked up against the bar of the chair, his cheeks sucked up so as to make his jaws resemble a pair of nut-crackers, and his eyes half-shut, yet watching with alertness every opportunity to exercise his licensed foolery.

"These truces with the infidels," he exclaimed, without caring how suddenly he interrupted the stately Templar, "make an old man of me!"

"Go to, knave, how so?" said Cedric, his features prepared to receive favourably the expected jest.

"Because," answered Wamba, "I remember three of them in my day, each of which was to endure for the course of fifty years; so that, by computation, I must be at least a hundred and fifty years old."

"I will warrant you against dying of old age, however," said the Templar, who now recognised his friend of the forest; "I will assure you from all deaths but a violent one, if you give such directions to wayfarers, as you did this night to the Prior and me."

"How, sirrah!" said Cedric, "misdirect travellers? We must have you whipt; you are at least as much rogue as fool."

"I pray thee, uncle," answered the Jester, "let my folly, for once, protect my roguery. I did but make a mistake between my right hand and my left; and he might have pardoned a greater, who took a fool for his counsellor and guide."

Conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of the porter's page, who announced that there was a stranger at the gate, imploring admittance and hospitality.

"Admit him," said Cedric, "be he who or what he may;—a night like that which roars without, compels even wild animals to herd with tame, and to seek the protection of man, their mortal foe, rather than perish by the elements. Let his wants be ministered to with all care—look to it, Oswald."

And the steward left the banqueting hall to see the commands of his patron obeyed.

CHAPTER V

*Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,
senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with
the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the
same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as
a Christian is?*
—Merchant of Venice

Oswald, returning, whispered into the ear of his master, "It is a Jew, who calls himself Isaac of York; is it fit I should marshall him into the hall?"

"Let Gurth do thine office, Oswald," said Wamba with his usual effrontery; "the swineherd will be a fit usher to the Jew."

"St Mary," said the Abbot, crossing himself, "an unbelieving Jew, and admitted into this presence!"

"A dog Jew," echoed the Templar, "to approach a defender of the Holy Sepulchre?"

"By my faith," said Wamba, "it would seem the Templars love the Jews' inheritance better than they do their company."

"Peace, my worthy guests," said Cedric; "my hospitality must not be bounded by your dislikes. If Heaven bore with the whole nation of stiff-necked unbelievers for more years than a layman can number, we may endure the presence of one Jew for a few hours. But I constrain no man to converse or to feed with him.—Let him have a board and a morsel apart,—unless," he said smiling, "these turban'd strangers will admit his society."

"Sir Franklin," answered the Templar, "my Saracen slaves are true Moslems, and scorn as much as any Christian to hold intercourse with a Jew."

"Now, in faith," said Wamba, "I cannot see that the worshippers of Mahound and Termagaunt have so greatly the advantage over the people once chosen of Heaven."

"He shall sit with thee, Wamba," said Cedric; "the fool and the knave will be well met."

"The fool," answered Wamba, raising the relics of a gammon of bacon, "will take care to erect a bulwark against the knave."

"Hush," said Cedric, "for here he comes."

Introduced with little ceremony, and advancing with fear and hesitation, and many a bow of deep humility, a tall thin old man, who, however, had lost by the habit of stooping much of his actual height, approached the lower end of the board. His features, keen and regular, with an aquiline nose, and piercing black eyes; his high and wrinkled forehead, and long grey hair and beard, would have been considered as handsome, had they not been the marks of a physiognomy peculiar to a race, which, during those dark ages, was alike detested by the credulous and prejudiced vulgar, and persecuted by the greedy and rapacious nobility, and who, perhaps, owing to that very hatred and persecution, had adopted a national character, in which there was much, to say the least, mean and unamiable.

The Jew's dress, which appeared to have suffered considerably from the storm, was a plain russet cloak of many folds, covering a dark purple tunic. He had large boots lined with fur, and a belt around his waist, which sustained a small knife, together with a case for writing materials, but no weapon. He wore a high square yellow cap of a peculiar fashion, assigned to his nation to distinguish them from Christians, and which he doffed with great humility at the door of the hall.

The reception of this person in the hall of Cedric the Saxon, was such as might have satisfied the most prejudiced enemy of the tribes of Israel. Cedric himself coldly nodded in answer to the Jew's repeated salutations, and signed to him to take place at the lower end of the table, where, however, no one offered to make room for him. On the contrary, as he passed along the file, casting a timid supplicating glance, and turning towards each of those who occupied the lower end of the board, the Saxon domestics squared their shoulders, and continued to devour their supper with great perseverance, paying not the least attention to the wants of the new guest. The attendants of the Abbot crossed themselves, with looks of pious horror, and the very heathen Saracens, as Isaac drew near them, curled up their whiskers with indignation, and laid their hands on their poniards, as if ready to rid themselves by the most desperate means from the apprehended contamination of his nearer approach.

Probably the same motives which induced Cedric to open his hall to this son of a rejected people, would have made him insist on his attendants receiving Isaac with more courtesy. But the Abbot had, at this moment, engaged him in a most interesting discussion on the breed and character of his favourite hounds, which he would not have interrupted for matters of much greater importance than that of a Jew going to bed supperless. While Isaac thus stood an outcast in the present society, like his people among the nations, looking in vain for welcome or resting place, the pilgrim who sat by the chimney took compassion upon him, and resigned his seat, saying briefly, "Old man, my garments are dried, my hunger is appeased, thou art both wet and fasting." So saying, he gathered together, and brought to a flame, the decaying brands which lay scattered on the ample hearth; took from the larger board a mess of pottage and seethed kid, placed it upon the small table at which he had himself supped, and, without waiting the Jew's thanks, went to the other side of the hall;—whether from unwillingness to hold more close communication with the object of his benevolence, or from a wish to draw near to the upper end of the table, seemed uncertain.

Had there been painters in those days capable to execute such a subject, the Jew, as he bent his withered form, and expanded his chilled and trembling hands over the fire, would have formed no bad emblematical personification of the Winter season. Having dispelled the cold, he turned eagerly to the smoking mess which was placed before him, and ate with a haste and an apparent relish, that seemed to betoken long abstinence from food.

Meanwhile the Abbot and Cedric continued their discourse upon hunting; the Lady Rowena seemed engaged in conversation with one of her attendant females; and the haughty Templar, whose eye wandered from the Jew to the Saxon beauty, revolved in his mind thoughts which appeared deeply to interest him.

"I marvel, worthy Cedric," said the Abbot, as their discourse proceeded, "that, great as your predilection is for your own manly language, you do not receive the Norman-French into your favour, so far at least as the mystery of wood-craft and hunting is concerned. Surely no tongue is so rich in the various phrases which the field-sports demand, or furnishes means to the experienced woodman so well to express his jovial art."

"Good Father Aymer," said the Saxon, "be it known to you, I care not for those over-sea refinements, without which I can well enough take my pleasure in the woods. I can wind my horn, though I call not the blast either a 'recheate' or a 'morte'—I can cheer my dogs on the prey, and I can flay and quarter the animal when it is brought down, without using the newfangled jargon of 'curee, arbor, nombles', and all the babble of the fabulous Sir Tristrem." 14

"The French," said the Templar, raising his voice with the presumptuous and authoritative tone which he used upon all occasions, "is not only the natural language of the chase, but that of love and of war, in which ladies should be won and enemies defied."

"Pledge me in a cup of wine, Sir Templar," said Cedric, "and fill another to the Abbot, while I look back some thirty years to tell you another tale. As Cedric the Saxon then was, his plain English tale needed no garnish from French troubadours, when it was told in the ear of beauty; and the field of Northallerton, upon the day of the Holy Standard, could tell whether the Saxon war-cry was not heard as far within the ranks of the Scottish host as the 'cri de guerre' of the boldest Norman baron. To the memory of the brave who fought there!—Pledge me, my guests." He drank deep, and went on with increasing warmth. "Ay, that was a day of cleaving of shields, when a hundred banners were bent forwards over the heads of the valiant, and blood flowed round like water, and death was held better than flight. A Saxon bard had called it a feast of the swords—a gathering of the eagles to the prey—the clashing of bills upon shield and helmet, the shouting of battle more joyful than the clamour of a bridal. But our bards are no more," he said; "our deeds are lost in those of another race—our language—our very name—is hastening to decay, and none mourns for it save one solitary old man—Cupbearer! knave, fill the goblets—To the strong in arms, Sir Templar, be their race or language what it will, who now bear them best in Palestine among the champions of the Cross!"

"It becomes not one wearing this badge to answer," said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert; "yet to whom, besides the sworn Champions of the Holy Sepulchre, can the palm be assigned among the champions of the Cross?"

"To the Knights Hospitallers," said the Abbot; "I have a brother of their order."

"I impeach not their fame," said the Templar; "nevertheless—"

"I think, friend Cedric," said Wamba, interfering, "that had Richard of the Lion's Heart been wise enough to have taken a fool's advice, he might have staid at home with his merry Englishmen, and left the recovery of Jerusalem to those same Knights who had most to do with the loss of it."

"Were there, then, none in the English army," said the Lady Rowena, "whose names are worthy to be mentioned with the Knights of the Temple, and of St John?"

"Forgive me, lady," replied De Bois-Guilbert; "the English monarch did, indeed, bring to Palestine a host of gallant warriors, second only to those whose breasts have been the unceasing bulwark of that blessed land."

"Second to NONE," said the Pilgrim, who had stood near enough to hear, and had listened to this conversation with marked impatience. All turned toward the spot from whence this unexpected asseveration was heard.

"I say," repeated the Pilgrim in a firm and strong voice, "that the English chivalry were second to NONE who ever drew sword in defence of the Holy Land. I say besides, for I saw it, that King Richard himself, and five of his knights, held a tournament after the taking of St John-de-Acre, as challengers against all comers. I

say that, on that day, each knight ran three courses, and cast to the ground three antagonists. I add, that seven of these assailants were Knights of the Temple—and Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert well knows the truth of what I tell you."

It is impossible for language to describe the bitter scowl of rage which rendered yet darker the swarthy countenance of the Templar. In the extremity of his resentment and confusion, his quivering fingers gripped towards the handle of his sword, and perhaps only withdrew, from the consciousness that no act of violence could be safely executed in that place and presence. Cedric, whose feelings were all of a right onward and simple kind, and were seldom occupied by more than one object at once, omitted, in the joyous glee with which he heard of the glory of his countrymen, to remark the angry confusion of his guest; "I would give thee this golden bracelet, Pilgrim," he said, "couldst thou tell me the names of those knights who upheld so gallantly the renown of merry England."

"That will I do blithely," replied the Pilgrim, "and without guerdon; my oath, for a time, prohibits me from touching gold."

"I will wear the bracelet for you, if you will, friend Palmer," said Wamba.

"The first in honour as in arms, in renown as in place," said the Pilgrim, "was the brave Richard, King of England."

"I forgive him," said Cedric; "I forgive him his descent from the tyrant Duke William."

"The Earl of Leicester was the second," continued the Pilgrim; "Sir Thomas Multon of Gilsland was the third."

"Of Saxon descent, he at least," said Cedric, with exultation.

"Sir Foulk Doilly the fourth," proceeded the Pilgrim.

"Saxon also, at least by the mother's side," continued Cedric, who listened with the utmost eagerness, and forgot, in part at least, his hatred to the Normans, in the common triumph of the King of England and his islanders. "And who was the fifth?" he demanded.

"The fifth was Sir Edwin Turneham."

"Genuine Saxon, by the soul of Hengist!" shouted Cedric—"And the sixth?" he continued with eagerness—"how name you the sixth?"

"The sixth," said the Palmer, after a pause, in which he seemed to recollect himself, "was a young knight of lesser renown and lower rank, assumed into that honourable company, less to aid their enterprise than to make up their number—his name dwells not in my memory."

"Sir Palmer," said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert scornfully, "this assumed forgetfulness, after so much has been remembered, comes too late to serve your purpose. I will myself tell the name of the knight before whose lance fortune and my horse's fault occasioned my falling—it was the Knight of Ivanhoe; nor was there one of the six that, for his years, had more renown in arms.—Yet this will I say, and loudly—that were he in England, and durst repeat, in this week's tournament, the challenge of St John-de-Acre, I, mounted and armed as I now am, would give him every advantage of weapons, and abide the result."

"Your challenge would soon be answered," replied the Palmer, "were your antagonist near you. As the matter is, disturb not the peaceful hall with vaunts of the issue of the conflict, which you well know cannot take place. If Ivanhoe ever returns from Palestine, I will be his surety that he meets you."

"A goodly security!" said the Knight Templar; "and what do you proffer as a pledge?"

"This reliquary," said the Palmer, taking a small ivory box from his bosom, and crossing himself, "containing a portion of the true cross, brought from the Monastery of Mount Carmel."

The Prior of Jorvaulx crossed himself and repeated a pater noster, in which all devoutly joined, excepting the Jew, the Mahomedans, and the Templar; the latter of whom, without veiling his bonnet, or testifying any reverence for the alleged sanctity of the relic, took from his neck a gold chain, which he flung on the board, saying—"Let Prior Aymer hold my pledge and that of this nameless vagrant, in token that when the Knight of Ivanhoe comes within the four seas of Britain, he underlies the challenge of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, which, if he answer not, I will proclaim him as a coward on the walls of every Temple Court in Europe."

"It will not need," said the Lady Rowena, breaking silence; "My voice shall be heard, if no other in this hall is raised in behalf of the absent Ivanhoe. I affirm he will meet fairly every honourable challenge. Could my weak warrant add security to the inestimable pledge of this holy pilgrim, I would pledge name and fame that Ivanhoe gives this proud knight the meeting he desires."

A crowd of conflicting emotions seemed to have occupied Cedric, and kept him silent during this discussion. Gratified pride, resentment, embarrassment, chased each other over his broad and open brow, like the shadow of clouds drifting over a harvest-field; while his attendants, on whom the name of the sixth knight seemed to produce an effect almost electrical, hung in suspense upon their master's looks. But when Rowena spoke, the sound of her voice seemed to startle him from his silence.

"Lady," said Cedric, "this beseems not; were further pledge necessary, I myself, offended, and justly offended, as I am, would yet gage my honour for the honour of Ivanhoe. But the wager of battle is complete, even according to the fantastic fashions of Norman chivalry—Is it not, Father Aymer?"

"It is," replied the Prior; "and the blessed relic and rich chain will I bestow safely in the treasury of our convent, until the decision of this warlike challenge."

Having thus spoken, he crossed himself again and again, and after many genuflections and muttered prayers, he delivered the reliquary to Brother Ambrose, his attendant monk, while he himself swept up with less ceremony, but perhaps with no less internal satisfaction, the golden chain, and bestowed it in a pouch lined with perfumed leather, which opened under his arm. "And now, Sir Cedric," he said, "my ears are chiming vespers with the strength of your good wine—permit us another pledge to the welfare of the Lady Rowena, and indulge us with liberty to pass to our repose."

"By the rood of Bromholme," said the Saxon, "you do but small credit to your fame, Sir Prior! Report speaks you a bonny monk, that would hear the matin chime ere he quitted his bowl; and, old as I am, I feared to have shame in encountering you. But, by my faith, a Saxon boy of twelve, in my time, would not so soon have relinquished his goblet."

The Prior had his own reasons, however, for persevering in the course of temperance which he had adopted. He was not only a professional peacemaker, but from practice a hater of all feuds and brawls. It was not altogether from a love to his neighbour, or to himself, or from a mixture of both. On the present occasion, he had an instinctive apprehension of the fiery temper of the Saxon, and saw the danger that the reckless and presumptuous spirit, of which his companion had already given so many proofs, might at length produce some disagreeable explosion. He therefore gently insinuated the incapacity of the native of any other country to engage in the genial conflict of the bowl with the hardy and strong-headed Saxons; something he mentioned, but slightly, about his own holy character, and ended by pressing his proposal to depart to repose.

The grace-cup was accordingly served round, and the guests, after making deep obeisance to their landlord and to the Lady Rowena, arose and mingled in the hall, while the heads of the family, by separate doors, retired with their attendants.

"Unbelieving dog," said the Templar to Isaac the Jew, as he passed him in the throng, "dost thou bend thy course to the tournament?"

"I do so propose," replied Isaac, bowing in all humility, "if it please your reverend valour."

"Ay," said the Knight, "to gnaw the bowels of our nobles with usury, and to gull women and boys with gauds and toys—I warrant thee store of shekels in thy Jewish scrip."

"Not a shekel, not a silver penny, not a halfling—so help me the God of Abraham!" said the Jew, clasping his hands; "I go but to seek the assistance of some brethren of my tribe to aid me to pay the fine which the Exchequer of the Jews have imposed upon me—Father Jacob be my speed! I am an impoverished wretch—the very gaberdine I wear is borrowed from Reuben of Tadcaster." 15

The Templar smiled sourly as he replied, "Beshrew thee for a false-hearted liar!" and passing onward, as if disdaining farther conference, he communed with his Moslem slaves in a language unknown to the bystanders. The poor Israelite seemed so staggered by the address of the military monk, that the Templar had passed on to the extremity of the hall ere he raised his head from the humble posture which he had assumed, so far as to be sensible of his departure. And when he did look around, it was with the astonished air of one at whose feet a thunderbolt has just burst, and who hears still the astounding report ringing in his ears.

The Templar and Prior were shortly after marshalled to their sleeping apartments by the steward and the cupbearer, each attended by two torchbearers and two servants carrying refreshments, while servants of inferior condition indicated to their retinue and to the other guests their respective places of repose.

CHAPTER VI

*To buy his favour I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.*
—Merchant of Venice

As the Palmer, lighted by a domestic with a torch, passed through the intricate combination of apartments of this large and irregular mansion, the cupbearer coming behind him whispered in his ear, that if he had no objection to a cup of good mead in his apartment, there were many domestics in that family who would gladly hear the news he had brought from the Holy Land, and particularly that which concerned the Knight of Ivanhoe. Wamba presently appeared to urge the same request, observing that a cup after midnight was worth three after curfew. Without disputing a maxim urged by such grave authority, the Palmer thanked them for their courtesy, but observed that he had included in his religious vow, an obligation never to speak in the kitchen on matters which were prohibited in the hall. "That vow," said Wamba to the cupbearer, "would scarce suit a serving-man."

The cupbearer shrugged up his shoulders in displeasure. "I thought to have lodged him in the solere chamber," said he; "but since he is so unsocial to Christians, e'en let him take the next stall to Isaac the Jew's.—Anwold," said he to the torchbearer, "carry the Pilgrim to the southern cell.—I give you good-night," he added, "Sir Palmer, with small thanks for short courtesy."

"Good-night, and Our Lady's benison," said the Palmer, with composure; and his guide moved forward.

In a small antechamber, into which several doors opened, and which was lighted by a small iron lamp, they met a second interruption from the waiting-maid of Rowena, who, saying in a tone of authority, that her mistress desired to speak with the Palmer, took the torch from the hand of Anwold, and, bidding him await her return, made a sign to the Palmer to follow. Apparently he did not think it proper to decline this invitation as he had done the former; for, though his gesture indicated some surprise at the summons, he obeyed it without answer or remonstrance.

A short passage, and an ascent of seven steps, each of which was composed of a solid beam of oak, led him to the apartment of the Lady Rowena, the rude magnificence of which corresponded to the respect which was paid to her by the lord of the mansion. The walls were covered with embroidered hangings, on which different-coloured silks, interwoven with gold and silver threads, had been employed with all the art of which the age was capable, to represent the sports of hunting and hawking. The bed was adorned with the same rich tapestry, and surrounded with curtains dyed with purple. The seats had also their stained coverings, and one, which was higher than the rest, was accommodated with a footstool of ivory, curiously carved.

No fewer than four silver candelabras, holding great waxen torches, served to illuminate this apartment. Yet let not modern beauty envy the magnificence of a Saxon princess. The walls of the apartment were so ill finished and so full of crevices, that the rich hangings shook in the night blast, and, in despite of a sort of screen intended to protect them from the wind, the flame of the torches streamed sideways into the air, like the unfurled pennon of a chieftain. Magnificence there was, with some rude attempt at taste; but of comfort there was little, and, being unknown, it was unmissed.

The Lady Rowena, with three of her attendants standing at her back, and arranging her hair ere she lay down to rest, was seated in the sort of throne already mentioned, and looked as if born to exact general homage. The Pilgrim acknowledged her claim to it by a low genuflection.

"Rise, Palmer," said she graciously. "The defender of the absent has a right to favourable reception from all who value truth, and honour manhood." She then said to her train, "Retire, excepting only Elgitha; I would speak with this holy Pilgrim."

The maidens, without leaving the apartment, retired to its further extremity, and sat down on a small bench against the wall, where they remained mute as statues, though at such a distance that their whispers could not have interrupted the conversation of their mistress.

"Pilgrim," said the lady, after a moment's pause, during which she seemed uncertain how to address him, "you this night mentioned a name—I mean," she said, with a degree of effort, "the name of Ivanhoe, in the halls where by nature and kindred it should have sounded most acceptably; and yet, such is the perverse course of fate, that of many whose hearts must have throbbed at the sound, I, only, dare ask you where, and in what condition, you left him of whom you spoke?—We heard, that, having remained in Palestine, on account of his impaired health, after the departure of the English army, he had experienced the persecution of the French faction, to whom the Templars are known to be attached."

"I know little of the Knight of Ivanhoe," answered the Palmer, with a troubled voice. "I would I knew him better, since you, lady, are interested in his fate. He hath, I believe, surmounted the persecution of his enemies in Palestine, and is on the eve of returning to England, where you, lady, must know better than I, what is his chance of happiness."

The Lady Rowena sighed deeply, and asked more particularly when the Knight of Ivanhoe might be expected in his native country, and whether he would not be exposed to great dangers by the road. On the first point, the Palmer professed ignorance; on the second, he said that the voyage might be safely made by the way of Venice and Genoa, and from thence through France to England. "Ivanhoe," he said, "was so well acquainted with the language and manners of the French, that there was no fear of his incurring any hazard during that part of his travels."

"Would to God," said the Lady Rowena, "he were here safely arrived, and able to bear arms in the approaching tourney, in which the chivalry of this land are expected to display their address and valour. Should Athelstane of Coningsburgh obtain the prize, Ivanhoe is like to hear evil tidings when he reaches England.—How looked he, stranger, when you last saw him? Had disease laid her hand heavy upon his strength and comeliness?"

"He was darker," said the Palmer, "and thinner, than when he came from Cyprus in the train of Coeur-de-Lion, and care seemed to sit heavy on his brow; but I approached not his presence, because he is unknown to me."

"He will," said the lady, "I fear, find little in his native land to clear those clouds from his countenance. Thanks, good Pilgrim, for your information concerning the companion of my childhood.—Maidens," she said, "draw near—offer the sleeping cup to this holy man, whom I will no longer detain from repose."

One of the maidens presented a silver cup, containing a rich mixture of wine and spice, which Rowena barely put to her lips. It was then offered to the Palmer, who, after a low obeisance, tasted a few drops.

"Accept this alms, friend," continued the lady, offering a piece of gold, "in acknowledgment of thy painful travail, and of the shrines thou hast visited."

The Palmer received the boon with another low reverence, and followed Edwina out of the apartment.

In the anteroom he found his attendant Anwold, who, taking the torch from the hand of the waiting-maid, conducted him with more haste than ceremony to an exterior and ignoble part of the building, where a number of small apartments, or rather cells, served for sleeping places to the lower order of domestics, and to strangers of mean degree.

"In which of these sleeps the Jew?" said the Pilgrim.

"The unbelieving dog," answered Anwold, "kennels in the cell next your holiness.—St Dunstan, how it must be scraped and cleansed ere it be again fit for a Christian!"

"And where sleeps Gurth the swineherd?" said the stranger.

"Gurth," replied the bondsman, "sleeps in the cell on your right, as the Jew on that to your left; you serve to keep the child of circumcision separate from the abomination of his tribe. You might have occupied a more honourable place had you accepted of Oswald's invitation."

"It is as well as it is," said the Palmer; "the company, even of a Jew, can hardly spread contamination through an oaken partition."

So saying, he entered the cabin allotted to him, and taking the torch from the domestic's hand, thanked him, and wished him good-night. Having shut the door of his cell, he placed the torch in a candlestick made of wood, and looked around his sleeping apartment, the furniture of which was of the most simple kind. It

consisted of a rude wooden stool, and still ruder hutch or bed-frame, stuffed with clean straw, and accommodated with two or three sheepskins by way of bed-clothes.

The Palmer, having extinguished his torch, threw himself, without taking off any part of his clothes, on this rude couch, and slept, or at least retained his recumbent posture, till the earliest sunbeams found their way through the little grated window, which served at once to admit both air and light to his uncomfortable cell. He then started up, and after repeating his matins, and adjusting his dress, he left it, and entered that of Isaac the Jew, lifting the latch as gently as he could.

The inmate was lying in troubled slumber upon a couch similar to that on which the Palmer himself had passed the night. Such parts of his dress as the Jew had laid aside on the preceding evening, were disposed carefully around his person, as if to prevent the hazard of their being carried off during his slumbers. There was a trouble on his brow amounting almost to agony. His hands and arms moved convulsively, as if struggling with the nightmare; and besides several ejaculations in Hebrew, the following were distinctly heard in the Norman-English, or mixed language of the country: "For the sake of the God of Abraham, spare an unhappy old man! I am poor, I am penniless—should your irons wrench my limbs asunder, I could not gratify you!"

The Palmer awaited not the end of the Jew's vision, but stirred him with his pilgrim's staff. The touch probably associated, as is usual, with some of the apprehensions excited by his dream; for the old man started up, his grey hair standing almost erect upon his head, and huddling some part of his garments about him, while he held the detached pieces with the tenacious grasp of a falcon, he fixed upon the Palmer his keen black eyes, expressive of wild surprise and of bodily apprehension.

"Fear nothing from me, Isaac," said the Palmer, "I come as your friend."

"The God of Israel requite you," said the Jew, greatly relieved; "I dreamed—But Father Abraham be praised, it was but a dream." Then, collecting himself, he added in his usual tone, "And what may it be your pleasure to want at so early an hour with the poor Jew?"

"It is to tell you," said the Palmer, "that if you leave not this mansion instantly, and travel not with some haste, your journey may prove a dangerous one."

"Holy father!" said the Jew, "whom could it interest to endanger so poor a wretch as I am?"

"The purpose you can best guess," said the Pilgrim; "but rely on this, that when the Templar crossed the hall yesternight, he spoke to his Mussulman slaves in the Saracen language, which I well understand, and charged them this morning to watch the journey of the Jew, to seize upon him when at a convenient distance from the mansion, and to conduct him to the castle of Philip de Malvoisin, or to that of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf."

It is impossible to describe the extremity of terror which seized upon the Jew at this information, and seemed at once to overpower his whole faculties. His arms fell down to his sides, and his head drooped on his breast, his knees bent under his weight, every nerve and muscle of his frame seemed to collapse and lose its energy, and he sunk at the foot of the Palmer, not in the fashion of one who intentionally stoops, kneels, or prostrates himself to excite compassion, but like a man borne down on all sides by the pressure of some invisible force, which crushes him to the earth without the power of resistance.

"Holy God of Abraham!" was his first exclamation, folding and elevating his wrinkled hands, but without raising his grey head from the pavement; "Oh, holy Moses! O, blessed Aaron! the dream is not dreamed for nought, and the vision cometh not in vain! I feel their irons already tear my sinews! I feel the rack pass over my body like the saws, and harrows, and axes of iron over the men of Rabbah, and of the cities of the children of Ammon!"

"Stand up, Isaac, and hearken to me," said the Palmer, who viewed the extremity of his distress with a compassion in which contempt was largely mingled; "you have cause for your terror, considering how your brethren have been used, in order to extort from them their hoards, both by princes and nobles; but stand up, I say, and I will point out to you the means of escape. Leave this mansion instantly, while its inmates sleep sound after the last night's revel. I will guide you by the secret paths of the forest, known as well to me as to any forester that ranges it, and I will not leave you till you are under safe conduct of some chief or baron going to the tournament, whose good-will you have probably the means of securing."

As the ears of Isaac received the hopes of escape which this speech intimated, he began gradually, and inch by inch, as it were, to raise himself up from the ground, until he fairly rested upon his knees, throwing back his long grey hair and beard, and fixing his keen black eyes upon the Palmer's face, with a look expressive at once of hope and fear, not unmingled with suspicion. But when he heard the concluding part of the sentence, his original terror appeared to revive in full force, and he dropt once more on his face, exclaiming, "'I possess the means of securing good-will! alas! there is but one road to the favour of a Christian, and how can the poor Jew find it, whom extortions have already reduced to the misery of Lazarus?" Then, as if suspicion had overpowered his other feelings, he suddenly exclaimed, "For the love of God, young man, betray me not—for the sake of the Great Father who made us all, Jew as well as Gentile, Israelite and Ishmaelite—do me no treason! I have not means to secure the good-will of a Christian beggar, were he rating it at a single penny." As he spoke these last words, he raised himself, and grasped the Palmer's mantle with a look of the most earnest entreaty. The pilgrim extricated himself, as if there were contamination in the touch.

"Wert thou loaded with all the wealth of thy tribe," he said, "what interest have I to injure thee?—In this dress I am vowed to poverty, nor do I change it for aught save a horse and a coat of mail. Yet think not that I care for thy company, or propose myself advantage by it; remain here if thou wilt—Cedric the Saxon may protect thee."

"Alas!" said the Jew, "he will not let me travel in his train—Saxon or Norman will be equally ashamed of the poor Israelite; and to travel by myself through the domains of Philip de Malvoisin and Reginald Front-de-Boeuf—Good youth, I will go with you!—Let us haste—let us gird up our loins—let us flee!—Here is thy staff, why wilt thou tarry?"

"I tarry not," said the Pilgrim, giving way to the urgency of his companion; "but I must secure the means of leaving this place—follow me."

He led the way to the adjoining cell, which, as the reader is apprised, was occupied by Gurth the swineherd.—"Arise, Gurth," said the Pilgrim, "arise quickly. Undo the postern gate, and let out the Jew and me."

Gurth, whose occupation, though now held so mean, gave him as much consequence in Saxon England as that of Eumaeus in Ithaca, was offended at the familiar and commanding tone assumed by the Palmer. "The Jew leaving Rotherwood," said he, raising himself on his elbow, and looking superciliously at him without quitting his pallet, "and travelling in company with the Palmer to boot—"

"I should as soon have dreamt," said Wamba, who entered the apartment at the instant, "of his stealing away with a gammon of bacon."

"Nevertheless," said Gurth, again laying down his head on the wooden log which served him for a pillow, "both Jew and Gentile must be content to abide the opening of the great gate—we suffer no visitors to depart by stealth at these unseasonable hours."

"Nevertheless," said the Pilgrim, in a commanding tone, "you will not, I think, refuse me that favour."

So saying, he stooped over the bed of the recumbent swineherd, and whispered something in his ear in Saxon. Gurth started up as if electrified. The Pilgrim, raising his finger in an attitude as if to express caution, added, "Gurth, beware—thou art wont to be prudent. I say, undo the postern—thou shalt know more anon."

With hasty alacrity Gurth obeyed him, while Wamba and the Jew followed, both wondering at the sudden change in the swineherd's demeanour. "My mule, my mule!" said the Jew, as soon as they stood without the postern.

"Fetch him his mule," said the Pilgrim; "and, hearest thou,—let me have another, that I may bear him company till he is beyond these parts—I will return it safely to some of Cedric's train at Ashby. And do thou"—he whispered the rest in Gurth's ear.

"Willingly, most willingly shall it be done," said Gurth, and instantly departed to execute the commission.

"I wish I knew," said Wamba, when his comrade's back was turned, "what you Palmers learn in the Holy Land."

"To say our orisons, fool," answered the Pilgrim, "to repent our sins, and to mortify ourselves with fastings, vigils, and long prayers."

"Something more potent than that," answered the Jester; "for when would repentance or prayer make Gurth do a courtesy, or fasting or vigil persuade him to lend you a mule?—I trow you might as well have told his favourite black boar of thy vigils and penance, and wouldst have gotten as civil an answer."

"Go to," said the Pilgrim, "thou art but a Saxon fool."

"Thou sayst well," said the Jester; "had I been born a Norman, as I think thou art, I would have had luck on my side, and been next door to a wise man."

At this moment Gurth appeared on the opposite side of the moat with the mules. The travellers crossed the ditch upon a drawbridge of only two planks breadth, the narrowness of which was matched with the straitness of the postern, and with a little wicket in the exterior palisade, which gave access to the forest. No sooner had they reached the mules, than the Jew, with hasty and trembling hands, secured behind the saddle a small bag of blue buckram, which he took from under his cloak, containing, as he muttered, "a change of raiment—only a change of raiment." Then getting upon the animal with more alacrity and haste than could have been anticipated from his years, he lost no time in so disposing of the skirts of his gabardine as to conceal completely from observation the burden which he had thus deposited "en croupe".

The Pilgrim mounted with more deliberation, reaching, as he departed, his hand to Gurth, who kissed it with the utmost possible veneration. The swineherd stood gazing after the travellers until they were lost under the boughs of the forest path, when he was disturbed from his reverie by the voice of Wamba.

"Knowest thou," said the Jester, "my good friend Gurth, that thou art strangely courteous and most unwontedly pious on this summer morning? I would I were a black Prior or a barefoot Palmer, to avail myself of thy unwonted zeal and courtesy—certes, I would make more out of it than a kiss of the hand."

"Thou art no fool thus far, Wamba," answered Gurth, "though thou arguest from appearances, and the wisest of us can do no more—But it is time to look after my charge."

So saying, he turned back to the mansion, attended by the Jester.

Meanwhile the travellers continued to press on their journey with a dispatch which argued the extremity of the Jew's fears, since persons at his age are seldom fond of rapid motion. The Palmer, to whom every path and outlet in the wood appeared to be familiar, led the way through the most devious paths, and more than once excited anew the suspicion of the Israelite, that he intended to betray him into some ambuscade of his enemies.

His doubts might have been indeed pardoned; for, except perhaps the flying fish, there was no race existing on the earth, in the air, or the waters, who were the object of such an unintermitting, general, and relentless persecution as the Jews of this period. Upon the slightest and most unreasonable pretences, as well as upon accusations the most absurd and groundless, their persons and property were exposed to every turn of popular fury; for Norman, Saxon, Dane, and Briton, however adverse these races were to each other, contended which should look with greatest detestation upon a people, whom it was accounted a point of religion to hate, to revile, to despise, to plunder, and to persecute. The kings of the Norman race, and the independent nobles, who followed their example in all acts of tyranny, maintained against this devoted people a persecution of a more regular, calculated, and self-interested kind. It is a well-known story of King John, that he confined a wealthy Jew in one of the royal castles, and daily caused one of his teeth to be torn out, until, when the jaw of the unhappy Israelite was half disfurnished, he consented to pay a large sum, which it was the tyrant's object to extort from him. The little ready money which was in the country was chiefly in possession of this persecuted people, and the nobility hesitated not to follow the example of their sovereign, in wringing it from them by every species of oppression, and even personal torture. Yet the passive courage inspired by the love of gain, induced the Jews to dare the various evils to which they were subjected, in consideration of the immense profits which they were enabled to realize in a country naturally so wealthy as England. In spite of every kind of discouragement, and even of the special court of taxations already mentioned, called the Jews' Exchequer, erected for the very purpose of despoiling and distressing them, the Jews increased, multiplied, and accumulated huge sums, which they transferred from one hand to another by means of bills of exchange—an invention for which commerce is said to be indebted to them, and which enabled them to transfer their wealth from land to land, that when threatened with oppression in one country, their treasure might be secured in another.

The obstinacy and avarice of the Jews being thus in a measure placed in opposition to the fanaticism that tyranny of those under whom they lived, seemed to increase in proportion to the persecution with which they were visited; and the immense wealth they usually acquired in commerce, while it frequently placed them in danger, was at other times used to extend their influence, and to secure to them a certain degree of protection. On these terms they lived; and their character, influenced accordingly, was watchful, suspicious, and timid—yet obstinate, uncomplying, and skilful in evading the dangers to which they were exposed.

When the travellers had pushed on at a rapid rate through many devious paths, the Palmer at length broke silence.

"That large decayed oak," he said, "marks the boundaries over which Front-de-Boeuf claims authority—we are long since far from those of Malvoisin. There is now no fear of pursuit."

"May the wheels of their chariots be taken off," said the Jew, "like those of the host of Pharaoh, that they may drive heavily!—But leave me not, good Pilgrim—Think but of that fierce and savage Templar, with his Saracen slaves—they will regard neither territory, nor manor, nor lordship."

"Our road," said the Palmer, "should here separate; for it beseems not men of my character and thine to travel together longer than needs must be. Besides, what succour couldst thou have from me, a peaceful Pilgrim, against two armed heathens?"

"O good youth," answered the Jew, "thou canst defend me, and I know thou wouldst. Poor as I am, I will requite it—not with money, for money, so help me my Father Abraham, I have none—but—"

"Money and recompense," said the Palmer, interrupting him, "I have already said I require not of thee. Guide thee I can; and, it may be, even in some sort defend thee; since to protect a Jew against a Saracen, can scarce be accounted unworthy of a Christian. Therefore, Jew, I will see thee safe under some fitting escort. We are now not far from the town of Sheffield, where thou mayest easily find many of thy tribe with whom to take refuge."

"The blessing of Jacob be upon thee, good youth!" said the Jew; "in Sheffield I can harbour with my kinsman Zareth, and find some means of travelling forth with safety."

"Be it so," said the Palmer; "at Sheffield then we part, and half-an-hour's riding will bring us in sight of that town."

The half hour was spent in perfect silence on both parts; the Pilgrim perhaps disdaining to address the Jew, except in case of absolute necessity, and the Jew not presuming to force a conversation with a person whose journey to the Holy Sepulchre gave a sort of sanctity to his character. They paused on the top of a gently rising bank, and the Pilgrim, pointing to the town of Sheffield, which lay beneath them, repeated the words, "Here, then, we part."

"Not till you have had the poor Jew's thanks," said Isaac; "for I presume not to ask you to go with me to my kinsman Zareth's, who might aid me with some means of repaying your good offices."

"I have already said," answered the Pilgrim, "that I desire no recompense. If among the huge list of thy debtors, thou wilt, for my sake, spare the gyves and the dungeon to some unhappy Christian who stands in thy danger, I shall hold this morning's service to thee well bestowed."

"Stay, stay," said the Jew, laying hold of his garment; "something would I do more than this, something for thyself.—God knows the Jew is poor—yes, Isaac is the beggar of his tribe—but forgive me should I guess what thou most lackest at this moment."

"If thou wert to guess truly," said the Palmer, "it is what thou canst not supply, wert thou as wealthy as thou sayst thou art poor."

"As I say?" echoed the Jew; "O! believe it, I say but the truth; I am a plundered, indebted, distressed man. Hard hands have wrung from me my goods, my money, my ships, and all that I possessed—Yet I can tell thee what thou lackest, and, it may be, supply it too. Thy wish even now is for a horse and armour."

The Palmer started, and turned suddenly towards the Jew:—"What fiend prompted that guess?" said he, hastily.

"No matter," said the Jew, smiling, "so that it be a true one—and, as I can guess thy want, so I can supply it."

"But consider," said the Palmer, "my character, my dress, my vow."

"I know you Christians," replied the Jew, "and that the noblest of you will take the staff and sandal in superstitious penance, and walk afoot to visit the graves of dead men."

"Blaspheme not, Jew," said the Pilgrim, sternly.

"Forgive me," said the Jew; "I spoke rashly. But there dropt words from you last night and this morning, that, like sparks from flint, showed the metal within; and in the bosom of that Palmer's gown, is hidden a knight's chain and spurs of gold. They glanced as you stooped over my bed in the morning."

The Pilgrim could not forbear smiling. "Were thy garments searched by as curious an eye, Isaac," said he, "what discoveries might not be made?" "No more of that," said the Jew, changing colour; and drawing forth his writing materials in haste, as if to stop the conversation, he began to write upon a piece of paper which he supported on the top of his yellow cap, without dismounting from his mule. When he had finished, he delivered the scroll, which was in the Hebrew character, to the Pilgrim, saying, "In the town of Leicester all men know the rich Jew, Kirjath Jairam of Lombardy; give him this scroll—he hath on sale six Milan harnesses, the worst would suit a crowned head—ten goodly steeds, the worst might mount a king, were he to do battle for his throne. Of these he will give thee thy choice, with every thing else that can furnish thee forth for the tournament: when it is over, thou wilt return them safely—unless thou shouldst have wherewith to pay their value to the owner."

"But, Isaac," said the Pilgrim, smiling, "dost thou know that in these sports, the arms and steed of the knight who is unhorsed are forfeit to his victor? Now I may be unfortunate, and so lose what I cannot replace or repay."

The Jew looked somewhat astounded at this possibility; but collecting his courage, he replied hastily. "No—no—no—It is impossible—I will not think so. The blessing of Our Father will be upon thee. Thy lance will be powerful as the rod of Moses."

So saying, he was turning his mule's head away, when the Palmer, in his turn, took hold of his gaberdine. "Nay, but Isaac, thou knowest not all the risk. The steed may be slain, the armour injured—for I will spare neither horse nor man. Besides, those of thy tribe give nothing for nothing; something there must be paid for their use."

The Jew twisted himself in the saddle, like a man in a fit of the colic; but his better feelings predominated over those which were most familiar to him. "I care not," he said, "I care not—let me go. If there is damage, it will cost you nothing—if there is usage money, Kirjath Jairam will forgive it for the sake of his kinsman Isaac. Fare thee well!—Yet hark thee, good youth," said he, turning about, "thrust thyself not too forward into this vain hurly-burly—I speak not for endangering the steed, and coat of armour, but for the sake of thine own life and limbs."

"Gramercy for thy caution," said the Palmer, again smiling; "I will use thy courtesy frankly, and it will go hard with me but I will requite it."

They parted, and took different roads for the town of Sheffield.

CHAPTER VII

*Knights, with a long retinue of their squires,
In gaudy liveries march and quaint attires;
One laced the helm, another held the lance,
A third the shining buckler did advance.
The courser paw'd the ground with restless feet,
And snorting foam'd and champ'd the golden bit.
The smiths and armourers on palfreys ride,
Files in their hands, and hammers at their side;
And nails for loosen'd spears, and thongs for shields provide.
The yeomen guard the streets in seemly bands;
And clowns come crowding on, with cudgels in their hands.
—Palamon and Arcite*

The condition of the English nation was at this time sufficiently miserable. King Richard was absent a prisoner, and in the power of the perfidious and cruel Duke of Austria. Even the very place of his captivity was uncertain, and his fate but very imperfectly known to the generality of his subjects, who were, in the meantime, a prey to every species of subaltern oppression.

Prince John, in league with Philip of France, Coeur-de-Lion's mortal enemy, was using every species of influence with the Duke of Austria, to prolong the captivity of his brother Richard, to whom he stood indebted for so many favours. In the meantime, he was strengthening his own faction in the kingdom, of which he proposed to dispute the succession, in case of the King's death, with the legitimate heir, Arthur Duke of Brittany, son of Geoffrey Plantagenet, the elder brother of John. This usurpation, it is well known, he afterwards effected. His own character being light, profligate, and perfidious, John easily attached to his person and faction, not only all who had reason to dread the resentment of Richard for criminal proceedings during his absence, but also the numerous class of "lawless resolute," whom the crusades had turned back on their country, accomplished in the vices of the East, impoverished in substance, and hardened in character, and who placed their hopes of harvest in civil commotion. To these causes of public distress and apprehension, must be added, the multitude of outlaws, who, driven to despair by the oppression of the feudal nobility, and the severe exercise of the forest laws, banded together in large gangs, and, keeping possession of the forests and the wastes, set at defiance the justice and magistracy of the country. The nobles themselves, each fortified within his own castle, and playing the petty sovereign over his own dominions, were the leaders of bands scarce less lawless and oppressive than those of the avowed depredators. To maintain these retainers, and to support the extravagance and magnificence which their pride induced them to affect, the nobility borrowed sums of money from the Jews at the most usurious interest, which gnawed into their estates like consuming cankers, scarce to be cured unless when circumstances gave them an opportunity of getting free, by exercising upon their creditors some act of unprincipled violence.

Under the various burdens imposed by this unhappy state of affairs, the people of England suffered deeply for the present, and had yet more dreadful cause to fear for the future. To augment their misery, a contagious disorder of a dangerous nature spread through the land; and, rendered more virulent by the uncleanness, the indifferent food, and the wretched lodging of the lower classes, swept off many whose fate the survivors were tempted to envy, as exempting them from the evils which were to come.

Yet amid these accumulated distresses, the poor as well as the rich, the vulgar as well as the noble, in the event of a tournament, which was the grand spectacle of that age, felt as much interested as the half-starved citizen of Madrid, who has not a real left to buy provisions for his family, feels in the issue of a bull-feast. Neither duty nor infirmity could keep youth or age from such exhibitions. The Passage of Arms, as it was called, which was to take place at Ashby, in the county of Leicester, as champions of the first renown were to take the field in the presence of Prince John himself, who was expected to grace the lists, had attracted universal attention, and an immense confluence of persons of all ranks hastened upon the appointed morning to the place of combat.

The scene was singularly romantic. On the verge of a wood, which approached to within a mile of the town of Ashby, was an extensive meadow, of the finest and most beautiful green turf, surrounded on one side by the forest, and fringed on the other by straggling oak-trees, some of which had grown to an immense size. The ground, as if fashioned on purpose for the martial display which was intended, sloped gradually down on all sides to a level bottom, which was enclosed for the lists with strong palisades, forming a space of a quarter of a mile in length, and about half as broad. The form of the enclosure was an oblong square, save that the corners were considerably rounded off, in order to afford more convenience for the spectators. The openings for the entry of the combatants were at the northern and southern extremities of the lists, accessible by strong wooden gates, each wide enough to admit two horsemen riding abreast. At each of these portals were stationed two heralds, attended by six trumpets, as many pursuivants, and a strong body of men-at-arms for maintaining order, and ascertaining the quality of the knights who proposed to engage in this martial game.

On a platform beyond the southern entrance, formed by a natural elevation of the ground, were pitched five magnificent pavilions, adorned with pennons of russet and black, the chosen colours of the five knights challengers. The cords of the tents were of the same colour. Before each pavilion was suspended the shield of

the knight by whom it was occupied, and beside it stood his squire, quaintly disguised as a salvage or silvan man, or in some other fantastic dress, according to the taste of his master, and the character he was pleased to assume during the game. 16

The central pavilion, as the place of honour, had been assigned to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whose renown in all games of chivalry, no less than his connexions with the knights who had undertaken this Passage of Arms, had occasioned him to be eagerly received into the company of the challengers, and even adopted as their chief and leader, though he had so recently joined them. On one side of his tent were pitched those of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and Richard de Malvoisin, and on the other was the pavilion of Hugh de Grantmesnil, a noble baron in the vicinity, whose ancestor had been Lord High Steward of England in the time of the Conqueror, and his son William Rufus. Ralph de Vipont, a knight of St John of Jerusalem, who had some ancient possessions at a place called Heather, near Ashby-de-la-Zouche, occupied the fifth pavilion. From the entrance into the lists, a gently sloping passage, ten yards in breadth, led up to the platform on which the tents were pitched. It was strongly secured by a palisade on each side, as was the esplanade in front of the pavilions, and the whole was guarded by men-at-arms.

The northern access to the lists terminated in a similar entrance of thirty feet in breadth, at the extremity of which was a large enclosed space for such knights as might be disposed to enter the lists with the challengers, behind which were placed tents containing refreshments of every kind for their accommodation, with armourers, tarriers, and other attendants, in readiness to give their services wherever they might be necessary.

The exterior of the lists was in part occupied by temporary galleries, spread with tapestry and carpets, and accommodated with cushions for the convenience of those ladies and nobles who were expected to attend the tournament. A narrow space, betwixt these galleries and the lists, gave accommodation for yeomanry and spectators of a better degree than the mere vulgar, and might be compared to the pit of a theatre. The promiscuous multitude arranged themselves upon large banks of turf prepared for the purpose, which, aided by the natural elevation of the ground, enabled them to overlook the galleries, and obtain a fair view into the lists. Besides the accommodation which these stations afforded, many hundreds had perched themselves on the branches of the trees which surrounded the meadow; and even the steeple of a country church, at some distance, was crowded with spectators.

It only remains to notice respecting the general arrangement, that one gallery in the very centre of the eastern side of the lists, and consequently exactly opposite to the spot where the shock of the combat was to take place, was raised higher than the others, more richly decorated, and graced by a sort of throne and canopy, on which the royal arms were emblazoned. Squires, pages, and yeomen in rich liveries, waited around this place of honour, which was designed for Prince John and his attendants. Opposite to this royal gallery was another, elevated to the same height, on the western side of the lists; and more gaily, if less sumptuously decorated, than that destined for the Prince himself. A train of pages and of young maidens, the most beautiful who could be selected, gaily dressed in fancy habits of green and pink, surrounded a throne decorated in the same colours. Among pennons and flags bearing wounded hearts, burning hearts, bleeding hearts, bows and quivers, and all the commonplace emblems of the triumphs of Cupid, a blazoned inscription informed the spectators, that this seat of honour was designed for "La Roynie de las Beaulte et des Amours". But who was to represent the Queen of Beauty and of Love on the present occasion no one was prepared to guess.

Meanwhile, spectators of every description thronged forward to occupy their respective stations, and not without many quarrels concerning those which they were entitled to hold. Some of these were settled by the men-at-arms with brief ceremony; the shafts of their battle-axes, and pummels of their swords, being readily employed as arguments to convince the more refractory. Others, which involved the rival claims of more elevated persons, were determined by the heralds, or by the two marshals of the field, William de Wyvil, and Stephen de Martival, who, armed at all points, rode up and down the lists to enforce and preserve good order among the spectators.

Gradually the galleries became filled with knights and nobles, in their robes of peace, whose long and rich-tinted mantles were contrasted with the gayer and more splendid habits of the ladies, who, in a greater proportion than even the men themselves, thronged to witness a sport, which one would have thought too bloody and dangerous to afford their sex much pleasure. The lower and interior space was soon filled by substantial yeomen and burghers, and such of the lesser gentry, as, from modesty, poverty, or dubious title, durst not assume any higher place. It was of course amongst these that the most frequent disputes for precedence occurred.

"Dog of an unbeliever," said an old man, whose threadbare tunic bore witness to his poverty, as his sword, and dagger, and golden chain intimated his pretensions to rank,—"whelp of a she-wolf! darest thou press upon a Christian, and a Norman gentleman of the blood of Montdidier?"

This rough expostulation was addressed to no other than our acquaintance Isaac, who, richly and even magnificently dressed in a gaberдинe ornamented with lace and lined with fur, was endeavouring to make place in the foremost row beneath the gallery for his daughter, the beautiful Rebecca, who had joined him at Ashby, and who was now hanging on her father's arm, not a little terrified by the popular displeasure which seemed generally excited by her parent's presumption. But Isaac, though we have seen him sufficiently timid on other occasions, knew well that at present he had nothing to fear. It was not in places of general resort, or where their equals were assembled, that any avaricious or malevolent noble durst offer him injury. At such meetings the Jews were under the protection of the general law; and if that proved a weak assurance, it usually happened that there were among the persons assembled some barons, who, for their own interested motives, were ready to act as their protectors. On the present occasion, Isaac felt more than usually confident, being aware that Prince John was even then in the very act of negotiating a large loan from the Jews of York, to be secured upon certain jewels and lands. Isaac's own share in this transaction was considerable, and he well knew that the Prince's eager desire to bring it to a conclusion would ensure him his protection in the dilemma in which he stood.

Emboldened by these considerations, the Jew pursued his point, and jostled the Norman Christian, without respect either to his descent, quality, or religion. The complaints of the old man, however, excited the indignation of the bystanders. One of these, a stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green, having twelve arrows stuck in his belt, with a baldric and badge of silver, and a bow of six feet length in his hand, turned short round, and while his countenance, which his constant exposure to weather had rendered brown as a hazel nut, grew darker with anger, he advised the Jew to remember that all the wealth he had acquired by sucking the blood of his miserable victims had but swelled him like a bloated spider, which might be overlooked while he kept in a corner, but would be crushed if it ventured into the light. This intimation, delivered in Norman-English with a firm voice and a stern aspect, made the Jew shrink back; and he would have probably withdrawn himself altogether from a vicinity so dangerous, had not the attention of every one been called to the sudden entrance of Prince John, who at that moment entered the lists, attended by a numerous and gay train, consisting partly of laymen, partly of churchmen, as light in their dress, and as gay in their demeanour, as their companions. Among the latter was the Prior of Jorvaulx, in the most gallant trim which a dignitary of the church could venture to exhibit. Fur and gold were not spared in his garments; and the points of his boots, out-heroding the preposterous fashion of the time, turned up so very far, as to be attached, not to his knees merely, but to his very girdle, and effectually prevented him from putting his foot into the stirrup. This, however, was a slight inconvenience to the gallant Abbot, who, perhaps, even rejoicing in the opportunity to display his accomplished horsemanship before so many spectators, especially of the fair sex, dispensed with the use of these supports to a timid rider. The rest of Prince John's retinue consisted of the favourite leaders of his mercenary troops, some marauding barons and profligate attendants upon the court, with several Knights Templars and Knights of St John.

It may be here remarked, that the knights of these two orders were accounted hostile to King Richard, having adopted the side of Philip of France in the long train of disputes which took place in Palestine betwixt that monarch and the lion-hearted King of England. It was the well-known consequence of this discord that Richard's repeated victories had been rendered fruitless, his romantic attempts to besiege Jerusalem disappointed, and the fruit of all the glory which he had acquired had dwindled into an uncertain truce with the Sultan Saladin. With the same policy which had dictated the conduct of their brethren in the Holy Land, the Templars and Hospitallers in England and Normandy attached themselves to the faction of Prince John, having little reason to desire the return of Richard to England, or the succession of Arthur, his legitimate heir. For the opposite reason, Prince John hated and contemned the few Saxon families of consequence which subsisted in England, and omitted no opportunity of mortifying and affronting them; being conscious that his person and pretensions were disliked by them, as well as by the greater part of the English commons, who feared farther innovation upon their rights and liberties, from a sovereign of John's licentious and tyrannical disposition.

Attended by this gallant equipage, himself well mounted, and splendidly dressed in crimson and in gold, bearing upon his hand a falcon, and having his head covered by a rich fur bonnet, adorned with a circle of precious stones, from which his long curled hair escaped and overspread his shoulders, Prince John, upon a grey and high-mettled palfrey, caracoled within the lists at the head of his jovial party, laughing loud with his train, and eyeing with all the boldness of royal criticism the beauties who adorned the lofty galleries.

Those who remarked in the physiognomy of the Prince a dissolute audacity, mingled with extreme haughtiness and indifference to the feelings of others could not yet deny to his countenance that sort of comeliness which belongs to an open set of features, well formed by nature, modelled by art to the usual rules of courtesy, yet so far frank and honest, that they seemed as if they disclaimed to conceal the natural workings of the soul. Such an expression is often mistaken for manly frankness, when in truth it arises from the reckless indifference of a libertine disposition, conscious of superiority of birth, of wealth, or of some other adventitious advantage, totally unconnected with personal merit. To those who did not think so deeply, and they were the greater number by a hundred to one, the splendour of Prince John's "rhenó", (i.e. fur tippet,) the richness of his cloak, lined with the most costly sables, his maroquin boots and golden spurs, together with the grace with which he managed his palfrey, were sufficient to merit clamorous applause.

In his joyous caracole round the lists, the attention of the Prince was called by the commotion, not yet subsided, which had attended the ambitious movement of Isaac towards the higher places of the assembly. The quick eye of Prince John instantly recognised the Jew, but was much more agreeably attracted by the beautiful daughter of Zion, who, terrified by the tumult, clung close to the arm of her aged father.

The figure of Rebecca might indeed have compared with the proudest beauties of England, even though it had been judged by as shrewd a connoisseur as Prince John. Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. Her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colours embossed upon a purple ground, permitted to be visible—all these constituted a combination of loveliness, which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her. It is true, that of the golden and pearl-studded clasps, which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. A diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value, were by this means also made more conspicuous. The feather of an ostrich, fastened in her turban by an agraffe set with brilliants, was another distinction of the beautiful Jewess, scoffed and sneered at by the proud dames who sat above her, but secretly envied by those who affected to deride them.

"By the bald scalp of Abraham," said Prince John, "yonder Jewess must be the very model of that perfection, whose charms drove frantic the wisest king that ever lived! What sayest thou, Prior Aymer?—By the Temple of that wise king, which our wiser brother Richard proved unable to recover, she is the very Bride of the Canticles!"

"The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley,"—answered the Prior, in a sort of snuffling tone; "but your Grace must remember she is still but a Jewess."

"Ay!" added Prince John, without heeding him, "and there is my Mammon of unrighteousness too—the Marquis of Marks, the Baron of Byzants, contesting for place with penniless dogs, whose threadbare cloaks have not a single cross in their pouches to keep the devil from dancing there. By the body of St Mark, my prince of supplies, with his lovely Jewess, shall have a place in the gallery!—What is she, Isaac? Thy wife or thy daughter, that Eastern houri that thou lockest under thy arm as thou wouldst thy treasure-casket?"

"My daughter Rebecca, so please your Grace," answered Isaac, with a low congee, nothing embarrassed by the Prince's salutation, in which, however, there was at least as much mockery as courtesy.

"The wiser man thou," said John, with a peal of laughter, in which his gay followers obsequiously joined. "But, daughter or wife, she should be preferred according to her beauty and thy merits.—Who sits above there?" he continued, bending his eye on the gallery. "Saxon churls, lolling at their lazy length!—out upon them!—let them sit close, and make room for my prince of usurers and his lovely daughter. I'll make the hinds know they must share the high places of the synagogue with those whom the synagogue properly belongs to."

Those who occupied the gallery to whom this injurious and unpolite speech was addressed, were the family of Cedric the Saxon, with that of his ally and kinsman, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, a personage, who, on account of his descent from the last Saxon monarchs of England, was held in the highest respect by all the Saxon natives of the north of England. But with the blood of this ancient royal race, many of their infirmities had descended to Athelstane. He was comely in countenance, bulky and strong in person, and in the flower of his age—yet inanimate in expression, dull-eyed, heavy-browed, inactive and sluggish in all his motions, and so slow in resolution, that the soubriquet of one of his ancestors was conferred upon him, and he was very generally called Athelstane the Unready. His friends, and he had many, who, as well as Cedric, were passionately attached to him, contended that this sluggish temper arose not from want of courage, but from mere want of decision; others alleged that his hereditary vice of drunkenness had obscured his faculties, never of a very acute order, and that the passive courage and meek good-nature which remained behind, were merely the dregs of a character that might have been deserving of praise, but of which all the valuable parts had flown off in the progress of a long course of brutal debauchery.

It was to this person, such as we have described him, that the Prince addressed his imperious command to make place for Isaac and Rebecca. Athelstane, utterly confounded at an order which the manners and feelings of the times rendered so injuriously insulting, unwilling to obey, yet undetermined how to resist, opposed only the "vis inertiae" to the will of John; and, without stirring or making any motion whatever of obedience, opened his large grey eyes, and stared at the Prince with an astonishment which had in it something extremely ludicrous. But the impatient John regarded it in no such light.

"The Saxon porker," he said, "is either asleep or minds me not—Prick him with your lance, De Bracy," speaking to a knight who rode near him, the leader of a band of Free Companions, or Condottieri; that is, of mercenaries belonging to no particular nation, but attached for the time to any prince by whom they were paid. There was a murmur even among the attendants of Prince John; but De Bracy, whose profession freed him from all scruples, extended his long lance over the space which separated the gallery from the lists, and would have executed the commands of the Prince before Athelstane the Unready had recovered presence of mind sufficient even to draw back his person from the weapon, had not Cedric, as prompt as his companion was tardy, unsheathed, with the speed of lightning, the short sword which he wore, and at a single blow severed the point of the lance from the handle. The blood rushed into the countenance of Prince John. He swore one of his deepest oaths, and was about to utter some threat corresponding in violence, when he was diverted from his purpose, partly by his own attendants, who gathered around him conjuring him to be patient, partly by a general exclamation of the crowd, uttered in loud applause of the spirited conduct of Cedric. The Prince rolled his eyes in indignation, as if to collect some safe and easy victim; and chancing to encounter the firm glance of the same archer whom we have already noticed, and who seemed to persist in his gesture of applause, in spite of the frowning aspect which the Prince bent upon him, he demanded his reason for clamouring thus.

"I always add my hollo," said the yeoman, "when I see a good shot, or a gallant blow."

"Sayst thou?" answered the Prince; "then thou canst hit the white thyself, I'll warrant."

"A woodsman's mark, and at woodsman's distance, I can hit," answered the yeoman.

"And Wat Tyrrel's mark, at a hundred yards," said a voice from behind, but by whom uttered could not be discerned.

This allusion to the fate of William Rufus, his Relative, at once incensed and alarmed Prince John. He satisfied himself, however, with commanding the men-at-arms, who surrounded the lists, to keep an eye on the braggart, pointing to the yeoman.

"By St Grizzel," he added, "we will try his own skill, who is so ready to give his voice to the feats of others!"

"I shall not fly the trial," said the yeoman, with the composure which marked his whole deportment.

"Meanwhile, stand up, ye Saxon churls," said the fiery Prince; "for, by the light of Heaven, since I have said it, the Jew shall have his seat amongst ye!"

"By no means, an it please your Grace!—it is not fit for such as we to sit with the rulers of the land," said the Jew; whose ambition for precedence though it had led him to dispute Place with the extenuated and impoverished descendant of the line of Montdidier, by no means stimulated him to an intrusion upon the privileges of the wealthy Saxons.

"Up, infidel dog when I command you," said Prince John, "or I will have thy swarthy hide stript off, and tanned for horse-furniture."

Thus urged, the Jew began to ascend the steep and narrow steps which led up to the gallery.

"Let me see," said the Prince, "who dare stop him," fixing his eye on Cedric, whose attitude intimated his intention to hurl the Jew down headlong.

The catastrophe was prevented by the clown Wamba, who, springing betwixt his master and Isaac, and exclaiming, in answer to the Prince's defiance, "Marry, that will I!" opposed to the beard of the Jew a shield of brawn, which he plucked from beneath his cloak, and with which, doubtless, he had furnished himself, lest the tournament should have proved longer than his appetite could endure abstinence. Finding the abomination of his tribe opposed to his very nose, while the Jester, at the same time, flourished his wooden sword above his head, the Jew recoiled, missed his footing, and rolled down the steps,—an excellent jest to the spectators, who set up a loud laughter, in which Prince John and his attendants heartily joined.

"Deal me the prize, cousin Prince," said Wamba; "I have vanquished my foe in fair fight with sword and shield," he added, brandishing the brawn in one hand and the wooden sword in the other.

"Who, and what art thou, noble champion?" said Prince John, still laughing.

"A fool by right of descent," answered the Jester; "I am Wamba, the son of Witless, who was the son of Weatherbrain, who was the son of an Alderman."

"Make room for the Jew in front of the lower ring," said Prince John, not unwilling perhaps to, seize an apology to desist from his original purpose; "to place the vanquished beside the victor were false heraldry."

"Knave upon fool were worse," answered the Jester, "and Jew upon bacon worst of all."

"Gramercy! good fellow," cried Prince John, "thou pleasest me—Here, Isaac, lend me a handful of byzants."

As the Jew, stunned by the request, afraid to refuse, and unwilling to comply, fumbled in the furred bag which hung by his girdle, and was perhaps endeavouring to ascertain how few coins might pass for a handful, the Prince stooped from his jennet and settled Isaac's doubts by snatching the pouch itself from his side; and flinging to Wamba a couple of the gold pieces which it contained, he pursued his career round the lists, leaving the Jew to the derision of those around him, and himself receiving as much applause from the spectators as if he had done some honest and honourable action.

CHAPTER VIII

*At this the challenger with fierce defy
His trumpet sounds; the challenged makes reply:
With clangour rings the field, resounds the vaulted sky.
Their visors closed, their lances in the rest,
Or at the helmet pointed or the crest,
They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,
And spurring see decrease the middle space.
Palamon and Arcite*

In the midst of Prince John's cavalcade, he suddenly stopt, and appealing to the Prior of Jorvaulx, declared the principal business of the day had been forgotten.

"By my halidom," said he, "we have forgotten, Sir Prior, to name the fair Sovereign of Love and of Beauty, by whose white hand the palm is to be distributed. For my part, I am liberal in my ideas, and I care not if I give my vote for the black-eyed Rebecca."

"Holy Virgin," answered the Prior, turning up his eyes in horror, "a Jewess!—We should deserve to be stoned out of the lists; and I am not yet old enough to be a martyr. Besides, I swear by my patron saint, that she is far inferior to the lovely Saxon, Rowena."

"Saxon or Jew," answered the Prince, "Saxon or Jew, dog or hog, what matters it? I say, name Rebecca, were it only to mortify the Saxon churls."

A murmur arose even among his own immediate attendants.

"This passes a jest, my lord," said De Bracy; "no knight here will lay lance in rest if such an insult is attempted."

"It is the mere wantonness of insult," said one of the oldest and most important of Prince John's followers, Waldemar Fitzurse, "and if your Grace attempt it, cannot but prove ruinous to your projects."

"I entertained you, sir," said John, reining up his palfrey haughtily, "for my follower, but not for my counsellor."

"Those who follow your Grace in the paths which you tread," said Waldemar, but speaking in a low voice, "acquire the right of counsellors; for your interest and safety are not more deeply gaged than their own."

From the tone in which this was spoken, John saw the necessity of acquiescence "I did but jest," he said; "and you turn upon me like so many adders! Name whom you will, in the fiend's name, and please yourselves."

"Nay, nay," said De Bracy, "let the fair sovereign's throne remain unoccupied, until the conqueror shall be named, and then let him choose the lady by whom it shall be filled. It will add another grace to his triumph, and teach fair ladies to prize the love of valiant knights, who can exalt them to such distinction."

"If Brian de Bois-Guilbert gain the prize," said the Prior, "I will gage my rosary that I name the Sovereign of Love and Beauty."

"Bois-Guilbert," answered De Bracy, "is a good lance; but there are others around these lists, Sir Prior, who will not fear to encounter him."

"Silence, sirs," said Waldemar, "and let the Prince assume his seat. The knights and spectators are alike impatient, the time advances, and highly fit it is that the sports should commence."

Prince John, though not yet a monarch, had in Waldemar Fitzurse all the inconveniences of a favourite minister, who, in serving his sovereign, must always do so in his own way. The Prince acquiesced, however, although his disposition was precisely of that kind which is apt to be obstinate upon trifles, and, assuming his throne, and being surrounded by his followers, gave signal to the heralds to proclaim the laws of the tournament, which were briefly as follows:

First, the five challengers were to undertake all comers.

Secondly, any knight proposing to combat, might, if he pleased, select a special antagonist from among the challengers, by touching his shield. If he did so with the reverse of his lance, the trial of skill was made with what were called the arms of courtesy, that is, with lances at whose extremity a piece of round flat board was fixed, so that no danger was encountered, save from the shock of the horses and riders. But if the shield was touched with the sharp end of the lance, the combat was understood to be at "outrance", that is, the knights were to fight with sharp weapons, as in actual battle.

Thirdly, when the knights present had accomplished their vow, by each of them breaking five lances, the Prince was to declare the victor in the first day's tourney, who should receive as prize a warhorse of exquisite beauty and matchless strength; and in addition to this reward of valour, it was now declared, he should have the peculiar honour of naming the Queen of Love and Beauty, by whom the prize should be given on the ensuing day.

Fourthly, it was announced, that, on the second day, there should be a general tournament, in which all the knights present, who were desirous to win praise, might take part; and being divided into two bands of equal numbers, might fight it out manfully, until the signal was given by Prince John to cease the combat. The elected Queen of Love and Beauty was then to crown the knight whom the Prince should adjudge to have borne himself best in this second day, with a coronet composed of thin gold plate, cut into the shape of a laurel crown. On this second day the knightly games ceased. But on that which was to follow, feats of archery, of bull-baiting, and other popular amusements, were to be practised, for the more immediate amusement of the populace. In this manner did Prince John

endeavour to lay the foundation of a popularity, which he was perpetually throwing down by some inconsiderate act of wanton aggression upon the feelings and prejudices of the people.

The lists now presented a most splendid spectacle. The sloping galleries were crowded with all that was noble, great, wealthy, and beautiful in the northern and midland parts of England; and the contrast of the various dresses of these dignified spectators, rendered the view as gay as it was rich, while the interior and lower space, filled with the substantial burghesses and yeomen of merry England, formed, in their more plain attire, a dark fringe, or border, around this circle of brilliant embroidery, relieving, and, at the same time, setting off its splendour.

The heralds finished their proclamation with their usual cry of "Largesse, largesse, gallant knights!" and gold and silver pieces were showered on them from the galleries, it being a high point of chivalry to exhibit liberality towards those whom the age accounted at once the secretaries and the historians of honour. The bounty of the spectators was acknowledged by the customary shouts of "Love of Ladies—Death of Champions—Honour to the Generous—Glory to the Brave!" To which the more humble spectators added their acclamations, and a numerous band of trumpeters the flourish of their martial instruments. When these sounds had ceased, the heralds withdrew from the lists in gay and glittering procession, and none remained within them save the marshals of the field, who, armed cap-a-pie, sat on horseback, motionless as statues, at the opposite ends of the lists. Meantime, the enclosed space at the northern extremity of the lists, large as it was, was now completely crowded with knights desirous to prove their skill against the challengers, and, when viewed from the galleries, presented the appearance of a sea of waving plumage, intermixed with glistening helmets, and tall lances, to the extremities of which were, in many cases, attached small pennons of about a span's breadth, which, fluttering in the air as the breeze caught them, joined with the restless motion of the feathers to add liveliness to the scene.

At length the barriers were opened, and five knights, chosen by lot, advanced slowly into the area; a single champion riding in front, and the other four following in pairs. All were splendidly armed, and my Saxon authority (in the Wardour Manuscript) records at great length their devices, their colours, and the embroidery of their horse trappings. It is unnecessary to be particular on these subjects. To borrow lines from a contemporary poet, who has written but too little:

"The knights are dust,

And their good swords are rust,

Their souls are with the saints, we trust." 17

Their escutcheons have long mouldered from the walls of their castles. Their castles themselves are but green mounds and shattered ruins—the place that once knew them, knows them no more—nay, many a race since theirs has died out and been forgotten in the very land which they occupied, with all the authority of feudal proprietors and feudal lords. What, then, would it avail the reader to know their names, or the evanescent symbols of their martial rank!

Now, however, no whit anticipating the oblivion which awaited their names and feats, the champions advanced through the lists, restraining their fiery steeds, and compelling them to move slowly, while, at the same time, they exhibited their paces, together with the grace and dexterity of the riders. As the procession entered the lists, the sound of a wild Barbaric music was heard from behind the tents of the challengers, where the performers were concealed. It was of Eastern origin, having been brought from the Holy Land; and the mixture of the cymbals and bells seemed to bid welcome at once, and defiance, to the knights as they advanced. With the eyes of an immense concourse of spectators fixed upon them, the five knights advanced up the platform upon which the tents of the challengers stood, and there separating themselves, each touched slightly, and with the reverse of his lance, the shield of the antagonist to whom he wished to oppose himself. The lower orders of spectators in general—nay, many of the higher class, and it is even said several of the ladies, were rather disappointed at the champions choosing the arms of courtesy. For the same sort of persons, who, in the present day, applaud most highly the deepest tragedies, were then interested in a tournament exactly in proportion to the danger incurred by the champions engaged.

Having intimated their more pacific purpose, the champions retreated to the extremity of the lists, where they remained drawn up in a line; while the challengers, sallying each from his pavilion, mounted their horses, and, headed by Brian de Bois-Guilbert, descended from the platform, and opposed themselves individually to the knights who had touched their respective shields.

At the flourish of clarions and trumpets, they started out against each other at full gallop; and such was the superior dexterity or good fortune of the challengers, that those opposed to Bois-Guilbert, Malvoisin, and Front-de-Boeuf, rolled on the ground. The antagonist of Grantmesnil, instead of bearing his lance-point fair against the crest or the shield of his enemy, swerved so much from the direct line as to break the weapon athwart the person of his opponent—a circumstance which was accounted more disgraceful than that of being actually unhorsed; because the latter might happen from accident, whereas the former evinced awkwardness and want of management of the weapon and of the horse. The fifth knight alone maintained the honour of his party, and parted fairly with the Knight of St John, both splintering their lances without advantage on either side.

The shouts of the multitude, together with the acclamations of the heralds, and the clangour of the trumpets, announced the triumph of the victors and the defeat of the vanquished. The former retreated to their pavilions, and the latter, gathering themselves up as they could, withdrew from the lists in disgrace and dejection, to agree with their victors concerning the redemption of their arms and their horses, which, according to the laws of the tournament, they had forfeited. The fifth of their number alone tarried in the lists long enough to be greeted by the applauses of the spectators, amongst whom he retreated, to the aggravation, doubtless, of his companions' mortification.

A second and a third party of knights took the field; and although they had various success, yet, upon the whole, the advantage decidedly remained with the challengers, not one of whom lost his seat or swerved from his charge—misfortunes which befell one or two of their antagonists in each encounter. The spirits, therefore, of those opposed to them, seemed to be considerably damped by their continued success. Three knights only appeared on the fourth entry, who, avoiding the shields of Bois-Guilbert and Front-de-Boeuf, contented themselves with touching those of the three other knights, who had not altogether manifested the same strength and dexterity. This politic selection did not alter the fortune of the field, the challengers were still successful: one of their antagonists was overthrown, and both the others failed in the "attaint", 18that is, in striking the helmet and shield of their antagonist firmly and strongly, with the lance held in a direct line, so that the weapon might break unless the champion was overthrown.

After this fourth encounter, there was a considerable pause; nor did it appear that any one was very desirous of renewing the contest. The spectators murmured among themselves; for, among the challengers, Malvoisin and Front-de-Boeuf were unpopular from their characters, and the others, except Grantmesnil, were disliked as strangers and foreigners.

But none shared the general feeling of dissatisfaction so keenly as Cedric the Saxon, who saw, in each advantage gained by the Norman challengers, a repeated triumph over the honour of England. His own education had taught him no skill in the games of chivalry, although, with the arms of his Saxon ancestors, he had manifested himself, on many occasions, a brave and determined soldier. He looked anxiously to Athelstane, who had learned the accomplishments of the age, as if desiring that he should make some personal effort to recover the victory which was passing into the hands of the Templar and his associates. But, though both stout of heart, and strong of person, Athelstane had a disposition too inert and unambitious to make the exertions which Cedric seemed to expect from him.

"The day is against England, my lord," said Cedric, in a marked tone; "are you not tempted to take the lance?"

"I shall tilt to-morrow" answered Athelstane, "in the 'melee'; it is not worth while for me to arm myself to-day."

Two things displeased Cedric in this speech. It contained the Norman word "melee", (to express the general conflict,) and it evinced some indifference to the honour of the country; but it was spoken by Athelstane, whom he held in such profound respect, that he would not trust himself to canvass his motives or his foibles. Moreover, he had no time to make any remark, for Wamba thrust in his word, observing, "It was better, though scarce easier, to be the best man among a hundred, than the best man of two."

Athelstane took the observation as a serious compliment; but Cedric, who better understood the Jester's meaning, darted at him a severe and menacing look; and lucky it was for Wamba, perhaps, that the time and place prevented his receiving, notwithstanding his place and service, more sensible marks of his master's resentment.

The pause in the tournament was still uninterrupted, excepting by the voices of the heralds exclaiming—"Love of ladies, splintering of lances! stand forth gallant knights, fair eyes look upon your deeds!"

The music also of the challengers breathed from time to time wild bursts expressive of triumph or defiance, while the clowns grudged a holiday which seemed to pass away in inactivity; and old knights and nobles lamented in whispers the decay of martial spirit, spoke of the triumphs of their younger days, but agreed that the land did not now supply dames of such transcendent beauty as had animated the jousts of former times. Prince John began to talk to his attendants about making ready the banquet, and the necessity of adjudging the prize to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had, with a single spear, overthrown two knights, and foiled a third.

At length, as the Saracenic music of the challengers concluded one of those long and high flourishes with which they had broken the silence of the lists, it was answered by a solitary trumpet, which breathed a note of defiance from the northern extremity. All eyes were turned to see the new champion which these sounds announced, and no sooner were the barriers opened than he paced into the lists. As far as could be judged of a man sheathed in armour, the new adventurer did not greatly exceed the middle size, and seemed to be rather slender than strongly made. His suit of armour was formed of steel, richly inlaid with gold, and the device on his shield was a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying *Disinherited*. He was mounted on a gallant black horse, and as he passed through the lists he gracefully saluted the Prince and the ladies by lowering his lance. The dexterity with which he managed his steed, and something of youthful grace which he displayed in his manner, won him the favour of the multitude, which some of the lower classes expressed by calling out, "Touch Ralph de Vipont's shield—touch the Hospitallers shield; he has the least sure seat, he is your cheapest bargain."

The champion, moving onward amid these well-meant hints, ascended the platform by the sloping alley which led to it from the lists, and, to the astonishment of all present, riding straight up to the central pavilion, struck with the sharp end of his spear the shield of Brian de Bois-Guilbert until it rung again. All stood astonished at his presumption, but none more than the redoubted Knight whom he had thus defied to mortal combat, and who, little expecting so rude a challenge, was standing carelessly at the door of the pavilion.

"Have you confessed yourself, brother," said the Templar, "and have you heard mass this morning, that you peril your life so frankly?"

"I am fitter to meet death than thou art" answered the Disinherited Knight; for by this name the stranger had recorded himself in the books of the tourney.

"Then take your place in the lists," said Bois-Guilbert, "and look your last upon the sun; for this night thou shalt sleep in paradise."

"Gramercy for thy courtesy," replied the Disinherited Knight, "and to requite it, I advise thee to take a fresh horse and a new lance, for by my honour you will need both."

Having expressed himself thus confidently, he reined his horse backward down the slope which he had ascended, and compelled him in the same manner to move backward through the lists, till he reached the northern extremity, where he remained stationary, in expectation of his antagonist. This feat of horsemanship again attracted the applause of the multitude.

However incensed at his adversary for the precautions which he recommended, Brian de Bois-Guilbert did not neglect his advice; for his honour was too nearly concerned, to permit his neglecting any means which might ensure victory over his presumptuous opponent. He changed his horse for a proved and fresh one of great strength and spirit. He chose a new and a tough spear, lest the wood of the former might have been strained in the previous encounters he had sustained. Lastly, he laid aside his shield, which had received some little damage, and received another from his squires. His first had only borne the general device of his rider, representing two knights riding upon one horse, an emblem expressive of the original humility and poverty of the Templars, qualities which they had since exchanged for the arrogance and wealth that finally occasioned their suppression. Bois-Guilbert's new shield bore a raven in full flight, holding in its claws a skull, and bearing the motto, "*Gare le Corbeau*".

When the two champions stood opposed to each other at the two extremities of the lists, the public expectation was strained to the highest pitch. Few augured the possibility that the encounter could terminate well for the Disinherited Knight, yet his courage and gallantry secured the general good wishes of the spectators.

The trumpets had no sooner given the signal, than the champions vanished from their posts with the speed of lightning, and closed in the centre of the lists with the shock of a thunderbolt. The lances burst into shivers up to the very grasp, and it seemed at the moment that both knights had fallen, for the shock had made each horse recoil backwards upon its haunches. The address of the riders recovered their steeds by use of the bridle and spur; and having glared on each other for an instant with eyes which seemed to flash fire through the bars of their visors, each made a demi-volte, and, retiring to the extremity of the lists, received a fresh lance from the attendants.

A loud shout from the spectators, waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs, and general acclamations, attested the interest taken by the spectators in this encounter; the most equal, as well as the best performed, which had graced the day. But no sooner had the knights resumed their station, than the clamour of applause was hushed into a silence, so deep and so dead, that it seemed the multitude were afraid even to breathe.

A few minutes pause having been allowed, that the combatants and their horses might recover breath, Prince John with his truncheon signed to the trumpets to sound the onset. The champions a second time sprung from their stations, and closed in the centre of the lists, with the same speed, the same dexterity, the same violence, but not the same equal fortune as before.

In this second encounter, the Templar aimed at the centre of his antagonist's shield, and struck it so fair and forcibly, that his spear went to shivers, and the Disinherited Knight reeled in his saddle. On the other hand, that champion had, in the beginning of his career, directed the point of his lance towards Bois-Guilbert's shield, but, changing his aim almost in the moment of encounter, he addressed it to the helmet, a mark more difficult to hit, but which, if attained, rendered the shock more irresistible. Fair and true he hit the Norman on the visor, where his lance's point kept hold of the bars. Yet, even at this disadvantage, the Templar sustained his high reputation; and had not the girths of his saddle burst, he might not have been unhorsed. As it chanced, however, saddle, horse, and man, rolled on the ground under a cloud of dust.

To extricate himself from the stirrups and fallen steed, was to the Templar scarce the work of a moment; and, stung with madness, both at his disgrace and at the acclamations with which it was hailed by the spectators, he drew his sword and waved it in defiance of his conqueror. The Disinherited Knight sprung from his steed, and also unsheathed his sword. The marshals of the field, however, spurred their horses between them, and reminded them, that the laws of the tournament did not, on the present occasion, permit this species of encounter.

"We shall meet again, I trust," said the Templar, casting a resentful glance at his antagonist; "and where there are none to separate us."

"If we do not," said the Disinherited Knight, "the fault shall not be mine. On foot or horseback, with spear, with axe, or with sword, I am alike ready to encounter thee."

More and angrier words would have been exchanged, but the marshals, crossing their lances betwixt them, compelled them to separate. The Disinherited Knight returned to his first station, and Bois-Guilbert to his tent, where he remained for the rest of the day in an agony of despair.

Without alighting from his horse, the conqueror called for a bowl of wine, and opening the beaver, or lower part of his helmet, announced that he quaffed it, "To all true English hearts, and to the confusion of foreign tyrants." He then commanded his trumpet to sound a defiance to the challengers, and desired a herald to announce to them, that he should make no election, but was willing to encounter them in the order in which they pleased to advance against him.

The gigantic *Front-de-Boeuf*, armed in sable armour, was the first who took the field. He bore on a white shield a black bull's head, half defaced by the numerous encounters which he had undergone, and bearing the arrogant motto, "*Cave, Adsum*". Over this champion the Disinherited Knight obtained a slight but decisive advantage. Both Knights broke their lances fairly, but *Front-de-Boeuf*, who lost a stirrup in the encounter, was adjudged to have the disadvantage.

In the stranger's third encounter with Sir Philip Malvoisin, he was equally successful; striking that baron so forcibly on the casque, that the laces of the helmet broke, and Malvoisin, only saved from falling by being unhelmeted, was declared vanquished like his companions.

In his fourth combat with De Grantmesnil, the Disinherited Knight showed as much courtesy as he had hitherto evinced courage and dexterity. De Grantmesnil's horse, which was young and violent, reared and plunged in the course of the career so as to disturb the rider's aim, and the stranger, declining to take the

advantage which this accident afforded him, raised his lance, and passing his antagonist without touching him, wheeled his horse and rode back again to his own end of the lists, offering his antagonist, by a herald, the chance of a second encounter. This De Grantmesnil declined, avowing himself vanquished as much by the courtesy as by the address of his opponent.

Ralph de Vipont summed up the list of the stranger's triumphs, being hurled to the ground with such force, that the blood gushed from his nose and his mouth, and he was borne senseless from the lists.

The acclamations of thousands applauded the unanimous award of the Prince and marshals, announcing that day's honours to the Disinherited Knight.

CHAPTER IX

—In the midst was seen
A lady of a more majestic mien,
By stature and by beauty mark'd their sovereign Queen.

And as in beauty she surpass'd the choir,
So nobler than the rest was her attire;
A crown of ruddy gold enclosed her brow,
Plain without pomp, and rich without a show;
A branch of Agnus Castus in her hand,
She bore aloft her symbol of command.
The Flower and the Leaf

William de Wyvil and Stephen de Martival, the marshals of the field, were the first to offer their congratulations to the victor, praying him, at the same time, to suffer his helmet to be unlaced, or, at least, that he would raise his visor ere they conducted him to receive the prize of the day's tourney from the hands of Prince John. The Disinherited Knight, with all knightly courtesy, declined their request, alleging, that he could not at this time suffer his face to be seen, for reasons which he had assigned to the heralds when he entered the lists. The marshals were perfectly satisfied by this reply; for amidst the frequent and capricious vows by which knights were accustomed to bind themselves in the days of chivalry, there were none more common than those by which they engaged to remain incognito for a certain space, or until some particular adventure was achieved. The marshals, therefore, pressed no farther into the mystery of the Disinherited Knight, but, announcing to Prince John the conqueror's desire to remain unknown, they requested permission to bring him before his Grace, in order that he might receive the reward of his valour.

John's curiosity was excited by the mystery observed by the stranger; and, being already displeased with the issue of the tournament, in which the challengers whom he favoured had been successively defeated by one knight, he answered haughtily to the marshals, "By the light of Our Lady's brow, this same knight hath been disinherited as well of his courtesy as of his lands, since he desires to appear before us without uncovering his face.—Wot ye, my lords," he said, turning round to his train, "who this gallant can be, that bears himself thus proudly?"

"I cannot guess," answered De Bracy, "nor did I think there had been within the four seas that girth Britain a champion that could bear down these five knights in one day's jousting. By my faith, I shall never forget the force with which he shocked De Vipont. The poor Hospitaller was hurled from his saddle like a stone from a sling."

"Boast not of that," said a Knight of St John, who was present; "your Temple champion had no better luck. I saw your brave lance, Bois-Guilbert, roll thrice over, grasping his hands full of sand at every turn."

De Bracy, being attached to the Templars, would have replied, but was prevented by Prince John. "Silence, sirs!" he said; "what unprofitable debate have we here?"

"The victor," said De Wyvil, "still waits the pleasure of your highness."

"It is our pleasure," answered John, "that he do so wait until we learn whether there is not some one who can at least guess at his name and quality. Should he remain there till night-fall, he has had work enough to keep him warm."

"Your Grace," said Waldemar Fitzurse, "will do less than due honour to the victor, if you compel him to wait till we tell your highness that which we cannot know; at least I can form no guess—unless he be one of the good lances who accompanied King Richard to Palestine, and who are now straggling homeward from the Holy Land."

"It may be the Earl of Salisbury," said De Bracy; "he is about the same pitch."

"Sir Thomas de Multon, the Knight of Gilsland, rather," said Fitzurse; "Salisbury is bigger in the bones." A whisper arose among the train, but by whom first suggested could not be ascertained. "It might be the King—it might be Richard Coeur-de-Lion himself!"

"Over God's forbode!" said Prince John, involuntarily turning at the same time as pale as death, and shrinking as if blighted by a flash of lightning; "Waldemar!—De Bracy! brave knights and gentlemen, remember your promises, and stand truly by me!"

"Here is no danger impending," said Waldemar Fitzurse; "are you so little acquainted with the gigantic limbs of your father's son, as to think they can be held within the circumference of yonder suit of armour?—De Wyvil and Martival, you will best serve the Prince by bringing forward the victor to the throne, and ending an error that has conjured all the blood from his cheeks.—Look at him more closely," he continued, "your highness will see that he wants three inches of King Richard's height, and twice as much of his shoulder-breadth. The very horse he backs, could not have carried the ponderous weight of King Richard through a single course."

While he was yet speaking, the marshals brought forward the Disinherited Knight to the foot of a wooden flight of steps, which formed the ascent from the lists to Prince John's throne. Still discomposed with the idea that his brother, so much injured, and to whom he was so much indebted, had suddenly arrived in his native kingdom, even the distinctions pointed out by Fitzurse did not altogether remove the Prince's apprehensions; and while, with a short and embarrassed eulogy upon his valour, he caused to be delivered to him the war-horse assigned as the prize, he trembled lest from the barred visor of the mailed form before him, an answer might be returned, in the deep and awful accents of Richard the Lion-hearted.

But the Disinherited Knight spoke not a word in reply to the compliment of the Prince, which he only acknowledged with a profound obeisance.

The horse was led into the lists by two grooms richly dressed, the animal itself being fully accoutred with the richest war-furniture; which, however, scarcely added to the value of the noble creature in the eyes of those who were judges. Laying one hand upon the pommel of the saddle, the Disinherited Knight vaulted at once upon the back of the steed without making use of the stirrup, and, brandishing aloft his lance, rode twice around the lists, exhibiting the points and paces of the horse with the skill of a perfect horseman.

The appearance of vanity, which might otherwise have been attributed to this display, was removed by the propriety shown in exhibiting to the best advantage the princely reward with which he had been just honoured, and the Knight was again greeted by the acclamations of all present.

In the meanwhile, the bustling Prior of Jorvaulx had reminded Prince John, in a whisper, that the victor must now display his good judgment, instead of his valour, by selecting from among the beauties who graced the galleries a lady, who should fill the throne of the Queen of Beauty and of Love, and deliver the prize of the tourney upon the ensuing day. The Prince accordingly made a sign with his truncheon, as the Knight passed him in his second career around the lists. The Knight turned towards the throne, and, sinking his lance, until the point was within a foot of the ground, remained motionless, as if expecting John's commands; while all

admired the sudden dexterity with which he instantly reduced his fiery steed from a state of violent emotion and high excitement to the stillness of an equestrian statue.

"Sir Disinherited Knight," said Prince John, "since that is the only title by which we can address you, it is now your duty, as well as privilege, to name the fair lady, who, as Queen of Honour and of Love, is to preside over next day's festival. If, as a stranger in our land, you should require the aid of other judgment to guide your own, we can only say that Alicia, the daughter of our gallant knight Waldemar Fitzurse, has at our court been long held the first in beauty as in place. Nevertheless, it is your undoubted prerogative to confer on whom you please this crown, by the delivery of which to the lady of your choice, the election of to-morrow's Queen will be formal and complete.—Raise your lance."

The Knight obeyed; and Prince John placed upon its point a coronet of green satin, having around its edge a circlet of gold, the upper edge of which was relieved by arrow-points and hearts placed interchangeably, like the strawberry leaves and balls upon a ducal crown.

In the broad hint which he dropped respecting the daughter of Waldemar Fitzurse, John had more than one motive, each the offspring of a mind, which was a strange mixture of carelessness and presumption with low artifice and cunning. He wished to banish from the minds of the chivalry around him his own indecent and unacceptable jest respecting the Jewess Rebecca; he was desirous of conciliating Alicia's father Waldemar, of whom he stood in awe, and who had more than once shown himself dissatisfied during the course of the day's proceedings. He had also a wish to establish himself in the good graces of the lady; for John was at least as licentious in his pleasures as profligate in his ambition. But besides all these reasons, he was desirous to raise up against the Disinherited Knight (towards whom he already entertained a strong dislike) a powerful enemy in the person of Waldemar Fitzurse, who was likely, he thought, highly to resent the injury done to his daughter, in case, as was not unlikely, the victor should make another choice.

And so indeed it proved. For the Disinherited Knight passed the gallery close to that of the Prince, in which the Lady Alicia was seated in the full pride of triumphant beauty, and, pacing forwards as slowly as he had hitherto rode swiftly around the lists, he seemed to exercise his right of examining the numerous fair faces which adorned that splendid circle.

It was worth while to see the different conduct of the beauties who underwent this examination, during the time it was proceeding. Some blushed, some assumed an air of pride and dignity, some looked straight forward, and essayed to seem utterly unconscious of what was going on, some drew back in alarm, which was perhaps affected, some endeavoured to forbear smiling, and there were two or three who laughed outright. There were also some who dropped their veils over their charms; but, as the Wardour Manuscript says these were fair ones of ten years standing, it may be supposed that, having had their full share of such vanities, they were willing to withdraw their claim, in order to give a fair chance to the rising beauties of the age.

At length the champion paused beneath the balcony in which the Lady Rowena was placed, and the expectation of the spectators was excited to the utmost.

It must be owned, that if an interest displayed in his success could have bribed the Disinherited Knight, the part of the lists before which he paused had merited his predilection. Cedric the Saxon, overjoyed at the discomfiture of the Templar, and still more so at the miscarriage of his two malevolent neighbours, Front-de-Boeuf and Malvoisin, had, with his body half stretched over the balcony, accompanied the victor in each course, not with his eyes only, but with his whole heart and soul. The Lady Rowena had watched the progress of the day with equal attention, though without openly betraying the same intense interest. Even the unmoved Athelstane had shown symptoms of shaking off his apathy, when, calling for a huge goblet of muscadine, he quaffed it to the health of the Disinherited Knight. Another group, stationed under the gallery occupied by the Saxons, had shown no less interest in the fate of the day.

"Father Abraham!" said Isaac of York, when the first course was run betwixt the Templar and the Disinherited Knight, "how fiercely that Gentile rides! Ah, the good horse that was brought all the long way from Barbary, he takes no more care of him than if he were a wild ass's colt—and the noble armour, that was worth so many zecchins to Joseph Pareira, the armourer of Milan, besides seventy in the hundred of profits, he cares for it as little as if he had found it in the highways!"

"If he risks his own person and limbs, father," said Rebecca, "in doing such a dreadful battle, he can scarce be expected to spare his horse and armour."

"Child!" replied Isaac, somewhat heated, "thou knowest not what thou speakest—His neck and limbs are his own, but his horse and armour belong to—Holy Jacob! what was I about to say!—Nevertheless, it is a good youth—See, Rebecca! see, he is again about to go up to battle against the Philistine—Pray, child—pray for the safety of the good youth,—and of the speedy horse, and the rich armour.—God of my fathers!" he again exclaimed, "he hath conquered, and the uncircumcised Philistine hath fallen before his lance,—even as Og the King of Bashan, and Sihon, King of the Amorites, fell before the sword of our fathers!—Surely he shall take their gold and their silver, and their war-horses, and their armour of brass and of steel, for a prey and for a spoil."

The same anxiety did the worthy Jew display during every course that was run, seldom failing to hazard a hasty calculation concerning the value of the horse and armour which was forfeited to the champion upon each new success. There had been therefore no small interest taken in the success of the Disinherited Knight, by those who occupied the part of the lists before which he now paused.

Whether from indecision, or some other motive of hesitation, the champion of the day remained stationary for more than a minute, while the eyes of the silent audience were riveted upon his motions; and then, gradually and gracefully sinking the point of his lance, he deposited the coronet which it supported at the feet of the fair Rowena. The trumpets instantly sounded, while the heralds proclaimed the Lady Rowena the Queen of Beauty and of Love for the ensuing day, menacing with suitable penalties those who should be disobedient to her authority. They then repeated their cry of *Largesse*, to which Cedric, in the height of his joy, replied by an ample donative, and to which Athelstane, though less promptly, added one equally large.

There was some murmuring among the damsels of Norman descent, who were as much unused to see the preference given to a Saxon beauty, as the Norman nobles were to sustain defeat in the games of chivalry which they themselves had introduced. But these sounds of disaffection were drowned by the popular shout of "Long live the Lady Rowena, the chosen and lawful Queen of Love and of Beauty!" To which many in the lower area added, "Long live the Saxon Princess! long live the race of the immortal Alfred!"

However unacceptable these sounds might be to Prince John, and to those around him, he saw himself nevertheless obliged to confirm the nomination of the victor, and accordingly calling to horse, he left his throne; and mounting his jennet, accompanied by his train, he again entered the lists. The Prince paused a moment beneath the gallery of the Lady Alicia, to whom he paid his compliments, observing, at the same time, to those around him—"By my halidome, sirs! if the Knight's feats in arms have shown that he hath limbs and sinews, his choice hath no less proved that his eyes are none of the clearest."

It was on this occasion, as during his whole life, John's misfortune, not perfectly to understand the characters of those whom he wished to conciliate. Waldemar Fitzurse was rather offended than pleased at the Prince stating thus broadly an opinion, that his daughter had been slighted.

"I know no right of chivalry," he said, "more precious or inalienable than that of each free knight to choose his lady-love by his own judgment. My daughter courts distinction from no one; and in her own character, and in her own sphere, will never fail to receive the full proportion of that which is her due."

Prince John replied not; but, spurring his horse, as if to give vent to his vexation, he made the animal bound forward to the gallery where Rowena was seated, with the crown still at her feet.

"Assume," he said, "fair lady, the mark of your sovereignty, to which none vows homage more sincerely than ourself, John of Anjou; and if it please you to-day, with your noble sire and friends, to grace our banquet in the Castle of Ashby, we shall learn to know the empress to whose service we devote to-morrow."

Rowena remained silent, and Cedric answered for her in his native Saxon.

"The Lady Rowena," he said, "possesses not the language in which to reply to your courtesy, or to sustain her part in your festival. I also, and the noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh, speak only the language, and practise only the manners, of our fathers. We therefore decline with thanks your Highness's courteous invitation to the banquet. To-morrow, the Lady Rowena will take upon her the state to which she has been called by the free election of the victor Knight, confirmed by the acclamations of the people."

So saying, he lifted the coronet, and placed it upon Rowena's head, in token of her acceptance of the temporary authority assigned to her.

"What says he?" said Prince John, affecting not to understand the Saxon language, in which, however, he was well skilled. The purport of Cedric's speech was repeated to him in French. "It is well," he said; "to-morrow we will ourself conduct this mute sovereign to her seat of dignity.—You, at least, Sir Knight," he added, turning to the victor, who had remained near the gallery, "will this day share our banquet?"

The Knight, speaking for the first time, in a low and hurried voice, excused himself by pleading fatigue, and the necessity of preparing for to-morrow's encounter.

"It is well," said Prince John, haughtily; "although unused to such refusals, we will endeavour to digest our banquet as we may, though ungraced by the most successful in arms, and his elected Queen of Beauty."

So saying, he prepared to leave the lists with his glittering train, and his turning his steed for that purpose, was the signal for the breaking up and dispersion of the spectators.

Yet, with the vindictive memory proper to offended pride, especially when combined with conscious want of desert, John had hardly proceeded three paces, ere again, turning around, he fixed an eye of stern resentment upon the yeoman who had displeased him in the early part of the day, and issued his commands to the men-at-arms who stood near—"On your life, suffer not that fellow to escape."

The yeoman stood the angry glance of the Prince with the same unvaried steadiness which had marked his former deportment, saying, with a smile, "I have no intention to leave Ashby until the day after to-morrow—I must see how Staffordshire and Leicestershire can draw their bows—the forests of Needwood and Charnwood must rear good archers."

"I," said Prince John to his attendants, but not in direct reply,—"I will see how he can draw his own; and woe betide him unless his skill should prove some apology for his insolence!"

"It is full time," said De Bracy, "that the 'outrecuidance' 19 of these peasants should be restrained by some striking example."

Waldemar Fitzurse, who probably thought his patron was not taking the readiest road to popularity, shrugged up his shoulders and was silent. Prince John resumed his retreat from the lists, and the dispersion of the multitude became general.

In various routes, according to the different quarters from which they came, and in groups of various numbers, the spectators were seen retiring over the plain. By far the most numerous part streamed towards the town of Ashby, where many of the distinguished persons were lodged in the castle, and where others found accommodation in the town itself. Among these were most of the knights who had already appeared in the tournament, or who proposed to fight there the ensuing day, and who, as they rode slowly along, talking over the events of the day, were greeted with loud shouts by the populace. The same acclamations were bestowed upon Prince John, although he was indebted for them rather to the splendour of his appearance and train, than to the popularity of his character.

A more sincere and more general, as well as a better-merited acclamation, attended the victor of the day, until, anxious to withdraw himself from popular notice, he accepted the accommodation of one of those pavilions pitched at the extremities of the lists, the use of which was courteously tendered him by the marshals of the field. On his retiring to his tent, many who had lingered in the lists, to look upon and form conjectures concerning him, also dispersed.

The signs and sounds of a tumultuous concourse of men lately crowded together in one place, and agitated by the same passing events, were now exchanged for the distant hum of voices of different groups retreating in all directions, and these speedily died away in silence. No other sounds were heard save the voices of the menials who stripped the galleries of their cushions and tapestry, in order to put them in safety for the night, and wrangled among themselves for the half-used bottles of wine and relics of the refreshment which had been served round to the spectators.

Beyond the precincts of the lists more than one forge was erected; and these now began to glimmer through the twilight, announcing the toil of the armourers, which was to continue through the whole night, in order to repair or alter the suits of armour to be used again on the morrow.

A strong guard of men-at-arms, renewed at intervals, from two hours to two hours, surrounded the lists, and kept watch during the night.

CHAPTER X

*Thus, like the sad presaging raven, that tolls
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
And in the shadow of the silent night
Doth shake contagion from her sable wings;
Vex'd and tormented, runs poor Barrabas,
With fatal curses towards these Christians.
—Jew of Malta*

The Disinherited Knight had no sooner reached his pavilion, than squires and pages in abundance tendered their services to disarm him, to bring fresh attire, and to offer him the refreshment of the bath. Their zeal on this occasion was perhaps sharpened by curiosity, since every one desired to know who the knight was that had gained so many laurels, yet had refused, even at the command of Prince John, to lift his visor or to name his name. But their officious inquisitiveness was not gratified. The Disinherited Knight refused all other assistance save that of his own squire, or rather yeoman—a clownish-looking man, who, wrapt in a cloak of dark-coloured felt, and having his head and face half-buried in a Norman bonnet made of black fur, seemed to affect the incognito as much as his master. All others being excluded from the tent, this attendant relieved his master from the more burdensome parts of his armour, and placed food and wine before him, which the exertions of the day rendered very acceptable.

The Knight had scarcely finished a hasty meal, ere his menial announced to him that five men, each leading a barbed steed, desired to speak with him. The Disinherited Knight had exchanged his armour for the long robe usually worn by those of his condition, which, being furnished with a hood, concealed the features, when such was the pleasure of the wearer, almost as completely as the visor of the helmet itself, but the twilight, which was now fast darkening, would of itself have rendered a disguise unnecessary, unless to persons to whom the face of an individual chanced to be particularly well known.

The Disinherited Knight, therefore, stepped boldly forth to the front of his tent, and found in attendance the squires of the challengers, whom he easily knew by their russet and black dresses, each of whom led his master's charger, loaded with the armour in which he had that day fought.

"According to the laws of chivalry," said the foremost of these men, "I, Baldwin de Oyley, squire to the redoubted Knight Brian de Bois-Guilbert, make offer to you, styling yourself, for the present, the Disinherited Knight, of the horse and armour used by the said Brian de Bois-Guilbert in this day's Passage of Arms, leaving it with your nobleness to retain or to ransom the same, according to your pleasure; for such is the law of arms."

The other squires repeated nearly the same formula, and then stood to await the decision of the Disinherited Knight.

"To you four, sirs," replied the Knight, addressing those who had last spoken, "and to your honourable and valiant masters, I have one common reply. Commend me to the noble knights, your masters, and say, I should do ill to deprive them of steeds and arms which can never be used by braver cavaliers.—I would I could here end my message to these gallant knights; but being, as I term myself, in truth and earnest, the Disinherited, I must be thus far bound to your masters, that they will, of their courtesy, be pleased to ransom their steeds and armour, since that which I wear I can hardly term mine own."

"We stand commissioned, each of us," answered the squire of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, "to offer a hundred zecchins in ransom of these horses and suits of armour."

"It is sufficient," said the Disinherited Knight. "Half the sum my present necessities compel me to accept; of the remaining half, distribute one moiety among yourselves, sir squires, and divide the other half betwixt the heralds and the pursuivants, and minstrels, and attendants."

The squires, with cap in hand, and low reverences, expressed their deep sense of a courtesy and generosity not often practised, at least upon a scale so extensive. The Disinherited Knight then addressed his discourse to Baldwin, the squire of Brian de Bois-Guilbert. "From your master," said he, "I will accept

neither arms nor ransom. Say to him in my name, that our strife is not ended—no, not till we have fought as well with swords as with lances—as well on foot as on horseback. To this mortal quarrel he has himself defied me, and I shall not forget the challenge.—Meantime, let him be assured, that I hold him not as one of his companions, with whom I can with pleasure exchange courtesies; but rather as one with whom I stand upon terms of mortal defiance."

"My master," answered Baldwin, "knows how to requite scorn with scorn, and blows with blows, as well as courtesy with courtesy. Since you disdain to accept from him any share of the ransom at which you have rated the arms of the other knights, I must leave his armour and his horse here, being well assured that he will never deign to mount the one nor wear the other."

"You have spoken well, good squire," said the Disinherited Knight, "well and boldly, as it beseemeth him to speak who answers for an absent master. Leave not, however, the horse and armour here. Restore them to thy master; or, if he scorns to accept them, retain them, good friend, for thine own use. So far as they are mine, I bestow them upon you freely."

Baldwin made a deep obeisance, and retired with his companions; and the Disinherited Knight entered the pavilion.

"Thus far, Gurth," said he, addressing his attendant, "the reputation of English chivalry hath not suffered in my hands."

"And I," said Gurth, "for a Saxon swineherd, have not ill played the personage of a Norman squire-at-arms."

"Yea, but," answered the Disinherited Knight, "thou hast ever kept me in anxiety lest thy clownish bearing should discover thee."

"Tush!" said Gurth, "I fear discovery from none, saving my playfellow, Wamba the Jester, of whom I could never discover whether he were most knave or fool. Yet I could scarce choose but laugh, when my old master passed so near to me, dreaming all the while that Gurth was keeping his porkers many a mile off, in the thickets and swamps of Rotherwood. If I am discovered—"

"Enough," said the Disinherited Knight, "thou knowest my promise."

"Nay, for that matter," said Gurth, "I will never fail my friend for fear of my skin-cutting. I have a tough hide, that will bear knife or scourge as well as any boar's hide in my herd."

"Trust me, I will requite the risk you run for my love, Gurth," said the Knight. "Meanwhile, I pray you to accept these ten pieces of gold."

"I am richer," said Gurth, putting them into his pouch, "than ever was swineherd or bondsman."

"Take this bag of gold to Ashby," continued his master, "and find out Isaac the Jew of York, and let him pay himself for the horse and arms with which his credit supplied me."

"Nay, by St Dunstan," replied Gurth, "that I will not do."

"How, knave," replied his master, "wilt thou not obey my commands?"

"So they be honest, reasonable, and Christian commands," replied Gurth; "but this is none of these. To suffer the Jew to pay himself would be dishonest, for it would be cheating my master; and unreasonable, for it were the part of a fool; and unchristian, since it would be plundering a believer to enrich an infidel."

"See him contented, however, thou stubborn varlet," said the Disinherited Knight.

"I will do so," said Gurth, taking the bag under his cloak, and leaving the apartment; "and it will go hard," he muttered, "but I content him with one-half of his own asking." So saying, he departed, and left the Disinherited Knight to his own perplexed ruminations; which, upon more accounts than it is now possible to communicate to the reader, were of a nature peculiarly agitating and painful.

We must now change the scene to the village of Ashby, or rather to a country house in its vicinity belonging to a wealthy Israelite, with whom Isaac, his daughter, and retinue, had taken up their quarters; the Jews, it is well known, being as liberal in exercising the duties of hospitality and charity among their own people, as they were alleged to be reluctant and churlish in extending them to those whom they termed Gentiles, and whose treatment of them certainly merited little hospitality at their hand.

In an apartment, small indeed, but richly furnished with decorations of an Oriental taste, Rebecca was seated on a heap of embroidered cushions, which, piled along a low platform that surrounded the chamber, served, like the estrada of the Spaniards, instead of chairs and stools. She was watching the motions of her father with a look of anxious and filial affection, while he paced the apartment with a dejected mien and disordered step; sometimes clasping his hands together—sometimes casting his eyes to the roof of the apartment, as one who laboured under great mental tribulation. "O, Jacob!" he exclaimed—"O, all ye twelve Holy Fathers of our tribe! what a losing venture is this for one who hath duly kept every jot and tittle of the law of Moses—Fifty zecchins wrenched from me at one clutch, and by the talons of a tyrant!"

"But, father," said Rebecca, "you seemed to give the gold to Prince John willingly."

"Willingly? the blotch of Egypt upon him!—Willingly, saidst thou?—Ay, as willingly as when, in the Gulf of Lyons, I flung over my merchandise to lighten the ship, while she laboured in the tempest—robed the seething billows in my choice silks—perfumed their briny foam with myrrh and aloes—enriched their caverns with gold and silver work! And was not that an hour of unutterable misery, though my own hands made the sacrifice?"

"But it was a sacrifice which Heaven exacted to save our lives," answered Rebecca, "and the God of our fathers has since blessed your store and your gettings."

"Ay," answered Isaac, "but if the tyrant lays hold on them as he did to-day, and compels me to smile while he is robbing me?—O, daughter, disinherited and wandering as we are, the worst evil which befalls our race is, that when we are wronged and plundered, all the world laughs around, and we are compelled to suppress our sense of injury, and to smile tamely, when we would revenge bravely."

"Think not thus of it, my father," said Rebecca; "we also have advantages. These Gentiles, cruel and oppressive as they are, are in some sort dependent on the dispersed children of Zion, whom they despise and persecute. Without the aid of our wealth, they could neither furnish forth their hosts in war, nor their triumphs in peace, and the gold which we lend them returns with increase to our coffers. We are like the herb which flourisheth most when it is most trampled on. Even this day's pageant had not proceeded without the consent of the despised Jew, who furnished the means."

"Daughter," said Isaac, "thou hast harped upon another string of sorrow. The goodly steed and the rich armour, equal to the full profit of my adventure with our Kirjath Jairam of Leicester—there is a dead loss too—ay, a loss which swallows up the gains of a week; ay, of the space between two Sabbaths—and yet it may end better than I now think, for 'tis a good youth."

"Assuredly," said Rebecca, "you shall not repent you of requiting the good deed received of the stranger knight."

"I trust so, daughter," said Isaac, "and I trust too in the rebuilding of Zion; but as well do I hope with my own bodily eyes to see the walls and battlements of the new Temple, as to see a Christian, yea, the very best of Christians, repay a debt to a Jew, unless under the awe of the judge and jailor."

So saying, he resumed his discontented walk through the apartment; and Rebecca, perceiving that her attempts at consolation only served to awaken new subjects of complaint, wisely desisted from her unavailing efforts—a prudential line of conduct, and we recommend to all who set up for comforters and advisers, to follow it in the like circumstances.

The evening was now becoming dark, when a Jewish servant entered the apartment, and placed upon the table two silver lamps, fed with perfumed oil; the richest wines, and the most delicate refreshments, were at the same time displayed by another Israelitish domestic on a small ebony table, inlaid with silver; for, in the interior of their houses, the Jews refused themselves no expensive indulgences. At the same time the servant informed Isaac, that a Nazarene (so they termed Christians, while conversing among themselves) desired to speak with him. He that would live by traffic, must hold himself at the disposal of every one claiming business with him. Isaac at once replaced on the table the untasted glass of Greek wine which he had just raised to his lips, and saying hastily to his daughter, "Rebecca, veil thyself," commanded the stranger to be admitted.

Just as Rebecca had dropped over her fine features a screen of silver gauze which reached to her feet, the door opened, and Gurth entered, wrapt in the ample folds of his Norman mantle. His appearance was rather suspicious than prepossessing, especially as, instead of doffing his bonnet, he pulled it still deeper over his rugged brow.

"Art thou Isaac the Jew of York?" said Gurth, in Saxon.

"I am," replied Isaac, in the same language, (for his traffic had rendered every tongue spoken in Britain familiar to him)—"and who art thou?"

"That is not to the purpose," answered Gurth.

"As much as my name is to thee," replied Isaac; "for without knowing thine, how can I hold intercourse with thee?"

"Easily," answered Gurth; "I, being to pay money, must know that I deliver it to the right person; thou, who are to receive it, will not, I think, care very greatly by whose hands it is delivered."

"O," said the Jew, "you are come to pay moneys?—Holy Father Abraham! that altereth our relation to each other. And from whom dost thou bring it?"

"From the Disinherited Knight," said Gurth, "victor in this day's tournament. It is the price of the armour supplied to him by Kirjath Jairam of Leicester, on thy recommendation. The steed is restored to thy stable. I desire to know the amount of the sum which I am to pay for the armour."

"I said he was a good youth!" exclaimed Isaac with joyful exultation. "A cup of wine will do thee no harm," he added, filling and handing to the swineherd a richer draught than Gurth had ever before tasted. "And how much money," continued Isaac, "has thou brought with thee?"

"Holy Virgin!" said Gurth, setting down the cup, "what nectar these unbelieving dogs drink, while true Christians are fain to quaff ale as muddy and thick as the draff we give to hogs!—What money have I brought with me?" continued the Saxon, when he had finished this uncivil ejaculation, "even but a small sum; something in hand the whilst. What, Isaac! thou must bear a conscience, though it be a Jewish one."

"Nay, but," said Isaac, "thy master has won goodly steeds and rich armours with the strength of his lance, and of his right hand—but 'tis a good youth—the Jew will take these in present payment, and render him back the surplus."

"My master has disposed of them already," said Gurth.

"Ah! that was wrong," said the Jew, "that was the part of a fool. No Christians here could buy so many horses and armour—no Jew except myself would give him half the values. But thou hast a hundred zecchins with thee in that bag," said Isaac, prying under Gurth's cloak, "it is a heavy one."

"I have heads for cross-bow bolts in it," said Gurth, readily.

"Well, then"—said Isaac, panting and hesitating between habitual love of gain and a new-born desire to be liberal in the present instance, "if I should say that I would take eighty zecchins for the good steed and the rich armour, which leaves me not a guilders profit, have you money to pay me?"

"Barely," said Gurth, though the sum demanded was more reasonable than he expected, "and it will leave my master nigh penniless. Nevertheless, if such be your least offer, I must be content."

"Fill thyself another goblet of wine," said the Jew. "Ah! eighty zecchins is too little. It leaveth no profit for the usages of the moneys; and, besides, the good horse may have suffered wrong in this day's encounter. O, it was a hard and a dangerous meeting! man and steed rushing on each other like wild bulls of Bashan! The horse cannot but have had wrong."

"And I say," replied Gurth, "he is sound, wind and limb; and you may see him now, in your stable. And I say, over and above, that seventy zecchins is enough for the armour, and I hope a Christian's word is as good as a Jew's. If you will not take seventy, I will carry this bag" (and he shook it till the contents jingled) "back to my master."

"Nay, nay!" said Isaac; "lay down the talents—the shekels—the eighty zecchins, and thou shalt see I will consider thee liberally."

Gurth at length complied; and telling out eighty zecchins upon the table, the Jew delivered out to him an acquittance for the horse and suit of armour. The Jew's hand trembled for joy as he wrapped up the first seventy pieces of gold. The last ten he told over with much deliberation, pausing, and saying something as he took each piece from the table, and dropt it into his purse. It seemed as if his avarice were struggling with his better nature, and compelling him to pouch zecchin after zecchin while his generosity urged him to restore some part at least to his benefactor, or as a donation to his agent. His whole speech ran nearly thus:

"Seventy-one—seventy-two; thy master is a good youth—seventy-three, an excellent youth—seventy-four—that piece hath been clipt within the ring—seventy-five—and that looketh light of weight—seventy-six—when thy master wants money, let him come to Isaac of York—seventy-seven—that is, with reasonable security." Here he made a considerable pause, and Gurth had good hope that the last three pieces might escape the fate of their comrades; but the enumeration proceeded.—"Seventy-eight—thou art a good fellow—seventy-nine—and deservest something for thyself—"

Here the Jew paused again, and looked at the last zecchin, intending, doubtless, to bestow it upon Gurth. He weighed it upon the tip of his finger, and made it ring by dropping it upon the table. Had it rung too flat, or had it felt a hair's breadth too light, generosity had carried the day; but, unhappily for Gurth, the chime was full and true, the zecchin plump, newly coined, and a grain above weight. Isaac could not find in his heart to part with it, so dropt it into his purse as if in absence of mind, with the words, "Eighty completes the tale, and I trust thy master will reward thee handsomely.—Surely," he added, looking earnestly at the bag, "thou hast more coins in that pouch?"

Gurth grinned, which was his nearest approach to a laugh, as he replied, "About the same quantity which thou hast just told over so carefully." He then folded the quittance, and put it under his cap, adding,—"Peril of thy beard, Jew, see that this be full and ample!" He filled himself unbidden, a third goblet of wine, and left the apartment without ceremony.

"Rebecca," said the Jew, "that Ishmaelite hath gone somewhat beyond me. Nevertheless his master is a good youth—ay, and I am well pleased that he hath gained shekels of gold and shekels of silver, even by the speed of his horse and by the strength of his lance, which, like that of Goliath the Philistine, might vie with a weaver's beam."

As he turned to receive Rebecca's answer, he observed, that during his chattering with Gurth, she had left the apartment unperceived.

In the meanwhile, Gurth had descended the stair, and, having reached the dark antechamber or hall, was puzzling about to discover the entrance, when a figure in white, shown by a small silver lamp which she held in her hand, beckoned him into a side apartment. Gurth had some reluctance to obey the summons. Rough and impetuous as a wild boar, where only earthly force was to be apprehended, he had all the characteristic terrors of a Saxon respecting fawns, forest-fiends, white women, and the whole of the superstitions which his ancestors had brought with them from the wilds of Germany. He remembered, moreover, that he was in the house of a Jew, a people who, besides the other unamiable qualities which popular report ascribed to them, were supposed to be profound necromancers and cabalists. Nevertheless, after a moment's pause, he obeyed the beckoning summons of the apparition, and followed her into the apartment which she indicated, where he found to his joyful surprise that his fair guide was the beautiful Jewess whom he had seen at the tournament, and a short time in her father's apartment. She asked him the particulars of his transaction with Isaac, which he detailed accurately.

"My father did but jest with thee, good fellow," said Rebecca; "he owes thy master deeper kindness than these arms and steed could pay, were their value tenfold. What sum didst thou pay my father even now?"

"Eighty zecchins," said Gurth, surprised at the question.

"In this purse," said Rebecca, "thou wilt find a hundred. Restore to thy master that which is his due, and enrich thyself with the remainder. Haste—begone—stay not to render thanks! and beware how you pass through this crowded town, where thou mayst easily lose both thy burden and thy life.—Reuben," she added, clapping her hands together, "light forth this stranger, and fail not to draw lock and bar behind him." Reuben, a dark-brow'd and black-bearded Israelite, obeyed her summons, with a torch in his hand; undid the outward door of the house, and conducting Gurth across a paved court, let him out through a wicket in the entrance-gate, which he closed behind him with such bolts and chains as would well have become that of a prison.

"By St Dunstan," said Gurth, as he stumbled up the dark avenue, "this is no Jewess, but an angel from heaven! Ten zecchins from my brave young master—twenty from this pearl of Zion—Oh, happy day!—Such another, Gurth, will redeem thy bondage, and make thee a brother as free of thy guild as the best. And then do I lay down my swineherd's horn and staff, and take the freeman's sword and buckler, and follow my young master to the death, without hiding either my face or my name."

CHAPTER XI

1st Outlaw: Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about you;

If not, we'll make you sit, and rifle you.

Speed: Sir, we are undone! these are the villains

That all the travellers do fear so much.

Val: My friends,—

1st Out: That's not so, sir, we are your enemies.

2d Out: Peace! we'll hear him.

3d Out: Ay, by my beard, will we;

For he's a proper man.

—Two Gentlemen of Verona

The nocturnal adventures of Gurth were not yet concluded; indeed he himself became partly of that mind, when, after passing one or two straggling houses which stood in the outskirts of the village, he found himself in a deep lane, running between two banks overgrown with hazel and holly, while here and there a dwarf oak flung its arms altogether across the path. The lane was moreover much rutted and broken up by the carriages which had recently transported articles of various kinds to the tournament; and it was dark, for the banks and bushes intercepted the light of the harvest moon.

From the village were heard the distant sounds of revelry, mixed occasionally with loud laughter, sometimes broken by screams, and sometimes by wild strains of distant music. All these sounds, intimating the disorderly state of the town, crowded with military nobles and their dissolute attendants, gave Gurth some uneasiness. "The Jewess was right," he said to himself. "By heaven and St Dunstan, I would I were safe at my journey's end with all this treasure! Here are such numbers, I will not say of arrant thieves, but of errant knights and errant squires, errant monks and errant minstrels, errant jugglers and errant jesters, that a man with a single merk would be in danger, much more a poor swineherd with a whole bagful of zecchins. Would I were out of the shade of these infernal bushes, that I might at least see any of St Nicholas's clerks before they spring on my shoulders."

Gurth accordingly hastened his pace, in order to gain the open common to which the lane led, but was not so fortunate as to accomplish his object. Just as he had attained the upper end of the lane, where the underwood was thickest, four men sprung upon him, even as his fears anticipated, two from each side of the road, and seized him so fast, that resistance, if at first practicable, would have been now too late.—"Surrender your charge," said one of them; "we are the deliverers of the commonwealth, who ease every man of his burden."

"You should not ease me of mine so lightly," muttered Gurth, whose surly honesty could not be tamed even by the pressure of immediate violence,—"had I it but in my power to give three strokes in its defence."

"We shall see that presently," said the robber; and, speaking to his companions, he added, "bring along the knave. I see he would have his head broken, as well as his purse cut, and so be let blood in two veins at once."

Gurth was hurried along agreeably to this mandate, and having been dragged somewhat roughly over the bank, on the left-hand side of the lane, found himself in a straggling thicket, which lay betwixt it and the open common. He was compelled to follow his rough conductors into the very depth of this cover, where they stopt unexpectedly in an irregular open space, free in a great measure from trees, and on which, therefore, the beams of the moon fell without much interruption from boughs and leaves. Here his captors were joined by two other persons, apparently belonging to the gang. They had short swords by their sides, and quarter-staves in their hands, and Gurth could now observe that all six wore visors, which rendered their occupation a matter of no question, even had their former proceedings left it in doubt.

"What money hast thou, churl?" said one of the thieves.

"Thirty zecchins of my own property," answered Gurth, doggedly.

"A forfeit—a forfeit," shouted the robbers; "a Saxon hath thirty zecchins, and returns sober from a village! An undeniable and unredeemable forfeit of all he hath about him."

"I hoarded it to purchase my freedom," said Gurth.

"Thou art an ass," replied one of the thieves "three quarts of double ale had rendered thee as free as thy master, ay, and freer too, if he be a Saxon like thyself."

"A sad truth," replied Gurth; "but if these same thirty zecchins will buy my freedom from you, unloose my hands, and I will pay them to you."

"Hold," said one who seemed to exercise some authority over the others; "this bag which thou bearest, as I can feel through thy cloak, contains more coin than thou hast told us of."

"It is the good knight my master's," answered Gurth, "of which, assuredly, I would not have spoken a word, had you been satisfied with working your will upon mine own property."

"Thou art an honest fellow," replied the robber, "I warrant thee; and we worship not St Nicholas so devoutly but what thy thirty zecchins may yet escape, if thou deal uprightly with us. Meantime render up thy trust for a time." So saying, he took from Gurth's breast the large leathern pouch, in which the purse given him by Rebecca was enclosed, as well as the rest of the zecchins, and then continued his interrogation.—"Who is thy master?"

"The Disinherited Knight," said Gurth.

"Whose good lance," replied the robber, "won the prize in to-day's tourney? What is his name and lineage?"

"It is his pleasure," answered Gurth, "that they be concealed; and from me, assuredly, you will learn nought of them."

"What is thine own name and lineage?"

"To tell that," said Gurth, "might reveal my master's."

"Thou art a saucy groom," said the robber, "but of that anon. How comes thy master by this gold? is it of his inheritance, or by what means hath it accrued to him?"

"By his good lance," answered Gurth.—"These bags contain the ransom of four good horses, and four good suits of armour."

"How much is there?" demanded the robber.

"Two hundred zecchins."

"Only two hundred zecchins!" said the bandit; "your master hath dealt liberally by the vanquished, and put them to a cheap ransom. Name those who paid the gold."

Gurth did so.

"The armour and horse of the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, at what ransom were they held?—Thou seest thou canst not deceive me."

"My master," replied Gurth, "will take nought from the Templar save his life's-blood. They are on terms of mortal defiance, and cannot hold courteous intercourse together."

"Indeed!"—repeated the robber, and paused after he had said the word. "And what wert thou now doing at Ashby with such a charge in thy custody?"

"I went thither to render to Isaac the Jew of York," replied Gurth, "the price of a suit of armour with which he fitted my master for this tournament."

"And how much didst thou pay to Isaac?—Methinks, to judge by weight, there is still two hundred zecchins in this pouch."

"I paid to Isaac," said the Saxon, "eighty zecchins, and he restored me a hundred in lieu thereof."

"How! what!" exclaimed all the robbers at once; "darest thou trifle with us, that thou tellest such improbable lies?"

"What I tell you," said Gurth, "is as true as the moon is in heaven. You will find the just sum in a silken purse within the leathern pouch, and separate from the rest of the gold."

"Bethink thee, man," said the Captain, "thou speakest of a Jew—of an Israelite,—as unapt to restore gold, as the dry sand of his deserts to return the cup of water which the pilgrim spills upon them."

"There is no more mercy in them," said another of the banditti, "than in an unbribed sheriffs officer."

"It is, however, as I say," said Gurth.

"Strike a light instantly," said the Captain; "I will examine this said purse; and if it be as this fellow says, the Jew's bounty is little less miraculous than the stream which relieved his fathers in the wilderness."

A light was procured accordingly, and the robber proceeded to examine the purse. The others crowded around him, and even two who had hold of Gurth relaxed their grasp while they stretched their necks to see the issue of the search. Availing himself of their negligence, by a sudden exertion of strength and activity, Gurth shook himself free of their hold, and might have escaped, could he have resolved to leave his master's property behind him. But such was no part of his intention. He wrenched a quarter-staff from one of the fellows, struck down the Captain, who was altogether unaware of his purpose, and had well-nigh repossessed himself of the pouch and treasure. The thieves, however, were too nimble for him, and again secured both the bag and the trusty Gurth.

"Knave!" said the Captain, getting up, "thou hast broken my head; and with other men of our sort thou wouldst fare the worse for thy insolence. But thou shalt know thy fate instantly. First let us speak of thy master; the knight's matters must go before the squire's, according to the due order of chivalry. Stand thou fast in the meantime—if thou stir again, thou shalt have that will make thee quiet for thy life—Comrades!" he then said, addressing his gang, "this purse is embroidered with Hebrew characters, and I well believe the yeoman's tale is true. The errant knight, his master, must needs pass us toll-free. He is too like ourselves for us to make booty of him, since dogs should not worry dogs where wolves and foxes are to be found in abundance."

"Like us?" answered one of the gang; "I should like to hear how that is made good."

"Why, thou fool," answered the Captain, "is he not poor and disinherited as we are?—Doth he not win his substance at the sword's point as we do?—Hath he not beaten Front-de-Boeuf and Malvoisin, even as we would beat them if we could? Is he not the enemy to life and death of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whom we have so much reason to fear? And were all this otherwise, wouldst thou have us show a worse conscience than an unbeliever, a Hebrew Jew?"

"Nay, that were a shame," muttered the other fellow; "and yet, when I served in the band of stout old Gandelyn, we had no such scruples of conscience. And this insolent peasant,—he too, I warrant me, is to be dismissed scatheless?"

"Not if THOU canst scathe him," replied the Captain.—"Here, fellow," continued he, addressing Gurth, "canst thou use the staff, that thou starts to it so readily?"

"I think," said Gurth, "thou shouldst be best able to reply to that question."

"Nay, by my troth, thou gavest me a round knock," replied the Captain; "do as much for this fellow, and thou shalt pass scot-free; and if thou dost not—why, by my faith, as thou art such a sturdy knave, I think I must pay thy ransom myself.—Take thy staff, Miller," he added, "and keep thy head; and do you others let the fellow go, and give him a staff—there is light enough to lay on load by."

The two champions being alike armed with quarter-staves, stepped forward into the centre of the open space, in order to have the full benefit of the moonlight; the thieves in the meantime laughing, and crying to their comrade, "Miller! beware thy toll-dish." The Miller, on the other hand, holding his quarter-staff by the middle, and making it flourish round his head after the fashion which the French call "faire le moulinet", exclaimed boastfully, "Come on, churl, an thou darest: thou shalt feel the strength of a miller's thumb!"

"If thou be'st a miller," answered Gurth, undauntedly, making his weapon play around his head with equal dexterity, "thou art doubly a thief, and I, as a true man, bid thee defiance."

So saying, the two champions closed together, and for a few minutes they displayed great equality in strength, courage, and skill, intercepting and returning the blows of their adversary with the most rapid dexterity, while, from the continued clatter of their weapons, a person at a distance might have supposed that there were at least six persons engaged on each side. Less obstinate, and even less dangerous combats, have been described in good heroic verse; but that of Gurth and the Miller must remain unsung, for want of a sacred poet to do justice to its eventful progress. Yet, though quarter-staff play be out of date, what we can in prose we will do for these bold champions.

Long they fought equally, until the Miller began to lose temper at finding himself so stoutly opposed, and at hearing the laughter of his companions, who, as usual in such cases, enjoyed his vexation. This was not a state of mind favourable to the noble game of quarter-staff, in which, as in ordinary cudgel-playing, the utmost coolness is requisite; and it gave Gurth, whose temper was steady, though surly, the opportunity of acquiring a decided advantage, in availing himself of which he displayed great mastery.

The Miller pressed furiously forward, dealing blows with either end of his weapon alternately, and striving to come to half-staff distance, while Gurth defended himself against the attack, keeping his hands about a yard asunder, and covering himself by shifting his weapon with great celerity, so as to protect his head and body. Thus did he maintain the defensive, making his eye, foot, and hand keep true time, until, observing his antagonist to lose wind, he darted the staff at his face with his left hand; and, as the Miller endeavoured to parry the thrust, he slid his right hand down to his left, and with the full swing of the weapon struck his opponent on the left side of the head, who instantly measured his length upon the green sward.

"Well and yeomanly done!" shouted the robbers; "fair play and Old England for ever! The Saxon hath saved both his purse and his hide, and the Miller has met his match."

"Thou mayst go thy ways, my friend," said the Captain, addressing Gurth, in special confirmation of the general voice, "and I will cause two of my comrades to guide thee by the best way to thy master's pavilion, and to guard thee from night-walkers that might have less tender consciences than ours; for there is many one of them upon the amble in such a night as this. Take heed, however," he added sternly; "remember thou hast refused to tell thy name—ask not after ours, nor endeavour to discover who or what we are; for, if thou makest such an attempt, thou wilt come by worse fortune than has yet befallen thee."

Gurth thanked the Captain for his courtesy, and promised to attend to his recommendation. Two of the outlaws, taking up their quarter-staves, and desiring Gurth to follow close in the rear, walked roundly forward along a by-path, which traversed the thicket and the broken ground adjacent to it. On the very verge of the thicket two men spoke to his conductors, and receiving an answer in a whisper, withdrew into the wood, and suffered them to pass unmolested. This circumstance induced Gurth to believe both that the gang was strong in numbers, and that they kept regular guards around their place of rendezvous.

When they arrived on the open heath, where Gurth might have had some trouble in finding his road, the thieves guided him straight forward to the top of a little eminence, whence he could see, spread beneath him in the moonlight, the palisades of the lists, the glimmering pavilions pitched at either end, with the pennons which adorned them fluttering in the moonbeams, and from which could be heard the hum of the song with which the sentinels were beguiling their night-watch.

Here the thieves stopt.

"We go with you no farther," said they; "it were not safe that we should do so.—Remember the warning you have received—keep secret what has this night befallen you, and you will have no room to repent it—neglect what is now told you, and the Tower of London shall not protect you against our revenge."

"Good night to you, kind sirs," said Gurth; "I shall remember your orders, and trust that there is no offence in wishing you a safer and an honester trade."

Thus they parted, the outlaws returning in the direction from whence they had come, and Gurth proceeding to the tent of his master, to whom, notwithstanding the injunction he had received, he communicated the whole adventures of the evening.

The Disinherited Knight was filled with astonishment, no less at the generosity of Rebecca, by which, however, he resolved he would not profit, than that of the robbers, to whose profession such a quality seemed totally foreign. His course of reflections upon these singular circumstances was, however, interrupted by the

necessity for taking repose, which the fatigue of the preceding day, and the propriety of refreshing himself for the morrow's encounter, rendered alike indispensable.

The knight, therefore, stretched himself for repose upon a rich couch with which the tent was provided; and the faithful Gurth, extending his hardy limbs upon a bear-skin which formed a sort of carpet to the pavilion, laid himself across the opening of the tent, so that no one could enter without awakening him.

CHAPTER XII

*The heralds left their pricking up and down,
Now ringen trumpets loud and clarion.
There is no more to say, but east and west,
In go the speares sadly in the rest,
In goth the sharp spur into the side,
There see men who can just and who can ride;
There shiver shaftes upon shieldes thick,
He feeleth through the heart-spone the prick;
Up springen speares, twenty feet in height,
Out go the swordes to the silver bright;
The helms they to-hewn and to-shred;
Out burst the blood with stern streames red.
Chaucer.*

Morning arose in unclouded splendour, and ere the sun was much above the horizon, the idlest or the most eager of the spectators appeared on the common, moving to the lists as to a general centre, in order to secure a favourable situation for viewing the continuation of the expected games.

The marshals and their attendants appeared next on the field, together with the heralds, for the purpose of receiving the names of the knights who intended to joust, with the side which each chose to espouse. This was a necessary precaution, in order to secure equality betwixt the two bodies who should be opposed to each other.

According to due formality, the Disinherited Knight was to be considered as leader of the one body, while Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had been rated as having done second-best in the preceding day, was named first champion of the other band. Those who had concurred in the challenge adhered to his party of course, excepting only Ralph de Vipont, whom his fall had rendered unfit so soon to put on his armour. There was no want of distinguished and noble candidates to fill up the ranks on either side.

In fact, although the general tournament, in which all knights fought at once, was more dangerous than single encounters, they were, nevertheless, more frequented and practised by the chivalry of the age. Many knights, who had not sufficient confidence in their own skill to defy a single adversary of high reputation, were, nevertheless, desirous of displaying their valour in the general combat, where they might meet others with whom they were more upon an equality. On the present occasion, about fifty knights were inscribed as desirous of combating upon each side, when the marshals declared that no more could be admitted, to the disappointment of several who were too late in preferring their claim to be included.

About the hour of ten o'clock, the whole plain was crowded with horsemen, horsewomen, and foot-passengers, hastening to the tournament; and shortly after, a grand flourish of trumpets announced Prince John and his retinue, attended by many of those knights who meant to take share in the game, as well as others who had no such intention.

About the same time arrived Cedric the Saxon, with the Lady Rowena, unattended, however, by Athelstane. This Saxon lord had arrayed his tall and strong person in armour, in order to take his place among the combatants; and, considerably to the surprise of Cedric, had chosen to enlist himself on the part of the Knight Templar. The Saxon, indeed, had remonstrated strongly with his friend upon the injudicious choice he had made of his party; but he had only received that sort of answer usually given by those who are more obstinate in following their own course, than strong in justifying it.

His best, if not his only reason, for adhering to the party of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Athelstane had the prudence to keep to himself. Though his apathy of disposition prevented his taking any means to recommend himself to the Lady Rowena, he was, nevertheless, by no means insensible to her charms, and considered his union with her as a matter already fixed beyond doubt, by the assent of Cedric and her other friends. It had therefore been with smothered displeasure that the proud though indolent Lord of Coningsburgh beheld the victor of the preceding day select Rowena as the object of that honour which it became his privilege to confer. In order to punish him for a preference which seemed to interfere with his own suit, Athelstane, confident of his strength, and to whom his flatterers, at least, ascribed great skill in arms, had determined not only to deprive the Disinherited Knight of his powerful succour, but, if an opportunity should occur, to make him feel the weight of his battle-axe.

De Bracy, and other knights attached to Prince John, in obedience to a hint from him, had joined the party of the challengers, John being desirous to secure, if possible, the victory to that side. On the other hand, many other knights, both English and Norman, natives and strangers, took part against the challengers, the more readily that the opposite band was to be led by so distinguished a champion as the Disinherited Knight had approved himself.

As soon as Prince John observed that the destined Queen of the day had arrived upon the field, assuming that air of courtesy which sat well upon him when he was pleased to exhibit it, he rode forward to meet her, doffed his bonnet, and, alighting from his horse, assisted the Lady Rowena from her saddle, while his followers uncovered at the same time, and one of the most distinguished dismounted to hold her palfrey.

"It is thus," said Prince John, "that we set the dutiful example of loyalty to the Queen of Love and Beauty, and are ourselves her guide to the throne which she must this day occupy.—Ladies," he said, "attend your Queen, as you wish in your turn to be distinguished by like honours."

So saying, the Prince marshalled Rowena to the seat of honour opposite his own, while the fairest and most distinguished ladies present crowded after her to obtain places as near as possible to their temporary sovereign.

No sooner was Rowena seated, than a burst of music, half-drowned by the shouts of the multitude, greeted her new dignity. Meantime, the sun shone fierce and bright upon the polished arms of the knights of either side, who crowded the opposite extremities of the lists, and held eager conference together concerning the best mode of arranging their line of battle, and supporting the conflict.

The heralds then proclaimed silence until the laws of the tourney should be rehearsed. These were calculated in some degree to abate the dangers of the day; a precaution the more necessary, as the conflict was to be maintained with sharp swords and pointed lances.

The champions were therefore prohibited to thrust with the sword, and were confined to striking. A knight, it was announced, might use a mace or battle-axe at pleasure, but the dagger was a prohibited weapon. A knight unhorsed might renew the fight on foot with any other on the opposite side in the same predicament; but mounted horsemen were in that case forbidden to assail him. When any knight could force his antagonist to the extremity of the lists, so as to touch the palisade with his person or arms, such opponent was obliged to yield himself vanquished, and his armour and horse were placed at the disposal of the conqueror. A knight thus overcome was not permitted to take farther share in the combat. If any combatant was struck down, and unable to recover his feet, his squire or page might enter the lists, and drag his master out of the press; but in that case the knight was adjudged vanquished, and his arms and horse declared forfeited. The combat was to cease as soon as Prince John should throw down his leading staff, or truncheon; another precaution usually taken to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood by the too long endurance of a sport so desperate. Any knight breaking the rules of the tournament, or otherwise transgressing the rules of

honourable chivalry, was liable to be stript of his arms, and, having his shield reversed to be placed in that posture astride upon the bars of the palisade, and exposed to public derision, in punishment of his unknighly conduct. Having announced these precautions, the heralds concluded with an exhortation to each good knight to do his duty, and to merit favour from the Queen of Beauty and of Love.

This proclamation having been made, the heralds withdrew to their stations. The knights, entering at either end of the lists in long procession, arranged themselves in a double file, precisely opposite to each other, the leader of each party being in the centre of the foremost rank, a post which he did not occupy until each had carefully marshalled the ranks of his party, and stationed every one in his place.

It was a goodly, and at the same time an anxious, sight, to behold so many gallant champions, mounted bravely, and armed richly, stand ready prepared for an encounter so formidable, seated on their war-saddles like so many pillars of iron, and awaiting the signal of encounter with the same ardour as their generous steeds, which, by neighing and pawing the ground, gave signal of their impatience.

As yet the knights held their long lances upright, their bright points glancing to the sun, and the streamers with which they were decorated fluttering over the plumage of the helmets. Thus they remained while the marshals of the field surveyed their ranks with the utmost exactness, lest either party had more or fewer than the appointed number. The tale was found exactly complete. The marshals then withdrew from the lists, and William de Wyvil, with a voice of thunder, pronounced the signal words—"Laissez aller!" The trumpets sounded as he spoke—the spears of the champions were at once lowered and placed in the rests—the spurs were dashed into the flanks of the horses, and the two foremost ranks of either party rushed upon each other in full gallop, and met in the middle of the lists with a shock, the sound of which was heard at a mile's distance. The rear rank of each party advanced at a slower pace to sustain the defeated, and follow up the success of the victors of their party.

The consequences of the encounter were not instantly seen, for the dust raised by the trampling of so many steeds darkened the air, and it was a minute ere the anxious spectator could see the fate of the encounter. When the fight became visible, half the knights on each side were dismounted, some by the dexterity of their adversary's lance,—some by the superior weight and strength of opponents, which had borne down both horse and man,—some lay stretched on earth as if never more to rise,—some had already gained their feet, and were closing hand to hand with those of their antagonists who were in the same predicament,—and several on both sides, who had received wounds by which they were disabled, were stopping their blood by their scarfs, and endeavouring to extricate themselves from the tumult. The mounted knights, whose lances had been almost all broken by the fury of the encounter, were now closely engaged with their swords, shouting their war-cries, and exchanging buffets, as if honour and life depended on the issue of the combat.

The tumult was presently increased by the advance of the second rank on either side, which, acting as a reserve, now rushed on to aid their companions. The followers of Brian de Bois-Guilbert shouted—"Ha! Beau-seant! Beau-seant! 20

"—For the Temple—For the Temple!" The opposite party shouted in answer—"Desdichado! Desdichado!"—which watch-word they took from the motto upon their leader's shield.

The champions thus encountering each other with the utmost fury, and with alternate success, the tide of battle seemed to flow now toward the southern, now toward the northern extremity of the lists, as the one or the other party prevailed. Meantime the clang of the blows, and the shouts of the combatants, mixed fearfully with the sound of the trumpets, and drowned the groans of those who fell, and lay rolling defenceless beneath the feet of the horses. The splendid armour of the combatants was now defaced with dust and blood, and gave way at every stroke of the sword and battle-axe. The gay plumage, shorn from the crests, drifted upon the breeze like snow-flakes. All that was beautiful and graceful in the martial array had disappeared, and what was now visible was only calculated to awake terror or compassion.

Yet such is the force of habit, that not only the vulgar spectators, who are naturally attracted by sights of horror, but even the ladies of distinction who crowded the galleries, saw the conflict with a thrilling interest certainly, but without a wish to withdraw their eyes from a sight so terrible. Here and there, indeed, a fair cheek might turn pale, or a faint scream might be heard, as a lover, a brother, or a husband, was struck from his horse. But, in general, the ladies around encouraged the combatants, not only by clapping their hands and waving their veils and kerchiefs, but even by exclaiming, "Brave lance! Good sword!" when any successful thrust or blow took place under their observation.

Such being the interest taken by the fair sex in this bloody game, that of the men is the more easily understood. It showed itself in loud acclamations upon every change of fortune, while all eyes were so riveted on the lists, that the spectators seemed as if they themselves had dealt and received the blows which were there so freely bestowed. And between every pause was heard the voice of the heralds, exclaiming, "Fight on, brave knights! Man dies, but glory lives!—Fight on—death is better than defeat!—Fight on, brave knights!—for bright eyes behold your deeds!"

Amid the varied fortunes of the combat, the eyes of all endeavoured to discover the leaders of each band, who, mingling in the thick of the fight, encouraged their companions both by voice and example. Both displayed great feats of gallantry, nor did either Bois-Guilbert or the Disinherited Knight find in the ranks opposed to them a champion who could be termed their unquestioned match. They repeatedly endeavoured to single out each other, spurred by mutual animosity, and aware that the fall of either leader might be considered as decisive of victory. Such, however, was the crowd and confusion, that, during the earlier part of the conflict, their efforts to meet were unavailing, and they were repeatedly separated by the eagerness of their followers, each of whom was anxious to win honour, by measuring his strength against the leader of the opposite party.

But when the field became thin by the numbers on either side who had yielded themselves vanquished, had been compelled to the extremity of the lists, or been otherwise rendered incapable of continuing the strife, the Templar and the Disinherited Knight at length encountered hand to hand, with all the fury that mortal animosity, joined to rivalry of honour, could inspire. Such was the address of each in parrying and striking, that the spectators broke forth into a unanimous and involuntary shout, expressive of their delight and admiration.

But at this moment the party of the Disinherited Knight had the worst; the gigantic arm of Front-de-Boeuf on the one flank, and the ponderous strength of Athelstane on the other, bearing down and dispersing those immediately exposed to them. Finding themselves freed from their immediate antagonists, it seems to have occurred to both these knights at the same instant, that they would render the most decisive advantage to their party, by aiding the Templar in his contest with his rival. Turning their horses, therefore, at the same moment, the Norman spurred against the Disinherited Knight on the one side, and the Saxon on the other. It was utterly impossible that the object of this unequal and unexpected assault could have sustained it, had he not been warned by a general cry from the spectators, who could not but take interest in one exposed to such disadvantage.

"Beware! beware! Sir Disinherited!" was shouted so universally, that the knight became aware of his danger; and, striking a full blow at the Templar, he reined back his steed in the same moment, so as to escape the charge of Athelstane and Front-de-Boeuf. These knights, therefore, their aim being thus eluded, rushed from opposite sides betwixt the object of their attack and the Templar, almost running their horses against each other ere they could stop their career. Recovering their horses however, and wheeling them round, the whole three pursued their united purpose of bearing to the earth the Disinherited Knight.

Nothing could have saved him, except the remarkable strength and activity of the noble horse which he had won on the preceding day.

This stood him in the more stead, as the horse of Bois-Guilbert was wounded, and those of Front-de-Boeuf and Athelstane were both tired with the weight of their gigantic masters, clad in complete armour, and with the preceding exertions of the day. The masterly horsemanship of the Disinherited Knight, and the activity of the noble animal which he mounted, enabled him for a few minutes to keep at sword's point his three antagonists, turning and wheeling with the agility of a hawk upon the wing, keeping his enemies as far separate as he could, and rushing now against the one, now against the other, dealing sweeping blows with his sword, without waiting to receive those which were aimed at him in return.

But although the lists rang with the applauses of his dexterity, it was evident that he must at last be overpowered; and the nobles around Prince John implored him with one voice to throw down his warder, and to save so brave a knight from the disgrace of being overcome by odds.

"Not I, by the light of Heaven!" answered Prince John; "this same springald, who conceals his name, and despises our proffered hospitality, hath already gained one prize, and may now afford to let others have their turn." As he spoke thus, an unexpected incident changed the fortune of the day.

There was among the ranks of the Disinherited Knight a champion in black armour, mounted on a black horse, large of size, tall, and to all appearance powerful and strong, like the rider by whom he was mounted, This knight, who bore on his shield no device of any kind, had hitherto evinced very little interest in the event of the fight, beating off with seeming ease those combatants who attacked him, but neither pursuing his advantages, nor himself assailing any one. In short, he had hitherto acted the part rather of a spectator than of a party in the tournament, a circumstance which procured him among the spectators the name of "Le Noir Faineant", or the Black Sluggard.

At once this knight seemed to throw aside his apathy, when he discovered the leader of his party so hard bested; for, setting spurs to his horse, which was quite fresh, he came to his assistance like a thunderbolt, exclaiming, in a voice like a trumpet-call, "Desdichado, to the rescue!" It was high time; for, while the Disinherited Knight was pressing upon the Templar, Front-de-Boeuf had got nigh to him with his uplifted sword; but ere the blow could descend, the Sable Knight dealt a stroke on his head, which, glancing from the polished helmet, lighted with violence scarcely abated on the "chamfron" of the steed, and Front-de-Boeuf rolled on the ground, both horse and man equally stunned by the fury of the blow. "Le Noir Faineant" then turned his horse upon Athelstane of Coningsburgh; and his own sword having been broken in his encounter with Front-de-Boeuf, he wrenched from the hand of the bulky Saxon the battle-axe which he wielded, and, like one familiar with the use of the weapon, bestowed him such a blow upon the crest, that Athelstane also lay senseless on the field. Having achieved this double feat, for which he was the more highly applauded that it was totally unexpected from him, the knight seemed to resume the sluggishness of his character, returning calmly to the northern extremity of the lists, leaving his leader to cope as he best could with Brian de Bois-Guilbert. This was no longer matter of so much difficulty as formerly. The Templars horse had bled much, and gave way under the shock of the Disinherited Knight's charge. Brian de Bois-Guilbert rolled on the field, encumbered with the stirrup, from which he was unable to draw his foot. His antagonist sprung from horseback, waved his fatal sword over the head of his adversary, and commanded him to yield himself; when Prince John, more moved by the Templars dangerous situation than he had been by that of his rival, saved him the mortification of confessing himself vanquished, by casting down his warder, and putting an end to the conflict.

It was, indeed, only the relics and embers of the fight which continued to burn; for of the few knights who still continued in the lists, the greater part had, by tacit consent, forborne the conflict for some time, leaving it to be determined by the strife of the leaders.

The squires, who had found it a matter of danger and difficulty to attend their masters during the engagement, now thronged into the lists to pay their dutiful attendance to the wounded, who were removed with the utmost care and attention to the neighbouring pavilions, or to the quarters prepared for them in the adjoining village.

Thus ended the memorable field of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, one of the most gallantly contested tournaments of that age; for although only four knights, including one who was smothered by the heat of his armour, had died upon the field, yet upwards of thirty were desperately wounded, four or five of whom never recovered. Several more were disabled for life; and those who escaped best carried the marks of the conflict to the grave with them. Hence it is always mentioned in the old records, as the Gentle and Joyous Passage of Arms of Ashby.

It being now the duty of Prince John to name the knight who had done best, he determined that the honour of the day remained with the knight whom the popular voice had termed "Le Noir Faineant." It was pointed out to the Prince, in impeachment of this decree, that the victory had been in fact won by the Disinherited Knight, who, in the course of the day, had overcome six champions with his own hand, and who had finally unhorsed and struck down the leader of the opposite party. But Prince John adhered to his own opinion, on the ground that the Disinherited Knight and his party had lost the day, but for the powerful assistance of the Knight of the Black Armour, to whom, therefore, he persisted in awarding the prize.

To the surprise of all present, however, the knight thus preferred was nowhere to be found. He had left the lists immediately when the conflict ceased, and had been observed by some spectators to move down one of the forest glades with the same slow pace and listless and indifferent manner which had procured him the epithet of the Black Sluggard. After he had been summoned twice by sound of trumpet, and proclamation of the heralds, it became necessary to name another to receive the honours which had been assigned to him. Prince John had now no further excuse for resisting the claim of the Disinherited Knight, whom, therefore, he named the champion of the day.

Through a field slippery with blood, and encumbered with broken armour and the bodies of slain and wounded horses, the marshals of the lists again conducted the victor to the foot of Prince John's throne.

"Disinherited Knight," said Prince John, "since by that title only you will consent to be known to us, we a second time award to you the honours of this tournament, and announce to you your right to claim and receive from the hands of the Queen of Love and Beauty, the Chaplet of Honour which your valour has justly deserved." The Knight bowed low and gracefully, but returned no answer.

While the trumpets sounded, while the heralds strained their voices in proclaiming honour to the brave and glory to the victor—while ladies waved their silken kerchiefs and embroidered veils, and while all ranks joined in a clamorous shout of exultation, the marshals conducted the Disinherited Knight across the lists to the foot of that throne of honour which was occupied by the Lady Rowena.

On the lower step of this throne the champion was made to kneel down. Indeed his whole action since the fight had ended, seemed rather to have been upon the impulse of those around him than from his own free will; and it was observed that he tottered as they guided him the second time across the lists. Rowena, descending from her station with a graceful and dignified step, was about to place the chaplet which she held in her hand upon the helmet of the champion, when the marshals exclaimed with one voice, "It must not be thus—his head must be bare." The knight muttered faintly a few words, which were lost in the hollow of his helmet, but their purport seemed to be a desire that his casque might not be removed.

Whether from love of form, or from curiosity, the marshals paid no attention to his expressions of reluctance, but unhelmed him by cutting the laces of his casque, and undoing the fastening of his gorget. When the helmet was removed, the well-formed, yet sun-burnt features of a young man of twenty-five were seen, amidst a profusion of short fair hair. His countenance was as pale as death, and marked in one or two places with streaks of blood.

Rowena had no sooner beheld him than she uttered a faint shriek; but at once summoning up the energy of her disposition, and compelling herself, as it were, to proceed, while her frame yet trembled with the violence of sudden emotion, she placed upon the drooping head of the victor the splendid chaplet which was the destined reward of the day, and pronounced, in a clear and distinct tone, these words: "I bestow on thee this chaplet, Sir Knight, as the meed of valour assigned to this day's victor." Here she paused a moment, and then firmly added, "And upon brows more worthy could a wreath of chivalry never be placed!"

The knight stooped his head, and kissed the hand of the lovely Sovereign by whom his valour had been rewarded; and then, sinking yet farther forward, lay prostrate at her feet.

There was a general consternation. Cedric, who had been struck mute by the sudden appearance of his banished son, now rushed forward, as if to separate him from Rowena. But this had been already accomplished by the marshals of the field, who, guessing the cause of Ivanhoe's swoon, had hastened to undo his armour, and found that the head of a lance had penetrated his breastplate, and inflicted a wound in his side.

CHAPTER XIII

*"Heroes, approach!" Atrides thus aloud,
"Stand forth distinguish'd from the circling crowd,
Ye who by skill or manly force may claim,
Your rivals to surpass and merit fame.
This cow, worth twenty oxen, is decreed,
For him who farthest sends the winged reed."*

—*Iliad*

The name of Ivanhoe was no sooner pronounced than it flew from mouth to mouth, with all the celerity with which eagerness could convey and curiosity receive it. It was not long ere it reached the circle of the Prince, whose brow darkened as he heard the news. Looking around him, however, with an air of scorn, "My Lords," said he, "and especially you, Sir Prior, what think ye of the doctrine the learned tell us, concerning innate attractions and antipathies? Methinks that I felt the presence of my brother's minion, even when I least guessed whom yonder suit of armour enclosed."

"Front-de-Boeuf must prepare to restore his fief of Ivanhoe," said De Bracy, who, having discharged his part honourably in the tournament, had laid his shield and helmet aside, and again mingled with the Prince's retinue.

"Ay," answered Waldemar Fitzurse, "this gallant is likely to reclaim the castle and manor which Richard assigned to him, and which your Highness's generosity has since given to Front-de-Boeuf."

"Front-de-Boeuf," replied John, "is a man more willing to swallow three manors such as Ivanhoe, than to disgorge one of them. For the rest, sirs, I hope none here will deny my right to confer the fiefs of the crown upon the faithful followers who are around me, and ready to perform the usual military service, in the room of those who have wandered to foreign Countries, and can neither render homage nor service when called upon."

The audience were too much interested in the question not to pronounce the Prince's assumed right altogether indubitable. "A generous Prince!—a most noble Lord, who thus takes upon himself the task of rewarding his faithful followers!"

Such were the words which burst from the train, expectants all of them of similar grants at the expense of King Richard's followers and favourites, if indeed they had not as yet received such. Prior Aymer also assented to the general proposition, observing, however, "That the blessed Jerusalem could not indeed be termed a foreign country. She was 'communis mater'—the mother of all Christians. But he saw not," he declared, "how the Knight of Ivanhoe could plead any advantage from this, since he" (the Prior) "was assured that the crusaders, under Richard, had never proceeded much farther than Askalon, which, as all the world knew, was a town of the Philistines, and entitled to none of the privileges of the Holy City."

Waldemar, whose curiosity had led him towards the place where Ivanhoe had fallen to the ground, now returned. "The gallant," said he, "is likely to give your Highness little disturbance, and to leave Front-de-Boeuf in the quiet possession of his gains—he is severely wounded."

"Whatever becomes of him," said Prince John, "he is victor of the day; and were he tenfold our enemy, or the devoted friend of our brother, which is perhaps the same, his wounds must be looked to—our own physician shall attend him."

A stern smile curled the Prince's lip as he spoke. Waldemar Fitzurse hastened to reply, that Ivanhoe was already removed from the lists, and in the custody of his friends.

"I was somewhat afflicted," he said, "to see the grief of the Queen of Love and Beauty, whose sovereignty of a day this event has changed into mourning. I am not a man to be moved by a woman's lament for her lover, but this same Lady Rowena suppressed her sorrow with such dignity of manner, that it could only be discovered by her folded hands, and her tearless eye, which trembled as it remained fixed on the lifeless form before her."

"Who is this Lady Rowena," said Prince John, "of whom we have heard so much?"

"A Saxon heiress of large possessions," replied the Prior Aymer, "a rose of loveliness, and a jewel of wealth; the fairest among a thousand, a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire."

"We shall cheer her sorrows," said Prince John, "and amend her blood, by wedding her to a Norman. She seems a minor, and must therefore be at our royal disposal in marriage.—How sayst thou, De Bracy? What thinkst thou of gaining fair lands and livings, by wedding a Saxon, after the fashion of the followers of the Conqueror?"

"If the lands are to my liking, my lord," answered De Bracy, "it will be hard to displease me with a bride; and deeply will I hold myself bound to your highness for a good deed, which will fulfil all promises made in favour of your servant and vassal."

"We will not forget it," said Prince John; "and that we may instantly go to work, command our seneschal presently to order the attendance of the Lady Rowena and her company—that is, the rude churl her guardian, and the Saxon ox whom the Black Knight struck down in the tournament, upon this evening's banquet.—De Bigot," he added to his seneschal, "thou wilt word this our second summons so courteously, as to gratify the pride of these Saxons, and make it impossible for them again to refuse; although, by the bones of Becket, courtesy to them is casting pearls before swine."

Prince John had proceeded thus far, and was about to give the signal for retiring from the lists, when a small billet was put into his hand.

"From whence?" said Prince John, looking at the person by whom it was delivered.

"From foreign parts, my lord, but from whence I know not" replied his attendant. "A Frenchman brought it hither, who said, he had ridden night and day to put it into the hands of your highness."

The Prince looked narrowly at the superscription, and then at the seal, placed so as to secure the flex-silk with which the billet was surrounded, and which bore the impression of three fleurs-de-lis. John then opened the billet with apparent agitation, which visibly and greatly increased when he had perused the contents, which were expressed in these words:

"Take heed to yourself for the Devil is unchained!"

The Prince turned as pale as death, looked first on the earth, and then up to heaven, like a man who has received news that sentence of execution has been passed upon him. Recovering from the first effects of his surprise, he took Waldemar Fitzurse and De Bracy aside, and put the billet into their hands successively.

"It means," he added, in a faltering voice, "that my brother Richard has obtained his freedom."

"This may be a false alarm, or a forged letter," said De Bracy.

"It is France's own hand and seal," replied Prince John.

"It is time, then," said Fitzurse, "to draw our party to a head, either at York, or some other central place. A few days later, and it will be indeed too late. Your highness must break short this present mummerly."

"The yeomen and commons," said De Bracy, "must not be dismissed discontented, for lack of their share in the sports."

"The day," said Waldemar, "is not yet very far spent—let the archers shoot a few rounds at the target, and the prize be adjudged. This will be an abundant fulfilment of the Prince's promises, so far as this herd of Saxon serfs is concerned."

"I thank thee, Waldemar," said the Prince; "thou remindest me, too, that I have a debt to pay to that insolent peasant who yesterday insulted our person. Our banquet also shall go forward to-night as we proposed. Were this my last hour of power, it should be an hour sacred to revenge and to pleasure—let new cares come with to-morrow's new day."

The sound of the trumpets soon recalled those spectators who had already begun to leave the field; and proclamation was made that Prince John, suddenly called by high and peremptory public duties, held himself obliged to discontinue the entertainments of to-morrow's festival: Nevertheless, that, unwilling so many good yeoman should depart without a trial of skill, he was pleased to appoint them, before leaving the ground, presently to execute the competition of archery intended for the morrow. To the best archer a prize was to be awarded, being a bugle-horn, mounted with silver, and a silken baldric richly ornamented with a medallion of St Hubert, the patron of silvan sport.

More than thirty yeomen at first presented themselves as competitors, several of whom were rangers and under-keepers in the royal forests of Needwood and Charnwood. When, however, the archers understood with whom they were to be matched, upwards of twenty withdrew themselves from the contest, unwilling to encounter the dishonour of almost certain defeat. For in those days the skill of each celebrated marksman was as well known for many miles round him, as the qualities of a horse trained at Newmarket are familiar to those who frequent that well-known meeting.

The diminished list of competitors for silvan fame still amounted to eight. Prince John stepped from his royal seat to view more nearly the persons of these chosen yeomen, several of whom wore the royal livery. Having satisfied his curiosity by this investigation, he looked for the object of his resentment, whom he observed standing on the same spot, and with the same composed countenance which he had exhibited upon the preceding day.

"Fellow," said Prince John, "I guessed by thy insolent babble that thou wert no true lover of the longbow, and I see thou darest not adventure thy skill among such merry-men as stand yonder."

"Under favour, sir," replied the yeoman, "I have another reason for refraining to shoot, besides the fearing discomfiture and disgrace."

"And what is thy other reason?" said Prince John, who, for some cause which perhaps he could not himself have explained, felt a painful curiosity respecting this individual.

"Because," replied the woodsman, "I know not if these yeomen and I are used to shoot at the same marks; and because, moreover, I know not how your Grace might relish the winning of a third prize by one who has unwittingly fallen under your displeasure."

Prince John coloured as he put the question, "What is thy name, yeoman?"

"Locksley," answered the yeoman.

"Then, Locksley," said Prince John, "thou shalt shoot in thy turn, when these yeomen have displayed their skill. If thou carriest the prize, I will add to it twenty nobles; but if thou lovest it, thou shalt be stript of thy Lincoln green, and scourged out of the lists with bowstrings, for a wordy and insolent braggart."

"And how if I refuse to shoot on such a wager?" said the yeoman.—"Your Grace's power, supported, as it is, by so many men-at-arms, may indeed easily strip and scourge me, but cannot compel me to bend or to draw my bow."

"If thou refusest my fair proffer," said the Prince, "the Provost of the lists shall cut thy bowstring, break thy bow and arrows, and expel thee from the presence as a faint-hearted craven."

"This is no fair chance you put on me, proud Prince," said the yeoman, "to compel me to peril myself against the best archers of Leicester And Staffordshire, under the penalty of infamy if they should overshoot me. Nevertheless, I will obey your pleasure."

"Look to him close, men-at-arms," said Prince John, "his heart is sinking; I am jealous lest he attempt to escape the trial.—And do you, good fellows, shoot boldly round; a buck and a butt of wine are ready for your refreshment in yonder tent, when the prize is won."

A target was placed at the upper end of the southern avenue which led to the lists. The contending archers took their station in turn, at the bottom of the southern access, the distance between that station and the mark allowing full distance for what was called a shot at rovers. The archers, having previously determined by lot their order of precedence, were to shoot each three shafts in succession. The sports were regulated by an officer of inferior rank, termed the Provost of the Games; for the high rank of the marshals of the lists would have been held degraded, had they condescended to superintend the sports of the yeomanry.

One by one the archers, stepping forward, delivered their shafts yeomanlike and bravely. Of twenty-four arrows, shot in succession, ten were fixed in the target, and the others ranged so near it, that, considering the distance of the mark, it was accounted good archery. Of the ten shafts which hit the target, two within the inner ring were shot by Hubert, a forester in the service of Malvoisin, who was accordingly pronounced victorious.

"Now, Locksley," said Prince John to the bold yeoman, with a bitter smile, "wilt thou try conclusions with Hubert, or wilt thou yield up bow, baldric, and quiver, to the Provost of the sports?"

"Sith it be no better," said Locksley, "I am content to try my fortune; on condition that when I have shot two shafts at yonder mark of Hubert's, he shall be bound to shoot one at that which I shall propose."

"That is but fair," answered Prince John, "and it shall not be refused thee.—If thou dost beat this braggart, Hubert, I will fill the bugle with silver-pennies for thee."

"A man can do but his best," answered Hubert; "but my grandsire drew a good long bow at Hastings, and I trust not to dishonour his memory."

The former target was now removed, and a fresh one of the same size placed in its room. Hubert, who, as victor in the first trial of skill, had the right to shoot first, took his aim with great deliberation, long measuring the distance with his eye, while he held in his hand his bended bow, with the arrow placed on the string. At length he made a step forward, and raising the bow at the full stretch of his left arm, till the centre or grasping-place was nigh level with his face, he drew his bowstring to his ear. The arrow whistled through the air, and lighted within the inner ring of the target, but not exactly in the centre.

"You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert," said his antagonist, bending his bow, "or that had been a better shot."

So saying, and without showing the least anxiety to pause upon his aim, Locksley stepped to the appointed station, and shot his arrow as carelessly in appearance as if he had not even looked at the mark. He was speaking almost at the instant that the shaft left the bowstring, yet it alighted in the target two inches nearer to the white spot which marked the centre than that of Hubert.

"By the light of heaven!" said Prince John to Hubert, "an thou suffer that runagate knave to overcome thee, thou art worthy of the gallows!"

Hubert had but one set speech for all occasions. "An your highness were to hang me," he said, "a man can but do his best. Nevertheless, my grandsire drew a good bow—"

"The foul fiend on thy grandsire and all his generation!" interrupted John, "shoot, knave, and shoot thy best, or it shall be the worse for thee!"

Thus exhorted, Hubert resumed his place, and not neglecting the caution which he had received from his adversary, he made the necessary allowance for a very light air of wind, which had just arisen, and shot so successfully that his arrow alighted in the very centre of the target.

"A Hubert! a Hubert!" shouted the populace, more interested in a known person than in a stranger. "In the clout!—in the clout!—a Hubert for ever!"

"Thou canst not mend that shot, Locksley," said the Prince, with an insulting smile.

"I will notch his shaft for him, however," replied Locksley.

And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, it lighted right upon that of his competitor, which it split to shivers. The people who stood around were so astonished at his wonderful dexterity, that they could not even give vent to their surprise in their usual clamour. "This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood," whispered the yeomen to each other; "such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain."

"And now," said Locksley, "I will crave your Grace's permission to plant such a mark as is used in the North Country; and welcome every brave yeoman who shall try a shot at it to win a smile from the bonny lass he loves best."

He then turned to leave the lists. "Let your guards attend me," he said, "if you please—I go but to cut a rod from the next willow-bush."

Prince John made a signal that some attendants should follow him in case of his escape: but the cry of "Shame! shame!" which burst from the multitude, induced him to alter his ungenerous purpose.

Locksley returned almost instantly with a willow wand about six feet in length, perfectly straight, and rather thicker than a man's thumb. He began to peel this with great composure, observing at the same time, that to ask a good woodsman to shoot at a target so broad as had hitherto been used, was to put shame upon his skill. "For his own part," he said, "and in the land where he was bred, men would as soon take for their mark King Arthur's round-table, which held sixty knights around it. A child of seven years old," he said, "might hit yonder target with a headless shaft; but," added he, walking deliberately to the other end of the lists, and sticking the willow wand upright in the ground, "he that hits that rod at five-score yards, I call him an archer fit to bear both bow and quiver before a king, an it were the stout King Richard himself."

"My grandsire," said Hubert, "drew a good bow at the battle of Hastings, and never shot at such a mark in his life—and neither will I. If this yeoman can cleave that rod, I give him the bucklers—or rather, I yield to the devil that is in his jerkin, and not to any human skill; a man can but do his best, and I will not shoot where I am sure to miss. I might as well shoot at the edge of our parson's whittle, or at a wheat straw, or at a sunbeam, as at a twinkling white streak which I can hardly see."

"Cowardly dog!" said Prince John.—"Sirrah Locksley, do thou shoot; but, if thou hittest such a mark, I will say thou art the first man ever did so. However it be, thou shalt not crow over us with a mere show of superior skill."

"I will do my best, as Hubert says," answered Locksley; "no man can do more."

So saying, he again bent his bow, but on the present occasion looked with attention to his weapon, and changed the string, which he thought was no longer truly round, having been a little frayed by the two former shots. He then took his aim with some deliberation, and the multitude awaited the event in breathless silence. The archer vindicated their opinion of his skill: his arrow split the willow rod against which it was aimed. A jubilee of acclamations followed; and even Prince John, in admiration of Locksley's skill, lost for an instant his dislike to his person. "These twenty nobles," he said, "which, with the bugle, thou hast fairly won, are thine own; we will make them fifty, if thou wilt take livery and service with us as a yeoman of our body guard, and be near to our person. For never did so strong a hand bend a bow, or so true an eye direct a shaft."

"Pardon me, noble Prince," said Locksley; "but I have vowed, that if ever I take service, it should be with your royal brother King Richard. These twenty nobles I leave to Hubert, who has this day drawn as brave a bow as his grandsire did at Hastings. Had his modesty not refused the trial, he would have hit the wand as well I."

Hubert shook his head as he received with reluctance the bounty of the stranger, and Locksley, anxious to escape further observation, mixed with the crowd, and was seen no more.

The victorious archer would not perhaps have escaped John's attention so easily, had not that Prince had other subjects of anxious and more important meditation pressing upon his mind at that instant. He called upon his chamberlain as he gave the signal for retiring from the lists, and commanded him instantly to gallop to Ashby, and seek out Isaac the Jew. "Tell the dog," he said, "to send me, before sun-down, two thousand crowns. He knows the security; but thou mayst show him this ring for a token. The rest of the money must be paid at York within six days. If he neglects, I will have the unbelieving villain's head. Look that thou pass him not on the way; for the circumcised slave was displaying his stolen finery amongst us."

So saying, the Prince resumed his horse, and returned to Ashby, the whole crowd breaking up and dispersing upon his retreat.

CHAPTER XIV

*In rough magnificence array'd,
When ancient Chivalry display'd
The pomp of her heroic games,
And crested chiefs and tissued dames
Assembled, at the clarion's call,
In some proud castle's high arch'd hall.
—Warton*

Prince John held his high festival in the Castle of Ashby. This was not the same building of which the stately ruins still interest the traveller, and which was erected at a later period by the Lord Hastings, High Chamberlain of England, one of the first victims of the tyranny of Richard the Third, and yet better known as one of Shakspeare's characters than by his historical fame. The castle and town of Ashby, at this time, belonged to Roger de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, who, during the period of our history, was absent in the Holy Land. Prince John, in the meanwhile, occupied his castle, and disposed of his domains without scruple; and seeking at present to dazzle men's eyes by his hospitality and magnificence, had given orders for great preparations, in order to render the banquet as splendid as possible.

The purveyors of the Prince, who exercised on this and other occasions the full authority of royalty, had swept the country of all that could be collected which was esteemed fit for their master's table. Guests also were invited in great numbers; and in the necessity in which he then found himself of courting popularity, Prince John had extended his invitation to a few distinguished Saxon and Danish families, as well as to the Norman nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood. However despised and degraded on ordinary occasions, the great numbers of the Anglo-Saxons must necessarily render them formidable in the civil commotions which seemed approaching, and it was an obvious point of policy to secure popularity with their leaders.

It was accordingly the Prince's intention, which he for some time maintained, to treat these unwonted guests with a courtesy to which they had been little accustomed. But although no man with less scruple made his ordinary habits and feelings bend to his interest, it was the misfortune of this Prince, that his levity and petulance were perpetually breaking out, and undoing all that had been gained by his previous dissimulation.

Of this fickle temper he gave a memorable example in Ireland, when sent thither by his father, Henry the Second, with the purpose of buying golden opinions of the inhabitants of that new and important acquisition to the English crown. Upon this occasion the Irish chieftains contended which should first offer to the young Prince their loyal homage and the kiss of peace. But, instead of receiving their salutations with courtesy, John and his petulant attendants could not resist the temptation of pulling the long beards of the Irish chieftains; a conduct which, as might have been expected, was highly resented by these insulted dignitaries, and produced fatal consequences to the English domination in Ireland. It is necessary to keep these inconsistencies of John's character in view, that the reader may understand his conduct during the present evening.

In execution of the resolution which he had formed during his cooler moments, Prince John received Cedric and Athelstane with distinguished courtesy, and expressed his disappointment, without resentment, when the indisposition of Rowena was alleged by the former as a reason for her not attending upon his gracious summons. Cedric and Athelstane were both dressed in the ancient Saxon garb, which, although not unhandsome in itself, and in the present instance composed of costly materials, was so remote in shape and appearance from that of the other guests, that Prince John took great credit to himself with Waldemar Fitzurse for refraining from laughter at a sight which the fashion of the day rendered ridiculous. Yet, in the eye of sober judgment, the short close tunic and long mantle of the Saxons was a more graceful, as well as a more convenient dress, than the garb of the Normans, whose under garment was a long doublet, so loose as to resemble a shirt or waggoner's frock, covered by a cloak of scanty dimensions, neither fit to defend the wearer from cold or from rain, and the only purpose of which appeared to be to display as much fur, embroidery, and jewellery work, as the ingenuity of the tailor could contrive to lay upon it. The Emperor Charlemagne, in whose reign they were first introduced, seems to have been very sensible of the inconveniences arising from the fashion of this garment. "In Heaven's name," said he, "to what purpose serve these abridged cloaks? If we are in bed they are no cover, on horseback they are no protection from the wind and rain, and when seated, they do not guard our legs from the damp or the frost."

Nevertheless, spite of this imperial objurgation, the short cloaks continued in fashion down to the time of which we treat, and particularly among the princes of the House of Anjou. They were therefore in universal use among Prince John's courtiers; and the long mantle, which formed the upper garment of the Saxons, was held in proportional derision.

The guests were seated at a table which groaned under the quantity of good cheer. The numerous cooks who attended on the Prince's progress, having exerted all their art in varying the forms in which the ordinary provisions were served up, had succeeded almost as well as the modern professors of the culinary art in rendering them perfectly unlike their natural appearance. Besides these dishes of domestic origin, there were various delicacies brought from foreign parts, and a quantity of rich pastry, as well as of the simnel-bread and wastle cakes, which were only used at the tables of the highest nobility. The banquet was crowned with the richest wines, both foreign and domestic.

But, though luxurious, the Norman nobles were not generally speaking an intemperate race. While indulging themselves in the pleasures of the table, they aimed at delicacy, but avoided excess, and were apt to attribute gluttony and drunkenness to the vanquished Saxons, as vices peculiar to their inferior station. Prince John, indeed, and those who courted his pleasure by imitating his foibles, were apt to indulge to excess in the pleasures of the trencher and the goblet; and indeed it is well known that his death was occasioned by a surfeit upon peaches and new ale. His conduct, however, was an exception to the general manners of his countrymen.

With sly gravity, interrupted only by private signs to each other, the Norman knights and nobles beheld the ruder demeanour of Athelstane and Cedric at a banquet, to the form and fashion of which they were unaccustomed. And while their manners were thus the subject of sarcastic observation, the untaught Saxons unwittingly transgressed several of the arbitrary rules established for the regulation of society. Now, it is well known, that a man may with more impunity be guilty of an actual breach either of real good breeding or of good morals, than appear ignorant of the most minute point of fashionable etiquette. Thus Cedric, who dried his hands with a towel, instead of suffering the moisture to exhale by waving them gracefully in the air, incurred more ridicule than his companion Athelstane, when he swallowed to his own single share the whole of a large pasty composed of the most exquisite foreign delicacies, and termed at that time a "Karum-Pie". When, however, it was discovered, by a serious cross-examination, that the Thane of Coningsburgh (or Franklin, as the Normans termed him) had no idea what he had been devouring, and that he had taken the contents of the Karum-pie for larks and pigeons, whereas they were in fact beccaficoes and nightingales, his ignorance brought him in for an ample share of the ridicule which would have been more justly bestowed on his gluttony.

The long feast had at length its end; and, while the goblet circulated freely, men talked of the feats of the preceding tournament,—of the unknown victor in the archery games, of the Black Knight, whose self-denial had induced him to withdraw from the honours he had won,—and of the gallant Ivanhoe, who had so dearly bought the honours of the day. The topics were treated with military frankness, and the jest and laugh went round the hall. The brow of Prince John alone was overclouded during these discussions; some overpowering care seemed agitating his mind, and it was only when he received occasional hints from his attendants, that he seemed to take interest in what was passing around him. On such occasions he would start up, quaff a cup of wine as if to raise his spirits, and then mingle in the conversation by some observation made abruptly or at random.

"We drink this beaker," said he, "to the health of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, champion of this Passage of Arms, and grieve that his wound renders him absent from our board—Let all fill to the pledge, and especially Cedric of Rotherwood, the worthy father of a son so promising."

"No, my lord," replied Cedric, standing up, and placing on the table his untasted cup, "I yield not the name of son to the disobedient youth, who at once despises my commands, and relinquishes the manners and customs of his fathers."

"'Tis impossible," cried Prince John, with well-feigned astonishment, "that so gallant a knight should be an unworthy or disobedient son!"

"Yet, my lord," answered Cedric, "so it is with this Wilfred. He left my homely dwelling to mingle with the gay nobility of your brother's court, where he learned to do those tricks of horsemanship which you prize so highly. He left it contrary to my wish and command; and in the days of Alfred that would have been termed disobedience—ay, and a crime severely punishable."

"Alas!" replied Prince John, with a deep sigh of affected sympathy, "since your son was a follower of my unhappy brother, it need not be enquired where or from whom he learned the lesson of filial disobedience."

Thus spake Prince John, wilfully forgetting, that of all the sons of Henry the Second, though no one was free from the charge, he himself had been most distinguished for rebellion and ingratitude to his father.

"I think," said he, after a moment's pause, "that my brother proposed to confer upon his favourite the rich manor of Ivanhoe."

"He did endow him with it," answered Cedric; "nor is it my least quarrel with my son, that he stooped to hold, as a feudal vassal, the very domains which his fathers possessed in free and independent right."

"We shall then have your willing sanction, good Cedric," said Prince John, "to confer this fief upon a person whose dignity will not be diminished by holding land of the British crown.—Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," he said, turning towards that Baron, "I trust you will so keep the goodly Barony of Ivanhoe, that Sir Wilfred shall not incur his father's farther displeasure by again entering upon that fief."

"By St Anthony!" answered the black-brow'd giant, "I will consent that your highness shall hold me a Saxon, if either Cedric or Wilfred, or the best that ever bore English blood, shall wrench from me the gift with which your highness has graced me."

"Whoever shall call thee Saxon, Sir Baron," replied Cedric, offended at a mode of expression by which the Normans frequently expressed their habitual contempt of the English, "will do thee an honour as great as it is undeserved."

Front-de-Boeuf would have replied, but Prince John's petulance and levity got the start.

"Assuredly," said he, "my lords, the noble Cedric speaks truth; and his race may claim precedence over us as much in the length of their pedigrees as in the longitude of their cloaks."

"They go before us indeed in the field—as deer before dogs," said Malvoisin.

"And with good right may they go before us—forget not," said the Prior Aymer, "the superior decency and decorum of their manners."

"Their singular abstemiousness and temperance," said De Bracy, forgetting the plan which promised him a Saxon bride.

"Together with the courage and conduct," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "by which they distinguished themselves at Hastings and elsewhere."

While, with smooth and smiling cheek, the courtiers, each in turn, followed their Prince's example, and aimed a shaft of ridicule at Cedric, the face of the Saxon became inflamed with passion, and he glanced his eyes fiercely from one to another, as if the quick succession of so many injuries had prevented his replying to them in turn; or, like a baited bull, who, surrounded by his tormentors, is at a loss to choose from among them the immediate object of his revenge. At length he spoke, in a voice half choked with passion; and, addressing himself to Prince John as the head and front of the offence which he had received, "Whatever," he said, "have been the follies and vices of our race, a Saxon would have been held 'nidering'," 21 (the most emphatic term for abject worthlessness,) "who should in his own hall, and while his own wine-cup passed, have treated, or suffered to be treated, an unoffending guest as your highness has this day beheld me used; and whatever was the misfortune of our fathers on the field of Hastings, those may at least be silent," here he looked at Front-de-Boeuf and the Templar, "who have within these few hours once and again lost saddle and stirrup before the lance of a Saxon."

"By my faith, a biting jest!" said Prince John. "How like you it, sirs?—Our Saxon subjects rise in spirit and courage; become shrewd in wit, and bold in bearing, in these unsettled times—What say ye, my lords?—By this good light, I hold it best to take our galleys, and return to Normandy in time."

"For fear of the Saxons?" said De Bracy, laughing; "we should need no weapon but our hunting spears to bring these boars to bay."

"A truce with your raillery, Sir Knights," said Fitzurse;—"and it were well," he added, addressing the Prince, "that your highness should assure the worthy Cedric there is no insult intended him by jests, which must sound but harshly in the ear of a stranger."

"Insult?" answered Prince John, resuming his courtesy of demeanour; "I trust it will not be thought that I could mean, or permit any, to be offered in my presence. Here! I fill my cup to Cedric himself, since he refuses to pledge his son's health."

The cup went round amid the well-dissembled applause of the courtiers, which, however, failed to make the impression on the mind of the Saxon that had been designed. He was not naturally acute of perception, but those too much undervalued his understanding who deemed that this flattering compliment would obliterate the sense of the prior insult. He was silent, however, when the royal pledge again passed round, "To Sir Athelstane of Coningsburgh."

The knight made his obeisance, and showed his sense of the honour by draining a huge goblet in answer to it.

"And now, sirs," said Prince John, who began to be warmed with the wine which he had drank, "having done justice to our Saxon guests, we will pray of them some requital to our courtesy.—Worthy Thane," he continued, addressing Cedric, "may we pray you to name to us some Norman whose mention may least sully your mouth, and to wash down with a goblet of wine all bitterness which the sound may leave behind it?"

Fitzurse arose while Prince John spoke, and gliding behind the seat of the Saxon, whispered to him not to omit the opportunity of putting an end to unkindness betwixt the two races, by naming Prince John. The Saxon replied not to this politic insinuation, but, rising up, and filling his cup to the brim, he addressed Prince John in these words: "Your highness has required that I should name a Norman deserving to be remembered at our banquet. This, perchance, is a hard task, since it calls on the slave to sing the praises of the master—upon the vanquished, while pressed by all the evils of conquest, to sing the praises of the conqueror. Yet I will name a Norman—the first in arms and in place—the best and the noblest of his race. And the lips that shall refuse to pledge me to his well-earned fame, I term false and dishonoured, and will so maintain them with my life.—I quaff this goblet to the health of Richard the Lion-hearted!"

Prince John, who had expected that his own name would have closed the Saxon's speech, started when that of his injured brother was so unexpectedly introduced. He raised mechanically the wine-cup to his lips, then instantly set it down, to view the demeanour of the company at this unexpected proposal, which many of them felt it as unsafe to oppose as to comply with. Some of them, ancient and experienced courtiers, closely imitated the example of the Prince himself, raising the goblet to their lips, and again replacing it before them. There were many who, with a more generous feeling, exclaimed, "Long live King Richard! and may he be speedily restored to us!" And some few, among whom were Front-de-Boeuf and the Templar, in sullen disdain suffered their goblets to stand untasted before them. But no man ventured directly to gainsay a pledge filled to the health of the reigning monarch.

Having enjoyed his triumph for about a minute, Cedric said to his companion, "Up, noble Athelstane! we have remained here long enough, since we have requited the hospitable courtesy of Prince John's banquet. Those who wish to know further of our rude Saxon manners must henceforth seek us in the homes of our fathers, since we have seen enough of royal banquets, and enough of Norman courtesy."

So saying, he arose and left the banqueting room, followed by Athelstane, and by several other guests, who, partaking of the Saxon lineage, held themselves insulted by the sarcasms of Prince John and his courtiers.

"By the bones of St Thomas," said Prince John, as they retreated, "the Saxon churls have borne off the best of the day, and have retreated with triumph!"

"Conclamatum est, poculatum est," said Prior Aymer; "we have drunk and we have shouted,—it were time we left our wine flagons."

"The monk hath some fair penitent to shrive to-night, that he is in such a hurry to depart," said De Bracy.

"Not so, Sir Knight," replied the Abbot; "but I must move several miles forward this evening upon my homeward journey."

"They are breaking up," said the Prince in a whisper to Fitzurse; "their fears anticipate the event, and this coward Prior is the first to shrink from me."

"Fear not, my lord," said Waldemar; "I will show him such reasons as shall induce him to join us when we hold our meeting at York.—Sir Prior," he said, "I must speak with you in private, before you mount your palfrey."

The other guests were now fast dispersing, with the exception of those immediately attached to Prince John's faction, and his retinue.

"This, then, is the result of your advice," said the Prince, turning an angry countenance upon Fitzurse; "that I should be bearded at my own board by a drunken Saxon churl, and that, on the mere sound of my brother's name, men should fall off from me as if I had the leprosy?"

"Have patience, sir," replied his counsellor; "I might retort your accusation, and blame the inconsiderate levity which foiled my design, and misled your own better judgment. But this is no time for recrimination. De Bracy and I will instantly go among these shuffling cowards, and convince them they have gone too far to recede."

"It will be in vain," said Prince John, pacing the apartment with disordered steps, and expressing himself with an agitation to which the wine he had drank partly contributed—"It will be in vain—they have seen the handwriting on the wall—they have marked the paw of the lion in the sand—they have heard his approaching roar shake the wood—nothing will reanimate their courage."

"Would to God," said Fitzurse to De Bracy, "that aught could reanimate his own! His brother's very name is an ague to him. Unhappy are the counsellors of a Prince, who wants fortitude and perseverance alike in good and in evil!"

CHAPTER XV

And yet he thinks,—ha, ha, ha, ha,—he thinks

I am the tool and servant of his will.

Well, let it be; through all the maze of trouble

His plots and base oppression must create,

I'll shape myself a way to higher things,

And who will say 'tis wrong?

—Basil, a Tragedy

No spider ever took more pains to repair the shattered meshes of his web, than did Waldemar Fitzurse to reunite and combine the scattered members of Prince John's cabal. Few of these were attached to him from inclination, and none from personal regard. It was therefore necessary, that Fitzurse should open to them new prospects of advantage, and remind them of those which they at present enjoyed. To the young and wild nobles, he held out the prospect of unpunished license and uncontrolled revelry; to the ambitious, that of power, and to the covetous, that of increased wealth and extended domains. The leaders of the mercenaries received a donation in gold; an argument the most persuasive to their minds, and without which all others would have proved in vain. Promises were still more liberally distributed than money by this active agent; and, in fine, nothing was left undone that could determine the wavering, or animate the disheartened. The return of King Richard he spoke of as an event altogether beyond the reach of probability; yet, when he observed, from the doubtful looks and uncertain answers which he received, that this was the apprehension by which the minds of his accomplices were most haunted, he boldly treated that event, should it really take place, as one which ought not to alter their political calculations.

"If Richard returns," said Fitzurse, "he returns to enrich his needy and impoverished crusaders at the expense of those who did not follow him to the Holy Land. He returns to call to a fearful reckoning, those who, during his absence, have done aught that can be construed offence or encroachment upon either the laws of the land or the privileges of the crown. He returns to avenge upon the Orders of the Temple and the Hospital, the preference which they showed to Philip of France during the wars in the Holy Land. He returns, in fine, to punish as a rebel every adherent of his brother Prince John. Are ye afraid of his power?" continued the artful confidant of that Prince, "we acknowledge him a strong and valiant knight; but these are not the days of King Arthur, when a champion could encounter an army. If Richard indeed comes back, it must be alone,—unfollowed—unfriended. The bones of his gallant army have whitened the sands of Palestine. The few of his followers who have returned have straggled hither like this Wilfred of Ivanhoe, beggared and broken men.—And what talk ye of Richard's right of birth?" he proceeded, in answer to those who objected scruples on that head. "Is Richard's title of primogeniture more decidedly certain than that of Duke Robert of Normandy, the Conqueror's eldest son? And yet William the Red, and Henry, his second and third brothers, were successively preferred to him by the voice of the nation, Robert had every merit which can be pleaded for Richard; he was a bold knight, a good leader, generous to his friends and to the church, and, to crown the whole, a crusader and a conqueror of the Holy Sepulchre; and yet he died a blind and miserable prisoner in the Castle of Cardiff, because he opposed himself to the will of the people, who chose that he should not rule over them. It is our right," he said, "to choose from the blood royal the prince who is best qualified to hold the supreme power—that is," said he, correcting himself, "him whose election will best promote the interests of the nobility. In personal qualifications," he added, "it was possible that Prince John might be inferior to his brother Richard; but when it was considered that the latter returned with the sword of vengeance in his hand, while the former held out rewards, immunities, privileges, wealth, and honours, it could not be doubted which was the king whom in wisdom the nobility were called on to support."

These, and many more arguments, some adapted to the peculiar circumstances of those whom he addressed, had the expected weight with the nobles of Prince John's faction. Most of them consented to attend the proposed meeting at York, for the purpose of making general arrangements for placing the crown upon the head of Prince John.

It was late at night, when, worn out and exhausted with his various exertions, however gratified with the result, Fitzurse, returning to the Castle of Ashby, met with De Bracy, who had exchanged his banqueting garments for a short green kirtle, with hose of the same cloth and colour, a leathern cap or head-piece, a short sword, a horn slung over his shoulder, a long bow in his hand, and a bundle of arrows stuck in his belt. Had Fitzurse met this figure in an outer apartment, he

would have passed him without notice, as one of the yeomen of the guard; but finding him in the inner hall, he looked at him with more attention, and recognised the Norman knight in the dress of an English yeoman.

"What mummerly is this, De Bracy?" said Fitzurse, somewhat angrily; "is this a time for Christmas gambols and quaint maskings, when the fate of our master, Prince John, is on the very verge of decision? Why hast thou not been, like me, among these heartless cravens, whom the very name of King Richard terrifies, as it is said to do the children of the Saracens?"

"I have been attending to mine own business," answered De Bracy calmly, "as you, Fitzurse, have been minding yours."

"I minding mine own business!" echoed Waldemar; "I have been engaged in that of Prince John, our joint patron."

"As if thou hadst any other reason for that, Waldemar," said De Bracy, "than the promotion of thine own individual interest? Come, Fitzurse, we know each other—ambition is thy pursuit, pleasure is mine, and they become our different ages. Of Prince John thou thinkest as I do; that he is too weak to be a determined monarch, too tyrannical to be an easy monarch, too insolent and presumptuous to be a popular monarch, and too fickle and timid to be long a monarch of any kind. But he is a monarch by whom Fitzurse and De Bracy hope to rise and thrive; and therefore you aid him with your policy, and I with the lances of my Free Companions."

"A hopeful auxiliary," said Fitzurse impatiently; "playing the fool in the very moment of utter necessity.—What on earth dost thou purpose by this absurd disguise at a moment so urgent?"

"To get me a wife," answered De Bracy coolly, "after the manner of the tribe of Benjamin."

"The tribe of Benjamin?" said Fitzurse; "I comprehend thee not."

"Wert thou not in presence yester-even," said De Bracy, "when we heard the Prior Aymer tell us a tale in reply to the romance which was sung by the Minstrel?—He told how, long since in Palestine, a deadly feud arose between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of the Israelitish nation; and how they cut to pieces well-nigh all the chivalry of that tribe; and how they swore by our blessed Lady, that they would not permit those who remained to marry in their lineage; and how they became grieved for their vow, and sent to consult his holiness the Pope how they might be absolved from it; and how, by the advice of the Holy Father, the youth of the tribe of Benjamin carried off from a superb tournament all the ladies who were there present, and thus won them wives without the consent either of their brides or their brides' families."

"I have heard the story," said Fitzurse, "though either the Prior or thou has made some singular alterations in date and circumstances."

"I tell thee," said De Bracy, "that I mean to purvey me a wife after the fashion of the tribe of Benjamin; which is as much as to say, that in this same equipment I will fall upon that herd of Saxon bullocks, who have this night left the castle, and carry off from them the lovely Rowena."

"Art thou mad, De Bracy?" said Fitzurse. "Bethink thee that, though the men be Saxons, they are rich and powerful, and regarded with the more respect by their countrymen, that wealth and honour are but the lot of few of Saxon descent."

"And should belong to none," said De Bracy; "the work of the Conquest should be completed."

"This is no time for it at least," said Fitzurse "the approaching crisis renders the favour of the multitude indispensable, and Prince John cannot refuse justice to any one who injures their favourites."

"Let him grant it, if he dare," said De Bracy; "he will soon see the difference betwixt the support of such a lusty lot of spears as mine, and that of a heartless mob of Saxon churls. Yet I mean no immediate discovery of myself. Seem I not in this garb as bold a forester as ever blew horn? The blame of the violence shall rest with the outlaws of the Yorkshire forests. I have sure spies on the Saxon's motions—To-night they sleep in the convent of Saint Wittol, or Withold, or whatever they call that churl of a Saxon Saint at Burton-on-Trent. Next day's march brings them within our reach, and, falcon-ways, we swoop on them at once. Presently after I will appear in mine own shape, play the courteous knight, rescue the unfortunate and afflicted fair one from the hands of the rude ravishers, conduct her to Front-de-Boeuf's Castle, or to Normandy, if it should be necessary, and produce her not again to her kindred until she be the bride and dame of Maurice de Bracy."

"A marvellously sage plan," said Fitzurse, "and, as I think, not entirely of thine own device.—Come, be frank, De Bracy, who aided thee in the invention? and who is to assist in the execution? for, as I think, thine own band lies as far off as York."

"Marry, if thou must needs know," said De Bracy, "it was the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert that shaped out the enterprise, which the adventure of the men of Benjamin suggested to me. He is to aid me in the onslaught, and he and his followers will personate the outlaws, from whom my valorous arm is, after changing my garb, to rescue the lady."

"By my halidome," said Fitzurse, "the plan was worthy of your united wisdom! and thy prudence, De Bracy, is most especially manifested in the project of leaving the lady in the hands of thy worthy confederate. Thou mayst, I think, succeed in taking her from her Saxon friends, but how thou wilt rescue her afterwards from the clutches of Bois-Guilbert seems considerably more doubtful—He is a falcon well accustomed to pounce on a partridge, and to hold his prey fast."

"He is a Templar," said De Bracy, "and cannot therefore rival me in my plan of wedding this heiress;—and to attempt aught dishonourable against the intended bride of De Bracy—By Heaven! were he a whole Chapter of his Order in his single person, he dared not do me such an injury!"

"Then since nought that I can say," said Fitzurse, "will put this folly from thy imagination, (for well I know the obstinacy of thy disposition,) at least waste as little time as possible—let not thy folly be lasting as well as untimely."

"I tell thee," answered De Bracy, "that it will be the work of a few hours, and I shall be at York—at the head of my daring and valorous fellows, as ready to support any bold design as thy policy can be to form one.—But I hear my comrades assembling, and the steeds stamping and neighing in the outer court.—Farewell.—I go, like a true knight, to win the smiles of beauty."

"Like a true knight?" repeated Fitzurse, looking after him; "like a fool, I should say, or like a child, who will leave the most serious and needful occupation, to chase the down of the thistle that drives past him.—But it is with such tools that I must work;—and for whose advantage?—For that of a Prince as unwise as he is profligate, and as likely to be an ungrateful master as he has already proved a rebellious son and an unnatural brother.—But he—he, too, is but one of the tools with which I labour; and, proud as he is, should he presume to separate his interest from mine, this is a secret which he shall soon learn."

The meditations of the statesman were here interrupted by the voice of the Prince from an interior apartment, calling out, "Noble Waldemar Fitzurse!" and, with bonnet doffed, the future Chancellor (for to such high preferment did the wily Norman aspire) hastened to receive the orders of the future sovereign.

CHAPTER XVI

*Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend hermit grew;
The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well
Remote from man, with God he pass'd his days,
Prayer all his business—all his pleasure praise.
—Parnell*

The reader cannot have forgotten that the event of the tournament was decided by the exertions of an unknown knight, whom, on account of the passive and indifferent conduct which he had manifested on the former part of the day, the spectators had entitled, "Le Noir Faineant". This knight had left the field abruptly when the victory was achieved; and when he was called upon to receive the reward of his valour, he was nowhere to be found. In the meantime, while summoned

by heralds and by trumpets, the knight was holding his course northward, avoiding all frequented paths, and taking the shortest road through the woodlands. He paused for the night at a small hostelry lying out of the ordinary route, where, however, he obtained from a wandering minstrel news of the event of the tourney. On the next morning the knight departed early, with the intention of making a long journey; the condition of his horse, which he had carefully spared during the preceding morning, being such as enabled him to travel far without the necessity of much repose. Yet his purpose was baffled by the devious paths through which he rode, so that when evening closed upon him, he only found himself on the frontiers of the West Riding of Yorkshire. By this time both horse and man required refreshment, and it became necessary, moreover, to look out for some place in which they might spend the night, which was now fast approaching.

The place where the traveller found himself seemed unpropitious for obtaining either shelter or refreshment, and he was likely to be reduced to the usual expedient of knights-errant, who, on such occasions, turned their horses to graze, and laid themselves down to meditate on their lady-mistress, with an oak-tree for a canopy. But the Black Knight either had no mistress to meditate upon, or, being as indifferent in love as he seemed to be in war, was not sufficiently occupied by passionate reflections upon her beauty and cruelty, to be able to parry the effects of fatigue and hunger, and suffer love to act as a substitute for the solid comforts of a bed and supper. He felt dissatisfied, therefore, when, looking around, he found himself deeply involved in woods, through which indeed there were many open glades, and some paths, but such as seemed only formed by the numerous herds of cattle which grazed in the forest, or by the animals of chase, and the hunters who made prey of them.

The sun, by which the knight had chiefly directed his course, had now sunk behind the Derbyshire hills on his left, and every effort which he might make to pursue his journey was as likely to lead him out of his road as to advance him on his route. After having in vain endeavoured to select the most beaten path, in hopes it might lead to the cottage of some herdsman, or the silvan lodge of a forester, and having repeatedly found himself totally unable to determine on a choice, the knight resolved to trust to the sagacity of his horse; experience having, on former occasions, made him acquainted with the wonderful talent possessed by these animals for extricating themselves and their riders on such emergencies.

The good steed, grievously fatigued with so long a day's journey under a rider cased in mail, had no sooner found, by the slackened reins, that he was abandoned to his own guidance, than he seemed to assume new strength and spirit; and whereas, formerly he had scarce replied to the spur, otherwise than by a groan, he now, as if proud of the confidence reposed in him, pricked up his ears, and assumed, of his own accord, a more lively motion. The path which the animal adopted rather turned off from the course pursued by the knight during the day; but as the horse seemed confident in his choice, the rider abandoned himself to his discretion.

He was justified by the event; for the footpath soon after appeared a little wider and more worn, and the tinkle of a small bell gave the knight to understand that he was in the vicinity of some chapel or hermitage.

Accordingly, he soon reached an open plat of turf, on the opposite side of which, a rock, rising abruptly from a gently sloping plain, offered its grey and weatherbeaten front to the traveller. Ivy mantled its sides in some places, and in others oaks and holly bushes, whose roots found nourishment in the cliffs of the crag, waved over the precipices below, like the plumage of the warrior over his steel helmet, giving grace to that whose chief expression was terror. At the bottom of the rock, and leaning, as it were, against it, was constructed a rude hut, built chiefly of the trunks of trees felled in the neighbouring forest, and secured against the weather by having its crevices stuffed with moss mingled with clay. The stem of a young fir-tree lopped of its branches, with a piece of wood tied across near the top, was planted upright by the door, as a rude emblem of the holy cross. At a little distance on the right hand, a fountain of the purest water trickled out of the rock, and was received in a hollow stone, which labour had formed into a rustic basin. Escaping from thence, the stream murmured down the descent by a channel which its course had long worn, and so wandered through the little plain to lose itself in the neighbouring wood.

Beside this fountain were the ruins of a very small chapel, of which the roof had partly fallen in. The building, when entire, had never been above sixteen feet long by twelve feet in breadth, and the roof, low in proportion, rested upon four concentric arches which sprung from the four corners of the building, each supported upon a short and heavy pillar. The ribs of two of these arches remained, though the roof had fallen down betwixt them; over the others it remained entire. The entrance to this ancient place of devotion was under a very low round arch, ornamented by several courses of that zig-zag moulding, resembling shark's teeth, which appears so often in the more ancient Saxon architecture. A belfry rose above the porch on four small pillars, within which hung the green and weatherbeaten bell, the feeble sounds of which had been some time before heard by the Black Knight.

The whole peaceful and quiet scene lay glimmering in twilight before the eyes of the traveller, giving him good assurance of lodging for the night; since it was a special duty of those hermits who dwelt in the woods, to exercise hospitality towards benighted or bewildered passengers.

Accordingly, the knight took no time to consider minutely the particulars which we have detailed, but thanking Saint Julian (the patron of travellers) who had sent him good harbourage, he leaped from his horse and assailed the door of the hermitage with the butt of his lance, in order to arouse attention and gain admittance. It was some time before he obtained any answer, and the reply, when made, was unpropitious.

"Pass on, whosoever thou art," was the answer given by a deep hoarse voice from within the hut, "and disturb not the servant of God and St Dunstan in his evening devotions."

"Worthy father," answered the knight, "here is a poor wanderer bewildered in these woods, who gives thee the opportunity of exercising thy charity and hospitality."

"Good brother," replied the inhabitant of the hermitage, "it has pleased Our Lady and St Dunstan to destine me for the object of those virtues, instead of the exercise thereof. I have no provisions here which even a dog would share with me, and a horse of any tenderness of nurture would despise my couch—pass therefore on thy way, and God speed thee."

"But how," replied the knight, "is it possible for me to find my way through such a wood as this, when darkness is coming on? I pray you, reverend father as you are a Christian, to undo your door, and at least point out to me my road."

"And I pray you, good Christian brother," replied the anchorite, "to disturb me no more. You have already interrupted one 'pater', two 'aves', and a 'credo', which I, miserable sinner that I am, should, according to my vow, have said before moonrise."

"The road—the road!" vociferated the knight, "give me directions for the road, if I am to expect no more from thee."

"The road," replied the hermit, "is easy to hit. The path from the wood leads to a morass, and from thence to a ford, which, as the rains have abated, may now be passable. When thou hast crossed the ford, thou wilt take care of thy footing up the left bank, as it is somewhat precipitous; and the path, which hangs over the river, has lately, as I learn, (for I seldom leave the duties of my chapel,) given way in sundry places. Thou wilt then keep straight forward—"

"A broken path—a precipice—a ford, and a morass!" said the knight interrupting him,—"Sir Hermit, if you were the holiest that ever wore beard or told bead, you shall scarce prevail on me to hold this road to-night. I tell thee, that thou, who livest by the charity of the country—ill deserved, as I doubt it is—hast no right to refuse shelter to the wayfarer when in distress. Either open the door quickly, or, by the rood, I will beat it down and make entry for myself."

"Friend wayfarer," replied the hermit, "be not importunate; if thou putttest me to use the carnal weapon in mine own defence, it will be e'en the worse for you."

At this moment a distant noise of barking and growling, which the traveller had for some time heard, became extremely loud and furious, and made the knight suppose that the hermit, alarmed by his threat of making forcible entry, had called the dogs who made this clamour to aid him in his defence, out of some inner recess in which they had been kennelled. Incensed at this preparation on the hermit's part for making good his inhospitable purpose, the knight struck the door so furiously with his foot, that posts as well as staples shook with violence.

The anchorite, not caring again to expose his door to a similar shock, now called out aloud, "Patience, patience—spare thy strength, good traveller, and I will presently undo the door, though, it may be, my doing so will be little to thy pleasure."

The door accordingly was opened; and the hermit, a large, strong-built man, in his sackcloth gown and hood, girt with a rope of rushes, stood before the knight. He had in one hand a lighted torch, or link, and in the other a baton of crab-tree, so thick and heavy, that it might well be termed a club. Two large shaggy dogs, half greyhound half mastiff, stood ready to rush upon the traveller as soon as the door should be opened. But when the torch glanced upon the lofty crest and

golden spurs of the knight, who stood without, the hermit, altering probably his original intentions, repressed the rage of his auxiliaries, and, changing his tone to a sort of churlish courtesy, invited the knight to enter his hut, making excuse for his unwillingness to open his lodge after sunset, by alleging the multitude of robbers and outlaws who were abroad, and who gave no honour to Our Lady or St Dunstan, nor to those holy men who spent life in their service.

"The poverty of your cell, good father," said the knight, looking around him, and seeing nothing but a bed of leaves, a crucifix rudely carved in oak, a missal, with a rough-hewn table and two stools, and one or two clumsy articles of furniture—"the poverty of your cell should seem a sufficient defence against any risk of thieves, not to mention the aid of two trusty dogs, large and strong enough, I think, to pull down a stag, and of course, to match with most men."

"The good keeper of the forest," said the hermit, "hath allowed me the use of these animals, to protect my solitude until the times shall mend."

Having said this, he fixed his torch in a twisted branch of iron which served for a candlestick; and, placing the oaken trivet before the embers of the fire, which he refreshed with some dry wood, he placed a stool upon one side of the table, and beckoned to the knight to do the same upon the other.

They sat down, and gazed with great gravity at each other, each thinking in his heart that he had seldom seen a stronger or more athletic figure than was placed opposite to him.

"Reverend hermit," said the knight, after looking long and fixedly at his host, "were it not to interrupt your devout meditations, I would pray to know three things of your holiness; first, where I am to put my horse?—secondly, what I can have for supper?—thirdly, where I am to take up my couch for the night?"

"I will reply to you," said the hermit, "with my finger, it being against my rule to speak by words where signs can answer the purpose." So saying, he pointed successively to two corners of the hut. "Your stable," said he, "is there—your bed there; and," reaching down a platter with two handfuls of parched pease upon it from the neighbouring shelf, and placing it upon the table, he added, "your supper is here."

The knight shrugged his shoulders, and leaving the hut, brought in his horse, (which in the interim he had fastened to a tree,) unsaddled him with much attention, and spread upon the steed's weary back his own mantle.

The hermit was apparently somewhat moved to compassion by the anxiety as well as address which the stranger displayed in tending his horse; for, muttering something about provender left for the keeper's palfrey, he dragged out of a recess a bundle of forage, which he spread before the knight's charger, and immediately afterwards shook down a quantity of dried fern in the corner which he had assigned for the rider's couch. The knight returned him thanks for his courtesy; and, this duty done, both resumed their seats by the table, whereon stood the trencher of pease placed between them. The hermit, after a long grace, which had once been Latin, but of which original language few traces remained, excepting here and there the long rolling termination of some word or phrase, set example to his guest, by modestly putting into a very large mouth, furnished with teeth which might have ranked with those of a boar both in sharpness and whiteness, some three or four dried pease, a miserable grist as it seemed for so large and able a mill.

The knight, in order to follow so laudable an example, laid aside his helmet, his corslet, and the greater part of his armour, and showed to the hermit a head thick-curved with yellow hair, high features, blue eyes, remarkably bright and sparkling, a mouth well formed, having an upper lip clothed with mustaches darker than his hair, and bearing altogether the look of a bold, daring, and enterprising man, with which his strong form well corresponded.

The hermit, as if wishing to answer to the confidence of his guest, threw back his cowl, and showed a round bullet head belonging to a man in the prime of life. His close-shaven crown, surrounded by a circle of stiff curled black hair, had something the appearance of a parish pinfold begirt by its high hedge. The features expressed nothing of monastic austerity, or of ascetic privations; on the contrary, it was a bold bluff countenance, with broad black eyebrows, a well-turned forehead, and cheeks as round and vermilion as those of a trumpeter, from which descended a long and curly black beard. Such a visage, joined to the brawny form of the holy man, spoke rather of sirloins and haunches, than of pease and pulse. This incongruity did not escape the guest. After he had with great difficulty accomplished the mastication of a mouthful of the dried pease, he found it absolutely necessary to request his pious entertainer to furnish him with some liquor; who replied to his request by placing before him a large can of the purest water from the fountain.

"It is from the well of St Dunstan," said he, "in which, betwixt sun and sun, he baptized five hundred heathen Danes and Britons—blessed be his name!" And applying his black beard to the pitcher, he took a draught much more moderate in quantity than his encomium seemed to warrant.

"It seems to me, reverend father," said the knight, "that the small morsels which you eat, together with this holy, but somewhat thin beverage, have thriven with you marvellously. You appear a man more fit to win the ram at a wrestling match, or the ring at a bout at quarter-staff, or the bucklers at a sword-play, than to linger out your time in this desolate wilderness, saying masses, and living upon parched pease and cold water."

"Sir Knight," answered the hermit, "your thoughts, like those of the ignorant laity, are according to the flesh. It has pleased Our Lady and my patron saint to bless the pittance to which I restrain myself, even as the pulse and water was blessed to the children Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who drank the same rather than defile themselves with the wine and meats which were appointed them by the King of the Saracens."

"Holy father," said the knight, "upon whose countenance it hath pleased Heaven to work such a miracle, permit a sinful layman to crave thy name?"

"Thou mayst call me," answered the hermit, "the Clerk of Copmanhurst, for so I am termed in these parts—They add, it is true, the epithet holy, but I stand not upon that, as being unworthy of such addition.—And now, valiant knight, may I pray ye for the name of my honourable guest?"

"Truly," said the knight, "Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, men call me in these parts the Black Knight,—many, sir, add to it the epithet of Sluggard, whereby I am no way ambitious to be distinguished."

The hermit could scarcely forbear from smiling at his guest's reply.

"I see," said he, "Sir Sluggish Knight, that thou art a man of prudence and of counsel; and moreover, I see that my poor monastic fare likes thee not, accustomed, perhaps, as thou hast been, to the license of courts and of camps, and the luxuries of cities; and now I bethink me, Sir Sluggard, that when the charitable keeper of this forest-walk left those dogs for my protection, and also those bundles of forage, he left me also some food, which, being unfit for my use, the very recollection of it had escaped me amid my more weighty meditations."

"I dare be sworn he did so," said the knight; "I was convinced that there was better food in the cell, Holy Clerk, since you first doffed your cowl.—Your keeper is ever a jovial fellow; and none who beheld thy grinders contending with these pease, and thy throat flooded with this ungenial element, could see thee doomed to such horse-provender and horse-beverage," (pointing to the provisions upon the table,) "and refrain from mending thy cheer. Let us see the keeper's bounty, therefore, without delay."

The hermit cast a wistful look upon the knight, in which there was a sort of comic expression of hesitation, as if uncertain how far he should act prudently in trusting his guest. There was, however, as much of bold frankness in the knight's countenance as was possible to be expressed by features. His smile, too, had something in it irresistibly comic, and gave an assurance of faith and loyalty, with which his host could not refrain from sympathizing.

After exchanging a mute glance or two, the hermit went to the further side of the hut, and opened a hutch, which was concealed with great care and some ingenuity. Out of the recesses of a dark closet, into which this aperture gave admittance, he brought a large pasty, baked in a pewter platter of unusual dimensions. This mighty dish he placed before his guest, who, using his poniard to cut it open, lost no time in making himself acquainted with its contents.

"How long is it since the good keeper has been here?" said the knight to his host, after having swallowed several hasty morsels of this reinforcement to the hermit's good cheer.

"About two months," answered the father hastily.

"By the true Lord," answered the knight, "every thing in your hermitage is miraculous, Holy Clerk! for I would have been sworn that the fat buck which furnished this venison had been running on foot within the week."

The hermit was somewhat discountenanced by this observation; and, moreover, he made but a poor figure while gazing on the diminution of the pasty, on which his guest was making desperate inroads; a warfare in which his previous profession of abstinence left him no pretext for joining.

"I have been in Palestine, Sir Clerk," said the knight, stopping short of a sudden, "and I bethink me it is a custom there that every host who entertains a guest shall assure him of the wholesomeness of his food, by partaking of it along with him. Far be it from me to suspect so holy a man of aught inhospitable; nevertheless I will be highly bound to you would you comply with this Eastern custom."

"To ease your unnecessary scruples, Sir Knight, I will for once depart from my rule," replied the hermit. And as there were no forks in those days, his clutches were instantly in the bowels of the pasty.

The ice of ceremony being once broken, it seemed matter of rivalry between the guest and the entertainer which should display the best appetite; and although the former had probably fasted longest, yet the hermit fairly surpassed him.

"Holy Clerk," said the knight, when his hunger was appeased, "I would gage my good horse yonder against a zecchin, that that same honest keeper to whom we are obliged for the venison has left thee a stoup of wine, or a runlet of canary, or some such trifle, by way of ally to this noble pasty. This would be a circumstance, doubtless, totally unworthy to dwell in the memory of so rigid an anchorite; yet, I think, were you to search yonder crypt once more, you would find that I am right in my conjecture."

The hermit only replied by a grin; and returning to the hutch, he produced a leathern bottle, which might contain about four quarts. He also brought forth two large drinking cups, made out of the horn of the urus, and hooped with silver. Having made this goodly provision for washing down the supper, he seemed to think no farther ceremonious scruple necessary on his part; but filling both cups, and saying, in the Saxon fashion, "'Waes hael', Sir Sluggish Knight!" he emptied his own at a draught.

"'Drink hael', Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst!" answered the warrior, and did his host reason in a similar brimmer.

"Holy Clerk," said the stranger, after the first cup was thus swallowed, "I cannot but marvel that a man possessed of such thews and sinews as thine, and who therewithal shows the talent of so goodly a trencher-man, should think of abiding by himself in this wilderness. In my judgment, you are fitter to keep a castle or a fort, eating of the fat and drinking of the strong, than to live here upon pulse and water, or even upon the charity of the keeper. At least, were I as thou, I should find myself both disport and plenty out of the king's deer. There is many a goodly herd in these forests, and a buck will never be missed that goes to the use of Saint Dunstan's chaplain."

"Sir Sluggish Knight," replied the Clerk, "these are dangerous words, and I pray you to forbear them. I am true hermit to the king and law, and were I to spoil my liege's game, I should be sure of the prison, and, an my gown saved me not, were in some peril of hanging."

"Nevertheless, were I as thou," said the knight, "I would take my walk by moonlight, when foresters and keepers were warm in bed, and ever and anon,—as I patterned my prayers,—I would let fly a shaft among the herds of dun deer that feed in the glades—Resolve me, Holy Clerk, hast thou never practised such a pastime?"

"Friend Sluggard," answered the hermit, "thou hast seen all that can concern thee of my housekeeping, and something more than he deserves who takes up his quarters by violence. Credit me, it is better to enjoy the good which God sends thee, than to be impertinently curious how it comes. Fill thy cup, and welcome; and do not, I pray thee, by further impertinent enquiries, put me to show that thou couldst hardly have made good thy lodging had I been earnest to oppose thee."

"By my faith," said the knight, "thou makest me more curious than ever! Thou art the most mysterious hermit I ever met; and I will know more of thee ere we part. As for thy threats, know, holy man, thou speakest to one whose trade it is to find out danger wherever it is to be met with."

"Sir Sluggish Knight, I drink to thee," said the hermit; "respecting thy valour much, but deeming wondrous slightly of thy discretion. If thou wilt take equal arms with me, I will give thee, in all friendship and brotherly love, such sufficing penance and complete absolution, that thou shalt not for the next twelve months sin the sin of excess of curiosity."

The knight pledged him, and desired him to name his weapons.

"There is none," replied the hermit, "from the scissors of Delilah, and the tenpenny nail of Jael, to the scimitar of Goliath, at which I am not a match for thee—But, if I am to make the election, what sayst thou, good friend, to these trinkets?"

Thus speaking, he opened another hutch, and took out from it a couple of broadswords and bucklers, such as were used by the yeomanry of the period. The knight, who watched his motions, observed that this second place of concealment was furnished with two or three good long-bows, a cross-bow, a bundle of bolts for the latter, and half-a-dozen sheaves of arrows for the former. A harp, and other matters of a very uncanonical appearance, were also visible when this dark recess was opened.

"I promise thee, brother Clerk," said he, "I will ask thee no more offensive questions. The contents of that cupboard are an answer to all my enquiries; and I see a weapon there" (here he stooped and took out the harp) "on which I would more gladly prove my skill with thee, than at the sword and buckler."

"I hope, Sir Knight," said the hermit, "thou hast given no good reason for thy surname of the Sluggard. I do promise thee I suspect thee grievously. Nevertheless, thou art my guest, and I will not put thy manhood to the proof without thine own free will. Sit thee down, then, and fill thy cup; let us drink, sing, and be merry. If thou knowest ever a good lay, thou shalt be welcome to a nook of pasty at Copmanhurst so long as I serve the chapel of St Dunstan, which, please God, shall be till I change my grey covering for one of green turf. But come, fill a flagon, for it will crave some time to tune the harp; and nought pitches the voice and sharpens the ear like a cup of wine. For my part, I love to feel the grape at my very finger-ends before they make the harp-strings tinkle." 22

CHAPTER XVII

*At eve, within yon studious nook,
I ope my brass-embossed book,
Portray'd with many a holy deed
Of martyrs crown'd with heavenly meed;
Then, as my taper waxes dim,
Chant, ere I sleep, my measured hymn.*

*Who but would cast his pomp away,
To take my staff and amice grey,
And to the world's tumultuous stage,
Prefer the peaceful Hermitage?
—Warton*

Notwithstanding the prescription of the genial hermit, with which his guest willingly complied, he found it no easy matter to bring the harp to harmony.

"Methinks, holy father," said he, "the instrument wants one string, and the rest have been somewhat misused."

"Ay, mark'st thou that?" replied the hermit; "that shows thee a master of the craft. Wine and wassail," he added, gravely casting up his eyes—"all the fault of wine and wassail!—I told Allan-a-Dale, the northern minstrel, that he would damage the harp if he touched it after the seventh cup, but he would not be controlled—Friend, I drink to thy successful performance."

So saying, he took off his cup with much gravity, at the same time shaking his head at the intemperance of the Scottish harper.

The knight in the meantime, had brought the strings into some order, and after a short prelude, asked his host whether he would choose a "sirvente" in the language of "oc", or a "lai" in the language of "oui", or a "virelai", or a ballad in the vulgar English. 23

"A ballad, a ballad," said the hermit, "against all the 'ocs' and 'ouis' of France. Downright English am I, Sir Knight, and downright English was my patron St Dunstan, and scorned 'oc' and 'oui', as he would have scorned the parings of the devil's hoof—downright English alone shall be sung in this cell."

"I will assay, then," said the knight, "a ballad composed by a Saxon glee-man, whom I knew in Holy Land."

It speedily appeared, that if the knight was not a complete master of the minstrel art, his taste for it had at least been cultivated under the best instructors. Art had taught him to soften the faults of a voice which had little compass, and was naturally rough rather than mellow, and, in short, had done all that culture can do in supplying natural deficiencies. His performance, therefore, might have been termed very respectable by abler judges than the hermit, especially as the knight threw into the notes now a degree of spirit, and now of plaintive enthusiasm, which gave force and energy to the verses which he sung.

THE CRUSADER'S RETURN.

1.

*High deeds achieved of knightly fame,
From Palestine the champion came;
The cross upon his shoulders borne,
Battle and blast had dimm'd and torn.
Each dint upon his batter'd shield
Was token of a foughten field;
And thus, beneath his lady's bower,
He sung as fell the twilight hour:—*

2.

*"Joy to the fair!—thy knight behold,
Return'd from yonder land of gold;
No wealth he brings, nor wealth can need,
Save his good arms and battle-steed
His spurs, to dash against a foe,
His lance and sword to lay him low;
Such all the trophies of his toil,
Such—and the hope of Tekla's smile!*

3.

*"Joy to the fair! whose constant knight
Her favour fired to feats of might;
Unnoted shall she not remain,
Where meet the bright and noble train;
Minstrel shall sing and herald tell—
'Mark yonder maid of beauty well,
'Tis she for whose bright eyes were won
The listed field at Askalon!*

4.

*"'Note well her smile!—it edged the blade
Which fifty wives to widows made,
When, vain his strength and Mahound's spell,
Iconium's turban'd Soldan fell.
Seest thou her locks, whose sunny glow
Half shows, half shades, her neck of snow?
Twines not of them one golden thread,
But for its sake a Paynim bled.'*

5.

*"Joy to the fair!—my name unknown,
Each deed, and all its praise thine own
Then, oh! unbar this churlish gate,
The night dew falls, the hour is late.
Inured to Syria's glowing breath,
I feel the north breeze chill as death;
Let grateful love quell maiden shame,
And grant him bliss who brings thee fame."*

During this performance, the hermit demeaned himself much like a first-rate critic of the present day at a new opera. He reclined back upon his seat, with his eyes half shut; now, folding his hands and twisting his thumbs, he seemed absorbed in attention, and anon, balancing his expanded palms, he gently flourished them in time to the music. At one or two favourite cadences, he threw in a little assistance of his own, where the knight's voice seemed unable to carry the air so high as his worshipful taste approved. When the song was ended, the anchorite emphatically declared it a good one, and well sung.

"And yet," said he, "I think my Saxon countrymen had herded long enough with the Normans, to fall into the tone of their melancholy ditties. What took the honest knight from home? or what could he expect but to find his mistress agreeably engaged with a rival on his return, and his serenade, as they call it, as little regarded as the caterwauling of a cat in the gutter? Nevertheless, Sir Knight, I drink this cup to thee, to the success of all true lovers—I fear you are none," he added, on observing that the knight (whose brain began to be heated with these repeated draughts) qualified his flagon from the water pitcher.

"Why," said the knight, "did you not tell me that this water was from the well of your blessed patron, St Dunstan?"

"Ay, truly," said the hermit, "and many a hundred of pagans did he baptize there, but I never heard that he drank any of it. Every thing should be put to its proper use in this world. St Dunstan knew, as well as any one, the prerogatives of a jovial friar."

And so saying, he reached the harp, and entertained his guest with the following characteristic song, to a sort of derry-down chorus, appropriate to an old English ditty. 24

THE BAREFOOTED FRIAR.

1.

*I'll give thee, good fellow, a twelvemonth or twain,
To search Europe through, from Byzantium to Spain;
But ne'er shall you find, should you search till you tire,
So happy a man as the Barefooted Friar.*

2.

*Your knight for his lady pricks forth in career,
And is brought home at even-song prick'd through with a spear;
I confess him in haste—for his lady desires
No comfort on earth save the Barefooted Friar's.*

3.

*Your monarch?—Pshaw! many a prince has been known
To barter his robes for our cowl and our gown,
But which of us e'er felt the idle desire
To exchange for a crown the grey hood of a Friar!*

4.

*The Friar has walk'd out, and where'er he has gone,
The land and its fatness is mark'd for his own;
He can roam where he lists, he can stop when he tires,
For every man's house is the Barefooted Friar's.*

5.

*He's expected at noon, and no wight till he comes
May profane the great chair, or the porridge of plums
For the best of the cheer, and the seat by the fire,
Is the undenied right of the Barefooted Friar.*

6.

*He's expected at night, and the pasty's made hot,
They broach the brown ale, and they fill the black pot,
And the goodwife would wish the goodman in the mire,
Ere he lack'd a soft pillow, the Barefooted Friar.*

7.

*Long flourish the sandal, the cord, and the cope,
The dread of the devil and trust of the Pope;
For to gather life's roses, unscathed by the briar,
Is granted alone to the Barefooted Friar.*

"By my troth," said the knight, "thou hast sung well and lustily, and in high praise of thine order. And, talking of the devil, Holy Clerk, are you not afraid that he may pay you a visit during some of your uncanonical pastimes?"

"I uncanonical!" answered the hermit; "I scorn the charge—I scorn it with my heels!—I serve the duty of my chapel duly and truly—Two masses daily, morning and evening, primes, noons, and vespers, 'aves, credos, paters'—"

"Excepting moonlight nights, when the venison is in season," said his guest.

"Exceptis excipiendis" replied the hermit, "as our old abbot taught me to say, when impertinent laymen should ask me if I kept every punctilio of mine order."

"True, holy father," said the knight; "but the devil is apt to keep an eye on such exceptions; he goes about, thou knowest, like a roaring lion."

"Let him roar here if he dares," said the friar; "a touch of my cord will make him roar as loud as the tongs of St Dunstan himself did. I never feared man, and I as little fear the devil and hisimps. Saint Dunstan, Saint Dubric, Saint Winibald, Saint Winifred, Saint Swibert, Saint Willick, not forgetting Saint Thomas a Kent, and my own poor merits to speed, I defy every devil of them, come cut and long tail.—But to let you into a secret, I never speak upon such subjects, my friend, until after morning vespers."

He changed the conversation; fast and furious grew the mirth of the parties, and many a song was exchanged betwixt them, when their revels were interrupted by a loud knocking at the door of the hermitage.

The occasion of this interruption we can only explain by resuming the adventures of another set of our characters; for, like old Ariosto, we do not pique ourselves upon continuing uniformly to keep company with any one personage of our drama.

*Away! our journey lies through dell and dingle,
Where the blithe fawn trips by its timid mother,
Where the broad oak, with intercepting boughs,
Chequers the sunbeam in the green-sward alley—
Up and away!—for lovely paths are these
To tread, when the glad Sun is on his throne
Less pleasant, and less safe, when Cynthia's lamp
With doubtful glimmer lights the dreary forest.
—Ettrick Forest*

When Cedric the Saxon saw his son drop down senseless in the lists at Ashby, his first impulse was to order him into the custody and care of his own attendants, but the words choked in his throat. He could not bring himself to acknowledge, in presence of such an assembly, the son whom he had renounced and disinherited. He ordered, however, Oswald to keep an eye upon him; and directed that officer, with two of his serfs, to convey Ivanhoe to Ashby as soon as the crowd had dispersed. Oswald, however, was anticipated in this good office. The crowd dispersed, indeed, but the knight was nowhere to be seen.

It was in vain that Cedric's cupbearer looked around for his young master—he saw the bloody spot on which he had lately sunk down, but himself he saw no longer; it seemed as if the fairies had conveyed him from the spot. Perhaps Oswald (for the Saxons were very superstitious) might have adopted some such hypothesis, to account for Ivanhoe's disappearance, had he not suddenly cast his eye upon a person attired like a squire, in whom he recognised the features of his fellow-servant Gurth. Anxious concerning his master's fate, and in despair at his sudden disappearance, the translated swineherd was searching for him everywhere, and had neglected, in doing so, the concealment on which his own safety depended. Oswald deemed it his duty to secure Gurth, as a fugitive of whose fate his master was to judge.

Renewing his enquiries concerning the fate of Ivanhoe, the only information which the cupbearer could collect from the bystanders was, that the knight had been raised with care by certain well-attired grooms, and placed in a litter belonging to a lady among the spectators, which had immediately transported him out of the press. Oswald, on receiving this intelligence, resolved to return to his master for farther instructions, carrying along with him Gurth, whom he considered in some sort as a deserter from the service of Cedric.

The Saxon had been under very intense and agonizing apprehensions concerning his son; for Nature had asserted her rights, in spite of the patriotic stoicism which laboured to disown her. But no sooner was he informed that Ivanhoe was in careful, and probably in friendly hands, than the paternal anxiety which had been excited by the dubiety of his fate, gave way anew to the feeling of injured pride and resentment, at what he termed Wilfred's filial disobedience.

"Let him wander his way," said he—"let those leech his wounds for whose sake he encountered them. He is fitter to do the juggling tricks of the Norman chivalry than to maintain the fame and honour of his English ancestry with the glaive and brown-bill, the good old weapons of his country."

"If to maintain the honour of ancestry," said Rowena, who was present, "it is sufficient to be wise in council and brave in execution—to be boldest among the bold, and gentlest among the gentle, I know no voice, save his father's—"

"Be silent, Lady Rowena!—on this subject only I hear you not. Prepare yourself for the Prince's festival: we have been summoned thither with unwonted circumstance of honour and of courtesy, such as the haughty Normans have rarely used to our race since the fatal day of Hastings. Thither will I go, were it only to show these proud Normans how little the fate of a son, who could defeat their bravest, can affect a Saxon."

"Thither," said Rowena, "do I NOT go; and I pray you to beware, lest what you mean for courage and constancy, shall be accounted hardness of heart."

"Remain at home, then, ungrateful lady," answered Cedric; "thine is the hard heart, which can sacrifice the weal of an oppressed people to an idle and unauthorized attachment. I seek the noble Athelstane, and with him attend the banquet of John of Anjou."

He went accordingly to the banquet, of which we have already mentioned the principal events. Immediately upon retiring from the castle, the Saxon thanes, with their attendants, took horse; and it was during the bustle which attended their doing so, that Cedric, for the first time, cast his eyes upon the deserter Gurth. The noble Saxon had returned from the banquet, as we have seen, in no very placid humour, and wanted but a pretext for wreaking his anger upon some one.

"The gyves!" he said, "the gyves!—Oswald—Hundibert!—Dogs and villains!—why leave ye the knave unfettered?"

Without daring to remonstrate, the companions of Gurth bound him with a halter, as the readiest cord which occurred. He submitted to the operation without remonstrance, except that, darting a reproachful look at his master, he said, "This comes of loving your flesh and blood better than mine own."

"To horse, and forward!" said Cedric.

"It is indeed full time," said the noble Athelstane; "for, if we ride not the faster, the worthy Abbot Waltheoff's preparations for a re-re-supper 25 will be altogether spoiled."

The travellers, however, used such speed as to reach the convent of St Withold's before the apprehended evil took place. The Abbot, himself of ancient Saxon descent, received the noble Saxons with the profuse and exuberant hospitality of their nation, wherein they indulged to a late, or rather an early hour; nor did they take leave of their reverend host the next morning until they had shared with him a sumptuous refecton.

As the cavalcade left the court of the monastery, an incident happened somewhat alarming to the Saxons, who, of all people of Europe, were most addicted to a superstitious observance of omens, and to whose opinions can be traced most of those notions upon such subjects, still to be found among our popular antiquities. For the Normans being a mixed race, and better informed according to the information of the times, had lost most of the superstitious prejudices which their ancestors had brought from Scandinavia, and piqued themselves upon thinking freely on such topics.

In the present instance, the apprehension of impending evil was inspired by no less respectable a prophet than a large lean black dog, which, sitting upright, howled most piteously as the foremost riders left the gate, and presently afterwards, barking wildly, and jumping to and fro, seemed bent upon attaching itself to the party.

"I like not that music, father Cedric," said Athelstane; for by this title of respect he was accustomed to address him.

"Nor I either, uncle," said Wamba; "I greatly fear we shall have to pay the piper."

"In my mind," said Athelstane, upon whose memory the Abbot's good ale (for Burton was already famous for that genial liquor) had made a favourable impression,— "in my mind we had better turn back, and abide with the Abbot until the afternoon. It is unlucky to travel where your path is crossed by a monk, a hare, or a howling dog, until you have eaten your next meal."

"Away!" said Cedric, impatiently; "the day is already too short for our journey. For the dog, I know it to be the cur of the runaway slave Gurth, a useless fugitive like its master."

So saying, and rising at the same time in his stirrups, impatient at the interruption of his journey, he launched his javelin at poor Fangs—for Fangs it was, who, having traced his master thus far upon his stolen expedition, had here lost him, and was now, in his uncouth way, rejoicing at his reappearance. The javelin inflicted a wound upon the animal's shoulder, and narrowly missed pinning him to the earth; and Fangs fled howling from the presence of the enraged thane. Gurth's heart swelled within him; for he felt this meditated slaughter of his faithful adherent in a degree much deeper than the harsh treatment he had himself received. Having in vain attempted to raise his hand to his eyes, he said to Wamba, who, seeing his master's ill humour had prudently retreated to the rear, "I pray thee, do me the kindness to wipe my eyes with the skirt of thy mantle; the dust offends me, and these bonds will not let me help myself one way or another."

Wamba did him the service he required, and they rode side by side for some time, during which Gurth maintained a moody silence. At length he could repress his feelings no longer.

"Friend Wamba," said he, "of all those who are fools enough to serve Cedric, thou alone hast dexterity enough to make thy folly acceptable to him. Go to him, therefore, and tell him that neither for love nor fear will Gurth serve him longer. He may strike the head from me—he may scourge me—he may load me with irons—but henceforth he shall never compel me either to love or to obey him. Go to him, then, and tell him that Gurth the son of Beowulph renounces his service." "Assuredly," said Wamba, "fool as I am, I shall not do your fool's errand. Cedric hath another javelin stuck into his girdle, and thou knowest he does not always miss his mark."

"I care not," replied Gurth, "how soon he makes a mark of me. Yesterday he left Wilfred, my young master, in his blood. To-day he has striven to kill before my face the only other living creature that ever showed me kindness. By St Edmund, St Dunstan, St Withold, St Edward the Confessor, and every other Saxon saint in the calendar," (for Cedric never swore by any that was not of Saxon lineage, and all his household had the same limited devotion,) "I will never forgive him!"

"To my thinking now," said the Jester, who was frequently wont to act as peace-maker in the family, "our master did not propose to hurt Fangs, but only to affright him. For, if you observed, he rose in his stirrups, as thereby meaning to overcast the mark; and so he would have done, but Fangs happening to bound up at the very moment, received a scratch, which I will be bound to heal with a penny's breadth of tar."

"If I thought so," said Gurth—"if I could but think so—but no—I saw the javelin was well aimed—I heard it whizz through the air with all the wrathful malevolence of him who cast it, and it quivered after it had pitched in the ground, as if with regret for having missed its mark. By the hog dear to St Anthony, I renounce him!"

And the indignant swineherd resumed his sullen silence, which no efforts of the Jester could again induce him to break.

Meanwhile Cedric and Athelstane, the leaders of the troop, conversed together on the state of the land, on the dissensions of the royal family, on the feuds and quarrels among the Norman nobles, and on the chance which there was that the oppressed Saxons might be able to free themselves from the yoke of the Normans, or at least to elevate themselves into national consequence and independence, during the civil convulsions which were likely to ensue. On this subject Cedric was all animation. The restoration of the independence of his race was the idol of his heart, to which he had willingly sacrificed domestic happiness and the interests of his own son. But, in order to achieve this great revolution in favour of the native English, it was necessary that they should be united among themselves, and act under an acknowledged head. The necessity of choosing their chief from the Saxon blood-royal was not only evident in itself, but had been made a solemn condition by those whom Cedric had intrusted with his secret plans and hopes. Athelstane had this quality at least; and though he had few mental accomplishments or talents to recommend him as a leader, he had still a goodly person, was no coward, had been accustomed to martial exercises, and seemed willing to defer to the advice of counsellors more wise than himself. Above all, he was known to be liberal and hospitable, and believed to be good-natured. But whatever pretensions Athelstane had to be considered as head of the Saxon confederacy, many of that nation were disposed to prefer to the title of the Lady Rowena, who drew her descent from Alfred, and whose father having been a chief renowned for wisdom, courage, and generosity, his memory was highly honoured by his oppressed countrymen.

It would have been no difficult thing for Cedric, had he been so disposed, to have placed himself at the head of a third party, as formidable at least as any of the others. To counterbalance their royal descent, he had courage, activity, energy, and, above all, that devoted attachment to the cause which had procured him the epithet of The Saxon, and his birth was inferior to none, excepting only that of Athelstane and his ward. These qualities, however, were unalloyed by the slightest shade of selfishness; and, instead of dividing yet farther his weakened nation by forming a faction of his own, it was a leading part of Cedric's plan to extinguish that which already existed, by promoting a marriage betwixt Rowena and Athelstane. An obstacle occurred to this his favourite project, in the mutual attachment of his ward and his son and hence the original cause of the banishment of Wilfred from the house of his father.

This stern measure Cedric had adopted, in hopes that, during Wilfred's absence, Rowena might relinquish her preference, but in this hope he was disappointed; a disappointment which might be attributed in part to the mode in which his ward had been educated. Cedric, to whom the name of Alfred was as that of a deity, had treated the sole remaining scion of that great monarch with a degree of observance, such as, perhaps, was in those days scarce paid to an acknowledged princess. Rowena's will had been in almost all cases a law to his household; and Cedric himself, as if determined that her sovereignty should be fully acknowledged within that little circle at least, seemed to take a pride in acting as the first of her subjects. Thus trained in the exercise not only of free will, but despotic authority, Rowena was, by her previous education, disposed both to resist and to resent any attempt to control her affections, or dispose of her hand contrary to her inclinations, and to assert her independence in a case in which even those females who have been trained up to obedience and subjection, are not infrequently apt to dispute the authority of guardians and parents. The opinions which she felt strongly, she avowed boldly; and Cedric, who could not free himself from his habitual deference to her opinions, felt totally at a loss how to enforce his authority of guardian.

It was in vain that he attempted to dazzle her with the prospect of a visionary throne. Rowena, who possessed strong sense, neither considered his plan as practicable, nor as desirable, so far as she was concerned, could it have been achieved. Without attempting to conceal her avowed preference of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, she declared that, were that favoured knight out of question, she would rather take refuge in a convent, than share a throne with Athelstane, whom, having always despised, she now began, on account of the trouble she received on his account, thoroughly to detest.

Nevertheless, Cedric, whose opinions of women's constancy was far from strong, persisted in using every means in his power to bring about the proposed match, in which he conceived he was rendering an important service to the Saxon cause. The sudden and romantic appearance of his son in the lists at Ashby, he had justly regarded as almost a death's blow to his hopes. His paternal affection, it is true, had for an instant gained the victory over pride and patriotism; but both had returned in full force, and under their joint operation, he was now bent upon making a determined effort for the union of Athelstane and Rowena, together with expediting those other measures which seemed necessary to forward the restoration of Saxon independence.

On this last subject, he was now labouring with Athelstane, not without having reason, every now and then, to lament, like Hotspur, that he should have moved such a dish of skimmed milk to so honourable an action. Athelstane, it is true, was vain enough, and loved to have his ears tickled with tales of his high descent, and of his right by inheritance to homage and sovereignty. But his petty vanity was sufficiently gratified by receiving this homage at the hands of his immediate attendants, and of the Saxons who approached him. If he had the courage to encounter danger, he at least hated the trouble of going to seek it; and while he agreed in the general principles laid down by Cedric concerning the claim of the Saxons to independence, and was still more easily convinced of his own title to reign over them when that independence should be attained, yet when the means of asserting these rights came to be discussed, he was still "Athelstane the Unready," slow, irresolute, procrastinating, and unenterprising. The warm and impassioned exhortations of Cedric had as little effect upon his impassive temper, as red-hot balls alighting in the water, which produce a little sound and smoke, and are instantly extinguished.

If, leaving this task, which might be compared to spurring a tired jade, or to hammering upon cold iron, Cedric fell back to his ward Rowena, he received little more satisfaction from conferring with her. For, as his presence interrupted the discourse between the lady and her favourite attendant upon the gallantry and fate of Wilfred, Elgitha failed not to revenge both her mistress and herself, by recurring to the overthrow of Athelstane in the lists, the most disagreeable subject which could greet the ears of Cedric. To this sturdy Saxon, therefore, the day's journey was fraught with all manner of displeasure and discomfort; so that he more than once internally cursed the tournament, and him who had proclaimed it, together with his own folly in ever thinking of going thither.

At noon, upon the motion of Athelstane, the travellers paused in a woodland shade by a fountain, to repose their horses and partake of some provisions, with which the hospitable Abbot had loaded a sumpter mule. Their repast was a pretty long one; and these several interruptions rendered it impossible for them to hope to reach Rotherwood without travelling all night, a conviction which induced them to proceed on their way at a more hasty pace than they had hitherto used.

CHAPTER XIX

A train of armed men, some noble dame

Escorting, (so their scatter'd words discover'd,

*As unperceived I hung upon their rear,
Are close at hand, and mean to pass the night
Within the castle.
—Orra, a Tragedy*

The travellers had now reached the verge of the wooded country, and were about to plunge into its recesses, held dangerous at that time from the number of outlaws whom oppression and poverty had driven to despair, and who occupied the forests in such large bands as could easily bid defiance to the feeble police of the period. From these rovers, however, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour Cedric and Athelstane accounted themselves secure, as they had in attendance ten servants, besides Wamba and Gurth, whose aid could not be counted upon, the one being a jester and the other a captive. It may be added, that in travelling thus late through the forest, Cedric and Athelstane relied on their descent and character, as well as their courage. The outlaws, whom the severity of the forest laws had reduced to this roving and desperate mode of life, were chiefly peasants and yeomen of Saxon descent, and were generally supposed to respect the persons and property of their countrymen.

As the travellers journeyed on their way, they were alarmed by repeated cries for assistance; and when they rode up to the place from whence they came, they were surprised to find a horse-litter placed upon the ground, beside which sat a young woman, richly dressed in the Jewish fashion, while an old man, whose yellow cap proclaimed him to belong to the same nation, walked up and down with gestures expressive of the deepest despair, and wrung his hands, as if affected by some strange disaster.

To the enquiries of Athelstane and Cedric, the old Jew could for some time only answer by invoking the protection of all the patriarchs of the Old Testament successively against the sons of Ishmael, who were coming to smite them, hip and thigh, with the edge of the sword. When he began to come to himself out of this agony of terror, Isaac of York (for it was our old friend) was at length able to explain, that he had hired a body-guard of six men at Ashby, together with mules for carrying the litter of a sick friend. This party had undertaken to escort him as far as Doncaster. They had come thus far in safety; but having received information from a wood-cutter that there was a strong band of outlaws lying in wait in the woods before them, Isaac's mercenaries had not only taken flight, but had carried off with them the horses which bore the litter and left the Jew and his daughter without the means either of defence or of retreat, to be plundered, and probably murdered, by the banditti, who they expected every moment would bring down upon them. "Would it but please your valours," added Isaac, in a tone of deep humiliation, "to permit the poor Jews to travel under your safeguard, I swear by the tables of our law, that never has favour been conferred upon a child of Israel since the days of our captivity, which shall be more gratefully acknowledged."

"Dog of a Jew!" said Athelstane, whose memory was of that petty kind which stores up trifles of all kinds, but particularly trifling offences, "dost not remember how thou didst beard us in the gallery at the tilt-yard? Fight or flee, or compound with the outlaws as thou dost list, ask neither aid nor company from us; and if they rob only such as thee, who rob all the world, I, for mine own share, shall hold them right honest folk."

Cedric did not assent to the severe proposal of his companion. "We shall do better," said he, "to leave them two of our attendants and two horses to convey them back to the next village. It will diminish our strength but little; and with your good sword, noble Athelstane, and the aid of those who remain, it will be light work for us to face twenty of those runagates."

Rowena, somewhat alarmed by the mention of outlaws in force, and so near them, strongly seconded the proposal of her guardian. But Rebecca suddenly quitting her dejected posture, and making her way through the attendants to the palfrey of the Saxon lady, knelt down, and, after the Oriental fashion in addressing superiors, kissed the hem of Rowena's garment. Then rising, and throwing back her veil, she implored her in the great name of the God whom they both worshipped, and by that revelation of the Law upon Mount Sinai, in which they both believed, that she would have compassion upon them, and suffer them to go forward under their safeguard. "It is not for myself that I pray this favour," said Rebecca; "nor is it even for that poor old man. I know that to wrong and to spoil our nation is a light fault, if not a merit, with the Christians; and what is it to us whether it be done in the city, in the desert, or in the field? But it is in the name of one dear to many, and dear even to you, that I beseech you to let this sick person be transported with care and tenderness under your protection. For, if evil chance him, the last moment of your life would be embittered with regret for denying that which I ask of you."

The noble and solemn air with which Rebecca made this appeal, gave it double weight with the fair Saxon.

"The man is old and feeble," she said to her guardian, "the maiden young and beautiful, their friend sick and in peril of his life—Jews though they be, we cannot as Christians leave them in this extremity. Let them unload two of the sumpter-mules, and put the baggage behind two of the serfs. The mules may transport the litter, and we have led horses for the old man and his daughter."

Cedric readily assented to what she proposed, and Athelstane only added the condition, "that they should travel in the rear of the whole party, where Wamba," he said, "might attend them with his shield of boar's brawn."

"I have left my shield in the tilt-yard," answered the Jester, "as has been the fate of many a better knight than myself."

Athelstane coloured deeply, for such had been his own fate on the last day of the tournament; while Rowena, who was pleased in the same proportion, as if to make amends for the brutal jest of her unfeeling suitor, requested Rebecca to ride by her side.

"It were not fit I should do so," answered Rebecca, with proud humility, "where my society might be held a disgrace to my protectress."

By this time the change of baggage was hastily achieved; for the single word "outlaws" rendered every one sufficiently alert, and the approach of twilight made the sound yet more impressive. Amid the bustle, Gurth was taken from horseback, in the course of which removal he prevailed upon the Jester to slack the cord with which his arms were bound. It was so negligently refastened, perhaps intentionally, on the part of Wamba, that Gurth found no difficulty in freeing his arms altogether from bondage, and then, gliding into the thicket, he made his escape from the party.

The bustle had been considerable, and it was some time before Gurth was missed; for, as he was to be placed for the rest of the journey behind a servant, every one supposed that some other of his companions had him under his custody, and when it began to be whispered among them that Gurth had actually disappeared, they were under such immediate expectation of an attack from the outlaws, that it was not held convenient to pay much attention to the circumstance.

The path upon which the party travelled was now so narrow, as not to admit, with any sort of convenience, above two riders abreast, and began to descend into a dingle, traversed by a brook whose banks were broken, swampy, and overgrown with dwarf willows. Cedric and Athelstane, who were at the head of their retinue, saw the risk of being attacked at this pass; but neither of them having had much practice in war, no better mode of preventing the danger occurred to them than that they should hasten through the defile as fast as possible. Advancing, therefore, without much order, they had just crossed the brook with a part of their followers, when they were assailed in front, flank, and rear at once, with an impetuosity to which, in their confused and ill-prepared condition, it was impossible to offer effectual resistance. The shout of "A white dragon!—a white dragon!—Saint George for merry England!" war-cries adopted by the assailants, as belonging to their assumed character of Saxon outlaws, was heard on every side, and on every side enemies appeared with a rapidity of advance and attack which seemed to multiply their numbers.

Both the Saxon chiefs were made prisoners at the same moment, and each under circumstances expressive of his character. Cedric, the instant that an enemy appeared, launched at him his remaining javelin, which, taking better effect than that which he had hurled at Fangs, nailed the man against an oak-tree that happened to be close behind him. Thus far successful, Cedric spurred his horse against a second, drawing his sword at the same time, and striking with such inconsiderate fury, that his weapon encountered a thick branch which hung over him, and he was disarmed by the violence of his own blow. He was instantly made prisoner, and pulled from his horse by two or three of the banditti who crowded around him. Athelstane shared his captivity, his bridle having been seized, and he himself forcibly dismounted, long before he could draw his weapon, or assume any posture of effectual defence.

The attendants, embarrassed with baggage, surprised and terrified at the fate of their masters, fell an easy prey to the assailants; while the Lady Rowena, in the centre of the cavalcade, and the Jew and his daughter in the rear, experienced the same misfortune.

Of all the train none escaped except Wamba, who showed upon the occasion much more courage than those who pretended to greater sense. He possessed himself of a sword belonging to one of the domestics, who was just drawing it with a tardy and irresolute hand, laid it about him like a lion, drove back several who approached him, and made a brave though ineffectual attempt to succour his master. Finding himself overpowered, the Jester at length threw himself from his horse, plunged into the thicket, and, favoured by the general confusion, escaped from the scene of action. Yet the valiant Jester, as soon as he found himself safe, hesitated more than once whether he should not turn back and share the captivity of a master to whom he was sincerely attached.

"I have heard men talk of the blessings of freedom," he said to himself, "but I wish any wise man would teach me what use to make of it now that I have it."

As he pronounced these words aloud, a voice very near him called out in a low and cautious tone, "Wamba!" and, at the same time, a dog, which he recognised to be Fangs, jumped up and fawned upon him. "Gurth!" answered Wamba, with the same caution, and the swineherd immediately stood before him.

"What is the matter?" said he eagerly; "what mean these cries, and that clashing of swords?"

"Only a trick of the times," said Wamba; "they are all prisoners."

"Who are prisoners?" exclaimed Gurth, impatiently.

"My lord, and my lady, and Athelstane, and Hundibert, and Oswald."

"In the name of God!" said Gurth, "how came they prisoners?—and to whom?"

"Our master was too ready to fight," said the Jester; "and Athelstane was not ready enough, and no other person was ready at all. And they are prisoners to green cassocks, and black visors. And they lie all tumbled about on the green, like the crab-apples that you shake down to your swine. And I would laugh at it," said the honest Jester, "if I could for weeping." And he shed tears of unfeigned sorrow.

Gurth's countenance kindled—"Wamba," he said, "thou hast a weapon, and thy heart was ever stronger than thy brain,—we are only two—but a sudden attack from men of resolution will do much—follow me!"

"Whither?—and for what purpose?" said the Jester.

"To rescue Cedric."

"But you have renounced his service but now," said Wamba.

"That," said Gurth, "was but while he was fortunate—follow me!"

As the Jester was about to obey, a third person suddenly made his appearance, and commanded them both to halt. From his dress and arms, Wamba would have conjectured him to be one of those outlaws who had just assailed his master; but, besides that he wore no mask, the glittering baldric across his shoulder, with the rich bugle-horn which it supported, as well as the calm and commanding expression of his voice and manner, made him, notwithstanding the twilight, recognise Locksley the yeoman, who had been victorious, under such disadvantageous circumstances, in the contest for the prize of archery.

"What is the meaning of all this," said he, "or who is it that rifle, and ransom, and make prisoners, in these forests?"

"You may look at their cassocks close by," said Wamba, "and see whether they be thy children's coats or no—for they are as like thine own, as one green pea-cod is to another."

"I will learn that presently," answered Locksley; "and I charge ye, on peril of your lives, not to stir from the place where ye stand, until I have returned. Obey me, and it shall be the better for you and your masters.—Yet stay, I must render myself as like these men as possible."

So saying he unbuckled his baldric with the bugle, took a feather from his cap, and gave them to Wamba; then drew a vizard from his pouch, and, repeating his charges to them to stand fast, went to execute his purposes of reconnoitring.

"Shall we stand fast, Gurth?" said Wamba; "or shall we e'en give him leg-bail? In my foolish mind, he had all the equipage of a thief too much in readiness, to be himself a true man."

"Let him be the devil," said Gurth, "an he will. We can be no worse of waiting his return. If he belong to that party, he must already have given them the alarm, and it will avail nothing either to fight or fly. Besides, I have late experience, that errant thieves are not the worst men in the world to have to deal with."

The yeoman returned in the course of a few minutes.

"Friend Gurth," he said, "I have mingled among yon men, and have learnt to whom they belong, and whither they are bound. There is, I think, no chance that they will proceed to any actual violence against their prisoners. For three men to attempt them at this moment, were little else than madness; for they are good men of war, and have, as such, placed sentinels to give the alarm when any one approaches. But I trust soon to gather such a force, as may act in defiance of all their precautions; you are both servants, and, as I think, faithful servants, of Cedric the Saxon, the friend of the rights of Englishmen. He shall not want English hands to help him in this extremity. Come then with me, until I gather more aid."

So saying, he walked through the wood at a great pace, followed by the jester and the swineherd. It was not consistent with Wamba's humour to travel long in silence.

"I think," said he, looking at the baldric and bugle which he still carried, "that I saw the arrow shot which won this gay prize, and that not so long since as Christmas."

"And I," said Gurth, "could take it on my halidome, that I have heard the voice of the good yeoman who won it, by night as well as by day, and that the moon is not three days older since I did so."

"Mine honest friends," replied the yeoman, "who, or what I am, is little to the present purpose; should I free your master, you will have reason to think me the best friend you have ever had in your lives. And whether I am known by one name or another—or whether I can draw a bow as well or better than a cow-keeper, or whether it is my pleasure to walk in sunshine or by moonlight, are matters, which, as they do not concern you, so neither need ye busy yourselves respecting them."

"Our heads are in the lion's mouth," said Wamba, in a whisper to Gurth, "get them out how we can."

"Hush—be silent," said Gurth. "Offend him not by thy folly, and I trust sincerely that all will go well."

CHAPTER XX

*When autumn nights were long and drear,
And forest walks were dark and dim,
How sweetly on the pilgrim's ear
Was wont to steal the hermit's hymn*

*Devotion borrows Music's tone,
And Music took Devotion's wing;
And, like the bird that hails the sun,
They soar to heaven, and soaring sing.
The Hermit of St Clement's Well*

It was after three hours' good walking that the servants of Cedric, with their mysterious guide, arrived at a small opening in the forest, in the centre of which grew an oak-tree of enormous magnitude, throwing its twisted branches in every direction. Beneath this tree four or five yeomen lay stretched on the ground, while another, as sentinel, walked to and fro in the moonlight shade.

Upon hearing the sound of feet approaching, the watch instantly gave the alarm, and the sleepers as suddenly started up and bent their bows. Six arrows placed on the string were pointed towards the quarter from which the travellers approached, when their guide, being recognised, was welcomed with every token of respect and attachment, and all signs and fears of a rough reception at once subsided.

"Where is the Miller?" was his first question.

"On the road towards Rotherham."

"With how many?" demanded the leader, for such he seemed to be.

"With six men, and good hope of booty, if it please St Nicholas."

"Devoutly spoken," said Locksley; "and where is Allan-a-Dale?"

"Walked up towards the Watling-street, to watch for the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"That is well thought on also," replied the Captain;—"and where is the Friar?"

"In his cell."

"Thither will I go," said Locksley. "Disperse and seek your companions. Collect what force you can, for there's game afoot that must be hunted hard, and will turn to bay. Meet me here by daybreak.—And stay," he added, "I have forgotten what is most necessary of the whole—Two of you take the road quickly towards Torquilstone, the Castle of Front-de-Boeuf. A set of gallants, who have been masquerading in such guise as our own, are carrying a band of prisoners thither—Watch them closely, for even if they reach the castle before we collect our force, our honour is concerned to punish them, and we will find means to do so. Keep a close watch on them therefore; and dispatch one of your comrades, the lightest of foot, to bring the news of the yeomen thereabout."

They promised implicit obedience, and departed with alacrity on their different errands. In the meanwhile, their leader and his two companions, who now looked upon him with great respect, as well as some fear, pursued their way to the Chapel of Copmanhurst.

When they had reached the little moonlight glade, having in front the reverend, though ruinous chapel, and the rude hermitage, so well suited to ascetic devotion, Wamba whispered to Gurth, "If this be the habitation of a thief, it makes good the old proverb, The nearer the church the farther from God.—And by my coxcomb," he added, "I think it be even so—Hearken but to the black sanctus which they are singing in the hermitage!"

In fact the anchorite and his guest were performing, at the full extent of their very powerful lungs, an old drinking song, of which this was the burden:—

"Come, trowl the brown bowl to me,

Bully boy, bully boy,

Come, trowl the brown bowl to me:

Ho! jolly Jenkin, I spy a knave in drinking,

Come, trowl the brown bowl to me."

"Now, that is not ill sung," said Wamba, who had thrown in a few of his own flourishes to help out the chorus. "But who, in the saint's name, ever expected to have heard such a jolly chant come from out a hermit's cell at midnight!"

"Marry, that should I," said Gurth, "for the jolly Clerk of Copmanhurst is a known man, and kills half the deer that are stolen in this walk. Men say that the keeper has complained to his official, and that he will be stripped of his cowl and cope altogether, if he keeps not better order."

While they were thus speaking, Locksley's loud and repeated knocks had at length disturbed the anchorite and his guest. "By my beads," said the hermit, stopping short in a grand flourish, "here come more benighted guests. I would not for my cowl that they found us in this goodly exercise. All men have their enemies, good Sir Sluggard; and there be those malignant enough to construe the hospitable refreshment which I have been offering to you, a weary traveller, for the matter of three short hours, into sheer drunkenness and debauchery, vices alike alien to my profession and my disposition."

"Base calumniators!" replied the knight; "I would I had the chastising of them. Nevertheless, Holy Clerk, it is true that all have their enemies; and there be those in this very land whom I would rather speak to through the bars of my helmet than barefaced."

"Get thine iron pot on thy head then, friend Sluggard, as quickly as thy nature will permit," said the hermit, "while I remove these pewter flagons, whose late contents run strangely in mine own pate; and to drown the clatter—for, in faith, I feel somewhat unsteady—strike into the tune which thou hearest me sing; it is no matter for the words—I scarce know them myself."

So saying, he struck up a thundering "De profundis clamavi", under cover of which he removed the apparatus of their banquet: while the knight, laughing heartily, and arming himself all the while, assisted his host with his voice from time to time as his mirth permitted.

"What devil's matins are you after at this hour?" said a voice from without.

"Heaven forgive you, Sir Traveller!" said the hermit, whose own noise, and perhaps his nocturnal potations, prevented from recognising accents which were tolerably familiar to him—"Wend on your way, in the name of God and Saint Dunstan, and disturb not the devotions of me and my holy brother."

"Mad priest," answered the voice from without, "open to Locksley!"

"All's safe—all's right," said the hermit to his companion.

"But who is he?" said the Black Knight; "it imports me much to know."

"Who is he?" answered the hermit; "I tell thee he is a friend."

"But what friend?" answered the knight; "for he may be friend to thee and none of mine?"

"What friend?" replied the hermit; "that, now, is one of the questions that is more easily asked than answered. What friend?—why, he is, now that I bethink me a little, the very same honest keeper I told thee of a while since."

"Ay, as honest a keeper as thou art a pious hermit," replied the knight, "I doubt it not. But undo the door to him before he beat it from its hinges."

The dogs, in the meantime, which had made a dreadful baying at the commencement of the disturbance, seemed now to recognise the voice of him who stood without; for, totally changing their manner, they scratched and whined at the door, as if interceding for his admission. The hermit speedily unbolted his portal, and admitted Locksley, with his two companions.

"Why, hermit," was the yeoman's first question as soon as he beheld the knight, "what boon companion hast thou here?"

"A brother of our order," replied the friar, shaking his head; "we have been at our orisons all night."

"He is a monk of the church militant, I think," answered Locksley; "and there be more of them abroad. I tell thee, friar, thou must lay down the rosary and take up the quarter-staff; we shall need every one of our merry men, whether clerk or layman.—But," he added, taking him a step aside, "art thou mad? to give admittance to a knight thou dost not know? Hast thou forgot our articles?"

"Not know him!" replied the friar, boldly, "I know him as well as the beggar knows his dish."

"And what is his name, then?" demanded Locksley.

"His name," said the hermit—"his name is Sir Anthony of Scrabelstone—as if I would drink with a man, and did not know his name!"

"Thou hast been drinking more than enough, friar," said the woodsman, "and, I fear, prating more than enough too."

"Good yeoman," said the knight, coming forward, "be not wroth with my merry host. He did but afford me the hospitality which I would have compelled from him if he had refused it."

"Thou compel!" said the friar; "wait but till have changed this grey gown for a green cassock, and if I make not a quarter-staff ring twelve upon thy pate, I am neither true clerk nor good woodsman."

While he spoke thus, he stript off his gown, and appeared in a close black buckram doublet and drawers, over which he speedily did on a cassock of green, and hose of the same colour. "I pray thee truss my points," said he to Wamba, "and thou shalt have a cup of sack for thy labour."

"Gramercy for thy sack," said Wamba; "but think'st thou it is lawful for me to aid you to transmew thyself from a holy hermit into a sinful forester?"

"Never fear," said the hermit; "I will but confess the sins of my green cloak to my greyfriar's frock, and all shall be well again."

"Amen!" answered the Jester; "a broadcloth penitent should have a sackcloth confessor, and your frock may absolve my motley doublet into the bargain."

So saying, he accommodated the friar with his assistance in tying the endless number of points, as the laces which attached the hose to the doublet were then termed.

While they were thus employed, Locksley led the knight a little apart, and addressed him thus:—"Deny it not, Sir Knight—you are he who decided the victory to the advantage of the English against the strangers on the second day of the tournament at Ashby."

"And what follows if you guess truly, good yeoman?" replied the knight.

"I should in that case hold you," replied the yeoman, "a friend to the weaker party."

"Such is the duty of a true knight at least," replied the Black Champion; "and I would not willingly that there were reason to think otherwise of me."

"But for my purpose," said the yeoman, "thou shouldst be as well a good Englishman as a good knight; for that, which I have to speak of, concerns, indeed, the duty of every honest man, but is more especially that of a true-born native of England."

"You can speak to no one," replied the knight, "to whom England, and the life of every Englishman, can be dearer than to me."

"I would willingly believe so," said the woodsman, "for never had this country such need to be supported by those who love her. Hear me, and I will tell thee of an enterprise, in which, if thou be'st really that which thou seemest, thou mayst take an honourable part. A band of villains, in the disguise of better men than themselves, have made themselves master of the person of a noble Englishman, called Cedric the Saxon, together with his ward, and his friend Athelstane of Coningsburgh, and have transported them to a castle in this forest, called Torquilstone. I ask of thee, as a good knight and a good Englishman, wilt thou aid in their rescue?"

"I am bound by my vow to do so," replied the knight; "but I would willingly know who you are, who request my assistance in their behalf?"

"I am," said the forester, "a nameless man; but I am the friend of my country, and of my country's friends—With this account of me you must for the present remain satisfied, the more especially since you yourself desire to continue unknown. Believe, however, that my word, when pledged, is as inviolate as if I wore golden spurs."

"I willingly believe it," said the knight; "I have been accustomed to study men's countenances, and I can read in thine honesty and resolution. I will, therefore, ask thee no further questions, but aid thee in setting at freedom these oppressed captives; which done, I trust we shall part better acquainted, and well satisfied with each other."

"So," said Wamba to Gurth,—for the friar being now fully equipped, the Jester, having approached to the other side of the hut, had heard the conclusion of the conversation,—*"So we have got a new ally?—I trust the valour of the knight will be truer metal than the religion of the hermit, or the honesty of the yeoman; for this Locksley looks like a born deer-stealer, and the priest like a lusty hypocrite."*

"Hold thy peace, Wamba," said Gurth; "it may all be as thou dost guess; but were the horned devil to rise and proffer me his assistance to set at liberty Cedric and the Lady Rowena, I fear I should hardly have religion enough to refuse the foul fiend's offer, and bid him get behind me."

The friar was now completely accoutred as a yeoman, with sword and buckler, bow, and quiver, and a strong partisan over his shoulder. He left his cell at the head of the party, and, having carefully locked the door, deposited the key under the threshold.

"Art thou in condition to do good service, friar," said Locksley, "or does the brown bowl still run in thy head?"

"Not more than a drought of St Dunstan's fountain will allay," answered the priest; "something there is of a whizzing in my brain, and of instability in my legs, but you shall presently see both pass away."

So saying, he stepped to the stone basin, in which the waters of the fountain as they fell formed bubbles which danced in the white moonlight, and took so long a drought as if he had meant to exhaust the spring.

"When didst thou drink as deep a drought of water before, Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst?" said the Black Knight.

"Never since my wine-butt leaked, and let out its liquor by an illegal vent," replied the friar, "and so left me nothing to drink but my patron's bounty here."

Then plunging his hands and head into the fountain, he washed from them all marks of the midnight revel.

Thus refreshed and sobered, the jolly priest twirled his heavy partisan round his head with three fingers, as if he had been balancing a reed, exclaiming at the same time, "Where be those false ravishers, who carry off wenches against their will? May the foul fiend fly off with me, if I am not man enough for a dozen of them."

"Swearest thou, Holy Clerk?" said the Black Knight.

"Clerk me no Clerks," replied the transformed priest; "by Saint George and the Dragon, I am no longer a shaveling than while my frock is on my back—When I am cased in my green cassock, I will drink, swear, and woo a lass, with any blithe forester in the West Riding."

"Come on, Jack Priest," said Locksley, "and be silent; thou art as noisy as a whole convent on a holy eve, when the Father Abbot has gone to bed.—Come on you, too, my masters, tarry not to talk of it—I say, come on, we must collect all our forces, and few enough we shall have, if we are to storm the Castle of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf."

"What! is it Front-de-Boeuf," said the Black Knight, "who has stopt on the king's highway the king's liege subjects?—Is he turned thief and oppressor?"

"Oppressor he ever was," said Locksley.

"And for thief," said the priest, "I doubt if ever he were even half so honest a man as many a thief of my acquaintance."

"Move on, priest, and be silent," said the yeoman; "it were better you led the way to the place of rendezvous, than say what should be left unsaid, both in decency and prudence."

CHAPTER XXI

*Alas, how many hours and years have past,
Since human forms have round this table sate,
Or lamp, or taper, on its surface gleam'd!
Methinks, I hear the sound of time long pass'd
Still murmuring o'er us, in the lofty void
Of these dark arches, like the ling'ring voices
Of those who long within their graves have slept.
Orra, a Tragedy*

While these measures were taking in behalf of Cedric and his companions, the armed men by whom the latter had been seized, hurried their captives along towards the place of security, where they intended to imprison them. But darkness came on fast, and the paths of the wood seemed but imperfectly known to the marauders. They were compelled to make several long halts, and once or twice to return on their road to resume the direction which they wished to pursue. The summer morn had dawned upon them ere they could travel in full assurance that they held the right path. But confidence returned with light, and the cavalcade now moved rapidly forward. Meanwhile, the following dialogue took place between the two leaders of the banditti.

"It is time thou shouldst leave us, Sir Maurice," said the Templar to De Bracy, "in order to prepare the second part of thy mystery. Thou art next, thou knowest, to act the Knight Deliverer."

"I have thought better of it," said De Bracy; "I will not leave thee till the prize is fairly deposited in Front-de-Boeuf's castle. There will I appear before the Lady Rowena in mine own shape, and trust that she will set down to the vehemence of my passion the violence of which I have been guilty."

"And what has made thee change thy plan, De Bracy?" replied the Knight Templar.

"That concerns thee nothing," answered his companion.

"I would hope, however, Sir Knight," said the Templar, "that this alteration of measures arises from no suspicion of my honourable meaning, such as Fitzurse endeavoured to instil into thee?"

"My thoughts are my own," answered De Bracy; "the fiend laughs, they say, when one thief robs another; and we know, that were he to spit fire and brimstone instead, it would never prevent a Templar from following his bent."

"Or the leader of a Free Company," answered the Templar, "from dreading at the hands of a comrade and friend, the injustice he does to all mankind."

"This is unprofitable and perilous recrimination," answered De Bracy; "suffice it to say, I know the morals of the Temple-Order, and I will not give thee the power of cheating me out of the fair prey for which I have run such risks."

"Psha," replied the Templar, "what hast thou to fear?—Thou knowest the vows of our order."

"Right well," said De Bracy, "and also how they are kept. Come, Sir Templar, the laws of gallantry have a liberal interpretation in Palestine, and this is a case in which I will trust nothing to your conscience."

"Hear the truth, then," said the Templar; "I care not for your blue-eyed beauty. There is in that train one who will make me a better mate."

"What! wouldst thou stoop to the waiting damsel?" said De Bracy.

"No, Sir Knight," said the Templar, haughtily. "To the waiting-woman will I not stoop. I have a prize among the captives as lovely as thine own."

"By the mass, thou meanest the fair Jewess!" said De Bracy.

"And if I do," said Bois-Guilbert, "who shall gainsay me?"

"No one that I know," said De Bracy, "unless it be your vow of celibacy, or a cheek of conscience for an intrigue with a Jewess."

"For my vow," said the Templar, "our Grand Master hath granted me a dispensation. And for my conscience, a man that has slain three hundred Saracens, need not reckon up every little failing, like a village girl at her first confession upon Good Friday eve."

"Thou knowest best thine own privileges," said De Bracy. "Yet, I would have sworn thy thought had been more on the old usurer's money bags, than on the black eyes of the daughter."

"I can admire both," answered the Templar; "besides, the old Jew is but half-prize. I must share his spoils with Front-de-Boeuf, who will not lend us the use of his castle for nothing. I must have something that I can term exclusively my own by this foray of ours, and I have fixed on the lovely Jewess as my peculiar prize. But, now thou knowest my drift, thou wilt resume thine own original plan, wilt thou not?—Thou hast nothing, thou seest, to fear from my interference."

"No," replied De Bracy, "I will remain beside my prize. What thou sayst is passing true, but I like not the privileges acquired by the dispensation of the Grand Master, and the merit acquired by the slaughter of three hundred Saracens. You have too good a right to a free pardon, to render you very scrupulous about peccadilloes."

While this dialogue was proceeding, Cedric was endeavouring to wring out of those who guarded him an avowal of their character and purpose. "You should be Englishmen," said he; "and yet, sacred Heaven! you prey upon your countrymen as if you were very Normans. You should be my neighbours, and, if so, my friends; for which of my English neighbours have reason to be otherwise? I tell ye, yeomen, that even those among ye who have been branded with outlawry have had from me protection; for I have pitied their miseries, and curst the oppression of their tyrannic nobles. What, then, would you have of me? or in what can this violence serve ye?—Ye are worse than brute beasts in your actions, and will you imitate them in their very dumbness?"

It was in vain that Cedric expostulated with his guards, who had too many good reasons for their silence to be induced to break it either by his wrath or his expostulations. They continued to hurry him along, travelling at a very rapid rate, until, at the end of an avenue of huge trees, arose Torquilstone, now the hoary and ancient castle of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. It was a fortress of no great size, consisting of a donjon, or large and high square tower, surrounded by buildings of inferior height, which were encircled by an inner court-yard. Around the exterior wall was a deep moat, supplied with water from a neighbouring rivulet. Front-de-Boeuf, whose character placed him often at feud with his enemies, had made considerable additions to the strength of his castle, by building towers upon the outward wall, so as to flank it at every angle. The access, as usual in castles of the period, lay through an arched barbican, or outwork, which was terminated and defended by a small turret at each corner.

Cedric no sooner saw the turrets of Front-de-Boeuf's castle raise their grey and moss-grown battlements, glimmering in the morning sun above the wood by which they were surrounded, than he instantly augured more truly concerning the cause of his misfortune.

"I did injustice," he said, "to the thieves and outlaws of these woods, when I supposed such banditti to belong to their bands; I might as justly have confounded the foxes of these brakes with the ravening wolves of France. Tell me, dogs—is it my life or my wealth that your master aims at? Is it too much that two Saxons, myself and the noble Athelstane, should hold land in the country which was once the patrimony of our race?—Put us then to death, and complete your tyranny by taking our lives, as you began with our liberties. If the Saxon Cedric cannot rescue England, he is willing to die for her. Tell your tyrannical master, I do only beseech him to dismiss the Lady Rowena in honour and safety. She is a woman, and he need not dread her; and with us will die all who dare fight in her cause."

The attendants remained as mute to this address as to the former, and they now stood before the gate of the castle. De Bracy winded his horn three times, and the archers and cross-bow men, who had manned the wall upon seeing their approach, hastened to lower the drawbridge, and admit them. The prisoners were compelled by their guards to alight, and were conducted to an apartment where a hasty repast was offered them, of which none but Athelstane felt any inclination to partake. Neither had the descendant of the Confessor much time to do justice to the good cheer placed before them, for their guards gave him and Cedric to understand that they were to be imprisoned in a chamber apart from Rowena. Resistance was vain; and they were compelled to follow to a large room, which, rising on clumsy Saxon pillars, resembled those refectories and chapter-houses which may be still seen in the most ancient parts of our most ancient monasteries. The Lady Rowena was next separated from her train, and conducted, with courtesy, indeed, but still without consulting her inclination, to a distant apartment. The same alarming distinction was conferred on Rebecca, in spite of her father's entreaties, who offered even money, in this extremity of distress, that she might be permitted to abide with him. "Base unbeliever," answered one of his guards, "when thou hast seen thy lair, thou wilt not wish thy daughter to partake it." And, without farther discussion, the old Jew was forcibly dragged off in a different direction from the other prisoners. The domestics, after being carefully searched and disarmed, were confined in another part of the castle; and Rowena was refused even the comfort she might have derived from the attendance of her handmaiden Elgitha.

The apartment in which the Saxon chiefs were confined, for to them we turn our first attention, although at present used as a sort of guard-room, had formerly been the great hall of the castle. It was now abandoned to meaner purposes, because the present lord, among other additions to the convenience, security, and beauty of his baronial residence, had erected a new and noble hall, whose vaulted roof was supported by lighter and more elegant pillars, and fitted up with that higher degree of ornament, which the Normans had already introduced into architecture.

Cedric paced the apartment, filled with indignant reflections on the past and on the present, while the apathy of his companion served, instead of patience and philosophy, to defend him against every thing save the inconvenience of the present moment; and so little did he feel even this last, that he was only from time to time roused to a reply by Cedric's animated and impassioned appeal to him.

"Yes," said Cedric, half speaking to himself, and half addressing himself to Athelstane, "it was in this very hall that my father feasted with Torquil Wolfanger, when he entertained the valiant and unfortunate Harold, then advancing against the Norwegians, who had united themselves to the rebel Tosti. It was in this hall that Harold returned the magnanimous answer to the ambassador of his rebel brother. Oft have I heard my father kindle as he told the tale. The envoy of Tosti was admitted, when this ample room could scarce contain the crowd of noble Saxon leaders, who were quaffing the blood-red wine around their monarch."

"I hope," said Athelstane, somewhat moved by this part of his friend's discourse, "they will not forget to send us some wine and refractions at noon—we had scarce a breathing-space allowed to break our fast, and I never have the benefit of my food when I eat immediately after dismounting from horseback, though the leeches recommend that practice."

Cedric went on with his story without noticing this interjectional observation of his friend.

"The envoy of Tosti," he said, "moved up the hall, undismayed by the frowning countenances of all around him, until he made his obeisance before the throne of King Harold."

"What terms," he said, "Lord King, hath thy brother Tosti to hope, if he should lay down his arms, and crave peace at thy hands?"

"A brother's love," cried the generous Harold, "and the fair earldom of Northumberland."

"But should Tosti accept these terms," continued the envoy, "what lands shall be assigned to his faithful ally, Hardrada, King of Norway?"

"Seven feet of English ground," answered Harold, fiercely, "or, as Hardrada is said to be a giant, perhaps we may allow him twelve inches more."

"The hall rung with acclamations, and cup and horn was filled to the Norwegian, who should be speedily in possession of his English territory."

"I could have pledged him with all my soul," said Athelstane, "for my tongue cleaves to my palate."

"The baffled envoy," continued Cedric, pursuing with animation his tale, though it interested not the listener, "retreated, to carry to Tosti and his ally the ominous answer of his injured brother. It was then that the distant towers of York, and the bloody streams of the Derwent, beheld that direful conflict, in which, after displaying the most undaunted valour, the King of Norway, and Tosti, both fell, with ten thousand of their bravest followers. Who would have thought that upon the proud day when this battle was won, the very gale which waved the Saxon banners in triumph, was filling the Norman sails, and impelling them to the fatal shores of Sussex?—Who would have thought that Harold, within a few brief days, would himself possess no more of his kingdom, than the share which he allotted in his wrath to the Norwegian invader?—Who would have thought that you, noble Athelstane—that you, descended of Harold's blood, and that I, whose father was not the worst defender of the Saxon crown, should be prisoners to a vile Norman, in the very hall in which our ancestors held such high festival?"

"It is sad enough," replied Athelstane; "but I trust they will hold us to a moderate ransom—At any rate it cannot be their purpose to starve us outright; and yet, although it is high noon, I see no preparations for serving dinner. Look up at the window, noble Cedric, and judge by the sunbeams if it is not on the verge of noon."

"It may be so," answered Cedric; "but I cannot look on that stained lattice without its awakening other reflections than those which concern the passing moment, or its privations. When that window was wrought, my noble friend, our hardy fathers knew not the art of making glass, or of staining it—The pride of Wolfgang's father brought an artist from Normandy to adorn his hall with this new species of emblazonment, that breaks the golden light of God's blessed day into so many fantastic hues. The foreigner came here poor, beggarly, cringing, and subservient, ready to doff his cap to the meanest native of the household. He returned pampered and proud, to tell his rapacious countrymen of the wealth and the simplicity of the Saxon nobles—a folly, oh, Athelstane, foreboded of old, as well as foreseen, by those descendants of Hengist and his hardy tribes, who retained the simplicity of their manners. We made these strangers our bosom friends, our confidential servants; we borrowed their artists and their arts, and despised the honest simplicity and hardihood with which our brave ancestors supported themselves, and we became enervated by Norman arts long ere we fell under Norman arms. Far better was our homely diet, eaten in peace and liberty, than the luxurious dainties, the love of which hath delivered us as bondsmen to the foreign conqueror!"

"I should," replied Athelstane, "hold very humble diet a luxury at present; and it astonishes me, noble Cedric, that you can bear so truly in mind the memory of past deeds, when it appeareth you forget the very hour of dinner."

"It is time lost," muttered Cedric apart and impatiently, "to speak to him of aught else but that which concerns his appetite! The soul of Hardicanute hath taken possession of him, and he hath no pleasure save to fill, to swill, and to call for more.—Alas!" said he, looking at Athelstane with compassion, "that so dull a spirit should be lodged in so goodly a form! Alas! that such an enterprise as the regeneration of England should turn on a hinge so imperfect! Wedded to Rowena, indeed, her nobler and more generous soul may yet awake the better nature which is torpid within him. Yet how should this be, while Rowena, Athelstane, and I myself, remain the prisoners of this brutal marauder and have been made so perhaps from a sense of the dangers which our liberty might bring to the usurped power of his nation?"

While the Saxon was plunged in these painful reflections, the door of their prison opened, and gave entrance to a sewer, holding his white rod of office. This important person advanced into the chamber with a grave pace, followed by four attendants, bearing in a table covered with dishes, the sight and smell of which seemed to be an instant compensation to Athelstane for all the inconvenience he had undergone. The persons who attended on the feast were masked and cloaked.

"What mummary is this?" said Cedric; "think you that we are ignorant whose prisoners we are, when we are in the castle of your master? Tell him," he continued, willing to use this opportunity to open a negotiation for his freedom,— "Tell your master, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, that we know no reason he can have for withholding our liberty, excepting his unlawful desire to enrich himself at our expense. Tell him that we yield to his rapacity, as in similar circumstances we should do to that of a literal robber. Let him name the ransom at which he rates our liberty, and it shall be paid, providing the exaction is suited to our means." The sewer made no answer, but bowed his head.

"And tell Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," said Athelstane, "that I send him my mortal defiance, and challenge him to combat with me, on foot or horseback, at any secure place, within eight days after our liberation; which, if he be a true knight, he will not, under these circumstances, venture to refuse or to delay."

"I shall deliver to the knight your defiance," answered the sewer; "meanwhile I leave you to your food."

The challenge of Athelstane was delivered with no good grace; for a large mouthful, which required the exercise of both jaws at once, added to a natural hesitation, considerably damped the effect of the bold defiance it contained. Still, however, his speech was hailed by Cedric as an incontestible token of reviving spirit in his companion, whose previous indifference had begun, notwithstanding his respect for Athelstane's descent, to wear out his patience. But he now cordially shook hands with him in token of his approbation, and was somewhat grieved when Athelstane observed, "that he would fight a dozen such men as Front-de-Boeuf, if, by so doing, he could hasten his departure from a dungeon where they put so much garlic into their pottage." Notwithstanding this intimation of a relapse into the apathy of sensuality, Cedric placed himself opposite to Athelstane, and soon showed, that if the distresses of his country could banish the recollection of food while the table was uncovered, yet no sooner were the victuals put there, than he proved that the appetite of his Saxon ancestors had descended to him along with their other qualities.

The captives had not long enjoyed their refreshment, however, ere their attention was disturbed even from this most serious occupation by the blast of a horn winded before the gate. It was repeated three times, with as much violence as if it had been blown before an enchanted castle by the destined knight, at whose summons halls and towers, barbican and battlement, were to roll off like a morning vapour. The Saxons started from the table, and hastened to the window. But their curiosity was disappointed; for these outlets only looked upon the court of the castle, and the sound came from beyond its precincts. The summons, however, seemed of importance, for a considerable degree of bustle instantly took place in the castle.

CHAPTER XXII

My daughter—O my ducats—O my daughter!

——O my Christian ducats!

Justice—the Law—my ducats, and my daughter!

—Merchant of Venice

Leaving the Saxon chiefs to return to their banquet as soon as their ungratified curiosity should permit them to attend to the calls of their half-satiated appetite, we have to look in upon the yet more severe imprisonment of Isaac of York. The poor Jew had been hastily thrust into a dungeon-vault of the castle, the floor of which was deep beneath the level of the ground, and very damp, being lower than even the moat itself. The only light was received through one or two loop-holes far above the reach of the captive's hand. These apertures admitted, even at mid-day, only a dim and uncertain light, which was changed for utter darkness long before the rest of the castle had lost the blessing of day. Chains and shackles, which had been the portion of former captives, from whom active exertions to escape had been apprehended, hung rusted and empty on the walls of the prison, and in the rings of one of those sets of fetters there remained two mouldering bones, which seemed to have been once those of the human leg, as if some prisoner had been left not only to perish there, but to be consumed to a skeleton. At one end of this ghastly apartment was a large fire-grate, over the top of which were stretched some transverse iron bars, half devoured with rust.

The whole appearance of the dungeon might have appalled a stouter heart than that of Isaac, who, nevertheless, was more composed under the imminent pressure of danger, than he had seemed to be while affected by terrors, of which the cause was as yet remote and contingent. The lovers of the chase say that the hare feels more agony during the pursuit of the greyhounds, than when she is struggling in their fangs. 27

And thus it is probable, that the Jews, by the very frequency of their fear on all occasions, had their minds in some degree prepared for every effort of tyranny which could be practised upon them; so that no aggression, when it had taken place, could bring with it that surprise which is the most disabling quality of terror. Neither was it the first time that Isaac had been placed in circumstances so dangerous. He had therefore experience to guide him, as well as hope, that he might again, as formerly, be delivered as a prey from the fowler. Above all, he had upon his side the unyielding obstinacy of his nation, and that unbending resolution, with which Israelites have been frequently known to submit to the uttermost evils which power and violence can inflict upon them, rather than gratify their oppressors by granting their demands.

In this humour of passive resistance, and with his garment collected beneath him to keep his limbs from the wet pavement, Isaac sat in a corner of his dungeon, where his folded hands, his dishevelled hair and beard, his furred cloak and high cap, seen by the wiry and broken light, would have afforded a study for Rembrandt, had that celebrated painter existed at the period. The Jew remained, without altering his position, for nearly three hours, at the expiry of which steps were heard on the dungeon stair. The bolts screamed as they were withdrawn—the hinges creaked as the wicket opened, and Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, followed by the two Saracen slaves of the Templar, entered the prison.

Front-de-Boeuf, a tall and strong man, whose life had been spent in public war or in private feuds and broils, and who had hesitated at no means of extending his feudal power, had features corresponding to his character, and which strongly expressed the fiercer and more malignant passions of the mind. The scars with which his visage was seamed, would, on features of a different cast, have excited the sympathy and veneration due to the marks of honourable valour; but, in the peculiar case of Front-de-Boeuf, they only added to the ferocity of his countenance, and to the dread which his presence inspired. This formidable baron was clad in a leathern doublet, fitted close to his body, which was frayed and soiled with the stains of his armour. He had no weapon, excepting a poniard at his belt, which served to counterbalance the weight of the bunch of rusty keys that hung at his right side.

The black slaves who attended Front-de-Boeuf were stripped of their gorgeous apparel, and attired in jerkins and trowsers of coarse linen, their sleeves being tucked up above the elbow, like those of butchers when about to exercise their function in the slaughter-house. Each had in his hand a small pannier; and, when they entered the dungeon, they stooped at the door until Front-de-Boeuf himself carefully locked and double-locked it. Having taken this precaution, he advanced slowly up the apartment towards the Jew, upon whom he kept his eye fixed, as if he wished to paralyze him with his glance, as some animals are said to fascinate their prey. It seemed indeed as if the sullen and malignant eye of Front-de-Boeuf possessed some portion of that supposed power over his unfortunate prisoner. The Jew sat with his mouth agape, and his eyes fixed on the savage baron with such earnestness of terror, that his frame seemed literally to shrink together, and to diminish in size while encountering the fierce Norman's fixed and baleful gaze. The unhappy Isaac was deprived not only of the power of rising to make the obeisance which his terror dictated, but he could not even doff his cap, or utter any word of supplication; so strongly was he agitated by the conviction that tortures and death were impending over him.

On the other hand, the stately form of the Norman appeared to dilate in magnitude, like that of the eagle, which ruffles up its plumage when about to pounce on its defenceless prey. He paused within three steps of the corner in which the unfortunate Jew had now, as it were, coiled himself up into the smallest possible space, and made a sign for one of the slaves to approach. The black satellite came forward accordingly, and, producing from his basket a large pair of scales and several weights, he laid them at the feet of Front-de-Boeuf, and again retired to the respectful distance, at which his companion had already taken his station.

The motions of these men were slow and solemn, as if there impended over their souls some preconception of horror and of cruelty. Front-de-Boeuf himself opened the scene by thus addressing his ill-fated captive.

"Most accursed dog of an accursed race," he said, awaking with his deep and sullen voice the sullen echoes of his dungeon vault, "seest thou these scales?"

The unhappy Jew returned a feeble affirmative.

"In these very scales shalt thou weigh me out," said the relentless Baron, "a thousand silver pounds, after the just measure and weight of the Tower of London."

"Holy Abraham!" returned the Jew, finding voice through the very extremity of his danger, "heard man ever such a demand?—Who ever heard, even in a minstrel's tale, of such a sum as a thousand pounds of silver?—What human sight was ever blessed with the vision of such a mass of treasure?—Not within the walls of York, ransack my house and that of all my tribe, wilt thou find the tithe of that huge sum of silver that thou speakest of."

"I am reasonable," answered Front-de-Boeuf, "and if silver be scant, I refuse not gold. At the rate of a mark of gold for each six pounds of silver, thou shalt free thy unbelieving carcass from such punishment as thy heart has never even conceived."

"Have mercy on me, noble knight!" exclaimed Isaac; "I am old, and poor, and helpless. It were unworthy to triumph over me—it is a poor deed to crush a worm."

"Old thou mayst be," replied the knight; "more shame to their folly who have suffered thee to grow grey in usury and knavery—Feeble thou mayst be, for when had a Jew either heart or hand—But rich it is well known thou art."

"I swear to you, noble knight," said the Jew "by all which I believe, and by all which we believe in common—"

"Perjure not thyself," said the Norman, interrupting him, "and let not thine obstinacy seal thy doom, until thou hast seen and well considered the fate that awaits thee. Think not I speak to thee only to excite thy terror, and practise on the base cowardice thou hast derived from thy tribe. I swear to thee by that which thou dost NOT believe, by the gospel which our church teaches, and by the keys which are given her to bind and to loose, that my purpose is deep and peremptory. This dungeon is no place for trifling. Prisoners ten thousand times more distinguished than thou have died within these walls, and their fate hath never been known! But for thee is reserved a long and lingering death, to which theirs were luxury."

He again made a signal for the slaves to approach, and spoke to them apart, in their own language; for he also had been in Palestine, where perhaps, he had learnt his lesson of cruelty. The Saracens produced from their baskets a quantity of charcoal, a pair of bellows, and a flask of oil. While the one struck a light with a flint and steel, the other disposed the charcoal in the large rusty grate which we have already mentioned, and exercised the bellows until the fuel came to a red glow.

"Seest thou, Isaac," said Front-de-Boeuf, "the range of iron bars above the glowing charcoal?— 28 on that warm couch thou shalt lie, stripped of thy clothes as if thou wert to rest on a bed of down. One of these slaves shall maintain the fire beneath thee, while the other shall anoint thy wretched limbs with oil, lest the roast should burn.—Now, choose betwixt such a scorching bed and the payment of a thousand pounds of silver; for, by the head of my father, thou hast no other option."

"It is impossible," exclaimed the miserable Jew—"it is impossible that your purpose can be real! The good God of nature never made a heart capable of exercising such cruelty!"

"Trust not to that, Isaac," said Front-de-Boeuf, "it were a fatal error. Dost thou think that I, who have seen a town sacked, in which thousands of my Christian countrymen perished by sword, by flood, and by fire, will blench from my purpose for the outcries or screams of one single wretched Jew?—or thinkest thou that

these swarthy slaves, who have neither law, country, nor conscience, but their master's will—who use the poison, or the stake, or the poniard, or the cord, at his slightest wink—thinkest thou that THEY will have mercy, who do not even understand the language in which it is asked?—Be wise, old man; discharge thyself of a portion of thy superfluous wealth; repay to the hands of a Christian a part of what thou hast acquired by the usury thou hast practised on those of his religion. Thy cunning may soon swell out once more thy shrivelled purse, but neither leech nor medicine can restore thy scorched hide and flesh wert thou once stretched on these bars. Tell down thy ransom, I say, and rejoice that at such rate thou canst redeem thee from a dungeon, the secrets of which few have returned to tell. I waste no more words with thee—choose between thy dross and thy flesh and blood, and as thou chooseth, so shall it be."

"So may Abraham, Jacob, and all the fathers of our people assist me," said Isaac, "I cannot make the choice, because I have not the means of satisfying your exorbitant demand!"

"Seize him and strip him, slaves," said the knight, "and let the fathers of his race assist him if they can."

The assistants, taking their directions more from the Baron's eye and his hand than his tongue, once more stepped forward, laid hands on the unfortunate Isaac, plucked him up from the ground, and, holding him between them, waited the hard-hearted Baron's farther signal. The unhappy Jew eyed their countenances and that of Front-de-Boeuf, in hope of discovering some symptoms of relenting; but that of the Baron exhibited the same cold, half-sullen, half-sarcastic smile which had been the prelude to his cruelty; and the savage eyes of the Saracens, rolling gloomily under their dark brows, acquiring a yet more sinister expression by the whiteness of the circle which surrounds the pupil, evinced rather the secret pleasure which they expected from the approaching scene, than any reluctance to be its directors or agents. The Jew then looked at the glowing furnace, over which he was presently to be stretched, and seeing no chance of his tormentor's relenting, his resolution gave way.

"I will pay," he said, "the thousand pounds of silver—That is," he added, after a moment's pause, "I will pay it with the help of my brethren; for I must beg as a mendicant at the door of our synagogue ere I make up so unheard-of a sum.—When and where must it be delivered?"

"Here," replied Front-de-Boeuf, "here it must be delivered—weighed it must be—weighed and told down on this very dungeon floor.—Thinkest thou I will part with thee until thy ransom is secure?"

"And what is to be my surety," said the Jew, "that I shall be at liberty after this ransom is paid?"

"The word of a Norman noble, thou pawn-broking slave," answered Front-de-Boeuf; "the faith of a Norman nobleman, more pure than the gold and silver of thee and all thy tribe."

"I crave pardon, noble lord," said Isaac timidly, "but wherefore should I rely wholly on the word of one who will trust nothing to mine?"

"Because thou canst not help it, Jew," said the knight, sternly. "Wert thou now in thy treasure-chamber at York, and were I craving a loan of thy shekels, it would be thine to dictate the time of payment, and the pledge of security. This is MY treasure-chamber. Here I have thee at advantage, nor will I again deign to repeat the terms on which I grant thee liberty."

The Jew groaned deeply.—"Grant me," he said, "at least with my own liberty, that of the companions with whom I travel. They scorned me as a Jew, yet they pitied my desolation, and because they tarried to aid me by the way, a share of my evil hath come upon them; moreover, they may contribute in some sort to my ransom."

"If thou meanest yonder Saxon churls," said Front-de-Boeuf, "their ransom will depend upon other terms than thine. Mind thine own concerns, Jew, I warn thee, and meddle not with those of others."

"I am, then," said Isaac, "only to be set at liberty, together with mine wounded friend?"

"Shall I twice recommend it," said Front-de-Boeuf, "to a son of Israel, to meddle with his own concerns, and leave those of others alone?—Since thou hast made thy choice, it remains but that thou payest down thy ransom, and that at a short day."

"Yet hear me," said the Jew—"for the sake of that very wealth which thou wouldst obtain at the expense of thy—" Here he stopt short, afraid of irritating the savage Norman. But Front-de-Boeuf only laughed, and himself filled up the blank at which the Jew had hesitated.

"At the expense of my conscience, thou wouldst say, Isaac; speak it out—I tell thee, I am reasonable. I can bear the reproaches of a loser, even when that loser is a Jew. Thou wert not so patient, Isaac, when thou didst invoke justice against Jacques Fitzdotterel, for calling thee a usurious blood-sucker, when thy exactions had devoured his patrimony."

"I swear by the Talmud," said the Jew, "that your valour has been misled in that matter. Fitzdotterel drew his poniard upon me in mine own chamber, because I craved him for mine own silver. The term of payment was due at the Passover."

"I care not what he did," said Front-de-Boeuf; "the question is, when shall I have mine own?—when shall I have the shekels, Isaac?"

"Let my daughter Rebecca go forth to York," answered Isaac, "with your safe conduct, noble knight, and so soon as man and horse can return, the treasure—" Here he groaned deeply, but added, after the pause of a few seconds,— "The treasure shall be told down on this very floor."

"Thy daughter!" said Front-de-Boeuf, as if surprised,— "By heavens, Isaac, I would I had known of this. I deemed that yonder black-browed girl had been thy concubine, and I gave her to be a handmaiden to Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, after the fashion of patriarchs and heroes of the days of old, who set us in these matters a wholesome example."

The yell which Isaac raised at this unfeeling communication made the very vault to ring, and astounded the two Saracens so much that they let go their hold of the Jew. He availed himself of his enlargement to throw himself on the pavement, and clasp the knees of Front-de-Boeuf.

"Take all that you have asked," said he, "Sir Knight—take ten times more—reduce me to ruin and to beggary, if thou wilt,—nay, pierce me with thy poniard, broil me on that furnace, but spare my daughter, deliver her in safety and honour!—As thou art born of woman, spare the honour of a helpless maiden—She is the image of my deceased Rachel, she is the last of six pledges of her love—Will you deprive a widowed husband of his sole remaining comfort?—Will you reduce a father to wish that his only living child were laid beside her dead mother, in the tomb of our fathers?"

"I would," said the Norman, somewhat relenting, "that I had known of this before. I thought your race had loved nothing save their moneybags."

"Think not so vilely of us, Jews though we be," said Isaac, eager to improve the moment of apparent sympathy; "the hunted fox, the tortured wildcat loves its young—the despised and persecuted race of Abraham love their children!"

"Be it so," said Front-de-Boeuf; "I will believe it in future, Isaac, for thy very sake—but it aids us not now, I cannot help what has happened, or what is to follow; my word is passed to my comrade in arms, nor would I break it for ten Jews and Jewesses to boot. Besides, why shouldst thou think evil is to come to the girl, even if she became Bois-Guilbert's booty?"

"There will, there must!" exclaimed Isaac, wringing his hands in agony; "when did Templars breathe aught but cruelty to men, and dishonour to women!"

"Dog of an infidel," said Front-de-Boeuf, with sparkling eyes, and not sorry, perhaps, to seize a pretext for working himself into a passion, "blaspheme not the Holy Order of the Temple of Zion, but take thought instead to pay me the ransom thou hast promised, or woe betide thy Jewish throat!"

"Robber and villain!" said the Jew, retorting the insults of his oppressor with passion, which, however impotent, he now found it impossible to bridle, "I will pay thee nothing—not one silver penny will I pay thee, unless my daughter is delivered to me in safety and honour!"

"Art thou in thy senses, Israelite?" said the Norman, sternly—"has thy flesh and blood a charm against heated iron and scalding oil?"

"I care not!" said the Jew, rendered desperate by paternal affection; "do thy worst. My daughter is my flesh and blood, dearer to me a thousand times than those limbs which thy cruelty threatens. No silver will I give thee, unless I were to pour it molten down thy avaricious throat—no, not a silver penny will I give thee, Nazarene, were it to save thee from the deep damnation thy whole life has merited! Take my life if thou wilt, and say, the Jew, amidst his tortures, knew how to disappoint the Christian."

"We shall see that," said Front-de-Boeuf; "for by the blessed rood, which is the abomination of thy accursed tribe, thou shalt feel the extremities of fire and steel!—Strip him, slaves, and chain him down upon the bars."

In spite of the feeble struggles of the old man, the Saracens had already torn from him his upper garment, and were proceeding totally to disrobe him, when the sound of a bugle, twice winded without the castle, penetrated even to the recesses of the dungeon, and immediately after loud voices were heard calling for Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. Unwilling to be found engaged in his hellish occupation, the savage Baron gave the slaves a signal to restore Isaac's garment, and, quitting the dungeon with his attendants, he left the Jew to thank God for his own deliverance, or to lament over his daughter's captivity, and probable fate, as his personal or parental feelings might prove strongest.

CHAPTER XXIII

*Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words
Can no way change you to a milder form,
I'll woo you, like a soldier, at arms' end,
And love you 'gainst the nature of love, force you.*
—Two Gentlemen of Verona

The apartment to which the Lady Rowena had been introduced was fitted up with some rude attempts at ornament and magnificence, and her being placed there might be considered as a peculiar mark of respect not offered to the other prisoners. But the wife of Front-de-Boeuf, for whom it had been originally furnished, was long dead, and decay and neglect had impaired the few ornaments with which her taste had adorned it. The tapestry hung down from the walls in many places, and in others was tarnished and faded under the effects of the sun, or tattered and decayed by age. Desolate, however, as it was, this was the apartment of the castle which had been judged most fitting for the accommodation of the Saxon heiress; and here she was left to meditate upon her fate, until the actors in this nefarious drama had arranged the several parts which each of them was to perform. This had been settled in a council held by Front-de-Boeuf, De Bracy, and the Templar, in which, after a long and warm debate concerning the several advantages which each insisted upon deriving from his peculiar share in this audacious enterprise, they had at length determined the fate of their unhappy prisoners.

It was about the hour of noon, therefore, when De Bracy, for whose advantage the expedition had been first planned, appeared to prosecute his views upon the hand and possessions of the Lady Rowena.

The interval had not entirely been bestowed in holding council with his confederates, for De Bracy had found leisure to decorate his person with all the foppery of the times. His green cassock and vizard were now flung aside. His long luxuriant hair was trained to flow in quaint tresses down his richly furred cloak. His beard was closely shaved, his doublet reached to the middle of his leg, and the girdle which secured it, and at the same time supported his ponderous sword, was embroidered and embossed with gold work. We have already noticed the extravagant fashion of the shoes at this period, and the points of Maurice de Bracy's might have challenged the prize of extravagance with the gayest, being turned up and twisted like the horns of a ram. Such was the dress of a gallant of the period; and, in the present instance, that effect was aided by the handsome person and good demeanour of the wearer, whose manners partook alike of the grace of a courtier, and the frankness of a soldier.

He saluted Rowena by doffing his velvet bonnet, garnished with a golden broach, representing St Michael trampling down the Prince of Evil. With this, he gently motioned the lady to a seat; and, as she still retained her standing posture, the knight ungloved his right hand, and motioned to conduct her thither. But Rowena declined, by her gesture, the proffered compliment, and replied, "If I be in the presence of my jailor, Sir Knight—nor will circumstances allow me to think otherwise—it best becomes his prisoner to remain standing till she learns her doom."

"Alas! fair Rowena," returned De Bracy, "you are in presence of your captive, not your jailor; and it is from your fair eyes that De Bracy must receive that doom which you fondly expect from him."

"I know you not, sir," said the lady, drawing herself up with all the pride of offended rank and beauty; "I know you not—and the insolent familiarity with which you apply to me the jargon of a troubadour, forms no apology for the violence of a robber."

"To thyself, fair maid," answered De Bracy, in his former tone—"to thine own charms be ascribed whate'er I have done which passed the respect due to her, whom I have chosen queen of my heart, and lodestar of my eyes."

"I repeat to you, Sir Knight, that I know you not, and that no man wearing chain and spurs ought thus to intrude himself upon the presence of an unprotected lady."

"That I am unknown to you," said De Bracy, "is indeed my misfortune; yet let me hope that De Bracy's name has not been always unspoken, when minstrels or heralds have praised deeds of chivalry, whether in the lists or in the battle-field."

"To heralds and to minstrels, then, leave thy praise, Sir Knight," replied Rowena, "more suiting for their mouths than for thine own; and tell me which of them shall record in song, or in book of tourney, the memorable conquest of this night, a conquest obtained over an old man, followed by a few timid hinds; and its booty, an unfortunate maiden, transported against her will to the castle of a robber?"

"You are unjust, Lady Rowena," said the knight, biting his lips in some confusion, and speaking in a tone more natural to him than that of affected gallantry, which he had at first adopted; "yourself free from passion, you can allow no excuse for the frenzy of another, although caused by your own beauty."

"I pray you, Sir Knight," said Rowena, "to cease a language so commonly used by strolling minstrels, that it becomes not the mouth of knights or nobles. Certes, you constrain me to sit down, since you enter upon such commonplace terms, of which each vile crowder hath a stock that might last from hence to Christmas."

"Proud damsel," said De Bracy, incensed at finding his gallant style procured him nothing but contempt—"proud damsel, thou shalt be as proudly encountered. Know then, that I have supported my pretensions to your hand in the way that best suited thy character. It is meet for thy humour to be wooed with bow and bill, than in set terms, and in courtly language."

"Courtesy of tongue," said Rowena, "when it is used to veil churlishness of deed, is but a knight's girdle around the breast of a base clown. I wonder not that the restraint appears to gall you—more it were for your honour to have retained the dress and language of an outlaw, than to veil the deeds of one under an affectation of gentle language and demeanour."

"You counsel well, lady," said the Norman; "and in the bold language which best justifies bold action I tell thee, thou shalt never leave this castle, or thou shalt leave it as Maurice de Bracy's wife. I am not wont to be baffled in my enterprises, nor needs a Norman noble scrupulously to vindicate his conduct to the Saxon maiden whom he distinguishes by the offer of his hand. Thou art proud, Rowena, and thou art the fitter to be my wife. By what other means couldst thou be raised to high honour and to princely place, saving by my alliance? How else wouldst thou escape from the mean precincts of a country grange, where Saxons herd with the swine which form their wealth, to take thy seat, honoured as thou shouldst be, and shalt be, amid all in England that is distinguished by beauty, or dignified by power?"

"Sir Knight," replied Rowena, "the grange which you contemn hath been my shelter from infancy; and, trust me, when I leave it—should that day ever arrive—it shall be with one who has not learnt to despise the dwelling and manners in which I have been brought up."

"I guess your meaning, lady," said De Bracy, "though you may think it lies too obscure for my apprehension. But dream not, that Richard Coeur de Lion will ever resume his throne, far less that Wilfred of Ivanhoe, his minion, will ever lead thee to his footstool, to be there welcomed as the bride of a favourite. Another suitor might feel jealousy while he touched this string; but my firm purpose cannot be changed by a passion so childish and so hopeless. Know, lady, that this rival is in my power, and that it rests but with me to betray the secret of his being within the castle to Front-de-Boeuf, whose jealousy will be more fatal than mine."

"Wilfred here?" said Rowena, in disdain; "that is as true as that Front-de-Boeuf is his rival."

De Bracy looked at her steadily for an instant.

"Wert thou really ignorant of this?" said he; "didst thou not know that Wilfred of Ivanhoe travelled in the litter of the Jew?—a meet conveyance for the crusader, whose doughty arm was to reconquer the Holy Sepulchre!" And he laughed scornfully.

"And if he is here," said Rowena, compelling herself to a tone of indifference, though trembling with an agony of apprehension which she could not suppress, "in what is he the rival of Front-de-Boeuf? or what has he to fear beyond a short imprisonment, and an honourable ransom, according to the use of chivalry?"

"Rowena," said De Bracy, "art thou, too, deceived by the common error of thy sex, who think there can be no rivalry but that respecting their own charms? Knowest thou not there is a jealousy of ambition and of wealth, as well as of love; and that this our host, Front-de-Boeuf, will push from his road him who opposes his claim to the fair barony of Ivanhoe, as readily, eagerly, and unscrupulously, as if he were preferred to him by some blue-eyed damsel? But smile on my suit, lady, and the wounded champion shall have nothing to fear from Front-de-Boeuf, whom else thou mayst mourn for, as in the hands of one who has never shown compassion."

"Save him, for the love of Heaven!" said Rowena, her firmness giving way under terror for her lover's impending fate.

"I can—I will—it is my purpose," said De Bracy; "for, when Rowena consents to be the bride of De Bracy, who is it shall dare to put forth a violent hand upon her kinsman—the son of her guardian—the companion of her youth? But it is thy love must buy his protection. I am not romantic fool enough to further the fortune, or avert the fate, of one who is likely to be a successful obstacle between me and my wishes. Use thine influence with me in his behalf, and he is safe,—refuse to employ it, Wilfred dies, and thou thyself art not the nearer to freedom."

"Thy language," answered Rowena, "hath in its indifferent bluntness something which cannot be reconciled with the horrors it seems to express. I believe not that thy purpose is so wicked, or thy power so great."

"Flatter thyself, then, with that belief," said De Bracy, "until time shall prove it false. Thy lover lies wounded in this castle—thy preferred lover. He is a bar betwixt Front-de-Boeuf and that which Front-de-Boeuf loves better than either ambition or beauty. What will it cost beyond the blow of a poniard, or the thrust of a javelin, to silence his opposition for ever? Nay, were Front-de-Boeuf afraid to justify a deed so open, let the leech but give his patient a wrong draught—let the chamberlain, or the nurse who tends him, but pluck the pillow from his head, and Wilfred in his present condition, is sped without the effusion of blood. Cedric also—"

"And Cedric also," said Rowena, repeating his words; "my noble—my generous guardian! I deserved the evil I have encountered, for forgetting his fate even in that of his son!"

"Cedric's fate also depends upon thy determination," said De Bracy; "and I leave thee to form it."

Hitherto, Rowena had sustained her part in this trying scene with undismayed courage, but it was because she had not considered the danger as serious and imminent. Her disposition was naturally that which physiognomists consider as proper to fair complexions, mild, timid, and gentle; but it had been tempered, and, as it were, hardened, by the circumstances of her education. Accustomed to see the will of all, even of Cedric himself, (sufficiently arbitrary with others,) give way before her wishes, she had acquired that sort of courage and self-confidence which arises from the habitual and constant deference of the circle in which we move. She could scarce conceive the possibility of her will being opposed, far less that of its being treated with total disregard.

Her haughtiness and habit of domination was, therefore, a fictitious character, induced over that which was natural to her, and it deserted her when her eyes were opened to the extent of her own danger, as well as that of her lover and her guardian; and when she found her will, the slightest expression of which was wont to command respect and attention, now placed in opposition to that of a man of a strong, fierce, and determined mind, who possessed the advantage over her, and was resolved to use it, she quailed before him.

After casting her eyes around, as if to look for the aid which was nowhere to be found, and after a few broken interjections, she raised her hands to heaven, and burst into a passion of uncontrolled vexation and sorrow. It was impossible to see so beautiful a creature in such extremity without feeling for her, and De Bracy was not unmoved, though he was yet more embarrassed than touched. He had, in truth, gone too far to recede; and yet, in Rowena's present condition, she could not be acted on either by argument or threats. He paced the apartment to and fro, now vainly exhorting the terrified maiden to compose herself, now hesitating concerning his own line of conduct.

If, thought he, I should be moved by the tears and sorrow of this disconsolate damsel, what should I reap but the loss of these fair hopes for which I have encountered so much risk, and the ridicule of Prince John and his jovial comrades? "And yet," he said to himself, "I feel myself ill framed for the part which I am playing. I cannot look on so fair a face while it is disturbed with agony, or on those eyes when they are drowned in tears. I would she had retained her original haughtiness of disposition, or that I had a larger share of Front-de-Boeuf's thrice-tempered hardness of heart!"

Agitated by these thoughts, he could only bid the unfortunate Rowena be comforted, and assure her, that as yet she had no reason for the excess of despair to which she was now giving way. But in this task of consolation De Bracy was interrupted by the horn, "hoarse-winded blowing far and keen," which had at the same time alarmed the other inmates of the castle, and interrupted their several plans of avarice and of license. Of them all, perhaps, De Bracy least regretted the interruption; for his conference with the Lady Rowena had arrived at a point, where he found it equally difficult to prosecute or to resign his enterprise.

And here we cannot but think it necessary to offer some better proof than the incidents of an idle tale, to vindicate the melancholy representation of manners which has been just laid before the reader. It is grievous to think that those valiant barons, to whose stand against the crown the liberties of England were indebted for their existence, should themselves have been such dreadful oppressors, and capable of excesses contrary not only to the laws of England, but to those of nature and humanity. But, alas! we have only to extract from the industrious Henry one of those numerous passages which he has collected from contemporary historians, to prove that fiction itself can hardly reach the dark reality of the horrors of the period.

The description given by the author of the Saxon Chronicle of the cruelties exercised in the reign of King Stephen by the great barons and lords of castles, who were all Normans, affords a strong proof of the excesses of which they were capable when their passions were inflamed. "They grievously oppressed the poor people by building castles; and when they were built, they filled them with wicked men, or rather devils, who seized both men and women who they imagined had any money, threw them into prison, and put them to more cruel tortures than the martyrs ever endured. They suffocated some in mud, and suspended others by the feet, or the head, or the thumbs, kindling fires below them. They squeezed the heads of some with knotted cords till they pierced their brains, while they threw others into dungeons swarming with serpents, snakes, and toads." But it would be cruel to put the reader to the pain of perusing the remainder of this description. 29

As another instance of these bitter fruits of conquest, and perhaps the strongest that can be quoted, we may mention, that the Princess Matilda, though a daughter of the King of Scotland, and afterwards both Queen of England, niece to Edgar Atheling, and mother to the Empress of Germany, the daughter, the wife, and the mother of monarchs, was obliged, during her early residence for education in England, to assume the veil of a nun, as the only means of escaping the licentious pursuit of the Norman nobles. This excuse she stated before a great council of the clergy of England, as the sole reason for her having taken the religious habit. The assembled clergy admitted the validity of the plea, and the notoriety of the circumstances upon which it was founded; giving thus an indubitable and most remarkable testimony to the existence of that disgraceful license by which that age was stained. It was a matter of public knowledge, they said, that after the conquest of King William, his Norman followers, elated by so great a victory, acknowledged no law but their own wicked pleasure, and not only despoiled the conquered Saxons of their lands and their goods, but invaded the honour of their wives and of their daughters with the most unbridled license; and hence it was then common for matrons and maidens of noble families to assume the veil, and take shelter in convents, not as called thither by the vocation of God, but solely to preserve their honour from the unbridled wickedness of man.

Such and so licentious were the times, as announced by the public declaration of the assembled clergy, recorded by Eadmer; and we need add nothing more to vindicate the probability of the scenes which we have detailed, and are about to detail, upon the more apocryphal authority of the Wardour MS.

CHAPTER XXIV

I'll woo her as the lion woos his bride.

—Douglas

While the scenes we have described were passing in other parts of the castle, the Jewess Rebecca awaited her fate in a distant and sequestered turret. Hither she had been led by two of her disguised ravishers, and on being thrust into the little cell, she found herself in the presence of an old sibyl, who kept murmuring to herself a Saxon rhyme, as if to beat time to the revolving dance which her spindle was performing upon the floor. The hag raised her head as Rebecca entered, and scowled at the fair Jewess with the malignant envy with which old age and ugliness, when united with evil conditions, are apt to look upon youth and beauty.

"Thou must up and away, old house-cricket," said one of the men; "our noble master commands it—Thou must e'en leave this chamber to a fairer guest."

"Ay," grumbled the hag, "even thus is service requited. I have known when my bare word would have cast the best man-at-arms among ye out of saddle and out of service; and now must I up and away at the command of every groom such as thou."

"Good Dame Urfried," said the other man, "stand not to reason on it, but up and away. Lords' hests must be listened to with a quick ear. Thou hast had thy day, old dame, but thy sun has long been set. Thou art now the very emblem of an old war-horse turned out on the barren heath—thou hast had thy paces in thy time, but now a broken amble is the best of them—Come, amble off with thee."

"Ill omens dog ye both!" said the old woman; "and a kennel be your burying-place! May the evil demon Zerneck tear me limb from limb, if I leave my own cell ere I have spun out the hemp on my distaff!"

"Answer it to our lord, then, old housefiend," said the man, and retired; leaving Rebecca in company with the old woman, upon whose presence she had been thus unwillingly forced.

"What devil's deed have they now in the wind?" said the old hag, murmuring to herself, yet from time to time casting a sidelong and malignant glance at Rebecca; "but it is easy to guess—Bright eyes, black locks, and a skin like paper, ere the priest stains it with his black unguent—Ay, it is easy to guess why they send her to this lone turret, whence a shriek could no more be heard than at the depth of five hundred fathoms beneath the earth.—Thou wilt have owls for thy neighbours, fair one; and their screams will be heard as far, and as much regarded, as thine own. Outlandish, too," she said, marking the dress and turban of Rebecca—"What country art thou of?—a Saracen? or an Egyptian?—Why dost not answer?—thou canst weep, canst thou not speak?"

"Be not angry, good mother," said Rebecca.

"Thou needst say no more," replied Urfried "men know a fox by the train, and a Jewess by her tongue."

"For the sake of mercy," said Rebecca, "tell me what I am to expect as the conclusion of the violence which hath dragged me hither! Is it my life they seek, to atone for my religion? I will lay it down cheerfully."

"Thy life, minion?" answered the sibyl; "what would taking thy life pleasure them?—Trust me, thy life is in no peril. Such usage shalt thou have as was once thought good enough for a noble Saxon maiden. And shall a Jewess, like thee, repine because she hath no better? Look at me—I was as young and twice as fair as thou, when Front-de-Boeuf, father of this Reginald, and his Normans, stormed this castle. My father and his seven sons defended their inheritance from story to story, from chamber to chamber—There was not a room, not a step of the stair, that was not slippery with their blood. They died—they died every man; and ere their bodies were cold, and ere their blood was dried, I had become the prey and the scorn of the conqueror!"

"Is there no help?—Are there no means of escape?" said Rebecca—"Richly, richly would I requite thine aid."

"Think not of it," said the hag; "from hence there is no escape but through the gates of death; and it is late, late," she added, shaking her grey head, "ere these open to us—Yet it is comfort to think that we leave behind us on earth those who shall be wretched as ourselves. Fare thee well, Jewess!—Jew or Gentile, thy fate would be the same; for thou hast to do with them that have neither scruple nor pity. Fare thee well, I say. My thread is spun out—thy task is yet to begin."

"Stay! stay! for Heaven's sake!" said Rebecca; "stay, though it be to curse and to revile me—thy presence is yet some protection."

"The presence of the mother of God were no protection," answered the old woman. "There she stands," pointing to a rude image of the Virgin Mary, "see if she can avert the fate that awaits thee."

She left the room as she spoke, her features writhed into a sort of sneering laugh, which made them seem even more hideous than their habitual frown. She locked the door behind her, and Rebecca might hear her curse every step for its steepness, as slowly and with difficulty she descended the turret-stair.

Rebecca was now to expect a fate even more dreadful than that of Rowena; for what probability was there that either softness or ceremony would be used towards one of her oppressed race, whatever shadow of these might be preserved towards a Saxon heiress? Yet had the Jewess this advantage, that she was better prepared by habits of thought, and by natural strength of mind, to encounter the dangers to which she was exposed. Of a strong and observing character, even from her earliest years, the pomp and wealth which her father displayed within his walls, or which she witnessed in the houses of other wealthy Hebrews, had not been able to blind her to the precarious circumstances under which they were enjoyed. Like Damocles at his celebrated banquet, Rebecca perpetually beheld, amid that gorgeous display, the sword which was suspended over the heads of her people by a single hair. These reflections had tamed and brought down to a pitch of sounder judgment a temper, which, under other circumstances, might have waxed haughty, supercilious, and obstinate.

From her father's example and injunctions, Rebecca had learnt to bear herself courteously towards all who approached her. She could not indeed imitate his excess of subservience, because she was a stranger to the meanness of mind, and to the constant state of timid apprehension, by which it was dictated; but she bore herself with a proud humility, as if submitting to the evil circumstances in which she was placed as the daughter of a despised race, while she felt in her mind the consciousness that she was entitled to hold a higher rank from her merit, than the arbitrary despotism of religious prejudice permitted her to aspire to.

Thus prepared to expect adverse circumstances, she had acquired the firmness necessary for acting under them. Her present situation required all her presence of mind, and she summoned it up accordingly.

Her first care was to inspect the apartment; but it afforded few hopes either of escape or protection. It contained neither secret passage nor trap-door, and unless where the door by which she had entered joined the main building, seemed to be circumscribed by the round exterior wall of the turret. The door had no inside bolt or bar. The single window opened upon an embattled space surmounting the turret, which gave Rebecca, at first sight, some hopes of escaping; but she soon found it had no communication with any other part of the battlements, being an isolated bartizan, or balcony, secured, as usual, by a parapet, with embrasures, at which a few archers might be stationed for defending the turret, and flanking with their shot the wall of the castle on that side.

There was therefore no hope but in passive fortitude, and in that strong reliance on Heaven natural to great and generous characters. Rebecca, however erroneously taught to interpret the promises of Scripture to the chosen people of Heaven, did not err in supposing the present to be their hour of trial, or in trusting that the children of Zion would be one day called in with the fulness of the Gentiles. In the meanwhile, all around her showed that their present state was that of punishment and probation, and that it was their especial duty to suffer without sinning. Thus prepared to consider herself as the victim of misfortune, Rebecca had early reflected upon her own state, and schooled her mind to meet the dangers which she had probably to encounter.

The prisoner trembled, however, and changed colour, when a step was heard on the stair, and the door of the turret-chamber slowly opened, and a tall man, dressed as one of those banditti to whom they owed their misfortune, slowly entered, and shut the door behind him; his cap, pulled down upon his brows, concealed the upper part of his face, and he held his mantle in such a manner as to muffle the rest. In this guise, as if prepared for the execution of some deed, at the thought of which he was himself ashamed, he stood before the affrighted prisoner; yet, ruffian as his dress bespoke him, he seemed at a loss to express what purpose had brought him thither, so that Rebecca, making an effort upon herself, had time to anticipate his explanation. She had already unclasped two costly bracelets and a collar, which she hastened to proffer to the supposed outlaw, concluding naturally that to gratify his avarice was to bespeak his favour.

"Take these," she said, "good friend, and for God's sake be merciful to me and my aged father! These ornaments are of value, yet are they trifling to what he would bestow to obtain our dismissal from this castle, free and uninjured."

"Fair flower of Palestine," replied the outlaw, "these pearls are orient, but they yield in whiteness to your teeth; the diamonds are brilliant, but they cannot match your eyes; and ever since I have taken up this wild trade, I have made a vow to prefer beauty to wealth."

"Do not do yourself such wrong," said Rebecca; "take ransom, and have mercy!—Gold will purchase you pleasure,—to misuse us, could only bring thee remorse. My father will willingly satiate thy utmost wishes; and if thou wilt act wisely, thou mayst purchase with our spoils thy restoration to civil society—mayst obtain pardon for past errors, and be placed beyond the necessity of committing more."

"It is well spoken," replied the outlaw in French, finding it difficult probably to sustain, in Saxon, a conversation which Rebecca had opened in that language; "but know, bright lily of the vale of Baca! that thy father is already in the hands of a powerful alchemist, who knows how to convert into gold and silver even the rusty bars of a dungeon grate. The venerable Isaac is subjected to an alembic, which will distil from him all he holds dear, without any assistance from my requests or thy entreaty. The ransom must be paid by love and beauty, and in no other coin will I accept it."

"Thou art no outlaw," said Rebecca, in the same language in which he addressed her; "no outlaw had refused such offers. No outlaw in this land uses the dialect in which thou hast spoken. Thou art no outlaw, but a Norman—a Norman, noble perhaps in birth—O, be so in thy actions, and cast off this fearful mask of outrage and violence!"

"And thou, who canst guess so truly," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, dropping the mantle from his face, "art no true daughter of Israel, but in all, save youth and beauty, a very witch of Endor. I am not an outlaw, then, fair rose of Sharon. And I am one who will be more prompt to hang thy neck and arms with pearls and diamonds, which so well become them, than to deprive thee of these ornaments."

"What wouldst thou have of me," said Rebecca, "if not my wealth?—We can have nought in common between us—you are a Christian—I am a Jewess.—Our union were contrary to the laws, alike of the church and the synagogue."

"It were so, indeed," replied the Templar, laughing; "wed with a Jewess? 'Despardieux!'—Not if she were the Queen of Sheba! And know, besides, sweet daughter of Zion, that were the most Christian king to offer me his most Christian daughter, with Languedoc for a dowry, I could not wed her. It is against my vow to love any maiden, otherwise than 'par amours', as I will love thee. I am a Templar. Behold the cross of my Holy Order."

"Darest thou appeal to it," said Rebecca, "on an occasion like the present?"

"And if I do so," said the Templar, "it concerns not thee, who art no believer in the blessed sign of our salvation."

"I believe as my fathers taught," said Rebecca; "and may God forgive my belief if erroneous! But you, Sir Knight, what is yours, when you appeal without scruple to that which you deem most holy, even while you are about to transgress the most solemn of your vows as a knight, and as a man of religion?"

"It is gravely and well preached, O daughter of Sirach!" answered the Templar; "but, gentle Ecclesiastics, thy narrow Jewish prejudices make thee blind to our high privilege. Marriage were an enduring crime on the part of a Templar; but what lesser folly I may practise, I shall speedily be absolved from at the next Preceptory of our Order. Not the wisest of monarchs, not his father, whose examples you must needs allow are weighty, claimed wider privileges than we poor soldiers of the Temple of Zion have won by our zeal in its defence. The protectors of Solomon's Temple may claim license by the example of Solomon."

"If thou redest the Scripture," said the Jewess, "and the lives of the saints, only to justify thine own license and profligacy, thy crime is like that of him who extracts poison from the most healthful and necessary herbs."

The eyes of the Templar flashed fire at this reproof—"Hearken," he said, "Rebecca; I have hitherto spoken mildly to thee, but now my language shall be that of a conqueror. Thou art the captive of my bow and spear—subject to my will by the laws of all nations; nor will I abate an inch of my right, or abstain from taking by violence what thou refusest to entreaty or necessity."

"Stand back," said Rebecca—"stand back, and hear me ere thou offerest to commit a sin so deadly! My strength thou mayst indeed overpower for God made women weak, and trusted their defence to man's generosity. But I will proclaim thy villainy, Templar, from one end of Europe to the other. I will owe to the superstition of thy brethren what their compassion might refuse me, Each Preceptory—each Chapter of thy Order, shall learn, that, like a heretic, thou hast sinned with a Jewess. Those who tremble not at thy crime, will hold thee accursed for having so far dishonoured the cross thou wearest, as to follow a daughter of my people."

"Thou art keen-witted, Jewess," replied the Templar, well aware of the truth of what she spoke, and that the rules of his Order condemned in the most positive manner, and under high penalties, such intrigues as he now prosecuted, and that, in some instances, even degradation had followed upon it—"thou art sharp-witted," he said; "but loud must be thy voice of complaint, if it is heard beyond the iron walls of this castle; within these, murmurs, laments, appeals to justice, and screams for help, die alike silent away. One thing only can save thee, Rebecca. Submit to thy fate—embrace our religion, and thou shalt go forth in such state, that many a Norman lady shall yield as well in pomp as in beauty to the favourite of the best lance among the defenders of the Temple."

"Submit to my fate!" said Rebecca—"and, sacred Heaven! to what fate?—embrace thy religion! and what religion can it be that harbours such a villain?—THOU the best lance of the Templars!—Craven knight!—forsworn priest! I spit at thee, and I defy thee.—The God of Abraham's promise hath opened an escape to his daughter—even from this abyss of infamy!"

As she spoke, she threw open the latticed window which led to the bartizan, and in an instant after, stood on the very verge of the parapet, with not the slightest screen between her and the tremendous depth below. Unprepared for such a desperate effort, for she had hitherto stood perfectly motionless, Bois-Guilbert had neither time to intercept nor to stop her. As he offered to advance, she exclaimed, "Remain where thou art, proud Templar, or at thy choice advance!—one foot nearer, and I plunge myself from the precipice; my body shall be crushed out of the very form of humanity upon the stones of that court-yard, ere it become the victim of thy brutality!"

As she spoke this, she clasped her hands and extended them towards heaven, as if imploring mercy on her soul before she made the final plunge. The Templar hesitated, and a resolution which had never yielded to pity or distress, gave way to his admiration of her fortitude. "Come down," he said, "rash girl!—I swear by earth, and sea, and sky, I will offer thee no offence."

"I will not trust thee, Templar," said Rebecca; "thou hast taught me better how to estimate the virtues of thine Order. The next Preceptory would grant thee absolution for an oath, the keeping of which concerned nought but the honour or the dishonour of a miserable Jewish maiden."

"You do me injustice," exclaimed the Templar fervently; "I swear to you by the name which I bear—by the cross on my bosom—by the sword on my side—by the ancient crest of my fathers do I swear, I will do thee no injury whatsoever! If not for thyself, yet for thy father's sake forbear! I will be his friend, and in this castle he will need a powerful one."

"Alas!" said Rebecca, "I know it but too well—dare I trust thee?"

"May my arms be reversed, and my name dishonoured," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "if thou shalt have reason to complain of me! Many a law, many a commandment have I broken, but my word never."

"I will then trust thee," said Rebecca, "thus far;" and she descended from the verge of the battlement, but remained standing close by one of the embrasures, or "machicolles", as they were then called.—"Here," she said, "I take my stand. Remain where thou art, and if thou shalt attempt to diminish by one step the distance now between us, thou shalt see that the Jewish maiden will rather trust her soul with God, than her honour to the Templar!"

While Rebecca spoke thus, her high and firm resolve, which corresponded so well with the expressive beauty of her countenance, gave to her looks, air, and manner, a dignity that seemed more than mortal. Her glance quailed not, her cheek blanched not, for the fear of a fate so instant and so horrible; on the contrary, the thought that she had her fate at her command, and could escape at will from infamy to death, gave a yet deeper colour of carnation to her complexion, and a yet more brilliant fire to her eye. Bois-Guilbert, proud himself and high-spirited, thought he had never beheld beauty so animated and so commanding.

"Let there be peace between us, Rebecca," he said.

"Peace, if thou wilt," answered Rebecca—"Peace—but with this space between."

"Thou needst no longer fear me," said Bois-Guilbert.

"I fear thee not," replied she; "thanks to him that reared this dizzy tower so high, that nought could fall from it and live—thanks to him, and to the God of Israel!—I fear thee not."

"Thou dost me injustice," said the Templar; "by earth, sea, and sky, thou dost me injustice! I am not naturally that which you have seen me, hard, selfish, and relentless. It was woman that taught me cruelty, and on woman therefore I have exercised it; but not upon such as thou. Hear me, Rebecca—Never did knight take lance in his hand with a heart more devoted to the lady of his love than Brian de Bois-Guilbert. She, the daughter of a petty baron, who boasted for all his domains but a ruinous tower, and an unproductive vineyard, and some few leagues of the barren Landes of Bourdeaux, her name was known wherever deeds of arms were done, known wider than that of many a lady's that had a county for a dowry.—Yes," he continued, pacing up and down the little platform, with an animation in which he seemed to lose all consciousness of Rebecca's presence—"Yes, my deeds, my danger, my blood, made the name of Adelaide de Montemare known from the court of Castile to that of Byzantium. And how was I requited?—When I returned with my dear-bought honours, purchased by toil and blood, I found her wedded to a Gascon squire, whose name was never heard beyond the limits of his own paltry domain! Truly did I love her, and bitterly did I revenge me of her broken faith! But my vengeance has recoiled on myself. Since that day I have separated myself from life and its ties—My manhood must know no domestic home—must be soothed by no affectionate wife—My age must know no kindly hearth—My grave must be solitary, and no offspring must outlive me, to bear the ancient name of Bois-Guilbert. At the feet of my Superior I have laid down the right of self-action—the privilege of independence. The Templar, a serf in all but the name, can possess neither lands nor goods, and lives, moves, and breathes, but at the will and pleasure of another."

"Alas!" said Rebecca, "what advantages could compensate for such an absolute sacrifice?"

"The power of vengeance, Rebecca," replied the Templar, "and the prospects of ambition."

"An evil recompense," said Rebecca, "for the surrender of the rights which are dearest to humanity."

"Say not so, maiden," answered the Templar; "revenge is a feast for the gods! And if they have reserved it, as priests tell us, to themselves, it is because they hold it an enjoyment too precious for the possession of mere mortals.—And ambition? it is a temptation which could disturb even the bliss of heaven itself."—He paused a moment, and then added, "Rebecca! she who could prefer death to dishonour, must have a proud and a powerful soul. Mine thou must be!—Nay, start not," he added, "it must be with thine own consent, and on thine own terms. Thou must consent to share with me hopes more extended than can be viewed from the throne of a monarch!—Hear me ere you answer and judge ere you refuse.—The Templar loses, as thou hast said, his social rights, his power of free agency, but he becomes a member and a limb of a mighty body, before which thrones already tremble,—even as the single drop of rain which mixes with the sea becomes an individual part of that resistless ocean, which undermines rocks and ingulfs royal armadas. Such a swelling flood is that powerful league. Of this mighty Order I am no mean member, but already one of the Chief Commanders, and may well aspire one day to hold the baton of Grand Master. The poor soldiers of the Temple will not alone place their foot upon the necks of kings—a hemp-sandall'd monk can do that. Our mailed step shall ascend their throne—our gauntlet shall wrench the sceptre from their gripe. Not the reign of your vainly-expected Messiah offers such power to your dispersed tribes as my ambition may aim at. I have sought but a kindred spirit to share it, and I have found such in thee."

"Sayest thou this to one of my people?" answered Rebecca. "Bethink thee—"

"Answer me not," said the Templar, "by urging the difference of our creeds; within our secret conclaves we hold these nursery tales in derision. Think not we long remained blind to the idiotical folly of our founders, who forswore every delight of life for the pleasure of dying martyrs by hunger, by thirst, and by pestilence, and by the swords of savages, while they vainly strove to defend a barren desert, valuable only in the eyes of superstition. Our Order soon adopted bolder and wider views, and found out a better indemnification for our sacrifices. Our immense possessions in every kingdom of Europe, our high military fame, which brings within our circle the flower of chivalry from every Christian clime—these are dedicated to ends of which our pious founders little dreamed, and which are equally concealed from such weak spirits as embrace our Order on the ancient principles, and whose superstition makes them our passive tools. But I will not further withdraw the veil of our mysteries. That bugle-sound announces something which may require my presence. Think on what I have said.—Farewell!—I do not say forgive me the violence I have threatened, for it was necessary to the display of thy character. Gold can be only known by the application of the touchstone. I will soon return, and hold further conference with thee."

He re-entered the turret-chamber, and descended the stair, leaving Rebecca scarcely more terrified at the prospect of the death to which she had been so lately exposed, than at the furious ambition of the bold bad man in whose power she found herself so unhappily placed. When she entered the turret-chamber, her first duty was to return thanks to the God of Jacob for the protection which he had afforded her, and to implore its continuance for her and for her father. Another name glided into her petition—it was that of the wounded Christian, whom fate had placed in the hands of bloodthirsty men, his avowed enemies. Her heart indeed checked her, as if, even in communing with the Deity in prayer, she mingled in her devotions the recollection of one with whose fate hers could have no alliance—a Nazarene, and an enemy to her faith. But the petition was already breathed, nor could all the narrow prejudices of her sect induce Rebecca to wish it recalled.

CHAPTER XXV

A damn'd cramp piece of penmanship as ever I saw in my life!

—She Stoops to Conquer

When the Templar reached the hall of the castle, he found De Bracy already there. "Your love-suit," said De Bracy, "hath, I suppose, been disturbed, like mine, by this obstreperous summons. But you have come later and more reluctantly, and therefore I presume your interview has proved more agreeable than mine."

"Has your suit, then, been unsuccessfully paid to the Saxon heiress?" said the Templar.

"By the bones of Thomas a Becket," answered De Bracy, "the Lady Rowena must have heard that I cannot endure the sight of women's tears."

"Away!" said the Templar; "thou a leader of a Free Company, and regard a woman's tears! A few drops sprinkled on the torch of love, make the flame blaze the brighter."

"Gramercy for the few drops of thy sprinkling," replied De Bracy; "but this damsel hath wept enough to extinguish a beacon-light. Never was such wringing of hands and such overflowing of eyes, since the days of St Niobe, of whom Prior Aymer told us. 30 A water-fiend hath possessed the fair Saxon."

"A legion of fiends have occupied the bosom of the Jewess," replied the Templar; "for, I think no single one, not even Apollyon himself, could have inspired such indomitable pride and resolution.—But where is Front-de-Boeuf? That horn is sounded more and more clamorously."

"He is negotiating with the Jew, I suppose," replied De Bracy, coolly; "probably the howls of Isaac have drowned the blast of the bugle. Thou mayst know, by experience, Sir Brian, that a Jew parting with his treasures on such terms as our friend Front-de-Boeuf is like to offer, will raise a clamour loud enough to be heard over twenty horns and trumpets to boot. But we will make the vassals call him."

They were soon after joined by Front-de-Boeuf, who had been disturbed in his tyrannic cruelty in the manner with which the reader is acquainted, and had only tarried to give some necessary directions.

"Let us see the cause of this cursed clamour," said Front-de-Boeuf—"here is a letter, and, if I mistake not, it is in Saxon."

He looked at it, turning it round and round as if he had had really some hopes of coming at the meaning by inverting the position of the paper, and then handed it to De Bracy.

"It may be magic spells for aught I know," said De Bracy, who possessed his full proportion of the ignorance which characterised the chivalry of the period. "Our chaplain attempted to teach me to write," he said, "but all my letters were formed like spear-heads and sword-blades, and so the old shaveling gave up the task."

"Give it me," said the Templar. "We have that of the priestly character, that we have some knowledge to enlighten our valour."

"Let us profit by your most reverend knowledge, then," said De Bracy; "what says the scroll?"

"It is a formal letter of defiance," answered the Templar; "but, by our Lady of Bethlehem, if it be not a foolish jest, it is the most extraordinary cartel that ever was sent across the drawbridge of a baronial castle."

"Jest!" said Front-de-Boeuf, "I would gladly know who dares jest with me in such a matter!—Read it, Sir Brian."

The Templar accordingly read it as follows:—"I, Wamba, the son of Witless, Jester to a noble and free-born man, Cedric of Rotherwood, called the Saxon,—And I, Gurth, the son of Beowulph, the swineherd—"

"Thou art mad," said Front-de-Boeuf, interrupting the reader.

"By St Luke, it is so set down," answered the Templar. Then resuming his task, he went on,—"*I, Gurth, the son of Beowulph, swineherd unto the said Cedric, with the assistance of our allies and confederates, who make common cause with us in this our feud, namely, the good knight, called for the present 'Le Noir Faineant', and the stout yeoman, Robert Locksley, called Cleave-the-Wand. Do you, Reginald Front de-Boeuf, and your allies and accomplices whomsoever, to wit, that whereas you have, without cause given or feud declared, wrongfully and by mastery seized upon the person of our lord and master the said Cedric; also upon the person of a noble and freeborn damsel, the Lady Rowena of Hargottstandstede; also upon the person of a noble and freeborn man, Athelstane of Coningsburgh; also upon the persons of certain freeborn men, their 'cnichts'; also upon certain serfs, their born bondsmen; also upon a certain Jew, named Isaac of York, together with his daughter, a Jewess, and certain horses and mules: Which noble persons, with their 'cnichts' and slaves, and also with the horses and mules, Jew and Jewess beforesaid, were all in peace with his majesty, and travelling as liege subjects upon the king's highway; therefore we require and demand that the said noble persons, namely, Cedric of Rotherwood, Rowena of Hargottstandstede, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, with their servants, 'cnichts', and followers, also the horses and mules, Jew and Jewess aforesaid, together with all goods and chattels to them pertaining, be, within an hour after the delivery hereof, delivered to us, or to those whom we shall appoint to receive the same, and that untouched and unharmed in body and goods. Failing of which, we do pronounce to you, that we hold ye as robbers and traitors, and will wager our bodies against ye in battle, siege, or otherwise, and do our utmost to your annoyance and destruction. Wherefore may God have you in his keeping.—Signed by us upon the eve of St Withold's day, under the great trysting oak in the Hart-hill Walk, the above being written by a holy man, Clerk to God, our Lady, and St Dunstan, in the Chapel of Copmanhurst.*"

At the bottom of this document was scrawled, in the first place, a rude sketch of a cock's head and comb, with a legend expressing this hieroglyphic to be the sign-manual of Wamba, son of Witless. Under this respectable emblem stood a cross, stated to be the mark of Gurth, the son of Beowulph. Then was written, in rough bold characters, the words, "Le Noir Faineant". And, to conclude the whole, an arrow, neatly enough drawn, was described as the mark of the yeoman Locksley.

The knights heard this uncommon document read from end to end, and then gazed upon each other in silent amazement, as being utterly at a loss to know what it could portend. De Bracy was the first to break silence by an uncontrollable fit of laughter, wherein he was joined, though with more moderation, by the Templar. Front-de-Boeuf, on the contrary, seemed impatient of their ill-timed jocularity.

"I give you plain warning," he said, "fair sirs, that you had better consult how to bear yourselves under these circumstances, than give way to such misplaced merriment."

"Front-de-Boeuf has not recovered his temper since his late overthrow," said De Bracy to the Templar; "he is cowed at the very idea of a cartel, though it come but from a fool and a swineherd."

"By St Michael," answered Front-de-Boeuf, "I would thou couldst stand the whole brunt of this adventure thyself, De Bracy. These fellows dared not have acted with such inconceivable impudence, had they not been supported by some strong bands. There are enough of outlaws in this forest to resent my protecting the deer. I did but tie one fellow, who was taken redhanded and in the fact, to the horns of a wild stag, which gored him to death in five minutes, and I had as many arrows shot at me as there were launched against yonder target at Ashby.—Here, fellow," he added, to one of his attendants, "hast thou sent out to see by what force this precious challenge is to be supported?"

"There are at least two hundred men assembled in the woods," answered a squire who was in attendance.

"Here is a proper matter!" said Front-de-Boeuf, "this comes of lending you the use of my castle, that cannot manage your undertaking quietly, but you must bring this nest of hornets about my ears!"

"Of hornets?" said De Bracy; "of stingless drones rather; a band of lazy knaves, who take to the wood, and destroy the venison rather than labour for their maintenance."

"Stingless!" replied Front-de-Boeuf; "fork-headed shafts of a cloth-yard in length, and these shot within the breadth of a French crown, are sting enough."

"For shame, Sir Knight!" said the Templar. "Let us summon our people, and sally forth upon them. One knight—ay, one man-at-arms, were enough for twenty such peasants."

"Enough, and too much," said De Bracy; "I should only be ashamed to couch lance against them."

"True," answered Front-de-Boeuf; "were they black Turks or Moors, Sir Templar, or the craven peasants of France, most valiant De Bracy; but these are English yeomen, over whom we shall have no advantage, save what we may derive from our arms and horses, which will avail us little in the glades of the forest. Sally, saidst thou? we have scarce men enough to defend the castle. The best of mine are at York; so is all your band, De Bracy; and we have scarcely twenty, besides the handful that were engaged in this mad business."

"Thou dost not fear," said the Templar, "that they can assemble in force sufficient to attempt the castle?"

"Not so, Sir Brian," answered Front-de-Boeuf. "These outlaws have indeed a daring captain; but without machines, scaling ladders, and experienced leaders, my castle may defy them."

"Send to thy neighbours," said the Templar, "let them assemble their people, and come to the rescue of three knights, besieged by a jester and a swineherd in the baronial castle of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf!"

"You jest, Sir Knight," answered the baron; "but to whom should I send?—Malvoisin is by this time at York with his retainers, and so are my other allies; and so should I have been, but for this infernal enterprise."

"Then send to York, and recall our people," said De Bracy. "If they abide the shaking of my standard, or the sight of my Free Companions, I will give them credit for the boldest outlaws ever bent bow in green-wood."

"And who shall bear such a message?" said Front-de-Boeuf; "they will beset every path, and rip the errand out of his bosom.—I have it," he added, after pausing for a moment—"Sir Templar, thou canst write as well as read, and if we can but find the writing materials of my chaplain, who died a twelvemonth since in the midst of his Christmas carousals—"

"So please ye," said the squire, who was still in attendance, "I think old Urfried has them somewhere in keeping, for love of the confessor. He was the last man, I have heard her tell, who ever said aught to her, which man ought in courtesy to address to maid or matron."

"Go, search them out, Engelred," said Front-de-Boeuf; "and then, Sir Templar, thou shalt return an answer to this bold challenge."

"I would rather do it at the sword's point than at that of the pen," said Bois-Guilbert; "but be it as you will."

He sat down accordingly, and indited, in the French language, an epistle of the following tenor:—"Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, with his noble and knightly allies and confederates, receive no defiances at the hands of slaves, bondsmen, or fugitives. If the person calling himself the Black Knight have indeed a claim to the honours of chivalry, he ought to know that he stands degraded by his present association, and has no right to ask reckoning at the hands of good men of noble blood. Touching the prisoners we have made, we do in Christian charity require you to send a man of religion, to receive their confession, and reconcile them with God; since it is our fixed intention to execute them this morning before noon, so that their heads being placed on the battlements, shall show to all men how lightly

we esteem those who have bestirred themselves in their rescue. Wherefore, as above, we require you to send a priest to reconcile them to God, in doing which you shall render them the last earthly service."

This letter being folded, was delivered to the squire, and by him to the messenger who waited without, as the answer to that which he had brought.

The yeoman having thus accomplished his mission, returned to the head-quarters of the allies, which were for the present established under a venerable oak-tree, about three arrow-flights distant from the castle. Here Wamba and Gurth, with their allies the Black Knight and Locksley, and the jovial hermit, awaited with impatience an answer to their summons. Around, and at a distance from them, were seen many a bold yeoman, whose silvan dress and weatherbeaten countenances showed the ordinary nature of their occupation. More than two hundred had already assembled, and others were fast coming in. Those whom they obeyed as leaders were only distinguished from the others by a feather in the cap, their dress, arms, and equipments being in all other respects the same.

Besides these bands, a less orderly and a worse armed force, consisting of the Saxon inhabitants of the neighbouring township, as well as many bondsmen and servants from Cedric's extensive estate, had already arrived, for the purpose of assisting in his rescue. Few of these were armed otherwise than with such rustic weapons as necessity sometimes converts to military purposes. Boar-spears, scythes, flails, and the like, were their chief arms; for the Normans, with the usual policy of conquerors, were jealous of permitting to the vanquished Saxons the possession or the use of swords and spears. These circumstances rendered the assistance of the Saxons far from being so formidable to the besieged, as the strength of the men themselves, their superior numbers, and the animation inspired by a just cause, might otherwise well have made them. It was to the leaders of this motley army that the letter of the Templar was now delivered.

Reference was at first made to the chaplain for an exposition of its contents.

"By the crook of St Dunstan," said that worthy ecclesiastic, "which hath brought more sheep within the sheepfold than the crook of e'er another saint in Paradise, I swear that I cannot expound unto you this jargon, which, whether it be French or Arabic, is beyond my guess."

He then gave the letter to Gurth, who shook his head gruffly, and passed it to Wamba. The Jester looked at each of the four corners of the paper with such a grin of affected intelligence as a monkey is apt to assume upon similar occasions, then cut a caper, and gave the letter to Locksley.

"If the long letters were bows, and the short letters broad arrows, I might know something of the matter," said the brave yeoman; "but as the matter stands, the meaning is as safe, for me, as the stag that's at twelve miles distance."

"I must be clerk, then," said the Black Knight; and taking the letter from Locksley, he first read it over to himself, and then explained the meaning in Saxon to his confederates.

"Execute the noble Cedric!" exclaimed Wamba; "by the rood, thou must be mistaken, Sir Knight."

"Not I, my worthy friend," replied the knight, "I have explained the words as they are here set down."

"Then, by St Thomas of Canterbury," replied Gurth, "we will have the castle, should we tear it down with our hands!"

"We have nothing else to tear it with," replied Wamba; "but mine are scarce fit to make mammoicks of freestone and mortar."

"'Tis but a contrivance to gain time," said Locksley; "they dare not do a deed for which I could exact a fearful penalty."

"I would," said the Black Knight, "there were some one among us who could obtain admission into the castle, and discover how the case stands with the besieged. Methinks, as they require a confessor to be sent, this holy hermit might at once exercise his pious vocation, and procure us the information we desire."

"A plague on thee, and thy advice!" said the pious hermit; "I tell thee, Sir Slothful Knight, that when I doff my friar's frock, my priesthood, my sanctity, my very Latin, are put off along with it; and when in my green jerkin, I can better kill twenty deer than confess one Christian."

"I fear," said the Black Knight, "I fear greatly, there is no one here that is qualified to take upon him, for the nonce, this same character of father confessor?"

All looked on each other, and were silent.

"I see," said Wamba, after a short pause, "that the fool must be still the fool, and put his neck in the venture which wise men shrink from. You must know, my dear cousins and countrymen, that I wore russet before I wore motley, and was bred to be a friar, until a brain-fever came upon me and left me just wit enough to be a fool. I trust, with the assistance of the good hermit's frock, together with the priesthood, sanctity, and learning which are stitched into the cowl of it, I shall be found qualified to administer both worldly and ghostly comfort to our worthy master Cedric, and his companions in adversity."

"Hath he sense enough, thinkst thou?" said the Black Knight, addressing Gurth.

"I know not," said Gurth; "but if he hath not, it will be the first time he hath wanted wit to turn his folly to account."

"On with the frock, then, good fellow," quoth the Knight, "and let thy master send us an account of their situation within the castle. Their numbers must be few, and it is five to one they may be accessible by a sudden and bold attack. Time wears—away with thee."

"And, in the meantime," said Locksley, "we will beset the place so closely, that not so much as a fly shall carry news from thence. So that, my good friend," he continued, addressing Wamba, "thou mayst assure these tyrants, that whatever violence they exercise on the persons of their prisoners, shall be most severely repaid upon their own."

"Pax vobiscum," said Wamba, who was now muffled in his religious disguise.

And so saying he imitated the solemn and stately deportment of a friar, and departed to execute his mission.

CHAPTER XXVI

The hottest horse will oft be cool,

The dullest will show fire;

The friar will often play the fool,

The fool will play the friar.

—Old Song

When the Jester, arrayed in the cowl and frock of the hermit, and having his knotted cord twisted round his middle, stood before the portal of the castle of Front-de-Boeuf, the warder demanded of him his name and errand.

"Pax vobiscum," answered the Jester, "I am a poor brother of the Order of St Francis, who come hither to do my office to certain unhappy prisoners now secured within this castle."

"Thou art a bold friar," said the warder, "to come hither, where, saving our own drunken confessor, a cock of thy feather hath not crowed these twenty years."

"Yet I pray thee, do mine errand to the lord of the castle," answered the pretended friar; "trust me it will find good acceptance with him, and the cock shall crow, that the whole castle shall hear him."

"Gramercy," said the warder; "but if I come to shame for leaving my post upon thine errand, I will try whether a friar's grey gown be proof against a grey-goose shaft."

With this threat he left his turret, and carried to the hall of the castle his unwonted intelligence, that a holy friar stood before the gate and demanded instant admission. With no small wonder he received his master's commands to admit the holy man immediately; and, having previously manned the entrance to guard against surprise, he obeyed, without further scruple, the commands which he had received. The harebrained self-conceit which had emboldened Wamba to undertake this dangerous office, was scarce sufficient to support him when he found himself in the presence of a man so dreadful, and so much dreaded, as Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, and he brought out his "pax vobiscum", to which he, in a good measure, trusted for supporting his character, with more anxiety and hesitation than had hitherto accompanied it. But Front-de-Boeuf was accustomed to see men of all ranks tremble in his presence, so that the timidity of the supposed father did not give him any cause of suspicion.

"Who and whence art thou, priest?" said he.

"Pax vobiscum!," reiterated the Jester, "I am a poor servant of St Francis, who, travelling through this wilderness, have fallen among thieves, (as Scripture hath it,) 'quidam viator incidit in latrones', which thieves have sent me unto this castle in order to do my ghostly office on two persons condemned by your honourable justice."

"Ay, right," answered Front-de-Boeuf; "and canst thou tell me, holy father, the number of those banditti?"

"Gallant sir," answered the Jester, "'nomen illis legio', their name is legion."

"Tell me in plain terms what numbers there are, or, priest, thy cloak and cord will ill protect thee."

"Alas!" said the supposed friar, "'cor meum eructavit', that is to say, I was like to burst with fear! but I conceive they may be—what of yeomen—what of commons, at least five hundred men."

"What!" said the Templar, who came into the hall that moment, "muster the wasps so thick here? it is time to stifle such a mischievous brood." Then taking Front-de-Boeuf aside "Knowest thou the priest?"

"He is a stranger from a distant convent," said Front-de-Boeuf; "I know him not."

"Then trust him not with thy purpose in words," answered the Templar. "Let him carry a written order to De Bracy's company of Free Companions, to repair instantly to their master's aid. In the meantime, and that the shaveling may suspect nothing, permit him to go freely about his task of preparing these Saxon hogs for the slaughter-house."

"It shall be so," said Front-de-Boeuf. And he forthwith appointed a domestic to conduct Wamba to the apartment where Cedric and Athelstane were confined.

The impatience of Cedric had been rather enhanced than diminished by his confinement. He walked from one end of the hall to the other, with the attitude of one who advances to charge an enemy, or to storm the breach of a beleaguered place, sometimes ejaculating to himself, sometimes addressing Athelstane, who stoutly and stoically awaited the issue of the adventure, digesting, in the meantime, with great composure, the liberal meal which he had made at noon, and not greatly interesting himself about the duration of his captivity, which he concluded, would, like all earthly evils, find an end in Heaven's good time.

"Pax vobiscum!," said the Jester, entering the apartment; "the blessing of St Dunstan, St Dennis, St Duthoc, and all other saints whatsoever, be upon ye and about ye."

"Enter freely," answered Cedric to the supposed friar; "with what intent art thou come hither?"

"To bid you prepare yourselves for death," answered the Jester.

"It is impossible!" replied Cedric, starting. "Fearless and wicked as they are, they dare not attempt such open and gratuitous cruelty!"

"Alas!" said the Jester, "to restrain them by their sense of humanity, is the same as to stop a runaway horse with a bridle of silk thread. Bethink thee, therefore, noble Cedric, and you also, gallant Athelstane, what crimes you have committed in the flesh; for this very day will ye be called to answer at a higher tribunal."

"Hearest thou this, Athelstane?" said Cedric; "we must rouse up our hearts to this last action, since better it is we should die like men, than live like slaves."

"I am ready," answered Athelstane, "to stand the worst of their malice, and shall walk to my death with as much composure as ever I did to my dinner."

"Let us then unto our holy gear, father," said Cedric.

"Wait yet a moment, good uncle," said the Jester, in his natural tone; "better look long before you leap in the dark."

"By my faith," said Cedric, "I should know that voice!"

"It is that of your trusty slave and jester," answered Wamba, throwing back his cowl. "Had you taken a fool's advice formerly, you would not have been here at all. Take a fool's advice now, and you will not be here long."

"How mean'st thou, knave?" answered the Saxon.

"Even thus," replied Wamba; "take thou this frock and cord, which are all the orders I ever had, and march quietly out of the castle, leaving me your cloak and girdle to take the long leap in thy stead."

"Leave thee in my stead!" said Cedric, astonished at the proposal; "why, they would hang thee, my poor knave."

"E'en let them do as they are permitted," said Wamba; "I trust—no disparagement to your birth—that the son of Witless may hang in a chain with as much gravity as the chain hung upon his ancestor the alderman."

"Well, Wamba," answered Cedric, "for one thing will I grant thy request. And that is, if thou wilt make the exchange of garments with Lord Athelstane instead of me."

"No, by St Dunstan," answered Wamba; "there were little reason in that. Good right there is, that the son of Witless should suffer to save the son of Hereward; but little wisdom there were in his dying for the benefit of one whose fathers were strangers to his."

"Villain," said Cedric, "the fathers of Athelstane were monarchs of England!"

"They might be whosoever they pleased," replied Wamba; "but my neck stands too straight upon my shoulders to have it twisted for their sake. Wherefore, good my master, either take my proffer yourself, or suffer me to leave this dungeon as free as I entered."

"Let the old tree wither," continued Cedric, "so the stately hope of the forest be preserved. Save the noble Athelstane, my trusty Wamba! it is the duty of each who has Saxon blood in his veins. Thou and I will abide together the utmost rage of our injurious oppressors, while he, free and safe, shall arouse the awakened spirits of our countrymen to avenge us."

"Not so, father Cedric," said Athelstane, grasping his hand,—for, when roused to think or act, his deeds and sentiments were not unbecoming his high race—"Not so," he continued; "I would rather remain in this hall a week without food save the prisoner's stinted loaf, or drink save the prisoner's measure of water, than embrace the opportunity to escape which the slave's untought kindness has purveyed for his master."

"You are called wise men, sirs," said the Jester, "and I a crazed fool; but, uncle Cedric, and cousin Athelstane, the fool shall decide this controversy for ye, and save ye the trouble of straining courtesies any farther. I am like John-a-Duck's mare, that will let no man mount her but John-a-Duck. I came to save my master, and if he will not consent—basta—I can but go away home again. Kind service cannot be chucked from hand to hand like a shuttlecock or stool-ball. I'll hang for no man but my own born master."

"Go, then, noble Cedric," said Athelstane, "neglect not this opportunity. Your presence without may encourage friends to our rescue—your remaining here would ruin us all."

"And is there any prospect, then, of rescue from without?" said Cedric, looking to the Jester.

"Prospect, indeed!" echoed Wamba; "let me tell you, when you fill my cloak, you are wrapped in a general's cassock. Five hundred men are there without, and I was this morning one of the chief leaders. My fool's cap was a casque, and my bauble a truncheon. Well, we shall see what good they will make by exchanging a fool for a wise man. Truly, I fear they will lose in valour what they may gain in discretion. And so farewell, master, and be kind to poor Gurth and his dog Fangs; and let my cockcomb hang in the hall at Rotherwood, in memory that I flung away my life for my master, like a faithful—fool."

The last word came out with a sort of double expression, betwixt jest and earnest. The tears stood in Cedric's eyes.

"Thy memory shall be preserved," he said, "while fidelity and affection have honour upon earth! But that I trust I shall find the means of saving Rowena, and thee, Athelstane, and thee, also, my poor Wamba, thou shouldst not overbear me in this matter."

The exchange of dress was now accomplished, when a sudden doubt struck Cedric.

"I know no language," he said, "but my own, and a few words of their mincing Norman. How shall I bear myself like a reverend brother?"

"The spell lies in two words," replied Wamba—"Pax vobiscum' will answer all queries. If you go or come, eat or drink, bless or ban, 'Pax vobiscum' carries you through it all. It is as useful to a friar as a broomstick to a witch, or a wand to a conjurer. Speak it but thus, in a deep grave tone,—'Pax vobiscum!'—it is

irresistible—Watch and ward, knight and squire, foot and horse, it acts as a charm upon them all. I think, if they bring me out to be hanged to-morrow, as is much to be doubted they may, I will try its weight upon the finisher of the sentence."

"If such prove the case," said the master, "my religious orders are soon taken—'Pax vobiscum'. I trust I shall remember the pass-word.—Noble Athelstane, farewell; and farewell, my poor boy, whose heart might make amends for a weaker head—I will save you, or return and die with you. The royal blood of our Saxon kings shall not be spilt while mine beats in my veins; nor shall one hair fall from the head of the kind knave who risked himself for his master, if Cedric's peril can prevent it.—Farewell."

"Farewell, noble Cedric," said Athelstane; "remember it is the true part of a friar to accept refreshment, if you are offered any."

"Farewell, uncle," added Wamba; "and remember 'Pax vobiscum'."

Thus exhorted, Cedric sallied forth upon his expedition; and it was not long ere he had occasion to try the force of that spell which his Jester had recommended as omnipotent. In a low-arched and dusky passage, by which he endeavoured to work his way to the hall of the castle, he was interrupted by a female form.

"Pax vobiscum!" said the pseudo friar, and was endeavouring to hurry past, when a soft voice replied, "'Et vobis—quaso, domine reverendissime, pro misericordia vestra'."

"I am somewhat deaf," replied Cedric, in good Saxon, and at the same time muttered to himself, "A curse on the fool and his 'Pax vobiscum!' I have lost my javelin at the first cast."

It was, however, no unusual thing for a priest of those days to be deaf of his Latin ear, and this the person who now addressed Cedric knew full well.

"I pray you of dear love, reverend father," she replied in his own language, "that you will deign to visit with your ghostly comfort a wounded prisoner of this castle, and have such compassion upon him and us as thy holy office teaches—Never shall good deed so highly advantage thy convent."

"Daughter," answered Cedric, much embarrassed, "my time in this castle will not permit me to exercise the duties of mine office—I must presently forth—there is life and death upon my speed."

"Yet, father, let me entreat you by the vow you have taken on you," replied the suppliant, "not to leave the oppressed and endangered without counsel or succour."

"May the fiend fly away with me, and leave me in Ifrin with the souls of Odin and of Thor!" answered Cedric impatiently, and would probably have proceeded in the same tone of total departure from his spiritual character, when the colloquy was interrupted by the harsh voice of Urfried, the old crone of the turret.

"How, minion," said she to the female speaker, "is this the manner in which you requite the kindness which permitted thee to leave thy prison-cell yonder?—Puttest thou the reverend man to use ungracious language to free himself from the importunities of a Jewess?"

"A Jewess!" said Cedric, availing himself of the information to get clear of their interruption,—"Let me pass, woman! stop me not at your peril. I am fresh from my holy office, and would avoid pollution."

"Come this way, father," said the old hag, "thou art a stranger in this castle, and canst not leave it without a guide. Come hither, for I would speak with thee.—And you, daughter of an accursed race, go to the sick man's chamber, and tend him until my return; and woe betide you if you again quit it without my permission!"

Rebecca retreated. Her importunities had prevailed upon Urfried to suffer her to quit the turret, and Urfried had employed her services where she herself would most gladly have paid them, by the bedside of the wounded Ivanhoe. With an understanding awake to their dangerous situation, and prompt to avail herself of each means of safety which occurred, Rebecca had hoped something from the presence of a man of religion, who, she learned from Urfried, had penetrated into this godless castle. She watched the return of the supposed ecclesiastic, with the purpose of addressing him, and interesting him in favour of the prisoners; with what imperfect success the reader has been just acquainted.

CHAPTER XXVII

*Fond wretch! and what canst thou relate,
But deeds of sorrow, shame, and sin?
Thy deeds are proved—thou know'st thy fate;
But come, thy tale—begin—begin.*

*But I have griefs of other kind,
Troubles and sorrows more severe;
Give me to ease my tortured mind,
Lend to my woes a patient ear;
And let me, if I may not find
A friend to help—find one to hear.
—Crabbe's Hall of Justice*

When Urfried had with clamours and menaces driven Rebecca back to the apartment from which she had sallied, she proceeded to conduct the unwilling Cedric into a small apartment, the door of which she heedfully secured. Then fetching from a cupboard a stoup of wine and two flagons, she placed them on the table, and said in a tone rather asserting a fact than asking a question, "Thou art Saxon, father—Deny it not," she continued, observing that Cedric hastened not to reply; "the sounds of my native language are sweet to mine ears, though seldom heard save from the tongues of the wretched and degraded serfs on whom the proud Normans impose the meanest drudgery of this dwelling. Thou art a Saxon, father—a Saxon, and, save as thou art a servant of God, a freeman.—Thine accents are sweet in mine ear."

"Do not Saxon priests visit this castle, then?" replied Cedric; "it were, methinks, their duty to comfort the outcast and oppressed children of the soil."

"They come not—or if they come, they better love to revel at the boards of their conquerors," answered Urfried, "than to hear the groans of their countrymen—so, at least, report speaks of them—of myself I can say little. This castle, for ten years, has opened to no priest save the debauched Norman chaplain who partook the nightly revels of Front-de-Boeuf, and he has been long gone to render an account of his stewardship.—But thou art a Saxon—a Saxon priest, and I have one question to ask of thee."

"I am a Saxon," answered Cedric, "but unworthy, surely, of the name of priest. Let me begone on my way—I swear I will return, or send one of our fathers more worthy to hear your confession."

"Stay yet a while," said Urfried; "the accents of the voice which thou hearest now will soon be choked with the cold earth, and I would not descend to it like the beast I have lived. But wine must give me strength to tell the horrors of my tale." She poured out a cup, and drank it with a frightful avidity, which seemed desirous of draining the last drop in the goblet. "It stupifies," she said, looking upwards as she finished her draught, "but it cannot cheer—Partake it, father, if you would hear my tale without sinking down upon the pavement." Cedric would have avoided pledging her in this ominous conviviality, but the sign which she made to him expressed impatience and despair. He complied with her request, and answered her challenge in a large wine-cup; she then proceeded with her story, as if appeased by his complaisance.

"I was not born," she said, "father, the wretch that thou now seest me. I was free, was happy, was honoured, loved, and was beloved. I am now a slave, miserable and degraded—the sport of my masters' passions while I had yet beauty—the object of their contempt, scorn, and hatred, since it has passed away. Dost thou wonder, father, that I should hate mankind, and, above all, the race that has wrought this change in me? Can the wrinkled decrepit hag before thee, whose wrath must vent itself in impotent curses, forget she was once the daughter of the noble Thane of Torquilstone, before whose frown a thousand vassals trembled?"

"Thou the daughter of Torquil Wolfganger!" said Cedric, receding as he spoke; "thou—thou—the daughter of that noble Saxon, my father's friend and companion in arms!"

"Thy father's friend!" echoed Urfried; "then Cedric called the Saxon stands before me, for the noble Hereward of Rotherwood had but one son, whose name is well known among his countrymen. But if thou art Cedric of Rotherwood, why this religious dress?—hast thou too despaired of saving thy country, and sought refuge from oppression in the shade of the convent?"

"It matters not who I am," said Cedric; "proceed, unhappy woman, with thy tale of horror and guilt!—Guilt there must be—there is guilt even in thy living to tell it."

"There is—there is," answered the wretched woman, "deep, black, damning guilt,—guilt, that lies like a load at my breast—guilt, that all the penitential fires of hereafter cannot cleanse.—Yes, in these halls, stained with the noble and pure blood of my father and my brethren—in these very halls, to have lived the paramour of their murderer, the slave at once and the partaker of his pleasures, was to render every breath which I drew of vital air, a crime and a curse."

"Wretched woman!" exclaimed Cedric. "And while the friends of thy father—while each true Saxon heart, as it breathed a requiem for his soul, and those of his valiant sons, forgot not in their prayers the murdered Ulrica—while all mourned and honoured the dead, thou hast lived to merit our hate and execration—lived to unite thyself with the vile tyrant who murdered thy nearest and dearest—who shed the blood of infancy, rather than a male of the noble house of Torquil Wolfganger should survive—with him hast thou lived to unite thyself, and in the hands of lawless love!"

"In lawless hands, indeed, but not in those of love!" answered the hag; "love will sooner visit the regions of eternal doom, than those unhallowed vaults.—No, with that at least I cannot reproach myself—hatred to Front-de-Boeuf and his race governed my soul most deeply, even in the hour of his guilty endearments."

"You hated him, and yet you lived," replied Cedric; "wretch! was there no poniard—no knife—no bodkin!—Well was it for thee, since thou didst prize such an existence, that the secrets of a Norman castle are like those of the grave. For had I but dreamed of the daughter of Torquil living in foul communion with the murderer of her father, the sword of a true Saxon had found thee out even in the arms of thy paramour!"

"Wouldst thou indeed have done this justice to the name of Torquil?" said Ulrica, for we may now lay aside her assumed name of Urfried; "thou art then the true Saxon report speaks thee! for even within these accursed walls, where, as thou well sayest, guilt shrouds itself in inscrutable mystery, even there has the name of Cedric been sounded—and I, wretched and degraded, have rejoiced to think that there yet breathed an avenger of our unhappy nation.—I also have had my hours of vengeance—I have fomented the quarrels of our foes, and heated drunken revelry into murderous broil—I have seen their blood flow—I have heard their dying groans!—Look on me, Cedric—are there not still left on this foul and faded face some traces of the features of Torquil?"

"Ask me not of them, Ulrica," replied Cedric, in a tone of grief mixed with abhorrence; "these traces form such a resemblance as arises from the graves of the dead, when a fiend has animated the lifeless corpse."

"Be it so," answered Ulrica; "yet wore these fiendish features the mask of a spirit of light when they were able to set at variance the elder Front-de-Boeuf and his son Reginald! The darkness of hell should hide what followed, but revenge must lift the veil, and darkly intimate what it would raise the dead to speak aloud. Long had the smouldering fire of discord glowed between the tyrant father and his savage son—long had I nursed, in secret, the unnatural hatred—it blazed forth in an hour of drunken wassail, and at his own board fell my oppressor by the hand of his own son—such are the secrets these vaults conceal!—Rend asunder, ye accursed arches," she added, looking up towards the roof, "and bury in your fall all who are conscious of the hideous mystery!"

"And thou, creature of guilt and misery," said Cedric, "what became thy lot on the death of thy ravisher?"

"Guess it, but ask it not.—Here—here I dwelt, till age, premature age, has stamped its ghastly features on my countenance—scorned and insulted where I was once obeyed, and compelled to bound the revenge which had once such ample scope, to the efforts of petty malice of a discontented menial, or the vain or unheeded curses of an impotent hag—condemned to hear from my lonely turret the sounds of revelry in which I once partook, or the shrieks and groans of new victims of oppression."

"Ulrica," said Cedric, "with a heart which still, I fear, regrets the lost reward of thy crimes, as much as the deeds by which thou didst acquire that meed, how didst thou dare to address thee to one who wears this robe? Consider, unhappy woman, what could the sainted Edward himself do for thee, were he here in bodily presence? The royal Confessor was endowed by heaven with power to cleanse the ulcers of the body, but only God himself can cure the leprosy of the soul."

"Yet, turn not from me, stern prophet of wrath," she exclaimed, "but tell me, if thou canst, in what shall terminate these new and awful feelings that burst on my solitude—Why do deeds, long since done, rise before me in new and irresistible horrors? What fate is prepared beyond the grave for her, to whom God has assigned on earth a lot of such unspeakable wretchedness? Better had I turn to Woden, Hertha, and Zernebock—to Mista, and to Skogula, the gods of our yet unbaptized ancestors, than endure the dreadful anticipations which have of late haunted my waking and my sleeping hours!"

"I am no priest," said Cedric, turning with disgust from this miserable picture of guilt, wretchedness, and despair; "I am no priest, though I wear a priest's garment."

"Priest or layman," answered Ulrica, "thou art the first I have seen for twenty years, by whom God was feared or man regarded; and dost thou bid me despair?"

"I bid thee repent," said Cedric. "Seek to prayer and penance, and mayest thou find acceptance! But I cannot, I will not, longer abide with thee."

"Stay yet a moment!" said Ulrica; "leave me not now, son of my father's friend, lest the demon who has governed my life should tempt me to avenge myself of thy hard-hearted scorn—Thinkest thou, if Front-de-Boeuf found Cedric the Saxon in his castle, in such a disguise, that thy life would be a long one?—Already his eye has been upon thee like a falcon on his prey."

"And be it so," said Cedric; "and let him tear me with beak and talons, ere my tongue say one word which my heart doth not warrant. I will die a Saxon—true in word, open in deed—I bid thee avaunt!—touch me not, stay me not!—The sight of Front-de-Boeuf himself is less odious to me than thou, degraded and degenerate as thou art."

"Be it so," said Ulrica, no longer interrupting him; "go thy way, and forget, in the insolence of thy superiority, that the wretch before thee is the daughter of thy father's friend.—Go thy way—if I am separated from mankind by my sufferings—separated from those whose aid I might most justly expect—not less will I be separated from them in my revenge!—No man shall aid me, but the ears of all men shall tingle to hear of the deed which I shall dare to do!—Farewell!—thy scorn has burst the last tie which seemed yet to unite me to my kind—a thought that my woes might claim the compassion of my people."

"Ulrica," said Cedric, softened by this appeal, "hast thou borne up and endured to live through so much guilt and so much misery, and wilt thou now yield to despair when thine eyes are opened to thy crimes, and when repentance were thy fitter occupation?"

"Cedric," answered Ulrica, "thou little knowest the human heart. To act as I have acted, to think as I have thought, requires the maddening love of pleasure, mingled with the keen appetite of revenge, the proud consciousness of power; droughts too intoxicating for the human heart to bear, and yet retain the power to prevent. Their force has long passed away—Age has no pleasures, wrinkles have no influence, revenge itself dies away in impotent curses. Then comes remorse, with all its vipers, mixed with vain regrets for the past, and despair for the future!—Then, when all other strong impulses have ceased, we become like the fiends in hell, who may feel remorse, but never repentance.—But thy words have awakened a new soul within me—Well hast thou said, all is possible for those who dare to die!—Thou hast shown me the means of revenge, and be assured I will embrace them. It has hitherto shared this wasted bosom with other and with rival passions—henceforward it shall possess me wholly, and thou thyself shalt say, that, whatever was the life of Ulrica, her death well became the daughter of the noble Torquil. There is a force without beleaguering this accursed castle—hasten to lead them to the attack, and when thou shalt see a red flag wave from the turret on the eastern angle of the donjon, press the Normans hard—they will then have enough to do within, and you may win the wall in spite both of bow and mangonel.—Begone, I pray thee—follow thine own fate, and leave me to mine."

Cedric would have enquired farther into the purpose which she thus darkly announced, but the stern voice of Front-de-Boeuf was heard, exclaiming, "Where tarries this loitering priest? By the scallop-shell of Compostella, I will make a martyr of him, if he loiters here to hatch treason among my domestics!"

"What a true prophet," said Ulrica, "is an evil conscience! But heed him not—out and to thy people—Cry your Saxon onslaught, and let them sing their war-song of Rollo, if they will; vengeance shall bear a burden to it."

As she thus spoke, she vanished through a private door, and Reginald Front-de-Boeuf entered the apartment. Cedric, with some difficulty, compelled himself to make obeisance to the haughty Baron, who returned his courtesy with a slight inclination of the head.

"Thy penitents, father, have made a long shrift—it is the better for them, since it is the last they shall ever make. Hast thou prepared them for death?"

"I found them," said Cedric, in such French as he could command, "expecting the worst, from the moment they knew into whose power they had fallen."

"How now, Sir Friar," replied Front-de-Boeuf, "thy speech, methinks, smacks of a Saxon tongue?"

"I was bred in the convent of St Withold of Burton," answered Cedric.

"Ay?" said the Baron; "it had been better for thee to have been a Norman, and better for my purpose too; but need has no choice of messengers. That St Withold's of Burton is an owl's nest worth the harrying. The day will soon come that the frock shall protect the Saxon as little as the mail-coat."

"God's will be done," said Cedric, in a voice tremulous with passion, which Front-de-Boeuf imputed to fear.

"I see," said he, "thou dreamest already that our men-at-arms are in thy refectory and thy ale-vaults. But do me one cast of thy holy office, and, come what list of others, thou shalt sleep as safe in thy cell as a snail within his shell of proof."

"Speak your commands," said Cedric, with suppressed emotion.

"Follow me through this passage, then, that I may dismiss thee by the postern."

And as he strode on his way before the supposed friar, Front-de-Boeuf thus schooled him in the part which he desired he should act.

"Thou seest, Sir Friar, yon herd of Saxon swine, who have dared to environ this castle of Torquilstone—Tell them whatever thou hast a mind of the weakness of this fortalice, or aught else that can detain them before it for twenty-four hours. Meantime bear thou this scroll—But soft—canst read, Sir Priest?"

"Not a jot I," answered Cedric, "save on my breviary; and then I know the characters, because I have the holy service by heart, praised be Our Lady and St Withold!"

"The fitter messenger for my purpose.—Carry thou this scroll to the castle of Philip de Malvoisin; say it cometh from me, and is written by the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and that I pray him to send it to York with all the speed man and horse can make. Meanwhile, tell him to doubt nothing, he shall find us whole and sound behind our battlement—Shame on it, that we should be compelled to hide thus by a pack of runagates, who are wont to fly even at the flash of our pennons and the tramp of our horses! I say to thee, priest, contrive some cast of thine art to keep the knaves where they are, until our friends bring up their lances. My vengeance is awake, and she is a falcon that slumbers not till she has been gorged."

"By my patron saint," said Cedric, with deeper energy than became his character, "and by every saint who has lived and died in England, your commands shall be obeyed! Not a Saxon shall stir from before these walls, if I have art and influence to detain them there."

"Ha!" said Front-de-Boeuf, "thou changest thy tone, Sir Priest, and speakest brief and bold, as if thy heart were in the slaughter of the Saxon herd; and yet thou art thyself of kindred to the swine?"

Cedric was no ready practiser of the art of dissimulation, and would at this moment have been much the better of a hint from Wamba's more fertile brain. But necessity, according to the ancient proverb, sharpens invention, and he muttered something under his cowl concerning the men in question being excommunicated outlaws both to church and to kingdom.

"Despardieux," answered Front-de-Boeuf, "thou hast spoken the very truth—I forgot that the knaves can strip a fat abbot, as well as if they had been born south of yonder salt channel. Was it not he of St Ives whom they tied to an oak-tree, and compelled to sing a mass while they were rifling his mails and his wallets?—No, by our Lady—that jest was played by Gualtier of Middleton, one of our own companions-at-arms. But they were Saxons who robbed the chapel at St Bees of cup, candlestick and chalice, were they not?"

"They were godless men," answered Cedric.

"Ay, and they drank out all the good wine and ale that lay in store for many a secret carousal, when ye pretend ye are but busied with vigils and primes!—Priest, thou art bound to revenge such sacrilege."

"I am indeed bound to vengeance," murmured Cedric; "Saint Withold knows my heart."

Front-de-Boeuf, in the meanwhile, led the way to a postern, where, passing the moat on a single plank, they reached a small barbican, or exterior defence, which communicated with the open field by a well-fortified sallyport.

"Begone, then; and if thou wilt do mine errand, and if thou return hither when it is done, thou shalt see Saxon flesh cheap as ever was hog's in the shambles of Sheffield. And, hark thee, thou seemest to be a jolly confessor—come hither after the onslaught, and thou shalt have as much Malvoisie as would drench thy whole convent."

"Assuredly we shall meet again," answered Cedric.

"Something in hand the whilst," continued the Norman; and, as they parted at the postern door, he thrust into Cedric's reluctant hand a gold byzant, adding, "Remember, I will fly off both cowl and skin, if thou failest in thy purpose."

"And full leave will I give thee to do both," answered Cedric, leaving the postern, and striding forth over the free field with a joyful step, "if, when we meet next, I deserve not better at thine hand."—Turning then back towards the castle, he threw the piece of gold towards the donor, exclaiming at the same time, "False Norman, thy money perish with thee!"

Front-de-Boeuf heard the words imperfectly, but the action was suspicious—"Archers," he called to the warders on the outward battlements, "send me an arrow through yon monk's frock!—yet stay," he said, as his retainers were bending their bows, "it avails not—we must thus far trust him since we have no better shift. I think he dares not betray me—at the worst I can but treat with these Saxon dogs whom I have safe in kennel.—Ho! Giles jailor, let them bring Cedric of Rotherwood before me, and the other churl, his companion—him I mean of Coningsburgh—Athelestane there, or what call they him? Their very names are an encumbrance to a Norman knight's mouth, and have, as it were, a flavour of bacon—Give me a stoup of wine, as jolly Prince John said, that I may wash away the relish—place it in the armoury, and thither lead the prisoners."

His commands were obeyed; and, upon entering that Gothic apartment, hung with many spoils won by his own valour and that of his father, he found a flagon of wine on the massive oaken table, and the two Saxon captives under the guard of four of his dependants. Front-de-Boeuf took a long draught of wine, and then addressed his prisoners;—for the manner in which Wamba drew the cap over his face, the change of dress, the gloomy and broken light, and the Baron's imperfect acquaintance with the features of Cedric, (who avoided his Norman neighbours, and seldom stirred beyond his own domains,) prevented him from discovering that the most important of his captives had made his escape.

"Gallants of England," said Front-de-Boeuf, "how relish ye your entertainment at Torquilstone?—Are ye yet aware what your 'surquedy' and 'outrecuidance' 31 merit, for scoffing at the entertainment of a prince of the House of Anjou?—Have ye forgotten how ye required the unmerited hospitality of the royal John? By God and St Dennis, an ye pay not the richer ransom, I will hang ye up by the feet from the iron bars of these windows, till the kites and hooded crows have made skeletons of you!—Speak out, ye Saxon dogs—what bid ye for your worthless lives?—How say you, you of Rotherwood?"

"Not a doil I," answered poor Wamba—"and for hanging up by the feet, my brain has been topsy-turvy, they say, ever since the biggin was bound first round my head; so turning me upside down may peradventure restore it again."

"Saint Genevieve!" said Front-de-Boeuf, "what have we got here?"

And with the back of his hand he struck Cedric's cap from the head of the Jester, and throwing open his collar, discovered the fatal badge of servitude, the silver collar round his neck.

"Giles—Clement—dogs and varlets!" exclaimed the furious Norman, "what have you brought me here?"

"I think I can tell you," said De Bracy, who just entered the apartment. "This is Cedric's clown, who fought so manful a skirmish with Isaac of York about a question of precedence."

"I shall settle it for them both," replied Front-de-Boeuf; "they shall hang on the same gallows, unless his master and this boar of Coningsburgh will pay well for their lives. Their wealth is the least they can surrender; they must also carry off with them the swarms that are besetting the castle, subscribe a surrender of their pretended immunities, and live under us as serfs and vassals; too happy if, in the new world that is about to begin, we leave them the breath of their nostrils.—Go," said he to two of his attendants, "fetch me the right Cedric hither, and I pardon your error for once; the rather that you but mistook a fool for a Saxon franklin."

"Ay, but," said Wamba, "your chivalrous excellency will find there are more fools than franklins among us."

"What means the knave?" said Front-de-Boeuf, looking towards his followers, who, lingering and loath, faltered forth their belief, that if this were not Cedric who was there in presence, they knew not what was become of him.

"Saints of Heaven!" exclaimed De Bracy, "he must have escaped in the monk's garments!"

"Fiends of hell!" echoed Front-de-Boeuf, "it was then the boar of Rotherwood whom I ushered to the postern, and dismissed with my own hands!—And thou," he said to Wamba, "whose folly could overreach the wisdom of idiots yet more gross than thyself—I will give thee holy orders—I will shave thy crown for thee!—Here, let them tear the scalp from his head, and then pitch him headlong from the battlements—Thy trade is to jest, canst thou jest now?"

"You deal with me better than your word, noble knight," whimpered forth poor Wamba, whose habits of buffoonery were not to be overcome even by the immediate prospect of death; "if you give me the red cap you propose, out of a simple monk you will make a cardinal."

"The poor wretch," said De Bracy, "is resolved to die in his vocation.—Front-de-Boeuf, you shall not slay him. Give him to me to make sport for my Free Companions.—How sayst thou, knave? Wilt thou take heart of grace, and go to the wars with me?"

"Ay, with my master's leave," said Wamba; "for, look you, I must not slip collar" (and he touched that which he wore) "without his permission."

"Oh, a Norman saw will soon cut a Saxon collar." said De Bracy.

"Ay, noble sir," said Wamba, "and thence goes the proverb—

*'Norman saw on English oak,
On English neck a Norman yoke;
Norman spoon in English dish,
And England ruled as Normans wish;
Blithe world to England never will be more,
Till England's rid of all the four.'*

"Thou dost well, De Bracy," said Front-de-Boeuf, "to stand there listening to a fool's jargon, when destruction is gaping for us! Seest thou not we are overreached, and that our proposed mode of communicating with our friends without has been disconcerted by this same motley gentleman thou art so fond to brother? What views have we to expect but instant storm?"

"To the battlements then," said De Bracy; "when didst thou ever see me the graver for the thoughts of battle? Call the Templar yonder, and let him fight but half so well for his life as he has done for his Order—Make thou to the walls thyself with thy huge body—Let me do my poor endeavour in my own way, and I tell thee the Saxon outlaws may as well attempt to scale the clouds, as the castle of Torquilstone; or, if you will treat with the banditti, why not employ the mediation of this worthy franklin, who seems in such deep contemplation of the wine-flagon?—Here, Saxon," he continued, addressing Athelstane, and handing the cup to him, "rinse thy throat with that noble liquor, and rouse up thy soul to say what thou wilt do for thy liberty."

"What a man of mould may," answered Athelstane, "providing it be what a man of manhood ought.—Dismiss me free, with my companions, and I will pay a ransom of a thousand marks."

"And wilt moreover assure us the retreat of that scum of mankind who are swarming around the castle, contrary to God's peace and the king's?" said Front-de-Boeuf.

"In so far as I can," answered Athelstane, "I will withdraw them; and I fear not but that my father Cedric will do his best to assist me."

"We are agreed then," said Front-de-Boeuf—"thou and they are to be set at freedom, and peace is to be on both sides, for payment of a thousand marks. It is a trifling ransom, Saxon, and thou wilt owe gratitude to the moderation which accepts of it in exchange of your persons. But mark, this extends not to the Jew Isaac."

"Nor to the Jew Isaac's daughter," said the Templar, who had now joined them.

"Neither," said Front-de-Boeuf, "belong to this Saxon's company."

"I were unworthy to be called Christian, if they did," replied Athelstane: "deal with the unbelievers as ye list."

"Neither does the ransom include the Lady Rowena," said De Bracy. "It shall never be said I was scared out of a fair prize without striking a blow for it."

"Neither," said Front-de-Boeuf, "does our treaty refer to this wretched Jester, whom I retain, that I may make him an example to every knave who turns jest into earnest."

"The Lady Rowena," answered Athelstane, with the most steady countenance, "is my affianced bride. I will be drawn by wild horses before I consent to part with her. The slave Wamba has this day saved the life of my father Cedric—I will lose mine ere a hair of his head be injured."

"Thy affianced bride?—The Lady Rowena the affianced bride of a vassal like thee?" said De Bracy; "Saxon, thou dreamest that the days of thy seven kingdoms are returned again. I tell thee, the Princes of the House of Anjou confer not their wards on men of such lineage as thine."

"My lineage, proud Norman," replied Athelstane, "is drawn from a source more pure and ancient than that of a beggarly Frenchman, whose living is won by selling the blood of the thieves whom he assembles under his paltry standard. Kings were my ancestors, strong in war and wise in council, who every day feasted in their hall more hundreds than thou canst number individual followers; whose names have been sung by minstrels, and their laws recorded by Wittenagemotes; whose bones were interred amid the prayers of saints, and over whose tombs minsters have been built."

"Thou hast it, De Bracy," said Front-de-Boeuf, well pleased with the rebuff which his companion had received; "the Saxon hath hit thee fairly."

"As fairly as a captive can strike," said De Bracy, with apparent carelessness; "for he whose hands are tied should have his tongue at freedom.—But thy glibness of reply, comrade," rejoined he, speaking to Athelstane, "will not win the freedom of the Lady Rowena."

To this Athelstane, who had already made a longer speech than was his custom to do on any topic, however interesting, returned no answer. The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a menial, who announced that a monk demanded admittance at the postern gate.

"In the name of Saint Bennet, the prince of these bull-beggars," said Front-de-Boeuf, "have we a real monk this time, or another impostor? Search him, slaves—for an ye suffer a second impostor to be palmed upon you, I will have your eyes torn out, and hot coals put into the sockets."

"Let me endure the extremity of your anger, my lord," said Giles, "if this be not a real shaveling. Your squire Jocelyn knows him well, and will vouch him to be brother Ambrose, a monk in attendance upon the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"Admit him," said Front-de-Boeuf, "most likely he brings us news from his jovial master. Surely the devil keeps holiday, and the priests are relieved from duty, that they are strolling thus wildly through the country. Remove these prisoners; and, Saxon, think on what thou hast heard."

"I claim," said Athelstane, "an honourable imprisonment, with due care of my board and of my couch, as becomes my rank, and as is due to one who is in treaty for ransom. Moreover, I hold him that deems himself the best of you, bound to answer to me with his body for this aggression on my freedom. This defiance hath already been sent to thee by thy sewer; thou underliest it, and art bound to answer me—There lies my glove."

"I answer not the challenge of my prisoner," said Front-de-Boeuf; "nor shalt thou, Maurice de Bracy.—Giles," he continued, "hang the franklin's glove upon the tine of yonder branched antlers: there shall it remain until he is a free man. Should he then presume to demand it, or to affirm he was unlawfully made my prisoner, by the belt of Saint Christopher, he will speak to one who hath never refused to meet a foe on foot or on horseback, alone or with his vassals at his back!"

The Saxon prisoners were accordingly removed, just as they introduced the monk Ambrose, who appeared to be in great perturbation.

"This is the real 'Deus vobiscum'," said Wamba, as he passed the reverend brother; "the others were but counterfeits."

"Holy Mother," said the monk, as he addressed the assembled knights, "I am at last safe and in Christian keeping!"

"Safe thou art," replied De Bracy; "and for Christianity, here is the stout Baron Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, whose utter abomination is a Jew; and the good Knight Templar, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whose trade is to slay Saracens—If these are not good marks of Christianity, I know no other which they bear about them."

"Ye are friends and allies of our reverend father in God, Aymer, Prior of Jorvaulx," said the monk, without noticing the tone of De Bracy's reply; "ye owe him aid both by knightly faith and holy charity; for what saith the blessed Saint Augustin, in his treatise 'De Civitate Dei'—"

"What saith the devil!" interrupted Front-de-Boeuf; "or rather what dost thou say, Sir Priest? We have little time to hear texts from the holy fathers."

"Sancta Maria!" ejaculated Father Ambrose, "how prompt to ire are these unhallowed laymen!—But be it known to you, brave knights, that certain murderous caitiffs, casting behind them fear of God, and reverence of his church, and not regarding the bull of the holy see, 'Si quis, suadende Diabolo'—"

"Brother priest," said the Templar, "all this we know or guess at—tell us plainly, is thy master, the Prior, made prisoner, and to whom?"

"Surely," said Ambrose, "he is in the hands of the men of Belial, infesters of these woods, and contemnors of the holy text, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets naught of evil.'"

"Here is a new argument for our swords, sirs," said Front-de-Boeuf, turning to his companions; "and so, instead of reaching us any assistance, the Prior of Jorvaulx requests aid at our hands? a man is well helped of these lazy churchmen when he hath most to do!—But speak out, priest, and say at once, what doth thy master expect from us?"

"So please you," said Ambrose, "violent hands having been imposed on my reverend superior, contrary to the holy ordinance which I did already quote, and the men of Belial having rifled his mails and budgets, and stripped him of two hundred marks of pure refined gold, they do yet demand of him a large sum beside, ere they will suffer him to depart from their uncircumcised hands. Wherefore the reverend father in God prays you, as his dear friends, to rescue him, either by paying down the ransom at which they hold him, or by force of arms, at your best discretion."

"The foul fiend quell the Prior!" said Front-de-Boeuf; "his morning's drought has been a deep one. When did thy master hear of a Norman baron unbuckling his purse to relieve a churchman, whose bags are ten times as weighty as ours?—And how can we do aught by valour to free him, that are cooped up here by ten times our number, and expect an assault every moment?"

"And that was what I was about to tell you," said the monk, "had your hastiness allowed me time. But, God help me, I am old, and these foul onslaughts distract an aged man's brain. Nevertheless, it is of verity that they assemble a camp, and raise a bank against the walls of this castle."

"To the battlements!" cried De Bracy, "and let us mark what these knaves do without;" and so saying, he opened a latticed window which led to a sort of bartizan or projecting balcony, and immediately called from thence to those in the apartment—"Saint Dennis, but the old monk hath brought true tidings!—They bring forward mantelets and pavisses, 32 and the archers muster on the skirts of the wood like a dark cloud before a hailstorm."

Reginald Front-de-Boeuf also looked out upon the field, and immediately snatched his bugle; and, after winding a long and loud blast, commanded his men to their posts on the walls.

"De Bracy, look to the eastern side, where the walls are lowest—Noble Bois-Guilbert, thy trade hath well taught thee how to attack and defend, look thou to the western side—I myself will take post at the barbican. Yet, do not confine your exertions to any one spot, noble friends!—we must this day be everywhere, and multiply ourselves, were it possible, so as to carry by our presence succour and relief wherever the attack is hottest. Our numbers are few, but activity and courage may supply that defect, since we have only to do with rascal clowns."

"But, noble knights," exclaimed Father Ambrose, amidst the bustle and confusion occasioned by the preparations for defence, "will none of ye hear the message of the reverend father in God Aymer, Prior of Jorvaulx?—I beseech thee to hear me, noble Sir Reginald!"

"Go patter thy petitions to heaven," said the fierce Norman, "for we on earth have no time to listen to them.—Ho! there, Anselm I see that seething pitch and oil are ready to pour on the heads of these audacious traitors—Look that the cross-bowmen lack not bolts. 33—Fling abroad my banner with the old bull's head—the knaves shall soon find with whom they have to do this day!"

"But, noble sir," continued the monk, persevering in his endeavours to draw attention, "consider my vow of obedience, and let me discharge myself of my Superior's errand."

"Away with this prating dotard," said Front-de Boeuf, "lock him up in the chapel, to tell his beads till the broil be over. It will be a new thing to the saints in Torquilstone to hear aves and paters; they have not been so honoured, I trow, since they were cut out of stone."

"Blaspheme not the holy saints, Sir Reginald," said De Bracy, "we shall have need of their aid to-day before yon rascal rout disband."

"I expect little aid from their hand," said Front-de-Boeuf, "unless we were to hurl them from the battlements on the heads of the villains. There is a huge lumbering Saint Christopher yonder, sufficient to bear a whole company to the earth."

The Templar had in the meantime been looking out on the proceedings of the besiegers, with rather more attention than the brutal Front-de-Boeuf or his giddy companion.

"By the faith of mine order," he said, "these men approach with more touch of discipline than could have been judged, however they come by it. See ye how dexterously they avail themselves of every cover which a tree or bush affords, and shun exposing themselves to the shot of our cross-bows? I spy neither banner nor pennon among them, and yet will I gage my golden chain, that they are led on by some noble knight or gentleman, skilful in the practice of wars."

"I espy him," said De Bracy; "I see the waving of a knight's crest, and the gleam of his armour. See yon tall man in the black mail, who is busied marshalling the farther troop of the rascaille yeomen—by Saint Dennis, I hold him to be the same whom we called 'Le Noir Faineant', who overthrew thee, Front-de-Boeuf, in the lists at Ashby."

"So much the better," said Front-de-Boeuf, "that he comes here to give me my revenge. Some hilding fellow he must be, who dared not stay to assert his claim to the tourney prize which chance had assigned him. I should in vain have sought for him where knights and nobles seek their foes, and right glad am I he hath here shown himself among yon villain yeomanry."

The demonstrations of the enemy's immediate approach cut off all farther discourse. Each knight repaired to his post, and at the head of the few followers whom they were able to muster, and who were in numbers inadequate to defend the whole extent of the walls, they awaited with calm determination the threatened assault.

CHAPTER XXVIII

*This wandering race, sever'd from other men,
Boast yet their intercourse with human arts;
The seas, the woods, the deserts, which they haunt,
Find them acquainted with their secret treasures:
And unregarded herbs, and flowers, and blossoms,
Display undreamt-of powers when gather'd by them.
—The Jew*

Our history must needs retrograde for the space of a few pages, to inform the reader of certain passages material to his understanding the rest of this important narrative. His own intelligence may indeed have easily anticipated that, when Ivanhoe sunk down, and seemed abandoned by all the world, it was the importunity

of Rebecca which prevailed on her father to have the gallant young warrior transported from the lists to the house which for the time the Jews inhabited in the suburbs of Ashby.

It would not have been difficult to have persuaded Isaac to this step in any other circumstances, for his disposition was kind and grateful. But he had also the prejudices and scrupulous timidity of his persecuted people, and those were to be conquered.

"Holy Abraham!" he exclaimed, "he is a good youth, and my heart bleeds to see the gore trickle down his rich embroidered hacqueton, and his corslet of goodly price—but to carry him to our house!—damsel, hast thou well considered?—he is a Christian, and by our law we may not deal with the stranger and Gentile, save for the advantage of our commerce."

"Speak not so, my dear father," replied Rebecca; "we may not indeed mix with them in banquet and in jollity; but in wounds and in misery, the Gentile becometh the Jew's brother."

"I would I knew what the Rabbi Jacob Ben Tudela would opine on it," replied Isaac;—"nevertheless, the good youth must not bleed to death. Let Seth and Reuben bear him to Ashby."

"Nay, let them place him in my litter," said Rebecca; "I will mount one of the palfreys."

"That were to expose thee to the gaze of those dogs of Ishmael and of Edom," whispered Isaac, with a suspicious glance towards the crowd of knights and squires. But Rebecca was already busied in carrying her charitable purpose into effect, and listed not what he said, until Isaac, seizing the sleeve of her mantle, again exclaimed, in a hurried voice—"Beard of Aaron!—what if the youth perish!—if he die in our custody, shall we not be held guilty of his blood, and be torn to pieces by the multitude?"

"He will not die, my father," said Rebecca, gently extricating herself from the grasp of Isaac "he will not die unless we abandon him; and if so, we are indeed answerable for his blood to God and to man."

"Nay," said Isaac, releasing his hold, "it grieveth me as much to see the drops of his blood, as if they were so many golden byzants from mine own purse; and I well know, that the lessons of Miriam, daughter of the Rabbi Manasses of Byzantium whose soul is in Paradise, have made thee skilful in the art of healing, and that thou knowest the craft of herbs, and the force of elixirs. Therefore, do as thy mind giveth thee—thou art a good damsel, a blessing, and a crown, and a song of rejoicing unto me and unto my house, and unto the people of my fathers."

The apprehensions of Isaac, however, were not ill founded; and the generous and grateful benevolence of his daughter exposed her, on her return to Ashby, to the unhallowed gaze of Brian de Bois-Guilbert. The Templar twice passed and repassed them on the road, fixing his bold and ardent look on the beautiful Jewess; and we have already seen the consequences of the admiration which her charms excited when accident threw her into the power of that unprincipled voluptuary. Rebecca lost no time in causing the patient to be transported to their temporary dwelling, and proceeded with her own hands to examine and to bind up his wounds. The youngest reader of romances and romantic ballads, must recollect how often the females, during the dark ages, as they are called, were initiated into the mysteries of surgery, and how frequently the gallant knight submitted the wounds of his person to her cure, whose eyes had yet more deeply penetrated his heart.

But the Jews, both male and female, possessed and practised the medical science in all its branches, and the monarchs and powerful barons of the time frequently committed themselves to the charge of some experienced sage among this despised people, when wounded or in sickness. The aid of the Jewish physicians was not the less eagerly sought after, though a general belief prevailed among the Christians, that the Jewish Rabbins were deeply acquainted with the occult sciences, and particularly with the cabalistical art, which had its name and origin in the studies of the sages of Israel. Neither did the Rabbins disown such acquaintance with supernatural arts, which added nothing (for what could add aught?) to the hatred with which their nation was regarded, while it diminished the contempt with which that malevolence was mingled. A Jewish magician might be the subject of equal abhorrence with a Jewish usurer, but he could not be equally despised. It is besides probable, considering the wonderful cures they are said to have performed, that the Jews possessed some secrets of the healing art peculiar to themselves, and which, with the exclusive spirit arising out of their condition, they took great care to conceal from the Christians amongst whom they dwelt.

The beautiful Rebecca had been heedfully brought up in all the knowledge proper to her nation, which her apt and powerful mind had retained, arranged, and enlarged, in the course of a progress beyond her years, her sex, and even the age in which she lived. Her knowledge of medicine and of the healing art had been acquired under an aged Jewess, the daughter of one of their most celebrated doctors, who loved Rebecca as her own child, and was believed to have communicated to her secrets, which had been left to herself by her sage father at the same time, and under the same circumstances. The fate of Miriam had indeed been to fall a sacrifice to the fanaticism of the times; but her secrets had survived in her apt pupil.

Rebecca, thus endowed with knowledge as with beauty, was universally revered and admired by her own tribe, who almost regarded her as one of those gifted women mentioned in the sacred history. Her father himself, out of reverence for her talents, which involuntarily mingled itself with his unbounded affection, permitted the maiden a greater liberty than was usually indulged to those of her sex by the habits of her people, and was, as we have just seen, frequently guided by her opinion, even in preference to his own.

When Ivanhoe reached the habitation of Isaac, he was still in a state of unconsciousness, owing to the profuse loss of blood which had taken place during his exertions in the lists. Rebecca examined the wound, and having applied to it such vulnerary remedies as her art prescribed, informed her father that if fever could be averted, of which the great bleeding rendered her little apprehensive, and if the healing balsam of Miriam retained its virtue, there was nothing to fear for his guest's life, and that he might with safety travel to York with them on the ensuing day. Isaac looked a little blank at this annunciation. His charity would willingly have stopped short at Ashby, or at most would have left the wounded Christian to be tended in the house where he was residing at present, with an assurance to the Hebrew to whom it belonged, that all expenses should be duly discharged. To this, however, Rebecca opposed many reasons, of which we shall only mention two that had peculiar weight with Isaac. The one was, that she would on no account put the phial of precious balsam into the hands of another physician even of her own tribe, lest that valuable mystery should be discovered; the other, that this wounded knight, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, was an intimate favourite of Richard Coeur-de-Lion, and that, in case the monarch should return, Isaac, who had supplied his brother John with treasure to prosecute his rebellious purposes, would stand in no small need of a powerful protector who enjoyed Richard's favour.

"Thou art speaking but sooth, Rebecca," said Isaac, giving way to these weighty arguments—"it were an offending of Heaven to betray the secrets of the blessed Miriam; for the good which Heaven giveth, is not rashly to be squandered upon others, whether it be talents of gold and shekels of silver, or whether it be the secret mysteries of a wise physician—assuredly they should be preserved to those to whom Providence hath vouchsafed them. And him whom the Nazarenes of England call the Lion's Heart, assuredly it were better for me to fall into the hands of a strong lion of Idumea than into his, if he shall have got assurance of my dealing with his brother. Wherefore I will lend ear to thy counsel, and this youth shall journey with us unto York, and our house shall be as a home to him until his wounds shall be healed. And if he of the Lion Heart shall return to the land, as is now noised abroad, then shall this Wilfred of Ivanhoe be unto me as a wall of defence, when the king's displeasure shall burn high against thy father. And if he doth not return, this Wilfred may natheless repay us our charges when he shall gain treasure by the strength of his spear and of his sword, even as he did yesterday and this day also. For the youth is a good youth, and keepeth the day which he appointeth, and restoreth that which he borroweth, and succoureth the Israelite, even the child of my father's house, when he is encompassed by strong thieves and sons of Belial."

It was not until evening was nearly closed that Ivanhoe was restored to consciousness of his situation. He awoke from a broken slumber, under the confused impressions which are naturally attendant on the recovery from a state of insensibility. He was unable for some time to recall exactly to memory the circumstances which had preceded his fall in the lists, or to make out any connected chain of the events in which he had been engaged upon the yesterday. A sense of wounds and injury, joined to great weakness and exhaustion, was mingled with the recollection of blows dealt and received, of steeds rushing upon each other,

overthrowing and overthrown—of shouts and clashing of arms, and all the heady tumult of a confused fight. An effort to draw aside the curtain of his couch was in some degree successful, although rendered difficult by the pain of his wound.

To his great surprise he found himself in a room magnificently furnished, but having cushions instead of chairs to rest upon, and in other respects partaking so much of Oriental costume, that he began to doubt whether he had not, during his sleep, been transported back again to the land of Palestine. The impression was increased, when, the tapestry being drawn aside, a female form, dressed in a rich habit, which partook more of the Eastern taste than that of Europe, glided through the door which it concealed, and was followed by a swarthy domestic.

As the wounded knight was about to address this fair apparition, she imposed silence by placing her slender finger upon her ruby lips, while the attendant, approaching him, proceeded to uncover Ivanhoe's side, and the lovely Jewess satisfied herself that the bandage was in its place, and the wound doing well. She performed her task with a graceful and dignified simplicity and modesty, which might, even in more civilized days, have served to redeem it from whatever might seem repugnant to female delicacy. The idea of so young and beautiful a person engaged in attendance on a sick-bed, or in dressing the wound of one of a different sex, was melted away and lost in that of a beneficent being contributing her effectual aid to relieve pain, and to avert the stroke of death. Rebecca's few and brief directions were given in the Hebrew language to the old domestic; and he, who had been frequently her assistant in similar cases, obeyed them without reply.

The accents of an unknown tongue, however harsh they might have sounded when uttered by another, had, coming from the beautiful Rebecca, the romantic and pleasing effect which fancy ascribes to the charms pronounced by some beneficent fairy, unintelligible, indeed, to the ear, but, from the sweetness of utterance, and benignity of aspect, which accompanied them, touching and affecting to the heart. Without making an attempt at further question, Ivanhoe suffered them in silence to take the measures they thought most proper for his recovery; and it was not until those were completed, and this kind physician about to retire, that his curiosity could no longer be suppressed.—"Gentle maiden," he began in the Arabian tongue, with which his Eastern travels had rendered him familiar, and which he thought most likely to be understood by the turban'd and caftan'd damsel who stood before him—"I pray you, gentle maiden, of your courtesy—"

But here he was interrupted by his fair physician, a smile which she could scarce suppress dimpling for an instant a face, whose general expression was that of contemplative melancholy. "I am of England, Sir Knight, and speak the English tongue, although my dress and my lineage belong to another climate."

"Noble damsel,"—again the Knight of Ivanhoe began; and again Rebecca hastened to interrupt him.

"Bestow not on me, Sir Knight," she said, "the epithet of noble. It is well you should speedily know that your handmaiden is a poor Jewess, the daughter of that Isaac of York, to whom you were so lately a good and kind lord. It well becomes him, and those of his household, to render to you such careful tendance as your present state necessarily demands."

I know not whether the fair Rowena would have been altogether satisfied with the species of emotion with which her devoted knight had hitherto gazed on the beautiful features, and fair form, and lustrous eyes, of the lovely Rebecca; eyes whose brilliancy was shaded, and, as it were, mellowed, by the fringe of her long silken eyelashes, and which a minstrel would have compared to the evening star darting its rays through a bower of jessamine. But Ivanhoe was too good a Catholic to retain the same class of feelings towards a Jewess. This Rebecca had foreseen, and for this very purpose she had hastened to mention her father's name and lineage; yet—for the fair and wise daughter of Isaac was not without a touch of female weakness—she could not but sigh internally when the glance of respectful admiration, not altogether unmixed with tenderness, with which Ivanhoe had hitherto regarded his unknown benefactress, was exchanged at once for a manner cold, composed, and collected, and fraught with no deeper feeling than that which expressed a grateful sense of courtesy received from an unexpected quarter, and from one of an inferior race. It was not that Ivanhoe's former carriage expressed more than that general devotional homage which youth always pays to beauty; yet it was mortifying that one word should operate as a spell to remove poor Rebecca, who could not be supposed altogether ignorant of her title to such homage, into a degraded class, to whom it could not be honourably rendered.

But the gentleness and candour of Rebecca's nature imputed no fault to Ivanhoe for sharing in the universal prejudices of his age and religion. On the contrary the fair Jewess, though sensible her patient now regarded her as one of a race of reprobation, with whom it was disgraceful to hold any beyond the most necessary intercourse, ceased not to pay the same patient and devoted attention to his safety and convalescence. She informed him of the necessity they were under of removing to York, and of her father's resolution to transport him thither, and tend him in his own house until his health should be restored. Ivanhoe expressed great repugnance to this plan, which he grounded on unwillingness to give farther trouble to his benefactors.

"Was there not," he said, "in Ashby, or near it, some Saxon franklin, or even some wealthy peasant, who would endure the burden of a wounded countryman's residence with him until he should be again able to bear his armour?—Was there no convent of Saxon endowment, where he could be received?—Or could he not be transported as far as Burton, where he was sure to find hospitality with Walthoeff, the Abbot of St Withold's, to whom he was related?"

"Any, the worst of these harbourages," said Rebecca, with a melancholy smile, "would unquestionably be more fitting for your residence than the abode of a despised Jew; yet, Sir Knight, unless you would dismiss your physician, you cannot change your lodging. Our nation, as you well know, can cure wounds, though we deal not in inflicting them; and in our own family, in particular, are secrets which have been handed down since the days of Solomon, and of which you have already experienced the advantages. No Nazarene—I crave your forgiveness, Sir Knight—no Christian leech, within the four seas of Britain, could enable you to bear your corslet within a month."

"And how soon wilt THOU enable me to brook it?" said Ivanhoe, impatiently.

"Within eight days, if thou wilt be patient and conformable to my directions," replied Rebecca.

"By Our Blessed Lady," said Wilfred, "if it be not a sin to name her here, it is no time for me or any true knight to be bedridden; and if thou accomplish thy promise, maiden, I will pay thee with my casque full of crowns, come by them as I may."

"I will accomplish my promise," said Rebecca, "and thou shalt bear thine armour on the eighth day from hence, if thou wilt grant me but one boon in the stead of the silver thou dost promise me."

"If it be within my power, and such as a true Christian knight may yield to one of thy people," replied Ivanhoe, "I will grant thy boon blithely and thankfully."

"Nay," answered Rebecca, "I will but pray of thee to believe henceforward that a Jew may do good service to a Christian, without desiring other guerdon than the blessing of the Great Father who made both Jew and Gentile."

"It were sin to doubt it, maiden," replied Ivanhoe; "and I repose myself on thy skill without further scruple or question, well trusting you will enable me to bear my corslet on the eighth day. And now, my kind leech, let me enquire of the news abroad. What of the noble Saxon Cedric and his household?—what of the lovely Lady—" He stopt, as if unwilling to speak Rowena's name in the house of a Jew—"Of her, I mean, who was named Queen of the tournament?"

"And who was selected by you, Sir Knight, to hold that dignity, with judgment which was admired as much as your valour," replied Rebecca.

The blood which Ivanhoe had lost did not prevent a flush from crossing his cheek, feeling that he had incautiously betrayed a deep interest in Rowena by the awkward attempt he had made to conceal it.

"It was less of her I would speak," said he, "than of Prince John; and I would fain know somewhat of a faithful squire, and why he now attends me not?"

"Let me use my authority as a leech," answered Rebecca, "and enjoin you to keep silence, and avoid agitating reflections, whilst I apprize you of what you desire to know. Prince John hath broken off the tournament, and set forward in all haste towards York, with the nobles, knights, and churchmen of his party, after collecting such sums as they could wring, by fair means or foul, from those who are esteemed the wealthy of the land. It is said he designs to assume his brother's crown."

"Not without a blow struck in its defence," said Ivanhoe, raising himself upon the couch, "if there were but one true subject in England I will fight for Richard's title with the best of them—ay, one or two, in his just quarrel!"

"But that you may be able to do so," said Rebecca touching his shoulder with her hand, "you must now observe my directions, and remain quiet."

"True, maiden," said Ivanhoe, "as quiet as these disquieted times will permit—And of Cedric and his household?"

"His steward came but brief while since," said the Jewess, "panting with haste, to ask my father for certain monies, the price of wool the growth of Cedric's flocks, and from him I learned that Cedric and Athelstane of Coningsburgh had left Prince John's lodging in high displeasure, and were about to set forth on their return homeward."

"Went any lady with them to the banquet?" said Wilfred.

"The Lady Rowena," said Rebecca, answering the question with more precision than it had been asked—"The Lady Rowena went not to the Prince's feast, and, as the steward reported to us, she is now on her journey back to Rotherwood, with her guardian Cedric. And touching your faithful squire Gurth—"

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, "knowest thou his name?—But thou dost," he immediately added, "and well thou mayst, for it was from thy hand, and, as I am now convinced, from thine own generosity of spirit, that he received but yesterday a hundred zecchins."

"Speak not of that," said Rebecca, blushing deeply; "I see how easy it is for the tongue to betray what the heart would gladly conceal."

"But this sum of gold," said Ivanhoe, gravely, "my honour is concerned in repaying it to your father."

"Let it be as thou wilt," said Rebecca, "when eight days have passed away; but think not, and speak not now, of aught that may retard thy recovery."

"Be it so, kind maiden," said Ivanhoe; "I were most ungrateful to dispute thy commands. But one word of the fate of poor Gurth, and I have done with questioning thee."

"I grieve to tell thee, Sir Knight," answered the Jewess, "that he is in custody by the order of Cedric."—And then observing the distress which her communication gave to Wilfred, she instantly added, "But the steward Oswald said, that if nothing occurred to renew his master's displeasure against him, he was sure that Cedric would pardon Gurth, a faithful serf, and one who stood high in favour, and who had but committed this error out of the love which he bore to Cedric's son. And he said, moreover, that he and his comrades, and especially Wamba the Jester, were resolved to warn Gurth to make his escape by the way, in case Cedric's ire against him could not be mitigated."

"Would to God they may keep their purpose!" said Ivanhoe; "but it seems as if I were destined to bring ruin on whomsoever hath shown kindness to me. My king, by whom I was honoured and distinguished, thou seest that the brother most indebted to him is raising his arms to grasp his crown;—my regard hath brought restraint and trouble on the fairest of her sex;—and now my father in his mood may slay this poor bondsman but for his love and loyal service to me!—Thou seest, maiden, what an ill-fated wretch thou dost labour to assist; be wise, and let me go, ere the misfortunes which track my footsteps like slot-hounds, shall involve thee also in their pursuit."

"Nay," said Rebecca, "thy weakness and thy grief, Sir Knight, make thee miscalculate the purposes of Heaven. Thou hast been restored to thy country when it most needed the assistance of a strong hand and a true heart, and thou hast humbled the pride of thine enemies and those of thy king, when their horn was most highly exalted, and for the evil which thou hast sustained, seest thou not that Heaven has raised thee a helper and a physician, even among the most despised of the land?—Therefore, be of good courage, and trust that thou art preserved for some marvel which thine arm shall work before this people. Adieu—and having taken the medicine which I shall send thee by the hand of Reuben, compose thyself again to rest, that thou mayest be the more able to endure the journey on the succeeding day."

Ivanhoe was convinced by the reasoning, and obeyed the directions, of Rebecca. The drought which Reuben administered was of a sedative and narcotic quality, and secured the patient sound and undisturbed slumbers. In the morning his kind physician found him entirely free from feverish symptoms, and fit to undergo the fatigue of a journey.

He was deposited in the horse-litter which had brought him from the lists, and every precaution taken for his travelling with ease. In one circumstance only even the entreaties of Rebecca were unable to secure sufficient attention to the accommodation of the wounded knight. Isaac, like the enriched traveller of Juvenal's tenth satire, had ever the fear of robbery before his eyes, conscious that he would be alike accounted fair game by the marauding Norman noble, and by the Saxon outlaw. He therefore journeyed at a great rate, and made short halts, and shorter repasts, so that he passed by Cedric and Athelstane who had several hours the start of him, but who had been delayed by their protracted feasting at the convent of Saint Withold's. Yet such was the virtue of Miriam's balsam, or such the strength of Ivanhoe's constitution, that he did not sustain from the hurried journey that inconvenience which his kind physician had apprehended.

In another point of view, however, the Jew's haste proved somewhat more than good speed. The rapidity with which he insisted on travelling, bred several disputes between him and the party whom he had hired to attend him as a guard. These men were Saxons, and not free by any means from the national love of ease and good living which the Normans stigmatized as laziness and gluttony. Reversing Shylock's position, they had accepted the employment in hopes of feeding upon the wealthy Jew, and were very much displeased when they found themselves disappointed, by the rapidity with which he insisted on their proceeding. They remonstrated also upon the risk of damage to their horses by these forced marches. Finally, there arose betwixt Isaac and his satellites a deadly feud, concerning the quantity of wine and ale to be allowed for consumption at each meal. And thus it happened, that when the alarm of danger approached, and that which Isaac feared was likely to come upon him, he was deserted by the discontented mercenaries on whose protection he had relied, without using the means necessary to secure their attachment.

In this deplorable condition the Jew, with his daughter and her wounded patient, were found by Cedric, as has already been noticed, and soon afterwards fell into the power of De Bracy and his confederates. Little notice was at first taken of the horse-litter, and it might have remained behind but for the curiosity of De Bracy, who looked into it under the impression that it might contain the object of his enterprise, for Rowena had not unveiled herself. But De Bracy's astonishment was considerable, when he discovered that the litter contained a wounded man, who, conceiving himself to have fallen into the power of Saxon outlaws, with whom his name might be a protection for himself and his friends, frankly avowed himself to be Wilfred of Ivanhoe.

The ideas of chivalrous honour, which, amidst his wildness and levity, never utterly abandoned De Bracy, prohibited him from doing the knight any injury in his defenceless condition, and equally interdicted his betraying him to Front-de-Boeuf, who would have had no scruples to put to death, under any circumstances, the rival claimant of the fief of Ivanhoe. On the other hand, to liberate a suitor preferred by the Lady Rowena, as the events of the tournament, and indeed Wilfred's previous banishment from his father's house, had made matter of notoriety, was a pitch far above the flight of De Bracy's generosity. A middle course betwixt good and evil was all which he found himself capable of adopting, and he commanded two of his own squires to keep close by the litter, and to suffer no one to approach it. If questioned, they were directed by their master to say, that the empty litter of the Lady Rowena was employed to transport one of their comrades who had been wounded in the scuffle. On arriving at Torquilstone, while the Knight Templar and the lord of that castle were each intent upon their own schemes, the one on the Jew's treasure, and the other on his daughter, De Bracy's squires conveyed Ivanhoe, still under the name of a wounded comrade, to a distant apartment. This explanation was accordingly returned by these men to Front-de-Boeuf, when he questioned them why they did not make for the battlements upon the alarm.

"A wounded companion!" he replied in great wrath and astonishment. "No wonder that churls and yeomen wax so presumptuous as even to lay leaguer before castles, and that clowns and swineherds send defiances to nobles, since men-at-arms have turned sick men's nurses, and Free Companions are grown keepers of dying folk's curtains, when the castle is about to be assailed.—To the battlements, ye loitering villains!" he exclaimed, raising his stentorian voice till the arches around rung again, "to the battlements, or I will splinter your bones with this truncheon!"

The men sulkily replied, "that they desired nothing better than to go to the battlements, providing Front-de-Boeuf would bear them out with their master, who had commanded them to tend the dying man."

"The dying man, knaves!" rejoined the Baron; "I promise thee we shall all be dying men an we stand not to it the more stoutly. But I will relieve the guard upon this caittiff companion of yours.—Here, Urfried—hag—fiend of a Saxon witch—hearest me not?—tend me this bedridden fellow since he must needs be tended, whilst these knaves use their weapons.—Here be two ablasts, comrades, with windlaces and quarrells 34—to the barbican with you, and see you drive each bolt through a Saxon brain."

The men, who, like most of their description, were fond of enterprise and detested inaction, went joyfully to the scene of danger as they were commanded, and thus the charge of Ivanhoe was transferred to Urfried, or Ulrica. But she, whose brain was burning with remembrance of injuries and with hopes of vengeance, was readily induced to devolve upon Rebecca the care of her patient.

CHAPTER XXIX

*Ascend the watch-tower yonder, valiant soldier,
Look on the field, and say how goes the battle.
—Schiller's Maid of Orleans*

A moment of peril is often also a moment of open-hearted kindness and affection. We are thrown off our guard by the general agitation of our feelings, and betray the intensity of those, which, at more tranquil periods, our prudence at least conceals, if it cannot altogether suppress them. In finding herself once more by the side of Ivanhoe, Rebecca was astonished at the keen sensation of pleasure which she experienced, even at a time when all around them both was danger, if not despair. As she felt his pulse, and enquired after his health, there was a softness in her touch and in her accents implying a kinder interest than she would herself have been pleased to have voluntarily expressed. Her voice faltered and her hand trembled, and it was only the cold question of Ivanhoe, "Is it you, gentle maiden?" which recalled her to herself, and reminded her the sensations which she felt were not and could not be mutual. A sigh escaped, but it was scarce audible; and the questions which she asked the knight concerning his state of health were put in the tone of calm friendship. Ivanhoe answered her hastily that he was, in point of health, as well, and better than he could have expected—"Thanks," he said, "dear Rebecca, to thy helpful skill."

"He calls me DEAR Rebecca," said the maiden to herself, "but it is in the cold and careless tone which ill suits the word. His war-horse—his hunting hound, are dearer to him than the despised Jewess!"

"My mind, gentle maiden," continued Ivanhoe, "is more disturbed by anxiety, than my body with pain. From the speeches of those men who were my warders just now, I learn that I am a prisoner, and, if I judge aright of the loud hoarse voice which even now dispatched them hence on some military duty, I am in the castle of Front-de-Boeuf—If so, how will this end, or how can I protect Rowena and my father?"

"He names not the Jew or Jewess," said Rebecca internally; "yet what is our portion in him, and how justly am I punished by Heaven for letting my thoughts dwell upon him!" She hastened after this brief self-accusation to give Ivanhoe what information she could; but it amounted only to this, that the Templar Bois-Guilbert, and the Baron Front-de-Boeuf, were commanders within the castle; that it was beleaguered from without, but by whom she knew not. She added, that there was a Christian priest within the castle who might be possessed of more information.

"A Christian priest!" said the knight, joyfully; "fetch him hither, Rebecca, if thou canst—say a sick man desires his ghostly counsel—say what thou wilt, but bring him—something I must do or attempt, but how can I determine until I know how matters stand without?"

Rebecca in compliance with the wishes of Ivanhoe, made that attempt to bring Cedric into the wounded Knight's chamber, which was defeated as we have already seen by the interference of Urfried, who had also been on the watch to intercept the supposed monk. Rebecca retired to communicate to Ivanhoe the result of her errand.

They had not much leisure to regret the failure of this source of intelligence, or to contrive by what means it might be supplied; for the noise within the castle, occasioned by the defensive preparations which had been considerable for some time, now increased into tenfold bustle and clamour. The heavy, yet hasty step of the men-at-arms, traversed the battlements or resounded on the narrow and winding passages and stairs which led to the various bartisans and points of defence. The voices of the knights were heard, animating their followers, or directing means of defence, while their commands were often drowned in the clashing of armour, or the clamorous shouts of those whom they addressed. Tremendous as these sounds were, and yet more terrible from the awful event which they presaged, there was a sublimity mixed with them, which Rebecca's high-toned mind could feel even in that moment of terror. Her eye kindled, although the blood fled from her cheeks; and there was a strong mixture of fear, and of a thrilling sense of the sublime, as she repeated, half whispering to herself, half speaking to her companion, the sacred text,—*"The quiver rattleth—the glittering spear and the shield—the noise of the captains and the shouting!"*

But Ivanhoe was like the war-horse of that sublime passage, glowing with impatience at his inactivity, and with his ardent desire to mingle in the affray of which these sounds were the introduction. "If I could but drag myself," he said, "to yonder window, that I might see how this brave game is like to go—If I had but bow to shoot a shaft, or battle-axe to strike were it but a single blow for our deliverance!—It is in vain—it is in vain—I am alike nerveless and weaponless!"

"Fret not thyself, noble knight," answered Rebecca, "the sounds have ceased of a sudden—it may be they join not battle."

"Thou knowest nought of it," said Wilfred, impatiently; "this dead pause only shows that the men are at their posts on the walls, and expecting an instant attack; what we have heard was but the instant muttering of the storm—it will burst anon in all its fury.—Could I but reach yonder window!"

"Thou wilt but injure thyself by the attempt, noble knight," replied his attendant. Observing his extreme solicitude, she firmly added, "I myself will stand at the lattice, and describe to you as I can what passes without."

"You must not—you shall not!" exclaimed Ivanhoe; "each lattice, each aperture, will be soon a mark for the archers; some random shaft—"

"It shall be welcome!" murmured Rebecca, as with firm pace she ascended two or three steps, which led to the window of which they spoke.

"Rebecca, dear Rebecca!" exclaimed Ivanhoe, "this is no maiden's pastime—do not expose thyself to wounds and death, and render me for ever miserable for having given the occasion; at least, cover thyself with yonder ancient buckler, and show as little of your person at the lattice as may be."

Following with wonderful promptitude the directions of Ivanhoe, and availing herself of the protection of the large ancient shield, which she placed against the lower part of the window, Rebecca, with tolerable security to herself, could witness part of what was passing without the castle, and report to Ivanhoe the preparations which the assailants were making for the storm. Indeed the situation which she thus obtained was peculiarly favourable for this purpose, because, being placed on an angle of the main building, Rebecca could not only see what passed beyond the precincts of the castle, but also commanded a view of the outwork likely to be the first object of the meditated assault. It was an exterior fortification of no great height or strength, intended to protect the postern-gate, through which Cedric had been recently dismissed by Front-de-Boeuf. The castle moat divided this species of barbican from the rest of the fortress, so that, in case of its being taken, it was easy to cut off the communication with the main building, by withdrawing the temporary bridge. In the outwork was a sallyport corresponding to the postern of the castle, and the whole was surrounded by a strong palisade. Rebecca could observe, from the number of men placed for the defence of this post, that the besieged entertained apprehensions for its safety; and from the mustering of the assailants in a direction nearly opposite to the outwork, it seemed no less plain that it had been selected as a vulnerable point of attack.

These appearances she hastily communicated to Ivanhoe, and added, "The skirts of the wood seem lined with archers, although only a few are advanced from its dark shadow."

"Under what banner?" asked Ivanhoe.

"Under no ensign of war which I can observe," answered Rebecca.

"A singular novelty," muttered the knight, "to advance to storm such a castle without pennon or banner displayed!—Seest thou who they be that act as leaders?"

"A knight, clad in sable armour, is the most conspicuous," said the Jewess; "he alone is armed from head to heel, and seems to assume the direction of all around him."

"What device does he bear on his shield?" replied Ivanhoe.

"Something resembling a bar of iron, and a padlock painted blue on the black shield." 35

"A fetterlock and shacklebolt azure," said Ivanhoe; "I know not who may bear the device, but well I ween it might now be mine own. Canst thou not see the motto?"

"Scarce the device itself at this distance," replied Rebecca; "but when the sun glances fair upon his shield, it shows as I tell you."

"Seem there no other leaders?" exclaimed the anxious enquirer.

"None of mark and distinction that I can behold from this station," said Rebecca; "but, doubtless, the other side of the castle is also assailed. They appear even now preparing to advance—God of Zion, protect us!—What a dreadful sight!—Those who advance first bear huge shields and defences made of plank; the others follow, bending their bows as they come on.—They raise their bows!—God of Moses, forgive the creatures thou hast made!"

Her description was here suddenly interrupted by the signal for assault, which was given by the blast of a shrill bugle, and at once answered by a flourish of the Norman trumpets from the battlements, which, mingled with the deep and hollow clang of the nakers, (a species of kettle-drum,) retorted in notes of defiance the challenge of the enemy. The shouts of both parties augmented the fearful din, the assailants crying, "Saint George for merry England!" and the Normans answering them with loud cries of "En avant De Bracy!—Beau-seant! Beau-seant!—Front-de-Boeuf a la rescousse!" according to the war-cries of their different commanders.

It was not, however, by clamour that the contest was to be decided, and the desperate efforts of the assailants were met by an equally vigorous defence on the part of the besieged. The archers, trained by their woodland pastimes to the most effective use of the long-bow, shot, to use the appropriate phrase of the time, so "wholly together," that no point at which a defender could show the least part of his person, escaped their cloth-yard shafts. By this heavy discharge, which continued as thick and sharp as hail, while, notwithstanding, every arrow had its individual aim, and flew by scores together against each embrasure and opening in the parapets, as well as at every window where a defender either occasionally had post, or might be suspected to be stationed,—by this sustained discharge, two or three of the garrison were slain, and several others wounded. But, confident in their armour of proof, and in the cover which their situation afforded, the followers of Front-de-Boeuf, and his allies, showed an obstinacy in defence proportioned to the fury of the attack and replied with the discharge of their large cross-bows, as well as with their long-bows, slings, and other missile weapons, to the close and continued shower of arrows; and, as the assailants were necessarily but indifferently protected, did considerably more damage than they received at their hand. The whizzing of shafts and of missiles, on both sides, was only interrupted by the shouts which arose when either side inflicted or sustained some notable loss.

"And I must lie here like a bedridden monk," exclaimed Ivanhoe, "while the game that gives me freedom or death is played out by the hand of others!—Look from the window once again, kind maiden, but beware that you are not marked by the archers beneath—Look out once more, and tell me if they yet advance to the storm."

With patient courage, strengthened by the interval which she had employed in mental devotion, Rebecca again took post at the lattice, sheltering herself, however, so as not to be visible from beneath.

"What dost thou see, Rebecca?" again demanded the wounded knight.

"Nothing but the cloud of arrows flying so thick as to dazzle mine eyes, and to hide the bowmen who shoot them."

"That cannot endure," said Ivanhoe; "if they press not right on to carry the castle by pure force of arms, the archery may avail but little against stone walls and bulwarks. Look for the Knight of the Fetterlock, fair Rebecca, and see how he bears himself; for as the leader is, so will his followers be."

"I see him not," said Rebecca.

"Foul craven!" exclaimed Ivanhoe; "does he blench from the helm when the wind blows highest?"

"He blenches not! he blenches not!" said Rebecca, "I see him now; he leads a body of men close under the outer barrier of the barbican. 36 —They pull down the piles and palisades; they hew down the barriers with axes.—His high black plume floats abroad over the throng, like a raven over the field of the slain.—They have made a breach in the barriers—they rush in—they are thrust back!—Front-de-Boeuf heads the defenders; I see his gigantic form above the press. They throng again to the breach, and the pass is disputed hand to hand, and man to man. God of Jacob! it is the meeting of two fierce tides—the conflict of two oceans moved by adverse winds!"

She turned her head from the lattice, as if unable longer to endure a sight so terrible.

"Look forth again, Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, mistaking the cause of her retiring; "the archery must in some degree have ceased, since they are now fighting hand to hand.—Look again, there is now less danger."

Rebecca again looked forth, and almost immediately exclaimed, "Holy prophets of the law! Front-de-Boeuf and the Black Knight fight hand to hand on the breach, amid the roar of their followers, who watch the progress of the strife—Heaven strike with the cause of the oppressed and of the captive!" She then uttered a loud shriek, and exclaimed, "He is down!—he is down!"

"Who is down?" cried Ivanhoe; "for our dear Lady's sake, tell me which has fallen?"

"The Black Knight," answered Rebecca, faintly; then instantly again shouted with joyful eagerness—"But no—but no!—the name of the Lord of Hosts be blessed!—he is on foot again, and fights as if there were twenty men's strength in his single arm—His sword is broken—he snatches an axe from a yeoman—he presses Front-de-Boeuf with blow on blow—The giant stoops and totters like an oak under the steel of the woodman—he falls—he falls!"

"Front-de-Boeuf?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"Front-de-Boeuf!" answered the Jewess; "his men rush to the rescue, headed by the haughty Templar—their united force compels the champion to pause—They drag Front-de-Boeuf within the walls."

"The assailants have won the barriers, have they not?" said Ivanhoe.

"They have—they have!" exclaimed Rebecca—"and they press the besieged hard upon the outer wall; some plant ladders, some swarm like bees, and endeavour to ascend upon the shoulders of each other—down go stones, beams, and trunks of trees upon their heads, and as fast as they bear the wounded to the rear, fresh men supply their places in the assault—Great God! hast thou given men thine own image, that it should be thus cruelly defaced by the hands of their brethren!"

"Think not of that," said Ivanhoe; "this is no time for such thoughts—Who yield?—who push their way?"

"The ladders are thrown down," replied Rebecca, shuddering; "the soldiers lie grovelling under them like crushed reptiles—The besieged have the better."

"Saint George strike for us!" exclaimed the knight; "do the false yeomen give way?"

"No!" exclaimed Rebecca, "they bear themselves right yeomanly—the Black Knight approaches the postern with his huge axe—the thundering blows which he deals, you may hear them above all the din and shouts of the battle—Stones and beams are hailed down on the bold champion—he regards them no more than if they were thistle-down or feathers!"

"By Saint John of Acre," said Ivanhoe, raising himself joyfully on his couch, "methought there was but one man in England that might do such a deed!"

"The postern gate shakes," continued Rebecca; "it crashes—it is splintered by his blows—they rush in—the outwork is won—Oh, God!—they hurl the defenders from the battlements—they throw them into the moat—O men, if ye be indeed men, spare them that can resist no longer!"

"The bridge—the bridge which communicates with the castle—have they won that pass?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"No," replied Rebecca, "The Templar has destroyed the plank on which they crossed—few of the defenders escaped with him into the castle—the shrieks and cries which you hear tell the fate of the others—Alas!—I see it is still more difficult to look upon victory than upon battle."

"What do they now, maiden?" said Ivanhoe; "look forth yet again—this is no time to faint at bloodshed."

"It is over for the time," answered Rebecca; "our friends strengthen themselves within the outwork which they have mastered, and it affords them so good a shelter from the foemen's shot, that the garrison only bestow a few bolts on it from interval to interval, as if rather to disquiet than effectually to injure them."

"Our friends," said Wilfred, "will surely not abandon an enterprise so gloriously begun and so happily attained.—O no! I will put my faith in the good knight whose axe hath rent heart-of-oak and bars of iron.—Singular," he again muttered to himself, "if there be two who can do a deed of such derring-do! 37—a fetterlock, and a shacklebolt on a field sable—what may that mean?—seest thou nought else, Rebecca, by which the Black Knight may be distinguished?"

"Nothing," said the Jewess; "all about him is black as the wing of the night raven. Nothing can I spy that can mark him further—but having once seen him put forth his strength in battle, methinks I could know him again among a thousand warriors. He rushes to the fray as if he were summoned to a banquet. There is more than mere strength, there seems as if the whole soul and spirit of the champion were given to every blow which he deals upon his enemies. God assoilize him of the sin of bloodshed!—it is fearful, yet magnificent, to behold how the arm and heart of one man can triumph over hundreds."

"Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, "thou hast painted a hero; surely they rest but to refresh their force, or to provide the means of crossing the moat—Under such a leader as thou hast spoken this knight to be, there are no craven fears, no cold-blooded delays, no yielding up a gallant emprise; since the difficulties which render it arduous render it also glorious. I swear by the honour of my house—I vow by the name of my bright lady-love, I would endure ten years' captivity to fight one day by that good knight's side in such a quarrel as this!"

"Alas," said Rebecca, leaving her station at the window, and approaching the couch of the wounded knight, "this impatient yearning after action—this struggling with and repining at your present weakness, will not fail to injure your returning health—How couldst thou hope to inflict wounds on others, ere that be healed which thou thyself hast received?"

"Rebecca," he replied, "thou knowest not how impossible it is for one trained to actions of chivalry to remain passive as a priest, or a woman, when they are acting deeds of honour around him. The love of battle is the food upon which we live—the dust of the 'melee' is the breath of our nostrils! We live not—we wish not to live—longer than while we are victorious and renowned—Such, maiden, are the laws of chivalry to which we are sworn, and to which we offer all that we hold dear."

"Alas!" said the fair Jewess, "and what is it, valiant knight, save an offering of sacrifice to a demon of vain glory, and a passing through the fire to Moloch?—What remains to you as the prize of all the blood you have spilled—of all the travail and pain you have endured—of all the tears which your deeds have caused, when death hath broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse?"

"What remains?" cried Ivanhoe; "Glory, maiden, glory! which gilds our sepulchre and embalms our name."

"Glory?" continued Rebecca; "alas, is the rusted mail which hangs as a hatchment over the champion's dim and mouldering tomb—is the defaced sculpture of the inscription which the ignorant monk can hardly read to the enquiring pilgrim—are these sufficient rewards for the sacrifice of every kindly affection, for a life spent miserably that ye may make others miserable? Or is there such virtue in the rude rhymes of a wandering bard, that domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness, are so wildly bartered, to become the hero of those ballads which vagabond minstrels sing to drunken churls over their evening ale?"

"By the soul of Hereward!" replied the knight impatiently, "thou speakest, maiden, of thou knowest not what. Thou wouldst quench the pure light of chivalry, which alone distinguishes the noble from the base, the gentle knight from the churl and the savage; which rates our life far, far beneath the pitch of our honour; raises us victorious over pain, toil, and suffering, and teaches us to fear no evil but disgrace. Thou art no Christian, Rebecca; and to thee are unknown those high feelings which swell the bosom of a noble maiden when her lover hath done some deed of emprise which sanctions his flame. Chivalry!—why, maiden, she is the nurse of pure and high affection—the stay of the oppressed, the redresser of grievances, the curb of the power of the tyrant—Nobility were but an empty name without her, and liberty finds the best protection in her lance and her sword."

"I am, indeed," said Rebecca, "sprung from a race whose courage was distinguished in the defence of their own land, but who warred not, even while yet a nation, save at the command of the Deity, or in defending their country from oppression. The sound of the trumpet wakes Judah no longer, and her despised children are now but the unresisting victims of hostile and military oppression. Well hast thou spoken, Sir Knight,—until the God of Jacob shall raise up for his chosen people a second Gideon, or a new Maccabeus, it ill beseemeth the Jewish damsel to speak of battle or of war."

The high-minded maiden concluded the argument in a tone of sorrow, which deeply expressed her sense of the degradation of her people, embittered perhaps by the idea that Ivanhoe considered her as one not entitled to interfere in a case of honour, and incapable of entertaining or expressing sentiments of honour and generosity.

"How little he knows this bosom," she said, "to imagine that cowardice or meanness of soul must needs be its guests, because I have censured the fantastic chivalry of the Nazarenes! Would to heaven that the shedding of mine own blood, drop by drop, could redeem the captivity of Judah! Nay, would to God it could avail to set free my father, and this his benefactor, from the chains of the oppressor! The proud Christian should then see whether the daughter of God's chosen people dared not to die as bravely as the vainest Nazarene maiden, that boasts her descent from some petty chieftain of the rude and frozen north!"

She then looked towards the couch of the wounded knight.

"He sleeps," she said; "nature exhausted by sufferance and the waste of spirits, his wearied frame embraces the first moment of temporary relaxation to sink into slumber. Alas! is it a crime that I should look upon him, when it may be for the last time?—When yet but a short space, and those fair features will be no longer animated by the bold and buoyant spirit which forsakes them not even in sleep!—When the nostril shall be distended, the mouth agape, the eyes fixed and bloodshot; and when the proud and noble knight may be trodden on by the lowest caitiff of this accursed castle, yet stir not when the heel is lifted up against him!—And my father!—oh, my father! evil is it with his daughter, when his grey hairs are not remembered because of the golden locks of youth!—What know I but that these evils are the messengers of Jehovah's wrath to the unnatural child, who thinks of a stranger's captivity before a parent's? who forgets the desolation of Judah, and looks upon the comeliness of a Gentile and a stranger?—But I will tear this folly from my heart, though every fibre bleed as I rend it away!"

She wrapped herself closely in her veil, and sat down at a distance from the couch of the wounded knight, with her back turned towards it, fortifying, or endeavouring to fortify her mind, not only against the impending evils from without, but also against those treacherous feelings which assailed her from within.

CHAPTER XXX

*Approach the chamber, look upon his bed.
His is the passing of no peaceful ghost,
Which, as the lark arises to the sky,
'Mid morning's sweetest breeze and softest dew,
Is wing'd to heaven by good men's sighs and tears!—
Anselm parts otherwise.
—Old Play*

During the interval of quiet which followed the first success of the besiegers, while the one party was preparing to pursue their advantage, and the other to strengthen their means of defence, the Templar and De Bracy held brief council together in the hall of the castle.

"Where is Front-de-Boeuf?" said the latter, who had superintended the defence of the fortress on the other side; "men say he hath been slain."

"He lives," said the Templar, coolly, "lives as yet; but had he worn the bull's head of which he bears the name, and ten plates of iron to fence it withal, he must have gone down before yonder fatal axe. Yet a few hours, and Front-de-Boeuf is with his fathers—a powerful limb lopped off Prince John's enterprise."

"And a brave addition to the kingdom of Satan," said De Bracy; "this comes of reviling saints and angels, and ordering images of holy things and holy men to be flung down on the heads of these rascaille yeomen."

"Go to—thou art a fool," said the Templar; "thy superstition is upon a level with Front-de-Boeuf's want of faith; neither of you can render a reason for your belief or unbelief."

"Benedicite, Sir Templar," replied De Bracy, "pray you to keep better rule with your tongue when I am the theme of it. By the Mother of Heaven, I am a better Christian man than thou and thy fellowship; for the 'bruit' goeth shrewdly out, that the most holy Order of the Temple of Zion nurseth not a few heretics within its bosom, and that Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is of the number."

"Care not thou for such reports," said the Templar; "but let us think of making good the castle.—How fought these villain yeomen on thy side?"

"Like fiends incarnate," said De Bracy. "They swarmed close up to the walls, headed, as I think, by the knave who won the prize at the archery, for I knew his horn and baldric. And this is old Fitzurse's boasted policy, encouraging these malapert knaves to rebel against us! Had I not been armed in proof, the villain had marked me down seven times with as little remorse as if I had been a buck in season. He told every rivet on my armour with a cloth-yard shaft, that rapped against my ribs with as little compunction as if my bones had been of iron—But that I wore a shirt of Spanish mail under my plate-coat, I had been fairly sped."

"But you maintained your post?" said the Templar. "We lost the outwork on our part."

"That is a shrewd loss," said De Bracy; "the knaves will find cover there to assault the castle more closely, and may, if not well watched, gain some unguarded corner of a tower, or some forgotten window, and so break in upon us. Our numbers are too few for the defence of every point, and the men complain that they can nowhere show themselves, but they are the mark for as many arrows as a parish-butt on a holyday even. Front-de-Boeuf is dying too, so we shall receive no more aid from his bull's head and brutal strength. How think you, Sir Brian, were we not better make a virtue of necessity, and compound with the rogues by delivering up our prisoners?"

"How?" exclaimed the Templar; "deliver up our prisoners, and stand an object alike of ridicule and execration, as the doughty warriors who dared by a night-attack to possess themselves of the persons of a party of defenceless travellers, yet could not make good a strong castle against a vagabond troop of outlaws, led by swineherds, jesters, and the very refuse of mankind?—Shame on thy counsel, Maurice de Bracy!—The ruins of this castle shall bury both my body and my shame, ere I consent to such base and dishonourable composition."

"Let us to the walls, then," said De Bracy, carelessly; "that man never breathed, be he Turk or Templar, who held life at lighter rate than I do. But I trust there is no dishonour in wishing I had here some two scores of my gallant troop of Free Companions?—Oh, my brave lances! if ye knew but how hard your captain were this day bested, how soon should I see my banner at the head of your clump of spears! And how short while would these rabble villains stand to endure your encounter!"

"Wish for whom thou wilt," said the Templar, "but let us make what defence we can with the soldiers who remain—They are chiefly Front-de-Boeuf's followers, hated by the English for a thousand acts of insolence and oppression."

"The better," said De Bracy; "the rugged slaves will defend themselves to the last drop of their blood, ere they encounter the revenge of the peasants without. Let us up and be doing, then, Brian de Bois-Guilbert; and, live or die, thou shalt see Maurice de Bracy bear himself this day as a gentleman of blood and lineage."

"To the walls!" answered the Templar; and they both ascended the battlements to do all that skill could dictate, and manhood accomplish, in defence of the place. They readily agreed that the point of greatest danger was that opposite to the outwork of which the assailants had possessed themselves. The castle, indeed, was divided from that barbican by the moat, and it was impossible that the besiegers could assail the postern-door, with which the outwork corresponded, without surmounting that obstacle; but it was the opinion both of the Templar and De Bracy, that the besiegers, if governed by the same policy their leader had already displayed, would endeavour, by a formidable assault, to draw the chief part of the defenders' observation to this point, and take measures to avail themselves of every negligence which might take place in the defence elsewhere. To guard against such an evil, their numbers only permitted the knights to place sentinels from space to space along the walls in communication with each other, who might give the alarm whenever danger was threatened. Meanwhile, they agreed that De Bracy should command the defence at the postern, and the Templar should keep with him a score of men or thereabouts as a body of reserve, ready to hasten to any other point which might be suddenly threatened. The loss of the barbican had also this unfortunate effect, that, notwithstanding the superior height of the castle walls, the besieged could not see from them, with the same precision as before, the operations of the enemy; for some straggling underwood approached so near the sallyport of the outwork, that the assailants might introduce into it whatever force they thought proper, not only under cover, but even without the knowledge of the defenders. Utterly uncertain, therefore, upon what point the storm was to burst, De Bracy and his companion were under the necessity of providing against every possible contingency, and their followers, however brave, experienced the anxious dejection of mind incident to men enclosed by enemies, who possessed the power of choosing their time and mode of attack.

Meanwhile, the lord of the beleaguered and endangered castle lay upon a bed of bodily pain and mental agony. He had not the usual resource of bigots in that superstitious period, most of whom were wont to atone for the crimes they were guilty of by liberality to the church, stupefying by this means their terrors by the idea of atonement and forgiveness; and although the refuge which success thus purchased, was no more like to the peace of mind which follows on sincere repentance, than the turbid stupefaction procured by opium resembles healthy and natural slumbers, it was still a state of mind preferable to the agonies of awakened remorse. But among the vices of Front-de-Boeuf, a hard and griping man, avarice was predominant; and he preferred setting church and churchmen at defiance, to purchasing from them pardon and absolution at the price of treasure and of manors. Nor did the Templar, an infidel of another stamp, justly characterise his associate, when he said Front-de-Boeuf could assign no cause for his unbelief and contempt for the established faith; for the Baron would have alleged that the Church sold her wares too dear, that the spiritual freedom which she put up to sale was only to be bought like that of the chief captain of Jerusalem, "with a great sum," and Front-de-Boeuf preferred denying the virtue of the medicine, to paying the expense of the physician.

But the moment had now arrived when earth and all his treasures were gliding from before his eyes, and when the savage Baron's heart, though hard as a nether millstone, became appalled as he gazed forward into the waste darkness of futurity. The fever of his body aided the impatience and agony of his mind, and his death-bed exhibited a mixture of the newly awakened feelings of horror, combating with the fixed and inveterate obstinacy of his disposition;—a fearful state of mind, only to be equalled in those tremendous regions, where there are complaints without hope, remorse without repentance, a dreadful sense of present agony, and a presentiment that it cannot cease or be diminished!

"Where be these dog-priests now," growled the Baron, "who set such price on their ghostly mummery?—where be all those unshod Carmelites, for whom old Front-de-Boeuf founded the convent of St Anne, robbing his heir of many a fair rood of meadow, and many a fat field and close—where be the greedy hounds now?—Swilling, I warrant me, at the ale, or playing their juggling tricks at the bedside of some miserly churl.—Me, the heir of their founder—me, whom their foundation binds them to pray for—me—ungrateful villains as they are!—they suffer to die like the houseless dog on yonder common, unshriven and unhouselled!—Tell the Templar to come hither—he is a priest, and may do something—But no!—as well confess myself to the devil as to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who recks neither of heaven nor of hell.—I have heard old men talk of prayer—prayer by their own voice—Such need not to court or to bribe the false priest—But I—I dare not!"

"Lives Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," said a broken and shrill voice close by his bedside, "to say there is that which he dares not!"

The evil conscience and the shaken nerves of Front-de-Boeuf heard, in this strange interruption to his soliloquy, the voice of one of those demons, who, as the superstition of the times believed, beset the beds of dying men to distract their thoughts, and turn them from the meditations which concerned their eternal welfare. He shuddered and drew himself together; but, instantly summoning up his wonted resolution, he exclaimed, "Who is there?—what art thou, that darest to echo my words in a tone like that of the night-raven?—Come before my couch that I may see thee."

"I am thine evil angel, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," replied the voice.

"Let me behold thee then in thy bodily shape, if thou be'st indeed a fiend," replied the dying knight; "think not that I will blench from thee.—By the eternal dungeon, could I but grapple with these horrors that hover round me, as I have done with mortal dangers, heaven or hell should never say that I shrunk from the conflict!"

"Think on thy sins, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," said the almost unearthly voice, "on rebellion, on rapine, on murder!—Who stirred up the licentious John to war against his grey-headed father—against his generous brother?"

"Be thou fiend, priest, or devil," replied Front-de-Boeuf, "thou liest in thy throat!—Not I stirred John to rebellion—not I alone—there were fifty knights and barons, the flower of the midland counties—better men never laid lance in rest—And must I answer for the fault done by fifty?—False fiend, I defy thee! Depart, and haunt my couch no more—let me die in peace if thou be mortal—if thou be a demon, thy time is not yet come."

"In peace thou shalt NOT die," repeated the voice; "even in death shalt thou think on thy murders—on the groans which this castle has echoed—on the blood that is engrained in its floors!"

"Thou canst not shake me by thy petty malice," answered Front-de-Boeuf, with a ghastly and constrained laugh. "The infidel Jew—it was merit with heaven to deal with him as I did, else wherefore are men canonized who dip their hands in the blood of Saracens?—The Saxon porkers, whom I have slain, they were the foes of my country, and of my lineage, and of my liege lord.—Ho! ho! thou seest there is no crevice in my coat of plate—Art thou fled?—art thou silenced?"

"No, foul parricide!" replied the voice; "think of thy father!—think of his death!—think of his banquet-room flooded with his gore, and that poured forth by the hand of a son!"

"Ha!" answered the Baron, after a long pause, "an thou knowest that, thou art indeed the author of evil, and as omniscient as the monks call thee!—That secret I deemed locked in my own breast, and in that of one besides—the temptress, the partaker of my guilt.—Go, leave me, fiend! and seek the Saxon witch Ulrica, who alone could tell thee what she and I alone witnessed.—Go, I say, to her, who washed the wounds, and straightened the corpse, and gave to the slain man the outward show of one parted in time and in the course of nature—Go to her, she was my temptress, the foul provoker, the more foul rewarder, of the deed—let her, as well as I, taste of the tortures which anticipate hell!"

"She already tastes them," said Ulrica, stepping before the couch of Front-de-Boeuf; "she hath long drunken of this cup, and its bitterness is now sweetened to see that thou dost partake it.—Grind not thy teeth, Front-de-Boeuf—roll not thine eyes—clench not thine hand, nor shake it at me with that gesture of menace!—The hand which, like that of thy renowned ancestor who gained thy name, could have broken with one stroke the skull of a mountain-bull, is now unnerved and powerless as mine own!"

"Vile murderous hag!" replied Front-de-Boeuf; "detestable screech-owl! it is then thou who art come to exult over the ruins thou hast assisted to lay low?"

"Ay, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf," answered she, "it is Ulrica!—it is the daughter of the murdered Torquil Wolfgang!—it is the sister of his slaughtered sons!—it is she who demands of thee, and of thy father's house, father and kindred, name and fame—all that she has lost by the name of Front-de-Boeuf!—Think of my wrongs, Front-de-Boeuf, and answer me if I speak not truth. Thou hast been my evil angel, and I will be thine—I will dog thee till the very instant of dissolution!"

"Detestable fury!" exclaimed Front-de-Boeuf, "that moment shalt thou never witness—Ho! Giles, Clement, and Eustace! Saint Maur, and Stephen! seize this damned witch, and hurl her from the battlements headlong—she has betrayed us to the Saxon!—Ho! Saint Maur! Clement! false-hearted, knaves, where tarry ye?"

"Call on them again, valiant Baron," said the hag, with a smile of grisly mockery; "summon thy vassals around thee, doom them that loiter to the scourge and the dungeon—But know, mighty chief," she continued, suddenly changing her tone, "thou shalt have neither answer, nor aid, nor obedience at their hands.—Listen to these horrid sounds," for the din of the recommenced assault and defence now rung fearfully loud from the battlements of the castle; "in that war-cry is the downfall of thy house—The blood-cemented fabric of Front-de-Boeuf's power totters to the foundation, and before the foes he most despised!—The Saxon, Reginald!—the scorned Saxon assails thy walls!—Why liest thou here, like a worn-out hind, when the Saxon storms thy place of strength?"

"Gods and fiends!" exclaimed the wounded knight; "O, for one moment's strength, to drag myself to the 'melee', and perish as becomes my name!"

"Think not of it, valiant warrior!" replied she; "thou shalt die no soldier's death, but perish like the fox in his den, when the peasants have set fire to the cover around it."

"Hateful hag! thou liest!" exclaimed Front-de-Boeuf; "my followers bear them bravely—my walls are strong and high—my comrades in arms fear not a whole host of Saxons, were they headed by Hengist and Horsa!—The war-cry of the Templar and of the Free Companions rises high over the conflict! And by mine honour, when we kindle the blazing beacon, for joy of our defence, it shall consume thee, body and bones; and I shall live to hear thou art gone from earthly fires to those of that hell, which never sent forth an incarnate fiend more utterly diabolical!"

"Hold thy belief," replied Ulrica, "till the proof reach thee—But, no!" she said, interrupting herself, "thou shalt know, even now, the doom, which all thy power, strength, and courage, is unable to avoid, though it is prepared for thee by this feeble band. Markest thou the smouldering and suffocating vapour which already eddies in sable folds through the chamber?—Didst thou think it was but the darkening of thy bursting eyes—the difficulty of thy cumbered breathing?—No! Front-de-Boeuf, there is another cause—Rememberest thou the magazine of fuel that is stored beneath these apartments?"

"Woman!" he exclaimed with fury, "thou hast not set fire to it?—By heaven, thou hast, and the castle is in flames!"

"They are fast rising at least," said Ulrica, with frightful composure; "and a signal shall soon wave to warn the besiegers to press hard upon those who would extinguish them.—Farewell, Front-de-Boeuf!—May Mista, Skogula, and Zernebock, gods of the ancient Saxons—fiends, as the priests now call them—supply the place of comforters at your dying bed, which Ulrica now relinquishes!—But know, if it will give thee comfort to know it, that Ulrica is bound to the same dark coast with thyself, the companion of thy punishment as the companion of thy guilt.—And now, parricide, farewell for ever!—May each stone of this vaulted roof find a tongue to echo that title into thine ear!"

So saying, she left the apartment; and Front-de-Boeuf could hear the crash of the ponderous key, as she locked and double-locked the door behind her, thus cutting off the most slender chance of escape. In the extremity of agony he shouted upon his servants and allies—"Stephen and Saint Maur!—Clement and Giles!—I burn here unaided!—To the rescue—to the rescue, brave Bois-Guilbert, valiant De Bracy!—It is Front-de-Boeuf who calls!—It is your master, ye traitor squires!—Your ally—your brother in arms, ye perjured and faithless knights!—all the curses due to traitors upon your recreant heads, do you abandon me to perish thus miserably!—They hear me not—they cannot hear me—my voice is lost in the din of battle.—The smoke rolls thicker and thicker—the fire has caught upon the floor below—O, for one drought of the air of heaven, were it to be purchased by instant annihilation!" And in the mad frenzy of despair, the wretch now shouted with the shouts of the fighters, now muttered curses on himself, on mankind, and on Heaven itself.—"The red fire flashes through the thick smoke!" he exclaimed; "the demon marches against me under the banner of his own element—Foul spirit, avoid!—I go not with thee without my comrades—all, all are thine, that garrison these walls—Thinkest thou Front-de-Boeuf will be singled out to go alone?—No—the infidel Templar—the licentious De Bracy—Ulrica, the foul murdering strumpet—the men who aided my enterprises—the dog Saxons and accursed Jews, who are my prisoners—all, all shall attend me—a goodly fellowship as ever took the downward road—Ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed in his frenzy till the vaulted roof rang again. "Who laughed there?" exclaimed Front-de-Boeuf, in altered mood, for the noise of the conflict did not prevent the echoes of his own mad laughter from returning upon his ear—"who laughed there?—Ulrica, was it thou?—Speak, witch, and I forgive thee—for, only thou or the fiend of hell himself could have laughed at such a moment. Avaunt—avaunt!—"

But it were impious to trace any farther the picture of the blasphemer and parricide's deathbed.

CHAPTER XXXI

*Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or, close the wall up with our English dead.
———And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here*

*The mettle of your pasture—let us swear
That you are worth your breeding.*

King Henry V

Cedric, although not greatly confident in Ulrica's message, omitted not to communicate her promise to the Black Knight and Locksley. They were well pleased to find they had a friend within the place, who might, in the moment of need, be able to facilitate their entrance, and readily agreed with the Saxon that a storm, under whatever disadvantages, ought to be attempted, as the only means of liberating the prisoners now in the hands of the cruel Front-de-Boeuf.

"The royal blood of Alfred is endangered," said Cedric.

"The honour of a noble lady is in peril," said the Black Knight.

"And, by the Saint Christopher at my baldric," said the good yeoman, "were there no other cause than the safety of that poor faithful knave, Wamba, I would jeopard a joint ere a hair of his head were hurt."

"And so would I," said the Friar; "what, sirs! I trust well that a fool—I mean, d'ye see me, sirs, a fool that is free of his guild and master of his craft, and can give as much relish and flavour to a cup of wine as ever a flitch of bacon can—I say, brethren, such a fool shall never want a wise clerk to pray for or fight for him at a strait, while I can say a mass or flourish a partisan." And with that he made his heavy halberd to play around his head as a shepherd boy flourishes his light crook.

"True, Holy Clerk," said the Black Knight, "true as if Saint Dunstan himself had said it.—And now, good Locksley, were it not well that noble Cedric should assume the direction of this assault?"

"Not a jot I," returned Cedric; "I have never been wont to study either how to take or how to hold out those abodes of tyrannic power, which the Normans have erected in this groaning land. I will fight among the foremost; but my honest neighbours well know I am not a trained soldier in the discipline of wars, or the attack of strongholds."

"Since it stands thus with noble Cedric," said Locksley, "I am most willing to take on me the direction of the archery; and ye shall hang me up on my own Trysting-tree, an the defenders be permitted to show themselves over the walls without being stuck with as many shafts as there are cloves in a gammon of bacon at Christmas."

"Well said, stout yeoman," answered the Black Knight; "and if I be thought worthy to have a charge in these matters, and can find among these brave men as many as are willing to follow a true English knight, for so I may surely call myself, I am ready, with such skill as my experience has taught me, to lead them to the attack of these walls."

The parts being thus distributed to the leaders, they commenced the first assault, of which the reader has already heard the issue.

When the barbican was carried, the Sable Knight sent notice of the happy event to Locksley, requesting him at the same time, to keep such a strict observation on the castle as might prevent the defenders from combining their force for a sudden sally, and recovering the outwork which they had lost. This the knight was chiefly desirous of avoiding, conscious that the men whom he led, being hasty and untrained volunteers, imperfectly armed and unaccustomed to discipline, must, upon any sudden attack, fight at great disadvantage with the veteran soldiers of the Norman knights, who were well provided with arms both defensive and offensive; and who, to match the zeal and high spirit of the besiegers, had all the confidence which arises from perfect discipline and the habitual use of weapons. The knight employed the interval in causing to be constructed a sort of floating bridge, or long raft, by means of which he hoped to cross the moat in despite of the resistance of the enemy. This was a work of some time, which the leaders the less regretted, as it gave Ulrica leisure to execute her plan of diversion in their favour, whatever that might be.

When the raft was completed, the Black Knight addressed the besiegers:—"It avails not waiting here longer, my friends; the sun is descending to the west—and I have that upon my hands which will not permit me to tarry with you another day. Besides, it will be a marvel if the horsemen come not upon us from York, unless we speedily accomplish our purpose. Wherefore, one of ye go to Locksley, and bid him commence a discharge of arrows on the opposite side of the castle, and move forward as if about to assault it; and you, true English hearts, stand by me, and be ready to thrust the raft endlong over the moat whenever the postern on our side is thrown open. Follow me boldly across, and aid me to burst yon sallyport in the main wall of the castle. As many of you as like not this service, or are but ill armed to meet it, do you man the top of the outwork, draw your bow-strings to your ears, and mind you quell with your shot whatever shall appear to man the rampart—Noble Cedric, wilt thou take the direction of those which remain?"

"Not so, by the soul of Hereward!" said the Saxon; "lead I cannot; but may posterity curse me in my grave, if I follow not with the foremost wherever thou shalt point the way—The quarrel is mine, and well it becomes me to be in the van of the battle."

"Yet, bethink thee, noble Saxon," said the knight, "thou hast neither hauberk, nor corslet, nor aught but that light helmet, target, and sword."

"The better!" answered Cedric; "I shall be the lighter to climb these walls. And,—forgive the boast, Sir Knight,—thou shalt this day see the naked breast of a Saxon as boldly presented to the battle as ever ye beheld the steel corslet of a Norman."

"In the name of God, then," said the knight, "fling open the door, and launch the floating bridge."

The portal, which led from the inner-wall of the barbican to the moat, and which corresponded with a sallyport in the main wall of the castle, was now suddenly opened; the temporary bridge was then thrust forward, and soon flashed in the waters, extending its length between the castle and outwork, and forming a slippery and precarious passage for two men abreast to cross the moat. Well aware of the importance of taking the foe by surprise, the Black Knight, closely followed by Cedric, threw himself upon the bridge, and reached the opposite side. Here he began to thunder with his axe upon the gate of the castle, protected in part from the shot and stones cast by the defenders by the ruins of the former drawbridge, which the Templar had demolished in his retreat from the barbican, leaving the counterpoise still attached to the upper part of the portal. The followers of the knight had no such shelter; two were instantly shot with cross-bow bolts, and two more fell into the moat; the others retreated back into the barbican.

The situation of Cedric and of the Black Knight was now truly dangerous, and would have been still more so, but for the constancy of the archers in the barbican, who ceased not to shower their arrows upon the battlements, distracting the attention of those by whom they were manned, and thus affording a respite to their two chiefs from the storm of missiles which must otherwise have overwhelmed them. But their situation was eminently perilous, and was becoming more so with every moment.

"Shame on ye all!" cried De Bracy to the soldiers around him; "do ye call yourselves cross-bowmen, and let these two dogs keep their station under the walls of the castle?—Heave over the coping stones from the battlements, an better may not be—Get pick-axe and levers, and down with that huge pinnacle!" pointing to a heavy piece of stone carved-work that projected from the parapet.

At this moment the besiegers caught sight of the red flag upon the angle of the tower which Ulrica had described to Cedric. The stout yeoman Locksley was the first who was aware of it, as he was hastening to the outwork, impatient to see the progress of the assault.

"Saint George!" he cried, "Merry Saint George for England!—To the charge, bold yeomen!—why leave ye the good knight and noble Cedric to storm the pass alone?—make in, mad priest, show thou canst fight for thy rosary,—make in, brave yeomen!—the castle is ours, we have friends within—See yonder flag, it is the appointed signal—Torquilstone is ours!—Think of honour, think of spoil—One effort, and the place is ours!"

With that he bent his good bow, and sent a shaft right through the breast of one of the men-at-arms, who, under De Bracy's direction, was loosening a fragment from one of the battlements to precipitate on the heads of Cedric and the Black Knight. A second soldier caught from the hands of the dying man the iron crow, with which he heaved at and had loosened the stone pinnacle, when, receiving an arrow through his head-piece, he dropped from the battlements into the moat a dead man. The men-at-arms were daunted, for no armour seemed proof against the shot of this tremendous archer.

"Do you give ground, base knaves!" said De Bracy; "'Mount joye Saint Dennis!—Give me the lever!"

And, snatching it up, he again assailed the loosened pinnacle, which was of weight enough, if thrown down, not only to have destroyed the remnant of the drawbridge, which sheltered the two foremost assailants, but also to have sunk the rude float of planks over which they had crossed. All saw the danger, and the

boldest, even the stout Friar himself, avoided setting foot on the raft. Thrice did Locksley bend his shaft against De Bracy, and thrice did his arrow bound back from the knight's armour of proof.

"Curse on thy Spanish steel-coat!" said Locksley, "had English smith forged it, these arrows had gone through, an as if it had been silk or sendal." He then began to call out, "Comrades! friends! noble Cedric! bear back, and let the ruin fall."

His warning voice was unheard, for the din which the knight himself occasioned by his strokes upon the postern would have drowned twenty war-trumpets. The faithful Gurth indeed sprung forward on the planked bridge, to warn Cedric of his impending fate, or to share it with him. But his warning would have come too late; the massive pinnacle already tottered, and De Bracy, who still heaved at his task, would have accomplished it, had not the voice of the Templar sounded close in his ears:—

"All is lost, De Bracy, the castle burns."

"Thou art mad to say so!" replied the knight.

"It is all in a light flame on the western side. I have striven in vain to extinguish it."

With the stern coolness which formed the basis of his character, Brian de Bois-Guilbert communicated this hideous intelligence, which was not so calmly received by his astonished comrade.

"Saints of Paradise!" said De Bracy; "what is to be done? I vow to Saint Nicholas of Limoges a candlestick of pure gold—"

"Spare thy vow," said the Templar, "and mark me. Lead thy men down, as if to a sally; throw the postern-gate open—There are but two men who occupy the float, fling them into the moat, and push across for the barbican. I will charge from the main gate, and attack the barbican on the outside; and if we can regain that post, be assured we shall defend ourselves until we are relieved, or at least till they grant us fair quarter."

"It is well thought upon," said De Bracy; "I will play my part—Templar, thou wilt not fail me?"

"Hand and glove, I will not!" said Bois-Guilbert. "But haste thee, in the name of God!"

De Bracy hastily drew his men together, and rushed down to the postern-gate, which he caused instantly to be thrown open. But scarce was this done ere the portentous strength of the Black Knight forced his way inward in despite of De Bracy and his followers. Two of the foremost instantly fell, and the rest gave way notwithstanding all their leader's efforts to stop them.

"Dogs!" said De Bracy, "will ye let TWO men win our only pass for safety?"

"He is the devil!" said a veteran man-at-arms, bearing back from the blows of their sable antagonist.

"And if he be the devil," replied De Bracy, "would you fly from him into the mouth of hell?—the castle burns behind us, villains!—let despair give you courage, or let me forward! I will cope with this champion myself."

And well and chivalrous did De Bracy that day maintain the fame he had acquired in the civil wars of that dreadful period. The vaulted passage to which the postern gave entrance, and in which these two redoubted champions were now fighting hand to hand, rung with the furious blows which they dealt each other, De Bracy with his sword, the Black Knight with his ponderous axe. At length the Norman received a blow, which, though its force was partly parried by his shield, for otherwise never more would De Bracy have again moved limb, descended yet with such violence on his crest, that he measured his length on the paved floor.

"Yield thee, De Bracy," said the Black Champion, stooping over him, and holding against the bars of his helmet the fatal poniard with which the knights dispatched their enemies, (and which was called the dagger of mercy,)—"yield thee, Maurice de Bracy, rescue or no rescue, or thou art but a dead man."

"I will not yield," replied De Bracy faintly, "to an unknown conqueror. Tell me thy name, or work thy pleasure on me—it shall never be said that Maurice de Bracy was prisoner to a nameless churl."

The Black Knight whispered something into the ear of the vanquished.

"I yield me to be true prisoner, rescue or no rescue," answered the Norman, exchanging his tone of stern and determined obstinacy for one of deep though sullen submission.

"Go to the barbican," said the victor, in a tone of authority, "and there wait my further orders."

"Yet first, let me say," said De Bracy, "what it imports thee to know. Wilfred of Ivanhoe is wounded and a prisoner, and will perish in the burning castle without present help."

"Wilfred of Ivanhoe!" exclaimed the Black Knight—"prisoner, and perish!—The life of every man in the castle shall answer it if a hair of his head be singed—Show me his chamber!"

"Ascend yonder winding stair," said De Bracy; "it leads to his apartment—Wilt thou not accept my guidance?" he added, in a submissive voice.

"No. To the barbican, and there wait my orders. I trust thee not, De Bracy."

During this combat and the brief conversation which ensued, Cedric, at the head of a body of men, among whom the Friar was conspicuous, had pushed across the bridge as soon as they saw the postern open, and drove back the dispirited and despairing followers of De Bracy, of whom some asked quarter, some offered vain resistance, and the greater part fled towards the court-yard. De Bracy himself arose from the ground, and cast a sorrowful glance after his conqueror. "He trusts me not!" he repeated; "but have I deserved his trust?" He then lifted his sword from the floor, took off his helmet in token of submission, and, going to the barbican, gave up his sword to Locksley, whom he met by the way.

As the fire augmented, symptoms of it became soon apparent in the chamber, where Ivanhoe was watched and tended by the Jewess Rebecca. He had been awakened from his brief slumber by the noise of the battle; and his attendant, who had, at his anxious desire, again placed herself at the window to watch and report to him the fate of the attack, was for some time prevented from observing either, by the increase of the smouldering and stifling vapour. At length the volumes of smoke which rolled into the apartment—the cries for water, which were heard even above the din of the battle made them sensible of the progress of this new danger.

"The castle burns," said Rebecca; "it burns!—What can we do to save ourselves?"

"Fly, Rebecca, and save thine own life," said Ivanhoe, "for no human aid can avail me."

"I will not fly," answered Rebecca; "we will be saved or perish together—And yet, great God!—my father, my father—what will be his fate!"

At this moment the door of the apartment flew open, and the Templar presented himself,—a ghastly figure, for his gilded armour was broken and bloody, and the plume was partly shorn away, partly burnt from his casque. "I have found thee," said he to Rebecca; "thou shalt prove I will keep my word to share weal and woe with thee—There is but one path to safety, I have cut my way through fifty dangers to point it to thee—up, and instantly follow me!" 38

"Alone," answered Rebecca, "I will not follow thee. If thou wert born of woman—if thou hast but a touch of human charity in thee—if thy heart be not hard as thy breastplate—save my aged father—save this wounded knight!"

"A knight," answered the Templar, with his characteristic calmness, "a knight, Rebecca, must encounter his fate, whether it meet him in the shape of sword or flame—and who reckes how or where a Jew meets with his?"

"Savage warrior," said Rebecca, "rather will I perish in the flames than accept safety from thee!"

"Thou shalt not choose, Rebecca—once didst thou foil me, but never mortal did so twice."

So saying, he seized on the terrified maiden, who filled the air with her shrieks, and bore her out of the room in his arms in spite of her cries, and without regarding the menaces and defiance which Ivanhoe thundered against him. "Hound of the Temple—stain to thine Order—set free the damsel! Traitor of Bois-Guilbert, it is Ivanhoe commands thee!—Villain, I will have thy heart's blood!"

"I had not found thee, Wilfred," said the Black Knight, who at that instant entered the apartment, "but for thy shouts."

"If thou be'st true knight," said Wilfred, "think not of me—pursue yon ravisher—save the Lady Rowena—look to the noble Cedric!"

"In their turn," answered he of the Fetterlock, "but thine is first."

And seizing upon Ivanhoe, he bore him off with as much ease as the Templar had carried off Rebecca, rushed with him to the postern, and having there delivered his burden to the care of two yeomen, he again entered the castle to assist in the rescue of the other prisoners.

One turret was now in bright flames, which flashed out furiously from window and shot-hole. But in other parts, the great thickness of the walls and the vaulted roofs of the apartments, resisted the progress of the flames, and there the rage of man still triumphed, as the scarce more dreadful element held mastery elsewhere; for the besiegers pursued the defenders of the castle from chamber to chamber, and satiated in their blood the vengeance which had long animated them against the soldiers of the tyrant Front-de-Boeuf. Most of the garrison resisted to the uttermost—few of them asked quarter—none received it. The air was filled with groans and clashing of arms—the floors were slippery with the blood of despairing and expiring wretches.

Through this scene of confusion, Cedric rushed in quest of Rowena, while the faithful Gurth, following him closely through the "melee", neglected his own safety while he strove to avert the blows that were aimed at his master. The noble Saxon was so fortunate as to reach his ward's apartment just as she had abandoned all hope of safety, and, with a crucifix clasped in agony to her bosom, sat in expectation of instant death. He committed her to the charge of Gurth, to be conducted in safety to the barbican, the road to which was now cleared of the enemy, and not yet interrupted by the flames. This accomplished, the loyal Cedric hastened in quest of his friend Athelstane, determined, at every risk to himself, to save that last scion of Saxon royalty. But ere Cedric penetrated as far as the old hall in which he had himself been a prisoner, the inventive genius of Wamba had procured liberation for himself and his companion in adversity.

When the noise of the conflict announced that it was at the hottest, the Jester began to shout, with the utmost power of his lungs, "Saint George and the dragon!—Bonny Saint George for merry England!—The castle is won!" And these sounds he rendered yet more fearful, by banging against each other two or three pieces of rusty armour which lay scattered around the hall.

A guard, which had been stationed in the outer, or anteroom, and whose spirits were already in a state of alarm, took fright at Wamba's clamour, and, leaving the door open behind them, ran to tell the Templar that foemen had entered the old hall. Meantime the prisoners found no difficulty in making their escape into the anteroom, and from thence into the court of the castle, which was now the last scene of contest. Here sat the fierce Templar, mounted on horseback, surrounded by several of the garrison both on horse and foot, who had united their strength to that of this renowned leader, in order to secure the last chance of safety and retreat which remained to them. The drawbridge had been lowered by his orders, but the passage was beset; for the archers, who had hitherto only annoyed the castle on that side by their missiles, no sooner saw the flames breaking out, and the bridge lowered, than they thronged to the entrance, as well to prevent the escape of the garrison, as to secure their own share of booty ere the castle should be burnt down. On the other hand, a party of the besiegers who had entered by the postern were now issuing out into the court-yard, and attacking with fury the remnant of the defenders who were thus assaulted on both sides at once.

Animated, however, by despair, and supported by the example of their indomitable leader, the remaining soldiers of the castle fought with the utmost valour; and, being well-armed, succeeded more than once in driving back the assailants, though much inferior in numbers. Rebecca, placed on horseback before one of the Templar's Saracen slaves, was in the midst of the little party; and Bois-Guilbert, notwithstanding the confusion of the bloody fray, showed every attention to her safety. Repeatedly he was by her side, and, neglecting his own defence, held before her the fence of his triangular steel-plated shield; and anon starting from his position by her, he cried his war-cry, dashed forward, struck to earth the most forward of the assailants, and was on the same instant once more at her bridle rein. Athelstane, who, as the reader knows, was slothful, but not cowardly, beheld the female form whom the Templar protected thus sedulously, and doubted not that it was Rowena whom the knight was carrying off, in despite of all resistance which could be offered.

"By the soul of Saint Edward," he said, "I will rescue her from yonder over-proud knight, and he shall die by my hand!"

"Think what you do!" cried Wamba; "hasty hand catches frog for fish—by my bauble, yonder is none of my Lady Rowena—see but her long dark locks!—Nay, an ye will not know black from white, ye may be leader, but I will be no follower—no bones of mine shall be broken unless I know for whom.—And you without armour too!—Bethink you, silk bonnet never kept out steel blade.—Nay, then, if wilful will to water, wilful must drench.—'Deus vobiscum', most doughty Athelstane!"—he concluded, loosening the hold which he had hitherto kept upon the Saxon's tunic.

To snatch a mace from the pavement, on which it lay beside one whose dying grasp had just relinquished it—to rush on the Templar's band, and to strike in quick succession to the right and left, levelling a warrior at each blow, was, for Athelstane's great strength, now animated with unusual fury, but the work of a single moment; he was soon within two yards of Bois-Guilbert, whom he defied in his loudest tone.

"Turn, false-hearted Templar! let go her whom thou art unworthy to touch—turn, limb of a hand of murdering and hypocritical robbers!"

"Dog!" said the Templar, grinding his teeth, "I will teach thee to blaspheme the holy Order of the Temple of Zion;" and with these words, half-wheeling his steed, he made a demi-courbette towards the Saxon, and rising in the stirrups, so as to take full advantage of the descent of the horse, he discharged a fearful blow upon the head of Athelstane.

Well said Wamba, that silken bonnet keeps out no steel blade. So trenchant was the Templar's weapon, that it shore asunder, as it had been a willow twig, the tough and plaited handle of the mace, which the ill-fated Saxon reared to parry the blow, and, descending on his head, levelled him with the earth.

"Ha! Beau-seant!" exclaimed Bois-Guilbert, "thus be it to the maligners of the Temple-knights!" Taking advantage of the dismay which was spread by the fall of Athelstane, and calling aloud, "Those who would save themselves, follow me!" he pushed across the drawbridge, dispersing the archers who would have intercepted them. He was followed by his Saracens, and some five or six men-at-arms, who had mounted their horses. The Templar's retreat was rendered perilous by the numbers of arrows shot off at him and his party; but this did not prevent him from galloping round to the barbican, of which, according to his previous plan, he supposed it possible De Bracy might have been in possession.

"De Bracy! De Bracy!" he shouted, "art thou there?"

"I am here," replied De Bracy, "but I am a prisoner."

"Can I rescue thee?" cried Bois-Guilbert.

"No," replied De Bracy; "I have rendered me, rescue or no rescue. I will be true prisoner. Save thyself—there are hawks abroad—put the seas betwixt you and England—I dare not say more."

"Well," answered the Templar, "an thou wilt tarry there, remember I have redeemed word and glove. Be the hawks where they will, methinks the walls of the Preceptory of Templestowe will be cover sufficient, and thither will I, like heron to her haunt."

Having thus spoken, he galloped off with his followers.

Those of the castle who had not gotten to horse, still continued to fight desperately with the besiegers, after the departure of the Templar, but rather in despair of quarter than that they entertained any hope of escape. The fire was spreading rapidly through all parts of the castle, when Ulrica, who had first kindled it, appeared on a turret, in the guise of one of the ancient furies, yelling forth a war-song, such as was of yore raised on the field of battle by the scalds of the yet heathen Saxons. Her long dishevelled grey hair flew back from her uncovered head; the inebriating delight of gratified vengeance contended in her eyes with the fire of insanity; and she brandished the distaff which she held in her hand, as if she had been one of the Fatal Sisters, who spin and abridge the thread of human life. Tradition has preserved some wild strophes of the barbarous hymn which she chanted wildly amid that scene of fire and of slaughter:—

1.

Whet the bright steel,

Sons of the White Dragon!

Kindle the torch,

Daughter of Hengist!

The steel glimmers not for the carving of the banquet,

It is hard, broad, and sharply pointed;

The torch goeth not to the bridal chamber,

*It steams and glitters blue with sulphur.
Whet the steel, the raven croaks!
Light the torch, Zernebock is yelling!
Whet the steel, sons of the Dragon!
Kindle the torch, daughter of Hengist!*

2.
*The black cloud is low over the thane's castle
The eagle screams—he rides on its bosom.
Scream not, grey rider of the sable cloud,
Thy banquet is prepared!
The maidens of Valhalla look forth,
The race of Hengist will send them guests.
Shake your black tresses, maidens of Valhalla!
And strike your loud timbrels for joy!
Many a haughty step bends to your halls,
Many a helmed head.*

3.
*Dark sits the evening upon the thanes castle,
The black clouds gather round;
Soon shall they be red as the blood of the valiant!
The destroyer of forests shall shake his red crest against
them.
He, the bright consumer of palaces,
Broad waves he his blazing banner,
Red, wide and dusky,
Over the strife of the valiant:
His joy is in the clashing swords and broken bucklers;
He loves to lick the hissing blood as it bursts warm from the
wound!*

4.
*All must perish!
The sword cleaveth the helmet;
The strong armour is pierced by the lance;
Fire devoureth the dwelling of princes,
Engines break down the fences of the battle.
All must perish!
The race of Hengist is gone—
The name of Horsa is no more!
Shrink not then from your doom, sons of the sword!
Let your blades drink blood like wine;
Feast ye in the banquet of slaughter,
By the light of the blazing halls!
Strong be your swords while your blood is warm,
And spare neither for pity nor fear,
For vengeance hath but an hour;
Strong hate itself shall expire
I also must perish! 39*

The towering flames had now surmounted every obstruction, and rose to the evening skies one huge and burning beacon, seen far and wide through the adjacent country. Tower after tower crashed down, with blazing roof and rafter; and the combatants were driven from the court-yard. The vanquished, of whom very few remained, scattered and escaped into the neighbouring wood. The victors, assembling in large bands, gazed with wonder, not unmixed with fear, upon the flames, in which their own ranks and arms glanced dusky red. The maniac figure of the Saxon Ulrica was for a long time visible on the lofty stand she had chosen, tossing her arms abroad with wild exultation, as if she reined empress of the conflagration which she had raised. At length, with a terrific crash, the whole turret gave way, and she perished in the flames which had consumed her tyrant. An awful pause of horror silenced each murmur of the armed spectators, who, for the space of several minutes, stirred not a finger, save to sign the cross. The voice of Locksley was then heard, "Shout, yeomen!—the den of tyrants is no more! Let each bring his spoil to our chosen place of rendezvous at the Trysting-tree in the Harthill-walk; for there at break of day will we make just partition among our own bands, together with our worthy allies in this great deed of vengeance."

CHAPTER XXXII.

*Trust me each state must have its policies:
Kingdoms have edicts, cities have their charters;
Even the wild outlaw, in his forest-walk,
Keeps yet some touch of civil discipline;
For not since Adam wore his verdant apron,
Hath man with man in social union dwelt,
But laws were made to draw that union closer.
—Old Play*

The daylight had dawned upon the glades of the oak forest. The green boughs glittered with all their pearls of dew. The hind led her fawn from the covert of high fern to the more open walks of the greenwood, and no huntsman was there to watch or intercept the stately hart, as he paced at the head of the antler'd herd.

The outlaws were all assembled around the Trysting-tree in the Harthill-walk, where they had spent the night in refreshing themselves after the fatigues of the siege, some with wine, some with slumber, many with hearing and recounting the events of the day, and computing the heaps of plunder which their success had placed at the disposal of their Chief.

The spoils were indeed very large; for, notwithstanding that much was consumed, a great deal of plate, rich armour, and splendid clothing, had been secured by the exertions of the dauntless outlaws, who could be appalled by no danger when such rewards were in view. Yet so strict were the laws of their society, that no one ventured to appropriate any part of the booty, which was brought into one common mass, to be at the disposal of their leader.

The place of rendezvous was an aged oak; not however the same to which Locksley had conducted Gurth and Wamba in the earlier part of the story, but one which was the centre of a silvan amphitheatre, within half a mile of the demolished castle of Torquilstone. Here Locksley assumed his seat—a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak, and the silvan followers were gathered around him. He assigned to the Black Knight a seat at his right hand, and to Cedric a place upon his left.

"Pardon my freedom, noble sirs," he said, "but in these glades I am monarch—they are my kingdom; and these my wild subjects would reck but little of my power, were I, within my own dominions, to yield place to mortal man.—Now, sirs, who hath seen our chaplain? where is our curtal Friar? A mass amongst Christian men best begins a busy morning."—No one had seen the Clerk of Copmanhurst. "Over gods forbode!" said the outlaw chief, "I trust the jolly priest hath but abidden by the wine-pot a thought too late. Who saw him since the castle was ta'en?"

"I," quoth the Miller, "marked him busy about the door of a cellar, swearing by each saint in the calendar he would taste the smack of Front-de-Boeuf's Gascoigne wine."

"Now, the saints, as many as there be of them," said the Captain, "forefend, lest he has drunk too deep of the wine-butts, and perished by the fall of the castle!—Away, Miller!—take with you enow of men, seek the place where you last saw him—throw water from the moat on the scorching ruins—I will have them removed stone by stone ere I lose my curtal Friar."

The numbers who hastened to execute this duty, considering that an interesting division of spoil was about to take place, showed how much the troop had at heart the safety of their spiritual father.

"Meanwhile, let us proceed," said Locksley; "for when this bold deed shall be sounded abroad, the bands of De Bracy, of Malvoisin, and other allies of Front-de-Boeuf, will be in motion against us, and it were well for our safety that we retreat from the vicinity.—Noble Cedric," he said, turning to the Saxon, "that spoil is divided into two portions; do thou make choice of that which best suits thee, to recompense thy people who were partakers with us in this adventure."

"Good yeoman," said Cedric, "my heart is oppressed with sadness. The noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh is no more—the last sprout of the sainted Confessor! Hopes have perished with him which can never return!—A sparkle hath been quenched by his blood, which no human breath can again rekindle! My people, save the few who are now with me, do but tarry my presence to transport his honoured remains to their last mansion. The Lady Rowena is desirous to return to Rotherwood, and must be escorted by a sufficient force. I should, therefore, ere now, have left this place; and I waited—not to share the booty, for, so help me God and Saint Withold! as neither I nor any of mine will touch the value of a liard,—I waited but to render my thanks to thee and to thy bold yeomen, for the life and honour ye have saved."

"Nay, but," said the chief Outlaw, "we did but half the work at most—take of the spoil what may reward your own neighbours and followers."

"I am rich enough to reward them from mine own wealth," answered Cedric.

"And some," said Wamba, "have been wise enough to reward themselves; they do not march off empty-handed altogether. We do not all wear motley."

"They are welcome," said Locksley; "our laws bind none but ourselves."

"But, thou, my poor knave," said Cedric, turning about and embracing his Jester, "how shall I reward thee, who feared not to give thy body to chains and death instead of mine!—All forsook me, when the poor fool was faithful!"

A tear stood in the eye of the rough Thane as he spoke—a mark of feeling which even the death of Athelstane had not extracted; but there was something in the half-instinctive attachment of his clown, that waked his nature more keenly than even grief itself.

"Nay," said the Jester, extricating himself from master's caress, "if you pay my service with the water of your eye, the Jester must weep for company, and then what becomes of his vocation?—But, uncle, if you would indeed pleasure me, I pray you to pardon my playfellow Gurth, who stole a week from your service to bestow it on your son."

"Pardon him!" exclaimed Cedric; "I will both pardon and reward him.—Kneel down, Gurth."—The swineherd was in an instant at his master's feet—"THEOW and ESNE 40 art thou no longer," said Cedric touching him with a wand; "FOLKFREE and SACLESS 41 art thou in town and from town, in the forest as in the field. A hide of land I give to thee in my steads of Walbrugham, from me and mine to thee and thine aye and for ever; and God's malison on his head who this gainsays!" No longer a serf, but a freeman and a landholder, Gurth sprung upon his feet, and twice bounded aloft to almost his own height from the ground. "A smith and a file," he cried, "to do away the collar from the neck of a freeman!—Noble master! doubled is my strength by your gift, and doubly will I fight for you!—There is a free spirit in my breast—I am a man changed to myself and all around.—Ha, Fangs!" he continued,—for that faithful cur, seeing his master thus transported, began to jump upon him, to express his sympathy,—"knowest thou thy master still?"

"Ay," said Wamba, "Fangs and I still know thee, Gurth, though we must needs abide by the collar; it is only thou art likely to forget both us and thyself."

"I shall forget myself indeed ere I forget thee, true comrade," said Gurth; "and were freedom fit for thee, Wamba, the master would not let thee want it."

"Nay," said Wamba, "never think I envy thee, brother Gurth; the serf sits by the hall-fire when the freeman must forth to the field of battle—And what saith Oldhelm of Malsbury—Better a fool at a feast than a wise man at a fray."

The tramp of horses was now heard, and the Lady Rowena appeared, surrounded by several riders, and a much stronger party of footmen, who joyfully shook their pikes and clashed their brown-bills for joy of her freedom. She herself, richly attired, and mounted on a dark chestnut palfrey, had recovered all the dignity of her manner, and only an unwonted degree of paleness showed the sufferings she had undergone. Her lovely brow, though sorrowful, bore on it a cast of reviving hope for the future, as well as of grateful thankfulness for the past deliverance—She knew that Ivanhoe was safe, and she knew that Athelstane was dead. The former assurance filled her with the most sincere delight; and if she did not absolutely rejoice at the latter, she might be pardoned for feeling the full advantage of being freed from further persecution on the only subject in which she had ever been contradicted by her guardian Cedric.

As Rowena bent her steed towards Locksley's seat, that bold yeoman, with all his followers, rose to receive her, as if by a general instinct of courtesy. The blood rose to her cheeks, as, courteously waving her hand, and bending so low that her beautiful and loose tresses were for an instant mixed with the flowing mane of her palfrey, she expressed in few but apt words her obligations and her gratitude to Locksley and her other deliverers.—"God bless you, brave men," she concluded, "God and Our Lady bless you and requite you for gallantly perilling yourselves in the cause of the oppressed!—If any of you should hunger, remember Rowena has food—if you should thirst, she has many a butt of wine and brown ale—and if the Normans drive ye from these walks, Rowena has forests of her own, where her gallant deliverers may range at full freedom, and never ranger ask whose arrow hath struck down the deer."

"Thanks, gentle lady," said Locksley; "thanks from my company and myself. But, to have saved you requites itself. We who walk the greenwood do many a wild deed, and the Lady Rowena's deliverance may be received as an atonement."

Again bowing from her palfrey, Rowena turned to depart; but pausing a moment, while Cedric, who was to attend her, was also taking his leave, she found herself unexpectedly close by the prisoner De Bracy. He stood under a tree in deep meditation, his arms crossed upon his breast, and Rowena was in hopes she might pass him unobserved. He looked up, however, and, when aware of her presence, a deep flush of shame suffused his handsome countenance. He stood a moment most irresolute; then, stepping forward, took her palfrey by the rein, and bent his knee before her.

"Will the Lady Rowena deign to cast an eye—on a captive knight—on a dishonoured soldier?"

"Sir Knight," answered Rowena, "in enterprises such as yours, the real dishonour lies not in failure, but in success."

"Conquest, lady, should soften the heart," answered De Bracy; "let me but know that the Lady Rowena forgives the violence occasioned by an ill-fated passion, and she shall soon learn that De Bracy knows how to serve her in nobler ways."

"I forgive you, Sir Knight," said Rowena, "as a Christian."

"That means," said Wamba, "that she does not forgive him at all."

"But I can never forgive the misery and desolation your madness has occasioned," continued Rowena.

"Unloose your hold on the lady's rein," said Cedric, coming up. "By the bright sun above us, but it were shame, I would pin thee to the earth with my javelin—but be well assured, thou shalt smart, Maurice de Bracy, for thy share in this foul deed."

"He threatens safely who threatens a prisoner," said De Bracy; "but when had a Saxon any touch of courtesy?"

Then retiring two steps backward, he permitted the lady to move on.

Cedric, ere they departed, expressed his peculiar gratitude to the Black Champion, and earnestly entreated him to accompany him to Rotherwood.

"I know," he said, "that ye errant knights desire to carry your fortunes on the point of your lance, and reckon not of land or goods; but war is a changeful mistress, and a home is sometimes desirable even to the champion whose trade is wandering. Thou hast earned one in the halls of Rotherwood, noble knight. Cedric has wealth enough to repair the injuries of fortune, and all he has is his deliverer's—Come, therefore, to Rotherwood, not as a guest, but as a son or brother."

"Cedric has already made me rich," said the Knight,—"he has taught me the value of Saxon virtue. To Rotherwood will I come, brave Saxon, and that speedily; but, as now, pressing matters of moment detain me from your halls. Peradventure when I come hither, I will ask such a boon as will put even thy generosity to the test."

"It is granted ere spoken out," said Cedric, striking his ready hand into the gauntleted palm of the Black Knight,—"it is granted already, were it to affect half my fortune."

"Gage not thy promise so lightly," said the Knight of the Fetterlock; "yet well I hope to gain the boon I shall ask. Meanwhile, adieu."

"I have but to say," added the Saxon, "that, during the funeral rites of the noble Athelstane, I shall be an inhabitant of the halls of his castle of Coningsburgh—They will be open to all who choose to partake of the funeral banqueting; and, I speak in name of the noble Edith, mother of the fallen prince, they will never be shut against him who laboured so bravely, though unsuccessfully, to save Athelstane from Norman chains and Norman steel."

"Ay, ay," said Wamba, who had resumed his attendance on his master, "rare feeding there will be—pity that the noble Athelstane cannot banquet at his own funeral.—But he," continued the Jester, lifting up his eyes gravely, "is supping in Paradise, and doubtless does honour to the cheer."

"Peace, and move on," said Cedric, his anger at this untimely jest being checked by the recollection of Wamba's recent services. Rowena waved a graceful adieu to him of the Fetterlock—the Saxon bade God speed him, and on they moved through a wide glade of the forest.

They had scarce departed, ere a sudden procession moved from under the greenwood branches, swept slowly round the silvan amphitheatre, and took the same direction with Rowena and her followers. The priests of a neighbouring convent, in expectation of the ample donation, or "soul-scat", which Cedric had propined, attended upon the car in which the body of Athelstane was laid, and sang hymns as it was sadly and slowly borne on the shoulders of his vassals to his castle of Coningsburgh, to be there deposited in the grave of Hengist, from whom the deceased derived his long descent. Many of his vassals had assembled at the news of his death, and followed the bier with all the external marks, at least, of dejection and sorrow. Again the outlaws arose, and paid the same rude and spontaneous homage to death, which they had so lately rendered to beauty—the slow chant and mournful step of the priests brought back to their remembrance such of their comrades as had fallen in the yesterday's array. But such recollections dwell not long with those who lead a life of danger and enterprise, and ere the sound of the death-hymn had died on the wind, the outlaws were again busied in the distribution of their spoil.

"Valiant knight," said Locksley to the Black Champion, "without whose good heart and mighty arm our enterprise must altogether have failed, will it please you to take from that mass of spoil whatever may best serve to pleasure you, and to remind you of this my Trysting-tree?"

"I accept the offer," said the Knight, "as frankly as it is given; and I ask permission to dispose of Sir Maurice de Bracy at my own pleasure."

"He is thine already," said Locksley, "and well for him! else the tyrant had graced the highest bough of this oak, with as many of his Free-Companions as we could gather, hanging thick as acorns around him.—But he is thy prisoner, and he is safe, though he had slain my father."

"De Bracy," said the Knight, "thou art free—depart. He whose prisoner thou art scorns to take mean revenge for what is past. But beware of the future, lest a worse thing befall thee.—Maurice de Bracy, I say BEWARE!"

De Bracy bowed low and in silence, and was about to withdraw, when the yeomen burst at once into a shout of execration and derision. The proud knight instantly stopped, turned back, folded his arms, drew up his form to its full height, and exclaimed, "Peace, ye yelping curs! who open upon a cry which ye followed not when the stag was at bay—De Bracy scorns your censure as he would disdain your applause. To your brakes and caves, ye outlawed thieves! and be silent when aught knightly or noble is but spoken within a league of your fox-earths."

This ill-timed defiance might have procured for De Bracy a volley of arrows, but for the hasty and imperative interference of the outlaw Chief. Meanwhile the knight caught a horse by the rein, for several which had been taken in the stables of Front-de-Boeuf stood accoutred around, and were a valuable part of the booty. He threw himself upon the saddle, and galloped off through the wood.

When the bustle occasioned by this incident was somewhat composed, the chief Outlaw took from his neck the rich horn and baldric which he had recently gained at the strife of archery near Ashby.

"Noble knight," he said to him of the Fetterlock, "if you disdain not to grace by your acceptance a bugle which an English yeoman has once worn, this I will pray you to keep as a memorial of your gallant bearing—and if ye have aught to do, and, as happeneth oft to a gallant knight, ye chance to be hard bested in any forest between Trent and Tees, wind three mots 42 upon the horn thus, 'Wa-sa-hoa!' and it may well chance ye shall find helpers and rescue."

He then gave breath to the bugle, and winded once and again the call which he described, until the knight had caught the notes.

"Gramercy for the gift, bold yeoman," said the Knight; "and better help than thine and thy rangers would I never seek, were it at my utmost need." And then in his turn he winded the call till all the greenwood rang.

"Well blown and clearly," said the yeoman; "beshrew me an thou knowest not as much of woodcraft as of war!—thou hast been a striker of deer in thy day, I warrant.—Comrades, mark these three mots—it is the call of the Knight of the Fetterlock; and he who hears it, and hastens not to serve him at his need, I will have him scourged out of our band with his own bowstring."

"Long live our leader!" shouted the yeomen, "and long live the Black Knight of the Fetterlock!—May he soon use our service, to prove how readily it will be paid."

Locksley now proceeded to the distribution of the spoil, which he performed with the most laudable impartiality. A tenth part of the whole was set apart for the church, and for pious uses; a portion was next allotted to a sort of public treasury; a part was assigned to the widows and children of those who had fallen, or to be expended in masses for the souls of such as had left no surviving family. The rest was divided amongst the outlaws, according to their rank and merit, and the judgment of the Chief, on all such doubtful questions as occurred, was delivered with great shrewdness, and received with absolute submission. The Black Knight was not a little surprised to find that men, in a state so lawless, were nevertheless among themselves so regularly and equitably governed, and all that he observed added to his opinion of the justice and judgment of their leader.

When each had taken his own proportion of the booty, and while the treasurer, accompanied by four tall yeomen, was transporting that belonging to the state to some place of concealment or of security, the portion devoted to the church still remained unappropriated.

"I would," said the leader, "we could hear tidings of our joyous chaplain—he was never wont to be absent when meat was to be blessed, or spoil to be parted; and it is his duty to take care of these the tithes of our successful enterprise. It may be the office has helped to cover some of his canonical irregularities. Also, I have a

holy brother of his a prisoner at no great distance, and I would fain have the Friar to help me to deal with him in due sort—I greatly misdoubt the safety of the bluff priest."

"I were right sorry for that," said the Knight of the Fetterlock, "for I stand indebted to him for the joyous hospitality of a merry night in his cell. Let us to the ruins of the castle; it may be we shall there learn some tidings of him."

While they thus spoke, a loud shout among the yeomen announced the arrival of him for whom they feared, as they learned from the stentorian voice of the Friar himself, long before they saw his burly person.

"Make room, my merry-men!" he exclaimed; "room for your godly father and his prisoner—Cry welcome once more.—I come, noble leader, like an eagle with my prey in my clutch."—And making his way through the ring, amidst the laughter of all around, he appeared in majestic triumph, his huge partisan in one hand, and in the other a halter, one end of which was fastened to the neck of the unfortunate Isaac of York, who, bent down by sorrow and terror, was dragged on by the victorious priest, who shouted aloud, "Where is Allan-a-Dale, to chronicle me in a ballad, or if it were but a lay?—By Saint Hermangild, the jingling crowder is ever out of the way where there is an apt theme for exalting valour!"

"Curtal Priest," said the Captain, "thou hast been at a wet mass this morning, as early as it is. In the name of Saint Nicholas, whom hast thou got here?"

"A captive to my sword and to my lance, noble Captain," replied the Clerk of Copmanhurst; "to my bow and to my halberd, I should rather say; and yet I have redeemed him by my divinity from a worse captivity. Speak, Jew—have I not ransomed thee from Sathanas?—have I not taught thee thy 'credo', thy 'pater', and thine 'Ave Maria'?—Did I not spend the whole night in drinking to thee, and in expounding of mysteries?"

"For the love of God!" ejaculated the poor Jew, "will no one take me out of the keeping of this mad—I mean this holy man?"

"How's this, Jew?" said the Friar, with a menacing aspect; "dost thou recant, Jew?—Bethink thee, if thou dost relapse into thine infidelity, though thou are not so tender as a suckling pig—I would I had one to break my fast upon—thou art not too tough to be roasted! Be conformable, Isaac, and repeat the words after me. 'Ave Maria!'—"

"Nay, we will have no profanation, mad Priest," said Locksley; "let us rather hear where you found this prisoner of thine."

"By Saint Dunstan," said the Friar, "I found him where I sought for better ware! I did step into the cellarage to see what might be rescued there; for though a cup of burnt wine, with spice, be an evening's drought for an emperor, it were waste, methought, to let so much good liquor be mulled at once; and I had caught up one runlet of sack, and was coming to call more aid among these lazy knaves, who are ever to seek when a good deed is to be done, when I was avised of a strong door—Aha! thought I, here is the choicest juice of all in this secret crypt; and the knave butler, being disturbed in his vocation, hath left the key in the door—In therefore I went, and found just nought besides a commodity of rusted chains and this dog of a Jew, who presently rendered himself my prisoner, rescue or no rescue. I did but refresh myself after the fatigue of the action, with the unbeliever, with one humming cup of sack, and was proceeding to lead forth my captive, when, crash after crash, as with wild thunder-dint and levin-fire, down toppled the masonry of an outer tower, (marry beshrew their hands that built it not the firmer!) and blocked up the passage. The roar of one falling tower followed another—I gave up thought of life; and deeming it a dishonour to one of my profession to pass out of this world in company with a Jew, I heaved up my halberd to beat his brains out; but I took pity on his grey hairs, and judged it better to lay down the partisan, and take up my spiritual weapon for his conversion. And truly, by the blessing of Saint Dunstan, the seed has been sown in good soil; only that, with speaking to him of mysteries through the whole night, and being in a manner fasting, (for the few droughts of sack which I sharpened my wits with were not worth marking,) my head is well-nigh dizzied, I trow.—But I was clean exhausted.—Gilbert and Wibbald know in what state they found me—quite and clean exhausted."

"We can bear witness," said Gilbert; "for when we had cleared away the ruin, and by Saint Dunstan's help lighted upon the dungeon stair, we found the runlet of sack half empty, the Jew half dead, and the Friar more than half—exhausted, as he calls it."

"Ye be knaves! ye lie!" retorted the offended Friar; "it was you and your gormandizing companions that drank up the sack, and called it your morning draught—I am a pagan, an I kept it not for the Captain's own throat. But what reck's it? The Jew is converted, and understands all I have told him, very nearly, if not altogether, as well as myself."

"Jew," said the Captain, "is this true? hast thou renounced thine unbelief?"

"May I so find mercy in your eyes," said the Jew, "as I know not one word which the reverend prelate spake to me all this fearful night. Alas! I was so distraught with agony, and fear, and grief, that had our holy father Abraham come to preach to me, he had found but a deaf listener."

"Thou liest, Jew, and thou knowest thou dost," said the Friar; "I will remind thee of but one word of our conference—thou didst promise to give all thy substance to our holy Order."

"So help me the Promise, fair sirs," said Isaac, even more alarmed than before, "as no such sounds ever crossed my lips! Alas! I am an aged beggar'd man—I fear me a childless—have ruth on me, and let me go!"

"Nay," said the Friar, "if thou dost retract vows made in favour of holy Church, thou must do penance."

Accordingly, he raised his halberd, and would have laid the staff of it lustily on the Jew's shoulders, had not the Black Knight stopped the blow, and thereby transferred the Holy Clerk's resentment to himself.

"By Saint Thomas of Kent," said he, "an I buckle to my gear, I will teach thee, sir lazy lover, to mell with thine own matters, maugre thine iron case there!"

"Nay, be not wroth with me," said the Knight; "thou knowest I am thy sworn friend and comrade."

"I know no such thing," answered the Friar; "and defy thee for a meddling coxcomb!"

"Nay, but," said the Knight, who seemed to take a pleasure in provoking his quondam host, "hast thou forgotten how, that for my sake (for I say nothing of the temptation of the flagon and the pasty) thou didst break thy vow of fast and vigil?"

"Truly, friend," said the Friar, clenching his huge fist, "I will bestow a buffet on thee."

"I accept of no such presents," said the Knight; "I am content to take thy cuff 421 as a loan, but I will repay thee with usury as deep as ever thy prisoner there exacted in his traffic."

"I will prove that presently," said the Friar.

"Hola!" cried the Captain, "what art thou after, mad Friar? brawling beneath our Trysting-tree?"

"No brawling," said the Knight, "it is but a friendly interchange of courtesy.—Friar, strike an thou darest—I will stand thy blow, if thou wilt stand mine."

"Thou hast the advantage with that iron pot on thy head," said the churchman; "but have at thee—Down thou goest, an thou wert Goliath of Gath in his brazen helmet."

The Friar bared his brawny arm up to the elbow, and putting his full strength to the blow, gave the Knight a buffet that might have felled an ox. But his adversary stood firm as a rock. A loud shout was uttered by all the yeomen around; for the Clerk's cuff was proverbial amongst them, and there were few who, in jest or earnest, had not had the occasion to know its vigour.

"Now, Priest," said the Knight, pulling off his gauntlet, "if I had vantage on my head, I will have none on my hand—stand fast as a true man."

"Genam meam dedi vapulatori—I have given my cheek to the smiter," said the Priest; "an thou canst stir me from the spot, fellow, I will freely bestow on thee the Jew's ransom."

So spoke the burly Priest, assuming, on his part, high defiance. But who may resist his fate? The buffet of the Knight was given with such strength and good-will, that the Friar rolled head over heels upon the plain, to the great amazement of all the spectators. But he arose neither angry nor crestfallen.

"Brother," said he to the Knight, "thou shouldst have used thy strength with more discretion. I had mumbled but a lame mass an thou hadst broken my jaw, for the piper plays ill that wants the nether chops. Nevertheless, there is my hand, in friendly witness, that I will exchange no more cuffs with thee, having been a loser by the barter. End now all unkindness. Let us put the Jew to ransom, since the leopard will not change his spots, and a Jew he will continue to be."

"The Priest," said Clement, "is not half so confident of the Jew's conversion, since he received that buffet on the ear."

"Go to, knave, what pratest thou of conversions?—what, is there no respect?—all masters and no men?—I tell thee, fellow, I was somewhat totty when I received the good knight's blow, or I had kept my ground under it. But an thou gibest more of it, thou shalt learn I can give as well as take."

"Peace all!" said the Captain. "And thou, Jew, think of thy ransom; thou needest not to be told that thy race are held to be accursed in all Christian communities, and trust me that we cannot endure thy presence among us. Think, therefore, of an offer, while I examine a prisoner of another cast."

"Were many of Front-de-Boeuf's men taken?" demanded the Black Knight.

"None of note enough to be put to ransom," answered the Captain; "a set of hilding fellows there were, whom we dismissed to find them a new master—enough had been done for revenge and profit; the bunch of them were not worth a cardecu. The prisoner I speak of is better booty—a jolly monk riding to visit his leman, an I may judge by his horse-gear and wearing apparel.—Here cometh the worthy prelate, as pert as a pyet." And, between two yeomen, was brought before the silvan throne of the outlaw Chief, our old friend, Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx.

CHAPTER XXXIII

—*Flower of warriors,
How is't with Titus Lartius?*
MARCIVS.—*As with a man busied about decrees,
Condemning some to death and some to exile,
Ransoming him or pitying, threatening the other.*
—*Coriolanus*

The captive Abbot's features and manners exhibited a whimsical mixture of offended pride, and deranged foppery and bodily terror.

"Why, how now, my masters?" said he, with a voice in which all three emotions were blended. "What order is this among ye? Be ye Turks or Christians, that handle a churchman?—Know ye what it is, 'manus imponere in servos Domini'? Ye have plundered my mails—torn my cope of curious cut lace, which might have served a cardinal!—Another in my place would have been at his 'excommunicabo vos'; but I am placible, and if ye order forth my palfreys, release my brethren, and restore my mails, tell down with all speed an hundred crowns to be expended in masses at the high altar of Jorvaulx Abbey, and make your vow to eat no venison until next Pentecost, it may be you shall hear little more of this mad frolic."

"Holy Father," said the chief Outlaw, "it grieves me to think that you have met with such usage from any of my followers, as calls for your fatherly reprehension."

"Usage!" echoed the priest, encouraged by the mild tone of the silvan leader; "it were usage fit for no hound of good race—much less for a Christian—far less for a priest—and least of all for the Prior of the holy community of Jorvaulx. Here is a profane and drunken minstrel, called Allan-a-Dale—'nebulo quidam'—who has menaced me with corporal punishment—nay, with death itself, an I pay not down four hundred crowns of ransom, to the boot of all the treasure he hath already robbed me of—gold chains and gymmal rings to an unknown value; besides what is broken and spoiled among their rude hands, such as my pouncer-box and silver crisping-tongs."

"It is impossible that Allan-a-Dale can have thus treated a man of your reverend bearing," replied the Captain.

"It is true as the gospel of Saint Nicodemus," said the Prior; "he swore, with many a cruel north-country oath, that he would hang me up on the highest tree in the greenwood."

"Did he so in very deed? Nay, then, reverend father, I think you had better comply with his demands—for Allan-a-Dale is the very man to abide by his word when he has so pledged it." 43

"You do but jest with me," said the astounded Prior, with a forced laugh; "and I love a good jest with all my heart. But, ha! ha! ha! when the mirth has lasted the livelong night, it is time to be grave in the morning."

"And I am as grave as a father confessor," replied the Outlaw; "you must pay a round ransom, Sir Prior, or your convent is likely to be called to a new election; for your place will know you no more."

"Are ye Christians," said the Prior, "and hold this language to a churchman?"

"Christians! ay, marry are we, and have divinity among us to boot," answered the Outlaw. "Let our buxom chaplain stand forth, and expound to this reverend father the texts which concern this matter."

The Friar, half-drunk, half-sober, had huddled a friar's frock over his green cassock, and now summoning together whatever scraps of learning he had acquired by rote in former days, "Holy father," said he, "'Deus faciat salvam benignitatem vestram'—You are welcome to the greenwood."

"What profane mummerly is this?" said the Prior. "Friend, if thou be'st indeed of the church, it were a better deed to show me how I may escape from these men's hands, than to stand ducking and grinning here like a morris-dancer."

"Truly, reverend father," said the Friar, "I know but one mode in which thou mayst escape. This is Saint Andrew's day with us, we are taking our tithes."

"But not of the church, then, I trust, my good brother?" said the Prior.

"Of church and lay," said the Friar; "and therefore, Sir Prior 'facite vobis amicos de Mammone iniquitatis'—make yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, for no other friendship is like to serve your turn."

"I love a jolly woodsman at heart," said the Prior, softening his tone; "come, ye must not deal too hard with me—I can well of woodcraft, and can wind a horn clear and lustily, and hollo till every oak rings again—Come, ye must not deal too hard with me."

"Give him a horn," said the Outlaw; "we will prove the skill he boasts of."

The Prior Aymer winded a blast accordingly. The Captain shook his head.

"Sir Prior," he said, "thou blowest a merry note, but it may not ransom thee—we cannot afford, as the legend on a good knight's shield hath it, to set thee free for a blast. Moreover, I have found thee—thou art one of those, who, with new French graces and Tra-li-ras, disturb the ancient English bugle notes.—Prior, that last flourish on the recheat hath added fifty crowns to thy ransom, for corrupting the true old manly blasts of venerie."

"Well, friend," said the Abbot, peevishly, "thou art ill to please with thy woodcraft. I pray thee be more conformable in this matter of my ransom. At a word—since I must needs, for once, hold a candle to the devil—what ransom am I to pay for walking on Watling-street, without having fifty men at my back?"

"Were it not well," said the Lieutenant of the gang apart to the Captain, "that the Prior should name the Jew's ransom, and the Jew name the Prior's?"

"Thou art a mad knave," said the Captain, "but thy plan transcends!—Here, Jew, step forth—Look at that holy Father Aymer, Prior of the rich Abbey of Jorvaulx, and tell us at what ransom we should hold him?—Thou knowest the income of his convent, I warrant thee."

"O, assuredly," said Isaac. "I have trafficked with the good fathers, and bought wheat and barley, and fruits of the earth, and also much wool. O, it is a rich abbey-stede, and they do live upon the fat, and drink the sweet wines upon the lees, these good fathers of Jorvaulx. Ah, if an outcast like me had such a home to go to, and such incomings by the year and by the month, I would pay much gold and silver to redeem my captivity."

"Hound of a Jew!" exclaimed the Prior, "no one knows better than thy own cursed self, that our holy house of God is indebted for the finishing of our chancel—"

"And for the storing of your cellars in the last season with the due allowance of Gascon wine," interrupted the Jew; "but that—that is small matters."

"Hear the infidel dog!" said the churchman; "he jangles as if our holy community did come under debts for the wines we have a license to drink, 'propter necessitatem, et ad frigus depellendum'. The circumcised villain blasphemeth the holy church, and Christian men listen and rebuke him not!"

"All this helps nothing," said the leader.—"Isaac, pronounce what he may pay, without flaying both hide and hair."

"An six hundred crowns," said Isaac, "the good Prior might well pay to your honoured valours, and never sit less soft in his stall."

"Six hundred crowns," said the leader, gravely; "I am contented—thou hast well spoken, Isaac—six hundred crowns.—It is a sentence, Sir Prior."

"A sentence!—a sentence!" exclaimed the band; "Solomon had not done it better."

"Thou hearest thy doom, Prior," said the leader.

"Ye are mad, my masters," said the Prior; "where am I to find such a sum? If I sell the very pyx and candlesticks on the altar at Jorvaulx, I shall scarce raise the half; and it will be necessary for that purpose that I go to Jorvaulx myself; ye may retain as borrows 44 my two priests."

"That will be but blind trust," said the Outlaw; "we will retain thee, Prior, and send them to fetch thy ransom. Thou shalt not want a cup of wine and a collop of venison the while; and if thou lovest woodcraft, thou shalt see such as your north country never witnessed."

"Or, if so please you," said Isaac, willing to curry favour with the outlaws, "I can send to York for the six hundred crowns, out of certain monies in my hands, if so be that the most reverend Prior present will grant me a quittance."

"He shall grant thee whatever thou dost list, Isaac," said the Captain; "and thou shalt lay down the redemption money for Prior Aymer as well as for thyself."

"For myself! ah, courageous sirs," said the Jew, "I am a broken and impoverished man; a beggar's staff must be my portion through life, supposing I were to pay you fifty crowns."

"The Prior shall judge of that matter," replied the Captain.—"How say you, Father Aymer? Can the Jew afford a good ransom?"

"Can he afford a ransom?" answered the Prior "Is he not Isaac of York, rich enough to redeem the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel, who were led into Assyrian bondage?—I have seen but little of him myself, but our cellarer and treasurer have dealt largely with him, and report says that his house at York is so full of gold and silver as is a shame in any Christian land. Marvel it is to all living Christian hearts that such gnawing adders should be suffered to eat into the bowels of the state, and even of the holy church herself, with foul usuries and extortions."

"Hold, father," said the Jew, "mitigate and assuage your choler. I pray of your reverence to remember that I force my monies upon no one. But when churchman and layman, prince and prior, knight and priest, come knocking to Isaac's door, they borrow not his shekels with these uncivil terms. It is then, Friend Isaac, will you pleasure us in this matter, and our day shall be truly kept, so God sa' me?—and Kind Isaac, if ever you served man, show yourself a friend in this need! And when the day comes, and I ask my own, then what hear I but Damned Jew, and The curse of Egypt on your tribe, and all that may stir up the rude and uncivil populace against poor strangers!"

"Prior," said the Captain, "Jew though he be, he hath in this spoken well. Do thou, therefore, name his ransom, as he named thine, without farther rude terms."

"None but 'latro famosus'—the interpretation whereof," said the Prior, "will I give at some other time and tide—would place a Christian prelate and an unbaptized Jew upon the same bench. But since ye require me to put a price upon this caitiff, I tell you openly that ye will wrong yourselves if you take from him a penny under a thousand crowns."

"A sentence!—a sentence!" exclaimed the chief Outlaw.

"A sentence!—a sentence!" shouted his assessors; "the Christian has shown his good nurture, and dealt with us more generously than the Jew."

"The God of my fathers help me!" said the Jew; "will ye bear to the ground an impoverished creature?—I am this day childless, and will ye deprive me of the means of livelihood?"

"Thou wilt have the less to provide for, Jew, if thou art childless," said Aymer.

"Alas! my lord," said Isaac, "your law permits you not to know how the child of our bosom is entwined with the strings of our heart—O Rebecca! laughter of my beloved Rachel! were each leaf on that tree a zecchin, and each zecchin mine own, all that mass of wealth would I give to know whether thou art alive, and escaped the hands of the Nazarene!"

"Was not thy daughter dark-haired?" said one of the outlaws; "and wore she not a veil of twisted sendal, broidered with silver?"

"She did!—she did!" said the old man, trembling with eagerness, as formerly with fear. "The blessing of Jacob be upon thee! canst thou tell me aught of her safety?"

"It was she, then," said the yeoman, "who was carried off by the proud Templar, when he broke through our ranks on yester-even. I had drawn my bow to send a shaft after him, but spared him even for the sake of the damsel, who I feared might take harm from the arrow."

"Oh!" answered the Jew, "I would to God thou hadst shot, though the arrow had pierced her bosom!—Better the tomb of her fathers than the dishonourable couch of the licentious and savage Templar. Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory hath departed from my house!"

"Friends," said the Chief, looking round, "the old man is but a Jew, natheless his grief touches me.—Deal uprightly with us, Isaac—will paying this ransom of a thousand crowns leave thee altogether penniless?"

Isaac, recalled to think of his worldly goods, the love of which, by dint of inveterate habit, contended even with his parental affection, grew pale, stammered, and could not deny there might be some small surplus.

"Well—go to—what though there be," said the Outlaw, "we will not reckon with thee too closely. Without treasure thou mayst as well hope to redeem thy child from the clutches of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, as to shoot a stag-royal with a headless shaft.—We will take thee at the same ransom with Prior Aymer, or rather at one hundred crowns lower, which hundred crowns shall be mine own peculiar loss, and not light upon this worshipful community; and so we shall avoid the heinous offence of rating a Jew merchant as high as a Christian prelate, and thou wilt have six hundred crowns remaining to treat for thy daughter's ransom. Templars love the glitter of silver shekels as well as the sparkle of black eyes.—Hasten to make thy crowns chink in the ear of De Bois-Guilbert, ere worse comes of it. Thou wilt find him, as our scouts have brought notice, at the next Preceptory house of his Order.—Said I well, my merry mates?"

The yeomen expressed their wonted acquiescence in their leader's opinion; and Isaac, relieved of one half of his apprehensions, by learning that his daughter lived, and might possibly be ransomed, threw himself at the feet of the generous Outlaw, and, rubbing his beard against his buskins, sought to kiss the hem of his green cassock. The Captain drew himself back, and extricated himself from the Jew's grasp, not without some marks of contempt.

"Nay, beshrew thee, man, up with thee! I am English born, and love no such Eastern prostrations—Kneel to God, and not to a poor sinner, like me."

"Ay, Jew," said Prior Aymer; "kneel to God, as represented in the servant of his altar, and who knows, with thy sincere repentance and due gifts to the shrine of Saint Robert, what grace thou mayst acquire for thyself and thy daughter Rebecca? I grieve for the maiden, for she is of fair and comely countenance,—I beheld her in the lists of Ashby. Also Brian de Bois-Guilbert is one with whom I may do much—bethink thee how thou mayst deserve my good word with him."

"Alas! alas!" said the Jew, "on every hand the spoilers arise against me—I am given as a prey unto the Assyrian, and a prey unto him of Egypt."

"And what else should be the lot of thy accursed race?" answered the Prior; "for what saith holy writ, 'verbum Domini projecerunt, et sapientia est nulla in eis'—they have cast forth the word of the Lord, and there is no wisdom in them; 'propterea dabo mulieres eorum exteris'—I will give their women to strangers, that is to the Templar, as in the present matter; 'et thesauros eorum haeredibus alienis', and their treasures to others—as in the present case to these honest gentlemen."

Isaac groaned deeply, and began to wring his hands, and to relapse into his state of desolation and despair. But the leader of the yeomen led him aside.

"Advise thee well, Isaac," said Locksley, "what thou wilt do in this matter; my counsel to thee is to make a friend of this churchman. He is vain, Isaac, and he is covetous; at least he needs money to supply his profusion. Thou canst easily gratify his greed; for think not that I am blinded by thy pretenses of poverty. I am intimately acquainted, Isaac, with the very iron chest in which thou dost keep thy money-bags—What! know I not the great stone beneath the apple-tree, that leads into the vaulted chamber under thy garden at York?" The Jew grew as pale as death—"But fear nothing from me," continued the yeoman, "for we are of old acquainted. Dost thou not remember the sick yeoman whom thy fair daughter Rebecca redeemed from the gyves at York, and kept him in thy house till his health was restored, when thou didst dismiss him recovered, and with a piece of money?—Usurer as thou art, thou didst never place coin at better interest than that poor silver mark, for it has this day saved thee five hundred crowns."

"And thou art he whom we called Diccon Bend-the-Bow?" said Isaac; "I thought ever I knew the accent of thy voice."

"I am Bend-the-Bow," said the Captain, "and Locksley, and have a good name besides all these."

"But thou art mistaken, good Bend-the-Bow, concerning that same vaulted apartment. So help me Heaven, as there is nought in it but some merchandises which I will gladly part with to you—one hundred yards of Lincoln green to make doublets to thy men, and a hundred staves of Spanish yew to make bows, and a hundred silken bowstrings, tough, round, and sound—these will I send thee for thy good-will, honest Diccon, an thou wilt keep silence about the vault, my good Diccon."

"Silent as a dormouse," said the Outlaw; "and never trust me but I am grieved for thy daughter. But I may not help it—The Templars lances are too strong for my archery in the open field—they would scatter us like dust. Had I but known it was Rebecca when she was borne off, something might have been done; but now thou must needs proceed by policy. Come, shall I treat for thee with the Prior?"

"In God's name, Diccon, an thou canst, aid me to recover the child of my bosom!"

"Do not thou interrupt me with thine ill-timed avarice," said the Outlaw, "and I will deal with him in thy behalf."

He then turned from the Jew, who followed him, however, as closely as his shadow.

"Prior Aymer," said the Captain, "come apart with me under this tree. Men say thou dost love wine, and a lady's smile, better than beseems thy Order, Sir Priest; but with that I have nought to do. I have heard, too, thou dost love a brace of good dogs and a fleet horse, and it may well be that, loving things which are costly to come by, thou hatest not a purse of gold. But I have never heard that thou didst love oppression or cruelty.—Now, here is Isaac willing to give thee the means of pleasure and pastime in a bag containing one hundred marks of silver, if thy intercession with thine ally the Templar shall avail to procure the freedom of his daughter."

"In safety and honour, as when taken from me," said the Jew, "otherwise it is no bargain."

"Peace, Isaac," said the Outlaw, "or I give up thine interest.—What say you to this my purpose, Prior Aymer?"

"The matter," quoth the Prior, "is of a mixed condition; for, if I do a good deal on the one hand, yet, on the other, it goeth to the vantage of a Jew, and in so much is against my conscience. Yet, if the Israelite will advantage the Church by giving me somewhat over to the building of our dortour, 45 I will take it on my conscience to aid him in the matter of his daughter."

"For a score of marks to the dortour," said the Outlaw,—"Be still, I say, Isaac!—or for a brace of silver candlesticks to the altar, we will not stand with you."

"Nay, but, good Diccon Bend-the-Bow"—said Isaac, endeavouring to interpose.

"Good Jew—good beast—good earthworm!" said the yeoman, losing patience; "an thou dost go on to put thy filthy lucre in the balance with thy daughter's life and honour, by Heaven, I will strip thee of every maravedi thou hast in the world, before three days are out!"

Isaac shrunk together, and was silent.

"And what pledge am I to have for all this?" said the Prior.

"When Isaac returns successful through your mediation," said the Outlaw, "I swear by Saint Hubert, I will see that he pays thee the money in good silver, or I will reckon with him for it in such sort, he had better have paid twenty such sums."

"Well then, Jew," said Aymer, "since I must needs meddle in this matter, let me have the use of thy writing-tablets—though, hold—rather than use thy pen, I would fast for twenty-four hours, and where shall I find one?"

"If your holy scruples can dispense with using the Jew's tablets, for the pen I can find a remedy," said the yeoman; and, bending his bow, he aimed his shaft at a wild-goose which was soaring over their heads, the advanced-guard of a phalanx of his tribe, which were winging their way to the distant and solitary fens of Holderness. The bird came fluttering down, transfixed with the arrow.

"There, Prior," said the Captain, "are quills enow to supply all the monks of Jorvaulx for the next hundred years, an they take not to writing chronicles."

The Prior sat down, and at great leisure indited an epistle to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and having carefully sealed up the tablets, delivered them to the Jew, saying, "This will be thy safe-conduct to the Preceptory of Templestowe, and, as I think, is most likely to accomplish the delivery of thy daughter, if it be well backed with proffers of advantage and commodity at thine own hand; for, trust me well, the good Knight Bois-Guilbert is of their confraternity that do nought for nought."

"Well, Prior," said the Outlaw, "I will detain thee no longer here than to give the Jew a quittance for the six hundred crowns at which thy ransom is fixed—I accept of him for my pay-master; and if I hear that ye boggle at allowing him in his accompts the sum so paid by him, Saint Mary refuse me, an I burn not the abbey over thine head, though I hang ten years the sooner!"

With a much worse grace than that wherewith he had penned the letter to Bois-Guilbert, the Prior wrote an acquittance, discharging Isaac of York of six hundred crowns, advanced to him in his need for acquittal of his ransom, and faithfully promising to hold true compt with him for that sum.

"And now," said Prior Aymer, "I will pray you of restitution of my mules and palfreys, and the freedom of the reverend brethren attending upon me, and also of the gymmal rings, jewels, and fair vestures, of which I have been despoiled, having now satisfied you for my ransom as a true prisoner."

"Touching your brethren, Sir Prior," said Locksley, "they shall have present freedom, it were unjust to detain them; touching your horses and mules, they shall also be restored, with such spending-money as may enable you to reach York, for it were cruel to deprive you of the means of journeying.—But as concerning rings, jewels, chains, and what else, you must understand that we are men of tender consciences, and will not yield to a venerable man like yourself, who should be dead to the vanities of this life, the strong temptation to break the rule of his foundation, by wearing rings, chains, or other vain gauds."

"Think what you do, my masters," said the Prior, "ere you put your hand on the Church's patrimony—These things are 'inter res sacras', and I wot not what judgment might ensue were they to be handled by laical hands."

"I will take care of that, reverend Prior," said the Hermit of Copmanhurst; "for I will wear them myself."

"Friend, or brother," said the Prior, in answer to this solution of his doubts, "if thou hast really taken religious orders, I pray thee to look how thou wilt answer to thine official for the share thou hast taken in this day's work."

"Friend Prior," returned the Hermit, "you are to know that I belong to a little diocese, where I am my own diocesan, and care as little for the Bishop of York as I do for the Abbot of Jorvaulx, the Prior, and all the convent."

"Thou art utterly irregular," said the Prior; "one of those disorderly men, who, taking on them the sacred character without due cause, profane the holy rites, and endanger the souls of those who take counsel at their hands; 'lapides pro pane condonantes iis', giving them stones instead of bread as the Vulgate hath it."

"Nay," said the Friar, "an my brain-pan could have been broken by Latin, it had not held so long together.—I say, that easing a world of such misproud priests as thou art of their jewels and their gimcracks, is a lawful spoiling of the Egyptians."

"Thou be'st a hedge-priest," 46 said the Prior, in great wrath, "excommunicabo vos."

"Thou be'st thyself more like a thief and a heretic," said the Friar, equally indignant; "I will pouch up no such affront before my parishioners, as thou thinkest it not shame to put upon me, although I be a reverend brother to thee. 'Ossa ejus perfringam', I will break your bones, as the Vulgate hath it."

"Hola!" cried the Captain, "come the reverend brethren to such terms?—Keep thine assurance of peace, Friar.—Prior, an thou hast not made thy peace perfect with God, provoke the Friar no further.—Hermit, let the reverend father depart in peace, as a ransomed man."

The yeomen separated the incensed priests, who continued to raise their voices, vituperating each other in bad Latin, which the Prior delivered the more fluently, and the Hermit with the greater vehemence. The Prior at length recollected himself sufficiently to be aware that he was compromising his dignity, by squabbling with such a hedge-priest as the Outlaw's chaplain, and being joined by his attendants, rode off with considerably less pomp, and in a much more apostolical condition, so far as worldly matters were concerned, than he had exhibited before this rencounter.

It remained that the Jew should produce some security for the ransom which he was to pay on the Prior's account, as well as upon his own. He gave, accordingly, an order sealed with his signet, to a brother of his tribe at York, requiring him to pay to the bearer the sum of a thousand crowns, and to deliver certain merchandises specified in the note.

"My brother Sheva," he said, groaning deeply, "hath the key of my warehouses."

"And of the vaulted chamber," whispered Locksley.

"No, no—may Heaven forefend!" said Isaac; "evil is the hour that let any one whomsoever into that secret!"

"It is safe with me," said the Outlaw, "so be that this thy scroll produce the sum therein nominated and set down.—But what now, Isaac? art dead? art stupefied? hath the payment of a thousand crowns put thy daughter's peril out of thy mind?"

The Jew started to his feet—"No, Diccon, no—I will presently set forth.—Farewell, thou whom I may not call good, and dare not and will not call evil."

Yet ere Isaac departed, the Outlaw Chief bestowed on him this parting advice:—"Be liberal of thine offers, Isaac, and spare not thy purse for thy daughter's safety. Credit me, that the gold thou shalt spare in her cause, will hereafter give thee as much agony as if it were poured molten down thy throat."

Isaac acquiesced with a deep groan, and set forth on his journey, accompanied by two tall foresters, who were to be his guides, and at the same time his guards, through the wood.

The Black Knight, who had seen with no small interest these various proceedings, now took his leave of the Outlaw in turn; nor could he avoid expressing his surprise at having witnessed so much of civil policy amongst persons cast out from all the ordinary protection and influence of the laws.

"Good fruit, Sir Knight," said the yeoman, "will sometimes grow on a sorry tree; and evil times are not always productive of evil alone and unmixed. Amongst those who are drawn into this lawless state, there are, doubtless, numbers who wish to exercise its license with some moderation, and some who regret, it may be, that they are obliged to follow such a trade at all."

"And to one of those," said the Knight, "I am now, I presume, speaking?"

"Sir Knight," said the Outlaw, "we have each our secret. You are welcome to form your judgment of me, and I may use my conjectures touching you, though neither of our shafts may hit the mark they are shot at. But as I do not pray to be admitted into your mystery, be not offended that I preserve my own."

"I crave pardon, brave Outlaw," said the Knight, "your reproof is just. But it may be we shall meet hereafter with less of concealment on either side.—Meanwhile we part friends, do we not?"

"There is my hand upon it," said Locksley; "and I will call it the hand of a true Englishman, though an outlaw for the present."

"And there is mine in return," said the Knight, "and I hold it honoured by being clasped with yours. For he that does good, having the unlimited power to do evil, deserves praise not only for the good which he performs, but for the evil which he forbears. Fare thee well, gallant Outlaw!" Thus parted that fair fellowship; and He of the Fetterlock, mounting upon his strong war-horse, rode off through the forest.

CHAPTER XXXIV

*KING JOHN.—I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way;
And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me.—Dost thou understand me?
—King John*

There was brave feasting in the Castle of York, to which Prince John had invited those nobles, prelates, and leaders, by whose assistance he hoped to carry through his ambitious projects upon his brother's throne. Waldemar Fitzurse, his able and politic agent, was at secret work among them, tempering all to that pitch of courage which was necessary in making an open declaration of their purpose. But their enterprise was delayed by the absence of more than one main limb of the confederacy. The stubborn and daring, though brutal courage of Front-de-Boeuf; the buoyant spirits and bold bearing of De Bracy; the sagacity, martial experience, and renowned valour of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, were important to the success of their conspiracy; and, while cursing in secret their unnecessary and unmeaning absence, neither John nor his adviser dared to proceed without them. Isaac the Jew also seemed to have vanished, and with him the hope of certain sums of money, making up the subsidy for which Prince John had contracted with that Israelite and his brethren. This deficiency was likely to prove perilous in an emergency so critical.

It was on the morning after the fall of Torquilstone, that a confused report began to spread abroad in the city of York, that De Bracy and Bois-Guilbert, with their confederate Front-de-Boeuf, had been taken or slain. Waldemar brought the rumour to Prince John, announcing, that he feared its truth the more that they had set out with a small attendance, for the purpose of committing an assault on the Saxon Cedric and his attendants. At another time the Prince would have treated this deed of violence as a good jest; but now, that it interfered with and impeded his own plans, he exclaimed against the perpetrators, and spoke of the broken laws, and the infringement of public order and of private property, in a tone which might have become King Alfred.

"The unprincipled marauders," he said—"were I ever to become monarch of England, I would hang such transgressors over the drawbridges of their own castles."

"But to become monarch of England," said his Ahithophel coolly, "it is necessary not only that your Grace should endure the transgressions of these unprincipled marauders, but that you should afford them your protection, notwithstanding your laudable zeal for the laws they are in the habit of infringing. We shall be finely helped, if the churl Saxons should have realized your Grace's vision, of converting feudal drawbridges into gibbets; and yonder bold-spirited Cedric seemeth one to whom such an imagination might occur. Your Grace is well aware, it will be dangerous to stir without Front-de-Boeuf, De Bracy, and the Templar; and yet we have gone too far to recede with safety."

Prince John struck his forehead with impatience, and then began to stride up and down the apartment.

"The villains," he said, "the base treacherous villains, to desert me at this pinch!"

"Nay, say rather the feather-pated giddy madmen," said Waldemar, "who must be toying with follies when such business was in hand."

"What is to be done?" said the Prince, stopping short before Waldemar.

"I know nothing which can be done," answered his counsellor, "save that which I have already taken order for.—I came not to bewail this evil chance with your Grace, until I had done my best to remedy it."

"Thou art ever my better angel, Waldemar," said the Prince; "and when I have such a chancellor to advise withal, the reign of John will be renowned in our annals.—What hast thou commanded?"

"I have ordered Louis Winkelbrand, De Bracy's lieutenant, to cause his trumpet sound to horse, and to display his banner, and to set presently forth towards the castle of Front-de-Boeuf, to do what yet may be done for the succour of our friends."

Prince John's face flushed with the pride of a spoilt child, who has undergone what it conceives to be an insult. "By the face of God!" he said, "Waldemar Fitzurse, much hast thou taken upon thee! and over malapert thou wert to cause trumpet to blow, or banner to be raised, in a town where ourselves were in presence, without our express command."

"I crave your Grace's pardon," said Fitzurse, internally cursing the idle vanity of his patron; "but when time pressed, and even the loss of minutes might be fatal, I judged it best to take this much burden upon me, in a matter of such importance to your Grace's interest."

"Thou art pardoned, Fitzurse," said the prince, gravely; "thy purpose hath atoned for thy hasty rashness.—But whom have we here?—De Bracy himself, by the rood!—and in strange guise doth he come before us."

It was indeed De Bracy—"bloody with spurring, fiery red with speed." His armour bore all the marks of the late obstinate fray, being broken, defaced, and stained with blood in many places, and covered with clay and dust from the crest to the spur. Undoing his helmet, he placed it on the table, and stood a moment as if to collect himself before he told his news.

"De Bracy," said Prince John, "what means this?—Speak, I charge thee!—Are the Saxons in rebellion?"

"Speak, De Bracy," said Fitzurse, almost in the same moment with his master, "thou wert wont to be a man—Where is the Templar?—where Front-de-Boeuf?"

"The Templar is fled," said De Bracy; "Front-de-Boeuf you will never see more. He has found a red grave among the blazing rafters of his own castle and I alone am escaped to tell you."

"Cold news," said Waldemar, "to us, though you speak of fire and conflagration."

"The worst news is not yet said," answered De Bracy; and, coming up to Prince John, he uttered in a low and emphatic tone—"Richard is in England—I have seen and spoken with him."

Prince John turned pale, tottered, and caught at the back of an oaken bench to support himself—much like to a man who receives an arrow in his bosom.

"Thou ravest, De Bracy," said Fitzurse, "it cannot be."

"It is as true as truth itself," said De Bracy; "I was his prisoner, and spoke with him."

"With Richard Plantagenet, sayest thou?" continued Fitzurse.

"With Richard Plantagenet," replied De Bracy, "with Richard Coeur-de-Lion—with Richard of England."

"And thou wert his prisoner?" said Waldemar; "he is then at the head of a power?"

"No—only a few outlawed yeomen were around him, and to these his person is unknown. I heard him say he was about to depart from them. He joined them only to assist at the storming of Torquilstone."

"Ay," said Fitzurse, "such is indeed the fashion of Richard—a true knight-errant he, and will wander in wild adventure, trusting the prowess of his single arm, like any Sir Guy or Sir Bevis, while the weighty affairs of his kingdom slumber, and his own safety is endangered.—What dost thou propose to do De Bracy?"

"I?—I offered Richard the service of my Free Lances, and he refused them—I will lead them to Hull, seize on shipping, and embark for Flanders; thanks to the bustling times, a man of action will always find employment. And thou, Waldemar, wilt thou take lance and shield, and lay down thy policies, and wend along with me, and share the fate which God sends us?"

"I am too old, Maurice, and I have a daughter," answered Waldemar.

"Give her to me, Fitzurse, and I will maintain her as fits her rank, with the help of lance and stirrup," said De Bracy.

"Not so," answered Fitzurse; "I will take sanctuary in this church of Saint Peter—the Archbishop is my sworn brother."

During this discourse, Prince John had gradually awakened from the stupor into which he had been thrown by the unexpected intelligence, and had been attentive to the conversation which passed betwixt his followers. "They fall off from me," he said to himself, "they hold no more by me than a withered leaf by the bough when a breeze blows on it!—Hell and fiends! can I shape no means for myself when I am deserted by these cravens?"—He paused, and there was an expression of diabolical passion in the constrained laugh with which he at length broke in on their conversation.

"Ha, ha, ha! my good lords, by the light of Our Lady's brow, I held ye sage men, bold men, ready-witted men; yet ye throw down wealth, honour, pleasure, all that our noble game promised you, at the moment it might be won by one bold cast!"

"I understand you not," said De Bracy. "As soon as Richard's return is blown abroad, he will be at the head of an army, and all is then over with us. I would counsel you, my lord, either to fly to France or take the protection of the Queen Mother."

"I seek no safety for myself," said Prince John, haughtily; "that I could secure by a word spoken to my brother. But although you, De Bracy, and you, Waldemar Fitzurse, are so ready to abandon me, I should not greatly delight to see your heads blackening on Clifford's gate yonder. Thinkest thou, Waldemar, that the wily Archbishop will not suffer thee to be taken from the very horns of the altar, would it make his peace with King Richard? And forgettest thou, De Bracy, that Robert Estoteville lies betwixt thee and Hull with all his forces, and that the Earl of Essex is gathering his followers? If we had reason to fear these levies even before Richard's return, trowest thou there is any doubt now which party their leaders will take? Trust me, Estoteville alone has strength enough to drive all thy Free Lances into the Humber."—Waldemar Fitzurse and De Bracy looked in each other's faces with blank dismay.—"There is but one road to safety," continued the Prince, and his brow grew black as midnight; "this object of our terror journeys alone—He must be met withal."

"Not by me," said De Bracy, hastily; "I was his prisoner, and he took me to mercy. I will not harm a feather in his crest."

"Who spoke of harming him?" said Prince John, with a hardened laugh; "the knave will say next that I meant he should slay him!—No—a prison were better; and whether in Britain or Austria, what matters it?—Things will be but as they were when we commenced our enterprise—it was founded on the hope that Richard would remain a captive in Germany—Our uncle Robert lived and died in the castle of Cardiffe."

"Ay, but," said Waldemar, "your sire Henry sate more firm in his seat than your Grace can. I say the best prison is that which is made by the sexton—no dungeon like a church-vault! I have said my say."

"Prison or tomb," said De Bracy, "I wash my hands of the whole matter."

"Villain!" said Prince John, "thou wouldst not bewray our counsel?"

"Counsel was never bewrayed by me," said De Bracy, haughtily, "nor must the name of villain be coupled with mine!"

"Peace, Sir Knight!" said Waldemar; "and you, good my lord, forgive the scruples of valiant De Bracy; I trust I shall soon remove them."

"That passes your eloquence, Fitzurse," replied the Knight.

"Why, good Sir Maurice," rejoined the wily politician, "start not aside like a scared steed, without, at least, considering the object of your terror.—This Richard—but a day since, and it would have been thy dearest wish to have met him hand to hand in the ranks of battle—a hundred times I have heard thee wish it."

"Ay," said De Bracy, "but that was as thou sayest, hand to hand, and in the ranks of battle! Thou never heardest me breathe a thought of assaulting him alone, and in a forest."

"Thou art no good knight if thou dost scruple at it," said Waldemar. "Was it in battle that Lancelot de Lac and Sir Tristram won renown? or was it not by encountering gigantic knights under the shade of deep and unknown forests?"

"Ay, but I promise you," said De Bracy, "that neither Tristram nor Lancelot would have been match, hand to hand, for Richard Plantagenet, and I think it was not their wont to take odds against a single man."

"Thou art mad, De Bracy—what is it we propose to thee, a hired and retained captain of Free Companions, whose swords are purchased for Prince John's service? Thou art apprized of our enemy, and then thou scruplest, though thy patron's fortunes, those of thy comrades, thine own, and the life and honour of every one amongst us, be at stake!"

"I tell you," said De Bracy, sullenly, "that he gave me my life. True, he sent me from his presence, and refused my homage—so far I owe him neither favour nor allegiance—but I will not lift hand against him."

"It needs not—send Louis Winkelbrand and a score of thy lances."

"Ye have sufficient ruffians of your own," said De Bracy; "not one of mine shall budge on such an errand."

"Art thou so obstinate, De Bracy?" said Prince John; "and wilt thou forsake me, after so many protestations of zeal for my service?"

"I mean it not," said De Bracy; "I will abide by you in aught that becomes a knight, whether in the lists or in the camp; but this highway practice comes not within my vow."

"Come hither, Waldemar," said Prince John. "An unhappy prince am I. My father, King Henry, had faithful servants—He had but to say that he was plagued with a factious priest, and the blood of Thomas-a-Becket, saint though he was, stained the steps of his own altar.—Tracy, Morville, Brito 47 loyal and daring subjects, your names, your spirit, are extinct! and although Reginald Fitzurse hath left a son, he hath fallen off from his father's fidelity and courage."

"He has fallen off from neither," said Waldemar Fitzurse; "and since it may not better be, I will take on me the conduct of this perilous enterprise. Dearly, however, did my father purchase the praise of a zealous friend; and yet did his proof of loyalty to Henry fall far short of what I am about to afford; for rather would I assail a whole calendar of saints, than put spear in rest against Coeur-de-Lion.—De Bracy, to thee I must trust to keep up the spirits of the doubtful, and to guard Prince John's person. If you receive such news as I trust to send you, our enterprise will no longer wear a doubtful aspect.—Page," he said, "hie to my lodgings, and tell

my armourer to be there in readiness; and bid Stephen Wetheral, Broad Thoresby, and the Three Spears of Spyinghow, come to me instantly; and let the scout-master, Hugh Bardon, attend me also.—Adieu, my Prince, till better times." Thus speaking, he left the apartment. "He goes to make my brother prisoner," said Prince John to De Bracy, "with as little touch of compunction, as if it but concerned the liberty of a Saxon franklin. I trust he will observe our orders, and use our dear Richard's person with all due respect."

De Bracy only answered by a smile.

"By the light of Our Lady's brow," said Prince John, "our orders to him were most precise—though it may be you heard them not, as we stood together in the oriel window—Most clear and positive was our charge that Richard's safety should be cared for, and woe to Waldemar's head if he transgress it!"

"I had better pass to his lodgings," said De Bracy, "and make him fully aware of your Grace's pleasure; for, as it quite escaped my ear, it may not perchance have reached that of Waldemar."

"Nay, nay," said Prince John, impatiently, "I promise thee he heard me; and, besides, I have farther occupation for thee. Maurice, come hither; let me lean on thy shoulder."

They walked a turn through the hall in this familiar posture, and Prince John, with an air of the most confidential intimacy, proceeded to say, "What thinkest thou of this Waldemar Fitzurse, my De Bracy?—He trusts to be our Chancellor. Surely we will pause ere we give an office so high to one who shows evidently how little he reverences our blood, by his so readily undertaking this enterprise against Richard. Thou dost think, I warrant, that thou hast lost somewhat of our regard, by thy boldly declining this unpleasing task—But no, Maurice! I rather honour thee for thy virtuous constancy. There are things most necessary to be done, the perpetrator of which we neither love nor honour; and there may be refusals to serve us, which shall rather exalt in our estimation those who deny our request. The arrest of my unfortunate brother forms no such good title to the high office of Chancellor, as thy chivalrous and courageous denial establishes in thee to the truncheon of High Marshal. Think of this, De Bracy, and begone to thy charge."

"Fickle tyrant!" muttered De Bracy, as he left the presence of the Prince; "evil luck have they who trust thee. Thy Chancellor, indeed!—He who hath the keeping of thy conscience shall have an easy charge, I trow. But High Marshal of England! that," he said, extending his arm, as if to grasp the baton of office, and assuming a loftier stride along the antechamber, "that is indeed a prize worth playing for!"

De Bracy had no sooner left the apartment than Prince John summoned an attendant.

"Bid Hugh Bardon, our scout-master, come hither, as soon as he shall have spoken with Waldemar Fitzurse."

The scout-master arrived after a brief delay, during which John traversed the apartment with, unequal and disordered steps.

"Bardon," said he, "what did Waldemar desire of thee?"

"Two resolute men, well acquainted with these northern wilds, and skilful in tracking the tread of man and horse."

"And thou hast fitted him?"

"Let your grace never trust me else," answered the master of the spies. "One is from Hexamshire; he is wont to trace the Tynedale and Teviotdale thieves, as a bloodhound follows the slot of a hurt deer. The other is Yorkshire bred, and has twanged his bowstring right off in merry Sherwood; he knows each glade and dingle, copse and high-wood, betwixt this and Richmond."

"'Tis well," said the Prince.—"Goes Waldemar forth with them?"

"Instantly," said Bardon.

"With what attendance?" asked John, carelessly.

"Broad Thoresby goes with him, and Wetheral, whom they call, for his cruelty, Stephen Steel-heart; and three northern men-at-arms that belonged to Ralph Middleton's gang—they are called the Spears of Spyinghow."

"'Tis well," said Prince John; then added, after a moment's pause, "Bardon, it imports our service that thou keep a strict watch on Maurice De Bracy—so that he shall not observe it, however—And let us know of his motions from time to time—with whom he converses, what he proposeth. Fail not in this, as thou wilt be answerable."

Hugh Bardon bowed, and retired.

"If Maurice betrays me," said Prince John—"if he betrays me, as his bearing leads me to fear, I will have his head, were Richard thundering at the gates of York."

CHAPTER XXXV

*Arouse the tiger of Hyrcanian deserts,
Strive with the half-starved lion for his prey;
Lesser the risk, than rouse the slumbering fire
Of wild Fanaticism.
—Anonymus*

Our tale now returns to Isaac of York.—Mounted upon a mule, the gift of the Outlaw, with two tall yeomen to act as his guard and guides, the Jew had set out for the Preceptory of Templestowe, for the purpose of negotiating his daughter's redemption. The Preceptory was but a day's journey from the demolished castle of Torquilstone, and the Jew had hoped to reach it before nightfall; accordingly, having dismissed his guides at the verge of the forest, and rewarded them with a piece of silver, he began to press on with such speed as his weariness permitted him to exert. But his strength failed him totally ere he had reached within four miles of the Temple-Court; racking pains shot along his back and through his limbs, and the excessive anguish which he felt at heart being now augmented by bodily suffering, he was rendered altogether incapable of proceeding farther than a small market-town, where dwelt a Jewish Rabbi of his tribe, eminent in the medical profession, and to whom Isaac was well known. Nathan Ben Israel received his suffering countryman with that kindness which the law prescribed, and which the Jews practised to each other. He insisted on his betaking himself to repose, and used such remedies as were then in most repute to check the progress of the fever, which terror, fatigue, ill usage, and sorrow, had brought upon the poor old Jew.

On the morrow, when Isaac proposed to arise and pursue his journey, Nathan remonstrated against his purpose, both as his host and as his physician. It might cost him, he said, his life. But Isaac replied, that more than life and death depended upon his going that morning to Templestowe.

"To Templestowe!" said his host with surprise again felt his pulse, and then muttered to himself, "His fever is abated, yet seems his mind somewhat alienated and disturbed."

"And why not to Templestowe?" answered his patient. "I grant thee, Nathan, that it is a dwelling of those to whom the despised Children of the Promise are a stumbling-block and an abomination; yet thou knowest that pressing affairs of traffic sometimes carry us among these bloodthirsty Nazarene soldiers, and that we visit the Preceptories of the Templars, as well as the Commanderies of the Knights Hospitallers, as they are called." 48

"I know it well," said Nathan; "but wottest thou that Lucas de Beaumanoir, the chief of their Order, and whom they term Grand Master, is now himself at Templestowe?"

"I know it not," said Isaac; "our last letters from our brethren at Paris advised us that he was at that city, beseeching Philip for aid against the Sultan Saladin."

"He hath since come to England, unexpected by his brethren," said Ben Israel; "and he cometh among them with a strong and outstretched arm to correct and to punish. His countenance is kindled in anger against those who have departed from the vow which they have made, and great is the fear of those sons of Belial. Thou must have heard of his name?"

"It is well known unto me," said Isaac; "the Gentiles deliver this Lucas Beaumanoir as a man zealous to slaying for every point of the Nazarene law; and our brethren have termed him a fierce destroyer of the Saracens, and a cruel tyrant to the Children of the Promise."

"And truly have they termed him," said Nathan the physician. "Other Templars may be moved from the purpose of their heart by pleasure, or bribed by promise of gold and silver; but Beaumanoir is of a different stamp—hating sensuality, despising treasure, and pressing forward to that which they call the crown of martyrdom—The God of Jacob speedily send it unto him, and unto them all! Specially hath this proud man extended his glove over the children of Judah, as holy David over Edom, holding the murder of a Jew to be an offering of as sweet savour as the death of a Saracen. Impious and false things has he said even of the virtues of our medicines, as if they were the devices of Satan—The Lord rebuke him!"

"Nevertheless," said Isaac, "I must present myself at Templestowe, though he hath made his face like unto a fiery furnace seven times heated."

He then explained to Nathan the pressing cause of his journey. The Rabbi listened with interest, and testified his sympathy after the fashion of his people, rending his clothes, and saying, "Ah, my daughter!—ah, my daughter!—Alas! for the beauty of Zion!—Alas! for the captivity of Israel!"

"Thou seest," said Isaac, "how it stands with me, and that I may not tarry. Peradventure, the presence of this Lucas Beaumanoir, being the chief man over them, may turn Brian de Bois-Guilbert from the ill which he doth meditate, and that he may deliver to me my beloved daughter Rebecca."

"Go thou," said Nathan Ben Israel, "and be wise, for wisdom availed Daniel in the den of lions into which he was cast; and may it go well with thee, even as thine heart wisheth. Yet, if thou canst, keep thee from the presence of the Grand Master, for to do foul scorn to our people is his morning and evening delight. It may be if thou couldst speak with Bois-Guilbert in private, thou shalt the better prevail with him; for men say that these accursed Nazarenes are not of one mind in the Preceptory—May their counsels be confounded and brought to shame! But do thou, brother, return to me as if it were to the house of thy father, and bring me word how it has sped with thee; and well do I hope thou wilt bring with thee Rebecca, even the scholar of the wise Miriam, whose cures the Gentiles slandered as if they had been wrought by necromancy."

Isaac accordingly bade his friend farewell, and about an hour's riding brought him before the Preceptory of Templestowe.

This establishment of the Templars was seated amidst fair meadows and pastures, which the devotion of the former Preceptor had bestowed upon their Order. It was strong and well fortified, a point never neglected by these knights, and which the disordered state of England rendered peculiarly necessary. Two halberdiers, clad in black, guarded the drawbridge, and others, in the same sad livery, glided to and fro upon the walls with a funereal pace, resembling spectres more than soldiers. The inferior officers of the Order were thus dressed, ever since their use of white garments, similar to those of the knights and esquires, had given rise to a combination of certain false brethren in the mountains of Palestine, terming themselves Templars, and bringing great dishonour on the Order. A knight was now and then seen to cross the court in his long white cloak, his head depressed on his breast, and his arms folded. They passed each other, if they chanced to meet, with a slow, solemn, and mute greeting; for such was the rule of their Order, quoting thereupon the holy texts, "In many words thou shalt not avoid sin," and "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." In a word, the stern ascetic rigour of the Temple discipline, which had been so long exchanged for prodigal and licentious indulgence, seemed at once to have revived at Templestowe under the severe eye of Lucas Beaumanoir.

Isaac paused at the gate, to consider how he might seek entrance in the manner most likely to bespeak favour; for he was well aware, that to his unhappy race the reviving fanaticism of the Order was not less dangerous than their unprincipled licentiousness; and that his religion would be the object of hate and persecution in the one case, as his wealth would have exposed him in the other to the extortions of unrelenting oppression.

Meantime Lucas Beaumanoir walked in a small garden belonging to the Preceptory, included within the precincts of its exterior fortification, and held sad and confidential communication with a brother of his Order, who had come in his company from Palestine.

The Grand Master was a man advanced in age, as was testified by his long grey beard, and the shaggy grey eyebrows overhanging eyes, of which, however, years had been unable to quench the fire. A formidable warrior, his thin and severe features retained the soldier's fierceness of expression; an ascetic bigot, they were no less marked by the emaciation of abstinence, and the spiritual pride of the self-satisfied devotee. Yet with these severer traits of physiognomy, there was mixed somewhat striking and noble, arising, doubtless, from the great part which his high office called upon him to act among monarchs and princes, and from the habitual exercise of supreme authority over the valiant and high-born knights, who were united by the rules of the Order. His stature was tall, and his gait, undepressed by age and toil, was erect and stately. His white mantle was shaped with severe regularity, according to the rule of Saint Bernard himself, being composed of what was then called Burrell cloth, exactly fitted to the size of the wearer, and bearing on the left shoulder the octangular cross peculiar to the Order, formed of red cloth. No vair or ermine decked this garment; but in respect of his age, the Grand Master, as permitted by the rules, wore his doublet lined and trimmed with the softest lambskin, dressed with the wool outwards, which was the nearest approach he could regularly make to the use of fur, then the greatest luxury of dress. In his hand he bore that singular "abacus", or staff of office, with which Templars are usually represented, having at the upper end a round plate, on which was engraved the cross of the Order, inscribed within a circle or orle, as heralds term it. His companion, who attended on this great personage, had nearly the same dress in all respects, but his extreme deference towards his Superior showed that no other equality subsisted between them. The Preceptor, for such he was in rank, walked not in a line with the Grand Master, but just so far behind that Beaumanoir could speak to him without turning round his head.

"Conrade," said the Grand Master, "dear companion of my battles and my toils, to thy faithful bosom alone I can confide my sorrows. To thee alone can I tell how oft, since I came to this kingdom, I have desired to be dissolved and to be with the just. Not one object in England hath met mine eye which it could rest upon with pleasure, save the tombs of our brethren, beneath the massive roof of our Temple Church in yonder proud capital. O, valiant Robert de Ros! did I exclaim internally, as I gazed upon these good soldiers of the cross, where they lie sculptured on their sepulchres,—O, worthy William de Mareschal! open your marble cells, and take to your repose a weary brother, who would rather strive with a hundred thousand pagans than witness the decay of our Holy Order!"

"It is but true," answered Conrade Mont-Fitchet; "it is but too true; and the irregularities of our brethren in England are even more gross than those in France."

"Because they are more wealthy," answered the Grand Master. "Bear with me, brother, although I should something vaunt myself. Thou knowest the life I have led, keeping each point of my Order, striving with devils embodied and disembodied, striking down the roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, like a good knight and devout priest, wheresoever I met with him—even as blessed Saint Bernard hath prescribed to us in the forty-fifth capital of our rule, 'Ut Leo semper feriat'. 49

"But by the Holy Temple! the zeal which hath devoured my substance and my life, yea, the very nerves and marrow of my bones; by that very Holy Temple I swear to thee, that save thyself and some few that still retain the ancient severity of our Order, I look upon no brethren whom I can bring my soul to embrace under that holy name. What say our statutes, and how do our brethren observe them? They should wear no vain or worldly ornament, no crest upon their helmet, no gold upon stirrup or bridle-bit; yet who now go pranked out so proudly and so gaily as the poor soldiers of the Temple? They are forbidden by our statutes to take one bird by means of another, to shoot beasts with bow or arblast, to halloo to a hunting-horn, or to spur the horse after game. But now, at hunting and hawking, and each idle sport of wood and river, who so prompt as the Templars in all these fond vanities? They are forbidden to read, save what their Superior permitted, or listen to what is read, save such holy things as may be recited aloud during the hours of refaction; but lo! their ears are at the command of idle minstrels, and their eyes study empty romances. They were commanded to extirpate magic and heresy. Lo! they are charged with studying the accursed cabalistical secrets of the Jews, and the magic of the Paynim Saracens. Simplesness of diet was prescribed to them, roots, pottage, gruels, eating flesh but thrice a-week, because the accustomed feeding on flesh is a dishonourable corruption of the body; and behold, their tables groan under delicate fare! Their drink was to be water, and now, to drink like a Templar, is the boast of each jolly boon companion! This very garden, filled as it is with curious herbs and trees sent from the Eastern climes, better becomes the harem of an unbelieving Emir, than the plot which Christian Monks should devote to raise their homely pot-herbs.—And O, Conrade! well it were that the relaxation of discipline stopped even here!—Well thou knowest that we were forbidden to receive those devout women, who at the beginning were associated as sisters of our Order, because, saith the forty-sixth chapter, the Ancient Enemy hath, by female society, withdrawn many from the right path to paradise. Nay, in the last capital, being, as it were, the cope-stone which our blessed founder placed on the pure and undefiled doctrine which he had enjoined, we are prohibited from offering, even to our sisters and our mothers, the kiss of affection—'ut omnium mulierum fugiantur oscula'.—I shame to speak—I

shame to think—of the corruptions which have rushed in upon us even like a flood. The souls of our pure founders, the spirits of Hugh de Payen and Godfrey de Saint Omer, and of the blessed Seven who first joined in dedicating their lives to the service of the Temple, are disturbed even in the enjoyment of paradise itself. I have seen them, Conrade, in the visions of the night—their sainted eyes shed tears for the sins and follies of their brethren, and for the foul and shameful luxury in which they wallow. Beaumanoir, they say, thou slumberest—awake! There is a stain in the fabric of the Temple, deep and foul as that left by the streaks of leprosy on the walls of the infected houses of old. 50

"The soldiers of the Cross, who should shun the glance of a woman as the eye of a basilisk, live in open sin, not with the females of their own race only, but with the daughters of the accursed heathen, and more accursed Jew. Beaumanoir, thou sleepest; up, and avenge our cause!—Slay the sinners, male and female!—Take to thee the brand of Phineas!—The vision fled, Conrade, but as I awaked I could still hear the clank of their mail, and see the waving of their white mantles.—And I will do according to their word, I WILL purify the fabric of the Temple! and the unclean stones in which the plague is, I will remove and cast out of the building."

"Yet bethink thee, reverend father," said Mont-Fitchet, "the stain hath become engrained by time and consuetude; let thy reformation be cautious, as it is just and wise."

"No, Mont-Fitchet," answered the stern old man—"it must be sharp and sudden—the Order is on the crisis of its fate. The sobriety, self-devotion, and piety of our predecessors, made us powerful friends—our presumption, our wealth, our luxury, have raised up against us mighty enemies.—We must cast away these riches, which are a temptation to princes—we must lay down that presumption, which is an offence to them—we must reform that license of manners, which is a scandal to the whole Christian world! Or—mark my words—the Order of the Temple will be utterly demolished—and the Place thereof shall no more be known among the nations."

"Now may God avert such a calamity!" said the Preceptor.

"Amen," said the Grand Master, with solemnity, "but we must deserve his aid. I tell thee, Conrade, that neither the powers in Heaven, nor the powers on earth, will longer endure the wickedness of this generation—My intelligence is sure—the ground on which our fabric is reared is already undermined, and each addition we make to the structure of our greatness will only sink it the sooner in the abyss. We must retrace our steps, and show ourselves the faithful Champions of the Cross, sacrificing to our calling, not alone our blood and our lives—not alone our lusts and our vices—but our ease, our comforts, and our natural affections, and act as men convinced that many a pleasure which may be lawful to others, is forbidden to the vowed soldier of the Temple."

At this moment a squire, clothed in a threadbare vestment, (for the aspirants after this holy Order wore during their noviciate the cast-off garments of the knights,) entered the garden, and, bowing profoundly before the Grand Master, stood silent, awaiting his permission ere he presumed to tell his errand.

"Is it not more seemly," said the Grand Master, "to see this Damian, clothed in the garments of Christian humility, thus appear with reverend silence before his Superior, than but two days since, when the fond fool was decked in a painted coat, and jangling as pert and as proud as any popinjay?—Speak, Damian, we permit thee—What is thine errand?"

"A Jew stands without the gate, noble and reverend father," said the Squire, "who prays to speak with brother Brian de Bois-Guilbert."

"Thou wert right to give me knowledge of it," said the Grand Master; "in our presence a Preceptor is but as a common compeer of our Order, who may not walk according to his own will, but to that of his Master—even according to the text, 'In the hearing of the ear he hath obeyed me.'—It imports us especially to know of this Bois-Guilbert's proceedings," said he, turning to his companion.

"Report speaks him brave and valiant," said Conrade.

"And truly is he so spoken of," said the Grand Master; "in our valour only we are not degenerated from our predecessors, the heroes of the Cross. But brother Brian came into our Order a moody and disappointed man, stirred, I doubt me, to take our vows and to renounce the world, not in sincerity of soul, but as one whom some touch of light discontent had driven into penitence. Since then, he hath become an active and earnest agitator, a murmurer, and a machinator, and a leader amongst those who impugn our authority; not considering that the rule is given to the Master even by the symbol of the staff and the rod—the staff to support the infirmities of the weak—the rod to correct the faults of delinquents.—Damian," he continued, "lead the Jew to our presence."

The squire departed with a profound reverence, and in a few minutes returned, marshalling in Isaac of York. No naked slave, ushered into the presence of some mighty prince, could approach his judgment-seat with more profound reverence and terror than that with which the Jew drew near to the presence of the Grand Master. When he had approached within the distance of three yards, Beaumanoir made a sign with his staff that he should come no farther. The Jew kneeled down on the earth which he kissed in token of reverence; then rising, stood before the Templars, his hands folded on his bosom, his head bowed on his breast, in all the submission of Oriental slavery.

"Damian," said the Grand Master, "retire, and have a guard ready to await our sudden call; and suffer no one to enter the garden until we shall leave it."—The squire bowed and retreated.—"Jew," continued the haughty old man, "mark me. It suits not our condition to hold with thee long communication, nor do we waste words or time upon any one. Wherefore be brief in thy answers to what questions I shall ask thee, and let thy words be of truth; for if thy tongue doubles with me, I will have it torn from thy misbelieving jaws."

The Jew was about to reply, but the Grand Master went on.

"Peace, unbeliever!—not a word in our presence, save in answer to our questions.—What is thy business with our brother Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

Isaac gasped with terror and uncertainty. To tell his tale might be interpreted into scandalizing the Order; yet, unless he told it, what hope could he have of achieving his daughter's deliverance? Beaumanoir saw his mortal apprehension, and condescended to give him some assurance.

"Fear nothing," he said, "for thy wretched person, Jew, so thou dealest uprightly in this matter. I demand again to know from thee thy business with Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

"I am bearer of a letter," stammered out the Jew, "so please your reverend valour, to that good knight, from Prior Aymer of the Abbey of Jorvaulx."

"Said I not these were evil times, Conrade?" said the Master. "A Cistercian Prior sends a letter to a soldier of the Temple, and can find no more fitting messenger than an unbelieving Jew.—Give me the letter."

The Jew, with trembling hands, undid the folds of his Armenian cap, in which he had deposited the Prior's tablets for the greater security, and was about to approach, with hand extended and body crouched, to place it within the reach of his grim interrogator.

"Back, dog!" said the Grand Master; "I touch not misbelievers, save with the sword.—Conrade, take thou the letter from the Jew, and give it to me."

Beaumanoir, being thus possessed of the tablets, inspected the outside carefully, and then proceeded to undo the packthread which secured its folds. "Reverend father," said Conrade, interposing, though with much deference, "wilt thou break the seal?"

"And will I not?" said Beaumanoir, with a frown. "Is it not written in the forty-second capital, 'De Lectione Literarum' that a Templar shall not receive a letter, no not from his father, without communicating the same to the Grand Master, and reading it in his presence?"

He then perused the letter in haste, with an expression of surprise and horror; read it over again more slowly; then holding it out to Conrade with one hand, and slightly striking it with the other, exclaimed—"Here is goodly stuff for one Christian man to write to another, and both members, and no inconsiderable members, of religious professions! When," said he solemnly, and looking upward, "wilt thou come with thy fanners to purge the thrashing-floor?"

Mont-Fitchet took the letter from his Superior, and was about to peruse it.

"Read it aloud, Conrade," said the Grand Master,—"and do thou" (to Isaac) "attend to the purport of it, for we will question thee concerning it."

Conrade read the letter, which was in these words: "Aymer, by divine grace, Prior of the Cistercian house of Saint Mary's of Jorvaulx, to Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, a Knight of the holy Order of the Temple, wisheth health, with the bounties of King Bacchus and of my Lady Venus. Touching our present condition, dear Brother, we are a captive in the hands of certain lawless and godless men, who have not feared to detain our person, and put us to ransom; whereby we have also learned of Front-de-Boeuf's misfortune, and that thou hast escaped with that fair Jewish sorceress, whose black eyes have bewitched thee. We are heartily rejoiced of thy

safety; nevertheless, we pray thee to be on thy guard in the matter of this second Witch of Endor; for we are privately assured that your Great Master, who careth not a bean for cherry cheeks and black eyes, comes from Normandy to diminish your mirth, and amend your misdoings. Wherefore we pray you heartily to beware, and to be found watching, even as the Holy Text hath it, 'Invenientur vigilantes'. And the wealthy Jew her father, Isaac of York, having prayed of me letters in his behalf, I gave him these, earnestly advising, and in a sort entreating, that you do hold the damsel to ransom, seeing he will pay you from his bags as much as may find fifty damsels upon safer terms, whereof I trust to have my part when we make merry together, as true brothers, not forgetting the wine-cup. For what saith the text, 'Vinum laetificat cor hominis'; and again, 'Rex delectabitur pulchritudine tua'.

"Till which merry meeting, we wish you farewell. Given from this den of thieves, about the hour of matins,

"Aymer Pr. S. M. Jorvolciencis.

"Postscriptum.' Truly your golden chain hath not long abidden with me, and will now sustain, around the neck of an outlaw deer-stealer, the whistle wherewith he calleth on his hounds."

"What sayest thou to this, Conrade?" said the Grand Master—"Den of thieves! and a fit residence is a den of thieves for such a Prior. No wonder that the hand of God is upon us, and that in the Holy Land we lose place by place, foot by foot, before the infidels, when we have such churchmen as this Aymer.—And what meaneth he, I trow, by this second Witch of Endor?" said he to his confident, something apart. Conrade was better acquainted (perhaps by practice) with the jargon of gallantry, than was his Superior; and he expounded the passage which embarrassed the Grand Master, to be a sort of language used by worldly men towards those whom they loved 'par amours'; but the explanation did not satisfy the bigoted Beaumanoir.

"There is more in it than thou dost guess, Conrade; thy simplicity is no match for this deep abyss of wickedness. This Rebecca of York was a pupil of that Miriam of whom thou hast heard. Thou shalt hear the Jew own it even now." Then turning to Isaac, he said aloud, "Thy daughter, then, is prisoner with Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

"Ay, reverend valorous sir," stammered poor Isaac, "and whatsoever ransom a poor man may pay for her deliverance—"

"Peace!" said the Grand Master. "This thy daughter hath practised the art of healing, hath she not?"

"Ay, gracious sir," answered the Jew, with more confidence; "and knight and yeoman, squire and vassal, may bless the goodly gift which Heaven hath assigned to her. Many a one can testify that she hath recovered them by her art, when every other human aid hath proved vain; but the blessing of the God of Jacob was upon her."

Beaumanoir turned to Mont-Fitchet with a grim smile. "See, brother," he said, "the deceptions of the devouring Enemy! Behold the baits with which he fishes for souls, giving a poor space of earthly life in exchange for eternal happiness hereafter. Well said our blessed rule, 'Semper percutiatur leo vorans'.—Up on the lion! Down with the destroyer!" said he, shaking aloft his mystic abacus, as if in defiance of the powers of darkness—"Thy daughter worketh the cures, I doubt not," thus he went on to address the Jew, "by words and sighs, and periapts, and other cabalistical mysteries."

"Nay, reverend and brave Knight," answered Isaac, "but in chief measure by a balsam of marvellous virtue."

"Where had she that secret?" said Beaumanoir.

"It was delivered to her," answered Isaac, reluctantly, "by Miriam, a sage matron of our tribe."

"Ah, false Jew!" said the Grand Master; "was it not from that same witch Miriam, the abomination of whose enchantments have been heard of throughout every Christian land?" exclaimed the Grand Master, crossing himself. "Her body was burnt at a stake, and her ashes were scattered to the four winds; and so be it with me and mine Order, if I do not as much to her pupil, and more also! I will teach her to throw spell and incantation over the soldiers of the blessed Temple.—There, Damian, spurn this Jew from the gate—shoot him dead if he oppose or turn again. With his daughter we will deal as the Christian law and our own high office warrant."

Poor Isaac was hurried off accordingly, and expelled from the preceptory; all his entreaties, and even his offers, unheard and disregarded. He could do not better than return to the house of the Rabbi, and endeavour, through his means, to learn how his daughter was to be disposed of. He had hitherto feared for her honour, he was now to tremble for her life. Meanwhile, the Grand Master ordered to his presence the Preceptor of Templestowe.

CHAPTER XXXVI

*Say not my art is fraud—all live by seeming.
The beggar begs with it, and the gay courtier
Gains land and title, rank and rule, by seeming;
The clergy scorn it not, and the bold soldier
Will eke with it his service.—All admit it,
All practise it; and he who is content
With showing what he is, shall have small credit
In church, or camp, or state—So wags the world.
—Old Play*

Albert Malvoisin, President, or, in the language of the Order, Preceptor of the establishment of Templestowe, was brother to that Philip Malvoisin who has been already occasionally mentioned in this history, and was, like that baron, in close league with Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

Amongst dissolute and unprincipled men, of whom the Temple Order included but too many, Albert of Templestowe might be distinguished; but with this difference from the audacious Bois-Guilbert, that he knew how to throw over his vices and his ambition the veil of hypocrisy, and to assume in his exterior the fanaticism which he internally despised. Had not the arrival of the Grand Master been so unexpectedly sudden, he would have seen nothing at Templestowe which might have appeared to argue any relaxation of discipline. And, even although surprised, and, to a certain extent, detected, Albert Malvoisin listened with such respect and apparent contrition to the rebuke of his Superior, and made such haste to reform the particulars he censured,—succeeded, in fine, so well in giving an air of ascetic devotion to a family which had been lately devoted to license and pleasure, that Lucas Beaumanoir began to entertain a higher opinion of the Preceptor's morals, than the first appearance of the establishment had inclined him to adopt.

But these favourable sentiments on the part of the Grand Master were greatly shaken by the intelligence that Albert had received within a house of religion the Jewish captive, and, as was to be feared, the paramour of a brother of the Order; and when Albert appeared before him, he was regarded with unwonted sternness.

"There is in this mansion, dedicated to the purposes of the holy Order of the Temple," said the Grand Master, in a severe tone, "a Jewish woman, brought hither by a brother of religion, by your connivance, Sir Preceptor."

Albert Malvoisin was overwhelmed with confusion; for the unfortunate Rebecca had been confined in a remote and secret part of the building, and every precaution used to prevent her residence there from being known. He read in the looks of Beaumanoir ruin to Bois-Guilbert and to himself, unless he should be able to avert the impending storm.

"Why are you mute?" continued the Grand Master.

"Is it permitted to me to reply?" answered the Preceptor, in a tone of the deepest humility, although by the question he only meant to gain an instant's space for arranging his ideas.

"Speak, you are permitted," said the Grand Master—"speak, and say, knowest thou the capital of our holy rule,—*De commilitonibus Templi in sancta civitate, qui cum miserrimis mulieribus versantur, propter oblectationem carnis?*" 51

"Surely, most reverend father," answered the Preceptor, "I have not risen to this office in the Order, being ignorant of one of its most important prohibitions."

"How comes it, then, I demand of thee once more, that thou hast suffered a brother to bring a paramour, and that paramour a Jewish sorceress, into this holy place, to the stain and pollution thereof?"

"A Jewish sorceress!" echoed Albert Malvoisin; "good angels guard us!"

"Ay, brother, a Jewish sorceress!" said the Grand Master, sternly. "I have said it. Darest thou deny that this Rebecca, the daughter of that wretched usurer Isaac of York, and the pupil of the foul witch Miriam, is now—shame to be thought or spoken!—lodged within this thy Preceptory?"

"Your wisdom, reverend father," answered the Preceptor, "hath rolled away the darkness from my understanding. Much did I wonder that so good a knight as Brian de Bois-Guilbert seemed so fondly besotted on the charms of this female, whom I received into this house merely to place a bar betwixt their growing intimacy, which else might have been cemented at the expense of the fall of our valiant and religious brother."

"Hath nothing, then, as yet passed betwixt them in breach of his vow?" demanded the Grand Master.

"What! under this roof?" said the Preceptor, crossing himself; "Saint Magdalene and the ten thousand virgins forbid!—No! if I have sinned in receiving her here, it was in the erring thought that I might thus break off our brother's besotted devotion to this Jewess, which seemed to me so wild and unnatural, that I could not but ascribe it to some touch of insanity, more to be cured by pity than reproof. But since your reverend wisdom hath discovered this Jewish queen to be a sorceress, perchance it may account fully for his enamoured folly."

"It doth!—it doth!" said Beaumanoir. "See, brother Conrade, the peril of yielding to the first devices and blandishments of Satan! We look upon woman only to gratify the lust of the eye, and to take pleasure in what men call her beauty; and the Ancient Enemy, the devouring Lion, obtains power over us, to complete, by talisman and spell, a work which was begun by idleness and folly. It may be that our brother Bois-Guilbert does in this matter deserve rather pity than severe chastisement; rather the support of the staff, than the strokes of the rod; and that our admonitions and prayers may turn him from his folly, and restore him to his brethren."

"It were deep pity," said Conrade Mont-Fitchet, "to lose to the Order one of its best lances, when the Holy Community most requires the aid of its sons. Three hundred Saracens hath this Brian de Bois-Guilbert slain with his own hand."

"The blood of these accursed dogs," said the Grand Master, "shall be a sweet and acceptable offering to the saints and angels whom they despise and blaspheme; and with their aid will we counteract the spells and charms with which our brother is entwined as in a net. He shall burst the bands of this Delilah, as Sampson burst the two new cords with which the Philistines had bound him, and shall slaughter the infidels, even heaps upon heaps. But concerning this foul witch, who hath flung her enchantments over a brother of the Holy Temple, assuredly she shall die the death."

"But the laws of England,"—said the Preceptor, who, though delighted that the Grand Master's resentment, thus fortunately averted from himself and Bois-Guilbert, had taken another direction, began now to fear he was carrying it too far.

"The laws of England," interrupted Beaumanoir, "permit and enjoin each judge to execute justice within his own jurisdiction. The most petty baron may arrest, try, and condemn a witch found within his own domain. And shall that power be denied to the Grand Master of the Temple within a preceptory of his Order?—No!—we will judge and condemn. The witch shall be taken out of the land, and the wickedness thereof shall be forgiven. Prepare the Castle-hall for the trial of the sorceress."

Albert Malvoisin bowed and retired,—not to give directions for preparing the hall, but to seek out Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and communicate to him how matters were likely to terminate. It was not long ere he found him, foaming with indignation at a repulse he had anew sustained from the fair Jewess. "The unthinking," he said, "the ungrateful, to scorn him who, amidst blood and flames, would have saved her life at the risk of his own! By Heaven, Malvoisin! I abode until roof and rafters crackled and crashed around me. I was the butt of a hundred arrows; they rattled on mine armour like hailstones against a latticed casement, and the only use I made of my shield was for her protection. This did I endure for her; and now the self-willed girl upbraids me that I did not leave her to perish, and refuses me not only the slightest proof of gratitude, but even the most distant hope that ever she will be brought to grant any. The devil, that possessed her race with obstinacy, has concentrated its full force in her single person!"

"The devil," said the Preceptor, "I think, possessed you both. How oft have I preached to you caution, if not continence? Did I not tell you that there were enough willing Christian damsels to be met with, who would think it sin to refuse so brave a knight '*le don d'amoureux merci*', and you must needs anchor your affection on a wilful, obstinate Jewess! By the mass, I think old Lucas Beaumanoir guesses right, when he maintains she hath cast a spell over you."

"Lucas Beaumanoir!"—said Bois-Guilbert reproachfully—"Are these your precautions, Malvoisin? Hast thou suffered the dotard to learn that Rebecca is in the Preceptory?"

"How could I help it?" said the Preceptor. "I neglected nothing that could keep secret your mystery; but it is betrayed, and whether by the devil or no, the devil only can tell. But I have turned the matter as I could; you are safe if you renounce Rebecca. You are pitied—the victim of magical delusion. She is a sorceress, and must suffer as such."

"She shall not, by Heaven!" said Bois-Guilbert.

"By Heaven, she must and will!" said Malvoisin. "Neither you nor any one else can save her. Lucas Beaumanoir hath settled that the death of a Jewess will be a sin-offering sufficient to atone for all the amorous indulgences of the Knights Templars; and thou knowest he hath both the power and will to execute so reasonable and pious a purpose."

"Will future ages believe that such stupid bigotry ever existed!" said Bois-Guilbert, striding up and down the apartment.

"What they may believe, I know not," said Malvoisin, calmly; "but I know well, that in this our day, clergy and laymen, take ninety-nine to the hundred, will cry 'amen' to the Grand Master's sentence."

"I have it," said Bois-Guilbert. "Albert, thou art my friend. Thou must connive at her escape, Malvoisin, and I will transport her to some place of greater security and secrecy."

"I cannot, if I would," replied the Preceptor; "the mansion is filled with the attendants of the Grand Master, and others who are devoted to him. And, to be frank with you, brother, I would not embark with you in this matter, even if I could hope to bring my bark to haven. I have risked enough already for your sake. I have no mind to encounter a sentence of degradation, or even to lose my Preceptory, for the sake of a painted piece of Jewish flesh and blood. And you, if you will be guided by my counsel, will give up this wild-goose chase, and fly your hawk at some other game. Think, Bois-Guilbert,—thy present rank, thy future honours, all depend on thy place in the Order. Shouldst thou adhere perversely to thy passion for this Rebecca, thou wilt give Beaumanoir the power of expelling thee, and he will not neglect it. He is jealous of the truncheon which he holds in his trembling gripe, and he knows thou stretchest thy bold hand towards it. Doubt not he will ruin thee, if thou affordest him a pretext so fair as thy protection of a Jewish sorceress. Give him his scope in this matter, for thou canst not control him. When the staff is in thine own firm grasp, thou mayest caress the daughters of Judah, or burn them, as may best suit thine own humour."

"Malvoisin," said Bois-Guilbert, "thou art a cold-blooded—"

"Friend," said the Preceptor, hastening to fill up the blank, in which Bois-Guilbert would probably have placed a worse word,—"*a cold-blooded friend* I am, and therefore more fit to give thee advice. I tell thee once more, that thou canst not save Rebecca. I tell thee once more, thou canst but perish with her. Go hie thee to the Grand Master—throw thyself at his feet and tell him—"

"Not at his feet, by Heaven! but to the dotard's very beard will I say—"

"Say to him, then, to his beard," continued Malvoisin, coolly, "that you love this captive Jewess to distraction; and the more thou dost enlarge on thy passion, the greater will be his haste to end it by the death of the fair enchantress; while thou, taken in flagrant delict by the avowal of a crime contrary to thine oath, canst

hope no aid of thy brethren, and must exchange all thy brilliant visions of ambition and power, to lift perhaps a mercenary spear in some of the petty quarrels between Flanders and Burgundy."

"Thou speakest the truth, Malvoisin," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, after a moment's reflection. "I will give the hoary bigot no advantage over me; and for Rebecca, she hath not merited at my hand that I should expose rank and honour for her sake. I will cast her off—yes, I will leave her to her fate, unless—"

"Qualify not thy wise and necessary resolution," said Malvoisin; "women are but the toys which amuse our lighter hours—ambition is the serious business of life. Perish a thousand such frail baubles as this Jewess, before thy manly step pause in the brilliant career that lies stretched before thee! For the present we part, nor must we be seen to hold close conversation—I must order the hall for his judgment-seat."

"What!" said Bois-Guilbert, "so soon?"

"Ay," replied the Preceptor, "trial moves rapidly on when the judge has determined the sentence beforehand."

"Rebecca," said Bois-Guilbert, when he was left alone, "thou art like to cost me dear—Why cannot I abandon thee to thy fate, as this calm hypocrite recommends?—One effort will I make to save thee—but beware of ingratitude! for if I am again repulsed, my vengeance shall equal my love. The life and honour of Bois-Guilbert must not be hazarded, where contempt and reproaches are his only reward."

The Preceptor had hardly given the necessary orders, when he was joined by Conrade Mont-Fitchet, who acquainted him with the Grand Master's resolution to bring the Jewess to instant trial for sorcery.

"It is surely a dream," said the Preceptor; "we have many Jewish physicians, and we call them not wizards though they work wonderful cures."

"The Grand Master thinks otherwise," said Mont-Fitchet; "and, Albert, I will be upright with thee—wizard or not, it were better that this miserable damsel die, than that Brian de Bois-Guilbert should be lost to the Order, or the Order divided by internal dissension. Thou knowest his high rank, his fame in arms—thou knowest the zeal with which many of our brethren regard him—but all this will not avail him with our Grand Master, should he consider Brian as the accomplice, not the victim, of this Jewess. Were the souls of the twelve tribes in her single body, it were better she suffered alone, than that Bois-Guilbert were partner in her destruction."

"I have been working him even now to abandon her," said Malvoisin; "but still, are there grounds enough to condemn this Rebecca for sorcery?—Will not the Grand Master change his mind when he sees that the proofs are so weak?"

"They must be strengthened, Albert," replied Mont-Fitchet, "they must be strengthened. Dost thou understand me?"

"I do," said the Preceptor, "nor do I scruple to do aught for advancement of the Order—but there is little time to find engines fitting."

"Malvoisin, they MUST be found," said Conrade; "well will it advantage both the Order and thee. This Templestowe is a poor Preceptory—that of Maison-Dieu is worth double its value—thou knowest my interest with our old Chief—find those who can carry this matter through, and thou art Preceptor of Maison-Dieu in the fertile Kent—How sayst thou?"

"There is," replied Malvoisin, "among those who came hither with Bois-Guilbert, two fellows whom I well know; servants they were to my brother Philip de Malvoisin, and passed from his service to that of Front-de-Boeuf—It may be they know something of the witcheries of this woman."

"Away, seek them out instantly—and hark thee, if a byzant or two will sharpen their memory, let them not be wanting."

"They would swear the mother that bore them a sorceress for a zecchin," said the Preceptor.

"Away, then," said Mont-Fitchet; "at noon the affair will proceed. I have not seen our senior in such earnest preparation since he condemned to the stake Hamet Alfagi, a convert who relapsed to the Moslem faith."

The ponderous castle-bell had tolled the point of noon, when Rebecca heard a trampling of feet upon the private stair which led to her place of confinement. The noise announced the arrival of several persons, and the circumstance rather gave her joy; for she was more afraid of the solitary visits of the fierce and passionate Bois-Guilbert than of any evil that could befall her besides. The door of the chamber was unlocked, and Conrade and the Preceptor Malvoisin entered, attended by four warders clothed in black, and bearing halberds.

"Daughter of an accursed race!" said the Preceptor, "arise and follow us."

"Whither," said Rebecca, "and for what purpose?"

"Damsel," answered Conrade, "it is not for thee to question, but to obey. Nevertheless, be it known to thee, that thou art to be brought before the tribunal of the Grand Master of our holy Order, there to answer for thine offences."

"May the God of Abraham be praised!" said Rebecca, folding her hands devoutly; "the name of a judge, though an enemy to my people, is to me as the name of a protector. Most willingly do I follow thee—permit me only to wrap my veil around my head."

They descended the stair with slow and solemn step, traversed a long gallery, and, by a pair of folding doors placed at the end, entered the great hall in which the Grand Master had for the time established his court of justice.

The lower part of this ample apartment was filled with squires and yeomen, who made way not without some difficulty for Rebecca, attended by the Preceptor and Mont-Fitchet, and followed by the guard of halberdiers, to move forward to the seat appointed for her. As she passed through the crowd, her arms folded and her head depressed, a scrap of paper was thrust into her hand, which she received almost unconsciously, and continued to hold without examining its contents. The assurance that she possessed some friend in this awful assembly gave her courage to look around, and to mark into whose presence she had been conducted. She gazed, accordingly, upon the scene, which we shall endeavour to describe in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVII

*Stern was the law which bade its vot'ries leave
At human woes with human hearts to grieve;
Stern was the law, which at the winning wile
Of frank and harmless mirth forbade to smile;
But sterner still, when high the iron-rod
Of tyrant power she shook, and call'd that power of God.
—The Middle Ages*

The Tribunal, erected for the trial of the innocent and unhappy Rebecca, occupied the dais or elevated part of the upper end of the great hall—a platform, which we have already described as the place of honour, destined to be occupied by the most distinguished inhabitants or guests of an ancient mansion.

On an elevated seat, directly before the accused, sat the Grand Master of the Temple, in full and ample robes of flowing white, holding in his hand the mystic staff, which bore the symbol of the Order. At his feet was placed a table, occupied by two scribes, chaplains of the Order, whose duty it was to reduce to formal record the proceedings of the day. The black dresses, bare scalps, and demure looks of these church-men, formed a strong contrast to the warlike appearance of the knights who attended, either as residing in the Preceptory, or as come thither to attend upon their Grand Master. The Preceptors, of whom there were four present, occupied seats lower in height, and somewhat drawn back behind that of their superior; and the knights, who enjoyed no such rank in the Order, were placed on benches still lower, and preserving the same distance from the Preceptors as these from the Grand Master. Behind them, but still upon the dais or elevated portion of the hall, stood the esquires of the Order, in white dresses of an inferior quality.

The whole assembly wore an aspect of the most profound gravity; and in the faces of the knights might be perceived traces of military daring, united with the solemn carriage becoming men of a religious profession, and which, in the presence of their Grand Master, failed not to sit upon every brow.

The remaining and lower part of the hall was filled with guards, holding partisans, and with other attendants whom curiosity had drawn thither, to see at once a Grand Master and a Jewish sorceress. By far the greater part of those inferior persons were, in one rank or other, connected with the Order, and were accordingly distinguished by their black dresses. But peasants from the neighbouring country were not refused admittance; for it was the pride of Beaumanoir to render the edifying spectacle of the justice which he administered as public as possible. His large blue eyes seemed to expand as he gazed around the assembly, and his countenance appeared elated by the conscious dignity, and imaginary merit, of the part which he was about to perform. A psalm, which he himself accompanied with a deep mellow voice, which age had not deprived of its powers, commenced the proceedings of the day; and the solemn sounds, "Venite exultemus Domino", so often sung by the Templars before engaging with earthly adversaries, was judged by Lucas most appropriate to introduce the approaching triumph, for such he deemed it, over the powers of darkness. The deep prolonged notes, raised by a hundred masculine voices accustomed to combine in the choral chant, arose to the vaulted roof of the hall, and rolled on amongst its arches with the pleasing yet solemn sound of the rushing of mighty waters.

When the sounds ceased, the Grand Master glanced his eye slowly around the circle, and observed that the seat of one of the Preceptors was vacant. Brian de Bois-Guilbert, by whom it had been occupied, had left his place, and was now standing near the extreme corner of one of the benches occupied by the Knights Companions of the Temple, one hand extending his long mantle, so as in some degree to hide his face; while the other held his cross-handled sword, with the point of which, sheathed as it was, he was slowly drawing lines upon the oaken floor.

"Unhappy man!" said the Grand Master, after favouring him with a glance of compassion. "Thou seest, Conrade, how this holy work distresses him. To this can the light look of woman, aided by the Prince of the Powers of this world, bring a valiant and worthy knight!—Seest thou he cannot look upon us; he cannot look upon her; and who knows by what impulse from his tormentor his hand forms these cabalistic lines upon the floor?—It may be our life and safety are thus aimed at; but we spit at and defy the foul enemy. 'Semper Leo percutiatur!'"

This was communicated apart to his confidential follower, Conrade Mont-Fitchet. The Grand Master then raised his voice, and addressed the assembly.

"Reverend and valiant men, Knights, Preceptors, and Companions of this Holy Order, my brethren and my children!—you also, well-born and pious Esquires, who aspire to wear this holy Cross!—and you also, Christian brethren, of every degree!—Be it known to you, that it is not defect of power in us which hath occasioned the assembling of this congregation; for, however unworthy in our person, yet to us is committed, with this baton, full power to judge and to try all that regards the weal of this our Holy Order. Holy Saint Bernard, in the rule of our knightly and religious profession, hath said, in the fifty-ninth capital, 53 that he would not that brethren be called together in council, save at the will and command of the Master; leaving it free to us, as to those more worthy fathers who have preceded us in this our office, to judge, as well of the occasion as of the time and place in which a chapter of the whole Order, or of any part thereof, may be convoked. Also, in all such chapters, it is our duty to hear the advice of our brethren, and to proceed according to our own pleasure. But when the raging wolf hath made an inroad upon the flock, and carried off one member thereof, it is the duty of the kind shepherd to call his comrades together, that with bows and slings they may quell the invader, according to our well-known rule, that the lion is ever to be beaten down. We have therefore summoned to our presence a Jewish woman, by name Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York—a woman infamous for sortileges and for witcheries; whereby she hath maddened the blood, and besotted the brain, not of a churl, but of a Knight—not of a secular Knight, but of one devoted to the service of the Holy Temple—not of a Knight Companion, but of a Preceptor of our Order, first in honour as in place. Our brother, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, is well known to ourselves, and to all degrees who now hear me, as a true and zealous champion of the Cross, by whose arm many deeds of valour have been wrought in the Holy Land, and the holy places purified from pollution by the blood of those infidels who defiled them. Neither have our brother's sagacity and prudence been less in repute among his brethren than his valour and discipline; in so much, that knights, both in eastern and western lands, have named De Bois-Guilbert as one who may well be put in nomination as successor to this baton, when it shall please Heaven to release us from the toil of bearing it. If we were told that such a man, so honoured, and so honourable, suddenly casting away regard for his character, his vows, his brethren, and his prospects, had associated to himself a Jewish damsel, wandered in this lewd company, through solitary places, defended her person in preference to his own, and, finally, was so utterly blinded and besotted by his folly, as to bring her even to one of our own Preceptories, what should we say but that the noble knight was possessed by some evil demon, or influenced by some wicked spell?—If we could suppose it otherwise, think not rank, valour, high repute, or any earthly consideration, should prevent us from visiting him with punishment, that the evil thing might be removed, even according to the text, 'Auferte malum ex vobis'. For various and heinous are the acts of transgression against the rule of our blessed Order in this lamentable history.—1st, He hath walked according to his proper will, contrary to capital 33, 'Quod nullus juxta propriam voluntatem incedat'.—2d, He hath held communication with an excommunicated person, capital 57, 'Ut fratres non participant cum excommunicatis', and therefore hath a portion in 'Anathema Maranatha'.—3d, He hath conversed with strange women, contrary to the capital, 'Ut fratres non conversantur cum extraneis mulieribus'.—4th, He hath not avoided, nay, he hath, it is to be feared, solicited the kiss of woman; by which, saith the last rule of our renowned Order, 'Ut fugiantur oscula', the soldiers of the Cross are brought into a snare. For which heinous and multiplied guilt, Brian de Bois-Guilbert should be cut off and cast out from our congregation, were he the right hand and right eye thereof."

He paused. A low murmur went through the assembly. Some of the younger part, who had been inclined to smile at the statute 'De osculis fugiendis', became now grave enough, and anxiously waited what the Grand Master was next to propose.

"Such," he said, "and so great should indeed be the punishment of a Knight Templar, who wilfully offended against the rules of his Order in such weighty points. But if, by means of charms and of spells, Satan had obtained dominion over the Knight, perchance because he cast his eyes too lightly upon a damsel's beauty, we are then rather to lament than chastise his backsliding; and, imposing on him only such penance as may purify him from his iniquity, we are to turn the full edge of our indignation upon the accursed instrument, which had so well-nigh occasioned his utter falling away.—Stand forth, therefore, and bear witness, ye who have witnessed these unhappy doings, that we may judge of the sum and bearing thereof; and judge whether our justice may be satisfied with the punishment of this infidel woman, or if we must go on, with a bleeding heart, to the further proceeding against our brother."

Several witnesses were called upon to prove the risks to which Bois-Guilbert exposed himself in endeavouring to save Rebecca from the blazing castle, and his neglect of his personal defence in attending to her safety. The men gave these details with the exaggerations common to vulgar minds which have been strongly excited by any remarkable event, and their natural disposition to the marvellous was greatly increased by the satisfaction which their evidence seemed to afford to the eminent person for whose information it had been delivered. Thus the dangers which Bois-Guilbert surmounted, in themselves sufficiently great, became portentous in their narrative. The devotion of the Knight to Rebecca's defence was exaggerated beyond the bounds, not only of discretion, but even of the most frantic excess of chivalrous zeal; and his deference to what she said, even although her language was often severe and upbraiding, was painted as carried to an excess, which, in a man of his haughty temper, seemed almost preternatural.

The Preceptor of Templestowe was then called on to describe the manner in which Bois-Guilbert and the Jewess arrived at the Preceptory. The evidence of Malvoisin was skilfully guarded. But while he apparently studied to spare the feelings of Bois-Guilbert, he threw in, from time to time, such hints, as seemed to infer that he laboured under some temporary alienation of mind, so deeply did he appear to be enamoured of the damsel whom he brought along with him. With sighs of penitence, the Preceptor avowed his own contrition for having admitted Rebecca and her lover within the walls of the Preceptory—"But my defence," he concluded, "has been made in my confession to our most reverend father the Grand Master; he knows my motives were not evil, though my conduct may have been irregular. Joyfully will I submit to any penance he shall assign me."

"Thou hast spoken well, Brother Albert," said Beaumanoir; "thy motives were good, since thou didst judge it right to arrest thine erring brother in his career of precipitate folly. But thy conduct was wrong; as he that would stop a runaway steed, and seizing by the stirrup instead of the bridle, receiveth injury himself, instead of accomplishing his purpose. Thirteen paternosters are assigned by our pious founder for matins, and nine for vespers; be those services doubled by thee. Thrice a-week are Templars permitted the use of flesh; but do thou keep fast for all the seven days. This do for six weeks to come, and thy penance is accomplished."

With a hypocritical look of the deepest submission, the Preceptor of Templestowe bowed to the ground before his Superior, and resumed his seat.

"Were it not well, brethren," said the Grand Master, "that we examine something into the former life and conversation of this woman, specially that we may discover whether she be one likely to use magical charms and spells, since the truths which we have heard may well incline us to suppose, that in this unhappy course our erring brother has been acted upon by some infernal enticement and delusion?"

Herman of Goodalricke was the Fourth Preceptor present; the other three were Conrade, Malvoisin, and Bois-Guilbert himself. Herman was an ancient warrior, whose face was marked with scars inflicted by the sabre of the Moslemah, and had great rank and consideration among his brethren. He arose and bowed to the Grand Master, who instantly granted him license of speech. "I would crave to know, most Reverend Father, of our valiant brother, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, what he says to these wondrous accusations, and with what eye he himself now regards his unhappy intercourse with this Jewish maiden?"

"Brian de Bois-Guilbert," said the Grand Master, "thou hearest the question which our Brother of Goodalricke desirest thou shouldst answer. I command thee to reply to him."

Bois-Guilbert turned his head towards the Grand Master when thus addressed, and remained silent.

"He is possessed by a dumb devil," said the Grand Master. "Avoid thee, Sathanus!—Speak, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, I conjure thee, by this symbol of our Holy Order."

Bois-Guilbert made an effort to suppress his rising scorn and indignation, the expression of which, he was well aware, would have little availed him. "Brian de Bois-Guilbert," he answered, "replies not, most Reverend Father, to such wild and vague charges. If his honour be impeached, he will defend it with his body, and with that sword which has often fought for Christendom."

"We forgive thee, Brother Brian," said the Grand Master; "though that thou hast boasted thy warlike achievements before us, is a glorifying of thine own deeds, and cometh of the Enemy, who tempteth us to exalt our own worship. But thou hast our pardon, judging thou speakest less of thine own suggestion than from the impulse of him whom by Heaven's leave, we will quell and drive forth from our assembly." A glance of disdain flashed from the dark fierce eyes of Bois-Guilbert, but he made no reply.—"And now," pursued the Grand Master, "since our Brother of Goodalricke's question has been thus imperfectly answered, pursue we our quest, brethren, and with our patron's assistance, we will search to the bottom this mystery of iniquity.—Let those who have aught to witness of the life and conversation of this Jewish woman, stand forth before us." There was a bustle in the lower part of the hall, and when the Grand Master enquired the reason, it was replied, there was in the crowd a bedridden man, whom the prisoner had restored to the perfect use of his limbs, by a miraculous balsam.

The poor peasant, a Saxon by birth, was dragged forward to the bar, terrified at the penal consequences which he might have incurred by the guilt of having been cured of the palsy by a Jewish damsel. Perfectly cured he certainly was not, for he supported himself forward on crutches to give evidence. Most unwilling was his testimony, and given with many tears; but he admitted that two years since, when residing at York, he was suddenly afflicted with a sore disease, while labouring for Isaac the rich Jew, in his vocation of a joiner; that he had been unable to stir from his bed until the remedies applied by Rebecca's directions, and especially a warming and spicy-smelling balsam, had in some degree restored him to the use of his limbs. Moreover, he said, she had given him a pot of that precious ointment, and furnished him with a piece of money withal, to return to the house of his father, near to Templestowe. "And may it please your gracious Reverence," said the man, "I cannot think the damsel meant harm by me, though she hath the ill hap to be a Jewess; for even when I used her remedy, I said the Pater and the Creed, and it never operated a whit less kindly—"

"Peace, slave," said the Grand Master, "and begone! It well suits brutes like thee to be tampering and trinketing with hellish cures, and to be giving your labour to the sons of mischief. I tell thee, the fiend can impose diseases for the very purpose of removing them, in order to bring into credit some diabolical fashion of cure. Hast thou that unguent of which thou speakest?"

The peasant, fumbling in his bosom with a trembling hand, produced a small box, bearing some Hebrew characters on the lid, which was, with most of the audience, a sure proof that the devil had stood apothecary. Beaumanoir, after crossing himself, took the box into his hand, and, learned in most of the Eastern tongues, read with ease the motto on the lid,—"The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath conquered."

"Strange powers of Sathanas," said he, "which can convert Scripture into blasphemy, mingling poison with our necessary food!—Is there no leech here who can tell us the ingredients of this mystic unguent?"

Two mediciners, as they called themselves, the one a monk, the other a barber, appeared, and avouched they knew nothing of the materials, excepting that they savoured of myrrh and camphire, which they took to be Oriental herbs. But with the true professional hatred to a successful practitioner of their art, they insinuated that, since the medicine was beyond their own knowledge, it must necessarily have been compounded from an unlawful and magical pharmacopeia; since they themselves, though no conjurors, fully understood every branch of their art, so far as it might be exercised with the good faith of a Christian. When this medical research was ended, the Saxon peasant desired humbly to have back the medicine which he had found so salutary; but the Grand Master frowned severely at the request. "What is thy name, fellow?" said he to the cripple.

"Higg, the son of Snell," answered the peasant.

"Then Higg, son of Snell," said the Grand Master, "I tell thee it is better to be bedridden, than to accept the benefit of unbelievers' medicine that thou mayest arise and walk; better to despoil infidels of their treasure by the strong hand, than to accept of them benevolent gifts, or do them service for wages. Go thou, and do as I have said."

"Alack," said the peasant, "an it shall not displease your Reverence, the lesson comes too late for me, for I am but a maimed man; but I will tell my two brethren, who serve the rich Rabbi Nathan Ben Samuel, that your mastership says it is more lawful to rob him than to render him faithful service."

"Out with the prating villain!" said Beaumanoir, who was not prepared to refute this practical application of his general maxim.

Higg, the son of Snell, withdrew into the crowd, but, interested in the fate of his benefactress, lingered until he should learn her doom, even at the risk of again encountering the frown of that severe judge, the terror of which withered his very heart within him.

At this period of the trial, the Grand Master commanded Rebecca to unveil herself. Opening her lips for the first time, she replied patiently, but with dignity,—"That it was not the wont of the daughters of her people to uncover their faces when alone in an assembly of strangers." The sweet tones of her voice, and the softness of her reply, impressed on the audience a sentiment of pity and sympathy. But Beaumanoir, in whose mind the suppression of each feeling of humanity which could interfere with his imagined duty, was a virtue of itself, repeated his commands that his victim should be unveiled. The guards were about to remove her veil accordingly, when she stood up before the Grand Master and said, "Nay, but for the love of your own daughters—Alas," she said, recollecting herself, "ye have no daughters!—yet for the remembrance of your mothers—for the love of your sisters, and of female decency, let me not be thus handled in your presence; it suits not a maiden to be disrobed by such rude grooms. I will obey you," she added, with an expression of patient sorrow in her voice, which had almost melted the heart of Beaumanoir himself; "ye are elders among your people, and at your command I will show the features of an ill-fated maiden."

She withdrew her veil, and looked on them with a countenance in which bashfulness contended with dignity. Her exceeding beauty excited a murmur of surprise, and the younger knights told each other with their eyes, in silent correspondence, that Brian's best apology was in the power of her real charms, rather than of her imaginary witchcraft. But Higg, the son of Snell, felt most deeply the effect produced by the sight of the countenance of his benefactress.

"Let me go forth," he said to the warders at the door of the hall,— "let me go forth!—To look at her again will kill me, for I have had a share in murdering her."

"Peace, poor man," said Rebecca, when she heard his exclamation; "thou hast done me no harm by speaking the truth—thou canst not aid me by thy complaints or lamentations. Peace, I pray thee—go home and save thyself."

Higg was about to be thrust out by the compassion of the warders, who were apprehensive lest his clamorous grief should draw upon them reprehension, and upon himself punishment. But he promised to be silent, and was permitted to remain. The two men-at-arms, with whom Albert Malvoisin had not failed to communicate upon the import of their testimony, were now called forward. Though both were hardened and inflexible villains, the sight of the captive maiden, as well as her excelling beauty, at first appeared to stagger them; but an expressive glance from the Preceptor of Templestowe restored them to their dogged composure; and they delivered, with a precision which would have seemed suspicious to more impartial judges, circumstances either altogether fictitious or trivial,

and natural in themselves, but rendered pregnant with suspicion by the exaggerated manner in which they were told, and the sinister commentary which the witnesses added to the facts. The circumstances of their evidence would have been, in modern days, divided into two classes—those which were immaterial, and those which were actually and physically impossible. But both were, in those ignorant and superstitious times, easily credited as proofs of guilt.—The first class set forth, that Rebecca was heard to mutter to herself in an unknown tongue—that the songs she sung by fits were of a strangely sweet sound, which made the ears of the hearer tingle, and his heart throb—that she spoke at times to herself, and seemed to look upward for a reply—that her garments were of a strange and mystic form, unlike those of women of good repute—that she had rings impressed with cabalistical devices, and that strange characters were brodered on her veil.

All these circumstances, so natural and so trivial, were gravely listened to as proofs, or, at least, as affording strong suspicions that Rebecca had unlawful correspondence with mystical powers.

But there was less equivocal testimony, which the credulity of the assembly, or of the greater part, greedily swallowed, however incredible. One of the soldiers had seen her work a cure upon a wounded man, brought with them to the castle of Torquilstone. She did, he said, make certain signs upon the wound, and repeated certain mysterious words, which he blessed God he understood not, when the iron head of a square cross-bow bolt disengaged itself from the wound, the bleeding was stanchd, the wound was closed, and the dying man was, within a quarter of an hour, walking upon the ramparts, and assisting the witness in managing a mangonel, or machine for hurling stones. This legend was probably founded upon the fact, that Rebecca had attended on the wounded Ivanhoe when in the castle of Torquilstone. But it was the more difficult to dispute the accuracy of the witness, as, in order to produce real evidence in support of his verbal testimony, he drew from his pouch the very bolt-head, which, according to his story, had been miraculously extracted from the wound; and as the iron weighed a full ounce, it completely confirmed the tale, however marvellous.

His comrade had been a witness from a neighbouring battlement of the scene betwixt Rebecca and Bois-Guilbert, when she was upon the point of precipitating herself from the top of the tower. Not to be behind his companion, this fellow stated, that he had seen Rebecca perch herself upon the parapet of the turret, and there take the form of a milk-white swan, under which appearance she flitted three times round the castle of Torquilstone; then again settle on the turret, and once more assume the female form.

Less than one half of this weighty evidence would have been sufficient to convict any old woman, poor and ugly, even though she had not been a Jewess. United with that fatal circumstance, the body of proof was too weighty for Rebecca's youth, though combined with the most exquisite beauty.

The Grand Master had collected the suffrages, and now in a solemn tone demanded of Rebecca what she had to say against the sentence of condemnation, which he was about to pronounce.

"To invoke your pity," said the lovely Jewess, with a voice somewhat tremulous with emotion, "would, I am aware, be as useless as I should hold it mean. To state that to relieve the sick and wounded of another religion, cannot be displeasing to the acknowledged Founder of both our faiths, were also unavailing; to plead that many things which these men (whom may Heaven pardon!) have spoken against me are impossible, would avail me but little, since you believe in their possibility; and still less would it advantage me to explain, that the peculiarities of my dress, language, and manners, are those of my people—I had well-nigh said of my country, but alas! we have no country. Nor will I even vindicate myself at the expense of my oppressor, who stands there listening to the fictions and surmises which seem to convert the tyrant into the victim.—God be judge between him and me! but rather would I submit to ten such deaths as your pleasure may denounce against me, than listen to the suit which that man of Belial has urged upon me—friendless, defenceless, and his prisoner. But he is of your own faith, and his lightest affirmance would weigh down the most solemn protestations of the distressed Jewess. I will not therefore return to himself the charge brought against me—but to himself—Yes, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, to thyself I appeal, whether these accusations are not false? as monstrous and calumnious as they are deadly?"

There was a pause; all eyes turned to Brian de Bois-Guilbert. He was silent.

"Speak," she said, "if thou art a man—if thou art a Christian, speak!—I conjure thee, by the habit which thou dost wear, by the name thou dost inherit—by the knighthood thou dost vaunt—by the honour of thy mother—by the tomb and the bones of thy father—I conjure thee to say, are these things true?"

"Answer her, brother," said the Grand Master, "if the Enemy with whom thou dost wrestle will give thee power."

In fact, Bois-Guilbert seemed agitated by contending passions, which almost convulsed his features, and it was with a constrained voice that at last he replied, looking to Rebecca,—"*The scroll!—the scroll!*"

"Ay," said Beaumanoir, "this is indeed testimony! The victim of her witcheries can only name the fatal scroll, the spell inscribed on which is, doubtless, the cause of his silence."

But Rebecca put another interpretation on the words extorted as it were from Bois-Guilbert, and glancing her eye upon the slip of parchment which she continued to hold in her hand, she read written thereupon in the Arabian character, "*Demand a Champion!*" The murmuring commentary which ran through the assembly at the strange reply of Bois-Guilbert, gave Rebecca leisure to examine and instantly to destroy the scroll unobserved. When the whisper had ceased, the Grand Master spoke.

"Rebecca, thou canst derive no benefit from the evidence of this unhappy knight, for whom, as we well perceive, the Enemy is yet too powerful. Hast thou aught else to say?"

"There is yet one chance of life left to me," said Rebecca, "even by your own fierce laws. Life has been miserable—miserable, at least, of late—but I will not cast away the gift of God, while he affords me the means of defending it. I deny this charge—I maintain my innocence, and I declare the falsehood of this accusation—I challenge the privilege of trial by combat, and will appear by my champion."

"And who, Rebecca," replied the Grand Master, "will lay lance in rest for a sorceress? who will be the champion of a Jewess?"

"God will raise me up a champion," said Rebecca—"It cannot be that in merry England—the hospitable, the generous, the free, where so many are ready to peril their lives for honour, there will not be found one to fight for justice. But it is enough that I challenge the trial by combat—there lies my gage."

She took her embroidered glove from her hand, and flung it down before the Grand Master with an air of mingled simplicity and dignity, which excited universal surprise and admiration.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

—*There I throw my gage,
To prove it on thee to the extremest point
Of martial daring.*
—*Richard II*

Even Lucas Beaumanoir himself was affected by the mien and appearance of Rebecca. He was not originally a cruel or even a severe man; but with passions by nature cold, and with a high, though mistaken, sense of duty, his heart had been gradually hardened by the ascetic life which he pursued, the supreme power which he enjoyed, and the supposed necessity of subduing infidelity and eradicating heresy, which he conceived peculiarly incumbent on him. His features relaxed in their usual severity as he gazed upon the beautiful creature before him, alone, unfriended, and defending herself with so much spirit and courage. He crossed himself twice, as doubting whence arose the unwonted softening of a heart, which on such occasions used to resemble in hardness the steel of his sword. At length he spoke.

"Damsel," he said, "if the pity I feel for thee arise from any practice thine evil arts have made on me, great is thy guilt. But I rather judge it the kinder feelings of nature, which grieves that so goodly a form should be a vessel of perdition. Repent, my daughter—confess thy witchcrafts—turn thee from thine evil faith—embrace this holy emblem, and all shall yet be well with thee here and hereafter. In some sisterhood of the strictest order, shalt thou have time for prayer and fitting penance, and that repentance not to be repented of. This do and live—what has the law of Moses done for thee that thou shouldst die for it?"

"It was the law of my fathers," said Rebecca; "it was delivered in thunders and in storms upon the mountain of Sinai, in cloud and in fire. This, if ye are Christians, ye believe—it is, you say, recalled; but so my teachers have not taught me."

"Let our chaplain," said Beaumanoir, "stand forth, and tell this obstinate infidel—"

"Forgive the interruption," said Rebecca, meekly; "I am a maiden, unskilled to dispute for my religion, but I can die for it, if it be God's will.—Let me pray your answer to my demand of a champion."

"Give me her glove," said Beaumanoir. "This is indeed," he continued, as he looked at the flimsy texture and slender fingers, "a slight and frail gage for a purpose so deadly!—Seest thou, Rebecca, as this thin and light glove of thine is to one of our heavy steel gauntlets, so is thy cause to that of the Temple, for it is our Order which thou hast defied."

"Cast my innocence into the scale," answered Rebecca, "and the glove of silk shall outweigh the glove of iron."

"Then thou dost persist in thy refusal to confess thy guilt, and in that bold challenge which thou hast made?"

"I do persist, noble sir," answered Rebecca.

"So be it then, in the name of Heaven," said the Grand Master; "and may God show the right!"

"Amen," replied the Preceptors around him, and the word was deeply echoed by the whole assembly.

"Brethren," said Beaumanoir, "you are aware that we might well have refused to this woman the benefit of the trial by combat—but though a Jewess and an unbeliever, she is also a stranger and defenceless, and God forbid that she should ask the benefit of our mild laws, and that it should be refused to her. Moreover, we are knights and soldiers as well as men of religion, and shame it were to us upon any pretence, to refuse proffered combat. Thus, therefore, stands the case. Rebecca, the daughter of Isaac of York, is, by many frequent and suspicious circumstances, defamed of sorcery practised on the person of a noble knight of our holy Order, and hath challenged the combat in proof of her innocence. To whom, reverend brethren, is it your opinion that we should deliver the gage of battle, naming him, at the same time, to be our champion on the field?"

"To Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whom it chiefly concerns," said the Preceptor of Goodalricke, "and who, moreover, best knows how the truth stands in this matter."

"But if," said the Grand Master, "our brother Brian be under the influence of a charm or a spell—we speak but for the sake of precaution, for to the arm of none of our holy Order would we more willingly confide this or a more weighty cause."

"Reverend father," answered the Preceptor of Goodalricke, "no spell can effect the champion who comes forward to fight for the judgment of God."

"Thou sayest right, brother," said the Grand Master. "Albert Malvoisin, give this gage of battle to Brian de Bois-Guilbert.—It is our charge to thee, brother," he continued, addressing himself to Bois-Guilbert, "that thou do thy battle manfully, nothing doubting that the good cause shall triumph.—And do thou, Rebecca, attend, that we assign thee the third day from the present to find a champion."

"That is but brief space," answered Rebecca, "for a stranger, who is also of another faith, to find one who will do battle, wagering life and honour for her cause, against a knight who is called an approved soldier."

"We may not extend it," answered the Grand Master; "the field must be foughten in our own presence, and divers weighty causes call us on the fourth day from hence."

"God's will be done!" said Rebecca; "I put my trust in Him, to whom an instant is as effectual to save as a whole age."

"Thou hast spoken well, damsel," said the Grand Master; "but well know we who can array himself like an angel of light. It remains but to name a fitting place of combat, and, if it so hap, also of execution.—Where is the Preceptor of this house?"

Albert Malvoisin, still holding Rebecca's glove in his hand, was speaking to Bois-Guilbert very earnestly, but in a low voice.

"How!" said the Grand Master, "will he not receive the gage?"

"He will—he doth, most Reverend Father," said Malvoisin, slipping the glove under his own mantle. "And for the place of combat, I hold the fittest to be the lists of Saint George belonging to this Preceptory, and used by us for military exercise."

"It is well," said the Grand Master.—"Rebecca, in those lists shalt thou produce thy champion; and if thou failest to do so, or if thy champion shall be discomfited by the judgment of God, thou shalt then die the death of a sorceress, according to doom.—Let this our judgment be recorded, and the record read aloud, that no one may pretend ignorance."

One of the chaplains, who acted as clerks to the chapter, immediately engrossed the order in a huge volume, which contained the proceedings of the Templar Knights when solemnly assembled on such occasions; and when he had finished writing, the other read aloud the sentence of the Grand Master, which, when translated from the Norman-French in which it was couched, was expressed as follows.—

"Rebecca, a Jewess, daughter of Isaac of York, being attainted of sorcery, seduction, and other damnable practices, practised on a Knight of the most Holy Order of the Temple of Zion, doth deny the same; and saith, that the testimony delivered against her this day is false, wicked, and disloyal; and that by lawful 'essoine' 54 of her body as being unable to combat in her own behalf, she doth offer, by a champion instead thereof, to avouch her case, he performing his loyal 'devoir' in all knightly sort, with such arms as to gage of battle do fully appertain, and that at her peril and cost. And therewith she proffered her gage. And the gage having been delivered to the noble Lord and Knight, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, of the Holy Order of the Temple of Zion, he was appointed to do this battle, in behalf of his Order and himself, as injured and impaired by the practices of the appellant. Wherefore the most reverend Father and puissant Lord, Lucas Marquis of Beaumanoir, did allow of the said challenge, and of the said 'essoine' of the appellant's body, and assigned the third day for the said combat, the place being the enclosure called the lists of Saint George, near to the Preceptory of Templestowe. And the Grand Master appoints the appellant to appear there by her champion, on pain of doom, as a person convicted of sorcery or seduction; and also the defendant so to appear, under the penalty of being held and adjudged recreant in case of default; and the noble Lord and most reverend Father aforesaid appointed the battle to be done in his own presence, and according to all that is commendable and profitable in such a case. And may God aid the just cause!"

"Amen!" said the Grand Master; and the word was echoed by all around. Rebecca spoke not, but she looked up to heaven, and, folding her hands, remained for a minute without change of attitude. She then modestly reminded the Grand Master, that she ought to be permitted some opportunity of free communication with her friends, for the purpose of making her condition known to them, and procuring, if possible, some champion to fight in her behalf.

"It is just and lawful," said the Grand Master; "choose what messenger thou shalt trust, and he shall have free communication with thee in thy prison-chamber."

"Is there," said Rebecca, "any one here, who, either for love of a good cause, or for ample hire, will do the errand of a distressed being?"

All were silent; for none thought it safe, in the presence of the Grand Master, to avow any interest in the calumniated prisoner, lest he should be suspected of leaning towards Judaism. Not even the prospect of reward, far less any feelings of compassion alone, could surmount this apprehension.

Rebecca stood for a few moments in indescribable anxiety, and then exclaimed, "Is it really thus?—And, in English land, am I to be deprived of the poor chance of safety which remains to me, for want of an act of charity which would not be refused to the worst criminal?"

Higg, the son of Snell, at length replied, "I am but a maimed man, but that I can at all stir or move was owing to her charitable assistance.—I will do thine errand," he added, addressing Rebecca, "as well as a crippled object can, and happy were my limbs fleet enough to repair the mischief done by my tongue. Alas! when I boasted of thy charity, I little thought I was leading thee into danger!"

"God," said Rebecca, "is the disposer of all. He can turn back the captivity of Judah, even by the weakest instrument. To execute his message the snail is as sure a messenger as the falcon. Seek out Isaac of York—here is that will pay for horse and man—let him have this scroll.—I know not if it be of Heaven the spirit which inspires me, but most truly do I judge that I am not to die this death, and that a champion will be raised up for me. Farewell!—Life and death are in thy haste."

The peasant took the scroll, which contained only a few lines in Hebrew. Many of the crowd would have dissuaded him from touching a document so suspicious; but Higg was resolute in the service of his benefactress. She had saved his body, he said, and he was confident she did not mean to peril his soul.

"I will get me," he said, "my neighbour Buthan's good capul, 55 and I will be at York within as brief space as man and beast may."

But as it fortune'd, he had no occasion to go so far, for within a quarter of a mile from the gate of the Preceptory he met with two riders, whom, by their dress and their huge yellow caps, he knew to be Jews; and, on approaching more nearly, discovered that one of them was his ancient employer, Isaac of York. The other was the Rabbi Ben Samuel; and both had approached as near to the Preceptory as they dared, on hearing that the Grand Master had summoned a chapter for the trial of a sorceress.

"Brother Ben Samuel," said Isaac, "my soul is disquieted, and I wot not why. This charge of necromancy is right often used for cloaking evil practices on our people."

"Be of good comfort, brother," said the physician; "thou canst deal with the Nazarenes as one possessing the mammon of unrighteousness, and canst therefore purchase immunity at their hands—it rules the savage minds of those ungodly men, even as the signet of the mighty Solomon was said to command the evil genii.—But what poor wretch comes hither upon his crutches, desiring, as I think, some speech of me?—Friend," continued the physician, addressing Higg, the son of Snell, "I refuse thee not the aid of mine art, but I relieve not with one asper those who beg for alms upon the highway. Out upon thee!—Hast thou the palsy in thy legs? then let thy hands work for thy livelihood; for, albeit thou be'st unfit for a speedy post, or for a careful shepherd, or for the warfare, or for the service of a hasty master, yet there be occupations—How now, brother?" said he, interrupting his harangue to look towards Isaac, who had but glanced at the scroll which Higg offered, when, uttering a deep groan, he fell from his mule like a dying man, and lay for a minute insensible.

The Rabbi now dismounted in great alarm, and hastily applied the remedies which his art suggested for the recovery of his companion. He had even taken from his pocket a cupping apparatus, and was about to proceed to phlebotomy, when the object of his anxious solicitude suddenly revived; but it was to dash his cap from his head, and to throw dust on his grey hairs. The physician was at first inclined to ascribe this sudden and violent emotion to the effects of insanity; and, adhering to his original purpose, began once again to handle his implements. But Isaac soon convinced him of his error.

"Child of my sorrow," he said, "well shouldst thou be called Benoni, instead of Rebecca! Why should thy death bring down my grey hairs to the grave, till, in the bitterness of my heart, I curse God and die!"

"Brother," said the Rabbi, in great surprise, "art thou a father in Israel, and dost thou utter words like unto these?—I trust that the child of thy house yet liveth?"

"She liveth," answered Isaac; "but it is as Daniel, who was called Beltheshazzar, even when within the den of the lions. She is captive unto those men of Belial, and they will wreak their cruelty upon her, sparing neither for her youth nor her comely favour. O! she was as a crown of green palms to my grey locks; and she must wither in a night, like the gourd of Jonah!—Child of my love!—child of my old age!—oh, Rebecca, daughter of Rachel! the darkness of the shadow of death hath encompassed thee."

"Yet read the scroll," said the Rabbi; "peradventure it may be that we may yet find out a way of deliverance."

"Do thou read, brother," answered Isaac, "for mine eyes are as a fountain of water."

The physician read, but in their native language, the following words:—

"To Isaac, the son of Adonikam, whom the Gentiles call Isaac of York, peace and the blessing of the promise be multiplied unto thee!—My father, I am as one doomed to die for that which my soul knoweth not—even for the crime of witchcraft. My father, if a strong man can be found to do battle for my cause with sword and spear, according to the custom of the Nazarenes, and that within the lists of Templestowe, on the third day from this time, peradventure our fathers' God will give him strength to defend the innocent, and her who hath none to help her. But if this may not be, let the virgins of our people mourn for me as for one cast off, and for the hart that is stricken by the hunter, and for the flower which is cut down by the scythe of the mower. Wherefore look now what thou doest, and whether there be any rescue. One Nazarene warrior might indeed bear arms in my behalf, even Wilfred, son of Cedric, whom the Gentiles call Ivanhoe. But he may not yet endure the weight of his armour. Nevertheless, send the tidings unto him, my father; for he hath favour among the strong men of his people, and as he was our companion in the house of bondage, he may find some one to do battle for my sake. And say unto him, even unto him, even unto Wilfred, the son of Cedric, that if Rebecca live, or if Rebecca die, she liveth or dieth wholly free of the guilt she is charged withal. And if it be the will of God that thou shalt be deprived of thy daughter, do not thou tarry, old man, in this land of bloodshed and cruelty; but betake thyself to Cordova, where thy brother liveth in safety, under the shadow of the throne, even of the throne of Boabdil the Saracen; for less cruel are the cruelties of the Moors unto the race of Jacob, than the cruelties of the Nazarenes of England."

Isaac listened with tolerable composure while Ben Samuel read the letter, and then again resumed the gestures and exclamations of Oriental sorrow, tearing his garments, besprinkling his head with dust, and ejaculating, "My daughter! my daughter! flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone!"

"Yet," said the Rabbi, "take courage, for this grief availeth nothing. Gird up thy loins, and seek out this Wilfred, the son of Cedric. It may be he will help thee with counsel or with strength; for the youth hath favour in the eyes of Richard, called of the Nazarenes Coeur-de-Lion, and the tidings that he hath returned are constant in the land. It may be that he may obtain his letter, and his signet, commanding these men of blood, who take their name from the Temple to the dishonour thereof, that they proceed not in their purposed wickedness."

"I will seek him out," said Isaac, "for he is a good youth, and hath compassion for the exile of Jacob. But he cannot bear his armour, and what other Christian shall do battle for the oppressed of Zion?"

"Nay, but," said the Rabbi, "thou speakest as one that knoweth not the Gentiles. With gold shalt thou buy their valour, even as with gold thou buyest thine own safety. Be of good courage, and do thou set forward to find out this Wilfred of Ivanhoe. I will also up and be doing, for great sin it were to leave thee in thy calamity. I will hie me to the city of York, where many warriors and strong men are assembled, and doubt not I will find among them some one who will do battle for thy daughter; for gold is their god, and for riches will they pawn their lives as well as their lands.—Thou wilt fulfil, my brother, such promise as I may make unto them in thy name?"

"Assuredly, brother," said Isaac, "and Heaven be praised that raised me up a comforter in my misery. Howbeit, grant them not their full demand at once, for thou shalt find it the quality of this accursed people that they will ask pounds, and peradventure accept of ounces—Nevertheless, be it as thou wilt, for I am distracted in this thing, and what would my gold avail me if the child of my love should perish!"

"Farewell," said the physician, "and may it be to thee as thy heart desireth."

They embraced accordingly, and departed on their several roads. The crippled peasant remained for some time looking after them.

"These dog-Jews!" said he; "to take no more notice of a free guild-brother, than if I were a bond slave or a Turk, or a circumcised Hebrew like themselves! They might have flung me a mancus or two, however. I was not obliged to bring their unhallowed scrawls, and run the risk of being bewitched, as more folks than one told me. And what care I for the bit of gold that the wench gave me, if I am to come to harm from the priest next Easter at confession, and be obliged to give him twice as much to make it up with him, and be called the Jew's flying post all my life, as it may hap, into the bargain? I think I was bewitched in earnest when I was beside that girl!—But it was always so with Jew or Gentile, whosoever came near her—none could stay when she had an errand to go—and still, whenever I think of her, I would give shop and tools to save her life."

*O maid, unrelenting and cold as thou art,
My bosom is proud as thine own.
—Seward*

It was in the twilight of the day when her trial, if it could be called such, had taken place, that a low knock was heard at the door of Rebecca's prison-chamber. It disturbed not the inmate, who was then engaged in the evening prayer recommended by her religion, and which concluded with a hymn we have ventured thus to translate into English.

*When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide, in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonish'd lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow;
By night, Arabia's crimson'd sands
Return'd the fiery column's glow.*

*There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answer'd keen,
And Zion's daughters pour'd their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.
No portents now our foes amaze,
Forsaken Israel wanders lone;
Our fathers would not know THY ways,
And THOU hast left them to their own.*

*But, present still, though now unseen;
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of THEE a cloudy screen
To temper the deceitful ray.
And oh, when stoops on Judah's path
In shade and storm the frequent night,
Be THOU, long-suffering, slow to wrath,
A burning, and a shining light!*

*Our harps we left by Babel's streams,
The tyrant's jest, the Gentile's scorn;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute our timbrel, trump, and horn.
But THOU hast said, the blood of goat,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize;
A contrite heart, and humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice.*

When the sounds of Rebecca's devotional hymn had died away in silence, the low knock at the door was again renewed. "Enter," she said, "if thou art a friend; and if a foe, I have not the means of refusing thy entrance."

"I am," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, entering the apartment, "friend or foe, Rebecca, as the event of this interview shall make me."

Alarmed at the sight of this man, whose licentious passion she considered as the root of her misfortunes, Rebecca drew backward with a cautious and alarmed, yet not a timorous demeanour, into the farthest corner of the apartment, as if determined to retreat as far as she could, but to stand her ground when retreat became no longer possible. She drew herself into an attitude not of defiance, but of resolution, as one that would avoid provoking assault, yet was resolute to repel it, being offered, to the utmost of her power.

"You have no reason to fear me, Rebecca," said the Templar; "or if I must so qualify my speech, you have at least NOW no reason to fear me."

"I fear you not, Sir Knight," replied Rebecca, although her short-drawn breath seemed to belie the heroism of her accents; "my trust is strong, and I fear thee not."

"You have no cause," answered Bois-Guilbert, gravely; "my former frantic attempts you have not now to dread. Within your call are guards, over whom I have no authority. They are designed to conduct you to death, Rebecca, yet would not suffer you to be insulted by any one, even by me, were my frenzy—for frenzy it is—to urge me so far."

"May Heaven be praised!" said the Jewess; "death is the least of my apprehensions in this den of evil."

"Ay," replied the Templar, "the idea of death is easily received by the courageous mind, when the road to it is sudden and open. A thrust with a lance, a stroke with a sword, were to me little—To you, a spring from a dizzy battlement, a stroke with a sharp poniard, has no terrors, compared with what either thinks disgrace. Mark me—I say this—perhaps mine own sentiments of honour are not less fantastic, Rebecca, than thine are; but we know alike how to die for them."

"Unhappy man," said the Jewess; "and art thou condemned to expose thy life for principles, of which thy sober judgment does not acknowledge the solidity? Surely this is a parting with your treasure for that which is not bread—but deem not so of me. Thy resolution may fluctuate on the wild and changeable billows of human opinion, but mine is anchored on the Rock of Ages."

"Silence, maiden," answered the Templar; "such discourse now avails but little. Thou art condemned to die not a sudden and easy death, such as misery chooses, and despair welcomes, but a slow, wretched, protracted course of torture, suited to what the diabolical bigotry of these men calls thy crime."

"And to whom—if such my fate—to whom do I owe this?" said Rebecca "surely only to him, who, for a most selfish and brutal cause, dragged me hither, and who now, for some unknown purpose of his own, strives to exaggerate the wretched fate to which he exposed me."

"Think not," said the Templar, "that I have so exposed thee; I would have bucklered thee against such danger with my own bosom, as freely as ever I exposed it to the shafts which had otherwise reached thy life."

"Had thy purpose been the honourable protection of the innocent," said Rebecca, "I had thanked thee for thy care—as it is, thou hast claimed merit for it so often, that I tell thee life is worth nothing to me, preserved at the price which thou wouldst exact for it."

"Truce with thine upbraidings, Rebecca," said the Templar; "I have my own cause of grief, and brook not that thy reproaches should add to it."

"What is thy purpose, then, Sir Knight?" said the Jewess; "speak it briefly.—If thou hast aught to do, save to witness the misery thou hast caused, let me know it; and then, if so it please you, leave me to myself—the step between time and eternity is short but terrible, and I have few moments to prepare for it."

"I perceive, Rebecca," said Bois-Guilbert, "that thou dost continue to burden me with the charge of distresses, which most fain would I have prevented."

"Sir Knight," said Rebecca, "I would avoid reproaches—But what is more certain than that I owe my death to thine unbridled passion?"

"You err—you err,"—said the Templar, hastily, "if you impute what I could neither foresee nor prevent to my purpose or agency.—Could I guess the unexpected arrival of yon dotard, whom some flashes of frantic valour, and the praises yielded by fools to the stupid self-torments of an ascetic, have raised for the present above his own merits, above common sense, above me, and above the hundreds of our Order, who think and feel as men free from such silly and fantastic prejudices as are the grounds of his opinions and actions?"

"Yet," said Rebecca, "you sate a judge upon me, innocent—most innocent—as you knew me to be—you concurred in my condemnation, and, if I aright understood, are yourself to appear in arms to assert my guilt, and assure my punishment."

"Thy patience, maiden," replied the Templar. "No race knows so well as thine own tribes how to submit to the time, and so to trim their bark as to make advantage even of an adverse wind."

"Lamented be the hour," said Rebecca, "that has taught such art to the House of Israel! but adversity bends the heart as fire bends the stubborn steel, and those who are no longer their own governors, and the denizens of their own free independent state, must crouch before strangers. It is our curse, Sir Knight, deserved, doubtless, by our own misdeeds and those of our fathers; but you—you who boast your freedom as your birthright, how much deeper is your disgrace when you stoop to soothe the prejudices of others, and that against your own conviction?"

"Your words are bitter, Rebecca," said Bois-Guilbert, pacing the apartment with impatience, "but I came not hither to bandy reproaches with you.—Know that Bois-Guilbert yields not to created man, although circumstances may for a time induce him to alter his plan. His will is the mountain stream, which may indeed be turned for a little space aside by the rock, but fails not to find its course to the ocean. That scroll which warned thee to demand a champion, from whom couldst thou think it came, if not from Bois-Guilbert? In whom else couldst thou have excited such interest?"

"A brief respite from instant death," said Rebecca, "which will little avail me—was this all thou couldst do for one, on whose head thou hast heaped sorrow, and whom thou hast brought near even to the verge of the tomb?"

"No maiden," said Bois-Guilbert, "this was NOT all that I purposed. Had it not been for the accursed interference of yon fanatical dotard, and the fool of Goodalricke, who, being a Templar, affects to think and judge according to the ordinary rules of humanity, the office of the Champion Defender had devolved, not on a Preceptor, but on a Companion of the Order. Then I myself—such was my purpose—had, on the sounding of the trumpet, appeared in the lists as thy champion, disguised indeed in the fashion of a roving knight, who seeks adventures to prove his shield and spear; and then, let Beaumanoir have chosen not one, but two or three of the brethren here assembled, I had not doubted to cast them out of the saddle with my single lance. Thus, Rebecca, should thine innocence have been avouched, and to thine own gratitude would I have trusted for the reward of my victory."

"This, Sir Knight," said Rebecca, "is but idle boasting—a brag of what you would have done had you not found it convenient to do otherwise. You received my glove, and my champion, if a creature so desolate can find one, must encounter your lance in the lists—yet you would assume the air of my friend and protector!"

"Thy friend and protector," said the Templar, gravely, "I will yet be—but mark at what risk, or rather at what certainty, of dishonour; and then blame me not if I make my stipulations, before I offer up all that I have hitherto held dear, to save the life of a Jewish maiden."

"Speak," said Rebecca; "I understand thee not."

"Well, then," said Bois-Guilbert, "I will speak as freely as ever did doting penitent to his ghostly father, when placed in the tricky confessional.—Rebecca, if I appear not in these lists I lose fame and rank—lose that which is the breath of my nostrils, the esteem, I mean, in which I am held by my brethren, and the hopes I have of succeeding to that mighty authority, which is now wielded by the bigoted dotard Lucas de Beaumanoir, but of which I should make a different use. Such is my certain doom, except I appear in arms against thy cause. Accursed be he of Goodalricke, who baited this trap for me! and doubly accursed Albert de Malvoisin, who withheld me from the resolution I had formed, of hurling back the glove at the face of the superstitious and superannuated fool, who listened to a charge so absurd, and against a creature so high in mind, and so lovely in form as thou art!"

"And what now avails rant or flattery?" answered Rebecca. "Thou hast made thy choice between causing to be shed the blood of an innocent woman, or of endangering thine own earthly state and earthly hopes—What avails it to reckon together?—thy choice is made."

"No, Rebecca," said the knight, in a softer tone, and drawing nearer towards her; "my choice is NOT made—nay, mark, it is thine to make the election. If I appear in the lists, I must maintain my name in arms; and if I do so, championed or unchampioned, thou diest by the stake and faggot, for there lives not the knight who hath coped with me in arms on equal issue, or on terms of vantage, save Richard Coeur-de-Lion, and his minion of Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe, as thou well knowest, is unable to bear his corslet, and Richard is in a foreign prison. If I appear, then thou diest, even although thy charms should instigate some hot-headed youth to enter the lists in thy defence."

"And what avails repeating this so often?" said Rebecca.

"Much," replied the Templar; "for thou must learn to look at thy fate on every side."

"Well, then, turn the tapestry," said the Jewess, "and let me see the other side."

"If I appear," said Bois-Guilbert, "in the fatal lists, thou diest by a slow and cruel death, in pain such as they say is destined to the guilty hereafter. But if I appear not, then am I a degraded and dishonoured knight, accused of witchcraft and of communion with infidels—the illustrious name which has grown yet more so under my wearing, becomes a hissing and a reproach. I lose fame, I lose honour, I lose the prospect of such greatness as scarce emperors attain to—I sacrifice mighty ambition, I destroy schemes built as high as the mountains with which heathens say their heaven was once nearly scaled—and yet, Rebecca," he added, throwing himself at her feet, "this greatness will I sacrifice, this fame will I renounce, this power will I forego, even now when it is half within my grasp, if thou wilt say, Bois-Guilbert, I receive thee for my lover."

"Think not of such foolishness, Sir Knight," answered Rebecca, "but hasten to the Regent, the Queen Mother, and to Prince John—they cannot, in honour to the English crown, allow of the proceedings of your Grand Master. So shall you give me protection without sacrifice on your part, or the pretext of requiring any requital from me."

"With these I deal not," he continued, holding the train of her robe—"it is thee only I address; and what can counterbalance thy choice? Bethink thee, were I a fiend, yet death is a worse, and it is death who is my rival."

"I weigh not these evils," said Rebecca, afraid to provoke the wild knight, yet equally determined neither to endure his passion, nor even feign to endure it. "Be a man, be a Christian! If indeed thy faith recommends that mercy which rather your tongues than your actions pretend, save me from this dreadful death, without seeking a requital which would change thy magnanimity into base barter."

"No, damsell!" said the proud Templar, springing up, "thou shalt not thus impose on me—if I renounce present fame and future ambition, I renounce it for thy sake, and we will escape in company. Listen to me, Rebecca," he said, again softening his tone; "England,—Europe,—is not the world. There are spheres in which we may act, ample enough even for my ambition. We will go to Palestine, where Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat, is my friend—a friend free as myself from the doting scruples which fetter our free-born reason—rather with Saladin will we league ourselves, than endure the scorn of the bigots whom we contemn.—I will form new paths to greatness," he continued, again traversing the room with hasty strides—"Europe shall hear the loud step of him she has driven from her sons!—Not the millions whom her crusaders send to slaughter, can do so much to defend Palestine—not the sabres of the thousands and ten thousands of Saracens can hew their way so deep into that land for which nations are striving, as the strength and policy of me and those brethren, who, in despite of yonder old bigot, will adhere to me in good and evil. Thou shalt be a queen, Rebecca—on Mount Carmel shall we pitch the throne which my valour will gain for you, and I will exchange my long-desired baton for a sceptre!"

"A dream," said Rebecca; "an empty vision of the night, which, were it a waking reality, affects me not. Enough, that the power which thou mightest acquire, I will never share; nor hold I so light of country or religious faith, as to esteem him who is willing to barter these ties, and cast away the bonds of the Order of which he

is a sworn member, in order to gratify an unruly passion for the daughter of another people.—Put not a price on my deliverance, Sir Knight—sell not a deed of generosity—protect the oppressed for the sake of charity, and not for a selfish advantage—Go to the throne of England; Richard will listen to my appeal from these cruel men."

"Never, Rebecca!" said the Templar, fiercely. "If I renounce my Order, for thee alone will I renounce it—Ambition shall remain mine, if thou refuse my love; I will not be fooled on all hands.—Stoop my crest to Richard?—ask a boon of that heart of pride?—Never, Rebecca, will I place the Order of the Temple at his feet in my person. I may forsake the Order, I never will degrade or betray it."

"Now God be gracious to me," said Rebecca, "for the succour of man is well-nigh hopeless!"

"It is indeed," said the Templar; "for, proud as thou art, thou hast in me found thy match. If I enter the lists with my spear in rest, think not any human consideration shall prevent my putting forth my strength; and think then upon thine own fate—to die the dreadful death of the worst of criminals—to be consumed upon a blazing pile—dispersed to the elements of which our strange forms are so mystically composed—not a relic left of that graceful frame, from which we could say this lived and moved!—Rebecca, it is not in woman to sustain this prospect—thou wilt yield to my suit."

"Bois-Guilbert," answered the Jewess, "thou knowest not the heart of woman, or hast only conversed with those who are lost to her best feelings. I tell thee, proud Templar, that not in thy fiercest battles hast thou displayed more of thy vaunted courage, than has been shown by woman when called upon to suffer by affection or duty. I am myself a woman, tenderly nurtured, naturally fearful of danger, and impatient of pain—yet, when we enter those fatal lists, thou to fight and I to suffer, I feel the strong assurance within me, that my courage shall mount higher than thine. Farewell—I waste no more words on thee; the time that remains on earth to the daughter of Jacob must be otherwise spent—she must seek the Comforter, who may hide his face from his people, but who ever opens his ear to the cry of those who seek him in sincerity and in truth."

"We part then thus?" said the Templar, after a short pause; "would to Heaven that we had never met, or that thou hadst been noble in birth and Christian in faith!—Nay, by Heaven! when I gaze on thee, and think when and how we are next to meet, I could even wish myself one of thine own degraded nation; my hand conversant with ingots and shekels, instead of spear and shield; my head bent down before each petty noble, and my look only terrible to the shivering and bankrupt debtor—this could I wish, Rebecca, to be near to thee in life, and to escape the fearful share I must have in thy death."

"Thou hast spoken the Jew," said Rebecca, "as the persecution of such as thou art has made him. Heaven in ire has driven him from his country, but industry has opened to him the only road to power and to influence, which oppression has left unbarred. Read the ancient history of the people of God, and tell me if those, by whom Jehovah wrought such marvels among the nations, were then a people of misers and of usurers!—And know, proud knight, we number names amongst us to which your boasted northern nobility is as the gourd compared with the cedar—names that ascend far back to those high times when the Divine Presence shook the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and which derive their splendour from no earthly prince, but from the awful Voice, which bade their fathers be nearest of the congregation to the Vision—Such were the princes of the House of Jacob."

Rebecca's colour rose as she boasted the ancient glories of her race, but faded as she added, with a sigh, "Such WERE the princes of Judah, now such no more!—They are trampled down like the shorn grass, and mixed with the mire of the ways. Yet are there those among them who shame not such high descent, and of such shall be the daughter of Isaac the son of Adonikam! Farewell!—I envy not thy blood-won honours—I envy not thy barbarous descent from northern heathens—I envy thee not thy faith, which is ever in thy mouth, but never in thy heart nor in thy practice."

"There is a spell on me, by Heaven!" said Bois-Guilbert. "I almost think yon besotted skeleton spoke truth, and that the reluctance with which I part from thee hath something in it more than is natural.—Fair creature!" he said, approaching near her, but with great respect,—"so young, so beautiful, so fearless of death! and yet doomed to die, and with infamy and agony. Who would not weep for thee?—The tear, that has been a stranger to these eyelids for twenty years, moistens them as I gaze on thee. But it must be—nothing may now save thy life. Thou and I are but the blind instruments of some irresistible fatality, that hurries us along, like goodly vessels driving before the storm, which are dashed against each other, and so perish. Forgive me, then, and let us part, at least, as friends part. I have assailed thy resolution in vain, and mine own is fixed as the adamant decrees of fate."

"Thus," said Rebecca, "do men throw on fate the issue of their own wild passions. But I do forgive thee, Bois-Guilbert, though the author of my early death. There are noble things which cross over thy powerful mind; but it is the garden of the sluggard, and the weeds have rushed up, and conspired to choke the fair and wholesome blossom."

"Yes," said the Templar, "I am, Rebecca, as thou hast spoken me, untaught, untamed—and proud, that, amidst a shoal of empty fools and crafty bigots, I have retained the preeminent fortitude that places me above them. I have been a child of battle from my youth upward, high in my views, steady and inflexible in pursuing them. Such must I remain—proud, inflexible, and unchanging; and of this the world shall have proof.—But thou forgivest me, Rebecca?"

"As freely as ever victim forgave her executioner."

"Farewell, then," said the Templar, and left the apartment.

The Preceptor Albert waited impatiently in an adjacent chamber the return of Bois-Guilbert.

"Thou hast tarried long," he said; "I have been as if stretched on red-hot iron with very impatience. What if the Grand Master, or his spy Conrade, had come hither? I had paid dear for my complaisance.—But what ails thee, brother?—Thy step totters, thy brow is as black as night. Art thou well, Bois-Guilbert?"

"Ay," answered the Templar, "as well as the wretch who is doomed to die within an hour.—Nay, by the rood, not half so well—for there be those in such state, who can lay down life like a cast-off garment. By Heaven, Malvoisin, yonder girl hath well-nigh unmanned me. I am half resolved to go to the Grand Master, abjure the Order to his very teeth, and refuse to act the brutality which his tyranny has imposed on me."

"Thou art mad," answered Malvoisin; "thou mayst thus indeed utterly ruin thyself, but canst not even find a chance thereby to save the life of this Jewess, which seems so precious in thine eyes. Beaumanoir will name another of the Order to defend his judgment in thy place, and the accused will as assuredly perish as if thou hadst taken the duty imposed on thee."

"'Tis false—I will myself take arms in her behalf," answered the Templar, haughtily; "and, should I do so, I think, Malvoisin, that thou knowest not one of the Order, who will keep his saddle before the point of my lance."

"Ay, but thou forgettest," said the wily adviser, "thou wilt have neither leisure nor opportunity to execute this mad project. Go to Lucas Beaumanoir, and say thou hast renounced thy vow of obedience, and see how long the despotic old man will leave thee in personal freedom. The words shall scarce have left thy lips, ere thou wilt either be an hundred feet under ground, in the dungeon of the Preceptory, to abide trial as a recreant knight; or, if his opinion holds concerning thy possession, thou wilt be enjoying straw, darkness, and chains, in some distant convent cell, stunned with exorcisms, and drenched with holy water, to expel the foul fiend which hath obtained dominion over thee. Thou must to the lists, Brian, or thou art a lost and dishonoured man."

"I will break forth and fly," said Bois-Guilbert—"fly to some distant land, to which folly and fanaticism have not yet found their way. No drop of the blood of this most excellent creature shall be spilled by my sanction."

"Thou canst not fly," said the Preceptor; "thy ravings have excited suspicion, and thou wilt not be permitted to leave the Preceptory. Go and make the essay—present thyself before the gate, and command the bridge to be lowered, and mark what answer thou shalt receive.—Thou are surprised and offended; but is it not the better for thee? Wert thou to fly, what would ensue but the reversal of thy arms, the dishonour of thine ancestry, the degradation of thy rank?—Think on it. Where shall thine old companions in arms hide their heads when Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the best lance of the Templars, is proclaimed recreant, amid the hisses of the assembled people? What grief will be at the Court of France! With what joy will the haughty Richard hear the news, that the knight that set him hard in Palestine, and well-nigh darkened his renown, has lost fame and honour for a Jewish girl, whom he could not even save by so costly a sacrifice!"

"Malvoisin," said the Knight, "I thank thee—thou hast touched the string at which my heart most readily thrills!—Come of it what may, recreant shall never be added to the name of Bois-Guilbert. Would to God, Richard, or any of his vaunting minions of England, would appear in these lists! But they will be empty—no one will risk to break a lance for the innocent, the forlorn."

"The better for thee, if it prove so," said the Preceptor; "if no champion appears, it is not by thy means that this unlucky damsel shall die, but by the doom of the Grand Master, with whom rests all the blame, and who will count that blame for praise and commendation."

"True," said Bois-Guilbert; "if no champion appears, I am but a part of the pageant, sitting indeed on horseback in the lists, but having no part in what is to follow."

"None whatever," said Malvoisin; "no more than the armed image of Saint George when it makes part of a procession."

"Well, I will resume my resolution," replied the haughty Templar. "She has despised me—repulsed me—reviled me—And wherefore should I offer up for her whatever of estimation I have in the opinion of others? Malvoisin, I will appear in the lists."

He left the apartment hastily as he uttered these words, and the Preceptor followed, to watch and confirm him in his resolution; for in Bois-Guilbert's fame he had himself a strong interest, expecting much advantage from his being one day at the head of the Order, not to mention the preferment of which Mont-Fitchet had given him hopes, on condition he would forward the condemnation of the unfortunate Rebecca. Yet although, in combating his friend's better feelings, he possessed all the advantage which a wily, composed, selfish disposition has over a man agitated by strong and contending passions, it required all Malvoisin's art to keep Bois-Guilbert steady to the purpose he had prevailed on him to adopt. He was obliged to watch him closely to prevent his resuming his purpose of flight, to intercept his communication with the Grand Master, lest he should come to an open rupture with his Superior, and to renew, from time to time, the various arguments by which he endeavoured to show, that, in appearing as champion on this occasion, Bois-Guilbert, without either accelerating or ensuring the fate of Rebecca, would follow the only course by which he could save himself from degradation and disgrace.

CHAPTER XL

Shadows avaunt!—Richard's himself again.

Richard III

When the Black Knight—for it becomes necessary to resume the train of his adventures—left the Trysting-tree of the generous Outlaw, he held his way straight to a neighbouring religious house, of small extent and revenue, called the Priory of Saint Botolph, to which the wounded Ivanhoe had been removed when the castle was taken, under the guidance of the faithful Gurth, and the magnanimous Wamba. It is unnecessary at present to mention what took place in the interim betwixt Wilfred and his deliverer; suffice it to say, that after long and grave communication, messengers were dispatched by the Prior in several directions, and that on the succeeding morning the Black Knight was about to set forth on his journey, accompanied by the jester Wamba, who attended as his guide.

"We will meet," he said to Ivanhoe, "at Coningsburgh, the castle of the deceased Athelstane, since there thy father Cedric holds the funeral feast for his noble relation. I would see your Saxon kindred together, Sir Wilfred, and become better acquainted with them than heretofore. Thou also wilt meet me; and it shall be my task to reconcile thee to thy father."

So saying, he took an affectionate farewell of Ivanhoe, who expressed an anxious desire to attend upon his deliverer. But the Black Knight would not listen to the proposal.

"Rest this day; thou wilt have scarce strength enough to travel on the next. I will have no guide with me but honest Wamba, who can play priest or fool as I shall be most in the humour."

"And I," said Wamba, "will attend you with all my heart. I would fain see the feasting at the funeral of Athelstane; for, if it be not full and frequent, he will rise from the dead to rebuke cook, sewer, and cupbearer; and that were a sight worth seeing. Always, Sir Knight, I will trust your valour with making my excuse to my master Cedric, in case mine own wit should fail."

"And how should my poor valour succeed, Sir Jester, when thy light wit halts?—resolve me that."

"Wit, Sir Knight," replied the Jester, "may do much. He is a quick, apprehensive knave, who sees his neighbours blind side, and knows how to keep the lee-gage when his passions are blowing high. But valour is a sturdy fellow, that makes all split. He rows against both wind and tide, and makes way notwithstanding; and, therefore, good Sir Knight, while I take advantage of the fair weather in our noble master's temper, I will expect you to bestir yourself when it grows rough."

"Sir Knight of the Fetterlock, since it is your pleasure so to be distinguished," said Ivanhoe, "I fear me you have chosen a talkative and a troublesome fool to be your guide. But he knows every path and alley in the woods as well as e'er a hunter who frequents them; and the poor knave, as thou hast partly seen, is as faithful as steel."

"Nay," said the Knight, "an he have the gift of showing my road, I shall not grumble with him that he desires to make it pleasant.—Fare thee well, kind Wilfred—I charge thee not to attempt to travel till to-morrow at earliest."

So saying, he extended his hand to Ivanhoe, who pressed it to his lips, took leave of the Prior, mounted his horse, and departed, with Wamba for his companion. Ivanhoe followed them with his eyes, until they were lost in the shades of the surrounding forest, and then returned into the convent.

But shortly after matin-song, he requested to see the Prior. The old man came in haste, and enquired anxiously after the state of his health.

"It is better," he said, "than my fondest hope could have anticipated; either my wound has been slighter than the effusion of blood led me to suppose, or this balsam hath wrought a wonderful cure upon it. I feel already as if I could bear my corslet; and so much the better, for thoughts pass in my mind which render me unwilling to remain here longer in inactivity."

"Now, the saints forbid," said the Prior, "that the son of the Saxon Cedric should leave our convent ere his wounds were healed! It were shame to our profession were we to suffer it."

"Nor would I desire to leave your hospitable roof, venerable father," said Ivanhoe, "did I not feel myself able to endure the journey, and compelled to undertake it."

"And what can have urged you to so sudden a departure?" said the Prior.

"Have you never, holy father," answered the Knight, "felt an apprehension of approaching evil, for which you in vain attempted to assign a cause?—Have you never found your mind darkened, like the sunny landscape, by the sudden cloud, which augurs a coming tempest?—And thinkest thou not that such impulses are deserving of attention, as being the hints of our guardian spirits, that danger is impending?"

"I may not deny," said the Prior, crossing himself, "that such things have been, and have been of Heaven; but then such communications have had a visibly useful scope and tendency. But thou, wounded as thou art, what avails it thou shouldst follow the steps of him whom thou couldst not aid, were he to be assaulted?"

"Prior," said Ivanhoe, "thou dost mistake—I am stout enough to exchange buffets with any who will challenge me to such a traffic—But were it otherwise, may I not aid him were he in danger, by other means than by force of arms? It is but too well known that the Saxons love not the Norman race, and who knows what may be the issue, if he break in upon them when their hearts are irritated by the death of Athelstane, and their heads heated by the carousal in which they will indulge themselves? I hold his entrance among them at such a moment most perilous, and I am resolved to share or avert the danger; which, that I may the better do, I would crave of thee the use of some palfrey whose pace may be softer than that of my 'destrier'." 56

"Surely," said the worthy churchman; "you shall have mine own ambling jennet, and I would it ambled as easy for your sake as that of the Abbot of Saint Albans. Yet this will I say for Malkin, for so I call her, that unless you were to borrow a ride on the juggler's steed that paces a hornpipe amongst the eggs, you could not go a journey on a creature so gentle and smooth-paced. I have composed many a homily on her back, to the edification of my brethren of the convent, and many poor Christian souls."

"I pray you, reverend father," said Ivanhoe, "let Malkin be got ready instantly, and bid Gurth attend me with mine arms."

"Nay, but fair sir," said the Prior, "I pray you to remember that Malkin hath as little skill in arms as her master, and that I warrant not her enduring the sight or weight of your full panoply. O, Malkin, I promise you, is a beast of judgment, and will contend against any undue weight—I did but borrow the 'Fructus Temporum' from the priest of Saint Bees, and I promise you she would not stir from the gate until I had exchanged the huge volume for my little breviary."

"Trust me, holy father," said Ivanhoe, "I will not distress her with too much weight; and if she calls a combat with me, it is odds but she has the worst." This reply was made while Gurth was buckling on the Knight's heels a pair of large gilded spurs, capable of convincing any restive horse that his best safety lay in being conformable to the will of his rider.

The deep and sharp rowels with which Ivanhoe's heels were now armed, began to make the worthy Prior repent of his courtesy, and ejaculate,—*"Nay, but fair sir, now I bethink me, my Malkin abideth not the spur—Better it were that you tarry for the mare of our manicle down at the Grange, which may be had in little more than an hour, and cannot but be tractable, in respect that she draweth much of our winter fire-wood, and eateth no corn."*

"I thank you, reverend father, but will abide by your first offer, as I see Malkin is already led forth to the gate. Gurth shall carry mine armour; and for the rest, rely on it, that as I will not overload Malkin's back, she shall not overcome my patience. And now, farewell!"

Ivanhoe now descended the stairs more hastily and easily than his wound promised, and threw himself upon the jennet, eager to escape the importunity of the Prior, who stuck as closely to his side as his age and fatness would permit, now singing the praises of Malkin, now recommending caution to the Knight in managing her.

"She is at the most dangerous period for maidens as well as mares," said the old man, laughing at his own jest, "being barely in her fifteenth year."

Ivanhoe, who had other web to weave than to stand canvassing a palfrey's paces with its owner, lent but a deaf ear to the Prior's grave advices and facetious jests, and having leapt on his mare, and commanded his squire (for such Gurth now called himself) to keep close by his side, he followed the track of the Black Knight into the forest, while the Prior stood at the gate of the convent looking after him, and ejaculating,—*"Saint Mary! how prompt and fiery be these men of war! I would I had not trusted Malkin to his keeping, for, crippled as I am with the cold rheum, I am undone if aught but good befalls her. And yet,"* said he, recollecting himself, *"as I would not spare my own old and disabled limbs in the good cause of Old England, so Malkin must e'en run her hazard on the same venture; and it may be they will think our poor house worthy of some munificent guerdon—or, it may be, they will send the old Prior a pacing nag. And if they do none of these, as great men will forget little men's service, truly I shall hold me well repaid in having done that which is right. And it is now well-nigh the fitting time to summon the brethren to breakfast in the refectory—Ah! I doubt they obey that call more cheerily than the bells for primes and matins."*

So the Prior of Saint Botolph's hobbled back again into the refectory, to preside over the stockfish and ale, which was just serving out for the friars' breakfast. Busy and important, he sat him down at the table, and many a dark word he threw out, of benefits to be expected to the convent, and high deeds of service done by himself, which, at another season, would have attracted observation. But as the stockfish was highly salted, and the ale reasonably powerful, the jaws of the brethren were too anxiously employed to admit of their making much use of their ears; nor do we read of any of the fraternity, who was tempted to speculate upon the mysterious hints of their Superior, except Father Diggory, who was severely afflicted by the toothache, so that he could only eat on one side of his jaws.

In the meantime, the Black Champion and his guide were pacing at their leisure through the recesses of the forest; the good Knight whiles humming to himself the lay of some enamoured troubadour, sometimes encouraging by questions the prating disposition of his attendant, so that their dialogue formed a whimsical mixture of song and jest, of which we would fain give our readers some idea. You are then to imagine this Knight, such as we have already described him, strong of person, tall, broad-shouldered, and large of bone, mounted on his mighty black charger, which seemed made on purpose to bear his weight, so easily he paced forward under it, having the visor of his helmet raised, in order to admit freedom of breath, yet keeping the beaver, or under part, closed, so that his features could be but imperfectly distinguished. But his ruddy embrowned cheek-bones could be plainly seen, and the large and bright blue eyes, that flashed from under the dark shade of the raised visor; and the whole gesture and look of the champion expressed careless gaiety and fearless confidence—a mind which was unapt to apprehend danger, and prompt to defy it when most imminent—yet with whom danger was a familiar thought, as with one whose trade was war and adventure.

The Jester wore his usual fantastic habit, but late accidents had led him to adopt a good cutting falchion, instead of his wooden sword, with a targe to match it; of both which weapons he had, notwithstanding his profession, shown himself a skilful master during the storming of Torquilstone. Indeed, the infirmity of Wamba's brain consisted chiefly in a kind of impatient irritability, which suffered him not long to remain quiet in any posture, or adhere to any certain train of ideas, although he was for a few minutes alert enough in performing any immediate task, or in apprehending any immediate topic. On horseback, therefore, he was perpetually swinging himself backwards and forwards, now on the horse's ears, then anon on the very rump of the animal,—now hanging both his legs on one side, and now sitting with his face to the tail, moping, mowing, and making a thousand apish gestures, until his palfrey took his freaks so much to heart, as fairly to lay him at his length on the green grass—an incident which greatly amused the Knight, but compelled his companion to ride more steadily thereafter.

At the point of their journey at which we take them up, this joyous pair were engaged in singing a virelai, as it was called, in which the clown bore a mellow burden, to the better instructed Knight of the Fetterlock. And thus run the ditty:—

*Anna-Marie, love, up is the sun,
 Anna-Marie, love, morn is begun,
 Mists are dispersing, love, birds singing free,
 Up in the morning, love, Anna-Marie.
 Anna-Marie, love, up in the morn,
 The hunter is winding blithe sounds on his horn,
 The echo rings merry from rock and from tree,
 'Tis time to arouse thee, love, Anna-Marie.*

Wamba.

*O Tybalt, love, Tybalt, awake me not yet,
 Around my soft pillow while softer dreams flit,
 For what are the joys that in waking we prove,
 Compared with these visions, O, Tybalt, my love?
 Let the birds to the rise of the mist carol shrill,
 Let the hunter blow out his loud horn on the hill,
 Softer sounds, softer pleasures, in slumber I prove,—
 But think not I dreamt of thee, Tybalt, my love.*

"A dainty song," said Wamba, when they had finished their carol, "and I swear by my bauble, a pretty moral!—I used to sing it with Gurth, once my playfellow, and now, by the grace of God and his master, no less than a freemen; and we once came by the cudgel for being so entranced by the melody, that we lay in bed two hours after sunrise, singing the ditty betwixt sleeping and waking—my bones ache at thinking of the tune ever since. Nevertheless, I have played the part of Anna-Marie, to please you, fair sir."

The Jester next struck into another carol, a sort of comic ditty, to which the Knight, catching up the tune, replied in the like manner.

Knight and Wamba.

*There came three merry men from south, west, and north,
 Ever more sing the roundelay;
 To win the Widow of Wycombe forth,
 And where was the widow might say them nay?*

*The first was a knight, and from Tynedale he came,
 Ever more sing the roundelay;*

*And his fathers, God save us, were men of great fame,
And where was the widow might say him nay?*

*Of his father the laird, of his uncle the squire,
He boasted in rhyme and in roundelay;
She bade him go bask by his sea-coal fire,
For she was the widow would say him nay.*

Wamba.

*The next that came forth, swore by blood and by nails,
Merrily sing the roundelay;
Hur's a gentleman, God wot, and hur's lineage was of Wales,
And where was the widow might say him nay?*

*Sir David ap Morgan ap Griffith ap Hugh
Ap Tudor ap Rhice, quoth his roundelay
She said that one widow for so many was too few,
And she bade the Welshman wend his way.*

*But then next came a yeoman, a yeoman of Kent,
Jollily singing his roundelay;
He spoke to the widow of living and rent,
And where was the widow could say him nay?*

Both.

*So the knight and the squire were both left in the mire,
There for to sing their roundelay;
For a yeoman of Kent, with his yearly rent,
There never was a widow could say him nay.*

"I would, Wamba," said the knight, "that our host of the Trysting-tree, or the jolly Friar, his chaplain, heard this thy ditty in praise of our bluff yeoman."

"So would not I," said Wamba—"but for the horn that hangs at your baldric."

"Ay," said the Knight,—*"this is a pledge of Locksley's goodwill, though I am not like to need it. Three mots on this bugle will, I am assured, bring round, at our need, a jolly band of yonder honest yeomen."*

"I would say, Heaven forefend," said the Jester, "were it not that that fair gift is a pledge they would let us pass peaceably."

"Why, what meanest thou?" said the Knight; "thinkest thou that but for this pledge of fellowship they would assault us?"

"Nay, for me I say nothing," said Wamba; "for green trees have ears as well as stone walls. But canst thou construe me this, Sir Knight—When is thy wine-pitcher and thy purse better empty than full?"

"Why, never, I think," replied the Knight.

"Thou never deservest to have a full one in thy hand, for so simple an answer! Thou hadst best empty thy pitcher ere thou pass it to a Saxon, and leave thy money at home ere thou walk in the greenwood."

"You hold our friends for robbers, then?" said the Knight of the Fetterlock.

"You hear me not say so, fair sir," said Wamba; "it may relieve a man's steed to take of his mail when he hath a long journey to make; and, certes, it may do good to the rider's soul to ease him of that which is the root of evil; therefore will I give no hard names to those who do such services. Only I would wish my mail at home, and my purse in my chamber, when I meet with these good fellows, because it might save them some trouble."

"WE are bound to pray for them, my friend, notwithstanding the fair character thou dost afford them."

"Pray for them with all my heart," said Wamba; "but in the town, not in the greenwood, like the Abbot of Saint Bees, whom they caused to say mass with an old hollow oak-tree for his stall."

"Say as thou list, Wamba," replied the Knight, "these yeomen did thy master Cedric yeomanly service at Torquilstone."

"Ay, truly," answered Wamba; "but that was in the fashion of their trade with Heaven."

"Their trade, Wamba! how mean you by that?" replied his companion.

"Marry, thus," said the Jester. "They make up a balanced account with Heaven, as our old cellarer used to call his ciphering, as fair as Isaac the Jew keeps with his debtors, and, like him, give out a very little, and take large credit for doing so; reckoning, doubtless, on their own behalf the seven-fold usury which the blessed text hath promised to charitable loans."

"Give me an example of your meaning, Wamba,—I know nothing of ciphers or rates of usage," answered the Knight.

"Why," said Wamba, "an your valour be so dull, you will please to learn that those honest fellows balance a good deed with one not quite so laudable; as a crown given to a begging friar with an hundred byzants taken from a fat abbot, or a wench kissed in the greenwood with the relief of a poor widow."

"Which of these was the good deed, which was the felony?" interrupted the Knight.

"A good gibe! a good gibe!" said Wamba; "keeping witty company sharpeneth the apprehension. You said nothing so well, Sir Knight, I will be sworn, when you held drunken vespers with the bluff Hermit.—But to go on. The merry-men of the forest set off the building of a cottage with the burning of a castle,—the thatching of a choir against the robbing of a church,—the setting free a poor prisoner against the murder of a proud sheriff; or, to come nearer to our point, the deliverance of a Saxon franklin against the burning alive of a Norman baron. Gentle thieves they are, in short, and courteous robbers; but it is ever the luckiest to meet with them when they are at the worst."

"How so, Wamba?" said the Knight.

"Why, then they have some compunction, and are for making up matters with Heaven. But when they have struck an even balance, Heaven help them with whom they next open the account! The travellers who first met them after their good service at Torquilstone would have a woeful flaying.—And yet," said Wamba, coming close up to the Knight's side, "there be companions who are far more dangerous for travellers to meet than yonder outlaws."

"And who may they be, for you have neither bears nor wolves, I trow?" said the Knight.

"Marry, sir, but we have Malvoisin's men-at-arms," said Wamba; "and let me tell you, that, in time of civil war, a halfscore of these is worth a band of wolves at any time. They are now expecting their harvest, and are reinforced with the soldiers that escaped from Torquilstone. So that, should we meet with a band of them, we are like to pay for our feats of arms.—Now, I pray you, Sir Knight, what would you do if we met two of them?"

"Pin the villains to the earth with my lance, Wamba, if they offered us any impediment."

"But what if there were four of them?"

"They should drink of the same cup," answered the Knight.

"What if six," continued Wamba, "and we as we now are, barely two—would you not remember Locksley's horn?"

"What! sound for aid," exclaimed the Knight, "against a score of such 'rascaille' as these, whom one good knight could drive before him, as the wind drives the withered leaves?"

"Nay, then," said Wamba, "I will pray you for a close sight of that same horn that hath so powerful a breath."

The Knight undid the clasp of the baldric, and indulged his fellow-traveller, who immediately hung the bugle round his own neck.

"Tra-lira-la," said he, whistling the notes; "nay, I know my gamut as well as another."

"How mean you, knave?" said the Knight; "restore me the bugle."

"Content you, Sir Knight, it is in safe keeping. When Valour and Folly travel, Folly should bear the horn, because she can blow the best."

"Nay but, rogue," said the Black Knight, "this exceedeth thy license—Beware ye tamper not with my patience."

"Urge me not with violence, Sir Knight," said the Jester, keeping at a distance from the impatient champion, "or Folly will show a clean pair of heels, and leave Valour to find out his way through the wood as best he may."

"Nay, thou hast hit me there," said the Knight; "and, sooth to say, I have little time to jangle with thee. Keep the horn an thou wilt, but let us proceed on our journey."

"You will not harm me, then?" said Wamba.

"I tell thee no, thou knave!"

"Ay, but pledge me your knightly word for it," continued Wamba, as he approached with great caution.

"My knightly word I pledge; only come on with thy foolish self."

"Nay, then, Valour and Folly are once more boon companions," said the Jester, coming up frankly to the Knight's side; "but, in truth, I love not such buffets as that you bestowed on the burly Friar, when his holiness rolled on the green like a king of the nine-pins. And now that Folly wears the horn, let Valour rouse himself, and shake his mane; for, if I mistake not, there are company in yonder brake that are on the look-out for us."

"What makes thee judge so?" said the Knight.

"Because I have twice or thrice noticed the glance of a motion from amongst the green leaves. Had they been honest men, they had kept the path. But yonder thicket is a choice chapel for the Clerks of Saint Nicholas."

"By my faith," said the Knight, closing his visor, "I think thou be'st in the right on't."

And in good time did he close it, for three arrows, flew at the same instant from the suspected spot against his head and breast, one of which would have penetrated to the brain, had it not been turned aside by the steel visor. The other two were averted by the gorget, and by the shield which hung around his neck.

"Thanks, trusty armourers," said the Knight.—"Wamba, let us close with them,"—and he rode straight to the thicket. He was met by six or seven men-at-arms, who ran against him with their lances at full career. Three of the weapons struck against him, and splintered with as little effect as if they had been driven against a tower of steel. The Black Knight's eyes seemed to flash fire even through the aperture of his visor. He raised himself in his stirrups with an air of inexpressible dignity, and exclaimed, "What means this, my masters!"—The men made no other reply than by drawing their swords and attacking him on every side, crying, "Die, tyrant!"

"Ha! Saint Edward! Ha! Saint George!" said the Black Knight, striking down a man at every invocation; "have we traitors here?"

His opponents, desperate as they were, bore back from an arm which carried death in every blow, and it seemed as if the terror of his single strength was about to gain the battle against such odds, when a knight, in blue armour, who had hitherto kept himself behind the other assailants, spurred forward with his lance, and taking aim, not at the rider but at the steed, wounded the noble animal mortally.

"That was a felon stroke!" exclaimed the Black Knight, as the steed fell to the earth, bearing his rider along with him.

And at this moment, Wamba winded the bugle, for the whole had passed so speedily, that he had not time to do so sooner. The sudden sound made the murderers bear back once more, and Wamba, though so imperfectly weaponed, did not hesitate to rush in and assist the Black Knight to rise.

"Shame on ye, false cowards!" exclaimed he in the blue harness, who seemed to lead the assailants, "do ye fly from the empty blast of a horn blown by a Jester?"

Animated by his words, they attacked the Black Knight anew, whose best refuge was now to place his back against an oak, and defend himself with his sword. The felon knight, who had taken another spear, watching the moment when his formidable antagonist was most closely pressed, galloped against him in hopes to nail him with his lance against the tree, when his purpose was again intercepted by Wamba. The Jester, making up by agility the want of strength, and little noticed by the men-at-arms, who were busied in their more important object, hovered on the skirts of the fight, and effectually checked the fatal career of the Blue Knight, by hamstringing his horse with a stroke of his sword. Horse and man went to the ground; yet the situation of the Knight of the Fetterlock continued very precarious, as he was pressed close by several men completely armed, and began to be fatigued by the violent exertions necessary to defend himself on so many points at nearly the same moment, when a grey-goose shaft suddenly stretched on the earth one of the most formidable of his assailants, and a band of yeomen broke forth from the glade, headed by Locksley and the jovial Friar, who, taking ready and effectual part in the fray, soon disposed of the ruffians, all of whom lay on the spot dead or mortally wounded. The Black Knight thanked his deliverers with a dignity they had not observed in his former bearing, which hitherto had seemed rather that of a blunt bold soldier, than of a person of exalted rank.

"It concerns me much," he said, "even before I express my full gratitude to my ready friends, to discover, if I may, who have been my unprovoked enemies.—Open the visor of that Blue Knight, Wamba, who seems the chief of these villains."

The Jester instantly made up to the leader of the assassins, who, bruised by his fall, and entangled under the wounded steed, lay incapable either of flight or resistance.

"Come, valiant sir," said Wamba, "I must be your armourer as well as your equerry—I have dismounted you, and now I will unhelm you."

So saying, with no very gentle hand he undid the helmet of the Blue Knight, which, rolling to a distance on the grass, displayed to the Knight of the Fetterlock grizzled locks, and a countenance he did not expect to have seen under such circumstances.

"Waldemar Fitzurse!" he said in astonishment; "what could urge one of thy rank and seeming worth to so foul an undertaking?"

"Richard," said the captive Knight, looking up to him, "thou knowest little of mankind, if thou knowest not to what ambition and revenge can lead every child of Adam."

"Revenge?" answered the Black Knight; "I never wronged thee—On me thou hast nought to revenge."

"My daughter, Richard, whose alliance thou didst scorn—was that no injury to a Norman, whose blood is noble as thine own?"

"Thy daughter?" replied the Black Knight; "a proper cause of enmity, and followed up to a bloody issue!—Stand back, my masters, I would speak to him alone.—And now, Waldemar Fitzurse, say me the truth—confess who set thee on this traitorous deed."

"Thy father's son," answered Waldemar, "who, in so doing, did but avenge on thee thy disobedience to thy father."

Richard's eyes sparkled with indignation, but his better nature overcame it. He pressed his hand against his brow, and remained an instant gazing on the face of the humbled baron, in whose features pride was contending with shame.

"Thou dost not ask thy life, Waldemar," said the King.

"He that is in the lion's clutch," answered Fitzurse, "knows it were needless."

"Take it, then, unasked," said Richard; "the lion preys not on prostrate carcasses.—Take thy life, but with this condition, that in three days thou shalt leave England, and go to hide thine infamy in thy Norman castle, and that thou wilt never mention the name of John of Anjou as connected with thy felony. If thou art found on English ground after the space I have allotted thee, thou diest—or if thou breathest aught that can attain the honour of my house, by Saint George! not the altar itself shall be a sanctuary. I will hang thee out to feed the ravens, from the very pinnacle of thine own castle.—Let this knight have a steed, Locksley, for I see your yeomen have caught those which were running loose, and let him depart unharmed."

"But that I judge I listen to a voice whose behests must not be disputed," answered the yeoman, "I would send a shaft after the skulking villain that should spare him the labour of a long journey."

"Thou bearest an English heart, Locksley," said the Black Knight, "and well dost judge thou art the more bound to obey my behest—I am Richard of England!"

At these words, pronounced in a tone of majesty suited to the high rank, and no less distinguished character of Coeur-de-Lion, the yeomen at once kneeled down before him, and at the same time tendered their allegiance, and implored pardon for their offences.

"Rise, my friends," said Richard, in a gracious tone, looking on them with a countenance in which his habitual good-humour had already conquered the blaze of hasty resentment, and whose features retained no mark of the late desperate conflict, excepting the flush arising from exertion,—*"Arise,"* he said, *"my friends!—Your misdemeanours, whether in forest or field, have been atoned by the loyal services you rendered my distressed subjects before the walls of Torquilstone, and the rescue you have this day afforded to your sovereign. Arise, my liegemen, and be good subjects in future.—And thou, brave Locksley—"*

"Call me no longer Locksley, my Liege, but know me under the name, which, I fear, fame hath blown too widely not to have reached even your royal ears—I am Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest." 561

"King of Outlaws, and Prince of good fellows!" said the King, "who hath not heard a name that has been borne as far as Palestine? But be assured, brave Outlaw, that no deed done in our absence, and in the turbulent times to which it hath given rise, shall be remembered to thy disadvantage."

"True says the proverb," said Wamba, interposing his word, but with some abatement of his usual petulance,—

"When the cat is away, The mice will play."

"What, Wamba, art thou there?" said Richard; "I have been so long of hearing thy voice, I thought thou hadst taken flight."

"I take flight!" said Wamba; "when do you ever find Folly separated from Valour? There lies the trophy of my sword, that good grey gelding, whom I heartily wish upon his legs again, conditioning his master lay there houghed in his place. It is true, I gave a little ground at first, for a motley jacket does not brook lance-heads, as a steel doublet will. But if I fought not at sword's point, you will grant me that I sounded the onset."

"And to good purpose, honest Wamba," replied the King. "Thy good service shall not be forgotten."

"Confiteor! Confiteor!"—exclaimed, in a submissive tone, a voice near the King's side—"my Latin will carry me no farther—but I confess my deadly treason, and pray leave to have absolution before I am led to execution!"

Richard looked around, and beheld the jovial Friar on his knees, telling his rosary, while his quarter-staff, which had not been idle during the skirmish, lay on the grass beside him. His countenance was gathered so as he thought might best express the most profound contrition, his eyes being turned up, and the corners of his mouth drawn down, as Wamba expressed it, like the tassels at the mouth of a purse. Yet this demure affectation of extreme penitence was whimsically belied by a ludicrous meaning which lurked in his huge features, and seemed to pronounce his fear and repentance alike hypocritical.

"For what art thou cast down, mad Priest?" said Richard; "art thou afraid thy diocesan should learn how truly thou dost serve Our Lady and Saint Dunstan?—Tush, man! fear it not; Richard of England betrays no secrets that pass over the flagon."

"Nay, most gracious sovereign," answered the Hermit, (well known to the curious in penny-histories of Robin Hood, by the name of Friar Tuck,) "it is not the crosier I fear, but the sceptre.—Alas! that my sacrilegious fist should ever have been applied to the ear of the Lord's anointed!"

"Ha! ha!" said Richard, "sits the wind there?—In truth I had forgotten the buffet, though mine ear sung after it for a whole day. But if the cuff was fairly given, I will be judged by the good men around, if it was not as well repaid—or, if thou thinkest I still owe thee aught, and will stand forth for another counterbuff—"

"By no means," replied Friar Tuck, "I had mine own returned, and with usury—may your Majesty ever pay your debts as fully!"

"If I could do so with cuffs," said the King, "my creditors should have little reason to complain of an empty exchequer."

"And yet," said the Friar, resuming his demure hypocritical countenance, "I know not what penance I ought to perform for that most sacrilegious blow!—"

"Speak no more of it, brother," said the King; "after having stood so many cuffs from Paynims and misbelievers, I were void of reason to quarrel with the buffet of a clerk so holy as he of Copmanhurst. Yet, mine honest Friar, I think it would be best both for the church and thyself, that I should procure a license to unfrock thee, and retain thee as a yeoman of our guard, serving in care of our person, as formerly in attendance upon the altar of Saint Dunstan."

"My Liege," said the Friar, "I humbly crave your pardon; and you would readily grant my excuse, did you but know how the sin of laziness has beset me. Saint Dunstan—may he be gracious to us!—stands quiet in his niche, though I should forget my orisons in killing a fat buck—I stay out of my cell sometimes a night, doing I wot not what—Saint Dunstan never complains—a quiet master he is, and a peaceful, as ever was made of wood.—But to be a yeoman in attendance on my sovereign the King—the honour is great, doubtless—yet, if I were but to step aside to comfort a widow in one corner, or to kill a deer in another, it would be, 'where is the dog Priest?' says one. 'Who has seen the accursed Tuck?' says another. 'The unfrocked villain destroys more venison than half the country besides,' says one keeper; 'And is hunting after every shy doe in the country!' quoth a second.—In fine, good my Liege, I pray you to leave me as you found me; or, if in aught you desire to extend your benevolence to me, that I may be considered as the poor Clerk of Saint Dunstan's cell in Copmanhurst, to whom any small donation will be most thankfully acceptable."

"I understand thee," said the King, "and the Holy Clerk shall have a grant of vert and venison in my woods of Warncliffe. Mark, however, I will but assign thee three bucks every season; but if that do not prove an apology for thy slaying thirty, I am no Christian knight nor true king."

"Your Grace may be well assured," said the Friar, "that, with the grace of Saint Dunstan, I shall find the way of multiplying your most bounteous gift."

"I nothing doubt it, good brother," said the King; "and as venison is but dry food, our cellarer shall have orders to deliver to thee a butt of sack, a runlet of Malvoisie, and three hogsheads of ale of the first strike, yearly—If that will not quench thy thirst, thou must come to court, and become acquainted with my butler."

"But for Saint Dunstan?" said the Friar—

"A cope, a stole, and an altar-cloth shalt thou also have," continued the King, crossing himself—"But we may not turn our game into earnest, lest God punish us for thinking more on our follies than on his honour and worship."

"I will answer for my patron," said the Priest, joyously.

"Answer for thyself, Friar," said King Richard, something sternly; but immediately stretching out his hand to the Hermit, the latter, somewhat abashed, bent his knee, and saluted it. "Thou dost less honour to my extended palm than to my clenched fist," said the Monarch; "thou didst only kneel to the one, and to the other didst prostrate thyself."

But the Friar, afraid perhaps of again giving offence by continuing the conversation in too jocose a style—a false step to be particularly guarded against by those who converse with monarchs—bowed profoundly, and fell into the rear.

At the same time, two additional personages appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XLI

*All hail to the lordlings of high degree,
Who live not more happy, though greater than we!
Our pastimes to see,
Under every green tree,
In all the gay woodland, right welcome ye be.
Macdonald*

The new comers were Wilfred of Ivanhoe, on the Prior of Botolph's palfrey, and Gurth, who attended him, on the Knight's own war-horse. The astonishment of Ivanhoe was beyond bounds, when he saw his master besprinkled with blood, and six or seven dead bodies lying around in the little glade in which the battle had taken place. Nor was he less surprised to see Richard surrounded by so many silvan attendants, the outlaws, as they seemed to be, of the forest, and a perilous retinue therefore for a prince. He hesitated whether to address the King as the Black Knight-errant, or in what other manner to demean himself towards him. Richard saw his embarrassment.

"Fear not, Wilfred," he said, "to address Richard Plantagenet as himself, since thou seest him in the company of true English hearts, although it may be they have been urged a few steps aside by warm English blood."

"Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe," said the gallant Outlaw, stepping forward, "my assurances can add nothing to those of our sovereign; yet, let me say somewhat proudly, that of men who have suffered much, he hath not truer subjects than those who now stand around him."

"I cannot doubt it, brave man," said Wilfred, "since thou art of the number—But what mean these marks of death and danger? these slain men, and the bloody armour of my Prince?"

"Treason hath been with us, Ivanhoe," said the King; "but, thanks to these brave men, treason hath met its meed—But, now I bethink me, thou too art a traitor," said Richard, smiling; "a most disobedient traitor; for were not our orders positive, that thou shouldst repose thyself at Saint Botolph's until thy wound was healed?"

"It is healed," said Ivanhoe; "it is not of more consequence than the scratch of a bodkin. But why, oh why, noble Prince, will you thus vex the hearts of your faithful servants, and expose your life by lonely journeys and rash adventures, as if it were of no more value than that of a mere knight-errant, who has no interest on earth but what lance and sword may procure him?"

"And Richard Plantagenet," said the King, "desires no more fame than his good lance and sword may acquire him—and Richard Plantagenet is prouder of achieving an adventure, with only his good sword, and his good arm to speed, than if he led to battle a host of an hundred thousand armed men."

"But your kingdom, my Liege," said Ivanhoe, "your kingdom is threatened with dissolution and civil war—your subjects menaced with every species of evil, if deprived of their sovereign in some of those dangers which it is your daily pleasure to incur, and from which you have but this moment narrowly escaped."

"Ho! ho! my kingdom and my subjects?" answered Richard, impatiently; "I tell thee, Sir Wilfred, the best of them are most willing to repay my follies in kind—For example, my very faithful servant, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, will not obey my positive commands, and yet reads his king a homily, because he does not walk exactly by his advice. Which of us has most reason to upbraid the other?—Yet forgive me, my faithful Wilfred. The time I have spent, and am yet to spend in concealment, is, as I explained to thee at Saint Botolph's, necessary to give my friends and faithful nobles time to assemble their forces, that when Richard's return is announced, he should be at the head of such a force as enemies shall tremble to face, and thus subdue the meditated treason, without even unsheathing a sword. Estoteville and Bohun will not be strong enough to move forward to York for twenty-four hours. I must have news of Salisbury from the south; and of Beauchamp, in Warwickshire; and of Multon and Percy in the north. The Chancellor must make sure of London. Too sudden an appearance would subject me to dangers, other than my lance and sword, though backed by the bow of bold Robin, or the quarter-staff of Friar Tuck, and the horn of the sage Wamba, may be able to rescue me from."

Wilfred bowed in submission, well knowing how vain it was to contend with the wild spirit of chivalry which so often impelled his master upon dangers which he might easily have avoided, or rather, which it was unpardonable in him to have sought out. The young knight sighed, therefore, and held his peace; while Richard, rejoiced at having silenced his counsellor, though his heart acknowledged the justice of the charge he had brought against him, went on in conversation with Robin Hood.—"King of Outlaws," he said, "have you no refreshment to offer to your brother sovereign? for these dead knaves have found me both in exercise and appetite."

"In troth," replied the Outlaw, "for I scorn to lie to your Grace, our larder is chiefly supplied with—" He stopped, and was somewhat embarrassed.

"With venison, I suppose?" said Richard, gaily; "better food at need there can be none—and truly, if a king will not remain at home and slay his own game, methinks he should not brawl too loud if he finds it killed to his hand."

"If your Grace, then," said Robin, "will again honour with your presence one of Robin Hood's places of rendezvous, the venison shall not be lacking; and a stoup of ale, and it may be a cup of reasonably good wine, to relish it withal."

The Outlaw accordingly led the way, followed by the buxom Monarch, more happy, probably, in this chance meeting with Robin Hood and his foresters, than he would have been in again assuming his royal state, and presiding over a splendid circle of peers and nobles. Novelty in society and adventure were the zest of life to Richard Coeur-de-Lion, and it had its highest relish when enhanced by dangers encountered and surmounted. In the lion-hearted King, the brilliant, but useless character, of a knight of romance, was in a great measure realized and revived; and the personal glory which he acquired by his own deeds of arms, was far more dear to his excited imagination, than that which a course of policy and wisdom would have spread around his government. Accordingly, his reign was like the course of a brilliant and rapid meteor, which shoots along the face of Heaven, shedding around an unnecessary and portentous light, which is instantly swallowed up by universal darkness; his feats of chivalry furnishing themes for bards and minstrels, but affording none of those solid benefits to his country on which history loves to pause, and hold up as an example to posterity. But in his present company Richard showed to the greatest imaginable advantage. He was gay, good-humoured, and fond of manhood in every rank of life.

Beneath a huge oak-tree the silvan repast was hastily prepared for the King of England, surrounded by men outlaws to his government, but who now formed his court and his guard. As the flagon went round, the rough foresters soon lost their awe for the presence of Majesty. The song and the jest were exchanged—the stories of former deeds were told with advantage; and at length, and while boasting of their successful infraction of the laws, no one recollected they were speaking in presence of their natural guardian. The merry King, nothing heeding his dignity any more than his company, laughed, quaffed, and jested among the jolly band. The natural and rough sense of Robin Hood led him to be desirous that the scene should be closed ere any thing should occur to disturb its harmony, the more especially that he observed Ivanhoe's brow clouded with anxiety. "We are honoured," he said to Ivanhoe, apart, "by the presence of our gallant Sovereign; yet I would not that he dallied with time, which the circumstances of his kingdom may render precious."

"It is well and wisely spoken, brave Robin Hood," said Wilfred, apart; "and know, moreover, that they who jest with Majesty even in its gayest mood are but toying with the lion's whelp, which, on slight provocation, uses both fangs and claws."

"You have touched the very cause of my fear," said the Outlaw; "my men are rough by practice and nature, the King is hasty as well as good-humoured; nor know I how soon cause of offence may arise, or how warmly it may be received—it is time this revel were broken off."

"It must be by your management then, gallant yeoman," said Ivanhoe; "for each hint I have essayed to give him serves only to induce him to prolong it."

"Must I so soon risk the pardon and favour of my Sovereign?" said Robin Hood, pausing for all instant; "but by Saint Christopher, it shall be so. I were undeserving his grace did I not peril it for his good.—Here, Scathlock, get thee behind yonder thicket, and wind me a Norman blast on thy bugle, and without an instant's delay on peril of your life."

Scathlock obeyed his captain, and in less than five minutes the revellers were startled by the sound of his horn.

"It is the bugle of Malvoisin," said the Miller, starting to his feet, and seizing his bow. The Friar dropped the flagon, and grasped his quarter-staff. Wamba stopt short in the midst of a jest, and betook himself to sword and target. All the others stood to their weapons.

Men of their precarious course of life change readily from the banquet to the battle; and, to Richard, the exchange seemed but a succession of pleasure. He called for his helmet and the most cumbrous parts of his armour, which he had laid aside; and while Gurth was putting them on, he laid his strict injunctions on Wilfred, under pain of his highest displeasure, not to engage in the skirmish which he supposed was approaching.

"Thou hast fought for me an hundred times, Wilfred,—and I have seen it. Thou shalt this day look on, and see how Richard will fight for his friend and liegeman."

In the meantime, Robin Hood had sent off several of his followers in different directions, as if to reconnoitre the enemy; and when he saw the company effectually broken up, he approached Richard, who was now completely armed, and, kneeling down on one knee, craved pardon of his Sovereign.

"For what, good yeoman?" said Richard, somewhat impatiently. "Have we not already granted thee a full pardon for all transgressions? Thinkest thou our word is a feather, to be blown backward and forward between us? Thou canst not have had time to commit any new offence since that time?"

"Ay, but I have though," answered the yeoman, "if it be an offence to deceive my prince for his own advantage. The bugle you have heard was none of Malvoisin's, but blown by my direction, to break off the banquet, lest it trenched upon hours of dearer import than to be thus dallied with."

He then rose from his knee, folded his arm on his bosom, and in a manner rather respectful than submissive, awaited the answer of the King,—like one who is conscious he may have given offence, yet is confident in the rectitude of his motive. The blood rushed in anger to the countenance of Richard; but it was the first transient emotion, and his sense of justice instantly subdued it.

"The King of Sherwood," he said, "grudges his venison and his wine-flask to the King of England? It is well, bold Robin!—but when you come to see me in merry London, I trust to be a less niggard host. Thou art right, however, good fellow. Let us therefore to horse and away—Wilfred has been impatient this hour. Tell me, bold Robin, hast thou never a friend in thy band, who, not content with advising, will needs direct thy motions, and look miserable when thou dost presume to act for thyself?"

"Such a one," said Robin, "is my Lieutenant, Little John, who is even now absent on an expedition as far as the borders of Scotland; and I will own to your Majesty, that I am sometimes displeased by the freedom of his councils—but, when I think twice, I cannot be long angry with one who can have no motive for his anxiety save zeal for his master's service."

"Thou art right, good yeoman," answered Richard; "and if I had Ivanhoe, on the one hand, to give grave advice, and recommend it by the sad gravity of his brow, and thee, on the other, to trick me into what thou thinkest my own good, I should have as little the freedom of mine own will as any king in Christendom or Heathenese.—But come, sirs, let us merrily on to Coningsburgh, and think no more on't."

Robin Hood assured them that he had detached a party in the direction of the road they were to pass, who would not fail to discover and apprise them of any secret ambushade; and that he had little doubt they would find the ways secure, or, if otherwise, would receive such timely notice of the danger as would enable them to fall back on a strong troop of archers, with which he himself proposed to follow on the same route.

The wise and attentive precautions adopted for his safety touched Richard's feelings, and removed any slight grudge which he might retain on account of the deception the Outlaw Captain had practised upon him. He once more extended his hand to Robin Hood, assured him of his full pardon and future favour, as well as his firm resolution to restrain the tyrannical exercise of the forest rights and other oppressive laws, by which so many English yeomen were driven into a state of rebellion. But Richard's good intentions towards the bold Outlaw were frustrated by the King's untimely death; and the Charter of the Forest was extorted from the unwilling hands of King John when he succeeded to his heroic brother. As for the rest of Robin Hood's career, as well as the tale of his treacherous death, they are to be found in those black-letter garlands, once sold at the low and easy rate of one halfpenny.

"Now cheaply purchased at their weight in gold."

The Outlaw's opinion proved true; and the King, attended by Ivanhoe, Gurth, and Wamba, arrived, without any interruption, within view of the Castle of Coningsburgh, while the sun was yet in the horizon.

There are few more beautiful or striking scenes in England, than are presented by the vicinity of this ancient Saxon fortress. The soft and gentle river Don sweeps through an amphitheatre, in which cultivation is richly blended with woodland, and on a mount, ascending from the river, well defended by walls and ditches, rises this ancient edifice, which, as its Saxon name implies, was, previous to the Conquest, a royal residence of the kings of England. The outer walls have probably been added by the Normans, but the inner keep bears token of very great antiquity. It is situated on a mount at one angle of the inner court, and forms a complete circle of perhaps twenty-five feet in diameter. The wall is of immense thickness, and is propped or defended by six huge external buttresses which project from the circle, and rise up against the sides of the tower as if to strengthen or to support it. These massive buttresses are solid when they arise from the foundation, and a good way higher up; but are hollowed out towards the top, and terminate in a sort of turrets communicating with the interior of the keep itself. The distant appearance of this huge building, with these singular accompaniments, is as interesting to the lovers of the picturesque, as the interior of the castle is to the eager antiquary, whose imagination it carries back to the days of the Heptarchy. A barrow, in the vicinity of the castle, is pointed out as the tomb of the memorable Hengist; and various monuments, of great antiquity and curiosity, are shown in the neighbouring churchyard. 57

When Coeur-de-Lion and his retinue approached this rude yet stately building, it was not, as at present, surrounded by external fortifications. The Saxon architect had exhausted his art in rendering the main keep defensible, and there was no other circumvallation than a rude barrier of palisades.

A huge black banner, which floated from the top of the tower, announced that the obsequies of the late owner were still in the act of being solemnized. It bore no emblem of the deceased's birth or quality, for armorial bearings were then a novelty among the Norman chivalry themselves and, were totally unknown to the Saxons. But above the gate was another banner, on which the figure of a white horse, rudely painted, indicated the nation and rank of the deceased, by the well-known symbol of Hengist and his Saxon warriors.

All around the castle was a scene of busy commotion; for such funeral banquets were times of general and profuse hospitality, which not only every one who could claim the most distant connexion with the deceased, but all passengers whatsoever, were invited to partake. The wealth and consequence of the deceased Athelstane, occasioned this custom to be observed in the fullest extent.

Numerous parties, therefore, were seen ascending and descending the hill on which the castle was situated; and when the King and his attendants entered the open and unguarded gates of the external barrier, the space within presented a scene not easily reconciled with the cause of the assemblage. In one place cooks were toiling to roast huge oxen, and fat sheep; in another, hogsheads of ale were set abroach, to be drained at the freedom of all comers. Groups of every description were to be seen devouring the food and swallowing the liquor thus abandoned to their discretion. The naked Saxon serf was drowning the sense of his half-year's hunger and thirst, in one day of gluttony and drunkenness—the more pampered burgess and guild-brother was eating his morsel with gust, or curiously criticising the quantity of the malt and the skill of the brewer. Some few of the poorer Norman gentry might also be seen, distinguished by their shaven chins and short cloaks, and not less so by their keeping together, and looking with great scorn on the whole solemnity, even while condescending to avail themselves of the good cheer which was so liberally supplied.

Mendicants were of course assembled by the score, together with strolling soldiers returned from Palestine, (according to their own account at least,) pedlars were displaying their wares, travelling mechanics were enquiring after employment, and wandering palmers, hedge-priests, Saxon minstrels, and Welsh bards, were muttering prayers, and extracting mistuned dirges from their harps, crowds, and rites. 58

One sent forth the praises of Athelstane in a doleful panegyric; another, in a Saxon genealogical poem, rehearsed the uncouth and harsh names of his noble ancestry. Jesters and jugglers were not wanting, nor was the occasion of the assembly supposed to render the exercise of their profession indecorous or improper. Indeed the ideas of the Saxons on these occasions were as natural as they were rude. If sorrow was thirsty, there was drink—if hungry, there was food—if it sunk down upon and saddened the heart, here were the means supplied of mirth, or at least of amusement. Nor did the assistants scorn to avail themselves of those means of consolation, although, every now and then, as if suddenly recollecting the cause which had brought them together, the men groaned in unison, while the females, of whom many were present, raised up their voices and shrieked for very woe.

Such was the scene in the castle-yard at Coningsburgh when it was entered by Richard and his followers. The seneschal or steward deigned not to take notice of the groups of inferior guests who were perpetually entering and withdrawing, unless so far as was necessary to preserve order; nevertheless he was struck by the good mien of the Monarch and Ivanhoe, more especially as he imagined the features of the latter were familiar to him. Besides, the approach of two knights, for such their dress bespoke them, was a rare event at a Saxon solemnity, and could not but be regarded as a sort of honour to the deceased and his family. And in his sable dress, and holding in his hand his white wand of office, this important personage made way through the miscellaneous assemblage of guests, thus

conducting Richard and Ivanhoe to the entrance of the tower. Gurth and Wamba speedily found acquaintances in the court-yard, nor presumed to intrude themselves any farther until their presence should be required.

CHAPTER XLII

*I found them winding of Marcello's corpse.
And there was such a solemn melody,
'Twixt doleful songs, tears, and sad elegies,—
Such as old grandames, watching by the dead,
Are wont to outwear the night with.
—Old Play*

The mode of entering the great tower of Coningsburgh Castle is very peculiar, and partakes of the rude simplicity of the early times in which it was erected. A flight of steps, so deep and narrow as to be almost precipitous, leads up to a low portal in the south side of the tower, by which the adventurous antiquary may still, or at least could a few years since, gain access to a small stair within the thickness of the main wall of the tower, which leads up to the third story of the building,—the two lower being dungeons or vaults, which neither receive air nor light, save by a square hole in the third story, with which they seem to have communicated by a ladder. The access to the upper apartments in the tower which consist in all of four stories, is given by stairs which are carried up through the external buttresses. By this difficult and complicated entrance, the good King Richard, followed by his faithful Ivanhoe, was ushered into the round apartment which occupies the whole of the third story from the ground. Wilfred, by the difficulties of the ascent, gained time to muffle his face in his mantle, as it had been held expedient that he should not present himself to his father until the King should give him the signal.

There were assembled in this apartment, around a large oaken table, about a dozen of the most distinguished representatives of the Saxon families in the adjacent counties. They were all old, or, at least, elderly men; for the younger race, to the great displeasure of the seniors, had, like Ivanhoe, broken down many of the barriers which separated for half a century the Norman victors from the vanquished Saxons. The downcast and sorrowful looks of these venerable men, their silence and their mournful posture, formed a strong contrast to the levity of the revellers on the outside of the castle. Their grey locks and long full beards, together with their antique tunics and loose black mantles, suited well with the singular and rude apartment in which they were seated, and gave the appearance of a band of ancient worshippers of Woden, recalled to life to mourn over the decay of their national glory.

Cedric, seated in equal rank among his countrymen, seemed yet, by common consent, to act as chief of the assembly. Upon the entrance of Richard (only known to him as the valorous Knight of the Fetterlock) he arose gravely, and gave him welcome by the ordinary salutation, "Waes hael", raising at the same time a goblet to his head. The King, no stranger to the customs of his English subjects, returned the greeting with the appropriate words, "Drinc hael", and partook of a cup which was handed to him by the sewer. The same courtesy was offered to Ivanhoe, who pledged his father in silence, supplying the usual speech by an inclination of his head, lest his voice should have been recognised.

When this introductory ceremony was performed, Cedric arose, and, extending his hand to Richard, conducted him into a small and very rude chapel, which was excavated, as it were, out of one of the external buttresses. As there was no opening, saving a little narrow loop-hole, the place would have been nearly quite dark but for two flambeaux or torches, which showed, by a red and smoky light, the arched roof and naked walls, the rude altar of stone, and the crucifix of the same material.

Before this altar was placed a bier, and on each side of this bier kneeled three priests, who told their beads, and muttered their prayers, with the greatest signs of external devotion. For this service a splendid "soul-scat" was paid to the convent of Saint Edmund's by the mother of the deceased; and, that it might be fully deserved, the whole brethren, saving the lame Sacristan, had transferred themselves to Coningsburgh, where, while six of their number were constantly on guard in the performance of divine rites by the bier of Athelstane, the others failed not to take their share of the refreshments and amusements which went on at the castle. In maintaining this pious watch and ward, the good monks were particularly careful not to interrupt their hymns for an instant, lest Zerneck, the ancient Saxon Apollyon, should lay his clutches on the departed Athelstane. Nor were they less careful to prevent any unhallowed layman from touching the pall, which, having been that used at the funeral of Saint Edmund, was liable to be desecrated, if handled by the profane. If, in truth, these attentions could be of any use to the deceased, he had some right to expect them at the hands of the brethren of Saint Edmund's, since, besides a hundred mancuses of gold paid down as the soul-ransom, the mother of Athelstane had announced her intention of endowing that foundation with the better part of the lands of the deceased, in order to maintain perpetual prayers for his soul, and that of her departed husband. Richard and Wilfred followed the Saxon Cedric into the apartment of death, where, as their guide pointed with solemn air to the untimely bier of Athelstane, they followed his example in devoutly crossing themselves, and muttering a brief prayer for the weal of the departed soul.

This act of pious charity performed, Cedric again motioned them to follow him, gliding over the stone floor with a noiseless tread; and, after ascending a few steps, opened with great caution the door of a small oratory, which adjoined to the chapel. It was about eight feet square, hollowed, like the chapel itself, out of the thickness of the wall; and the loop-hole, which enlightened it, being to the west, and widening considerably as it sloped inward, a beam of the setting sun found its way into its dark recess, and showed a female of a dignified mien, and whose countenance retained the marked remains of majestic beauty. Her long mourning robes and her flowing wimple of black cypress, enhanced the whiteness of her skin, and the beauty of her light-coloured and flowing tresses, which time had neither thinned nor mingled with silver. Her countenance expressed the deepest sorrow that is consistent with resignation. On the stone table before her stood a crucifix of ivory, beside which was laid a missal, having its pages richly illuminated, and its boards adorned with clasps of gold, and bosses of the same precious metal.

"Noble Edith," said Cedric, after having stood a moment silent, as if to give Richard and Wilfred time to look upon the lady of the mansion, "these are worthy strangers, come to take a part in thy sorrows. And this, in especial, is the valiant Knight who fought so bravely for the deliverance of him for whom we this day mourn."

"His bravery has my thanks," returned the lady; "although it be the will of Heaven that it should be displayed in vain. I thank, too, his courtesy, and that of his companion, which hath brought them hither to behold the widow of Adeling, the mother of Athelstane, in her deep hour of sorrow and lamentation. To your care, kind kinsman, I intrust them, satisfied that they will want no hospitality which these sad walls can yet afford."

The guests bowed deeply to the mourning parent, and withdrew from their hospitable guide.

Another winding stair conducted them to an apartment of the same size with that which they had first entered, occupying indeed the story immediately above. From this room, ere yet the door was opened, proceeded a low and melancholy strain of vocal music. When they entered, they found themselves in the presence of about twenty matrons and maidens of distinguished Saxon lineage. Four maidens, Rowena leading the choir, raised a hymn for the soul of the deceased, of which we have only been able to decipher two or three stanzas:—

*Dust unto dust,
To this all must;
The tenant hath resign'd
The faded form
To waste and worm—
Corruption claims her kind.*

*Through paths unknown
Thy soul hath flown,
To seek the realms of woe,
Where fiery pain
Shall purge the stain
Of actions done below.*

*In that sad place,
By Mary's grace,
Brief may thy dwelling be
Till prayers and alms,
And holy psalms,
Shall set the captive free.*

While this dirge was sung, in a low and melancholy tone, by the female choristers, the others were divided into two bands, of which one was engaged in bedecking, with such embroidery as their skill and taste could compass, a large silken pall, destined to cover the bier of Athelstane, while the others busied themselves in selecting, from baskets of flowers placed before them, garlands, which they intended for the same mournful purpose. The behaviour of the maidens was decorous, if not marked with deep affliction; but now and then a whisper or a smile called forth the rebuke of the severer matrons, and here and there might be seen a damsel more interested in endeavouring to find out how her mourning-robe became her, than in the dismal ceremony for which they were preparing. Neither was this propensity (if we must needs confess the truth) at all diminished by the appearance of two strange knights, which occasioned some looking up, peeping, and whispering. Rowena alone, too proud to be vain, paid her greeting to her deliverer with a graceful courtesy. Her demeanour was serious, but not dejected; and it may be doubted whether thoughts of Ivanhoe, and of the uncertainty of his fate, did not claim as great a share in her gravity as the death of her kinsman.

To Cedric, however, who, as we have observed, was not remarkably clear-sighted on such occasions, the sorrow of his ward seemed so much deeper than any of the other maidens, that he deemed it proper to whisper the explanation—"She was the affianced bride of the noble Athelstane."—It may be doubted whether this communication went a far way to increase Wilfred's disposition to sympathize with the mourners of Coningsburgh.

Having thus formally introduced the guests to the different chambers in which the obsequies of Athelstane were celebrated under different forms, Cedric conducted them into a small room, destined, as he informed them, for the exclusive accomodation of honourable guests, whose more slight connexion with the deceased might render them unwilling to join those who were immediately effected by the unhappy event. He assured them of every accommodation, and was about to withdraw when the Black Knight took his hand.

"I crave to remind you, noble Thane," he said, "that when we last parted, you promised, for the service I had the fortune to render you, to grant me a boon."

"It is granted ere named, noble Knight," said Cedric; "yet, at this sad moment—"

"Of that also," said the King, "I have bethought me—but my time is brief—neither does it seem to me unfit, that, when closing the grave on the noble Athelstane, we should deposit therein certain prejudices and hasty opinions."

"Sir Knight of the Fetterlock," said Cedric, colouring, and interrupting the King in his turn, "I trust your boon regards yourself and no other; for in that which concerns the honour of my house, it is scarce fitting that a stranger should mingle."

"Nor do I wish to mingle," said the King, mildly, "unless in so far as you will admit me to have an interest. As yet you have known me but as the Black Knight of the Fetterlock—Know me now as Richard Plantagenet."

"Richard of Anjou!" exclaimed Cedric, stepping backward with the utmost astonishment.

"No, noble Cedric—Richard of England!—whose deepest interest—whose deepest wish, is to see her sons united with each other.—And, how now, worthy Thane! hast thou no knee for thy prince?"

"To Norman blood," said Cedric, "it hath never bended."

"Reserve thine homage then," said the Monarch, "until I shall prove my right to it by my equal protection of Normans and English."

"Prince," answered Cedric, "I have ever done justice to thy bravery and thy worth—Nor am I ignorant of thy claim to the crown through thy descent from Matilda, niece to Edgar Atheling, and daughter to Malcolm of Scotland. But Matilda, though of the royal Saxon blood, was not the heir to the monarchy."

"I will not dispute my title with thee, noble Thane," said Richard, calmly; "but I will bid thee look around thee, and see where thou wilt find another to be put into the scale against it."

"And hast thou wandered hither, Prince, to tell me so?" said Cedric—"To upbraid me with the ruin of my race, ere the grave has closed o'er the last scion of Saxon royalty?"—His countenance darkened as he spoke.—"It was boldly—it was rashly done!"

"Not so, by the holy rood!" replied the King; "it was done in the frank confidence which one brave man may repose in another, without a shadow of danger."

"Thou sayest well, Sir King—for King I own thou art, and wilt be, despite of my feeble opposition.—I dare not take the only mode to prevent it, though thou hast placed the strong temptation within my reach!"

"And now to my boon," said the King, "which I ask not with one jot the less confidence, that thou hast refused to acknowledge my lawful sovereignty. I require of thee, as a man of thy word, on pain of being held faithless, man-sworn, and 'nidering', 581 to forgive and receive to thy paternal affection the good knight, Wilfred of Ivanhoe. In this reconciliation thou wilt own I have an interest—the happiness of my friend, and the quelling of dissension among my faithful people."

"And this is Wilfred!" said Cedric, pointing to his son.

"My father!—my father!" said Ivanhoe, prostrating himself at Cedric's feet, "grant me thy forgiveness!"

"Thou hast it, my son," said Cedric, raising him up. "The son of Hereward knows how to keep his word, even when it has been passed to a Norman. But let me see thee use the dress and costume of thy English ancestry—no short cloaks, no gay bonnets, no fantastic plumage in my decent household. He that would be the son of Cedric, must show himself of English ancestry.—Thou art about to speak," he added, sternly, "and I guess the topic. The Lady Rowena must complete two years' mourning, as for a betrothed husband—all our Saxon ancestors would disown us were we to treat of a new union for her ere the grave of him she should have wedded—him, so much the most worthy of her hand by birth and ancestry—is yet closed. The ghost of Athelstane himself would burst his bloody cerements and stand before us to forbid such dishonour to his memory."

It seemed as if Cedric's words had raised a spectre; for, scarce had he uttered them ere the door flew open, and Athelstane, arrayed in the garments of the grave, stood before them, pale, haggard, and like something arisen from the dead! 59

The effect of this apparition on the persons present was utterly appalling. Cedric started back as far as the wall of the apartment would permit, and, leaning against it as one unable to support himself, gazed on the figure of his friend with eyes that seemed fixed, and a mouth which he appeared incapable of shutting. Ivanhoe crossed himself, repeating prayers in Saxon, Latin, or Norman-French, as they occurred to his memory, while Richard alternately said, "Benedicite", and swore, "Mort de ma vie!"

In the meantime, a horrible noise was heard below stairs, some crying, "Secure the treacherous monks!"—others, "Down with them into the dungeon!"—others, "Pitch them from the highest battlements!"

"In the name of God!" said Cedric, addressing what seemed the spectre of his departed friend, "if thou art mortal, speak!—if a departed spirit, say for what cause thou dost revisit us, or if I can do aught that can set thy spirit at repose.—Living or dead, noble Athelstane, speak to Cedric!"

"I will," said the spectre, very composedly, "when I have collected breath, and when you give me time—Alive, saidst thou?—I am as much alive as he can be who has fed on bread and water for three days, which seem three ages—Yes, bread and water, Father Cedric! By Heaven, and all saints in it, better food hath not passed my weasand for three livelong days, and by God's providence it is that I am now here to tell it."

"Why, noble Athelstane," said the Black Knight, "I myself saw you struck down by the fierce Templar towards the end of the storm at Torquilstone, and as I thought, and Wamba reported, your skull was cloven through the teeth."

"You thought amiss, Sir Knight," said Athelstane, "and Wamba lied. My teeth are in good order, and that my supper shall presently find—No thanks to the Templar though, whose sword turned in his hand, so that the blade struck me flatlings, being averted by the handle of the good mace with which I warded the blow; had my steel-cap been on, I had not valued it a rush, and had dealt him such a counter-buff as would have spoilt his retreat. But as it was, down I went, stunned, indeed, but unwounded. Others, of both sides, were beaten down and slaughtered above me, so that I never recovered my senses until I found myself in a coffin—(an open one, by good luck)—placed before the altar of the church of Saint Edmund's. I sneezed repeatedly—groaned—awakened and would have arisen, when the Sacristan and Abbot, full of terror, came running at the noise, surprised, doubtless, and no way pleased to find the man alive, whose heirs they had proposed themselves to be. I asked for wine—they gave me some, but it must have been highly medicated, for I slept yet more deeply than before, and wakened not for many hours. I found my arms swathed down—my feet tied so fast that mine ankles ache at the very remembrance—the place was utterly dark—the oubliette, as I suppose, of their accursed convent, and from the close, stifled, damp smell, I conceive it is also used for a place of sepulture. I had strange thoughts of what had befallen me, when the door of my dungeon creaked, and two villain monks entered. They would have persuaded me I was in purgatory, but I knew too well the pursy short-breathed voice of the Father Abbot.—Saint Jeremy! how different from that tone with which he used to ask me for another slice of the haunch!—the dog has feasted with me from Christmas to Twelfth-night."

"Have patience, noble Athelstane," said the King, "take breath—tell your story at leisure—beshrew me but such a tale is as well worth listening to as a romance."

"Ay but, by the rood of Bromeholm, there was no romance in the matter!" said Athelstane.—"A barley loaf and a pitcher of water—that THEY gave me, the niggardly traitors, whom my father, and I myself, had enriched, when their best resources were the flitches of bacon and measures of corn, out of which they wheedled poor serfs and bondsmen, in exchange for their prayers—the nest of foul ungrateful vipers—barley bread and ditch water to such a patron as I had been! I will smoke them out of their nest, though I be excommunicated!"

"But, in the name of Our Lady, noble Athelstane," said Cedric, grasping the hand of his friend, "how didst thou escape this imminent danger—did their hearts relent?"

"Did their hearts relent!" echoed Athelstane.—"Do rocks melt with the sun? I should have been there still, had not some stir in the Convent, which I find was their procession hitherward to eat my funeral feast, when they well knew how and where I had been buried alive, summoned the swarm out of their hive. I heard them droning out their death-psalms, little judging they were sung in respect for my soul by those who were thus famishing my body. They went, however, and I waited long for food—no wonder—the gouty Sacristan was even too busy with his own provender to mind mine. At length down he came, with an unstable step and a strong flavour of wine and spices about his person. Good cheer had opened his heart, for he left me a nook of pasty and a flask of wine, instead of my former fare. I ate, drank, and was invigorated; when, to add to my good luck, the Sacristan, too totty to discharge his duty of turnkey fitly, locked the door beside the staple, so that it fell ajar. The light, the food, the wine, set my invention to work. The staple to which my chains were fixed, was more rusted than I or the villain Abbot had supposed. Even iron could not remain without consuming in the damps of that infernal dungeon."

"Take breath, noble Athelstane," said Richard, "and partake of some refreshment, ere you proceed with a tale so dreadful."

"Partake!" quoth Athelstane; "I have been partaking five times to-day—and yet a morsel of that savoury ham were not altogether foreign to the matter; and I pray you, fair sir, to do me reason in a cup of wine."

The guests, though still agape with astonishment, pledged their resuscitated landlord, who thus proceeded in his story:—He had indeed now many more auditors than those to whom it was commenced, for Edith, having given certain necessary orders for arranging matters within the Castle, had followed the dead-alive up to the stranger's apartment attended by as many of the guests, male and female, as could squeeze into the small room, while others, crowding the staircase, caught up an erroneous edition of the story, and transmitted it still more inaccurately to those beneath, who again sent it forth to the vulgar without, in a fashion totally irreconcilable to the real fact. Athelstane, however, went on as follows, with the history of his escape:—

"Finding myself freed from the staple, I dragged myself up stairs as well as a man loaded with shackles, and emaciated with fasting, might; and after much groping about, I was at length directed, by the sound of a jolly roundelay, to the apartment where the worthy Sacristan, an it so please ye, was holding a devil's mass with a huge beetle-browed, broad-shouldered brother of the grey-frock and cowl, who looked much more like a thief than a clergyman. I burst in upon them, and the fashion of my grave-clothes, as well as the clanking of my chains, made me more resemble an inhabitant of the other world than of this. Both stood aghast; but when I knocked down the Sacristan with my fist, the other fellow, his pot-companion, fetched a blow at me with a huge quarter-staff."

"This must be our Friar Tuck, for a count's ransom," said Richard, looking at Ivanhoe.

"He may be the devil, an he will," said Athelstane. "Fortunately he missed the aim; and on my approaching to grapple with him, took to his heels and ran for it. I failed not to set my own heels at liberty by means of the fetter-key, which hung amongst others at the sexton's belt; and I had thoughts of beating out the knave's brains with the bunch of keys, but gratitude for the nook of pasty and the flask of wine which the rascal had imparted to my captivity, came over my heart; so, with a brace of hearty kicks, I left him on the floor, pouched some baked meat, and a leathern bottle of wine, with which the two venerable brethren had been regaling, went to the stable, and found in a private stall mine own best palfrey, which, doubtless, had been set apart for the holy Father Abbot's particular use. Hither I came with all the speed the beast could compass—man and mother's son flying before me wherever I came, taking me for a spectre, the more especially as, to prevent my being recognised, I drew the corpse-hood over my face. I had not gained admittance into my own castle, had I not been supposed to be the attendant of a juggler who is making the people in the castle-yard very merry, considering they are assembled to celebrate their lord's funeral—I say the sewer thought I was dressed to bear a part in the tregetour's mummerly, and so I got admission, and did but disclose myself to my mother, and eat a hasty morsel, ere I came in quest of you, my noble friend."

"And you have found me," said Cedric, "ready to resume our brave projects of honour and liberty. I tell thee, never will dawn a morrow so auspicious as the next, for the deliverance of the noble Saxon race."

"Talk not to me of delivering any one," said Athelstane; "it is well I am delivered myself. I am more intent on punishing that villain Abbot. He shall hang on the top of this Castle of Coningsburgh, in his cope and stole; and if the stairs be too strait to admit his fat carcass, I will have him craned up from without."

"But, my son," said Edith, "consider his sacred office."

"Consider my three days' fast," replied Athelstane; "I will have their blood every one of them. Front-de-Boeuf was burnt alive for a less matter, for he kept a good table for his prisoners, only put too much garlic in his last dish of pottage. But these hypocritical, ungrateful slaves, so often the self-invited flatterers at my board, who gave me neither pottage nor garlic, more or less, they die, by the soul of Hengist!"

"But the Pope, my noble friend,"—said Cedric—

"But the devil, my noble friend,"—answered Athelstane; "they die, and no more of them. Were they the best monks upon earth, the world would go on without them."

"For shame, noble Athelstane," said Cedric; "forget such wretches in the career of glory which lies open before thee. Tell this Norman prince, Richard of Anjou, that, lion-hearted as he is, he shall not hold undisputed the throne of Alfred, while a male descendant of the Holy Confessor lives to dispute it."

"How!" said Athelstane, "is this the noble King Richard?"

"It is Richard Plantagenet himself," said Cedric; "yet I need not remind thee that, coming hither a guest of free-will, he may neither be injured nor detained prisoner—thou well knowest thy duty to him as his host."

"Ay, by my faith!" said Athelstane; "and my duty as a subject besides, for I here tender him my allegiance, heart and hand."

"My son," said Edith, "think on thy royal rights!"

"Think on the freedom of England, degenerate Prince!" said Cedric.

"Mother and friend," said Athelstane, "a truce to your upbraidings—bread and water and a dungeon are marvellous mortifiers of ambition, and I rise from the tomb a wiser man than I descended into it. One half of those vain follies were puffed into mine ear by that perfidious Abbot Wolfram, and you may now judge if he is a counsellor to be trusted. Since these plots were set in agitation, I have had nothing but hurried journeys, indigestions, blows and bruises, imprisonments and starvation; besides that they can only end in the murder of some thousands of quiet folk. I tell you, I will be king in my own domains, and nowhere else; and my first act of dominion shall be to hang the Abbot."

"And my ward Rowena," said Cedric—"I trust you intend not to desert her?"

"Father Cedric," said Athelstane, "be reasonable. The Lady Rowena cares not for me—she loves the little finger of my kinsman Wilfred's glove better than my whole person. There she stands to avouch it—Nay, blush not, kinswoman, there is no shame in loving a courtly knight better than a country franklin—and do not laugh neither, Rowena, for grave-clothes and a thin visage are, God knows, no matter of merriment—Nay, an thou wilt needs laugh, I will find thee a better jest—Give me thy hand, or rather lend it me, for I but ask it in the way of friendship.—Here, cousin Wilfred of Ivanhoe, in thy favour I renounce and abjure—Hey! by Saint Dunstan, our cousin Wilfred hath vanished!—Yet, unless my eyes are still dazzled with the fasting I have undergone, I saw him stand there but even now."

All now looked around and enquired for Ivanhoe, but he had vanished. It was at length discovered that a Jew had been to seek him; and that, after very brief conference, he had called for Gurth and his armour, and had left the castle.

"Fair cousin," said Athelstane to Rowena, "could I think that this sudden disappearance of Ivanhoe was occasioned by other than the weightiest reason, I would myself resume—"

But he had no sooner let go her hand, on first observing that Ivanhoe had disappeared, than Rowena, who had found her situation extremely embarrassing, had taken the first opportunity to escape from the apartment.

"Certainly," quoth Athelstane, "women are the least to be trusted of all animals, monks and abbots excepted. I am an infidel, if I expected not thanks from her, and perhaps a kiss to boot—These cursed grave-clothes have surely a spell on them, every one flies from me.—To you I turn, noble King Richard, with the vows of allegiance, which, as a liege-subject—"

But King Richard was gone also, and no one knew whither. At length it was learned that he had hastened to the court-yard, summoned to his presence the Jew who had spoken with Ivanhoe, and after a moment's speech with him, had called vehemently to horse, thrown himself upon a steed, compelled the Jew to mount another, and set off at a rate, which, according to Wamba, rendered the old Jew's neck not worth a penny's purchase.

"By my halidome!" said Athelstane, "it is certain that Zernebock hath possessed himself of my castle in my absence. I return in my grave-clothes, a pledge restored from the very sepulchre, and every one I speak to vanishes as soon as they hear my voice!—But it skills not talking of it. Come, my friends—such of you as are left, follow me to the banquet-hall, lest any more of us disappear—it is, I trust, as yet tolerably furnished, as becomes the obsequies of an ancient Saxon noble; and should we tarry any longer, who knows but the devil may fly off with the supper?"

CHAPTER XLIII

*Be Mowbray's sins so heavy in his bosom,
That they may break his foaming courser's back,
And throw the rider headlong in the lists,
A caitiff recreant!
—Richard II*

Our scene now returns to the exterior of the Castle, or Preceptory, of Templestowe, about the hour when the bloody die was to be cast for the life or death of Rebecca. It was a scene of bustle and life, as if the whole vicinity had poured forth its inhabitants to a village wake, or rural feast. But the earnest desire to look on blood and death, is not peculiar to those dark ages; though in the gladiatorial exercise of single combat and general tourney, they were habituated to the bloody spectacle of brave men falling by each other's hands. Even in our own days, when morals are better understood, an execution, a bruising match, a riot, or a meeting of radical reformers, collects, at considerable hazard to themselves, immense crowds of spectators, otherwise little interested, except to see how matters are to be conducted, or whether the heroes of the day are, in the heroic language of insurgent tailors, flints or dunghills.

The eyes, therefore, of a very considerable multitude, were bent on the gate of the Preceptory of Templestowe, with the purpose of witnessing the procession; while still greater numbers had already surrounded the tiltyard belonging to that establishment. This enclosure was formed on a piece of level ground adjoining to the Preceptory, which had been levelled with care, for the exercise of military and chivalrous sports. It occupied the brow of a soft and gentle eminence, was carefully palisaded around, and, as the Templars willingly invited spectators to be witnesses of their skill in feats of chivalry, was amply supplied with galleries and benches for their use.

On the present occasion, a throne was erected for the Grand Master at the east end, surrounded with seats of distinction for the Preceptors and Knights of the Order. Over these floated the sacred standard, called "Le Beau-seant", which was the ensign, as its name was the battle-cry, of the Templars.

At the opposite end of the lists was a pile of faggots, so arranged around a stake, deeply fixed in the ground, as to leave a space for the victim whom they were destined to consume, to enter within the fatal circle, in order to be chained to the stake by the fetters which hung ready for that purpose. Beside this deadly apparatus stood four black slaves, whose colour and African features, then so little known in England, appalled the multitude, who gazed on them as on demons employed about their own diabolical exercises. These men stirred not, excepting now and then, under the direction of one who seemed their chief, to shift and replace the ready fuel. They looked not on the multitude. In fact, they seemed insensible of their presence, and of every thing save the discharge of their own horrible duty.

And when, in speech with each other, they expanded their blubber lips, and showed their white fangs, as if they grinned at the thoughts of the expected tragedy, the startled commons could scarcely help believing that they were actually the familiar spirits with whom the witch had communed, and who, her time being out, stood ready to assist in her dreadful punishment. They whispered to each other, and communicated all the feats which Satan had performed during that busy and unhappy period, not failing, of course, to give the devil rather more than his due.

"Have you not heard, Father Denet," quoth one boor to another advanced in years, "that the devil has carried away bodily the great Saxon Thane, Athelstane of Coningsburgh?"

"Ay, but he brought him back though, by the blessing of God and Saint Dunstan."

"How's that?" said a brisk young fellow, dressed in a green cassock embroidered with gold, and having at his heels a stout lad bearing a harp upon his back, which betrayed his vocation. The Minstrel seemed of no vulgar rank; for, besides the splendour of his gaily braided doublet, he wore around his neck a silver chain, by which hung the "wrest", or key, with which he tuned his harp. On his right arm was a silver plate, which, instead of bearing, as usual, the cognizance or badge of the baron to whose family he belonged, had barely the word SHERWOOD engraved upon it.—"How mean you by that?" said the gay Minstrel, mingling in the conversation of the peasants; "I came to seek one subject for my rhyme, and, by'r Lady, I were glad to find two."

"It is well avouched," said the elder peasant, "that after Athelstane of Coningsburgh had been dead four weeks—"

"That is impossible," said the Minstrel; "I saw him in life at the Passage of Arms at Ashby-de-la-Zouche."

"Dead, however, he was, or else translated," said the younger peasant; "for I heard the Monks of Saint Edmund's singing the death's hymn for him; and, moreover, there was a rich death-meal and dole at the Castle of Coningsburgh, as right was; and thither had I gone, but for Mabel Parkins, who—"

"Ay, dead was Athelstane," said the old man, shaking his head, "and the more pity it was, for the old Saxon blood—"

"But, your story, my masters—your story," said the Minstrel, somewhat impatiently.

"Ay, ay—construe us the story," said a burly Friar, who stood beside them, leaning on a pole that exhibited an appearance between a pilgrim's staff and a quarter-staff, and probably acted as either when occasion served,—"*Your story*," said the stalwart churchman; "burn not daylight about it—we have short time to spare."

"An please your reverence," said Dennet, "a drunken priest came to visit the Sacristan at Saint Edmund's—"

"It does not please my reverence," answered the churchman, "that there should be such an animal as a drunken priest, or, if there were, that a layman should so speak him. Be mannerly, my friend, and conclude the holy man only wrapt in meditation, which makes the head dizzy and foot unsteady, as if the stomach were filled with new wine—I have felt it myself."

"Well, then," answered Father Dennet, "a holy brother came to visit the Sacristan at Saint Edmund's—a sort of hedge-priest is the visitor, and kills half the deer that are stolen in the forest, who loves the tinkling of a pint-pot better than the sacring-bell, and deems a flitch of bacon worth ten of his breviary; for the rest, a good fellow and a merry, who will flourish a quarter-staff, draw a bow, and dance a Cheshire round, with e'er a man in Yorkshire."

"That last part of thy speech, Dennet," said the Minstrel, "has saved thee a rib or twain."

"Tush, man, I fear him not," said Dennet; "I am somewhat old and stiff, but when I fought for the bell and ram at Doncaster—"

"But the story—the story, my friend," again said the Minstrel.

"Why, the tale is but this—Athelstane of Coningsburgh was buried at Saint Edmund's."

"That's a lie, and a loud one," said the Friar, "for I saw him borne to his own Castle of Coningsburgh."

"Nay, then, e'en tell the story yourself, my masters," said Dennet, turning sulky at these repeated contradictions; and it was with some difficulty that the boor could be prevailed on, by the request of his comrade and the Minstrel, to renew his tale.—"*These two 'sober' friars*," said he at length, "since this reverend man will needs have them such, had continued drinking good ale, and wine, and what not, for the best part for a summer's day, when they were aroused by a deep groan, and a clanking of chains, and the figure of the deceased Athelstane entered the apartment, saying, '*Ye evil shep-herds!*—'"

"It is false," said the Friar, hastily, "he never spoke a word."

"So ho! Friar Tuck," said the Minstrel, drawing him apart from the rustics; "we have started a new hare, I find."

"I tell thee, Allan-a-Dale," said the Hermit, "I saw Athelstane of Coningsburgh as much as bodily eyes ever saw a living man. He had his shroud on, and all about him smelt of the sepulchre—A butt of sack will not wash it out of my memory."

"Pshaw!" answered the Minstrel; "thou dost but jest with me!"

"Never believe me," said the Friar, "an I fetched not a knock at him with my quarter-staff that would have felled an ox, and it glided through his body as it might through a pillar of smoke!"

"By Saint Hubert," said the Minstrel, "but it is a wondrous tale, and fit to be put in metre to the ancient tune, '*Sorrow came to the old Friar.*'"

"Laugh, if ye list," said Friar Tuck; "but an ye catch me singing on such a theme, may the next ghost or devil carry me off with him headlong! No, no—I instantly formed the purpose of assisting at some good work, such as the burning of a witch, a judicial combat, or the like matter of godly service, and therefore am I here."

As they thus conversed, the heavy bell of the church of Saint Michael of Templestowe, a venerable building, situated in a hamlet at some distance from the Preceptory, broke short their argument. One by one the sullen sounds fell successively on the ear, leaving but sufficient space for each to die away in distant echo, ere the air was again filled by repetition of the iron knell. These sounds, the signal of the approaching ceremony, chilled with awe the hearts of the assembled multitude, whose eyes were now turned to the Preceptory, expecting the approach of the Grand Master, the champion, and the criminal.

At length the drawbridge fell, the gates opened, and a knight, bearing the great standard of the Order, sallied from the castle, preceded by six trumpets, and followed by the Knights Preceptors, two and two, the Grand Master coming last, mounted on a stately horse, whose furniture was of the simplest kind. Behind him came Brian de Bois-Guilbert, armed cap-a-pie in bright armour, but without his lance, shield, and sword, which were borne by his two esquires behind him. His face, though partly hidden by a long plume which floated down from his barrel-cap, bore a strong and mingled expression of passion, in which pride seemed to contend with irresolution. He looked ghastly pale, as if he had not slept for several nights, yet reined his pawing war-horse with the habitual ease and grace proper to the best lance of the Order of the Temple. His general appearance was grand and commanding; but, looking at him with attention, men read that in his dark features, from which they willingly withdrew their eyes.

On either side rode Conrade of Mont-Fitchet, and Albert de Malvoisin, who acted as godfathers to the champion. They were in their robes of peace, the white dress of the Order. Behind them followed other Companions of the Temple, with a long train of esquires and pages clad in black, aspirants to the honour of being one day Knights of the Order. After these neophytes came a guard of warders on foot, in the same sable livery, amidst whose partisans might be seen the pale form of the accused, moving with a slow but undismayed step towards the scene of her fate. She was stript of all her ornaments, lest perchance there should be among them some of those amulets which Satan was supposed to bestow upon his victims, to deprive them of the power of confession even when under the torture. A coarse white dress, of the simplest form, had been substituted for her Oriental garments; yet there was such an exquisite mixture of courage and resignation in her look, that even in this garb, and with no other ornament than her long black tresses, each eye wept that looked upon her, and the most hardened bigot regretted the fate that had converted a creature so goodly into a vessel of wrath, and a waged slave of the devil.

A crowd of inferior personages belonging to the Preceptory followed the victim, all moving with the utmost order, with arms folded, and looks bent upon the ground.

This slow procession moved up the gentle eminence, on the summit of which was the tiltyard, and, entering the lists, marched once around them from right to left, and when they had completed the circle, made a halt. There was then a momentary bustle, while the Grand Master and all his attendants, excepting the champion and his godfathers, dismounted from their horses, which were immediately removed out of the lists by the esquires, who were in attendance for that purpose.

The unfortunate Rebecca was conducted to the black chair placed near the pile. On her first glance at the terrible spot where preparations were making for a death alike dismaying to the mind and painful to the body, she was observed to shudder and shut her eyes, praying internally doubtless, for her lips moved though no speech was heard. In the space of a minute she opened her eyes, looked fixedly on the pile as if to familiarize her mind with the object, and then slowly and naturally turned away her head.

Meanwhile, the Grand Master had assumed his seat; and when the chivalry of his order was placed around and behind him, each in his due rank, a loud and long flourish of the trumpets announced that the Court were seated for judgment. Malvoisin, then, acting as godfather of the champion, stepped forward, and laid the glove of the Jewess, which was the pledge of battle, at the feet of the Grand Master.

"Valorous Lord, and reverend Father," said he, "here standeth the good Knight, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Knight Preceptor of the Order of the Temple, who, by accepting the pledge of battle which I now lay at your reverence's feet, hath become bound to do his devoir in combat this day, to maintain that this Jewish maiden, by name Rebecca, hath justly deserved the doom passed upon her in a Chapter of this most Holy Order of the Temple of Zion, condemning her to die as a sorceress;—here, I say, he standeth, such battle to do, knightly and honourable, if such be your noble and sanctified pleasure."

"Hath he made oath," said the Grand Master, "that his quarrel is just and honourable? Bring forward the Crucifix and the '*Te igitur.*'"

"Sir, and most reverend father," answered Malvoisin, readily, "our brother here present hath already sworn to the truth of his accusation in the hand of the good Knight Conrade de Mont-Fitchet; and otherwise he ought not to be sworn, seeing that his adversary is an unbeliever, and may take no oath."

This explanation was satisfactory, to Albert's great joy; for the wily knight had foreseen the great difficulty, or rather impossibility, of prevailing upon Brian de Bois-Guilbert to take such an oath before the assembly, and had invented this excuse to escape the necessity of his doing so.

The Grand Master, having allowed the apology of Albert Malvoisin, commanded the herald to stand forth and do his devoir. The trumpets then again flourished, and a herald, stepping forward, proclaimed aloud,—“Oyez, oyez, oyez.—Here standeth the good Knight, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, ready to do battle with any knight of free blood, who will sustain the quarrel allowed and allotted to the Jewess Rebecca, to try by champion, in respect of lawful essoine of her own body; and to such champion the reverend and valorous Grand Master here present allows a fair field, and equal partition of sun and wind, and whatever else appertains to a fair combat.” The trumpets again sounded, and there was a dead pause of many minutes.

“No champion appears for the appellant,” said the Grand Master. “Go, herald, and ask her whether she expects any one to do battle for her in this her cause.” The herald went to the chair in which Rebecca was seated, and Bois-Guilbert suddenly turning his horse's head toward that end of the lists, in spite of hints on either side from Malvoisin and Mont-Fitchet, was by the side of Rebecca's chair as soon as the herald.

“Is this regular, and according to the law of combat?” said Malvoisin, looking to the Grand Master.

“Albert de Malvoisin, it is,” answered Beaumanoir; “for in this appeal to the judgment of God, we may not prohibit parties from having that communication with each other, which may best tend to bring forth the truth of the quarrel.”

In the meantime, the herald spoke to Rebecca in these terms:—“Damsel, the Honourable and Reverend the Grand Master demands of thee, if thou art prepared with a champion to do battle this day in thy behalf, or if thou dost yield thee as one justly condemned to a deserved doom?”

“Say to the Grand Master,” replied Rebecca, “that I maintain my innocence, and do not yield me as justly condemned, lest I become guilty of mine own blood. Say to him, that I challenge such delay as his forms will permit, to see if God, whose opportunity is in man's extremity, will raise me up a deliverer; and when such uttermost space is passed, may His holy will be done!” The herald retired to carry this answer to the Grand Master.

“God forbid,” said Lucas Beaumanoir, “that Jew or Pagan should impeach us of injustice!—Until the shadows be cast from the west to the eastward, will we wait to see if a champion shall appear for this unfortunate woman. When the day is so far passed, let her prepare for death.”

The herald communicated the words of the Grand Master to Rebecca, who bowed her head submissively, folded her arms, and, looking up towards heaven, seemed to expect that aid from above which she could scarce promise herself from man. During this awful pause, the voice of Bois-Guilbert broke upon her ear—it was but a whisper, yet it startled her more than the summons of the herald had appeared to do.

“Rebecca,” said the Templar, “dost thou hear me?”

“I have no portion in thee, cruel, hard-hearted man,” said the unfortunate maiden.

“Ay, but dost thou understand my words?” said the Templar; “for the sound of my voice is frightful in mine own ears. I scarce know on what ground we stand, or for what purpose they have brought us hither.—This listed space—that chair—these faggots—I know their purpose, and yet it appears to me like something unreal—the fearful picture of a vision, which appals my sense with hideous fantasies, but convinces not my reason.”

“My mind and senses keep touch and time,” answered Rebecca, “and tell me alike that these faggots are destined to consume my earthly body, and open a painful but a brief passage to a better world.”

“Dreams, Rebecca,—dreams,” answered the Templar; “idle visions, rejected by the wisdom of your own wiser Sadducees. Hear me, Rebecca,” he said, proceeding with animation; “a better chance hast thou for life and liberty than yonder knaves and dotard dream of. Mount thee behind me on my steed—on Zamor, the gallant horse that never failed his rider. I won him in single fight from the Soldan of Trebizond—mount, I say, behind me—in one short hour is pursuit and enquiry far behind—a new world of pleasure opens to thee—to me a new career of fame. Let them speak the doom which I despise, and erase the name of Bois-Guilbert from their list of monastic slaves! I will wash out with blood whatever blot they may dare to cast on my scutcheon.”

“Tempter,” said Rebecca, “begone!—Not in this last extremity canst thou move me one hair's-breadth from my resting place—surrounded as I am by foes, I hold thee as my worst and most deadly enemy—avoid thee, in the name of God!”

Albert Malvoisin, alarmed and impatient at the duration of their conference, now advanced to interrupt it.

“Hath the maiden acknowledged her guilt?” he demanded of Bois-Guilbert; “or is she resolute in her denial?”

“She is indeed resolute,” said Bois-Guilbert.

“Then,” said Malvoisin, “must thou, noble brother, resume thy place to attend the issue—The shades are changing on the circle of the dial—Come, brave Bois-Guilbert—come, thou hope of our holy Order, and soon to be its head.”

As he spoke in this soothing tone, he laid his hand on the knight's bridle, as if to lead him back to his station.

“False villain! what meanest thou by thy hand on my rein?” said Sir Brian, angrily. And shaking off his companion's grasp, he rode back to the upper end of the lists.

“There is yet spirit in him,” said Malvoisin apart to Mont-Fitchet, “were it well directed—but, like the Greek fire, it burns whatever approaches it.”

The Judges had now been two hours in the lists, awaiting in vain the appearance of a champion.

“And reason good,” said Friar Tuck, “seeing she is a Jewess—and yet, by mine Order, it is hard that so young and beautiful a creature should perish without one blow being struck in her behalf! Were she ten times a witch, provided she were but the least bit of a Christian, my quarter-staff should ring noon on the steel cap of yonder fierce Templar, ere he carried the matter off thus.”

It was, however, the general belief that no one could or would appear for a Jewess, accused of sorcery; and the knights, instigated by Malvoisin, whispered to each other, that it was time to declare the pledge of Rebecca forfeited. At this instant a knight, urging his horse to speed, appeared on the plain advancing towards the lists. A hundred voices exclaimed, “A champion! a champion!” And despite the prepossessions and prejudices of the multitude, they shouted unanimously as the knight rode into the tiltyard, The second glance, however, served to destroy the hope that his timely arrival had excited. His horse, urged for many miles to its utmost speed, appeared to reel from fatigue, and the rider, however undauntedly he presented himself in the lists, either from weakness, weariness, or both, seemed scarce able to support himself in the saddle.

To the summons of the herald, who demanded his rank, his name, and purpose, the stranger knight answered readily and boldly, “I am a good knight and noble, come hither to sustain with lance and sword the just and lawful quarrel of this damsel, Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York; to uphold the doom pronounced against her to be false and truthless, and to defy Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, as a traitor, murderer, and liar; as I will prove in this field with my body against his, by the aid of God, of Our Lady, and of Monseigneur Saint George, the good knight.”

“The stranger must first show,” said Malvoisin, “that he is good knight, and of honourable lineage. The Temple sendeth not forth her champions against nameless men.”

“My name,” said the Knight, raising his helmet, “is better known, my lineage more pure, Malvoisin, than thine own. I am Wilfred of Ivanhoe.”

“I will not fight with thee at present,” said the Templar, in a changed and hollow voice. “Get thy wounds healed, purvey thee a better horse, and it may be I will hold it worth my while to scourge out of thee this boyish spirit of bravado.”

“Ha! proud Templar,” said Ivanhoe, “hast thou forgotten that twice didst thou fall before this lance? Remember the lists at Acre—remember the Passage of Arms at Ashby—remember thy proud vaunt in the halls of Rotherwood, and the gage of your gold chain against my reliquary, that thou wouldst do battle with Wilfred of Ivanhoe, and recover the honour thou hadst lost! By that reliquary and the holy relic it contains, I will proclaim thee, Templar, a coward in every court in Europe—in every Preceptory of thine Order—unless thou do battle without farther delay.”

Bois-Guilbert turned his countenance irresolutely towards Rebecca, and then exclaimed, looking fiercely at Ivanhoe, “Dog of a Saxon! take thy lance, and prepare for the death thou hast drawn upon thee!”

“Does the Grand Master allow me the combat?” said Ivanhoe.

"I may not deny what thou hast challenged," said the Grand Master, "provided the maiden accepts thee as her champion. Yet I would thou wert in better plight to do battle. An enemy of our Order hast thou ever been, yet would I have thee honourably met with."

"Thus—thus as I am, and not otherwise," said Ivanhoe; "it is the judgment of God—to his keeping I commend myself.—Rebecca," said he, riding up to the fatal chair, "dost thou accept of me for thy champion?"

"I do," she said—"I do," fluttered by an emotion which the fear of death had been unable to produce, "I do accept thee as the champion whom Heaven hath sent me. Yet, no—no—thy wounds are uncured—Meet not that proud man—why shouldst thou perish also?"

But Ivanhoe was already at his post, and had closed his visor, and assumed his lance. Bois-Guilbert did the same; and his esquire remarked, as he clasped his visor, that his face, which had, notwithstanding the variety of emotions by which he had been agitated, continued during the whole morning of an ashy paleness, was now become suddenly very much flushed.

The herald, then, seeing each champion in his place, uplifted his voice, repeating thrice—"Faites vos devoirs, preux chevaliers!" After the third cry, he withdrew to one side of the lists, and again proclaimed, that none, on peril of instant death, should dare, by word, cry, or action, to interfere with or disturb this fair field of combat. The Grand Master, who held in his hand the gage of battle, Rebecca's glove, now threw it into the lists, and pronounced the fatal signal words, "Laissez aller".

The trumpets sounded, and the knights charged each other in full career. The wearied horse of Ivanhoe, and its no less exhausted rider, went down, as all had expected, before the well-aimed lance and vigorous steed of the Templar. This issue of the combat all had foreseen; but although the spear of Ivanhoe did but, in comparison, touch the shield of Bois-Guilbert, that champion, to the astonishment of all who beheld it reeled in his saddle, lost his stirrups, and fell in the lists.

Ivanhoe, extricating himself from his fallen horse, was soon on foot, hastening to mend his fortune with his sword; but his antagonist arose not. Wilfred, placing his foot on his breast, and the sword's point to his throat, commanded him to yield him, or die on the spot. Bois-Guilbert returned no answer.

"Slay him not, Sir Knight," cried the Grand Master, "unshriven and unabsolved—kill not body and soul! We allow him vanquished."

He descended into the lists, and commanded them to unhelm the conquered champion. His eyes were closed—the dark red flush was still on his brow. As they looked on him in astonishment, the eyes opened—but they were fixed and glazed. The flush passed from his brow, and gave way to the pallid hue of death. Unscathed by the lance of his enemy, he had died a victim to the violence of his own contending passions.

"This is indeed the judgment of God," said the Grand Master, looking upwards—"Fiat voluntas tua!"

CHAPTER XLIV

So! now 'tis ended, like an old wife's story.

Webster

When the first moments of surprise were over, Wilfred of Ivanhoe demanded of the Grand Master, as judge of the field, if he had manfully and rightfully done his duty in the combat? "Manfully and rightfully hath it been done," said the Grand Master. "I pronounce the maiden free and guiltless—The arms and the body of the deceased knight are at the will of the victor."

"I will not despoil him of his weapons," said the Knight of Ivanhoe, "nor condemn his corpse to shame—he hath fought for Christendom—God's arm, no human hand, hath this day struck him down. But let his obsequies be private, as becomes those of a man who died in an unjust quarrel.—And for the maiden—"

He was interrupted by a clattering of horses' feet, advancing in such numbers, and so rapidly, as to shake the ground before them; and the Black Knight galloped into the lists. He was followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms, and several knights in complete armour.

"I am too late," he said, looking around him. "I had doomed Bois-Guilbert for mine own property.—Ivanhoe, was this well, to take on thee such a venture, and thou scarce able to keep thy saddle?"

"Heaven, my Liege," answered Ivanhoe, "hath taken this proud man for its victim. He was not to be honoured in dying as your will had designed."

"Peace be with him," said Richard, looking steadfastly on the corpse, "if it may be so—he was a gallant knight, and has died in his steel harness full knightly. But we must waste no time—Bohun, do thine office!"

A Knight stepped forward from the King's attendants, and, laying his hand on the shoulder of Albert de Malvoisin, said, "I arrest thee of High Treason."

The Grand Master had hitherto stood astonished at the appearance of so many warriors.—He now spoke.

"Who dares to arrest a Knight of the Temple of Zion, within the girth of his own Preceptory, and in the presence of the Grand Master? and by whose authority is this bold outrage offered?"

"I make the arrest," replied the Knight—"I, Henry Bohun, Earl of Essex, Lord High Constable of England."

"And he arrests Malvoisin," said the King, raising his visor, "by the order of Richard Plantagenet, here present.—Conrade Mont-Fitchet, it is well for thee thou art born no subject of mine.—But for thee, Malvoisin, thou diest with thy brother Philip, ere the world be a week older."

"I will resist thy doom," said the Grand Master.

"Proud Templar," said the King, "thou canst not—look up, and behold the Royal Standard of England floats over thy towers instead of thy Temple banner!—Be wise, Beaumanoir, and make no bootless opposition—Thy hand is in the lion's mouth."

"I will appeal to Rome against thee," said the Grand Master, "for usurpation on the immunities and privileges of our Order."

"Be it so," said the King; "but for thine own sake tax me not with usurpation now. Dissolve thy Chapter, and depart with thy followers to thy next Preceptory, (if thou canst find one), which has not been made the scene of treasonable conspiracy against the King of England—Or, if thou wilt, remain, to share our hospitality, and behold our justice."

"To be a guest in the house where I should command?" said the Templar; "never!—Chaplains, raise the Psalm, 'Quare fremuerunt Gentes?'—Knights, squires, and followers of the Holy Temple, prepare to follow the banner of 'Beau-seant!'"

The Grand Master spoke with a dignity which confronted even that of England's king himself, and inspired courage into his surprised and dismayed followers. They gathered around him like the sheep around the watch-dog, when they hear the baying of the wolf. But they evinced not the timidity of the scared flock—there were dark brows of defiance, and looks which menaced the hostility they dared not to proffer in words. They drew together in a dark line of spears, from which the white cloaks of the knights were visible among the dusky garments of their retainers, like the lighter-coloured edges of a sable cloud. The multitude, who had raised a clamorous shout of reprobation, paused and gazed in silence on the formidable and experienced body to which they had unwarily bade defiance, and shrunk back from their front.

The Earl of Essex, when he beheld them pause in their assembled force, dashed the rowels into his charger's sides, and galloped backwards and forwards to array his followers, in opposition to a band so formidable. Richard alone, as if he loved the danger his presence had provoked, rode slowly along the front of the Templars, calling aloud, "What, sirs! Among so many gallant knights, will none dare splinter a spear with Richard?—Sirs of the Temple! your ladies are but sun-burned, if they are not worth the shiver of a broken lance?"

"The Brethren of the Temple," said the Grand Master, riding forward in advance of their body, "fight not on such idle and profane quarrel—and not with thee, Richard of England, shall a Templar cross lance in my presence. The Pope and Princes of Europe shall judge our quarrel, and whether a Christian prince has done well in bucklering the cause which thou hast to-day adopted. If unassailed, we depart assailing no one. To thine honour we refer the armour and household goods of the Order which we leave behind us, and on thy conscience we lay the scandal and offence thou hast this day given to Christendom."

With these words, and without waiting a reply, the Grand Master gave the signal of departure. Their trumpets sounded a wild march, of an Oriental character, which formed the usual signal for the Templars to advance. They changed their array from a line to a column of march, and moved off as slowly as their horses could step, as if to show it was only the will of their Grand Master, and no fear of the opposing and superior force, which compelled them to withdraw.

"By the splendour of Our Lady's brow!" said King Richard, "it is pity of their lives that these Templars are not so trusty as they are disciplined and valiant."

The multitude, like a timid cur which waits to bark till the object of its challenge has turned his back, raised a feeble shout as the rear of the squadron left the ground.

During the tumult which attended the retreat of the Templars, Rebecca saw and heard nothing—she was locked in the arms of her aged father, giddy, and almost senseless, with the rapid change of circumstances around her. But one word from Isaac at length recalled her scattered feelings.

"Let us go," he said, "my dear daughter, my recovered treasure—let us go to throw ourselves at the feet of the good youth."

"Not so," said Rebecca, "O no—no—no—I must not at this moment dare to speak to him—Alas! I should say more than—No, my father, let us instantly leave this evil place."

"But, my daughter," said Isaac, "to leave him who hath come forth like a strong man with his spear and shield, holding his life as nothing, so he might redeem thy captivity; and thou, too, the daughter of a people strange unto him and his—this is service to be thankfully acknowledged."

"It is—it is—most thankfully—most devoutly acknowledged," said Rebecca—"it shall be still more so—but not now—for the sake of thy beloved Rachel, father, grant my request—not now!"

"Nay, but," said Isaac, insisting, "they will deem us more thankless than mere dogs!"

"But thou seest, my dear father, that King Richard is in presence, and that—"

"True, my best—my wisest Rebecca!—Let us hence—let us hence!—Money he will lack, for he has just returned from Palestine, and, as they say, from prison—and pretext for exacting it, should he need any, may arise out of my simple traffic with his brother John. Away, away, let us hence!"

And hurrying his daughter in his turn, he conducted her from the lists, and by means of conveyance which he had provided, transported her safely to the house of the Rabbi Nathan.

The Jewess, whose fortunes had formed the principal interest of the day, having now retired unobserved, the attention of the populace was transferred to the Black Knight. They now filled the air with "Long life to Richard with the Lion's Heart, and down with the usurping Templars!"

"Notwithstanding all this lip-loyalty," said Ivanhoe to the Earl of Essex, "it was well the King took the precaution to bring thee with him, noble Earl, and so many of thy trusty followers."

The Earl smiled and shook his head.

"Gallant Ivanhoe," said Essex, "dost thou know our Master so well, and yet suspect him of taking so wise a precaution! I was drawing towards York having heard that Prince John was making head there, when I met King Richard, like a true knight-errant, galloping hither to achieve in his own person this adventure of the Templar and the Jewess, with his own single arm. I accompanied him with my band, almost maugre his consent."

"And what news from York, brave Earl?" said Ivanhoe; "will the rebels bide us there?"

"No more than December's snow will bide July's sun," said the Earl; "they are dispersing; and who should come posting to bring us the news, but John himself!"

"The traitor! the ungrateful insolent traitor!" said Ivanhoe; "did not Richard order him into confinement?"

"O! he received him," answered the Earl, "as if they had met after a hunting party; and, pointing to me and our men-at-arms, said, 'Thou seest, brother, I have some angry men with me—thou wert best go to our mother, carry her my duteous affection, and abide with her until men's minds are pacified.'"

"And this was all he said?" enquired Ivanhoe; "would not any one say that this Prince invites men to treason by his clemency?"

"Just," replied the Earl, "as the man may be said to invite death, who undertakes to fight a combat, having a dangerous wound unhealed."

"I forgive thee the jest, Lord Earl," said Ivanhoe; "but, remember, I hazarded but my own life—Richard, the welfare of his kingdom."

"Those," replied Essex, "who are specially careless of their own welfare, are seldom remarkably attentive to that of others—But let us haste to the castle, for Richard meditates punishing some of the subordinate members of the conspiracy, though he has pardoned their principal."

From the judicial investigations which followed on this occasion, and which are given at length in the Wardour Manuscript, it appears that Maurice de Bracy escaped beyond seas, and went into the service of Philip of France; while Philip de Malvoisin, and his brother Albert, the Preceptor of Templestowe, were executed, although Waldemar Fitzurse, the soul of the conspiracy, escaped with banishment; and Prince John, for whose behoof it was undertaken, was not even censured by his good-natured brother. No one, however, pitied the fate of the two Malvoisins, who only suffered the death which they had both well deserved, by many acts of falsehood, cruelty, and oppression.

Briefly after the judicial combat, Cedric the Saxon was summoned to the court of Richard, which, for the purpose of quieting the counties that had been disturbed by the ambition of his brother, was then held at York. Cedric tushed and pshawed more than once at the message—but he refused not obedience. In fact, the return of Richard had quenched every hope that he had entertained of restoring a Saxon dynasty in England; for, whatever head the Saxons might have made in the event of a civil war, it was plain that nothing could be done under the undisputed dominion of Richard, popular as he was by his personal good qualities and military fame, although his administration was wilfully careless, now too indulgent, and now allied to despotism.

But, moreover, it could not escape even Cedric's reluctant observation, that his project for an absolute union among the Saxons, by the marriage of Rowena and Athelstane, was now completely at an end, by the mutual dissent of both parties concerned. This was, indeed, an event which, in his ardour for the Saxon cause, he could not have anticipated, and even when the disinclination of both was broadly and plainly manifested, he could scarce bring himself to believe that two Saxons of royal descent should scruple, on personal grounds, at an alliance so necessary for the public weal of the nation. But it was not the less certain: Rowena had always expressed her repugnance to Athelstane, and now Athelstane was no less plain and positive in proclaiming his resolution never to pursue his addresses to the Lady Rowena. Even the natural obstinacy of Cedric sunk beneath these obstacles, where he, remaining on the point of junction, had the task of dragging a reluctant pair up to it, one with each hand. He made, however, a last vigorous attack on Athelstane, and he found that resuscitated sprout of Saxon royalty engaged, like country squires of our own day, in a furious war with the clergy.

It seems that, after all his deadly menaces against the Abbot of Saint Edmund's, Athelstane's spirit of revenge, what between the natural indolent kindness of his own disposition, what through the prayers of his mother Edith, attached, like most ladies, (of the period,) to the clerical order, had terminated in his keeping the Abbot and his monks in the dungeons of Coningsburgh for three days on a meagre diet. For this atrocity the Abbot menaced him with excommunication, and made out a dreadful list of complaints in the bowels and stomach, suffered by himself and his monks, in consequence of the tyrannical and unjust imprisonment they had sustained. With this controversy, and with the means he had adopted to counteract this clerical persecution, Cedric found the mind of his friend Athelstane so fully occupied, that it had no room for another idea. And when Rowena's name was mentioned the noble Athelstane prayed leave to quaff a full goblet to her health, and that she might soon be the bride of his kinsman Wilfred. It was a desperate case therefore. There was obviously no more to be made of Athelstane; or, as Wamba expressed it, in a phrase which has descended from Saxon times to ours, he was a cock that would not fight.

There remained betwixt Cedric and the determination which the lovers desired to come to, only two obstacles—his own obstinacy, and his dislike of the Norman dynasty. The former feeling gradually gave way before the endearments of his ward, and the pride which he could not help nourishing in the fame of his son. Besides, he was not insensible to the honour of allying his own line to that of Alfred, when the superior claims of the descendant of Edward the Confessor were abandoned for ever. Cedric's aversion to the Norman race of kings was also much undermined,—first, by consideration of the impossibility of ridding England of the new dynasty, a feeling which goes far to create loyalty in the subject to the king "de facto"; and, secondly, by the personal attention of King Richard, who delighted in the blunt humour of Cedric, and, to use the language of the Wardour Manuscript, so dealt with the noble Saxon, that, ere he had been a guest at court for seven days, he had given his consent to the marriage of his ward Rowena and his son Wilfred of Ivanhoe.

The nuptials of our hero, thus formally approved by his father, were celebrated in the most august of temples, the noble Minster of York. The King himself attended, and from the countenance which he afforded on this and other occasions to the distressed and hitherto degraded Saxons, gave them a safer and more certain prospect of attaining their just rights, than they could reasonably hope from the precarious chance of a civil war. The Church gave her full solemnities, graced with all the splendour which she of Rome knows how to apply with such brilliant effect.

Gurth, gallantly apparelled, attended as esquire upon his young master whom he had served so faithfully, and the magnanimous Wamba, decorated with a new cap and a most gorgeous set of silver bells. Sharers of Wilfred's dangers and adversity, they remained, as they had a right to expect, the partakers of his more prosperous career.

But besides this domestic retinue, these distinguished nuptials were celebrated by the attendance of the high-born Normans, as well as Saxons, joined with the universal jubilee of the lower orders, that marked the marriage of two individuals as a pledge of the future peace and harmony between two races, which, since that period, have been so completely mingled, that the distinction has become wholly invisible. Cedric lived to see this union approximate towards its completion; for as the two nations mixed in society and formed intermarriages with each other, the Normans abated their scorn, and the Saxons were refined from their rusticity. But it was not until the reign of Edward the Third that the mixed language, now termed English, was spoken at the court of London, and that the hostile distinction of Norman and Saxon seems entirely to have disappeared.

It was upon the second morning after this happy bridal, that the Lady Rowena was made acquainted by her handmaid Elgitha, that a damsel desired admission to her presence, and solicited that their parley might be without witness. Rowena wondered, hesitated, became curious, and ended by commanding the damsel to be admitted, and her attendants to withdraw.

She entered—a noble and commanding figure, the long white veil, in which she was shrouded, overshadowing rather than concealing the elegance and majesty of her shape. Her demeanour was that of respect, unmingled by the least shade either of fear, or of a wish to propitiate favour. Rowena was ever ready to acknowledge the claims, and attend to the feelings, of others. She arose, and would have conducted her lovely visitor to a seat; but the stranger looked at Elgitha, and again intimated a wish to discourse with the Lady Rowena alone. Elgitha had no sooner retired with unwilling steps, than, to the surprise of the Lady of Ivanhoe, her fair visitant kneeled on one knee, pressed her hands to her forehead, and bending her head to the ground, in spite of Rowena's resistance, kissed the embroidered hem of her tunic.

"What means this, lady?" said the surprised bride; "or why do you offer to me a deference so unusual?"

"Because to you, Lady of Ivanhoe," said Rebecca, rising up and resuming the usual quiet dignity of her manner, "I may lawfully, and without rebuke, pay the debt of gratitude which I owe to Wilfred of Ivanhoe. I am—forgive the boldness which has offered to you the homage of my country—I am the unhappy Jewess, for whom your husband hazarded his life against such fearful odds in the tilt-yard of Templestowe."

"Damsel," said Rowena, "Wilfred of Ivanhoe on that day rendered back but in slight measure your unceasing charity towards him in his wounds and misfortunes.

Speak, is there aught remains in which he or I can serve thee?"

"Nothing," said Rebecca, calmly, "unless you will transmit to him my grateful farewell."

"You leave England then?" said Rowena, scarce recovering the surprise of this extraordinary visit.

"I leave it, lady, ere this moon again changes. My father had a brother high in favour with Mohammed Boabdil, King of Grenada—thither we go, secure of peace and protection, for the payment of such ransom as the Moslem exact from our people."

"And are you not then as well protected in England?" said Rowena. "My husband has favour with the King—the King himself is just and generous."

"Lady," said Rebecca, "I doubt it not—but the people of England are a fierce race, quarrelling ever with their neighbours or among themselves, and ready to plunge the sword into the bowels of each other. Such is no safe abode for the children of my people. Ephraim is an heartless dove—Issachar an over-laboured drudge, which stoops between two burdens. Not in a land of war and blood, surrounded by hostile neighbours, and distracted by internal factions, can Israel hope to rest during her wanderings."

"But you, maiden," said Rowena—"you surely can have nothing to fear. She who nursed the sick-bed of Ivanhoe," she continued, rising with enthusiasm—"she can have nothing to fear in England, where Saxon and Norman will contend who shall most do her honour."

"Thy speech is fair, lady," said Rebecca, "and thy purpose fairer; but it may not be—there is a gulf between us. Our breeding, our faith, alike forbid either to pass over it. Farewell—yet, ere I go indulge me one request. The bridal-veil hangs over thy face; deign to raise it, and let me see the features of which fame speaks so highly."

"They are scarce worthy of being looked upon," said Rowena; "but, expecting the same from my visitant, I remove the veil."

She took it off accordingly; and, partly from the consciousness of beauty, partly from bashfulness, she blushed so intensely, that cheek, brow, neck, and bosom, were suffused with crimson. Rebecca blushed also, but it was a momentary feeling; and, mastered by higher emotions, past slowly from her features like the crimson cloud, which changes colour when the sun sinks beneath the horizon.

"Lady," she said, "the countenance you have deigned to show me will long dwell in my remembrance. There reigns in it gentleness and goodness; and if a tinge of the world's pride or vanities may mix with an expression so lovely, how should we chide that which is of earth for bearing some colour of its original? Long, long will I remember your features, and bless God that I leave my noble deliverer united with—"

She stopped short—her eyes filled with tears. She hastily wiped them, and answered to the anxious enquiries of Rowena—"I am well, lady—well. But my heart swells when I think of Torquilstone and the lists of Templestowe.—Farewell. One, the most trifling part of my duty, remains undischarged. Accept this casket—startle not at its contents."

Rowena opened the small silver-chased casket, and perceived a carcanet, or neck lace, with ear-jewels, of diamonds, which were obviously of immense value.

"It is impossible," she said, tendering back the casket. "I dare not accept a gift of such consequence."

"Yet keep it, lady," returned Rebecca.—"You have power, rank, command, influence; we have wealth, the source both of our strength and weakness; the value of these toys, ten times multiplied, would not influence half so much as your slightest wish. To you, therefore, the gift is of little value,—and to me, what I part with is of much less. Let me not think you deem so wretchedly ill of my nation as your commons believe. Think ye that I prize these sparkling fragments of stone above my liberty? or that my father values them in comparison to the honour of his only child? Accept them, lady—to me they are valueless. I will never wear jewels more."

"You are then unhappy!" said Rowena, struck with the manner in which Rebecca uttered the last words. "O, remain with us—the counsel of holy men will wean you from your erring law, and I will be a sister to you."

"No, lady," answered Rebecca, the same calm melancholy reigning in her soft voice and beautiful features—"that—may not be. I may not change the faith of my fathers like a garment unsuited to the climate in which I seek to dwell, and unhappy, lady, I will not be. He, to whom I dedicate my future life, will be my comforter, if I do His will."

"Have you then convents, to one of which you mean to retire?" asked Rowena.

"No, lady," said the Jewess; "but among our people, since the time of Abraham downwards, have been women who have devoted their thoughts to Heaven, and their actions to works of kindness to men, tending the sick, feeding the hungry, and relieving the distressed. Among these will Rebecca be numbered. Say this to thy lord, should he chance to enquire after the fate of her whose life he saved."

There was an involuntary tremour on Rebecca's voice, and a tenderness of accent, which perhaps betrayed more than she would willingly have expressed. She hastened to bid Rowena adieu.

"Farewell," she said. "May He, who made both Jew and Christian, shower down on you his choicest blessings! The bark that waits us hence will be under weigh ere we can reach the port."

She glided from the apartment, leaving Rowena surprised as if a vision had passed before her. The fair Saxon related the singular conference to her husband, on whose mind it made a deep impression. He lived long and happily with Rowena, for they were attached to each other by the bonds of early affection, and they loved each other the more, from the recollection of the obstacles which had impeded their union. Yet it would be enquiring too curiously to ask, whether the recollection of Rebecca's beauty and magnanimity did not recur to his mind more frequently than the fair descendant of Alfred might altogether have approved. Ivanhoe distinguished himself in the service of Richard, and was graced with farther marks of the royal favour. He might have risen still higher, but for the premature death of the heroic Coeur-de-Lion, before the Castle of Chaluz, near Limoges. With the life of a generous, but rash and romantic monarch, perished all the projects which his ambition and his generosity had formed; to whom may be applied, with a slight alteration, the lines composed by Johnson for Charles of Sweden—

*His fate was destined to a foreign strand,
A petty fortress and an "humble" hand;
He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a TALE.*

BOOK V CASTLE DANGEROUS

CHAPTER THE FIRST

Hosts have been known at that dread sound to yield,
And, Douglas dead, his name hath won the field.

JOHN HOME.

It was at the close of an early spring day, when nature, in a cold province of Scotland, was reviving from her winter's sleep, and the air at least, though not the vegetation, gave promise of an abatement of the rigour of the season, that two travellers, whose appearance at that early period sufficiently announced their wandering character, which, in general, secured a free passage even through a dangerous country, were seen coming from the south-westward, within a few miles of the Castle of Douglas, and seemed to be holding their course in the direction of the river of that name, whose dale afforded a species of approach to that memorable feudal fortress. The stream, small in comparison to the extent of its fame, served as a kind of drain to the country in its neighbourhood, and at the same time afforded the means of a rough road to the castle and village. The high lords to whom the castle had for ages belonged, might, had they chosen, have made this access a great deal smoother and more convenient; but there had been as yet little or no exercise for those geniuses, who have taught all the world that it is better to take the more circuitous road round the base of a hill, than the direct course of ascending it on the one side, and descending it directly on the other, without yielding a single step to render the passage more easy to the traveller; still less were those mysteries dreamed of which M'Adam has of late days expounded. But, indeed, to what purpose should the ancient Douglasses have employed his principles, even if they had known them in ever so much perfection? Wheel-carriages, except of the most clumsy description, and for the most simple operations of agriculture, were totally unknown. Even the most delicate female had no resource save a horse, or, in case of sore infirmity, a litter. The men used their own sturdy limbs, or hardy horses, to transport themselves from place to place; and travellers, females in particular, experienced no small inconvenience from the rugged nature of the country. A swollen torrent sometimes crossed their path, and compelled them to wait until the waters had abated their frenzy. The bank of a small river was occasionally torn away by the effects of a thunder-storm, a recent inundation, or the like convulsions of nature; and the wayfarer relied upon his knowledge of the district, or obtained the best local information in his power, how to direct his path so as to surmount such untoward obstacles.

The Douglas issues from an amphitheatre of mountains which bounds the valley to the south-west, from whose contributions, and the aid of sudden storms, it receives its scanty supplies. The general aspect of the country is that of the pastoral hills of the south of Scotland, forming, as is usual, bleak and wild farms, many of which had, at no great length of time from the date of the story, been covered with trees; as some of them still attest by bearing the name of *shaw*, that is, wild natural wood. The neighbourhood of the Douglas water itself was flat land, capable of bearing strong crops of oats and rye, supplying the inhabitants with what they required of these productions. At no great distance from the edge of the river, a few special spots excepted, the soil capable of agriculture was more and more mixed with the pastoral and woodland country, till both terminated in desolate and partly inaccessible moorlands.

Above all, it was war-time, and of necessity all circumstances of mere convenience were obliged to give way to a paramount sense of danger; the inhabitants, therefore, instead of trying to amend the paths which connected them with other districts, were thankful that the natural difficulties which surrounded them rendered it unnecessary to break up or to fortify the access from more open countries. Their wants, with a very few exceptions, were completely supplied, as we have already said, by the rude and scanty produce of their own mountains and *holms*, [Footnote: Holms, or flat plains, by the sides of the brooks and rivers, termed in the south, *lngs*.] the last of which served for the exercise of their limited agriculture, while the better part of the mountains and forest glens produced pasture for their herds and flocks. The recesses of the unexplored depths of these sylvan retreats being seldom disturbed, especially since the lords of the district had laid aside, during this time of strife, their constant occupation of hunting, the various kinds of game had increased of late very considerably; so that not only in crossing the rougher parts of the hilly and desolate country we are describing, different varieties of deer were occasionally seen, but even the wild cattle peculiar to Scotland sometimes showed themselves, and other animals, which indicated the irregular and disordered state of the period. The wild-cat was frequently surprised in the dark ravines or the swampy thickets; and the wolf, already a stranger to the more populous districts of the Lothians, here maintained his ground against the encroachments of man, and was still himself a terror to those by whom he was finally to be extirpated. In winter especially, and winter was hardly yet past, these savage animals were wont to be driven to extremity for lack of food, and used to frequent, in dangerous numbers, the battle-field, the deserted churchyard—nay, sometimes the abodes of living men, there to watch for children, their defenceless prey, with as much familiarity as the fox now-a-days will venture to prowl near the mistress's [Footnote: The good dame, or wife of a respectable farmer, is almost universally thus designated in Scotland.] poultry-yard.

From what we have said, our readers, if they have made—as who in these days has not—the Scottish tour, will be able to form a tolerably just idea of the wilder and upper part of Douglas Dale, during the earlier period of the fourteenth century. The setting sun cast his gleams along a moorland country, which to the westward broke into larger swells, terminating in the mountains called the Larger and Lesser Cairntable. The first of these is, as it were, the father of the hills in the neighbourhood, the source of an hundred streams, and by far the largest of the ridge, still holding in his dark bosom, and in the ravines with which his sides are ploughed, considerable remnants of those ancient forests with which all the high grounds of that quarter were once covered, and particularly the hills, in which the rivers—both those which run to the east, and those which seek the west to discharge themselves into the Solway—hide, like so many hermits, their original and scanty sources.

The landscape was still illuminated by the reflection of the evening sun, sometimes thrown back from pool or stream; sometimes resting on grey rocks, huge cumberers of the soil, which labour and agriculture have since removed, and sometimes contenting itself with gilding the banks of the stream, tinged, alternately grey, green, or ruddy, as the ground itself consisted of rock, or grassy turf, or bare earthen mound, or looked at a distance like a rampart of dark red porphyry. Occasionally, too, the eye rested on the steep brown extent of moorland as the sunbeam glanced back from the little tarn or mountain pool, whose lustre, like that of the eye in the human countenance, gives a life and vivacity to every feature around.

The elder and stouter of the two travellers whom we have mentioned, was a person well, and even showily dressed, according to the finery of the times, and bore at his back, as wandering minstrels were wont, a case, containing a small harp, rote or viol, or some such species of musical instrument for accompanying the voice. The leathern case announced so much, although it proclaimed not the exact nature of the instrument. The colour of the traveller's doublet was blue, and that of his hose violet, with slashes which showed a lining of the same colour with the jerkin. A mantle ought, according to ordinary custom, to have covered this dress; but the heat of the sun, though the season was so early, had induced the wearer to fold up his cloak in small compass, and form it into a bundle, attached to the shoulders like the military greatcoat of the infantry soldier of the present day. The neatness with which it was made up, argued the precision of a practised traveller, who had been long accustomed to every resource which change of weather required. A great profusion of narrow ribands or points, constituting the loops with which our ancestors connected their doublet and hose, formed a kind of cordon, composed of knots of blue or violet, which surrounded the traveller's person, and thus assimilated in colour with the two garments which it was the office of these strings to combine. The bonnet usually worn with this showy dress, was of that kind with which Henry the Eighth and his son, Edward the Sixth, are usually represented. It was more fitted, from the gay stuff of which it was composed, to appear in a public place, than to encounter a storm of rain. It was party-coloured, being made of different stripes of blue and violet; and the wearer arrogated a certain degree of gentility to himself, by wearing a plume of considerable dimensions of the same favourite colours. The features over which this feather drooped were in no degree remarkable for peculiarity of expression. Yet in so desolate a country as the west of Scotland, it would, not have been easy to pass the man without more minute attention than he would have met with where there was more in the character of the scenery to arrest the gaze of the passengers.

A quick eye, a sociable look, seeming to say, "Ay, look at me, I am a man worth noticing, and not unworthy your attention," carried with it, nevertheless, an interpretation which might be thought favourable or otherwise, according to the character of the person whom the traveller met. A knight or soldier would merely have thought that he had met a merry fellow, who could sing a wild song, or tell a wild tale, and help to empty a flagon, with all the accomplishments necessary for

a boon companion at an hostelry, except perhaps an alacrity at defraying his share of the reckoning. A churchman, on the other hand, might have thought he of the blue and violet was of too loose habits, and accustomed too little to limit himself within the boundaries of befitting mirth, to be fit society for one of his sacred calling. Yet the Man of Song had a certain steadiness of countenance, which seemed fitted to hold place in scenes of serious business as well as of gaiety. A wayfaring passenger of wealth (not at that time a numerous class) might have feared in him a professional robber, or one whom opportunity was very likely to convert into such; a female might have been apprehensive of uncivil treatment; and a youth, or timid person, might have thought of murder, or such direful doings. Unless privately armed, however, the minstrel was ill-acquainted for any dangerous occupation. His only visible weapon was a small crooked sword, like what we now call a hanger; and the state of the times would have justified any man, however peaceful his intentions, in being so far armed against the perils of the road.

If a glance at this man had in any respect prejudiced him in the opinion of those whom he met on his journey, a look at his companion would, so far as his character could be guessed at—for he was closely muffled up—have passed for an apology and warrant for his associate. The younger traveller was apparently in early youth, a soft and gentle boy, whose Slavonic gown, the appropriate dress of the pilgrim, he wore more closely drawn about him than the coldness of the weather seemed to authorize or recommend. His features, imperfectly seen under the hood of his pilgrim's dress, were prepossessing in a high degree; and though he wore a walking sword, it seemed rather to be in compliance with general fashion than from any violent purpose he did so. There were traces of sadness upon his brow, and of tears upon his cheeks; and his weariness was such, as even his rougher companion seemed to sympathize with, while he privately participated also in the sorrow which left its marks upon a countenance so lovely. They spoke together, and the elder of the two, while he assumed the deferential air proper to a man of inferior rank addressing a superior, showed in tone and gesture, something that amounted to interest and affection.

"Bertram, my friend," said the younger of the two, "how far are we still from Douglas Castle? We have already come farther than the twenty miles, which thou didst say was the distance from Cammock—or how didst thou call the last hostelry which we left by daybreak?"

"Cummock, my dearest lady—I beg ten thousand excuses—my gracious young lord."

"Call me Augustine," replied his comrade, "if you mean to speak as is fittest for the time."

"Nay, as for that," said Bertram, "if your ladyship can condescend to lay aside your quality, my own good breeding is not so firmly sewed to me but that I can doff it, and resume it again without its losing a stitch; and since your ladyship, to whom I am sworn in obedience, is pleased to command that I should treat you as my own son, shame it were to me if I were not to show you the affection of a father, more especially as I may well swear my great oath, that I owe you the duty of such, though well I wot it has, in our case, been the lot of the parent to be maintained by the kindness and liberality of the child; for when was it that I hungered or thirsted, and the *black stock*[Footnote: The table dormant, which stood in a baron's hall, was often so designated.] of Berkley did not relieve my wants?"

"I would have it so," answered the young pilgrim; "I would have it so. What use of the mountains of beef, and the oceans of beer, which they say our domains produce, if there is a hungry heart among our vassalage, or especially if thou, Bertram, who hast served as the minstrel of our house for more than twenty years, shouldst experience such a feeling?"

"Certes, lady," answered Bertram, "it would be like the catastrophe which is told of the Baron of Fastenough, when his last mouse was starved to death in the very pantry; and if I escape this journey without such a calamity, I shall think myself out of reach of thirst or famine for the whole of my life."

"Thou hast suffered already once or twice by these attacks, my poor friend," said the lady.

"It is little," answered Bertram, "any thing that I have suffered; and I were ungrateful to give the inconvenience of missing a breakfast, or making an untimely dinner, so serious a name. But then I hardly see how your ladyship can endure this gear much longer. You must yourself feel, that the plodding along these high lands, of which the Scots give us such good measure in their miles, is no jesting matter; and as for Douglas Castle, why it is still three good miles off."

"The question then is," quoth the lady, heaving a sigh, "what we are to do when we have so far to travel, and when the castle gates must be locked long before we arrive there?"

"For that I will pledge my word," answered Bertram. "The gates of Douglas, under the care of Sir John de Walton, do not open so easily as those of the buttery hatch at our own castle, when it is well oiled; and if your ladyship take my advice, you will turn southward ho! and in two days at farthest, we shall be in a land where men's wants are provided for, as the inns proclaim it, with the least possible delay, and the secret of this little journey shall never be known to living mortal but ourselves, as sure as I am sworn minstrel, and man of faith."

"I thank thee for thy advice, mine honest Bertram," said the lady, "but I cannot profit by it. Should thy knowledge of these parts possess thee with an acquaintance with any decent house, whether it belong to rich or poor, I would willingly take quarters there, if I could obtain them from this time until to-morrow morning. The gates of Douglas Castle will then be open to guests of so peaceful an appearance as we carry with us, and—and—it will out—we might have time to make such applications to our toilet as might ensure us a good reception, by drawing a comb through our locks, or such like foppery."

"Ah, madam!" said Bertram, "were not Sir John de Walton in question, methinks I should venture to reply, that an unwashed brow, an unkempt head of hair, and a look far more saucy than your ladyship ever wears, or can wear, were the proper disguise to trick out that minstrel's boy, whom, you wish to represent in the present pageant."

"Do you suffer your youthful pupils to be indeed so slovenly and so saucy, Bertram?" answered the lady. "I for one will not imitate them in that particular; and whether Sir John be now in the Castle of Douglas or not, I will treat the soldiers who hold so honourable a charge with a washed brow, and a head of hair somewhat ordered. As for going back without seeing a castle which has mingled even with my very dreams—at a word, Bertram, thou mayst go that way, but I will not."

"And if I part with your ladyship on such terms," responded the minstrel, "now your frolic is so nearly accomplished, it shall be the foul fiend himself, and nothing more comely or less dangerous, that shall tear me from your side; and for lodging, there is not far from hence the house of one Tom Dickson of Hazelside, one of the most honest fellows of the Dale, and who, although a labouring man, ranked as high as a warrior, when I was in this country, as any noble gentleman that rode in the band of the Douglas."

"He is then a soldier?" said the lady.

"When his country or his lord need his sword," replied Bertram—"and, to say the truth, they are seldom at peace; but otherwise, he is no enemy, save to the wolf which plunders his herds."

"But forget not, my trusty guide," replied the lady, "that the blood in our veins is English, and consequently, that we are in danger from all who call themselves foes to the ruddy Cross."

"Do not fear this man's faith," answered Bertram. "You may trust to him as to the best knight or gentleman of the land. We may make good our lodging by a tune or a song; and it may remember you that I undertook (provided it pleased your ladyship) to temporize a little with the Scots, who, poor souls, love minstrelsy, and when they have but a silver penny, will willingly bestow it to encourage the *gay science*—I promised you, I say, that we should be as welcome to them as if we had been born amidst their own wild hills; and for the best that such a house as Dickson's affords, the glee-man's son, fair lady, shall not breathe a wish in vain. And now, will you speak your mind to your devoted friend and adopted father, or rather your sworn servant and guide, Bertram the Minstrel, what it is your pleasure to do in this matter?"

"O, we will certainly accept of the Scot's hospitality," said the lady, "your minstrel word being plighted that he is a true man. Tom Dickson, call you him?"

"Yes," replied Bertram, "such is his name; and by looking on these sheep, I am assured that we are now upon his land."

"Indeed?" said the lady, with some surprise; "and how is your wisdom aware of that?"

"I see the first letter of his name marked upon this flock," answered the guide. "Ah, learning is what carries a man through the world, as well as if he had the ring by virtue of which old minstrels tell that Adam understood the language of the beasts in paradise. Ah, madam! there is more wit taught in the shepherd's shieling than the lady thinks of, who sews her painted seam in her summer bower."

"Be it so, good Bertram. And although not so deeply skilled in the knowledge of written language as you are, it is impossible for me to esteem its value more than I actually do; so hold we on the nearest road to this Tom Dickson's, whose very sheep tell of his whereabouts. I trust we have not very far to go, although the knowledge that our journey is shortened by a few miles has so much recovered my fatigue, that methinks I could dance all the rest of the way."

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

Rosalind.	Well,	this	is	the	Forest	of	Arden.					
Touchstone.	Ay,	now	am	I	in	Arden;	the	more	fool	I.	When	I
was												at
home	I	was	in	a	better	place;	but	travellers	must	be		content.
Rosalind.	Ay,	be	so,	good	Touchstone.	Look	you,	who	comes			a
here;												talk.
young	man		and	an	old,	in		solemn				

As You Like It. Scene IV. Act 2.

As the travellers spoke together, they reached a turn of the path which presented a more extensive prospect than the broken face of the country had yet shown them. A valley, through which flowed a small tributary stream, exhibited the wild, but not unpleasant, features of "a lone vale of green braken;" here and there besprinkled with groups of alder- trees, of hazels, and of copse-oakwood, which had maintained their stations in the recesses of the valley, although they had vanished from the loftier and more exposed sides of the hills. The farm-house or mansion-house, (for, from its size and appearance, it might have been the one or the other,) was a large but low building, and the walls of the out-houses were sufficiently strong to resist any band of casual depredators. There was nothing, however, which could withstand a more powerful force; for, in a country laid waste by war, the farmer was then, as now, obliged to take his chance of the great evils attendant upon that state of things; and his condition, never a very eligible one, was rendered considerably worse by the insecurity attending it. About half a mile farther was seen a Gothic building of very small extent, having a half dismantled chapel, which the minstrel pronounced to be the Abbey of Saint Bride. "The place," he said, "I understand, is allowed to subsist, as two or three old monks and as many nuns, whom it contains, are permitted by the English to serve God there, and sometimes to give relief to Scottish travellers; and who have accordingly taken assurance with Sir John de Walton, and accepted as their superior a churchman on whom he thinks he can depend. But if these guests happen to reveal any secrets, they are, by some means or other, believed to fly towards the English governor; and therefore, unless your ladyship's commands be positive, I think we had best not trust ourselves to their hospitality."

"Of a surety, no," said the lady, "if thou canst provide me with lodgings where we shall have more prudent hosts."

At this moment, two human forms were seen to approach the farm-house in a different direction from the travellers, and speaking so high, in a tone apparently of dispute, that the minstrel and his companion could distinguish their voices though the distance was considerable. Having screened his eyes with his hand for some minutes, Bertram at length exclaimed, "By our Lady, it is my old friend, Tom Dickson, sure enough!—What can make him in such bad humour with the lad, who, I think, may be the little wild boy, his son Charles, who used to run about and plait rushes some twenty years ago? It is lucky, however, we have found our friends astir; for I warrant, Tom hath a hearty piece of beef in the pot ere he goes to bed, and he must have changed his wont if an old friend hath not his share; and who knows, had we come later, at what hour they may now find it convenient to drop latch and draw bolt so near a hostile garrison; for if we call things by their right names, such is the proper term for an English garrison in the castle of a Scottish nobleman."

"Foolish man," answered the lady, "thou judgest of Sir John de Walton as thou wouldst of some rude boor, to whom the opportunity of doing what he wills is a temptation and license to exercise cruelty and oppression. Now, I could plight you my word, that, setting apart the quarrel of the kingdoms, which, of course, will be fought out in fair battles on both sides, you will find that English and Scottish, within this domain, and within the reach of Sir John de Walton's influence, live together as that same flock of sheep and goats do with the shepherd's dog; a foe from whom they fly upon certain occasions, but around whom they nevertheless eagerly gather for protection should a wolf happen to show himself."

"It is not to your ladyship," answered Bertram, "that I should venture to state my opinion of such matters; but the young knight, when he is sheathed in armour, is a different being from him who feasts in halls among press of ladies; and he that feeds by another man's fireside, and when his landlord, of all men in the world, chances to be the Black Douglas, has reason to keep his eyes about him as he makes his meal:— but it were better I looked after our own evening refreshment, than that I stood here gaping and talking about other folk's matters." So saying, he called out in a thundering tone of voice, "Dickson!—what ho, Thomas Dickson!—will you not acknowledge an old friend who is much disposed to trust his supper and night's lodging to your hospitality?"

The Scotchman, attracted by the call, looked first along the banks of the river, then upward to the bare side of the hill, and at length cast his eyes upon the two figures who were descending from it.

As if he felt the night colder while he advanced from the more sheltered part of the valley to meet them, the Douglas Dale farmer wrapped closer around him the grey plaid, which, from an early period, has been used by the shepherds of the south of Scotland, and the appearance of which gives a romantic air to the peasantry and middle classes; and which, although less brilliant and gaudy in its colours, is as picturesque in its arrangement as the more military tartan mantle of the Highlands. When they approached near to each other, the lady might observe that this friend of her guide was a stout athletic man, somewhat past the middle of life, and already showing marks of the approach, but none of the infirmities, of age, upon a countenance which had been exposed to many a storm. Sharp eyes, too, and a quick observation, exhibited signs of vigilance, acquired by one who had lived long in a country where he had constant occasion for looking around him with caution. His features were still swollen with displeasure; and the handsome young man who attended him seemed to be discontented, like one who had undergone no gentle marks of his father's indignation, and who, from the sullen expression which mingled with an appearance of shame on his countenance, seemed at once affected by anger and remorse.

"Do you not remember me, old friend?" said Bertram, as they approached within a distance for communing; "or have the twenty years which have marched over us since we met, carried along with them all remembrance of Bertram, the English minstrel?"

"In troth," answered the Scot, "it is not for want of plenty of your countrymen to keep you in my remembrance, and I have hardly heard one of them so much as whistle

'Hey, now the day dawns,'

but it has recalled some note of your blythe rebeck; and yet, such animals are we, that I had forgot the mien of my old friend, and scarcely knew him at a distance. But we have had trouble lately; there are a thousand of your countrymen that keep garrison in the Perilous Castle of Douglas yonder, as well as in other places through the vale, and that is but a woful sight for a true Scotchman—even my own poor house has not escaped the dignity of a garrison of a man-at-arms, besides two or three archer knaves, and one or two slips of mischievous boys called pages, and so forth, who will not let a man say, 'this is my own,' by his own fireside. Do not, therefore, think hardly of me, old comrade, if I show you a welcome something colder than you might expect from a friend of other days; for, by Saint Bride of Douglas, I have scarcely anything left to which I can say welcome."

"Small welcome will serve," said Bertram. "My son, make thy reverence to thy father's old friend. Augustine is learning my joyous trade, but he will need some practice ere he can endure its fatigues. If you could give him some little matter of food, and a quiet bed for the night, there's no fear but that we shall both do well enough; for I dare say, when you travel with my friend Charles there,—if that tall youth chance to be my old acquaintance Charles,—you will find yourself accommodated when his wants are once well provided for."

"Nay, the foul fiend take me if I do," answered the Scottish husbandman. "I know not what the lads of this day are made of—not of the same clay as their fathers, to be sure—not sprung from their heather, which fears neither wind nor rain, but from some delicate plant of a foreign country, which will not thrive unless it be nourished under glass, with a murrain to it. The good Lord of Douglas—I have been his henchman, and can vouch for it—did not in his pagehood desire such food and lodging as, in the present day, will hardly satisfy such a lad as your friend Charles."

"Nay," said Bertram, "it is not that my Augustine is over nice; but, for other reasons, I must request of you a bed to himself; he hath of late been unwell."

"Ay, I understand," said Dickson, "your son hath had a touch of that illness which terminates so frequently in the black death you English folk die of? We hear much of the havoc it has made to the southward. Comes it hitherward?"

Bertram nodded.

"Well, my father's house," continued the farmer, "hath more rooms than one, and your son shall have one well-aired and comfortable; and for supper, ye shall have a part of what is prepared for your countrymen, though I would rather have their room than their company. Since I am bound to feed a score of them, they will not dispute the claim of such a skilful minstrel as thou art to a night's hospitality. I am ashamed to say that I must do their bidding even in my own house, Well-a-day, if my good lord were in possession of his own, I have heart and hand enough to turn the whole of them out of my house, like—like"——

"To speak plainly," said Bertram, "like a southern strolling gang from Redesdale, whom I have seen you fling out of your house like a litter of blind puppies, when not one of them looked behind to see who had done him the courtesy until he was half-way to Cairntable."

"Ay," answered the Scotchman, drawing himself up at least six inches taller than before; "then I had a house of my own, and a cause and an arm to keep it. Now I am—what signifies it what I am?—the noblest lord in Scotland is little better."

"Truly, friend," said Bertram, "now you view this matter in a rational light. I do not say that the wisest, the richest, or the strongest man in this world has any right to tyrannize over his neighbour, because he is the more weak, ignorant, and the poorer; but yet if he does enter into such a controversy, he must submit to the course of nature, and that will always give the advantage in the tide of battle to wealth, strength, and health."

"With permission, however," answered Dickson, "the weaker party, if he use his facilities to the utmost, may, in the long run, obtain revenge upon the author of his sufferings, which would be at least compensation for his temporary submission; and he acts simply as a man, and most foolishly as a Scotchman, whether he sustain these wrongs with the insensibility of an idiot, or whether he endeavour to revenge them before Heaven's appointed time has arrived.—But if I talk thus I shall scare you, as I have scared some of your countrymen, from accepting a meal of meat and a night's lodging, in a house where you might be called with the morning to a bloody settlement of a national quarrel."

"Never mind," said Bertram, "we have been known to each other of old; and I am no more afraid of meeting unkindness in your house, than you expect me to come here for the purpose of adding to the injuries of which you complain."

"So be it," said Dickson; "and you, my old friend, are as welcome to my abode as when it never held any guest, save of my own inviting.—And you, my young friend, Master Augustine, shall be looked after as well as if you came with a gay brow and a light cheek, such as best becomes the *gay science*."

"But wherefore, may I ask," said Bertram, "so much displeased but now at my young friend Charles?"

The youth answered before his father had time to speak. "My father, good sir, may put what show upon it he will, but shrewd and wise men wax weak in the brain these troublous times. He saw two or three wolves seize upon three of our choicest wethers; and because I shouted to give the alarm to the English garrison, he was angry as if he could have murdered me—just for saving the sheep from the jaws that would have devoured them."

"This is a strange account of thee, old friend," said Bertram. "Dost thou connive with the wolves in robbing thine own fold?"

"Why, let it pass, if thou lovest me," answered the countryman; "Charles could tell thee something nearer the truth if he had a mind; but for the present let it pass."

The minstrel, perceiving that the Scotchman was fretted and embarrassed with the subject, pressed it no farther.

At this moment, in crossing the threshold of Thomas Dickson's house, they were greeted with sounds from two English soldiers within. "Quiet, Anthony," said one voice,— "quiet, man!—for the sake of common sense, if not common manners;—Robin Hood himself never sat down to his board ere the roast was ready."

"Ready!" quoth another rough voice; "It is roasting to rags, and small had been the knave Dickson's share, even of these rags, had it not been the express orders of the worshipful Sir John de Walton, that the soldiers who lie at outposts should afford to the inmates such provisions as are not necessary for their own subsistence."

"Hush, Anthony,—hush, for shame!" replied his fellow-soldier, "if ever I heard our host's step, I heard it this instant; so give over thy grumbling, since our captain, as we all know, hath prohibited, under strict penalties, all quarrels between his followers and the people of the country."

"I am sure," replied Anthony, "that I have ministered occasion to none; but I would I were equally certain of the good meaning of this sullen-browed Thomas Dickson towards the English soldiers, for I seldom go to bed in this dungeon of a house, but I expect my throat will gape as wide as a thirsty oyster before I awaken. Here he comes, however," added Anthony, sinking his sharp tones as he spoke; "and I hope to be excommunicated if he has not brought with him that mad animal, his son Charles, and two other strangers, hungry enough, I'll be sworn, to eat up the whole supper, if they do us no other injury."

"Shame of thyself, Anthony," repeated his comrade; "a good archer thou as ever wore Kendal green, and yet affect to be frightened for two tired travellers, and alarmed for the inroad their hunger may make on the night's meal. There are four or five of us here—we have our bows and our bills within reach, and scorn to be chased from our supper, or cheated out of our share of it by a dozen Scotchmen, whether stationary or strollers. How say'st thou?" he added, turning to Dickson—"How say ye, quartermaster? it is no secret, that by the directions given to our post, we must enquire into the occupations of such guests as you may receive besides ourselves, your unwilling inmates; you are as ready for supper, I warrant, as supper is for you, and I will only delay you and my friend Anthony,—who becomes dreadfully impatient, until you answer two or three questions which you wot of."

"Bend-the-Bow," answered Dickson, "thou art a civil fellow; and although it is something hard to be constrained to give an account of one's friends, because they chance to quarter in one's own house for a night or two, yet I must submit to the times, and make no vain opposition. You may mark down in your breviary there, that upon the fourteenth day before Palm Sunday, Thomas Dickson brought to his house of Hazelside, in which you hold garrison, by orders from the English governor, Sir John de Walton, two strangers, to whom the said Thomas Dickson had promised refreshment, and a bed for the evening, if it be lawful at this time and place."

"But what are they, these strangers?" said Anthony, somewhat sharply.

"A fine world the while," murmured Thomas Dickson, "that an honest man should be forced to answer the questions of every paltry companion!"— But he mitigated his voice and proceeded. "The eldest of my guests is Bertram, an ancient English minstrel, who is bound on his own errand to the Castle of Douglas, and will communicate what he has to say of news to Sir John de Walton himself. I have known him for twenty years, and never heard any thing of him save that he was good man and true. The younger stranger is his son, a lad recovering from the English disorder, which has been raging far and wide in Westmoreland and Cumberland."

"Tell me," said Bend-the-Bow, "this same Bertram,—was he not about a year since in the service of some noble lady in our own country?"

"I have heard so," answered Dickson.

"We shall, in that case, I think, incur little danger," replied Bend-the-Bow, "by allowing this old man and his son to proceed on their journey to the castle."

"You are my elder and my better," answered Anthony; "but I may remind you that it is not so clearly our duty to give free passage, into a garrison of a thousand men of all ranks, to a youth who has been so lately attacked by a contagious disorder; and I question if our commander would not rather hear that the Black Douglas, with a hundred devils as black as himself, since such is his colour, had taken possession of the outposts of Hazelside with sword and battle-axe, than that one person suffering under this fell sickness had entered peaceably, and by the open wicket of the castle."

"There is something in what thou sayest, Anthony," replied his comrade; "and considering that our governor, since he has undertaken the troublesome job of keeping a castle which is esteemed so much more dangerous than any other within Scotland, has become one of the most cautious and jealous men in the world, we had better, I think, inform him of the circumstance, and take his commands how the stripling is to be dealt with."

"Content am I," said the archer; "and first, methinks, I would just, in order to show that we know what belongs to such a case, ask the stripling a few questions, as how long he has been ill, by what physicians he has been attended, when he was cured, and how his cure is certified, &c."

"True, brother," said Bend-the-Bow. "Thou hearest, minstrel, we would ask thy son some questions—What has become of him?—he was in this apartment but now."

"So please you," answered Bertram, "he did but pass through the apartment. Mr. Thomas Dickson, at my entreaty, as well as in respectful reverence to your honour's health, carried him through the room without tarriance, judging his own bed-chamber the fittest place for a young man recovering from a severe illness, and after a day of no small fatigue."

"Well," answered the elder archer, "though it is uncommon for men who, like us, live by bow-string and quiver, to meddle with interrogations and examinations; yet, as the case stands, we must make some enquiries of your son, ere we permit him to set forth to the Castle of Douglas, where you say his errand leads him."

"Rather my errand, noble sir," said the minstrel, "than that of the young man himself."

"If such be the case," answered Bend-the-Bow, "we may sufficiently do our duty by sending yourself, with the first grey light of dawn, to the castle, and letting your son remain in bed, which I warrant is the fittest place for him, until we shall receive Sir John de Walton's commands whether he is to be brought onward or not."

"And we may as well," said Anthony, "since we are to have this man's company at supper, make him acquainted with the rules of the out-garrison stationed here for the time." So saying, he pulled a scroll from his leathern pouch, and said, "Minstrel, canst thou read?"

"It becomes my calling," said the minstrel.

"It has nothing to do with mine, though," answered the archer, "and therefore do thou read these regulations aloud; for since I do not comprehend these characters by sight, I lose no chance of having them read over to me as often as I can, that I may fix their sense in my memory. So beware that thou readest the words letter for letter as they are set down; for thou dost so at thy peril, Sir Minstrel, if thou readest not like a true man."

"On my minstrel word," said Bertram, and began to read excessively slow; for he wished to gain a little time for consideration, which he foresaw would be necessary to prevent his being separated from his mistress, which was likely to occasion her much anxiety and distress. He therefore began thus:—"Outpost at Hazelside, the steading of Goodman Thomas Dickson'—Ay, Thomas, and is thy house so called?"

"It is the ancient name of the steading," said the Scot, "being surrounded by a hazel-shaw, or thicket."

"Hold your chattering tongue, minstrel," said Anthony, "and proceed, as you value your ears, which you seem disposed to make less use of."

"His garrison" proceeded the minstrel, reading, "consists of a lance with its furniture.' What, then, a lance, in other words, a belted knight, commands this party?"

"Tis no concern of thine," said the archer.

"But it is," answered the minstrel; "we have a right to be examined by the highest person in presence."

"I will show thee, thou rascal," said the archer, starting up, "that I am lance enough for thee to reply to, and I will break thy head if thou say'st a word more."

"Take care, brother Anthony," said his comrade, "we are to use travellers courteously—and, with your leave, those travellers best who come from our native land."

"It is even so stated here," said the minstrel, and he proceeded to read:—"The watch at this outpost of Hazelside [Footnote: Hazelside Place, the fief granted to Thomas Dickson by William the Hardy, seventh Lord Douglas, is still pointed out about two miles to the southwest of the Castle Dangerous. Dickson was sixty years of age at the time when Lord James first appeared in Douglasdale. His heirs kept possession of the fief for centuries; and some respectable gentlemen's families in Lanarkshire still trace themselves to this ancestor.—*From Notes by Mr. Haddow.*] shall stop and examine all travellers passing by the said station, suffering such to pass onward to the town of Douglas or to Douglas Castle, always interrogating them with civility, and detaining and turning them back if there arise matter of suspicion; but conducting themselves in all matters civilly and courteously to the people of the country, and to those who travel in it.' You see, most excellent and valiant archer," added the commentator Bertram, "that courtesy and civility are, above all, recommended to your worship in your conduct towards the inhabitants, and those passengers who, like us, may chance to fall under your rules in such matters."

"I am not to be told at this time of day," said the archer, "how to conduct myself in the discharge of my duties. Let me advise you, Sir Minstrel, to be frank and open in your answers to our enquiries, and you shall have no reason to complain."

"I hope at all events," said the minstrel, "to have your favour for my son, who is a delicate stripling, and not accustomed to play his part among the crew which inhabit this wild world."

"Well," continued the elder and more civil of the two archers, "if thy son be a novice in this terrestrial navigation, I warrant that thou, my friend, from thy look and manner of speech, hast enough of skill to use thy compass. To comfort thee, although thou must thyself answer the questions of our governor or deputy-governor, in order that he may see there is no offence in thee, I think there may be permission granted for thy son's residing here in the convent hard by, (where the nuns, by the way, are as old as the monks, and have nearly as long beards, so thou mayst be easy about thy son's morals,) until thou hast done thy business at Douglas Castle, and art ready to resume thy journey."

"If such permission," said the minstrel, "can be obtained, I should be better pleased to leave him at the abbey, and go myself, in the first place, to take the directions of your commanding officer."

"Certainly," answered the archer, "that will be the safest and best way; and with a piece or two of money, thou mayst secure the protection of the abbot."

"Thou say'st well," answered the minstrel; "I have known life, I have known every stile, gap, pathway, and pass of this wilderness of ours for some thirty years; and he that cannot steer his course fairly through it like an able seaman, after having served such an apprenticeship, can hardly ever be taught, were a century to be given him to learn it in."

"Since thou art so expert a mariner," answered the archer Anthony, "thou hast, I warrant me, met in thy wanderings a potation called a morning's draught, which they who are conducted by others, where they themselves lack experience, are used to bestow upon those who undertake the task of guide upon such an occasion?"

"I understand you, sir," quoth the minstrel; "and although money, or *drink-geld*, as the Fleming calls it, is rather a scarce commodity in the purse of one of my calling, yet according to my feeble ability, thou shalt have no cause to complain that thine eyes or those of thy comrades have been damaged by a Scottish mist, while we can find an English coin to pay for the good liquor which would wash them clear."

"Content," said the archer; "we now understand each other; and if difficulties arise on the road, thou shalt not want the countenance of Anthony to sail triumphantly through them. But thou hadst better let thy son know soon of the early visit to the abbot to-morrow, for thou mayst guess that we cannot and dare not delay our departure for the convent a minute after the eastern sky is ruddy; and, with other infirmities, young men often are prone to laziness and a love of ease."

"Thou shalt have no reason to think so," answered the minstrel; "not the lark himself, when waked by the first ray peeping over the black cloud, springs more lightly to the sky, than will my Augustine answer the same brilliant summons. And now we understand each other, I would only further pray you to forbear light talk while my son is in your company,—a boy of innocent life, and timid in conversation."

"Nay, jolly minstrel," said the elder archer, "thou givest us here too gross an example of Satan reproving sin. If thou hast followed thy craft for twenty years, as thou pretendest, thy son, having kept thee company since childhood, must by this time be fit to open a school to teach even devils the practice of the seven deadly sins, of which none know the theory if those of the *gay science* are lacking."

"Truly, comrade, thou speakest well," answered Bertram, "and I acknowledge that we minstrels are too much to blame in this matter. Nevertheless, in good sooth, the fault is not one of which I myself am particularly guilty; on the contrary, I think that he who would wish to have his own hair honoured when time has strewed it with silver, should so rein his mirth when in the presence of the young, as may show in what respect he holds innocence. I will, therefore, with your permission, speak a word to Augustine, that to-morrow we must be on foot early."

"Do so, my friend," said the English soldier; "and do the same the more speedily that our poor supper is still awaiting until thou art ready to partake of it."

"To which, I promise thee," said Bertram, "I am disposed to entertain, no delay."

"Follow me, then," said Dickson, "and I will show thee where this young bird of thine has his nest."

Their host accordingly tripped up the wooden stair, and tapped at a door, which he thus indicated was that of his younger guest.

"Your father," continued he, as the door opened, "would speak with you, Master Augustine."

"Excuse me, my host," answered Augustine, "the truth is, that this room being directly above your eating-chamber, and the flooring not in the best possible repair, I have been compelled to the unhandsome practice of eavesdropping, and not a word has escaped me that passed concerning my proposed residence at the abbey, our journey to-morrow, and the somewhat early hour at which I must shake off sloth, and, according to thy expression, fly down from the roost."

"And how dost thou relish," said Dickson, "being left with the Abbot of Saint Bride's little flock here."

"Why, well," said the youth, "if the abbot is a man of respectability becoming his vocation, and not one of those swaggering churchmen, who stretch out the sword, and bear themselves like rank soldiers in these troublous times."

"For that, young master," said Dickson, "if you let him put his hand deep enough into your purse, he will hardly quarrel with any thing." "Then I will leave him to my father," replied Augustine, "who will not grudge him any thing he asks in reason."

"In that case," replied the Scotchman, "you may trust to our abbot for good accommodation—and so both sides are pleased."

"It is well, my son," said Bertram, who now joined in the conversation; "and that thou mayst be ready for early travelling, I shall presently get our host to send thee some food, after partaking of which thou shouldst go to bed and sleep off the fatigue of to-day, since to-morrow will bring work for itself."

"And as for thy engagement to these honest archers," answered Augustine, "I hope you will be able to do what will give pleasure to our guides, if they are disposed to be civil and true men."

"God bless thee, my child!" answered Bertram; "thou knowest already what would drag after thy beck all the English archers that were ever on this side of the Solway. There is no fear of a grey goose shaft, if you sing a *reveille* like to that which chimed even now from that silken nest of dainty young goldfinches."

"Hold me as in readiness, then," said the seeming youth, "when you depart to-morrow morning. I am within hearing, I suppose, of the bells of Saint Bride's chapel, and have no fear, through my sloth, of keeping you or your company waiting."

"Good night, and God bless thee, my child!" again said the minstrel; "remember that your father sleeps not far distant, and on the slightest alarm will not fail to be with you. I need scarce bid thee recommend thyself, meantime, to the great Being, who is the friend and father of us all."

The pilgrim thanked his supposed father for his evening blessing, and the visitors withdrew without farther speech at the time, leaving the young lady to those engrossing fears, which, the novelty of her situation, and the native delicacy of her sex being considered, naturally thronged upon her.

The tramp of a horse's foot was not long after heard at the house of Hazelside, and the rider was welcomed by its garrison with marks of respect. Bertram understood so much as to discover from the conversation of the warders that this late arrival was Aymer de Valence, the knight who commanded the little party, and to the furniture of whose lance, as it was technically called, belonged the archers with whom we have already been acquainted, a man-at-arms or two, a certain proportion of pages or grooms, and, in short, the command and guidance of the garrison at Thomas Dickson's, while in rank he was Deputy-governor of Douglas Castle.

To prevent all suspicion respecting himself and his companion, as well as the risk of the latter being disturbed, the minstrel thought it proper to present himself to the inspection of this knight, the great authority of the little place. He found him with as little scruple as the archers heretofore, making a supper of the relics of the roast beef.

Before this young knight Bertram underwent an examination, while an old soldier took down in writing such items of information as the examinee thought proper to express in his replies, both with regard to the minutiae of his present journey, his business at Castle Douglas, and his route when that business should be accomplished; a much more minute examination, in a word, than he had hitherto undergone by the archers, or perhaps than was quite agreeable to him, being encumbered with at least the knowledge of one secret, whatever more. Not that this new examiner had any thing stern or severe in his looks or his questions. As to the first, he was mild, gentle, and "meek as a maid," and possessed exactly of the courteous manners ascribed by our father Chaucer to the pattern of chivalry whom he describes upon his pilgrimage to Canterbury. But with all his gentleness, De Valence showed a great degree of acuteness and accuracy in his queries; and well pleased was Bertram that the young knight did not insist upon seeing his supposed son, although even in that case his ready wit had resolved, like a seaman in a tempest, to sacrifice one part to preserve the rest. He was not, however, driven to this extremity, being treated by Sir Aymer with that degree of courtesy which in that age men of song were in general thought entitled to. The knight kindly and liberally consented to the lad's remaining in the convent, as a fit and quiet residence for a stripling and an invalid, until Sir John de Walton should express his pleasure on the subject; and Sir Aymer consented to this arrangement the more willingly, as it averted all possible danger of bringing disease into the English garrison.

By the young knight's order, all in Dickson's house were despatched earlier to rest than usual; the matin bell of the neighbouring chapel being the signal for their assembly by daybreak. They rendezvoused accordingly, and proceeded to Saint Bride's, where they heard mass, after which an interview took place between the abbot Jerome and the minstrel, in which the former undertook, with the permission of De Valence, to receive Augustine into his abbey as a guest for a few days, less or more, and for which Bertram promised an acknowledgment in name of alms, which was amply satisfactory.

"So be it," said Bertram, taking leave of his supposed son; "rely on it I will not tarry a day longer at Douglas Castle than shall suffice for transacting my business there, which is to look after the old books you wot of, and I will speedily return for thee to the Abbey of Saint Bride, to resume in company our journey homeward."

"O father," replied the youth, with a smile, "I fear if you get among romances and chronicles, you will be so earnest in your researches, that you will forget poor Augustine and his concerns."

"Never fear me, Augustine," said the old man, making the motion of throwing a kiss towards the boy; "thou art good and virtuous, and Heaven will not neglect thee, were thy father unnatural enough to do so. Believe me, all the old songs since Merlin's day shall not make me forget thee."

Thus they separated, the minstrel, with the English knight and his retinue, to move towards the castle, and the youth in dutiful attendance on the venerable abbot, who was delighted to find that his guest's thoughts turned rather upon spiritual things than on the morning repast, of the approach of which he could not help being himself sensible.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

This night, methinks, is but the daylight sick.
It looks a little paler; 'tis a day
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

To facilitate the progress of the party on its way to Douglas Castle, the Knight of Valence offered the minstrel the convenience of a horse, which the fatigues of yesterday made him gladly accept. Any one acquainted with equestrian exercise, is aware that no means of refreshment carries away the sense of fatigue from over walking so easily, as the exchange to riding, which calls into play another set of muscles, and leaves those which have been over exerted an opportunity of resting through change of motion, more completely than they could in absolute repose. Sir Aymer de Valence was sheathed in armour, and mounted on his charger, two of the archers, a groom of mean rank, and a squire, who looked in his day for the honour of knighthood, completed the detachment, which seemed so disposed as to secure the minstrel from escape, and to protect him against violence. "Not," said the young knight, addressing himself to Bertram, "that there is usually danger in travelling in this country any more than in the most quiet districts of England; but some disturbances, as you may have learnt, have broken out here within this last year, and have caused the garrison of Castle Douglas to maintain a stricter watch. But let us move on, for the complexion of the day is congenial with the original derivation of the name of the country, and the description of the chiefs to whom it belonged—*Sholto Dhu Glass*—(see yon dark grey man,) and dark grey will our route prove this morning, though by good luck it is not long."

The morning was indeed what the original Gaelic words implied, a drizzly, dark, moist day; the mist had settled upon the hills, and unrolled itself upon brook, glade, and tarn, and the spring breeze was not powerful enough to raise the veil, though from the wild sounds which were heard occasionally on the ridges, and through the glens, it might be supposed to wail at a sense of its own inability. The route of the travellers was directed by the course which the river had ploughed for itself down the valley, the banks of which bore in general that dark grey livery which Sir Aymer de Valence had intimated to be the prevalent tint of the country. Some ineffectual struggles of the sun shot a ray here and there to salute the peaks of the hills; yet these were unable to surmount the dulness of a March morning, and, at so early an hour, produced a variety of shades, rather than a gleam of brightness upon the eastern horizon. The view was monotonous and depressing, and apparently the good knight Aymer sought some amusement in occasional talk with Bertram, who, as was usual with his craft, possessed a fund of knowledge, and a power of conversation, well suited to pass away a dull morning. The minstrel, well pleased to pick up such information as he might be able concerning the present state of the country, embraced every opportunity of sustaining the dialogue.

"I would speak with you, Sir Minstrel," said the young knight. "If thou dost not find the air of this morning too harsh for thine organs, heartily do I wish thou wouldst fairly tell me what can have induced thee, being, as thou seemst, a man of sense, to thrust thyself into a wild country like this, at such a time.—And you, my masters," addressing the archers and the rest of the party, "methinks it would be as fitting and seeming if you reined back your steeds for a horse's length or so, since I apprehend you can travel on your way without the pastime of minstrelsy." The bowmen took the hint, and fell back, but, as was expressed by their grumbling observations, by no means pleased that there seemed little chance of their overhearing what conversation should pass between the young knight and the minstrel, which proceeded as follows—

"I am, then, to understand, good minstrel," said the knight, "that you, who have in your time borne arms, and even followed Saint George's red- cross banner to the Holy Sepulchre, are so little tired of the danger attending our profession, that you feel yourself attracted unnecessarily to regions where the sword, for ever loose in its scabbard, is ready to start on the slightest provocation?"

"It would be hard," replied the minstrel bluntly, "to answer such a question in the affirmative; and yet, when you consider how nearly allied is his profession who celebrates deeds of arms with that of the knight who performs them, your honour, I think, will hold it advisable that a minstrel desirous of doing his devoir, should, like a young knight, seek the truth of adventures where it is to be found, and rather visit countries where the knowledge is preserved of high and noble deeds, than those lazy and quiet realms, in which men live indolently, and die ignobly in peace, or by sentence of law. You yourself, sir, and those like you, who hold life cheap in respect of glory, guide your course through this world on the very same principle which brings your poor rhyming servant Bertram from a far province of merry England, to this dark country of rugged Scotland called Douglas Dale. You long to see adventures worthy of notice, and I (under favour for naming us two in the same breath) seek a scanty and precarious, but not a dishonourable living, by preparing for immortality, as well as I can, the particulars of such exploits, especially the names of those who were the heroes of these actions. Each, therefore, labours in his vocation; nor can the one be justly wondered at more than the other, seeing that if there be any difference in the degrees of danger to which both the hero and the poet are exposed, the courage, strength, arms, and address of the valiant knight, render it safer for him to venture into scenes of peril, than for the poor man of rhyme."

"You say well," answered the warrior; "and although it is something of novelty to me to hear your craft represented as upon a level with my own mode of life, yet shame were it to say that the minstrel who toils so much to keep in memory the feats of gallant knights should not himself prefer fame to existence, and a single achievement of valour to a whole age without a name, or to affirm that he follows a mean and unworthy profession."

"Your worship will then acknowledge," said the minstrel, "that it is a legitimate object in such as myself, who, simple as I am, have taken my regular degrees among the professors of the *gay science* at the capital town of Aigues-Mortos, to struggle forward into this northern district, where I am well assured many things have happened which have been adapted to the harp by minstrels of great fame in ancient days, and have become the subject of lays which lie deposited in the library of Castle Douglas, where, unless copied over by some one who understands the old British characters and language, they must, with whatever they may contain, whether of entertainment or edification, be speedily lost to posterity. If these hidden treasures were preserved and recorded by the minstrel art of my poor self and others, it might be held well to compensate for the risk of a chance blow of a broadsword, or the sweep of a brown bill, while I am engaged in collecting them; and I were unworthy of the name of a man, much more of an inventor or finder, [Footnote: The name of Maker stands for *Poet* (with the original sense of which word it exactly corresponds) in the old Scottish language. That of *Trouveur* or Troubadour—Finder, in short—has a similar meaning, and almost in every country the poetical tribes have been graced with the same epithets, inferring the property of those who employ invention or creation.] should I weigh the loss of life, a commodity always so uncertain, against the chance of that immortality which will survive in my lay after my broken voice and shivered harp shall no longer be able either to express tune or accompany tale."

"Certainly," said Sir Aymer, "having a heart to feel such a motive, you have an undoubted right to express it; nor should I have been in any degree disposed to question it had I found many minstrels prepared, like yourself, to prefer renown even to life itself, which most men think of greatly more consequence."

"There are, indeed, noble sir," replied Bertram, "minstrels, and, with your reverence, even belted knights themselves, who do not sufficiently value that renown which is acquired at the risk of life. To such ignoble men we must leave their own reward—let us abandon to them earth, and the things of earth, since they cannot aspire to that glory which is the *best* reward of others."

The minstrel uttered these last words with such enthusiasm, that the knight drew his bridle, and stood fronting Bertram, with his countenance kindling at the same theme, on which, after a short silence, he expressed himself with a like vivacity.

"Well fare thy heart, gay companion! I am happy to see there is still so much enthusiasm surviving in the world. Thou hast fairly won the minstrel groat; and if I do not pay it in conformity to my sense of thy merit, it shall be the fault of dame Fortune, who has graced my labours in these Scottish wars with the niggard pay of Scottish money. A gold piece or two there must be remaining of the ransom of one French knight, whom chance threw into my hands, and that, my friend, shall surely be thine own; and hark thee, I, Aymer de Valence, who now speak to thee, am born of the noble House of Pembroke; and though now landless, shall, by the grace of Our Lady, have in time a fitting establishment, wherein I will find room for a minstrel like thee, if thy talents have not by that time found thee a better patron."

"Thank thee, noble knight," said the minstrel, "as well for thy present intentions, as I hope I shall for thy future performance; but I may say, with truth, that I have not the sordid inclination of many of my brethren."

"He who partakes the true thirst of noble fame," said the young knight, "can have little room in his heart for the love of gold. But thou hast not yet told me, friend minstrel, what are the motives, in particular which have attracted thy wandering steps to this wild country?"

"Were I to do so," replied Bertram, rather desirous to avoid the question, as in some respects too nearly bordering on the secret purpose of his journey, "it might sound like a studied panegyric on thine own bold deeds, Sir Knight, and those of your companions in arms; and such adulation, minstrel as I am, I hate like an empty cup at a companion's lips. But let me say in few words, that Douglas Castle, and the deeds of valour which it has witnessed, have sounded wide through England; nor is there a gallant knight or trusty minstrel, whose heart does not throb at the name of the stronghold, which, in former days, the foot of an Englishman never entered, except in hospitality. There is a magic in the very names of Sir John de Walton and Sir Aymer de Valence, the gallant defenders of a place so often won back by its ancient lords, and with such circumstances of valour and cruelty, that it bears, in England, the name of the Dangerous Castle."

"Yet I would fain hear," answered the knight, "your own minstrel account of those legends which have induced you, for the amusement of future times, to visit a country which, at this period, is so distracted and perilous."

"If you can endure the length of a minstrel tale," said Bertram—"I for one am always amused by the exercise of my vocation, and have no objection to tell my story, provided you do not prove an impatient listener."

"Nay, for that matter," said the young knight, "a fair listener thou shalt have of me; and if my reward be not great, my attention at least shall be remarkable."

"And he," said the minstrel, "must be a poor gleeman who does not hold himself better paid with that, than with gold or silver, were the pieces English rose-nobles. On this condition, then, I begin a long story, which may, in one or other of its details, find subject for better minstrels than myself, and be listened to by such warriors as you hundreds of years hence."

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

While	many	a	merry	lay	and	many	a	song
Cheer'd	the	rough	road,	we	wish'd	the	rough	road
The	rough	road	then	returning	in	a	round,	
Mark'd	their	impatient	steps,	for	all	was	fairy	ground.

DR. JOHNSON.

"It was about the year of redemption one thousand two hundred and eighty-five years," began, the minstrel, "when King Alexander the Third of Scotland lost his daughter Margaret, whose only child of the same name, called the Maiden of Norway, (as her father was king of that country,) became the heiress of this kingdom of Scotland, as well as of her father's crown. An unhappy death was this for Alexander, who had no nearer heirs left of his own body than this grandchild. She indeed might claim his kingdom by birthright; but the difficulty of establishing such a claim of inheritance must have been anticipated by all who bestowed a thought upon the subject. The Scottish king, therefore, endeavoured to make up for his loss by replacing his late Queen, who was an English princess, sister of our Edward the First, with Juletta, daughter of the Count de Dreux. The solemnities at the nuptial ceremony, which took place in the town of Jedburgh, were very great and remarkable, and particularly when, amidst the display of a pageant which was exhibited on the occasion, a ghastly spectre made its appearance in the form of a skeleton, as the King of Terrors is said to be represented.—Your worship is free to laugh at this, if you think it a proper subject for mirth; but men are alive who viewed it with their own eyes, and the event showed too well of what misfortunes this apparition was the singular prognostication."

"I have heard the story," said the knight; "but the monk who told it me, suggested that the figure, though unhappily chosen, was perhaps purposely introduced as a part of the pageant."

"I know not that," said the minstrel, dryly; "but there is no doubt that shortly after this apparition King Alexander died, to the great sorrow of his people. The Maid of Norway, his heiress, speedily followed her grandfather to the grave, and our English king, Sir Knight, raked up a claim of dependency and homage due, he said, by Scotland, which neither the lawyers, nobles, priests, nor the very minstrels of Scotland, had ever before heard of."

"Now, beshrew me," interrupted Sir Aymer de Valence, "this is beyond bargain. I agreed to hear your tale with patience, but I did not pledge myself that it should contain matter to the reproach of Edward the First, of blessed memory; nor will I permit his name to be mentioned in my hearing without the respect due his high rank and noble qualities."

"Nay," said the minstrel, "I am no highland bagpiper or genealogist, to carry respect for my art so far as to quarrel with a man of worship who stops me at the beginning of a pibroch. I am an Englishman, and wish dearly well to my country; and, above all, I must speak the truth. But I will avoid disputable topics. Your age, sir, though none of the ripest, authorizes me to suppose you may have seen the battle of Falkirk, and other onslaughts in which the competition of Bruce and Baliol has been fiercely agitated, and you will permit me to say, that if the Scottish have not had the right upon their side, they have at least defended the wrong with the efforts of brave men and true."

"Of brave men I grant you," said the knight, "for I have seen no cowards amongst them; but as for truth, they can best judge of it who know how often they have sworn faith to England, and how repeatedly they have broken their vow."

"I shall not stir the question," said the minstrel, "leaving it to your worship to determine which has most falsehood—he who compels a weaker person to take an unjust path, or he who, compelled by necessity, takes the imposed oath without the intention of keeping his word."

"Nay, nay," said De Valence, "let us keep our opinions, for we are not likely to force each other from the faith we have adopted on this subject. But take my advice, and whilst thou travellest under an English pennon, take heed that thou keepest off this conversation in the hall and kitchen, where perhaps the soldier may be less tolerant than the officer; and now, in a word, what is thy legend of this Dangerous Castle?"

"For that," replied Bertram, "methinks your worship is most likely to have a better edition than I, who have not been in this country for many years; but it is not for me to bandy opinions with your knightship. I will even proceed with the tale as I have heard it. I need not, I presume, inform your worship that the Lords of Douglas, who founded this castle, are second to no lineage in Scotland in the antiquity of their descent. Nay, they have themselves boasted that their family is not to be seen or distinguished, like other great houses, until it is found at once in a certain degree of eminence. 'You may see us in the tree,' they say, 'you cannot discover us in the twig; you may see us in the stream, you cannot trace us to the fountain.' In a word, they deny that historians or genealogists can point out the first mean man named Douglas, who originally elevated the family; and true it is, that so far back as we have known this race, they have always been renowned for valour and enterprise, accompanied with the power which made that enterprise effectual."

"Enough," said the knight, "I have heard of the pride and power of that great family, nor does it interest me in the least to deny or detract from their bold claims to consideration in this respect."

"Without doubt you must also have heard, noble sir," replied the minstrel, "many things of James, the present heir of the house of Douglas?" "More than enough," answered the English knight; "he is known to have been a stout supporter of that outlawed traitor, William Wallace; and again, upon the first raising of the banner by this Robert Bruce, who pretends to be King of Scotland, this young springald, James Douglas, must needs start into rebellion anew. He plunders his uncle, the Archbishop of St. Andrews, of a considerable sum of money, to fill the Scottish Usurper's not over-burdened treasury, debauches the servants of his relation, takes arms, and though repeatedly chastised in the field, still keeps his vaunt, and threatens mischief to those, who, in the name of his rightful sovereign, defend the Castle of Douglasdale."

"It is your pleasure to say so, Sir Knight," replied Bertram; "yet I am sure, were you a Scot, you would with patience hear me tell over what has been said of this young man by those who have known him, and whose account of his adventures shows how differently the same tale may be told. These men talk of the present heir of this ancient family as fully adequate to maintain and augment its reputation; ready, indeed, to undergo every peril in the cause of Robert the Bruce, because the Bruce is esteemed by him his lawful king; and sworn and devoted, with such small strength as he can muster, to revenge himself on those Southrons who have, for several years, as he thinks, unjustly, possessed themselves of his father's abode."

"O," replied Sir Aymer de Valence, "we have heard much of his achievements in this respect, and of his threats against our governor and ourselves; yet we think it scarce likely that Sir John de Walton will move from Douglasdale without the King's order, although this James Douglas, a mere chicken, take upon himself to crack his voice by crowing like a cock of the game."

"Sir," answered Bertram, "our acquaintance is but brief, and yet I feel it has been so beneficial to me, that I trust there is no harm, in hoping that James Douglas and you may never meet in bodily presence till the state of the two countries shall admit of peace being between you."

"Thou art obliging, friend," answered Sir Aymer, "and, I doubt not, sincere; and truly thou seemest to have a wholesome sense of the respect due to this young knight, when men talk of him in his native valley of Douglas. For me, I am only poor Aymer of Valence, without an acre of land, or much hope of acquiring any, unless I cut something huge with my broadsword out of the middle of these hills. Only this, good minstrel, if thou livest to tell my story, may I pray thee to use thy scrupulous custom of searching out the verity, and whether I live or die thou shalt not, I think, discover that thy late acquaintance of a spring morning hath added more to the laurels of James of Douglas, than any man's death must give to him by whose stronger arm, or more lucky chance, it is his lot to fall."

"I nothing fear you, Sir Knight," said the minstrel, "for yours is that happy brain, which, bold in youth as beseems a young knight, is in more advanced life the happy source of prudent counsel, of which I would not, by an early death, wish thy country to be deprived."

"Thou art so candid, then, as to wish Old England the benefit of good advice" said Sir Aymer, "though thou leanest to the side of Scotland in the controversy?"

"Assuredly, Sir Knight," said the minstrel, "since in wishing that Scotland and England each knew their own true interest, I am bound to wish them both alike well; and they should, I think, desire to live in friendship together. Occupying each their own portion of the same island, and living under the same laws, and being at peace with each other, they might without fear, face the enmity of the whole world."

"If thy faith be so liberal," answered the Knight, "as becomes a good man, thou must certainly pray, Sir Minstrel, for the success of England in the war, by which alone these murderous hostilities of the northern nation can end in a solid peace. The rebellions of this obstinate country are but the struggles of the stag when he is mortally wounded; the animal grows weaker and weaker with every struggle, till his resistance is effectually tamed by the hand of death."

"Not so, Sir Knight," said the minstrel; "if my creed is well taught me, we ought not so to pray. We may, without offence, intimate in our prayers the end we wish to obtain; but it is not for us, poor mortals, to point out to an all-seeing Providence the precise manner in which our petitions are to be accomplished, or to wish the downfall of a country to end its commotions, as the death-stab terminates the agonies of the wounded stag. Whether I appeal to my heart or to my understanding, the dictate would be to petition Heaven for what is just and equal in the case; and if I should fear for thee, Sir Knight, in an encounter with James of Douglas, it is only because he upholds, as I conceive, the better side of the debate; and powers more earthly have presaged to him success."

"Do you tell me so, Sir Minstrel," said De Valence in a threatening tone, "knowing me and my office?"

"Your personal dignity and authority" said Bertram, "cannot change the right into wrong, or avert what Providence has decreed to take place. You know, I must presume, that the Douglas hath, by various devices, already contrived to make himself master of this Castle of Douglas three several times, and that Sir John de Walton, the present governor, holds it with a garrison trebled in force, and under the assurance that if, without surprise, he should keep it from the Scottish power for a year and a day, he shall obtain the barony of Douglas, with its extensive appendages, in free property for his reward; while, on the other hand, if he shall suffer the fortress during this space to be taken, either by guile or by open force, as has happened successively to the holders of the Dangerous Castle, he will become liable to dishonour as a knight, and to attainder as a subject; and the chiefs who take share with him, and serve under him, will participate also in his guilt and his punishment?"

"All this I know well" said Sir Aymer; "and I only wonder that, having become public, the conditions have, nevertheless, been told with so much accuracy; but what has this to do with the issue of the combat, if the Douglas and I should chance to meet? I will not surely be disposed to fight with less animation because I wear my fortune upon my sword, or become coward because I fight for a portion of the Douglas's estate, as well as for fame and for fatherland? And after all"—

"Hear me," said the minstrel; "an ancient gleeman has said, that in a false quarrel there is no true valour, and the *los* or praise won therein, is, when balanced against honest fame, as valueless as a wreath formed out of copper, compared to a chaplet of pure gold; but I bid you not take me for thy warrant in this important question. Thou well knowest how James of Thirlwall, the last English commander before Sir John de Walton, was surprised, and the castle sacked with circumstances of great inhumanity."

"Truly," said Sir Aymer, "I think that Scotland and England both have heard of that onslaught, and of the disgusting proceedings of the Scottish chieftain, when he caused transport into the wild forest gold, silver, ammunition, and armour, and all things that could be easily removed, and destroyed a large quantity of provisions in a manner equally savage and unheard-of."

"Perhaps, Sir Knight," said Bertram, "you were yourself an eyewitness of that transaction, which has been spoken of far and wide, and is called the Douglas Larder?"

"I saw not the actual accomplishment of the deed," said De Valence; "that is, I witnessed it not a-doing, but I beheld enough of the sad relics to make the Douglas Larder never by me to be forgotten as a record of horror and abomination. I would speak it truly, by the hand of my father and by my honour as a knight! and I will leave it to thee to judge whether it was a deed calculated to secure the smiles of Heaven in favour of the actors. This is my edition of the story:—

"A large quantity of provisions had during two years or thereabouts been collected from different points, and the Castle of Douglas, newly repaired, and, as was thought, carefully guarded, was appointed as the place where the said provisions were to be put in store for the service of the King of England, or of the Lord Clifford, whichever should first enter the Western Marches with an English army, and stand in need of such a supply. This army was also to relieve our wants, I mean those of my uncle the Earl of Pembroke, who for some time before had lain with a considerable force in the town called Ayr, near the old Caledonian Forest, and where we had hot wars with the insurgent Scots. Well, sir, it happened, as in similar cases, that Thirlwall, though a bold and active soldier, was surprised in the Castle of Douglas, about Hallowmass, by this same worthy, young James Douglas. In no very good humour was he, as you may suppose; for his father, called William the Hardy, or William Longlegs, having refused, on any terms, to become Anglicized, was made a lawful prisoner, and died as such, closely confined in Berwick, or, as some say, in Newcastle. The news of his father's death had put young Douglas into no small rage, and tended, I think, to suggest what he did in his resentment. Embarrassed by the quantity of provisions which he found in the castle, which, the English being superior in the country, he had neither the means to remove, nor the leisure to stay and consume, the fiend, as I think, inspired him with a contrivance to render them unfit for human use. You shall judge yourself whether it was likely to be suggested by a good or an evil spirit.

"According to this device, the gold, silver, and other transportable commodities being carried to secret places of safety, Douglas caused the meat, the malt, and other corn or grain, to be brought down into the castle cellar, where he emptied the contents of the sacks into one loathsome heap, striking out the heads of the barrels and puncheons, so as to let the mingled drink run through the heap of meal, grain, and so forth. The bullocks provided for slaughter were in like manner knocked on the head, and their blood suffered to drain into the mass of edible substances; and lastly, the flesh of these oxen was buried in the same mass, in which was also included the dead bodies of those in the castle, who, receiving no quarter from the Douglas, paid dear enough for having kept no better watch. This base and unworthy abuse of provisions intended for the use of man, together with throwing into the well of the castle carcasses of men and horses, and other filth for polluting the same, has since that time been called the DOUGLAS LARDER."

"I pretend not, good Sir Aymer," said the minstrel, "to vindicate what you justly reprove, nor can I conceive any mode of rendering provisions arranged after the form of the Douglas Larder, proper for the use of any Christian; yet this young gentleman might perhaps act under the sting of natural resentment, rendering his singular exploit more excusable than it may seem at first. Think, if your own noble father had just died in a lingering captivity, his inheritance seized upon, and occupied as a garrison by a foreign enemy, would not these things stir you to a mode of resentment, which in cold blood, and judging of it as the action of an enemy, your honour might hold in natural and laudable abhorrence?—Would you pay respect to dead and senseless objects, which no one could blame your appropriating to your own use, or even scruple the refusal of quarter to prisoners, which is so often practised even in wars which are otherwise termed fair and humane?"

"You press me close, minstrel," said Aymer de Valence. "I at least have no great interest to excuse the Douglas in this matter, since its consequences were, that I myself, and the rest of my uncle's host, laboured with Clifford and his army to rebuild this same Dangerous Castle; and feeling no stomach for the cheer that the Douglas had left us, we suffered hard commons, though I acknowledge we did not hesitate to adopt for our own use such sheep and oxen as the miserable Scots had still left around their farm-houses; and I jest not, Sir Minstrel, when I acknowledge in sad earnest, that we martial men ought to make our petitions with peculiar penitence to Heaven for mercy, when we reflect on the various miseries which the nature of our profession compels us to inflict on each other."

"It seems to me," answered the minstrel, "that those who feel the stings of their own conscience should be more lenient when they speak of the offences of others; nor do I greatly rely on a sort of prophecy which was delivered, as the men of this hill district say, to the young Douglas, by a man who in the course of nature should have been long since dead, promising him a course of success against the English for having sacrificed his own castle to prevent their making it a garrison."

"We have time enough for the story," said Sir Aymer, "and methinks it would suit a knight and a minstrel better than the grave converse we have hitherto held, which would have beseemed—so God save me—the mouths of two travelling friars."

"So be it," said the minstrel; "the rote or the viol easily changes its time and varies its note."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

A	tale	of	sorrow,	for	your	eyes	may	weep;
A	tale	of	horror,	for	your	flesh	may	tingle;
A	tale	of	wonder,	for			eyebrows	arch,
And	the	flesh	curdles	if	you	read	it	rightly

OLD PLAY.

"Your honour must be informed, gentle Sir Aymer de Valence, that I have heard this story told at a great distance from the land in which it happened, by a sworn minstrel, the ancient friend and servant of the house of Douglas, one of the best, it is said, who ever belonged to that noble family. This minstrel, Hugo Hugonet by name, attended his young master when on this fierce exploit, as was his wont.

"The castle was in total tumult; in one corner the war-men were busy breaking up and destroying provisions; in another, they were slaying men, horses, and cattle, and these actions were accompanied with appropriate sounds. The cattle, particularly, had become sensible of their impending fate, and with awkward resistance and piteous cries, testified that reluctance with which these poor creatures look instinctively on the shambles. The groans and screams of men, undergoing, or about to undergo, the stroke of death, and the screeches of the poor horses which were in mortal agony, formed a fearful chorus. Hugonet was desirous to remove himself from such unpleasant sights and sounds; but his master, the Douglas, had been a man of some reading, and his old servant was anxious to secure a book of poetry, to which he had been attached of old. This contained the Lays of an ancient Scottish Bard, who, if an ordinary human creature while he was in this life, cannot now perhaps be exactly termed such.

"He was, in short, that Thomas, distinguished by the name of the Rhymer, and whose intimacy, it is said, became so great with the gifted people, called the Faery folk, that he could, like them, foretell the future deed before it came to pass, and united in his own person the quality of bard and of soothsayer. But of late years he had vanished almost entirely from this mortal scene; and although the time and manner of his death were never publicly known, yet the general belief was, that he was not severed from the land of the living, but removed to the land of Faery, from whence he sometimes made excursions, and concerned himself only about matters which were to come hereafter. Hugonet was the more earnest to prevent the loss of the works of this ancient bard, as many of his poems and predictions were said to be preserved in the castle, and were supposed to contain much especially connected with the old house of Douglas, as well as other families of ancient descent, who had been subjects of this old man's prophecy; and accordingly he determined to save this volume from destruction in the general conflagration to which the building was about to be consigned by the heir of its ancient proprietors. With this view he hurried up into the little old vaulted room, called 'the Douglas's study,' in which there might be some dozen old books written by the ancient chaplains, in what the minstrels call *the letter black*. He immediately discovered the celebrated lay, called Sir Tristrem, which has been so often altered and abridged as to bear little resemblance to the original. Hugonet, who well knew the value in which this poem was held by the ancient lords of the castle, took the parchment volume from the shelves of the library, and laid it upon a small desk adjacent to the Baron's chair. Having made such preparation for putting it in safety, he fell into a brief reverie, in which the decay of light, and the preparations for the Douglas Larder, but especially the last sight of objects which had been familiar to his eyes, now on the eve of destruction, engaged him at that moment.

"The bard, therefore, was thinking within himself upon the uncommon mixture of the mystical scholar and warrior in his old master, when, as he bent his eyes upon the book of the ancient Rhymer, he was astonished to observe it slowly removed from the desk on which it lay by an invisible hand. The old man looked with horror at the spontaneous motion of the book, for the safety of which he was interested, and had the courage to approach a little nearer the table, in order to discover by what means it had been withdrawn.

"I have said the room was already becoming dark, so as to render it difficult to distinguish any person in the chair, though it now appeared, on closer examination, that a kind of shadowy outline of a human form was seated in it, but neither precise enough to convey its exact figure to the mind, nor so detailed as to intimate distinctly its mode of action. The Bard of Douglas, therefore, gazed upon the object of his fear, as if he had looked upon something not mortal; nevertheless, as he gazed more intently, he became more capable of discovering the object which offered itself to his eyes, and they grew by degrees more keen to penetrate what they witnessed. A tall thin form, attired in, or rather shaded with, a long flowing dusky robe, having a face and physiognomy so wild and overgrown with hair as to be hardly human, were the only marked outlines of the phantom; and, looking more attentively, Hugonet was still sensible of two other forms, the outlines, it seemed, of a hart and a hind, which appeared half to shelter themselves behind the person and under the robe of this supernatural figure."

"A probable tale," said the knight, "for you, Sir Minstrel, a man of sense as you seem to be, to recite so gravely! From what wise authority have you had this tale, which, though it might pass well enough amid clanging beakers, must be held quite apocryphal in the sober hours of the morning?"

"By my minstrel word, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "I am no propagator of the fable, if it be one; Hugonet, the violer, when he had retired into a cloister near the Lake of Pembelmere in Wales, communicated the story to me as I now tell it. Therefore, as it was upon the authority of an eyewitness, I apologize not for relating it to you, since I could hardly discover a more direct source of knowledge."

"Be it so, Sir Minstrel," said the knight; "tell on thy tale, and may thy legend escape criticism from others as well as from me."

"Hugonet, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "was a holy man, and maintained a fair character during his whole life, notwithstanding his trade may be esteemed a light one. The vision spoke to him in an antique language, like that formerly used in the kingdom of Strath- Clyde, being a species of Scots or Gaelic, which few would have comprehended.

"'You are a learned man,' said the apparition, 'and not unacquainted with the dialects used in your country formerly, although they are now out of date, and you are obliged to translate them into the vulgar Saxon of Deira or Northumberland; but highly must an ancient British bard prize one in this "remote term of time," who sets upon the poetry of his native country a value which invites him to think of its preservation at a moment of such terror as influences the present evening.'

"'It is, indeed,' said Hugonet, 'a night of terror, that calls even the dead from the grave, and makes them the ghastly and fearful companions of the living—Who or what art thou, in God's name, who breakest the bounds which divide them, and revisitest thus strangely the state thou hast so long bid adieu to?'

"'I am,' replied the vision, 'that celebrated Thomas the Rhymer, by some called Thomas of Erceldoun, or Thomas the True Speaker. Like other sages, I am permitted at times to revisit the scenes of my former life, nor am I incapable of removing the shadowy clouds and darkness which overhang futurity; and know, thou afflicted man, that what thou now seest in this woeful country, is not a general emblem of what shall therein befall hereafter, but in proportion as the Douglasses are now suffering the loss and destruction of their home for their loyalty to the rightful heir of the Scottish kingdom, so hath Heaven appointed for them a just reward; and as they have not spared to burn and destroy their own house and that of their fathers in the Bruce's cause, so is it the doom of Heaven, that as often as the walls of Douglas Castle shall be burnt to the ground, they shall be again rebuilt still more stately and more magnificent than before.'

"A cry was now heard like that of a multitude in the courtyard, joining in a fierce shout of exultation; at the same time a broad and ruddy glow seemed to burst from the beams and rafters, and sparks flew from them as from the smith's stithy, while the element caught to its fuel, and the conflagration broke its way through every aperture.

"'See ye that?' said the vision, casting his eye towards the windows and disappearing—"Begone! The fated hour of removing this book is not yet come, nor are thine the destined hands. But it will be safe where I have placed it, and the time of its removal shall come.' The voice was heard after the form had vanished, and the brain of Hugonet almost turned round at the wild scene which he beheld; his utmost exertion was scarcely sufficient to withdraw him from the terrible spot, and Douglas Castle that night sunk into ashes and smoke, to arise, in no great length of time, in a form stronger than ever." The minstrel stopt, and his hearer, the English knight, remained silent for some minutes ere at length he replied.

"It is true, minstrel," answered Sir Aymer, "that your tale is so far undeniable, that this castle—three times burned down by the heir of the house and of the barony—has hitherto been as often reared again by Henry Lord Clifford, and other generals of the English, who endeavoured on every occasion to build it up more artificially and more strongly than it had formerly existed, since it occupies a position too important to the safety of our Scottish border to permit our yielding it

up. This I myself have partly witnessed. But I cannot think, that because the castle has been so destroyed, it is therefore decreed so to be repaired in future, considering that such cruelties, as surely cannot meet the approbation of Heaven, have attended the feats of the Douglasses. But I see thou art determined to keep thine own faith, nor can I blame thee, since the wonderful turns of fate which have attended this fortress, are sufficient to warrant any one to watch for what seem the peculiar indications of the will of Heaven; but thou mayst believe, good minstrel, that the fault shall not be mine, if the young Douglas shall have opportunity to exercise his cookery upon a second edition of his family larder, or to profit by the predictions of Thomas the Rhymer."

"I do not doubt due circumspection upon your own part and Sir John de Walton's," said Bertram; "but there is no crime in my saying that Heaven can accomplish its own purposes. I look upon Douglas Castle as in some degree a fated place, and I long to see what changes time may have made in it during the currency of twenty years. Above all, I desire to secure, if possible, the volume of this Thomas of Erceldoun, having in it such a fund of forgotten minstrelsy, and of prophecies respecting the future fates of the British kingdom, both northern and southern."

The knight made no answer, but rode a little space forward, keeping the upper part of the ridge of the water, by which the road down the vale seemed to be rather sharply conducted. It at length attained the summit of an acclivity of considerable length. From this point, and behind a conspicuous rock, which appeared to have been pushed aside, as it were, like the scene of a theatre to admit a view of the under part of the valley, the travellers beheld the extensive vale, parts of which have been already shown in detail, but which, as the river became narrower, was now entirely laid bare in its height and depth as far as it extended, and displayed in its precincts, at a little distance from the course of the stream, the towering and lordly castle to which it gave the name. The mist which continued to encumber the valley with its fleecy clouds, showed imperfectly the rude fortifications which served to defend the small town of Douglas, which was strong enough to repel a desultory attack, but not to withstand what was called in those days a formal siege. The most striking feature was its church, an ancient Gothic pile raised on an eminence in the centre of the town, and even then extremely ruinous. To the left, and lying in the distance, might be seen other towers and battlements; and divided from the town by a piece of artificial water, which extended almost around it, arose the Dangerous Castle of Douglas.

Sternly was it fortified, after the fashion of the middle ages, with donjon and battlements; displaying, above others, the tall tower, which bore the name of Lord Henry's, or the Clifford's Tower.

"Yonder is the castle," said Aymer de Valence, extending his arm with a smile of triumph upon his brow; "thou mayst judge thyself, whether the defences added to it under the Clifford are likely to render its next capture a more easy deed than the last."

The minstrel barely shook his head, and quoted from the Psalmist—"*Nisi Dominus custodiet.*" Nor did he prosecute the discourse, though De Valence answered eagerly, "My own edition of the text is not very different from thine; but, methinks thou art more spiritually- minded than can always be predicated of a wandering minstrel."

"God knows," said Bertram, "that if I, or such as I, are forgetful of the finger of Providence in accomplishing its purposes in this lower world, we have heavier blame than that of other people, since we are perpetually called upon, in the exercise of our fanciful profession, to admire the turns of fate which bring good out of evil, and which render those who think only of their own passions and purposes the executors of the will of Heaven."

"I do submit to what you say, Sir Minstrel," answered the knight, "and it would be unlawful to express any doubt of the truths which you speak so solemnly, any more than of your own belief in them. Let me add, sir, that I think I have power enough in this garrison to bid you welcome, and Sir John de Walton, I hope, will not refuse access to hall, castle, or knight's bower, to a person of your profession, and by whose conversation we shall, perhaps, profit somewhat. I cannot, however, lead you to expect such indulgence for your son, considering the present state of his health; but if I procure him the privilege to remain at the convent of Saint Bride, he will be there unmolested and in safety, until you have renewed your acquaintance with Douglas Dale and its history, and are disposed to set forward on your journey."

"I embrace your honour's proposal the more willingly," said the minstrel, "that I can recompense the Father Abbot."

"A main point with holy men or women," replied De Valence, "who, in time of warfare, subsist by affording the visitors of their shrine the means of maintenance in their cloisters for a passing season."

The party now approached the sentinels on guard at the castle, who were closely and thickly stationed, and who respectfully admitted Sir Aymer de Valence, as next in command under Sir John de Walton. Fabian—for so was the young squire named who attended on De Valence—mentioned it as his master's pleasure that the minstrel should also be admitted. An old archer, however, looked hard at the minstrel as he followed Sir Aymer. "It is not for us," said he, "or any of our degree, to oppose the pleasure of Sir Aymer de Valence, nephew to the Earl of Pembroke, in such a matter; and for us, Master Fabian, welcomes are you to make the gleeman your companion both at bed and board, as well as your visitant, a week or two at the Castle of Douglas; but your worship is well aware of the strict order of watch laid upon us, and if Solomon, King of Israel, were to come here as a travelling minstrel, by my faith I durst not give him entrance, unless I had positive authority from Sir John de Walton."

"Do you doubt, sirrah," said Aymer de Valence, who returned on hearing an altercation betwixt Fabian and the archer—"do you doubt that I have good authority to entertain a guest, or do you presume to contest it?"

"Heaven forbid!" said the old man, "that I should presume to place my own desire in opposition to your worship, who has so lately and so honourably acquired your spurs; but in this matter I must think what will be the wish of Sir John de Walton, who is your governor, Sir Knight, as well as mine; and so far I hold it worth while to detain your guest until Sir John return from a ride to the outposts of the castle; and this, I conceive, being my duty, will be no matter of offence to your worship."

"Methinks," said the knight, "it is saucy in thee to suppose that my commands can have any thing in them improper, or contradictory to those of Sir John de Walton; thou mayst trust to me at least that thou shalt come to no harm. Keep this man in the guard-room; let him not want good cheer, and when Sir John de Walton returns, report him as a person admitted by my invitation, and if any thing more be wanted to make out your excuse, I shall not be reluctant in stating it to the governor."

The archer made a signal of obedience with the pike which he held in his hand, and resumed the grave and solemn manner of a sentinel upon his post. He first, however, ushered in the minstrel, and furnished him with food and liquor, speaking at the same time to Fabian, who remained behind. The smart young stripling had become very proud of late, in consequence of obtaining the name of Sir Aymer's squire, and advancing a step in chivalry, as Sir Aymer himself had, somewhat earlier than the usual period, been advanced from squire to knight.

"I tell thee, Fabian," said the old archer, (whose gravity, sagacity, and skill in his vocation, while they gained him the confidence of all in the castle, subjected him, as he himself said, occasionally to the ridicule of the young coxcombs; and at the same time we may add, rendered him somewhat pragmatic and punctilious towards those who stood higher than himself in birth and rank;) "I tell thee, Fabian, thou wilt do thy master, Sir Aymer, good service, if thou wilt give him a hint to suffer an old archer, man-at-arms, or such like, to give him a fair and civil answer respecting that which he commands; for undoubtedly it is not in the first score of a man's years that he learns the various proper forms of military service; and Sir John de Walton, a most excellent commander no doubt, is one earnestly bent on pursuing the strict line of his duty, and will be rigorously severe, as well, believe me, with thy master as with a lesser person. Nay, he also possesses that zeal for his duty which induces him to throw blame, if there be the slightest ground for it, upon Aymer de Valence himself, although his uncle, the Earl of Pembroke, was John de Walton's steady patron, and laid the beginning of his good fortune; for all which, by training up his nephew in the true discipline of the French wars, Sir John has taken the best way of showing himself grateful to the eld Earl."

"Be it as you will, old Gilbert Greenleaf," answered Fabian, "thou knowest I never quarrel with thy sermonizing, and therefore give me credit for submitting to many a lecture from Sir John de Walton and thyself; but thou drivest this a little too far, if thou canst not let a day pass without giving me a flogging. Credit me, Sir John de Walton will not thank thee, if thou term him one too old to remember that he himself had once some green sap in his veins. Ay, thus it is, the old man will not forget that he has once been young, nor the young that he must some day be old; and so the one changes his manners into the lingering formality of advanced age, and the other remains like a midsummer torrent swoln with rain, every drop of water in it noise, froth, and overflow. There is a maxim for thee, Gilbert!—

Heardest thou ever better? hang it up amidst thy axioms of wisdom, and see if it will not pass among them like fifteen to the dozen. It will serve to bring thee off, man, when the wine-pot (thine only fault, good Gilbert) hath brought thee on occasion into something of a scrape."

"Best keep it for thyself, good Sir Squire," said the old man; "methinks it is more like to stand thyself one day in good stead. Who ever heard of a knight, or of the wood of which a knight is made, and that is a squire, being punished corporally like a poor old archer or horseboy? Your worst fault will be mended by some of these witty sayings, and your best service will scarce be rewarded more thankfully than by giving thee the name of Fabian the Fabler, or some such witty title."

Having unloosed his repartee to this extent, old Greenleaf resumed a certain acidity of countenance, which may be said to characterise those whose preferment hath become frozen under the influence of the slowness of its progress, and who display a general spleen against such as have obtained the advancement for which all are struggling, earlier, and, as they suppose, with less merit than their own. From time to time the eye of the old sentinel stole from the top of his pike, and with an air of triumph rested upon the young man Fabian, as if to see how deeply the wound had galled him, while at the same time he held himself on the alert to perform whatever mechanical duty his post might require. Both Fabian and his master were at the happy period of life when such discontent as that of the grave archer affected them lightly, and, at the very worst, was considered as the jest of an old man and a good soldier; the more especially, as he was always willing to do the duty of his companions, and was much trusted by Sir John de Walton, who, though very much younger, had been bred up like Greenleaf in the wars of Edward the First, and was tenacious in upholding strict discipline, which, since the death of that great monarch, had been considerably neglected by the young and warm-blooded valour of England.

Meantime it occurred to Sir Aymer de Valence, that though in displaying the usual degree of hospitality shown, to such a man as Bertram, he had merely done what was becoming his own rank, as one possessed of the highest honours of chivalry—the self-styled minstrel might not in reality be a man of that worth which he assumed. There was certainly something in his conversation, at least more grave, if not more austere, than was common to those of his calling; and when he recollected many points of Sir John de Walton's minuteness, a doubt arose in his mind, that the governor might not approve of his having introduced into the castle a person of Bertram's character, who was capable of making observations from which the garrison might afterwards feel much danger and inconvenience. Secretly, therefore, he regretted that he had not fairly intimated to the wandering minstrel, that his reception, or that of any stranger, within the Dangerous Castle, was not at present permitted by the circumstances of the times. In this case, the express line of his duty would have been his vindication, and instead, perhaps of discountenance and blame, he would have had praise and honour from his superior.

With these thoughts passing through his mind, some tacit apprehension arose of a rebuke on the part of his commanding-officer; for this officer, notwithstanding his strictness, Sir Aymer loved as well as feared. He went, therefore, towards the guard-room of the castle, under the pretence of seeing that the rites of hospitality had been duly observed towards his late travelling companion. The minstrel arose respectfully, and from the manner in which he paid his compliments, seemed, if he had not expected this call of enquiry, at least to be in no degree surprised at it. Sir Aymer, on the other hand, assumed an air something more distant than he had yet used towards Bertram, and in reverting to his former invitation, he now so far qualified it as to say, that the minstrel knew that he was only second in command, and that effectual permission to enter the castle ought to be sanctioned by Sir John de Walton.

There is a civil way of seeming to believe any apology which people are disposed to receive in payment, without alleging suspicion of its currency. The minstrel, therefore, tendered his thanks for the civility which had so far been shown to him. "It was a mere wish of passing curiosity," he said, "which, if not granted, could be attended with no consequences either inconvenient or disagreeable to him. Thomas of Erceldoun was, according to the Welsh triads, *one of the three bards of Britain*, who never stained a spear with blood, or was guilty either of taking or retaking castles and fortresses, and thus far not a person likely, after death, to be suspected of such warlike feats. But I can easily conceive why Sir John de Walton should have allowed the usual rites of hospitality to fall into disuse, and why a man of public character like myself ought not to desire food or lodging where it is accounted so dangerous; and it can surprise no one why the governor did not even invest his worthy young lieutenant with the power of dispensing with so strict and unusual a rule."

These words, very coolly spoken, had something of the effect of affronting the young knight, as insinuating, that he was not held sufficiently trustworthy by Sir John de Walton, with whom he had lived on terms of affection and familiarity, though the governor had attained his thirtieth year and upwards, and his lieutenant did not yet write himself one-and-twenty, the full age of chivalry having been in his case particularly dispensed with, owing to a feat of early manhood. Ere he had fully composed the angry thoughts which were chafing in his mind, the sound of a hunting bugle was heard at the gate, and from the sort of general stir which it spread through the garrison, it was plain that the governor had returned from his ride. Every sentinel, seemingly animated by his presence, shouldered his pike more uprightly, gave the word of the post more sharply, and seemed more fully awake and conscious of his duty. Sir John de Walton having alighted from his horse, asked Greenleaf what had passed during his absence; the old archer thought it his duty to say that a minstrel, who seemed like a Scotchman, or wandering borderer, had been admitted into the castle, while his son, a lad sick of the pestilence so much talked of, had been left for a time at the Abbey of Saint Bride. This he said on Fabian's information. The archer added, that the father was a man of tale and song, who could keep the whole garrison amused, without giving them leave to attend to their own business.

"We want no such devices to pass the time," answered the governor; "and we would have been better satisfied if our lieutenant had been pleased to find us other guests, and fitter for a direct and frank communication, than one who, by his profession, is a detractor of God and a deceiver of man."

"Yet," said the old soldier, who could hardly listen even to his commander without indulging the humour of contradiction, "I have heard your honour intimate that the trade of a minstrel, when it is justly acted up to, is as worthy as even the degree of knighthood itself."

"Such it may have been in former days," answered the knight; "but in modern minstrelsy, the duty of rendering the art an incentive to virtue is forgotten, and it is well if the poetry which fired our fathers to noble deeds, does not now push on their children to such as are base and unworthy. But I will speak upon this to my friend Aymer, than whom I do not know a more excellent, or a more high-spirited young man."

While discoursing with the archer in this manner, Sir John de Walton, of a tall and handsome figure, advanced and stood within the ample arch of the guard-room chimney, and was listened to in reverential silence by trusty Gilbert, who filled up with nods and signs, as an attentive auditor, the pauses in the conversation. The conduct of another hearer of what passed was not equally respectful, but, from his position, he escaped observation.

This third person was no other than the squire Fabian, who was concealed from observation by his position behind the hob, or projecting portion of the old-fashioned fireplace, and hid himself yet more carefully when he heard the conversation between the governor and the archer turn to the prejudice, as he thought, of his master. The squire's employment at this time was the servile task of cleaning Sir Aymer's arms, which was conveniently performed by heating, upon the projection already specified, the pieces of steel armour for the usual thin coating of varnish. He could not, therefore, if he should be discovered, be considered as guilty of any thing insolent or disrespectful. He was better screened from view, as a thick smoke arose from a quantity of oak panelling, carved in many cases with the crest and achievements of the Douglas family, which being the fuel nearest at hand, lay smouldering in the chimney, and gathering to a blaze.

The governor, unconscious of this addition to his audience, pursued his conversation, with Gilbert Greenleaf: "I need not tell you," he said, "that I am interested in the speedy termination of this siege or blockade, with which Douglas continues to threaten us; my own honour and affections are engaged in keeping this Dangerous Castle safe in England's behalf, but I am troubled at the admission of this stranger; and young De Valence would have acted more strictly in the line of his duty, if he had refused to this wanderer any communication with this garrison without my permission."

"Pity it is," replied old Greenleaf, shaking his head, "that this good-natured and gallant young knight is somewhat drawn aside by the rash advices of his squire, the boy Fabian, who has bravery, but as little steadiness in him as a bottle of fermented small beer."

"Now hang thee," thought Fabian to himself, "for an old relic of the wars, stuffed full of conceit and warlike terms, like the soldier who, to keep himself from the cold, has lapped himself so close in a tattered ensign for a shelter, that his very outside may show nothing but rags and blazonry."

"I would not think twice of the matter, were the party less dear to me," said Sir John de Walton. "But I would fain be of use to this young man, even although I should purchase his improvement in military knowledge at the expense of giving him a little pain. Experience should, as it were, be burnt in upon the mind of a young man, and not merely impressed by marking the lines of his chart out for him with chalk; I will remember the hint you, Greenleaf, have given, and take an

opportunity of severing these two young men; and though I most dearly love the one, and am far from wishing ill to the other, yet at present, as you well hint, the blind is leading the blind, and the young knight has for his assistant and counsellor too young a squire, and that must be amended."

"Marry! out upon thee, old palmer-worm!" said the page within himself; "have I found thee in the very fact of maligning myself and my master, as it is thy nature to do towards all the hopeful young buds of chivalry? If it were not to dirty the arms of an *eleve* of chivalry, by measuring them with one of thy rank, I might honour thee with a knightly invitation to the field, while the scandal which thou hast spoken is still foul upon thy tongue; as it is, thou shalt not carry one kind of language publicly in the castle, and another before the governor, upon the footing of having served with him under the banner of Longshanks. I will carry to my master this tale of thine evil intentions; and when we have concerted together, it shall appear whether the youthful spirits of the garrison or the grey beards are most likely to be the hope and protection, of this same Castle of Douglas."

It is enough to say that Fabian pursued his purpose, in carrying to his master, and in no very good humour, the report of what had passed between Sir John de Walton and the old soldier. He succeeded in representing the whole as a formal offence intended to Sir Aymer de Valence; while all that the governor did to remove the suspicions entertained by the young knight, could not in any respect bring him to take a kindly view of the feelings of his commander towards him. He retained the impression which he had formed from Fabian's recital of what he had heard, and did not think he was doing Sir John de Walton any injustice, in supposing him desirous to engross the greatest share of the fame acquired in the defence of the castle, and thrusting back his companions, who might reasonably pretend to a fair portion of it.

The mother of mischief, says a Scottish proverb, is no bigger than a midge's wing. [Footnote: i.e. Gnat's wing] In this matter of quarrel, neither the young man nor the older knight had afforded each other any just cause of offence. De Walton was a strict observer of military discipline, in which he had been educated from his extreme youth, and by which he was almost as completely ruled as by his natural disposition; and his present situation added force to his original education.

Common report had even exaggerated the military skill, the love of adventure, and the great variety of enterprise, ascribed to James, the young Lord of Douglas. He had, in the eyes of this Southern garrison, the faculties of a fiend, rather than those of a mere mortal; for if the English soldiers cursed the tedium of the perpetual watch and ward upon the Dangerous Castle, which admitted of no relaxation from the severity of extreme duty, they agreed that a tall form was sure to appear to them with a battle-axe in his hand, and entering into conversation in the most insinuating manner, never failed, with an ingenuity and eloquence equal to that of a fallen spirit, to recommend to the discontented sentinel some mode in which, by giving his assistance to betray the English, he might set himself at liberty. The variety of these devices, and the frequency of their recurrence, kept Sir John de Walton's anxiety so perpetually upon the stretch, that he at no time thought himself exactly out of the Black Douglas's reach, any more than the good Christian supposes himself out of reach of the wiles of the Devil; while every new temptation, instead of confirming his hope, seems to announce that the immediate retreat of the Evil One will be followed by some new attack yet more cunningly devised. Under this general state of anxiety and apprehension, the temper of the governor changed somewhat for the worse, and they who loved him best, regretted most that he became addicted to complain of the want of diligence on the part of those, who, neither invested with responsibility like his, nor animated by the hope of such splendid rewards, did not entertain the same degree of watchful and incessant suspicion as himself. The soldiers muttered that the vigilance of their governor was marked with severity; the officers and men of rank, of whom there were several, as the castle was a renowned school of arms, and there was a certain merit attained even by serving within its walls, complained, at the same time, that Sir John de Walton no longer made parties for hunting, for hawking, or for any purpose which might soften the rigours of warfare, and suffered nothing to go forward but the precise discipline of the castle. On the other hand, it may be usually granted that the castle is well kept where the governor is a disciplinarian; and where feuds and personal quarrels are found in the garrison, the young men are usually more in fault than those whose greater experience has convinced them of the necessity of using the strictest precautions.

A generous mind—and such was Sir John de Walton's—is often in this way changed and corrupted by the habit of over-vigilance, and pushed beyond its natural limits of candour. Neither was Sir Aymer de Valence free from a similar change; suspicion, though from a different cause, seemed also to threaten to bias his open and noble disposition, in those qualities which had hitherto been proper to him. It was in vain that Sir John de Walton studiously sought opportunities to give his younger friend indulgences, which at times were as far extended as the duty of the garrison permitted. The blow was struck; the alarm had been given to a proud and fiery temper on both sides; and while De Valence entertained an opinion that he was unjustly suspected by a friend, who was in several respects bound to him, De Walton, on the other hand, was led to conceive that a young man, of whom he took a charge as affectionate as if he had been a son of his own, and who owed to his lessons what he knew of warfare, and what success he had obtained in life, had taken offence at trifles, and considered himself ill-treated on very inadequate grounds. The seeds of disagreement, thus sown between them, failed not, like the tares sown by the Enemy among the wheat, to pass from one class of the garrison to another; the soldiers, though without any better reason than merely to pass the time, took different sides between their governor and his young lieutenant; and so the ball of contention being once thrown up between them, never lacked some arm or other to keep it in motion.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

Alas!	they	had	been	friends	in	youth;
But	whispering		tongues	can	poison	truth;
And	constancy		lives	in	realms	above;
And	life	is	thorny,	and	youth	is
And	to	be	wroth	with	one	we
Doth	work	like	madness	in'	the	brain.
*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Each	spoke	words	of	high	disdain,	
And	insult	to	his	heart's	dear	brother,
But	never		either	found	another	
To	free	the	hollow	heart	from	paining—
They	stood	aloof,	the	scars	remaining,	
Like	cliffs	which	had	been	rent	asunder;
A	dreary	sea	now	flows	between,	
But	neither	heat,	nor	frost,	nor	thunder,
Shall	wholly	do	away,	I	ween,	
The	marks	of	that	which	once	hath
						been.

CHRISTABELLE OF COLERIDGE.

In prosecution of the intention which, when his blood was cool, seemed to him wisest, Sir John de Walton resolved that he would go to the verge of indulgence with his lieutenant and his young officers, furnish them with every species of amusement which the place rendered possible, and make them ashamed of their discontent, by overloading them with courtesy. The first time, therefore, that he saw Aymer de Valence after his return to the castle, he addressed him in high spirits, whether real or assumed.

"What thinkest thou, my young friend," said De Walton, "if we try some of the woodland sports proper, they say, to this country? There are still in our neighbourhood some herds of the Caledonian breed of wild cattle, which are nowhere to be found except among the moorlands—the black and rugged frontier of what was anciently called the Kingdom of Strath-Clyde. There are some hunters, too, who have been accustomed to the sport, and who vouch that these animals are by far the most bold and fierce subjects of chase in the island of Britain."

"You will do as you please," replied Sir Aymer, coldly; "but it is not I, Sir John, who would recommend, for the sake of a hunting-match, that you should involve the whole garrison in danger; you know best the responsibilities incurred by your office here, and no doubt must have heedfully attended to them before making a proposal of such a nature."

"I do indeed know my own duty," replied De Walton, offended in turn, "and might be allowed to think of yours also, without assuming more than my own share of responsibility; but it seems to me as if the commander of this Dangerous Castle, among other inabilities, were, as old people in this country say, subjected to a spell—and one which renders it impossible for him to guide his conduct so as to afford pleasure to those whom he is most desirous to oblige. Not a great many weeks since, whose eyes would have sparkled like those of Sir Aymer de Valence at the proposal of a general hunting-match after a new object of game; and now what is his bearing when such sport is proposed, merely, I think, to disappoint my purpose of obliging him?—a cold acquiescence drops half frozen from his lips, and he proposes to go to rouse the wild cattle with an air of gravity, as if he were undertaking a pilgrimage to the tomb of a martyr."

"Not so, Sir John," answered the young knight. "In our present situation we stand conjoined in more charges than one, and although the greater and controlling trust is no doubt laid upon you as the elder and abler knight, yet still I feel that I myself have my own share of a serious responsibility. I trust, therefore, you will indulgently hear my opinion, and bear with it, even though it should appear to have relation to that part of our common charge which is more especially intrusted to your keeping. The dignity of knighthood, which I have the honour to share with you, the *accolade* laid on my shoulder by the royal Plantagenet, entitles me, methinks, to so much grace."

"I cry you mercy," said the elder cavalier; "I forgot how important a person I had before me, dubbed by King Edward himself, who was moved no doubt by special reasons to confer such an early honour; and I certainly feel that I overstep my duty when I propose any thing that savours like idle sport to a person of such grave pretensions."

"Sir John de Walton," retorted De Valence, "we have had something too much of this—let it stop here. All that I mean to say is, that in this wardship of Douglas Castle, it will not be by my consent, if any amusement, which distinctly infers a relaxation of discipline, be unnecessarily engaged in, and especially such as compels us to summon to our assistance a number of the Scots, whose evil disposition towards us we well know; nor will I, though my years have rendered me liable to such suspicion, suffer any thing of this kind to be imputed to me; and if unfortunately—though I am sure I know not why—we are in future to lay aside those bonds of familiar friendship which formerly linked us to each other, yet I see no reason why we should not bear ourselves in our necessary communications like knights and gentlemen, and put the best construction on each other's motives, since there can be no reason for imputing the worst to any thing that comes from either of us."

"You may be right, Sir Aymer de Valence," said the governor, bending stiffly: "and since you say we are no longer bound to each other as friends, you may be certain, nevertheless, that I will never permit a hostile feeling, of which you are the object, to occupy my bosom. You have been long, and I hope not uselessly, my pupil in the duties of chivalry. You are the near relation of the Earl of Pembroke, my kind and constant patron; and if these circumstances are well weighed, they form a connexion which it would be difficult, at least for me, to break through. If you feel yourself, as you seem to intimate, less strictly tied by former obligations, you must take your own choice in fixing our relations towards each other."

"I can only say," replied De Valence, "that my conduct will naturally be regulated by your own; and you, Sir John, cannot hope more devoutly than I do that our military duties may be fairly discharged, without interfering with our friendly intercourse."

The knights here parted, after a conference which once or twice had very nearly terminated in a full and cordial explanation; but still there was wanting one kind heartfelt word from either to break, as it were, the ice which was fast freezing upon their intercourse, and neither chose to be the first in making the necessary advances with sufficient cordiality, though each would have gladly done so, had the other appeared desirous of meeting it with the same ardour; but their pride was too high, and prevented either from saying what might at once have put them upon an open and manly footing. They parted, therefore, without again returning to the subject of the proposed diversion; until it was afterwards resumed in a formal note, praying Sir Aymer de Valence to accompany the commandant of Douglas Castle upon a solemn hunting-match, which had for its object the wild cattle of the neighbouring dale.

The time of meeting was appointed at six in the morning, beyond the gate of the outer barricade; and the chase was declared to be ended in the afternoon, when the *recheat* should be blown beneath the great oak, known by the name of Sholto's Club, which stood a remarkable object, where Douglas Dale was bounded by several scattered trees, the outskirts of the forest and hill country. The usual warning was sent out to the common people, or vassals of the district, which they, notwithstanding their feeling of antipathy, received in general with delight, upon the great Epicurean principle of *carpe diem*, that is to say, in whatever circumstances it happens to present itself, be sure you lose no recreation which life affords. A hunting-match has still its attractions, even though an English knight take his pleasure in the woods of the Douglas.

It was no doubt afflicting to these faithful vassals, to acknowledge another lord than the redoubted Douglas, and to wait by wood and river at the command of English officers, and in the company of their archers, whom they accounted their natural enemies. Still it was the only species of amusement which had been permitted them for a long time, and they were not disposed to omit the rare opportunity of joining in it. The chase of the wolf, the wild boar, or even the timid stag, required silvan arms; the wild cattle still more demanded this equipment of war—bows and shafts, boar-spears and sharp swords, and other tools of the chase similar to those used in actual war. Considering this, the Scottish inhabitants were seldom allowed to join in the chase, except under regulations as to number and arms, and especially in preserving a balance of force on the side of the English soldiers, which was very offensive to them. The greater part of the garrison was upon such occasions kept on foot, and several detachments, formed according to the governor's direction, were stationed in different positions in case any quarrel should suddenly break out.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

The	drivers	thorough	the	wood	went,
For	to	raise	the	deer;	
Bowmen	bickered	upon	the	bent,	
With their broad arrows clear.					
The	wylde	thorough	the	woods	went,
On	every	side		shear;	
Grehounds	thorough	the	groves	glent,	
For	to	kill	thir	deer.	

BALLAD OF CHEVY CHASE, *Old Edit.*

The appointed morning came in cold and raw, after the manner of the Scottish March weather. Dogs yelped, yawned, and shivered, and the huntsmen, though hardy and cheerful in expectation of the day's sport, twitched their mauds, or Lowland plaids, close to their throats, and looked with some dismay at the mists which floated about the horizon, now threatening to sink down on the peaks and ridges of prominent mountains, and now to shift their position under the influence of some of the uncertain gales, which rose and fell alternately, as they swept along the valley.

Nevertheless, the appearance of the whole formed, as is usual in almost all departments of the chase, a gay and a jovial spectacle. A brief truce seemed to have taken place between the nations, and the Scottish people appeared for the time rather as exhibiting the sports of their mountains in a friendly manner to the accomplished knights and bonny archers of Old England, than as performing a feudal service, neither easy nor dignified in itself, at the instigation of usurping neighbours. The figures of the cavaliers, now half seen, now exhibited fully, and at the height, of strenuous exertion, according to the character of the dangerous and broken ground, particularly attracted the attention of the pedestrians, who, leading the dogs or beating the thickets, dislodged such objects of chase as they found in the dingles, and kept their eyes fixed upon their companions, rendered more remarkable from being mounted, and the speed at which they urged their horses; the disregard of all accidents being as perfect as Melton-Mowbray itself, or any other noted field of hunters of the present day, can exhibit.

The principles on which modern and ancient hunting were conducted, are, however, as different as possible. A fox, or even a hare is, in our own day, considered as a sufficient apology for a day's exercise to forty or fifty dogs, and nearly as many men and horses; but the ancient chase, even though not terminating, as it often did, in battle, carried with it objects more important, and an interest immeasurably more stirring. If indeed one species of exercise can be pointed out as more universally exhilarating and engrossing than others, it is certainly that of the chase. The poor over-laboured drudge, who has served out his day of life, and wearied all his energies in the service of his fellow-mortals—he who has been for many years the slave of agriculture, or (still worse) of manufactures, engaged in raising a single peck of corn from year to year, or in the monotonous labours of the desk—can hardly remain dead to the general happiness when the chase sweeps past him with hound and horn, and for a moment feels all the exultation of the proudest cavalier who partakes the amusement. Let any one who has witnessed the sight recall to his imagination the vigour and lively interest which he has seen inspired into a village, including the oldest and feeblest of its inhabitants. In the words of Wordsworth, it is, on such occasions,

"Up, Timothy, up with your staff and away,
 Not a soul will remain in the village to-day;
 The hare has just started from Hamilton's grounds,
 And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds."

But compare those inspiring sounds to the burst of a whole feudal population enjoying the sport, whose lives, instead of being spent in the monotonous toil of modern avocations, have been agitated by the hazards of war, and of the chase, its near resemblance, and you must necessarily suppose that the excitation is extended, like a fire which catches to dry heath. To use the common expression, borrowed from another amusement, all is fish that comes in the net on such occasions. An ancient hunting-match (the nature of the carnage excepted) was almost equal to a modern battle, when the strife took place on the surface of a varied and unequal country. A whole district poured forth its inhabitants, who formed a ring of great extent, called technically, a tinchel, and, advancing and narrowing their circle by degrees, drove before them the alarmed animals of every kind; all and each of which, as they burst from the thicket or the moorland, were objects of the bow, the javelin, or whatever missile weapons the hunters possessed; while others were run down and worried by large greyhounds, or more frequently brought to bay, when the more important persons present claimed for themselves the pleasure of putting them to death with their chivalrous hands, incurring individually such danger as is inferred from a mortal contest even with the timid buck, when he is brought to the death-struggle, and has no choice but yielding his life or putting himself upon the defensive, by the aid of his splendid antlers, and with all the courage of despair.

The quantity of game found in Douglas Dale on this occasion was very considerable, for, as already noticed, it was a long time since a hunting upon a great scale had been attempted under the Douglasses themselves, whose misfortunes had commenced several years before, with those of their country. The English garrison, too, had not sooner judged themselves strong or numerous enough to exercise these valued feudal privileges. In the meantime, the game increased considerably. The deer, the wild cattle, and the wild boars, lay near the foot of the mountains, and made frequent irruptions into the lower part of the valley, which in Douglas Dale bears no small resemblance to an oasis, surrounded by tangled woods, and broken moors, occasionally rocky, and showing large tracts of that bleak dominion to which wild creatures gladly escape when pressed by the neighbourhood of man.

As the hunters traversed the spots which separated the field from the wood, there was always a stimulating uncertainty what sort of game was to be found, and the marksman, with his bow ready bent, or his javelin poised, and his good and well-bitted horse thrown upon its haunches, ready for a sudden start, observed watchfully what should rush from the covert, so that, were it deer, boar, wolf, wild cattle, or any other species of game, he might be in readiness.

The wolf, which, on account of its ravages, was the most obnoxious of the beasts of prey, did not, however, supply the degree of diversion which his name promised; he usually fled far—in some instances many miles—before he took courage to turn to bay, and though formidable at such moments, destroying both dogs and men by his terrible bite, yet at other times was rather despised for his cowardice. The boar, on the other hand, was a much more irascible and courageous animal.

The wild cattle, the most formidable of all the tenants of the ancient Caledonian forest, were, however, to the English cavaliers, by far the most interesting objects of pursuit. [Footnote: These Bulls are thus described by Hector Boetius, concerning whom he says—"In this wood (namely the Caledonian wood) were sometime white bulls, with crisp and curling manes, like fierce lions; and though they seemed meek and tame in the remanent figure of their bodies, they were more wild than any other beasts, and had such hatred against the society and company of men, that they never came in the woods nor lesuries where they found any foot or hand thereof, and many days after they eat not of the herbs that were touched or handled by man. These bulls were so wild, that they were never taken but by slight and crafty labour, and so impatient, that after they were taken they died from insupportable dolour. As soon as any man, invaded these bulls, they rushed with such, terrible press upon him that they struck him to the earth, taking no fear of hounds, sharp lances, or other most penetrative weapons."—*Boetius, Chron. Scot.* Vol. I. page xxxix.

The wild cattle of this breed, which are now only known in one manor in England, that of Chillingham Castle, in Northumberland, (the seat of the Earl of Tankerville,) were, in the memory of man, still preserved in three places in Scotland, namely, Drumlanrig, Cumbernauld, and the upper park at Hamilton Palace, at all of which places, except the last, I believe, they have now been destroyed, on account of their ferocity. But though those of modern days are remarkable for their white colour, with black muzzles, and exhibiting, in a small degree, the black mane, about three or four inches long, by which the bulls in particular are distinguished, they do not by any means come near the terrific description given us by the ancient authors, which has made some naturalists think that these animals should probably be referred to a different species, though possessing the same general habits, and included in the same genus. The bones, which are often discovered in Scottish mosses, belong certainly to a race of animals much larger than those of Chillingham, which seldom grow to above 80 stone (of 14 lbs.), the general weight varying from 60 to 80 stone. We should be accounted very negligent by one class of readers, did we not record that the beef furnished by those cattle is of excellent flavour, and finely marbled.

[The following is an extract from, a letter received by Sir Walter Scott, some time after the publication of the novel.—

"When it is wished to kill any of the cattle at Chillingham, the keeper goes into the herd on horseback, in which way they are quite accessible, and singling out his victim, takes aim with a large rifle-gun, and seldom fails in bringing him down. If the poor animal makes much bellowing in his agony, and especially if the ground be stained with his blood, his companions become very furious, and are themselves, I believe, accessory to his death. After which, they fly off to a distant part of the park, and he is drawn away on a sledge. Lord Tankerville is very tenacious of these singular animals; he will on no account part with a living one, and hardly allows of a sufficient number being killed, to leave pasturage for those that remain.

"It happened on one occasion, three or four years ago, that a party visiting at the castle, among whom were some men of war, who had hunted buffaloes in foreign parts, obtained permission to do the keeper's work, and shoot one of the wild cattle. They sallied out on horseback, and duly equipped for the enterprise, attacked their object. The poor animal received several wounds, but none of them proving fatal, he retired before his pursuers, roaring with pain and rage, till, planting himself against a wall or tree, he stood at bay, offering a front of defiance. In this position the youthful heir of the castle, Lord Ossulston, rode up to give him the fatal shot. Though warned of the danger of approaching near to the enraged animal, and especially of firing without first having turned his horse's head in a direction to be ready for flight, he discharged his piece; but ere he could turn his horse round to make his retreat, the raging beast had plunged his immense horns into its flank. The horse staggered and was near falling, but recovering by a violent effort, he extricated himself from his infuriated pursuer, making off with all the speed his wasting strength supplied, his entrails meanwhile dragging on the ground, till at length he fell, and died at the same moment. The animal was now close upon his rear, and the young Lord would unquestionably have shared the fate of his unhappy steed, had not the keeper, deeming it full time to conclude the day's diversion, fired at the instant. His shot brought the beast to the ground, and running in with his large knife, he put a period to his existence.

"This scene of gentlemanly pastime was viewed from a turret of the castle by Lady Tankerville and her female visitors. Such a situation for the mother of the young hero, was anything but enviable."]] Altogether, the ringing of bugles, the clattering of horses' hoofs, the lowing and bellowing of the enraged mountain cattle, the

sobs of deer mingled by throttling dogs, the wild shouts of exultation of the men,— made a chorus which extended far through the scene in which it arose, and seemed to threaten the inhabitants of the valley even in its inmost recesses.

During the course of the hunting, when a stag or a boar was expected, one of the wild cattle often came rushing forward, bearing down the young trees, crashing the branches in its progress, and in general dispersing whatever opposition was presented to it by the hunters. Sir John de Walton was the only one of the chivalry of the party who individually succeeded in mastering one of these powerful animals. Like a Spanish tauridor, he bore down and killed with his lance a ferocious bull; two well-grown calves and three kine were also slain, being unable to carry off the quantity of arrows, javelins, and other missiles, directed against them by the archers and drivers; but many others, in spite of every endeavour to intercept them, escaped to their gloomy haunts in the remote skirts of the mountain called Cairntable, with their hides well feathered with those marks of human enmity.

A large portion of the morning was spent in this way, until a particular blast from the master of the hunt announced that he had not forgot the discreet custom of the repast, which, on such occasions, was provided for upon a scale proportioned to the multitude who had been convened to attend the sport.

The blast peculiar to the time, assembled the whole party in an open space in a wood, where their numbers had room and accommodation to sit down upon the green turf, the slain game affording a plentiful supply for roasting or broiling, an employment in which the lower class were all immediately engaged; while puncheons and pipes, placed in readiness, and scientifically opened, supplied Gascoigne wine, and mighty ale, at the pleasure of those who chose to appeal to them.

The knights, whose rank did not admit of interference, were seated by themselves, and ministered to by their squires and pages, to whom such menial services were not accounted disgraceful, but, on the contrary, a proper step of their education. The number of those distinguished persons seated upon the present occasion at the table of dais, as it was called, (in virtue of a canopy of green boughs with which it was overshadowed,) comprehended Sir John de Walton, Sir Aymer de Valance, and some reverend brethren dedicated to the service of Saint Bride, who, though Scottish ecclesiastics, were treated with becoming respect by the English soldiers. One or two Scottish retainers, or vavasours, maintaining, perhaps in prudence, a suitable deference to the English knights, sat at the bottom of the table, and as many English archers, peculiarly respected by their superiors, were invited, according to the modern phrase, to the honours of the sitting.

Sir John de Walton sat at the head of the table; his eye, though it seemed to have no certain object, yet never for a moment remained stationary, but glanced from one countenance to another of the ring formed by his guests, for such they all were, no doubt, though he himself could hardly have told upon what principle he had issued the invitations; and even apparently was at a loss to think what, in one or two cases, had procured him the honour of their presence.

One person in particular caught De Walton's eye, as having the air of a redoubted man-at-arms, although it seemed as if fortune had not of late smiled upon his enterprises. He was a tall raw-boned man, of an extremely rugged countenance, and his skin, which showed itself through many a loophole in his dress, exhibited a complexion which must have endured all the varieties of an outlawed life; and akin to one who had, according to the customary phrase, "ta'en the bent with Robin Bruce," in other words occupied the moors with him as an insurgent. Some such idea certainly crossed De Walton's mind. Yet the apparent coolness, and absence of alarm, with which the stranger sat at the board of an English officer, at the same time being wholly in his power, had much in it which was irreconcilable with any such suggestion. De Walton, and several of those about him, had in the course of the day observed that this tattered cavalier, the most remarkable parts of whose garb and equipments consisted of an old coat-of-mail and a rusted yet massive partisan about eight feet long, was possessed of superior skill in the art of hunting to any individual of their numerous party. The governor having looked at this suspicious figure until he had rendered the stranger aware of the special interest which he attracted, at length filled a goblet of choice wine, and requested him, as one of the best pupils of Sir Tristem who had attended upon the day's chase, to pledge him in a vintage superior to that supplied to the general company.

"I suppose, however, sir," said De Walton, "you will have no objections to put off my challenge of a brimmer, until you can answer my pledge in Gascoigne wine, which grew in the king's own demesne, was pressed for his own lip, and is therefore fittest to be emptied to his majesty's health and prosperity."

"One half of the island of Britain," said the woodsman, with great composure, "will be of your honour's opinion; but as I belong to the other half, even the choicest liquor in Gascony cannot render that health acceptable to me."

A murmur of disapprobation ran through the warriors present; the priests hung their heads, looked deadly grave, and muttered their pater-nosters.

"You see, stranger," said De Walton sternly, "that your speech discomposes the company."

"It may be so," replied the man, in the same blunt tone; "and it may happen that there is no harm in the speech notwithstanding."

"Do you consider that it is made in my presence?" answered De Walton.

"Yes, Sir Governor."

"And have you thought what must be the necessary inference?" continued De Walton.

"I may form a round guess," answered the stranger, "what I might have to fear, if your safe conduct and word of honour, when inviting me to this hunting, were less trustworthy than I know full well it really is. But I am your guest—your meat is even now passing my throat—your cup, filled with right good wine, I have just now quaffed off—and I would not fear the rankest Paynim infidel, if we stood in such relation together, much less an English knight. I tell you, besides, Sir Knight, you undervalue the wine we have quaffed. The high flavour and contents of your cup, grow where it will, give me spirit to tell you one or two circumstances, which cold cautious sobriety would, in a moment like this, have left unsaid. You wish, I doubt not, to know who I am? My Christian name is Michael—my surname is that of Turnbull, a redoubted clan, to whose honours, even in the field of hunting or of battle, I have added something. My abode is beneath the mountain of Rubieslaw, by the fair streams of Teviot. You are surprised that I know how to hunt the wild cattle,—I, who have made them my sport from infancy in the lonely forests of Jed and Southdean, and have killed more of them than you or any Englishman in your host ever saw, even if you include the doughty deeds of this day."

The bold borderer made this declaration with the same provoking degree of coolness which predominated in his whole demeanour, and was indeed his principal attribute. His effrontery did not fail to produce its effect upon Sir John De Walton, who instantly called out, "To arms! to arms!—Secure the spy and traitor! Ho! pages and yeomen—William, Anthony, Bend-the-bow, and Greenleaf—seize the traitor, and bind him with your bow-strings and dog-leashes—bind him, I say, until the blood start from beneath his nails!"

"Here is a goodly summons!" said Turnbull, with a sort of horselaugh. "Were I as sure of being answered by twenty men I could name, there would be small doubt of the upshot of this day."

The archers thickened around the hunter, yet laid no hold on him, none of them being willing to be the first who broke the peace proper to the occasion.

"Tell me," said De Walton, "thou traitor, for what waitest thou here?"

"Simply and solely," said the Jed forester, "that I may deliver up to the Douglas the castle of his ancestors, and that I may ensure thee, Sir Englishman, the payment of thy deserts, by cutting that very throat which thou makest such a brawling use of."

At the same time, perceiving that the yeomen were crowding behind him to carry their lord's commands into execution so soon as they should be reiterated, the huntsman turned himself short round upon those who appeared about to surprise him, and having, by the suddenness of the action, induced them to step back a pace, he proceeded—"Yes, John de Walton, my purpose was ere now to have put thee to death, as one whom I find in possession of that castle and territory which belong to my master, a knight much more worthy than thyself; but I know not why I have paused—thou hast given me food when I have hungered for twenty- four hours, I have not therefore had the heart to pay thee at advantage as thou hast deserved. Begone from this place and country, and take the fair warning of a foe; thou hast constituted thyself the mortal enemy of this people, and there are those among them who have seldom been injured or defied with impunity. Take no care in searching after me, it will be in vain,—until I meet thee at a time which will come at my pleasure, not thine. Push not your inquisition into cruelty, to discover by what means I have deceived you, for it is impossible for you to learn; and with this friendly advice, look at me and take your leave, for although we shall one day meet, it may be long ere I see you again."

De Walton remained silent, hoping that his prisoner, (for he saw no chance of his escaping,) might, in his communicative humour, drop some more information, and was not desirous to precipitate a fray with which the scene was likely to conclude, unconscious at the same time of the advantage which he thereby gave the daring hunter.

As Turnbull concluded his sentence, he made a sudden spring backwards, which carried him out of the circle formed around him, and before they were aware of his intentions, at once disappeared among the underwood.

"Seize him—seize him!" repeated De Walton: "let us have him at least at our discretion, unless the earth has actually swallowed him."

This indeed appeared not unlikely, for near the place where Turnbull had made the spring, there yawned a steep ravine, into which he plunged, and descended by the assistance of branches, bushes, and copsewood, until he reached the bottom, where he found some road to the outskirts of the forest, through which he made his escape, leaving the most expert woodsmen among the pursuers totally at fault, and unable to trace his footsteps.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

This interlude carried some confusion into the proceedings of the hunt, thus suddenly surprised by the apparition of Michael Turnbull, an armed and avowed follower of the House of Douglas, a sight so little to be expected in the territory where his master was held a rebel and a bandit, and where he himself must have been well known to most of the peasantry present. The circumstance made an obvious impression on the English chivalry. Sir John de Walton looked grave and thoughtful, ordered the hunters to be assembled on the spot, and directed his soldiers to commence a strict search among the persons who had attended the chase, so as to discover whether Turnbull had any companions among them; but it was too late to make that enquiry in the strict fashion which De Walton directed.

The Scottish attendants on the chase, when they beheld that the hunting, under pretence of which they were called together, was interrupted for the purpose of laying hands upon their persons, and subjecting them to examination, took care to suit their answers to the questions put to them; in a word, they kept their own secret, if they had any. Many of them, conscious of being the weaker party, became afraid of foul play, slipped away from the places to which they had been appointed, and left the hunting-match like men who conceived they had been invited with no friendly intent. Sir John de Walton became aware of the decreasing numbers of the Scottish—their gradual disappearance awakening in the English knight that degree of suspicion which had of late become his peculiar characteristic.

"Take, I pray thee," said he to Sir Aymer de Valence, "as many men-at-arms as thou canst get together in five minutes' space, and at least a hundred of the mounted archers, and ride as fast as thou canst, without permitting them to straggle from thy standard, to reinforce the garrison of Douglas; for I have my own thoughts what may have been attempted on the castle, when we observe with our own eyes such a nest of traitors here assembled."

"With reverence, Sir John," replied Aymer, "you shoot in this matter rather beyond the mark. That the Scottish peasants have had bad thoughts against us, I will be the last to deny; but, long debarred from any silvan sport, you cannot wonder at their crowding to any diversion by wood or river, and still less at their being easily alarmed as to the certainty of the safe footing on which they stand with us. The least rough usage is likely to strike them with fear, and with the desire of escape, and so"—

"And so," said Sir John de Walton, who had listened with a degree of impatience scarce consistent with the grave and formal politeness which one knight was accustomed to bestow upon another, "and so I would rather see Sir Aymer de Valence busy his horse's heels to execute my orders, than give his tongue the trouble of impugning them."

At this sharp reprimand, all present looked at each other with indications of marked displeasure. Sir Aymer was highly offended, but saw it was no time to indulge in reprisal. He bowed until the feather which was in his barret-cap mingled with his horse's mane, and without reply—for he did not even choose to trust his voice in reply at the moment—headed a considerable body of cavalry by the straightest road back to the Castle of Douglas.

When he came to one of those eminences from which he could observe the massive and complicated towers and walls of the old fortress, with the glitter of the broad lake which surrounded it on three sides, he felt much pleasure at the sight of the great banner of England, which streamed from the highest part of the building. "I knew it," he internally said; "I was certain that Sir John de Walton had become a very woman in the indulgence of his fears and suspicions. Alas! that a situation of responsibility should so much have altered a disposition which I have known so noble and so knightly! By this good day, I scarce know in what manner I should demean me when thus publicly rebuked before the garrison. Certainly he deserves that I should, at some time or other, let him understand, that however he may triumph in the exercise of his short-lived command, yet, when man is to meet with man, it will puzzle Sir John de Walton to show himself the superior of Aymer de Valence, or perhaps to establish himself as his equal. But if, on the contrary, his fears, however fantastic, are sincere at the moment he expresses them, it becomes me to obey punctually commands which, however absurd, are imposed in consequence of the governor's belief that they are rendered necessary by the times, and not inventions designed to vex and domineer over his officers in the indulgence of his official powers. I would I knew which is the true statement of the case, and whether the once famed De Walton is become afraid of his enemies more than fits a knight, or makes imaginary doubts the pretext of tyrannizing over his friend. I cannot say it would make much difference to me, but I would rather have it that the man I once loved had turned a petty tyrant than a weak-spirited coward; and I would be content that he should study to vex me, rather than be afraid of his own shadow."

With these ideas passing in his mind, the young knight crossed the causeway which traversed the piece of water that fed the moat, and, passing under the strongly fortified gateway, gave strict orders for letting down the portcullis, and elevating the drawbridge, even at the appearance of De Walton's own standard before it.

A slow and guarded movement from the hunting-ground to the Castle of Douglas, gave the governor ample time to recover his temper, and to forget that his young friend had shown less alacrity than usual in obeying his commands. He was even disposed to treat as a jest the length of time and extreme degree of ceremony with which every point of martial discipline was observed on his own re-admission to the castle, though the raw air of a wet spring evening whistled around his own unsheltered person, and those of his followers, as they waited before the castle gate for the exchange of pass-words, the delivery of keys, and all the slow minutiae attendant upon the movements of a garrison in a well-guarded fortress.

"Come," said he to an old knight, who was peevishly blaming the lieutenant-governor, "it was my own fault; I spoke but now to Aymer de Valence with more authoritative emphasis than his newly-dubbed dignity was pleased with, and this precise style of obedience is a piece of not unnatural and very pardonable revenge. Well, we will owe him a return, Sir Philip—shall we not? This is not a night to keep a man at the gate."

This dialogue, overheard by some of the squires and pages, was bandied about from one to another, until it entirely lost the tone of good-humour in which it was spoken, and the offence was one for which Sir John de Walton and old Sir Philip were to meditate revenge, and was said to have been represented by the governor as a piece of mortal and intentional offence on the part of his subordinate officer.

Thus an increasing feud went on from day to day between two warriors, who, with no just cause of quarrel, had at heart every reason to esteem and love each other. It became visible in the fortress even to those of the lower rank, who hoped to gain some consequence by intermingling in the species of emulation produced by the jealousy of the commanding officers—an emulation which may take place, indeed, in the present day, but can hardly have the same sense of wounded pride and jealous dignity attached to it, which existed in times when the personal honour of knighthood rendered those who possessed it jealous of every punctilio.

So many little debates took place between the two knights, that Sir Aymer de Valence thought himself under the necessity of writing to his uncle and namesake, the Earl of Pembroke, stating that his officer, Sir John de Walton, had unfortunately of late taken some degree of prejudice against him, and that after having borne with many provoking instances of his displeasure, he was now compelled to request that his place of service should be changed from the Castle of Douglas, to wherever honour could be acquired, and time might be given to put an end to his present cause of complaint against his commanding officer. Through the whole letter, young Sir Aymer was particularly cautious how he expressed his sense of Sir John de Walton's jealousy or severe usage: but such sentiments are not easily concealed, and in spite of him an air of displeasure glanced out from several passages, and indicated his discontent with his uncle's old friend and

companion in arms, and with the sphere of military duty which his uncle had himself assigned him. An accidental movement among the English troops brought Sir Aymer an answer to his letter sooner than he could have hoped for at that time of day, in the ordinary course of correspondence, which was then extremely slow and interrupted.

Pembroke, a rigid old warrior, entertained the most partial opinion of Sir John de Walton, who was a work as it were of his own hands, and was indignant to find that his nephew, whom he considered as a mere boy, elated by having had the dignity of knighthood conferred upon him at an age unusually early, did not absolutely coincide with him in this opinion. He replied to him, accordingly, in a tone of high displeasure, and expressed himself as a person of rank would write to a young and dependent kinsman upon the duties of his profession; and, as he gathered his nephew's cause of complaint from his own letter, he conceived that he did him no injustice in making it slighter than it really was. He reminded the young man that the study of chivalry consisted in the faithful and patient discharge of military service, whether of high or low degree, according to the circumstances in which war placed the champion. That above all, the post of danger, which Douglas Castle had been termed by common consent, was also the post of honour; and that a young man should be cautious how he incurred the supposition of being desirous of quitting his present honourable command, because he was tired of the discipline of a military director so renowned as Sir John de Walton. Much also there was, as was natural in a letter of that time, concerning the duty of young men, whether in council or in arms, to be guided implicitly by their elders; and it was observed, with justice, that the commanding officer, who had put himself into the situation of being responsible with his honour, if not his life, for the event of the siege or blockade, might, justly, and in a degree more than common, claim the implicit direction of the whole defence. Lastly, Pembroke reminded his nephew that he was, in a great measure, dependent upon the report of Sir John de Walton for the character which he was to sustain in after life; and reminded him, that a few actions of headlong and inconsiderate valour would not so firmly found his military reputation, as months and years spent in regular, humble, and steady obedience to the commands which the governor of Douglas Castle might think necessary in so dangerous a conjuncture.

This missive arrived within so short a time after the despatch of the letter to which it was a reply, that Sir Aymer was almost tempted to suppose that his uncle had some mode of corresponding with De Walton, unknown to the young knight himself, and to the rest of the garrison. And as the earl alluded to some particular displeasure which had been exhibited by De Valence on a late trivial occasion, his uncle's knowledge of this, and other minutiae, seemed to confirm his idea that his own conduct was watched in a manner which he did not feel honourable to himself, or dignified on the part of his relative; in a word, he conceived himself exposed to that sort of surveillance of which, in all ages, the young have accused the old. It hardly needs to say that the admonition of the Earl of Pembroke greatly chafed the fiery spirit of his nephew; insomuch, that if the earl had wished to write a letter purposely to increase the prejudices which he desired to put an end to, he could not have made use of terms better calculated for that effect.

The truth was, that the old archer, Gilbert Greenleaf, had, without the knowledge of the young knight, gone to Pembroke's camp, in Ayrshire, and was recommended by Sir John de Walton to the earl, as a person who could give such minute information respecting Aymer de Valence, as he might desire to receive. The old archer was, as we have seen, a formalist, and when pressed on some points of Sir Aymer de Valence's discipline, he did not hesitate to throw out hints, which, connected with those in the knight's letter to his uncle, made the severe old earl adopt too implicitly the idea that his nephew was indulging a spirit of insubordination, and a sense of impatience under authority, most dangerous to the character of a young soldier. A little explanation might have produced a complete agreement in the sentiments of both; but for this, fate allowed neither time nor opportunity; and the old earl was unfortunately induced to become a party, instead of a negotiator, in the quarrel,

"And by decision more embroil'd the fray."

Sir John de Walton soon perceived, that the receipt of Pembroke's letter did not in any respect alter the cold ceremonious conduct of his lieutenant towards him, which limited their intercourse to what their situation rendered indispensable, and exhibited no advances to any more frank or intimate connexion. Thus, as may sometimes be the case between officers in their relative situations even at the present day, they remained in that cold stiff degree of official communication, in which their intercourse was limited to as few expressions as the respective duties of their situation absolutely demanded. Such a state of misunderstanding is, in fact, worse than a downright quarrel;—the latter may be explained or apologized for, or become the subject of mediation; but in such a case as the former, an *eclaircissement* is as unlikely to take place as a general engagement between two armies which have taken up strong defensive positions on both sides. Duty, however, obliged the two principal persons in the garrison of Douglas Castle to be often together, when they were so far from seeking an opportunity of making up matters, that they usually revived ancient subjects of debate.

It was upon such an occasion that De Walton, in a very formal manner, asked De Valence in what capacity, and for how long time, it was his pleasure that the minstrel, called Bertram, should remain at the castle.

"A week," said the governor, "is certainly long enough, in this time and place, to express the hospitality due to a minstrel."

"Certainly," replied the young man, "I have not interest enough in the subject to form a single wish upon it."

"In that case," resumed De Walton, "I shall request of this person to cut short his visit at the Castle of Douglas."

"I know no particular interest," replied Aymer de Valence, "which I can possibly have in this man's motions. He is here under pretence of making some researches after the writings of Thomas of Erceldoun, called the Rhymer, which he says are infinitely curious, and of which there is a volume in the old Baron's study, saved somehow from the flames at the last conflagration. This told, you know as much of his errand as I do; and if you hold the presence of a wandering old man, and the neighbourhood of a boy, dangerous to the castle under your charge, you will no doubt do well to dismiss them—it will cost but a word of your mouth."

"Pardon me," said De Walton; "the minstrel came here as one of your retinue, and I could not, in fitting courtesy, send him away without your leave."

"I am sorry, then," answered Sir Aymer, "in my turn, that you did not mention your purpose sooner. I never entertained a dependent, vassal or servant, whose residence in the castle I would wish to have prolonged a moment beyond your honourable pleasure."

"I am sorry," said Sir John de Walton, "that we two have of late grown so extremely courteous that it is difficult for us to understand each other. This minstrel and his son come from we know not where, and are bound we know not whither. There is a report among some of your escort, that this fellow Bertram upon the way had the audacity to impugn, even to your face, the King of England's right to the crown of Scotland, and that he debated the point with you, while your other attendants were desired by you to keep behind and out of hearing."

"Hah!" said Sir Aymer, "do you mean to found on that circumstance any charge against my loyalty? I pray you to observe, that such an averment would touch mine honour, which I am ready and willing to defend to the last gasp."

"No doubt of it, Sir Knight," answered the governor; "but it is the strolling minstrel, and not the high-born English knight, against whom the charge is brought. Well! the minstrel comes to this castle, and he intimates a wish that his son should be allowed to take up his quarters at the little old convent of Saint Bride, where two or three Scottish nuns and friars are still permitted to reside, most of them rather out of respect to their order, than for any good will which they are supposed to bear the English or their sovereign. It may also be noticed that his leave was purchased by a larger sum of money, if my information be correct, than is usually to be found in the purses of travelling minstrels, a class of wanderers alike remarkable for their poverty and for their genius. What do you think of all this?"

"I?"—replied De Valence; "I am happy that my situation, as a soldier, under command, altogether dispenses with my thinking of it at all. My post, as lieutenant of your castle, is such, that if I can manage matters so as to call my honour and my soul my own, I must think that quite enough of free-will is left at my command; and I promise you shall not have again to reprove, or send a bad report of me to my uncle, on that account."

"This is beyond sufferance!" said Sir John de Walton half aside, and then proceeded aloud—"Do not, for Heaven's sake, do yourself and me the injustice of supposing that I am endeavouring to gain an advantage over you by these questions. Recollect, young knight, that when you evade giving your commanding officer your advice when required, you fail as much in point of duty, as if you declined affording him the assistance of your sword and lance."

"Such being the case," answered De Valence, "let me know plainly on what matter it is that you require my opinion? I will deliver it plainly, and stand by the result, even if I should have the misfortune (a crime unpardonable in so young a man, and so inferior an officer) to differ from that of Sir John de Walton."

"I would ask you then. Sir Knight of Valence," answered the governor, "what is your opinion with respect to this minstrel, Bertram, and whether the suspicions respecting him and his son are not such as to call upon me, in performance of my duty, to put them to a close examination, with the question ordinary and extraordinary, as is usual in such cases, and to expel them not only from the castle, but from the whole territory of Douglas Dale, under pain of scourging, if they be again found wandering in these parts?"

"You ask me my opinion," said De Valence, "and you shall have it, Sir Knight of Walton, and freely and fairly, as if matters stood betwixt us on a footing as friendly as they ever did. I agree with you, that most of those who in this day profess the science of minstrelsy, are altogether unqualified to support the higher pretensions of that noble order. Minstrels by right, are men who have dedicated themselves to the noble occupation of celebrating knightly deeds and generous principles; it is in their verse that the valiant knight is handed down to fame, and the poet has a right, nay is bound, to emulate the virtues which he praises. The looseness of the times has diminished the consequence, and impaired the morality of this class of wanderers; their satire and their praise are now too often distributed on no other principle than love of gain; yet let us hope that there are still among them some who know, and also willingly perform, their duty. My own opinion is that this Bertram holds himself as one who has not shared in the degradation of his brethren, nor bent the knee to the mammon of the times; it must remain with you, sir, to judge whether such a person, honourably and morally disposed, can cause any danger to the Castle of Douglas. But believing, from the sentiments he has manifested to me, that he is incapable of playing the part of a traitor, I must strongly remonstrate against his being punished as one, or subjected to the torture within the walls of an English garrison. I should blush for my country, if it required of us to inflict such wanton misery upon wanderers, whose sole fault is poverty; and your own knightly sentiments will suggest more than would become me to state to Sir John de Walton, unless in so far as is necessary to apologize for retaining my own opinion."

Sir John de Walton's dark brow was stricken with red when he heard an opinion delivered in opposition to his own, which plainly went to stigmatize his advice as ungenerous, unfeeling, and unknightly. He made an effort to preserve his temper while he thus replied with a degree of calmness. "You have given your opinion, Sir Aymer de Valence; and that you have given it openly and boldly, without regard to my own, I thank you. It is not quite so clear that I am obliged to defer my own sentiments to yours, in case the rules on which I hold my office—the commands of the king—and the observations which I may personally have made, shall recommend to me a different line of conduct from that which you think it right to suggest."

De Walton bowed, in conclusion, with great gravity; and the young knight returning the reverence with exactly the same degree of stiff formality, asked whether there were any particular orders respecting his duty in the castle; and having received an answer in the negative took his departure.

Sir John de Walton, after an expression of impatience, as if disappointed at finding that the advance which he had made towards an explanation with his young friend had proved unexpectedly abortive, composed his brow as if to deep thought, and walked several times to and fro in the apartment, considering what course he was to take in these circumstances. "It is hard to censure him severely," he said, "when I recollect that, on first entering upon life, my own thoughts and feelings would have been the same with those of this giddy and hot-headed, but generous boy. Now prudence teaches me to suspect mankind in a thousand instances where perhaps there is not sufficient ground. If I am disposed to venture my own honour and fortune, rather than an idle travelling minstrel should suffer a little pain, which at all events I might make up to him by money, still, have I a right to run the risk of a conspiracy against the king, and thus advance the treasonable surrender of the Castle of Douglas, for which I know so many schemes are formed; for which, too, none can be imagined so desperate but agents will be found bold enough to undertake the execution? A man who holds my situation, although the slave of conscience, ought to learn to set aside those false scruples which assume the appearance of flowing from our own moral feeling, whereas they are in fact instilled by the suggestion of affected delicacy. I will not, I swear by Heaven, be infected by the follies of a boy, such as Aymer; I will not, that I may defer to his caprices, lose all that love, honour, and ambition can propose, for the reward of twelve months' service, of a nature the most watchful and unpleasant. I—will go straight to my point, and use the ordinary precautions in Scotland which I should employ in Normandy or Gascoigny.—What ho! page! who waits there?"

One of his attendants replied to his summons—"Seek me out Gilbert Greenleaf the archer, and tell him I would speak with him touching the two bows and the sheaf of arrows, concerning which I gave him a commission to Ayr."

A few minutes intervened after the order was given, when the archer entered, holding in his hand two bow-staves, not yet fashioned, and a number of arrows secured together with a thong. He bore the mysterious looks of one whose apparent business is not of very great consequence, but is meant as a passport for other affairs which are in themselves of a secret nature. Accordingly, as the knight was silent, and afforded no other opening for Greenleaf, that judicious negotiator proceeded to enter upon such as was open to him.

"Here are the bow-staves, noble sir, which you desired me to obtain while I was at Ayr with the Earl of Pembroke's army. They are not so good as I could have wished, yet are perhaps of better quality than could have been procured by any other than a fair judge of the weapon. The Earl of Pembroke's whole camp are frantic mad in order to procure real Spanish staves from the Groyne, and other ports in Spain; but though two vessels laden with such came into the port of Ayr, said to be for the King's army, yet I believe never one half of them have come into English hands. These two grew in Sherwood, which having been seasoned since the time of Robin Hood, are not likely to fail either in strength or in aim, in so strong a hand, and with so just an eye, as those of the men who wait on your worship."

"And who has got the rest, since two ships' cargoes of new bow-staves are arrived at Ayr, and thou with difficulty hast only procured me two old ones?" said the governor.

"Faith, I pretend not skill enough to know," answered Greenleaf, shrugging his shoulders. "Talk there is of plots in that country as well as here. It is said that their Bruce, and the rest of his kinsmen, intend a new May-game, and that the outlawed king proposes to land near Turnberry, early in summer, with a number of stout kerns from Ireland; and no doubt the men of his mock earldom of Garrick are getting them ready with bow and spear for so hopeful an undertaking. I reckon that it will not cost us the expense of more than a few score of sheaves of arrows to put all that matter to rights."

"Do you talk then of conspiracies in this part of the country, Greenleaf?" said De Walton. "I know you are a sagacious fellow, well bred for many a day to the use of the bent stick and string, and will not allow such a practice to go on under thy nose, without taking notice of it."

"I am old enough, Heaven knows," said Greenleaf, "and have had good experience of these Scottish wars, and know well whether these native Scots are a people to be trusted to by knight or yeoman. Say they are a false generation, and say a good archer told you so, who, with a fair aim, seldom missed a handsbreadth of the white. Ah! sir, your honour knows how to deal with them—ride them strongly, and rein them hard,—you are not like those simple novices who imagine that all is to be done by gentleness, and wish to parade themselves as courteous and generous to those faithless mountaineers, who never, in the course of their lives, knew any tincture either of courteousness or generosity."

"Thou alludest to some one," said the governor, "and I charge thee, Gilbert, to be plain and sincere with me. Thou knowest, methinks, that in trusting me thou wilt come to no harm?"

"It is true, it is true, sir," said the old remnant of the wars, carrying his hand to his brow, "but it were imprudent to communicate all the remarks which float through an old man's brain in the idle moments of such a garrison as this. One stumbles unawares on fantasies, as well as realities, and thus one gets, not altogether undeservedly, the character of a tale-bearer and mischief-maker among his comrades, and methinks I would not willingly fall under that accusation."

"Speak frankly to me," answered De Walton, "and have no fear of being misconstrued, whosoever the conversation may concern."

"Nay, in plain truth," answered Gilbert, "I fear not the greatness of this young knight, being, as I am, the oldest soldier in the garrison, and having drawn a bow-string long and many a day ere he was weaned from his nurse's breast."

"It is, then," said De Walton, "my lieutenant and friend, Aymer de Valence, at whom your suspicions point?"

"At nothing," replied the archer, "touching the honour of the young knight himself, who is as brave as the sword he wears, and, his youth considered, stands high in the roll of English chivalry; but he is young, as your worship knows, and I own that in the choice of his company he disturbs and alarms me."

"Why, you know, Greenleaf," answered the governor, "that in the leisure of a garrison a knight cannot always confine his sports and pleasures among those of his own rank, who are not numerous, and may not be so gamesome or fond of frolic, as he would desire them to be."

"I know that well," answered the archer, "nor would I say a word concerning your honour's lieutenant for joining any honest fellows, however inferior their rank, in the wrestling ring, or at a bout of quarterstaff. But if Sir Aymer de Valence has a fondness for martial tales of former days, methinks he had better learn them from the ancient soldiers who have followed Edward the First, whom God assoilzie, and who have known before his time the Barons' wars and Other onslaughts, in which the knights and archers of merry England transmitted so many gallant actions to be recorded by fame; this truly, I say, were more befitting the Earl of Pembroke's nephew, than to see him closet himself day after day with a strolling minstrel, who gains his livelihood by reciting nonsense and lies to such young men as are fond enough to believe him, of whom hardly any one knows whether he be English or Scottish in his opinions, and still less can any one pretend to say whether he is of English or Scottish birth, or with what purpose he lies lounging about this castle, and is left free to communicate every thing which passes within it to those old mutterers of matins at St. Bride's, who say with their tongues God save King Edward, but pray in their hearts God save King Robert the Bruce. Such a communication he can easily carry on by means of his son, who lies at Saint Bride's cell, as your worship knows, under pretence of illness."

"How do you say?" exclaimed the governor, "under pretence?—is he not then really indisposed?"

"Nay, he may be sick to the death for aught I know," said the archer; "but if so, were it not then more natural that the father should attend his son's sick-bed, than that he should be ranging about this castle, where one eternally meets him in the old Baron's study, or in some corner, where you least expect to find him?"

"If he has no lawful object," replied the knight, "it might be as you say; but he is said to be in quest of ancient poems or prophecies of Merlin, of the Rhymer, or some other old bard; and in truth it is natural for him to wish to enlarge his stock of knowledge and power of giving amusement, and where should he find the means save in a study filled with ancient books?"

"No doubt," replied the Archer, with a sort of dry civil sneer of incredulity; "I have seldom known an insurrection in Scotland but that it was prophesied by some old forgotten rhyme, conjured out of dust and cobwebs, for the sake of giving courage to these North Country rebels, who durst not otherwise have abidden the whistling of the grey-goose shaft; but curled heads are hasty, and, with license, even your own train, Sir Knight, retains too much of the fire of youth for such uncertain times as the present."

"Thou hast convinced me, Gilbert Greenleaf, and I will look into this man's business and occupation more closely than hitherto. This is no time to peril the safety of a royal castle for the sake of affecting generosity towards a man of whom we know so little, and to whom, till we receive a very full explanation, we may, without doing him injustice, attach grave suspicions. Is he now in the apartment called the Baron's study?"

"Your worship will be certain to find him there," replied Greenleaf.

"Then follow me, with two or three of thy comrades, and keep out of sight, but within hearing; it may be necessary to arrest this man."

"My assistance," said the old archer, "shall be at hand when you call, but"—

"But what?" said the knight; "I hope I am not to find doubts and disobedience on all hands?"

"Certainly not on mine," replied Greenleaf; "I would only remind your worship that what I have said was a sincere opinion expressed in answer to your worship's question; and that, as Sir Aymer de Valence has avowed himself the patron of this man, I would not willingly be left to the hazard of his revenge."

"Pshaw" answered De Walton, "is Aymer de Valence governor of this castle, or am I? or to whom do you imagine you are responsible for answering such questions as I may put to you?"

"Nay," replied the archer, secretly not displeased at seeing De Walton show some little jealousy of his own authority, "believe me, Sir Knight, that I know my own station and your worship's, and that I am not now to be told to whom I owe obedience."

"To the study, then, and let us find the man," said the governor.

"A fine matter, indeed," subjoined Greenleaf, following him, "that your worship should have to go in person to look after the arrest of so mean an individual. But your honour is right; these minstrels are often jugglers, and possess the power of making their escape by means which borrel [Footnote: Unlearned.] folk like myself are disposed to attribute to necromancy."

Without attending to these last words, Sir John de Walton set forth towards the study, walking at a quick pace, as if this conversation had augmented his desire to find himself in possession of the person of the suspected minstrel.

Traversing the ancient passages of the castle, the governor had no difficulty in reaching the study, which was strongly vaulted with stone, and furnished with a sort of iron cabinet, intended for the preservation of articles and papers of value, in case of fire. Here he found the minstrel seated at a small table, sustaining before him a manuscript, apparently of great antiquity, from which he seemed engaged in making extracts. The windows of the room were very small, and still showed some traces that they had originally been glazed with a painted history of Saint Bride—another mark of the devotion of the great family of Douglas to their tutelar saint.

The minstrel, who had seemed deeply wrapped in the contemplation of his task, on being disturbed by the unlooked-for entrance of Sir John de Walton, rose with every mark of respect and humility, and, remaining standing in the governor's presence, appeared to wait for his interrogations, as if he had anticipated that the visit concerned himself particularly.

"I am to suppose, Sir Minstrel," said Sir John de Walton, "that you have been successful in your search, and have found the roll of poetry or prophecies that you proposed to seek after amongst these broken shelves and tattered volumes?"

"More successful than I could have expected," replied the minstrel, "considering the effects of the conflagration. This, Sir Knight, is apparently the fatal volume for which I sought, and strange it is, considering the heavy chance of other books contained in this library, that I have been able to find a few though imperfect fragments of it."

"Since, therefore, you have been permitted to indulge your curiosity," said the governor, "I trust, minstrel, you will have no objection to satisfy mine?"

The minstrel replied with the same humility, "that if there was any thing within the poor compass of his skill which could gratify Sir John de Walton in any degree, he would but reach his lute, and presently obey his commands."

"You mistake, Sir," said Sir John, somewhat harshly. "I am none of those who have hours to spend in listening to tales or music of former days; my life has hardly given me time enough for learning the duties of my profession, far less has it allowed me leisure for such twangling follies. I care not who knows it, but my ear is so incapable judging of your art, which you doubtless think a noble one, that I can scarcely tell the modulation of one tune from another."

"In that case," replied the minstrel composedly, "I can hardly promise myself the pleasure of affording your worship the amusement which I might otherwise have done."

"Nor do I look for any from your hand," said the governor, advancing a step nearer to him, and speaking in a sterner tone. "I want information, sir, which I am assured you can give me, if you incline; and it is my duty to tell you, that if you show unwillingness to speak the truth, I know means by which it will become my painful duty to extort it in a more disagreeable manner than I would wish."

"If your questions, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "be such as I can or ought to answer, there shall be no occasion to put them more than once. If they are such as I cannot, or ought not to reply to, believe me that no threats of violence will extort an answer from me."

"You speak boldly," said Sir John de Walton; "but take my word for it, that your courage will be put to the test. I am as little fond of proceeding to such extremities as you can be of undergoing them, but such will be the natural consequence of your own obstinacy. I therefore ask you, whether Bertram be your real name—whether you have any other profession than that of a travelling minstrel—and, lastly, whether you have any acquaintance or connexion with any Englishman or Scottishman beyond the walls of this Castle of Douglas?"

"To these questions," replied the minstrel, "I have already answered the worshipful knight, Sir Aymer de Valence, and having fully satisfied him, it is not, I conceive, necessary that I should undergo a second examination; nor is it consistent either with your worship's honour, or that of the lieutenant-governor, that such a re-examination should take place."

"You are very considerate," replied the governor, "of my honour and of that of Sir Aymer de Valence. Take my word for it, they are both in perfect safety in our own keeping, and may dispense with your attention. I ask you, will you answer the enquiries which it is my duty to make, or am I to enforce obedience by putting you under the penalties of the question? I have already, it is my duty to say, seen the answers you have returned to my lieutenant, and they do not satisfy me."

He at the same time clapped his hands, and two or three archers showed themselves stripped of their tunics, and only attired in their shirts and hose.

"I understand," said the minstrel, "that you intend to inflict upon me a punishment which is foreign to the genius of the English laws, in that no proof is adduced of my guilt. I have already told that I am by birth an Englishman, by profession a minstrel, and that I am totally unconnected with any person likely to nourish any design against this Castle of Douglas, Sir John de Walton, or his garrison. What answers you may extort from me by bodily agony, I cannot, to speak as a plain-dealing Christian, hold myself responsible for. I think that I can endure as much pain as any one; I am sure that I never yet felt a degree of agony, that I would not willingly prefer to breaking my plighted word, or becoming a false informer against innocent persons: but I own I do not know the extent to which the art of torture may be carried; and though I do not fear you, Sir John de Walton, yet I must acknowledge that I fear myself, since I know not to what extremity your cruelty may be capable of subjecting me, or how far I may be enabled to bear it. I, therefore, in the first place, protest, that I shall in no manner be liable for any words which I may utter in the course of any examination enforced from me by torture; and you must therefore, under such circumstances, proceed to the execution of an office, which, permit me to say, is hardly that which I expected to have found thus administered by an accomplished knight like yourself."

"Hark you, sir," replied the governor, "you and I are at issue, and in doing my duty, I ought instantly to proceed to the extremities I have threatened; but perhaps you yourself feel less reluctance to undergo the examination as proposed, than I shall do in commanding it; I will therefore consign you for the present to a place of confinement, suitable to one who is suspected of being a spy upon this fortress. Until you are pleased to remove such suspicions, your lodgings and nourishment are those of a prisoner. In the meantime, before subjecting you to the question, take notice, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and satisfy myself whether the young person whom you would pass as your son, is possessed of the same determination as that which you yourself seem to assert. It may so happen that his examination and yours may throw such light upon each other as will decidedly prove either your guilt or innocence, without its being confirmed by the use of the extraordinary question. If it be otherwise, tremble for your son's sake, if not for your own.—Have I shaken you, sir?—or do you fear, for your boy's young sinews and joints, the engines which, in your case, you seem willing to defy?"

"Sir," answered the minstrel, recovering from the momentary emotion he had shown, "I leave it to yourself, as a man of honour and candour, whether you ought, in common fairness, to form a worse opinion of any man, because he is not unwilling to incur, in his own person, severities which he would not desire to be inflicted upon his child, a sickly youth, just recovering from a dangerous disease."

"It is my duty," answered De Walton, after a short pause, "to leave no stone unturned by which this business may be traced to the source; and if thou desirest mercy for thy son, thou wilt thyself most easily attain it, by setting him the example of honesty and plain-dealing."

The minstrel threw himself back on the seat, as if fully resolved to bear every extremity that could be inflicted, rather than make any farther answer than he had already offered. Sir John de Walton himself seemed in some degree uncertain what might now be his best course. He felt an invincible repugnance to proceed, without due consideration, in what most people would have deemed the direct line of his duty, by inflicting the torture both upon father and son; but deep as was his sense of devotion towards the King, and numerous as were the hopes and expectations he had formed upon the strict discharge of his present high trust, he could not resolve upon having recourse at once to this cruel method of cutting the knot. Bertram's appearance was venerable, and his power of words not unworthy of his aspect and bearing. The governor remembered that Aymer de Valence, whose judgment in general it was impossible to deny, had described him as one of those rare individuals, who vindicated the honour of a corrupted profession by their personal good behaviour; and he acknowledged to himself, that there was gross cruelty and injustice in refusing to admit the prisoner to the credit of being a true and honest man, until, by way of proving his rectitude, he had strained every sinew, and crushed every joint in his body, as well as those of his son. "I have no touchstone," he said internally, "which can distinguish truth from falsehood; the Bruce and his followers are on the alert,—he has certainly equipped the galleys which lay at Rachrin during winter. This story, too, of Greenleaf, about arms being procured for a new insurrection, tallies strangely with the appearance of that savage-looking forester at the hunt; and all tends to show, that something is upon the anvil which it is my duty to provide against. I will, therefore, pass over no circumstance by which I can affect the mind through hope or fear; but, please God to give me light from any other source, I will not think it lawful to torment these unfortunate, and, it may yet be, honest men." He accordingly took his departure from the library, whispering a word to Greenleaf respecting the prisoner.

He had reached the outward door of the study, and his satellites had already taken the minstrel into their grasp, when the voice of the old man was heard calling upon De Walton to return for a single moment.

"What hast thou to say, sir?" said the governor; "be speedy, for I have already lost more time in listening to thee than I am answerable for; and so I advise thee for thine own sake"—

"I advise thee," said the minstrel, "for thine own sake, Sir John de Walton, to beware how thou dost insist on thy present purpose, by which thou thyself alone, of all men living,—will most severely suffer. If thou harmest a hair of that young man's head—nay, if thou permittest him to undergo any privation which it is in thy power to prevent, thou wilt, in doing so, prepare for thine own suffering a degree of agony more acute than anything else in this mortal world could cause thee. I swear by the most blessed objects of our holy religion; I call to witness that holy sepulchre, of which I have been an unworthy visitor, that I speak nothing but the truth, and that thou wilt one day testify thy gratitude for the part I am now acting. It is my interest, as well as yours, to secure you in the safe possession of this castle, although assuredly I know some things respecting it, and respecting your worship, which I am not at liberty to tell without the consent of that youth. Bring me but a note under his hand, consenting to my taking you into our mystery, and believe me, you will soon see those clouds charmed away; since there was never a doleful uncertainty which more speedily changed to joy, or a thunder-cloud of adversity which more instantly gave way to sunshine, than would then the suspicions which appear now so formidable."

He spoke with so much earnestness as to make some impression upon Sir John de Walton, who was once more wholly at a loss to know what line his duty called upon him to pursue.

"I would most gladly," said the governor, "follow out my purpose by the gentlest means in my power; and I shall bring no further distress upon this poor lad, than thine own obstinacy and his shall appear to deserve. In the meantime, think, Sir Minstrel, that my duty has limits, and if I slack it for a day, it will become thee to exert every effort in thy power to meet my condescension. I will give thee leave to address thy son by a line under thy hand, and I will await his answer before I proceed farther in this matter, which seems to be very mysterious. Meantime, as thou hast a soul to be saved, I conjure thee to speak the truth, and tell me whether the secrets of which thou seemest to be a too faithful treasurer, have regard to the practices of Douglas, of Bruce, or of any in their names, against this Castle of Douglas?"

The prisoner thought a moment, and then replied—"I am aware, Sir Knight, of the severe charge under which this command is intrusted to your hands, and were it in my power to assist you, as a faithful minstrel and loyal subject, either with hand or tongue, I should feel myself called upon so to do; but so far am I from being the character your suspicions have apprehended, that I should have held it for certain that the Bruce and Douglas had assembled their followers, for the purpose of renouncing their rebellious attempts, and taking their departure for the Holy Land, but for the apparition of the forester, who, I hear, bearded you at the hunting, which impresses upon me the belief, that when so resolute a follower and henchman of the Douglas was sitting fearless among you, his master and comrades could be at no great distance—how far his intentions could be friendly to you, I must leave it to yourself to judge; only believe me thus far, that the rack, pulley, or pincers, would not have compelled me to act the informer, or adviser, in a quarrel wherein I have little or no share, if I had not been desirous of fixing the belief upon you, that you are dealing with a true man, and one who has your welfare at heart.—Meanwhile, permit me to have writing materials, or let my own be

restored, for I possess, in some degree, the higher arts of my calling; nor do I fear but that I can procure for you an explanation of these marvels, without much more loss of time."

"God grant it prove so," said the governor; "though I see not well how I can hope for so favourable a termination, and I may sustain great harm by trusting too much on the present occasion. My duty, however, requires that, in the meantime, you be removed into strict confinement."

He handed to the prisoner, as he spoke, the writing materials, which had been seized upon by the archers on their first entrance, and then commanded those satellites to unhand the minstrel.

"I must, then," said Bertram, "remain subjected to all the severities of a strict captivity; but I deprecate no hardship whatever in my own person, so I may secure you from acting with a degree of rashness, of which you will all your life repent, without the means of atoning."

"No more words, minstrel," said the governor; "but since I have made my choice, perhaps a very dangerous one for myself, let us carry this spell into execution, which thou sayest is to serve me, as mariners say that oil spread upon the raging billows will assuage their fury."

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

Beware!		beware!		of		the		black		Friar,
He		still		retains		his		black		sway,
For	he	is	yet	the	Church's	heir	by			right,
Whoever		may		be		the				lay.
Amundeville		is		lord		by				day,
But	the	monk		is	lord		by			night,
Nor	wine	nor	wassel	could	raise		a			vassal
To		question		that	friar's					right.

Don Juan, CANTO XVII.

The minstrel made no vain boast of the skill which he possessed in the use of pen and ink. In fact, no priest of the time could have produced his little scroll more speedily, more neatly composed, or more fairly written, than were the lines addressed "To the youth called Augustine, son of Bertram the Minstrel."

"I have not folded this letter," said he, "nor tied it with silk, for it is not expressed so as to explain the mystery to you; nor, to speak frankly, do I think that it can convey to you any intelligence; but it may be satisfactory to show you what the letter does not contain, and that it is written from and to a person, who both mean kindly towards you and your garrison."

"That," said the governor, "is a deception which is easily practised; it tends, however, to show, though not with certainty, that you are disposed to act upon good faith; and until the contrary appear, I shall consider it a point of duty to treat you with as much gentleness as the matter admits of. Meantime, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and in person examine the young prisoner; and as you say he has the power, so I pray to Heaven he may have the will, to read this riddle, which seems to throw us all into confusion." So saying, he ordered his horse, and while it was getting ready, he perused with great composure the minstrel's letter. Its contents ran thus:—

"DEAR AUGUSTINE,

"Sir John de Walton, the governor of this castle, has conceived those suspicions which I pointed out as likely to be the consequence of our coming to this country without an avowed errand. I at least am seized, and threatened with examination under torture, to force me to tell the purpose of our journey; but they shall tear the flesh from my bones, ere they force me to break the oath which I have taken. And the purport of this letter is to apprise you of the danger in which you stand of being placed in similar circumstances, unless you are disposed to authorize me to make the discovery to this knight; but on this subject you are only to express your own wishes, being assured they shall be in every respect attended to by your devoted

"BERTRAM."

This letter did not throw the smallest light upon the mystery of the writer. The governor read it more than once, and turned it repeatedly in his hand, as if he had hoped by that mechanical process to draw something from the missive, which at a first view the words did not express; but as no result of this sort appeared, De Walton retired to the hall, where he informed Sir Aymer de Valence, that he was going abroad as far as the Abbey of Saint Bride, and that he would be obliged by his taking upon him the duties of governor during his absence. Sir Aymer, of course, intimated his acquiescence in the charge; and the state of disunion in which they stood to each other, permitted no further explanation.

Upon the arrival of Sir John de Walton at the dilapidated shrine, the abbot, with trembling haste, made it his business immediately to attend the commander of the English garrison, upon whom for the present, their house depended for every indulgence they experienced, as well as for the subsistence and protection necessary to them in so perilous a period. Having interrogated this old man respecting the youth residing in the Abbey, De Walton was informed that he had been indisposed since left there by his father, Bertram, a minstrel. It appeared to the abbot, that his indisposition might be of that contagious kind which, at that period, ravaged the English Borders, and made some incursions into Scotland, where it afterwards worked a fearful progress. After some farther conversation, Sir John de Walton put into the abbot's hand the letter to the young person under his roof, on delivering which to Augustine, the reverend father was charged with a message to the English governor, so bold, that he was afraid to be the bearer of it. It signified, that the youth could not, and would not, at that moment, receive the English knight; but that, if he came back on the morrow after mass, it was probable he might learn something of what was requested.

"This is not an answer," said Sir John de Walton, "to be sent by a boy like this to a person in my charge; and me thinks, Father Abbot, you consult your own safety but slenderly in delivering such an insolent message."

The abbot trembled under the folds of his large coarse habit; and De Walton, imagining that his discomposure was the consequence of guilty fear, called upon him to remember the duties which he owed to England, the benefits which he had received from himself, and the probable consequence of taking part in a pert boy's insolent defiance of the power of the governor of the province.

The abbot vindicated himself from these charges with the utmost anxiety. He pledged his sacred word, that the inconsiderate character of the boy's message was owing to the waywardness arising from indisposition. He reminded the governor that, as a Christian and an Englishman, he had duties to observe towards the community of Saint Bride, which had never given the English government the least subject of complaint. As he spoke, the churchman seemed to gather courage from the immunities of his order. He said he could not permit a sick boy who had taken refuge within the sanctuary of the Church, to be seized or subjected to any species of force, unless he was accused of a specific crime, capable of being immediately proved. The Douglasses, a headstrong race, had, in former days, uniformly respected the sanctuary of Saint Bride, and it was not to be supposed that the king of England, the dutiful and obedient child of the Church of Rome, would act with less veneration for her rights, than the followers of a usurper, homicide, and excommunicated person like Robert Bruce.

Walton was considerably shaken with this remonstrance. He knew that, in the circumstances of the times, the Pope had great power in every controversy in which it was his pleasure to interfere. He knew that even in the dispute respecting the supremacy of Scotland, his Holiness had set up a claim to the kingdom which, in the temper of the times, might perhaps have been deemed superior both to that of Robert Bruce, and that of Edward of England, and he conceived his monarch would give him little thanks for any fresh embroilment which might take place with the Church. Moreover, it was easy to place a watch, so as to prevent Augustine from escaping during the night; and on the following morning he would be still as effectually in the power of the English governor as if he were seized on by open force at the present moment. Sir John de Walton, however, so far exerted his authority over the abbot, that he engaged, in consideration of the sanctuary being respected for this space of time, that, when it expired, he would be aiding and assisting with his spiritual authority to surrender the youth, should he not allege a sufficient reason to the contrary. This arrangement, which appeared still to flatter the governor with the prospect of an easy termination of this troublesome dispute, induced him to grant the delay which Augustine rather demanded than petitioned for.

"At your request, Father Abbot, whom I have hitherto found a true man, I will indulge this youth with the grace he asks, before taking him into custody, understanding that he shall not be permitted to leave this place; and thou art to be responsible to this effect, giving thee, as is reasonable, power to command our little garrison at Hazelside, to which I will send a reinforcement on my return to the Castle, in case it should be necessary to use the strong hand, or circumstances impose upon me other measures."

"Worthy Sir Knight," replied the Abbot, "I have no idea that the frowardness of this youth will render any course necessary, saving that of persuasion; and I venture to say, that you yourself will in the highest degree approve of the method in which I shall acquit myself of my present trust."

The abbot went through the duties of hospitality, enumerating what simple cheer the cloister of the convent permitted him to offer to the English knight. Sir John de Walton declined the offer of refreshment, however—took a courteous leave of the churchman, and did not spare his horse until the noble animal had brought him again before the Castle of Douglas. Sir Aymer De Valence met him on the drawbridge, and reported the state of the garrison to be the same in which he had left it, excepting that intimation had been received that twelve or fifteen men were expected on their way to the town of Lanark; and being on march from the neighbourhood of Ayr, would that night take up their quarters at the outpost of Hazelside.

"I am glad of it," replied the governor; "I was about to strengthen that detachment. This stripling, the son of Bertram the minstrel, or whoever he is, has engaged to deliver himself up for examination in the morning. As this party of soldiers are followers of your uncle, Lord Pembroke, may I request you will ride to meet them, and command them to remain at Hazelside until you make farther enquiries about this youth, who has still to clear up the mystery which hangs about him, and reply to a letter which I delivered with my own hand to the Abbot of Saint Bride. I have shown too much forbearance in this matter, and I trust to your looking to the security of this young man, and conveying him hither, with all due care and attention, as being a prisoner of some importance."

"Certainly, Sir John," answered Sir Aymer; "your orders shall be obeyed, since you have none of greater importance for one who hath the honour to be second only to yourself in this place."

"I crave your mercy, Sir Aymer," returned the governor, "if the commission be in any degree beneath your dignity; but it is our misfortune to misunderstand each other, when we endeavour to be most intelligible."

"But what am I to do," said Sir Aymer—"no way disputing your command, but only asking for information—what am I to do, if the Abbot of Saint Bride offers opposition?"

"How!" answered Sir John de Walton; "with the reinforcement from my Lord of Pembroke, you will command at least twenty war-men, with bow and spear, against five or six timid old monks, with only gown and hood."

"True," said Sir Aymer, "but ban and excommunication are sometimes; In the present day, too hard for the mail coat, and I would not willingly be thrown out of the pale of the Christian Church."

"Well, then, thou very suspicious and scrupulous young man," replied De Walton, "know that if this youth does not deliver himself up to thee of his own accord, the abbot has promised to put him into thy hands."

There was no farther answer to be made, and De Valence, though still thinking himself unnecessarily harassed with the charge of a petty commission, took the sort of half arms which were always used when the knights stirred, beyond the walls of the garrison, and proceeded to execute the commands of De Walton. A horseman or two, together with his squire Fabian, accompanied him.

The evening closed in with one of those Scottish mists which are commonly said to be equal to the showers of happier climates; the path became more and more dark, the hills more wreathed in vapours, and more difficult to traverse; and all the little petty inconveniences which rendered travelling through the district slow and uncertain, were augmented by the density of the fog which overhung every thing.

Sir Aymer, therefore, occasionally mended his pace, and often incurred the fate of one who is over-late, delaying himself by his efforts to make greater expedition. The knight bethought himself that he would get into a straight road by passing through the almost deserted town of Douglas—the inhabitants of which had been treated so severely by the English, in the course of those fierce troubles, that most of them who were capable of bearing arms had left it, and withdrawn themselves to different parts of the country. This almost deserted place was defended by a rude palisade, and a ruder drawbridge, which gave entrance into streets so narrow, as to admit with difficulty three horses abreast, and evincing with what strictness the ancient lords of the village adhered to their prejudice against fortifications, and their opinion in favour of keeping the field, so quaintly expressed in the well-known proverb of the family,—"*It is better to hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep.*" The streets, or rather the lanes, were dark, but for a shifting gleam of moonlight, which, as that planet began to rise, was now and then visible upon some steep and narrow gable. No sound of domestic industry, or domestic festivity, was heard, and no ray of candle or firelight glanced from the windows of the houses; the ancient ordinance called the curfew, which the Conqueror had introduced into England, was at this time in full force in such parts of Scotland as were thought doubtful, and likely to rebel; under which description it need not be said the ancient possessions of the Douglas were most especially regarded. The Church, whose Gothic monuments were of a magnificent character, had been, as far as possible, destroyed by fire; but the ruins, held together by the weight of the massive stones of which they were composed, still sufficiently evinced the greatness of the family at whose cost it had been raised, and whose bones, from immemorial time, had been entombed in its crypts.

Paying little attention to these relics of departed splendour, Sir Aymer de Valence advanced with his small detachment, and had passed the scattered fragments of the cemetery of the Douglasses, when to his surprise, the noise of his horse's feet was seemingly replied to by sounds which rung like those of another knightly steed advancing heavily up the street, as if it were to meet him. Valence was unable to conjecture what might be the cause of these warlike sounds; the ring and the clang of armour was distinct, and the heavy tramp of a war-horse was not to be mistaken by the ear of a warrior. The difficulty of keeping soldiers from straying out of quarters by night, would have sufficiently accounted for the appearance of a straggling foot-soldier; but it was more difficult to account for a mounted horseman, in full armour; and such was the apparition which a peculiarly bright glimpse of moonlight now showed at the bottom of the causewayed hill. Perhaps the unknown warrior obtained at the same time a glance of Aymer de Valence and his armed followers—at least each of them shouted "*Who goes there?*"—the alarm of the times; and on the instant the deep answers of "*St. George!*" on the one side, and "*The Douglas!*" on the other, awakened the still echoes of the small and ruinous street, and the silent arches of the dilapidated church. Astonished at a war-cry with which so many recollections were connected, the English knight spurred his horse at full gallop down the steep and broken descent leading out at the south or south-east gate of the town; and it was the work of an instant to call out, "*Ho! Saint George! upon the insolent villain all of you!*"—To the gate, Fabian, and cut him off from flight! —Saint George! I say, for England! Bows and bills!—bows and bills!" At the same time Aymer de Valence laid in rest his own long lance, which he snatched from the squire by whom it was carried. But the light was seen and gone in an instant, and though De Valence concluded that the hostile warrior had hardly room to avoid his career, yet he could take no aim for the encounter, unless by mere guess, and continued to plunge down the dark declivity, among shattered stones and other encumbrances, without groping out with his lance the object of his pursuit. He rode, in short, at a broken gallop, a descent of about fifty or sixty yards, without having any reason to suppose that he had met the figure which had appeared to him, although the narrowness of the street scarcely admitted his having passed him, unless both horse and horseman could have melted at the moment of encounter like an air-bubble. The riders of his suite, meanwhile, were struck with a feeling like supernatural terror, which a number of singular adventures, had caused most of them to attach to the name of Douglas; and when he reached the gate by which the broken street was terminated, there was none close behind him but Fabian, in whose head no suggestions of a timorous nature could outlive the sound of his dear master's voice.

Here there were a post of English, archers, who were turning out in considerable alarm, when De Valence and his page rode in amongst them. "*Villains!*" shouted De Valence, "why were you not upon your duty? Who was it passed through your post even now, with the traitorous cry of Douglas?"

"We know of no such," said the captain of the watch.

"That is to say, you besotted villains," answered the young knight, "you have been drinking, and have slept?"

The men protested the contrary, but in a confused manner, which was far from overcoming De Valence's suspicions. He called loudly to bring cressets, torches, and candles; and a few remaining inhabitants began to make their unwilling appearance, with such various means of giving light as they chanced to possess.

They heard the story of the young English knight with wonder; nor, although it was confirmed by all his retinue, did they give credit to the recital, more than that the Englishmen wished somehow or other to pick a quarrel with the people of the palace, under the pretence of their having admitted a retainer of their ancient lord by night into the town. They protested, therefore, their innocence of the cause of tumult, and endeavoured to seem active in hastening from house to house, and corner to corner, with their torches, in order to discover the invisible cavalier. The English suspected them no less of treachery, than the Scottish imagined the whole matter a pretext for bringing an accusation, on the part of the young knight, against the citizens. The women, however, who now began to issue from the houses, had a key for the solution of the apparition, which at that time was believed of efficacy sufficient to solve any mystery. "The devil," they said, "must have appeared visibly amongst them," an explanation which had already occurred to the followers of the young knight; for that a living man and horse, both as it seemed, of a gigantic size, could be conjured in the twinkling of an eye, and appear in a street secured at one end by the best of the archers, and at the other by the horsemen under Valence himself, was altogether, it seemed, a thing impossible. The inhabitants did not venture to put their thoughts on the subject into language, for fear of giving offence, and only indicated by a passing word to each other the secret degree of pleasure which they felt in the confusion and embarrassment of the English garrison. Still, however, they continued to affect a great deal of interest in the alarm which De Valence had received, and the anxiety which he expressed to discover the cause.

At length a female voice spoke above the Babel of confused sounds, saying, "Where is the Southern Knight? I am sure that I can tell him where he can find the only person who can help him out of his present difficulty."

"And who is that, good woman?" said Aymer de Valence, who was growing every moment more impatient at the loss of time, which was flying fast, in an investigation which had something vexatious in it, and even ridiculous. At the same time, the sight of an armed partisan of the Douglasses, in their own native town, seemed to bode too serious consequences, if it should be suffered to pass without being probed to the bottom.

"Come hither to me," said the female voice, "and I will name to you the only person who can explain all matters of this kind that chance in this country." On this the knight snatched a torch from some of those who were present, and holding it up, descried the person who spoke, a tall woman, who evidently endeavoured to render herself remarkable. When he approached her, she communicated her intelligence in a grave and sententious tone of voice.

"We had once wise men, that could have answered any parables which might have been put to them for explanation in this country side. Whether you yourselves, gentlemen, have not had some hand in weeding them out, good troth, it is not for the like of me to say; at any rate, good counsel is not so easy come by as it was in this Douglas country, nor, may be, is it a safe thing to pretend to the power of giving it."

"Good woman," said De Valence, "if you will give me an explanation of this mystery, I will owe you a kirtle of the best raploch grey."

"It is not I," said the old woman, "that pretend to possess the knowledge which may assist you; but I would fain know that the man whom I shall name to you shall be skaitless and harmless. Upon your knighthood and your honour, will you promise to me so much?"

"Assuredly," said De Valence, "such a person shall even have thanks and reward, if he is a faithful informer; ay, and pardon, moreover, although he may have listened to any dangerous practices, or been concerned in any plots."

"Oh! not he," replied the female; "it is old Goodman Powheid, who has the charge of the muniments," (meaning probably monuments,) "that is, such part of them as you English have left standing; I mean the old sexton of the kirk of Douglas, who can tell more stories of these old folk, whom your honour is not very fond of hearing named, than would last us from this day to Yule."

"Does anybody," said the knight, "know whom it is that this old woman means?"

"I conjecture," replied Fabian, "that she speaks of an old dotard, who is, I think, the general referee concerning the history and antiquities of this old town, and of the savage family that lived here perhaps before the flood."

"And who, I dare say," said the knight, "knows as much about the matter as she herself does. But where is this man? a sexton is he? He may be acquainted with places of concealment, which are often fabricated in Gothic buildings, and known to those whose business calls them to frequent them. Come, my good old dame, bring this man to me; or, what may be better, I will go to him, for we have already spent too much time."

"Time!" replied the old woman,— "is time an object with your honour? I am sure I can hardly get so much for mine as will hold soul and body together. You are not far from the old man's house."

She led the way accordingly, blundering over heaps of rubbish, and encountering all the embarrassments of a ruinous street, in lighting the way to Sir Aymer, who, giving his horse to one of his attendants, and desiring Fabian to be ready at a call, scrambled after as well as the slowness of his guide would permit.

Both were soon involved in the remains of the old church, much dilapidated as it had been by wanton damage done to it by the soldiery, and so much impeded by rubbish, that the knight marvelled how the old woman could find the way. She kept talking all the while as she stumbled onward. Sometimes she called out in a screeching tone, "Powheid! Lazarus Powheid!"—and then muttered—"Ay, ay, the old man will be busy with some of his duties, as he calls them; I wonder he fashes wi' them in these times. But never mind, I warrant they will last for his day and for mine; and the times, Lord help us! for all that I can see, are well enough for those that are to live in them."

"Are you sure, good woman," replied the knight, "that there is any inhabitant in these ruins? For my part, I should rather suppose that you are taking me to the charnel-house of the dead."

"Maybe you are right," said the old woman, with a ghastly laugh; "carles and carlines agree weel with funeral vaults and charnel-houses, and when an auld bedral dwells near the dead, he is living, ye ken, among his customers—Halloo! Powheid! Lazarus Powheid! there is a gentleman would speak with you;" and she added, with some sort of emphasis, "an. English noble gentleman—one of the honourable garrison."

An old man's step was now heard advancing, so slowly that the glimmering light which he held in his hand was visible on the ruined walls of the vault some time before it showed the person who bore it.

The shadow of the old man was also projected upon the illuminated wall ere his person came in view; his dress was in considerable confusion, owing to his having been roused from his bed; and since artificial light was forbidden by the regulations of the garrison, the natives of Douglas Dale spent in sleep the time that they could not very well get rid of by any other means. The sexton was a tall thin man, emaciated by years and by privations; his body was bent habitually by his occupation of grave-digging, and his eye naturally inclined downward to the scene of his labours. His hand sustained the cruise or little lamp, which he held so as to throw light upon his visitant; at the same time it displayed to the young knight the features of the person with whom he was now confronted, which, though neither handsome nor pleasing, were strongly marked, sagacious, and venerable, indicating, at the same time, a certain air of dignity, which age, even mere poverty, may be found occasionally to bestow, as conferring that last melancholy species of independence proper to those whose situation can hardly by any imaginable means, be rendered much worse than years and fortune have already made it. The habit of a lay brother added somewhat of religious importance to his appearance.

"What would you with me, young man?" said the sexton. "Your youthful features, and your gay dress, bespeak one who stands in need of my ministry neither for himself nor for others."

"I am indeed," replied the knight, "a living man, and therefore need not either shovel or pick-axe for my own behoof. I am not, as you see, attired in mourning, and therefore need not your offices in behalf of any friend; I would only ask you a few questions."

"What you would have done must needs be done, you being at present one of our rulers, and, as I think, a man of authority," replied the sexton; "follow me this way into my poor habitation; I have had a better in my day; and yet, Heaven knows, it is good enough for me, when many men of much greater consequence must perform content themselves with worse."

He opened a lowly door, which was fitted, though irregularly, to serve as the entrance of a vaulted apartment, where it appeared that the old man held, apart from the living world, his wretched and solitary dwelling. [Footnote: [This is a most graphic and accurate description of the present state of the ruin. Its being occupied by the sexton as a dwelling-place, and the whole scene of the old man's interview with De Valence, may be classed with our illustrious author's most felicitous

Look around, Sir Knight, you have above and around you the men of whom we speak. Beneath us, in a little aisle, (which hath not been opened since these thin grey locks were thick and brown,) there lies the first man whom I can name as memorable among those of this mighty line. It is he whom the Thane of Athol pointed out to the King of Scotland as Sholto Dhuglass, or the dark iron-coloured man, whose exertions had gained the battle for his native prince; and who, according to this legend, bequeathed his name to our dale and town, though others say that the race assumed the name of Douglass from the stream so called in unrecorded times, before they had their fastness on its banks. Others, his descendants, called Eachain, or Hector the first, and Orodh, or Hugh, William, the first of that name, and Gilmour, the theme of many a minstrel song, commemorating achievements done under the oriflamme of Charles the Great, Emperor of France, have all consigned themselves to their last sleep, nor has their memory been sufficiently preserved from the waste of time. Something we know concerning their great deeds, their great power, and, alas! their great crimes. Something we also know of a Lord of Douglas who sat in a parliament at Forfar, held by King Malcolm the First, and we are aware that from his attachment to hunting the wild hart, he built himself a tower called Blackhouse, in the forest of Ettrick, which perhaps still exists."

"Old man," he said, "I do not require from thee this detail, which must be useless to me, as well as painful to thyself. Thou dost but thy duty in rendering justice to thy ancient lord; but thou hast not yet explained to me why I have met in this town, this very night, and not half an hour since, a person in the arms, and bearing the complexion, of one of the Black Douglasses, who cried his war-cry as if in contempt of his conquerors."

"Surely," replied the sexton, "it is not my business to explain such a fancy, otherwise than by supposing that the natural fears of the Southron will raise the spectre of a Douglas at any time, when he is within sight of their sepulchre. Methinks, in such a night as this, the fairest cavalier would wear the complexion of this swarthy race, nor can I hold it wonderful that the war-cry which was once in the throats of so many thousands in this country, should issue upon occasion from the mouth of a single champion."

"You are bold, old man," returned the English knight; "do you consider that your life is in my power, and that it may, in certain cases, be my duty to inflict death with that degree of pain at which humanity shudders?"

The old man rose up slowly in the light of the blazing fire, displaying his emaciated features, which resembled those ascribed by artists to Saint Anthony of the desert; and pointing to the feeble lamp, which he placed upon the coarse table, thus addressed his interrogator, with an appearance of perfect firmness, and something even resembling dignity:—

"Young knight of England, you see that utensil constructed for the purpose of dispensing light amid these fatal vaults,—it is as frail as any thing can well be, whose flame is supplied by living element, contained in a frame composed of iron. It is doubtless in your power entirely to end its service, by destroying the frame, or extinguishing the light. Threaten it with such annihilation, Sir Knight, and see whether your menace will impress any sense of fear either on the element or the iron. Know that you have no more power over the frail mortal whom you threaten with similar annihilation. You may tear from my body the skin in which it is now swathed, but although my nerves might glow with agony during the inhuman operation, it would produce no more impression on me than flaying on the stag which an arrow has previously pierced through the heart. My age sets me beyond your cruelty: if you think otherwise, call your agents, and commence your operations; neither threats nor inflictions will enable you to extort from me any thing that I am not ready to tell you of my own accord."

"You trifle with me, old man," said De Valence; "you talk as if you possessed some secret respecting the motions of these Douglasses, who are to you as gods, yet you communicate no intelligence to me whatever."

"You may soon know," replied the old man, "all that a poor sexton has to communicate; and it will not increase your knowledge respecting the living, though it may throw some light upon my proper domains, which are those of the dead. The spirits of the deceased Douglasses do not rest in their graves during the dishonour of their monuments, and the downfall of their house. That, upon death, the greater part of any line are consigned to the regions of eternal bliss, or of never-ending misery, religion will not suffer us to believe, and amidst a race who had so great a share of worldly triumph and prosperity, we must suppose there have existed many who have been justly subjected to the doom of an intermediate space of punishment. You have destroyed the temples— which were built by their posterity to propitiate Heaven for the welfare of their souls; you have silenced the prayers and stopt the choirs, by the mediation of which the piety of children had sought to appease the wrath of Heaven in behalf of their ancestors, subjected to expiatory fires. Can you wonder that the tormented spirits, thus deprived of the relief which had been proposed to them, should not, according to the common phrase, rest in their graves? Can you wonder they should show themselves like discontented loiterers near to the places which, but for the manner in which you have prosecuted your remorseless warfare, might have ere now afforded them rest? Or do you marvel that these fleshless warriors should interrupt your marches, and do what else their airy nature may permit to disturb your councils, and meet as far as they may the hostilities which you make it your boast to carry on, as well against those who are deceased, as against any who may yet survive your cruelty?"

"Old man," replied Aymer de Valence, "you cannot expect that I am to take for answer a story like this, being a fiction too gross to charm to sleep a schoolboy tormented with the toothache; nevertheless, I thank God that thy doom does not remain in my hands. My squire and two archers shall carry thee captive to the worshipful Sir John de Walton, Governor of the Castle and Valley, that he may deal with thee as seems meet; nor is he a person to believe in your apparitions and ghosts from purgatory.—What ho! Fabian! Come hither, and bring with thee two archers of the guard."

Fabian accordingly, who had waited at the entrance of the ruined building, now found his way, by the light of the old sexton's lamp, and the sound of his master's voice, into the singular apartment of the old man, the strange decorations of which struck the youth with great surprise, and some horror.

"Take the two archers with thee, Fabian," said the Knight of Valence, "and, with their assistance, convey this old man, on horseback, or in a litter, to the presence of the worshipful Sir John de Walton. Tell him what we have seen, which thou didst witness as well as I; and tell him that this old sexton, whom I send to be examined by his superior wisdom, seems to know more than he is willing to disclose respecting our ghostly cavalier, though he will give us no account of him, except intimating that he is a spirit of the old Douglasses from purgatory, to which Sir John de Walton will give what faith he pleases. You may say, that, for my part, my belief is, either that the sexton is crazed by age, want, and enthusiasm, or that he is connected with some plot which the country people are hatching. You may also say that I shall not use much ceremony with the youth under the care of the Abbot of St. Bride; there is something suspicious in all the occurrences that are now passing around us."

Fabian promised obedience; and the knight, pulling him aside, gave him an additional caution, to behave with attention in this business, seeing he must recollect that neither the judgment of himself, nor that of his master, were apparently held in very much esteem by the governor; and that it would ill become them to make any mistake in a matter where the safety of the Castle was perhaps concerned.

"Fear me not, worshipful sir," replied the youth; "I am returning to pure air in the first place, and a good fire in the second, both acceptable exchanges for this dungeon of suffocating vapours and execrable smells. You may trust to my making no delay; a very short time will carry me back to Castle Douglas, even moving with suitable attention to this old man's bones."

"Use him humanely," answered the knight. "And thou, old man, if thou art insensible to threats of personal danger in this matter, remember, that if thou art found paltering with us, thy punishment will perhaps be more severe than any we can inflict upon thy person."

"Can you administer the torture to the soul?" said the sexton.

"As to thee," answered the knight, "we have that power;—we will dissolve every monastery or religious establishment held for the souls of these Douglasses, and will only allow the religious people to hold their residence there upon condition of their praying for the soul of King Edward the First of glorious memory, the *malleus Scotorum*; and if the Douglasses are deprived of the ghostly benefit of the prayers and services of such shrines, they may term thy obstinacy the cause."

"Such a species of vengeance," answered the old man, in the same bold unsubdued tone which he had hitherto used, "were more worthy of the infernal fiends than of Christian men."

The squire raised his hand. The knight interposed: "Forbear him," he said, "Fabian, he is very old, and perhaps insane.—And you, sexton, remember that the vengeance threatened is lawfully directed towards a family which have been the obstinate supporters of the excommunicated rebel, who murdered the Red Comyn at the High Church in Dumfries."

So saying, Aymer strode out of the ruins, picking his way with much difficulty—took his horse, which he found at the entrance—repeated a caution to Fabian, to conduct himself with prudence—and, passing on to the south-western gate, gave the strongest injunctions concerning the necessity of keeping a vigilant watch, both by patrols and by sentinels, intimating, at the same time, that it must have been neglected during the preceding part of the evening. The men murmured an apology, the confusion of which seemed to express that there had existed some occasion for the reprimand.

Sir Aymer then proceeded on his journey to Hazelside, his train diminished by the absence of Fabian and his assistants. After a hasty, but not a short journey, the knight alighted at Thomas Dickson's, where he found the detachment from Ayr had arrived before him, and were snugly housed for the night. He sent one of the archers to announce his approach to the Abbot of Saint Bride and his young guest, intimating at the same time, that the archer must keep sight of the latter until he himself arrived at the chapel, which would be instantly.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

When the nightengale singes, the wodes waxes grene,
Lef, and gras, and blosme, the springeth in April I wene,
And love is to myne herte gone with one speare so kene.
Night and day my blood hyt drynkes, mine herte deth me fane.

MSS. Hail. Quoted by Warton.

Sir Aymer De Valance had no sooner followed his archer to the convent of Saint Bride, than he summoned the abbot to his presence, who came with the air of a man who loves his ease, and who is suddenly called from the couch where he has consigned himself to a comfortable repose, at the summons of one whom he does not think it safe to disobey, and to whom he would not disguise his sense of peevishness, if he durst.

"It is a late ride," he said, "which has brought your worthy honour hither from the castle. May I be informed of the cause, after the arrangement so recently gone into with the governor?"

"It is my hope," replied the knight, "that you, Father Abbot, are not already conscious of it; suspicions are afloat, and I myself have this night seen something to confirm them, that some of the obstinate rebels of this country are again setting afoot dangerous practices, to the peril of the garrison; and I come, father, to see whether, in requital of many favours received from the English monarch, you will not merit his bounty and protection, by contributing to the discovery of the designs of his enemies."

"Assuredly so," answered Father Jerome, in an agitated voice. "Most unquestionably my information should stand at your command; that is, if I knew any thing the communication of which could be of advantage to you."

"Father Abbot," replied the English knight, "although it is rash to make myself responsible for a North-country man in these times, yet I own I do consider you as one who has ever been faithfully subject to the King of England, and I willingly hope that you will still continue so."

"And a fine encouragement I have!" said the abbot; "to be called out of my bed at midnight, in this raw weather, to undergo the examination of a knight, who is the youngest, perhaps, of his own honourable rank, and who will not tell me the subject of the interrogatories, but detains me on this cold pavement, till, according to the opinion of Celsus, the podagra which lurks in my feet may be driven into my stomach, and then good-night to abbacy and examinations from henceforward."

"Good father," said the young man, "the spirit of the times must teach thee patience; recollect that I can feel no pleasure in this duty, and that if an insurrection should take place, the rebels, who are sufficiently displeased with thee for acknowledging the English monarch, would hang thee from thine own steeple to feed the crows; or that, if thou hast secured thy peace by some private compact with the insurgents, the English governor, who will sooner or later gain the advantage, will not fail to treat thee as a rebel to his sovereign."

"It may appear to you, my noble son," answered the abbot, obviously discomposed, "that I am hung up, in this case, on the horns of the dilemma which you have stated; nevertheless, I protest to you, that if any one accuses me of conspiring with the rebels against the King of England, I am ready, provided you give me time to swallow a potion recommended by Celsus in my perilous case, to answer with the most perfect sincerity every question which you can put to me upon that subject." So saying, he called upon a monk who had attended at his levee, and giving him a large key, whispered something in his ear. The cup which the monk brought was of such capacity as proved Celsus's draught required to be administered in considerable quantity, and a strong smell which it spread through the apartment, accredited the knight's suspicion that the medicine chiefly consisted of what were then termed distilled waters, a preparation known in the monasteries for some time before that comfortable secret had reached the laity in general. The abbot, neither overawed by the strength nor by the quantity of the potion, took it off with what he himself would have called a feeling of solace and pleasance, and his voice became much more composed; he signified himself as comforted extraordinarily by the medicine, and willing to proceed to answer any questions which could be put to him by his gallant young friend.

"At present," said the knight, "you are aware, father, that strangers travelling through this country, must be the first objects of our suspicions and enquiries. What is, for example, your own opinion of the youth termed Augustine, the son, or calling himself so, of a person called Bertram the minstrel, who has resided for some days in your convent?"

The abbot heard the question with eyes expressive of surprise at the quarter from which it came.

"Assuredly," said he, "I think of him as a youth who, from any thing I have seen, is of that excellent disposition, both with respect to loyalty and religion, which I should have expected, were I to judge from the estimable person who committed him to my care."

With this the abbot bowed to the knight, as if he had conceived that this repartee gave him a silencing advantage in any question which could follow upon that subject; and he was probably, therefore, surprised when Sir Aymer replied as follows:

"It is very true, Father Abbot, that I myself did recommend this stripling to you as a youth of a harmless disposition, and with respect to whom it would be unnecessary to exercise the strict vigilance extended to others in similar circumstances; but the evidence which seemed to me to vouch for this young man's innocence, has not appeared so satisfactory to my superior and commander; and it is by his orders that I now make farther enquiries of you. You must think they are of consequence, since we again trouble you, and at so unwonted an hour."

"I can only protest by my order, and by the veil of Saint Bride," replied the abbot, the spirit of Celsus appearing to fail his pupil, "that whatever evil may be in this matter, is totally unknown to me— nor could it be extorted from me by racks or implements of torture. Whatever signs of disloyalty may have been evinced by this young man, I have witnessed none of them, although I have been strictly attentive to his behaviour."

"In what respect?" said the knight—"and what is the result of your observation?"

"My answer," said the abbot of Saint Bride, "shall be sincere and downright. The youth condescended upon payment of a certain number of gold crowns, not by any means to repay the hospitality of the church of Saint Bride, but merely"—

"Nay, father," interrupted the knight, "you may cut that short, since the governor and I well understand the terms upon which the monks of Saint Bride exercise their hospitality. In what manner, it is more necessary to ask, was it received by this boy?"

"With the utmost gentleness and moderation, noble sir," answered the abbot; "indeed it appeared to me, at first, that he might be a troublesome guest, since the amount of his benevolence to the convent was such as to encourage, and, in some degree, to authorise, his demanding accommodation of a kind superior to what we had to bestow."

"In which case," said Sir Aymer, "you would have had the discomfort of returning some part of the money you have received?"

"That," replied the abbot, "would have been a mode of settlement contrary to our vows. What is paid to the treasury of Saint Bridget, cannot, agreeably to our rule, be on any account restored. But, noble knight, there was no occasion for this; a crust of white bread and a draught of milk were diet sufficient to nourish this poor youth for a day, and it was my own anxiety for his health that dictated the furnishing of his cell with a softer bed and coverlet than are quite consistent with the rules of our order."

"Now hearken to what I say, Sir Abbot, and answer me truly," said the Knight of Valence—"What communication has this youth held with the inmates of your convent, or with those beyond your house? Search your memory concerning this, and let me have a distinct answer, for your guest's safety and your own depend upon it."

"As I am a Christian man," said the abbot, "I have observed nothing which could give ground for your worship's suspicions. The boy Augustine, unlike those whom I have observed who have been educated in the world, showed a marked preference to the company of such sisters as the house of Saint Bride contains, rather than for that of the monks, my brethren, although there are among them pleasant and conversible men."

"Scandal," said the young knight, "might find a reason for that preference."

"Not in the case of the sisters of Saint Bridget," said the abbot, "most of whom have been either sorely misused by time, or their comeliness destroyed by some mishap previously to their being received into the seclusion of the house."

This observation the good father made with some internal movement of mirth, which was apparently excited at the idea of the sisterhood of Saint Bridget becoming attractive to any one by dint of their personal beauty, in which, as it happened, they were all notably, and almost ludicrously, deficient. The English knight, to whom the sisterhood were well known, felt also inclined to smile at this conversation.

"I acquit," he said, "the pious sisterhood of charming, otherwise than by their kind wishes, and attention to the wants of the suffering stranger."

"Sister Beatrice," continued the father, resuming his gravity, "is indeed blessed with a winning gift of making comfits and syllabubs; but, on minute enquiry, I do not find that the youth has tasted any of them. Neither is sister Ursula so hard-favoured by nature, as from the effects of an accident; but your honour knows that when a woman is ugly, the men do not trouble themselves about the cause of her hard favour. I will go, with your leave, and see in what state the youth now is, and summon him, before you."

"I request you to do so, father, for the affair is instant: and I earnestly advise you to watch, in the closest manner, this Augustine's behaviour: you cannot be too particular. I will wait your return, and either carry the boy to the castle, or leave him here, as circumstances may seem to require."

The abbot bowed, promised his utmost exertions, and hobbled out of the room to wait on the youth Augustine in his cell, anxious to favour, if possible, the wishes of De Valence, whom he looked upon as rendered by circumstances his military patron.

He remained long absent, and Sir Aymer began to be of opinion that the delay was suspicious, when the abbot returned with perplexity and discomposure in his countenance.

"I crave your pardon for keeping your worship waiting," said Jerome, with much anxiety; "but I have myself been detained and vexed by unnecessary formalities and scruples on the part of this peevish boy. In the first place, hearing my foot approaching his bedroom, my youth, instead of undoing the door, which would have been but proper respect to my place, on the contrary draws a strong bolt on the inside; and this fastening, forsooth, has been placed on his chamber by Ursula's command, that his slumbers might be suitably respected. I intimated to him as I best could, that he must attend you without delay, and prepare to accompany you to the Castle of Douglas; but he would not answer a single word, save recommending to me patience, to which I was fain to have recourse, as well as your archer, whom I found standing sentinel before the door of the cell, and contenting himself with the assurance of the sisters that there was no other passage by which Augustine could make his escape. At length the door opens, and my young master presents himself fully arrayed for his journey. The truth is, I think some fresh attack of his malady has affected the youth; he may perhaps be disturbed with some touch of hypochondria, or black choler, a species of dotage of the mind, which is sometimes found concomitant with and symptomatic of this disorder; but he is at present composed, and if your worship chooses to see him, he is at your command."

"Call him hither," said the knight. And a considerable space of time again elapsed ere the eloquence of the abbot, half chiding and half soothing, prevailed on the lady, in her adopted character, to approach, the parlour, in which at last she made her appearance, with a countenance on which the marks of tears might still be discovered, and a pettish sullenness, like that of a boy, or, with reverence, that of a girl, who is determined upon taking her own way in any matter, and equally resolved to give no reason for her doing so. Her hurried levee had not prevented her attending closely to all the mufflings and disguisings by which her pilgrim's dress was arranged, so as to alter her appearance, and effectually disguise her sex. But as civility prevented her wearing her large slouched hat, she necessarily exposed her countenance more than in the open air; and though the knight beheld a most lovely set of features, yet they were not such as were inconsistent with the character she had adopted, and which she had resolved upon maintaining to the last. She had, accordingly, mustered up a degree of courage which was not natural to her, and which she perhaps supported by hopes which her situation hardly admitted. So soon as she found herself in the same apartment with De Valence, she assumed a style of manners, bolder and more determined than she had hitherto displayed.

"Your worship," she said, addressing him even before he spoke, "is a knight of England, and possessed, doubtless, of the virtues which become that noble station. I am an unfortunate lad, obliged, by reasons which I am under the necessity of keeping secret, to travel in a dangerous country, where I am suspected, without any just cause, of becoming accessory to plots and conspiracies which are contrary to my own interest, and which my very soul abhors; and which I might safely abjure, by imprecating upon myself all the curses of our religion and renouncing all its promises, if I were accessory to such designs, in thought, word, or deed. Nevertheless, you, who will not believe my solemn protestations, are about to proceed against me as a guilty person, and in so doing I must warn you, Sir Knight, that you will commit a great and cruel injustice."

"I shall endeavour to avoid that," said the knight, "by referring the duty to Sir John de Walton, the governor, who will decide what is to be done; in this case, my only duty will be to place you in his hands at Douglas Castle."

"Must you do this?" said Augustine.

"Certainly," replied the knight, "or be answerable for neglecting my duty."

"But if I become bound to answer your loss with a large sum of money, a large tract of land"—

"No treasure, no land,—supposing such at your disposal," answered the knight, "can atone for disgrace; and, besides, boy, how should I trust to your warrant, were my avarice such as would induce me to listen to such proposals?"

"I must then prepare to attend you instantly to the Castle of Douglas and the presence of Sir John de Walton?" replied Augustine.

"Young man," answered De Valence, "there is no remedy, since if you delay me longer, I must carry you thither by force."

"What will be the consequence to my father?" said the youth.

"That," replied the knight, "will depend exactly on the nature of your confession and his; something you both have to say, as is evident from the terms of the letter Sir John de Walton conveyed to you; and I assure you, you were better to speak it out at once than to risk the consequences of more delay. I can admit of no more trifling; and, believe me, that your fate will be entirely ruled by your own frankness and candour."

"I must prepare, then, to travel at your command," said the youth. "But this cruel disease still hangs around me, and Abbot Jerome, whose leech-craft is famous, will himself assure you that I cannot travel without danger of my life; and that while I was residing in this convent, I declined every opportunity of exercise which was offered me by the kindness of the garrison at Hazelside, lest I might by mishap bring the contagion among your men."

"The youth says right," said the abbot; "the archers and men-at-arms have more than once sent to invite this lad to join in some of their military games, or to amuse them, perhaps, with some of his minstrelsy; but he has uniformly declined doing so; and, according to my belief, it is the effects of this disorder which have prevented his accepting an indulgence so natural to his age, and in so dull a place as the convent of Saint Bride must needs seem to a youth bred up in the world."

"Do you then hold, reverend father," said Sir Aymer, "that there is real danger in carrying this youth to the castle to-night, as I proposed?"

"I conceive such danger," replied the abbot, "to exist, not only as it may occasion the relapse of the poor youth himself, but as particularly likely, no preparations having been made, to introduce the infection among your honourable garrison; for it is in these relapses, more than in the first violence of the malady, that it has been found most contagious."

"Then," said the knight, "you must be content, my friend, to give a share of your room to an archer, by way of sentinel."

"I cannot object," said Augustine, "provided my unfortunate vicinity does not endanger the health of the poor soldier."

"He will be as ready to do his duty," said the abbot, "without the door of the apartment as within it; and if the youth should sleep soundly, which the presence of a guard in his chamber might prevent, he is the more likely to answer your purpose on the morrow."

"Let it be so," said Sir Aymer; "so you are sure that you do not minister any facility of escape."

"The apartment," said the monk, "hath no other entrance than that which is guarded by the archer; but, to content you, I shall secure the door in your presence."

"So be it, then," said the Knight of Valence; "this done, I myself will lie down without doffing my mail-shirt, and snatch a sleep till the ruddy dawn calls me again to duty, when you, Augustine, will hold yourself ready to attend me to our Castle of Douglas."

The bells of the convent summoned the inhabitants and inmates of Saint Bride to morning prayers at the first peep of day. When this duty was over, the knight demanded his prisoner. The abbot marshalled him to the door of Augustine's chamber. The sentinel who was stationed there, armed with a brown-bill, or species of partisan, reported that he had heard no motion in the apartment during the whole night. The abbot tapped at the door, but received no answer. He knocked again louder, but the silence was unbroken from within.

"What means this?" said the reverend ruler of the convent of Saint Bride; "my young patient has certainly fallen into a syncope or swoon!"

"I wish, Father Abbot," said the knight, "that he may not have made his escape instead, an accident which both you and I may be required to answer, since, according to our strict duty, we ought to have kept sight of him, and detained him in close custody until daybreak."

"I trust your worship," said the abbot, "only anticipates a misfortune which I cannot think possible."

"We shall speedily see," said the knight; and raising his voice, he called aloud, so as to be heard within, "Bring crow-bars and levers, and burst me that door into splinters without an instant's delay."

The loudness of his voice, and the stern tone in which he spoke, soon brought around him the brethren of the house, and two or three soldiers of his own party, who were already busy in caparisoning their horses. The displeasure of the young knight was manifested by his flushed features, and the abrupt manner in which he again repeated his commands for breaking open the door. This was speedily performed, though it required the application of considerable strength, and as the shattered remains fell crashing into the apartment, De Valence sprung, and the abbot hobbled, into the cell of the prisoner, which, to the fulfilment of their worst suspicions, they found empty.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

Where	is	he?	Has	the	deep	earth	swallow'd	him?
Or	hath	he	melted	like	some	airy	phantom	
That	shuns	the	approach	of	morn	and	the	young
Or	hath	he	wrapt	him	in	Cimmerian	darkness,	
And	pass'd	beyond	the	circuit	of	the	sight	
With	things	of	the	night's	shadows?			

ANONYMOUS.

The disappearance of the youth, whose disguise and whose fate have, we hope, inclined our readers to take some interest in him, will require some explanation ere we proceed with the other personages of the story, and we shall set about giving it accordingly.

When Augustine was consigned to his cell for the second time on the preceding evening, both the monk and the young Knight of Valence had seen the key turned upon him, and had heard him secure the door in the inside with the bolt which had been put on at his request by sister Ursula, in whose affections the youth of Augustine, his extreme handsomeness, and, above all, his indisposition of body and his melancholy of mind, had gained him considerable interest.

So soon, accordingly, as Augustine re-entered his apartment, he was greeted in a whisper by the sister, who, during the interval of his absence, had contrived to slip into the cell, and having tapped herself behind the little bed, came out with great appearance of joy, to greet the return of the youth. The number of little attentions, the disposal of holly boughs, and such other evergreens as the season permitted, showed the anxiety of the holy sisters to decorate the chamber of their guest, and the greetings of sister Ursula expressed the same friendly interest, at the same time intimating that she was already in some degree in possession of the stranger's mystery.

As Augustine and the holy sister were busied in exchange of confidence, the extraordinary difference between, their countenances and their persons must have struck any one who might have been accidentally a witness of their interview. The dark pilgrim's robe of the disguised female was not a stronger contrast to the white woollen garment worn by the votaress of Saint Bride, than the visage of the nun, seamed with many a ghastly scar, and the light of one of her eyes extinguished for ever, causing it to roll a sightless luminary in her head, was to the beautiful countenance of Augustine, now bent with a confidential, and even affectionate look, upon the extraordinary features of her companion.

"You know," said the supposed Augustine, "the principal part of my story; can you, or will you, lend me your assistance? If not, my dearest sister, you must consent to witness my death, rather than my shame. Yes, sister Ursula, I will not be pointed at by the finger of scorn, as the thoughtless maiden who sacrificed so much for a young man, of whose attachment she was not so well assured as she ought to have been. I will not be dragged before De Walton, for the purpose of being compelled, by threats of torture, to declare myself the female in honour of whom he holds the Dangerous Castle. No doubt, he might be glad to give his hand in wedlock to a damsel whose dowry is so ample; but who can tell whether he will regard me with that respect which every woman would wish to command, or pardon that boldness of which I have been guilty, even though its consequences have been in his own favour?"

"Nay, my darling daughter," answered the nun, "comfort yourself; for in all I can aid you, be assured I will. My means are somewhat more than my present situation may express, and, be assured, they shall be tried to the uttermost. Methinks, I still hear that lay which you sung to the other sisters and myself, although I alone, touched by feelings kindred to yours, had the address to comprehend that it told your own tale."

"I am yet surprised," said Augustine, speaking beneath her breath, "how I had the boldness to sing in your ears the lay, which, in fact, was the history of my disgrace."

"Alas! that you will say so," returned the nun; "there was not a word but what resembled those tales of love and of high-spirited daring which the best minstrels love to celebrate, and the noblest knights and maidens weep at once and smile to hear. The Lady Augusta of Berkely, a great heiress, according to the world, both in land and movable goods, becomes the King's ward by the death of her parents; and thus is on the point of being given away in marriage to a minion of the King of England, whom in these Scottish valleys, we scruple not to call a peremptory tyrant."

"I must not say so, my sister," said the pilgrim; "and yet, true it is, that the cousin of the obscure parasite Gaviston, on whom the king wished to confer my poor hand, was neither by birth, merit, nor circumstance, worthy of such an alliance. Meantime, I heard of the fame of Sir John de Walton; and I heard of it not with the less interest that his feats of chivalry were said to adorn a knight, who, rich in everything else, was poor in worldly goods, and in the smiles of fortune. I saw this Sir John de Walton, and I acknowledge that a thought, which had already intruded itself on my imagination, became, after this interview, by frequent recurrence, more familiar, and more welcome to me. Methought that the daughter of a powerful English family, if she could give away with her hand such wealth as the world spoke of, would more justly and honourably bestow it in remedying the errors of fortune in regard to a gallant knight like De Walton, than in patching the revenues of a beggarly Frenchman, whose only merit was in being the kinsman of a man who was very generally detested by the whole kingdom of England, excepting the infatuated monarch himself."

"Nobly designed, my daughter," said the nun; "what more worthy of a noble heart, possessing riches, beauty, birth, and rank, than to confer them all upon indigent and chivalrous merit?"

"Such, dearest sister, was my intention," replied Augustine; "but I have, perhaps, scarce sufficiently explained the manner in which I meant to proceed. By the advice of a minstrel of our house, the same who is now prisoner at Douglas, I caused exhibit a large feast upon Christmas eve, and sent invitations abroad to the young knights of noble name who were known to spend their leisure in quest of arms and adventures. When the tables were drawn, and the feast concluded, Bertram, as had been before devised, was called upon to take his harp. He sung, receiving from all who were present the attention due to a minstrel of so much fame. The theme which he chose, was the frequent capture of this Douglas Castle, or, as the poet termed it, Castle Dangerous. 'Where are the champions of the renowned Edward the First,' said the minstrel, 'when the realm of England cannot furnish a man brave enough, or sufficiently expert in the wars, to defend a miserable hamlet of the North against the Scottish rebels, who have vowed to retake it over our soldiers' heads ere the year rolls to an end? Where are the noble ladies, whose smiles used to give countenance to the Knights of Saint George's Cross? Alas! the spirit of love and of chivalry is alike dead amongst us—our

knight are limited to petty enterprises—and our noblest heiresses are given as prizes to strangers, as if their own country had no one to deserve them.'—Here stopt the harp; and I shame to say, that I myself, as if moved to enthusiasm by the song of the minstrel, arose, and taking from my neck the chain of gold which supported a crucifix of special sanctity, I made my vow, always under the King's permission, that I would give my hand, and the inheritance of my fathers, to the good knight, being of noble birth and lineage, who should keep the Castle of Douglas in the King of England's name, for a year and a day. I sat down, my dearest sister, deafened with the jubilee in which my guests expressed their applause of my supposed patriotism. Yet some degree of pause took place amidst the young knights, who might reasonably have been supposed ready to embrace this offer, although at the risk of being encumbered with Augusta of Berkely."

"Shame on the man," said sister Ursula, "who should think so! Put your beauty alone, my dearest, into consideration, and a true knight ought to have embraced the dangers of twenty Castles of Douglas, rather than let such an invaluable opportunity of gaining your favour be lost."

"It may be that some in reality thought so," said the pilgrim; "but it was supposed that the king's favour might be lost by those who seemed too anxious to thwart his royal purpose upon his ward's hand. At any rate, greatly to my joy, the only person who availed himself of the offer I had made was Sir John de Walton; and as his acceptance of it was guarded by a clause, saving and reserving the king's approbation, I hope he has not suffered any diminution of Edward's favour."

"Assure yourself, noble and high-spirited young lady," replied the nun, "that there is no fear of thy generous devotion hurting thy lover with the King of England. Something we hear concerning worldly passages, even in this remote nook of Saint Bride's cloister; and the report goes among the English soldiers that their king was indeed offended at your putting your will in opposition to his own; yet, on the other hand, this preferred lover, Sir John de Walton, was a man of such extensive fame, and your offer was so much in the character of better but not forgotten times, that even a king could not at the beginning of a long and stubborn war deprive an errant cavalier of his bride, if she should be duly won by his sword and lance."

"Ah! dearest sister Ursula!" sighed the disguised pilgrim, "but, on the other hand, how much time must pass by in the siege, by defeating which that suit must needs be advanced? While I sat in my lonely castle, tidings came to astound me with the numerous, or rather the constant dangers, with which my lover was surrounded, until at length, in a moment I think of madness, I resolved to set out in this masculine disguise; and having myself with my own eyes seen in what situation I had placed my knight, I determined to take such measures in respect to shortening the term of his trial, or otherwise, as a sight of Douglas Castle, and—why should I deny it?—of Sir John de Walton, might suggest. Perhaps you, my dearest sister, may not so well understand my being tempted into flinching from the resolution which I had laid down for my own honour, and that of my lover; but consider, that my resolution was the consequence of a moment of excitement, and that the course which I adopted was the conclusion of a long, wasting, sickening state of uncertainty, the effect of which was to weaken the nerves which were once highly strung with love of my country, as I thought; but in reality, alas! with fond and anxious feelings of a more selfish description."

"Alas!" said sister Ursula, evincing the strongest symptoms of interest and compassion, "am I the person, dearest child, whom you suspect of insensibility to the distresses which are the fruit of true love? Do you suppose that the air which is breathed within these walls has the property upon the female heart, of such marvellous fountains as they say change into stone the substances which are immersed into their waters? Hear my tale, and judge if it can be thus with one who possesses my causes of grief. And do not fear for loss of time; we must let our neighbours at Hazelside be settled for the evening, ere I furnish you with the means of escape; and you must have a trusty guide, for whose fidelity I will be responsible, to direct your path through these woods, and protect you in case of any danger, too likely to occur in these troublesome times. It will thus be nigh an hour ere you depart; and sure I am that in no manner can you spend the time better than in listening to distresses too similar to your own, and flowing from the source of disappointed affection which you must needs sympathize with."

The distresses of the Lady Augusta did not prevent her being in some degree affected, almost ludicrously, with the singular contrast between the hideous countenance of this victim of the tender passion, and the cause to which she imputed her sorrows; but it was not a moment for giving way to a sense of the ridiculous, which would have been in the highest degree offensive to the sister of Saint Bride, whose good-will she had so many reasons to conciliate. She readily, therefore, succeeded in preparing herself to listen to the votary—with an appearance of sympathy, which might reward that which she had herself experienced at the hands of sister Ursula; while the unfortunate recluse, with an agitation which made her ugliness still more conspicuous, narrated, nearly in a whisper, the following circumstances:—

"My misfortunes commenced long before I was called sister Ursula, or secluded as a votaress within these walls. My father was a noble Norman, who, like many of his countrymen, sought and found fortune at the court of the King of Scotland. He was endowed with the sheriffdom of this county, and Maurice de Hattely, or Hautlieu, was numbered among the wealthy and powerful barons of Scotland. Wherefore should I deny it, that the daughter of this baron, then called Margaret de Hautlieu, was also distinguished among the great and fair of the land? It can be no censurable vanity which provokes me to speak the truth, and unless I tell it myself, you could hardly suspect what a resemblance I once bore even to the lovely Lady Augusta of Berkely. About this time broke out those unfortunate feuds of Bruce and Baliol, which have been so long the curse of this country. My father, determined in his choice of party by the arguments of his wealthy kinsmen at the court of Edward, embraced with passion the faction of the English interest, and became one of the keenest partisans, at first of John Baliol, and afterwards of the English monarch. None among the Anglocised-Scottish, as his party was called, were so zealous as he for the red cross, and no one was more detested by his countrymen who followed the national standard of Saint Andrew and the patriot Wallace. Among those soldiers of the soil, Malcolm Fleming of Biggar was one of the most distinguished by his noble birth, his high acquirements, and his fame in chivalry. I saw him; and the ghastly spectre who now addresses you must not be ashamed to say, that she loved, and was beloved by, one of the handsomest youths in Scotland. Our attachment was discovered to my father almost ere we had owned it to each other, and he was furious both against my lover and myself; he placed me under the charge of a religious woman of this rule, and I was immured within the house of Saint Bride, where my father shamed not to announce he would cause me to take the veil by force, unless I agreed to wed a youth bred at the English court, his nephew; and, as Heaven had granted him no son, the heir, as he had resolved, of the house of Hautlieu. I was not long in making my election. I protested that death should be my choice, rather than any other husband excepting Malcolm Fleming. Neither was my lover less faithful; he found means to communicate to me a particular night on which he proposed to attempt to storm the nunnery of Saint Bride, and carry me from hence to freedom and the greenwood, of which Wallace was generally called the king. In an evil hour—an hour I think of infatuation and witchery—I suffered the abbess to wheedle the secret out of me, which I might have been sensible would appear more horribly flagitious to her than to any other woman that breathed; but I had not taken the vows, and I thought Wallace and Fleming had the same charms for every body as for me, and the artful woman gave me reason to believe that her loyalty to Bruce was without a flaw of suspicion, and she took part in a plot of which my freedom was the object. The abbess engaged to have the English guards removed to a distance, and in appearance the troops were withdrawn. Accordingly, in the middle of the night appointed, the window of my cell, which was two stories from the ground, was opened without noise; and never were my eyes more gladdened than, as ready disguised and arrayed for flight, even in a horseman's dress, like yourself, fairest. Lady Augusta, I saw Malcolm Fleming spring into the apartment. He rushed towards me; but at the same time my father with ten of his strongest men filled the room, and cried their war-cry of Baliol. Blows were instantly dealt on every side. A form like a giant, however, appeared in the midst of the tumult, and distinguished himself, even to my half-giddy eye, by the ease with which he bore down and dispersed those who fought against our freedom. My father alone offered an opposition which threatened to prove fatal to him; for Wallace, it was said, could foil any two martial champions that ever drew sword. Brushing from him the armed men, as a lady would drive away with her fan a swarm of troublesome flies, he secured me in one arm, used his other for our mutual protection, and I found myself in the act of being borne in safety down the ladder by which my deliverers had ascended from without,—but an evil fate awaited this attempt.

"My father, whom the Champion of Scotland had spared for my sake, or rather for Fleming's, gained by his victor's compassion and lenity a fearful advantage, and made a remorseless use of it. Having only his left hand to oppose to the maniac attempts of my father, even the strength of Wallace could not prevent the assailant, with all the energy of desperation, from throwing down the ladder, on which his daughter was perched like a dove in the grasp of an eagle. The champion saw our danger, and exerting his inimitable strength and agility, cleared himself and me from the ladder, and leaped free of the moat of the convent, into which we must otherwise have been precipitated. The Champion of Scotland was saved in the desperate attempt, but I who fell among a heap of stones and rubbish, I the disobedient daughter, wellnigh the apostate vestal, waked only from a long bed of sickness, to find myself the disfigured wretch, which you now see me. I then learned that Malcolm had escaped from the fray, and shortly after I heard, with feelings less keen perhaps than they ought to have been, that my father

was slain in one of the endless battles which took place between the contending factions. If he had lived, I might have submitted to the completion of my fate; but since he was no more, I felt that it would be a preferable lot to be a beggar in the streets of a Scottish village, than, an abbess in this miserable house of Saint Bride; nor was even that poor object of ambition, on which my father used to expatiate when desirous of persuading me to enter the monastic state by milder means than throwing me off the battlements, long open to me. The old abbess died of a cold caught the evening of the fray; and the place, which might have been kept open until I was capable of filling it, was disposed of otherwise, when the English thought fit to reform, as they termed it, the discipline of the house; and instead of electing a new abbess, sent hither two or three friendly monks, who have now the absolute government of the community, and wield it entirely according to the pleasure of the English. But I, for one, who have had the honour to be supported by the arms of the Champion of my country, will not remain here to be commanded by this Abbot Jerome. I will go forth, nor do I fear to find relations and friends, who will provide a more fitting place of refuge for Margaret de Hautlieu than the convent of Saint Bride; you, too, dearest lady, shall obtain your freedom, and it will be well to leave such information as will make Sir John de Walton aware of the devotion with which his happy fate has inspired you."

"It is not, then, your own intention," said the Lady Augusta, "to return into the world again, and you are about to renounce the lover, in a union with whom you and he once saw your joint happiness?"

"It is a question, my dearest child," said sister Ursula, "which I dare not ask myself, and to which I am absolutely uncertain what answer I should return. I have not taken the final and irrevocable vows; I have done nothing to alter my situation with regard to Malcolm Fleming. He also, by the vows plighted in the Chancery of Heaven, is my affianced bridegroom, nor am I conscious that I less deserve his faith, in any respect now, than at the moment when it was pledged to me; but, I confess, dearest lady, that rumours have reached me, which sting me to the quick; the reports of my wounds and scars are said to have estranged the knight of my choice. I am now, indeed, poor," she added, with a sigh, "and I am no longer possessed of those personal charms, which they say attract the love, and fix the fidelity, of the other sex. I teach myself, therefore, to think, in my moments of settled resolution, that all betwixt me and Malcolm Fleming is at an end, saving good wishes on the part of both towards the other; and yet there is a sensation in my bosom which whispers, in spite of my reason, that if I absolutely believed that which I now say, there would be no object on earth worthy my living for in order to attain it. This insinuating prepossession whispers, to my secret soul, and in very opposition to my reason and understanding, that Malcolm Fleming, who could pledge his all upon the service of his country, is incapable of nourishing the versatile affection of an ordinary, a coarse, or a venal character. Methinks, were the difference upon his part instead of mine, he would not lose his interest in my eyes, because he was seamed with honourable scars, obtained in asserting the freedom of his choice, but that such wounds would, in my opinion, add to his merit, whatever they took away from his personal comeliness. Ideas rise on my soul, as if Malcolm and Margaret might yet be to each other all that their affections once anticipated with so much security, and that a change, which took nothing from the honour and virtue of the beloved person, must rather add to, than diminish, the charms of the union. Look at me, dearest Lady Augusta!—look me—if you have courage—full in the face, and tell me whether I do not rave when my fancy is thus converting mere possibilities into that which is natural and probable."

The Lady of Berkely, conscious of the necessity, raised her eyes on the unfortunate nun, afraid of losing her own chance of deliverance by the mode in which she should conduct herself in this crisis; yet not willing at the same time to flatter the unfortunate Ursula, with suggesting ideas for which her own sense told her she could hardly find any rational grounds. But her imagination, stored with the minstrelsy of the time, brought back to her recollection the Loathly Lady in "The marriage of Sir Gawain," and she conducted her reply in the following manner:—

"You ask me, my dear Lady Margaret, a trying question, which it would be unfriendly to answer otherwise than sincerely, and most cruel to answer with too much rashness. It is true, that what is called beauty, is the first quality on which we of the weaker sex learn to set a value; we are flattered by the imputation of personal charms, whether we actually possess them or not; and no doubt we learn to place upon them a great deal more consequence than in reality is found to belong to them. Women, however, even, such as are held by their own sex, and perhaps in secret by themselves, as devoid of all pretensions to beauty, have been known to become, from their understanding, their talents, or their accomplishments, the undoubted objects of the warmest attachment. Wherefore then should you, in the mere rashness of your apprehension, deem it impossible that your Malcolm Fleming should be made of that porcelain clay of the earth, which despises the passing captivations of outward form in comparison to the charms of true affection, and the excellence of talents and virtue?"

The nun pressed her companion's hand to her bosom, and answered her with a deep sigh.

"I fear," she said, "you flatter me; and yet in a crisis like this, it does one good to be flattered, even as cordials, otherwise dangerous to the constitution, are wisely given to support a patient through a paroxysm of agony, and enable him to endure at least what they cannot cure. Answer only one question, and it will be time to drop this conversation. Could you, sweet lady—you upon whom fortune has bestowed so many charms—could any argument make you patient under the irretrievable loss of your personal advantages, with the concomitant loss, as in my case is most probable, of that lover for whom you have already done so much?"

The English lady cast her eyes again on her friend, and could not help shuddering a little at the thought of her own beautiful countenance being exchanged for the seamed and scarred features of the Lady of Hautlieu, irregularly lighted by the beams of a single eye.

"Believe me," she said, looking solemnly upwards, "that even in the case which you suppose, I would not sorrow so much for myself, as I would for the poor-spirited thoughts of the lover who could leave me because those transitory charms (which must in any case ere long take their departure) had fled ere yet the bridal day. It is, however, concealed by the decrees of Providence, in what manner, or to what extent, other persons, with whose disposition we are not fully acquainted, may be affected by such changes. I can only assure you that my hopes go with yours, and that there is no difficulty which shall remain in your path in future, if it is in my power to remove it.—Hark!"—

"It is the signal of our freedom," replied Ursula, giving attention to something resembling the whoop of the night-owl. "We must prepare to leave the convent in a few minutes. Have you anything to take with you?"

"Nothing," answered the Lady of Berkely, "except the few valuables, which I scarce know why I brought with me on my flight hither. This scroll, which I shall leave behind, gives my faithful minstrel permission to save himself, by confessing to Sir John de Walton who the person really is whom he has had within his reach."

"It is strange," said the novice of Saint Bride, "through what extraordinary labyrinths this Love, this Will-of-the-Wisp, guides his votaries, Take heed as you descend; this trap-door, carefully concealed, curiously jointed and oiled, leads to a secret postern, where I conceive the horses already wait, which will enable us speedily to bid adieu to Saint Bride's—Heaven's blessing on her, and on her convent! We can have no advantage from any light, until we are in the open air."

During this time, sister Ursula, to give her for the last time her conventual name, exchanged her stole, or loose upper garment, for the more succinct cloak and hood of a horseman. She led the way through divers passages, studiously complicated, until the Lady of Berkely, with throbbing heart, stood in the pale and doubtful moonlight, which was shining with grey uncertainty upon the walls of the ancient building. The imitation of an owl's cry directed them to a neighbouring large elm, and on approaching it, they were aware of three horses, held by one, concerning whom they could only see that he was tall, strong, and accoutred in the dress of a man-at-arms.

"The sooner," he said, "we are gone from this place, Lady Margaret, it is so much the better. You have only to direct the course which we shall hold."

Lady Margaret's answer was given beneath her breath; and replied to with a caution from the guide to ride slowly and silently for the first quarter of an hour, by which time inhabited places would be left at a distance.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

Great was the astonishment of the young Knight of Valence and the reverend Father Jerome, when, upon breaking into the cell, they discovered the youthful pilgrim's absence; and, from the garments which were left, saw every reason to think that the one-eyed novice, sister Ursula, had accompanied him in his escape from custody. A thousand thoughts thronged upon Sir Aymer, how shamefully he had suffered himself to be outwitted by the artifices of a boy and of a novice. His reverend companion in error felt no less contrition for having recommended to the knight a mild exercise of his authority. Father Jerome had obtained his preferment as abbot upon the faith of his zeal for the cause of the English monarch, with the affected interest in which he was at a loss to reconcile his proceedings of the last night. A hurried enquiry took place, from which little could be learned, save that the young pilgrim had most certainly gone off with the Lady

Margaret de Hautlieu, an incident at which the females of the convent expressed surprise, mingled with a great deal of horror; while that of the males, whom the news soon reached, was qualified with a degree of wonder, which seemed to be founded upon the very different personal appearance of the two fugitives.

"Sacred Virgin," said a nun, "who could have conceived the hopeful votaress, sister Ursula, so lately drowned in tears for her father's untimely fate, capable of eloping with a boy scarce fourteen years old!"

"And, holy Saint Bride!" said the Abbot Jerome, "what could have made so handsome a young man lend his arm to assist such a nightmare as sister Ursula, in the commission of so great an enormity? Certainly he can neither plead temptation nor seduction, but must have gone, as the worldly phrase is,—to the devil with a dish-clout."

"I must disperse the soldiers to pursue the fugitives," said De Valence, "unless this letter, which the pilgrim must have left behind him, shall contain some explanations respecting our mysterious prisoner."

After viewing the contents with some surprise, he read aloud,—"The undersigned, late residing in the house of Saint Bride, do you, father Jerome, the abbot of said house, to know, that finding you were disposed to treat me as a prisoner and a spy, in the sanctuary to which you had received me as a distressed person, I have resolved to use my natural liberty, with which you have no right to interfere, and therefore have withdrawn myself from your abbacy. Moreover, finding that the novice called in your convent sister Ursula (who hath, by monastic rule and discipline, a fair title to return to the world unless she is pleased, after a year's novitiate, to profess herself sister of your order) is determined to use such privilege, I joyfully take the opportunity of her company in this her lawful resolution, as being what is in conformity to the law of God, and the precepts of Saint Bride, which gave you no authority to detain any person in your convent by force, who hath not taken upon her irrevocably the vows of the order.

"To you, Sir John de Walton, and Sir Aymer de Valence, knights of England, commanding the garrison of Douglas Dale, I have only to say, that you have acted and are acting against me under a mystery, the solution of which is comprehended in a secret known only to my faithful minstrel, Bertram of the many Lays, as whose son I have found it convenient to pass myself. But as I cannot at this time prevail upon myself personally to discover a secret which cannot well be unfolded without feelings of shame, I not only give permission to the said Bertram the minstrel, but I charge and command him that he tell to you the purpose with which I came originally to the Castle of Douglas. When this is discovered, it will only remain to express my feelings towards the two knights, in return for the pain and agony of mind which their violence and threats of further severities have occasioned me.

"And first respecting Sir Aymer de Valence, I freely and willingly forgive him for having been involved in a mistake to which I myself led the way, and I shall at all times be happy to meet with him as an acquaintance, and never to think farther of his part in these few days' history, saving as matter of mirth and ridicule.

"But respecting Sir John de Walton, I must request of him to consider whether his conduct towards me, standing as we at present do towards each, other, is such as he himself ought to forget or I ought to forgive; and I trust he will understand me when I tell him, that all former connexions must henceforth be at an end between him and the supposed "AUGUSTINE."

"This is madness," said the abbot, when he had read the letter,—"very midsummer madness; not unfrequently an accompaniment of this pestilential disease, and I should do well in requiring of those soldiers who shall first apprehend this youth Augustine, that they reduce his victuals immediately to water and bread, taking care that the diet do not exceed in measure what is necessary to sustain nature; nay, I should be warranted by the learned, did I recommend a sufficient intermixture of flagellation with belts, stirrup-leathers, or surcingles, and flogging those, with riding-whips, switches, and the like."

"Hush! my reverend father," said De Valence, "a light begins to break in upon me. John de Walton, if my suspicions be true, would sooner expose his own flesh to be hewn from his bones, than have this Augustine's finger stung by a gnat. Instead of treating this youth as a madman, I for my own part, will be contented to avow that I myself have been bewitched and fascinated; and by my honour, if I send out my attendants in quest of the fugitives, it shall be with the strict charge, that, when apprehended, they treat them with all respect, and protect them, if they object to return to this house, to any honourable place of refuge which they may desire."

"I hope," said the abbot, looking strangely confused, "I shall be first heard in behalf of the Church concerning this affair of an abducted nun? You see yourself, Sir Knight, that this scapegrace of a minstrel vouches neither repentance nor contrition at his share in a matter so flagitious."

"You shall be secured an opportunity of being fully heard," replied the knight, "if you shall find at last that you really desire one. Meantime, I must back, without a moment's delay, to inform Sir John de Walton of the turn which affairs have taken. Farewell, reverend father. By my honour we may wish each other joy that we have escaped from a troublesome charge, which brought as much terror with it as the phantoms of a fearful dream, and is yet found capable of being dispelled by a cure as simple as that of awakening the sleeper. But, by Saint Bride! both churchmen and laymen are bound to sympathise with the unfortunate Sir John de Walton. I tell thee, father, that if this letter"—touching the missive with his finger—"is to be construed literally, as far as respects him, he is the man most to be pitied betwixt the brink of Solway and the place where we now stand. Suspend thy curiosity, most worthy churchman, lest there should be more in this matter than I myself see; so that, while thinking that I have lighted on the true explanation, I may not have to acknowledge that I have been again leading you into error. Sound to horse there! Ho?" he called out from the window of the apartment; "and let the party I brought hither prepare to scour the woods on their return."

"By my faith!" said Father Jerome, "I am right glad that this young nut-cracker is going to leave me to my own meditation. I hate when a young person pretends to understand whatever passes, while his betters are obliged to confess that it is all a mystery to them. Such an assumption is like that of the conceited fool, sister Ursula, who pretended to read with a single eye a manuscript which I myself could not find intelligible with the assistance of my spectacles."

This might not have quite pleased the young knight, nor was it one of those truths which the abbot would have chosen to deliver in his hearing. But the knight had shaken him by the hand, said adieu, and was already at Hazelside, issuing particular orders to little troops of the archers and others, and occasionally chiding Thomas Dickson, who, with a degree of curiosity which the English knight was not very willing to excuse, had been endeavouring to get some account of the occurrences of the night.

"Peace, fellow!" he said, "and mind thine own business, being well assured that the hour will come in which it will require all the attention thou canst give, leaving others to take care of their own affairs."

"If I am suspected of any thing," answered Dickson, in a tone rather dogged and surly than otherwise, "methinks it were but fair to let me know what accusation is brought against me. I need not tell you that chivalry prescribes that a knight should not attack an enemy undefined."

"When you are a knight," answered Sir Aymer de Valence, "it will be time enough for me to reckon with you upon the points of form due to you by the laws of chivalry. Meanwhile, you had best let me know what share you have had in playing off the martial phantom which sounded the rebellious slogan of Douglas in the town of that name?"

"I know nothing of what you speak," answered the goodman of Hazelside.

"See then," said the knight, "that you do not engage yourself in the affairs of other people, even if your conscience warrants that you are in no danger from your own."

So saying, he rode off, not waiting any answer. The ideas which filled his head were to the following purpose.

"I know not how it is, but one mist seems no sooner to clear away than we find ourselves engaged in another. I take it for granted that the disguised damsel is no other than the goddess of Walton's private idolatry, who has cost him and me so much trouble, and some certain, degree of misunderstanding during these last weeks. By my honour! this fair lady is right lavish in the pardon which she has so frankly bestowed upon me, and if she is willing to be less complaisant to Sir John de Walton, why then—And what then?—It surely does not infer that she would receive me into that place in her affections, from which she has just expelled De Walton? Nor, if she did, could I avail myself of a change in favour of myself, at the expense of my friend and companion in arms. It were a folly even to dream of a thing so improbable. But with respect to the other business, it is worth serious consideration. Yon sexton seems to have kept company with dead bodies, until he is unfit for the society of the living; and as to that Dickson of Hazelside, as they call him, there is no attempt against the English during these endless wars, in which that man has not been concerned; had my life depended upon it, I could not have prevented myself from intimating my suspicions of him, let him take it as

he lists." So saying, the knight spurred his horse, and arriving at Douglas Castle without farther adventure, demanded in a tone of greater cordiality than he had of late used, whether he could be admitted to Sir John de Walton, having something of consequence to report to him. He was immediately ushered into an apartment, in which the governor was seated at his solitary breakfast. Considering the terms upon which they had lately stood, the governor of Douglas Dale was somewhat surprised at the easy familiarity with which De Valence now approached him.

"Some uncommon news," said Sir John, rather gravely, "have brought me the honour of Sir Aymer de Valence's company."

"It is," answered Sir Aymer, "what seems of high importance to your interest, Sir John de Walton, and therefore I were to blame if I lost a moment in communicating it."

"I shall be proud to profit by your intelligence," said Sir John de Walton.

"And I too," said the young knight, "am both to lose the credit of having penetrated a mystery which blinded Sir John de Walton. At the same time, I do not wish to be thought capable of jesting with you, which might be the case were I, from misapprehension, to give a false key to this matter. With your permission, then, we will proceed thus: We go together to the place of Bertram the minstrel's confinement. I have in my possession a scroll from the young person who was intrusted to the care of the Abbot Jerome; it is written in a delicate female hand, and gives authority to the minstrel to declare the purpose which brought them to this vale of Douglas."

"It must be as you say," said Sir John de Walton, "although can scarce see occasion for adding so much form to a mystery which can be expressed in such small compass."

Accordingly the two knights, the warder leading the way, proceeded to the dungeon to which the minstrel had been removed.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

The doors of the stronghold being undone, displayed a dungeon such as in those days held victims hopeless of escape, but in which the ingenious knave of modern times would scarcely have deigned to remain many hours. The huge rings by which the fetters were soldered together, and attached to the human body, were, when examined minutely, found to be clenched together by riveting so very thin, that when rubbed with corrosive acid, or patiently ground with a bit of sandstone, the hold of the fetters upon each other might easily be forced asunder, and the purpose of them entirely frustrated. The locks also, large, and apparently very strong, were so coarsely made, that an artist of small ingenuity could easily contrive to get the better of their fastenings upon the same principle. The daylight found its way to the subterranean dungeon only at noon, and through a passage which was purposely made tortuous, so as to exclude the rays of the sun, while it presented no obstacle to wind or rain. The doctrine that a prisoner was to be esteemed innocent until he should be found guilty by his peers, was not understood in those days of brute force, and he was only accommodated with a lamp or other alleviation of his misery, if his demeanour was quiet, and he appeared disposed to give his jailor no trouble by attempting to make his escape. Such a cell of confinement was that of Bertram, whose moderation of temper and patience had nevertheless procured for him such mitigations of his fate as the warder could grant. He was permitted to carry into his cell the old book, in the perusal of which he found an amusement of his solitude, together with writing materials, and such other helps towards spending his time as were consistent with his abode in the bosom of the rock, and the degree of information with which his minstrel craft had possessed him. He raised his head from the table as the knights entered, while the governor observed to the young knight:—

"As you seem to think yourself possessed of the secret of this prisoner, I leave it to you, Sir Aymer de Valence, to bring it to light in the manner which you shall judge most expedient. If the man or his son have suffered unnecessary hardship, it shall be my duty to make amends— which, I suppose, can be no very important matter."

Bertram looked up, and fixed his eyes full upon the governor, but read nothing in his looks which indicated his being better acquainted than before with the secret of his imprisonment. Yet, upon turning his eye towards Sir Aymer, his countenance evidently lighted up, and the glance which passed between them was one of intelligence.

"You have my secret, then," said he, "and you know who it is that passes under the name of Augustine?"

Sir Aymer exchanged with him a look of acquiescence; while the eyes of the governor glancing wildly from the prisoner to the knight of Valence, exclaimed,—

"Sir Aymer de Valence, as you are belted knight and Christian man, as you have honour to preserve on earth, and a soul to rescue after death, I charge you to tell me the meaning of this mystery! It may be that you conceive, with truth, that you have subject of complaint against me;— If so, I will satisfy you as a knight may."

The minstrel spoke at the same moment.

"I charge this knight," he said, "by his vow of chivalry, that he do not divulge any secret belonging to a person of honour and of character, unless he has positive assurance that it is done entirely by that person's own consent."

"Let this note remove your scruples," said Sir Aymer, putting the scroll into the hands of the minstrel; "and for you, Sir John de Walton, far from retaining the least feeling of any misunderstanding which may have existed between us, I am disposed entirely to bury it in forgetfulness, as having arisen out of a series of mistakes which no mortal could have comprehended. And do not be offended, my dear Sir John, when I protest, on my knightly faith, that I pity the pain which I think this scroll is likely to give you, and that if my utmost efforts can be of the least service to you in unravelling this tangled skein, I will contribute them with as much earnestness as ever I did aught in my life. This faithful minstrel will now see that he can have no difficulty in yielding up a secret, which I doubt not, but for the writing I have just put into his hands, he would have continued to keep with unshaken fidelity."

Sir Aymer now placed in De Walton's hand a note, in which he had, ere he left Saint Bride's convent, signified his own interpretation, of the mystery; and the governor had scarcely read the name it contained, before the same name was pronounced aloud by Bertram, who, at the same moment, handed to the governor the scroll which he had received from the Knight of Valence.

The white plume which floated over the knight's cap of maintenance, which was worn as a headpiece within doors, was not more pale in complexion than was the knight himself at the unexpected and surprising information, that the lady who was, in chivalrous phrase, empress of his thoughts, and commander of his actions, and to whom, even in less fantastic times, he must have owed the deepest gratitude for the generous election which she had made in his favour, was the same person whom he had threatened with personal violence, and subjected to hardships and affronts which he would not willingly have bestowed even upon the meanest of her sex.

Yet Sir John de Walton seemed at first scarcely to comprehend the numerous ill consequences which might probably follow this unhappy complication of mistakes. He took the paper from the minstrel's hand, and while his eye, assisted by the lamp, wandered over the characters without apparently their conveying any distinct impression to his understanding, De Valence even became alarmed that he was about to lose his faculties.

"For Heaven's sake, sir," he said, "be a man, and support with manly steadiness these unexpected occurrences—I would fain think they will reach to nothing else—which the wit of man could not have prevented. This fair lady, I would fain hope, cannot be much hurt or deeply offended by a train of circumstances, the natural consequence of your anxiety to discharge perfectly a duty upon which must depend the accomplishment of all the hopes she had permitted you to entertain. In God's name, rouse up, sir; let it not be said, that an apprehended frown of a fair lady hath damped to such a degree the courage of the boldest knight in England; be what men have called you, 'Walton the Unwavering,' in Heaven's name, let us at least see that the lady is indeed offended, before we conclude that she is irreconcilably so. To whose fault are we to ascribe the source of all these errors? Surely, with all due respect, to the caprice of the lady herself, which has engendered such a nest of mistakes. Think of it as a man, and as a soldier. Suppose that you yourself, or I, desirous of proving the fidelity of our sentinels, or for any other reason, good or bad, attempted to enter this Dangerous Castle of Douglas without giving the password to the warders, would we be entitled to blame those upon duty, if, not knowing our persons, they manfully refused us entrance, made us prisoners, and mishandled us while resisting our attempt, in terms of the orders which we ourselves had imposed upon them? What is there that makes a difference between such a sentinel and yourself, John de Walton, in this curious affair, which, by Heaven! would rather form a gay subject for the minstrelsy of this excellent bard, than the theme of a tragic lay? Come! look not thus, Sir John de

Walton; be angry, if you will, with the lady who has committed such a piece of folly, or with me who have rode up and down nearly all night on a fool's errand, and spoiled my best horse, in absolute uncertainty how I shall get another till my uncle of Pembroke and I shall be reconciled; or, lastly, if you desire to be totally absurd in your wrath, direct it against this worthy minstrel on account of his rare fidelity, and punish him for that for which he better deserves a chain of gold. Let passion out, if you will; but chase this desponding gloom from the brow of a man and a belted knight."

Sir John de Walton made an effort to speak, and succeeded with some difficulty.

"Aymer de Valence," he said, "in irritating a madman you do but sport with your own life;" and then remained silent.

"I am glad you can say so much," replied his friend; "for I was not jesting when I said I would rather that you were at variance with me, than that you laid the whole blame on yourself. It would be courteous, I think, to set this minstrel instantly at liberty. Meantime, for his lady's sake, I will entreat him, in all honour, to be our guest till the Lady Augusta de Berkely shall do us the same honour, and to assist us in our search after her place of retirement.—Good minstrel," he continued, "you hear what I say, and you will not, I suppose, be surprised, that in all honour and kind usage, you find yourself detained for a short space in this Castle of Douglas?"

"You seem, Sir Knight," replied the minstrel, "not so much to keep your eye upon the right of doing what you should, as to possess the might of doing what you would. I must necessarily be guided by your advice, since you have the power to make it a command."

"And I trust," continued De Valence, "that when your mistress and you again meet, we shall have the benefit of your intercession for any thing which we may have done to displeasure her, considering that the purpose of our action was exactly the reverse."

"Let me," said Sir John de Walton, "say a single word. I will offer thee a chain of gold, heavy enough to bear down the weight of these shackles, as a sign of regret for having condemned thee to suffer so many indignities."

"Enough said, Sir John," said De Valence; "let us promise no more till this good minstrel shall see some sign of performance. Follow me this way, and I will tell thee in private of other tidings, which it is important that you should know."

So saying, he withdrew De Walton from the dungeon, and sending for the old knight, Sir Philip de Montenay, already mentioned, who acted as seneschal of the castle, he commanded that the minstrel should be enlarged from the dungeon, well looked to in other respects, yet prohibited, though with every mark of civility, from leaving the castle without a trusty attendant.

"And now, Sir John de Walton," he said, "methinks you are a little churlish in not ordering me some breakfast, after I have been all night engaged in your affairs; and a cup of muscadel would, I think, be no bad induction to a full consideration of this perplexed matter."

"Thou knowest," answered De Walton, "that thou mayest call for what thou wilt, provided always thou tellest me, without loss of time, what else thou knowest respecting the will of the lady, against whom we have all sinned so grievously—and I, alas, beyond hope of forgiveness!"

"Trust me, I hope," said the Knight of Valence, "the good lady bears me no malice, as indeed she has expressly renounced any ill-will against me. The words, you see, are as plain as you yourself may read—'The lady pardons poor Aymer de Valence, and willingly, for having been involved in a mistake, to which she herself led the way; she herself will at all times be happy to meet with him as an acquaintance, and never to think farther of these few days' history, except as matter of mirth and ridicule.' So it is expressly written and set down."

"Yes," replied Sir John de Walton, "but see you not that her offending lover is expressly excluded from the amnesty granted to the lesser offender? Mark you not the concluding paragraph?" He took the scroll with a trembling hand, and read with a discomposed voice its closing words. "It is even so: 'All former connexion must henceforth be at an end between him and the supposed Augustine.' Explain to me how the reading of these words is reconcilable to anything but their plain sense of condemnation and forfeiture of contract, implying destruction of the hopes of Sir John de Walton?"

"You are somewhat an older man than I, Sir Knight," answered De Valence, "and I will grant, by far the wiser and more experienced; yet I will uphold that there is no adopting the interpretation which you seem to have affixed in your mind to this letter, without supposing the preliminary, that the fair writer was distracted in her understanding, —nay, never start, look wildly, or lay your hand on your sword, I do not affirm this is the case. I say again, that no woman in her senses would have pardoned a common acquaintance for his behaving to her with unintentional disrespect and unkindness, during the currency of a certain masquerade, and, at the same time, sternly and irrevocably broke off with the lover to whom her troth was plighted, although his error in joining in the offence was neither grosser nor more protracted than that of the person indifferent to her love."

"Do not blaspheme," said Sir John de Walton; "and forgive me, if, in justice to truth and to the angel whom I fear I have forfeited for ever, I point out to you the difference which a maiden of dignity and of feeling must make between an offence towards her, committed by an ordinary acquaintance, and one of precisely the same kind offered by a person who is bound by the most undeserved preference, by the most generous benefits, and by every thing which can bind human feeling, to think and reflect ere he becomes an actor in any case in which it is possible for her to be concerned."

"Now, by mine honour," said Aymer de Valence, "I am glad to hear thee make some attempt at reason, although it is but an unreasonable kind of reason too, since its object is to destroy thine own hopes, and argue away thine own chance of happiness; but if I have, in the progress of this affair, borne me sometimes towards thee, as to give not only the governor, but even the friend, some cause of displeasure, I will make it up to thee now, John de Walton, by trying to convince thee in spite of thine own perverse logic. But here comes the muscadel and the breakfast; wilt thou take some refreshment;—or shall we go on without the spirit of muscadel?"

"For Heaven's sake," replied De Walton, "do as thou wilt, so thou make me clear of thy well-intended babble."

"Nay, thou shalt not brawl me out of my powers of argument," said De Valence, laughing, and helping himself to a brimming cup of wine; "if thou acknowledgest thyself conquered, I am contented to give the victory to the inspiring strength of the jovial liquor."

"Do as thou listest," said De Walton, "but make an end of an argument which thou canst not comprehend."

"I deny the charge," answered the younger knight, wiping his lips, after having finished his draught; "and listen, Walton the Warlike, to a chapter in the history of woman, in which thou art more unskilled than I would wish thee to be. Thou canst not deny that, be it right or wrong, the lady Augusta hath ventured more forward with you than is usual upon the sea of affection; she boldly made thee her choice, while thou wert as yet known to her only as a flower of English chivalry,—faith, and I respect her for her frankness—but it was a choice, which the more cold of her own sex might perhaps claim occasion to term rash and precipitate.—Nay, be not, I pray thee, offended—I am far from thinking or saying so; on the contrary, I will uphold with my lance, her selection of John de Walton against the minions of a court, to be a wise and generous choice, and her own behaviour as alike candid and noble. But she herself is not unlikely to dread unjust misconstruction; a fear of which may not improbably induce her, upon any occasion, to seize some opportunity of showing an unwonted and unusual rigour towards her lover, in order to balance her having extended towards him, in the beginning of their intercourse, somewhat of an unusual degree of frank encouragement. Nay, it might be easy for her lover so far to take part against himself, by arguing as thou dost, when out of thy senses, as to make it difficult for her to withdraw from an argument which he himself was foolish enough to strengthen; and thus, like a maiden too soon taken at her first nay-say, she shall perhaps be allowed no opportunity of bearing herself according to her real feelings, or retracting a sentence issued with consent of the party whose hopes it destroys."

"I have heard thee, De Valence," answered the governor of Douglas Dale; "nor is it difficult for me to admit, that these thy lessons may serve as a chart to many a female heart, but not to that of Augusta de Berkely. By my life, I say I would much sooner be deprived of the merit of those few deeds of chivalry which thou sayest have procured for me such enviable distinction, than I would act upon them with the insolence, as if I said that my place in the lady's bosom was too firmly fixed to be shaken even by the success of a worthier man, or by my own gross failure in respect to the object of my attachment. No, herself alone shall have power to persuade me that even goodness equal to that of an interceding saint will restore me to the place in her affections which I have most unworthily forfeited, by a stupidity only to be compared to that of brutes."

"If you are so minded," said Aymer De Valence, "I have only one word more—forgive me if I speak it peremptorily—the lady, as you say, and say truly, must be the final arbitress in this question. My arguments do not extend to insisting that you should claim her hand, whether she herself will or no; but, to learn her determination, it is necessary that you should find out where she is, of which I am unfortunately not able to inform you."

"How! what mean you!" exclaimed the governor, who now only began to comprehend the extent of his misfortune; "whither hath she fled? or with whom?"

"She is fled, for what I know," said De Valence, "in search of a more enterprising lover than one who is so willing to interpret every air of frost as a killing blight to his hopes; perhaps she seeks the Black Douglas, or some such hero of the Thistle, to reward with her lands, her lordships, and beauty, those virtues of enterprise and courage, of which John de Walton was at one time thought possessed. But, seriously, events are passing around us of strange import. I saw enough last night, on my way to Saint Bride's, to make me suspicious of every one. I sent to you as a prisoner the old sexton of the church of Douglas. I found him contumacious as to some enquiries which I thought it proper to prosecute; but of this more at another time. The escape of this lady adds greatly to the difficulties which encircle this devoted castle."

"Aymer de Valence," replied De Walton, in a solemn and animated tone, "Douglas Castle shall be defended, as we have hitherto been able, with the aid of heaven, to spread from its battlements the broad banner of St. George. Come of me what lists during my life, I will die the faithful lover of Augusta de Berkely, even although I no longer live as her chosen knight. There are cloisters and hermitages"—

"Ay, marry are there," replied Sir Aymer; "and girdles of hemp, moreover, and beads of oak; but all these we omit in our reckonings, till we discover where the Lady Augusta is, and what she purposes to do in this matter."

"You say well," replied De Walton; "let us hold counsel together by what means we shall, if possible, discover the lady's too hasty retreat, by which she has done me great wrong; I mean, if she supposed her commands would not have been fully obeyed, had she honoured with them the governor of Douglas Dale, or any who are under his command."

"Now," replied De Valence, "you again speak like a true son of chivalry. With your permission I would summon this minstrel to our presence. His fidelity to his mistress has been remarkable; and, as matters stand now, we must take instant measures for tracing the place of her retreat."

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

The	way	is	long,	my	children,	long	and	rough
The	moors	are	dreary,	and	the	woods	are	dark;
But	he	that	creeps	from	cradle	on	to	grave,
Unskill'd	save	in	the	velvet	course	of	fortune,	
Hath	miss'd	the	discipline	of	noble	hearts.		

OLD PLAY.

It was yet early in the day, when, after the Governor and De Valence had again summoned Bertram to their councils, the garrison of Douglas was mustered, and a number of small parties, in addition to those already despatched by De Valence from Hazelside, were sent out to scour the woods in pursuit of the fugitives, with strict injunctions to treat them, if overtaken, with the utmost respect, and to obey their commands, keeping an eye, however, on the place where they might take refuge. To facilitate this result, some who were men of discretion were intrusted with the secret who the supposed pilgrim and the fugitive nun really were. The whole ground, whether forest or moorland, within many miles of Douglas Castle, was covered and traversed by parties, whose anxiety to detect the fugitives was equal to the reward for their safe recovery, liberally offered by De Walton and De Valence. They spared not, meantime, to make such enquiries in all directions as might bring to light any machinations of the Scottish insurgents which might be on foot in those wild districts, of which, as we have said before, De Valence, in particular, entertained strong suspicions. Their instructions were, in case of finding such, to proceed against the persons engaged, by arrest and otherwise, in the most rigorous manner, such as had been commanded by De Walton himself at the time when the Black Douglas and his accomplices had been the principal objects of his wakeful suspicions. These various detachments had greatly reduced the strength of the garrison; yet, although numerous, alert, and despatched in every direction, they had not the fortune either to fall on the trace of the Lady of Berkely, or to encounter any party whatever of the insurgent Scottish.

Meanwhile, our fugitives had, as we have seen, set out from the convent of St. Bride under the guidance of a cavalier, of whom the Lady Augusta knew nothing, save that he was to guide their steps in a direction where they would not be exposed to the risk of being overtaken. At length Margaret de Hautlieu herself spoke upon the subject.

"You have made no enquiry," she said, "Lady Augusta, whither you are travelling, or under whose charge, although methinks it should much concern you to know."

"Is it not enough for me to be aware," answered Lady Augusta, "that I am travelling, kind sister, under the protection of one to whom you yourself trust as to a friend; and why need I be anxious for any farther assurance of my safety?"

"Simply," said Margaret, de Hautlieu, "because the persons with whom, from national as well as personal circumstances, I stand connected, are perhaps not exactly the protectors to whom you, lady, can with such perfect safety intrust yourself."

"In what sense," said the Lady Augusta, "do you use these words?"

"Because," replied Margaret de Hautlieu, "the Bruce, the Douglas, Malcolm Fleming, and others of that party, although they are incapable of abusing such an advantage to any dishonourable purpose, might nevertheless, under a strong temptation, consider you as an hostage thrown into their hands by Providence, through whom they might meditate the possibility of gaining some benefit to their dispersed and dispirited party."

"They might make me," answered the Lady Augusta, "the subject of such a treaty, when I was dead, but, believe me, never while I drew vital breath. Believe me also that, with whatever pain, shame, or agony, I would again deliver myself up to the power of De Walton, yes, I would rather put myself in his hands—what do I say? *his!*—I would rather surrender myself to the meanest archer of my native country, than combine with its foes to work mischief to merry England—my own England—that country which is the envy of every other country, and the pride of all who can term themselves her natives!"

"I thought that your choice might prove so," said Lady Margaret; "and since you have honoured me with your confidence, gladly would I provide for your liberty by placing you as nearly in the situation which you yourself desire, as my poor means have the power of accomplishing. In half an hour we shall be in danger of being taken by the English parties, which will be instantly dispersed in every direction in quest of us. Now, take notice, lady, I know a place in which I can take refuge with my friends and countrymen, those gallant Scots, who have never even in this dishonoured age bent the knee to Baal. For their honour, their nicety of honour, I could in other days have answered with my own; but of late, I am bound to tell you, they have been put to those trials by which the most generous affections may be soured, and driven to a species of frenzy, the more wild that it is founded originally on the noblest feelings. A person who feels himself deprived of his natural birthright, denounced, exposed to confiscation and death, because he avouches the rights of his king, the cause of his country, ceases on his part to be nice or precise in estimating the degree of retaliation which it is lawful for him to exercise in the requital of such injuries; and, believe me, bitterly should I lament having guided you into a situation which you might consider afflicting or degrading."

"In a word then," said the English lady, "what is it you apprehend I am like to suffer at the hands of your friends, whom I must be excused for terming rebels?"

"If," said the sister Ursula, "*your* friends, whom I should term oppressors and tyrants, take our land and our lives, seize our castles, and confiscate our property, you must confess, that the rough laws of war indulge *mine* with the privilege of retaliation. There can be no fear, that such men, under any circumstances, would ever exercise cruelty or insult upon a lady of your rank; but it is another thing to calculate that they will abstain from such means of extorting advantage from your captivity as are common in warfare. You would not, I think, wish to be delivered up to the English, on consideration of Sir John de Walton surrendering the Castle of Douglas to its natural lord; yet, were you in the hands of the Bruce or Douglas, although I can answer for your being treated with all the respect which they have the means of showing, yet I own, their putting you at such a ransom might be by no means unlikely."

"I would sooner die," said the Lady Berkely, "than have my name mixed up in a treaty so disgraceful; and De Walton's reply to it would, I am certain, be to strike the head from the messenger, and throw it from the highest tower of Douglas Castle."

"Where, then, lady, would you now go," said sister Ursula, "were the choice in your power?"

"To my own castle," answered Lady Augusta, "where, if necessary, I could be defended even against the king himself, until I could place at least my person under the protection of the Church."

"In that case," replied Margaret de Hautlieu, "my power of rendering you assistance is only precarious, yet it comprehends a choice which I will willingly submit to your decision, notwithstanding I thereby subject the secrets of my friends to some risk of being discovered and frustrated. But the confidence which you have placed in me, imposes on me the necessity of committing to you a like trust. It rests with you, whether you will proceed with me to the secret rendezvous of the Douglas and his friends, which I may be blamed for making known, and there take your chance of the reception which you may encounter, since I cannot warrant you of any thing save honourable treatment, so far as your person is concerned; or if you should think this too hazardous, make the best of your way at once for the Border; in which last case I will proceed as far as I can with you towards the English line, and then leave you to pursue your journey, and to obtain a guard and a conductor among your own countrymen. Meantime, it will be well for me if I escape being taken, since the abbot would not shrink at inflicting upon me the death due to an apostate nun."

"Such cruelty, my sister, could hardly be inflicted upon one who had never taken the religious vows, and who still, according to the laws of the Church, had a right to make a choice between the world and the veil."

"Such choice as they gave their gallant victims," said Lady Margaret, "who have fallen into English hands during these merciless wars,—such choice as they gave to Wallace, the Champion of Scotland,—such as they gave to Hay, the gentle and the free,—to Sommerville, the flower of chivalry,—and to Athol, the blood relation of King Edward himself—all of whom were as much traitors, under which name they were executed, as Margaret de Hautlieu is an apostate nun, and subject to the rule of the cloister."

She spoke with some eagerness, for she felt as if the English lady imputed to her more coldness than she was, in such doubtful circumstances, conscious of manifesting.

"And after all," she proceeded, "you, Lady Augusta de Berkely, what do you venture, if you run the risk of falling into the hands of your lover? What dreadful risk do you incur? You need not, methinks, fear being immured between four walls, with a basket of bread and a cresset of water, which, were I seized, would be the only support allowed to me for the short space that my life would be prolonged. Nay, even were you to be betrayed to the rebel Scots, as you call them, a captivity among the hills, sweetened by the hope of deliverance, and rendered tolerable by all the alleviations which the circumstances of your captors allowed them the means of supplying, were not, I think, a lot so very hard to endure."

"Nevertheless," answered the Lady of Berkely, "frightful enough it must have appeared to me, since, to fly from such, I threw myself upon your guidance."

"And, whatever you think or suspect," answered the novice, "I am as true to you as ever was one maiden to another; and as sure as ever sister Ursula was true to her vows, although they were never completed, so will I be faithful to your secret, even at the risk of betraying my own."

"Hearken, lady!" she said, suddenly pausing, "do you hear that?"

The sound to which she alluded was the same imitation of the cry of an owl, which the lady had before heard under the walls of the convent.

"These sounds," said Margaret de Hautlieu, "announce that one is near, more able than I am to direct us in this matter. I must go forward and speak with him; and this man, our guide, will remain by you for a little space; nor, when he quits your bridle, need you wait for any other signal, but ride forward on the woodland path, and obey the advice and directions which will be given you."

"Stay! stay! sister Ursula!" cried the Lady de Berkely—"abandon me not in this moment of uncertainty and distress!"

"It must be, for the sake of both," returned Margaret de Hautlieu. "I also am in uncertainty—I also am in distress—and patience and obedience are the only virtues which can save us both."

So saying, she struck her horse with the riding rod, and moving briskly forward, disappeared among the tangled boughs of a thicket. The Lady of Berkely would have followed her companion, but the cavalier who attended them laid a strong hand upon the bridle of her palfrey, with a look which implied that he would not permit her to proceed in that direction. Terrified, therefore, though she could not exactly state a reason why, the Lady of Berkely remained with her eyes fixed upon the thicket, instinctively, as it were, expecting to see a band of English archers, or rugged Scottish insurgents, issue from its tangled skirts, and doubtful which she should have most considered as the objects of her terror. In the distress of her uncertainty, she again attempted to move forward, but the stern check which her attendant again bestowed upon her bridle, proved sufficiently that in restraining her wishes, the stranger was not likely to spare the strength which he certainly possessed. At length, after some ten minutes had elapsed, the cavalier withdrew his hand from her bridle, and pointing with his lance towards the thicket, through which there winded a narrow, scarce visible path, seemed to intimate to the lady that her road lay in that direction, and that he would no longer prevent her following it.

"Do you not go with me?" said the lady, who, having been accustomed to this man's company since they left the convent, had by degrees come to look upon him as a sort of protector. He, however, gravely shook his head, as if to excuse complying with a request, which it was not in his power to grant; and turning his steed in a different direction, retired at a pace which soon carried him from her sight. She had then no alternative but to take the path of the thicket, which had been followed by Margaret de Hautlieu, nor did she pursue it long before coming in sight of a singular spectacle. The trees grew wider as the lady advanced, and when she entered the thicket, she perceived that, though hedged in as it were by an enclosure of copsewood, it was in the interior altogether occupied by a few of the magnificent trees, such as seemed to have been the ancestors of the forest, and which, though few in number, were sufficient to overshadow all the unoccupied ground, by the great extent of their complicated branches. Beneath one of these lay stretched something of a grey colour, which, as it drew itself together, exhibited the figure of a man sheathed in armour, but strangely accoutred, and in a manner so bizarre, as to indicate some of the wild fancies peculiar to the knights of that period. His armour was ingeniously painted, so as to represent a skeleton; the ribs being constituted by the corselet and its back-piece. The shield represented an owl with its wings spread, a device which was repeated upon the helmet, which appeared to be completely covered by an image of the same bird of ill omen. But that which was particularly calculated to excite surprise in the spectator, was the great height and thinness of the figure, which, as it arose from the ground, and placed itself in an erect posture, seemed rather to resemble an apparition in the act of extricating itself from the grave, than that of an ordinary man rising upon his feet. The horse, too, upon which the lady rode, started back and snorted, either at the sudden change of posture of this ghastly specimen of chivalry, or disagreeably affected by some odour which accompanied his presence. The lady herself manifested some alarm, for although she did not utterly believe she was in the presence of a super natural being, yet, among all the strange half-frantic disguises of chivalry this was assuredly the most uncouth which she had ever seen; and, considering how often the knights of the period pushed their dreamy fancies to the borders of insanity, it seemed at best no very safe adventure to meet? one accoutred in the emblems of the King of Terrors himself, alone, and in the midst of a wild forest. Be the knight's character and purposes what they might, she resolved, however, to accost him in the language and manner observed in romances upon such occasions, in the hope even that if he were a madman he might prove a peaceable one, and accessible to civility.

"Sir Knight," she said, in as firm a tone as she could assume, "right sorry am I, if, by my hasty approach, I have disturbed your solitary meditations. My horse, sensible I think of the presence of yours, brought me hither, without my being aware whom or what I was to encounter."

"I am one," answered the stranger, in a solemn tone, "whom few men seek to meet, till the time comes that they can avoid me no longer."

"You speak, Sir Knight," replied the Lady de Berkely, "according to the dismal character of which it has pleased you to assume the distinction. May I appeal to one whose exterior is so formidable, for the purpose of requesting some directions to guide me through this wild wood; as, for instance, what is the name of the nearest castle, town, or hostelry, and by what course I am best likely to reach such?"

"It is a singular audacity," answered the Knight of the Tomb, "that would enter into conversation with him who is termed the Inexorable, the Unsparing, and the Pitiless, whom even the most miserable forbears to call to his assistance, lest his prayers should be too soon answered."

"Sir Knight," replied the Lady Augusta, "the character which you have assumed, unquestionably for good reasons, dictates to you a peculiar course of speech; but although your part is a sad one, it does not, I should suppose, render it necessary for you to refuse those acts of civility to which you must have bound yourself in taking the high vows of chivalry."

"If you will trust to my guidance," replied the ghastly figure, "there is only one condition upon which I can grant you the information which you require; and that is, that you follow my footsteps without any questions asked as to the tendency of our journey."

"I suppose I must submit to your conditions," she answered, "if you are indeed pleased to take upon yourself the task of being my guide. In my heart I conceive you to be one of the unhappy gentlemen of Scotland, who are now in arms, as they say, for the defence of their liberties. A rash undertaking has brought me within the sphere of your influence, and now the only favour I have to request of you, against whom I never did, nor planned any evil, is the guidance which your knowledge of the country permits you easily to afford me in my way to the frontiers of England. Believe that what I may see of your haunts or of your practices, shall be to me things invisible, as if they were actually concealed by the sepulchre itself, of the king of which it has pleased you to assume the attributes; and if a sum of money, enough to be the ransom of a wealthy earl, will purchase such a favour at need, such a ransom will be frankly paid, and with as much fidelity as ever it was rendered by a prisoner to the knight by whom he was taken. Do not reject me, princely Bruce—noble Douglas—if indeed it is to either of these that I address myself in this my last extremity—men speak of both as fearful enemies, but generous knights and faithful friends. Let me entreat you to remember how much you would wish your own friends and connexions to meet with compassion under similar circumstances, at the hands of the knights of England."

"And have they done so?" replied the Knight, in a voice more gloomy than before, "or do you act wisely, while imploring the protection of one whom you believe to be a true Scottish knight, for no other reason than the extreme and extravagant misery of his appearance?—is it, I say, well or wise to remind him of the mode in which the lords of England have treated the lovely maidens and the high-born dames of Scotland? Have not their prison cages been suspended from the battlements of castles, that their captivity might be kept in view of every base burgher, who should desire to look upon the miseries of the noblest peeresses, yea, even the Queen of Scotland? [Footnote: The Queen of Robert the Bruce, and the Countess of Buchan, by whom, as one of Macduff's descent, he was crowned at Scone, were secured in the manner described.] Is this a recollection which can inspire a Scottish knight with compassion towards an English lady? or is it a thought which can do aught but swell the deeply sworn hatred of Edward Plantagenet, the author of these evils, that boils in every drop of Scottish blood which still feels the throb of life? No;—it is all you can expect, if, cold and pitiless as the sepulchre I represent, I leave you unassisted in the helpless condition in which you describe yourself to be."

"You will not be so inhuman," replied the lady; "in doing so you must surrender every right to honest fame, which you have won either by sword or lance. You must surrender every pretence to that justice which affects the merit of supporting the weak against the strong. You must make it your principle to avenge the wrongs and tyranny of Edward Plantagenet upon the dames and damosels of England, who have neither access to his councils, nor perhaps give him their approbation in his wars against Scotland."

"It would not then," said the Knight of the Sepulchre, "induce you to depart from your request, should I tell you the evils to which you would subject yourself should we fall into the hands of the English troops, and should they find you under such ill-omened protection as my own?"

"Be assured," said the lady, "the consideration of such an event does not in the least shake my resolution, or desire of confiding in your protection. You may probably know who I am, and may judge how far even, Edward would hold himself entitled to extend punishment towards me."

"How am I to know you," replied the ghastly cavalier, "or your circumstances? They must be extraordinary indeed, if they could form a check, either of justice or humanity, upon the revengeful feelings of Edward. All who know him are well assured that it is no ordinary motive that will induce him to depart from the indulgence of his evil temper. But be it as it may, you, lady, if a lady you be, throw yourself as a burden upon me, and I must discharge myself of my trust as I best may; for this purpose you must be guided implicitly by my directions, which will be given after the fashion of those of the spiritual world, being intimations, rather than detailed instructions for your conduct, and expressed rather by commands, than, by any reason or argument. In this way it is possible that I may be of service to you; in any other case, it is most likely that I may fail you at need, and melt from your side like a phantom which dreads the approach of day."

"You cannot be so cruel!" answered the lady. "A gentleman, a knight, and a nobleman—and I persuade myself I speak to all—hath duties which he cannot abandon."

"He has, I grant it, and they are most sacred to me," answered the Spectral Knight; "but I have also duties whose obligations are doubly binding, and to which I must sacrifice those which would otherwise lead me to devote myself to your rescue. The only question is whether you feel inclined to accept my protection on the limited terms on which alone I can extend it, or whether you deem it better that each go their own way, and limit themselves to their own resources, and trust the rest to Providence?" "Alas!" replied the lady, "beset and hard pressed as I am, to ask me to form a resolution for myself, is like calling on the wretch in the act of falling from a precipice, to form a calm judgment by what twig he may best gain the chance of breaking his fall. His answer must necessarily be, that he will cling to that which he can easiest lay hold of, and trust the rest to Providence. I accept therefore your offer of protection in the modified way you are pleased to limit it, and I put my faith in Heaven and in you. To aid me effectually, however, you must know my name and my circumstances."

"All these," answered the Knight of the Sepulchre, "have already been told me by your late companion; for deem not, young lady, that either beauty, rank, extended domains, unlimited wealth, or the highest accomplishments, can weigh any thing in the consideration of him who wears the trappings of the tomb, and whose affections and desires are long buried in the charnel-house."

"May your faith," said the Lady Augusta de Berkely, "be as steady as your words appear severe, and I submit to your guidance, without the least doubt or fear that it will prove otherwise than as I venture to hope."

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

Like the dog following its master, when engaged in training him to the sport in which he desires he should excel, the Lady Augusta felt herself occasionally treated with a severity, calculated to impress upon her the most implicit obedience and attention to the Knight of the Tomb, in whom she had speedily persuaded herself she saw a principal man among the retainers of Douglas, if not James of Douglas himself. Still, however, the ideas which the lady had formed of the redoubted Douglas, were those of a knight highly accomplished in the duties of chivalry, devoted in particular to the service of the fair sex, and altogether unlike the personage with whom she found herself so strangely united, or rather for the present enthralled to. Nevertheless, when, as if to abridge farther communication, he turned short into one of the mazes of the wood, and seemed to adopt a pace, which, from the nature of the ground, the horse on which the Lady Augusta was mounted had difficulty to keep up with, she followed him with the alarm and speed of the young spaniel, which from fear rather than fondness, endeavours to keep up with the track of its severe master. The simile, it is true, is not a very polite one, nor entirely becoming an age, when women were worshipped with a certain degree of devotion; but such circumstances as the present were also rare, and the Lady Augusta de Berkely could not but persuade herself that the terrible champion, whose name had been so long the theme of her anxiety, and the terror indeed of the whole country, might be able, some way or other, to accomplish her deliverance. She, therefore, exerted herself to the utmost, so as to keep pace with the phantom-like apparition, and followed the knight, as the evening shadow keeps watch upon the belated rustic.

As the lady obviously suffered under the degree of exertion necessary to keep her palfrey from stumbling in these steep and broken paths, the Knight of the Tomb slackened his pace, looked anxiously around him, and muttered apparently to himself, though probably intended for his companion's ear, "There is no occasion for so much haste."

He proceeded at a slower rate, until they seemed to be on the brink of a ravine, being one of many irregularities on the surface of the ground, effected by the sudden torrents peculiar to that country, and which, winding among the trees and copse-wood, formed, as it were, a net of places of concealment, opening into each other, so that there was perhaps no place in the world so fit for the purpose of ambuscade. The spot where the borderer Turnbull had made his escape at

the hunting match, was one specimen of this broken country, and perhaps connected itself with the various thickets and passes through which the knight and pilgrim occasionally seemed to take their way, though that ravine was at a considerable distance from their present route.

Meanwhile the knight led the way, as if rather with the purpose of bewildering the Lady Augusta amidst these interminable woods, than following any exact or fixed path. Here they ascended, and anon appeared to descend in the same direction, finding only boundless wildernesses, and varied combinations of tangled woodland scenery. Such part of the country as seemed arable, the knight appeared carefully to avoid; yet he could not direct his course with so much certainty but that he occasionally crossed the path of inhabitants and cultivators, who showed a consciousness of so singular a presence, but never as the lady observed evinced any symptoms of recognition. The inference was obvious, that the spectre knight was known in the country, and that he possessed adherents or accomplices there, who were at least so far his friends, as to avoid giving any alarm, which might be the means of his discovery. The well-imitated cry of the night-owl, too frequent a guest in the wilderness that its call should be a subject of surprise, seemed to be a signal generally understood among them; for it was heard in different parts of the wood, and the Lady Augusta, experienced in such journeys by her former travels under the guidance of the minstrel Bertram, was led to observe, that on hearing such wild notes, her guide changed the direction of his course, and betook himself to paths which led through deeper wilds, and more impenetrable thickets. This happened so often, that a new alarm came upon the unfortunate pilgrim, which suggested other motives of terror. Was she not the confidant, and almost the tool of some artful design, laid with a view to an extensive operation, which was destined to terminate, as the efforts of Douglas had before done, in the surprise of his hereditary castle, the massacre of the English garrison—and finally in the dishonour and death of that Sir John de Walton, upon whose fate she had long believed, or taught herself to believe, that her own was dependent?

It no sooner flashed across the mind of the Lady Augusta that she was engaged in some such conspiracy with a Scottish insurgent, than she shuddered at the consequences of the dark transactions in which she had now become involved, and which appeared to have a tendency so very different from what she had at first apprehended.

The hours of the morning of this remarkable day, being that of Palm Sunday, were thus drawn out in wandering from place to place; while the Lady de Berkely occasionally interposed by petitions for liberty, which she endeavoured to express in the most moving and pathetic manner, and by offers of wealth and treasures, to which no answer whatever was returned by her strange guide.

At length, as if worn out by his captive's importunity, the knight, coming close up to the bridle-rein of the Lady Augusta, said in a solemn tone—

"I am, as you may well believe, none of those knights who roam through wood and wild, seeking adventures, by which I may obtain grace in the eyes of a fair lady: Yet will I to a certain degree grant the request which thou dost solicit so anxiously, and the arbitration of thy fate shall depend upon the pleasure of him to whose will thou hast expressed thyself ready to submit thine own. I will, on our arrival at the place of our destination, which is now at hand, write to Sir John de Walton, and send my letter, together with thy fair self, by a special messenger. He will, no doubt, speedily attend our summons, and thou shalt thyself be satisfied, that even he who has as yet appeared deaf to entreaty, and insensible to earthly affections, has still some sympathy for beauty and for virtue. I will put the choice of safety, and thy future happiness, into thine own hands, and those of the man whom thou hast chosen; and thou mayst select which thou wilt betwixt those and misery."

While he thus spoke, one of those ravines or clefts in the earth seemed to yawn before them, and entering it at the upper end, the spectre knight, with an attention which he had not yet shown, guided the lady's courser by the rein down the broken and steep path by which alone the bottom of the tangled dingle was accessible.

When placed on firm ground after the dangers of a descent, in which her palfrey seemed to be sustained by the personal strength and address of the singular being who had hold of the bridle, the lady looked with some astonishment at a place so well adapted for concealment as that which she had now reached. It appeared evident that it was used for this purpose, for more than one stifled answer was given to a very low bugle-note emitted by the Knight of the Tomb; and when the same note was repeated, about half a score of armed men, some wearing the dress of soldiers, others those of shepherds and agriculturists, showed themselves imperfectly, as if acknowledging the summons.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

"Hail to you, my gallant friends!" said the Knight of the Tomb to his companions, who seemed to welcome him with the eagerness of men engaged in the same perilous undertaking. "The winter has passed over, the festival of Palm Sunday is come, and as surely as the ice and snow of this season shall not remain to chill the earth through the ensuing summer, so surely we, in a few hours, keep our word to those southern braggarts, who think their language of boasting and malice has as much force over our Scottish bosoms, as the blast possesses over the autumn fruits; but it is not so. While we choose to remain concealed, they may as vainly seek to descry us, as a housewife would search for the needle she has dropped among the withered foliage of yon gigantic oak. Yet a few hours, and the lost needle shall become the exterminating sword of the Genius of Scotland, avenging ten thousand injuries, and especially the life of the gallant Lord Douglas, cruelly done to death as an exile from his native country."

An exclamation between a yell and a groan burst from the assembled retainers of Douglas, upon being reminded of the recent death of their chieftain; while they seemed at the same time sensible of the necessity of making little noise, lest they should give the alarm to some of the numerous English parties which were then traversing different parts of the forest. The acclamation, so cautiously uttered, had scarce died away in silence, when the Knight of the Tomb, or, to call him by his proper name, Sir James Douglas, again addressed his handful of faithful followers.

"One effort, my friends, may yet be made to end our strife with the Southron without bloodshed. Fate has within a few hours thrown into my power the young heiress of Berkely, for whose sake it is said Sir John de Walton keeps with such obstinacy the castle which is mine by inheritance. Is there one among you who dare go, as the honourable escort of Augusta de Berkely, bearing a letter, explaining the terms on which I am willing to restore her to her lover, to freedom, and to her English lordships?"

"If there is none other," said a tall man, dressed in the tattered attire of a woodsman, and being, in fact, no other than the very Michael Turnbull, who had already given so extraordinary a proof of his undaunted manhood, "I will gladly be the person who will be the lady's henchman on this expedition."

"Thou art never wanting," said the Douglas, "where a manly deed is to be done; but remember, this lady must pledge to us her word and oath that she will hold herself our faithful prisoner, rescue or no rescue; that she will consider herself as pledged for the life, freedom, and fair usage of Michael Turnbull; and that if Sir John de Walton refuse my terms, she must hold herself obliged to return with Turnbull to our presence, in order to be disposed of at our pleasure."

There was much in these conditions, which struck the Lady Augusta with natural doubt and horror; nevertheless, strange as it may seem, the declaration of the Douglas gave a species of decision to her situation, which might have otherwise been unattainable; and from the high opinion which she entertained of the Douglas's chivalry, she could not bring herself to think, that any part which he might play in the approaching drama would be other than that which a perfect good knight would, under all circumstances, maintain towards his enemy. Even with respect to De Walton, she felt herself relieved of a painful difficulty. The idea of her being discovered by the knight himself, in a male disguise, had preyed upon her spirits; and she felt as if guilty of a departure from the laws of womanhood, in having extended her favour towards him beyond maidenly limits; a step, too, which might tend to lessen her in the eyes of the lover for whom she had hazarded so much.

"The	heart,	she	said,	is	lightly	prized,
That		is	but		lightly	won;
And	Long	shall	mourn	the	heartless	man,
That leaves his love too soon."						

On the other hand, to be brought before him as a prisoner, was indeed a circumstance equally perplexing as unpleasing, but it was one which was beyond her control, and the Douglas, into whose hands she had fallen, appeared to her to represent the deity in the play, whose entrance was almost sufficient to bring its perplexities to a conclusion; she therefore not unwillingly submitted to take what oaths and promises were required by the party in whose hands she found herself,

and accordingly engaged to be a true prisoner, whatever might occur. Meantime she strictly obeyed the directions of those who had her motions at command, devoutly praying that circumstances, in themselves so adverse, might nevertheless work together for the safety of her lover and her own freedom.

A pause ensued, during which a slight repast was placed before the Lady Augusta, who was well-nigh exhausted with the fatigues of her journey.

Douglas and his partisans, meanwhile, whispered together, as if unwilling she should hear their conference; while, to purchase their good-will, if possible, she studiously avoided every appearance of listening.

After some conversation, Turnbull, who appeared to consider the lady as peculiarly his charge, said to her in a harsh voice, "Do not fear, lady; no wrong shall be done you; nevertheless, you must be content for a space to be blindfolded."

She submitted to this in silent terror; and the trooper, wrapping part of a mantle round her head, did not assist her to remount her palfrey, but lent her his arm to support her in this blinded state.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

The ground which they traversed was, as Lady Augusta could feel, very broken and uneven, and sometimes, as she thought, encumbered with ruins, which were difficult to surmount. The strength of her comrade assisted her forward on such occasions; but his help was so roughly administered, that the lady once or twice, in fear or suffering, was compelled to groan or sigh heavily, whatever was her desire to suppress such evidence of the apprehension which she underwent, or the pain which she endured. Presently, upon an occasion of this kind, she was distinctly sensible that the rough woodsman was removed from her side, and another of the party substituted in his stead, whose voice, more gentle than that of his companions, she thought she had lately heard.

"Noble lady," were the words, "fear not the slightest injury at our hands, and accept of my ministry instead of that of my henchman, who has gone forward with our letter; do not think me presuming on my situation if I bear you in my arms through ruins where you could not easily move alone and blindfold."

At the same time the Lady Augusta Berkely felt herself raised from the earth in the strong arms of a man, and borne onward with the utmost gentleness, without the necessity of making those painful exertions which had been formerly required. She was ashamed of her situation; but, however delicate, it was no time to give vent to complaints, which might have given offence to persons whom it was her interest to conciliate. She, therefore, submitted to necessity, and heard the following words whispered in her ear.

"Fear nothing; there is no evil intended you; nor shall Sir John de Walton, if he loves you as you deserve at his hand, receive any harm on our part. We call on him but to do justice to ourselves and to you; and be assured you will best accomplish your own happiness by aiding our views, which are equally in favour of your wishes and your freedom."

The Lady Augusta would have made some answer to this, but her breath, betwixt fear and the speed with which she was transported, refused to permit her to use intelligible accents. Meantime she began to be sensible that she was enclosed within some building, and probably a ruinous one—for although the mode of her transportation no longer permitted her to ascertain the nature of her path in any respect distinctly, yet the absence of the external air—which was, however, sometimes excluded, and sometimes admitted in furious gusts—intimated that she was conducted through buildings partly entire, and in other places admitting the wind through wide rents and gaps. In one place it seemed to the lady as if she passed through a considerable body of people, all of whom observed silence, although there was sometimes heard among them a murmur, to which every one present in some degree contributed, although the general sound did not exceed a whisper. Her situation made her attend to every circumstance, and she did not fail to observe that these persons made way for him who bore her, until at length she became sensible that he descended by the regular steps of a stair, and that she was now alone excepting his company. Arrived, as it appeared to the lady, on more level ground, they proceeded on their singular road by a course which appeared neither direct nor easy, and through an atmosphere which was close to a smothering degree, and felt at the same time damp and disagreeable, as if from the vapours of a new-made grave. Her guide again spoke.

"Bear up, Lady Augusta, for a little longer, and continue to endure that atmosphere which must be one day common to us all. By the necessity of my situation, I must resign my present office to your original guide, and can only give you my assurance, that neither he, nor any one else, shall offer you the least incivility or insult—and on this you may rely, on the faith of a man of honour."

He placed her, as he said these words, upon the soft turf, and, to her infinite refreshment, made her sensible that she was once more in the open air, and free from the smothering atmosphere which had before oppressed her like that of a charnel-house. At the same time, she breathed in a whisper an anxious wish that she might be permitted to disencumber herself from the folds of the mantle which excluded almost the power of breathing, though intended only to prevent her seeing by what road she travelled. She immediately found it unfolded, agreeably to her request, and hastened, with uncovered eyes, to take note of the scene around her.

It was overshadowed by thick oak trees, among which stood some remnants of buildings, or what might have seemed such, being perhaps the same in which she had been lately wandering. A clear fountain of living water bubbled forth from under the twisted roots of one of those trees, and offered the lady the opportunity of a draught of the pure element, and in which she also bathed her face, which had received more than one scratch in the course of her journey, in spite of the care, and almost the tenderness, with which she had latterly been borne along. The cool water speedily stopt the bleeding of those trifling injuries, and the application served at the same time to recall the scattered senses of the damsel herself. Her first idea was, whether an attempt to escape, if such should appear possible, was not advisable. A moment's reflection, however, satisfied her that such a scheme was not to be thought of; and such second thoughts were confirmed by the approach of the gigantic form of the huntsman Turnbull, the rough tones of whose voice were heard before his figure was obvious to her eye.

"Were you impatient for my return, fair lady? Such as I," he continued in an ironical tone of voice, "who are foremost in the chase of wild stags and silvan cattle, are not in use to lag behind, when fair ladies, like you, are the objects of pursuit; and if I am not so constant in my attendance as you might expect, believe me, it is because I was engaged in another matter, to which I must sacrifice for a little even the duty of attending on you."

"I offer no resistance," said the lady; "forbear, however, in discharging thy duty, to augment my uneasiness by thy conversation, for thy master hath pledged me his word that he will not suffer me to be alarmed or ill treated."

"Nay, fair one," replied the huntsman, "I ever thought it was fit to make interest by soft words with fair ladies; but if you like it not, I have no such pleasure in hunting for fine holyday terms, but that I can with equal ease hold myself silent. Come, then, since we must wait upon this lover of yours ere morning closes, and learn his last resolution touching a matter which is become so strangely complicated, I will hold no more intercourse with you as a female, but talk to you as a person of sense, although an Englishwoman."

"You will," replied the lady, "best fulfil the intentions of those by whose orders you act, by holding no society with me whatever, otherwise than is necessary in the character of guide."

The man lowered his brows, yet seemed to assent to what the Lady of Berkely proposed, and remained silent as they for some time pursued their course, each pondering over their own share of meditation, which probably turned upon matters essentially different. At length the loud blast of a bugle was heard at no great distance from the unsocial fellow-travellers.

"That is the person we seek," said Turnbull; "I know his blast from any other who frequents this forest, and my orders are to bring you to speech of him."

The blood darted rapidly through the lady's veins at the thought of being thus unceremoniously presented to the knight, in whose favour she had confessed a rash preference more agreeable to the manners of those times, when exaggerated sentiments often inspired actions of extravagant generosity, than in our days, when every thing is accounted absurd which does not turn upon a motive connected with the immediate selfish interests of the actor himself. When Turnbull, therefore, winded his horn, as if in answer to the blast which they had heard, the lady was disposed to fly at the first impulse of shame and of fear. Turnbull perceived her intention, and caught hold of her with no very gentle grasp, saying—"Nay, lady, it is to be understood that you play your own part in the drama, which, unless you continue on the stage, will conclude unsatisfactorily to us all, in a combat at outrance between your lover and me, when it will appear which of us is most worthy of your favour."

"I will be patient," said the lady, bethinking her that even this strange man's presence, and the compulsion which he appeared to use towards her, was a sort of excuse to her female scruples, for coming into the presence of her lover, at least at her first appearance before him, in a disguise which her feelings confessed was not extremely decorous, or reconcilable to the dignity of her sex.

The moment after these thoughts had passed through her mind, the tramp of a horse was heard approaching; and Sir John de Walton, pressing through the trees, became aware of the presence of his lady, captive, as it seemed, in the grasp of a Scottish outlaw, who was only known to him by his former audacity at the hunting-match.

His surprise and joy only supplied the knight with those hasty expressions—"Caitiff, let go thy hold! or die in thy profane attempt to control the motions of one whom the very sun in heaven should be proud to obey." At the same time, apprehensive that the huntsman might hurry the lady from his sight by means of some entangled path—such as upon a former occasion had served him for escape Sir John de Walton dropt his cumbrous lance, of which the trees did not permit him the perfect use, and springing from his horse, approached Turnbull with his drawn sword.

The Scotchman, keeping his left hand still upon the lady's mantle, uplifted with his right his battle-axe, or Jedwood staff, for the purpose of parrying and returning the blow of his antagonist, but the lady spoke.

"Sir John de Walton," she said, "for heaven's sake, forbear all violence, till you hear upon what pacific object I am brought hither, and by what peaceful means these wars may be put an end to. This man, though an enemy of yours, has been to me a civil and respectful guardian; and I entreat you to forbear him while he speaks the purpose for which he has brought me hither."

"To speak of compulsion and the Lady de Berkely in the same breath, would itself be cause enough for instant death," said the Governor of Douglas Castle; "but you command, lady, and I spare his insignificant life, although I have causes of complaint against him, the least of which were good warrant, had he a thousand lives, for the forfeiture of them all."

"John de Walton," replied Turnbull, "this lady well knows that no fear of thee operates in my mind to render this a peaceful meeting; and were I not withheld by other circumstances of great consideration to the Douglas as well as thyself, I should have no more fear in facing the utmost thou couldst do, than I have now in levelling that sapling to the earth it grows upon."

So saying, Michael Turnbull raised his battle-axe, and struck from a neighbouring oak-tree a branch, wellnigh as thick as a man's arm, which (with all its twigs and leaves) rushed to the ground between De Walton and the Scotchman, giving a singular instance of the keenness of his weapon, and the strength and dexterity with which he used it.

"Let there be truce, then, between us, good fellow," said Sir John de Walton, "since it is the lady's pleasure that such should be the case, and let me know what thou hast to say to me respecting her?"

"On that subject," said Turnbull, "my words are few, but mark them, Sir Englishman. The Lady Augusta Berkely, wandering in this country, has become a prisoner of the noble Lord Douglas, the rightful inheritor of the Castle and lordship, and he finds himself obliged to attach to the liberty of this lady the following conditions, being in all respects such as good and lawful warfare entitles a knight to exact. That is to say, in all honour and safety the Lady Augusta shall be delivered to Sir John de Walton, or those whom he shall name, for the purpose of receiving her. On the other hand, the Castle of Douglas itself, together with all out-posts or garrisons thereunto belonging, shall be made over and surrendered by Sir John de Walton, in the same situation, and containing the same provisions and artillery, as are now within their walls; and the space of a month of truce shall be permitted to Sir James Douglas and Sir John de Walton farther to regulate the terms of surrender on both parts, having first plighted their knightly word and oath, that in the exchange of the honourable lady for the foresaid castle, lies the full import of the present agreement, and that every other subject of dispute shall, at the pleasure of the noble knights foresaid, be honourably compounded and agreed betwixt them; or at their pleasure, settled knightly by single combat according to usage, and in a fair field, before any honourable person, that may possess power enough to preside."

It is not easy to conceive the astonishment of Sir John de Walton at hearing the contents of this extraordinary cartel; he looked towards the Lady of Berkely with that aspect of despair with which a criminal may be supposed to see his guardian angel prepare for departure. Through her mind also similar ideas flowed, as if they contained a concession of what she had considered as the summit of her wishes, but under conditions disgraceful to her lover, like the cherub's fiery sword of yore, which was a barrier between our first parents and the blessings of Paradise. Sir John de Walton, after a moment's hesitation, broke silence in these words:—

"Noble lady, you may be surprised if a condition be imposed upon me, having for its object your freedom; and if Sir John de Walton, already standing under those obligations to you, which he is proud of acknowledging, should yet hesitate on accepting, with the utmost eagerness, what must ensure your restoration to freedom and independence; but so it is, that the words now spoken have thrilled in mine ear without reaching to my understanding, and I must pray the Lady of Berkely for pardon if I take time to reconsider them for a short space."

"And I," replied Turnbull, "have only power to allow you half an hour for the consideration of an offer, in accepting which, methinks, you should jump shoulder-height instead of asking any time for reflection. What does this cartel exact, save what your duty as a knight implicitly obliges you to? You have engaged yourself to become the agent of the tyrant Edward, in holding Douglas Castle, as his commander, to the prejudice of the Scottish nation, and of the Knight of Douglas Dale, who never, as a community or as an individual, were guilty of the least injury towards you; you are therefore prosecuting a false path, unworthy of a good knight. On the other hand, the freedom and safety of your lady is now proposed to be pledged to you, with a full assurance of her liberty and honour, on consideration of your withdrawing from the unjust line of conduct, in which you have suffered yourself to be imprudently engaged. If you persevere in it, you place your own honour, and the lady's happiness, in the hands of men whom you have done everything in your power to render desperate, and whom, thus irritated, it is most probable you may find such."

"It is not from thee at least," said the knight, "that I shall learn to estimate the manner in which Douglas will explain the laws of war, or De Walton receive them at his dictating."

"I am not, then," said Turnbull, "received as a friendly messenger? Farewell, and think of this lady as being in any hands but those which are safe, while you make up at leisure your mind upon the message I have brought you. Come, madam, we must be gone."

So saying, he seized upon the lady's hand, and pulled her, as if to force her to withdraw. The lady had stood motionless, and almost senseless, while these speeches were exchanged between the warriors; but when she felt the grasp of Michael Turnbull, she exclaimed, like one almost beside herself with fear—"Help me, De Walton!"

The knight, stung to instant rage, assaulted the forester with the utmost fury, and dealt him with his long sword, almost at unawares, two or three heavy blows, by which he was so wounded that he sunk backwards in the thicket, and. De Walton was about to despatch him, when he was prevented by the anxious cry of the lady—"Alas! De Walton, what have you done? This man was only an ambassador, and should have passed free from injury, while he confined himself to the delivery of what he was charged with; and if thou hast slain him, who knows how frightful may prove the vengeance exacted!"

The voice of the lady seemed to recover the huntsman from the effects of the blows he had received: he sprung on his feet, saying—"Never mind me, nor think of my becoming the means of making mischief. The knight, in his haste, spoke without giving me warning and defiance, which gave him an advantage which, I think, he would otherwise have scorned to have taken, in such a case, I will renew the combat on fairer terms, or call another champion, as the knight pleases." With these words he disappeared.

"Fear not, empress of De Walton's thoughts," answered the knight, "but believe, that if we regain together the shelter of Douglas Castle, and the safeguard of Saint George's Cross, thou may'st laugh at all. And if you can but pardon, what I shall never be able to forgive myself, the mole-like blindness which did not recognise the sun while under a temporary eclipse, the task cannot be named too hard for mortal valour to achieve which I shall not willingly undertake, to wipe out the memory of my grievous fault."

"Mention it no more," said the lady; "it is not at such a time as—this, when our lives are for the moment at stake, that quarrels upon slighter topics are to be recurred to. I can tell you, if you do not yet know, that the Scots are in arms in this vicinity, and that even the earth has yawned to conceal them from the sight of your garrison."

"Let it yawn, then," said Sir John de Walton, "and suffer every fiend in the infernal abyss to escape from his prison-house and reinforce our enemies—still, fairest, having received in thee a pearl of matchless price, my spurs shall be hacked from my heels by the basest scullion, if I turn my horse's head to the rear before the utmost force these ruffians can assemble, either upon earth or from underneath it. In thy name I defy them all to instant combat."

As Sir John de Walton pronounced these last words, in something of an exalted tone, a tall cavalier, arrayed in black armour of the simplest form, stepped forth from that part of the thicket where Turnbull had disappeared. "I am," he said, "James of Douglas, and your challenge is accepted. I, the challenged, name the arms our knightly weapons as we now wear them, and our place of combat this field or dingle, called the Bloody Sykes, the time being instant, and the combatants, like true knights, foregoing each advantage on either side." [Footnote: The ominous name of Bloodmire-sink or Syke, marks a narrow hollow to the north-west of Douglas Castle, from which it is distant about the third of a mile. Mr. Haddow states, that according to local tradition, the name was given in consequence of Sir James Douglas having at this spot intercepted and slain part of the garrison of the castle, while De Walton was in command.]

"So be it, in God's name," said the English knight, who, though surprised at being called upon to so sudden an encounter with so formidable a warrior as young Douglas, was too proud to dream of avoiding the combat. Making a sign to the lady to retire behind him, that he might not lose the advantage which he had gained by setting her at liberty from the forester, he drew his sword, and with a deliberate and prepared attitude of offence, moved slowly to the encounter. It was a dreadful one, for the courage and skill both of the native Lord of Douglas Dale, and of De Walton, among the most renowned of the times, and perhaps the world of chivalry could hardly have produced two knights more famous. Their blows fell as if urged by some mighty engine, where they were met and parried with equal strength and dexterity; nor seemed it likely, in the course of ten minutes' encounter, that an advantage would be gained by either combatant over the other. An instant they stopped by mutually implied assent, as it seemed, for the purpose of taking breath, during which Douglas said, "I beg that this noble lady may understand, that her own freedom is no way concerned in the present contest, which entirely regards the injustice done by this Sir John de Walton, and by his nation of England, to the memory of my father, and to my own natural rights."

"You are generous, Sir Knight," replied the lady; "but in what circumstances do you place me, if you deprive me of my protector by death or captivity, and leave me alone in a foreign land?"

"If such should be the event of the combat," replied Sir James, "the Douglas himself, lady, will safely restore thee to thy native land; for never did his sword do an injury for which he was not willing to make amends with the same weapon; and if Sir John de Walton will make the slightest admission that he renounces maintaining the present strife, were it only by yielding up a feather from the plume of his helmet, Douglas will renounce every purpose on his part which can touch the lady's honour or safety, and the combat may be suspended until the national quarrel again brings us together."

Sir John de Walton pondered a moment, and the lady, although she did not speak, looked at him with eyes which plainly expressed how much she wished that he would choose the less hazardous alternative. But the knight's own scruples prevented his bringing the case to so favourable an arbitrement.

"Never shall it be said of Sir John de Walton," he replied, "that he compromised, in the slightest degree, his own honour, or that of his country. This battle may end in my defeat, or rather death, and in that case my earthly prospects are closed, and I resign to Douglas, with my last breath, the charge of the Lady Augusta, trusting that he will defend her with his life, and find the means of replacing her with safety in the halls of her fathers. But while I survive, she may have a better, but will not need another protector than he who is honoured by being her own choice; nor will I yield up, were it a plume from my helmet, implying that I have maintained an unjust quarrel, either in the cause of England, or of the fairest of her daughters. Thus far alone I will concede to Douglas—an instant truce, provided the lady shall not be interrupted in her retreat to England, and the combat be fought out upon another day. The castle and territory of Douglas is the property of Edward of England, the governor in his name is the rightful governor, and on this point I will fight while my eyelids are unclosed."

"Time flies," said Douglas, "without waiting for our resolves; nor is there any part of his motions of such value as that which is passing with every breath of vital air which we presently draw. Why should we adjourn till to-morrow that which can be as well finished today? Will our swords be sharper, or our arms stronger to wield them, than they are at this moment? Douglas will do all which knight can do to succour a lady in distress; but he will not grant to her knight the slightest mark of deference, which Sir John de Walton vainly supposes himself able to extort by force of arms."

With these words, the knights engaged once more in mortal combat, and the lady felt uncertain whether she should attempt her escape through the devious paths of the wood, or abide the issue of this obstinate fight. It was rather her desire to see the fate of Sir John de Walton, than any other consideration, which induced her to remain, as if fascinated, upon the spot, where one of the fiercest quarrels ever fought—was disputed by two of the bravest champions that ever drew sword. At last the lady attempted to put a stop to the combat, by appealing to the bells which began to ring for the service of the day, which was Palm Sunday.

"For Heaven's sake," she said—"for your own sakes, and for that of lady's love, and the duties of chivalry, hold your hands only for an hour, and take chance, that where strength is so equal, means will be found of converting the truce into a solid peace. Think this is Palm Sunday, and will you defile with blood such a peculiar festival of Christianity! Intermit your feud at least so far as to pass to the nearest church, bearing with you branches, not in the ostentatious mode of earthly conquerors, but as rendering due homage to the rules of the blessed Church, and the institutions of our holy religion."

"I was on my road, fair lady, for that purpose, to the holy church of Douglas," said the Englishman, "when I was so fortunate as to meet you at this place; nor do I object to proceed thither even, now, holding truce for an hour, and I fear not to find there friends to whom I can commit you with assurance of safety, in case I am unfortunate in the combat which is now broken off, to be resumed after the service of the day."

"I also assent," said the Douglas, "to a truce for such short space; nor do I fear that there may be good Christians enough at the church, who will not see their master overpowered by odds. Let us go thither, and each take the chance of what Heaven shall please to send us."

From these words Sir John de Walton little doubted that Douglas had assured himself of a party among those who should there assemble; but he doubted not of so many of the garrison being present as would bridle every attempt at rising; and the risk, he thought, was worth incurring, since he should thereby secure an opportunity to place Lady Augusta de Berkely in safety, at least so far as to make her liberty depend on the event of a general conflict, instead of the precarious issue of a combat between himself and Douglas.

Both these distinguished knights were inwardly of opinion, that the proposal of the lady, though it relieved them from their present conflict, by no means bound them to abstain from the consequences which an accession of force might add to their general strength, and each relied upon his superiority, in some degree provided for by their previous proceedings. Sir John de Walton made almost certain of meeting with several of his bands of soldiers, who were scouring the country and traversing the woods by his direction; and Douglas, it may be supposed, had not ventured himself in person, where a price was set upon his head, without being attended by a sufficient number of approved adherents, placed in more or less connexion with each other, and stationed for mutual support. Each, therefore, entertained well-grounded hopes, that by adopting the truce proposed, he would ensure himself an advantage over his antagonist, although neither exactly knew in what manner or to what extent this success was to be obtained.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

His	talk	was	of	another	world—his	bodiments
Strange,	doubtful,	and	mysterious;	those	who	heard
Listen'd	as	to	a	man	in	feverish
Who	speaks	of	other	objects	than	the
And	mutters	like	to	him	who	sees
						a
						vision.

OLD PLAY.

On the same Palm Sunday when De Walton and Douglas measured together their mighty swords, the minstrel Bertram was busied with the ancient Book of Prophecies, which we have already mentioned as the supposed composition of Thomas the Rhymer, but not without many anxieties as to the fate of his lady, and the events which were passing around him. As a minstrel he was desirous of an auditor to enter into the discoveries which he should make in that mystic volume, as well as to assist in passing away the time; Sir John de Walton had furnished him, in Gilbert Greenleaf the archer, with one who was well contented to play the listener "from morn to dewy eve," provided a flask of Gascon wine, or a stoup of good English ale, remained on the board. It may be remembered that De Walton, when he dismissed the minstrel from the dungeon, was sensible that he owed him some compensation for the causeless suspicion which had dictated his imprisonment, more particularly as he was a valued servant, and had shown himself the faithful confidant of the Lady Augusta de Berkely, and the person who was moreover likely to know all the motives and circumstances of her Scottish journey. To secure his good wishes was, therefore, politic; and De Walton had intimated to his faithful archer that he was to lay aside all suspicion of Bertram, but at the same time keep him in sight, and, if possible, in good humour with the governor of the castle, and his adherents. Greenleaf accordingly had no doubt in his own mind, that the only way to please a minstrel was to listen with patience and commendation to the lays which he liked best to sing, or the tales which he most loved to tell; and in order to ensure the execution of his master's commands, he judged it necessary to demand of the butler such store of good liquor, as could not fail to enhance the pleasure of his society.

Having thus fortified himself with the means of bearing a long interview with the minstrel, Gilbert Greenleaf proposed to confer upon him the bounty of an early breakfast, which, if it pleased him, they might wash down with a cup of sack, and, having his master's commands to show the minstrel any thing about the castle which he might wish to see, refresh their overwearied spirits by attending a part of the garrison of Douglas to the service of the day, which, as we have already seen, was of peculiar sanctity. Against such a proposal the minstrel, a good Christian by profession, and, by his connexion with the joyous science, a good fellow, having no objections to offer, the two comrades, who had formerly little good-will towards each other, commenced their morning's repast on that fated Palm Sunday, with all manner of cordiality and good fellowship.

"Do not believe, worthy minstrel," said the archer, "that my master in any respect disparages your worth or rank in referring you for company or conversation to so poor a man as myself. It is true I am no officer of this garrison; yet for an old archer, who, for these thirty years, has lived by bow and bowstring, I do not (Our Lady make me thankful!) hold less share in the grace of Sir John de Walton, the Earl of Pembroke, and other approved good soldiers, than many of those giddy young men on whom commissions are conferred, and to whom confidences are intrusted, not on account of what they have done, but what their ancestors have done before them. I pray you to notice among them one youth placed at our head in De Walton's absence, and who bears the honoured name of Aymer de Valence, being the same with that of the Earl of Pembroke, of whom I have spoken; this knight has also a brisk young page, whom men call Fabian Harbothel."

"Is it to these gentlemen that your censure applies?" answered the minstrel; "I should have judged differently, having never, in the course of my experience, seen a young man more courteous and amiable than the young knight you named."

"I nothing dispute that it may be so," said the archer, hastening to amend the false step which he had made; "but in order that it should be so, it will be necessary that he conform to the usages of his uncle, taking the advice of experienced old soldiers in the emergencies which may present themselves; and not believing, that the knowledge which it takes many years of observation to acquire, can be at once conferred by the slap of the flat of a sword, and the magic words, 'Rise up, Sir Arthur'—or however the case may be."

"Doubt not, Sir Archer," replied Bertram, "that I am fully aware of the advantage to be derived from conversing with men of experience like you: it benefiteth men of every persuasion, and I myself am oft reduced to lament my want of sufficient knowledge of armorial bearings, signs, and cognizances, and would right fain have thy assistance, where I am a stranger alike to the names of places, of persons, and description of banners and emblems by which great families are distinguished from each other, so absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of my present task."

"Pennons and banners," answered the archer, "I have seen right many, and can assign, as is a soldier's wont, the name of the leader to the emblem under which he musters his followers; nevertheless, worthy minstrel, I cannot presume to understand what you call prophecies, with or under warranted authority of old painted books, expositions of dreams, oracles, revelations, invocations of damned spirits, judicials, astrologicals, and other gross and palpable offences, whereby men, pretending to have the assistance of the devil, do impose upon the common people, in spite of the warnings of the Privy Council; not however, that I suspect you, worthy minstrel, of busying yourself with these attempts to explain futurity, which are dangerous attempts, and may be truly said to be penal, and part of treason."

"There is something in what you say," replied the minstrel; "yet it applieth not to books and manuscripts such as I have been consulting; part, of which things therein written having already come to pass, authorize us surely to expect the completion of the rest; nor would I have much difficulty in showing you from this volume, that enough has been already proved true, to entitle us to look with certainty to the accomplishment of that which remains."

"I should be glad to hear that," answered the archer, who entertained little more than a soldier's belief respecting prophecies and auguries, but yet cared not bluntly to contradict the minstrel upon such subjects, as he had been instructed by Sir John de Walton to comply with his humour. Accordingly the minstrel began to recite verses, which, in our time, the ablest interpreter could not make sense out of.

"When	the	cook		crows,		keep		well		his		comb,
For	the	fox	and	the	fulmart	they	are	false		both.		
When	the	raven		the	rook	have		rounded		together,		
And	the	kid	in	his	cliff	shall	accord	to	the	same.		
Then	shall	they	be	bold,	and	soon	to	battle		thereafter.		
Then	the	birds		of	the	raven	rugs	and		reives,		
And	the	leal	men	of	Lothian,	are	louping	on	their	horse;		
Then	shall	the	poor	people	be	spoiled		full		near,		
And	the	Abbeys	be	burnt	truly	that	stand	upon		Tweed		
They	shall	burn	and	slay,	and	great	reif			make:		
There	shall	no	poor	man	who	say	whose	man	he	is:		
Then	shall	the	land	be	lawless,	for	love	there	is	none.		
Then	faleset		shall	have	foot	fully	five			years;		
Then	truth	surely	shall	be	tint,	and	none	shall	lippen	to	other;	
The	one	cousing	shall	not	trust	the				other,		
Not	the	son	the	father,	nor	the	father	the	son:			
For	to	have	his	goods	he	would	have	him		hanged."		

&c. &c. &c.

The archer listened to these mystic prognostications, which were not the less wearisome that they were, in a considerable degree, unintelligible; at the same time subduing his Hotspur-like disposition to tire of the recitation, yet at brief intervals comforting himself with an application to the wine flagon, and enduring as he might what he neither understood nor took interest in. Meanwhile the minstrel proceeded with his explanation of the dubious and imperfect vaticinations of which we have given a sufficient specimen.

"Could you wish," said he to Greenleaf, "a more exact description of the miseries which have passed over Scotland in these latter days? Have not these the raven and rook, the fox and the fulmart, explained; either because the nature of the birds or beasts bear an individual resemblance to those of the knights who display them on their banners, or otherwise are bodied forth by actual blazonry on their shields, and come openly into the field to ravage and destroy? Is not the total disunion of the land plainly indicated by these words, that connexions of blood shall be broken asunder, that kinsmen shall not trust each other, and that the father and son, instead, of putting faith in their natural connexion, shall seek each other's life, in order to enjoy his inheritance? The *leal men* of Lothian are distinctly

mentioned as taking arms, and there is plainly allusion to the other events of these late Scottish troubles. The death of this last William is obscurely intimated under the type of a hound, which was that good lord's occasional cognizance.

'The	hound	that	was	harm'd	then	muzzled	shall	be,
Who	loved	him	worst	shall	weep	for	his	wreck;
Yet	shall	a	whelp	rise	of	the	same	race,
That	rudely	shall	roar,	and	rule	the	whole	north,
And	quit	the	whole	quarrel	of	old	deeds	done,
Though	he	from	his	hold	be	kept	back	awhile.
True	Thomas	told	me	this	in	a	troublesome	time,

In a harvest morning at Eldoun hills."

"This hath a meaning, Sir Archer," continued the minstrel, "and which flies as directly to its mark as one of your own arrows, although there may be some want of wisdom in making the direct explication. Being, however, upon assurance with you, I do not hesitate to tell you, that in my opinion this lion's whelp that awaits its time, means this same celebrated Scottish prince, Robert the Bruce, who, though repeatedly defeated, has still, while hunted with bloodhounds, and surrounded by enemies of every sort, maintained his pretensions to the crown of Scotland, in despite of King Edward, now reigning."

"Minstrel," answered the soldier, "you are my guest, and we have sat down together as friends to this simple meal in good comradeship. I must tell thee, however, though I am loath to disturb our harmony, that thou art the first who hast adventured to speak a word before Gilbert Greenleaf in favour of that outlawed traitor, Robert Bruce, who has by his seditions so long disturbed the peace of this realm. Take my advice, and be silent on this topic; for, believe me, the sword of a true English archer will spring from its scabbard without consent of its master, should it hear aught said to the disparagement of bonny St. George and his ruddy cross; nor shall the authority of Thomas the Rhymer, or any other prophet in Scotland, England, or Wales, be considered as an apology for such unbecoming predictions."

"I were loth to give offence at any time," said the minstrel, "much more to provoke you to anger, when I am in the very act of experiencing your hospitality. I trust, however, you will remember that I do not come your uninvited guest, and that if I speak to you of future events, I do so without having the least intention to add my endeavour to bring them to pass; for, God knows, it is many years since my sincere prayer has been for peace and happiness to all men, and particularly honour and happiness to the land of Bowmen, in which I was born, and which I am bound to remember in my prayers beyond all other nations in the world."

"It is well that you do so," said the archer; "for so you shall best maintain your bounden duty to the fair land of your birth, which is the richest that the sun shines upon. Something, however, I would know, if it suits with your pleasure to tell me, and that is, whether you find anything in these rude rhymes appearing to affect the safety of the Castle of Douglas, where we now are?—for, mark me, Sir Minstrel, I have observed that these mouldering parchments, when or by whomsoever composed, have so far a certain coincidence with the truth, that when such predictions which they contain are spread abroad in the country, and create rumours of plots, conspiracies, and bloody wars, they are very apt to cause the very mischances which they would be thought only to predict."

"It were not very cautious in me," said the minstrel, "to choose a prophecy for my theme, which had reference to any attack on this garrison; for in such case I should, according to your ideas, lay myself under suspicion of endeavouring to forward what no person could more heartily regret than myself."

"Take my word for it, good friend," said the archer, "that it shall not be thus with thee; for I neither will myself conceive ill of thee, nor report thee to Sir John de Walton as meditating harm against him or his garrison—nor, to speak truth, would Sir John de Walton be willing to believe anyone who did. He thinks highly, and no doubt deservedly, of thy good faith towards thy lady, and would conceive it unjust to suspect the fidelity of one who has given evidence of his willingness to meet death rather than betray the least secret of his mistress."

"In preserving her secret," said Bertram, "I only discharged the duty of a faithful servant, leaving it to her to judge how long such a secret ought to be preserved; for a faithful servant ought to think as little of the issue towards himself of the commission which he bears, as the band of flock silk concerns itself with the secret of the letter which it secures. And, touching your question—I have no objections, although merely to satisfy your curiosity, to unfold to you that these old prophecies do contain some intimations of wars befalling in Douglas Dale, between an haggard, or wild hawk, which I take to be the cognizance of Sir John de Walton, and the three stars, or martlets, which is the cognizance of the Douglas; and more particulars I could tell of these onslaughts, did I know whereabouts is a place in these woods termed Bloody Sykes, the scene also, as I comprehend, of slaughter and death, between the followers of the three stars and those who hold the part of the Saxon, or King of England."

"Such a place," replied Gilbert Greenleaf, "I have heard often mentioned by that name among the natives of these parts; nevertheless it is vain to seek to discover the precise spot, as these wily Scots conceal from us with care every thing respecting the geography of their country, as it is called by learned men; but we may here mention the Bloody Sykes, Bottomless Myre, and other places, as portentous names, to which their traditions attach some signification of war and slaughter. If it suits your wish, however, we can, on our way to the church, try to find this place called Bloody Sykes, which I doubt not we shall trace out long before the traitors who meditate an attack upon us will find a power sufficient for the attempt."

Accordingly the minstrel and archer, the latter of whom was by this time reasonably well refreshed with wine, marched out of the castle of Douglas, without waiting for others of the garrison, resolving to seek the dingle bearing the ominous name of Bloody Sykes, concerning which the archer only knew that by mere accident he had heard of a place bearing such a name, at the hunting match made under the auspices of Sir John de Walton, and knew that it lay in the woods somewhere near the town of Douglas and in the vicinage of the castle.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

Hotspur.	I	cannot	choose;	sometimes	he	angers	me
With	telling	me	of	the	moldwarp	and	the
Of	the	dreamer	Merlin,	and	his	prophecies;	
And	of	a	dragon	and	a	finless	fish,
A	clipt-wing'd	griffin	and	a	moulten	raven,	
A	couching	lion,	and	a	ramping	cat.	
And	such	a	deal	of	skimble-skamble	stuff,	
As	puts	me	from	my	faith.		

KING HENRY IV.

The conversation between the minstrel and the ancient archer naturally pursued a train somewhat resembling that of Hotspur and Glendower, in which Gilbert Greenleaf by degrees took a larger share than was apparently consistent with his habits and education: but the truth was that as he exerted himself to recall the recognisances of military chieftains, their war-cries, emblems, and other types by which they distinguished themselves in battle, and might undoubtedly be indicated in prophetic rhymes, he began to experience the pleasure which most men entertain when they find themselves unexpectedly possessed of a faculty which the moment calls upon them to employ, and renders them important in the possession of. The minstrel's sound good sense was certainly somewhat surprised at the inconsistencies sometimes displayed by his companion, as he was carried off by the willingness to make show of his newly-discovered faculty on the one hand, and, on the other, to call to mind the prejudices which he had nourished during his whole life against minstrels, who, with the train of legends and fables, were the more likely to be false, as being generally derived from the "North Countrie."

As they strolled from one glade of the forest to another, the minstrel began to be surprised at the number of Scottish votaries whom they met, and who seemed to be hastening to the church, and, as it appeared by the boughs which they carried, to assist in the ceremony of the day. To each of these the archer put a question respecting the existence of a place called Bloody Sykes, and where it was to be found—but all seemed either to be ignorant on the subject, or desirous of evading

it, for which they found some pretext in the jolly archer's manner of interrogation, which savoured a good deal of the genial breakfast. The general answer was, that they knew no such place, or had other matters to attend to upon the morn of a holy-tide than answering frivolous questions. At last, when, in one or two; instances, the answer of the Scottish almost approached to sullenness, the minstrel remarked it, observing that there was ever some mischief on foot when the people of this country could not find a civil answer to their betters, which is usually so ready among them, and that they appeared to be making a strong muster for the service of Palm Sunday.

"You will doubtless, Sir Archer," continued the minstrel, "make your report to your knight accordingly; for I promise you, that if you do not, I myself, whose lady's freedom is also concerned, will feel it my duty to place before Sir John de Walton the circumstances which make me entertain suspicion of this extraordinary confluence of Scottish men, and the surliness which has replaced their wonted courtesy of manners."

"Tush, Sir Minstrel," replied the archer, displeased at Bertram's interference, "believe me, that armies have ere now depended on my report to the general, which has always been perspicuous and clear, according to the duties of war. Your walk, my worthy friend, has been in a separate department, such as affairs of peace, old songs, prophecies, and the like, in which it is far from my thoughts to contend with you; but credit me, it will be most for the reputation, of both, that we do not attempt to interfere with what concerns each other."

"It is far from my wish to do so," replied the minstrel; "but I would. wish that a speedy return should be made to the castle, in order to ask Sir John de Walton's opinion of that which we have but just seen."

"To this," replied Greenleaf, "there can be no objection; but, would you seek the governor at the hour which now is, you will find him most readily by going to the church of Douglas, to which he regularly wends on occasions such as the present, with the principal part of his officers, to ensure, by his presence, that no tumult arise (of which there is no little dread) between the English and the Scottish. Let us therefore hold to our original intention of attending the service of the day, and we shall rid ourselves of these entangled woods, and gain the shortest road to the church of Douglas."

"Let us go, then, with all despatch," said the minstrel; "and with the greater haste, that it appears to me that something has passed on this very spot this morning, which argues that the Christian peace due to the day has not been inviolably observed. What mean these drops of blood?" alluding to those which had flowed from the wounds of Turnbull— "Wherefore is the earth impressed with these deep tints, the footsteps of armed men advancing and retreating, doubtless, according to the chances of a fierce and heady conflict?"

"By Our Lady," returned Greenleaf, "I must own that thou seest clear. What were my eyes made of when they permitted thee to be the first discoverer of these signs of conflict? Here are feathers of a blue plume, which I ought to remember, seeing my knight assumed it, or at least permitted me to place it in his helmet, this morning, in sign of returning hope, from the liveliness of its colour. But here it lies, shorn from his head, and, if I may guess, by no friendly hand. Come, friend, to the church—to the church—and thou shalt have my example of the manner in which De Walton ought to be supported when in danger."

He led the way through the town of Douglas, entering at the southern gate, and up the very street in which Sir Aymer de Valence had charged the Phantom Knight.

We can now say more fully, that the church of Douglas had originally been a stately Gothic building, whose towers, arising high above the walls of the town, bore witness to the grandeur of its original construction. It was now partly ruinous, and the small portion of open space which was retained for public worship was fitted up in the family aisle where its deceased lords rested from worldly labours and the strife of war. From the open ground in the front of the building, their eye could pursue a considerable part of the course of the river Douglas, which approached the town from the south-west, bordered by a line of hills fantastically diversified in their appearance, and in many places covered with copsewood, which descended towards the valley, and formed a part of the tangled and intricate woodland by which the town was surrounded. The river itself, sweeping round the west side of the town, and from thence northward, supplied that large inundation or artificial piece of water which we have already mentioned. Several of the Scottish people, bearing willow branches, or those of yew, to represent the palms which were the symbol of the day, seemed wandering in the churchyard as if to attend the approach of some person of peculiar sanctity, or procession, of monks and friars, come to render the homage due to the solemnity. At the moment almost that Bertram and his companion entered the churchyard, the Lady of Berkely, who was in the act of following Sir John de Walton into the church, after having witnessed his conflict with the young Knight of Douglas, caught a glimpse of her faithful minstrel, and instantly determined to regain the company of that old servant of her house and confidant of her fortunes, and trust to the chance afterwards of being rejoined by Sir John de Walton, with a sufficient party to provide for her safety, which she in no respect doubted it would be his care to collect. She darted away accordingly from the path in which she was advancing, and reached the place where Bertram, with his new acquaintance Greenleaf, were making some enquiries of the soldiers of the English garrison, whom the service of the day had brought there.

Lady Augusta Berkely, in the meantime, had an opportunity to say privately to her faithful attendant and guide, "Take no notice of me, friend Bertram, but take heed, if possible, that we be not again separated from each other." Having given him this hint, she observed that it was adopted by the minstrel, and that he presently afterwards looked round and set his eye upon her, as, muffled in her pilgrim's cloak, she slowly withdrew to another part of the cemetery, and seemed to halt, until, detaching himself from Greenleaf, he should find an opportunity of joining her.

Nothing, in truth, could have more sensibly affected the faithful minstrel than the singular mode of communication which acquainted him that his mistress was safe, and at liberty to choose her own motions, and, as he might hope, disposed to extricate herself from the dangers which surrounded her in Scotland, by an immediate retreat to her own country and domain. He would gladly have approached and joined her, but she took an opportunity by a sign to caution him against doing so, while at the same time he remained somewhat apprehensive of the consequences of bringing her under the notice of his new friend, Greenleaf, who might perhaps think it proper to busy himself so as to gain some favour with the knight who was at the head of the garrison. Meantime the old archer continued his conversation with Bertram, while the minstrel, like many other men similarly situated, heartily wished that his well-meaning companion had been a hundred fathoms under ground, so his evanishment had given him license to join his mistress; but all he had in his power was to approach her as near as he could, without creating any suspicion.

"I would pray you, worthy minstrel," said Greenleaf, after looking carefully round, "that we may prosecute together the theme which we were agitating before we came hither; is it not your opinion, that the Scottish natives have fixed this very morning for some of those dangerous attempts which they have repeatedly made, and which are so carefully guarded against by the governors placed in this district of Douglas by our good King Edward, our rightful sovereign?"

"I cannot see," replied the minstrel, "on what grounds you found such an apprehension, or what you see here in the churchyard different from that you talked of as we approached it, when you held me rather in scorn, for giving way to some suspicions of the same kind."

"Do you not see," added the archer, "the numbers of men, with strange faces, and in various disguisements, who are thronging about these ancient ruins, which are usually so solitary? Yonder, for example, sits a boy who seems to shun observation, and whose dress, I will be sworn, has never been shaped in Scotland."

"And if he is an English pilgrim," replied the minstrel, observing that the archer pointed towards the Lady of Berkely, "he surely affords less matter of suspicion."

"I know not that," said old Greenleaf, "but I think it will be my duty to inform Sir John de Walton, if I can reach him, that there are many persons here, who in outward appearance neither belong to the garrison, nor to this part of the country."

"Consider," said Bertram, "before you harass with accusation a poor young man, and subject him to the consequences which must necessarily attend upon suspicions of this nature, how many circumstances call forth men peculiarly to devotion at this period. Not only is this the time of the triumphal entrance of the founder of the Christian religion into Jerusalem, but the day itself is called Dominica Confitentium, or the Sunday of Confessors, and the palm-tree, or the box and yew, which are used as its substitutes, and which are distributed to the priests, are burnt solemnly to ashes, and those ashes distributed among the pious, by the priests, upon the Ash-Wednesday of the succeeding year, all which rites and ceremonies in our country, are observed, by order of the Christian Church; nor ought you, gentle archer, nor can you without a crime, persecute those as guilty of designs upon your garrison, who can ascribe their presence here to their desire to discharge the duties of the day; and look ye at yon numerous procession approaching with banner and cross, and, as it appears, consisting of some churchman of

rank, and his attendants; let us first enquire who he is, and it is probable we shall find in his name and rank sufficient security for the peaceable and orderly behaviour of those whom piety has this day assembled at the church of Douglas."

Greenleaf accordingly made the investigation recommended by his companion, and received information that the holy man who headed the procession, was no other than the diocesan of the district, the Bishop of Glasgow, who had come to give his countenance to the rites with which the day was to be sanctified.

The prelate accordingly entered the walls of the dilapidated churchyard, preceded by his cross-bearers, and attended by numbers, with boughs of yew and other evergreens, used on the festivity instead of palms. Among them the holy father showered his blessing, accompanied by signs of the cross, which were met with devout exclamations by such of the worshippers as crowded around him:—"To thee, reverend father, we apply for pardon for our offences, which we humbly desire to confess to thee, in order that we may obtain pardon from Heaven."

In this manner the congregation and the dignified clergyman met together, exchanging pious greeting, and seemingly intent upon nothing but the rites of the day. The acclamations of the congregation, mingled with the deep voice of the officiating priest, dispensing the sacred ritual; the whole forming a scene which, conducted with the Catholic skill and ceremonial, was at once imposing and affecting.

The archer, on seeing the zeal with which the people in the churchyard, as well as a number who issued from the church, hastened proudly to salute the bishop of the diocese, was rather ashamed of the suspicions which he had entertained of the sincerity of the good man's purpose in coming hither. Taking advantage of a fit of devotion, not perhaps very common with old Greenleaf, who at this moment thrust himself forward to share in those spiritual advantages which the prelate was dispensing, Bertram slipped clear of his English friend, and, gliding to the side of the Lady Augusta, exchanged, by the pressure of the hand, a mutual congratulation upon having rejoined company. On a sign by the minstrel, they withdrew to the inside of the church, so as to remain unobserved amidst the crowd, in which they were favoured by the dark shadows of some parts of the building.

The body of the church, broken as it was, and hung round with the armorial trophies of the last Lords of Douglas, furnished rather the appearance of a sacrilegiously desecrated ruin, than the inside of a holy place; yet some care appeared to have been taken to prepare it for the service of the day. At the lower end hung the great escutcheon of William Lord of Douglas, who had lately died a prisoner in England; around that escutcheon were placed the smaller shields of his sixteen ancestors, and a deep black shadow was diffused by the whole mass, unless where relieved by the glance of the coronets, or the glimmer of bearings particularly gay in emblazonry. I need not say that in other respects the interior of the church was much dismantled, it being the very same place in which Sir Aymer de Valence held an interview with the old sexton; and who now, drawing into a separate corner some of the straggling parties whom he had collected and brought to the church, kept on the alert, and appeared ready for an attack as well at mid-day as at the witching hour of midnight. This was the more necessary, as the eye of Sir John de Walton seemed busied in searching from one place to another, as if unable to find the object he was in quest of, which the reader will easily understand to be the Lady Augusta de Berkely, of whom he had lost sight in the pressure of the multitude. At the eastern part of the church was fitted up a temporary altar, by the side of which, arrayed in his robes, the Bishop of Glasgow had taken his place, with such priests and attendants as composed his episcopal retinue. His suite was neither numerous nor richly attired, nor did his own appearance present a splendid specimen of the wealth and dignity of the episcopal order. When he laid down, however, his golden cross, at the stern command of the King of England, that of simple wood, which he assumed instead thereof, did not possess less authority, nor command less awe among the clergy and people of the diocese.

The various persons, natives of Scotland, now gathered around, seemed to watch his motions, as those of a descended saint, and the English waited in mute astonishment, apprehensive that at some unexpected signal an attack would be made upon them, either by the powers of earth or heaven, or perhaps by both in combination. The truth is, that so great was the devotion of the Scottish clergy of the higher ranks to the interests of the party of Bruce, that the English had become jealous of permitting them to interfere even with those ceremonies of the Church which were placed under their proper management, and thence the presence of the Bishop of Glasgow, officiating at a high festival in the church of Douglas, was a circumstance of rare occurrence, and not unattended both with wonder and suspicion. A council of the Church, however, had lately called the distinguished prelates of Scotland to the discharge of their duty on the festivity of Palm Sunday, and neither English nor Scottish saw the ceremony with indifference. An unwonted silence which prevailed in the church, filled, as it appeared, with persons of different views, hopes, wishes, and expectations, resembled one of those solemn pauses which often take place before a strife of the elements, and are well understood to be the forerunners of some dreadful concussion of nature. All animals, according to their various nature, express their sense of the approaching tempest; the cattle, the deer, and other inhabitants of the walks of the forest, withdraw to the inmost recesses of their pastures; the sheep crowd into their fold; and the dull stupor of universal nature, whether animate or inanimate, presages its speedily awakening into general convulsion and disturbance, when the lurid lightning shall hiss at command of the diapason of the thunder.

It was thus that, in deep suspense, those who had come to the church in arms, at the summons, of Douglas, awaited and expected every moment a signal to attack, while the soldiers of the English garrison, aware of the evil disposition of the natives towards them, were reckoning every moment when the well-known shouts of "Bows and bills!" should give signal for a general conflict, and both parties, gazing fiercely upon each other, seemed to expect the fatal onset.

Notwithstanding the tempest, which appeared every moment ready to burst, the Bishop of Glasgow proceeded with the utmost solemnity to perform the ceremonies proper to the day; he paused from time to time to survey the throng, as if to calculate whether the turbulent passions of those around him would be so long kept under as to admit of his duties being brought to a close in a manner becoming the time and place.

The prelate had just concluded the service, when a person advanced towards him with a solemn and mournful aspect, and asked if the reverend father could devote a few moments to administer comfort to a dying man, who was lying wounded close by.

The churchman signified a ready acquiescence, amidst a stillness which, when he surveyed the lowering brows of one party at least of those who were in the church, boded no peaceful termination to this fated day. The father motioned to the messenger to show him the way, and proceeded on his mission, attended by some of those who were understood to be followers of the Douglas.

There was something peculiarly striking, if not suspicious, in the interview which followed. In a subterranean vault was deposited the person of a large tall man, whose blood flowed copiously through two or three ghastly wounds, and streamed amongst the trusses of straw on which he lay; while his features exhibited a mixture of sternness and ferocity, which seemed prompt to kindle into a still more savage expression.

The reader will probably conjecture that the person in question was no other than Michael Turnbull, who, wounded in the rencounter of the morning, had been left by some of his friends upon the straw, which was arranged for him by way of couch, to live or die as he best could. The prelate, on entering the vault, lost no time in calling the attention of the wounded man to the state of his spiritual affairs, and assisting him to such comfort as the doctrine of the Church directed should be administered to departing sinners. The words exchanged between them were of that grave and severe character which passes between the ghostly father and his pupil, when one world is rolling away from the view of the sinner, and another is displaying itself in all its terrors, and thundering in the ear of the penitent that retribution which the deeds done in the flesh must needs prepare him to expect. This is one of the most solemn meetings which can take place between earthly beings; and the courageous character of the Jedwood forester, as well as the benevolent and pious expression of the old churchman, considerably enhanced the pathos of the scene.

"Turnbull," said the churchman, "I trust you will believe me when I say that it grieves my heart to see thee brought to this situation by wounds which it is my duty to tell you, you must consider mortal."

"Is the chase ended, then?" said the Jedwood man with a sigh. "I care not, good father, for I think I have borne me as becomes a gallant quarry, and that the old forest has lost no credit by me, whether in pursuit, or in bringing to bay; and even in this last matter, methinks this gay English knight would not have come off with such advantage had the ground on which we stood been alike indifferent to both, or had I been aware of his onset; but it will be seen, by any one who takes the trouble to examine, that poor Michael Turnbull's foot slipped twice in the *melee*, otherwise it had not been his fate to be lying here in the dead-thraw; [Footnote: Or death agony.] while yonder southron would probably have died like a dog, upon this bloody straw, in his place."

The bishop replied, advising his penitent to turn from vindictive thoughts respecting the death of others, and endeavour to fix his attention upon his own departure from existence, which seemed shortly about to take place.

"Nay," replied the wounded man, "you, father, undoubtedly know best what is fit for me to do; yet methinks it would not be very well with me if I had prolonged to this time of day the task of revising my life, and I am not the man to deny that mine has been a bloody and a desperate one. But you will grant me I never bore malice to a brave enemy for having done me an injury, and show me the man, being a Scotchman born, and having a natural love for his own country, who hath not, in these times, rather preferred a steel cap to a hat and feather, or who hath not been more conversant with drawn blades than with prayer-book; and you yourself know, father, whether, in our proceedings against the English interest, we have not uniformly had the countenance of the sincere fathers of the Scottish Church, and whether we have not been exhorted to take arms and make use of them, for the honour of the King of Scotland, and the defence of our own rights."

"Undoubtedly," said the prelate, "such have been our exhortations towards our oppressed countrymen, nor do I now teach you a different doctrine; nevertheless, having now blood around me, and a dying man before me, I have need to pray that I have not been misled from the true path, and thus become the means of misdirecting others. May Heaven forgive me if I have done so, since I have only to plead my sincere and honest intention in excuse for the erroneous counsel which I may have given to you and others touching these wars. I am conscious that encouraging you so to stain your swords in blood, I have departed in some degree from the character of my profession, which enjoins that we neither shed blood, nor are the occasion of its being shed. May Heaven enable us to obey our duties, and to repent of our errors, especially such as have occasioned the death or distress of our fellow-creatures. And, above all, may this dying Christian become aware of his errors, and repent with sincerity of having done to others that which he would not willingly have suffered at their hand!"

"For that matter," answered Turnbull, "the time has never been when I would not exchange a blow with the best man who ever lived; and if I was not in constant practice of the sword, it was because I have been brought up to the use of the Jedwood-axe, which the English call a partisan, and which makes little difference, I understand, from the sword and poniard."

"The distinction is not great," said the bishop; "but I fear, my friend, that life taken with what you call a Jedwood-axe, gives you no privilege over him who commits the same deed, and inflicts the same injury, with any other weapon."

"Nay, worthy father," said the penitent, "I must own that the effect of the weapons is the same, as far as concerns the man who suffers; but I would pray of you information, why a Jedwood man ought not to use, as is the custom of his country, a Jedwood-axe, being, as is implied in the name, the offensive weapon proper to his country?"

"The crime of murder," said the bishop, "consists not in the weapon with which the crime is inflicted, but in the pain which the murderer inflicts upon his fellow-creature, and the breach of good order which he introduces into heaven's lovely and peaceable creation; and it is by turning your repentance upon this crime that you may fairly expect to propitiate Heaven for your offences, and at the same time to escape the consequences which are denounced in Holy Writ against those by whom man's blood shall be shed."

"But, good father," said the wounded man, "you know as well as any one, that in this company, and in this very church, there are upon the watch scores of both Scotchmen and Englishmen, who come here not so much to discharge the religious duties of the day, as literally to bereave each other of their lives, and give a new example of the horror of those feuds which the two extremities of Britain nourish against each other. What conduct, then, is a poor man like me to hold? Am I not to raise this hand against the English, which methinks I still can make a tolerably efficient one—or am I, for the first time in my life, to hear the war-cry when it is raised, and hold back my sword from the slaughter? Methinks it will be difficult, perhaps altogether impossible, for me to do so; but if such is the pleasure of Heaven, and your advice, most reverend father, unquestionably I must do my best to be governed by your directions, as of one who has a right and title to direct us in every dilemma, or case, as they term it, of troubled conscience."

"Unquestionably," said the bishop, "it is my duty, as I have already said, to give no occasion this day for the shedding of blood, or the breach of peace; and I must charge you, as my penitent, that upon your soul's safety, you do not minister any occasion to affray or bloodshed, either by maintaining such in your own person, or inciting others to the same; for by following a different course of advice, I am certain that you, as well as myself, would act sinfully and out of character."

"So I will endeavour to think, reverend father," answered the huntsman; "nevertheless, I hope it will be remembered in my favour that I am the first person bearing the surname of Turnbull, together with the proper name of the Prince of Archangels himself, who has at any time been able to sustain the affront occasioned by the presence of a southron with a drawn sword, and was not thereby provoked to pluck forth his own weapon, and to lay about him."

"Take care, my son," returned the Prelate of Glasgow, "and observe, that even now thou art departing from those resolutions which, but a few minutes since, thou didst adopt upon serious and just consideration; wherefore do not be, O my son! like the sow that has wallowed in the mire, and, having been washed, repeats its act of pollution, and becomes again yet fouler than it was before."

"Well, reverend father," replied the wounded man, "although it seems almost unnatural for Scottishmen and English to meet and part without a buffet, yet I will endeavour most faithfully not to minister any occasion of strife, nor, if possible, to snatch at any such occasion as shall be ministered to me."

"In doing so," returned the bishop, "thou wilt best atone for the injury which thou hast done to the law of Heaven upon former occasions, and thou shalt prevent the causes for strife betwixt thee and thy brethren of the southern land, and shalt eschew the temptation towards that blood-guiltiness which is so rife in this our day and generation. And do not think that I am imposing upon thee, by these admonitions, a duty more difficult than it is in thy covenant to bear, as a man and as a Christian. I myself am a man and a Scotchman, and, as such, I feel offended at the unjust conduct of the English towards our country and sovereign; and thinking as you do yourself, I know what you must suffer when you are obliged to submit to national insults, unretaliated and unrevenged. But let us not conceive ourselves the agents of that retributive vengeance which Heaven has, in a peculiar degree, declared to be its own attribute. Let us, while we see and feel the injuries inflicted on our own country, not forget that our own raids, ambushes, and surprisals, have been at least equally fatal to the English as their attacks and forays have been to us; and, in short, let the mutual injuries of the crosses of Saint Andrew and of Saint George be no longer considered as hostile to the inhabitants of the opposite district, at least during the festivals of religion; but as they are mutually signs of redemption, let them be, in like manner, intimations of forbearance and peace on both sides."

"I am contented," answered Turnbull, "to abstain from all offences towards others, and shall even endeavour to keep myself from resenting those of others towards me, in the hope of bringing to pass such a quiet and godly state of things as your words, reverend father, induce me to expect." Turning his face to the wall, the Borderer lay in stern expectation of approaching death, which the bishop left him to contemplate. The peaceful disposition which the prelate had inspired into Michael Turnbull, had in some degree diffused itself among those present, who heard with awe the spiritual admonition to suspend the national antipathy, and remain in truce and amity with each other. Heaven had, however, decreed that the national quarrel, in which so much blood had been sacrificed, should that day again be the occasion of deadly strife.

A loud flourish of trumpets, seeming to proceed from beneath the earth, now rung through the church, and roused the attention of the soldiers and worshippers then assembled. Most of those who heard these warlike sounds betook themselves to their weapons, as if they considered it useless to wait any longer for the signal of conflict. Hoarse voices, rude exclamations, the rattle of swords against their sheaths, or their clashing against other pieces of armour, gave an awful presage of an onset, which, however, was for a time averted by the exhortations of the bishop. A second flourish of trumpets having taken place, the voice of a herald made proclamation to the following purpose:—

"That whereas there were many noble pursuivants of chivalry presently assembled in the Kirk of Douglas, and whereas there existed among them the usual causes of quarrel and points of debate for their advancement in chivalry, therefore the Scottish knights were ready to fight any number of the English who might be agreed, either upon the superior beauty of their ladies, or upon the national quarrel in any of its branches, or upon whatever point might be at issue between them, which should be deemed satisfactory ground of quarrel by both; and the knights who should chance to be worsted in such dispute should renounce the prosecution thereof, or the bearing arms therein thereafter, with such other conditions to ensue upon their defeat as might be agreed upon by a council of the knights present at the Kirk of Douglas aforesaid. But foremost of all, any number of Scottish knights, from one to twenty, will defend the quarrel which has already

drawn blood, touching the freedom of Lady Augusta de Berkely, and the rendition of Douglas Castle to the owner here present. Wherefore it is required that the English knights do intimate their consent that such trial of valour take place, which, according to the rules of chivalry, they cannot refuse, without losing utterly the reputation of valour, and incurring the diminution of such other degree of estimation as a courageous pursuivant of arms would willingly be held in, both by the good knights of his own country, and those of others."

This unexpected gage of battle realized the worst fears of those who had looked with suspicion on the extraordinary assemblage this day of the dependents of the House of Douglas. After a short pause, the trumpets again flourished lustily, when the reply of the English knights was made in the following terms:—

"That God forbid the rights and privileges of England's knights, and the beauty of her damsels, should not be asserted by her children, or that such English knights as were here assembled, should show the least backwardness to accept the combat offered, whether grounded upon the superior beauty of their ladies, or whether upon the causes of dispute between the countries, for either or all of which the knights of England here present were willing to do battle in the terms of the indenture aforesaid, while sword and lance shall endure. Saving and excepting the surrender of the Castle of Douglas, which can be rendered to no one but England's king, or those acting under his orders."

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

Cry	the	wild	war-note,	let	the	champions	pass,
Do	bravely	each,	and	God	defend	the	right;
Upon	Saint	Andrew	thrice	can	they	thus	cry,
And	thrice		they	shout		on	height,
And	then	marked	them		on	the	Englishmen,
As	I	have		told		you	right.
Saint	George	the	bright,		our	ladies'	knight,
To	name	they		were		full	fain;
Our	Englishmen	they		cried		on	height,
And	thrice	they			shout		again.

OLD BALLAD.

The extraordinary crisis mentioned in the preceding chapter, was the cause, as may be supposed, of the leaders on both sides now throwing aside all concealment, and displaying their utmost strength, by marshalling their respective adherents; the renowned Knight of Douglas, with Sir Malcolm Fleming and other distinguished cavaliers, were seen in close consultation.

Sir John de Walton, startled by the first flourish of trumpets, while anxiously endeavouring to secure a retreat for the Lady Augusta, was in a moment seen collecting his followers, in which he was assisted by the active friendship of the Knight of Valence.

The Lady of Berkely showed no craven spirit at these warlike preparations; she advanced, closely followed by the faithful Bertram, and a female in a riding-hood, whose face, though carefully concealed, was no other than that of the unfortunate Margaret de Hautlieu, whose worst fears had been realized as to the faithlessness of her betrothed knight.

A pause ensued, which for some time no one present thought himself of authority sufficient to break.

At last the Knight of Douglas stepped forward and said, loudly, "I wait to know whether Sir John de Walton requests leave of James of Douglas to evacuate his castle without further wasting that daylight which might show us to judge a fair field, and whether he craves Douglas's protection in doing so?"

The Knight of Walton drew his sword. "I hold the Castle of Douglas," he said, "in spite of all deadly,—and never will I ask the protection from any one which my own sword is competent to afford me."

"I stand by you, Sir John," said Aymer de Valence, "as your true comrade, against whatever odds may oppose themselves to us."

"Courage, noble English," said the voice of Greenleaf; "take your weapons in God's name. Bows and bills! bows and bills!—A messenger brings us notice that Pembroke is in full march hither from the borders of Ayrshire, and will be with us in half an hour. Fight on, gallant English! Valence to the rescue! and long life to the gallant Earl of Pembroke!"

Those English within and around the church no longer delayed to take arms, and De Walton, crying out at the height of his voice, "I implore the Douglas to look nearly to the safety of the ladies," fought his way to the church door; the Scottish finding themselves unable to resist the impression of terror which affected them at the sight of this renowned knight, seconded by his brother-in-arms, both of whom had been so long the terror of the district. In the meantime, it is possible that De Walton might altogether have forced his way out of the church, had he not been met boldly by the young son of Thomas Dickson of Hazelside, while his father was receiving from Douglas the charge of preserving the stranger ladies from all harm from the fight, which, so long suspended, was now on the point of taking place.

De Walton cast his eye upon the Lady Augusta, with a desire of rushing to the rescue; but was forced to conclude, that he provided best for her safety by leaving her under the protection of Douglas's honour.

Young Dickson, in the meantime, heaped blow on blow, seconding with all his juvenile courage every effort he could make, in order to attain the prize due to the conqueror of the renowned De Walton.

"Silly boy," at length said Sir John, who had for some time forborne the stripling, "take, then, thy death from a noble hand, since thou preferrest that to peace and length of days."

"I care not," said the Scottish youth, with his dying breath; "I have lived long enough, since I have kept you so long in the place where you now stand."

And the youth said truly, for as he fell never again to rise, the Douglas stood in his place, and without a word spoken, again engaged with De Walton in the same formidable single combat, by which they had already been distinguished, but with even additional fury. Aymer de Valence drew up to his friend De Walton's left hand, and seemed but to desire the apology of one of Douglas's people attempting to second him, to join in the fray; but as he saw no person who seemed disposed to give him such opportunity, he repressed the inclination, and remained an unwilling spectator. At length it seemed as if Fleming, who stood foremost among the Scottish knights, was desirous to measure his sword with De Valence. Aymer himself, burning with the desire of combat, at last called out, "Faithless Knight of Boghall! step forth and defend yourself against the imputation of having deserted your lady-love, and of being a man-sworn disgrace to the rolls of chivalry!"

"My answer," said Fleming, "even to a less gross taunt, hangs by my side." In an instant his sword was in his hand, and even the practised warriors who looked on felt difficulty in discovering the progress of the strife, which rather resembled a thunder storm in a mountainous country than the stroke and parry of two swords, offending on the one side, and keeping the defensive on the other.

Their blows were exchanged with surprising rapidity; and although the two combatants did not equal Douglas and De Walton in maintaining a certain degree of reserve, founded upon a respect which these knights mutually entertained for each other, yet the want of art was supplied by a degree of fury, which gave chance at least an equal share in the issue.

Seeing their superiors thus desperately engaged, the partisans, as they were accustomed, stood still on either side, and looked on with the reverence which they instinctively paid to their commanders and leaders in arms. One or two of the women were in the meanwhile attracted, according to the nature of the sex, by compassion for those who had already experienced the casualties of war. Young Dickson, breathing his last among the feet of the combatants, [Footnote: [The fall of this, brave stripling by the hand of the English governor, and the stern heroism of the father in turning from the spot where he lay, "a model of beauty and strength," that he might not be withdrawn from the duty which Douglas had assigned him of protecting the Lady of Berkely, excites an interest for both, with which it is almost to be regretted that history interferes. It was the old man, Thomas Dickson, not his son, who fell. The *slogan*, "a Douglas, a Douglas," having been

prematurely raised, Dickson, who was within the church, thinking that his young Lord with his armed band was at hand, drew his sword, and with only one, man to assist him, opposed the English, who now rushed to the door. Cut across the middle by an English sword, he still continued his opposition, till he fell lifeless at the threshold. Such is tradition, and it is supported by a memorial of some authority—a tombstone, still to be seen in the church-yard of Douglas, on which is sculptured a figure of Dickson, supporting with his left arm his protruding entrails, and raising his sword with the other in the attitude of combat.]—*Note by the Rev, Mr. Stewart of Douglas.*] was in some sort rescued from the tumult by the Lady of Berkely, in whom the action seemed less strange, owing to the pilgrim's dress which she still retained, and who in vain endeavoured to solicit the attention of the boy's father to the task in which she was engaged.

"Cumber yourself not, lady, about that which is bootless," said old Dickson, "and distract not your own attention and mine from preserving you, whom it is the Douglas's wish to rescue, and whom, so please God and St. Bride, I consider as placed by my Chieftain under my charge. Believe me, this youth's death is in no way forgotten, though this be not the time to remember it. A time will come for recollection, and an hour for revenge."

So said the stern old man, reverting his eyes from the bloody corpse which lay at his feet, a model of beauty and strength. Having taken one more anxious look, he turned round, and placed himself where he could best protect the Lady of Berkely, not again turning his eyes on his son's body.

In the interim the combat continued, without the least cessation on either side, and without a decided advantage. At length, however, fate seemed disposed to interfere; the Knight of Fleming, pushing fiercely forward, and brought by chance almost close to the person of the Lady Margaret de Hautlieu, missed his blow, and his foot sliding in the blood of the young victim, Dickson, he fell before his antagonist, and was in imminent danger of being at his mercy, when Margaret de Hautlieu, who inherited the soul of a warrior, and, besides, was a very strong, as well as an undaunted person, seeing a mace of no great weight lying on the floor, where it had been dropped by the fallen Dickson, it, at the same instant, caught her eye, armed her hand, and intercepted, or struck down the sword of Sir Aymer de Valence, who would otherwise have remained the master of the day at that interesting moment. Fleming had more to do to avail himself of an unexpected chance of recovery, than to make a commentary upon the manner in which it had been so singularly brought about; he instantly recovered the advantage he had lost, and was able in the ensuing close to trip up the feet of his antagonist, who fell on the pavement, while the voice of his conqueror, if he could properly be termed such, resounded through the church with the fatal words, "Yield thee, Aymer de Valence—rescue or no rescue—yield thee! —yield ye!" he added, as he placed his sword to the throat of the fallen knight, "not to me, but to this noble lady—rescue or no rescue."

With a heavy heart the English knight perceived that he had lost so favourable an opportunity of acquiring fame, and was obliged to submit to his destiny, or be slain upon the spot. There was only one consolation, that no battle was ever more honourably sustained, being gained as much by accident as by valour.

The fate of the protracted and desperate combat between Douglas and De Walton did not much longer remain in suspense; indeed, the number of conquests in single combat achieved by the Douglas in these wars, was so great, as to make it doubtful whether he was not, in personal strength and skill, even a superior knight to Bruce himself, and he was at least acknowledged nearly his equal in the art of war.

So however it was, that when three quarters of an hour had passed in hard contest, Douglas and De Walton, whose nerves were not actually of iron, began to show some signs that their human bodies were feeling the effect of the dreadful exertion. Their blows began to be drawn more slowly, and were parried with less celerity. Douglas, seeing that the combat must soon come to an end, generously made a signal, intimating to his antagonist to hold his hand for an instant.

"Brave De Walton," he said, "there is no mortal quarrel between us, and you must be sensible that in this passage of arms, Douglas, though he is only worth his sword and his cloak, has abstained from taking a decisive advantage when the chance of arms has more than once offered it. My father's house, the broad domains around it, the dwelling, and the graves of my ancestors, form a reasonable reward for a knight to fight for, and call upon me in an imperative voice the prosecute to strife which has such an object, while you are as welcome to the noble lady, in all honour and safety, as if you had received her from the hands of King Edward himself; and I give you my word, that the utmost honours which can attend a prisoner, and a careful absence of every thing like injury or insult, shall attend De Walton when he yields up the castle, as well as his sword to James of Douglas."

"It is the fate to which I am perhaps doomed," replied Sir John de Walton; "but never will I voluntarily embrace it, and never shall it be said that my own tongue, saving in the last extremity, pronounced upon me the fatal sentence to sink the point of my own sword. Pembroke is upon the march with his whole army, to rescue the garrison of Douglas. I hear the tramp of his horse's feet even now; and I will maintain my ground while I am within reach of support; nor do I fear that the breath which now begins to fail will not last long enough to uphold the struggle till the arrival of the expected succour. Come on, then, and treat me not as a child, but as one who, whether I stand or fall, fears not to encounter the utmost force of my knightly antagonist."

"So be it then," said Douglas, a darksome hue, like the lurid colour of the thunder-cloud, changing his brow as he spoke, intimating that he meditated a speedy end to the contest, when, just as the noise of horses' feet drew nigh, a Welsh knight, known as such by the diminutive size of his steed, his naked limbs, and his bloody spear, called out loudly to the combatants to hold their hands.

"Is Pembroke near?" said De Walton.

"No nearer than Loudon Hill," said the Prestantin; "but I bring his commands to John de Walton."

"I stand ready to obey them through every danger," answered the knight.

"Woe is me," said the Welshman, "that my mouth should bring to the ears of so brave a man tidings so unwelcome! The Earl of Pembroke yesterday received information that the castle of Douglas was attacked by the son of the deceased Earl, and the whole inhabitants of the district. Pembroke, on hearing this, resolved to march to your support, noble knight, with all the forces he had at his disposal. He did so, and accordingly entertained every assurance of relieving the castle, when unexpectedly he met, on Loudon Hill, a body of men of no very inferior force to his own, and having at their head that famous Bruce whom the Scottish rebels acknowledge as their king. He marched instantly to the attack, swearing he would not even draw a comb through his grey beard until he had rid England of his recurring plague. But the fate of war was against us."

He stopt here for lack of breath.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Douglas. "Robert Bruce will now sleep at night, since he has paid home Pembroke for the slaughter of his friends and the dispersion of his army at Methuen Wood. His men are, indeed, accustomed to meet with dangers, and to conquer them: those who follow him have been trained under Wallace, besides being partakers of the perils of Bruce himself. It was thought that the waves had swallowed them when they shipped themselves from the west; but know, that the Bruce was determined with the present reviving spring to awaken his pretensions, and that he retires not from Scotland again while he lives, and while a single lord remains to set his foot by his sovereign, in spite of all the power which has been so feloniously employed against him."

"It is even too true," said the Welshman Meredith, "although it is said by a proud Scotchman.—The Earl of Pembroke, completely defeated, is unable to stir from Ayr, towards which he has retreated with great loss: and he sends his instructions to Sir John de Walton, to make the best terms he can for the surrender of the Castle of Douglas, and trust nothing to his support."

The Scottish, who heard this unexpected news, joined in a shout so loud and energetic, that the ruins of the ancient church seemed actually to rock and threaten to fall on the heads of those who were crowded within it.

The brow of De Walton was overclouded at the news of Pembroke's defeat, although in some respects it placed him at liberty to take measures for the safety of the Lady of Berkely. He could not, however, claim the same honourable terms which had been offered to him by Douglas before the news of the battle of Loudon Hill had arrived.

"Noble knight," he said, "it is entirely at your pleasure to dictate the terms of surrender of your paternal castle; nor have I a right to claim from you those conditions which, a little while since, your generosity put in my offer. But I submit to my fate; and upon whatever terms you think fit to grant me, I must be content to offer to surrender to you the weapon, of which I now put the point in the earth, in evidence that I will never more direct it against you until a fair ransom shall place it once more at my own disposal."

"God forbid," answered the noble James of Douglas, "that I should take such advantage of the bravest knight out of not a few who have found me work in battle! I will take example from the Knight of Fleming, who has gallantly bestowed his captive in guerdon upon a noble damsel here present; and in like manner I transfer

my claim upon the person of the redoubted Knight of Walton, to the high and noble Lady Augusta Berkely, who, I hope, will not scorn to accept from the Douglas a gift which the chance of war has thrown into his hands."

Sir John de Walton, on hearing this unexpected decision, looked up like the traveller who discovers the beams of the sun breaking through and dispersing the tempest which has accompanied him for a whole morning. The Lady of Berkely recollected what became her rank, and showed her sense of the Douglas's chivalry. Hastily wiping off the tears which had unwillingly flowed to her eyes, while her lover's safety and her own were resting on the precarious issue of a desperate combat, she assumed the look proper to a heroine of that age, who did not feel averse to accept the importance which was conceded to her by the general voice of the chivalry of the period. Stepping forward, bearing her person gracefully, yet modestly, in the attitude of a lady accustomed to be looked to in difficulties like the present, she addressed the audience in a tone which might not have misbecome the Goddess of Battle dispersing her influence at the close of a field covered with the dead and the dying.

"The noble Douglas," she said, "shall not pass without a prize from the field which he has so nobly won. This rich string of brilliants, which my ancestor won from the Sultan of Trebison, itself a prize of battle, will be honoured by sustaining, under the Douglas's armour, a lock of hair of the fortunate lady whom the victorious lord has adopted for his guide in chivalry; and if the Douglas, till he shall adorn it with that lock, will permit the honoured lock of hair which it now bears to retain its station, she on whose head it grew will hold it as a signal that poor Augusta de Berkely is pardoned for having gaged any mortal man in strife with the Knight of Douglas."

"Woman's love," replied the Douglas, "shall not divorce this locket from my bosom, which I will keep till the last day of my life, as emblematic of female worth and female virtue. And, not to encroach upon the valued and honoured province of Sir John de Walton, be it known to all men, that whoever shall say that the Lady Augusta of Berkely has, in this entangled matter, acted otherwise than becomes the noblest of her sex, he will do well to be ready to maintain such a proposition with his lance, against James of Douglas, in a fair field."

This speech was heard with approbation on all sides; and the news brought by Meredith of the defeat of the Earl of Pembroke, and his subsequent retreat, reconciled the fiercest of the English soldiers to the surrender of Douglas Castle. The necessary conditions were speedily agreed on, which put the Scottish in possession of this stronghold, together with the stores, both of arms and ammunition, of every kind which it contained. The garrison had it to boast, that they obtained a free passage, with their horses and arms, to return by the shortest and safest route to the marches of England, without either suffering or inflicting damage.

Margaret of Hautlieu was not behind in acting a generous part; the gallant Knight of Valence was allowed to accompany his friend De Walton and the Lady Augusta to England, and without ransom.

The venerable prelate of Glasgow, seeing what appeared at one time likely to end in a general conflict, terminate so auspiciously for his country, contented himself with bestowing his blessing on the assembled multitude, and retiring with those who came to assist in the service of the day.

This surrender of Douglas Castle upon the Palm Sunday of 19th March, 1306-7, was the beginning of a career of conquest which was uninterrupted, in which the greater part of the strengths and fortresses of Scotland were yielded to those who asserted the liberty of their country, until the crowning mercy was gained in the celebrated field of Bannockburn, where the English sustained a defeat more disastrous than is mentioned upon any other occasion in their annals.

Little need be said of the fate of the persons of this story. King Edward was greatly enraged at Sir John de Walton for having surrendered the Castle of Douglas, securing at the same time his own object, the envied hand of the heiress of Berkely. The knights to whom he referred the matter as a subject of enquiry, gave it nevertheless as their opinion that De Walton was void of all censure, having discharged his duty in its fullest extent, till the commands of his superior officer obliged him to surrender the Dangerous Castle.

A singular renewal of intercourse took place, many months afterwards, between Margaret of Hautlieu and her lover, Sir Malcolm Fleming. The use which the lady made of her freedom, and of the doom of the Scottish Parliament, which put her in possession of her father's inheritance, was to follow her adventurous spirit through dangers not usually encountered by those of her sex; and the Lady of Hautlieu was not only a daring follower of the chase, but it was said that she was even not daunted in the battlefield. She remained faithful to the political principles which she had adopted at an early period; and it seemed as if she had formed the gallant resolution of shaking the god Cupid from her horse's mane, if not treading him beneath her horse's feet.

The Fleming, although he had vanished from the neighbourhood of the counties of Lanark and Ayr, made an attempt to state his apology to the Lady de Hautlieu herself, who returned his letter unopened, and remained to all appearance resolved never again to enter upon the topic of their original engagement. It chanced, however, at a later period of the war with England, while Fleming was one night travelling upon the Border, after the ordinary fashion of one who sought adventures, a waiting-maid, equipped in a fantastic habit, asked the protection of his arm in the name of her lady, who, late in the evening, had been made captive, she said, by certain ill-disposed caitiffs, who were carrying her by force through the forest. The Fleming's lance was, of course, in its rest, and woe betide the faitour whose lot it was to encounter its thrust; the first fell, incapable of further combat, and another of the felons encountered the same fate with little more resistance. The lady, released from the discourteous cord which restrained her liberty, did not hesitate to join company with the brave knight by whom she had been rescued; and although the darkness did not permit her to recognise her old lover in her liberator, yet she could not but lend a willing ear to the conversation with which he entertained her, as they proceeded on the way. He spoke of the fallen caitiffs as being Englishmen, who found a pleasure in exercising oppression and barbarities upon the wandering damsels of Scotland, and whose cause, therefore, the champions of that country were bound to avenge while the blood throbbed in their veins. He spoke of the injustice of the national quarrel which had afforded a pretence for such deliberate oppression; and the lady, who herself had suffered so much by the interference of the English in the affairs of Scotland, readily acquiesced in the sentiments which he expressed on a subject which she had so much reason for regarding as an afflicting one. Her answer was given in the spirit of a person who would not hesitate, if the times should call for such an example, to defend even with her hand the rights which she asserted with her tongue.

Pleased with the sentiments which she expressed, and recognising in her voice that secret charm, which, once impressed upon the human heart, is rarely wrought out of the remembrance by a long train of subsequent events, he almost persuaded himself that the tones were familiar to him, and had at one time formed the key to his innermost affections. In proceeding on their journey, the knight's troubled state of mind was augmented instead of being diminished. The scenes of his earliest youth were recalled by circumstances so slight, as would in ordinary cases have produced no effect whatever; the sentiments appeared similar to those which his life had been devoted to enforce, and he half persuaded himself that the dawn of day was to be to him the beginning of a fortune equally singular and extraordinary.

In the midst of this anxiety, Sir Malcolm Fleming had no anticipation that the lady whom he had heretofore rejected was again thrown into his path, after years of absence; still less, when daylight gave him a partial view of his fair companion's countenance, was he prepared to believe that he was once again to term himself the champion of Margaret de Hautlieu, but it was so. The lady, on that direful morning when she retired from the church of Douglas, had not resolved (indeed what lady ever did?) to renounce, without some struggle, the beauties which she had once possessed. A long process of time, employed under skilful hands, had succeeded in obliterating the scars which remained as the marks of her fall. These were now considerably effaced, and the lost organ of sight no longer appeared so great a blemish, concealed, as it was, by a black ribbon, and the arts of the tirewoman, who made it her business to shadow it over by a lock of hair. In a word, he saw the same Margaret de Hautlieu, with no very different style of expression from that which her face, partaking of the high and passionate character of her soul, had always presented. It seemed to both, therefore, that their fate, by bringing them together after a separation which appeared so decisive, had intimated its *fiat* that their fortunes were inseparable from each other. By the time that the summer sun had climbed high in the heavens, the two travellers rode apart from their retinue, conversing together with an eagerness which marked the important matters of discussion between them; and in a short time it was made generally known through Scotland, that Sir Malcolm Fleming and the Lady Margaret de Hautlieu were to be united at the court of the good King Robert, and the husband invested with the honours of Biggar and Cumbernauld, an earldom so long known in the family of Fleming.

The gentle reader is acquainted, that these are, in all probability, the last tales which it will be the lot of the Author to submit to the public. He is now on the eve of visiting foreign parts; a ship of war is commissioned by its Royal Master to carry the Author of Waverley to climates in which he may possibly obtain such a restoration of health as may serve him to spin his thread to an end in his own country. Had he continued to prosecute his usual literary labours, it seems indeed probable, that at the term of years he has already attained, the bowl, to use the pathetic language of Scripture, would have been broken at the fountain; and little can one, who has enjoyed on the whole an uncommon share of the most inestimable of worldly blessings, be entitled to complain, that life, advancing to its period, should be attended with its usual proportions of shadows and storms. They have affected him at least in no more painful manner than is inseparable from the discharge of this part of the debt of humanity. Of those whose relation to him in the ranks of life might have ensured him their sympathy under indisposition, many are now no more; and those who may yet follow in his wake, are entitled to expect, in bearing inevitable evils, an example of firmness and patience, more especially on the part of one who has enjoyed no small good fortune during the course of his pilgrimage.

The public have claims on his gratitude, for which the Author of Waverley has no adequate means of expression; but he may be permitted to hope, that the powers of his mind, such as they are, may not have a different date from those of his body; and that he may again meet his patronising friends, if not exactly in his old fashion of literature, at least in some branch that may not call forth the remark that—

"Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage."

ABBOTSFORD, *September* 1831.

BOOK VI
THE FAIR MAID OF PERTH & THE DAY OF ST. VALENTINE
CHAPTER I.

*"Behold the Tiber," the vain Roman cried,
Viewing the ample Tay from Baiglie's side;
But where's the Scot that would the vaunt repay,
And hail the puny Tiber for the Tay?*

Anonymous.

Among all the provinces in Scotland, if an intelligent stranger were asked to describe the most varied and the most beautiful, it is probable he would name the county of Perth. A native also of any other district of Caledonia, though his partialities might lead him to prefer his native county in the first instance, would certainly class that of Perth in the second, and thus give its inhabitants a fair right to plead that, prejudice apart, Perthshire forms the fairest portion of the Northern kingdom. It is long since Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with that excellent taste which characterises her writings, expressed her opinion that the most interesting district of every country, and that which exhibits the varied beauties of natural scenery in greatest perfection, is that where the mountains sink down upon the champaign, or more level land. The most picturesque, if not the highest, hills are also to be found in the county of Perth. The rivers find their way out of the mountainous region by the wildest leaps, and through the most romantic passes connecting the Highlands with the Lowlands. Above, the vegetation of a happier climate and soil is mingled with the magnificent characteristics of mountain scenery, and woods, groves, and thickets in profusion clothe the base of the hills, ascend up the ravines, and mingle with the precipices. It is in such favoured regions that the traveller finds what the poet Gray, or some one else, has termed beauty lying in the lap of terror.

From the same advantage of situation, this favoured province presents a variety of the most pleasing character. Its lakes, woods, and mountains may vie in beauty with any that the Highland tour exhibits; while Perthshire contains, amidst this romantic scenery, and in some places in connexion with it, many fertile and habitable tracts, which may vie with the richness of merry England herself. The county has also been the scene of many remarkable exploits and events, some of historical importance, others interesting to the poet and romancer, though recorded in popular tradition alone. It was in these vales that the Saxons of the plain and the Gad of the mountains had many a desperate and bloody encounter, in which it was frequently impossible to decide the palm of victory between the mailed chivalry of the low country and the plaided clans whom they opposed.

Perth, so eminent for the beauty of its situation, is a place of great antiquity; and old tradition assigns to the town the importance of a Roman foundation. That victorious nation, it is said, pretended to recognise the Tiber in the much more magnificent and navigable Tay, and to acknowledge the large level space, well known by the name of the North Inch, as having a near resemblance to their Campus Martins. The city was often the residence of our monarchs, who, although they had no palace at Perth, found the Cistercian convent amply sufficient for the reception of their court. It was here that James the First, one of the wisest and best of the Scottish kings, fell a victim to the jealousy of the vengeful aristocracy. Here also occurred the mysterious conspiracy of Gowrie, the scene of which has only of late been effaced by the destruction of the ancient palace in which the tragedy was acted. The Antiquarian Society of Perth, with just zeal for the objects of their pursuit, have published an accurate plan of this memorable mansion, with some remarks upon its connexion with the narrative of the plot, which display equal acuteness and candour.

One of the most beautiful points of view which Britain, or perhaps the world, can afford is, or rather we may say was, the prospect from a spot called the Wicks of Baiglie, being a species of niche at which the traveller arrived, after a long stage from Kinross, through a waste and uninteresting country, and from which, as forming a pass over the summit of a ridgy eminence which he had gradually surmounted, he beheld, stretching beneath him, the valley of the Tay, traversed by its ample and lordly stream; the town of Perth, with its two large meadows, or inches, its steeples, and its towers; the hills of Moncrieff and Kinnoul faintly rising into picturesque rocks, partly clothed with woods; the rich margin of the river, studded with elegant mansions; and the distant view of the huge Grampian mountains, the northern screen of this exquisite landscape. The alteration of the road, greatly, it must be owned, to the improvement of general intercourse, avoids this magnificent point of view, and the landscape is introduced more gradually and partially to the eye, though the approach must be still considered as extremely beautiful. There is still, we believe, a footpath left open, by which the station at the Wicks of Baiglie may be approached; and the traveller, by quitting his horse or equipage, and walking a few hundred yards, may still compare the real landscape with the sketch which we have attempted to give. But it is not in our power to communicate, or in his to receive, the exquisite charm which surprise gives to pleasure, when so splendid a view arises when least expected or hoped for, and which Chrystal Croftangry experienced when he beheld, for the first time, the matchless scene.

Childish wonder, indeed, was an ingredient in my delight, for I was not above fifteen years old; and as this had been the first excursion which I was permitted to make on a pony of my own, I also experienced the glow of independence, mingled with that degree of anxiety which the most conceited boy feels when he is first abandoned to his own undirected counsels. I recollect pulling up the reins without meaning to do so, and gazing on the scene before me as if I had been afraid it would shift like those in a theatre before I could distinctly observe its different parts, or convince myself that what I saw was real. Since that hour, and the period is now more than fifty years past, the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strongest influence over my mind, and retained its place as a memorable thing, when much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollection. It is therefore unnatural that, whilst deliberating on what might be brought forward for the amusement of the public, I should pitch upon some narrative connected with the splendid scenery which made so much impression on my youthful imagination, and which may perhaps have that effect in setting off the imperfections of the composition which ladies suppose a fine set of china to possess in heightening the flavour of indifferent tea.

The period at which I propose to commence is, however, considerably earlier of the remarkable historical transactions to which I have already alluded, as the events which I am about to recount occurred during the last years of the 14th century, when the Scottish sceptre was swayed by the gentle but feeble hand of John, who, on being called to the throne, assumed the title of Robert the Third.

CHAPTER II.

*A country lip may have the velvet touch;
Though she's no lady, she may please as much.*

DRYDEN.

Perth, boasting, as we have already mentioned, so large a portion of the beauties of inanimate nature, has at no time been without its own share of those charms which are at once more interesting and more transient. To be called the Fair Maid of Perth would at any period have been a high distinction, and have inferred no mean superiority in beauty, where there were many to claim that much envied attribute. But, in the feudal times to which we now call the reader's attention, female beauty was a quality of much higher importance than it has been since the ideas of chivalry have been in a great measure extinguished. The love of the ancient cavaliers was a licensed species of idolatry, which the love of Heaven alone was theoretically supposed to approach in intensity, and which in practice it seldom equalled. God and the ladies were familiarly appealed to in the same breath; and devotion to the fair sex was as peremptorily enjoined upon the aspirant to the honour of chivalry as that which was due to Heaven. At such a period in society, the power of beauty was almost unlimited. It could level the highest rank with that which was immeasurably inferior.

It was but in the reign preceding that of Robert III. that beauty alone had elevated a person of inferior rank and indifferent morals to share the Scottish throne; and many women, less artful or less fortunate, had risen to greatness from a state of concubinage, for which the manners of the times made allowance and apology. Such views might have dazzled a girl of higher birth than Catharine, or Katie, Glover, who was universally acknowledged to be the most beautiful young woman of the city or its vicinity, and whose renown, as the Fair Maid of Perth, had drawn on her much notice from the young gallants of the royal court, when it chanced to be residing in or near Perth, insomuch that more than one nobleman of the highest rank, and most distinguished for deeds of chivalry, were more attentive to exhibit feats of horsemanship as they passed the door of old Simon Glover, in what was called Couvrefew, or Curfew, Street, than to distinguish themselves in the tournaments, where the noblest dames of Scotland were spectators of their address. But the glover's daughter—for, as was common with the citizens and artisans of that early period, her father, Simon, derived his surname from the trade which he practised—showed no inclination to listen to any gallantry which came from those of a station highly exalted above that which she herself occupied, and, though probably in no degree insensible to her personal charms, seemed desirous to confine her conquests to those who were within her own sphere of life. Indeed, her beauty being of that kind which we connect more with the mind than with the person, was, notwithstanding her natural kindness and gentleness of disposition, rather allied to reserve than to gaiety, even when in company with her equals; and the earnestness with which she attended upon the exercises of devotion induced many to think that Catharine Glover nourished the private wish to retire from the world and bury herself in the recesses of the cloister. But to such a sacrifice, should it be meditated, it was not to be expected her father, reputed a wealthy man and having this only child, would yield a willing consent.

In her resolution of avoiding the addresses of the gallant courtiers, the reigning beauty of Perth was confirmed by the sentiments of her parent.

"Let them go," he said—"let them go, Catharine, those gallants, with their capering horses, their jingling spurs, their plumed bonnets, and their trim mustachios: they are not of our class, nor will we aim at pairing with them. Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day, when every bird chooses her mate; but you will not see the linnet pair with the sparrow hawk, nor the Robin Redbreast with the kite. My father was an honest burgher of Perth, and could use his needle as well as I can. Did there come war to the gates of our fair burgh, down went needles, thread, and shamoy leather, and out came the good head piece and target from the dark nook, and the long lance from above the chimney. Show me a day that either he or I was absent when the provost made his musters! Thus we have led our lives, my girl, working to win our bread, and fighting to defend it. I will have no son in law that thinks himself better than me; and for these lords and knights, I trust thou wilt always remember thou art too low to be their lawful love, and too high to be their unlawful loon. And now lay by thy work, lass, for it is holytide eve, and it becomes us to go to the evening service, and pray that Heaven may send thee a good Valentine tomorrow."

So the Fair Maid of Perth laid aside the splendid hawking glove which she was embroidering for the Lady Drummond, and putting on her holyday kirtle, prepared to attend her father to the Blackfriars monastery, which was adjacent to Couvrefew Street in which they lived. On their passage, Simon Glover, an ancient and esteemed burgher of Perth, somewhat stricken in years and increased in substance, received from young and old the homage due to his velvet jerkin and his golden chain, while the well known beauty of Catharine, though concealed beneath her screen—which resembled the mantilla still worn in Flanders—called both obeisances and doffings of the bonnet from young and old.

As the pair moved on arm in arm, they were followed by a tall handsome young man, dressed in a yeoman's habit of the plainest kind, but which showed to advantage his fine limbs, as the handsome countenance that looked out from a quantity of curled tresses, surmounted by a small scarlet bonnet, became that species of headress. He had no other weapon than a staff in his hand, it not being thought fit that persons of his degree (for he was an apprentice to the old glover) should appear on the street armed with sword or dagger, a privilege which the jackmen, or military retainers of the nobility, esteemed exclusively their own. He attended his master at holytide, partly in the character of a domestic, or guardian, should there be cause for his interference; but it was not difficult to discern, by the earnest attention which he paid to Catharine Glover, that it was to her, rather than to her father, that he desired to dedicate his good offices.

Generally speaking, there was no opportunity for his zeal displaying itself; for a common feeling of respect induced passengers to give way to the father and daughter.

But when the steel caps, barrets, and plumes of squires, archers, and men at arms began to be seen among the throng, the wearers of these warlike distinctions were more rude in their demeanour than the quiet citizens. More than once, when from chance, or perhaps from an assumption of superior importance, such an individual took the wall of Simon in passing, the glover's youthful attendant bristled up with a look of defiance, and the air of one who sought to distinguish his zeal in his mistress's service by its ardour. As frequently did Conachar, for such was the lad's name, receive a check from his master, who gave him to understand that he did not wish his interference before he required it.

"Foolish boy," he said, "hast thou not lived long enough in my shop to know that a blow will breed a brawl; that a dirk will cut the skin as fast as a needle pierces leather; that I love peace, though I never feared war, and care not which side of the causeway my daughter and I walk upon so we may keep our road in peace and quietness?"

Conachar excused himself as zealous for his master's honour, yet was scarce able to pacify the old citizen.

"What have we to do with honour?" said Simon Glover. "If thou wouldst remain in my service, thou must think of honesty, and leave honour to the swaggering fools who wear steel at their heels and iron on their shoulders. If you wish to wear and use such garniture, you are welcome, but it shall not be in my house or in my company."

Conachar seemed rather to kindle at this rebuke than to submit to it. But a sign from Catharine, if that slight raising of her little finger was indeed a sign, had more effect than the angry reproof of his master; and the youth laid aside the military air which seemed natural to him, and relapsed into the humble follower of a quiet burgher.

Meantime the little party were overtaken by a tall young man wrapped in a cloak, which obscured or muffled a part of his face—a practice often used by the gallants of the time, when they did not wish to be known, or were abroad in quest of adventures. He seemed, in short, one who might say to the world around him:

"I desire, for the present, not to be known or addressed in my own character; but, as I am answerable to myself alone for my actions, I wear my incognito but for form's sake, and care little whether you see through it or not."

He came on the right side of Catharine, who had hold of her father's arm, and slackened his pace as if joining their party.

"Good even to you, Goodman."

"The same to your worship, and thanks. May I pray you to pass on? Our pace is too slow for that of your lordship, our company too mean for that of your father's son."

"My father's son can best judge of that, old man. I have business to talk of with you and with my fair St. Catharine here, the loveliest and most obdurate saint in the calendar."

"With deep reverence, my lord," said the old man, "I would remind you that this is good St. Valentine's Eve, which is no time for business, and that I can have your worshipful commands by a serving man as early as it pleases you to send them."

"There is no time like the present," said the persevering youth, whose rank seemed to be a kind which set him above ceremony. "I wish to know whether the buff doublet be finished which I commissioned some time since; and from you, pretty Catharine (here he sank his voice to a whisper), I desire to be informed whether your fair fingers have been employed upon it, agreeably to your promise? But I need not ask you, for my poor heart has felt the pang of each puncture that pierced the garment which was to cover it. Traitor, how wilt thou answer for thus tormenting the heart that loves thee so dearly?"

"Let me entreat you, my lord," said Catharine, "to forego this wild talk: it becomes not you to speak thus, or me to listen. We are of poor rank but honest manners; and the presence of the father ought to protect the child from such expressions, even from your lordship."

This she spoke so low, that neither her father nor Conachar could understand what she said.

"Well, tyrant," answered the persevering gallant, "I will plague you no longer now, providing you will let me see you from your window tomorrow, when the sun first peeps over the eastern hills, and give me right to be your Valentine for the year."

"Not so, my lord; my father but now told me that hawks, far less eagles, pair not with the humble linnet. Seek some court lady, to whom your favours will be honour; to me—your Highness must permit me to speak the plain truth—they can be nothing but disgrace."

As they spoke thus, the party arrived at the gate of the church.

"Your lordship will, I trust, permit us here to take leave of you?" said her father. "I am well aware how little you will alter your pleasure for the pain and uneasiness you may give to such as us but, from the throng of attendants at the gate, your lordship may see that there are others in the church to whom even your gracious lordship must pay respect."

"Yes—respect; and who pays any respect to me?" said the haughty young lord. "A miserable artisan and his daughter, too much honoured by my slightest notice, have the insolence to tell me that my notice dishonours them. Well, my princess of white doe skin and blue silk, I will teach you to rue this."

As he murmured thus, the glover and his daughter entered the Dominican church, and their attendant, Conachar, in attempting to follow them closely, jostled, it may be not unwillingly, the young nobleman. The gallant, starting from his unpleasing reverie, and perhaps considering this as an intentional insult, seized on the young man by the breast, struck him, and threw him from him. His irritated opponent recovered himself with difficulty, and grasped towards his own side, as if seeking a sword or dagger in the place where it was usually worn; but finding none, he made a gesture of disappointed rage, and entered the church. During the few seconds he remained, the young nobleman stood with his arms folded on his breast, with a haughty smile, as if defying him to do his worst. When Conachar had entered the church, his opponent, adjusting his cloak yet closer about his face, made a private signal by holding up one of his gloves. He was instantly joined by two men, who, disguised like himself, had waited his motions at a little distance. They spoke together earnestly, after which the young nobleman retired in one direction, his friends or followers going off in another.

Simon Glover, before he entered the church, cast a look towards the group, but had taken his place among the congregation before they separated themselves. He knelt down with the air of a man who has something burdensome on his mind; but when the service was ended, he seemed free from anxiety, as one who had referred himself and his troubles to the disposal of Heaven. The ceremony of High Mass was performed with considerable solemnity, a number of noblemen and ladies of rank being present. Preparations had indeed been made for the reception of the good old King himself, but some of those infirmities to which he was subject had prevented Robert III from attending the service as was his wont. When the congregation were dismissed, the glover and his beautiful daughter lingered for some time, for the purpose of making their several shrifts in the confessionals, where the priests had taken their places for discharging that part of their duty. Thus it happened that the night had fallen dark, and the way was solitary, when they returned along the now deserted streets to their own dwelling. Most persons had betaken themselves to home and to bed. They who still lingered in the street were night walkers or revellers, the idle and swaggering retainers of the haughty nobles, who were much wont to insult the peaceful passengers, relying on the impunity which their masters' court favour was too apt to secure them.

It was, perhaps, in apprehension of mischief from some character of this kind that Conachar, stepping up to the glover, said, "Master, walk faster—we are dogg'd."

"Dogg'd, sayest thou? By whom and by how many?"

"By one man muffled in his cloak, who follows us like our shadow."

"Then will it never mend my pace along the Couvrefew Street for the best one man that ever trode it."

"But he has arms," said Conachar.

"And so have we, and hands, and legs, and feet. Why, sure, Conachar, you are not afraid of one man?"

"Afraid!" answered Conachar, indignant at the insinuation; "you shall soon know if I am afraid."

"Now you are as far on the other side of the mark, thou foolish boy: thy temper has no middle course; there is no occasion to make a brawl, though we do not run. Walk thou before with Catharine, and I will take thy place. We cannot be exposed to danger so near home as we are."

The glover fell behind accordingly, and certainly observed a person keep so close to them as, the time and place considered, justified some suspicion. When they crossed the street, he also crossed it, and when they advanced or slackened their pace, the stranger's was in proportion accelerated or diminished. The matter would have been of very little consequence had Simon Glover been alone; but the beauty of his daughter might render her the object of some profligate scheme, in a country where the laws afforded such slight protection to those who had not the means to defend themselves.

Conachar and his fair charge having arrived on the threshold of their own apartment, which was opened to them by an old female servant, the burgher's uneasiness was ended. Determined, however, to ascertain, if possible, whether there had been any cause for it, he called out to the man whose motions had occasioned the alarm, and who stood still, though he seemed to keep out of reach of the light. "Come, step forward, my friend, and do not play at bo peep; knowest thou not, that they who walk like phantoms in the dark are apt to encounter the conjuration of a quarterstaff? Step forward, I say, and show us thy shapes, man."

"Why, so I can, Master Glover," said one of the deepest voices that ever answered question. "I can show my shapes well enough, only I wish they could bear the light something better."

"Body of me," exclaimed Simon, "I should know that voice! And is it thou, in thy bodily person, Harry Gow? Nay, beshrew me if thou passest this door with dry lips. What, man, curfew has not rung yet, and if it had, it were no reason why it should part father and son. Come in, man; Dorothy shall get us something to eat, and we will jingle a can ere thou leave us. Come in, I say; my daughter Kate will be right glad to see thee."

By this time he had pulled the person, whom he welcomed so cordially, into a sort of kitchen, which served also upon ordinary occasions the office of parlour. Its ornaments were trenchers of pewter, mixed with a silver cup or two, which, in the highest degree of cleanliness, occupied a range of shelves like those of a beaufet, popularly called "the bink." A good fire, with the assistance of a blazing lamp, spread light and cheerfulness through the apartment, and a savoury smell of some victuals which Dorothy was preparing did not at all offend the unrefined noses of those whose appetite they were destined to satisfy.

Their unknown attendant now stood in full light among them, and though his appearance was neither dignified nor handsome, his face and figure were not only deserving of attention, but seemed in some manner to command it. He was rather below the middle stature, but the breadth of his shoulders, length and brawniness of his arms, and the muscular appearance of the whole man, argued a most unusual share of strength, and a frame kept in vigour by constant exercise. His legs were somewhat bent, but not in a manner which could be said to approach to deformity, on the contrary, which seemed to correspond to the strength of his frame, though it injured in some degree its symmetry.

His dress was of buff hide; and he wore in a belt around his waist a heavy broadsword, and a dirk or poniard, as if to defend his purse, which (burgher fashion) was attached to the same cincture. The head was well proportioned, round, close cropped, and curled thickly with black hair. There was daring and resolution in the dark eye, but the other features seemed to express a bashful timidity, mingled with good humor, and obvious satisfaction at meeting with his old friends.

Abstracted from the bashful expression, which was that of the moment, the forehead of Henry Gow, or Smith, for he was indifferently so called, was high and noble, but the lower part of the face was less happily formed. The mouth was large, and well furnished with a set of firm and beautiful teeth, the appearance of which corresponded with the air of personal health and muscular strength which the whole frame indicated. A short thick beard, and mustachios which had lately been arranged with some care, completed the picture. His age could not exceed eight and twenty.

The family appeared all well pleased with the unexpected appearance of an old friend. Simon Glover shook his hand again and again, Dorothy made her compliments, and Catharine herself offered freely her hand, which Henry held in his massive grasp, as if he designed to carry it to his lips, but, after a moment's hesitation, desisted, from fear lest the freedom might be ill taken. Not that there was any resistance on the part of the little hand which lay passive in his grasp; but there was a smile mingled with the blush on her cheek, which seemed to increase the confusion of the gallant.

Her father, on his part, called out frankly, as he saw his friend's hesitation: "Her lips, man—her lips! and that's a proffer I would not make to every one who crosses my threshold. But, by good St. Valentine, whose holyday will dawn tomorrow, I am so glad to see thee in the bonny city of Perth again that it would be hard to tell the thing I could refuse thee."

The smith, for, as has been said, such was the craft of this sturdy artisan, was encouraged modestly to salute the Fair Maid, who yielded the courtesy with a smile of affection that might have become a sister, saying, at the same time: "Let me hope that I welcome back to Perth a repentant and amended man."

He held her hand as if about to answer, then suddenly, as one who lost courage at the moment, relinquished his grasp; and drawing back as if afraid of what he had done, his dark countenance glowing with bashfulness, mixed with delight, he sat down by the fire on the opposite side from that which Catharine occupied.

"Come, Dorothy, speed thee with the food, old woman; and Conachar—where is Conachar?"

"He is gone to bed, sir, with a headache," said Catharine, in a hesitating voice.

"Go, call him, Dorothy," said the old glover; "I will not be used thus by him: his Highland blood, forsooth, is too gentle to lay a trencher or spread a napkin, and he expects to enter our ancient and honourable craft without duly waiting and tending upon his master and teacher in all matters of lawful obedience. Go, call him, I say; I will not be thus neglected."

Dorothy was presently heard screaming upstairs, or more probably up a ladder, to the cock loft, to which the recusant apprentice had made an untimely retreat; a muttered answer was returned, and soon after Conachar appeared in the eating apartment. There was a gloom of deep sullenness on his haughty, though handsome, features, and as he proceeded to spread the board, and arrange the trenchers, with salt, spices, and other condiments—to discharge, in short, the duties of a modern domestic, which the custom of the time imposed upon all apprentices—he was obviously disgusted and indignant with the mean office imposed upon him.

The Fair Maid of Perth looked with some anxiety at him, as if apprehensive that his evident sullenness might increase her father's displeasure; but it was not till her eyes had sought out his for a second time that Conachar condescended to veil his dissatisfaction, and throw a greater appearance of willingness and submission into the services which he was performing.

And here we must acquaint our reader that, though the private interchange of looks betwixt Catharine Glover and the young mountaineer indicated some interest on the part of the former in the conduct of the latter, it would have puzzled the strictest observer to discover whether that feeling exceeded in degree what might have been felt by a young person towards a friend and inmate of the same age, with whom she had lived on habits of intimacy.

"Thou hast had a long journey, son Henry," said Glover, who had always used that affectionate style of speech, though no ways akin to the young artisan; "ay, and hast seen many a river besides Tay, and many a fair bigging besides St. Johnston."

"But none that I like half so well, and none that are half so much worth my liking," answered the smith. "I promise you, father, that, when I crossed the Wicks of Baiglie, and saw the bonny city lie stretched fairly before me like a fairy queen in romance, whom the knight finds asleep among a wilderness of flowers, I felt even as a bird when it folds its wearied wings to stoop down on its own nest."

"Aha! so thou canst play the maker [old Scottish for poet] yet?" said the glover. "What, shall we have our ballets and our roundels again? our lusty carols for Christmas, and our mirthful springs to trip it round the maypole?"

"Such toys there may be forthcoming, father," said Henry Smith, "though the blast of the bellows and the clatter of the anvil make but coarse company to lays of minstrelsy; but I can afford them no better, since I must mend my fortune, though I mar my verses."

"Right again—my own son just," answered the glover; "and I trust thou hast made a saving voyage of it?"

"Nay, I made a thriving one, father: I sold the steel habergeon that you wot of for four hundred marks to the English Warden of the East Marches, Sir Magnus Redman. He scarce scrupled a penny after I gave him leave to try a sword dint upon it. The beggardly Highland thief who bespoke it boggled at half the sum, though it had cost me a year's labour."

"What dost thou start at, Conachar?" said Simon, addressing himself, by way of parenthesis, to the mountain disciple; "wilt thou never learn to mind thy own business, without listening to what is passing round thee? What is it to thee that an Englishman thinks that cheap which a Scottishman may hold dear?"

Conachar turned round to speak, but, after a moment's consideration, looked down, and endeavoured to recover his composure, which had been deranged by the contemptuous manner in which the smith had spoken of his Highland customer.

Henry went on without paying any attention to him. "I sold at high prices some swords and whingers when I was at Edinburgh. They expect war there; and if it please God to send it, my merchandise will be worth its price. St. Dunstan make us thankful, for he was of our craft. In short, this fellow (laying his hand on his purse); who, thou knowest, father, was somewhat lank and low in condition when I set out four months since, is now as round and full as a six weeks' porker."

"And that other leathern sheathed, iron hilted fellow who hangs beside him," said the glover, "has he been idle all this while? Come, jolly smith, confess the truth—how many brawls hast thou had since crossing the Tay?"

"Nay, now you do me wrong, father, to ask me such a question (glancing a look at Catharine) in such a presence," answered the armourer: "I make swords, indeed, but I leave it to other people to use them. No—no, seldom have I a naked sword in my fist, save when I am turning them on the anvil or grindstone; and they slandered me to your daughter Catharine, that led her to suspect the quietest burgess in Perth of being a brawler. I wish the best of them would dare say such a word at the Hill of Kinnoul, and never a man on the green but he and I."

"Ay—ay," said the glover, laughing, "we should then have a fine sample of your patient sufferance. Out upon you, Henry, that you will speak so like a knave to one who knows thee so well! You look at Kate, too, as if she did not know that a man in this country must make his hand keep his head, unless he will sleep in slender security. Come—come, beshrew me if thou hast not spoiled as many suits of armour as thou hast made."

"Why, he would be a bad armourer, father Simon, that could not with his own blow make proof of his own workmanship. If I did not sometimes cleave a helmet, or strike a point through a harness, I should not know what strength of fabric to give them; and might jingle together such pasteboard work as yonder Edinburgh smiths think not shame to put out of their hands."

"Aha, now would I lay a gold crown thou hast had a quarrel with some Edinburgh 'burn the wind' upon that very ground?"

["Burn the wind," an old cant term for blacksmith, appears in Burns:

Then burnewin came on like death, At every chaup, etc.]

"A quarrel! no, father," replied the Perth armourer, "but a measuring of swords with such a one upon St. Leonard's Craggs, for the honour of my bonny city, I confess. Surely you do not think I would quarrel with a brother craftsman?"

"Ah, to a surety, no. But how did your brother craftman come off?"

"Why, as one with a sheet of paper on his bosom might come off from the stroke of a lance; or rather, indeed, he came not off at all, for, when I left him, he was lying in the Hermit's Lodge daily expecting death, for which Father Gervis said he was in heavenly preparation."

"Well, any more measuring of weapons?" said the glover.

"Why, truly, I fought an Englishman at Berwick besides, on the old question of the supremacy, as they call it—I am sure you would not have me slack at that debate?—and I had the luck to hurt him on the left knee."

"Well done for St. Andrew! to it again. Whom next had you to deal with?" said Simon, laughing at the exploits of his pacific friend.

"I fought a Scotchman in the Torwood," answered Henry Smith, "upon a doubt which was the better swordsman, which, you are aware, could not be known or decided without a trial. The poor fellow lost two fingers."

"Pretty well for the most peaceful lad in Perth, who never touches a sword but in the way of his profession. Well, anything more to tell us?"

"Little; for the drubbing of a Highlandman is a thing not worth mentioning."

"For what didst thou drub him, O man of peace?" inquired the glover.

"For nothing that I can remember," replied the smith, "except his presenting himself on the south side of Stirling Bridge."

"Well, here is to thee, and thou art welcome to me after all these exploits. Conachar, bestir thee. Let the cans clink, lad, and thou shalt have a cup of the nut brown for thyself, my boy."

Conachar poured out the good liquor for his master and for Catharine with due observance. But that done, he set the flagon on the table and sat down.

"How now, sirrah! be these your manners? Fill to my guest, the worshipful Master Henry Smith."

"Master Smith may fill for himself, if he wishes for liquor," answered the youthful Celt. "The son of my father has demeaned himself enough already for one evening."

"That's well crowed for a cockerel," said Henry; "but thou art so far right, my lad, that the man deserves to die of thirst who will not drink without a cupbearer."

But his entertainer took not the contumacy of the young apprentice with so much patience. "Now, by my honest word, and by the best glove I ever made," said Simon, "thou shalt help him with liquor from that cup and flagon, if thee and I are to abide under one roof."

Conachar arose sullenly upon hearing this threat, and, approaching the smith, who had just taken the tankard in his hand, and was raising it to his head, he contrived to stumble against him and jostle him so awkwardly, that the foaming ale gushed over his face, person, and dress. Good natured as the smith, in spite of his warlike propensities, really was in the utmost degree, his patience failed under such a provocation. He seized the young man's throat, being the part which came readiest to his grasp, as Conachar arose from the pretended stumble, and pressing it severely as he cast the lad from him, exclaimed: "Had this been in another place, young gallows bird, I had stowed the lugs out of thy head, as I have done to some of thy clan before thee."

Conachar recovered his feet with the activity of a tiger, and exclaimed: "Never shall you live to make that boast again!" drew a short, sharp knife from his bosom, and, springing on Henry Smith, attempted to plunge it into his body over the collarbone, which must have been a mortal wound. But the object of this violence was so ready to defend himself by striking up the assailant's hand, that the blow only glanced on the bone, and scarce drew blood. To wrench the dagger from the boy's hand, and to secure him with a grasp like that of his own iron vice, was, for the powerful smith, the work of a single moment.

Conachar felt himself at once in the absolute power of the formidable antagonist whom he had provoked; he became deadly pale, as he had been the moment before glowing red, and stood mute with shame and fear, until, relieving him from his powerful hold, the smith quietly said: "It is well for thee that thou canst not make me angry; thou art but a boy, and I, a grown man, ought not to have provoked thee. But let this be a warning."

Conachar stood an instant as if about to reply, and then left the room, ere Simon had collected himself enough to speak. Dorothy was running hither and thither for salves and healing herbs. Catharine had swooned at the sight of the trickling blood.

"Let me depart, father Simon," said Henry Smith, mournfully, "I might have guessed I should have my old luck, and spread strife and bloodshed where I would wish most to bring peace and happiness. Care not for me. Look to poor Catharine; the fright of such an affray hath killed her, and all through my fault."

"Thy fault, my son! It was the fault of yon Highland cateran, whom it is my curse to be cumbered with; but he shall go back to his glens tomorrow, or taste the tolbooth of the burgh. An assault upon the life of his master's guest in his house! It breaks all bonds between us. But let me see to thy wound."

"Catharine!" repeated the armourer—"look to Catharine."

"Dorothy will see to her," said Simon; "surprise and fear kill not; skenes and dirks do. And she is not more the daughter of my blood than thou, my dear Henry, art the son of my affections. Let me see the wound. The skene ocle is an ugly weapon in a Highland hand."

"I mind it no more than the scratch of a wildcat," said the armourer; "and now that the colour is coming to Catharine's cheek again, you shall see me a sound man in a moment."

He turned to a corner in which hung a small mirror, and hastily took from his purse some dry lint to apply to the slight wound he had received. As he unloosed the leathern jacket from his neck and shoulders, the manly and muscular form which they displayed was not more remarkable than the fairness of his skin, where it had not, as in hands and face, been exposed to the effects of rough weather and of his laborious trade. He hastily applied some lint to stop the bleeding; and a little water having removed all other marks of the fray, he buttoned his doublet anew, and turned again to the table, where Catharine, still pale and trembling, was, however, recovered from her fainting fit.

"Would you but grant me your forgiveness for having offended you in the very first hour of my return? The lad was foolish to provoke me, and yet I was more foolish to be provoked by such as he. Your father blames me not, Catharine, and cannot you forgive me?"

"I have no power to forgive," answered Catharine, "what I have no title to resent. If my father chooses to have his house made the scene of night brawls, I must witness them—I cannot help myself. Perhaps it was wrong in me to faint and interrupt, it may be, the farther progress of a fair fray. My apology is, that I cannot bear the sight of blood."

"And is this the manner," said her father, "in which you receive my friend after his long absence? My friend, did I say? Nay, my son. He escapes being murdered by a fellow whom I will tomorrow clear this house of, and you treat him as if he had done wrong in dashing from him the snake which was about to sting him!"

"It is not my part, father," returned the Maid of Perth, "to decide who had the right or wrong in the present brawl, nor did I see what happened distinctly enough to say which was assailant, or which defender. But sure our friend, Master Henry, will not deny that he lives in a perfect atmosphere of strife, blood, and quarrels. He hears of no swordsman but he envies his reputation, and must needs put his valour to the proof. He sees no brawl but he must strike into the midst of it. Has he friends, he fights with them for love and honour; has he enemies, he fights with them for hatred and revenge. And those men who are neither his friends nor foes, he fights with them because they are on this or that side of a river. His days are days of battle, and, doubtless, he acts them over again in his dreams."

"Daughter," said Simon, "your tongue wags too freely. Quarrels and fights are men's business, not women's, and it is not maidenly to think or speak of them."

"But if they are so rudely enacted in our presence," said Catharine, "it is a little hard to expect us to think or speak of anything else. I will grant you, my father, that this valiant burgess of Perth is one of the best hearted men that draws breath within its walls: that he would walk a hundred yards out of the way rather than step upon a worm; that he would be as loth, in wantonness, to kill a spider as if he were a kinsman to King Robert, of happy memory; that in the last quarrel before his departure he fought with four butchers, to prevent their killing a poor mastiff that had misbehaved in the bull ring, and narrowly escaped the fate of the cur that he was protecting. I will grant you also, that the poor never pass the house of the wealthy armourer but they are relieved with food and alms. But what avails all this, when his sword makes as many starving orphans and mourning widows as his purse relieves?"

"Nay, but, Catharine, hear me but a word before going on with a string of reproaches against my friend, that sound something like sense, while they are, in truth, inconsistent with all we hear and see around us. What," continued the glover, "do our King and our court, our knights and ladies, our abbots, monks, and priests themselves, so earnestly crowd to see? Is it not to behold the display of chivalry, to witness the gallant actions of brave knights in the tilt and tourney ground, to look upon deeds of honour and glory achieved by arms and bloodshed? What is it these proud knights do, that differs from what our good Henry Gow works out in his sphere? Who ever heard of his abusing his skill and strength to do evil or forward oppression, and who knows not how often it has been employed as that of a champion in the good cause of the burgh? And shouldst not thou, of all women, deem thyself honoured and glorious, that so true a heart and so strong an arm has termed himself thy bachelor? In what do the proudest dames take their loftiest pride, save in the chivalry of their knight; and has the boldest in Scotland done more gallant deeds than my brave son Henry, though but of low degree? Is he not known to Highland and Lowland as the best armourer that ever made sword, and the truest soldier that ever drew one?"

"My dearest father," answered Catharine, "your words contradict themselves, if you will permit your child to say so. Let us thank God and the good saints that we are in a peaceful rank of life, below the notice of those whose high birth, and yet higher pride, lead them to glory in their bloody works of cruelty, which haughty and lordly men term deeds of chivalry. Your wisdom will allow that it would be absurd in us to prank ourselves in their dainty plumes and splendid garments; why, then, should we imitate their full blown vices? Why should we assume their hard hearted pride and relentless cruelty, to which murder is not only a sport, but a subject of vainglorious triumph? Let those whose rank claims as its right such bloody homage take pride and pleasure in it; we, who have no share in the sacrifice, may the better pity the sufferings of the victim. Let us thank our lowliness, since it secures us from temptation. But forgive me, father, if I have stepped over the limits of my duty, in contradicting the views which you entertain, with so many others, on these subjects."

"Nay, thou hast even too much talk for me, girl," said her father, somewhat angrily. "I am but a poor workman, whose best knowledge is to distinguish the left hand glove from the right. But if thou wouldst have my forgiveness, say something of comfort to my poor Henry. There he sits, confounded and dismayed with all the preachment thou hast heaped together; and he, to whom a trumpet sound was like the invitation to a feast, is struck down at the sound of a child's whistle."

The armourer, indeed, while he heard the lips that were dearest to him paint his character in such unfavourable colours, had laid his head down on the table, upon his folded arms, in an attitude of the deepest dejection, or almost despair.

"I would to Heaven, my dearest father," answered Catharine, "that it were in my power to speak comfort to Henry, without betraying the sacred cause of the truths I have just told you. And I may—nay, I must have such a commission," she continued with something that the earnestness with which she spoke and the extreme beauty of her features caused for the moment to resemble inspiration.

"The truth of Heaven," she said, in a solemn tone, "was never committed to a tongue, however feeble, but it gave a right to that tongue to announce mercy, while it declared judgment. Arise, Henry—rise up, noble minded, good, and generous, though widely mistaken man. Thy faults are those of this cruel and remorseless age, thy virtues all thine own."

While she thus spoke, she laid her hand upon the smith's arm, and extricating it from under his head by a force which, however gentle, he could not resist, she compelled him to raise towards her his manly face, and the eyes into which her expostulations, mingled with other feelings, had summoned tears.

"Weep not," she said, "or rather, weep on, but weep as those who have hope. Abjure the sins of pride and anger, which most easily beset thee; fling from thee the accursed weapons, to the fatal and murderous use of which thou art so easily tempted."

"You speak to me in vain, Catharine," returned the armourer: "I may, indeed, turn monk and retire from the world, but while I live in it I must practise my trade; and while I form armour and weapons for others, I cannot myself withstand the temptation of using them. You would not reproach me as you do, if you knew how inseparably the means by which I gain my bread are connected with that warlike spirit which you impute to me as a fault, though it is the consequence of inevitable necessity. While I strengthen the shield or corselet to withstand wounds, must I not have constantly in remembrance the manner and strength with which they may be dealt; and when I forge the sword, and temper it for war, is it practicable for me to avoid the recollection of its use?"

"Then throw from you, my dear Henry," said the enthusiastic girl, clasping with both her slender hands the nervous strength and weight of one of the muscular armourer's, which they raised with difficulty, permitted by its owner, yet scarcely receiving assistance from his volition—"cast from you, I say, the art which is a snare to you. Abjure the fabrication of weapons which can only be useful to abridge human life, already too short for repentance, or to encourage with a feeling of safety those whom fear might otherwise prevent from risking themselves in peril. The art of forming arms, whether offensive or defensive, is alike sinful in one to whose violent and ever vehement disposition the very working upon them proves a sin and a snare. Resign utterly the manufacture of weapons of every description, and deserve the forgiveness of Heaven, by renouncing all that can lead to the sin which most easily besets you."

"And what," murmured the armourer, "am I to do for my livelihood, when I have given over the art of forging arms for which Henry of Perth is known from the Tay to the Thames?"

"Your art itself," said Catharine, "has innocent and laudable resources. If you renounce the forging of swords and bucklers, there remains to you the task of forming the harmless spade, and the honourable as well as useful ploughshare—of those implements which contribute to the support of life, or to its comforts. Thou canst frame locks and bars to defend the property of the weak against the stouthrief and oppression of the strong. Men will still resort to thee, and repay thy honest industry—"

But here Catharine was interrupted. Her father had heard her declaim against war and tournaments with a feeling that, though her doctrine were new to him, they might not, nevertheless, be entirely erroneous. He felt, indeed, a wish that his proposed son in law should not commit himself voluntarily to the hazards which the daring character and great personal strength of Henry the Smith had hitherto led him to incur too readily; and so far he would rather have desired that Catharine's arguments should have produced some effect upon the mind of her lover, whom he knew to be as ductile when influenced by his affections as he was fierce and intractable when assailed by hostile remonstrances or threats. But her arguments interfered with his views, when he heard her enlarge upon the necessity of his designed son in law resigning a trade which brought in more ready income than any at that time practised in Scotland, and more profit to Henry of Perth in particular than to any armourer in the nation. He had some indistinct idea that it would not be amiss to convert, if possible, Henry the Smith from his too frequent use of arms, even though he felt some pride in being connected with one who wielded with such superior excellence those weapons, which in that warlike age it was the boast of all men to manage with spirit. But when he heard his daughter recommend, as the readiest road to this pacific state of mind, that her lover should renounce the gainful trade in which he was held unrivalled, and which, from the constant private differences and public wars of the time, was sure to afford him a large income, he could withhold his wrath no longer. The daughter had scarce recommended to her lover the fabrication of the implements of husbandry, than, feeling the certainty of being right, of which in the earlier part of their debate he had been somewhat doubtful, the father broke in with:

"Locks and bars, plough graith and harrow teeth! and why not grates and fire prongs, and Culross girdles, and an ass to carry the merchandise through the country, and thou for another ass to lead it by the halter? Why, Catharine, girl, has sense altogether forsaken thee, or dost thou think that in these hard and iron days men will give ready silver for anything save that which can defend their own life, or enable them to take that of their enemy? We want swords to protect ourselves every moment now, thou silly wench, and not ploughs to dress the ground for the grain we may never see rise. As for the matter of our daily bread, those who are strong seize it, and live; those who are weak yield it, and die of hunger. Happy is the man who, like my worthy son, has means of obtaining his living otherwise than by the point of the sword which he makes. Preach peace to him as much as thou wilt, I will never be he will say thee nay; but as for bidding the first armourer in Scotland forego the forging of swords, curtal axes, and harness, it is enough to drive patience itself mad. Out from my sight! and next morning I prithee remember that, shouldst thou have the luck to see Henry the Smith, which is more than thy usage of him has deserved, you see a man who has not his match in Scotland at the use of broadsword and battle axe, and who can work for five hundred marks a year without breaking a holyday."

The daughter, on hearing her father speak thus peremptorily, made a low obeisance, and, without further goodnight, withdrew to the chamber which was her usual sleeping apartment.

CHAPTER III.

*Whence cometh Smith, be he knight, lord, or squire,
But from the smith that forged in the fire?*

VERSTEGAN.

The armourer's heart swelled big with various and contending sensations, so that it seemed as if it would burst the leathern doublet under which it was shrouded. He arose, turned away his head, and extended his hand towards the glover, while he averted his face, as if desirous that his emotion should not be read upon his countenance.

"Nay, hang me if I bid you farewell, man," said Simon, striking the flat of his hand against that which the armourer expanded towards him. "I will shake no hands with you for an hour to come at least. Tarry but a moment, man, and I will explain all this; and surely a few drops of blood from a scratch, and a few silly words from a foolish wench's lips, are not to part father and son when they have been so long without meeting? Stay, then, man, if ever you would wish for a father's blessing and St. Valentine's, whose blessed eve this chances to be."

The glover was soon heard loudly summoning Dorothy, and, after some clanking of keys and trampling up and down stairs, Dorothy appeared bearing three large rummer cups of green glass, which were then esteemed a great and precious curiosity, and the glover followed with a huge bottle, equal at least to three quarts of these degenerate days.

"Here is a cup of wine, Henry, older by half than I am myself; my father had it in a gift from stout old Crabbe, the Flemish engineer, who defended Perth so stoutly in the minority of David the Second. We glovers could always do something in war, though our connexion with it was less than yours who work in steel and iron. And my father had pleased old Crabbe, some other day I will tell you how, and also how long these bottles were concealed under ground, to save them from the reiving Southron. So I will empty a cup to the soul's health of my honoured father—May his sins be forgiven him! Dorothy, thou shalt drink this pledge, and then be gone to thy cock loft. I know thine ears are itching, girl, but I have that to say which no one must hear save Henry Smith, the son of mine adoption."

Dorothy did not venture to remonstrate, but, taking off her glass, or rather her goblet, with good courage, retired to her sleeping apartment, according to her master's commands.

The two friends were left alone.

"It grieves me, friend Henry," said Simon, filling at the same time his own glass and his guest's—"it grieves me from my soul that my daughter retains this silly humor; but also methinks, thou mightst mend it. Why wouldst thou come hither clattering with thy sword and dagger, when the girl is so silly that she cannot bear the sight of these? Dost thou not remember that thou hadst a sort of quarrel with her even before thy last departure from Perth, because thou wouldst not go like other honest quiet burghers, but must be ever armed, like one of the rascally jackmen that wait on the nobility? Sure it is time enough for decent burgesses to arm at the tolling of the common bell, which calls us out bodin in effeir of war."

"Why, my good father, that was not my fault; but I had no sooner quitted my nag than I run hither to tell you of my return, thinking, if it were your will to permit me, that I would get your advice about being Mistress Catharine's Valentine for the year; and then I heard from Mrs. Dorothy that you were gone to hear mass at the Black Friars. So I thought I would follow thither, partly to hear the same mass with you, and partly—Our Lady and St. Valentine forgive me!—to look upon one who thinks little enough of me. And, as you entered the church, methought I saw two or three dangerous looking men holding counsel together, and gazing at you and at her, and in especial Sir John Ramorny, whom I knew well enough, for all his disguise, and the velvet patch over his eye, and his cloak so like a serving man's; so methought, father Simon, that, as you were old, and yonder slip of a Highlander something too young to do battle, I would even walk quietly after you, not doubting, with the tools I had about me, to bring any one to reason that might disturb you in your way home. You know that yourself discovered me, and drew me into the house, whether I would or no; otherwise, I promise you, I would not have seen your daughter till I had donn'd the new jerkin which was made at Berwick after the latest cut; nor would I have appeared before her with these weapons, which she dislikes so much. Although, to say truth, so many are at deadly feud with me for one unhappy chance or another, that it is as needful for me as for any man in Scotland to go by night with weapons about me."

"The silly wench never thinks of that," said Simon Glover: "she never has sense to consider, that in our dear native land of Scotland every man deems it his privilege and duty to avenge his own wrong. But, Harry, my boy, thou art to blame for taking her talk so much to heart. I have seen thee bold enough with other wenches, wherefore so still and tongue tied with her?"

"Because she is something different from other maidens, father Glover—because she is not only more beautiful, but wiser, higher, holier, and seems to me as if she were made of better clay than we that approach her. I can hold my head high enough with the rest of the lasses round the maypole; but somehow, when I approach Catharine, I feel myself an earthly, coarse, ferocious creature, scarce worthy to look on her, much less to contradict the precepts which she expounds to me."

"You are an imprudent merchant, Harry Smith," replied Simon, "and rate too high the goods you wish to purchase. Catharine is a good girl, and my daughter; but if you make her a conceited ape by your bashfulness and your flattery, neither you nor I will see our wishes accomplished."

"I often fear it, my good father," said the smith; "for I feel how little I am deserving of Catharine."

"Feel a thread's end!" said the glover; "feel for me, friend Smith—for Catharine and me. Think how the poor thing is beset from morning to night, and by what sort of persons, even though windows be down and doors shut. We were accosted today by one too powerful to be named—ay, and he showed his displeasure openly, because I would not permit him to gallant my daughter in the church itself, when the priest was saying mass. There are others scarce less reasonable. I sometimes wish that Catharine were some degrees less fair, that she might not catch that dangerous sort of admiration, or somewhat less holy, that she might sit down like an honest woman, contented with stout Henry Smith, who could protect his wife against every sprig of chivalry in the court of Scotland."

"And if I did not," said Henry, thrusting out a hand and arm which might have belonged to a giant for bone and muscle, "I would I may never bring hammer upon anvil again! Ay, an it were come but that length, my fair Catharine should see that there is no harm in a man having the trick of defence. But I believe she thinks the whole world is one great minster church, and that all who live in it should behave as if they were at an eternal mass."

"Nay, in truth," said the father, "she has strange influence over those who approach her; the Highland lad, Conachar, with whom I have been troubled for these two or three years, although you may see he has the natural spirit of his people, obeys the least sign which Catharine makes him, and, indeed, will hardly be ruled by any one else in the house. She takes much pains with him to bring him from his rude Highland habits."

Here Harry Smith became uneasy in his chair, lifted the flagon, set it down, and at length exclaimed: "The devil take the young Highland whelp and his whole kindred! What has Catharine to do to instruct such a fellow as he? He will be just like the wolf cub that I was fool enough to train to the offices of a dog, and every one thought him reclaimed, till, in an ill hour, I went to walk on the hill of Moncrieff, when he broke loose on the laird's flock, and made a havoc that I might well have rued, had the laird not wanted a harness at the time. And I marvel that you, being a sensible man, father Glover, will keep this Highland young fellow—a likely one, I promise you—so nigh to Catharine, as if there were no other than your daughter to serve him for a schoolmistress."

"Fie, my son—fie; now you are jealous," said Simon, "of a poor young fellow who, to tell you the truth, resides here because he may not so well live on the other side of the hill."

"Ay—ay, father Simon," retorted the smith, who had all the narrow minded feelings of the burghers of his time, "an it were not for fear of offence, I would say that you have even too much packing and peiling with yonder loons out of burgh."

"I must get my deer hides, buckskins, kidskins, and so forth somewhere, my good Harry, and Highlandmen give good bargains."

"They can afford them," replied Henry, drily, "for they sell nothing but stolen gear."

"Well—well, be that as it may, it is not my business where they get the bestial, so I get the hides. But as I was saying, there are certain considerations why I am willing to oblige the father of this young man, by keeping him here. And he is but half a Highlander neither, and wants a thought of the dour spirit of a 'glune amie' after all, I have seldom seen him so fierce as he showed himself but now."

"You could not, unless he had killed his man," replied the smith, in the same dry tone.

"Nevertheless, if you wish it, Harry, I'll set all other respects aside, and send the landloupier to seek other quarters tomorrow morning."

"Nay, father," said the smith, "you cannot suppose that Harry Gow cares the value of a smithy dander for such a cub as yonder cat-a-mountain? I care little, I promise you, though all his clan were coming down the Shoegate with slogan crying and pipes playing: I would find fifty blades and bucklers would send them back faster than they came. But, to speak truth, though it is a fool's speech too, I care not to see the fellow so much with Catharine. Remember, father Glover, your trade keeps your eyes and hands close employed, and must have your heedful care, even if this lazy lurdane wrought at it, which you know yourself he seldom does."

"And that is true," said Simon: "he cuts all his gloves out for the right hand, and never could finish a pair in his life."

"No doubt, his notions of skin cutting are rather different," said Henry. "But with your leave, father, I would only say that, work he or be he idle, he has no bleared eyes, no hands seared with the hot iron, and welked by the use of the fore hammer, no hair rusted in the smoke, and singed in the furnace, like the hide of a

badger, rather than what is fit to be covered with a Christian bonnet. Now, let Catharine be as good a wench as ever lived, and I will uphold her to be the best in Perth, yet she must see and know that these things make a difference betwixt man and man, and that the difference is not in my favour."

"Here is to thee, with all my heart, son Harry," said the old man, filling a brimmer to his companion and another to himself; "I see that, good smith as thou art, thou ken'st not the mettle that women are made of. Thou must be bold, Henry; and bear thyself not as if thou wert going to the gallows lee, but like a gay young fellow, who knows his own worth and will not be slighted by the best grandchild Eve ever had. Catharine is a woman like her mother, and thou thinkest foolishly to suppose they are all set on what pleases the eye. Their ear must be pleased too, man: they must know that he whom they favour is bold and buxom, and might have the love of twenty, though he is suing for theirs. Believe an old man, woman walk more by what others think than by what they think themselves, and when she asks for the boldest man in Perth whom can she hear named but Harry Burn-the-wind? The best armourer that ever fashioned weapon on anvil? Why, Harry Smith again. The tightest dancer at the maypole? Why, the lusty smith. The gayest troller of ballads? Why, who but Harry Gow? The best wrestler, sword and buckler player, the king of the weapon shawing, the breaker of mad horses, the tamer of wild Highlandmen? Evermore it is thee—thee—no one but thee. And shall Catharine prefer yonder slip of a Highland boy to thee? Pshaw! she might as well make a steel gauntlet out of kid's leather. I tell thee, Conachar is nothing to her, but so far as she would fain prevent the devil having his due of him, as of other Highlandmen. God bless her, poor thing, she would bring all mankind to better thoughts if she could."

"In which she will fail to a certainty," said the smith, who, as the reader may have noticed, had no goodwill to the Highland race. "I will wager on Old Nick, of whom I should know something, he being indeed a worker in the same element with myself, against Catharine on that debate: the devil will have the tartan, that is sure enough."

"Ay, but Catharine," replied the glover, "hath a second thou knowest little of: Father Clement has taken the young reiver in hand, and he fears a hundred devils as little as I do a flock of geese."

"Father Clement!" said the smith. "You are always making some new saint in this godly city of St. Johnston. Pray, who, for a devil's drubber, may he be? One of your hermits that is trained for the work like a wrestler for the ring, and brings himself to trim by fasting and penance, is he not?"

"No, that is the marvel of it," said Simon: "Father Clement eats, drinks, and lives much like other folks—all the rules of the church, nevertheless, strictly observed."

"Oh, I comprehend!—a buxom priest that thinks more of good living than of good life, tipples a can on Eastern's Eve, to enable him to face Lent, has a pleasant in principio, and confesses all the prettiest women about the town?"

"You are on the bow hand still, smith. I tell you, my daughter and I could nose out either a fasting hypocrite or a full one. But Father Clement is neither the one nor the other."

"But what is he then, in Heaven's name?"

"One who is either greatly better than half his brethren of St. Johnston put together, or so much worse than the worst of them, that it is sin and shame that he is suffered to abide in the country."

"Methinks it were easy to tell whether he be the one or the other," said the smith.

"Content you, my friend," said Simon, "with knowing that, if you judge Father Clement by what you see him do and hear him say, you will think of him as the best and kindest man in the world, with a comfort for every man's grief, a counsel for every man's difficulty, the rich man's surest guide, and the poor man's best friend. But if you listen to what the Dominicans say of him, he is—Benedicite!—(here the glover crossed himself on brow and bosom)—a foul heretic, who ought by means of earthly flames to be sent to those which burn eternally."

The smith also crossed himself, and exclaimed: "St. Mary! father Simon, and do you, who are so good and prudent that you have been called the Wise Glover of Perth, let your daughter attend the ministry of one who—the saints preserve us!—may be in league with the foul fiend himself! Why, was it not a priest who raised the devil in the Meal Vennel, when Hodge Jackson's house was blown down in the great wind? Did not the devil appear in the midst of the Tay, dressed in a priest's scapular, gambolling like a pellack amongst the waves, the morning when our stately bridge was swept away?"

"I cannot tell whether he did or no," said the glover; "I only know I saw him not. As to Catharine, she cannot be said to use Father Clement's ministry, seeing her confessor is old Father Francis the Dominican, from whom she had her shrift today. But women will sometimes be wilful, and sure enough she consults with Father Clement more than I could wish; and yet when I have spoken with him myself, I have thought him so good and holy a man that I could have trusted my own salvation with him. There are bad reports of him among the Dominicans, that is certain. But what have we laymen to do with such things, my son? Let us pay Mother Church her dues, give our alms, confess and do our penances duly, and the saints will bear us out."

"Ay, truly; and they will have consideration," said the smith, "for any rash and unhappy blow that a man may deal in a fight, when his party was on defence, and standing up to him; and that's the only creed a man can live upon in Scotland, let your daughter think what she pleases. Marry, a man must know his fence, or have a short lease of his life, in any place where blows are going so rife. Five nobles to our altar have cleared me for the best man I ever had misfortune with."

"Let us finish our flask, then," said the old glover; "for I reckon the Dominican tower is tolling midnight. And hark thee, son Henry; be at the lattice window on our east gable by the very peep of dawn, and make me aware thou art come by whistling the smith's call gently. I will contrive that Catharine shall look out at the window, and thus thou wilt have all the privileges of being a gallant Valentine through the rest of the year; which, if thou canst not use to thine own advantage, I shall be led to think that, for all thou be'st covered with the lion's hide, nature has left on thee the long ears of the ass."

"Amen, father," said the armourer, "a hearty goodnight to you; and God's blessing on your roof tree, and those whom it covers. You shall hear the smith's call sound by cock crowing; I warrant I put sir chanticler to shame."

So saying, he took his leave; and, though completely undaunted, moved through the deserted streets like one upon his guard, to his own dwelling, which was situated in the Mill Wynd, at the western end of Perth.

CHAPTER IV.

*What's all this turmoil crammed into our parts?
Faith, but the pit-a-pat of poor young hearts.*

DRYDEN.

The sturdy armourer was not, it may be believed, slack in keeping the appointment assigned by his intended father in law. He went through the process of his toilet with more than ordinary care, throwing, as far as he could, those points which had a military air into the shade. He was far too noted a person to venture to go entirely unarmed in a town where he had indeed many friends, but also, from the character of many of his former exploits, several deadly enemies, at whose hands, should they take him at advantage, he knew he had little mercy to expect. He therefore wore under his jerkin a "secret," or coat of chain mail, made so light and flexible that it interfered as little with his movements as a modern under waistcoat, yet of such proof as he might safely depend upon, every ring of it having been wrought and joined by his own hands. Above this he wore, like others of his age and degree, the Flemish hose and doublet, which, in honour of the holy tide, were of the best superfine English broadcloth, light blue in colour, slashed out with black satin, and passamented (laced, that is) with embroidery of black silk. His walking boots were of cordovan leather; his cloak of good Scottish grey, which served to conceal a whinger, or couteau de chasse, that hung at his belt, and was his only offensive weapon, for he carried in his hand but a rod of holly. His black velvet bonnet was lined with steel, quilted between the metal and his head, and thus constituted a means of defence which might safely be trusted to.

Upon the whole, Henry had the appearance, to which he was well entitled, of a burgher of wealth and consideration, assuming, in his dress, as much consequence as he could display without stepping beyond his own rank, and encroaching on that of the gentry. Neither did his frank and manly deportment, though indicating a total indifference to danger, bear the least resemblance to that of the bravo or swashbucklers of the day, amongst whom Henry was sometimes unjustly ranked by those who imputed the frays in which he was so often engaged to a quarrelsome and violent temper, resting upon a consciousness of his personal strength and knowledge of his weapon. On the contrary, every feature bore the easy and good-humoured expression of one who neither thought of inflicting mischief nor dreaded it from others.

Having attired himself in his best, the honest armourer next placed nearest to his heart (which throbbed at its touch) a little gift which he had long provided for Catharine Glover, and which his quality of Valentine would presently give him the title to present, and her to receive, without regard to maidenly scruples. It was a small ruby cut into the form of a heart, transfigured with a golden arrow, and was inclosed in a small purse made of links of the finest work in steel, as if it had been designed for a hauberk to a king. Round the verge of the purse were these words:

Loves darts Cleave hearts Through mail shirts.

This device had cost the armourer some thought, and he was much satisfied with his composition, because it seemed to imply that his skill could defend all hearts saving his own.

He wrapped himself in his cloak, and hastened through the still silent streets, determined to appear at the window appointed a little before dawn.

With this purpose he passed up the High Street, and turned down the opening where St. John's Church now stands, in order to proceed to Curfew Street; when it occurred to him, from the appearance of the sky, that he was at least an hour too early for his purpose, and that it would be better not to appear at the place of rendezvous till nearer the time assigned. Other gallants were not unlikely to be on the watch as well as himself about the house of the Fair Maid of Perth; and he knew his own foible so well as to be sensible of the great chance of a scuffle arising betwixt them.

"I have the advantage," he thought, "by my father Simon's friendship; and why should I stain my fingers with the blood of the poor creatures that are not worthy my notice, since they are so much less fortunate than myself? No—no, I will be wise for once, and keep at a distance from all temptation to a broil. They shall have no more time to quarrel with me than just what it may require for me to give the signal, and for my father Simon to answer it. I wonder how the old man will contrive to bring her to the window? I fear, if she knew his purpose, he would find it difficult to carry it into execution."

While these lover-like thoughts were passing through his brain, the armourer loitered in his pace, often turning his eyes eastward, and eyeing the firmament, in which no slight shades of grey were beginning to flicker, to announce the approach of dawn, however distant, which, to the impatience of the stout armourer, seemed on that morning to abstain longer than usual from occupying her eastern barbican. He was now passing slowly under the wall of St. Anne's Chapel (not failing to cross himself and say an ace, as he trode the consecrated ground), when a voice, which seemed to come from behind one of the flying buttresses of the chapel, said, "He lingers that has need to run."

"Who speaks?" said the armourer, looking around him, somewhat startled at an address so unexpected, both in its tone and tenor.

"No matter who speaks," answered the same voice. "Do thou make great speed, or thou wilt scarce make good speed. Bandy not words, but begone."

"Saint or sinner, angel or devil," said Henry, crossing himself, "your advice touches me but too dearly to be neglected. St. Valentine be my speed!"

So saying, he instantly changed his loitering pace to one with which few people could have kept up, and in an instant was in Couvrefew Street. He had not made three steps towards Simon Glover's, which stood in the midst of the narrow street, when two men started from under the houses on different sides, and advanced, as it were by concert, to intercept his passage. The imperfect light only permitted him to discern that they wore the Highland mantle.

"Clear the way, cateran," said the armourer, in the deep stern voice which corresponded with the breadth of his chest.

They did not answer, at least intelligibly; but he could see that they drew their swords, with the purpose of withstanding him by violence. Conjecturing some evil, but of what kind he could not anticipate, Henry instantly determined to make his way through whatever odds, and defend his mistress, or at least die at her feet. He cast his cloak over his left arm as a buckler, and advanced rapidly and steadily to the two men. The nearest made a thrust at him, but Henry Smith, parrying the blow with his cloak, dashed his arm in the man's face, and tripping him at the same time, gave him a severe fall on the causeway; while almost at the same instant he struck a blow with his whinger at the fellow who was upon his right hand, so severely applied, that he also lay prostrate by his associate. Meanwhile, the armourer pushed forward in alarm, for which the circumstance of the street being guarded or defended by strangers who conducted themselves with such violence afforded sufficient reason. He heard a suppressed whisper and a bustle under the glover's windows—those very windows from which he had expected to be hailed by Catharine as her Valentine. He kept to the opposite side of the street, that he might reconnoitre their number and purpose. But one of the party who were beneath the window, observing or hearing him, crossed the street also, and taking him doubtless for one of the sentinels, asked, in a whisper, "What noise was yonder, Kenneth? why gave you not the signal?"

"Villain," said Henry, "you are discovered, and you shall die the death."

As he spoke thus, he dealt the stranger a blow with his weapon, which would probably have made his words good, had not the man, raising his arm, received on his hand the blow meant for his head. The wound must have been a severe one, for he staggered and fell with a deep groan.

Without noticing him farther, Henry Smith sprung forward upon a party of men who seemed engaged in placing a ladder against the lattice window in the gable. Henry did not stop either to count their numbers or to ascertain their purpose. But, crying the alarm word of the town, and giving the signal at which the burghers were wont to collect, he rushed on the night walkers, one of whom was in the act of ascending the ladder. The smith seized it by the rounds, threw it down on the pavement, and placing his foot on the body of the man who had been mounting, prevented him from regaining his feet. His accomplices struck fiercely at Henry, to extricate their companion. But his mail coat stood him in good stead, and he repaid their blows with interest, shouting aloud, "Help—help, for bonny St. Johnston! Bows and blades, brave citizens! bows and blades! they break into our houses under cloud of night."

These words, which resounded far through the streets, were accompanied by as many fierce blows, dealt with good effect among those whom the armourer assailed. In the mean time, the inhabitants of the district began to awaken and appear on the street in their shirts, with swords and targets, and some of them with torches. The assailants now endeavoured to make their escape, which all of them effected excepting the man who had been thrown down along with the ladder. Him the intrepid armourer had caught by the throat in the scuffle, and held as fast as the greyhound holds the hare. The other wounded men were borne off by their comrades.

"Here are a sort of knaves breaking peace within burgh," said Henry to the neighbours who began to assemble; "make after the rogues. They cannot all get off, for I have maimed some of them: the blood will guide you to them."

"Some Highland caterans," said the citizens; "up and chase, neighbours!"

"Ay, chase—chase! leave me to manage this fellow," continued the armourer.

The assistants dispersed in different directions, their lights flashing and their cries resounding through the whole adjacent district.

In the mean time the armourer's captive entreated for freedom, using both promises and threats to obtain it. "As thou art a gentleman," he said, "let me go, and what is past shall be forgiven."

"I am no gentleman," said Henry—"I am Hal of the Wynd, a burgher of Perth; and I have done nothing to need forgiveness."

"Villain, then hast done thou knowest not what! But let me go, and I will fill thy bonnet with gold pieces."

"I shall fill thy bonnet with a cloven head presently," said the armourer, "unless thou stand still as a true prisoner."

"What is the matter, my son Harry?" said Simon, who now appeared at the window. "I hear thy voice in another tone than I expected. What is all this noise; and why are the neighbours gathering to the affray?"

"There have been a proper set of limmers about to scale your windows, father Simon; but I am like to prove godfather to one of them, whom I hold here, as fast as ever vice held iron."

"Hear me, Simon Glover," said the prisoner; "let me but speak one word with you in private, and rescue me from the gripe of this iron fisted and leaden pated clown, and I will show thee that no harm was designed to thee or thine, and, moreover, tell thee what will much advantage thee."

"I should know that voice," said Simon Glover, who now came to the door with a dark lantern in his hand. "Son Smith, let this young man speak with me. There is no danger in him, I promise you. Stay but an instant where you are, and let no one enter the house, either to attack or defend. I will be answerable that this galliard meant but some St. Valentine's jest."

So saying, the old man pulled in the prisoner and shut the door, leaving Henry a little surprised at the unexpected light in which his father-in-law had viewed the affray.

"A jest!" he said; "it might have been a strange jest, if they had got into the maiden's sleeping room! And they would have done so, had it not been for the honest friendly voice from betwixt the buttresses, which, if it were not that of the blessed saint—though what am I that the holy person should speak to me?—could not sound in that place without her permission and assent, and for which I will promise her a wax candle at her shrine, as long as my whinger; and I would I had had my two handed broadsword instead, both for the sake of St. Johnston and of the rogues, for of a certain those whingers are pretty toys, but more fit for a boy's hand than a man's. Oh, my old two handed Trojan, hadst thou been in my hands, as thou hang'st presently at the tester of my bed, the legs of those rogues had not carried their bodies so clean off the field. But there come lighted torches and drawn swords. So ho—stand! Are you for St. Johnston? If friends to the bonny burgh, you are well come."

"We have been but bootless hunters," said the townsmen. "We followed by the tracks of the blood into the Dominican burial ground, and we started two fellows from amongst the tombs, supporting betwixt them a third, who had probably got some of your marks about him, Harry. They got to the postern gate before we could overtake them, and rang the sanctuary bell; the gate opened, and in went they. So they are safe in girth and sanctuary, and we may go to our cold beds and warm us."

"Ay," said one of the party, "the good Dominicans have always some devout brother of their convent sitting up to open the gate of the sanctuary to any poor soul that is in trouble, and desires shelter in the church."

"Yes, if the poor hunted soul can pay for it," said another "but, truly, if he be poor in purse as well as in spirit, he may stand on the outside till the hounds come up with him."

A third, who had been poring for a few minutes upon the ground by advantage of his torch, now looked upwards and spoke. He was a brisk, forward, rather corpulent little man, called Oliver Proudpute, reasonably wealthy, and a leading man in his craft, which was that of bonnet makers; he, therefore, spoke as one in authority.

"Canst tell us, jolly smith"—for they recognised each other by the lights which were brought into the streets—"what manner of fellows they were who raised up this fray within burgh?"

"The two that I first saw," answered the armourer, "seemed to me, as well as I could observe them, to have Highland plaids about them."

"Like enough—like enough," answered another citizen, shaking his head. "It's a shame the breaches in our walls are not repaired, and that these landlouping Highland scoundrels are left at liberty to take honest men and women out of their beds any night that is dark enough."

"But look here, neighbours," said Oliver Proudpute, showing a bloody hand which he had picked up from the ground; "when did such a hand as this tie a Highlandman's brogues? It is large, indeed, and bony, but as fine as a lady's, with a ring that sparkles like a gleaming candle. Simon Glover has made gloves for this hand before now, if I am not much mistaken, for he works for all the courtiers."

The spectators here began to gaze on the bloody token with various comments.

"If that is the case," said one, "Harry Smith had best show a clean pair of heels for it, since the justiciar will scarce think the protecting a burgess's house an excuse for cutting off a gentleman's hand. There be hard laws against mutilation."

"Fie upon you, that you will say so, Michael Webster," answered the bonnet maker; "are we not representatives and successors of the stout old Romans, who built Perth as like to their own city as they could? And have we not charters from all our noble kings and progenitors, as being their loving liegemen? And would you have us now yield up our rights, privileges, and immunities, our outfang and infang, our handhaband, our back bearand, and our blood suits, and amerciaments, escheats, and commodities, and suffer an honest burgess's house to be assaulted without seeking for redress? No, brave citizens, craftsmen, and burgesses, the Tay shall flow back to Dunkeld before we submit to such injustice!"

"And how can we help it?" said a grave old man, who stood leaning on a two handed sword. "What would you have us do?"

"Marry, Bailie Craigdallie, I wonder that you, of all men, ask the question. I would have you pass like true men from this very place to the King's Grace's presence, raise him from his royal rest, and presenting to him the piteous case of our being called forth from our beds at this season, with little better covering than these shirts, I would show him this bloody token, and know from his Grace's own royal lips whether it is just and honest that his loving lieges should be thus treated by the knights and nobles of his deboshed court. And this I call pushing our cause warmly."

"Warmly, sayst thou?" replied the old burgess; "why, so warmly, that we shall all die of cold, man, before the porter turn a key to let us into the royal presence. Come, friends, the night is bitter, we have kept our watch and ward like men, and our jolly smith hath given a warning to those that would wrong us, which shall be worth twenty proclamations of the king. Tomorrow is a new day; we will consult on this matter on this self same spot, and consider what measures should be taken for discovery and pursuit of the villains. And therefore let us dismiss before the heart's blood freeze in our veins."

"Bravo—bravo, neighbour Craigdallie! St. Johnston for ever!"

Oliver Proudpute would still have spoken; for he was one of those pitiless orators who think that their eloquence can overcome all inconveniences in time, place, and circumstances. But no one would listen, and the citizens dispersed to their own houses by the light of the dawn, which began now to streak the horizon.

They were scarce gone ere the door of the glover's house opened, and seizing the smith by the hand, the old man pulled him in.

"Where is the prisoner?" demanded the armourer.

"He is gone—escaped—fled—what do I know of him?" said the glover. "He got out at the back door, and so through the little garden. Think not of him, but come and see the Valentine whose honour and life you have saved this morning."

"Let me but sheathe my weapon," said the smith, "let me but wash my hands."

"There is not an instant to lose, she is up and almost dressed. Come on, man. She shall see thee with thy good weapon in thy hand, and with villain's blood on thy fingers, that she may know what is the value of a true man's service. She has stopped my mouth overlong with her pruderies and her scruples. I will have her know what a brave man's love is worth, and a bold burgess's to boot."

CHAPTER V.

*Up! lady fair, and braid thy hair,
And rouse thee in the breezy air,
Up! quit thy bower, late wears the hour,
Long have the rooks caw'd round the tower.*

JOANNA BAILLIE.

Startled from her repose by the noise of the affray, the Fair Maid of Perth had listened in breathless terror to the sounds of violence and outcry which arose from the street. She had sunk on her knees to pray for assistance, and when she distinguished the voices of neighbours and friends collected for her protection, she remained in the same posture to return thanks. She was still kneeling when her father almost thrust her champion, Henry Smith, into her apartment; the bashful lover hanging back at first, as if afraid to give offence, and, on observing her posture, from respect to her devotion.

"Father," said the armourer, "she prays; I dare no more speak to her than to a bishop when he says mass."

"Now, go thy ways, for a right valiant and courageous blockhead," said her father—and then speaking to his daughter, he added, "Heaven is best thanked, my daughter, by gratitude shown to our fellow creatures. Here comes the instrument by whom God has rescued thee from death, or perhaps from dishonour worse than death. Receive him, Catharine, as thy true Valentine, and him whom I desire to see my affectionate son."

"Not thus—father," replied Catharine. "I can see—can speak to no one now. I am not ungrateful—perhaps I am too thankful to the instrument of our safety; but let me thank the guardian saint who sent me this timely relief, and give me but a moment to don my kirtle."

"Nay, God-a-mercy, wench, it were hard to deny thee time to busk thy body clothes, since the request is the only words like a woman that thou hast uttered for these ten days. Truly, son Harry, I would my daughter would put off being entirely a saint till the time comes for her being canonised for St. Catherine the Second."

"Nay, jest not, father; for I will swear she has at least one sincere adorer already, who hath devoted himself to her pleasure, so far as sinful man may. Fare thee well, then, for the moment, fair maiden," he concluded, raising his voice, "and Heaven send thee dreams as peaceful as thy waking thoughts. I go to watch thy slumbers, and woe with him that shall intrude on them!"

"Nay, good and brave Henry, whose warm heart is at such variance with thy reckless hand, thrust thyself into no farther quarrels tonight; but take the kindest thanks, and with these, try to assume the peaceful thoughts which you assign to me. Tomorrow we will meet, that I may assure you of my gratitude. Farewell."

"And farewell, lady and light of my heart!" said the armourer, and, descending the stair which led to Catharine's apartment, was about to sally forth into the street, when the glover caught him by the arm.

"I shall like the ruffle of tonight," said he, "better than I ever thought to do the clashing of steel, if it brings my daughter to her senses, Harry, and teaches her what thou art worth. By St. Macgrider! I even love these roysterers, and am sorry for that poor lover who will never wear left handed chevron again. Ay! he has lost that which he will miss all the days of his life, especially when he goes to pull on his gloves; ay, he will pay but half a fee to my craft in future. Nay, not a step from this house tonight," he continued "Thou dost not leave us, I promise thee, my son."

"I do not mean it. But I will, with your permission, watch in the street. The attack may be renewed."

"And if it be," said Simon, "thou wilt have better access to drive them back, having the vantage of the house. It is the way of fighting which suits us burghers best—that of resisting from behind stone walls. Our duty of watch and ward teaches us that trick; besides, enough are awake and astir to ensure us peace and quiet till morning. So come in this way."

So saying, he drew Henry, nothing loth, into the same apartment where they had supped, and where the old woman, who was on foot, disturbed as others had been by the nocturnal affray, soon roused up the fire.

"And now, my doughty son," said the glover, "what liquor wilt thou pledge thy father in?"

Henry Smith had suffered himself to sink mechanically upon a seat of old black oak, and now gazed on the fire, that flashed back a ruddy light over his manly features. He muttered to himself half audibly: "Good Henry—brave Henry. Ah! had she but said, dear Henry!"

"What liquors be these?" said the old glover, laughing. "My cellar holds none such; but if sack, or Rhenish, or wine of Gascony can serve, why, say the word and the flagon foams, that is all."

"The kindest thanks," said the armourer, still musing, "that's more than she ever said to me before—the kindest thanks—what may not that stretch to?"

"It shall stretch like kid's leather, man," said the glover, "if thou wilt but be ruled, and say what thou wilt take for thy morning's draught."

"Whatever thou wilt, father," answered the armourer, carelessly, and relapsed into the analysis of Catharine's speech to him. "She spoke of my warm heart; but she also spoke of my reckless hand. What earthly thing can I do to get rid of this fighting fancy? Certainly I were best strike my right hand off, and nail it to the door of a church, that it may never do me discredit more."

"You have chopped off hands enough for one night," said his friend, setting a flagon of wine on the table. "Why dost thou vex thyself, man? She would love thee twice as well did she not see how thou doatest upon her. But it becomes serious now. I am not to have the risk of my booth being broken and my house plundered by the hell raking followers of the nobles, because she is called the Fair Maid of Perth, an't please ye. No, she shall know I am her father, and will have that obedience to which law and gospel give me right. I will have her thy wife, Henry, my heart of gold—thy wife, my man of mettle, and that before many weeks are over. Come—come, here is to thy merry bridal, jolly smith."

The father quaffed a large cup, and filled it to his adopted son, who raised it slowly to his head; then, ere it had reached his lips, replaced it suddenly on the table and shook his head.

"Nay, if thou wilt not pledge me to such a health, I know no one who will," said Simon. "What canst thou mean, thou foolish lad? Here has a chance happened, which in a manner places her in thy power, since from one end of the city to the other all would cry fie on her if she should say thee nay. Here am I, her father, not only consenting to the cutting out of the match, but willing to see you two as closely united together as ever needle stitched buckskin. And with all this on thy side—fortune, father, and all—thou lookest like a distracted lover in a ballad, more like to pitch thyself into the Tay than to woo a lass that may be had for the asking, if you can but choose the lucky minute."

"Ay, but that lucky minute, father? I question much if Catharine ever has such a moment to glance on earth and its inhabitants as might lead her to listen to a coarse ignorant borrel man like me. I cannot tell how it is, father; elsewhere I can hold up my head like another man, but with your saintly daughter I lose heart and courage, and I cannot help thinking that it would be well nigh robbing a holy shrine if I could succeed in surprising her affections. Her thoughts are too much fitted for Heaven to be wasted on such a one as I am."

"E'en as you like, Henry," answered the glover. "My daughter is not courting you any more than I am—a fair offer is no cause offend; only if you think that I will give in to her foolish notions of a convent, take it with you that I will never listen to them. I love and honour the church," he said, crossing himself, "I pay her rights duly and cheerfully—tithes and alms, wine and wax, I pay them as justly, I say, as any man in Perth of my means doth—but I cannot afford the church my only and single ewe lamb that I have in the world. Her mother was dear to me on earth, and is now an angel in Heaven. Catharine is all I have to remind me of her I have lost; and if she goes to the cloister, it shall be when these old eyes are closed for ever, and not sooner. But as for you, friend Gow, I pray you will act according to your own best liking, I want to force no wife on you, I promise you."

"Nay, now you beat the iron twice over," said Henry. "It is thus we always end, father, by your being testy with me for not doing that thing in the world which would make me happiest, were I to have it in my power. Why, father, I would the keenest dirk I ever forged were sticking in my heart at this moment if there is one single particle in it that is not more your daughter's property than my own. But what can I do? I cannot think less of her, or more of myself, than we both deserve; and what seems to you so easy and certain is to me as difficult as it would be to work a steel hauberk out of bards of flax. But here is to you, father," he added, in a more cheerful tone; "and here is to my fair saint and Valentine, as I hope your Catharine will be mine for the season. And let me not keep your old head longer from the pillow, but make interest with your featherbed till daybreak; and then you must be my guide to your daughter's chamber door, and my apology for entering it, to bid her good morrow, for the brightest that the sun will awaken, in the city or for miles round."

"No bad advice, my son," said the honest glover, "But you, what will you do? Will you lie down beside me, or take a part of Conachar's bed?"

"Neither," answered Harry Gow; "I should but prevent your rest, and for me this easy chair is worth a down bed, and I will sleep like a sentinel, with my graith about me." As he spoke, he laid his hand on his sword.

"Nay, Heaven send us no more need of weapons. Goodnight, or rather good morrow, till day peep; and the first who wakes calls up the other."

Thus parted the two burghers. The glover retired to his bed, and, it is to be supposed, to rest. The lover was not so fortunate. His bodily frame easily bore the fatigue which he had encountered in the course of the night, but his mind was of a different and more delicate mould. In one point of view, he was but the stout burgher of his period, proud alike of his art in making weapons and wielding them when made; his professional jealousy, personal strength, and skill in the use of arms brought him into many quarrels, which had made him generally feared, and in some instances disliked. But with these qualities were united the simple good nature of a child, and at the same time an imaginative and enthusiastic temper, which seemed little to correspond with his labours at the forge or his combats in the field. Perhaps a little of the hare brained and ardent feeling which he had picked out of old ballads, or from the metrical romances, which were his sole source of information or knowledge, may have been the means of pricking him on to some of his achievements, which had often a rude strain of chivalry in them; at least, it was certain that his love to the fair Catharine had in it a delicacy such as might have become the squire of low degree, who was honoured, if song speaks truth, with the smiles of the King of Hungary's daughter. His sentiments towards her were certainly as exalted as if they had been fixed upon an actual angel, which made old Simon, and others who watched his conduct, think that his passion was too high and devotional to be successful with maiden of mortal mould. They were mistaken, however. Catharine, coy and reserved as she was, had a heart which could feel and understand the nature and depth of the armourer's passion; and whether she was able to repay it or not, she had as much secret pride in the attachment of the redoubted Henry Gow as a lady of romance may be supposed to have in the company of a tame lion, who follows to provide for and defend her. It was with sentiments of the most sincere gratitude that she recollected, as she awoke at dawn, the services of Henry during the course of the eventful night, and the first thought which she dwelt upon was the means of making him understand her feelings.

Arising hastily from bed, and half blushing at her own purpose—"I have been cold to him, and perhaps unjust; I will not be ungrateful," she said to herself, "though I cannot yield to his suit. I will not wait till my father compels me to receive him as my Valentine for the year: I will seek him out, and choose him myself. I have thought other girls bold when they did something like this; but I shall thus best please my father, and but discharge the rites due to good St. Valentine by showing my gratitude to this brave man."

Hastily slipping on her dress, which, nevertheless, was left a good deal more disordered than usual, she tripped downstairs and opened the door of the chamber, in which, as she had guessed, her lover had passed the hours after the fray. Catharine paused at the door, and became half afraid of executing her purpose, which not only permitted but enjoined the Valentines of the year to begin their connexion with a kiss of affection. It was looked upon as a peculiarly propitious omen if the one party could find the other asleep, and awaken him or her by performance of this interesting ceremony.

Never was a fairer opportunity offered for commencing this mystic tie than that which now presented itself to Catharine. After many and various thoughts, sleep had at length overcome the stout armourer in the chair in which he had deposited himself. His features, in repose, had a more firm and manly cast than Catharine had thought, who, having generally seen them fluctuating between shamefacedness and apprehension of her displeasure, had been used to connect with them some idea of imbecility.

"He looks very stern," she said; "if he should be angry? And then when he awakes—we are alone—if I should call Dorothy—if I should wake my father? But no! it is a thing of custom, and done in all maidenly and sisterly love and honour. I will not suppose that Henry can misconstrue it, and I will not let a childish bashfulness put my gratitude to sleep."

So saying, she tripped along the floor of the apartment with a light, though hesitating, step; and a cheek crimsoned at her own purpose; and gliding to the chair of the sleeper, dropped a kiss upon his lips as light as if a rose leaf had fallen on them. The slumbers must have been slight which such a touch could dispel, and the dreams of the sleeper must needs have been connected with the cause of the interruption, since Henry, instantly starting up, caught the maiden in his arms, and attempted to return in ecstasy the salute which had broken his repose. But Catharine struggled in his embrace; and as her efforts implied alarmed modesty rather than maidenly coyness, her bashful lover suffered her to escape a grasp from which twenty times her strength could not have extricated her.

"Nay, be not angry, good Henry," said Catharine, in the kindest tone, to her surprised lover. "I have paid my vows to St. Valentine, to show how I value the mate which he has sent me for the year. Let but my father be present, and I will not dare to refuse thee the revenge you may claim for a broken sleep."

"Let not that be a hinderance," said the old glover, rushing in ecstasy into the room; "to her, smith—to her: strike while the iron is hot, and teach her what it is not to let sleeping dogs lie still."

Thus encouraged, Henry, though perhaps with less alarming vivacity, again seized the blushing maiden in his arms, who submitted with a tolerable grace to receive repayment of her salute, a dozen times repeated, and with an energy very different from that which had provoked such severe retaliation. At length she again extricated herself from her lover's arms, and, as if frightened and repenting what she had done, threw herself into a seat, and covered her face with her hands.

"Cheer up, thou silly girl," said her father, "and be not ashamed that thou hast made the two happiest men in Perth, since thy old father is one of them. Never was kiss so well bestowed, and meet it is that it should be suitably returned. Look up, my darling! look up, and let me see thee give but one smile. By my honest word, the sun that now rises over our fair city shows no sight that can give me greater pleasure. What," he continued, in a jocose tone, "thou thoughtst thou hadst Jamie Keddie's ring, and couldst walk invisible? but not so, my fairy of the dawning. Just as I was about to rise, I heard thy chamber door open, and watched thee downstairs, not to protect thee against this sleepy headed Henry, but to see with my own delighted eyes my beloved girl do that which her father most wished. Come, put down these foolish hands, and though thou blushest a little, it will only the better grace St. Valentine's morn, when blushes best become a maiden's cheek."

As Simon Glover spoke, he pulled away, with gentle violence, the hands which hid his daughter's face. She blushed deeply indeed, but there was more than maiden's shame in her face, and her eyes were fast filling with tears.

"What! weeping, love?" continued her father; "nay—nay, this is more than need. Henry, help me to comfort this little fool."

Catharine made an effort to collect herself and to smile, but the smile was of a melancholy and serious cast.

"I only meant to say, father," said the Fair Maid of Perth, with continued exertion, "that in choosing Henry Gow for my Valentine, and rendering to him the rights and greeting of the morning, according to wonted custom, I meant but to show my gratitude to him for his manly and faithful service, and my obedience to you. But do not lead him to think—and, oh, dearest father, do not yourself entertain an idea—that I meant more than what the promise to be his faithful and affectionate Valentine through the year requires of me."

"Ay—ay—ay—ay, we understand it all," said Simon, in the soothing tone which nurses apply to children. "We understand what the meaning is; enough for once—enough for once. Thou shalt not be frightened or hurried. Loving, true, and faithful Valentines are ye, and the rest as Heaven and opportunity shall permit. Come, prithee, have done: wring not thy tiny hands, nor fear farther persecution now. Thou hast done bravely, excellently. And now, away to Dorothy, and call up the old sluggard; we must have a substantial breakfast, after a night of confusion and a morning of joy, and thy hand will be needed to prepare for us some of these delicate cakes which no one can make but thyself; and well hast thou a right to the secret, seeing who taught it thee. Ah! health to the soul of thy dearest mother," he added, with a sigh; "how blythe would she have been to see this happy St. Valentine's morning!"

Catharine took the opportunity of escape which was thus given her, and glided from the room. To Henry it seemed as if the sun had disappeared from the heaven at midday, and left the world in sudden obscurity. Even the high swelled hopes with which the late incident had filled him began to quail, as he reflected upon her altered demeanour—the tears in her eyes, the obvious fear which occupied her features, and the pains she had taken to show, as plainly as delicacy would permit, that the advances which she had made to him were limited to the character with which the rites of the day had invested him. Her father looked on his fallen countenance with something like surprise and displeasure.

"In the name of good St. John, what has befallen you, that makes you look as grave as an owl, when a lad of your spirit, having really such a fancy for this poor girl as you pretend, ought to be as lively as a lark?"

"Alas, father!" replied the crestfallen lover, "there is that written on her brow which says she loves me well enough to be my Valentine, especially since you wish it, but not well enough to be my wife."

"Now, a plague on thee for a cold, downhearted gooscap," answered the father. "I can read a woman's brow as well, and better, than thou, and I can see no such matter on hers. What, the foul fiend, man! there thou wast lying like a lord in thy elbow chair, as sound asleep as a judge, when, hadst thou been a lover of any spirit, thou wouldst have been watching the east for the first ray of the sun. But there thou layest, snoring I warrant, thinking nought about her, or anything else; and the poor girl rises at peep of day, lest any one else should pick up her most precious and vigilant Valentine, and wakes thee with a grace which—so help me, St. Macgrider!—would have put life in an anvil; and thou awakest to hone, and pine, and moan, as if she had drawn a hot iron across thy lips! I would to St. John she had sent old Dorothy on the errand, and bound thee for thy Valentine service to that bundle of dry bones, with never a tooth in her head. She were fittest Valentine in Perth for so craven a wooer."

"As to craven, father," answered the smith, "there are twenty good cocks, whose combs I have plucked, can tell thee if I am craven or no. And Heaven knows that I would give my good land, held by burgess' tenure, with smithy, bellows, tongs, anvil, and all, providing it would make your view of the matter the true one. But it is not of her coyness or her blushes that I speak; it is of the paleness which so soon followed the red, and chased it from her cheeks; and it is of the tears which succeeded. It was like the April showers stealing upon and obscuring the fairest dawning that ever beamed over the Tay."

"Tutti taitti," replied the glover; "neither Rome nor Perth were built in a day. Thou hast fished salmon a thousand times, and mightst have taken a lesson. When the fish has taken the fly, to pull a hard strain on the line would snap the tackle to pieces, were it made of wire. Ease your hand, man, and let him rise; take leisure, and in half an hour thou layest him on the bank. There is a beginning as fair as you could wish, unless you expect the poor wench to come to thy bedside as she did to thy chair; and that is not the fashion of modest maidens. But observe me; after we have had our breakfast, I will take care thou hast an opportunity to speak thy mind; only beware thou be neither too backward nor press her too hard. Give her line enough, but do not slack too fast, and my life for yours upon the issue."

"Do what I can, father," answered Henry, "you will always lay the blame on me—either that I give too much head or that I strain the tackle. I would give the best habergeon I ever wrought, that the difficulty in truth rested with me, for there were then the better chance of its being removed. I own, however, I am but an ass in the trick of bringing about such discourse as is to the purpose for the occasion."

"Come into the booth with me, my son, and I will furnish thee with a fitting theme. Thou knowest the maiden who ventures to kiss a sleeping man wins of him a pair of gloves. Come to my booth; thou shalt have a pair of delicate kid skin that will exactly suit her hand and arm. I was thinking of her poor mother when I shaped them," added honest Simon, with a sigh; "and except Catharine, I know not the woman in Scotland whom they would fit, though I have measured most of the high beauties of the court. Come with me, I say, and thou shalt be provided with a theme to wag thy tongue upon, providing thou hast courage and caution to stand by thee in thy wooing."

CHAPTER VI.

Never to man shall Catharine give her hand.

Taming of the Shrew.

The breakfast was served, and the thin soft cakes, made of flour and honey according to the family receipt, were not only commended with all the partiality of a father and a lover, but done liberal justice to in the mode which is best proof of cake as well as pudding. They talked, jested, and laughed. Catharine, too, had recovered her equanimity where the dames and damsels of the period were apt to lose theirs—in the kitchen, namely, and in the superintendence of household affairs, in which she was an adept. I question much if the perusal of Seneca for as long a period would have had equal effect in composing her mind.

Old Dorothy sat down at the board end, as was the homespun fashion of the period; and so much were the two men amused with their own conversation, and Catharine occupied either in attending to them or with her own reflections, that the old woman was the first who observed the absence of the boy Conachar.

"It is true," said the master glover; "go call him, the idle Highland loon. He was not seen last night during the fray neither, at least I saw him not. Did any of you observe him?"

The reply was negative; and Henry's observation followed:

"There are times when Highlanders can couch like their own deer—ay, and run from danger too as fast. I have seen them do so myself, for the matter of that."

"And there are times," replied Simon, "when King Arthur and his Round Table could not make stand against them. I wish, Henry, you would speak more reverently of the Highlanders. They are often in Perth, both alone and in numbers, and you ought to keep peace with them so long as they will keep peace with you."

An answer of defiance rose to Henry's lips, but he prudently suppressed it. "Why, thou knowest, father," he said, smiling, "that we handicrafts best love the folks we live by; now, my craft provides for valiant and noble knights, gentle squires and pages, stout men at arms, and others that wear the weapons which we make. It is natural I should like the Ruthvens, the Lindsays, the Ogilvys, the Oliphants, and so many others of our brave and noble neighbours, who are sheathed in steel of my making, like so many paladins, better than those naked, snatching mountaineers, who are ever doing us wrong, especially since no five of each clan have a rusty shirt of mail as old as their brattach; and that is but the work of the clumsy clan smith after all, who is no member of our honourable mystery, but simply works at the anvil, where his father wrought before him. I say, such people can have no favour in the eyes of an honest craftsman."

"Well—well," answered Simon; "I prithee let the matter rest even now, for here comes the loitering boy, and, though it is a holyday morn, I want no more bloody puddings."

The youth entered accordingly. His face was pale, his eyes red, and there was an air of discomposure about his whole person. He sat down at the lower end of the table, opposite to Dorothy, and crossed himself, as if preparing for his morning's meal. As he did not help himself to any food, Catharine offered him a platter containing some of the cakes which had met with such general approbation. At first he rejected her offered kindness rather sullenly; but on her repeating the offer with a smile of goodwill, he took a cake in his hand, broke it, and was about to eat a morsel, when the effort to swallow seemed almost too much for him; and though he succeeded, he did not repeat it.

"You have a bad appetite for St. Valentine's morning, Conachar," said his good humoured master; "and yet I think you must have slept soundly the night before, since I conclude you were not disturbed by the noise of the scuffle. Why, I thought a lively glune amie would have been at his master's side, dirk in hand, at the first sound of danger which arose within a mile of us."

"I heard but an indistinct noise," said the youth, his face glowing suddenly like a heated coal, "which I took for the shout of some merry revellers; and you are wont to bid me never open door or window, or alarm the house, on the score of such folly."

"Well—well," said Simon; "I thought a Highlander would have known better the difference betwixt the clash of swords and the twanging on harps, the wild war cry and the merry hunt's up. But let it pass, boy; I am glad thou art losing thy quarrelsome fashions. Eat thy breakfast, any way, as I have that to employ thee which requires haste."

"I have breakfasted already, and am in haste myself. I am for the hills. Have you any message to my father?"

"None," replied the glover, in some surprise; "but art thou beside thyself, boy? or what a vengeance takes thee from the city, like the wing of the whirlwind?"

"My warning has been sudden," said Conachar, speaking with difficulty; but whether arising from the hesitation incidental to the use of a foreign language, or whether from some other cause, could not easily be distinguished. "There is to be a meeting—a great hunting—" Here he stopped.

"And when are you to return from this blessed hunting?" said the master; "that is, if I may make so bold as to ask."

"I cannot exactly answer," replied the apprentice. "Perhaps never, if such be my father's pleasure," continued Conachar, with assumed indifference.

"I thought," said Simon Glover, rather seriously, "that all this was to be laid aside, when at earnest intercession I took you under my roof. I thought that when I undertook, being very loth to do so, to teach you an honest trade, we were to hear no more of hunting, or hosting, or clan gatherings, or any matters of the kind?"

"I was not consulted when I was sent hither," said the lad, haughtily. "I cannot tell what the terms were."

"But I can tell you, sir Conachar," said the glover, angrily, "that there is no fashion of honesty in binding yourself to an honest craftsman, and spoiling more hides than your own is worth; and now, when you are of age to be of some service, in taking up the disposal of your time at your pleasure, as if it were your own property, not your master's."

"Reckon with my father about that," answered Conachar; "he will pay you gallantly—a French mutton for every hide I have spoiled, and a fat cow or bullock for each day I have been absent."

"Close with him, friend Glover—close with him," said the armourer, drily. "Thou wilt be paid gallantly at least, if not honestly. Methinks I would like to know how many purses have been emptied to fill the goat skin sporran that is to be so free to you of its gold, and whose pastures the bullocks have been calved in that are to be sent down to you from the Grampian passes."

"You remind me, friend," said the Highland youth, turning haughtily towards the smith, "that I have also a reckoning to hold with you."

"Keep at arm's length, then," said Henry, extending his brawny arm: "I will have no more close hugs—no more bodkin work, like last night. I care little for a wasp's sting, yet I will not allow the insect to come near me if I have warning."

Conachar smiled contemptuously. "I meant thee no harm," he said. "My father's son did thee but too much honour to spill such churl's blood. I will pay you for it by the drop, that it may be dried up, and no longer soil my fingers."

"Peace, thou bragging ape!" said the smith: "the blood of a true man cannot be valued in gold. The only expiation would be that thou shouldst come a mile into the Low Country with two of the strongest galloglasses of thy clan; and while I dealt with them, I would leave thee to the correction of my apprentice, little Jankin."

Here Catharine interposed. "Peace," she said, "my trusty Valentine, whom I have a right to command; and peace you, Conachar, who ought to obey me as your master's daughter. It is ill done to awaken again on the morrow the evil which has been laid to sleep at night."

"Farewell, then, master," said Conachar, after another look of scorn at the smith, which he only answered with a laugh—"farewell! and I thank you for your kindness, which has been more than I deserve. If I have at times seemed less than thankful, it was the fault of circumstances, and not of my will. Catharine—" He cast upon the maiden a look of strong emotion, in which various feelings were blended. He hesitated, as if to say something, and at length turned away with the single word "farewell."

Five minutes afterwards, with Highland buskins on his feet and a small bundle in his hand, he passed through the north gate of Perth, and directed his course to the Highlands.

"There goes enough of beggary and of pride for a whole Highland clan," said Henry. "He talks as familiarly of gold pieces as I would of silver pennies, and yet I will be sworn that the thumb of his mother's worsted glove might hold the treasure of the whole clan."

"Like enough," said the glover, laughing at the idea; "his mother was a large boned woman, especially in the fingers and wrist."

"And as for cattle," continued Henry, "I reckon his father and brothers steal sheep by one at a time."

"The less we say of them the better," said the glover, becoming again grave. "Brothers he hath none; his father is a powerful man—hath long hands—reaches as far as he can, and hears farther than it is necessary to talk of him."

"And yet he hath bound his only son apprentice to a glover in Perth?" said Henry. "Why, I should have thought the gentle craft, as it is called, of St. Crispin would have suited him best; and that, if the son of some great Mac or O was to become an artisan, it could only be in the craft where princes set him the example."

This remark, though ironical, seemed to awaken our friend Simon's sense of professional dignity, which was a prevailing feeling that marked the manners of the artisans of the time.

"You err, son Henry," he replied, with much gravity: "the glovers' are the more honourable craft of the two, in regard they provide for the accommodation of the hands, whereas the shoemakers and cordwainers do but work for the feet."

"Both equally necessary members of the body corporate," said Henry, whose father had been a cordwainer.

"It may be so, my son," said the glover; "but not both alike honourable. Bethink you, that we employ the hands as pledges of friendship and good faith, and the feet have no such privilege. Brave men fight with their hands; cowards employ their feet in flight. A glove is borne aloft; a shoe is trampled in the mire. A man greets a friend with his open hand; he spurns a dog, or one whom he holds as mean as a dog, with his advanced foot. A glove on the point of a spear is a sign and pledge of faith all the wide world over, as a gauntlet flung down is a gage of knightly battle; while I know no other emblem belonging to an old shoe, except that some crones will fling them after a man by way of good luck, in which practice I avow myself to entertain no confidence."

"Nay," said the smith, amused with his friend's eloquent pleading for the dignity of the art he practised, "I am not the man, I promise you, to disparage the glover's mystery. Bethink you, I am myself a maker of gauntlets. But the dignity of your ancient craft removes not my wonder, that the father of this Conachar suffered his son to learn a trade of any kind from a Lowland craftsman, holding us, as they do, altogether beneath their magnificent degree, and a race of contemptible drudges, unworthy of any other fate than to be ill used and plundered, as often as these bare breeched dunnie wassals see safety and convenience for doing so."

"Ay," answered the glover, "but there were powerful reasons for—for—" he withheld something which seemed upon his lips, and went on: "for Conachar's father acting as he did. Well, I have played fair with him, and I do not doubt but he will act honourably by me. But Conachar's sudden leave taking has put me to some inconvenience. He had things under his charge. I must look through the booth."

"Can I help you, father?" said Henry Gow, deceived by the earnestness of his manner.

"You!—no," said Simon, with a dryness which made Henry so sensible of the simplicity of his proposal, that he blushed to the eyes at his own dulness of comprehension, in a matter where love ought to have induced him to take his cue easily up.

"You, Catharine," said the glover, as he left the room, "entertain your Valentine for five minutes, and see he departs not till my return. Come hither with me, old Dorothy, and bestir thy limbs in my behalf."

He left the room, followed by the old woman; and Henry Smith remained with Catharine, almost for the first time in his life, entirely alone. There was embarrassment on the maiden's part, and awkwardness on that of the lover, for about a minute; when Henry, calling up his courage, pulled the gloves out of his pocket with which Simon had supplied him, and asked her to permit one who had been so highly graced that morning to pay the usual penalty for being asleep at the moment when he would have given the slumbers of a whole twelvemonth to be awake for a single minute.

"Nay, but," said Catharine, "the fulfilment of my homage to St. Valentine infers no such penalty as you desire to pay, and I cannot therefore think of accepting them."

"These gloves," said Henry, advancing his seat insidiously towards Catharine as he spoke, "were wrought by the hands that are dearest to you; and see—they are shaped for your own."

He extended them as he spoke, and taking her arm in his robust hand, spread the gloves beside it to show how well they fitted.

"Look at that taper arm," he said, "look at these small fingers; think who sewed these seams of silk and gold, and think whether the glove and the arm which alone the glove can fit ought to remain separate, because the poor glove has had the misfortune to be for a passing minute in the keeping of a hand so swart and rough as mine."

"They are welcome as coming from my father," said Catharine; "and surely not less so as coming from my friend (and there was an emphasis on the word), as well as my Valentine and preserver."

"Let me aid to do them on," said the smith, bringing himself yet closer to her side; "they may seem a little over tight at first, and you may require some assistance."

"You are skilful in such service, good Henry Gow," said the maiden, smiling, but at the same time drawing farther from her lover.

"In good faith, no," said Henry, shaking his head: "my experience has been in donning steel gauntlets on mailed knights, more than in fitting embroidered gloves upon maidens."

"I will trouble you then no further, and Dorothy shall aid me, though there needs no assistance; my father's eye and fingers are faithful to his craft: what work he puts through his hands is always true to the measure."

"Let me be convinced of it," said the smith—"let me see that these slender gloves actually match the hands they were made for."

"Some other time, good Henry," answered the maiden, "I will wear the gloves in honour of St. Valentine, and the mate he has sent me for the season. I would to Heaven I could pleasure my father as well in weightier matters; at present the perfume of the leather harms the headache I have had since morning."

"Headache, dearest maiden!" echoed her lover.

"If you call it heartache, you will not misname it," said Catharine, with a sigh, and proceeded to speak in a very serious tone.

"Henry," she said, "I am going perhaps to be as bold as I gave you reason to think me this morning; for I am about to speak the first upon a subject on which, it may well be, I ought to wait till I had to answer you. But I cannot, after what has happened this morning, suffer my feelings towards you to remain unexplained, without the possibility of my being greatly misconceived. Nay, do not answer till you have heard me out. You are brave, Henry, beyond most men, honest and true as the steel you work upon—"

"Stop—stop, Catharine, for mercy's sake! You never said so much that was good concerning me, save to introduce some bitter censure, of which your praises were the harbingers. I am honest, and so forth, you would say, but a hot brained brawler, and common sworder or stabber."

"I should injure both myself and you in calling you such. No, Henry, to no common stabber, had he worn a plume in his bonnet and gold spurs on his heels, would Catharine Glover have offered the little grace she has this day voluntarily done to you. If I have at times dwelt severely upon the proneness of your spirit to anger, and of your hand to strife, it is because I would have you, if I could so persuade you, hate in yourself the sins of vanity and wrath by which you are most easily beset. I have spoken on the topic more to alarm your own conscience than to express my opinion. I know as well as my father that, in these forlorn and desperate days, the whole customs of our nation, nay, of every Christian nation, may be quoted in favour of bloody quarrels for trifling causes, of the taking deadly and deep revenge for slight offences, and the slaughter of each other for emulation of honour, or often in mere sport. But I knew that for all these things we shall one day be called into judgment; and fain would I convince thee, my brave and generous friend, to listen oftener to the dictates of thy good heart, and take less pride in the strength and dexterity of thy unsparing arm."

"I am—I am convinced, Catharine" exclaimed Henry: "thy words shall henceforward be a law to me. I have done enough, far too much, indeed, for proof of my bodily strength and courage; but it is only from you, Catharine, that I can learn a better way of thinking. Remember, my fair Valentine, that my ambition of distinction in arms, and my love of strife, if it can be called such, do not fight even handed with my reason and my milder dispositions, but have their patrons and sticklers to egg them on. Is there a quarrel, and suppose that I, thinking on your counsels, am something loth to engage in it, believe you I am left to decide between peace or war at my own choosing? Not so, by St. Mary! there are a hundred round me to stir me on. 'Why, how now, Smith, is thy mainspring rusted?' says one. 'Jolly Henry is deaf on the quarrelling ear this morning!' says another. 'Stand to it, for the honour of Perth,' says my lord the Provost. 'Harry against them for a gold noble,' cries your father, perhaps. Now, what can a poor fellow do, Catharine, when all are hallooing him on in the devil's name, and not a soul putting in a word on the other side?"

"Nay, I know the devil has factors enough to utter his wares," said Catharine; "but it is our duty to despise such idle arguments, though they may be pleaded even by those to whom we owe much love and honour."

"Then there are the minstrels, with their romaunts and ballads, which place all a man's praise in receiving and repaying hard blows. It is sad to tell, Catharine, how many of my sins that Blind Harry the Minstrel hath to answer for. When I hit a downright blow, it is not—so save me—to do any man injury, but only to strike as William Wallace struck."

The minstrel's namesake spoke this in such a tone of rueful seriousness, that Catharine could scarce forbear smiling; but nevertheless she assured him that the danger of his own and other men's lives ought not for a moment to be weighed against such simple toys.

"Ay, but," replied Henry, emboldened by her smiles, "methinks now the good cause of peace would thrive all the better for an advocate. Suppose, for example, that, when I am pressed and urged to lay hand on my weapon, I could have cause to recollect that there was a gentle and guardian angel at home, whose image would seem to whisper, 'Henry, do no violence; it is my hand which you crimson with blood. Henry, rush upon no idle danger; it is my breast which you expose to injury;' such thoughts would do more to restrain my mood than if every monk in Perth should cry, 'Hold thy hand, on pain of bell, book, and candle.'"

"If such a warning as could be given by the voice of sisterly affection can have weight in the debate," said Catharine, "do think that, in striking, you empurple this hand, that in receiving wounds you harm this heart."

The smith took courage at the sincerely affectionate tone in which these words were delivered.

"And wherefore not stretch your regard a degree beyond these cold limits? Why, since you are so kind and generous as to own some interest in the poor ignorant sinner before you, should you not at once adopt him as your scholar and your husband? Your father desires it, the town expects it, glovers and smiths are preparing their rejoicings, and you, only you, whose words are so fair and so kind, you will not give your consent."

"Henry," said Catharine, in a low and tremulous voice, "believe me I should hold it my duty to comply with my father's commands, were there not obstacles invincible to the match which he proposes."

"Yet think—think but for a moment. I have little to say for myself in comparison of you, who can both read and write. But then I wish to hear reading, and could listen to your sweet voice for ever. You love music, and I have been taught to play and sing as well as some minstrels. You love to be charitable, I have enough to give, and enough to keep, as large a daily alms as a deacon gives would never be missed by me. Your father gets old for daily toil; he would live with us, as I should truly hold him for my father also. I would be as chary of mixing in causeless strife as of thrusting my hand into my own furnace; and if there came on us unlawful violence, its wares would be brought to an ill chosen market."

"May you experience all the domestic happiness which you can conceive, Henry, but with some one more happy than I am!"

So spoke, or rather so sobbed, the Fair Maiden of Perth, who seemed choking in the attempt to restrain her tears.

"You hate me, then?" said the lover, after a pause.

"Heaven is my witness, no."

"Or you love some other better?"

"It is cruel to ask what it cannot avail you to know. But you are entirely mistaken."

"Yon wildcat, Conachar, perhaps?" said Henry. "I have marked his looks—"

"You avail yourself of this painful situation to insult me, Henry, though I have little deserved it. Conachar is nothing to me, more than the trying to tame his wild spirit by instruction might lead me to take some interest in a mind abandoned to prejudices and passions, and therein, Henry, not unlike your own."

"It must then be some of these flaunting silkworm sirs about the court," said the armourer, his natural heat of temper kindling from disappointment and vexation—"some of those who think they carry it off through the height of their plumed bonnets and the jingle of their spurs. I would I knew which it was that, leaving his natural mates, the painted and perfumed dames of the court, comes to take his prey among the simple maidens of the burgher craft. I would I knew but his name and surname!"

"Henry Smith," said Catharine, shaking off the weakness which seemed to threaten to overpower her a moment before, "this is the language of an ungrateful fool, or rather of a frantic madman. I have told you already, there was no one who stood, at the beginning of this conference, more high in my opinion than he who is now losing ground with every word he utters in the tone of unjust suspicion and senseless anger. You had no title to know even what I have told you, which, I pray

you to observe, implies no preference to you over others, though it disowns any preference of another to you. It is enough you should be aware that there is as insuperable an objection to what you desire as if an enchanter had a spell over my destiny."

"Spells may be broken by true men," said, the smith. "I would it were come to that. Thorbiorn, the Danish armourer, spoke of a spell he had for making breastplates, by singing a certain song while the iron was heating. I told him that his runic rhymes were no proof against the weapons which fought at Loncarty—what farther came of it it is needless to tell, but the corselet and the wearer, and the leech who salved his wound, know if Henry Gow can break a spell or no."

Catharine looked at him as if about to return an answer little approving of the exploit he had vaunted, which the downright smith had not recollected was of a kind that exposed him to her frequent censure. But ere she had given words to her thoughts, her father thrust his head in at the door.

"Henry," he said, "I must interrupt your more pleasing affairs, and request you to come into my working room in all speed, to consult about certain matters deeply affecting the weal of the burgh."

Henry, making his obeisance to Catharine, left the apartment upon her father's summons. Indeed, it was probably in favour of their future friendly intercourse, that they were parted on this occasion at the turn which the conversation seemed likely to take. For, as the wooer had begun to hold the refusal of the damsel as somewhat capricious and inexplicable after the degree of encouragement which, in his opinion, she had afforded; Catharine, on the other hand, considered him rather as an encroacher upon the grace which she had shown him than one whose delicacy rendered him deserving of such favour. But there was living in their bosoms towards each other a reciprocal kindness, which, on the termination of the dispute, was sure to revive, inducing the maiden to forget her offended delicacy, and the lover his slighted warmth of passion.

CHAPTER VII.

This quarrel may draw blood another day.

Henry IV. Part I.

The conclave of citizens appointed to meet for investigating the affray of the preceding evening had now assembled. The workroom of Simon Glover was filled to crowding by personages of no little consequence, some of whom wore black velvet cloaks, and gold chains around their necks. They were, indeed, the fathers of the city; and there were bailies and deacons in the honoured number. There was an ireful and offended air of importance upon every brow as they conversed together, rather in whisper than aloud or in detail. Busiest among the busy, the little important assistant of the previous night, Oliver Proudpute by name, and bonnet maker by profession, was bustling among the crowd, much after the manner of the seagull, which flutters, screams, and sputters most at the commencement of a gale of wind, though one can hardly conceive what the bird has better to do than to fly to its nest and remain quiet till the gale is over.

Be that as it may, Master Proudpute was in the midst of the crowd, his fingers upon every one's button and his mouth in every man's ear, embracing such as were near to his own stature, that he might more closely and mysteriously utter his sentiments; and standing on tiptoe, and supporting himself by the cloak collars of tall men, that he might dole out to them also the same share of information. He felt himself one of the heroes of the affair, being conscious of the dignity of superior information on the subject as an eyewitness, and much disposed to push his connexion with the scuffle a few points beyond the modesty of truth. It cannot be said that his communications were in especial curious and important, consisting chiefly of such assertions as these:

"It is all true, by St. John! I was there and saw it myself—was the first to run to the fray; and if it had not been for me and another stout fellow, who came in about the same time, they had broken into Simon Glover's house, cut his throat, and carried his daughter off to the mountains. It is too evil usage—not to be suffered, neighbour Crookshank; not to be endured, neighbour Glass; not to be borne, neighbours Balneaves, Rollock, and Chrysteson. It was a mercy that I and that stout fellow came in, was it not, neighbour and worthy Bailie Craigdallie?"

These speeches were dispersed by the busy bonnet maker into sundry ears. Bailie Craigdallie, a portly guild brother, the same who had advised the prorogation of their civic council to the present place and hour, a big, burly, good looking man, shook the deacon from his cloak with pretty much the grace with which a large horse shrugs off the importunate fly that has beset him for ten minutes, and exclaimed, "Silence, good citizens; here comes Simon Glover, in whom no man ever saw falsehood. We will hear the outrage from his own mouth."

Simon being called upon to tell his tale, did so with obvious embarrassment, which he imputed to a reluctance that the burgh should be put in deadly feud with any one upon his account. It was, he dared to say, a masking or revel on the part of the young gallants about court; and the worst that might come of it would be, that he would put iron stanchions on his daughter's window, in case of such another frolic.

"Why, then, if this was a mere masking or mummery," said Craigdallie, "our townsman, Harry of the Wind, did far wrong to cut off a gentleman's hand for such a harmless pleasantry, and the town may be brought to a heavy fine for it, unless we secure the person of the mutilator."

"Our Lady forbid!" said the glover. "Did you know what I do, you would be as much afraid of handling this matter as if it were glowing iron. But, since you will needs put your fingers in the fire, truth must be spoken. And come what will, I must say, that the matter might have ended ill for me and mine, but for the opportune assistance of Henry Gow, the armourer, well known to you all."

"And mine also was not awanting," said Oliver Proudpute, "though I do not profess to be utterly so good a swordsman as our neighbour Henry Gow. You saw me, neighbour Glover, at the beginning of the fray?"

"I saw you after the end of it, neighbour," answered the glover, drily.

"True—true; I had forgot you were in your house while the blows were going, and could not survey who were dealing them."

"Peace, neighbour Proudpute—I prithee, peace," said Craigdallie, who was obviously tired of the tuneless screeching of the worthy deacon.

"There is something mysterious here," said the bailie; "but I think I spy the secret. Our friend Simon is, as you all know, a peaceful man, and one that will rather sit down with wrong than put a friend, or say a neighbourhood, in danger to seek his redress. Thou, Henry, who art never wanting where the burgh needs a defender, tell us what thou knowest of this matter."

Our smith told his story to the same purpose which we have already related; and the meddling maker of bonnets added as before, "And thou sawest me there, honest smith, didst thou not?"

"Not I, in good faith, neighbour," answered Henry; "but you are a little man, you know, and I might overlook you."

This reply produced a laugh at Oliver's expense, who laughed for company, but added doggedly, "I was one of the foremost to the rescue for all that."

"Why, where wert thou, then, neighbour?" said the smith; "for I saw you not, and I would have given the worth of the best suit of armour I ever wrought to have seen as stout a fellow as thou at my elbow."

"I was no farther off, however, honest smith; and whilst thou wert laying on blows as if on an anvil, I was parrying those that the rest of the villains aimed at thee behind thy back; and that is the cause thou sawest me not."

"I have heard of smiths of old time who had but one eye," said Henry; "I have two, but they are both set in my forehead, and so I could not see behind my back, neighbour."

"The truth is, however," persevered Master Oliver, "there I was, and I will give Master Bailie my account of the matter; for the smith and I were first up to the fray."

"Enough at present," said the bailie, waving to Master Proudpute an injunction of silence. "The precognition of Simon Glover and Henry Gow would bear out a matter less worthy of belief. And now, my masters, your opinion what should be done. Here are all our burgher rights broken through and insulted, and you may well fancy that it is by some man of power, since no less dared have attempted such an outrage. My masters, it is hard on flesh and blood to submit to this. The

laws have framed us of lower rank than the princes and nobles, yet it is against reason to suppose that we will suffer our houses to be broken into, and the honour of our women insulted, without some redress."

"It is not to be endured!" answered the citizens, unanimously.

Here Simon Glover interfered with a very anxious and ominous countenance. "I hope still that all was not meant so ill as it seemed to us, my worthy neighbours; and I for one would cheerfully forgive the alarm and disturbance to my poor house, providing the Fair City were not brought into jeopardy for me. I beseech you to consider who are to be our judges that are to hear the case, and give or refuse redress. I speak among neighbours and friends, and therefore I speak openly. The King, God bless him! is so broken in mind and body, that he will but turn us over to some great man amongst his counsellors who shall be in favour for the time. Perchance he will refer us to his brother the Duke of Albany, who will make our petition for righting of our wrongs the pretence for squeezing money out of us."

"We will none of Albany for our judge!" answered the meeting with the same unanimity as before.

"Or perhaps," added Simon, "he will bid the Duke of Rothsay take charge of it; and the wild young prince will regard the outrage as something for his gay companions to scoff at, and his minstrels to turn into song."

"Away with Rothsay! he is too gay to be our judge," again exclaimed the citizens.

Simon, emboldened by seeing he was reaching the point he aimed at, yet pronouncing the dreaded name with a half whisper, next added, "Would you like the Black Douglas better to deal with?"

There was no answer for a minute. They looked on each other with fallen countenances and blanched lips.

But Henry Smith spoke out boldly, and in a decided voice, the sentiments which all felt, but none else dared give words to: "The Black Douglas to judge betwixt a burgher and a gentleman, nay, a nobleman, for all I know or care! The black devil of hell sooner! You are mad, father Simon, so much as to name so wild a proposal."

There was again a silence of fear and uncertainty, which was at length broken by Bailie Craigdallie, who, looking very significantly to the speaker, replied, "You are confident in a stout doublet, neighbour Smith, or you would not talk so boldly."

"I am confident of a good heart under my doublet, such as it is, bailie," answered the undaunted Henry; "and though I speak but little, my mouth shall never be padlocked by any noble of them all."

"Wear a thick doublet, good Henry, or do not speak so loud," reiterated the bailie in the same significant tone. "There are Border men in the town who wear the bloody heart on their shoulder. But all this is no rede. What shall we do?"

"Short rede, good rede," said the smith. "Let us to our provost, and demand his countenance and assistance."

A murmur of applause went through the party, and Oliver Proudfoot exclaimed, "That is what I have been saying for this half hour, and not one of ye would listen to me. 'Let us go to our provost,' said I. 'He is a gentleman himself, and ought to come between the burgh and the nobles in all matters.'"

"Hush, neighbours—hush; be wary what you say or do," said a thin meagre figure of a man, whose diminutive person seemed still more reduced in size, and more assimilated to a shadow, by his efforts to assume an extreme degree of humility, and make himself, to suit his argument, look meaner yet, and yet more insignificant, than nature had made him.

"Pardon me," said he; "I am but a poor pottingar. Nevertheless, I have been bred in Paris, and learned my humanities and my cursus medendi as well as some that call themselves learned leeches. Methinks I can tent this wound, and treat it with emollients. Here is our friend Simon Glover, who is, as you all know, a man of worship. Think you he would not be the most willing of us all to pursue harsh courses here, since his family honour is so nearly concerned? And since he blanches away from the charge against these same revellers, consider if he may not have some good reason more than he cares to utter for letting the matter sleep. It is not for me to put my finger on the sore; but, alack! we all know that young maidens are what I call fugitive essences. Suppose now, an honest maiden—I mean in all innocence—leaves her window unlatched on St. Valentine's morn, that some gallant cavalier may—in all honesty, I mean—become her Valentine for the season, and suppose the gallant be discovered, may she not scream out as if the visit were unexpected, and—and—bray all this in a mortar, and then consider, will it be a matter to place the town in feud for?"

The pottingar delivered his opinion in a most insinuating manner; but he seemed to shrink into something less than his natural tenuity when he saw the blood rise in the old cheek of Simon Glover, and inflame to the temples the complexion of the redoubted smith.

The last, stepping forward, and turning a stern look on the alarmed pottingar, broke out as follows: "Thou walking skeleton! thou asthmatic gallipot! thou poisoner by profession! if I thought that the puff of vile breath thou hast left could blight for the tenth part of a minute the fair fame of Catharine Glover, I would pound thee, quacksalver! in thine own mortar, and beat up thy wretched carrion with flower of brimstone, the only real medicine in thy booth, to make a salve to rub mangy hounds with!"

"Hold, son Henry—hold!" cried the glover, in a tone of authority, "no man has title to speak of this matter but me. Worshipful Bailie Craigdallie, since such is the construction that is put upon my patience, I am willing to pursue this riot to the uttermost; and though the issue may prove that we had better have been patient, you will all see that my Catharine hath not by any lightness or folly of hers afforded grounds for this great scandal."

The bailie also interposed. "Neighbour Henry," said he, "we came here to consult, and not to quarrel. As one of the fathers of the Fair City, I command thee to forego all evil will and malice thou may have against Master Pottingar Dwining."

"He is too poor a creature, bailie," said Henry Gow, "for me to harbour feud with—I that could destroy him and his booth with one blow of my forehammer."

"Peace, then, and hear me," said the official. "We all are as much believers in the honour of the Fair Maiden of Perth as in that of our Blessed Lady." Here he crossed himself devoutly. "But touching our appeal to our provost, are you agreed, neighbours, to put matter like this into our provost's hand, being against a powerful noble, as is to be feared?"

"The provost being himself a nobleman," squeaked the pottingar, in some measure released from his terror by the intervention of the bailie. "God knows, I speak not to the disparagement of an honourable gentleman, whose forebears have held the office he now holds for many years—"

"By free choice of the citizens of Perth," said the smith, interrupting the speaker with the tones of his deep and decisive voice.

"Ay, surely," said the disconcerted orator, "by the voice of the citizens. How else? I pray you, friend Smith, interrupt me not. I speak to our worthy and eldest bailie, Craigdallie, according to my poor mind. I say that, come amongst us how he will, still this Sir Patrick Charteris is a nobleman, and hawks will not pick hawks' eyes out. He may well bear us out in a feud with the Highlandmen, and do the part of our provost and leader against them; but whether he that himself wears silk will take our part against brodered cloak and cloth of gold, though he may do so against tartan and Irish frieze, is something to be questioned. Take a fool's advice. We have saved our Maiden, of whom I never meant to speak harm, as truly I knew none. They have lost one man's hand, at least, thanks to Harry Smith—"

"And to me," added the little important bonnet maker.

"And to Oliver Proudfoot, as he tells us," continued the pottingar, who contested no man's claim to glory provided he was not himself compelled to tread the perilous paths which lead to it. "I say, neighbours, since they have left a hand as a pledge they will never come in Couvrefew Street again, why, in my simple mind, we were best to thank our stout townsman, and the town having the honour and these rakehells the loss, that we should hush the matter up and say no more about it."

These pacific counsels had their effect with some of the citizens, who began to nod and look exceedingly wise upon the advocate of acquiescence, with whom, notwithstanding the offence so lately given, Simon Glover seemed also to agree in opinion. But not so Henry Smith, who, seeing the consultation at a stand, took up the speech in his usual downright manner.

"I am neither the oldest nor the richest among you, neighbours, and I am not sorry for it. Years will come, if one lives to see them; and I can win and spend my penny like another, by the blaze of the furnace and the wind of the bellows. But no man ever saw me sit down with wrong done in word or deed to our fair town, if man's tongue and man's hand could right it. Neither will I sit down with this outrage, if I can help it. I will go to the provost myself, if no one will go with me; he is a

knight, it is true, and a gentleman of free and true born blood, as we all know, since Wallace's time, who settled his great grandsire amongst us. But if he were the proudest nobleman in the land, he is the Provost of Perth, and for his own honour must see the freedoms and immunities of the burgh preserved—ay, and I know he will. I have made a steel doublet for him, and have a good guess at the kind of heart that it was meant to cover."

"Surely," said Bailie Craigdallie, "it would be to no purpose to stir at court without Sir Patrick Charteris's countenance: the ready answer would be, 'Go to your provost, you borrel loons.' So, neighbours and townsmen, if you will stand by my side, I and our pottingar Dwining will repair presently to Kinfauns, with Sim Glover, the jolly smith, and gallant Oliver Proudpute, for witnesses to the onslaught, and speak with Sir Patrick Charteris, in name of the fair town."

"Nay," said the peaceful man of medicine, "leave me behind, I pray you: I lack audacity to speak before a belted knight."

"Never regard that, neighbour, you must go," said Bailie Craigdallie. "The town hold me a hot headed carle for a man of threescore; Sim Glover is the offended party; we all know that Harry Gow spoils more harness with his sword than he makes with his hammer and our neighbour Proudpute, who, take his own word, is at the beginning and end of every fray in Perth, is of course a man of action. We must have at least one advocate amongst us for peace and quietness; and thou, pottingar, must be the man. Away with you, sirs, get your boots and your beasts—horse and haddock, I say, and let us meet at the East Port; that is, if it is your pleasure, neighbours, to trust us with the matter."

"There can be no better rede, and we will all avouch it," said the citizens. "If the provost take our part, as the Fair Town hath a right to expect, we may bell the cat with the best of them."

"It is well, then, neighbours," answered the bailie; "so said, so shall be done. Meanwhile, I have called the whole town council together about this hour, and I have little doubt," looking around the company, "that, as so many of them who are in this place have resolved to consult with our provost, the rest will be compliant to the same resolution. And, therefore, neighbours, and good burghers of the Fair City of Perth, horse and haddock, as I said before, and meet me at the East Port."

A general acclamation concluded the sitting of this species of privy council, or Lords of the Articles; and they dispersed, the deputation to prepare for the journey, and the rest to tell their impatient wives and daughters of the measures they had taken to render their chambers safe in future against the intrusion of gallants at unseasonable hours.

While nags are saddling, and the town council debating, or rather putting in form what the leading members of their body had already adopted, it may be necessary, for the information of some readers, to state in distinct terms what is more circuitously intimated in the course of the former discussion.

It was the custom at this period, when the strength of the feudal aristocracy controlled the rights, and frequently insulted the privileges, of the royal burghs of Scotland, that the latter, where it was practicable, often chose their provost, or chief magistrate, not out of the order of the merchants, shopkeepers, and citizens, who inhabited the town itself, and filled up the roll of the ordinary magistracy, but elected to that preeminent state some powerful nobleman, or baron, in the neighbourhood of the burgh, who was expected to stand their friend at court in such matters as concerned their common weal, and to lead their civil militia to fight, whether in general battle or in private feud, reinforcing them with his own feudal retainers. This protection was not always gratuitous. The provosts sometimes availed themselves of their situation to an unjustifiable degree, and obtained grants of lands and tenements belonging to the common good, or public property of the burgh, and thus made the citizens pay dear for the countenance which they afforded. Others were satisfied to receive the powerful aid of the townsmen in their own feudal quarrels, with such other marks of respect and benevolence as the burgh over which they presided were willing to gratify them with, in order to secure their active services in case of necessity. The baron, who was the regular protector of a royal burgh, accepted such freewill offerings without scruple, and repaid them by defending the rights of the town by arguments in the council and by bold deeds in the field.

The citizens of the town, or, as they loved better to call it, the Fair City, of Perth, had for several generations found a protector and provost of this kind in the knightly family of Charteris, Lords of Kinfauns, in the neighbourhood of the burgh. It was scarce a century (in the time of Robert III) since the first of this distinguished family had settled in the strong castle which now belonged to them, with the picturesque and fertile scenes adjoining to it. But the history of the first settler, chivalrous and romantic in itself, was calculated to facilitate the settlement of an alien in the land in which his lot was cast. We relate it as it is given by an ancient and uniform tradition, which carries in it great indications of truth, and is warrant enough, perhaps, for its insertion in graver histories than the present.

During the brief career of the celebrated patriot Sir William Wallace, and when his arms had for a time expelled the English invaders from his native country, he is said to have undertaken a voyage to France, with a small band of trusty friends, to try what his presence (for he was respected through all countries for his prowess) might do to induce the French monarch to send to Scotland a body of auxiliary forces, or other assistance, to aid the Scots in regaining their independence.

The Scottish Champion was on board a small vessel, and steering for the port of Dieppe, when a sail appeared in the distance, which the mariners regarded, first with doubt and apprehension, and at last with confusion and dismay. Wallace demanded to know what was the cause of their alarm. The captain of the ship informed him that the tall vessel which was bearing down, with the purpose of boarding that which he commanded, was the ship of a celebrated rover, equally famed for his courage, strength of body, and successful piracies. It was commanded by a gentleman named Thomas de Longueville, a Frenchman by birth, but by practice one of those pirates who called themselves friends to the sea and enemies to all who sailed upon that element. He attacked and plundered vessels of all nations, like one of the ancient Norse sea kings, as they were termed, whose dominion was upon the mountain waves. The master added that no vessel could escape the rover by flight, so speedy was the bark he commanded; and that no crew, however hardy, could hope to resist him, when, as was his usual mode of combat, he threw himself on board at the head of his followers.

Wallace smiled sternly, while the master of the ship, with alarm in his countenance and tears in his eyes, described to him the certainty of their being captured by the Red Rover, a name given to De Longueville, because he usually displayed the blood red flag, which he had now hoisted.

"I will clear the narrow seas of this rover," said Wallace.

Then calling together some ten or twelve of his own followers, Boyd, Kerlie, Seton, and others, to whom the dust of the most desperate battle was like the breath of life, he commanded them to arm themselves, and lie flat upon the deck, so as to be out of sight. He ordered the mariners below, excepting such as were absolutely necessary to manage the vessel; and he gave the master instructions, upon pain of death, so to steer as that, while the vessel had an appearance of attempting to fly, he should in fact permit the Red Rover to come up with them and do his worst. Wallace himself then lay down on the deck, that nothing might be seen which could intimate any purpose of resistance. In a quarter of an hour De Longueville's vessel ran on board that of the Champion, and the Red Rover, casting out grappling irons to make sure of his prize, jumped on the deck in complete armour, followed by his men, who gave a terrible shout, as if victory had been already secured. But the armed Scots started up at once, and the rover found himself unexpectedly engaged with men accustomed to consider victory as secure when they were only opposed as one to two or three. Wallace himself rushed on the pirate captain, and a dreadful strife began betwixt them with such fury that the others suspended their own battle to look on, and seemed by common consent to refer the issue of the strife to the fate of the combat between the two chiefs. The pirate fought as well as man could do; but Wallace's strength was beyond that of ordinary mortals. He dashed the sword from the rover's hand, and placed him in such peril that, to avoid being cut down, he was fain to close with the Scottish Champion in hopes of overpowering him in the grapple. In this also he was foiled. They fell on the deck, locked in each other's arms, but the Frenchman fell undermost; and Wallace, fixing his grasp upon his gorget, compressed it so closely, notwithstanding it was made of the finest steel, that the blood gushed from his eyes, nose, and month, and he was only able to ask for quarter by signs. His men threw down their weapons and begged for mercy when they saw their leader thus severely handled. The victor granted them all their lives, but took possession of their vessel, and detained them prisoners.

When he came in sight of the French harbour, Wallace alarmed the place by displaying the rover's colours, as if De Longueville was coming to pillage the town. The bells were rung backward, horns were blown, and the citizens were hurrying to arms, when the scene changed. The Scottish Lion on his shield of gold was raised above the piratical flag, and announced that the Champion of Scotland was approaching, like a falcon with his prey in his clutch. He landed with his prisoner, and carried him to the court of France, where, at Wallace's request, the robberies which the pirate had committed were forgiven, and the king even conferred the honour of knighthood on Sir Thomas de Longueville, and offered to take him into his service. But the rover had contracted such a friendship for his

generous victor, that he insisted on uniting his fortunes with those of Wallace, with whom he returned to Scotland, and fought by his side in many a bloody battle, where the prowess of Sir Thomas de Longueville was remarked as inferior to that of none, save of his heroic conqueror. His fate also was more fortunate than that of his patron. Being distinguished by the beauty as well as strength of his person, he rendered himself so acceptable to a young lady, heiress of the ancient family of Charteris, that she chose him for her husband, bestowing on him with her hand the fair baronial Castle of Kinfauns, and the domains annexed to it. Their descendants took the name of Charteris, as connecting themselves with their maternal ancestors, the ancient proprietors of the property, though the name of Thomas de Longueville was equally honoured amongst them; and the large two handed sword with which he mowed the ranks of war was, and is still, preserved among the family muniments. Another account is, that the family name of De Longueville himself was Charteris. The estate afterwards passed to a family of Blairs, and is now the property of Lord Gray.

These barons of Kinfauns, from father to son, held, for several generations, the office of Provost of Perth, the vicinity of the castle and town rendering it a very convenient arrangement for mutual support. The Sir Patrick of this history had more than once led out the men of Perth to battles and skirmishes with the restless Highland depredators, and with other enemies, foreign and domestic. True it is, he used sometimes to be weary of the slight and frivolous complaints unnecessarily brought before him, and in which he was requested to interest himself. Hence he had sometimes incurred the charge of being too proud as a nobleman, or too indolent as a man of wealth, and one who was too much addicted to the pleasures of the field and the exercise of feudal hospitality, to bestir himself upon all and every occasion when the Fair Town would have desired his active interference. But, notwithstanding that this occasioned some slight murmuring, the citizens, upon any serious cause of alarm, were wont to rally around their provost, and were warmly supported by him both in council and action.

CHAPTER VIII.

*Within the bounds of Annandale
The gentle Johnstones ride;
They have been there a thousand years,
A thousand more they'll bide.*

Old Ballad.

The character and quality of Sir Patrick Charteris, the Provost of Perth, being such as we have sketched in the last chapter, let us now return to the deputation which was in the act of rendezvousing at the East Port, in order to wait upon that dignitary with their complaints at Kinfauns.

And first appeared Simon Glover, on a pacing palfrey, which had sometimes enjoyed the honour of bearing the fairer person as well as the lighter weight of his beautiful daughter. His cloak was muffled round the lower part of his face, as a sign to his friends not to interrupt him by any questions while he passed through the streets, and partly, perhaps, on account of the coldness of the weather. The deepest anxiety was seated on his brow, as if the more he meditated on the matter he was engaged in, the more difficult and perilous it appeared. He only greeted by silent gestures his friends as they came to the rendezvous.

A strong black horse, of the old Galloway breed, of an under size, and not exceeding fourteen hands, but high shouldered, strong limbed, well coupled, and round barrelled, bore to the East Port the gallant smith. A judge of the animal might see in his eye a spark of that vicious temper which is frequently the accompaniment of the form that is most vigorous and enduring; but the weight, the hand, and the seat of the rider, added to the late regular exercise of a long journey, had subdued his stubbornness for the present. He was accompanied by the honest bonnet maker, who being, as the reader is aware, a little round man, and what is vulgarly called duck legged, had planted himself like a red pincushion (for he was wrapped in a scarlet cloak, over which he had slung a hawking pouch), on the top of a great saddle, which he might be said rather to be perched upon than to bestride. The saddle and the man were girthed on the ridge bone of a great trampling Flemish mare, with a nose turned up in the air like a camel, a huge fleece of hair at each foot, and every hoof full as large in circumference as a frying pan. The contrast between the beast and the rider was so extremely extraordinary, that, whilst chance passengers contented themselves with wondering how he got up, his friends were anticipating with sorrow the perils which must attend his coming down again; for the high seated horseman's feet did not by any means come beneath the laps of the saddle. He had associated himself to the smith, whose motions he had watched for the purpose of joining him; for it was Oliver Proudpute's opinion that men of action showed to most advantage when beside each other; and he was delighted when some wag of the lower class had gravity enough to cry out, without laughing outright: "There goes the pride of Perth—there go the slashing craftsmen, the jolly Smith of the Wynd and the bold bonnet maker!"

It is true, the fellow who gave this all hail thrust his tongue in his cheek to some scapegraces like himself; but as the bonnet maker did not see this byplay, he generously threw him a silver penny to encourage his respect for martialists. This munificence occasioned their being followed by a crowd of boys, laughing and hallooing, until Henry Smith, turning back, threatened to switch the foremost of them—a resolution which they did not wait to see put in execution.

"Here are we the witnesses," said the little man on the large horse, as they joined Simon Glover at the East Port; "but where are they that should back us? Ah, brother Henry! authority is a load for an ass rather than a spirited horse: it would but clog the motions of such young fellows as you and me."

"I could well wish to see you bear ever so little of that same weight, worthy Master Proudpute," replied Henry Gow, "were it but to keep you firm in the saddle; for you bounce aloft as if you were dancing a jig on your seat, without any help from your legs."

"Ay—ay; I raise myself in my stirrups to avoid the jolting. She is cruelly hard set this mare of mine; but she has carried me in field and forest, and through some passages that were something perilous, so Jezabel and I part not. I call her Jezabel, after the Princess of Castile."

"Isabel, I suppose you mean," answered the smith.

"Ay—Isabel, or Jezabel—all the same, you know. But here comes Bailie Craigdallie at last, with that poor, creeping, cowardly creature the pottingar. They have brought two town officers with their partizans, to guard their fair persons, I suppose. If there is one thing I hate more than another, it is such a sneaking varlet as that Dwining."

"Have a care he does not hear you say so," said the smith, "I tell thee, bonnet maker, that there is more danger in yonder slight wasted anatomy than in twenty stout fellows like yourself."

"Pshaw! Bully Smith, you are but jesting with me," said Oliver, softening his voice, however, and looking towards the pottingar, as if to discover in what limb or lineament of his wasted face and form lay any appearance of the menaced danger; and his examination reassuring him, he answered boldly: "Blades and bucklers, man, I would stand the feud of a dozen such as Dwining. What could he do to any man with blood in his veins?"

"He could give him a dose of physic," answered the smith drily.

They had no time for further colloquy, for Bailie Craigdallie called to them to take the road to Kinfauns, and himself showed the example. As they advanced at a leisurely pace, the discourse turned on the reception which they were to expect from their provost, and the interest which he was likely to take in the aggression which they complained of. The glover seemed particularly desponding, and talked more than once in a manner which implied a wish that they would yet consent to let the matter rest. He did not speak out very plainly, however, fearful, perhaps, of the malignant interpretation which might be derived from any appearance of his flinching from the assertion of his daughter's reputation. Dwining seemed to agree with him in opinion, but spoke more cautiously than in the morning.

"After all," said the bailie, "when I think of all the propines and good gifts which have passed from the good town to my Lord Provost's, I cannot think he will be backward to show himself. More than one lusty boat, laden with Bordeaux wine, has left the South Shore to discharge its burden under the Castle of Kinfauns. I have some right to speak of that, who was the merchant importer."

"And," said Dwining, with his squeaking voice, "I could speak of delicate confections, curious comfits, loaves of wastel bread, and even cakes of that rare and delicious condiment which men call sugar, that have gone thither to help out a bridal banquet, or a kirstening feast, or suchlike. But, alack, Bailie Craigdallie, wine is drunk, comfits are eaten, and the gift is forgotten when the flavour is past away. Alas! neighbour, the banquet of last Christmas is gone like the last year's snow."

"But there have been gloves full of gold pieces," said the magistrate.

"I should know that who wrought them," said Simon, whose professional recollections still mingled with whatever else might occupy his mind. "One was a hawking glove for my lady. I made it something wide. Her ladyship found no fault, in consideration of the intended lining."

"Well, go to," said Bailie Craigdallie, "the less I lie; and if these are not to the fore, it is the provost's fault, and not the town's: they could neither be eat nor drunk in the shape in which he got them."

"I could speak of a brave armour too," said the smith; "but, cogan na schie! [Peace or war, I care not!] as John Highlandman says—I think the knight of Kinfauns will do his devoir by the burgh in peace or war; and it is needless to be reckoning the town's good deeds till we see him thankless for them."

"So say I," cried our friend Proudpute, from the top of his mare. "We roystering blades never bear so base a mind as to count for wine and walnuts with a friend like Sir Patrick Charteris. Nay, trust me, a good woodsman like Sir Patrick will prize the right of hunting and sporting over the lands of the burgh as an high privilege, and one which, his Majesty the King's Grace excepted, is neither granted to lord nor loon save to our provost alone."

As the bonnet maker spoke, there was heard on the left hand the cry of, "So so—waw waw—haw," being the shout of a falconer to his hawk.

"Methinks yonder is a fellow using the privilege you mention, who, from his appearance, is neither king nor provost," said the smith.

"Ay, marry, I see him," said the bonnet maker, who imagined the occasion presented a prime opportunity to win honour. "Thou and I, jolly smith, will prick towards him and put him to the question."

"Have with you, then," cried the smith; and his companion spurred his mare and went off, never doubting that Gow was at his heels.

But Craigdallie caught Henry's horse by the reins. "Stand fast by the standard," he said; "let us see the luck of our light horseman. If he procures himself a broken pate he will be quieter for the rest of the day."

"From what I already see," said the smith, "he may easily come by such a boon. Yonder fellow, who stops so impudently to look at us, as if he were engaged in the most lawful sport in the world—I guess him, by his trotting hobbler, his rusty head piece with the cock's feather, and long two handed sword, to be the follower of some of the southland lords—men who live so near the Southron, that the black jack is never off their backs, and who are as free of their blows as they are light in their fingers."

Whilst they were thus speculating on the issue of the rencounter the valiant bonnet maker began to pull up Jezabel, in order that the smith, who he still concluded was close behind, might overtake him, and either advance first or at least abreast of himself. But when he saw him at a hundred yards distance, standing composedly with the rest of the group, the flesh of the champion, like that of the old Spanish general, began to tremble, in anticipation of the dangers into which his own venturesome spirit was about to involve it. Yet the consciousness of being countenanced by the neighbourhood of so many friends, the hopes that the appearance of such odds must intimidate the single intruder, and the shame of abandoning an enterprise in which he had volunteered, and when so many persons must witness his disgrace, surmounted the strong inclination which prompted him to wheel Jezabel to the right about, and return to the friends whose protection he had quitted, as fast as her legs could carry them. He accordingly continued his direction towards the stranger, who increased his alarm considerably by putting his little nag in motion, and riding to meet him at a brisk trot. On observing this apparently offensive movement, our hero looked over his left shoulder more than once, as if reconnoitring the ground for a retreat, and in the mean while came to a decided halt. But the Philistine was upon him ere the bonnet maker could decide whether to fight or fly, and a very ominous looking Philistine he was. His figure was gaunt and lathy, his visage marked by two or three ill favoured scars, and the whole man had much the air of one accustomed to say, "Stand and deliver," to a true man.

This individual began the discourse by exclaiming, in tones as sinister as his looks, "The devil catch you for a cuckoo, why do you ride across the moor to spoil my sport?"

"Worthy stranger," said our friend, in the tone of pacific remonstrance, "I am Oliver Proudpute, a burgess of Perth, and a man of substance; and yonder is the worshipful Adam Craigdallie, the oldest bailie of the burgh, with the fighting Smith of the Wynd, and three or four armed men more, who desire to know your name, and how you come to take your pleasure over these lands belonging to the burgh of Perth; although, natheless, I will answer for them, it is not their wish to quarrel with a gentleman, or stranger for any accidental trespass; only it is their use and wont not to grant such leave, unless it is duly asked; and—and—therefore I desire to know your name, worthy sir."

The grim and loathly aspect with which the falconer had regarded Oliver Proudpute during his harangue had greatly disconcerted him, and altogether altered the character of the inquiry which, with Henry Gow to back him, he would probably have thought most fitting for the occasion.

The stranger replied to it, modified as it was, with a most inauspicious grin, which the scars of his visage made appear still more repulsive. "You want to know my name? My name is the Devil's Dick of Hellgarth, well known in Annandale for a gentle Johnstone. I follow the stout Laird of Wamphray, who rides with his kinsman the redoubted Lord of Johnstone, who is banded with the doughty Earl of Douglas; and the earl and the lord, and the laird and I, the esquire, fly our hawks where we find our game, and ask no man whose ground we ride over."

"I will do your message, sir," replied Oliver Proudpute, meekly enough; for he began to be very desirous to get free of the embassy which he had so rashly undertaken, and was in the act of turning his horse's head, when the Annandale man added:

"And take you this to boot, to keep you in mind that you met the Devil's Dick, and to teach you another time to beware how you spoil the sport of any one who wears the flying spur on his shoulder."

With these words he applied two or three smart blows of his riding rod upon the luckless bonnet maker's head and person. Some of them lighted upon Jezabel, who, turning sharply round, laid her rider upon the moor, and galloped back towards the party of citizens.

Proudpute, thus overthrown, began to cry for assistance in no very manly voice, and almost in the same breath to whimper for mercy; for his antagonist, dismounting almost as soon as he fell, offered a whinger, or large wood knife, to his throat, while he rifled the pockets of the unlucky citizen, and even examined his hawking bag, swearing two or three grisly oaths, that he would have what it contained, since the wearer had interrupted his sport. He pulled the belt rudely off, terrifying the prostrate bonnet maker still more by the regardless violence which he used, as, instead of taking the pains to unbuckle the strap, he drew till the fastening gave way. But apparently it contained nothing to his mind. He threw it carelessly from him, and at the same time suffered the dismounted cavalier to rise, while he himself remounted his hobbler, and looked towards the rest of Oliver's party, who were now advancing.

When they had seen their delegate overthrown, there was some laughter; so much had the vaunting humor of the bonnet maker prepared his friends to rejoice when, as Henry Smith termed it, they saw the Oliver meet with a Rowland. But when the bonnet maker's adversary was seen to bestride him, and handle him in the manner described, the armourer could hold out no longer.

"Please you, good Master Bailie, I cannot endure to see our townsman beaten and rifled, and like to be murdered before us all. It reflects upon the Fair Town, and if it is neighbour Proudpute's misfortune, it is our shame. I must to his rescue."

"We will all go to his rescue," answered Bailie Craigdallie; "but let no man strike without order from me. We have more feuds on our hands, it is to be feared, than we have strength to bring to good end. And therefore I charge you all, more especially you, Henry of the Wynd, in the name of the Fair City, that you make no stroke but in self defence."

They all advanced, therefore, in a body; and the appearance of such a number drove the plunderer from his booty. He stood at gaze, however, at some distance, like the wolf, which, though it retreats before the dogs, cannot be brought to absolute flight.

Henry, seeing this state of things, spurred his horse and advanced far before the rest of the party, up towards the scene of Oliver Proudpute's misfortune. His first task was to catch Jezabel by the flowing rein, and his next to lead her to meet her discomfited master, who was crippling towards him, his clothes much soiled with his fall, his eyes streaming with tears, from pain as well as mortification, and altogether exhibiting an aspect so unlike the spruce and dapper importance of his ordinary appearance, that the honest smith felt compassion for the little man, and some remorse at having left him exposed to such disgrace. All men, I believe, enjoy an ill natured joke. The difference is, that an ill natured person can drink out to the very dregs the amusement which it affords, while the better moulded mind soon loses the sense of the ridiculous in sympathy for the pain of the sufferer.

"Let me pitch you up to your saddle again, neighbour," said the smith, dismounting at the same time, and assisting Oliver to scramble into his war saddle, as a monkey might have done.

"May God forgive you, neighbour Smith, for not backing of me! I would not have believed in it, though fifty credible witnesses had sworn it of you."

Such were the first words, spoken in sorrow more than anger, by which the dismayed Oliver vented his feelings.

"The bailie kept hold of my horse by the bridle; and besides," Henry continued, with a smile, which even his compassion could not suppress, "I thought you would have accused me of diminishing your honour, if I brought you aid against a single man. But cheer up! the villain took foul odds of you, your horse not being well at command."

"That is true—that is true," said Oliver, eagerly catching at the apology.

"And yonder stands the faitour, rejoicing at the mischief he has done, and triumphing in your overthrow, like the king in the romance, who played upon the fiddle whilst a city was burning. Come thou with me, and thou shalt see how we will handle him. Nay, fear not that I will desert thee this time."

So saying, he caught Jezabel by the rein, and galloping alongside of her, without giving Oliver time to express a negative, he rushed towards the Devil's Dick, who had halted on the top of a rising ground at some distance. The gentle Johnstone, however, either that he thought the contest unequal, or that he had fought enough for the day, snapping his fingers and throwing his hand out with an air of defiance, spurred his horse into a neighbouring bog, through which he seemed to flutter like a wild duck, swinging his lure round his head, and whistling to his hawk all the while, though any other horse and rider must have been instantly bogged up to the saddle girths.

"There goes a thoroughbred moss trooper," said the smith. "That fellow will fight or flee as suits his humor, and there is no use to pursue him, any more than to hunt a wild goose. He has got your purse, I doubt me, for they seldom leave off till they are full handed."

"Ye—ye—yes," said Proudpute, in a melancholy tone, "he has got my purse; but there is less matter since he hath left the hawking bag."

"Nay, the hawking bag had been an emblem of personal victory, to be sure—a trophy, as the minstrels call it."

"There is more in it than that, friend," said Oliver, significantly.

"Why, that is well, neighbour: I love to hear you speak in your own scholarly tone again. Cheer up, you have seen the villain's back, and regained the trophies you had lost when taken at advantage."

"Ah, Henry Gow—Henry Gow—" said the bonnet maker, and stopped short with a deep sigh, nearly amounting to a groan.

"What is the matter?" asked his friend—"what is it you vex yourself about now?"

"I have some suspicion, my dearest friend, Henry Smith, that the villain fled for fear of you, not of me."

"Do not think so," replied the armourer: "he saw two men and fled, and who can tell whether he fled for one or the other? Besides, he knows by experience your strength and activity: we all saw how you kicked and struggled when you were on the ground."

"Did I?" said poor Proudpute. "I do not remember it, but I know it is my best point: I am a strong dog in the loins. But did they all see it?"

"All as much as I," said the smith, smothering an inclination to laughter.

"But thou wilt remind them of it?"

"Be assured I will," answered Henry, "and of thy desperate rally even now. Mark what I say to Bailie Craigdallie, and make the best of it."

"It is not that I require any evidence in thy favour, for I am as brave by nature as most men in Perth; but only—" Here the man of valour paused.

"But only what?" inquired the stout armourer.

"But only I am afraid of being killed. To leave my pretty wife and my young family, you know, would be a sad change, Smith. You will know this when it is your own case, and will feel abated in courage."

"It is like that I may," said the armourer, musing.

"Then I am so accustomed to the use of arms, and so well breathed, that few men can match me. It's all here," said the little man, expanding his breast like a trussed fowl, and patting himself with his hands—"here is room for all the wind machinery."

"I dare say you are long breathed—long winded; at least your speech bewrays—"

"My speech! You are a wag—But I have got the stern post of a dromond brought up the river from Dundee."

"The stern post of a Drummond!" exclaimed the armourer; "conscience, man, it will put you in feud with the whole clan—not the least wrathful in the country, as I take it."

"St. Andrew, man, you put me out! I mean a dromond—that is, a large ship. I have fixed this post in my yard, and had it painted and carved something like a soldan or Saracen, and with him I breathe myself, and will wield my two handed sword against him, thrust or point, for an hour together."

"That must make you familiar with the use of your weapon," said the smith.

"Ay, marry does it; and sometimes I will place you a bonnet—an old one, most likely—on my soldan's head, and cleave it with such a downright blow that in troth, the infidel has but little of his skull remaining to hit at."

"That is unlucky, for you will lose your practice," said Henry. "But how say you, bonnet maker? I will put on my head piece and corselet one day, and you shall hew at me, allowing me my broadsword to parry and pay back? Eh, what say you?"

"By no manner of means, my dear friend. I should do you too much evil; besides, to tell you the truth, I strike far more freely at a helmet or bonnet when it is set on my wooden soldan; then I am sure to fetch it down. But when there is a plume of feathers in it that nod, and two eyes gleaming fiercely from under the shadow of the visor, and when the whole is dancing about here and there, I acknowledge it puts out my hand of fence."

"So, if men would but stand stock still like your soldan, you would play the tyrant with them, Master Proudpute?"

"In time, and with practice, I conclude I might," answered Oliver. "But here we come up with the rest of them. Bailie Craigdallie looks angry, but it is not his kind of anger that frightens me."

You are to recollect, gentle reader, that as soon as the bailie and those who attended him saw that the smith had come up to the forlorn bonnet maker, and that the stranger had retreated, they gave themselves no trouble about advancing further to his assistance, which they regarded as quite ensured by the presence of the redoubted Henry Gow. They had resumed their straight road to Kinfauns, desirous that nothing should delay the execution of their mission. As some time had elapsed ere the bonnet maker and the smith rejoined the party, Bailie Craigdallie asked them, and Henry Smith in particular, what they meant by dallying away precious time by riding uphill after the falconer.

"By the mass, it was not my fault, Master Bailie," replied the smith. "If ye will couple up an ordinary Low Country greyhound with a Highland wolf dog, you must not blame the first of them for taking the direction in which it pleases the last to drag him on. It was so, and not otherwise, with my neighbour Oliver Proudpute. He no sooner got up from the ground, but he mounted his mare like a flash of lightning, and, enraged at the unknighly advantage which yonder rascal had taken of his stumbling horse, he flew after him like a dromedary. I could not but follow, both to prevent a second stumble and secure our over bold friend and champion from the chance of some ambush at the top of the hill. But the villain, who is a follower of some Lord of the Marches, and wears a winged spur for his cognizance, fled from our neighbour like fire from flint."

The senior bailie of Perth listened with surprise to the legend which it had pleased Gow to circulate; for, though not much caring for the matter, he had always doubted the bonnet maker's romancing account of his own exploits, which hereafter he must hold as in some degree orthodox.

The shrewd old glover looked closer into the matter. "You will drive the poor bonnet maker mad," he whispered to Henry, "and set him a-ringing his clapper as if he were a town bell on a rejoicing day, when for order and decency it were better he were silent."

"Oh, by Our Lady, father," replied the smith, "I love the poor little braggadocio, and could not think of his sitting rueful and silent in the provost's hall, while all the rest of them, and in especial that venomous pottingar, were telling their mind."

"Thou art even too good natured a fellow, Henry," answered Simon. "But mark the difference betwixt these two men. The harmless little bonnet maker assumes the airs of a dragon, to disguise his natural cowardice; while the pottingar wilfully desires to show himself timid, poor spirited, and humble, to conceal the danger of his temper. The adder is not the less deadly that he creeps under a stone. I tell thee, son Henry, that, for all his sneaking looks and timorous talking, this wretched anatomy loves mischief more than he fears danger. But here we stand in front of the provost's castle; and a lordly place is Kinfauns, and a credit to the city it is, to have the owner of such a gallant castle for its chief magistrate."

"A goodly fortalice, indeed," said the smith, looking at the broad winding Tay, as it swept under the bank on which the castle stood, like its modern successor, and seemed the queen of the valley, although, on the opposite side of the river, the strong walls of Elcho appeared to dispute the pre-eminence. Elcho, however, was in that age a peaceful nunnery, and the walls with which it was surrounded were the barriers of secluded vestals, not the bulwarks of an armed garrison.

"Tis a brave castle," said the armourer, again looking at the towers of Kinfauns, "and the breastplate and target of the bonny course of the Tay. It were worth lipping a good blade, before wrong were offered to it."

The porter of Kinfauns, who knew from a distance the persons and characters of the party, had already opened the courtyard gate for their entrance, and sent notice to Sir Patrick Charteris that the eldest bailie of Perth, with some other good citizens, were approaching the castle. The good knight, who was getting ready for a hawking party, heard the intimation with pretty much the same feelings that the modern representative of a burgh hears of the menaced visitation of a party of his worthy electors, at a time rather unseasonable for their reception. That is, he internally devoted the intruders to Mahound and Termagaunt, and outwardly gave orders to receive them with all decorum and civility; commanded the sewers to bring hot venison steaks and cold baked meats into the knightly hall with all despatch, and the butler to broach his casks, and do his duty; for if the Fair City of Perth sometimes filled his cellar, her citizens were always equally ready to assist at emptying his flagons.

The good burghers were reverently marshalled into the hall, where the knight, who was in a riding habit, and booted up to the middle of his thighs, received them with a mixture of courtesy and patronising condescension; wishing them all the while at the bottom of the Tay, on account of the interruption their arrival gave to his proposed amusement of the morning. He met them in the midst of the hall, with bare head and bonnet in hand, and some such salutation as the following:

"Ha, my Master Eldest Bailie, and you, worthy Simon Glover, fathers of the Fair City, and you, my learned pottingar, and you, stout smith, and my slashing bonnet maker too, who cracks more skulls than he covers, how come I to have the pleasure of seeing so many friends so early? I was thinking to see my hawks fly, and your company will make the sport more pleasant—(Aside, I trust in Our Lady they may break their necks!)—that is, always, unless the city have any commands to lay on me. Butler Gilbert, despatch, thou knave. But I hope you have no more grave errand than to try if the malvoisie holds its flavour?"

The city delegates answered to their provost's civilities by inclinations and congees, more or less characteristic, of which the pottingar's bow was the lowest and the smith's the least ceremonious. Probably he knew his own value as a fighting man upon occasion. To the general compliment the elder bailie replied.

"Sir Patrick Charteris, and our noble Lord Provost," said Craigdallie, gravely, "had our errand been to enjoy the hospitality with which we have been often regaled here, our manners would have taught us to tarry till your lordship had invited us, as on other occasions. And as to hawking, we have had enough on't for one morning; since a wild fellow, who was flying a falcon hard by on the moor, unhorsed and cudgelled our worthy friend Oliver Bonnet Maker, or Proudpute, as some men call him, merely because he questioned him, in your honour's name, and the town of Perth's, who or what he was that took so much upon him."

"And what account gave he of himself?" said the provost. "By St. John! I will teach him to forestall my sport!"

"So please your lordship," said the bonnet maker, "he did take me at disadvantage. But I got on horseback again afterwards, and pricked after him gallantly. He calls himself Richard the Devil."

"How, man! he that the rhymes and romances are made on?" said the provost. "I thought that smaik's name had been Robert."

"I trow they be different, my lord. I only graced this fellow with the full title, for indeed he called himself the Devil's Dick, and said he was a Johnstone, and a follower of the lord of that name. But I put him back into the bog, and recovered my hawking bag, which he had taken when I was at disadvantage."

Sir Patrick paused for an instant. "We have heard," said he, "of the Lord of Johnstone, and of his followers. Little is to be had by meddling with them. Smith, tell me, did you endure this?"

"Ay, faith did I, Sir Patrick, having command from my betters not to help."

"Well, if thou satst down with it," said the provost, "I see not why we should rise up; especially as Master Oliver Proudpute, though taken at advantage at first, has, as he has told us; recovered his reputation and that of the burgh. But here comes the wine at length. Fill round to my good friends and guests till the wine leap over the cup. Prosperity to St. Johnston, and a merry welcome to you all, my honest friends! And now sit you to eat a morsel, for the sun is high up, and it must be long since you thrifty men have broken your fast."

"Before we eat, my Lord Provost," said the bailie, "let us tell you the pressing cause of our coming, which as yet we have not touched upon."

"Nay, prithee, bailie," said the provost, "put it off till thou hast eaten. Some complaint against the rascally jackmen and retainers of the nobles, for playing at football on the streets of the burgh, or some such goodly matter."

"No, my lord," said Craigdallie, stoutly and firmly. "It is the jackmen's masters of whom we complain, for playing at football with the honour of our families, and using as little ceremony with our daughters' sleeping chambers as if they were in a bordel at Paris. A party of reiving night walkers—courtiers and men of rank, as there is but too much reason to believe—attempted to scale the windows of Simon Glover's house last night; they stood in their defence with drawn weapons when they were interrupted by Henry Smith, and fought till they were driven off by the rising of the citizens."

"How!" said Sir Patrick, setting down the cup which he was about to raise to his head. "Cock's body, make that manifest to me, and, by the soul of Thomas of Longueville, I will see you righted with my best power, were it to cost me life and land. Who attests this? Simon Glover, you are held an honest and a cautious man—do you take the truth of this charge upon your conscience?"

"My lord," said Simon, "understand I am no willing complainer in this weighty matter. No damage has arisen, save to the breakers of the peace themselves. I fear only great power could have encouraged such lawless audacity; and I were unwilling to put feud between my native town and some powerful nobleman on my account. But it has been said that, if I hang back in prosecuting this complaint, it will be as much as admitting that my daughter expected such a visit, which is a direct falsehood. Therefore, my lord, I will tell your lordship what happened, so far as I know, and leave further proceeding to your wisdom."

He then told, from point to point, all that he had seen of the attack.

Sir Patrick Charteris, listening with much attention, seemed particularly struck with the escape of the man who had been made prisoner.

"Strange," he said, "that you did not secure him when you had him. Did you not look at him so as to know him again?"

"I had but the light of a lantern, my Lord Provost; and as to suffering him to escape, I was alone," said the glover, "and old. But yet I might have kept him, had I not heard my daughter shriek in the upper room; and ere I had returned from her chamber the man had escaped through the garden."

"Now, armourer, as a true man and a good soldier," said Sir Patrick, "tell me what you know of this matter."

Henry Gow, in his own decided style, gave a brief but clear narrative of the whole affair.

Honest Proudfoote being next called upon, began his statement with an air of more importance. "Touching this awful and astounding tumult within the burgh, I cannot altogether, it is true, say with Henry Gow that I saw the very beginning. But it will not be denied that I beheld a great part of the latter end, and especially that I procured the evidence most effectual to convict the knaves."

"And what is it, man?" said Sir Patrick Charteris. "Never lose time fumbling and prating about it. What is it?"

"I have brought your lordship, in this pouch, what one of the rogues left behind him," said the little man. "It is a trophy which, in good faith and honest truth, I do confess I won not by the blade, but I claim the credit of securing it with that presence of mind which few men possess amidst flashing torches and clashing weapons. I secured it, my lord, and here it is."

So saying, he produced, from the hawking pouch already mentioned, the stiffened hand which had been found on the scene of the skirmish.

"Nay, bonnet maker," said the provost, "I'll warrant thee man enough to secure a rogue's hand after it is cut from the body. What do you look so busily for in your bag?"

"There should have been—there was—a ring, my lord, which was on the knave's finger. I fear I have been forgetful, and left it at home, for I took it off to show to my wife, as she cared not to look upon the dead hand, as women love not such sights. But yet I thought I had put it on the finger again. Nevertheless, it must, I bethink me, be at home. I will ride back for it, and Henry Smith will trot along with me."

"We will all trot with thee," said Sir Patrick Charteris, "since I am for Perth myself. Look you, honest burghers and good neighbours of Perth; you may have thought me unapt to be moved by light complaints and trivial breaches of your privileges, such as small trespasses on your game, the barons' followers playing football in the street, and suchlike. But, by the soul of Thomas of Longueville, you shall not find Patrick Charteris slothful in a matter of this importance. This hand," he continued, holding up the severed joint, "belongs to one who hath worked no drudgery. We will put it in a way to be known and claimed of the owner, if his comrades of the revel have but one spark of honour in them. Hark you, Gerard; get me some half score of good men instantly to horse, and let them take jack and spear. Meanwhile, neighbours, if feud arise out of this, as is most likely, we must come to each other's support. If my poor house be attacked, how many men will you bring to my support?"

The burghers looked at Henry Gow, to whom they instinctively turned when such matters were discussed.

"I will answer," said he, "for fifty good fellows to be assembled ere the common bell has rung ten minutes; for a thousand, in the space of an hour."

"It is well," answered the gallant provost; "and in the case of need, I will come to aid the Fair City with such men as I can make. And now, good friends, let us to horse."

CHAPTER IX.

*If I know how to manage these affairs,
Thus thrust disorderly upon my hands,
Never believe me—*

Richard II.

It was early in the afternoon of St. Valentine's Day that the prior of the Dominicans was engaged in discharge of his duties as confessor to a penitent of no small importance. This was an elderly man, of a goodly presence, a florid and healthful cheek, the under part of which was shaded by a venerable white beard, which descended over his bosom. The large and clear blue eyes, with the broad expanse of brow, expressed dignity; but it was of a character which seemed more accustomed to receive honours voluntarily paid than to enforce them when they were refused. The good nature of the expression was so great as to approach to defenceless simplicity or weakness of character, unfit, it might be inferred, to repel intrusion or subdue resistance. Amongst the grey locks of this personage was placed a small circlet or coronet of gold, upon a blue fillet. His beads, which were large and conspicuous, were of native gold, rudely enough wrought, but ornamented with Scottish pearls of rare size and beauty. These were his only ornaments; and a long crimson robe of silk, tied by a sash of the same colour, formed his attire. His shrift being finished, he arose heavily from the embroidered cushion upon which he kneeled during his confession, and, by the assistance of a crutch headed staff of ebony, moved, lame and ungracefully, and with apparent pain, to a chair of state, which, surmounted by a canopy, was placed for his accommodation by the chimney of the lofty and large apartment.

This was Robert, third of that name, and the second of the ill fated family of Stuart who filled the throne of Scotland. He had many virtues, and was not without talent; but it was his great misfortune that, like others of his devoted line, his merits were not of a kind suited to the part which he was called upon to perform in life. The king of so fierce a people as the Scots then were ought to have been warlike, prompt, and active, liberal in rewarding services, strict in punishing crimes, one whose conduct should make him feared as well as beloved. The qualities of Robert the Third were the reverse of all these. In youth he had indeed seen battles; but, without incurring disgrace, he had never manifested the chivalrous love of war and peril, or the eager desire to distinguish himself by dangerous achievements, which that age expected from all who were of noble birth and had claims to authority.

Besides, his military career was very short. Amidst the tumult of a tournament, the young Earl of Carrick, such was then his title, received a kick from the horse of Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith, in consequence of which he was lame for the rest of his life, and absolutely disabled from taking share either in warfare or in the military sports and tournaments which were its image. As Robert had never testified much predilection for violent exertion, he did not probably much regret the incapacities which exempted him from these active scenes. But his misfortune, or rather its consequences, lowered him in the eyes of a fierce nobility and warlike people. He was obliged to repose the principal charge of his affairs now in one member, now in another, of his family, sometimes with the actual rank, and always with the power, of lieutenant general of the kingdom. His paternal affection would have induced him to use the assistance of his eldest son, a young man of spirit and talent, whom in fondness he had created Duke of Rothsay, in order to give him the present possession of a dignity next to that of the throne. But the young prince's head was too giddy, and his hand too feeble to wield with dignity the delegated sceptre. However fond of power, pleasure was the Prince's favourite pursuit; and the court was disturbed, and the country scandalised, by the number of fugitive amours and extravagant revels practised by him who should have set an example of order and regularity to the youth of the kingdom.

The license and impropriety of the Duke of Rothsay's conduct was the more reprehensible in the public view, that he was a married person; although some, over whom his youth, gaiety, grace, and good temper had obtained influence, were of opinion that an excuse for his libertinism might be found in the circumstances of the marriage itself. They reminded each other that his nuptials were entirely conducted by his uncle, the Duke of Albany, by whose counsels the infirm and timid King was much governed at the time, and who had the character of managing the temper of his brother and sovereign, so as might be most injurious to the interests and prospects of the young heir. By Albany's machinations the hand of the heir apparent was in a manner put up to sale, as it was understood publicly that the nobleman in Scotland who should give the largest dower to his daughter might aspire to raise her to the bed of the Duke of Rothsay.

In the contest for preference which ensued, George Earl of Dunbar and March, who possessed, by himself or his vassals, a great part of the eastern frontier, was preferred to other competitors; and his daughter was, with the mutual goodwill of the young couple, actually contracted to the Duke of Rothsay.

But there remained a third party to be consulted, and that was no other than the tremendous Archibald Earl of Douglas, terrible alike from the extent of his lands, from the numerous offices and jurisdictions with which he was invested, and from his personal qualities of wisdom and valour, mingled with indomitable pride, and more than the feudal love of vengeance. The Earl was also nearly related to the throne, having married the eldest daughter of the reigning monarch.

After the espousals of the Duke of Rothsay with the Earl of March's daughter, Douglas, as if he had postponed his share in the negotiation to show that it could not be concluded with any one but himself, entered the lists to break off the contract. He tendered a larger dower with his daughter Marjory than the Earl of March

had proffered; and, secured by his own cupidity and fear of the Douglas, Albany exerted his influence with the timid monarch till he was prevailed upon to break the contract with the Earl of March, and wed his son to Marjory Douglas, a woman whom Rothsay could not love. No apology was offered to the Earl of March, excepting that the espousals betwixt the Prince and Elizabeth of Dunbar had not been approved by the States of Parliament, and that till such ratification the contract was liable to be broken off. The Earl deeply resented the wrong done to himself and his daughter, and was generally understood to study revenge, which his great influence on the English frontier was likely to place within his power.

In the mean time, the Duke of Rothsay, incensed at the sacrifice of his hand and his inclinations to this state intrigue, took his own mode of venting his displeasure, by neglecting his wife, contemning his formidable and dangerous father in law, and showing little respect to the authority of the King himself, and none whatever to the remonstrances of Albany, his uncle, whom he looked upon as his confirmed enemy.

Amid these internal dissensions of his family, which extended themselves through his councils and administration, introducing everywhere the baneful effects of uncertainty and disunion, the feeble monarch had for some time been supported by the counsels of his queen, Annabella, a daughter of the noble house of Drummond, gifted with a depth of sagacity and firmness of mind which exercised some restraint over the levities of a son who respected her, and sustained on many occasions the wavering resolution of her royal husband. But after her death the imbecile sovereign resembled nothing so much as a vessel drifted from her anchors, and tossed about amidst contending currents. Abstractedly considered, Robert might be said to doat upon his son, to entertain respect and awe for the character of his brother Albany, so much more decisive than his own, to fear the Douglas with a terror which was almost instinctive; and to suspect the constancy of the bold but fickle Earl of March. But his feelings towards these various characters were so mixed and complicated, that from time to time they showed entirely different from what they really were; and according to the interest which had been last exerted over his flexible mind, the King would change from an indulgent to a strict and even cruel father, from a confiding to a jealous brother, or from a benignant and bountiful to a grasping and encroaching sovereign. Like the chameleon, his feeble mind reflected the colour of that firmer character upon which at the time he reposed for counsel and assistance. And when he disused the advice of one of his family, and employed the counsel of another, it was no unwonted thing to see a total change of measures, equally disrespectful to the character of the King and dangerous to the safety of the state.

It followed as a matter of course that the clergy of the Catholic Church acquired influence over a man whose intentions were so excellent, but whose resolutions were so infirm. Robert was haunted, not only with a due sense of the errors he had really committed, but with the tormenting apprehensions of those peccadilloes which beset a superstitious and timid mind. It is scarce necessary, therefore, to add, that the churchmen of various descriptions had no small influence over this easy tempered prince, though, indeed, theirs was, at that period, an influence from which few or none escaped, however resolute and firm of purpose in affairs of a temporal character. We now return from this long digression, without which what we have to relate could not perhaps have been well understood.

The King had moved with ungraceful difficulty to the cushioned chair which, under a state or canopy, stood prepared for his accommodation, and upon which he sank down with enjoyment, like an indolent man, who had been for some time confined to a constrained position. When seated, the gentle and venerable looks of the good old man showed benevolence. The prior, who now remained standing opposite to the royal seat, with an air of deep deference which cloaked the natural haughtiness of his carriage, was a man betwixt forty and fifty years of age, but every one of whose hairs still retained their natural dark colour. Acute features and a penetrating look attested the talents by which the venerable father had acquired his high station in the community over which he presided; and, we may add, in the councils of the kingdom, in whose service they were often exercised. The chief objects which his education and habits taught him to keep in view were the extension of the dominion and the wealth of the church, and the suppression of heresy, both of which he endeavoured to accomplish by all the means which his situation afforded him. But he honoured his religion by the sincerity of his own belief, and by the morality which guided his conduct in all ordinary situations. The faults of the Prior Anselm, though they led him into grievous error, and even cruelty, were perhaps rather those of his age and profession; his virtues were his own.

"These things done," said the King, "and the lands I have mentioned secured by my gift to this monastery, you are of opinion, father, that I stand as much in the good graces of our Holy Mother Church as to term myself her dutiful son?"

"Surely, my liege," said the prior; "would to God that all her children brought to the efficacious sacrament of confession as deep a sense of their errors, and as much will to make amends for them. But I speak these comforting words, my liege, not to Robert King of Scotland, but only to my humble and devout penitent, Robert Stuart of Carrick."

"You surprise me, father," answered the King: "I have little check on my conscience for aught that I have done in my kingly office, seeing that I use therein less mine own opinion than the advice of the most wise counsellors."

"Even therein lieth the danger, my liege," replied the prior. "The Holy Father recognises in your Grace, in every thought, word, and action, an obedient vassal of the Holy Church. But there are perverse counsellors, who obey the instinct of their wicked hearts, while they abuse the good nature and ductility of their monarch, and, under colour of serving his temporal interests, take steps which are prejudicial to those that last to eternity."

King Robert raised himself upright in his chair, and assumed an air of authority, which, though it well became him, he did not usually display.

"Prior Anselm," he said, "if you have discovered anything in my conduct, whether as a king or a private individual, which may call down such censures as your words intimate, it is your duty to speak plainly, and I command you to do so."

"My liege, you shall be obeyed," answered the prior, with an inclination of the body. Then raising himself up, and assuming the dignity of his rank in the church, he said, "Hear from me the words of our Holy Father the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, to whom have descended the keys, both to bind and to unloose. 'Wherefore, O Robert of Scotland, hast thou not received into the see of St. Andrews Henry of Wardlaw, whom the Pontiff hath recommended to fill that see? Why dost thou make profession with thy lips of dutiful service to the Church, when thy actions proclaim the depravity and disobedience of thy inward soul? Obedience is better than sacrifice.'"

"Sir prior," said the monarch, bearing himself in a manner not unbecoming his lofty rank, "we may well dispense with answering you upon this subject, being a matter which concerns us and the estates of our kingdom, but does not affect our private conscience."

"Alas," said the prior, "and whose conscience will it concern at the last day? Which of your belted lords or wealthy burgesses will then step between their king and the penalty which he has incurred by following of their secular policy in matters ecclesiastical? Know, mighty king, that, were all the chivalry of thy realm drawn up to shield thee from the red levin bolt, they would be consumed like scorched parchment before the blaze of a furnace."

"Good father prior," said the King, on whose timorous conscience this kind of language seldom failed to make an impression, "you surely argue over rigidly in this matter. It was during my last indisposition, while the Earl of Douglas held, as lieutenant general, the regal authority in Scotland, that the obstruction to the reception of the Primate unhappily arose. Do not, therefore, tax me with what happened when I was unable to conduct the affairs of the kingdom, and compelled to delegate my power to another."

"To your subject, sire, you have said enough," replied the prior. "But, if the impediment arose during the lieutenancy of the Earl of Douglas, the legate of his Holiness will demand wherefore it has not been instantly removed, when the King resumed in his royal hands the reins of authority? The Black Douglas can do much—more perhaps than a subject should have power to do in the kingdom of his sovereign; but he cannot stand betwixt your Grace and your own conscience, or release you from the duties to the Holy Church which your situation as a king imposes upon you."

"Father," said Robert, somewhat impatiently, "you are over peremptory in this matter, and ought at least to wait a reasonable season, until we have time to consider of some remedy. Such disputes have happened repeatedly in the reigns of our predecessors; and our royal and blessed ancestor, St. David, did not resign his privileges as a monarch without making a stand in their defence, even though he was involved in arguments with the Holy Father himself."

"And therein was that great and good king neither holy nor saintly," said the prior "and therefore was he given to be a rout and a spoil to his enemies, when he raised his sword against the banners of St. Peter, and St. Paul, and St. John of Beverley, in the war, as it is still called, of the Standard. Well was it for him that, like his namesake, the son of Jesse, his sin was punished upon earth, and not entered against him at the long and dire day of accounting."

"Well, good prior—well—enough of this for the present. The Holy See shall, God willing, have no reason to complain of me. I take Our Lady to witness, I would not for the crown I wear take the burden of wronging our Mother Church. We have ever feared that the Earl of Douglas kept his eyes too much fixed on the fame and the temporalities of this frail and passing life to feel altogether as he ought the claims that refer to a future world."

"It is but lately," said the prior, "that he hath taken up forcible quarters in the monastery of Aberbrothock, with his retinue of a thousand followers; and the abbot is compelled to furnish him with all he needs for horse and man, which the Earl calls exercising the hospitality which he hath a right to expect from the foundation to which his ancestors were contributors. Certain, it were better to return to the Douglas his lands than to submit to such exaction, which more resembles the masterful license of Highland thiggers and sorners [sturdy beggars], than the demeanour of a Christian baron."

"The Black Douglasses," said the King, with a sigh, "are a race which will not be said nay. But, father prior, I am myself, it may be, an intruder of this kind; for my sojourning hath been long among you, and my retinue, though far fewer than the Douglas's, are nevertheless enough to cumber you for their daily maintenance; and though our order is to send out purveyors to lessen your charge as much as may be, yet if there be inconvenience, it were fitting we should remove in time."

"Now, Our Lady forbid!" said the prior, who, if desirous of power, had nothing meanly covetous in his temper, but was even magnificent in his generous kindness; "certainly the Dominican convent can afford to her sovereign the hospitality which the house offers to every wanderer of whatever condition who will receive it at the hands of the poor servants of our patron. No, my royal liege; come with ten times your present train, they shall neither want a grain of oats, a pile of straw, a morsel of bread, nor an ounce of food which our convent can supply them. It is one thing to employ the revenues of the church, which are so much larger than monks ought to need or wish for, in the suitable and dutiful reception of your royal Majesty, and another to have it wrenched from us by the hands of rude and violent men, whose love of rapine is only limited by the extent of their power."

"It is well, good prior," said the King; "and now to turn our thoughts for an instant from state affairs, can thy reverence inform us how the good citizens of Perth have begun their Valentine's Day? Gallantly, and merrily, and peaceably; I hope."

"For gallantly, my liege, I know little of such qualities. For peaceably, there were three or four men, two cruelly wounded, came this morning before daylight to ask the privilege of girth and sanctuary, pursued by a hue and cry of citizens in their shirts, with clubs, bills, Lochaber axes, and two handed swords, crying 'Kill and slay,' each louder than another. Nay, they were not satisfied when our porter and watch told them that those they pursued had taken refuge in the galilee of the church, but continued for some minutes clamouring and striking upon the postern door, demanding that the men who had offended should be delivered up to them. I was afraid their rude noise might have broken your Majesty's rest, and raised some surprise."

"My rest might have been broken," said the monarch; "but that sounds of violence should have occasioned surprise—Alas! reverend father, there is in Scotland only one place where the shriek of the victim and threats of the oppressor are not heard, and that, father, is—the grave."

The prior stood in respectful silence, sympathising with the feelings of a monarch whose tenderness of heart suited so ill with the condition and manners of his people.

"And what became of the fugitives?" asked Robert, after a minute's pause.

"Surely, sire," said the prior, "they were dismissed, as they desired to be, before daylight; and after we had sent out to be assured that no ambush of their enemies watched them in the vicinity, they went their way in peace."

"You know nothing," inquired the King, "who the men were, or the cause of their taking refuge with you?"

"The cause," said the prior, "was a riot with the townsmen; but how arising is not known to us. The custom of our house is to afford twenty-four hours of uninterrupted refuge in the sanctuary of St. Dominic, without asking any question at the poor unfortunates who have sought relief there. If they desire to remain for a longer space, the cause of their resorting to sanctuary must be put upon the register of the convent; and, praised be our holy saint, many persons escape the weight of the law by this temporary protection, whom, did we know the character of their crimes, we might have found ourselves obliged to render up to their pursuers and persecutors."

As the prior spoke, a dim idea occurred to the monarch, that the privilege of sanctuary thus peremptorily executed must prove a severe interruption to the course of justice through his realm. But he repelled the feeling, as if it had been a suggestion of Satan, and took care that not a single word should escape to betray to the churchman that such a profane thought had ever occupied his bosom; on the contrary, he hastened to change the subject.

"The sun," he said, "moves slowly on the index. After the painful information you have given me, I expected the Lords of my Council ere now, to take order with the ravelled affairs of this unhappy riot. Evil was the fortune which gave me rule over a people among whom it seems to me I am in my own person the only man who desires rest and tranquillity!"

"The church always desires peace and tranquillity," added the prior, not suffering even so general a proposition to escape the poor king's oppressed mind without insisting on a saving clause for the church's honour.

"We meant nothing else," said Robert. "But, father prior, you will allow that the church, in quelling strife, as is doubtless her purpose, resembles the busy housewife, who puts in motion the dust which she means to sweep away."

To this remark the prior would have made some reply, but the door of the apartment was opened, and a gentleman usher announced the Duke of Albany.

CHAPTER X.

*Gentle friend,
Chide not her mirth, who was sad yesterday,
And may be so tomorrow.*

JOANNA BAILLIE.

The Duke of Albany was, like his royal brother, named Robert. The Christian name of the latter had been John until he was called to the throne; when the superstition of the times observed that the name had been connected with misfortune in the lives and reigns of John of England, John of France, and John Baliol of Scotland. It was therefore agreed that, to elude the bad omen, the new king should assume the name of Robert, rendered dear to Scotland by the recollections of Robert Bruce. We mention this to account for the existence of two brothers of the same Christian name in one family, which was not certainly an usual occurrence, more than at the present day.

Albany, also an aged man, was not supposed to be much more disposed for warlike enterprise than the King himself. But if he had not courage, he had wisdom to conceal and cloak over his want of that quality, which, once suspected, would have ruined all the plans which his ambition had formed. He had also pride enough to supply, in extremity, the want of real valour, and command enough over his nerves to conceal their agitation. In other respects, he was experienced in the ways of courts, calm, cool, and crafty, fixing upon the points which he desired to attain, while they were yet far removed, and never losing sight of them, though the winding paths in which he trode might occasionally seem to point to a different direction. In his person he resembled the King, for he was noble and majestic both in stature and countenance. But he had the advantage of his elder brother, in being unencumbered with any infirmity, and in every respect lighter and more active. His dress was rich and grave, as became his age and rank, and, like his royal brother, he wore no arms of any kind, a case of small knives supplying at his girdle the place usually occupied by a dagger in absence of a sword.

At the Duke's entrance the prior, after making an obeisance, respectfully withdrew to a recess in the apartment, at some distance from the royal seat, in order to leave the conversation of the brothers uncontrolled by the presence of a third person. It is necessary to mention, that the recess was formed by a window; placed in the inner front of the monastic buildings, called the palace, from its being the frequent residence of the Kings of Scotland, but which was, unless on such

occasions, the residence of the prior or abbot. The window was placed over the principal entrance to the royal apartments, and commanded a view of the internal quadrangle of the convent, formed on the right hand by the length of the magnificent church, on the left by a building containing the range of cellars, with the refectory, chapter house, and other conventual apartments rising above them, for such existed altogether independent of the space occupied by King Robert and his attendants; while a fourth row of buildings, showing a noble outward front to the rising sun, consisted of a large hospitium, for the reception of strangers and pilgrims, and many subordinate offices, warehouses, and places of accommodation, for the ample stores which supplied the magnificent hospitality of the Dominican fathers. A lofty vaulted entrance led through this eastern front into the quadrangle, and was precisely opposite to the window at which Prior Anselm stood, so that he could see underneath the dark arch, and observe the light which gleamed beneath it from the eastern and open portal; but, owing to the height to which he was raised, and the depth of the vaulted archway, his eye could but indistinctly reach the opposite and extended portal. It is necessary to notice these localities.

We return to the conversation between the princely relatives.

"My dear brother," said the King, raising the Duke of Albany, as he stooped to kiss his hand—"my dear, dear brother, wherefore this ceremonial? Are we not both sons of the same Stuart of Scotland and of the same Elizabeth More?"

"I have not forgot that it is so," said Albany, arising; "but I must not omit, in the familiarity of the brother, the respect that is due to the king."

"Oh, true—most true, Robin," answered the King. "The throne is like a lofty and barren rock, upon which flower or shrub can never take root. All kindly feelings, all tender affections, are denied to a monarch. A king must not fold a brother to his heart—he dare not give way to fondness for a son."

"Such, in some respects, is the doom of greatness, sire," answered Albany; "but Heaven, who removed to some distance from your Majesty's sphere the members of your own family, has given you a whole people to be your children."

"Alas! Robert," answered the monarch, "your heart is better framed for the duties of a sovereign than mine. I see from the height at which fate has placed me that multitude whom you call my children. I love them, I wish them well; but they are many, and they are distant from me. Alas! even the meanest of them has some beloved being whom he can clasp to his heart, and upon whom he can lavish the fondness of a father. But all that a king can give to a people is a smile, such as the sun bestows on the snowy peaks of the Grampian mountains, as distant and as ineffectual. Alas, Robin! our father used to caress us, and if he chid us it was with a tone of kindness; yet he was a monarch as well as I, and wherefore should not I be permitted, like him, to reclaim my poor prodigal by affection as well as severity?"

"Had affection never been tried, my liege," replied Albany, in the tone of one who delivers sentiments which he grieves to utter, "means of gentleness ought assuredly to be first made use of. Your Grace is best judge whether they have been long enough persevered in, and whether those of discouragement and restraint may not prove a more effectual corrective. It is exclusively in your royal power to take what measures with the Duke of Rothsay you think will be most available to his ultimate benefit, and that of the kingdom."

"This is unkind, brother," said the King: "you indicate the painful path which you would have me pursue, yet you offer me not your support in treading it."

"My support your Grace may ever command," replied Albany; "but would it become me, of all men on earth, to prompt to your Grace severe measures against your son and heir? Me, on whom, in case of failure—which Heaven forefend!—of your Grace's family, this fatal crown might descend? Would it not be thought and said by the fiery March and the haughty Douglas, that Albany had sown dissension between his royal brother and the heir to the Scottish throne, perhaps to clear the way for the succession of his own family? No, my liege, I can sacrifice my life to your service, but I must not place my honour in danger."

"You say true, Robin.—you say very true," replied the King, hastening to put his own interpretation upon his brother's words. "We must not suffer these powerful and dangerous lords to perceive that there is aught like discord in the royal family. That must be avoided of all things: and therefore we will still try indulgent measures, in hopes of correcting the follies of Rothsay. I behold sparks of hope in him, Robin, from time to time, that are well worth cherishing. He is young—very young—a prince, and in the heyday of his blood. We will have patience with him, like a good rider with a hot tempered horse. Let him exhaust this idle humor, and no one will be better pleased with him than yourself. You have censured me in your kindness for being too gentle, too retired; Rothsay has no such defects."

"I will pawn my life he has not," replied Albany, drily.

"And he wants not reflection as well as spirit," continued the poor king, pleading the cause of his son to his brother. "I have sent for him to attend council today, and we shall see how he acquits himself of his devoir. You yourself allow, Robin, that the Prince wants neither shrewdness nor capacity for affairs, when he is in the humor to consider them."

"Doubtless, he wants neither, my liege," replied Albany, "when he is in the humor to consider them."

"I say so," answered the King; "and am heartily glad that you agree with me, Robin, in giving this poor hapless young man another trial. He has no mother now to plead his cause with an incensed father. That must be remembered, Albany."

"I trust," said Albany, "the course which is most agreeable to your Grace's feelings will also prove the wisest and the best."

The Duke well saw the simple stratagem by which the King was endeavouring to escape from the conclusions of his reasoning, and to adopt, under pretence of his sanction, a course of proceeding the reverse of what it best suited him to recommend. But though he saw he could not guide his brother to the line of conduct he desired, he would not abandon the reins, but resolved to watch for a fitter opportunity of obtaining the sinister advantages to which new quarrels betwixt the King and Prince were soon, he thought, likely to give rise.

In the mean time, King Robert, afraid lest his brother should resume the painful subject from which he had just escaped, called aloud to the prior of the Dominicans, "I hear the trampling of horse. Your station commands the courtyard, reverend father. Look from the window, and tell us who alights. Rothsay, is it not?"

"The noble Earl of March, with his followers," said the prior.

"Is he strongly accompanied?" said the King. "Do his people enter the inner gate?"

At the same moment, Albany whispered the King, "Fear nothing, the Brandanes of your household are under arms."

The King nodded thanks, while the prior from the window answered the question he had put. "The Earl is attended by two pages, two gentlemen, and four grooms. One page follows him up the main staircase, bearing his lordship's sword. The others halt in the court, and—Benedicite, how is this? Here is a strolling glee woman, with her viol, preparing to sing beneath the royal windows, and in the cloister of the Dominicans, as she might in the yard of an hostelrie! I will have her presently thrust forth."

"Not so, father," said the King. "Let me implore grace for the poor wanderer. The joyous science, as they call it, which they profess, mingles sadly with the distresses to which want and calamity condemn a strolling race; and in that they resemble a king, to whom all men cry, 'All hail!' while he lacks the homage and obedient affection which the poorest yeoman receives from his family. Let the wanderer remain undisturbed, father; and let her sing if she will to the yeomen and troopers in the court; it will keep them from quarrelling with each other, belonging, as they do, to such unruly and hostile masters."

So spoke the well meaning and feeble minded prince, and the prior bowed in acquiescence. As he spoke, the Earl of March entered the hall of audience, dressed in the ordinary riding garb of the time, and wearing his poniard. He had left in the anteroom the page of honour who carried his sword. The Earl was a well built, handsome man, fair complexioned, with a considerable profusion of light coloured hair, and bright blue eyes, which gleamed like those of a falcon. He exhibited in his countenance, otherwise pleasing, the marks of a hasty and irritable temper, which his situation as a high and powerful feudal lord had given him but too many opportunities of indulging.

"I am glad to see you, my Lord of March," said the King, with a gracious inclination of his person. "You have been long absent from our councils."

"My liege," answered March with a deep reverence to the King, and a haughty and formal inclination to the Duke of Albany, "if I have been absent from your Grace's councils, it is because my place has been supplied by more acceptable, and, I doubt not, abler, counsellors. And now I come but to say to your Highness, that the news from the English frontier make it necessary that I should return without delay to my own estates. Your Grace has your wise and politic brother, my

Lord of Albany, with whom to consult, and the mighty and warlike Earl of Douglas to carry your counsels into effect. I am of no use save in my own country; and thither, with your Highness's permission, I am purposed instantly to return, to attend my charge, as Warden of the Eastern Marches."

"You will not deal so unkindly with us, cousin," replied the gentle monarch. "Here are evil tidings on the wind. These unhappy Highland clans are again breaking into general commotion, and the tranquillity even of our own court requires the wisest of our council to advise, and the bravest of our barons to execute, what may be resolved upon. The descendant of Thomas Randolph will not surely abandon the grandson of Robert Bruce at such a period as this?"

"I leave with him the descendant of the far famed James of Douglas," answered March. "It is his lordship's boast that he never puts foot in stirrup but a thousand horse mount with him as his daily lifeguard, and I believe the monks of Aberbrothock will swear to the fact. Surely, with all the Douglas's chivalry, they are fitter to restrain a disorderly swarm of Highland kerne than I can be to withstand the archery of England and power of Henry Hotspur? And then, here is his Grace of Albany, so jealous in his care of your Highness's person, that he calls your Brandanes to take arms when a dutiful subject like myself approaches the court with a poor half score of horse, the retinue of the meanest of the petty barons who own a tower and a thousand acres of barren heath. When such precautions are taken where there is not the slightest chance of peril—since I trust none was to be apprehended from me—your royal person will surely be suitably guarded in real danger."

"My Lord of March," said the Duke of Albany, "the meanest of the barons of whom you speak put their followers in arms even when they receive their dearest and nearest friends within the iron gate of their castle; and, if it please Our Lady, I will not care less for the King's person than they do for their own. The Brandanes are the King's immediate retainers and household servants, and an hundred of them is but a small guard round his Grace, when yourself, my lord, as well as the Earl of Douglas, often ride with ten times the number."

"My Lord Duke," replied March, "when the service of the King requires it, I can ride with ten times as many horse as your Grace has named; but I have never done so either traitorously to entrap the King nor boastfully to overawe other nobles."

"Brother Robert," said the King, ever anxious to be a peacemaker, "you do wrong even to intimate a suspicion of my Lord of March. And you, cousin of March, misconstrue my brother's caution. But hark—to divert this angry parley—I hear no unpleasing touch of minstrelsy. You know the gay science, my Lord of March, and love it well. Step to yonder window, beside the holy prior, at whom we make no question touching secular pleasures, and you will tell us if the music and play be worth listening to. The notes are of France, I think. My brother of Albany's judgment is not worth a cockle shell in such matters, so you, cousin, must report your opinion whether the poor glee maiden deserves recompense. Our son and the Douglas will presently be here, and then, when our council is assembled, we will treat of graver matters."

With something like a smile on his proud brow, March withdrew into the recess of the window, and stood there in silence beside the prior, like one who, while he obeyed the King's command, saw through and despised the timid precaution which it implied, as an attempt to prevent the dispute betwixt Albany and himself. The tune, which was played upon a viol, was gay and sprightly in the commencement, with a touch of the wildness of the troubadour music. But, as it proceeded, the faltering tones of the instrument, and of the female voice which accompanied it, became plaintive and interrupted, as if choked by the painful feelings of the minstrel.

The offended earl, whatever might be his judgment in such matters on which the King had complimented him, paid, it may be supposed, little attention to the music of the female minstrel. His proud heart was struggling between the allegiance he owed his sovereign, as well as the love he still found lurking in his bosom for the person of his well natured king, and a desire of vengeance arising out of his disappointed ambition, and the disgrace done to him by the substitution of Marjory Douglas to be bride of the heir apparent, instead of his betrothed daughter. March had the vices and virtues of a hasty and uncertain character, and even now, when he came to bid the King adieu, with the purpose of renouncing his allegiance as soon as he reached his own feudal territories, he felt unwilling, and almost unable, to resolve upon a step so criminal and so full of peril. It was with such dangerous cogitations that he was occupied during the beginning of the glee maiden's lay; but objects which called his attention powerfully, as the songstress proceeded, affected the current of his thoughts, and riveted them on what was passing in the courtyard of the monastery. The song was in the Provencal dialect, well understood as the language of poetry in all the courts of Europe, and particularly in Scotland. It was more simply turned, however, than was the general cast of the sirventes, and rather resembled the lai of a Norman minstrel. It may be translated thus:

The Lay of Poor Louise.

*Ah, poor Louise! The livelong day
She roams from cot to castle gay;
And still her voice and viol say,
Ah, maids, beware the woodland way;
Think on Louise.*

*Ah, poor Louise! The sun was high;
It smirch'd her cheek, it dimm'd her eye.
The woodland walk was cool and nigh,
Where birds with chiming streamlets vie
To cheer Louise.*

*Ah, poor Louise! The savage bear
Made ne'er that lovely grove his lair;
The wolves molest not paths so fair.
But better far had such been there
For poor Louise.*

*Ah, poor Louise! In woody wold
She met a huntsman fair and bold;
His baldrick was of silk and gold,
And many a witching tale he told
To poor Louise.*

*Ah, poor Louise! Small cause to pine
Hadst thou for treasures of the mine;
For peace of mind, that gift divine,
And spotless innocence, were thine.
Ah, poor Louise!*

Ah, poor Louise! Thy treasure's reft.

*I know not if by force or theft,
Or part by violence, part by gift;
But misery is all that's left
To poor Louise,*

*Let poor Louise some succour have!
She will not long your bounty crave,
Or tire the gay with warning stave;
For Heaven has grace, and earth a grave
For poor Louise.*

The song was no sooner finished than, anxious lest the dispute should be revived betwixt his brother and the Earl of March, King Robert called to the latter, "What think you of the minstrelsy, my lord? Methinks, as I heard it even at this distance, it was a wild and pleasing lay."

"My judgment is not deep my lord; but the singer may dispense with my approbation, since she seems to have received that of his Grace of Rothsay, the best judge in Scotland."

"How!" said the King in alarm; "is my son below?"

"He is sitting on horseback by the glee maiden," said March, with a malicious smile on his cheek, "apparently as much interested by her conversation as her music."

"How is this, father prior?" said the King.

But the prior drew back from the lattice. "I have no will to see, my lord, things which it would pain me to repeat."

"How is all this?" said the King, who coloured deeply, and seemed about to rise from his chair; but changed his mind, as if unwilling, perhaps, to look upon some unbecoming prank of the wild young prince, which he might not have had heart to punish with necessary severity. The Earl of March seemed to have a pleasure in informing him of that of which doubtless he desired to remain ignorant.

"My liege," he cried, "this is better and better. The glee maiden has not only engaged the ear of the Prince of Scotland, as well as of every groom and trooper in the courtyard, but she has riveted the attention of the Black Douglas, whom we have not known as a passionate admirer of the gay science. But truly, I do not wonder at his astonishment, for the Prince has honoured the fair professor of song and viol with a kiss of approbation."

"How!" cried the King, "is David of Rothsay trifling with a glee maiden, and his wife's father in presence? Go, my good father abbot, call the Prince here instantly. Go, my dearest brother—" And when they had both left the room, the King continued, "Go, good cousin of March; there will be mischief, I am assured of it. I pray you go, cousin, and second my lord prior's prayers with my commands."

"You forget, my liege," said March, with the voice of a deeply offended person, "the father of Elizabeth of Dunbar were but an unfit intercessor between the Douglas and his royal son in law."

"I crave your pardon, cousin," said the gentle old man. "I own you have had some wrong; but my Rothsay will be murdered—I must go myself."

But, as he arose precipitately from his chair, the poor king missed a footstep, stumbled, and fell heavily to the ground, in such a manner that, his head striking the corner of the seat from which he had risen, he became for a minute insensible. The sight of the accident at once overcame March's resentment and melted his heart. He ran to the fallen monarch, and replaced him in his seat, using, in the tenderest and most respectful manner, such means as seemed most fit to recall animation.

Robert opened his eyes, and gazed around with uncertainty. "What has happened?—are we alone?—who is with us?"

"Your dutiful subject, March," replied the Earl.

"Alone with the Earl of March!" repeated the King, his still disturbed intellect receiving some alarm from the name of a powerful chief whom he had reason to believe he had mortally offended.

"Yes, my gracious liege, with poor George of Dunbar, of whom many have wished your Majesty to think ill, though he will be found truer to your royal person at the last than they will."

"Indeed, cousin, you have had too much wrong; and believe me, we shall strive to redress—"

"If your Grace thinks so, it may yet be righted," interrupted the Earl, catching at the hopes which his ambition suggested: "the Prince and Marjory Douglas are nearly related—the dispensation from Rome was informally granted—their marriage cannot be lawful—the Pope, who will do much for so godly a prince, can set aside this unchristian union, in respect of the pre-contract. Bethink you well, my liege," continued the Earl, kindling with a new train of ambitious thoughts, to which the unexpected opportunity of pleading his cause personally had given rise—"bethink you how you choose betwixt the Douglas and me. He is powerful and mighty, I grant. But George of Dunbar wears the keys of Scotland at his belt, and could bring an English army to the gates of Edinburgh ere Douglas could leave the skirts of Carintable to oppose them. Your royal son loves my poor deserted girl, and hates the haughty Marjory of Douglas. Your Grace may judge the small account in which he holds her by his toying with a common glee maiden even in the presence of her father."

The King had hitherto listened to the Earl's argument with the bewildered feelings of a timid horseman, borne away by an impetuous steed, whose course he can neither arrest nor direct. But the last words awakened in his recollection the sense of his son's immediate danger.

"Oh, ay, most true—my son—the Douglas! Oh, my dear cousin, prevent blood, and all shall be as you will. Hark, there is a tumult—that was the clash of arms!"

"By my coronet, by my knightly faith, it is true!" said the Earl, looking from the window upon the inner square of the convent, now filled with armed men and brandished weapons, and resounding with the clash of armour. The deep vaulted entrance was crowded with warriors at its farthest extremity, and blows seemed to be in the act of being exchanged betwixt some who were endeavouring to shut the gate and others who contended to press in.

"I will go instantly," said the Earl of March, "and soon quell this sudden broil. Humbly I pray your Majesty to think on what I have had the boldness to propose."

"I will—I will, fair cousin," said the King, scarce knowing to what he pledged himself; "do but prevent tumult and bloodshed!"

CHAPTER XI

*Fair is the damsel, passing fair;
Sunny at distance gleams her smile;
Approach—the cloud of woful care
Hangs trembling in her eye the while.*

Lucinda, a Ballad.

We must here trace a little more correctly the events which had been indistinctly seen from the window of the royal apartments, and yet more indistinctly reported by those who witnessed them. The glee maiden, already mentioned, had planted herself where a rise of two large broad steps, giving access to the main gateway of the royal apartments, gained her an advantage of a foot and a half in height over those in the court, of whom she hoped to form an audience. She wore the dress of her calling, which was more gaudy than rich, and showed the person more than did the garb of other females. She had laid aside an upper mantle, and a small basket which contained her slender stock of necessaries; and a little French spaniel dog sat beside them, as their protector. An azure blue jacket,

embroidered with silver, and sitting close to the person, was open in front, and showed several waistcoats of different coloured silks, calculated to set off the symmetry of the shoulders and bosom, and remaining open at the throat. A small silver chain worn around her neck involved itself amongst these brilliant coloured waistcoats, and was again produced from them; to display a medal of the same metal, which intimated, in the name of some court or guild of minstrels, the degree she had taken in the gay or joyous science. A small scrip, suspended over her shoulders by a blue silk riband; hung on her left side.

Her sunny complexion, snow white teeth, brilliant black eyes, and raven locks marked her country lying far in the south of France, and the arch smile and dimpled chin bore the same character. Her luxuriant raven locks, twisted around a small gold bodkin, were kept in their position by a net of silk and gold. Short petticoats, deep laced with silver, to correspond with the jacket, red stockings which were visible so high as near the calf of the leg, and buskins of Spanish leather, completed her adjustment, which, though far from new, had been saved as an untarnished holiday suit, which much care had kept in good order. She seemed about twenty-five years old; but perhaps fatigue and wandering had anticipated the touch of time in obliterating the freshness of early youth.

We have said the glee maiden's manner was lively, and we may add that her smile and repartee were ready. But her gaiety was assumed, as a quality essentially necessary to her trade, of which it was one of the miseries, that the professors were obliged frequently to cover an aching heart with a compelled smile. This seemed to be the case with Louise, who, whether she was actually the heroine of her own song, or whatever other cause she might have for sadness, showed at times a strain of deep melancholy thought, which interfered with and controlled the natural flow of lively spirits which the practice of the joyous science especially required. She lacked also, even in her gayest sallies, the decided boldness and effrontery of her sisterhood, who were seldom at a loss to retort a saucy jest, or turn the laugh against any who interrupted or interfered with them.

It may be here remarked, that it was impossible that this class of women, very numerous in that age, could bear a character generally respectable. They were, however, protected by the manners of the time; and such were the immunities they possessed by the rights of chivalry, that nothing was more rare than to hear of such errant damsels sustaining injury or wrong, and they passed and repassed safely, where armed travellers would probably have encountered a bloody opposition. But though licensed and protected in honour of their tuneful art, the wandering minstrels, male or female, like similar ministers to the public amusement, the itinerant musicians, for instance, and strolling comedians of our own day, led a life too irregular and precarious to be accounted a creditable part of society. Indeed, among the stricter Catholics, the profession was considered as unlawful.

Such was the damsel who, with viol in hand, and stationed on the slight elevation we have mentioned, stepped forward to the bystanders and announced herself as a mistress of the gay science, duly qualified by a brief from a Court of Love and Music held at Aix, in Provence, under the countenance of the flower of chivalry, the gallant Count Aymer; who now prayed that the cavaliers of merry Scotland, who were known over the wide world for bravery and courtesy, would permit a poor stranger to try whether she could afford them any amusement by her art. The love of song was like the love of fight, a common passion of the age, which all at least affected, whether they were actually possessed by it or no; therefore the acquiescence in Louise's proposal was universal. At the same time, an aged, dark browed monk who was among the bystanders thought it necessary to remind the glee maiden that, since she was tolerated within these precincts, which was an unusual grace, he trusted nothing would be sung or said inconsistent with the holy character of the place.

The glee maiden bent her head low, shook her sable locks, and crossed herself reverentially, as if she disclaimed the possibility of such a transgression, and then began the song of "Poor Louise," which we gave at length in the last chapter.

Just as she commenced, she was stopped by a cry of "Room—room—place for the Duke of Rothsay!"

"Nay, hurry no man on my score," said a gallant young cavalier, who entered on a noble Arabian horse, which he managed with exquisite grace, though by such slight handling of the reins, such imperceptible pressure of the limbs and sway of the body, that to any eye save that of an experienced horseman the animal seemed to be putting forth his paces for his own amusement, and thus gracefully bearing forward a rider who was too indolent to give himself any trouble about the matter.

The Prince's apparel, which was very rich, was put on with slovenly carelessness. His form, though his stature was low, and his limbs extremely slight, was elegant in the extreme; and his features no less handsome. But there was on his brow a haggard paleness, which seemed the effect of care or of dissipation, or of both these wasting causes combined. His eyes were sunk and dim, as from late indulgence in revelry on the preceding evening, while his cheek was inflamed with unnatural red, as if either the effect of the Bacchanalian orgies had not passed away from the constitution, or a morning draught had been resorted to, in order to remove the effects of the night's debauchery.

Such was the Duke of Rothsay, and heir of the Scottish crown, a sight at once of interest and compassion. All unbonneted and made way for him, while he kept repeating carelessly, "No haste—no haste: I shall arrive soon enough at the place I am bound for. How's this—a damsel of the joyous science? Ay, by St. Giles! and a comely wench to boot. Stand still, my merry men; never was minstrelsy marred for me. A good voice, by the mass! Begin me that lay again, sweetheart."

Louise did not know the person who addressed her; but the general respect paid by all around, and the easy and indifferent manner in which it was received, showed her she was addressed by a man of the highest quality. She recommenced her lay, and sung her best accordingly; while the young duke seemed thoughtful and rather affected towards the close of the ditty. But it was not his habit to cherish such melancholy affections.

"This is a plaintive ditty, my nut brown maid," said he, chucking the retreating glee maiden under the chin, and detaining her by the collar of her dress, which was not difficult, as he sat on horseback so close to the steps on which she stood. "But I warrant me you have livelier notes at will, ma bella tenebrosa; ay, and canst sing in bower as well as wold, and by night as well as day."

"I am no nightingale, my lord," said Louise, endeavouring to escape a species of gallantry which ill suited the place and circumstances—a discrepancy to which he who addressed it to her seemed contemptuously indifferent.

"What hast thou there, darling?" he added, removing his hold from her collar to the scrip which she carried.

Glad was Louise to escape his grasp, by slipping the knot of the riband, and leaving the little bag in the Prince's hand, as, retiring back beyond his reach, she answered, "Nuts, my lord, of the last season."

The Prince pulled out a handful of nuts accordingly. "Nuts, child! they will break thine ivory teeth, hurt thy pretty voice," said Rothsay, cracking one with his teeth, like a village schoolboy.

"They are not the walnuts of my own sunny clime, my lord," said Louise; "but they hang low, and are within the reach of the poor."

"You shall have something to afford you better fare, poor wandering ape," said the Duke, in a tone in which feeling predominated more than in the affected and contemptuous gallantry of his first address to the glee maiden.

At this moment, as he turned to ask an attendant for his purse, the Prince encountered the stern and piercing look of a tall black man, seated on a powerful iron grey horse, who had entered the court with attendants while the Duke of Rothsay was engaged with Louise, and now remained stupefied and almost turned to stone by his surprise and anger at this unseemly spectacle. Even one who had never seen Archibald Earl of Douglas, called the Grim, must have known him by his swart complexion, his gigantic frame, his buff coat of bull's hide, and his air of courage, firmness, and sagacity, mixed with indomitable pride. The loss of an eye in battle, though not perceptible at first sight, as the ball of the injured organ remained similar to the other, gave yet a stern, immovable glare to the whole aspect.

The meeting of the royal son in law with his terrible stepfather [father in law] was in circumstances which arrested the attention of all present; and the bystanders waited the issue with silence and suppressed breath, lest they should lose any part of what was to ensue.

When the Duke of Rothsay saw the expression which occupied the stern features of Douglas, and remarked that the Earl did not make the least motion towards respectful, or even civil, salutation, he seemed determined to show him how little respect he was disposed to pay to his displeased looks. He took his purse from his chamberlain.

"Here, pretty one," he said, "I give thee one gold piece for the song thou hast sung me, another for the nuts I have stolen from thee, and a third for the kiss thou art about to give me. For know, my pretty one, that when fair lips, and thine for fault of better may be called so, make sweet music for my pleasure, I am sworn to St. Valentine to press them to mine."

"My song is recompensed nobly," said Louise, shrinking back; "my nuts are sold to a good market; farther traffic, my lord, were neither befitting you nor beseeming me."

"What! you coy it, my nymph of the highway?" said the Prince, contemptuously. "Know damsel, that one asks you a grace who is unused to denial."

"It is the Prince of Scotland—the Duke of Rothsay," said the courtiers around, to the terrified Louise, pressing forward the trembling young woman; "you must not thwart his humor."

"But I cannot reach your lordship," she said, timidly, "you sit so high on horseback."

"If I must alight," said Rothsay, "there shall be the heavier penalty. What does the wench tremble for? Place thy foot on the toe of my boot, give me hold of thy hand. Gallantly done!" He kissed her as she stood thus suspended in the air, perched upon his foot and supported by his hand; saying, "There is thy kiss, and there is my purse to pay it; and to grace thee farther, Rothsay will wear thy scrip for the day."

He suffered the frightened girl to spring to the ground, and turned his looks from her to bend them contemptuously on the Earl of Douglas, as if he had said, "All this I do in despite of you and of your daughter's claims."

"By St. Bride of Douglas!" said the Earl, pressing towards the Prince, "this is too much, unmannered boy, as void of sense as honour! You know what considerations restrain the hand of Douglas, else had you never dared—"

"Can you play at spang cockle, my lord?" said the Prince, placing a nut on the second joint of his forefinger, and spinning it off by a smart application of the thumb. The nut struck on Douglas's broad breast, who burst out into a dreadful exclamation of wrath, inarticulate, but resembling the growl of a lion in depth and sternness of expression.

"I cry your pardon, most mighty lord," said the Duke of Rothsay, scornfully, while all around trembled; "I did not conceive my pellet could have wounded you, seeing you wear a buff coat. Surely, I trust, it did not hit your eye?"

The prior, despatched by the King, as we have seen in the last chapter, had by this time made way through the crowd, and laying hold on Douglas's rein, in a manner that made it impossible for him to advance, reminded him that the Prince was the son of his sovereign; and the husband of his daughter.

"Fear not, sir prior," said Douglas. "I despise the childish boy too much to raise a finger against him. But I will return insult for insult. Here, any of you who love the Douglas, spurn me this quean from the monastery gates; and let her be so scourged that she may bitterly remember to the last day of her life how she gave means to an unrespective boy to affront the Douglas."

Four or five retainers instantly stepped forth to execute commands which were seldom uttered in vain, and heavily would Louise have atoned for an offence of which she was alike the innocent, unconscious, and unwilling instrument, had not the Duke of Rothsay interfered.

"Spurn the poor glee woman!" he said, in high indignation; "scourge her for obeying my commands! Spurn thine own oppressed vassals, rude earl—scourge thine own faulty hounds; but beware how you touch so much as a dog that Rothsay hath patted on the head, far less a female whose lips he hath kissed!"

Before Douglas could give an answer, which would certainly have been in defiance, there arose that great tumult at the outward gate of the monastery, already noticed, and men both on horseback and on foot began to rush headlong in, not actually fighting with each other, but certainly in no peaceable manner.

One of the contending parties, seemingly, were partizans of Douglas, known by the cognizance of the bloody heart; the other were composed of citizens of the town of Perth. It appeared they had been skirmishing in earnest when without the gates, but, out of respect to the sanctified ground, they lowered their weapons when they entered, and confined their strife to a war of words and mutual abuse.

The tumult had this good effect, that it forced asunder, by the weight and press of numbers, the Prince and Douglas, at a moment when the levity of the former and the pride of the latter were urging both to the utmost extremity. But now peacemakers interfered on all sides. The prior and the monks threw themselves among the multitude, and commanded peace in the name of Heaven, and reverence to their sacred walls, under penalty of excommunication; and their expostulations began to be listened to. Albany, who was despatched by his royal brother at the beginning of the fray, had not arrived till now on the scene of action. He instantly applied himself to Douglas, and in his ear conjured him to temper his passion.

"By St. Bride of Douglas, I will be avenged!" said the Earl. "No man shall brook life after he has passed an affront on Douglas."

"Why, so you may be avenged in fitting time," said Albany; "but let it not be said that, like a peevish woman, the Great Douglas could choose neither time nor place for his vengeance. Bethink you, all that we have laboured at is like to be upset by an accident. George of Dunbar hath had the advantage of an audience with the old man; and though it lasted but five minutes, I fear it may endanger the dissolution of your family match, which we brought about with so much difficulty. The authority from Rome has not yet been obtained."

"A toy!" answered Douglas, haughtily; "they dare not dissolve it."

"Not while Douglas is at large, and in possession of his power," answered Albany. "But, noble earl, come with me, and I will show you at what disadvantage you stand."

Douglas dismounted, and followed his wily accomplice in silence. In a lower hall they saw the ranks of the Brandanes drawn up, well armed in caps of steel and shirts of mail. Their captain, making an obeisance to Albany, seemed to desire to address him.

"What now, MacLouis?" said the Duke.

"We are informed the Duke of Rothsay has been insulted, and I can scarce keep the Brandanes within door."

"Gallant MacLouis," said Albany, "and you, my trusty Brandanes, the Duke of Rothsay, my princely nephew, is as well as a hopeful gentleman can be. Some scuffle there has been, but all is appeased."

He continued to draw the Earl of Douglas forward. "You see, my lord," he said in his ear, "that, if the word 'arrest' was to be once spoken, it would be soon obeyed, and you are aware your attendants are few for resistance."

Douglas seemed to acquiesce in the necessity of patience for the time. "If my teeth," he said, "should bite through my lips, I will be silent till it is the hour to speak out."

George of March, in the meanwhile, had a more easy task of pacifying the Prince. "My Lord of Rothsay," he said, approaching him with grave ceremony, "I need not tell you that you owe me something for reparation of honour, though I blame not you personally for the breach of contract which has destroyed the peace of my family. Let me conjure you, by what observance your Highness may owe an injured man, to forego for the present this scandalous dispute."

"My lord, I owe you much," replied Rothsay; "but this haughty and all controlling lord has wounded mine honour."

"My lord, I can but add, your royal father is ill—hath swooned with terror for your Highness's safety."

"Ill!" replied the Prince—"the kind, good old man swooned, said you, my Lord of March? I am with him in an instant."

The Duke of Rothsay sprung from his saddle to the ground, and was dashing into the palace like a greyhound, when a feeble grasp was laid on his cloak, and the faint voice of a kneeling female exclaimed, "Protection, my noble prince!—protection for a helpless stranger!"

"Hands off, stroller!" said the Earl of March, thrusting the suppliant glee maiden aside.

But the gentler prince paused. "It is true," he said, "I have brought the vengeance of an unforgiving devil upon this helpless creature. O Heaven! what a life, is mine, so fatal to all who approach me! What to do in the hurry? She must not go to my apartments. And all my men are such born reprobates. Ha! thou at mine elbow, honest Harry Smith? What dost thou here?"

"There has been something of a fight, my lord," answered our acquaintance the smith, "between the townsmen and the Southland loons who ride with the Douglas; and we have swung them as far as the abbey gate."

"I am glad of it—I am glad of it. And you beat the knaves fairly?"

"Fairly, does your Highness ask?" said Henry. "Why, ay! We were stronger in numbers, to be sure; but no men ride better armed than those who follow the Bloody Heart. And so in a sense we beat them fairly; for, as your Highness knows, it is the smith who makes the man at arms, and men with good weapons are a match for great odds."

While they thus talked, the Earl of March, who had spoken with some one near the palace gate, returned in anxious haste. "My Lord Duke!—my Lord Duke! your father is recovered, and if you haste not speedily, my Lord of Albany and the Douglas will have possession of his royal ear."

"And if my royal father is recovered," said the thoughtless Prince, "and is holding, or about to hold, counsel with my gracious uncle and the Earl of Douglas, it befits neither your lordship nor me to intrude till we are summoned. So there is time for me to speak of my little business with mine honest armourer here."

"Does your Highness take it so?" said the Earl, whose sanguine hopes of a change of favour at court had been too hastily excited, and were as speedily checked. "Then so let it be for George of Dunbar."

He glided away with a gloomy and displeased aspect; and thus out of the two most powerful noblemen in Scotland, at a time when the aristocracy so closely controlled the throne, the reckless heir apparent had made two enemies—the one by scornful defiance and the other by careless neglect. He heeded not the Earl of March's departure, however, or rather he felt relieved from his importunity.

The Prince went on in indolent conversation with our armourer, whose skill in his art had made him personally known to many of the great lords about the court.

"I had something to say to thee, Smith. Canst thou take up a fallen link in my Milan hauberk?"

"As well, please your Highness, as my mother could take up a stitch in the nets she wove. The Milaner shall not know my work from his own."

"Well, but that was not what I wished of thee just now," said the Prince, recollecting himself: "this poor glee woman, good Smith, she must be placed in safety. Thou art man enough to be any woman's champion, and thou must conduct her to some place of safety."

Henry Smith was, as we have seen, sufficiently rash and daring when weapons were in question. But he had also the pride of a decent burgher, and was unwilling to place himself in what might be thought equivocal circumstances by the sober part of his fellow citizens.

"May it please your Highness," he said, "I am but a poor craftsman. But, though my arm and sword are at the King's service and your Highness's, I am, with reverence, no squire of dames. Your Highness will find, among your own retinue, knights and lords willing enough to play Sir Pandarus of Troy; it is too knightly a part for poor Hal of the Wynd."

"Umph—hah!" said the Prince. "My purse, Edgar." (His attendant whispered him.) "True—true, I gave it to the poor wench. I know enough of your craft, sir smith, and of craftsmen in general, to be aware that men lure not hawks with empty hands; but I suppose my word may pass for the price of a good armour, and I will pay it thee, with thanks to boot, for this slight service."

"Your Highness may know other craftsmen," said the smith; "but, with reverence, you know not Henry Gow. He will obey you in making a weapon, or in wielding one, but he knows nothing of this petticoat service."

"Hark thee, thou Perthshire mule," said the Prince, yet smiling, while he spoke, at the sturdy punctilio of the honest burgher; "the wench is as little to me as she is to thee. But in an idle moment, as you may learn from those about thee, if thou sawest it not thyself, I did her a passing grace, which is likely to cost the poor wretch her life. There is no one here whom I can trust to protect her against the discipline of belt and bowstring, with which the Border brutes who follow Douglas will beat her to death, since such is his pleasure."

"If such be the case, my liege, she has a right to every honest man's protection; and since she wears a petticoat—though I would it were longer and of a less fanciful fashion—I will answer for her protection as well as a single man may. But where am I to bestow her?"

"Good faith, I cannot tell," said the Prince. "Take her to Sir John Ramorny's lodging. But, no—no—he is ill at ease, and besides, there are reasons; take her to the devil if thou wilt, but place her in safety, and oblige David of Rothsay."

"My noble Prince," said the smith, "I think, always with reverence, that I would rather give a defenceless woman to the care of the devil than of Sir John Ramorny. But though the devil be a worker in fire like myself, yet I know not his haunts, and with aid of Holy Church hope to keep him on terms of defiance. And, moreover, how I am to convey her out of this crowd, or through the streets, in such a mumming habit may be well made a question."

"For the leaving the convent," said the Prince, "this good monk" (seizing upon the nearest by his cowl)—"Father Nicholas or Boniface—"

"Poor brother Cyprian, at your Highness's command," said the father.

"Ay—ay, brother Cyprian," continued the Prince—"yes. Brother Cyprian shall let you out at some secret passage which he knows of, and I will see him again to pay a prince's thanks for it."

The churchman bowed in acquiescence, and poor Louise, who, during this debate, had looked from the one speaker to the other, hastily said, "I will not scandalise this good man with my foolish garb: I have a mantle for ordinary wear."

"Why, there, Smith, thou hast a friar's hood and a woman's mantle to shroud thee under. I would all my frailties were as well shrouded. Farewell, honest fellow; I will thank thee hereafter."

Then, as if afraid of farther objection on the smith's part, he hastened into the palace.

Henry Gow remained stupefied at what had passed, and at finding himself involved in a charge at once inferring much danger and an equal risk of scandal, both which, joined to a principal share which he had taken, with his usual forwardness, in the fray, might, he saw, do him no small injury in the suit he pursued most anxiously. At the same time, to leave a defenceless creature to the ill usage of the barbarous Galwegians and licentious followers of the Douglas was a thought which his manly heart could not brook for an instant.

He was roused from his reverie by the voice of the monk, who, sliding out his words with the indifference which the holy fathers entertained, or affected, towards all temporal matters, desired them to follow him. The smith put himself in motion, with a sigh much resembling a groan, and, without appearing exactly connected with the monk's motions, he followed him into a cloister, and through a postern door, which, after looking once behind him, the priest left ajar. Behind them followed Louise, who had hastily assumed her small bundle, and, calling her little four legged companion, had eagerly followed in the path which opened an escape from what had shortly before seemed a great and inevitable danger.

CHAPTER XII.

*Then up and spak the auld gudewife,
And wow! but she was grim:
"Had e'er your father done the like,
It had been ill for him."*

Lucky Trumbull.

The party were now, by a secret passage, admitted within the church, the outward doors of which, usually left open, had been closed against every one in consequence of the recent tumult, when the rioters of both parties had endeavoured to rush into it for other purposes than those of devotion. They traversed the gloomy aisles, whose arched roof resounded to the heavy tread of the armourer, but was silent under the sandalled foot of the monk, and the light step of poor Louise, who trembled excessively, as much from fear as cold. She saw that neither her spiritual nor temporal conductor looked kindly upon her. The former was an austere man, whose aspect seemed to hold the luckless wanderer in some degree of horror, as well as contempt; while the latter, though, as we have seen,

one of the best natured men living, was at present grave to the pitch of sternness, and not a little displeased with having the part he was playing forced upon him, without, as he was constrained to feel, a possibility of his declining it.

His dislike at his task extended itself to the innocent object of his protection, and he internally said to himself, as he surveyed her scornfully: "A proper queen of beggars to walk the streets of Perth with, and I a decent burgher! This tawdry minion must have as ragged a reputation as the rest of her sisterhood, and I am finely sped if my chivalry in her behalf comes to Catharine's ears. I had better have slain a man, were he the best in Perth; and, by hammer and nails, I would have done it on provocation, rather than convoy this baggage through the city."

Perhaps Louise suspected the cause of her conductor's anxiety, for she said, timidly and with hesitation: "Worthy sir, were it not better I should stop one instant in that chapel and don my mantle?"

"Umph, sweetheart, well proposed," said the armourer; but the monk interfered, raising at the same time the finger of interdiction.

"The chapel of holy St. Madox is no tiring room for jugglers and strollers to shift their trappings in. I will presently show thee a vestiare more suited to thy condition."

The poor young woman hung down her humbled head, and turned from the chapel door which she had approached with the deep sense of self abasement. Her little spaniel seemed to gather from his mistress's looks and manner that they were unauthorised intruders on the holy ground which they trode, and hung his ears, and swept the pavement with his tail, as he trotted slowly and close to Louise's heels.

The monk moved on without a pause. They descended a broad flight of steps, and proceeded through a labyrinth of subterranean passages, dimly lighted. As they passed a low arched door, the monk turned and said to Louise, with the same stern voice as before: "There, daughter of folly—there is a robing room, where many before you have deposited their vestments."

Obedying the least signal with ready and timorous acquiescence, she pushed the door open, but instantly recoiled with terror. It was a charnel house, half filled with dry skulls and bones.

"I fear to change my dress there, and alone. But, if you, father, command it, be it as you will."

"Why, thou child of vanity, the remains on which thou lookest are but the earthly attire of those who, in their day, led or followed in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. And such shalt thou be, for all thy mincing and ambling, thy piping and thy harping—thou, and all such ministers of frivolous and worldly pleasure, must become like these poor bones, whom thy idle nicety fears and loathes to look upon."

"Say not with idle nicety, reverend father," answered the glee maiden, "for, Heaven knows, I covet the repose of these poor bleached relics; and if, by stretching my body upon them, I could, without sin, bring my state to theirs, I would choose that charnel heap for my place of rest beyond the fairest and softest couch in Scotland."

"Be patient, and come on," said the monk, in a milder tone, "the reaper must not leave the harvest work till sunset gives the signal that the day's toil is over."

They walked forward. Brother Cyprian, at the end of a long gallery, opened the door of a small apartment, or perhaps a chapel, for it was decorated with a crucifix, before which burned four lamps. All bent and crossed themselves; and the priest said to the minstrel maiden, pointing to the crucifix, "What says that emblem?"

"That HE invites the sinner as well as the righteous to approach."

"Ay, if the sinner put from him his sin," said the monk, whose tone of voice was evidently milder. "Prepare thyself here for thy journey."

Louise remained an instant or two in the chapel, and presently reappeared in a mantle of coarse grey cloth, in which she had closely muffled herself, having put such of her more gaudy habiliments as she had time to take off in the little basket which had before held her ordinary attire.

The monk presently afterwards unlocked a door which led to the open air. They found themselves in the garden which surrounded the monastery of the Dominicans.

"The southern gate is on the latch, and through it you can pass unnoticed," said the monk. "Bless thee, my son; and bless thee too, unhappy child. Remembering where you put off your idle trinkets, may you take care how you again resume them!"

"Alas, father!" said Louise, "if the poor foreigner could supply the mere wants of life by any more creditable occupation, she has small wish to profess her idle art. But—"

But the monk had vanished; nay, the very door though which she had just passed appeared to have vanished also, so curiously was it concealed beneath a flying buttress, and among the profuse ornaments of Gothic architecture.

"Here is a woman let out by this private postern, sure enough," was Henry's reflection. "Pray Heaven the good fathers never let any in! The place seems convenient for such games at bo peep. But, Benedicite, what is to be done next? I must get rid of this quean as fast as I can; and I must see her safe. For let her be at heart what she may, she looks too modest, now she is in decent dress, to deserve the usage which the wild Scot of Galloway, or the devil's legion from the Liddel, are like to afford her."

Louise stood as if she waited his pleasure which way to go. Her little dog, relieved by the exchange of the dark, subterranean vault for the open air, sprung in wild gambols through the walks, and jumped upon its mistress, and even, though more timidly, circled close round the smith's feet, to express its satisfaction to him also, and conciliate his favour.

"Down, Charlot—down!" said the glee maiden. "You are glad to get into the blessed sunshine; but where shall we rest at night, my poor Charlot?"

"And now, mistress," said the smith, not churlishly, for it was not in his nature, but bluntly, as one who is desirous to finish a disagreeable employment, "which way lies your road?"

Louise looked on the ground and was silent. On being again urged to say which way she desired to be conducted, she again looked down, and said she could not tell.

"Come—come," said Henry, "I understand all that: I have been a galliard—a reveller in my day, but it's best to be plain. As matters are with me now, I am an altered man for these many, many months; and so, my quean, you and I must part sooner than perhaps a light o' love such as you expected to part with—a likely young fellow."

Louise wept silently, with her eyes still cast on the ground, as one who felt an insult which she had not a right to complain of. At length, perceiving that her conductor was grown impatient, she faltered out, "Noble sir—"

"Sir is for a knight," said the impatient burgher, "and noble is for a baron. I am Harry of the Wynd, an honest mechanic, and free of my guild."

"Good craftsman, then," said the minstrel woman, "you judge me harshly, but not without seeming cause. I would relieve you immediately of my company, which, it may be, brings little credit to good men, did I but know which way to go."

"To the next wake or fair, to be sure," said Henry, roughly, having no doubt that this distress was affected for the purpose of palming herself upon him, and perhaps dreading to throw himself into the way of temptation; "and that is the feast of St. Madox, at Auchterarder. I warrant thou wilt find the way thither well enough."

"Aft—Auchter—" repeated the glee maiden, her Southern tongue in vain attempting the Celtic accentuation. "I am told my poor plays will not be understood if I go nearer to yon dreadful range of mountains."

"Will you abide, then, in Perth?"

"But where to lodge?" said the wanderer.

"Why, where lodged you last night?" replied the smith. "You know where you came from, surely, though you seem doubtful where you are going?"

"I slept in the hospital of the convent. But I was only admitted upon great importunity, and I was commanded not to return."

"Nay, they will never take you in with the ban of the Douglas upon you, that is even too true. But the Prince mentioned Sir John Ramorny's; I can take you to his lodgings through bye streets, though it is short of an honest burgher's office, and my time presses."

"I will go anywhere; I know I am a scandal and incumbrance. There was a time when it was otherwise. But this Ramorny, who is he?"

"A courtly knight, who lives a jolly bachelor's life, and is master of the horse, and privado, as they say, to the young prince."

"What! to the wild, scornful young man who gave occasion to yonder scandal? Oh, take me not thither, good friend. Is there no Christian woman who would give a poor creature rest in her cowhouse or barn for one night? I will be gone with early daybreak. I will repay her richly. I have gold; and I will repay you, too, if you will take me where I may be safe from that wild reveller, and from the followers of that dark baron, in whose eye was death."

"Keep your gold for those who lack it, mistress," said Henry, "and do not offer to honest hands the money that is won by violating, and tabouring, and toe tripping, and perhaps worse pastimes. I tell you plainly, mistress, I am not to be fooled. I am ready to take you to any place of safety you can name, for my promise is as strong as an iron shackle. But you cannot persuade me that you do not know what earth to make for. You are not so young in your trade as not to know there are hostleries in every town, much more in a city like Perth, where such as you may be harboured for your money, if you cannot find some gulls, more or fewer, to pay your lawing. If you have money, mistress, my care about you need be the less; and truly I see little but pretence in all that excessive grief, and fear of being left alone, in one of your occupation."

Having thus, as he conceived, signified that he was not to be deceived by the ordinary arts of a glee maiden, Henry walked a few paces sturdily, endeavouring to think he was doing the wisest and most prudent thing in the world. Yet he could not help looking back to see how Louise bore his departure, and was shocked to observe that she had sunk upon a bank, with her arms resting on her knees and her head on her arms, in a situation expressive of the utmost desolation.

The smith tried to harden his heart. "It is all a sham," he said: "the gouge knows her trade, I'll be sworn, by St. Ringan."

At the instant something pulled the skirts of his cloak; and looking round, he saw the little spaniel, who immediately, as if to plead his mistress's cause, got on his hind legs and began to dance, whimpering at the same time, and looking back to Louise, as if to solicit compassion for his forsaken owner.

"Poor thing," said the smith, "there may be a trick in this too, for thou dost but as thou art taught. Yet, as I promised to protect this poor creature, I must not leave her in a swoon, if it be one, were it but for manhood's sake."

Returning, and approaching his troublesome charge, he was at once assured, from the change of her complexion, either that she was actually in the deepest distress, or had a power of dissimulation beyond the comprehension of man—or woman either.

"Young woman," he said, with more of kindness than he had hitherto been able even to assume, "I will tell you frankly how I am placed. This is St. Valentine's Day, and by custom I was to spend it with my fair Valentine. But blows and quarrels have occupied all the morning, save one poor half hour. Now, you may well understand where my heart and my thoughts are, and where, were it only in mere courtesy, my body ought to be."

The glee maiden listened, and appeared to comprehend him.

"If you are a true lover, and have to wait upon a chaste Valentine, God forbid that one like me should make a disturbance between you! Think about me no more. I will ask of that great river to be my guide to where it meets the ocean, where I think they said there was a seaport; I will sail from thence to La Belle France, and will find myself once more in a country in which the roughest peasant would not wrong the poorest female."

"You cannot go to Dundee today," said the smith. "The Douglas people are in motion on both sides of the river, for the alarm of the morning has reached them ere now; and all this day, and the next, and the whole night which is between, they will gather to their leader's standard, like Highlandmen at the fiery cross. Do you see yonder five or six men who are riding so wildly on the other side of the river? These are Annandale men: I know them by the length of their lances, and by the way they hold them. An Annandale man never slopes his spear backwards, but always keeps the point upright, or pointed forward."

"And what of them?" said the glee maiden. "They are men at arms and soldiers. They would respect me for my viol and my helplessness."

"I will say them no scandal," answered the smith. "If you were in their own glens, they would use you hospitably, and you would have nothing to fear; but they are now on an expedition. All is fish that comes to their net. There are amongst them who would take your life for the value of your gold earrings. Their whole soul is settled in their eyes to see prey, and in their hands to grasp it. They have no ears either to hear lays of music or listen to prayers for mercy. Besides, their leader's order is gone forth concerning you, and it is of a kind sure to be obeyed. Ay, great lords are sooner listened to if they say, 'Burn a church,' than if they say, 'Build one.'"

"Then," said the glee woman, "I were best sit down and die."

"Do not say so," replied the smith. "If I could but get you a lodging for the night, I would carry you the next morning to Our Lady's Stairs, from whence the vessels go down the river for Dundee, and would put you on board with some one bound that way, who should see you safely lodged where you would have fair entertainment and kind usage."

"Good—excellent—generous man!" said the glee maiden, "do this, and if the prayers and blessings of a poor unfortunate should ever reach Heaven, they will rise thither in thy behalf. We will meet at yonder postern door, at whatever time the boats take their departure."

"That is at six in the morning, when the day is but young."

"Away with you, then, to your Valentine; and if she loves you, oh, deceive her not!"

"Alas, poor damsel! I fear it is deceit hath brought thee to this pass. But I must not leave you thus unprovided. I must know where you are to pass the night."

"Care not for that," replied Louise: "the heavens are clear—there are bushes and boskets enough by the river side—Charlot and I can well make a sleeping room of a green arbour for one night; and tomorrow will, with your promised aid, see me out of reach of injury and wrong. Oh, the night soon passes away when there is hope for tomorrow! Do you still linger, with your Valentine waiting for you? Nay, I shall hold you but a loitering lover, and you know what belongs to a minstrel's reproaches."

"I cannot leave you, damsel," answered the armourer, now completely melted. "It were mere murder to suffer you to pass the night exposed to the keenness of a Scottish blast in February. No—no, my word would be ill kept in this manner; and if I should incur some risk of blame, it is but just penance for thinking of thee, and using thee, more according to my own prejudices, as I now well believe, than thy merits. Come with me, damsel; thou shalt have a sure and honest lodging for the night, whatsoever may be the consequence. It would be an evil compliment to my Catharine, were I to leave a poor creature to be starved to death, that I might enjoy her company an hour sooner."

So saying, and hardening himself against all anticipations of the ill consequences or scandal which might arise from such a measure, the manly hearted smith resolved to set evil report at defiance, and give the wanderer a night's refuge in his own house. It must be added, that he did this with extreme reluctance, and in a sort of enthusiasm of benevolence.

Ere our stout son of Vulcan had fixed his worship on the Fair Maid of Perth, a certain natural wildness of disposition had placed him under the influence of Venus, as well as that of Mars; and it was only the effect of a sincere attachment which had withdrawn him entirely from such licentious pleasures. He was therefore justly jealous of his newly acquired reputation for constancy, which his conduct to this poor wanderer must expose to suspicion; a little doubtful, perhaps, of exposing himself too venturously to temptation; and moreover in despair to lose so much of St. Valentine's Day, which custom not only permitted, but enjoined him to pass beside his mate for the season. The journey to Kinfauns, and the various transactions which followed, had consumed the day, and it was now nearly evensong time.

As if to make up by a speedy pace for the time he was compelled to waste upon a subject so foreign to that which he had most at heart, he strode on through the Dominicans' gardens, entered the town, and casting his cloak around the lower part of his face, and pulling down his bonnet to conceal the upper, he continued the same celerity of movement through bye streets and lanes, hoping to reach his own house in the Wynd without being observed. But when he had continued his rate of walking for ten minutes, he began to be sensible it might be too rapid for the young woman to keep up with him. He accordingly looked behind him with a degree of angry impatience, which soon turned into compunction, when he saw that she was almost utterly exhausted by the speed which she had exerted.

"Now, marry, hang me up for a brute," said Henry to himself. "Was my own haste ever so great, could it give that poor creature wings? And she loaded with baggage too! I am an ill nurtured beast, that is certain, wherever women are in question; and always sure to do wrong when I have the best will to act right."

"Hark thee, damsel; let me carry these things for thee. We shall make better speed that I do so."

Poor Louise would have objected, but her breath was too much exhausted to express herself; and she permitted her good natured guardian to take her little basket, which, when the dog beheld, he came straight before Henry, stood up, and shook his fore paws, whining gently, as if he too wanted to be carried.

"Nay, then, I must needs lend thee a lift too," said the smith, who saw the creature was tired:

"Fie, Charlot!" said Louise; "thou knowest I will carry thee myself."

She endeavoured to take up the little spaniel, but it escaped from her; and going to the other side of the smith, renewed its supplication that he would take it up.

"Charlot's right," said the smith: "he knows best who is ablest to bear him. This lets me know, my pretty one, that you have not been always the bearer of your own mail: Charlot can tell tales."

So deadly a hue came across the poor glee maiden's countenance as Henry spoke, that he was obliged to support her, lest she should have dropped to the ground. She recovered again, however, in an instant or two, and with a feeble voice requested her guide would go on.

"Nay—nay," said Henry, as they began to move, "keep hold of my cloak, or my arm, if it helps you forward better. A fair sight we are; and had I but a rebeck or a guitar at my back, and a jackanapes on my shoulder, we should seem as joyous a brace of strollers as ever touched string at a castle gate.

"Snails!" he ejaculated internally, "were any neighbour to meet me with this little harlotry's basket at my back, her dog under my arm, and herself hanging on my cloak, what could they think but that I had turned mumper in good earnest? I would not for the best harness I ever laid hammer on, that any of our long tongued neighbours met me in this guise; it were a jest would last from St. Valentine's Day to next Candlemas."

Stirred by these thoughts, the smith, although at the risk of making much longer a route which he wished to traverse as swiftly as possible, took the most indirect and private course which he could find, in order to avoid the main streets, still crowded with people, owing to the late scene of tumult and agitation. But unhappily his policy availed him nothing; for, in turning into an alley, he met a man with his cloak muffled around his face, from a desire like his own to pass unobserved, though the slight insignificant figure, the spindle shanks, which showed themselves beneath the mantle, and the small dull eye that blinked over its upper folds, announced the pottingar as distinctly as if he had carried his sign in front of his bonnet. His unexpected and most unwelcome presence overwhelmed the smith with confusion. Ready evasion was not the property of his bold, blunt temper; and knowing this man to be a curious observer, a malignant tale bearer, and by no means well disposed to himself in particular, no better hope occurred to him than that the worshipful apothecary would give him some pretext to silence his testimony and secure his discretion by twisting his neck round.

But, far from doing or saying anything which could warrant such extremities, the pottingar, seeing himself so close upon his stalwart townsman that recognition was inevitable, seemed determined it should be as slight as possible; and without appearing to notice anything particular in the company or circumstances in which they met, he barely slid out these words as he passed him, without even a glance towards his companion after the first instant of their meeting: "A merry holiday to you once more, stout smith. What! thou art bringing thy cousin, pretty Mistress Joan Letham, with her mail, from the waterside—fresh from Dundee, I warrant? I heard she was expected at the old cordwainer's."

As he spoke thus, he looked neither right nor left, and exchanging a "Save you!" with a salute of the same kind which the smith rather muttered than uttered distinctly, he glided forward on his way like a shadow.

"The foul fiend catch me, if I can swallow that pill," said Henry Smith, "how well soever it may be gilded. The knave has a shrewd eye for a kirtle, and knows a wild duck from a tame as well as e'er a man in Perth. He were the last in the Fair City to take sour plums for pears, or my roundabout cousin Joan for this piece of fantastic vanity. I fancy his bearing was as much as to say, 'I will not see what you might wish me blind to'; and he is right to do so, as he might easily purchase himself a broken pate by meddling with my matters, and so he will be silent for his own sake. But whom have we next? By St. Dunstan, the chattering, bragging, cowardly knave, Oliver Proudful!"

It was, indeed, the bold bonnet maker whom they next encountered, who, with his cap on one side, and trolling the ditty of—

*"Thou art over long at the pot, Tom, Tom,"
—gave plain intimation that he had made no dry meal.*

"Ha! my jolly smith," he said, "have I caught thee in the manner? What, can the true steel bend? Can Vulcan, as the minstrel says, pay Venus back in her own coin? Faith, thou wilt be a gay Valentine before the year's out, that begins with the holiday so jollily."

"Hark ye, Oliver," said the displeased smith, "shut your eyes and pass on, crony. And hark ye again, stir not your tongue about what concerns you not, as you value having an entire tooth in your head."

"I betray counsel? I bear tales, and that against my brother martialist? I would not tell it even to my timber soldan! Why, I can be a wild galliard in a corner as well as thou, man. And now I think on't, I will go with thee somewhere, and we will have a rouse together, and thy Dalilah shall give us a song. Ha! said I not well?"

"Excellently," said Henry, longing the whole time to knock his brother martialist down, but wisely taking a more peaceful way to rid himself of the incumbrance of his presence—"excellently well! I may want thy help, too, for here are five or six of the Douglasses before us: they will not fail to try to take the wench from a poor burgher like myself, so I will be glad of the assistance of a tearer such as thou art."

"I thank ye—I thank ye," answered the bonnet maker; "but were I not better run and cause ring the common bell, and get my great sword?"

"Ay, ay, run home as fast as you can, and say nothing of what you have seen."

"Who, I? Nay, fear me not. Pah! I scorn a tale bearer."

"Away with you, then. I hear the clash of armour."

This put life and mettle into the heels of the bonnet maker, who, turning his back on the supposed danger, set off at a pace which the smith never doubted would speedily bring him to his own house.

"Here is another chattering jay to deal with," thought the smith; "but I have a hank over him too. The minstrels have a fabliau of a daw with borrowed feathers—why, this Oliver is The very bird, and, by St. Dunstan, if he lets his chattering tongue run on at my expense, I will so pluck him as never hawk plumed a partridge. And this he knows."

As these reflections thronged on his mind, he had nearly reached the end of his journey, and, with the glee maiden still hanging on his cloak, exhausted, partly with fear, partly with fatigue, he at length arrived at the middle of the wynd, which was honoured with his own habitation, and from which, in the uncertainty that then attended the application of surnames, he derived one of his own appellatives. Here, on ordinary days, his furnace was seen to blaze, and four half stripped knaves stunned the neighbourhood with the clang of hammer and stithy. But St. Valentine's holiday was an excuse for these men of steel having shut the shop, and for the present being absent on their own errands of devotion or pleasure. The house which adjoined to the smithy called Henry its owner; and though it was small, and situated in a narrow street, yet, as there was a large garden with fruit trees behind it, it constituted upon the whole a pleasant dwelling. The smith, instead of knocking or calling, which would have drawn neighbours to doors and windows, drew out a pass key of his own fabrication, then a great and envied curiosity, and opening the door of his house, introduced his companion into his habitation.

The apartment which received Henry and the glee maiden was the kitchen, which served amongst those of the smith's station for the family sitting room, although one or two individuals, like Simon Glover, had an eating room apart from that in which their victuals were prepared. In the corner of this apartment, which was arranged with an unusual attention to cleanliness, sat an old woman, whose neatness of attire, and the precision with which her scarlet plaid was drawn over her head, so as to descend to her shoulders on each side, might have indicated a higher rank than that of Luckie Shoolbred, the smith's housekeeper. Yet such and no other was her designation; and not having attended mass in the morning, she was quietly reposing herself by the side of the fire, her beads, half told, hanging over her left arm; her prayers, half said, loitering upon her tongue; her eyes, half closed, resigning themselves to slumber, while she expected the return of her

foster son, without being able to guess at what hour it was likely to happen. She started up at the sound of his entrance, and bent her eye upon his companion, at first with a look of the utmost surprise, which gradually was exchanged for one expressive of great displeasure.

"Now the saints bless mine eyesight, Henry Smith!" she exclaimed, very devoutly.

"Amen, with all my heart. Get some food ready presently, good nurse, for I fear me this traveller hath dined but lightly."

"And again I pray that Our Lady would preserve my eyesight from the wicked delusions of Satan!"

"So be it, I tell you, good woman. But what is the use of all this pattering and praying? Do you not hear me? or will you not do as I bid you?"

"It must be himself, then, whatever is of it! But, oh! it is more like the foul fiend in his likeness, to have such a baggage hanging upon his cloak. Oh, Harry Smith, men called you a wild lad for less things; but who would ever have thought that Harry would have brought a light leman under the roof that sheltered his worthy mother, and where his own nurse has dwelt for thirty years?"

"Hold your peace, old woman, and be reasonable," said the smith. "This glee woman is no leman of mine, nor of any other person that I know of; but she is going off for Dundee tomorrow by the boats, and we must give her quarters till then."

"Quarters!" said the old woman. "You may give quarters to such cattle if you like it yourself, Harry Wynd; but the same house shall not quarter that trumpery quean and me, and of that you may assure yourself."

"Your mother is angry with me," said Louise, misconstruing the connexion of the parties. "I will not remain to give her any offence. If there is a stable or a cowhouse, an empty stall will be bed enough for Charlot and me."

"Ay—ay, I am thinking it is the quarters you are best used to," said Dame Shoolbred.

"Harkye, Nurse Shoolbred," said the smith. "You know I love you for your own sake and for my mother's; but by St. Dunstan, who was a saint of my own craft, I will have the command of my own house; and if you leave me without any better reason but your own nonsensical suspicions, you must think how you will have the door open to you when you return; for you shall have no help of mine, I promise you."

"Aweel, my bairn, and that will never make me risk the honest name I have kept for sixty years. It was never your mother's custom, and it shall never be mine, to take up with rangers, and jugglers, and singing women; and I am not so far to seek for a dwelling, that the same roof should cover me and a tramping princess like that."

With this the refractory gouvernante began in great hurry to adjust her tartan mantle for going abroad, by pulling it so forwards as to conceal the white linen cap, the edges of which bordered her shrivelled but still fresh and healthful countenance. This done, she seized upon a staff, the trusty companion of her journeys, and was fairly trudging towards the door, when the smith stepped between her and the passage.

"Wait at least, old woman, till we have cleared scores. I owe you for fee and bountith."

"An' that's e'en a dream of your own fool's head. What fee or bountith am I to take from the son of your mother, that fed, clad, and bielled me as if I had been a sister?"

"And well you repay it, nurse, leaving her only child at his utmost need."

This seemed to strike the obstinate old woman with compunction. She stopped and looked at her master and the minstrel alternately; then shook her head, and seemed about to resume her motion towards the door.

"I only receive this poor wanderer under my roof," urged the smith, "to save her from the prison and the scourge."

"And why should you save her?" said the inexorable Dame Shoolbred. "I dare say she has deserved them both as well as ever thief deserved a hempen collar."

"For aught I know she may or she may not. But she cannot deserve to be scourged to death, or imprisoned till she is starved to death; and that is the lot of them that the Black Douglas bears mal-talent against."

"And you are going to throw the Black Douglas for the cake of a glee woman? This will be the worst of your feuds yet. Oh, Henry Gow, there is as much iron in your head as in your anvil!"

"I have sometimes thought this myself; Mistress Shoolbred; but if I do get a cut or two on this new argument, I wonder who is to cure them, if you run away from me like a scared wild goose? Ay, and, moreover, who is to receive my bonny bride, that I hope to bring up the wynd one of these days?"

"Ah, Harry—Harry," said the old woman, shaking her head, "this is not the way to prepare an honest man's house for a young bride: you should be guided by modesty and discretion, and not by chambering and wantonness."

"I tell you again, this poor creature is nothing to me. I wish her only to be safely taken care of; and I think the boldest Borderman in Perth will respect the bar of my door as much as the gate of Carlisle Castle. I am going down to Sim Glover's; I may stay there all night, for the Highland cub is run back to the hills, like a wolf whelp as he is, and so there is a bed to spare, and father Simon will make me welcome to the use of it. You will remain with this poor creature, feed her, and protect her during the night, and I will call on her before day; and thou mayst go with her to the boat thyself an thou wilt, and so thou wilt set the last eyes on her at the same time I shall."

"There is some reason in that," said Dame Shoolbred; "though why you should put your reputation in risk for a creature that would find a lodging for a silver twopence and less matter is a mystery to me."

"Trust me with that, old woman, and be kind to the girl."

"Kinder than she deserves, I warrant you; and truly, though I little like the company of such cattle, yet I think I am less like to take harm from her than you—unless she be a witch, indeed, which may well come to be the case, as the devil is very powerful with all this wayfaring clanjamfray."

"No more a witch than I am a warlock," said the honest smith: "a poor, broken hearted thing, that, if she hath done evil, has dreed a sore weird for it. Be kind to her. And you, my musical damsel, I will call on you tomorrow morning, and carry you to the waterside. This old woman will treat you kindly if you say nothing to her but what becomes honest ears."

The poor minstrel had listened to this dialogue without understanding more than its general tendency; for, though she spoke English well, she had acquired the language in England itself; and the Northern dialect was then, as now, of a broader and harsher character. She saw, however, that she was to remain with the old lady, and meekly folding her arms on her bosom, bent her head with humility. She next looked towards the smith with a strong expression of thankfulness, then, raising her eyes to heaven, took his passive hand, and seemed about to kiss the sinewy fingers in token of deep and affectionate gratitude.

But Dame Shoolbred did not give license to the stranger's mode of expressing her feelings. She thrust in between them, and pushing poor Louise aside, said, "No—no, I'll have none of that work. Go into the chimney nook, mistress, and when Harry Smith's gone, if you must have hands to kiss, you shall kiss mine as long as you like. And you, Harry, away down to Sim Glover's, for if pretty Mistress Catharine hears of the company you have brought home, she may chance to like them as little as I do. What's the matter now? is the man demented? are you going out without your buckler, and the whole town in misrule?"

"You are right, dame," said the armourer; and, throwing the buckler over his broad shoulders, he departed from his house without abiding farther question.

CHAPTER XIII.

*How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years.*

BYRON.

We must now leave the lower parties in our historical drama, to attend to the incidents which took place among those of a higher rank and greater importance. We pass from the hut of an armourer to the council room of a monarch, and resume our story just when, the tumult beneath being settled, the angry chieftains were summoned to the royal presence. They entered, displeased with and lowering upon each other, each so exclusively filled with his own fancied injuries as to be equally unwilling and unable to attend to reason or argument. Albany alone, calm and crafty, seemed prepared to use their dissatisfaction for his own purposes, and turn each incident as it should occur to the furtherance of his own indirect ends.

The King's irresolution, although it amounted even to timidity, did not prevent his assuming the exterior bearing becoming his situation. It was only when hard pressed, as in the preceding scene, that he lost his apparent composure. In general, he might be driven from his purpose, but seldom from his dignity of manner. He received Albany, Douglas, March, and the prior, those ill assorted members of his motley council, with a mixture of courtesy and loftiness, which reminded each haughty peer that he stood in the presence of his sovereign, and compelled him to do the befitting reverence.

Having received their salutations, the King motioned them to be seated; and they were obeying his commands when Rothsay entered. He walked gracefully up to his father, and, kneeling at his footstool, requested his blessing. Robert, with an aspect in which fondness and sorrow were ill disguised, made an attempt to assume a look of reproof, as he laid his hand on the youth's head and said, with a sigh, "God bless thee, my thoughtless boy, and make thee a wiser man in thy future years!"

"Amen, my dearest father!" said Rothsay, in a tone of feeling such as his happier moments often evinced. He then kissed the royal hand, with the reverence of a son and a subject; and, instead of taking a place at the council board, remained standing behind the King's chair, in such a position that he might, when he chose, whisper into his father's ear.

The King next made a sign to the prior of St. Dominic to take his place at the table, on which there were writing materials, which, of all the subjects present, Albany excepted, the churchman was alone able to use. The King then opened the purpose of their meeting by saying, with much dignity:

"Our business, my lords, respected these unhappy dissensions in the Highlands, which, we learn by our latest messengers, are about to occasion the waste and destruction of the country, even within a few miles of this our own court. But, near as this trouble is, our ill fate, and the instigations of wicked men, have raised up one yet nearer, by throwing strife and contention among the citizens of Perth and those attendants who follow your lordships and others our knights and nobles. I must first, therefore, apply to yourselves, my lords, to know why our court is disturbed by such unseemly contentings, and by what means they ought to be repressed? Brother of Albany, do you tell us first your sentiments on this matter."

"Sir, our royal sovereign and brother," said the Duke, "being in attendance on your Grace's person when the fray began, I am not acquainted with its origin."

"And for me," said the Prince, "I heard no worse war cry than a minstrel wench's ballad, and saw no more dangerous bolts flying than hazel nuts."

"And I," said the Earl of March, "could only perceive that the stout citizens of Perth had in chase some knaves who had assumed the Bloody Heart on their shoulders. They ran too fast to be actually the men of the Earl of Douglas."

Douglas understood the sneer, but only replied to it by one of those withering looks with which he was accustomed to intimate his mortal resentment. He spoke, however, with haughty composure.

"My liege," he said, "must of course know it is Douglas who must answer to this heavy charge, for when was there strife or bloodshed in Scotland, but there were foul tongues to asperse a Douglas or a Douglas's man as having given cause to them? We have here goodly witnesses. I speak not of my Lord of Albany, who has only said that he was, as well becomes him, by your Grace's side. And I say nothing of my Lord of Rothsay, who, as befits his rank, years, and understanding, was cracking nuts with a strolling musician. He smiles. Here he may say his pleasure; I shall not forget a tie which he seems to have forgotten. But here is my Lord of March, who saw my followers flying before the clowns of Perth. I can tell that earl that the followers of the Bloody Heart advance or retreat when their chieftain commands and the good of Scotland requires."

"And I can answer—" exclaimed the equally proud Earl of March, his blood rushing into his face, when the King interrupted him.

"Peace! angry lords," said the King, "and remember in whose presence you stand. And you, my Lord of Douglas, tell us, if you can, the cause of this mutiny, and why your followers, whose general good services we are most willing to acknowledge, were thus active in private brawl."

"I obey, my lord," said Douglas, slightly stooping a head that seldom bent. "I was passing from my lodgings in the Carthusian convent, through the High Street of Perth, with a few of my ordinary retinue, when I beheld some of the baser sort of citizens crowding around the Cross, against which there was nailed this placard, and that which accompanies it."

He took from a pocket in the bosom of his buff coat a human hand and a piece of parchment. The King was shocked and agitated.

"Read," he said, "good father prior, and let that ghastly spectacle be removed."

The prior read a placard to the following purpose:

"Inasmuch as the house of a citizen of Perth was assaulted last night, being St. Valentine's Eve, by a sort of disorderly night walkers, belonging to some company of the strangers now resident in the Fair City; and whereas this hand was struck from one of the lawless limmers in the fray that ensued, the provost and magistrates have directed that it should be nailed to the Cross, in scorn and contempt of those by whom such brawl was occasioned. And if any one of knightly degree shall say that this our act is wrongfully done, I, Patrick Charteris of Kinfauns, knight, will justify this cartel in knightly weapons, within the barrace; or, if any one of meaner birth shall deny what is here said, he shall be met with by a citizen of the Fair City of Perth, according to his degree. And so God and St. John protect the Fair City!"

"You will not wonder, my lord," resumed Douglas, "that, when my almoner had read to me the contents of so insolent a scroll, I caused one of my squires to pluck down a trophy so disgraceful to the chivalry and nobility of Scotland. Where upon, it seems some of these saucy burghers took license to hoot and insult the hindmost of my train, who wheeled their horses on them, and would soon have settled the feud, but for my positive command that they should follow me in as much peace as the rascally vulgar would permit. And thus they arrived here in the guise of flying men, when, with my command to repel force by force, they might have set fire to the four corners of this wretched borough, and stifled the insolent churls, like malicious fox cubs in a burning brake of furze."

There was a silence when Douglas had done speaking, until the Duke of Rothsay answered, addressing his father:

"Since the Earl of Douglas possesses the power of burning the town where your Grace holds your court, so soon as the provost and he differ about a night riot, or the terms of a cartel, I am sure we ought all to be thankful that he has not the will to do so."

"The Duke of Rothsay," said Douglas, who seemed resolved to maintain command of his temper, "may have reason to thank Heaven in a more serious tone than he now uses that the Douglas is as true as he is powerful. This is a time when the subjects in all countries rise against the law: we have heard of the insurgents of the Jacquerie in France; and of Jack Straw, and Hob Miller, and Parson Ball, among the Southron; and we may be sure there is fuel enough to catch such a flame, were it spreading to our frontiers. When I see peasants challenging noblemen, and nailing the hands of the gentry to their city cross, I will not say I fear mutiny—for that would be false—but I foresee, and will stand well prepared for, it."

"And why does my Lord Douglas say," answered the Earl of March, "that this cartel has been done by churls? I see Sir Patrick Charteris's name there, and he, I ween, is of no churl's blood. The Douglas himself, since he takes the matter so warmly, might lift Sir Patrick's gauntlet without soiling of his honour."

"My Lord of March," replied Douglas, "should speak but of what he understands. I do no injustice to the descendant of the Red Rover, when I say he is too slight to be weighed with the Douglas. The heir of Thomas Randolph might have a better claim to his answer."

"And, by my honour, it shall not miss for want of my asking the grace," said the Earl of March, pulling his glove off.

"Stay, my lord," said the King. "Do us not so gross an injury as to bring your feud to mortal defiance here; but rather offer your ungloved hand in kindness to the noble earl, and embrace in token of your mutual fealty to the crown of Scotland."

"Not so, my liege," answered March; "your Majesty may command me to return my gauntlet, for that and all the armour it belongs to are at your command, while I continue to hold my earldom of the crown of Scotland; but when I clasp Douglas, it must be with a mailed hand. Farewell, my liege. My counsels here avail not, nay, are so unfavourably received, that perhaps farther stay were unwholesome for my safety. May God keep your Highness from open enemies and treacherous friends! I am for my castle of Dunbar, from whence I think you will soon hear news. Farewell to you, my Lords of Albany and Douglas; you are playing a high game, look you play it fairly. Farewell, poor thoughtless prince, who art sporting like a fawn within spring of a tiger! Farewell, all—George of Dunbar sees the evil he cannot remedy. Adieu, all."

The King would have spoken, but the accents died on his tongue, as he received from Albany a look cautioning him to forbear. The Earl of March left the apartment, receiving the mute salutations of the members of the council whom he had severally addressed, excepting from Douglas alone, who returned to his farewell speech a glance of contemptuous defiance.

"The recreant goes to betray us to the Southron," he said; "his pride rests on his possessing that sea worn hold which can admit the English into Lothian [the castle of Dunbar]. Nay, look not alarmed, my liege, I will hold good what I say. Nevertheless, it is yet time. Speak but the word, my liege—say but 'Arrest him,' and March shall not yet cross the Earn on his traitorous journey."

"Nay, gallant earl," said Albany, who wished rather that the two powerful lords should counterbalance each other than that one should obtain a decisive superiority, "that were too hasty counsel. The Earl of March came hither on the King's warrant of safe conduct, and it may not consist with my royal brother's honour to break it. Yet, if your lordship can bring any detailed proof—"

Here they were interrupted by a flourish of trumpets.

"His Grace of Albany is unwontedly scrupulous today," said Douglas; "but it skills not wasting words—the time is past—these are March's trumpets, and I warrant me he rides at flight speed so soon as he passes the South Port. We shall hear of him in time; and if it be as I have conjectured, he shall be met with though all England backed his treachery."

"Nay, let us hope better of the noble earl," said the King, no way displeased that the quarrel betwixt March and Douglas had seemed to obliterate the traces of the disagreement betwixt Rothsay and his father in law; "he hath a fiery, but not a sullen, temper. In some things he has been—I will not say wronged, but disappointed—and something is to be allowed to the resentment of high blood armed with great power. But thank Heaven, all of us who remain are of one sentiment, and, I may say, of one house; so that, at least, our councils cannot now be thwarted with disunion. Father prior, I pray you take your writing materials, for you must as usual be our clerk of council. And now to business, my lords; and our first object of consideration must be this Highland cumber."

"Between the Clan Chattan and the Clan Quhele," said the prior, "which, as our last advices from our brethren at Dunkeld inform us, is ready to break out into a more formidable warfare than has yet taken place between these sons of Belial, who speak of nothing else than of utterly destroying one another. Their forces are assembling on each side, and not a man claiming in the tenth degree of kindred but must repair to the brattach of his tribe, or stand to the punishment of fire and sword. The fiery cross hath flitted about like a meteor in every direction, and awakened strange and unknown tribes beyond the distant Moray Firth—may Heaven and St. Dominic be our protection! But if your lordships cannot find remedy for evil, it will spread broad and wide, and the patrimony of the church must in every direction be exposed to the fury of these Amalekites, with whom there is as little devotion to Heaven as there is pity or love to their neighbour—may Our Lady be our guard! We hear some of them are yet utter heathens, and worship Mahound and Termagaunt."

"My lords and kinsmen," said Robert, "ye have heard the urgency of this case, and may desire to know my sentiments before you deliver what your own wisdom shall suggest. And, in sooth, no better remedy occurs to me than to send two commissioners, with full power from us to settle such debates as be among them, and at the same time to charge them, as they shall be answerable to the law, to lay down their arms, and forbear all practices of violence against each other."

"I approve of your Grace's proposal," said Rothsay; "and I trust the good prior will not refuse the venerable station of envoy upon this peacemaking errand. And his reverend brother, the abbot of the Carthusian convent, must contend for an honour which will certainly add two most eminent recruits to the large army of martyrs, since the Highlanders little regard the distinction betwixt clerk and layman in the ambassadors whom you send to them."

"My royal Lord of Rothsay," said the prior, "if I am destined to the blessed crown of martyrdom, I shall be doubtless directed to the path by which I am to attain it. Meantime, if you speak in jest, may Heaven pardon you, and give you light to perceive that it were better buckle on your arms to guard the possessions of the church, so perilously endangered, than to employ your wit in taunting her ministers and servants."

"I taunt no one, father prior," said the youth, yawning; "Nor have I much objection to taking arms, excepting that they are a somewhat cumbrous garb, and in February a furred mantle is more suiting to the weather than a steel corselet. And it irks me the more to put on cold harness in this nipping weather, that, would but the church send a detachment of their saints—and they have some Highland ones well known in this district, and doubtless used to the climate—they might fight their own battles, like merry St. George of England. But I know not how it is, we hear of their miracles when they are propitiated, and of their vengeance if any one trespasses on their patrimonies, and these are urged as reasons for extending their lands by large largesses; and yet, if there come down but a band of twenty Highlanders, bell, book, and candle make no speed, and the belted baron must be fain to maintain the church in possession of the lands which he has given to her, as much as if he himself still enjoyed the fruits of them."

"Son David," said the King, "you give an undue license to your tongue."

"Nay, Sir, I am mute," replied the Prince. "I had no purpose to disturb your Highness, or displease the father prior, who, with so many miracles at his disposal, will not face, as it seems, a handful of Highland caterans."

"We know," said the prior, with suppressed indignation, "from what source these vile doctrines are derived, which we hear with horror from the tongue that now utters them. When princes converse with heretics, their minds and manners are alike corrupted. They show themselves in the streets as the companions of maskers and harlots, and in the council as the scorners of the church and of holy things."

"Peace, good father!" said the King. "Rothsay shall make amends for what he has idly spoken. Alas! let us take counsel in friendly fashion, rather than resemble a mutinous crew of mariners in a sinking vessel, when each is more intent on quarrelling with his neighbours than in assisting the exertions of the forlorn master for the safety of the ship. My Lord of Douglas, your house has been seldom to lack when the crown of Scotland desired either wise counsel or manly achievement; I trust you will help us in this strait."

"I can only wonder that the strait should exist, my lord," answered the haughty Douglas. "When I was entrusted with the lieutenancy of the kingdom, there were some of these wild clans came down from the Grampians. I troubled not the council about the matter, but made the sheriff, Lord Ruthven, get to horse with the forces of the Carse—the Hays, the Lindsays, the Ogilvies, and other gentlemen. By St. Bride! When it was steel coat to frieze mantle, the thieves knew what lances were good for, and whether swords had edges or no. There were some three hundred of their best bonnets, besides that of their chief, Donald Cormac, left on the moor of Thorn and in Rochinroy Wood; and as many were gibbeted at Houghmanstares, which has still the name from the hangman work that was done there. This is the way men deal with thieves in my country; and if gentler methods will succeed better with these Earish knaves, do not blame Douglas for speaking his mind. You smile, my Lord of Rothsay. May I ask how I have a second time become your jest, before I have replied to the first which you passed on me?"

"Nay, be not wrathful, my good Lord of Douglas," answered the Prince; "I did but smile to think how your princely retinue would dwindle if every thief were dealt with as the poor Highlanders at Houghmanstares."

The King again interfered, to prevent the Earl from giving an angry reply.

"Your lordship," said he to Douglas, "advises wisely that we should trust to arms when these men come out against our subjects on the fair and level plan; but the difficulty is to put a stop to their disorders while they continue to lurk within their mountains. I need not tell you that the Clan Chattan and the Clan Quhele are great confederacies, consisting each of various tribes, who are banded together, each to support their own separate league, and who of late have had dissensions which have drawn blood wherever they have met, whether individually or in bands. The whole country is torn to pieces by their restless feuds."

"I cannot see the evil of this," said the Douglas: "the ruffians will destroy each other, and the deer of the Highlands will increase as the men diminish. We shall gain as hunters the exercise we lose as warriors."

"Rather say that the wolves will increase as the men diminish," replied the King.

"I am content," said Douglas: "better wild wolves than wild caterans. Let there be strong forces maintained along the Earish frontier, to separate the quiet from the disturbed country. Confine the fire of civil war within the Highlands; let it spend its uncontrolled fury, and it will be soon burnt out for want of fuel. The survivors will be humbled, and will be more obedient to a whisper of your Grace's pleasure than their fathers, or the knaves that now exist, have, been to your strictest commands."

"This is wise but ungodly counsel," said the prior, shaking his head; "I cannot take it upon my conscience to recommend it. It is wisdom, but it is the wisdom of Achitophel, crafty at once and cruel."

"My heart tells me so," said the King, laying his hand on his breast—"my heart tells me that it will be asked of me at the awful day, 'Robert Stuart, where are the subjects I have given thee?' It tells me that I must account for them all, Saxon and Gael, Lowland, Highland, and Border man; that I will not be required to answer for those alone who have wealth and knowledge, but for those also who were robbers because they were poor, and rebels because they were ignorant."

"Your Highness speaks like a Christian king," said the prior; "but you bear the sword as well as the sceptre, and this present evil is of a kind which the sword must cure."

"Hark ye, my lords," said the Prince, looking up as if a gay thought had suddenly struck him. "Suppose we teach these savage mountaineers a strain of chivalry? It were no hard matter to bring these two great commanders, the captain of the Clan Chattan and the chief of the no less doughty race of the Clan Quhele, to defy each other to mortal combat. They might fight here in Perth—we would lend them horse and armour; thus their feud would be stanch'd by the death of one, or probably both, of the villains, for I think both would break their necks in the first charge; my father's godly desire of saving blood would be attained; and we should have the pleasure of seeing such a combat between two savage knights, for the first time in their lives wearing breeches and mounted on horses, as has not been heard of since the days of King Arthur."

"Shame upon you, David!" said the King. "Do you make the distress of your native country, and the perplexity of our councils, a subject for buffoonery?"

"If you will pardon me, royal brother," said Albany, "I think that, though my princely nephew hath started this thought in a jocular manner, there may be something wrought out of it, which might greatly remedy this pressing evil."

"Good brother," replied the King, "it is unkind to expose Rothsay's folly by pressing further his ill timed jest. We know the Highland clans have not our customs of chivalry, nor the habit or mode of doing battle which these require."

"True, your Grace," answered Albany; "yet I speak not in scorn, but in serious earnest. True, the mountaineers have not our forms and mode of doing battle in the lists, but they have those which are as effectual to the destruction of human life, and so that the mortal game is played, and the stake won and lost, what signifies it whether these Gael fight with sword and lance, as becomes belted knights, or with sandbags, like the crestless churls of England, or butcher each other with knives and skenes, in their own barbarous fashion? Their habits, like our own, refer all disputed rights and claims to the decision of battle. They are as vain, too, as they are fierce; and the idea that these two clans would be admitted to combat in presence of your Grace and of your court will readily induce them to refer their difference to the fate of battle, even were such rough arbitrement less familiar to their customs, and that in any such numbers as shall be thought most convenient. We must take care that they approach not the court, save in such a fashion and number that they shall not be able to surprise us; and that point being provided against, the more that shall be admitted to combat upon either side, the greater will be the slaughter among their bravest and most stirring men, and the more the chance of the Highlands being quiet for some time to come."

"This were a bloody policy, brother," said the King; "and again I say, that I cannot bring my conscience to countenance the slaughter of these rude men, that are so little better than so many benighted heathens."

"And are their lives more precious," asked Albany, "than those of nobles and gentlemen who by your Grace's license are so frequently admitted to fight in barrack, either for the satisfying of disputes at law or simply to acquire honour?"

The King, thus hard pressed, had little to say against a custom so engrafted upon the laws of the realm and the usages of chivalry as the trial by combat; and he only replied: "God knows, I have never granted such license as you urge me with unless with the greatest repugnance; and that I never saw men have strife together to the effusion of blood, but I could have wished to appease it with the shedding of my own."

"But, my gracious lord," said the prior, "it seems that, if we follow not some such policy as this of my Lord of Albany, we must have recourse to that of the Douglas; and, at the risk of the dubious event of battle, and with the certainty of losing many excellent subjects, do, by means of the Lowland swords, that which these wild mountaineers will otherwise perform with their own hand. What says my Lord of Douglas to the policy of his Grace of Albany?"

"Douglas," said the haughty lord, "never counselled that to be done by policy which might be attained by open force. He remains by his opinion, and is willing to march at the head of his own followers, with those of the barons of Perth shire and the Carse, and either bring these Highlanders to reason or subjection, or leave the body of a Douglas among their savage wildernesses."

"It is nobly spoken, my Lord of Douglas," said Albany; "and well might the King rely upon thy undaunted heart and the courage of thy resolute followers. But see you not how soon you may be called elsewhere, where your presence and services are altogether indispensable to Scotland and her monarch? Marked you not the gloomy tone in which the fiery March limited his allegiance and faith to our sovereign here present to that space for which he was to remain King Robert's vassal? And did not you yourself suspect that he was plotting a transference of his allegiance to England? Other chiefs, of subordinate power and inferior fame, may do battle with the Highlanders; but if Dunbar admit the Percies and their Englishmen into our frontiers, who will drive them back if the Douglas be elsewhere?"

"My sword," answered Douglas, "is equally at the service of his Majesty on the frontier or in the deepest recesses of the Highlands. I have seen the backs of the proud Percy and George of Dunbar ere now, and I may see them again. And, if it is the King's pleasure I should take measures against this probable conjunction of stranger and traitor, I admit that, rather than trust to an inferior or feebler hand the important task of settling the Highlands, I would be disposed to give my opinion in favour of the policy of my Lord of Albany, and suffer those savages to carve each other's limbs, without giving barons and knights the trouble of hunting them down."

"My Lord of Douglas," said the Prince, who seemed determined to omit no opportunity to gall his haughty father in law, "does not choose to leave to us Lowlanders even the poor crumbs of honour which might be gathered at the expense of the Highland kerne, while he, with his Border chivalry, reaps the full harvest of victory over the English. But Percy hath seen men's backs as well as Douglas; and I have known as great wonders as that he who goes forth to seek such wool should come back shorn."

"A phrase," said Douglas, "well becoming a prince who speaks of honour with a wandering harlot's scrip in his bonnet, by way of favor."

"Excuse it, my lord," said Rothsay: "men who have matched unfittingly become careless in the choice of those whom they love par amours. The chained dog must snatch at the nearest bone."

"Rothsay, my unhappy son!" exclaimed the King, "art thou mad? or wouldst thou draw down on thee the full storm of a king and father's displeasure?"

"I am dumb," returned the Prince, "at your Grace's command."

"Well, then, my Lord of Albany," said the King, "since such is your advice, and since Scottish blood must flow, how, I pray you, are we to prevail on these fierce men to refer their quarrel to such a combat as you propose?"

"That, my liege," said Albany, "must be the result of more mature deliberation. But the task will not be difficult. Gold will be needful to bribe some of the bards and principal counsellors and spokesmen. The chiefs, moreover, of both these leagues must be made to understand that, unless they agree to this amicable settlement—"

"Amicable, brother!" said the King, with emphasis.

"Ay, amicable, my liege," replied his brother, "since it is better the country were placed in peace, at the expense of losing a score or two of Highland kernes, than remain at war till as many thousands are destroyed by sword, fire, famine, and all the extremities of mountain battle. To return to the purpose: I think that the first party to whom the accommodation is proposed will snatch at it eagerly; that the other will be ashamed to reject an offer to rest the cause on the swords of their bravest men; that the national vanity, and factious hate to each other, will prevent them from seeing our purpose in adopting such a rule of decision; and that they will be more eager to cut each other to pieces than we can be to halloo them on. And now, as our counsels are finished, so far as I can aid, I will withdraw."

"Stay yet a moment," said the prior, "for I also have a grief to disclose, of a nature so black and horrible, that your Grace's pious heart will hardly credit its existence, and I state it mournfully, because, as certain as that I am an unworthy servant of St. Dominic, it is the cause of the displeasure of Heaven against this poor country, by which our victories are turned into defeat, our gladness into mourning, our councils distracted with disunion, and our country devoured by civil war."

"Speak, reverend prior," said the King; "assuredly, if the cause of such evils be in me or in my house, I will take instant care to their removal."

He uttered these words with a faltering voice, and eagerly waited for the prior's reply, in the dread, no doubt, that it might implicate Rothsay in some new charge of folly or vice. His apprehensions perhaps deceived him, when he thought he saw the churchman's eye rest for a moment on the Prince, before he said, in a solemn tone, "Heresy, my noble and gracious liege—heresy is among us. She snatches soul after soul from the congregation, as wolves steal lambs from the sheep fold."

"There are enough of shepherds to watch the fold," answered the Duke of Rothsay. "Here are four convents of regular monks alone around this poor hamlet of Perth, and all the secular clergy besides. Methinks a town so well garrisoned should be fit to keep out an enemy."

"One traitor in a garrison, my lord," answered the prior, "can do much to destroy the security of a city which is guarded by legions; and if that one traitor is, either from levity, or love of novelty, or whatever other motive, protected and fostered by those who should be most eager to expel him from the fortress, his opportunities of working mischief will be incalculably increased."

"Your words seem to aim at some one in this presence, father prior," said the Douglas; "if at me, they do me foul wrong. I am well aware that the abbot of Aberbrothock hath made some ill advised complaints, that I suffered not his bees to become too many for his pastures, or his stock of grain to burst the girdles of the monastery, while my followers lacked beef and their horses corn. But bethink you, the pastures and cornfields which produced that plenty were bestowed by my ancestors on the house of Aberbrothock, surely not with the purpose that their descendant should starve in the midst of it; and neither will he, by St. Bride! But for heresy and false doctrine," he added, striking his large hand heavily on the council table, "who is it that dare tax the Douglas? I would not have poor men burned for silly thoughts; but my hand and sword are ever ready to maintain the Christian faith."

"My lord, I doubt it not," said the prior; "so hath it ever been with your most noble house. For the abbot's complaints, they may pass to a second day. But what we now desire is a commission to some noble lord of state, joined to others of Holy Church, to support by strength of hand, if necessary, the inquiries which the reverend official of the bounds, and other grave prelates, my unworthy self being one, are about to make into the cause of the new doctrines, which are now deluding the simple, and depraving the pure and precious faith, approved by the Holy Father and his reverend predecessors."

"Let the Earl of Douglas have a royal commission to this effect," said Albany; "and let there be no exception whatever from his jurisdiction, saving the royal person. For my own part, although conscious that I have neither in act nor thought received or encouraged a doctrine which Holy Church hath not sanctioned, yet I should blush to claim an immunity under the blood royal of Scotland, lest I should seem to be seeking refuge against a crime so horrible."

"I will have nought to do with it," said Douglas: "to march against the English, and the Southron traitor March, is task enough for me. Moreover, I am a true Scotsman, and will not give way to aught that may put the Church of Scotland's head farther into the Roman yoke, or make the baron's coronet stoop to the mitre and cowl. Do you, therefore, most noble Duke of Albany, place your own name in the commission; and I pray your Grace so to mitigate the zeal of the men of Holy Church who may be associated with you, that there be no over zealous dealings; for the smell of a fagot on the Tay would bring back the Douglas from the walls of York."

The Duke hastened to give the Earl assurance that the commission should be exercised with lenity and moderation.

"Without a question," said King Robert, "the commission must be ample; and did it consist with the dignity of our crown, we would not ourselves decline its jurisdiction. But we trust that, while the thunders of the church are directed against the vile authors of these detestable heresies, there shall be measures of mildness and compassion taken with the unfortunate victims of their delusions."

"Such is ever the course of Holy Church, my lord," said the prior of St. Dominic's.

"Why, then, let the commission be expedited with due care, in name of our brother Albany, and such others as shall be deemed convenient," said the King. "And now once again let us break up our council; and, Rothsay, come thou with me, and lend me thine arm; I have matter for thy private ear."

"Ho, la!" here exclaimed the Prince, in the tone in which he would have addressed a managed horse.

"What means this rudeness, boy?" said the King; "wilt thou never learn reason and courtesy?"

"Let me not be thought to offend, my liege," said the Prince; "but we are parting without learning what is to be done in the passing strange adventure of the dead hand, which the Douglas hath so gallantly taken up. We shall sit but uncomfortably here at Perth, if we are at variance with the citizens."

"Leave that to me," said Albany. "With some little grant of lands and money, and plenty of fair words, the burghers may be satisfied for this time; but it were well that the barons and their followers, who are in attendance on the court, were warned to respect the peace within burgh."

"Surely, we would have it so," said the King; "let strict orders be given accordingly."

"It is doing the churls but too much grace," said the Douglas; "but be it at your Highness's pleasure. I take leave to retire."

"Not before you taste a flagon of Gascon wine, my lord?" said the King.

"Pardon," replied the Earl, "I am not athirst, and I drink not for fashion, but either for need or for friendship." So saying, he departed.

The King, as if relieved by his absence, turned to Albany, and said: "And now, my lord, we should chide this truant Rothsay of ours; yet he hath served us so well at council, that we must receive his merits as some atonement for his follies."

"I am happy to hear it," answered Albany, with a countenance of pity and incredulity, as if he knew nothing of the supposed services.

"Nay, brother, you are dull," said the King, "for I will not think you envious. Did you not note that Rothsay was the first to suggest the mode of settling the Highlands, which your experience brought indeed into better shape, and which was generally approved of; and even now we had broken up, leaving a main matter unconsidered, but that he put us in mind of the affray with the citizens?"

"I nothing doubt, my liege," said the Duke of Albany, with the acquiescence which he saw was expected, "that my royal nephew will soon emulate his father's wisdom."

"Or," said the Duke of Rothsay, "I may find it easier to borrow from another member of my family that happy and comfortable cloak of hypocrisy which covers all vices, and then it signifies little whether they exist or not."

"My lord prior," said the Duke, addressing the Dominican, "we will for a moment pray your reverence's absence. The King and I have that to say to the Prince which must have no further audience, not even yours."

The Dominican bowed and withdrew.

When the two royal brothers and the Prince were left together, the King seemed in the highest degree embarrassed and distressed, Albany sullen and thoughtful, while Rothsay himself endeavoured to cover some anxiety under his usual appearance of levity. There was a silence of a minute. At length Albany spoke.

"Royal brother," he said, "my princely nephew entertains with so much suspicion any admonition coming from my mouth, that I must pray your Grace yourself to take the trouble of telling him what it is most fitting he should know."

"It must be some displeasing communication indeed, which my Lord of Albany cannot wrap up in honied words," said the Prince.

"Peace with thine effrontery, boy," answered the King, passionately. "You asked but now of the quarrel with the citizens. Who caused that quarrel, David? What men were those who scaled the window of a peaceful citizen and liege man, alarmed the night with torch and outcry, and subjected our subjects to danger and affright?"

"More fear than danger, I fancy," answered the Prince; "but how can I of all men tell who made this nocturnal disturbance?"

"There was a follower of thine own there," continued the King—"a man of Belial, whom I will have brought to condign punishment."

"I have no follower, to my knowledge, capable of deserving your Highness's displeasure," answered the Prince.

"I will have no evasions, boy. Where wert thou on St. Valentine's Eve?"

"It is to be hoped that I was serving the good saint, as a man of mould might," answered the young man, carelessly.

"Will my royal nephew tell us how his master of the horse was employed upon that holy eve?" said the Duke of Albany.

"Speak, David; I command thee to speak," said the King.

"Ramorny was employed in my service, I think that answer may satisfy my uncle."

"But it will not satisfy me," said the angry father. "God knows, I never coveted man's blood, but that Ramorny's head I will have, if law can give it. He has been the encourager and partaker of all thy numerous vices and follies. I will take care he shall be so no more. Call MacLouis, with a guard."

"Do not injure an innocent man," interposed the Prince, desirous at every sacrifice to preserve his favourite from the menaced danger: "I pledge my word that Ramorny was employed in business of mine, therefore could not be engaged in this brawl."

"False equivocator that thou art!" said the King, presenting to the Prince a ring, "behold the signet of Ramorny, lost in the infamous affray! It fell into the hands of a follower of the Douglas, and was given by the Earl to my brother. Speak not for Ramorny, for he dies; and go thou from my presence, and repent the flagitious counsels which could make thee stand before me with a falsehood in thy mouth. Oh, shame, David—shame! as a son thou hast lied to thy father, as a knight to the head of thy order."

The Prince stood mute, conscience struck, and self convicted. He then gave way to the honourable feelings which at bottom he really possessed, and threw himself at his father's feet.

"The false knight," he said, "deserves degradation, the disloyal subject death; but, oh! let the son crave from the father pardon for the servant who did not lead him into guilt, but who reluctantly plunged himself into it at his command. Let me bear the weight of my own folly, but spare those who have been my tools rather than my accomplices. Remember, Ramorny was preferred to my service by my sainted mother."

"Name her not, David, I charge thee," said the King; "she is happy that she never saw the child of her love stand before her doubly dishonoured by guilt and by falsehood."

"I am indeed unworthy to name her," said the Prince; "and yet, my dear father, in her name I must petition for Ramorny's life."

"If I might offer my counsel," said the Duke of Albany, who saw that a reconciliation would soon take place betwixt the father and son, "I would advise that Ramorny be dismissed from the Prince's household and society, with such further penalty as his imprudence may seem to merit. The public will be contented with his disgrace, and the matter will be easily accommodated or stifled, so that his Highness do not attempt to screen his servant."

"Wilt thou, for my sake, David," said the King, with a faltering voice and the tear in his eye, "dismiss this dangerous man?—for my sake, who could not refuse thee the heart out of my bosom?"

"It shall be done, my father—done instantly," the Prince replied; and seizing the pen, he wrote a hasty dismissal of Ramorny from his service, and put it into Albany's hands. "I would I could fulfil all your wishes as easily, my royal father," he added, again throwing himself at the King's feet, who raised him up and fondly folded him in his arms.

Albany scowled, but was silent; and it was not till after the space of a minute or two that he said: "This matter being so happily accommodated, let me ask if your Majesty is pleased to attend the evensong service in the chapel?"

"Surely," said the King. "Have I not thanks to pay to God, who has restored union to my family? You will go with us, brother?"

"So please your Grace to give me leave of absence—no," said the Duke. "I must concert with the Douglas and others the manner in which we may bring these Highland vultures to our lure."

Albany retired to think over his ambitious projects, while the father and son attended divine service, to thank God for their happy reconciliation.

CHAPTER XIV.

*Will you go to the Hielands, Lizzy Lyndesay,
Will you go the Hielands wi' me?
Will you go to the Hielands, Lizzy Lyndesay,
My bride and my darling to be?*

Old Ballad.

A former chapter opened in the royal confessional; we are now to introduce our readers to a situation somewhat similar, though the scene and persons were very different. Instead of a Gothic and darkened apartment in a monastery, one of the most beautiful prospects in Scotland lay extended beneath the hill of Kinnoul, and at the foot of a rock which commanded the view in every direction sat the Fair Maid of Perth, listening in an attitude of devout attention to the instructions of a Carthusian monk, in his white gown and scapular, who concluded his discourse with prayer, in which his proselyte devoutly joined.

When they had finished their devotions, the priest sat for some time with his eyes fixed on the glorious prospect, of which even the early and chilly season could not conceal the beauties, and it was some time ere he addressed his attentive companion.

"When I behold," he said at length, "this rich and varied land, with its castles, churches, convents, stately palaces, and fertile fields, these extensive woods, and that noble river, I know not, my daughter, whether most to admire the bounty of God or the ingratitude of man. He hath given us the beauty and fertility of the earth, and we have made the scene of his bounty a charnel house and a battlefield. He hath given us power over the elements, and skill to erect houses for comfort and defence, and we have converted them into dens for robbers and ruffians."

"Yet, surely, my father, there is room for comfort," replied Catharine, "even in the very prospect we look upon. Yonder four goodly convents, with their churches, and their towers, which tell the citizens with brazen voice that they should think on their religious duties; their inhabitants, who have separated themselves from the world, its pursuits and its pleasures, to dedicate themselves to the service of Heaven—all bear witness that, if Scotland be a bloody and a sinful land, she is yet alive and sensible to the claims which religion demands of the human race."

"Verily, daughter," answered the priest, "what you say seems truth; and yet, nearly viewed, too much of the comfort you describe will be found delusive. It is true, there was a period in the Christian world when good men, maintaining themselves by the work of their hands, assembled together, not that they might live easily or sleep softly, but that they might strengthen each other in the Christian faith, and qualify themselves to be teachers of the Word to the people. Doubtless there are still such to be found in the holy edifices on which we now look. But it is to be feared that the love of many has waxed cold. Our churchmen have become wealthy, as well by the gifts of pious persons as by the bribes which wicked men have given in their ignorance, imagining that they can purchase that pardon by endowments to the church which Heaven has only offered to sincere penitents. And thus, as the church waxeth rich, her doctrines have unhappily become dim and obscure, as a light is less seen if placed in a lamp of chased gold than beheld through a screen of glass. God knows, if I see these things and mark them, it is

from no wish of singularity or desire to make myself a teacher in Israel; but because the fire burns in my bosom, and will not permit me to be silent. I obey the rules of my order, and withdraw not myself from its austerities. Be they essential to our salvation, or be they mere formalities, adopted to supply the want of real penitence and sincere devotion, I have promised, nay, vowed, to observe them; and they shall be respected by me the more, that otherwise I might be charged with regarding my bodily ease, when Heaven is my witness how lightly I value what I may be called on to act or suffer, if the purity of the church could be restored, or the discipline of the priesthood replaced in its primitive simplicity."

"But, my father," said Catharine, "even for these opinions men term you a Lollard and a Wickliffite, and say it is your desire to destroy churches and cloisters, and restore the religion of heathenness."

"Even so, my daughter, am I driven to seek refuge in hills and rocks, and must be presently contented to take my flight amongst the rude Highlanders, who are thus far in a more gracious state than those I leave behind me, that theirs are crimes of ignorance, not of presumption. I will not omit to take such means of safety and escape from their cruelty as Heaven may open to me; for, while such appear, I shall account it a sign that I have still a service to accomplish. But when it is my Master's pleasure, He knows how willingly Clement Blair will lay down a vilified life upon earth, in humble hope of a blessed exchange hereafter. But wherefore dost thou look northward so anxiously, my child? Thy young eyes are quicker than mine—dost thou see any one coming?"

"I look, father, for the Highland youth, Conachar, who will be thy guide to the hills, where his father can afford thee a safe, if a rude, retreat. This he has often promised, when we spoke of you and of your lessons. I fear he is now in company where he will soon forget them."

"The youth hath sparkles of grace in him," said Father Clement; "although those of his race are usually too much devoted to their own fierce and savage customs to endure with patience either the restraints of religion or those of the social law. Thou hast never told me, daughter, how, contrary to all the usages either of the burgh or of the mountains, this youth came to reside in thy father's house?"

"All I know touching that matter," said Catharine, "is, that his father is a man of consequence among those hill men, and that he desired as a favour of my father, who hath had dealings with them in the way of his merchandise, to keep this youth for a certain time, and that it is only two days since they parted, as Conachar was to return home to his own mountains."

"And why has my daughter," demanded the priest, "maintained such a correspondence with this Highland youth, that she should know how to send for him when she desired to use his services in my behalf? Surely, this is much influence for a maiden to possess over such a wild colt as this youthful mountaineer."

Catharine blushed, and answered with hesitation: "If I have had any influence with Conachar, Heaven be my witness, I have only exerted it to enforce upon his fiery temper compliance with the rules of civil life. It is true, I have long expected that you, my father, would be obliged to take to flight, and I therefore had agreed with him that he should meet me at this place as soon as he should receive a message from me with a token, which I yesterday despatched. The messenger was a lightfooted boy of his own clan, whom he used sometimes to send on errands into the Highlands."

"And am I then to understand, daughter, that this youth, so fair to the eye, was nothing more dear to you than as you desired to enlighten his mind and reform his manners?"

"It is so, my father, and no otherwise," answered Catharine; "and perhaps I did not do well to hold intimacy with him, even for his instruction and improvement. But my discourse never led farther."

"Then have I been mistaken, my daughter; for I thought I had seen in thee of late some change of purpose, and some wishful regards looking back to this world, of which you were at one time resolved to take leave."

Catharine hung down her head and blushed more deeply than ever as she said: "Yourself, father, were used to remonstrate against my taking the veil."

"Nor do I now approve of it, my child," said the priest. "Marriage is an honourable state, appointed by Heaven as the regular means of continuing the race of man; and I read not in the Scriptures what human inventions have since affirmed concerning the superior excellence of a state of celibacy. But I am jealous of thee, my child, as a father is of his only daughter, lest thou shouldst throw thyself away upon some one unworthy of thee. Thy parent, I know, less nice in thy behalf than I am, countenances the addresses of that fierce and riotous reveller whom they call Henry of the Wynd. He is rich it may be; but a haunter of idle and debauched company—a common prizefighter, who has shed human blood like water. Can such a one be a fit mate for Catharine Glover? And yet report says they are soon to be united."

The Fair Maid of Perth's complexion changed from red to pale, and from pale to red, as she hastily replied: "I think not of him; though it is true some courtesies have passed betwixt us of late, both as he is my father's friend and as being according to the custom of the time, my Valentine."

"Your Valentine, my child!" said Father Clement. "And can your modesty and prudence have trifled so much with the delicacy of your sex as to place yourself in such a relation to such a man as this artificer? Think you that this Valentine, a godly saint and Christian bishop, as he is said to have been, ever countenanced a silly and unseemly custom, more likely to have originated in the heathen worship of Flora or Venus, when mortals gave the names of deities to their passions; and studied to excite instead of restraining them?"

"Father," said Catharine, in a tone of more displeasure than she had ever before assumed to the Carthusian, "I know not upon what ground you tax me thus severely for complying with a general practice, authorised by universal custom and sanctioned by my father's authority. I cannot feel it kind that you put such misconstruction upon me."

"Forgive me, daughter," answered the priest, mildly, "if I have given you offence. But this Henry Gow, or Smith, is a forward, licentious man, to whom you cannot allow any uncommon degree of intimacy and encouragement, without exposing yourself to worse misconstruction—unless, indeed, it be your purpose to wed him, and that very shortly."

"Say no more of it, my father," said Catharine. "You give me more pain than you would desire to do; and I may be provoked to answer otherwise than as becomes me. Perhaps I have already had cause enough to make me repent my compliance with an idle custom. At any rate, believe that Henry Smith is nothing to me, and that even the idle intercourse arising from St. Valentine's Day is utterly broken off."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, my daughter," replied the Carthusian, "and must now prove you on another subject, which renders me most anxious on your behalf. You cannot your self be ignorant of it, although I could wish it were not necessary to speak of a thing so dangerous, even, before these surrounding rocks, cliffs, and stones. But it must be said. Catharine, you have a lover in the highest rank of Scotland's sons of honour?"

"I know it, father," answered Catharine, composedly. "I would it were not so."

"So would I also," said the priest, "did I see in my daughter only the child of folly, which most young women are at her age, especially if possessed of the fatal gift of beauty. But as thy charms, to speak the language of an idle world, have attached to thee a lover of such high rank, so I know that thy virtue and wisdom will maintain the influence over the Prince's mind which thy beauty hath acquired."

"Father," replied Catharine, "the Prince is a licentious gallant, whose notice of me tends only to my disgrace and ruin. Can you, who seemed but now afraid that I acted imprudently in entering into an ordinary exchange of courtesies with one of my own rank, speak with patience of the sort of correspondence which the heir of Scotland dares to fix upon me? Know that it is but two nights since he, with a party of his debauched followers, would have carried me by force from my father's house, had I not been rescued by that same rash spirited Henry Smith, who, if he be too hasty in venturing on danger on slight occasion, is always ready to venture his life in behalf of innocence or in resistance of oppression. It is well my part to do him that justice."

"I should know something of that matter," said the monk, "since it was my voice that sent him to your assistance. I had seen the party as I passed your door, and was hastening to the civil power in order to raise assistance, when I perceived a man's figure coming slowly towards me. Apprehensive it might be one of the ambuscade, I stepped behind the buttresses of the chapel of St. John, and seeing from a nearer view that it was Henry Smith, I guessed which way he was bound, and raised my voice, in an exhortation which made him double his speed."

"I am beholden to you, father," said Catharine; "but all this, and the Duke of Rothsay's own language to me, only show that the Prince is a profligate young man, who will scruple no extremities which may promise to gratify an idle passion, at whatever expense to its object. His emissary, Ramorny, has even had the

insolence to tell me that my father shall suffer for it if I dare to prefer being the wife of an honest man to becoming the loose paramour of a married prince. So I see no other remedy than to take the veil, or run the risk of my own ruin and my poor father's. Were there no other reason, the terror of these threats, from a man so notoriously capable of keeping his word, ought as much to prevent my becoming the bride of any worthy man as it should prohibit me from unlatching his door to admit murderers. Oh, good father, what a lot is mine! and how fatal am I likely to prove to my affectionate parent, and to any one with whom I might ally my unhappy fortunes!"

"Be yet of good cheer, my daughter," said the monk; "there is comfort for thee even in this extremity of apparent distress. Ramorny is a villain, and abuses the ear of his patron. The Prince is unhappily a dissipated and idle youth; but, unless my grey hairs have been strangely imposed on, his character is beginning to alter. He hath been awakened to Ramorny's baseness, and deeply regrets having followed his evil advice. I believe, nay, I am well convinced, that his passion for you has assumed a nobler and purer character, and that the lessons he has heard from me on the corruptions of the church and of the times will, if enforced from your lips, sink deeply into his heart, and perhaps produce fruits for the world to wonder as well as rejoice at. Old prophecies have said that Rome shall fall by the speech of a woman."

"These are dreams, father," said Catharine—"the visions of one whose thoughts are too much on better things to admit his thinking justly upon the ordinary affairs of Perth. When we have looked long at the sun, everything else can only be seen indistinctly."

"Thou art over hasty, my daughter," said Clement, "and thou shalt be convinced of it. The prospects which I am to open to thee were unfit to be exposed to one of a less firm sense of virtue, or a more ambitious temper. Perhaps it is not fit that, even to you, I should display them; but my confidence is strong in thy wisdom and thy principles. Know, then, that there is much chance that the Church of Rome will dissolve the union which she has herself formed, and release the Duke of Rothsay from his marriage with Marjory Douglas."

Here he paused.

"And if the church hath power and will to do this," replied the maiden, "what influence can the divorce of the Duke from his wife produce on the fortunes of Catharine Glover?"

She looked at the priest anxiously as she spoke, and he had some apparent difficulty in framing his reply, for he looked on the ground while he answered her.

"What did beauty do for Catharine Logie? Unless our fathers have told us falsely, it raised her to share the throne of David Bruce."

"Did she live happy or die regretted, good father?" asked Catharine, in the same calm and steady tone.

"She formed her alliance from temporal, and perhaps criminal, ambition," replied Father Clement; "and she found her reward in vanity and vexation of spirit. But had she wedded with the purpose that the believing wife should convert the unbelieving, or confirm the doubting, husband, what then had been her reward? Love and honour upon earth, and an inheritance in Heaven with Queen Margaret and those heroines who have been the nursing mothers of the church."

Hitherto Catharine had sat upon a stone beside the priest's feet, and looked up to him as she spoke or listened; but now, as if animated by calm, yet settled, feelings of disapprobation, she rose up, and, extending her hand towards the monk as she spoke, addressed him with a countenance and voice which might have become a cherub, pitying, and even as much as possible sparing, the feelings of the mortal whose errors he is commissioned to rebuke.

"And is it even so?" she said, "and can so much of the wishes, hopes, and prejudices of this vile world affect him who may be called tomorrow to lay down his life for opposing the corruptions of a wicked age and backsliding priesthood? Can it be the severely virtuous Father Clement who advises his child to aim at, or even to think of, the possession of a throne and a bed which cannot become vacant but by an act of crying injustice to the present possessor? Can it be the wise reformer of the church who wishes to rest a scheme, in itself so unjust, upon a foundation so precarious? Since when is it, good father, that the principal libertine has altered his morals so much, to be likely to court in honourable fashion the daughter of a Perth artisan? Two days must have wrought this change; for only that space has passed since he was breaking into my father's house at midnight, with worse mischief in his mind than that of a common robber. And think you that, if Rothsay's heart could dictate so mean a match, he could achieve such a purpose without endangering both his succession and his life, assailed by the Douglas and March at the same time, for what they must receive as an act of injury and insult to both their houses? Oh! Father Clement, where was your principle, where your prudence, when they suffered you to be bewildered by so strange a dream, and placed the meanest of your disciples in the right thus to reproach you?"

The old man's eyes filled with tears, as Catharine, visibly and painfully affected by what she had said, became at length silent.

"By the mouths of babes and sucklings," he said, "hath He rebuked those who would seem wise in their generation. I thank Heaven, that hath taught me better thoughts than my own vanity suggested, through the medium of so kind a monitress. Yes, Catharine, I must not hereafter wonder or exclaim when I see those whom I have hitherto judged too harshly struggling for temporal power, and holding all the while the language of religious zeal. I thank thee, daughter, for thy salutary admonition, and I thank Heaven that sent it by thy lips, rather than those of a stern reprove."

Catharine had raised her head to reply, and bid the old man, whose humiliation gave her pain, be comforted, when her eyes were arrested by an object close at hand. Among the crags and cliffs which surrounded this place of seclusion, there were two which stood in such close contiguity, that they seemed to have been portions of the same rock, which, rendered by lightning or by an earthquake, now exhibited a chasm of about four feet in breadth, betwixt the masses of stone. Into this chasm an oak tree had thrust itself, in one of the fantastic frolics which vegetation often exhibits in such situations. The tree, stunted and ill fed, had sent its roots along the face of the rock in all directions to seek for supplies, and they lay like military lines of communication, contorted, twisted, and knotted like the immense snakes of the Indian archipelago. As Catharine's look fell upon the curious complication of knotty branches and twisted roots, she was suddenly sensible that two large eyes were visible among them, fixed and glaring at her, like those of a wild animal in ambush. She started, and, without speaking, pointed out the object to her companion, and looking herself with more strict attention, could at length trace out the bushy red hair and shaggy beard, which had hitherto been concealed by the drooping branches and twisted roots of the tree.

When he saw himself discovered, the Highlander, for such he proved, stepped forth from his lurking place, and, stalking forward, displayed a colossal person, clothed in a purple, red, and green checked plaid, under which he wore a jacket of bull's hide. His bow and arrows were at his back, his head was bare, and a large quantity of tangled locks, like the glibbs of the Irish, served to cover the head, and supplied all the purposes of a bonnet. His belt bore a sword and dagger, and he had in his hand a Danish pole axe, more recently called a Lochaber axe. Through the same rude portal advanced, one by one, four men more, of similar size, and dressed and armed in the same manner.

Catharine was too much accustomed to the appearance of the inhabitants of the mountains so near to Perth to permit herself to be alarmed, as another Lowland maiden might have been on the same occasion. She saw with tolerable composure these gigantic forms arrange themselves in a semicircle around and in front of the monk and herself, all bending upon them in silence their large fixed eyes, expressing, as far as she could judge, a wild admiration of her beauty. She inclined her head to them, and uttered imperfectly the usual words of a Highland salutation. The elder and leader of the party returned the greeting, and then again remained silent and motionless. The monk told his beads; and even Catharine began to have strange fears for her personal safety, and anxiety to know whether they were to consider themselves at personal freedom. She resolved to make the experiment, and moved forward as if to descend the hill; but when she attempted to pass the line of Highlanders, they extended their poleaxes betwixt each other, so as effectually to occupy each opening through which she could have passed.

Somewhat disconcerted, yet not dismayed, for she could not conceive that any evil was intended, she sat down upon one of the scattered fragments of rock, and bade the monk, standing by her side, be of good courage.

"If I fear," said Father Clement, "it is not for myself; for whether I be brained with the axes of these wild men, like an ox when, worn out by labour, he is condemned to the slaughter, or whether I am bound with their bowstrings, and delivered over to those who will take my life with more cruel ceremony, it can but little concern me, if they suffer thee, dearest daughter, to escape uninjured."

"We have neither of us," replied the Maiden of Perth, "any cause for apprehending evil; and here comes Conachar to assure us of it."

Yet, as she spoke, she almost doubted her own eyes; so altered were the manner and attire of the handsome, stately, and almost splendidly dressed youth who, springing like a roebuck from a cliff of considerable height, lighted just in front of her. His dress was of the same tartan worn by those who had first made their appearance, but closed at the throat and elbows with a necklace and armlets of gold. The hauberk which he wore over his person was of steel, but so clearly burnished that it shone like silver. His arms were profusely ornamented, and his bonnet, besides the eagle's feather marking the quality of chief, was adorned with a chain of gold, wrapt several times around it, and secured by a large clasp, glistening with pearls. His brooch, by which the tartan mantle, or plaid, as it is now called, was secured on the shoulder, was also of gold, large and curiously carved. He bore no weapon in his hand, excepting a small sapling stick with a hooked head. His whole appearance and gait, which used formerly to denote a sullen feeling of conscious degradation, was now bold, forward, and haughty; and he stood before Catharine with smiling confidence, as if fully conscious of his improved appearance, and waiting till she should recognise him.

"Conachar," said Catharine, desirous to break this state of suspense, "are these your father's men?"

"No, fair Catharine," answered the young man. "Conachar is no more, unless in regard to the wrongs he has sustained, and the vengeance which they demand. I am Ian Eachin Maclan, son to the chief of the Clan Quhele. I have moulted my feathers, as you see, when I changed my name. And for these men, they are not my father's followers, but mine. You see only one half of them collected: they form a band consisting of my foster father and eight sons, who are my bodyguard, and the children of my belt, who breathe but to do my will. But Conachar," he added, in a softer tone of voice, "lives again so soon as Catharine desires to see him; and while he is the young chief of the Clan Quhele to all others, he is to her as humble and obedient as when he was Simon Glover's apprentice. See, here is the stick I had from you when we nipped together in the sunny braes of Lednoch, when autumn was young in the year that is gone. I would not exchange it, Catharine, for the truncheon of my tribe."

While Eachin thus spoke, Catharine began to doubt in her own mind whether she had acted prudently in requesting the assistance of a bold young man, elated, doubtless, by his sudden elevation from a state of servitude to one which she was aware gave him extensive authority over a very lawless body of adherents.

"You do not fear me, fair Catharine?" said the young chief, taking her hand. "I suffered my people to appear before you for a few minutes, that I might see how you could endure their presence; and methinks you regarded them as if you were born to be a chieftain's wife."

"I have no reason to fear wrong from Highlanders," said Catharine, firmly; "especially as I thought Conachar was with them. Conachar has drunk of our cup and eaten of our bread; and my father has often had traffic with Highlanders, and never was there wrong or quarrel betwixt him and them."

"No?" replied Hector, for such is the Saxon equivalent for Eachin, "what! never when he took the part of the Gow Chrom (the bandy legged smith) against Eachin Maclan? Say nothing to excuse it, and believe it will be your own fault if I ever again allude to it. But you had some command to lay upon me; speak, and you shall be obeyed."

Catharine hastened to reply; for there was something in the young chief's manner and language which made her desire to shorten the interview.

"Eachin," she said, "since Conachar is no longer your name, you ought to be sensible that in claiming, as I honestly might, a service from my equal, I little thought that I was addressing a person of such superior power and consequence. You, as well as I, have been obliged to the religious instruction of this good man. He is now in great danger: wicked men have accused him with false charges, and he is desirous to remain in safety and concealment till the storm shall pass away."

"Ha! the good clerk Clement! Ay, the worthy clerk did much for me, and more than my rugged temper was capable to profit by. I will be glad to see any one in the town of Perth persecute one who hath taken hold of Maclan's mantle!"

"It may not be safe to trust too much to that," said Catharine. "I nothing doubt the power of your tribe; but when the Black Douglas takes up a feud, he is not to be scared by the shaking of a Highland plaid."

The Highlander disguised his displeasure at this speech with a forced laugh.

"The sparrow," he said, "that is next the eye seems larger than the eagle that is perched on Bengoile. You fear the Douglasses most, because they sit next to you. But be it as you will. You will not believe how wide our hills, and vales, and forests extend beyond the dusky barrier of yonder mountains, and you think all the world lies on the banks of the Tay. But this good clerk shall see hills that could hide him were all the Douglasses on his quest—ay, and he shall see men enough also to make them glad to get once more southward of the Grampians. And wherefore should you not go with the good man? I will send a party to bring him in safety from Perth, and we will set up the old trade beyond Loch Tay—only no more cutting out of gloves for me. I will find your father in hides, but I will not cut them, save when they are on the creatures' backs."

"My father will come one day and see your housekeeping, Conachar—I mean, Hector. But times must be quieter, for there is feud between the townspeople and the followers of the noblemen, and there is speech of war about to break out in the Highlands."

"Yes, by Our Lady, Catharine! and were it not for that same Highland war, you should nor thus put off your Highland visit, my pretty mistress. But the race of the hills are no longer to be divided into two nations. They will fight like men for the supremacy, and he who gets it will deal with the King of Scotland as an equal, not as a superior. Pray that the victory may fall to Maclan, my pious St. Catharine, for thou shalt pray for one who loves thee dearly."

"I will pray for the right," said Catharine; "or rather, I will pray that there be peace on all sides. Farewell, kind and excellent Father Clement. Believe I shall never forget thy lessons; remember me in thy prayers. But how wilt thou be able to sustain a journey so toilsome?"

"They shall carry him if need be," said Hector, "if we go far without finding a horse for him. But you, Catharine—it is far from hence to Perth. Let me attend you thither as I was wont."

"If you were as you were wont, I would not refuse your escort. But gold brooches and bracelets are perilous company, when the Liddesdale and Annandale lancers are riding as throng upon the highway as the leaves at Hallowmass; and there is no safe meeting betwixt Highland tartans and steel jackets."

She hazarded this remark, as she somewhat suspected that, in casting his slough, young Eachin had not entirely surmounted the habits which he had acquired in his humble state, and that, though he might use bold words, he would not be rash enough to brave the odds of numbers, to which a descent into the vicinity of the city would be likely to expose him. It appeared that she judged correctly; for, after a farewell, in which she compounded for the immensity of her lips by permitting him to kiss her hand, she returned towards Perth, and could obtain at times, when she looked back, an occasional glance of the Highlanders, as, winding through the most concealed and impracticable paths, they bent their way towards the North.

She felt in part relieved from her immediate anxiety, as the distance increased betwixt her and these men, whose actions were only directed by the will of their chief, and whose chief was a giddy and impetuous boy. She apprehended no insult on her return to Perth from the soldiery of any party whom she might meet; for the rules of chivalry were in those days a surer protection to a maiden of decent appearance than an escort of armed men, whose cognizance might not be acknowledged as friendly by any other party whom they might chance to encounter. But more remote dangers pressed on her apprehension. The pursuit of the licentious Prince was rendered formidable by threats which his unprincipled counsellor, Ramorny, had not shunned to utter against her father, if she persevered in her coyness. These menaces, in such an age, and from such a character, were deep grounds for alarm; nor could she consider the pretensions to her favour which Conachar had scarce repressed during his state of servitude, and seemed now to avow boldly, as less fraught with evil, since there had been repeated incursions of the Highlanders into the very town of Perth, and citizens had, on more occasions than one, been made prisoners and carried off from their own houses, or had fallen by the claymore in the very streets of their city. She feared, too, her father's importunity on behalf of the smith, of whose conduct on St. Valentine's Day unworthy reports had reached her; and whose suit, had he stood clear in her good opinion, she dared not listen to, while Ramorny's threats of revenge upon her father rung on her ear. She thought on these various dangers with the deepest apprehension, and an earnest desire to escape from them and herself, by taking refuge in the cloister; but saw no possibility of obtaining her father's consent to the only course from which she expected peace and protection.

In the course of these reflections, we cannot discover that she very distinctly regretted that her perils attended her because she was the Fair Maid of Perth. This was one point which marked that she was not yet altogether an angel; and perhaps it was another that, in despite of Henry Smith's real or supposed delinquencies, a sigh escaped from her bosom when she thought upon St. Valentine's dawn.

CHAPTER XV.

*Oh, for a draught of power to steep
The soul of agony in sleep!*

Bertha.

We have shown the secrets of the confessional; those of the sick chamber are not hidden from us. The darkened apartment, where salves and medicines showed that the leech had been busy in his craft, a tall thin form lay on a bed, arrayed in a nightgown belted around him, with pain on his brow, and a thousand stormy passions agitating his bosom. Everything in the apartment indicated a man of opulence and of expense. Henbane Dwining, the apothecary, who seemed to have the care of the patient, stole with a crafty and catlike step from one corner of the room to another, busying himself with mixing medicines and preparing dressings. The sick man groaned once or twice, on which the leech, advancing to his bedside, asked whether these sounds were a token of the pain of his body or of the distress of his mind.

"Of both, thou poisoning varlet," said Sir John Ramorny, "and of being encumbered with thy accursed company."

"If that is all, I can relieve your knighthood of one of these ills by presently removing myself elsewhere. Thanks to the feuds of this boisterous time, had I twenty hands, instead of these two poor servants of my art (displaying his skinny palms), there is enough of employment for them—well requited employment, too, where thanks and crowns contend which shall best pay my services; while you, Sir John, wreak upon your surgeon the anger you ought only to bear against the author of your wound."

"Villain, it is beneath me to reply to thee," said the patient; "but every word of thy malignant tongue is a dirk, inflicting wounds which set all the medicines of Arabia at defiance."

"Sir John, I understand you not; but if you give way to these tempestuous fits of rage, it is impossible but fever and inflammation must be the result."

"Why then dost thou speak in a sense to chafe my blood? Why dost thou name the supposition of thy worthless self having more hands than nature gave thee, while I, a knight and gentleman, am mutilated like a cripple?"

"Sir John," replied the surgeon, "I am no divine, nor a mainly obstinate believer in some things which divines tell us. Yet I may remind you that you have been kindly dealt with; for if the blow which has done you this injury had lighted on your neck, as it was aimed, it would have swept your head from your shoulders, instead of amputating a less considerable member."

"I wish it had, Dwining—I wish it had lighted as it was addressed. I should not then have seen a policy which had spun a web so fine as mine burst through by the brute force of a drunken churl. I should not have been reserved to see horses which I must not mount, lists which I must no longer enter, splendours which I cannot hope to share, or battles which I must not take part in. I should not, with a man's passions for power and for strife, be set to keep place among the women, despised by them, too, as a miserable, impotent cripple, unable to aim at obtaining the favour of the sex."

"Supposing all this to be so, I will yet pray of your knighthood to remark," replied Dwining, still busying himself with arranging the dressings of the wounds, "that your eyes, which you must have lost with your head, may, being spared to you, present as rich a prospect of pleasure as either ambition, or victory in the list or in the field, or the love of woman itself, could have proposed to you."

"My sense is too dull to catch thy meaning, leech," replied Ramorny. "What is this precious spectacle reserved to me in such a shipwreck?"

"The dearest that mankind knows," replied Dwining; and then, in the accent of a lover who utters the name of his beloved mistress, and expresses his passion for her in the very tone of his voice, he added the word "REVENGE!"

The patient had raised himself on his couch to listen with some anxiety for the solution of the physician's enigma. He laid himself down again as he heard it explained, and after a short pause asked, "In what Christian college learned you this morality, good Master Dwining?"

"In no Christian college," answered his physician; "for, though it is privately received in most, it is openly and manfully adopted in none. But I have studied among the sages of Granada, where the fiery souled Moor lifts high his deadly dagger as it drops with his enemy's blood, and avows the doctrine which the pallid Christian practises, though coward-like he dare not name it."

"Thou art then a more high souled villain than I deemed thee," said Ramorny.

"Let that pass," answered Dwining. "The waters that are the stillest are also the deepest; and the foe is most to be dreaded who never threatens till he strikes. You knights and men at arms go straight to your purpose with sword in hand. We who are clerks win our access with a noiseless step and an indirect approach, but attain our object not less surely."

"And I," said the knight, "who have trod to my revenge with a mailed foot, which made all echo around it, must now use such a slipper as thine—ha?"

"He who lacks strength," said the wily mediciner, "must attain his purpose by skill."

"And tell me sincerely, mediciner, wherefore thou wouldst read me these devil's lessons? Why wouldst thou thrust me faster or farther on to my vengeance than I may seem to thee ready to go of my own accord? I am old in the ways of the world, man; and I know that such as thou do not drop words in vain, or thrust themselves upon the dangerous confidence of men like me save with the prospect of advancing some purpose of their own. What interest hast thou in the road, whether peaceful or bloody, which I may pursue on these occurrents?"

"In plain dealing, sir knight, though it is what I seldom use," answered the leech, "my road to revenge is the same with yours."

"With mine, man?" said Ramorny, with a tone of scornful surprise. "I thought it had been high beyond thy reach. Thou aim at the same revenge with Ramorny?"

"Ay, truly," replied Dwining, "for the smithy churl under whose blow you have suffered has often done me despite and injury. He has thwarted me in counsel and despised me in action. His brutal and unhesitating bluntness is a living reproach to the subtlety of my natural disposition. I fear him, and I hate him."

"And you hope to hind an active coadjutor in me?" said Ramorny, in the same supercilious tone as before. "But know, the artisan fellow is too low in degree to be to me either the object of hatred or of fear. Yet he shall not escape. We hate not the reptile that has stung us, though we might shake it off the wound, and tread upon it. I know the ruffian of old as a stout man at arms, and a pretender, as I have heard, to the favour of the scornful puppet whose beauties, forsooth, spurred us to our wise and hopeful attempt. Fiends that direct this nether world, by what malice have ye decided that the hand which has couched a lance against the bosom of a prince should be struck off like a sapling by the blow of a churl, and during the turmoil of a midnight riot? Well, mediciner, thus far our courses hold together, and I bid thee well believe that I will crush for thee this reptile mechanic. But do not thou think to escape me when that part of my revenge is done which will be most easily and speedily accomplished."

"Not, it may be, altogether so easily accomplished," said the apothecary; "for if your knighthood will credit me, there will be found small ease or security in dealing with him. He is the strongest, boldest, and most skilful swordsman in Perth and all the country around it."

"Fear nothing; he shall be met with had he the strength of Sampson. But then, mark me! Hope not thou to escape my vengeance, unless thou become my passive agent in the scene which is to follow. Mark me, I say once more. I have studied at no Moorish college, and lack some of thy unbounded appetite for revenge, but yet I will have my share of vengeance. Listen to me, mediciner, while I shall thus far unfold myself; but beware of treachery, for, powerful as thy fiend is, thou hast taken lessons from a meaner devil than mine. Hearken—the master whom I have served through vice and virtue, with too much zeal for my own character, perhaps, but with unshaken fidelity to him—the very man, to soothe whose frantic folly I have incurred this irreparable loss, is, at the prayer of his doating father, about to sacrifice me, by turning me out of his favour, and leaving me at the mercy of the hypocritical relative with whom he seeks a precarious reconciliation at my expense. If he perseveres in this most ungrateful purpose, thy fiercest Moors, were their complexion swarthy as the smoke of hell, shall blush to see their

revenge outdone. But I will give him one more chance for honour and safety before my wrath shall descend on him in unrelenting and unmitigated fury. There, then, thus far thou hast my confidence. Close hands on our bargain. Close hands, did I say? Where is the hand that should be the pledge and representative of Ramorny's plighted word? Is it nailed on the public pillory, or flung as offal to the houseless dogs, who are even now snarling over it? Lay thy finger on the mutilated stump, then, and swear to be a faithful actor in my revenge, as I shall be in yours. How now, sir leech look you pale—you, who say to death, stand back or advance, can you tremble to think of him or to hear him named? I have not mentioned your fee, for one who loves revenge for itself requires no deeper bribe; yet, if broad lands and large sums of gold can increase thy zeal in a brave cause, believe me, these shall not be lacking."

"They tell for something in my humble wishes," said Dwining: "the poor man in this bustling world is thrust down like a dwarf in a crowd, and so trodden under foot; the rich and powerful rise like giants above the press, and are at ease, while all is turmoil around them."

"Then shalt thou arise above the press, mediciner, as high as gold can raise thee. This purse is weighty, yet it is but an earnest of thy guerdon."

"And this Smith, my noble benefactor," said the leech, as he pouched the gratuity—"this Henry of the Wynd, or what ever is his name—would not the news that he hath paid the penalty of his action assuage the pain of thy knighthood's wound better than the balm of Mecca with which I have salved it?"

"He is beneath the thoughts of Ramorny; and I have no more resentment against him than I have ill will at the senseless weapon which he swayed. But it is just thy hate should be vented upon him. Where is he chiefly to be met with?"

"That also I have considered," said Dwining. "To make the attempt by day in his own house were too open and dangerous, for he hath five servants who work with him at the stithy, four of them strong knaves, and all loving to their master. By night were scarce less desperate, for he hath his doors strongly secured with bolt of oak and bar of iron, and ere the fastenings of his house could be forced, the neighbourhood would rise to his rescue, especially as they are still alarmed by the practice on St. Valentine's Even."

"Oh, ay, true, mediciner," said Ramorny, "for deceit is thy nature even with me: thou knewest my hand and signet, as thou said'st, when that hand was found cast out on the street, like the disgusting refuse of a shambles—why, having such knowledge, went'st thou with these jolterheaded citizens to consult that Patrick Charteris, whose spurs should be hacked off from his heels for the communion which he holds with paltry burghers, and whom thou brought'st here with the fools to do dishonour to the lifeless hand, which, had it held its wonted place, he was not worthy to have touched in peace or faced in war?"

"My noble patron, as soon as I had reason to know you had been the sufferer, I urged them with all my powers of persuasion to desist from prosecuting the feud; but the swaggering smith, and one or two other hot heads, cried out for vengeance. Your knighthood must know this fellow calls himself bachelor to the Fair Maiden of Perth, and stands upon his honour to follow up her father's quarrel; but I have forestalled his market in that quarter, and that is something in earnest of revenge."

"How mean you by that, sir leech?" said the patient.

"Your knighthood shall conceive," said the mediciner, "that this smith doth not live within compass, but is an outlier and a galliard. I met him myself on St. Valentine's Day, shortly after the affray between the townsfolk and the followers of Douglas. Yes, I met him sneaking through the lanes and bye passages with a common minstrel wench, with her messan and her viol on his one arm and her buxom self hanging upon the other. What thinks your honour? Is not this a trim squire, to cross a prince's love with the fairest girl in Perth, strike off the hand of a knight and baron, and become gentleman usher to a strolling glee woman, all in the course of the same four and twenty hours?"

"Marry, I think the better of him that he has so much of a gentleman's humour, clown though he be," said Ramorny. "I would he had been a precisian instead of a galliard, and I should have had better heart to aid thy revenge. And such revenge!—revenge on a smith—in the quarrel of a pitiful manufacturer of rotten cheverons! Pah! And yet it shall be taken in full. Thou hast commenced it, I warrant me, by thine own manoeuvres."

"In a small degree only," said the apothecary. "I took care that two or three of the most notorious gossips in Curfew street, who liked not to hear Catharine called the Fair Maid of Perth, should be possessed of this story of her faithful Valentine. They opened on the scent so keenly, that, rather than doubt had fallen on the tale, they would have vouched for it as if their own eyes had seen it. The lover came to her father's within an hour after, and your worship may think what a reception he had from the angry glover, for the damsel herself would not be looked upon. And thus your honour sees I had a foretaste of revenge. But I trust to receive the full draught from the hands of your lordship, with whom I am in a brotherly league, which—"

"Brotherly!" said the knight, contemptuously. "But be it so, the priests say we are all of one common earth. I cannot tell, there seems to me some difference; but the better mould shall keep faith with the baser, and thou shalt have thy revenge. Call thou my page hither."

A young man made his appearance from the anteroom upon the physician's summons.

"Eviot," said the knight, "does Bonthron wait? and is he sober?"

"He is as sober as sleep can make him after a deep drink," answered the page.

"Then fetch him hither, and do thou shut the door."

A heavy step presently approached the apartment, and a man entered, whose deficiency of height seemed made up in breadth of shoulders and strength of arm.

"There is a man thou must deal upon, Bonthron," said the knight. The man smoothed his rugged features and grinned a smile of satisfaction.

"That mediciner will show thee the party. Take such advantage of time, place, and circumstance as will ensure the result; and mind you come not by the worst, for the man is the fighting Smith of the Wynd."

"It Will be a tough job," growled the assassin; "for if I miss my blow, I may esteem myself but a dead man. All Perth rings with the smith's skill and strength."

"Take two assistants with thee," said the knight.

"Not I," said Bonthron. "If you double anything, let it be the reward."

"Account it doubled," said his master; "but see thy work be thoroughly executed."

"Trust me for that, sir knight: seldom have I failed."

"Use this sage man's directions," said the wounded knight, pointing to the physician. "And hark thee, await his coming forth, and drink not till the business be done."

"I will not," answered the dark satellite; "my own life depends on my blow being steady and sure. I know whom I have to deal with."

"Vanish, then, till he summons you, and have axe and dagger in readiness."

Bonthron nodded and withdrew.

"Will your knighthood venture to entrust such an act to a single hand?" said the mediciner, when the assassin had left the room. "May I pray you to remember that yonder party did, two nights since, baffle six armed men?"

"Question me not, sir mediciner: a man like Bonthron, who knows time and place, is worth a score of confused revellers. Call Eviot; thou shalt first exert thy powers of healing, and do not doubt that thou shalt, in the farther work, be aided by one who will match thee in the art of sudden and unexpected destruction."

The page Eviot again appeared at the mediciner's summons, and at his master's sign assisted the chirurgeon in removing the dressings from Sir John Ramorny's wounded arm. Dwining viewed the naked stump with a species of professional satisfaction, enhanced, no doubt, by the malignant pleasure which his evil disposition took in the pain and distress of his fellow creatures. The knight just turned his eye on the ghastly spectacle, and uttered, under the pressure of bodily pain or mental agony, a groan which he would fain have repressed.

"You groan, sir," said the leech, in his soft, insinuating tone of voice, but with a sneer of enjoyment, mixed with scorn, curling upon his lip, which his habitual dissimulation could not altogether disguise—"you groan; but be comforted. This Henry Smith knows his business: his sword is as true to its aim as his hammer to the anvil. Had a common swordsman struck this fatal blow, he had harmed the bone and damaged the muscles, so that even my art might not have been able to repair them. But Henry Smith's cut is clean, and as sure as that with which my own scalpel could have made the amputation. In a few days you will be able, with care and attention to the ordinances of medicine, to stir abroad."

"But my hand—the loss of my hand—"

"It may be kept secret for a time," said the mediciner. "I have possessed two or three tattling fools, in deep confidence, that the hand which was found was that of your knighthood's groom, Black Quentin, and your knighthood knows that he has parted for Fife, in such sort as to make it generally believed."

"I know well enough," said Ramorny, "that the rumour may stifle the truth for a short time. But what avails this brief delay?"

"It may be concealed till your knighthood retires for a time from the court, and then, when new accidents have darkened the recollection of the present stir, it may be imputed to a wound received from the shivering of a spear, or from a crossbow bolt. Your slave will find a suitable device, and stand for the truth of it."

"The thought maddens me," said Ramorny, with another groan of mental and bodily agony; "yet I see no better remedy."

"There is none other," said the leech, to whose evil nature his patron's distress was delicious nourishment. "In the mean while, it is believed you are confined by the consequences of some bruises, aiding the sense of displeasure at the Prince's having consented to dismiss you from his household at the remonstrance of Albany, which is publicly known."

"Villain, thou rack'st me!" exclaimed the patient.

"Upon the whole, therefore," said Dwining, "your knighthood has escaped well, and, saving the lack of your hand, a mischance beyond remedy, you ought rather to rejoice than complain; for no barber surgeon in France or England could have more ably performed the operation than this churl with one downright blow."

"I understand my obligation fully," said Ramorny, struggling with his anger, and affecting composure; "and if Bonthron pays him not with a blow equally downright, and rendering the aid of the leech unnecessary, say that John of Ramorny cannot requite an obligation."

"That is spoke like yourself, noble knight!" answered the mediciner. "And let me further say, that the operator's skill must have been vain, and the hemorrhage must have drained your life veins, but for the bandages, the cautery, and the styptics applied by the good monks, and the poor services of your humble vassal, Henbane Dwining."

"Peace," exclaimed the patient, "with thy ill omened voice and worse omened name! Methinks, as thou mentionest the tortures I have undergone, my tingling nerves stretch and contract themselves as if they still actuated the fingers that once could clutch a dagger."

"That," explained the leech, "may it please your knighthood, is a phenomenon well known to our profession. There have been those among the ancient sages who have thought that there still remained a sympathy between the severed nerves and those belonging to the amputated limb; and that the several fingers are seen to quiver and strain, as corresponding with the impulse which proceeds from their sympathy with the energies of the living system. Could we recover the hand from the Cross, or from the custody of the Black Douglas, I would be pleased to observe this wonderful operation of occult sympathies. But, I fear me, one might as safely go to wrest the joint from the talons of an hungry eagle."

"And thou mayst as safely break thy malignant jests on a wounded lion as on John of Ramorny," said the knight, raising himself in uncontrollable indignation.

"Caitiff, proceed to thy duty; and remember, that if my hand can no longer clasp a dagger, I can command an hundred."

"The sight of one drawn and brandished in anger were sufficient," said Dwining, "to consume the vital powers of your surgeon. But who then," he added in a tone partly insinuating, partly jeering—"who would then relieve the fiery and scorching pain which my patron now suffers, and which renders him exasperated even with his poor servant for quoting the rules of healing, so contemptible, doubtless, compared with the power of inflicting wounds?"

Then, as daring no longer to trifle with the mood of his dangerous patient, the leech addressed himself seriously to salving the wound, and applied a fragrant balm, the odour of which was diffused through the apartment, while it communicated a refreshing coolness, instead of the burning heat—a change so gratifying to the fevered patient, that, as he had before groaned with agony, he could not now help sighing for pleasure, as he sank back on his couch to enjoy the ease which the dressing bestowed.

"Your knightly lordship now knows who is your friend," said Dwining; "had you yielded to a rash impulse, and said, 'Slay me this worthless quacksalver,' where, within the four seas of Britain, would you have found the man to have ministered to you as much comfort?"

"Forget my threats, good leech," said Ramorny, "and beware how you tempt me. Such as I brook not jests upon our agony. See thou keep thy scoffs, to pass upon misers [that is, miserable persons, as used in Spenser and other writers of his time, though the sense is now restricted to those who are covetous] in the hospital."

Dwining ventured to say no more, but poured some drops from a phial which he took from his pocket into a small cup of wine allayed with water.

"This draught," said the man of art, "is medicated to produce a sleep which must not be interrupted."

"For how long will it last?" asked the knight.

"The period of its operation is uncertain—perhaps till morning."

"Perhaps for ever," said the patient. "Sir mediciner, taste me that liquor presently, else it passes not my lips."

The leech obeyed him, with a scornful smile. "I would drink the whole with readiness; but the juice of this Indian gum will bring sleep on the healthy man as well as upon the patient, and the business of the leech requires me to be a watcher."

"I crave your pardon, sir leech," said Ramorny, looking downwards, as if ashamed to have manifested suspicion.

"There is no room for pardon where offence must not be taken," answered the mediciner. "An insect must thank a giant that he does not tread on him. Yet, noble knight, insects have their power of harming as well as physicians. What would it have cost me, save a moment's trouble, so to have drugged that balm, as should have made your arm rot to the shoulder joint, and your life blood curdle in your veins to a corrupted jelly? What is there that prevented me to use means yet more subtle, and to taint your room with essences, before which the light of life twinkles more and more dimly, till it expires, like a torch amidst the foul vapours of some subterranean dungeon? You little estimate my power, if you know not that these and yet deeper modes of destruction stand at command of my art. But a physician slays not the patient by whose generosity he lives, and far less will he the breath of whose nostrils is the hope of revenge destroy the vowed ally who is to favour his pursuit of it. Yet one word; should a necessity occur for rousing yourself—for who in Scotland can promise himself eight hours' uninterrupted repose?—then smell at the strong essence contained in this pouncet box. And now, farewell, sir knight; and if you cannot think of me as a man of nice conscience, acknowledge me at least as one of reason and of judgment."

So saying, the mediciner left the room, his usual mean and shuffling gait elevating itself into something more noble, as conscious of a victory over his imperious patient.

Sir John Ramorny remained sunk in unpleasing reflections until he began to experience the incipient effects of his soporific draught. He then roused himself for an instant, and summoned his page.

"Eviot! what ho! Eviot! I have done ill to unbosom myself so far to this poisonous quacksalver. Eviot!"

The page entered.

"Is the mediciner gone forth?"

"Yes, so please your knighthood."

"Alone or accompanied?"

"Bonthron spoke apart with him, and followed him almost immediately—by your lordship's command, as I understood him."

"Lackaday, yes! he goes to seek some medicaments; he will return anon. If he be intoxicated, see he comes not near my chamber, and permit him not to enter into converse with any one. He raves when drink has touched his brain. He was a rare fellow before a Southron bill laid his brain pan bare; but since that time he talks gibberish whenever the cup has crossed his lips. Said the leech aught to you, Eviot?"

"Nothing, save to reiterate his commands that your honour be not disturbed."

"Which thou must surely obey," said the knight. "I feel the summons to rest, of which I have been deprived since this unhappy wound. At least, if I have slept it has been but for a snatch. Aid me to take off my gown, Eviot."

"May God and the saints send you good rest, my lord," said the page, retiring after he had rendered his wounded master the assistance required.

As Eviot left the room, the knight, whose brain was becoming more and more confused, muttered over the page's departing salutation.

"God—saints—I have slept sound under such a benison. But now, methinks if I awake not to the accomplishment of my proud hopes of power and revenge, the best wish for me is, that the slumbers which now fall around my head were the forerunners of that sleep which shall return my borrowed powers to their original nonexistence—I can argue it no farther."

Thus speaking, he fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

On Fastern's E'en when we war fou.

Scots Song.

The night which sunk down on the sickbed of Ramorny was not doomed to be a quiet one. Two hours had passed since curfew bell, then rung at seven o'clock at night, and in those primitive times all were retired to rest, excepting such whom devotion, or duty, or debauchery made watchers; and the evening being that of Shrovetide, or, as it was called in Scotland, Fastern's E'en, the vigils of gaiety were by far the most frequented of the three.

The common people had, throughout the day, toiled and struggled at football; the nobles and gentry had fought cocks, and hearkened to the wanton music of the minstrel; while the citizens had gorged themselves upon pancakes fried in lard, and brose, or brewis—the fat broth, that is, in which salted beef had been boiled, poured upon highly toasted oatmeal, a dish which even now is not ungrateful to simple, old fashioned Scottish palates. These were all exercises and festive dishes proper to the holiday. It was no less a solemnity of the evening that the devout Catholic should drink as much good ale and wine as he had means to procure; and, if young and able, that he should dance at the ring, or figure among the morrice dancers, who, in the city of Perth, as elsewhere, wore a peculiarly fantastic garb, and distinguished themselves by their address and activity. All this gaiety took place under the prudential consideration that the long term of Lent, now approaching, with its fasts and deprivations, rendered it wise for mortals to cram as much idle and sensual indulgence as they could into the brief space which intervened before its commencement.

The usual revels had taken place, and in most parts of the city were succeeded by the usual pause. A particular degree of care had been taken by the nobility to prevent any renewal of discord betwixt their followers and the citizens of the town, so that the revels had proceeded with fewer casualties than usual, embracing only three deaths and certain fractured limbs, which, occurring to individuals of little note, were not accounted worth inquiring into. The carnival was closing quietly in general, but in some places the sport was still kept up.

One company of revellers, who had been particularly noticed and applauded, seemed unwilling to conclude their frolic. The entry, as it was called, consisted of thirteen persons, habited in the same manner, having doublets of chamois leather sitting close to their bodies, curiously slashed and laced. They wore green caps with silver tassels, red ribands, and white shoes, had bells hung at their knees and around their ankles, and naked swords in their hands. This gallant party, having exhibited a sword dance before the King, with much clashing of weapons and fantastic interchange of postures, went on gallantly to repeat their exhibition before the door of Simon Glover, where, having made a fresh exhibition of their agility, they caused wine to be served round to their own company and the bystanders, and with a loud shout drank to the health of the Fair Maid of Perth. This summoned old Simon to the door of his habitation, to acknowledge the courtesy of his countrymen, and in his turn to send the wine around in honour of the Merry Morrice Dancers of Perth.

"We thank thee, father Simon," said a voice, which strove to drown in an artificial squeak the pert, conceited tone of Oliver Proudfoote. "But a sight of thy lovely daughter had been more sweet to us young bloods than a whole vintage of Malvoisie."

"I thank thee, neighbours, for your goodwill," replied the glover. "My daughter is ill at ease, and may not come forth into the cold night air; but if this gay gallant, whose voice methinks I should know, will go into my poor house, she will charge him with thanks for the rest of you."

"Bring them to us at the hostelrie of the Griffin," cried the rest of the ballet to their favoured companion; "for there will we ring in Lent, and have another rouse to the health of the lovely Catharine."

"Have with you in half an hour," said Oliver, "and see who will quaff the largest flagon, or sing the loudest glee. Nay, I will be merry in what remains of Fastern's Even, should Lent find me with my mouth closed for ever."

"Farewell, then," cried his mates in the morrice—"fare well, slashing bonnet maker, till we meet again."

The morrice dancers accordingly set out upon their further progress, dancing and carolling as they went along to the sound of four musicians, who led the joyous band, while Simon Glover drew their coryphaeus into his house, and placed him in a chair by his parlour fire.

"But where is your daughter?" said Oliver. "She is the bait for us brave blades."

"Why, truly, she keeps her apartment, neighbour Oliver; and, to speak plainly, she keeps her bed."

"Why, then will I upstairs to see her in her sorrow; you have marred my ramble, Gaffer Glover, and you owe me amends—a roving blade like me; I will not lose both the lass and the glass. Keeps her bed, does she?"

*"My dog and I we have a trick
To visit maids when they are sick;
When they are sick and like to die,
Oh, thither do come my dog and I.*

*"And when I die, as needs must hap,
Then bury me under the good ale tap;
With folded arms there let me lie
Cheek for jowl, my dog and I."*

"Canst thou not be serious for a moment, neighbour Proudfoote?" said the glover; "I want a word of conversation with you."

"Serious!" answered his visitor; "why, I have been serious all this day: I can hardly open my mouth, but something comes out about death, a burial, or suchlike—the most serious subjects that I wot of."

"St. John, man!" said the glover, "art then fey?"

"No, not a whit: it is not my own death which these gloomy fancies foretell. I have a strong horoscope, and shall live for fifty years to come. But it is the case of the poor fellow—the Douglas man, whom I struck down at the fray of St. Valentine's: he died last night; it is that which weighs on my conscience, and awakens sad fancies. Ah, father Simon, we martialists, that have spilt blood in our choler, have dark thoughts at times; I sometimes wish that my knife had cut nothing but worsted thrums."

"And I wish," said Simon, "that mine had cut nothing but buck's leather, for it has sometimes cut my own fingers. But thou mayst spare thy remorse for this bout: there was but one man dangerously hurt at the affray, and it was he from whom Henry Smith hewed the hand, and he is well recovered. His name is Black Quentin, one of Sir John Ramorny's followers. He has been sent privately back to his own country of Fife."

"What, Black Quentin? Why, that is the very man that Henry and I, as we ever keep close together, struck at in the same moment, only my blow fell somewhat earlier. I fear further feud will come of it, and so does the provost. And is he recovered? Why, then, I will be jovial, and since thou wilt not let me see how Kate becomes her night gear, I will back to the Griffin to my morrice dancers."

"Nay, stay but one instant. Thou art a comrade of Henry Wynd, and hast done him the service to own one or two deeds and this last among others. I would thou couldst clear him of other charges with which fame hath loaded him."

"Nay, I will swear by the hilt of my sword they are as false as hell, father Simon. What—blades and targets! shall not men of the sword stick together?"

"Nay, neighbour bonnet maker, be patient; thou mayst do the smith a kind turn, an thou takest this matter the right way. I have chosen thee to consult with anent this matter—not that I hold thee the wisest head in Perth, for should I say so I should lie."

"Ay—ay," answered the self satisfied bonnet maker; "I know where you think my fault lies: you cool heads think we hot heads are fools—I have heard men call Henry Wynd such a score of times."

"Fool enough and cool enough may rhyme together passing well," said the glover; "but thou art good natured, and I think lovest this crony of thine. It stands awkwardly with us and him just now," continued Simon. "Thou knowest there hath been some talk of marriage between my daughter Catharine and Henry Gow?"

"I have heard some such song since St. Valentine's Morn. Ah! he that shall win the Fair Maid of Perth must be a happy man; and yet marriage spoils many a pretty fellow. I myself somewhat regret—"

"Prithee, truce with thy regrets for the present, man," interrupted the glover, somewhat peevishly. "You must know, Oliver, that some of these talking women, who I think make all the business of the world their own, have accused Henry of keeping light company with glee women and suchlike. Catharine took it to heart; and I held my child insulted, that he had not waited upon her like a Valentine, but had thrown himself into unseemly society on the very day when, by ancient custom, he might have had an opportunity to press his interest with my daughter. Therefore, when he came hither late on the evening of St. Valentine's, I, like a hasty old fool, bid him go home to the company he had left, and denied him admittance. I have not seen him since, and I begin to think that I may have been too rash in the matter. She is my only child, and the grave should have her sooner than a debauchee, But I have hitherto thought I knew Henry Gow as if he were my son. I cannot think he would use us thus, and it may be there are means of explaining what is laid to his charge. I was led to ask Dwining, who is said to have saluted the smith while he was walking with this choice mate. If I am to believe his words, this wench was the smith's cousin, Joan Letham. But thou knowest that the potter carrier ever speaks one language with his visage and another with his tongue. Now, thou, Oliver, hast too little wit—I mean, too much honesty—to belie the truth, and as Dwining hinted that thou also hadst seen her—"

"I see her, Simon Glover! Will Dwining say that I saw her?"

"No, not precisely that; but he says you told him you had met the smith thus accompanied."

"He lies, and I will pound him into a gallipot!" said Oliver Proudfoot.

"How! Did you never tell him, then, of such a meeting?"

"What an if I did?" said the bonnet maker. "Did not he swear that he would never repeat again to living mortal what I communicated to him? and therefore, in telling the occurrent to you, he hath made himself a liar."

"Thou didst not meet the smith, then," said Simon, "with such a loose baggage as fame reports?"

"Lackaday, not I; perhaps I did, perhaps I did not. Think, father Simon—I have been a four years married man, and can you expect me to remember the turn of a glee woman's ankle, the trip of her toe, the lace upon her petticoat, and such toys? No, I leave that to unmarried wags, like my gossip Henry."

"The upshot is, then," said the glover, much vexed, "you did meet him on St. Valentine's Day walking the public streets—"

"Not so, neighbour; I met him in the most distant and dark lane in Perth, steering full for his own house, with bag and baggage, which, as a gallant fellow, he carried in his arms, the puppy dog on one and the jilt herself—and to my thought she was a pretty one—hanging upon the other."

"Now, by good St. John," said the glover, "this infamy would make a Christian man renounce his faith, and worship Mahound in very anger! But he has seen the last of my daughter. I would rather she went to the wild Highlands with a barelegged cateran than wed with one who could, at such a season, so broadly forget honour and decency. Out upon him!"

"Tush—tush! father Simon," said the liberal minded bonnet maker, "you consider not the nature of young blood. Their company was not long, for—to speak truth, I did keep a little watch on him—I met him before sunrise, conducting his errant damsel to the Lady's Stairs, that the wench might embark on the Tay from Perth; and I know for certainty, for I made inquiry, that she sailed in a gabbart for Dundee. So you see it was but a slight escape of youth."

"And he came here," said Simon, bitterly, "beseeching for admittance to my daughter, while he had his harlot awaiting him at home! I had rather he had slain a score of men! It skills not talking, least of all to thee, Oliver Proudfoot, who, if thou art not such a one as himself, would fain be thought so. But—"

"Nay, think not of it so seriously," said Oliver, who began to reflect on the mischief his tattling was likely to occasion to his friend, and on the consequences of Henry Gow's displeasure, when he should learn the disclosure which he had made rather in vanity of heart than in evil intention.

"Consider," he continued, "that there are follies belonging to youth. Occasion provokes men to such frolics, and confession wipes them off. I care not if I tell thee that, though my wife be as goodly a woman as the city has, yet I myself—"

"Peace, silly braggart," said the glover in high wrath; "thy loves and thy battles are alike apocryphal. If thou must needs lie, which I think is thy nature, canst thou invent no falsehood that may at least do thee some credit? Do I not see through thee, as I could see the light through the horn of a base lantern? Do I not know, thou filthy weaver of rotten worsted, that thou durst no more cross the threshold of thy own door, if thy wife heard of thy making such a boast, than thou dardest cross naked weapons with a boy of twelve years old, who has drawn a sword for the first time of his life? By St. John, it were paying you for your tale bearing trouble to send thy Maudie word of thy gay brags."

The bonnet maker, at this threat, started as if a crossbow bolt had whizzed past his head when least expected. And it was with a trembling voice that he replied:

"Nay, good father Glover, thou takest too much credit for thy grey hairs. Consider, good neighbour, thou art too old for a young martialist to wrangle with. And in the matter of my Maudie, I can trust thee, for I know no one who would be less willing than thou to break the peace of families."

"Trust thy coxcomb no longer with me," said the incensed glover; "but take thyself, and the thing thou call'st a head, out of my reach, lest I borrow back five minutes of my youth and break thy pate!"

"You have had a merry Fastern's Even, neighbour," said the bonnet maker, "and I wish you a quiet sleep; we shall meet better friends tomorrow."

"Out of my doors tonight!" said the glover. "I am ashamed so idle a tongue as thine should have power to move me thus."

"Idiot—beast—loose tongued coxcomb," he exclaimed, throwing himself into a chair, as the bonnet maker disappeared; "that a fellow made up of lies should not have had the grace to frame one when it might have covered the shame of a friend! And I—what am I, that I should, in my secret mind, wish that such a gross insult to me and my child had been glossed over? Yet such was my opinion of Henry, that I would have willingly believed the grossest figment the swaggering ass could have invented. Well, it skills not thinking of it. Our honest name must be maintained, though everything else should go to ruin."

While the glover thus moralised on the unwelcome confirmation of the tale he wished to think untrue, the expelled morrice dancer had leisure, in the composing air of a cool and dark February night, to meditate on the consequences of the glover's unrestrained anger.

"But it is nothing," he bethought himself, "to the wrath of Henry Wynd, who hath killed a man for much less than placing displeasure betwixt him and Catharine, as well as her fiery old father. Certainly I were better have denied everything. But the humour of seeming a knowing gallant, as in truth I am, fairly overcame me. Were I best go to finish the revel at the Griffin? But then Maudie will rampage on my return—ay, and this being holiday even, I may claim a privilege. I have it: I will not to the Griffin—I will to the smith's, who must be at home, since no one hath seen him this day amid the revel. I will endeavour to make peace with him, and offer my intercession with the glover. Harry is a simple, downright fellow, and though I think he is my better in a broil, yet in discourse I can turn him my own way. The streets are now quiet, the night, too, is dark, and I may step aside if I meet any rioters. I will to the smith's, and, securing him for my friend, I care little for old

Simon. St. Ringan bear me well through this night, and I will clip my tongue out ere it shall run my head into such peril again! Yonder old fellow, when his blood was up, looked more like a carver of buff jerkins than a clipper of kid gloves."

With these reflections, the puissant Oliver walked swiftly, yet with as little noise as possible, towards the wynd in which the smith, as our readers are aware, had his habitation. But his evil fortune had not ceased to pursue him. As he turned into the High, or principal, Street, he heard a burst of music very near him, followed by a loud shout.

"My merry mates, the morrice dancers," thought he; "I would know old Jeremy's rebeck among an hundred. I will venture across the street ere they pass on; if I am espied, I shall have the renown of some private quest, which may do me honour as a roving blade."

With these longings for distinction among the gay and gallant, combated, however, internally, by more prudential considerations, the bonnet maker made an attempt to cross the street. But the revellers, whoever they might be, were accompanied by torches, the flash of which fell upon Oliver, whose light coloured habit made him the more distinctly visible. The general shout of "A prize—a prize" overcame the noise of the minstrel, and before the bonnet maker could determine whether it were better to stand or fly, two active young men, clad in fantastic masking habits, resembling wild men, and holding great clubs, seized upon him, saying, in a tragical tone: "Yield thee, man of bells and bombast—yield thee, rescue or no rescue, or truly thou art but a dead morrice dancer."

"To whom shall I yield me?" said the bonnet maker, with a faltering voice; for, though he saw he had to do with a party of mummers who were afoot for pleasure, yet he observed at the same time that they were far above his class, and he lost the audacity necessary to support his part in a game where the inferior was likely to come by the worst.

"Dost thou parley, slave?" answered one of the maskers; "and must I show thee that thou art a captive, by giving thee incontinently the bastinado?"

"By no means, puissant man of Ind," said the bonnet maker; "lo, I am conformable to your pleasure."

"Come, then," said those who had arrested him—"come and do homage to the Emperor of Mimes, King of Caperers, and Grand Duke of the Dark Hours, and explain by what right thou art so presumptuous as to prance and jingle, and wear out shoe leather, within his dominions without paying him tribute. Know'st thou not thou hast incurred the pains of high treason?"

"That were hard, methinks," said poor Oliver, "since I knew not that his Grace exercised the government this evening. But I am willing to redeem the forfeit, if the purse of a poor bonnet maker may, by the mulct of a gallon of wine, or some such matter."

"Bring him before the emperor," was the universal cry; and the morrice dancer was placed before a slight, but easy and handsome, figure of a young man, splendidly attired, having a cincture and tiara of peacock's feathers, then brought from the East as a marvellous rarity; a short jacket and under dress of leopard's skin fitted closely the rest of his person, which was attired in flesh coloured silk, so as to resemble the ordinary idea of an Indian prince. He wore sandals, fastened on with ribands of scarlet silk, and held in his hand a sort of fan, such as ladies then used, composed of the same feathers, assembled into a plume or tuft.

"What mister wight have we here," said the Indian chief, "who dares to tie the bells of a morrice on the ankles of a dull ass? Hark ye, friend, your dress should make you a subject of ours, since our empire extends over all Merryland, including mimes and minstrels of every description. What, tongue tied? He lacks wine; minister to him our nutshell full of sack."

A huge calabash full of sack was offered to the lips of the suppliant, while this prince of revellers exhorted him:

"Crack me this nut, and do it handsomely, and without wry faces."

But, however Oliver might have relished a moderate sip of the same good wine, he was terrified at the quantity he was required to deal with. He drank a draught, and then entreated for mercy.

"So please your princedom, I have yet far to go, and if I were to swallow your Grace's bounty, for which accept my dutiful thanks, I should not be able to stride over the next kennel."

"Art thou in case to bear thyself like a galliard? Now, cut me a caper—ha! one—two—three—admirable. Again—give him the spur (here a satellite of the Indian gave Oliver a slight touch with his sword). Nay, that is best of all: he sprang like a cat in a gutter. Tender him the nut once more; nay, no compulsion, he has paid forfeit, and deserves not only free dismissal but reward. Kneel down—kneel, and arise Sir Knight of the Calabash! What is thy name? And one of you lend me a rapier."

"Oliver, may it please your honour—I mean your principality."

"Oliver, man. Nay, then thou art one of the 'douze peers' already, and fate has forestalled our intended promotion. Yet rise up, sweet Sir Oliver Thatchpate, Knight of the honourable order of the Pumpkin—rise up, in the name of nonsense, and begone about thine own concerns, and the devil go with thee!"

So saying, the prince of the revels bestowed a smart blow with the flat of the weapon across the bonnet maker's shoulders, who sprung to his feet with more alacrity of motion than he had hitherto displayed, and, accelerated by the laugh and halloo which arose behind him, arrived at the smith's house before he stopped, with the same speed with which a hunted fox makes for his den.

It was not till the affrighted bonnet maker had struck a blow on the door that he recollected he ought to have bethought himself beforehand in what manner he was to present himself before Henry, and obtain his forgiveness for his rash communications to Simon Glover. No one answered to his first knock, and, perhaps, as these reflections arose in the momentary pause of recollection which circumstances permitted, the perplexed bonnet maker might have flinched from his purpose, and made his retreat to his own premises, without venturing upon the interview which he had purposed. But a distant strain of minstrelsy revived his apprehensions of falling once more into the hands of the gay maskers from whom he had escaped, and he renewed his summons on the door of the smith's dwelling with a hurried, though faltering, hand. He was then appalled by the deep, yet not unmusical, voice of Henry Gow, who answered from within: "Who calls at this hour, and what is it that you want?"

"It is I—Oliver Proudfeet," replied the bonnet maker; "I have a merry jest to tell you, gossip Henry."

"Carry thy foolery to some other market. I am in no jesting humour," said Henry. "Go hence; I will see no one tonight."

"But, gossip—good gossip," answered the martialist with out, "I am beset with villains, and beg the shelter of your roof!"

"Fool that thou art!" replied Henry; "no dunghill cock, the most recreant that has fought this Fastern's Eve, would ruffle his feathers at such a craven as thou!"

At this moment another strain of minstrelsy, and, as the bonnet maker conceived, one which approached much nearer, goaded his apprehensions to the uttermost; and in a voice the tones of which expressed the undisguised extremity of instant fear he exclaimed:

"For the sake of our old gossipred, and for the love of Our Blessed Lady, admit me, Henry, if you would not have me found a bloody corpse at thy door, slain by the bloody minded Douglasses!"

"That would be a shame to me," thought the good natured smith, "and sooth to say, his peril may be real. There are roving hawks that will strike at a sparrow as soon as a heron."

With these reflections, half muttered, half spoken, Henry undid his well fastened door, proposing to reconnoitre the reality of the danger before he permitted his unwelcome guest to enter the house. But as he looked abroad to ascertain how matters stood, Oliver bolted in like a scared deer into a thicket, and harboured himself by the smith's kitchen fire before Henry could look up and down the lane, and satisfy himself there were no enemies in pursuit of the apprehensive fugitive. He secured his door, therefore, and returned into the kitchen, displeased that he had suffered his gloomy solitude to be intruded upon by sympathising with apprehensions which he thought he might have known were so easily excited as those of his timid townsman.

"How now!" he said, coldly enough, when he saw the bonnet maker calmly seated by his hearth. "What foolish revel is this, Master Oliver? I see no one near to harm you."

"Give me a drink, kind gossip," said Oliver: "I am choked with the haste I have made to come hither."

"I have sworn," said Henry, "that this shall be no revel night in this house: I am in my workday clothes, as you see, and keep fast, as I have reason, instead of holiday. You have had wassail enough for the holiday evening, for you speak thick already. If you wish more ale or wine you must go elsewhere."

"I have had overmuch wassail already," said poor Oliver, "and have been well nigh drowned in it. That accursed calabash! A draught of water, kind gossip—you will not surely let me ask for that in vain? or, if it is your will, a cup of cold small ale."

"Nay, if that be all," said Henry, "it shall not be lacking. But it must have been much which brought thee to the pass of asking for either."

So saying, he filled a quart flagon from a barrel that stood nigh, and presented it to his guest. Oliver eagerly accepted it, raised it to his head with a trembling hand, imbibed the contents with lips which quivered with emotion, and, though the potation was as thin as he had requested, so much was he exhausted with the combined fears of alarm and of former revelry, that, when he placed the flagon on the oak table, he uttered a deep sigh of satisfaction, and remained silent.

"Well, now you have had your draught, gossip," said the smith, "what is it you want? Where are those that threatened you? I could see no one."

"No—but there were twenty chased me into the wynd," said Oliver. "But when they saw us together, you know they lost the courage that brought all of them upon one of us."

"Nay, do not trifle, friend Oliver," replied his host; "my mood lies not that way."

"I jest not, by St. John of Perth. I have been stayed and foully outraged (gliding his hand sensitively over the place affected) by mad David of Rothsay, roaring Ramorny, and the rest of them. They made me drink a firkin of Malvoisie."

"Thou speakest folly, man. Ramorny is sick nigh to death, as the potter carrier everywhere reports: they and he cannot surely rise at midnight to do such frolics."

"I cannot tell," replied Oliver; "but I saw the party by torchlight, and I can make bodily oath to the bonnets I made for them since last Innocents'. They are of a quaint device, and I should know my own stitch."

"Well, thou mayst have had wrong," answered Henry. "If thou art in real danger, I will cause them get a bed for thee here. But you must fill it presently, for I am not in the humour of talking."

"Nay, I would thank thee for my quarters for a night, only my Maudie will be angry—that is, not angry, for that I care not for—but the truth is, she is overanxious on a revel night like this, knowing my humour is like thine for a word and a blow."

"Why, then, go home," said the smith, "and show her that her treasure is in safety, Master Oliver; the streets are quiet, and, to speak a blunt word, I would be alone."

"Nay, but I have things to speak with thee about of moment," replied Oliver, who, afraid to stay, seemed yet unwilling to go. "There has been a stir in our city council about the affair of St. Valentine's Even. The provost told me not four hours since, that the Douglas and he had agreed that the feud should be decided by a yeoman on either party and that our acquaintance, the Devil's Dick, was to wave his gentry, and take up the cause for Douglas and the nobles, and that you or I should fight for the Fair City. Now, though I am the elder burgess, yet I am willing, for the love and kindness we have always borne to each other, to give thee the precedence, and content myself with the humbler office of stickler."

Henry Smith, though angry, could scarce forbear a smile.

"If it is that which breaks thy quiet, and keeps thee out of thy bed at midnight, I will make the matter easy. Thou shalt not lose the advantage offered thee. I have fought a score of duels—far, far too many. Thou hast, I think, only encountered with thy wooden soldan: it were unjust—unfair—unkind—in me to abuse thy friendly offer. So go home, good fellow, and let not the fear of losing honour disturb thy slumbers. Rest assured that thou shalt answer the challenge, as good right thou hast, having had injury from this rough rider."

"Gramercy, and thank thee kindly," said Oliver much embarrassed by his friend's unexpected deference; "thou art the good friend I have always thought thee. But I have as much friendship for Henry Smith as he for Oliver Proudfeute. I swear by St. John, I will not fight in this quarrel to thy prejudice; so, having said so, I am beyond the reach of temptation, since thou wouldst not have me mansworn, though it were to fight twenty duels."

"Hark thee," said the smith, "acknowledge thou art afraid, Oliver: tell the honest truth, at once, otherwise I leave thee to make the best of thy quarrel."

"Nay, good gossip," replied the bonnet maker, "thou knowest I am never afraid. But, in sooth, this is a desperate ruffian; and as I have a wife—poor Maudie, thou knowest—and a small family, and thou—"

"And I," interrupted Henry, hastily, "have none, and never shall have."

"Why, truly, such being the case, I would rather thou fought'st this combat than I."

"Now, by our halidome, gossip," answered the smith, "thou art easily gored! Know, thou silly fellow, that Sir Patrick Charteris, who is ever a merry man, hath but jested with thee. Dost thou think he would venture the honour of the city on thy head, or that I would yield thee the precedence in which such a matter was to be disputed? Lackaday, go home, let Maudie tie a warm nightcap on thy head, get thee a warm breakfast and a cup of distilled waters, and thou wilt be in ease tomorrow to fight thy wooden dromond, or soldan, as thou call'st him, the only thing thou wilt ever lay downright blow upon."

"Ay, say'st thou so, comrade?" answered Oliver, much relieved, yet deeming it necessary to seem in part offended. "I care not for thy dogged humour; it is well for thee thou canst not wake my patience to the point of falling foul. Enough—we are gossips, and this house is thine. Why should the two best blades in Perth clash with each other? What! I know thy rugged humour, and can forgive it. But is the feud really soldered up?"

"As completely as ever hammer fixed rivet," said the smith. "The town hath given the Johnstone a purse of gold, for not ridding them of a troublesome fellow called Oliver Proudfeute, when he had him at his mercy; and this purse of gold buys for the provost the Sleepless Isle, which the King grants him, for the King pays all in the long run. And thus Sir Patrick gets the comely inch which is opposite to his dwelling, and all honour is saved on both sides, for what is given to the provost is given, you understand, to the town. Besides all this, the Douglas hath left Perth to march against the Southron, who, men say, are called into the marches by the false Earl of March. So the Fair City is quit of him and his cumber."

"But, in St. John's name, how came all that about," said Oliver, "and no one spoken to about it?"

"Why, look thee, friend Oliver, this I take to have been the case. The fellow whom I cropped of a hand is now said to have been a servant of Sir John Ramorny's, who hath fled to his motherland of Fife, to which Sir John himself is also to be banished, with full consent of every honest man. Now, anything which brings in Sir John Ramorny touches a much greater man—I think Simon Glover told as much to Sir Patrick Charteris. If it be as I guess, I have reason to thank Heaven and all the saints I stabbed him not upon the ladder when I made him prisoner."

"And I too thank Heaven and all the saints, most devoutly," said Oliver. "I was behind thee, thou knowest, and—"

"No more of that, if thou be'st wise. There are laws against striking princes," said the smith: "best not handle the horseshoe till it cools. All is hushed up now."

"If this be so," said Oliver, partly disconcerted, but still more relieved, by the intelligence he received from his better informed friend, "I have reason to complain of Sir Patrick Charteris for jesting with the honour of an honest burgess, being, as he is, provost of our town."

"Do, Oliver; challenge him to the field, and he will bid his yeoman loose his dogs on thee. But come, night wears apace, will you be shogging?"

"Nay, I had one word more to say to thee, good gossip. But first, another cup of your cold ale."

"Pest on thee for a fool! Thou makest me wish thee where told liquors are a scarce commodity. There, swill the barrellful an thou wilt."

Oliver took the second flagon, but drank, or rather seemed to drink, very slowly, in order to gain time for considering how he should introduce his second subject of conversation, which seemed rather delicate for the smith's present state of irritability. At length, nothing better occurred to him than to plunge into the subject at once, with, "I have seen Simon Glover today, gossip."

"Well," said the smith, in a low, deep, and stern tone of voice, "and if thou hast, what is that to me?"

"Nothing—nothing," answered the appalled bonnet maker. "Only I thought you might like to know that he questioned me close if I had seen thee on St. Valentine's Day, after the uproar at the Dominicans', and in what company thou wert."

"And I warrant thou told'st him thou met'st me with a glee woman in the mirk loaning yonder?"

"Thou know'st, Henry, I have no gift at lying; but I made it all up with him."

"As how, I pray you?" said the smith.

"Marry, thus: 'Father Simon,' said I, 'you are an old man, and know not the quality of us, in whose veins youth is like quicksilver. You think, now, he cares about this girl,' said I, 'and, perhaps, that he has her somewhere here in Perth in a corner? No such matter; I know,' said I, 'and I will make oath to it, that she left his house early next morning for Dundee.' Ha! have I helped thee at need?"

"Truly, I think thou hast, and if anything could add to my grief and vexation at this moment, it is that, when I am so deep in the mire, an ass like thee should place his clumsy hoof on my head, to sink me entirely. Come, away with thee, and mayst thou have such luck as thy meddling humour deserves; and then I think, thou wilt be found with a broken neck in the next gutter. Come, get you out, or I will put you to the door with head and shoulders forward."

"Ha—ha!" exclaimed Oliver, laughing with some constraint, "thou art such a groom! But in sadness, gossip Henry, wilt thou not take a turn with me to my own house, in the Meal Vennel?"

"Curse thee, no," answered the smith.

"I will bestow the wine on thee if thou wilt go," said Oliver.

"I will bestow the cudgel on thee if thou stay'st," said Henry.

"Nay, then, I will don thy buff coat and cap of steel, and walk with thy swashing step, and whistling thy pibroch of 'Broken Bones at Loncarty'; and if they take me for thee, there dare not four of them come near me."

"Take all or anything thou wilt, in the fiend's name! only be gone."

"Well—well, Hal, we shall meet when thou art in better humour," said Oliver, who had put on the dress.

"Go; and may I never see thy coxcombly face again."

Oliver at last relieved his host by swaggering off, imitating as well as he could the sturdy step and outward gesture of his redoubted companion, and whistling a pibroch composed on the rout of the Danes at Loncarty, which he had picked up from its being a favourite of the smith's, whom he made a point of imitating as far as he could. But as the innocent, though conceited, fellow stepped out from the entrance of the wynd, where it communicated with the High Street, he received a blow from behind, against which his headpiece was no defence, and he fell dead upon the spot, an attempt to mutter the name of Henry, to whom he always looked for protection, quivering upon his dying tongue.

CHAPTER XVII.

Nay, I will fit you for a young prince.

Falstaff.

We return to the revellers, who had, half an hour before, witnessed, with such boisterous applause, Oliver's feat of agility, being the last which the poor bonnet maker was ever to exhibit, and at the hasty retreat which had followed it, animated by their wild shout. After they had laughed their fill, they passed on their mirthful path in frolic and jubilee, stopping and frightening some of the people whom they met, but, it must be owned, without doing them any serious injury, either in their persons or feelings. At length, tired with his rambles, their chief gave a signal to his merry men to close around him.

"We, my brave hearts and wise counsellors, are," he said, "the real king over all in Scotland that is worth commanding. We sway the hours when the wine cup circulates, and when beauty becomes kind, when frolic is awake, and gravity snoring upon his pallet. We leave to our vice regent, King Robert, the weary task of controlling ambitious nobles, gratifying greedy clergymen, subduing wild Highlanders, and composing deadly feuds. And since our empire is one of joy and pleasure, meet it is that we should haste with all our forces to the rescue of such as own our sway, when they chance, by evil fortune, to become the prisoners of care and hypochondriac malady. I speak in relation chiefly to Sir John, whom the vulgar call Ramorny. We have not seen him since the onslaught of Curfew Street, and though we know he was somedeal hurt in that matter, we cannot see why he should not do homage in leal and duteous sort. Here, you, our Calabash King at arms, did you legally summon Sir John to his part of this evening's revels?"

"I did, my lord."

"And did you acquaint him that we have for this night suspended his sentence of banishment, that, since higher powers have settled that part, we might at least take a mirthful leave of an old friend?"

"I so delivered it, my lord," answered the mimic herald.

"And sent he not a word in writing, he that piques himself upon being so great a clerk?"

"He was in bed, my lord, and I might not see him. So far as I hear, he hath lived very retired, harmed with some bodily bruises, malcontent with your Highness's displeasure, and doubting insult in the streets, he having had a narrow escape from the burgesses, when the churls pursued him and his two servants into the Dominican convent. The servants, too, have been removed to Fife, lest they should tell tales."

"Why, it was wisely done," said the Prince, who, we need not inform the intelligent reader, had a better title to be so called than arose from the humours of the evening—"it was prudently done to keep light tongued companions out of the way. But St. John's absenting himself from our solemn revels, so long before decreed, is flat mutiny and disclamation of allegiance. Or, if the knight be really the prisoner of illness and melancholy, we must ourself grace him with a visit, seeing there can be no better cure for those maladies than our own presence, and a gentle kiss of the calabash. Forward, ushers, minstrels, guard, and attendants! Bear on high the great emblem of our dignity. Up with the calabash, I say, and let the merry men who carry these firkins, which are to supply the wine cup with their life blood, be chosen with regard to their state of steadiness. Their burden is weighty and precious, and if the fault is not in our eyes, they seem to us to reel and stagger more than were desirable. Now, move on, sirs, and let our minstrels blow their blythest and boldest."

On they went with tipsy mirth and jollity, the numerous torches flashing their red light against the small windows of the narrow streets, from whence nightcapped householders, and sometimes their wives to boot, peeped out by stealth to see what wild wassail disturbed the peaceful streets at that unwonted hour. At length the jolly train halted before the door of Sir John Ramorny's house, which a small court divided from the street.

Here they knocked, thundered, and halloo'd, with many denunciations of vengeance against the recusants who refused to open the gates. The least punishment threatened was imprisonment in an empty hogshead, within the massamore [principal dungeon] of the Prince of Pastimes' feudal palace, videlicet, the ale cellar. But Eviot, Ramorny's page, heard and knew well the character of the intruders who knocked so boldly, and thought it better, considering his master's condition, to make no answer at all, in hopes that the revel would pass on, than to attempt to deprecate their proceedings, which he knew would be to no purpose. His master's bedroom looking into a little garden, his page hoped he might not be disturbed by the noise; and he was confident in the strength of the outward gate, upon which he resolved they should beat till they tired themselves, or till the tone of their drunken humour should change. The revellers accordingly seemed likely to exhaust themselves in the noise they made by shouting and beating the door, when their mock prince (alas! too really such) upbraided them as lazy and dull followers of the god of wine and of mirth.

"Bring forward," he said, "our key, yonder it lies, and apply it to this rebellious gate."

The key he pointed at was a large beam of wood, left on one side of the street, with the usual neglect of order characteristic of a Scottish borough of the period.

The shouting men of Ind instantly raised it in their arms, and, supporting it by their united strength, ran against the door with such force, that hasp, hinge, and staple jingled, and gave fair promise of yielding. Eviot did not choose to wait the extremity of this battery: he came forth into the court, and after some momentary questions for form's sake, caused the porter to undo the gate, as if he had for the first time recognised the midnight visitors.

"False slave of an unfaithful master," said the Prince, "where is our disloyal subject, Sir John Ramorny, who has proved recreant to our summons?"

"My lord," said Eviot, bowing at once to the real and to the assumed dignity of the leader, "my master is just now very much indisposed: he has taken an opiate—and—your Highness must excuse me if I do my duty to him in saying, he cannot be spoken with without danger of his life."

"Tush! tell me not of danger, Master Teviot—Cheviot—Eviot—what is it they call thee? But show me thy master's chamber, or rather undo me the door of his lodging, and I will make a good guess at it myself. Bear high the calabash, my brave followers, and see that you spill not a drop of the liquor, which Dan Bacchus has sent for the cure of all diseases of the body and cares of the mind. Advance it, I say, and let us see the holy rind which incloses such precious liquor."

The Prince made his way into the house accordingly, and, acquainted with its interior, ran upstairs, followed by Eviot, in vain imploring silence, and, with the rest of the rabble rout, burst into the room of the wounded master of the lodging.

He who has experienced the sensation of being compelled to sleep in spite of racking bodily pains by the administration of a strong opiate, and of having been again startled by noise and violence out of the unnatural state of insensibility in which he had been plunged by the potency of the medicine, may be able to imagine the confused and alarmed state of Sir John Ramorny's mind, and the agony of his body, which acted and reacted upon each other. If we add to these feelings the consciousness of a criminal command, sent forth and in the act of being executed, it may give us some idea of an awakening to which, in the mind of the party, eternal sleep would be a far preferable doom. The groan which he uttered as the first symptom of returning sensation had something in it so terrific, that even the revellers were awed into momentary silence; and as, from the half recumbent posture in which he had gone to sleep, he looked around the room, filled with fantastic shapes, rendered still more so by his disturbed intellects, he muttered to himself:

"It is thus, then, after all, and the legend is true! These are fiends, and I am condemned for ever! The fire is not external, but I feel it—I feel it at my heart—burning as if the seven times heated furnace were doing its work within!"

While he cast ghastly looks around him, and struggled to recover some share of recollection, Eviot approached the Prince, and, falling on his knees, implored him to allow the apartment to be cleared.

"It may," he said, "cost my master his life."

"Never fear, Cheviot," replied the Duke of Rothsay; "were he at the gates of death, here is what should make the fiends relinquish their prey. Advance the calabash, my masters."

"It is death for him to taste it in his present state," said Eviot: "if he drinks wine he dies."

"Some one must drink it for him—he shall be cured vicariously; and may our great Dan Bacchus deign to Sir John Ramorny the comfort, the elevation of heart, the lubrication of lungs, and lightness of fancy, which are his choicest gifts, while the faithful follower, who quaffs in his stead, shall have the qualms, the sickness, the racking of the nerves, the dimness of the eyes, and the throbbing of the brain, with which our great master qualifies gifts which would else make us too like the gods. What say you, Eviot? will you be the faithful follower that will quaff in your lord's behalf, and as his representative? Do this, and we will hold ourselves contented to depart, for, methinks, our subject doth look something ghastly."

"I would do anything in my slight power," said Eviot, "to save my master from a draught which may be his death, and your Grace from the sense that you had occasioned it. But here is one who will perform the feat of goodwill, and thank your Highness to boot."

"Whom have we here?" said the Prince, "a butcher, and I think fresh from his office. Do butchers ply their craft on Fastern's Eve? Foh, how he smells of blood!"

This was spoken of Bonthron, who, partly surprised at the tumult in the house, where he had expected to find all dark and silent, and partly stupid through the wine which the wretch had drunk in great quantities, stood in the threshold of the door, staring at the scene before him, with his buff coat splashed with blood, and a bloody axe in his hand, exhibiting a ghastly and disgusting spectacle to the revellers, who felt, though they could not tell why, fear as well as dislike at his presence.

As they approached the calabash to this ungainly and truculent looking savage, and as he extended a hand soiled as it seemed with blood, to grasp it, the Prince called out:

"Downstairs with him! let not the wretch drink in our presence; find him some other vessel than our holy calabash, the emblem of our revels: a swine's trough were best, if it could be come by. Away with him! let him be drenched to purpose, in atonement for his master's sobriety. Leave me alone with Sir John Ramorny and his page; by my honour, I like not yon ruffian's looks."

The attendants of the Prince left the apartment, and Eviot alone remained.

"I fear," said the Prince, approaching the bed in different form from that which he had hitherto used—"I fear, my dear Sir John, that this visit has been unwelcome; but it is your own fault. Although you know our old wont, and were your self participant of our schemes for the evening, you have not come near us since St. Valentine's; it is now Fastern's Even, and the desertion is flat disobedience and treason to our kingdom of mirth and the statutes of the calabash."

Ramorny raised his head, and fixed a wavering eye upon the Prince; then signed to Eviot to give him something to drink. A large cup of ptisan was presented by the page, which the sick man swallowed with eager and trembling haste. He then repeatedly used the stimulating essence left for the purpose by the leech, and seemed to collect his scattered senses.

"Let me feel your pulse, dear Ramorny," said the Prince; "I know something of that craft. How! Do your offer me the left hand, Sir John? that is neither according to the rules of medicine nor of courtesy."

"The right has already done its last act in your Highness's service," muttered the patient in a low and broken tone.

"How mean you by that?" said the Prince. "I am aware thy follower, Black Quentin, lost a hand; but he can steal with the other as much as will bring him to the gallows, so his fate cannot be much altered."

"It is not that fellow who has had the loss in your Grace's service: it is I, John of Ramorny."

"You!" said the Prince; "you jest with me, or the opiate still masters your reason."

"If the juice of all the poppies in Egypt were blended in one draught," said Ramorny, "it would lose influence over me when I look upon this." He drew his right arm from beneath the cover of the bedclothes, and extending it towards the Prince, wrapped as it was in dressings, "Were these undone and removed," he said, "your Highness would see that a bloody stump is all that remains of a hand ever ready to unsheath the sword at your Grace's slightest bidding."

Rothsay started back in horror. "This," he said, "must be avenged!"

"It is avenged in small part," said Ramorny—"that is, I thought I saw Bonthron but now; or was it that the dream of hell that first arose in my mind when I awakened summoned up an image so congenial? Eviot, call the miscreant—that is, if he is fit to appear."

Eviot retired, and presently returned with Bonthron, whom he had rescued from the penance, to him no displeasing infliction, of a second calabash of wine, the brute having gorged the first without much apparent alteration in his demeanour.

"Eviot," said the Prince, "let not that beast come nigh me. My soul recoils from him in fear and disgust: there is something in his looks alien from my nature, and which I shudder at as at a loathsome snake, from which my instinct revolts."

"First hear him speak, my lord," answered Ramorny; "unless a wineskin were to talk, nothing could use fewer words. Hast thou dealt with him, Bonthron?"

The savage raised the axe which he still held in his hand, and brought it down again edgeways.

"Good. How knew you your man? the night, I am told, is dark."

"By sight and sound, garb, gait, and whistle."

"Enough, vanish! and, Eviot, let him have gold and wine to his brutish contentment. Vanish! and go thou with him."

"And whose death is achieved?" said the Prince, released from the feelings of disgust and horror under which he suffered while the assassin was in presence. "I trust this is but a jest! Else must I call it a rash and savage deed. Who has had the hard lot to be butchered by that bloody and brutal slave?"

"One little better than himself," said the patient, "a wretched artisan, to whom, however, fate gave the power of reducing Ramorny to a mutilated cripple—a curse go with his base spirit! His miserable life is but to my revenge what a drop of water would be to a furnace. I must speak briefly, for my ideas again wander: it is

only the necessity of the moment which keeps them together; as a thong combines a handful of arrows. You are in danger, my lord—I speak it with certainty: you have braved Douglas, and offended your uncle, displeased your father, though that were a trifle, were it not for the rest."

"I am sorry I have displeased my father," said the Prince, entirely diverted from so insignificant a thing as the slaughter of an artisan by the more important subject touched upon, "if indeed it be so. But if I live, the strength of the Douglas shall be broken, and the craft of Albany shall little avail him!"

"Ay—if—if. My lord," said Ramorny, "with such opposites as you have, you must not rest upon if or but; you must resolve at once to slay or be slain."

"How mean you, Ramorny? Your fever makes you rave" answered the Duke of Rothsay.

"No, my lord," said Ramorny, "were my frenzy at the highest, the thoughts that pass through my mind at this moment would qualify it. It may be that regret for my own loss has made me desperate, that anxious thoughts for your Highness's safety have made me nourish bold designs; but I have all the judgment with which Heaven has gifted me, when I tell you that, if ever you would brook the Scottish crown, nay, more, if ever you would see another St. Valentine's Day, you must—"

"What is it that I must do, Ramorny?" said the Prince, with an air of dignity; "nothing unworthy of myself, I hope?"

"Nothing, certainly, unworthy or misbecoming a prince of Scotland, if the bloodstained annals of our country tell the tale truly; but that which may well shock the nerves of a prince of mimes and merry makers."

"Thou art severe, Sir John Ramorny," said the Duke of Rothsay, with an air of displeasure; "but thou hast dearly bought a right to censure us by what thou hast lost in our cause."

"My Lord of Rothsay," said the knight, "the surgeon who dressed this mutilated stump told me that the more I felt the pain his knife and brand inflicted, the better was my chance of recovery. I shall not, therefore, hesitate to hurt your feelings, while by doing so I may be able to bring you to a sense of what is necessary for your safety. Your Grace has been the pupil of mirthful folly too long; you must now assume manly policy, or be crushed like a butterfly on the bosom of the flower you are sporting on."

"I think I know your cast of morals, Sir John: you are weary of merry folly—the churchmen call it vice—and long for a little serious crime. A murder, now, or a massacre, would enhance the flavour of debauch, as the taste of the olive gives zest to wine. But my worst acts are but merry malice: I have no relish for the bloody trade, and abhor to see or hear of its being acted even on the meanest caitiff. Should I ever fill the throne, I suppose, like my father before me, I must drop my own name, and be dubbed Robert, in honour of the Bruce; well, an if it be so, every Scots lad shall have his flag on in one hand and the other around his lass's neck, and manhood shall be tried by kisses and bumpers, not by dirks and dourlachs; and they shall write on my grave, 'Here lies Robert, fourth of his name. He won not battles like Robert the First. He rose not from a count to a king like Robert the Second. He founded not churches like Robert the Third, but was contented to live and die king of good fellows!' Of all my two centuries of ancestors, I would only emulate the fame of—"

"Old King Coull, Who had a brown bowl."

"My gracious lord," said Ramorny, "let me remind you that your joyous revels involve serious evils. If I had lost this hand in fighting to attain for your Grace some important advantage over your too powerful enemies, the loss would never have grieved me. But to be reduced from helmet and steel coat to biggin and gown in a night brawl—"

"Why, there again now, Sir John," interrupted the reckless Prince. "How canst thou be so unworthy as to be for ever flinging thy bloody hand in my face, as the ghost of Gaskhall threw his head at Sir William Wallace? Bethink thee, thou art more unreasonable than Fawdyeon himself; for wight Wallace had swept his head off in somewhat a hasty humour, whereas I would gladly stick thy hand on again, were that possible. And, hark thee, since that cannot be, I will get thee such a substitute as the steel hand of the old knight of Carslogie, with which he greeted his friends, caressed his wife, braved his antagonists, and did all that might be done by a hand of flesh and blood, in offence or defence. Depend on it, John Ramorny, we have much that is superfluous about us. Man can see with one eye, hear with one ear, touch with one hand, smell with one nostril; and why we should have two of each, unless to supply an accidental loss or injury, I for one am at a loss to conceive."

Sir John Ramorny turned from the Prince with a low groan.

"Nay, Sir John," said the Duke, "I am quite serious. You know the truth touching the legend of Steel Hand of Carslogie better than I, since he was your own neighbour. In his time that curious engine could only be made in Rome; but I will wager an hundred marks with you that, let the Perth armourer have the use of it for a pattern, Henry of the Wynd will execute as complete an imitation as all the smiths in Rome could accomplish, with all the cardinals to bid a blessing on the work."

"I could venture to accept your wager, my lord," answered Ramorny, bitterly, "but there is no time for foolery. You have dismissed me from your service, at command of your uncle?"

"At command of my father," answered the Prince.

"Upon whom your uncle's commands are imperative," replied Ramorny. "I am a disgraced man, thrown aside, as I may now fling away my right hand glove, as a thing useless. Yet my head might help you, though my hand be gone. Is your Grace disposed to listen to me for one word of serious import, for I am much exhausted, and feel my force sinking under me?"

"Speak your pleasure," said the Prince; "thy loss binds me to hear thee, thy bloody stump is a sceptre to control me. Speak, then, but be merciful in thy strength of privilege."

"I will be brief for mine own sake as well as thine; indeed, I have but little to say. Douglas places himself immediately at the head of his vassals. He will assemble, in the name of King Robert, thirty thousand Borderers, whom he will shortly after lead into the interior, to demand that the Duke of Rothsay receive, or rather restore, his daughter to the rank and privileges of his Duchess. King Robert will yield to any conditions which may secure peace. What will the Duke do?"

"The Duke of Rothsay loves peace," said the Prince, haughtily; "but he never feared war. Ere he takes back yonder proud peat to his table and his bed, at the command of her father, Douglas must be King of Scotland."

"Be it so; but even this is the less pressing peril, especially as it threatens open violence, for the Douglas works not in secret."

"What is there which presses, and keeps us awake at this late hour? I am a weary man, thou a wounded one, and the very tapers are blinking, as if tired of our conference."

"Tell me, then, who is it that rules this kingdom of Scotland?" said Ramorny.

"Robert, third of the name," said the Prince, raising his bonnet as he spoke; "and long may he sway the sceptre!"

"True, and amen," answered Ramorny; "but who sways King Robert, and dictates almost every measure which the good King pursues?"

"My Lord of Albany, you would say," replied the Prince. "Yes, it is true my father is guided almost entirely by the counsels of his brother; nor can we blame him in our consciences, Sir John Ramorny, for little help hath he had from his son."

"Let us help him now, my lord," said Ramorny. "I am possessor of a dreadful secret: Albany hath been trafficking with me, to join him in taking your Grace's life! He offers full pardon for the past, high favour for the future."

"How, man—my life? I trust, though, thou dost only mean my kingdom? It were impious! He is my father's brother—they sat on the knees of the same father—lay in the bosom of the same mother. Out on thee, man, what follies they make thy sickbed believe!"

"Believe, indeed!" said Ramorny. "It is new to me to be termed credulous. But the man through whom Albany communicated his temptations is one whom all will believe so soon as he hints at mischief—even the medicaments which are prepared by his hands have a relish of poison."

"Tush! such a slave would slander a saint," replied the Prince. "Thou art duped for once, Ramorny, shrewd as thou art. My uncle of Albany is ambitious, and would secure for himself and for his house a larger portion of power and wealth than he ought in reason to desire. But to suppose he would dethrone or slay his brother's son—Fie, Ramorny! put me not to quote the old saw, that evil doers are evil dreaders. It is your suspicion, not your knowledge, which speaks."

"Your Grace is fatally deluded. I will put it to an issue. The Duke of Albany is generally hated for his greed and covetousness. Your Highness is, it may be, more beloved than—"

Ramorny stopped, the Prince calmly filled up the blank: "More beloved than I am honoured. It is so I would have it, Ramorny."

"At least," said Ramorny, "you are more beloved than you are feared, and that is no safe condition for a prince. But give me your honour and knightly word that you will not resent what good service I shall do in your behalf, and lend me your signet to engage friends in your name, and the Duke of Albany shall not assume authority in this court till the wasted hand which once terminated this stump shall be again united to the body, and acting in obedience to the dictates of my mind."

"You would not venture to dip your hands in royal blood?" said the Prince sternly.

"Fie, my lord, at no rate. Blood need not be shed; life may, nay, will, be extinguished of itself. For want of trimming it with fresh oil, or screening it from a breath of wind, the quivering light will die in the socket. To suffer a man to die is not to kill him."

"True—I had forgot that policy. Well, then, suppose my uncle Albany does not continue to live—I think that must be the phrase—who then rules the court of Scotland?"

"Robert the Third, with consent, advice, and authority of the most mighty David, Duke of Rothsay, Lieutenant of the Kingdom, and alter ego; in whose favour, indeed, the good King, wearied with the fatigues and troubles of sovereignty, will, I guess, be well disposed to abdicate. So long live our brave young monarch, King David the Third!

"Ille manu fortis Anglis ludebit in hortis."

"And our father and predecessor," said Rothsay, "will he continue to live to pray for us, as our beadsman, by whose favour he holds the privilege of laying his grey hairs in the grave as soon, and no earlier, than the course of nature permits, or must he also encounter some of those negligences in consequence of which men cease to continue to live, and can change the limits of a prison, or of a convent resembling one, for the dark and tranquil cell, where the priests say that the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest?"

"You speak in jest, my lord," replied Ramorny: "to harm the good old King were equally unnatural and impolitic."

"Why shrink from that, man, when thy whole scheme," answered the Prince, in stern displeasure, "is one lesson of unnatural guilt, mixed with short sighted ambition? If the King of Scotland can scarcely make head against his nobles, even now when he can hold up before them an unsullied and honourable banner, who would follow a prince that is blackened with the death of an uncle and the imprisonment of a father? Why, man, thy policy were enough to revolt a heathen divan, to say nought of the council of a Christian nation. Thou wert my tutor, Ramorny, and perhaps I might justly upbraid thy lessons and example for some of the follies which men chide in me. Perhaps, if it had not been for thee, I had not been standing at midnight in this fool's guise (looking at his dress), to hear an ambitious profligate propose to me the murder of an uncle, the dethronement of the best of fathers. Since it is my fault as well as thine that has sunk me so deep in the gulf of infamy, it were unjust that thou alone shouldst die for it. But dare not to renew this theme to me, on peril of thy life! I will proclaim thee to my father—to Albany—to Scotland—throughout its length and breadth. As many market crosses as are in the land shall have morsels of the traitor's carcass, who dare counsel such horrors to the heir of Scotland. Well hope I, indeed, that the fever of thy wound, and the intoxicating influence of the cordials which act on thy infirm brain, have this night operated on thee, rather than any fixed purpose."

"In sooth, my lord," said Ramorny, "if I have said any thing which could so greatly exasperate your Highness, it must have been by excess of zeal, mingled with imbecility of understanding. Surely I, of all men, am least likely to propose ambitious projects with a prospect of advantage to myself! Alas! my only future views must be to exchange lance and saddle for the breviary and the confessional. The convent of Lindores must receive the maimed and impoverished knight of Ramorny, who will there have ample leisure to meditate upon the text, 'Put not thy faith in princes.'"

"It is a goodly purpose," said the Prince, "and we will not be lacking to promote it. Our separation, I thought, would have been but for a time. It must now be perpetual. Certainly, after such talk as we have held, it were meet that we should live asunder. But the convent of Lindores, or what ever other house receives thee, shall be richly endowed and highly favoured by us. And now, Sir John of Ramorny, sleep—sleep—and forget this evil omened conversation, in which the fever of disease and of wine has rather, I trust, held colloquy than your own proper thoughts. Light to the door, Eviot."

A call from Eviot summoned the attendants of the Prince, who had been sleeping on the staircase and hall, exhausted by the revels of the evening.

"Is there none amongst you sober?" said the Duke of Rothsay, disgusted by the appearance of his attendants.

"Not a man—not a man," answered the followers, with a drunken shout, "we are none of us traitors to the Emperor of Merry makers!"

"And are all of you turned into brutes, then?" said the Prince.

"In obedience and imitation of your Grace," answered one fellow; "or, if we are a little behind your Highness, one pull at the pitcher will—"

"Peace, beast!" said the Duke of Rothsay. "Are there none of you sober, I say?"

"Yes, my noble liege," was the answer; "here is one false brother, Watkins the Englishman."

"Come hither then, Watkins, and aid me with a torch; give me a cloak, too, and another bonnet, and take away this trumpery," throwing down his coronet of feathers. "I would I could throw off all my follies as easily. English Wat, attend me alone, and the rest of you end your revelry, and doff your mumming habits. The holytide is expended, and the fast has begun."

"Our monarch has abdicated sooner than usual this night," said one of the revel rout; but as the Prince gave no encouragement, such as happened for the time to want the virtue of sobriety endeavoured to assume it as well as they could, and the whole of the late rioters began to adopt the appearance of a set of decent persons, who, having been surprised into intoxication, endeavoured to disguise their condition by assuming a double portion of formality of behaviour. In the interim the Prince, having made a hasty reform in his dress, was lighted to the door by the only sober man of the company, but, in his progress thither, had well nigh stumbled over the sleeping bulk of the brute Bonthon.

"How now! is that vile beast in our way once more?" he said in anger and disgust. "Here, some of you, toss this caitiff into the horse trough; that for once in his life he may be washed clean."

While the train executed his commands, availing themselves of a fountain which was in the outer court, and while Bonthon underwent a discipline which he was incapable of resisting, otherwise than by some inarticulate groans and snorts, like, those of a dying boar, the Prince proceeded on his way to his apartments, in a mansion called the Constable's lodgings, from the house being the property of the Earls of Errol. On the way, to divert his thoughts from the more unpleasing matters, the Prince asked his companion how he came to be sober, when the rest of the party had been so much overcome with liquor.

"So please your honour's Grace," replied English Wat, "I confess it was very familiar in me to be sober when it was your Grace's pleasure that your train should be mad drunk; but in respect they were all Scottishmen but myself, I thought it argued no policy in getting drunken in their company, seeing that they only endure me even when we are all sober, and if the wine were uppermost, I might tell them a piece of my mind, and be paid with as many stabs as there are skenes in the good company."

"So it is your purpose never to join any of the revels of our household?"

"Under favour, yes; unless it be your Grace's pleasure that the residue of your train should remain one day sober, to admit Will Watkins to get drunk without terror of his life."

"Such occasion may arrive. Where dost thou serve, Watkins?"

"In the stable, so please you."

"Let our chamberlain bring thee into the household, as a yeoman of the night watch. I like thy favour, and it is something to have one sober fellow in the house, although he is only such through the fear of death. Attend, therefore, near our person; and thou shalt find sobriety a thriving virtue."

Meantime a load of care and fear added to the distress of Sir John Ramorny's sick chamber. His reflections, disordered as they were by the opiate, fell into great confusion when the Prince, in whose presence he had suppressed its effect by strong resistance, had left the apartment. His consciousness, which he had

possessed perfectly during the interview, began to be very much disturbed. He felt a general sense that he had incurred a great danger, that he had rendered the Prince his enemy, and that he had betrayed to him a secret which might affect his own life. In this state of mind and body, it was not strange that he should either dream, or else that his diseased organs should become subject to that species of phantasmagoria which is excited by the use of opium. He thought that the shade of Queen Annabella stood by his bedside, and demanded the youth whom she had placed under his charge, simple, virtuous, gay, and innocent. "Thou hast rendered him reckless, dissolute, and vicious," said the shade of pallid Majesty. "Yet I thank thee, John of Ramorny, ungrateful to me, false to thy word, and treacherous to my hopes. Thy hate shall counteract the evil which thy friendship has done to him. And well do I hope that, now thou art no longer his counsellor, a bitter penance on earth may purchase my ill fated child pardon and acceptance in a better world." Ramorny stretched out his arms after his benefactress, and endeavoured to express contrition and excuse; but the countenance of the apparition became darker and sterner, till it was no longer that of the late Queen, but presented the gloomy and haughty aspect of the Black Douglas; then the timid and sorrowful face of King Robert, who seemed to mourn over the approaching dissolution of his royal house; and then a group of fantastic features, partly hideous, partly ludicrous, which moped, and chattered, and twisted themselves into unnatural and extravagant forms, as if ridiculing his endeavour to obtain an exact idea of their lineaments.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A purple land, where law secures not life.

BYRON.

The morning of Ash Wednesday arose pale and bleak, as usual at this season in Scotland, where the worst and most inclement weather often occurs in the early spring months. It was a severe day of frost, and the citizens had to sleep away the consequences of the preceding holiday's debauchery. The sun had therefore risen for an hour above the horizon before there was any general appearance of life among the inhabitants of Perth, so that it was some time after daybreak when a citizen, going early to mass, saw the body of the luckless Oliver Proudfoot lying on its face across the kennel in the manner in which he had fallen under the blow; as our readers will easily imagine, of Anthony Bonthron, the "boy of the belt"—that is the executioner of the pleasure—of John of Ramorny.

This early citizen was Allan Griffin, so termed because he was master of the Griffin Inn; and the alarm which he raised soon brought together first straggling neighbours, and by and by a concourse of citizens. At first from the circumstance of the well known buff coat and the crimson feather in the head piece, the noise arose that it was the stout smith that lay there slain. This false rumour continued for some time, for the host of the Griffin, who himself had been a magistrate, would not permit the body to be touched or stirred till Bailie Craigdallie arrived, so that the face was not seen..

"This concerns the Fair City, my friends," he said, "and if it is the stout Smith of the Wynd who lies here, the man lives not in Perth who will not risk land and life to avenge him. Look you, the villains have struck him down behind his back, for there is not a man within ten Scotch miles of Perth, gentle or simple, Highland or Lowland, that would have met him face to face with such evil purpose. Oh, brave men of Perth! the flower of your manhood has been cut down, and that by a base and treacherous hand."

A wild cry of fury arose from the people, who were fast assembling.

"We will take him on our shoulders," said a strong butcher, "we will carry him to the King's presence at the Dominican convent"

"Ay—ay," answered a blacksmith, "neither bolt nor bar shall keep us from the King, neither monk nor mass shall break our purpose. A better armourer never laid hammer on anvil!"

"To the Dominicans—to the Dominicans!" shouted the assembled people.

"Bethink you, burghers," said another citizen, "our king is a good king and loves us like his children. It is the Douglas and the Duke of Albany that will not let good King Robert hear the distresses of his people."

"Are we to be slain in our own streets for the King's softness of heart?" said the butcher. "The Bruce did otherwise. If the King will not keep us, we will keep ourselves. Ring the bells backward, every bell of them that is made of metal. Cry, and spare not, St. Johnston's hunt is up!"

"Ay," cried another citizen, "and let us to the holds of Albany and the Douglas, and burn them to the ground. Let the fires tell far and near that Perth knew how to avenge her stout Henry Gow. He has fought a score of times for the Fair City's right; let us show we can once to avenge his wrong. Hally ho! brave citizens, St. Johnston's hunt is up!"

This cry, the well known rallying word amongst the inhabitants of Perth, and seldom heard but on occasions of general uproar, was echoed from voice to voice; and one or two neighbouring steeples, of which the enraged citizens possessed themselves, either by consent of the priests or in spite of their opposition, began to ring out the ominous alarm notes, in which, as the ordinary succession of the chimes was reversed, the bells were said to be rung backward.

Still, as the crowd thickened, and the roar waxed more universal and louder, Allan Griffin, a burly man with a deep voice, and well respected among high and low, kept his station as he bestrode the corpse, and called loudly to the multitude to keep back and wait the arrival of the magistrates.

"We must proceed by order in this matter, my masters, we must have our magistrates at our head. They are duly chosen and elected in our town hall, good men and true every one; we will not be called rioters, or idle perturbators of the king's peace. Stand you still, and make room, for yonder comes Bailie Craigdallie, ay, and honest Simon Glover, to whom the Fair City is so much bounden. Alas—alas! my kind townsmen, his beautiful daughter was a bride yesternight; this morning the Fair Maid of Perth is a widow before she has been a wife."

This new theme of sympathy increased the rage and sorrow of the crowd the more, as many women now mingled with them, who echoed back the alarm cry to the men.

"Ay—ay, St. Johnston's hunt is up! For the Fair Maid of Perth and the brave Henry Gow! Up—up, every one of you, spare not for your skin cutting! To the stables!—to the stables! When the horse is gone the man at arms is useless—cut off the grooms and yeomen; lame, maim, and stab the horses; kill the base squires and pages. Let these proud knights meet us on their feet if they dare!"

"They dare not—they dare not," answered the men; "their strength is their horses and armour; and yet the haughty and ungrateful villains have slain a man whose skill as an armourer was never matched in Milan or Venice. To arms!—to arms, brave burghers! St. Johnston's hunt is up!"

Amid this clamour, the magistrates and superior class of inhabitants with difficulty obtained room to examine the body, having with them the town clerk to take an official protocol, or, as it is still called, a precognition, of the condition in which it was found. To these delays the multitude submitted, with a patience and order which strongly marked the national character of a people whose resentment has always been the more deeply dangerous, that they will, without relaxing their determination of vengeance, submit with patience to all delays which are necessary to ensure its attainment. The multitude, therefore, received their magistrates with a loud cry, in which the thirst of revenge was announced, together with the deferential welcome to the patrons by whose direction they expected to obtain it in right and legal fashion.

While these accents of welcome still rung above the crowd, who now filled the whole adjacent streets, receiving and circulating a thousand varying reports, the fathers of the city caused the body to be raised and more closely examined; when it was instantly perceived, and the truth publicly announced, that not the armourer of the Wynd, so highly and, according to the esteemed qualities of the time, so justly popular among his fellow citizens, but a man of far less general estimation, though not without his own value in society, lay murdered before them—the brisk bonnet maker, Oliver Proudfoot. The resentment of the people had so much turned upon the general opinion that their frank and brave champion, Henry Gow, was the slaughtered person, that the contradiction of the report served to cool the general fury, although, if poor Oliver had been recognised at first, there is little doubt that the cry of vengeance would have been as unanimous, though

not probably so furious, as in the case of Henry Wynd. The first circulation of the unexpected intelligence even excited a smile among the crowd, so near are the confines of the ludicrous to those of the terrible.

"The murderers have without doubt taken him for Henry Smith," said Griffin, "which must have been a great comfort to him in the circumstances." But the arrival of other persons on the scene soon restored its deeply tragic character.

CHAPTER XIX.

*Who's that that rings the bell? Diablos, ho!
The town will rise.*

Othello, Act II. Scene III.

The wild rumours which flew through the town, speedily followed by the tolling of the alarm bells spread general consternation. The nobles and knights, with their followers, gathered in different places of rendezvous, where a defence could best be maintained; and the alarm reached the royal residence where the young prince was one of the first to appear, to assist, if necessary, in the defence of the old king. The scene of the preceding night ran in his recollection; and, remembering the bloodstained figure of Bonthron, he conceived, though indistinctly, that the ruffian's action had been connected with this uproar. The subsequent and more interesting discourse with Sir John Ramorny had, however, been of such an impressive nature as to obliterate all traces of what he had vaguely heard of the bloody act of the assassin, excepting a confused recollection that some one or other had been slain. It was chiefly on his father's account that he had assumed arms with his household train, who, clad in bright armour, and bearing lances in their hands, made now a figure very different from that of the preceding night, when they appeared as intoxicated Bacchanalians. The kind old monarch received this mark of filial attachment with tears of gratitude, and proudly presented his son to his brother Albany, who entered shortly afterwards. He took them each by the hand.

"Now are we three Stuarts," he said, "as inseparable as the holy trefoil; and, as they say the wearer of that sacred herb mocks at magical delusion, so we, while we are true to each other, may set malice and enmity at defiance."

The brother and son kissed the kind hand which pressed theirs, while Robert III expressed his confidence in their affection. The kiss of the youth was, for the time, sincere; that of the brother was the salute of the apostate Judas.

In the mean time the bell of St. John's church alarmed, amongst others, the inhabitants of Curfew Street. In the house of Simon Glover, old Dorothy Glover, as she was called (for she also took name from the trade she practised, under her master's auspices), was the first to catch the sound. Though somewhat deaf upon ordinary occasions, her ear for bad news was as sharp as a kite's scent for carrion; for Dorothy, otherwise an industrious, faithful, and even affectionate creature, had that strong appetite for collecting and retailing sinister intelligence which is often to be marked in the lower classes. Little accustomed to be listened to, they love the attention which a tragic tale ensures to the bearer, and enjoy, perhaps, the temporary equality to which misfortune reduces those who are ordinarily accounted their superiors. Dorothy had no sooner possessed herself of a slight packet of the rumours which were flying abroad than she bounced into her master's bedroom, who had taken the privilege of age and the holiety to sleep longer than usual.

"There he lies, honest man," said Dorothy, half in a screeching and half in a wailing tone of sympathy—"there he lies; his best friend slain, and he knowing as little about it as the babe new born, that kens not life from death."

"How now!" said the glover, starting up out of his bed. "What is the matter, old woman? Is my daughter well?"

"Old woman!" said Dorothy, who, having her fish hooked, chose to let him play a little. "I am not so old," said she, flouncing out of the room, "as to bide in the place till a man rises from his naked bed—"

And presently she was heard at a distance in the parlour beneath, melodiously singing to the scrubbing of her own broom.

"Dorothy—screech owl—devil—say but my daughter is well!"

"I am well, my father," answered the Fair Maid of Perth, speaking from her bedroom, "perfectly well, but what, for Our Lady's sake, is the matter? The bells ring backward, and there is shrieking and crying in the streets."

"I will presently know the cause. Here, Conachar, come speedily and tie my points. I forgot—the Highland loon is far beyond Forthingall. Patience, daughter, I will presently bring you news."

"Ye need not hurry yourself for that, Simon Glover," quoth the obdurate old woman; "the best and the worst of it may be tauld before you could hobble over your door stane. I ken the haill story abroad; 'for,' thought I, 'our goodman is so wilful that he'll be for banging out to the tuilzie, be the cause what it like; and sae I maun e'en stir my shanks, and learn the cause of all this, or he will hae his auld nose in the midst of it, and maybe get it nipt off before he knows what for.'"

"And what is the news, then, old woman?" said the impatient glover, still busying himself with the hundred points or latchets which were the means of attaching the doublet to the hose.

Dorothy suffered him to proceed in his task till she conjectured it must be nearly accomplished; and foresaw that; if she told not the secret herself, her master would be abroad to seek in person for the cause of the disturbance. She, therefore, halloo'd out: "Aweel—aweel, ye canna say it is me fault, if you hear ill news before you have been at the morning mass. I would have kept it from ye till ye had heard the priest's word; but since you must hear it, you have e'en lost the truest friend that ever gave hand to another, and Perth maun mourn for the bravest burgher that ever took a blade in hand!"

"Harry Smith! Harry Smith!" exclaimed the father and the daughter at once.

"Oh, ay, there ye hae it at last," said Dorothy; "and whose fault was it but your ain? ye made such a piece of work about his companying with a glee woman, as if he had companied with a Jewess!"

Dorothy would have gone on long enough, but her master exclaimed to his daughter, who was still in her own apartment: "It is nonsense, Catharine—all the dotage of an old fool. No such thing has happened. I will bring you the true tidings in a moment," and snatching up his staff, the old man hurried out past Dorothy and into the street, where the throng of people were rushing towards the High Street.

Dorothy, in the mean time, kept muttering to herself: "Thy father is a wise man, take his ain word for it. He will come next by some scathe in the hobbleshow, and then it will be, 'Dorothy, get the lint,' and 'Dorothy, spread the plaster;' but now it is nothing but nonsense, and a lie, and impossibility, that can come out of Dorothy's mouth. Impossible! Does auld Simon think that Harry Smith's head was as hard as his stithy, and a haill clan of Highlandmen dinging at him?"

Here she was interrupted by a figure like an angel, who came wandering by her with wild eye, cheek deadly pale, hair dishevelled, and an apparent want of consciousness, which terrified the old woman out of her discontented humour.

"Our Lady bless my bairn!" said she. "What look you sae wild for?"

"Did you not say some one was dead?" said Catharine, with a frightful uncertainty of utterance, as if her organs of speech and hearing served her but imperfectly.

"Dead, hinny! Ay—ay, dead enough; ye'll no hae him to gloom at ony mair."

"Dead!" repeated Catharine, still with the same uncertainty of voice and manner. "Dead—slain—and by Highlanders?"

"I'se warrant by Highlanders, the lawless loons. Wha is it else that kills maist of the folks about, unless now and than when the burghers take a tirrvie, and kill ane another, or whiles that the knights and nobles shed blood? But I'se uphauld it's been the Highlandmen this bout. The man was no in Perth, laird or loon, durst have faced Henry Smith man to man. There's been sair odds against him; ye'll see that when it's looked into."

"Highlanders!" repeated Catharine, as if haunted by some idea which troubled her senses. "Highlanders! Oh, Conachar—Conachar!"

"Indeed, and I dare say you have lighted on the very man, Catharine. They quarrelled, as you saw, on the St. Valentine's Even, and had a warstle. A Highlandman has a long memory for the like of that. Gie him a cuff at Martinmas, and his cheek will be tingling at Whitsunday. But what could have brought down the lang legged loons to do their bloody wark within burgh?"

"Woe's me, it was I," said Catharine—"it was I brought the Highlanders down—I that sent for Conachar—ay, they have lain in wait—but it was I that brought them within reach of their prey. But I will see with my own eyes—and then—something we will do. Say to my father I will be back anon."

"Are ye distraught, lassie?" shouted Dorothy, as Catharine made past her towards the street door. "You would not gang into the street with the hair hanging down your haffets in that guise, and you kenn'd for the Fair Maid of Perth? Mass, but she's out in the street, come o't what like, and the auld Glover will be as mad as if I could withhold her, will she nill she, flyte she fling she. This is a brave morning for an Ash Wednesday! What's to be done? If I were to seek my master among the multitude, I were like to be crushed beneath their feet, and little moan made for the old woman. And am I to run after Catharine, who ere this is out of sight, and far lighter of foot than I am? so I will just down the gate to Nicol Barber's, and tell him a' about it."

While the trusty Dorothy was putting her prudent resolve into execution, Catharine ran through the streets of Perth in a manner which at another moment would have brought on her the attention of every one who saw her hurrying on with a reckless impetuosity wildly and widely different from the ordinary decency and composure of her step and manner, and without the plaid, scarf, or mantle which "women of good," of fair character and decent rank, universally carried around them, when they went abroad. But, distracted as the people were, every one inquiring or telling the cause of the tumult, and most recounting it different ways, the negligence of her dress and discomposure of her manner made no impression on any one; and she was suffered to press forward on the path she had chosen without attracting more notice than the other females who, stirred by anxious curiosity or fear, had come out to inquire the cause of an alarm so general—it might be to seek for friends for whose safety they were interested.

As Catharine passed along, she felt all the wild influence of the agitating scene, and it was with difficulty she forbore from repeating the cries of lamentation and alarm which were echoed around her. In the mean time, she rushed rapidly on, embarrassed like one in a dream, with a strange sense of dreadful calamity, the precise nature of which she was unable to define, but which implied the terrible consciousness that the man who loved her so fondly, whose good qualities she so highly esteemed, and whom she now felt to be dearer than perhaps she would before have acknowledged to her own bosom, was murdered, and most probably by her means. The connexion betwixt Henry's supposed death and the descent of Conachar and his followers, though adopted by her in a moment of extreme and engrossing emotion, was sufficiently probable to have been received for truth, even if her understanding had been at leisure to examine its credibility. Without knowing what she sought except the general desire to know the worst of the dreadful report, she hurried forward to the very spot which of all others her feelings of the preceding day would have induced her to avoid.

Who would, upon the evening of Shrovetide, have persuaded the proud, the timid, the shy, the rigidly decorous Catharine Glover that before mass on Ash Wednesday she should rush through the streets of Perth, making her way amidst tumult and confusion, with her hair unbound and her dress disarranged, to seek the house of that same lover who, she had reason to believe, had so grossly and indelicately neglected and affronted her as to pursue a low and licentious amour? Yet so it was; and her eagerness taking, as if by instinct, the road which was most free, she avoided the High Street, where the pressure was greatest, and reached the wynd by the narrow lanes on the northern skirt of the town, through which Henry Smith had formerly escorted Louise. But even these comparatively lonely passages were now astir with passengers, so general was the alarm. Catharine Glover made her way through them, however, while such as observed her looked on each other and shook their heads in sympathy with her distress. At length, without any distinct idea of her own purpose, she stood before her lover's door and knocked for admittance.

The silence which succeeded the echoing of her hasty summons increased the alarm which had induced her to take this desperate measure.

"Open—open, Henry!" she cried. "Open, if you yet live! Open, if you would not find Catharine Glover dead upon your threshold!"

As she cried thus frantically to ears which she was taught to believe were stopped by death, the lover she invoked opened the door in person, just in time to prevent her sinking on the ground. The extremity of his ecstatic joy upon an occasion so unexpected was qualified only by the wonder which forbade him to believe it real, and by his alarm at the closed eyes, half opened and blanched lips, total absence of complexion, and apparently total cessation of breathing.

Henry had remained at home, in spite of the general alarm, which had reached his ears for a considerable time, fully determined to put himself in the way of no brawls that he could avoid; and it was only in compliance with a summons from the magistrates, which, as a burgher, he was bound to obey, that, taking his sword and a spare buckler from the wall, he was about to go forth, for the first time unwillingly, to pay his service, as his tenure bound him.

"It is hard," he said, "to be put forward in all the town feuds, when the fighting work is so detestable to Catharine. I am sure there are enough of wenches in Perth that say to their gallants, 'Go out, do your devoir bravely, and win your lady's grace'; and yet they send not for their lovers, but for me, who cannot do the duties of a man to protect a minstrel woman, or of a burgess who fights for the honour of his town, but this peevish Catharine uses me as if I were a brawler and bordeller!" Such were the thoughts which occupied his mind, when, as he opened his door to issue forth, the person dearest to his thoughts, but whom he certainly least expected to see, was present to his eyes, and dropped into his arms.

His mixture of surprise, joy, and anxiety did not deprive him of the presence of mind which the occasion demanded. To place Catharine Glover in safety, and recall her to herself was to be thought of before rendering obedience to the summons of the magistrates, however pressingly that had been delivered. He carried his lovely burden, as light as a feather, yet more precious than the same quantity of purest gold, into a small bedchamber which had been his mother's. It was the most fit for an invalid, as it looked into the garden, and was separated from the noise of the tumult.

"Here, Nurse—Nurse Shoolbred—come quick—come for death and life—here is one wants thy help!"

Up trotted the old dame. "If it should but prove any one that will keep thee out of the scuffle," for she also had been aroused by the noise; but what was her astonishment when, placed in love and reverence on the bed of her late mistress, and supported by the athletic arms of her foster son, she saw the apparently lifeless form of the Fair Maid of Perth.

"Catharine Glover!" she said; "and, Holy Mother, a dying woman, as it would seem!"

"Not so, old woman," said her foster son: "the dear heart throbs—the sweet breath comes and returns! Come thou, that may aid her more meetly than I—bring water—essences—whatever thy old skill can devise. Heaven did not place her in my arms to die, but to live for herself and me!"

With an activity which her age little promised, Nurse Shoolbred collected the means of restoring animation; for, like many women of the period, she understood what was to be done in such cases, nay, possessed a knowledge of treating wounds of an ordinary description, which the warlike propensities of her foster son kept in pretty constant exercise.

"Come now," she said, "son Henry, unfold your arms from about my patient, though she is worth the pressing, and set thy hands at freedom to help me with what I want. Nay, I will not insist on your quitting her hand, if you will beat the palm gently, as the fingers uncloset their clenched grasp."

"I beat her slight, beautiful hand!" said Henry; "you were as well bid me beat a glass cup with a forehammer as tap her fair palm with my horn hard fingers. But the fingers do unfold, and we will find a better way than beating"; and he applied his lips to the pretty hand, whose motion indicated returning sensation. One or two deep sighs succeeded, and the Fair Maid of Perth opened her eyes, fixed them on her lover, as he kneeled by the bedside, and again sunk back on the pillow. As she withdrew not her hand from her lover's hold or from his grasp, we must in charity believe that the return to consciousness was not so complete as to make her aware that he abused the advantage, by pressing it alternately to his lips and his bosom. At the same time we are compelled to own that the blood was colouring in her cheek, and that her breathing was deep and regular, for a minute or two during this relapse.

The noise at the door began now to grow much louder, and Henry was called for by all his various names of Smith. Gow, and Hal of the Wynd, as heathens used to summon their deities by different epithets. At last, like Portuguese Catholics when exhausted with entreating their saints, the crowd without had recourse to vituperative exclamations.

"Out upon you, Henry! You are a disgraced man, man sworn to your burgher oath, and a traitor to the Fair City, unless you come instantly forth!"

It would seem that nurse Shoolbred's applications were now so far successful that Catharine's senses were in some measure restored; for, turning her face more towards that of her lover than her former posture permitted, she let her right hand fall on his shoulder, leaving her left still in his possession, and seeming slightly to detain him, while she whispered: "Do not go, Henry—stay with me; they will kill thee, these men of blood."

It would seem that this gentle invocation, the result of finding the lover alive whom she expected to have only recognised as a corpse, though it was spoken so low as scarcely to be intelligible, had more effect to keep Henry Wynd in his present posture than the repeated summons of many voices from without had to bring him downstairs.

"Mass, townsmen," cried one hardy citizen to his companions, "the saucy smith but jests with us! Let us into the house, and bring him out by the lug and the horn." "Take care what you are doing," said a more cautious assailant. "The man that presses on Henry Gow's retirement may go into his house with sound bones, but will return with ready made work for the surgeon. But here comes one has good right to do our errand to him, and make the recreant hear reason on both sides of his head."

The person of whom this was spoken was no other than Simon Glover himself. He had arrived at the fatal spot where the unlucky bonnet maker's body was lying, just in time to discover, to his great relief, that when it was turned with the face upwards by Bailie Craigdallie's orders, the features of the poor braggart Proudfoot were recognised, when the crowd expected to behold those of their favorite champion, Henry Smith. A laugh, or something approaching to one, went among those who remembered how hard Oliver had struggled to obtain the character of a fighting man, however foreign to his nature and disposition, and remarked now that he had met with a mode of death much better suited to his pretensions than to his temper. But this tendency to ill timed mirth, which savoured of the rudeness of the times, was at once hushed by the voice, and cries, and exclamations of a woman who struggled through the crowd, screaming at the same time, "Oh, my husband—my husband!"

Room was made for the sorrower, who was followed by two or three female friends. Maudie Proudfoot had been hitherto only noticed as a good looking, black haired woman, believed to be "dink" and disdainful to those whom she thought meaner or poorer than herself, and lady and empress over her late husband, whom she quickly caused to lower his crest when she chanced to hear him crowing out of season. But now, under the influence of powerful passion, she assumed a far more imposing character.

"Do you laugh," she said, "you unworthy burghers of Perth, because one of your own citizens has poured his blood into the kennel? or do you laugh because the deadly lot has lighted on my husband? How has he deserved this? Did he not maintain an honest house by his own industry, and keep a creditable board, where the sick had welcome and the poor had relief? Did he not lend to those who wanted, stand by his neighbours as a friend, keep counsel and do justice like a magistrate?"

"It is true—it is true," answered the assembly; "his blood is our blood as much as if it were Henry Gow's."

"You speak truth, neighbours," said Bailie Craigdallie; "and this feud cannot be patched up as the former was: citizen's blood must not flow unavenged down our kennels, as if it were ditch water, or we shall soon see the broad Tay crimsoned with it. But this blow was never meant for the poor man on whom it has unhappily fallen. Every one knew what Oliver Proudfoot was, how wide he would speak, and how little he would do. He has Henry Smith's buff coat, target, and head piece. All the town know them as well as I do: there is no doubt on't. He had the trick, as you know, of trying to imitate the smith in most things. Some one, blind with rage, or perhaps through liquor, has stricken the innocent bonnet maker, whom no man either hated or feared, or indeed cared either much or little about, instead of the stout smith, who has twenty feuds upon his hands."

"What then, is to be done, bailie?" cried the multitude.

"That, my friends, your magistrates will determine for you, as we shall instantly meet together when Sir Patrick Charteris cometh here, which must be anon. Meanwhile, let the chirurgeon Dwining examine that poor piece of clay, that he may tell us how he came by his fatal death; and then let the corpse be decently swathed in a clean shroud, as becomes an honest citizen, and placed before the high altar in the church of St. John, the patron of the Fair City. Cease all clamour and noise, and every defensible man of you, as you would wish well to the Fair Town, keep his weapons in readiness, and be prepared to assemble on the High Street at the tolling of the common bell from the townhouse, and we will either revenge the death of our fellow citizen, or else we shall take such fortune as Heaven will send us. Meanwhile avoid all quarrelling With the knights and their followers till we know the innocent from the guilty. But wherefore tarries this knave Smith? He is ready enough in tumults when his presence is not wanted, and lags he now when his presence may serve the Fair City? What ails him, doth any one know? Hath he been upon the frolic last Fastern's Even?"

"Rather he is sick or sullen, Master Bailie," said one of the city's mairs, or sergeants; "for though he is within door, as his knaves report, yet he will neither answer to us nor admit us."

"So please your worship, Master Bailie," said Simon Glover, "I will go myself to fetch Henry Smith. I have some little difference to make up with him. And blessed be Our Lady, who hath so ordered it that I find him alive, as a quarter of an hour since I could never have expected!"

"Bring the stout smith to the council house," said the bailie, as a mounted yeoman pressed through the crowd and whispered in his ear, "Here is a good fellow who says the Knight of Kinfauns is entering the port."

Such was the occasion of Simon Glover presenting himself at the house of Henry Gow at the period already noticed.

Unrestrained by the considerations of doubt and hesitation which influenced others, he repaired to the parlour; and having overheard the bustling of Dame Shoolbred, he took the privilege of intimacy to ascend to the bedroom, and, with the slight apology of "I crave your pardon, good neighbour," he opened the door and entered the apartment, where a singular and unexpected sight awaited him. At the sound of his voice, May Catharine experienced a revival much speedier than Dame Shoolbred's restoratives had been able to produce, and the paleness of her complexion changed into a deep glow of the most lovely red. She pushed her lover from her with both her hands, which, until this minute, her want of consciousness, or her affection, awakened by the events of the morning, had well nigh abandoned to his caresses. Henry Smith, bashful as we know him, stumbled as he rose up; and none of the party were without a share of confusion, excepting Dame Shoolbred, who was glad to make some pretext to turn her back to the others, in order that she might enjoy a laugh at their expense, which she felt herself utterly unable to restrain, and in which the glover, whose surprise, though great, was of short duration, and of a joyful character, sincerely joined.

"Now, by good St. John," he said, "I thought I had seen a sight this morning that would cure me of laughter, at least till Lent was over; but this would make me curl my cheek if I were dying. Why, here stands honest Henry Smith, who was lamented as dead, and toll'd out for from every steeple in town, alive, merry, and, as it seems from his ruddy complexion, as like to live as any man in Perth. And here is my precious daughter, that yesterday would speak of nothing but the wickedness of the wights that haunt profane sports and protect glee maidens. Ay, she who set St. Valentine and St. Cupid both at defiance—here she is, turned a glee maiden herself, for what I can see! Truly, I am glad to see that you, my good Dame Shoolbred, who give way to no disorder, have been of this loving party."

"You do me wrong, my dearest father," said Catharine, as if about to weep. "I came here with far different expectations than you suppose. I only came because—because—"

"Because you expected to find a dead lover," said her father, "and you have found a living one, who can receive the tokens of your regard, and return them. Now, were it not a sin, I could find in my heart to thank Heaven that thou hast been surprised at last into owning thyself a woman. Simon Glover is not worthy to have an absolute saint for his daughter. Nay, look not so piteously, nor expect condolence from me! Only I will try not to look merry, if you will be pleased to stop your tears, or confess them to be tears of joy."

"If I were to die for such a confession," said poor Catharine, "I could not tell what to call them. Only believe, dear father, and let Henry believe, that I would never have come hither; unless—unless—"

"Unless you had thought that Henry could not come to you," said her father. "And now, shake hands in peace and concord, and agree as Valentines should. Yesterday was Shrovetide, Henry; We will hold that thou hast confessed thy follies, hast obtained absolution, and art relieved of all the guilt thou stoodest charged with."

"Nay touching that, father Simon," said the smith, "now that you are cool enough to hear me, I can swear on the Gospels, and I can call my nurse, Dame Shoolbred, to witness—"

"Nay—nay," said the glover, "but wherefore rake up differences which should all be forgotten?"

"Hark ye, Simon!—Simon Glover!" This was now echoed from beneath.

"True, son Smith," said the glover, seriously, "we have other work in hand. You and I must to the council instantly. Catharine shall remain here with Dame Shoolbred, who will take charge of her till we return; and then, as the town is in misrule, we two, Harry, will carry her home, and they will be bold men that cross us."

"Nay, my dear father," said Catharine, with a smile, "now you are taking Oliver Proudfoote's office. That doughty burgher is Henry's brother at arms."

Her father's countenance grew dark.

"You have spoke a stinging word, daughter; but you know not what has happened. Kiss him, Catharine, in token of forgiveness."

"Not so," said Catharine; "I have done him too much grace already. When he has seen the errant damsel safe home, it will be time enough to claim his reward."

"Meantime," said Henry, "I will claim, as your host, what you will not allow me on other terms."

He folded the fair maiden in his arms, and was permitted to take the salute which she had refused to bestow.

As they descended the stair together, the old man laid his hand on the smith's shoulder, and said: "Henry, my dearest wishes are fulfilled; but it is the pleasure of the saints that it should be in an hour of difficulty and terror."

"True," said the smith; "but thou knowest, father, if our riots be frequent at Perth, at least they seldom last long."

Then, opening a door which led from the house into the smithy, "here, comrades," he cried, "Anton, Cuthbert, Dingwell, and Ringen! Let none of you stir from the place till I return. Be as true as the weapons I have taught you to forge: a French crown and a Scotch merrymaking for you, if you obey my command. I leave a mighty treasure in your charge. Watch the doors well, let little Jannekin scout up and down the wynd, and have your arms ready if any one approaches the house. Open the doors to no man till father Glover or I return: it concerns my life and happiness."

The strong, swarthy giants to whom he spoke answered: "Death to him who attempts it!"

"My Catharine is now as safe," said he to her father, "as if twenty men garrisoned a royal castle in her cause. We shall pass most quietly to the council house by walking through the garden."

He led the way through a little orchard accordingly, where the birds, which had been sheltered and fed during the winter by the good natured artisan, early in the season as it was, were saluting the precarious smiles of a February sun with a few faint and interrupted attempts at melody.

"Hear these minstrels, father," said the smith; "I laughed at them this morning in the bitterness of my heart, because the little wretches sung, with so much of winter before them. But now, methinks, I could bear a blythe chorus, for I have my Valentine as they have theirs; and whatever ill may lie before me for tomorrow, I am today the happiest man in Perth, city or county, burgh or landward."

"Yet I must allay your joy," said the old glover, "though, Heaven knows, I share it. Poor Oliver Proudfoote, the inoffensive fool that you and I knew so well, has been found this morning dead in the streets."

"Only dead drunk, I trust?" said the smith; "nay, a candle and a dose of matrimonial advice will bring him to life again."

"No, Henry—no. He is slain—slain with a battle axe or some such weapon."

"Impossible!" replied the smith; "he was light footed enough, and would not for all Perth have trusted to his hands, when he could extricate himself by his heels."

"No choice was allowed him. The blow was dealt in the very back of his head; he who struck must have been a shorter man than himself, and used a horseman's battle axe, or some such weapon, for a Lochaber axe must have struck the upper part of his head. But there he lies dead, brained, I may say, by a most frightful wound."

"This is inconceivable," said Henry Wynd. "He was in my house at midnight, in a morrice's habit; seemed to have been drinking, though not to excess. He told me a tale of having been beset by revellers, and being in danger; but, alas! you know the man—I deemed it was a swaggering fit, as he sometimes took when he was in liquor; and, may the Merciful Virgin forgive me! I let him go without company, in which I did him inhuman wrong. Holy St. John be my witness! I would have gone with any helpless creature; and far more with him, with whom I have so often sat at the same board and drunken of the same cup. Who, of the race of man, could have thought of harming a creature so simple and so unoffending, excepting by his idle vaunts?"

"Henry, he wore thy head piece, thy buff coat; thy target. How came he by these?"

"Why, he demanded the use of them for the night, and I was ill at ease, and well pleased to be rid of his company, having kept no holiday, and being determined to keep none, in respect of our misunderstanding."

"It is the opinion of Bailie Craigdallie and all our sagest counsellors that the blow was intended for yourself, and that it becomes you to prosecute the due vengeance of our fellow citizen, who received the death which was meant for you."

The smith was for some time silent. They had now left the garden, and were walking in a lonely lane, by which they meant to approach the council house of the burgh without being exposed to observation or idle inquiry.

"You are silent, my son, yet we two have much to speak of," said Simon Glover. "Bethink thee that this widowed woman, Maudlin, if she should see cause to bring a charge against any one for the wrong done to her and her orphan children, must support it by a champion, according to law and custom; for, be the murderer who he may, we know enough of these followers of the nobles to be assured that the party suspected will appeal to the combat, in derision, perhaps, of we whom they will call the cowardly burghers. While we are men with blood in our veins, this must not be, Henry Wynd."

"I see where you would draw me, father," answered Henry, dejectedly, "and St. John knows I have heard a summons to battle as willingly as war horse ever heard the trumpet. But bethink you, father, how I have lost Catharine's favour repeatedly, and have been driven well nigh to despair of ever regaining it, for being, if I may say so, even too ready a man of my hands. And here are all our quarrels made up, and the hopes that seemed this morning removed beyond earthly prospect have become nearer and brighter than ever; and must I with the dear one's kiss of forgiveness on my lips, engage in a new scene of violence, which you are well aware will give her the deepest offence?"

"It is hard for me to advise you, Henry," said Simon; "but this I must ask you: Have you, or have you not, reason to think that this poor unfortunate Oliver has been mistaken for you?"

"I fear it too much," said Henry. "He was thought something like me, and the poor fool had studied to ape my gestures and manner of walking, nay the very airs which I have the trick of whistling, that he might increase a resemblance which has cost him dear. I have ill willers enough, both in burgh and landward, to owe me a shrewd turn; and he, I think, could have none such."

"Well, Henry, I cannot say but my daughter will be offended. She has been much with Father Clement, and has received notions about peace and forgiveness which methinks suit ill with a country where the laws cannot protect us, unless we have spirit to protect ourselves. If you determine for the combat, I will do my best to persuade her to look on the matter as the other good womanhood in the burgh will do; and if you resolve to let the matter rest—the man who has lost his life for yours remaining unavenged, the widow and the orphans without any reparation for the loss of a husband and father—I will then do you the justice to think that I, at least, ought not to think the worse of you for your patience, since it was adopted for love of my child. But, Henry, we must in that case remove ourselves from bonny St. Johnston, for here we will be but a disgraced family."

Henry groaned deeply, and was silent for an instant, then replied: "I would rather be dead than dishonoured, though I should never see her again! Had it been yester evening, I would have met the best blade among these men at arms as blythely as ever I danced at a maypole. But today, when she had first as good as said, 'Henry Smith, I love thee!' Father Glover; it is very hard. Yet it is all my own fault. This poor unhappy Oliver! I ought to have allowed him the shelter of my roof, when he prayed me in his agony of fear; or, had I gone with him, I should then have prevented or shared his fate. But I taunted him, ridiculed him, loaded him

with maledictions, though the saints know they were uttered in idle peevishness of impatience. I drove him out from my doors, whom I knew so helpless, to take the fate which was perhaps intended for me. I must avenge him, or be dishonoured for ever. See, father, I have been called a man hard as the steel I work in. Does burnished steel ever drop tears like these? Shame on me that I should shed them!"

"It is no shame, my dearest son," said Simon; "thou art as kind as brave, and I have always known it. There is yet a chance for us. No one may be discovered to whom suspicion attaches, and where none such is found, the combat cannot take place. It is a hard thing to wish that the innocent blood may not be avenged. But if the perpetrator of this foul murder be hidden for the present, thou wilt be saved from the task of seeking that vengeance which Heaven doubtless will take at its own proper time."

As they spoke thus, they arrived at the point of the High Street where the council house was situated. As they reached the door, and made their way through the multitude who thronged the street, they found the avenues guarded by a select party of armed burghers, and about fifty spears belonging to the Knight of Kinfauns, who, with his allies the Grays, Blairs, Moncrieffs, and others, had brought to Perth a considerable body of horse, of which these were a part. So soon as the glover and smith presented themselves, they were admitted to the chamber in which the magistrates were assembled.

CHAPTER XX.

*A woman waits for justice at the gate,
A widow'd woman, wan and desolate.*

Bertha.

The council room of Perth presented a singular spectacle. In a gloomy apartment, ill and inconveniently lighted by two windows of different form and of unequal size, were assembled, around a large oaken table, a group of men, of whom those who occupied the higher seats were merchants, that is, guild brethren, or shopkeepers, arrayed in decent dresses becoming their station, but most of them bearing, like, the Regent York, "signs of war around their aged necks"—gorgets, namely, and baldricks, which sustained their weapons. The lower places around the table were occupied by mechanics and artisans, the presidents, or deacons, as they were termed, of the working classes, in their ordinary clothes, somewhat better arranged than usual. These, too, wore pieces of armour of various descriptions. Some had the blackjack, or doublets covered with small plates of iron of a lozenge shape, which, secured through the upper angle, hung in rows above each [other], and which, swaying with the motion of the wearer's person, formed a secure defence to the body. Others had buff coats, which, as already mentioned, could resist the blow of a sword, and even a lance's point, unless propelled with great force. At the bottom of the table, surrounded as it was with this varied assembly, sat Sir Louis Lundin; no military man, but a priest and parson of St. John's, arrayed in his canonical dress, and having his pen and ink before him. He was town clerk of the burgh, and, like all the priests of the period (who were called from that circumstance the Pope's knights), received the honourable title of Dominus, contracted into Dom, or Dan, or translated into Sir, the title of reverence due to the secular chivalry.

On an elevated seat at the head of the council board was placed Sir Patrick Charteris, in complete armour brightly burnished—a singular contrast to the motley mixture of warlike and peaceful attire exhibited by the burghers, who were only called to arms occasionally. The bearing of the provost, while it completely admitted the intimate connexion which mutual interests had created betwixt himself, the burgh, and the magistracy, was at the same time calculated to assert the superiority which, in virtue of gentle blood and chivalrous rank, the opinions of the age assigned to him over the members of the assembly in which he presided. Two squires stood behind him, one of them holding the knight's pennon, and another his shield, bearing his armorial distinctions, being a hand holding a dagger, or short sword, with the proud motto, "This is my charter." A handsome page displayed the long sword of his master, and another bore his lance; all which chivalrous emblems and appurtenances were the more scrupulously exhibited, that the dignitary to whom they belonged was engaged in discharging the office of a burgh magistrate. In his own person the Knight of Kinfauns appeared to affect something of state and stiffness which did not naturally pertain to his frank and jovial character.

"So you are come at length, Henry Smith and Simon Glover," said the provost. "Know that you have kept us waiting for your attendance. Should it so chance again while we occupy this place, we will lay such a fine on you as you will have small pleasure in paying. Enough—make no excuses. They are not asked now, and another time they will not be admitted. Know, sirs, that our reverend clerk hath taken down in writing, and at full length, what I will tell you in brief, that you may see what is to be required of you, Henry Smith, in particular. Our late fellow citizen, Oliver Proudfoot, hath been found dead in the High Street, close by the entrance into the wynd. It seemeth he was slain by a heavy blow with a short axe, dealt from behind and at unawares; and the act by which he fell can only be termed a deed of foul and forethought murder. So much for the crime. The criminal can only be indicated by circumstances. It is recorded in the protocol of the Reverend Sir Louis Lundin, that divers well reported witnesses saw our deceased citizen, Oliver Proudfoot, till a late period accompanying the entry of the morrice dancers, of whom he was one, as far as the house of Simon Glover, in Curfew Street, where they again played their pageant. It is also manifested that at this place he separated from the rest of the band, after some discourse with Simon Glover, and made an appointment to meet with the others of his company at the sign of the Griffin, there to conclude the holiday. Now, Simon, I demand of you whether this be truly stated, so far as you know? and further, what was the purport of the defunct Oliver Proudfoot's discourse with you?"

"My Lord Provost and very worshipful Sir Patrick," answered Simon Glover, "you and this honourable council shall know that, touching certain reports which had been made of the conduct of Henry Smith, some quarrel had arisen between myself and another of my family and the said Smith here present. Now, this our poor fellow citizen, Oliver Proudfoot, having been active in spreading these reports, as indeed his element lay in such gossiping, some words passed betwixt him and me on the subject; and, as I think, he left me with the purpose of visiting Henry Smith, for he broke off from the morrice dancers, promising, as it seems, to meet them, as your honour has said, at the sign of the Griffin, in order to conclude the evening. But what he actually did, I know not, as I never again saw him in life."

"It is enough," said Sir Patrick, "and agrees with all that we have heard. Now, worthy sirs, we next find our poor fellow citizen environed by a set of revellers and maskers who had assembled in the High Street, by whom he was shamefully ill treated, being compelled to kneel down in the street, and there to quaff huge quantities of liquor against his inclination, until at length he escaped from them by flight. This violence was accomplished with drawn swords, loud shouts, and imprecations, so as to attract the attention of several persons, who, alarmed by the tumult, looked out from their windows, as well as of one or two passengers, who, keeping aloof from the light of the torches, lest they also had been maltreated, beheld the usage which our fellow citizen received in the High Street of the burgh. And although these revellers were disguised, and used vizards, yet their disguises were well known, being a set of quaint masking habits prepared some weeks ago by command of Sir John Ramorny, Master of the Horse to his Royal Highness the Duke of Rothsay, Prince Royal of Scotland."

A low groan went through the assembly.

"Yes, so it is, brave burghers," continued Sir Patrick; "our inquiries have led us into conclusions both melancholy and terrible. But as no one can regret the point at which they seem likely to arrive more than I do, so no man living can dread its consequences less. It is even so, various artisans employed upon the articles have described the dresses prepared for Sir John Ramorny's mask as being exactly similar to those of the men by whom Oliver Proudfoot was observed to be maltreated. And one mechanic, being Wingfield the feather dresser, who saw the revellers when they had our fellow citizen within their hands, remarked that they wore the cinctures and coronals of painted feathers which he himself had made by the order of the Prince's master of horse.

"After the moment of his escape from these revellers, we lose all trace of Oliver' but we can prove that the maskers went to Sir John Ramorny's, where they were admitted, after some show of delay. It is rumoured that thou, Henry Smith, sawest our unhappy fellow citizen after he had been in the hands of these revellers. What is the truth of the matter?"

"He came to my house in the wynd," said Henry, "about half an hour before midnight; and I admitted him, something unwillingly, as he had been keeping carnival while I remained at home; and 'There is ill talk,' says the proverb, 'betwixt a full man and a fasting.'"

"And in which plight seemed he when thou didst admit him?" said the provost.

"He seemed," answered the smith, "out of breath, and talked repeatedly of having been endangered by revellers. I paid but small regard, for he was ever a timorous, chicken spirited, though well meaning, man, and I held that he was speaking more from fancy than reality. But I shall always account it for foul offence in myself that I did not give him my company, which he requested; and if I live, I will found masses for his soul, in expiation of my guilt."

"Did he describe those from whom he received the injury?" said the provost.

"Revellers in masking habits," replied Henry.

"And did he intimate his fear of having to do with them on his return?" again demanded Sir Patrick.

"He alluded particularly to his being waylaid, which I treated as visionary, having been able to see no one in the lane."

"Had he then no help from thee of any kind whatsoever?" said the provost.

"Yes, worshipful," replied the smith; "he exchanged his morrice dress for my head piece, buff coat, and target, which I hear were found upon his body; and I have at home his morrice cap and bells, with the jerkin and other things pertaining. He was to return my garb of fence, and get back his own masking suit this day, had the saints so permitted."

"You saw him not then afterwards?"

"Never, my lord."

"One word more," said the provost. "Have you any reason to think that the blow which slew Oliver Proudfeut was meant for another man?"

"I have," answered the smith; "but it is doubtful, and may be dangerous to add such a conjecture, which is besides only a supposition."

"Speak it out, on your burgher faith and oath. For whom, think you, was the blow meant?"

"If I must speak," replied Henry, "I believe Oliver Proudfeut received the fate which was designed for myself; the rather that, in his folly, Oliver spoke of trying to assume my manner of walking, as well as my dress."

"Have you feud with any one, that you form such an idea?" said Sir Patrick Charteris.

"To my shame and sin be it spoken, I have feud with Highland and Lowland, English and Scot, Perth and Angus. I do not believe poor Oliver had feud with a new hatched chicken. Alas! he was the more fully prepared for a sudden call!"

"Hark ye, smith," said the provost, "answer me distinctly: Is there cause of feud between the household of Sir John Ramorny and yourself?"

"To a certainty, my lord, there is. It is now generally said that Black Quentin, who went over Tay to Fife some days since, was the owner of the hand which was found in Couvrefew Street upon the eve of St. Valentine. It was I who struck off that hand with a blow of my broadsword. As this Black Quentin was a chamberlain of Sir John, and much trusted, it is like there must be feud between me and his master's dependants."

"It bears a likely front, smith," said Sir Patrick Charteris. "And now, good brothers and wise magistrates, there are two suppositions, each of which leads to the same conclusion. The maskers who seized our fellow citizen, and misused him in a manner of which his body retains some slight marks, may have met with their former prisoner as he returned homewards, and finished their ill usage by taking his life. He himself expressed to Henry Gow fears that this would be the case. If this be really true, one or more of Sir John Ramorny's attendants must have been the assassins. But I think it more likely that one or two of the revellers may have remained on the field, or returned to it, having changed perhaps their disguise, and that to those men (for Oliver Proudfeut, in his own personal appearance, would only have been a subject of sport) his apparition in the dress, and assuming, as he proposed to do, the manner, of Henry Smith, was matter of deep hatred; and that, seeing him alone, they had taken, as they thought, a certain and safe mode to rid themselves of an enemy so dangerous as all men know Henry Wynd is accounted by those that are his unfriends. The same train of reasoning, again, rests the guilt with the household of Sir John Ramorny. How think you, sirs? Are we not free to charge the crime upon them?"

The magistrates whispered together for several minutes, and then replied by the voice of Bailie Craigdallie: "Noble knight, and our worthy provost, we agree entirely in what your wisdom has spoken concerning this dark and bloody matter; nor do we doubt your sagacity in tracing to the fellowship and the company of John Ramorny of that ilk the villainy which hath been done to our deceased fellow citizen, whether in his own character and capacity or as mistaking him for our brave townsman, Henry of the Wynd. But Sir John, in his own behalf, and as the Prince's master of the horse, maintains an extensive household; and as, of course, the charge will be rebutted by a denial, we would ask how we shall proceed in that case. It is true, could we find law for firing the lodging, and putting all within it to the sword; the old proverb of 'Short rede, good rede,' might here apply; for a fouler household of defiers of God, destroyers of men, and debauchers of women are nowhere sheltered than are in Ramorny's band. But I doubt that this summary mode of execution would scarce be borne out by the laws; and no tittle of evidence which I have heard will tend to fix the crime on any single individual or individuals."

Before the provost could reply, the town clerk arose, and, stroking his venerable beard, craved permission to speak, which was instantly granted.

"Brethren," he said, "as well in our fathers' time as ours; hath God, on being rightly appealed to, condescended to make manifest the crimes of the guilty and the innocence of those who may have been rashly accused. Let us demand from our sovereign lord, King Robert, who, when the wicked do not interfere to pervert his good intentions, is as just and clement a prince as our annals can show in their long line, in the name of the Fair City, and of all the commons in Scotland, that he give us, after the fashion of our ancestors, the means of appealing to Heaven for light upon this dark murder, we will demand the proof by 'bier right,' often granted in the days of our sovereign's ancestors, approved of by bulls and decretals, and administered by the great Emperor Charlemagne in France, by King Arthur in Britain, and by Gregory the Great, and the mighty Achaius, in this our land of Scotland."

"I have heard of the bier right, Sir Louis," quoth the provost, "and I know we have it in our charters of the Fair City; but I am something ill learned in the ancient laws, and would pray you to inform us more distinctly of its nature."

"We will demand of the King," said Sir Louis Lundin, "my advice being taken, that the body of our murdered fellow citizen be transported into the High Church of St. John, and suitable masses said for the benefit of his soul and for the discovery of his foul murder. Meantime, we shall obtain an order that Sir John Ramorny give up a list of such of his household as were in Perth in the course of the night between Fastern's Even and this Ash Wednesday, and become bound to present them on a certain day and hour, to be early named, in the High Church of St. John, there one by one to pass before the bier of our murdered fellow citizen, and in the form prescribed to call upon God and His saints to bear witness that he is innocent of the acting, art or part, of the murder. And credit me, as has been indeed proved by numerous instances, that, if the murderer shall endeavour to shroud himself by making such an appeal, the antipathy which subsists between the dead body and the hand which dealt the fatal blow that divorced it from the soul will awaken some imperfect life, under the influence of which the veins of the dead man will pour forth at the fatal wounds the blood which has been so long stagnant in the veins. Or, to speak more certainly, it is the pleasure of Heaven, by some hidden agency which we cannot comprehend, to leave open this mode of discovering the wickedness of him who has defaced the image of his Creator."

"I have heard this law talked of," said Sir Patrick, "and it was enforced in the Bruce's time. This surely is no unfit period to seek, by such a mystic mode of inquiry, the truth to which no ordinary means can give us access, seeing that a general accusation of Sir John's household would full surely be met by a general denial. Yet I must crave farther of Sir Louis, our reverend town clerk, how we shall prevent the guilty person from escaping in the interim?"

"The burghers will maintain a strict watch upon the wall, drawbridges shall be raised and portcullises lowered, from sunset to sunrise, and strong patrols maintained through the night. This guard the burghers will willingly maintain, to secure against the escape of the murderer of their townsman."

The rest of the counsellors acquiesced, by word, sign, and look, in this proposal.

"Again," said the provost, "what if any one of the suspected household refuse to submit to the ordeal of bier right?"

"He may appeal to that of combat," said the reverend city scribe, "with an opponent of equal rank; because the accused person must have his choice, in the appeal to the judgment of God, by what ordeal he will be tried. But if he refuses both, he must be held as guilty, and so punished."

The sages of the council unanimously agreed with the opinion of their provost and town clerk, and resolved, in all formality, to petition the King, as a matter of right, that the murder of their fellow citizen should be inquired into according to this ancient form, which was held to manifest the truth, and received as matter of evidence in case of murder so late as towards the end of the 17th century. But before the meeting dissolved, Bailie Craigdallie thought it meet to inquire who was to be the champion of Maudie, or Magdalen, Proudpute and her two children.

"There need be little inquiry about that," said Sir Patrick Charteris; "we are men, and wear swords, which should be broken over the head of any one amongst us who will not draw it in behalf of the widow and orphans of our murdered fellow citizen, and in brave revenge of his death. If Sir John Ramorny shall personally resent the inquiry, Patrick Charteris of Kinfauns will do battle with him to the outrace, whilst horse and man may stand, or spear and blade hold together. But in case the challenger be of yeomanly degree, well wot I that Magdalen Proudpute may choose her own champion among the bravest burghers of Perth, and shame and dishonour were it to the Fair City for ever could she light upon one who were traitor and coward enough to say her nay! Bring her hither, that she may make her election."

Henry Smith heard this with a melancholy anticipation that the poor woman's choice would light upon him, and that his recent reconciliation with his mistress would be again dissolved, by his being engaged in a fresh quarrel, from which there lay no honourable means of escape, and which, in any other circumstances, he would have welcomed as a glorious opportunity of distinguishing himself, both in sight of the court and of the city. He was aware that, under the tuition of Father Clement, Catharine viewed the ordeal of battle rather as an insult to religion than an appeal to the Deity, and did not consider it as reasonable that superior strength of arm or skill of weapon should be resorted to as the proof of moral guilt or innocence. He had, therefore, much to fear from her peculiar opinions in this particular, refined as they were beyond those of the age she lived in.

While he thus suffered under these contending feelings, Magdalen, the widow of the slaughtered man, entered the court, wrapt in a deep mourning veil, and followed and supported by five or six women of good (that is, of respectability) dressed in the same melancholy attire. One of her attendants held an infant in her arms, the last pledge of poor Oliver's nuptial affections. Another led a little tottering creature of two years, or thereabouts, which looked with wonder and fear, sometimes on the black dress in which they had muffled him, and sometimes on the scene around him.

The assembly rose to receive the melancholy group, and saluted them with an expression of the deepest sympathy, which Magdalen, though the mate of poor Oliver, returned with an air of dignity, which she borrowed, perhaps, from the extremity of her distress. Sir Patrick Charteris then stepped forward, and with the courtesy of a knight to a female, and of a protector to an oppressed and injured widow, took the poor woman's hand, and explained to her briefly by what course the city had resolved to follow out the vengeance due for her husband's slaughter.

Having, with a softness and gentleness which did not belong to his general manner, ascertained that the unfortunate woman perfectly understood what was meant, he said aloud to the assembly: "Good citizens of Perth, and freeborn men of guild and craft, attend to what is about to pass, for it concerns your rights and privileges. Here stands Magdalen Proudpute, desirous to follow forth the revenge due for the death of her husband, foully murdered, as she sayeth, by Sir John Ramorny, Knight, of that ilk, and which she offers to prove, by the evidence of bier right, or by the body of a man. Therefore, I, Patrick Charteris, being a belted knight and freeborn gentleman, offer myself to do battle in her just quarrel, whilst man and horse may endure, if any one of my degree shall lift my glove. How say you, Magdalen Proudpute, will you accept me for your champion?"

The widow answered with difficulty: "I can desire none nobler."

Sir Patrick then took her right hand in his, and, kissing her forehead, for such was the ceremony, said solemnly: "So may God and St. John prosper me at my need, as I will do my devoir as your champion, knightly, truly, and manfully. Go now, Magdalen, and choose at your will among the burgesses of the Fair City, present or absent, any one upon whom you desire to rest your challenge, if he against whom you bring plaint shall prove to be beneath my degree."

All eyes were turned to Henry Smith, whom the general voice had already pointed out as in every respect the fittest to act as champion on the occasion. But the widow waited not for the general prompting of their looks. As soon as Sir Patrick had spoken, she crossed the floor to the place where, near the bottom of the table, the armourer stood among the men of his degree, and took him by the hand.

"Henry Gow, or Smith," she said, "good burgher and draftsman, my—my—"

"Husband," she would have said, but the word would not come forth: she was obliged to change the expression.

"He who is gone, loved and prized you over all men; therefore meet it is that thou shouldst follow out the quarrel of his widow and orphans."

If there had been a possibility, which in that age there was not, of Henry's rejecting or escaping from a trust for which all men seemed to destine him, every wish and idea of retreat was cut off when the widow began to address him; and a command from Heaven could hardly have made a stronger impression than did the appeal of the unfortunate Magdalen. Her allusion to his intimacy with the deceased moved him to the soul. During Oliver's life, doubtless, there had been a strain of absurdity in his excessive predilection for Henry, which, considering how very different they were in character, had in it something ludicrous. But all this was now forgotten, and Henry, giving way to his natural ardour, only remembered that Oliver had been his friend and intimate—a man who had loved and honoured him as much as he was capable of entertaining such sentiments for any one, and, above all, that there was much reason to suspect that the deceased had fallen victim to a blow meant for Henry himself.

It was, therefore, with an alacrity which, the minute before, he could scarce have commanded, and which seemed to express a stern pleasure, that, having pressed his lips to the cold brow of the unhappy Magdalen, the armourer replied:

"I, Henry the Smith, dwelling in the Wynd of Perth, good man and true, and freely born, accept the office of champion to this widow Magdalen and these orphans, and will do battle in their quarrel to the death, with any man whomsoever of my own degree, and that so long as I shall draw breath. So help me at my need God and good St. John!"

There arose from the audience a half suppressed cry, expressing the interest which the persons present took in the prosecution of the quarrel, and their confidence in the issue.

Sir Patrick Charteris then took measures for repairing to the King's presence, and demanding leave to proceed with inquiry into the murder of Oliver Proudpute, according to the custom of bier right, and, if necessary, by combat.

He performed this duty after the town council had dissolved, in a private interview between himself and the King, who heard of this new trouble with much vexation, and appointed next morning, after mass, for Sir Patrick and the parties interested to attend his pleasure in council. In the mean time, a royal pursuivant was despatched to the Constable's lodgings, to call over the roll of Sir John Ramorny's attendants, and charge him, with his whole retinue, under high penalties, to abide within Perth until the King's pleasure should be farther known.

CHAPTER XXI.

*In God's name, see the lists and all things fit;
There let them end it—God defend the right!*

Henry IV. Part II.

In the same council room of the conventual palace of the Dominicans, King Robert was seated with his brother Albany, whose affected austerity of virtue, and real art and dissimulation, maintained so high an influence over the feeble minded monarch. It was indeed natural that one who seldom saw things according to their real forms and outlines should view them according to the light in which they were presented to him by a bold, astucious man, possessing the claim of such near relationship.

Ever anxious on account of his misguided and unfortunate son, the King was now endeavouring to make Albany coincide in opinion with him in exculpating Rothsay from any part in the death of the bonnet maker, the precognition concerning which had been left by Sir Patrick Charteris for his Majesty's consideration.

"This is an unhappy matter, brother Robin," he said—"a most unhappy occurrence, and goes nigh to put strife and quarrel betwixt the nobility and the commons here, as they have been at war together in so many distant lands. I see but one cause of comfort in the matter, and that is, that Sir John Ramorny having received his dismissal from the Duke of Rothsay's family, it cannot be said that he or any of his people who may have done this bloody deed—if it has truly been done by them—have been encouraged or hounded out upon such an errand by my poor boy. I am sure, brother, you and I can bear witness how readily, upon my entreaties, he agreed to dismiss Ramorny from his service, on account of that brawl in Curfew Street."

"I remember his doing so," said Albany; "and well do I hope that the connexion betwixt the Prince and Ramorny has not been renewed since he seemed to comply with your Grace's wishes."

"Seemed to comply! The connexion renewed!" said the King. "What mean you by these expressions, brother? Surely, when David promised to me that, if that unhappy matter of Curfew Street were but smothered up and concealed, he would part with Ramorny, as he was a counsellor thought capable of involving him in similar fooleries, and would acquiesce in our inflicting on him either exile or such punishment as it should please us to impose—surely you cannot doubt that he was sincere in his professions, and would keep his word? Remember you not that, when you advised that a heavy fine should be levied upon his estate in Fife in lieu of banishment, the Prince himself seemed to say that exile would be better for Ramorny, and even for himself?"

"I remember it well, my royal brother. Nor, truly, could I have suspected Ramorny of having so much influence over the Prince, after having been accessory to placing him in a situation so perilous, had it not been for my royal kinsman's own confession, alluded to by your Grace, that, if suffered to remain at court, he might still continue to influence his conduct. I then regretted I had advised a fine in place of exile. But that time is passed, and now new mischief has occurred, fraught with much peril to your Majesty, as well as to your royal heir, and to the whole kingdom."

"What mean you, Robin?" said the weak minded King. "By the tomb of our parents! by the soul of Bruce, our immortal ancestor! I entreat thee, my dearest brother, to take compassion on me. Tell me what evil threatens my son, or my kingdom?"

The features of the King, trembling with anxiety, and his eyes brimful of tears, were bent upon his brother, who seemed to assume time for consideration ere he replied.

"My lord, the danger lies here. Your Grace believed that the Prince had no accession to this second aggression upon the citizens of Perth—the slaughter of this bonnet making fellow, about whose death they clamour, as a set of gulls about their comrade, when one of the noisy brood is struck down by a boor's shaft."

"Their lives," said the King, "are dear to themselves and their friends, Robin."

"Truly, ay, my liege; and they make them dear to us too, ere we can settle with the knaves for the least blood wit. But, as I said, your Majesty thinks the Prince had no share in this last slaughter; I will not attempt to shake your belief in that delicate point, but will endeavour to believe along with you. What you think is rule for me, Robert of Albany will never think otherwise than Robert of broad Scotland."

"Thank you, thank you," said the King, taking his brother's hand. "I knew I might rely that your affection would do justice to poor heedless Rothsay, who exposes himself to so much misconstruction that he scarcely deserves the sentiments you feel for him."

Albany had such an immovable constancy of purpose, that he was able to return the fraternal pressure of the King's hand, while tearing up by the very roots the hopes of the indulgent, fond old man.

"But, alas!" the Duke continued, with a sigh, "this burly, intractable Knight of Kinfauns, and his brawling herd of burghers, will not view the matter as we do. They have the boldness to say that this dead fellow had been misused by Rothsay and his fellows, who were in the street in mask and revel, stopping men and women, compelling them to dance, or to drink huge quantities of wine, with other follies needless to recount; and they say that the whole party repaired in Sir John Ramorny's, and broke their way into the house in order to conclude their revel there, thus affording good reason to judge that the dismissal of Sir John from the Prince's service was but a feigned stratagem to deceive the public. And hence they urge that, if ill were done that night by Sir John Ramorny or his followers, much it is to be thought that the Duke of Rothsay must have at least been privy to, if he did not authorise, it."

"Albany, this is dreadful!" said the King. "Would they make a murderer of my boy? would they pretend my David would soil his hands in Scottish blood without having either provocation or purpose? No—no, they will not invent calumnies so broad as these, for they are flagrant and incredible."

"Pardon, my liege," answered the Duke of Albany; "they say the cause of quarrel which occasioned the riot in Curfew Street, and, its consequences, were more proper to the Prince than to Sir John, since none suspects, far less believes, that that hopeful enterprise was conducted for the gratification of the knight of Ramorny."

"Thou drivest me mad, Robin!" said the King.

"I am dumb," answered his brother; "I did but speak my poor mind according to your royal order."

"Thou meanest well, I know," said the King; "but, instead of tearing me to pieces with the display of inevitable calamities, were it not kinder, Robin, to point me out some mode to escape from them?"

"True, my liege; but as the only road of extrication is rough and difficult, it is necessary your Grace should be first possessed with the absolute necessity of using it, ere you hear it even described. The chirurgeon must first convince his patient of the incurable condition of a shattered member, ere he venture to name amputation, though it be the only remedy."

The King at these words was roused to a degree of alarm and indignation greater than his brother had deemed he could be awakened to.

"Shattered and mortified member, my Lord of Albany! amputation the only remedy! These are unintelligible words, my lord. If thou appliest them to our son Rothsay, thou must make them good to the letter, else mayst thou have bitter cause to rue the consequence."

"You construe me too literally, my royal liege," said Albany. "I spoke not of the Prince in such unbecoming terms, for I call Heaven to witness that he is dearer to me as the son of a well beloved brother than had he been son of my own. But I spoke in regard to separating him from the follies and vanities of life, which holy men say are like to mortified members, and ought, like them, to be cut off and thrown from us, as things which interrupt our progress in better things."

"I understand—thou wouldst have this Ramorny, who hath been thought the instrument of my son's follies, exiled from court," said the relieved monarch, "until these unhappy scandals are forgotten, and our subjects are disposed to look upon our son with different and more confiding eyes."

"That were good counsel, my liege; but mine went a little—a very little—farther. I would have the Prince himself removed for some brief period from court."

"How, Albany! part with my child, my firstborn, the light of my eyes, and—wilful as he is—the darling of my heart! Oh, Robin! I cannot, and I will not."

"Nay, I did but suggest, my lord; I am sensible of the wound such a proceeding must inflict on a parent's heart, for am I not myself a father?" And he hung his head, as if in hopeless despondency.

"I could not survive it, Albany. When I think that even our own influence over him, which, sometimes forgotten in our absence, is ever effectual whilst he is with us, is by your plan to be entirely removed, what perils might he not rush upon? I could not sleep in his absence—I should hear his death groan in every breeze; and you, Albany, though you conceal it better, would be nearly as anxious."

Thus spoke the facile monarch, willing to conciliate his brother and cheat himself, by taking it for granted that an affection, of which there were no traces, subsisted betwixt the uncle and nephew.

"Your paternal apprehensions are too easily alarmed, my lord," said Albany. "I do not propose to leave the disposal of the Prince's motions to his own wild pleasure. I understand that the Prince is to be placed for a short time under some becoming restraint—that he should be subjected to the charge of some grave counsellor, who must be responsible both for his conduct and his safety, as a tutor for his pupil."

"How! a tutor, and at Rothsay's age!" exclaimed the King; "he is two years beyond the space to which our laws limit the term of nonage."

"The wiser Romans," said Albany, "extended it for four years after the period we assign; and, in common sense, the right of control ought to last till it be no longer necessary, and so the time ought to vary with the disposition. Here is young Lindsay, the Earl of Crawford, who they say gives patronage to Ramorny on this appeal. He is a lad of fifteen, with the deep passions and fixed purpose of a man of thirty; while my royal nephew, with much more amiable and noble qualities both of head and heart, sometimes shows, at twenty-three years of age, the wanton humours of a boy, towards whom restraint may be kindness. And do not be discouraged that it is so, my liege, or angry with your brother for telling the truth; since the best fruits are those that are slowest in ripening, and the best horses such as give most trouble to the grooms who train them for the field or lists."

The Duke stopped, and, after suffering King Robert to indulge for two or three minutes in a reverie which he did not attempt to interrupt, he added, in a more lively tone: "But, cheer up, my noble liege; perhaps the feud may be made up without farther fighting or difficulty. The widow is poor, for her husband, though he was much employed, had idle and costly habits. The matter may be therefore redeemed for money, and the amount of an assythment may be recovered out of Ramorny's estate."

"Nay, that we will ourselves discharge," said King Robert, eagerly catching at the hope of a pacific termination of this displeasing debate. "Ramorny's prospects will be destroyed by his being sent from court and deprived of his charge in Rothsay's household, and it would be ungenerous to load a falling man. But here comes our secretary, the prior, to tell us the hour of council approaches. Good morrow, my worthy father."

"Benedicite, my royal liege," answered the abbot.

"Now, good father," continued the King, "without waiting for Rothsay, whose accession to our counsels we will ourselves guarantee, proceed we to the business of our kingdom. What advices have you from the Douglas?"

"He has arrived at his castle of Tantallon, my liege, and has sent a post to say, that, though the Earl of March remains in sullen seclusion in his fortress of Dunbar, his friends and followers are gathering and forming an encampment near Coldingham, Where it is supposed they intend to await the arrival of a large force of English, which Hotspur and Sir Ralph Percy are assembling on the English frontier."

"That is cold news," said the King; "and may God forgive George of Dunbar!"

The Prince entered as he spoke, and he continued: "Ha! thou art here at length, Rothsay; I saw thee not at mass."

"I was an idler this morning," said the Prince, "having spent a restless and feverish night."

"Ah, foolish boy!" answered the King; "hadst thou not been over restless on Eastern's Eve, thou hadst not been feverish on the night of Ash Wednesday."

"Let me not interrupt your praying, my liege," said the Prince, lightly. "Your Grace Was invoking Heaven in behalf of some one—an enemy doubtless, for these have the frequent advantage of your orisons."

"Sit down and be at peace, foolish youth!" said his father, his eye resting at the same time on the handsome face and graceful figure of his favourite son. Rothsay drew a cushion near to his father's feet, and threw himself carelessly down upon it, while the King resumed.

"I was regretting that the Earl of March, having separated warm from my hand with full assurance that he should receive compensation for everything which he could complain of as injurious, should have been capable of caballing with Northumberland against his own country. Is it possible he could doubt our intentions to make good our word?"

"I will answer for him—no," said the Prince. "March never doubted your Highness's word. Marry, he may well have made question whether your learned counsellors would leave your Majesty the power of keeping it."

Robert the Third had adopted to a great extent the timid policy of not seeming to hear expressions which, being heard, required, even in his own eyes, some display of displeasure. He passed on, therefore, in his discourse, without observing his son's speech, but in private Rothsay's rashness augmented the displeasure which his father began to entertain against him.

"It is well the Douglas is on the marches," said the King. "His breast, like those of his ancestors, has ever been the best bulwark of Scotland."

"Then woe betide us if he should turn his back to the enemy," said the incorrigible Rothsay.

"Dare you impeach the courage of Douglas?" replied the King, extremely chafed.

"No man dare question the Earl's courage," said Rothsay, "it is as certain as his pride; but his luck may be something doubted."

"By St. Andrew, David," exclaimed his father, "thou art like a screech owl, every word thou sayest betokens strife and calamity."

"I am silent, father," answered the youth.

"And what news of our Highland disturbances?" continued the King, addressing the prior.

"I trust they have assumed a favourable aspect," answered the clergyman. "The fire which threatened the whole country is likely to be drenched out by the blood of some forty or fifty kerne; for the two great confederacies have agreed, by solemn indenture of arms, to decided their quarrel with such weapons as your Highness may name, and in your royal presence, in such place as shall be appointed, on the 30th of March next to come, being Palm Sunday; the number of combatants being limited to thirty on each side; and the fight to be maintained to extremity, since they affectionately make humble suit and petition to your Majesty that you will parentally condescend to waive for the day your royal privilege of interrupting the combat, by flinging down of truncheon or crying of 'Ho!' until the battle shall be utterly fought to an end."

"The wild savages!" exclaimed the King, "would they limit our best and dearest royal privilege, that of putting a stop to strife, and crying truce to battle? Will they remove the only motive which could bring me to the butcherly spectacle of their combat? Would they fight like men, or like their own mountain wolves?"

"My lord," said Albany, "the Earl of Crawford and I had presumed, without consulting you, to ratify that preliminary, for the adoption of which we saw much and pressing reason."

"How! the Earl of Crawford!" said the King. "Methinks he is a young counsellor on such grave occurrences."

"He is," replied Albany, "notwithstanding his early years, of such esteem among his Highland neighbours, that I could have done little with them but for his aid and influence."

"Hear this, young Rothsay!" said the King reproachfully to his heir.

"I pity Crawford, sire," replied the Prince. "He has too early lost a father whose counsels would have better become such a season as this."

The King turned next towards Albany with a look of triumph, at the filial affection which his son displayed in his reply.

Albany proceeded without emotion. "It is not the life of these Highlandmen, but their death, which is to be profitable to this commonwealth of Scotland; and truly it seemed to the Earl of Crawford and myself most desirable that the combat should be a strife of extermination."

"Marry," said the Prince, "if such be the juvenile policy of Lindsay, he will be a merciful ruler some ten or twelve years hence! Out upon a boy that is hard of heart before he has hair upon his lip! Better he had contented himself with fighting cocks on Eastern's Even than laying schemes for massacring men on Palm Sunday, as if he were backing a Welsh main, where all must fight to death."

"Rothsay is right, Albany," said the King: "it were unlike a Christian monarch to give way in this point. I cannot consent to see men battle until they are all hewn down like cattle in the shambles. It would sicken me to look at it, and the warder would drop from my hand for mere lack of strength to hold it."

"It would drop unheeded," said Albany. "Let me entreat your Grace to recollect, that you only give up a royal privilege which, exercised, would win you no respect, since it would receive no obedience. Were your Majesty to throw down your warder when the war is high, and these men's blood is hot, it would meet no more regard than if a sparrow should drop among a herd of battling wolves the straw which he was carrying to his nest. Nothing will separate them but the exhaustion of slaughter; and better they sustain it at the hands of each other than from the swords of such troops as might attempt to separate them at your Majesty's commands. An attempt to keep the peace by violence would be construed into an ambush laid for them; both parties would unite to resist it, the slaughter would be the same, and the hoped for results of future peace would be utterly disappointed."

"There is even too much truth in what you say, brother Robin," replied the flexible King. "To little purpose is it to command what I cannot enforce; and, although I have the unhappiness to do so each day of my life, it were needless to give such a very public example of royal impotency before the crowds who may assemble to behold this spectacle. Let these savage men, therefore, work their bloody will to the uttermost upon each other: I will not attempt to forbid what I cannot prevent them from executing. Heaven help this wretched country! I will to my oratory and pray for her, since to aid her by hand and head is alike denied to me. Father prior, I pray the support of your arm."

"Nay, but, brother," said Albany, "forgive me if I remind you that we must hear the matter between the citizens of Perth and Ramorny, about the death of a townsman—"

"True—true," said the monarch, reseating himself; "more violence—more battle. Oh, Scotland! Scotland! if the best blood of thy bravest children could enrich thy barren soil, what land on earth would excel thee in fertility! When is it that a white hair is seen on the beard of a Scottishman, unless he be some wretch like thy sovereign, protected from murder by impotence, to witness the scenes of slaughter to which he cannot put a period? Let them come in, delay them not. They are in haste to kill, and, grudge each other each fresh breath of their Creator's blessed air. The demon of strife and slaughter hath possessed the whole land!"

As the mild prince threw himself back on his seat with an air of impatience and anger not very usual with him, the door at the lower end of the room was unclosed, and, advancing from the gallery into which it led (where in perspective was seen a guard of the Bute men, or Brandanes, under arms), came, in mournful procession, the widow of poor Oliver, led by Sir Patrick Charteris, with as much respect as if she had been a lady of the first rank. Behind them came two women of good, the wives of magistrates of the city, both in mourning garments, one bearing the infant and the other leading the elder child. The smith followed in his best attire, and wearing over his buff coat a scarf of crape. Bailie Craigdallie and a brother magistrate closed the melancholy procession, exhibiting similar marks of mourning.

The good King's transitory passion was gone the instant he looked at the pallid countenance of the sorrowing widow, and beheld the unconsciousness of the innocent orphans who had sustained so great a loss, and when Sir Patrick Charteris had assisted Magdalen Proudpute to kneel down and, still holding her hand, kneeled himself on one knee, it was with a sympathetic tone that King Robert asked her name and business. She made no answer, but muttered something, looking towards her conductor.

"Speak for the poor woman, Sir Patrick Charteris," said the King, "and tell us the cause of her seeking our presence."

"So please you, my liege," answered Sir Patrick, rising up, "this woman, and these unhappy orphans, make plaint to your Highness upon Sir John Ramorny of Ramorny, Knight, that by him, or by some of his household, her umquhile husband, Oliver Proudpute, freeman and burgess of Perth, was slain upon the streets of the city on the eve of Shrove Tuesday or morning of Ash Wednesday."

"Woman," replied the King, with much kindness, "thou art gentle by sex, and shouldst be pitiful even by thy affliction; for our own calamity ought to make us—nay, I think it doth make us—merciful to others. Thy husband hath only trodden the path appointed to us all."

"In his case," said the widow, "my liege must remember it has been a brief and a bloody one."

"I agree he hath had foul measure. But since I have been unable to protect him, as I confess was my royal duty, I am willing, in atonement, to support thee and these orphans, as well or better than you lived in the days of your husband; only do thou pass from this charge, and be not the occasion of spilling more life. Remember, I put before you the choice betwixt practising mercy and pursuing vengeance, and that betwixt plenty and penury."

"It is true, my liege, we are poor," answered the widow, with unshaken firmness "but I and my children will feed with the beasts of the field ere we live on the price of my husband's blood. I demand the combat by my champion, as you are belted knight and crowned king."

"I knew it would be so!" said the King, aside to Albany. "In Scotland the first words stammered by an infant and the last uttered by a dying greybeard are 'combat—blood—revenge.' It skills not arguing farther. Admit the defendants."

Sir John Ramorny entered the apartment. He was dressed in a long furred robe, such as men of quality wore when they were unarmed. Concealed by the folds of drapery, his wounded arm was supported by a scarf or sling of crimson silk, and with the left arm he leaned on a youth, who, scarcely beyond the years of boyhood, bore on his brow the deep impression of early thought and premature passion. This was that celebrated Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, who, in his after days, was known by the epithet of the Tiger Earl, and who ruled the great and rich valley of Strathmore with the absolute power and unrelenting cruelty of a feudal tyrant. Two or three gentlemen, friends of the Earl, or of his own, countenanced Sir John Ramorny by their presence on this occasion. The charge was again stated, and met by a broad denial on the part of the accused; and in reply, the challengers offered to prove their assertion by an appeal to the ordeal of bier right.

"I am not bound," answered Sir John Ramorny, "to submit to this ordeal, since I can prove, by the evidence of my late royal master, that I was in my own lodgings, lying on my bed, ill at ease, while this provost and these bailies pretend I was committing a crime to which I had neither will nor temptation. I can therefore be no just object of suspicion."

"I can aver," said the Prince, "that I saw and conversed with Sir John Ramorny about some matters concerning my own household on the very night when this murder was a-doing. I therefore know that he was ill at ease, and could not in person commit the deed in question. But I know nothing of the employment of his attendants, and will not take it upon me to say that some one of them may not have been guilty of the crime now charged on them."

Sir John Ramorny had, during the beginning of this speech, looked round with an air of defiance, which was somewhat disconcerted by the concluding sentence of Rothsay's speech.

"I thank your Highness," he said, with a smile, "for your cautious and limited testimony in my behalf. He was wise who wrote, 'Put not your faith in princes.'"

"If you have no other evidence of your innocence, Sir John Ramorny," said the King, "we may not, in respect to your followers, refuse to the injured widow and orphans, the complainers, the grant of a proof by ordeal of bier right, unless any of them should prefer that of combat. For yourself, you are, by the Prince's evidence, freed from the attainr."

"My liege," answered Sir John, "I can take warrant upon myself for the innocence of my household and followers."

"Why, so a monk or a woman might speak," said Sir Patrick Charteris. "In knightly language, wilt thou, Sir John de Ramorny, do battle with me in the behalf of thy followers?"

"The provost of Perth had not obtained time to name the word combat," said Ramorny, "ere I would have accepted it. But I am not at present fit to hold a lance."

"I am glad of it, under your favour, Sir John. There will be the less bloodshed," said the King. "You must therefore produce your followers according to your steward's household book, in the great church of St. John, that, in presence of all whom it may concern, they may purge themselves of this accusation. See that every man of them do appear at the time of high mass, otherwise your honour may be sorely tainted."

"They shall attend to a man," said Sir John Ramorny.

Then bowing low to the King, he directed himself to the young Duke of Rothsay, and, making a deep obeisance, spoke so as to be heard by him alone. "You have used me generously, my lord! One word of your lips could have ended this controversy, and you have refused to speak it."

"On my life," whispered the Prince, "I spake as far as the extreme verge of truth and conscience would permit. I think thou couldst not expect I should frame lies for thee; and after all, John, in my broken recollections of that night, I do bethink me of a butcherly looking mute, with a curtal axe, much like such a one as may have done yonder night job. Ha! have I touched you, sir knight?"

Ramorny made no answer, but turned as precipitately as if some one had pressed suddenly on his wounded arm, and regained his lodgings with the Earl of Crawford; to whom, though disposed for anything rather than revelry, he was obliged to offer a splendid collation, to acknowledge in some degree his sense of the countenance which the young noble had afforded him.

CHAPTER XXII.

*In pottingry he wrocht great pyne;
He murdreit mony in medecyne.*

DUNBAR.

When, after an entertainment the prolonging of which was like torture to the wounded knight, the Earl of Crawford at length took horse, to go to his distant quarters in the Castle of Dupplin, where he resided as a guest, the Knight of Ramorny retired into his sleeping apartment, agonized by pains of body and anxiety of mind. Here he found Henbane Dwining, on whom it was his hard fate to depend for consolation in both respects. The physician, with his affectation of extreme humility, hoped he saw his exalted patient merry and happy.

"Merry as a mad dog," said Ramorny, "and happy as the wretch whom the cur hath bitten, and who begins to feel the approach of the ravening madness! That ruthless boy, Crawford, saw my agony, and spared not a single carouse. I must do him justice, forsooth! If I had done justice to him and to the world, I had thrown him out of window and cut short a career which, if he grew up as he has begun, will prove a source of misery to all Scotland, but especially to Tayside. Take heed as thou undoest the ligatures, chirurgeon, the touch of a fly's wing on that raw glowing stump were like a dagger to me."

"Fear not, my noble patron," said the leech, with a chuckling laugh of enjoyment, which he vainly endeavoured to disguise under a tone of affected sensibility. "We will apply some fresh balsam, and—he, he, he!—relieve your knightly honour of the irritation which you sustain so firmly."

"Firmly, man!" said Ramorny, grinning with pain; "I sustain it as I would the scorching flames of purgatory. The bone seems made of red hot iron; thy greasy ointment will hiss as it drops upon the wound. And yet it is December's ice, compared to the fever fit of my mind!"

"We will first use our emollients upon the body, my noble patron," said Dwining; "and then, with your knighthood's permission; your servant will try his art on the troubled mind; though I fain hope even the mental pain also may in some degree depend on the irritation of the wound, and that, abated as I trust the corporeal pangs will soon be, perhaps the stormy feelings of the mind may subside of themselves."

"Henbane Dwining," said the patient, as he felt the pain of his wound assuaged, "thou art a precious and invaluable leech, but some things are beyond thy power. Thou canst stupify my bodily cause of this raging agony, but thou canst not teach me to bear the score of the boy whom I have brought up—whom I loved, Dwining—for I did love him—dearly love him! The worst of my ill deeds have been to flatter his vices; and he grudged me a word of his mouth, when a word would have allayed this cumber! He smiled, too—I saw him smile—when yon paltry provost, the companion and patron of wretched burghers, defied me, whom this heartless prince knew to be unable to bear arms. Ere I forget or forgive it, thou thyself shalt preach up the pardoning of injuries! And then the care for tomorrow! Think'st thou, Henbane Dwining, that, in very reality, the Wounds of the slaughtered corpse will gape and shed tears of fresh blood at the murderer's approach?"

"I cannot tell, my lord, save by report," said Dwining, "which avouches the fact."

"The brute Bonthron," said Ramorny, "is startled at the apprehension of such a thing, and speaking of being rather willing to stand the combat. What think'st thou? He is a fellow of steel."

"It is the armourer's trade to deal with steel," replied Dwining.

"Were Bonthron to fall, it would little grieve me," said Ramorny; "though I should miss an useful hand."

"I well believe your lordship will not sorrow as for that you lost in Curfew Street. Excuse my pleasantry, he, he! But what are the useful properties of this fellow Bonthron?"

"Those of a bulldog," answered the knight, "he worries without barking."

"You have no fear of his confessing?" said the physician.

"Who can tell what the dread of approaching death may do?" replied the patient. "He has already shown a timorousness entirely alien from his ordinary sullenness of nature; he, that would scarce wash his hands after he had slain a man, is now afraid to see a dead body bleed."

"Well," said the leech, "I must do something for him if I can, since it was to further my revenge that he struck yonder downright blow, though by ill luck it lighted not where it was intended."

"And whose fault was that, timid villain," said Ramorny, "save thine own, who marked a rascal deer for a buck of the first head?"

"Benedicite, noble sir," replied the mediciner, "would you have me, who know little save of chamber practice, be as skilful of woodcraft as your noble self, or tell hart from hind, doe from roe, in a glade at midnight? I misdoubted me little when I saw the figure run past us to the smith's habitation in the wynd, habited like a morrice dancer; and yet my mind partly misgave me whether it was our man, for methought he seemed less of stature. But when he came out again, after so much time as to change his dress, and swaggered onward with buff coat and steel cap, whistling after the armourer's wonted fashion, I do own I was mistaken super totam materiem, and loosed your knighthood's bulldog upon him, who did his devoir most duly, though he pulled down the wrong deer. Therefore, unless the accursed smith kill our poor friend stone dead on the spot, I am determined, if art may do it, that the ban dog Bonthron shall not miscarry."

"It will put thine art to the test, man of medicine," said Ramorny; "for know that, having the worst of the combat, if our champion be not killed stone dead in the lists, he will be drawn forth of them by the heels, and without further ceremony knitted up to the gallows, as convicted of the murder; and when he hath swung there like a loose tassel for an hour or so, I think thou wilt hardly take it in hand to cure his broken neck."

"I am of a different opinion, may it please your knighthood," answered Dwining, gently. "I will carry him off from the very foot of the gallows into the land of faery, like King Arthur, or Sir Huon of Bordeaux, or Ugero the Dane; or I will, if I please, suffer him to dangle on the gibbet for a certain number of minutes, or hours, and then whisk him away from the sight of all, with as much ease as the wind wafts away the withered leaf."

"This is idle boasting, sir leech," replied Ramorny. "The whole mob of Perth will attend him to the gallows, each more eager than another to see the retainer of a nobleman die, for the slaughter of a cuckoldly citizen. There will be a thousand of them round the gibbet's foot."

"And were there ten thousand," said Dwining, "shall I, who am a high clerk, and have studied in Spain, and Araby itself, not be able to deceive the eyes of this hoggish herd of citizens, when the pettiest juggler that ever dealt in legerdemain can gull even the sharp observation of your most intelligent knighthood? I tell you, I will put the change on them as if I were in possession of Keddie's ring."

"If thou speakest truth," answered the knight, "and I think thou darest not palter with me on such a theme, thou must have the aid of Satan, and I will have nought to do with him. I disown and defy him."

Dwining indulged in his internal chuckling laugh when he heard his patron testify his defiance of the foul fiend, and saw him second it by crossing himself. He composed himself, however, upon observing Ramorny's aspect become very stern, and said, with tolerable gravity, though a little interrupted by the effort necessary to suppress his mirthful mood:

"Confederacy, most devout sir—confederacy is the soul of jugglery. But—he, he, he!—I have not the honour to be—he, he!—an ally of the gentleman of whom you speak—in whose existence I am—he, he!—no very profound believer, though your knightship, doubtless, hath better opportunities of acquaintance."

"Proceed, rascal, and without that sneer, which thou mayst otherwise dearly pay for."

"I will, most undaunted," replied Dwining. "Know that I have my confederate too, else my skill were little worth."

"And who may that be, pray you?"

"Stephen Smotherwell, if it like your honour, lockman of this Fair City. I marvel your knighthood knows him not."

"And I marvel thy knaveship knows him not on professional acquaintance," replied Ramorny; "but I see thy nose is unslit, thy ears yet uncropped, and if thy shoulders are scarred or branded, thou art wise for using a high collared jerkin."

"He, he! your honour is pleasant," said the mediciner. "It is not by personal circumstances that I have acquired the intimacy of Stephen Smotherwell, but on account of a certain traffic betwixt us, in which an't please you, I exchange certain sums of silver for the bodies, heads, and limbs of those who die by aid of friend Stephen."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the knight with horror, "is it to compose charms and forward works of witchcraft that you trade for these miserable relics of mortality?"

"He, he, he! No, an it please your knighthood," answered the mediciner, much amused with the ignorance of his patron; "but we, who are knights of the scalpel, are accustomed to practise careful carving of the limbs of defunct persons, which we call dissection, whereby we discover, by examination of a dead member, how to deal with one belonging to a living man, which hath become diseased through injury or otherwise. Ah! if your honour saw my poor laboratory, I could show you heads and hands, feet and lungs, which have been long supposed to be rotting in the mould. The skull of Wallace, stolen from London Bridge; the head of Sir Simon Fraser [the famous ancestor of the Lovats, slain at Halidon Hill (executed in London in 1306)], that never feared man; the lovely skull of the fair Katie Logie [(should be Margaret Logie), the beautiful mistress of David II]. Oh, had I but had the fortune to have preserved the chivalrous hand of mine honoured patron!"

Out upon thee, slave! Thinkest thou to disgust me with thy catalogue of horrors? Tell me at once where thy discourse drives. How can thy traffic with the hangdog executioner be of avail to serve me, or to help my servant Bonthron?"

"Nay, I do not recommend it to your knighthood, save in an extremity," replied Dwining. "But we will suppose the battle fought and our cock beaten. Now we must first possess him with the certainty that, if unable to gain the day, we will at least save him from the hangman, provided he confess nothing which can prejudice your knighthood's honour."

"Ha! ay, a thought strikes me," said Ramorny. "We can do more than this, we can place a word in Bonthron's mouth that will be troublesome enough to him whom I am bound to curse for being the cause of my misfortune. Let us to the ban dog's kennel, and explain to him what is to be done in every view of the question. If we can persuade him to stand the bier ordeal, it may be a mere bugbear, and in that case we are safe. If he take the combat, he is fierce as a baited bear, and may, perchance, master his opponent; then we are more than safe, we are avenged. If Bonthron himself is vanquished, we will put thy device in exercise; and if thou canst manage it cleanly; we may dictate his confession, take the advantage of it, as I will show thee on further conference, and make a giant stride towards satisfaction for my wrongs. Still there remains one hazard. Suppose our mastiff mortally wounded in the lists, who shall prevent his growling out some species of confession different from what we would recommend?"

"Marry, that can his mediciner," said Dwining. "Let me wait on him, and have the opportunity to lay but a finger on his wound, and trust me he shall betray no confidence."

"Why, there's a willing fiend, that needs neither pushing nor prompting!" said Ramorny.

"As I trust I shall need neither in your knighthood's service."

"We will go indoctrinate our agent," continued the knight. "We shall find him pliant; for, hound as he is, he knows those who feed from those who browbeat him; and he holds a late royal master of mine in deep hate for some injurious treatment and base terms which he received at his hand. I must also farther concert with thee the particulars of thy practice, for saving the ban dog from the hands of the herd of citizens."

We leave this worthy pair of friends to their secret practices, of which we shall afterwards see the results. They were, although of different qualities, as well matched for device and execution of criminal projects as the greyhound is to destroy the game which the slowhound raises, or the slowhound to track the prey which the gazehound discovers by the eye. Pride and selfishness were the characteristics of both; but, from the difference of rank, education, and talents, they had assumed the most different appearance in the two individuals.

Nothing could less resemble the high blown ambition of the favourite courtier, the successful gallant, and the bold warrior than the submissive, unassuming mediciner, who seemed even to court and delight in insult; whilst, in his secret soul, he felt himself possessed of a superiority of knowledge, a power both of science and of mind, which placed the rude nobles of the day infinitely beneath him. So conscious was Henbane Dwining of this elevation, that, like a keeper of wild beasts, he sometimes adventured, for his own amusement, to rouse the stormy passions of such men as Ramorny, trusting, with his humble manner, to elude the turmoil he had excited, as an Indian boy will launch his light canoe, secure from its very fragility, upon a broken surf, in which the boat of an argosy would be assuredly dashed to pieces. That the feudal baron should despise the humble practitioner in medicine was a matter of course; but Ramorny felt not the less the influence which Dwining exercised over him, and was in the encounter of their wits often mastered by him, as the most eccentric efforts of a fiery horse are overcome by a boy of twelve years old, if he has been bred to the arts of the manege. But the contempt of Dwining for Ramorny was far less qualified. He regarded the knight, in comparison with himself, as scarcely rising above the brute creation; capable, indeed, of working destruction, as the bull with his horns or the wolf with his fangs, but mastered by mean prejudices, and a slave to priest craft, in which phrase Dwining included religion of every kind. On the whole, he considered Ramorny as one whom nature had assigned to him as a serf, to mine for the gold which he worshipped, and the avaricious love of which was his greatest failing, though by no means his worst vice. He vindicated this sordid tendency in his own eyes by persuading himself that it had its source in the love of power.

"Henbane Dwining," he said, as he gazed in delight upon the hoards which he had secretly amassed, and which he visited from time to time, "is no silly miser that doats on those pieces for their golden lustre: it is the power with which they endow the possessor which makes him thus adore them. What is there that these put not within your command? Do you love beauty, and are mean, deformed, infirm, and old? Here is a lure the fairest hawk of them all will stoop to. Are you feeble, weak, subject to the oppression of the powerful? Here is that will arm in your defence those more mighty than the petty tyrant whom you fear. Are you splendid in your wishes, and desire the outward show of opulence? This dark chest contains many a wide range of hill and dale, many a fair forest full of game, the allegiance of a thousand vassals. Wish you for favour in courts, temporal or spiritual? The smiles of kings, the pardon of popes and priests for old crimes, and the indulgence which encourages priest ridden fools to venture on new ones—all these holy incentives to vice may be purchased for gold. Revenge itself, which the gods are said to reserve to themselves, doubtless because they envy humanity so sweet a morsel—revenge itself is to be bought by it. But it is also to be won by superior skill, and that is the nobler mode of reaching it. I will spare, then, my treasure for other uses, and accomplish my revenge gratis; or rather I will add the luxury of augmented wealth to the triumph of requited wrongs."

Thus thought Dwining, as, returned from his visit to Sir John Ramorny, he added the gold he had received for his various services to the mass of his treasure; and, having gloated over the whole for a minute or two, turned the key on his concealed treasure house, and walked forth on his visits to his patients, yielding the wall to every man whom he met and bowing and doffing his bonnet to the poorest burgher that owned a petty booth, nay, to the artificers who gained their precarious bread by the labour of their welked hands.

"Caitiffs," was the thought of his heart while he did such obeisance—"base, sodden witted mechanics! did you know what this key could disclose, what foul weather from heaven would prevent your unbonneting? what putrid kennel in your wretched hamlet would be disgusting enough to make you scruple to fall down and worship the owner of such wealth? But I will make you feel my power, though it suits my honour to hide the source of it. I will be an incubus to your city, since you have rejected me as a magistrate. Like the night mare, I will hag ride ye, yet remain invisible myself. This miserable Ramorny, too, he who, in losing his hand, has, like a poor artisan, lost the only valuable part of his frame, he heaps insulting language on me, as if anything which he can say had power to chafe a constant mind like mine! Yet, while he calls me rogue, villain, and slave, he acts as wisely as if he should amuse himself by pulling hairs out of my head while my hand had hold of his heart strings. Every insult I can pay back instantly by a pang of bodily pain or mental agony, and—he, he!—I run no long accounts with his knighthood, that must be allowed."

While the mediciner was thus indulging his diabolical musing, and passing, in his creeping manner, along the street, the cry of females was heard behind him.

"Ay, there he is, Our Lady be praised!—there is the most helpful man in Perth," said one voice.

"They may speak of knights and kings for redressing wrongs, as they call it; but give me worthy Master Dwining the potter carrier, cummers," replied another.

At the same moment, the leech was surrounded and taken hold of by the speakers, good women of the Fair City.

"How now, what's the matter?" said Dwining, "whose cow has calved?"

"There is no calving in the case," said one of the women, "but a poor fatherless wean dying; so come awa' wi' you, for our trust is constant in you, as Bruce said to Donald of the Isles."

"Opiferque per orbem dicor," said Henbane Dwining. "What is the child dying of?"

"The croup—the croup," screamed one of the gossips; "the innocent is rousing like a corbie."

"Cynanche trachealis—that disease makes brief work. Show me the house instantly," continued the mediciner, who was in the habit of exercising his profession liberally, not withstanding his natural avarice, and humanely, in spite of his natural malignity. As we can suspect him of no better principle, his motive most probably may have been vanity and the love of his art.

He would nevertheless have declined giving his attendance in the present case had he known whither the kind gossips were conducting him, in time sufficient to frame an apology. But, ere he guessed where he was going, the leech was hurried into the house of the late Oliver Proudpute, from which he heard the chant of the women as they swathed and dressed the corpse of the umquhile bonnet maker for the ceremony of next morning, of which chant the following verses may be received as a modern imitation:

*Viewless essence, thin and bare,
Well nigh melted into air,
Still with fondness hovering near
The earthly form thou once didst wear,*

*Pause upon thy pinion's flight;
Be thy course to left or right,
Be thou doom'd to soar or sink,
Pause upon the awful brink.*

*To avenge the deed expelling
Thee untimely from thy dwelling,
Mystic force thou shalt retain
O'er the blood and o'er the brain.*

*When the form thou shalt espy
That darken'd on thy closing eye,
When the footstep thou shalt hear
That thrill'd upon thy dying ear,*

*Then strange sympathies shall wake,
The flesh shall thrill, the nerves shall quake,
The wounds renew their clotted flood,
And every drop cry blood for blood!*

Hardened as he was, the physician felt reluctance to pass the threshold of the man to whose death he had been so directly, though, so far as the individual was concerned, mistakingly, accessory.

"Let me pass on, women," he said, "my art can only help the living—the dead are past our power."

"Nay, but your patient is upstairs—the youngest orphan"—Dwining was compelled to go into the house. But he was surprised when, the instant he stepped over the threshold, the gossips, who were busied with the dead body, stunted suddenly in their song, while one said to the others:

"In God's name, who entered? That was a large gout of blood."

"Not so," said another voice, "it is a drop of the liquid balm."

"Nay, cummer, it was blood. Again I say, who entered the house even now?"

One looked out from the apartment into the little entrance, where Dwining, under pretence of not distinctly seeing the trap ladder by which he was to ascend into the upper part of this house of lamentation, was delaying his progress purposely, disconcerted with what had reached him of the conversation.

"Nay, it is only worthy Master Henbane Dwining," answered one of the sibyls.

"Only Master Dwining," replied the one who had first spoken, in a tone of acquiescence—"our best helper in need! Then it must have been balm sure enough."

"Nay," said the other, "it may have been blood nevertheless; for the leech, look you, when the body was found, was commanded by the magistrates to probe the wound with his instruments, and how could the poor dead corpse know that that was done with good purpose?"

"Ay, truly, cummer; and as poor Oliver often mistook friends for enemies while he was in life, his judgment cannot be thought to have mended now."

Dwining heard no more, being now forced upstairs into a species of garret, where Magdalen sat on her widowed bed, clasping to her bosom her infant, which, already black in the face and uttering the gasping, crowing sound which gives the popular name to the complaint, seemed on the point of rendering up its brief existence. A Dominican monk sat near the bed, holding the other child in his arms, and seeming from time to time to speak a word or two of spiritual consolation, or intermingle some observation on the child's disorder.

The mediciner cast upon the good father a single glance, filled With that ineffable disdain which men of science entertain against interlopers. His own aid was instant and efficacious: he snatched the child from the despairing mother, stripped its throat, and opened a vein, which, as it bled freely, relieved the little patient instantaneously. In a brief space every dangerous symptom disappeared, and Dwining, having bound up the vein, replaced the infant in the arms of the half distracted mother.

The poor woman's distress for her husband's loss, which had been suspended during the extremity of the child's danger, now returned on Magdalen with the force of an augmented torrent, which has borne down the dam dike that for a while interrupted its waves.

"Oh, learned sir," she said, "you see a poor woman of her that you once knew a richer. But the hands that restored this bairn to my arms must not leave this house empty. Generous, kind Master Dwining, accept of his beads; they are made of ebony and silver. He aye liked to have his things as handsome as any gentleman, and liker he was in all his ways to a gentleman than any one of his standing, and even so came of it."

With these words, in a mute passion of grief she pressed to her breast and to her lips the chaplet of her deceased husband, and proceeded to thrust it into Dwining's hands.

"Take it," she said, "for the love of one who loved you well. Ah, he used ever to say, if ever man could be brought back from the brink of the grave, it must be by Master Dwining's guidance. And his ain bairn is brought back this blessed day, and he is lying there stark and stiff, and kens naething of its health and sickness! Oh, woe is me, and walawa! But take the beads, and think on his pur soul, as you put them through your fingers, he will be freed from purgatory the sooner that good people pray to assoilzie him."

"Take back your beads, cummer; I know no legerdemain, can do no conjuring tricks," said the mediciner, who, more moved than perhaps his rugged nature had anticipated, endeavoured to avoid receiving the ill omened gift. But his last words gave offence to the churchman, whose presence he had not recollected when he uttered them.

"How now, sir leech!" said the Dominican, "do you call prayers for the dead juggling tricks? I know that Chaucer, the English maker, says of you mediciners, that your study is but little on the Bible. Our mother, the church, hath nodded of late, but her eyes are now opened to discern friends from foes; and be well assured—"

"Nay, reverend father," said Dwining, "you take me at too great advantage. I said I could do no miracles, and was about to add that, as the church certainly could work such conclusions, those rich beads should be deposited in your hands, to be applied as they may best benefit the soul of the deceased."

He dropped the beads into the Dominican's hand, and escaped from the house of mourning.

"This was a strangely timed visit," he said to himself, when he got safe out of doors. "I hold such things cheap as any can; yet, though it is but a silly fancy, I am glad I saved the squalling child's life. But I must to my friend Smotherwell, whom I have no doubt to bring to my purpose in the matter of Bonthron; and thus on this occasion I shall save two lives, and have destroyed only one."

CHAPTER XXIII.

*Lo! where he lies embalmed in gore,
His wound to Heaven cries:
The floodgates of his blood implore
For vengeance from the skies.*

Uranus and Psyche.

The High Church of St. John in Perth, being that of the patron saint of the burgh, had been selected by the magistrates as that in which the community was likely to have most fair play for the display of the ordeal. The churches and convents of the Dominicans, Carthusians, and others of the regular clergy had been highly endowed by the King and nobles, and therefore it was the universal cry of the city council that "their ain good auld St. John," of whose good graces they thought themselves sure, ought to be fully confided in, and preferred to the new patrons, for whom the Dominicans, Carthusians, Carmelites, and others had founded newer seats around the Fair City. The disputes between the regular and secular clergy added to the jealousy which dictated this choice of the spot in which Heaven was to display a species of miracle, upon a direct appeal to the divine decision in a case of doubtful guilt; and the town clerk was as anxious that the church of St. John should be preferred as if there had been a faction in the body of saints for and against the interests of the beautiful town of Perth.

Many, therefore, were the petty intrigues entered into and disconcerted for the purpose of fixing on the church. But the magistrates, considering it as a matter touching in a close degree the honour of the city, determined, with judicious confidence in the justice and impartiality of their patron, to confide the issue to the influence of St. John.

It was, therefore, after high mass had been performed with the greatest solemnity of which circumstances rendered the ceremony capable, and after the most repeated and fervent prayers had been offered to Heaven by the crowded assembly, that preparations were made for appealing to the direct judgment of Heaven on the mysterious murder of the unfortunate bonnet maker.

The scene presented that effect of imposing solemnity which the rites of the Catholic Church are so well qualified to produce. The eastern window, richly and variously painted, streamed down a torrent of chequered light upon the high altar. On the bier placed before it were stretched the mortal remains of the murdered man, his arms folded on his breast, and his palms joined together, with the fingers pointed upwards, as if the senseless clay was itself appealing to Heaven for vengeance against those who had violently divorced the immortal spirit from its mangled tenement.

Close to the bier was placed the throne which supported Robert of Scotland and his brother Albany. The Prince sat upon a lower stool, beside his father—an arrangement which occasioned some observation, as, Albany's seat being little distinguished from that of the King, the heir apparent, though of full age, seemed to be degraded beneath his uncle in the sight of the assembled people of Perth. The bier was so placed as to leave the view of the body it sustained open to the greater part of the multitude assembled in the church.

At the head of the bier stood the Knight of Kinfauns, the challenger, and at the foot the young Earl of Crawford, as representing the defendant. The evidence of the Duke of Rothsay in expurgation, as it was termed, of Sir John Ramorny, had exempted him from the necessity of attendance as a party subjected to the ordeal; and his illness served as a reason for his remaining at home. His household, including those who, though immediately in waiting upon Sir John, were accounted the Prince's domestics, and had not yet received their dismissal, amounted to eight or ten persons, most of them esteemed men of profligate habits, and who might therefore be deemed capable, in the riot of a festival evening, of committing the slaughter of the bonnet maker. They were drawn up in a row on the left side of the church, and wore a species of white cassock, resembling the dress of a penitentiary. All eyes being bent on them, several of this band seemed so much disconcerted as to excite among the spectators strong prepossessions of their guilt. The real murderer had a countenance incapable of betraying him—a sullen, dark look, which neither the feast nor wine cup could enliven, and which the peril of discovery and death could not render dejected.

We have already noticed the posture of the dead body. The face was bare, as were the breast and arms. The rest of the corpse was shrouded in a winding sheet of the finest linen, so that, if blood should flow from any place which was covered, it could not fail to be instantly manifest.

High mass having been performed, followed by a solemn invocation to the Deity, that He would be pleased to protect the innocent, and make known the guilty, Eviot, Sir John Ramorny's page, was summoned to undergo the ordeal. He advanced with an ill assured step. Perhaps he thought his internal consciousness that Bonthron must have been the assassin might be sufficient to implicate him in the murder, though he was not directly accessory to it. He paused before the bier; and his voice faltered, as he swore by all that was created in seven days and seven nights, by heaven, by hell, by his part of paradise, and by the God and author of all, that he was free and sackless of the bloody deed done upon the corpse before which he stood, and on whose breast he made the sign of the cross, in evidence of the appeal. No consequences ensued. The body remained stiff as before, the curdled wounds gave no sign of blood.

The citizens looked on each other with faces of blank disappointment. They had persuaded themselves of Eviot's guilt, and their suspicions had been confirmed by his irresolute manner. Their surprise at his escape was therefore extreme. The other followers of Ramorny took heart, and advanced to take the oath with a boldness which increased as one by one they performed the ordeal, and were declared, by the voice of the judges, free and innocent of every suspicion attaching to them on account of the death of Oliver Proudfoot.

But there was one individual who did not partake that increasing confidence. The name of "Bonthron—Bonthron!" sounded three times through the aisles of the church; but he who owned it acknowledged the call no otherwise than by a sort of shuffling motion with his feet, as if he had been suddenly affected with a fit of the palsy.

"Speak, dog," whispered Eviot, "or prepare for a dog's death!"

But the murderer's brain was so much disturbed by the sight before him, that the judges, beholding his deportment, doubted whether to ordain him to be dragged before the bier or to pronounce judgment in default; and it was not until he was asked for the last time whether he would submit to the ordeal, that he answered, with his usual brevity:

"I will not; what do I know what juggling tricks may be practised to take a poor man's life? I offer the combat to any man who says I harmed that dead body."

And, according to usual form, he threw his glove upon the floor of the church.

Henry Smith stepped forward, amidst the murmured applauses of his fellow citizens, which even the august presence could not entirely suppress; and, lifting the ruffian's glove, which he placed in his bonnet, laid down his own in the usual form, as a gage of battle. But Bonthron raised it not.

"He is no match for me," growled the savage, "nor fit to lift my glove. I follow the Prince of Scotland, in attending on his master of horse. This fellow is a wretched mechanic."

Here the Prince interrupted him. "Thou follow me, caitiff! I discharge thee from my service on the spot. Take him in hand, Smith, and beat him as thou didst never thump anvil! The villain is both guilty and recreant. It sickens me even to look at him; and if my royal father will be ruled by me, he will give the parties two handsome Scottish axes, and we will see which of them turns out the best fellow before the day is half an hour older."

This was readily assented to by the Earl of Crawford and Sir Patrick Charteris, the godfathers of the parties, who, as the combatants were men of inferior rank, agreed that they should fight in steel caps, buff jackets, and with axes, and that as soon as they could be prepared for the combat.

The lists were appointed in the Skinners' Yards—a neighbouring space of ground, occupied by the corporation from which it had the name, and who quickly cleared a space of about thirty feet by twenty-five for the combatants. Thither thronged the nobles, priests, and commons—all excepting the old King, who, detesting such scenes of blood, retired to his residence, and devolved the charge of the field upon the Earl of Errol, Lord High Constable, to whose office it more particularly belonged. The Duke of Albany watched the whole proceeding with a close and wary eye. His nephew gave the scene the heedless degree of notice which corresponded with his character.

When the combatants appeared in the lists, nothing could be more striking than the contrast betwixt the manly, cheerful countenance of the smith, whose sparkling bright eye seemed already beaming with the victory he hoped for, and the sullen, downcast aspect of the brutal Bonthron, who looked as if he were some obscene bird, driven into sunshine out of the shelter of its darksome haunts. They made oath severally, each to the truth of his quarrel—a ceremony which Henry Gow performed with serene and manly confidence, Bonthron with a dogged resolution, which induced the Duke of Rothsay to say to the High Constable: "Didst thou ever, my dear Errol, behold such a mixture of malignity, cruelty, and I think fear, as in that fellow's countenance?"

"He is not comely," said the Earl, "but a powerful knave as I have seen."

"I'll gage a hog'shead of wine with you, my good lord, that he loses the day. Henry the armourer is as strong as he, and much more active; and then look at his bold bearing! There is something in that other fellow that is loathsome to look upon. Let them yoke presently, my dear Constable, for I am sick of beholding him."

The High Constable then addressed the widow, who, in her deep weeds, and having her children still beside her, occupied a chair within the lists: "Woman, do you willingly accept of this man, Henry the Smith, to do battle as your champion in this cause?"

"I do—I do, most willingly," answered Magdalen Proudfoot; "and may the blessing of God and St. John give him strength and fortune, since he strikes for the orphan and fatherless!"

"Then I pronounce this a fenced field of battle," said the Constable aloud. "Let no one dare, upon peril of his life, to interrupt this combat by word, speech, or look. Sound trumpets, and fight, combatants!"

The trumpets flourished, and the combatants, advancing from the opposite ends of the lists, with a steady and even pace, looked at each other attentively, well skilled in judging from the motion of the eye the direction in which a blow was meditated. They halted opposite to, and within reach of, each other, and in turn made more than one feint to strike, in order to ascertain the activity and vigilance of the opponent. At length, whether weary of these manoeuvres, or fearing lest in a contest so conducted his unwieldy strength would be foiled by the activity of the smith, Bonthron heaved up his axe for a downright blow, adding the whole strength of his sturdy arms to the weight of the weapon in its descent. The smith, however, avoided the stroke by stepping aside; for it was too forcible to be controlled by any guard which he could have interposed. Ere Bonthron recovered guard, Henry struck him a sidelong blow on the steel headpiece, which prostrated him on the ground.

"Confess, or die," said the victor, placing his foot on the body of the vanquished, and holding to his throat the point of the axe, which terminated in a spike or poniard.

"I will confess," said the villain, glaring wildly upwards on the sky. "Let me rise."

"Not till you have yielded," said Harry Smith.

"I do yield," again murmured Bonthron, and Henry proclaimed aloud that his antagonist was defeated.

The Dukes of Rothsay and Albany, the High Constable, and the Dominican prior now entered the lists, and, addressing Bonthron, demanded if he acknowledged himself vanquished.

"I do," answered the miscreant.

"And guilty of the murder of Oliver Proudfoot?"

"I am; but I mistook him for another."

"And whom didst thou intend to slay?" said the prior. "Confess, my son, and merit thy pardon in another world for with this thou hast little more to do."

"I took the slain man," answered the discomfited combatant, "for him whose hand has struck me down, whose foot now presses me."

"Blessed be the saints!" said the prior; "now all those who doubt the virtue of the holy ordeal may have their eyes opened to their error. Lo, he is trapped in the snare which he laid for the guiltless."

"I scarce ever saw the man," said the smith. "I never did wrong to him or his. Ask him, an it please your reverence, why he should have thought of slaying me treacherously."

"It is a fitting question," answered the prior. "Give glory where it is due, my son, even though it is manifested by thy shame. For what reason wouldst thou have waylaid this armourer, who says he never wronged thee?"

"He had wronged him whom I served," answered Bonthron, "and I meditated the deed by his command."

"By whose command?" asked the prior.

Bonthron was silent for an instant, then growled out: "He is too mighty for me to name."

"Hearken, my son," said the churchman; "tarry but a brief hour, and the mighty and the mean of this earth shall to thee alike be empty sounds. The sledge is even now preparing to drag thee to the place of execution. Therefore, son, once more I charge thee to consult thy soul's weal by glorifying Heaven, and speaking the truth. Was it thy master, Sir John Ramorny, that stirred thee to so foul a deed?"

"No," answered the prostrate villain, "it was a greater than he." And at the same time he pointed with his finger to the Prince.

"Wretch!" said the astonished Duke of Rothsay; "do you dare to hint that I was your instigator?"

"You yourself, my lord," answered the unblushing ruffian.

"Die in thy falsehood, accursed slave!" said the Prince; and, drawing his sword, he would have pierced his calumniator, had not the Lord High Constable interposed with word and action.

"Your Grace must forgive my discharging mine office: this caitiff must be delivered into the hands of the executioner. He is unfit to be dealt with by any other, much less by your Highness."

"What! noble earl," said Albany aloud, and with much real or affected emotion, "would you let the dog pass alive from hence, to poison the people's ears with false accusations against the Prince of Scotland? I say, cut him to mammoicks upon the spot!"

"Your Highness will pardon me," said the Earl of Errol; "I must protect him till his doom is executed."

"Then let him be gagged instantly," said Albany. "And you, my royal nephew, why stand you there fixed in astonishment? Call your resolution up—speak to the prisoner—swear—protest by all that is sacred that you knew not of this felon deed. See how the people look on each other and whisper apart! My life on't that this lie spreads faster than any Gospel truth. Speak to them, royal kinsman, no matter what you say, so you be constant in denial."

"What, sir," said Rothsay, starting from his pause of surprise and mortification, and turning haughtily towards his uncle; "would you have me gage my royal word against that of an abject recreant? Let those who can believe the son of their sovereign, the descendant of Bruce, capable of laying ambush for the life of a poor mechanic, enjoy the pleasure of thinking the villain's tale true."

"That will not I for one," said the smith, bluntly. "I never did aught but what was in honour towards his royal Grace the Duke of Rothsay, and never received unkindness from him in word, look, or deed; and I cannot think he would have given aim to such base practice."

"Was it in honour that you threw his Highness from the ladder in Curfew Street upon Fastern's [St. Valentine's] Even?" said Bonthron; "or think you the favour was received kindly or unkindly?"

This was so boldly said, and seemed so plausible, that it shook the smith's opinion of the Prince's innocence.

"Alas, my lord," said he, looking sorrowfully towards Rothsay, "could your Highness seek an innocent fellow's life for doing his duty by a helpless maiden? I would rather have died in these lists than live to hear it said of the Bruce's heir!"

"Thou art a good fellow, Smith," said the Prince; "but I cannot expect thee to judge more wisely than others. Away with that convict to the gallows, and gibbet him alive as you will, that he may speak falsehood and spread scandal on us to the last prolonged moment of his existence!"

So saying, the Prince turned away from the lists, disdaining to notice the gloomy looks cast towards him, as the crowd made slow and reluctant way for him to pass, and expressing neither surprise nor displeasure at a deep, hollow murmur, or groan, which accompanied his retreat. Only a few of his own immediate followers attended him from the field, though various persons of distinction had come there in his train. Even the lower class of citizens ceased to follow the unhappy Prince, whose former indifferent reputation had exposed him to so many charges of impropriety and levity, and around whom there seemed now darkening suspicions of the most atrocious nature.

He took his slow and thoughtful way to the church of the Dominicans; but the ill news, which flies proverbially fast, had reached his father's place of retirement before he himself appeared. On entering the palace and inquiring for the King, the Duke of Rothsay was surprised to be informed that he was in deep consultation with the Duke of Albany, who, mounting on horseback as the Prince left the lists, had reached the convent before him. He was about to use the privilege of his rank and birth to enter the royal apartment, when MacLouis, the commander of the guard of Brandanes, gave him to understand, in the most respectful terms, that he had special instructions which forbade his admittance.

"Go at least, MacLouis, and let them know that I wait their pleasure," said the Prince. "If my uncle desires to have the credit of shutting the father's apartment against the son, it will gratify him to know that I am attending in the outer hall like a lackey."

"May it please you," said MacLouis, with hesitation, "if your Highness would consent to retire just now, and to wait awhile in patience, I will send to acquaint you when the Duke of Albany goes; and I doubt not that his Majesty will then admit your Grace to his presence. At present, your Highness must forgive me, it is impossible you can have access."

"I understand you, MacLouis; but go, nevertheless, and obey my commands."

The officer went accordingly, and returned with a message that the King was indisposed, and on the point of retiring to his private chamber; but that the Duke of Albany would presently wait upon the Prince of Scotland.

It was, however, a full half hour ere the Duke of Albany appeared—a period of time which Rothsay spent partly in moody silence, and partly in idle talk with MacLouis and the Brandanes, as the levity or irritability of his temper obtained the ascendant.

At length the Duke came, and with him the lord High Constable, whose countenance expressed much sorrow and embarrassment.

"Fair kinsman," said the Duke of Albany, "I grieve to say that it is my royal brother's opinion that it will be best, for the honour of the royal family, that your Royal Highness do restrict yourself for a time to the seclusion of the High Constable's lodgings, and accept of the noble Earl here present for your principal, if not sole, companion until the scandals which have been this day spread abroad shall be refuted or forgotten."

"How is this, my lord of Errol?" said the Prince in astonishment. "Is your house to be my jail, and is your lordship to be my jailer?"

"The saints forbid, my lord," said the Earl of Errol "but it is my unhappy duty to obey the commands of your father, by considering your Royal Highness for some time as being under my ward."

"The Prince—the heir of Scotland, under the ward of the High Constable! What reason can be given for this? is the blighting speech of a convicted recreant of strength sufficient to tarnish my royal escutcheon?"

"While such accusations are not refuted and denied, my kinsman," said the Duke of Albany, "they will contaminate that of a monarch."

"Denied, my lord!" exclaimed the Prince; "by whom are they asserted, save by a wretch too infamous, even by his own confession, to be credited for a moment, though a beggar's character, not a prince's, were impeached? Fetch him hither, let the rack be shown to him; you will soon hear him retract the calumny which he dared to assert!"

"The gibbet has done its work too surely to leave Bonthron sensible to the rack," said the Duke of Albany. "He has been executed an hour since."

"And why such haste, my lord?" said the Prince; "know you it looks as if there were practice in it to bring a stain on my name?"

"The custom is universal, the defeated combatant in the ordeal of battle is instantly transferred from the lists to the gallows. And yet, fair kinsman," continued the Duke of Albany, "if you had boldly and strongly denied the imputation, I would have judged right to keep the wretch alive for further investigation; but as your Highness was silent, I deemed it best to stifle the scandal in the breath of him that uttered it."

"St. Mary, my lord, but this is too insulting! Do you, my uncle and kinsman, suppose me guilty of prompting such an useless and unworthy action as that which the slave confessed?"

"It is not for me to bandy question with your Highness, otherwise I would ask whether you also mean to deny the scarce less unworthy, though less bloody, attack upon the house in Couvrefew Street? Be not angry with me, kinsman; but, indeed, your sequestering yourself for some brief space from the court, were it only during the King's residence in this city, where so much offence has been given, is imperiously demanded."

Rothsay paused when he heard this exhortation, and, looking at the Duke in a very marked manner, replied:

"Uncle, you are a good huntsman. You have pitched your toils with much skill, but you would have been foiled, notwithstanding, had not the stag rushed among the nets of free will. God speed you, and may you have the profit by this matter which your measures deserve. Say to my father, I obey his arrest. My Lord High Constable, I wait only your pleasure to attend you to your lodgings. Since I am to lie in ward, I could not have desired a kinder or more courteous warden."

The interview between the uncle and nephew being thus concluded, the Prince retired with the Earl of Errol to his apartments; the citizens whom they met in the streets passing to the further side when they observed the Duke of Rothsay, to escape the necessity of saluting one whom they had been taught to consider as a ferocious as well as unprincipled libertine. The Constable's lodgings received the owner and his princely guest, both glad to leave the streets, yet neither feeling easy in the situation which they occupied with regard to each other within doors.

We must return to the lists after the combat had ceased, and when the nobles had withdrawn. The crowds were now separated into two distinct bodies. That which made the smallest in number was at the same time the most distinguished for respectability, consisting of the better class of inhabitants of Perth, who were congratulating the successful champion and each other upon the triumphant conclusion to which they had brought their feud with the courtiers. The magistrates were so much elated on the occasion, that they entreated Sir Patrick Charteris's acceptance of a collation in the town hall. To this Henry, the hero of the day, was of course invited, or he was rather commanded to attend. He listened to the summons with great embarrassment, for it may be readily believed his heart was with Catharine Glover. But the advice of his father Simon decided him. That veteran citizen had a natural and becoming deference for the magistracy of the Fair City; he entertained a high estimation of all honours which flowed from such a source, and thought that his intended son in law would do wrong not to receive them with gratitude.

"Thou must not think to absent thyself from such a solemn occasion, son Henry," was his advice. "Sir Patrick Charteris is to be there himself, and I think it will be a rare occasion for thee to gain his goodwill. It is like he may order of thee a new suit of harness; and I myself heard worthy Bailie Craigdallie say there was a talk of furbishing up the city's armoury. Thou must not neglect the good trade, now that thou takest on thee an expensive family."

"Tush, father Glover," answered the embarrassed victor, "I lack no custom; and thou knowest there is Catharine, who may wonder at my absence, and have her ear abused once more by tales of glee maidens and I wot not what."

"Fear not for that," said the glover, "but go, like an obedient burgess, where thy betters desire to have thee. I do not deny that it will cost thee some trouble to make thy peace with Catharine about this duel; for she thinks herself wiser in such matters than king and council, kirk and canons, provost and bailies. But I will take up the quarrel with her myself, and will so work for thee, that, though she may receive thee tomorrow with somewhat of a chiding, it shall melt into tears and smiles, like an April morning, that begins with a mild shower. Away with thee, then, my son, and be constant to the time, tomorrow morning after mass."

The smith, though reluctantly, was obliged to defer to the reasoning of his proposed father in law, and, once determined to accept the honour destined for him by the fathers of the city, he extricated himself from the crowd, and hastened home to put on his best apparel; in which he presently afterwards repaired to the council house, where the ponderous oak table seemed to bend under the massy dishes of choice Tay salmon and delicious sea fish from Dundee, being the dainties which the fasting season permitted, whilst neither wine, ale, nor metheglin were wanting to wash them down. The waits, or minstrels of the burgh, played during the repast, and in the intervals of the music one of them recited With great emphasis a long poetical account of the battle of Blackearnside, fought by Sir William Wallace and his redoubted captain and friend, Thomas of Longueville, against the English general Seward—a theme perfectly familiar to all the guests, who, nevertheless, more tolerant than their descendants, listened as if it had all the zest of novelty. It was complimentary to the ancestor of the Knight of Kinfauns, doubtless, and to other Perthshire families, in passages which the audience applauded vociferously, whilst they pledged each other in mighty draughts to the memory of the heroes who had fought by the side of the Champion of Scotland. The health of Henry Wynd was quaffed with repeated shouts, and the provost announced publicly, that the magistrates were consulting how they might best invest him with some distinguished privilege or honorary reward, to show how highly his fellow citizens valued his courageous exertions.

"Nay, take it not thus, an it like your worships," said the smith, with his usual blunt manner, "lest men say that valour must be rare in Perth when they reward a man for fighting for the right of a forlorn widow. I am sure there are many scores of stout burghers in the town who would have done this day's dargue as well or better than I. For, in good sooth, I ought to have cracked yonder fellow's head piece like an earthen pipkin—ay, and would have done it, too, if it had not been one which I myself tempered for Sir John Ramorny. But, an the Fair City think my service of any worth, I will conceive it far more than acquitted by any aid which you may afford from the common good to the support of the widow Magdalen and her poor orphans."

"That may well be done," said Sir Patrick Charteris, "and yet leave the Fair City rich enough to pay her debts to Henry Wynd, of which every man of us is a better judge than him self, who is blinded with an unavailing nicety, which men call modesty. And if the burgh be too poor for this, the provost will bear his share. The Rover's golden angels have not all taken flight yet."

The beakers were now circulated, under the name of a cup of comfort to the widow, and anon flowed around once more to the happy memory of the murdered Oliver, now so bravely avenged. In short, it was a feast so jovial that all agreed nothing was wanting to render it perfect but the presence of the bonnet maker himself, whose calamity had occasioned the meeting, and who had usually furnished the standing jest at such festive assemblies. Had his attendance been possible, it was drily observed by Bailie Craigdallie, he would certainly have claimed the success of the day, and vouched himself the avenger of his own murder.

At the sound of the vesper bell the company broke up, some of the graver sort going to evening prayers, where, with half shut eyes and shining countenances, they made a most orthodox and edifying portion of a Lenten congregation; others to their own homes, to tell over the occurrences of the fight and feast, for the information of the family circle; and some, doubtless, to the licensed freedoms of some tavern, the door of which Lent did not keep so close shut as the forms of the church required. Henry returned to the wynd, warm with the good wine and the applause of his fellow citizens, and fell asleep to dream of perfect happiness and Catharine Glover.

We have said that, when the combat was decided, the spectators were divided into two bodies. Of these, when the more respectable portion attended the victor in joyous procession, much the greater number, or what might be termed the rabble, waited upon the subdued and sentenced Bonthron, who was travelling in a different direction, and for a very opposite purpose. Whatever may be thought of the comparative attractions of the house of mourning and of feasting under other circumstances, there can be little doubt which will draw most visitors, when the question is, whether we would witness miseries which we are not to share, or festivities of which we are not to partake. Accordingly, the tumbrel in which the criminal was conveyed to execution was attended by far the greater proportion of the inhabitants of Perth.

A friar was seated in the same car with the murderer, to whom he did not hesitate to repeat, under the seal of confession, the same false asseveration which he had made upon the place of combat, which charged the Duke of Rothsay with being director of the ambushade by which the unfortunate bonnet maker had suffered. The same falsehood he disseminated among the crowd, averring, with unblushing effrontery, to those who were nearest to the car, that he owed his death to his having been willing to execute the Duke of Rothsay's pleasure. For a time he repeated these words, sullenly and doggedly, in the manner of one reciting a task, or a liar who endeavours by reiteration to obtain a credit for his words which he is internally sensible they do not deserve. But when he lifted up his eyes, and beheld in the distance the black outline of a gallows, at least forty feet high, with its ladder and its fatal cord, rising against the horizon, he became suddenly silent, and the friar could observe that he trembled very much.

"Be comforted, my son," said the good priest, "you have confessed the truth, and received absolution. Your penitence will be accepted according to your sincerity; and though you have been a man of bloody hands and cruel heart, yet, by the church's prayers, you shall be in due time assoilzied from the penal fires of purgatory."

These assurances were calculated rather to augment than to diminish the terrors of the culprit, who was agitated by doubts whether the mode suggested for his preservation from death would to a certainty be effectual, and some suspicion whether there was really any purpose of employing them in his favour, for he knew his master well enough to be aware of the indifference with which he would sacrifice one who might on some future occasion be a dangerous evidence against him.

His doom, however, was sealed, and there was no escaping from it. They slowly approached the fatal tree, which was erected on a bank by the river's side, about half a mile from the walls of the city—a site chosen that the body of the wretch, which was to remain food for the carrion crows, might be seen from a distance in every direction. Here the priest delivered Bonthron to the executioner, by whom he was assisted up the ladder, and to all appearance despatched according to the usual forms of the law. He seemed to struggle for life for a minute, but soon after hung still and inanimate. The executioner, after remaining upon duty for more than half an hour, as if to permit the last spark of life to be extinguished, announced to the admirers of such spectacles that the irons for the permanent suspension of the carcass not having been got ready, the concluding ceremony of disembowelling the dead body and attaching it finally to the gibbet would be deferred till the next morning at sunrise.

Notwithstanding the early hour which he had named, Master Smotherwell had a reasonable attendance of rabble at the place of execution, to see the final proceedings of justice with its victim. But great was the astonishment and resentment of these amateurs to find that the dead body had been removed from the gibbet. They were not, however, long at a loss to guess the cause of its disappearance. Bonthron had been the follower of a baron whose estates lay in Fife, and was himself a native of that province. What was more natural than that some of the Fife men, whose boats were frequently plying on the river, should have clandestinely removed the body of their countryman from the place of public shame? The crowd vented their rage against Smotherwell for not completing his job on the preceding evening; and had not he and his assistant betaken themselves to a boat, and escaped across the Tay, they would have run some risk of being pelted to death. The event, however, was too much in the spirit of the times to be much wondered at. Its real cause we shall explain in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Let gallows gape for dogs, let men go free.

Henry V.

The incidents of a narrative of this kind must be adapted to each other, as the wards of a key must tally accurately with those of the lock to which it belongs. The reader, however gentle, will not hold himself obliged to rest satisfied with the mere fact that such and such occurrences took place, which is, generally speaking, all that in ordinary life he can know of what is passing around him; but he is desirous, while reading for amusement, of knowing the interior movements occasioning the course of events. This is a legitimate and reasonable curiosity; for every man hath a right to open and examine the mechanism of his own watch, put together for his proper use, although he is not permitted to pry into the interior of the timepiece which, for general information, is displayed on the town steeple. It would be, therefore, uncourteous to leave my readers under any doubt concerning the agency which removed the assassin Bonthron from the gallows—an event which some of the Perth citizens ascribed to the foul fiend himself, while others were content to lay it upon the natural dislike of Bonthron's countrymen of Fife to see him hanging on the river side, as a spectacle dishonourable to their province.

About midnight succeeding the day when the execution had taken place, and while the inhabitants of Perth were deeply buried in slumber, three men muffled in their cloaks, and bearing a dark lantern, descended the alleys of a garden which led from the house occupied by Sir John Ramorny to the banks of the Tay, where a small boat lay moored to a landing place, or little projecting pier. The wind howled in a low and melancholy manner through the leafless shrubs and bushes; and a pale moon "waded," as it is termed in Scotland, amongst drifting clouds, which seemed to threaten rain. The three individuals entered the boat with great precaution to escape observation. One of them was a tall, powerful man; another short and bent downwards; the third middle sized, and apparently younger than his companions, well made, and active. Thus much the imperfect light could discover. They seated themselves in the boat and unmoored it from the pier.

"We must let her drift with the current till we pass the bridge, where the burghers still keep guard; and you know the proverb, 'A Perth arrow hath a perfect flight,'" said the most youthful of the party, who assumed the office of helmsman, and pushed the boat off from the pier; whilst the others took the oars, which were muffled, and rowed with all precaution till they attained the middle of the river; they then ceased their efforts, lay upon their oars, and trusted to the steersman for keeping her in mid channel.

In this manner they passed unnoticed or disregarded beneath the stately Gothic arches of the old bridge, erected by the magnificent patronage of Robert Bruce in 1329, and carried away by an inundation in 1621. Although they heard the voices of a civic watch, which, since these disturbances commenced, had been nightly maintained in that important pass, no challenge was given; and when they were so far down the stream as to be out of hearing of these guardians of the night, they began to row, but still with precaution, and to converse, though in a low tone.

"You have found a new trade, comrade, since I left you," said one of the rowers to the other. "I left you engaged in tending a sick knight, and I find you employed in purloining a dead body from the gallows."

"A living body, so please your squirehood, Master Buncle, or else my craft hath failed of its purpose."

"So I am told, Master Pottercarrier; but, saving your clerkship, unless you tell me your trick, I will take leave to doubt of its success."

"A simple toy, Master Buncle, not likely to please a genius so acute as that of your valiancie. Marry, thus it is. This suspension of the human body, which the vulgar call hanging, operates death by apoplexia—that is, the blood being unable to return to the heart by the compression of the veins, it rushes to the brain, and the man dies. Also, and as an additional cause of dissolution, the lungs no longer receive the needful supply of the vital air, owing to the ligature of the cord around the thorax; and hence the patient perishes."

"I understand that well enough. But how is such a revulsion of blood to the brain to be prevented, sir mediciner?" said the third person, who was no other than Ramorny's page, Eviot.

"Marry, then," replied Dwining, "hang me the patient up in such fashion that the carotid arteries shall not be compressed, and the blood will not determine to the brain, and apoplexia will not take place; and again, if there be no ligature around the thorax, the lungs will be supplied with air, whether the man be hanging in the middle heaven or standing on the firm earth."

"All this I conceive," said Eviot; "but how these precautions can be reconciled with the execution of the sentence of hanging is what my dull brain cannot comprehend."

"Ah! good youth, thy valiancie hath spoiled a fair wit. Hadst thou studied with me, thou shouldst have learned things more difficult than this. But here is my trick. I get me certain bandages, made of the same substance with your young valiancie's horse girths, having especial care that they are of a kind which will not shrink on being strained, since that would spoil my experiment. One loop of this substance is drawn under each foot, and returns up either side of the leg to a cincture, with which it is united; these cinctures are connected by divers straps down the breast and back, in order to divide the weight. And there are sundry other conveniences for easing the patient, but the chief is this: the straps, or ligatures, are attached to a broad steel collar, curving outwards, and having a hook or two, for the better security of the halter, which the friendly executioner passes around that part of the machine, instead of applying it to the bare throat of the patient. Thus, when thrown off from the ladder, the sufferer will find himself suspended, not by his neck, if it please you, but by the steel circle, which supports the loops in which his feet are placed, and on which his weight really rests, diminished a little by similar supports under each arm. Thus, neither vein nor windpipe being compressed, the man will breathe as free, and his blood, saving from fright and novelty of situation, will flow as temperately as your valiancie's when you stand up in your stirrups to view a field of battle."

"By my faith, a quaint and rare device!" quoth Buncle.

"Is it not?" pursued the leech, "and well worth being known to such mounting spirits as your valiancies, since there is no knowing to what height Sir John Ramorny's pupils may arrive; and if these be such that it is necessary to descend from them by a rope, you may find my mode of management more convenient than the common practice. Marry, but you must be provided with a high collared doublet, to conceal the ring of steel, and, above all, such a bonus socius as Smother well to adjust the noose."

"Base poison vender," said Eviot, "men of our calling die on the field of battle."

"I will save the lesson, however," replied Buncle, "in case of some pinching occasion. But what a night the bloody hangdog Bonthron must have had of it, dancing a pavise in mid air to the music of his own shackles, as the night wind swings him that way and this!"

"It were an alms deed to leave him there," said Eviot; "for his descent from the gibbet will but encourage him to new murders. He knows but two elements—drunkenness and bloodshed."

"Perhaps Sir John Ramorny might have been of your opinion," said Dwining; "but it would first have been necessary to cut out the rogue's tongue, lest he had told strange tales from his airy height. And there are other reasons that it concerns not your valiancies to know. In truth, I myself have been generous in serving him, for the fellow is built as strong as Edinburgh Castle, and his anatomy would have matched any that is in the chirurgical hall of Padua. But tell me, Master Buncle, what news bring you from the doughty Douglas?"

"They may tell that know," said Buncle. "I am the dull ass that bears the message, and kens nought of its purport. The safer for myself, perhaps. I carried letters from the Duke of Albany and from Sir John Ramorny to the Douglas, and he looked black as a northern tempest when he opened them. I brought them answers from the Earl, at which they smiled like the sun when the harvest storm is closing over him. Go to your ephemerides, leech, and conjure the meaning out of that."

"Methinks I can do so without much cost of wit," said the surgeon; "but yonder I see in the pale moonlight our dead alive. Should he have screamed out to any chance passenger, it were a curious interruption to a night journey to be hailed from the top of such a gallows as that. Hark, methinks I do hear his groans amid the whistling of the wind and the creaking of the chains. So—fair and softly; make fast the boat with the grappling, and get out the casket with my matters, we would be better for a little fire, but the light might bring observation on us. Come on, my men of valour, march warily, for we are bound for the gallows foot. Follow with the lantern; I trust the ladder has been left.

*"Sing, three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men are we,
Thou on the land, and I on the sand,
And Jack on the gallows tree."*

As they advanced to the gibbet, they could plainly hear groans, though uttered in a low tone. Dwining ventured to give a low cough once or twice, by way of signal; but receiving no answer, "We had best make haste," said he to his companions, "for our friend must be in extremis, as he gives no answer to the signal which announces the arrival of help. Come, let us to the gear. I will go up the ladder first and cut the rope. Do you two follow, one after another, and take fast hold of the body, so that he fall not when the halter is unloosed. Keep sure gripe, for which the bandages will afford you convenience. Bethink you that, though he plays an owl's part tonight, he hath no wings, and to fall out of a halter may be as dangerous as to fall into one."

While he spoke thus with sneer and gibe, he ascended the ladder, and having ascertained that the men at arms who followed him had the body in their hold, he cut the rope, and then gave his aid to support the almost lifeless form of the criminal.

By a skilful exertion of strength and address, the body of Bonthron was placed safely on the ground; and the faint yet certain existence of life having been ascertained, it was thence transported to the river side, where, shrouded by the bank, the party might be best concealed from observation, while the leech employed himself in the necessary means of recalling animation, with which he had taken care to provide himself.

For this purpose he first freed the recovered person from his shackles, which the executioner had left unlocked on purpose, and at the same time disengaged the complicated envelopes and bandages by which he had been suspended. It was some time ere Dwining's efforts succeeded; for, in despite of the skill with which his machine had been constructed, the straps designed to support the body had stretched so considerably as to occasion the sense of suffocation becoming extremely overpowering. But the address of the surgeon triumphed over all obstacles; and, after sneezing and stretching himself, with one or two brief convulsions, Bonthron gave decided proofs of reanimation, by arresting the hand of the operator as it was in the act of dropping strong waters on his breast and throat, and, directing the bottle which contained them to his lips, he took, almost perforce, a considerable gulp of the contents.

"It is spiritual essence double distilled," said the astonished operator, "and would blister the throat and burn the stomach of any other man. But this extraordinary beast is so unlike all other human creatures, that I should not wonder if it brought him to the complete possession of his faculties."

Bonthron seemed to confirm this: he started with a strong convulsion, sat up, stared around, and indicated some consciousness of existence.

"Wine—wine," were the first words which he articulated.

The leech gave him a draught of medicated wine, mixed with water. He rejected it, under the dishonourable epithet of "kennel washings," and again uttered the words, "Wine—wine."

"Nay, take it to thee, i' the devil's name," said the leech, "since none but he can judge of thy constitution."

A draught, long and deep enough to have discomposed the intellects of any other person, was found effectual in recalling those of Bonthron to a more perfect state; though he betrayed no recollection of where he was or what had befallen him, and in his brief and sullen manner asked why he was brought to the river side at this time of night.

"Another frolic of the wild Prince, for drenching me as he did before. Nails and blood, but I would—"

"Hold thy peace," interrupted Eviot, "and be thankful, I pray you, if you have any thankfulness in you, that thy body is not crow's meat and thy soul in a place where water is too scarce to duck thee."

"I begin to bethink me," said the ruffian; and raising the flask to his mouth, which he saluted with a long and hearty kiss, he set the empty bottle on the earth, dropped his head on his bosom, and seemed to muse for the purpose of arranging his confused recollections.

"We can abide the issue of his meditations no longer," said Dwining; "he will be better after he has slept. Up, sir! you have been riding the air these some hours; try if the water be not an easier mode of conveyance. Your valours must lend me a hand. I can no more lift this mass than I could raise in my arms a slaughtered bull."

"Stand upright on thine own feet, Bonthron, now we have placed thee upon them," said Eviot.

"I cannot," answered the patient. "Every drop of blood tingles in my veins as if it had pinpoints, and my knees refuse to bear their burden. What can be the meaning of all this? This is some practice of thine, thou dog leech!"

"Ay—ay, so it is, honest Bonthron," said Dwining—"a practice thou shalt thank me for when thou comest to learn it. In the mean while, stretch down in the stern of that boat, and let me wrap this cloak about thee."

Assisted into the boat accordingly, Bonthron was deposited there as conveniently as things admitted of. He answered their attentions with one or two snorts resembling the grunt of a boar who has got some food particularly agreeable to him.

"And now, Buncle," said the surgeon, "your valiant squireship knows your charge. You are to carry this lively cargo by the river to Newburgh, where you are to dispose of him as you wot of; meantime, here are his shackles and bandages, the marks of his confinement and liberation. Bind them up together, and fling them into the deepest pool you pass over; for, found in your possession, they might tell tales against us all. This low, light breath of wind from the west will permit you to use a sail as soon as the light comes in and you are tired of rowing. Your other valiancie, Master Page Eviot, must be content to return to Perth with me afoot, for here severs our fair company. Take with thee the lantern, Buncle, for thou wilt require it more than we, and see thou send me back my flasket."

As the pedestrians returned to Perth, Eviot expressed his belief that Bonthron's understanding would never recover the shock which terror had inflicted upon it, and which appeared to him to have disturbed all the faculties of his mind, and in particular his memory.

"It is not so, an it please your pagehood," said the leech. "Bonthron's intellect, such as it is, hath a solid character: it will but vacillate to and fro like a pendulum which hath been put in motion, and then will rest in its proper point of gravity. Our memory is, of all our powers of mind, that which is peculiarly liable to be suspended. Deep intoxication or sound sleep alike destroy it, and yet it returns when the drunkard becomes sober or the sleeper is awakened. Terror sometimes produces the same effect. I knew at Paris a criminal condemned to die by the halter, who suffered the sentence accordingly, showing no particular degree of timidity upon the scaffold, and behaving and expressing himself as men in the same condition are wont to do. Accident did for him what a little ingenious practice hath done for our amiable friend from whom we but now parted. He was cut down and given to his friends before life was extinct, and I had the good fortune to restore him. But, though he recovered in other particulars, he remembered but little of his trial and sentence. Of his confession on the morning of his execution—he! he! he! (in his usual chuckling manner)—he remembered him not a word. Neither of leaving the prison, nor of his passage to the Greve, where he suffered, nor of the devout speeches with which he—he! he! he!—edified—he! he! he!—so many good Christians, nor of ascending the fatal tree, nor of taking the fatal leap, had my revenant the slightest recollection.' But here we reach the point where we must separate; for it were unfit, should we meet any of the watch, that we be found together, and it were also prudent that we enter the city by different gates. My profession forms an excuse for my going and coming at all times. Your valiant pagehood will make such explanation as may seem sufficing."

"I shall make my will a sufficient excuse if I am interrogated," said the haughty young man. "Yet I will avoid interruption, if possible. The moon is quite obscured, and the road as black as a wolf's mouth."

"Tut," said the physicianer, "let not your valour care for that: we shall tread darker paths ere it be long."

Without inquiring into the meaning of these evil boding sentences, and indeed hardly listening to them in the pride and recklessness of his nature, the page of Ramorny parted from his ingenious and dangerous companion, and each took his own way.

CHAPTER XXV.

The course of true love never did run smooth.

SHAKESPEARE.

The ominous anxiety of our armourer had not played him false. When the good glover parted with his intended son in law, after the judicial combat had been decided, he found what he indeed had expected, that his fair daughter was in no favourable disposition towards her lover. But although he perceived that Catharine was cold, restrained, collected, had cast away the appearance of mortal passion, and listened with a reserve, implying contempt, to the most splendid description he could give her of the combat in the Skinners' Yards, he was determined not to take the least notice of her altered manner, but to speak of her marriage with his son Henry as a thing which must of course take place. At length, when she began, as on a former occasion, to intimate that her attachment to the armourer did not exceed the bounds of friendship, that she was resolved never to marry, that the pretended judicial combat was a mockery of the divine will, and of human laws, the glover not unnaturally grew angry.

"I cannot read thy thoughts, wench; nor can I pretend to guess under what wicked delusion it is that you kiss a declared lover, suffer him to kiss you, run to his house when a report is spread of his death, and fling yourself into his arms when you find him alone [alive]. All this shows very well in a girl prepared to obey her parents in a match sanctioned by her father; but such tokens of intimacy, bestowed on one whom a young woman cannot esteem, and is determined not to marry, are uncommon and unmaidenly. You have already been more bounteous of your favours to Henry Smith than your mother, whom God assoilzie, ever was to me before I married her. I tell thee, Catharine, this trifling with the love of an honest man is what I neither can, will, nor ought to endure. I have given my consent to the match, and I insist it shall take place without delay, and that you receive Henry Wynd tomorrow, as a man whose bride you are to be with all despatch."

"A power more potent than yours, father, will say no," replied Catharine.

"I will risk it; my power is a lawful one, that of a father over a child, and an erring child," answered her father. "God and man allow of my influence."

"Then, may Heaven help us," said Catharine; "for, if you are obstinate in your purpose, we are all lost."

"We can expect no help from Heaven," said the glover, "when we act with indiscretion. I am clerk enough myself to know that; and that your causeless resistance to my will is sinful, every priest will inform you. Ay, and more than that, you have spoken degradingly of the blessed appeal to God in the combat of ordeal. Take heed! for the Holy Church is awakened to watch her sheepfold, and to extirpate heresy by fire and steel; so much I warn thee of."

Catharine uttered a suppressed exclamation; and, with difficulty compelling herself to assume an appearance of composure, promised her father that, if he would spare her any farther discussion of the subject till tomorrow morning, she would then meet him, determined to make a full discovery of her sentiments.

With this promise Simon Glover was obliged to remain contented, though extremely anxious for the postponed explanation. It could not be levity or fickleness of character which induced his daughter to act with so much apparent inconsistency towards the man of his choice, and whom she had so lately unequivocally owned to be also the man of her own. What external force there could exist, of a kind powerful enough to change the resolutions she had so decidedly expressed within twenty-four hours, was a matter of complete mystery.

"But I will be as obstinate as she can be," thought the glover, "and she shall either marry Henry Smith without farther delay or old Simon Glover will know an excellent reason to the contrary."

The subject was not renewed during the evening; but early on the next morning, just at sun rising, Catharine knelt before the bed in which her parent still slumbered. Her heart sobbed as if it would burst, and her tears fell thick upon her father's face. The good old man awoke, looked up, crossed his child's forehead, and kissed her affectionately.

"I understand thee, Kate," he said; "thou art come to confession, and, I trust, art desirous to escape a heavy penance by being sincere."

Catharine was silent for an instant.

"I need not ask, my father, if you remember the Carthusian monk, Clement, and his preachings and lessons; at which indeed you assisted so often, that you cannot be ignorant men called you one of his converts, and with greater justice termed me so likewise?"

"I am aware of both," said the old man, raising himself on his elbow; "but I defy foul fame to show that I ever owned him in any heretical proposition, though I loved to hear him talk of the corruptions of the church, the misgovernment of the nobles, and the wild ignorance of the poor, proving, as it seemed to me, that the sole virtue of our commonweal, its strength and its estimation, lay among the burgher craft of the better class, which I received as comfortable doctrine, and creditable to the town. And if he preached other than right doctrine, wherefore did his superiors in the Carthusian convent permit it? If the shepherds turn a wolf in sheep's clothing into the flock, they should not blame the sheep for being worried."

"They endured his preaching, nay, they encouraged it," said Catharine, "while the vices of the laity, the contentions of the nobles, and the oppression of the poor were the subject of his censure, and they rejoiced in the crowds who, attracted to the Carthusian church, forsook those of the other convents. But the hypocrites—for such they are—joined with the other fraternities in accusing their preacher Clement, when, passing from censuring the crimes of the state, he began to display the pride, ignorance, and luxury of the churchmen themselves—their thirst of power, their usurpation over men's consciences, and their desire to augment their worldly wealth."

"For God's sake, Catharine," said her father, "speak within doors: your voice rises in tone and your speech in bitterness, your eyes sparkle. It is owing to this zeal in what concerns you no more than others that malicious persons fix upon you the odious and dangerous name of a heretic."

"You know I speak no more than what is truth," said Catharine, "and which you yourself have avouched often."

"By needle and buckskin, no!" answered the glover, hastily. "Wouldst thou have me avouch what might cost me life and limb, land and goods? For a full commission hath been granted for taking and trying heretics, upon whom is laid the cause of all late tumults and miscarriages; wherefore, few words are best, wench. I am ever of mind with the old maker:

"Since word is thrall and thought is free, Keep well thy tongue, I counsel thee."

"The counsel comes too late, father," answered Catharine, sinking down on a chair by her father's bedside. "The words have been spoken and heard; and it is indited against Simon Glover, burgess in Perth, that he hath spoken irreverent discourses of the doctrines of Holy Church."

"As I live by knife and needle," interrupted Simon, "it is a lie! I never was so silly as to speak of what I understood not."

"And hath slandered the anointed of the church, both regular and secular," continued Catharine.

"Nay, I will never deny the truth," said the glover: "an idle word I may have spoken at the ale bench, or over a pottle pot of wine, or in right sure company; but else, my tongue is not one to run my head into peril."

"So you think, my dearest father; but your slightest language has been espied, your best meaning phrases have been perverted, and you are in dittay as a gross railer against church and churchmen, and for holding discourse against them with loose and profligate persons, such as the deceased Oliver Proudfoot, the smith Henry of the Wynd, and others, set forth as commending the doctrines of Father Clement, whom they charge with seven rank heresies, and seek for with staff and spear, to try him to the death. But that," said Catharine, kneeling, and looking upwards with the aspect of one of those beauteous saints whom the Catholics have given to the fine arts—"that they shall never do. He hath escaped from the net of the fowler; and, I thank Heaven, it was by my means."

"Thy means, girl—art thou mad?" said the amazed glover.

"I will not deny what I glory in," answered Catharine: "it was by my means that Conachar was led to come hither with a party of men and carry off the old man, who is now far beyond the Highland line."

"Thou my rash—my unlucky child!" said the glover, "hast dared to aid the escape of one accused of heresy, and to invite Highlanders in arms to interfere with the administration of justice within burgh? Alas! thou hast offended both against the laws of the church and those of the realm. What—what would become of us, were this known?"

"It is known, my dear father," said the maiden, firmly—"known even to those who will be the most willing avengers of the deed."

"This must be some idle notion, Catharine, or some trick of those cogging priests and nuns; it accords not with thy late cheerful willingness to wed Henry Smith."

"Alas! dearest father, remember the dismal surprise occasioned by his reported death, and the joyful amazement at finding him alive; and deem it not wonder if I permitted myself, under your protection, to say more than my reflection justified. But then I knew not the worst, and thought the danger exaggerated. Alas I was yesterday fearfully undeceived, when the abbess herself came hither, and with her the Dominican. They showed me the commission, under the broad seal of Scotland, for inquiring into and punishing heresy; they showed me your name and my own in a list of suspected persons; and it was with tears—real tears, that the abbess conjured me to avert a dreadful fate by a speedy retreat into the cloister, and that the monk pledged his word that you should not be molested if I complied."

"The foul fiend take them both for weeping crocodiles!" said the glover.

"Alas!" replied Catharine, "complaint or anger will little help us; but you see I have had real cause for this present alarm."

"Alarm! call it utter ruin. Alas! my reckless child, where was your prudence when you ran headlong into such a snare?"

"Hear me, father," said Catharine; "there is still one mode of safety held out: it is one which I have often proposed, and for which I have in vain supplicated your permission."

"I understand you—the convent," said her father. "But, Catharine, what abbess or prioress would dare—"

"That I will explain to you, father, and it will also show the circumstances which have made me seem unsteady of resolution to a degree which has brought censure upon me from yourself and others. Our confessor, old Father Francis, whom I chose from the Dominican convent at your command—"

"Ay, truly," interrupted the glover; "and I so counselled and commanded thee, in order to take off the report that thy conscience was altogether under the direction of Father Clement."

"Well, this Father Francis has at different times urged and provoked me to converse on such matters as he judged I was likely to learn something of from the Carthusian preacher. Heaven forgive me my blindness! I fell into the snare, spoke freely, and, as he argued gently, as one who would fain be convinced, I even spoke warmly in defence of what I believed devoutly. The confessor assumed not his real aspect and betrayed not his secret purpose until he had learned all that I had to tell him. It was then that he threatened me with temporal punishment and with eternal condemnation. Had his threats reached me alone, I could have stood firm; for their cruelty on earth I could have endured, and their power beyond this life I have no belief in."

"For Heaven's sake!" said the glover, who was well nigh beside himself at perceiving at every new word the increasing extremity of his daughter's danger, "beware of blaspheming the Holy Church, whose arms are as prompt to strike as her ears are sharp to hear."

"To me," said the Maid of Perth, again looking up, "the terrors of the threatened denunciations would have been of little avail; but when they spoke of involving thee, my father, in the charge against me, I own I trembled, and desired to compromise. The Abbess Martha, of Elcho nunnery, being my mother's kinswoman, I told her my distresses, and obtained her promise that she would receive me, if, renouncing worldly love and thoughts of wedlock, I would take the veil in her sisterhood. She had conversation on the topic, I doubt not, with the Dominican Francis, and both joined in singing the same song.

"'Remain in the world,' said they, 'and thy father and thou shall be brought to trial as heretics; assume the veil, and the errors of both shall be forgiven and cancelled.' They spoke not even of recantation of errors of doctrine: all should be peace if I would but enter the convent."

"I doubt not—I doubt not," said Simon: "the old glover is thought rich, and his wealth would follow his daughter to the convent of Elcho, unless what the Dominicans might claim as their own share. So this was thy call to the veil, these thy objections to Henry Wynd?"

"Indeed, father, the course was urged on all hands, nor did my own mind recoil from it. Sir John Ramorny threatened me with the powerful vengeance of the young Prince, if I continued to repel his wicked suit; and as for poor Henry, it is but of late that I have discovered, to my own surprise—that—that I love his virtues more than I dislike his faults. Alas! the discovery has only been made to render my quitting the world more difficult than when I thought I had thee only to regret."

She rested her head on her hand and wept bitterly.

"All this is folly," said the glover. "Never was there an extremity so pinching, but what a wise man might find counsel if he was daring enough to act upon it. This has never been the land or the people over whom priests could rule in the name of Rome, without their usurpation being controlled. If they are to punish each honest burgher who says the monks love gold, and that the lives of some of them cry shame upon the doctrines they teach, why, truly, Stephen Smotherwell will not lack employment; and if all foolish maidens are to be secluded from the world because they follow the erring doctrines of a popular preaching friar, they must enlarge the nunneries and receive their inmates on slighter composition. Our privileges have been often defended against the Pope himself by our good monarchs of yore, and when he pretended to interfere with the temporal government of the kingdom, there wanted not a Scottish Parliament who told him his duty in a letter that should have been written in letters of gold. I have seen the epistle myself, and though I could not read it, the very sight of the seals of the right reverend prelates and noble and true barons which hung at it made my heart leap for joy. Thou shouldst not have kept this secret, my child—but it is no time to tax thee with thy fault. Go down, get me some food. I will mount instantly, and go to our Lord Provost and have his advice, and, as I trust, his protection and that of other true hearted Scottish nobles, who will not see a true man trodden down for an idle word."

"Alas! my father," said Catharine, "it was even this impetuosity which I dreaded. I knew if I made my plaint to you there would soon be fire and feud, as if religion, though sent to us by the Father of peace, were fit only to be the mother of discord; and hence I could now—even now—give up the world, and retire with my sorrow among the sisters of Elcho, would you but let me be the sacrifice. Only, father—comfort poor Henry when we are parted for ever; and do not—do not let him think of me too harshly. Say Catharine will never vex him more by her remonstrances, but that she will never forget him in her prayers."

"The girl hath a tongue that would make a Saracen weep," said her father, his own eyes sympathising with those of his daughter. "But I will not yield way to this combination between the nun and the priest to rob me of my only child. Away with you, girl, and let me don my clothes; and prepare yourself to obey me in what I may have to recommend for your safety. Get a few clothes together, and what valuables thou hast; also, take the keys of my iron box, which poor Henry Smith gave me, and divide what gold you find into two portions; put the one into a purse for thyself, and the other into the quilted girdle which I made on purpose to wear on journeys. Thus both shall be provided, in case fate should sunder us; in which event, God send the whirlwind may take the withered leaf and spare the green one! Let them make ready my horse instantly, and the white jennet that I bought for thee but a day since, hoping to see thee ride to St. John's Kirk with maids and matrons, as blythe a bride as ever crossed the holy threshold. But it skills not talking. Away, and remember that the saints help those who are willing to help themselves. Not a word in answer; begone, I say—no wilfulness now. The pilot in calm weather will let a sea boy trifle with the rudder; but, by my soul, when winds howl and waves arise, he stands by the helm himself. Away—no reply."

Catharine left the room to execute, as well as she might, the commands of her father, who, gentle in disposition and devotedly attached to his child, suffered her often, as it seemed, to guide and rule both herself and him; yet who, as she knew, was wont to claim filial obedience and exercise parental authority with sufficient strictness when the occasion seemed to require an enforcement of domestic discipline.

While the fair Catharine was engaged in executing her father's behests, and the good old glover was hastily attiring himself, as one who was about to take a journey, a horse's tramp was heard in the narrow street. The horseman was wrapped in his riding cloak, having the cape of it drawn up, as if to hide the under part of his face, while his bonnet was pulled over his brows, and a broad plume obscured his upper features. He sprung from the saddle, and Dorothy had scarce time to reply to his inquiries that the glover was in his bedroom, ere the stranger had ascended the stair and entered the sleeping apartment. Simon, astonished and

alarmed, and disposed to see in this early visitant an apparitor or sumner come to attach him and his daughter, was much relieved when, as the stranger doffed the bonnet and threw the skirt of the mantle from his face, he recognised the knightly provost of the Fair City, a visit from whom at any time was a favour of no ordinary degree, but, being made at such an hour, had something marvellous, and, connected with the circumstances of the times, even alarming.

"Sir Patrick Charteris!" said the glover. "This high honour done to your poor beadsman—"

"Hush!" said the knight, "there is no time for idle civilities. I came hither because a man is, in trying occasions, his own safest page, and I can remain no longer than to bid thee fly, good glover, since warrants are to be granted this day in council for the arrest of thy daughter and thee, under charge of heresy; and delay will cost you both your liberty for certain, and perhaps your lives."

"I have heard something of such a matter," said the glover, "and was this instant setting forth to Kinfauns to plead my innocence of this scandalous charge, to ask your lordship's counsel, and to implore your protection."

"Thy innocence, friend Simon, will avail thee but little before prejudiced judges; my advice is, in one word, to fly, and wait for happier times. As for my protection, we must tarry till the tide turns ere it will in any sort avail thee. But if thou canst lie concealed for a few days or weeks, I have little doubt that the churchmen, who, by siding with the Duke of Albany in court intrigue, and by alleging the decay of the purity of Catholic doctrine as the sole cause of the present national misfortunes, have, at least for the present hour, an irresistible authority over the King, will receive a check. In the mean while, however, know that King Robert hath not only given way to this general warrant for inquisition after heresy, but hath confirmed the Pope's nomination of Henry Wardlaw to be Archbishop of St. Andrews and Primate of Scotland; thus yielding to Rome those freedoms and immunities of the Scottish Church which his ancestors, from the time of Malcolm Canmore, have so boldly defended. His brave fathers would have rather subscribed a covenant with the devil than yielded in such a matter to the pretensions of Rome."

"Alas, and what remedy?"

"None, old man, save in some sudden court change," said Sir Patrick. "The King is but like a mirror, which, having no light itself, reflects back with equal readiness any which is placed near to it for the time. Now, although the Douglas is banded with Albany, yet the Earl is unfavourable to the high claims of those domineering priests, having quarrelled with them about the exactions which his retinue hath raised on the Abbot of Arbroath. He will come back again with a high hand, for report says the Earl of March hath fled before him. When he returns we shall have a changed world, for his presence will control Albany; especially as many nobles, and I myself, as I tell you in confidence, are resolved to league with him to defend the general right. Thy exile, therefore, will end with his return to our court. Thou hast but to seek thee some temporary hiding place."

"For that, my lord," said the glover, "I can be at no loss, since I have just title to the protection of the high Highland chief, Gilchrist Maclan, chief of the Clan Quhele."

"Nay, if thou canst take hold of his mantle thou needs no help of any one else: neither Lowland churchman nor layman finds a free course of justice beyond the Highland frontier."

"But then my child, noble sir—my Catharine?" said the glover.

"Let her go with thee, man. The graddan cake will keep her white teeth in order, the goat's whey will make the blood spring to her cheek again, which these alarms have banished and even the Fair Maiden of Perth may sleep soft enough on a bed of Highland breckan."

"It is not from such idle respects, my lord, that I hesitate," said the glover. "Catharine is the daughter of a plain burgher, and knows not nicety of food or lodging. But the son of Maclan hath been for many years a guest in my house, and I am obliged to say that I have observed him looking at my daughter, who is as good as a betrothed bride, in a manner that, though I cared not for it in this lodging in Curfew Street, would give me some fear of consequences in a Highland glen, where I have no friend and Conachar many."

The knightly provost replied by a long whistle. "Whew! whew! Nay, in that case, I advise thee to send her to the nunnery at Elcho, where the abbess, if I forget not, is some relation of yours. Indeed, she said so herself, adding, that she loved her kinswoman well, together with all that belongs to thee, Simon."

"Truly, my lord, I do believe that the abbess hath so much regard for me, that she would willingly receive the trust of my daughter, and my whole goods and gear, into her sisterhood. Marry, her affection is something of a tenacious character, and would be loth to unloose its hold, either upon the wench or her tocher."

"Whew—whew!" again whistled the Knight of Kinfauns; "by the Thane's Cross, man, but this is an ill favoured pirl to wind: Yet it shall never be said the fairest maid in the Fair City was cooped up in a convent, like a kane hen in a cavey, and she about to be married to the bold burgess Henry Wynd. That tale shall not be told while I wear belt and spurs, and am called Provost of Perth."

"But what remede, my lord?" asked the glover.

"We must all take our share of the risk. Come, get you and your daughter presently to horse. You shall ride with me, and we'll see who dare gloom at you. The summons is not yet served on thee, and if they send an apparitor to Kinfauns without a warrant under the King's own hand, I make mine avow, by the Red Rover's soul! that he shall eat his writ, both wax and wether skin. To horse—to horse! and," addressing Catharine, as she entered at the moment, "you too, my pretty maid—"

"To horse, and fear not for your quarters; They thrive in law that trust in Charters."

In a minute or two the father and daughter were on horseback, both keeping an arrow's flight before the provost, by his direction, that they might not seem to be of the same company. They passed the eastern gate in some haste, and rode forward roundly until they were out of sight. Sir Patrick followed leisurely; but, when he was lost to the view of the warders, he spurred his mettled horse, and soon came up with the glover and Catharine, when a conversation ensued which throws light upon some previous passages of this history.

CHAPTER XXVI.

*Hail, land of bowmen! seed of those who scorn'd
To stoop the neck to wide imperial Rome—
Oh, dearest half of Albion sea walled!*

Albania (1737).

"I have been devising a mode," said the well meaning provost, "by which I may make you both secure for a week or two from the malice of your enemies, when I have little doubt I may see a changed world at court. But that I may the better judge what is to be done, tell me frankly, Simon, the nature of your connexion with Gilchrist Maclan, which leads you to repose such implicit confidence in him. You are a close observer of the rules of the city, and are aware of the severe penalties which they denounce against such burghers as have covine and alliance with the Highland clans."

"True, my lord; but it is also known to you that our craft, working in skins of cattle, stags, and every other description of hides, have a privilege, and are allowed to transact with those Highlanders, as with the men who can most readily supply us with the means of conducting our trade, to the great profit of the burgh. Thus it hath chanced with me to have great dealings with these men; and I can take it on my salvation, that you nowhere find more just and honourable traffickers, or by whom a man may more easily make an honest penny. I have made in my day several distant journeys into the far Highlands, upon the faith of their chiefs; nor did I ever meet with a people more true to their word, when you can once prevail upon them to plight it in your behalf. And as for the Highland chief, Gilchrist Maclan, saving that he is hasty in homicide and fire raising towards those with whom he hath deadly feud, I have nowhere seen a man who walketh a more just and upright path."

"It is more than ever I heard before," said Sir Patrick Charteris. "Yet I have known something of the Highland runagates too."

"They show another favour, and a very different one, to their friends than to their enemies, as your lordship shall understand," said the glover. "However, be that as it may, it chanced me to serve Gilchrist Maclan in a high matter. It is now about eighteen years since, that it chanced, the Clan Quhele and Clan Chattan being at feud, as indeed they are seldom at peace, the former sustained such a defeat as well nigh extirpated the family of their chief Maclan. Seven of his sons were slain in battle and after it, himself put to flight, and his castle taken and given to the flames. His wife, then near the time of giving birth to an infant, fled into the forest, attended by one faithful servant and his daughter. Here, in sorrow and care enough, she gave birth to a boy; and as the misery of the mother's condition rendered her little able to suckle the infant, he was nursed with the milk of a doe, which the forester who attended her contrived to take alive in a snare. It was not many months afterwards that, in a second encounter of these fierce clans, Maclan defeated his enemies in his turn, and regained possession of the district which he had lost. It was with unexpected rapture that he found his wife and child were in existence, having never expected to see more of them than the bleached bones, from which the wolves and wildcats had eaten the flesh.

"But a strong and prevailing prejudice, such as is often entertained by these wild people, prevented their chief from enjoying the full happiness arising from having thus regained his only son in safety. An ancient prophecy was current among them, that the power of the tribe should fall by means of a boy born under a bush of holly and suckled by a white doe. The circumstance, unfortunately for the chief, tallied exactly with the birth of the only child which remained to him, and it was demanded of him by the elders of the clan, that the boy should be either put to death or at least removed from the dominions of the tribe and brought up in obscurity. Gilchrist Maclan was obliged to consent and having made choice of the latter proposal, the child, under the name of Conachar, was brought up in my family, with the purpose, as was at first intended, of concealing from him all knowledge who or what he was, or of his pretensions to authority over a numerous and warlike people. But, as years rolled on, the elders of the tribe, who had exerted so much authority, were removed by death, or rendered incapable of interfering in the public affairs by age; while, on the other hand, the influence of Gilchrist Maclan was increased by his successful struggles against the Clan Chattan, in which he restored the equality betwixt the two contending confederacies, which had existed before the calamitous defeat of which I told your honour. Feeling himself thus firmly seated, he naturally became desirous to bring home his only son to his bosom and family; and for that purpose caused me to send the young Conachar, as he was called, more than once to the Highlands. He was a youth expressly made, by his form and gallantry of bearing, to gain a father's heart. At length, I suppose the lad either guessed the secret of his birth or something of it was communicated to him; and the disgust which the paughty Hieland varlet had always shown for my honest trade became more manifest; so that I dared not so much as lay my staff over his costard, for fear of receiving a stab with a dirk, as an answer in Gaelic to a Saxon remark. It was then that I wished to be well rid of him, the rather that he showed so much devotion to Catharine, who, forsooth, set herself up to wash the Ethiopian, and teach a wild Hielandman mercy and morals. She knows herself how it ended."

"Nay, my father," said Catharine, "it was surely but a point of charity to snatch the brand from the burning."

"But a small point of wisdom," said her father, "to risk the burning of your own fingers for such an end. What says my lord to the matter?"

"My lord would not offend the Fair Maid of Perth," said Sir Patrick; "and he knows well the purity and truth of her mind. And yet I must needs say that, had this nursling of the doe been shrivelled, haggard, cross made, and red haired, like some Highlanders I have known, I question if the Fair Maiden of Perth would have bestowed so much zeal upon his conversion; and if Catharine had been as aged, wrinkled, and bent by years as the old woman that opened the door for me this morning, I would wager my gold spurs against a pair of Highland brogues that this wild roebuck would never have listened to a second lecture. You laugh, glover, and Catharine blushes a blush of anger. Let it pass, it is the way of the world."

"The way in which the men of the world esteem their neighbours, my lord," answered Catharine, with some spirit.

"Nay, fair saint, forgive a jest," said the knight; "and thou, Simon, tell us how this tale ended—with Conachar's escape to the Highlands, I suppose?"

"With his return thither," said the glover. "There was, for some two or three years, a fellow about Perth, a sort of messenger, who came and went under divers pretences, but was, in fact, the means of communication between Gilchrist Maclan and his son, young Conachar, or, as he is now called, Hector. From this gillie I learned, in general, that the banishment of the dault an neigh dheil, or foster child of the white doe, was again brought under consideration of the tribe. His foster father, Torquil of the Oak, the old forester, appeared with eight sons, the finest men of the clan, and demanded that the doom of banishment should be revoked. He spoke with the greater authority, as he was himself taishatar, or a seer, and supposed to have communication with the invisible world. He affirmed that he had performed a magical ceremony, termed tìne eagan, by which he evoked a fiend, from whom he extorted a confession that Conachar, now called Eachin, or Hector, Maclan, was the only man in the approaching combat between the two hostile clans who should come off without blood or blemish. Hence Torquil of the Oak argued that the presence of the fated person was necessary to ensure the victory. 'So much I am possessed of this,' said the forester, 'that, unless Eachin fight in his place in the ranks of the Clan Quhele, neither I, his foster father, nor any of my eight sons will lift a weapon in the quarrel.'

"This speech was received with much alarm; for the defection of nine men, the stoutest of their tribe, would be a serious blow, more especially if the combat, as begins to be rumoured, should be decided by a small number from each side. The ancient superstition concerning the foster son of the white doe was counterbalanced by a new and later prejudice, and the father took the opportunity of presenting to the clan his long hidden son, whose youthful, but handsome and animated, countenance, haughty carriage, and active limbs excited the admiration of the clansmen, who joyfully received him as the heir and descendant of their chief, notwithstanding the ominous presage attending his birth and nurture.

"From this tale, my lord," continued Simon Glover, "your lordship may easily conceive why I myself should be secure of a good reception among the Clan Quhele; and you may also have reason to judge that it would be very rash in me to carry Catharine thither. And this, noble lord, is the heaviest of my troubles."

"We shall lighten the load, then," said Sir Patrick; "and, good glover, I will take risk for thee and this damsel. My alliance with the Douglas gives me some interest with Marjory, Duchess of Rothsay, his daughter, the neglected wife of our wilful Prince. Rely on it, good glover, that in her retinue thy daughter will be as secure as in a fenced castle. The Duchess keeps house now at Falkland, a castle which the Duke of Albany, to whom it belongs, has lent to her for her accommodation. I cannot promise you pleasure, Fair Maiden; for the Duchess Marjory of Rothsay is unfortunate, and therefore splenetic, haughty, and overbearing; conscious of the want of attractive qualities, therefore jealous of those women who possess them. But she is firm in faith and noble in spirit, and would fling Pope or prelate into the ditch of her castle who should come to arrest any one under her protection. You will therefore have absolute safety, though you may lack comfort."

"I have no title to more," said Catharine; "and deeply do I feel the kindness that is willing to secure me such honourable protection. If she be haughty, I will remember she is a Douglas, and hath right, as being such, to entertain as much pride as may become a mortal; if she be fretful, I will recollect that she is unfortunate, and if she be unreasonably captious, I will not forget that she is my protectress. Heed no longer for me, my lord, when you have placed me under the noble lady's charge. But my poor father, to be exposed amongst these wild and dangerous people!"

"Think not of that, Catharine," said the glover: "I am as familiar with brogues and bracken as if I had worn them myself. I have only to fear that the decisive battle may be fought before I can leave this country; and if the clan Quhele lose the combat, I may suffer by the ruin of my protectors."

"We must have that cared for," said Sir Patrick: "rely on my looking out for your safety. But which party will carry the day, think you?"

"Frankly, my Lord Provost, I believe the Clan Chattan will have the worse: these nine children of the forest form a third nearly of the band surrounding the chief of Clan Quhele, and are redoubted champions."

"And your apprentice, will he stand to it, thinkest thou?"

"He is hot as fire, Sir Patrick," answered the glover; "but he is also unstable as water. Nevertheless, if he is spared, he seems likely to be one day a brave man."

"But, as now, he has some of the white doe's milk still lurking about his liver, ha, Simon?"

"He has little experience, my lord," said the glover, "and I need not tell an honoured warrior like yourself that danger must be familiar to us ere we can dally with it like a mistress."

This conversation brought them speedily to the Castle of Kinfauns, where, after a short refreshment, it was necessary that the father and the daughter should part, in order to seek their respective places of refuge. It was then first, as she saw that her father's anxiety on her account had drowned all recollections of his friend, that Catharine dropped, as if in a dream, the name of "Henry Gow."

"True—most true," continued her father; "we must possess him of our purposes."

"Leave that to me," said Sir Patrick. "I will not trust to a messenger, nor will I send a letter, because, if I could write one, I think he could not read it. He will suffer anxiety in the mean while, but I will ride to Perth tomorrow by times and acquaint him with your designs."

The time of separation now approached. It was a bitter moment, but the manly character of the old burgher, and the devout resignation of Catharine to the will of Providence made it lighter than might have been expected. The good knight hurried the departure of the burgess, but in the kindest manner; and even went so far as to offer him some gold pieces in loan, which might, where specie was so scarce, be considered as the ne plus ultra of regard. The glover, however, assured him he was amply provided, and departed on his journey in a northwesterly direction. The hospitable protection of Sir Patrick Charteris was no less manifested towards his fair guest. She was placed under the charge of a duenna who managed the good knight's household, and was compelled to remain several days in Kinfauns, owing to the obstacles and delays interposed by a Tay boatman, named Kitt Henshaw, to whose charge she was to be committed, and whom the provost highly trusted.

Thus were severed the child and parent in a moment of great danger and difficulty, much augmented by circumstances of which they were then ignorant, and which seemed greatly to diminish any chance of safety that remained for them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"This Austin humbly did." "Did he?" quoth he.

"Austin may do the same again for me."

Pope's Prologue to Canterbury Tales from Chaucer.

The course of our story will be best pursued by attending that of Simon Glover. It is not our purpose to indicate the exact local boundaries of the two contending clans, especially since they are not clearly pointed out by the historians who have transmitted accounts of this memorable feud. It is sufficient to say, that the territory of the Clan Chattan extended far and wide, comprehending Caithness and Sutherland, and having for their paramount chief the powerful earl of the latter shire, thence called Mohr ar Chat. In this general sense, the Keiths, the Sinclairs, the Guns, and other families and clans of great power, were included in the confederacy. These, however, were not engaged in the present quarrel, which was limited to that part of the Clan Chattan occupying the extensive mountainous districts of Perthshire and Inverness shire, which form a large portion of what is called the northeastern Highlands. It is well known that two large septs, unquestionably known to belong to the Clan Chattan, the MacPhersons and the MacIntoshes, dispute to this day which of their chieftains was at the head of this Badenoch branch of the great confederacy, and both have of later times assumed the title of Captain of Clan Chattan. Non nostrum est. But, at all events, Badenoch must have been the centre of the confederacy, so far as involved in the feud of which we treat.

Of the rival league of Clan Quhele we have a still less distinct account, for reasons which will appear in the sequel. Some authors have identified them with the numerous and powerful sept of MacKay. If this is done on good authority, which is to be doubted, the MacKays must have shifted their settlements greatly since the reign of Robert III, since they are now to be found (as a clan) in the extreme northern parts of Scotland, in the counties of Ross and Sutherland. We cannot, therefore, be so clear as we would wish in the geography of the story. Suffice it that, directing his course in a northwesterly direction, the glover travelled for a day's journey in the direction of the Breadalbane country, from which he hoped to reach the castle where Gilchrist Maclan, the captain of the Clan Quhele, and the father of his pupil Conachar, usually held his residence, with a barbarous pomp of attendance and ceremonial suited to his lofty pretensions.

We need not stop to describe the toil and terrors of such a journey, where the path was to be traced among wastes and mountains, now ascending precipitous ravines, now plunging into inextricable bogs, and often intersected with large brooks, and even rivers. But all these perils Simon Glover had before encountered in quest of honest gain; and it was not to be supposed that he shunned or feared them where liberty, and life itself, were at stake.

The danger from the warlike and uncivilised inhabitants of these wilds would have appeared to another at least as formidable as the perils of the journey. But Simon's knowledge of the manners and language of the people assured him on this point also. An appeal to the hospitality of the wildest Gael was never unsuccessful; and the kerne, that in other circumstances would have taken a man's life for the silver button of his cloak, would deprive himself of a meal to relieve the traveller who implored hospitality at the door of his bothy. The art of travelling in the Highlands was to appear as confident and defenceless as possible; and accordingly the glover carried no arms whatever, journeyed without the least appearance of precaution, and took good care to exhibit nothing which might excite cupidity. Another rule which he deemed it prudent to observe was to avoid communication with any of the passengers whom he might chance to meet, except in the interchange of the common civilities of salutation, which the Highlanders rarely omit. Few opportunities occurred of exchanging even such passing greetings. The country, always lonely, seemed now entirely forsaken; and, even in the little straths or valleys which he had occasion to pass or traverse, the hamlets were deserted, and the inhabitants had betaken themselves to woods and caves. This was easily accounted for, considering the imminent dangers of a feud which all expected would become one of the most general signals for plunder and ravage that had ever distracted that unhappy country.

Simon began to be alarmed at this state of desolation. He had made a halt since he left Kinfauns, to allow his nag some rest; and now he began to be anxious how he was to pass the night. He had reckoned upon spending it at the cottage of an old acquaintance, called Niel Booshalloch (or the cow herd), because he had charge of numerous herds of cattle belonging to the captain of Clan Quhele, for which purpose he had a settlement on the banks of the Tay, not far from the spot where it leaves the lake of the same name. From this his old host and friend, with whom he had transacted many bargains for hides and furs, the old glover hoped to learn the present state of the country, the prospect of peace or war, and the best measures to be taken for his own safety. It will be remembered that the news of the indentures of battle entered into for diminishing the extent of the feud had only been communicated to King Robert the day before the glover left Perth, and did not become public till some time afterwards.

"If Niel Booshalloch hath left his dwelling like the rest of them, I shall be finely helped up," thought Simon, "since I want not only the advantage of his good advice, but also his interest with Gilchrist Maclan; and, moreover, a night's quarters and a supper."

Thus reflecting, he reached the top of a swelling green hill, and saw the splendid vision of Loch Tay lying beneath him—an immense plate of polished silver, its dark heathy mountains and leafless thickets of oak serving as an arabesque frame to a magnificent mirror.

Indifferent to natural beauty at any time, Simon Glover was now particularly so; and the only part of the splendid landscape on which he turned his eye was an angle or loop of meadow land where the river Tay, rushing in full swoln dignity from its parent lake, and wheeling around a beautiful valley of about a mile in breadth, begins his broad course to the southeastward, like a conqueror and a legislator, to subdue and to enrich remote districts. Upon the sequestered spot, which is so beautifully situated between lake, mountain, and river, arose afterwards the feudal castle of the Ballough [Balloch is Gaelic for the discharge of a lake into a river], which in our time has been succeeded by the splendid palace of the Earls of Breadalbane.

But the Campbells, though they had already attained very great power in Argyleshire, had not yet extended themselves so far eastward as Loch Tay, the banks of which were, either by right or by mere occupancy, possessed for, the present by the Clan Quhele, whose choicest herds were fattened on the Balloch margin of the lake. In this valley, therefore, between the river and the lake, amid extensive forests of oak wood, hazel, rowan tree, and larches, arose the humble cottage of Niel Booshalloch, a village Eumaeus, whose hospitable chimneys were seen to smoke plentifully, to the great encouragement of Simon Glover, who might otherwise have been obliged to spend the night in the open air, to his no small discomfort.

He reached the door of the cottage, whistled, shouted, and made his approach known. There was a baying of hounds and collies, and presently the master of the hut came forth. There was much care on his brow, and he seemed surprised at the sight of Simon Glover, though the herdsman covered both as well as he might; for nothing in that region could be reckoned more uncivil than for the landlord to suffer anything to escape him in look or gesture which might induce the visitor to think that his arrival was an unpleasing, or even an unexpected, incident. The traveller's horse was conducted to a stable, which was almost too low to receive him, and the glover himself was led into the mansion of the Booshalloch, where, according to the custom of the country, bread and cheese was placed before the wayfarer, while more solid food was preparing. Simon, who understood all their habits, took no notice of the obvious marks of sadness on the brow of his entertainer and on those of the family, until he had eaten somewhat for form's sake, after which he asked the general question, "Was there any news in the country?"

"Bad news as ever were told," said the herdsman: "our father is no more."

"How!" said Simon, greatly alarmed, "is the captain of the Clan Quhele dead?"

"The captain of the Clan Quhele never dies," answered the Booshalloch; "but Gilchrist Maclan died twenty hours since, and his son, Eachin Maclan, is now captain."

"What, Eachin—that is Conachar—my apprentice?"

"As little of that subject as you list, brother Simon," said the herdsman. "It is to be remembered, friend, that your craft, which doth very well for a living in the douce city of Perth, is something too mechanical to be much esteemed at the foot of Ben Lawers and on the banks of Loch Tay. We have not a Gaelic word by which we can even name a maker of gloves."

"It would be strange if you had, friend Niel," said Simon, drily, "having so few gloves to wear. I think there be none in the whole Clan Quhele, save those which I myself gave to Gilchrist Maclan, whom God assoilzie, who esteemed them a choice propine. Most deeply do I regret his death, for I was coming to him on express business."

"You had better turn the nag's head southward with morning light," said the herdsman. "The funeral is instantly to take place, and it must be with short ceremony; for there is a battle to be fought by the Clan Quhele and the Clan Chattan, thirty champions on a side, as soon as Palm Sunday next, and we have brief time either to lament the dead or honour the living."

"Yet are my affairs so pressing, that I must needs see the young chief, were it but for a quarter of an hour," said the glover.

"Hark thee, friend," replied his host, "I think thy business must be either to gather money or to make traffic. Now, if the chief owe thee anything for upbringing or otherwise, ask him not to pay it when all the treasures of the tribe are called in for making gallant preparation of arms and equipment for their combatants, that we may meet these proud hill cats in a fashion to show ourselves their superiors. But if thou comest to practise commerce with us, thy time is still worse chosen. Thou knowest that thou art already envied of many of our tribe, for having had the fosterage of the young chief, which is a thing usually given to the best of the clan."

"But, St. Mary, man!" exclaimed the glover, "men should remember the office was not conferred on me as a favour which I courted, but that it was accepted by me on importunity and entreaty, to my no small prejudice. This Conachar, or Hector, of yours, or whatever you call him, has destroyed me doe skins to the amount of many pounds Scots."

"There again, now," said the Booshalloch, "you have spoken word to cost your life—any allusion to skins or hides, or especially to deer and does—may incur no less a forfeit. The chief is young, and jealous of his rank; none knows the reason better than thou, friend Glover. He will naturally wish that everything concerning the opposition to his succession, and having reference to his exile, should be totally forgotten; and he will not hold him in affection who shall recall the recollection of his people, or force back his own, upon what they must both remember with pain. Think how, at such a moment, they will look on the old glover of Perth, to whom the chief was so long apprentice! Come—come, old friend, you have erred in this. You are in over great haste to worship the rising sun, while his beams are yet level with the horizon. Come thou when he has climbed higher in the heavens, and thou shalt have thy share of the warmth of his noonday height."

"Niel Booshalloch," said the glover, "we have been old friends, as thou say'st; and as I think thee a true one, I will speak to thee freely, though what I say might be perilous if spoken to others of thy clan. Thou think'st I come hither to make my own profit of thy young chief, and it is natural thou shouldst think so. But I would not, at my years, quit my own chimney corner in Curfew Street to bask me in the beams of the brightest sun that ever shone upon Highland heather. The very truth is, I come hither in extremity: my foes have the advantage of me, and have laid things to my charge whereof I am incapable, even in thought. Nevertheless, doom is like to go forth against me, and there is no remedy but that I must up and fly, or remain and perish. I come to your young chief, as one who had refuge with me in his distress—who ate of my bread and drank of my cup. I ask of him refuge, which, as I trust, I shall need but a short time."

"That makes a different case," replied the herdsman. "So different, that, if you came at midnight to the gate of Maclan, having the King of Scotland's head in your hand, and a thousand men in pursuit for the avenging of his blood, I could not think it for his honour to refuse you protection. And for your innocence or guilt, it concerns not the case; or rather, he ought the more to shelter you if guilty, seeing your necessity and his risk are both in that case the greater. I must straightway to him, that no hasty tongue tell him of your arriving hither without saying the cause."

"A pity of your trouble," said the glover; "but where lies the chief?"

"He is quartered about ten miles hence, busied with the affairs of the funeral, and with preparations for the combat—the dead to the grave and the living to battle."

"It is a long way, and will take you all night to go and come," said the glover; "and I am very sure that Conachar when he knows it is I who—"

"Forget Conachar," said the herdsman, placing his finger on his lips. "And as for the ten miles, they are but a Highland leap, when one bears a message between his friend and his chief."

So saying, and committing the traveller to the charge of his eldest son and his daughter, the active herdsman left his house two hours before midnight, to which he returned long before sunrise. He did not disturb his wearied guest, but when the old man had arisen in the morning he acquainted him that the funeral of the late chieftain was to take place the same day, and that, although Eachin Maclan could not invite a Saxon to the funeral, he would be glad to receive him at the entertainment which was to follow.

"His will must be obeyed," said the glover, half smiling at the change of relation between himself and his late apprentice. "The man is the master now, and I trust he will remember that, when matters were otherwise between us, I did not use my authority ungraciously."

"Troutsho, friend!" exclaimed the Booshalloch, "the less of that you say the better. You will find yourself a right welcome guest to Eachin, and the deil a man dares stir you within his bounds. But fare you well, for I must go, as beseems me, to the burial of the best chief the clan ever had, and the wisest captain that ever cocked the sweet gale (bog myrtle) in his bonnet. Farewell to you for a while, and if you will go to the top of the Tom an Lonach behind the house, you will see a gallant sight, and hear such a coronach as will reach the top of Ben Lawers. A boat will wait for you, three hours hence, at a wee bit creek about half a mile westward from the head of the Tay."

With these words he took his departure, followed by his three sons, to man the boat in which he was to join the rest of the mourners, and two daughters, whose voices were wanted to join in the lament, which was chanted, or rather screamed, on such occasions of general affliction.

Simon Glover, finding himself alone, resorted to the stable to look after his nag, which, he found, had been well served with graddan, or bread made of scorched barley. Of this kindness he was fully sensible, knowing that, probably, the family had little of this delicacy left to themselves until the next harvest should bring them a scanty supply. In animal food they were well provided, and the lake found them abundance of fish for their lenten diet, which they did not observe very strictly; but bread was a delicacy very scanty in the Highlands. The bogs afforded a soft species of hay, none of the best to be sure; but Scottish horses, like their riders, were then accustomed to hard fare.

Gauntlet, for this was the name of the palfrey, had his stall crammed full of dried fern for litter, and was otherwise as well provided for as Highland hospitality could contrive.

Simon Glover being thus left to his own painful reflections, nothing better remained, after having seen after the comforts of the dumb companion of his journey, than to follow the herdsman's advice; and ascending towards the top of an eminence called Tom an Lonach, or the Knoll of Yew Trees, after a walk of half an hour he reached the summit, and could look down on the broad expanse of the lake, of which the height commanded a noble view. A few aged and scattered yew trees of great size still vindicated for the beautiful green hill the name attached to it. But a far greater number had fallen a sacrifice to the general demand for bow staves in that warlike age, the bow being a weapon much used by the mountaineers, though those which they employed, as well as their arrows, were, in shape and form, and especially in efficacy, far inferior to the archery of merry England. The dark and shattered individual yews which remained were like the veterans of a broken host, occupying in disorder some post of advantage, with the stern purpose of resisting to the last. Behind this eminence, but detached from it, arose a higher hill, partly covered with copsewood, partly opening into glades of pasture, where the cattle strayed, finding, at this season of the year, a scanty sustenance among the spring heads and marshy places, where the fresh grass began first to arise.

The opposite or northern shore of the lake presented a far more Alpine prospect than that upon which the glover was stationed. Woods and thickets ran up the sides of the mountains, and disappeared among the sinuosities formed by the winding ravines which separated them from each other; but far above these specimens of a tolerable natural soil arose the swart and bare mountains themselves, in the dark grey desolation proper to the season.

Some were peaked, some broad crested, some rocky and precipitous, others of a tamer outline; and the clan of Titans seemed to be commanded by their appropriate chieftains—the frowning mountain of Ben Lawers, and the still more lofty eminence of Ben Mohr, arising high above the rest, whose peaks retain a dazzling helmet of snow far into the summer season, and sometimes during the whole year. Yet the borders of this wild and silvan region, where the mountains descended upon the lake, intimated, even at that early period, many traces of human habitation. Hamlets were seen, especially on the northern margin of the lake, half hid among the little glens that poured their tributary streams into Loch Tay, which, like many earthly things, made a fair show at a distance, but, when more closely approached, were disgusting and repulsive, from their squalid want of the conveniences which attend even Indian wigwams. They were inhabited by a race who neither cultivated the earth nor cared for the enjoyments which industry procures. The women, although otherwise treated with affection, and even delicacy of respect, discharged all the absolutely necessary domestic labour. The men, excepting some reluctant use of an ill formed plough, or more frequently a spade, grudgingly gone through, as a task infinitely beneath them, took no other employment than the charge of the herds of black cattle, in which their wealth consisted. At all other times they hunted, fished, or marauded, during the brief intervals of peace, by way of pastime; plundering with bolder license, and fighting with embittered animosity, in time of war, which, public or private, upon a broader or more restricted scale, formed the proper business of their lives, and the only one which they esteemed worthy of them.

The magnificent bosom of the lake itself was a scene to gaze on with delight. Its noble breadth, with its termination in a full and beautiful run, was rendered yet more picturesque by one of those islets which are often happily situated in the Scottish lakes. The ruins upon that isle, now almost shapeless, being overgrown with wood rose, at the time we speak of, into the towers and pinnacles of a priory, where slumbered the remains of Sibylla, daughter of Henry I of England, and consort of Alexander the First of Scotland. This holy place had been deemed of dignity sufficient to be the deposit of the remains of the captain of the Clan Quhele, at least till times when the removal of the danger, now so imminently pressing, should permit of his body being conveyed to a distinguished convent in the north, where he was destined ultimately to repose with all his ancestry.

A number of boats pushed off from various points of the near and more distant shore, many displaying sable banners, and others having their several pipers in the bow, who from time to time poured forth a few notes of a shrill, plaintive, and wailing character, and intimated to the glover that the ceremony was about to take place. These sounds of lamentation were but the tuning as it were of the instruments, compared with the general wail which was speedily to be raised.

A distant sound was heard from far up the lake, even as it seemed from the remote and distant glens out of which the Dochart and the Lochy pour their streams into Loch Tay. It was in a wild, inaccessible spot, where the Campbells at a subsequent period founded their strong fortress of Finlayrigg, that the redoubted commander of the Clan Quhele drew his last breath; and, to give due pomp to his funeral, his corpse was now to be brought down the loch to the island assigned for his temporary place of rest. The funeral fleet, led by the chieftain's barge, from which a huge black banner was displayed, had made more than two thirds of its voyage ere it was visible from the eminence on which Simon Glover stood to overlook the ceremony. The instant the distant wail of the coronach was heard proceeding from the attendants on the funeral barge, all the subordinate sounds of lamentation were hushed at once, as the raven ceases to croak and the hawk to whistle whenever the scream of the eagle is heard. The boats, which had floated hither and thither upon the lake, like a flock of waterfowl dispersing themselves on its surface, now drew together with an appearance of order, that the funeral flotilla might pass onward, and that they themselves might fall into their proper places. In the mean while the piercing din of the war pipes became louder and louder, and the cry from the numberless boats which followed that from which the black banner of the chief was displayed rose in wild unison up to the Tom an Lonach, from which the glover viewed the spectacle. The galley which headed the procession bore on its poop a species of scaffold, upon which, arrayed in white linen, and with the face bare, was displayed the corpse of the deceased chieftain. His son and the nearest relatives filled the vessel, while a great number of boats, of every description that could be assembled, either on Loch Tay itself or brought by land carriage from Loch Earn and otherwise, followed in the rear, some of them of very frail materials. There were even curraghs, composed of ox hides stretched over hoops of willow, in the manner of the ancient British, and some committed themselves to rafts formed for the occasion, from the readiest materials that occurred, and united in such a precarious manner as to render it probable that, before the accomplishment of the voyage, some of the clansmen of the deceased might be sent to attend their chieftain in the world of spirits.

When the principal flotilla came in sight of the smaller group of boats collected towards the foot of the lake, and bearing off from the little island, they hailed each other with a shout so loud and general, and terminating in a cadence so wildly prolonged, that not only the deer started from their glens for miles around, and sought the distant recesses of the mountains, but even the domestic cattle, accustomed to the voice of man, felt the full panic which the human shout strikes into the wilder tribes, and like them fled from their pasture into morasses and dingles.

Summoned forth from their convent by those sounds, the monks who inhabited the little islet began to issue from their lowly portal, with cross and banner, and as much of ecclesiastical state as they had the means of displaying; their bells at the same time, of which the edifice possessed three, pealing the death toll over the long lake, which came to the ears of the now silent multitude, mingled with the solemn chant of the Catholic Church, raised by the monks in their procession. Various ceremonies were gone through, while the kindred of the deceased carried the body ashore, and, placing it on a bank long consecrated to the purpose, made the deasil around the departed. When the corpse was uplifted to be borne into the church, another united yell burst from the assembled multitude, in which the deep shout of warriors and the shrill wail of females joined their notes with the tremulous voice of age and the babbling cry of childhood. The coronach was again, and for the last time, shrieked as the body was carried into the interior of the church, where only the nearest relatives of the deceased and the most distinguished of the leaders of the clan were permitted to enter. The last yell of woe was so terribly loud, and answered by so many hundred echoes, that the glover instinctively raised his hands to his ears, to shut out, or deaden at least, a sound so piercing. He kept this attitude while the hawks, owls, and other birds, scared by the wild scream, had begun to settle in their retreats, when, as he withdrew his hands, a voice close by him said:

"Think you this, Simon Glover, the hymn of penitence and praise with which it becomes poor forlorn man, cast out from his tenement of clay, to be wafted into the presence of his maker?"

The glover turned, and in the old man with a long white beard who stood close beside him had no difficulty, from the clear mild eye and the benevolent cast of features, to recognise the Carthusian monk Father Clement, no longer wearing his monastic habiliments, but wrapped in a frieze mantle and having a Highland cap on his head.

It may be recollected that the glover regarded this man with a combined feeling of respect and dislike—respect, which his judgment could not deny to the monk's person and character, and dislike, which arose from Father Clement's peculiar doctrines being the cause of his daughter's exile and his own distress. It was not, therefore, with sentiments of unmingled satisfaction that he returned the greetings of the father, and replied to the reiterated question, what he thought of the funeral rites which were discharged in so wild a manner: "I know not, my good father; but these men do their duty to their deceased chief according to the fashion of their

ancestors: they mean to express their regret for their friend's loss and their prayers to Heaven in his behalf; and that which is done of goodwill must, to my thinking, be accepted favourably. Had it been otherwise, methinks they had ere now been enlightened to do better."

"Thou art deceived," answered the monk. "God has sent His light amongst us all, though in various proportions; but man wilfully shuts his eyes and prefers darkness. This benighted people mingle with the ritual of the Roman Church the old heathen ceremonies of their own fathers, and thus unite with the abominations of a church corrupted by wealth and power the cruel and bloody ritual of savage paynims."

"Father," said Simon, abruptly, "methinks your presence were more useful in yonder chapel, aiding your brethren in the discharge of their clerical duties, than in troubling and unsettling the belief of an humble though ignorant Christian like myself."

"And wherefore say, good brother, that I would unfix thy principles of belief?" answered Clement. "So Heaven deal with me, as, were my life blood necessary to cement the mind of any man to the holy religion he professeth, it should be freely poured out for the purpose."

"Your speech is fair, father, I grant you," said the glover; "but if I am to judge the doctrine by the fruits, Heaven has punished me by the hand of the church for having hearkened thereto. Ere I heard you, my confessor was little moved though I might have owned to have told a merry tale upon the ale bench, even if a friar or a nun were the subject. If at a time I had called Father Hubert a better hunter of hares than of souls, I confessed me to the Vicar Vinesauf, who laughed and made me pay a reckoning for penance; or if I had said that the Vicar Vinesauf was more constant to his cup than to his breviary, I confessed me to Father Hubert, and a new hawking glove made all well again; and thus I, my conscience, and Mother Church lived together on terms of peace, friendship, and mutual forbearance. But since I have listened to you, Father Clement, this goodly union is broke to pieces, and nothing is thundered in my ear but purgatory in the next world and fire and fagot in this. Therefore, avoid you, Father Clement, or speak to those who can understand your doctrine. I have no heart to be a martyr: I have never in my whole life had courage enough so much as to snuff a candle with my fingers; and, to speak the truth, I am minded to go back to Perth, sue out my pardon in the spiritual court, carry my fagot to the gallows foot in token of recantation, and purchase myself once more the name of a good Catholic, were it at the price of all the worldly wealth that remains to me."

"You are angry, my dearest brother," said Clement, "and repent you on the pinch of a little worldly danger and a little worldly loss for the good thoughts which you once entertained."

"You speak at ease, Father Clement, since I think you have long forsworn the wealth and goods of the world, and are prepared to yield up your life when it is demanded in exchange for the doctrine you preach and believe. You are as ready to put on your pitched shirt and brimstone head gear as a naked man is to go to his bed, and it would seem you have not much more reluctance to the ceremony. But I still wear that which clings to me. My wealth is still my own, and I thank Heaven it is a decent pittance whereon to live; my life, too, is that of a hale old man of sixty, who is in no haste to bring it to a close; and if I were poor as Job and on the edge of the grave, must I not still cling to my daughter, whom your doctrines have already cost so dear?"

"Thy daughter, friend Simon," said the Carmelite [Carthusian], "may be truly called an angel upon earth."

"Ay, and by listening to your doctrines, father, she is now like to be called on to be an angel in heaven, and to be transported thither in a chariot of fire."

"Nay, my good brother," said Clement, "desist, I pray you, to speak of what you little understand. Since it is wasting time to show thee the light that thou chafest against, yet listen to that which I have to say touching thy daughter, whose temporal felicity, though I weigh it not even for an instant in the scale against that which is spiritual, is, nevertheless, in its order, as dear to Clement Blair as to her own father."

The tears stood in the old man's eyes as he spoke, and Simon Glover was in some degree mollified as he again addressed him.

"One would think thee, Father Clement, the kindest and most amiable of men; how comes it, then, that thy steps are haunted by general ill will wherever thou chancest to turn them? I could lay my life thou hast contrived already to offend yonder half score of poor friars in their water girdled cage, and that you have been prohibited from attendance on the funeral?"

"Even so, my son," said the Carthusian, "and I doubt whether their malice will suffer me to remain in this country. I did but speak a few sentences about the superstition and folly of frequenting St. Fillan's church, to detect theft by means of his bell, of bathing mad patients in his pool, to cure their infirmity of mind; and lo! the persecutors have cast me forth of their communion, as they will speedily cast me out of this life."

"Lo you there now," said the glover, "see what it is for a man that cannot take a warning! Well, Father Clement, men will not cast me forth unless it were as a companion of yours. I pray you, therefore, tell me what you have to say of my daughter, and let us be less neighbours than we have been."

"This, then, brother Simon, I have to acquaint you with. This young chief, who is swoln with contemplation of his own power and glory, loves one thing better than it all, and that is thy daughter."

"He, Conachar!" exclaimed Simon. "My runagate apprentice look up to my daughter!"

"Alas!" said Clement, "how close sits our worldly pride, even as ivy clings to the wall, and cannot be separated! Look up to thy daughter, good Simon? Alas, no! The captain of Clan Quhele, great as he is, and greater as he soon expects to be, looks down to the daughter of the Perth burgess, and considers himself demeaned in doing so. But, to use his own profane expression, Catharine is dearer to him than life here and Heaven hereafter: he cannot live without her."

"Then he may die, if he lists," said Simon Glover, "for she is betrothed to an honest burgess of Perth; and I would not break my word to make my daughter bride to the Prince of Scotland."

"I thought it would be your answer," replied the monk; "I would, worthy friend, thou couldst carry into thy spiritual concerns some part of that daring and resolved spirit with which thou canst direct thy temporal affairs."

"Hush thee—hush, Father Clement!" answered the glover; "when thou fallest into that vein of argument, thy words savour of blazing tar, and that is a scent I like not. As to Catharine, I must manage as I can, so as not to displease the young dignitary; but well is it for me that she is far beyond his reach."

"She must then be distant indeed," said the Carmelite [Carthusian]. "And now, brother Simon, since you think it perilous to own me and my opinions, I must walk alone with my own doctrines and the dangers they draw on me. But should your eye, less blinded than it now is by worldly hopes and fears, ever turn a glance back on him who soon may be snatched from you, remember, that by nought save a deep sense of the truth and importance of the doctrine which he taught could Clement Blair have learned to encounter, nay, to provoke, the animosity of the powerful and inveterate, to alarm the fears of the jealous and timid, to walk in the world as he belonged not to it, and to be accounted mad of men, that he might, if possible, win souls to God. Heaven be my witness, that I would comply in all lawful things to conciliate the love and sympathy of my fellow creatures! It is no light thing to be shunned by the worthy as an infected patient, to be persecuted by the Pharisees of the day as an unbelieving heretic, to be regarded with horror at once and contempt by the multitude, who consider me as a madman, who may be expected to turn mischievous. But were all those evils multiplied an hundredfold, the fire within must not be stifled, the voice which says within me 'Speak' must receive obedience. Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel, even should I at length preach it from amidst the pile of flames!"

So spoke this bold witness, one of those whom Heaven raised up from time to time to preserve amidst the most ignorant ages, and to carry down to those which succeed them, a manifestation of unadulterated Christianity, from the time of the Apostles to the age when, favoured by the invention of printing, the Reformation broke out in full splendour. The selfish policy of the glover was exposed in his own eyes; and he felt himself contemptible as he saw the Carthusian turn from him in all the hallowedness of resignation. He was even conscious of a momentary inclination to follow the example of the preacher's philanthropy and disinterested zeal, but it glanced like a flash of lightning through a dark vault, where there lies nothing to catch the blaze; and he slowly descended the hill in a direction different from that of the Carthusian, forgetting him and his doctrines, and buried in anxious thoughts about his child's fate and his own.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

What want these outlaws conquerors should have

*But history's purchased page to call them great,
A wider space, an ornamented grave?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls were full as brave.*

BYRON.

The funeral obsequies being over, the same flotilla which had proceeded in solemn and sad array down the lake prepared to return with displayed banners, and every demonstration of mirth and joy; for there was but brief time to celebrate festivals when the awful conflict betwixt the Clan Quhele and their most formidable rivals so nearly approached. It had been agreed, therefore, that the funeral feast should be blended with that usually given at the inauguration of the young chief. Some objections were made to this arrangement, as containing an evil omen. But, on the other hand, it had a species of recommendation, from the habits and feelings of the Highlanders, who, to this day, are wont to mingle a degree of solemn mirth with their mourning, and something resembling melancholy with their mirth. The usual aversion to speak or think of those who have been beloved and lost is less known to this grave and enthusiastic race than it is to others. You hear not only the young mention (as is everywhere usual) the merits and the character of parents, who have, in the course of nature, predeceased them; but the widowed partner speaks, in ordinary conversation, of the lost spouse, and, what is still stranger, the parents allude frequently to the beauty or valour of the child whom they have interred. The Scottish Highlanders appear to regard the separation of friends by death as something less absolute and complete than it is generally esteemed in other countries, and converse of the dear connexions who have sought the grave before them as if they had gone upon a long journey in which they themselves must soon follow. The funeral feast, therefore, being a general custom throughout Scotland, was not, in the opinion of those who were to share it, unseemingly mingled, on the present occasion, with the festivities which hailed the succession to the chieftainship.

The barge which had lately borne the dead to the grave now conveyed the young Maclan to his new command and the minstrels sent forth their gayest notes to gratulate Eachin's succession, as they had lately sounded their most doleful dirges when carrying Gilchrist to his grave. From the attendant flotilla rang notes of triumph and jubilee, instead of those yells of lamentation which had so lately disturbed the echoes of Loch Tay; and a thousand voices hailed the youthful chieftain as he stood on the poop, armed at all points, in the flower of early manhood, beauty, and activity, on the very spot where his father's corpse had so lately been extended, and surrounded by triumphant friends, as that had been by desolate mourners.

One boat kept closest of the flotilla to the honoured galley. Torquil of the Oak, a grizzled giant, was steersman; and his eight sons, each exceeding the ordinary stature of mankind, pulled the oars. Like some powerful and favourite wolf hound, unloosed from his couples, and frolicking around a liberal master, the boat of the foster brethren passed the chieftain's barge, now on one side and now on another, and even rowed around it, as if in extravagance of joy; while, at the same time, with the jealous vigilance of the animal we have compared it to, they made it dangerous for any other of the flotilla to approach so near as themselves, from the risk of being run down by their impetuous and reckless manoeuvres. Raised to an eminent rank in the clan by the succession of their foster brother to the command of the Clan Quhele, this was the tumultuous and almost terrible mode in which they testified their peculiar share in their chief's triumph.

Far behind, and with different feelings, on the part of one at least of the company, came the small boat in which, manned by the Booshalloch and one of his sons, Simon Glover was a passenger.

"If we are bound for the head of the lake," said Simon to his friend, "we shall hardly be there for hours."

But as he spoke the crew of the boat of the foster brethren, or leichtach, on a signal from the chief's galley, lay on their oars until the Booshalloch's boat came up, and throwing on board a rope of hides, which Niel made fast to the head of his skiff, they stretched to their oars once more, and, notwithstanding they had the small boat in tow, swept through the lake with almost the same rapidity as before. The skiff was tugged on with a velocity which seemed to hazard the pulling her under water, or the separation of her head from her other timbers.

Simon Glover saw with anxiety the reckless fury of their course, and the bows of the boat occasionally brought within an inch or two of the level of the water; and though his friend, Niel Booshalloch, assured him it was all done in especial honour, he heartily wished his voyage might have a safe termination. It had so, and much sooner than he apprehended; for the place of festivity was not four miles distant from the sepulchral island, being chosen to suit the chieftain's course, which lay to the southeast, so soon as the banquet should be concluded. A bay on the southern side of Loch Tay presented a beautiful beach of sparkling sand, on which the boats might land with ease, and a dry meadow, covered with turf, verdant considering the season, behind and around which rose high banks, fringed with copsewood, and displaying the lavish preparations which had been made for the entertainment.

The Highlanders, well known for ready hatchet men, had constructed a long arbour or silvan banquetting room, capable of receiving two hundred men, while a number of smaller huts around seemed intended for sleeping apartments. The uprights, the couples, and roof tree of the temporary hall were composed of mountain pine, still covered with its bark. The framework of the sides was of planks or spars of the same material, closely interwoven with the leafy boughs of the fir and other evergreens, which the neighbouring woods afforded, while the hills had furnished plenty of heath to form the roof. Within this silvan palace the most important personages present were invited to hold high festival. Others of less note were to feast in various long sheds constructed with less care; and tables of sod, or rough planks, placed in the open air, were allotted to the numberless multitude. At a distance were to be seen piles of glowing charcoal or blazing wood, around which countless cooks toiled, bustled, and fretted, like so many demons working in their native element. Pits, wrought in the hillside, and lined with heated stones, served as ovens for stewing immense quantities of beef, mutton, and venison; wooden spits supported sheep and goats, which were roasted entire; others were cut into joints, and seethed in caldrons made of the animal's own skins, sewed hastily together and filled with water; while huge quantities of pike, trout, salmon, and char were broiled with more ceremony on glowing embers. The glover had seen many a Highland banquet, but never one the preparations for which were on such a scale of barbarous profusion.

He had little time, however, to admire the scene around him for, as soon as they landed on the beach, the Booshalloch observed with some embarrassment, that, as they had not been bidden to the table of the dais, to which he seemed to have expected an invitation, they had best secure a place in one of the inferior bothies or booths; and was leading the way in that direction, when he was stopped by one of the bodyguards, seeming to act as master of ceremonies, who whispered something in his ear.

"I thought so," said the herdsman, much relieved—"I thought neither the stranger nor the man that has my charge would be left out at the high table."

They were conducted accordingly into the ample lodge, within which were long ranges of tables already mostly occupied by the guests, while those who acted as domestics were placing upon them the abundant though rude materials of the festival. The young chief, although he certainly saw the glover and the herdsman enter, did not address any personal salute to either, and their places were assigned them in a distant corner, far beneath the salt, a huge piece of antique silver plate, the only article of value that the table displayed, and which was regarded by the clan as a species of palladium, only produced and used on the most solemn occasions, such as the present.

The Booshalloch, somewhat discontented, muttered to Simon as he took his place: "These are changed days, friend. His father, rest his soul, would have spoken to us both; but these are bad manners which he has learned among you Sassenachs in the Low Country."

To this remark the glover did not think it necessary to reply; instead of which he adverted to the evergreens, and particularly to the skins and other ornaments with which the interior of the bower was decorated. The most remarkable part of these ornaments was a number of Highland shirts of mail, with steel bonnets, battle axes, and two handed swords to match, which hung around the upper part of the room, together with targets highly and richly embossed. Each mail shirt was hung over a well dressed stag's hide, which at once displayed the armour to advantage and saved it from suffering by damp.

"These," whispered the Booshalloch, "are the arms of the chosen champions of the Clan Quhele. They are twenty-nine in number, as you see, Eachin himself being the thirtieth, who wears his armour today, else had there been thirty. And he has not got such a good hauberk after all as he should wear on Palm Sunday. These nine suits of harness, of such large size, are for the leichtach, from whom so much is expected."

"And these goodly deer hides," said Simon, the spirit of his profession awakening at the sight of the goods in which he traded—"think you the chief will be disposed to chaffer for them? They are in demand for the doublets which knights wear under their armour."

"Did I not pray you," said Niel Booshalloch, "to say nothing on that subject?"

"It is the mail shirts I speak of," said Simon—"may I ask if any of them were made by our celebrated Perth armourer, called Henry of the Wynd?"

"Thou art more unlucky than before," said Niel, "that man's name is to Eachin's temper like a whirlwind upon the lake; yet no man knows for what cause."

"I can guess," thought our glover, but gave no utterance to the thought; and, having twice lighted on unpleasant subjects of conversation, he prepared to apply himself, like those around him, to his food, without starting another topic.

We have said as much of the preparations as may lead the reader to conclude that the festival, in respect of the quality of the food, was of the most rude description, consisting chiefly of huge joints of meat, which were consumed with little respect to the fasting season, although several of the friars of the island convent graced and hallowed the board by their presence. The platters were of wood, and so were the hooped cogues or cups out of which the guests quaffed their liquor, as also the broth or juice of the meat, which was held a delicacy. There were also various preparations of milk which were highly esteemed, and were eaten out of similar vessels. Bread was the scarcest article at the banquet, but the glover and his patron Niel were served with two small loaves expressly for their own use. In eating, as, indeed, was then the case all over Britain, the guests used their knives called skenes, or the large poniards named dirks, without troubling themselves by the reflection that they might occasionally have served different or more fatal purposes.

At the upper end of the table stood a vacant seat, elevated a step or two above the floor. It was covered with a canopy of hollow boughs and ivy, and there rested against it a sheathed sword and a folded banner. This had been the seat of the deceased chieftain, and was left vacant in honour of him. Eachin occupied a lower chair on the right hand of the place of honour.

The reader would be greatly mistaken who should follow out this description by supposing that the guests behaved like a herd of hungry wolves, rushing upon a feast rarely offered to them. On the contrary, the Clan Quhele conducted themselves with that species of courteous reserve and attention to the wants of others which is often found in primitive nations, especially such as are always in arms, because a general observance of the rules of courtesy is necessary to prevent quarrels, bloodshed, and death. The guests took the places assigned them by Torquil of the Oak, who, acting as marischal taeh, i.e. sewer of the mess, touched with a white wand, without speaking a word, the place where each was to sit. Thus placed in order, the company patiently waited for the portion assigned them, which was distributed among them by the leichtach; the bravest men or more distinguished warriors of the tribe being accommodated with a double mess, emphatically called bieyfir, or the portion of a man. When the sewers themselves had seen every one served, they resumed their places at the festival, and were each served with one of these larger messes of food. Water was placed within each man's reach, and a handful of soft moss served the purposes of a table napkin, so that, as at an Eastern banquet, the hands were washed as often as the mess was changed. For amusement, the bard recited the praises of the deceased chief, and expressed the clan's confidence in the blossoming virtues of his successor. The seannachie recited the genealogy of the tribe, which they traced to the race of the Dalriads; the harpers played within, while the war pipes cheered the multitude without. The conversation among the guests was grave, subdued, and civil; no jest was attempted beyond the bounds of a very gentle pleasantry, calculated only to excite a passing smile. There were no raised voices, no contentious arguments; and Simon Glover had heard a hundred times more noise at a guild feast in Perth than was made on this occasion by two hundred wild mountaineers.

Even the liquor itself did not seem to raise the festive party above the same tone of decorous gravity. It was of various kinds. Wine appeared in very small quantities, and was served out only to the principal guests, among which honoured number Simon Glover was again included. The wine and the two wheaten loaves were indeed the only marks of notice which he received during the feast; but Niel Booshalloch, jealous of his master's reputation for hospitality, failed not to enlarge on them as proofs of high distinction. Distilled liquors, since so generally used in the Highlands, were then comparatively unknown. The usquebaugh was circulated in small quantities, and was highly flavoured with a decoction of saffron and other herbs, so as to resemble a medicinal potion rather than a festive cordial. Cider and mead were seen at the entertainment, but ale, brewed in great quantities for the purpose, and flowing round without restriction, was the liquor generally used, and that was drunk with a moderation much less known among the more modern Highlanders. A cup to the memory of the deceased chieftain was the first pledge solemnly proclaimed after the banquet was finished, and a low murmur of benedictions was heard from the company, while the monks alone, uplifting their united voices, sung Requiem eternam dona. An unusual silence followed, as if something extraordinary was expected, when Eachin arose with a bold and manly, yet modest, grace, and ascended the vacant seat or throne, saying with dignity and firmness:

"This seat and my father's inheritance I claim as my right—so prosper me God and St. Barr!"

"How will you rule your father's children?" said an old man, the uncle of the deceased.

"I will defend them with my father's sword, and distribute justice to them under my father's banner."

The old man, with a trembling hand, unsheathed the ponderous weapon, and, holding it by the blade, offered the hilt to the young chieftain's grasp; at the same time Torquil of the Oak unfurled the pennon of the tribe, and swung it repeatedly over Eachin's head, who, with singular grace and dexterity, brandished the huge claymore as in its defence. The guests raised a yelling shout to testify their acceptance of the patriarchal chief who claimed their allegiance, nor was there any who, in the graceful and agile youth before them, was disposed to recollect the subject of sinister vaticinations. As he stood in glittering mail, resting on the long sword, and acknowledging by gracious gestures the acclamations which rent the air within, without, and around, Simon Glover was tempted to doubt whether this majestic figure was that of the same lad whom he had often treated with little ceremony, and began to have some apprehension of the consequences of having done so. A general burst of minstrelsy succeeded to the acclamations, and rock and greenwood rang to harp and pipes, as lately to shout and yell of woe.

It would be tedious to pursue the progress of the inaugural feast, or detail the pledges that were quaffed to former heroes of the clan, and above all to the twenty-nine brave galloglasses who were to fight in the approaching conflict, under the eye and leading of their young chief. The bards, assuming in old times the prophetic character combined with their own, ventured to assure them of the most distinguished victory, and to predict the fury with which the blue falcon, the emblem of the Clan Quhele, should rend to pieces the mountain cat, the well known badge of the Clan Chattan.

It was approaching sunset when a bowl, called the grace cup, made of oak, hooped with silver, was handed round the table as the signal of dispersion, although it was left free to any who chose a longer carouse to retreat to any of the outer bothies. As for Simon Glover, the Booshalloch conducted him to a small hut, contrived, it would seem, for the use of a single individual, where a bed of heath and moss was arranged as well as the season would permit, and an ample supply of such delicacies as the late feast afforded showed that all care had been taken for the inhabitant's accommodation.

"Do not leave this hut," said the Booshalloch, taking leave of his friend and protege: "this is your place of rest. But apartments are lost on such a night of confusion, and if the badger leaves his hole the toad will creep into it."

To Simon Glover this arrangement was by no means disagreeable. He had been wearied by the noise of the day, and felt desirous of repose. After eating, therefore, a morsel, which his appetite scarce required, and drinking a cup of wine to expel the cold, he muttered his evening prayer, wrapt himself in his cloak, and lay down on a couch which old acquaintance had made familiar and easy to him. The hum and murmur, and even the occasional shouts, of some of the festive multitude who continued revelling without did not long interrupt his repose, and in about ten minutes he was as fast asleep as if he had lain in his own bed in Curfew Street.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Still harping on my daughter.

Hamlet.

Two hours before the black cock crew, Simon Glover was wakened by a well known voice, which called him by name.

"What, Conachar!" he replied, as he started from sleep, "is the morning so far advanced?" and, raising his eyes, the person of whom he was dreaming stood before him; and at the same moment, the events of yesterday rushing on his recollection, he saw with surprise that the vision retained the form which sleep had assigned it, and it was not the mail clad Highland chief, with claymore in hand, as he had seen him the preceding night, but Conachar of Curfew Street, in his humble apprentice's garb, holding in his hand a switch of oak. An apparition would not more have surprised our Perth burgher. As he gazed with wonder, the youth turned upon him a piece of lighted bog wood which he carried in a lantern, and to his waking exclamation replied:

"Even so, father Simon: it is Conachar, come to renew our old acquaintance, when our intercourse will attract least notice."

So saying, he sat down on a tressel which answered the purpose of a chair, and placing the lantern beside him, proceeded in the most friendly tone:

"I have tasted of thy good cheer many a day, father Simon; I trust thou hast found no lack in my family?"

"None whatever, Eachin Maclan," answered the glover, for the simplicity of the Celtic language and manners rejects all honorary titles; "it was even too good for this fasting season, and much too good for me, since I must be ashamed to think how hard you fared in Curfew Street."

"Even too well, to use your own word," said Conachar, "for the deserts of an idle apprentice and for the wants of a young Highlander. But yesterday, if there was, as I trust, enough of food, found you not, good glover, some lack of courteous welcome? Excuse it not—I know you did so. But I am young in authority with my people, and I must not too early draw their attention to the period of my residence in the Lowlands, which, however, I can never forget."

"I understand the cause entirely," said Simon; "and therefore it is unwillingly, and as it were by force, that I have made so early a visit hither."

"Hush, father—hush! It is well you are come to see some of my Highland splendour while it yet sparkles. Return after Palm Sunday, and who knows whom or what you may find in the territories we now possess! The wildcat may have made his lodge where the banqueting bower of Maclan now stands."

The young chief was silent, and pressed the top of the rod to his lips, as if to guard against uttering more.

"There is no fear of that, Eachin," said Simon, in that vague way in which lukewarm comforters endeavour to turn the reflections of their friends from the consideration of inevitable danger.

"There is fear, and there is peril of utter ruin," answered Eachin, "and there is positive certainty of great loss. I marvel my father consented to this wily proposal of Albany. I would MacGillie Chattanach would agree with me, and then, instead of wasting our best blood against each other, we would go down together to Strathmore and kill and take possession. I would rule at Perth and he at Dundee, and all the great strath should be our own to the banks of the Firth of Tay. Such is the policy I have caught from your old grey head, father Simon, when holding a trencher at thy back, and listening to thy evening talk with Bailie Craigdallie."

"The tongue is well called an unruly member," thought the glover. "Here have I been holding a candle to the devil, to show him the way to mischief."

But he only said aloud: "These plans come too late."

"Too late indeed!" answered Eachin. "The indentures of battle are signed by our marks and seals, the burning hate of the Clan Quhele and Clan Chattan is blown up to an inextinguishable flame by mutual insults and boasts. Yes, the time is passed by. But to thine own affairs, father Glover. It is religion that has brought thee hither, as I learn from Niel Booshalloch. Surely, my experience of thy prudence did not lead me to suspect thee of any quarrel with Mother Church. As for my old acquaintance, Father Clement, he is one of those who hunt after the crown of martyrdom, and think a stake, surrounded with blazing fagots, better worth embracing than a willing bride. He is a very knight errant in defence of his religious notions, and does battle wherever he comes. He hath already a quarrel with the monks of Sibyl's Isle yonder about some point of doctrine. Hast seen him?"

"I have," answered Simon; "but we spoke little together, the time being pressing."

"He may have said that there is a third person—one more likely, I think, to be a true fugitive for religion than either you, a shrewd citizen, or he, a wrangling preacher—who would be right heartily welcome to share our protection? Thou art dull, man, and wilt not guess my meaning—thy daughter, Catharine."

These last words the young chief spoke in English; and he continued the conversation in that language, as if apprehensive of being overheard, and, indeed, as if under the sense of some involuntary hesitation.

"My daughter Catharine," said the glover, remembering what the Carthusian had told him, "is well and safe."

"But where or with whom?" said the young chief. "And wherefore came she not with you? Think you the Clan Quhele have no cailliachs as active as old Dorothy, whose hand has warmed my haffits before now, to wait upon the daughter of their chieftain's master?"

"Again I thank you," said the glover, "and doubt neither your power nor your will to protect my daughter, as well as myself. But an honourable lady, the friend of Sir Patrick Charteris, hath offered her a safe place of refuge without the risk of a toilsome journey through a desolate and distracted country."

"Oh, ay, Sir Patrick Charteris," said Eachin, in a more reserved and distant tone; "he must be preferred to all men, without doubt. He is your friend, I think?"

Simon Glover longed to punish this affectation of a boy who had been scolded four times a day for running into the street to see Sir Patrick Charteris ride past; but he checked his spirit of repartee, and simply said:

"Sir Patrick Charteris has been provost of Perth for seven years, and it is likely is so still, since the magistrates are elected, not in Lent, but at St. Martinmas."

"Ah, father Glover," said the youth, in his kinder and more familiar mode of address, "you are so used to see the sumptuous shows and pageants of Perth, that you would but little relish our barbarous festival in comparison. What didst thou think of our ceremonial of yesterday?"

"It was noble and touching," said the glover; "and to me, who knew your father, most especially so. When you rested on the sword and looked around you, methought I saw mine old friend Gilchrist Maclan arisen from the dead and renewed in years and in strength."

"I played my part there boldly, I trust; and showed little of that paltry apprentice boy whom you used to—use just as he deserved?"

"Eachin resembles Conachar," said the glover, "no more than a salmon resembles a gar, though men say they are the same fish in a different state, or than a butterfly resembles a grub."

"Thinkest thou that, while I was taking upon me the power which all women love, I would have been myself an object for a maiden's eye to rest upon? To speak plain, what would Catharine have thought of me in the ceremonial?"

"We approach the shallows now," thought Simon Glover, "and without nice pilotage we drive right on shore."

"Most women like show, Eachin; but I think my daughter Catharine be an exception. She would rejoice in the good fortune of her household friend and playmate; but she would not value the splendid Maclan, captain of Clan Quhele, more than the orphan Conachar."

"She is ever generous and disinterested," replied the young chief. "But yourself, father, have seen the world for many more years than she has done, and can better form a judgment what power and wealth do for those who enjoy them. Think, and speak sincerely, what would be your own thoughts if you saw your Catharine standing under yonder canopy, with the command over an hundred hills, and the devoted obedience of ten thousand vassals; and as the price of these advantages, her hand in that of the man who loves her the best in the world?"

"Meaning in your own, Conachar?" said Simon.

"Ay, Conachar call me: I love the name, since it was by that I have been known to Catharine."

"Sincerely, then," said the glover, endeavouring to give the least offensive turn to his reply, "my inmost thought would be the earnest wish that Catharine and I were safe in our humble booth in Curfew Street, with Dorothy for our only vassal."

"And with poor Conachar also, I trust? You would not leave him to pine away in solitary grandeur?"

"I would not," answered the glover, "wish so ill to the Clan Quhele, mine ancient friends, as to deprive them, at the moment of emergency, of a brave young chief, and that chief of the fame which he is about to acquire at their head in the approaching conflict."

Eachin bit his lip to suppress his irritated feelings as he replied: "Words—words—empty words, father Simon. You fear the Clan Quhele more than you love them, and you suppose their indignation would be formidable should their chief marry the daughter of a burghess of Perth."

"And if I do fear such an issue, Hector Maclan, have I not reason? How have ill assorted marriages had issue in the house of MacCallanmore, in that of the powerful MacLeans—nay, of the Lords of the Isles themselves? What has ever come of them but divorce and exheredation, sometimes worse fate, to the ambitious intruder? You could not marry my child before a priest, and you could only wed her with your left hand; and I—" he checked the strain of impetuosity which the subject inspired, and concluded, "and I am an honest though humble burgher of Perth, who would rather my child were the lawful and undoubted spouse of a citizen in my own rank than the licensed concubine of a monarch."

"I will wed Catharine before the priest and before the world, before the altar and before the black stones of Iona," said the impetuous young man. "She is the love of my youth, and there is not a tie in religion or honour but I will bind myself by them! I have sounded my people. If we do but win this combat—and, with the hope of gaining Catharine, we SHALL win it—my heart tells me so—I shall be so much lord over their affections that, were I to take a bride from the almshouse, so it was my pleasure, they would hail her as if she were a daughter of MacCallanmore. But you reject my suit?" said Eachin, sternly.

"You put words of offence in my mouth," said the old man, "and may next punish me for them, since I am wholly in your power. But with my consent my daughter shall never wed save in her own degree. Her heart would break amid the constant wars and scenes of bloodshed which connect themselves with your lot. If you really love her, and recollect her dread of strife and combat, you would not wish her to be subjected to the train of military horrors in which you, like your father, must needs be inevitably and eternally engaged. Choose a bride amongst the daughters of the mountain chiefs, my son, or fiery Lowland nobles. You are fair, young, rich, high born, and powerful, and will not woo in vain. You will readily find one who will rejoice in your conquests, and cheer you under defeat. To Catharine, the one would be as frightful as the other. A warrior must wear a steel gauntlet: a glove of kidskin would be torn to pieces in an hour."

A dark cloud passed over the face of the young chief, lately animated with so much fire.

"Farewell," he said, "the only hope which could have lighted me to fame or victory!"

He remained for a space silent, and intensely thoughtful, with downcast eyes, a lowering brow, and folded arms. At length he raised his hands, and said: "Father,—for such you have been to me—I am about to tell you a secret. Reason and pride both advise me to be silent, but fate urges me, and must be obeyed. I am about to lodge in you the deepest and dearest secret that man ever confided to man. But beware—end this conference how it will—beware how you ever breathe a syllable of what I am now to trust to you; for know that, were you to do so in the most remote corner of Scotland, I have ears to hear it even there, and a hand and poniard to reach a traitor's bosom. I am—but the word will not out!"

"Do not speak it then," said the prudent glover: "a secret is no longer safe when it crosses the lips of him who owns it, and I desire not a confidence so dangerous as you menace me with."

"Ay, but I must speak, and you must hear," said the youth. "In this age of battle, father, you have yourself been a combatant?"

"Once only," replied Simon, "when the Southron assaulted the Fair City. I was summoned to take my part in the defence, as my tenure required, like that of other craftsmen, who are bound to keep watch and ward."

"And how felt you upon that matter?" inquired the young chief.

"What can that import to the present business?" said Simon, in some surprise.

"Much, else I had not asked the question," answered. Eachin, in the tone of haughtiness which from time to time he assumed.

"An old man is easily brought to speak of olden times," said Simon, not unwilling, on an instant's reflection, to lead the conversation away from the subject of his daughter, "and I must needs confess my feelings were much short of the high, cheerful confidence, nay, the pleasure, with which I have seen other men go to battle. My life and profession were peaceful, and though I have not wanted the spirit of a man, when the time demanded it, yet I have seldom slept worse than the night before that onslaught. My ideas were harrowed by the tales we were told—nothing short of the truth—about the Saxon archers: how they drew shafts of a cloth yard length, and used bows a third longer than ours. When I fell into a broken slumber, if but a straw in the mattress pricked my side I started and waked, thinking an English arrow was quivering in my body. In the morning, as I began for very weariness to sink into some repose, I was waked by the tolling of the common bell, which called us burghers to the walls; I never heard its sound peal so like a passing knell before or since."

"Go on—what further chanced?" demanded Eachin.

"I did on my harness," said Simon, "such as it was; took my mother's blessing, a high spirited woman, who spoke of my father's actions for the honour of the Fair Town. This heartened me, and I felt still bolder when I found myself ranked among the other crafts, all bowmen, for thou knowest the Perth citizens have good skill in archery. We were dispersed on the walls, several knights and squires in armour of proof being mingled amongst us, who kept a bold countenance, confident perhaps in their harness, and informed us, for our encouragement, that they would cut down with their swords and axes any of those who should attempt to quit their post. I was kindly assured of this myself by the old Kempe of Kinfauns, as he was called, this good Sir Patrick's father, then our provost. He was a grandson of the Red Rover, Tom of Longueville, and a likely man to keep his word, which he addressed to me in especial, because a night of much discomfort may have made me look paler than usual; and, besides, I was but a lad."

"And did his exhortation add to your fear or your resolution?" said Eachin, who seemed very attentive.

"To my resolution," answered Simon; "for I think nothing can make a man so bold to face one danger at some distance in his front as the knowledge of another close behind him, to push him forward. Well, I mounted the walls in tolerable heart, and was placed with others on the Spey Tower, being accounted a good bowman. But a very cold fit seized me as I saw the English, in great order, with their archers in front, and their men at arms behind, marching forward to the attack in strong columns, three in number. They came on steadily, and some of us would fain have shot at them; but it was strictly forbidden, and we were obliged to remain motionless, sheltering ourselves behind the battlement as we best might. As the Southron formed their long ranks into lines, each man occupying his place as by magic, and preparing to cover themselves by large shields, called pavesses, which they planted before them, I again felt a strange breathlessness, and some desire to go home for a glass of distilled waters. But as I looked aside, I saw the worthy Kempe of Kinfauns bending a large crossbow, and I thought it pity he should waste the bolt on a true hearted Scotsman, when so many English were in presence; so I e'en staid where I was, being in a comfortable angle, formed by two battlements. The English then strode forward, and drew their bowstrings—not to the breast, as your Highland kerne do, but to the ear—and sent off their volleys of swallow tails before we could call on St. Andrew. I winked when I saw them haul up their tackle, and I believe I started as the shafts began to rattle against the parapet. But looking round me, and seeing none hurt but John Squallit, the town crier, whose jaws were pierced through with a cloth yard shaft, I took heart of grace, and shot in my turn with good will and good aim. A little man I shot at, who had just peeped out from behind his target, dropt with a shaft through his shoulder. The provost cried, 'Well stitched, Simon Glover!' 'St. John, for his own town, my fellow craftsmen!' shouted I, though I was then but an apprentice. And if you will believe me, in the rest of the skirmish, which was ended by the foes drawing off, I drew bowstring and loosed shaft as calmly as if I had been shooting at butts instead of men's breasts. I gained some credit, and I have ever afterwards thought that, in case of necessity—for with me it had never been matter of choice—I should not have lost it again. And this is all I can tell of warlike experience in battle. Other dangers I have had, which I have endeavoured to avoid like a wise man, or, when they were inevitable, I have faced them like a true one. Upon other terms a man cannot live or hold up his head in Scotland."

"I understand your tale," said Eachin; "but I shall find it difficult to make you credit mine, knowing the race of which I am descended, and especially that I am the son of him whom we have this day laid in the tomb—well that he lies where he will never learn what you are now to hear! Look, my father, the light which I bear grows short and pale, a few minutes will extinguish it; but before it expires, the hideous tale will be told. Father, I am—a COWARD! It is said at last, and the secret of my disgrace is in keeping of another!"

The young man sunk back in a species of syncope, produced by the agony of his mind as he made the fatal communication. The glover, moved as well by fear as by compassion, applied himself to recall him to life, and succeeded in doing so, but not in restoring him to composure. He hid his face with his hands, and his tears flowed plentifully and bitterly.

"For Our Lady's sake, be composed," said the old man, "and recall the vile word! I know you better than yourself: you are no coward, but only too young and inexperienced, ay, and somewhat too quick of fancy, to have the steady valour of a bearded man. I would hear no other man say that of you, Conachar, without giving him the lie. You are no coward: I have seen high sparks of spirit fly from you even on slight enough provocation."

"High sparks of pride and passion!" said the unfortunate youth; "but when saw you them supported by the resolution that should have backed them? The sparks you speak of fell on my dastardly heart as on a piece of ice which could catch fire from nothing: if my offended pride urged me to strike, my weakness of mind prompted me the next moment to fly."

"Want of habit," said Simon; "it is by clambering over walls that youths learn to scale precipices. Begin with slight feuds; exercise daily the arms of your country in tourney with your followers."

"And what leisure is there for this?" exclaimed the young chief, starting as if something horrid had occurred to his imagination. "How many days are there betwixt this hour and Palm Sunday, and what is to chance then? A list inclosed, from which no man can stir, more than the poor bear who is chained to his stake. Sixty living men, the best and fiercest—one alone excepted!—which Albyn can send down from her mountains, all athirst for each other's blood, while a king and his nobles, and shouting thousands besides, attend, as at a theatre, to encourage their demoniac fury! Blows clang and blood flows, thicker, faster, redder; they rush on each other like madmen, they tear each other like wild beasts; the wounded are trodden to death amid the feet of their companions! Blood ebbs, arms become weak; but there must be no parley, no truce, no interruption, while any of the maimed wretches remain alive! Here is no crouching behind battlements, no fighting with missile weapons: all is hand to hand, till hands can no longer be raised to maintain the ghastly conflict! If such a field is so horrible in idea, what think you it will be in reality?"

The glover remained silent.

"I say again, what think you?"

"I can only pity you, Conachar," said Simon. "It is hard to be the descendant of a lofty line—the son of a noble father—the leader by birth of a gallant array, and yet to want, or think you want, for still I trust the fault lies much in a quick fancy, that over estimates danger—to want that dogged quality which is possessed by every game cock that is worth a handful of corn, every hound that is worth a mess of offal. But how chanced it that, with such a consciousness of inability to fight in this battle, you proffered even now to share your chieftom with my daughter? Your power must depend on your fighting this combat, and in that Catharine cannot help you."

"You mistake, old man," replied Eachin: "were Catharine to look kindly on the earnest love I bear her, it would carry me against the front of the enemies with the mettle of a war horse. Overwhelming as my sense of weakness is, the feeling that Catharine looked on would give me strength. Say yet—oh, say yet—she shall be mine if we gain the combat, and not the Gow Chrom himself, whose heart is of a piece with his anvil, ever went to battle so light as I shall do! One strong passion is conquered by another."

"This is folly, Conachar. Cannot the recollection of your interest, your honour, your kindred, do as much to stir your courage as the thoughts of a brent browed lass? Fie upon you, man!"

"You tell me but what I have told myself, but it is in vain," replied Eachin, with a sigh. "It is only whilst the timid stag is paired with the doe that he is desperate and dangerous. Be it from constitution; be it, as our Highland caillachs will say, from the milk of the white doe; be it from my peaceful education and the experience of your strict restraint; be it, as you think, from an overheated fancy, which paints danger yet more dangerous and ghastly than it is in reality, I cannot tell. But I know my failing, and—yes, it must be said!—so sorely dread that I cannot conquer it, that, could I have your consent to my wishes on such terms, I would even here make a pause, renounce the rank I have assumed, and retire into humble life."

"What, turn glover at last, Conachar?" said Simon. "This beats the legend of St. Crispin. Nay—nay, your hand was not framed for that: you shall spoil me no more doe skins."

"Jest not," said Eachin, "I am serious. If I cannot labour, I will bring wealth enough to live without it. They will proclaim me recreant with horn and war pipe. Let them do so. Catharine will love me the better that I have preferred the paths of peace to those of bloodshed, and Father Clement shall teach us to pity and forgive the world, which will load us with reproaches that wound not. I shall be the happiest of men; Catharine will enjoy all that unbounded affection can confer upon her, and will be freed from apprehension of the sights and sounds of horror which your ill assorted match would have prepared for her; and you, father Glover, shall occupy your chimney corner, the happiest and most honoured man that ever—"

"Hold, Eachin—I prithee, hold," said the glover; "the fir light, with which this discourse must terminate, burns very low, and I would speak a word in my turn, and plain dealing is best. Though it may vex, or perhaps enrage, you, let me end these visions by saying at once: Catharine can never be yours. A glove is the emblem of faith, and a man of my craft should therefore less than any other break his own. Catharine's hand is promised—promised to a man whom you may hate, but whom you must honour—to Henry the armourer. The match is fitting by degree, agreeable to their mutual wishes, and I have given my promise. It is best to be plain at once; resent my refusal as you will—I am wholly in your power. But nothing shall make me break my word."

The glover spoke thus decidedly, because he was aware from experience that the very irritable disposition of his former apprentice yielded in most cases to stern and decided resolution. Yet, recollecting where he was, it was with some feelings of fear that he saw the dying flame leap up and spread a flash of light on the visage of Eachin, which seemed pale as the grave, while his eye rolled like that of a maniac in his fever fit. The light instantly sunk down and died, and Simon felt a momentary terror lest he should have to dispute for his life with the youth, whom he knew to be capable of violent actions when highly excited, however short a period his nature could support the measures which his passion commenced. He was relieved by the voice of Eachin, who muttered in a hoarse and altered tone:

"Let what we have spoken this night rest in silence for ever. If thou bring'st it to light, thou wert better dig thine own grave."

Thus speaking, the door of the hut opened, admitting a gleam of moonshine. The form of the retiring chief crossed it for an instant, the hurdle was then closed, and the shieling left in darkness.

Simon Glover felt relieved when a conversation fraught with offence and danger was thus peaceably terminated. But he remained deeply affected by the condition of Hector Maclan, whom he had himself bred up.

"The poor child," said he, "to be called up to a place of eminence, only to be hurled from it with contempt! What he told me I partly knew, having often remarked that Conachar was more prone to quarrel than to fight. But this overpowering faint heartedness, which neither shame nor necessity can overcome, I, though no Sir William Wallace, cannot conceive. And to propose himself for a husband to my daughter, as if a bride were to find courage for herself and the bridegroom! No—no, Catharine must wed a man to whom she may say, 'Husband, spare your enemy'—not one in whose behalf she must cry, 'Generous enemy, spare my husband!'"

Tired out with these reflections, the old man at length fell asleep. In the morning he was awakened by his friend the Booshalloch, who, with something of a blank visage, proposed to him to return to his abode on the meadow at the Ballough. He apologised that the chief could not see Simon Glover that morning, being busied with things about the expected combat; and that Eachin Maclan thought the residence at the Ballough would be safest for Simon Glover's health, and had given charge that every care should be taken for his protection and accommodation.

Niel Booshalloch dilated on these circumstances, to gloss over the neglect implied in the chief's dismissing his visitor without a particular audience.

"His father knew better," said the herdsman. "But where should he have learned manners, poor thing, and bred up among your Perth burghers, who, excepting yourself, neighbour Glover, who speak Gaelic as well as I do, are a race incapable of civility?"

Simon Glover, it may be well believed, felt none of the want of respect which his friend resented on his account. On the contrary, he greatly preferred the quiet residence of the good herdsman to the tumultuous hospitality of the daily festival of the chief, even if there had not just passed an interview with Eachin upon a subject which it would be most painful to revive.

To the Ballough, therefore, he quietly retreated, where, could he have been secure of Catharine's safety, his leisure was spent pleasantly enough. His amusement was sailing on the lake in a little skiff, which a Highland boy managed, while the old man angled. He frequently landed on the little island, where he mused over the tomb of his old friend Gilchrist Maclan, and made friends with the monks, presenting the prior with gloves of martens' fur, and the superior officers with each of them a pair made from the skin of the wildcat. The cutting and stitching of these little presents served to beguile the time after sunset, while the family of the herdsman crowded around, admiring his address, and listening to the tales and songs with which the old man had skill to pass away a heavy evening. It must be confessed that the cautious glover avoided the conversation of Father Clement, whom he erroneously considered as rather the author of his misfortunes than the guiltless sharer of them. "I will not," he thought, "to please his fancies, lose the goodwill of these kind monks, which may be one day useful to me. I have suffered enough by his preachments already, I trow. Little the wiser and much the poorer they have made me. No—no, Catharine and Clement may think as they will; but I will take the first opportunity to sneak back like a rated hound at the call of his master, submit to a plentiful course of haircloth and whippcord, disburse a lusty mulct, and become whole with the church again."

More than a fortnight had passed since the glover had arrived at Ballough, and he began to wonder that he had not heard news of Catharine or of Henry Wynd, to whom he concluded the provost had communicated the plan and place of his retreat. He knew the stout smith dared not come up into the Clan Quhele country, on account of various feuds with the inhabitants, and with Eachin himself, while bearing the name of Conachar; but yet the glover thought Henry might have found means to send him a message, or a token, by some one of the various couriers who passed and repassed between the court and the headquarters of the Clan Quhele, in order to concert the terms of the impending combat, the march of the parties to Perth, and other particulars requiring previous adjustment. It was now the middle of March, and the fatal Palm Sunday was fast approaching.

Whilst time was thus creeping on, the exiled glover had not even once set eyes upon his former apprentice. The care that was taken to attend to his wants and convenience in every respect showed that he was not forgotten; but yet, when he heard the chieftain's horn ringing through the woods, he usually made it a point to choose his walk in a different direction. One morning, however, he found himself unexpectedly in Eachin's close neighbourhood, with scarce leisure to avoid him, and thus it happened.

As Simon strolled pensively through a little silvan glade, surrounded on either side with tall forest trees, mixed with underwood, a white doe broke from the thicket, closely pursued by two deer greyhounds, one of which griped her haunch, the other her throat, and pulled her down within half a furlong of the glover, who was something startled at the suddenness of the incident. The ear and piercing blast of a horn, and the baying of a slow hound, made Simon aware that the hunters were close behind, and on the trace of the deer. Hallooing and the sound of men running through the copse were heard close at hand. A moment's recollection would have satisfied Simon that his best way was to stand fast, or retire slowly, and leave it to Eachin to acknowledge his presence or not, as he should see cause. But his desire of shunning the young man had grown into a kind of instinct, and in the alarm of finding him so near, Simon hid himself in a bush of hazels mixed with holly, which altogether concealed him. He had hardly done so ere Eachin, rosy with exercise, dashed from the thicket into the open glade, accompanied by his foster father, Torquil of the Oak. The latter, with equal strength and address, turned the struggling hind on her back, and holding her forefeet in his right hand, while he knelt on her body, offered his skene with the left to the young chief, that he might cut the animal's throat.

"It may not be, Torquil; do thine office, and take the assay thyself. I must not kill the likeness of my foster—"

This was spoken with a melancholy smile, while a tear at the same time stood in the speaker's eye. Torquil stared at his young chief for an instant, then drew his sharp wood knife across the creature's throat with a cut so swift and steady that the weapon reached the backbone. Then rising on his feet, and again fixing a long piercing look on his chief, he said: "As much as I have done to that hind would I do to any living man whose ears could have heard my dault (foster son) so much as name a white doe, and couple the word with Hector's name!"

If Simon had no reason before to keep himself concealed, this speech of Torquil furnished him with a pressing one.

"It cannot be concealed, father Torquil," said Eachin: "it will all out to the broad day."

"What will out? what will to broad day?" asked Torquil in surprise.

"It is the fatal secret," thought Simon; "and now, if this huge privy councillor cannot keep silence, I shall be made answerable, I suppose, for Eachin's disgrace having been blown abroad."

Thinking thus anxiously, he availed himself at the same time of his position to see as much as he could of what passed between the afflicted chieftain and his confidant, impelled by that spirit of curiosity which prompts us in the most momentous, as well as the most trivial, occasions of life, and which is sometimes found to exist in company with great personal fear.

As Torquil listened to what Eachin communicated, the young man sank into his arms, and, supporting himself on his shoulder, concluded his confession by a whisper into his ear. Torquil seemed to listen with such amazement as to make him incapable of crediting his ears. As if to be certain that it was Eachin who spoke, he gradually roused the youth from his reclining posture, and, holding him up in some measure by a grasp on his shoulder, fixed on him an eye that seemed enlarged, and at the same time turned to stone, by the marvels he listened to. And so wild waxed the old man's visage after he had heard the murmured communication, that Simon Glover apprehended he would cast the youth from him as a dishonoured thing, in which case he might have lighted among the very copse in which he lay concealed, and occasioned his discovery in a manner equally painful and dangerous. But the passions of Torquil, who entertained for his foster child even a double portion of that passionate fondness which always attends that connexion in the Highlands took a different turn.

"I believe it not," he exclaimed; "it is false of thy father's child, false of thy mother's son, falsest of my dault! I offer my gage to heaven and hell, and will maintain the combat with him that shall call it true. Thou hast been spellbound by an evil eye, my darling, and the fainting which you call cowardice is the work of magic. I remember the bat that struck the torch out on the hour that thou wert born—that hour of grief and of joy. Cheer up, my beloved. Thou shalt with me to Iona, and the good St. Columbus, with the whole choir of blessed saints and angels, who ever favoured thy race, shall take from thee the heart of the white doe and return that which they have stolen from thee."

Eachin listened, with a look as if he would fain have believed the words of the comforter.

"But, Torquil," he said, "supposing this might avail us, the fatal day approaches, and if I go to the lists, I dread me we shall be shamed."

"It cannot be—it shall not!" said Torquil. "Hell shall not prevail so far: we will steep thy sword in holy water, place vervain, St. John's Wort, and rowan tree in thy crest. We will surround thee, I and thy eight brethren: thou shalt be safe as in a castle."

Again the youth helplessly uttered something, which, from the dejected tone in which it was spoken, Simon could not understand, while Torquil's deep tones in reply fell full and distinct upon his ear.

"Yes, there may be a chance of withdrawing thee from the conflict. Thou art the youngest who is to draw blade. Now, hear me, and thou shalt know what it is to have a foster father's love, and how far it exceeds the love even of kinsmen. The youngest on the indenture of the Clan Chattan is Ferquhard Day. His father slew mine, and the red blood is seething hot between us; I looked to Palm Sunday as the term that should cool it. But mark! Thou wouldst have thought that the blood in the veins of this Ferquhard Day and in mine would not have mingled had they been put into the same vessel, yet hath he cast the eyes of his love upon my only daughter Eva, the fairest of our maidens. Think with what feelings I heard the news. It was as if a wolf from the skirts of Farragon had said, 'Give me thy child in wedlock, Torquil.' My child thought not thus: she loves Ferquhard, and weeps away her colour and strength in dread of the approaching battle. Let her give him but a sign of favour, and well I know he will forget kith and kin, forsake the field, and fly with her to the desert."

"He, the youngest of the champions of Clan Chattan, being absent, I, the youngest of the Clan Quhele, may be excused from combat" said Eachin, blushing at the mean chance of safety thus opened to him.

"See now, my chief," said Torquil, "and judge my thoughts towards thee: others might give thee their own lives and that of their sons—I sacrifice to thee the honour of my house."

"My friend—my father," repeated the chief, folding Torquil to his bosom, "what a base wretch am I that have a spirit dastardly enough to avail myself of your sacrifice!"

"Speak not of that. Green woods have ears. Let us back to the camp, and send our gillies for the venison. Back, dogs, and follow at heel."

The slowhound, or lyme dog, luckily for Simon, had drenched his nose in the blood of the deer, else he might have found the glover's lair in the thicket; but its more acute properties of scent being lost, it followed tranquilly with the gazehounds.

When the hunters were out of sight and hearing, the glover arose, greatly relieved by their departure, and began to move off in the opposite direction as fast as his age permitted. His first reflection was on the fidelity of the foster father.

"The wild mountain heart is faithful and true. Yonder man is more like the giants in romaunts than a man of mould like ourselves; and yet Christians might take an example from him for his lealty. A simple contrivance this, though, to finger a man from off their enemies' chequer, as if there would not be twenty of the wildcats ready to supply his place."

Thus thought the glover, not aware that the strictest proclamations were issued, prohibiting any of the two contending clans, their friends, allies, and dependants, from coming within fifty miles of Perth, during a week before and a week after the combat, which regulation was to be enforced by armed men.

So soon as our friend Simon arrived at the habitation of the herdsman, he found other news awaiting him. They were brought by Father Clement, who came in a pilgrim's cloak, or dalmatic, ready to commence his return to the southward, and desirous to take leave of his companion in exile, or to accept him as a travelling companion.

"But what," said the citizen, "has so suddenly induced you to return within the reach of danger?"

"Have you not heard," said Father Clement, "that, March and his English allies having retired into England before the Earl of Douglas, the good earl has applied himself to redress the evils of the commonwealth, and hath written to the court letters desiring that the warrant for the High Court of Commission against heresy be withdrawn, as a trouble to men's consciences, that the nomination of Henry of Wardlaw to be prelate of St. Andrews be referred to the Parliament, with sundry other things pleasing to the Commons? Now, most of the nobles that are with the King at Perth, and with them Sir Patrick Charteris, your worthy provost, have declared for the proposals of the Douglas. The Duke of Albany had agreed to them—whether from goodwill or policy I know not. The good King is easily persuaded to mild and gentle courses. And thus are the jaw teeth of the oppressors dashed to pieces in their sockets, and the prey snatched from their ravening talons. Will you with me to the Lowlands, or do you abide here a little space?"

Neil Booshalloch saved his friend the trouble of reply.

"He had the chief's authority," he said, "for saying that Simon Glover should abide until the champions went down to the battle."

In this answer the citizen saw something not quite consistent with his own perfect freedom of volition; but he cared little for it at the time, as it furnished a good apology for not travelling along with the clergyman.

"An exemplary man," he said to his friend Niel Booshalloch, as soon as Father Clement had taken leave—"a great scholar and a great saint. It is a pity almost he is no longer in danger to be burned, as his sermon at the stake would convert thousands. O Niel Booshalloch, Father Clement's pile would be a sweet savouring sacrifice and a beacon to all decent Christians! But what would the burning of a borrel ignorant burgess like me serve? Men offer not up old glove leather for incense, nor are beacons fed with undressed hides, I trow. Sooth to speak, I have too little learning and too much fear to get credit by the affair, and, therefore, I should, in our homely phrase, have both the scathe and the scorn."

"True for you," answered the herdsman.

CHAPTER XXX.

We must return to the characters of our dramatic narrative whom we left at Perth, when we accompanied the glover and his fair daughter to Kinfauns, and from that hospitable mansion traced the course of Simon to Loch Tay; and the Prince, as the highest personage, claims our immediate attention.

This rash and inconsiderate young man endured with some impatience his sequestered residence with the Lord High Constable, with whose company, otherwise in every respect satisfactory, he became dissatisfied, from no other reason than that he held in some degree the character of his warder. Incensed against his uncle and displeased with his father, he longed, not unnaturally, for the society of Sir John Ramorny, on whom he had been so long accustomed to throw himself for amusement, and, though he would have resented the imputation as an insult, for guidance and direction. He therefore sent him a summons to attend him, providing his health permitted; and directed him to come by water to a little pavilion in the High Constable's garden, which, like that of Sir John's own lodgings, ran down to the Tay. In renewing an intimacy so dangerous, Rothsay only remembered that he had been Sir John Ramorny's munificent friend; while Sir John, on receiving the invitation, only recollected, on his part, the capricious insults he had sustained from his patron, the loss of his hand, and the lightness with which he had treated the subject, and the readiness with which Rothsay had abandoned his cause in the matter of the bonnet maker's slaughter. He laughed bitterly when he read the Prince's billet.

"Eviot," he said, "man a stout boat with six trusty men—trusty men, mark me—lose not a moment, and bid Dwining instantly come hither.

"Heaven smiles on us, my trusty friend," he said to the mediciner. "I was but beating my brains how to get access to this fickle boy, and here he sends to invite me."

"Hem! I see the matter very clearly," said Dwining. "Heaven smiles on some untoward consequences—he! he! he!"

"No matter, the trap is ready; and it is baited, too, my friend, with what would lure the boy from a sanctuary, though a troop with drawn weapons waited him in the churchyard. Yet is it scarce necessary. His own weariness of himself would have done the job. Get thy matters ready—thou goest with us. Write to him, as I cannot, that we come instantly to attend his commands, and do it clerkly. He reads well, and that he owes to me."

"He will be your valiancie's debtor for more knowledge before he dies—he! he! he! But is your bargain sure with the Duke of Albany?"

"Enough to gratify my ambition, thy avarice, and the revenge of both. Aboard—aboard, and speedily; let Eviot throw in a few flasks of the choicest wine, and some cold baked meats."

"But your arm, my lord, Sir John? Does it not pain you?"

"The throbbing of my heart silences the pain of my wound. It beats as it would burst my bosom."

"Heaven forbid!" said Dwining; adding, in a low voice—"It would be a strange sight if it should. I should like to dissect it, save that its stony case would spoil my best instruments."

In a few minutes they were in the boat, while a speedy messenger carried the note to the Prince.

Rothsay was seated with the Constable, after their noontide repast. He was sullen and silent; and the earl had just asked whether it was his pleasure that the table should be cleared, when a note, delivered to the Prince, changed at once his aspect.

"As you will," he said. "I go to the pavilion in the garden—always with permission of my Lord Constable—to receive my late master of the horse."

"My lord!" said Lord Errol.

"Ay, my lord; must I ask permission twice?"

"No, surely, my lord," answered the Constable; "but has your Royal Highness recollected that Sir John Ramorny—"

"Has not the plague, I hope?" replied the Duke of Rothsay. "Come, Errol, you would play the surly turnkey, but it is not in your nature; farewell for half an hour."

"A new folly!" said Errol, as the Prince, flinging open a lattice of the ground parlour in which they sat, stepped out into the garden—"a new folly, to call back that villain to his counsels. But he is infatuated."

The Prince, in the mean time, looked back, and said hastily:

"Your lordship's good housekeeping will afford us a flask or two of wine and a slight collation in the pavilion? I love the *al fresco* of the river."

The Constable bowed, and gave the necessary orders; so that Sir John found the materials of good cheer ready displayed, when, landing from his barge, he entered the pavilion.

"It grieves my heart to see your Highness under restraint," said Ramorny, with a well executed appearance of sympathy.

"That grief of thine will grieve mine," said the Prince. "I am sure here has Errol, and a right true hearted lord he is, so tired me with grave looks, and something like grave lessons, that he has driven me back to thee, thou reprobate, from whom, as I expect nothing good, I may perhaps obtain something entertaining. Yet, ere we say more, it was foul work, that upon the Fastern's Even, Ramorny. I well hope thou gavest not aim to it."

"On my honour, my lord, a simple mistake of the brute Bonthron. I did hint to him that a dry beating would be due to the fellow by whom I had lost a hand; and lo you, my knave makes a double mistake. He takes one man for another, and instead of the baton he uses the axe."

"It is well that it went no farther. Small matter for the bonnet maker; but I had never forgiven you had the armourer fallen—there is not his match in Britain. But I hope they hanged the villain high enough?"

"If thirty feet might serve," replied Ramorny.

"Pah! no more of him," said Rothsay; "his wretched name makes the good wine taste of blood. And what are the news in Perth, Ramorny? How stands it with the bona robas and the galliards?"

"Little galliardise stirring, my lord," answered the knight. "All eyes are turned to the motions of the Black Douglas, who comes with five thousand chosen men to put us all to rights, as if he were bound for another Otterburn. It is said he is to be lieutenant again. It is certain many have declared for his faction."

"It is time, then, my feet were free," said Rothsay, "otherwise I may find a worse warder than Errol."

"Ah, my lord! were you once away from this place, you might make as bold a head as Douglas."

"Ramorny," said the Prince, gravely, "I have but a confused remembrance of your once having proposed something horrible to me. Beware of such counsel. I would be free—I would have my person at my own disposal; but I will never levy arms against my father, nor those it pleases him to trust."

"It was only for your Royal Highness's personal freedom that I was presuming to speak," answered Ramorny. "Were I in your Grace's place, I would get me into that good boat which hovers on the Tay, and drop quietly down to Fife, where you have many friends, and make free to take possession of Falkland. It is a royal castle; and though the King has bestowed it in gift on your uncle, yet surely, even if the grant were not subject to challenge, your Grace might make free with the residence of so near a relative."

"He hath made free with mine," said the Duke, "as the stewartry of Renfrew can tell. But stay, Ramorny—hold; did I not hear Errol say that the Lady Marjory Douglas, whom they call Duchess of Rothsay, is at Falkland? I would neither dwell with that lady nor insult her by dislodging her."

"The lady was there, my lord," replied Ramorny; "I have sure advice that she is gone to meet her father."

"Ha! to animate the Douglas against me? or perhaps to beg him to spare me, providing I come on my knees to her bed, as pilgrims say the emirs and amirals upon whom a Saracen soldan bestows a daughter in marriage are bound to do? Ramorny, I will act by the Douglas's own saying, 'It is better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak.' I will keep both foot and hand from fetters."

"No place fitter than Falkland," replied Ramorny. "I have enough of good yeomen to keep the place; and should your Highness wish to leave it, a brief ride reaches the sea in three directions."

"You speak well. But we shall die of gloom yonder. Neither mirth, music, nor maidens—ha!" said the heedless Prince.

"Pardon me, noble Duke; but, though the Lady Marjory Douglas be departed, like an errant dame in romance, to implore succour of her doughty sire, there is, I may say, a lovelier, I am sure a younger, maiden, either presently at Falkland or who will soon be on the road thither. Your Highness has not forgotten the Fair Maid of Perth?"

"Forget the prettiest wench in Scotland! No—any more than thou hast forgotten the hand that thou hadst in the Curfew Street onslaught on St. Valentine's Eve."

"The hand that I had! Your Highness would say, the hand that I lost. As certain as I shall never regain it, Catharine Glover is, or will soon be, at Falkland. I will not flatter your Highness by saying she expects to meet you; in truth, she proposes to place herself under the protection of the Lady Marjory."

"The little traitress," said the Prince—"she too to turn against me? She deserves punishment, Ramorny."

"I trust your Grace will make her penance a gentle one," replied the knight.

"Faith, I would have been her father confessor long ago, but I have ever found her coy."

"Opportunity was lacking, my lord," replied Ramorny; "and time presses even now."

"Nay, I am but too apt for a frolic; but my father—"

"He is personally safe," said Ramorny, "and as much at freedom as ever he can be; while your Highness—"

"Must brook fetters, conjugal or literal—I know it. Yonder comes Douglas, with his daughter in his hand, as haughty and as harsh featured as himself, bating touches of age."

"And at Falkland sits in solitude the fairest wench in Scotland," said Ramorny. "Here is penance and restraint, yonder is joy and freedom."

"Thou hast prevailed, most sage counsellor," replied Rothsay; "but mark you, it shall be the last of my frolics."

"I trust so," replied Ramorny; "for, when at liberty, you may make a good accommodation with your royal father."

"I will write to him, Ramorny. Get the writing materials. No, I cannot put my thoughts in words—do thou write."

"Your Royal Highness forgets," said Ramorny, pointing to his mutilated arm.

"Ah! that cursed hand of yours. What can we do?"

"So please your Highness," answered his counsellor, "if you would use the hand of the mediciner, Dwining—he writes like a clerk."

"Hath he a hint of the circumstances? Is he possessed of them?"

"Fully," said Ramorny; and, stepping to the window, he called Dwining from the boat.

He entered the presence of the Prince of Scotland, creeping as if he trode upon eggs, with downcast eyes, and a frame that seemed shrunk up by a sense of awe produced by the occasion.

"There, fellow, are writing materials. I will make trial of you; thou know'st the case—place my conduct to my father in a fair light."

Dwining sat down, and in a few minutes wrote a letter, which he handed to Sir John Ramorny.

"Why, the devil has aided thee, Dwining," said the knight. "Listen, my dear lord. 'Respected father and liege sovereign—Know that important considerations induce me to take my departure from this your court, purposing to make my abode at Falkland, both as the seat of my dearest uncle Albany, with whom I know your Majesty would desire me to use all familiarity, and as the residence of one from whom I have been too long estranged, and with whom I haste to exchange vows of the closest affection from henceforward.'"

The Duke of Rothsay and Ramorny laughed aloud; and the physician, who had listened to his own scroll as if it were a sentence of death, encouraged by their applause, raised his eyes, uttered faintly his chuckling note of "He! he!" and was again grave and silent, as if afraid he had transgressed the bounds of reverent respect.

"Admirable!" said the Prince—"admirable! The old man will apply all this to the Duchess, as they call her, of Rothsay. Dwining, thou shouldst be a secretis to his Holiness the Pope, who sometimes, it is said, wants a scribe that can make one word record two meanings. I will subscribe it, and have the praise of the device."

"And now, my lord," said Ramorny, sealing the letter and leaving it behind, "will you not to boat?"

"Not till my chamberlain attends with some clothes and necessities, and you may call my sewer also."

"My lord," said Ramorny, "time presses, and preparation will but excite suspicion. Your officers will follow with the mails tomorrow. For tonight, I trust my poor service may suffice to wait on you at table and chamber."

"Nay, this time it is thou who forgets," said the Prince, touching the wounded arm with his walking rod. "Recollect, man, thou canst neither carve a capon nor tie a point—a goodly sewer or valet of the mouth!"

Ramorny grinned with rage and pain; for his wound, though in a way of healing, was still highly sensitive, and even the pointing a finger towards it made him tremble.

"Will your Highness now be pleased to take boat?"

"Not till I take leave of the Lord Constable. Rothsay must not slip away, like a thief from a prison, from the house of Errol. Summon him hither."

"My Lord Duke," said Ramorny, "it may be dangerous to our plan."

"To the devil with danger, thy plan, and thyself! I must and will act to Errol as becomes us both."

The earl entered, agreeable to the Prince's summons.

"I gave you this trouble, my lord," said Rothsay, with the dignified courtesy which he knew so well how to assume, "to thank you for your hospitality and your good company. I can enjoy them no longer, as pressing affairs call me to Falkland."

"My lord," said the Lord High Constable, "I trust your Grace remembers that you are—under ward."

"How!—under ward? If I am a prisoner, speak plainly; if not, I will take my freedom to depart."

"I would, my lord, your Highness would request his Majesty's permission for this journey. There will be much displeasure."

"Mean you displeasure against yourself, my lord, or against me?"

"I have already said your Highness lies in ward here; but if you determine to break it, I have no warrant—God forbid—to put force on your inclinations. I can but entreat your Highness, for your own sake—"

"Of my own interest I am the best judge. Good evening to you, my lord."

The wilful Prince stepped into the boat with Dwining and Ramorny, and, waiting for no other attendance, Eviot pushed off the vessel, which descended the Tay rapidly by the assistance of sail and oar and of the ebb tide.

For some space the Duke of Rothsay appeared silent and moody, nor did his companions interrupt his reflections. He raised his head at length and said: "My father loves a jest, and when all is over he will take this frolic at no more serious rate than it deserves—a fit of youth, with which he will deal as he has with others. Yonder, my masters, shows the old hold of Kinfauns, frowning above the Tay. Now, tell me, John Ramorny, how thou hast dealt to get the Fair Maid of Perth out of the hands of yonder bull headed provost; for Errol told me it was rumoured that she was under his protection."

"Truly she was, my lord, with the purpose of being transferred to the patronage of the Duchess—I mean of the Lady Marjory of Douglas. Now, this beetle headed provost, who is after all but a piece of blundering valiancy, has, like most such, a retainer of some slyness and cunning, whom he uses in all his dealings, and whose suggestions he generally considers as his own ideas. Whenever I would possess myself of a landward baron, I address myself to such a confidant, who, in the present case, is called Kitt Henshaw, an old skipper upon the Tay, and who, having in his time sailed as far as Campvere, holds with Sir Patrick Charteris the respect due to one who has seen foreign countries. This his agent I have made my own, and by his means have insinuated various apologies in order to postpone the departure of Catharine for Falkland."

"But to what good purpose?"

"I know not if it is wise to tell your Highness, lest you should disapprove of my views. I meant the officers of the Commission for inquiry into heretical opinions should have found the Fair Maid at Kinfauns, for our beauty is a peevish, self willed swerver from the church; and certes, I designed that the knight should have come in for his share of the fines and confiscations that were about to be inflicted. The monks were eager enough to be at him, seeing he hath had frequent disputes with them about the salmon tithe."

"But wherefore wouldst thou have ruined the knight's fortunes, and brought the beautiful young woman to the stake, perchance?"

"Pshaw, my Lord Duke! monks never burn pretty maidens. An old woman might have been in some danger; and as for my Lord Provost, as they call him, if they had clipped off some of his fat acres, it would have been some atonement for the needless brave he put on me in St. John's church."

"Methinks, John, it was but a base revenge," said Rothsay.

"Rest ye contented, my lord. He that cannot right himself by the hand must use his head. Well, that chance was over by the tender hearted Douglas's declaring in favour of tender conscience; and then, my lord, old Henshaw found no further objections to carrying the Fair Maid of Perth to Falkland, not to share the dulness of the Lady Marjory's society, as Sir Patrick Charteris and she herself doth opine, but to keep your Highness from tiring when we return from hunting in the park."

There was again a long pause, in which the Prince seemed to muse deeply. At length he spoke. "Ramorny, I have a scruple in this matter; but if I name it to thee, the devil of sophistry, with which thou art possessed, will argue it out of me, as it has done many others. This girl is the most beautiful, one excepted, whom I ever saw or knew; and I like her the more that she bears some features of—Elizabeth of Dunbar. But she, I mean Catharine Glover, is contracted, and presently to be wedded, to Henry the armourer, a craftsman unequalled for skill, and a man at arms yet unmatched in the barrace. To follow out this intrigue would do a good fellow too much wrong."

"Your Highness will not expect me to be very solicitous of Henry Smith's interest," said Ramorny, looking at his wounded arm.

"By St. Andrew with his shored cross, this disaster of thine is too much harped upon, John Ramorny! Others are content with putting a finger into every man's pie, but thou must thrust in thy whole gory hand. It is done, and cannot be undone; let it be forgotten."

"Nay, my lord, you allude to it more frequently than I," answered the knight—"in derision, it is true; while I—but I can be silent on the subject if I cannot forget it."

"Well, then, I tell thee that I have scruple about this intrigue. Dost thou remember, when we went in a frolic to hear Father Clement preach, or rather to see this fair heretic, that he spoke as touchingly as a minstrel about the rich man taking away the poor man's only ewe lamb?"

"A great matter, indeed," answered Sir John, "that this churl's wife's eldest son should be fathered by the Prince of Scotland! How many earls would covet the like fate for their fair countesses? and how many that have had such good luck sleep not a grain the worse for it?"

"And if I might presume to speak," said the mediciner, "the ancient laws of Scotland assigned such a privilege to every feudal lord over his female vassals, though lack of spirit and love of money hath made many exchange it for gold."

"I require no argument to urge me to be kind to a pretty woman; but this Catharine has been ever cold to me," said the Prince.

"Nay, my lord," said Ramorny, "if, young, handsome, and a prince, you know not how to make yourself acceptable to a fine woman, it is not for me to say more."

"And if it were not far too great audacity in me to speak again, I would say," quoth the leech, "that all Perth knows that the Gow Chrom never was the maiden's choice, but fairly forced upon her by her father. I know for certain that she refused him repeatedly."

"Nay, if thou canst assure us of that, the case is much altered," said Rothsay. "Vulcan was a smith as well as Harry Wynd; he would needs wed Venus, and our chronicles tell us what came of it."

"Then long may Lady Venus live and be worshipped," said Sir John Ramorny, "and success to the gallant knight Mars who goes a-wooing to her goddess-ship!"

The discourse took a gay and idle turn for a few minutes; but the Duke of Rothsay soon dropped it. "I have left," he said, "yonder air of the prison house behind me, and yet my spirits scarce revive. I feel that drowsy, not unpleasing, yet melancholy mood that comes over us when exhausted by exercise or satiated with pleasure. Some music now, stealing on the ear, yet not loud enough to make us lift the eye, were a treat for the gods."

"Your Grace has but to speak your wishes, and the nymphs of the Tay are as favourable as the fair ones upon the shore. Hark! it is a lute."

"A lute!" said the Duke of Rothsay, listening; "it is, and rarely touched. I should remember that dying fall. Steer towards the boat from whence the music comes."

"It is old Henshaw," said Ramorny, "working up the stream. How, skipper!"

The boatman answered the hail, and drew up alongside of the Prince's barge.

"Oh, ho! my old friend!" said the Prince, recognising the figure as well as the appointments of the French glee woman, Louise. "I think I owe thee something for being the means of thy having a fright, at least, upon St. Valentine's Day. Into this boat with thee, lute, puppy dog, scrip and all; I will prefer thee to a lady's service who shall feed thy very cur on capons and canary."

"I trust your Highness will consider—" said Ramorny.

"I will consider nothing but my pleasure, John. Pray, do thou be so complying as to consider it also."

"Is it indeed to a lady's service you would promote me?" said the glee maiden. "And where does she dwell?"

"At Falkland," answered the Prince.

"Oh, I have heard of that great lady!" said Louise; "and will you indeed prefer me to your right royal consort's service?"

"I will, by my honour—whenever I receive her as such. Mark that reservation, John," said he aside to Ramorny.

The persons who were in the boat caught up the tidings, and, concluding a reconciliation was about to take place betwixt the royal couple, exhorted Louise to profit by her good fortune, and add herself to the Duchess of Rothsay's train. Several offered her some acknowledgment for the exercise of her talents.

During this moment of delay, Ramorny whispered to Dwining: "Make in, knave, with some objection. This addition is one too many. Rouse thy wits, while I speak a word with Henshaw."

"If I might presume to speak," said Dwining, "as one who have made my studies both in Spain and Arabia, I would say, my lord, that the sickness has appeared in Edinburgh, and that there may be risk in admitting this young wanderer into your Highness's vicinity."

"Ah! and what is it to thee," said Rothsay, "whether I choose to be poisoned by the pestilence or the 'pothecary? Must thou, too, needs thwart my humour?"

While the Prince thus silenced the remonstrances of Dwining, Sir John Ramorny had snatched a moment to learn from Henshaw that the removal of the Duchess of Rothsay from Falkland was still kept profoundly secret, and that Catharine Glover would arrive there that evening or the next morning, in expectation of being taken under the noble lady's protection.

The Duke of Rothsay, deeply plunged in thought, received this intimation so coldly, that Ramorny took the liberty of remonstrating. "This, my lord," he said, "is playing the spoiled child of fortune. You wish for liberty; it comes. You wish for beauty; it awaits you, with just so much delay as to render the boon more precious. Even your slightest desires seem a law to the Fates; for you desire music when it seems most distant, and the lute and song are at your hand. These things, so sent, should be enjoyed, else we are but like petted children, who break and throw from them the toys they have wept themselves sick for."

"To enjoy pleasure, Ramorny," said the Prince, "a man should have suffered pain, as it requires fasting to gain a good appetite. We, who can have all for a wish, little enjoy that all when we have possessed it. Seest thou yonder thick cloud, which is about to burst to rain? It seems to stifle me—the waters look dark and lurid—the shores have lost their beautiful form—"

"My lord, forgive your servant," said Ramorny. "You indulge a powerful imagination, as an unskilful horseman permits a fiery steed to rear until he falls back on his master and crushes him. I pray you shake off this lethargy. Shall the glee maiden make some music?"

"Let her; but it must be melancholy: all mirth would at this moment jar on my ear."

The maiden sung a melancholy dirge in Norman French; the words, of which the following is an imitation, were united to a tune as doleful as they are themselves:

*Yes, thou mayst sigh,
And look once more at all around,
At stream and bank, and sky and ground.
Thy life its final course has found,
And thou must die.*

*Yes, lay thee down,
And while thy struggling pulses flutter,
Bid the grey monk his soul mass mutter,
And the deep bell its death tone utter—
Thy life is gone.*

*Be not afraid.
'Tis but a pang, and then a thrill,
A fever fit, and then a chill,
And then an end of human ill,
For thou art dead.*

The Prince made no observation on the music; and the maiden, at Ramorny's beck, went on from time to time with her minstrel craft, until the evening sunk down into rain, first soft and gentle, at length in great quantities, and accompanied by a cold wind. There was neither cloak nor covering for the Prince, and he sullenly rejected that which Ramorny offered.

"It is not for Rothsay to wear your cast garments, Sir John; this melted snow, which I feel pierce me to the very marrow, I am now encountering by your fault. Why did you presume to put off the boat without my servants and apparel?"

Ramorny did not attempt an exculpation; for he knew the Prince was in one of those humours, when to enlarge upon a grievance was more pleasing to him than to have his mouth stopped by any reasonable apology. In sullen silence, or amid unsuppressed chiding, the boat arrived at the fishing village of Newburgh. The party landed, and found horses in readiness, which, indeed, Ramorny had long since provided for the occasion. Their quality underwent the Prince's bitter sarcasm, expressed to Ramorny sometimes by direct words, oftener by bitter gibes. At length they were mounted and rode on through the closing night and the falling rain, the Prince leading the way with reckless haste. The glee maiden, mounted by his express order, attended them and well for her that, accustomed to severe weather, and exercise both on foot and horseback, she supported as firmly as the men the fatigues of the nocturnal ride. Ramorny was compelled to keep at the Prince's rein, being under no small anxiety lest, in his wayward fit, he might ride off from him entirely, and, taking refuge in the house of some loyal baron, escape the snare which was spread for him. He therefore suffered inexpressibly during the ride, both in mind and in body.

At length the forest of Falkland received them, and a glimpse of the moon showed the dark and huge tower, an appendage of royalty itself, though granted for a season to the Duke of Albany. On a signal given the drawbridge fell. Torches glared in the courtyard, menials attended, and the Prince, assisted from horseback, was ushered into an apartment, where Ramorny waited on him, together with Dwining, and entreated him to take the leech's advice. The Duke of Rothsay repulsed the proposal, haughtily ordered his bed to be prepared, and having stood for some time shivering in his dank garments beside a large blazing fire, he retired to his apartment without taking leave of anyone.

"You see the peevish humour of this childish boy, now," said Ramorny to Dwining; "can you wonder that a servant who has done so much for him as I have should be tired of such a master?"

"No, truly," said Dwining, "that and the promised earldom of Lindores would shake any man's fidelity. But shall we commence with him this evening? He has, if eye and cheek speak true, the foundation of a fever within him, which will make our work easy while it will seem the effect of nature."

"It is an opportunity lost," said Ramorny; "but we must delay our blow till he has seen this beauty, Catharine Glover. She may be hereafter a witness that she saw him in good health, and master of his own motions, a brief space before—you understand me?"

Dwining nodded assent, and added:

"There is no time lost; for there is little difficulty in blighting a flower exhausted from having been made to bloom too soon."

CHAPTER XXXI.

*Ah, me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee:
Few earthly things found favour in his sight,
Save concubines and carnal companie,
And flaunting wassailers of high and low degree.*

BYRON.

With the next morning the humour of the Duke of Rothsay was changed. He complained, indeed, of pain and fever, but they rather seemed to stimulate than to overwhelm him. He was familiar with Ramorny, and though he said nothing on the subject of the preceding night, it was plain he remembered what he desired to obliterate from the memory of his followers—the ill humour he had then displayed. He was civil to every one, and jested with Ramorny on the subject of Catharine's arrival.

"How surprised will the pretty prude be at seeing herself in a family of men, when she expects to be admitted amongst the hoods and pinnars of Dame Marjory's waiting women! Thou hast not many of the tender sex in thy household, I take it, Ramorny?"

"Faith, none except the minstrel wench, but a household drudge or two whom we may not dispense with. By the way, she is anxiously inquiring after the mistress your Highness promised to prefer her to. Shall I dismiss her, to hunt for her new mistress at leisure?"

"By no means, she will serve to amuse Catharine. And, hark you, were it not well to receive that coy jillett with something of a mumming?"

"How mean you, my lord?"

"Thou art dull, man. We will not disappoint her, since she expects to find the Duchess of Rothsay: I will be Duke and Duchess in my own person."

"Still I do not comprehend."

"No one so dull as a wit," said the Prince, "when he does not hit off the scent at once. My Duchess, as they call her, has been in as great a hurry to run away from Falkland as I to come hither. We have both left our apparel behind. There is as much female trumpery in the wardrobe adjoining to my sleeping room as would equip a whole carnival. Look you, I will play Dame Marjory, disposed on this day bed here with a mourning veil and a wreath of willow, to show my forsaken plight; thou, John, wilt look starch and stiff enough for her Galwegian maid of honour, the Countess Hermigild; and Dwining shall present the old Hecate, her nurse—only she hath more beard on her upper lip than Dwining on his whole face, and skull to boot. He should have the commodity of a beard to set her forth conformably. Get thy kitchen drudges, and what passable pages thou hast with thee, to make my women of the bedroom. Hearest thou? about it instantly."

Ramorny hastened into the anteroom, and told Dwining the Prince's device.

"Do thou look to humour the fool," he said; "I care not how little I see him, knowing what is to be done."

"Trust all to me," said the physician, shrugging his shoulders. "What sort of a butcher is he that can cut the lamb's throat, yet is afraid to hear it bleat?"

"Tush, fear not my constancy: I cannot forget that he would have cast me into the cloister with as little regard as if he threw away the truncheon of a broken lance. Begone—yet stay; ere you go to arrange this silly pageant, something must be settled to impose on the thick witted Charteris. He is like enough, should he be left in the belief that the Duchess of Rothsay is still here, and Catharine Glover in attendance on her, to come down with offers of service, and the like, when, as I need scarce tell thee, his presence would be inconvenient. Indeed, this is the more likely, that some folks have given a warmer name to the iron headed knight's great and tender patronage of this damsel."

"With that hint, let me alone to deal with him. I will send him such a letter, that for this month he shall hold himself as ready for a journey to hell as to Falkland. Can you tell me the name of the Duchess's confessor?"

"Waltheof, a grey friar."

"Enough—then here I start."

In a few minutes, for he was a clerk of rare celerity, Dwining finished a letter, which he placed in Ramorny's hand.

"This is admirable, and would have made thy fortune with Rothsay. I think I should have been too jealous to trust thee in his household, save that his day is closed."

"Read it aloud," said Dwining, "that we may judge if it goes trippingly off."

And Ramorny read as follows: "By command of our high and mighty Princess Marjory, Duchess of Rothsay, and so forth, we Waltheof, unworthy brother of the order of St. Francis, do thee, Sir Patrick Charteris, knight of Kinfauns, to know, that her Highness marvels much at the temerity with which you have sent to her presence a woman of whose fame she can judge but lightly, seeing she hath made her abode, without any necessity, for more than a week in thine own castle, without company of any other female, saving menials; of which foul cohabitation the savour is gone up through Fife, Angus, and Perthshire. Nevertheless, her Highness, considering the ease as one of human frailty, hath not caused this wanton one to be scourged with nettles, or otherwise to dree penance; but, as two good brethren of the convent of Lindores, the Fathers Thickskull and Dundermore, have been summoned up to the Highlands upon an especial call, her Highness hath committed to their care this maiden Catharine, with charge to convey her to her father, whom she states to be residing beside Loch Tay, under whose protection she will find a situation more fitting her qualities and habits than the Castle of Falkland, while her Highness the Duchess of Rothsay abides there. She hath charged the said reverend brothers so to deal with the young woman as may give her a sense of the sin of incontinence, and she commendeth thee to confession and penitence.—Signed, Waltheof, by command of an high and mighty Princess"; and so forth.

When he had finished, "Excellent—excellent!" Ramorny exclaimed. "This unexpected rebuff will drive Charteris mad! He hath been long making a sort of homage to this lady, and to find himself suspected of incontinence, when he was expecting the full credit of a charitable action, will altogether confound him; and, as thou say'st, it will be long enough ere he come hither to look after the damsel or do honour to the dame. But away to thy pageant, while I prepare that which shall close the pageant for ever."

It was an hour before noon, when Catharine, escorted by old Henshaw and a groom of the Knight of Kinfauns, arrived before the lordly tower of Falkland. The broad banner which was displayed from it bore the arms of Rothsay, the servants who appeared wore the colours of the Prince's household, all confirming the general belief that the Duchess still resided there. Catharine's heart throbbed, for she had heard that the Duchess had the pride as well as the high courage of the house of Douglas, and felt uncertain touching the reception she was to experience. On entering the castle, she observed that the train was smaller than she had

expected, but, as the Duchess lived in close retirement, she was little surprised at this. In a species of anteroom she was met by a little old woman, who seemed bent double with age, and supported herself upon an ebony staff.

"Truly thou art welcome, fair daughter," said she, saluting Catharine, "and, as I may say, to an afflicted house; and I trust (once more saluting her) thou wilt be a consolation to my precious and right royal daughter the Duchess. Sit thee down, my child, till I see whether my lady be at leisure to receive thee. Ah, my child, thou art very lovely indeed, if Our Lady hath given to thee a soul to match with so fair a body."

With that the counterfeit old woman crept into the next apartment, where she found Rothsay in the masquerading habit he had prepared, and Ramorny, who had evaded taking part in the pageant, in his ordinary attire.

"Thou art a precious rascal, sir doctor," said the Prince; "by my honour, I think thou couldst find in thy heart to play out the whole play thyself, lover's part and all."

"If it were to save your Highness trouble," said the leech, with his usual subdued laugh.

"No—no," said Rothsay, "I never need thy help, man; and tell me now, how look I, thus disposed on the couch—languishing and ladylike, ha?"

"Something too fine complexioned and soft featured for the Lady Marjory of Douglas, if I may presume to say so," said the leech.

"Away, villain, and marshal in this fair frost piece—fear not she will complain of my effeminacy; and thou, Ramorny, away also."

As the knight left the apartment by one door, the fictitious old woman ushered in Catharine Glover by another. The room had been carefully darkened to twilight, so that Catharine saw the apparently female figure stretched on the couch without the least suspicion.

"Is that the maiden?" asked Rothsay, in a voice naturally sweet, and now carefully modulated to a whispering tone. "Let her approach, Griselda, and kiss our hand."

The supposed nurse led the trembling maiden forward to the side of the couch, and signed to her to kneel. Catharine did so, and kissed with much devotion and simplicity the gloved hand which the counterfeit duchess extended to her.

"Be not afraid," said the same musical voice; "in me you only see a melancholy example of the vanity of human greatness; happy those, my child, whose rank places them beneath the storms of state."

While he spoke, he put his arms around her neck and drew her towards him, as if to salute her in token of welcome. But the kiss was bestowed with an earnestness which so much overacted the part of the fair patroness, that Catharine, concluding the Duchess had lost her senses, screamed aloud.

"Peace, fool! it is I—David of Rothsay."

Catharine looked around her; the nurse was gone, and the Duke tearing off his veil, she saw herself in the power of a daring young libertine.

"Now be present with me, Heaven!" she said; "and Thou wilt, if I forsake not myself."

As this resolution darted through her mind, she repressed her disposition to scream, and, as far as she might, strove to conceal her fear.

"The jest hath been played," she said, with as much firmness as she could assume; "may I entreat that your Highness will now unhand me?" for he still kept hold of her arm.

"Nay, my pretty captive, struggle not—why should you fear?"

"I do not struggle, my lord. As you are pleased to detain me, I will not, by striving, provoke you to use me ill, and give pain to yourself, when you have time to think."

"Why, thou traitress, thou hast held me captive for months," said the Prince, "and wilt thou not let me hold thee for a moment?"

"This were gallantry, my lord, were it in the streets of Perth, where I might listen or escape as I listed; it is tyranny here."

"And if I did let thee go, whither wouldst thou fly?" said Rothsay. "The bridges are up, the portcullis down, and the men who follow me are strangely deaf to a peevish maiden's squalls. Be kind, therefore, and you shall know what it is to oblige a prince."

"Unloose me, then, my lord, and hear me appeal from thyself to thyself, from Rothsay to the Prince of Scotland. I am the daughter of an humble but honest citizen. I am, I may well nigh say, the spouse of a brave and honest man. If I have given your Highness any encouragement for what you have done, it has been unintentional. Thus forewarned, I entreat you to forego your power over me, and suffer me to depart. Your Highness can obtain nothing from me, save by means equally unworthy of knighthood or manhood."

"You are bold, Catharine," said the Prince, "but neither as a knight nor a man can I avoid accepting a defiance. I must teach you the risk of such challenges."

While he spoke, he attempted to throw his arms again around her; but she eluded his grasp, and proceeded in the same tone of firm decision.

"My strength, my lord, is as great to defend myself in an honourable strife as yours can be to assail me with a most dishonourable purpose. Do not shame yourself and me by putting it to the combat. You may stun me with blows, or you may call aid to overpower me; but otherwise you will fail of your purpose."

"What a brute you would make me!" said the Prince. "The force I would use is no more than excuses women in yielding to their own weakness."

He sat down in some emotion.

"Then keep it," said Catharine, "for those women who desire such an excuse. My resistance is that of the most determined mind which love of honour and fear of shame ever inspired. Alas! my lord, could you succeed, you would but break every bond between me and life, between yourself and honour. I have been trained fraudulently here, by what decoys I know not; but were I to go dishonoured hence, it would be to denounce the destroyer of my happiness to every quarter of Europe. I would take the palmer's staff in my hand, and wherever chivalry is honoured, or the word Scotland has been heard, I would proclaim the heir of a hundred kings, the son of the godly Robert Stuart, the heir of the heroic Bruce, a truthless, faithless man, unworthy of the crown he expects and of the spurs he wears. Every lady in wide Europe would hold your name too foul for her lips; every worthy knight would hold you a baffled, forsworn caitiff, false to the first vow of arms, the protection of woman and the defence of the feeble."

Rothsay resumed his seat, and looked at her with a countenance in which resentment was mingled with admiration. "You forget to whom you speak, maiden. Know, the distinction I have offered you is one for which hundreds whose trains you are born to bear would feel gratitude."

"Once more, my lord," resumed Catharine, "keep these favours for those by whom they are prized; or rather reserve your time and your health for other and nobler pursuits—for the defence of your country and the happiness of your subjects. Alas, my lord, how willingly would an exulting people receive you for their chief! How gladly would they close around you, did you show desire to head them against the oppression of the mighty, the violence of the lawless, the seduction of the vicious, and the tyranny of the hypocrite!"

The Duke of Rothsay, whose virtuous feelings were as easily excited as they were evanescent, was affected by the enthusiasm with which she spoke. "Forgive me if I have alarmed you, maiden," he said "thou art too noble minded to be the toy of passing pleasure, for which my mistake destined thee; and I, even were thy birth worthy of thy noble spirit and transcendent beauty, have no heart to give thee; for by the homage of the heart only should such as thou be wooed. But my hopes have been blighted, Catharine: the only woman I ever loved has been torn from me in the very wantonness of policy, and a wife imposed on me whom I must ever detest, even had she the loveliness and softness which alone can render a woman amiable in my eyes. My health is fading even in early youth; and all that is left for me is to snatch such flowers as the short passage from life to the grave will now present. Look at my hectic cheek; feel, if you will, my intermitting pulse; and pity me and excuse me if I, whose rights as a prince and as a man have been trampled upon and usurped, feel occasional indifference towards the rights of others, and indulge a selfish desire to gratify the wish of the passing moment."

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Catharine, with the enthusiasm which belonged to her character—"I will call you my dear lord, for dear must the heir of Bruce be to every child of Scotland—let me not, I pray, hear you speak thus! Your glorious ancestor endured exile, persecution, the night of famine, and the day of unequal combat, to free his country; do you practise the like self denial to free yourself. Tear yourself from those who find their own way to greatness smoothed by feeding your follies. Distrust yon dark Ramorny! You know it not, I am sure—you could not know; but the wretch who could urge the daughter to courses of shame by threatening the life of the aged father is capable of all that is vile, all that is treacherous!"

"Did Ramorny do this?" said the Prince.

"He did indeed, my lord, and he dares not deny it."

"It shall be looked to," answered the Duke of Rothsay. "I have ceased to love him; but he has suffered much for my sake, and I must see his services honourably requited."

"His services! Oh, my lord, if chronicles speak true, such services brought Troy to ruins and gave the infidels possession of Spain."

"Hush, maiden—speak within compass, I pray you," said the Prince, rising up; "our conference ends here."

"Yet one word, my Lord Duke of Rothsay," said Catharine, with animation, while her beautiful countenance resembled that of an admonitory angel. "I cannot tell what impels me to speak thus boldly; but the fire burns within me, and will break out. Leave this castle without an hour's delay; the air is unwholesome for you. Dismiss this Ramorny before the day is ten minutes older; his company is most dangerous."

"What reason have you for saying this?"

"None in especial," answered Catharine, abashed at her own eagerness—"none, perhaps, excepting my fears for your safety."

"To vague fears the heir of Bruce must not listen. What, ho! who waits without?"

Ramorny entered, and bowed low to the Duke and to the maiden, whom, perhaps, he considered as likely to be preferred to the post of favourite sultana, and therefore entitled to a courteous obeisance.

"Ramorny," said the Prince, "is there in the household any female of reputation who is fit to wait on this young woman till we can send her where she may desire to go?"

"I fear," replied Ramorny, "if it displease not your Highness to hear the truth, your household is indifferently provided in that way; and that, to speak the very verity, the glee maiden is the most decorous amongst us."

"Let her wait upon this young person, then, since better may not be. And take patience, maiden, for a few hours."

Catharine retired.

"So, my lord, part you so soon from the Fair Maid of Perth? This is, indeed, the very wantonness of victory."

"There is neither victory nor defeat in the case," returned the Prince, drily. "The girl loves me not; nor do I love her well enough to torment myself concerning her scruples."

"The chaste Malcolm the Maiden revived in one of his descendants!" said Ramorny.

"Favour me, sir, by a truce to your wit, or by choosing a different subject for its career. It is noon, I believe, and you will oblige me by commanding them to serve up dinner."

Ramorny left the room; but Rothsay thought he discovered a smile upon his countenance, and to be the subject of this man's satire gave him no ordinary degree of pain. He summoned, however, the knight to his table, and even admitted Dwining to the same honour. The conversation was of a lively and dissolute cast, a tone encouraged by the Prince, as if designing to counterbalance the gravity of his morals in the morning, which Ramorny, who was read in old chronicles, had the boldness to liken to the continence of Scipio.

The banquet, notwithstanding the Duke's indifferent health, was protracted in idle wantonness far beyond the rules of temperance; and, whether owing simply to the strength of the wine which he drank, or the weakness of his constitution, or, as it is probable, because the last wine which he quaffed had been adulterated by Dwining, it so happened that the Prince, towards the end of the repast, fell into a lethargic sleep, from which it seemed impossible to rouse him. Sir John Ramorny and Dwining carried him to his chamber, accepting no other assistance than that of another person, whom we will afterwards give name to.

Next morning, it was announced that the Prince was taken ill of an infectious disorder; and, to prevent its spreading through the household, no one was admitted to wait on him save his late master of horse, the physician Dwining, and the domestic already mentioned; one of whom seemed always to remain in the apartment, while the others observed a degree of precaution respecting their intercourse with the rest of the family, so strict as to maintain the belief that he was dangerously ill of an infectious disorder.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire,
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages, long ago betid:
And, ere thou bid goodnight, to quit their grief,
Tell thou the lamentable fall of me.*

King Richard II Act V. Scene I.

Far different had been the fate of the misguided heir of Scotland from that which was publicly given out in the town of Falkland. His ambitious uncle had determined on his death, as the means of removing the first and most formidable barrier betwixt his own family and the throne. James, the younger son of the King, was a mere boy, who might at more leisure be easily set aside. Ramorny's views of aggrandisement, and the resentment which he had latterly entertained against his masters made him a willing agent in young Rothsay's destruction. Dwining's love of gold, and his native malignity of disposition, rendered him equally forward. It had been resolved, with the most calculating cruelty, that all means which might leave behind marks of violence were to be carefully avoided, and the extinction of life suffered to take place of itself by privation of every kind acting upon a frail and impaired constitution. The Prince of Scotland was not to be murdered, as Ramorny had expressed himself on another occasion, he was only to cease to exist. Rothsay's bedchamber in the Tower of Falkland was well adapted for the execution of such a horrible project. A small, narrow staircase, scarce known to exist, opened from thence by a trapdoor to the subterranean dungeons of the castle, through a passage by which the feudal lord was wont to visit, in private and in disguise, the inhabitants of those miserable regions. By this staircase the villains conveyed the insensible Prince to the lowest dungeon of the castle, so deep in the bowels of the earth, that no cries or groans, it was supposed, could possibly be heard, while the strength of its door and fastenings must for a long time have defied force, even if the entrance could have been discovered. Bonthron, who had been saved from the gallows for the purpose, was the willing agent of Ramorny's unparalleled cruelty to his misled and betrayed patron.

This wretch revisited the dungeon at the time when the Prince's lethargy began to wear off, and when, awaking to sensation, he felt himself deadly cold, unable to move, and oppressed with fetters, which scarce permitted him to stir from the dank straw on which he was laid. His first idea was that he was in a fearful dream, his next brought a confused augury of the truth. He called, shouted, yelled at length in frenzy but no assistance came, and he was only answered by the vaulted roof of the dungeon. The agent of hell heard these agonizing screams, and deliberately reckoned them against the taunts and reproaches with which Rothsay had expressed his instinctive aversion to him. When, exhausted and hopeless, the unhappy youth remained silent, the savage resolved to present himself before the eyes of his prisoner. The locks were drawn, the chain fell; the Prince raised himself as high as his fetters permitted; a red glare, against which he was fain to shut his eyes, streamed through the vault; and when he opened them again, it was on the ghastly form of one whom he had reason to think dead. He sunk back in horror.

"I am judged and condemned," he exclaimed, "and the most abhorred fiend in the infernal regions is sent to torment me!"

"I live, my lord," said Bonthron; "and that you may live and enjoy life, be pleased to sit up and eat your victuals."

"Free me from these irons," said the Prince, "release me from this dungeon, and, dog as thou art, thou shalt be the richest man in Scotland."

"If you would give me the weight of your shackles in gold," said Bonthron, "I would rather see the iron on you than have the treasure myself! But look up; you were wont to love delicate fare—behold how I have catered for you."

The wretch, with fiendish glee, unfolded a piece of rawhide covering the bundle which he bore under' his arm, and, passing the light to and fro before it, showed the unhappy Prince a bull's head recently hewn from the trunk, and known in Scotland as the certain signal of death. He placed it at the foot of the bed, or rather lair, on which the Prince lay.

"Be moderate in your food," he said; "it is like to be long ere thou getst another meal."

"Tell me but one thing, wretch," said the Prince. "Does Ramorny know of this practice?"

"How else hadst thou been decoyed hither? Poor woodcock, thou art snared!" answered the murderer.

With these words, the door shut, the bolts resounded, and the unhappy Prince was left to darkness, solitude, and misery. "Oh, my father!—my prophetic father! The staff I leaned on has indeed proved a spear!"

We will not dwell on the subsequent hours, nay, days, of bodily agony and mental despair.

But it was not the pleasure of Heaven that so great a crime should be perpetrated with impunity.

Catharine Glover and the glee woman, neglected by the other inmates, who seemed to be engaged with the tidings of the Prince's illness, were, however, refused permission to leave the castle until it should be seen how this alarming disease was to terminate, and whether it was actually an infectious sickness. Forced on each other's society, the two desolate women became companions, if not friends; and the union drew somewhat closer when Catharine discovered that this was the same female minstrel on whose account Henry Wynd had fallen under her displeasure. She now heard his complete vindication, and listened with ardour to the praises which Louise heaped on her gallant protector. On the other hand, the minstrel, who felt the superiority of Catharine's station and character, willingly dwelt upon a theme which seemed to please her, and recorded her gratitude to the stout smith in the little song of "Bold and True," which was long a favourite in Scotland.

*Oh, bold and true,
In bonnet blue,
That fear or falsehood never knew,
Whose heart was loyal to his word,
Whose hand was faithful to his sword—
Seek Europe wide from sea to sea,
But bonny blue cap still for me!*

*I've seen Almain's proud champions prance,
Have seen the gallant knights of France,
Unrivall'd with the sword and lance,
Have seen the sons of England true,
Wield the brown bill and bend the yew.
Search France the fair, and England free,
But bonny blue cap still for me!*

In short, though Louise's disreputable occupation would have been in other circumstances an objection to Catharine's voluntarily frequenting her company, yet, forced together as they now were, she found her a humble and accommodating companion.

They lived in this manner for four or five days, and, in order to avoid as much as possible the gaze, and perhaps the incivility, of the menials in the offices, they prepared their food in their own apartment. In the absolutely necessary intercourse with domestics, Louise, more accustomed to expedients, bolder by habit, and desirous to please Catharine, willingly took on herself the trouble of getting from the pantler the materials of their slender meal, and of arranging it with the dexterity of her country.

The glee woman had been abroad for this purpose upon the sixth day, a little before noon; and the desire of fresh air, or the hope to find some sallad or pot herbs, or at least an early flower or two, with which to deck their board, had carried her into the small garden appertaining to the castle. She re-entered her apartment in the tower with a countenance pale as ashes, and a frame which trembled like an aspen leaf. Her terror instantly extended itself to Catharine, who could hardly find words to ask what new misfortune had occurred.

"Is the Duke of Rothsay dead?"

"Worse! they are starving him alive."

"Madness, woman!"

"No—no—no—no!" said Louise, speaking under her breath, and huddling her words so thick upon each other that Catharine could hardly catch the sense. "I was seeking for flowers to dress your pottage, because you said you loved them yesterday; my poor little dog, thrusting himself into a thicket of yew and holly bushes that grow out of some old ruins close to the castle wall, came back whining and howling. I crept forward to see what might be the cause—and, oh! I heard a groaning as of one in extreme pain, but so faint, that it seemed to arise out of the very depth of the earth. At length, I found it proceeded from a small rent in the wall, covered with ivy; and when I laid my ear close to the opening, I could hear the Prince's voice distinctly say, 'It cannot now last long'—and then it sunk away in something like a prayer."

"Gracious Heaven! did you speak to him?"

"I said, 'Is it you, my lord?' and the answer was, 'Who mocks me with that title?' I asked him if I could help him, and he answered with a voice I shall never forget, 'Food—food! I die of famine!' So I came hither to tell you. What is to be done? Shall we alarm the house?"

"Alas! that were more likely to destroy than to aid," said Catharine.

"And what then shall we do?" said Louise.

"I know not yet," said Catharine, prompt and bold on occasions of moment, though yielding to her companion in ingenuity of resource on ordinary occasions: "I know not yet, but something we will do: the blood of Bruce shall not die unaided."

So saying, she seized the small cruise which contained their soup, and the meat of which it was made, wrapped some thin cakes which she had baked into the fold of her plaid, and, beckoning her companion to follow with a vessel of milk, also part of their provisions, she hastened towards the garden.

"So, our fair vestal is stirring abroad?" said the only man she met, who was one of the menials; but Catharine passed on without notice or reply, and gained the little garden without farther interruption.

Louise indicated to her a heap of ruins, which, covered with underwood, was close to the castle wall. It had probably been originally a projection from the building; and the small fissure, which communicated with the dungeon, contrived for air, had terminated within it. But the aperture had been a little enlarged by decay, and admitted a dim ray of light to its recesses, although it could not be observed by those who visited the place with torchlight aids.

"Here is dead silence," said Catharine, after she had listened attentively for a moment. "Heaven and earth, he is gone!"

"We must risk something," said her companion, and ran her fingers over the strings of her guitar.

A sigh was the only answer from the depth of the dungeon. Catharine then ventured to speak. "I am here, my lord—I am here, with food and drink."

"Ha! Ramorny! The jest comes too late; I am dying," was the answer.

"His brain is turned, and no wonder," thought Catharine; "but whilst there is life, there may be hope."

"It is I, my lord, Catharine Glover. I have food, if I could pass it safely to you."

"Heaven bless thee, maiden! I thought the pain was over, but it glows again within me at the name of food."

"The food is here, but how—ah, how can I pass it to you? the chink is so narrow, the wall is so thick! Yet there is a remedy—I have it. Quick, Louise; cut me a willow bough, the tallest you can find."

The glee maiden obeyed, and, by means of a cleft in the top of the wand, Catharine transmitted several morsels of the soft cakes, soaked in broth, which served at once for food and for drink.

The unfortunate young man ate little, and with difficulty, but prayed for a thousand blessings on the head of his comforter. "I had destined thee to be the slave of my vices," he said, "and yet thou triest to become the preserver of my life! But away, and save thyself."

"I will return with food as I shall see opportunity," said Catharine, just as the glee maiden plucked her sleeve and desired her to be silent and stand close.

Both crouched among the ruins, and they heard the voices of Ramorny and the mediciner in close conversation.

"He is stronger than I thought," said the former, in a low, croaking tone. "How long held out Dalwolsy, when the knight of Liddesdale prisoned him in his castle of Hermitage?"

"For a fortnight," answered Dwining; "but he was a strong man, and had some assistance by grain which fell from a granary above his prison house."

"Were it not better end the matter more speedily? The Black Douglas comes this way. He is not in Albany's secret. He will demand to see the Prince, and all must be over ere he comes."

They passed on in their dark and fatal conversation.

"Now gain we the tower," said Catharine to her companion, when she saw they had left the garden. "I had a plan of escape for myself; I will turn it into one of rescue for the Prince. The dey woman enters the castle about vesper time, and usually leaves her cloak in the passage as she goes into the pantlers' office with the milk. Take thou the cloak, muffle thyself close, and pass the warder boldly; he is usually drunken at that hour, and thou wilt go as the dey woman unchallenged through gate and along bridge, if thou bear thyself with confidence. Then away to meet the Black Douglas; he is our nearest and only aid."

"But," said Louise, "is he not that terrible lord who threatened me with shame and punishment?"

"Believe it," said Catharine, "such as thou or I never dwelt an hour in the Douglas's memory, either for good or evil. Tell him that his son in law, the Prince of Scotland dies—treacherously famished—in Falkland Castle, and thou wilt merit not pardon only, but reward."

"I care not for reward," said Louise; "the deed will reward itself. But methinks to stay is more dangerous than to go. Let me stay, then, and nourish the unhappy Prince, and do you depart to bring help. If they kill me before you return, I leave you my poor lute, and pray you to be kind to my poor Charlot."

"No, Louise," replied Catharine, "you are a more privileged and experienced wanderer than I—do you go; and if you find me dead on your return, as may well chance, give my poor father this ring and a lock of my hair, and say, Catharine died in endeavouring to save the blood of Bruce. And give this other lock to Henry; say, Catharine thought of him to the last, and that, if he has judged her too scrupulous touching the blood of others, he will then know it was not because she valued her own."

They sobbed in each other's arms, and the intervening hours till evening were spent in endeavouring to devise some better mode of supplying the captive with nourishment, and in the construction of a tube, composed of hollow reeds, slipping into each other, by which liquids might be conveyed to him. The bell of the village church of Falkland tolled to vespers. The dey, or farm woman, entered with her pitchers to deliver the milk for the family, and to hear and tell the news stirring. She had scarcely entered the kitchen when the female minstrel, again throwing herself in Catharine's arms, and assuring her of her unalterable fidelity, crept in silence downstairs, the little dog under her arm. A moment after, she was seen by the breathless Catharine, wrapt in the dey woman's cloak, and walking composedly across the drawbridge.

"So," said the warder, "you return early tonight, May Bridget? Small mirth towards in the hall—ha, wench! Sick times are sad times!"

"I have forgotten my tallies," said the ready witted French woman, "and will return in the skinning of a bowie."

She went onward, avoiding the village of Falkland, and took a footpath which led through the park. Catharine breathed freely, and blessed God when she saw her lost in the distance. It was another anxious hour for Catharine which occurred before the escape of the fugitive was discovered. This happened so soon as the dey girl, having taken an hour to perform a task which ten minutes might have accomplished, was about to return, and discovered that some one had taken away her grey frieze cloak. A strict search was set on foot; at length the women of the house remembered the glee maiden, and ventured to suggest her as one not unlikely to exchange an old cloak for a new one. The warder, strictly questioned, averred he saw the dey woman depart immediately after vespers; and on this being contradicted by the party herself, he could suggest, as the only alternative, that it must needs have been the devil.

As, however, the glee woman could not be found, the real circumstances of the case were easily guessed at; and the steward went to inform Sir John Ramorny and Dwining, who were now scarcely ever separate, of the escape of one of their female captives. Everything awakens the suspicions of the guilty. They looked on each other with faces of dismay, and then went together to the humble apartment of Catharine, that they might take her as much as possible by surprise while they inquired into the facts attending Louise's disappearance.

"Where is your companion, young woman?" said Ramorny, in a tone of austere gravity.

"I have no companion here," answered Catharine.

"Trifle not," replied the knight; "I mean the glee maiden, who lately dwelt in this chamber with you."

"She is gone, they tell me," said Catharine—"gone about an hour since."

"And whither?" said Dwining.

"How," answered Catharine, "should I know which way a professed wanderer may choose to travel? She was tired no doubt of a solitary life, so different from the scenes of feasting and dancing which her trade leads her to frequent. She is gone, and the only wonder is that she should have stayed so long."

"This, then," said Ramorny, "is all you have to tell us?"

"All that I have to tell you, Sir John," answered Catharine, firmly; "and if the Prince himself inquire, I can tell him no more."

"There is little danger of his again doing you the honour to speak to you in person," said Ramorny, "even if Scotland should escape being rendered miserable by the sad event of his decease."

"Is the Duke of Rothsay so very ill?" asked Catharine.

"No help, save in Heaven," answered Ramorny, looking upward.

"Then may there yet be help there," said Catharine, "if human aid prove unavailing!"

"Amen!" said Ramorny, with the most determined gravity; while Dwining adopted a face fit to echo the feeling, though it seemed to cost him a painful struggle to suppress his sneering yet soft laugh of triumph, which was peculiarly excited by anything having a religious tendency.

"And it is men—earthly men, and not incarnate devils, who thus appeal to Heaven, while they are devouring by inches the life blood of their hapless master!" muttered Catharine, as her two baffled inquisitors left the apartment. "Why sleeps the thunder? But it will roll ere long, and oh! may it be to preserve as well as to punish!"

The hour of dinner alone afforded a space when, all in the castle being occupied with that meal, Catharine thought she had the best opportunity of venturing to the breach in the wall, with the least chance of being observed. In waiting for the hour, she observed some stir in the castle, which had been silent as the grave ever since the seclusion of the Duke of Rothsay. The portcullis was lowered and raised, and the creaking of the machinery was intermingled with the tramp of horse, as men at arms went out and returned with steeds hard ridden and covered with foam. She observed, too, that such domestics as she casually saw from her window were in arms. All this made her heart throb high, for it augured the approach of rescue; and besides, the bustle left the little garden more lonely than ever. At length the hour of noon arrived; she had taken care to provide, under pretence of her own wishes, which the pantler seemed disposed to indulge, such articles of

food as could be the most easily conveyed to the unhappy captive. She whispered to intimate her presence; there was no answer; she spoke louder, still there was silence.

"He sleeps," she muttered these words half aloud, and with a shuddering which was succeeded by a start and a scream, when a voice replied behind her:

"Yes, he sleeps; but it is for ever."

She looked round. Sir John Ramorny stood behind her in complete armour, but the visor of his helmet was up, and displayed a countenance more resembling one about to die than to fight. He spoke with a grave tone, something between that of a calm observer of an interesting event and of one who is an agent and partaker in it.

"Catharine," he said, "all is true which I tell you. He is dead. You have done your best for him; you can do no more."

"I will not—I cannot believe it," said Catharine. "Heaven be merciful to me! it would make one doubt of Providence, to think so great a crime has been accomplished."

"Doubt not of Providence, Catharine, though it has suffered the profligate to fall by his own devices. Follow me; I have that to say which concerns you. I say follow (for she hesitated), unless you prefer being left to the mercies of the brute Bonthron and the mediciner Henbane Dwining."

"I will follow you," said Catharine. "You cannot do more to me than you are permitted."

He led the way into the tower, and mounted staircase after staircase and ladder after ladder.

Catharine's resolution failed her. "I will follow no farther," she said. "Whither would you lead me? If to my death, I can die here."

"Only to the battlements of the castle, fool," said Ramorny, throwing wide a barred door which opened upon the vaulted roof of the castle, where men were bending mangonels, as they called them (military engines, that is, for throwing arrows or stones), getting ready crossbows, and piling stones together. But the defenders did not exceed twenty in number, and Catharine thought she could observe doubt and irresolution amongst them.

"Catharine," said Ramorny, "I must not quit this station, which is necessary for my defence; but I can speak with you here as well as elsewhere."

"Say on," answered Catharine, "I am prepared to hear you."

"You have thrust yourself, Catharine, into a bloody secret. Have you the firmness to keep it?"

"I do not understand you, Sir John," answered the maiden.

"Look you. I have slain—murdered, if you will—my late master, the Duke of Rothsay. The spark of life which your kindness would have fed was easily smothered. His last words called on his father. You are faint—bear up—you have more to hear. You know the crime, but you know not the provocation. See! this gauntlet is empty; I lost my right hand in his cause, and when I was no longer fit to serve him, I was cast off like a worn out hound, my loss ridiculed, and a cloister recommended, instead of the halls and palaces in which I had my natural sphere! Think on this—pity and assist me."

"In what manner can you require my assistance?" said the trembling maiden; "I can neither repair your loss nor cancel your crime."

"Thou canst be silent, Catharine, on what thou hast seen and heard in yonder thicket. It is but a brief oblivion I ask of you, whose word will, I know, be listened to, whether you say such things were or were not. That of your mountebank companion, the foreigner, none will hold to be of a pin point's value. If you grant me this, I will take your promise for my security, and throw the gate open to those who now approach it. If you will not promise silence, I defend this castle till every one perishes, and I fling you headlong from these battlements. Ay, look at them—it is not a leap to be rashly braved. Seven courses of stairs brought you up hither with fatigue and shortened breath; but you shall go from the top to the bottom in briefer time than you can breathe a sigh! Speak the word, fair maid; for you speak to one unwilling to harm you, but determined in his purpose."

Catharine stood terrified, and without power of answering a man who seemed so desperate; but she was saved the necessity of reply by the approach of Dwining. He spoke with the same humble conge which at all times distinguished his manner, and with his usual suppressed ironical sneer, which gave that manner the lie.

"I do you wrong, noble sir, to intrude on your valiance when engaged with a fair damsel. But I come to ask a trifling question."

"Speak, tormentor!" said Ramorny; "ill news are sport to thee even when they affect thyself, so that they concern others also."

"Hem!—he, he!—I only desired to know if your knighthood proposed the chivalrous task of defending the castle with your single hand—I crave pardon, I meant your single arm? The question is worth asking, for I am good for little to aid the defence, unless you could prevail on the besiegers to take physic—he, he, he!—and Bonthron is as drunk as ale and strong waters can make him; and you, he, and I make up the whole garrison who are disposed for resistance."

"How! Will the other dogs not fight?" said Ramorny.

"Never saw men who showed less stomach to the work," answered Dwining—"never. But here come a brace of them. Venit extrema dies. He, he, he!"

Eviot and his companion Buncle now approached, with sullen resolution in their faces, like men who had made their minds up to resist that authority which they had so long obeyed.

"How now!" said Ramorny, stepping forward to meet them. "Wherefore from your posts? Why have you left the barbican, Eviot? And you other fellow, did I not charge you to look to the mangonels?"

"We have something to tell you, Sir John Ramorny," answered Eviot. "We will not fight in this quarrel."

"How—my own squires control me?" exclaimed Ramorny.

"We were your squires and pages, my lord, while you were master of the Duke of Rothsay's household. It is bruited about the Duke no longer lives; we desire to know the truth."

"What traitor dares spread such falsehoods?" said Ramorny.

"All who have gone out to skirt the forest, my lord, and I myself among others, bring back the same news. The minstrel woman who left the castle yesterday has spread the report everywhere that the Duke of Rothsay is murdered, or at death's door. The Douglas comes on us with a strong force—"

"And you, cowards, take advantage of an idle report to forsake your master?" said Ramorny, indignantly.

"My lord," said Eviot, "let Buncle and myself see the Duke of Rothsay, and receive his personal orders for defence of this castle, and if we do not fight to the death in that quarrel, I will consent to be hanged on its highest turret. But if he be gone by natural disease, we will yield up the castle to the Earl of Douglas, who is, they say, the King's lieutenant. Or if—which Heaven forefend!—the noble Prince has had foul play, we will not involve ourselves in the guilt of using arms in defence of the murderers, be they who they will."

"Eviot," said Ramorny, raising his mutilated arm, "had not that glove been empty, thou hadst not lived to utter two words of this insolence."

"It is as it is," answered Eviot, "and we do but our duty. I have followed you long, my lord, but here I draw bridle."

"Farewell, then, and a curse light on all of you!" exclaimed the incensed baron. "Let my horse be brought forth!"

"Our valiance is about to run away," said the mediciner, who had crept close to Catharine's side before she was aware. "Catharine, thou art a superstitious fool, like most women; nevertheless thou hast some mind, and I speak to thee as one of more understanding than the buffaloes which are herding about us. These haughty barons who overstride the world, what are they in the day of adversity? Chaff before the wind. Let their sledge hammer hands or their column resembling legs have injury, and bah! the men at arms are gone. Heart and courage is nothing to them, lith and limb everything: give them animal strength, what are they better than furious bulls; take that away, and your hero of chivalry lies grovelling like the brute when he is hamstrung. Not so the sage; while a grain of sense remains in a crushed or mutilated frame, his mind shall be strong as ever. Catharine, this morning I was practising your death; but methinks I now rejoice that you may survive to tell how the poor mediciner, the pill gilder, the mortar pounder, the poison vender, met his fate, in company with the gallant Knight of Ramorny, Baron in possession and Earl of Lindores in expectation—God save his lordship!"

"Old man," said Catharine, "if thou be indeed so near the day of thy deserved doom, other thoughts were far wholesomer than the vainglorious ravings of a vain philosophy. Ask to see a holy man—"

"Yes," said Dwining, scornfully, "refer myself to a greasy monk, who does not—he! he! he!—understand the barbarous Latin he repeats by rote. Such would be a fitting counsellor to one who has studied both in Spain and Arabia! No, Catharine, I will choose a confessor that is pleasant to look upon, and you shall be honoured with the office. Now, look yonder at his valiancie, his eyebrow drops with moisture, his lip trembles with agony; for his valiancie—he! he! he!—is pleading for his life with his late domestics, and has not eloquence enough to persuade them to let him slip. See how the fibres of his face work as he implores the ungrateful brutes, whom he has heaped with obligations, to permit him to get such a start for his life as the hare has from the greyhounds when men course her fairly. Look also at the sullen, downcast, dogged faces with which, fluctuating between fear and shame, the domestic traitors deny their lord this poor chance for his life. These things thought themselves the superior of a man like me! and you, foolish wench, think so meanly of your Deity as to suppose wretches like them are the work of Omnipotence!"

"No! man of evil—no!" said Catharine, warmly; "the God I worship created these men with the attributes to know and adore Him, to guard and defend their fellow creatures, to practise holiness and virtue. Their own vices, and the temptations of the Evil One, have made them such as they now are. Oh, take the lesson home to thine own heart of adamant! Heaven made thee wiser than thy fellows, gave thee eyes to look into the secrets of nature, a sagacious heart, and a skilful hand; but thy pride has poisoned all these fair gifts, and made an ungodly atheist of one who might have been a Christian sage!"

"Atheist, say'st thou?" answered Dwining. "Perhaps I have doubts on that matter—but they will be soon solved. Yonder comes one who will send me, as he has done thousands, to the place where all mysteries shall be cleared."

Catharine followed the mediciner's eye up one of the forest glades, and beheld it occupied by a body of horsemen advancing at full gallop. In the midst was a pennon displayed, which, though its bearings were not visible to Catharine, was, by a murmur around, acknowledged as that of the Black Douglas. They halted within arrow shot of the castle, and a herald with two trumpets advanced up to the main portal, where, after a loud flourish, he demanded admittance for the high and dreaded Archibald Earl of Douglas, Lord Lieutenant of the King, and acting for the time with the plenary authority of his Majesty; commanding, at the same time, that the inmates of the castle should lay down their arms, all under penalty of high treason.

"You hear?" said Eviot to Ramorny, who stood sullen and undecided. "Will you give orders to render the castle, or must I?"

"No, villain!" interrupted the knight, "to the last I will command you. Open the gates, drop the bridge, and render the castle to the Douglas."

"Now, that's what may be called a gallant exertion of free will," said Dwining. "Just as if the pieces of brass that were screaming a minute since should pretend to call those notes their own which are breathed through them by a frowsy trumpeter."

"Wretched man!" said Catharine, "either be silent or turn thy thoughts to the eternity on the brink of which thou art standing."

"And what is that to thee?" answered Dwining. "Thou canst not, wench, help hearing what I say to thee, and thou wilt tell it again, for thy sex cannot help that either. Perth and all Scotland shall know what a man they have lost in Henbane Dwining!"

The clash of armour now announced that the newcomers had dismounted and entered the castle, and were in the act of disarming the small garrison. Earl Douglas himself appeared on the battlements, with a few of his followers, and signed to them to take Ramorny and Dwining into custody. Others dragged from some nook the stupefied Bonthron.

"It was to these three that the custody of the Prince was solely committed daring his alleged illness?" said the Douglas, prosecuting an inquiry which he had commenced in the hall of the castle.

"No other saw him, my lord," said Eviot, "though I offered my services."

"Conduct us to the Duke's apartment, and bring the prisoners with us. Also should there be a female in the castle, if she hath not been murdered or spirited away—the companion of the glee maiden who brought the first alarm."

"She is here, my lord," said Eviot, bringing Catharine forward.

Her beauty and her agitation made some impression even upon the impassible Earl.

"Fear nothing, maiden," he said; "thou hast deserved both praise and reward. Tell to me, as thou wouldst confess to Heaven, the things thou hast witnessed in this castle."

Few words served Catharine to unfold the dreadful story.

"It agrees," said the Douglas, "with the tale of the glee maiden, from point to point. Now show us the Prince's apartment."

They passed to the room which the unhappy Duke of Rothsay had been supposed to inhabit; but the key was not to be found, and the Earl could only obtain entrance by forcing the door. On entering, the wasted and squalid remains of the unhappy Prince were discovered, flung on the bed as if in haste. The intention of the murderers had apparently been to arrange the dead body so as to resemble a timely parted corpse, but they had been disconcerted by the alarm occasioned by the escape of Louise. Douglas looked on the body of the misguided youth, whose wild passions and caprices had brought him to this fatal and premature catastrophe.

"I had wrongs to be redressed," he said; "but to see such a sight as this banishes all remembrance of injury!"

"He! he! It should have been arranged," said Dwining, "more to your omnipotence's pleasure; but you came suddenly on us, and hasty masters make slovenly service."

Douglas seemed not to hear what his prisoner said, so closely did he examine the wan and wasted features, and stiffened limbs, of the dead body before him. Catharine, overcome by sickness and fainting, at length obtained permission to retire from the dreadful scene, and, through confusion of every description, found her way to her former apartment, where she was locked in the arms of Louise, who had returned in the interval.

The investigations of Douglas proceeded. The dying hand of the Prince was found to be clenched upon a lock of hair, resembling, in colour and texture, the coal black bristles of Bonthron. Thus, though famine had begun the work, it would seem that Rothsay's death had been finally accomplished by violence. The private stair to the dungeon, the keys of which were found at the subaltern assassin's belt, the situation of the vault, its communication with the external air by the fissure in the walls, and the wretched lair of straw, with the fetters which remained there, fully confirmed the story of Catharine and of the glee woman.

"We will not hesitate an instant," said the Douglas to his near kinsman, the Lord Balveny, as soon as they returned from the dungeon. "Away with the murderers! hang them over the battlements."

"But, my lord, some trial may be fitting," answered Balveny.

"To what purpose?" answered, Douglas. "I have taken them red hand; my authority will stretch to instant execution. Yet stay—have we not some Jedwood men in our troop?"

"Plenty of Turnbells, Rutherfords, Ainslies, and so forth," said Balveny.

"Call me an inquest of these together; they are all good men and true, saving a little shifting for their living. Do you see to the execution of these felons, while I hold a court in the great hall, and we'll try whether the jury or the provost marshal do their work first; we will have Jedwood justice—hang in haste and try at leisure."

"Yet stay, my lord," said Ramorny, "you may rue your haste—will you grant me a word out of earshot?"

"Not for worlds!" said Douglas; "speak out what thou hast to say before all that are here present."

"Know all; then," said Ramorny, aloud, "that this noble Earl had letters from the Duke of Albany and myself, sent him by the hand of yon cowardly deserter, Buncle—let him deny it if he dare—counselling the removal of the Duke for a space from court, and his seclusion in this Castle of Falkland."

"But not a word," replied Douglas, sternly smiling, "of his being flung into a dungeon—famished—strangled. Away with the wretches, Balveny, they pollute God's air too long!"

The prisoners were dragged off to the battlements. But while the means of execution were in the act of being prepared, the apothecary expressed so ardent a desire to see Catharine once more, and, as he said, for the good of his soul, that the maiden, in hopes his obduracy might have undergone some change even at

the last hour, consented again to go to the battlements, and face a scene which her heart recoiled from. A single glance showed her Bonthron, sunk in total and drunken insensibility; Ramorny, stripped of his armour, endeavouring in vain to conceal fear, while he spoke with a priest, whose good offices he had solicited; and Dwining, the same humble, obsequious looking, crouching individual she had always known him. He held in his hand a little silver pen, with which he had been writing on a scrap of parchment.

"Catharine," he said—"he, he, he!—I wish to speak to thee on the nature of my religious faith."

"If such be thy intention, why lose time with me? Speak with this good father."

"The good father," said Dwining, "is—he, he!—already a worshipper of the deity whom I have served. I therefore prefer to give the altar of mine idol a new worshipper in thee, Catharine. This scrap of parchment will tell thee how to make your way into my chapel, where I have worshipped so often in safety. I leave the images which it contains to thee as a legacy, simply because I hate and condemn thee something less than any of the absurd wretches whom I have hitherto been obliged to call fellow creatures. And now away—or remain and see if the end of the quacksalver belies his life."

"Our Lady forbid!" said Catharine.

"Nay," said the mediciner, "I have but a single word to say, and yonder nobleman's valiancie may hear it if he will."

Lord Balveny approached, with some curiosity; for the undaunted resolution of a man who never wielded sword or bore armour and was in person a poor dwindled dwarf, had to him an air of something resembling sorcery."

"You see this trifling implement," said the criminal, showing the silver pen. "By means of this I can escape the power even of the Black Douglas."

"Give him no ink nor paper," said Balveny, hastily, "he will draw a spell."

"Not so, please your wisdom and valiancie—he, he, he!" said Dwining with his usual chuckle, as he unscrewed the top of the pen, within which was a piece of sponge or some such substance, no bigger than a pea.

"Now, mark this—" said the prisoner, and drew it between his lips. The effect was instantaneous. He lay a dead corpse before them, the contemptuous sneer still on his countenance.

Catharine shrieked and fled, seeking, by a hasty descent, an escape from a sight so appalling. Lord Balveny was for a moment stupified, and then exclaimed, "This may be glamour! hang him over the battlements, quick or dead. If his foul spirit hath only withdrawn for a space, it shall return to a body with a dislocated neck."

His commands were obeyed. Ramorny and Bonthron were then ordered for execution. The last was hanged before he seemed quite to comprehend what was designed to be done with him. Ramorny, pale as death, yet with the same spirit of pride which had occasioned his ruin, pleaded his knighthood, and demanded the privilege of dying by decapitation by the sword, and not by the noose.

"The Douglas never alters his doom," said Balveny. "But thou shalt have all thy rights. Send the cook hither with a cleaver."

The menial whom he called appeared at his summons.

"What shakest thou for, fellow?" said Balveny; "here, strike me this man's gilt spurs from his heels with thy cleaver. And now, John Ramorny, thou art no longer a knight, but a knave. To the halter with him, provost marshal! hang him betwixt his companions, and higher than them if it may be."

In a quarter of an hour afterwards, Balveny descended to tell the Douglas that the criminals were executed.

"Then there is no further use in the trial," said the Earl. "How say you, good men of inquest, were these men guilty of high treason—ay or no?"

"Guilty," exclaimed the obsequious inquest, with edifying unanimity, "we need no farther evidence."

"Sound trumpets, and to horse then, with our own train only; and let each man keep silence on what has chanced here, until the proceedings shall be laid before the King, which cannot conveniently be till the battle of Palm Sunday shall be fought and ended. Select our attendants, and tell each man who either goes with us or remains behind that he who prates dies."

In a few minutes the Douglas was on horseback, with the followers selected to attend his person. Expresses were sent to his daughter, the widowed Duchess of Rothsay, directing her to take her course to Perth, by the shores of Lochleven, without approaching Falkland, and committing to her charge Catharine Glover and the glee woman, as persons whose safety he tendered.

As they rode through the forest, they looked back, and beheld the three bodies hanging, like specks darkening the walls of the old castle.

"The hand is punished," said Douglas, "but who shall arraign the head by whose direction the act was done?"

"You mean the Duke of Albany?" said Balveny.

"I do, kinsman; and were I to listen to the dictates of my heart, I would charge him with the deed, which I am certain he has authorised. But there is no proof of it beyond strong suspicion, and Albany has attached to himself the numerous friends of the house of Stuart, to whom, indeed, the imbecility of the King and the ill regulated habits of Rothsay left no other choice of a leader. Were I, therefore, to break the bond which I have so lately formed with Albany, the consequence must be civil war, an event ruinous to poor Scotland while threatened by invasion from the activity of the Percy, backed by the treachery of March. No, Balveny, the punishment of Albany must rest with Heaven, which, in its own good time, will execute judgment on him and on his house."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

*The hour is nigh: now hearts beat high;
Each sword is sharpen'd well;
And who dares die, who stoops to fly,
Tomorrow's light shall tell.*

Sir Edwald.

We are now to recall to our reader's recollection, that Simon Glover and his fair daughter had been hurried from their residence without having time to announce to Henry Smith either their departure or the alarming cause of it. When, therefore, the lover appeared in Curfew Street, on the morning of their flight, instead of the hearty welcome of the honest burgher, and the April reception, half joy half censure, which he had been promised on the part of his lovely daughter, he received only the astounding intelligence, that her father and she had set off early, on the summons of a stranger, who had kept himself carefully muffled from observation. To this, Dorothy, whose talents for forestalling evil, and communicating her views of it, are known to the reader, chose to add, that she had no doubt her master and young mistress were bound for the Highlands, to avoid a visit which had been made since their departure by two or three apparitors, who, in the name of a Commission appointed by the King, had searched the house, put seals upon such places as were supposed to contain papers, and left citations for father and daughter to appear before the Court of Commission, on a day certain, under pain of outlawry. All these alarming particulars Dorothy took care to state in the gloomiest colours, and the only consolation which she afforded the alarmed lover was, that her master had charged her to tell him to reside quietly at Perth, and that he should soon hear news of them. This checked the smith's first resolve, which was to follow them instantly to the Highlands, and partake the fate which they might encounter.

But when he recollected his repeated feuds with divers of the Clan Quhele, and particularly his personal quarrel with Conachar, who was now raised to be a high chief, he could not but think, on reflection, that his intrusion on their place of retirement was more likely to disturb the safety which they might otherwise enjoy there than be of any service to them. He was well acquainted with Simon's habitual intimacy with the chief of the Clan Quhele, and justly augured that the Glover would obtain protection, which his own arrival might be likely to disturb, while his personal prowess could little avail him in a quarrel with a whole tribe of vindictive

mountaineers. At the same time his heart throbbed with indignation, when he thought of Catharine being within the absolute power of young Conachar, whose rivalry he could not doubt, and who had now so many means of urging his suit. What if the young chief should make the safety of the father depend on the favour of the daughter? He distrusted not Catharine's affections, but then her mode of thinking was so disinterested, and her attachment to her father so tender, that, if the love she bore her suitor was weighed against his security, or perhaps his life, it was matter of deep and awful doubt whether it might not be found light in the balance. Tormented by thoughts on which we need not dwell, he resolved nevertheless to remain at home, stifle his anxiety as he might, and await the promised intelligence from the old man. It came, but it did not relieve his concern.

Sir Patrick Charteris had not forgotten his promise to communicate to the smith the plans of the fugitives. But, amid the bustle occasioned by the movement of troops, he could not himself convey the intelligence. He therefore entrusted to his agent, Kitt Henshaw, the task of making it known. But this worthy person, as the reader knows, was in the interest of Ramorny, whose business it was to conceal from every one, but especially from a lover so active and daring as Henry, the real place of Catharine's residence. Henshaw therefore announced to the anxious smith that his friend the glover was secure in the Highlands; and though he affected to be more reserved on the subject of Catharine, he said little to contradict the belief that she as well as Simon shared the protection of the Clan Quhele. But he reiterated, in the name of Sir Patrick, assurances that father and daughter were both well, and that Henry would best consult his own interest and their safety by remaining quiet and waiting the course of events.

With an agonized heart, therefore, Henry Gow determined to remain quiet till he had more certain intelligence, and employed himself in finishing a shirt of mail, which he intended should be the best tempered and the most finely polished that his skilful hands had ever executed. This exercise of his craft pleased him better than any other occupation which he could have adopted, and served as an apology for secluding himself in his workshop, and shunning society, where the idle reports which were daily circulated served only to perplex and disturb him. He resolved to trust in the warm regard of Simon, the faith of his daughter, and the friendship of the provost, who, having so highly commended his valour in the combat with Bonthron, would never, he thought, desert him at this extremity of his fortunes. Time, however, passed on day by day; and it was not till Palm Sunday was near approaching, that Sir Patrick Charteris, having entered the city to make some arrangements for the ensuing combat, bethought himself of making a visit to the Smith of the Wynd.

He entered his workshop with an air of sympathy unusual to him, and which made Henry instantly augur that he brought bad news. The smith caught the alarm, and the uplifted hammer was arrested in its descent upon the heated iron, while the agitated arm that wielded it, strong before as that of a giant, became so powerless, that it was with difficulty Henry was able to place the weapon on the ground, instead of dropping it from his hand.

"My poor Henry," said Sir Patrick, "I bring you but cold news; they are uncertain, however, and, if true, they are such as a brave man like you should not take too deeply to heart."

"In God's name, my lord," said Henry, "I trust you bring no evil news of Simon Glover or his daughter?"

"Touching themselves," said Sir Patrick, "no: they are safe and well. But as to thee, Henry, my tidings are more cold. Kitt Henshaw has, I think, apprised thee that I had endeavoured to provide Catharine Glover with a safe protection in the house of an honourable lady, the Duchess of Rothsay. But she hath declined the charge, and Catharine hath been sent to her father in the Highlands. What is worst is to come. Thou mayest have heard that Gilchrist Maclan is dead, and that his son Eachin, who was known in Perth as the apprentice of old Simon, by the name of Conachar, is now the chief of Clan Quhele; and I heard from one of my domestics that there is a strong rumour among the Maclans that the young chief seeks the hand of Catharine in marriage. My domestic learned this—as a secret, however—while in the Breadalbane country, on some arrangements touching the ensuing combat. The thing is uncertain but, Henry, it wears a face of likelihood."

"Did your lordship's servant see Simon Glover and his daughter?" said Henry, struggling for breath, and coughing, to conceal from the provost the excess of his agitation.

"He did not," said Sir Patrick; "the Highlanders seemed jealous, and refused to permit him to speak to the old man, and he feared to alarm them by asking to see Catharine. Besides, he talks no Gaelic, nor had his informer much English, so there may be some mistake in the matter. Nevertheless, there is such a report, and I thought it best to tell it you. But you may be well assured that the wedding cannot go on till the affair of Palm Sunday be over; and I advise you to take no step till we learn the circumstances of the matter, for certainty is most desirable, even when it is painful. Go you to the council house," he added, after a pause, "to speak about the preparations for the lists in the North Inch? You will be welcome there."

"No, my good lord."

"Well, Smith, I judge by your brief answer that you are discomposed with this matter; but, after all, women are weathercocks, that is the truth on't. Solomon and others have proved it before you."

And so Sir Patrick Charteris retired, fully convinced he had discharged the office of a comforter in the most satisfactory manner.

With very different impressions did the unfortunate lover regard the tidings and listen to the consoling commentary.

"The provost," he said bitterly to himself, "is an excellent man; marry, he holds his knighthood so high, that, if he speaks nonsense, a poor man must hold it sense, as he must praise dead ale if it be handed to him in his lordship's silver flagon. How would all this sound in another situation? Suppose I were rolling down the steep descent of the Corriche Dhu, and before I came to the edge of the rock, comes my Lord Provost, and cries: 'Henry, there is a deep precipice, and I grieve to say you are in the fair way of rolling over it. But be not downcast, for Heaven may send a stone or a bush to stop your progress. However, I thought it would be comfort to you to know the worst, which you will be presently aware of. I do not know how many hundred feet deep the precipice descends, but you may form a judgment when you are at the bottom, for certainty is certainty. And hark ye! when come you to take a game at bowls?' And this gossip is to serve instead of any friendly attempt to save the poor wight's neck! When I think of this, I could go mad, seize my hammer, and break and destroy all around me. But I will be calm; and if this Highland kite, who calls himself a falcon, should stoop at my turtle dove, he shall know whether a burgher of Perth can draw a bow or not."

It was now the Thursday before the fated Palm Sunday, and the champions on either side were expected to arrive the next day, that they might have the interval of Saturday to rest, refresh themselves, and prepare for the combat. Two or three of each of the contending parties were detached to receive directions about the encampment of their little band, and such other instructions as might be necessary to the proper ordering of the field. Henry was not, therefore, surprised at seeing a tall and powerful Highlander peering anxiously about the wynd in which he lived, in the manner in which the natives of a wild country examine the curiosities of one that is more civilized. The smith's heart rose against the man on account of his country, to which our Perth burgher bore a natural prejudice, and more especially as he observed the individual wear the plaid peculiar to the Clan Quhele. The sprig of oak leaves, worked in silk, intimated also that the individual was one of those personal guards of young Eachin, upon whose exertions in the future battle so much reliance was placed by those of their clan.

Having observed so much, Henry withdrew into his smithy, for the sight of the man raised his passion; and, knowing that the Highlander came plighted to a solemn combat, and could not be the subject of any inferior quarrel, he was resolved at least to avoid friendly intercourse with him. In a few minutes, however, the door of the smithy flew open, and flattering in his tartans, which greatly magnified his actual size, the Gael entered with the haughty step of a man conscious of a personal dignity superior to anything which he is likely to meet with. He stood looking around him, and seemed to expect to be received with courtesy and regarded with wonder. But Henry had no sort of inclination to indulge his vanity and kept hammering away at a breastplate which was lying upon his anvil as if he were not aware of his visitor's presence.

"You are the Gow Chrom?" (the bandy legged smith), said the Highlander.

"Those that wish to be crook backed call me so," answered Henry.

"No offence meant," said the Highlander; "but her own self comes to buy an armour."

"Her own self's bare shanks may trot hence with her," answered Henry; "I have none to sell."

"If it was not within two days of Palm Sunday, herself would make you sing another song," retorted the Gael.

"And being the day it is," said Henry, with the same contemptuous indifference, "I pray you to stand out of my light."

"You are an uncivil person; but her own self is fir nan ord too; and she knows the smith is fiery when the iron is hot."

"If her nainsell be hammer man herself, her nainsell may make her nain harness," replied Henry.

"And so her nainsell would, and never fash you for the matter; but it is said, Gow Chrom, that you sing and whistle tunes over the swords and harnesses that you work, that have power to make the blades cut steel links as if they were paper, and the plate and mail turn back steel lances as if they were boddle prins?"

"They tell your ignorance any nonsense that Christian men refuse to believe," said Henry. "I whistle at my work whatever comes uppermost, like an honest craftsman, and commonly it is the Highlandman's 'Och hone for Houghman stares!' My hammer goes naturally to that tune."

"Friend, it is but idle to spur a horse when his legs are ham shackled," said the Highlander, haughtily. "Her own self cannot fight even now, and there is little gallantry in taunting her thus."

"By nails and hammer, you are right there," said the smith, altering his tone. "But speak out at once, friend, what is it thou wouldst have of me? I am in no humour for dallying."

"A hauberk for her chief, Eachin Maclan," said the Highlander.

"You are a hammer man, you say? Are you a judge of this?" said our smith, producing from a chest the mail shirt on which he had been lately employed.

The Gael handled it with a degree of admiration which had something of envy in it. He looked curiously at every part of its texture, and at length declared it the very best piece of armour that he had ever seen.

"A hundred cows and bullocks and a good drift of sheep would be e'en ower cheap an offer," said the Highlandman, by way of tentative; "but her nainsell will never bid thee less, come by them how she can."

"It is a fair proffer," replied Henry; "but gold nor gear will never buy that harness. I want to try my own sword on my own armour, and I will not give that mail coat to any one but who will face me for the best of three blows and a thrust in the fair field; and it is your chief's upon these terms."

"Hut, prut, man—take a drink and go to bed," said the Highlander, in great scorn. "Are ye mad? Think ye the captain of the Clan Quhele will be brawling and battling with a bit Perth burgess body like you? Whisht, man, and hearken. Her nainsell will do ye mair credit than ever belonged to your kin. She will fight you for the fair harness hersell."

"She must first show that she is my match," said Henry, with a grim smile.

"How! I, one of Eachin Maclan's leichtach, and not your match!"

"You may try me, if you will. You say you are a fir nan ord. Do you know how to cast a sledge hammer?"

"Ay, truly—ask the eagle if he can fly over Farragon."

"But before you strive with me, you must first try a cast with one of my leichtach. Here, Dunter, stand forth for the honour of Perth! And now, Highlandman, there stands a row of hammers; choose which you will, and let us to the garden."

The Highlander whose name was Norman nan Ord, or Norman of the Hammer, showed his title to the epithet by selecting the largest hammer of the set, at which Henry smiled. Dunter, the stout journeyman of the smith, made what was called a prodigious cast; but the Highlander, making a desperate effort, threw beyond it by two or three feet, and looked with an air of triumph to Henry, who again smiled in reply.

"Will you mend that?" said the Gael, offering our smith the hammer.

"Not with that child's toy," said Henry, "which has scarce weight to fly against the wind. Jannekin, fetch me Sampson; or one of you help the boy, for Sampson is somewhat ponderous."

The hammer now produced was half as heavy again as that which the Highlander had selected as one of unusual weight. Norman stood astonished; but he was still more so when Henry, taking his position, swung the ponderous implement far behind his right haunch joint, and dismissed it from his hand as if it had flown from a warlike engine. The air groaned and whistled as the mass flew through it. Down at length it came, and the iron head sunk a foot into the earth, a full yard beyond the cast of Norman.

The Highlander, defeated and mortified, went to the spot where the weapon lay, lifted it, poised it in his hand with great wonder, and examined it closely, as if he expected to discover more in it than a common hammer. He at length returned it to the owner with a melancholy smile, shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head as the smith asked him whether he would not mend his cast.

"Norman has lost too much at the sport already," he replied. "She has lost her own name of the Hammerer. But does her own self, the Gow Chrom, work at the anvil with that horse's load of iron?"

"You shall see, brother," said Henry, leading the way to the smithy. "Dunter," he said, "rax me that bar from the furnace"; and uplifting Sampson, as he called the monstrous hammer, he plied the metal with a hundred strokes from right to left—now with the right hand, now with the left, now with both, with so much strength at once and dexterity, that he worked off a small but beautifully proportioned horseshoe in half the time that an ordinary smith would have taken for the same purpose, using a more manageable implement.

"Oigh—oigh!" said the Highlander, "and what for would you be fighting with our young chief, who is far above your standard, though you were the best smith ever wrought with wind and fire?"

"Hark you!" said Henry; "you seem a good fellow, and I'll tell you the truth. Your master has wronged me, and I give him this harness freely for the chance of fighting him myself."

"Nay, if he hath wronged you he must meet you," said the life guardsman. "To do a man wrong takes the eagle's feather out of the chief's bonnet; and were he the first in the Highlands, and to be sure so is Eachin, he must fight the man he has wronged, or else a rose falls from his chaplet."

"Will you move him to this," said Henry, "after the fight on Sunday?"

"Oh, her nainsell will do her best, if the hawks have not got her nainsell's bones to pick; for you must know, brother, that Clan Chattan's claws pierce rather deep."

"The armour is your chief's on that condition," said Henry; "but I will disgrace him before king and court if he does not pay me the price."

"Deil a fear—deil a fear; I will bring him in to the barrace myself," said Norman, "assuredly."

"You will do me a pleasure," replied Henry; "and that you may remember your promise, I will bestow on you this dirk. Look—if you hold it truly, and can strike between the mail hood and the collar of your enemy, the surgeon will be needless."

The Highlander was lavish in his expressions of gratitude, and took his leave.

"I have given him the best mail harness I ever wrought," said the smith to himself, rather repenting his liberality, "for the poor chance that he will bring his chief into a fair field with me; and then let Catharine be his who can win her fairly. But much I dread the youth will find some evasion, unless he have such luck on Palm Sunday as may induce him to try another combat. That is some hope, however; for I have often, ere now, seen a raw young fellow shoot up after his first fight from a dwarf into a giant queller."

Thus, with little hope, but with the most determined resolution, Henry Smith awaited the time that should decide his fate. What made him augur the worst was the silence both of the glover and of his daughter.

"They are ashamed," he said, "to confess the truth to me, and therefore they are silent."

Upon the Friday at noon, the two bands of thirty men each, representing the contending clans, arrived at the several points where they were to halt for refreshments.

The Clan Quhele was entertained hospitably at the rich abbey of Scone, while the provost regaled their rivals at his Castle of Kinfauns, the utmost care being taken to treat both parties with the most punctilious attention, and to afford neither an opportunity of complaining of partiality. All points of etiquette were, in the mean while, discussed and settled by the Lord High Constable Errol and the young Earl of Crawford, the former acting on the part of the Clan Chattan and the latter patronising the Clan Quhele. Messengers were passing continually from the one earl to the other, and they held more than: six meetings within thirty hours, before the ceremonial of the field could be exactly arranged.

Meanwhile, in case of revival of ancient quarrel, many seeds of which existed betwixt the burghers and their mountain neighbours, a proclamation commanded the citizens not to approach within half a mile of the place where the Highlanders were quartered; while on their part the intended combatants were prohibited from approaching Perth without special license. Troops were stationed to enforce this order, who did their charge so scrupulously as to prevent Simon Glover himself, burgess and citizen of Perth, from approaching the town, because he owned having come thither at the same time with the champions of Eachin Maclan, and wore a plaid around him of their check or pattern. This interruption prevented Simon from seeking out Henry Wynd and possessing him with a true knowledge of all that had happened since their separation, which intercourse, had it taken place, must have materially altered the catastrophe of our narrative.

On Saturday afternoon another arrival took place, which interested the city almost as much as the preparations for the expected combat. This was the approach of the Earl Douglas, who rode through the town with a troop of only thirty horse, but all of whom were knights and gentlemen of the first consequence. Men's eyes followed this dreaded peer as they pursue the flight of an eagle through the clouds, unable to ken the course of the bird of Jove yet silent, attentive, and as earnest in observing him as if they could guess the object for which he sweeps through the firmament; He rode slowly through the city, and passed out at the northern gate. He next alighted at the Dominican convent and desired to see the Duke of Albany. The Earl was introduced instantly, and received by the Duke with a manner which was meant to be graceful and conciliatory, but which could not conceal both art and inquietude. When the first greetings were over, the Earl said with great gravity: "I bring you melancholy news. Your Grace's royal nephew, the Duke of Rothsay, is no more, and I fear hath perished by some foul practices."

"Practices!" said the Duke in confusion—"what practices? Who dared practise on the heir of the Scottish throne?"

"'Tis not for me to state how these doubts arise," said Douglas; "but men say the eagle was killed with an arrow fledged from his own wing, and the oak trunk rent by a wedge of the same wood."

"Earl of Douglas," said the Duke of Albany, "I am no reader of riddles."

"Nor am I a propounder of them," said Douglas, haughtily, "Your Grace will find particulars in these papers worthy of perusal. I will go for half an hour to the cloister garden, and then rejoin you."

"You go not to the King, my lord?" said Albany.

"No," answered Douglas; "I trust your Grace will agree with me that we should conceal this great family misfortune from our sovereign till the business of tomorrow be decided."

"I willingly agree," said Albany. "If the King heard of this loss, he could not witness the combat; and if he appear not in person, these men are likely to refuse to fight, and the whole work is cast loose. But I pray you sit down, my lord, while I read these melancholy papers respecting poor Rothsay."

He passed the papers through his hands, turning some over with a hasty glance, and dwelling on others as if their contents had been of the last importance. When he had spent nearly a quarter of an hour in this manner, he raised his eyes, and said very gravely: "My lord, in these most melancholy documents, it is yet a comfort to see nothing which can renew the divisions in the King's councils, which were settled by the last solemn agreement between your lordship and myself. My unhappy nephew was by that agreement to be set aside, until time should send him a graver judgment. He is now removed by Fate, and our purpose in that matter is anticipated and rendered unnecessary."

"If your Grace," replied the Earl, "sees nothing to disturb the good understanding which the tranquillity and safety of Scotland require should exist between us, I am not so ill a friend of my country as to look closely for such."

"I understand you, my Lord of Douglas," said Albany, eagerly. "You hastily judged that I should be offended with your lordship for exercising your powers of lieutenancy, and punishing the detestable murderers within my territory of Falkland. Credit me, on the contrary, I am obliged to your lordship for taking out of my hands the punishment of these wretches, as it would have broken my heart even to have looked on them. The Scottish Parliament will inquire, doubtless, into this sacrilegious deed; and happy am I that the avenging sword has been in the hand of a man so important as your lordship. Our communication together, as your lordship must well recollect, bore only concerning a proposed restraint of my unfortunate nephew until the advance of a year or two had taught him discretion?"

"Such was certainly your Grace's purpose, as expressed to me," said the Earl; "I can safely avouch it."

"Why, then, noble earl, we cannot be censured because villains, for their own revengeful ends, appear to have engrafted a bloody termination on our honest purpose?"

"The Parliament will judge it after their wisdom," said Douglas. "For my part, my conscience acquits me."

"And mine assuages me," said the Duke with solemnity. "Now, my lord, touching the custody of the boy James, who succeeds to his father's claims of inheritance?"

"The King must decide it," said Douglas, impatient of the conference. "I will consent to his residence anywhere save at Stirling, Doune, or Falkland."

With that he left the apartment abruptly.

"He is gone," muttered the crafty Albany, "and he must be my ally, yet feels himself disposed to be my mortal foe. No matter, Rothsay sleeps with his fathers, James may follow in time, and then—a crown is the recompense of my perplexities."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Thretty for thretty faucht in barreris,
At Sanct Johnstoun on a day besyde the black freris.*

WYNTOUN.

Palm Sunday now dawned. At an earlier period of the Christian Church, the use of any of the days of Passion Week for the purpose of combat would have been accounted a profanity worthy of excommunication. The Church of Rome, to her infinite honour, had decided that during the holy season of Easter, when the redemption of man from his fallen state was accomplished, the sword of war should be sheathed, and angry monarchs should respect the season termed the Truce of God. The ferocious violence of the latter wars betwixt Scotland and England had destroyed all observance of this decent and religious Ordinance. Very often the most solemn occasions were chosen by one party for an attack, because they hoped to find the other engaged in religious duties and unprovided for defence. Thus the truce, once considered as proper to the season, had been discontinued; and it became not unusual even to select the sacred festivals of the church for decision of the trial by combat, to which this intended contest bore a considerable resemblance.

On the present occasion, however, the duties of the day were observed with the usual solemnity, and the combatants themselves took share in them. Bearing branches of yew in their hands, as the readiest substitute for palm boughs, they marched respectively to the Dominican and Carthusian convents, to hear High Mass, and, by a show at least of devotion, to prepare themselves for the bloody strife of the day. Great care had of course been taken that, during this march, they should not even come within the sound of each other's bagpipes; for it was certain that, like game cocks exchanging mutual notes of defiance, they would have sought out and attacked each other before they arrived at the place of combat.

The citizens of Perth crowded to see the unusual procession on the streets, and thronged the churches where the two clans attended their devotions, to witness their behaviour, and to form a judgment from their appearance which was most likely to obtain the advantage in the approaching conflict. Their demeanour in the church, although not habitual frequenters of places of devotion, was perfectly decorous; and, notwithstanding their wild and untamed dispositions, there were few of the mountaineers who seemed affected either with curiosity or wonder. They appeared to think it beneath their dignity of character to testify either curiosity or surprise at many things which were probably then presented to them for the first time.

On the issue of the combat, few even of the most competent judges dared venture a prediction; although the great size of Torquil and his eight stalwart sons induced some who professed themselves judges of the thewes and sinews of men to incline to ascribe the advantage to the party of the Clan Quhele. The opinion of the female sex was much decided by the handsome form, noble countenance, and gallant demeanour of Eachin Maclan. There were more than one who imagined they had recollection of his features, but his splendid military attire rendered the humble glover's apprentice unrecognisable in the young Highland chief, saving by one person.

That person, as may well be supposed, was the Smith of the Wynd, who had been the foremost in the crowd that thronged to see the gallant champions of Clan Quhele. It was with mingled feelings of dislike, jealousy, and something approaching to admiration that he saw the glover's apprentice stripped of his mean slough, and blazing forth as a chieftain, who, by his quick eye and gallant demeanour, the noble shape of his brow and throat, his splendid arms and well proportioned limbs, seemed well worthy to hold the foremost rank among men selected to live or die for the honour of their race. The smith could hardly think that he looked upon the same passionate boy whom he had brushed off as he might a wasp that stung him, and, in mere compassion, forebore to despatch by treading on him.

"He looks it gallantly with my noble hauberk," thus muttered Henry to himself, "the best I ever wrought. Yet, if he and I stood together where there was neither hand to help nor eye to see, by all that is blessed in this holy church, the good harness should return to its owner! All that I am worth would I give for three fair blows on his shoulders to undo my own best work; but such happiness will never be mine. If he escape from the conflict, it will be with so high a character for courage, that he may well disdain to put his fortune, in its freshness, to the risk of an encounter with a poor burgess like myself. He will fight by his champion, and turn me over to my fellow craftsman the hammerer, when all I can reap will be the pleasure of knocking a Highland bullock on the head. If I could but see Simon Glover! I will to the other church in quest of him, since for sure he must have come down from the Highlands."

The congregation was moving from the church of the Dominicans when the smith formed this determination, which he endeavoured to carry into speedy execution, by thrusting through the crowd as hastily as the solemnity of the place and occasion would permit. In making his way through the press, he was at one instant carried so close to Eachin that their eyes encountered. The smith's hardy and embrowned countenance coloured up like the heated iron on which he wrought, and retained its dark red hue for several minutes. Eachin's features glowed with a brighter blush of indignation, and a glance of fiery hatred was shot from his eyes. But the sudden flush died away in ashy paleness, and his gaze instantly avoided the unfriendly but steady look with which it was encountered.

Torquil, whose eye never quitted his foster son, saw his emotion, and looked anxiously around to discover the cause. But Henry was already at a distance, and hastening on his way to the Carthusian convent. Here also the religious service of the day was ended; and those who had so lately borne palms in honour of the great event which brought peace on earth and goodwill to the children of men were now streaming to the place of combat—some prepared to take the lives of their fellow creatures or to lose their own, others to view the deadly strife with the savage delight which the heathens took in the contests of their gladiators.

The crowd was so great that any other person might well have despaired of making way through it. But the general deference entertained for Henry of the Wynd, as the champion of Perth, and the universal sense of his ability to force a passage, induced all to unite in yielding room for him, so that he was presently quite close to the warriors of the Clan Chattan. Their pipers marched at the head of their column. Next followed the well known banner, displaying a mountain cat rampant, with the appropriate caution, "Touch not the cat, but (i.e. without) the glove." The chief followed with his two handed sword advanced, as if to protect the emblem of the tribe. He was a man of middle stature, more than fifty years old, but betraying neither in features nor form any decay of strength or symptoms of age. His dark red close curled locks were in part chequered by a few grizzled hairs, but his step and gesture were as light in the dance, in the chase, or in the battle as if he had not passed his thirtieth year. His grey eye gleamed with a wild light expressive of valour and ferocity mingled; but wisdom and experience dwelt on the expression of his forehead, eyebrows, and lips. The chosen champions followed by two and two. There was a cast of anxiety on several of their faces, for they had that morning discovered the absence of one of their appointed number; and, in a contest so desperate as was expected, the loss seemed a matter of importance to all save to their high mettled chief, MacGillie Chattanach.

"Say nothing to the Saxons of his absence," said this bold leader, when the diminution of his force was reported to him. "The false Lowland tongues might say that one of Clan Chattan was a coward, and perhaps that the rest favoured his escape, in order to have a pretence to avoid the battle. I am sure that Ferquhard Day will be found in the ranks ere we are ready for battle; or, if he should not, am not I man enough for two of the Clan Quhele? or would we not fight them fifteen to thirty, rather than lose the renown that this day will bring us?"

The tribe received the brave speech of their leader with applause, yet there were anxious looks thrown out in hopes of espying the return of the deserter; and perhaps the chief himself was the only one of the determined band who was totally indifferent on the subject.

They marched on through the streets without seeing anything of Ferquhard Day, who, many a mile beyond the mountains, was busied in receiving such indemnification as successful love could bestow for the loss of honour. MacGillie Chattanach marched on without seeming to observe the absence of the deserter, and entered upon the North Inch, a beautiful and level plain, closely adjacent to the city, and appropriated to the martial exercises of the inhabitants.

The plain is washed on one side by the deep and swelling Tay. There was erected within it a strong palisade, inclosing on three sides a space of one hundred and fifty yards in length and seventy-four yards in width. The fourth side of the lists was considered as sufficiently fenced by the river. An amphitheatre for the accommodation of spectators surrounded the palisade, leaving a large space free to be occupied by armed men on foot and horseback, and for the more ordinary class of spectators. At the extremity of the lists which was nearest to the city, there was a range of elevated galleries for the King and his courtiers, so highly decorated with rustic treillage, intermingled with gilded ornaments, that the spot retains to this day the name of the Golden, or Gilded, Arbour.

The mountain minstrelsy, which sounded the appropriate pibrochs or battle tunes of the rival confederacies, was silent when they entered on the Inch, for such was the order which had been given. Two stately but aged warriors, each bearing the banner of his tribe, advanced to the opposite extremities of the lists, and, pitching their standards into the earth, prepared to be spectators of a fight in which they were not to join. The pipers, who were also to be neutral in the strife, took their places by their respective brattachs.

The multitude received both bands with the same general shout with which on similar occasions they welcome those from whose exertion they expect amusement, or what they term sport. The destined combatants returned no answer to this greeting, but each party advanced to the opposite extremities of the lists, where were entrances by which they were to be admitted to the interior. A strong body of men at arms guarded either access; and the Earl Marshal at the one and the Lord High Constable at the other carefully examined each individual, to see whether he had the appropriate arms, being steel cap, mail shirt, two handed sword, and dagger. They also examined the numbers of each party; and great was the alarm among the multitude when the Earl of Errol held up his hand and cried: "Ho! The combat cannot proceed, for the Clan Chattan lack one of their number."

"What reek of that?" said the young Earl of Crawford; "they should have counted better ere they left home."

The Earl Marshal, however, agreed with the Constable that the fight could not proceed until the inequality should be removed; and a general apprehension was excited in the assembled multitude that, after all the preparation, there would be no battle.

Of all present there were only two perhaps who rejoiced at the prospect of the combat being adjourned, and these were the captain of the Clan Quhele and the tender hearted King Robert. Meanwhile the two chiefs, each attended by a special friend and adviser, met in the midst of the lists, having, to assist them in determining what was to be done, the Earl Marshal, the Lord High Constable, the Earl of Crawford, and Sir Patrick Charteris. The chief of the Clan Chattan declared himself willing and desirous of fighting upon the spot, without regard to the disparity of numbers.

"That," said Torquil of the Oak, "Clan Quhele will never consent to. You can never win honour from us with the sword, and you seek but a subterfuge, that you may say when you are defeated, as you know you will be, that it was for want of the number of your band fully counted out. But I make a proposal: Ferquhard Day was the youngest of your band, Eachin Maclan is the youngest of ours; we will set him aside in place of the man who has fled from the combat."

"A most unjust and unequal proposal," exclaimed Toshach Beg, the second, as he might be termed, of MacGillie Chattanach. "The life of the chief is to the clan the breath of our nostrils, nor will we ever consent that our chief shall be exposed to dangers which the captain of Clan Quhele does not share."

Torquil saw with deep anxiety that his plan was about to fail when the objection was made to Hector's being withdrawn from the battle, and he was meditating how to support his proposal, when Eachin himself interfered. His timidity, it must be observed, was not of that sordid and selfish nature which induces those who are infected by it calmly to submit to dishonour rather than risk danger. On the contrary, he was morally brave, though constitutionally timid, and the shame of avoiding the combat became at the moment more powerful than the fear of facing it.

"I will not hear," he said, "of a scheme which will leave my sword sheathed during this day's glorious combat. If I am young in arms, there are enough of brave men around me whom I may imitate if I cannot equal."

He spoke these words in a spirit which imposed on Torquil, and perhaps on the young chief himself.

"Now, God bless his noble heart!" said the foster father to himself. "I was sure the foul spell would be broken through, and that the tardy spirit which besieged him would fly at the sound of the pipe and the first flutter of the brattach!"

"Hear me, Lord Marshal," said the Constable. "The hour of combat may not be much longer postponed, for the day approaches to high noon. Let the chief of Clan Chattan take the half hour which remains, to find, if he can, a substitute for this deserter; if he cannot, let them fight as they stand."

"Content I am," said the Marshal, "though, as none of his own clan are nearer than fifty miles, I see not how MacGillis Chattanach is to find an auxiliary."

"That is his business," said the High Constable; "but, if he offers a high reward, there are enough of stout yeomen surrounding the lists, who will be glad enough to stretch their limbs in such a game as is expected. I myself, did my quality and charge permit, would blythely take a turn of work amongst these wild fellows, and think it fame won."

They communicated their decision to the Highlanders, and the chief of the Clan Chattan replied: "You have judged unpartially and nobly, my lords, and I deem myself obliged to follow your direction. So make proclamation, heralds, that, if any one will take his share with Clan Chattan of the honours and chances of this day, he shall have present payment of a gold crown, and liberty to fight to the death in my ranks."

"You are something chary of your treasure, chief," said the Earl Marshal: "a gold crown is poor payment for such a campaign as is before you."

"If there be any man willing to fight for honour," replied MacGillis Chattanach, "the price will be enough; and I want not the service of a fellow who draws his sword for gold alone."

The heralds had made their progress, moving half way round the lists, stopping from time to time to make proclamation as they had been directed, without the least apparent disposition on the part of any one to accept of the proffered enlistment. Some sneered at the poverty of the Highlanders, who set so mean a price upon such a desperate service. Others affected resentment, that they should esteem the blood of citizens so lightly. None showed the slightest intention to undertake the task proposed, until the sound of the proclamation reached Henry of the Wynd, as he stood without the barrier, speaking from time to time with Baillie Craigdallie, or rather listening vaguely to what the magistrate was saying to him.

"Ha! what proclaim they?" he cried out.

"A liberal offer on the part of MacGillie Chattanach," said the host of the Griffin, "who proposes a gold crown to any one who will turn wildcat for the day, and be killed a little in his service! That's all."

"How!" exclaimed the smith, eagerly, "do they make proclamation for a man to fight against the Clan Quhele?"

"Ay, marry do they," said Griffin; "but I think they will find no such fools in Perth."

He had hardly said the word, when he beheld the smith clear the barriers at a single bound and alight in the lists, saying: "Here am I, sir herald, Henry of the Wynd, willing to battle on the part of the Clan Chattan."

A cry of admiration ran through the multitude, while the grave burghers, not being able to conceive the slightest reason for Henry's behaviour, concluded that his head must be absolutely turned with the love of fighting. The provost was especially shocked.

"Thou art mad," he said, "Henry! Thou hast neither two handed sword nor shirt of mail."

"Truly no," said Henry, "for I parted with a mail shirt, which I had made for myself, to yonder gay chief of the Clan Quhele, who will soon find on his shoulders with what sort of blows I clink my rivets! As for two handed sword, why, this boy's brand will serve my turn till I can master a heavier one."

"This must not be," said Errol. "Hark thee, armourer, by St. Mary, thou shalt have my Milan hauberk and good Spanish sword."

"I thank your noble earlship, Sir Gilbert Hay, but the yoke with which your brave ancestor turned the battle at Loncarty would serve my turn well enough. I am little used to sword or harness that I have not wrought myself, because I do not well know what blows the one will bear out without being cracked or the other lay on without snapping."

The cry had in the mean while run through the multitude and passed into the town, that the dauntless smith was about to fight without armour, when, just as the fated hour was approaching, the shrill voice of a female was heard screaming for passage through the crowd. The multitude gave place to her importunity, and she advanced, breathless with haste under the burden of a mail hauberk and a large two handed sword. The widow of Oliver Proudpute was soon recognised, and the arms which she bore were those of the smith himself, which, occupied by her husband on the fatal evening when he was murdered, had been naturally conveyed to his house with the dead body, and were now, by the exertions of his grateful widow, brought to the lists at a moment when such proved weapons were of the last consequence to their owner. Henry joyfully received the well known arms, and the widow with trembling haste assisted in putting them on, and then took leave of him, saying: "God for the champion of the widow and orphan, and ill luck to all who come before him!"

Confident at feeling himself in his well proved armour, Henry shook himself as if to settle the steel shirt around him, and, unsheathing the two handed sword, made it flourish over his head, cutting the air through which it whistled in the form of the figure eight with an ease and sleight of hand that proved how powerfully and skilfully he could wield the ponderous weapon. The champions were now ordered to march in their turns around the lists, crossing so as to avoid meeting each other, and making obeisance as they passed the Golden Arbour where the King was seated.

While this course was performing, most of the spectators were again curiously comparing the stature, limbs, and sinews of the two parties, and endeavouring to form a conjecture as to the probable issue of the combat. The feud of a hundred years, with all its acts of aggression and retaliation, was concentrated in the bosom of each combatant. Their countenances seemed fiercely writhen into the wildest expression of pride, hate, and a desperate purpose of fighting to the very last.

The spectators murmured a joyful applause, in high wrought expectation of the bloody game. Wagers were offered and accepted both on the general issue of the conflict and on the feats of particular champions. The clear, frank, and elated look of Henry Smith rendered him a general favourite among the spectators, and odds, to use the modern expression, were taken that he would kill three of his opponents before he himself fell.

Scarcely was the smith equipped for the combat, when the commands of the chiefs ordered the champions into their places; and at the same moment Henry heard the voice of Simon Glover issuing from the crowd, who were now silent with expectation, and calling on him: "Harry Smith—Harry Smith, what madness hath possessed thee?"

"Ay, he wishes to save his hopeful son in law that is, or is to be, from the smith's handling," was Henry's first thought; his second was to turn and speak with him; and his third, that he could on no pretext desert the band which he had joined, or even seem desirous to delay the fight, consistently with honour.

He turned himself, therefore, to the business of the hour. Both parties were disposed by the respective chiefs in three lines, each containing ten men. They were arranged with such intervals between each individual as offered him scope to wield his sword, the blade of which was five feet long, not including the handle. The second and third lines were to come up as reserves, in case the first experienced disaster. On the right of the array of Clan Quhele, the chief, Eachin Maclan, placed himself in the second line betwixt two of his foster brothers. Four of them occupied the right of the first line, whilst the father and two others protected the rear of the beloved chieftain. Torquil, in particular, kept close behind, for the purpose of covering him. Thus Eachin stood in the centre of nine of the strongest men of his band, having four especial defenders in front, one on each hand, and three in his rear.

The line of the Clan Chattan was arranged in precisely the same order, only that the chief occupied the centre of the middle rank, instead of being on the extreme right. This induced Henry Smith, who saw in the opposing bands only one enemy, and that was the unhappy Eachin, to propose placing himself on the left of the front rank of the Clan Chattan. But the leader disapproved of this arrangement; and having reminded Henry that he owed him obedience, as having taken wages at his hand, he commanded him to occupy the space in the third line immediately behind himself—a post of honour, certainly, which Henry could not decline, though he accepted of it with reluctance.

When the clans were thus drawn up opposed to each other, they intimated their feudal animosity and their eagerness to engage by a wild scream, which, uttered by the Clan Quhele, was answered and echoed back by the Clan Chattan, the whole at the same time shaking their swords and menacing each other, as if they meant to conquer the imagination of their opponents ere they mingled in the actual strife.

At this trying moment, Torquil, who had never feared for himself, was agitated with alarm on the part of his dault, yet consoled by observing that he kept a determined posture, and that the few words which he spoke to his clan were delivered boldly, and well calculated to animate them to combat, as expressing his resolution to partake their fate in death or victory. But there was no time for further observation. The trumpets of the King sounded a charge, the bagpipes blew up their screaming and maddening notes, and the combatants, starting forward in regular order, and increasing their pace till they came to a smart run, met together in the centre of the ground, as a furious land torrent encounters an advancing tide.

For an instant or two the front lines, hewing at each other with their long swords, seemed engaged in a succession of single combats; but the second and third ranks soon came up on either side, actuated alike by the eagerness of hatred and the thirst of honour, pressed through the intervals, and rendered the scene a tumultuous chaos, over which the huge swords rose and sunk, some still glittering, others streaming with blood, appearing, from the wild rapidity with which they were swayed, rather to be put in motion by some complicated machinery than to be wielded by human hands. Some of the combatants, too much crowded together to use those long weapons, had already betaken themselves to their poniards, and endeavoured to get within the sword sweep of those opposed to them. In the mean time, blood flowed fast, and the groans of those who fell began to mingle with the cries of those who fought; for, according to the manner of the Highlanders at all times, they could hardly be said to shout, but to yell. Those of the spectators whose eyes were best accustomed to such scenes of blood and confusion could nevertheless discover no advantage yet acquired by either party. The conflict swayed, indeed, at different intervals forwards or backwards, but it was only in momentary superiority, which the party who acquired it almost instantly lost by a corresponding exertion on the other side. The wild notes of the pipers were still heard above the tumult, and stimulated to farther exertions the fury of the combatants.

At once, however, and as if by mutual agreement, the instruments sounded a retreat; it was expressed in wailing notes, which seemed to imply a dirge for the fallen. The two parties disengaged themselves from each other, to take breath for a few minutes. The eyes of the spectators greedily surveyed the shattered array of the combatants as they drew off from the contest, but found it still impossible to decide which had sustained the greater loss. It seemed as if the Clan Chattan had lost rather fewer men than their antagonists; but in compensation, the bloody plaids and skirts of their party (for several on both sides had thrown their mantles away) showed more wounded men than the Clan Quhele. About twenty of both sides lay on the field dead or dying; and arms and legs lopped off, heads cleft to the chin, slashes deep through the shoulder into the breast, showed at once the fury of the combat, the ghastly character of the weapons used, and the fatal strength of the arms which wielded them. The chief of the Clan Chattan had behaved himself with the most determined courage, and was slightly wounded. Eachin also had fought with spirit, surrounded by his bodyguard. His sword was bloody, his bearing bold and warlike; and he smiled when old Torquil, folding him in his arms, loaded him with praises and with blessings.

The two chiefs, after allowing their followers to breathe for the space of about ten minutes, again drew up in their files, diminished by nearly one third of their original number. They now chose their ground nearer to the river than that on which they had formerly encountered, which was encumbered with the wounded and the slain. Some of the former were observed, from time to time, to raise themselves to gain a glimpse of the field, and sink back, most of them to die from the effusion of blood which poured from the terrific gashes inflicted by the claymore.

Harry Smith was easily distinguished by his Lowland habit, as well as his remaining on the spot where they had first encountered, where he stood leaning on a sword beside a corpse, whose bonneted head, carried to ten yards' distance from the body by the force of the blow which had swept it off, exhibited the oak leaf, the appropriate ornament of the bodyguard of Eachin Maclan. Since he slew this man, Henry had not struck a blow, but had contented himself with warding off many that were dealt at himself, and some which were aimed at the chief. MacGillie Chattanach became alarmed, when, having given the signal that his men should again draw together, he observed that his powerful recruit remained at a distance from the ranks, and showed little disposition to join them.

"What ails thee, man?" said the chief. "Can so strong a body have a mean and cowardly spirit? Come, and make in to the combat."

"You as good as called me hireling but now," replied Henry. "If I am such," pointing to the headless corpse, "I have done enough for my day's wage."

"He that serves me without counting his hours," replied the chief, "I reward him without reckoning wages."

"Then," said the smith, "I fight as a volunteer, and in the post which best likes me."

"All that is at your own discretion," replied MacGillis Chattanach, who saw the prudence of humouring an auxiliary of such promise.

"It is enough," said Henry; and, shouldering his heavy weapon, he joined the rest of the combatants with alacrity, and placed himself opposite to the chief of the Clan Quhele.

It was then, for the first time, that Eachin showed some uncertainty. He had long looked up to Henry as the best combatant which Perth and its neighbourhood could bring into the lists. His hatred to him as a rival was mingled with recollection of the ease with which he had once, though unarmed, foiled his own sudden and desperate attack; and when he beheld him with his eyes fixed in his direction, the dripping sword in his hand, and obviously meditating an attack on him individually, his courage fell, and he gave symptoms of wavering, which did not escape his foster father.

It was lucky for Eachin that Torquil was incapable, from the formation of his own temper, and that of those with whom he had lived, to conceive the idea of one of his own tribe, much less of his chief and foster son, being deficient in animal courage. Could he have imagined this, his grief and rage might have driven him to the fierce extremity of taking Eachin's life, to save him from staining his honour. But his mind rejected the idea that his dault was a personal coward, as something which was monstrous and unnatural. That he was under the influence of enchantment was a solution which superstition had suggested, and he now anxiously, but in a whisper, demanded of Hector: "Does the spell now darken thy spirit, Eachin?"

"Yes, wretch that I am," answered the unhappy youth; "and yonder stands the fell enchanter!"

"What!" exclaimed Torquil, "and you wear harness of his making? Norman, miserable boy, why brought you that accursed mail?"

"If my arrow has flown astray, I can but shoot my life after it," answered Norman nan Ord. "Stand firm, you shall see me break the spell."

"Yes, stand firm," said Torquil. "He may be a fell enchanter; but my own ear has heard, and my own tongue has told, that Eachin shall leave the battle whole, free, and unwounded; let us see the Saxon wizard who can gainsay that. He may be a strong man, but the fair forest of the oak shall fall, stock and bough, ere he lay a finger on my dault. Ring around him, my sons; bas air son Eachin!"

The sons of Torquil shouted back the words, which signify, "Death for Hector."

Encouraged by their devotion, Eachin renewed his spirit, and called boldly to the minstrels of his clan, "Seid suas" that is, "Strike up."

The wild pibroch again sounded the onset; but the two parties approached each other more slowly than at first, as men who knew and respected each other's valour. Henry Wynd, in his impatience to begin the contest, advanced before the Clan Chattan and signed to Eachin to come on. Norman, however, sprang forward to cover his foster brother, and there was a general, though momentary, pause, as if both parties were willing to obtain an omen of the fate of the day from the event of this duel. The Highlander advanced, with his large sword uplifted, as in act to strike; but, just as he came within sword's length, he dropt the long and cumbrous weapon, leapt lightly over the smith's sword, as he fetched a cut at him, drew his dagger, and, being thus within Henry's guard, struck him with the weapon (his own gift) on the side of the throat, directing the blow downwards into the chest, and calling aloud, at the same time, "You taught me the stab!"

But Henry Wynd wore his own good hauberk, doubly defended with a lining of tempered steel. Had he been less surely armed, his combats had been ended for ever. Even as it was, he was slightly wounded.

"Fool!" he replied, striking Norman a blow with the pommel of his long sword, which made him stagger backwards, "you were taught the thrust, but not the parry"; and, fetching a blow at his antagonist, which cleft his skull through the steel cap, he strode over the lifeless body to engage the young chief, who now stood open before him.

But the sonorous voice of Torquil thundered out, "Far eil air son Eachin!" (Another for Hector!) and the two brethren who flanked their chief on each side thrust forward upon Henry, and, striking both at once, compelled him to keep the defensive.

"Forward, race of the tiger cat!" cried MacGillie Chattanach. "Save the brave Saxon; let these kites feel your talons!"

Already much wounded, the chief dragged himself up to the smith's assistance, and cut down one of the leichtach, by whom he was assailed. Henry's own good sword rid him of the other.

"Reist air son Eachin!" (Again for Hector!) shouted the faithful foster father.

"Bas air son Eachin!" (Death for Hector!) answered two more of his devoted sons, and opposed themselves to the fury of the smith and those who had come to his aid; while Eachin, moving towards the left wing of the battle, sought less formidable adversaries, and again, by some show of valour, revived the sinking hopes of his followers. The two children of the oak, who had covered, this movement, shared the fate of their brethren; for the cry of the Clan Chattan chief had drawn to that part of the field some of his bravest warriors. The sons of Torquil did not fall unavenged, but left dreadful marks of their swords on the persons of the dead and living. But the necessity of keeping their most distinguished soldiers around the person of their chief told to disadvantage on the general event of the combat; and so few were now the number who remained fighting, that it was easy to see that the Clan Chattan had fifteen of their number left, though most of them wounded, and that of the Clan Quhele only about ten remained, of whom there were four of the chief's bodyguard, including Torquil himself.

They fought and struggled on, however, and as their strength decayed, their fury seemed to increase. Henry Wynd, now wounded in many places, was still bent on breaking through, or exterminating, the band of bold hearts who continued to fight around the object of his animosity. But still the father's shout of "Another for Hector!" was cheerfully answered by the fatal countersign, "Death for Hector!" and though the Clan Quhele were now outnumbered, the combat seemed still dubious. It was bodily lassitude alone that again compelled them to another pause.

The Clan Chattan were then observed to be twelve in number, but two or three were scarce able to stand without leaning on their swords. Five were left of the Clan Quhele; Torquil and his youngest son were of the number, both slightly wounded. Eachin alone had, from the vigilance used to intercept all blows levelled against his person, escaped without injury. The rage of both parties had sunk, through exhaustion, into sullen desperation. They walked staggering, as if in their sleep, through the carcasses of the slain, and gazed on them, as if again to animate their hatred towards their surviving enemies by viewing the friends they had lost.

The multitude soon after beheld the survivors of the desperate conflict drawing together to renew the exterminating feud on the banks of the river, as the spot least slippery with blood, and less encumbered with the bodies of the slain.

"For God's sake—for the sake of the mercy which we daily pray for," said the kind hearted old King to the Duke of Albany, "let this be ended! Wherefore should these wretched rags and remnants of humanity be suffered to complete their butchery? Surely they will now be ruled, and accept of peace on moderate terms?"

"Compose yourself, my liege," said his brother. "These men are the pest of the Lowlands. Both chiefs are still living; if they go back unharmed, the whole day's work is cast away. Remember your promise to the council, that you would not cry 'hold.'"

"You compel me to a great crime, Albany, both as a king, who should protect his subjects, and as a Christian man, who respects the brother of his faith."

"You judge wrong, my lord," said the Duke: "these are not loving subjects, but disobedient rebels, as my Lord of Crawford can bear witness; and they are still less Christian men, for the prior of the Dominicans will vouch for me that they are more than half heathen."

The King sighed deeply. "You must work your pleasure, and are too wise for me to contend with. I can but turn away and shut my eyes from the sights and sounds of a carnage which makes me sicken. But well I know that God will punish me even for witnessing this waste of human life."

"Sound, trumpets," said Albany; "their wounds will stiffen if they dally longer."

While this was passing, Torquil was embracing and encouraging his young chief.

"Resist the witchcraft but a few minutes longer! Be of good cheer, you will come off without either scar or scratch, wem or wound. Be of good cheer!"

"How can I be of good cheer," said Eachin, "while my brave kinsmen have one by one died at my feet—died all for me, who could never deserve the least of their kindness?"

"And for what were they born, save to die for their chief?" said Torquil, composedly. "Why lament that the arrow returns not to the quiver, providing it hit the mark? Cheer up yet. Here are Tormot and I but little hurt, while the wildcats drag themselves through the plain as if they were half throttled by the terriers. Yet one brave stand, and the day shall be your own, though it may well be that you alone remain alive. Minstrels, sound the gathering."

The pipers on both sides blew their charge, and the combatants again mingled in battle, not indeed with the same strength, but with unabated inveteracy. They were joined by those whose duty it was to have remained neuter, but who now found themselves unable to do so. The two old champions who bore the standards had gradually advanced from the extremity of the lists, and now approached close to the immediate scene of action. When they beheld the carnage more nearly, they were mutually impelled by the desire to revenge their brethren, or not to survive them. They attacked each other furiously with the lances to which the standards were attached, closed after exchanging several deadly thrusts, then grappled in close strife, still holding their banners, until at length, in the eagerness of their conflict, they fell together into the Tay, and were found drowned after the combat, closely locked in each other's arms. The fury of battle, the frenzy of rage and despair, infected next the minstrels. The two pipers, who, during the conflict, had done their utmost to keep up the spirits of their brethren, now saw the dispute well nigh terminated for want of men to support it. They threw down their instruments, rushed desperately upon each other with their daggers, and each being more intent on despatching his opponent than in defending himself, the piper of Clan Quhele was almost instantly slain and he of Clan Chattan mortally wounded. The last, nevertheless, again grasped his instrument, and the pibroch of the clan yet poured its expiring notes over the Clan Chattan, while the dying minstrel had breath to inspire it. The instrument which he used, or at least that part of it called the chanter, is preserved in the family of a Highland chief to this day, and is much honoured under the name of the federan dhu, or, "black chanter."

Meanwhile, in the final charge, young Tormot, devoted, like his brethren, by his father Torquil to the protection of his chief, had been mortally wounded by the unsparing sword of the smith. The other two remaining of the Clan Quhele had also fallen, and Torquil, with his foster son and the wounded Tormot, forced to retreat before eight or ten of the Clan Chattan, made a stand on the bank of the river, while their enemies were making such exertions as their wounds would permit to come up with them. Torquil had just reached the spot where he had resolved to make the stand, when the young Tormot dropped and expired. His death drew from his father the first and only sigh which he had breathed throughout the eventful day.

"My son Tormot!" he said, "my youngest and dearest! But if I save Hector, I save all. Now, my darling dault, I have done for thee all that man may, excepting the last. Let me undo the clasps of that ill omened armour, and do thou put on that of Tormot; it is light, and will fit thee well. While you do so, I will rush on these crippled men, and make what play with them I can. I trust I shall have but little to do, for they are following each other like disabled steers. At least, darling of my soul, if I am unable to save thee, I can show thee how a man should die."

While Torquil thus spoke, he unloosed the clasps of the young chief's hauberk, in the simple belief that he could thus break the meshes which fear and necromancy had twined about his heart.

"My father—my father—my more than parent," said the unhappy Eachin, "stay with me! With you by my side, I feel I can fight to the last."

"It is impossible," said Torquil. "I will stop them coming up, while you put on the hauberk. God eternally bless thee, beloved of my soul!"

And then, brandishing his sword, Torquil of the Oak rushed forward with the same fatal war cry which had so often sounded over that bloody field, "Bas air son Eachin!" The words rung three times in a voice of thunder; and each time that he cried his war shout he struck down one of the Clan Chattan as he met them successively straggling towards him.

"Brave battle, hawk—well flown, falcon!" exclaimed the multitude, as they witnessed exertions which seemed, even at this last hour, to threaten a change of the fortunes of the day. Suddenly these cries were hushed into silence, and succeeded by a clashing of swords so dreadful, as if the whole conflict had recommenced in the person of Henry Wynd and Torquil of the Oak. They cut, foined, hewed, and thrust as if they had drawn their blades for the first time that day; and their inveteracy was mutual, for Torquil recognised the foul wizard who, as he supposed, had cast a spell over his child; and Henry saw before him the giant who, during the whole conflict, had interrupted the purpose for which alone he had joined the combatants—that of engaging in single combat with Hector. They fought with an equality which, perhaps, would not have existed, had not Henry, more wounded than his antagonist, been somewhat deprived of his usual agility.

Meanwhile Eachin, finding himself alone, after a disorderly and vain attempt to put on his foster brother's harness, became animated by an emotion of shame and despair, and hurried forward to support his foster father in the terrible struggle, ere some other of the Clan Chattan should come up. When he was within five yards, and sternly determined to take his share in the death fight, his foster father fell, cleft from the collarbone well nigh to the heart, and murmuring with his last breath, "Bas air son Eachin!" The unfortunate youth saw the fall of his last friend, and at the same moment beheld the deadly enemy who had hunted him through the whole field standing within sword's point of him, and brandishing the huge weapon which had hewed its way to his life through so many obstacles. Perhaps this was enough to bring his constitutional timidity to its highest point; or perhaps he recollected at the same moment that he was without defensive armour, and that a line of enemies, halting indeed and crippled, but eager for revenge and blood, were closely approaching. It is enough to say, that his heart sickened, his eyes darkened, his ears tingled, his brain turned giddy, all other considerations were lost in the apprehension of instant death; and, drawing one ineffectual blow at the smith, he avoided that which was aimed at him in return by bounding backward; and, ere the former could recover his weapon, Eachin had plunged into the stream of the Tay. A roar of contumely pursued him as he swam across the river, although, perhaps, not a dozen of those who joined in it would have behaved otherwise in the like circumstances. Henry looked after the fugitive in silence and surprise, but could not speculate on the consequences of his flight, on account of the faintness which seemed to overpower him as soon as the animation of the contest had subsided. He sat down on the grassy bank, and endeavoured to stanch such of his wounds as were pouring fastest.

The victors had the general meed of gratulation. The Duke of Albany and others went down to survey the field; and Henry Wynd was honoured with particular notice.

"If thou wilt follow me, good fellow," said the Black Douglas, "I will change thy leathern apron for a knight's girdle, and thy burgage tenement for an hundred pound land to maintain thy rank withal."

"I thank you humbly, my lord," said the smith, dejectedly, "but I have shed blood enough already, and Heaven has punished me by foiling the only purpose for which I entered the combat."

"How, friend?" said Douglas. "Didst thou not fight for the Clan Chattan, and have they not gained a glorious conquest?"

"I fought for my own hand," [meaning, I did such a thing for my own pleasure, not for your profit] said the smith, indifferently; and the expression is still proverbial in Scotland.

The good King Robert now came up on an ambling palfrey, having entered the barriers for the purpose of causing the wounded to be looked after.

"My lord of Douglas," he said, "you vex the poor man with temporal matters when it seems he may have short timer to consider those that are spiritual. Has he no friends here who will bear him where his bodily wounds and the health of his soul may be both cared for?"

"He hath as many friends as there are good men in Perth," said Sir Patrick Charteris, "and I esteem myself one of the closest."

"A churl will savour of churl's kind," said the haughty Douglas, turning his horse aside; "the proffer of knighthood from the sword of Douglas had recalled him from death's door, had there been a drop of gentle blood in his body."

Disregarding the taunt of the mighty earl, the Knight of Kinfauns dismounted to take Henry in his arms, as he now sunk back from very faintness. But he was prevented by Simon Glover, who, with other burgesses of consideration, had now entered the barrace.

"Henry, my beloved son Henry!" said the old man. "Oh, what tempted you to this fatal affray? Dying—speechless?"

"No—not speechless," said Henry. "Catharine—" He could utter no more.

"Catharine is well, I trust, and shall be thine—that is, if—"

"If she be safe, thou wouldst say, old man," said the Douglas, who, though something affronted at Henry's rejection of his offer, was too magnanimous not to interest himself in what was passing. "She is safe, if Douglas's banner can protect her—safe, and shall be rich. Douglas can give wealth to those who value it more than honour."

"For her safety, my lord, let the heartfelt thanks and blessings of a father go with the noble Douglas. For wealth, we are rich enough. Gold cannot restore my beloved son."

"A marvel!" said the Earl: "a churl refuses nobility, a citizen despises gold!"

"Under your lordship's favour," said Sir Patrick, "I, who am knight and noble, take license to say, that such a brave man as Henry Wynd may reject honourable titles, such an honest man as this reverend citizen may dispense with gold."

"You do well, Sir Patrick, to speak for your town, and I take no offence," said the Douglas. "I force my bounty on no one. But," he added, in a whisper to Albany, "your Grace must withdraw the King from this bloody sight, for he must know that tonight which will ring over broad Scotland when tomorrow dawns. This feud is ended. Yet even I grieve that so many brave Scottishmen lie here slain, whose brands might have decided a pitched field in their country's cause."

With dignity King Robert was withdrawn from the field, the tears running down his aged cheeks and white beard, as he conjured all around him, nobles and priests, that care should be taken for the bodies and souls of the few wounded survivors, and honourable burial rendered to the slain. The priests who were present answered zealously for both services, and redeemed their pledge faithfully and piously.

Thus ended this celebrated conflict of the North Inch of Perth. Of sixty-four brave men (the minstrels and standard bearers included) who strode manfully to the fatal field, seven alone survived, who were conveyed from thence in litters, in a case little different from the dead and dying around them, and mingled with them in the sad procession which conveyed them from the scene of their strife. Eachin alone had left it void of wounds and void of honour.

It remains but to say, that not a man of the Clan Quhele survived the bloody combat except the fugitive chief; and the consequence of the defeat was the dissolution of their confederacy. The clans of which it consisted are now only matter of conjecture to the antiquary, for, after this eventful contest, they never assembled under the same banner. The Clan Chattan, on the other hand, continued to increase and flourish; and the best families of the Northern Highlands boast their descent from the race of the Cat a Mountain.

CHAPTER XXXV.

While the King rode slowly back to the convent which he then occupied, Albany, with a discomposed aspect and faltering voice, asked the Earl of Douglas: "Will not your lordship, who saw this most melancholy scene at Falkland, communicate the tidings to my unhappy brother?"

"Not for broad Scotland," said the Douglas. "I would sooner bare my breast, within flight shot, as a butt to an hundred Tynedale bowmen. No, by St. Bride of Douglas! I could but say I saw the ill fated youth dead. How he came by his death, your Grace can perhaps better explain. Were it not for the rebellion of March and the English war, I would speak my own mind of it."

So saying, and making his obeisance to the King, the Earl rode off to his own lodgings, leaving Albany to tell his tale as he best could.

"The rebellion and the English war!" said the Duke to himself. "Ay, and thine own interest, haughty earl, which, imperious as thou art, thou darest not separate from mine. Well, since the task falls on me, I must and will discharge it."

He followed the King into his apartment. The King looked at him with surprise after he had assumed his usual seat.

"Thy countenance is ghastly, Robin," said the King. "I would thou wouldst think more deeply when blood is to be spilled, since its consequences affect thee so powerfully. And yet, Robin, I love thee the better that thy kind nature will sometimes show itself, even through thy reflecting policy."

"I would to Heaven, my royal brother," said Albany, with a voice half choked, "that the bloody field we have seen were the worst we had to see or hear of this day. I should waste little sorrow on the wild kerne who lie piled on it like carrion. But—" he paused.

"How!" exclaimed the King, in terror. "What new evil? Rothsay? It must be—it is Rothsay! Speak out! What new folly has been done? What fresh mischance?"

"My lord—my liege, folly and mischance are now ended with my hapless nephew."

"He is dead!—he is dead!" screamed the agonized parent. "Albany, as thy brother, I conjure thee! But no, I am thy brother no longer. As thy king, dark and subtle man, I charge thee to tell the worst."

Albany faltered out: "The details are but imperfectly known to me; but the certainty is, that my unhappy nephew was found dead in his apartment last night from sudden illness—as I have heard."

"Oh, Rothsay!—Oh, my beloved David! Would to God I had died for thee, my son—my son!"

So spoke, in the emphatic words of Scripture, the helpless and bereft father, tearing his grey beard and hoary hair, while Albany, speechless and conscience struck, did not venture to interrupt the tempest of his grief. But the agony of the King's sorrow almost instantly changed to fury—a mood so contrary to the gentleness and timidity of his nature, that the remorse of Albany was drowned in his fear.

"And this is the end," said the King, "of thy moral saws and religious maxims! But the besotted father who gave the son into thy hands—who gave the innocent lamb to the butcher—is a king, and thou shalt know it to thy cost. Shall the murderer stand in presence of his brother—stained with the blood of that brother's son? No! What ho, without there!—MacLouis!—Brandanes! Treachery! Murder! Take arms, if you love the Stuart!"

MacLouis, with several of the guards, rushed into the apartment.

"Murder and treason!" exclaimed the miserable King. "Brandanes, your noble Prince—" Here his grief and agitation interrupted for a moment the fatal information it was his object to convey. At length he resumed his broken speech: "An axe and a block instantly into the courtyard! Arrest—" The word choked his utterance.

"Arrest whom, my noble liege?" said MacLouis, who, observing the King influenced by a tide of passion so different from the gentleness of his ordinary demeanour, almost conjectured that his brain had been disturbed by the unusual horrors of the combat he had witnessed.

"Whom shall I arrest, my liege?" he replied. "Here is none but your Grace's royal brother of Albany."

"Most true," said the King, his brief fit of vindictive passion soon dying away. "Most true—none but Albany—none but my parent's child—none but my brother. O God, enable me to quell the sinful passion which glows in this bosom. Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!"

MacLouis cast a look of wonder towards the Duke of Albany, who endeavoured to hide his confusion under an affectation of deep sympathy, and muttered to the officer: "The great misfortune has been too much for his understanding."

"What misfortune, please your Grace?" replied MacLouis. "I have heard of none."

"How! not heard of the death of my nephew Rothsay?"

"The Duke of Rothsay dead, my Lord of Albany?" exclaimed the faithful Brandane, with the utmost horror and astonishment. "When, how, and where?"

"Two days since—the manner as yet unknown—at Falkland."

MacLouis gazed at the Duke for an instant; then, with a kindling eye and determined look, said to the King, who seemed deeply engaged in his mental devotion: "My liege! a minute or two since you left a word—one word—unspeakable. Let it pass your lips, and your pleasure is law to your Brandanes!"

"I was praying against temptation, MacLouis," said the heart broken King, "and you bring it to me. Would you arm a madman with a drawn weapon? But oh, Albany! my friend—my brother—my bosom counsellor—how—how camest thou by the heart to do this?"

Albany, seeing that the King's mood was softening, replied with more firmness than before: "My castle has no barrier against the power of death. I have not deserved the foul suspicions which your Majesty's words imply. I pardon them, from the distraction of a bereaved father. But I am willing to swear by cross and altar, by my share in salvation, by the souls of our royal parents—"

"Be silent, Robert!" said the King: "add not perjury to murder. And was this all done to gain a step nearer to a crown and sceptre? Take them to thee at once, man; and mayst thou feel as I have done, that they are both of red hot iron! Oh, Rothsay—Rothsay! thou hast at least escaped being a king!"

"My liege," said MacLouis, "let me remind you that the crown and sceptre of Scotland are, when your Majesty ceases to bear them, the right of Prince James, who succeeds to his brother's rights."

"True, MacLouis," said the King, eagerly, "and will succeed, poor child, to his brother's perils! Thanks, MacLouis—thanks. You have reminded me that I have still work upon earth. Get thy Brandanes under arms with what speed thou canst. Let no man go with us whose truth is not known to thee. None in especial who has trafficked with the Duke of Albany—that man, I mean, who calls himself my brother—and order my litter to be instantly prepared. We will to Dunbarton, MacLouis, or to Bute. Precipices, and tides, and my Brandanes' hearts shall defend the child till we can put oceans betwixt him and his cruel uncle's ambition. Farewell, Robert of Albany—farewell for ever, thou hard hearted, bloody man! Enjoy such share of power as the Douglas may permit thee. But seek not to see my face again, far less to approach my remaining child; for, that hour thou dost, my guards shall have orders to stab thee down with their partizans! MacLouis, look it be so directed."

The Duke of Albany left the presence without attempting further justification or reply.

What followed is matter of history. In the ensuing Parliament, the Duke of Albany prevailed on that body to declare him innocent of the death of Rothsay, while, at the same time, he showed his own sense of guilt by taking out a remission or pardon for the offence. The unhappy and aged monarch secluded himself in his Castle of Rothsay, in Bute, to mourn over the son he had lost, and watch with feverish anxiety over the life of him who remained. As the best step for the youthful James's security, he sent him to France to receive his education at the court of the reigning sovereign. But the vessel in which the Prince of Scotland sailed was taken by an English cruiser, and, although there was a truce for the moment betwixt the kingdoms, Henry IV ungenerously detained him a prisoner. This last blow completely broke the heart of the unhappy King Robert III. Vengeance followed, though with a slow pace, the treachery and cruelty of his brother. Robert of Albany's own grey hairs went, indeed, in peace to the grave, and he transferred the regency which he had so foully acquired to his son Murdoch. But, nineteen years after the death of the old King, James I returned to Scotland, and Duke Murdoch of Albany, with his sons, was brought to the scaffold, in expiation of his father's guilt and his own.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

*The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile.*

BURNS.

We now return to the Fair Maid of Perth, who had been sent from the horrible scene at Falkland by order of the Douglas, to be placed under the protection of his daughter, the now widowed Duchess of Rothsay. That lady's temporary residence was a religious house called Campsie, the ruins of which still occupy a striking situation on the Tay. It arose on the summit of a precipitous rock, which descends on the princely river, there rendered peculiarly remarkable by the cataract called Campsie Linn, where its waters rush tumultuously over a range of basaltic rock, which intercepts the current, like a dike erected by human hands. Delighted with a site so romantic, the monks of the abbey of Cupar reared a structure there, dedicated to an obscure saint, named St. Hunnand, and hither they were wont themselves to retire for pleasure or devotion. It had readily opened its gates to admit the noble lady who was its present inmate, as the country was under the influence of the powerful Lord Drummond, the ally of the Douglas. There the Earl's letters were presented to the Duchess by the leader of the escort which conducted Catharine and the glee maiden to Campsie. Whatever reason she might have to complain of Rothsay, his horrible and unexpected end greatly shocked the noble lady, and she spent the greater part of the night in indulging her grief and in devotional exercises.

On the next morning, which was that of the memorable Palm Sunday, she ordered Catharine Glover and the minstrel into her presence. The spirits of both the young women had been much sunk and shaken by the dreadful scenes in which they had so lately been engaged; and the outward appearance of the Duchess Marjory was, like that of her father, more calculated to inspire awe than confidence. She spoke with kindness, however, though apparently in deep affliction, and learned from them all which they had to tell concerning the fate of her erring and inconsiderate husband. She appeared grateful for the efforts which Catharine and the glee maiden had made, at their own extreme peril, to save Rothsay from his horrible fate. She invited them to join in her devotions; and at the hour of dinner gave them her hand to kiss, and dismissed them to their own refectory, assuring both, and Catharine in particular, of her efficient protection, which should include, she said, her father's, and be a wall around them both, so long as she herself lived.

They retired from the presence of the widowed Princess, and partook of a repast with her duennas and ladies, all of whom, amid their profound sorrow, showed a character of stateliness which chilled the light heart of the Frenchwoman, and imposed restraint even on the more serious character of Catharine Glover. The friends, for so we may now term them, were fain, therefore, to escape from the society of these persons, all of them born gentlewomen, who thought themselves but ill assorted with a burgher's daughter and a strolling glee maiden, and saw them with pleasure go out to walk in the neighbourhood of the convent. A little garden, with its bushes and fruit trees, advanced on one side of the convent, so as to skirt the precipice, from which it was only separated by a parapet built on the ledge of the rock, so low that the eye might easily measure the depth of the crag, and gaze on the conflicting waters which foamed, struggled, and chafed over the reef below.

The Fair Maiden of Perth and her companion walked slowly on a path that ran within this parapet, looked at the romantic prospect, and judged what it must be when the advancing summer should clothe the grove with leaves. They observed for some time a deep silence. At length the gay and bold spirit of the glee maiden rose above the circumstances in which she had been and was now placed.

"Do the horrors of Falkland, fair May, still weigh down your spirits? Strive to forget them as I do: we cannot tread life's path lightly, if we shake not from our mantles the raindrops as they fall."

"These horrors are not to be forgotten," answered Catharine. "Yet my mind is at present anxious respecting my father's safety; and I cannot but think how many brave men may be at this instant leaving the world, even within six miles of us, or little farther."

"You mean the combat betwixt sixty champions, of which the Douglas's equerry told us yesterday? It were a sight for a minstrel to witness. But out upon these womanish eyes of mine—they could never see swords cross each other without being dazzled. But see—look yonder, May Catharine—look yonder! That flying messenger certainly brings news of the battle."

"Methinks I should know him who runs so wildly," said Catharine. "But if it be he I think of, some wild thoughts are urging his speed."

As she spoke, the runner directed his course to the garden. Louise's little dog ran to meet him, barking furiously, but came back, to cower, creep, and growl behind its mistress; for even dumb animals can distinguish when men are driven on by the furious energy of irresistible passion, and dread to cross or encounter them in their career. The fugitive rushed into the garden at the same reckless pace. His head was bare, his hair dishevelled, his rich acton and all his other vestments looked as if they had been lately drenched in water. His leathern buskins were cut and torn, and his feet marked the sod with blood. His countenance was wild, haggard, and highly excited, or, as the Scottish phrase expresses it, much "raised."

"Conachar!" said Catharine, as he advanced, apparently without seeing what was before him, as hares are said to do when severely pressed by the greyhounds. But he stopped short when he heard his own name.

"Conachar," said Catharine, "or rather Eachin MacIain, what means all this? Have the Clan Quhele sustained a defeat?"

"I have borne such names as this maiden gives me," said the fugitive, after a moment's recollection. "Yes, I was called Conachar when I was happy, and Eachin when I was powerful. But now I have no name, and there is no such clan as thou speak'st of; and thou art a foolish maid to speak of that which is not to one who has no existence."

"Alas! unfortunate—"

"And why unfortunate, I pray you?" exclaimed the youth. "If I am coward and villain, have not villainy and cowardice command over the elements? Have I not braved the water without its choking me, and trod the firm earth without its opening to devour me? And shall a mortal oppose my purpose?"

"He raves, alas!" said Catharine. "Haste to call some help. He will not harm me; but I fear he will do evil to himself. See how he stares down on the roaring waterfall!"

The glee woman hastened to do as she was ordered, and Conachar's half frenzied spirit seemed relieved by her absence.

"Catharine," he said, "now she is gone, I will say I know thee—I know thy love of peace and hatred of war. But hearken; I have, rather than strike a blow at my enemy, given up all that a man calls dearest: I have lost honour, fame, and friends, and such friends! (he placed his hands before his face). Oh! their love surpassed the love of woman! Why should I hide my tears? All know my shame; all should see my sorrow. Yes, all might see, but who would pity it? Catharine, as I ran like a madman down the strath, man and woman called 'shame' on me! The beggar to whom I flung an alms, that I might purchase one blessing, threw it back in disgust, and with a curse upon the coward! Each bell that tolled rung out, 'Shame on the recreant caitiff!' The brute beasts in their lowing and bleating, the wild winds in their rustling and howling, the hoarse waters in their dash and roar, cried, 'Out upon the dastard!' The faithful nine are still pursuing me; they cry with feeble voice, 'Strike but one blow in our revenge, we all died for you!'"

While the unhappy youth thus raved, a rustling was heard in the bushes.

"There is but one way!" he exclaimed, springing upon the parapet, but with a terrified glance towards the thicket, through which one or two attendants were stealing, with the purpose of surprising him. But the instant he saw a human form emerge from the cover of the bushes, he waved his hands wildly over his head, and shrieking out, "Bas air Eachin!" plunged down the precipice into the raging cataract beneath.

It is needless to say, that aught save this thistledown must have been dashed to pieces in such a fall. But the river was swelled, and the remains of the unhappy youth were never seen. A varying tradition has assigned more than one supplement to the history. It is said by one account, that the young captain of Clan Quhele swam safe to shore, far below the Linns of Campsie; and that, wandering disconsolately in the deserts of Rannoch, he met with Father Clement, who had taken up his abode in the wilderness as a hermit, on the principle of the old Culdees. He converted, it is said, the heart broken and penitent Conachar, who lived with him in his cell, sharing his devotion and privations, till death removed them in succession.

Another wilder legend supposes that he was snatched from death by the daione shie, or fairy folk, and that he continues to wander through wood and wild, armed like an ancient Highlander, but carrying his sword in his left hand. The phantom appears always in deep grief. Sometimes he seems about to attack the traveller, but, when resisted with courage, always flies. These legends are founded on two peculiar points in his story—his evincing timidity and his committing suicide—both of them circumstances almost unexampled in the history of a mountain chief.

When Simon Glover, having seen his friend Henry duly taken care of in his own house in Curfew Street, arrived that evening at the Place of Campsie, he found his daughter extremely ill of a fever, in consequence of the scenes to which she had lately been a witness, and particularly the catastrophe of her late playmate. The affection of the glee maiden rendered her so attentive and careful a nurse, that the glover said it should not be his fault if she ever touched lute again, save for her own amusement.

It was some time ere Simon ventured to tell his daughter of Henry's late exploits, and his severe wounds; and he took care to make the most of the encouraging circumstance, that her faithful lover had refused both honour and wealth rather than become a professed soldier and follow the Douglas. Catharine sighed deeply and shook her head at the history of bloody Palm Sunday on the North Inch. But apparently she had reflected that men rarely advance in civilisation or refinement beyond the ideas of their own age, and that a headlong and exuberant courage, like that of Henry Smith, was, in the iron days in which they lived, preferable to the deficiency which had led to Conachar's catastrophe. If she had any doubts on the subject, they were removed in due time by Henry's protestations, so soon as restored health enabled him to plead his own cause.

"I should blush to say, Catharine, that I am even sick of the thoughts of doing battle. Yonder last field showed carnage enough to glut a tiger. I am therefore resolved to hang up my broadsword, never to be drawn more unless against the enemies of Scotland."

"And should Scotland call for it," said Catharine, "I will buckle it round you."

"And, Catharine," said the joyful glover, "we will pay largely for soul masses for those who have fallen by Henry's sword; and that will not only cure spiritual flaws, but make us friends with the church again."

"For that purpose, father," said Catharine, "the hoards of the wretched Dwining may be applied. He bequeathed them to me; but I think you would not mix his base blood money with your honest gains?"

"I would bring the plague into my house as soon," said the resolute glover.

The treasures of the wicked apothecary were distributed accordingly among the four monasteries; nor was there ever after a breath of suspicion concerning the orthodoxy of old Simon or his daughter.

Henry and Catharine were married within four months after the battle of the North Inch, and never did the corporations of the glovers and hammermen trip their sword dance so featly as at the wedding of the boldest burgess and brightest maiden in Perth. Ten months after, a gallant infant filled the well spread cradle, and was rocked by Louise to the tune of—

Bold and true,

In bonnet blue.

The names of the boy's sponsors are recorded, as "Ane Hie and Michty Lord, Archibald Erl of Douglas, ane Honorabil and gude Knight, Schir Patrick Charteris of Kinfauns, and ane Gracious Princess, Marjory Dowaire of his Serene Highness David, umquhile Duke of Rothesay."

Under such patronage a family rises fast; and several of the most respected houses in Scotland, but especially in Perthshire, and many individuals distinguished both in arts and arms, record with pride their descent from the Gow Chrom and the Fair Maid of Perth.

BOOK VII
QUENTIN DURWARD
CHAPTER I: THE CONTRAST

*Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.*

HAMLET

The latter part of the fifteenth century prepared a train of future events that ended by raising France to that state of formidable power which has ever since been from time to time the principal object of jealousy to the other European nations. Before that period she had to struggle for her very existence with the English already possessed of her fairest provinces while the utmost exertions of her King, and the gallantry of her people, could scarcely protect the remainder from a foreign yoke. Nor was this her sole danger. The princes who possessed the grand fiefs of the crown, and, in particular, the Dukes of Burgundy and Bretagne, had come to wear their feudal bonds so lightly that they had no scruple in lifting the standard against their liege and sovereign lord, the King of France, on the slightest pretence. When at peace, they reigned as absolute princes in their own provinces; and the House of Burgundy, possessed of the district so called, together with the fairest and richest part of Flanders, was itself so wealthy, and so powerful, as to yield nothing to the crown, either in splendour or in strength.

In imitation of the grand feudatories, each inferior vassal of the crown assumed as much independence as his distance from the sovereign power, the extent of his fief, or the strength of his chateau enabled him to maintain; and these petty tyrants, no longer amenable to the exercise of the law, perpetrated with impunity the wildest excesses of fantastic oppression and cruelty. In Auvergne alone, a report was made of more than three hundred of these independent nobles, to whom incest, murder, and rapine were the most ordinary and familiar actions.

Besides these evils, another, springing out of the long continued wars betwixt the French and English, added no small misery to this distracted kingdom. Numerous bodies of soldiers, collected into bands, under officers chosen by themselves, from among the bravest and most successful adventurers, had been formed in various parts of France out of the refuse of all other countries. These hireling combatants sold their swords for a time to the best bidder; and, when such service was not to be had, they made war on their own account, seizing castles and towers, which they used as the places of their retreat, making prisoners, and ransoming them, exacting tribute from the open villages and the country around them—and acquiring, by every species of rapine, the appropriate epithets of *Tondeurs* and *Ecorcheurs*, that is, *Clippers* and *Flayers*.

In the midst of the horrors and miseries arising from so distracted a state of public affairs, reckless and profuse expense distinguished the courts of the lesser nobles, as well as of the superior princes; and their dependents, in imitation, expended in rude but magnificent display the wealth which they extorted from the people. A tone of romantic and chivalrous gallantry (which, however, was often disgraced by unbounded license) characterized the intercourse between the sexes; and the language of knight errantry was yet used, and its observances followed, though the pure spirit of honourable love and benevolent enterprise which it inculcates had ceased to qualify and atone for its extravagances. The jousts and tournaments, the entertainments and revels, which each petty court displayed, invited to France every wandering adventurer; and it was seldom that, when arrived there, he failed to employ his rash courage, and headlong spirit of enterprise, in actions for which his happier native country afforded no free stage.

At this period, and as if to save this fair realm from the various woes with which it was menaced, the tottering throne was ascended by Louis XI, whose character, evil as it was in itself, met, combated, and in a great degree neutralized the mischiefs of the time—as poisons of opposing qualities are said, in ancient books of medicine, to have the power of counteracting each other.

Brave enough for every useful and political purpose, Louis had not a spark of that romantic valour, or of the pride generally associated with it, which fought on for the point of honour, when the point of utility had been long gained. Calm, crafty, and profoundly attentive to his own interest, he made every sacrifice, both of pride and passion, which could interfere with it. He was careful in disguising his real sentiments and purposes from all who approached him, and frequently used the expressions, "that the king knew not how to reign, who knew not how to dissemble; and that, for himself, if he thought his very cap knew his secrets, he would throw it into the fire." No man of his own, or of any other time, better understood how to avail himself of the frailties of others, and when to avoid giving any advantage by the untimely indulgence of his own.

He was by nature vindictive and cruel, even to the extent of finding pleasure in the frequent executions which he commanded. But, as no touch of mercy ever induced him to spare, when he could with safety condemn, so no sentiment of vengeance ever stimulated him to a premature violence. He seldom sprang on his prey till it was fairly within his grasp, and till all hope of rescue was vain; and his movements were so studiously disguised, that his success was generally what first announced to the world the object he had been manoeuvring to attain.

In like manner, the avarice of Louis gave way to apparent profusion, when it was necessary to bribe the favourite or minister of a rival prince for averting any impending attack, or to break up any alliance confederated against him. He was fond of license and pleasure; but neither beauty nor the chase, though both were ruling passions, ever withdrew him from the most regular attendance to public business and the affairs of his kingdom. His knowledge of mankind was profound, and he had sought it in the private walks of life, in which he often personally mingled; and, though naturally proud and haughty, he hesitated not, with an inattention to the arbitrary divisions of society which was then thought something portentously unnatural, to raise from the lowest rank men whom he employed on the most important duties, and knew so well how to choose them, that he was rarely disappointed in their qualities. Yet there were contradictions in the character of this artful and able monarch; for human nature is rarely uniform. Himself the most false and insincere of mankind, some of the greatest errors of his life arose from too rash a confidence in the honour and integrity of others. When these errors took place, they seem to have arisen from an over refined system of policy, which induced Louis to assume the appearance of undoubting confidence in those whom it was his object to overreach; for, in his general conduct, he was as jealous and suspicious as any tyrant who ever breathed.

Two other points may be noticed to complete the sketch of this formidable character, by which he rose among the rude, chivalrous sovereigns of the period to the rank of a keeper among wild beasts, who, by superior wisdom and policy, by distribution of food, and some discipline by blows, comes finally to predominate over those who, if unsubjected by his arts, would by main strength have torn him to pieces.

The first of these attributes was Louis's excessive superstition, a plague with which Heaven often afflicts those who refuse to listen to the dictates of religion. The remorse arising from his evil actions Louis never endeavoured to appease by any relaxation in his Machiavellian stratagems [on account of the alleged political immorality of Machiavelli, an illustrious Italian of the sixteenth century, this expression has come to mean "destitute of political morality; habitually using duplicity and bad faith." *Cent. Dict.*], but laboured in vain to soothe and silence that painful feeling by superstitious observances, severe penance, and profuse gifts to the ecclesiastics. The second property, with which the first is sometimes found strangely united, was a disposition to low pleasures and obscure debauchery. The wisest, or at least the most crafty sovereign of his time, he was fond of low life, and, being himself a man of wit, enjoyed the jests and repartees of social conversation more than could have been expected from other points of his character. He even mingled in the comic adventures of obscure intrigue, with a freedom little consistent with the habitual and guarded jealousy of his character, and he was so fond of this species of humble gallantry, that he caused a number of its gay and licentious anecdotes to be enrolled in a collection well known to book collectors, in whose eyes (and the work is unfit for any other) the right edition is very precious.

[This editio princeps, which, when in good preservation, is much sought after by connoisseurs, is entitled *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, contenant Cent Histoires Nouveaux, qui sont moult plaisans a raconter en toutes bonnes compagnies par maniere de joyeuxete. Paris, Antoine Verard. Sans date d'annee d'impression; en folio gotique. See De Bure. S]

By means of this monarch's powerful and prudent, though most unamiable character, it pleased Heaven, who works by the tempest as well as by the soft, small rain, to restore to the great French nation the benefits of civil government, which, at the time of his accession, they had nearly lost.

Ere he succeeded to the crown, Louis had given evidence of his vices rather than of his talents. His first wife, Margaret of Scotland, was "done to death by slanderous tongues" in her husband's court, where, but for the encouragement of Louis himself, not a word would have been breathed against that amiable and injured princess. He had been an ungrateful and a rebellious son, at one time conspiring to seize his father's person, and at another levying open war against him. For the first offence, he was banished to his appanage of Dauphine, which he governed with much sagacity; for the second he was driven into absolute exile, and forced to throw himself on the mercy, and almost on the charity, of the Duke of Burgundy and his son; where he enjoyed hospitality, afterwards indifferently requited, until the death of his father in 1461.

In the very outset of his reign, Louis was almost overpowered by a league formed against him by the great vassals of France, with the Duke of Burgundy, or rather his son, the Count de Charalois, at its head. They levied a powerful army, blockaded Paris, fought a battle of doubtful issue under its very walls, and placed the French monarchy on the brink of actual destruction. It usually happens in such cases, that the more sagacious general of the two gains the real fruit, though perhaps not the martial fame, of the disputed field. Louis, who had shown great personal bravery during the battle of Montlhery, was able, by his prudence, to avail himself of its undecided character, as if it had been a victory on his side. He temporized until the enemy had broken up their leaguer, and showed so much dexterity in sowing jealousies among those great powers, that their alliance "for the public weal," as they termed it, but in reality for the overthrow of all but the external appearance of the French monarchy, dissolved itself, and was never again renewed in a manner so formidable. From this period, Louis, relieved of all danger from England by the Civil Wars of York and Lancaster, was engaged for several years, like an unfeeling but able physician, in curing the wounds of the body politic, or rather in stopping, now by gentle remedies, now by the use of fire and steel, the progress of those mortal gangrenes with which it was then infected. The brigandage of the Free Companies [troops that acknowledged no authority except that of their leaders, and who hired themselves out at will], and the unpunished oppression of the nobility, he laboured to lessen, since he could not actually stop them; and, by dint of unrelaxed attention, he gradually gained some addition to his own regal authority, or effected some diminution of those by whom it was counterbalanced.

Still the King of France was surrounded by doubt and danger. The members of the league "for the public weal," though not in unison, were in existence, and, like a scotched snake [see Macbeth. III, ii, 13, "We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it."], might reunite and become dangerous again. But a worse danger was the increasing power of the Duke of Burgundy, then one of the greatest princes of Europe, and little diminished in rank by the very slight dependence of his duchy upon the crown of France.

Charles, surnamed the Bold, or rather, the Audacious, for his courage was allied to rashness and frenzy, then wore the ducal coronet of Burgundy, which he burned to convert into a royal and independent regal crown. The character of this Duke was in every respect the direct contrast to that of Louis XI.

The latter was calm, deliberate, and crafty, never prosecuting a desperate enterprise, and never abandoning one likely to be successful, however distant the prospect. The genius of the Duke was entirely different. He rushed on danger because he loved it, and on difficulties because he despised them. As Louis never sacrificed his interest to his passion, so Charles, on the other hand, never sacrificed his passion, or even his humour, to any other consideration. Notwithstanding the near relationship that existed between them, and the support which the Duke and his father had afforded to Louis in his exile when Dauphin, there was mutual contempt and hatred betwixt them. The Duke of Burgundy despised the cautious policy of the King, and imputed to the faintness of his courage that he sought by leagues, purchases, and other indirect means those advantages which, in his place, the Duke would have snatched with an armed hand. He likewise hated the King, not only for the ingratitude he had manifested for former kindnesses, and for personal injuries and imputations which the ambassadors of Louis had cast upon him, when his father was yet alive, but also, and especially, because of the support which he afforded in secret to the discontented citizens of Ghent, Liege, and other great towns in Flanders. These turbulent cities, jealous of their privileges, and proud of their wealth, were frequently in a state of insurrection against their liege lords, the Dukes of Burgundy, and never failed to find underhand countenance at the court of Louis, who embraced every opportunity of fomenting disturbance within the dominions of his overgrown vassal.

The contempt and hatred of the Duke were retaliated by Louis with equal energy, though he used a thicker veil to conceal his sentiments. It was impossible for a man of his profound sagacity not to despise the stubborn obstinacy which never resigned its purpose, however fatal perseverance might prove, and the headlong impetuosity which commenced its career without allowing a moment's consideration for the obstacles to be encountered. Yet the King hated Charles even more than he contemned him, and his scorn and hatred were the more intense, that they were mingled with fear; for he knew that the onset of the mad bull, to whom he likened the Duke of Burgundy, must ever be formidable, though the animal makes it with shut eyes. It was not alone the wealth of the Burgundian provinces, the discipline of the warlike inhabitants, and the mass of their crowded population, which the King dreaded, for the personal qualities of their leader had also much in them that was dangerous. The very soul of bravery, which he pushed to the verge of rashness, and beyond it—profuse in expenditure—splendid in his court, his person, and his retinue, in all which he displayed the hereditary magnificence of the house of Burgundy, Charles the Bold drew into his service almost all the fiery spirits of the age whose tempers were congenial; and Louis saw too clearly what might be attempted and executed by such a train of resolute adventurers, following a leader of a character as ungovernable as their own.

There was yet another circumstance which increased the animosity of Louis towards his overgrown vassal; he owed him favours which he never meant to repay, and was under the frequent necessity of temporizing with him, and even of enduring bursts of petulant insolence, injurious to the regal dignity, without being able to treat him otherwise than as his "fair cousin of Burgundy."

It was about the year 1468, when their feuds were at the highest, though a dubious and hollow truce, as frequently happened, existed for the time betwixt them, that the present narrative opens. The person first introduced on the stage will be found indeed to be of a rank and condition, the illustration of whose character scarcely called for a dissertation on the relative position of two great princes; but the passions of the great, their quarrels, and their reconciliations involve the fortunes of all who approach them; and it will be found, on proceeding farther in our story, that this preliminary chapter is necessary for comprehending the history of the individual whose adventures we are about to relate.

CHAPTER II: THE WANDERER

Why then the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open.

ANCIENT PISTOL

It was upon a delicious summer morning, before the sun had assumed its scorching power, and while the dews yet cooled and perfumed the air, that a youth, coming from the northeastward approached the ford of a small river, or rather a large brook, tributary to the Cher, near to the royal Castle of Plessis les Tours, whose dark and multiplied battlements rose in the background over the extensive forest with which they were surrounded. These woodlands comprised a noble chase, or royal park, fenced by an enclosure, termed, in the Latin of the middle ages, Plexitium, which gives the name of Plessis to so many villages in France. The castle and village of which we particularly speak, was called Plessis les Tours, to distinguish it from others, and was built about two miles to the southward of the fair town of that name, the capital of ancient Touraine, whose rich plain has been termed the Garden of France.

On the bank of the above mentioned brook, opposite to that which the traveller was approaching, two men, who appeared in deep conversation, seemed, from time to time, to watch his motions; for, as their station was much more elevated, they could remark him at considerable distance.

The age of the young traveller might be about nineteen, or betwixt that and twenty; and his face and person, which were very prepossessing, did not, however, belong to the country in which he was now a sojourner. His short gray cloak and hose were rather of Flemish than of French fashion, while the smart blue bonnet, with a single sprig of holly and an eagle's feather, was already recognized as the Scottish head gear. His dress was very neat, and arranged with the precision of a youth conscious of possessing a fine person. He had at his back a satchel, which seemed to contain a few necessities, a hawking gauntlet on his left hand,

though he carried no bird, and in his right a stout hunter's pole. Over his left shoulder hung an embroidered scarf which sustained a small pouch of scarlet velvet, such as was then used by fowlers of distinction to carry their hawks' food, and other matters belonging to that much admired sport. This was crossed by another shoulder belt, to which was hung a hunting knife, or couteau de chasse. Instead of the boots of the period, he wore buskins of half dressed deer's skin.

Although his form had not yet attained its full strength, he was tall and active, and the lightness of the step with which he advanced, showed that his pedestrian mode of travelling was pleasure rather than pain to him. His complexion was fair, in spite of a general shade of darker hue, with which the foreign sun, or perhaps constant exposure to the atmosphere in his own country, had, in some degree, embrowned it.

His features, without being quite regular, were frank, open, and pleasing. A half smile, which seemed to arise from a happy exuberance of animal spirits, showed now and then that his teeth were well set, and as pure as ivory; whilst his bright blue eye, with a corresponding gaiety, had an appropriate glance for every object which it encountered, expressing good humour, lightness of heart, and determined resolution.

He received and returned the salutation of the few travellers who frequented the road in those dangerous times with the action which suited each. The strolling spearman, half soldier, half brigand, measured the youth with his eye, as if balancing the prospect of booty with the chance of desperate resistance; and read such indications of the latter in the fearless glance of the passenger, that he changed his ruffian purpose for a surly "Good morrow, comrade," which the young Scot answered with as martial, though a less sullen tone. The wandering pilgrim, or the begging friar, answered his reverent greeting with a paternal benediction [equivalent to the English expression, "Bless you."]; and the dark eyed peasant girl looked after him for many a step after they had passed each other, and interchanged a laughing good morrow. In short, there was an attraction about his whole appearance not easily escaping attention, and which was derived from the combination of fearless frankness and good humour, with sprightly looks and a handsome face and person. It seemed, too, as if his whole demeanour bespoke one who was entering on life with no apprehension of the evils with which it is beset, and small means for struggling with its hardships, except a lively spirit and a courageous disposition; and it is with such tempers that youth most readily sympathizes, and for whom chiefly age and experience feel affectionate and pitying interest.

The youth whom we have described had been long visible to the two persons who loitered on the opposite side of the small river which divided him from the park and the castle; but as he descended the rugged bank to the water's edge, with the light step of a roe which visits the fountain, the younger of the two said to the other, "It is our man—it is the Bohemian! If he attempts to cross the ford, he is a lost man—the water is up, and the ford impassable."

"Let him make that discovery himself, gossip [an intimate friend or companion (obsolete)]," said the elder personage; "it may, perchance, save a rope and break a proverb [refers to the old saw, 'Who is born to be hanged will never be drowned.']."

"I judge him by the blue cap," said the other, "for I cannot see his face. Hark, sir; he hallooos to know whether the water be deep."

"Nothing like experience in this world," answered the other, "let him try."

The young man, in the meanwhile, receiving no hint to the contrary, and taking the silence of those to whom he applied as an encouragement to proceed, entered the stream without farther hesitation than the delay necessary to take off his buskins. The elder person, at the same moment, hallooed to him to beware, adding, in a lower tone, to his companion, "Mortdieu—gossip—you have made another mistake—this is not the Bohemian chatterer."

But the intimation to the youth came too late. He either did not hear or could not profit by it, being already in the deep stream. To one less alert and practised in the exercise of swimming, death had been certain, for the brook was both deep and strong.

"By Saint Anne! but he is a proper youth," said the elder man. "Run, gossip, and help your blunder, by giving him aid, if thou canst. He belongs to thine own troop—if old saws speak truth, water will not drown him."

Indeed, the young traveller swam so strongly, and buffeted the waves so well, that, notwithstanding the strength of the current, he was carried but a little way down from the ordinary landing place.

By this time the younger of the two strangers was hurrying down to the shore to render assistance, while the other followed him at a graver pace, saying to himself as he approached, "I knew water would never drown that young fellow.—By my halidome [originally something regarded as sacred, as a relic; formerly much used in solemn oaths], he is ashore, and grasps his pole!—If I make not the more haste, he will beat my gossip for the only charitable action which I ever saw him perform, or attempt to perform, in the whole course of his life."

There was some reason to augur such a conclusion of the adventure, for the bonny Scot had already accosted the younger Samaritan, who was hastening to his assistance, with these ireful words: "Discourteous dog! why did you not answer when I called to know if the passage was fit to be attempted? May the foul fiend catch me, but I will teach you the respect due to strangers on the next occasion."

This was accompanied with that significant flourish with his pole which is called *le moulinet*, because the artist, holding it in the middle, brandishes the two ends in every direction like the sails of a windmill in motion. His opponent, seeing himself thus menaced, laid hand upon his sword, for he was one of those who on all occasions are more ready for action than for speech; but his more considerate comrade, who came up, commanded him to forbear, and, turning to the young man, accused him in turn of precipitation in plunging into the swollen ford, and of intemperate violence in quarrelling with a man who was hastening to his assistance.

The young man, on hearing himself thus reproved by a man of advanced age and respectable appearance, immediately lowered his weapon, and said he would be sorry if he had done them injustice; but, in reality, it appeared to him as if they had suffered him to put his life in peril for want of a word of timely warning, which could be the part neither of honest men nor of good Christians, far less of respectable burgesses, such as they seemed to be.

"Fair son," said the elder person, "you seem, from your accent and complexion, a stranger; and you should recollect your dialect is not so easily comprehended by us; as perhaps it may be uttered by you."

"Well, father," answered the youth, "I do not care much about the ducking I have had, and I will readily forgive your being partly the cause, provided you will direct me to some place where I can have my clothes dried; for it is my only suit, and I must keep it somewhat decent."

"For whom do you take us, fair son?" said the elder stranger, in answer to this question.

"For substantial burgesses, unquestionably," said the youth; "or—hold; you, master, may be a money broker, or a corn merchant; and this man a butcher, or grazier."

"You have hit our capacities rarely," said the elder, smiling. "My business is indeed to trade in as much money as I can and my gossip's dealings are somewhat of kin to the butcher's. As to your accommodation we will try to serve you; but I must first know who you are, and whither you are going, for, in these times, the roads are filled with travellers on foot and horseback, who have anything in their head but honesty and the fear of God."

The young man cast another keen and penetrating glance on him who spoke, and on his silent companion, as if doubtful whether they, on their part, merited the confidence they demanded; and the result of his observation was as follows.

The eldest and most remarkable of these men in dress and appearance, resembled the merchant or shopkeeper of the period. His jerkin, hose, and cloak were of a dark uniform colour, but worn so threadbare that the acute young Scot conceived that the wearer must be either very rich or very poor, probably the former. The fashion of the dress was close and short, a kind of garment which was not then held decorous among gentry, or even the superior class of citizens, who generally wore loose gowns which descended below the middle of the leg.

The expression of this man's countenance was partly attractive and partly forbidding. His strong features, sunk cheeks, and hollow eyes had, nevertheless, an expression of shrewdness and humour congenial to the character of the young adventurer. But then, those same sunken eyes, from under the shroud of thick black eyebrows, had something in them that was at once commanding and sinister. Perhaps this effect was increased by the low fur cap, much depressed on the forehead, and adding to the shade from under which those eyes peered out; but it is certain that the young stranger had some difficulty to reconcile his looks with the meanness of his appearance in other respects. His cap, in particular, in which all men of any quality displayed either a brooch of gold or of silver, was

ornamented with a paltry image of the Virgin, in lead, such as the poorer sort of pilgrims bring from Loretto [a city in Italy, containing the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary called the Santa Casa, reputed to have been brought there by angels].

His comrade was a stout formed, middle sized man, more than ten years younger than his companion, with a down looking visage and a very ominous smile, when by chance he gave way to that impulse, which was never, except in reply to certain secret signs that seemed to pass between him and the elder stranger. This man was armed with a sword and dagger; and underneath his plain habit the Scotsman observed that he concealed a jazeran, or flexible shirt of linked mail, which, as being often worn by those, even of peaceful professions, who were called upon at that perilous period to be frequently abroad, confirmed the young man in his conjecture that the wearer was by profession a butcher, grazier, or something of that description, called upon to be much abroad. The young stranger, comprehending in one glance the result of the observation which has taken us some time to express, answered, after a moment's pause, "I am ignorant whom I may have the honour to address," making a slight reverence at the same time, "but I am indifferent who knows that I am a cadet of Scotland; and that I come to seek my fortune in France, or elsewhere, after the custom of my countrymen."

"Pasques dieu! and a gallant custom it is," said the elder stranger. "You seem a fine young springald, and at the right age to prosper, whether among men or women. What say you? I am a merchant, and want a lad to assist in my traffic; I suppose you are too much a gentleman to assist in such mechanical drudgery?"

"Fair sir," said the youth, "if your offer be seriously made—of which I have my doubts—I am bound to thank you for it, and I thank you accordingly; but I fear I should be altogether unfit for your service."

"What!" said the senior, "I warrant thou knowest better how to draw the bow, than how to draw a bill of charges—canst handle a broadsword better than a pen—ha!"

"I am, master," answered the young Scot, "a braeman, and therefore, as we say, a bowman. But besides that, I have been in a convent, where the good fathers taught me to read and write, and even to cipher."

"Pasques dieu! that is too magnificent," said the merchant. "By our Lady of Embrun [a town in France containing a cathedral in which was a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, said to have been sculptured by St. Luke], thou art a prodigy, man!"

"Rest you merry, fair master," said the youth, who was not much pleased with his new acquaintance's jocularly, "I must go dry myself, instead of standing dripping here, answering questions."

The merchant only laughed louder as he spoke, and answered, "Pasques dieu! the proverb never fails—fier comme un Ecossois [proud or haughty as a Scotchman]—but come, youngster, you are of a country I have a regard for, having traded in Scotland in my time—an honest poor set of folks they are; and, if you will come with us to the village, I will bestow on you a cup of burnt sack and a warm breakfast, to atone for your drenching.—But tete bleau! what do you with a hunting glove on your hand? Know you not there is no hawking permitted in a royal chase?"

"I was taught that lesson," answered the youth, "by a rascally forester of the Duke of Burgundy. I did but fly the falcon I had brought with me from Scotland, and that I reckoned on for bringing me into some note, at a heron near Peronne, and the rascally schelm [rogue, rascal (obsolete or Scotch)] shot my bird with an arrow."

"What did you do?" said the merchant.

"Beat him," said the youngster, brandishing his staff, "as near to death as one Christian man should belabour another—I wanted not to have his blood to answer for."

"Know you," said the burgess, "that had you fallen into the Duke of Burgundy's hands, he would have hung you up like a chestnut?"

"Ay, I am told he is as prompt as the King of France for that sort of work. But, as this happened near Peronne, I made a leap over the frontiers, and laughed at him. If he had not been so hasty, I might, perhaps, have taken service with him."

"He will have a heavy miss of such a paladin as you are, if the truce should break off," said the merchant, and threw a look at his own companion, who answered him with one of the downcast lowering smiles which gleamed along his countenance, enlivening it as a passing meteor enlivens a winter sky.

The young Scot suddenly stopped, pulled his bonnet over his right eyebrow, as one that would not be ridiculed, and said firmly, "My masters, and especially you, sir, the elder, and who should be the wiser, you will find, I presume, no sound or safe jesting at my expense. I do not altogether like the tone of your conversation. I can take a jest with any man, and a rebuke, too, from my elder, and say thank you, sir, if I know it to be deserved; but I do not like being borne in hand as if I were a child, when, God wot, I find myself man enough to belabour you both, if you provoke me too far."

The eldest man seemed like to choke with laughter at the lad's demeanour—his companion's hand stole to his sword hilt, which the youth observing, dealt him a blow across the wrist, which made him incapable of grasping it, while his companion's mirth was only increased by the incident.

"Hold, hold," he cried, "most doughty Scot, even for thine own dear country's sake, and you, gossip, forbear your menacing look. Pasques-dieu! let us be just traders, and set off the wetting against the knock on the wrist, which was given with so much grace and alacrity.—And hark ye, my young friend," he said to the young man, with a grave sternness which, in spite of all the youth could do, damped and overawed him, "no more violence. I am no fit object for it, and my gossip, as you may see, has had enough of it. Let me know your name."

"I can answer a civil question civilly," said the youth; "and will pay fitting respect to your age, if you do not urge my patience with mockery. Since I have been here in France and Flanders, men have called me, in their fantasy, the Varlet with the Velvet Pouch, because of this hawk purse which I carry by my side; but my true name, when at home, is Quentin Durward."

"Durward!" said the querist; "is it a gentleman's name?"

"By fifteen descents in our family," said the young man; "and that makes me reluctant to follow any other trade than arms."

"A true Scot! Plenty of blood, plenty of pride, and right great scarcity of ducats, I warrant thee.—Well, gossip," he said to his companion, "go before us, and tell them to have some breakfast ready yonder at the Mulberry grove; for this youth will do as much honour to it as a starved mouse to a housewife's cheese. And for the Bohemian—hark in thy ear."

His comrade answered by a gloomy but intelligent smile, and set forward at a round pace, while the elder man continued, addressing young Durward, "You and I will walk leisurely forward together, and we may take a mass at Saint Hubert's Chapel in our way through the forest; for it is not good to think of our fleshly before our spiritual wants."

[This silvan saint... was passionately fond of the chase, and used to neglect attendance on divine worship for this amusement. While he was once engaged in this pastime, a stag appeared before him, having a crucifix bound betwixt his horns, and he heard a voice which menaced him with eternal punishment if he did not repent of his sins. He retired from the world and took orders... Hubert afterwards became Bishop of Maestrecht and Liege. S.]

Durward, as a good Catholic, had nothing to object against this proposal, although he might probably have been desirous, in the first place; to have dried his clothes and refreshed himself. Meanwhile, they soon lost sight of their downward looking companion, but continued to follow the same path which he had taken, until it led them into a wood of tall trees, mixed with thickets and brushwood, traversed by long avenues, through which were seen, as through a vista, the deer trotting in little herds with a degree of security which argued their consciousness of being completely protected.

"You asked me if I were a good bowman," said the young Scot. "Give me a bow and a brace of shafts, and you shall have a piece of venison in a moment."

"Pasques dieu! my young friend," said his companion, "take care of that; my gossip yonder hath a special eye to the deer; they are under his charge, and he is a strict keeper."

"He hath more the air of a butcher than of a gay forester," answered Durward. "I cannot think yon hang dog look of his belongs to any one who knows the gentle rules of woodcraft."

"Ah, my young friend," answered his companion, "my gossip hath somewhat an ugly favour to look upon at the first; but those who become acquainted with him never are known to complain of him."

Quentin Durward found something singularly and disagreeably significant in the tone with which this was spoken; and, looking suddenly at the speaker, thought he saw in his countenance, in the slight smile that curled his upper lip, and the accompanying twinkle of his keen dark eye, something to justify his displeasing surprise. "I have heard of robbers," he thought to himself, "and of wily cheats and cutthroats—what if yonder fellow be a murderer, and this old rascal his decoy duck! I will be on my guard—they will get little by me but good Scottish knocks."

While he was thus reflecting, they came to a glade, where the large forest trees were more widely separated from each other, and where the ground beneath, cleared of underwood and bushes, was clothed with a carpet of the softest and most lovely verdure, which, screened from the scorching heat of the sun, was here more beautifully tender than it is usually to be seen in France. The trees in this secluded spot were chiefly beeches and elms of huge magnitude, which rose like great hills of leaves into the air. Amidst these magnificent sons of the earth there peeped out, in the most open spot of the glade, a lowly chapel, near which trickled a small rivulet. Its architecture was of the rudest and most simple kind; and there was a very small lodge beside it, for the accommodation of a hermit or solitary priest, who remained there for regularly discharging the duty of the altar. In a small niche over the arched doorway stood a stone image of Saint Hubert, with the bugle horn around his neck, and a leash of greyhounds at his feet. The situation of the chapel in the midst of a park or chase, so richly stocked with game, made the dedication to the Sainted Huntsman peculiarly appropriate.

Towards this little devotional structure the old man directed his steps, followed by young Durward; and, as they approached, the priest, dressed in his sacerdotal garments, made his appearance in the act of proceeding from his cell to the chapel, for the discharge, doubtless, of his holy office. Durward bowed his body reverently to the priest, as the respect due to his sacred office demanded; whilst his companion, with an appearance of still more deep devotion, kneeled on one knee to receive the holy man's blessing, and then followed him into church, with a step and manner expressive of the most heartfelt contrition and humility.

The inside of the chapel was adorned in a manner adapted to the occupation of the patron saint while on earth. The richest furs of such animals as are made the objects of the chase in different countries supplied the place of tapestry and hangings around the altar and elsewhere, and the characteristic emblazonments of bugles, bows, quivers, and other emblems of hunting, surrounded the walls, and were mingled with the heads of deer, wolves, and other animals considered beasts of sport. The whole adornments took an appropriate and silvan character; and the mass itself, being considerably shortened, proved to be of that sort which is called a hunting mass, because in use before the noble and powerful, who, while assisting at the solemnity, are usually impatient to commence their favourite sport.

Yet, during this brief ceremony, Durward's companion seemed to pay the most rigid and scrupulous attention; while Durward, not quite so much occupied with religious thoughts, could not forbear blaming himself in his own mind for having entertained suspicions derogatory to the character of so good and so humble a man. Far from now holding him as a companion and accomplice of robbers, he had much to do to forbear regarding him as a saint-like personage.

When mass was ended, they retired together from the chapel, and the elder said to his young comrade, "It is but a short walk from hence to the village—you may now break your fast with an unprejudiced conscience—follow me."

Turning to the right, and proceeding along a path which seemed gradually to ascend, he recommended to his companion by no means to quit the track, but, on the contrary, to keep the middle of it as nearly as he could. Durward could not help asking the cause of this precaution.

"You are now near the Court, young man," answered his guide; "and, Pasques-dieu! there is some difference betwixt walking in this region and on your own heathy hills. Every yard of this ground, excepting the path which we now occupy, is rendered dangerous, and well nigh impracticable, by snares and traps, armed with scythe blades, which shred off the unwary passenger's limb as sheerly as a hedge bill lops a hawthorn sprig—and calthrops that would pierce your foot through, and pitfalls deep enough to bury you in them for ever; for you are now within the precincts of the royal demesne, and we shall presently see the front of the Chateau."

"Were I the King of France," said the young man, "I would not take so much trouble with traps and gins, but would try instead to govern so well that no man should dare to come near my dwelling with a bad intent; and for those who came there in peace and goodwill, why, the more of them the merrier we should be."

His companion looked round affecting an alarmed gaze, and said, "Hush, hush, Sir Varlet with the Velvet Pouch! for I forgot to tell you, that one great danger of these precincts is, that the very leaves of the trees are like so many ears, which carry all which is spoken to the King's own cabinet."

"I care little for that," answered Quentin Durward; "I bear a Scottish tongue in my head, bold enough to speak my mind to King Louis's face, God bless him—and for the ears you talk of, if I could see them growing on a human head, I would crop them out of it with my wood knife."

CHAPTER III: THE CASTLE

*Full in the midst a mighty pile arose,
Where iron grated gates their strength oppose
To each invading step—and strong and steep,
The battled walls arose, the fosse sunk deep.
Slow round the fortress roll'd the sluggish stream,
And high in middle air the warder's turrets gleam.*

ANONYMOUS

While Durward and his acquaintance thus spoke, they came in sight of the whole front of the Castle of Plessis les Tours, which, even in those dangerous times, when the great found themselves obliged to reside within places of fortified strength, was distinguished for the extreme and jealous care with which it was watched and defended.

From the verge of the wood where young Durward halted with his companion, in order to take a view of this royal residence, extended, or rather arose, though by a very gentle elevation, an open esplanade, devoid of trees and bushes of every description, excepting one gigantic and half withered old oak. This space was left open, according to the rules of fortification in all ages, in order that an enemy might not approach the walls under cover, or unobserved from the battlements, and beyond it arose the Castle itself.

There were three external walls, battlemented and turreted from space to space and at each angle, the second enclosure rising higher than the first, and being built so as to command the exterior defence in case it was won by the enemy; and being again, in the same manner, itself commanded by the third and innermost barrier.

Around the external wall, as the Frenchman informed his young companion (for as they stood lower than the foundation of the wall, he could not see it), was sunk a ditch of about twenty feet in depth, supplied with water by a dam head on the river Cher; or rather on one of its tributary branches. In front of the second enclosure, he said, there ran another fosse, and a third, both of the same unusual dimensions, was led between the second and the innermost inclosure. The verge, both of the outer and inner circuit of this triple moat was strongly fenced with palisades of iron, serving the purpose of what are called chevaux de frise in modern fortification, the top of each pale being divided into a cluster of sharp spikes, which seemed to render any attempt to climb over an act of self destruction.

From within the innermost enclosure arose the Castle itself, containing buildings of all periods, crowded around, and united with the ancient and grim looking donjon keep, which was older than any of them, and which rose, like a black Ethiopian giant, high into the air, while the absence of any windows larger than shot holes, irregularly disposed for defence, gave the spectator the same unpleasant feeling which we experience on looking at a blind man. The other buildings seemed scarcely better adapted for the purposes of comfort, for the windows opened to an inner and enclosed courtyard; so that the whole external front looked much more like that of a prison than a palace. The reigning King had even increased this effect; for, desirous that the additions which he himself had made to the

fortifications should be of a character not easily distinguished from the original building (for, like many jealous persons, he loved not that his suspicions should be observed), the darkest coloured brick and freestone were employed, and soot mingled with the lime, so as to give the whole Castle the same uniform tinge of extreme and rude antiquity.

This formidable place had but one entrance—at least Durward saw none along the spacious front, except where, in the centre of the first and outward boundary, arose two strong towers, the usual defences of a gateway; and he could observe their ordinary accompaniments, portcullis and drawbridge—of which the first was lowered, and the last raised. Similar entrance towers were visible on the second and third bounding wall, but not in the same line with those on the outward circuit; because the passage did not cut right through the whole three enclosures at the same point, but, on the contrary, those who entered had to proceed nearly thirty yards betwixt the first and second wall, exposed, if their purpose were hostile, to missiles from both; and again, when the second boundary was passed, they must make a similar digression from the straight line, in order to attain the portal of the third and innermost enclosure; so that before gaining the outer court, which ran along the front of the building, two narrow and dangerous defiles were to be traversed under a flanking discharge of artillery, and three gates, defended in the strongest manner known to the age, were to be successively forced.

Coming from a country alike desolated by foreign war and internal feuds—a country, too, whose unequal and mountainous surface, abounding in precipices and torrents, affords so many situations of strength, young Durward was sufficiently acquainted with all the various contrivances by which men, in that stern age, endeavoured to secure their dwellings; but he frankly owned to his companion, that he did not think it had been in the power of art to do so much for defence, where nature had done so little; for the situation, as we have hinted, was merely the summit of a gentle elevation ascending upwards from the place where they were standing.

To enhance his surprise, his companion told him that the environs of the Castle, except the single winding path by which the portal might be safely approached, were, like the thickets through which they had passed, surrounded with every species of hidden pitfall, snare, and gin, to entrap the wretch who should venture thither without a guide; that upon the walls were constructed certain cradles of iron, called swallows' nests, from which the sentinels, who were regularly posted there, could without being exposed to any risk, take deliberate aim at any who should attempt to enter without the proper signal or password of the day; and that the Archers of the Royal Guard performed that duty day and night, for which they received high pay, rich clothing, and much honour and profit at the hands of King Louis. "And now tell me, young man," he continued, "did you ever see so strong a fortress, and do you think there are men bold enough to storm it?"

The young man looked long and fixedly on the place, the sight of which interested him so much that he had forgotten, in the eagerness of youthful curiosity, the wetness of his dress. His eye glanced, and his colour mounted to his cheek like that of a daring man who meditates an honourable action, as he replied, "It is a strong castle, and strongly guarded; but there is no impossibility to brave men."

"Are there any in your country who could do such a feat?" said the elder, rather scornfully.

"I will not affirm that," answered the youth; "but there are thousands that, in a good cause, would attempt as bold a deed."

"Umph!" said the senior, "perhaps you are yourself such a gallant!"

"I should sin if I were to boast where there is no danger," answered young Durward; "but my father has done as bold an act, and I trust I am no bastard."

"Well," said his companion, smiling, "you might meet your match, and your kindred withal in the attempt; for the Scottish Archers of King Louis's Life Guards stand sentinels on yonder walls—three hundred gentlemen of the best blood in your country."

"And were I King Louis," said the youth, in reply, "I would trust my safety to the faith of the three hundred Scottish gentlemen, throw down my bounding walls to fill up the moat; call in my noble peers and paladins, and live as became me, amid breaking of lances in gallant tournaments, and feasting of days with nobles, and dancing of nights with ladies, and have no more fear of a foe than I have of a fly."

His companion again smiled, and turning his back on the Castle, which, he observed, they had approached a little too nearly, he led the way again into the wood by a more broad and beaten path than they had yet trodden. "This," he said, "leads us to the village of Plessis, as it is called, where you, as a stranger, will find reasonable and honest accommodation. About two miles onward lies the fine city of Tours, which gives name to this rich and beautiful earldom. But the village of Plessis, or Plessis of the Park as it is sometimes called, from its vicinity to the royal residence, and the chase with which it is encircled, will yield you nearer and as convenient hospitality."

"I thank you, kind master, for your information," said the Scot; "but my stay will be so short here, that, if I fail not in a morsel of meat, and a drink of something better than water, my necessities in Plessis, be it of the park or the pool, will be amply satisfied."

"Nay," answered his companion, "I thought you had some friend to see in this quarter."

"And so I have—my mother's own brother," answered Durward; "and as pretty a man, before he left the braes of Angus [hills and moors of Angus in Forfarshire, Scotland.], as ever planted brogue on heather."

"What is his name?" said the senior. "We will inquire him out for you; for it is not safe for you to go up to the Castle, where you might be taken for a spy."

"Now, by my father's hand!" said the youth, "I taken for a spy!—By Heaven, he shall brook cold iron that brands me with such a charge!—But for my uncle's name, I care not who knows it—it is Lesly. Lesly—an honest and noble name."

"And so it is, I doubt not," said the old man; "but there are three of the name in the Scottish Guard."

"My uncle's name is Ludovic Lesly," said the young man.

"Of the three Leslys," answered the merchant, "two are called Ludovic."

"They call my kinsman Ludovic with the Scar," said Quentin. "Our family names are so common in a Scottish house, that, where there is no land in the case, we always give a to-name [surname]."

"A nom de guerre [the war name; formerly taken by French soldiers on entering the service. Hence a fictitious name assumed for other purposes.], I suppose you to mean," answered his companion; "and the man you speak of, we, I think, call Le Balafre, from that scar on his face—a proper man, and a good soldier. I wish I may be able to help you to an interview with him, for he belongs to a set of gentlemen whose duty is strict, and who do not often come out of garrison, unless in the immediate attendance on the King's person.—And now, young man, answer me one question. I will wager you are desirous to take service with your uncle in the Scottish Guard. It is a great thing, if you propose so; especially as you are very young, and some years' experience is necessary for the high office which you aim at."

"Perhaps I may have thought on some such thing," said Durward, carelessly; "but if I did, the fancy is off."

"How so, young man?" said the Frenchman, something sternly, "Do you speak thus of a charge which the most noble of your countrymen feel themselves emulous to be admitted to?"

"I wish them joy of it," said Quentin, composedly. "To speak plain, I should have liked the service of the French King full well; only, dress me as fine and feed me as high as you will, I love the open air better than being shut up in a cage or a swallow's nest yonder, as you call these same grated pepper boxes. Besides," he added, in a lower voice, "to speak truth, I love not the Castle when the covin tree bears such acorns as I see yonder."

[The large tree in front of a Scottish castle was sometimes called so. It is difficult to trace the derivation; but at that distance from the castle the laird received guests of rank, and thither he conveyed them on their departure. S.]

"I guess what you mean," said the Frenchman; "but speak yet more plainly."

"To speak more plainly, then," said the youth, "there grows a fair oak some flight shot or so from yonder Castle—and on that oak hangs a man in a gray jerkin, such as this which I wear."

"Ay and indeed!" said the man of France—"Pasques dieu! see what it is to have youthful eyes! Why, I did see something, but only took it for a raven among the branches. But the sight is no ways strange, young man; when the summer fades into autumn, and moonlight nights are long, and roads become unsafe, you will see a cluster of ten, ay of twenty such acorns, hanging on that old doddered oak.—But what then?—they are so many banners displayed to scare knaves; and for

each rogue that hangs there, an honest man may reckon that there is a thief, a traitor, a robber on the highway, a piller and oppressor of the people the fewer in France. These, young man, are signs of our Sovereign's justice."

"I would have hung them farther from my palace, though, were I King Louis," said the youth. "In my country, we hang up dead corbies where living corbies haunt, but not in our gardens or pigeon houses. The very scent of the carrion—faugh—reached my nostrils at the distance where we stood."

"If you live to be an honest and loyal servant of your Prince, my good youth," answered the Frenchman, "you will know there is no perfume to match the scent of a dead traitor."

"I shall never wish to live till I lose the scent of my nostrils or the sight of my eyes," said the Scot. "Show me a living traitor, and here are my hand and my weapon; but when life is out, hatred should not live longer.—But here, I fancy, we come upon the village, where I hope to show you that neither ducking nor disgust have spoiled mine appetite for my breakfast. So my good friend, to the hostelrie, with all the speed you may.—Yet, ere I accept of your hospitality, let me know by what name to call you."

"Men call me Maitre Pierre," answered his companion. "I deal in no titles. A plain man, that can live on mine own good—that is my designation."

"So be it, Maitre Pierre," said Quentin, "and I am happy my good chance has thrown us together; for I want a word of seasonable advice, and can be thankful for it."

While they spoke thus, the tower of the church and a tall wooden crucifix, rising above the trees, showed that they were at the entrance of the village.

But Maitre Pierre, deflecting a little from the road, which had now joined an open and public causeway, said to his companion that the inn to which he intended to introduce him stood somewhat secluded, and received only the better sort of travellers.

"If you mean those who travel with the better filled purses," answered the Scot, "I am none of the number, and will rather stand my chance of your flayers on the highway, than of your flayers in the hostelrie."

"Pasques dieu!" said his guide, "how cautious your countrymen of Scotland are! An Englishman, now, throws himself headlong into a tavern, eats and drinks of the best, and never thinks of the reckoning till his belly is full. But you forget, Master Quentin, since Quentin is your name, you forget I owe you a breakfast for the wetting which my mistake procured you.—It is the penance of my offence towards you."

"In truth," said the light hearted young man, "I had forgot wetting, offence, and penance, and all. I have walked my clothes dry, or nearly so, but I will not refuse your offer in kindness; for my dinner yesterday was a light one, and supper I had none. You seem an old and respectable burgess, and I see no reason why I should not accept your courtesy."

The Frenchman smiled aside, for he saw plainly that the youth, while he was probably half famished, had yet some difficulty to reconcile himself to the thoughts of feeding at a stranger's cost, and was endeavouring to subdue his inward pride by the reflection, that, in such slight obligations, the acceptor performed as complaisant a part as he by whom the courtesy was offered.

In the meanwhile, they descended a narrow lane, overshadowed by tall elms, at the bottom of which a gateway admitted them into the courtyard of an inn of unusual magnitude, calculated for the accommodation of the nobles and suitors who had business at the neighbouring Castle, where very seldom, and only when such hospitality was altogether unavoidable, did Louis XI permit any of his court to have apartments. A scutcheon, bearing the fleur de lys, hung over the principal door of the large irregular building; but there was about the yard and the offices little or none of the bustle which in those days, when attendants were maintained both in public and in private houses, marked that business was alive, and custom plenty. It seemed as if the stern and unsocial character of the royal mansion in the neighbourhood had communicated a portion of its solemn and terrific gloom even to a place designed according to universal custom elsewhere, for the temple of social indulgence, merry society, and good cheer.

Maitre Pierre, without calling any one, and even without approaching the principal entrance, lifted the latch of a side door, and led the way into a large room, where a faggot was blazing on the hearth, and arrangements made for a substantial breakfast.

"My gossip has been careful," said the Frenchman to the Scot. "You must be cold, and I have commanded a fire; you must be hungry, and you shall have breakfast presently."

He whistled and the landlord entered—answered Maitre Pierre's bon jour with a reverence—but in no respect showed any part of the prating humour properly belonging to a French publican of all ages.

"I expected a gentleman," said Maitre Pierre, "to order breakfast—hath he done so?"

In answer the landlord only bowed; and while he continued to bring, and arrange upon the table, the various articles of a comfortable meal, omitted to extol their merits by a single word. And yet the breakfast merited such eulogiums as French hosts are wont to confer upon their regales, as the reader will be informed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: THE DEJEUNER

Sacred heaven! what masticators! what bread!

YORICK'S TRAVELS

We left our young stranger in France situated more comfortably than he had found himself since entering the territories of the ancient Gauls. The breakfast, as we hinted in the conclusion of the last chapter, was admirable. There was a pate de Perigord, over which a gastronome would have wished to live and die, like Homer's lotus eaters [see the Odyssey, chap. ix, where Odysseus arrives at the land of the Lotus eaters: "whosoever of them ate the lotus's honeyed fruit resolved to bring tidings back no more and never to leave the place, but with the Lotus eaters there desired to stay, to feed on lotus and forget his going home." Palmer's Translation.], forgetful of kin, native country, and all social obligations whatever. Its vast walls of magnificent crust seemed raised like the bulwarks of some rich metropolitan city, an emblem of the wealth which they are designed to protect. There was a delicate ragout, with just that petit point de l'ail [a little flavor of garlic. The French is ungrammatical.] which Gascons love, and Scottishmen do not hate. There was, besides, a delicate ham, which had once supported a noble wild boar in the neighbouring wood of Mountrichart. There was the most exquisite white bread, made into little round loaves called boules (whence the bakers took their French name of boulangers), of which the crust was so inviting, that, even with water alone, it would have been a delicacy. But the water was not alone, for there was a flask of leather called bottrine, which contained about a quart of exquisite Vin de Beaulne. So many good things might have created appetite under the ribs of death. What effect, then, must they have produced upon a youngster of scarce twenty, who (for the truth must be told) had eaten little for the two last days, save the scarcely ripe fruit which chance afforded him an opportunity of plucking, and a very moderate portion of barley bread? He threw himself upon the ragout, and the plate was presently vacant—he attacked the mighty pasty, marched deep into the bowels of the land, and seasoning his enormous meal with an occasional cup of wine, returned to the charge again and again, to the astonishment of mine host, and the amusement of Maitre Pierre.

The latter indeed, probably because he found himself the author of a kinder action than he had thought of, seemed delighted with the appetite of the young Scot; and when, at length, he observed that his exertions began to languish, endeavoured to stimulate him to new efforts by ordering confections, darioles [cream cakes], and any other light dainties he could think of, to entice the youth to continue his meal. While thus engaged, Maitre Pierre's countenance expressed a kind of good humour almost amounting to benevolence, which appeared remote from its ordinary sharp, caustic, and severe character. The aged almost always sympathize with the enjoyments of youth and with its exertions of every kind, when the mind of the spectator rests on its natural poise and is not disturbed by inward envy or idle emulation.

Quentin Durward also, while thus agreeably employed, could do no otherwise than discover that the countenance of his entertainer, which he had at first found so unprepossessing, mended when it was seen under the influence of the Vin de Beaulne, and there was kindness in the tone with which he reproached Maitre Pierre, that he amused himself with laughing at his appetite, without eating anything himself.

"I am doing penance," said Maitre Pierre, "and may not eat anything before noon, save some comfiture and a cup of water.—Bid yonder lady," he added, turning to the innkeeper, "bring them hither to me."

The innkeeper left the room, and Maitre Pierre proceeded, "Well, have I kept faith with you concerning the breakfast I promised you?"

"The best meal I have eaten," said the youth, "since I left Glen Houlakin."

"Glen—what?" demanded Maitre Pierre. "Are you going to raise the devil, that you use such long tailed words?"

"Glen Houlakin," answered Quentin good humouredly, "which is to say the Glen of the Midges, is the name of our ancient patrimony, my good sir. You have bought the right to laugh at the sound, if you please."

"I have not the least intention to offend," said the old man; "but I was about to say, since you like your present meal so well, that the Scottish Archers of the guard eat as good a one, or a better, every day."

"No wonder," said Durward; "for if they be shut up in the swallows' nests all night, they must needs have a curious appetite in the morning."

"And plenty to gratify it upon," said Maitre Pierre. "They need not, like the Burgundians, choose a bare back, that they may have a full belly—they dress like counts, and feast like abbots."

"It is well for them," said Durward.

"And wherefore will you not take service here, young man? Your uncle might, I dare say, have you placed on the file when there should a vacancy occur. And, hark in your ear, I myself have some little interest, and might be of some use to you. You can ride, I presume, as well as draw the bow?"

"Our race are as good horsemen as ever put a plated shoe into a steel stirrup; and I know not but I might accept of your kind offer. Yet, look you, food and raiment are needful things, but, in my case, men think of honour, and advancement, and brave deeds of arms. Your King Louis—God bless him, for he is a friend and ally of Scotland—but he lies here in this castle, or only rides about from one fortified town to another; and gains cities and provinces by politic embassies, and not in fair fighting. Now, for me, I am of the Douglasses' mind, who always kept the fields, because they loved better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak."

"Young man," said Maitre Pierre, "do not judge too rashly of the actions of sovereigns. Louis seeks to spare the blood of his subjects, and cares not for his own. He showed himself a man of courage at Mont'lhery."

"Ay, but that was some dozen years ago or more," answered the youth—"I should like to follow a master that would keep his honour as bright as his shield, and always venture foremost in the very throng of the battle."

"Why did you not tarry at Brussels, then, with the Duke of Burgundy? He would put you in the way to have your bones broken every day; and, rather than fail, would do the job for you himself—especially if he heard that you had beaten his forester."

"Very true," said Quentin; "my unhappy chance has shut that door against me."

"Nay, there are plenty of daredevils abroad, with whom mad youngsters may find service," said his adviser. "What think you, for example, of William de la Marck?"

"What!" exclaimed Durward, "serve Him with the Beard—serve the Wild Boar of Ardennes—a captain of pillagers and murderers, who would take a man's life for the value of his gaberdine, and who slays priests and pilgrims as if they were so many lance knights and men at arms? It would be a blot on my father's scutcheon for ever."

"Well, my young hot blood," replied Maitre Pierre, "if you hold the Sanglier [Wild Boar] too unscrupulous, wherefore not follow the young Duke of Gueldres?"

[Adolphus, son of Arnold and of Catherine de Bourbon.... He made war against his father; in which unnatural strife he made the old man prisoner, and used him with the most brutal violence, proceeding, it is said, even to the length of striking him with his hand. Arnold, in resentment of this usage, disinherited the unprincipled wretch, and sold to Charles of Burgundy whatever rights he had over the duchy of Gueldres and earldom of Zutphen.... S.]

"Follow the foul fiend as soon," said Quentin. "Hark in your ear—he is a burden too heavy for earth to carry—hell gapes for him! Men say that he keeps his own father imprisoned, and that he has even struck him—can you believe it?"

Maitre Pierre seemed somewhat disconcerted with the naive horror with which the young Scotsman spoke of filial ingratitude, and he answered, "You know not, young man, how short a while the relations of blood subsist amongst those of elevated rank;" then changed the tone of feeling in which he had begun to speak, and added, gaily, "besides, if the Duke has beaten his father, I warrant you his father hath beaten him of old, so it is but a clearing of scores."

"I marvel to hear you speak thus," said the Scot, colouring with indignation; "gray hairs such as yours ought to have fitter subjects for jesting. If the old Duke did beat his son in childhood, he beat him not enough; for better he had died under the rod, than have lived to make the Christian world ashamed that such a monster had ever been baptized."

"At this rate," said Maitre Pierre, "as you weigh the characters of each prince and leader, I think you had better become a captain yourself; for where will one so wise find a chieftain fit to command him?"

"You laugh at me, Maitre Pierre," said the youth, good humouredly, "and perhaps you are right; but you have not named a man who is a gallant leader, and keeps a brave party up here, under whom a man might seek service well enough."

"I cannot guess whom you mean."

"Why, he that hangs like Mahomet's coffin [there is a tradition that Mahomet's coffin is suspended in mid air Without any support, the most generally accepted explanation being that the coffin is of iron and is placed between two magnets] (a curse be upon Mahomet!) between the two loadstones—he that no man can call either French or Burgundian, but who knows to hold the balance between them both, and makes both of them fear and serve him, for as great princes as they be."

"I cannot guess whom you mean," said Maitre Pierre, thoughtfully.

"Why, whom should I mean but the noble Louis de Luxembourg, Count of Saint Paul, the High Constable of France? Yonder he makes his place good with his gallant little army, holding his head as high as either King Louis or Duke Charles, and balancing between them like the boy who stands on the midst of a plank, while two others are swinging on the opposite ends."

[This part of Louis XI's reign was much embarrassed by the intrigues of the Constable Saint Paul, who affected independence, and carried on intrigues with England, France, and Burgundy at the same time. According to the usual fate of such variable politicians, the Constable ended by drawing upon himself the animosity of all the powerful neighbours whom he had in their turn amused and deceived. He was delivered up by the Duke of Burgundy to the King of France, tried, and hastily executed for treason, A. D. 1475. S.]

"He is in danger of the worst fall of the three," said Maitre Pierre. "And hark ye, my young friend, you who hold pillaging such a crime, do you know that your politic Count of Saint Paul was the first who set the example of burning the country during the time of war? and that before the shameful devastation which he committed, open towns and villages, which made no resistance, were spared on all sides?"

"Nay, faith," said Durward, "if that be the case, I shall begin to think no one of these great men is much better than another, and that a choice among them is but like choosing a tree to be hung upon. But this Count de Saint Paul, this Constable, hath possessed himself by clean conveyance of the town which takes its name from my honoured saint and patron, Saint Quentin" [it was by his possession of this town of Saint Quentin that the Constable was able to carry on those political intrigues which finally cost him so dear. S.] (here he crossed himself), "and methinks were I dwelling there, my holy patron would keep some look out for me—he has not so many named after him as your more popular saints—and yet he must have forgotten me, poor Quentin Durward, his spiritual godson, since he lets me go one day without food, and leaves me the next morning to the harbourage of Saint Julian, and the chance courtesy of a stranger, purchased by a ducking in the renowned river Cher, or one of its tributaries."

"Blaspheme not the saints, my young friend," said Maitre Pierre. "Saint Julian is the faithful patron of travellers; and, peradventure, the blessed Saint Quentin hath done more and better for thee than thou art aware of."

As he spoke, the door opened, and a girl rather above than under fifteen years old, entered with a platter, covered with damask, on which was placed a small saucer of the dried plums which have always added to the reputation of Tours, and a cup of the curiously chased plate which the goldsmiths of that city were anciently famous for executing with a delicacy of workmanship that distinguished them from the other cities of France, and even excelled the skill of the metropolis. The form of the goblet was so elegant that Durward thought not of observing closely whether the material was of silver, or like what had been placed before himself, of a baser metal, but so well burnished as to resemble the richer ore.

But the sight of the young person by whom this service was executed attracted Durward's attention far more than the petty minutiae of the duty which she performed.

He speedily made the discovery that a quantity of long black tresses, which, in the maiden fashion of his own country, were unadorned by any ornament, except a single chaplet lightly woven out of ivy leaves, formed a veil around a countenance which, in its regular features, dark eyes, and pensive expression, resembled that of Melpomene [the Muse of tragedy], though there was a faint glow on the cheek, and an intelligence on the lips and in the eye, which made it seem that gaiety was not foreign to a countenance so expressive, although it might not be its most habitual expression. Quentin even thought he could discern that depressing circumstances were the cause why a countenance so young and so lovely was graver than belongs to early beauty; and as the romantic imagination of youth is rapid in drawing conclusions from slight premises, he was pleased to infer, from what follows, that the fate of this beautiful vision was wrapped in silence and mystery.

"How now, Jacqueline?" said Maitre Pierre, when she entered the apartment. "Wherefore this? Did I not desire that Dame Perette should bring what I wanted?—Pasques dieu!—Is she, or does she think herself, too good to serve me?"

"My kinswoman is ill at ease," answered Jacqueline, in a hurried yet a humble tone,—"ill at ease, and keeps her chamber."

"She keeps it alone, I hope!" replied Maitre Pierre, with some emphasis; "I am vieux routier [one who is experienced in the ways of the world], and none of those upon whom feigned disorders pass for apologies."

Jacqueline turned pale, and even tottered at the answer of Maitre Pierre; for it must be owned that his voice and looks, at all times harsh, caustic, and unpleasing, had, when he expressed anger or suspicion, an effect both sinister and alarming.

The mountain chivalry of Quentin Durward was instantly awakened, and he hastened to approach Jacqueline and relieve her of the burden she bore, and which she passively resigned to him, while, with a timid and anxious look, she watched the countenance of the angry burgess. It was not in nature to resist the piercing and pity craving expression of her looks, and Maitre Pierre proceeded, not merely with an air of diminished displeasure, but with as much gentleness as he could assume in countenance and manner, "I blame not thee, Jacqueline, and thou art too young to be, what it is pity to think thou must be one day—a false and treacherous thing, like the rest of thy giddy sex. No man ever lived to man's estate, but he had the opportunity to know you all [he (Louis) entertained great contempt for the understanding, and not less for the character, of the fair sex. S.]. Here is a Scottish cavalier will tell you the same."

Jacqueline looked for an instant on the young stranger, as if to obey Maitre Pierre, but the glance, momentary as it was, appeared to Durward a pathetic appeal to him for support and sympathy; and with the promptitude dictated by the feelings of youth, and the romantic veneration for the female sex inspired by his education, he answered hastily that he would throw down his gage to any antagonist, of equal rank and equal age, who should presume to say such a countenance as that which he now looked upon, could be animated by other than the purest and the truest mind.

The young woman grew deadly pale, and cast an apprehensive glance upon Maitre Pierre, in whom the bravado of the young gallant seemed only to excite laughter, more scornful than applause. Quentin, whose second thoughts generally corrected the first, though sometimes after they had found utterance, blushed deeply at having uttered what might be construed into an empty boast in presence of an old man of a peaceful profession; and as a sort of just and appropriate penance, resolved patiently to submit to the ridicule which he had incurred. He offered the cup and trencher to Maitre Pierre with a blush in his cheek, and a humiliation of countenance which endeavoured to disguise itself under an embarrassed smile.

"You are a foolish young man," said Maitre Pierre, "and know as little of women as of princes,—whose hearts," he said, crossing himself devoutly, "God keeps in his right hand."

"And who keeps those of the women, then?" said Quentin, resolved, if he could help it, not to be borne down by the assumed superiority of this extraordinary old man, whose lofty and careless manner possessed an influence over him of which he felt ashamed.

"I am afraid you must ask of them in another quarter," said Maitre Pierre, composedly.

Quentin was again rebuffed, but not utterly disconcerted. "Surely," he said to himself, "I do not pay this same burgess of Tours all the deference which I yield him, on account of the miserable obligation of a breakfast, though it was a right good and substantial meal. Dogs and hawks are attached by feeding only—man must have kindness, if you would bind him with the cords of affection and obligation. But he is an extraordinary person; and that beautiful emanation that is even now vanishing—surely a thing so fair belongs not to this mean place, belongs not even to the money gathering merchant himself, though he seems to exert authority over her, as doubtless he does over all whom chance brings within his little circle. It is wonderful what ideas of consequence these Flemings and Frenchmen attach to wealth—so much more than wealth deserves, that I suppose this old merchant thinks the civility I pay to his age is given to his money. I a Scottish gentleman of blood and coat armour, and he a mechanic of Tours!"

Such were the thoughts which hastily traversed the mind of young Durward; while Maitre Pierre said with a smile, and at the same time patting Jacqueline's heed, from which hung down her long tresses, "This young man will serve me, Jacqueline, thou mayst withdraw. I will tell thy negligent kinswoman she does ill to expose thee to be gazed on unnecessarily."

"It was only to wait on you," said the maiden. "I trust you will not be displeased with my kinswoman, since"—

"Pasques dieu!" said the merchant, interrupting her, but not harshly, "do you bandy words with me, you brat, or stay you to gaze upon the youngster here?—Begone—he is noble, and his services will suffice me."

Jacqueline vanished; and so much was Quentin Durward interested in her sudden disappearance that it broke his previous thread of reflection, and he complied mechanically when Maitre Pierre said, in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed, as he threw himself carelessly upon a large easy chair, "Place that tray beside me."

The merchant then let his dark eyebrows sink over his keen eyes so that the last became scarce visible, or but shot forth occasionally a quick and vivid ray, like those of the sun setting behind a dark cloud, through which its beams are occasionally darted, but singly and for an instant.

"That is a beautiful creature," said the old man at last, raising his head, and looking steadily and firmly at Quentin, when he put the question,— "a lovely girl to be the servant of an auberge [an inn]? She might grace the board of an honest burgess; but 'tis a vile education, a base origin."

It sometimes happens that a chance shot will demolish a noble castle in the air, and the architect on such occasions entertains little goodwill towards him who fires it, although the damage on the offender's part may be wholly unintentional. Quentin was disconcerted, and was disposed to be angry—he himself knew not why—with this old man, for acquainting him that this beautiful creature was neither more nor less than what her occupation announced; the servant of the auberge—an upper servant, indeed, and probably a niece of the landlord, or such like; but still a domestic, and obliged to comply with the humour of the customers, and particularly of Maitre Pierre, who probably had sufficiency of whims, and was rich enough to ensure their being attended to.

The thought, the lingering thought, again returned on him, that he ought to make the old gentleman understand the difference betwixt their conditions, and call on him to mark, that, how rich soever he might be, his wealth put him on no level with a Durward of Glen Houlakin. Yet, whenever he looked on Maitre Pierre's countenance with such a purpose, there was, notwithstanding the downcast look, pinched features, and mean and miserly dress, something which prevented the young man from asserting the superiority over the merchant which he conceived himself to possess. On the contrary, the oftener and more fixedly Quentin looked

at him, the stronger became his curiosity to know who or what this man actually was; and he set him down internally for at least a Syndic or high magistrate of Tours, or one who was, in some way or other, in the full habit of exacting and receiving deference. Meantime, the merchant seemed again sunk into a reverie, from which he raised himself only to make the sign of the cross devoutly, and to eat some of the dried fruit, with a morsel of biscuit. He then signed to Quentin to give him the cup, adding, however, by way of question, as he presented it, "You are noble, you say?"

"I surely am," replied the Scot, "if fifteen descents can make me so—so I told you before. But do not constrain yourself on that account, Maitre Pierre—I have always been taught it is the duty of the young to assist the more aged."

"An excellent maxim," said the merchant, availing himself of the youth's assistance in handing the cup, and filling it from a ewer which seemed of the same materials with the goblet, without any of those scruples in point of propriety which, perhaps, Quentin had expected to excite.

"The devil take the ease and familiarity of this old mechanical burgher!" said Durward once more to himself. "He uses the attendance of a noble Scottish gentleman with as little ceremony as I would that of a gillie from Glen Isla."

The merchant, in the meanwhile, having finished his cup of water, said to his companion, "From the zeal with which you seem to relish the Vin de Beaulne, I fancy you would not care much to pledge me in this elemental liquor. But I have an elixir about me which can convert even the rock water into the richest wines of France."

As he spoke, he took a large purse from his bosom, made of the fur of the sea otter, and streamed a shower of small silver pieces into the goblet, until the cup, which was but a small one, was more than half full.

"You have reason to be more thankful, young man," said Maitre Pierre, "both to your patron Saint Quentin and to Saint Julian, than you seemed to be but now. I would advise you to bestow alms in their name. Remain in this hostelry until you see your kinsman, Le Balafre, who will be relieved from guard in the afternoon. I will cause him to be acquainted that he may find you here, for I have business in the Castle."

Quentin Durward would have said something to have excused himself from accepting the profuse liberality of his new friend; but Maitre Pierre, bending his dark brows, and erecting his stooping figure into an attitude of more dignity than he had yet seen him assume, said in a tone of authority, "No reply, young man, but do what you are commanded."

With these words he left the apartment, making a sign, as he departed, that Quentin must not follow him.

The young Scotsman stood astounded, and knew not what to think of the matter. His first most natural, though perhaps not most dignified impulse, drove him to peer into the silver goblet, which assuredly was more than half full of silver pieces to the number of several scores, of which perhaps Quentin had never called twenty his own at one time during the course of his whole life. But could he reconcile it to his dignity as a gentleman, to accept the money of this wealthy plebeian?—This was a trying question; for, though he had secured a good breakfast, it was no great reserve upon which to travel either back to Dijon, in case he chose to hazard the wrath and enter the service of the Duke of Burgundy, or to Saint Quentin, if he fixed on that of the Constable Saint Paul; for to one of those powers, if not to the king of France, he was determined to offer his services. He perhaps took the wisest resolution in the circumstances, in resolving to be guided by the advice of his uncle; and, in the meantime, he put the money into his velvet hawking pouch, and called for the landlord of the house, in order to restore the silver cup—resolving, at the same time, to ask him some questions about this liberal and authoritative merchant.

The man of the house appeared presently; and, if not more communicative, was at least more loquacious, than he had been formerly. He positively declined to take back the silver cup. It was none of his, he said, but Maitre Pierre's, who had bestowed it on his guest. He had, indeed, four silver hanaps of his own, which had been left him by his grandmother, of happy memory, but no more like the beautiful carving of that in his guest's hand, than a peach was like a turnip—that was one of the famous cups of Tours, wrought by Martin Dominique, an artist who might brag all Paris.

"And, pray, who is this Maitre Pierre," said Durward, interrupting him, "who confers such valuable gifts on strangers?"

"Who is Maitre Pierre?" said the host, dropping the words as slowly from his mouth as if he had been distilling them.

"Ay," said Durward, hastily and peremptorily, "who is this Maitre Pierre, and why does he throw about his bounties in this fashion? And who is the butcherly looking fellow whom he sent forward to order breakfast?"

"Why, fair sir, as to who Maitre Pierre is, you should have asked the question of himself; and for the gentleman who ordered breakfast to be made ready, may God keep us from his closer acquaintance!"

"There is something mysterious in all this," said the young Scot. "This Maitre Pierre tells me he is a merchant."

"And if he told you so," said the innkeeper, "surely he is a merchant."

"What commodities does he deal in?"

"Oh, many a fair matter of traffic," said the host; "and especially he has set up silk manufactories here which match those rich bales that the Venetians bring from India and Cathay. You might see the rows of mulberry trees as you came hither, all planted by Maitre Pierre's command, to feed the silk worms."

"And that young person who brought in the confections, who is she, my good friend?" said the guest.

"My lodger, sir, with her guardian, some sort of aunt or kinswoman, as I think," replied the innkeeper.

"And do you usually employ your guests in waiting on each other?" said Durward; "for I observed that Maitre Pierre would take nothing from your hand, or that of your attendant."

"Rich men may have their fancies, for they can pay for them," said the landlord; "this is not the first time Maitre Pierre has found the true way to make gentlefolks serve at his beck."

The young Scotsman felt somewhat offended at the insinuation; but, disguising his resentment, he asked whether he could be accommodated with an apartment at this place for a day, and perhaps longer.

"Certainly," the innkeeper replied; "for whatever time he was pleased to command it."

"Could he be permitted," he asked, "to pay his respects to the ladies, whose fellow lodger he was about to become?"

The innkeeper was uncertain. "They went not abroad," he said, "and received no one at home."

"With the exception, I presume, of Maitre Pierre?" said Durward.

"I am not at liberty to name any exceptions," answered the man, firmly but respectfully.

Quentin, who carried the notions of his own importance pretty high, considering how destitute he was of means to support them, being somewhat mortified by the innkeeper's reply, did not hesitate to avail himself of a practice common enough in that age. "Carry to the ladies," he said, "a flask of vernat, with my humble duty; and say that Quentin Durward, of the house of Glen Houlakin, a Scottish cavalier of honour, and now their fellow lodger, desires the permission to dedicate his homage to them in a personal interview."

The messenger departed, and returned, almost instantly, with the thanks of the ladies, who declined the proffered refreshment, and, with their acknowledgments to the Scottish cavalier, regretted that, residing there in privacy, they could not receive his visit.

Quentin bit his lip, took a cup of the rejected vernat, which the host had placed on the table. "By the mass, but this is a strange country," said he to himself, "where merchants and mechanics exercise the manners and munificence of nobles, and little travelling damsels, who hold their court in a cabaret [a public house], keep their state like disguised princesses! I will see that black browed maiden again, or it will go hard, however;" and having formed this prudent resolution, he demanded to be conducted to the apartment which he was to call his own.

The landlord presently ushered him up a turret staircase, and from thence along a gallery, with many doors opening from it, like those of cells in a convent; a resemblance which our young hero, who recollected, with much ennui, an early specimen of a monastic life, was far from admiring. The host paused at the very end of the gallery, selected a key from the large bunch which he carried at his girdle, opened the door, and showed his guest the interior of a turret chamber;

small, indeed, but which, being clean and solitary, and having the pallet bed and the few articles of furniture, in unusually good order, seemed, on the whole, a little palace.

"I hope you will find your dwelling agreeable here, fair sir," said the landlord. "I am bound to pleasure every friend of Maitre Pierre."

"Oh, happy ducking!" exclaimed Quentin Durward, cutting a caper on the floor, so soon as his host had retired: "Never came good luck in a better or a wetter form. I have been fairly deluged by my good fortune."

As he spoke thus, he stepped towards the little window, which, as the turret projected considerably from the principal line of the building, not only commanded a very pretty garden of some extent, belonging to the inn, but overlooked, beyond its boundary, a pleasant grove of those very mulberry trees which Maitre Pierre was said to have planted for the support of the silk worm. Besides, turning the eye from these more remote objects, and looking straight along the wall, the turret of Quentin was opposite to another turret, and the little window at which he stood commanded a similar little window in a corresponding projection of the building. Now, it would be difficult for a man twenty years older than Quentin to say why this locality interested him more than either the pleasant garden or the grove of mulberry trees; for, alas! eyes which have been used for forty years and upwards, look with indifference on little turret windows, though the lattice be half open to admit the air, while the shutter is half closed to exclude the sun, or perhaps a too curious eye—nay, even though there hang on the one side of the casement a lute, partly mantled by a light veil of sea green silk. But, at Durward's happy age, such accidents, as a painter would call them, form sufficient foundation for a hundred airy visions and mysterious conjectures, at recollection of which the full grown man smiles while he sighs, and sighs while he smiles.

As it may be supposed that our friend Quentin wished to learn a little more of his fair neighbour, the owner of the lute and veil—as it may be supposed he was at least interested to know whether she might not prove the same whom he had seen in humble attendance on Maitre Pierre, it must of course be understood that he did not produce a broad staring visage and person in full front of his own casement. Durward knew better the art of bird catching; and it was to his keeping his person skilfully withdrawn on one side of his window; while he peeped through the lattice, that he owed the pleasure of seeing a white, round, beautiful arm take down the instrument, and that his ears had presently after their share in the reward of his dexterous management.

The maid of the little turret, of the veil, and of the lute sang exactly such an air as we are accustomed to suppose flowed from the lips of the high born dames of chivalry, when knights and troubadours listened and languished. The words had neither so much sense, wit, or fancy as to withdraw the attention from the music, nor the music so much of art as to drown all feeling of the words. The one seemed fitted to the other; and if the song had been recited without the notes, or the air played without the words, neither would have been worth noting. It is; therefore, scarcely fair to put upon record lines intended not to be said or read, but only to be sung. But such scraps of old poetry have always had a sort of fascination for us; and as the tune is lost for ever unless Bishop [Sir Henry Rowley, an English composer and professor of music at Oxford in 1848. Among his most popular operas are Guy Mannering and The Knight of Snowdon] happens to find the notes, or some lark teaches Stephens [Catherine (1794-1882): a vocalist and actress who created Susanna in the Marriage of Figaro, and various parts in adaptation of Scott.] to warble the air—we will risk our credit, and the taste of the Lady of the Lute, by preserving the verses, simple and even rude as they are:

*Ah! County Guy, the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea,
The orange flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark, his lay who thrill'd all day,
Sits hush'd his partner nigh;
Breeze, bird, and flower confess the hour,
But where is County Guy?*

*The village maid steals through the shade,
Her shepherd's suit to hear;
To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high born Cavalier.
The star of Love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky;
And high and low the influence know
—But where is County Guy?*

Whatever the reader may think of this simple ditty, it had a powerful effect on Quentin, when married to heavenly airs, and sung by a sweet and melting voice, the notes mingling with the gentle breezes which wafted perfumes from the garden, and the figure of the songstress being so partially and obscurely visible as threw a veil of mysterious fascination over the whole.

At the close of the air, the listener could not help showing himself more boldly than he had yet done, in a rash attempt to see more than he had yet been able to discover. The music instantly ceased—the casement was closed, and a dark curtain, dropped on the inside, put a stop to all farther observation on the part of the neighbour in the next turret.

Durward was mortified and surprised at the consequence of his precipitance, but comforted himself with the hope that the Lady of the Lute could neither easily forego the practice of an instrument which seemed so familiar to her, nor cruelly resolve to renounce the pleasures of fresh air and an open window for the churlish purpose of preserving for her own exclusive ear the sweet sounds which she created. There came, perhaps, a little feeling of personal vanity to mingle with these consolatory reflections. If, as he shrewdly suspected, there was a beautiful dark tressed damsel inhabitant of the one turret, he could not but be conscious that a handsome, young, roving, bright locked gallant, a cavalier of fortune, was the tenant of the other; and romances, those prudent instructors, had taught his youth that if damsels were shy, they were yet neither void of interest nor of curiosity in their neighbours' affairs.

Whilst Quentin was engaged in these sage reflections, a sort of attendant or chamberlain of the inn informed him that a cavalier desired to speak with him below.

CHAPTER V: THE MAN AT ARMS

*Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.*

AS YOU LIKE IT

The cavalier who awaited Quentin Durward's descent into the apartment where he had breakfasted, was one of those of whom Louis XI had long since said that they held in their hands the fortune of France, as to them were intrusted the direct custody and protection of the royal person.

Charles the Sixth had instituted this celebrated body, the Archers, as they were called, of the Scottish Bodyguard, with better reason than can generally be alleged for establishing round the throne a guard of foreign and mercenary troops. The divisions which tore from his side more than half of France, together with the wavering and uncertain faith of the nobility who yet acknowledged his cause, rendered it impolitic and unsafe to commit his personal safety to their keeping. The Scottish nation was the hereditary enemy of the English, and the ancient, and, as it seemed, the natural allies of France. They were poor, courageous, faithful;

their ranks were sure to be supplied from the superabundant population of their own country, than which none in Europe sent forth more or bolder adventurers. Their high claims of descent, too, gave them a good title to approach the person of a monarch more closely than other troops, while the comparative smallness of their numbers prevented the possibility of their mutinying, and becoming masters where they ought to be servants.

On the other hand, the French monarchs made it their policy to conciliate the affections of this select band of foreigners, by allowing them honorary privileges and ample pay, which last most of them disposed of with military profusion in supporting their supposed rank. Each of them ranked as a gentleman in place and honour; and their near approach to the King's person gave them dignity in their own eyes, as well as importance in those of the nation of France. They were sumptuously armed, equipped, and mounted; and each was entitled to allowance for a squire, a valet, a page; and two yeomen, one of whom was termed *coutelier*, from the large knife which he wore to dispatch those whom in the melee his master had thrown to the ground. With these followers, and a corresponding equipage, an Archer of the Scottish Guard was a person of quality and importance; and vacancies being generally filled up by those who had been trained in the service as pages or valets, the cadets of the best Scottish families were often sent to serve under some friend and relation in those capacities, until a chance of preferment should occur.

The *coutelier* and his companion, not being noble or capable of this promotion, were recruited from persons of inferior quality; but as their pay and appointments were excellent, their masters were easily able to select from among their wandering countrymen the strongest and most courageous to wait upon them in these capacities.

Ludovic Lesly, or as we shall more frequently call him, Le Balafre, by which name he was generally known in France, was upwards of six feet high, robust, strongly compacted in person, and hard favoured in countenance, which latter attribute was much increased by a large and ghastly scar, which, beginning on his forehead, and narrowly missing his right eye, had laid bare the cheek bone, and descended from thence almost to the tip of his ear, exhibiting a deep seam, which was sometimes scarlet, sometimes purple, sometimes blue, and sometimes approaching to black; but always hideous, because at variance with the complexion of the face in whatever state it chanced to be, whether agitated or still, flushed with unusual passion, or in its ordinary state of weather-beaten and sunburnt swarthinness.

His dress and arms were splendid. He wore his national bonnet, crested with a tuft of feathers, and with a Virgin Mary of massive silver for a brooch. These brooches had been presented to the Scottish Guard, in consequence of the King, in one of his fits of superstitious piety, having devoted the swords of his guard to the service of the Holy Virgin, and, as some say, carried the matter so far as to draw out a commission to Our Lady as their Captain General. The Archer's gorget, arm pieces, and gauntlets, were of the finest steel, curiously inlaid with silver, and his hauberk, or shirt of mail, was as clear and bright as the frostwork of a winter morning upon fern or brier. He wore a loose surcoat or cassock of rich blue velvet, open at the sides like that of a herald, with a large white St. Andrew's cross of embroidered silver bisecting it both before and behind; his knees and legs were protected by hose of mail and shoes of steel; a broad, strong poniard (called the Mercy of God), hung by his right side; the baldric for his two handed sword, richly embroidered, hung upon his left shoulder; but for convenience he at present carried in his hand that unwieldy weapon which the rules of his service forbade him to lay aside.

[St. Andrew was the first called to apostleship. He made many converts to Christianity and was finally crucified on a cross of peculiar form, which has since been called the St. Andrew's cross. Certain of his relics were brought to Scotland in the fourth century, and he has since that time been honoured as the patron saint of that country. He is also the patron saint of the Burgundian Order, the Golden Fleece.]

Quentin Durward—though, like the Scottish youth of the period, he had been early taught to look upon arms and war—thought he had never seen a more martial looking, or more completely equipped and accomplished man at arms than now saluted him in the person of his mother's brother, called Ludovic with the Scar, or Le Balafre; yet he could not but shrink a little from the grim expression of his countenance, while, with its rough moustaches, he brushed first the one and then the other cheek of his kinsman, welcomed his nephew to France, and, in the same breath, asked what news from Scotland.

"Little good tidings, dear uncle," replied young Durward; "but I am glad that you know me so readily."

"I would have known thee, boy, in the landes of Bourdeaux, had I met thee marching there like a crane on a pair of stilts [the crutches or stilts which in Scotland are used to pass rivers. They are employed by the peasantry of the country near Bordeaux to traverse those deserts of loose sand called Landes. S]. But sit thee down—sit thee down—if there is sorrow to hear of, we will have wine to make us bear it.—Ho! old Pinch Measure, our good host, bring us of thy best, and that in an instant."

The well known sound of the Scottish French was as familiar in the taverns near Plessis as that of the Swiss French in the modern *guinguettes* [common inns] of Paris; and promptly—ay, with the promptitude of fear and precipitation, was it heard and obeyed. A flagon of champagne stood before them, of which the elder took a draught, while the nephew helped himself only to a moderate sip to acknowledge his uncle's courtesy, saying, in excuse, that he had already drunk wine that morning.

"That had been a rare good apology in the mouth of thy sister, fair nephew," said Le Balafre; "you must fear the wine pot less, if you would wear beard on your face, and write yourself soldier. But, come—come—unbuckle your Scottish mail bag—give us the news of Glen Houlakin—How doth my sister?"

"Dead, fair uncle," answered Quentin, sorrowfully.

"Dead!" echoed his uncle, with a tone rather marked by wonder than sympathy,—"*why*, she was five years younger than I, and I was never better in my life. Dead! the thing is impossible. I have never had so much as a headache, unless after revelling out of my two or three days' furlough with the brethren of the joyous science—and my poor sister is dead—And your father, fair nephew, hath he married again?"

And, ere the youth could reply, he read the answer in his surprise at the question, and said, "What! no—I would have sworn that Allan Durward was no man to live without a wife. He loved to have his house in order—loved to look on a pretty woman too; and was somewhat strict in life withal—matrimony did all this for him. Now, I care little about these comforts, and I can look on a pretty woman without thinking on the sacrament of wedlock—I am scarce holy enough for that."

"Alas! dear uncle, my mother was left a widow a year since, when Glen Houlakin was harried by the Ogilvies. My father, and my two uncles, and my two elder brothers, and seven of my kinsmen, and the harper, and the tasker, and some six more of our people, were killed in defending the castle, and there is not a burning hearth or a standing stone in all Glen Houlakin."

"Cross of Saint Andrew!" said Le Balafre; "that is what I call an onslaught! Ay, these Ogilvies were ever but sorry neighbours to Glen Houlakin—an evil chance it was; but fate of war—fate of war.—When did this mishap befall, fair nephew?" With that he took a deep draught of wine, and shook his head with much solemnity, when his kinsman replied that his family had been destroyed upon the festival of Saint Jude [October 28] last bypast.

"Look ye there," said the soldier; "I said it was all chance—on that very day I and twenty of my comrades carried the Castle of Roche Noir by storm, from Amaury Bras de fer, a captain of free lances, whom you must have heard of. I killed him on his own threshold, and gained as much gold as made this fair chain, which was once twice as long as it now is—and that minds me to send part of it on an holy errand.—Here, Andrew—Andrew!"

Andrew, his yeoman, entered, dressed like the Archer himself in the general equipment, but without the armour for the limbs—that of the body more coarsely manufactured—his cap without a plume, and his cassock made of serge, or ordinary cloth, instead of rich velvet. Untwining his gold chain from his neck, Balafre twisted off, with his firm and strong set teeth, about four inches from the one end of it, and said to his attendant, "Here, Andrew, carry this to my gossip, jolly Father Boniface, the monk of St. Martin's; greet him well from me, by the same token that he could not say God save ye when we last parted at midnight.—Tell my gossip that my brother and sister, and some others of my house, are all dead and gone, and I pray him to say masses for their souls as far as the value of these links will carry him, and to do on trust what else may be necessary to free them from Purgatory. And hark ye, as they were just living people, and free from all heresy, it may be that they are well nigh out of limbo already, so that a little matter may have them free of the fetlocks; and in that case, look ye, ye will say I desire to take out the balance of the gold in curses upon a generation called the Ogilvies of Angus Shire, in what way soever the church may best come at them. You understand all this, Andrew?"

The *coutelier* nodded.

"Then look that none of the links find their way to the wine house ere the monk touches them; for if it so chance, thou shalt taste of saddle girth and stirrup leather till thou art as raw as Saint Bartholomew [he was flayed alive. In Michael Angelo's Last Judgment he is represented as holding his skin in his hand]—Yet hold, I see thy eye has fixed on the wine measure, and thou shalt not go without tasting."

So saying, he filled him a brimful cup, which the coutelier drank off, and retired to do his patron's commission.

"And now, fair nephew, let us hear what was your own fortune in this unhappy matter."

"I fought it out among those who were older and stouter than I was, till we were all brought down," said Durward, "and I received a cruel wound."

"Not a worse slash than I received ten years since myself," said Le Balafre. "Look at this, now, my fair nephew," tracing the dark crimson gash which was imprinted on his face.—"An Ogilvy's sword never ploughed so deep a furrow."

"They ploughed deep enough," answered Quentin, sadly, "but they were tired at last, and my mother's entreaties procured mercy for me, when I was found to retain some spark of life; but although a learned monk of Aberbrothik, who chanced to be our guest at the fatal time, and narrowly escaped being killed in the fray, was permitted to bind my wounds, and finally to remove me to a place of safety, it was only on promise, given both by my mother and him, that I should become a monk."

"A monk!" exclaimed the uncle. "Holy Saint Andrew! that is what never befell me. No one, from my childhood upwards, ever so much as dreamed of making me a monk. And yet I wonder when I think of it; for you will allow that, bating the reading and writing, which I could never learn, and the psalmody, which I could never endure, and the dress, which is that of a mad beggar—Our Lady forgive me! [here he crossed himself] and their fasts, which do not suit my appetite, I would have made every whit as good a monk as my little gossip at St. Martin's yonder. But I know not why, none ever proposed the station to me.—Oh, so, fair nephew, you were to be a monk, then—and wherefore, I pray you?"

"That my father's house might be ended, either in the cloister or in the tomb," answered Quentin, with deep feeling.

"I see," answered his uncle—"I comprehend. Cunning rogues—very cunning! They might have been cheated, though; for, look ye, fair nephew, I myself remember the canon Robersart who had taken the vows and afterwards broke out of cloister, and became a captain of Free Companions. He had a mistress, the prettiest wench I ever saw, and three as beautiful children.—There is no trusting monks, fair nephew—no trusting them—they may become soldiers and fathers when you least expect it—but on with your tale."

"I have little more to tell," said Durward, "except that, considering my poor mother to be in some degree a pledge for me, I was induced to take upon me the dress of a novice, and conformed to the cloister rules, and even learned to read and write."

"To read and write!" exclaimed Le Balafre, who was one of that sort of people who think all knowledge is miraculous which chances to exceed their own. "To write, say'st thou, and to read! I cannot believe it—never Durward could write his name that ever I heard of, nor Lesly either. I can answer for one of them—I can no more write than I can fly. Now, in Saint Louis's name, how did they teach it you?"

"It was troublesome at first," said Durward, "but became more easy by use; and I was weak with my wounds, and loss of blood, and desirous to gratify my preserver, Father Peter, and so I was the more easily kept to my task. But after several months' languishing, my good, kind mother died, and as my health was now fully restored, I communicated to my benefactor, who was also Sub Prior of the convent, my reluctance to take the vows; and it was agreed between us, since my vocation lay not to the cloister, that I should be sent out into the world to seek my fortune, and that to save the Sub Prior from the anger of the Ogilvies, my departure should have the appearance of flight; and to colour it I brought off the Abbot's hawk with me. But I was regularly dismissed, as will appear from the hand and seal of the Abbot himself."

"That is right, that is well," said his uncle. "Our King cares little what other theft thou mayst have made, but hath a horror at anything like a breach of the cloister. And I warrant thee, thou hadst no great treasure to bear thy charges?"

"Only a few pieces of silver," said the youth; "for to you, fair uncle, I must make a free confession."

"Alas!" replied Le Balafre, "that is hard. Now, though I am never a hoarder of my pay, because it doth ill to bear a charge about one in these perilous times, yet I always have (and I would advise you to follow my example) some odd gold chain, or bracelet, or carcanet, that serves for the ornament of my person, and can at need spare a superfluous link or two, or it may be a superfluous stone for sale, that can answer any immediate purpose. But you may ask, fair kinsman, how you are to come by such toys as this." (He shook his chain with complacent triumph.) "They hang not on every bush—they grow not in the fields like the daffodils, with whose stalks children make knights' collars. What then?—you may get such where I got this, in the service of the good King of France, where there is always wealth to be found, if a man has but the heart to seek it at the risk of a little life or so."

"I understood," said Quentin, evading a decision to which he felt himself as yet scarcely competent, "that the Duke of Burgundy keeps a more noble state than the King of France, and that there is more honour to be won under his banners—that good blows are struck there, and deeds of arms done; while the most Christian King, they say, gains his victories by his ambassadors' tongues."

"You speak like a foolish boy, fair nephew," answered he with the scar, "and yet, I bethink me, when I came hither I was nearly as simple: I could never think of a King but what I supposed him either sitting under the high deas, and feasting amid his high vassals and Paladins, eating blanc mange, with a great gold crown upon his head, or else charging at the head of his troops like Charlemagne in the romaunts, or like Robert Bruce or William Wallace in our own true histories, such as Barbour and the Minstrel. Hark in thine ear, man—it is all moonshine in the water. Policy—policy does it all. But what is policy, you will say? It is an art this French King of ours has found out, to fight with other men's swords, and to wage his soldiers out of other men's purses. Ah! it is the wisest prince that ever put purple on his back—and yet he weareth not much of that neither—I see him often go plainer than I would think befitted me to do."

[Charlemagne (742?-814): King of the Franks and crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 800. His kingdom included Germany and France, the greater part of Italy, and Spain as far as the Ebro. As Emperor of the West he bore the title Caesar Augustus. He established churches and monasteries, and encouraged arts and learning. He figures largely in mediaeval minstrelsy, where the achievements of his knights, or paladins, rival those of Arthur's court.]

[Robert Bruce: the grandson of Robert Bruce, the competitor with John Baliol for the Scottish throne. He defeated the English forces at Bannockburn in 1314, and thus secured the independence of Scotland, an independence which lasted until the two kingdoms were united under one crown in 1707.]

[William Wallace: another brave Scottish leader in the war for independence against Edward I of England. Wallace was betrayed in 1305 and carried to London, where he was cruelly executed as a traitor.]

[Barbour: an eminent Scottish poet contemporary with Chaucer. His principal work, The Bruce, records the life and deeds of Robert Bruce.]

[Harry the Minstrel or "Blind Harry" was the author of a poem on the life and deeds of Wallace which was held in peculiar reverence by the Scotch people.]

"But you meet not my exception, fair uncle," answered young Durward; "I would serve, since serve I must in a foreign land, somewhere where a brave deed, were it my hap to do one, might work me a name."

"I understand you, my fair nephew," said the royal man at arms, "I understand you passing well; but you are unripe in these matters. The Duke of Burgundy is a hot brained, impetuous, pudding headed, iron ribbed dare all. He charges at the head of his nobles and native knights, his liegemen of Artois and Hainault; think you, if you were there, or if I were there myself, that we could be much farther forward than the Duke and all his brave nobles of his own land? If we were not up with them, we had a chance to be turned on the Provost Marshal's hands for being slow in making to; if we were abreast of them, all would be called well and we might be thought to have deserved our pay; and grant that I was a spear's length or so in the front, which is both difficult and dangerous in such a melee where all do their best, why, my lord Duke says in his Flemish tongue, when he sees a good blow struck, 'Ha! gut getroffen [well struck]! a good lance—a brave Scot—give him a florin to drink our health;' but neither rank, nor lands, nor treasures come to the stranger in such a service—all goes to the children of the soil."

"And where should it go, in Heaven's name, fair uncle?" demanded young Durward.

"To him that protects the children of the soil," said Balafre, drawing up his gigantic height. "Thus says King Louis 'My good French peasant—mine honest Jacques Bonhomme, get you to your tools, your plough and your harrow, your pruning knife and your hoe—here is my gallant Scot that will fight for you, and you shall only

have the trouble to pay him. And you, my most serene duke, my illustrious count, and my most mighty marquis, e'en rein up your fiery courage till it is wanted, for it is apt to start out of the course, and to hurt its master; here are my companies of ordnance—here are my French Guards—here are, above all, my Scottish Archers, and mine honest Ludovic with the Scar, who will fight, as well or better than you, will fight with all that undisciplined valour which, in your father's time, lost Cressy and Azincour [two famous victories in the Hundred Years' War gained over the French by the English, near the towns of Crecy and Agincourt, in 1346 and 1415. See Shakespeare's Henry V for a description of the latter.]. Now, see you not in which of these states a cavalier of fortune holds the highest rank, and must come to the highest honour?"

"I think I understand you, fair uncle," answered the nephew; "but, in my mind, honour cannot be won where there is no risk. Sure, this is—I pray pardon me—an easy and almost slothful life, to mount guard round an elderly man whom no one thinks of harming, to spend summer day and winter night up in yonder battlements, and shut up all the while in iron cages, for fear you should desert your posts—uncle, uncle, it is but a hawk upon his perch, who is never carried out to the fields!"

"Now, by Saint Martin of Tours, the boy has some spirit! a right touch of the Lesly in him; much like myself, though always with a little more folly in it. Hark ye, youth—Long live the King of France!—scarce a day but there is some commission in hand, by which some of his followers may win both coin and credit. Think not that the bravest and most dangerous deeds are done by daylight. I could tell you of some, as scaling castles, making prisoners, and the like, where one who shall be nameless hath run higher risk and gained greater favour than any desperado in the train of desperate Charles of Burgundy. And if it please his Majesty to remain behind, and in the background, while such things are doing, he hath the more leisure of spirit to admire, and the more liberality of hand to reward the adventurers, whose dangers, perhaps, and whose feats of arms, he can better judge of than if he had personally shared them. Oh, 't is a sagacious and most politic monarch!"

His nephew paused, and then said, in a low but impressive tone of voice, "the good Father Peter used often to teach me there might be much danger in deeds by which little glory was acquired. I need not say to you, fair uncle, that I do in course suppose that these secret commissions must needs be honourable."

"For whom or for what take you me, fair nephew," said Balafre, somewhat sternly; "I have not been trained, indeed, in the cloister, neither can I write or read. But I am your mother's brother; I am a loyal Lesly. Think you that I am like to recommend to you anything unworthy? The best knight in France, Du Guesclin himself, if he were alive again, might be proud to number my deeds among his achievements."

"I cannot doubt your warranty, fair uncle," said the youth; "you are the only adviser my mishap has left me. But is it true, as fame says, that this King keeps a meagre Court here at his Castle of Plessis? No repair of nobles or courtiers, none of his grand feudatories in attendance, none of the high officers of the crown; half solitary sports, shared only with the menials of his household; secret councils, to which only low and obscure men are invited; rank and nobility depressed, and men raised from the lowest origin to the kingly favour—all this seems unregulated, resembles not the manners of his father, the noble Charles, who tore from the fangs of the English lion this more than half conquered kingdom of France."

"You speak like a giddy child," said Le Balafre, "and even as a child, you harp over the same notes on a new string. Look you: if the King employs Oliver Dain, his barber, to do what Oliver can do better than any peer of them all, is not the kingdom the gainer? If he bids his stout Provost Marshal, Tristan, arrest such or such a seditious burgher, take off such or such a turbulent noble, the deed is done, and no more of it; when, were the commission given to a duke or peer of France, he might perchance send the King back a defiance in exchange. If, again, the King pleases to give to plain Ludovic le Balafre a commission which he will execute, instead of employing the High Constable, who would perhaps betray it, doth it not show wisdom? Above all, doth not a monarch of such conditions best suit cavaliers of fortune, who must go where their services are most highly prized, and most frequently in demand?—No, no, child, I tell thee Louis knows how to choose his confidants, and what to charge them with; suiting, as they say, the burden to each man's back. He is not like the King of Castile, who choked with thirst, because the great butler was not beside to hand his cup.—But hark to the bell of St. Martin's! I must hasten, back to the Castle—Farewell—make much of yourself, and at eight tomorrow morning present yourself before the drawbridge, and ask the sentinel for me. Take heed you step not off the straight and beaten path in approaching the portal! There are such traps and snap haunches as may cost you a limb, which you will sorely miss. You shall see the King, and learn to judge him for yourself—farewell."

So saying, Balafre hastily departed, forgetting, in his hurry, to pay for the wine he had called for, a shortness of memory incidental to persons of his description, and which his host, overawed perhaps by the nodding bonnet and ponderous two handed sword, did not presume to use any efforts for correcting. It might have been expected that, when left alone, Durward would have again betaken himself to his turret, in order to watch for the repetition of those delicious sounds which had soothed his morning reverie. But that was a chapter of romance, and his uncle's conversation had opened to him a page of the real history of life. It was no pleasing one, and for the present the recollections and reflections which it excited were qualified to overpower other thoughts, and especially all of a light and soothing nature.

Quentin resorted to a solitary walk along the banks of the rapid Cher, having previously inquired of his landlord for one which he might traverse without fear of disagreeable interruption from snares and pitfalls, and there endeavoured to compose his turmoiled and scattered thoughts, and consider his future motions, upon which his meeting with his uncle had thrown some dubiety.

CHAPTER VI: THE BOHEMIANS

*Sae rantingly, sae wantingly,
Sae dantingly gaed he,
He play'd a spring and danced a round
Beneath the gallows tree!*

OLD SONG

[The Bohemians: In... Guy Mannering the reader will find some remarks on the gipsies as they are found in Scotland. Their first appearance in Europe took place in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The account given by these singular people was, that it was appointed to them, as a penance, to travel for a certain number of years. Their appearance, however, and manners, strongly contradicted the allegation that they travelled from any religious motive. Their dress and accoutrements were at once showy and squalid; those who acted as captains and leaders of any horde,... were arrayed in dresses of the most showy colours, such as scarlet or light green; were well mounted; assumed the title of dukes and counts, and affected considerable consequence. The rest of the tribe were most miserable in their diet and apparel, fed without hesitation on animals which had died of disease, and were clad in filthy and scanty rags.... Their complexion was positively Eastern, approaching to that of the Hindoos. Their manners were as depraved as their appearance was poor and beggarly. The men were in general thieves, and the women of the most abandoned character. The few arts which they studied with success were of a slight and idle, though ingenious description. They practised working in iron, but never upon any great scale. Many were good sportsmen, good musicians.... But their ingenuity never ascended into industry.... Their pretensions to read fortunes, by palmistry and by astrology, acquired them sometimes respect, but oftener drew them under suspicion as sorcerers; the universal accusation that they augmented their horde by stealing children, subjected them to doubt and execration.... The pretension set up by these wanderers, of being pilgrims in the act of penance, although it... in many instances obtained them protection from the governments of the countries through which they travelled, was afterwards totally disbelieved, and they were considered as incorrigible rogues and vagrants.... A curious and accurate account of their arrival in France is quoted by Pasquier "On August 27th, 1427, came to Paris twelve penitents,... viz. a duke, an earl, and ten men, all on horseback, and calling themselves good Christians. They were of Lower Egypt, and gave out that, not long before, the Christians had subdued their country, and obliged them to

embrace Christianity on pain of being put to death. Those who were baptized were great lords in their own country, and had a king and queen there. Soon after their conversion, the Saracens overran the country, and obliged them to renounce Christianity. When the Emperor of Germany, the King of Poland, and other Christian princes heard of this, they fell upon them, and obliged the whole of them, both great and small, to quit the country, and go to the Pope at Rome, who enjoined them seven years' penance to wander over the world, without lying in a bed. They had been wandering five years when they came to Paris first.... Nearly all of them had their ears bored, and wore two silver rings in each.... The men were black, their hair curled; the women remarkably black, their only clothes a large old duffle garment, tied over the shoulders with a cloth or cord, and under it a miserable rocket;... notwithstanding their poverty, there were among them women who, by looking into people's hands, told their fortunes, and what was worse, they picked people's pockets of their money, and got it into their own, by telling these things through airy magic, et cetera." Pasquier remarks upon this singular journal that however the story of a penance savours of a trick, these people wandered up and down France, under the eye, and with the knowledge, of the magistrates, for more than a hundred years; and it was not till 1561, that a sentence of banishment was passed against them in that kingdom. The arrival of the Egyptians (as these singular people were called) in various parts of Europe, corresponds with the period in which Timur or Tamerlane invaded Hindostan, affording its natives the choice between the Koran and death. There can be little doubt that these wanderers consisted originally of the Hindostanee tribes, who, displaced, and flying from the sabres of the Mohammedans, undertook this species of wandering life, without well knowing whither they were going. When they are in closest contact with the ordinary peasants around them, they still keep their language a mystery. There is little doubt, however, that it is a dialect of the Hindostanee, from the specimens produced by Grellman, Hoyland, and others, who have written on the subject. S.]

The manner in which Quentin Durward had been educated was not of a kind to soften the heart, or perhaps to improve the moral feeling. He, with the rest of his family, had been trained to the chase as an amusement, and taught to consider war as their only serious occupation, and that it was the great duty of their lives stubbornly to endure, and fiercely to retaliate, the attacks of their feudal enemies, by whom their race had been at last almost annihilated. And yet there mixed with these feuds a spirit of rude chivalry, and even courtesy, which softened their rigour; so that revenge, their only justice, was still prosecuted with some regard to humanity and generosity. The lessons of the worthy old monk, better attended to, perhaps, during a long illness and adversity, than they might have been in health and success, had given young Durward still farther insight into the duties of humanity towards others; and considering the ignorance of the period, the general prejudices entertained in favour of a military life, and the manner in which he himself had been bred, the youth was disposed to feel more accurately the moral duties incumbent on his station than was usual at the time.

He reflected on his interview with his uncle with a sense of embarrassment and disappointment. His hopes had been high; for although intercourse by letters was out of the question, yet a pilgrim, or an adventurous trafficker, or a crippled soldier sometimes brought Lesly's name to Glen Houlakin, and all united in praising his undaunted courage, and his success in many petty enterprises which his master had intrusted to him. Quentin's imagination had filled up the sketch in his own way, and assimilated his successful and adventurous uncle (whose exploits probably lost nothing in the telling) to some of the champions and knights errant of whom minstrels sung and who won crowns and kings' daughters by dint of sword and lance. He was now compelled to rank his kinsman greatly lower in the scale of chivalry; but, blinded by the high respect paid to parents and those who approach that character—moved by every early prejudice in his favour—inexperienced besides, and passionately attached to his mother's memory, he saw not, in the only brother of that dear relation, the character he truly held, which was that of an ordinary mercenary soldier, neither much worse nor greatly better than many of the same profession whose presence added to the distracted state of France.

Without being wantonly cruel, Le Balafre was, from habit, indifferent to human life and human suffering; he was profoundly ignorant, greedy of booty, unscrupulous how he acquired it, and profuse in expending it on the gratification of his passions. The habit of attending exclusively to his own wants and interests had converted him into one of the most selfish animals in the world; so that he was seldom able, as the reader may have remarked, to proceed far in any subject without considering how it applied to himself, or, as it is called, making the case his own, though not upon feelings connected with the golden rule, but such as were very different. To this must be added that the narrow round of his duties and his pleasures had gradually circumscribed his thoughts, hopes, and wishes, and quenched in a great measure the wild spirit of honour, and desire of distinction in arms, by which his youth had been once animated.

Balafre was, in short, a keen soldier, hardened, selfish, and narrow minded; active and bold in the discharge of his duty, but acknowledging few objects beyond it, except the formal observance of a careless devotion, relieved by an occasional debauch with brother Boniface, his comrade and confessor. Had his genius been of a more extended character, he would probably have been promoted to some important command, for the King, who knew every soldier of his bodyguard personally, reposed much confidence in Balafre's courage and fidelity; and besides, the Scot had either wisdom or cunning enough perfectly to understand, and ably to humour, the peculiarities of that sovereign. Still, however, his capacity was too much limited to admit of his rising to higher rank, and though smiled on and favoured by Louis on many occasions, Balafre continued a mere Life Guardsman, or Scottish Archer.

Without seeing the full scope of his uncle's character, Quentin felt shocked at his indifference to the disastrous extirpation of his brother in law's whole family, and could not help being surprised, moreover, that so near a relative had not offered him the assistance of his purse, which, but for the generosity of Maitre Pierre, he would have been under the necessity of directly craving from him. He wronged his uncle, however, in supposing that this want of attention to his probable necessities was owing to avarice. Not precisely needing money himself at that moment, it had not occurred to Balafre that his nephew might be in exigencies; otherwise, he held a near kinsman so much a part of himself, that he would have provided for the weal of the living nephew, as he endeavoured to do for that of his deceased sister and her husband. But whatever was the motive, the neglect was very unsatisfactory to young Durward, and he wished more than once he had taken service with the Duke of Burgundy before he quarrelled with his forester. "Whatever had then become of me," he thought to himself, "I should always have been able to keep up my spirits with the reflection that I had, in case of the worst, a stout back friend in this uncle of mine. But now I have seen him, and, woe worth him, there has been more help in a mere mechanical stranger, than I have found in my own mother's brother, my countryman and a cavalier! One would think the slash, that has carved all comeliness out of his face, had let at the same time every drop of gentle blood out of his body."

Durward now regretted he had not had an opportunity to mention Maitre Pierre to Le Balafre, in the hope of obtaining some farther account of that personage; but his uncle's questions had followed fast on each other, and the summons of the great bell of Saint Martin of Tours had broken off their conference rather suddenly. That old man, he thought to himself, was crabbed and dogged in appearance, sharp and scornful in language, but generous and liberal in his actions; and such a stranger is worth a cold kinsman.

"What says our old Scottish proverb?—'Better kind fremit, than fremit kindred.' ['Better kind strangers than estranged kindred.' The motto is engraved on a dirk, belonging to a person who had but too much reason to choose such a device. It was left by him to my father. The weapon is now in my possession. S.] I will find out that man, which, methinks, should be no difficult task, since he is so wealthy as mine host bespeaks him. He will give me good advice for my governance, at least; and if he goes to strange countries, as many such do, I know not but his may be as adventurous a service as that of those Guards of Louis."

As Quentin framed this thought, a whisper from those recesses of the heart in which lies much that the owner does not know of, or will not acknowledge willingly, suggested that, perchance, the lady of the turret, she of the veil and lute, might share that adventurous journey. As the Scottish youth made these reflections, he met two grave looking men, apparently citizens of Tours, whom, doffing his cap with the reverence due from youth to age, he respectfully asked to direct him to the house of Maitre Pierre.

"The house of whom, my fair son?" said one of the passengers.

"Of Maitre Pierre, the great silk merchant, who planted all the mulberry trees in the park yonder," said Durward.

"Young man," said one of them who was nearest to him, "you have taken up an idle trade a little too early."

"And have chosen wrong subjects to practise your fooleries upon," said the farther one, still more gruffly. "The Syndic of Tours is not accustomed to be thus talked to by strolling jesters from foreign parts."

Quentin was so much surprised at the causeless offence which these two decent looking persons had taken at a very simple and civil question, that he forgot to be angry at the rudeness of their reply, and stood staring after them as they walked on with amended pace, often looking back at him, as if they were desirous to get as soon as possible out of his reach.

He next met a party of vine dressers, and addressed to them the same question; and in reply, they demanded to know whether he wanted Maitre Pierre, the schoolmaster? or Maitre Pierre, the carpenter? or Maitre Pierre, the beadle? or half a dozen of Maitre Pierres besides. When none of these corresponded with the description of the person after whom he inquired, the peasants accused him of jesting with them impertinently, and threatened to fall upon him and beat him, in guerdon of his raillery. The oldest amongst them, who had some influence over the rest, prevailed on them to desist from violence.

"You see by his speech and his fool's cap," said he, "that he is one of the foreign mountebanks who are come into the country, and whom some call magicians and soothsayers, and some jugglers, and the like, and there is no knowing what tricks they have amongst them. I have heard of such a one's paying a liard [a small copper coin worth a quarter of a cent, current in France in the fifteenth century.] to eat his bellyfull of grapes in a poor man's vineyard; and he ate as many as would have loaded a wain, and never undid a button of his jerkin—and so let him pass quietly, and keep his way, as we will keep ours.—And you, friend, if you would shun worse, walk quietly on, in the name of God, our Lady of Marmoutier, and Saint Martin of Tours, and trouble us no more about your Maitre Pierre, which may be another name for the devil, for aught we know."

The Scot finding himself much the weaker party, judged it his wisest course to walk on without reply; but the peasants, who at first shrunk from him in horror, at his supposed talents for sorcery and grape devouring, took heart of grace as he got to a distance, and having uttered a few cries and curses, finally gave them emphasis with a shower of stones, although at such a distance as to do little or no harm to the object of their displeasure. Quentin, as he pursued his walk, began to think, in his turn, either that he himself lay under a spell, or that the people of Touraine were the most stupid, brutal, and inhospitable of the French peasants. The next incident which came under his observation did not tend to diminish this opinion.

On a slight eminence, rising above the rapid and beautiful Cher, in the direct line of his path, two or three large chestnut trees were so happily placed as to form a distinguished and remarkable group; and beside them stood three or four peasants, motionless, with their eyes turned upwards, and fixed, apparently, upon some object amongst the branches of the tree next to them. The meditations of youth are seldom so profound as not to yield to the slightest impulse of curiosity, as easily as the lightest pebble, dropped casually from the hand, breaks the surface of a limpid pool. Quentin hastened his pace, and ran lightly up the rising ground, in time enough to witness the ghastly spectacle which attracted the notice of these gazers—which was nothing less than the body of a man, convulsed by the last agony, suspended on one of the branches.

"Why do you not cut him down?" said the young Scot, whose hand was as ready to assist affliction, as to maintain his own honour when he deemed it assailed.

One of the peasants, turning on him an eye from which fear had banished all expression but its own, and a face as pale as clay, pointed to a mark cut upon the bark of the tree, having the same rude resemblance to a fleur de lys which certain talismanic scratches, well known to our revenue officers, bear to a broad arrow. Neither understanding nor heeding the import of this symbol, young Durward sprang lightly as the ounce up into the tree, drew from his pouch that most necessary implement of a Highlander or woodsman, the trusty skene dhu [black knife; a species of knife without clasp or hinge formerly much used by the Highlanders, who seldom travelled without such an ugly weapon, though it is now rarely used. S.], and, calling to those below to receive the body on their hands, cut the rope asunder in less than a minute after he had perceived the exigency.

But his humanity was ill seconded by the bystanders. So far from rendering Durward any assistance, they seemed terrified at the audacity of his action, and took to flight with one consent, as if they feared their merely looking on might have been construed into accession to his daring deed. The body, unsupported from beneath, fell heavily to earth in such a manner that Quentin, who presently afterwards jumped down, had the mortification to see that the last sparks of life were extinguished. He gave not up his charitable purpose, however, without farther efforts. He freed the wretched man's neck from the fatal noose, undid the doublet, threw water on the face, and practised the other ordinary remedies resorted to for recalling suspended animation.

While he was thus humanely engaged, a wild clamour of tongues, speaking a language which he knew not, arose around him; and he had scarcely time to observe that he was surrounded by several men and women of a singular and foreign appearance, when he found himself roughly seized by both arms, while a naked knife, at the same moment, was offered to his throat.

"Pale slave of Eblis!" [in Mohammedan religion the name of the chief of the fallen angels] said a man, in imperfect French, "are you robbing him you have murdered?—But we have you—and you shall atone it."

There were knives drawn on every side of him, as these words were spoken, and the grim and distorted countenances which glared on him were like those of wolves rushing on their prey.

Still the young Scot's courage and presence of mind bore him out. "What mean ye, my masters?" he said; "if that be your friend's body, I have just now cut him down, in pure charity, and you will do better to try to recover his life, than to misuse an innocent stranger to whom he owes his chance of escape."

The women had by this time taken possession of the dead body, and continued the attempts to recover animation which Durward had been making use of, though with the like bad success; so that, desisting from their fruitless efforts, they seemed to abandon themselves to all the Oriental expressions of grief; the women making a piteous wailing, and tearing their long black hair, while the men seemed to rend their garments, and to sprinkle dust upon their heads. They gradually became so much engaged in their mourning rites, that they bestowed no longer any attention on Durward, of whose innocence they were probably satisfied from circumstances. It would certainly have been his wisest plan to have left these wild people to their own courses, but he had been bred in almost reckless contempt of danger, and felt all the eagerness of youthful curiosity.

The singular assemblage, both male and female, wore turbans and caps, more similar in general appearance to his own bonnet than to the hats commonly worn in France. Several of the men had curled black beards, and the complexion of all was nearly as dark as that of Africans. One or two who seemed their chiefs, had some tawdry ornaments of silver about their necks and in their ears, and wore showy scarfs of yellow, or scarlet, or light green; but their legs and arms were bare, and the whole troop seemed wretched and squalid in appearance. There were no weapons among them that Durward saw, except the long knives with which they had lately menaced him, and one short, crooked sabre, or Moorish sword, which was worn by an active looking young man, who often laid his hand upon the hilt, while he surpassed the rest of the party in his extravagant expressions of grief, and seemed to mingle with them threats of vengeance.

The disordered and yelling group were so different in appearance from any beings whom Quentin had yet seen, that he was on the point of concluding them to be a party of Saracens, of those "heathen hounds," who were the opponents of gentle knights and Christian monarchs in all the romances which he had heard or read, and was about to withdraw himself from a neighbourhood so perilous, when a galloping of horse was heard, and the supposed Saracens, who had raised by this time the body of their comrade upon their shoulders, were at once charged by a party of French soldiers.

This sudden apparition changed the measured wailing of the mourners into irregular shrieks of terror. The body was thrown to the ground in an instant, and those who were around it showed the utmost and most dexterous activity in escaping under the bellies as it were of the horses, from the point of the lances which were levelled at them, with exclamations of "Down with the accursed heathen thieves—take and kill—bind them like beasts—spear them like wolves!"

These cries were accompanied with corresponding acts of violence; but such was the alertness of the fugitives, the ground being rendered unfavourable to the horsemen by thickets and bushes, that only two were struck down and made prisoners, one of whom was the young fellow with the sword, who had previously offered some resistance. Quentin, whom fortune seemed at this period to have chosen for the butt of her shafts, was at the same time seized by the soldiers, and his arms, in spite of his remonstrances, bound down with a cord; those who apprehended him showing a readiness and dispatch in the operation, which proved them to be no novices in matters of police.

Looking anxiously to the leader of the horsemen, from whom he hoped to obtain liberty, Quentin knew not exactly whether to be pleased or alarmed upon recognising in him the down looking and silent companion of Maitre Pierre. True, whatever crime these strangers might be accused of, this officer might know,

from the history of the morning, that he, Durward, had no connection with them whatever; but it was a more difficult question, whether this sullen man would be either a favourable judge or a willing witness in his behalf, and he felt doubtful whether he would mend his condition by making any direct application to him. But there was little leisure for hesitation. "Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre," said the down looking officer to two of his band, "These same trees stand here quite convenient. I will teach these misbelieving, thieving sorcerers to interfere with the King's justice, when it has visited any of their accursed race. Dismount, my children, and do your office briskly."

Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre were in an instant on foot, and Quentin observed that they had each, at the crupper and pommel of his saddle, a coil or two of ropes, which they hastily undid, and showed that, in fact, each coil formed a halter, with the fatal noose adjusted, ready for execution. The blood ran cold in Quentin's veins, when he saw three cords selected, and perceived that it was proposed to put one around his own neck. He called on the officer loudly, reminded him of their meeting that morning, claimed the right of a free born Scotsman in a friendly and allied country, and denied any knowledge of the persons along with whom he was seized, or of their misdeed.

The officer whom Durward thus addressed, scarce deigned to look at him while he was speaking, and took no notice whatever of the claim he preferred to prior acquaintance. He barely turned to one or two of the peasants who were now come forward, either to volunteer their evidence against the prisoners, or out of curiosity, and said gruffly, "Was yonder young fellow with the vagabonds?"

"That he was, sir, and it please your noble Provostship," answered one of the clowns; "he was the very first blasphemously to cut down the rascal whom his Majesty's justice most deservedly hung up, as we told your worship."

"I'll swear by God, and Saint Martin of Tours, to have seen him with their gang," said another, "when they pillaged our metairie [a small farm]."

"Nay, but," said a boy, "yonder heathen was black, and this youth is fair; yonder one had short curled hair, and this hath long fair locks."

"Ay, child," said the peasant, "and perhaps you will say yonder one had a green coat and this a gray jerkin. But his worship, the Provost, knows that they can change their complexions as easily as their jerkins, so that I am still minded he was the same."

"It is enough that you have seen him intermeddle with the course of the King's justice, by attempting to recover an executed traitor," said the officer.—"Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre, dispatch."

"Stay, signior officer!" exclaimed the youth in mortal agony; "hear me speak—let me not die guiltlessly—my blood will be required of you by my countrymen in this world, and by Heaven's justice in that which is to follow."

"I will answer for my actions in both," said the Provost, coldly, and made a sign with his left hand to the executioners; then, with a smile of triumphant malice, touched with his forefinger his right arm, which hung suspended in a scarf, disabled probably by the blow which Durward had dealt him that morning.

"Miserable, vindictive wretch!" answered Quentin, persuaded by that action that private revenge was the sole motive of this man's rigour, and that no mercy whatever was to be expected from him.

"The poor youth raves," said the functionary: "speak a word of comfort to him ere he make his transit, Trois Eschelles; thou art a comfortable man in such cases when a confessor is not to be had. Give him one minute of ghostly advice, and dispatch matters in the next. I must proceed on the rounds.—Soldiers, follow me!"

The Provost rode on, followed by his guard, excepting two or three, who were left to assist in the execution. The unhappy youth cast after him an eye almost darkened by despair, and thought he heard in every tramp of his horse's retreating hoofs the last slight chance of his safety vanish. He looked around him in agony, and was surprised, even in that moment, to see the stoical indifference of his fellow prisoners. They had previously testified every sign of fear, and made every effort of escape; but now, when secured and destined apparently to inevitable death, they awaited its arrival with the utmost composure. The scene of fate before them gave, perhaps, a more yellow tinge to their swarthy cheeks; but it neither agitated their features, nor quenched the stubborn haughtiness of their eye. They seemed like foxes, which, after all their wiles and artful attempts at escape are exhausted, die with a silent and sullen fortitude which wolves and bears, the fiercer objects of the chase, do not exhibit. They were undaunted by the conduct of the fatal executioners, who went about their work with more deliberation than their master had recommended, and which probably arose from their having acquired by habit a sort of pleasure in the discharge of their horrid office. We pause an instant to describe them, because, under a tyranny, whether despotic or popular, the character of the hangman becomes a subject of grave importance.

These functionaries were essentially different in their appearance and manners. Louis used to call them Democritus and Heraclitus, and their master, the Provost, termed them Jean qui pleure and Jean qui rit.

[Democritus and Heraclitus: two Greek philosophers of the fifth century; the former because of his propensity to laugh at the follies of men was called the "laughing philosopher;" the latter, according to a current notion, probably unfounded, habitually wept over the follies of mankind]

[Jean qui pleure, and Jean qui rit: John who weeps and John who laughs. One of these two persons, ... might with more accuracy have been called Petit Jean, than Petit Andre. This was actually the name of the son of Henry de Cousin, master executioner of the High Court of Justice. S.]

Trois Eschelles was a tall, thin, ghastly man, with a peculiar gravity of visage, and a large rosary round his neck, the use of which he was accustomed piously to offer to those sufferers on whom he did his duty. He had one or two Latin texts continually in his mouth on the nothingness and vanity of human life; and, had it been regular to have enjoyed such a plurality, he might have held the office of confessor to the jail in commendam with that of executioner. Petit Andre, on the contrary, was a joyous looking, round, active, little fellow, who rolled about in execution of his duty as if it were the most diverting occupation in the world. He seemed to have a sort of fond affection for his victims, and always spoke of them in kindly and affectionate terms. They were his poor honest fellows, his pretty dears, his gossips, his good old fathers, as their age or sex might be; and as Trois Eschelles endeavoured to inspire them with a philosophical or religious regard to futurity, Petit Andre seldom failed to refresh them with a jest or two, as if to induce them to pass from life as something that was ludicrous, contemptible, and not worthy of serious consideration.

I cannot tell why or wherefore it was, but these two excellent persons, notwithstanding the variety of their talents, and the rare occurrence of such among persons of their profession, were both more utterly detested than perhaps any creatures of their kind, whether before or since; and the only doubt of those who knew aught of them was, whether the grave and pathetic Trois Eschelles or the frisky, comic, alert Petit Andre was the object of the greatest fear, or of the deepest execration. It is certain they bore the palm in both particulars over every hangman in France, unless it were perhaps their master Tristan l'Hermite, the renowned Provost Marshal, or his master, Louis XI.

It must not be supposed that these reflections were of Quentin Durward's making. Life, death, time, and eternity were swimming before his eyes—a stunning and overwhelming prospect, from which human nature recoiled in its weakness, though human pride would fain have borne up. He addressed himself to the God of his fathers; and when he did so, the little rude and unroofed chapel, which now held almost all his race but himself, rushed on his recollection.

"Our feudal enemies gave my kindred graves in our own land," he thought, "but I must feed the ravens and kites of a foreign land, like an excommunicated felon!"

The tears gushed involuntarily from his eyes. Trois Eschelles, touching one shoulder, gravely congratulated him on his heavenly disposition for death, and pathetically exclaiming, *Beati qui in Domino moriuntur* [blessed are they who die in the Lord], remarked, the soul was happy that left the body while the tear was in the eye. Petit Andre, slapping the other shoulder, called out, "Courage, my fair son! since you must begin the dance, let the ball open gaily, for all the rebecks are in tune," twitching the halter at the same time, to give point to his joke. As the youth turned his dismayed looks, first on one and then on the other, they made their meaning plainer by gently urging him forward to the fatal tree, and bidding him be of good courage, for it would be over in a moment.

In this fatal predicament, the youth cast a distracted look around him. "Is there any good Christian who hears me," he said, "that will tell Ludovic Lesly of the Scottish Guard, called in this country Le Balafre, that his nephew is here basely murdered?" The words were spoken in good time, for an Archer of the Scottish Guard, attracted by the preparations for the execution, was standing by, with one or two other chance passengers, to witness what was passing.

"Take heed what you do," he said to the executioners, "if this young man be of Scottish birth, I will not permit him to have foul play."

"Heaven forbid, Sir Cavalier," said Trois Eschelles; "but we must obey our orders," drawing Durward forward by one arm. "The shortest play is ever the fairest," said Petit Andre, pulling him onward by the other.

But Quentin had heard words of comfort, and, exerting his strength, he suddenly shook off both the finishers of the law, and, with his arms still bound, ran to the Scottish Archer. "Stand by me, countryman," he said, in his own language, "for the love of Scotland and Saint Andrew! I am innocent—I am your own native landsman. Stand by me, as you shall answer at the last day."

"By Saint Andrew! they shall make at you through me!" said the Archer, and unsheathed his sword.

"Cut my bonds, countryman," said Quentin, "and I will do something for myself."

This was done with a touch of the Archer's weapon, and the liberated captive, springing suddenly on one of the Provost's guard, wrested from him a halbert with which he was armed. "And now" he said, "come on, if you dare."

The two officers whispered together.

"Ride thou after the Provost Marshal," said Trois Eschelles, "and I will detain them here, if I can. Soldiers of the Provost's guard, stand to your arms."

Petit Andre mounted his horse, and left the field, and the other Marshals men in attendance drew together so hastily at the command of Trois Eschelles, that they suffered the other two prisoners to make their escape during the confusion. Perhaps they were not very anxious to detain them; for they had of late been sated with the blood of such wretches, and, like other ferocious animals, were, through long slaughter, become tired of carnage. But the pretext was, that they thought themselves immediately called upon to attend to the safety of Trois Eschelles; for there was a jealousy, which occasionally led to open quarrels, betwixt the Scottish Archers and the Marshal guards, who executed the orders of their Provost.

"We are strong enough to beat the proud Scots twice over, if it be your pleasure," said one of these soldiers to Trois Eschelles.

But that cautious official made a sign to him to remain quiet, and addressed the Scottish Archer with great civility. "Surely, sir, this is a great insult to the Provost Marshal, that you should presume to interfere with the course of the King's justice, duly and lawfully committed to his charge; and it is no act of justice to me, who am in lawful possession of my criminal. Neither is it a well meant kindness to the youth himself, seeing that fifty opportunities of hanging him may occur, without his being found in so happy a state of preparation as he was before your ill advised interference."

"If my young countryman," said the Scot, smiling, "be of opinion I have done him an injury, I will return him to your charge without a word more dispute."

"No, no!—for the love of Heaven, no!" exclaimed Quentin. "I would rather you swept my head off with your long sword—it would better become my birth, than to die by the hands of such a foul churl."

"Hear how he revileth," said the finisher of the law. "Alas! how soon our best resolutions pass away!—he was in a blessed frame for departure but now, and in two minutes he has become a contemner of authorities."

"Tell me at once," said the Archer, "what has this young man done."

"Interfered," answered Trois Eschelles, with some earnestness, "to take down the dead body of a criminal, when the fleur de lys was marked on the tree where he was hung with my own proper hand."

"How is this, young man?" said the Archer; "how came you to have committed such an offence?"

"As I desire your protection," answered Durward, "I will tell you the truth as if I were at confession. I saw a man struggling on the tree, and I went to cut him down out of mere humanity. I thought neither of fleur de lys nor of clove gilliflower, and had no more idea of offending the King of France than our Father the Pope."

"What a murrain had you to do with the dead body, then?" said the Archer. "You 'll see them hanging, in the rear of this gentleman, like grapes on every tree, and you will have enough to do in this country if you go a-gleaning after the hangman. However, I will not quit a countryman's cause if I can help it.—Hark ye, Master Marshals man, you see this is entirely a mistake. You should have some compassion on so young a traveller. In our country at home he has not been accustomed to see such active proceedings as yours and your master's."

"Not for want of need of them, Signior Archer," said Petit Andre, who returned at this moment. "Stand fast, Trois Eschelles, for here comes the Provost Marshal; we shall presently see how he will relish having his work taken out of his hand before it is finished."

"And in good time," said the Archer, "here come some of my comrades."

Accordingly, as the Provost Tristan rode up with his patrol on one side of the little bill which was the scene of the altercation, four or five Scottish Archers came as hastily up on the other, and at their head the Balafre himself.

Upon this urgency, Lesly showed none of that indifference towards his nephew of which Quentin had in his heart accused him; for he no sooner saw his comrade and Durward standing upon their defence, than he exclaimed, "Cunningham, I thank thee.—Gentlemen—comrades, lend me your aid.—It is a young Scottish gentleman—my nephew—Lindesay—Guthrie—Tyrie, draw, and strike in!"

There was now every prospect of a desperate scuffle between the parties, who were not so disproportioned in numbers but that the better arms of the Scottish cavaliers gave them an equal chance of victory. But the Provost Marshal, either doubting the issue of the conflict, or aware that it would be disagreeable to the King, made a sign to his followers to forbear from violence, while he demanded of Balafre, who now put himself forward as the head of the other party, what he, a cavalier of the King's Bodyguard, purposed by opposing the execution of a criminal.

"I deny that I do so," answered the Balafre. "Saint Martin! [patron saint of Tours, Lucca, and of penitent drunkards. He was greatly honoured in the Middle Ages.] there is, I think, some difference between the execution of a criminal and a slaughter of my own nephew!"

"Your nephew may be a criminal as well as another," said the Provost Marshal; "and every stranger in France is amenable to the laws of France."

"Yes, but we have privileges, we Scottish Archers," said Balafre, "have we not, comrades?"

"Yes, yes," they all exclaimed together. "Privileges—privileges! Long live King Louis—long live the bold Balafre—long live the Scottish Guard—and death to all who would infringe our privileges!"

"Take reason with you, gentlemen cavaliers," said the Provost Marshal; "consider my commission."

"We will have no reason at your hand," said Cunningham; "our own officers shall do us reason. We will be judged by the King's grace, or by our own Captain, now that the Lord High Constable is not in presence."

"And we will be hanged by none," said Lindesay, "but Sandie Wilson, the auld Marshals man of our ain body."

"It would be a positive cheating of Sandie, who is as honest a man as ever tied noose upon hemp, did we give way to any other proceeding," said the Balafre.

"Were I to be hanged myself, no other should tie tippet about my craig."

"But hear ye," said the Provost Marshal, "this young fellow belongs not to you, and cannot share what you call your privileges."

"What we call our privileges, all shall admit to be such," said Cunningham.

"We will not hear them questioned!" was the universal cry of the Archers.

"Ye are mad, my masters," said Tristan l'Hermite. "No one disputes your privileges; but this youth is not one of you."

"He is my nephew," said the Balafre, with a triumphant air.

"But no Archer of the Guard, I think," retorted Tristan l'Hermite.

The Archers looked on each other in some uncertainty.

"Stand to it yet, comrade," whispered Cunningham to Balafre. "Say he is engaged with us."

"Saint Martin! you say well, fair countryman," answered Lesly; and raising his voice, swore that he had that day enrolled his kinsman as one of his own retinue. This declaration was a decisive argument.

"It is well, gentlemen," said the Provost Tristan, who was aware of the King's nervous apprehension of disaffection creeping in among his Guards. "You know, as you say, your privileges, and it is not my duty to have brawls with the King's Guards, if it is to be avoided. But I will report this matter for the King's own decision; and I would have you to be aware, that, in doing so, I act more mildly than perhaps my duty warrants."

So saying, he put his troop into motion, while the Archers, remaining on the spot, held a hasty consultation what was next to be done. "We must report the matter to Lord Crawford, our Captain, in the first place, and have the young fellow's name put on the roll."

"But, gentlemen, and my worthy friends and preservers," said Quentin, with some hesitation, "I have not yet determined whether to take service with you or no."

"Then settle in your own mind," said his uncle, "whether you choose to do so, or be hanged—for I promise you, that, nephew of mine as you are, I see no other chance of your 'scaping the gallows."

This was an unanswerable argument, and reduced Quentin at once to acquiesce in what he might have otherwise considered as no very agreeable proposal; but the recent escape from the halter, which had been actually around his neck, would probably have reconciled him to a worse alternative than was proposed.

"He must go home with us to our caserne," said Cunningham; "there is no safety for him out of our bounds, whilst these man hunters are prowling."

"May I not then abide for this night at the hostelry where I breakfasted, fair uncle?" said the youth—thinking, perhaps, like many a new recruit, that even a single night of freedom was something gained.

"Yes, fair nephew," answered his uncle, ironically, "that we may have the pleasure of fishing you out of some canal or moat, or perhaps out of a loop of the Loire, knit up in a sack for the greater convenience of swimming—for that is like to be the end on't. The Provost Marshal smiled on us when we parted," continued he, addressing Cunningham, "and that is a sign his thoughts were dangerous."

"I care not for his danger," said Cunningham; "such game as we are beyond his bird bolts. But I would have thee tell the whole to the Devil's Oliver [Oliver Dain: Oliver's name, or nickname, was Le Diable, which was bestowed on him by public hatred, in exchange for Le Daim, or Le Dain. He was originally the King's barber, but afterwards a favourite counsellor. S.], who is always a good friend to the Scottish Guard, and will see Father Louis before the Provost can, for he is to shave him tomorrow."

"But hark you," said Balafre, "it is ill going to Oliver empty handed, and I am as bare as the birch in December."

"So are we all," said Cunningham. "Oliver must not scruple to take our Scottish words for once. We will make up something handsome among us against the next payday; and if he expects to share, let me tell you, the payday will come about all the sooner."

"And now for the Chateau," said Balafre; "and my nephew shall tell us by the way how he brought the Provost Marshal on his shoulders, that we may know how to frame our report both to Crawford and Oliver."

CHAPTER VII: THE ENROLMENT

Justice of Peace.—

Here, hand me down the statute—read the articles—

Swear, kiss the book—subscribe, and be a hero;

Drawing a portion from the public stock

For deeds of valour to be done hereafter—

Sixpence per day, subsistence and arrears.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER

An attendant upon the Archers having been dismounted, Quentin Durward was accommodated with his horse, and, in company of his martial countrymen, rode at a round pace towards the Castle of Plessis, about to become, although on his own part involuntarily, an inhabitant of that gloomy fortress, the outside of which had, that morning, struck him with so much surprise.

In the meanwhile, in answer to his uncle's repeated interrogations, he gave him an exact account of the accident which had that morning brought him into so much danger. Although he himself saw nothing in his narrative save what was affecting, he found it was received with much laughter by his escort.

"And yet it is no good jest either," said his uncle, "for what, in the devil's name, could lead the senseless boy to meddle with the body of a cursed misbelieving Jewish Moorish pagan?"

"Had he quarrelled with the Marshals men about a pretty wench, as Michael of Moffat did, there had been more sense in it," said Cunningham.

"But I think it touches our honour that Tristan and his people pretend to confound our Scottish bonnets with these pilfering vagabonds—torques and turbands, as they call them," said Lindesay. "If they have not eyes to see the difference they must be taught by rule of hand. But it 's my belief, Tristan but pretends to mistake, that he may snap up the kindly Scots that come over to see their kinsfolks."

"May I ask, kinsman," said Quentin, "what sort of people these are of whom you speak?"

"In troth you may ask," said his uncle, "but I know not, fair nephew, who is able to answer you. Not I, I am sure, although I know, it may be, as much as other people; but they appeared in this land within a year or two, just as a flight of locusts might do."

"Ay," said Lindesay, "and Jacques Bonhomme (that is our name for the peasant, young man—you will learn our way of talk in time)—honest Jacques, I say, cares little what wind either brings them or the locusts, so he but knows any gale that would carry them away again."

"Do they do so much evil?" asked the young man.

"Evil? why, boy, they are heathens, or Jews, or Mahommedans at the least, and neither worship Our Lady, nor the Saints" (crossing himself) "and steal what they can lay hands on, and sing, and tell fortunes," added Cunningham.

"And they say there are some goodly wenches amongst these," said Guthrie; "but Cunningham knows that best."

"How, brother!" said Cunningham. "I trust ye mean me no reproach?"

"I am sure I said ye none," answered Guthrie.

"I will be judged by the company," said Cunningham. "Ye said as much as that I, a Scottish gentleman, and living within pale of holy church, had a fair friend among these off scourings of Heathenesse."

"Nay, nay," said Balafre, "he did but jest. We will have no quarrels among comrades."

"We must have no such jesting then," said Cunningham, murmuring, as if he had been speaking to his own beard.

"Be there such vagabonds in other lands than France?" said Lindesay.

"Ay, in good sooth, are there—tribes of them have appeared in Germany, and in Spain, and in England," answered Balafre. "By the blessing of good Saint Andrew, Scotland is free of them yet."

"Scotland," said Cunningham, "is too cold, a country for locusts, and too poor a country for thieves."

"Or perhaps John Highlander will suffer no thieves to thrive there but his own," said Guthrie.

"I let you all know," said Balafre, "that I come from the Braes of Angus, and have gentle Highland kin in Glen Isla and I will not have the Highlanders slandered."

"You will not deny that they are cattle lifters?" said Guthrie.

"To drive a spreagh [to plunder] or so, is no thievery," said Balafre, "and that I will maintain when and how you dare."

"For shame, comrade!" said Cunningham, "who quarrels now? The young man should not see such mad misconstruction—Come, here we are at the Chateau. I will bestow a runlet of wine to have a rouse in friendship, and drink to Scotland, Highland and Lowland both, if you will meet me at dinner at my quarters."

"Agreed—agreed," said Balafre; "and I will bestow another to wash away unkindness, and to drink a health to my nephew on his first entrance to our corps."

At their approach, the wicket was opened, and the drawbridge fell. One by one they entered; but when Quentin appeared, the sentinels crossed their pikes, and commanded him to stand, while bows were bent, and harquebusses aimed at him from the walls, a rigour of vigilance used, notwithstanding that the young stranger came in company of a party of the garrison, nay, of the very body which furnished the sentinels who were then upon duty.

Le Balafre, who had remained by his nephew's side on purpose, gave the necessary explanations, and, after some considerable hesitation and delay, the youth was conveyed under a strong guard to the Lord Crawford's apartment.

This Scottish nobleman was one of the last relics of the gallant band of Scottish lords and knights who had so long and so truly served Charles VI in those bloody wars which decided the independence of the French crown, and the expulsion of the English. He had fought, when a boy, abreast with Douglas and with Buchan, had ridden beneath the banner of the Maid of Arc, and was perhaps one of the last of those associates of Scottish chivalry who had so willingly drawn their swords for the fleur de lys, against their "auld enemies of England." Changes which had taken place in the Scottish kingdom, and perhaps his having become habituated to French climate and manners, had induced the old Baron to resign all thoughts of returning to his native country, the rather that the high office which he held in the household of Louis and his own frank and loyal character had gained a considerable ascendancy over the King, who, though in general no ready believer in human virtue or honour, trusted and confided in those of the Lord Crawford, and allowed him the greater influence, because he was never known to interfere excepting in matters which concerned his charge.

[Douglas: fourth earl of Douglas. He was created Duke of Touraine in 1423 by Charles VII of France.]

[Buchan: Regent of Scotland and grandson of Robert II. He entered the service of Charles VII in 1420, and was appointed Constable of France.]

[Maid of Arc (1412-1431): Joan of Arc. She believed that God had called her to liberate France from the curse of the English who were besieging Orleans. In person she led the French troops from victory to victory until she saw the Dauphin crowned as Charles VII at Rheims. She was then betrayed by her people into the hands of the English, who, in 1431, sentenced her to the flames.]

Balafre and Cunningham followed Durward and the guard to the apartment of their officer, by whose dignified appearance, as well as with the respect paid to him by these proud soldiers, who seemed to respect no one else, the young man was much and strongly impressed.

Lord Crawford was tall, and through advanced age had become gaunt and thin; yet retaining in his sinews the strength, at least, if not the elasticity, of youth, he was able to endure the weight of his armour during a march as well as the youngest man who rode in his band. He was hard favoured, with a scarred and weather-beaten countenance, and an eye that had looked upon death as his playfellow in thirty pitched battles, but which nevertheless expressed a calm contempt of danger, rather than the ferocious courage of a mercenary soldier. His tall, erect figure was at present wrapped in a loose chamber gown, secured around him by his buff belt, in which was suspended his richly hilted poniard. He had round his neck the collar and badge of the order of Saint Michael [a patron saint of France. In 1469, a military order was instituted in his honour by Louis XI]. He sat upon a couch covered with deer's hide, and with spectacles on his nose (then a recent invention) was labouring to read a huge manuscript called the Rosier de la Guerre, a code of military and civil policy which Louis had compiled for the benefit of his son the Dauphin, and upon which he was desirous to have the opinion of the experienced Scottish warrior.

Lord Crawford laid his book somewhat peevishly aside upon the entrance of these unexpected visitors, and demanded, in his broad national dialect, what, in the foul fiend's name, they lacked now.

Le Balafre, with more respect than perhaps he would have shown to Louis himself, stated at full length the circumstances in which his nephew was placed, and humbly requested his Lordship's protection. Lord Crawford listened very attentively. He could not but smile at the simplicity with which the youth had interfered in behalf of the hanged criminal, but he shook his head at the account which he received of the ruffle betwixt the Scottish Archers and the Provost Marshal's guard.

[Such disputes between the Scots Guards and the other constituted authorities of the ordinary military corps often occurred. In 1474, two Scotsmen had been concerned in robbing... a fishmonger of a large sum of money. They were accordingly apprehended by Philip du Four, Provost, with some of his followers. But ere they could lodge one of them,... in the prison of the Chastellet, they were attacked by two Archers of the King's Scottish Guard, who rescued the prisoner.... S.]

"How often," he said, "will you bring me such ill winded pirms to ravel out? How often must I tell you, and especially both you, Ludovic Lesly, and you, Archie Cunningham, that the foreign soldier should bear himself modestly and decorously towards the people of the country if you would not have the whole dogs of the town at your heels? However, if you must have a bargain [a quarrel, videlicet. S.], I would rather it were with that loon of a Provost than any one else; and I blame you less for this onslaught than for other frays that you have made, Ludovic, for it was but natural and kind-like to help your young kinsman. This simple bairn must come to no skaith [same as scathe] neither; so give me the roll of the company yonder down from the shelf, and we will even add his name to the troop, that he may enjoy the privileges."

"May it please your Lordship" said Durward.

"Is the lad crazed?" exclaimed his uncle. "Would you speak to his Lordship without a question asked?"

"Patience, Ludovic," said Lord Crawford, "and let us hear what the bairn has to say."

"Only this, if it may please your Lordship," replied Quentin, "that I told my uncle formerly I had some doubts about entering this service. I have now to say that they are entirely removed, since I have seen the noble and experienced commander under whom I am to serve; for there is authority in your look."

"Weel said, my bairn," said the old Lord, not insensible to the compliment; "we have had some experience, had God sent us grace to improve by it, both in service and in command. There you stand, Quentin, in our honourable corps of Scottish Bodyguards, as esquire to your uncle, and serving under his lance. I trust you will do well, for you should be a right man at arms, if all be good that is upcome [that is, if your courage corresponds with your personal appearance. S.], and you are come of a gentle kindred.—Ludovic, you will see that your kinsman follow his exercise diligently, for we will have spears breaking one of these days."

"By my hilts, and I am glad of it, my Lord—this peace makes cowards of us all. I myself feel a sort of decay of spirit, closed up in this cursed dungeon of a Castle."

"Well, a bird whistled in my ear," continued Lord Crawford, "that the old banner will be soon dancing in the field again."

"I will drink a cup the deeper this evening to that very tune," said Balafre.

"Thou wilt drink to any tune," said Lord Crawford; "and I fear me, Ludovic, you will drink a bitter browst [as much liquor as is brewed at one time] of your own brewing one day."

Lesly, a little abashed, replied that it had not been his wont for many a day; but that his Lordship knew the use of the company, to have a carouse to the health of a new comrade.

"True," said the old leader, "I had forgot the occasion. I will send a few stoups of wine to assist your carouse; but let it be over by sunset. And, hark ye—let the soldiers for duty be carefully pricked off; and see that none of them be more or less partakers of your debauch."

"Your Lordship shall be lawfully obeyed," said Ludovic, "and your health duly remembered."

"Perhaps," said Lord Crawford, "I may look in myself upon your mirth—just to see that all is carried decently."

"Your Lordship shall be most dearly welcome;" said Ludovic; and the whole party retreated in high spirits to prepare for their military banquet, to which Lesly invited about a score of his comrades, who were pretty much in the habit of making their mess together.

A soldier's festival is generally a very extempore affair, providing there is enough of meat and drink to be had; but on the present occasion, Ludovic bustled about to procure some better wine than ordinary; observing that the old Lord was the surest gear in their aught, and that, while he preached sobriety to them, he himself, after drinking at the royal table as much wine as he could honestly come by, never omitted any creditable opportunity to fill up the evening over the wine pot.

"So you must prepare, comrades," he said, "to hear the old histories of the battles of Vernoil and Beauge [in both these battles the Scottish auxiliaries of France, under Stewart, Earl of Buchan, were distinguished.... S.]."

The Gothic apartment in which they generally met was, therefore, hastily put into the best order; their grooms were dispatched to collect green rushes to spread upon the floor; and banners, under which the Scottish Guard had marched to battle, or which they had taken from the enemies' ranks, were displayed, by way of tapestry, over the table and around the walls of the chamber.

The next point was, to invest the young recruit as hastily as possible with the dress and appropriate arms of the Guard, that he might appear in every respect the sharer of its important privileges, in virtue of which, and by the support of his countrymen, he might freely brave the power and the displeasure of the Provost Marshal—although the one was known to be as formidable as the other was unrelenting.

The banquet was joyous in the highest degree; and the guests gave vent to the whole current of their national partiality on receiving into their ranks a recruit from their beloved fatherland. Old Scottish songs were sung, old tales of Scottish heroes told—the achievements of their fathers, and the scenes in which they were wrought, were recalled to mind; and, for a time, the rich plains of Touraine seemed converted into the mountainous and sterile regions of Caledonia.

When their enthusiasm was at high flood, and each was endeavouring to say something to enhance the dear remembrance of Scotland, it received a new impulse from the arrival of Lord Crawford, who, as Le Balafre had well prophesied, sat as it were on thorns at the royal board, until an opportunity occurred of making his escape to the revelry of his own countrymen. A chair of state had been reserved for him at the upper end of the table; for, according to the manners of the age and the constitution of that body, although their leader and commander under the King and High Constable, the members of the corps (as we should now say, the privates) being all ranked as noble by birth, their captain sat with them at the same table without impropriety, and might mingle when he chose in their festivity, without derogation from his dignity as commander.

At present, however, Lord Crawford declined occupying the seat prepared for him, and bidding them "hold themselves merry," stood looking on the revel with a countenance which seemed greatly to enjoy it.

"Let him alone," whispered Cunningham to Lindesay, as the latter offered the wine to their noble captain, "let him alone—hurry no man's cattle—let him take it of his own accord."

In fact, the old Lord, who at first smiled, shook his head, and placed the untasted winecup before him, began presently, as if it were in absence of mind, to sip a little of the contents, and in doing so, fortunately recollected that it would be ill luck did he not drink a draught to the health of the gallant lad who had joined them this day. The pledge was filled, and answered, as may well be supposed, with many a joyous shout, when the old leader proceeded to acquaint them that he had possessed Master Oliver with an account of what had passed that day.

"And as," he said, "the scraper of chins hath no great love for the stretcher of throats, he has joined me in obtaining from the King an order, commanding the Provost to suspend all proceedings, under whatever pretence, against Quentin Durward; and to respect, on all occasions, the privileges of the Scottish guard."

Another shout broke forth, the cups were again filled till the wine sparkled on the brim, and there was an acclaim to the health of the noble Lord Crawford, the brave conservator of the privileges and rights of his countrymen. The good old Lord could not but in courtesy do reason to this pledge also, and gliding into the ready chair; as it were, without reflecting what he was doing, he caused Quentin to come up beside him, and assailed him with many more questions concerning the state of Scotland, and the great families there, than he was well able to answer, while ever and anon, in the course of his queries, the good Lord kissed the wine cup by way of parenthesis, remarking that sociality became Scottish gentlemen, but that young men, like Quentin, ought to practise it cautiously, lest it might degenerate into excess; upon which occasion he uttered many excellent things, until his own tongue, although employed in the praises of temperance, began to articulate something thicker than usual. It was now that, while the military ardour of the company augmented with each flagon which they emptied, Cunningham called on them to drink the speedy hoisting of the Oriflamme, the royal banner of France.

"And a breeze of Burgundy to fan it!" echoed Lindesay.

"With all the soul that is left in this worn body do I accept the pledge, bairns," echoed Lord Crawford; "and as old as I am, I trust I may see it flutter yet. Hark ye, my mates," (for wine had made him something communicative), "ye are all true servants to the French crown, and wherefore should ye not know there is an envoy come from Duke Charles of Burgundy, with a message of an angry favour?"

"I saw the Count of Crevecoeur's equipage, horses, and retinue," said another of the guests, "down at the inn yonder at the Mulberry Grove. They say the King will not admit him into the Castle."

"Now, Heaven send him an ungracious answer!" said Guthrie; "but what is it he complains of?"

"A world of grievances upon the frontier," said Lord Crawford; "and latterly, that the King hath received under his protection a lady of his land, a young Countess, who hath fled from Dijon, because, being a ward of the Duke, he would have her marry his favourite, Campobasso."

"And hath she actually come hither alone, my lord?" said Lindesay.

"Nay, not altogether alone, but with the old Countess, her kinswoman, who hath yielded to her cousin's wishes in this matter."

"And will the King," said Cunningham, "he being the Duke's feudal sovereign, interfere between the Duke and his ward, over whom Charles hath the same right, which, were he himself dead, the King would have over the heiress of Burgundy?"

"The King will be ruled as he is wont, by rules of policy, and you know," continued Crawford, "that he hath not publicly received these ladies, nor placed them under the protection of his daughters, the Lady of Beaujeu, or the Princess Joan, so, doubtless, he will be guided by circumstances. He is our Master—but it is no treason to say, he will chase with the hounds, and run with the hare, with any prince in Christendom."

"But the Duke of Burgundy understands no such doubling," said Cunningham.

"No," answered the old Lord; "and, therefore, it is likely to make work between them."

"Well—Saint Andrew further the fray!" said Le Balafre. "I had it foretold me ten, ay, twenty years since, that I was to make the fortune of my house by marriage. Who knows what may happen, if once we come to fight for honour and ladies' love, as they do in the old romaunts."

"Thou name ladies' love, with such a trench in thy visage!" said Guthrie.

"As well not love at all, as love a Bohemian woman of Heathenesse," retorted Le Balafre.

"Hold there, comrades," said Lord Crawford; "no tilting with keen scoffs—friends all. And for the lady, she is too wealthy to fall to a poor Scottish lord, or I would put in my own claim, fourscore years and all, or not very far from it. But here is her health, nevertheless, for they say she is a lamp of beauty."

"I think I saw her," said another soldier, "when I was upon guard this morning at the inner barrier; but she was more like a dark lantern than a lamp, for she and another were brought into the Chateau in close litters."

"Shame! shame! Arnot!" said Lord Crawford; "a soldier on duty should say naught of what he sees. Besides," he added after a pause, his own curiosity prevailing over the show of discipline which he had thought it necessary to exert, "why should these litters contain this very same Countess Isabelle de Croye?"

"Nay, my Lord," replied Arnot, "I know nothing of it save this, that my coutelier was airing my horses in the road to the village, and fell in with Doguin the muleteer, who brought back the litters to the inn, for they belong to the fellow of the Mulberry Grove yonder—he of the Fleur de Lys, I mean—and so Doguin asked Saunders Steed to take a cup of wine, as they were acquainted, which he was no doubt willing enough to do."

"No doubt—no doubt," said the old Lord; "it is a thing I wish were corrected among you, gentlemen; but all your grooms, and couteliers, and jackmen as we should call them in Scotland, are but too ready to take a cup of wine with any one.—It is a thing perilous in war, and must be amended. But, Andrew Arnot, this is a long tale of yours, and we will cut it with a drink; as the Highlander says, Skeoch doch nan skial ['Cut a tale with a drink;' an expression used when a man preaches over his liquor, as *bons vivants* say in England. S.]; and that 's good Gaelic.—Here is to the Countess Isabelle of Croye, and a better husband to her than Campobasso, who is a base Italian cullion!—And now, Andrew Arnot, what said the muleteer to this yeoman of thine?"

"Why, he told him in secrecy, if it please your Lordship," continued Arnot, "that these two ladies whom he had presently before convoyed up to the Castle in the close litters, were great ladies, who had been living in secret at his house for some days, and that the King had visited them more than once very privately, and had done them great honour; and that they had fled up to the Castle, as he believed, for fear of the Count de Crevecoeur, the Duke of Burgundy's ambassador, whose approach was just announced by an advanced courier."

"Ay, Andrew, come you there to me?" said Guthrie. "Then I will be sworn it was the Countess whose voice I heard singing to the lute, as I came even now through the inner court—the sound came from the bay windows of the Dauphin's Tower; and such melody was there as no one ever heard before in the Castle of Plessis of the Park. By my faith, I thought it was the music of the Fairy Melusina's making. There I stood—though I knew your board was covered, and that you were all impatient—there I stood like—"

[The Fairy Melusina: a water fay who married a mortal on condition that she should be allowed to spend her Saturdays in deep seclusion. This promise, after many years, was broken, and Melusina, half serpent, half woman, was discovered swimming in a bath. For this breach of faith on the part of her husband, Melusina was compelled to leave her home. She regularly returned, however, before the death of any of the lords of her family, and by her wailings foretold that event. Her history is closely interwoven with the legends of the Banshee and Mermaid.]

"—Like an ass, Johnny Guthrie," said his commander; "thy long nose smelling the dinner, thy long ears hearing the music, and thy short discretion not enabling thee to decide which of them thou didst prefer.—Hark! is that not the Cathedral bell tolling to vespers?—Sure it cannot be that time yet? The mad old sexton has toll'd evensong an hour too soon."

"In faith, the bell rings but too justly the hour," said Cunningham; "yonder the sun is sinking on the west side of the fair plain."

"Ay," said the Lord Crawford, "is it even so?—Well, lads, we must live within compass.—Fair and soft goes far—slow fire makes sweet malt—to be merry and wise is a sound proverb.—One other rouse to the weal of old Scotland, and then each man to his duty."

The parting cup was emptied, and the guests dismissed—the stately old Baron taking the Balafre's arm, under pretence of giving him some instructions concerning his nephew, but, perhaps, in reality, lest his own lofty pace should seem in the public eye less steady than became his rank and high command. A serious countenance did he bear as he passed through the two courts which separated his lodging from the festal chamber, and solemn as the gravity of a hogshead was the farewell caution with which he prayed Ludovic to attend his nephew's motions, especially in the matters of wenches and wine cups.

Meanwhile, not a word that was spoken concerning the beautiful Countess Isabelle had escaped the young Durward, who, conducted into a small cabin, which he was to share with his uncle's page, made his new and lowly abode the scene of much high musing. The reader will easily imagine that the young soldier should build a fine romance on such a foundation as the supposed, or rather the assumed, identification of the Maiden of the Turret, to whose lay he had listened with so much interest, and the fair cup bearer of Maitre Pierre, with a fugitive Countess of rank and wealth, flying from the pursuit of a hated lover, the favourite of an oppressive guardian, who abused his feudal power. There was an interlude in Quentin's vision concerning Maitre Pierre, who seemed to exercise such authority even over the formidable officer from whose hands he had that day, with much difficulty, made his escape. At length the youth's reveries, which had been respected by little Will Harper, the companion of his cell, were broken in upon by the return of his uncle, who commanded Quentin to bed, that he might arise betimes in the morning, and attend him to his Majesty's antechamber, to which he was called by his hour of duty, along with five of his comrades.

CHAPTER VIII: THE ENVOY

*Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;
For ere thou canst report I will be there.
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard—
So, hence! be thou the trumpet of our wrath.*

KING JOHN

Had sloth been a temptation by which Durward was easily beset, the noise with which the caserne of the guards resounded after the first toll of primes, had certainly banished the siren from his couch; but the discipline of his father's tower, and of the convent of Aberbrothick, had taught him to start with the dawn; and he did on his clothes gaily, amid the sounding of bugles and the clash of armour, which announced the change of the vigilant guards—some of whom were returning to barracks after their nightly duty, whilst some were marching out to that of the morning—and others, again, amongst whom was his uncle, were arming for immediate attendance upon the person of Louis. Quentin Durward soon put on, with the feelings of so young a man on such an occasion, the splendid dress and arms appertaining to his new situation; and his uncle, who looked with great accuracy and interest to see that he was completely fitted out in every respect, did not conceal his satisfaction at the improvement which had been thus made in his nephew's appearance.

"If thou dost prove as faithful and bold as thou art well favoured, I shall have in thee one of the handsomest and best esquires in the Guard, which cannot but be an honour to thy mother's family. Follow me to the presence chamber; and see thou keep close at my shoulder."

So saying, he took up a partisan, large, weighty, and beautifully inlaid and ornamented, and directing his nephew to assume a lighter weapon of a similar description, they proceeded to the inner court of the palace, where their comrades, who were to form the guard of the interior apartments, were already drawn up and under arms—the squires each standing behind their masters, to whom they thus formed a second rank. Here were also in attendance many yeomen prickers, with gallant horses and noble dogs, on which Quentin looked with such inquisitive delight that his uncle was obliged more than once to remind him that the animals were not there for his private amusement, but for the King's, who had a strong passion for the chase, one of the few inclinations which he indulged even when coming in competition with his course of policy; being so strict a protector of the game in the royal forests that it was currently said you might kill a man with greater impunity than a stag.

On a signal given, the Guards were put into motion by the command of Le Balafre, who acted as officer upon the occasion; and, after some minutiae of word and signal, which all served to show the extreme and punctilious jealousy with which their duty was performed, they marched into the hall of audience where the King was immediately expected.

New as Quentin was to scenes of splendour, the effect of that which was now before him rather disappointed the expectations which he had formed of the brilliancy of a court. There were household officers, indeed, richly attired; there were guards gallantly armed, and there were domestics of various degrees. But he saw none of the ancient counsellors of the kingdom, none of the high officers of the crown, heard none of the names which in those days sounded an alarum to chivalry; saw none either of those generals or leaders, who, possessed of the full prime of manhood, were the strength of France, or of the more youthful and fiery nobles, those early aspirants after honour, who were her pride. The jealous habits, the reserved manners, the deep and artful policy of the King, had estranged this splendid circle from the throne, and they were only called around it upon certain stated and formal occasions, when they went reluctantly, and returned joyfully, as the animals in the fable are supposed to have approached and left the den of the lion.

The very few persons who seemed to be there in the character of counsellors were mean looking men, whose countenances sometimes expressed sagacity, but whose manners showed they were called into a sphere for which their previous education and habits had qualified them but indifferently. One or two persons, however, did appear to Durward to possess a more noble mien, and the strictness of the present duty was not such as to prevent his uncle's communicating the names of those whom he thus distinguished.

With the Lord Crawford, who was in attendance, dressed in the rich habit of his office, and holding a leading staff of silver in his hand, Quentin, as well as the reader, was already acquainted. Among others, who seemed of quality, the most remarkable was the Count de Dunois, the son of that celebrated Dunois, known by the name of the Bastard of Orleans, who, fighting under the banner of Jeanne d'Arc, acted such a distinguished part in liberating France from the English yoke. His son well supported the high renown which had descended to him from such an honoured source; and, notwithstanding his connexion with the royal family, and his hereditary popularity both with the nobles and the people, Dunois had, upon all occasions, manifested such an open, frank loyalty of character that he seemed to have escaped all suspicion, even on the part of the jealous Louis, who loved to see him near his person, and sometimes even called him to his councils.

Although accounted complete in all the exercises of chivalry, and possessed of much of the character of what was then termed a perfect knight, the person of the Count was far from being a model of romantic beauty. He was under the common size, though very strongly built, and his legs rather curved outwards, into that make which is more convenient for horseback, than elegant in a pedestrian. His shoulders were broad, his hair black, his complexion swarthy, his arms remarkably long and nervous. The features of his countenance were irregular, even to ugliness; yet, after all, there was an air of conscious worth and nobility about the Count de Dunois, which stamped, at the first glance, the character of the high born nobleman and the undaunted soldier. His mien was bold and upright, his step free and manly, and the harshness of his countenance was dignified by a glance like an eagle, and a frown like a lion. His dress was a hunting suit, rather sumptuous than gay, and he acted on most occasions as Grand Huntsman, though we are not inclined to believe that he actually held the office.

Upon the arm of his relation Dunois, walking with a step so slow and melancholy that he seemed to rest on his kinsman and supporter, came Louis Duke of Orleans, the first prince of the Blood Royal (afterwards King, by the name of Louis XII), and to whom the guards and attendants rendered their homage as such. The jealously watched object of Louis's suspicions, this Prince, who, failing the King's offspring, was heir to the kingdom, was not suffered to absent himself from Court, and, while residing there, was alike denied employment and countenance. The dejection which his degraded and almost captive state naturally impressed on the deportment of this unfortunate Prince, was at this moment greatly increased by his consciousness that the King meditated, with respect to him, one of the most cruel and unjust actions which a tyrant could commit, by compelling him to give his hand to the Princess Joan of France, the younger daughter of Louis, to whom he had been contracted in infancy, but whose deformed person rendered the insisting upon such an agreement an act of abominable rigour.

The exterior of this unhappy Prince was in no respect distinguished by personal advantages; and in mind, he was of a gentle, mild and beneficent disposition, qualities which were visible even through the veil of extreme dejection with which his natural character was at present obscured. Quentin observed that the Duke studiously avoided even looking at the Royal Guards, and when he returned their salute, that he kept his eyes bent on the ground, as if he feared the King's jealousy might have construed the gesture of ordinary courtesy as arising from the purpose of establishing a separate and personal interest among them.

Very different was the conduct of the proud Cardinal and Prelate, John of Balue, the favourite minister of Louis for the time, whose rise and character bore as close a resemblance to that of Wolsey, as the difference betwixt the crafty and politic Louis and the headlong and rash Henry VIII of England would permit. The former had raised his minister from the lowest rank, to the dignity, or at least to the emoluments, of Grand Almoner of France, loaded him with benefices, and obtained for him the hat of a cardinal; and although he was too cautious to repose in the ambitious Balue the unbounded power and trust which Henry placed in Wolsey, yet he was more influenced by him than by any other of his avowed counsellors. The Cardinal, accordingly, had not escaped the error incidental to those who are suddenly raised to power from an obscure situation, for he entertained a strong persuasion, dazzled doubtlessly by the suddenness of his elevation, that his capacity was equal to intermeddling with affairs of every kind, even those most foreign to his profession and studies. Tall and ungainly in his person, he affected gallantry and admiration of the fair sex, although his manners rendered his pretensions absurd, and his profession marked them as indecorous. Some male or female flatterer had, in evil hour, possessed him with the idea that there was much beauty of contour in a pair of huge, substantial legs, which he had derived from his father, a car man of Limoges—or, according to other authorities, a miller of Verdun, and with this idea he had become so infatuated that he always had his cardinal's robes a little looped up on one side, that the sturdy proportion of his limbs might not escape observation. As he swept through the stately apartment in his crimson dress and rich cope, he stopped repeatedly to look at the arms and appointments of the cavaliers on guard, asked them several questions in an authoritative tone, and took upon him to censure some of them for what he termed irregularities of discipline, in language to which these experienced soldiers dared no reply, although it was plain they listened to it with impatience and with contempt.

[Wolsey (1471-1530): at one time the chief favourite of Henry VIII. He was raised from obscurity by that sovereign to be Archbishop of York, Lord Chancellor of England, and Cardinal. As legate of the Pope, he gained the ill will of Henry by his failure to secure that king's divorce. He was deprived of his offices, his property was confiscated to the crown, and in 1530 he was arrested for high treason, but died on his way to trial.]

"Is the King aware," said Dunois to the Cardinal, "that the Burgundian Envoy is peremptory in demanding an audience?"

"He is," answered the Cardinal; "and here, as I think, comes the all sufficient Oliver Dain, to let us know the royal pleasure."

As he spoke, a remarkable person, who then divided the favour of Louis with the proud Cardinal himself, entered from the inner apartment, but without any of that important and consequential demeanour which marked the full blown dignity of the churchman. On the contrary, this was a little, pale, meagre man, whose black silk jerkin and hose, without either coat, cloak, or cassock, formed a dress ill qualified to set off to advantage a very ordinary person. He carried a silver basin in his hand, and a napkin flung over his arm indicated his menial capacity. His visage was penetrating and quick, although he endeavoured to banish such expression from his features by keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, while, with the stealthy and quiet pace of a cat, he seemed modestly rather to glide than to walk through the apartment. But though modesty may easily obscure worth, it cannot hide court favour; and all attempts to steal unperceived through the presence chamber were vain, on the part of one known to have such possession of the King's ear as had been attained by his celebrated barber and groom of the chamber, Oliver le Dain, called sometimes Oliver le Mauvais, and sometimes Oliver le Diable, epithets derived from the unscrupulous cunning with which he assisted in the execution of the schemes of his master's tortuous policy. At present he spoke earnestly for a few moments with the Count de Dunois, who instantly left the chamber, while the tonsor glided quietly back towards the royal apartment whence he had issued, every one giving place to him; which civility he only acknowledged by the most humble inclination of the body, excepting in a very few instances, where he made one or two persons the subject of envy to all the other courtiers, by whispering a single word in their ear; and at the same time muttering something of the duties of his place, he escaped from their replies as well as from the eager solicitations of those who wished to attract his notice. Ludovic Lesly had the good fortune to be one of the individuals who, on the present occasion, was favoured by Oliver with a single word, to assure him that his matter was fortunately terminated.

Presently afterwards he had another proof of the same agreeable tidings; for Quentin's old acquaintance, Tristan l'Hermite, the Provost Marshal of the royal household, entered the apartment, and came straight to the place where Balafre was posted. This formidable officer's uniform, which was very rich, had only the effect of making his sinister countenance and bad mien more strikingly remarkable, and the tone, which he meant for conciliatory, was like nothing so much as the growling of a bear. The import of his words, however, was more amicable than the voice in which they were pronounced. He regretted the mistake which had fallen between them on the preceding day, and observed it was owing to the Sieur Le Balafre's nephew's not wearing the uniform of his corps, or announcing himself as belonging to it, which had led him into the error for which he now asked forgiveness.

Ludovic Lesly made the necessary reply, and as soon as Tristan had turned away, observed to his nephew that they had now the distinction of having a mortal enemy from henceforward in the person of this dreaded officer.

"But we are above his volée [brood, rank, class]—a soldier," said he, "who does his duty, may laugh at the Provost Marshal."

Quentin could not help being of his uncle's opinion, for, as Tristan parted from them, it was with the look of angry defiance which the bear casts upon the hunter whose spear has wounded him. Indeed, even when less strongly moved, the sullen eye of this official expressed a malevolence of purpose which made men shudder to meet his glance; and the thrill of the young Scot was the deeper and more abhorrent, that he seemed to himself still to feel on his shoulders the grasp of the two death doing functionaries of this fatal officer.

Meanwhile, Oliver, after he had prowled around the room in the stealthy manner which we have endeavoured to describe—all, even the highest officers making way for him, and loading him with their ceremonious attentions, which his modesty seemed desirous to avoid—again entered the inner apartment, the doors of which were presently thrown open, and King Louis entered the presence chamber.

Quentin, like all others, turned his eyes upon him; and started so suddenly that he almost dropped his weapon, when he recognised in the King of France that silk merchant, Maître Pierre, who had been the companion of his morning walk. Singular suspicions respecting the real rank of this person had at different times crossed his thoughts; but this, the proved reality, was wilder than his wildest conjecture.

The stern look of his uncle, offended at this breach of the decorum of his office, recalled him to himself; but not a little was he astonished when the King, whose quick eye had at once discovered him, walked straight to the place where he was posted, without taking notice of any one else.

"So," he said, "young man, I am told you have been brawling on your first arrival in Touraine; but I pardon you, as it was chiefly the fault of a foolish old merchant, who thought your Caledonian blood required to be heated in the morning with Vin de Beaulne. If I can find him, I will make him an example to those who debauch my Guards.—Balafre," he added, speaking to Lesly, "your kinsman is a fair youth, though a fiery. We love to cherish such spirits, and mean to make more than ever we did of the brave men who are around us. Let the year, day, hour, and minute of your nephew's birth be written down and given to Oliver Dain."

Le Balafre bowed to the ground, and re-assumed his erect military position, as one who would show by his demeanour his promptitude to act in the King's quarrel or defence. Quentin, in the meantime, recovered from his first surprise, studied the King's appearance more attentively, and was surprised to find how differently he now construed his deportment and features than he had done at their first interview.

These were not much changed in exterior, for Louis, always a scorner of outward show, wore, on the present occasion, an old dark blue hunting dress, not much better than the plain burgher suit of the preceding day, and garnished with a huge rosary of ebony which had been sent to him by no less a personage than the Grand Seigneur, with an attestation that it had been used by a Coptic hermit on Mount Lebanon, a personage of profound sanctity. And instead of his cap with a single image, he now wore a hat, the band of which was garnished with at least a dozen of little paltry figures of saints stamped in lead. But those eyes, which, according to Quentin's former impression, only twinkled with the love of gain, had, now that they were known to be the property of an able and powerful monarch, a piercing and majestic glance; and those wrinkles on the brow, which he had supposed were formed during a long series of petty schemes of commerce, seemed now the furrows which sagacity had worn while toiling in meditation upon the fate of nations.

Presently after the King's appearance, the Princesses of France, with the ladies of their suite, entered the apartment. With the eldest, afterwards married to Peter of Bourbon, and known in French history by the name of the Lady of Beaujeu, our story has but little to do. She was tall, and rather handsome, possessed eloquence, talent, and much of her father's sagacity, who reposed great confidence in her, and loved her as well perhaps as he loved any one.

The younger sister, the unfortunate Joan, the destined bride of the Duke of Orleans, advanced timidly by the side of her sister, conscious of a total want of those external qualities which women are most desirous of possessing, or being thought to possess. She was pale, thin, and sickly in her complexion; her shape visibly bent to one side, and her gait was so unequal that she might be called lame. A fine set of teeth, and eyes which were expressive of melancholy, softness, and resignation, with a quantity of light brown locks, were the only redeeming points which flattery itself could have dared to number, to counteract the general homeliness of her face and figure. To complete the picture, it was easy to remark, from the Princess's negligence in dress and the timidity of her manner, that she had an unusual and distressing consciousness of her own plainness of appearance, and did not dare to make any of those attempts to mend by manners or by art what nature had left amiss, or in any other way to exert a power of pleasing. The King (who loved her not) stepped hastily to her as she entered.

"How now," he said, "our world contemning daughter—Are you robed for a hunting party, or for the convent, this morning? Speak—answer."

"For which your highness pleases, sire," said the Princess, scarce raising her voice above her breath.

"Ay, doubtless, you would persuade me it is your desire to quit the Court, Joan, and renounce the world and its vanities.—Ha! maiden, wouldst thou have it thought that we, the first born of Holy Church, would refuse our daughter to Heaven?—Our Lady and Saint Martin forbid we should refuse the offering, were it worthy of the altar, or were thy vocation in truth thitherward!"

So saying, the King crossed himself devoutly, looking in the meantime, as appeared to Quentin, very like a cunning vassal, who was depreciating the merit of something which he was desirous to keep to himself, in order that he might stand excused for not offering it to his chief or superior.

"Dares he thus play the hypocrite with Heaven," thought Durward, "and sport with God and the Saints, as he may safely do with men, who dare not search his nature too closely?"

Louis meantime resumed, after a moment's mental devotion, "No, fair daughter, I and another know your real mind better. Ha! fair cousin of Orleans, do we not? Approach, fair sir, and lead this devoted vestal of ours to her horse."

Orleans started when the King spoke and hastened to obey him; but with such precipitation of step, and confusion, that Louis called out, "Nay, cousin, rein your gallantry, and look before you. Why, what a headlong matter a gallant's haste is on some occasions! You had well nigh taken Anne's hand instead of her sister's.—Sir, must I give Joan's to you myself?"

The unhappy Prince looked up, and shuddered like a child, when forced to touch something at which it has instinctive horror—then making an effort, took the hand which the Princess neither gave nor yet withheld. As they stood, her cold, damp fingers enclosed in his trembling hand, with their eyes looking on the ground, it would have been difficult to say which of these two youthful beings was rendered more utterly miserable—the Duke, who felt himself fettered to the object of his aversion by bonds which he durst not tear asunder, or the unfortunate young woman, who too plainly saw that she was an object of abhorrence to him, to gain whose kindness she would willingly have died.

"And now to horse, gentlemen and ladies—we will ourselves lead forth our daughter of Beaujeu," said the King; "and God's blessing and Saint Hubert's be on our morning's sport!"

"I am, I fear, doomed to interrupt it, Sire," said the Comte de Dunois; "the Burgundian Envoy is before the gates of the Castle and demands an audience."

"Demands an audience, Dunois?" replied the King. "Did you not answer him, as we sent you word by Oliver, that we were not at leisure to see him today,—and that tomorrow was the festival of Saint Martin, which, please Heaven, we would disturb by no earthly thoughts—and that on the succeeding day we were designed for Amboise—but that we would not fail to appoint him as early an audience, when we returned, as our pressing affairs would permit."

"All this I said," answered Dunois, "but yet, Sire—"

"Pasques dieu! man, what is it that thus sticks in thy throat?" said the King. "This Burgundian's terms must have been hard of digestion."

"Had not my duty, your Grace's commands, and his character as an envoy, restrained me," said Dunois, "he should have tried to digest them himself; for, by our Lady of Orleans, I had more mind to have made him eat his own words, than to have brought them to your Majesty."

"Body of me," said the King, "it is strange that thou, one of the most impatient fellows alive, should have so little sympathy with the like infirmity in our blunt and fiery cousin, Charles of Burgundy. Why, man, I mind his blustering messages no more than the towers of this Castle regard the whistling of the northeast wind, which comes from Flanders, as well as this brawling Envoy."

"Know then, Sire," replied Dunois, "that the Count of Crevecoeur tarries below, with his retinue of pursuivants and trumpets, and says, that since your Majesty refuses him the audience which his master has instructed him to demand, upon matters of most pressing concern, he will remain there till midnight, and accost your Majesty at whatever hour you are pleased to issue from your Castle, whether for business, exercise, or devotion; and that no consideration, except the use of absolute force, shall compel him to desist from this."

"He is a fool," said the King, with much composure. "Does the hot headed Hainaulter think it any penance for a man of sense to remain for twenty-four hours quiet within the walls of his Castle, when he hath the affairs of a kingdom to occupy him? These impatient coxcombs think that all men, like themselves, are miserable, save when in saddle and stirrup. Let the dogs be put up, and well looked to, gentle Dunois.—We will hold council today, instead of hunting."

"My Liege," answered Dunois, "you will not thus rid yourself of Crevecoeur; for his master's instructions are, that if he hath not this audience which he demands, he shall nail his gauntlet to the palisade before the Castle in token of mortal defiance on the part of his master, shall renounce the Duke's fealty to France, and declare instant war."

"Ay," said Louis without any perceptible alteration of voice, but frowning until his piercing dark eyes became almost invisible under his shaggy eyebrows, "is it even so? will our ancient vassal prove so masterful—our dear cousin treat us thus unkindly?—Nay, then, Dunois, we must unfold the Oriflamme, and cry Dennis Montjoye!"

[Montjoie St. Denis, a former war cry of the French soldiers. Saint Denis was a patron saint of France who suffered martyrdom in the third century. Montjoie (mont and joie) may be the name of the hill where the saint met his death; or it may signify that any such place is a "hill of joy."]

"Marry and amen, and in a most happy hour!" said the martial Dunois; and the guards in the hall, unable to resist the same impulse, stirred each upon his post, so as to produce a low but distinct sound of clashing arms. The King cast his eye proudly round, and, for a moment, thought and looked like his heroic father. But the excitement of the moment presently gave way to the host of political considerations, which, at that conjuncture, rendered an open breach with Burgundy so peculiarly perilous. Edward IV, a brave and victorious king, who had in his own person fought thirty battles, was now established on the throne of England, was brother to the Duchess of Burgundy, and, it might well be supposed, waited but a rupture between his near connexion and Louis, to carry into France, through the ever open gate of Calais, those arms which had been triumphant in the English civil wars, and to obliterate the recollection of internal dissensions by that most popular of all occupations amongst the English, an invasion of France. To this consideration was added the uncertain faith of the Duke of Bretagne, and other weighty subjects of reflection. So that, after a deep pause, when Louis again spoke, although in the same tone, it was with an altered spirit. "But God forbid," he said, "that aught less than necessity should make us, the Most Christian King, give cause to the effusion of Christian blood, if anything short of dishonour may avert such a calamity. We tender our subjects' safety dearer than the ruffle which our own dignity may receive from the rude breath of a malapert ambassador, who hath perhaps exceeded the errand with which he was charged.—Admit the Envoy of Burgundy to our presence."

"Beati pacifici, [blessed are the peace makers]" said the Cardinal Balue.

"True; and your Eminence knoweth that they who humble themselves shall be exalted," added the King.

The Cardinal spoke an Amen, to which few assented, for even the pale cheek of Orleans kindled with shame, and Balafré suppressed his feelings so little, as to let the butt end of his partisan fall heavily on the floor—a movement of impatience for which he underwent a bitter reproof from the Cardinal, with a lecture on the mode of handling his arms when in presence of the Sovereign. The King himself seemed unusually embarrassed at the silence around him.

"You are pensive, Dunois," he said. "You disapprove of our giving way to this hot headed Envoy."

"By no means," said Dunois; "I meddle not with matters beyond my sphere. I was thinking of asking a boon of your Majesty."

"A boon, Dunois—what is it? You are an unfrequent suitor, and may count on our favour."

"I would, then, your Majesty would send me to Evreux to regulate the clergy," said Dunois, with military frankness.

"That were indeed beyond thy sphere," replied the King, smiling.

"I might order priests as well," replied the Count, "as my Lord Bishop of Evreux, or my Lord Cardinal, if he likes the title better, can exercise the soldiers of your Majesty's guard."

The King smiled again, and more mysteriously, while he whispered Dunois, "The time may come when you and I will regulate the priests together.—But this is for the present a good conceited animal of a Bishop. Ah, Dunois! Rome, Rome puts him and other burdens upon us.—But patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards, till our hand is a stronger one."

[Dr. Dryasdust here remarks that cards, said to have been invented in a preceding reign, for the amusement of Charles V during the intervals of his mental disorder, seem speedily to have become common among the courtiers.... The alleged origin of the invention of cards produced one of the shrewdest replies I have ever heard given in evidence. It was made by the late Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh to a counsel of great eminence at the Scottish bar. The Doctor's testimony went to prove the insanity of the party whose mental capacity was the point at issue. On a cross interrogation, he admitted that the person in question played admirably at whist. "And do you seriously say, doctor," said the learned counsel, "that a person having a superior capacity for a game so difficult, and which requires in a preeminent degree, memory, judgment, and combination, can be at the same time deranged in his understanding?"—"I am no card player," said the doctor, with great address, "but I have read in history that cards were invented for the amusement of an insane king." The consequences of this reply were decisive. S.]

The flourish of trumpets in the courtyard now announced the arrival of the Burgundian nobleman. All in the presence chamber made haste to arrange themselves according to their proper places of precedence, the King and his daughters remaining in the centre of the assembly.

The Count of Crevecoeur, a renowned and undaunted warrior, entered the apartment; and, contrary to the usage among the envoys of friendly powers, he appeared all armed, excepting his head, in a gorgeous suit of the most superb Milan armour, made of steel, inlaid and embossed with gold, which was wrought into the fantastic taste called the Arabesque. Around his neck and over his polished cuirass, hung his master's order of the Golden Fleece, one of the most honoured associations of chivalry then known in Christendom. A handsome page bore his helmet behind him, a herald preceded him, bearing his letters of credence which he offered on his knee to the King; while the ambassador himself paused in the midst of the hall, as if to give all present time to admire his lofty look, commanding stature, and undaunted composure of countenance and manner. The rest of his attendants waited in the antechamber, or courtyard.

[The military order of the Golden Fleece was instituted by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in the year 1429, the King of Spain being grand master of the order, as Duke of Burgundy.]

"Approach, Seignior Count de Crevecoeur," said Louis, after a moment's glance at his commission; "we need not our cousin's letters of credence, either to introduce to us a warrior so well known, or to assure us of your highly deserved credit with your master. We trust that your fair partner, who shares some of our ancestral blood, is in good health. Had you brought her in your hand, Seignior Count, we might have thought you wore your armour, on this unwonted occasion, to maintain the superiority of her charms against the amorous chivalry of France. As it is, we cannot guess the reason of this complete panoply."

"Sire," replied the ambassador, "the Count of Crevecoeur must lament his misfortune, and entreat your forgiveness, that he cannot, on this occasion, reply with such humble deference as is due to the royal courtesy with which your Majesty has honoured him. But, although it is only the voice of Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes which speaks, the words which he utters must be those of his gracious Lord and Sovereign, the Duke of Burgundy."

"And what has Crevecoeur to say in the words of Burgundy?" said Louis, with an assumption of sufficient dignity. "Yet hold—remember, that in this presence, Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes speaks to him who is his Sovereign's Sovereign."

Crevecoeur bowed, and then spoke aloud: "King of France, the mighty Duke of Burgundy once more sends you a written schedule of the wrongs and oppressions committed on his frontiers by your Majesty's garrisons and officers; and the first point of inquiry is, whether it is your Majesty's purpose to make him amends for these injuries?"

The King, looking slightly at the memorial which the herald delivered to him upon his knee, said, "These matters have been already long before our Council. Of the injuries complained of, some are in requital of those sustained by my subjects, some are affirmed without any proof, some have been retaliated by the Duke's garrisons and soldiers; and if there remain any which fall under none of those predicaments, we are not, as a Christian prince, averse to make satisfaction for wrongs actually sustained by our neighbour, though committed not only without our countenance, but against our express order."

"I will convey your Majesty's answer," said the ambassador, "to my most gracious master; yet, let me say, that, as it is in no degree different from the evasive replies which have already been returned to his just complaints, I cannot hope that it will afford the means of re-establishing peace and friendship betwixt France and Burgundy."

"Be that at God's pleasure," said the King. "It is not for dread of thy master's arms, but for the sake of peace only, that I return so temperate an answer to his injurious reproaches. Proceed with thine errand."

"My master's next demand," said the ambassador, "is that your Majesty will cease your secret and underhand dealings with his towns of Ghent, Liege, and Malines. He requests that your Majesty will recall the secret agents by whose means the discontents of his good citizens of Flanders are inflamed; and dismiss from your Majesty's dominions, or rather deliver up to the condign punishment of their liege lord, those traitorous fugitives, who, having fled from the scene of their machinations, have found too ready a refuge in Paris, Orleans, Tours, and other French cities."

"Say to the Duke of Burgundy," replied the King, "that I know of no such indirect practices as those with which he injuriously charges me; that many subjects of France have frequent intercourse with the good cities of Flanders, for the purpose of mutual benefit by free traffic, which it would be as much contrary to the Duke's interest as mine to interrupt; and that many Flemings have residence in my kingdom, and enjoy the protection of my laws, for the same purpose; but none, to our knowledge, for those of treason or mutiny against the Duke. Proceed with your message—you have heard my answer."

"As formerly, Sire, with pain," replied the Count of Crevecoeur; "it not being of that direct or explicit nature which the Duke, my master, will accept, in atonement for a long train of secret machinations, not the less certain, though now disavowed by your Majesty. But I proceed with my message. The Duke of Burgundy farther requires the King of France to send back to his dominions without delay, and under a secure safeguard, the persons of Isabelle Countess of Croye, and of her relation and guardian the Countess Hameline, of the same family, in respect the said Countess Isabelle, being, by the law of the country and the feudal tenure of her estates, the ward of the said Duke of Burgundy, hath fled from his dominions, and from the charge which he, as a careful guardian, was willing to extend over her, and is here maintained in secret by the King of France and by him fortified in her contumacy to the Duke, her natural lord and guardian, contrary to the laws of God and man, as they ever have been acknowledged in civilized Europe.—Once more I pause for your Majesty's reply."

"You did well, Count de Crevecoeur," said Louis, scornfully, "to begin your embassy at an early hour; for if it be your purpose to call on me to account for the flight of every vassal whom your master's heady passion may have driven from his dominions, the head roll may last till sunset. Who can affirm that these ladies are in my dominions? who can presume to say, if it be so, that I have either countenanced their flight hither, or have received them with offers of protection? Nay, who is it will assert, that, if they are in France, their place of retirement is within my knowledge?"

"Sire," said Crevecoeur, "may it please your Majesty, I was provided with a witness on this subject—one who beheld these fugitive ladies in the inn called the Fleur de Lys, not far from this Castle—one who saw your Majesty in their company, though under the unworthy disguise of a burgess of Tours—one who received from them, in your royal presence, messages and letters to their friends in Flanders—all which he conveyed to the hand and ear of the Duke of Burgundy."

"Bring them forward," said the King; "place the man before my face who dares maintain these palpable falsehoods."

"You speak in triumph, my lord, for you are well aware that this witness no longer exists. When he lived, he was called Zamet Magraubin, by birth one of those Bohemian wanderers. He was yesterday—as I have learned—executed by a party of your Majesty's Provost Marshal, to prevent, doubtless, his standing here to verify what he said of this matter to the Duke of Burgundy, in presence of his Council, and of me, Philip Crevecoeur de Cordes."

"Now, by Our Lady of Embrun," said the King, "so gross are these accusations, and so free of consciousness am I of aught that approaches them, that, by the honour of a King, I laugh, rather than am wroth at them. My Provost guard daily put to death, as is their duty, thieves and vagabonds; and is my crown to be slandered with companions these thieves and vagabonds may have said to our hot cousin of Burgundy and his wise counsellors? I pray you, tell my kind cousin, if he loves such companions, he had best keep them in his own estates; for here they are like to meet short shrift and a tight cord."

"My master needs no such subjects, Sir King," answered the Count, in a tone more disrespectful than he had yet permitted himself to make use of; "for the noble Duke uses not to inquire of witches, wandering Egyptians, or others, upon the destiny and fate of his neighbours and allies."

"We have had patience enough, and to spare," said the King, interrupting him; "and since thy sole errand here seems to be for the purpose of insult, we will send some one in our name to the Duke of Burgundy—convinced, in thus demeaning thyself towards us, thou hast exceeded thy commission, whatever that may have been."

"On the contrary," said Crevecoeur, "I have not yet acquitted myself of it—Hearken, Louis of Valois, King of France—Hearken, nobles and gentlemen, who may be present.—Hearken, all good and true men.—And thou, Toison d'Or," addressing the herald, "make proclamation after me.—I, Philip Crevecoeur of Cordes, Count of the Empire, and Knight of the honourable and princely Order of the Golden Fleece, in the name of the most puissant Lord and Prince, Charles, by the grace of God, Duke of Burgundy and Lotharingia, of Brabant and Limbourg, of Luxembourg and of Guedres; Earl of Flanders and of Artois; Count Palatine of Hainault, of Holland, Zealand, Namur, and Zutphen; Marquis of the Holy Empire; Lord of Friezeland, Salines, and Malines, do give you, Louis, King of France, openly to know, that you, having refused to remedy the various griefs, wrongs, and offences, done and wrought by you, or by and through your aid, suggestion, and instigation, against the said Duke and his loving subjects, he, by my mouth, renounces all allegiance and fealty towards your crown and dignity—pronounces you false and faithless; and defies you as a Prince, and as a man. There lies my gage, in evidence of what I have said."

So saying, he plucked the gauntlet off his right hand, and flung it down on the floor of the hall.

Until this last climax of audacity, there had been a deep silence in the royal apartment during the extraordinary scene; but no sooner had the clash of the gauntlet, when cast down, been echoed by the deep voice of Toison d'Or, the Burgundian herald, with the ejaculation, "Vive Bourgogne!" than there was a general tumult. While Dunois, Orleans, old Lord Crawford, and one or two others, whose rank authorized their interference, contended which should lift up the gauntlet, the others in the hall exclaimed, "Strike him down! Cut him to pieces! Comes he here to insult the King of France in his own palace?"

But the King appeased the tumult by exclaiming, in a voice like thunder, which overawed and silenced every other sound, "Silence, my lieges, lay not a hand on the man, not a finger on the gage!—And you, Sir Count, of what is your life composed, or how is it warranted, that you thus place it on the cast of a die so perilous? or is your Duke made of a different metal from other princes, since he thus asserts his pretended quarrel in a manner so unusual?"

"He is indeed framed of a different and more noble metal than the other princes of Europe," said the undaunted Count of Crevecoeur; "for, when not one of them dared to give shelter to you—to you, I say, King Louis—when you were yet only Dauphin, an exile from France, and pursued by the whole bitterness of your father's revenge, and all the power of his kingdom, you were received and protected like a brother by my noble master, whose generosity of disposition you have so grossly misused. Farewell, Sire, my mission is discharged."

So saying, the Count de Crevecoeur left the apartment abruptly, and without farther leave taking.

"After him—after him—take up the gauntlet and after him!" said the King. "I mean not you, Dunois, nor you, my Lord of Crawford, who, methinks, may be too old for such hot frays; nor you, cousin of Orleans, who are too young for them.—My Lord Cardinal—my Lord Bishop of Auxerre—it is your holy office to make peace among princes; do you lift the gauntlet, and remonstrate with Count Crevecoeur on the sin he has committed, in thus insulting a great monarch in his own Court, and forcing us to bring the miseries of war upon his kingdom, and that of his neighbour."

Upon this direct personal appeal, the Cardinal Balue proceeded to lift the gauntlet, with such precaution as one would touch an adder—so great was apparently his aversion to this symbol of war—and presently left the royal apartment to hasten after the challenger.

Louis paused and looked round the circle of his courtiers, most of whom, except such as we have already distinguished, being men of low birth, and raised to their rank in the King's household for other gifts than courage or feats of arms, looked pale on each other, and had obviously received an unpleasant impression from the scene which had been just acted. Louis gazed on them with contempt, and then said aloud, "Although the Count of Crevecoeur be presumptuous and overweening, it must be confessed that in him the Duke of Burgundy hath as bold a servant as ever bore message for a prince. I would I knew where to find as faithful an Envoy to carry back my answer."

"You do your French nobles injustice, Sire," said Dunois; "not one of them but would carry a defiance to Burgundy on the point of his sword."

"And, Sire," said old Crawford, "you wrong also the Scottish gentlemen who serve you. I, or any of my followers, being of meet rank, would not hesitate a moment to call yonder proud Count to a reckoning; my own arm is yet strong enough for the purpose, if I have but your Majesty's permission."

"But your Majesty," continued Dunois, "will employ us in no service through which we may win honour to ourselves, to your Majesty, or to France."

"Say rather," said the King, "that I will not give way, Dunois, to the headlong impetuosity, which, on some punctilio of chivalry, would wreck yourselves, the throne, France, and all. There is not one of you who knows not how precious every hour of peace is at this moment, when so necessary to heal the wounds of a distracted country; yet there is not one of you who would not rush into war on account of the tale of a wandering gipsy, or of some errant damosel, whose reputation, perhaps, is scarce higher.—Here comes the Cardinal, and we trust with more pacific tidings.—How now, my Lord,—have you brought the Count to reason and to temper?"

"Sire," said Balue, "my task hath been difficult. I put it to yonder proud Count, how he dared to use towards your Majesty the presumptuous reproach with which his audience had broken up, and which must be understood as proceeding, not from his master, but from his own insolence, and as placing him therefore in your Majesty's discretion for what penalty you might think proper."

"You said right," replied the King; "and what was his answer?"

"The Count," continued the Cardinal, "had at that moment his foot in the stirrup, ready to mount; and, on hearing my expostulation, he turned his head without altering his position. 'Had I,' said he, 'been fifty leagues distant, and had heard by report that a question vituperative of my Prince had been asked by the King of France, I had, even at that distance, instantly mounted, and returned to disburden my mind of the answer which I gave him but now.'"

"I said, sirs," said the King, turning around, without any show of angry emotion, "that in the Count Philip of Crevecoeur, our cousin the Duke possesses as worthy a servant as ever rode at a prince's right hand.—But you prevailed with him to stay?"

"To stay for twenty-four hours; and in the meanwhile to receive again his gage of defiance," said the Cardinal; "he has dismounted at the Fleur de Lys."

"See that he be nobly attended and cared for, at our charges," said the King; "such a servant is a jewel in a prince's crown. Twenty-four hours?" he added, muttering to himself, and looking as if he were stretching his eyes to see into futurity; "twenty-four hours? It is of the shortest. Yet twenty-four hours, ably and skilfully employed, may be worth a year in the hand of indolent or incapable agents.—Well—to the forest—to the forest, my gallant lords!—Orleans, my fair kinsman, lay aside that modesty, though it becomes you; mind not my Joan's coyness. The Loire may as soon avoid mingling with the Cher, as she from favouring your suit, or you from preferring it," he added, as the unhappy prince moved slowly on after his betrothed bride. "And now for your boar spears, gentlemen—for Allegre, my pricker, hath harboured one that will try both dog and man.—Dunois, lend me your spear—take mine, it is too weighty for me; but when did you complain of such a fault in your lance?—To horse—to horse, gentlemen."

And all the chase rode on.

CHAPTER IX: THE BOAR HUNT

*I will converse with unrespecting boys
And iron-witted fools. None are for me
that look into me with suspicious eyes.*

KING RICHARD

All the experience which the Cardinal had been able to collect of his master's disposition, did not, upon the present occasion, prevent his falling into a great error of policy. His vanity induced him to think that he had been more successful in prevailing upon the Count of Crevecoeur to remain at Tours, than any other moderator whom the King might have employed, would, in all probability, have been. And as he was well aware of the importance which Louis attached to the postponement of a war with the Duke of Burgundy, he could not help showing that he conceived himself to have rendered the King great and acceptable service. He pressed nearer to the King's person than he was wont to do, and endeavoured to engage him in conversation on the events of the morning.

This was injudicious in more respects than one, for princes love not to see their subjects approach them with an air conscious of deserving, and thereby seeming desirous to extort, acknowledgment and recompense for their services; and Louis, the most jealous monarch that ever lived, was peculiarly averse and inaccessible to any one who seemed either to presume upon service rendered or to pry into his secrets.

Yet, hurried away, as the most cautious sometimes are, by the self-satisfied humour of the moment, the Cardinal continued to ride on the King's right hand, turning the discourse, whenever it was possible, upon Crevecoeur and his embassy which, although it might be the matter at that moment most in the King's thoughts, was nevertheless precisely that which he was least willing to converse on. At length Louis, who had listened to him with attention, yet without having returned any answer which could tend to prolong the conversation, signed to Dunois, who rode at no great distance, to come up on the other side of his horse.

"We came hither for sport and exercise," said he, "but the reverend Father here would have us hold a council of state."

"I hope your Highness will excuse my assistance," said Dunois; "I am born to fight the battles of France, and have heart and hand for that, but I have no head for her councils."

"My Lord Cardinal hath a head turned for nothing else, Dunois," answered Louis; "he hath confessed Crevecoeur at the Castle gate, and he hath communicated to us his whole shrift.—Said you not the whole?" he continued, with an emphasis on the word, and a glance at the Cardinal, which shot from betwixt his long dark eyelashes as a dagger gleams when it leaves the scabbard.

The Cardinal trembled, as, endeavouring to reply to the King's jest, he said that though his order were obliged to conceal the secrets of their penitents in general, there was no *sigillum confessionis* [seal of confession] which could not be melted at his Majesty's breath.

"And as his Eminence," said the King, "is ready to communicate the secrets of others to us, he naturally expects that we should be equally communicative to him; and, in order to get upon this reciprocal footing, he is very reasonably desirous to know if these two ladies of Croye be actually in our territories. We are sorry we cannot indulge his curiosity, not ourselves knowing in what precise place errant damsels, disguised princesses, distressed countesses, may lie leaguer within our dominions, which are, we thank God and our Lady of Embrun, rather too extensive for us to answer easily his Eminence's most reasonable inquiries. But supposing they were with us, what say you, Dunois, to our cousin's peremptory demand?"

"I will answer you, my Liege, if you will tell me in sincerity, whether you want war or peace," replied Dunois, with a frankness which, while it arose out of his own native openness and intrepidity of character, made him from time to time a considerable favourite with Louis, who, like all astucious persons, was as desirous of looking into the hearts of others as of concealing his own.

"By my halidome," said he, "I should be as well contented as thyself, Dunois, to tell thee my purpose, did I myself but know it exactly. But say I declared for war, what should I do with this beautiful and wealthy young heiress, supposing her to be in my dominions?"

"Bestow her in marriage on one of your own gallant followers, who has a heart to love, and an arm to protect her," said Dunois.

"Upon thyself, ha!" said the King. "Pasques dieu! thou art more politic than I took thee for, with all thy bluntness."

"Nay," answered Dunois, "I am aught except politic. By our Lady of Orleans, I come to the point at once, as I ride my horse at the ring. Your Majesty owes the house of Orleans at least one happy marriage."

"And I will pay it, Count. Pasques dieu, I will pay it!—See you not yonder fair couple?"

The King pointed to the unhappy Duke of Orleans and the Princess, who, neither daring to remain at a greater distance from the King, nor in his sight appear separate from each other, were riding side by side, yet with an interval of two or three yards betwixt them, a space which timidity on the one side, and aversion on the other, prevented them from diminishing, while neither dared to increase it.

Dunois looked in the direction of the King's signal, and as the situation of his unfortunate relative and the destined bride reminded him of nothing so much as of two dogs, which, forcibly linked together, remain nevertheless as widely separated as the length of their collars will permit, he could not help shaking his head, though he ventured not on any other reply to the hypocritical tyrant. Louis seemed to guess his thoughts.

"It will be a peaceful and quiet household they will keep—not much disturbed with children, I should augur. But these are not always a blessing."

[Here the King touches on the very purpose for which he pressed on the match with such tyrannic severity, which was that as the Princess's personal deformity admitted little chance of its being fruitful, the branch of Orleans, which was next in succession to the crown, might be, by the want of heirs, weakened or extinguished]

It was, perhaps, the recollection of his own filial ingratitude that made the King pause as he uttered the last reflection, and which converted the sneer that trembled on his lip into something resembling an expression of contrition. But he instantly proceeded in another tone.

"Frankly, my Dunois, much as I revere the holy sacrament of matrimony" (here he crossed himself), "I would rather the house of Orleans raised for me such gallant soldiers as thy father and thyself, who share the blood royal of France without claiming its rights, than that the country should be torn to pieces, like to England, by wars arising from the rivalry of legitimate candidates for the crown. The lion should never have more than one cub."

Dunois sighed and was silent, conscious that contradicting his arbitrary Sovereign might well hurt his kinsman's interests but could do him no service; yet he could not forbear adding, in the next moment,

"Since your Majesty has alluded to the birth of my father, I must needs own that, setting the frailty of his parents on one side, he might be termed happier, and more fortunate, as the son of lawless love than of conjugal hatred."

"Thou art a scandalous fellow, Dunois, to speak thus of holy wedlock," answered Louis jestingly. "But to the devil with the discourse, for the boar is unharboured.—Lay on the dogs, in the name of the holy Saint Hubert!—Ha! ha! tra-la-la-lira-la!"—And the King's horn rang merrily through the woods as he pushed forward on the chase, followed by two or three of his guards, amongst whom was our friend Quentin Durward. And here it was remarkable that, even in the keen prosecution of his favourite sport, the King in indulgence of his caustic disposition, found leisure to amuse himself by tormenting Cardinal Balue.

It was one of that able statesman's weaknesses, as we have elsewhere hinted, to suppose himself, though of low rank and limited education, qualified to play the courtier and the man of gallantry. He did not, indeed, actually enter the lists of chivalrous combat, like Becket, or levy soldiers, like Wolsey. But gallantry, in which they also were proficient, was his professed pursuit; and he likewise affected great fondness for the martial amusement of the chase. Yet, however well he might succeed with certain ladies, to whom his power, his wealth, and his influence as a statesman might atone for deficiencies in appearance and manners, the gallant horses, which he purchased at almost any price, were totally insensible to the dignity of carrying a Cardinal, and paid no more respect to him than they would have done to his father, the carter, miller, or tailor, whom he rivalled in horsemanship. The King knew this, and, by alternately exciting and checking his own horse, he brought that of the Cardinal, whom he kept close by his side, into such a state of mutiny against his rider, that it became apparent they must soon part company; and then, in the midst of its starting, bolting, rearing, and lashing out, alternately, the royal tormentor rendered the rider miserable, by questioning him upon many affairs of importance, and hinting his purpose to take that opportunity of communicating to him some of those secrets of state which the Cardinal had but a little while before seemed so anxious to learn.

[In imputing to the Cardinal a want of skill in horsemanship, I recollected his adventure in Paris when attacked by assassins, on which occasion his mule, being scared by the crowd, ran away with the rider, and taking its course to a monastery, to the abbot of which he formerly belonged; was the means of saving his master's life.... S.]

A more awkward situation could hardly be imagined than that of a privy councillor forced to listen to and reply to his sovereign, while each fresh gambade of his unmanageable horse placed him in a new and more precarious attitude—his violet robe flying loose in every direction, and nothing securing him from an instant and perilous fall save the depth of the saddle, and its height before and behind. Dunois laughed without restraint; while the King, who had a private mode of enjoying his jest inwardly, without laughing aloud, mildly rebuked his minister on his eager passion for the chase, which would not permit him to dedicate a few moments to business.

"I will no longer be your hindrance to a course," continued he, addressing the terrified Cardinal, and giving his own horse the rein at the same time.

Before Balue could utter a word by way of answer or apology, his horse, seizing the bit with his teeth, went forth at an uncontrollable gallop, soon leaving behind the King and Dunois, who followed at a more regulated pace, enjoying the statesman's distressed predicament. If any of our readers has chanced to be run away with in his time (as we ourselves have in ours), he will have a full sense at once of the pain, peril, and absurdity of the situation. Those four limbs of the quadruped, which, noway under the rider's control, nor sometimes under that of the creature they more properly belong to, fly at such a rate as if the hindmost meant to overtake the foremost; those clinging legs of the biped which we so often wish safely planted on the greensward, but which now only augment our distress by pressing the animal's sides—the hands which have forsaken the bridle for the mane—the body, which, instead of sitting upright on the centre of gravity, as old Angelo [a celebrated riding and fencing master at the beginning of the nineteenth century] used to recommend, or stooping forward like a jockey's at Newmarket [the scene of the annual horse races has been at Newmarket Heath since the time of James I], lies, rather than hangs, crouched upon the back of the animal, with no better chance of saving itself than a sack of corn—combine to make a picture more than sufficiently ludicrous to spectators, however uncomfortable to the exhibiter. But add to this some singularity of dress or appearance on the part of the unhappy cavalier—a robe of office, a splendid uniform, or any other peculiarity of costume—and let the scene of action be a race course, a review, a procession, or any other place of concourse and public display, and if the poor wight would escape being the object of a shout of inextinguishable laughter, he must contrive to break a limb or two, or, which will be more effectual, to be killed on the spot; for on no slighter condition will his fall excite anything like serious sympathy. On the present occasion, the short violet coloured gown of the Cardinal, which he used as riding dress (having changed his long robes before he left the Castle), his scarlet stockings, and scarlet hat, with the long strings hanging down, together with his utter helplessness, gave infinite zest to his exhibition of horsemanship.

The horse, having taken matters entirely into his own hand, flew rather than galloped up a long green avenue; overtook the pack in hard pursuit of the boar, and then, having overturned one or two yeomen prickers, who little expected to be charged in the rear—having ridden down several dogs, and greatly confused the chase—animated by the clamorous expostulations and threats of the huntsman, carried the terrified Cardinal past the formidable animal itself, which was rushing on at a speedy trot, furious and embossed with the foam which he churned around his tusks. Balue, on beholding himself so near the boar, set up a dreadful cry for help, which, or perhaps the sight of the boar, produced such an effect on his horse, that the animal interrupted its headlong career by suddenly springing to one side; so that the Cardinal, who had long kept his seat only because the motion was straight forward, now fell heavily to the ground. The conclusion of Balue's chase took place so near the boar that, had not the animal been at that moment too much engaged about his own affairs, the vicinity might have proved as fatal to the Cardinal, as it is said to have done to Favila, King of the Visigoths of Spain [he was killed by a bear while hunting]. The powerful churchman got off, however, for the fright, and, crawling as hastily as he could out of the way of hounds and huntsmen, saw the whole chase sweep by him without affording him assistance, for hunters in those days were as little moved by sympathy for such misfortunes as they are in our own. The King, as he passed, said to Dunois, "Yonder lies his Eminence low enough—he is no great huntsman, though for a fisher (when a secret is to be caught) he may match Saint Peter himself. He has, however, for once, I think, met with his match."

The Cardinal did not hear the words, but the scornful look with which they were spoken led him to suspect their general import. The devil is said to seize such opportunities of temptation as were now afforded by the passions of Balue, bitterly moved as they had been by the scorn of the King. The momentary fright was over so soon as he had assured himself that his fall was harmless; but mortified vanity, and resentment against his Sovereign, had a much longer influence on his feelings. After all the chase had passed him, a single cavalier, who seemed rather to be a spectator than a partaker of the sport, rode up with one or two attendants, and expressed no small surprise to find the Cardinal upon the ground, without a horse or attendants, and in such a plight as plainly showed the nature of the accident which had placed him there. To dismount, and offer his assistance in this predicament—to cause one of his attendants to resign a staid and quiet palfrey for the Cardinal's use—to express his surprise at the customs of the French Court, which thus permitted them to abandon to the dangers of the chase, and forsake in his need, their wisest statesman, were the natural modes of assistance and consolation which so strange a rencontre supplied to Crevecoeur, for it was the Burgundian ambassador who came to the assistance of the fallen Cardinal.

He found the minister in a lucky time and humour for essaying some of those practices on his fidelity, to which it is well known that Balue had the criminal weakness to listen. Already in the morning, as the jealous temper of Louis had suggested, more had passed betwixt them than the Cardinal durst have reported to his master. But although he had listened with gratified ears to the high value, which, he was assured by Crevecoeur, the Duke of Burgundy placed upon his person and talents, and not without a feeling of temptation, when the Count hinted at the munificence of his master's disposition, and the rich benefices of Flanders, it was not until the accident, as we have related, had highly irritated him that, stung with wounded vanity, he resolved, in a fatal hour, to show Louis XI that no enemy can be so dangerous as an offended friend and confidant. On the present occasions he hastily requested Crevecoeur to separate from him lest

they should be observed, but appointed him a meeting for the evening in the Abbey of Saint Martin's at Tours, after vesper service; and that in a tone which assured the Burgundian that his master had obtained an advantage hardly to have been hoped for except in such a moment of exasperation. In the meanwhile, Louis, who, though the most politic Prince of his time, upon this, as on other occasions, had suffered his passions to interfere with his prudence, followed contentedly the chase of the wild boar, which was now come to an interesting point. It had so happened that a sounder (i.e., in the language of the period, a boar of only two years old), had crossed the track of the proper object of the chase, and withdrawn in pursuit of him all the dogs (except two or three couples of old stanch hounds) and the greater part of the huntsmen. The King saw, with internal glee, Dunois, as well as others, follow upon this false scent, and enjoyed in secret the thought of triumphing over that accomplished knight in the art of venerie, which was then thought almost as glorious as war. Louis was well mounted, and followed, close on the hounds; so that, when the original boar turned to bay in a marshy piece of ground, there was no one near him but the King himself. Louis showed all the bravery and expertness of an experienced huntsman; for, unheeding the danger, he rode up to the tremendous animal, which was defending itself with fury against the dogs, and struck him with his boar spear; yet, as the horse shied from the boar, the blow was not so effectual as either to kill or disable him. No effort could prevail on the horse to charge a second time; so that the King, dismounting, advanced on foot against the furious animal, holding naked in his hand one of those short, sharp, straight, and pointed swords, which huntsmen used for such encounters. The boar instantly quitted the dogs to rush on his human enemy, while the King, taking his station, and posting himself firmly, presented the sword, with the purpose of aiming it at the boar's throat, or rather chest, within the collarbone; in which case, the weight of the beast, and the impetuosity of its career, would have served to accelerate its own destruction. But, owing to the wetness of the ground, the King's foot slipped, just as this delicate and perilous manoeuvre ought to have been accomplished, so that the point of the sword encountering the cuirass of bristles on the outside of the creature's shoulder, glanced off without making any impression, and Louis fell flat on the ground. This was so far fortunate for the Monarch, because the animal, owing to the King's fall, missed his blow in his turn, and in passing only rent with his tusk the King's short hunting cloak, instead of ripping up his thigh. But when, after running a little ahead in the fury of his course, the boar turned to repeat his attack on the King at the moment when he was rising, the life of Louis was in imminent danger. At this critical moment, Quentin Durward, who had been thrown out in the chase by the slowness of his horse, but who, nevertheless, had luckily distinguished and followed the blast of the King's horn, rode up, and transfixed the animal with his spear.

The King, who had by this time recovered his feet, came in turn to Durward's assistance, and cut the animal's throat with his sword. Before speaking a word to Quentin, he measured the huge creature not only by paces, but even by feet—then wiped the sweat from his brow, and the blood from his hands—then took off his hunting cap, hung it on a bush, and devoutly made his orisons to the little leaden images which it contained—and at length, looking upon Durward, said to him, "Is it thou, my young Scot?—Thou hast begun thy woodcraft well, and Maitre Pierre owes thee as good entertainment as he gave thee at the Fleur de Lys yonder.—Why dost thou not speak? Thou hast lost thy forwardness and fire, methinks, at the Court, where others find both."

Quentin, as shrewd a youth as ever Scottish breeze breathed caution into, had imbibed more awe than confidence towards his dangerous master, and was far too wise to embrace the perilous permission of familiarity which he seemed thus invited to use. He answered in very few and well chosen words, that if he ventured to address his Majesty at all, it could be but to crave pardon for the rustic boldness with which he had conducted himself when ignorant of his high rank.

"Tush! man," said the King; "I forgive thy sauciness for thy spirit and shrewdness. I admired how near thou didst hit upon my gossip Tristan's occupation. You have nearly tasted of his handiwork since, as I am given to understand. I bid thee beware of him; he is a merchant who deals in rough bracelets and tight necklaces. Help me to my horse;—I like thee, and will do thee good. Build on no man's favour but mine—not even on thine uncle's or Lord Crawford's—and say nothing of thy timely aid in this matter of the boar; for if a man makes boast that he has served a King in such pinch, he must take the braggart humour for its own recompense."

The King then winded his horn, which brought up Dunois and several attendants, whose compliments he received on the slaughter of such a noble animal, without scrupling to appropriate a much greater share of merit than actually belonged to him; for he mentioned Durward's assistance as slightly as a sportsman of rank, who, in boasting of the number of birds which he has bagged, does not always dilate upon the presence and assistance of the gamekeeper. He then ordered Dunois to see that the boar's carcass was sent to the brotherhood of Saint Martin, at Tours, to mend their fare on holydays, and that they might remember the King in their private devotions.

"And," said Louis, "who hath seen his Eminence my Lord Cardinal? Methinks it were but poor courtesy, and cold regard to Holy Church to leave him afoot here in the forest."

"May it please you," said Quentin, when he saw that all were silent, "I saw his Lordship the Cardinal accommodated with a horse, on which he left the forest."

"Heaven cares for its own," replied the King. "Set forward to the Castle, my lords; we'll hunt no more this morning.—You, Sir Squire," addressing Quentin, "reach me my wood knife—it has dropt from the sheath beside the quarry there. Ride on, Dunois—I follow instantly."

Louis, whose lightest motions were often conducted like stratagems, thus gained an opportunity to ask Quentin privately, "My bonny Scot, thou hast an eye, I see. Canst thou tell me who helped the Cardinal to a palfrey?—Some stranger, I should suppose; for, as I passed without stopping, the courtiers would likely be in no hurry to do him such a timely good turn."

"I saw those who aided his Eminence but an instant, Sire," said Quentin; "it was only a hasty glance, for I had been unluckily thrown out, and was riding fast to be in my place; but I think it was the Ambassador of Burgundy and his people."

"Ha," said Louis. "Well, be it so. France will match them yet."

There was nothing more remarkable happened, and the King, with his retinue, returned to the Castle.

CHAPTER X: THE SENTINEL

Where should this music be? i' the air or the earth?

THE TEMPEST

*I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death.*

COMUS

Quentin had hardly reached his little cabin, in order to make some necessary changes in his dress, when his worthy relation required to know the full particulars of all that had befallen him at the hunt.

The youth, who could not help thinking that his uncle's hand was probably more powerful than his understanding, took care, in his reply, to leave the King in full possession of the victory which he had seemed desirous to appropriate. Le Balafre's reply was a boast of how much better he himself would have behaved in the like circumstances, and it was mixed with a gentle censure of his nephew's slackness in not making in to the King's assistance, when he might be in imminent peril. The youth had prudence, in answer, to abstain from all farther indication of his own conduct, except that, according to the rules of woodcraft, he held it ungentle to interfere with the game attacked by another hunter, unless he was specially called upon for his assistance. The discussion was scarcely ended, when

occasion was afforded Quentin to congratulate himself for observing some reserve towards his kinsman. A low tap at the door announced a visitor—it was presently opened, and Oliver Dain, or Mauvais, or Diable, for by all these names he was known, entered the apartment.

This able but most unprincipled man has been already described in so far as his exterior is concerned. The aptest resemblance of his motions and manners might perhaps be to those of a domestic cat, which, while couching in seeming slumber, or gliding through the apartment with slow, stealthy, and timid steps, is now engaged in watching the hole of some unfortunate mouse, now in rubbing herself with apparent confidence and fondness against those by whom she desires to be caressed, and, presently after, is flying upon her prey, or scratching, perhaps, the very object of her former cajolements.

He entered with stooping shoulders, a humble and modest look, and threw such a degree of civility into his address to the Seigneur Balafre, that no one who saw the interview could have avoided concluding that he came to ask a boon of the Scottish Archer. He congratulated Lesly on the excellent conduct of his young kinsman in the chase that day, which, he observed, had attracted the King's particular attention. He here paused for a reply; and, with his eyes fixed on the ground, save just when once or twice they stole upwards to take a side glance at Quentin, he heard Balafre observe that his Majesty had been unlucky in not having himself by his side instead of his nephew, as he would questionless have made in, and speared the brute, a matter which he understood Quentin had left upon his Majesty's royal hands, so far as he could learn the story.

"But it will be a lesson to his Majesty," he said, "while he lives, to mount a man of my inches on a better horse; for how could my great hill of a Flemish dray horse keep up with his Majesty's Norman runner? I am sure I spurred till his sides were furrowed. It is ill considered, Master Oliver, and you must represent it to his Majesty."

Master Oliver only replied to this observation by turning towards the bold, bluff speaker one of those slow, dubious glances which, accompanied by a slight motion of the hand, and a gentle depression of the head to one side, may be either interpreted as a mute assent to what is said, or as a cautious deprecation of farther prosecution of the subject. It was a keener, more scrutinizing glance, which he bent on the youth, as he said, with an ambiguous smile, "So, young man, is it the wont of Scotland to suffer your Princes to be endangered for the lack of aid in such emergencies as this of today?"

"It is our custom," answered Quentin, determined to throw no farther light on the subject, "not to encumber them with assistance in honourable pastimes, when they can aid themselves without it. We hold that a Prince in a hunting field must take his chance with others, and that he comes there for the very purpose. What were woodcraft without fatigue and without danger?"

"You hear the silly boy," said his uncle; "that is always the way with him; he hath an answer or a reason ready to be rendered to every one. I wonder whence he hath caught the gift; I never could give a reason for anything I have ever done in my life, except for eating when I was a-hungry, calling the muster roll, and such points of duty as the like."

"And pray, worthy Seigneur," said the royal tonsor, looking at him from under his eyelids, "what might your reason be for calling the muster roll on such occasions?"

"Because the Captain commanded me," said Le Balafre. "By Saint Giles [patron saint of lepers, beggars, and cripples. He has been especially venerated in England and Scotland], I know no other reason! If he had commanded Tyrie or Cunningham, they must have done the same."

"A most military final cause!" said Oliver. "But, Seigneur Le Balafre, you will be glad, doubtless, to learn that his Majesty is so far from being displeased with your nephew's conduct, that he hath selected him to execute a piece of duty this afternoon."

"Selected him?" said Balafre in great surprise—"selected me, I suppose you mean?"

"I mean precisely as I speak," replied the barber, in a mild but decided tone; "the King hath a commission with which to intrust your nephew."

"Why, wherefore, and for what reason?" said Balafre. "Why doth he choose the boy, and not me?"

"I can go no farther back than your own ultimate cause, Seigneur Le Balafre, such are his Majesty's commands. But," said he, "if I might use the presumption to form a conjecture, it may be his Majesty hath work to do, fitter for a youth like your nephew, than for an experienced warrior like yourself, Seigneur Balafre.—Wherefore, young gentleman, get your weapons and follow me. Bring with you a harquebuss, for you are to mount sentinel."

"Sentinel!" said the uncle. "Are you sure you are right, Master Oliver? The inner guards of the Castle have ever been mounted by those only who have (like me) served twelve years in our honourable body."

"I am quite certain of his Majesty's pleasure," said Oliver, "and must no longer delay executing it."

"But," said Le Balafre, "my nephew is not even a free Archer, being only an Esquire, serving under my lance."

"Pardon me," answered Oliver; "the King sent for the register not half an hour since, and enrolled him among the Guard. Have the goodness to assist to put your nephew in order for the service."

Balafre, who had no ill nature, or even much jealousy in his disposition, hastily set about adjusting his nephew's dress, and giving him directions for his conduct under arms, but was unable to refrain from larding them with interjections of surprise at such luck's chancing to fall upon the young man so early.

It had never taken place before in the Scottish Guard, he said, not even in his own instance. But doubtless his service must be to mount guard over the popinjays and Indian peacocks, which the Venetian ambassador had lately presented to the King—it could be nothing else; and such duty being only fit for a beardless boy (here he twirled his own grim mustaches), he was glad the lot had fallen on his fair nephew.

Quick and sharp of wit, as well as ardent in fancy, Quentin saw visions of higher importance in this early summons to the royal presence, and his heart beat high at the anticipation of rising into speedy distinction. He determined carefully to watch the manners and language of his conductor, which he suspected must, in some cases at least, be interpreted by contraries, as soothsayers are said to discover the interpretation of dreams. He could not but hug himself on having observed strict secrecy on the events of the chase, and then formed a resolution, which, for so young a person, had much prudence in it, that while he breathed the air of this secluded and mysterious Court, he would keep his thoughts locked in his bosom, and his tongue under the most careful regulation.

His equipment was soon complete, and, with his harquebuss on his shoulder (for though they retained the name of Archers, the Scottish Guard very early substituted firearms for the long bow, in the use of which their nation never excelled), he followed Master Oliver out of the barrack.

His uncle looked long after him, with a countenance in which wonder was blended with curiosity; and though neither envy nor the malignant feelings which it engenders entered into his honest meditations, there was yet a sense of wounded or diminished self importance, which mingled with the pleasure excited by his nephew's favourable commencement of service.

He shook his head gravely, opened a privy cupboard, took out a large bottrine of stout old wine, shook it to examine how low the contents had ebbed, filled and drank a hearty cup; then took his seat, half reclining, on the great oaken settle; and having once again slowly shaken his head, received so much apparent benefit from the oscillation, that, like the toy called a mandarin, he continued the motion until he dropped into a slumber, from which he was first roused by the signal to dinner.

When Quentin Durward left his uncle to these sublime meditations, he followed his conductor, Master Oliver, who, without crossing any of the principal courts, led him, partly through private passages exposed to the open air, but chiefly through a maze of stairs, vaults, and galleries, communicating with each other by secret doors and at unexpected points, into a large and spacious latticed gallery, which, from its breadth, might have been almost termed a hall, hung with tapestry more ancient than beautiful, and with a very few of the hard, cold, ghastly looking pictures, belonging to the first dawn of the arts which preceded their splendid sunrise. These were designed to represent the Paladins of Charlemagne, who made such a distinguished figure in the romantic history of France; and as this gigantic form of the celebrated Orlando constituted the most prominent figure, the apartment acquired from him the title of Rolando's Hall, or Roland's Gallery.

[Charlemagne... was accounted a saint during the dark ages: and Louis XI, as one of his successors, honoured his shrine with peculiar observance. S.]

[Orlando: also called Roland. His history may be read in the Chanson de Roland.]

"You will keep watch here," said Oliver, in a low whisper, as if the hard delineations of monarchs and warriors around could have been offended at the elevation of his voice, or as if he had feared to awaken the echoes that lurked among the groined vaults and Gothic drop work on the ceiling of this huge and dreary apartment.

"What are the orders and signs of my watch?" answered Quentin, in the same suppressed tone.

"Is your harquebuss loaded?" replied Oliver, without answering his query.

"That," answered Quentin, "is soon done;" and proceeded to charge his weapon, and to light the slow match (by which when necessary it was discharged) at the embers of a wood fire, which was expiring in the huge hall chimney—a chimney itself so large that it might have been called a Gothic closet or chapel appertaining to the hall.

When this was performed, Oliver told him that he was ignorant of one of the high privileges of his own corps, which only received orders from the King in person, or the High Constable of France, in lieu of their own officers. "You are placed here by his Majesty's command, young man," added Oliver, "and you will not be long here without knowing wherefore you are summoned. Meantime your walk extends along this gallery. You are permitted to stand still while you list, but on no account to sit down, or quit your weapon. You are not to sing aloud, or whistle, upon any account; but you may, if you list, mutter some of the church's prayers, or what else you list that has no offence in it, in a low voice. Farewell, and keep good watch."

"Good watch!" thought the youthful soldier as his guide stole away from him with that noiseless gliding step which was peculiar to him, and vanished through a side door behind the arras.

"Good watch! but upon whom and against whom?—for what, save bats or rats, are there here to contend with, unless these grim old representatives of humanity should start into life for the disturbance of my guard? Well, it is my duty, I suppose, and I must perform it."

With the vigorous purpose of discharging his duty, even to the very rigour, he tried to while away the time with some of the pious hymns which he had learned in the convent in which he had found shelter after the death of his father—allowing in his own mind, that, but for the change of a novice's frock for the rich military dress which he now wore, his soldierly walk in the royal gallery of France resembled greatly those of which he had tired excessively in the cloistered seclusion of Aberbrothick.

Presently, as if to convince himself he now belonged not to the cell but to the world, he chanted to himself, but in such tone as not to exceed the license given to him, some of the ancient rude ballads which the old family harper had taught him, of the defeat of the Danes at Aberlemno and Forres, the murder of King Duffus at Forfar, and other pithy sonnets and lays which appertained to the history of his distant native country, and particularly of the district to which he belonged. This wore away a considerable space of time, and it was now more than two hours past noon when Quentin was reminded by his appetite that the good fathers of Aberbrothick, however strict in demanding his attendance upon the hours of devotion, were no less punctual in summoning him to those of refectory; whereas here, in the interior of a royal palace, after a morning spent in exercise, and a noon exhausted in duty, no man seemed to consider it as a natural consequence that he must be impatient for his dinner.

There are, however, charms in sweet sounds which can lull to rest even the natural feelings of impatience by which Quentin was now visited. At the opposite extremities of the long hall or gallery were two large doors, ornamented with heavy architraves, probably opening into different suites of apartments, to which the gallery served as a medium of mutual communication. As the sentinel directed his solitary walk betwixt these two entrances, which formed the boundary of his duty, he was startled by a strain of music which was suddenly waked near one of those doors, and which, at least in his imagination, was a combination of the same lute and voice by which he had been enchanted on the preceding day. All the dreams of yesterday morning, so much weakened by the agitating circumstances which he had since undergone, again arose more vivid from their slumber, and, planted on the spot where his ear could most conveniently, drink in the sounds, Quentin remained, with his harquebuss shouldered, his mouth half open, ear, eye, and soul directed to the spot, rather the picture of a sentinel than a living form,—without any other idea than that of catching, if possible, each passing sound of the dulcet melody.

These delightful sounds were but partially heard—they languished, lingered, ceased entirely, and were from time to time renewed after uncertain intervals. But, besides that music, like beauty, is often most delightful, or at least most interesting, to the imagination when its charms are but partially displayed and the imagination is left to fill up what is from distance but imperfectly detailed, Quentin had matter enough to fill up his reverie during the intervals of fascination. He could not doubt, from the report of his uncle's comrades and the scene which had passed in the presence chamber that morning, that the siren who thus delighted his ears, was not, as he had profanely supposed, the daughter or kinswoman of a base Cabaretier [inn keeper], but the same disguised and distressed Countess for whose cause kings and princes were now about to buckle on armour, and put lance in rest. A hundred wild dreams, such as romantic and adventurous youth readily nourished in a romantic and adventurous age, chased from his eyes the bodily presentiment of the actual scene, and substituted their own bewildering delusions, when at once, and rudely, they were banished by a rough grasp laid upon his weapon, and a harsh voice which exclaimed, close to his ear, "Ha! Pasques dieu, Sir Squire, methinks you keep sleepy ward."

The voice was the tuneless, yet impressive and ironical tone of Maitre Pierre, and Quentin, suddenly recalled to himself, saw, with shame and fear, that he had, in his reverie, permitted Louis himself—entering probably by some secret door, and gliding along by the wall, or behind the tapestry—to approach him so nearly as almost to master his weapon.

The first impulse of his surprise was to free his harquebuss by a violent exertion, which made the King stagger backward into the hall. His next apprehension was that, in obeying the animal instinct, as it may be termed, which prompts a brave man to resist an attempt to disarm him, he had aggravated, by a personal struggle with the King, the displeasure produced by the negligence with which he had performed his duty upon guard; and, under this impression, he recovered his harquebuss without almost knowing what he did, and, having again shouldered it, stood motionless before the Monarch, whom he had reason to conclude he had mortally offended.

Louis, whose tyrannical disposition was less founded on natural ferocity or cruelty of temper, than on cold blooded policy and jealous suspicion, had, nevertheless, a share of that caustic severity which would have made him a despot in private conversation, and he always seemed to enjoy the pain which he inflicted on occasions like the present. But he did not push his triumph far, and contented himself with saying, "Thy service of the morning hath already overpaid some negligence in so young a soldier.—Hast thou dined?"

Quentin, who rather looked to be sent to the Provost Marshal than greeted with such a compliment, answered humbly in the negative.

"Poor lad," said Louis, in a softer tone than he usually spoke in, "hunger hath made him drowsy.—I know thine appetite is a wolf," he continued; "and I will save thee from one wild beast as thou didst me from another; thou hast been prudent too in that matter, and I thank thee for it.—Canst thou yet hold out an hour without food?"

"Four-and-twenty, Sire," replied Durward, "or I were no true Scot."

"I would not for another kingdom be the pasty which should encounter thee after such a vigil," said the King; "but the question now is, not of thy dinner, but of my own. I admit to my table this day, and in strict privacy, the Cardinal Balue and this Burgundian—this Count de Crevecoeur—and something may chance; the devil is most busy when foes meet on terms of truce."

He stopped, and remained silent, with a deep and gloomy look. As the King was in no haste to proceed, Quentin at length ventured to ask what his duty was to be in these circumstances.

"To keep watch at the beauffet, with thy loaded weapon," said Louis; "and if there is treason, to shoot the traitor."

"Treason, Sire! and in this guarded castle!" exclaimed Durward.

"You think it impossible," said the King, not offended, it would seem, by his frankness; "but our history has shown that treason can creep into an auger hole.—Treason excluded by guards! Oh, thou silly boy!—quis custodiat ipsos custodes—who shall exclude the treason of those very warders?"

"Their Scottish honour," answered Durward, boldly.

"True: most right:—thou pleasest me," said the King, cheerfully; "the Scottish honour was ever true, and I trust it accordingly. But treason!"—here he relapsed into his former gloomy mood, and traversed the apartment with unequal steps—"she sits at our feasts, she sparkles in our bowls, she wears the beard of our counsellors, the smiles of our courtiers, the crazy laugh of our jesters—above all, she lies hid under the friendly air of a reconciled enemy. Louis of Orleans trusted John of Burgundy—he was murdered in the Rue Barquette. John of Burgundy trusted the faction of Orleans—he was murdered on the bridge of Montereau.—I will trust no one—no one. Hark ye; I will keep my eye on that insolent Count; ay, and on the churchman too, whom I hold not too faithful. When I say, Ecosse, en avant [Forward, Scotland], shoot Crevecoeur dead on the spot."

"It is my duty," said Quentin, "your Majesty's life being endangered."

"Certainly—I mean it no otherwise," said the King. "What should I get by slaying this insolent soldier?—Were it the Constable Saint Paul indeed"—here he paused, as if he thought he had said a word too much, but resumed, laughing, "our brother-in-law, James of Scotland—your own James, Quentin—poniarded the Douglas when on a hospitable visit, within his own royal castle of Skirling."

[Douglas: the allusion in the text is to the fate of James, Earl of Douglas, who, upon the faith of a safe conduct, after several acts of rebellion, visited James the Second in the Castle of Stirling. The king stabbed Douglas, who received his mortal wound from Sir Patrick Grey, one of the king's attendants.]

"Of Stirling," said Quentin, "and so please your Highness.—It was a deed of which came little good."

"Stirling call you the castle?" said the King, overlooking the latter part of Quentin's speech. "Well, let it be Stirling—the name is nothing to the purpose. But I meditate no injury to these men—none.—It would serve me nothing. They may not purpose equally fair by me—I rely on thy harquebuss."

"I shall be prompt at the signal," said Quentin; "but yet"

"You hesitate," said the King. "Speak out—I give thee full leave. From such as thou art, hints may be caught that are right valuable."

"I would only presume to say," replied Quentin, "that your Majesty having occasion to distrust this Burgundian, I marvel that you suffer him to approach so near your person, and that in privacy."

"Oh, content you, Sir Squire," said the King. "There are some dangers which when they are braved, disappear, and which yet, when there is an obvious and apparent dread of them displayed, become certain and inevitable. When I walk boldly up to a surly mastiff, and caress him, it is ten to one I soothe him to good temper; if I show fear of him, he flies on me and rends me. I will be thus far frank with thee.—It concerns me nearly that this man returns not to his headlong master in a resentful humour. I run my risk, therefore. I have never shunned to expose my life for the weal of my kingdom. Follow me."

Louis led his young Life Guardsman, for whom he seemed to have taken a special favour, through the side door by which he had himself entered, saying, as he showed it him, "He who would thrive at Court must know the private wickets and concealed staircases—ay, and the traps and pitfalls of the palace, as well as the principal entrances, folding doors, and portals."

After several turns and passages, the King entered a small vaulted room, where a table was prepared for dinner with three covers. The whole furniture and arrangements of the room were plain almost to meanness. A beauffet, or folding and movable cupboard, held a few pieces of gold and silver plate, and was the only article in the chamber which had in the slightest degree the appearance of royalty. Behind this cupboard, and completely hidden by it, was the post which Louis assigned to Quentin Durward; and after having ascertained, by going to different parts of the room, that he was invisible from all quarters, he gave him his last charge: "Remember the word, Posse, en avant; and so soon as ever I utter these sounds, throw down the screen—spare not for cup or goblet, and be sure thou take good aim at Crevecoeur—if thy piece fail, cling to him, and use thy knife—Oliver and I can deal with the Cardinal."

Having thus spoken, he whistled aloud, and summoned into the apartment Oliver, who was premier valet of the chamber as well as barber, and who, in fact, performed all offices immediately connected with the King's person, and who now appeared, attended by two old men, who were the only assistants or waiters at the royal table. So soon as the King had taken his place, the visitors were admitted; and Quentin, though himself unseen, was so situated as to remark all the particulars of the interview.

The King welcomed his visitors with a degree of cordiality which Quentin had the utmost difficulty to reconcile with the directions which he had previously received, and the purpose for which he stood behind the beauffet with his deadly weapon in readiness. Not only did Louis appear totally free from apprehension of any kind, but one would have supposed that those visitors whom he had done the high honour to admit to his table were the very persons in whom he could most unreservedly confide, and whom he was, most willing to honour. Nothing could be more dignified, and, at the same time, more courteous than his demeanour. While all around him, including even his own dress, was far beneath the splendour which the petty princes of the kingdom displayed in their festivities, his own language and manners were those of a mighty Sovereign in his most condescending mood. Quentin was tempted to suppose, either that the whole of his previous conversation with Louis had been a dream, or that the dutiful demeanour of the Cardinal, and the frank, open, and gallant bearing of the Burgundian noble had entirely erased the King's suspicion.

But whilst the guests, in obedience to the King, were in the act of placing themselves at the table, his Majesty darted one keen glance on them, and then instantly directed his look to Quentin's post. This was done in an instant; but the glance conveyed so much doubt and hatred towards his guests, such a peremptory injunction on Quentin to be watchful in attendance, and prompt in execution, that no room was left for doubting that the sentiments of Louis continued unaltered, and his apprehensions unabated. He was, therefore, more than ever astonished at the deep veil under which that Monarch was able to conceal the movements of his jealous disposition.

Appearing to have entirely forgotten the language which Crevecoeur had held towards him in the face of his Court, the King conversed with him of old times, of events which had occurred during his own exile in the territories of Burgundy, and inquired respecting all the nobles with whom he had been then familiar, as if that period had indeed been the happiest of his life, and as if he retained towards all who had contributed to soften the term of his exile, the kindest and most grateful sentiments.

"To an ambassador of another nation," he said, "I would have thrown something of state into our reception; but to an old friend, who often shared my board at the Castle of Genappes [during his residence in Burgundy, in his father's lifetime, Genappes was the usual abode of Louis.... S.], I wished to show myself, as I love best to live, old Louis of Valois, as simple and plain as any of his Parisian badauds [idlers]. But I directed them to make some better cheer than ordinary for you, Sir Count, for I know your Burgundian proverb, 'Mieux vault bon repas que bel habit' [a good meal is better than a beautiful coat. (Present spelling is vaut.); and therefore I bid them have some care of our table. For our wine, you know well it is the subject of an old emulation betwixt France and Burgundy, which we will presently reconcile; for I will drink to you in Burgundy, and you, Sir Count, shall pledge me in Champagne.—Here, Oliver, let me have a cup of Vin d'Auxerre;" and he hummed gaily a song then well known,

"Auxerre est le boisson des Rois."

[Auxerre wine is the beverage of kings]

"Here, Sir Count, I drink to the health of the noble Duke of Burgundy, our kind and loving cousin.—Oliver, replenish yon golden cup with Vin de Rheims, and give it to the Count on your knee—he represents our loving brother.—My Lord Cardinal, we will ourself fill your cup."

"You have already, Sire, even to overflowing," said the Cardinal, with the lowly mien of a favourite towards an indulgent master.

"Because we know that your Eminence can carry it with a steady hand," said Louis. "But which side do you espouse in the great controversy, Sillery or Auxerre—France or Burgundy?"

"I will stand neutral, Sire," said the Cardinal, "and replenish my cup with Auvernat."

"A neutral has a perilous part to sustain," said the King; but as he observed the Cardinal colour somewhat, he glided from the subject and added, "But you prefer the Auvernat, because it is so noble a wine it endures not water.—You, Sir Count, hesitate to empty your cup. I trust you have found no national bitterness at the bottom."

"I would, Sire," said the Count de Crevecoeur, "that all national quarrels could be as pleasantly ended as the rivalry betwixt our vineyards."

"With time, Sir Count," answered the King, "with time—such time as you have taken to your draught of Champagne.—And now that it is finished, favour me by putting the goblet in your bosom, and keeping it as a pledge of our regard. It is not to every one that we would part with it. It belonged of yore to that terror of France, Henry V of England, and was taken when Rouen was reduced, and those islanders expelled from Normandy by the joint arms of France and Burgundy. It cannot be better bestowed than on a noble and valiant Burgundian, who well knows that on the union of these two nations depends the continuance of the freedom of the continent from the English yoke."

The Count made a suitable answer, and Louis gave unrestrained way to the satirical gaiety of disposition which sometimes enlivened the darker shades of his character. Leading, of course, the conversation, his remarks, always shrewd and caustic, and often actually witty, were seldom good natured, and the anecdotes with which he illustrated them were often more humorous than delicate; but in no one word, syllable, or letter did he betray the state of mind of one who, apprehensive of assassination, hath in his apartment an armed soldier with his piece loaded, in order to prevent or anticipate an attack on his person.

The Count de Crevecoeur gave frankly in to the King's humour [the nature of Louis XI's coarse humour may be guessed at by those who have perused the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, which are grosser than most similar collections of the age. S.]; while the smooth churchman laughed at every jest and enhanced every ludicrous idea, without exhibiting any shame at expressions which made the rustic young Scot blush even in his place of concealment. In about an hour and a half the tables were drawn; and the King, taking courteous leave of his guests, gave the signal that it was his desire to be alone.

So soon as all, even Oliver, had retired, he called Quentin from his place of concealment; but with a voice so faint, that the youth could scarcely believe it to be the same which had so lately given animation to the jest, and zest to the tale. As he approached, he saw an equal change in his countenance. The light of assumed vivacity had left the King's eyes, the smile had deserted his face, and he exhibited all the fatigue of a celebrated actor, when he has finished the exhausting representation of some favourite character, in which, while upon the stage, he had displayed the utmost vivacity.

"Thy watch is not yet over," said he to Quentin; "refresh thyself for an instant—yonder table affords the means; I will then instruct thee in thy farther duty. Meanwhile it is ill talking between a full man and a fasting."

He threw himself back on his seat, covered his brow with his hand, and was silent.

CHAPTER XI: THE HALL OF ROLAND

*Painters show cupid blind—Hath Hymen eyes?
Or is his sight warp'd by those spectacles
which parents, guardians, and advisers, lent him,
That he may look through them on lands and mansions,
On jewels, gold, and all such rich dotations,
And see their value ten times magnified?—
Methinks 't will brook a question.*

THE MISERIES OF ENFORCED MARRIAGE

Louis XI of France, though the sovereign in Europe who was fondest and most jealous of power, desired only its substantial enjoyment; and though he knew well enough, and at times exacted strictly, the observances due to his rank, he was in general singularly careless of show.

In a prince of sounder moral qualities, the familiarity with which he invited subjects to his board—nay, occasionally sat at theirs—must have been highly popular; and even such as he was, the King's homeliness of manners atoned for many of his vices with that class of his subjects who were not particularly exposed to the consequences of his suspicion and jealousy. The tiers etat, or commons of France, who rose to more opulence and consequence under the reign of this sagacious Prince, respected his person, though they loved him not; and it was resting on their support that he was enabled to make his party good against the hatred of the nobles, who conceived that he diminished the honour of the French crown, and obscured their own splendid privileges by that very neglect of form which gratified the citizens and commons.

With patience which most other princes would have considered as degrading, and not without a sense of amusement, the Monarch of France waited till his Life Guardsman had satisfied the keenness of a youthful appetite. It may be supposed, however, that Quentin had too much sense and prudence to put the royal patience to a long or tedious proof; and indeed he was repeatedly desirous to break off his repast ere Louis would permit him.

"I see it in thine eye," he said good naturedly, "that thy courage is not half abated. Go on—God and Saint Denis!—charge again. I tell thee that meat and mass" (crossing himself) "never hindered the work of a good Christian man. Take a cup of wine; but mind thou be cautious of the wine pot—it is the vice of thy countrymen as well as of the English, who, lacking that folly, are the choicest soldiers ever wore armour. And now wash speedily—forget not thy benedicite, and follow me."

Quentin obeyed, and, conducted by a different but as maze-like an approach as he had formerly passed, he followed Louis into the Hall of Roland.

"Take notice," said the King, imperatively, "thou hast never left this post—let that be thine answer to thy kinsman and comrades—and, hark thee, to bind the recollection on thy memory, I give thee this gold chain" (flinging on his arm one of considerable value). "If I go not brave myself, those whom I trust have ever the means to ruffle it with the best. But when such chains as these bind not the tongue from wagging too freely, my gossip, L'Hermite, hath an amulet for the throat, which never fails to work a certain cure. And now attend.—No man, save Oliver or I myself, enters here this evening; but ladies will come hither, perhaps from the one extremity of the hall, perhaps from the other, perhaps one from each. You may answer if they address you, but, being on duty, your answer must be brief; and you must neither address them in your turn, nor engage in any prolonged discourse. But hearken to what they say. Thine ears as well as thy hands are mine—I have bought thee, body and soul. Therefore, if thou hearest aught of their conversation, thou must retain it in memory until it is communicated to me, and then forget it. And, now I think better on it, it will be best that thou pass for a Scottish recruit, who hath come straight down from his mountains, and hath not yet acquired our most Christian language.—Right.—So, if they speak to thee, thou wilt not answer—this will free you from embarrassment, and lead them to converse without regard to your presence. You understand me.—Farewell. Be wary, and thou hast a friend."

The King had scarce spoken these words ere he disappeared behind the arras, leaving Quentin to meditate on what he had seen and heard. The youth was in one of those situations from which it is pleasanter to look forward than to look back; for the reflection that he had been planted like a marksman in a thicket who watches for a stag, to take the life of the noble Count of Crevecoeur, had in it nothing ennobling. It was very true that the King's measures seemed on this occasion merely cautionary and defensive; but how did the youth know but he might be soon commanded on some offensive operation of the same kind? This would be an unpleasant crisis, since it was plain, from the character of his master, that there would be destruction in refusing, while his honour told him that there would be disgrace in complying. He turned his thoughts from this subject of reflection with the sage consolation so often adopted by youth when prospective dangers intrude themselves on their mind, that it was time enough to think what was to be done when the emergence actually arrived, and that sufficient for the day was the evil thereof.

Quentin made use of this sedative reflection the more easily that the last commands of the King had given him something more agreeable to think of than his own condition. The Lady of the Lute was certainly one of those to whom his attention was to be dedicated; and well in his mind did he promise to obey one part of the King's mandate, and listen with diligence to every word that might drop from her lips that he might know if the magic of her conversation equalled that of her

music. But with as much sincerity did he swear to himself, that no part of her discourse should be reported by him to the King which might affect the fair speaker otherwise than favourably.

Meantime, there was no fear of his again slumbering on his post. Each passing breath of wind, which, finding its way through the open lattice, waved the old arras, sounded like the approach of the fair object of his expectation. He felt, in short, all that mysterious anxiety and eagerness of expectation which is always the companion of love, and sometimes hath a considerable share in creating it.

At length, a door actually creaked and jingled (for the doors even of palaces did not in the fifteenth century turn on their hinges so noiseless as ours); but, alas! it was not at that end of the hall from which the lute had been heard. It opened, however, and a female figure entered, followed by two others, whom she directed by a sign to remain without, while she herself came forward into the hall. By her imperfect and unequal gait, which showed to peculiar disadvantage as she traversed this long gallery, Quentin at once recognised the Princess Joan, and with the respect which became his situation, drew himself up in an attitude of silent vigilance, and lowered his weapon to her as she passed. She acknowledged the courtesy by a gracious inclination of her head, and he had an opportunity of seeing her countenance more distinctly than he had in the morning.

There was little in the features of this ill fated Princess to atone for the misfortune of her shape and gait. Her face was, indeed, by no means disagreeable in itself, though destitute of beauty; and there was a meek impression of suffering patience in her large blue eyes, which were commonly fixed upon the ground. But besides that she was extremely pallid in complexion, her skin had the yellowish discoloured tinge which accompanies habitual bad health; and though her teeth were white and regular, her lips were thin and pale. The Princess had a profusion of flaxen hair, but it was so light coloured as to be almost of a bluish tinge; and her tire woman, who doubtless considered the luxuriance of her mistress's tresses as a beauty, had not greatly improved matters by arranging them in curls around her pale countenance, to which they added an expression almost corpse-like and unearthly. To make matters still worse, she had chosen a vest or cymar of a pale green silk, which gave her, on the whole, a ghastly and even spectral appearance.

While Quentin followed this singular apparition with eyes in which curiosity was blended with compassion, for every look and motion of the Princess seemed to call for the latter feeling, two ladies entered from the upper end of the apartment.

One of these was the young person who upon Louis's summons had served him with fruit, while Quentin made his memorable breakfast at the Fleur de Lys. Invested now with all the mysterious dignity belonging to the nymph of the veil and lute, and proved, besides (at least in Quentin's estimation), to be the high born heiress of a rich earldom, her beauty made ten times the impression upon him which it had done when he beheld in her one whom he deemed the daughter of a paltry innkeeper, in attendance upon a rich and humorous old burgher. He now wondered what fascination could ever have concealed from him her real character. Yet her dress was nearly as simple as before, being a suit of deep mourning, without any ornaments. Her headdress was but a veil of crape, which was entirely thrown back, so as to leave her face uncovered; and it was only Quentin's knowledge of her actual rank, which gave in his estimation new elegance to her beautiful shape, a dignity to her step which had before remained unnoticed, and to her regular features, brilliant complexion, and dazzling eyes, an air of conscious nobleness that enhanced their beauty.

Had death been the penalty, Durward must needs have rendered to this beauty and her companion the same homage which he had just paid to the royalty of the Princess. They received it as those who were accustomed to the deference of inferiors, and returned it with courtesy; but he thought—perhaps it was but a youthful vision—that the young lady coloured slightly, kept her eyes on the ground, and seemed embarrassed though in a trifling degree, as she returned his military salutation. This must have been owing to her recollection of the audacious stranger in the neighbouring turret at the Fleur de Lys; but did that discomposure express displeasure? This question he had no means to determine.

The companion of the youthful Countess, dressed like herself simply and in deep mourning, was at the age when women are apt to cling most closely to that reputation for beauty which has for years been diminishing. She had still remains enough to show what the power of her charms must once have been, and, remembering past triumphs, it was evident from her manner that she had not relinquished the pretensions to future conquests. She was tall and graceful, though somewhat haughty in her deportment, and returned the salute of Quentin with a smile of gracious condescension, whispering the next instant something into her companion's ear, who turned towards the soldier as if to comply with some hint from the elder lady, but answered, nevertheless, without raising her eyes. Quentin could not help suspecting that the observation called on the young lady to notice his own good mien; and he was (I do not know why) pleased with the idea that the party referred to did not choose to look at him, in order to verify with her own eyes the truth of the observation. Probably he thought there was already a sort of mysterious connexion beginning to exist between them, which gave importance to the slightest trifle.

This reflection was momentary, for he was instantly wrapped up in attention to the meeting of the Princess Joan with these stranger ladies. She had stood still upon their entrance, in order to receive them, conscious, perhaps, that motion did not become her well; and as she was somewhat embarrassed in receiving and repaying their compliments, the elder stranger, ignorant of the rank of the party whom she addressed, was led to pay her salutation in a manner rather as if she conferred than received an honour through the interview.

"I rejoice," she said, with a smile which was meant to express condescension at once and encouragement, "that we are at length permitted the society of such a respectable person of our own sex as you appear to be. I must say that my niece and I have had but little for which to thank the hospitality of King Louis.—Nay, niece, never pluck my sleeve—I am sure I read in the looks of this young lady sympathy for our situation.—Since we came hither, fair madam, we have been used little better than mere prisoners; and after a thousand invitations to throw our cause and our persons under the protection of France, the Most Christian King has afforded us at first but a base inn for our residence, and now a corner of this moth eaten palace, out of which we are only permitted to creep towards sunset, as if we were bats or owls, whose appearance in the sunshine is to be held matter of ill omen."

"I am sorry," said the Princess, faltering with the awkward embarrassment of the interview, "that we have been unable, hitherto, to receive you according to your deserts.—Your niece, I trust, is better satisfied?"

"Much—much better than I can express," answered the youthful Countess. "I sought but safety and I have found solitude and secrecy besides. The seclusion of our former residence, and the still greater solitude of that now assigned to us, augment, in my eye, the favour which the King vouchsafed to us unfortunate fugitives."

"Silence, my silly cousin," said the elder lady, "and let us speak according to our conscience, since at last we are alone with one of our own sex—I say alone, for that handsome young soldier is a mere statue, since he seems not to have the use of his limbs, and I am given to understand he wants that of his tongue, at least in civilized language—I say, since no one but this lady can understand us, I must own there is nothing I have regretted equal to taking this French journey. I looked for a splendid reception, tournaments, carousals, pageants, and festivals; instead of which, all has been seclusion and obscurity! and the best society whom the King introduced to us, was a Bohemian vagabond, by whose agency he directed us to correspond with our friends in Flanders.—Perhaps," said the lady, "it is his politic intention to mew us up here until our lives' end, that he may seize on our estates, after the extinction of the ancient house of Croye. The Duke of Burgundy was not so cruel; he offered my niece a husband, though he was a bad one."

"I should have thought the veil preferable to an evil husband," said the Princess, with difficulty finding opportunity to interpose a word.

"One would at least wish to have the choice, madam," replied the voluble dame. "It is, Heaven knows, on account of my niece that I speak; for myself, I have long laid aside thoughts of changing my condition. I see you smile, but by my halidome, it is true—yet that is no excuse for the King, whose conduct, like his person, hath more resemblance to that of old Michaud, the moneychanger of Ghent, than to the successor of Charlemagne."

"Hold!" said the Princess, with some asperity in her tone; "remember you speak of my father."

"Of your father!" replied the Burgundian lady, in surprise.

"Of my father," repeated the Princess, with dignity, "I am Joan of France.—But fear not, madam," she continued, in the gentle accent which was natural to her, "you designed no offence, and I have taken none. Command my influence to render your exile and that of this interesting young person more supportable. Alas! it is but little I have in my power, but it is willingly offered."

Deep and submissive was the reverence with which the Countess Hameline de Croye, so was the elder lady called, received the obliging offer of the Princess's protection. She had been long the inhabitant of courts, was mistress of the manners which are there acquired, and held firmly the established rule of courtiers of all ages, who, although their usual private conversation turns upon the vices and follies of their patrons, and on the injuries and neglect which they themselves have sustained, never suffer such hints to drop from them in the presence of the Sovereign or those of his family. The lady was, therefore, scandalised to the last degree at the mistake which had induced her to speak so indecorously in presence of the daughter of Louis. She would have exhausted herself in expressing regret and making apologies, had she not been put to silence and restored to equanimity by the Princess, who requested, in the most gentle manner, yet which, from a Daughter of France, had the weight of a command, that no more might be said in the way either of excuse or of explanation.

The Princess Joan then took her own chair with a dignity which became her, and compelled the two strangers to sit, one on either hand, to which the younger consented with unfeigned and respectful diffidence, and the elder with an affectation of deep humility and deference which was intended for such.

They spoke together, but in such a low tone that the sentinel could not overhear their discourse, and only remarked that the Princess seemed to bestow much of her regard on the younger and more interesting lady; and that the Countess Hameline, though speaking a great deal more, attracted less of the Princess's attention by her full flow of conversation and compliment, than did her kinswoman by her brief and modest replies to what was addressed to her.

The conversation of the ladies had not lasted a quarter of an hour, when the door at the lower end of the hall opened, and a man entered shrouded in a riding cloak. Mindful of the King's injunction, and determined not to be a second time caught slumbering, Quentin instantly moved towards the intruder, and, interposing between him and the ladies, requested him to retire instantly.

"By whose command?" said the stranger, in a tone of contemptuous surprise.

"By that of the King," said Quentin, firmly, "which I am placed here to enforce."

"Not against Louis of Orleans," said the Duke, dropping his cloak.

The young man hesitated a moment; but how enforce his orders against the first Prince of the Blood, about to be allied, as the report now generally went, with the King's own family?

"Your Highness," he said, "is too great that your pleasure should be withstood by me. I trust your Highness will bear me witness that I have done the duty of my post so far as your will permitted."

"Go to—you shall have no blame, young soldier," said Orleans; and passing forward, paid his compliments to the Princess, with that air of constraint which always marked his courtesy when addressing her.

He had been dining, he said, with Dunois, and understanding there was society in Roland's Gallery, he had ventured on the freedom of adding one to the number.

The colour which mounted into the pale cheek of the unfortunate Joan, and which for the moment spread something of beauty over her features, evinced that this addition to the company was anything but indifferent to her. She hastened to present the Prince to the two Ladies of Croye, who received him with the respect due to his eminent rank; and the Princess, pointing to a chair, requested him to join their conversation party.

The Duke declined the freedom of assuming a seat in such society; but taking a cushion from one of the settles, he laid it at the feet of the beautiful young Countess of Croye, and so seated himself, that, without appearing to neglect the Princess, he was enabled to bestow the greater share of his attention on her lovely neighbour.

At first, it seemed as if this arrangement rather pleased than offended his destined bride. She encouraged the Duke in his gallantries towards the fair stranger, and seemed to regard them as complimentary to herself. But the Duke of Orleans, though accustomed to subject his mind to the stern yoke of his uncle when in the King's presence, had enough of princely nature to induce him to follow his own inclinations whenever that restraint was withdrawn; and his high rank giving him a right to overstep the ordinary ceremonies, and advance at once to familiarity, his praises of the Countess Isabelle's beauty became so energetic, and flowed with such unrestrained freedom, owing perhaps to his having drunk a little more wine than usual—for Dunois was no enemy to the worship of Bacchus—that at length he seemed almost impassioned, and the presence of the Princess appeared well nigh forgotten.

The tone of compliment which he indulged was grateful only to one individual in the circle; for the Countess Hameline already anticipated the dignity of an alliance with the first Prince of the Blood, by means of her whose birth, beauty, and large possessions rendered such an ambitious consummation by no means impossible, even in the eyes of a less sanguine projector, could the views of Louis XI have been left out of the calculation of chances. The younger Countess listened to the Duke's gallantries with anxiety and embarrassment, and ever and anon turned an entreating look towards the Princess, as if requesting her to come to her relief. But the wounded feelings and the timidity of Joan of France rendered her incapable of an effort to make the conversation more general; and at length, excepting a few interjectional civilities of the Lady Hameline, it was maintained almost exclusively by the Duke himself, though at the expense of the younger Countess of Croye, whose beauty formed the theme of his high flown eloquence.

Nor must I forget that there was a third person, the unregarded sentinel, who saw his fair visions melt away like wax before the sun, as the Duke persevered in the warm tenor of his passionate discourse. At length the Countess Isabelle de Croye made a determined effort to cut short what was becoming intolerably disagreeable to her, especially from the pain to which the conduct of the Duke was apparently subjecting the Princess.

Addressing the latter, she said, modestly, but with some firmness, that the first boon she had to claim from her promised protection was, "that her Highness would undertake to convince the Duke of Orleans that the ladies of Burgundy, though inferior in wit and manners to those of France, were not such absolute fools as to be pleased with no other conversation than that of extravagant compliment."

"I grieve, lady," said the Duke, preventing the Princess's answer, "that you will satirize, in the same sentence, the beauty of the dames of Burgundy and the sincerity of the Knights of France. If we are hasty and extravagant in the expression of our admiration, it is because we love as we fight, Without letting cold deliberation come into our bosoms, and surrender to the fair with the same rapidity with which we defeat the valiant."

"The beauty of our countrywomen," said the young Countess, with more of reproof than she had yet ventured to use towards the high born suitor, "is as unfit to claim such triumphs, as the valour of the men of Burgundy is incapable of yielding them."

"I respect your patriotism, Countess," said the Duke; "and the last branch of your theme shall not be impugned by me, till a Burgundian knight shall offer to sustain it with lance in rest. But for the injustice which you have done to the charms which your land produces, I appeal from yourself to yourself.—Look there," he said, pointing to a large mirror, the gift of the Venetian republic, and then of the highest rarity and value, "and tell me, as you look, what is the heart that can resist the charms there represented?"

The Princess, unable to sustain any longer the neglect of her lover, here sunk backwards on her chair with a sigh, which at once recalled the Duke from the land of romance, and induced the Lady Hameline to ask whether her Highness found herself ill.

"A sudden pain shot through my forehead," said the Princess, attempting to smile; "but I shall be presently better."

Her increasing paleness contradicted her words, and induced the Lady Hameline to call for assistance, as the Princess was about to faint.

The Duke, biting his lip, and cursing the folly which could not keep guard over his tongue, ran to summon the Princess's attendants, who were in the next chamber, and when they came hastily, with the usual remedies, he could not but, as a cavalier and gentleman, give his assistance to support and to recover her. His voice, rendered almost tender by pity and self reproach, was the most powerful means of recalling her to herself, and just as the swoon was passing away, the King himself entered the apartment.

CHAPTER XII: THE POLITICIAN

This is a lecturer, so skill'd in policy,

*That (no disparagement to Satan's cunning)
He well might read a lesson to the devil,
And teach the old seducer new temptations.*

OLD PLAY

As Louis entered the gallery, he bent his brows in the manner we have formerly described as peculiar to him, and sent, from under his gathered and gloomy eyebrows, a keen look on all around; in darting which, as Quentin afterwards declared, his eyes seemed to turn so small, so fierce, and so piercing, as to resemble those of an aroused adder looking through the bush of heath in which he lies coiled.

When, by this momentary and sharpened glance, the King had reconnoitered the cause of the bustle which was in the apartment, his first address was to the Duke of Orleans.

"You here, my fair cousin?" he said;—and turning to Quentin, added sternly, "Had you not charge?"

"Forgive the young man, Sire," said the Duke; "he did not neglect his duty; but I was informed that the Princess was in this gallery."

"And I warrant you would not be withstood when you came hither to pay your court," said the King, whose detestable hypocrisy persisted in representing the Duke as participating in a passion which was felt only on the side of his unhappy daughter; "and it is thus you debauch the sentinels of my guard, young man?—But what cannot be pardoned to a gallant who only lives par amours [by his love affairs]?"

The Duke of Orleans raised his head, as if about to reply in some manner which might correct the opinion conveyed in the King's observation; but the instinctive reverence, not to say fear, of Louis, in which he had been bred from childhood, chained up his voice.

"And Joan hath been ill?" said the King; "but do not be grieved, Louis; it will soon pass away; lend her your arm to her apartment, while I will conduct these strange ladies to theirs."

The order was given in a tone which amounted to a command, and Orleans accordingly made his exit with the Princess at one extremity of the gallery, while the King, ungloving his right hand, courteously handed the Countess Isabelle and her kinswoman to their apartment, which opened from the other. He bowed profoundly as they entered, and remained standing on the threshold for a minute after they had disappeared; then, with great composure, shut the door by which they had retired and turning the huge key, took it from the lock, and put it into his girdle—an appendage which gave him still more perfectly the air of some old miser, who cannot journey in comfort unless he bear with him the key of his treasure closet.

With slow and pensive step, and eyes fixed on the ground, Louis now paced towards Quentin Durward, who, expecting his share of the royal displeasure, viewed his approach with no little anxiety.

"Thou hast done wrong," said the King, raising his eyes, and fixing them firmly on him when he had come within a yard of him,—"*thou hast done foul wrong, and deservest to die.—Speak not a word in defence!—What hadst thou to do with Dukes or Princesses?—what with any thing but my order?*"

"So please your Majesty," said the young soldier, "what could I do?"

"What couldst thou do when thy post was forcibly passed?" answered the King, scornfully,—"*what is the use of that weapon on thy shoulder? Thou shouldst have levelled thy piece, and if the presumptuous rebel did not retire on the instant, he should have died within this very hall! Go—pass into these farther apartments. In the first thou wilt find a large staircase, which leads to the inner Bailey; there thou wilt find Oliver Dain [the inner bailey contained the stables and often the chapel. It communicated directly with the keep]. Send him to me—do thou begone to thy quarters.—As thou dost value thy life, be not so loose of thy tongue as thou hast been this day slack of thy hand.*"

Well pleased to escape so easily, yet with a soul which revolted at the cold blooded cruelty which the King seemed to require from him in the execution of his duty, Durward took the road indicated; hastened down stairs, and communicated the royal pleasure to Oliver, who was waiting in the court beneath. The wily tonsor bowed, sighed, and smiled, as, with a voice even softer than ordinary, he wished the youth a good evening; and they parted, Quentin to his quarters, and Oliver to attend the King.

In this place, the Memoirs which we have chiefly followed in compiling this true history were unhappily defective; for, founded chiefly on information supplied by Quentin, they do not convey the purport of the dialogue which, in his absence, took place between the King and his secret counsellor. Fortunately the Library of Hautlieu contains a manuscript copy of the *Chronique Scandaleuse* of Jean de Troyes [the Marquis de Hautlieu is the name of an imaginary character in whose library Scott declares himself to have found the memorials which form the basis of the novel of Quentin Durward], much more full than that which has been printed; to which are added several curious memoranda, which we incline to think must have been written down by Oliver himself after the death of his master, and before he had the happiness to be rewarded with the halter which he had so long merited. From this we have been able to extract a very full account of the obscure favourite's conversation with Louis upon the present occasion, which throws a light upon the policy of that Prince, which we might otherwise have sought for in vain.

When the favourite attendant entered the Gallery of Roland, he found the King pensively seated upon the chair which his daughter had left some minutes before. Well acquainted with his temper, he glided on with his noiseless step until he had just crossed the line of the King's sight, so as to make him aware of his presence, then shrank modestly backward and out of sight, until he should be summoned to speak or to listen. The Monarch's first address was an unpleasant one: "So, Oliver, your fine schemes are melting like snow before the south wind!—I pray to Our Lady of Embrun that they resemble not the ice heaps of which the Switzer churls tell such stories, and come rushing down upon our heads."

"I have heard with concern that all is not well, Sire," answered Oliver.

"Not well!" exclaimed the King, rising and hastily marching up and down the gallery. "All is ill, man—and as ill nearly as possible; so much for thy fond romantic advice, that I, of all men, should become a protector of distressed damsels! I tell thee Burgundy is arming, and on the eve of closing an alliance with England. And Edward, who hath his hands idle at home, will pour his thousands upon us through that unhappy gate of Calais. Singly, I might cajole or defy them; but united, united—and with the discontent and treachery of that villain Saint Paul!—All thy fault, Oliver, who counselled me to receive the women, and to use the services of that damned Bohemian to carry messages to their vassals."

"My lord," said Oliver, "you know my reasons. The Countess's domains lie between the frontiers of Burgundy and Flanders—her castle is almost impregnable—her rights over neighbouring estates are such as, if well supported, cannot but give much annoyance to Burgundy, were the lady but wedded to one who should be friendly to France."

"It is, it is a tempting bait," said the King; "and could we have concealed her being here, we might have arranged such a marriage for this rich heiress as would have highly profited—France. But that cursed Bohemian, how couldst thou recommend such a heathen hound for a commission which required trust?"

"Please you," said Oliver, "to remember it was your Grace's self who trusted him too far—much farther than I recommended. He would have borne a letter trustily enough to the Countess's kinsman, telling him to hold out her castle, and promising speedy relief; but your Highness must needs put his prophetic powers to the test; and thus he became possessed of secrets which were worth betraying to Duke Charles."

"I am ashamed, I am ashamed," said Louis. "And yet, Oliver, they say that these heathen people are descended from the sage Chaldeans, who did read the mysteries of the stars in the plains of Shinar [they lie between the Tigris and Euphrates]."

Well aware that his master, with all his acuteness and sagacity, was but the more prone to be deceived by soothsayers, astrologers, diviners, and all that race of pretenders to occult science, and that he even conceived himself to have some skill in these arts. Oliver dared to press this point no farther; and only observed that the Bohemian had been a bad prophet on his own account, else he would have avoided returning to Tours, and saved himself from the gallows he had merited.

"It often happens that those who are gifted with prophetic knowledge," answered Louis, with much gravity, "have not the power of foreseeing those events in which they themselves are personally interested."

"Under your Majesty's favour," replied the confidant, "that seems as if a man could not see his own hand by means of the candle which he holds, and which shows him every other object in the apartment."

"He cannot see his own features by the light which shows the faces of others," replied Louis; "and that is the more faithful illustration of the case.—But this is foreign to my purpose at present. The Bohemian hath had his reward, and peace be with him.—But these ladies!—Not only does Burgundy threaten us with war for harbouring them, but their presence is like to interfere with my projects in my own family. My simple cousin of Orleans hath barely seen this damsel, and I venture to prophesy that the sight of her is like to make him less pliable in the matter of his alliance with Joan."

"Your Majesty," answered the counsellor, "may send these ladies of Croye back to Burgundy, and so make your peace with the Duke. Many might murmur at this as dishonourable; but if necessity demands the sacrifice—"

"If profit demanded the sacrifice, Oliver, the sacrifice should be made without hesitation," answered the King. "I am an old, experienced salmon, and use not to gulp the angler's hook because it is busked up with a feather called honour. But what is worse than a lack of honour, there were, in returning those ladies to Burgundy, a forfeiture of those views of advantage which moved us to give them an asylum. It were heart breaking to renounce the opportunity of planting a friend to ourselves, and an enemy to Burgundy, in the very centre of his dominions, and so near to the discontented cities of Flanders. Oliver, I cannot relinquish the advantages which our scheme of marrying the maiden to a friend of our own house seems to hold out to us."

"Your Majesty," said Oliver, after a moment's thought, "might confer her hand on some right trusty friend, who would take all blame on himself, and serve your Majesty secretly, while in public you might disown him."

"And where am I to find such a friend?" said Louis. "Were I to bestow her upon any one of our mutinous and ill ruled nobles, would it not be rendering him independent? and hath it not been my policy for years to prevent them from becoming so?—Dunois indeed—him, and him only, I might perchance trust.—He would fight for the crown of France, whatever were his condition. But honours and wealth change men's natures.—Even Dunois I will not trust."

"Your Majesty may find others," said Oliver, in his smoothest manner, and in a tone more insinuating than that which he usually employed in conversing with the King, who permitted him considerable freedom; "men dependent entirely on your own grace and favour, and who could no more exist without your countenance than without sun or air—men rather of head than of action—men who"

"Men who resemble thyself, ha!" said King Louis. "No, Oliver, by my faith that arrow was too rashly shot!—What! because I indulge thee with my confidence, and let thee, in reward, poll my lieges a little now and then, dost thou think it makes thee fit to be the husband of that beautiful vision, and a Count of the highest class to boot?—thee—thee, I say, low born, and lower bred, whose wisdom is at best a sort of dinning, and whose courage is more than doubtful."

"Your Majesty imputes to me a presumption of which I am not guilty, in supposing me to aspire so highly," said Oliver.

"I am glad to hear it, man," said the King; "and truly, I hold your judgment the healthier that you disown such a reverie. But methinks thy speech sounded strangely in that key.—Well, to return.—I dare not wed this beauty to one of my subjects—I dare not return her to Burgundy—I dare not transmit her to England or to Germany, where she is likely to become the prize of some one more apt to unite with Burgundy than with France, and who would be more ready to discourage the honest malcontents in Ghent and Liege, than to yield them that wholesome countenance which might always find Charles the Hardy enough to exercise his valour on, without stirring from his domains—and they were in so ripe a humour for insurrection, the men of Liege in especial, that they alone, well heated and supported, would find my fair cousin work for more than a twelvemonth; and backed by a warlike Count of Croye—O, Oliver! the plan is too hopeful to be resigned without a struggle.—Cannot thy fertile brain devise some scheme?"

Oliver paused for a long time—then at last replied, "What if a bridal could be accomplished betwixt Isabelle of Croye and young Adolphus, the Duke of Gueldres?"

"What!" said the King, in astonishment "sacrifice her, and she, too, so lovely a creature, to the furious wretch who deposed, imprisoned, and has often threatened to murder his own father!—No, Oliver, no that were too unutterably cruel even for you and me, who look so steadfastly to our excellent end, the peace and the welfare of France, and respect so little the means by which it is attained. Besides, he lies distant from us and is detested by the people of Ghent and Liege.—No, no—I will none of Adolphus of Gueldres—think on some one else."

"My invention is exhausted, Sire," said the counsellor; "I can remember no one who, as husband to the Countess of Croye, would be likely to answer your Majesty's views. He must unite such various qualities—a friend to your Majesty—an enemy to Burgundy—of policy enough to conciliate the Ghentois and Liegeois, and of valour sufficient to defend his little dominions against the power of Duke Charles—of noble birth besides—that your Highness insists upon; and of excellent and virtuous character to the boot of all."

"Nay, Oliver," said the King, "I leaned not so much—that is so very much, on character; but methinks Isabelle's bridegroom should be something less publicly and generally abhorred than Adolphus of Gueldres. For example, since I myself must suggest some one—why not William de la Marck?"

"On my halidome, Sire," said Oliver, "I cannot complain of your demanding too high a standard of moral excellence in the happy man, if the Wild Boar of Ardennes can serve your turn. De la Marck!—why, he is the most notorious robber and murderer on all the frontiers—excommunicated by the Pope for a thousand crimes."

"We will have him released from the sentence, friend Oliver—Holy Church is merciful."

"Almost an outlaw," continued Oliver, "and under the ban of the Empire, by an ordinance of the Chamber at Ratisbon."

[Ratisbon was the seat of the German Reichstag from 1663 to 1806.]

"We will have the ban taken off, friend Oliver," continued the King, in the same tone; "the Imperial Chamber will hear reason."

[A supreme court of appeals established in 1495 by Maximilian I: the first law court established in Germany.]

"And admitting him to be of noble birth," said Oliver, "he hath the manners, the face, and the outward form, as well as the heart, of a Flemish butcher—she will never accept of him."

"His mode of wooing, if I mistake him not," said Louis, "will render it difficult for her to make a choice."

"I was far wrong indeed, when I taxed your Majesty with being over scrupulous," said the counsellor. "On my life, the crimes of Adolphus are but virtues to those of De la Marck!—And then how is he to meet with his bride? Your Majesty knows he dare not stir far from his own forest of Ardennes."

"That must be cared for," said the King; "and, in the first place, the two ladies must be acquainted privately that they can be no longer maintained at this Court, except at the expense of a war between France and Burgundy, and that, unwilling to deliver them up to my fair cousin of Burgundy, I am desirous they should secretly depart from my dominions."

"They will demand to be conveyed to England," said Oliver "and we shall have her return to Flanders with an island lord, having a round, fair face, long brown hair, and three thousand archers at his back."

"No—no," replied the king; "we dare not (you understand me) so far offend our fair cousin of Burgundy as to let her pass to England. It would bring his displeasure as certainly as our maintaining her here. No, no—to the safety of the Church alone we will venture to commit her; and the utmost we can do is to connive at the Ladies Hameline and Isabelle de Croye departing in disguise, and with a small retinue, to take refuge with the Bishop of Liege, who will place the fair Isabelle for the time under the safeguard of a convent."

"And if that convent protect her from William de la Marck, when he knows of your Majesty's favourable intentions, I have mistaken the man."

"Why, yes," answered the King, "thanks to our secret supplies of money, De la Marck hath together a handsome handful of as unscrupulous soldiery as ever were outlawed; with which he contrives to maintain himself among the woods, in such a condition as makes him formidable both to the Duke of Burgundy and the Bishop of Liege. He lacks nothing but some territory which he may call his own; and this being so fair an opportunity to establish himself by marriage, I think that, Pasques dieu! he will find means to win and wed, without more than a hint on our part. The Duke of Burgundy will then have such a thorn in his side as no lancet of our time will easily cut out from his flesh. The Boar of Ardennes, whom he has already outlawed, strengthened by the possession of that fair lady's lands,

castles, and seignior, with the discontented Liegeois to boot, who, by my faith, will not be in that case unwilling to choose him for their captain and leader—let Charles then think of wars with France when he will, or rather let him bless his stars if she war not with him.—How dost thou like the scheme, Oliver, ha?"

"Rarely," said Oliver, "save and except the doom which confers that lady on the Wild Boar of Ardennes.—By my halidome, saving in a little outward show of gallantry, Tristan, the Provost Marshal, were the more proper bridegroom of the two."

"Anon thou didst propose Master Oliver the barber," said Louis; "but friend Oliver and gossip Tristan, though excellent men in the way of counsel and execution, are not the stuff that men make counts of.—Know you not that the burghers of Flanders value birth in other men precisely because they have it not themselves?—A plebeian mob ever desire an aristocratic leader. Yonder Ked, or Cade, or—how called they him?—in England, was fain to lure his rascal rout after him by pretending to the blood of the Mortimers [Jack Cade was the leader of Cade's Rebellion. Calling himself Mortimer, and claiming to be a cousin of Richard, Duke of York, in 1450, at the head of twenty thousand men, he took formal possession of London. His alleged object was to procure representation for the people, and so reduce excessive taxation.]. William de la Marck comes of the blood of the Princes of Sedan, as noble as mine own.—And now to business. I must determine the ladies of Croye to a speedy and secret flight, under sure guidance. This will be easily done—we have but to hint the alternative of surrendering them to Burgundy. Thou must find means to let William de la Marck know of their motions, and let him choose his own time and place to push his suit. I know a fit person to travel with them."

"May I ask to whom your Majesty commits such an important charge?" asked the tonsor.

"To a foreigner, be sure," replied the King, "one who has neither kin nor interest in France, to interfere with the execution of my pleasure; and who knows too little of the country and its factions, to suspect more of my purpose than I choose to tell him—in a word, I design to employ the young Scot who sent you hither but now."

Oliver paused in a manner which seemed to imply a doubt of the prudence of the choice, and then added, "Your Majesty has reposed confidence in that stranger boy earlier than is your wont."

"I have my reasons," answered the King. "Thou knowest" (and he crossed himself) "my devotion for the blessed Saint Julian. I had been saying my orisons to that holy Saint late in the night before last, wherein (as he is known to be the guardian of travellers) I made it my humble petition that he would augment my household with such wandering foreigners as might best establish throughout our kingdom unlimited devotion to our will; and I vowed to the good Saint in guerdon, that I would, in his name, receive, and relieve; and maintain them."

"And did Saint Julian," said Oliver, "send your Majesty this long legged importation from Scotland in answer to your prayers?"

Although the barber, who well knew that his master had superstition in a large proportion to his want of religion, and that on such topics nothing was more easy than to offend him—although, I say, he knew the royal weakness, and therefore carefully put the preceding question in the softest and most simple tone of voice, Louis felt the innuendo which it contained, and regarded the speaker with high displeasure.

"Sirrah," he said, "thou art well called Oliver the Devil, who darest thus to sport at once with thy master and with the blessed Saints. I tell thee, wert thou one grain less necessary to me, I would have thee hung up on yonder oak before the Castle, as an example to all who scoff at things holy—Know, thou infidel slave, that mine eyes were no sooner closed; than the blessed Saint Julian was visible to me, leading a young man whom he presented to me, saying that his fortune should be to escape the sword, the cord, the river, and to bring good fortune to the side which he should espouse, and to the adventures in which he should be engaged. I walked out on the succeeding morning and I met with this youth, whose image I had seen in my dream. In his own country he hath escaped the sword, amid the massacre of his whole family, and here within the brief compass of two days, he hath been strangely rescued from drowning and from the gallows, and hath already, on a particular occasion, as I but lately hinted to thee, been of the most material service to me. I receive him as sent hither by Saint Julian to serve me in the most difficult, the most dangerous, and even the most desperate services."

The King, as he thus expressed himself, doffed his hat, and selecting from the numerous little leaden figures with which the hat band was garnished that which represented Saint Julian, he placed it on the table, as was often his wont when some peculiar feeling of hope, or perhaps of remorse, happened to thrill across his mind, and, kneeling down before it, muttered, with an appearance of profound devotion, "Sancte Juliane, adsis precibus nostris! Ora, ora, pro nobis! [St. Julian, give heed to our prayers. Plead, plead for us!]"

This was one of those ague fits of superstitious devotion which often seized on Louis in such extraordinary times and places, that they gave one of the most sagacious monarchs who ever reigned the appearance of a madman, or at least of one whose mind was shaken by some deep consciousness of guilt.

While he was thus employed, his favourite looked at him with an expression of sarcastic contempt which he scarce attempted to disguise. Indeed, it was one of this man's peculiarities, that in his whole intercourse with his master, he laid aside that fondling, purring affectation of officiousness and humility which distinguished his conduct to others; and if he still bore some resemblance to a cat, it was when the animal is on its guard,—watchful, animated, and alert for sudden exertion. The cause of this change was probably Oliver's consciousness that his Master was himself too profound a hypocrite not to see through the hypocrisy of others.

"The features of this youth, then, if I may presume to speak," said Oliver, "resemble those of him whom your dream exhibited?"

"Closely and intimately," said the King, whose imagination, like that of superstitious people in general, readily imposed upon itself. "I have had his horoscope cast, besides, by Galeotti Martivalle, and I have plainly learned, through his art and mine own observation, that, in many respects, this unfriended youth has his destiny under the same constellation with mine."

Whatever Oliver might think of the causes thus boldly assigned for the preference of an inexperienced stripling, he dared make no farther objections, well knowing that Louis, who, while residing in exile, had bestowed much of his attention on the supposed science of judicial astrology, would listen to no raillery of any kind which impeached his skill. He therefore only replied that he trusted the youth would prove faithful in the discharge of a task so delicate.

"We will take care he hath no opportunity to be otherwise," said Louis; "for he shall be privy to nothing, save that he is sent to escort the Ladies of Croye to the residence of the Bishop of Liege. Of the probable interference of William de la Marck he shall know as little as they themselves. None shall know that secret but the guide; and Tristan or thou must find one fit for our purpose."

"But in that case," said Oliver, "judging of him from his country and his appearance, the young man is like to stand to his arms as soon as the Wild Boar comes on them, and may not come off so easily from the tusks as he did this morning."

"If they rend his heart strings," said Louis, composedly, "Saint Julian, blessed be his name! can send me another in his stead. It skills as little that the messenger is slain after his duty is executed, as that the flask is broken when the wine is drunk out.—Meanwhile, we must expedite the ladies' departure, and then persuade the Count de Crevecoeur that it has taken place without our connivance; we having been desirous to restore them to the custody of our fair cousin, which their sudden departure has unhappily prevented."

"The Count is perhaps too wise, and his master too prejudiced, to believe it."

"Holy Mother!" said Louis, "what unbelief would that be in Christian men! But, Oliver, they shall believe us. We will throw into our whole conduct towards our fair cousin, Duke Charles, such thorough and unlimited confidence, that, not to believe we have been sincere with him in every respect, he must be worse than an infidel. I tell thee, so convinced am I that I could make Charles of Burgundy think of me in every respect as I would have him, that, were it necessary for silencing his doubts, I would ride unarmed, and on a palfrey, to visit him in his tent, with no better guard about me than thine own simple person, friend Oliver."

"And I," said Oliver, "though I pique not myself upon managing steel in any other shape than that of a razor, would rather charge a Swiss battalion of pikes, than I would accompany your Highness upon such a visit of friendship to Charles of Burgundy, when he hath so many grounds to be well assured that there is enmity in your Majesty's bosom against him."

"Thou art a fool, Oliver," said the King, "with all thy pretensions to wisdom—and art not aware that deep policy must often assume the appearance of the most extreme simplicity, as courage occasionally shrouds itself under the show of modest timidity. Were it needful, full surely would I do what I have said—the Saints always blessing our purpose, and the heavenly constellations bringing round in their course a proper conjuncture for such an exploit."

In these words did King Louis XI give the first hint of the extraordinary resolution which he afterwards adopted in order to dupe his great rival, the subsequent execution of which had very nearly proved his own ruin.

He parted with his counsellor, and presently afterwards went to the apartment of the Ladies of Croye. Few persuasions beyond his mere license would have been necessary to determine their retreat from the Court of France, upon the first hint that they might not be eventually protected against the Duke of Burgundy; but it was not so easy to induce them to choose Liege for the place of their retreat. They entreated and requested to be transferred to Bretagne or Calais, where, under protection of the Duke of Bretagne or King of England, they might remain in a state of safety, until the sovereign of Burgundy should relent in his rigorous purpose towards them. But neither of these places of safety at all suited the plans of Louis, and he was at last successful in inducing them to adopt that which did coincide with them.

The power of the Bishop of Liege for their defence was not to be questioned, since his ecclesiastical dignity gave him the means of protecting the fugitives against all Christian Princes; while, on the other hand, his secular forces, if not numerous, seemed at least sufficient to defend his person, and all under his protection, from any sudden violence. The difficulty was to reach the little Court of the Bishop in safety; but for this Louis promised to provide, by spreading a report that the Ladies of Croye had escaped from Tours by night, under fear of being delivered up to the Burgundian Envoy, and had taken their flight towards Bretagne. He also promised them the attendance of a small but faithful retinue, and letters to the commanders of such towns and fortresses as they might pass, with instructions to use every means for protecting and assisting them in their journey.

The Ladies of Croye, although internally resenting the ungenerous and discourteous manner in which Louis thus deprived them of the promised asylum in his Court, were so far from objecting to the hasty departure which he proposed, that they even anticipated his project, by entreating to be permitted to set forward that same night. The Lady Hameline was already tired of a place where there were neither admiring courtiers, nor festivities to be witnessed; and the Lady Isabelle thought she had seen enough to conclude that, were the temptation to become a little stronger, Louis XI, not satisfied with expelling them from his Court, would not hesitate to deliver her up to her irritated Suzerain, the Duke of Burgundy. Lastly, Louis himself readily acquiesced in their hasty departure, anxious to preserve peace with Duke Charles, and alarmed lest the beauty of Isabelle should interfere with and impede the favourite plan which he had formed for bestowing the hand of his daughter Joan upon his cousin of Orleans.

CHAPTER XIII: THE JOURNEY

*Talk not of kings—I scorn the poor comparison;
I am a sage and can command the elements—
At least men think I can; and on that thought
I found unbounded empire.*

ALBUMAZAR

Occupation and adventure might be said to crowd upon the young Scottishman with the force of a spring tide; for he was speedily summoned to the apartment of his Captain, the Lord Crawford, where, to his astonishment, he again beheld the King. After a few words respecting the honour and trust which were about to be reposed in him, which made Quentin internally afraid that they were again about to propose to him such a watch as he had kept upon the Count of Crevecoeur, or perhaps some duty still more repugnant to his feelings, he was not relieved merely, but delighted, with hearing that he was selected, with the assistance of four others under his command, one of whom was a guide, to escort the Ladies of Croye to the little Court of their relative, the Bishop of Liege, in the safest and most commodious, and, at the same time, in the most secret manner possible. A scroll was given him, in which were set down directions for his guidance, for the places of halt (generally chosen in obscure villages, solitary monasteries, and situations remote from towns), and for the general precautions which he was to attend to, especially on approaching the frontier of Burgundy. He was sufficiently supplied with instructions what he ought to say and do to sustain the personage of the Maitre d'Hotel of two English ladies of rank, who had been on a pilgrimage to Saint Martin of Tours, and were about to visit the holy city of Cologne, and worship the relics of the sage Eastern Monarchs, who came to adore the nativity of Bethlehem [the relics of the three kings, or Magi, were placed in the Cathedral of Cologne in 1162]; for under that character the Ladies of Croye were to journey.

Without having any defined notions of the cause of his delight, Quentin Durward's heart leapt for joy at the idea of approaching thus nearly to the person of the Beauty of the Turret, and in a situation which entitled him to her confidence, since her protection was in so great a degree intrusted to his conduct and courage. He felt no doubt in his own mind that he should be her successful guide through the hazards of her pilgrimage. Youth seldom thinks of dangers, and bred up free, and fearless, and self confiding, Quentin, in particular, only thought of them to defy them. He longed to be exempted from the restraint of the Royal presence, that he might indulge the secret glee with which such unexpected tidings filled him, and which prompted him to bursts of delight which would have been totally unfitting for that society.

But Louis had not yet done with him. That cautious monarch had to consult a counsellor of a different stamp from Oliver le Diable, who was supposed to derive his skill from the superior and astral intelligences, as men, judging from their fruits, were apt to think the counsels of Oliver sprang from the Devil himself.

Louis therefore led the way, followed by the impatient Quentin, to a separate tower of the castle of Plessis, in which was installed, in no small ease and splendour; the celebrated astrologer, poet, and philosopher, Galeotti Marti, or Martius, or Martivale, a native of Narni, in Italy, the author of the famous Treatise De Vulgo Incognitis [concerning things unknown to the generality of mankind. S.], and the subject of his age's admiration, and of the panegyrics of Paulus Jovius [an Italian historian of the sixteenth century who lived at the Pope's court]. He had long flourished at the court of the celebrated Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, from whom he was in some measure decoyed by Louis, who grudged the Hungarian monarch the society and the counsels of a sage accounted so skilful in reading the decrees of Heaven.

[Martius Galeotti... was secretary to Matthias Carvinus, King of Hungary. He left Hungary in 1477, and was made prisoner at Venice on a charge of having propagated heterodox opinions.... He might have suffered seriously but for the protection of Sixtus IV, then Pope, who had been one of his scholars.... He attached himself to Louis XI, and died in his service. S.]

Martivale was none of those ascetic, withered, pale professors of mystic learning of those days, who bleared their eyes over the midnight furnace, and macerated their bodies by out watching the Polar Bear. He indulged in all courtly pleasures, and until he grew corpulent, had excelled in all martial sports and gymnastic exercises, as well as in the use of arms; insomuch, that Janus Pannonius [a Hungarian poet of the fifteenth century] has left a Latin epigram upon a wrestling match betwixt Galeotti and a renowned champion of that art, in the presence of the Hungarian King and Court, in which the Astrologer was completely victorious.

The apartments of this courtly and martial sage were far more splendidly furnished than any which Quentin had yet seen in the royal palace; and the carving and ornamented woodwork of his library, as well as the magnificence displayed in the tapestries, showed the elegant taste of the learned Italian. Out of his study one door opened to his sleeping apartment, another led to the turret which served as his observatory. A large open table, in the midst of the chamber, was covered with a rich Turkey carpet, the spoils of the tent of a Pacha, after the great battle of Jaiza, where the Astrologer had fought abreast with the valiant champion of Christendom, Matthias Corvinus. On the table lay a variety of mathematical and astrological instruments, all of the most rich materials and curious workmanship.

His astrolabe of silver was the gift of the Emperor of Germany, and his Jacob's staff of ebony [a divining rod made of a hazel fork], jointed with gold and curiously inlaid, was a mark of esteem from the reigning Pope.

There were various other miscellaneous articles disposed on the table, or hanging around the walls; amongst others, two complete suits of armour, one of mail, the other of plate, both of which, from their great size, seemed to call the gigantic Astrologer their owner; a Spanish toledo, a Scottish broadsword, a Turkish scymetar, with bows, quivers, and other warlike weapons; musical instruments of several different kinds; a silver crucifix, a sepulchral antique vase, and several of the little brazen Penates of the ancient heathens, with other curious nondescript articles, some of which, in the superstitious opinions of that period, seemed to be designed for magical purposes. The library of this singular character was of the same miscellaneous description with its other effects. Curious manuscripts of classical antiquity lay mingled with the voluminous labours of Christian divines, and of those painstaking sages who professed the chemical science, and proffered to guide their students into the most secret recesses of nature, by means of the Hermetical Philosophy [a system of philosophy ascribed to the Egyptian Hermes (Thoth) who was reputed to have written certain sacred books treating of religion and the natural sciences]. Some were written in the Eastern character, and others concealed their sense or nonsense under the veil of hieroglyphics and cabalistic characters. The whole apartment and its furniture of every kind, formed a scene very impressive on the fancy, considering the general belief then indisputably entertained concerning the truth of the occult sciences; and that effect was increased by the manners and appearance of the individual himself, who, seated in a huge chair, was employed in curiously examining a specimen, just issued from the Frankfort press, of the newly invented art of printing.

Galeotti Martivalle was a tall, bulky, yet stately man, considerably past his prime, and whose youthful habits of exercise, though still occasionally resumed, had not been able to contend with his natural tendency to corpulence, increased by sedentary study, and indulgence in the pleasures of the table. His features, though rather overgrown, were dignified and noble, and a Santon might have envied the dark and downward sweep of his long descending beard. His dress was a chamber robe of the richest Genoa velvet, with ample sleeves, clasped with frogs of gold, and lined with sables. It was fastened round his middle by a broad belt of virgin parchment, round which were represented, in crimson characters, the signs of the Zodiac. He rose and bowed to the King, yet with the air of one to whom such exalted society was familiar, and who was not at all likely, even in the royal presence, to compromise the dignity then especially affected by the pursuers of science.

"You are engaged, father," said the King, "and, as I think, with this new fashioned art of multiplying manuscripts by the intervention of machinery. Can things of such mechanical and terrestrial import interest the thoughts of one before whom Heaven has unrolled her own celestial volumes?"

"My brother," replied Martivalle, "for so the tenant of this cell must term even the King of France, when he deigns to visit him as a disciple—believe me that in considering the consequences of this invention, I read with as certain augury as by any combination of the heavenly bodies, the most awful and portentous changes. When I reflect with what slow and limited supplies the stream of science hath hitherto descended to us, how difficult to be obtained by those most ardent in its search, how certain to be neglected by all who regard their ease; how liable to be diverted, altogether dried up, by the invasions of barbarism; can I look forward without wonder and astonishment to the lot of a succeeding generation on whom knowledge will descend like the first and second rain, uninterrupted, unabated, unbounded; fertilizing some grounds, and overflowing others; changing the whole form of social life; establishing and overthrowing religions; erecting and destroying kingdoms."

"Hold, Galeotti," said Louis, "shall these changes come in our time?"

"No, my royal brother," replied Martivalle; "this invention may be likened to a young tree, which is now newly planted, but shall, in succeeding generations, bear fruit as fatal, yet as precious, as that of the Garden of Eden; the knowledge, namely, of good and evil."

Louis answered, after a moment's pause, "Let futurity look to what concerns them—we are men of this age, and to this age we will confine our care. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

"Tell me, hast thou proceeded farther in the horoscope Which I sent to thee, and of which you made me some report? I have brought the party hither, that you may use palmistry, or chiromancy if such is your pleasure. The matter is pressing."

The bulky sage arose from his seat, and, approaching the young soldier, fixed on him his keen large dark eyes as if he were in the act of internally spelling and dissecting every lineament and feature.

Blushing and borne down by this close examination on the part of one whose expression was so reverend at once and commanding, Quentin bent his eyes on the ground, and did not again raise them, till in the act of obeying the sonorous command of the Astrologer, "Look up and be not afraid, but hold forth thy hand."

When Martivalle had inspected his palm, according to the form of the mystic arts which he practised, he led the King some steps aside.

"My royal brother," he said, "the physiognomy of this youth, together with the lines impressed on his hand, confirm, in a wonderful degree, the report which I founded on his horoscope, as well as that judgment which your own proficiency in our sublime arts induced you at once to form of him. All promises that this youth will be brave and fortunate."

"And faithful?" said the King; "for valour and fortune square not always with fidelity."

"And faithful also," said the Astrologer; "for there is manly firmness in look and eye, and his linea vitæ [the line of life, a term used in palmistry] is deeply marked and clear, which indicates a true and upright adherence to those who do benefit or lodge trust in him. But yet—"

"But what?" said the King; "Father Galeotti, wherefore do you now pause?"

"The ears of Kings," said the sage, "are like the palates of those dainty patients which are unable to endure the bitterness of the drugs necessary for their recovery."

"My ears and my palate have no such niceness," said Louis; "let me hear what is useful counsel, and swallow what is wholesome medicine. I quarrel not with the rudeness of the one, or the harsh taste of the other. I have not been cockered in wantonness or indulgence; my youth was one of exile and suffering. My ears are used to harsh counsel, and take no offence at it."

"Then plainly, Sire," replied Galeotti, "if you have aught in your purposed commission which—which, in short, may startle a scrupulous conscience—intrust it not to this youth, at least, not till a few years' exercise in your service has made him as unscrupulous as others."

"And is this what you hesitated to speak, my good Galeotti? and didst thou think thy speaking it would offend me?" said the King. "Alack, I know that thou art well sensible that the path of royal policy cannot be always squared (as that of private life ought invariably to be) by the abstract maxims of religion and of morality. Wherefore do we, the Princes of the earth, found churches and monasteries, make pilgrimages, undergo penances, and perform devotions with which others may dispense, unless it be because the benefit of the public, and the welfare of our kingdoms, force us upon measures which grieve our consciences as Christians? But Heaven has mercy, the Church, an unbounded stock of merits and the intercession of Our Lady of Embrun and the blessed saints, is urgent, everlasting, and omnipotent."

He laid his hat on the table, and devoutly kneeling before the images stuck into the hat band, repeated in an earnest tone, "Sancte Huberte, Sancte Juliane, Sancte Martine, Sancta Rosalia, Sancti quotquot adestis, orate pro me peccatore!" [St. Hubert, St. Julian, St. Martin, St. Rosalia, all ye saints who hear me, pray for me, a sinner.] He then smote his breast, arose, reassumed his hat, and continued: "Be assured, good father, that whatever there may be in our commission of the nature at which you have hinted, the execution shall not be intrusted to this youth, nor shall he be privy to such part of our purpose."

"In this," said the Astrologer, "you, my royal brother, will walk wisely.—Something may be apprehended likewise from the rashness of this your young commissioner, a failing inherent in those of sanguine complexion. But I hold that, by the rules of art, this chance is not to be weighed against the other properties discovered from his horoscope and otherwise."

"Will this next midnight be a propitious hour in which to commence a perilous journey?" said the King. "See, here is your Ephemerides—you see the position of the moon in regard to Saturn, and the ascendance of Jupiter.—That should argue, methinks, in submission to your better art, success to him who sends forth the expedition at such an hour."

"To him who sends forth the expedition," said the Astrologer, after a pause, "this conjunction doth indeed promise success; but, methinks, that Saturn, being combust, threatens danger and infortune to the party sent; whence I infer that the errand may be perilous, or even fatal to those who are to journey. Violence and captivity, methinks, are intimated in that adverse conjunction."

"Violence and captivity to those who are sent," answered the King, "but success to the wishes of the sender.—Runs it not thus, my learned father?"

"Even so," replied the Astrologer.

The King paused, without giving any farther indication how far this presaging speech (probably hazarded by the Astrologer from his conjecture that the commission related to some dangerous purpose) squared with his real object, which, as the reader is aware, was to betray the Countess Isabelle of Croye into the hands of William de la Marck, a nobleman indeed of high birth, but degraded by his crimes into a leader of banditti, distinguished for his turbulent disposition and ferocious bravery.

The King then pulled forth a paper from his pocket, and, ere he gave it to Martivalle, said, in a tone which resembled that of an apology, "Learned Galeotti, be not surprised that, possessing in you an oracular treasure, superior to that lodged in the breast of any now alive, not excepting the great Nostradamus himself [a French astrologer of the sixteenth century, author of a book of prophecies, which was condemned by the papal court in 1781], I am desirous frequently to avail myself of your skill in those doubts and difficulties which beset every Prince who hath to contend with rebellion within his land, and with external enemies, both powerful and inveterate."

"When I was honoured with your request, Sire," said the philosopher, "and abandoned the Court of Buda for that of Plessis, it was with the resolution to place at the command of my royal patron whatever my art had, that might be of service to him."

"Enough, good Martivalle—I pray thee attend to the import of this question."

He proceeded to read from the paper in his hand: "A person having on hand a weighty controversy, which is like to draw to debate either by law or by force of arms, is desirous, for the present, to seek accommodation by a personal interview with his antagonist. He desires to know what day will be propitious for the execution of such a purpose; also what is likely to be the success of such a negotiation, and whether his adversary will be moved to answer the confidence thus reposed in him, with gratitude and kindness, or may rather be likely to abuse the opportunity and advantage which such meeting may afford him."

"It is an important question," said Martivalle, when the King had done reading, "and requires that I should set a planetary figure [to prepare a diagram which would represent the heavens at that particular moment], and give it instant and deep consideration."

"Let it be so, my good father in the sciences, and thou shalt know what it is to oblige a King of France. We are determined, if the constellations forbid not—and our own humble art leads us to think that they approve our purpose—to hazard something, even in our own person, to stop these anti-Christian wars."

"May the Saints forward your Majesty's pious intent," said the Astrologer, "and guard your sacred person."

"Thanks, learned father. Here is something, the while, to enlarge your curious library."

He placed under one of the volumes a small purse of gold; for, economical even in his superstitions, Louis conceived the Astrologer sufficiently bound to his service by the pensions he had assigned him, and thought himself entitled to the use of his skill at a moderate rate, even upon great exigencies.

Louis, having thus, in legal phrase, added a refreshing fee to his general retainer, turned from him to address Durward.

"Follow me," he said, "my bonny Scot, as one chosen by Destiny and a Monarch to accomplish a bold adventure. All must be got ready, that thou mayest put foot in stirrup the very instant the bell of Saint Martin's tolls twelve. One minute sooner, one minute later, were to forfeit the favourable aspect of the constellations which smile on your adventure."

Thus saying, the King left the apartment, followed by his young guardsman; and no sooner were they gone than the Astrologer gave way to very different feelings from those which seemed to animate him during the royal presence.

"The niggardly slave!" he said, weighing the purse in his hand—for, being a man of unbounded expense, he had almost constant occasion for money—"The base, sordid scullion! A coxswain's wife would give more to know that her husband had crossed the narrow seas in safety. He acquire any tincture of humane letters!—yes, when prowling foxes and yelling wolves become musicians. He read the glorious blazoning of the firmament!—ay, when sordid moles shall become lynxes. Post tot promissa—after so many promises made, to entice me from the Court of the magnificent Matthias, where Hun and Turk, Christian and Infidel, the Czar of Muscovia and the Cham of Tartary themselves, contended to load me with gifts—doth he think I am to abide in this old castle like a bullfinch in a cage, fain to sing as off as he chooses to whistle, and all for seed and water? Not so—aut inveniam viam, aut faciam—I will discover or contrive a remedy. The Cardinal Balue is politic and liberal—this query shall to him, and it shall be his Eminence's own fault if the stars speak not as he would have them."

He again took the despised guerdon, and weighed it in his hand. "It may be," he said, "there is some jewel, or pearl of price, concealed in this paltry case—I have heard he can be liberal even to lavishness, when it suits his caprice or interest."

He emptied the purse, which contained neither more nor less than ten gold pieces. The indignation of the Astrologer was extreme.

"Thinks he that for such paltry rate of hire I will practise that celestial science which I have studied with the Armenian Abbot of Istrahoff, who had not seen the sun for forty years—with the Greek Dubravius, who is said to have raised the dead—and have even visited the Sheik Ebn Hali in his cave in the deserts of Thebais? No, by Heaven!—he that contemns art shall perish through his own ignorance. Ten pieces!—a pittance which I am half ashamed to offer to Toinette, to buy her new breast laces."

So saying, the indignant Sage nevertheless plunged the contemned pieces of gold into a large pouch which he wore at his girdle, which Toinette, and other abettors of lavish expense, generally contrived to empty fully faster than the philosopher, with all his art, could find the means of filling.

CHAPTER XIV: THE JOURNEY

*I see thee yet, fair France—thou favour'd land
Of art and nature—thou art still before me,
Thy sons, to whom their labour is a sport,
So well thy grateful soil returns its tribute,
Thy sunburnt daughters, with their laughing eyes
And glossy raven locks. But, favour'd France,
Thou hast had many a tale of woe to tell
In ancient times as now.*

ANONYMOUS

Avoiding all conversation with any one (for such was his charge), Quentin Durward proceeded hastily to array himself in a strong but plain cuirass, with thigh and arm pieces, and placed on his head a good steel cap without any visor. To these was added a handsome cassock of chamois leather, finely dressed, and laced down the seams with some embroidery, such as might become a superior officer in a noble household.

These were brought to his apartment by Oliver, who, with his quiet, insinuating smile and manner, acquainted him that his uncle had been summoned to mount guard purposely that he might make no inquiries concerning these mysterious movements.

"Your excuse will be made to your kinsman," said Oliver, smiling again, "and, my dearest son, when you return safe from the execution of this pleasing trust, I doubt not you will be found worthy of such promotion as will dispense with your accounting for your motions to any one, while it will place you at the head of those who must render an account of theirs to you."

So spoke Oliver le Diable, calculating, probably, in his own mind, the great chance there was that the poor youth whose hand he squeezed affectionately as he spoke, must necessarily encounter death or captivity in the commission intrusted to his charge. He added to his fair words a small purse of gold, to defray necessary expenses on the road, as a gratuity on the King's part.

At a few minutes before twelve at midnight, Quentin, according to his directions, proceeded to the second courtyard, and paused under the Dauphin's Tower, which, as the reader knows, was assigned for the temporary residence of the Countesses of Croye. He found, at this place of rendezvous, the men and horses appointed to compose the retinue, leading two sumpter mules already loaded with baggage, and holding three palfreys for the two Countesses and a faithful waiting woman, with a stately war horse for himself, whose steel plated saddle glanced in the pale moonlight. Not a word of recognition was spoken on either side. The men sat still in their saddles as if they were motionless, and by the same imperfect light Quentin saw with pleasure that they were all armed, and held long lances in their hands. They were only three in number, but one of them whispered to Quentin, in a strong Gascon accent, that their guide was to join them beyond Tours.

Meantime, lights glanced to and fro at the lattices of the tower, as if there was bustle and preparation among its inhabitants. At length a small door, which led from the bottom of the tower to the court, was unclosed, and three females came forth attended by a man wrapped in a cloak. They mounted in silence the palfreys which stood prepared for them, while their attendant on foot led the way, and gave the passwords and signals to the watchful guards, whose posts they passed in succession. Thus they at length reached the exterior of these formidable barriers. Here the man on foot, who had hitherto acted as their guide, paused, and spoke low and earnestly to the two foremost females.

"May heaven bless you, Sire," said a voice which thrilled upon Quentin Durward's ear, "and forgive you, even if your purposes be more interested than your words express! To be placed in safety under the protection of the good Bishop of Liege, is the utmost extent of my desire."

The person whom she thus addressed muttered an inaudible answer, and retreated back through the barrier gate, while Quentin thought that, by the moon glimpse, he recognized in him the King himself, whose anxiety for the departure of his guests had probably induced him to give his presence, in case scruples should arise on their part, or difficulties on that of the guards of the Castle.

When the riders were beyond the Castle, it was necessary for some time to ride with great precaution, in order to avoid the pitfalls, snares, and similar contrivances which were placed for the annoyance of strangers. The Gascon was, however, completely possessed of the clew to this labyrinth, and in a quarter of an hour's riding they found themselves beyond the limits of Plessis le Parc, and not far distant from the city of Tours.

The moon, which had now extricated herself from the clouds through which she was formerly wading, shed a full sea of glorious light upon a landscape equally glorious. They saw the princely Loire rolling his majestic tide through the richest plain in France, and sweeping along between banks ornamented with towers and terraces, and with olives and vineyards. They saw the walls of the city of Tours, the ancient capital of Touraine, raising their portal towers and embattlements white in the moonlight, while from within their circle rose the immense Gothic mass, which the devotion of the sainted Bishop Perpetuus erected as early as the fifth century, and which the zeal of Charlemagne and his successors had enlarged with such architectural splendour as rendered it the most magnificent church in France. The towers of the church of Saint Gatien [the cathedral of Tours] were also visible, and the gloomy strength of the Castle, which was said to have been, in ancient times, the residence of the Emperor Valentinian [a Roman emperor who strengthened the northern frontiers against the barbarians].

Even the circumstances in which he was placed, though of a nature so engrossing, did not prevent the wonder and delight with which the young Scottishman, accustomed to the waste though impressive landscape of his own mountains, and the poverty even of his country's most stately scenery, looked on a scene which art and nature seemed to have vied in adorning with their richest splendour. But he was recalled to the business of the moment by the voice of the elder lady (pitched at least an octave higher than those soft tones which bade adieu to King Louis), demanding to speak with the leader of the band. Spurring his horse forward, Quentin respectfully presented himself to the ladies in that capacity, and thus underwent the interrogatories of the Lady Hameline.

"What was his name, and what his degree?"

He told both.

"Was he perfectly acquainted with the road?"

"He could not," he replied, "pretend to much knowledge of the route, but he was furnished with full instructions, and he was, at their first resting place, to be provided with a guide, in all respects competent to the task of directing their farther journey, meanwhile, a horseman, who had just joined them and made the number of their guard four, was to be their guide for the first stage."

"And wherefore were you selected for such a duty, young gentleman?" said the lady. "I am told you are the same youth who was lately upon guard in the gallery in which we met the Princess of France. You seem young and inexperienced for such a charge—a stranger, too, in France, and speaking the language as a foreigner."

"I am bound to obey the commands of the King, madam, but am not qualified to reason on them," answered the young soldier.

"Are you of noble birth?" demanded the same querist.

"I may safely affirm so, madam," replied Quentin.

"And are you not," said the younger lady, addressing him in her turn, but with a timorous accent, "the same whom I saw when I was called to wait upon the King at yonder inn?"

Lowering his voice, perhaps from similar feelings of timidity, Quentin answered in the affirmative.

"Then methinks, my cousin," said the Lady Isabelle, addressing the Lady Hameline, "we must be safe under this young gentleman's safeguard, he looks not, at least, like one to whom the execution of a plan of treacherous cruelty upon two helpless women could be with safety intrusted."

"On my honour," said Durward, "by the fame of my house, by the bones of my ancestry, I could not, for France and Scotland laid into one, be guilty of treachery or cruelty towards you!"

"You speak well, young man," said the Lady Hameline, "but we are accustomed to hear fair speeches from the King of France and his agents. It was by these that we were induced, when the protection of the Bishop of Liege might have been attained with less risk than now, or when we might have thrown ourselves on that of Wincellaus of Germany, or of Edward of England, to seek refuge in France. And in what did the promises of the King result? In an obscure and shameful concealing of us, under plebeian names, as a sort of prohibited wares in yonder paltry hostelry, when we—who, as thou knowest, Marthon" (addressing her domestic), "never put on our head tire save under a canopy, and upon a dais of three degrees—were compelled to attire ourselves, standing on the simple floor, as if we had been two milkmaids."

Marthon admitted that her lady spoke a most melancholy truth.

"I would that had been the sorest evil, dear kinswoman," said the Lady Isabelle, "I could gladly have dispensed with state."

"But not with society," said the elder Countess, "that, my sweet cousin, was impossible."

"I would have dispensed with all, my dearest kinswoman," answered Isabelle, in a voice which penetrated to the very heart of her young conductor and guard, "with all, for a safe and honourable retirement. I wish not—God knows, I never wished—to occasion war betwixt France and my native Burgundy, or that lives should be lost for such as I am. I only implored permission to retire to the Convent of Marmoutier, or to any other holy sanctuary."

"You spoke then like a fool, my cousin," answered the elder lady, "and not like a daughter of my noble brother. It is well there is still one alive who hath some of the spirit of the noble House of Croye. How should a high born lady be known from a sunburnt milkmaid, save that spears are broken for the one, and only hazel poles shattered for the other? I tell you, maiden, that while I was in the very earliest bloom, scarcely older than yourself, the famous Passage of Arms at

Haflingham was held in my honour, the challengers were four, the assailants so many as twelve. It lasted three days, and cost the lives of two adventurous knights, the fracture of one backbone, one collarbone, three legs, and two arms, besides flesh wounds and bruises beyond the heralds' counting, and thus have the ladies of our House ever been honoured. Ah! had you but half the heart of your noble ancestry, you would find means at some court where ladies' love and fame in arms are still prized, to maintain a tournament at which your hand should be the prize, as was that of your great grandmother of blessed memory, at the spear running of Strasbourg, and thus should you gain the best lance in Europe, to maintain the rights of the House of Croye, both against the oppression of Burgundy and the policy of France."

"But, fair kinswoman," answered the younger Countess, "I have been told by my old nurse, that although the Rhinegrave [formerly a Rhenish prince] was the best lance at the great tournament at Strasbourg, and so won the hand of my respected ancestor, yet the match was no happy one, as he used often to scold, and sometimes even to beat, my great grandmother of blessed memory."

"And wherefore not?" said the elder Countess, in her romantic enthusiasm for the profession of chivalry, "why should those victorious arms, accustomed to deal blows when abroad, be bound to restrain their energies at home? A thousand times rather would I be beaten twice a day by a husband whose arm was as much feared by others as by me, than be the wife of a coward, who dared neither to lift hand to his wife, nor to any one else!"

"I should wish you joy of such an active mate, fair aunt," replied Isabelle, "without envying you, for if broken bones be lovely in tourneys, there is nothing less amiable in ladies' bower."

"Nay, but the beating is no necessary consequence of wedding with a knight of fame in arms," said the Lady Hameline, "though it is true that your ancestor of blessed memory, the Rhinegrave Gottfried, was something rough tempered, and addicted to the use of Rheinwein."

"The very perfect knight is a lamb among ladies, and a lion among lances. There was Thibault of Montigni—God be with him!—he was the kindest soul alive, and not only was he never so discourteous as to lift hand against his lady, but, by our good dame, he who beat all enemies without doors, found a fair foe who could belabour him within.—Well, 't was his own fault—he was one of the challengers at the Passage of Haflingham, and so well bestirred himself, that, if it had pleased Heaven, and your grandfather, there might have been a lady of Montigni who had used his gentle nature more gently."

The Countess Isabelle, who had some reason to dread this Passage of Haflingham, it being a topic upon which her aunt was at all times very diffuse, suffered the conversation to drop, and Quentin, with the natural politeness of one who had been gently nurtured dreading lest his presence might be a restraint on their conversation, rode forward to join the guide, as if to ask him some questions concerning their route.

Meanwhile the ladies continued their journey in silence, or in such conversation as is not worth narrating, until day began to break, and as they had then been on horseback for several hours, Quentin, anxious lest they should be fatigued, became impatient to know their distance from the nearest resting place.

"I will show it you," answered the guide, "in half an hour."

"And then you leave us to other guidance?" continued Quentin.

"Even so, Seignior Archer," replied the man, "my journeys are always short and straight. When you and others, Seignior Archer, go by the bow, I always go by the cord."

The moon had by this time long been down, and the lights of dawn were beginning to spread bright and strong in the east, and to gleam on the bosom of a small lake, on the verge of which they had been riding for a short space of time. This lake lay in the midst of a wide plain, scattered over with single trees, groves and thickets, but which might be yet termed open, so that objects began to be discerned with sufficient accuracy. Quentin cast his eye on the person whom he rode beside, and under the shadow of a slouched overspreading hat, which resembled the sombrero of a Spanish peasant, he recognised the facetious features of the same Petit Andre whose fingers, not long since, had, in concert with those of his lugubrious brother, Trois Eschelles, been so unpleasantly active about his throat.—Impelled by aversion, not altogether unmixed with fear (for in his own country the executioner is regarded with almost superstitious horror), which his late narrow escape had not diminished, Durward instinctively moved his horse's head to the right, and pressing him at the same time with the spur, made a demi-volte, which separated him eight feet from his hateful companion.

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!" exclaimed Petit Andre, "by Our Lady of the Grave, our young soldier remembers us of old. What! comrade, you bear no malice, I trust?—every one wins his bread in this country. No man need be ashamed of having come through my hands, for I will do my work with any that ever tied a living weight to a dead tree.—And God hath given me grace to be such a merry fellow withal.—Ha! ha! ha!—I could tell you such jests I have cracked between the foot of a ladder and the top of the gallows, that, by my halidome, I have been obliged to do my job rather hastily, for fear the fellows should die with laughing, and so shame my mystery!"

As he thus spoke he edged his horse sideways to regain the interval which the Scot had left between them, saying, at the same time, "Come, Seignior Archer, let there be no unkindness betwixt us!—For my part, I always do my duty without malice, and with a light heart, and I never love a man better than when I have put my scant of wind collar about his neck, to dub him Knight of the order of Saint Patibularius [patibulum, a gibbet], as the Provost's Chaplain, the worthy Father Vaconeldiablo [possibly Baco (Bacchus) el Diablo (the Devil)], is wont to call the Patron Saint of the Provostry."

"Keep back, thou wretched object!" exclaimed Quentin, as the finisher of the law again sought to approach him closer, "or I shall be tempted to teach you the distance that should be betwixt men of honour and such an outcast."

"La you there, how hot you are!" said the fellow, "had you said men of honesty, there had been some savour of truth in it, but for men of honour, good lack, I have to deal with them every day, as nearly and closely as I was about to do business with you.—But peace be with you, and keep your company to yourself. I would have bestowed a flagon of Auvernat upon you to wash away every unkindness—but 't is like you scorn my courtesy.—Well. Be as churlish as you list—I never quarrel with my customers—my jerry come tumbles, my merry danciers, my little playfellows, as Jacques Butcher says to his lambs—those in fine, who, like your seigniorship, have H. E. M. P. written on their foreheads.—No, no, let them use me as they list, they shall have my good service at last—and yourself shall see, when you next come under Petit Andre's hands, that he knows how to forgive an injury."

So saying, and summing up the whole with a provoking wink, and such an interjectional tchick as men quicken a dull horse with, Petit Andre drew off to the other side of the path, and left the youth to digest the taunts he had treated him with, as his proud Scottish stomach best might. A strong desire had Quentin to have belaboured him while the staff of his lance could hold together, but he put a restraint on his passion, recollecting that a brawl with such a character could be creditable at no time or place, and that a quarrel of any kind, on the present occasion, would be a breach of duty, and might involve the most perilous consequences. He therefore swallowed his wrath at the ill timed and professional jokes of Mons. Petit Andre, and contented himself with devoutly hoping that they had not reached the ears of his fair charge, on which they could not be supposed to make an impression in favour of himself, as one obnoxious to such sarcasms. But he was speedily roused from such thoughts by the cry of both the ladies at once, to "Look back—look back!—For the love of Heaven look yourself, and us—we are pursued!"

Quentin hastily looked back, and saw that two armed men were in fact following them, and riding at such a pace as must soon bring them up with their party. "It can," he said, "be only some of the Provostry making their rounds in the forest.—Do thou look," he said to Petit Andre, "and see what they may be."

Petit Andre obeyed, and rolling himself jocosely in the saddle after he had made his observations, replied, "These, fair sir, are neither your comrades nor mine—neither Archers nor Marshals men—for I think they wear helmets, with visors lowered, and gorgets of the same.—A plague upon these gorgets of all other pieces of armour!—I have fumbled with them an hour before I could undo the rivets."

"Do you, gracious ladies," said Durward, without attending to Petit Andre, "ride forward—not so fast as to raise an opinion of your being in flight, and yet fast enough to avail yourself of the impediment which I shall presently place between you and these men who follow us."

The Countess Isabelle looked to their guide, and then whispered to her aunt, who spoke to Quentin thus: "We have confidence in your care, fair Archer, and will rather abide the risk of whatever may chance in your company, than we will go onward with that man, whose mien is, we think, of no good augury."

"Be it as you will, ladies," said the youth. "There are but two who come after us, and though they be knights, as their arms seem to show, they shall, if they have any evil purpose, learn how a Scottish gentleman can do his devour in the presence and for the defence of such as you.

"Which of you," he continued, addressing the guards whom he commanded, "is willing to be my comrade, and to break a lance with these gallants?"

Two of the men obviously faltered in resolution, but the third, Bertrand Guyot, swore that cap de diou, were they Knights of King Arthur's Round Table, he would try their mettle, for the honour of Gascony.

While he spoke, the two knights—for they seemed of no less rank—came up with the rear of the party, in which Quentin, with his sturdy adherent, had by this time stationed himself. They were fully accoutred in excellent armour of polished steel, without any device by which they could be distinguished.

One of them, as they approached, called out to Quentin, "Sir Squire, give place—we come to relieve you of a charge which is above your rank and condition. You will do well to leave these ladies in our care, who are fitter to wait upon them, especially as we know that in yours they are little better than captives."

"In return to your demand, sirs," replied Durward, "know, in the first place, that I am discharging the duty imposed upon me by my present sovereign, and next, that however unworthy I may be, the ladies desire to abide under my protection."

"Out, sirrah!" exclaimed one of the champions, "will you, a wandering beggar, put yourself on terms of resistance against belted knights?"

"They are indeed terms of resistance," said Quentin, "since they oppose your insolent and unlawful aggression, and if there be difference of rank between us, which as yet I know not, your discourtesy has done it away. Draw your sword, or if you will use the lance, take ground for your career."

While the knights turned their horses, and rode back to the distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, Quentin, looking to the ladies, bent low on his saddlebow, as if desiring their favourable regard, and as they streamed towards him their kerchiefs, in token of encouragement, the two assailants had gained the distance necessary for their charge.

Calling to the Gascon to bear himself like a man, Durward put his steed into motion, and the four horsemen met in full career in the midst of the ground which at first separated them. The shock was fatal to the poor Gascon, for his adversary, aiming at his face, which was undefended by a visor, ran him through the eye into the brain, so that he fell dead from his horse.

On the other hand, Quentin, though labouring under the same disadvantage, swayed himself in the saddle so dexterously, that the hostile lance, slightly scratching his cheek, passed over his right shoulder, while his own spear, striking his antagonist fair upon the breast, hurled him to the ground. Quentin jumped off, to unhelm his fallen opponent, but the other knight (who had never yet spoken), seeing the fortune of his companion, dismounted still more speedily than Durward, and bestriding his friend, who lay senseless, exclaimed, "In the name of God and Saint Martin, mount, good fellow, and get thee gone with thy woman's ware—Ventre Saint Gris, they have caused mischief enough this morning."

"By your leave, Sir Knight," said Quentin, who could not brook the menacing tone in which this advice was given, "I will first see whom I have had to do with, and learn who is to answer for the death of my comrade."

"That shalt thou never live to know or to tell," answered the knight. "Get thee back in peace, good fellow. If we were fools for interrupting your passage, we have had the worst, for thou hast done more evil than the lives of thee and thy whole hand could repay.—Nay, if thou wilt have it" (for Quentin now drew his sword, and advanced on him), "take it with a vengeance!"

So saying, he dealt the Scot such a blow on the helmet, as, till that moment (though bred where good blows were plenty), he had only read of in romance. It descended like a thunderbolt, beating down the guard which the young soldier had raised to protect his head, and, reaching his helmet of proof, cut it through so far as to touch his hair, but without farther injury while Durward, dizzy, stunned, and beaten down on one knee, was for an instant at the mercy of the knight, had it pleased him to second his blow. But compassion for Quentin's youth, or admiration of his courage, or a generous love of fair play, made him withhold from taking such advantage: while Durward, collecting himself, sprang up and attacked his antagonist with the energy of one determined to conquer or die, and at the same time with the presence of mind necessary for fighting the quarrel out to the best advantage. Resolved not again to expose himself to such dreadful blows as he had just obtained, he employed the advantage of superior agility, increased by the comparative lightness of his armour, to harass his antagonist by traversing on all sides, with a suddenness of motion and rapidity of attack against which the knight—in his heavy panoply—found it difficult to defend himself without much fatigue.

It was in vain that this generous antagonist called aloud to Quentin that there now remained no cause of fight betwixt them, and that he was loath to be constrained to do him injury. Listening only to the suggestions of a passionate wish to redeem the shame of his temporary defeat, Durward continued to assail him with the rapidity of lightning—now menacing him with the edge, now with the point of his sword, and ever keeping such an eye on the motions of his opponent, of whose superior strength he had had terrible proof, that he was ready to spring backward, or aside, from under the blows of his tremendous weapon.

"Now the devil be with thee for an obstinate and presumptuous fool," muttered the knight, "that cannot be quiet till thou art knocked on the head!"

So saying, he changed his mode of fighting, collected himself, as if to stand on the defensive, and seemed contented with parrying, instead of returning, the blows which Quentin unceasingly aimed at him, with the internal resolution that the instant when either loss of breath or any false or careless pass of the young soldier should give an opening, he would put an end to the fight by a single blow. It is likely he might have succeeded in this artful policy, but Fate had ordered it otherwise.

The duel was still at the hottest, when a large party of horse rode up, crying, "Hold, in the King's name!"

Both champions stepped back—and Quentin saw, with surprise, that his Captain, Lord Crawford, was at the head of the party who had thus interrupted their combat. There was also Tristan l'Hermite, with two or three of his followers, making, in all, perhaps twenty horse.

CHAPTER XV: THE GUIDE

*He was a son of Egypt, as he told me,
And one descended from those dread magicians,
Who waged rash war, when Israel dwelt in Goshen,
With Israel and her Prophet—matching rod
With his, the son's of Levi's—and encountering
Jehovah's miracles with incantations,
Till upon Egypt came the avenging Angel,
And those proud sages wept for their first born,
As wept the unletter'd peasant.*

ANONYMOUS

The arrival of Lord Crawford and his guard put an immediate end to the engagement which we endeavoured to describe in the last chapter, and the knight, throwing off his helmet, hastily gave the old Lord his sword, saying, "Crawford, I render myself.—But hither—and lend me your ear—a word for God's sake—save the Duke of Orleans!"

"How!—what?—the Duke of Orleans!" exclaimed the Scottish commander. "How came this, in the name of the foul fiend? It will ruin the gallant with the King, for ever and a day."

"Ask no questions," said Dunois—for it was no other than he—"it was all my fault. See, he stirs. I came forth but to have a snatch at yonder damsel, and make myself a landed and a married man—and see what is come on 't. Keep back your canaille—let no man look upon him."

So saying, he opened the visor of Orleans, and threw water on his face, which was afforded by the neighbouring lake.

Quentin Durward, meanwhile, stood like one planet struck [affected by the supposed influence of the planets], so fast did new adventures pour in upon him. He had now, as the pale features of his first antagonist assured him, borne to the earth the first Prince of the Blood in France, and had measured swords with her best champion, the celebrated Dunois,—both of them achievements honourable in themselves: but whether they might be called good service to the King, or so esteemed by him, was a very different question.

The Duke had now recovered his breath, and was able to sit up and give attention to what passed betwixt Dunois and Crawford, while the former pleaded eagerly that there was no occasion to mention in the matter the name of the most noble Orleans, while he was ready to take the whole blame on his own shoulders, and to avouch that the Duke had only come thither in friendship to him.

Lord Crawford continued listening with his eyes fixed on the ground, and from time to time he sighed and shook his head. At length he said, looking up, "Thou knowest, Dunois, that, for thy father's sake, as well as thine own, I would full fain do thee a service."

"It is not for myself I demand anything," answered Dunois. "Thou hast my sword, and I am your prisoner—what needs more? But it is for this noble Prince, the only hope of France, if God should call the Dauphin. He only came hither to do me a favour—in an effort to make my fortune—in a matter which the King had partly encouraged."

"Dunois," replied Crawford, "if another had told me thou hadst brought the noble Prince into this jeopardy to serve any purpose of thine own, I had told him it was false. And now that thou dost pretend so thyself, I can hardly believe it is for the sake of speaking the truth."

"Noble Crawford," said Orleans, who had now entirely recovered from his swoon, "you are too like in character to your friend Dunois, not to do him justice. It was indeed I that dragged him hither, most unwillingly, upon an enterprise of harebrained passion, suddenly and rashly undertaken.—Look on me all who will," he added, rising up and turning to the soldiery, "I am Louis of Orleans, willing to pay the penalty of my own folly. I trust the King will limit his displeasure to me, as is but just.—Meanwhile, as a Child of France must not give up his sword to any one—not even to you, brave Crawford—fare thee well, good steel."

So saying, he drew his sword from its scabbard, and flung it into the lake. It went through the air like a stream of lightning, and sank in the flashing waters, which speedily closed over it. All remained standing in irresolution and astonishment, so high was the rank, and so much esteemed was the character, of the culprit, while, at the same time, all were conscious that the consequences of his rash enterprise, considering the views which the King had upon him, were likely to end in his utter ruin.

Dunois was the first who spoke, and it was in the chiding tone of an offended and distrusted friend: "So! your Highness hath judged it fit to cast away your best sword, in the same morning when it was your pleasure to fling away the King's favour, and to slight the friendship of Dunois?"

"My dearest kinsman," said the Duke, "when or how was it in my purpose to slight your friendship by telling the truth, when it was due to your safety and my honour?"

"What had you to do with my safety, my most princely cousin, I would pray to know?" answered Dunois, gruffly. "What, in God's name, was it to you, if I had a mind to be hanged, or strangled, or flung into the Loire, or poniarded, or broke on the wheel, or hung up alive in an iron cage, or buried alive in a castle fosse, or disposed of in any other way in which it might please King Louis to get rid of his faithful subject?—(You need 'not wink and frown, and point to Tristan l'Hermite—I see the scoundrel as well as you do.) But it would not have stood so hard with me.—And so much for my safety. And then for your own honour—by the blush of Saint Magdalene, I think the honour would have been to have missed this morning's work, or kept it out of sight. Here has your Highness got yourself unhorsed by a wild Scottish boy."

"Tut, tut!" said Lord Crawford, "never shame his Highness for that. It is not the first time a Scottish boy hath broke a good lance—I am glad the youth hath borne him well."

"I will say nothing to the contrary," said Dunois, "yet, had your Lordship come something later than you did, there might have been a vacancy in your band of Archers."

"Ay, ay," answered Lord Crawford, "I can read your handwriting in that cleft morion. Some one take it from the lad and give him a bonnet, which, with its steel lining, will keep his head better than that broken loom—And let me tell your Lordship, that your own armour of proof is not without some marks of good Scottish handwriting. But, Dunois, I must now request the Duke of Orleans and you to take horse and accompany me, as I have power and commission to convey you to a place different from that which my goodwill might assign you."

"May I not speak one word, my Lord of Crawford, to yonder fair ladies?" said the Duke of Orleans.

"Not one syllable," answered Lord Crawford, "I am too much a friend of your Highness to permit such an act of folly."

Then addressing Quentin, he added, "You, young man, have done your duty. Go on to obey the charge with which you are intrusted."

"Under favour, my Lord," said Tristan, with his usual brutality of manner, "the youth must find another guide. I cannot do without Petit Andre, when there is so like to be business on hand for him."

"The young man," said Petit Andre, now coming forward, "has only to keep the path which lies straight before him, and it will conduct him to a place where he will find the man who is to act as his guide."

"I would not for a thousand ducats be absent from my Chief this day I have hanged knights and esquires many a one, and wealthy Echevins [during the Middle Ages royal officers possessing a large measure of power in local administration], and burgomasters to boot—even counts and marquises have tasted of my handiwork but, a-humph"—he looked at the Duke, as if to intimate that he would have filled up the blank with "a Prince of the Blood!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Petit Andre, thou wilt be read of in Chronicle!"

"Do you permit your ruffians to hold such language in such a presence?" said Crawford, looking sternly to Tristan.

"Why do you not correct him yourself, my Lord?" said Tristan, sullenly.

"Because thy hand is the only one in this company that can beat him without being degraded by such an action."

"Then rule your own men, my Lord, and I will be answerable for mine," said the Provost Marshal.

Lord Crawford seemed about to give a passionate reply, but as if he had thought better of it, turned his back short upon Tristan, and, requesting the Duke of Orleans and Dunois to ride one on either hand of him, he made a signal of adieu to the ladies, and said to Quentin, "God bless thee, my child, thou hast begun thy service valiantly, though in an unhappy cause."

He was about to go off when Quentin could hear Dunois whisper to Crawford, "Do you carry us to Plessis?"

"No, my unhappy and rash friend," answered Crawford, with a sigh, "to Loches."

"To Loches!" The name of a castle, or rather prison, yet more dreaded than Plessis itself, fell like a death toll upon the ear of the young Scotchman. He had heard it described as a place destined to the workings of those secret acts of cruelty with which even Louis shamed to pollute the interior of his own residence. There were in this place of terror dungeons under dungeons, some of them unknown even to the keepers themselves, living graves, to which men were consigned with little hope of farther employment during the rest of their life than to breathe impure air, and feed on bread and water. At this formidable castle were also those dreadful places of confinement called cages, in which the wretched prisoner could neither stand upright nor stretch himself at length, an invention, it is said, of the Cardinal Balue [who himself tenanted one of these dens for more than eleven years. S. De Comines, who also suffered this punishment, describes the cage as eight feet wide, and a foot higher than a man.]. It is no wonder that the name of this place of horrors, and the consciousness that he had been partly the means of dispatching thither two such illustrious victims, struck so much sadness into the heart of the young Scot that he rode for some time with his head dejected, his eyes fixed on the ground, and his heart filled with the most painful reflections.

As he was now again at the head of the little troop, and pursuing the road which had been pointed out to him, the Lady Hameline had an opportunity to say to him, "Methinks, fair sir, you regret the victory which your gallantry has attained in our behalf?"

There was something in the question which sounded like irony, but Quentin had tact enough to answer simply and with sincerity.

"I can regret nothing that is done in the service of such ladies as you are, but, methinks, had it consisted with your safety, I had rather have fallen by the sword of so good a soldier as Dunois, than have been the means of consigning that renowned knight and his unhappy chief, the Duke of Orleans, to yonder fearful dungeons."

"It was, then, the Duke of Orleans," said the elder lady, turning to her niece. "I thought so, even at the distance from which we beheld the fray.—You see, kinswoman, what we might have been, had this sly and avaricious monarch permitted us to be seen at his Court. The first Prince of the Blood of France, and the valiant Dunois, whose name is known as wide as that of his heroic father.—This young gentleman did his devoir bravely and well, but methinks 't is pity that he did not succumb with honour, since his ill advised gallantry has stood betwixt us and these princely rescuers."

The Countess Isabelle replied in a firm and almost a displeased tone, with an energy, in short, which Quentin had not yet observed her use. She said, "but that I know you jest, I would say your speech is ungrateful to our brave defender, to whom we owe more, perhaps, than you are aware of. Had these gentlemen succeeded so far in their rash enterprise as to have defeated our escort, is it not still evident, that, on the arrival of the Royal Guard, we must have shared their captivity? For my own part, I give tears, and will soon bestow masses, on the brave man who has fallen, and I trust" (she continued, more timidly) "that he who lives will accept my grateful thanks."

As Quentin turned his face towards her, to return the fitting acknowledgments, she saw the blood which streamed down on one side of his face, and exclaimed, in a tone of deep feeling, "Holy Virgin, he is wounded! he bleeds!—Dismount, sir, and let your wound be bound!"

In spite of all that Durward could say of the slowness of his hurt he was compelled to dismount, and to seat himself on a bank, and unhelmet himself, while the Ladies of Croye, who, according to a fashion not as yet antiquated, pretended some knowledge of leech craft, washed the wound, stanching the blood, and bound it with the kerchief of the younger Countess in order to exclude the air, for so their practice prescribed.

In modern times, gallants seldom or never take wounds for ladies' sake, and damsels on their side never meddle with the cure of wounds. Each has a danger the less. That which the men escape will be generally acknowledged, but the peril of dressing such a slight wound as that of Quentin's, which involved nothing formidable or dangerous, was perhaps as real in its way as the risk of encountering it.

We have already said the patient was eminently handsome, and the removal of his helmet, or more properly, of his morion, had suffered his fair locks to escape in profusion, around a countenance in which the hilarity of youth was qualified by a blush of modesty at once and pleasure. And then the feelings of the younger Countess, when compelled to hold the kerchief to the wound, while her aunt sought in their baggage for some vulnerary remedy, were mingled at once with a sense of delicacy and embarrassment, a thrill of pity for the patient, and of gratitude for his services, which exaggerated, in her eyes, his good mien and handsome features. In short, this incident seemed intended by Fate to complete the mysterious communication which she had, by many petty and apparently accidental circumstances, established betwixt two persons, who, though far different in rank and fortune, strongly resembled each other in youth, beauty, and the romantic tenderness of an affectionate disposition. It was no wonder, therefore, that from this moment the thoughts of the Countess Isabelle, already so familiar to his imagination, should become paramount in Quentin's bosom, nor that if the maiden's feelings were of a less decided character, at least so far as known to herself, she should think of her young defender, to whom she had just rendered a service so interesting, with more emotion than of any of the whole band of high born nobles who had for two years past besieged her with their adoration. Above all, when the thought of Campobasso, the unworthy favourite of Duke Charles, with his hypocritical mien, his base, treacherous spirit, his wry neck and his squint, occurred to her, his portrait was more disgustingly hideous than ever, and deeply did she resolve no tyranny should make her enter into so hateful a union.

In the meantime, whether the good Lady Hameline of Croye understood and admired masculine beauty as much as when she was fifteen years younger (for the good Countess was at least thirty-five, if the records of that noble house speak the truth), or whether she thought she had done their young protector less justice than she ought, in the first view which she had taken of his services, it is certain that he began to find favour in her eyes.

"My niece," she said, "has bestowed on you a kerchief for the binding of your wound, I will give you one to grace your gallantry, and to encourage you in your farther progress in chivalry."

So saying, she gave him a richly embroidered kerchief of blue and silver, and pointing to the housing of her palfrey, and the plumes in her riding cap, desired him to observe that the colours were the same.

The fashion of the time prescribed one absolute mode of receiving such a favour, which Quentin followed accordingly by tying the napkin around his arm, yet his manner of acknowledgment had more of awkwardness, and loss of gallantry in it, than perhaps it might have had at another time, and in another presence, for though the wearing of a lady's favour, given in such a manner, was merely matter of general compliment, he would much rather have preferred the right of displaying on his arm that which bound the wound inflicted by the sword of Dunois.

Meantime they continued their pilgrimage, Quentin now riding abreast of the ladies, into whose society he seemed to be tacitly adopted. He did not speak much, however, being filled by the silent consciousness of happiness, which is afraid of giving too strong vent to its feelings. The Countess Isabelle spoke still less, so that the conversation was chiefly carried on by the Lady Hameline, who showed no inclination to let it drop, for, to initiate the young Archer, as she said, into the principles and practice of chivalry, she detailed to him at full length the Passage of Arms at Haflingham, where she had distributed the prizes among the victors.

Not much interested, I am sorry to say, in the description of this splendid scene, or in the heraldic bearings of the different Flemish and German knights, which the lady blazoned with pitiless accuracy, Quentin began to entertain some alarm lest he should have passed the place where his guide was to join him—a most serious disaster, from which, should it really have taken place, the very worst consequences were to be apprehended.

While he hesitated whether it would be better to send back one of his followers to see whether this might not be the case, he heard the blast of a horn, and looking in the direction from which the sound came, beheld a horseman riding very fast towards them. The low size, and wild, shaggy, untrained state of the animal, reminded Quentin of the mountain breed of horses in his own country, but this was much more finely limbed, and, with the same appearance of hardness, was more rapid in its movements. The head particularly, which, in the Scottish pony, is often lumpish and heavy, was small and well placed in the neck of this animal, with thin jaws, full sparkling eyes, and expanded nostrils.

The rider was even more singular in his appearance than the horse which he rode, though that was extremely unlike the horses of France. Although he managed his palfrey with great dexterity, he sat with his feet in broad stirrups, something resembling shovels, so short in the leathers that his knees were well nigh as high as the pommel of his saddle. His dress was a red turban of small size, in which he wore a sullied plume, secured by a clasp of silver, his tunic, which was shaped like those of the Estradiots (a sort of troops whom the Venetians at that time levied in the provinces on the eastern side of their gulf), was green in colour, and tawdrily laced with gold, he wore very wide drawers or trowsers of white, though none of the cleanest, which gathered beneath the knee, and his swarthy legs were quite bare, unless for the complicated laces which bound a pair of sandals on his feet, he had no spurs, the edge of his large stirrups being so sharp as to serve to goad the horse in a very severe manner. In a crimson sash this singular horseman wore a dagger on the right side, and on the left a short crooked Moorish sword, and by a tarnished baldric over the shoulder hung the horn which announced his approach. He had a swarthy and sunburnt visage, with a thin beard, and piercing dark eyes, a well formed mouth and nose, and other features which might have been pronounced handsome, but for the black elf locks which hung around his face, and the air of wildness and emaciation, which rather seemed to indicate a savage than a civilized man.

"He also is a Bohemian!" said the ladies to each other. "Holy Mary, will the King again place confidence in these outcasts?"

"I will question the man, if it be your pleasure," said Quentin, "and assure myself of his fidelity as I best may."

Durward, as well as the Ladies of Croye, had recognised in this man's dress and appearance the habit and the manners of those vagrants with whom he had nearly been confounded by the hasty proceedings of Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre, and he, too, entertained very natural apprehensions concerning the risk of reposing trust in one of that vagrant race.

"Art thou come hither to seek us?" was his first question. The stranger nodded. "And for what purpose?"

"To guide you to the Palace of Him of Liege."

"Of the Bishop?"

The Bohemian again nodded.

"What token canst thou give me that we should yield credence to thee?"

"Even the old rhyme, and no other," answered the Bohemian.

"The page slew the boar,

The peer had the gloire."

"A true token," said Quentin, "lead on, good fellow—I will speak farther with thee presently."

Then falling back to the ladies, he said, "I am convinced this man is the guide we are to expect, for he hath brought me a password, known, I think, but to the King and me. But I will discourse with him farther, and endeavour to ascertain how far he is to be trusted."

CHAPTER XVI: THE VAGRANT

I am as free as Nature first made man,

Ere the base laws of servitude began

When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

THE CONQUEST OF GRENADA

While Quentin held the brief communication with the ladies necessary to assure them that this extraordinary addition to their party was the guide whom they were to expect on the King's part, he noticed (for he was as alert in observing the motions of the stranger, as the Bohemian could be on his part) that the man not only turned his head as far back as he could to peer at them, but that, with a singular sort of agility, more resembling that of a monkey than of a man, he had screwed his whole person around on the saddle so as to sit almost sidelong upon the horse, for the convenience, as it seemed, of watching them more attentively.

Not greatly pleased with this manoeuvre, Quentin rode up to the Bohemian and said to him, as he suddenly assumed his proper position on the horse, "Methinks, friend, you will prove but a blind guide, if you look at the tail of your horse rather than his ears."

"And if I were actually blind," answered the Bohemian, "I could not the less guide you through any county in this realm of France, or in those adjoining to it."

"Yet you are no Frenchman," said the Scot.

"I am not," answered the guide.

"What countryman, then, are you," demanded Quentin.

"I am of no country," answered the guide.

"How! of no country?" repeated the Scot.

"No," answered the Bohemian, "of none. I am a Zingaro, a Bohemian, an Egyptian, or whatever the Europeans, in their different languages, may choose to call our people, but I have no country."

"Are you a Christian?" asked the Scotchman.

The Bohemian shook his head.

"Dog," said Quentin (for there was little toleration in the spirit of Catholicism in those days), "dost thou worship Mahoun?"

[Mahoun: Mohammed. It was a remarkable feature of the character of these wanderers that they did not, like the Jews whom they otherwise resembled in some particulars, possess or profess any particular religion, whether in form or principle. They readily conformed, as far as might be required, with the religion of any country in which they happened to sojourn, but they did not practise it more than was demanded of them.... S.]

"No," was the indifferent and concise answer of the guide, who neither seemed offended nor surprised at the young man's violence of manner.

"Are you a Pagan, then, or what are you?"

"I have no religion," answered the Bohemian.

Durward started back, for though he had heard of Saracens and Idolaters, it had never entered into his ideas or belief that any body of men could exist who practised no mode of worship whatever. He recovered from his astonishment to ask his guide where he usually dwelt.

"Wherever I chance to be for the time," replied the Bohemian. "I have no home."

"How do you guard your property?"

"Excepting the clothes which I wear, and the horse I ride on, I have no property."

"Yet you dress gaily, and ride gallantly," said Durward. "What are your means of subsistence?"

"I eat when I am hungry, drink when I am thirsty, and have no other means of subsistence than chance throws in my Way," replied the vagabond.

"Under whose laws do you live?"

"I acknowledge obedience to none, but an it suits my pleasure or my necessities," said the Bohemian.

"Who is your leader, and commands you?"

"The father of our tribe—if I choose to obey him," said the guide, "otherwise I have no commander."

"You are, then," said the wondering querist, "destitute of all that other men are combined by—you have no law, no leader, no settled means of subsistence, no house or home. You have, may Heaven compassionate you, no country—and, may Heaven enlighten and forgive you, you have no God! What is it that remains to you, deprived of government, domestic happiness, and religion?"

"I have liberty," said the Bohemian "I crouch to no one, obey no one—respect no one—I go where I will—live as I can—and die when my day comes."

"But you are subject to instant execution, at the pleasure of the Judge?"

"Be it so," returned the Bohemian, "I can but die so much the sooner."

"And to imprisonment also," said the Scot, "and where, then, is your boasted freedom?"

"In my thoughts," said the Bohemian, "which no chains can bind, while yours, even when your limbs are free, remain fettered by your laws and your superstitions, your dreams of local attachment, and your fantastic visions of civil policy. Such as I are free in spirit when our limbs are chained.—You are imprisoned in mind even when your limbs are most at freedom."

"Yet the freedom of your thoughts," said the Scot, "relieves not the pressure of the gyves on your limbs."

"For a brief time that may be endured," answered the vagrant, "and if within that period I cannot extricate myself, and fail of relief from my comrades, I can always die, and death is the most perfect freedom of all."

There was a deep pause of some duration, which Quentin at length broke by resuming his queries.

"Yours is a wandering race, unknown to the nations of Europe.—Whence do they derive their origin?"

"I may not tell you," answered the Bohemian.

"When will they relieve this kingdom from their presence, and return to the land from whence they came?" said the Scot.

"When the day of their pilgrimage shall be accomplished," replied his vagrant guide.

"Are you not sprung from those tribes of Israel which were carried into captivity beyond the great river Euphrates?" said Quentin, who had not forgotten the lore which had been taught him at Aberbrothick.

"Had we been so," answered the Bohemian, "we had followed their faith and practised their rites."

"What is thine own name?" said Durward.

"My proper name is only known to my brethren. The men beyond our tents call me Hayraddin Maugrabin—that is, Hayraddin the African Moor."

"Thou speakest too well for one who hath lived always in thy filthy horde," said the Scot.

"I have learned some of the knowledge of this land," said Hayraddin. "When I was a little boy, our tribe was chased by the hunters after human flesh. An arrow went through my mother's head, and she died. I was entangled in the blanket on her shoulders, and was taken by the pursuers. A priest begged me from the Provost's archers, and trained me up in Frankish learning for two or three years."

"How came you to part with him?" demanded Durward.

"I stole money from him—even the God which he worshipped," answered Hayraddin, with perfect composure, "he detected me, and beat me—I stabbed him with my knife, fled to the woods, and was again united to my people."

"Wretch!" said Durward, "did you murder your benefactor?"

"What had he to do to burden me with his benefits?—The Zingaro boy was no house bred cur, to dog the heels of his master, and crouch beneath his blows, for scraps of food:—He was the imprisoned wolf whelp, which at the first opportunity broke his chain, rended his master, and returned to his wilderness."

There was another pause, when the young Scot, with a view of still farther investigating the character and purpose of this suspicious guide, asked Hayraddin whether it was not true that his people, amid their ignorance, pretended to a knowledge of futurity which was not given to the sages, philosophers, and divines of more polished society.

"We pretend to it," said Hayraddin, "and it is with justice."

"How can it be that so high a gift is bestowed on so abject a race?" said Quentin.

"Can I tell you?" answered Hayraddin.—"Yes, I may indeed, but it is when you shall explain to me why the dog can trace the footsteps of a man, while man, the nobler animal, hath not power to trace those of the dog. These powers, which seem to you so wonderful, are instinctive in our race. From the lines on the face and on the hand, we can tell the future fate of those who consult us, even as surely as you know from the blossom of the tree in spring what fruit it will bear in the harvest."

"I doubt of your knowledge, and defy you to the proof."

"Defy me not, Sir Squire," said Hayraddin Maugrabin. "I can tell you that, say what you will of your religion, the Goddess whom you worship rides in this company."

"Peace!" said Quentin, in astonishment, "on thy life, not a word farther, but in answer to what I ask thee.—Canst thou be faithful?"

"I can—all men can," said the Bohemian.

"But wilt thou be faithful?"

"Wouldst thou believe me the more should I swear it?" answered Maugrabin, with a sneer.

"Thy life is in my hand," said the young Scot.

"Strike, and see whether I fear to die," answered the Bohemian.

"Will money render thee a trusty guide?" demanded Durward.

"If I be not such without it, no," replied the heathen.

"Then what will bind thee?" asked the Scot.

"Kindness," replied the Bohemian.

"Shall I swear to show thee such, if thou art true guide to us on this pilgrimage?"

"No," replied Hayraddin, "it were extravagant waste of a commodity so rare. To thee I am bound already."

"How?" exclaimed Durward, more surprised than ever.

"Remember the chestnut trees on the banks of the Cher! The victim whose body thou didst cut down was my brother, Zamet the Maugrabin."

"And yet," said Quentin, "I find you in correspondence with those very officers by whom your brother was done to death, for it was one of them who directed me where to meet with you—the same, doubtless, who procured yonder ladies your services as a guide."

"What can we do?" answered Hayraddin, gloomily. "These men deal with us as the sheepdogs do with the flock, they protect us for a while, drive us hither and thither at their pleasure, and always end by guiding us to the shambles."

Quentin had afterwards occasion to learn that the Bohemian spoke truth in this particular, and that the Provost guard, employed to suppress the vagabond bands by which the kingdom was infested, entertained correspondence among them, and forbore, for a certain time, the exercise of their duty, which always at last ended in conducting their allies to the gallows. This is a sort of political relation between thief and officer, for the profitable exercise of their mutual professions, which has subsisted in all countries, and is by no means unknown to our own.

Durward, parting from the guide, fell back to the rest of the retinue, very little satisfied with the character of Hayraddin, and entertaining little confidence in the professions of gratitude which he had personally made to him. He proceeded to sound the other two men who had been assigned him for attendants, and he was concerned to find them stupid and as unfit to assist him with counsel, as in the rencounter they had shown themselves reluctant to use their weapons.

"It is all the better," said Quentin to himself, his spirit rising with the apprehended difficulties of his situation, "that lovely young lady shall owe all to me. What one hand—ay, and one head can do—methinks I can boldly count upon. I have seen my father's house on fire, and he and my brothers lying dead amongst the flames—I gave not an inch back, but fought it out to the last. Now I am two years older, and have the best and fairest cause to bear me well that ever kindled mettle within a brave man's bosom."

Acting upon this resolution, the attention and activity which Quentin bestowed during the journey had in it something that gave him the appearance of ubiquity. His principal and most favourite post was of course by the side of the ladies, who, sensible of his extreme attention to their safety, began to converse with him in almost the tone of familiar friendship, and appeared to take great pleasure in the naivete, yet shrewdness, of his conversation. Yet Quentin did not suffer the fascination of this intercourse to interfere with the vigilant discharge of his duty.

If he was often by the side of the Countesses, labouring to describe to the natives of a level country the Grampian mountains, and, above all, the beauties of Glen Houlakin, he was as often riding with Hayraddin in the front of the cavalcade, questioning him about the road and the resting places, and recording his answers in his mind, to ascertain whether upon cross examination he could discover anything like meditated treachery. As often again he was in the rear, endeavouring to secure the attachment of the two horsemen by kind words, gifts, and promises of additional recompense, when their task should be accomplished.

In this way they travelled for more than a week, through bypaths and unfrequented districts, and by circuitous routes, in order to avoid large towns. Nothing remarkable occurred, though they now and then met strolling gangs of Bohemians, who respected them, as under the conduct of one of their tribe—straggling soldiers, or perhaps banditti, who deemed their party too strong to be attacked—or parties of the Marechaussee [mounted police], as they would now be termed, whom Louis, who searched the wounds of the land with steel and cautery, employed to suppress the disorderly bands which infested the interior. These last suffered them to pursue, their way unmolested by virtue of a password with which Quentin had been furnished for that purpose by the King himself.

Their resting places were chiefly the monasteries, most of which were obliged by the rules of their foundation to receive pilgrims, under which character the ladies travelled, with hospitality and without any troublesome inquiries into their rank and character, which most persons of distinction were desirous of concealing while in the discharge of their vows. The pretence of weariness was usually employed by the Countesses of Croye as an excuse for instantly retiring to rest, and Quentin, as their majordomo, arranged all that was necessary betwixt them and their entertainers, with a shrewdness which saved them all trouble, and an alacrity that failed not to excite a corresponding degree of good will on the part of those who were thus sedulously attended to.

One circumstance gave Quentin peculiar trouble, which was the character and nation of his guide, who, as a heathen and an infidel vagabond, addicted besides to occult arts (the badge of all his tribe), was often looked upon as a very improper guest for the holy resting places at which the company usually halted, and was not in consequence admitted within even the outer circuit of their walls, save with extreme reluctance. This was very embarrassing, for, on the one hand, it was necessary to keep in good humour a man who was possessed of the secret of their expedition, and, on the other, Quentin deemed it indispensable to maintain a vigilant though secret watch on Hayraddin's conduct, in order that, as far as might be, he should hold no communication with any one without being observed. This of course was impossible, if the Bohemian was lodged without the precincts of the convent at which they stopped, and Durward could not help thinking that Hayraddin was desirous of bringing about this latter arrangement for, instead of keeping himself still and quiet in the quarters allotted to him, his conversation, tricks, and songs were at the same time so entertaining to the novices and younger brethren, and so unedifying in the opinion of the seniors of the fraternity, that, in more cases than one, it required all the authority, supported by threats, which Quentin could exert over him, to restrain his irreverent and untimely jocularities, and all the interest he could make with the Superiors, to prevent the heathen hound from being thrust out of the doors. He succeeded, however, by the adroit manner in which he apologized for the acts of indecorum committed by their attendant, and the skill with which he hinted the hope of his being brought to a better sense of principles and behaviour, by the neighbourhood of holy relics, consecrated buildings, and, above all, of men dedicated to religion.

But upon the tenth or twelfth day of their journey, after they had entered Flanders, and were approaching the town of Namur, all the efforts of Quentin became inadequate to suppress the consequences of the scandal given by his heathen guide. The scene was a Franciscan convent, and of a strict and reformed order, and the Prior a man who afterwards died in the odour of sanctity. After rather more than the usual scruples (which were indeed in such a case to be expected) had been surmounted, the obnoxious Bohemian at length obtained quarters in an out house inhabited by a lay brother, who acted as gardener. The ladies retired to their apartment, as usual, and the Prior, who chanced to have some distant alliances and friends in Scotland, and who was fond of hearing foreigners tell of their native countries, invited Quentin, with whose mien and conduct he seemed much pleased, to a slight monastic refectory in his own cell. Finding the Father a man of intelligence, Quentin did not neglect the opportunity of making himself acquainted with the state of affairs in the country of Liege, of which, during the last two days of their journey, he had heard such reports as made him very apprehensive for the security of his charge during the remainder of their route, nay, even of the Bishop's power to protect them, when they should be safely conducted to his residence. The replies of the Prior were not very consolatory.

He said that the people of Liege were wealthy burghers, who, like Jeshurun [a designation for Israel] of old, had waxed fat and kicked—that they were uplifted in heart because of their wealth and their privileges—that they had divers disputes with the Duke of Burgundy, their liege lord, upon the subject of imports and immunities and that they had repeatedly broken out into open mutiny, whereat the Duke was so much incensed, as being a man of a hot and fiery nature, that he had sworn, by Saint George, on the next provocation, he would make the city of Liege like to the desolation of Babylon and the downfall of Tyre, a hissing and a reproach to the whole territory of Flanders.

[Babylon: taken by Cyrus in 538 B. C. See Revelation xviii, 21: "A mighty angel took up a stone... and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more."]

[Tyre: conquered by Alexander the Great in 332 B. C. "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more... yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God." Ezekiel xxvi, 21.]

"And he is a prince by all report likely to keep such a vow," said Quentin, "so the men of Liege will probably beware how they give him occasion."

"It were to be so hoped," said the Prior, "and such are the prayers of the godly in the land, who would not that the blood of the citizens were poured forth like water, and that they should perish, even as utter castaways, ere they make their peace with Heaven. Also the good Bishop labours night and day to preserve peace, as well becometh a servant of the altar, for it is written in Holy Scripture, *Beati pacifici*. But"—Here the good Prior stopped, with a deep sigh.

Quentin modestly urged the great importance of which it was to the ladies whom he attended, to have some assured information respecting the internal state of the country, and what an act of Christian charity it would be, if the worthy and reverend Father would enlighten them upon that subject.

"It is one," said the Prior, "on which no man speaks with willingness, for those who speak evil of the powerful, etiam in cubiculo [even in the bed chamber], may find that a winged thing shall carry the matter to his ears. Nevertheless, to render you, who seem an ingenuous youth, and your ladies, who are devout votareesses accomplishing a holy pilgrimage, the little service that is in my power, I will be plain with you."

He then looked cautiously round and lowered his voice, as if afraid of being overheard.

"The people of Liege," he said, "are privily instigated to their frequent mutinies by men of Belial [in the Bible this term is used as an appellative of Satan], who pretend, but, as I hope, falsely, to have commission to that effect from our most Christian King, whom, however, I hold to deserve that term better than were consistent with his thus disturbing the peace of a neighbouring state. Yet so it is, that his name is freely used by those who uphold and inflame the discontents at Liege. There is, moreover, in the land, a nobleman of good descent, and fame in warlike affairs, but otherwise, so to speak, *Lapis offensiois et petra scandali*—and a stumbling block of offence to the countries of Burgundy and Flanders. His name is William de la Marck."

"Called William with the Beard," said the young Scot, "or the Wild Boar of Ardennes?"

"And rightly so called, my son," said the Prior, "because he is as the wild boar of the forest, which treadeth down with his hoofs and rendeth with his tusks. And he hath formed to himself a band of more than a thousand men, all, like himself, contemnors of civil and ecclesiastical authority, and holds himself independent of the Duke of Burgundy, and maintains himself and his followers by rapine and wrong, wrought without distinction upon churchmen and laymen. *Imposuit manus in Christos Domini*—he hath stretched forth his hand upon the anointed of the Lord, regardless of what is written, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no wrong.'—Even to our poor house did he send for sums of gold and sums of silver, as a ransom for our lives, and those of our brethren, to which we returned a Latin supplication, stating our inability to answer his demand, and exhorting him in the words of the preacher, *Ne moliaris amico tuo malum, cum habet in te fiduciam* [devise not evil against thy neighbour who dwelleth by thee in security]. Nevertheless, this *Guilielmus Barbatus*, this William de la Marck, as completely ignorant of humane letters as of humanity itself, replied, in his ridiculous jargon, *Si non payatis, brulabo monasterium vestrum* [if you do not pay, I will burn your monastery. A similar story is told of the Duke of Vendome, who answered in this sort of macaronic Latin the classical expostulations of a German convent against the imposition of a contribution. S.]."

"Of which rude Latin, however, you, my good father," said the youth, "were at no loss to conceive the meaning?"

"Alas! my son," said the Prior, "Fear and Necessity are shrewd interpreters, and we were obliged to melt down the silver vessels of our altar to satisfy the rapacity of this cruel chief. May Heaven requite it to him seven fold! *Pereat improbus*—Amen, amen, anathema esto! [let the wicked perish. Let him be anathema! 'In pronouncing an anathema against a person, the church excludes him from her communion; and he must, if he continue obstinate, perish eternally.' Cent. Dict.]"

"I marvel," said Quentin, "that the Duke of Burgundy, who is so strong and powerful, doth not bait this boar to purpose, of whose ravages I have already heard so much."

"Alas! my son," said the Prior, "the Duke Charles is now at Peronne, assembling his captains of hundreds and his captains of thousands, to make war against France, and thus, while Heaven hath set discord between the hearts of those great princes, the country is misused by such subordinate oppressors. But it is in evil time that the Duke neglects the cure of these internal gangrenes, for this William de la Marck hath of late entertained open communication with Rouslaer and Pavillon, the chiefs of the discontented at Liege, and it is to be feared he will soon stir them up to some desperate enterprise."

"But the Bishop of Liege," said Quentin, "he hath still power enough to subdue this disquieted and turbulent spirit—hath he not, good father? Your answer to this question concerns me much."

"The Bishop, my child," replied the Prior, "hath the sword of Saint Peter, as well as the keys. He hath power as a secular prince, and he hath the protection of the mighty House of Burgundy, he hath also spiritual authority as a prelate, and he supports both with a reasonable force—of good soldiers and men at arms. This William de la Marck was bred in his household, and bound to him by many benefits. But he gave vent, even in the court of the Bishop, to his fierce and bloodthirsty temper, and was expelled thence for a homicide committed on one of the Bishop's chief domestics. From thenceforward, being banished from the good Prelate's presence, he hath been his constant and unrelenting foe, and now, I grieve to say, he hath girded his loins, and strengthened his horn against him."

"You consider, then, the situation of the worthy Prelate as being dangerous?" said Quentin, very, anxiously.

"Alas! my son," said the good Franciscan, "what or who is there in this weary wilderness, whom we may not hold as in danger? But Heaven forefend I should speak of the reverend Prelate as one whose peril is imminent. He has much treasure, true counsellors, and brave soldiers, and, moreover, a messenger who passed hither to the eastward yesterday saith that the Duke of Burgundy hath dispatched, upon the Bishop's request, an hundred men at arms to his assistance. This reinforcement, with the retinue belonging to each lance, are enough to deal with William de la Marck, on whose name be sorrow!—Amen."

At this crisis their conversation was interrupted by the Sacristan, who, in a voice almost inarticulate with anger, accused the Bohemian of having practised the most abominable arts of delusion among the younger brethren. He had added to their nightly meal cups of a heady and intoxicating cordial, of ten times the strength of the most powerful wine, under which several of the fraternity had succumbed, and indeed, although the Sacristan had been strong to resist its influence, they might yet see, from his inflamed countenance and thick speech, that even he, the accuser himself, was in some degree affected by this unhallowed potation. Moreover, the Bohemian had sung songs of worldly vanity and impure pleasures, he had derided the cord of Saint Francis, made jest of his miracles, and termed his votaries fools and lazy knaves. Lastly, he had practised palmistry, and foretold to the young Father Cherubin that he was helped by a beautiful lady, who should make him father to a thriving boy.

The Father Prior listened to these complaints for some time in silence, as struck with mute horror by their enormous atrocity. When the Sacristan had concluded, he rose up, descended to the court of the convent, and ordered the lay brethren, on pain of the worst consequences of spiritual disobedience, to beat Hayraddin out of the sacred precincts with their broom staves and cart whips.

This sentence was executed accordingly, in the presence of Quentin Durward, who, however vexed at the occurrence, easily saw that his interference would be of no avail.

The discipline inflicted upon the delinquent, notwithstanding the exhortations of the Superior, was more ludicrous than formidable. The Bohemian ran hither and thither through the court, amongst the clamour of voices, and noise of blows, some of which reached him not because purposely misaimed, others, sincerely designed for his person, were eluded by his activity, and the few that fell upon his back and shoulders he took without either complaint or reply. The noise and riot was the greater, that the inexperienced cudgel players, among whom Hayraddin ran the gauntlet, hit each other more frequently than they did him, till at length, desirous of ending a scene which was more scandalous than edifying, the Prior commanded the wicket to be flung open, and the Bohemian, darting through it with the speed of lightning, fled forth into the moonlight. During this scene, a suspicion which Durward had formerly entertained, recurred with additional strength. Hayraddin had, that very morning, promised to him more modest and discreet behaviour than he was wont to exhibit, when they rested in a convent on their journey, yet he had broken his engagement, and had been even more offensively obstreperous than usual. Something probably lurked under this, for whatever were the Bohemian's deficiencies, he lacked neither sense, nor, when he pleased, self command, and might it not be probable that he wished to hold some communication, either with, his own horde or some one else, from which he was debarred in the course of the day by the vigilance with which he was watched by Quentin, and had recourse to this stratagem in order to get himself turned out of the convent?

No sooner did this suspicion dart once more through Quentin's mind, than, alert as he always was in his motions, he resolved to follow his cudgelled guide, and observe (secretly if possible) how he disposed of himself. Accordingly, when the Bohemian fled, as already mentioned, out at the gate of the convent, Quentin, hastily explaining to the Prior the necessity of keeping sight of his guide, followed in pursuit of him.

CHAPTER XVII: THE ESPIED SPY

*What, the rude ranger? and spied spy?—hands off—
You are for no such rustics.*

BEN JONSON'S TALE OF ROBIN HOOD

When Quentin sallied from the convent, he could mark the precipitate retreat of the Bohemian, whose dark figure was seen in the far moonlight flying with the speed of a flogged hound quite through the street of the little village, and across the level meadow that lay beyond.

"My friend runs fast," said Quentin to himself, "but he must run faster yet, to escape the fleetest foot that ever pressed the heather of Glen Houlakin!"

Being fortunately without his cloak and armour, the Scottish mountaineer was at liberty to put forth a speed which was unrivalled in his own glens, and which, notwithstanding the rate at which the Bohemian ran, was likely soon to bring his pursuer up with him. This was not, however, Quentin's object, for he considered it more essential to watch Hayraddin's motions, than to interrupt them. He was the rather led to this by the steadiness with which the Bohemian directed his course, and which, continuing even after the impulse of the violent expulsion had subsided, seemed to indicate that his career had some more certain goal for its object than could have suggested itself to a person unexpectedly turned out of good quarters when midnight was approaching, to seek a new place of repose. He never even looked behind him, and consequently Durward was enabled to follow him unobserved. At length, the Bohemian having traversed the meadow and attained the side of a little stream, the banks of which were clothed with alders and willows, Quentin observed that he stood still, and blew a low note on his horn, which was answered by a whistle at some little distance.

"This is a rendezvous," thought Quentin, "but how shall I come near enough to overhear the import of what passes? The sound of my steps, and the rustling of the boughs through which I must force my passage, will betray me, unless I am cautious—I will stalk them, by Saint Andrew, as if they were Glen Isla deer—they shall learn that I have not conned woodcraft for naught. Yonder they meet, the two shadows—and two of them there are—odds against me if I am discovered, and if their purpose be unfriendly, as is much to be doubted. And then the Countess Isabelle loses her poor friend—Well, and he were not worthy to be called such, if he were not ready to meet a dozen in her behalf. Have I not crossed swords with Dunois, the best knight in France, and shall I fear a tribe of yonder vagabonds? Pshaw!—God and Saint Andrew to friend, they will find me both stout and wary."

Thus resolving, and with a degree of caution taught him by his silvan habits, our friend descended into the channel of the little stream, which varied in depth, sometimes scarce covering his shoes, sometimes coming up to his knees, and so crept along, his form concealed by the boughs overhanging the bank, and his steps unheard amid the ripple of the water. (We have ourselves, in the days of yore, thus approached the nest of the wakeful raven.) In this manner the Scot drew near unperceived, until he distinctly heard the voices of those who were the subject of his observation, though he could not distinguish the words. Being at this time under the drooping branches of a magnificent weeping willow, which almost swept the surface of the water, he caught hold of one of its boughs, by the assistance of which, exerting at once much agility, dexterity, and strength, he raised himself up into the body of the tree, and sat, secure from discovery, among the central branches.

From this situation he could discover that the person with whom Hayraddin was now conversing was one of his own tribe, and at the same time he perceived, to his great disappointment, that no approximation could enable him to comprehend their language, which was totally unknown to him. They laughed much, and as

Hayraddin made a sign of skipping about, and ended by rubbing his shoulder with his hand, Durward had no doubt that he was relating the story of the bastinading which he had sustained previous to his escape from the convent.

On a sudden, a whistle was again heard in the distance, which was once more answered by a low tone or two of Hayraddin's horn. Presently afterwards, a tall, stout, soldierly looking man, a strong contrast in point of thews and sinews to the small and slender limbed Bohemians, made his appearance. He had a broad baldric over his shoulder, which sustained a sword that hung almost across his person, his hose were much slashed, through which slashes was drawn silk, or tiffany, of various colours, they were tied by at least five hundred points or strings, made of ribbon, to the tight buff jacket which he wore, the right sleeve of which displayed a silver boar's head, the crest of his Captain. A very small hat sat jauntily on one side of his head, from which descended a quantity of curled hair, which fell on each side of a broad face, and mingled with as broad a beard, about four inches long. He held a long lance in his hand, and his whole equipment was that of one of the German adventurers, who were known by the name of lanzknechts, in English, spearmen, who constituted a formidable part of the infantry of the period. These mercenaries were, of course, a fierce and rapacious soldiery, and having an idle tale current among themselves, that a lanzknecht was refused admittance into heaven on account of his vices, and into hell on the score of his tumultuous, mutinous, and insubordinate disposition, they manfully acted as if they neither sought the one nor eschewed the other.

"Donner and blitz! [thunder and lightning!]" was his first salutation, in a sort of German French, which we can only imperfectly imitate, "Why have you kept me dancing in attendance dis drie nights?"

"I could not see you sooner, Meinherr," said Hayraddin, very submissively, "there is a young Scot, with as quick an eye as the wildcat, who watches my least motions. He suspects me already, and, should he find his suspicion confirmed, I were a dead man on the spot, and he would carry back the women into France again."

"Was henker! [what the deuce!]" said the lanzknecht, "we are three—we will attack them tomorrow, and carry the women off without going farther. You said the two valets were cowards—you and your comrade may manage them, and the Teufel [the devil] shall hold me, but I match your Scots wildcat."

"You will find that foolhardy," said Hayraddin, "for besides that we ourselves count not much in fighting, this spark hath matched himself with the best knight in France, and come off with honour—I have seen those who saw him press Dunois hard enough."

"Hagel and sturmewetter! [hail and stormy weather!]" It is but your cowardice that speaks," said the German soldier.

"I am no more a coward than yourself," said Hayraddin "but my trade is not fighting.—If you keep the appointment where it was laid, it is well—if not, I guide them safely to the Bishop's Palace, and William de la Marck may easily possess himself of them there, provided he is half as strong as he pretended a week since."

"Poz tausend! [Zounds!]" said the soldier, "we are as strong and stronger, but we hear of a hundreds of the lances of Burgund,—das ist, see you,—five men to a lance do make five hundreds, and then hold me the devil, they will be fainer to seek for us, than we to seek for them, for der Bischoff hath a goot force on footing—ay, indeed!"

"You must then hold to the ambuscade at the Cross of the Three Kings, or give up the adventure," said the Bohemian.

"Geb up—geb up the adventure of the rich bride for our noble hauptman [leader or captain]—Teufel! I will charge through hell first.—Mein soul, we will be all princes and hertzogs, whom they call dukes, and we will hab a snab at the wein kellar [wine cellar], and at the mouldy French crowns, and it may be at the pretty garces too [meaning the countesses], when He with de beard is weary on them."

"The ambuscade at the Cross of the Three Kings then still holds?" said the Bohemian.

"Mein Gob ay,—you will swear to bring them there, and when they are on their knees before the cross, and down from off their horses, which all men do, except such black heathens as thou, we will make in on them and they are ours."

"Ay, but I promised this piece of necessary villainy only on one condition," said Hayraddin.—"I will not have a hair of the young man's head touched. If you swear this to me, by your Three Dead Men of Cologne, I will swear to you, by the Seven Night Walkers, that I will serve you truly as to the rest. And if you break your oath, the Night Walkers shall wake you seven nights from your sleep, between night and morning, and, on the eighth, they shall strangle and devour you."

"But donner and bagel, what need you be so curious about the life of this boy, who is neither your blood nor kin?" said the German.

"No matter for that, honest Heinrick, some men have pleasure in cutting throats, some in keeping them whole.—So swear to me, that you will spare him life and limb, or by the bright star Aldebaran, this matter shall go no farther.—Swear, and by the Three Kings, as you call them, of Cologne—I know you care for no other oath."

"Du bist ein comische man [thou art a droll fellow]," said the lanzknecht, "I swear."

"Not yet," said the Bohemian. "Face about, brave lanzknecht, and look to the east, else the Kings may not hear you."

The soldier took the oath in the manner prescribed, and then declared that he would be in readiness, observing the place was quite convenient, being scarce five miles from their present leaguer.

"But were it not making sure work to have a fahnlein [a regiment or company] of riders on the other road, by the left side of the inn, which might trap them if they go that way?"

The Bohemian considered a moment, and then answered. "No—the appearance of their troops in that direction might alarm the garrison of Namur, and then they would have a doubtful fight, instead of assured success. Besides, they shall travel on the right bank of the Maes, for I can guide them which way I will, for sharp as this same Scottish mountaineer is, he hath never asked any one's advice, save mine, upon the direction of their route. Undoubtedly, I was assigned to him by an assured friend, whose word no man mistrusts till they come to know him a little."

"Hark ye, friend Hayraddin," said the soldier, "I would ask you somewhat. You and your bruder were, as you say yourself, gross sternen deuter, that is, star lookers and geister seers [seers of ghosts]. Now, what henker was it made you not foresee him, your bruder Zamet, to be hanged?"

"I will tell you, Heinrick," said Hayraddin, "if I could have known my brother was such a fool as to tell the counsel of King Louis to Duke Charles of Burgundy, I could have foretold his death as sure as I can foretell fair weather in July. Louis hath both ears and hands at the Court of Burgundy, and Charles's counsellors love the chink of French gold as well as thou dost the clatter of a wine pot.—But fare thee well, and keep appointment—I must await my early Scot a bow shot without the gate of the den of the lazy swine yonder, else will he think me about some excursion which bodes no good to the success of his journey."

"Take a draught of comfort first," said the lanzknecht, tendering him a flask—"but I forget, thou art beast enough to drink nothing but water, like a vile vassal of Mahound and Termagund [the name of the god of the Saracens in mediæval romances where he is linked with Mahound]."

"Thou art thyself a vassal of the wine measure and the flagon," said the Bohemian. "I marvel not that thou art only trusted with the bloodthirsty and violent part of executing what better heads have devised.—He must drink no wine who would know the thoughts of others, or hide his own. But why preach to thee, who hast a thirst as eternal as a sand bank in Arabia?"

"Fare thee well. Take my comrade Tuisco with thee—his appearance about the monastery may breed suspicion."

The two worthies parted, after each had again pledged himself to keep the rendezvous at the Cross of the Three Kings. Quentin Durward watched until they were out of sight, and then descended from his place of concealment, his heart throbbing at the narrow escape which he and his fair charge had made—if, indeed, it could yet be achieved—from a deep laid plan of villainy. Afraid, on his return to the monastery, of stumbling upon Hayraddin, he made a long detour, at the expense of traversing some very rough ground, and was thus enabled to return to his asylum on a different point from that by which he left it.

On the route, he communed earnestly with himself concerning the safest plan to be pursued. He had formed the resolution, when he first heard Hayraddin avow his treachery, to put him to death so soon as the conference broke up, and his companions were at a sufficient distance, but when he heard the Bohemian express so much interest in saving his own life, he felt it would be ungrateful to execute upon him, in its rigour, the punishment his treachery had deserved. He therefore resolved to spare his life, and even, if possible, still to use his services as a guide, under such precautions as should ensure the security of the precious charge, to the preservation of which his own life was internally devoted.

But whither were they to turn?—The Countesses of Croye could neither obtain shelter in Burgundy, from which they had fled, nor in France, from which they had been in a manner expelled. The violence of Duke Charles, in the one country, was scarcely more to be feared than the cold and tyrannical policy of King Louis in the other. After deep thought, Durward could form no better or safer plan for their security, than that, evading the ambuscade, they should take the road to Liege by the left hand of the Maes, and throw themselves, as the ladies originally designed, upon the protection of the excellent Bishop. That Prelate's will to protect them could not be doubted, and, if reinforced by this Burgundian party of men at arms, he might be considered as having the power. At any rate, if the dangers to which he was exposed from the hostility of William de la Marck, and from the troubles in the city of Liege, appeared imminent, he would still be able to protect the unfortunate ladies until they could be dispatched to Germany with a suitable escort.

To sum up this reasoning—for when is a mental argument conducted without some reference to selfish consideration?—Quentin imagined that the death or captivity to which King Louis had, in cold blood, consigned him, set him at liberty from his engagements to the crown of France: which, therefore, it was his determined purpose to renounce. The Bishop of Liege was likely, he concluded, to need soldiers, and he thought that, by the interposition of his fair friends, who now, especially the elder Countess, treated him with much familiarity, he might get some command, and perhaps might have the charge of conducting the Ladies of Croye to some place more safe than the neighbourhood of Liege. And, to conclude, the ladies had talked, although almost in a sort of jest, of raising the Countess's own vassals, and, as others did in those stormy times, fortifying her strong castle against all assailants whatever, they had jestingly asked Quentin whether he would accept the perilous office of their Seneschal, and, on his embracing the office with ready glee and devotion, they had, in the same spirit, permitted him to kiss both their hands on that confidential and honourable appointment. Nay, he thought that the hand of the Countess Isabelle, one of the best formed and most beautiful to which true vassal ever did such homage, trembled when his lips rested on it a moment longer than ceremony required, and that some confusion appeared on her cheek and in her eye as she withdrew it. Something might come of all this, and what brave man, at Quentin Durward's age, but would gladly have taken the thoughts which it awakened, into the considerations which were to determine his conduct?

This point settled, he had next to consider in what degree he was to use the farther guidance of the faithless Bohemian. He had renounced his first thought of killing him in the wood, and, if he took another guide, and dismissed him alive, it would be sending the traitor to the camp of William de la Marck, with intelligence of their motions. He thought of taking the Prior into his counsels, and requesting him to detain the Bohemian by force, until they should have time to reach the Bishop's castle, but, on reflection, he dared not hazard such a proposition to one who was timid both as an old man and a friar, who held the safety of his convent the most important object of his duty, and who trembled at the mention of the Wild Boar of Ardennes.

At length Durward settled a plan of operation on which he could the better reckon, as the execution rested entirely upon himself, and, in the cause in which he was engaged, he felt himself capable of everything. With a firm and bold heart, though conscious of the dangers of his situation, Quentin might be compared to one walking under a load, of the weight of which he is conscious, but which yet is not beyond his strength and power of endurance. Just as his plan was determined, he reached the convent.

Upon knocking gently at the gate, a brother, considerably stationed for that purpose by the Prior, opened it, and acquainted him that the brethren were to be engaged in the choir till daybreak, praying Heaven to forgive to the community the various scandals which had that evening taken place among them.

The worthy friar offered Quentin permission to attend their devotions, but his clothes were in such a wet condition that the young Scot was obliged to decline the opportunity, and request permission, instead, to sit by the kitchen fire, in order to his attire being dried before morning, as he was particularly desirous that the Bohemian, when they should next meet, should observe no traces of his having been abroad during the night. The friar not only granted his request, but afforded him his own company, which fell in very happily with the desire which Durward had to obtain information concerning the two routes which he had heard mentioned by the Bohemian in his conversation with the lanzknecht. The friar, entrusted upon many occasions with the business of the convent abroad, was the person in the fraternity best qualified to afford him the information he requested, but observed that, as true pilgrims, it became the duty of the ladies whom Quentin escorted, to take the road on the right side of the Maes, by the Cross of the Kings, where the blessed relics of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar (as the Catholic Church has named the eastern Magi who came to Bethlehem with their offerings) had rested as they were transported to Cologne, and on which spot they had wrought many miracles.

Quentin replied that the ladies were determined to observe all the holy stations with the utmost punctuality, and would certainly visit that of the Cross, either in going to or from Cologne, but they had heard reports that the road by the right side of the river was at present rendered unsafe by the soldiers of the ferocious William de la Marck.

"Now may Heaven forbid," said Father Francis, "that the Wild Boar of Ardennes should again make his lair so near us!—Nevertheless, the broad Maes will be a good barrier betwixt us, even should it so chance."

"But it will be no barrier between my ladies and the marauder, should we cross the river, and travel on the right," answered the Scot.

"Heaven will protect its own, young man," said the friar, "for it were hard to think that the Kings of yonder blessed city of Cologne, who will not endure that a Jew or infidel should even enter within the walls of their town, could be oblivious enough to permit their worshippers, coming to their shrine as true pilgrims, to be plundered and misused by such a miscreant dog as this Boar of Ardennes, who is worse than a whole desert of Saracen heathens, and all the ten tribes of Israel to boot."

Whatever reliance Quentin, as a sincere Catholic, was bound to rest upon the special protection of Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar, he could not but recollect that the pilgrim habits of the ladies being assumed out of mere earthly policy, he and his charge could scarcely expect their countenance on the present occasion, and therefore resolved, as far as possible, to avoid placing the ladies in any predicament where miraculous interposition might be necessary, whilst, in the simplicity of his good faith, he himself vowed a pilgrimage to the Three Kings of Cologne in his own proper person, provided the simulate design of those over whose safety he was now watching, should be permitted by those reasonable and royal, as well as sainted personages, to attain the desired effect.

That he might enter into this obligation with all solemnity, he requested the friar to show him into one of the various chapels which opened from the main body of the church of the convent, where, upon his knees, and with sincere devotion, he ratified the vow which he had made internally. The distant sound of the choir, the solemnity of the deep and dead hour which he had chosen for this act of devotion, the effect of the glimmering lamp with which the little Gothic building was illuminated—all contributed to throw Quentin's mind into the state when it most readily acknowledges its human frailty, and seeks that supernatural aid and protection which, in every worship, must be connected with repentance for past sins and resolutions of future amendment. That the object of his devotion was misplaced, was not the fault of Quentin, and, its purpose being sincere, we can scarce suppose it unacceptable to the only true Deity, who regards the motives, and not the forms of prayer, and in whose eyes the sincere devotion of a heathen is more estimable than the specious hypocrisy of a Pharisee.

Having commended himself and his helpless companions to the Saints, and to the keeping of Providence, Quentin at length retired to rest, leaving the friar much edified by the depth and sincerity of his devotion.

CHAPTER XVIII: PALMISTRY

*When many a many tale and many a song
Cheer'd the rough road, we wish'd the rough road long.
The rough road, then, returning in a round,
Mock'd our enchanted steps, for all was fairy ground.*

SAMUEL JOHNSON

By peep of day Quentin Durward had forsaken his little cell, had roused the sleepy grooms, and, with more than his wonted care, seen that everything was prepared for the day's journey. Girths and bridles, the horse furniture, and the shoes of the horses themselves, were carefully inspected with his own eyes, that there might be as little chance as possible of the occurrence of any of those casualties, which, petty as they seem, often interrupt or disconcert travelling. The horses were also, under his own inspection, carefully fed, so as to render them fit for a long day's journey, or, if that should be necessary, for a hasty flight. Quentin then betook himself to his own chamber, armed himself with unusual care, and belted on his sword with the feeling at once of approaching danger, and of stern determination to dare it to the uttermost.

These generous feelings gave him a loftiness of step, and a dignity of manner, which the Ladies of Croye had not yet observed in him, though they had been highly pleased and interested by the grace, yet naivete, of his general behaviour and conversation, and the mixture of shrewd intelligence which naturally belonged to him, with the simplicity arising from his secluded education and distant country. He let them understand that it would be necessary that they should prepare for their journey this morning rather earlier than usual, and, accordingly, they left the convent immediately after a morning repast, for which, as well as the other hospitalities of the House, the ladies made acknowledgment by a donation to the altar, befitting rather their rank than their appearance. But this excited no suspicion, as they were supposed to be Englishwomen, and the attribute of superior wealth attached at that time to the insular character as strongly as in our own day.

The Prior blessed them as they mounted to depart, and congratulated Quentin on the absence of his heathen guide.

"For," said the venerable man, "better stumble in the path than be upheld by the arm of a thief or robber."

Quentin was not quite of his opinion, for, dangerous as he knew the Bohemian to be, he thought he could use his services, and, at the same time, baffle his treasonable purpose, now that he saw clearly to what it tended. But his anxiety upon this subject was soon at an end, for the little cavalcade was not an hundred yards from the monastery and the village before Maugrabin joined it, riding as usual on his little active and wild looking jennet. Their road led them along the side of the same brook where Quentin had overheard the mysterious conference the preceding evening, and Hayraddin had not long rejoined them, ere they passed under the very willow tree which had afforded Durward the means of concealment, when he became an unsuspected hearer of what then passed betwixt that false guide and the lanzknecht.

The recollections which the spot brought back stirred Quentin to enter abruptly into conversation with his guide, whom hitherto he had scarce spoken to.

"Where hast thou found night quarter, thou profane knave?" said the Scot.

"Your wisdom may guess, by looking on my gaberdine," answered the Bohemian, pointing to his dress, which was covered with seeds of hay.

"A good haystack," said Quentin, "is a convenient bed for an astrologer, and a much better than a heathen scoffer at our blessed religion and its ministers, ever deserves."

"It suited my Klepper better than me, though," said Hayraddin, patting his horse on the neck, "for he had food and shelter at the same time. The old bald fools turned him loose, as if a wise man's horse could have infected with wit or sagacity a whole convent of asses. Lucky that Klepper knows my whistle, and follows me as truly as a hound, or we had never met again, and you in your turn might have whistled for a guide."

"I have told thee more than once," said Durward, sternly, "to restrain thy ribaldry when thou chancest to be in worthy men's company, a thing, which, I believe, hath rarely happened to thee in thy life before now, and I promise thee, that did I hold thee as faithless a guide as I esteem thee a blasphemous and worthless catiff, my Scottish dirk and thy heathenish heart had ere now been acquainted, although the doing such a deed were as ignoble as the sticking of swine."

"A wild boar is near akin to a sow," said the Bohemian, without flinching from the sharp look with which Quentin regarded him, or altering, in the slightest degree, the caustic indifference which he affected in his language, "and many men," he subjoined, "find both pride, pleasure, and profit, in sticking them."

Astonished at the man's ready confidence, and uncertain whether he did not know more of his own history and feelings than was pleasant for him to converse upon, Quentin broke off a conversation in which he had gained no advantage over Maugrabin, and fell back to his accustomed post beside the ladies.

We have already observed that a considerable degree of familiarity had begun to establish itself between them. The elder Countess treated him (being once well assured of the nobility of his birth) like a favoured equal, and though her niece showed her regard to their protector less freely, yet, under every disadvantage of bashfulness and timidity, Quentin thought he could plainly perceive that his company and conversation were not by any means indifferent to her.

Nothing gives such life and soul to youthful gaiety as the consciousness that it is successfully received, and Quentin had accordingly, during the former period of their journey, amused his fair charge with the liveliness of his conversation and the songs and tales of his country, the former of which he sang in his native language, while his efforts to render the latter into his foreign and imperfect French, gave rise to a hundred little mistakes and errors of speech, as diverting as the narratives themselves. But on this anxious morning, he rode beside the Ladies of Croye without any of his usual attempts to amuse them, and they could not help observing his silence as something remarkable.

"Our young companion has seen a wolf," said the Lady Hameline, alluding to an ancient superstition, "and he has lost his tongue in consequence."

[Vox quoque Moerim Jam fugit ipsa; lupi Moerim videre priores. Virgili ix. Ecloga. The commentators add, in explanation of this passage, the opinion of Pliny: "The being beheld by a wolf in Italy is accounted noxious, and is supposed to take away the speech of a man, if these animals behold him ere he sees them." S.]

"To say I had tracked a fox were nearer the mark," thought Quentin, but gave the reply no utterance.

"Are you well, Seignior Quentin?" said the Countess Isabelle, in a tone of interest at which she herself blushed, while she felt that it was something more than the distance between them warranted.

"He hath sat up carousing with the jolly friars," said the Lady Hameline, "the Scots are like the Germans, who spend all their mirth over the Rheinwein, and bring only their staggering steps to the dance in the evening, and their aching heads to the ladies' bower in the morning."

"Nay, gentle ladies," said Quentin, "I deserve not your reproach. The good friars were at their devotions almost all night, and for myself, my drink was barely a cup of their thinnest and most ordinary wine."

"It is the badness of his fare that has put him out of humour," said the Countess Isabelle. "Cheer up, Seignior Quentin, and should we ever visit my ancient Castle of Bracquemont together, if I myself should stand your cup bearer, and hand it to you, you shall have a generous cup of wine, that the like never grew upon the vines of Hochheim or Johannisberg."

"A glass of water, noble lady, from your hand,"—Thus far did Quentin begin, but his voice trembled, and Isabelle continued, as if she had been insensible of the tenderness of the accentuation upon the personal pronoun.

"The wine was stocked in the deep vaults of Bracquemont, by my great grandfather the Rhinegrave Godfrey," said the Countess Isabelle.

"Who won the hand of her great grandmother," interjected the Lady Hameline, interrupting her niece, "by proving himself the best son of chivalry, at the great tournament of Strasbourg—ten knights were slain in the lists. But those days are now over, and no one now thinks of encountering peril for the sake of honour, or to relieve distressed beauty."

To this speech, which was made in the tone in which a modern beauty, whose charms are rather on the wane, may be heard to condemn the rudeness of the present age, Quentin took upon him to reply that there was no lack of that chivalry which the Lady Hameline seemed to consider as extinct, and that, were it eclipsed everywhere else, it would still glow in the bosoms of the Scottish gentlemen.

"Hear him!" said the Lady Hameline, "he would have us believe that in his cold and bleak country still lives the noble fire which has decayed in France and Germany! The poor youth is like a Swiss mountaineer, mad with partiality to his native land—he will next tell us of the vines and olives of Scotland."

"No, madam," said Durward, "of the wine and the oil of our mountains I can say little more than that our swords can compel these rich productions as tribute from our wealthier neighbours. But for the unblemished faith and unfaded honour of Scotland, I must now put to the proof how far you can repose trust in them, however mean the individual who can offer nothing more as a pledge of your safety."

"You speak mysteriously—you know of some pressing and present danger," said the Lady Hameline.

"I have read it in his eye for this hour past!" exclaimed the Lady Isabelle, clasping her hands. "Sacred Virgin, what will become of us?"

"Nothing, I hope, but what you would desire," answered Durward. "And now I am compelled to ask—gentle ladies, can you trust me?"

"Trust you?" answered the Countess Hameline. "Certainly. But why the question? Or how far do you ask our confidence?"

"I, on my part," said the Countess Isabelle, "trust you implicitly, and without condition. If you can deceive us, Quentin, I will no more look for truth, save in Heaven!"

"Gentle lady," replied Durward, highly gratified, "you do me but justice. My object is to alter our route, by proceeding directly by the left bank of the Maes to Liege, instead of crossing at Namur. This differs from the order assigned by King Louis and the instructions given to the guide. But I heard news in the monastery of marauders on the right bank of the Maes, and of the march of Burgundian soldiers to suppress them. Both circumstances alarm me for your safety. Have I your permission so far to deviate from the route of your journey?"

"My ample and full permission," answered the younger lady.

"Cousin," said the Lady Hameline, "I believe with you that the youth means us well—but bethink you—we transgress the instructions of King Louis, so positively iterated."

"And why should we regard his instructions?" said the Lady Isabelle. "I am, I thank Heaven for it, no subject of his, and, as a suppliant, he has abused the confidence he induced me to repose in him. I would not dishonour this young gentleman by weighing his word for an instant against the injunctions of yonder crafty and selfish despot."

"Now, may God bless you for that very word, lady," said Quentin, joyously, "and if I deserve not the trust it expresses, tearing with wild horses in this life and eternal tortures in the next were e'en too good for my deserts."

So saying, he spurred his horse, and rejoined the Bohemian. This worthy seemed of a remarkably passive, if not a forgiving temper. Injury or threat never dwelt, or at least seemed not to dwell in his recollection, and he entered into the conversation which Durward presently commenced, just as if there had been no unkindly word betwixt them in the course of the morning.

The dog, thought the Scot, snarls not now, because he intends to clear scores with me at once and for ever, when he can snatch me by the very throat, but we will try for once whether we cannot foil a traitor at his own weapons.

"Honest Hayraddin," he said, "thou hast travelled with us for ten days, yet hast never shown us a specimen of your skill in fortune telling, which you are, nevertheless, so fond of practising that you must needs display your gifts in every convent at which we stop, at the risk of being repaid by a night's lodging under a haystack."

"You have never asked me for a specimen of my skill," said the gipsy. "You are, like the rest of the world, contented to ridicule those mysteries which they do not understand."

"Give me then a present proof of your skill," said Quentin and, ungloving his hand, he held it out to the gipsy.

Hayraddin carefully regarded all the lines which crossed each other on the Scotchman's palm, and noted, with equally scrupulous attention, the little risings or swellings at the roots of the fingers, which were then believed as intimately connected with the disposition, habits, and fortunes of the individual, as the organs of the brain are pretended to be in our own time.

"Here is a hand," said Hayraddin, "which speaks of toils endured, and dangers encountered. I read in it an early acquaintance with the hilt of the sword, and yet some acquaintance also with the clasps of the mass book."

"This of my past life you may have learned elsewhere," said Quentin, "tell me something of the future."

"This line from the hill of Venus," said the Bohemian, "not broken off abruptly, but attending and accompanying the line of life, argues a certain and large fortune by marriage, whereby the party shall be raised among the wealthy and the noble by the influence of successful love."

"Such promises you make to all who ask your advice," said Quentin, "they are part of your art."

"What I tell you is as certain," said Hayraddin, "as that you shall in brief space be menaced with mighty danger, which I infer from this bright blood red line cutting the table line transversely, and intimating stroke of sword, or other violence, from which you shall only be saved by the attachment of a faithful friend."

"Thyself, ha?" said Quentin, somewhat indignant that the chiromantist should thus practise on his credulity, and endeavour to found a reputation by predicting the consequences of his own treachery.

"My art," replied the Zingaro, "tells me naught that concerns myself."

"In this, then, the seers of my land," said Quentin, "excel your boasted knowledge, for their skill teaches them the dangers by which they are themselves beset. I left not my hills without having felt a portion of the double vision with which their inhabitants are gifted, and I will give thee a proof of it, in exchange for thy specimen of palmistry. Hayraddin, the danger which threatens me lies on the right bank of the river—I will avoid it by travelling to Liege on the left bank."

The guide listened with an apathy, which, knowing the circumstances in which Maugrabin stood, Quentin could not by any means comprehend.

"If you accomplish your purpose," was the Bohemian's reply, "the dangerous crisis will be transferred from your lot to mine."

"I thought," said Quentin, "that you said but now, that you could not presage your own fortune?"

"Not in the manner in which I have but now told you yours," answered Hayraddin, "but it requires little knowledge of Louis of Valois, to presage that he will hang your guide, because your pleasure was to deviate from the road which he recommended."

"The attaining with safety the purpose of the journey, and ensuring its happy termination," said Quentin, "must atone for a deviation from the exact line of the prescribed route."

"Ay," replied the Bohemian, "if you are sure that the King had in his own eye the same termination of the pilgrimage which he insinuated to you."

"And of what other termination is it possible that he could have been meditating? or why should you suppose he had any purpose in his thought, other than was avowed in his direction?" inquired Quentin.

"Simply," replied the Zingaro, "that those who know aught of the Most Christian King, are aware that the purpose about which he is most anxious, is always that which he is least willing to declare. Let our gracious Louis send twelve embassies, and I will forfeit my neck to the gallows a year before it is due, if in eleven of them there is not something at the bottom of the ink horn more than the pen has written in the letters of credence."

"I regard not your foul suspicions," answered Quentin, "my duty is plain and peremptory—to convey these ladies in safety to Liege, and I take it on me to think that I best discharge that duty in changing our prescribed route, and keeping the left side of the river Maes. It is likewise the direct road to Liege. By crossing the river, we should lose time and incur fatigue to no purpose—wherefore should we do so?"

"Only because pilgrims, as they call themselves, destined for Cologne," said Hayraddin, "do not usually descend the Maes so low as Liege, and that the route of the ladies will be accounted contradictory of their professed destination."

"If we are challenged on that account," said Quentin, "we will say that alarms of the wicked Duke of Gueldres, or of William de la Marck, or of the Ecorcheurs [flayers; a name given to bands of wandering troops on account of their cruelty] and lanzknechts, on the right side of the river, justify our holding by the left, instead of our intended route."

"As you will, my good seignior," replied the Bohemian. "I am, for my part, equally ready to guide you down the left as down the right side of the Maes. Your excuse to your master you must make out for yourself."

Quentin, although rather surprised, was at the same time pleased with the ready, or at least the unrepugnant acquiescence of Hayraddin in their change of route, for he needed his assistance as a guide, and yet had feared that the disconcerting of his intended act of treachery would have driven him to extremity. Besides, to expel the Bohemian from their society would have been the ready mode to bring down William de la Marck, with whom he was in correspondence, upon their intended route, whereas, if Hayraddin remained with them Quentin thought he could manage to prevent the Moor from having any communication with strangers unless he was himself aware of it.

Abandoning, therefore, all thoughts of their original route, the little party followed that by the left bank of the broad Maes, so speedily and successfully that the next day early brought them to the proposed end of their journey. They found that the Bishop of Liege, for the sake of his health, as he himself alleged, but rather, perhaps, to avoid being surprised by the numerous and mutinous population of the city, had established his residence in his beautiful Castle of Schonwaldt, about a mile without Liege.

Just as they approached the Castle, they saw the Prelate returning in long procession from the neighbouring city, in which he had been officiating at the performance of High Mass. He was at the head of a splendid train of religious, civil and military men, mingled together, or, as the old ballad maker expresses it,

*"With many a cross bearer before,
And many a spear behind."*

The procession made a noble appearance, as winding along the verdant banks of the broad Maes, it wheeled into, and was as it were devoured by, the huge Gothic portal of the Episcopal residence.

But when the party came more near, they found that circumstances around the Castle argued a doubt and sense of insecurity, which contradicted that display of pomp and power which they had just witnessed. Strong guards of the Bishop's soldiers were heedfully maintained all around the mansion and its immediate vicinity, and the prevailing appearances in an ecclesiastical residence seemed to argue a sense of danger in the reverend Prelate, who found it necessary thus to surround himself with all the defensive precautions of war.

The Ladies of Croye, when announced by Quentin, were reverently ushered into the great Hall, where they met with the most cordial reception from the Bishop, who met them there at the head of his little Court. He would not permit them to kiss his hand, but welcomed them with a salute, which had something in it of gallantry on the part of a prince to fine women, and something also of the holy affection of a pastor to the sisters of his flock.

Louis of Bourbon, the reigning Bishop of Liege, was in truth a generous and kind hearted prince, whose life had not indeed been always confined, with precise strictness, within the bounds of his clerical profession, but who, notwithstanding, had uniformly maintained the frank and honourable character of the House of Bourbon, from which he was descended.

In latter times, as age advanced, the Prelate had adopted habits more befitting a member of the hierarchy than his early reign had exhibited, and was loved among the neighbouring princes, as a noble ecclesiastic, generous and magnificent in his ordinary mode of life, though preserving no very ascetic severity of character, and governing with an easy indifference, which, amid his wealthy and mutinous subjects, rather encouraged than subdued rebellious purposes.

The Bishop was so fast an ally of the Duke of Burgundy that the latter claimed almost a joint sovereignty in his bishopric, and repaid the good natured ease with which the Prelate admitted claims which he might easily have disputed, by taking his part on all occasions with the determined and furious zeal which was a part of his character. He used to say he considered Liege as his own, the Bishop as his brother (indeed, they might be accounted such, in consequence of the Duke's having married for his first wife, the Bishop's sister), and that he who annoyed Louis of Bourbon, had to do with Charles of Burgundy, a threat which, considering the character and the power of the prince who used it, would have been powerful with any but the rich and discontented city of Liege, where much wealth had, according to the ancient proverb, made wit waver.

The Prelate, as we have said, assured the Ladies of Croye of such intercession as his interest at the Court of Burgundy, used to the uttermost, might gain for them, and which, he hoped, might be the more effectual, as Campobasso, from some late discoveries, stood rather lower than formerly in the Duke's personal favour. He promised them also such protection as it was in his power to afford, but the sigh with which he gave the warrant seemed to allow that his power was more precarious than in words he was willing to admit.

"At every event, my dearest daughters," said the Bishop, with an air in which, as in his previous salute, a mixture of spiritual unction qualified the hereditary gallantry of the House of Bourbon, "Heaven forbid I should abandon the lamb to the wicked wolf, or noble ladies to the oppression of faitours. I am a man of peace, though my abode now rings with arms, but be assured I will care for your safety as for my own, and should matters become yet more distracted here, which, with Our Lady's grace, we trust will be rather pacified than inflamed, we will provide for your safe conduct to Germany, for not even the will of our brother and protector, Charles of Burgundy, shall prevail with us to dispose of you in any respect contrary to your own inclinations. We cannot comply with your request of sending you to a convent, for, alas! such is the influence of the sons of Belial among the inhabitants of Liege, that we know no retreat to which our authority extends, beyond the bounds of our own castle, and the protection of our soldiery. But here you are most welcome, and your train shall have all honourable entertainment, especially this youth whom you recommend so particularly to our countenance, and on whom in especial we bestow our blessing."

Quentin kneeled, as in duty bound, to receive the Episcopal benediction.

"For yourselves," proceeded the good Prelate, "you shall reside here with my sister Isabelle, a Canoness of Triers, with whom you may dwell in all honour, even under the roof of so gay a bachelor as the Bishop of Liege."

He gallantly conducted the ladies to his sister's apartment, as he concluded the harangue of welcome, and his Master of the Household, an officer who, having taken Deacon's orders, held something between a secular and ecclesiastical character, entertained Quentin with the hospitality which his master enjoined, while the other personages of the retinue of the Ladies of Croye were committed to the inferior departments.

In this arrangement Quentin could not help remarking that the presence of the Bohemian, so much objected to in the country convents, seemed, in the household of this wealthy, and perhaps we might say worldly prelate, to attract neither objection nor remark.

CHAPTER XIX: THE CITY

*Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To any sudden act of mutiny.*

JULIUS CAESAR

Separated from the Lady Isabelle, whose looks had been for so many days his loadstar, Quentin felt a strange vacancy and chillness of the heart, which he had not yet experienced in any of the vicissitudes to which his life had subjected him. No doubt the cessation of the close and unavoidable intercourse and intimacy betwixt them was the necessary consequence of the Countess's having obtained a place of settled residence, for under what pretext could she, had she meditated such an impropriety, have had a gallant young squire such as Quentin in constant attendance upon her?

But the shock of the separation was not the more welcome that it seemed unavoidable, and the proud heart of Quentin swelled at finding he was parted with like an ordinary postilion, or an escort whose duty is discharged, while his eyes sympathised so far as to drop a secret tear or two over the ruins of all those airy castles, so many of which he had employed himself in constructing during their too interesting journey. He made a manly, but, at first, a vain effort to throw off this mental dejection, and so, yielding to the feelings he could not suppress, he sat him down in one of the deep recesses formed by a window which lighted the great Gothic hall of Schonwaldt, and there mused upon his hard fortune, which had not assigned him rank or wealth sufficient to prosecute his daring suit.

Quentin tried to dispel the sadness which overhung him by dispatching Charlet, one of the valets, with letters to the court of Louis, announcing the arrival of the Ladies of Croye at Liege. At length his natural buoyancy of temper returned, much excited by the title of an old romaunt [a poetical romance] which had been just printed at Strasbourg, and which lay beside him in the window, the title of which set forth—

*How the Squire of lowe degree
Loved the King's daughter of Hungarie.*

[An old English poem reprinted in Hazlitt's Remains of Early Popular Poetry of England.]

While he was tracing the "letters blake" of the ditty so congenial to his own situation, Quentin was interrupted by a touch on the shoulder, and, looking up, beheld the Bohemian standing by him.

Hayraddin, never a welcome sight, was odious from his late treachery, and Quentin sternly asked him why he dared take the freedom to touch a Christian and a gentleman?

"Simply," answered the Bohemian, "because I wished to know if the Christian gentleman had lost his feeling as well as his eyes and ears. I have stood speaking to you these five minutes, and you have stared on that scrap of yellow paper, as if it were a spell to turn you into a statue, and had already wrought half its purpose."

"Well, what dost thou want? Speak, and begone!"

"I want what all men want, though few are satisfied with it," said Hayraddin, "I want my due, ten crowns of gold for guiding the ladies hither."

"With what face darrest thou ask any guerdon beyond my sparing thy worthless life?" said Durward, fiercely, "thou knowest that it was thy purpose to have betrayed them on the road."

"But I did not betray them," said Hayraddin, "if I had, I would have asked no guerdon from you or from them, but from him whom their keeping on the right hand side of the river might have benefited. The party that I have served is the party who must pay me."

"Thy guerdon perish with thee, then, traitor," said Quentin, telling out the money. "Get thee to the Boar of Ardennes, or to the devil! but keep hereafter out of my sight, lest I send thee thither before thy time."

"The Boar of Ardennes!" repeated the Bohemian, with a stronger emotion of surprise than his features usually expressed—"it was then no vague guess—no general suspicion—which made you insist on changing the road?—Can it be—are there really in other lands arts of prophecy more sure than those of our wandering tribes? The willow tree under which we spoke could tell no tales. But no—no—no—dolt that I was!—I have it—I have it!—the willow by the brook near yonder convent—I saw you look towards it as you passed it, about half a mile from yon hive of drones—that could not indeed speak, but it might hide one who could hear! I will hold my councils in an open plain henceforth, not a bunch of thistles shall be near me for a Scot to shroud amongst.—Ha! ha! the Scot hath beat the Zingaro at his own subtle weapons. But know, Quentin Durward, that you have foiled me to the marring of thine own fortune.—Yes! the fortune I have told thee of, from the lines on thy hand, had been richly accomplished but for thine own obstinacy."

"By Saint. Andrew," said Quentin, "thy impudence makes me laugh in spite of myself.—How, or in what, should thy successful villainy have been of service to me? I heard, indeed, that you did stipulate to save my life, which condition your worthy allies would speedily have forgotten, had we once come to blows—but in what thy betrayal of these ladies could have served me, but by exposing me to death or captivity, is a matter beyond human brains to conjecture."

"No matter thinking of it, then," said Hayraddin, "for I mean still to surprise you with my gratitude. Had you kept back my hire, I should have held that we were quit, and had left you to your own foolish guidance. As it is, I remain your debtor for yonder matter on the banks of the Cher."

"Methinks I have already taken out the payment in cursing and abusing thee," said Quentin.

"Hard words, or kind ones," said the Zingaro, "are but wind, which make no weight in the balance. Had you struck me, indeed, instead of threatening—"

"I am likely enough to take out payment in that way, if you provoke me longer."

"I would not advise it," said the Zingaro, "such payment, made by a rash hand, might exceed the debt, and unhappily leave a balance on your side, which I am not one to forget or forgive. And now farewell, but not for a long space—I go to bid adieu to the Ladies of Croye."

"Thou?" said Quentin, in astonishment—"thou be admitted to the presence of the ladies, and here, where they are in a manner recluses under the protection of the Bishop's sister, a noble canoness? It is impossible."

"Marthon, however, waits to conduct me to their presence," said the Zingaro, with a sneer, "and I must pray your forgiveness if I leave you something abruptly."

He turned as if to depart, but instantly coming back, said, with a tone of deep and serious emphasis, "I know your hopes—they are daring, yet not vain if I aid them. I know your fears, they should teach prudence, not timidity. Every woman may be won. A count is but a nickname, which will befit Quentin as well as the other nickname of duke befits Charles, or that of king befits Louis."

Ere Durward could reply, the Bohemian had left the hall. Quentin instantly followed, but, better acquainted than the Scot with the passages of the house, Hayraddin kept the advantage which he had gotten, and the pursuer lost sight of him as he descended a small back staircase. Still Durward followed, though without exact consciousness of his own purpose in doing so. The staircase terminated by a door opening into the alley of a garden, in which he again beheld the Zingaro hastening down a pleached walk.

On two sides, the garden was surrounded by the buildings of the castle—a huge old pile, partly castellated, and partly resembling an ecclesiastical building, on the other two sides, the enclosure was a high embattled wall. Crossing the alleys of the garden to another part of the building, where a postern door opened behind a large massive buttress, overgrown with ivy, Hayraddin looked back, and waved his hand in a signal of an exulting farewell to his follower, who saw that in effect the postern door was opened by Marthon, and that the vile Bohemian was admitted into the precincts, as he naturally concluded, of the apartment of the Countesses of Croye. Quentin bit his lips with indignation, and blamed himself severely that he had not made the ladies sensible of the full infamy of Hayraddin's character, and acquainted with his machinations against their safety. The arrogating manner in which the Bohemian had promised to back his suit added to his anger and his disgust, and he felt as if even the hand of the Countess Isabelle would be profaned, were it possible to attain it by such patronage.

"But it is all a deception," he said, "a turn of his base, juggling artifice. He has procured access to those ladies upon some false pretence, and with some mischievous intention. It is well I have learned where they lodge. I will watch Marthon, and solicit an interview with them, were it but to place them on their guard. It is hard that I must use artifice and brook delay, when such as he have admittance openly and without scruple. They shall find, however, that though I am excluded from their presence, Isabelle's safety is the chief subject of my vigilance."

While the young lover was thus meditating, an aged gentleman of the Bishop's household approached him from the same door by which he had himself entered the garden, and made him aware, though with the greatest civility of manner, that the garden was private, and reserved only for the use of the Bishop and guests of the very highest distinction.

Quentin heard him repeat this information twice ere he put the proper construction upon it, and then starting as from a reverie, he bowed and hurried out of the garden, the official person following him all the way, and overwhelming him with formal apologies for the necessary discharge of his duty. Nay, so pertinacious was he in his attempts to remove the offence which he conceived Durward to have taken, that he offered to bestow his own company upon him, to contribute to his entertainment until Quentin, internally cursing his formal foppery, found no better way of escape, then pretending a desire of visiting the neighbouring city, and setting off thither at such a round pace as speedily subdued all desire in the gentleman usher to accompany him farther than the drawbridge. In a few minutes, Quentin was within the walls of the city of Liege, then one of the richest in Flanders, and of course in the world.

Melancholy, even love melancholy, is not so deeply seated, at least in minds of a manly and elastic character, as the soft enthusiasts who suffer under it are fond of believing. It yields to unexpected and striking impressions upon the senses, to change of place, to such scenes as create new trains of association, and to the influence of the busy hum of mankind. In a few minutes, Quentin's attention was as much engrossed by the variety of objects presented in rapid succession by the busy streets of Liege, as if there had been neither a Countess Isabelle nor a Bohemian in the world.

The lofty houses—the stately, though narrow and gloomy streets—the splendid display of the richest goods and most gorgeous armour in the warehouses and shops around—the walks crowded by busy citizens of every description, passing and repassing with faces of careful importance or eager bustle—the huge wains, which transported to and fro the subjects of export and import, the former consisting of broadcloths and serge, arms of all kinds, nails and iron work, while the latter comprehended every article of use or luxury, intended either for the consumption of an opulent city, or received in barter, and destined to be transported elsewhere—all these objects combined to form an engrossing picture of wealth, bustle, and splendour, to which Quentin had been hitherto a stranger. He admired also the various streams and canals, drawn from and communicating with the Maes, which, traversing the city in various directions, offered to every quarter the

commercial facilities of water carriage, and he failed not to hear a mass in the venerable old Church of Saint Lambert, said to have been founded in the eighth century.

It was upon leaving this place of worship that Quentin began to observe that he, who had been hitherto gazing on all around him with the eagerness of unrestrained curiosity, was himself the object of attention to several groups of substantial looking burghers, who seemed assembled to look upon him as he left the church, and amongst whom arose a buzz and whisper, which spread from one party to another, while the number of gazers continued to augment rapidly, and the eyes of each who added to it were eagerly directed to Quentin with a stare which expressed much interest and curiosity, mingled with a certain degree of respect.

At length he now formed the centre of a considerable crowd, which yet yielded before him while he continued to move forward, while those who followed or kept pace with him studiously avoided pressing on him, or impeding his motions. Yet his situation was too embarrassing to be long endured, without making some attempt to extricate himself and to obtain some explanation.

Quentin looked around him, and fixing upon a jolly, stout made, respectable man, whom, by his velvet cloak and gold chain, he concluded to be a burgher of eminence, and perhaps a magistrate, he asked him whether he saw anything particular in his appearance, to attract public attention in a degree so unusual? or whether it was the ordinary custom of the people of Liege thus to throng around strangers who chanced to visit their city?

"Surely not, good seignior," answered the burgher, "the Liegeois are neither so idly curious as to practise such a custom, nor is there anything in your dress or appearance saving that which is most welcome to this city, and which our townsmen are both delighted to see and desirous to honour."

"This sounds very polite, worthy sir," said Quentin, "but, by the Cross of Saint Andrew, I cannot even guess at your meaning."

"Your oath," answered the merchant of Liege, "as well as your accent, convinces me that we are right in our conjecture."

"By my patron Saint Quentin!" said Durward, "I am farther off from your meaning than ever."

"There again now," rejoined the Liegeois, looking, as he spoke, most provokingly, yet most civilly, politic and intelligent.

"It is surely not for us to see that which you, worthy seignior, deem it proper to conceal: But why swear by Saint Quentin, if you would not have me construe your meaning?—We know the good Count of Saint Paul, who lies there at present, wishes well to our cause."

"On my life," said Quentin, "you are under some delusion.—I know nothing of Saint Paul."

"Nay, we question you not," said the burgher, "although, hark ye—I say, hark in your ear—my name is Pavillon."

"And what is my business with that, Seignior Pavillon?" said Quentin.

"Nay, nothing—only methinks it might satisfy you that I am trustworthy.—Here is my colleague Rouslaer, too."

Rouslaer advanced, a corpulent dignitary, whose fair round belly, like a battering ram, "did shake the press before him," and who, whispering caution to his neighbour, said in a tone of rebuke, "You forget, good colleague, the place is too open—the seignior will retire to your house or mine, and drink a glass of Rhenish and sugar, and then we shall hear more of our good friend and ally, whom we love with all our honest Flemish hearts."

"I have no news for any of you," said Quentin, impatiently, "I will drink no Rhenish, and I only desire of you, as men of account and respectability, to disperse this idle crowd, and allow a stranger to leave your town as quietly as he came into it."

"Nay, then, sir," said Rouslaer, "since you stand so much on your incognito, and with us, too, who are men of confidence, let me ask you roundly, wherefore wear you the badge of your company if you would remain unknown in Liege."

"What badge, and what order?" said Quentin, "you look like reverend men and grave citizens, yet, on my soul you are either mad yourselves, or desire to drive me so."

"Sapperment!" said the other burgher, "this youth would make Saint Lambert swear! Why, who wear bonnets with the Saint Andrew's cross and fleur de lys, save the Scottish Archers of King Louis's Guards?"

"And supposing I am an Archer of the Scottish Guard, why should you make a wonder of my wearing the badge of my company?" said Quentin impatiently.

"He has avowed it, he has avowed it!" said Rouslaer and Pavillon, turning to the assembled burghers in attitudes of congratulation, with waving arms, extended palms, and large round faces radiating with glee. "He hath avowed himself an Archer of Louis's Guard—of Louis, the guardian of the liberties of Liege!"

A general shout and cry now arose from the multitude, in which were mingled the various sounds of "Long live Louis of France! Long live the Scottish Guard! Long live the valiant Archer! Our liberties, our privileges, or death! No imposts! Long live the valiant Boar of Ardennes! Down with Charles of Burgundy! and confusion to Bourbon and his bishopric!" Half stunned by the noise, which began anew in one quarter so soon as it ceased in another, rising and falling like the billows of the sea, and augmented by thousands of voices which roared in chorus from distant streets and market places, Quentin had yet time to form a conjecture concerning the meaning of the tumult, and a plan for regulating his own conduct:

He had forgotten that, after his skirmish with Orleans and Dunois, one of his comrades had, at Lord Crawford's command, replaced the morion, cloven by the sword of the latter, with one of the steel lined bonnets which formed a part of the proper and well known equipment of the Scottish Guards. That an individual of this body, which was always kept very close to Louis's person, should have appeared in the streets of a city whose civil discontents had been aggravated by the agents of that King, was naturally enough interpreted by the burghers of Liege into a determination on the part of Louis openly to assist their cause, and the apparition of an individual archer was magnified into a pledge of immediate and active support from Louis—nay, into an assurance that his auxiliary forces were actually entering the town at one or other, though no one could distinctly tell which, of the city gates.

To remove a conviction so generally adopted, Quentin easily saw was impossible—nay, that any attempt to undeceive men so obstinately prepossessed in their belief, would be attended with personal risk, which, in this case, he saw little use of incurring. He therefore hastily resolved to temporize, and to get free the best way he could, and this resolution he formed while they were in the act of conducting him to the Stadthouse [town house], where the notables of the town were fast assembling, in order to hear the tidings which he was presumed to have brought, and to regale him with a splendid banquet.

In spite of all his opposition, which was set down to modesty, he was on every side surrounded by the donors of popularity, the unsavoury tide of which now floated around him. His two burgomaster friends, who were Schoppen, or Syndics of the city, had made fast both his arms. Before him, Nikkel Blok, the chief of the butchers' incorporation, hastily summoned from his office in the shambles, brandished his death doing axe, yet smeared with blood and brains, with a courage and grace which brantwein [spirits] alone could inspire. Behind him came the tall, lean, rawboned, very drunk, and very patriotic figure of Claus Hammerlein, president of the mystery of the workers in iron, and followed by at least a thousand unwashed artificers of his class. Weavers, nailers, ropemakers, artisans of every degree and calling, thronged forward to join the procession from every gloomy and narrow street. Escape seemed a desperate and impossible adventure.

In this dilemma, Quentin appealed to Rouslaer, who held one arm, and to Pavillon, who had secured the other, and who were conducting him forward at the head of the ovation, of which he had so unexpectedly become the principal object. He hastily acquainted them with his having thoughtlessly adopted the bonnet of the Scottish Guard, on an accident having occurred to the headpiece in which he had proposed to travel, he regretted that, owing to this circumstance, and the sharp wit with which the Liegeois drew the natural inference of his quality, and the purpose of his visit, these things had been publicly discovered, and he intimated that, if just now conducted to the Stadthouse, he might unhappily feel himself under the necessity of communicating to the assembled notables certain matters which he was directed by the King to reserve for the private ears of his excellent gossips, Meinheers Rouslaer and Pavillon of Liege.

This last hint operated like magic on the two citizens, who were the most distinguished leaders of the insurgent burghers, and were, like all demagogues of their kind, desirous to keep everything within their own management, so far as possible. They therefore hastily agreed that Quentin should leave the town for the time, and return by night to Liege, and converse with them privately in the house of Rouslaer, near the gate opposite to Schonwaldt. Quentin hesitated not to tell them that he was at present residing in the Bishop's palace, under pretence of bearing despatches from the French Court, although his real errand was, as they had well conjectured, designed to the citizens of Liege, and this tortuous mode of conducting a communication as well as the character and rank of the person to whom it was supposed to be intrusted, was so consonant to the character of Louis, as neither to excite doubt nor surprise.

Almost immediately after this eclairsissement [explanation] was completed, the progress of the multitude brought them opposite to the door of Pavillon's house, in one of the principal streets, but which communicated from behind with the Maes by means of a garden, as well as an extensive manufactory of tan pits, and other conveniences for dressing hides, for the patriotic burgher was a felt dresser or currier.

It was natural that Pavillon should desire to do the honours of his dwelling to the supposed envoy of Louis, and a halt before his house excited no surprise on the part of the multitude, who, on the contrary, greeted Meinheer Pavillon with a loud vivat [long live], as he ushered in his distinguished guest. Quentin speedily laid aside his remarkable bonnet for the cap of a felt maker, and flung a cloak over his other apparel. Pavillon then furnished him with a passport to pass the gates of the city, and to return by night or day as should suit his convenience, and lastly, committed him to the charge of his daughter, a fair and smiling Flemish lass, with instructions how he was to be disposed of, while he himself hastened back to his colleague to amuse their friends at the Stadthouse with the best excuses which they could invent for the disappearance of King Louis's envoy. We cannot, as the footman says in the play, recollect the exact nature of the lie which the bell wethers told the flock, but no task is so easy as that of imposing upon a multitude whose eager prejudices have more than half done the business ere the impostor has spoken a word.

The worthy burgess was no sooner gone than his plump daughter, Trudchen, with many a blush, and many a wreathed smile, which suited very prettily with lips like cherries, laughing blue eyes, and a skin transparently pure—escorted the handsome stranger through the pleached alleys of the Sieur Pavillon's garden, down to the water side, and there saw him fairly embarked in a boat, which two stout Flemings, in their trunk hose, fur caps, and many buttoned jerkins, had got in readiness with as much haste as their low country nature would permit.

As the pretty Trudchen spoke nothing but German, Quentin—no disparagement to his loyal affection to the Countess of Croye—could only express his thanks by a kiss on those same cherry lips, which was very gallantly bestowed, and accepted with all modest gratitude, for gallants with a form and face like our Scottish Archer were not of everyday occurrence among the bourgeoisie of Liege [the French middle class. The term has come to mean the middle class of any country, especially those engaged in trade].

[The adventure of Quentin at Liege may be thought overstrained, yet it is extraordinary what slight circumstances will influence the public mind in a moment of doubt and uncertainty. Most readers must remember that, when the Dutch were on the point of rising against the French yoke, their zeal for liberation received a strong impulse from the landing of a person in a British volunteer uniform, whose presence, though that of a private individual, was received as a guarantee of succours from England. S.]

While the boat was rowed up the sluggish waters of the Maes, and passed the defences of the town, Quentin had time enough to reflect what account he ought to give of his adventure in Liege, when he returned to the Bishop's palace of Schonwaldt, and disdaining alike to betray any person who had reposed confidence in him, although by misapprehension, or to conceal from the hospitable Prelate the mutinous state of his capital, he resolved to confine himself to so general an account as might put the Bishop upon his guard, while it should point out no individual to his vengeance.

He was landed from the boat, within half a mile of the castle, and rewarded his rowers with a guilder, to their great satisfaction. Yet, short as was the space which divided him from Schonwaldt, the castle bell had tolled for dinner, and Quentin found, moreover, that he had approached the castle on a different side from that of the principal entrance, and that to go round would throw his arrival considerably later. He therefore made straight towards the side that was nearest to him, as he discerned that it presented an embattled wall, probably that of the little garden already noticed, with a postern opening upon the moat, and a skiff moored by the postern, which might serve, he thought, upon summons, to pass him over. As he approached, in hopes to make his entrance this way, the postern opened, a man came out, and, jumping into the boat, made his way to the farther side of the moat, and then, with a long pole, pushed the skiff back towards the place where he had embarked. As he came near, Quentin discerned that this person was the Bohemian, who, avoiding him, as was not difficult, held a different path towards Liege, and was presently out of his ken.

Here was a new subject for meditation. Had this vagabond heathen been all this while with the Ladies of Croye, and for what purpose should they so far have graced him with their presence? Tormented with this thought, Durward became doubly determined to seek an explanation with them, for the purpose at once of laying bare the treachery of Hayraddin, and announcing to them the perilous state in which their protector, the Bishop, was placed, by the mutinous state of his town of Liege.

As Quentin thus resolved, he entered the castle by the principal gate, and found that part of the family who assembled for dinner in the great hall, including the Bishop's attendant clergy, officers of the household, and strangers below the rank of the very first nobility, were already placed at their meal. A seat at the upper end of the board had, however, been reserved beside the Bishop's domestic chaplain, who welcomed the stranger with the old college jest of *Sero venientibus ossa* [the bones for those who come late], while he took care so to load his plate with dainties, as to take away all appearance of that tendency to reality, which, in Quentin's country, is said to render a joke either no joke, or at best an unpalatable one ["A sooth boord (true joke) is no boord," says the Scot. S.].

In vindicating himself from the suspicion of ill breeding, Quentin briefly described the tumult which had been occasioned in the city by his being discovered to belong to the Scottish Archer Guard of Louis, and endeavoured to give a ludicrous turn to the narrative by saying that he had been with difficulty extricated by a fat burgher of Liege and his pretty daughter.

But the company were too much interested in the story to taste the jest. All operations of the table were suspended while Quentin told his tale, and when he had ceased, there was a solemn pause, which was only broken by the Majordomo's saying in a low and melancholy tone, "I would to God that we saw those hundred lances of Burgundy!"

"Why should you think so deeply on it?" said Quentin. "You have many soldiers here, whose trade is arms, and your antagonists are only the rabble of a disorderly city, who will fly before the first flutter of a banner with men at arms arrayed beneath it."

"You do not know the men of Liege," said the Chaplain, "of whom it may be said, that, not even excepting those of Ghent, they are at once the fiercest and the most untameable in Europe. Twice has the Duke of Burgundy chastised them for their repeated revolts against their Bishop, and twice hath he suppressed them with much severity, abridged their privileges, taken away their banners, and established rights and claims to himself which were not before competent over a free city of the Empire.—Nay, the last time he defeated them with much slaughter near Saint Tron, where Liege lost nearly six thousand men, what with the sword, what with those drowned in the flight, and thereafter, to disable them from farther mutiny, Duke Charles refused to enter at any of the gates which they had surrendered, but, beating to the ground forty cubits' breadth of their city wall, marched into Liege as a conqueror with visor closed, and lance in rest, at the head of his chivalry, by the breach which he had made. Nay, well were the Liegeois then assured, that, but for the intercession of his father, Duke Philip the Good, this Charles, then called Count of Charalois, would have given their town up to spoil. And yet, with all these fresh recollections, with their breaches unrepaired, and their arsenals scarcely supplied, the sight of an archer's bonnet is sufficient again to stir them to uproar. May God amend all! but I fear there will be bloody work between so fierce a population and so fiery a Sovereign, and I would my excellent and kind master had a see of lesser dignity and more safety, for his mitre is lined with thorns instead of ermine. This much I say to you, Seignior Stranger, to make you aware that, if your affairs detain you not at Schonwaldt, it is a place from which each man of sense should depart as speedily as possible. I apprehend that your ladies are of the same opinion, for one of the grooms who attended them on the route has been sent back by them to the Court of France with letters, which doubtless are intended to announce their going in search of a safer asylum."

CHAPTER XX: THE BILLET

*Go to—thou art made, if thou desirest to be so.—
If not, let me see thee still the fellow of servants,*

and not fit to touch Fortune's fingers.—

TWELFTH NIGHT

When the tables were drawn, the Chaplain, who seemed to have taken a sort of attachment to Quentin Durward's society, or who perhaps desired to extract from him farther information concerning the meeting of the morning, led him into a withdrawing apartment, the windows of which, on one side, projected into the garden, and as he saw his companion's eye gaze rather eagerly upon the spot, he proposed to Quentin to go down and take a view of the curious foreign shrubs with which the Bishop had enriched its parterres.

Quentin excused himself as unwilling to intrude, and therewithal communicated the check which he had received in the morning. The Chaplain smiled, and said that there was indeed some ancient prohibition respecting the Bishop's private garden.

"But this," he added, with a smile, "was when our reverend father was a princely young prelate of not more than thirty years of age, and when many fair ladies frequented the Castle for ghostly consolation. Need there was," he said with a downcast look, and a smile, half simple and half intelligent, "that these ladies, pained in conscience, who were ever lodged in the apartments now occupied by the noble Canoness, should have some space for taking the air, secure from the intrusion of the profane. But of late years," he added, "this prohibition, although not formally removed, has fallen entirely out of observance, and remains but as the superstition which lingers in the brain of a superannuated gentleman usher. If you please," he added, "we will presently descend, and try whether the place be haunted or no."

Nothing could have been more agreeable to Quentin than the prospect of a free entrance into the garden, through means of which, according to a chance which had hitherto attended his passion, he hoped to communicate with, or at least obtain sight of, the object of his affections, from some such turret or balcony window, or similar "coign of vantage," as at the hostelry of the Fleur de Lys, near Plessis, or the Dauphin's Tower, within that Castle itself. Isabelle seemed still destined, wherever she made her abode, to be the Lady of the Turret.

[Coign of vantage: an advantageous position for observation or action. Cf. 'no jutty, frieze, buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle.' Macbeth, I, vi, 6.]

When Durward descended with his new friend into the garden, the latter seemed a terrestrial philosopher, entirely busied with the things of the earth, while the eyes of Quentin, if they did not seek the heavens, like those of an astrologer, ranged, at least, all around the windows, balconies, and especially the turrets, which projected on every part from the inner front of the old building, in order to discover that which was to be his cynosure.

While thus employed, the young lover heard with total neglect, if indeed he heard at all, the enumeration of plants, herbs, and shrubs which his reverend conductor pointed out to him, of which this was choice, because of prime use in medicine, and that more choice for yielding a rare flavour to pottage, and a third, choicest of all, because possessed of no merit but its extreme scarcity. Still it was necessary to preserve some semblance at least of attention, which the youth found so difficult, that he fairly wished at the devil the officious naturalist and the whole vegetable kingdom. He was relieved at length by the striking of a clock, which summoned the Chaplain to some official duty.

The reverend man made many unnecessary apologies for leaving his new friend, and concluded by giving him the agreeable assurance that he might walk in the garden till supper, without much risk of being disturbed.

"It is," said he, "the place where I always study my own homilies, as being most sequestered from the resort of strangers. I am now about to deliver one of them in the chapel, if you please to favour me with your audience. I have been thought to have some gift.—But the glory be where it is due!"

Quentin excused himself for this evening, under pretence of a severe headache, which the open air was likely to prove the best cure for, and at length the well meaning, priest left him to himself.

It may be well imagined, that in the curious inspection which he now made, at more leisure, of every window or aperture which looked into the garden, those did not escape which were in the immediate neighbourhood of the small door by which he had seen Marthon admit Hayraddin, as he pretended, to the apartment of the Countesses. But nothing stirred or showed itself, which could either confute or confirm the tale which the Bohemian had told, until it was becoming dusky, and Quentin began to be sensible, he scarce knew why, that his sauntering so long in the garden might be subject of displeasure or suspicion. Just as he had resolved to depart, and was taking what he had destined for his last turn under the windows which had such attraction for him, he heard above him a slight and cautious sound, like that of a cough, as intended to call his attention, and to avoid the observation of others. As he looked up in joyful surprise, a casement opened, a female hand was seen to drop a billet, which fell into a rosemary bush that grew at the foot of the wall. The precaution used in dropping this letter prescribed equal prudence and secrecy in reading it. The garden, surrounded, as we have said, upon two sides, by the buildings of the palace, was commanded, of course, by the windows of many apartments, but there was a sort of grotto of rock work, which the Chaplain had shown Durward with much complacency. To snatch up the billet, thrust it into his bosom, and hie to this place of secrecy, was the work of a single minute. He there opened the precious scroll, and blessed, at the same time, the memory of the Monks of Aberbrothick, whose nurture had rendered him capable of deciphering its contents.

The first line contained the injunction, "Read this in secret,"—and the contents were as follows: "What your eyes have too boldly said, mine have perhaps too rashly understood. But unjust persecution makes its victims bold, and it were better to throw myself on the gratitude of one, than to remain the object of pursuit to many. Fortune has her throne upon a rock but brave men fear not to climb. If you dare do aught for one that hazards much, you need but pass into this garden at prime tomorrow, wearing in your cap a blue and white feather, but expect no farther communication. Your stars have, they say, destined you for greatness, and disposed you to gratitude.—Farewell—be faithful, prompt, and resolute, and doubt not thy fortune."

Within this letter was enclosed a ring with a table diamond, on which were cut, in form of a lozenge, the ancient arms of the House of Croye.

The first feeling of Quentin upon this occasion was unmingled ecstasy—a pride and joy which seemed to raise him to the stars—a determination to do or die, influenced by which he treated with scorn the thousand obstacles that placed themselves betwixt him and the goal of his wishes.

In this mood of rapture, and unable to endure any interruption which might withdraw his mind, were it but for a moment, from so ecstatic a subject of contemplation, Durward, retiring to the interior of the castle, hastily assigned his former pretext of a headache for not joining the household of the Bishop at the supper meal, and, lighting his lamp, betook himself to the chamber which had been assigned him, to read, and to read again and again, the precious billet, and to kiss a thousand times the no less precious ring.

But such high wrought feelings could not remain long in the same ecstatic tone. A thought pressed upon him, though he repelled it as ungrateful—as even blasphemous—that the frankness of the confession implied less delicacy on the part of her who made it, than was consistent with the high romantic feeling of adoration with which he had hitherto worshipped the Lady Isabelle. No sooner did this ungracious thought intrude itself, than he hastened to stifle it, as he would have stifled a hissing and hateful adder that had intruded itself into his couch. Was it for him—him the Favoured—on whose account she had stooped from her sphere, to ascribe blame to her for the very act of condescension, Without which he dared not have raised his eyes towards her? Did not her very dignity of birth and of condition reverse, in her case, the usual rules which impose silence on the lady until her lover shall have first spoken? To these arguments, which he boldly formed into syllogisms and avowed to himself, his vanity might possibly suggest one which he cared not to embody even mentally with the same frankness—that the merit of the party beloved might perhaps warrant, on the part of the lady, some little departure from common rules, and, after all, as in the case of Malvolio [Olivia's steward in Twelfth Night], there was example for it in chronicle. The Squire of low degree, of whom he had just been reading, was, like himself, a gentleman void of land and living, and yet the generous Princess of Hungary bestowed on him, without scruple, more substantial marks of her affection than the billet he had just received:

*"'Welcome,' she said, 'my swete Squyre,
My heart's roots, my soul's desire,
I will give thee kisses three,*

And als five hundrid poundis in fee."

And again the same faithful history made the King of Hongrie himself avouch—

"I have yknown many a page,

Come to be Prince by marriage."

So that, upon the whole, Quentin generously and magnanimously reconciled himself to a line of conduct on the Countess's part by which he was likely to be so highly benefited.

But this scruple was succeeded by another doubt, harder of digestion. The traitor Hayraddin had been in the apartments of the ladies, for aught Quentin knew, for the space of four hours, and, considering the hints which he had thrown out of possessing an influence of the most interesting kind over the fortunes of Quentin Durward, what should assure him that this train was not of his laying? And if so, was it not probable that such a dissembling villain had set it on foot to conceal some new plan of treachery—perhaps to seduce Isabelle out of the protection of the worthy Bishop? This was a matter to be closely looked into, for Quentin felt a repugnance to this individual proportioned to the unabashed impudence with which he had avowed his profligacy, and could not bring himself to hope that anything in which he was concerned could ever come to an honourable or happy conclusion.

These various thoughts rolled over Quentin's mind like misty clouds, to dash and obscure the fair landscape which his fancy had at first drawn, and his couch was that night a sleepless one. At the hour of prime—ay, and an hour before it, was he in the castle garden, where no one now opposed either his entrance or his abode, with a feather of the assigned colour, as distinguished as he could by any means procure in such haste. No notice was taken of his appearance for nearly two hours, at length he heard a few notes of the lute, and presently the lattice opened right above the little postern door at which Marthon had admitted Hayraddin, and Isabelle, in maidenly beauty, appeared at the opening, greeted him half kindly, half shyly, coloured extremely at the deep and significant reverence with which he returned her courtesy—shut the casement, and disappeared.

Daylight and champaign could discover no more! The authenticity of the billet was ascertained—it only remained what was to follow, and of this the fair writer had given him no hint. But no immediate danger impended—the Countess was in a strong castle, under the protection of a Prince, at once respectable for his secular and venerable for his ecclesiastical authority. There was neither immediate room nor occasion for the exulting Squire interfering in the adventure, and it was sufficient if he kept himself prompt to execute her commands whensoever they should be communicated to him. But Fate purposed to call him into action sooner than he was aware of.

It was the fourth night after his arrival at Schonwaldt, when Quentin had taken measures for sending back on the morrow, to the Court of Louis, the remaining groom who had accompanied him on his journey, with letters from himself to his uncle and Lord Crawford, renouncing the service of France, for which the treachery to which he had been exposed by the private instructions of Hayraddin gave him an excuse, both in honour and prudence, and he betook himself to his bed with all the rosy coloured ideas around him which flutter about the couch of a youth when he loves dearly, and thinks his love is as sincerely repaid.

But Quentin's dreams, which at first partook of the nature of those happy influences under which he had fallen asleep, began by degrees to assume a more terrific character.

He walked with the Countess Isabelle beside a smooth and inland lake, such as formed the principal characteristic of his native glen, and he spoke to her of his love, without any consciousness of the impediments which lay between them. She blushed and smiled when she listened—even as he might have expected from the tenor of the letter, which, sleeping or waking, lay nearest to his heart. But the scene suddenly changed from summer to winter—from calm to tempest, the winds and the waves rose with such a contest of surge and whirlwind as if the demons of the water and of the air had been contending for their roaring empires in rival strife. The rising waters seemed to cut off their advance and their retreat—the increasing tempest, which dashed them against each other, seemed to render their remaining on the spot impossible, and the tumultuous sensations produced by the apparent danger awoke the dreamer.

He awoke, but although the circumstances of the vision had disappeared, and given place to reality, the noise, which had probably suggested them, still continued to sound in his ears.

Quentin's first impulse was to sit erect in bed and listen with astonishment to sounds, which, if they had announced a tempest, might have shamed the wildest that ever burst down from the Grampians, and again in a minute he became sensible that the tumult was not excited by the fury of the elements, but by the wrath of men. He sprang from bed, and looked from the window of his apartment, but it opened into the garden, and on that side all was quiet, though the opening of the casement made him still more sensible from the shouts which reached his ears that the outside of the castle was beleaguered and assaulted, and that by a numerous and determined enemy. Hastily collecting his dress and arms, and putting them on with such celerity as darkness and surprise permitted, his attention was solicited by a knocking at the door of his chamber. As Quentin did not immediately answer, the door, which was a slight one, was forced open from without, and the intruder, announced by his peculiar dialect to be the Bohemian, Hayraddin Maugrabin, entered the apartment. A phial which he held in his hand, touched by a match, produced a dark flash of ruddy fire, by means of which he kindled a lamp, which he took from his bosom.

"The horoscope of your destinies," he said energetically to Durward, without any farther greeting, "now turns upon the determination of a minute."

"Caitiff!" said Quentin, in reply, "there is treachery around us, and where there is treachery thou must have a share in it."

"You are mad," answered Maugrabin. "I never betrayed any one but to gain by it—and wherefore should I betray you, by whose safety I can take more advantage than by your destruction? Harken for a moment, if it be possible for you, to one note of reason, ere it is sounded into your ear by the death shut of ruin. The Liegeois are up—William de la Marck with his band leads them.—Were there means of resistance, their numbers and his fury would overcome them, but there are next to none. If you would save the Countess and your own hopes, follow me, in the name of her who sent you a table diamond, with three leopards engraved on it."

"Lead the way," said Quentin, hastily. "In that name I dare every danger."

"As I shall manage it," said the Bohemian, "there is no danger, if you can but withhold your hand from strife which does not concern you, for, after all, what is it to you whether the Bishop, as they call him, slaughters his flock, or the flock slaughters the shepherd?—Ha! ha! ha! Follow me, but with caution and patience, subdue your own courage, and confide in my prudence and my debt of thankfulness is paid, and you have a Countess for your spouse.—Follow me."

"I follow," said Quentin, drawing his sword, "but the moment in which I detect the least sign of treachery, thy head and body are three yards separate!"

Without more conversation the Bohemian, seeing that Quentin was now fully armed and ready, ran down the stairs before him, and winded hastily through various side passages, until they gained the little garden. Scarce a light was to be seen on that side, scarce any bustle was to be heard, but no sooner had Quentin entered the open space, than the noise on the opposite side of the castle became ten times more stunningly audible, and he could hear the various war cries of "Liege! Liege! Sanglier! Sanglier! [the Wild Boar: a name given to William de la Marck]" shouted by the assailants, while the feeble cry of "Our Lady for the Prince Bishop!" was raised in a faint and faltering tone by those of the prelate's soldiers who had hastened, though surprised and at disadvantage, to the defence of the walls.

But the interest of the fight, notwithstanding the martial character of Quentin Durward, was indifferent to him, in comparison with the fate of Isabelle of Croye, which, he had reason to fear, would be a dreadful one, unless rescued from the power of the dissolute and cruel freebooter who was now, as it seemed, bursting the gates of the castle. He reconciled himself to the aid of the Bohemian, as men in a desperate illness refuse not the remedy prescribed by quacks and mountebanks, and followed across the garden, with the intention of being guided by him until he should discover symptoms of treachery, and then piercing him through the heart, or striking his head from his body.

Hayraddin seemed himself conscious that his safety turned on a feather weight, for he forbore, from the moment they entered the open air, all his wonted gibes and quirks, and seemed to have made a vow to act at once with modesty, courage, and activity.

At the opposite door, which led to the ladies' apartments, upon a low signal made by Hayraddin, appeared two women, muffled in the black silk veils which were then, as now, worn by the women in the Netherlands. Quentin offered his arm to one of them, who clung to it with trembling eagerness, and indeed hung upon him

so much, that had her weight been greater, she must have much impeded their retreat. The Bohemian, who conducted the other female, took the road straight for the postern which opened upon the moat, through the garden wall, close to which the little skiff Was drawn up, by means of which Quentin had formerly observed Hayraddin himself retreating from the castle.

As they crossed, the shouts of storm and successful violence seemed to announce that the castle was in the act of being taken, and so dismal was the sound in Quentin's ears, that he could not help swearing aloud, "But that my blood is irretrievably devoted to the fulfilment of my present duty, I would back to the wall, take faithful part with the hospitable Bishop, and silence some of those knaves whose throats are full of mutiny and robbery!"

The lady, whose arm was still folded in his, pressed it lightly as he spoke, as if to make him understand that there was a nearer claim on his chivalry than the defence of Schonwaldt, while the Bohemian exclaimed, loud enough to be heard, "Now, that I call right Christian frenzy, which would turn back to fight when love and fortune both demand that we should fly.

"On, on—with all the haste you can make.—Horses wait us in yonder thicket of willows."

"There are but two horses," said Quentin, who saw them in the moonlight.

"All that I could procure without exciting suspicion—and enough," replied the Bohemian. "You two must ride for Tongres ere the way becomes unsafe—Marthon will abide with the women of our horde, with whom she is an old acquaintance. Know she is a daughter of our tribe, and only dwelt among you to serve our purpose as occasion should fall."

"Marthon!" exclaimed the Countess, looking at the veiled female with a shriek of surprise, "is not this my kinswoman?"

"Only Marthon," said Hayraddin. "Excuse me that little piece of deceit. I dared not carry off both the Ladies of Croye from the Wild Boar of Ardennes."

"Wretch!" said Quentin, emphatically—"but it is not—shall not be too late—I will back to rescue the Lady Hameline."

"Hameline," whispered the lady, in a disturbed voice, "hangs on thy arm, to thank thee for her rescue."

"Ha! what!—How is this?" said Quentin, extricating himself from her hold, and with less gentleness than he would at any other time have used towards a female of any rank. "Is the Lady Isabelle then left behind!—Farewell—farewell."

As he turned to hasten back to the castle, Hayraddin laid hold of him.—"Nay, hear you—hear you—you run upon your death! What the foul fiend did you wear the colours of the old one for?—I will never trust blue and white silk again. But she has almost as large a dower—has jewels and gold—hath pretensions, too, upon the earldom."

While he spoke thus, panting on in broken sentences, the Bohemian struggled to detain Quentin, who at length laid his hand on his dagger, in order to extricate himself.

"Nay, if that be the case," said Hayraddin, unloosing his hold, "go—and the devil, if there be one, go along with you!"

And, soon as freed from his hold, the Scot shot back to the castle with the speed of the wind.

Hayraddin then turned round to the Countess Hameline, who had sunk down on the ground, between shame, fear, and disappointment.

"Here has been a mistake," he said, "up, lady, and come with me—I will provide you, ere morning comes, a gallanter husband than this smock faced boy, and if one will not serve, you shall have twenty."

The Lady Hameline was as violent in her passions, as she was vain and weak in her understanding. Like many other persons, she went tolerably well through the ordinary duties of life, but in a crisis like the present, she was entirely incapable of doing aught, save pouring forth unavailing lamentations, and accusing Hayraddin of being a thief, a base slave, an impostor, a murderer.

"Call me Zingaro," returned he, composedly, "and you have said all at once."

"Monster! you said the stars had decreed our union, and caused me to write—Oh, wretch that I was!" exclaimed the unhappy lady.

"And so they had decreed your union," said Hayraddin, "had both parties been willing—but think you the blessed constellations can make any one wed against his will?—I was led into error with your accursed Christian gallantries, and fopperies of ribbons and favours—and the youth prefers veal to beef, I think—that 's all.—Up and follow me, and take notice, I endure neither weeping nor swooning."

"I will not stir a foot," said the Countess, obstinately.

"By the bright welkin, but you shall, though!" exclaimed Hayraddin. "I swear to you, by all that ever fools believed in, that you have to do with one, who would care little to strip you naked, bind you to a tree, and leave you to your fortune!"

"Nay," said Marthon, interfering, "by your favour she shall not be misused. I wear a knife as well as you, and can use it.—She is a kind woman, though a fool.—And you, madam, rise up and follow us.—Here has been a mistake, but it is something to have saved life and limb. There are many in yonder castle would give all the wealth in the world to stand where we do."

As Marthon spoke, a clamour, in which the shouts of victory were mingled with screams of terror and despair, was wafted to them from the Castle of Schonwaldt.

"Hear that, lady!" said Hayraddin, "and be thankful you are not adding your treble pipe to yonder concert. Believe me, I will care for you honestly, and the stars shall keep their words, and find you a good husband."

Like some wild animal, exhausted and subdued by terror amid fatigue, the Countess Hameline yielded herself up to the conduct of her guides, and suffered herself to be passively led whichever way they would. Nay, such was the confusion of her spirits and the exhaustion of her strength, that the worthy couple, who half bore, half led her, carried on their discourse in her presence without her even understanding it.

"I ever thought your plan was folly," said Marthon. "Could you have brought the young people together, indeed, we might have had a hold on their gratitude, and a footing in their castle. But what chance of so handsome a youth wedding this old fool?"

"Rizpah," said Hayraddin, "you have borne the name of a Christian, and dwelt in the tents of those besotted people, till thou hast become a partaker in their follies. How could I dream that he would have made scruples about a few years' youth or age, when the advantages of the match were so evident? And thou knowest, there would have been no moving yonder coy wench to be so frank as this coming Countess here, who hangs on our arms as dead a weight as a wool pack. I loved the lad too, and would have done him a kindness: to wed him to this old woman was to make his fortune, to unite him to Isabelle were to have brought on him De la Marck, Burgundy, France—every one that challenges an interest in disposing of her hand. And this silly woman's wealth being chiefly in gold and jewels, we should have had our share. But the bow string has burst, and the arrow failed. Away with her—we will bring her to William with the Beard. By the time he has gorged himself with wassail, as is his wont, he will not know an old Countess from a young one. Away, Rizpah—bear a gallant heart. The bright Aldebaran still influences the destinies of the Children of the Desert!"

CHAPTER XXI: THE SACK

*The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,
And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of bloody hand shall range,
With conscience wide as hell.*

HENRY V

The surprised and affrighted garrison of the Castle of Schonwaldt had, nevertheless, for some time made good the defence of the place against the assailants, but the immense crowds which, issuing from the city of Liege, thronged to the assault like bees, distracted their attention, and abated their courage.

There was also disaffection at least, if not treachery, among the defenders, for some called out to surrender, and others, deserting their posts, tried to escape from the castle. Many threw themselves from the walls into the moat, and such as escaped drowning, flung aside their distinguishing badges, and saved themselves by mingling among the motley crowd of assailants. Some few, indeed, from attachment to the Bishop's person, drew around him, and continued to defend the great keep, to which he had fled, and others, doubtful of receiving quarter, or from an impulse of desperate courage, held out other detached bulwarks and towers of the extensive building. But the assailants had got possession of the courts and lower parts of the edifice, and were busy pursuing the vanquished, and searching for spoil, while one individual, as if he sought for that death from which all others were flying, endeavoured to force his way into the scene of tumult and horror, under apprehensions still more horrible to his imagination than the realities around were to his sight and senses. Whoever had seen Quentin Durward that fatal night, not knowing the meaning of his conduct, had accounted him a raging madman, whoever had appreciated his motives, had ranked him nothing beneath a hero of romance.

Approaching Schonwaldt on the same side from which he had left it, the youth met several fugitives making for the wood, who naturally avoided him as an enemy, because he came in an opposite direction from that which they had adopted. When he came nearer, he could hear, and partly see, men dropping from the garden wall into the castle fosse, and others who seemed precipitated from the battlements by the assailants. His courage was not staggered, even for an instant. There was not time to look for the boat, even had it been practicable to use it, and it was in vain to approach the postern of the garden, which was crowded with fugitives, who ever and anon, as they were thrust through it by the pressure behind, fell into the moat which they had no means of crossing.

Avoiding that point, Quentin threw himself into the moat, near what was called the little gate of the castle, and where there was a drawbridge, which was still elevated. He avoided with difficulty the fatal grasp of more than one sinking wretch, and, swimming to the drawbridge, caught hold of one of the chains which was hanging down, and, by a great exertion of strength and activity, swayed himself out of the water, and attained the platform from which the bridge was suspended. As with hands and knees he struggled to make good his footing, a lanzknecht, with his bloody sword in his hand, made towards him, and raised his weapon for a blow which must have been fatal.

"How now, fellow," said Quentin, in a tone of authority. "Is that the way in which you assist a comrade?—Give me your hand."

The soldier in silence, and not without hesitation, reached him his arm, and helped him upon the platform, when, without allowing him time for reflection, the Scot continued in the same tone of command, "To the western tower, if you would be rich—the Priest's treasury is in the western tower."

The words were echoed on every hand: "To the western tower—the treasure is in the western tower!" And the stragglers who were within, hearing of the cry, took, like a herd of raging wolves, the direction opposite to that which Quentin, come life, come death, was determined to pursue.

Bearing himself as if he were one, not of the conquered, but of the victors, he made a way into the garden, and pushed across it with less interruption than he could have expected, for the cry of "To the western tower!" had carried off one body of the assailants, and another was summoned together, by war cry and trumpet sound, to assist in repelling a desperate sally, attempted by the defenders of the keep, who had hoped to cut their way out of the castle, bearing the Bishop along with them. Quentin, therefore, crossed the garden with an eager step and throbbing heart, commending himself to those heavenly powers which had protected him through the numberless perils of his life, and bold in his determination to succeed, or leave his life in this desperate undertaking. Ere he reached the garden, three men rushed on him with levelled lances, crying, "Liege, Liege!"

Putting himself in defence, but without striking, he replied, "France, France, friend to Liege."

"Vivat France!" cried the burghers of Liege, and passed on. The same signal proved a talisman to avert the weapons of four or five of La Marck's followers, whom he found straggling in the garden, and who set upon him crying, "Sanglier!"

In a word, Quentin began to hope that his character as an emissary of King Louis, the private instigator of the insurgents of Liege, and the secret supporter of William de la Marck, might possibly bear him through the horrors of the night.

On reaching the turret, he shuddered when he found that the little side door, through which Marthon and the Countess Hameline had shortly before joined him, was now blockaded with more than one dead body.

Two of them he dragged hastily aside, and was stepping over the third body, in order to enter the portal, when the supposed dead man laid hand on his cloak, and entreated him to stay and assist him to rise. Quentin was about to use rougher methods than struggling to rid himself of this untimely obstruction, when the fallen man continued to exclaim, "I am stifled here, in mine own armour!—I am the Syndic Pavillon of Liege! If you are for us, I will enrich you—if you are for the other side, I will protect you, but do not—do not leave me to die the death of a smothered pig!"

In the midst of this scene of blood and confusion, the presence of mind of Quentin suggested to him that this dignitary might have the means of protecting their retreat. He raised him on his feet, and asked him if he was wounded.

"Not wounded, at least I think not," answered the burgher, "but much out of wind."

"Sit down, then, on this stone, and recover your breath," said Quentin, "I will return instantly."

"For whom are you?" said the burgher, still detaining him.

"For France—for France," answered Quentin, studying to get away.

"What! my lively young Archer?" said the worthy Syndic. "Nay, if it has been my fate to find a friend in this fearful night, I will not quit him, I promise you. Go where you will, I follow, and could I get some of the tight lads of our guildry together, I might be able to help you in turn, but they are all squandered abroad like so many pease.—Oh, it is a fearful night!"

During this time, he was dragging himself on after Quentin, who, aware of the importance of securing the countenance of a person of such influence, slackened his pace to assist him, although cursing in his heart the encumbrance that retarded his pace.

At the top of the stair was an anteroom, with boxes and trunks, which bore marks of having been rifled, as some of the contents lay on the floor. A lamp, dying in the chimney, shed a feeble beam on a dead or senseless man who lay across the hearth.

Bounding from Pavillon like a greyhound from his keeper's leash, and with an effort which almost overthrew him, Quentin sprang through a second and a third room, the last of which seemed to be the bedroom of the Ladies of Croye. No living mortal was to be seen in either of them. He called upon the Lady Isabelle's name, at first gently, then more loudly, and then with an accent of despairing emphasis, but no answer was returned. He wrung his hands, tore his hair, and stamped on the earth with desperation. At length a feeble glimmer of light, which shone through a crevice in the wainscoting of a dark nook in the bedroom, announced some recess or concealment behind the arras. Quentin hasted to examine it. He found there was indeed a concealed room, but it resisted his hurried efforts to open it. Heedless of the personal injury he might sustain, he rushed at the door with the whole force and weight of his body, and such was the impetus of an effort made betwixt hope and despair, that it would have burst much stronger fastenings.

He thus forced his way, almost headlong, into a small oratory, where a female figure, which had been kneeling in agonizing supplication before the holy image, now sank at length on the floor, under the new terrors implied in this approaching tumult. He hastily raised her from the ground, and, joy of joys it was she whom he sought to save—the Countess Isabelle. He pressed her to his bosom—he conjured her to awake—entreated her to be of good cheer—for that she was now under time protection of one who had heart and hand enough to defend her against armies.

"Durward!" she said, as she at length collected herself, "is it indeed you?—then there is some hope left. I thought all living and mortal friends had left me to my fate.—Do not again abandon me."

"Never—never!" said Durward. "Whatever shall happen, whatever danger shall approach, may I forfeit the benefits purchased by yonder blessed sign, if I be not the sharer of your fate until it is again a happy one!"

"Very pathetic and touching, truly," said a rough, broken, asthmatic voice behind. "A love affair, I see, and, from my soul, I pity the tender creature as if she were my own Trudchen."

"You must do more than pity," said Quentin, turning towards the speaker, "you must assist in protecting us, Meinheer Pavillon. Be assured this lady was put under my especial charge by your ally the King of France, and, if you aid me not to shelter her from every species of offence and violence, your city will lose the favour of Louis of Valois. Above all, she must be guarded from the hands of William de la Marck."

"That will be difficult," said Pavillon, "for these schelms of lanzknechts are very devils at rummaging out the wenches. But I'll do my best.—We will to the other apartment, and there I will consider.—It is but a narrow stair, and you can keep the door with a pike, while I look from the window, and get together some of my brisk boys of the curriers' guildry of Liege, that are as true as the knives they wear in their girdles.—But first undo me these clasps—for I have not worn this corselet since the battle of Saint Tron [fought by the insurgents of Liege against the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, when Count of Charalois, in which the people of Liege were defeated with great slaughter. S.] and I am three stone heavier since that time, if there be truth in Dutch beam and scale."

The undoing of the iron enclosure gave great relief to the honest man, who, in putting it on, had more considered his zeal to the cause of Liege, than his capacity of bearing arms. It afterwards turned out that being, as it were, borne forward involuntarily, and hoisted over the walls by his company as they thronged to the assault, the magistrate had been carried here and there, as the tide of attack and defence flowed or ebbed, without the power, latterly, of even uttering a word until, as the sea casts a log of driftwood ashore in the first creek, he had been ultimately thrown in the entrance to the Ladies of Croye's apartments, where the encumbrance of his own armour, with the superincumbent weight of two men slain in the entrance, and who fell above him, might have fixed him down long enough, had he not been relieved by Durward.

The same warmth of temper which rendered Hermann Pavillon a hot headed and intemperate zealot in politics, had the more desirable consequence of making him, in private, a good tempered, kind hearted man, who, if sometimes a little misled by vanity, was always well meaning and benevolent. He told Quentin to have an especial care of the poor pretty yung frau [young woman], and, after this unnecessary exhortation, began to halloo from the window, "Liege, Liege, for the gallant skimmers' guild of curriers!"

One or two of his immediate followers collected at the summons and at the peculiar whistle with which it was accompanied (each of the crafts having such a signal among themselves), and, more joining them, established a guard under the window from which their leader was bawling, and before the postern door.

Matters seemed now settling into some sort of tranquillity. All opposition had ceased, and the leaders of the different classes of assailants were taking measures to prevent indiscriminate plunder. The great bell was tolled, a summons to a military counsel, and its iron tongue communicating to Liege the triumphant possession of Schonwaldt by the insurgents, was answered by all the bells in that city, whose distant and clamorous voices seemed to cry, Hail to the victors! It would have been natural that Meinheer Pavillon should now have sallied from his fastness, but either in reverent care of those whom he had taken under his protection, or perhaps for the better assurance of his own safety, he contented himself with dispatching messenger on messenger, to command his lieutenant, Peterkin Geislaer, to attend him directly.

Peterkin came, at length, to his great relief, as being the person upon whom, on all pressing occasions, whether of war, politics, or commerce, Pavillon was most accustomed to repose confidence. He was a stout, squat figure, with a square face and broad black eyebrows, that announced him to be opinionative and disputatious,—an advice giving countenance, so to speak. He was endued with a buff jerkin, wore a broad belt and cutlass by his side, and carried a halberd in his hand.

"Peterkin, my dear lieutenant," said the commander, "this has been a glorious day—night I should say—I trust thou art pleased for once."

"I am well enough pleased that you are so," said the doughty lieutenant, "though I should not have thought of your celebrating the victory, if you call it one, up in this garret by yourself, when you are wanted in council."

"But am I wanted there?" said the Syndic.

"Ay, marry are you, to stand up for the rights of Liege, that are in more danger than ever," answered the lieutenant.

"Pshaw, Peterkin," answered his principal, "thou art ever such a frampold grumbler—"

"Grumbler? not I," said Peterkin, "what pleases other people will always please me. Only I wish we have not got King Stork, instead of King Log, like the fabliau [fable] that the Clerk of Saint Lambert's used to read us out of Meister Aesop's book."

[Refers to Aesop's fable. The commonwealth of frogs, having conceived an aversion for their amiable king Log, asked Jupiter to send them another sovereign. He accordingly bestowed upon them a stork who gradually devoured all his subjects.]

"I cannot guess your meaning," said the Syndic.

"Why then, I tell you, Master Pavillon, that this Boar or Bear is like to make his own den of Schonwaldt, and is probable to turn out as bad a neighbour to our town as ever was the old Bishop, and worse. Here has he taken the whole conquest in his own hand, and is only doubting whether he should be called Prince or Bishop—and it is a shame to see how they have mishandled the old man among them."

"I will not permit it, Peterkin," said Pavillon, hustling up, "I disliked the mitre, but not the head that wore it. We are ten to one in the field, Peterkin, and will not permit these courses."

"Ay, ten to one in the field, but only man to man in the castle, besides that Nikkel Blok the butcher, and all the rabble of the suburbs, take part with William de la Marck, partly for saus and braus [means here carousing] (for he has broached all the ale tubs and wine casks), and partly for old envy towards us, who are the craftsmen, and have privileges."

"Peter," said Pavillon, "we will go presently to the city. I will stay no longer in Schonwaldt."

"But the bridges of this castle are up, master," said Geislaer—"the gates locked, and guarded by these lanzknechts, and, if we were to try to force our way, these fellows, whose everyday business is war, might make wild work of us that only fight of a holyday."

"But why has he secured the gates?" said the alarmed burgher, "or what business hath he to make honest men prisoners?"

"I cannot tell—not I," said Peter. "Some noise there is about the Ladies of Croye, who have escaped during the storm of the castle. That first put the Man with the Beard beside himself with anger, and now he 's beside himself with drink also."

The Burgomaster cast a disconsolate look towards Quentin, and seemed at a loss what to resolve upon. Durward, who had not lost a word of the conversation, which alarmed him very much, saw nevertheless that their only safety depended on his preserving his own presence of mind, and sustaining the courage of Pavillon. He struck boldly into the conversation, as one who had a right to have a voice in the deliberation.

"I am ashamed," he said, "Meinheer Pavillon, to observe you hesitate what to do on this occasion. Go boldly to William de la Marck, and demand free leave to quit the castle, you, your lieutenant, your squire, and your daughter. He can have no pretence for keeping you prisoner."

"For me and my lieutenant—that is myself and Peter?—Good—but who is my squire?"

"I am for the present," replied the undaunted Scot.

"You!" said the embarrassed burgess, "but are you not the envoy of King Louis of France?"

"True, but my message is to the magistrates of Liege—and only in Liege will I deliver it.—Were I to acknowledge my quality before William de la Marck, must I not enter into negotiations with him? Ay, and, it is like, be detained by him. You must get me secretly out of the castle in the capacity of your squire."

"Good—my squire—but you spoke of my daughter—my daughter is, I trust, safe in my house in Liege—where I wish her father was, with all my heart and soul."

"This lady," said Durward, "will call you father while we are in this place."

"And for my whole life afterwards," said the Countess, throwing herself at the citizen's feet, and clasping his knees.

"Never shall the day pass in which I will not honour you, love you, and pray for you as a daughter for a father, if you will but aid me in this fearful strait.—Oh, be not hard hearted! Think, your own daughter may kneel to a stranger, to ask him for life and honour—think of this, and give me the protection you would wish her to receive!"

"In troth," said the good citizen, much moved with her pathetic appeal, "I think, Peter, that this pretty maiden hath a touch of our Trudchen's sweet look—I thought so from the first, and that this brisk youth here, who is so ready with his advice, is somewhat like Trudchen's bachelor—I wager a groat, Peter, that this is a true love matter, and it is a sin not to further it."

"It were shame and sin both," said Peter, a good natured Fleming, notwithstanding all his self conceit, and as he spoke he wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his jerkin.

"She shall be my daughter, then," said Pavillon, "well wrapped up in her black silk veil and if there are not enough of true hearted skinnners to protect her, being the daughter of their Syndic, it were pity they should ever tug leather more.—But hark ye—questions must be answered—How if I am asked what should my daughter make here at such an onslaught?"

"What should half the women in Liege make here when they followed us to the castle?" said Peter. "They had no other reason, sure, but that it was just the place in the world that they should not have come to. Our yung frau Trudchen has come a little farther than the rest—that is all."

"Admirably spoken," said Quentin, "only be bold, and take this gentleman's good counsel, noble Meinheer Pavillon, and, at no trouble to yourself, you will do the most worthy action since the days of Charlemagne.—Here, sweet lady, wrap yourself close in this veil" (for many articles of female apparel lay scattered about the apartment)—"be but confident, and a few minutes will place you in freedom and safety. Noble Sir," he added, addressing Pavillon, "set forward."

"Hold—hold—hold a minute," said Pavillon, "my mind misgives me!—This De la Marck is a fury, a perfect boar in his nature as in his name, what if the young lady be one of those of Croye?—and what if he discover her, and be addicted to wrath?"

"And if I were one of those unfortunate women," said Isabelle, again attempting to throw herself at his feet, "could you for that reject me in this moment of despair? Oh, that I had been indeed your daughter, or the daughter of the poorest burgher!"

"Not so poor—not so poor neither, young lady—we pay as we go," said the citizen.

"Forgive me, noble sir," again began the unfortunate maiden.

"Not noble, nor sir, neither," said the Syndic, "a plain burgher of Liege, that pays bills of exchange in ready guilders.—But that is nothing to the purpose.—Well, say you be a countess, I will protect you nevertheless."

"You are bound to protect her, were she a duchess," said Peter, "having once passed your word."

"Right, Peter, very right," said the Syndic "it is our old Low Dutch fashion, ein wort, ein man [a man of his word], and now let us to this gear. We must take leave of this William de la Marck, and yet I know not, my mind misgives me when I think of him, and were it a ceremony which could be waived, I have no stomach to go through it."

"Were you not better, since you have a force together, to make for the gate and force the guard?" said Quentin.

But with united voice, Pavillon and his adviser exclaimed against the propriety of such an attack upon their ally's soldiers, with some hints concerning its rashness, which satisfied Quentin that it was not a risk to be hazarded with such associates.

They resolved, therefore, to repair boldly to the great hall of the castle, where, as they understood, the Wild Boar of Ardennes held his feast, and demand free egress for the Syndic of Liege and his company, a request too reasonable, as it seemed, to be denied. Still the good burgomaster groaned when he looked on his companions, and exclaimed to his faithful Peter, "See what it is to have too bold and too tender a heart! Alas! Peterkin, how much have courage and humanity cost me! and how much may I yet have to pay for my virtues, before Heaven makes us free of this damned Castle of Schonwaldt!"

As they crossed the courts, still strewn with the dying and dead, Quentin, while he supported Isabelle through the scene of horrors, whispered to her courage and comfort, and reminded her that her safety depended entirely on her firmness and presence of mind.

"Not on mine—not on mine," she said, "but on yours—on yours only. Oh, if I but escape this fearful night, never shall I forget him who saved me! One favour more only, let me implore at your hand, and I conjure you to grant it, by your mother's fame and your father's honour!"

"What is it you can ask that I could refuse?" said Quentin, in a whisper.

"Plunge your dagger in my heart," said she, "rather than leave me captive in the hands of these monsters."

Quentin's only answer was a pressure of the young Countess's hand, which seemed as if, but for terror, it would have returned the caress. And, leaning on her youthful protector, she entered the fearful hall, preceded by Pavillon and his lieutenant, and followed by a dozen of the Kurschenschaft, or skinner's trade, who attended as a guard of honour on the Syndic.

As they approached the hall, the yells of acclamation and bursts of wild laughter which proceeded from it, seemed rather to announce the revel of festive demons, rejoicing after some accomplished triumph over the human race, than of mortal beings who had succeeded in a bold design. An emphatic tone of mind, which despair alone could have inspired, supported the assumed courage of the Countess Isabelle, undaunted spirits, which rose with the extremity, maintained that of Durward, while Pavillon and his lieutenant made a virtue of necessity, and faced their fate like bears bound to a stake, which must necessarily stand the dangers of the course.

CHAPTER XXII: THE REVELLERS

Cade.—Where's Dick, the butcher of Ashford?

Dick.—Here, sir.

Cade.—They fell before thee like sheep and oxen, and thou behavedst thyself as if thou hadst been in thine own slaughter house.

SECOND PART OF KING HENRY V.

There could hardly exist a more strange and horrible change than had taken place in the castle hall of Schonwaldt since Quentin had partaken of the noontide meal there, and it was indeed one which painted, in the extremity of their dreadful features, the miseries of war—more especially when waged by those most relentless of all agents, the mercenary soldiers of a barbarous age—men who, by habit and profession, had become familiarized with all that was cruel and bloody in the art of war, while they were devoid alike of patriotism and of the romantic spirit of chivalry.

Instead of the orderly, decent, and somewhat formal meal, at which civil and ecclesiastical officers had, a few hours before, sat mingled in the same apartment, where a light jest could only be uttered in a whisper, and where, even amid superfluity of feasting and of wine, there reigned a decorum which almost amounted to hypocrisy, there was now such a scene of wild and roaring debauchery as Satan himself, had he taken the chair as founder of the feast, could scarcely have improved.

At the head of the table sat, in the Bishop's throne and state, which had been hastily brought thither from his great council chamber, the redoubted Boar of Ardennes himself, well deserving that dreaded name in which he affected to delight, and which he did as much as he could think of to deserve.

His head was unhelmeted, but he wore the rest of his ponderous and bright armour, which indeed he rarely laid aside. Over his shoulders hung a strong surcoat, made of the dressed skin of a huge wild boar, the hoofs being of solid silver and the tusks of the same. The skin of the head was so arranged, that, drawn over the casque, when the Baron was armed, or over his bare head in the fashion of a hood, as he often affected when the helmet was laid aside, and as he now wore it, the effect was that of a grinning, ghastly monster, and yet the countenance which it overshadowed scarce required such horrors to improve those which were natural to its ordinary expression.

The upper part of De la Marck's face, as Nature had formed it, almost gave the lie to his character, for though his hair, when uncovered, resembled the rude and wild bristles of the hood he had drawn over it, yet an open, high, and manly forehead, broad ruddy cheeks, large, sparkling, light coloured eyes, and a nose which looked like the beak of the eagle, promised something valiant and generous. But the effect of these more favourable traits was entirely overpowered by his habits of violence and insolence, which, joined to debauchery and intemperance, had stamped upon the features a character inconsistent with the rough gallantry which they would otherwise have exhibited. The former had, from habitual indulgence, swollen the muscles of the cheeks and those around the eyes, in particular the latter; evil practices and habits had dimmed the eyes themselves, reddened the part of them that should have been white, and given the whole face a hideous likeness of the monster which it was the terrible Baron's pleasure to resemble. But from an odd sort of contradiction, De la March, while he assumed in other respects the appearance of the Wild Boar, and even seemed pleased with the name, yet endeavoured, by the length and growth of his beard, to conceal the circumstance that had originally procured him that denomination. This was an unusual thickness and projection of the mouth and upper jaw, which, with the huge projecting side teeth, gave that resemblance to the bestial creation, which, joined to the delight that De la Marck had in hunting the forest so called, originally procured for him the name of the Boar of Ardennes. The beard, broad, grisly, and uncombed, neither concealed the natural horrors of the countenance, nor dignified its brutal expression.

The soldiers and officers sat around the table, intermixed with the men of Liege, some of them of the very lowest description, among whom Nikkel Blok the butcher, placed near De la Marck himself, was distinguished by his tucked up sleeves, which displayed arms smeared to the elbows with blood, as was the cleaver which lay on the table before him. The soldiers wore, most of them, their beards long and grisly, in imitation of their leader, had their hair plaited and turned upwards, in the manner that ought best improve the natural ferocity of their appearance, and intoxicated, as many of them seemed to be, partly with the sense of triumph, and partly with the long libations of wine which they had been quaffing, presented a spectacle at once hideous and disgusting. The language which they held, and the songs which they sang, without even pretending to pay each other the compliment of listening, were so full of license and blasphemy, that Quentin blessed God that the extremity of the noise prevented them from being intelligible to his companion.

It only remains to say of the better class of burghers who were associated with William de la Marck's soldiers in this fearful revel that the wan faces and anxious mien of the greater part showed that they either disliked their entertainment, or feared their companions, while some of lower education, or a nature more brutal, saw only in the excesses of the soldier a gallant bearing, which they would willingly imitate, and the tone of which they endeavoured to catch so far as was possible, and stimulated themselves to the task, by swallowing immense draughts of wine and schwarzbier [black beer]—indulging a vice 'which at all times was too common in the Low Countries.

The preparations for the feast had been as disorderly as the quality of the company. The whole of the Bishop's plate—nay, even that belonging to the service of the Church—for the Boar of Ardennes regarded not the imputation of sacrilege—was mingled with black jacks, or huge tankards made of leather, and drinking horns of the most ordinary description.

One circumstance of horror remains to be added and accounted for, and we willingly leave the rest of the scene to the imagination of the reader. Amidst the wild license assumed by the soldiers of De la Marck, one who was excluded from the table (a lanzknecht, remarkable for his courage and for his daring behaviour during the storm of the evening), had impudently snatched up a large silver goblet, and carried it off declaring it should atone for his loss of the share of the feast. The leader laughed till his sides shook at a jest so congenial to the character of the company, but when another, less renowned, it would seem, for audacity in battle, ventured on using the same freedom, De la Marck instantly put a check to a jocular practice, which would soon have cleared his table of all the more valuable decorations.

"Ho! by the spirit of the thunder!" he exclaimed, "those who dare not be men when they face the enemy, must not pretend to be thieves among their friends. What! thou frontless dastard, thou—thou who didst wait for opened gate and lowered bridge, when Conrade Horst forced his way over moat and wall, must thou be malapert?—Knit him up to the stanchions of the hall window!—He shall beat time with his feet, while we drink a cup to his safe passage to the devil."

The doom was scarce sooner pronounced than accomplished, and in a moment the wretch wrestled out his last agonies, suspended from the iron bars. His body still hung there when Quentin and the others entered the hall, and, intercepting the pale moonbeam, threw on the castle floor an uncertain shadow, which dubiously, yet fearfully, intimated the nature of the substance that produced it.

When the Syndic Pavillon was announced from mouth to mouth in this tumultuous meeting, he endeavoured to assume, in right of his authority and influence, an air of importance and equality, which a glance at the fearful object at the window, and at the wild scene around him, rendered it very difficult for him to sustain, notwithstanding the exhortations of Peter, who whispered in his ear with some perturbation, "Up heart, master, or we are but gone men!"

The Syndic maintained his dignity, however, as well as he could, in a short address, in which he complimented the company upon the great victory gained by the soldiers of De la Marck and the good citizens of Liege.

"Ay," answered De la Marck, sarcastically, "we have brought down the game at last, quoth my lady's brach to the wolf hound. But ho! Sir Burgomaster, you come like Mars, with Beauty by your side. Who is this fair one?—Unveil, unveil—no woman calls her beauty her own tonight."

"It is my daughter, noble leader," answered Pavillon, "and I am to pray your forgiveness for her wearing a veil. She has a vow for that effect to the Three Blessed Kings."

"I will absolve her of it presently," said De la Marck, "for here, with one stroke of a cleaver, will I consecrate myself Bishop of Liege, and I trust one living bishop is worth three dead kings."

There was a shuddering and murmur among the guests, for the community of Liege, and even some of the rude soldiers, revered the Kings of Cologne, as they were commonly called, though they respected nothing else.

"Nay, I mean no treason against their defunct majesties," said De la Marck, "only Bishop I am determined to be. A prince both secular and ecclesiastical, having power to bind and loose, will best suit a band of reprobates such as you, to whom no one else would give absolution.—But come hither, noble Burgomaster—sit beside me, when you shall see me make a vacancy for my own preferment.—Bring in our predecessor in the holy seat."

A bustle took place in the hall, while Pavillon, excusing himself from the proffered seat of honour, placed himself near the bottom of the table, his followers keeping close behind him, not unlike a flock of sheep which, when a stranger dog is in presence, may be sometimes seen to assemble in the rear of an old bell wether, who is, from office and authority, judged by them to have rather more courage than themselves. Near the spot sat a very handsome lad, a natural son, as was said, of the ferocious De la Marck, and towards whom he sometimes showed affection, and even tenderness. The mother of the boy, a beautiful concubine, had perished by a blow dealt her by the ferocious leader in a fit of drunkenness or jealousy, and her fate had caused her tyrant as much remorse as he was capable of feeling. His attachment to the surviving orphan might be partly owing to these circumstances. Quentin, who had learned this point of the leader's character from the old priest, planted himself as close as he could to the youth in question, determined to make him, in some way or other, either a hostage or a protector, should other means of safety fail them.

While all stood in a kind of suspense, waiting the event of the orders which the tyrant had issued, one of Pavillon's followers whispered Peter, "Did not our master call that wench his daughter?—Why, it cannot be our Trudchen. This strapping lass is taller by two inches, and there is a black lock of hair peeps forth yonder from under her veil. By Saint Michael of the Marketplace, you might as well call a black bullock's hide a white heifer's!"

"Hush! hush!" said Peter, with some presence of mind. "What if our 'master hath a mind to steal a piece of doe venison out of the Bishop's parks here, without our good dame's knowledge? And is it for thee or me to be a spy on him?"

"That will not I," answered the other, "though I would not have thought of his turning deer stealer at his years. Sapperment—what a shy fairy it is! See how she crouches down on yonder seat, behind folks' backs, to escape the gaze of the Marckers.—But hold, hold, what are they about to do with the poor old Bishop?"

As he spoke, the Bishop of Liege, Louis of Bourbon, was dragged into the hall of his own palace by the brutal soldiery. The dishevelled state of his hair, beard, and attire bore witness to the ill treatment he had already received, and some of his sacerdotal robes, hastily flung over him, appeared to have been put on in

scorn and ridicule of his quality and character. By good fortune, as Quentin was compelled to think it, the Countess Isabelle, whose feelings at seeing her protector in such an extremity might have betrayed her own secret and compromised her safety, was so situated as neither to hear nor see what was about to take place, and Durward sedulously interposed his own person before her, so as to keep her from observing alike and from observation.

The scene which followed was short and fearful. When the unhappy Prelate was brought before the footstool of the savage leader, although in former life only remarkable for his easy and good natured temper, he showed in this extremity a sense of his dignity and noble blood, well becoming the high race from which he was descended. His look was composed and undismayed, his gesture, when the rude hands which dragged him forward were unloosed, was noble, and at the same time resigned, somewhat between the bearing of a feudal noble and of a Christian martyr and so much was even De la Marck himself staggered by the firm demeanour of his prisoner and recollection of the early benefits he had received from him, that he seemed irresolute, cast down his eyes, and it was not until he had emptied a large goblet of wine, that, resuming his haughty insolence of look and manner, he thus addressed his unfortunate captive.

"Louis of Bourbon," said the truculent soldier, drawing hard his breath, clenching 'his hands, setting his teeth, and using the other mechanical actions to rouse up and sustain his native ferocity of temper, "I sought your friendship, and you rejected mine. What would you now give that it had been otherwise?—Nikkel, be ready."

The butcher rose, seized his weapon, and stealing round behind De la Marck's chair, stood with it uplifted in his bare and sinewy hands.

"Look at that man, Louis of Bourbon," said De la Marck again,—"What terms wilt thou now offer, to escape this dangerous hour?"

The Bishop cast a melancholy but unshaken look upon the grisly satellite, who seemed prepared to execute the will of the tyrant, and then he said with firmness, "Hear me, William de la Marck, and good men all, if there be any here who deserve that name, hear the only terms I can offer to this ruffian.

"William de la Marck, thou hast stirred up to sedition an imperial city—hast assaulted and taken the palace of a Prince of the Holy German Empire—slain his people—plundered his goods—maltreated his person, for this thou art liable to the Ban of the Empire [to put a prince under the ban of the empire was to divest him of his dignities, and to interdict all intercourse and all offices of humanity with the offender]—hast deserved to be declared outlawed and fugitive, landless and rightless. Thou hast done more than all this. More than mere human laws hast thou broken, more than mere human vengeance hast thou deserved. Thou hast broken into the sanctuary of the Lord—laid violent hands upon a Father of the Church—defiled the house of God with blood and rapine, like a sacrilegious robber—"

"Hast thou yet done?" said De la Marck, fiercely interrupting him, and stamping with his foot.

"No," answered the Prelate, "for I have not yet told thee the terms which you demanded to hear from me."

"Go on," said De la Marck, "and let the terms please me better than the preface, or woe to thy gray head!"

And flinging himself back in his seat, he grinded his teeth till the foam flew from his lips, as from the tusks of the savage animal whose name and spoils he wore.

"Such are thy crimes," resumed the Bishop, with calm determination, "now hear the terms, which, as a merciful Prince and a Christian Prelate, setting aside all personal offence, forgiving each peculiar injury, I condescend to offer. Fling down thy heading staff—renounce thy command—unbind thy prisoners—restore thy spoil—distribute what else thou hast of goods, to relieve those whom thou hast made orphans and widows—array thyself in sackcloth and ashes—take a palmer's staff in thy hand, and go barefooted on pilgrimage to Rome, and we will ourselves be intercessors for thee with the Imperial Chamber at Ratisbon for thy life, With our Holy Father the Pope for thy miserable soul."

While Louis of Bourbon proposed these terms, in a tone as decided as if he still occupied his episcopal throne, and as if the usurper kneeled a suppliant at his feet, the tyrant slowly raised himself in his chair, the amazement with which he was at first filled giving way gradually to rage, until, as the Bishop ceased, he looked to Nikkel Blok, and raised his finger, without speaking a word. The ruffian struck as if he had been doing his office in the common shambles, and the murdered Bishop sunk, without a groan, at the foot of his own episcopal throne. The Liegeois, who were not prepared for so horrible a catastrophe, and who had expected to hear the conference end in some terms of accommodation, started up unanimously, with cries of execration, mingled with shouts of vengeance.

[In assigning the present date to the murder of the Bishop of Liege, Louis de Bourbon, history has been violated. It is true that the Bishop was made prisoner by the insurgents of that city. It is also true that the report of the insurrection came to Charles with a rumour that the Bishop was slain, which excited his indignation against Louis, who was then in his power. But these things happened in 1468, and the Bishop's murder did not take place till 1482. In the months of August and September of that year, William de la Marck, called the Wild Boar of Ardennes, entered into a conspiracy with the discontented citizens of Liege against their Bishop, Louis of Bourbon, being aided with considerable sums of money by the King of France. By this means, and the assistance of many murderers and banditti, who thronged to him as to a leader befitting them, De la Marck assembled a body of troops, whom he dressed in scarlet as a uniform, with a boar's head on the left sleeve. With this little army he approached the city of Liege. Upon this the citizens, who were engaged in the conspiracy, came to their Bishop, and, offering to stand by him to the death, exhorted him to march out against these robbers. The Bishop, therefore, put himself at the head of a few troops of his own, trusting to the assistance of the people of Liege. But so soon as they came in sight of the enemy, the citizens, as before agreed, fled from the Bishop's banner, and he was left with his own handful of adherents. At this moment De la Marck charged at the head of his banditti with the expected success. The Bishop was brought before the profligate Knight, who first cut him over the face, then murdered him with his own hand, and caused his body to be exposed naked in the great square of Liege before Saint Lambert's Cathedral. S.]

But William de la Marck, raising his tremendous voice above the tumult, and shaking his clenched hand and extended arm, shouted aloud, "How now, ye porkers of Liege! ye wallowers in the mud of the Maes!—do ye dare to mate yourselves with the Wild Boar of Ardennes?—Up, ye Boar's brood!" (an expression by which he himself, and others, often designated his soldiers) "let these Flemish hogs see your tusks!"

Every one of his followers started up at the command, and mingled as they were among their late allies, prepared too for such a surprisal, each had, in an instant, his next neighbour by the collar, while his right hand brandished a broad dagger that glimmered against lamplight and moonshine. Every arm was uplifted, but no one struck, for the victims were too much surprised for resistance, 'and it was probably the object of De la Marck only to impose terror on his civic confederates.

But the courage of Quentin Durward, prompt and alert in resolution beyond his years, and stimulated at the moment by all that could add energy to his natural shrewdness and resolution, gave a new turn to the scene. Imitating the action of the followers of De la Marck, he sprang on Carl Eberson, the son of their leader, and mastering him with ease, held his dirk at the boy's throat, while he exclaimed, "Is that your game? then here I play my part."

"Hold! hold!" exclaimed De la Marck, "it is a jest—a jest.—Think you I would injure my good friends and allies of the city of Liege!—Soldiers, unloose your holds, sit down, take away the carrion" (giving the Bishop's corpse a thrust with his foot) "which hath caused this strife among friends, and let us drown unkindness in a fresh carouse."

All unloosened their holds, and the citizens and the soldiers stood gazing on each other, as if they scarce knew whether they were friends or foes. Quentin Durward took advantage of the moment.

"Hear me," he said, "William de la Marck, and you, burghers and citizens of Liege—and do you, young sir, stand still" (for the boy Carl was attempting to escape from his grip)—"no harm shall befall you unless another of these sharp jests shall pass around."

"Who art thou, in the fiend's name," said the astonished De la Marck, "who art come to hold terms and take hostages from us in our own lair—from us, who exact pledges from others, but yield them to no one?"

"I am a servant of King Louis of France," said Quentin, boldly, "an Archer of his Scottish Guard, as my language and dress may partly tell you. I am here to behold and to report your proceedings, and I see with wonder that they are those of heathens, rather than Christians—of madmen, rather than men possessed of reason. The hosts of Charles of Burgundy will be instantly in motion against you all, and if you wish assistance from France, you must conduct yourself in a different manner.

"For you, men of Liege, I advise your instant return to your own city, and if there is any obstruction offered to your departure, I denounce those by whom it is so offered, foes to my master, his Most Gracious Majesty of France."

"France and Liege! France and Liege!" cried the followers of Pavillon, and several other citizens whose courage began to rise at the bold language held by Quentin.

"France and Liege, and long live the gallant Archer! We will live and die with him!"

William de la Marck's eyes sparkled, and he grasped his dagger as if about to launch it at the heart of the audacious speaker, but glancing his eye around, he read something in the looks of his soldiers which even he was obliged to respect. Many of them were Frenchmen, and all of them knew the private support which William had received, both in men and in money, from that kingdom, nay, some of them were rather startled at the violent and sacrilegious action which had been just committed. The name of Charles of Burgundy, a person likely to resent to the utmost the deeds of that night, had an alarming sound, and the extreme impolicy of at once quarrelling with the Liegeois and provoking the Monarch of France, made an appalling impression on their minds, confused as their intellects were. De la Marck, in short, saw he would not be supported, even by his own band, in any farther act of immediate violence, and relaxing the terrors of his brow and eye, declared that he had not the least design against his good friends of Liege, all of whom were at liberty to depart from Schonwaldt at their pleasure, although he had hoped they would revel one night with him, at least, in honour of their victory. He added, with more calmness than he commonly used, that he would be ready to enter into negotiation concerning the partition of spoil, and the arrangement of measures for their mutual defence, either the next day, or as soon after as they would. Meantime he trusted that the Scottish gentleman would honour his feast by remaining all night at Schonwaldt.

The young Scot returned his thanks, but said his motions must be determined by those of Pavillon, to whom he was directed particularly to attach himself, but that, unquestionably, he would attend him on his next return to the quarters of the valiant William de la Marck.

"If you depend on my motions," said Pavillon, hastily and aloud, "you are likely to quit Schonwaldt without an instant's delay—and, if you do not come back to Schonwaldt, save in my company, you are not likely to see it again in a hurry."

This last part of the sentence the honest citizen muttered to himself, afraid of the consequences of giving audible vent 'to feelings which, nevertheless, he was unable altogether to suppress.

"Keep close about me, my brisk Kurschner [a worker in fur] lads," he said to his bodyguard, "and we will get as fast as we can out of this den of thieves."

Most of the better classes of the Liegeois seemed to entertain similar opinions with the Syndic, and there had been scarce so much joy amongst them at the obtaining possession of Schonwaldt as now seemed to arise from the prospect of getting safe out of it. They were suffered to leave the castle without opposition of any kind, and glad was Quentin when he turned his back on those formidable walls.

For the first time since they had entered that dreadful hall, Quentin ventured to ask the young Countess how she did.

"Well, well," she answered, in feverish haste, "excellently well—do not stop to ask a question, let us not lose an instant in words.—Let us fly—let us fly!"

She endeavoured to mend her pace as she spoke, but with so little success that she must have fallen from exhaustion had not Durward supported her. With the tenderness of a mother, when she conveys her infant out of danger, the young Scot raised his precious charge in his arms, and while she encircled his neck with one arm, lost to every other thought save the desire of escaping, he would not have wished one of the risks of the night unencountered, since such had been the conclusion.

The honest Burgomaster was, in his turn, supported and dragged forward by his faithful counsellor Peter, and another of his clerks, and thus, in breathless haste, they reached the banks of the river, encountering many strolling bands of citizens, who were eager to know the event of the siege, and the truth of certain rumours already afloat that the conquerors had quarrelled among themselves.

Evading their curiosity as they best could, the exertions of Peter and some of his companions at length procured a boat for the use of the company, and with it an opportunity of enjoying some repose, equally welcome to Isabelle, who continued to lie almost motionless in the arms of her deliverer, and to the worthy Burgomaster, who, after delivering a broken string of thanks to Durward, whose mind was at the time too much occupied to answer him, began a long harangue, which he addressed to Peter, upon his own courage and benevolence, and the dangers to which these virtues had exposed him, on this and other occasions.

"Peter, Peter," he said, resuming the complaint of the preceding evening, "if I had not had a bold heart, I would never have stood out against paying the burghers twentieths, when every other living soul was willing to pay the same.—Ay, and then a less stout heart had not seduced me into that other battle of Saint Tron, where a Hainault man at arms thrust me into a muddy ditch with his lance, which neither heart nor hand that I had could help me out of till the battle was over.—Ay, and then, Peter, this very night my courage seduced me, moreover, into too strait a corselet, which would have been the death of me, but for the aid of this gallant young gentleman, whose trade is fighting, whereof I wish him heartily joy. And then for my tenderness of heart, Peter, it has made a poor man of me, that is, it would have made a poor man of me, if I had not been tolerably well to pass in this wicked world—and Heaven knows what trouble it is likely to bring on me yet, with ladies, countesses, and keeping of secrets, which, for aught I know, may cost me half my fortune, and my neck into the bargain!"

Quentin could remain no longer silent, but assured him that whatever danger or damage he should incur on the part of the young lady now under his protection should be thankfully acknowledged, and, as far as was possible, repaid.

"I thank you, young Master Squire Archer, I thank you," answered the citizen of Liege "but who was it told you that I desired any repayment at your hand for doing the duty of an honest man? I only regretted that it might cost me so and so, and I hope I may have leave to say so much to my lieutenant, without either grudging my loss or my peril."

Quentin accordingly concluded that his present friend was one of the numerous class of benefactors to others, who take out their reward in grumbling, without meaning more than, by showing their grievances, to exalt a little the idea of the valuable service by which they have incurred them, and therefore prudently remained silent, and suffered the Syndic to maunder on to his lieutenant concerning the risk and the loss he had encountered by his zeal for the public good, and his disinterested services to individuals, until they reached his own habitation.

The truth was, that the honest citizen felt that he had lost a little consequence, by suffering the young stranger to take the lead at the crisis which had occurred at the castle hall of Schonwaldt, and, however delighted with the effect of Durward's interference at the moment, it seemed to him, on reflection, that he had sustained a diminution of importance, for which he endeavoured to obtain compensation by exaggerating the claims which he had upon the gratitude of his country in general, his friends in particular, and more especially still, on the Countess of Croye, and her youthful protector.

But when the boat stopped at the bottom of his garden, and he had got himself assisted on shore by Peter, it seemed as if the touch of his own threshold had at once dissipated those feelings of wounded self opinion and jealousy, and converted the discontented and obscured demagogue into the honest, kind, hospitable, and friendly host. He called loudly for Trudchen, who presently appeared, for fear and anxiety would permit few within the walls of Liege to sleep during that eventful night. She was charged to pay the utmost attention to the care of the beautiful and half fainting stranger, and, admiring her personal charms, while she pitied her distress, Gertrude discharged the hospitable duty with the zeal and affection of a sister.

Late as it now was, and fatigued as the Syndic appeared, Quentin, on his side, had difficulty to escape a flask of choice and costly wine, as old as the battle of Azincour, and must have submitted to take his share, however unwilling, but for the appearance of the mother of the family, whom Pavillon's loud summons for the keys of the cellar brought forth from her bedroom. She was a jolly little roundabout, woman, who had been pretty in her time, but whose principal characteristics for several years had been a red and sharp nose, a shrill voice, and a determination that the Syndic, in consideration of the authority which he exercised when abroad, should remain under the rule of due discipline at home.

So soon as she understood the nature of the debate between her husband and his guest, she declared roundly that the former, instead of having occasion for more wine, had got too much already, and, far from using, in furtherance of his request, any of the huge bunch of keys which hung by a silver chain at her waist, she turned her back on him without ceremony, and ushered Quentin to the neat and pleasant apartment in which he was to spend the night, amid such appliances to rest and comfort as probably he had till that moment been entirely a stranger to, so much did the wealthy Flemings excel, not merely the poor and rude Scots, but the French themselves in all the conveniences of domestic life.

CHAPTER XXIII: THE FLIGHT

*Now bid me run,
And I will strive with things impossible;
Yea, get the better of them.*

*Set on your foot;
And, with a heart new fired, I follow you,
To do I know not what.*

JULIUS CAESAR

In spite of a mixture of joy and fear, doubt, anxiety, and other agitating passions, the exhausting fatigues of the preceding day were powerful enough to throw the young Scot into a deep and profound repose, which lasted until late on the day following, when his worthy host entered the apartment with looks of care on his brow.

He seated himself by his guest's bedside, and began a long and complicated discourse upon the domestic duties of a married life, and especially upon the awful power and right supremacy which it became married men to sustain in all differences of opinion with their wives. Quentin listened with some anxiety. He knew that husbands, like other belligerent powers, were sometimes disposed to sing *Te Deum* [*Te Deum laudamus*: We praise Thee, O God; the first words of an ancient hymn, sung in the morning service of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches], rather to conceal a defeat than to celebrate a victory, and he hastened to probe the matter more closely, by hoping their arrival had been attended with no inconvenience to the good lady of the household.

"Inconvenience!—no," answered the Burgomaster.—"No woman can be less taken unawares than Mother Mabel—always happy to see her friends—always a clean lodging and a handsome meal ready for them, with God's blessing on bed and board.—No woman on earth so hospitable—only 'tis pity her temper is something particular."

"Our residence here is disagreeable to her, in short?" said the Scot, starting out of bed, and beginning to dress himself hastily. "Were I but sure the Lady Isabelle were fit for travel after the horrors of the last night, we would not increase the offence by remaining here an instant longer."

"Nay," said Pavillon, "that is just what the young lady herself said to Mother Mabel, and truly I wish you saw the colour that came to her face as she said it—a milkmaid that has skated five miles to market against the frost wind is a lily compared to it—I do not wonder Mother Mabel may be a little jealous, poor dear soul."

"Has the Lady Isabelle then left her apartment?" said the youth, continuing his toilette operations with more dispatch than before.

"Yes," replied Pavillon, "and she expects your approach with much impatience, to determine which way you shall go since you are both determined on going. But I trust you will tarry breakfast?"

"Why did you not tell me this sooner?" said Durward, impatiently.

"Softly—softly," said the Syndic, "I have told it you too soon, I think, if it puts you into such a hasty fluster. Now I have some more matter for your ear, if I saw you had some patience to listen to me."

"Speak it, worthy sir, as soon and as fast as you can—I listen devoutly."

"Well," resumed the Burgomaster, "I have but one word to say, and that is that Trudchen, who is as sorry to part with yonder pretty lady as if she had been some sister of hers, wants you to take some other disguise, for there is word in the town that the Ladies of Croye travel the country in pilgrim's dresses, attended by a French life guardsman of the Scottish Archers, and it is said one of them was brought into Schonwaldt last night by a Bohemian after we had left it, and it was said still farther, that this same Bohemian had assured William de la Marck that you were charged with no message either to him or to the good people of Liege, and that you had stolen away the young Countess, and travelled with her as her paramour. And all this news hath come from Schonwaldt this morning, and it has been told to us and the other councillors, who know not well what to advise, for though our own opinion is that William de la Marck has been a thought too rough both with the Bishop and with ourselves, yet there is a great belief that he is a good natured soul at bottom—that is, when he is sober—and that he is the only leader in the world to command us against the Duke of Burgundy, and, in truth, as matters stand, it is partly my own mind that we must keep fair with him, for we have gone too far to draw back."

"Your daughter advises well," said Quentin Durward, abstaining from reproaches or exhortations, which he saw would be alike unavailing to sway a resolution which had been adopted by the worthy magistrate in compliance at once with the prejudices of his party and the inclination of his wife.

"Your daughter counsels well.—We must part in disguise, and that instantly. We may, I trust, rely upon you for the necessary secrecy, and for the means of escape?"

"With all my heart—with all my heart," said the honest citizen, who, not much satisfied with the dignity of his own conduct, was eager to find some mode of atonement. "I cannot but remember that I owed you my life last night, both for unclasping that accursed steel doublet, and helping me through the other scrape, which was worse, for yonder Boar and his brood look more like devils than men. So I will be true to you as blade to haft, as our cutlers say, who are the best in the whole world. Nay, now you are ready, come this way—you shall see how far I can trust you."

The Syndic led him from the chamber in which he had slept to his own counting room, in which he transacted his affairs of business, and after bolting the door, and casting a piercing and careful eye around him, he opened a concealed and vaulted closet behind the tapestry, in which stood more than one iron chest. He proceeded to open one which was full of guilders, and placed it at Quentin's discretion to take whatever sum he might think necessary for his companion's expenses and his own.

As the money with which Quentin was furnished on leaving Plessis was now nearly expended, he hesitated not to accept the sum of two hundred guilders, and by doing so took a great weight from the mind of Pavillon, who considered the desperate transaction in which he thus voluntarily became the creditor as an atonement for the breach of hospitality which various considerations in a great measure compelled him to commit.

Having carefully locked his treasure chamber, the wealthy Fleming next conveyed his guest to the parlour, where, in full possession of her activity of mind and body, though pale from the scenes of the preceding night, he found the Countess attired in the fashion of a Flemish maiden of the middling class. No other was present excepting Trudchen, who was sedulously employed in completing the Countess's dress, and instructing her how to bear herself. She extended her hand to him, which, when he had reverently kissed, she said to him, "Seignior Quentin, we must leave our friends here unless I would bring on them a part of the misery which has pursued me ever since my father's death. You must change your dress and go with me, unless you also are tired of befriending a being so unfortunate."

"I!—I tired of being your attendant!—To the end of the earth will I guard you! But you—you yourself—are you equal to the task you undertake!—Can you, after the terrors of last night"

"Do not recall them to my memory," answered the Countess, "I remember but the confusion of a horrid dream.—Has the excellent Bishop escaped?"

"I trust he is in freedom," said Quentin, making a sign to Pavillon, who seemed about to enter on the dreadful narrative, to be silent.

"Is it possible for us to rejoin him?—Hath he gathered any power?" said the lady.

"His only hopes are in Heaven," said the Scot, "but wherever you wish to go, I stand by your side, a determined guide and guard."

"We will consider," said Isabelle, and after a moment's pause, she added, "A convent would be my choice, but that I fear it would prove a weak defence against those who pursue me."

"Hem! hem!" said the Syndic, "I could not well recommend a convent within the district of Liege, because the Boar of Ardennes, though in the main a brave leader, a trusty confederate, and a well wisher to our city, has, nevertheless, rough humours, and payeth, on the whole, little regard to cloisters, convents, nunneries, and the like. Men say that there are a score of nuns—that is, such as were nuns—who march always with his company."

"Get yourself in readiness hastily, Seignior Durward," said Isabelle, interrupting this detail, "since to your faith I must needs commit myself."

No sooner had the Syndic and Quentin left the room than Isabelle began to ask of Gertrude various questions concerning the roads, and so forth, with such clearness of spirit and pertinence, that the latter could not help exclaiming, "Lady, I wonder at you!—I have heard of masculine firmness, but yours appears to me more than belongs to humanity."

"Necessity," answered the Countess,—"necessity, my friend, is the mother of courage, as of invention. No long time since, I might have fainted when I saw a drop of blood shed from a trifling cut—I have since seen life blood flow around me, I may say, in waves, yet I have retained my senses and my self possession.—Do not think it was an easy task," she added, laying on Gertrude's arm a trembling hand, although she still spoke with a firm voice, "the little world within me is like a garrison besieged by a thousand foes, whom nothing but the most determined resolution can keep from storming it on every hand, and at every moment. Were my situation one whit less perilous than it is—were I not sensible that my only chance to escape a fate more horrible than death is to retain my recollection and self possession—Gertrude, I would at this moment throw myself into your arms, and relieve my bursting bosom by such a transport of tears and agony of terror as never rushed from a breaking heart."

"Do not do so, lady!" said the sympathizing Fleming, "take courage, tell your beads, throw yourself on the care of Heaven, and surely, if ever Heaven sent a deliverer to one ready to perish, that bold and adventurous young gentleman must be designed for yours. There is one, too," she added, blushing deeply, "in whom I have some interest. Say nothing to my father, but I have ordered my bachelor, Hans Glover, to wait for you at the eastern gate, and never to see my face more, unless he brings word that he has guided you safe from the territory."

To kiss her tenderly was the only way in which the young Countess could express her thanks to the frank and kind hearted city maiden, who returned the embrace affectionately, and added, with a smile, "Nay, if two maidens and their devoted bachelors cannot succeed in a disguise and an escape, the world is changed from what I am told it wont to be."

A part of this speech again called the colour into the Countess's pale cheeks, which was not lessened by Quentin's sudden appearance. He entered completely attired as a Flemish boor of the better class, in the holyday suit of Peter, who expressed his interest in the young Scot by the readiness with which he parted with it for his use, and swore, at the same time, that, were he to be curried and tugged worse than ever was bullock's hide, they should make nothing out of him, to the betraying of the young folks. Two stout horses had been provided by the activity of Mother Mabel, who really desired the Countess and her attendant no harm, so that she could make her own house and family clear of the dangers which might attend upon harbouring them. She beheld them mount and go off with great satisfaction, after telling them that they would find their way to the east gate by keeping their eye on Peter, who was to walk in that direction as their guide, but without holding any visible communication with them. The instant her guests had departed, Mother Mabel took the opportunity to read a long practical lecture to Trudchen upon the folly of reading romances, whereby the flaunting ladies of the Court were grown so bold and venturous, that, instead of applying to learn some honest housewifery, they must ride, forsooth, a-damsel erranting through the country, with no better attendant than some idle squire, debauched page, or rake belly archer from foreign parts, to the great danger of their health, the impoverishing of their substance, and the irreparable prejudice of their reputation. All this Gertrude heard in silence, and without reply, but, considering her character, it might be doubted whether she derived from it the practical inference which it was her mother's purpose to enforce. Meantime, the travellers had gained the eastern gate of the city, traversing crowds of people, who were fortunately too much busied in the political events and rumours of the hour to give any attention to a couple who had so little to render their appearance remarkable. They passed the guards in virtue of a permission obtained for them by Pavillon, but in the name of his colleague Rouslaer, and they took leave of Peter Geislaer with a friendly though brief exchange of good wishes on either side.

Immediately afterwards, they were joined by a stout young man, riding a good gray horse, who presently made himself known as Hans Glover, the bachelor of Trudchen Pavillon. He was a young fellow with a good Flemish countenance—not, indeed, of the most intellectual cast, but arguing more hilarity and good humour than wit, and, as the Countess could not help thinking, scarce worthy to be bachelor to the generous Trudchen. He seemed, however, fully desirous to second the views which she had formed in their favour, for, saluting them respectfully, he asked of the Countess, in Flemish, on which road she desired to be conducted.

"Guide me," said she, "towards the nearest town on the frontiers of Brabant."

"You have then settled the end and object of your journey," said Quentin, approaching his horse to that of Isabelle, and speaking French, which their guide did not understand.

"Surely," replied the young lady, "for, situated as I now am, it must be of no small detriment to me if I were to prolong a journey in my present circumstances, even though the termination should be a rigorous prison."

"A prison," said Quentin.

"Yes, my friend, a prison, but I will take care that you shall not share it."

"Do not talk—do not think of me," said Quentin. "Saw I you but safe, my own concerns are little worth minding."

"Do not speak so loud," said the Lady Isabelle, "you will surprise our guide—you see he has already rode on before us,"—for, in truth, the good natured Fleming, doing as he desired to be done by, had removed from them the constraint of a third person, upon Quentin's first motion towards the lady.

"Yes," she continued, when she noticed they were free from observation, "to you, my friend, my protector—why should I be ashamed to call you what Heaven has made you to me?—to you it is my duty to say that my resolution is taken to return to my native country, and to throw myself on the mercy of the Duke of Burgundy. It was mistaken, though well meant advice, which induced me ever to withdraw from his protection, and place myself under that of the crafty and false Louis of France."

"And you resolve to become the bride, then, of the Count of Campobasso, the unworthy favourite of Charles?"

Thus spoke Quentin, with a voice in which internal agony struggled with his desire to assume an indifferent tone, like that of the poor condemned criminal, when, affecting a firmness which he is far from feeling, he asks if the death warrant be arrived.

"No, Durward, no," said the Lady Isabelle, sitting up erect in her saddle, "to that hated condition all Burgundy's power shall not sink a daughter of the House of Croye. Burgundy may seize on my lands and fiefs, he may imprison my person in a convent, but that is the worst I have to expect, and worse than that I will endure ere I give my hand to Campobasso."

"The worst?" said Quentin, "and what worse can there be than plunder and imprisonment?—Oh, think, while you have God's free air around you, and one by your side who will hazard life to conduct you to England, to Germany, even to Scotland, in all of which you shall find generous protectors.—Oh, while this is the case, do not resolve so rashly to abandon the means of liberty, the best gift that Heaven gives!—Oh, well sang a poet of my own land—

"Ah, freedom is a noble thing—

Freedom makes men to have liking—

Freedom the zest to pleasure gives—

He lives at ease who freely lives.

Grief, sickness, poortith [poverty], want, are all

Summ'd up within the name of thrall."

[from Barbour's Bruce]

She listened with a melancholy smile to her guide's tirade in praise of liberty, and then answered, after a moment's pause. "Freedom is for man alone—woman must ever seek a protector, since nature made her incapable to defend herself. And where am I to find one?—In that voluptuary Edward of England—in the inebriated Wenceslaus of Germany—in Scotland?—Ah, Durward, were I your sister, and could you promise me shelter in some of those mountain glens which you love to describe where, for charity, or for the few jewels I have preserved, I might lead an unharrassed life, and forget the lot I was born to—could you promise me the protection of some honoured matron of the land—of some baron whose heart was as true as his sword—that were indeed a prospect, for which it were worth the risk of farther censure to wander farther and wider."

There was a faltering tenderness of voice with which the Countess Isabelle made this admission that at once filled Quentin with a sensation of joy, and cut him to the very heart. He hesitated a moment ere he made an answer, hastily reviewing in his mind the possibility there might be that he could procure her shelter in Scotland, but the melancholy truth rushed on him that it would be alike base and cruel to point out to her a course which he had not the most distant power or means to render safe.

"Lady," he said at last, "I should act foully against my honour and oath of chivalry, did I suffer you to ground any plan upon the thoughts that I have the power in Scotland to afford you other protection than that of the poor arm which is now by your side. I scarce know that my blood flows in the veins of an individual who now lives in my native land. The Knight of Innerquharity stormed our Castle at midnight, and cut off all that belonged to my name. Were I again in Scotland, our feudal enemies are numerous and powerful, I single and weak, and even had the King a desire to do me justice, he dared not, for the sake of redressing the wrongs of a poor individual, provoke a chief who rides with five hundred horse."

"Alas!" said the Countess, "there is then no corner of the world safe from oppression, since it rages as unrestrained amongst those wild hills which afford so few objects to covet as in our rich and abundant lowlands!"

"It is a sad truth, and I dare not deny it," said the Scot, "that for little more than the pleasure of revenge, and the lust of bloodshed, our hostile clans do the work of executioners on each other, and Ogilvies and the like act the same scenes in Scotland as De la Marck and his robbers do in this country."

"No more of Scotland, then," said Isabelle, with a tone of indifference, either real or affected—"no more of Scotland,—which indeed I mentioned but in jest, to see if you really dared to recommend to me, as a place of rest, the most distracted kingdom in Europe. It was but a trial of your sincerity, which I rejoice to see may be relied on, even when your partialities are most strongly excited. So, once more, I will think of no other protection than can be afforded by the first honourable baron holding of Duke Charles, to whom I am determined to render myself."

"And why not rather betake yourself to your own estates, and to your own strong castle, as you designed when at Tours?" said Quentin. "Why not call around you the vassals of your father, and make treaty with Burgundy, rather than surrender yourself to him? Surely there must be many a bold heart that would fight in your cause, and I know at least of one who would willingly lay down his life to give example."

"Alas," said the Countess, "that scheme, the suggestion of the crafty Louis, and, like all which he ever suggested, designed more for his advantage than for mine, has become practicable, since it was betrayed to Burgundy by the double traitor Zamet Hayraddin. My kinsman was then imprisoned, and my houses garrisoned. Any attempt of mine would but expose my dependents to the vengeance of Duke Charles, and why should I occasion more bloodshed than has already taken place on so worthless an account? No. I will submit myself to my Sovereign as a dutiful vassal, in all which shall leave my personal freedom of choice unfringed, the rather that I trust my kinswoman, the Countess Hameline, who first counselled, and indeed urged my flight, has already taken this wise and honourable step."

"Your kinswoman!" repeated Quentin, awakened to recollections to which the young Countess was a stranger, and which the rapid succession of perilous and stirring events had, as matters of nearer concern, in fact banished from his memory.

"Ay—my aunt—the Countess Hameline of Croye—know you aught of her?" said the Countess Isabelle. "I trust she is now under the protection of the Burgundian banner. You are silent. Know you aught of her?"

The last question, urged in a tone of the most anxious inquiry, obliged Quentin to give some account of what he knew of the Countess's fate. He mentioned that he had been summoned to attend her in a flight from Liege, which he had no doubt the Lady Isabelle would be partaker in—he mentioned the discovery that had been made after they had gained the forest—and finally, he told his own return to the castle, and the circumstances in which he found it. But he said nothing of the views with which it was plain the Lady Hameline had left the Castle of Schonwaldt, and as little about the floating report of her having fallen into the hands of William de la Marck. Delicacy prevented his even hinting at the one, and regard for the feelings of his companion at a moment when strength and exertion were most demanded of her, prevented him from alluding to the latter, which had, besides, only reached him as a mere rumour.

This tale, though abridged of those important particulars, made a strong impression on the Countess Isabelle, who, after riding some time in silence, said at last, with a tone of cold displeasure, "And so you abandoned my unfortunate relative in a wild forest, at the mercy of a vile Bohemian and a traitorous waiting woman?—Poor kinswoman, thou wert wont to praise this youth's good faith!"

"Had I not done so, madam," said Quentin, not unreasonably offended at the turn thus given to his gallantry, "what had been the fate of one to whose service I was far more devotedly bound? Had I not left the Countess Hameline of Croye to the charge of those whom she had herself selected as counsellors and advisers, the Countess Isabelle had been ere now the bride of William de la Marck, the Wild Boar of Ardennes."

"You are right," said the Countess Isabelle, in her usual manner, "and I, who have the advantage of your unhesitating devotion, have done you foul and ungrateful wrong. But oh, my unhappy kinswoman! and the wretch Marthon, who enjoyed so much of her confidence, and deserved it so little—it was she that introduced to my kinswoman the wretched Zamet and Hayraddin Maugrabin, who, by their pretended knowledge of soothsaying and astrology, obtained a great ascendancy over her mind, it was she who, strengthening their predictions, encouraged her in—I know not what to call them—delusions concerning matches and lovers, which my kinswoman's age rendered ungraceful and improbable. I doubt not that, from the beginning, we had been surrounded by these snares by Louis of France, in order to determine us to take refuge at his Court, or rather to put ourselves into his power, after which rash act on our part, how unkingly, unknighly, ignobly, ungentlemanlike, he hath conducted himself towards us, you, Quentin Durward, can bear witness. But, alas! my kinswoman—what think you will be her fate?"

Endeavouring to inspire hopes which he scarce felt, Durward answered that the avarice of these people was stronger than any other passion, that Marthon, even when he left them, seemed to act rather as the Lady Hameline's protectress, and in fine, that it was difficult to conceive any object these wretches could accomplish by the ill usage or murder of the Countess, whereas they might be gainers by treating her well, and putting her to ransom.

To lead the Countess Isabelle's thoughts from this melancholy subject, Quentin frankly told her the treachery of the Maugrabin, which he had discovered in the night quarter near Namur, and which appeared the result of an agreement betwixt the King and William de la Marck. Isabelle shuddered with horror, and then recovering herself said, "I am ashamed, and I have sinned in permitting myself so far to doubt of the saints' protection, as for an instant to have deemed possible the accomplishment of a scheme so utterly cruel, base, and dishonourable, while there are pitying eyes in Heaven to look down on human miseries. It is not a thing to be thought of with fear or abhorrence, but to be rejected as such a piece of incredible treachery and villainy, as it were atheism to believe could ever be successful. But I now see plainly why that hypocritical Marthon often seemed to foster every seed of petty jealousy or discontent betwixt my poor kinswoman and myself, whilst she always mixed with flattery, addressed to the individual who was present, whatever could prejudice her against her absent kinswoman. Yet never did I dream she could have proceeded so far as to have caused my once affectionate kinswoman to have left me behind in the perils of Schonwaldt, while she made her own escape."

"Did the Lady Hameline not mention to you, then," said Quentin, "her intended flight?"

"No," replied the Countess, "but she alluded to some communication which Marthon was to make to me. To say truth, my poor kinswoman's head was so turned by the mysterious jargon of the miserable Hayraddin, whom that day she had admitted to a long and secret conference, and she threw out so many strange hints that—that—in short, I cared not to press on her, when in that humour, for any explanation. Yet it was cruel to leave me behind her."

"I will excuse the Lady Hameline from intending such unkindness," said Quentin, "for such was the agitation of the moment, and the darkness of the hour, that I believe the Lady Hameline as certainly conceived herself accompanied by her niece, as I at the same time, deceived by Marthon's dress and demeanour,

supposed I was in the company of both the Ladies of Croye: and of her especially," he added, with a low but determined voice, "without whom the wealth of worlds would not have tempted me to leave."

Isabelle stooped her head forward, and seemed scarce to hear the emphasis with which Quentin had spoken. But she turned her face to him again when he began to speak of the policy of Louis, and, it was not difficult for them, by mutual communication, to ascertain that the Bohemian brothers, with their accomplice Marthon, had been the agents of that crafty monarch, although Zamet, the elder of them, with a perfidy peculiar to his race, had attempted to play a double game, and had been punished accordingly. In the same humour of mutual confidence, and forgetting the singularity of their own situation, as well as the perils of the road, the travellers pursued their journey for several hours, only stopping to refresh their horses at a retired dorff, or hamlet, to which they were conducted by Hans Glover, who, in all other respects, as well as in leaving them much to their own freedom in conversation, conducted himself like a person of reflection and discretion.

Meantime, the artificial distinction which divided the two lovers (for such we may now term them) seemed dissolved, or removed, by the circumstances in which they were placed, for if the Countess boasted the higher rank, and was by birth entitled to a fortune incalculably larger than that of the youth, whose revenue lay in his sword, it was to be considered that, for the present, she was as poor as he, and for her safety, honour, and life, exclusively indebted to his presence of mind, valour, and devotion. They spoke not indeed of love, for though the young lady, her heart full of gratitude and confidence, might have pardoned such a declaration, yet Quentin, on whose tongue there was laid a check, both by natural timidity and by the sentiments of chivalry, would have held it an unworthy abuse of her situation had he said anything which could have the appearance of taking undue advantage of the opportunities which it afforded them. They spoke not then of love, but the thoughts of it were on both sides unavoidable, and thus they were placed in that relation to each other, in which sentiments of mutual regard are rather understood than announced, and which, with the freedoms which it permits, and the uncertainties that attend it, often forms the most delightful hours of human existence, and as frequently leads to those which are darkened by disappointment, fickleness, and all the pains of blighted hope and unrequited attachment.

It was two hours after noon, when the travellers were alarmed by the report of the guide, who, with paleness and horror in his countenance, said that they were pursued by a party of De la Marck's Schwarzsreiters. These soldiers, or rather banditti, were bands levied in the Lower Circles of Germany, and resembled the lanzknechts in every particular, except that the former acted as light cavalry. To maintain the name of Black Troopers, and to strike additional terror into their enemies, they usually rode on black chargers, and smeared with black ointment their arms and accoutrements, in which operation their hands and faces often had their share. In morals and in ferocity these Schwarzsreiters emulated their pedestrian brethren the Lanzknechts.

["To make their horses and boots shine, they make themselves as black as colliers. These horsemen wear black clothes, and poor though they be, spend no small time in brushing them. The most of them have black horses,... and delight to have their boots and shoes shine with blacking stuff, their hands and faces become black, and thereof they have their foresaid name."... Fynes Morrison's Itinerary.—S.]

On looking back, and discovering along the long level road which they had traversed a cloud of dust advancing, with one or two of the headmost troopers riding furiously in front of it, Quentin addressed his companion: "Dearest Isabelle, I have no weapon left save my sword, but since I cannot fight for you, I will fly with you. Could we gain yonder wood that is before us ere they come up, we may easily find means to escape."

"So be it, my only friend," said Isabelle, pressing her horse to the gallop, "and thou, good fellow," she added, addressing Hans Glover, "get thee off to another road, and do not stay to partake our misfortune and danger."

The honest Fleming shook his head, and answered her generous exhortation, with Nein, nein! das geht nicht [no, no! that must not be], and continued to attend them, all three riding toward the shelter of the wood as fast as their jaded horses could go, pursued, at the same time, by the Schwarzsreiters, who increased their pace when they saw them fly. But notwithstanding the fatigue of the horses, still the fugitives being unarmed, and riding lighter in consequence, had considerably the advantage of the pursuers, and were within about a quarter of a mile of the wood, when a body of men at arms, under a knight's pennon, was discovered advancing from the cover, so as to intercept their flight.

"They have bright armour," said Isabelle, "they must be Burgundians. Be they who they will, we must yield to them, rather than to the lawless miscreants who pursue us."

A moment after, she exclaimed, looking on the pennon, "I know the cloven heart which it displays! It is the banner of the Count of Crevecoeur, a noble Burgundian—to him I will surrender myself."

Quentin Durward sighed, but what other alternative remained, and how happy would he have been but an instant before, to have been certain of the escape of Isabelle, even under worse terms? They soon joined the band of Crevecoeur, and the Countess demanded to speak to the leader, who had halted his party till he should reconnoitre the Black Troopers, and as he gazed on her with doubt and uncertainty, she said, "Noble Count—Isabelle of Croye, the daughter of your old companion in arms, Count Reinold of Croye, renders herself, and asks protection from your valour for her and hers."

"Thou shalt have it, fair kinswoman, were it against a host—always excepting my liege lord, of Burgundy. But there is little time to talk of it. These filthy looking fiends have made a halt, as if they intended to dispute the matter.—By Saint George of Burgundy, they have the insolence to advance against the banner of Crevecoeur! What! will not the knaves be ruled? Damian, my lance!—Advance banner!—Lay your spears in the rest!—Crevecoeur to the Rescue!"

Crying his war cry, and followed by his men at arms, he galloped rapidly forward to charge the Schwarzsreiters.

CHAPTER XXIV: THE SURRENDER

*Rescue or none, Sir Knight, I am your captive:
Deal with me what your nobleness suggests—
Thinking the chance of war may one day place you
Where I must now be reckon'd—I' the roll
Of melancholy prisoners.*

ANONYMOUS

The skirmish betwixt the Schwarzsreiters and the Burgundian men at arms lasted scarcely five minutes, so soon were the former put to the rout by the superiority of the latter in armour, weight of horse, and military spirit. In less than the space we have mentioned, the Count of Crevecoeur, wiping his bloody sword upon his horse's mane ere he sheathed it, came back to the verge of the forest, where Isabelle had remained a spectator of the combat. One part of his people followed him, while the other continued to pursue the flying enemy for a little space along the causeway.

"It is shame," said the Count, "that the weapons of knights and gentlemen should be soiled by the blood of those brutal swine."

So saying, he returned his weapon to the sheath and added, "This is a rough welcome to your home, my pretty cousin, but wandering princesses must expect such adventures. And well I came up in time, for, let me assure you, the Black Troopers respect a countess's coronet as little as a country wench's coif, and I think your retinue is not qualified for much resistance."

"My Lord Count," said the Lady Isabelle, "without farther preface, let me know if I am a prisoner, and where you are to conduct me."

"You know, you silly child," answered the Count, "how I would answer that question, did it rest on my own will. But you, and your foolish match making, marriage hunting aunt, have made such wild use of your wings of late, that I fear you must be contented to fold them up in a cage for a little while. For my part, my duty, and it is a sad one, will be ended when I have conducted you to the Court of the Duke, at Peronne for which purpose I hold it necessary to deliver the command of this

reconnoitring party to my nephew, Count Stephen, while I return with you thither, as I think you may need an intercessor.—And I hope the young giddy pate will discharge his duty wisely."

"So please you, fair uncle," said Count Stephen, "if you doubt my capacity to conduct the men at arms, even remain with them yourself, and I will be the servant and guard of the Countess Isabelle of Croye."

"No doubt, fair nephew," answered his uncle, "this were a goodly improvement on my scheme, but methinks I like it as well in the way I planned it. Please you, therefore, to take notice, that your business here is not to hunt after and stick these black hogs, for which you seemed but now to have felt an especial vocation, but to collect and bring to me true tidings of what is going forward in the country of Liege, concerning which we hear such wild rumours. Let some half score of lances follow me and the rest remain with my banner under your guidance."

"Yet one moment, cousin of Crevecoeur," said the Countess Isabelle, "and let me, in yielding myself prisoner, stipulate at least for the safety of those who have befriended me in my misfortunes. Permit this good fellow, my trusty guide, to go back unharmed to his native town of Liege."

"My nephew," said Crevecoeur, after looking sharply at Glover's honest breadth of countenance, "shall guard this good fellow, who seems, indeed, to have little harm in him, as far into the territory as he himself advances, and then leave him at liberty."

"Fail not to remember me to the kind Gertrude," said the Countess to her guide, and added, taking a string of pearls from under her veil, "Pray her to wear this in remembrance of her unhappy friend."

Honest Glover took the string of pearls, and kissed with clownish gesture, but with sincere kindness, the fair hand which had found such a delicate mode of remunerating his own labours and peril.

"Umph! signs and tokens," said the Count, "any farther bequests to make, my fair cousin?—It is time we were on our way."

"Only," said the Countess, making an effort to speak, "that you will be pleased to be favourable to this—this young gentleman."

"Umph!" said Crevecoeur, casting the same penetrating glance on Quentin which he had bestowed on Glover, but apparently with a much less satisfactory result, and mimicking, though not offensively, the embarrassment of the Countess.

"Umph!—Ay—this is a blade of another temper.—And pray, my cousin, what has this—this very young gentleman done, to deserve such intercession at your hands?"

"He has saved my life and honour," said the Countess, reddening with shame and resentment.

Quentin also blushed with indignation, but wisely concluded that to give vent to it might only make matters worse.

"Life and honour?—Umph!" said again the Count Crevecoeur, "methinks it would have been as well, my cousin, if you had not put yourself in the way of lying under such obligations to this very young gentleman.—But let it pass. The young gentleman may wait on us, if his quality permit, and I will see he has no injury—only I will myself take in future the office of protecting your life and honour, and may perhaps find for him some fitter duty than that of being a squire of the body to damosels errant."

"My Lord Count," said Durward, unable to keep silence any longer, "lest you should talk of a stranger in slighter terms than you might afterwards think becoming, I take leave to tell you, that I am Quentin Durward, an Archer of the Scottish Bodyguard, in which, as you well know, none but gentlemen and men of honour are enrolled."

"I thank you for your information, and I kiss your hands, Seignior Archer," said Crevecoeur, in the same tone of raillery. "Have the goodness to ride with me to the front of the party."

As Quentin moved onward at the command of the Count, who had now the power, if not the right, to dictate his motions, he observed that the Lady Isabelle followed his motions with a look of anxious and timid interest, which amounted almost to tenderness, and the sight of which brought water into his eyes. But he remembered that he had a man's part to sustain before Crevecoeur, who, perhaps of all the chivalry in France or Burgundy, was the least likely to be moved to anything but laughter by a tale of true love sorrow. He determined, therefore, not to wait his addressing him, but to open the conversation in a tone which should assert his claim to fair treatment, and to more respect than the Count, offended perhaps at finding a person of such inferior note placed so near the confidence of his high born and wealthy cousin, seemed disposed to entertain for him.

"My Lord Count of Crevecoeur," he said, in a temperate but firm tone of voice, "may I request of you, before our interview goes farther, to tell me if I am at liberty, or am to account myself your prisoner?"

"A shrewd question," replied the Count, "which at present I can only answer by another.—Are France and Burgundy, think you, at peace or war with each other?"

"That," replied the Scot, "you, my lord, should certainly know better than I. I have been absent from the Court of France, and have heard no news for some time."

"Look you there," said the Count, "you see how easy it is to ask questions, but how difficult to answer them. Why, I myself, who have been at Peronne with the Duke for this week and better, cannot resolve this riddle any more than you, and yet, Sir Squire, upon the solution of that question depends the said point, whether you are prisoner or free man, and, for the present, I must hold you as the former.—Only, if you have really and honestly been of service to my kinswoman, and for you are candid in your answers to the questions I shall ask, affairs shall stand the better with you."

"The Countess of Croye," said Quentin, "is best judge if I have rendered any service, and to her I refer you on that matter. My answers you will yourself judge of when you ask me your questions."

"Umph!—haughty enough," muttered the Count of Crevecoeur, "and very like one that wears a lady's favour in his hat, and thinks he must carry things with a high tone, to honour the precious remnant of silk and tinsel. Well, sir, I trust it will be no abatement of your dignity, if you answer me, how long you have been about the person of the Lady Isabelle of Croye?"

"Count of Crevecoeur," said Quentin Durward, "if I answer questions which are asked in a tone approaching towards insult, it is only lest injurious inferences should be drawn from my silence respecting one to whom we are both obliged to render justice. I have acted as escort to the Lady Isabelle since she left France to retire into Flanders."

"Ho! ho!" said the Count, "and that is to say, since she fled from Plessis les Tours?—You, an Archer of the Scottish Guard, accompanied her, of course, by the express orders of King Louis?"

However little Quentin thought himself indebted to the King of France, who, in contriving the surprisal of the Countess Isabelle by William de la Marck, had probably calculated on the young Scotchman's being slain in her defence, he did not yet conceive himself at liberty to betray any trust which Louis had reposed, or had seemed to repose, in him, and therefore replied to Count Crevecoeur's inference that it was sufficient for him to have the authority of his superior officer for what he had done, and he inquired no farther.

"It is quite sufficient," said the Count. "We know the King does not permit his officers to send the Archers of his Guard to prance like paladins by the bridle rein of wandering ladies, unless he hath some politic purpose to serve. It will be difficult for King Louis to continue to aver so boldly that he knew' not of the Ladies of Croye's having escaped from France, since they were escorted by one of his own Life guard.—And whither, Sir Archer, was your retreat directed?"

"To Liege, my lord," answered the Scot, "where the ladies desired to be placed under the protection of the late Bishop."

"The late Bishop!" exclaimed the Count of Crevecoeur, "is Louis of Bourbon dead?—Not a word of his illness had reached the Duke.—Of what did he die?"

"He sleeps in a bloody grave, my lord—that is, if his murderers have conferred one on his remains."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Crevecoeur again.—"Holy Mother of Heaven!—young man, it is impossible!"

"I saw the deed done with my own eyes, and many an act of horror besides."

"Saw it! and made not in to help the good Prelate!" exclaimed the Count, "or to raise the castle against his murderers?—Know'st thou not that even to look on such a deed, without resisting it, is profane sacrilege?"

"To be brief, my lord," said Durward, "ere this act was done, the castle was stormed by the bloodthirsty William de la Marck, with help of the insurgent Liegeois."

"I am struck with thunder," said Crevecoeur. "Liege in insurrection!—Schonwaldt taken!—the Bishop murdered—Messenger of sorrow, never did one man unfold such a packet of woes!—Speak—knew you of this assault—of this insurrection—of this murder?—Speak—thou art one of Louis's trusted Archers, and it is he that has aimed this painful arrow.—Speak, or I will have thee torn with wild horses!"

"And if I am so torn, my lord, there can be nothing rent out of me, that may not become a true Scottish gentleman: I know no more of these villainies than you—was so far from being partaker in them, that I would have withstood them to the uttermost, had my means in a twentieth degree equalled my inclination. But what could I do?—they were hundreds, and I but one. My only care was to rescue the Countess Isabelle, and in that I was happily successful. Yet, had I been near enough when the ruffian deed was so cruelly done on the old man, I had saved his gray hairs, or I had avenged them, and as it was, my abhorrence was spoken loud enough to prevent other horrors."

"I believe thee, youth," said the Count, "thou art neither of an age nor nature to be trusted with such bloody work, however well fitted to be the squire of dames. But alas! for the kind and generous Prelate, to be murdered on the hearth where he so often entertained the stranger with Christian charity and princely bounty—and that by a wretch, a monster! a portentous growth of blood and cruelty!—bred up in the very hall where he has imbrued his hands in his benefactor's blood! But I know not Charles of Burgundy—nay, I should doubt of the justice of Heaven, if vengeance be not as sharp, and sudden, and severe, as this villainy has been unexampled in atrocity. And, if no other shall pursue the murderer"—here he paused, grasped his sword, then quitting his bridle, struck both gauntleted hands upon his breast, until his corselet clattered, and finally held them up to heaven, as he solemnly continued,—"**I—I, Philip Crevecoeur of Cordes, make a vow to God, Saint Lambert, and the Three Kings of Cologne, that small shall be my thought of other earthly concerns, till I take full revenge on the murderers of the good Louis of Bourbon, whether I find them in forest or field, in city or in country, in hill or in plain, in King's Court or in God's Church! and thereto I pledge hands and living, friends and followers, life and honour. So help me God, and Saint Lambert of Liege, and the Three Kings of Cologne!**"

When the Count of Crevecoeur had made his vow, his mind seemed in some sort relieved from the overwhelming grief and astonishment with which he had heard the fatal tragedy that had been acted at Schonwaldt, and he proceeded to question Durward more minutely concerning the particulars of that disastrous affair, which the Scot, nowise desirous to abate the spirit of revenge which the Count entertained against William de la Marck, gave him at full length.

"But those blind, unsteady, faithless, fickle beasts, the Liegeois," said the Count, "that they should have combined themselves with this inexorable robber and murderer, to put to death their lawful Prince!"

Durward here informed the enraged Burgundian that the Liegeois, or at least the better class of them, however rashly they had run into the rebellion against their Bishop, had no design, so far as appeared to him, to aid in the execrable deed of De la Marck but, on the contrary, would have prevented it if they had had the means, and were struck with horror when they beheld it.

"Speak not of the faithless, inconstant plebeian rabble!" said Crevecoeur. "When they took arms against a Prince who had no fault, save that he was too kind and too good a master for such a set of ungrateful slaves—when they armed against him, and broke into his peaceful house, what could there be in their intention but murder?—when they banded themselves with the Wild Boar of Ardennes, the greatest homicide in the marches of Flanders, what else could there be in their purpose but murder, which is the very trade he lives by? And again, was it not one of their own vile rabble who did the very deed, by thine own account? I hope to see their canals running blood by the flight of their burning houses. Oh, the kind, noble, generous lord, whom they have slaughtered!—Other vassals have rebelled under the pressure of imposts and penury but the men of Liege in the fullness of insolence and plenty."

He again abandoned the reins of his war horse, and wrung bitterly the hands, which his mail gloves rendered untractable. Quentin easily saw that the grief which he manifested was augmented by the bitter recollection of past intercourse and friendship with the sufferer, and was silent accordingly, respecting feelings which he was unwilling to aggravate, and at the same time felt it impossible to soothe. But the Count of Crevecoeur returned again and again to the subject—questioned him on every particular of the surprise of Schonwaldt, and the death of the Bishop, and then suddenly, as if he had recollected something which had escaped his memory, demanded what had become of the Lady Hameline, and why she was not with her kinswoman?

"Not," he added contemptuously, "that I consider her absence as at all a loss to the Countess Isabelle, for, although she was her kinswoman, and upon the whole a well meaning woman, yet the Court of Cocagne never produced such a fantastic fool, and I hold it for certain that her niece, whom I have always observed to be a modest and orderly young lady, was led into the absurd frolic of flying from Burgundy to France, by that blundering, romantic old match making and match seeking idiot!"

[Court of Cocagne: a fabled land intended to ridicule the stories of Avalon, the apple green island, the home of King Arthur. "Its houses were built of good things to eat: roast geese went slowly down the street, turning themselves, and inviting the passersby to eat them; buttered larks fell in profusion; the shingles of the houses were of cake." Cent. Dict. Cocagne has also been called Lubberland.]

What a speech for a romantic lover to hear! and to hear, too, when it would have been ridiculous in him to attempt what it was impossible for him to achieve—namely, to convince the Count, by force of arms, that he did foul wrong to the Countess—the peerless in sense as in beauty—in terming her a modest and orderly young woman, qualities which might have been predicated with propriety of the daughter of a sunburnt peasant, who lived by goading the oxen, while her father held the plough. And then, to suppose her under the domination and supreme guidance of a silly and romantic aunt!—The slander should have been repelled down the slanderer's throat. But the open, though severe, physiognomy of the Count of Crevecoeur, the total contempt which he seemed to entertain for those feelings which were uppermost in Quentin's bosom, overawed him, not for fear of the Count's fame in arms, that was a risk which would have increased his desire of making out a challenge—but in dread of ridicule, the weapon of all others most feared by enthusiasts of every description, and which, from its predominance over such minds, often checks what is absurd, and fully as often smothers that which is noble.

Under the influence of this fear of becoming an object of scorn rather than resentment, Durward, though with some pain, confined his reply to a confused account of the Lady Hameline's having made her escape from Schonwaldt before the attack took place. He could not, indeed, have made his story very distinct, without throwing ridicule on the near relation of Isabelle and perhaps incurring some himself, as having been the object of her preposterous expectations. He added to his embarrassed detail, that he had heard a report, though a vague one, of the Lady Hameline's having again fallen into the hands of William de la Marck.

"I trust in Saint Lambert that he will marry her," said Crevecoeur, "as indeed, he is likely enough to do, for the sake of her moneybags, and equally likely to knock her on the head, so soon as these are either secured in his own grasp, or, at farthest, emptied."

The Count then proceeded to ask so many questions concerning the mode in which both ladies had conducted themselves on the journey, the degree of intimacy to which they admitted Quentin himself, and other trying particulars, that, vexed, and ashamed, and angry, the youth was scarce able to conceal his embarrassment from the keen sighted soldier and courtier, who seemed suddenly disposed to take leave of him, saying, at the same time, "Umph—I see it is as I conjectured, on one side at least, I trust the other party has kept her senses better.—Come, Sir Squire, spur on, and keep the van, while I fall back to discourse with the Lady Isabelle. I think I have learned now so much from you, that I can talk to her of these sad passages without hurting her nicety, though I have fretted yours a little.—Yet stay, young gallant—one word ere you go. You have had, I imagine, a happy journey through Fairyland—all full of heroic adventure, and high hope, and wild minstrel-like delusion, like the gardens of Morgaine la Fee [half-sister of Arthur. Her gardens abounded in all good things; music filled the air, and the inhabitants enjoyed perpetual youth]. Forget it all, young soldier," he added, tapping him on the shoulder, "remember yonder lady only as the honoured Countess of Croye—forget her as a wandering and adventurous damsel. And her friends—one of them I can answer for—will remember, on their part, only the services you have done her, and forget the unreasonable reward which you have had the boldness to propose to yourself."

Enraged that he had been unable to conceal from the sharp sighted Crevecoeur feelings which the Count seemed to consider as the object of ridicule, Quentin replied indignantly, "My Lord Count, when I require advice of you, I will ask it, when I demand assistance of you, it will be time enough to grant or refuse it, when I set peculiar value on your opinion of me, it will not be too late to express it."

"Heyday!" said the Count, "I have come between Amadis and Oriana, and must expect a challenge to the lists!"

[Amadis is the hero of a famous mediaeval romance originally written in Portuguese, but translated into French and much enlarged by subsequent romancers. Amadis is represented as a model of chivalry. His lady was Oriana.]

"You speak as if that were an impossibility," said Quentin. "When I broke a lance with the Duke of Orleans, it was against a head in which flowed better blood than that of Crevecoeur.—When I measured swords with Dunois, I engaged a better warrior."

"Now Heaven nourish thy judgment, gentle youth," said Crevecoeur, still laughing at the chivalrous inamorato. "If thou speak'st truth, thou hast had singular luck in this world, and, truly, if it be the pleasure of Providence exposes thee to such trials, without a beard on thy lip, thou wilt be mad with vanity ere thou writest thyself man. Thou canst not move me to anger, though thou mayst to mirth. Believe me, though thou mayst have fought with Princes, and played the champion for Countesses, by some of those freaks which Fortune will sometimes exhibit, thou art by no means the equal of those of whom thou hast been either the casual opponent, or more casual companion. I can allow thee like a youth, who hath listened to romances till he fancied himself a Paladin, to form pretty dreams for some time, but thou must not be angry at a well meaning friend, though he shake thee something roughly by the shoulders to awake thee."

"My Lord of Crevecoeur," said Quentin, "my family—"

"Nay, it was not utterly of family that I spoke," said the Count, "but of rank, fortune, high station, and so forth, which place a distance between various degrees and classes of persons. As for birth, all men are descended from Adam and Eve."

"My Lord Count," repeated Quentin, "my ancestors, the Durwards of Glen Houlakin—"

"Nay," said the Count, "if you claim a farther descent for them than from Adam, I have done! Good even to you."

He reined back his horse, and paused to join the Countess, to whom, if possible, his insinuations and advices, however well meant, were still more disagreeable than to Quentin, who, as he rode on, muttered to himself, "Cold blooded, insolent, overweening coxcomb!—Would that the next Scottish Archer who has his harquebuss pointed at thee, may not let thee off so easily as I did!"

In the evening they reached the town of Charleroi, on the Sambre, where the Count of Crevecoeur had determined to leave the Countess Isabelle, whom the terror and fatigue of yesterday, joined to a flight of fifty miles since morning, and the various distressing sensations by which it was accompanied, had made incapable of travelling farther with safety to her health. The Count consigned her, in a state of great exhaustion, to the care of the Abbess of the Cistercian convent in Charleroi, a noble lady, to whom both the families of Crevecoeur and Croye were related, and in whose prudence and kindness he could repose confidence.

Crevecoeur himself only stopped to recommend the utmost caution to the governor of a small Burgundian garrison who occupied the place, and required him also to mount a guard of honour upon the convent during the residence of the Countess Isabelle of Croye—ostensibly to secure her safety, but perhaps secretly to prevent her attempting to escape. The Count only assigned as a cause for the garrison's being vigilant, some vague rumours which he had heard of disturbances in the Bishopric of Liege. But he was determined himself to be the first who should carry the formidable news of the insurrection and the murder of the Bishop, in all their horrible reality, to Duke Charles, and for that purpose, having procured fresh horses for himself and suite, he mounted with the resolution of continuing his journey to Peronne without stopping for repose, and, informing Quentin Durward that he must attend him, he made, at the same time, a mock apology for parting fair company, but hoped that to so devoted a squire of dames a night's journey by moonshine would be more agreeable than supinely to yield himself to slumber like an ordinary mortal.

Quentin, already sufficiently afflicted by finding that he was to be parted from Isabelle, longed to answer this taunt with an indignant defiance, but aware that the Count would only laugh at his anger, and despise his challenge, he resolved to wait some future time, when he might have an opportunity of obtaining some amends from this proud lord, who, though for very different reasons, had become nearly as odious to him as the Wild Boar of Ardennes himself. He therefore assented to Crevecoeur's proposal, as to what he had no choice of declining, and they pursued in company, and with all the despatch they could exert, the road between Charleroi and Peronne.

CHAPTER XXV: THE UNBIDDEN GUEST

*No human quality is so well wove
In warp and woof, but there 's some flaw in it:
I've known a brave man fly a shepherd's cur,
A wise man so demean him, drivelling idiocy
Had wellnigh been ashamed on't. For your crafty,
Your worldly wise man, he, above the rest,
Weaves his own snares so fine, he 's often caught in them.*

OLD PLAY

Quentin, during the earlier part of the night journey, had to combat with that bitter heartache which is felt when youth parts, and probably forever, with her he loves. As, pressed by the urgency of the moment, and the impatience of Crevecoeur, they hasted on through the rich lowlands of Hainault, under the benign guidance of a rich and lustrous harvest moon, she shed her yellow influence over rich and deep pastures, woodland, and cornfields, from which the husbandmen were using her light to withdraw the grain, such was the industry of the Flemings, even at that period, she shone on broad, level, and fructifying rivers, where glided the white sail in the service of commerce, uninterrupted by rock and torrent, beside lively quiet villages, whose external decency and cleanliness expressed the ease and comfort of the inhabitants,—she gleamed upon the feudal castle of many a Baron and Knight, with its deep moat, battlemented court, and high belfry—for the chivalry of Hainault was renowned among the nobles of Europe—and her light displayed at a distance, in its broad beam, the gigantic towers of more than one lofty minster.

Yet all this fair variety, however, differing from the waste and wilderness of his own land, interrupted not the course of Quentin's regrets and sorrows. He had left his heart behind him when he departed from Charleroi, and the only reflection which the farther journey inspired was that every step was carrying him farther from Isabelle. His imagination was taxed to recall every word she had spoken, every look she had directed towards him, and, as happens frequently in such cases, the impression made upon his imagination by the recollection of these particulars, was even stronger than the realities themselves had excited.

At length, after the cold hour of midnight was past, in spite alike of love and of sorrow, the extreme fatigue which Quentin had undergone the two preceding days began to have an effect on him, which his habits of exercise of every kind, and his singular alertness and activity of character, as well as the painful nature of the reflections which occupied his thoughts, had hitherto prevented his experiencing. The ideas of his mind began to be so little corrected by the exertions of his senses, worn out and deadened as the latter now were by extremity of fatigue, that the visions which the former drew superseded or perverted the information conveyed by the blunted organs of seeing and hearing, and Durward was only sensible that he was awake, by the exertions which, sensible of the peril of his situation, he occasionally made to resist falling into a deep and dead sleep. Every now and then, strong consciousness of the risk of falling from or with his horse roused him to exertion and animation, but ere long his eyes again were dimmed by confused shades of all sorts of mingled colours, the moonlight landscape swam before them, and he was so much overcome with fatigue, that the Count of Crevecoeur, observing his condition, was at length compelled to order two of his attendants, one to each rein of Durward's bridle, in order to prevent the risk of his falling from his horse.

When at length they reached the town of Landrecy, the Count, in compassion to the youth, who had now been in a great measure without sleep for three nights, allowed himself and his retinue a halt of four hours, for rest and refreshment. Deep and sound were Quentin's slumbers, until they were broken by the sound of

the Count's trumpet, and the cry of his Fouriers [subordinate officers who secure quarters for the army while manoeuvring] and harbingers, "Debout! debout! Ha! Messires, en route, en route! [arise, let us set out!]"

Yet, unwelcomely early as the tones came, they awaked him a different being in strength and spirits from what he had fallen asleep. Confidence in himself and his fortunes returned with his reviving spirits, and with the rising sun. He thought of his love no longer as a desperate and fantastic dream, but as a high and invigorating principle, to be cherished in his bosom, although he might never purpose to himself, under all the difficulties by which he was beset, to bring it to any prosperous issue.

"The pilot," he reflected, "steers his bark by the polar star, although he never expects to become possessor of it, and the thoughts of Isabelle of Croye shall make me a worthy man at arms, though I may never see her more. When she hears that a Scottish soldier named Quentin Durward distinguished himself in a well fought field, or left his body on the breach of a disputed fortress, she will remember the companion of her journey, as one who did all in his power to avert the snares and misfortunes which beset it, and perhaps will honour his memory with a tear, his coffin with a garland."

In this manly mood of bearing his misfortune, Quentin felt himself more able to receive and reply to the jests of the Count of Crevecoeur, who passed several on his alleged effeminacy and incapacity of undergoing fatigue. The young Scot accommodated himself so good humouredly to the Count's raillery, and replied at once so happily and so respectfully, that the change of his tone and manner made obviously a more favourable impression on the Count than he had entertained from his prisoner's conduct during the preceding evening, when, rendered irritable by the feelings of his situation, he was alternately moodily silent or fiercely argumentative. The veteran soldier began at length to take notice of his young companion as a pretty fellow, of whom something might be made, and more than hinted to him that would he but resign his situation in the Archer Guard of France, he would undertake to have him enrolled in the household of the Duke of Burgundy in an honourable condition, and would himself take care of his advancement. And although Quentin, with suitable expressions of gratitude, declined this favour at present, until he should find out how far he had to complain of his original patron, King Louis, he, nevertheless, continued to remain on good terms with the Count of Crevecoeur, and, while his enthusiastic mode of thinking, and his foreign and idiomatical manner of expressing himself, often excited a smile on the grave cheek of the Count, that smile had lost all that it had of sarcastic and bitter, and did not exceed the limits of good humour and good manners.

Thus travelling on with much more harmony than on the preceding day, the little party came at last within two miles of the famous and strong town of Peronne, near which the Duke of Burgundy's army lay encamped, ready, as was supposed, to invade France, and, in opposition to which, Louis XI had himself assembled a strong force near Saint Maxence, for the purpose of bringing to reason his over powerful vassal.

Perrone, situated upon a deep river, in a flat country, and surrounded by strong bulwarks and profound moats, was accounted in ancient as in modern times, one of the strongest fortresses in France. [Indeed, though lying on an exposed and warlike frontier, it was never taken by an enemy, but preserved the proud name of Peronne la Pucelle, until the Duke of Wellington, a great destroyer of that sort of reputation, took the place in the memorable advance upon Paris in 1815. S.] The Count of Crevecoeur, his retinue, and his prisoner, were approaching the fortress about the third hour after noon, when riding through the pleasant glades of a large forest, which then covered the approach to the town on the east side, they were met by two men of rank, as appeared from the number of their attendants, dressed in the habits worn in time of peace, and who, to judge from the falcons which they carried on their wrists, and the number of spaniels and greyhounds led by their followers, were engaged in the amusement of hawking. But on perceiving Crevecoeur, with whose appearance and liveries they were sufficiently intimate, they quitted the search which they were making for a heron along the banks of a long canal, and came galloping towards him.

"News, news, Count of Crevecoeur," they cried both together, "will you give news, or take news? or will you barter fairly?"

"I would barter fairly, Messires," said Crevecoeur, after saluting them courteously, "did I conceive you had any news of importance sufficient to make an equivalent for mine."

The two sportsmen smiled on each other, and the elder of the two, a fine baronial figure, with a dark countenance, marked with that sort of sadness which some physiognomists ascribe to a melancholy temperament, and some, as the Italian statuary augured of the visage of Charles I, consider as predicting an unhappy death, turning to his companion, said, "Crevecoeur has been in Brabant, the country of commerce, and he has learned all its artifices—he will be too hard for us if we drive a bargain."

"Messires," said Crevecoeur, "the Duke ought in justice to have the first of my wares, as the Seigneur takes his toll before open market begins. But tell me, are your news of a sad or a pleasant complexion?"

The person whom he particularly addressed was a lively looking man, with an eye of great vivacity, which was corrected by an expression of reflection and gravity about the mouth and upper lip—the whole physiognomy marking a man who saw and judged rapidly, but was sage and slow in forming resolutions or in expressing opinions. This was the famous Knight of Hainault, son of Collara, or Nicolas de l'Elite, known in history, and amongst historians, by the venerable name of Philip de Comines, at this time close to the person of Duke Charles the Bold, and one of his most esteemed counsellors. He answered Crevecoeur's question concerning the complexion of the news of which he and his companion, the Baron D'Hymbercourt, were the depositaries.

[Philip de Comines was described in the former editions of this work as a little man, fitted rather for counsel than action. This was a description made at a venture, to vary the military portraits with which the age and work abound. Sleidan the historian, upon the authority of Matthieu d'Arves, who knew Philip de Comines, and had served in his household, says he was a man of tall stature, and a noble presence. The learned Monsieur Petitot... intimates that Philip de Comines made a figure at the games of chivalry and pageants exhibited on the wedding of Charles of Burgundy with Margaret of England in 1468.... He is the first named, however, of a gallant band of assailants, knights and noblemen, to the number of twenty, who, with the Prince of Orange as their leader, encountered, in a general tourney, with a party of the same number under the profligate Adolf of Cleves, who acted as challenger, by the romantic title of Arbre d'or. The encounter, though with arms of courtesy, was very fierce, and separated by main force, not without difficulty. Philip de Comines has, therefore, a title to be accounted tam Martre quam Mercurio... S.]

[D'Hymbercourt, or Imbercourt, was put to death by the inhabitants of Ghent, with the Chancellor of Burgundy, in the year 1477. Mary of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold, appeared in mourning in the marketplace, and with tears besought the life of her servants from her insurgent subjects, but in vain. S.]

"They were," he said, "like the colours of the rainbow, various in hue, as they might be viewed from different points, and placed against the black cloud or the fair sky.—Such a rainbow was never seen in France or Flanders, since that of Noah's ark."

"My tidings," replied Crevecoeur, "are altogether like the comet, gloomy, wild, and terrible in themselves, yet to be accounted the forerunners of still greater and more dreadful evils which are to ensue."

"We must open our bales," said Comines to his companion, "or our market will be forestalled by some newcomers, for ours are public news.—In one word, Crevecoeur—listen and wonder—King Louis is at Peronne."

"What!" said the Count in astonishment, "has the Duke retreated without a battle? and do you remain here in your dress of peace, after the town is besieged by the French?—for I cannot suppose it taken."

"No, surely," said D'Hymbercourt, "the banners of Burgundy have not gone back a foot, and still King Louis is here."

"Then Edward of England must have come over the seas with his bowmen," said Crevecoeur, "and, like his ancestors, gained a second field of Poitiers?"

"Not so," said Comines. "Not a French banner has been borne down, not a sail spread from England—where Edward is too much amused among the wives of the citizens of London to think of playing the Black Prince. Hear the extraordinary truth. You know, when you left us, that the conference between the commissioners on the parts of France and Burgundy was broken up, without apparent chance of reconciliation."

"True, and we dreamt of nothing but war."

"What has followed has been indeed so like a dream," said Comines, "that I almost expect to awake, and find it so. Only one day since, the Duke had in council protested so furiously against farther delay that it was resolved to send a defiance to the King, and march forward instantly into France. Toison d'Or,

commissioned for the purpose, had put on his official dress, and had his foot in the stirrup to mount his horse, when lo! the French herald Montjoie rode into our camp.

"We thought of nothing else than that Louis had been beforehand with our defiance, and began to consider how much the Duke would resent the advice which had prevented him from being the first to declare war. But a council being speedily assembled, what was our wonder when the herald informed us, that Louis, King of France, was scarce an hour's riding behind, intending to visit Charles, Duke of Burgundy, with a small retinue, in order that their differences might be settled at a personal interview!"

"You surprise me, Messires," said Crevecoeur, "yet you surprise me less than you might have expected, for, when I was last at Plessis les Tours, the all trusted Cardinal Balue, offended with his master, and Burgundian at heart, did hint to me that he could so work upon Louis's peculiar foibles as to lead him to place himself in such a position with regard to Burgundy that the Duke might have the terms of peace of his own making. But I never suspected that so old a fox as Louis could have been induced to come into the trap of his own accord. What said the Burgundian counsellors?"

"As you may guess," answered D'Hymbercourt, "talked much of faith to be observed, and little of advantage to be obtained by such a visit, while it was manifest they thought almost entirely of the last, and were only anxious to find some way to reconcile it with the necessary preservation of appearances."

"And what said the Duke?" continued the Count of Crevecoeur.

"Spoke brief and bold as usual," replied Comines. "'Which of you was it,' he asked, 'who witnessed the meeting of my cousin Louis and me after the battle of Montlhery, when I was so thoughtless as to accompany him back within the intrenchments of Paris with half a score of attendants, and so put my person at the King's mercy?' I replied, that most of us had been present, and none could ever forget the alarm which it had been his pleasure to give us. 'Well,' said the Duke, 'you blamed me for my folly, and I confessed to you that I had acted like a giddy pated boy, and I am aware, too, that my father of happy memory being then alive, my kinsman, Louis, would have had less advantage by seizing on my person than I might now have by securing his. But, nevertheless, if my royal kinsman comes hither on the present occasion, in the same singleness of heart under which I then acted, he shall be royally welcome.—If it is meant by this appearance of confidence to circumvent and to blind me, till he execute some of his politic schemes, by Saint George of Burgundy, let him to look to it!' And so, having turned up his mustaches and stamped on the ground, he ordered us all to get on our horses, and receive so extraordinary a guest."

[After the battle of Montlhery, in 1465, Charles... had an interview with Louis under the walls of Paris, each at the head of a small party. The two Princes dismounted, and walked together so deeply engaged in discussing the business of their meeting, that Charles forgot the peculiarity of his situation; and when Louis turned back towards the town of Paris, from which he came, the Count of Charalois kept him company so far as to pass the line of outworks with which Paris was surrounded, and enter a field work which communicated with the town by a trench.... His escort and his principal followers rode forward from where he had left them. ... To their great joy the Count returned uninjured, accompanied with a guard belonging to Louis. The Burgundians taxed him with rashness in no measured terms. "Say no more of it," said Charles; "I acknowledge the extent of my folly, but I was not aware what I was doing till I entered the redoubt." Memoires de Philippe de Comines.—S.]

"And you met the King accordingly?" replied the Count of Crevecoeur. "Miracles have not ceased—How was he accompanied?"

"As slightly as might be," answered D'Hymbercourt, "only a score or two of the Scottish Guard, and a few knights and gentlemen of his household among whom his astrologer, Galeotti, made the gayest figure."

"That fellow," said Crevecoeur, "holds some dependence on the Cardinal Balue—I should not be surprised that he has had his share in determining the King to this step of doubtful policy. Any nobility of higher rank?"

"There are Monsieur of Orleans, and Dunois," replied Comines.

"I will have a rouse with Dunois," said Crevecoeur, "wag the world as it will. But we heard that both he and the Duke had fallen into disgrace, and were in prison."

"They were both under arrest in the Castle of Loches, that delightful place of retirement for the French nobility," said D'Hymbercourt, "but Louis has released them, in order to bring them with him—perhaps because he cared not to leave Orleans behind. For his other attendants, faith, I think his gossip, the Hangman Marshal, with two or three of his retinue, and Oliver, his barber, may be the most considerable—and the whole bevy so poorly arrayed, that, by my honour, the King resembles most an old usurer, going to collect desperate debts, attended by a body of catchpolls."

"And where is he lodged?" said Crevecoeur.

"Nay, that," replied the Comines, "is the most marvellous of all. Our Duke offered to let the King's Archer Guard have a gate of the town, and a bridge of boats over the Somme, and to have assigned to Louis himself the adjoining house, belonging to a wealthy burgess, Giles Orthen, but, in going thither, the King espied the banners of De Lau and Pencil de Riviere, whom he had banished from France, and scared, as it would seem, with the thought of lodging so near refugees and malcontents of his own making, he craved to be quartered in the castle of Peronne, and there he hath his abode accordingly."

"Why, God ha' mercy!" exclaimed Crevecoeur, "this is not only not being content with venturing into the lion's den, but thrusting his head into his very jaws.—Nothing less than the very bottom of the rat trap would serve the crafty old politician!"

"Nay," said Comines, "D'Hymbercourt hath not told you the speech of Le Glorieux [the jester of Charles of Burgundy of whom more hereafter. S.]—which, in my mind, was the shrewdest opinion that was given."

"And what said his most illustrious wisdom?" asked the Count.

"As the Duke," replied Comines, "was hastily ordering some vessels and ornaments of plate and the like, to be prepared as presents for the King and his retinue, by way of welcome on his arrival:

"'Trouble not thy small brain about it, my friend Charles,' said Le Glorieux, 'I will give thy cousin Louis a nobler and a fitter gift than thou canst, and that is my cap and bells, and my bauble to boot, for, by the mass, he is a greater fool than I am, for putting himself in thy power.'

"'But if I give him no reason to repent it, sirrah, how thou?' said the Duke.

"'Then, truly, Charles, thou shalt have cap and bauble thyself, as the greatest fool of the three of us.'

"I promise you this knavish quip touched the Duke closely—I saw him change colour and bite his lip. And now, our news are told, noble Crevecoeur, and what think you they resemble?"

"A mine full charged with gunpowder," answered Crevecoeur, "to which, I fear, it is my fate to bring the kindled linstock. Your news and mine are like flax and fire, which cannot meet without bursting into flame, or like certain chemical substances which cannot be mingled without an explosion. Friends—gentlemen—ride close by my rein, and when I tell you what has chanced in the bishopric of Liege, I think you will be of opinion that King Louis might as safely have undertaken a pilgrimage to the infernal regions as this ill timed visit to Peronne."

The two nobles drew up close on either hand of the Count, and listened, with half suppressed exclamations, and gestures of the deepest wonder and interest, to his account of the transactions at Liege and Schonwaldt. Quentin was then called forward, and examined and re-examined on the particulars of the Bishop's death, until at length he refused to answer any farther interrogatories, not knowing wherefore they were asked, or what use might be made of his replies.

They now reached the rich and level banks of the Somme, and the ancient walls of the little town of Peronne la Pucelle, and the deep green meadows adjoining, now whitened with the numerous tents of the Duke of Burgundy's army, amounting to about fifteen thousand men.

CHAPTER XXVI: THE INTERVIEW

*When Princes meet, Astrologers may mark it
An ominous conjunction, full of boding,*

OLD PLAY

One hardly knows whether to term it a privilege or a penalty annexed to the quality of princes, that, in their intercourse with each other, they are required by the respect which is due to their own rank and dignity, to regulate their feelings and expressions by a severe etiquette, which precludes all violent and avowed display of passion, and which, but that the whole world are aware that this assumed complaisance is a matter of ceremony, might justly pass for profound dissimulation. It is no less certain, however, that the overstepping of these bounds of ceremonial, for the purpose of giving more direct vent to their angry passions, has the effect of compromising their dignity with the world in general; as was particularly noted when those distinguished rivals, Francis the First and the Emperor Charles, gave each other the lie direct, and were desirous of deciding their differences hand to hand, in single combat.

Charles of Burgundy, the most hasty and impatient, nay, the most imprudent prince of his time, found himself, nevertheless, fettered within the magic circle which prescribed the most profound deference to Louis, as his Suzerain and liege Lord, who had deigned to confer upon him, a vassal of the crown, the distinguished honour of a personal visit. Dressed in his ducal mantle, and attended by his great officers and principal knights and nobles, he went in gallant cavalcade to receive Louis XI. His retinue absolutely blazed with gold and silver; for the wealth of the Court of England being exhausted by the wars of York and Lancaster, and the expenditure of France limited by the economy of the Sovereign, that of Burgundy was for the time the most magnificent in Europe. The cortege of Louis, on the contrary, was few in number, and comparatively mean in appearance, and the exterior of the King himself, in a threadbare cloak, with his wonted old high crowned hat stuck full of images, rendered the contrast yet more striking; and as the Duke, richly attired with the coronet and mantle of state, threw himself from his noble charger, and, kneeling on one knee, offered to hold the stirrup while Louis dismounted from his little ambling palfrey, the effect was almost grotesque.

The greeting between the two potentates was, of course, as full of affected kindness and compliment as it was totally devoid of sincerity. But the temper of the Duke rendered it much more difficult for him to preserve the necessary appearances, in voice, speech, and demeanour; while in the King, every species of simulation and dissimulation seemed so much a part of his nature that those best acquainted with him could not have distinguished what was feigned from what was real.

Perhaps the most accurate illustration, were it not unworthy two such high potentates, would be to suppose the King in the situation of a stranger, perfectly acquainted with the habits and dispositions of the canine race, who, for some, purpose of his own, is desirous to make friends with a large and surly mastiff that holds him in suspicion and is disposed to worry him on the first symptoms either of diffidence or of umbrage. The mastiff growls internally, erects his bristles, shows his teeth, yet is ashamed to fly upon the intruder, who seems at the same time so kind and so confiding, and therefore the animal endures advances which are far from pacifying him, watching at the same time the slightest opportunity which may justify him in his own eyes for seizing his friend by the throat.

The King was no doubt sensible, from the altered voice, constrained manner, and abrupt gestures of the Duke, that the game he had to play was delicate, and perhaps he more than once repented having ever taken it in hand. But repentance was too late, and all that remained for him was that inimitable dexterity of management, which the King understood equally at least with any man that ever lived.

The demeanour which Louis used towards the Duke was such as to resemble the kind overflowing of the heart in a moment of sincere reconciliation with an honoured and tried friend, from whom he had been estranged by temporary circumstances now passed away, and forgotten as soon as removed. The King blamed himself for not having sooner taken the decisive step, of convincing his kind and good kinsman by such a mark of confidence as he was now bestowing, that the angry passages which had occurred betwixt them were nothing in his remembrance, when weighed against the kindness which received him when an exile from France, and under the displeasure of the King his father. He spoke of the good Duke of Burgundy, as Philip the father of Duke Charles was currently called, and remembered a thousand instances of his paternal kindness.

"I think, cousin," he said, "your father made little difference in his affection betwixt you and me; for I remember when by an accident I had bewildered myself in a hunting party, I found the good Duke upbraiding you with leaving me in the forest, as if you had been careless of the safety of an elder brother."

The Duke of Burgundy's features were naturally harsh and severe; and when he attempted to smile, in polite acquiescence to the truth of what the King told him, the grimace which he made was truly diabolical.

"Prince of dissemblers," he said, in his secret soul, "would that it stood with my honour to remind you how you have requited all the benefits of our House!"

"And then," continued the King, "if the ties of consanguinity and gratitude are not sufficient to bind us together, my fair cousin, we have those of spiritual relationship; for I am godfather to your fair daughter Mary, who is as dear to me as one of my own maidens; and when the Saints (their holy name be blessed!) sent me a little blossom which withered in the course of three months, it was your princely father who held it at the font, and celebrated the ceremony of baptism with richer and prouder magnificence than Paris itself could have afforded. Never shall I forget the deep, the indelible impression which the generosity of Duke Philip, and yours, my dearest cousin, made upon the half broken heart of the poor exile!"

"Your Majesty," said the Duke, compelling himself to make some reply, "acknowledged that slight obligation in terms which overpaid all the display which Burgundy could make, to show a due sense of the honour you had done its Sovereign."

"I remember the words you mean, fair cousin," said the King, smiling; "I think they were, that in guerdon of the benefit of that day, I, poor wanderer, had nothing to offer, save the persons of myself, of my wife, and of my child.—Well, and I think I have indifferently well redeemed my pledge."

"I mean not to dispute what your Majesty is pleased to aver," said the Duke; "but—"

"But you ask," said the King, interrupting him, "how my actions have accorded with my words.—Marry thus: the body of my infant child Joachim rests in Burgundian earth—my own person I have this morning placed unreservedly in your power—and, for that of my wife,—truly, cousin, I think, considering the period of time which has passed, you will scarce insist on my keeping my word in that particular. She was born on the Day of the Blessed Annunciation" (he crossed himself, and muttered an *Ora pro nobis* [intercede for us]), "some fifty years since; but she is no farther distant than Rheims, and if you insist on my promise being fulfilled to the letter, she shall presently wait your pleasure."

Angry as the Duke of Burgundy was at the barefaced attempt of the King to assume towards him a tone of friendship and intimacy, he could not help laughing at the whimsical reply of that singular monarch, and his laugh was as discordant as the abrupt tones of passion in which he often spoke. Having laughed longer and louder than was at that period, or would now be, thought fitting the time and occasion, he answered in the same tone, bluntly declining the honour of the Queen's company, but stating his willingness to accept that of the King's eldest daughter, whose beauty was celebrated.

"I am happy, fair cousin," said the King, with one of those dubious smiles of which he frequently made use, "that your gracious pleasure has not fixed on my younger daughter, Joan. I should otherwise have had spear breaking between you and my cousin of Orleans; and, had harm come of it, I must on either side have lost a kind friend and affectionate cousin."

"Nay, nay, my royal sovereign," said Duke Charles, "the Duke of Orleans shall have no interruption from me in the path which he has chosen par amours. The cause in which I couch my lance against Orleans must be fair and straight."

Louis was far from taking amiss this brutal allusion to the personal deformity of the Princess Joan. On the contrary, he was rather pleased to find that the Duke was content to be amused with broad jests, in which he was himself a proficient, and which (according to the modern phrase) spared much sentimental hypocrisy. Accordingly, he speedily placed their intercourse on such a footing that Charles, though he felt it impossible to play the part of an affectionate and reconciled friend to a monarch whose ill offices he had so often encountered, and whose sincerity on the present occasion he so strongly doubted, yet had no difficulty in acting the hearty landlord towards a facetious guest; and so the want of reciprocity in kinder feelings between them was supplied by the tone of good fellowship which exists between two boon companions—a tone natural to the Duke from the frankness, and, it might be added, the grossness of his character, and to Louis, because, though capable of assuming any mood of social intercourse, that which really suited him best was mingled with grossness of ideas and of caustic humour and expression.

Both Princes were happily able to preserve, during the period of a banquet at the town house of Peronne, the same kind of conversation, on which they met as on a neutral ground, and which, as Louis easily perceived, was more available than any other to keep the Duke of Burgundy in that state of composure which seemed necessary to his own safety.

Yet he was alarmed to observe that the Duke had around him several of those French nobles, and those of the highest rank, and in situations of great trust and power, whom his own severity or injustice had driven into exile; and it was to secure himself from the possible effects of their resentment and revenge, that (as already mentioned) he requested to be lodged in the Castle or Citadel of Peronne, rather than in the town itself. This was readily granted by Duke Charles, with one of those grim smiles of which it was impossible to say whether it meant good or harm to the party whom it concerned.

[Scott quotes from the *Memoires of De Comines* as follows: "these nobles... inspired Louis with so much suspicion that he... demanded to be lodged in the old Castle of Peronne, and thus rendered himself an absolute captive."]

But when the King, expressing himself with as much delicacy as he could, and in the manner he thought best qualified to lull suspicion asleep, asked whether the Scottish Archers of his Guard might not maintain the custody of the Castle of Peronne during his residence there, in lieu of the gate of the town which the Duke had offered to their care, Charles replied, with his wonted sternness of voice and abruptness of manner, rendered more alarming by his habit, when he spoke, of either turning up his mustaches, or handling his sword or dagger, the last of which he used frequently to draw a little way, and then return to the sheath [this gesture, very indicative of a fierce character, is also by stage tradition a distinction of Shakespeare's Richard III. S.],

"Saint Martin! No, my Liege. You are in your vassal's camp and city—so men call me in respect to your Majesty—my castle and town are yours, and my men are yours; so it is indifferent whether my men at arms or the Scottish Archers guard either the outer gate or defences of the Castle.—No, by Saint George! Peronne is a virgin fortress—she shall not lose her reputation by any neglect of mine. Maidens must be carefully watched, my royal cousin, if we would have them continue to live in good fame."

"Surely, fair cousin, and I altogether agree with you," said the King, "I being in fact more interested in the reputation of the good little town than you are—Peronne being, as you know, fair cousin, one of those upon the same river Somme, which, pledged to your father of happy memory for redemption of money, are liable to be redeemed upon repayment. And, to speak truth; coming, like an honest debtor, disposed to clear off my obligations of every kind, I have brought here a few sumpter mules loaded with silver for the redemption—enough to maintain even your princely and royal establishment, fair cousin, for the space of three years."

"I will not receive a penny of it," said the Duke, twirling his mustaches—"the day of redemption is past, my royal cousin; nor were there ever serious purpose that the right should be exercised, the cession of these towns being the sole recompense my father ever received from France, when, in a happy hour for your family, he consented to forget the murder of my grandfather, and to exchange the alliance of England for that of your father. Saint George! if he had not so acted, your royal self, far from having towns in the Somme, could scarce have kept those beyond the Loire. No—I will not render a stone of them, were I to receive for every stone so rendered its weight in gold. I thank God, and the wisdom and valour of my ancestors, that the revenues of Burgundy, though it be a duchy, will maintain my state, even when a King is my guest, without obliging me to barter my heritage."

"Well, fair cousin," answered the King, with the same mild and placid manner as before, and unperturbed by the loud tone and violent gestures of the Duke, "I see that you are so good a friend to France that you are unwilling to part with aught that belongs to her. But we shall need some moderator in those affairs when we come to treat of them in council.—What say you to Saint Paul?"

"Neither Saint Paul, nor Saint Peter, nor e'er a Saint in the Calendar," said the Duke of Burgundy, "shall preach me out of the possession of Peronne."

"Nay, but you mistake me," said King Louis, smiling; "I mean Louis de Luxembourg, our trusty constable, the Count of Saint Paul.—Ah! Saint Mary of Embrun! we lack but his head at our conference! the best head in France, and the most useful to the restoration of perfect harmony betwixt us."

"By Saint George of Burgundy!" said the Duke, "I marvel to hear your Majesty talk thus of a man, false and perjured, both to France and Burgundy—one who hath ever endeavoured to fan into a flame our frequent differences, and that with the purpose of giving himself the airs of a mediator. I swear by the Order I wear that his marshes shall not be long a resource for him!"

"Be not so warm, cousin," said the King, smiling, and speaking under his breath; "when I wished for the head constable, as a means of ending the settlement of our trifling differences, I had no desire for his body, which might remain at Saint Quentin's with much convenience."

"Ho! ho! I take your meaning, my royal cousin," said Charles, with the same dissonant laugh which some other of the King's coarse pleasantries had extorted; and added, stamping his heel on the ground, "I allow, in that sense, the head of the Constable might be useful at Peronne."

These, and other discourses, by which the King mixed hints at serious affairs amid matters of mirth and amusement, did not follow each other consecutively; but were adroitly introduced during the time of the banquet at the Hotel de Ville, during a subsequent interview in the Duke's own apartments, and, in short, as occasion seemed to render the introduction of such delicate subjects easy and natural.

Indeed, however rashly Louis had placed himself in a risk which the Duke's fiery temper and the mutual subjects of exasperated enmity which subsisted betwixt them rendered of doubtful and perilous issue, never pilot on an unknown coast conducted himself with more firmness and prudence. He seemed to sound with the utmost address and precision the depths and shallows of his rival's mind and temper, and manifested neither doubt nor fear when the result of his experiments discovered much more of sunken rocks and of dangerous shoals than of safe anchorage.

At length a day closed which must have been a wearisome one to Louis, from the constant exertion, vigilance, precaution, and attention which his situation required, as it was a day of constraint to the Duke, from the necessity of suppressing the violent feelings to which he was in the general habit of giving uncontrolled vent.

No sooner had the latter retired into his own apartment, after he had taken a formal leave of the King for the night, than he gave way to the explosion of passion which he had so long suppressed; and many an oath and abusive epithet, as his jester, Le Glorieux said, "fell that night upon heads which they were never coined for," his domestics reaping the benefit of that hoard of injurious language which he could not in decency bestow on his royal guest, even in his absence, and which was yet become too great to be altogether suppressed. The jests of the clown had some effect in tranquillizing the Duke's angry mood—he laughed loudly, threw the jester a piece of gold, caused himself to be disrobed in tranquillity, swallowed a deep cup of wine and spices, went to bed, and slept soundly.

The couchee of King Louis is more worthy of notice than that of Charles; for the violent expression of exasperated and headlong passion, as indeed it belongs more to the brutal than the intelligent part of our nature, has little to interest us, in comparison to the deep workings of a vigorous and powerful mind.

Louis was escorted to the lodgings he had chosen in the Castle, or Citadel of Peronne, by the Chamberlains and harbingers of the Duke of Burgundy, and received at the entrance by a strong guard of archers and men at arms.

As he descended from his horse to cross the drawbridge, over a moat of unusual width and depth, he looked on the sentinels, and observed to Comines, who accompanied him, with other Burgundian nobles, "They wear Saint Andrew's crosses—but not those of my Scottish Archers."

"You will find them as ready to die in your defence, Sire," said the Burgundian, whose sagacious ear had detected in the King's tone of speech a feeling which doubtless Louis would have concealed if he could. "They wear the Saint Andrew's Cross as the appendage of the collar of the Golden Fleece, my master the Duke of Burgundy's Order."

"Do I not know it?" said Louis, showing the collar which he himself wore in compliment to his host. "It is one of the dear bonds of fraternity which exist between my kind brother and myself. We are brothers in chivalry, as in spiritual relationship; cousins by birth, and friends by every tie of kind feeling and good neighbourhood.—No farther than the base court, my noble lords and gentlemen! I can permit your attendance no farther—you have done me enough of grace."

"We were charged by the Duke," said D'Hymbercourt, "to bring your Majesty to your lodging.—We trust your Majesty will permit us to obey our master's command."

"In this small matter," said the King, "I trust you will allow my command to outweigh his, even with you his liege subjects.—I am something indisposed, my lords—something fatigued. Great pleasure hath its toils, as well as great pain. I trust to enjoy your society better tomorrow.—And yours, too, Seigneur Philip of Comines—

I am told you are the annalist of the time—we that desire to have a name in history must speak you fair, for men say your pen hath a sharp point, when you will.—Goodnight, my lords and gentles, to all and each of you."

The Lords of Burgundy retired, much pleased with the grace of Louis's manner, and the artful distribution of his attentions; and the King was left with only one or two of his own personal followers, under the archway of the base court of the Castle of Peronne, looking on the huge tower which occupied one of the angles, being in fact the Donjon, or principal Keep, of the palace. This tall, dark, massive building was seen clearly by the same moon which was lighting Quentin Durward betwixt Charleroi and Peronne, which, as the reader is aware, shone with peculiar lustre. The great Keep was in form nearly resembling the White Tower in the Citadel of London, but still more ancient in its architecture, deriving its date, as was affirmed, from the days of Charlemagne. The walls were of a tremendous thickness, the windows very small, and grated with bars of iron, and the huge clumsy bulk of the building cast a dark and portentous shadow over the whole of the courtyard.

"I am not to be lodged there," the King said, with a shudder that had something in it ominous.

"No," replied the gray headed seneschal, who attended upon him unbonneted. "God forbid!—Your Majesty's apartments are prepared in these lower buildings which are hard by, and in which King John slept two nights before the battle of Poitiers."

"Hum—that is no lucky omen neither," muttered the King; "but what of the Tower, my old friend? and why should you desire of Heaven that I may not be there lodged?"

"Nay, my gracious Liege," said the seneschal, "I know no evil of the Tower at all, only that the sentinels say lights are seen, and strange noises heard in it at night; and there are reasons why that may be the case, for anciently it was used as a state prison, and there are many tales of deeds which have been done in it."

Louis asked no further questions; for no man was more bound than he to respect the secrets of a prison house. At the door of the apartments destined for his use, which, though of later date than the Tower, were still both ancient and gloomy, stood a small party of the Scottish Guard, which the Duke, although he declined to concede the point to Louis, had ordered to be introduced, so as to be near the person of their master. The faithful Lord Crawford was at their head.

"Crawford—my honest and faithful Crawford," said the King, "where hast thou been today?—Are the Lords of Burgundy so inhospitable as to neglect one of the bravest and most noble gentlemen that ever trode a court?—I saw you not at the banquet."

"I declined it, my Liege," said Crawford, "times are changed with me. The day has been that I could have ventured a carouse with the best man in Burgundy and that in the juice of his own grape; but a matter of four pints now flusters me, and I think it concerns your Majesty's service to set in this an example to my gallants."

"Thou art ever prudent," said the King, "but surely your toil is the less when you have so few men to command?—and a time of festivity requires not so severe self denial on your part as a time of danger."

"If I have few men to command," said Crawford, "I have the more need to keep the knaves in fitting condition; and whether this business be like to end in feasting or fighting, God and your Majesty know better than old John of Crawford."

"You surely do not apprehend any danger?" said the King hastily, yet in a whisper.

"Not I," answered Crawford; "I wish I did; for, as old Earl Tineman [an Earl of Douglas, so called. S.] used to say, apprehended dangers may be always defended dangers.—The word for the night, if your Majesty pleases?"

"Let it be Burgundy, in honour of our host and of a liquor that you love, Crawford."

"I will quarrel with neither Duke nor drink, so called," said Crawford, "provided always that both be sound. A good night to your Majesty!"

"A good night, my trusty Scot," said the King, and passed on to his apartments.

At the door of his bedroom Le Balafre was placed sentinel. "Follow me hither," said the King, as he passed him; and the Archer accordingly, like a piece of machinery put into motion by an artist, strode after him into the apartment, and remained there fixed, silent, and motionless, attending the royal command.

"Have you heard from that wandering Paladin, your nephew?" said the King; "for he hath been lost to us, since, like a young knight who had set out upon his first adventures, he sent us home two prisoners as the first fruits of his chivalry."

"My Lord, I heard something of that," said Balafre, "and I hope your Majesty will believe that if he acted wrongfully, it was in no shape by any precept or example, since I never was so bold as to unhorse any of your Majesty's most illustrious house, better knowing my own condition, and—"

"Be silent on that point," said the King; "your nephew did his duty in the matter."

"There indeed," continued Balafre, "he had the cue from me.—'Quentin,' said I to him, 'whatever comes of it, remember you belong to the Scottish Archer Guard, and do your duty whatever comes on't.'"

"I guess he had some such exquisite instructor," said Louis; "but it concerns me that you answer me my first question.—Have you heard of your nephew of late?—Stand aback, my masters," he added, addressing the gentlemen of his chamber, "for this concerneth no ears but mine."

"Surely, please your Majesty," said Balafre, "I have seen this very evening the groom Charlot, whom my kinsman dispatched from Liege, or some castle of the Bishop's which is near it, and where he hath lodged the Ladies of Croye in safety."

"Now Our Lady of Heaven be praised for it!" said the King. "Art thou sure of it?—sure of the good news?"

"As sure as I can be of aught," said Le Balafre, "the fellow, I think, hath letters for your Majesty from the Ladies of Croye."

"Haste to get them," said the King. "Give the harquebuss to one of these knaves—to Oliver—to any one. Now Our Lady of Embrun be praised! and silver shall be the screen that surrounds her high altar!"

Louis, in this fit of gratitude and devotion, doffed, as usual, his hat, selected from the figures with which it was garnished that which represented his favourite image of the Virgin, placed it on a table, and, kneeling down, repeated reverently the vow he had made.

The groom, being the first messenger whom Durward had despatched from Schonwaldt, was now introduced with his letters. They were addressed to the King by the Ladies of Croye, and barely thanked him in very cold terms for his courtesy while at his Court, and something more warmly for having permitted them to retire and sent them in safety from his dominions; expressions at which Louis laughed very heartily, instead of resenting them. He then demanded of Charlot, with obvious interest, whether they had not sustained some alarm or attack upon the road? Charlot, a stupid fellow, and selected for that quality, gave a very confused account of the affray in which his companion, the Gascon, had been killed, but knew of no other. Again Louis demanded of him, minutely and particularly, the route which the party had taken to Liege; and seemed much interested when he was informed, in reply, that they had, upon approaching Namur, kept the more direct road to Liege, upon the right bank of the Maes, instead of the left bank, as recommended in their route. The King then ordered the man a small present, and dismissed him, disguising the anxiety he had expressed as if it only concerned the safety of the Ladies of Croye.

Yet the news, though they implied the failure of one of his own favourite plans, seemed to imply more internal satisfaction on the King's part than he would have probably indicated in a case of brilliant success. He sighed like one whose breast has been relieved from a heavy burden, muttered his devotional acknowledgments with an air of deep sanctity, raised up his eyes, and hastened to adjust newer and surer schemes of ambition.

With such purpose, Louis ordered the attendance of his astrologer, Martius Galeotti, who appeared with his usual air of assumed dignity, yet not without a shade of uncertainty on his brow, as if he had doubted the King's kind reception. It was, however, favourable, even beyond the warmest which he had ever met with at any former interview. Louis termed him his friend, his father in the sciences—the glass by which a king should look into distant futurity—and concluded by thrusting on his finger a ring of very considerable value. Galeotti, not aware of the circumstances which had thus suddenly raised his character in the estimation of Louis, yet understood his own profession too well to let that ignorance be seen. He received with grave modesty the praises of Louis, which he contended were only due to the nobleness of the science which he practised, a science the rather the more deserving of admiration on account of its working miracles through means of so feeble an agent as himself; and he and the King took leave, for once much satisfied with each other.

On the Astrologer's departure, Louis threw himself into a chair, and appearing much exhausted, dismissed the rest of his attendants, excepting Oliver alone, who, creeping around with gentle assiduity and noiseless step, assisted him in the task of preparing for repose.

While he received this assistance, the King, unlike to his wont, was so silent and passive, that his attendant was struck by the unusual change in his deportment. The worst minds have often something of good principle in them—banditti show fidelity to their captain, and sometimes a protected and promoted favourite has felt a gleam of sincere interest in the monarch to whom he owed his greatness. Oliver le Diable, le Mauvais (or by whatever other name he was called expressive of his evil propensities), was, nevertheless, scarcely so completely identified with Satan as not to feel some touch of grateful feeling for his master in this singular condition, when, as it seemed, his fate was deeply interested and his strength seemed to be exhausted. After for a short time rendering to the King in silence the usual services paid by a servant to his master at the toilette, the attendant was at length tempted to say, with the freedom which his Sovereign's indulgence had permitted him in such circumstances, "Tete dieu, Sire, you seem as if you had lost a battle; and yet I, who was near your Majesty during this whole day, never knew you fight a field so gallantly."

"A field!" said King Louis, looking up, and assuming his wonted causticity of tone and manner. "Pasques dieu, my friend Oliver, say I have kept the arena in a bullfight; for a blinder, and more stubborn, untameable, uncontrollable brute than our cousin of Burgundy never existed, save in the shape of a Murcian bull, trained for the bull feasts.—Well, let it pass—I dodged him bravely. But, Oliver, rejoice with me that my plans in Flanders have not taken effect, whether as concerning those two rambling Princesses of Croye, or in Liege—you understand me?"

"In faith, I do not, Sire," replied Oliver; "it is impossible for me to congratulate your Majesty on the failure of your favourite schemes, unless you tell me some reason for the change in your own wishes and views."

"Nay," answered the King, "there is no change in either, in a general view. But, Pasques dieu, my friend, I have this day learned more of Duke Charles than I before knew. When he was Count de Charalois, in the time of the old Duke Philip and the banished Dauphin of France, we drank, and hunted, and rambled together—and many a wild adventure we have had. And in those days I had a decided advantage over him—like that which a strong spirit naturally assumes over a weak one. But he has since changed—has become a dogged, daring, assuming, disputatious dogmatist, who nourishes an obvious wish to drive matters to extremities, while he thinks he has the game in his own hands. I was compelled to glide as gently away from each offensive topic, as if I touched red hot iron. I did but hint at the possibility of those erratic Countesses of Croye, ere they attained Liege (for thither I frankly confessed that, to the best of my belief, they were gone), falling into the hands of some wild snapper upon the frontiers, and, Pasques dieu! you would have thought I had spoken of sacrilege. It is needless to tell you what he said, and quite enough to say that I would have held my head's safety very insecure, if, in that moment, accounts had been brought of the success of thy friend, William with the Beard, in his and thy honest scheme of bettering himself by marriage."

"No friend of mine, if it please your Majesty," said Oliver, "neither friend nor plan of mine."

"True, Oliver," answered the King; "thy plan had not been to wed, but to shave such a bridegroom. Well, thou didst wish her as bad a one, when thou didst modestly hint at thyself. However, Oliver, lucky the man who has her not; for hang, draw, and quarter were the most gentle words which my gentle cousin spoke of him who should wed the young Countess, his vassal, without his most ducal permission."

"And he is, doubtless, as jealous of any disturbances in the good town of Liege?" asked the favourite.

"As much, or much more," replied the King, "as your understanding may easily anticipate; but, ever since I resolved on coming hither, my messengers have been in Liege to repress, for the present, every movement to insurrection; and my very busy and bustling friends, Rousalaer and Pavillon, have orders to be quiet as a mouse until this happy meeting between my cousin and me is over."

"Judging, then, from your Majesty's account," said Oliver dryly, "the utmost to be hoped from this meeting is that it should not make your condition worse—Surely this is like the crane that thrust her head into the fox's mouth, and was glad to thank her good fortune that it was not bitten off. Yet your Majesty seemed deeply obliged even now to the sage philosopher who encouraged you to play so hopeful a game."

"No game," said the King sharply, "is to be despaired of until it is lost, and that I have no reason to expect it will be in my own case. On the contrary, if nothing occurs to stir the rage of this vindictive madman, I am sure of victory; and surely, I am not a little obliged to the skill which selected for my agent, as the conductor of the Ladies of Croye, a youth whose horoscope so far corresponded with mine that he hath saved me from danger, even by the disobedience of my own commands, and taking the route which avoided De la Marck's ambuscade."

"Your Majesty," said Oliver, "may find many agents who will serve you on the terms of acting rather after their own pleasure than your instructions."

"Nay, nay, Oliver," said Louis impatiently, "the heathen poet speaks of Vota diis exaudita malignis,—wishes, that is, which the saints grant to us in their wrath; and such, in the circumstances, would have been the success of William de la Marck's exploit, had it taken place about this time, and while I am in the power of this Duke of Burgundy.—And this my own art foresaw—fortified by that of Galeotti—that is, I foresaw not the miscarriage of De la Marck's undertaking, but I foresaw that the expedition of yonder Scottish Archer should end happily for me—and such has been the issue, though in a manner different from what I expected; for the stars, though they foretell general results, are yet silent on the means by which such are accomplished, being often the very reverse of what we expect, or even desire.—But why talk I of these mysteries to thee, Oliver, who art in so far worse than the very devil, who is thy namesake, since he believes and trembles; whereas thou art an infidel both to religion and to science, and wilt remain so till thine own destiny is accomplished, which as thy horoscope and physiognomy alike assure me, will be by the intervention of the gallows!"

"And if it indeed shall be so," said Oliver, in a resigned tone of voice, "it will be so ordered, because I was too grateful a servant to hesitate at executing the commands of my royal master."

Louis burst into his usual sardonic laugh.—"Thou hast broke thy lance on me fairly, Oliver; and by Our Lady thou art right, for I defied thee to it. But, prithee, tell me in sadness, dost thou discover anything in these measures towards us which may argue any suspicion of ill usage?"

"My Liege," replied Oliver, "your Majesty and yonder learned philosopher look for augury to the stars and heavenly host—I am an earthly reptile, and consider but the things connected with my vocation. But methinks there is a lack of that earnest and precise attention on your Majesty which men show to a welcome guest of a degree so far above them. The Duke tonight pleaded weariness, and saw your Majesty not farther than to the street, leaving to the officers of his household the task of conveying you to your lodgings. The rooms here are hastily and carelessly fitted up—the tapestry is hung up awry—and, in one of the pieces, as you may observe, the figures are reversed and stand on their heads, while the trees grow with their roots uppermost."

"Pshaw! accident, and the effect of hurry," said the King. "When did you ever know me concerned about such trifles as these?"

"Not on their own account are they worth notice," said Oliver; "but as intimating the degree of esteem in which the officers of the Duke's household observe your Grace to be held by him. Believe me, that, had his desire seemed sincere that your reception should be in all points marked by scrupulous attention, the zeal of his people would have made minutes do the work of days.—And when," he added, pointing to the basin and ewer, "was the furniture of your Majesty's toilette of other substance than silver?"

"Nay," said the King, with a constrained smile, "that last remark upon the shaving utensils, Oliver, is too much in the style of thine own peculiar occupation to be combated by any one.—True it is, that when I was only a refugee, and an exile, I was served upon gold plate by order of the same Charles, who accounted silver too mean for the Dauphin, though he seems to hold that metal too rich for the King of France. Well, Oliver, we will to bed.—Our resolution has been made and executed; there is nothing to be done, but to play manfully the game on which we have entered. I know that my cousin of Burgundy, like other wild bulls, shuts his eyes when he begins his career. I have but to watch that moment, like one of the tauridors [Spanish bull fighters] whom we saw at Burgos, and his impetuosity places him at my mercy."

CHAPTER XXVII: THE EXPLOSION

'T is listening fear, and dumb amazement all,

*When to the startled eye, the sudden glance
Appears far south, eruptive through the cloud.*

THOMSON'S SUMMER

The preceding chapter, agreeably to its title, was designed as a retrospect which might enable the reader fully to understand the terms upon which the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy stood together, when the former, moved partly perhaps by his belief in astrology, which was represented as favourable to the issue of such a measure, and in a great measure doubtless by the conscious superiority of his own powers of mind over those of Charles, had adopted the extraordinary, and upon any other ground altogether inexplicable, resolution of committing his person to the faith of a fierce and exasperated enemy—a resolution also the more rash and unaccountable, as there were various examples in that stormy time to show that safe conducts, however solemnly plighted, had proved no assurance for those in whose favour they were conceived; and indeed the murder of the Duke's grandfather at the Bridge of Montereau, in presence of the father of Louis, and at an interview solemnly agreed upon for the establishment of peace and amnesty, was a horrible precedent, should the Duke be disposed to resort to it.

But the temper of Charles, though rough, fierce, headlong, and unyielding, was not, unless in the full tide of passion, faithless or ungenerous, faults which usually belong to colder dispositions. He was at no pains to show the King more courtesy than the laws of hospitality positively demanded; but, on the other hand, he evinced no purpose of overleaping their sacred barriers.

On the following morning after the King's arrival, there was a general muster of the troops of the Duke of Burgundy, which were so numerous and so excellently appointed, that, perhaps, he was not sorry to have an opportunity of displaying them before his great rival. Indeed, while he paid the necessary compliment of a vassal to his Suzerain, in declaring that these troops were the King's and not his own, the curl of his upper lip and the proud glance of his eye intimated his consciousness that the words he used were but empty compliment, and that his fine army at his own unlimited disposal, was as ready to march against Paris as in any other direction. It must have added to Louis's mortification that he recognised, as forming part of this host, many banners of French nobility, not only of Normandy and Bretagne, but of provinces more immediately subjected to his own authority, who, from various causes of discontent, had joined and made common cause with the Duke of Burgundy.

True to his character, however, Louis seemed to take little notice of these malcontents, while, in fact, he was revolving in his mind the various means by which it might be possible to detach them from the banners of Burgundy and bring them back to his own, and resolved for that purpose that he would cause those to whom he attached the greatest importance to be secretly sounded by Oliver and other agents.

He himself laboured diligently, but at the same time cautiously, to make interest with the Duke's chief officers and advisers, employing for that purpose the usual means of familiar and frequent notice, adroit flattery, and liberal presents; not, as he represented, to alienate their faithful services from their noble master, but that they might lend their aid in preserving peace betwixt France and Burgundy—an end so excellent in itself, and so obviously tending to the welfare of both countries and of the reigning Princes of either.

The notice of so great and so wise a King was in itself a mighty bribe; promises did much, and direct gifts, which the customs of the time permitted the Burgundian courtiers to accept without scruple, did still more. During a boar hunt in the forest, while the Duke, eager always upon the immediate object, whether business or pleasure, gave himself entirely up to the ardour of the chase, Louis, unrestrained by his presence, sought and found the means of speaking secretly and separately to many of those who were reported to have most interest with Charles, among whom D'Hymbercourt and Comines were not forgotten; nor did he fail to mix up the advances which he made towards those two distinguished persons with praises of the valour and military skill of the first, and of the profound sagacity and literary talents of the future historian of the period.

Such an opportunity of personally conciliating, or, if the reader pleases, corrupting the ministers of Charles, was perhaps what the King had proposed to himself as a principal object of his visit, even if his art should fail to cajole the Duke himself. The connection betwixt France and Burgundy was so close that most of the nobles belonging to the latter country had hopes or actual interests connected with the former, which the favour of Louis could advance, or his personal displeasure destroy. Formed for this and every other species of intrigue, liberal to profusion when it was necessary to advance his plans, and skilful in putting the most plausible colour upon his proposals and presents, the King contrived to reconcile the spirit of the proud to their profit, and to hold out to the real or pretended patriot the good of both France and Burgundy as the ostensible motive; whilst the party's own private interest, like the concealed wheel of some machine, worked not the less powerfully that its operations were kept out of sight. For each man he had a suitable bait, and a proper mode of presenting it; he poured the guerdon into the sleeve of those who were too proud to extend their hand, and trusted that his bounty, thought it descended like the dew, without noise and imperceptibly, would not fail to produce, in due season, a plentiful crop of goodwill at least, perhaps of good offices, to the donor. In fine, although he had been long paving the way by his ministers for an establishment of such an interest in the Court of Burgundy as should be advantageous to the interests of France, Louis's own personal exertions, directed doubtless by the information of which he was previously possessed, did more to accomplish that object in a few hours than his agents had effected in years of negotiation.

One man alone the King missed, whom he had been particularly desirous of conciliating, and that was the Count de Crevecoeur, whose firmness, during his conduct as Envoy at Plessis, far from exciting Louis's resentment, had been viewed as a reason for making him his own if possible. He was not particularly gratified when he learnt that the Count, at the head of an hundred lances, was gone towards the frontiers of Brabant, to assist the Bishop, in case of necessity, against William de la Marck and his discontented subjects; but he consoled himself that the appearance of this force, joined with the directions which he had sent by faithful messengers, would serve to prevent any premature disturbances in that country, the breaking out of which might, he foresaw, render his present situation very precarious.

The Court upon this occasion dined in the forest when the hour of noon arrived, as was common in those great hunting parties; an arrangement at this time particularly agreeable to the Duke, desirous as he was to abridge that ceremonious and deferential solemnity with which he was otherwise under the necessity of receiving King Louis. In fact, the King's knowledge of human nature had in one particular misled him on this remarkable occasion. He thought that the Duke would have been inexpressibly flattered to have received such a mark of condescension and confidence from his liege lord; but he forgot that the dependence of this dukedom upon the Crown of France was privately the subject of galling mortification to a Prince so powerful, so wealthy, and so proud as Charles, whose aim it certainly was to establish an independent kingdom. The presence of the King at the Court of the Duke of Burgundy imposed on that prince the necessity of exhibiting himself in the subordinate character of a vassal, and of discharging many rites of feudal observance and deference, which, to one of his haughty disposition, resembled derogation from the character of a Sovereign Prince, which on all occasions he affected as far as possible to sustain.

But although it was possible to avoid much ceremony by having the dinner upon the green turf, with sound of bugles, broaching of barrels, and all the freedom of a sylvan meal, it was necessary that the evening repast should, even for that very reason, be held with more than usual solemnity.

Previous orders for this purpose had been given, and, upon returning to Peronne, King Louis found a banquet prepared with such a profusion of splendour and magnificence, as became the wealth of his formidable vassal, possessed as he was of almost all the Low Countries, then the richest portion of Europe. At the head of the long board, which groaned under plate of gold and silver, filled to profusion with the most exquisite dainties, sat the Duke, and on his right hand, upon a seat more elevated than his own, was placed his royal guest. Behind him stood on one side the son of the Duke of Gueldres, who officiated as his grand carver—on the other, Le Glorieux, his jester, without whom he seldom stirred for, like most men of his hasty and coarse character, Charles carried to extremity the general taste of that age for court fools and jesters—experiencing that pleasure in their display of eccentricity and mental infirmity which his more acute but not more benevolent rival loved better to extract from marking the imperfections of humanity in its nobler specimens, and finding subject for mirth in the "fears of the brave and follies of the wise." And indeed, if the anecdote related by Brantome be true, that a court fool, having overheard Louis, in one of his agonies of

repentant devotion, confess his accession to the poisoning of his brother, Henry, Count of Guyenne, divulged it next day at dinner before the assembled court, that monarch might be supposed rather more than satisfied with the pleasantries of professed jesters for the rest of his life.

But, on the present occasion, Louis neglected not to take notice of the favourite buffoon of the Duke, and to applaud his repartees, which he did the rather that he thought he saw that the folly of Le Glorieux, however grossly it was sometimes displayed, covered more than the usual quantity of shrewd and caustic observation proper to his class.

In fact, Tiel Wetzweiler, called Le Glorieux, was by no means a jester of the common stamp. He was a tall, fine looking man, excellent at many exercises, which seemed scarce reconcilable with mental imbecility, because it must have required patience and attention to attain them. He usually followed the Duke to the chase and to the fight; and at Montlhery, when Charles was in considerable personal danger, wounded in the throat, and likely to be made prisoner by a French knight who had hold of his horse's rein, Tiel Wetzweiler charged the assailant so forcibly as to overthrow him and disengage his master. Perhaps he was afraid of this being thought too serious a service for a person of his condition, and that it might excite him enemies among those knights and nobles who had left the care of their master's person to the court fool. At any rate, he chose rather to be laughed at than praised for his achievement; and made such gasconading boasts of his exploits in the battle, that most men thought the rescue of Charles was as ideal as the rest of his tale; and it was on this occasion he acquired the title of Le Glorieux (or the boastful), by which he was ever afterwards distinguished.

Le Glorieux was dressed very richly, but with little of the usual distinction of his profession; and that little rather of a symbolical than a very literal character. His head was not shorn; on the contrary, he wore a profusion of long curled hair, which descended from under his cap, and joining with a well arranged and handsomely trimmed beard, set off features, which, but for a wild lightness of eye, might have been termed handsome. A ridge of scarlet velvet carried across the top of his cap indicated, rather than positively represented, the professional cock's comb, which distinguished the head gear of a fool in right of office. His bauble, made of ebony, was crested as usual with a fool's head, with ass's ears formed of silver; but so small, and so minutely carved, that, till very closely examined, it might have passed for an official baton of a more solemn character. These were the only badges of his office which his dress exhibited. In other respects, it was such as to match with that of the most courtly nobles. His bonnet displayed a medal of gold, he wore a chain of the same metal around his neck, and the fashion of his rich garments was not much more fantastic than those of young gallants who have their clothes made in the extremity of the existing fashion.

To this personage Charles, and Louis, in imitation of his host, often addressed themselves during the entertainment; and both seemed to manifest, by hearty laughter, their amusement at the answers of Le Glorieux.

"Whose seats be those that are vacant?" said Charles to the jester.

"One of those at least should be mine by right of succession, Charles," replied Le Glorieux.

"Why so, knave?" said Charles.

"Because they belong to the Sieur D'Hymbercourt and De Comines, who are gone so far to fly their falcons, that they have forgot their supper. They who would rather look at a kite on the wing than a pheasant on the board, are of kin to the fool, and he should succeed to the stools, as a part of their movable estate."

"That is but a stale jest, my friend Tiel," said the Duke; "but, fools or wise men, here come the defaulters."

As he spoke, Comines and D'Hymbercourt entered the room, and, after having made their reverence to the two Princes, assumed in silence the seats which were left vacant for them.

"What ho! sirs," exclaimed the Duke, addressing them, "your sport has been either very good or very bad, to lead you so far and so late. Sir Philip de Comines, you are dejected—hath D'Hymbercourt won so heavy a wager on you?—You are a philosopher, and should not grieve at bad fortune.—By Saint George D'Hymbercourt looks as sad as thou dost.—How now, sirs? Have you found no game? or have you lost your falcons? or has a witch crossed your way? or has the Wild Huntsman [the famous apparition, sometimes called le Grand Veneur. Sully gives some account of this hunting spectre. S.] met you in the forest? By my honour, you seem as if you were come to a funeral, not a festival."

While the Duke spoke, the eyes of the company were all directed towards D'Hymbercourt and De Comines; and the embarrassment and dejection of their countenances, neither being of that class of persons to whom such expression of anxious melancholy was natural, became so remarkable, that the mirth and laughter of the company, which the rapid circulation of goblets of excellent wine had raised to a considerable height, was gradually hushed; and, without being able to assign any reason for such a change in their spirits, men spoke in whispers to each other, as on the eve of expecting some strange and important tidings.

"What means this silence, Messires?" said the Duke, elevating his voice, which was naturally harsh. "If you bring these strange looks, and this stranger silence, into festivity, we shall wish you had abode in the marshes seeking for herons, or rather for woodcocks and howlets."

"My gracious lord," said De Comines, "as we were about to return hither from the forest, we met the Count of Crevecoeur—"

"How!" said the Duke, "already returned from Brabant?—but he found all well there, doubtless?"

"The Count himself will presently give your Grace an account of his news," said D'Hymbercourt, "which we have heard but imperfectly."

"Body of me, where is the Count?" said the Duke.

"He changes his dress, to wait upon your Highness," answered D'Hymbercourt.

"His dress? Saint Bleu!" exclaimed the impatient Prince, "what care I for his dress! I think you have conspired with him to drive me mad."

"Or rather, to be plain," said De Comines, "he wishes to communicate these news at a private audience."

"Teste dieu! my Lord King," said Charles, "this is ever the way our counsellors serve us.—If they have got hold of aught which they consider as important for our ear, they look as grave upon the matter and are as proud of their burden as an ass of a new pack saddle.—Some one bid Crevecoeur come to us directly!—He comes from the frontiers of Liege, and we, at least" (he laid some emphasis on the pronoun), "have no secrets in that quarter which we would shun to have proclaimed before the assembled world."

All perceived that the Duke had drunk so much wine as to increase the native obstinacy of his disposition; and though many would willingly have suggested that the present was neither a time for hearing news nor for taking counsel, yet all knew the impetuosity of his temper too well to venture on farther interference, and sat in anxious expectation of the tidings which the Count might have to communicate.

A brief interval intervened, during which the Duke remained looking eagerly to the door, as if in a transport of impatience; whilst the guests sat with their eyes bent on the table, as if to conceal their curiosity and anxiety. Louis, alone maintaining perfect composure, continued his conversation alternately with the grand carver and with the jester.

At length Crevecoeur entered, and was presently saluted by the hurried question of his master, "What news from Liege and Brabant, Sir Count?—the report of your arrival has chased mirth from our table—we hope your actual presence will bring it back to us."

"My Liege and master," answered the Count in a firm but melancholy tone, "the news which I bring you are fitter for the council board than the feasting table."

"Out with them, man, if they were tidings from Antichrist!" said the Duke; "but I can guess them—the Liegeois are again in mutiny."

"They are, my lord," said Crevecoeur very gravely.

"Look there," said the Duke, "I have hit at once on what you had been so much afraid to mention to me: the hare brained burghers are again in arms. It could not be in better time, for we may at present have the advice of our own Suzerain," bowing to King Louis, with eyes which spoke the most bitter though suppressed resentment, "to teach us how such mutineers should be dealt with.—Hast thou more news in thy packet? Out with them, and then answer for yourself why you went not forward to assist the Bishop."

"My lord, the farther tidings are heavy for me to tell, and will be afflicting to you to hear.—No aid of mine, or of living chivalry, could have availed the excellent Prelate. William de la Marck, united with the insurgent Liegeois, has taken his Castle of Schonwaldt, and murdered him in his own hall."

"Murdered him!" repeated the Duke in a deep and low tone, which nevertheless was heard from the one end of the hall in which they were assembled to the other, "thou hast been imposed upon, Crevecoeur, by some wild report—it is impossible!"

"Alas! my lord!" said the Count, "I have it from an eyewitness, an archer of the King of France's Scottish Guard, who was in the hall when the murder was committed by William de la Marck's order."

"And who was doubtless aiding and abetting in the horrible sacrilege," said the Duke, starting up and stamping with his foot with such fury that he dashed in pieces the footstool which was placed before him. "Bar the doors of this hall, gentlemen—secure the windows—let no stranger stir from his seat, upon pain of instant death!—Gentlemen of my chamber, draw your swords."

And turning upon Louis, he advanced his own hand slowly and deliberately to the hilt of his weapon, while the King, without either showing fear or assuming a defensive posture, only said—"These news, fair cousin, have staggered your reason."

"No!" replied the Duke, in a terrible tone, "but they have awakened a just resentment, which I have too long suffered to be stifled by trivial considerations of circumstance and place. Murderer of thy brother!—rebel against thy parent—tyrant over thy subjects!—treacherous ally!—perjured King!—dishonoured gentleman!—thou art in my power, and I thank God for it."

"Rather thank my folly," said the King; "for when we met on equal terms at Montlhéry, methinks you wished yourself farther from me than we are now."

The Duke still held his hand on the hilt of his sword, but refrained to draw his weapon or to strike a foe who offered no sort of resistance which could in any wise provoke violence.

Meanwhile, wild and general confusion spread itself through the hall. The doors were now fastened and guarded by order of the Duke; but several of the French nobles, few as they were in number, started from their seats, and prepared for the defence of their Sovereign. Louis had spoken not a word either to Orleans or Dunois since they were liberated from restraint at the Castle of Loches, if it could be termed liberation, to be dragged in King Louis's train, objects of suspicion evidently, rather than of respect and regard; but, nevertheless, the voice of Dunois was first heard above the tumult, addressing himself to the Duke of Burgundy.

"Sir Duke, you have forgotten that you are a vassal of France, and that we, your guests, are Frenchmen. If you lift a hand against our Monarch, prepare to sustain the utmost effects of our despair; for, credit me, we shall feast as high with the blood of Burgundy as we have done with its wine.—Courage, my Lord of Orleans—and you, gentlemen of France, form yourselves round Dunois, and do as he does."

It was in that moment when a King might see upon what tempers he could certainly rely. The few independent nobles and knights who attended Louis, most of whom had only received from him frowns or discountenance, unappalled by the display of infinitely superior force, and the certainty of destruction in case they came to blows, hastened to array themselves around Dunois, and, led by him, to press towards the head of the table where the contending Princes were seated.

On the contrary, the tools and agents whom Louis had dragged forward out of their fitting and natural places into importance which was not due to them, showed cowardice and cold heart, and, remaining still in their seats, seemed resolved not to provoke their fate by intermeddling, whatever might become of their benefactor.

The first of the more generous party was the venerable Lord Crawford, who, with an agility which no one would have expected at his years, forced his way through all opposition (which was the less violent, as many of the Burgundians, either from a point of honour, or a secret inclination to prevent Louis's impending fate, gave way to him), and threw himself boldly between the King and the Duke. He then placed his bonnet, from which his white hair escaped in dishevelled tresses, upon one side of his head—his pale cheek and withered brow coloured, and his aged eye lightened with all the fire of a gallant who is about to dare some desperate action. His cloak was flung over one shoulder, and his action intimated his readiness to wrap it about his left arm, while he unsheathed his sword with his right.

"I have fought for his father and his grandsire," that was all he said, "and by Saint Andrew, end the matter as it will, I will not fail him at this pinch."

What has taken some time to narrate, happened, in fact, with the speed of light; for so soon as the Duke assumed his threatening posture, Crawford had thrown himself betwixt him and the object of his vengeance; and the French gentlemen, drawing together as fast as they could, were crowding to the same point.

The Duke of Burgundy still remained with his hand on his sword, and seemed in the act of giving the signal for a general onset, which must necessarily have ended in the massacre of the weaker party, when Crevecoeur rushed forward, and exclaimed in a voice like a trumpet, "My liege Lord of Burgundy, beware what you do! This is your hall—you are the King's vassal—do not spill the blood of your guest on your hearth, the blood of your Sovereign on the throne you have erected for him, and to which he came under your safeguard. For the sake of your house's honour, do not attempt to revenge one horrid murder by another yet worse!"

"Out of my road, Crevecoeur," answered the Duke, "and let my vengeance pass!—Out of my path! The wrath of kings is to be dreaded like that of Heaven."

"Only when, like that of Heaven, it is just," answered Crevecoeur firmly. "Let me pray of you, my lord, to rein the violence of your temper, however justly offended.—And for you, my Lords of France, whose resistance is unavailing, let me recommend you to forbear whatever may lead towards bloodshed."

"He is right," said Louis, whose coolness forsook him not in that dreadful moment, and who easily foresaw that if a brawl should commence, more violence would be dared and done in the heat of blood than was likely to be attempted if peace were preserved.

"My cousin Orleans—kind Dunois—and you, my trusty Crawford—bring not on ruin and bloodshed by taking offence too hastily. Our cousin the Duke is chafed at the tidings of the death of a near and loving friend, the venerable Bishop of Liege, whose slaughter we lament as he does. Ancient, and, unhappily, recent subjects of jealousy lead him to suspect us of having abetted a crime which our bosom abhors. Should our host murder us on this spot—us, his King and his kinsman, under a false impression of our being accessory to this unhappy accident, our fate will be little lightened, but, on the contrary, greatly aggravated, by your stirring.—Therefore stand back, Crawford.—Were it my last word, I speak as a King to his officer, and demand obedience.—Stand back, and, if it is required, yield up your sword. I command you to do so, and your oath obliges you to obey."

"True, true, my lord," said Crawford, stepping back, and returning to the sheath the blade he had half drawn.—"It may be all very true; but, by my honour, if I were at the head of threescore and ten of my brave fellows, instead of being loaded with more than the like number of years, I would try whether I could have some reason out of these fine gallants, with their golden chains and looped up bonnets, with braw world dyes [gaudy colors] and devices on them."

The Duke stood with his eyes fixed on the ground for a considerable space, and then said, with bitter irony, "Crevecoeur, you say well; and it concerns our honour that our obligations to this great King, our honoured and loving guest, be not so hastily adjusted, as in our hasty anger we had at first proposed. We will so act that all Europe shall acknowledge the justice of our proceedings.—Gentlemen of France, you must render up your arms to my officers! Your master has broken the truce, and has no title to take farther benefit of it. In compassion, however, to your sentiments of honour, and in respect to the rank which he hath disgraced, and the race from which he hath degenerated, we ask not our cousin Louis's sword."

"Not one of us," said Dunois, "will resign our weapon, or quit this hall, unless we are assured of at least our King's safety, in life and limb."

"Nor will a man of the Scottish Guard," exclaimed Crawford, "lay down his arms, save at the command of the King of France, or his High Constable."

"Brave Dunois," said Louis, "and you, my trusty Crawford, your zeal will do me injury instead of benefit.—I trust," he added with dignity, "in my rightful cause, more than in a vain resistance, which would but cost the lives of my best and bravest. Give up your swords.—The noble Burgundians, who accept such honourable pledges, will be more able than you are to protect both you and me.—Give up your swords.—It is I who command you."

It was thus that, in this dreadful emergency, Louis showed the promptitude of decision and clearness of judgment which alone could have saved his life. He was aware that, until actual blows were exchanged, he should have the assistance of most of the nobles present to moderate the fury of their Prince; but that, were a melee once commenced, he himself and his few adherents must be instantly murdered. At the same time, his worst enemies confessed that his demeanour had in it nothing either of meanness or cowardice. He shunned to aggravate into frenzy the wrath of the Duke; but he neither deprecated nor seemed to fear it, and continued to look on him with the calm and fixed attention with which a brave man eyes the menacing gestures of a lunatic, whilst conscious that his own steadiness and composure operate as an insensible and powerful check on the rage even of insanity.

Crawford, at the King's command, threw his sword to Crevecoeur, saying, "Take it! and the devil give you joy of it.—It is no dishonour to the rightful owner who yields it, for we have had no fair play."

"Hold, gentlemen," said the Duke in a broken voice, as one whom passion had almost deprived of utterance, "retain your swords; it is sufficient you promise not to use them. And you, Louis of Valois, must regard yourself as my prisoner, until you are cleared of having abetted sacrilege and murder. Have him to the Castle.—Have him to Earl Herbert's Tower. Let him have six gentlemen of his train to attend him, such as he shall choose.—My Lord of Crawford, your guard must leave the Castle, and shall be honourably quartered elsewhere. Up with every drawbridge, and down with every portcullis.—Let the gates of the town be trebly guarded.—Draw the floating bridge to the right hand side of the river.—Bring round the Castle my band of Black Walloons [regiments of Dutch troops, wearing black armour], and treble the sentinels on every post!—You, D'Hymbercourt, look that patrols of horse and foot make the round of the town every half hour during the night and every hour during the next day—if indeed such ward shall be necessary after daybreak, for it is like we may be sudden in this matter.—Look to the person of Louis, as you love your life."

He started from the table in fierce and moody haste, darted a glance of mortal enmity at the King, and rushed out of the apartment.

"Sirs," said the King, looking with dignity around him, "grief for the death of his ally hath made your Prince frantic. I trust you know better your duty, as knights and noblemen, than to abet him in his treasonable violence against the person of his liege Lord."

At this moment was heard in the streets the sound of drums beating, and horns blowing, to call out the soldiery in every direction.

"We are," said Crevecoeur, who acted as the Marshal of the Duke's household, "subjects of Burgundy, and must do our duty as such. Our hopes and prayers, and our efforts, will not be wanting to bring about peace and union between your Majesty and our liege Lord. Meantime, we must obey his commands. These other lords and knights will be proud to contribute to the convenience of the illustrious Duke of Orleans, of the brave Dunois, and the stout Lord Crawford. I myself must be your Majesty's chamberlain, and bring you to your apartments in other guise than would be my desire, remembering the hospitality of Plessis. You have only to choose your attendants, whom the Duke's commands limit to six."

"Then," said the King, looking around him, and thinking for a moment—"I desire the attendance of Oliver le Dain, of a private of my Life Guard called Balafre, who may be unarmed if you will—of Tristan l'Hermite, with two of his people—and my right royal and trusty philosopher, Martius Galeotti."

"Your Majesty's will shall be complied with in all points," said the Count de Crevecoeur. "Galeotti," he added, after a moment's inquiry, "is, I understand, at present supping in some buxom company, but he shall instantly be sent for; the others will obey your Majesty's command upon the instant."

"Forward, then, to the new abode, which the hospitality of our cousin provides for us," said the King. "We know it is strong, and have only to hope it may be in a corresponding degree safe."

"Heard you the choice which King Louis has made of his attendants?" said Le Glorieux to Count Crevecoeur apart, as they followed Louis from the hall.

"Surely, my merry gossip," replied the Count. "What hast thou to object to them?"

"Nothing, nothing—only they are a rare election!—A panderly barber—a Scottish hired cutthroat—a chief hangman and his two assistants, and a thieving charlatan.—I will along with you, Crevecoeur, and take a lesson in the degrees of roguery, from observing your skill in marshalling them. The devil himself could scarce have summoned such a synod, or have been a better president amongst them."

Accordingly, the all licensed jester, seizing the Count's arm familiarly, began to march along with him, while, under a strong guard, yet forgetting no semblance of respect, he conducted the King towards his new apartment.

[The historical facts attending this celebrated interview are expounded and enlarged upon in this chapter. Agents sent by Louis had tempted the people of Liege to rebel against their superior, Duke Charles, and persecute and murder their Bishop. But Louis was not prepared for their acting with such promptitude. They flew to arms with the temerity of a fickle rabble, took the Bishop prisoner, menaced and insulted him, and tore to pieces one or two of his canons. This news was sent to the Duke of Burgundy at the moment when Louis had so unguardedly placed himself in his power; and the consequence was that Charles placed guards on the Castle of Peronne, and, deeply resenting the treachery of the king of France in exciting sedition in his dominions, while he pretended the most intimate friendship, he deliberated whether he should not put Louis to death. Three days Louis was detained in this very precarious situation, and it was only his profuse liberality amongst Charles's favourites and courtiers which finally ensured him from death or deposition. Comines, who was the Duke of Burgundy's chamberlain at the time, and slept in his apartment, says Charles neither undressed nor slept, but flung himself from time to time on the bed, and, at other times, wildly traversed the apartment. It was long before his violent temper became in any degree tractable. At length he only agreed to give Louis his liberty, on condition of his accompanying him in person against, and employing his troops in subduing, the mutineers whom his intrigues had instigated to arms. This was a bitter and degrading alternative. But Louis, seeing no other mode of compounding for the effects of his rashness, not only submitted to this discreditable condition, but swore to it upon a crucifix said to have belonged to Charlemagne. These particulars are from Comines. There is a succinct epitome of them in Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's History of France, vol. i.—S.]

CHAPTER XXVIII: UNCERTAINTY

*Then happy low, lie down;
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.*

SECOND PART OF KING HENRY IV.

Forty men at arms, carrying alternately naked swords and blazing torches, served as the escort, or rather the guard, of King Louis, from the town hall of Peronne to the Castle; and as he entered within its darksome and gloomy strength, it seemed as if a voice screamed in his ear that warning which the Florentine has inscribed over the portal of the infernal regions, "Leave all hope behind."

[The Florentine (1265-1321): Dante Alighieri, the greatest of Italian poets. The Divine Comedy, his chief work, describes his passage through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven; the inscription here referred to Dante places at the entrance of Hell.]

At that moment, perhaps, some feeling of remorse might have crossed the King's mind, had he thought on the hundreds, nay, thousands whom, without cause, or on light suspicion, he had committed to the abysses of his dungeons, deprived of all hope of liberty, and loathing even the life to which they clung by animal instinct.

The broad glare of the torches outfacing the pale moon, which was more obscured on this than on the former night, and the red smoky light which they dispersed around the ancient buildings, gave a darker shade to that huge donjon, called the Earl Herbert's Tower. It was the same that Louis had viewed with misgiving presentiment on the preceding evening, and of which he was now doomed to become an inhabitant, under the terror of what violence soever the wrathful temper of his overgrown vassal might tempt him to exercise in those secret recesses of despotism.

To aggravate the King's painful feelings, he saw, as he crossed the courtyard, one or two bodies, over each of which had been hastily flung a military cloak. He was not long in discerning that they were corpses of slain Archers of the Scottish Guard, who having disputed, as the Count Crevecoeur informed him, the command given them to quit the post near the King's apartments, a brawl had ensued between them and the Duke's Walloon bodyguards, and before it could be composed by the officers on either side, several lives had been lost.

"My trusty Scots!" said the King as he looked upon this melancholy spectacle; "had they brought only man to man, all Flanders, ay, and Burgundy to boot, had not furnished champions to mate you."

"Yes, an it please your Majesty," said Balafre, who attended close behind the King, "Maistery mows the meadow [maist, a Scotch form of most. That is, there is strength in numbers]—few men can fight more than two at once.—I myself never care to meet three, unless it be in the way of special duty, when one must not stand to count heads."

"Art thou there, old acquaintance," said the King, looking behind him; "then I have one true subject with me yet."

"And a faithful minister, whether in your councils, or in his offices about your royal person," whispered Oliver le Dain.

"We are all faithful," said Tristan l'Hermite gruffly; "for should they put to death your Majesty, there is not one of us whom they would suffer to survive you, even if we would."

"Now, that is what I call good corporal bail for fidelity," said Le Glorieux, who, as already mentioned, with the restlessness proper to an infirm brain, had thrust himself into their company.

Meanwhile the Seneschal, hastily summoned, was turning with laborious effort the ponderous key which opened the reluctant gate of the huge Gothic Keep, and was at last fain to call for the assistance of one of Crevecoeur's attendants. When they had succeeded, six men entered with torches, and showed the way through a narrow and winding passage, commanded at different points by shot holes from vaults and casements constructed behind, and in the thickness of the massive walls. At the end of this passage arose a stair of corresponding rudeness, consisting of huge blocks of stone, roughly dressed with the hammer, and of unequal height. Having mounted this ascent, a strong iron clenched door admitted them to what had been the great hall of the donjon, lighted but very faintly even during the daytime (for the apertures, diminished, in appearance by the excessive thickness of the walls, resembled slits rather than windows), and now but for the blaze of the torches, almost perfectly dark. Two or three bats, and other birds of evil presage, roused by the unusual glare, flew against the lights, and threatened to extinguish them; while the Seneschal formally apologized to the King that the State Hall had not been put in order, such was the hurry of the notice sent to him, adding that, in truth, the apartment had not been in use for twenty years, and rarely before that time, so far as ever he had heard, since the time of King Charles the Simple.

"King Charles the Simple!" echoed Louis; "I know the history of the Tower now.—He was here murdered by his treacherous vassal, Herbert, Earl of Vermandois.—So say our annals. I knew there was something concerning the Castle of Peronne which dwelt on my mind, though I could not recall the circumstance.—Here, then, my predecessor was slain!"

"Not here, not exactly here, and please your Majesty," said the old Seneschal, stepping with the eager haste of a cicerone who shows the curiosities of such a place.

"Not here, but in the side chamber a little onward, which opens from your Majesty's bedchamber."

He hastily opened a wicket at the upper end of the hall, which led into a bedchamber, small, as is usual in those old buildings; but, even for that reason, rather more comfortable than the waste hall through which they had passed. Some hasty preparations had been here made for the King's accommodation. Arras had been tacked up, a fire lighted in the rusty grate, which had been long unused, and a pallet laid down for those gentlemen who were to pass the night in his chamber, as was then usual.

"We will get beds in the hall for the rest of your attendants," said the garrulous old man; "but we have had such brief notice, if it please your Majesty.—And if it please your Majesty to look upon this little wicket behind the arras, it opens into the little old cabinet in the thickness of the wall where Charles was slain; and there is a secret passage from below, which admitted the men who were to deal with him. And your Majesty, whose eyesight I hope is better than mine, may see the blood still on the oak floor, though the thing was done five hundred years ago."

While he thus spoke, he kept fumbling to open the postern of which he spoke, until the King said, "Forbear, old man—forbear but a little while, when thou mayst have a newer tale to tell, and fresher blood to show.—My Lord of Crevecoeur, what say you?"

"I can but answer, Sire, that these two interior apartments are as much at your Majesty's disposal as those in your own Castle at Plessis, and that Crevecoeur, a name never blackened by treachery or assassination, has the guard of the exterior defences of it."

"But the private passage into that closet, of which the old man speaks?" This King Louis said in a low and anxious tone, holding Crevecoeur's arm fast with one hand, and pointing to the wicket door with the other.

"It must be some dream of Mornay's," said Crevecoeur, "or some old and absurd tradition of the place; but we will examine."

He was about to open the closet door, when Louis answered, "No, Crevecoeur, no.—Your honour is sufficient warrant.—But what will your Duke do with me, Crevecoeur? He cannot hope to keep me long a prisoner; and—in short, give me your opinion, Crevecoeur."

"My Lord, and Sire," said the Count, "how the Duke of Burgundy must resent this horrible cruelty on the person of his near relative and ally, is for your Majesty to judge; and what right he may have to consider it as instigated by your Majesty's emissaries, you only can know. But my master is noble in his disposition, and made incapable, even by the very strength of his passions, of any underhand practices. Whatever he does, will be done in the face of day, and of the two nations. And I can but add, that it will be the wish of every counsellor around him—excepting perhaps one—that he should behave in this matter with mildness and generosity, as well as justice."

"Ah! Crevecoeur," said Louis, taking his hand as if affected by some painful recollections, "how happy is the Prince who has counsellors near him, who can guard him against the effects of his own angry passions! Their names will be read in golden letters, when the history of his reign is perused.—Noble Crevecoeur, had it been my lot to have such as thou art about my person!"

"It had in that case been your Majesty's study to have got rid of them as fast as you could," said Le Glorieux.

"Aha! Sir Wisdom, art thou there?" said Louis, turning round, and instantly changing the pathetic tone in which he had addressed Crevecoeur, and adopting with facility one which had a turn of gaiety in it.—"Hast thou followed us hither?"

"Ay, Sir," answered Le Glorieux, "Wisdom must follow, in motley, where Folly leads the way in purple."

"How shall I construe that, Sir Solomon?" answered Louis. "Wouldst thou change conditions with me?"

"Not I, by my halidome," quoth Le Glorieux, "if you would give me fifty crowns to boot."

"Why, wherefore so?—Methinks I could be well enough contented, as princes go, to have thee for my king."

"Ay, Sire," replied Le Glorieux, "but the question is, whether, judging of your Majesty's wit from its having lodged you here, I should not have cause to be ashamed of having so dull a fool."

"Peace, sirrah!" said the Count of Crevecoeur, "your tongue runs too fast."

"Let it take its course," said the King, "I know of no such fair subject of raillery as the follies of those who should know better.—Here, my sagacious friend, take this purse of gold, and with it the advice never to be so great a fool as to deem yourself wiser than other people. Prithee, do me so much favour as to inquire after my astrologer, Martius Galeotti, and send him hither to me presently."

"I will, without fail, my Liege," answered the jester; "and I wot well I shall find him at Jan Dopplethur's, for philosophers, as well as fools, know where the best wine is sold."

"Let me pray for free entrance for this learned person through your guards, Seignior de Crevecoeur," said Louis.

"For his entrance, unquestionably," answered the Count; "but it grieves me to add that my instructions do not authorize me to permit any one to quit your Majesty's apartments.—I wish your Majesty a goodnight," he subjoined, "and will presently make such arrangements in the outer hall, as may put the gentlemen who are to inhabit it more at their ease."

"Give yourself no trouble for them, Sir Count," replied the King, "they are men accustomed to set hardships at defiance; and, to speak truth, excepting that I wish to see Galeotti, I would desire as little farther communication from without this night as may be consistent with your instructions."

"These are, to leave your Majesty," replied Crevecoeur, "undisputed possession of your own apartments. Such are my master's orders."

"Your Master, Count," answered Louis, "whom I may also term mine, is a right gracious master.—My dominions," he added, "are somewhat shrunk in compass, now that they have dwindled to an old hall and a bedchamber, but they are still wide enough for all the subjects which I can at present boast of."

The Count of Crevecoeur took his leave, and shortly after, they could hear the noise of the sentinels moving to their posts, accompanied with the word of command from the officers, and the hasty tread of the guards who were relieved. At length all became still, and the only sound which filled the air was the sluggish murmur of the river Somme, as it glided, deep and muddy, under the walls of the castle.

"Go into the hall, my mates," said Louis to his train; "but do not lie down to sleep. Hold yourselves in readiness, for there is still something to be done tonight, and that of moment."

Oliver and Tristan retired to the hall, accordingly, in which Le Balafre and the two officers had remained, when the others entered the bedchamber. They found that those without had thrown fagots enough upon the fire to serve the purpose of light and heat at the same time, and, wrapping themselves in their cloaks, had sat down on the floor, in postures which variously expressed the discomposure and dejection of their minds. Oliver and Tristan saw nothing better to be done than to follow their example and, never very good friends in the days of their court prosperity, they were both equally reluctant to repose confidence in each other upon this strange and sudden reverse of fortune. So the whole party sat in silent dejection.

Meanwhile their master underwent, in the retirement of his secret chamber, agonies that might have atoned for some of those which had been imposed by his command. He paced the room with short and unequal steps, often stood still and clasped his hands together, and gave loose, in short, to agitation, which in public he had found himself able to suppress so successfully. At length, pausing and wringing his hands, he planted himself opposite to the wicket door, which had been pointed out by old Mornay as leading to the scene of the murder of one of his predecessors, and gradually gave voice to his feelings in a broken soliloquy.

"Charles the Simple—Charles the Simple!—what will posterity call the Eleventh Louis, whose blood will probably soon refresh the stains of thine! Louis the Fool—Louis the Driveller—Louis the Infatuated—are all terms too slight to mark the extremity of my idiocy! To think these hot headed Liegeois, to whom rebellion is as natural as their food, would remain quiet—to dream that the Wild Beast of Ardennes would for a moment be interrupted in his career of force and bloodthirsty brutality—to suppose that I could use reason and arguments to any good purpose with Charles of Burgundy, until I had tried the force of such exhortations with success upon a wild bull. Fool, and double idiot that I was! But the villain Martius shall not escape.—He has been at the bottom of this, he and the vile priest, the detestable Balue. If I ever get out of this danger, I will tear from his head the Cardinal's cap, though I pull the scalp along with it! But the other traitor is in my hands—I am yet King enough—have yet an empire roomy enough—for the punishment of the quack salving, word mongering, star gazing, lie coining impostor, who has at once made a prisoner and a dupe of me!—The conjunction of the constellations—ay, the conjunction.—He must talk nonsense which would scarce gull a thrice sodden sheep's head, and I must be idiot enough to think I understand him! But we shall see presently what the conjunction hath really boded. But first let me to my devotions."

[Louis kept his promise of vengeance against Cardinal La Balue, whom he always blamed as having betrayed him to Burgundy. After he had returned to his own kingdom, he caused his late favourite to be immured in one of the iron cages at Loches. These were constructed with horrible ingenuity, so that a person of ordinary size could neither stand up at his full height, nor lie lengthwise in them. Some ascribe this horrid device to Balue himself. At any rate, he was confined in one of these dens for eleven years, nor did Louis permit him to be liberated till his last illness. S.]

Above the little door, in memory perhaps of the deed which had been done within, was a rude niche, containing a crucifix cut in stone. Upon this emblem the King fixed his eyes, as if about to kneel, but stopped short, as if he applied to the blessed image the principles of worldly policy, and deemed it rash to approach its presence without having secured the private intercession of some supposed favourite. He therefore turned from the crucifix as unworthy to look upon it, and selecting from the images with which, as often mentioned, his hat was completely garnished, a representation of the Lady of Clery, knelt down before it, and made the following extraordinary prayer; in which, it is to be observed, the grossness of his superstition induced him, in some degree, to consider the Virgin of Clery as a different person from the Madonna of Embrun, a favourite idol, to whom he often paid his vows.

"Sweet Lady of Clery," he exclaimed, clasping his hands and beating his breast while he spoke, "blessed Mother of Mercy! thou who art omnipotent with Omnipotence, have compassion with me, a sinner! It is true, that I have something neglected thee for thy blessed sister of Embrun; but I am a King, my power is great, my wealth boundless; and, were it otherwise, I would double the gabelle on my subjects, rather than not pay my debts to you both. Undo these iron doors—fill up these tremendous moats—lead me, as a mother leads a child, out of this present and pressing danger! If I have given thy sister the county of Boulogne, to be held of her for ever, have I no means of showing devotion to thee also? Thou shalt have the broad and rich province of Champagne, and its vineyards shall pour their abundance into thy convent. I had promised the province to my brother Charles; but he, thou knowest, is dead—poisoned by that wicked Abbe of Saint John d'Angely, whom, if I live, I will punish!—I promised this once before, but this time I will keep my word.—If I had any knowledge of the crime, believe, dearest patroness, it was because I knew no better method of quieting the discontents of my kingdom. Oh, do not reckon that old debt to my account today; but be, as thou hast ever been, kind, benignant, and easy to be entreated! Sweetest Lady, work with thy child, that he will pardon all past sins, and one—one little deed which I must do this night—nay, it is no sin, dearest Lady of Clery—no sin, but an act of justice privately administered, for the villain is the greatest impostor that ever poured falsehood into a Prince's ear, and leans besides to the filthy heresy of the Greeks. He is not deserving of thy protection, leave him to my care; and hold it as good service that I rid the world of him, for the man is a necromancer and wizard, that is not worth thy thought and care—a dog, the extinction of whose life ought to be of as little consequence in thine eyes as the treading out a spark that drops from a lamp, or springs from a fire. Think not of this little matter, gentlest, kindest Lady, but only consider how thou canst best aid me in my troubles! and I here, bind my royal signet to thy effigy, in token that I will keep word concerning the county of Champagne, and that this shall be the last time I will trouble thee in affairs of blood, knowing thou art so kind, so gentle, and so tender hearted."

[As overheard and reported by the court jester this historic prayer reads as follows: "Ah, my good Lady, my gentle mistress, my only friend, in whom alone I have resource, I pray you to supplicate God in my behalf, and to be my advocate with him that he may pardon me the death of my brother whom I caused to be poisoned by that wicked Abbot of Saint John. I confess my guilt to thee as to my good patroness and mistress. But then what could I do? he was perpetually causing disorder in my kingdom. Cause me then to be pardoned, my good Lady, and I know what a reward I will give thee."]

After this extraordinary contract with the object of his adoration, Louis recited, apparently with deep devotion, the seven penitential psalms [the 6th, 32d, 38th, 51st, 102d, 130th, and 143d, so called from their penitential character] in Latin, and several aves and prayers especially belonging to the service of the Virgin. He then arose, satisfied that he had secured the intercession of the Saint to whom he had prayed, the rather, as he craftily reflected, that most of the sins for which he had requested her mediation on former occasions had been of a different character, and that, therefore, the Lady of Clery was less likely to consider him as a hardened and habitual shedder of blood than the other saints whom he had more frequently made confidants of his crimes in that respect.

When he had thus cleared his conscience, or rather whited it over like a sepulchre, the King thrust his head out at the door of the hall, and summoned Le Balafre into his apartment. "My good soldier," he said, "thou hast served me long, and hast had little promotion. We are here in a case where I may either live or die; but I would not willingly die an ungrateful man, or leave, so far as the Saints may place it in my power, either a friend or an enemy unrecompensed. Now I have a friend to be rewarded, that is thyself—an enemy to be punished according to his deserts, and that is the base, treacherous villain; Martius Galeotti, who, by his impostures and specious falsehoods, has trained me hither into the power of my mortal enemy, with as firm a purpose of my destruction as ever butcher had of slaying the beast which he drove to the shambles."

"I will challenge him on that quarrel, since they say he is a fighting blade, though he looks somewhat unwieldy," said Le Balafre. "I doubt not but the Duke of Burgundy is so much a friend to men of the sword that he will allow us a fair field within some reasonable space, and if your Majesty live so long, and enjoy so much freedom, you shall behold me do battle in your right, and take as proper a vengeance on this philosopher as your heart could desire."

"I commend your bravery and your devotion to my service," said the King. "But this treacherous villain is a stout man at arms, and I would not willingly risk thy life, my brave soldier."

"I were no brave soldier, if it please your Majesty," said Balafre, "if I dared not face a better man than he. A fine thing it would be for me, who can neither read nor write, to be afraid of a fat lurdane, who has done little else all his Life!"

"Nevertheless," said the King, "it is not our pleasure so to put thee in venture, Balafre. This traitor comes hither, summoned by our command. We would have thee, so soon as thou canst find occasion, close up with him, and smite him under the fifth rib.—Dost thou understand me?"

"Truly I do," answered Le Balafre, "but, if it please your Majesty, this is a matter entirely out of my course of practice. I could not kill you a dog unless it were in hot assault, or pursuit, or upon defiance given, or such like."

"Why, sure, thou dost not pretend to tenderness of heart," said the King; "thou who hast been first in storm and siege, and most eager, as men tell me, on the pleasures and advantages which are gained on such occasions by the rough heart and the bloody hand?"

"My lord," answered Le Balafre, "I have neither feared nor spared your enemies, sword in hand. And an assault is a desperate matter, under risks which raise a man's blood so that, by Saint Andrew, it will not settle for an hour or two—which I call a fair license for plundering after a storm. And God pity us poor soldiers, who are first driven mad with danger, and then madder with victory. I have heard of a legion consisting entirely of saints; and methinks it would take them all to pray and intercede for the rest of the army, and for all who wear plumes and corselets, buff coats and broadswords. But what your Majesty purposes is out of my course of practice, though I will never deny that it has been wide enough. As for the Astrologer, if he be a traitor, let him e'en die a traitor's death—I will neither meddle nor make with it. Your Majesty has your Provost and two of his Marshals men without, who are more fit for dealing with him than a Scottish gentleman of my family and standing in the service."

"You say well," said the King; "but, at least, it belongs to thy duty to prevent interruption, and to guard the execution of my most just sentence."

"I will do so against all Peronne," said Le Balafre. "Your Majesty need not doubt my fealty in that which I can reconcile to my conscience, which, for mine own convenience and the service of your royal Majesty, I can vouch to be a pretty large one—at least, I know I have done some deeds for your Majesty, which I would rather have eaten a handful of my own dagger than I would have done for any one else."

"Let that rest," said the King, "and hear you—when Galeotti is admitted, and the door shut on him, do you stand to your weapon, and guard the entrance on the inside of the apartment. Let no one intrude—that is all I require of you. Go hence, and send the Provost Marshal to me."

Balafre left the apartment accordingly, and in a minute afterwards Tristan l'Hermite entered from the hall.

"Welcome, gossip," said the King; "what thinkest thou of our situation?"

"As of men sentenced to death," said the Provost Marshal, "unless there come a reprieve from the Duke."

"Reprieved or not, he that decoyed us into this snare shalt go our fourrier to the next world, to take up lodgings for us," said the King, with a grisly and ferocious smile. "Tristan, thou hast done many an act of brave justice—finis—I should have said funis coronat opus [the end—I should have said the rope—crowns the work]—thou must stand by me to the end."

"I will, my Liege," said Tristan, "I am but a plain fellow, but I am grateful. I will do my duty within these walls, or elsewhere; and while I live, your Majesty's breath shall pour as potential a note of condemnation, and your sentence be as literally executed, as when you sat on your own throne. They may deal with me the next hour for it if they will—I care not."

"It is even what I expected of thee, my loving gossip," said Louis; "but hast thou good assistance?—The traitor is strong and able bodied, and will doubtless be clamorous for aid. The Scot will do naught but keep the door, and well that he can be brought to that by flattery and humouring. Then Oliver is good for nothing but lying, flattering, and suggesting dangerous counsels; and, Ventre Saint Dieu! I think is more like one day to deserve the halter himself than to use it to another. Have you men, think you, and means, to make sharp and sure work?"

"I have Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre with me," said he, "men so expert in their office that, out of three men, they would hang up one ere his two companions were aware. And we have all resolved to live or die with your Majesty, knowing we shall have as short breath to draw when you are gone, as ever fell to the lot of any of our patients.—But what is to be our present subject, an it please your Majesty? I love to be sure of my man; for, as your Majesty is pleased sometimes to remind me, I have now and then mistaken the criminal, and strung up in his place an honest labourer, who had given your Majesty no offence."

"Most true," said the other. "Know then, Tristan, that the condemned person is Martius Galeotti.—You start, but it is even as I say. The villain hath trained us all hither by false and treacherous representations, that he might put us into the hands of the Duke of Burgundy without defence."

"But not without vengeance!" said Tristan, "were it the last act of my life, I would sting him home like an expiring wasp, should I be crushed to pieces on the next instant!"

"I know thy trusty spirit," said the King, "and the pleasure which, like other good men, thou dost find in the discharge of thy duty, since virtue, as the schoolmen say, is its own reward. But away and prepare the priests, for the victim approaches."

"Would you have it done in your own presence, my gracious Liege?" said Tristan.

Louis declined this offer; but charged the Provost Marshal to have everything ready for the punctual execution of his commands the moment the Astrologer left his apartment.

"For," said the King, "I will see the villain once more, just to observe how he bears himself towards the master whom he has led into the toils. I shall love to see the sense of approaching death strike the colour from that ruddy cheek, and dim that eye which laughed as it lied.—Oh, that there were but another with him, whose counsels aided his prognostications! But if I survive this—look to your scarlet, my Lord Cardinal! for Rome shall scarce protect you—be it spoken under favour of Saint Peter and the blessed Lady of Clery, who is all over mercy.—Why do you tarry? Go get your rooms ready. I expect the villain instantly. I pray to Heaven he take not fear and come not!—that were indeed a balk.—Begone, Tristan—thou wert not wont to be so slow when business was to be done."

"On the contrary, an it like your Majesty, you were ever wont to say that I was too fast, and mistook your purpose, and did the job on the wrong subject. Now, please your Majesty to give me a sign, just when you part with Galeotti for the night, whether the business goes on or no. I have known your Majesty once or twice change your mind, and blame me for over dispatch."

[The Provost Marshal was often so precipitate in execution as to slay another person instead of him whom the King had indicated. This always occasioned a double execution, for the wrath or revenge of Louis was never satisfied with a vicarious punishment. S.]

"Thou suspicious creature," answered King Louis, "I tell thee I will not change my mind—but to silence thy remonstrances, observe, if I say to the knave at parting, 'There is a Heaven above us!' then let the business go on; but if I say 'Go in peace,' you will understand that my purpose is altered."

"My head is somewhat of the dullest out of my own department," said Tristan l'Hermite. "Stay, let me rehearse.—If you bid him depart in peace, I am to have him dealt upon?"

"No, no—idiot, no," said the King, "in that case, you let him pass free. But if I say, 'There is a heaven above us,' up with him a yard or two nearer the planets he is so conversant with."

"I wish we may have the means here," said the Provost.

"Then up with him, or down with him, it matters not which," answered the King, grimly smiling.

"And the body," said the Provost, "how shall we dispose of it?"

"Let me see an instant," said the King—"the windows of the hall are too narrow; but that projecting oriel is wide enough. We will over with him into the Somme, and put a paper on his breast, with the legend, 'Let the justice of the King pass toll free.' The Duke's officers may seize it for duties if they dare."

The Provost Marshal left the apartment of Louis, and summoned his two assistants to council in an embrasure in the great hall, where Trois Eschelles stuck a torch against the wall to give them light. They discoursed in whispers, little noticed by Oliver le Dain, who seemed sunk in dejection, and Le Balafre, who was fast asleep.

"Comrades," said the Provost to his executioners, "perhaps you have thought that our vocation was over, or that, at least, we were more likely to be the subjects of the duty of others than to have any more to discharge on our own parts. But courage, my mates! Our gracious master has reserved for us one noble cast of our office, and it must be gallantly executed, as by men who would live in history."

"Ay, I guess how it is," said Trois Eschelles; "our patron is like the old Kaisers of Rome, who, when things came to an extremity, or, as we would say, to the ladder foot with them, were wont to select from their own ministers of justice some experienced person, who might spare their sacred persons from the awkward attempts of a novice, or blunderer in our mystery. It was a pretty custom for Ethnics; but, as a good Catholic, I should make some scruple at laying hands on the Most Christian King."

"Nay, but, brother, you are ever too scrupulous," said Petit Andre. "If he issues word and warrant for his own execution, I see not how we can in duty dispute it. He that dwells at Rome must obey the Pope—the Marshalsmen, must do their master's bidding, and he the King's."

"Hush, you knaves!" said the Provost Marshal, "there is here no purpose concerning the King's person, but only that of the Greek heretic pagan and Mahomedan wizard, Martius Galeotti."

"Galeotti!" answered Petit-Andre, "that comes quite natural. I never knew one of these legerdemain fellows, who pass their lives, as one may say, in dancing upon a tight rope, but what they came at length to caper at the end of one—tchick."

"My only concern is," said Trois Eschelles, looking upwards, "that the poor creature must die without confession."

"Tush! tush!" said the Provost Marshal, in reply, "he is a rank heretic and necromancer—a whole college of priests could not absolve him from the doom he has deserved. Besides, if he hath a fancy that way, thou hast a gift, Trois Eschelles, to serve him for ghostly father thyself. But, what is more material, I fear you must use your poniards, my mates; for you have not here the fitting conveniences for the exercise of your profession."

"Now our Lady of the Isle of Paris forbid," said Trois Eschelles, "that the King's command should find me destitute of my tools! I always wear around my body Saint Francis's cord, doubled four times, with a handsome loop at the farther end of it; for I am of the company of Saint Francis, and may wear his cowl when I am in extremis [at the point of death]—I thank God and the good fathers of Saumur."

"And for me," said Petit Andre, "I have always in my budget a handy block and sheaf, or a pulley as they call it, with a strong screw for securing it where I list, in case we should travel where trees are scarce, or high branched from the ground. I have found it a great convenience."

"That will suit us well," said the Provost Marshal. "You have but to screw your pulley into yonder beam above the door, and pass the rope over it. I will keep the fellow in some conversation near the spot until you adjust the noose under his chin, and then—"

"And then we run up the rope," said Petit Andre, "and, tchick, our Astrologer is so far in Heaven that he hath not a foot on earth."

"But these gentlemen," said Trois Eschelles, looking towards the chimney, "do not these help, and so take a handsel of our vocation?"

"Hem! no," answered the Provost, "the barber only contrives mischief, which he leaves other men to execute; and for the Scot, he keeps the door when the deed is a-doing, which he hath not spirit or quickness sufficient to partake in more actively—every one to his trade."

[The author has endeavoured to give to the odious Tristan l'Hermite a species of dogged and brutal fidelity to Louis, similar to the attachment of a bulldog to his master. With all the atrocity of his execrable character, he was certainly a man of courage, and was in his youth made knight in the breach of Fronsac, with a great number of other young nobles, by the honour giving hand of the elder Dunois, the celebrated hero of Charles the Fifth's reign. S.]

With infinite dexterity, and even a sort of professional delight which sweetened the sense of their own precarious situation, the worthy executioners of the Provost's mandates adapted their rope and pulley for putting in force the sentence which had been uttered against Galeotti by the captive Monarch—seeming to rejoice that that last action was to be one so consistent with their past lives. Tristan l'Hermite sat eyeing their proceedings with a species of satisfaction; while Oliver paid no attention to them whatever; and Ludovic Lesly, if, awaked by the bustle, he looked upon them at all, considered them as engaged in matters entirely unconnected with his own duty, and for which he was not to be regarded as responsible in one way or other.

CHAPTER XXIX: RECRIMINATION

*Thy time is not yet out—the devil thou servest
Has not as yet deserted thee. He aids
The friends who drudge for him, as the blind man
Was aided by the guide, who lent his shoulder
O'er rough and smooth, until he reached the brink
Of the fell precipice—then hurl'd him downward.*

OLD PLAY

When obeying the command, or rather the request of Louis—for he was in circumstances in which, though a monarch, he could only request Le Glorieux to go in search of Martius Galeotti—the jester had no trouble in executing his commission, betaking himself at once to the best tavern in Peronne, of which he himself was rather more than an occasional frequenter, being a great admirer of that species of liquor which reduced all other men's brains to a level with his own.

He found, or rather observed, the Astrologer in the corner of the public drinking room—stove, as it is called in German and Flemish, from its principal furniture—sitting in close colloquy with a female in a singular and something like a Moorish or Asiatic garb, who, as Le Glorieux approached Martius, rose as in the act to depart.

"These," said the stranger, "are news upon which you may rely with absolute certainty," and with that disappeared among the crowd of guests who sat grouped at different tables in the apartment.

"Cousin Philosopher," said the jester, presenting himself, "Heaven no sooner relieves one sentinel than it sends another to supply the place. One fool being gone, here I come another, to guide you to the apartments of Louis of France."

"And art thou the messenger?" said Martius, gazing on him with prompt apprehension, and discovering at once the jester's quality, though less intimated, as we have before noticed, than was usual, by his external appearance.

"Ay, sir, and like your learning," answered Le Glorieux. "When Power sends Folly to entreat the approach of Wisdom, 't is a sure sign what foot the patient halts upon."

"How if I refuse to come, when summoned at so late an hour by such a messenger?" said Galeotti.

"In that case, we will consult your ease, and carry you," said Le Glorieux. "Here are half a score of stout Burgundian yeomen at the door, with whom He of Crevecoeur has furnished me to that effect. For know that my friend Charles of Burgundy and I have not taken away our kinsman Louis's crown, which he was ass enough to put into our power, but have only filed and clipt it a little, and, though reduced to the size of a spangle, it is still pure gold. In plain terms, he is still paramount over his own people, yourself included, and Most Christian King of the old dining hall in the Castle of Peronne, to which you, as his liege subject, are presently obliged to repair."

"I attend you, sir," said Martius Galeotti, and accompanied Le Glorieux accordingly—seeing, perhaps, that no evasion was possible.

"Ay, sir," said the Fool, as they went towards the Castle, "you do well; for we treat our kinsman as men use an old famished lion in his cage, and thrust him now and then a calf to mumble, to keep his old jaws in exercise."

"Do you mean," said Martius, "that the King intends me bodily injury?"

"Nay, that you can guess better than I," said the jester; "for though the night be cloudy, I warrant you can see the stars through the mist. I know nothing of the matter, not I—only my mother always told me to go warily near an old rat in a trap, for he was never so much disposed to bite."

The Astrologer asked no more questions, and Le Glorieux, according to the custom of those of his class, continued to run on in a wild and disordered strain of sarcasm and folly mingled together, until he delivered the philosopher to the guard at the Castle gate of Peronne, where he was passed from warder to warder, and at length admitted within Herbert's Tower.

The hints of the jester had not been lost on Martius Galeotti, and he saw something which seemed to confirm them in the look and manner of Tristan, whose mode of addressing him, as he marshalled him to the King's bedchamber, was lowering, sullen, and ominous. A close observer of what passed on earth, as well as among the heavenly bodies, the pulley and the rope also caught the Astrologer's eye; and as the latter was in a state of vibration he concluded that some one who had been busy adjusting it had been interrupted in the work by his sudden arrival. All this he saw, and summoned together his subtilty to evade the impending danger, resolved, should he find that impossible, to defend himself to the last against whomsoever should assail him.

Thus resolved, and with a step and look corresponding to the determination he had taken, Martius presented himself before Louis, alike unabashed at the miscarriage of his predictions, and undismayed at the Monarch's anger, and its probable consequences.

"Every good planet be gracious to your Majesty!" said Galeotti, with an inclination almost Oriental in manner. "Every evil constellation withhold its influence from my royal master!"

"Methinks," replied the King, "that when you look around this apartment, when you think where it is situated, and how guarded, your wisdom might consider that my propitious stars had proved faithless and that each evil conjunction had already done its worst. Art thou not ashamed, Martius Galeotti, to see me here and a prisoner, when you recollect by what assurances I was lured hither?"

"And art thou not ashamed, my royal Sire?" replied the philosopher, "thou, whose step in science was so forward, thy apprehension so quick, thy perseverance so unceasing—art thou not ashamed to turn from the first frown of fortune, like a craven from the first clash of arms? Didst thou propose to become participant of those mysteries which raise men above the passions, the mischances, the pains, the sorrows of life, a state only to be attained by rivalling the firmness of the ancient Stoic, and dost thou shrink from the first pressure of adversity, and forfeit the glorious prize for which thou didst start as a competitor, frightened out of the course, like a scared racer, by shadowy and unreal evils?"

"Shadowy and unreal! frontless as thou art!" exclaimed the King. "Is this dungeon unreal?—the weapons of the guards of my detested enemy Burgundy, which you may hear clash at the gate, are those shadows? What, traitor, are real evils, if imprisonment, dethronement, and danger of life are not so?"

"Ignorance—ignorance, my brother, and prejudice," answered the sage, with great firmness, "are the only real evils. Believe me that Kings in the plenitude of power, if immersed in ignorance and prejudice, are less free than sages in a dungeon, and loaded with material chains. Towards this true happiness it is mine to guide you—be it yours to attend to my instructions."

"And it is to such philosophical freedom that your lessons would have guided me?" said the King very bitterly. "I would you had told me at Plessis that the dominion promised me so liberally was an empire over my own passions; that the success of which I was assured, related to my progress in philosophy, and that I might become as wise and as learned as a strolling mountebank of Italy! I might surely have attained this mental ascendancy at a more moderate price than that of forfeiting the fairest crown in Christendom, and becoming tenant of a dungeon in Peronne! Go, sir, and think not to escape condign punishment.—There is a Heaven above us!"

"I leave you not to your fate," replied Martius, "until I have vindicated, even in your eyes, darkened as they are, that reputation, a brighter gem than the brightest in thy crown, and at which the world shall wonder, ages after all the race of Capet [the surname of the kings of France, beginning with Hugh Capet, 987] are mouldered into oblivion in the charnels of Saint Denis."

"Speak on," said Louis. "Thine impudence cannot make me change my purposes or my opinion.—Yet as I may never again pass judgment as a King, I will not censure thee unheard. Speak, then—though the best thou canst say will be to speak the truth. Confess that I am a dupe, thou an impostor, thy pretended science a dream, and the planets which shine above us as little influential of our destiny as their shadows, when reflected in the river, are capable of altering its course."

"And how know'st thou," answered the Astrologer boldly, "the secret influence of yonder blessed lights? Speak'st thou of their inability to influence waters, when yet thou know'st that ever the weakest, the moon herself—weakest because nearest to this wretched earth of ours—holds under her domination not such poor streams as the Somme, but the tides of the mighty ocean itself, which ebb and increase as her disc waxes and wanes, and watch her influence as a slave waits the nod of a Sultana? And now, Louis of Valois, answer my parable in turn.—Confess, art thou not like the foolish passenger, who becomes wroth with his pilot because he cannot bring the vessel into harbour without experiencing occasionally the adverse force of winds and currents? I could indeed point to thee the probable issue of thine enterprise as prosperous, but it was in the power of Heaven alone to conduct thee thither; and if the path be rough and dangerous, was it in my power to smooth or render it more safe? Where is thy wisdom of yesterday, which taught thee so truly to discern that the ways of destiny are often ruled to our advantage, though in opposition to our wishes?"

"You remind me—you remind me," said the King hastily, "of one specific falsehood. You foretold yonder Scot should accomplish his enterprise fortunately for my interest and honour; and thou knowest it has so terminated that no more mortal injury could I have received than from the impression which the issue of that affair is like to make on the excited brain of the Mad Bull of Burgundy. This is a direct falsehood.—Thou canst plead no evasion here—canst refer to no remote favourable turn of the tide, for which, like an idiot sitting on the bank until the river shall pass away, thou wouldst have me wait contentedly.—Here thy craft deceived thee.—Thou wert weak enough to make a specific prediction, which has proved directly false."

"Which will prove most firm and true," answered the Astrologer boldly. "I would desire no greater triumph of art over ignorance, than that prediction and its accomplishment will afford.—I told thee he would be faithful in any honourable commission.—Hath he not been so?—I told thee he would be scrupulous in aiding any evil enterprise.—Hath he not proved so?—If you doubt it, go ask the Bohemian, Hayraddin Maugrabin."

The King here coloured deeply with shame and anger.

"I told thee," continued the Astrologer, "that the conjunction of planets under which he set forth augured danger to the person—and hath not his path been beset by danger?—I told thee that it augured an advantage to the sender—and of that thou wilt soon have the benefit."

"Soon have the benefit!" exclaimed the King. "Have I not the result already, in disgrace and imprisonment?"

"No," answered the Astrologer, "the End is not as yet—thine own tongue shall ere long confess the benefit which thou hast received, from the manner in which the messenger bore himself in discharging thy commission."

"This is too—too insolent," said the King, "at once to deceive and to insult.—But hence!—think not my wrongs shall be unavenged.—There is a Heaven above us!" Galeotti turned to depart.

"Yet stop," said Louis; "thou bearest thine imposture bravely out.—Let me hear your answer to one question and think ere you speak.—Can thy pretended skill ascertain the hour of thine own death?"

"Only by referring to the fate of another," said Galeotti.

"I understand not thine answer," said Louis.

"Know then, O King," said Martius, "that this only I can tell with certainty concerning mine own death, that it shall take place exactly twenty-four hours before that of your Majesty."

[This story appropriated by Scott was told of Tiberius, whose soothsayer made the prediction that his own death would take place three days before that of the Emperor. Louis received a similar reply from a soothsayer, who had foretold the death of one of his favourites. Greatly incensed, he arranged for the death of the soothsayer when he should leave the royal presence after an interview. When Louis questioned him as to the day of his death, the astrologer answered that "it would be exactly three days before that of his Majesty. There was, of course, care taken that he should escape his destined fate, and he was ever after much protected by the King, as a man of real science, and intimately connected with the royal destinies." S.... Louis was the slave of his physicians also. Cottier, one of these, was paid a retaining fee of ten thousand crowns, besides great sums in lands and money. "He maintained over Louis unbounded influence, by using to him

the most disrespectful harshness and insolence. 'I know,' he said to the suffering King, 'that one morning you will turn me adrift like so many others. But, by Heaven, you had better beware, for you will not live eight days after you have done so!' S.]

"Ha! sayest thou?" said Louis, his countenance again altering. "Hold—hold—go not—wait one moment.—Saidst thou, my death should follow thine so closely?"

"Within the space of twenty-four hours," repeated Galeotti firmly, "if there be one sparkle of true divination in those bright and mysterious intelligences, which speak, each on their courses, though without a tongue. I wish your Majesty good rest."

"Hold—hold—go not," said the King, taking him by the arm, and leading him from the door. "Martius Galeotti, I have been a kind master to thee—enriched thee—made thee my friend—my companion—the instructor of my studies.—Be open with me, I entreat you.—Is there aught in this art of yours in very deed?—Shall this Scot's mission be, in fact, propitious to me?—And is the measure of our lives so very—very nearly matched? Confess, my good Martius, you speak after the trick of your trade.—Confess, I pray you, and you shall have no displeasure at my hand. I am in years—a prisoner—likely to be deprived of a kingdom—to one in my condition truth is worth kingdoms, and it is from thee, dearest Martius, that I must look for this inestimable jewel."

"And I have laid it before your Majesty," said Galeotti, "at the risk that, in brutal passion, you might turn upon me and rend me."

"Who, I, Galeotti?" replied Louis mildly. "Alas! thou mistakest me!—Am I not captive—and should not I be patient, especially since my anger can only show my impotence?—Tell me then in sincerity.—Have you fooled me?—Or is your science true, and do you truly report it?"

"Your Majesty will forgive me if I reply to you," said Martius Galeotti, "that time only—time and the event, will convince incredulity. It suits ill the place of confidence which I have held at the council table of the renowned conqueror, Matthias Corvinus of Hungary—nay, in the cabinet of the Emperor himself—to reiterate assurances of that which I have advanced as true. If you will not believe me, I can but refer to the course of events. A day or two days' patience will prove or disprove what I have averred concerning the young Scot, and I will be contented to die on the wheel, and have my limbs broken joint by joint, if your Majesty have not advantage, and that in a most important degree, from the dauntless conduct of that Quentin Durward. But if I were to die under such tortures, it would be well your Majesty should seek a ghostly father, for, from the moment my last groan is drawn, only twenty-four hours will remain to you for confession and penitence."

Louis continued to keep hold of Galeotti's robe as he led him towards the door, and pronounced, as he opened it, in a loud voice, "Tomorrow we 'll talk more of this. Go in peace, my learned father.—Go in peace.—Go in peace!"

He repeated these words three times; and, still afraid that the Provost Marshal might mistake his purpose, he led the Astrologer into the hall, holding fast his robe, as if afraid that he should be torn from him, and put to death before his eyes. He did not unloose his grasp until he had not only repeated again and again the gracious phrase, "Go in peace," but even made a private signal to the Provost Marshal to enjoin a suspension of all proceedings against the person of the Astrologer.

Thus did the possession of some secret information, joined to audacious courage and readiness of wit, save Galeotti from the most imminent danger; and thus was Louis, the most sagacious, as well as the most vindictive, amongst the monarchs of the period, cheated of his revenge by the influence of superstition upon a selfish temper and a mind to which, from the consciousness of many crimes, the fear of death was peculiarly terrible.

He felt, however, considerable mortification at being obliged to relinquish his purposed vengeance, and the disappointment seemed to be shared by his satellites, to whom the execution was to have been committed. Le Balafre alone, perfectly indifferent on the subject, so soon as the countermarching signal was given, left the door at which he had posted himself, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. The Provost Marshal, as the group reclined themselves to repose in the hall after the King retired to his bedchamber, continued to eye the goodly form of the Astrologer with the look of a mastiff watching a joint of meat which the cook had retrieved from his jaws, while his attendants communicated to each other in brief sentences, their characteristic sentiments.

"The poor blinded necromancer," whispered Trois Eschelles, with an air of spiritual unction and commiseration, to his comrade, Petit Andre, "hath lost the fairest chance of expiating some of his vile sorceries, by dying through means of the cord of the blessed Saint Francis, and I had purpose, indeed, to leave the comfortable noose around his neck, to scare the foul fiend from his unhappy carcass."

"And I," said Petit Andre, "have missed the rarest opportunity of knowing how far a weight of seventeen stone will stretch a three plied cord!—It would have been a glorious experiment in our line—and the jolly old boy would have died so easily!"

While this whispered dialogue was going forward, Martius, who had taken the opposite side of the huge stone fireplace, round which the whole group was assembled, regarded them askance, and with a look of suspicion. He first put his hand into his vest, and satisfied himself that the handle of a very sharp double edged poniard, which he always carried about him, was disposed conveniently for his grasp; for, as we have already noticed, he was, though now somewhat unwieldy, a powerful, athletic man, and prompt and active at the use of his weapon. Satisfied that this trusty instrument was in readiness, he next took from his bosom a scroll of parchment, inscribed with Greek characters, and marked with cabalistic signs, drew together the wood in the fireplace, and made a blaze by which he could distinguish the features and attitude of all who sat or lay around—the heavy and deep slumbers of the Scottish soldier, who lay motionless, with rough countenance as immovable as if it were cast in bronze—the pale and anxious face of Oliver, who at one time assumed the appearance of slumber, and again opened his eyes and raised his head hastily, as if stung by some internal throe, or awakened by some distant sound—the discontented, savage, bulldog aspect of the Provost, who looked—

"frustrate of his will,

not half sufficed, and greedy yet to kill"

—while the background was filled up by the ghastly, hypocritical countenance of Trois Eschelles—whose eyes were cast up towards Heaven, as if he was internally saying his devotions—and the grim drollery of Petit Andre, who amused himself with mimicking the gestures and wry faces of his comrade before he betook himself to sleep.

Amidst these vulgar and ignoble countenances nothing could show to greater advantage than the stately form, handsome mien, and commanding features of the Astrologer, who might have passed for one of the ancient magi, imprisoned in a den of robbers, and about to invoke a spirit to accomplish his liberation. And, indeed, had he been distinguished by nothing else than the beauty of the graceful and flowing beard which descended over the mysterious roll which he held in his hand, one might have been pardoned for regretting that so noble an appendage had been bestowed on one who put both talents, learning, and the advantages of eloquence, and a majestic person, to the mean purposes of a cheat and an imposter.

Thus passed the night in Count Herbert's Tower, in the Castle of Peronne. When the first light of dawn penetrated the ancient Gothic chamber, the King summoned Oliver to his presence, who found the Monarch sitting in his nightgown, and was astonished at the alteration which one night of mortal anxiety had made in his looks. He would have expressed some anxiety on the subject, but the King silenced him by entering into a statement of the various modes by which he had previously endeavoured to form friends at the Court of Burgundy, and which Oliver was charged to prosecute so soon as he should be permitted to stir abroad.

And never was that wily minister more struck with the clearness of the King's intellect, and his intimate knowledge of all the springs which influence human actions, than he was during that memorable consultation.

About two hours afterwards, Oliver accordingly obtained permission from the Count of Crevecoeur to go out and execute the commissions which his master had intrusted him with, and Louis, sending for the Astrologer, in whom he seemed to have renewed his faith, held with him, in like manner, a long consultation, the issue of which appeared to give him more spirits and confidence than he had at first exhibited; so that he dressed himself, and received the morning compliments of Crevecoeur with a calmness at which the Burgundian Lord could not help Wondering, the rather that he had already heard that the Duke had passed several hours in a state of mind which seemed to render the King's safety very precarious.

*Our counsels waver like the unsteady bark,
That reels amid the strife of meeting currents.*

OLD PLAY

If the night passed by Louis was carefully anxious and agitated, that spent by the Duke of Burgundy, who had at no time the same mastery over his passions, and, indeed, who permitted them almost a free and uncontrolled dominion over his actions, was still more disturbed.

According to the custom of the period, two of his principal and most favoured counsellors, D'Hymbercourt and De Comines, shared his bedchamber, couches being prepared for them near the bed of the prince. Their attendance was never more necessary than upon this night, when, distracted by sorrow, by passion, by the desire of revenge, and by the sense of honour, which forbade him to exercise it upon Louis in his present condition, the Duke's mind resembled a volcano in eruption, which throws forth all the different contents of the mountain, mingled and molten into one burning mass.

He refused to throw off his clothes, or to make any preparation for sleep; but spent the night in a succession of the most violent bursts of passion. In some paroxysms he talked incessantly to his attendants so thick and so rapidly, that they were really afraid his senses would give way, choosing for his theme the merits and the kindness of heart of the murdered Bishop of Liege, and recalling all the instances of mutual kindness, affection, and confidence which had passed between them, until he had worked himself into such a transport of grief, that he threw himself upon his face in the bed, and seemed ready to choke with the sobs and tears which he endeavoured to stifle. Then starting from the couch, he gave vent at once to another and more furious mood, and traversed the room hastily, uttering incoherent threats, and still more incoherent oaths of vengeance, while stamping with his foot, according to his customary action, he invoked Saint George, Saint Andrew, and whomsoever else he held most holy, to bear witness that he would take bloody vengeance on De la Marck, on the people of Liege, and on him who was the author of the whole.—These last threats, uttered more obscurely than the others, obviously concerned the person of the King, and at one time the Duke expressed his determination to send for the Duke of Normandy, the brother of the King, and with whom Louis was on the worst terms, in order to compel the captive monarch to surrender either the Crown itself, or some of its most valuable rights and appanages.

Another day and night passed in the same stormy and fitful deliberations, or rather rapid transitions of passion, for the Duke scarcely ate or drank, never changed his dress, and, altogether, demeaned himself like one in whom rage might terminate in utter insanity. By degrees he became more composed, and began to hold, from time to time, consultations with his ministers, in which much was proposed, but nothing resolved on. Comines assures us that at one time a courier was mounted in readiness to depart for the purpose of summoning the Duke of Normandy, and in that event, the prison of the French Monarch would probably have been found, as in similar cases, a brief road to his grave.

At other times, when Charles had exhausted his fury, he sat with his features fixed in stern and rigid immobility, like one who broods over some desperate deed, to which he is as yet unable to work up his resolution. And unquestionably it would have needed little more than an insidious hint from any of the counsellors who attended his person to have pushed the Duke to some very desperate action. But the nobles of Burgundy, from the sacred character attached to the person of a King, and a Lord Paramount, and from a regard to the public faith, as well as that of their Duke, which had been pledged when Louis threw himself into their power, were almost unanimously inclined to recommend moderate measures; and the arguments which D'Hymbercourt and De Comines had now and then ventured to insinuate during the night, were, in the cooler hours of the next morning, advanced and urged by Crevecoeur and others. Possibly their zeal in behalf of the King might not be entirely disinterested.

Many, as we have mentioned, had already experienced the bounty of the King; others had either estates or pretensions in France, which placed them a little under his influence; and it is certain that the treasure which had loaded four mules when the King entered Peronne, became much lighter in the course of these negotiations.

In the course of the third day, the Count of Campobasso brought his Italian wit to assist the counsels of Charles; and well was it for Louis that he had not arrived when the Duke was in his first fury. Immediately on his arrival, a regular meeting of the Duke's counsellors was convened for considering the measures to be adopted in this singular crisis.

On this occasion, Campobasso gave his opinion, couched in the apologue of the Traveller, the Adder, and the Fox; and reminded the Duke of the advice which Reynard gave to the man, that he should crush his mortal enemy, now that chance had placed his fate at his disposal. [The fox advised the man who had found a snake by the roadside to kill it. He, however, placed it in his bosom, and was afterwards bitten.] De Comines, who saw the Duke's eyes sparkle at a proposal which his own violence of temper had already repeatedly suggested, hastened to state the possibility that Louis might not be, in fact, so directly accessory to the sanguinary action which had been committed at Schonwaldt; that he might be able to clear himself of the imputation laid to his charge, and perhaps to make other atonement for the distractions which his intrigues had occasioned in the Duke's dominions, and those of his allies; and that an act of violence perpetrated on the King was sure to bring both on France and Burgundy a train of the most unhappy consequences, among which not the least to be feared was that the English might avail themselves of the commotions and civil discord which must needs ensue, to repossess themselves of Normandy and Guyenne, and renew those dreadful wars which had only, and with difficulty, been terminated by the union of both France and Burgundy against the common enemy. Finally, he confessed that he did not mean to urge the absolute and free dismissal of Louis; but only that the Duke should avail himself no farther of his present condition than merely to establish a fair and equitable treaty between the countries, with such security on the King's part as should make it difficult for him to break his faith, or disturb the internal peace of Burgundy in the future. D'Hymbercourt, Crevecoeur, and others signified their reprobation of the violent measures proposed by Campobasso, and their opinion, that in the way of treaty more permanent advantages could be obtained, and in a manner more honourable for Burgundy, than by an action which would stain her with a breach of faith and hospitality.

The Duke listened to these arguments with his looks fixed on the ground, and his brow so knitted together as to bring his bushy eyebrows into one mass. But when Crevecoeur proceeded to say that he did not believe Louis either knew of, or was accessory to, the atrocious act of violence committed at Schonwaldt, Charles raised his head, and darting a fierce look at his counsellor, exclaimed, "Have you too, Crevecoeur, heard the gold of France clink?—Methinks it rings in my council as merrily as ever the bells of Saint Denis.—Dare any one say that Louis is not the fomentor of these feuds in Flanders?"

"My gracious lord," said Crevecoeur, "my hand has ever been more conversant with steel than with gold, and so far am I from holding that Louis is free from the charge of having caused the disturbances in Flanders, that it is not long since, in the face of his whole Court, I charged him with that breach of faith, and offered him defiance in your name. But although his intrigues have been doubtless the original cause of these commotions, I am so far from believing that he authorized the death of the Archbishop, that I believe one of his emissaries publicly protested against it; and I could produce the man, were it your Grace's pleasure to see him."

"It is our pleasure," said the Duke. "Saint George, can you doubt that we desire to act justly? Even in the highest flight of our passion, we are known for an upright and a just judge. We will see France herself—we will ourselves charge him with our wrongs, and ourselves state to him the reparation which we expect and demand. If he shall be found guiltless of this murder, the atonement for other crimes may be more easy.—If he hath been guilty, who shall say that a life of penitence in some retired monastery were not a most deserved and a most merciful doom?—Who," he added, kindling as he spoke, "who shall dare to blame a revenge yet more direct and more speedy?—Let your witness attend.—We will to the Castle at the hour before noon. Some articles we will minute down with which he shall comply, or woe on his head! Others shall depend upon the proof. Break up the council, and dismiss yourselves. I will but change my dress, as this is scarce a fitting trim in which to wait on my most gracious Sovereign."

With a deep and bitter emphasis on the last expression, the Duke arose and strode out of the room.

"Louis's safety, and, what is worse, the honour of Burgundy, depend on a cast of the dice," said D'Hymbercourt to Crevecoeur and to De Comines. "Haste thee to the Castle, De Comines, thou hast a better filed tongue than either Crevecoeur or I. Explain to Louis what storm is approaching—he will best know how to pilot himself. I trust this Life Guardsman will say nothing which can aggravate; for who knows what may have been the secret commission with which he was charged?" "The young man," said Crevecoeur, "seems bold, yet prudent and wary far beyond his years. In all which he said to me he was tender of the King's character, as of that of the Prince whom he serves. I trust he will be equally so in the Duke's presence. I must go seek him, and also the young Countess of Croye."

"The Countess—you told us you had left her at Saint Bridget's"

"Ay, but I was obliged," said the Count, "to send for her express, by the Duke's orders; and she has been brought hither on a litter, as being unable to travel otherwise. She was in a state of the deepest distress, both on account of the uncertainty of the fate of her kinswoman, the Lady Hameline, and the gloom which overhangs her own, guilty as she has been of a feudal delinquency, in withdrawing herself from the protection of her liege lord, Duke Charles, who is not the person in the world most likely to view with indifference what trenches on his seignorial rights."

The information that the young Countess was in the hands of Charles, added fresh and more pointed thorns to Louis's reflections. He was conscious that, by explaining the intrigues by which he had induced the Lady Hameline and her to resort to Peronne, she might supply that evidence which he had removed by the execution of Zamet Maugrabin, and he knew well how much such proof of his having interfered with the rights of the Duke of Burgundy would furnish both motive and pretext for Charles's availing himself to the uttermost of his present predicament.

Louis discoursed on these matters with great anxiety to the Sieur de Comines, whose acute and political talents better suited the King's temper than the blunt martial character of Crevecoeur, or the feudal haughtiness of D'Hymbercourt.

"These iron handed soldiers, my good friend Comines," he said to his future historian, "should never enter a King's cabinet, but be left with the halberds and partisans in the antechamber. Their hands are indeed made for our use, but the monarch who puts their heads to any better occupation than that of anvils for his enemies' swords and maces, ranks with the fool who presented his mistress with a dog leash for a carcanet. It is with such as thou, Philip, whose eyes are gifted with the quick and keen sense that sees beyond the exterior surface of affairs, that Princes should share their council table, their cabinet—what do I say?—the most secret recesses of their soul."

De Comines, himself so keen a spirit, was naturally gratified with the approbation of the most sagacious Prince in Europe, and he could not so far disguise his internal satisfaction, but that Louis was aware he had made some impression on him.

"I would," continued he, "that I had such a servant, or rather that I were worthy to have such a one! I had not then been in this unfortunate situation, which, nevertheless, I should hardly regret, could I but discover any means of securing the services of so experienced a statish."

De Comines said that all his faculties, such as they were, were at the service of his Most Christian Majesty, saving always his allegiance to his rightful lord, Duke Charles of Burgundy.

"And am I one who would seduce you from that allegiance?" said Louis pathetically. "Alas! am I not now endangered by having reposed too much confidence in my vassal? and can the cause of feudal good faith be more sacred with any than with me, whose safety depends on an appeal to it?—No, Philip de Comines—continue to serve Charles of Burgundy, and you will best serve him, by bringing round a fair accommodation with Louis of France. In doing thus you will serve us both, and one, at least, will be grateful. I am told your appointments in this Court hardly match those of the Grand Falconer and thus the services of the wisest counsellor in Europe are put on a level, or rather ranked below, those of a fellow who feeds and physics kites! France has wide lands—her King has much gold. Allow me, my friend, to rectify this scandalous inequality. The means are not distant.—Permit me to use them."

The King produced a weighty bag of money; but De Comines, more delicate in his sentiments than most courtiers of that time, declined the proffer, declaring himself perfectly satisfied with the liberality of his native Prince, and assuring Louis that his desire to serve him could not be increased by the acceptance of any such gratuity as he had proposed.

"Singular man!" exclaimed the King; "let me embrace the only courtier of his time, at once capable and incorruptible. Wisdom is to be desired more than fine gold; and believe me, I trust in thy kindness, Philip, at this pinch, more than I do in the purchased assistance of many who have received my gifts. I know you will not counsel your master to abuse such an opportunity as fortune, and, to speak plain, De Comines, as my own folly, has afforded him."

"To abuse it, by no means," answered the historian, "but most certainly to use it."

"How, and in what degree?" said Louis. "I am not ass enough to expect that I shall escape without some ransom—but let it be a reasonable one—reason I am ever willing to listen to at Paris or at Plessis, equally as at Peronne."

"Ah, but if it like your Majesty," replied De Comines, "Reason at Paris or Plessis was used to speak in so low and soft a tone of voice, that she could not always gain an audience of your Majesty—at Peronne she borrows the speaking trumpet of Necessity, and her voice becomes lordly and imperative."

"You are figurative," said Louis, unable to restrain an emotion of peevishness; "I am a dull, blunt man, Sir de Comines. I pray you leave your tropes, and come to plain ground. What does your Duke expect of me?"

"I am the bearer of no propositions, my lord," said De Comines; "the Duke will soon explain his own pleasure; but some things occur to me as proposals, for which your Majesty ought to hold yourself prepared. As, for example, the final cession of these towns here upon the Somme."

"I expected so much," said Louis.

"That you should disown the Liegeois, and William de la Marck."

"As willingly as I disclaim Hell and Satan," said Louis.

"Ample security will be required, by hostages, or occupation of fortresses, or otherwise, that France shall in future abstain from stirring up rebellion among the Flemings."

"It is something new," answered the King, "that a vassal should demand pledges from his Sovereign; but let that pass too."

"A suitable and independent appanage for your illustrious brother, the ally and friend of my master—Normandy or Champagne. The Duke loves your father's house, my Liege."

"So well," answered Louis, "that, mort Dieu! he's about to make them all kings.—Is your budget of hints yet emptied?"

"Not entirely," answered the counsellor: "it will certainly be required that your Majesty will forbear molesting, as you have done of late, the Duke de Bretagne, and that you will no longer contest the right which he and other grand feudatories have, to strike money, to term themselves dukes and princes by the grace of God—"

"In a word, to make so many kings of my vassals. Sir Philip, would you make a fratricide of me?—You remember well my brother Charles—he was no sooner Duke of Guyenne, than he died.—And what will be left to the descendant and representative of Charlemagne, after giving away these rich provinces, save to be smeared with oil [a king, priest, or prophet was consecrated by means of oil] at Rheims, and to eat their dinner under a high canopy?"

"We will diminish your Majesty's concern on that score, by giving you a companion in that solitary exaltation," said Philip de Comines. "The Duke of Burgundy, though he claims not at present the title of an independent king, desires nevertheless to be freed in future from the abject marks of subjection required of him to the crown of France—it is his purpose to close his ducal coronet with an imperial arch, and surmount it with a globe, in emblem that his dominions are independent."

"And how dares the Duke of Burgundy, the sworn vassal of France," exclaimed Louis, starting up, and showing an unwonted degree of emotion, "how dares he propose such terms to his Sovereign, as, by every law of Europe, should infer a forfeiture of his fief?"

"The doom of forfeiture it would in this case be difficult to enforce," answered De Comines calmly. "Your Majesty is aware that the strict interpretation of the feudal law is becoming obsolete even in the Empire, and that superior and vassal endeavour to mend their situation in regard to each other, as they have power and opportunity."

"Your Majesty's interferences with the Duke's vassals in Flanders will prove an exculpation of my master's conduct, supposing him to insist that, by enlarging his independence, France should in future be debarred from any pretext of doing so."

"Comines, Comines!" said Louis, arising again, and pacing the room in a pensive manner, "this is a dreadful lesson on the text *Vae victis!* [woe to the vanquished!]
—You cannot mean that the Duke will insist on all these hard conditions?"

"At least I would have your Majesty be in a condition to discuss them all."

"Yet moderation, De Comines, moderation in success, is—no one knows better than you—necessary to its ultimate advantage."

"So please your Majesty, the merit of moderation is, I have observed, most apt to be extolled by the losing party. The winner holds in more esteem the prudence which calls on him not to leave an opportunity unimproved."

"Well, we will consider," replied the King; "but at least thou hast reached the extremity of your Duke's unreasonable exaction? there can remain nothing—or if there does, for so thy brow intimates—what is it—what indeed can it be—unless it be my crown? which these previous demands, if granted, will deprive of all its lustre?"

"My lord," said De Comines, "what remains to be mentioned, is a thing partly—indeed in a great measure within the Duke's own power, though he means to invite your Majesty's accession to it, for in truth it touches you nearly."

"*Pasques Dieu!*" exclaimed the King impatiently, "what is it?—Speak out, Sir Philip—am I to send him my daughter for a concubine, or what other dishonour is he to put on me?"

"No dishonour, my Liege; but your Majesty's cousin, the illustrious Duke of Orleans—"

"Ha!" exclaimed the King; but De Comines proceeded without heeding the interruption.

"—having conferred his affections on the young Countess Isabelle de Croye, the Duke expects your Majesty will, on your part, as he on his, yield your assent to the marriage, and unite with him in endowing the right noble couple with such an appanage, as, joined to the Countess's estates, may form a fit establishment for a Child of France."

"Never, never!" said the King, bursting out into that emotion which he had of late suppressed with much difficulty, and striding about in a disordered haste, which formed the strongest contrast to the self command which he usually exhibited.

"Never, never!—let them bring scissors, and shear my hair like that of the parish fool, whom I have so richly resembled—let them bid the monastery or the grave yawn for me, let them bring red hot basins to sear my eyes—axe or aconite—whatever they will, but Orleans shall not break his plighted faith to my daughter, or marry another while she lives!"

"Your Majesty," said De Comines, "ere you set your mind so keenly against what is proposed, will consider your own want of power to prevent it. Every wise man, when he sees a rock giving way, withdraws from the bootless attempt of preventing the fall."

"But a brave man," said Louis, "will at least find his grave beneath it. De Comines, consider the great loss, the utter destruction, such a marriage will bring upon my kingdom. Recollect, I have but one feeble boy, and this Orleans is the next heir—consider that the Church hath consented to his union with Joan, which unites so happily the interests of both branches of my family, think on all this, and think too that this union has been the favourite scheme of my whole life—that I have schemed for it, fought for it, watched for it, prayed for it—and sinned for it. Philip de Comines, I will not forego it! Think man, think!—pity me in this extremity, thy quick brain can speedily find some substitute for this sacrifice—some ram to be offered up instead of that project which is dear to me as the Patriarch's only son was to him. [Isaac, whose father Abraham, in obedience to the command of God, was about to sacrifice him upon the altar when a ram appeared, which Abraham offered in his stead.] Philip, pity me!—you at least should know that, to men of judgment and foresight, the destruction of the scheme on which they have long dwelt, and for which they have long toiled, is more inexpressibly bitter than the transient grief of ordinary men, whose pursuits are but the gratification of some temporary passion—you, who know how to sympathize with the deeper, the more genuine distress of baffled prudence and disappointed sagacity—will you not feel for me?"

"My Lord and King," replied De Comines, "I do sympathize with your distress in so far as duty to my master—"

"Do not mention him!" said Louis, acting, or at least appearing to act, under an irresistible and headlong impulse, which withdrew the usual guard which he maintained over his language. "Charles of Burgundy is unworthy of your attachment. He who can insult and strike his councillors—he who can distinguish the wisest and most faithful among them by the opprobrious name of Booted Head!"

The wisdom of Philip de Comines did not prevent his having a high sense of personal consequence; and he was so much struck with the words which the King uttered, as it were, in the career of a passion which overleaped ceremony, that he could only reply by repetition of the words "Booted Head! It is impossible that my master the Duke could have so termed the servant who has been at his side since he could mount a palfrey—and that too before a foreign monarch!—it is impossible!"

Louis instantly saw the impression he had made, and avoiding alike a tone of condolence, which might have seemed insulting, and one of sympathy, which might have savoured of affectation; he said, with simplicity, and at the same time with dignity, "My misfortunes make me forget my courtesy, else I had not spoken to you of what it must be unpleasant for you to hear. But you have in reply taxed me with having uttered impossibilities—this touches my honour; yet I must submit to the charge, if I tell you not the circumstances which the Duke, laughing until his eyes ran over, assigned for the origin of that opprobrious name, which I will not offend your ears by repeating. Thus, then, it chanced. You, Sir Philip de Comines, were at a hunting match with the Duke of Burgundy, your master; and when he alighted after the chase, he required your services in drawing off his boots. Reading in your looks, perhaps, some natural resentment of this disparaging treatment, he ordered you to sit down in turn, and rendered you the same office he had just received from you. But offended at your understanding him literally, he no sooner plucked one of your boots off than he brutally beat it about your head till the blood flowed, exclaiming against the insolence of a subject who had the presumption to accept of such a service at the hand of his Sovereign; and hence he, or his privileged fool, Le Glorieux, is in the current habit of distinguishing you by the absurd and ridiculous name of *Tete botte*, which makes one of the Duke's most ordinary subjects of pleasantry."

[The story is told more bluntly, and less probably, in the French memoirs of the period, which affirm that Comines, out of a presumption inconsistent with his excellent good sense, had asked of Charles of Burgundy to draw off his boots, without having been treated with any previous familiarity to lead to such a freedom. I have endeavoured to give the anecdote a turn more consistent with the sense and prudence of the great author concerned. S.]

While Louis thus spoke, he had the double pleasure of galling to the quick the person whom he addressed—an exercise which it was in his nature to enjoy, even where he had not, as in the present case, the apology that he did so in pure retaliation—and that of observing that he had at length been able to find a point in De Comines's character which might lead him gradually from the interests of Burgundy to those of France. But although the deep resentment which the offended courtier entertained against his master induced him at a future period to exchange the service of Charles for that of Louis, yet, at the present moment, he was contented to throw out only some general hints of his friendly inclination towards France, which he well knew the King would understand how to interpret. And indeed it would be unjust to stigmatize the memory of the excellent historian with the desertion of his master on this occasion, although he was certainly now possessed with sentiments much more favourable to Louis than when he entered the apartment.

He constrained himself to laugh at the anecdote which Louis had detailed, and then added, "I did not think so trifling a frolic would have dwelt on the mind of the Duke so long as to make it worth telling again. Some such passage there was of drawing off boots and the like, as your Majesty knows that the Duke is fond of rude play; but it has been much exaggerated in his recollection. Let it pass on."

"Ay, let it pass on," said the King; "it is indeed shame it should have detained us a minute.—And now, Sir Philip, I hope you are French so far as to afford me your best counsel in these difficult affairs. You have, I am well aware, the clew to the labyrinth, if you would but impart it."

"Your Majesty may command my best advice and service," replied De Comines, "under reservation always of my duty to my own master."

This was nearly what the courtier had before stated; but he now repeated it in a tone so different that, whereas Louis understood from the former declaration that the reserved duty to Burgundy was the prime thing to be considered, so he now saw clearly that the emphasis was reversed, and that more weight was now given by the speaker to his promise of counsel than to a restriction which seemed interposed for the sake of form and consistency. The King resumed his own seat, and compelled De Comines to sit by him, listening at the same time to that statesman as if the words of an oracle sounded in his ears. De Comines spoke in that low and impressive tone which implies at once great sincerity and some caution, and at the same time so slowly as if he was desirous that the King should weigh and consider each individual word as having its own peculiar and determined meaning.

"The things," he said, "which I have suggested for your Majesty's consideration, harsh as they sound in your ear, are but substitutes for still more violent proposals brought forward in the Duke's counsels, by such as are more hostile to your Majesty. And I need scarce remind your Majesty, that the more direct and more violent suggestions find readiest acceptance with our master, who loves brief and dangerous measures better than those that are safe, but at the same time circuitous."

"I remember," said the King. "I have seen him swim a river at the risk of drowning, though there was a bridge to be found for riding two hundred yards."

"True, Sire; and he that weighs not his life against the gratification of a moment of impetuous passion will, on the same impulse, prefer the gratification of his will to the increase of his substantial power."

"Most true," replied the King; "a fool will ever grasp rather at the appearance than the reality of authority. And this I know to be true of Charles of Burgundy. But, my dear friend De Comines, what do you infer from these premises?"

"Simply this, my lord," answered the Burgundian, "that as your Majesty has seen a skilful angler control a large and heavy fish, and finally draw him to land by a single hair, which fish had broke through a tackle tenfold stronger, had the fisher presumed to strain the line on him, instead of giving him head enough for all his wild flourishes; even so your Majesty, by gratifying the Duke in these particulars on which he has pitched his ideas of honour, and the gratification of his revenge, may evade many of the other unpalatable propositions at which I have hinted; and which—including, I must state openly to your Majesty, some of those through which France would be most especially weakened—will slide out of his remembrance and attention, and, being referred to subsequent conferences and future discussion, may be altogether eluded."

"I understand you, my good Sir Philip; but to the matter," said the King. "To which of those happy propositions is your Duke so much wedded that contradiction will make him unreasonable and untractable?"

"To any or to all of them, if it please your Majesty, on which you may happen to contradict him. This is precisely what your Majesty must avoid; and to take up my former parable, you must needs remain on the watch, ready to give the Duke line enough whenever he shoots away under the impulse of his rage. His fury, already considerably abated, will waste itself if he be unopposed, and you will presently find him become more friendly and more tractable."

"Still," said the King, musing, "there must be some particular demands which lie deeper at my cousin's heart than the other proposals. Were I but aware of these, Sir Philip."

"Your Majesty may make the lightest of his demands the most important simply by opposing it," said De Comines, "nevertheless, my lord, thus far I can say, that every shadow of treaty will be broken off, if your Majesty renounce not William de la Marck and the Liegeois."

"I have already said that I will disown them," said the King, "and well they deserve it at my hand; the villains have commenced their uproar at a moment that might have cost me my life."

"He that fires a train of powder," replied the historian, "must expect a speedy explosion of the mine.—But more than mere disavowal of their cause will be expected of your Majesty by Duke Charles, for know that he will demand your Majesty assistance to put the insurrection down, and your royal presence to witness the punishment which he destines for the rebels."

"That may scarce consist with our honour, De Comines," said the King.

"To refuse it will scarcely consist with your Majesty's safety," replied De Comines. "Charles is determined to show the people of Flanders that no hope, nay, no promise, of assistance from France will save them in their mutinies from the wrath and vengeance of Burgundy."

"But, Sir Philip, I will speak plainly," answered the King. "Could we but procrastinate the matter, might not these rogues of Liege make their own part good against Duke Charles? The knaves are numerous and steady.—Can they not hold out their town against him?"

"With the help of the thousand archers of France whom your Majesty promised them, they might have done something, but—"

"Whom I promised them?" said the King. "Alas! good Sir Philip! you much wrong me in saying so."

"But without whom," continued De Comines, not heeding the interruption, "as your Majesty will not now likely find it convenient to supply them, what chance will the burghers have of making good their town, in whose walls the large breaches made by Charles after the battle of St. Tron are still unrepaired; so that the lances of Hainault, Brabant, and Burgundy may advance to the attack twenty men in front?"

"The improvident idiots!" said the King. "If they have thus neglected their own safety, they deserve not my protection. Pass on—I will make no quarrel for their sake."

"The next point, I fear, will sit closer to your Majesty's heart," said De Comines.

"Ah!" replied the King, "you mean that infernal marriage! I will not consent to the breach of the contract betwixt my daughter Joan and my cousin of Orleans—it would be wresting the sceptre of France from me and my posterity; for that feeble boy, the Dauphin, is a blighted blossom, which will wither without fruit. This match between Joan and Orleans has been my thought by day, my dream by night.—I tell thee, Sir Philip, I cannot give it up!—Besides, it is inhuman to require me, with my own hand, to destroy at once my own scheme of policy, and the happiness of a pair brought up for each other."

"Are they, then, so much attached?" said De Comines.

"One of them at least," said the King, "and the one for whom I am bound to be most anxious. But you smile, Sir Philip—you are no believer in the force of love."

"Nay," said De Comines, "if it please you, Sire, I am so little an infidel in that particular that I was about to ask whether it would reconcile you in any degree to your acquiescing in the proposed marriage betwixt the Duke of Orleans and Isabelle de Croye, were I to satisfy you that the Countess's inclinations are so much fixed on another, that it is likely it will never be a match?"

King Louis sighed. "Alas," he said, "my good and dear friend, from what sepulchre have you drawn such dead comfort? Her inclinations, indeed!—Why, to speak truth, supposing that Orleans detested my daughter Joan, yet, but for this ill ravelled web of mischance, he must needs have married her; so you may conjecture how little chance there is of this damsel's being able to refuse him under a similar compulsion, and he a Child of France besides.—Ah, no, Philip! little fear of her standing obstinate against the suit of such a lover.—*Variū et mutabile* [(semper femina): woman is always inconstant and capricious], Philip."

"Your Majesty may, in the present instance, undervalue the obstinate courage of this young lady. She comes of a race determinately wilful; and I have picked out of Crevecoeur that she has formed a romantic attachment to a young squire, who, to say truth, rendered her many services on the road."

"Ha!" said the King—"an Archer of my Guards, by name Quentin Durward?"

"The same, as I think," said De Comines; "he was made prisoner along with the Countess, travelling almost alone together."

"Now, our Lord and our Lady, and Monseigneur Saint Martin, and Monseigneur Saint Julian, be praised every one of them!" said the King, "and all laud and honour to the learned Galeotti; who read in the stars that this youth's destiny was connected with mine! If the maiden be so attached to him as to make her refractory to the will of Burgundy, this Quentin hath indeed been rarely useful to me."

"I believe, my lord," answered the Burgundian, "according to Crevecoeur's report, that there is some chance of her being sufficiently obstinate; besides, doubtless, the noble Duke himself, notwithstanding what your Majesty was pleased to hint in way of supposition, will not willingly renounce his fair cousin, to whom he has been long engaged."

"Umph!" answered the King—"but you have never seen my daughter Joan.—A howlet, man!—an absolute owl, whom I am ashamed of! But let him be only a wise man, and marry her, I will give him leave to be mad par amours for the fairest lady in France.—And now, Philip, have you given me the full map of your master's mind?"

"I have possessed you, Sire, of those particulars on which he is at present most disposed to insist. But your Majesty well knows that the Duke's disposition is like a sweeping torrent, which only passes smoothly forward when its waves encounter no opposition; and what may be presented to chafe him into fury, it is impossible even to guess. Were more distinct evidence of your Majesty's practices (pardon the phrase, when there is so little time for selection) with the Liegeois and William de la Marck to occur unexpectedly, the issue might be terrible.—There are strange news from that country—they say La Marck hath married Hameline, the elder Countess of Croye."

"That old fool was so mad on marriage that she would have accepted the hand of Satan," said the King; "but that La Marck, beast as he is, should have married her, rather more surprises me."

"There is a report also," continued De Comines, "that an envoy, or herald, on La Marck's part, is approaching Peronne; this is like to drive the Duke frantic with rage—I trust that he has no letters or the like to show on your Majesty's part?"

"Letters to a Wild Boar!" answered the King.—"No, no, Sir Philip, I was no such fool as to cast pearls before swine.—What little intercourse I had with the brute animal was by message, in which I always employed such low bred slaves and vagabonds that their evidence would not be received in a trial for robbing a hen roost."

"I can then only further recommend," said De Comines, taking his leave, "that your Majesty should remain on your guard, be guided by events, and, above all, avoid using any language or argument with the Duke which may better become your dignity than your present condition."

"If my dignity," said the King, "grow troublesome to me—which it seldom doth while there are deeper interests to think of—I have a special remedy for that swelling of the heart.—It is but looking into a certain ruinous closet, Sir Philip, and thinking of the death of Charles the Simple; and it cures me as effectually as the cold bath would cool a fever.—And now, my friend and monitor, must thou be gone? Well, Sir Philip, the time must come when thou wilt tire reading lessons of state policy to the Bull of Burgundy, who is incapable of comprehending your most simple argument.—If Louis of Valois then lives, thou hast a friend in the Court of France. I tell thee, my Philip, it would be a blessing to my kingdom should I ever acquire thee; who, with a profound view of subjects of state, hast also a conscience, capable of feeling and discerning between right and wrong. So help me our Lord and Lady, and Monseigneur Saint Martin, Oliver and Balue have hearts as hardened as the nether millstone; and my life is embittered by remorse and penances for the crimes they make me commit. Thou, Sir Philip, possessed of the wisdom of present and past times, canst teach how to become great without ceasing to be virtuous."

"A hard task, and which few have attained," said the historian; "but which is yet within the reach of princes who will strive for it. Meantime, Sire, be prepared, for the Duke will presently confer with you."

Louis looked long after Philip when he left the apartment, and at length burst into a bitter laugh. "He spoke of fishing—I have sent him home, a trout properly tickled!—And he thinks himself virtuous because he took no bribe, but contented himself with flattery and promises, and the pleasure of avenging an affront to his vanity!—Why, he is but so much the poorer for the refusal of the money—not a jot the more honest. He must be mine, though, for he hath the shrewdest head among them. Well, now for nobler game! I am to face this leviathan Charles, who will presently swim hitherward, cleaving the deep before him. I must, like a trembling sailor, throw a tub overboard to amuse him. But I may one day find the chance of driving a harpoon into his entrails!"

[If a ship is threatened by a school of whales, a tub is thrown into the sea to divert their attention. Hence to mislead an enemy, or to create a diversion in order to avoid a danger.]

[Scott says that during this interesting scene Comines first realized the great powers of Louis, and entertained from this time a partiality to France which allured him to Louis's court in 1472. After the death of Louis he fell under the suspicion of that sovereign's daughter and was imprisoned in one of the cages he has so feelingly described. He was subjected to trial and exiled from court, but was afterwards employed by Charles VIII in one or two important missions. He died at his Castle of Argenton in 1509, and was regretted as one of the most profound statesmen, and the best historian of his age.]

CHAPTER XXXI: THE INTERVIEW

*Hold fast thy truth, young soldier.—Gentle maiden,
Keep you your promise plight—leave age its subtleties,
And gray hair'd policy its maze of falsehood,
But be you candid as the morning sky,
Ere the high sun sucks vapours up to stain it.*

THE TRIAL

On the perilous and important morning which preceded the meeting of the two Princes in the Castle of Peronne, Oliver le Dain did his master the service of an active and skilful agent, making interest for Louis in every quarter, both with presents and promises; so that when the Duke's anger should blaze forth, all around should be interested to smother, and not to increase, the conflagration. He glided like night, from tent to tent, from house to house, making himself friends, but not in the Apostle's sense, with the Mammon of unrighteousness. As was said of another active political agent, "his finger was in every man's palm, his mouth was in every man's ear;" and for various reasons, some of which we have formerly hinted at, he secured the favour of many Burgundian nobles, who either had something to hope or fear from France, or who thought that, were the power of Louis too much reduced, their own Duke would be likely to pursue the road to despotic authority, to which his heart naturally inclined him, with a daring and unopposed pace.

Where Oliver suspected his own presence or arguments might be less acceptable, he employed that of other servants of the King; and it was in this manner that he obtained, by the favour of the Count de Crevecoeur, an interview betwixt Lord Crawford, accompanied by Le Balafre, and Quentin Durward, who, since he had arrived at Peronne, had been detained in a sort of honourable confinement. Private affairs were assigned as the cause of requesting this meeting; but it is probable that Crevecoeur, who was afraid that his master might be stirred up in passion to do something dishonourably violent towards Louis, was not sorry to afford an opportunity to Crawford to give some hints to the young Archer, which might prove useful to his master.

The meeting between the countrymen was cordial and even affecting.

"Thou art a singular youth," said Crawford, stroking the head of young Durward, as a grandsire might do that of his descendant. "Certes, you have had as meikle good fortune as if you had been born with a lucky hood on your head."

"All comes of his gaining an Archer's place at such early years," said Le Balafre; "I never was so much talked of, fair nephew, because I was five and twenty years old before I was hors de page [passed out of the rank of the page]."

"And an ill looking mountainous monster of a page thou wert, Ludovic," said the old commander, "with a beard like a baker's shool, and a back like old Wallace Wight [so called because of his vigour and activity]."

"I fear," said Quentin, with downcast eyes, "I shall enjoy that title to distinction but a short time—since it is my purpose to resign the service of the Archer Guard."

Le Balafre was struck almost mute with astonishment, and Crawford's ancient features gleamed with displeasure. The former at length mustered words enough to say, "Resign!—leave your place in the Scottish Archers!—such a thing was never dreamed of. I would not give up my situation to be made Constable of France."

"Hush! Ludovic," said Crawford; "this youngster knows better how to shape his course with the wind than we of the old world do. His journey hath given him some pretty tales to tell about King Louis; and he is turning Burgundian, that he may make his own little profit by telling them to Duke Charles."

"If I thought so," said Le Balafre, "I would cut his throat with my own hand, were he fifty times my sister's son."

"But you would first inquire whether I deserved to be so treated, fair kinsman?" answered Quentin; "and you, my lord, know that I am no tale bearer; nor shall either question or torture draw out of me a word to King Louis's prejudice, which may have come to my knowledge while I was in his service.—So far my oath of duty keeps me silent. But I will not remain in that services in which, besides the perils of fair battle with mine enemies, I am to be exposed to the dangers of ambuscade on the part of my friends."

"Nay, if he objects to lying in ambuscade," said the slow witted Le Balafre, looking sorrowfully at the Lord Crawford, "I am afraid, my lord, that all is over with him! I myself have had thirty bushments break upon me, and truly I think I have laid in ambuscade twice as often myself, it being a favourite practice in our King's mode of making war."

"It is so indeed, Ludovic," answered Lord Crawford; "nevertheless, hold your peace, for I believe I understand this gear better than you do."

"I wish to Our Lady you may, my lord," answered Ludovic; "but it wounds me to the very midriff, to think my sister's son should fear an ambushment."

"Young man," said Crawford, "I partly guess your meaning. You have met foul play on the road where you travelled by the King's command, and you think you have reason to charge him with being the author of it."

"I have been threatened with foul play in the execution of the King's commission," answered Quentin; "but I have had the good fortune to elude it—whether his Majesty be innocent or guilty in the matter, I leave to God and his own conscience. He fed me when I was a-hungred—received me when I was a wandering stranger. I will never load him in his adversity with accusations which may indeed be unjust, since I heard them only from the vilest mouths."

"My dear boy—my own lad!" said Crawford, taking him in his arms.—"Ye think like a Scot, every joint of you! Like one that will forget a cause of quarrel with a friend whose back is already at the wall, and remember nothing of him but his kindness."

"Since my Lord Crawford has embraced my nephew," said Ludovic Lesly, "I will embrace him also—though I would have you to know that to understand the service of an ambushment is as necessary to a soldier as it is to a priest to be able to read his breviary."

"Be hushed, Ludovic," said Crawford; "ye are an ass, my friend, and ken not the blessing Heaven has sent you in this braw callant.—And now tell me, Quentin, my man, hath the King any advice of this brave, Christian, and manly resolution of yours, for, poor man, he had need, in his strait, to ken what he has to reckon upon. Had he but brought the whole brigade of Guards with him!—But God's will be done.—Kens he of your purpose, think you?"

"I really can hardly tell," answered Quentin; "but I assured his learned Astrologer, Martius Galeotti, of my resolution to be silent on all that could injure the King with the Duke of Burgundy. The particulars which I suspect, I will not (under your favour) communicate even to your lordship; and to the philosopher I was, of course, far less willing to unfold myself."

"Ha!—ay!" answered Lord Crawford.—"Oliver did indeed tell me that Galeotti prophesied most stoutly concerning the line of conduct you were to hold; and I am truly glad to find he did so on better authority than the stars."

"He prophesy!" said Le Balafre, laughing; "the stars never told him that honest Ludovic Lesly used to help yonder wench of his to spend the fair ducats he flings into her lap."

"Hush! Ludovic," said his captain, "hush! thou beast, man!—If thou dost not respect my gray hairs, because I have been e'en too much of a routier myself, respect the boy's youth and innocence, and let us have no more of such unbecoming daffing."

"Your honour may say your pleasure," answered Ludovic Lesly; "but, by my faith, second sighted Saunders Souplesaw, the town souter of Glen Houlakin, was worth Galeotti, or Gallipotty, or whatever ye call him, twice told, for a prophet. He foretold that all my sister's children, would die some day; and he foretold it in the very hour that the youngest was born, and that is this lad Quentin—who, no doubt, will one day die, to make up the prophecy—the more's the pity—the whole curney of them is gone but himself. And Saunders foretold to myself one day, that I should be made by marriage, which doubtless will also happen in due time, though it hath not yet come to pass—though how or when, I can hardly guess, as I care not myself for the wedded state, and Quentin is but a lad. Also, Saunders predicted—"

"Nay," said Lord Crawford, "unless the prediction be singularly to the purpose, I must cut you short, my good Ludovic; for both you and I must now leave your nephew, with prayers to Our Lady to strengthen him in the good mind he is in; for this is a case in which a light word might do more mischief than all the Parliament of Paris could mend. My blessing with you, my lad; and be in no hurry to think of leaving our body; for there will be good blows going presently in the eye of day, and no ambuscade."

"And my blessing, too, nephew," said Ludovic Lesly; "for, since you have satisfied our most noble captain, I also am satisfied, as in duty bound."

"Stay, my lord," said Quentin, and led Lord Crawford a little apart from his uncle. "I must not forget to mention that there is a person besides in the world, who, having learned from me these circumstances, which it is essential to King Louis's safety should at present remain concealed, may not think that the same obligation of secrecy, which attaches to me as the King's soldier, and as having been relieved by his bounty, is at all binding on her."

"On her!" replied Crawford; "nay, if there be a woman in the secret, the Lord have mercy, for we are all on the rocks again!"

"Do not suppose so, my lord," replied Durward, "but use your interest with the Count of Crevecoeur to permit me an interview with the Countess Isabelle of Croye, who is the party possessed of my secret, and I doubt not that I can persuade her to be as silent as I shall unquestionably myself remain, concerning whatever may incense the Duke against King Louis."

The old soldier mused for a long time—looked up to the ceiling, then down again upon the floor—then shook his head—and at length said, "There is something in all this, which, by my honour, I do not understand. The Countess Isabelle of Croye!—an interview with a lady of her birth, blood, and possessions!—and thou a raw Scottish lad, so certain of carrying thy point with her? Thou art either strangely confident, my young friend, or else you have used your time well upon the journey. But, by the cross of Saint Andrew, I will move Crevecoeur in thy behalf; and, as he truly fears that Duke Charles may be provoked against the King to the extremity of falling foul, I think it likely he may grant thy request, though, by my honour, it is a comical one!"

So saying, and shrugging up his shoulders, the old Lord left the apartment, followed by Ludovic Lesly, who, forming his looks on those of his principal, endeavoured, though knowing nothing of the cause of his wonder, to look as mysterious and important as Crawford himself.

In a few minutes Crawford returned, but without his attendant, Le Balafre. The old man seemed in singular humour, laughing and chuckling to himself in a manner which strangely distorted his stern and rigid features, and at the same time shaking his head, as at something which he could not help condemning, while he found it irresistibly ludicrous. "My certes, countryman," said he, "but you are not blate—you will never lose fair lady for faint heart! Crevecoeur swallowed your proposal as he would have done a cup of vinegar, and swore to me roundly, by all the saints in Burgundy, that were less than the honour of princes and the peace of kingdoms at stake, you should never see even so much as the print of the Countess Isabelle's foot on the clay. Were it not that he had a dame, and a fair one, I would have thought that he meant to break a lance for the prize himself. Perhaps he thinks of his nephew, the County Stephen. A Countess!—would no less serve you to be minting at?—But come along—your interview with her must be brief.—But I fancy you know how to make the most of little time—ho! ho! ho!—By my faith, I can hardly chide thee for the presumption, I have such a good will to laugh at it!"

With a brow like scarlet, at once offended and disconcerted by the blunt inferences of the old soldier, and vexed at beholding in what an absurd light his passion was viewed by every person of experience, Durward followed Lord Crawford in silence to the Ursuline convent, in which the Countess was lodged, and in the parlour of which he found the Count de Crevecoeur.

"So, young gallant," said the latter sternly, "you must see the fair companion of your romantic expedition once more, it seems."

"Yes, my Lord Count," answered Quentin firmly, "and what is more, I must see her alone."

"That shall never be," said the Count de Crevecoeur.—"Lord Crawford, I make you judge. This young lady, the daughter of my old friend and companion in arms, the richest heiress in Burgundy, has confessed a sort of a—what was I going to say?—in short, she is a fool, and your man at arms here a presumptuous coxcomb.—In a word, they shall not meet alone."

"Then will I not speak a single word to the Countess in your presence," said Quentin, much delighted. "You have told me much that I did not dare, presumptuous as I may be, even to hope."

"Ay, truly said, my friend," said Crawford. "You have been imprudent in your communications; and, since you refer to me, and there is a good stout grating across the parlour, I would advise you to trust to it, and let them do the worst with their tongues. What, man! the life of a King, and many thousands besides, is not to be weighed with the chance of two young things whilly whawing in ilk other's ears for a minute."

So saying, he dragged off Crevecoeur, who followed very reluctantly, and cast many angry glances at the young Archer as he left the room.

In a moment after, the Countess Isabelle entered on the other side of the grate, and no sooner saw Quentin alone in the parlour, than she stopped short, and cast her eyes on the ground for the space of half a minute. "Yet why should I be ungrateful," she said, "because others are unjustly suspicious?—My friend—my preserver, I may almost say, so much have I been beset by treachery, my only faithful and constant friend!"

As she spoke thus, she extended her hand to him through the grate, nay, suffered him to retain it until he had covered it with kisses, not unmingled with tears. She only said, "Durward, were we ever to meet again, I would not permit this folly."

If it be considered that Quentin had guided her through so many perils—that he had been, in truth, her only faithful and zealous protector, perhaps my fair readers, even if countesses and heiresses should be of the number, will pardon the derogation.

But the Countess extricated her hand at length, and stepping a pace back from the grate, asked Durward, in a very embarrassed tone, what boon he had to ask of her?—"For that you have a request to make, I have learned from the old Scottish Lord, who came here but now with my cousin of Crevecoeur. Let it be but reasonable," she said, "but such as poor Isabelle can grant with duty and honour unfringed, and you cannot tax my slender powers too highly. But, oh! do not speak hastily—do not say," she added, looking around with timidity, "aught that might, if overheard, do prejudice to us both!"

"Fear not, noble lady," said Quentin sorrowfully; "it is not here that I can forget the distance which fate has placed between us, or expose you to the censures of your proud kindred, as the object of the most devoted love to one, poorer and less powerful—not perhaps less noble—than themselves. Let that pass like a dream of the night to all but one bosom, where, dream as it is, it will fill up the room of all existing realities."

"Hush! hush!" said Isabelle "for your own sake—for mine—be silent on such a theme. Tell me rather what it is you have to ask of me."

"Forgiveness to one," replied Quentin, "who, for his own selfish views, hath conducted himself as your enemy."

"I trust I forgive all my enemies," answered Isabelle; "but oh, Durward! through what scenes have your courage and presence of mind protected me!—Yonder bloody hall—the good Bishop—I knew not till yesterday half the horrors I had unconsciously witnessed!"

"Do not think on them," said Quentin, who saw the transient colour which had come to her cheek during their conference fast fading into the most deadly paleness.—"Do not look back, but look steadily forward, as they needs must who walk in a perilous road. Harken to me. King Louis deserves nothing better at your hand, of all others; than to be proclaimed the wily and insidious politician which he really is. But to tax him as the encourager of your flight—still more as the author of a plan to throw you into the hands of De la Marck—will at this moment produce perhaps the King's death or dethronement; and, at all events, the most bloody war between France and Burgundy which the two countries have ever been engaged in."

"These evils shall not arrive for my sake, if they can be prevented," said the Countess Isabelle; "and indeed your slightest request were enough to make me forego my revenge, were that at any time a passion which I deeply cherish. Is it possible I would rather remember King Louis's injuries than your invaluable services?—Yet how is this to be?—When I am called before my Sovereign, the Duke of Burgundy, I must either stand silent or speak the truth. The former would be contumacy; and to a false tale you will not desire me to train my tongue."

"Surely not," said Durward; "but let your evidence concerning Louis be confined to what you yourself positively know to be truth; and when you mention what others have reported, no matter how credibly, let it be as reports only, and beware of pledging your own personal evidence to that, which, though you may fully believe, you cannot personally know to be true. The assembled Council of Burgundy cannot refuse to a monarch the justice which in my country is rendered to the meanest person under accusation. They must esteem him innocent, until direct and sufficient proof shall demonstrate his guilt. Now, what does not consist with your own certain knowledge, should be proved by other evidence than your report from hearsay."

"I think I understand you," said the Countess Isabelle.

"I will make my meaning plainer," said Quentin; and was illustrating it accordingly by more than one instance when the convent bell tolled.

"That," said the Countess, "is a signal that we must part—part for ever!—But do not forget me, Durward; I will never forget you—your faithful services—"

She could not speak more, but again extended her hand, which was again pressed to his lips; and I know not how it was, that, in endeavouring to withdraw her hand, the Countess came so close to the grating that Quentin was encouraged to press the adieu on her lips. The young lady did not chide him—perhaps there was no time; for Crevecoeur and Crawford, who had been from some loophole eye witnesses if not ear witnesses, also, of what was passing, rushed into the apartment, the first in a towering passion, the latter laughing, and holding the Count back.

"To your chamber, young mistress—to your chamber!" exclaimed the Count to Isabelle, who, flinging down her veil, retired in all haste—"which should be exchanged for a cell, and bread and water.—And you, gentle sir, who are so malapert, the time will come when the interests of kings and kingdoms may not be connected with such as you are; and you shall then learn the penalty of your audacity in raising your beggarly eyes—"

"Hush! hush!—enough said—rein up—rein up," said the old Lord "and you, Quentin, I command you to be silent, and begone to your quarters.—There is no such room for so much scorn, neither, Sir Count of Crevecoeur, that I must say now he is out of hearing.—Quentin Durward is as much a gentleman as the King, only, as the Spaniard says, not so rich. He is as noble as myself, and I am chief of my name. Tush, tush! man, you must not speak to us of penalties."

"My lord, my lord," said Crevecoeur impatiently, "the insolence of these foreign mercenaries is proverbial, and should receive rather rebuke than encouragement from you, who are their leader."

"My Lord Count," answered Crawford, "I have ordered my command for these fifty years without advice either from Frenchman or Burgundian; and I intend to do so, under your favour, so long as I shall continue to hold it."

"Well, well, my lord," said Crevecoeur, "I meant you no disrespect; your nobleness, as well as your age, entitle you to be privileged in your impatience; and for these young people. I am satisfied to overlook the past, since I will take care that they never meet again."

"Do not take that upon your salvation, Crevecoeur," said the old Lord, laughing; "mountains, it is said, may meet, and why not mortal creatures that have legs, and life and love to put those legs in motion? Yon kiss, Crevecoeur, came tenderly off—methinks it was ominous."

"You are striving again to disturb my patience," said Crevecoeur, "but I will not give you that advantage over me.—Hark! they toll the summons to the Castle—an awful meeting, of which God only can foretell the issue."

"This issue I can foretell," said the old Scottish lord, "that if violence is to be offered to the person of the King, few as his friends are, and surrounded by his shall neither fall alone nor unavenged; and grieved I am that his own positive orders have prevented my taking measures to prepare for such an issue."

"My Lord of Crawford," said the Burgundian, "to anticipate such evil is the sure way to give occasion to it. Obey the orders of your royal master, and give no pretext for violence by taking hasty offence, and you will find that the day will pass over more smoothly than you now conjecture."

*Me rather had my heart might feel your love,
 Than my displeased eye see your courtesy.
 Up, cousin, up—your heart is up, I know,
 Thus high at least—although your knee—*

KING RICHARD II

At the first toll of the bell which was to summon the great nobles of Burgundy together in council, with the very few French peers who could be present on the occasion, Duke Charles, followed by a part of his train, armed with partisans and battle axes, entered the Hall of Herbert's Tower, in the Castle of Peronne. King Louis, who had expected the visit, arose and made two steps towards the Duke, and then remained standing with an air of dignity, which, in spite of the meanness of his dress, and the familiarity of his ordinary manners, he knew very well how to assume when he judged it necessary. Upon the present important crisis, the composure of his demeanour had an evident effect upon his rival, who changed the abrupt and hasty step with which he entered the apartment into one more becoming a great vassal entering the presence of his Lord Paramount. Apparently the Duke had formed the internal resolution to treat Louis, in the outset at least, with the formalities due to his high station; but at the same time it was evident, that, in doing so, he put no small constraint upon the fiery impatience of his own disposition, and was scarce able to control the feelings of resentment and the thirst of revenge which boiled in his bosom. Hence, though he compelled himself to use the outward acts, and in some degree the language, of courtesy and reverence, his colour came and went rapidly—his voice was abrupt, hoarse, and broken—his limbs shook, as if impatient of the curb imposed on his motions—he frowned and bit his lip until the blood came—and every look and movement showed that the most passionate prince who ever lived was under the dominion of one of his most violent paroxysms of fury.

The King marked this war of passion with a calm and untroubled eye, for, though he gathered from the Duke's looks a foretaste of the bitterness of death, which he dreaded alike as a mortal and a sinful man, yet he was resolved, like a wary and skilful pilot, neither to suffer himself to be disconcerted by his own fears, nor to abandon the helm, while there was a chance of saving the vessel by adroit pilotage. Therefore, when the Duke, in a hoarse and broken tone, said something of the scarcity of his accommodations, he answered with a smile that he could not complain, since he had as yet found Herbert's Tower a better residence than it had proved to one of his ancestors.

"They told you the tradition then?" said Charles.

"Yes—here he was slain—but it was because he refused to take the cowl, and finish his days in a monastery."

"The more fool he," said Louis, affecting unconcern, "since he gained the torment of being a martyr, without the merit of being a saint."

"I come," said the Duke, "to pray your Majesty to attend a high council at which tidings of weight are to be deliberated upon concerning the welfare of France and Burgundy. You will presently meet them—that is, if such be your pleasure."

"Nay, my fair cousin," said the King, "never strain courtesy so far as to entreat what you may so boldly command.—To council, since such is your Grace's pleasure. We are somewhat shorn of our train," he added, looking upon the small suite that arranged themselves to attend him, "but you, cousin, must shine out for us both."

Marshaled by Toison d'Or, chief of the heralds of Burgundy, the Princes left the Earl Herbert's Tower, and entered the castle yard, which Louis observed was filled with the Duke's bodyguard and men at arms, splendidly accoutred, and drawn up in martial array. Crossing the court, they entered the Council Hall, which was in a much more modern part of the building than that of which Louis had been the tenant, and, though in disrepair, had been hastily arranged for the solemnity of a public council. Two chairs of state were erected under the same canopy, that for the King being raised two steps higher than the one which the Duke was to occupy; about twenty of the chief nobility sat, arranged in due order, on either hand of the chair of state; and thus, when both the Princes were seated, the person for whose trial, as it might be called, the council was summoned, held the highest place, and appeared to preside in it.

It was perhaps to get rid of this inconsistency, and the scruples which might have been inspired by it, that Duke Charles, having bowed slightly to the royal chair, bluntly opened the sitting with the following words—

"My good vassals and councillors, it is not unknown to you what disturbances have arisen in our territories, both in our father's time and in our own, from the rebellion of vassals against superiors, and subjects against their princes. And lately we have had the most dreadful proof of the height to which these evils have arrived in our case, by the scandalous flight of the Countess Isabelle of Croye, and her aunt the Lady Hameline, to take refuge with a foreign power, thereby renouncing their fealty to us, and inferring the forfeiture of their fiefs; and in another more dreadful and deplorable instance, by the sacrilegious and bloody murder of our beloved brother and ally, the Bishop of Liege, and the rebellion of that treacherous city, which was but too mildly punished for the last insurrection. We have been informed that these sad events may be traced, not merely to the inconstancy and folly of women, and the presumption of pampered citizens, but to the agency of foreign power, and the interference of a mighty neighbour, from whom, if good deeds could merit any return in kind, Burgundy could have expected nothing but the most sincere and devoted friendship. If this should prove truth," said the Duke, setting his teeth and pressing his heel against the ground, "what consideration shall withhold us—the means being in our power—from taking such measures as shall effectually, and at the very source, close up the main spring from which these evils have yearly flowed on us?"

The Duke had begun his speech with some calmness, but he elevated his voice at the conclusion; and the last sentence was spoken in a tone which made all the councillors tremble, and brought a transient fit of paleness across the King's cheek. He instantly recalled his courage, however, and addressed the council in his turn in a tone evincing so much ease and composure that the Duke, though he seemed desirous to interrupt or stop him, found no decent opportunity to do so.

"Nobles of France and of Burgundy," he said, "Knights of the Holy Spirit and of the Golden Fleece! Since a King must plead his cause as an accused person he cannot desire more distinguished judges than the flower of nobleness and muster and pride of chivalry. Our fair cousin of Burgundy hath but darkened the dispute between us, in so far as his courtesy has declined to state it in precise terms. I, who have no cause for observing such delicacy, nay, whose condition permits me not to do so, crave leave to speak more precisely. It is to Us, my lords—to Us, his liege lord, his kinsman, his ally, that unhappy circumstances, perverting our cousins's clear judgment and better nature, have induced him to apply the hateful charges of seducing his vassals from their allegiance, stirring up the people of Liege to revolt, and stimulating the outlawed William de la Marck to commit a most cruel and sacrilegious murder. Nobles of France and Burgundy, I might truly appeal to the circumstances in which I now stand, as being in themselves a complete contradiction of such an accusation, for is it to be supposed that, having the sense of a rational being left me, I should have thrown myself unreservedly into the power of the Duke of Burgundy while I was practising treachery against him such as could not fail to be discovered, and which being discovered, must place me, as I now stand, in the power of a justly exasperated prince? The folly of one who should seat himself quietly down to repose on a mine, after he had lighted the match which was to cause instant explosion, would have been wisdom compared to mine. I have no doubt that, amongst the perpetrators of those horrible treasons at Schonwaldt, villains have been busy with my name—but am I to be answerable, who have given them no right to use it?—If two silly women, disgusted on account of some romantic cause of displeasure, sought refuge at my Court, does it follow that they did so by my direction?—It will be found, when inquired into, that, since honour and chivalry forbade my sending them back prisoners to the Court of Burgundy—which, I think, gentlemen, no one who wears the collar of these Orders would suggest—that I came as nearly as possible to the same point by placing them in the hands of the venerable father in God, who is now a saint in Heaven."

Here Louis seemed much affected and pressed his kerchief to his eyes. "In the hands, I say, of a member of my own family, and still more closely united with that of Burgundy, whose situation, exalted condition in the church, and, alas! whose numerous virtues qualified him to be the protector of these unhappy wanderers for a little while, and the mediator betwixt them and their liege lord. I say, therefore, the only circumstances which seem, in my brother of Burgundy's hasty view of this subject, to argue unworthy suspicions against me, are such as can be explained on the fairest and most honourable motives; and I say, moreover, that no one

particle of credible evidence can be brought to support the injurious charges which have induced my brother to alter his friendly looks towards one who came to him in full confidence of friendship—have caused him to turn his festive hall into a court of justice, and his hospitable apartments into a prison."

"My lord, my lord," said Charles, breaking in as soon as the King paused, "for your being here at a time so unluckily coinciding with the execution of your projects, I can only account by supposing that those who make it their trade to impose on others do sometimes egregiously delude themselves. The engineer is sometimes killed by the springing of his own petard.—For what is to follow, let it depend on the event of this solemn inquiry.—Bring hither the Countess Isabelle of Croye."

As the young lady was introduced, supported on the one side by the Countess of Crevecoeur, who had her husband's commands to that effect, and on the other by the Abbess of the Ursuline convent, Charles exclaimed, with his usual harshness of voice and manner, "So! sweet Princess—you, who could scarce find breath to answer us when we last laid our just and reasonable commands on you, yet have had wind enough to run as long a course as ever did hunted doe—what think you of the fair work you have made between two great Princes, and two mighty countries, that have been like to go to war for your baby face?"

The publicity of the scene and the violence of Charles's manner totally overcame the resolution which Isabelle had formed of throwing herself at the Duke's feet and imploring him to take possession of her estates, and permit her to retire into a cloister. She stood motionless, like a terrified female in a storm, who hears the thunder roll on every side of her, and apprehends in every fresh peal the bolt which is to strike her dead. The Countess of Crevecoeur, a woman of spirit equal to her birth and to the beauty which she preserved even in her matronly years, judged it necessary to interfere.

"My Lord Duke," she said, "my fair cousin is under my protection. I know better than your Grace how women should be treated, and we will leave this presence instantly, unless you use a tone and language more suitable to our rank and sex."

The Duke burst out into a laugh. "Crevecoeur," he said, "thy tameness hath made a lordly dame of thy Countess; but that is no affair of mine. Give a seat to yonder simple girl, to whom, so far from feeling enmity, I design the highest grace and honour.—Sit down, mistress, and tell us at your leisure what fiend possessed you to fly from your native country, and embrace the trade of a damsel adventurous."

With much pain, and not without several interruptions, Isabelle confessed that, being absolutely determined against a match proposed to her by the Duke of Burgundy, she had indulged the hope of obtaining protection of the Court of France.

"And under protection of the French Monarch," said Charles. "Of that, doubtless, you were well assured?"

"I did indeed so think myself assured," said the Countess Isabelle, "otherwise I had not taken a step so decided."

Here Charles looked upon Louis with a smile of inexpressible bitterness, which the King supported with the utmost firmness, except that his lip grew something whiter than it was wont to be.

"But my information concerning King Louis's intentions towards us," continued the Countess, after a short pause, "was almost entirely derived from my unhappy aunt, the Lady Hameline, and her opinions were formed upon the assertions and insinuations of persons whom I have since discovered to be the vilest traitors and most faithless wretches in the world."

She then stated, in brief terms, what she had since come to learn of the treachery of Marthon, and of Hayraddin Maugrabin, and added that she "entertained no doubt that the elder Maugrabin, called Zamet, the original adviser of their flight, was capable of every species of treachery, as well as of assuming the character of an agent of Louis without authority."

There was a pause while the Countess had continued her story, which she prosecuted, though very briefly, from the time she left the territories of Burgundy, in company with her aunt, until the storming of Schonwaldt, and her final surrender to the Count of Crevecoeur. All remained mute after she had finished her brief and broken narrative, and the Duke of Burgundy bent his fierce dark eyes on the ground, like one who seeks for a pretext to indulge his passion, but finds none sufficiently plausible to justify himself in his own eyes.

"The mole," he said at length, looking upwards, "winds not his dark subterranean path beneath our feet the less certainly that we, though conscious of his motions, cannot absolutely trace them. Yet I would know of King Louis wherefore he maintained these ladies at his Court, had they not gone thither by his own invitation."

"I did not so entertain them, fair cousin," answered the King. "Out of compassion, indeed, I received them in privacy, but took an early opportunity of placing them under the protection of the late excellent Bishop, your own ally, and who was (may God assoil him!) a better judge than I, or any secular prince, how to reconcile the protection due to fugitives with the duty which a king owes to his ally, from whose dominions they have fled. I boldly ask this young lady whether my reception of them was cordial, or whether it was not, on the contrary, such as made them express regret that they had made my Court their place of refuge?"

"So much was it otherwise than cordial," answered the Countess, "that it induced me, at least, to doubt how far it was possible that your Majesty should have actually given the invitation of which we had been assured, by those who called themselves your agents, since, supposing them to have proceeded only as they were duly authorized, it would have been hard to reconcile your Majesty's conduct with that to be expected from a king, a knight, and a gentleman."

The Countess turned her eyes to the King as she spoke, with a look which was probably intended as a reproach, but the breast of Louis was armed against all such artillery. On the contrary, waving slowly his expanded hands, and looking around the circle, he seemed to make a triumphant appeal to all present, upon the testimony borne to his innocence in the Countess's reply.

Burgundy, meanwhile, cast on him a look which seemed to say, that if in some degree silenced, he was as far as ever from being satisfied, and then said abruptly to the Countess, "Methinks, fair mistress, in this account of your wanderings, you have forgot all mention of certain love passages.—So, ho, blushing already?—Certain knights of the forest, by whom your quiet was for a time interrupted. Well—that incident hath come to our ear, and something we may presently form out of it.—Tell me, King Louis, were it not well, before this vagrant Helen of Troy [the wife of Menelaus. She was carried to Troy by Paris, and thus was the cause of the Trojan War], or of Croye, set more Kings by the ears, were it not well to carve out a fitting match for her?"

King Louis, though conscious what ungrateful proposal was likely to be made next, gave a calm and silent assent to what Charles said; but the Countess herself was restored to courage by the very extremity of her situation. She quitted the arm of the Countess of Crevecoeur, on which she had hitherto leaned, came forward timidly, yet with an air of dignity, and kneeling before the Duke's throne, thus addressed him "Noble Duke of Burgundy, and my liege lord, I acknowledge my fault in having withdrawn myself from your dominions without your gracious permission, and will most humbly acquiesce in any penalty you are pleased to impose. I place my lands and castles at your rightful disposal, and pray you only of your own bounty, and for the sake of my memory, to allow the last of the line of Croye, out of her large estate, such a moderate maintenance as may find her admission into a convent for the remainder of her life."

"What think you, Sire, of the young person's petition to us," said the Duke, addressing Louis.

"As of a holy and humble motion," said the King, "which doubtless comes from that grace which ought not to be resisted or withstood."

"The humble and lowly shall be exalted," said Charles. "Arise, Countess Isabelle—we mean better for you than you have devised for yourself. We mean neither to sequester your estates, nor to abase your honours, but, on the contrary, will add largely to both."

"Alas! my lord," said the Countess, continuing on her knees, "it is even that well meant goodness which I fear still more than your Grace's displeasure, since it compels me—"

"Saint George of Burgundy!" said Duke Charles, "is our will to be thwarted, and our commands disputed, at every turn? Up, I say, minion, and withdraw for the present—when we have time to think of thee, we will so order matters that, Teste Saint Gris! you shall either obey us, or do worse."

Notwithstanding this stern answer, the Countess Isabelle remained at his feet, and would probably, by her pertinacity, have driven him to say upon the spot something yet more severe, had not the Countess of Crevecoeur, who better knew that Prince's humour, interfered to raise her young friend, and to conduct her from the hall.

Quentin Durward was now summoned to appear, and presented himself before the King and Duke with that freedom, distant alike from bashful reserve and intrusive boldness, which becomes a youth at once well born and well nurtured, who gives honour where it is due but without permitting himself to be dazzled or confused by the presence of those to whom it is to be rendered. His uncle had furnished him with the means of again equipping himself in the arms and dress of an Archer of the Scottish Guard, and his complexion, mien, and air suited in an uncommon degree his splendid appearance. His extreme youth, too,

prepossessed the councillors in his favour, the rather that no one could easily believe that the sagacious Louis would have chosen so very young a person to become the confidant of political intrigues; and thus the King enjoyed, in this, as in other cases, considerable advantage from his singular choice of agents, both as to age and rank, where such election seemed least likely to be made. At the command of the Duke, sanctioned by that of Louis, Quentin commenced an account of his journey with the Ladies of Croye to the neighbourhood of Liege, premising a statement of King Louis's instructions, which were that he should escort them safely to the castle of the Bishop.

"And you obeyed my orders accordingly," said the King.

"I did, Sire," replied the Scot.

"You omit a circumstance," said the Duke. "You were set upon in the forest by two wandering knights."

"It does not become me to remember or to proclaim such an incident," said the youth, blushing ingenuously.

"But it doth not become me to forget it," said the Duke of Orleans. "This youth discharged his commission manfully, and maintained his trust in a manner that I shall long remember.—Come to my apartment, Archer, when this matter is over, and thou shalt find I have not forgot thy brave bearing, while I am glad to see it is equalled by thy modesty."

"And come to mine," said Dunois. "I have a helmet for thee, since I think I owe thee one."

Quentin bowed low to both, and the examination was resumed. At the command of Duke Charles he produced the written instructions which he had received for the direction of his journey.

"Did you follow these instructions literally, soldier?" said the Duke.

"No; if it please your Grace," replied Quentin. "They directed me, as you may be pleased to observe, to cross the Maes near Namur; whereas I kept the left bank, as being both the nigher and the safer road to Liege."

"And wherefore that alteration?" said the Duke.

"Because I began to suspect the fidelity of my guide," answered Quentin.

"Now mark the questions I have next to ask thee," said the Duke. "Reply truly to them, and fear nothing from the resentment of any one. But if you palter or double in your answers I will have thee hung alive in an iron chain from the steeple of the market house, where thou shalt wish for death for many an hour ere he come to relieve you!"

There was a deep silence ensued. At length, having given the youth time, as he thought, to consider the circumstances in which he was placed, the Duke demanded to know of Durward who his guide was, by whom supplied, and wherefore he had been led to entertain suspicion of him. To the first of these questions Quentin Durward answered by naming Hayraddin Maugrabin, the Bohemian; to the second, that the guide had been recommended by Tristan l'Hermite; and in reply to the third point he mentioned what had happened in the Franciscan convent near Namur, how the Bohemian had been expelled from the holy house, and how, jealous of his behaviour, he had dogged him to a rendezvous with one of William de la Marck's lanzknechts, where he overheard them arrange a plan for surprising the ladies who were under his protection.

"Now, hark," said the Duke, "and once more remember thy life depends on thy veracity, did these villains mention their having this King's—I mean this very King Louis of France's authority for their scheme of surprising the escort and carrying away the ladies?"

"If such infamous fellows had said," replied Quentin, "I know not how I should have believed them, having the word of the King himself to place in opposition to theirs."

Louis, who had listened hitherto with most earnest attention, could not help drawing his breath deeply when he heard Durward's answer, in the manner of one from whose bosom a heavy weight has been at once removed. The Duke again looked disconcerted and moody, and, returning to the charge, questioned Quentin still more closely, whether he did not understand, from these men's private conversation, that the plots which they meditated had King Louis's sanction?

"I repeat that I heard nothing which could authorize me to say so," answered the young man, who, though internally convinced of the King's accession to the treachery of Hayraddin, yet held it contrary to his allegiance to bring forward his own suspicions on the subject; "and if I had heard such men make such an assertion, I again say that I would not have given their testimony weight against the instructions of the King himself."

"Thou art a faithful messenger," said the Duke, with a sneer, "and I venture to say that, in obeying the King's instructions, thou hast disappointed his expectations in a manner that thou mightst have smarted for, but that subsequent events have made thy bull headed fidelity seem like good service."

"I understand you not, my lord," said Quentin Durward, "all I know is that my master King Louis sent me to protect these ladies, and that I did so accordingly, to the extent of my ability, both in the journey to Schonwaldt, and through the subsequent scenes which took place. I understood the instructions of the King to be honourable, and I executed them honourably; had they been of a different tenor, they would not have suited one of my name or nation."

"Fier comme an Ecossois," said Charles, who, however disappointed at the tenor of Durward's reply, was not unjust enough to blame him for his boldness. "But hark thee, Archer, what instructions were those which made thee, as some sad fugitives from Schonwaldt have informed us, parade the streets of Liege, at the head of those mutineers, who afterwards cruelly murdered their temporal Prince and spiritual Father? And what harangue was it which thou didst make after that murder was committed, in which you took upon you, as agent for Louis, to assume authority among the villains who had just perpetrated so great a crime?"

"My lord," said Quentin, "there are many who could testify that I assumed not the character of an envoy of France in the town of Liege, but had it fixed upon me by the obstinate clamours of the people themselves, who refused to give credit to any disclamation which I could make. This I told to those in the service of the Bishop when I had made my escape from the city, and recommended their attention to the security of the Castle, which might have prevented the calamity and horror of the succeeding night. It is, no doubt, true that I did, in the extremity of danger, avail myself of the influence which my imputed character gave me, to save the Countess Isabelle, to protect my own life, and, so far as I could, to rein in the humour for slaughter, which had already broke out in so dreadful an instance. I repeat, and will maintain it with my body, that I had no commission of any kind from the King of France respecting the people of Liege, far less instructions to instigate them to mutiny; and that, finally, when I did avail myself of that imputed character, it was as if I had snatched up a shield to protect myself in a moment of emergency, and used it, as I should surely have done, for the defence of myself and others, without inquiring whether I had a right to the heraldic emblazonments which it displayed."

"And therein my young companion and prisoner," said Crevecoeur, unable any longer to remain silent, "acted with equal spirit and good sense; and his doing so cannot justly be imputed as blame to King Louis."

There was a murmur of assent among the surrounding nobility, which sounded joyfully in the ears of King Louis, whilst it gave no little offence to Charles. He rolled his eyes angrily around; and the sentiments so generally expressed by so many of his highest vassals and wisest councillors, would not perhaps have prevented his giving way to his violent and despotic temper, had not De Comines, who foresaw the danger, prevented it, by suddenly announcing a herald from the city of Liege.

"A herald from weavers and nailers!" exclaimed the Duke. "But admit him instantly. By Our Lady, I will learn from this same herald something farther of his employers' hopes and projects than this young French Scottish man at arms seems desirous to tell me!"

CHAPTER XXXIII: THE HERALD

Ariel.—Hark! they roar.

Prospero. Let them be hunted soundly.

THE TEMPEST

There was room made in the assembly, and no small curiosity evinced by those present to see the herald whom the insurgent Liegeois had ventured to send to so haughty a Prince as the Duke of Burgundy, while in such high indignation against them. For it must be remembered that at this period heralds were only dispatched from sovereign princes to each other upon solemn occasions; and that the inferior nobility employed pursuivants, a lower rank of officers at arms. It may be also noticed, in passing, that Louis XI, an habitual derider of whatever did not promise real power or substantial advantage, was in especial a professed contemner of heralds and heraldry, "red, blue, and green, with all their trumpery," to which the pride of his rival Charles, which was of a very different kind, attached no small degree of ceremonious importance.

The herald, who was now introduced into the presence of the monarchs, was dressed in a tabard, or coat, embroidered with the arms of his master, in which the Boar's Head made a distinguished appearance, in blazonry, which in the opinion of the skilful was more showy than accurate. The rest of his dress—a dress always sufficiently tawdry—was overcharged with lace, embroidery, and ornament of every kind, and the plume of feathers which he wore was so high, as if intended to sweep the roof of the hall. In short, the usual gaudy splendour of the heraldic attire was caricatured and overdone. The Boar's Head was not only repeated on every part of his dress, but even his bonnet was formed into that shape, and it was represented with gory tongue and bloody tusks, or in proper language, langed and dentated gules, and there was something in the man's appearance which seemed to imply a mixture of boldness and apprehension, like one who has undertaken a dangerous commission, and is sensible that audacity alone can carry him through it with safety. Something of the same mixture of fear and effrontery was visible in the manner in which he paid his respects, and he showed also a grotesque awkwardness, not usual amongst those who were accustomed to be received in the presence of princes.

"Who art thou, in the devil's name?" was the greeting with which Charles the Bold received this singular envoy.

"I am Rouge Sanglier," answered the herald, "the officer at arms of William de la Marck, by the grace of God, and the election of the Chapter, Prince Bishop of Liege."

"Ha!" exclaimed Charles, but, as if subduing his own passion, he made a sign to him to proceed.

"And, in right of his wife, the Honourable Countess Hameline of Croye, Count of Croye, and Lord of Bracquemont."

The utter astonishment of Duke Charles at the extremity of boldness with which these titles were announced in his presence seemed to strike him dumb; and the herald conceiving, doubtless, that he had made a suitable impression by the annunciation of his character, proceeded to state his errand.

"Annuncio vobis gaudium magnum [I announce to you a great joy]," he said; "I let you, Charles of Burgundy and Earl of Flanders, to know, in my master's name, that under favour of a dispensation of our Holy Father of Rome, presently expected, and appointing a fitting substitute ad sacra [to the sacred office], he proposes to exercise at once the office of Prince Bishop, and maintain the rights of Count of Croye."

The Duke of Burgundy, at this and other pauses in the herald's speech, only ejaculated, "Ha!" or some similar interjection, without making any answer; and the tone of exclamation was that of one who, though surprised and moved, is willing to hear all that is to be said ere he commits himself by making an answer. To the further astonishment of all who were present, he forbore from his usual abrupt and violent gesticulations, remaining with the nail of his thumb pressed against his teeth, which was his favourite attitude when giving attention, and keeping his eyes bent on the ground, as if unwilling to betray the passion which might gleam in them.

The envoy, therefore, proceeded boldly and unabashed in the delivery of his message. "In the name, therefore, of the Prince Bishop of Liege, and Count of Croye, I am to require of you, Duke Charles, to desist from those pretensions and encroachments which you have made on the free and imperial city of Liege, by connivance with the late Louis of Bourbon, unworthy Bishop thereof."

"Ha," again exclaimed the Duke.

"Also to restore the banners of the community, which you took violently from the town, to the number of six and thirty—to rebuild the breaches in their walls, and restore the fortifications which you tyrannically dismantled—and to acknowledge my master, William de la Marck, as Prince Bishop, lawfully elected in a free Chapter of Canons, of which behold the proces verbal."

"Have you finished?" said the Duke.

"Not yet," replied the envoy. "I am farther to require your Grace, on the part of the said right noble and venerable Prince, Bishop, and Count, that you do presently withdraw the garrison from the Castle of Bracquemont, and other places of strength, belonging to the Earldom of Croye, which have been placed there, whether in your own most gracious name, or in that of Isabelle, calling herself Countess of Croye, or any other, until it shall be decided by the Imperial Diet whether the fiefs in question shall not pertain to the sister of the late Count, my most gracious Lady Hameline, rather than to his daughter, in respect of the jus emphyteusis [a permanent tenure of land upon condition of cultivating it properly, and paying a stipulated rent; a sort of fee farm or copyhold]."

"Your master is most learned," replied the Duke.

"Yet," continued the herald, "the noble and venerable Prince and Count will be disposed, all other disputes betwixt Burgundy and Liege being settled, to fix upon the Lady Isabelle such an appanage as may become her quality."

"He is generous and considerate," said the Duke, in the same tone.

"Now, by a poor fool's conscience," said Le Glorieux apart to the Count of Crevecoeur, "I would rather be in the worst cow's hide that ever died of the murrain than in that fellow's painted coat! The poor man goes on like drunkards, who only look to the ether pot, and not to the score which mine host chalks up behind the lattice."

"Have you yet done?" said the Duke to the herald.

"One word more," answered Rouge Sanglier, "from my noble and venerable lord aforesaid, respecting his worthy and trusty ally, the most Christian King."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Duke, starting, and in a fiercer tone than he had yet used; but checking himself, he instantly composed himself again to attention.

"Which most Christian King's royal person it is rumoured that you, Charles of Burgundy, have placed under restraint contrary to your duty as a vassal of the Crown of France, and to the faith observed among Christian Sovereigns. For which reason, my said noble and venerable master, by my mouth, charges you to put his royal and most Christian ally forthwith at freedom, or to receive the defiance which I am authorized to pronounce to you."

"Have you yet done?" said the Duke.

"I have," answered the herald, "and await your Grace's answer, trusting it may be such as will save the effusion of Christian blood."

"Now, by Saint George of Burgundy!" said the Duke, but ere he could proceed farther, Louis arose, and struck in with a tone of so much dignity and authority that Charles could not interrupt him.

"Under your favour, fair cousin of Burgundy," said the King, "we ourselves crave priority of voice in replying to this insolent fellow.—Sirrah herald, or whatever thou art, carry back notice to the perjured outlaw and murderer, William de la Marck, that the King of France will be presently before Liege, for the purpose of punishing the sacrilegious murderer of his late beloved kinsman, Louis of Bourbon; and that he proposes to gibbet De la Marck alive, for the insolence of terming himself his ally, and putting his royal name into the mouth of one of his own base messengers."

"Add whatever else on my part," said Charles, "which it may not misbecome a prince to send to a common thief and murderer.—And begone!—Yet stay.—Never herald went from the Court of Burgundy without having cause to cry, Largesse!—Let him be scourged till the bones are laid bare."

"Nay, but if it please your Grace," said Crevecoeur and D'Hymbercourt together, "he is a herald, and so far privileged."

"It is you, Messires," replied the Duke, "who are such owls as to think that the tabard makes the herald. I see by that fellow's blazoning he is a mere impostor. Let Toison d'Or step forward, and question him in your presence."

In spite of his natural effrontery, the envoy of the Wild Boar of Ardennes now became pale; and that notwithstanding some touches of paint with which he had adorned his countenance. Toison d'Or, the chief herald, as we have elsewhere said, of the Duke, and King at arms within his dominions, stepped forward with the solemnity of one who knew what was due to his office, and asked his supposed brother in what college he had studied the science which he professed.

"I was bred a pursuivant at the Heraldic College of Ratisbon," answered Rouge Sanglier, "and received the diploma of Ehrenhold [a herald] from that same learned fraternity."

"You could not derive it from a source more worthy," answered Toison d'Or, bowing still lower than he had done before; "and if I presume to confer with you on the mysteries of our sublime science, in obedience to the orders of the most gracious Duke, it is not in hopes of giving, but of receiving knowledge."

"Go to," said the Duke impatiently. "Leave off ceremony, and ask him some question that may try his skill."

"It were injustice to ask a disciple of the worthy College of Arms at Ratisbon if he comprehendeth the common terms of blazonry," said Toison d'Or, "but I may, without offence, crave of Rouge Sanglier to say if he is instructed in the more mysterious and secret terms of the science, by which the more learned do emblematically, and as it were parabolically, express to each other what is conveyed to others in the ordinary language, taught in the very accidence as it were of Heraldry."

"I understand one sort of blazonry as well as another," answered Rouge Sanglier boldly, "but it may be we have not the same terms in Germany which you have here in Flanders."

"Alas, that you will say so!" replied Toison d'Or. "our noble science, which is indeed the very banner of nobleness and glory of generosity, being the same in all Christian countries, nay, known and acknowledged even by the Saracens and Moors. I would, therefore, pray of you to describe what coat you will after the celestial fashion, that is, by the planets."

"Blazon it yourself as you will," said Rouge Sanglier; "I will do no such apish tricks upon commandment, as an ape is made to come aloft."

"Show him a coat and let him blazon it his own way," said the Duke; "and if he fails, I promise him that his back shall be gules, azure, and sable."

"Here," said the herald of Burgundy, taking from his pouch a piece of parchment, "is a scroll in which certain considerations led me to prick down, after my own poor fashion, an ancient coat. I will pray my brother, if indeed he belong to the honourable College of Arms at Ratisbon, to decipher it in fitting language."

Le Glorieux, who seemed to take great pleasure in this discussion, had by this time bustled himself close up to the two heralds. "I will help thee, good fellow," said he to Rouge Sanglier, as he looked hopelessly upon the scroll. "This, my lords and masters, represents the cat looking out at the dairy window."

This sally occasioned a laugh, which was something to the advantage of Rouge Sanglier, as it led Toison d'Or, indignant at the misconstruction of his drawing, to explain it as the coat of arms assumed by Chilbert, King of France, after he had taken prisoner Gandemar, King of Burgundy; representing an ounce, or tiger cat, the emblem of the captive prince, behind a grating, or, as Toison d'Or technically defined it, "Sable, a musion [a tiger cat; a term of heraldry] passant Or, oppressed with a trellis gules, cloue of the second."

"By my bauble," said Le Glorieux, "if the cat resemble Burgundy, she has the right side of the grating nowadays."

"True, good fellow," said Louis, laughing, while the rest of the presence, and even Charles himself, seemed disconcerted at so broad a jest.

"I owe thee a piece of gold for turning some thing that looked like sad earnest into the merry game, which I trust it will end in."

"Silence, Le Glorieux," said the Duke; "and you, Toison d'Or, who are too learned to be intelligible, stand back—and bring that rascal forward, some of you.—Hark ye, villain," he said in his harshest tone, "do you know the difference between argent and or, except in the shape of coined money?"

"For pity's sake, your Grace, be good unto me!—Noble King Louis, speak for me!"

"Speak for thyself," said the Duke. "In a word, art thou herald or not?"

"Only for this occasion!" acknowledged the detected official.

"Now, by Saint George!" said the Duke, eyeing Louis askance, "we know no king—no gentleman—save one, who would have so prostituted the noble science on which royalty and gentry rest, save that King who sent to Edward of England a serving man disguised as a herald."

[The heralds of the middle ages were regarded almost as sacred characters. It was treasonable to strike a herald, or to counterfeit the character of one. Yet Louis "did not hesitate to practise such an imposition when he wished to enter into communication with Edward IV of England.... He selected, as an agentfit for his purpose, a simple valet. This man... he disguised as a herald, with all the insignia of his office, and sent him in that capacity to open a communication with the English army. The stratagem, though of so fraudulent a nature, does not seem to have been necessarily called for, since all that King Louis could gain by it would be that he did not commit himself by sending a more responsible messenger. ... Ferne... imputes this intrusion on their rights in some degree to necessity. 'I have heard some,' he says, '... allow of the action of Louis XI who had so unknighly a regard both of his own honour, and also of armes, that he seldom had about his court any officer at armes. And therefore, at such time as Edward IV, King of England,... lay before the town of Saint Quentin, the same French King, for want of a herald to carry his mind to the English King, was constrained to suborn a vadelict, or common serving man, with a trumpet banner, having a hole made through the middest for this preposterous herauld to put his head through, and to cast it over his shoulders instead of a better coat armour of France. And thus came this hastily arrayed courier as a counterfeit officer at armes, with instructions from his sovereign's mouth to offer peace to our King.' Ferne's Blazen of Gentry, 1586, p. 161.—S.]

"Such a stratagem," said Louis, laughing, or affecting to laugh, "could only be justified at a Court where no herald were at the time, and when the emergency was urgent. But, though it might have passed on the blunt and thick witted islander, no one with brains a whit better than those of a wild boar would have thought of passing such a trick upon the accomplished Court of Burgundy."

"Send him who will," said the Duke fiercely, "he shall return on their hands in poor case.—Here!—drag him to the market place!—slash him with bridle reins and dog whips until the tabard hang about him in tatters!—Upon the Rouge Sanglier!—ca, ca!—Haloo, haloo!"

Four or five large hounds, such as are painted in the hunting pieces upon which Rubens and Schneiders laboured in conjunction, caught the well known notes with which the Duke concluded, and began to yell and bay as if the boar were just roused from his lair.

[Rubens (1577-1640): a great Flemish artist whose works were sought by kings and princes. He painted the history of Marie de Medicis in the series of colossal pictures now in the Louvre. He was knighted by Philip IV of Spain and Charles I of England.]

[Schneiders, or Snyders: a Flemish painter of the seventeenth century.]

"By the rood!" said King Louis, observant to catch the vein of his dangerous cousin, "since the ass has put on the boar's hide, I would set the dogs on him to bait him out of it!"

"Right! right!" exclaimed Duke Charles, the fancy exactly chiming in with his humour at the moment—"it shall be done!—Uncouple the hounds!—Hyke a Talbot! [a hunter's cry to his dog. See Dame Berner's Boke of Hawking and Hunting.] hyke a Beaumont!—We will course him from the door of the Castle to the east gate!"

"I trust your Grace will treat me as a beast of chase," said the fellow, putting the best face he could upon the matter, "and allow me fair law?"

"Thou art but vermin," said the Duke, "and entitled to no law, by the letter of the book of hunting; nevertheless, thou shalt have sixty yards in advance, were it but for the sake of thy unparalleled impudence.—Away, away, sirs!—we will see this sport."

And the council breaking up tumultuously, all hurried, none faster than the two Princes, to enjoy the humane pastime which King Louis had suggested.

The Rouge Sanglier showed excellent sport; for, winged with terror, and having half a score of fierce boar hounds hard at his haunches, encouraged by the blowing of horns and the woodland cheer of the hunters, he flew like the very wind, and had he not been encumbered with his herald's coat (the worst possible habit for a runner), he might fairly have escaped dog free; he also doubled once or twice, in a manner much approved of by the spectators. None of these, nay, not even Charles himself, was so delighted with the sport as King Louis, who, partly from political considerations, and partly as being naturally pleased with the sight of human suffering when ludicrously exhibited, laughed till the tears ran from his eyes, and in his ecstasies of rapture caught hold of the Duke's ermine cloak, as if to support himself; whilst the Duke, no less delighted, flung his arm around the King's shoulder, making thus an exhibition of confidential sympathy and

familiarity, very much at variance with the terms on which they had so lately stood together. At length the speed of the pseudo herald could save him no longer from the fangs of his pursuers; they seized him, pulled him down, and would probably soon have throttled him, had not the Duke called out, "Stave and tail!—stave and tail! [to strike the bear with a staff, and pull off the dogs by the tail, to separate them.]—Take them off him!—He hath shown so good a course, that, though he has made no sport at bay, we will not have him dispatched."

Several officers accordingly busied themselves in taking off the dogs; and they were soon seen coupling some up, and pursuing others which ran through the streets, shaking in sport and triumph the tattered fragments of painted cloth and embroidery rent from the tabard, which the unfortunate wearer had put on in an unlucky hour.

At this moment, and while the Duke was too much engaged with what passed before him to mind what was said behind him, Oliver le Dain, gliding behind King Louis, whispered into his ear, "It is the Bohemian, Hayraddin Maugrabin.—It were not well he should come to speech of the Duke."

"He must die," answered Louis in the same tone, "dead men tell no tales."

One instant afterwards, Tristan l'Hermite, to whom Oliver had given the hint, stepped forward before the King and the Duke, and said, in his blunt manner, "So please your Majesty and your Grace, this piece of game is mine, and I claim him—he is marked with my stamp—the fleur de lis is branded on his shoulder, as all men may see.—He is a known villain, and hath slain the King's subjects, robbed churches, deflowered virgins, slain deer in the royal parks—"

"Enough, enough," said Duke Charles, "he is my royal cousin's property by many a good title. What will your Majesty do with him?"

"If he is left to my disposal," said the King, "I will at least give him one lesson in the science of heraldry, in which he is so ignorant—only explain to him practically the meaning of a cross potence, with a noose dangling proper."

"Not as to be by him borne, but as to bear him.—Let him take the degrees under your gossip Tristan—he is a deep professor in such mysteries."

Thus answered the Duke, with a burst of discordant laughter at his own wit, which was so cordially chorused by Louis that his rival could not help looking kindly at him, while he said, "Ah, Louis, Louis! would to God thou wert as faithful a monarch as thou art a merry companion!—I cannot but think often on the jovial time we used to spend together."

"You may bring it back when you will," said Louis; "I will grant you as fair terms as for very shame's sake you ought to ask in my present condition, without making yourself the fable of Christendom; and I will swear to observe them upon the holy relique which I have ever the grace to bear about my person, being a fragment of the true cross."

Here he took a small golden reliquary, which was suspended from his neck next to his shirt by a chain of the same metal, and having kissed it devoutly, continued—"Never was false oath sworn on this most sacred relique, but it was avenged within the year."

"Yet," said the Duke, "it was the same on which you swore amity to me when you left Burgundy, and shortly after sent the Bastard of Rubempre to murder or kidnap me."

"Nay, gracious cousin, now you are ripping up ancient grievances," said the King. "I promise you, that you were deceived in that matter.—Moreover, it was not upon this relique which I then swore, but upon another fragment of the true cross which I got from the Grand Seigneur, weakened in virtue, doubtless, by sojourning with infidels. Besides, did not the war of the Public Good break out within the year; and was not a Burgundian army encamped at Saint Denis, backed by all the great feudatories of France; and was I not obliged to yield up Normandy to my brother?—O God, shield us from perjury on such a warrant as this!"

"Well, cousin," answered the Duke, "I do believe thou hadst a lesson to keep faith another time.—And now for once, without finesse and doubling, will you make good your promise, and go with me to punish this murdering La Marck and the Liegeois?"

"I will march against them," said Louis, "with the Ban and Arriere Ban of France [the military force called out by the sovereign in early feudal times, together with their vassals, equipment, and three months' provision], and the Oriflamme displayed."

"Nay, nay," said the Duke, "that is more than is needful, or may be advisable. The presence of your Scottish Guard, and two hundred choice lances, will serve to show that you are a free agent. A large army might—"

"Make me so in effect, you would say, my fair cousin?" said the King. "Well, you shall dictate the number of my attendants."

"And to put this fair cause of mischief out of the way, you will agree to the Countess Isabelle of Croye's wedding with the Duke of Orleans?"

"Fair cousin," said the King, "you drive my courtesy to extremity. The Duke is the betrothed bridegroom of my daughter Joan. Be generous—yield up this matter, and let us speak rather of the towns on the Somme."

"My council will talk to your Majesty of these," said Charles, "I myself have less at heart the acquisition of territory than the redress of injuries. You have tampered with my vassals, and your royal pleasure must needs dispose of the hand of a ward of Burgundy. Your Majesty must bestow it within the pale of your own royal family, since you have meddled with it—otherwise our conference breaks off."

"Were I to say I did this willingly," said the King, "no one would believe me, therefore do you, my fair cousin, judge of the extent of my wish to oblige you, when I say most reluctantly, that the parties consenting, and a dispensation from the Pope being obtained, my own objections shall be no bar to this match which you purpose."

"All besides can be easily settled by our ministers," said the Duke, "and we are once more cousins and friends."

"May Heaven be praised!" said Louis, "who, holding in his hand the hearts of princes, doth mercifully incline them to peace and clemency, and prevent the effusion of human blood."

"Oliver," he added apart to that favourite, who ever waited around him like the familiar beside a sorcerer, "hark thee—tell Tristan to be speedy in dealing with yonder runagate Bohemian."

CHAPTER XXXIV: THE EXECUTION

*I'll take thee to the good green wood,
And make thine own hand choose the tree.*

OLD BALLAD

"Now God be praised, that gave us the power of laughing, and making others laugh, and shame to the dull cur who scorns the office of a jester! Here is a joke, and that none of the brightest (though it might pass, since it has amused two Princes), which hath gone farther than a thousand reasons of state to prevent a war between France and Burgundy."

Such was the inference of Le Glorieux, when, in consequence of the reconciliation of which we gave the particulars in the last chapter, the Burgundian guards were withdrawn from the Castle of Peronne, the abode of the King removed from the ominous Tower of Count Herbert, and, to the great joy both of French and Burgundians, an outward show at least of confidence and friendship seemed so established between Duke Charles and his liege lord. Yet still the latter, though treated with ceremonial observance, was sufficiently aware that he continued to be the object of suspicion, though he prudently affected to overlook it, and appeared to consider himself as entirely at his ease.

Meanwhile, as frequently happens in such cases, whilst the principal parties concerned had so far made up their differences, one of the subaltern agents concerned in their intrigues was bitterly experiencing the truth of the political maxim that if the great have frequent need of base tools, they make amends to society by abandoning them to their fate, so soon as they find them no longer useful.

Thus was Hayraddin Maugrabin, who, surrendered by the Duke's officers to the King's Provost Marshal, was by him placed in the hands of his two trusty aides de camp, Trois Eschelles and Petit Andre, to be dispatched without loss of time. One on either side of him, and followed by a few guards and a multitude of rabble—this playing the Allegro, that the Penseroso, [the mirthful and the serious. Cf. Milton's poems by these names.]—he was marched off (to use a modern comparison, like Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy) to the neighbouring forest; where, to save all farther trouble and ceremonial of a gibbet, and so forth, the disposers of his fate proposed to knit him up to the first sufficient tree.

They were not long in finding an oak, as Petit Andre facetiously expressed it, fit to bear such an acorn; and placing the wretched criminal on a bank, under a sufficient guard, they began their extemporaneous preparations for the final catastrophe. At that moment, Hayraddin, gazing on the crowd, encountered the eyes of Quentin Durward, who, thinking he recognized the countenance of his faithless guide in that of the detected impostor, had followed with the crowd to witness the execution, and assure himself of the identity.

When the executioners informed him that all was ready, Hayraddin, with much calmness, asked a single boon at their hands.

"Anything, my son, consistent with our office," said Trois Eschelles.

"That is," said Hayraddin, "anything but my life."

"Even so," said Trois Eschelles, "and something more, for you seem resolved to do credit to our mystery, and die like a man, without making wry mouths—why, though our orders are to be prompt, I care not if I indulge you ten minutes longer."

"You are even too generous," said Hayraddin.

"Truly we may be blamed for it," said Petit Andre, "but what of that?—I could consent almost to give my life for such a jerry come tumble, such a smart, tight, firm lad, who proposes to come from aloft with a grace, as an honest fellow should."

"So that if you want a confessor—" said Trois Eschelles.

"Or a lire of wine—" said his facetious companion.

"Or a psalm—" said Tragedy.

"Or a song—" said Comedy.

"Neither, my good, kind, and most expeditious friends," said the Bohemian. "I only pray to speak a few minutes with yonder Archer of the Scottish Guard."

The executioners hesitated a moment; but Trois Eschelles, recollecting that Quentin Durward was believed, from various circumstances, to stand high in the favour of their master, King Louis, they resolved to permit the interview.

When Quentin, at their summons, approached the condemned criminal, he could not but be shocked at his appearance, however justly his doom might have been deserved. The remnants of his heraldic finery, rent to tatters by the fangs of the dogs, and the clutches of the bipeds who had rescued him from their fury to lead him to the gallows, gave him at once a ludicrous and a wretched appearance. His face was discoloured with paint and with some remnants of a fictitious beard, assumed for the purpose of disguise, and there was the paleness of death upon his cheek and upon his lip; yet, strong in passive courage, like most of his tribe, his eye, while it glistened and wandered, as well as the contorted smile of his mouth, seemed to bid defiance to the death he was about to die.

Quentin was struck, partly with horror, partly with compassion, as he approached the miserable man; and these feelings probably betrayed themselves in his manner, for Petit Andre called out, "Trip it more smartly, jolly Archer.—This gentleman's leisure cannot wait for you, if you walk as if the pebbles were eggs, and you afraid of breaking them."

"I must speak with him in privacy," said the criminal, despair seeming to croak in his accent as he uttered the words.

"That may hardly consist with our office, my merry Leap the ladder," said Petit Andre, "we know you for a slippery eel of old."

"I am tied with your horse girths, hand and foot," said the criminal. "You may keep guard around me, though out of earshot—the Archer is your own King's servant. And if I give you ten guilders—"

"Laid out in masses, the sum may profit his poor soul," said Trois Eschelles.

"Laid out in wine or brantwein, it will comfort my poor body," responded Petit Andre. "So let them be forthcoming, my little crack rope."

"Pay the bloodhounds their fee," said Hayraddin to Durward, "I was plundered of every stiver when they took me—it shall avail thee much."

Quentin paid the executioners their guerdon, and, like men of promise, they retreated out of hearing—keeping, however, a careful eye on the criminal's motions. After waiting an instant till the unhappy man should speak, as he still remained silent, Quentin at length addressed him, "And to this conclusion thou hast at length arrived?"

"Ay," answered Hayraddin, "it required neither astrologer, or physiognomist, nor chiromantist to foretell that I should follow the destiny of my family."

"Brought to this early end by thy long course of crime and treachery?" said the Scot.

"No, by the bright Aldebaran and all his brother twinklers!" answered the Bohemian. "I am brought hither by my folly in believing that the bloodthirsty cruelty of a Frank could be restrained even by what they themselves profess to hold most sacred. A priest's vestment would have been no safer garb for me than a herald's tabard, however sanctimonious are your professions of devotion and chivalry."

"A detected impostor has no right to claim the immunities of the disguise he had usurped," said Durward.

"Detected!" said the Bohemian. "My jargon was as good as yonder old fool of a herald's, but let it pass. As well now as hereafter."

"You abuse time," said Quentin. "If you have aught to tell me, say it quickly, and then take some care of your soul."

"Of my soul?" said the Bohemian, with a hideous laugh. "Think ye a leprosy of twenty years can be cured in an instant?—If I have a soul, it hath been in such a course since I was ten years old and more, that it would take me one month to recall all my crimes, and another to tell them to the priest!—and were such space granted me, it is five to one I would employ it otherwise."

"Hardened wretch, blaspheme not! Tell me what thou hast to say, and I leave thee to thy fate," said Durward, with mingled pity and horror.

"I have a boon to ask," said Hayraddin; "but first I will buy it of you; for your tribe, with all their professions of charity, give naught for naught."

"I could well nigh say, thy gifts perish with thee," answered Quentin, "but that thou art on the very verge of eternity.—Ask thy boon—reserve thy bounty—it can do me no good—I remember enough of your good offices of old."

"Why, I loved you," said Hayraddin, "for the matter that chanced on the banks of the Cher; and I would have helped you to a wealthy dame. You wore her scarf, which partly misled me, and indeed I thought that Hameline, with her portable wealth, was more for your market penny than the other hen sparrow, with her old roost at Bracquemont, which Charles has clutched, and is likely to keep his claws upon."

"Talk not so idly, unhappy man," said Quentin; "yonder officers become impatient."

"Give them ten guilders for ten minutes more," said the culprit, who, like most in his situation, mixed with his hardihood a desire of procrastinating his fate, "I tell thee it shall avail thee much."

"Use then well the minutes so purchased," said Durward, and easily made a new bargain with the Marshals men.

This done, Hayraddin continued.—"Yes, I assure you I meant you well; and Hameline would have proved an easy and convenient spouse. Why, she has reconciled herself even with the Boar of Ardennes, though his mode of wooing was somewhat of the roughest, and lords it yonder in his sty, as if she had fed on mast husks and acorns all her life."

"Cease this brutal and untimely jesting," said Quentin, "or, once more I tell you, I will leave you to your fate."

"You are right," said Hayraddin, after a moment's pause; "what cannot be postponed must be faced!—Well, know then, I came hither in this accursed disguise, moved by a great reward from De la Marck, and hoping a yet mightier one from King Louis, not merely to bear the message of defiance which you may have heard of, but to tell the King an important secret."

"It was a fearful risk," said Durward.

"It was paid for as such, and such it hath proved," answered the Bohemian. "De la Marck attempted before to communicate with Louis by means of Marthon; but she could not, it seems, approach nearer to him than the Astrologer, to whom she told all the passages of the journey, and of Schonwaldt; but it is a chance if her tidings ever reach Louis, except in the shape of a prophecy. But hear my secret, which is more important than aught she could tell. William de la Marck has assembled a numerous and strong force within the city of Liege, and augments it daily by means of the old priest's treasures. But he proposes not to hazard a battle with the chivalry of Burgundy, and still less to stand a siege in the dismantled town. This he will do—he will suffer the hot brained Charles to sit down before the place without opposition, and in the night, make an outfall or sally upon the leaguer with his whole force. Many he will have in French armour, who will cry, France, Saint Louis, and Denis Montjoye, as if there were a strong body of French auxiliaries in the city. This cannot choose but strike utter confusion among the Burgundians; and if King Louis, with his guards, attendants, and such soldiers as he may have with him, shall second his efforts, the Boar of Ardennes nothing doubts the discomfiture of the whole Burgundian army.—There is my secret, and I bequeath it to you. Forward or prevent the enterprise—sell the intelligence to King Louis, or to Duke Charles, I care not—save or destroy whom thou wilt; for my part, I only grieve that I cannot spring it like a mine, to the destruction of them all."

"It is indeed an important secret," said Quentin, instantly comprehending how easily the national jealousy might be awakened in a camp consisting partly of French, partly of Burgundians.

"Ay, so it is," answered Hayraddin; "and now you have it, you would fain begone, and leave me without granting the boon for which I have paid beforehand."

"Tell me thy request," said Quentin. "I will grant it if it be in my power."

"Nay, it is no mighty demand—it is only in behalf of poor Klepper, my palfrey, the only living thing that may miss me.—A due mile south, you will find him feeding by a deserted collier's hut; whistle to him thus" (he whistled a peculiar note), "and call him by his name, Klepper, he will come to you; here is his bridle under my gaberdine—it is lucky the hounds got it not, for he obeys no other. Take him, and make much of him—I do not say for his master's sake,—but because I have placed at your disposal the event of a mighty war. He will never fail you at need—night and day, rough and smooth, fair and foul, warm stables and the winter sky, are the same to Klepper; had I cleared the gates of Peronne, and got so far as where I left him, I had not been in this case.—Will you be kind to Klepper?"

"I swear to you that I will," answered Quentin, affected by what seemed a trait of tenderness in a character so hardened.

"Then fare thee well!" said the criminal. "Yet stay—stay—I would not willingly die in discourtesy, forgetting a lady's commission.—This billet is from the very gracious and extremely silly Lady of the Wild Boar of Ardennes, to her black eyed niece—I see by your look I have chosen a willing messenger.—And one word more—I forgot to say, that in the stuffing of my saddle you will find a rich purse of gold pieces, for the sake of which I put my life on the venture which has cost me so dear. Take them, and replace a hundred fold the guilders you have bestowed on these bloody slaves—I make you mine heir."

"I will bestow them in good works and masses for the benefit of thy soul," said Quentin.

"Name not that word again," said Hayraddin, his countenance assuming a dreadful expression; "there is—there can be, there shall be—no such thing!—it is a dream of priestcraft."

"Unhappy, most unhappy being! Think better! let me speed for a priest—these men will delay yet a little longer. I will bribe them to it," said Quentin. "What canst thou expect, dying in such opinions, and impenitent?"

"To be resolved into the elements," said the hardened atheist, pressing his fettered arms against his bosom; "my hope, trust, and expectation is that the mysterious frame of humanity shall melt into the general mass of nature, to be recompounded in the other forms with which she daily supplies those which daily disappear, and return under different forms—the watery particles to streams and showers, the earthy parts to enrich their mother earth, the airy portions to wanton in the breeze, and those of fire to supply the blaze of Aldebaran and his brethren.—In this faith have I lived, and I will die in it!—Hence! begone!—disturb me no farther!—I have spoken the last word that mortal ears shall listen to."

Deeply impressed with the horrors of his condition, Quentin Durward yet saw that it was vain to hope to awaken him to a sense of his fearful state. He bade him, therefore, farewell, to which the criminal only replied by a short and sullen nod, as one who, plunged in reverie, bids adieu to company which distracts his thoughts. He bent his course towards the forest, and easily found where Klepper was feeding. The creature came at his call, but was for some time unwilling to be caught, snuffing and starting when the stranger approached him. At length, however, Quentin's general acquaintance with the habits of the animal, and perhaps some particular knowledge of those of Klepper, which he had often admired while Hayraddin and he travelled together, enabled him to take possession of the Bohemian's dying bequest. Long ere he returned to Peronne, the Bohemian had gone where the vanity of his dreadful creed was to be put to the final issue—a fearful experience for one who had neither expressed remorse for the past, nor apprehension for the future!

CHAPTER XXXV: A PRIZE FOR HONOUR

'T is brave for Beauty when the best blade wins her.

THE COUNT PALATINE

When Quentin Durward reached Peronne, a council was sitting, in the issue of which he was interested more deeply than he could have apprehended, and which, though held by persons of a rank with whom one of his could scarce be supposed to have community of interest, had nevertheless the most extraordinary influence on his fortunes.

King Louis, who, after the interlude of De la Marck's envoy, had omitted no opportunity to cultivate the returning interest which that circumstance had given him in the Duke's opinion, had been engaged in consulting him, or, it might be almost said, receiving his opinion, upon the number and quality of the troops, by whom, as auxiliary to the Duke of Burgundy, he was to be attended in their joint expedition against Liege. He plainly saw the wish of Charles was to call into his camp such Frenchmen as, from their small number and high quality, might be considered rather as hostages than as auxiliaries; but, observant of Crevecoeur's advice, he assented as readily to whatever the Duke proposed, as if it had arisen from the free impulse of his own mind.

The King failed not, however, to indemnify himself for his complaisance by the indulgence of his vindictive temper against Balue, whose counsels had led him to repose such exuberant trust in the Duke of Burgundy. Tristan, who bore the summons for moving up his auxiliary forces, had the farther commission to carry the Cardinal to the Castle of Loches, and there shut him up in one of those iron cages which he himself is said to have invented.

"Let him make proof of his own devices," said the King; "he is a man of holy church—we may not shed his blood; but, Pasques dieu! his bishopric, for ten years to come, shall have an impregnable frontier to make up for its small extent!—And see the troops are brought up instantly."

Perhaps, by this prompt acquiescence, Louis hoped to evade the more displeasing condition with which the Duke had clogged their reconciliation. But if he so hoped, he greatly mistook the temper of his cousin, for never man lived more tenacious of his purpose than Charles of Burgundy, and least of all was he willing to relax any stipulation which he made in resentment, or revenge, of a supposed injury.

No sooner were the necessary expresses dispatched to summon up the forces who were selected to act as auxiliaries, than Louis was called upon by his host to give public consent to the espousals of the Duke of Orleans and Isabelle of Croye. The King complied with a heavy sigh, and presently after urged a slight expostulation, founded upon the necessity of observing the wishes of the Duke himself.

"These have not been neglected," said the Duke of Burgundy, "Crevecoeur hath communicated with Monsieur d'Orleans, and finds him (strange to say) so dead to the honour of wedding a royal bride, that he acceded to the proposal of marrying the Countess of Croye as the kindest proposal which father could have made to him."

"He is the more ungracious and thankless," said Louis, "but the whole shall be as you, my cousin, will, if you can bring it about with consent of the parties themselves."

"Fear not that," said the Duke, and accordingly, not many minutes after, the affair had been proposed, the Duke of Orleans and the Countess of Croye, the latter attended, as on the preceding occasion, by the Countess of Crevecoeur and the Abbess of the Ursulines, were summoned to the presence of the Princes, and heard from the mouth of Charles of Burgundy, unobjected to by that of Louis, who sat in silent and moody consciousness of diminished consequence, that the union of their hands was designed by the wisdom of both Princes, to confirm the perpetual alliance which in future should take place betwixt France and Burgundy.

The Duke of Orleans had much difficulty in suppressing the joy which he felt upon the proposal, and which delicacy rendered improper in the presence of Louis; and it required his habitual awe of that monarch to enable him to rein in his delight, so much as merely to reply that his duty compelled him to place his choice at the disposal of his Sovereign.

"Fair cousin of Orleans," said Louis with sullen gravity, "since I must speak on so unpleasant an occasion, it is needless for me to remind you that my sense of your merits had led me to propose for you a match into my own family. But since my cousin of Burgundy thinks that the disposing of your hand otherwise is the surest pledge of amity between his dominions and mine, I love both too well not to sacrifice to them my own hopes and wishes."

The Duke of Orleans threw himself on his knees, and kissed—and, for once, with sincerity of attachment—the hand which the King, with averted countenance, extended to him. In fact he, as well as most present, saw, in the unwilling acquiescence of this accomplished dissembler, who, even with that very purpose, had suffered his reluctance to be visible, a King relinquishing his favourite project, and subjugating his paternal feelings to the necessities of state, and interest of his country. Even Burgundy was moved, and Orleans's heart smote him for the joy which he involuntarily felt on being freed from his engagement with the Princess Joan. If he had known how deeply the King was cursing him in his soul, and what thoughts of future revenge he was agitating, it is probable his own delicacy on the occasion would not have been so much hurt.

Charles next turned to the young Countess, and bluntly announced the proposed match to her, as a matter which neither admitted delay nor hesitation, adding, at the same time, that it was but a too favourable consequence of her intractability on a former occasion.

"My Lord Duke and Sovereign," said Isabelle, summoning up all her courage, "I observe your Grace's commands, and submit to them."

"Enough, enough," said the Duke, interrupting her, "we will arrange the rest.—Your Majesty," he continued, addressing King Louis, "hath had a boar's hunt in the morning; what say you to rousing a wolf in the afternoon?"

The young Countess saw the necessity of decision.

"Your Grace mistakes my meaning," she said, speaking, though timidly, yet loudly and decidedly enough to compel the Duke's attention, which, from some consciousness, he would otherwise have willingly denied to her.

"My submission," she said, "only respected those lands and estates which your Grace's ancestors gave to mine, and which I resign to the House of Burgundy, if my Sovereign thinks my disobedience in this matter renders me unworthy to hold them."

"Ha! Saint George!" said the Duke, stamping furiously on the ground, "does the fool know in what presence she is?—And to whom she speaks?"

"My lord," she replied, still undismayed, "I am before my Suzerain, and, I trust, a just one. If you deprive me of my lands, you take away all that your ancestors' generosity gave, and you break the only bonds which attach us together. You gave not this poor and persecuted form, still less the spirit which animates me.—And these it is my purpose to dedicate to Heaven in the convent of the Ursulines, under the guidance of this Holy Mother Abbess."

The rage and astonishment of the Duke can hardly be conceived, unless we could estimate the surprise of a falcon against whom a dove should ruffle its pinions in defiance.

"Will the Holy Mother receive you without an appanage?" he said in a voice of scorn.

"If she doth her convent, in the first instance, so much wrong," said the Lady Isabelle, "I trust there is charity enough among the noble friends of my house to make up some support for the orphan of Croye."

"It is false!" said the Duke, "it is a base pretext to cover some secret and unworthy passion.—My Lord of Orleans, she shall be yours, if I drag her to the altar with my own hands!"

The Countess of Crevecoeur, a high spirited woman and confident in her husband's merits and his favour with the Duke, could keep silent no longer.

"My lord," she said, "your passions transport you into language utterly unworthy.—The hand of no gentlewoman can be disposed of by force."

"And it is no part of the duty of a Christian Prince," added the Abbess, "to thwart the wishes of a pious soul, who, broken with the cares and persecutions of the world, is desirous to become the bride of Heaven."

"Neither can my cousin of Orleans," said Dunois, "with honour accept a proposal to which the lady has thus publicly stated her objections."

"If I were permitted," said Orleans, on whose facile mind Isabelle's beauty had made a deep impression, "some time to endeavour to place my pretensions before the Countess in a more favourable light—"

"My lord," said Isabelle, whose firmness was now fully supported by the encouragement which she received from all around, "it were to no purpose—my mind is made up to decline this alliance, though far above my deserts."

"Nor have I time," said the Duke, "to wait till these whimsies are changed with the next change of the moon.—Monseigneur d'Orleans, she shall learn within this hour that obedience becomes matter of necessity."

"Not in my behalf, Sire," answered the Prince, who felt that he could not, with any show of honour, avail himself of the Duke's obstinate disposition; "to have been once openly and positively refused is enough for a son of France. He cannot prosecute his addresses farther."

The Duke darted one furious glance at Orleans, another at Louis, and reading in the countenance of the latter, in spite of his utmost efforts to suppress his feelings, a look of secret triumph, he became outrageous.

"Write," he said, to the secretary, "our doom of forfeiture and imprisonment against this disobedient and insolent minion. She shall to the Zuchthaus, to the penitentiary, to herd with those whose lives have rendered them her rivals in effrontery."

There was a general murmur.

"My Lord Duke," said the Count of Crevecoeur, taking the word for the rest, "this must be better thought on. We, your faithful vassals, cannot suffer such a dishonour to the nobility and chivalry of Burgundy. If the Countess hath done amiss, let her be punished—but in the manner that becomes her rank, and ours, who stand connected with her house by blood and alliance."

The Duke paused a moment, and looked full at his councillor with the stare of a bull, which, when compelled by the neat herd from the road which he wishes to go, deliberates with himself whether to obey, or to rush on his driver, and toss him into the air.

Prudence, however, prevailed over fury—he saw the sentiment was general in his council—was afraid of the advantages which Louis might derive from seeing dissension among his vassals; and probably—for he was rather of a coarse and violent, than of a malignant temper—felt ashamed of his own dishonourable proposal.

"You are right," he said, "Crevecoeur, and I spoke hastily. Her fate shall be determined according to the rules of chivalry. Her flight to Liege hath given the signal for the Bishop's murder. He that best avenges that deed, and brings us the head of the Wild Boar of Ardennes, shall claim her hand of us; and if she denies his right, we can at least grant him her fiefs, leaving it to his generosity to allow her what means he will to retire into a convent."

"Nay!" said the Countess, "think I am the daughter of Count Reinold—of your father's old, valiant, and faithful servant. Would you hold me out as a prize to the best sword player?"

"Your ancestress," said the Duke, "was won at a tourney—you shall be fought for in real melee. Only thus far, for Count Reinold's sake, the successful prizier shall be a gentleman, of unimpeached birth, and unstained bearings; but, be he such, and the poorest who ever drew the strap of a sword belt through the tongue of a buckle, he shall have at least the proffer of your hand. I swear it, by St. George, by my ducal crown, and by the Order that I wear!—Ha! Messires," he added, turning to the nobles present, "this at least is, I think, in conformity with the rules of chivalry?"

Isabelle's remonstrances were drowned in a general and jubilant assent, above which was heard the voice of old Lord Crawford, regretting the weight of years that prevented his striking for so fair a prize. The Duke was gratified by the general applause, and his temper began to flow more smoothly, like that of a swollen river when it hath subsided within its natural boundaries.

"Are we to whom fate has given dames already," said Crevecoeur, "to be bystanders at this fair game? It does not consist with my honour to be so, for I have myself a vow to be paid at the expense of that tusked and bristled brute, De la Marck."

"Strike boldly in, Crevecoeur," said the Duke, "to win her, and since thou canst not wear her thyself, bestow her where thou wilt—on Count Stephen, your nephew, if you list."

"Gramercy, my lord!" said Crevecoeur, "I will do my best in the battle; and, should I be fortunate enough to be foremost, Stephen shall try his eloquence against that of the Lady Abbess."

"I trust," said Dunois, "that the chivalry of France are not excluded from this fair contest?"

"Heaven forbid! brave Dunois," answered the Duke, "were it but for the sake of seeing you do your uttermost. But," he added, "though there be no fault in the Lady Isabelle wedding a Frenchman, it will be necessary that the Count of Croye must become a subject of Burgundy."

"Enough," said Dunois, "my bar sinister may never be surmounted by the coronet of Croye—I will live and die French. But, yet, though I should lose the lands, I will strike a blow for the lady."

Le Balafre dared not speak aloud in such a presence, but he muttered to himself,

"Now, Saunders Souplejaw, hold thine own!—thou always saidst the fortune of our house was to be won by marriage, and never had you such a chance to keep your word with us."

"No one thinks of me," said Le Glorieux, "who am sure to carry off the prize from all of you."

"Right, my sapient friend," said Louis, laughing, "when a woman is in the case, the greatest fool is ever the first in favour."

While the princes and their nobles thus jested over her fate, the Abbess and the Countess of Crevecoeur endeavoured in vain to console Isabelle, who had withdrawn with them from the council-presence. The former assured her that the Holy Virgin would frown on every attempt to withdraw a true votaress from the shrine of Saint Ursula; while the Countess of Crevecoeur whispered more temporal consolation, that no true knight, who might succeed in the enterprise proposed, would avail himself, against her inclinations, of the Duke's award; and that perhaps the successful competitor might prove one who should find such favour in her eyes as to reconcile her to obedience. Love, like despair, catches at straws; and, faint and vague as was the hope which this insinuation conveyed, the tears of the Countess Isabelle flowed more placidly while she dwelt upon it.

[Saint Ursula: the patron saint of young girls. Tradition says she was martyred by the Huns, together with her eleven thousand companions. Her history has been painted by Carpacelo and by Hans Memling.]

CHAPTER XXXVI: THE SALLY

*The wretch condemn'd with life to part,
Still, still on hope relies,
And every pang that rends the heart,
Bids expectation rise.*

*Hope, like the glimmering taper's light,
Adorns and cheers the way;
And still, the darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.*

GOLDSMITH

Few days had passed ere Louis had received, with a smile of gratified vengeance, the intelligence that his favourite and his councillor, the Cardinal Balue, was groaning within a cage of iron, so disposed as scarce to permit him to enjoy repose in any posture except when recumbent, and of which, be it said in passing, he remained the unpitied tenant for nearly twelve years. The auxiliary forces which the Duke had required Louis to bring up had also appeared, and he comforted himself that their numbers were sufficient to protect his person against violence, although too limited to cope, had such been his purpose, with the large army of Burgundy. He saw himself also at liberty, when time should suit, to resume his project of marriage between his daughter and the Duke of Orleans; and, although he was sensible to the indignity of serving with his noblest peers under the banners of his own vassal, and against the people whose cause he had abetted, he did not allow these circumstances to embarrass him in the meantime, trusting that a future day would bring him amends.

"For chance," said he to his trusty Oliver, "may indeed gain one hit, but it is patience and wisdom which win the game at last."

With such sentiments, upon a beautiful day in the latter end of harvest, the King mounted his horse; and, indifferent that he was looked upon rather as a part of the pageant of a victor, than in the light of an independent Sovereign surrounded by his guards and his chivalry, King Louis sallied from under the Gothic gateway of Peronne, to join the Burgundian army, which commenced at the same time its march against Liege.

Most of the ladies of distinction who were in the place attended, dressed in their best array, upon the battlements and defences of the gate, to see the gallant show of the warriors setting forth on the expedition. Thither had the Countess Crevecoeur brought the Countess Isabelle. The latter attended very reluctantly, but the peremptory order of Charles had been, that she who was to bestow the palm in the tourney should be visible to the knights who were about to enter the lists.

As they thronged out from under the arch, many a pennon and shield was to be seen, graced with fresh devices, expressive of the bearer's devoted resolution to become a competitor for a prize so fair. Here a charger was painted starting for the goal—there an arrow aimed at a mark—one knight bore a bleeding heart, indicative of his passion—another a skull and a coronet of laurels, showing his determination to win or die. Many others there were; and some so cunningly intricate and obscure, that they might have defied the most ingenious interpreter. Each knight, too, it may be presumed, put his courser to his mettle, and assumed his most gallant seat in the saddle, as he passed for a moment under the view of the fair bevy of dames and damsels, who encouraged their valour by their smiles, and the waving of kerchiefs and of veils. The Archer Guard, selected almost at will from the flower of the Scottish nation, drew general applause, from the gallantry and splendour of their appearance.

And there was one among these strangers who ventured on a demonstration of acquaintance with the Lady Isabelle, which had not been attempted even by the most noble of the French nobility. It was Quentin Durward, who, as he passed the ladies in his rank, presented to the Countess of Croye, on the point of his lance, the letter of her aunt.

"Now, by my honour," said the Count of Crevecoeur, "that is over insolent in an unworthy adventurer!"

"Do not call him so, Crevecoeur," said Dunois; "I have good reason to bear testimony to his gallantry—and in behalf of that lady, too."

"You make words of nothing," said Isabelle, blushing with shame, and partly with resentment; "it is a letter from my unfortunate aunt.—She writes cheerfully, though her situation must be dreadful."

"Let us hear, let us hear what says the Boar's bride," said Crevecoeur.

The Countess Isabelle read the letter, in which her aunt seemed determined to make the best of a bad bargain, and to console herself for the haste and indecorum of her nuptials, by the happiness of being wedded to one of the bravest men of the age, who had just acquired a principedom by his valour. She implored her niece not to judge of her William (as she called him) by the report of others, but to wait till she knew him personally. He had his faults, perhaps, but they were such as belonged to characters whom she had ever venerated. William was rather addicted to wine, but so was the gallant Sir Godfrey, her grandsire—he was something hasty and sanguinary in his temper, such had been her brother Reinold of blessed memory; he was blunt in speech, few Germans were otherwise; and a little wilful and peremptory, but she believed all men loved to rule. More there was to the same purpose; and the whole concluded with the hope and request that Isabelle would, by means of the bearer, endeavour her escape from the tyrant of Burgundy, and come to her loving kinswoman's Court of Liege, where any little differences concerning their mutual rights of succession to the Earldom might be adjusted by Isabelle's marrying Earl Ebersson—a bridegroom younger indeed than his bride, but that, as she (the Lady Hameline) might perhaps say from experience, was an inequality more easy to be endured than Isabelle could be aware of.

[The marriage of William de la Marck with the Lady Hameline is as apocryphal as the lady herself.—S.]

Here the Countess Isabelle stopped, the Abbess observing, with a prim aspect, that she had read quite enough concerning such worldly vanities, and the Count of Crevecoeur, breaking out, "Aroint thee, deceitful witch!—Why, this device smells rank as the toasted cheese in a rat trap.—Now fie, and double fie, upon the old decoy duck!"

The Countess of Crevecoeur gravely rebuked her husband for his violence.

"The Lady," she said, "must have been deceived by De la Marck with a show of courtesy."

"He show courtesy!" said the Count. "I acquit him of all such dissimulation. You may as well expect courtesy from a literal wild boar, you may as well try to lay leaf gold on old rusty gibbet irons. No—idiot as she is, she is not quite goose enough to fall in love with the fox who has snapped her, and that in his very den. But you women are all alike—fair words carry it—and, I dare say, here is my pretty cousin impatient to join her aunt in this fool's paradise, and marry the Bear Pig."

"So far from being capable of such folly," said Isabelle, "I am doubly desirous of vengeance on the murderers of the excellent Bishop, because it will, at the same time, free my aunt from the villain's power."

"Ah! there indeed spoke the voice of Croye!" exclaimed the Count, and no more was said concerning the letter.

But while Isabelle read her aunt's epistle to her friends, it must be observed that she did not think it necessary to recite a certain postscript, in which the Countess Hameline, lady-like, gave an account of her occupations, and informed her niece that she had laid aside for the present a surcoat which she was working for her husband, bearing the arms of Croye and La Marck in conjugal fashion, parted per pale, because her William had determined, for purposes of policy, in the first action to have others dressed in his coat armour and himself to assume the arms of Orleans, with a bar sinister—in other words, those of Dunois. There was also a slip of paper in another hand, the contents of which the Countess did not think it necessary to mention, being simply these words: "If you hear not of me soon, and that by the trumpet of Fame, conclude me dead, but not unworthy."

A thought, hitherto repelled as wildly incredible, now glanced with double keenness through Isabelle's soul. As female wit seldom fails in the contrivance of means, she so ordered it that ere the troops were fully on march, Quentin Durward received from an unknown hand the billet of Lady Hameline, marked with three crosses opposite to the postscript, and having these words subjoined: "He who feared not the arms of Orleans when on the breast of their gallant owner, cannot dread them when displayed on that of a tyrant and murderer."

A thousand thousand times was this intimation kissed and pressed to the bosom of the young Scot! for it marshalled him on the path where both Honour and Love held out the reward, and possessed him with a secret unknown to others, by which to distinguish him whose death could alone give life to his hopes, and which he prudently resolved to lock up in his own bosom.

But Durward saw the necessity of acting otherwise respecting the information communicated by Hayraddin, since the proposed sally of De la Marck, unless heedfully guarded against, might prove the destruction of the besieging army, so difficult was it, in the tumultuous warfare of those days, to recover from a nocturnal surprise. After pondering on the matter, he formed the additional resolution, that he would not communicate the intelligence save personally, and to both the Princes while together, perhaps because he felt that to mention so well contrived and hopeful a scheme to Louis whilst in private, might be too strong a temptation to the wavering probity of that Monarch, and lead him to assist, rather than repel, the intended sally. He determined, therefore, to watch for an opportunity of revealing the secret whilst Louis and Charles were met, which, as they were not particularly fond of the constraint imposed by each other's society, was not likely soon to occur.

Meanwhile the march continued, and the confederates soon entered the territories of Liege. Here the Burgundian soldiers, at least a part of them, composed of those bands who had acquired the title of Ecorcheurs, or flayers, showed, by the usage which they gave the inhabitants, under pretext of avenging the Bishop's death, that they well deserved that honourable title; while their conduct greatly prejudiced the cause of Charles, the aggrieved inhabitants, who might otherwise have been passive in the quarrel, assuming arms in self defence, harassing his march by cutting off small parties, and falling back before the main body upon the city itself, thus augmenting the numbers and desperation of those who had resolved to defend it. The French, few in number, and those the choice soldiers of the country, kept, according to the King's orders, close by their respective standards, and observed the strictest discipline, a contrast which increased the suspicions of Charles, who could not help remarking that the troops of Louis demeaned themselves as if they were rather friends to the Liegeois than allies of Burgundy.

At length, without experiencing any serious opposition, the army arrived in the rich valley of the Maes, and before the large and populous city of Liege. The Castle of Schonwaldt they found had been totally destroyed, and learned that William de la Marck, whose only talents were of a military cast, had withdrawn his whole forces into the city, and was determined to avoid the encounter of the chivalry of France and Burgundy in the open field. But the invaders were not long of experiencing the danger which must always exist in attacking a large town, however open, if the inhabitants are disposed to defend it desperately.

A part of the Burgundian vanguard, conceiving that, from the dismantled and breached state of the walls, they had nothing to do but to march into Liege at their ease, entered one of the suburbs with the shouts of "Burgundy, Burgundy, Kill, kill—all is ours!—Remember Louis of Bourbon!"

But as they marched in disorder through the narrow streets, and were partly dispersed for the purpose of pillage, a large body of the inhabitants issued suddenly from the town, fell furiously upon them, and made considerable slaughter. De la Marck even availed himself of the breaches in the walls, which permitted the defenders to issue out at different points, and, by taking separate routes into the contested suburb, to attack, in the front, flank, and rear at once the assailants, who, stunned by the furious, unexpected, and multiplied nature of the resistance offered, could hardly stand to their arms. The evening, which began to close, added to their confusion.

When this news was brought to Duke Charles, he was furious with rage, which was not much appeased by the offer of King Louis to send the French men at arms into the suburbs, to rescue and bring off the Burgundian vanguard. Rejecting this offer briefly, he would have put himself at the head of his own Guards, to extricate those engaged in the incautious advance; but D'Hymbercourt and Crevecoeur entreated him to leave the service to them, and, marching into the scene of action at two points with more order and proper arrangement for mutual support, these two celebrated captains succeeded in repulsing the Liegeois, and in extricating the vanguard, who lost, besides prisoners, no fewer than eight hundred men, of whom about a hundred were men at arms. The prisoners, however, were not numerous, most of them having been rescued by D'Hymbercourt, who now proceeded to occupy the contested suburb, and to place guards opposite to the town, from which it was divided by an open space, or esplanade, of five or six hundred yards, left free of buildings for the purposes of defence. There was no moat betwixt the suburb and town, the ground being rocky in that place. A gate fronted the suburb, from which sallies might be easily made, and the wall was

pierced by two or three of those breaches which Duke Charles had caused to be made after the battle of Saint Tron, and which had been hastily repaired with mere barricades of timber.

D'Hymbercourt turned two culverins on the gate, and placed two others opposite to the principal breach, to repel any sally from the city, and then returned to the Burgundian army, which he found in great disorder. In fact, the main body and rear of the numerous army of the Duke had continued to advance, while the broken and repulsed vanguard was in the act of retreating; and they had come into collision with each other, to the great confusion of both. The necessary absence of D'Hymbercourt, who discharged all the duties of Marechal du Camp, or, as we should now say, of Quartermaster General, augmented the disorder; and to complete the whole, the night sank down dark as a wolf's mouth; there fell a thick and heavy rain, and the ground on which the beleaguering army must needs take up their position, was muddy and intersected with many canals. It is scarce possible to form an idea of the confusion which prevailed in the Burgundian army, where leaders were separated from their soldiers, and soldiers from their standards and officers. Every one, from the highest to the lowest, was seeking shelter and accommodation where he could individually find it; while the wearied and wounded, who had been engaged in the battle, were calling in vain for shelter and refreshment; and while those who knew nothing of the disaster were pressing on to have their share in the sack of the place, which they had no doubt was proceeding merrily.

When D'Hymbercourt returned, he had a task to perform of incredible difficulty, and embittered by the reproaches of his master, who made no allowance for the still more necessary duty in which he had been engaged, until the temper of the gallant soldier began to give way under the Duke's unreasonable reproaches.

"I went hence to restore some order in the van," he said, "and left the main body under your Grace's own guidance, and now, on my return, I can neither find that we have front, flank, nor rear, so utter is the confusion."

"We are the more like a barrel of herrings," answered Le Glorieux, "which is the most natural resemblance for a Flemish army."

The jester's speech made the Duke laugh, and perhaps prevented a farther prosecution of the altercation betwixt him and his general.

By dint of great exertion, a small lusthaus, or country villa of some wealthy citizen of Liege, was secured and cleared of other occupants, for the accommodation of the Duke and his immediate attendants; and the authority of D'Hymbercourt and Crevecoeur at length established a guard in the vicinity, of about forty men at arms, who lighted a very large fire, made with the timber of the outhouses, which they pulled down for the purpose.

A little to the left of this villa, and betwixt it and the suburb, which, as we have said, was opposite to the city gate, and occupied by the Burgundian Vanguard, lay another pleasure house, surrounded by a garden and courtyard, and having two or three small enclosures or fields in the rear of it. In this the King of France established his own headquarters. He did not himself pretend to be a soldier further than a natural indifference to danger and much sagacity qualified him to be called such; but he was always careful to employ the most skilful in that profession, and reposed in them the confidence they merited. Louis and his immediate attendants occupied this second villa, a part of his Scottish Guard were placed in the court, where there were outhouses and sheds to shelter them from the weather; the rest were stationed in the garden. The remainder of the French men at arms were quartered closely together and in good order, with alarm posts stationed, in case of their having to sustain an attack.

Dunois and Crawford, assisted by several old officers and soldiers, amongst whom Le Balafre was conspicuous for his diligence, contrived, by breaking down walls, making openings through hedges, filling up ditches, and the like, to facilitate the communication of the troops with each other, and the orderly combination of the whole in case of necessity.

Meanwhile, the King judged it proper to go without farther ceremony to the quarters of the Duke of Burgundy, to ascertain what was to be the order of proceeding, and what cooperation was expected from him. His presence occasioned a sort of council of war to be held, of which Charles might not otherwise have dreamed.

It was then that Quentin Durward prayed earnestly to be admitted, as having something of importance to deliver to the two Princes. This was obtained without much difficulty, and great was the astonishment of Louis, when he heard him calmly and distinctly relate the purpose of William de la Marck to make a sally upon the camp of the besiegers, under the dress and banners of the French. Louis would probably have been much better pleased to have had such important news communicated in private, but as the whole story had been publicly told in presence of the Duke of Burgundy, he only observed, that, whether true or false, such a report concerned them most materially.

"Not a whit!—not a whit!" said the Duke carelessly. "Had there been such a purpose as this young man announces, it had not been communicated to me by an Archer of the Scottish Guard."

"However that may be," answered Louis, "I pray you, fair cousin, you and your captains, to attend, that to prevent the displeasing consequences of such an attack, should it be made unexpectedly, I will cause my soldiers to wear white scarfs over their armour.—Dunois, see it given out on the instant—that is," he added, "if our brother and general approves of it."

"I see no objection," replied the Duke, "if the chivalry of France are willing to run the risk of having the name of the Knights of the Smock Sleeve bestowed on them in future."

"It would be a right well adapted title, friend Charles," said Le Glorieux, "considering that a woman is the reward of the most valiant."

"Well spoken, Sagacity," said Louis. "Cousin, good night, I will go arm me.—By the way, what if I win the Countess with mine own hand?"

"Your Majesty," said the Duke, in an altered tone of voice, "must then become a true Fleming."

"I cannot," answered Louis, in a tone of the most sincere confidence, "be more so than I am already, could I but bring you, my dear cousin, to believe it."

The Duke only replied by wishing the King good night in a tone resembling the snort of a shy horse, starting from the caress of the rider when he is about to mount, and is soothing him to stand still.

"I could pardon all his duplicity," said the Duke to Crevecoeur, "but cannot forgive his supposing me capable of the gross folly of being duped by his professions." Louis, too, had his confidences with Oliver le Dain, when he returned to his own quarters. "This," he said, "is such a mixture of shrewdness and simplicity, that I know not what to make of him. Pasques dieu! think of his unpardonable folly in bringing out honest De la Marck's plan of a sally before the face of Burgundy, Crevecoeur, and all of them, instead of rounding it in my ear, and giving me at least the choice of abetting or defeating it!"

"It is better as it is, Sire," said Oliver; "there are many in your present train who would scruple to assail Burgundy undefied, or to ally themselves with De la Marck."

"Thou art right, Oliver. Such fools there are in the world, and we have no time to reconcile their scruples by a little dose of self interest. We must be true men, Oliver, and good allies of Burgundy, for this night at least—time may give us a chance of a better game. Go, tell no man to unarm himself; and let them shoot, in case of necessity, as sharply on those who cry France and St. Denis! as if they cried Hell and Satan! I will myself sleep in my armour. Let Crawford place Quentin Durward on the extreme point of our line of sentinels, next to the city. Let him e'en have the first benefit of the sally which he has announced to us—if his luck bear him out, it is the better for him. But take an especial care of Martius Galeotti, and see he remain in the rear, in a place of the most absolute safety—he is even but too venturesome, and, like a fool, would be both swordsman and philosopher. See to these things, Oliver, and good night.—Our Lady of Clery, and Monseigneur St. Martin of Tours, be gracious to my slumbers!"

[The Duke of Burgundy, full of resentment for the usage which the Bishop had received from the people of Liege (whose death, as already noticed, did not take place for some years after), and knowing that the walls of the town had not been repaired since they were breached by himself after the battle of Saint Tron, advanced recklessly to their chastisement. His commanders shared his presumptuous confidence: for the advanced guard of his army, under the Marechal of Burgundy, and Seigneur D'Hymbercourt, rushed upon one of the suburbs, without waiting for the rest of their army, which, commanded by the Duke in person, remained about seven or eight leagues in the rear. The night was closing, and, as the Burgundian troops observed no discipline, they were exposed to a sudden attack from a party of the citizens commanded by Jean de Vilde, who, assaulting them in the front and rear, threw them into great disorder, and killed more than eight hundred men, of whom one hundred were men at arms. When Charles and the King of France came up, they took up their quarters in two villas situated near to the wall of the city. In the two or three days which followed, Louis was distinguished for the quiet and regulated composure with which he pressed the siege, and provided for defence in case of sallies; while the Duke of Burgundy, no way deficient in courage, and who showed the rashness and want of order

which was his principal characteristic, seemed also extremely suspicious that the King would desert him and join with the Liegeois. They lay before the town for five or six days, and at length fixed the 30th of October, 1468, for a general storm. The citizens, who had probably information of their intent, resolved to prevent their purpose and determined on anticipating it by a desperate sally through the breaches in their walls. They placed at their head six hundred of the men of the little territory of Fraudemont, belonging to the Bishopric of Liege, and reckoned the most valiant of their troops. They burst out of the town on a sudden, surprised the Duke of Burgundy's quarters, ere his guards could put on their armour, which they had laid off to enjoy some repose before the assault. The King of France's lodgings were also attacked and endangered. A great confusion ensued, augmented incalculably by the mutual jealousy and suspicions of the French and Burgundians. The people of Liege were, however, unable to maintain their hardy enterprise, when the men at arms of the king and Duke began to recover from their confusion, and were finally forced to retire within their walls, after narrowly missing the chance of surprising both King Louis and the Duke of Burgundy, the most powerful princes of their time. At daybreak the storm took place, as had been originally intended, and the citizens, disheartened and fatigued by the nocturnal sally, did not make so much resistance as was expected. Liege was taken and miserably pillaged, without regard to sex or age, things sacred or things profane. These particulars are fully related by Comines in his *Memoires*, liv. ii, chap. 11, 12, 13, and do not differ much from the account of the same events given in the text. S.]

CHAPTER XXXVII: THE SALLY

*He look'd, and saw what numbers numberless
The city gates outpour'd.*

PARADISE REGAINED

A dead silence soon reigned over that great host which lay in leaguer before Liege. For a long time the cries of the soldiers repeating their signals, and seeking to join their several banners, sounded like the howling of bewildered dogs seeking their masters. But at length, overcome with weariness by the fatigues of the day, the dispersed soldiers crowded under such shelter as they could meet with, and those who could find none sunk down through very fatigue under walls, hedges, and such temporary protection, there to await for morning—a morning which some of them were never to behold. A dead sleep fell on almost all, excepting those who kept a faint and wary watch by the lodgings of the King and the Duke. The dangers and hopes of the morrow—even the schemes of glory which many of the young nobility had founded upon the splendid prize held out to him who should avenge the murdered Bishop of Liege—glided from their recollection as they lay stupefied with fatigue and sleep. But not so with Quentin Durward. The knowledge that he alone was possessed of the means of distinguishing La Marck in the contest—the recollection by whom that information had been communicated, and the fair augury which might be drawn from her conveying it to him—the thought that his fortune had brought him to a most perilous and doubtful crisis indeed, but one where there was still, at least, a chance of his coming off triumphant—banished every desire to sleep and strung his nerves with vigour which defied fatigue.

Posted, by the King's express order, on the extreme point between the French quarters and the town, a good way to the right of the suburb which we have mentioned, he sharpened his eye to penetrate the mass which lay before him, and excited his ears to catch the slightest sound which might announce any commotion in the beleaguered city. But its huge clocks had successively knelled three hours after midnight, and all continued still and silent as the grave.

At length, and just when Quentin began to think the attack would be deferred till daybreak, and joyfully recollected that there would be then light enough to descry the Bar Sinister across the Fleur de lis of Orleans, he thought he heard in the city a humming murmur, like that of disturbed bees mustering for the defence of their hives. He listened—the noise continued, but it was of a character so undistinguished by any peculiar or precise sound, that it might be the murmur of a wind arising among the boughs of a distant grove, or perhaps some stream, swollen by the late rain, which was discharging itself into the sluggish Maes with more than usual clamour. Quentin was prevented by these considerations from instantly giving the alarm, which, if done carelessly, would have been a heavy offence. But, when the noise rose louder, and seemed pouring at the same time towards his own post, and towards the suburb, he deemed it his duty to fall back as silently as possible and call his uncle, who commanded the small body of Archers destined to his support. All were on their feet in a moment, and with as little noise as possible. In less than a second Lord Crawford was at their head, and, dispatching an Archer to alarm the King and his household, drew back his little party to some distance behind their watchfire, that they might not be seen by its light. The rushing sound, which had approached them more nearly, seemed suddenly to have ceased, but they still heard distinctly the more distant heavy tread of a large body of men approaching the suburb.

"The lazy Burgundians are asleep on their post," whispered Crawford; "make for the suburb, Cunningham, and awaken the stupid oxen."

"Keep well to the rear as you go," said Durward; "if ever I heard the tread of mortal men, there is a strong body interposed between us and the suburb."

"Well said, Quentin, my dainty callant," said Crawford; "thou art a soldier beyond thy years. They only made halt till the others come forward.—I would I had some knowledge where they are!"

"I will creep forward, my Lord," said Quentin, "and endeavour to bring you information."

"Do so, my bonny chield; thou hast sharp ears and eyes, and good will—but take heed—I would not lose thee for two and a plack [an homely Scottish expression for something you value]."

Quentin, with his harquebuss ready prepared, stole forward, through ground which he had reconnoitred carefully in the twilight of the preceding evening, until he was not only certain that he was in the neighbourhood of a very large body of men, who were standing fast betwixt the King's quarters and the suburbs, but also that there was a detached party of smaller number in advance, and very close to him. They seemed to whisper together, as if uncertain what to do next. At last the steps of two or three *Enfans perdus* [literally, lost children], detached from that smaller party, approached him so near as twice a pike's length. Seeing it impossible to retreat undiscovered, Quentin called out aloud, "Qui vive? [who goes there?]" and was answered, by "Vive Li—Li—ege—c'est a dire [that is to say]" (added he who spoke, correcting himself), "Vive—la France!"

Quentin instantly fired his harquebuss—a man groaned and fell, and he himself, under the instant but vague discharge of a number of pieces, the fire of which ran in a disorderly manner along the column, and showed it to be very numerous, hastened back to the main guard.

"Admirably done, my brave boy!" said Crawford. "Now, callants, draw in within the courtyard—they are too many to mell with in the open field."

They drew within the courtyard and garden accordingly, where they found all in great order and the King prepared to mount his horse.

"Whither away, Sire!" said Crawford; "you are safest here with your own people."

"Not so," said Louis, "I must instantly to the Duke. He must be convinced of our good faith at this critical moment, or we shall have both Liegeois and Burgundians upon us at once."

And, springing on his horse, he bade Dunois command the French troops without the house, and Crawford the Archer Guard and other household troops to defend the *lusthaus* and its enclosures. He commanded them to bring up two *sakers* and as many *falconets* (pieces of cannon for the field), which had been left about half a mile in the rear; and, in the meantime, to make good their posts, but by no means to advance, whatever success they might obtain; and having given these orders, he rode off, with a small escort, to the Duke's quarters. The delay which permitted these arrangements to be carried fully into effect was owing to Quentin's having fortunately shot the proprietor of the house, who acted as guide to the column which was designed to attack it, and whose attack, had it been made instantly, might have had a chance of being successful.

Durward, who, by the King's order, attended him to the Duke's, found the latter in a state of choleric distemper, which almost prevented his discharging the duties of a general, which were never more necessary; for, besides the noise of a close and furious combat which had now taken place in the suburb upon the left of their whole army—besides the attack upon the King's quarters, which was fiercely maintained in the centre—a third column of Liegeois, of even superior

numbers, had filed out from a more distant breach, and, marching by lanes, vineyards, and passes known to themselves, had fallen upon the right flank of the Burgundian army, who, alarmed at their war cries of *Vive la France!* and *Denis Montjoie!* which mingled with those of *Liege!* and *Rouge Sanglier!* and at the idea thus inspired, of treachery on the part of the French confederates, made a very desultory and imperfect resistance; while the Duke, foaming and swearing and cursing his liege Lord and all that belonged to him, called out to shoot with bow and gun on all that was French whether black or white,—alluding to the sleeves with which Louis's soldiers had designated themselves.

The arrival of the King, attended only by Le Balafre and Quentin and half a score of Archers, restored confidence between France and Burgundy. D'Hymbercourt, Crevecoeur, and others of the Burgundian leaders, whose names were then the praise and dread of war, rushed devotedly into the conflict; and, while some commanders hastened to bring up more distant troops, to whom the panic had not extended, others threw themselves into the tumult, reanimated the instinct of discipline, and while the Duke toiled in the front, shouting, hacking, and hewing, like an ordinary man at arms, brought their men by degrees into array, and dismayed the assailants by the use of their artillery. The conduct of Louis, on the other hand, was that of a calm, collected, sagacious leader, who neither sought nor avoided danger, but showed so much self possession and sagacity, that the Burgundian leaders readily obeyed the orders which he issued.

The scene was now become in the utmost degree animated and horrible. On the left the suburb, after a fierce contest, had been set on fire, and a wide and dreadful conflagration did not prevent the burning ruins from being still disputed. On the centre, the French troops, though pressed by immense odds, kept up so close and constant a fire, that the little pleasure house shone bright with the glancing flashes, as if surrounded with a martyr's crown of flames. On the left, the battle swayed backwards and forwards, with varied success, as fresh reinforcements poured out of the town, or were brought forward from the rear of the Burgundian host; and the strife continued with unremitting fury for three mortal hours, which at length brought the dawn, so much desired by the besiegers. The enemy, at this period, seemed to be slackening their efforts upon the right and in the centre, and several discharges of cannon were heard from the *lusthaus*.

"Go," said the King to Le Balafre and Quentin, the instant his ear had caught the sound; "they have got up the sakers and falconets—the pleasure house is safe, blessed be the Holy Virgin!—Tell Dunois to move this way, but rather nearer the walls of Liege, with all our men at arms, excepting what he may leave for the defence of the house, and cut in between those thick headed Liegeois on the right and the city from which they are supplied with recruits."

The uncle and nephew galloped off to Dunois and Crawford, who, tired of their defensive war, joyfully obeyed the summons, and, filing out at the head of a gallant body of about two hundred French gentlemen, besides squires, and the greater part of the Archers and their followers, marched across the field, trampling down the wounded till they gained the flank of the large body of Liegeois, by whom the right of the Burgundians had been so fiercely assailed. The increasing daylight discovered that the enemy were continuing to pour out from the city, either for the purpose of continuing the battle on that point, or of bringing safely off the forces who were already engaged.

"By Heaven!" said old Crawford to Dunois, "were I not certain it is thou that art riding by my side, I would say I saw thee among yonder banditti and burghers, marshalling and arraying them with thy mace—only, if yon be thou, thou art bigger than thou art wont to be. Art thou sure yonder armed leader is not thy wraith, thy double man, as these Flemings call it?"

"My wraith!" said Dunois; "I know not what you mean. But yonder is a caitiff with my bearings displayed on crest and shield, whom I will presently punish for his insolence."

"In the name of all that is noble, my lord, leave the vengeance to me!" said Quentin.

"To thee, indeed, young man," said Dunois; "that is a modest request."

"No—these things brook no substitution." Then turning on his saddle, he called out to those around him, "Gentlemen of France, form your line, level your lances! Let the rising sunbeams shine through the battalions of yonder swine of Liege and hogs of Ardennes, that masquerade in our ancient coats."

The men at arms answered with a loud shout of "A Dunois! a Dunois! Long live the bold Bastard!—Orleans to the rescue!"

And, with their leader in the centre, they charged at full gallop. They encountered no timid enemy. The large body which they charged consisted (excepting some mounted officers) entirely of infantry, who, setting the butt of their lances against their feet, the front rank kneeling, the second stooping, and those behind presenting their spears over their heads, offered such resistance to the rapid charge of the men at arms as the hedgehog presents to his enemy. Few were able to make way through that iron Wall; but of those few was Dunois, who, giving spur to his horse, and making the noble animal leap more than twelve feet at a bound, fairly broke his way into the middle of the phalanx, and made toward the object of his animosity. What was his surprise to find Quentin still by his side, and fighting in the same front with himself—youth, desperate courage, and the determination to do or die having still kept the youth abreast with the best knight in Europe; for such was Dunois reported, and truly reported at the period.

Their spears were soon broken, but the lanzknechts Were unable to withstand the blows of their long, heavy swords; while the horses and riders, armed in complete steel, sustained little injury from their lances. Still Dunois and Durward were contending with rival efforts to burst forward to the spot where he who had usurped the armorial bearings of Dunois was doing the duty of a good and valiant leader, when Dunois, observing the boar's head and tusks—the usual bearing of William de la Marck—in another part of the conflict, called out to Quentin, "Thou art worthy to avenge the arms of Orleans! I leave thee the task.—Balafre, support your nephew; but let none dare to interfere with Dunois's boar hunt!"

That Quentin Durward joyfully acquiesced in this division of labour cannot be doubted, and each pressed forward upon his separate object, followed, and defended from behind, by such men at arms as were able to keep up with them.

But at this moment the column which De la Marck had proposed to support, when his own course was arrested by the charge of Dunois, had lost all the advantages they had gained during the night; while the Burgundians, with returning day, had begun to show the qualities which belong to superior discipline. The great mass of Liegeois were compelled to retreat, and at length to fly; and, falling back on those who were engaged with the French men at arms, the whole became a confused tide of fighters, fliers, and pursuers, which rolled itself towards the city walls, and at last was poured into the ample and undefended breach through which the Liegeois had sallied.

Quentin made more than human exertions to overtake the special object of his pursuit, who was still in his sight, striving, by voice and example, to renew the battle, and bravely supported by a chosen party of lanzknechts. Le Balafre and several of his comrades attached themselves to Quentin, much marvelling at the extraordinary gallantry displayed by so young a soldier. On the very brink of the breach, De la Marck—for it was himself—succeeded in effecting a momentary stand, and repelling some of the most forward of the pursuers. He had a mace of iron in his hand, before which everything seemed to go down, and was so much covered with blood that it was almost impossible to discern those bearings on his shield which had so much incensed Dunois.

Quentin now found little difficulty in singling him out, for the commanding situation of which he had possessed himself, and the use he made of his terrible mace, caused many of the assailants to seek safer points of attack than that where so desperate a defender presented himself. But Quentin, to whom the importance attached to victory over this formidable antagonist was better known, sprung from his horse at the bottom of the breach, and, letting the noble animal, the gift of the Duke of Orleans, run loose through the tumult, ascended the ruins to measure swords with the Boar of Ardennes. The latter, as if he had seen his intention, turned towards Durward with mace uplifted; and they were on the point of encounter, when a dreadful shout of triumph, of tumult, and of despair, announced that the besiegers were entering the city at another point, and in the rear of those who defended the breach. Assembling around him, by voice and bugle, the desperate partners of his desperate fortune, De la Marck, at those appalling sounds, abandoned the breach, and endeavoured to effect his retreat towards a part of the city from which he might escape to the other side of the Maes. His immediate followers formed a deep body of well disciplined men, who, never having given quarter, were resolved now not to ask it, and who, in that hour of despair, threw themselves into such firm order that their front occupied the whole breadth of the street, through which they slowly retired, making head from time to time, and checking the pursuers, many of whom began to seek a safer occupation, by breaking into the houses for plunder. It is therefore probable that De la Marck might have effected his escape, his disguise concealing him from those who promised themselves to win honour and grandeur upon his head, but for the stanch pursuit of Quentin, his uncle Le Balafre, and some of his comrades. At every pause which was made by the lanzknechts, a furious combat took place betwixt them and the Archers, and in every melee Quentin sought De la Marck; but the

latter, whose present object was to retreat, seemed to evade the young Scot's purpose of bringing him to single combat. The confusion was general in every direction. The shrieks and cries of women, the yelling of the terrified inhabitants, now subjected to the extremity of military license, sounded horribly shrill amid the shouts of battle—like the voice of misery and despair contending with that of fury and violence, which should be heard farthest and loudest.

It was just when De la Marck, retiring through this infernal scene, had passed the door of a small chapel of peculiar sanctity, that the shouts of "France! France!—Burgundy! Burgundy!" apprised him that a part of the besiegers were entering the farther end of the street, which was a narrow one, and that his retreat was cut off.

"Comrade," he said, "take all the men with you.—Charge yonder fellows roundly, and break through if you can—with me it is over. I am man enough, now that I am brought to bay, to send some of these vagabond Scots to hell before me."

His lieutenant obeyed, and, with most of the few lanzknechts who remained alive, hurried to the farther end of the street, for the purpose of charging those Burgundians who were advancing, and so forcing their way, so as to escape. About six of De la Marck's best men remained to perish with their master, and fronted the Archers, who were not many more in number.

"Sanglier! Sanglier! Hola! gentlemen of Scotland," said the ruffian but undaunted chief, waving his mace, "who longs to gain a coronet—who strikes at the Boar of Ardennes?—You, young man, have, methinks, a hankering; but you must win ere you wear it."

Quentin heard but imperfectly the words, which were partly lost in the hollow helmet; but the action could not be mistaken, and he had but time to bid his uncle and comrades, as they were gentlemen, to stand back, when De la Marck sprang upon him with a bound like a tiger, aiming, at the same time a blow with his mace, so as to make his hand and foot keep time together, and giving his stroke full advantage of the descent of his leap, but, light of foot and quick of eye, Quentin leaped aside, and disappointed an aim which would have been fatal had it taken effect.

They then closed, like the wolf and the wolf dog, their comrades on either side remaining inactive spectators, for Le Balafre roared out for fair play, adding that he would venture his nephew on him were he as wight as Wallace.

Neither was the experienced soldier's confidence unjustified; for, although the blows of the despairing robber fell like those of the hammer on the anvil, yet the quick motions and dexterous swordsmanship of the young Archer enabled him to escape, and to requite them with the point of his less noisy, though more fatal weapon; and that so often, and so effectually, that the huge strength of his antagonist began to give way to fatigue, while the ground on which he stood became a puddle of blood. Yet, still unabated in courage and ire, the wild Boar of Ardennes fought on with as much mental energy as at first, and Quentin's victory seemed dubious and distant, when a female voice behind him called him by his name, ejaculating,

"Help! help! for the sake of the blessed Virgin!"

He turned his head, and with a single glance beheld Gertrude Pavillon, her mantle stripped from her shoulders, dragged forcibly along by a French soldier, one of several who, breaking into the chapel close by, had seized, as their prey, on the terrified females who had taken refuge there.

"Wait for me but one moment," exclaimed Quentin to De la Marck, and sprang to extricate his benefactress from a situation of which he conjectured all the dangers.

"I wait no man's pleasure," said De la Marck, flourishing his mace, and beginning to retreat—glad, no doubt, at being free of so formidable an assailant.

"You shall wait mine, though, by your leave," said Balafre; "I will not have my nephew balked."

So saying, he instantly assaulted De la Marck with his two handed sword.

Quentin found, in the meanwhile, that the rescue of Gertrude was a task more difficult than could be finished in one moment. Her captor, supported by his comrades, refused to relinquish his prize: and whilst Durward, aided by one or two of his countrymen, endeavoured to compel him to do so, the former beheld the chance which Fortune had so kindly afforded him for fortune and happiness glide out of his reach; so that when he stood at length in the street with the liberated Gertrude, there was no one near them. Totally forgetting the defenceless situation of his companion, he was about to spring away in pursuit of the Boar of Ardennes, as the greyhound tracks the deer, when, clinging to him in her despair, she exclaimed, "For the sake of your mother's honour, leave me not here!—As you are a gentleman, protect me to my father's house, which once sheltered you and the Lady Isabelle!—For her sake leave me not!"

Her call was agonizing, but it was irresistible; and bidding a mental adieu, with unutterable bitterness of feeling, to all the gay hopes which had stimulated his exertion, carried him through that bloody day, and which at one moment seemed to approach consummation, Quentin, like an unwilling spirit who obeys a talisman which he cannot resist, protected Gertrude to Pavillon's house, and arrived in time to defend that and the Syndic himself against the fury of the licentious soldiery.

Meantime the King and the Duke of Burgundy entered the city on horseback and through one of the breaches. They were both in complete armour, but the latter, covered with blood from the plume to the spur, drove his steed furiously up the breach, which Louis surmounted with the stately pace of one who leads a procession. They dispatched orders to stop the sack of the city, which had already commenced, and to assemble their scattered troops. The Princes themselves proceeded towards the great church, both for the protection of many of the distinguished inhabitants who had taken refuge there, and in order to hold a sort of military council after they had heard high mass.

Busied, like other officers of his rank, in collecting those under his command, Lord Crawford, at the turning of one of the streets which leads to the Maes, met Le Balafre sauntering composedly towards the river, holding in his hand, by the gory locks, a human head with as much indifference as a fowler carries a game pouch.

"How now, Ludovic!" said his commander; "what are ye doing with that carrion?"

"It is all that is left of a bit of work which my nephew shaped out and nearly finished and I put the last hand to," said Le Balafre, "a good fellow that I dispatched yonder and who prayed me to throw his head into the Maes.—Men have queer fancies when old Small Back [a cant expression in Scotland for Death, usually delineated as a skeleton. S.] is gripping them, but Small Back must lead down the dance with us all in our time."

"And you are going to throw that head into the Maes?" said Crawford, looking more attentively on the ghastly memorial of mortality.

"Ay, truly am I," said Ludovic testily. "If you refuse a dying man his boon, you are likely to be haunted by his ghost, and I love to sleep sound at nights."

"You must take your chance of the ghaist, man," said Crawford; "for, by my soul, there is more lies on that dead pow than you think for. Come along with me—not a word more—Come along with me."

"Nay, for that matter," said Le Balafre, "I made him no promise; for, in truth, I had off his head before the tongue had well done wagging; and as I feared him not living, by St. Martin of Tours, I fear him as little when he is dead. Besides, my little gossip, the merry Friar of St. Martin's, will lend me a pot of holy water."

When high mass had been said in the Cathedral Church of Liege and the terrified town was restored to some moderate degree of order, Louis and Charles, with their peers around, proceeded to hear the claims of those who had any to make for services performed during the battle. Those which respected the County of Croye and its fair mistress were first received, and to the disappointment of sundry claimants, who had thought themselves sure of the rich prize, there seemed doubt and mystery to involve their several pretensions. Crevecoeur showed a boar's hide, such as De la Marck usually wore; Dunois produced a cloven shield with his armorial bearings; and there were others who claimed the merit of having dispatched the murderer of the Bishop, producing similar tokens—the rich reward fixed on De la Marck's head having brought death to all who were armed in his resemblance.

There was much noise and contest among the competitors, and Charles, internally regretting the rash promise which had placed the hand and wealth of his fair vassal on such a hazard, was in hopes he might find means of evading all these conflicting claims, when Crawford pressed forward into the circle, dragging Le Balafre after him, who, awkward and bashful, followed like an unwilling mastiff towed on in a leash, as his leader exclaimed, "Away with your hoofs and hides and painted iron!—No one, save he who slew the Boar, can show the tusks!"

So saying, he flung on the floor the bloody head, easily known as that of De la Marck by the singular conformation of the jaws, which in reality had a certain resemblance to those of the animal whose name he bore, and which was instantly recognized by all who had seen him.

[We have already noticed the anachronism respecting the crimes of this atrocious baron; and it is scarce necessary to repeat, that if he in reality murdered the Bishop of Liege in 1482, the Count of La Marck could not be slain in the defence of Liege four years earlier. In fact, the Wild Boar of Ardennes, as he was usually termed, was of high birth, being the third son of John I, Count of La Marck and Aremborg, and ancestor of the branch called Barons of Lumain. He did not escape the punishment due to his atrocity, though it did not take place at the time, or in the manner, narrated in the text. Maximilian, Emperor of Austria, caused him to be arrested at Utrecht, where he was beheaded in the year 1485, three years after the Bishop of Liege's death. S.]

"Crawford," said Louis, while Charles sat silent in gloomy and displeased surprise, "I trust it is one of my faithful Scots who has won this prize?"

"It is Ludovic Lesly, Sire, whom we call Le Balafre," replied the old soldier.

"But is he noble?" said the Duke; "is he of gentle blood?—Otherwise our promise is void."

"He is a cross, ungainly piece of wood enough," said Crawford, looking at the tall, awkward, embarrassed figure of the Archer; "but I will warrant him a branch of the tree of Rothes for all that—and they have been as noble as any house in France or Burgundy ever since it is told of their founder that—

"Between the less-lee and the mair,

He slew the Knight, and left him there."

[An old rhyme by which the Leslies vindicate their descent from an ancient knight, who is said to have slain a gigantic Hungarian champion, and to have formed a proper name for himself by a play of words upon the place where he fought his adversary. S.]

"There is then no help for it," said the Duke, "and the fairest and richest heiress in Burgundy must be the wife of a rude mercenary soldier like this, or die secluded in a convent—and she the only child of our faithful Reginald de Croye!—I have been too rash."

And a cloud settled on his brow, to the surprise of his peers, who seldom saw him evince the slightest token of regret for the necessary consequences of an adopted resolution.

"Hold but an instant," said the Lord Crawford, "it may be better than your Grace conjectures. Hear but what this cavalier has to say.—Speak out, man, and a murrain to thee," he added, apart to Le Balafre.

But that blunt soldier, though he could make a shift to express himself intelligibly enough to King Louis, to whose familiarity he was habituated, yet found himself incapable of enunciating his resolution before so splendid an assembly as that before which he then stood; and after having turned his shoulder to the princes, and preluded with a hoarse chuckling laugh, and two or three tremendous contortions of countenance, he was only able to pronounce the words, "Saunders Souplejaw"—and then stuck fast.

"May it please your Majesty and your Grace," said Crawford, "I must speak for my countryman and old comrade. You shall understand that he has had it prophesied to him by a seer in his own land, that the fortune of his house is to be made by marriage; but as he is, like myself, something the worse for the wear—loves the wine house better than a lady's summer parlour, and, in short, having some barrack tastes and likings, which would make greatness in his own person rather an encumbrance to him, he hath acted by my advice, and resigns the pretensions acquired by the fate of slaying William de la Marck, to him by whom the Wild Boar was actually brought to bay, who is his maternal nephew."

"I will vouch for that youth's services and prudence," said King Louis, overjoyed to see that fate had thrown so gallant a prize to one over whom he had some influence. "Without his prudence and vigilance, we had been ruined. It was he who made us aware of the night sally."

"I, then," said Charles, "owe him some reparation for doubting his veracity."

"And I can attest his gallantry as a man at arms," said Dunois.

"But," interrupted Crevecoeur, "though the uncle be a Scottish gentillatre, that makes not the nephew necessarily so."

"He is of the House of Durward," said Crawford, "descended from that Allan Durward who was High Steward of Scotland."

"Nay, if it be young Durward," said Crevecoeur, "I say no more.—Fortune has declared herself on his side too plainly for me to struggle farther with her humoursome ladyship—but it is strange, from lord to horseboy, how wonderfully these Scots stick by each other."

"Highlander shoulder to shoulder," answered Lord Crawford, laughing at the mortification of the proud Burgundian.

"We have yet to inquire," said Charles thoughtfully, "what the fair lady's sentiments may be towards this fortunate adventurer."

"By the mass" said Crevecoeur, "I have but too much reason to believe your Grace will find her more amenable to authority than on former occasions.—But why should I grudge this youth his preferment? Since, after all, it is sense, firmness, and gallantry which have put him in possession of WEALTH, RANK, and BEAUTY!"

BOOK IIX
ANNE OF GAIERSTEIN, THE MAIDEN IN THE MIST
PART I

CHAPTER I

The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphurous,
Like foam from the roused ocean ...
... I am giddy.
Manfred.

The course of four centuries has well-nigh elapsed since the series of events which are related in the following chapters took place on the Continent. The records which contained the outlines of the history, and might be referred to as proof of its veracity, were long preserved in the superb library of the Monastery of St. Gall, but perished, with many of the literary treasures of that establishment, when the convent was plundered by the French revolutionary armies. The events are fixed, by historical date, to the middle of the fifteenth century—that important period, when chivalry still shone with a setting ray, soon about to be totally obscured: in some countries, by the establishment of free institutions; in others, by that 2of arbitrary power, which alike rendered useless the interference of those self-endowed redressers of wrongs, whose only warrant of authority was the sword.

Amid the general light which had recently shone upon Europe, France, Burgundy, and Italy, but more especially Austria, had been made acquainted with the character of a people of whose very existence they had before been scarcely conscious. It is true, that the inhabitants of those countries which lie in the vicinity of the Alps, that immense barrier, were not ignorant that, notwithstanding their rugged and desolate appearance, the secluded valleys which winded among those gigantic mountains nourished a race of hunters and shepherds; men who, living in a state of primeval simplicity, compelled from the soil a subsistence gained by severe labour, followed the chase over the most savage precipices and through the darkest pine forests, or drove their cattle to spots which afforded them a scanty pasturage, even in the vicinage of eternal snows. But the existence of such a people, or rather of a number of small communities who followed nearly the same poor and hardy course of life, had seemed to the rich and powerful princes in the neighbourhood a matter of as little consequence, as it is to the stately herds which repose in a fertile meadow, that a few half-starved goats find their scanty food among the rocks which overlook their rich domain.

But wonder and attention began to be attracted towards these mountaineers, about the middle of the fourteenth century, when reports were spread abroad of severe contests, in which the German chivalry, endeavouring to suppress insurrections 3among their Alpine vassals, had sustained repeated and bloody defeats, although having on their side numbers and discipline, and the advantage of the most perfect military equipment then known and confided in. Great was the wonder that cavalry, which made the only efficient part of the feudal armies of these ages, should be routed by men on foot; that warriors sheathed in complete steel should be overpowered by naked peasants who wore no defensive armour, and were irregularly provided with pikes, halberts, and clubs, for the purpose of attack; above all, it seemed a species of miracle, that knights and nobles of the highest birth should be defeated by mountaineers and shepherds. But the repeated victories of the Swiss at Laupen, Sempach [\[a\]](#),[\[2\]](#) and on other less distinguished occasions, plainly intimated that a new principle of civil organisation, as well as of military movements, had arisen amid the stormy regions of Helvetia.

Still, although the decisive victories which obtained liberty for the Swiss Cantons, as well as the spirit of resolution and wisdom with which the members of the little confederation had maintained themselves against the utmost exertions of Austria, had spread their fame abroad through all the neighbouring countries; and although they themselves were conscious of the character and actual power which repeated victories had acquired for themselves and their country, yet down to the middle of the fifteenth century, and at a later date, the Swiss retained in a great measure the wisdom, 4moderation, and simplicity of their ancient manners; so much so, that those who were intrusted with the command of the troops of the Republic in battle, were wont to resume the shepherd's staff when they laid down the truncheon, and, like the Roman dictators, to retire to complete equality with their fellow-citizens, from the eminence of military command to which their talents, and the call of their country, had raised them.

It is, then, in the Forest Cantons of Switzerland, in the autumn of 1474, while these districts were in the rude and simple state we have described, that our tale opens.

Two travellers, one considerably past the prime of life, the other probably two or three and twenty years old, had passed the night at the little town of Lucerne, the capital of the Swiss state of the same name, and beautifully situated on the Lake of the Four Cantons. Their dress and character seemed those of merchants of a higher class, and while they themselves journeyed on foot, the character of the country rendering that by far the most easy mode of pursuing their route, a young peasant lad, from the Italian side of the Alps, followed them with a sumpter mule, laden apparently with men's wares and baggage, which he sometimes mounted, but more frequently led by the bridle.

The travellers were uncommonly fine-looking men, and seemed connected by some very near relationship,—probably that of father and son; for at the little inn where they lodged on the preceding evening, the great deference and respect paid by the younger to the elder had not escaped the observation of the natives, who, like other 5sequestered beings, were curious in proportion to the limited means of information which they possessed. They observed also, that the merchants, under pretence of haste, declined opening their bales, or proposing traffic to the inhabitants of Lucerne, alleging in excuse that they had no commodities fitted for the market. The females of the town were the more displeased with the reserve of the mercantile travellers, because they were given to understand that it was occasioned by the wares in which they dealt being too costly to find customers among the Helvetian mountains; for it had transpired, by means of their attendant, that the strangers had visited Venice, and had there made many purchases of rich commodities, which were brought from India and Egypt to that celebrated emporium, as to the common mart of the Western World, and thence dispersed into all quarters of Europe. Now the Swiss maidens had of late made the discovery that gauds and gems were fair to look upon, and, though without the hope of being able to possess themselves of such ornaments, they felt a natural desire to review and handle the rich stores of the merchants, and some displeasure at being prevented from doing so.

It was also observed, that though the strangers were sufficiently courteous in their demeanour, they did not evince that studious anxiety to please, displayed by the travelling pedlars or merchants of Lombardy or Savoy, by whom the inhabitants of the mountains were occasionally visited; and who had been more frequent in their rounds of late years, since the spoils of victory had invested the Swiss with some wealth, and had taught many of them new wants. Those peripatetic traders 6were civil and assiduous, as their calling required; but the new visitors seemed men who were indifferent to traffic, or at least to such slender gains as could be gathered in Switzerland.

Curiosity was further excited by the circumstance that they spoke to each other in a language which was certainly neither German, Italian, nor French, but from which an old man serving in the cabaret, who had once been as far as Paris, supposed they might be English; a people of whom it was only known in these mountains, that they were a fierce insular race, at war with the French for many years, and a large body of whom had long since invaded the Forest Cantons [\[b\]](#), and sustained such a defeat in the valley of Russwyl as was well remembered by the grey-haired men of Lucerne, who received the tale from their fathers.

The lad who attended the strangers was soon ascertained to be a youth from the Grisons country, who acted as their guide, so far as his knowledge of the mountains permitted. He said they designed to go to Bâle, but seemed desirous to travel by circuitous and unfrequented routes. The circumstances just mentioned increased the general desire to know more of the travellers and of their merchandise. Not a bale, however, was unpacked, and the merchants, leaving Lucerne next morning, resumed their toilsome journey, preferring a circuitous route and bad roads, through the peaceful cantons of Switzerland, to encountering the exactions and rapine of the robber chivalry of Germany, who, like so many sovereigns, made war each at his own pleasure, and levied tolls and taxes on every one who passed their domains, of a mile's breadth, with all the insolence of petty tyranny.⁷

For several hours after leaving Lucerne, the journey of our travellers was successfully prosecuted. The road, though precipitous and difficult, was rendered interesting by those splendid phenomena, which no country exhibits in a more astonishing manner than the mountains of Switzerland, where the rocky pass, the verdant valley, the broad lake, and the rushing torrent, the attributes of other hills as well as these, are interspersed with the magnificent and yet fearful horrors of the glaciers, a feature peculiar to themselves.

It was not an age in which the beauties or grandeur of a landscape made much impression either on the minds of those who travelled through the country, or who resided in it. To the latter, the objects, however dignified, were familiar, and associated with daily habits and with daily toil; and the former saw, perhaps, more terror than beauty in the wild region through which they passed, and were rather solicitous to get safe to their night's quarters, than to comment on the grandeur of the scenes which lay between them and their place of rest. Yet our merchants, as they proceeded on their journey, could not help being strongly impressed by the character of the scenery around them. Their road lay along the side of the lake, at times level and close on its very margin, at times rising to a great height on the side of the mountain, and winding along the verge of precipices which sank down to the water as sharp and sheer as the wall of a castle descending upon the ditch which defends it. At other times it traversed spots of a milder character,—delightful green slopes, and lowly retired valleys, affording both pasturage and arable ground, sometimes watered by small streams, which winded by the hamlet of wooden huts with their fantastic little church and steeple, meandered round the orchard and the mount of vines, and, murmuring gently as they flowed, found a quiet passage into the lake.

"That stream, Arthur," said the elder traveller, as with one consent they stopped to gaze on such a scene as I have described, "resembles the life of a good and a happy man."

"And the brook, which hurries itself headlong down yon distant hill, marking its course by a streak of white foam," answered Arthur,— "what does that resemble?"

"That of a brave and unfortunate one," replied his father.

"The torrent for me," said Arthur; "a headlong course which no human force can oppose, and then let it be as brief as it is glorious."

"It is a young man's thought," replied his father; "but I am well aware that it is so rooted in thy heart, that nothing but the rude hand of adversity can pluck it up."

"As yet the root clings fast to my heart's strings," said the young man; "and methinks adversity's hand hath had a fair grasp of it."

"You speak, my son, of what you little understand," said his father. "Know, that till the middle of life be passed, men scarce distinguish true prosperity from adversity, or rather they court as the favours of fortune what they should more justly regard as the marks of her displeasure. Look at yonder mountain, which wears on its shaggy brow a diadem of clouds, now raised and now depressed, while the sun glances upon, but is unable to dispel it;—a child might believe it to be a crown of glory—a man knows it to be the signal of tempest."

Arthur followed the direction of his father's eye to the dark and shadowy eminence of Mount Pilatus.

"Is the mist on yonder wild mountain so ominous, then?" asked the young man.

"Demand of Antonio," said his father; "he will tell you the legend."

The young merchant addressed himself to the Swiss lad who acted as their attendant, desiring to know the name of the gloomy height, which, in that quarter, seems the leviathan of the huge congregation of mountains assembled about Lucerne.

The lad crossed himself devoutly, as he recounted the popular legend, that the wicked Pontius Pilate, Proconsul of Judea, had here found the termination of his impious life; having, after spending years in the recesses of that mountain which bears his name, at length, in remorse and despair rather than in penitence, plunged into the dismal lake which occupies the summit. Whether water refused to do the executioner's duty upon such a wretch, or whether, his body being drowned, his vexed spirit continued to haunt the place where he committed suicide, Antonio did not pretend to explain. But a form was often, he said, seen to emerge from the gloomy waters, and go through the action of one washing his hands; and when he did so, dark clouds of mist gathered first round the bosom of the Infernal Lake (such it had been styled of old), and then, wrapping the whole upper part of the mountain in darkness, presaged a tempest or hurricane, which was sure to follow in a short space. He added, that the evil spirit was peculiarly exasperated at the audacity of such strangers as ascended the mountain to gaze at his place of punishment, and that, in consequence, the magistrates of Lucerne had prohibited any one from approaching Mount Pilatus, under severe penalties. Antonio once more crossed himself as he finished his legend; in which act of devotion he was imitated by his hearers, too good Catholics to entertain any doubt of the truth of the story.

"How the accursed heathen scowls upon us!" said the younger of the merchants, while the cloud darkened and seemed to settle on the brow of Mount Pilatus.

"*Vade retro!* Be thou defied, sinner!"

A rising wind, rather heard than felt, seemed to groan forth, in the tone of a dying lion, the acceptance of the suffering spirit to the rash challenge of the young Englishman. The mountain was seen to send down its rugged sides thick wreaths of heaving mist, which, rolling through the rugged chasms that seamed the grisly hill, resembled torrents of rushing lava pouring down from a volcano. The ridgy precipices, which formed the sides of these huge ravines, showed their splintery and rugged edges over the vapour, as if dividing from each other the descending streams of mist which rolled around them. As a strong contrast to this gloomy and threatening scene, the more distant mountain range of Rigi shone brilliant with all the hues of an autumnal sun.

While the travellers watched this striking and varied contrast, which resembled an approaching combat betwixt the powers of Light and Darkness, their guide, in his mixed jargon of Italian and German, exhorted them to make haste on their journey. The village to which he proposed to conduct them, he said, was yet distant, the road bad, and difficult to find, and if the Evil One (looking to Mount Pilatus, and crossing himself) should send his darkness upon the valley, the path would be both doubtful and dangerous. The travellers, thus admonished, gathered the capes of their cloaks close round their throats, pulled their bonnets resolutely over their brows, drew the buckle of the broad belts which fastened their mantles, and each with a mountain staff in his hand, well shod with an iron spike, they pursued their journey, with unabated strength and undaunted spirit.

With every step the scenes around them appeared to change. Each mountain, as if its firm and immutable form were flexible and varying, altered in appearance, like that of a shadowy apparition, as the position of the strangers relative to them changed with their motions, and as the mist, which continued slowly though constantly to descend, influenced the rugged aspect of the hills and valleys which it shrouded with its vapoury mantle. The nature of their progress, too, never direct, but winding by a narrow path along the sinuosities of the valley, and making many a circuit round precipices and other obstacles which it was impossible to surmount, added to the wild variety of a journey, in which, at last, the travellers totally lost any vague idea which they had previously entertained concerning the direction in which the road led them.

"I would," said the elder, "we had that mystical needle which mariners talk of, that points ever to the north, and enables them to keep their way on the waters, when there is neither cape nor headland, sun, moon, nor stars, nor any mark in heaven or earth, to tell them how to steer."

"It would scarce avail us among these mountains," answered the youth; "for though that wonderful needle may keep its point to the northern Pole-star, when it is on a flat surface like the sea, it is not to be thought it would do so when these huge mountains arise like walls, betwixt the steel and the object of its sympathy."

"I fear me," replied the father, "we shall find our guide, who has been growing hourly more stupid since he left his own valley, as useless as you suppose the compass would be among the hills of this wild country.—Canst tell, my boy," said he, addressing Antonio in bad Italian, "if we be in the road we purposed?"

"If it please St. Antonio"—said the guide, who was obviously too much confused to answer the question directly.

"And that water, half covered with mist, which glimmers through the fog, at the foot of this huge black precipice—is it still a part of the Lake of Lucerne, or have we lighted upon another since we ascended that last hill?"

Antonio could only answer that they ought to be on the Lake of Lucerne still, and that he hoped that what they saw below them was only a winding branch of the same sheet of water. But he could say nothing with certainty.

"Dog of an Italian!" exclaimed the younger traveller, "thou deservest to have thy bones broken, for undertaking a charge which thou art as incapable to perform as thou art to guide us to heaven!"¹³

"Peace, Arthur," said his father; "if you frighten the lad, he runs off, and we lose the small advantage we might have by his knowledge; if you use your baton, he rewards you with the stab of a knife,—for such is the humour of a revengeful Lombard. Either way, you are marred instead of helped.—Hark thee hither, my boy," he continued, in his indifferent Italian, "be not afraid of that hot youngster, whom I will not permit to injure thee; but tell me, if thou canst, the names of the villages by which we are to make our journey to-day."

The gentle mode in which the elder traveller spoke reassured the lad, who had been somewhat alarmed at the harsh tone and menacing expressions of his younger companion; and he poured forth, in his patois, a flood of names, in which the German guttural sounds were strangely intermixed with the soft accents of the Italian, but which carried to the hearer no intelligible information concerning the object of his question; so that at length he was forced to conclude, "Even lead on, in Our Lady's name, or in St. Antonio's, if you like it better: we shall but lose time, I see, in trying to understand each other."

They moved on as before, with this difference, that the guide, leading the mule, now went first, and was followed by the other two, whose motions he had formerly directed by calling to them from behind. The clouds meantime became thicker and thicker, and the mist, which had at first been a thin vapour, began now to descend in the form of a small thick rain, which gathered like dew upon the capotes of the travellers. Distant rustling and groaning sounds were heard among the remote 14 mountains, similar to those by which the Evil Spirit of Mount Pilatus had seemed to announce the storm. The boy again pressed his companions to advance, but at the same time threw impediments in the way of their doing so, by the slowness and indecision which he showed in leading them on.

Having proceeded in this manner for three or four miles, which uncertainty rendered doubly tedious, the travellers were at length engaged in a narrow path, running along the verge of a precipice. Beneath was water, but of what description they could not ascertain. The wind, indeed, which began to be felt in sudden gusts, sometimes swept aside the mist so completely as to show the waves glimmering below; but whether they were those of the same lake on which their morning journey had commenced, whether it was another and separate sheet of water of a similar character, or whether it was a river or large brook, the view afforded was too indistinct to determine. Thus far was certain, that they were not on the shores of the Lake of Lucerne, where it displays its usual expanse of waters; for the same hurricane gusts which showed them water in the bottom of the glen gave them a transient view of the opposite side, at what exact distance they could not well discern, but near enough to show tall abrupt rocks and shaggy pine-trees, here united in groups, and there singly anchored among the cliffs which overhung the water. This was a more distinct landscape than the farther side of the lake would have offered, had they been on the right road.

Hitherto the path, though steep and rugged, was plainly enough indicated, and showed traces of 15 having been used both by riders and foot passengers. But suddenly, as Antonio with the loaded mule had reached a projecting eminence, around the peak of which the path made a sharp turn, he stopped short, with his usual exclamation, addressed to his patron saint. It appeared to Arthur that the mule shared the terrors of the guide; for it started back, put forwards its fore feet separate from each other, and seemed, by the attitude which it assumed, to intimate a determination to resist every proposal to advance, at the same time expressing horror and fear at the prospect which lay before it.

Arthur pressed forward, not only from curiosity, but that he might if possible bear the brunt of any danger before his father came up to share it. In less time than we have taken to tell the story, the young man stood beside Antonio and the mule, upon a platform of rock on which the road seemed absolutely to terminate, and from the farther side of which a precipice sank sheer down, to what depth the mist did not permit him to discern, but certainly uninterrupted for more than three hundred feet.

The blank expression which overcast the visage of the younger traveller, and traces of which might be discerned in the physiognomy of the beast of burden, announced alarm and mortification at this unexpected and, as it seemed, insurmountable obstacle. Nor did the looks of the father, who presently after came up to the same spot, convey either hope or comfort. He stood with the others gazing on the misty gulf beneath them, and looking all around, but in vain, for some continuation of the path, which certainly had never been originally 16 designed to terminate in this summary manner. As they stood uncertain what to do next, the son in vain attempting to discover some mode of passing onward, and the father about to propose that they should return by the road which had brought them hither, a loud howl of the wind, more wild than they had yet heard, swept down the valley. All being aware of the danger of being hurled from the precarious station which they occupied, snatched at bushes and rocks by which to secure themselves, and even the poor mule seemed to steady itself in order to withstand the approaching hurricane. The gust came with such unexpected fury that it appeared to the travellers to shake the very rock on which they stood, and would have swept them from its surface like so many dry leaves, had it not been for the momentary precautions which they had taken for their safety. But as the wind rushed down the glen, it completely removed for the space of three or four minutes the veil of mist which former gusts had only served to agitate or discompose, and showed them the nature and cause of the interruption which they had met with so unexpectedly.

The rapid but correct eye of Arthur was then able to ascertain that the path, after leaving the platform of rock on which they stood, had originally passed upwards in the same direction along the edge of a steep bank of earth, which had then formed the upper covering of a stratum of precipitous rocks. But it had chanced, in some of the convulsions of nature which take place in those wild regions, where she works upon a scale so formidable, that the earth had made a slip, or almost a precipitous descent, from the rock, and 17 been hurled downwards with the path, which was traced along the top, and with bushes, trees, or whatever grew upon it, into the channel of the stream; for such they could now discern the water beneath them to be, and not a lake, or an arm of a lake, as they had hitherto supposed.

The immediate cause of this phenomenon might probably have been an earthquake, not unfrequent in that country. The bank of earth, now a confused mass of ruins inverted in its fall, showed some trees growing in a horizontal position, and others, which, having pitched on their heads in their descent, were at once inverted and shattered to pieces, and lay a sport to the streams of the river which they had heretofore covered with gloomy shadow. The gaunt precipice which remained behind, like the skeleton of some huge monster divested of its flesh, formed the wall of a fearful abyss, resembling the face of a newly wrought quarry, more dismal of aspect from the rawness of its recent formation, and from its being as yet uncovered with any of the vegetation with which nature speedily mantles over the bare surface even of her sternest crags and precipices.

Besides remarking these appearances, which tended to show that this interruption of the road had been of recent occurrence, Arthur was able to observe, on the farther side of the river, higher up the valley, and rising out of the pine forests, interspersed with rocks, a square building of considerable height, like the ruins of a Gothic tower. He pointed out this remarkable object to Antonio, and demanded if he knew it; justly conjecturing that, from the peculiarity of the site, it was a landmark not easily to be forgotten by any who had seen it 18 before. Accordingly, it was gladly and promptly recognised by the lad, who called out cheerfully that the place was Geierstein—that is, as he explained it, the Rock of the Vultures. He knew it, he said, by the old tower, as well as by a huge pinnacle of rock which arose near it, almost in the form of a steeple, to the top of which the lammer-geier (one of the largest birds of prey known to exist) had in former days transported the child of an ancient lord of the castle. He proceeded to recount the vow which was made by the Knight of Geierstein to Our Lady of Einsiedlen; and, while he spoke, the castle, rocks, woods, and precipices again faded in mist. But as he concluded his wonderful narrative with the miracle which restored the infant again to its father's arms, he cried out suddenly, "Look to yourselves—the storm!—the storm!" It came accordingly, and, sweeping the mist before it, again bestowed on the travellers a view of the horrors around them.

"Ayl!" quoth Antonio, triumphantly, as the gust abated, "old Pontius loves little to hear of Our Lady of Einsiedlen; but she will keep her own with him—Ave Maria!"

"That tower," said the young traveller, "seems uninhabited. I can descry no smoke, and the battlement appears ruinous."

"It has not been inhabited for many a day," answered the guide. "But I would I were at it, for all that. Honest Arnold Biederman, the Landamman [chief magistrate] of the Canton of Unterwalden, dwells near, and, I warrant you, distressed strangers will not want the best that cupboard and cellar can find them, wherever he holds rule."¹⁹

"I have heard of him," said the elder traveller, whom Antonio had been taught to call Signor Philipson; "a good and hospitable man, and one who enjoys deserved weight with his countrymen."

"You have spoken him right, Signor," answered the guide: "and I would we could reach his house, where you should be sure of hospitable treatment, and a good direction for your next day's journey. But how we are to get to the Vulture's Castle, unless we had wings like the vulture, is a question hard to answer."

Arthur replied by a daring proposal, which the reader will find in the next chapter.²⁰

CHAPTER II.

Away with me.

The clouds grow thicker—there—now lean on me.

Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling

A moment to that shrub—now, give me your hand.

The chalet will be gained within an hour.

Manfred.

After surveying the desolate scene as accurately as the stormy state of the atmosphere would permit, the younger of the travellers observed, "In any other country, I should say the tempest begins to abate; but what to expect in this land of desolation, it were rash to decide. If the apostate spirit of Pilate be actually on the blast, these lingering and more distant howls seem to intimate that he is returning to his place of punishment. The pathway has sunk with the ground on which it was traced—I can see part of it lying down in the abyss, marking, as with a streak of clay, yonder mass of earth and stone. But I think it possible, with your permission, my father, that I could still scramble forward along the edge of the precipice, till I come in sight of the habitation which the lad tells us of. If there be actually such a one, there must be an access to it somewhere; and if I cannot find the path out, I can at least make a signal to those who dwell near the Vulture's Nest yonder, and obtain some friendly guidance."

"I cannot consent to your incurring such a risk," said his father; "let the lad go forward, if 21he can and will. He is mountain-bred, and I will reward him richly."

But Antonio declined the proposal absolutely and decidedly. "I am mountain-bred," he said, "but I am no chamois-hunter; and I have no wings to transport me from cliff to cliff, like a raven—gold is not worth life."

"And God forbid," said Seignor Philipson, "that I should tempt thee to weigh them against each other!—Go on, then, my son—I follow thee."

"Under your favour, dearest sir, no," replied the young man; "it is enough to endanger the life of one—and mine, far the most worthless, should, by all the rules of wisdom as well as nature, be put first in hazard."

"No, Arthur," replied his father, in a determined voice; "no, my son—I have survived much, but I will not survive thee."

"I fear not for the issue, father, if you permit me to go alone; but I cannot—dare not—undertake a task so perilous, if you persist in attempting to share it, with no better aid than mine. While I endeavoured to make a new advance, I should be ever looking back to see how you might attain the station which I was about to leave—And bethink you, dearest father, that if I fall, I fall an unregarded thing, of as little moment as the stone or tree which has toppled headlong down before me. But you—should your foot slip, or your hand fail, bethink you what and how much must needs fall with you!"

"Thou art right, my child," said the father. "I still have that which binds me to life, even though I were to lose in thee all that is dear to 22me.—Our Lady and our Lady's Knight bless thee and prosper thee, my child! Thy foot is young, thy hand is strong—thou hast not climbed Plynlimmon in vain. Be bold, but be wary—remember there is a man who, failing thee, has but one act of duty to bind him to the earth, and, that discharged, will soon follow thee."

The young man accordingly prepared for his journey, and, stripping himself of his cumbrous cloak, showed his well-proportioned limbs in a jerkin of grey cloth, which sat close to his person. The father's resolution gave way when his son turned round to bid him farewell. He recalled his permission, and in a peremptory tone forbade him to proceed. But, without listening to the prohibition, Arthur had commenced his perilous adventure. Descending from the platform on which he stood, by the boughs of an old ash-tree, which thrust itself out of the cleft of a rock, the youth was enabled to gain, though at great risk, a narrow ledge, the very brink of the precipice, by creeping along which he hoped to pass on till he made himself heard or seen from the habitation, of whose existence the guide had informed him. His situation, as he pursued this bold purpose, appeared so precarious, that even the hired attendant hardly dared to draw breath as he gazed on him. The ledge which supported him seemed to grow so narrow, as he passed along it, as to become altogether invisible, while sometimes with his face to the precipice, sometimes looking forward, sometimes glancing his eyes upward, but never venturing to cast a look below, lest his brain should grow giddy at a sight so appalling, he wound his way onward. To his father and the 23attendant, who beheld his progress, it was less that of a man advancing in the ordinary manner, and resting by aught connected with the firm earth, than that of an insect crawling along the face of a perpendicular wall, of whose progressive movement we are indeed sensible, but cannot perceive the means of its support. And bitterly, most bitterly, did the miserable parent now lament, that he had not persisted in his purpose to encounter the baffling and even perilous measure of retracing his steps to the habitation of the preceding night. He should then, at least, have partaken the fate of the son of his love.

Meanwhile, the young man's spirits were strongly braced for the performance of his perilous task. He laid a powerful restraint on his imagination, which in general was sufficiently active, and refused to listen, even for an instant, to any of the horrible insinuations by which fancy augments actual danger. He endeavoured manfully to reduce all around him to the scale of right reason, as the best support of true courage. "This ledge of rock," he urged to himself, "is but narrow, yet it has breadth enough to support me; these cliffs and crevices in the surface are small and distant, but the one affords as secure a resting-place to my feet, the other as available a grasp to my hands, as if I stood on a platform of a cubit broad, and rested my arm on a balustrade of marble. My safety, therefore, depends on myself. If I move with decision, step firmly, and hold fast, what signifies how near I am to the mouth of an abyss?"

Thus estimating the extent of his danger by the measure of sound sense and reality, and supported by some degree of practice in such exercise, the 24brave youth went forward on his awful journey, step by step, winning his way with a caution and fortitude and presence of mind which alone could have saved him from instant destruction. At length he gained a point where a projecting rock formed the angle of the precipice, so far as it had been visible to him from the platform. This, therefore, was the critical point of his undertaking; but it was also the most perilous part of it. The rock projected more than six feet forward over the torrent, which he heard raging at the depth of a hundred yards beneath, with a noise like subterranean thunder. He examined the spot with the utmost care, and was led, by the existence of shrubs, grass, and even stunted trees, to believe that this rock marked the farthest extent of the slip or slide of earth, and that, could he but turn round the angle of which it was the termination, he might hope to attain the continuation of the path which had been so strangely interrupted by this convulsion of nature. But the crag jutted out so much as to afford no possibility of passing either under or around it; and as it rose several feet above the position which Arthur had attained, it was no easy matter to climb over it. This was, however, the course which he chose, as the only mode of surmounting what he hoped might prove the last obstacle to his voyage of discovery. A projecting tree afforded him the means of raising and swinging himself up to the top of the crag. But he had scarcely planted himself on it, had scarcely a moment to congratulate himself, on seeing, amid a wild chaos of cliffs and wood, the gloomy ruins of Geierstein, with smoke arising, and indicating something like a human habitation 25beside them, when, to his extreme terror, he felt the huge cliff on which he stood tremble, stoop slowly forward, and gradually sink from its position. Projecting as it was, and shaken as its equilibrium had been by the recent earthquake, it lay now so insecurely poised, that its balance was entirely destroyed, even by the addition of the young man's weight.

Aroused by the imminence of the danger, Arthur, by an instinctive attempt at self-preservation, drew cautiously back from the falling crag into the tree by which he had ascended, and turned his head back as if spell-bound, to watch the descent of the fatal rock from which he had just retreated. It tottered for two or three seconds, as if uncertain which way to fall, and, had it taken a sidelong direction, must have dashed the adventurer from his place of refuge, or borne both the tree and him headlong down into the river. After a moment of horrible uncertainty, the power of gravitation determined a direct and forward descent. Down went the huge fragment, which must have weighed at least twenty tons, rending and splintering in its precipitate course the trees and bushes which it encountered, and settling at length in the channel of the torrent, with a din equal to the discharge of a hundred pieces of artillery. The sound was re-echoed from bank to bank, from precipice to precipice, with emulative thunders; nor was the tumult silent till it rose into the region of eternal snows, which, equally insensible to terrestrial sounds and unfavourable to animal life, heard the roar in their majestic solitude, but suffered it to die away without a responsive voice.

What, in the meanwhile, were the thoughts of the distracted father, who saw the ponderous rock descend, but could not mark whether his only son had borne it company in its dreadful fall! His first impulse was to rush forward along the face of the precipice, which he had seen Arthur so lately traverse; and when the lad Antonio withheld him, by throwing his arms around him, he turned on the guide with the fury of a bear which had been robbed of her cubs.

"Unhand me, base peasant," he exclaimed, "or thou diest on the spot!"

"Alas!" said the poor boy, dropping on his knees before him, "I too have a father!"

The appeal went to the heart of the traveller, who instantly let the lad go, and holding up his hands, and lifting his eyes towards heaven, said, in accents of the deepest agony, mingled with devout resignation, "*Fiat voluntas tua!*—he was my last, and loveliest, and best beloved, and most worthy of my love; and yonder," he added, "yonder over the glen soar the birds of prey, who are to feast on his young blood.—But I will see him once more," exclaimed the miserable parent, as the huge carrion vulture floated past him on the thick air,—"*I will see my Arthur once more, ere the wolf and the eagle mangle him—I will see all of him that earth still holds. Detain me not—but abide here, and watch me as I advance. If I fall, as is most likely, I charge you to take the sealed papers, which you will find in the valise, and carry them to the person to whom they are addressed, with the least possible delay. There is money enough in the purse to bury me with my poor boy, and to cause masses be said for our souls, and yet leave you a rich recompense for your journey.*"²⁷

The honest Swiss lad, obtuse in his understanding, but kind and faithful in his disposition, blubbered as his employer spoke, and, afraid to offer further remonstrance or opposition, saw his temporary master prepare himself to traverse the same fatal precipice over the verge of which his ill-fated son had seemed to pass to the fate which, with all the wildness of a parent's anguish, his father was hastening to share.

Suddenly there was heard, from beyond the fatal angle from which the mass of stone had been displaced by Arthur's rash ascent, the loud hoarse sound of one of those huge horns made out of the spoils of the urus, or wild bull, of Switzerland, which in ancient times announced the terrors of the charge of these mountaineers, and, indeed, served them in war instead of all musical instruments.

"Hold, sir, hold!" exclaimed the Grison. "Yonder is a signal from Geierstein. Some one will presently come to our assistance, and show us the safer way to seek for your son.—And look you—at yon green bush that is glimmering through the mist, St. Antonio preserve me, as I see a white cloth displayed there! it is just beyond the point where the rock fell."

The father endeavoured to fix his eyes on the spot, but they filled so fast with tears that they could not discern the object which the guide pointed out.—"It is all in vain," he said, dashing the tears from his eyes—"I shall never see more of him than his lifeless remains!"

"You will—you will see him in life!" said the Grison. "St. Antonio wills it so—See, the white cloth waves again!"

"Some remnant of his garments," said the despairing father,—"*some wretched memorial of his fate.*—No, my eyes see it not—I have beheld the fall of my house—would that the vultures of these crags had rather torn them from their sockets!"

"Yet look again," said the Swiss; "the cloth hangs not loose upon a bough—I can see that it is raised on the end of a staff, and is distinctly waved to and fro. Your son makes a signal that he is safe."

"And if it be so," said the traveller, clasping his hands together, "blessed be the eyes that see it, and the tongue that tells it! If we find my son, and find him alive, this day shall be a lucky one for thee too."

"Nay," answered the lad, "I only ask that you will abide still, and act by counsel, and I will hold myself quit for my services. Only, it is not creditable to an honest lad to have people lose themselves by their own wilfulness; for the blame, after all, is sure to fall upon the guide, as if he could prevent old Pontius from shaking the mist from his brow, or banks of earth from slipping down into the valley at a time, or young harebrained gallants from walking upon precipices as narrow as the edge of a knife, or madmen, whose grey hairs might make them wiser, from drawing daggers like bravos in Lombardy."

Thus the guide ran on, and in that vein he might have long continued, for Signor Philipson heard him not. Each throb of his pulse, each thought of his heart, was directed towards the object which the lad referred to as a signal of his son's safety. He became at length satisfied that the signal was actually waved by a human hand; and, as eager in the glow of reviving hope as he had been under the influence of desperate grief, he again prepared for the attempt of advancing towards his son, and assisting him, if possible, in regaining a place of safety. But the entreaties and reiterated assurances of his guide induced him to pause.

"Are you fit," he said, "to go on the crag? Can you repeat your Credo and Ave without missing or misplacing a word? for, without that, our old men say your neck, had you a score of them, would be in danger.—Is your eye clear, and your feet firm?—I trow the one streams like a fountain, and the other shakes like the aspen which overhangs it! Rest here till those arrive who are far more able to give your son help than either you or I are. I judge, by the fashion of his blowing, that yonder is the horn of the Goodman of Geierstein, Arnold Biederman. He hath seen your son's danger, and is even now providing for his safety and ours. There are cases in which the aid of one stranger, well acquainted with the country, is worth that of three brothers who know not the crags."

"But if yonder horn really sounded a signal," said the traveller, "how chanced it that my son replied not?"

"And if he did so, as is most likely he did," rejoined the Grison, "how should we have heard him? The bugle of Uri itself sounded amid these horrible dins of water and tempest like the reed of a shepherd boy; and how think you we should hear the holloa of a man?"

"Yet, methinks," said Signor Philipson, "I do hear something amid this roar of elements which is like a human voice—but it is not Arthur's."³⁰

"I wot well, no," answered the Grison; "that is a woman's voice. The maidens will converse with each other in that manner, from cliff to cliff, through storm and tempest, were there a mile between."

"Now, Heaven be praised for this providential relief!" said Signor Philipson; "I trust we shall yet see this dreadful day safely ended. I will holloa in answer."

He attempted to do so, but, inexperienced in the art of making himself heard in such a country, he pitched his voice in the same key with that of the roar of wave and wind; so that, even at twenty yards from the place where he was speaking, it must have been totally indistinguishable from that of the elemental war around them. The lad smiled at his patron's ineffectual attempts, and then raised his voice himself in a high, wild, and prolonged scream, which, while produced with apparently much less effort than that of the Englishman, was nevertheless a distinct sound, separated from others by the key to which it was pitched, and was probably audible to a very considerable distance. It was presently answered by distant cries of the same nature, which gradually approached the platform, bringing renovated hope to the anxious traveller.

If the distress of the father rendered his condition an object of deep compassion, that of the son, at the same moment, was sufficiently perilous. We have already stated, that Arthur Philipson had commenced his precarious journey along the precipice with all the coolness, resolution, and unshaken determination of mind which was most essential to a task where all must depend upon firmness of nerve. But the formidable accident³¹ which checked his onward progress was of a character so dreadful as made him feel all the bitterness of a death instant, horrible, and, as it seemed, inevitable. The solid rock had trembled and rent beneath his footsteps, and although, by an effort rather mechanical than voluntary, he had withdrawn himself from the instant ruin attending its descent, he felt as if the better part of him, his firmness of mind and strength of body, had been rent away with the descending rock, as it fell thundering, with clouds of dust and smoke, into the torrents and whirlpools of the vexed gulf beneath. In fact, the seaman swept from the deck of a wrecked vessel, drenched in the waves, and battered against the rocks on the shore, does not differ more from the same mariner, when, at the commencement of the gale, he stood upon the deck of his favourite ship, proud of her strength and his own dexterity, than Arthur, when commencing his journey, from the same Arthur, while clinging to the decayed trunk of an old tree, from which, suspended between heaven and earth, he saw the fall of the crag which he had so nearly accompanied. The effects of his terror, indeed, were physical as well as moral, for a thousand colours played before his eyes; he was attacked by a sick dizziness, and deprived at once of the obedience of those limbs which had hitherto served him so admirably; his arms and hands, as if no longer at his own command, now clung to the branches of the tree, with a cramp-like tenacity over which he seemed to possess no power, and now trembled in a state of such complete nervous relaxation as led him to fear that they were becoming unable to support him longer in his position.³²

An incident, in itself trifling, added to the distress occasioned by this alienation of his powers. All living things in the neighbourhood had, as might be supposed, been startled by the tremendous fall to which his progress had given occasion. Flights of owls, bats, and other birds of darkness, compelled to betake themselves

to the air, had lost no time in returning into their bowers of ivy, or the harbour afforded them by the rifts and holes of the neighbouring rocks. One of this ill-omened flight chanced to be a lammer-geier, or Alpine vulture, a bird larger and more voracious than the eagle himself, and which Arthur had not been accustomed to see, or at least to look upon closely. With the instinct of most birds of prey, it is the custom of this creature, when gorged with food, to assume some station of inaccessible security, and there remain stationary and motionless for days together, till the work of digestion has been accomplished, and activity returns with the pressure of appetite. Disturbed from such a state of repose, one of these terrific birds had risen from the ravine to which the species gives its name, and having circled unwillingly round, with a ghastly scream and a flagging wing, it had sunk down upon the pinnacle of a crag, not four yards from the tree in which Arthur held his precarious station. Although still in some degree stupefied by torpor, it seemed encouraged by the motionless state of the young man to suppose him dead, or dying, and sat there and gazed at him, without displaying any of that apprehension which the fiercest animals usually entertain from the vicinity of man.

As Arthur, endeavouring to shake off the incapacitating effects of his panic fear, raised his eyes to look gradually and cautiously around, he encountered those of the voracious and obscene bird, whose head and neck denuded of feathers, her eyes surrounded by an iris of an orange-tawny colour, and a position more horizontal than erect, distinguished her as much from the noble carriage and graceful proportions of the eagle, as those of the lion place him in the ranks of creation above the gaunt, ravenous, grisly, yet dastard wolf.

As if arrested by a charm, the eyes of young Philipson remained bent on this ill-omened and ill-favoured bird, without his having the power to remove them. The apprehension of dangers, ideal as well as real, weighed upon his weakened mind, disabled as it was by the circumstances of his situation. The near approach of a creature, not more loathsome to the human race than averse to come within their reach, seemed as ominous as it was unusual. Why did it gaze on him with such glaring earnestness, projecting its disgusting form, as if presently to alight upon his person? The foul bird, was she the demon of the place to which her name referred? and did she come to exult that an intruder on her haunts seemed involved amid their perils, with little hope or chance of deliverance? Or was it a native vulture of the rocks, whose sagacity foresaw that the rash traveller was soon destined to become its victim? Could the creature, whose senses are said to be so acute, argue from circumstances the stranger's approaching death, and wait, like a raven or hooded crow by a dying sheep, for the earliest opportunity to commence her ravenous banquet? Was he doomed to feel its beak and talons before his heart's blood should cease to beat? Had he already lost the dignity of humanity, the awe which the being formed in the image of his Maker inspires into all inferior creatures?

Apprehensions so painful served more than all that reason could suggest to renew in some degree the elasticity of the young man's mind. By waving his handkerchief, using, however, the greatest precaution in his movements, he succeeded in scaring the vulture from his vicinity. It rose from its resting-place, screaming harshly and dolefully, and sailed on its expanded pinions to seek a place of more undisturbed repose, while the adventurous traveller felt a sensible pleasure at being relieved of its disgusting presence.

With more collected ideas, the young man, who could obtain, from his position, a partial view of the platform he had left, endeavoured to testify his safety to his father, by displaying, as high as he could, the banner by which he had chased off the vulture. Like them, too, he heard, but at a less distance, the burst of the great Swiss horn, which seemed to announce some near succour. He replied by shouting and waving his flag, to direct assistance to the spot where it was so much required; and, recalling his faculties, which had almost deserted him, he laboured mentally to recover hope, and with hope the means and motive for exertion.

A faithful Catholic, he eagerly recommended himself in prayer to Our Lady of Einsiedlen, and, making vows of propitiation, besought her intercession, that he might be delivered from his dreadful condition. "Or, gracious Lady!" he concluded his orison, "if it is my doom to lose my life like a hunted fox amidst this savage wilderness of tottering crags, restore at least my natural sense of patience and courage, and let not one who has lived like a man, though a sinful one, meet death like a timid hare!"

Having devoutly recommended himself to that Protectress, of whom the legends of the Catholic Church form a picture so amiable, Arthur, though every nerve still shook with his late agitation, and his heart throbbed with a violence that threatened to suffocate him, turned his thoughts and observation to the means of effecting his escape. But, as he looked around him, he became more and more sensible how much he was enervated by the bodily injuries and the mental agony which he had sustained during his late peril. He could not, by any effort of which he was capable, fix his giddy and bewildered eyes on the scene around him;—they seemed to reel till the landscape danced along with them, and a motley chaos of thickets and tall cliffs, which interposed between him and the ruinous Castle of Geierstein, mixed and whirled round in such confusion, that nothing, save the consciousness that such an idea was the suggestion of partial insanity, prevented him from throwing himself from the tree, as if to join the wild dance to which his disturbed brain had given motion.

"Heaven be my protection!" said the unfortunate young man, closing his eyes, in hopes, by abstracting himself from the terrors of his situation, to compose his too active imagination, "my senses are abandoning me!"

He became still more convinced that this was the case, when a female voice, in a high-pitched but eminently musical accent, was heard at no great distance, as if calling to him. He opened his eyes once more, raised his head, and looked towards the place whence the sounds seemed to come, though far from being certain that they existed saving in his own disordered imagination. The vision which appeared had almost confirmed him in the opinion that his mind was unsettled, and his senses in no state to serve him accurately.

Upon the very summit of a pyramidal rock, that rose out of the depth of the valley, was seen a female figure, so obscured by mist that only the outline could be traced. The form, reflected against the sky, appeared rather the undefined lineaments of a spirit than of a mortal maiden; for her person seemed as light, and scarcely more opaque, than the thin cloud that surrounded her pedestal. Arthur's first belief was, that the Virgin had heard his vows, and had descended in person to his rescue; and he was about to recite his Ave Maria, when the voice again called to him with the singular shrill modulation of the mountain halloo, by which the natives of the Alps can hold conference with each other from one mountain ridge to another, across ravines of great depth and width.

While he debated how to address this unexpected apparition, it disappeared from the point which it at first occupied, and presently after became again visible, perched on the cliff out of which projected the tree in which Arthur had taken refuge. Her personal appearance, as well as her dress, made it then apparent that she was a maiden of these mountains, familiar with their dangerous paths. He saw that a beautiful young woman stood before him, who regarded him with a mixture of pity and wonder.

"Stranger," she at length said, "who are you, and whence come you?"

"I am a stranger, maiden, as you justly term me," answered the young man, raising himself as well as he could. "I left Lucerne this morning, with my father, and a guide. I parted with them not three furlongs from hence. May it please you, gentle maiden, to warn them of my safety, for I know my father will be in despair upon my account?"

"Willingly," said the maiden; "but I think my uncle, or some one of my kinsmen, must have already found them, and will prove faithful guides. Can I not aid you? Are you wounded? Are you hurt? We were alarmed by the fall of a rock—ay, and yonder it lies, a mass of no ordinary size."

As the Swiss maiden spoke thus, she approached so close to the verge of the precipice, and looked with such indifference into the gulf, that the sympathy which connects the actor and spectator upon such occasions brought back the sickness and vertigo from which Arthur had just recovered, and he sank back into his former more recumbent posture, with something like a faint groan.

"You are then ill?" said the maiden, who observed him turn pale. "Where and what is the harm you have received?"

"None, gentle maiden, saving some bruises of little import; but my head turns, and my heart grows sick, when I see you so near the verge of the cliff."

"Is that all?" replied the Swiss maiden. "Know, stranger, that I do not stand on my uncle's hearth with more security than I have stood upon precipices compared to which this is a child's leap. You too, stranger, if, as I judge from the traces, you have come along the edge of the precipice which the earth-slide hath laid bare, ought to be far beyond such weakness, since surely you must be well entitled to call yourself a cragsman."

"I might have called myself so half an hour since," answered Arthur; "but I think I shall hardly venture to assume the name in future."

"Be not downcast," said his kind adviser, "for a passing qualm, which will at times cloud the spirit and dazzle the eyesight of the bravest and most experienced. Raise yourself upon the trunk of the tree, and advance closer to the rock out of which it grows. Observe the place well. It is easy for you, when you have attained the lower part of the projecting stem, to gain by one bold step the solid rock upon which I stand, after which there is no danger or difficulty worthy of mention to a young man, whose limbs are whole, and whose courage is active."

"My limbs are indeed sound," replied the youth; "but I am ashamed to think how much my courage is broken. Yet I will not disgrace the interest you have taken in an unhappy wanderer, by listening longer to the dastardly suggestions of a feeling which till to-day has been a stranger to my bosom."

The maiden looked on him anxiously, and with much interest, as, raising himself cautiously, and moving along the trunk of the tree, which lay nearly horizontal from the rock, and seemed to bend as he changed his posture, the youth at length stood upright, within what, on level ground, had been but an extended stride to the cliff on which the Swiss maiden stood. But instead of being a step to be taken on the level and firm earth, it was one which must cross a dark abyss, at the bottom of which a torrent surged and boiled with incredible fury. Arthur's knees knocked against each other, his feet became of lead, and seemed no longer at his command; and he experienced, in a stronger degree than ever, that unnerving influence, which those who have been overwhelmed by it in a situation of like peril never can forget, and which others, happily strangers to its power, may have difficulty even in comprehending.

The young woman discerned his emotion, and foresaw its probable consequences. As the only mode in her power to restore his confidence, she sprang lightly from the rock to the stem of the tree, on which she alighted with the ease and security of a bird, and in the same instant back to the cliff; and extending her hand to the stranger, "My arm," she said, "is but a slight balustrade; yet do but step forward with resolution, and you will find it as secure as the battlement of Berne." But shame now overcame terror so much, that Arthur, declining assistance which he could not have accepted without feeling lowered in his own eyes, took heart of grace, and successfully achieved the formidable step which placed him upon the same cliff with his kind assistant.

To seize her hand and raise it to his lips, in affectionate token of gratitude and respect, was naturally the youth's first action; nor was it possible for the maiden to have prevented him from doing so, without assuming a degree of prudery foreign to her character, and occasioning a ceremonious debate upon a matter of no great consequence, where the scene of action was a rock scarce five feet long by three in width, and which looked down upon a torrent roaring some three hundred feet below.⁴¹

CHAPTER III.

Cursed be the gold and silver, which persuade

Weak man to follow far fatiguing trade.

The lily, peace, outshines the silver store,

And life is dearer than the golden ore.

Yet money tempts us o'er the desert brown,

To every distant mart and wealthy town.

Hassan, or the Camel-driver.

Arthur Philipson and Anne of Geierstein, thus placed together in a situation which brought them into the closest possible contiguity, felt a slight degree of embarrassment; the young man, doubtless, from the fear of being judged a poltroon in the eyes of the maiden by whom he had been rescued, and the young woman, perhaps, in consequence of the exertion she had made, or a sense of being placed suddenly in a situation of such proximity to the youth whose life she had probably saved.

"And now, maiden," said Arthur, "I must repair to my father. The life which I owe to your assistance can scarce be called welcome to me, unless I am permitted to hasten to his rescue."

He was here interrupted by another bugle-blast, which seemed to come from the quarter in which the elder Philipson and his guide had been left by their young and daring companion. Arthur looked in that direction; but the platform, which he had seen but imperfectly from the tree, when he was perched in that place of refuge, was invisible from the rock on which they now stood.

"It would cost me nothing to step back on yonder root," said the young woman, "to spy from thence whether I could see aught of your friends. But I am convinced they are under safer guidance than either yours or mine; for the horn announces that my uncle, or some of my young kinsmen, have reached them. They are by this time on their way to the Geierstein, to which, with your permission, I will become your guide; for you may be assured that my uncle Arnold will not allow you to pass farther to-day; and we shall but lose time by endeavouring to find your friends, who, situated where you say you left them, will reach the Geierstein sooner than we shall. Follow me, then, or I must suppose you weary of my guidance."

"Sooner suppose me weary of the life which your guidance has in all probability saved," replied Arthur, and prepared to attend her; at the same time taking a view of her dress and person, which confirmed the satisfaction he had in following such a conductor, and which we shall take the liberty to detail somewhat more minutely than he could do at that time.

An upper vest, neither so close as to display the person, a habit forbidden by the sumptuary laws of the canton, nor so loose as to be an incumbrance in walking or climbing, covered a close tunic of a different colour, and came down beneath the middle of the leg, but suffered the ankle, in all its fine proportions, to be completely visible. The foot was defended by a sandal, the point of which was turned upwards, and the crossings and knots of the strings, which secured it on the front of the leg, were garnished with silver rings. The upper vest was gathered round the middle by a sash of party-coloured silk, ornamented with twisted threads of gold; while the tunic, open at the throat, permitted the shape and exquisite whiteness of a well-formed neck to be visible at the collar, and for an inch or two beneath. The small portion of the throat and bosom thus exposed was even more brilliantly fair than was promised by the countenance, which last bore some marks of having been freely exposed to the sun and air, by no means in a degree to diminish its beauty, but just so far as to show that the maiden possessed the health which is purchased by habits of rural exercise. Her long fair hair fell down in a profusion of curls on each side of a face, whose blue eyes, lovely features, and dignified simplicity of expression implied at once a character of gentleness and of the self-relying resolution of a mind too virtuous to suspect evil, and too noble to fear it. Above these locks, beauty's natural and most beseeching ornament—or rather, I should say, amongst them—was placed the small bonnet, which, from its size, little answered the purpose of protecting the head, but served to exercise the ingenuity of the fair wearer, who had not failed, according to the prevailing custom of the mountain maidens, to decorate the tiny cap with a heron's feather, and the then unusual luxury of a small and thin chain of gold, long enough to encircle the cap four or five times, and having the ends secured under a broad medal of the same costly metal.

I have only to add, that the stature of the young person was something above the common size, and that the whole contour of her form, without being in the slightest degree masculine, resembled that of Minerva, rather than the proud beauties of Juno, or the yielding graces of Venus. The noble brow, the well-formed and active limbs, the firm and yet light step—above all, the total absence of anything resembling the consciousness of personal beauty, and the open and candid look, which seemed desirous of knowing nothing that was hidden, and conscious that she herself had nothing to hide, were traits not unworthy of the goddess of wisdom and of chastity.

The road which the young Englishman pursued, under the guidance of this beautiful young woman, was difficult and unequal, but could not be termed dangerous, at least in comparison to those precipices over which Arthur had recently passed. It was, in fact, a continuation of the path which the slip or slide of earth, so often mentioned, had interrupted; and although it had sustained damage in several places at the period of the same earthquake, yet there were marks of these having been already repaired in such a rude manner as made the way sufficient for the necessary intercourse of a people so indifferent as the Swiss to smooth or level paths. The maiden also gave Arthur to understand, that the present road took a circuit for the purpose of gaining that on which he was lately travelling, and that, if he and his companions had turned off at the place where this new track united with the old pathway, they would have escaped the danger which had attended their keeping the road by the verge of the precipice.

The path which they now pursued was rather averted from the torrent, though still within hearing of its sullen thunders, which seemed to increase as they ascended parallel to its course, till suddenly the road, turning short, and directing itself straight upon the old castle, brought them within sight of one of the most splendid and awful scenes of that mountainous region.

The ancient tower of Geierstein, though neither extensive nor distinguished by architectural ornament, possessed an air of terrible dignity by its position on the very verge of the opposite bank of the torrent, which, just at the angle of the rock on which the ruins are situated, falls sheer over a cascade of nearly a hundred feet in height, and then rushes down the defile, through a trough of living rock, which perhaps its waves have been deepening since time itself had a commencement. Facing, and at the same time looking down upon this eternal roar of waters, stood the old tower, built so close to the verge of the precipice that the buttresses with which the architect had strengthened the foundation seemed a part of the solid rock itself, and a continuation of its perpendicular ascent. As usual throughout Europe in the feudal times, the principal part of the building was a massive square pile, the decayed summit of which was rendered picturesque, by flanking turrets of different sizes and heights, some round, some angular, some ruinous, some tolerably entire, varying the outline of the building as seen against the stormy sky.

A projecting sallyport, descending by a flight of steps from the tower, had in former times given access to a bridge connecting the castle with that side of the stream on which Arthur Philipson and his fair guide now stood. A single arch, or rather one rib of an arch, consisting of single stones, still remained, and spanned the river immediately in front of the waterfall. In former times this arch had served for the support of a wooden drawbridge, of more convenient breadth, and of such length and weight as must have been rather unmanageable, had it not been lowered on some solid resting-place. It is true, the device was attended with this inconvenience, that even when the drawbridge was up, there remained a possibility of approaching the castle gate by means of this narrow rib of stone. But as it was not above eighteen inches broad, and could only admit the daring foe who should traverse it to a doorway regularly defended by gate and portcullis, and having flanking turrets and projections, from which stones, darts, melted lead, and scalding water might be poured down on the soldiery who should venture to approach Geierstein by this precarious access, the possibility of such an attempt was not considered as diminishing the security of the garrison.

In the time we treat of, the castle being entirely ruined and dismantled, and the door, drawbridge, and portcullis gone, the dilapidated gateway, and the slender arch which connected the two sides of the stream, were used as a means of communication between the banks of the river, by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, whom habit had familiarised with the dangerous nature of the passage.

Arthur Philipson had, in the meantime, like a good bow when new strung, regained the elasticity of feeling and character which was natural to him. It was not indeed with perfect composure that he followed his guide, as she tripped lightly over the narrow arch, composed of rugged stones, and rendered wet and slippery with the perpetual drizzle of the mist issuing from the neighbouring cascade. Nor was it without apprehension that he found himself performing this perilous feat in the neighbourhood of the waterfall itself, whose deafening roar he could not exclude from his ears, though he took care not to turn his head towards its terrors, lest his brain should again be dizzy by the tumult of the waters as they shot forward from the precipice above, and plunged themselves into what seemed the fathomless gulf below. But notwithstanding these feelings of agitation, the natural shame to show cowardice where a beautiful young female exhibited so much indifference, and the desire to regain his character in the eyes of his guide, prevented Arthur from again giving way to the appalling feelings by which he had been overwhelmed a short time before. Stepping firmly on, yet cautiously supporting himself with his piked staff, he traced the light footsteps of his guide along the bridge of dread, and followed her through the ruined sallyport, to which they ascended by stairs which were equally dilapidated.

The gateway admitted them into a mass of ruins, formerly a sort of courtyard to the donjon, which rose in gloomy dignity above the wreck of what had been works destined for external defence, or buildings for internal accommodation. They quickly passed through these ruins, over which vegetation had thrown a wild mantle of ivy, and other creeping shrubs, and issued from them through the main gate of the castle into one of those spots in which Nature often embosoms her sweetest charms, in the midst of districts chiefly characterised by waste and desolation.

The castle in this aspect also rose considerably above the neighbouring ground, but the elevation of the site, which towards the torrent was an abrupt rock, was on this side a steep eminence, which had been scarped like a modern glacis, to render the building more secure. It was now covered with young trees and bushes, out of which the tower itself seemed to rise in ruined dignity. Beyond this hanging thicket the view was of a very different character. A piece of ground, amounting to more than a hundred acres, seemed scooped out of the rocks and mountains, which, retaining the same savage character with the tract in which the travellers had been that morning bewildered, enclosed, and as it were defended, a limited space of a mild and fertile character. The surface of this little domain was considerably varied, but its general aspect was a gentle slope to the south-west.

The principal object which it presented was a large house composed of huge logs, without any pretence to form or symmetry, but indicating, by the smoke which arose from it, as well as the extent of the neighbouring offices, and the improved and cultivated character of the fields around, that it was the abode, not of splendour certainly, but of ease and competence. An orchard of thriving fruit-trees extended to the southward of the dwelling. Groves of walnut and chestnut grew in stately array, and even a vineyard, of three or four acres, showed that the cultivation of the grape was understood and practised. It is now universal in Switzerland, but was, in those early days, almost exclusively confined to a few more fortunate proprietors, who had the rare advantage of uniting intelligence with opulent, or at least easy, circumstances.

There were fair ranges of pasture-fields, into which the fine race of cattle which constitute the pride and wealth of the Swiss mountaineers had been brought down from the more Alpine grazings where they had fed during the summer, to be near shelter and protection when the autumnal storms might be expected. On some selected spots, the lambs of the last season fed in plenty and security, and in others, huge trees, the natural growth of the soil, were suffered to remain, from motives of convenience probably, that they might be at hand when timber was required for domestic use, but giving, at the same time, a woodland character to a scene otherwise agricultural. Through this mountain-paradise the course of a small brook might be traced, now showing itself to the sun, which had by this time dispelled the fogs, now intimating its course, by its gently sloping banks, clothed in some places with lofty trees, or concealing itself under thickets of hawthorn and nut bushes. This stream, by a devious and gentle course, which seemed to indicate a reluctance to leave this quiet region, found its way at length out of the sequestered domain, and, like a youth hurrying from the gay and tranquil sports of boyhood into the wild career of active life, finally united itself with the boisterous torrent, which, breaking down tumultuously from the mountains, shook the ancient Tower of Geierstein as it rolled down the adjacent rock, and then rushed howling through the defile in which our youthful traveller had well-nigh lost his life.⁵⁰

Eager as the younger Philipson was to rejoin his father, he could not help pausing for a moment to wonder how so much beauty should be found amid such scenes of horror, and to look back on the Tower of Geierstein, and on the huge cliff from which it derived its name, as if to ascertain, by the sight of these distinguished landmarks, that he was actually in the neighbourhood of the savage wild where he had encountered so much danger and terror. Yet so narrow were the limits of this cultivated farm, that it hardly required such a retrospect to satisfy the spectator that the spot susceptible of human industry, and on which it seemed that a considerable degree of labour had been bestowed, bore a very small proportion to the wilderness in which it was situated. It was on all sides surrounded by lofty hills, in some places rising into walls of rock, in others clothed with dark and savage forests of the pine and the larch, of primeval antiquity. Above these, from the eminence on which the tower was situated, could be seen the almost rosy hue in which an immense glacier threw back the sun; and still higher over the frozen surface of that icy sea arose, in silent dignity, the pale peaks of those countless mountains, on which the snow eternally rests.

What we have taken some time to describe, occupied young Philipson only for one or two hurried minutes; for on a sloping lawn, which was in front of the farmhouse, as the mansion might properly be styled, he saw five or six persons, the foremost of whom, from his gait, his dress, and the form of his cap, he could easily distinguish as the parent whom he hardly expected at one time to have again beheld.⁵¹

He followed, therefore, his conductress with a glad step, as she led the way down the steep ascent on which the ruined tower was situated. They approached the group whom Arthur had noticed, the foremost of which was his father, who hastily came forward to meet him, in company with another person, of advanced age, and stature well-nigh gigantic, and who, from his simple yet majestic bearing, seemed the worthy countryman of William Tell, Stauffacher, Winkelried, and other

Swiss worthies, whose stout hearts and hardy arms had, in the preceding age, vindicated against countless hosts their personal liberty, and the independence of their country.

With a natural courtesy, as if to spare the father and son many witnesses to a meeting which must be attended with emotion, the Landamman himself, in walking forward with the elder Philipson, signed to those by whom he was attended, all of whom seemed young men, to remain behind. They remained accordingly, examining, as it seemed, the guide Antonio, upon the adventures of the strangers. Anne, the conductress of Arthur Philipson, had but time to say to him, "Yonder old man is my uncle, Arnold Biederman, and these young men are my kinsmen," when the former, with the elder traveller, were close before them. The Landamman, with the same propriety of feeling which he had before displayed, signed to his niece to move a little aside; yet while requiring from her an account of her morning's expedition, he watched the interview of the father and son with as much curiosity as his natural sense of complaisance permitted him to testify. It was of a character different from what he had expected.⁵²

We have already described the elder Philipson as a father devotedly attached to his son, ready to rush on death when he had expected to lose him, and equally overjoyed at heart, doubtless, to see him again restored to his affections. It might have been therefore expected that the father and son would have rushed into each other's arms, and such probably was the scene which Arnold Biederman expected to have witnessed.

But the English traveller, in common with many of his countrymen, covered keen and quick feelings with much appearance of coldness and reserve, and thought it a weakness to give unlimited sway even to the influence of the most amiable and most natural emotions. Eminently handsome in youth, his countenance, still fine in his more advanced years, had an expression which intimated an unwillingness either to yield to passion or encourage confidence. His pace, when he first beheld his son, had been quickened by the natural wish to meet him; but he slackened it as they drew near to each other, and when they met, said in a tone rather of censure and admonition than affection,—"Arthur, may the Saints forgive the pain thou hast this day given me."

"Amen," said the youth. "I must need pardon since I have given you pain. Believe, however, that I acted for the best."

"It is well, Arthur, that in acting for the best, according to your forward will, you have not encountered the worst."

"That I have not," answered the son, with the same devoted and patient submission, "is owing to this maiden," pointing to Anne, who stood at a few paces' distance, desirous perhaps of avoiding ⁵³to witness the reproof of the father, which might seem to her rather ill-timed and unreasonable.

"To the maiden my thanks shall be rendered," said his father, "when I can study how to pay them in an adequate manner; but is it well or comely, think you, that you should receive from a maiden the succour which it is your duty as a man to extend to the weaker sex?"

Arthur held down his head and blushed deeply, while Arnold Biederman, sympathising with his feelings, stepped forward and mingled in the conversation.

"Never be abashed, my young guest, that you have been indebted for aught of counsel or assistance to a maiden of Unterwalden. Know that the freedom of their country owes no less to the firmness and wisdom of her daughters than to that of her sons.—And you, my elder guest, who have, I judge, seen many years and various lands, must have often known examples how the strong are saved by the help of the weak, the proud by the aid of the humble."

"I have at least learned," said the Englishman, "to debate no point unnecessarily with the host who has kindly harboured me;" and after one glance at his son, which seemed to kindle with the fondest affection, he resumed, as the party turned back towards the house, a conversation which he had been maintaining with his new acquaintance before Arthur and the maiden had joined them.

Arthur had in the meantime an opportunity of observing the figure and features of their Swiss landlord, which, I have already hinted, exhibited a primeval simplicity mixed with a certain rude ⁵⁴dignity, arising out of its masculine and unaffected character. The dress did not greatly differ in form from the habit of the female which we have described. It consisted of an upper frock, shaped like the modern shirt, and only open at the bosom, worn above a tunic or under doublet. But the man's vest was considerably shorter in the skirts, which did not come lower down than the kilt of the Scottish Highlander; a species of boots or buskins rose above the knee, and the person was thus entirely clothed. A bonnet made of the fur of the marten, and garnished with a silver medal, was the only part of the dress which displayed anything like ornament; the broad belt which gathered the garment together was of buff leather, secured by a large brass buckle.

But the figure of him who wore this homely attire, which seemed almost wholly composed of the fleeces of the mountain sheep and the spoils of animals of the chase, would have commanded respect wherever the wearer had presented himself, especially in those warlike days, when men were judged of according to the promising or unpromising qualities of their thews and sinews. To those who looked at Arnold Biederman from this point of view, he displayed the size and form, the broad shoulders and prominent muscles, of a Hercules. But to such as looked rather at his countenance, the steady sagacious features, open front, large blue eyes, and deliberate resolution which it expressed, more resembled the character of the fabled King of Gods and Men. He was attended by several sons and relatives, young men, among whom he walked, receiving, as his undeniable due, respect and obedience, similar to that ⁵⁵which a herd of deer are observed to render to the monarch stag.

While Arnold Biederman walked and spoke with the elder stranger, the young men seemed closely to scrutinise Arthur, and occasionally interrogated in whispers their relation Anne, receiving from her brief and impatient answers, which rather excited than appeased the vein of merriment in which the mountaineers indulged, very much, as it seemed to the young Englishman, at the expense of their guest. To feel himself exposed to derision was not softened by the reflection, that in such a society it would probably be attached to all who could not tread on the edge of a precipice with a step as firm and undismayed as if they walked the street of a city. However unreasonable ridicule may be, it is always displeasing to be subjected to it, but more particularly is it distressing to a young man, where beauty is a listener. It was some consolation to Arthur that he thought the maiden certainly did not enjoy the jest, and seemed by word and look to reprove the rudeness of her companions; but this he feared was only from a sense of humanity.

"She, too, must despise me," he thought, "though civility, unknown to these ill-taught boors, has enabled her to conceal contempt under the guise of pity. She can but judge of me from that which she has seen—if she could know me better" (such was his proud thought), "she might perhaps rank me more highly."

As the travellers entered the habitation of Arnold Biederman, they found preparations made in a large apartment, which served the purpose of general accommodation, for a homely but plentiful ⁵⁶meal. A glance round the walls showed the implements of agriculture and the chase; but the eyes of the elder Philipson rested upon a leathern corselet, a long heavy halberd, and a two-handed sword, which were displayed as a sort of trophy. Near these, but covered with dust, unfurnished and neglected, hung a helmet, with a visor, such as was used by knights and men-at-arms. The golden garland, or coronal twisted around it, though sorely tarnished, indicated noble birth and rank; and the crest, which was a vulture of the species which gave name to the old castle and its adjacent cliff, suggested various conjectures to the English guest, who, acquainted in a great measure with the history of the Swiss revolution, made little doubt that in this relic he saw some trophy of the ancient warfare between the inhabitants of these mountains, and the feudal lord to whom they had of yore appertained.

A summons to the hospitable board disturbed the train of the English merchant's reflections; and a large company, comprising the whole inhabitants of every description that lived under Biederman's roof, sat down to a plentiful repast of goat's flesh, fish, preparations of milk of various kinds, cheese, and, for the upper mess, the venison of a young chamois. The Landamman himself did the honours of the table with great kindness and simplicity, and urged the strangers to show, by their appetite, that they thought themselves as welcome as he desired to make them. During the repast, he carried on a conversation with his elder guest, while the younger people at table, as well as the menials, ate in modesty and silence. Ere the dinner was finished, a figure crossed on the ⁵⁷outside of the large window which lighted the eating-hall, the sight of which seemed to occasion a lively sensation amongst such as observed it.

"Who passed?" said old Biederman to those seated opposite to the window.

"It is our cousin, Rudolph of Donnerhugel," answered one of Arnold's sons eagerly.

The annunciation seemed to give great pleasure to the younger part of the company, especially the sons of the Landamman; while the head of the family only said with a grave, calm voice,—"Your kinsman is welcome—tell him so, and let him come hither."

Two or three arose for this purpose, as if there had been a contention among them who should do the honours of the house to the new guest. He entered presently—a young man, unusually tall, well-proportioned and active, with a quantity of dark-brown locks curling around his face, together with mustaches of the same, or rather a still darker hue. His cap was small considering the quantity of his thickly clustering hair, and rather might be said to hang upon one side of his

head than to cover it. His clothes were of the same form and general fashion as those of Arnold, but made of much finer cloth, the manufacture of the German loom, and ornamented in a rich and fanciful manner. One sleeve of his vest was dark green, curiously laced and embroidered with devices in silver, while the rest of the garment was scarlet. His sash was twisted and netted with gold, and besides answering the purpose of a belt, by securing the upper garment round his waist, sustained a silver-hilted poniard. His finery was completed by boots, the tips of which were so long as to turn upwards with a peak, after a prevailing fashion in the Middle Ages. A golden chain hung round his neck, and sustained a large medallion of the same metal.

This young gallant was instantly surrounded by the race of Biederman, among whom he appeared to be considered as the model upon which the Swiss youth ought to build themselves, and whose gait, opinions, dress, and manners all ought to follow who would keep pace with the fashion of the day, in which he reigned an acknowledged and unrivalled example.

By two persons in the company, however, it seemed to Arthur Philipson that this young man was received with less distinguished marks of regard than those with which he was hailed by the general voice of the youths present. Arnold Biederman himself was at least no way warm in welcoming the young Bernese, for such was Rudolph's country. The young man drew from his bosom a sealed packet, which he delivered to the Landamman with demonstrations of great respect, and seemed to expect that Arnold, when he had broken the seal and perused the contents, would say something to him on the subject. But the patriarch only bade him be seated, and partake of their meal, and Rudolph found a place accordingly next to Anne of Geierstein, which was yielded to him by one of the sons of Arnold with ready courtesy.

It seemed also to the observant young Englishman, that the new comer was received with marked coldness by the maiden, to whom he appeared eager and solicitous to pay his compliments, by whose side he had contrived to seat himself at the well-furnished board, and to whom he seemed more anxious to recommend himself, than to partake of the food which it offered. He observed the gallant whisper her, and look towards him. Anne gave a very brief reply, but one of the young Biedermans, who sat on his other hand, was probably more communicative, as the youths both laughed, and the maiden again seemed disconcerted, and blushed with displeasure.

"Had I either of these sons of the mountain," thought young Philipson, "upon six yards of level greensward, if there be so much flat ground in this country, methinks I were more likely to spoil their mirth than to furnish food for it. It is as marvellous to see such conceited boors under the same roof with so courteous and amiable a damsel, as it would be to see one of their shaggy bears dance a rigadon with a maiden like the daughter of our host. Well, I need not concern myself more than I can help about her beauty or their breeding, since morning will separate me from them for ever."

As these reflections passed through the young guest's mind, the father of the family called for a cup of wine, and having required the two strangers to pledge him in a maple cup of considerable size, he sent a similar goblet to Rudolph Donnerhugel. "Yet you," he said, "kinsman, are used to more highly flavoured wine than the half-ripened grapes of Geierstein can supply.—Would you think it, Sir Merchant," he continued, addressing Philipson, "there are burghers of Berne who send for wine for their own drinking both to France and Germany?"

"My kinsman disapproves of that," replied Rudolph; "yet every place is not blessed with vineyards like Geierstein, which produces all that heart and eye can desire." This was said with a glance at his fair companion, who did not appear to take the compliment, while the envoy of Berne proceeded: "But our wealthier burghers, having some superfluous crowns, think it no extravagance to barter them for a goblet of better wine than our own mountains can produce. But we will be more frugal when we have at our disposal tuns of the wine of Burgundy, for the mere trouble of transporting them."

"How mean you by that, cousin Rudolph?" said Arnold Biederman.

"Methinks, respected kinsman," answered the Bernese, "your letters must have told you that our Diet is likely to declare war against Burgundy?"

"Ah! And you know, then, the contents of my letters?" said Arnold; "another mark how times are changed at Berne, and with the Diet of Switzerland. When did all her grey-haired statesmen die, that our allies should have brought beardless boys into their councils?"

"The Senate of Berne, and the Diet of the Confederacy," said the young man, partly abashed, partly in vindication of what he had before spoken, "allow the young men to know their purposes, since it is they by whom they must be executed. The head which thinks may well confide in the hand that strikes."

"Not till the moment of dealing the blow, young man," said Arnold Biederman, sternly. "What kind of counsellor is he who talks loosely the secrets of state affairs before women and strangers? Go, Rudolph, and all of ye, and try by manly exercises which is best fitted to serve your country, rather than give your judgment upon her measures.—Hold, young man," he continued, addressing Arthur, who had arisen, "this does not apply to you, who are unused to mountain travel, and require rest after it."

"Under your favour, sir, not so," said the elder stranger. "We hold, in England, that the best refreshment after we have been exhausted by one species of exercise is to betake ourselves to another; as riding, for example, affords more relief to one fatigued by walking, than a bed of down would. So, if your young men will permit, my son will join their exercises."

"He will find them rough playmates," answered the Swiss; "but be it at your pleasure."

The young men went out accordingly to the open lawn in front of the house. Anne of Geierstein, and some females of the household, sat down on a bank to judge which performed best, and shouts, loud laughing, and all that announces the riot of juvenile spirits occupied by manly sports, was soon after heard by the two seniors, as they sat together in the hall. The master of the house resumed the wine-flask, and, having filled the cup of his guest, poured the remainder into his own.

"At an age, worthy stranger," he said, "when the blood grows colder, and the feelings heavier, a moderate cup of wine brings back light thoughts, and makes the limbs supple. Yet, I almost wish that Noah had never planted the grape, when of late years I have seen with my own eyes my countrymen swill wine like very Germans, till they were like gorged swine, incapable of sense, thought, or motion."⁶²

"It is a vice," said the Englishman, "which I have observed gains ground in your country, where within a century I have heard it was totally unknown."

"It was so," said the Swiss, "for wine was seldom made at home, and never imported from abroad; for indeed none possessed the means of purchasing that, or aught else, which our valleys produce not. But our wars and our victories have gained us wealth as well as fame; and in the poor thoughts of one Swiss, at least, we had been better without both, had we not also gained liberty by the same exertion. It is something, however, that commerce may occasionally send into our remote mountains a sensible visitor like yourself, worthy guest, whose discourse shows him to be a man of sagacity and discernment; for though I love not the increasing taste for trinkets and gewgaws which you merchants introduce, yet I acknowledge that we simple mountaineers learn from men like you more of the world around us, than we could acquire by our own exertions. You are bound, you say, to Bâle, and thence to the Duke of Burgundy's leaguer?"

"I am so, my worthy host," said the merchant—"that is, providing I can perform my journey with safety."

"Your safety, good friend, may be assured, if you list to tarry for two or three days; for in that space I shall myself take the journey, and with such an escort as will prevent any risk of danger. You will find in me a sure and faithful guide, and I shall learn from you much of other countries, which it concerns me to know better than I do. Is it a bargain?"⁶³

"The proposal is too much to my advantage to be refused," said the Englishman; "but may I ask the purpose of your journey?"

"I chid yonder boy but now," answered Biederman, "for speaking on public affairs without reflection, and before the whole family; but our tidings and my errand need not be concealed from a considerate person like you, who must indeed soon learn it from public rumour. You know doubtless the mutual hatred which subsists between Louis XI. of France and Charles of Burgundy, whom men call the Bold; and having seen these countries, as I understand from your former discourse, you are probably well aware of the various contending interests, which, besides the personal hatred of the sovereigns, make them irreconcilable enemies. Now Louis, whom the world cannot match for craft and subtlety, is using all his influence, by distributions of large sums amongst some of the counsellors of our neighbours of Berne, by pouring treasures into the exchequer of that state itself, by holding out the bait of emolument to the old men, and encouraging the violence of the young, to urge the Bernese into a war with the Duke. Charles, on the other hand, is acting, as he frequently does, exactly as Louis could have wished. Our neighbours and allies of Berne do not, like us of the Forest Cantons, confine themselves to pasture or agriculture, but carry on considerable

commerce, which the Duke of Burgundy has in various instances interrupted, by the exactions and violence of his officers in the frontier towns, as is doubtless well known to you."

"Unquestionably," answered the merchant; "they are universally regarded as vexatious."⁶⁴

"You will not then be surprised, that, solicited by the one sovereign, and aggrieved by the other, proud of past victories, and ambitious of additional power, Berne and the City Cantons of our confederacy, whose representatives, from their superior wealth and better education, have more to say in our Diet than we of the Forests, should be bent upon war, from which it has hitherto happened that the Republic has always derived victory, wealth, and increase of territory."

"Ay, worthy host, and of glory," said Philipson, interrupting him with some enthusiasm; "I wonder not that the brave youths of your states are willing to thrust themselves upon new wars, since their past victories have been so brilliant and so far-famed."

"You are no wise merchant, kind guest," answered the host, "if you regard success in former desperate undertakings as an encouragement to future rashness. Let us make a better use of past victories. When we fought for our liberties God blessed our arms; but will He do so if we fight either for aggrandisement or for the gold of France?"

"Your doubt is just," said the merchant, more sedately; "but suppose you draw the sword to put an end to the vexatious exactions of Burgundy?"

"Hear me, good friend," answered the Switzer; "it may be that we of the Forest Cantons think too little of those matters of trade, which so much engross the attention of the burghers of Berne. Yet we will not desert our neighbours and allies in a just quarrel; and it is well-nigh settled that a deputation shall be sent to the Duke of Burgundy to request redress. In this embassy the General Diet now assembled at Berne have requested that I should take some share; and hence the journey in which I propose that you should accompany me."

"It will be much to my satisfaction to travel in your company, worthy host," said the Englishman. "But, as I am a true man, methinks your port and figure resemble an envoy of defiance rather than a messenger of peace."

"And I too might say," replied the Switzer, "that your language and sentiments, my honoured guest, rather belong to the sword than the measuring-wand."

"I was bred to the sword, worthy sir, before I took the cloth-yard in my hand," replied Philipson, smiling, "and it may be I am still more partial to my old trade than wisdom would altogether recommend."

"I thought so," said Arnold; "but then you fought most likely under your country's banners against a foreign and national enemy; and in that case I will admit that war has something in it which elevates the heart above the due sense it should entertain of the calamity inflicted and endured by God's creatures on each side. But the warfare in which I was engaged had no such gilding. It was the miserable war of Zurich [c], where Switzers levelled their pikes against the bosoms of their own countrymen; and quarter was asked and refused in the same kindly mountain language. From such remembrances your warlike recollections are probably free."

The merchant hung down his head and pressed his forehead with his hand, as one to whom the most painful thoughts were suddenly recalled.⁶⁶

"Alas!" he said, "I deserve to feel the pain which your words inflict. What nation can know the woes of England that has not felt them—what eye can estimate them which has not seen a land torn and bleeding with the strife of two desperate factions, battles fought in every province, plains heaped with slain, and scaffolds drenched in blood! Even in your quiet valleys, methinks, you may have heard of the Civil Wars of England?"

"I do indeed bethink me," said the Switzer, "that England had lost her possessions in France during many years of bloody internal wars concerning the colour of a rose—was it not?—But these are ended."

"For the present," answered Philipson, "it would seem so."

As he spoke, there was a knock at the door; the master of the house said, "Come in!" the door opened, and, with the reverence which was expected from young persons towards their elders in those pastoral regions, the fine form of Anne of Geierstein presented itself.⁶⁷

CHAPTER IV.

And now the well-known bow the master bore,
Turn'd on all sides, and view'd it o'er and o'er;
Whilst some deriding, "How he turns the bow!
Some other like it sure the man must know:
Or else would copy—or in bows he deals;
Perhaps he makes them, or perhaps he steals."

POPE'S *Homer's Odyssey*.

The fair maiden approached with the half-bashful half-important look which sits so well on a young housekeeper, when she is at once proud and ashamed of the matronly duties she is called upon to discharge, and whispered something in her uncle's ear.

"And could not the idle-pated boys have brought their own errand—what is it they want that they cannot ask themselves, but must send thee to beg it for them? Had it been anything reasonable, I should have heard it din'd into my ears by forty voices, so modest are our Swiss youths become nowadays." She stooped forward, and again whispered in his ear, as he fondly stroked her curling tresses with his ample hand, and replied, "The bow of Buttisholz, my dear? Why, the youths surely are not grown stronger since last year, when none of them could bend it? But yonder it hangs with its three arrows. Who is the wise champion that is challenger at a game where he is sure to be foiled?"⁶⁸

"It is this gentleman's son, sir," said the maiden, "who, not being able to contend with my cousins in running, leaping, hurling the bar, or pitching the stone, has challenged them to ride, or to shoot with the English long-bow."

"To ride," said the venerable Swiss, "were difficult where there are no horses, and no level ground to career upon if there were. But an English bow he shall have, since we happen to possess one. Take it to the young men, my niece, with the three arrows, and say to them from me, that he who bends it will do more than William Tell, or the renowned Stauffacher, could have done."

As the maiden went to take the weapon from the place where it hung amid the group of arms which Philipson had formerly remarked, the English merchant observed, "that were the minstrels of his land to assign her occupation, so fair a maiden should be bow-bearer to none but the little blind god Cupid."

"I will have nothing of the blind god Cupid," said Arnold, hastily, yet half laughing at the same time; "we have been deafened with the foolery of minstrels and strolling minnesingers, ever since the wandering knaves have found there were pence to be gathered among us. A Swiss maiden should only sing Albert Ischudi's ballads, or the merry lay of the going out and return of the cows to and from the mountain pastures."

While he spoke, the damsel had selected from the arms a bow of extraordinary strength, considerably above six feet in length, with three shafts of a cloth-yard long. Philipson asked to look at the weapons, and examined them closely. "It is a 69tough piece of yew," he said. "I should know it, since I have dealt in such commodities in my time; but when I was of Arthur's age, I could have bent it as easily as a boy bends a willow."

"We are too old to boast like boys," said Arnold Biederman, with something of a reproving glance at his companion. "Carry the bow to thy kinsmen, Anne, and let him who can bend it say he beat Arnold Biederman." As he spoke, he turned his eyes on the spare yet muscular figure of the Englishman, then again glanced down on his own stately person.

"You must remember, good my host," said Philipson, "that weapons are wielded not by strength, but by art and sleight of hand. What most I wonder at, is to see in this place a bow made by Matthew of Doncaster, a bowyer who lived at least a hundred years ago, remarkable for the great toughness and strength of the weapons which he made, and which are now become somewhat unmanageable, even by an English yeoman."

"How are you assured of the maker's name, worthy guest?" replied the Swiss.

"By old Matthew's mark," answered the Englishman, "and his initials cut upon the bow. I wonder not a little to find such a weapon here, and in such good preservation."

"It has been regularly waxed, oiled, and kept in good order," said the Landamman, "being preserved as a trophy of a memorable day. It would but grieve you to recount its early history, since it was taken in a day fatal to your country."

"My country," said the Englishman, composedly, "has gained so many victories, that her children may well afford to hear of a single defeat. 70But I knew not that the English ever warred in Switzerland."

"Not precisely as a nation," answered Biederman; "but it was in my grandsire's days, that a large body of roving soldiers, composed of men from almost all countries, but especially Englishmen, Normans, and Gascons, poured down on the Argau, and the districts adjacent. They were headed by a great warrior called Ingelram de Couci, who pretended some claims upon the Duke of Austria; to satisfy which, he ravaged indifferently the Austrian territory and that of our Confederacy. His soldiers were hired warriors—Free Companions they called themselves—that seemed to belong to no country, and were as brave in the fight as they were cruel in their depredations. Some pause in the constant wars betwixt France and England had deprived many of those bands of their ordinary employment, and battle being their element, they came to seek it among our valleys. The air seemed on fire with the blaze of their armour, and the very sun was darkened at the flight of their arrows. They did us much evil, and we sustained the loss of more than one battle. But we met them at Buttisholz, and mingled the blood of many a rider (noble, as they were called and esteemed) with that of their horses. The huge mound that covers the bones of man and steed is still called the English barrow."

Philipson was silent for a minute or two, and then replied, "Then let them sleep in peace. If they did wrong, they paid for it with their lives; and that is all the ransom that mortal man can render for his transgressions.—Heaven pardon their souls!"71

"Amen," replied the Landamman, "and those of all brave men!—My grandsire was at the battle, and was held to have demeaned himself like a good soldier; and this bow has been ever since carefully preserved in our family. There is a prophecy about it, but I hold it not worthy of remark."

Philipson was about to inquire further, but was interrupted by a loud cry of surprise and astonishment from without.

"I must out," said Biederman, "and see what these wild lads are doing. It is not now as formerly in this land, when the young dared not judge for themselves, till the old man's voice had been heard."

He went forth from the lodge, followed by his guest. The company who had witnessed the games were all talking, shouting, and disputing in the same breath; while Arthur Philipson stood a little apart from the rest, leaning on the unbent bow with apparent indifference. At the sight of the Landamman all were silent.

"What means this unwonted clamour?" he said, raising a voice to which all were accustomed to listen with reverence.—"Rudiger," addressing the eldest of his sons, "has the young stranger bent the bow?"

"He has, father," said Rudiger, "and he has hit the mark. Three such shots were never shot by William Tell."

"It was chance—pure chance," said the young Swiss from Berne. "No human skill could have done it, much less a puny lad, baffled in all besides that he attempted among us."

"But what *has* been done?" said the Landamman.—"Nay, 72speak not all at once!—Anne of Geierstein, thou hast more sense and breeding than these boys—tell me how the game has gone."

The maiden seemed a little confused at this appeal, but answered with a composed and downcast look—

"The mark was, as usual, a pigeon to a pole. All the young men, except the stranger, had practised at it with the cross-bow and long-bow, without hitting it. When I brought out the bow of Buttisholz, I offered it first to my kinsmen. None would accept of it, saying, respected uncle, that a task too great for you must be far too difficult for them."

"They said well," answered Arnold Biederman; "and the stranger, did he string the bow?"

"He did, my uncle, but first he wrote something on a piece of paper, and placed it in my hands."

"And did he shoot and hit the mark?" continued the surprised Switzer.

"He first," said the maiden, "removed the pole a hundred yards farther than the post where it stood."

"Singular!" said the Landamman, "that is double the usual distance."

"He then drew the bow," continued the maiden, "and shot off, one after another, with incredible rapidity, the three arrows which he had stuck into his belt. The first cleft the pole, the second cut the string, the third killed the poor bird as it rose into the air."

"By St. Mary of Einsiedlen," said the old man, looking up in amaze, "if your eyes really saw this, they saw such archery as was never before witnessed in the Forest States!"73

"I say nay to that, my revered kinsman," replied Rudolph Donnerhugel, whose vexation was apparent; "it was mere chance, if not illusion or witchery."

"What say'st thou of it thyself, Arthur," said his father, half smiling. "Was thy success by chance or skill?"

"My father," said the young man, "I need not tell you that I have done but an ordinary feat for an English bowman. Nor do I speak to gratify that misproud and ignorant young man. But to our worthy host and his family, I make answer. This youth charges me with having deluded men's eyes, or hit the mark by chance. For illusion, yonder is the pierced pole, the severed string, and the slain bird, they will endure sight and handling; and, besides, if that fair maiden will open the note which I put into her hand, she will find evidence to assure you, that even before I drew the bow, I had fixed upon the three marks which I designed to aim at."

"Produce the scroll, good niece," said her uncle, "and end the controversy."

"Nay, under your favour, my worthy host," said Arthur, "it is but some foolish rhymes addressed to the maiden's own eye."

"And under your favour, sir," said the Landamman, "whatsoever is fit for my niece's eyes may greet my ears."

He took the scroll from the maiden, who blushed deeply when she resigned it. The character in which it was written was so fine that the Landamman in surprise exclaimed, "No clerk of St. Gall could have written more fairly.—Strange," he again repeated, "that a hand which could draw 74so true a bow, should have the cunning to form characters so fair." He then exclaimed anew, "Ha! verses, by Our Lady! What, have we minstrels disguised as traders?" He then opened the scroll, and read the following lines:—

If I hit mast, and line, and bird,

An English archer keeps his word.

Ah! maiden, didst thou aim at me,

A single glance were worth the three.

"Here is rare rhyming, my worthy guest," said the Landamman, shaking his head; "fine words to make foolish maidens fain. But do not excuse it; it is your country-fashion, and we know how to treat it as such." And without further allusion to the concluding couplet, the reading of which threw the poet as well as the object of the verses into some discomposure, he added gravely, "You must now allow, Rudolph Donnerhugel, that the stranger has fairly attained the three marks which he proposed to himself."

"That he has attained them is plain," answered the party to whom the appeal was made; "but that he has done this fairly may be doubted, if there are such things as witchery and magic in this world."

"Shame, shame, Rudolph!" said the Landamman. "Can spleen and envy have weight with so brave a man as you, from whom my sons ought to learn temperance, forbearance, and candour, as well as manly courage and dexterity?"

The Bernese coloured high under this rebuke, to which he ventured not to attempt a reply.

"To your sports till sunset, my children," continued Arnold; "while I and my worthy friend 75occupy our time with a walk, for which the evening is now favourable."

"Methinks," said the English merchant, "I should like to visit the ruins of yonder castle, situated by the waterfall. There is something of melancholy dignity in such a scene which reconciles us to the misfortunes of our own time, by showing that our ancestors, who were perhaps more intelligent or more powerful, have nevertheless, in their days, encountered cares and distresses similar to those which we now groan under."

"Have with you, my worthy sir," replied his host; "there will be time also upon the road to talk of things that you should know."

The slow step of the two elderly men carried them by degrees from the limits of the lawn, where shout and laugh and halloo were again revived. Young Philipson, whose success as an archer had obliterated all recollection of former failure, made other attempts to mingle in the manly pastimes of the country, and gained a considerable portion of applause. The young men, who had but lately been so ready to join in ridiculing him, now began to consider him as a person to be looked up and appealed to; while Rudolph Donnerhugel saw with resentment that he was no longer without a rival in the opinion of his male cousins, perhaps of his kinswoman also. The proud young Swiss reflected with bitterness that he had fallen under the Landamman's displeasure, declined in reputation with his companions, of whom he had been hitherto the leader, and even hazarded a more mortifying disappointment, all, as his swelling heart expressed it, through the means of a stranger stripling, of neither blood nor fame, who could not step from one rock to another without the encouragement of a girl.

In this irritated mood, he drew near the young Englishman, and while he seemed to address him on the chances of the sports which were still proceeding, he conveyed, in a whisper, matter of a far different tendency. Striking Arthur's shoulder with the frank bluntness of a mountaineer, he said aloud: "Yonder bolt of Ernest whistled through the air like a falcon when she stoops down the wind!" and then proceeded in a deep low voice, "You merchants sell gloves—do you ever deal in single gauntlets, or only in pairs?"

"I sell no single glove," said Arthur, instantly apprehending him, and sufficiently disposed to resent the scornful looks of the Bernese champion during the time of their meal, and his having but lately imputed his successful shooting to chance or sorcery,—"*I sell* no single glove, sir, but never refuse to exchange one."

"You are apt, I see," said Rudolph. "Look at the players while I speak, or our purpose will be suspected.—You are quicker, I say, of apprehension than I expected. If we exchange our gloves, how shall each redeem his own?"

"With our good swords," said Arthur Philipson.

"In armour, or as we stand?"

"Even as we stand," said Arthur. "I have no better garment of proof than this doublet—no other weapon than my sword; and these, Sir Switzer, I hold enough for the purpose.—Name time and place."

"The old castle-court at Geierstein," replied Rudolph; "the time sunrise;—but we are watched.—I have lost my wager, stranger," he added, speaking aloud, and in an indifferent tone of voice, "since Ulrick has made a cast beyond Ernest.—There is my glove, in token I shall not forget the flask of wine."

"And there is mine," said Arthur, "in token I will drink it with you merrily."

Thus, amid the peaceful though rough sports of their companions, did these two hot-headed youths contrive to indulge their hostile inclinations towards each other, by settling a meeting of deadly purpose.⁷⁸

CHAPTER V.

I was one

Who loved the greenwood bank and lowing herd,
The russet prize, the lowly peasant's life,
Season'd with sweet content, more than the halls
Where revellers feast to fever-height. Believe me,
There ne'er was poison mix'd in maple bowl.

ANONYMOUS.

Leaving the young persons engaged with their sports, the Landamman of Unterwalden and the elder Philipson walked on in company, conversing chiefly on the political relations of France, England, and Burgundy, until the conversation was changed as they entered the gate of the old castle-yard of Geierstein, where arose the lonely and dismantled keep, surrounded by the ruins of other buildings.

"This has been a proud and a strong habitation in its time," said Philipson.

"They were a proud and powerful race who held it," replied the Landamman. "The Counts of Geierstein have a history which runs back to the times of the old Helvetians, and their deeds are reported to have matched their antiquity. But all earthly grandeur has an end, and free men tread the ruins of their feudal castle, at the most distant sight of whose turrets serfs were formerly obliged to vail their bonnets, if they would escape the chastisement of contumacious rebels."⁷⁹

"I observe," said the merchant, "engraved on a stone under yonder turret, the crest, I conceive, of the last family, a vulture perched on a rock, descriptive, doubtless, of the word Geierstein."

"It is the ancient cognisance of the family," replied Arnold Biederman, "and, as you say, expresses the name of the castle, being the same with that of the knights who so long held it."

"I also remarked in your hall," continued the merchant, "a helmet bearing the same crest or cognisance. It is, I suppose, a trophy of the triumph of the Swiss peasants over the nobles of Geierstein, as the English bow is preserved in remembrance of the battle of Buttscholz?"

"And you, fair sir," replied the Landamman, "would, I perceive, from the prejudices of your education, regard the one victory with as unpleasant feelings as the other?—Strange, that the veneration for rank should be rooted even in the minds of those who have no claim to share it! But clear up your downcast brows, my worthy guest, and be assured, that though many a proud baron's castle, when Switzerland threw off the bonds of feudal slavery, was plundered and destroyed by the just vengeance of an incensed people, such was not the lot of Geierstein. The blood of the old possessors of these towers still flows in the veins of him by whom these lands are occupied."

"What am I to understand by that, Sir Landamman?" said Philipson. "Are not you yourself the occupant of this place?"

"And you think, probably," answered Arnold, "because I live like the other shepherds, wear homespun grey, and hold the plough with my own hands, I cannot be descended from a line of ancient nobility? This land holds many such gentle peasants, Sir Merchant; nor is there a more ancient nobility than that of which the remains are to be found in my native country. But they have voluntarily resigned the oppressive part of their feudal power, and are no longer regarded as wolves amongst the flock, but as sagacious mastiffs, who attend the sheep in time of peace, and are prompt in their defence when war threatens our community."

"But," repeated the merchant, who could not yet reconcile himself to the idea that his plain and peasant-seeming host was a man of distinguished birth, "you bear not the name, worthy sir, of your fathers—They were, you say, the Counts of Geierstein, and you are"——

"Arnold Biederman, at your command," answered the magistrate. "But know,—if the knowledge can make you sup with more sense of dignity or comfort,—I need but put on yonder old helmet, or, if that were too much trouble, I have only to stick a falcon's feather into my cap, and call myself Arnold, Count of Geierstein. No man could gainsay me—though whether it would become my Lord Count to drive his bullocks to the pasture, and whether his Excellency the High and Well-born could, without derogation, sow a field or reap it, are questions which should be settled beforehand. I see you are confounded, my respected guest, at my degeneracy; but the state of my family is very soon explained."

"My lordly fathers ruled this same domain of Geierstein, which in their time was very extensive, much after the mode of feudal barons—that is, they were sometimes the protectors and patrons, but oftener the oppressors of their subjects. But when my grandfather, Heinrich of Geierstein, flourished, he not only joined the Confederates to repel Ingelram de Couci and his roving bands, as I already told you, but, when the wars with Austria were renewed, and many of his degree joined with the host of the Emperor Leopold, my ancestor adopted the opposite side, fought in front of the Confederates, and contributed by his skill and valour to the decisive victory at Sempach, in which Leopold lost his life, and the flower of Austrian chivalry fell around him. My father, Count Williewald, followed the same course, both from inclination and policy. He united himself closely with the state of Unterwalden, became a citizen of the Confederacy, and distinguished himself so much that he was chosen Landamman of the Republic. He had two sons,—myself, and a younger brother, Albert; and possessed, as he felt himself, of a species of double character, he was desirous, perhaps unwisely (if I may censure the purpose of a deceased parent), that one of his sons should succeed him in his Lordship of Geierstein, and the other support the less ostentatious, though not in my thought less honourable condition, of a free citizen of Unterwalden,

possessing such influence among his equals in the Canton as might be acquired by his father's merits and his own. When Albert was twelve years old, our father took us on a short excursion to Germany, where the form, pomp, and magnificence which we witnessed made a very different impression on the mind of my brother and on my own. What 82appeared to Albert the consummation of earthly splendour seemed to me a weary display of tiresome and useless ceremonials. Our father explained his purpose, and offered to me, as his eldest son, the large estate belonging to Geierstein, reserving such a portion of the most fertile ground as might make my brother one of the wealthiest citizens, in a district where competence is esteemed wealth. The tears gushed from Albert's eyes—"And must my brother," he said, 'be a noble Count, honoured and followed by vassals and attendants, and I a homespun peasant among the grey-bearded shepherds of Unterwalden?—No, father—I respect your will—but I will not sacrifice my own rights. Geierstein is a fief held of the empire, and the laws entitle me to my equal half of the lands. If my brother be Count of Geierstein, I am not the less Count Albert of Geierstein; and I will appeal to the Emperor, rather than that the arbitrary will of one ancestor, though he be my father, shall cancel in me the rank and rights which I have derived from a hundred.' My father was greatly incensed. 'Go,' he said, 'proud boy, give the enemy of thy country a pretext to interfere in her affairs—appeal to the will of a foreign prince from the pleasure of thy father. Go, but never again look me in the face, and dread my eternal malediction!' Albert was about to reply with vehemence, when I entreated him to be silent and hear me speak. I had, I said, all my life loved the mountain better than the plain; had been more pleased to walk than to ride; more proud to contend with shepherds in their sports than with nobles in the lists; and happier in the village dance than among the feasts of the German nobles. 83'Let me, therefore,' I said, 'be a citizen of the republic of Unterwalden; you will relieve me of a thousand cares; and let my brother Albert wear the coronet and bear the honours of Geierstein.' After some further discussion, my father was at length contented to adopt my proposal, in order to attain the object which he had so much at heart. Albert was declared heir of his castle and his rank, by the title of Count Albert of Geierstein; and I was placed in possession of these fields and fertile meadows amidst which my house is situated, and my neighbours called me Arnold Biederman."

"And if Biederman," said the merchant, "means, as I understand the word, a man of worth, candour, and generosity, I know none on whom the epithet could be so justly conferred. Yet let me observe, that I praise the conduct which, in your circumstances, I could not have bowed my spirit to practise. Proceed, I pray you, with the history of your house, if the recital be not painful to you."

"I have little more to say," replied the Landamman. "My father died soon after the settlement of his estate in the manner I have told you. My brother had other possessions in Swabia and Westphalia, and seldom visited his paternal castle, which was chiefly occupied by a seneschal, a man so obnoxious to the vassals of the family, that but for the protection afforded by my near residence, and relationship with his lord, he would have been plucked out of the Vulture's Nest, and treated with as little ceremony as if he had been the vulture himself. Neither, to say the truth, did my brother's occasional visits to Geierstein afford his 84vassals much relief, or acquire any popularity for himself. He heard with the ears and saw with the eyes of his cruel and interested steward, Ital Schreckenwald, and would not listen even to my interference and admonition. Indeed, though he always demeaned himself with personal kindness towards me, I believe he considered me as a dull and poor-spirited clown, who had disgraced my noble blood by my mean propensities. He showed contempt on every occasion for the prejudices of his countrymen, and particularly by wearing a peacock's feather in public, and causing his followers to display the same badge, though the cognisance of the House of Austria, and so unpopular in this country, that men have been put to death for no better reason than for carrying it in their caps. In the meantime I was married to my Bertha, now a saint in heaven, by whom I had six stately sons, five of whom you saw surrounding my table this day. Albert also married. His wife was a lady of rank in Westphalia, but his bridal-bed was less fruitful; he had only one daughter, Anne of Geierstein. Then came on the wars between the city of Zurich and our Forest Cantons, in which so much blood was shed, and when our brethren of Zurich were so ill advised as to embrace the alliance of Austria. Their Emperor strained every nerve to avail himself of the favourable opportunity afforded by the disunion of the Swiss, and engaged all with whom he had influence to second his efforts. With my brother he was but too successful; for Albert not only took arms in the Emperor's cause, but admitted into the strong fortress of Geierstein a band of Austrian soldiers, with whom the wicked Ital Schreckenwald 85laid waste the whole country, excepting my little patrimony."

"It came to a severe pass with you, my worthy host," said the merchant, "since you were to decide against the cause of your country or that of your brother."

"I did not hesitate," continued Arnold Biederman. "My brother was in the Emperor's army, and I was not therefore reduced to act personally against him; but I denounced war against the robbers and thieves with whom Schreckenwald had filled my father's house. It was waged with various fortune. The seneschal, during my absence, burnt down my house, and slew my youngest son, who died, alas! in defence of his father's hearth. It is little to add that my lands were wasted and my flocks destroyed. On the other hand, I succeeded, with help of a body of the peasants of Unterwalden, in storming the Castle of Geierstein. It was offered back to me by the Confederates; but I had no desire to sully the fair cause in which I had assumed arms, by enriching myself at the expense of my brother; and besides, to have dwelt in that guarded hold would have been a penance to one the sole protectors of whose house of late years had been a latch and a shepherd's cur. The castle was therefore dismantled, as you see, by order of the elders of the Canton; and I even think that, considering the uses it was too often put to, I look with more pleasure on the rugged remains of Geierstein, than I ever did when it was entire, and apparently impregnable."

"I can understand your feelings," said the Englishman, "though I repeat, my virtue would not perhaps have extended so far beyond the circle of 86my family affections.—Your brother, what said he to your patriotic exertions?"

"He was, as I learnt," answered the Landamman, "dreadfully incensed, having no doubt been informed that I had taken his castle with a view to my own aggrandisement. He even swore he would renounce my kindred, seek me through the battle, and slay me with his own hand. We were, in fact, both at the battle of Freyenbach, but my brother was prevented from attempting the execution of his vindictive purpose by a wound from an arrow, which occasioned his being carried out of the mêlée. I was afterwards in the bloody and melancholy fight at Mount-Herzel, and that other onslaught at the Chapel of St. Jacob [\[d\]](#), which brought our brethren of Zurich to terms, and reduced Austria once more to the necessity of making peace with us. After this war of thirteen years, the Diet passed sentence of banishment for life on my brother Albert, and would have deprived him of his possessions, but forbore in consideration of what they thought my good service. When the sentence was intimated to the Count of Geierstein, he returned an answer of defiance; yet a singular circumstance showed us not long afterwards that he retained an attachment to his country, and amidst his resentment against me, his brother, did justice to my unaltered affection for him."

"I would pledge my credit," said the merchant, "that what follows relates to yonder fair maiden, your niece?"

"You guess rightly," said the Landamman. "For some time we heard, though indistinctly (for we have, as you know, but little communication with foreign countries), that my brother was high 87in favour at the court of the Emperor, but latterly that he had fallen under suspicion, and, in the course of some of those revolutions common at the courts of princes, had been driven into exile. It was shortly after this news, and, as I think, more than seven years ago, that I was returning from hunting on the farther side of the river, had passed the narrow bridge as usual, and was walking through the courtyard which we have lately left" (for their walk was now turned homeward), "when a voice said, in the German language, 'Uncle, have compassion upon me!' As I looked around, I beheld a girl of ten years old approach timidly from the shelter of the ruins, and kneel down at my feet. 'Uncle, spare my life,' she said, holding up her little hands in the act of supplication, while mortal terror was painted upon her countenance.—'Am I your uncle, little maiden?' said I; 'and if I am, why should you fear me?'—'Because you are the head of the wicked and base clowns who delight to spill noble blood,' replied the girl, with a courage which surprised me.—'What is your name, my little maiden?' said I; 'and who, having planted in your mind opinions so unfavourable to your kinsman, has brought you hither, to see if he resembles the picture you have received of him?'—'It was Ital Schreckenwald that brought me hither,' said the girl, only half comprehending the nature of my question.—'Ital Schreckenwald?' I repeated, shocked at the name of a wretch I have so much reason to hate. A voice from the ruins, like that of a sullen echo from the grave, answered, 'Ital Schreckenwald!' and the caitiff issued from his place of concealment, and stood before me, 88with that singular indifference to danger which he unites to his atrocity of character. I had my spiked mountain-staff in my hand—What should I have done—or what would you have done, under like circumstances?"

"I would have laid him on the earth, with his skull shivered like an icicle!" said the Englishman, fiercely.

"I had well-nigh done so," replied the Swiss, "but he was unarmed, a messenger from my brother, and therefore no object of revenge. His own undismayed and audacious conduct contributed to save him. 'Let the vassal of the noble and high-born Count of Geierstein hear the words of his master, and let him look that they are obeyed,' said the insolent ruffian. 'Doff thy cap, and listen; for though the voice is mine, the words are those of the noble Count.'—'God and man know,' replied

"I, 'if I owe my brother respect or homage—it is much if, in respect for him, I defer paying to his messenger the meed I dearly owe him. Proceed with thy tale, and rid me of thy hateful presence.'—'Albert Count of Geierstein, thy lord and my lord,' proceeded Schreckenwald, 'having on his hand wars, and other affairs of weight, sends his daughter, the Countess Anne, to thy charge, and graces thee so far as to intrust to thee her support and nurture, until it shall suit his purposes to require her back from thee; and he desires that thou apply to her maintenance the rents and profits of the lands of Geierstein, which thou hast usurped from him.'—'Ital Schreckenwald,' I replied, 'I will not stop to ask if this mode of addressing me be according to my brother's directions, or thine own insolent pleasure. If circumstances have, as thou sayest, deprived my niece of her natural protector, I will be to her as a father, nor shall she want aught which I have to give her. The lands of Geierstein are forfeited to the state, the castle is ruinous, as thou seest, and it is much of thy crimes that the house of my fathers is desolate. But where I dwell Anne of Geierstein shall dwell, as my children fare shall she fare, and she shall be to me as a daughter. And now thou hast thine errand—Go hence, if thou lovest thy life; for it is unsafe parleying with the father, when thy hands are stained with the blood of the son.' The wretch retired as I spoke, but took his leave with his usual determined insolence of manner.—'Farewell,' he said, 'Count of the Plough and Harrow—farewell, noble companion of paltry burghers!' He disappeared, and released me from the strong temptation under which I laboured, and which urged me to stain with his blood the place which had witnessed his cruelty and his crimes. I conveyed my niece to my house, and soon convinced her that I was her sincere friend. I inured her, as if she had been my daughter, to all our mountain exercises; and while she excels in these the damsels of the district, there burst from her such sparkles of sense and courage, mingled with delicacy, as belong not—I must needs own the truth—to the simple maidens of these wild hills, but relish of a nobler stem, and higher breeding. Yet they are so happily mixed with simplicity and courtesy, that Anne of Geierstein is justly considered as the pride of the district; nor do I doubt but that, if she should make a worthy choice of a husband, the state would assign her a large dower out of her father's possessions, since it is not our maxim to punish the child for the faults of the parent."

"It will naturally be your anxious desire, my worthy host," replied the Englishman, "to secure to your niece, in whose praises I have deep cause to join with a grateful voice, such a suitable match as her birth and expectations, but above all her merit, demand."

"It is, my good guest," said the Landamman, "that which hath often occupied my thoughts. The over-near relationship prohibits what would have been my most earnest desire, the hope of seeing her wedded to one of my own sons. This young man, Rudolph Donnerhugel, is brave, and highly esteemed by his fellow-citizens; but more ambitious, and more desirous of distinction, than I would desire for my niece's companion through life. His temper is violent, though his heart, I trust, is good. But I am like to be unpleasantly released from all care on this score, since my brother, having, as it seemed, forgotten Anne for seven years and upwards, has, by a letter which I have lately received, demanded that she shall be restored to him.—You can read, my worthy sir, for your profession requires it. See, here is the scroll, coldly worded, but far less unkindly than his unbrotherly message by Ital Schreckenwald—Read it, I pray you, aloud."

The merchant read accordingly.

"BROTHER—I thank you for the care you have taken of my daughter, for she has been in safety when she would otherwise have been in peril, and kindly used, when she would have been in hardship. I now entreat you to restore her to me, and trust that she will come with the virtues which become a woman in every station, and a disposition to lay aside the habits of a Swiss villager, for the graces of a high-born maiden.—Adieu. I thank you once more for your care, and would repay it were it in my power; but you need nothing I can give, having renounced the rank to which you were born, and made your nest on the ground where the storm passes over you. I rest your brother,

GEIERSTEIN."

"It is addressed 'to Count Arnold of Geierstein, called Arnold Biederman.' A postscript requires you to send the maiden to the court of the Duke of Burgundy.—This, good sir, appears to me the language of a haughty man, divided betwixt the recollection of old offence and recent obligation. The speech of his messenger was that of a malicious vassal, desirous of venting his own spite under pretence of doing his lord's errand."

"I so receive both," replied Arnold Biederman.

"And do you intend," continued the merchant, "to resign this beautiful and interesting creature to the conduct of her father, wilful as he seems to be, without knowing what his condition is, or what his power of protecting her?"

The Landamman hastened to reply. "The tie which unites the parent to the child is the earliest and the most hallowed that binds the human race. The difficulty of her travelling in safety has hitherto prevented my attempting to carry my brother's instructions into execution. But as I am now likely to journey in person towards the court of Charles, I have determined that Anne shall accompany me; and as I will myself converse with my brother, whom I have not seen for many years, I shall learn his purpose respecting his daughter, and it may be I may prevail on Albert to suffer her to remain under my charge.—And now, sir, having told you of my family affairs at some greater length than was necessary, I must crave your attention, as a wise man, to what further I have to say. You know the disposition which young men and women naturally have to talk, jest, and sport with each other, out of which practice arise often more serious attachments, which they call loving *par amours*. I trust, if we are to travel together, you will so school your young man as to make him aware that Anne of Geierstein cannot, with propriety on her part, be made the object of his thoughts or attentions."

The merchant coloured with resentment, or something like it. "I asked not to join your company, Sir Landamman—it was you who requested mine," he said; "if my son and I have since become in any respect the objects of your suspicion, we will gladly pursue our way separately."

"Nay, be not angry, worthy guest," said the Landamman; "we Switzers do not rashly harbour suspicions; and that we may not harbour them, we speak, respecting the circumstances out of which they might arise, more plainly than is the wont of more civilised countries. When I proposed to you to be my companion on the journey, to speak the truth, though it may displease a father's ear, I regarded your son as a soft, faint-hearted youth, who was, as yet at least, too timid and milky-blooded to attract either respect or regard from the maidens. But a few hours have presented him to us in the character of such a one as is sure to interest them. He has accomplished the emprise of the bow, long thought unattainable, and with which a popular report connects an idle prophecy. He has wit to make verses, and knows doubtless how to recommend himself by other accomplishments which bind young persons to each other, though they are lightly esteemed by men whose beards are mixed with grey, like yours, friend merchant, and mine own. Now, you must be aware, that since my brother broke terms with me, simply for preferring the freedom of a Swiss citizen to the tawdry and servile condition of a German courtier, he will not approve of any one looking towards his daughter who hath not the advantage of noble blood, or who hath, what he would call, debased himself by attention to merchandise, to the cultivation of land—in a word, to any art that is useful. Should your son love Anne of Geierstein, he prepares for himself danger and disappointment. And, now you know the whole,—I ask you, Do we travel together or apart?"

"Even as ye list, my worthy host," said Philipson, in an indifferent tone; "for me, I can but say that such an attachment as you speak of would be as contrary to my wishes as to those of your brother, or what I suppose are your own. Arthur Philipson has duties to perform totally inconsistent with his playing the gentle bachelor to any maiden in Switzerland, take Germany to boot, whether of high or low degree. He is an obedient son, besides—hath never seriously disobeyed my commands, and I will have an eye upon his motions."⁹⁴

"Enough, my friend," said the Landamman; "we travel together, then, and I willingly keep my original purpose, being both pleased and instructed by your discourse."

Then changing the conversation, he began to ask whether his acquaintance thought that the league entered into by the King of England and the Duke of Burgundy would continue stable. "We hear much," continued the Swiss, "of the immense army with which King Edward proposes the recovery of the English dominions in France."

"I am well aware," said Philipson, "that nothing can be so popular in my country as the invasion of France, and the attempt to reconquer Normandy, Maine, and Gascony, the ancient appanages of our English crown. But I greatly doubt whether the voluptuous usurper, who now calls himself king, will be graced by Heaven with success in such an adventure. This Fourth Edward is brave indeed, and has gained every battle in which he drew his sword, and they have been many in number. But since he reached, through a bloody path, to the summit of his ambition, he has shown himself rather a sensual debauchee than a valiant knight; and

it is my firm belief, that not even the chance of recovering all the fair dominions which were lost during the civil wars excited by his ambitious house will tempt him to exchange the soft beds of London, with sheets of silk and pillows of down, and the music of a dying lute to lull him to rest, for the turf of France and the réveille of an alarm trumpet."

"It is the better for us should it prove so," said the Landamman; "for if England and Burgundy were to dismember France, as in our father's days 95 was nearly accomplished, Duke Charles would then have leisure to exhaust his long-hoarded vengeance against our Confederacy."

As they conversed thus, they attained once more the lawn in front of Arnold Biederman's mansion, where the contention of the young men had given place to the dance performed by the young persons of both sexes. The dance was led by Anne of Geierstein and the youthful stranger; which, although it was the most natural arrangement, where the one was a guest, and the other represented the mistress of the family, occasioned the Landamman's exchanging a glance with the elder Philipson, as if it had held some relation to the suspicions he had recently expressed.

But so soon as her uncle and his elder guest appeared, Anne of Geierstein took the earliest opportunity of a pause to break off the dance, and to enter into conversation with her kinsman, as if on the domestic affairs under her attendance. Philipson observed that his host listened seriously to his niece's communication; and, nodding in his frank manner, seemed to intimate that her request should receive a favourable consideration.

The family were presently afterwards summoned to attend the evening meal, which consisted chiefly of the excellent fish afforded by the neighbouring streams and lakes. A large cup, containing what was called the *schlaf-trunk*, or sleeping-drink, then went round, which was first quaffed by the master of the household, then modestly tasted by the maiden, next pledged by the two strangers, and finally emptied by the rest of the company. Such were then the sober manners of the Swiss, afterwards much corrupted by their intercourse with 96 more luxurious regions. The guests were conducted to the sleeping-apartments, where Philipson and young Arthur occupied the same couch, and shortly after the whole inhabitants of the household were locked in sound repose. 97

CHAPTER VI.

When we two meet, we meet like rushing torrents;
Like warring winds, like flames from various points,
That mate each other's fury—there is naught
Of elemental strife, were fiends to guide it,
Can match the wrath of man.

FRENAUD.

The elder of our two travellers, though a strong man and familiar with fatigue, slept sounder and longer than usual on the morning which was now beginning to dawn, but his son Arthur had that upon his mind which early interrupted his repose.

The encounter with the bold Switzer, a chosen man of a renowned race of warriors, was an engagement which, in the opinion of the period in which he lived, was not to be delayed or broken. He left his father's side, avoiding as much as possible the risk of disturbing him, though even in that case the circumstance would not have excited any attention, as he was in the habit of rising early, in order to make preparations for the day's journey, to see that the guide was on his duty, and that the mule had his provender, and to discharge similar offices which might otherwise have given trouble to his father. The old man, however, fatigued with the exertions of the preceding day, slept, as we have said, more soundly than his wont, and Arthur, arming himself with his good sword, sallied out to the lawn in front of the Landamman's dwelling, amid the magic dawn of a beautiful harvest morning in the Swiss mountains. 98

The sun was just about to kiss the top of the most gigantic of that race of Titans, though the long shadows still lay on the rough grass, which crisped under the young man's feet with a strong intimation of frost. But Arthur looked not round on the landscape, however lovely, which lay waiting one flash from the orb of day to start into brilliant existence. He drew the belt of his trusty sword which he was in the act of fastening when he left the house, and ere he had secured the buckle he was many paces on his way towards the place where he was to use it.

It was still the custom of that military period to regard a summons to combat as a sacred engagement, preferable to all others which could be formed; and stifling whatever inward feelings of reluctance Nature might oppose to the dictates of fashion, the step of a gallant to the place of encounter was required to be as free and ready as if he had been going to a bridal. I do not know whether this alacrity was altogether real on the part of Arthur Philipson; but, if it were otherwise, neither his look nor pace betrayed the secret.

Having hastily traversed the fields and groves which separated the Landamman's residence from the old castle of Geierstein, he entered the courtyard from the side where the castle overlooked the land; and nearly in the same instant his almost gigantic antagonist, who looked yet more tall and burly by the pale morning light than he had seemed the preceding evening, appeared ascending from the precarious bridge beside the torrent, having reached Geierstein by a different route from that pursued by the Englishman. 99

The young champion of Berne had hanging along his back one of those huge two-handed swords, the blade of which measured five feet, and which were wielded with both hands. These were almost universally used by the Swiss; for, besides the impression which such weapons were calculated to make upon the array of the German men-at-arms, whose armour was impenetrable to lighter swords, they were also well calculated to defend mountain passes, where the great bodily strength and agility of those who bore them enabled the combatants, in spite of their weight and length, to use them with much address and effect. One of these gigantic swords hung round Rudolph Donnerhugel's neck, the point rattling against his heel, and the handle extending itself over his left shoulder, considerably above his head. He carried another in his hand.

"Thou art punctual," he called out to Arthur Philipson, in a voice which was distinctly heard above the roar of the waterfall, which it seemed to rival in sullen force. "But I judged thou wouldst come without a two-handed sword. There is my kinsman Ernest's," he said, throwing on the ground the weapon which he carried, with the hilt towards the young Englishman. "Look, stranger, that thou disgrace it not, for my kinsman will never forgive me if thou dost. Or thou mayst have mine if thou likest it better."

The Englishman looked at the weapon with some surprise, to the use of which he was totally unaccustomed.

"The challenger," he said, "in all countries where honour is known, accepts the arms of the challenged." 100

"He who fights on a Swiss mountain, fights with a Swiss brand," answered Rudolph. "Think you our hands are made to handle penknives?"

"Nor are ours made to wield scythes," said Arthur; and muttered betwixt his teeth, as he looked at the sword, which the Swiss continued to offer him—" *Usum non habeo* [e], I have not proved the weapon."

"Do you repent the bargain you have made?" said the Swiss; "if so, cry craven, and return in safety. Speak plainly, instead of prattling Latin like a clerk or a shaven monk."

"No, proud man," replied the Englishman, "I ask thee no forbearance. I thought but of a combat between a shepherd and a giant, in which God gave the victory to him who had worse odds of weapons than falls to my lot to-day. I will fight as I stand; my own good sword shall serve my need now, as it has done before."

"Content!—But blame not me who offered thee equality of weapons," said the mountaineer. "And now hear me. This is a fight for life or death—yon waterfall sounds the alarum for our conflict.—Yes, old bellower," he continued, looking back, "it is long since thou hast heard the noise of battle;—and look at it ere we begin, stranger, for if you fall, I will commit your body to its waters."

"And if thou fall'st, proud Swiss," answered Arthur, "as well I trust thy presumption leads to destruction, I will have thee buried in the church at Einsiedlen, where the priests shall sing masses for thy soul—thy two-handed sword shall be displayed above thy grave, and a scroll shall tell the passenger, Here lies a bear's cub of Berne, slain by Arthur the Englishman." 101

"The stone is not in Switzerland, rocky as it is," said Rudolph, scornfully, "that shall bear that inscription. Prepare thyself for battle."

The Englishman cast a calm and deliberate glance around the scene of action—a courtyard, partly open, partly encumbered with ruins, in less and larger masses.

"Methinks," said he to himself, "a master of his weapon, with the instructions of Bottaferma of Florence in his remembrance, a light heart, a good blade, a firm hand, and a just cause, might make up a worse odds than two feet of steel."

Thinking thus, and imprinting on his mind, as much as the time would permit, every circumstance of the locality around him which promised advantage in the combat, and taking his station in the middle of the courtyard where the ground was entirely clear, he flung his cloak from him, and drew his sword.

Rudolph had at first believed that his foreign antagonist was an effeminate youth, who would be swept from before him at the first flourish of his tremendous weapon. But the firm and watchful attitude assumed by the young man reminded the Swiss of the deficiencies of his own unwieldy implement, and made him determine to avoid any precipitation which might give advantage to an enemy who seemed both daring and vigilant. He unsheathed his huge sword, by drawing it over the left shoulder, an operation which required some little time, and might have offered formidable advantage to his antagonist, had Arthur's sense of honour permitted him to begin the attack ere it was completed. The Englishman remained firm, however, until the Swiss, displaying his 102bright brand to the morning sun, made three or four flourishes as if to prove its weight, and the facility with which he wielded it—then stood firm within sword-stroke of his adversary, grasping his weapon with both hands, and advancing it a little before his body, with the blade pointed straight upwards. The Englishman, on the contrary, carried his sword in one hand, holding it across his face in a horizontal position, so as to be at once ready to strike, thrust, or parry.

"Strike, Englishman!" said the Switzer, after they had confronted each other in this manner for about a minute.

"The longest sword should strike first," said Arthur; and the words had not left his mouth when the Swiss sword rose, and descended with a rapidity which, the weight and size of the weapon considered, appeared portentous. No parry, however dexterously interposed, could have baffled the ruinous descent of that dreadful weapon, by which the champion of Berne had hoped at once to begin the battle and end it. But young Philipson had not over-estimated the justice of his own eye, or the activity of his limbs. Ere the blade descended, a sudden spring to one side carried him from beneath its heavy sway, and before the Swiss could again raise his sword aloft he received a wound, though a slight one, upon the left arm. Irritated at the failure and at the wound, the Switzer heaved up his sword once more, and availing himself of a strength corresponding to his size, he discharged towards his adversary a succession of blows, downright, athwart, horizontal, and from left to right, with such surprising strength and velocity, that it required all the address of the 103young Englishman, by parrying, shifting, eluding, or retreating, to evade a storm of which every individual blow seemed sufficient to cleave a solid rock. The Englishman was compelled to give ground, now backwards, now swerving to the one side or the other, now availing himself of the fragments of the ruins, but watching all the while, with the utmost composure, the moment when the strength of his enraged enemy might become somewhat exhausted, or when by some improvident or furious blow he might again lay himself open to a close attack. The latter of these advantages had nearly occurred, for in the middle of his headlong charge the Switzer stumbled over a large stone concealed among the long grass, and ere he could recover himself received a severe blow across the head from his antagonist. It lighted upon his bonnet, the lining of which enclosed a small steel cap, so that he escaped unwounded, and springing up, renewed the battle with unabated fury, though it seemed to the young Englishman with breath somewhat short, and blows dealt with more caution.

They were still contending with equal fortune, when a stern voice, rising over the clash of swords, as well as the roar of waters, called out in a commanding tone, "On your lives, forbear!"

The two combatants sank the points of their swords, not very sorry perhaps for the interruption of a strife which must otherwise have had a deadly termination. They looked round, and the Landamman stood before them, with anger frowning on his broad and expressive forehead.

"How now, boys?" he said. "Are you guests of Arnold Biederman, and do you dishonour his 104house by acts of violence more becoming the wolves of the mountains, than beings to whom the great Creator has given a form after His own likeness, and an immortal soul to be saved by penance and repentance?"

"Arthur," said the elder Philipson, who had come up at the same time with their host, "what frenzy is this? Are your duties of so light and heedless a nature, as to give time and place for quarrels and combats with every idle boor who chances to be boastful at once and bull-headed?"

The young men, whose strife had ceased at the entrance of these unexpected spectators, stood looking at each other, and resting on their swords.

"Rudolph Donnerhugel," said the Landamman, "give thy sword to me—to me, the owner of this ground, the master of this family, and magistrate of the canton."

"And which is more," answered Rudolph, submissively, "to you who are Arnold Biederman, at whose command every native of these mountains draws his sword or sheathes it."

He gave his two-handed sword to the Landamman.

"Now, by my honest word," said Biederman, "it is the same with which thy father Stephen fought so gloriously at Sempach, abreast with the famous De Winkelried! Shame it is, that it should be drawn on a helpless stranger.—And you, young sir," continued the Swiss, addressing Arthur, while his father said at the same time, "Young man, yield up your sword to the Landamman."

"It shall not need, sir," replied the young Englishman, "since, for my part, I hold our strife at an end. This gallant gentleman called me hither, 105on a trial, as I conceive, of courage: I can give my unqualified testimony to his gallantry and swordmanship; and as I trust he will say nothing to the shame of my manhood, I think our strife has lasted long enough for the purpose which gave rise to it."

"Too long for me," said Rudolph, frankly; "the green sleeve of my doublet, which I wore of that colour out of my love to the Forest Cantons, is now stained into as dirty a crimson as could have been done by any dyer in Ypres or Ghent. But I heartily forgive the brave stranger who has spoiled my jerkin, and given its master a lesson he will not soon forget. Had all Englishmen been like your guest, worthy kinsman, methinks the mound at Buttisholz had hardly risen so high."

"Cousin Rudolph," said the Landamman, smoothing his brow as his kinsman spoke, "I have ever thought thee as generous as thou art harebrained and quarrelsome; and you, my young guest, may rely, that when a Swiss says the quarrel is over, there is no chance of its being renewed. We are not like the men of the valleys to the eastward, who nurse revenge as if it were a favourite child. And now, join hands, my children, and let us forget this foolish feud."

"Here is my hand, brave stranger," said Donnerhugel; "thou hast taught me a trick of fence, and when we have broken our fast we will, by your leave, to the forest, where I will teach you a trick of woodcraft in return. When your foot hath half the experience of your hand, and your eye hath gained a portion of the steadiness of your heart, you will not find many hunters to match you." 106

Arthur, with all the ready confidence of youth, readily embraced a proposition so frankly made, and before they reached the house various subjects of sport were eagerly discussed between them, with as much cordiality as if no disturbance of their concord had taken place.

"Now this," said the Landamman, "is as it should be. I am ever ready to forgive the headlong impetuosity of our youth, if they will be but manly and open in their reconciliation, and bear their heart on their tongue, as a true Swiss should."

"These two youths had made but wild work of it, however," said Philipson, "had not your care, my worthy host, learned of their rendezvous, and called me to assist in breaking their purpose. May I ask how it came to your knowledge so opportunely?"

"It was e'en through means of my domestic fairy," answered Arnold Biederman, "who seems born for the good luck of my family,—I mean my niece, Anne, who had observed a glove exchanged betwixt the two young braggadocios, and heard them mention Geierstein and break of day. Oh, sir, it is much to see a woman's sharpness of wit! It would have been long enough ere any of my thick-headed sons had shown themselves so apprehensive."

"I think I see our propitious protectress peeping at us from yonder high ground," said Philipson; "but it seems as if she would willingly observe us without being seen in return."

"Ay," said the Landamman, "she has been looking out to see that there has been no hurt done; and now, I warrant me, the foolish girl is 107ashamed of having shown such a laudable degree of interest in a matter of the kind."

"Methinks," said the Englishman, "I would willingly return my thanks, in your presence, to the fair maiden to whom I have been so highly indebted."

"There can be no better time than the present," said the Landamman; and he sent through the groves the maiden's name, in one of those shrilly accented tones which we have already noticed.

Anne of Geierstein, as Philipson had before observed, was stationed upon a knoll at some distance, and concealed, as she thought, from notice, by a screen of brushwood. She started at her uncle's summons, therefore, but presently obeyed it; and avoiding the young men, who passed on foremost, she joined the Landamman and Philipson, by a circuitous path through the woods.

"My worthy friend and guest would speak with you, Anne," said the Landamman, so soon as the morning greeting had been exchanged. The Swiss maiden coloured over brow as well as cheek, when Philipson, with a grace which seemed beyond his calling, addressed her in these words:—

"It happens sometimes to us merchants, my fair young friend, that we are unlucky enough not to possess means for the instant defraying of our debts; but he is justly held amongst us as the meanest of mankind who does not acknowledge them. Accept, therefore, the thanks of a father, whose son your courage, only yesterday, saved from destruction, and whom your prudence has, this very morning, rescued from a great danger. And grieve me not, by refusing to wear these earrings," he added, producing a small jewel-case, 108which he opened as he spoke: "they are, it is true, only of pearls, but they have not been thought unworthy the ears of a countess"——

"And must, therefore," said the old Landamman, "show misplaced on the person of a Swiss maiden of Unterwalden; for such and no more is my niece Anne while she resides in my solitude. Methinks, good Master Philipson, you display less than your usual judgment in matching the quality of your gifts with the rank of her on whom they are bestowed—as a merchant, too, you should remember that large guerdons will lighten your gains."

"Let me crave your pardon, my good host," answered the Englishman, "while I reply, that at least I have consulted my own sense of the obligation under which I labour, and have chosen, out of what I have at my free disposal, that which I thought might best express it. I trust the host whom I have found hitherto so kind will not prevent this young maiden from accepting what is at least not unbecoming the rank she is born to; and you will judge me unjustly if you think me capable of doing either myself or you the wrong, of offering any token of a value beyond what I can well spare."

The Landamman took the jewel-case into his own hand.

"I have ever set my countenance," he said, "against gaudy gems, which are leading us daily further astray from the simplicity of our fathers and mothers.—And yet," he added, with a good-humoured smile, and holding one of the earrings close to his relation's face, "the ornaments do set off the wench rarely, and they say girls have more 109pleasure in wearing such toys than grey-haired men can comprehend. Wherefore, dear Anne, as thou hast deserved a dearer trust in a greater matter, I refer thee entirely to thine own wisdom, to accept of our good friend's costly present, and wear it or not as thou thinkest fit."

"Since such is your pleasure, my best friend and kinsman," said the young maiden, blushing as she spoke, "I will not give pain to our valued guest, by refusing what he desires so earnestly that I should accept; but, by his leave, good uncle, and yours, I will bestow these splendid earrings on the shrine of Our Lady of Einsiedlen, to express our general gratitude to her protecting favour, which has been around us in the terrors of yesterday's storm, and the alarms of this morning's discord."

"By Our Lady, the wench speaks sensibly!" said the Landamman; "and her wisdom has applied the bounty well, my good guest, to bespeak prayers for thy family and mine, and for the general peace of Unterwalden.—Go to, Anne, thou shalt have a necklace of jet at next shearing-feast, if our fleeces bear any price in the market."110

CHAPTER VII.

Let him who will not proffer'd peace receive,
Be sated with the plagues which war can give;
And well thy hatred of the peace is known,
If now thy soul reject the friendship shown.
HOOLE'S Tasso.

The confidence betwixt the Landamman and the English merchant appeared to increase during the course of a few busy days, which occurred before that appointed for the commencement of their journey to the court of Charles of Burgundy. The state of Europe, and of the Helvetian Confederacy, has been already alluded to; but, for the distinct explanation of our story, may be here briefly recapitulated.

In the interval of a week, whilst the English travellers remained at Geierstein, meetings or diets were held, as well of the City Cantons of the Confederacy as of those of the Forest. The former, aggrieved by the taxes imposed on their commerce by the Duke of Burgundy, rendered yet more intolerable by the violence of the agents whom he employed in such oppression, were eager for war, in which they had hitherto uniformly found victory and wealth. Many of them were also privately instigated to arms by the largesses of Louis XI., who spared neither intrigues nor gold to effect a breach betwixt these dauntless confederates and his formidable enemy, Charles the Bold.111

On the other hand, there were many reasons which appeared to render it impolitic for the Switzers to engage in war with one of the most wealthy, most obstinate, and most powerful princes in Europe—for such unquestionably was Charles of Burgundy—without the existence of some strong reason affecting their own honour and independence. Every day brought fresh intelligence from the interior that Edward the Fourth of England had entered into a strict and intimate alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Duke of Burgundy, and that it was the purpose of the English King, renowned for his numerous victories over the rival House of Lancaster, by which, after various reverses, he had obtained undisputed possession of the throne, to reassert his claims to those provinces of France so long held by his ancestors. It seemed as if this alone were wanting to his fame, and that, having subdued his internal enemies, he now turned his eyes to the regaining of those rich and valuable foreign possessions which had been lost during the administration of the feeble Henry VI. and the civil discords so dreadfully prosecuted in the wars of the White and Red Roses. It was universally known, that throughout England generally the loss of the French provinces was felt as a national degradation; and that not only the nobility, who had in consequence been deprived of the large fiefs which they had held in Normandy, Gascony, Maine, and Anjou, but the warlike gentry, accustomed to gain both fame and wealth at the expense of France, and the fiery yeomanry, whose bows had decided so many fatal battles, were as eager to renew the conflict, as their ancestors of Cressy, 112Poitiers, and Agincourt had been to follow their sovereign to the fields of victory, on which their deeds had conferred deathless renown.

The latest and most authentic intelligence bore, that the King of England was on the point of passing to France in person (an invasion rendered easy by his possession of Calais), with an army superior in numbers and discipline to any with which an English monarch had ever before entered that kingdom; that all the hostile preparations were completed, and that the arrival of Edward might instantly be expected; whilst the powerful co-operation of the Duke of Burgundy, and the assistance of numerous disaffected French noblemen in the provinces which had been so long under the English dominion, threatened a fearful issue of the war to Louis XI., sagacious, wise, and powerful as that prince unquestionably was.

It would no doubt have been the wisest policy of Charles of Burgundy, when thus engaging in an alliance against his most formidable neighbour, and hereditary as well as personal enemy, to have avoided all cause of quarrel with the Helvetian Confederacy, a poor but most warlike people, who already had been taught by repeated successes to feel that their hardy infantry could, if necessary, engage on terms of equality, or even of advantage, the flower of that chivalry which had hitherto been considered as forming the strength of European battle. But the measures of Charles, whom fortune had opposed to the most astutious and politic monarch of his time, were always dictated by passionate feeling and impulse, rather than by a judicious consideration of the circumstances in which he stood. Haughty, proud, and uncompromising, 113though neither destitute of honour nor generosity, he despised and hated what he termed the paltry associations of herdsmen and shepherds, united with a few towns which subsisted chiefly by commerce; and instead of courting the Helvetian Cantons, like his crafty enemy, or at least affording them no ostensible pretence of quarrel, he omitted no opportunity of showing the disregard and contempt in which he held their upstart consequence, and of evincing the secret longing which he entertained to take vengeance upon them for the quantity of noble blood which they had shed, and to compensate the repeated successes they had gained over the feudal lords, of whom he imagined himself the destined avenger.

The Duke of Burgundy's possessions in the Alsatian territory [f] afforded him many opportunities for wreaking his displeasure upon the Swiss League. The little castle and town of Ferette, lying within ten or eleven miles of Bâle, served as a thoroughfare to the traffic of Berne and Soleure, the two principal towns of the

confederation. In this place the Duke posted a governor, or seneschal, who was also an administrator of the revenue, and seemed born on purpose to be the plague and scourge of his republican neighbours.

Archibald von Hagenbach was a German noble, whose possessions lay in Suabia, and was universally esteemed one of the fiercest and most lawless of that frontier nobility known by the name of Robber-knights and Robber-counts. These dignitaries, because they held their fiefs of the Holy Roman Empire, claimed as complete sovereignty within their territories of a mile square as any reigning prince of Germany in his more extended 114 dominions. They levied tolls and taxes on strangers, and imprisoned, tried, and executed those who, as they alleged, had committed offences within their petty domains. But especially, and in further exercise of their seigniorial privileges, they made war on each other, and on the Free Cities of the Empire, attacking and plundering without mercy the caravans, or large trains of wagons, by which the internal commerce of Germany was carried on.

A succession of injuries done and received by Archibald of Hagenbach, who had been one of the fiercest sticklers for this privilege of *faustrecht*, or club-law, as it may be termed, had ended in his being obliged, though somewhat advanced in life, to leave a country where his tenure of existence was become extremely precarious, and to engage in the service of the Duke of Burgundy, who willingly employed him, as he was a man of high descent and proved valour, and not the less, perhaps, that he was sure to find in a man of Hagenbach's fierce, rapacious, and haughty disposition, the unscrupulous executioner of whatsoever severities it might be his master's pleasure to enjoin.

The traders of Berne and Soleure, accordingly, made loud and violent complaints of Hagenbach's exactions. The impositions laid on commodities which passed through his district of La Ferette, to whatever place they might be ultimately bound, were arbitrarily increased, and the merchants and traders who hesitated to make instant payment of what was demanded were exposed to imprisonment and personal punishment. The commercial towns of Germany appealed to the Duke against this iniquitous conduct on the part of the Governor of 115 La Ferette, and requested of his Grace's goodness that he would withdraw Von Hagenbach from their neighbourhood; but the Duke treated their complaints with contempt. The Swiss League carried their remonstrances higher, and required that justice should be done on the Governor of La Ferette, as having offended against the law of nations; but they were equally unable to attract attention or obtain redress.

At length the Diet of the Confederation determined to send the solemn deputation which has been repeatedly mentioned. One or two of these envoys joined with the calm and prudent Arnold Biederman, in the hope that so solemn a measure might open the eyes of the Duke to the wicked injustice of his representative; others among the deputies, having no such peaceful views, were determined, by this resolute remonstrance, to pave the way for hostilities.

Arnold Biederman was an especial advocate for peace, while its preservation was compatible with national independence, and the honour of the Confederacy; but the younger Philipson soon discovered that the Landamman alone, of all his family, cherished these moderate views. The opinion of his sons had been swayed and seduced by the impetuous eloquence and overbearing influence of Rudolph of Donnerhugel, who, by some feats of peculiar gallantry, and the consideration due to the merit of his ancestors, had acquired an influence in the councils of his native canton, and with the youth of the League in general, beyond what was usually yielded by these wise republicans to men of his early age. Arthur, who was now an acceptable and welcome companion of all 116 their hunting parties and other sports, heard nothing among the young men but anticipations of war, rendered delightful by the hopes of booty and of distinction, which were to be obtained by the Switzers. The feats of their ancestors against the Germans had been so wonderful as to realise the fabulous victories of romance; and while the present race possessed the same hardy limbs, and the same inflexible courage, they eagerly anticipated the same distinguished success. When the Governor of La Ferette was mentioned in the conversation, he was usually spoken of as the bandog of Burgundy, or the Alsatian mastiff; and intimations were openly given, that if his course were not instantly checked by his master, and he himself withdrawn from the frontiers of Switzerland, Archibald of Hagenbach would find his fortress no protection from the awakened indignation of the wronged inhabitants of Soleure, and particularly of those of Berne.

This general disposition to war among the young Switzers was reported to the elder Philipson by his son, and led him at one time to hesitate whether he ought not rather to resume all the inconveniences and dangers of a journey, accompanied only by Arthur, than run the risk of the quarrels in which he might be involved by the unruly conduct of these fierce mountain youths, after they should have left their own frontiers. Such an event would have had, in a peculiar degree, the effect of destroying every purpose of his journey; but respected as Arnold Biederman was by his family and countrymen, the English merchant concluded, upon the whole, that his influence would be able to restrain his companions 117 until the great question of peace or war should be determined, and especially until they should have discharged their commission by obtaining an audience of the Duke of Burgundy; and after this he should be separated from their society, and not liable to be engaged in any responsibility for their ulterior measures.

After a delay of about ten days, the deputation commissioned to remonstrate with the Duke on the aggressions and exactions of Archibald of Hagenbach at length assembled at Geierstein, whence the members were to journey forth together. They were three in number, besides the young Bernese, and the Landamman of Unterwalden. One was, like Arnold, a proprietor from the Forest Cantons, wearing a dress scarcely handsomer than that of a common herdsman, but distinguished by the beauty and size of his long silvery beard. His name was Nicholas Bonstetten. Melchior Sturmthal, banner-bearer of Berne, a man of middle age, and a soldier of distinguished courage, with Adam Zimmerman, a burgess of Soleure, who was considerably older, completed the number of the envoys.

Each was dressed after his best fashion; but notwithstanding that the severe eye of Arnold Biederman censured one or two silver belt-buckles, as well as a chain of the same metal, which decorated the portly person of the burgess of Soleure, it seemed that a powerful and victorious people, for such the Swiss were now to be esteemed, were never represented by an embassy of such patriarchal simplicity. The deputies travelled on foot, with their piked staves in their hands, like pilgrims bound for some place of devotion. Two 118 mules, which bore their little stock of baggage, were led by young lads, sons or cousins of members of the embassy, who had obtained permission in this manner to get such a glance of the world beyond the mountains as this journey promised to afford.

But although their retinue was small, so far as respected either state or personal attendance and accommodation, the dangerous circumstances of the times, and the very unsettled state of the country beyond their own territories, did not permit men charged with affairs of such importance to travel without a guard. Even the danger arising from the wolves, which, when pinched by the approach of winter, have been known to descend from their mountain fastnesses into open villages, such as those the travellers might choose to quarter in, rendered the presence of some escort necessary; and the bands of deserters from various services, who formed parties of banditti on the frontiers of Alsatia and Germany, combined to recommend such a precaution.

Accordingly, about twenty of the selected youth from the various Swiss cantons, including Rudiger, Ernest, and Sigismund, Arnold's three eldest sons, attended upon the deputation. They did not, however, observe any military order, or march close or near to the patriarchal train. On the contrary, they formed hunting parties of five or six together, who explored the rocks, woods, and passes of the mountains, through which the envoys journeyed. Their slower pace allowed the active young men, who were accompanied by their large shaggy dogs, full time to destroy wolves and bears, or occasionally to surprise a chamois among the cliffs; while 119 the hunters, even while in pursuit of their sport, were careful to examine such places as might afford opportunity for ambush, and thus ascertained the safety of the party whom they escorted, more securely than if they had attended close on their train. A peculiar note on the huge Swiss bugle, before described, formed of the horn of the mountain bull, was the signal agreed upon for collecting in a body should danger occur. Rudolph Donnerhugel, so much younger than his brethren in the same important commission, took the command of this mountain body-guard, whom he usually accompanied in their sportive excursions. In point of arms, they were well provided; bearing two-handed swords, long partisans and spears, as well as both cross and long bows, short cutlasses, and huntsmen's knives. The heavier weapons, as impeding their activity, were carried with the baggage, but were ready to be assumed on the slightest alarm.

Arthur Philipson, like his late antagonist, naturally preferred the company and sports of the younger men to the grave conversation and slow pace of the fathers of the mountain commonwealth. There was, however, one temptation to loiter with the baggage, which, had other circumstances permitted, might have reconciled the young Englishman to forego the opportunities of sport which the Swiss youth so eagerly sought after, and endure the slow pace and grave conversation of the elders of the party. In a word, Anne of Geierstein, accompanied by a Swiss girl her attendant, travelled in the rear of the deputation.

The two females were mounted upon asses, whose slow step hardly kept pace with the baggage 120 mules; and it may be fairly suspected that Arthur Philipson, in requital of the important services which he had received from that beautiful and interesting young woman, would have deemed it no extreme hardship to have

afforded her occasionally his assistance on the journey, and the advantage of his conversation to relieve the tediousness of the way. But he dared not presume to offer attentions which the customs of the country did not seem to permit, since they were not attempted by any of the maiden's cousins, or even by Rudolph Donnerhugel, who certainly had hitherto appeared to neglect no opportunity to recommend himself to his fair cousin. Besides, Arthur had reflection enough to be convinced, that in yielding to the feelings which impelled him to cultivate the acquaintance of this amiable young person, he would certainly incur the serious displeasure of his father, and probably also that of her uncle, by whose hospitality they had profited, and whose safe-conduct they were in the act of enjoying.

The young Englishman, therefore, pursued the same amusements which interested the other young men of the party, managing only, as frequently as their halts permitted, to venture upon offering to the maiden such marks of courtesy as could afford no room for remark or censure. And his character as a sportsman being now well established, he sometimes permitted himself, even when the game was afoot, to loiter in the vicinity of the path on which he could at least mark the flutter of the grey wimple of Anne of Geierstein, and the outline of the form which it shrouded. This indolence, as it seemed, was not unfavourably construed by his companions, being only accounted an indifference to the less noble or less dangerous game; for when the object was a bear, wolf, or other animal of prey, no spear, cutlass, or bow of the party, not even those of Rudolph Donnerhugel, were so prompt in the chase as those of the young Englishman.

Meantime, the elder Philipson had other and more serious subjects of consideration. He was a man, as the reader must have already seen, of much acquaintance with the world, in which he had acted parts different from that which he now sustained. Former feelings were recalled and awakened, by the view of sports familiar to his early years. The clamour of the hounds, echoing from the wild hills and dark forests through which they travelled; the sight of the gallant young huntsmen, appearing, as they brought the object of their chase to bay, amid airy cliffs and profound precipices, which seemed impervious to the human foot; the sounds of halloo and horn reverberating from hill to hill, had more than once well-nigh impelled him to take a share in the hazardous but animating amusement, which, next to war, was then in most parts of Europe the most serious occupation of life. But the feeling was transient, and he became yet more deeply interested in studying the manners and opinions of the persons with whom he was travelling.

They seemed to be all coloured with the same downright and blunt simplicity which characterised Arnold Biederman, although it was in none of them elevated by the same dignity of thought or profound sagacity. In speaking of the political state of their country, they affected no secrecy; and although, with the exception of Rudolph, their own young men were not admitted into their councils, the exclusion seemed only adopted with a view to the necessary subordination of youth to age, and not for the purpose of observing any mystery. In the presence of the elder Philipson, they freely discussed the pretensions of the Duke of Burgundy, the means which their country possessed of maintaining her independence, and the firm resolution of the Helvetic League to bid defiance to the utmost force the world could bring against it, rather than submit to the slightest insult. In other respects, their views appeared wise and moderate, although both the Banneret of Berne and the consequential Burgher of Soleure seemed to hold the consequences of war more lightly than they were viewed by the cautious Landamman of Unterwalden, and his venerable companion, Nicholas Bonstetten, who subscribed to all his opinions.

It frequently happened that, quitting these subjects, the conversation turned on such as were less attractive to their fellow-traveller. The signs of the weather, the comparative fertility of recent seasons, the most advantageous mode of managing their orchards and rearing their crops, though interesting to the mountaineers themselves, gave Philipson slender amusement; and notwithstanding that the excellent Meinherr Zimmerman of Soleure would fain have joined with him in conversation respecting trade and merchandise, yet the Englishman, who dealt in articles of small bulk and considerable value, and traversed sea and land to carry on his traffic, could find few mutual topics to discuss with the Swiss trader, whose commerce only extended into the neighbouring districts of Burgundy and Germany, and whose goods consisted of coarse woollen cloths, fustian, hides, peltry, and such ordinary articles.

But ever and anon, while the Switzers were discussing some paltry interests of trade, or describing some process of rude cultivation, or speaking of blights in grain, and the murrain amongst cattle, with all the dull minuteness of petty farmers and traders met at a country fair, a well-known spot would recall the name and story of a battle in which some of them had served (for there were none of the party who had not been repeatedly in arms), and the military details, which in other countries were only the theme of knights and squires who had acted their part in them, or of learned clerks who laboured to record them, were, in this singular region, the familiar and intimate subjects of discussion with men whose peaceful occupations seemed to place them at an immeasurable distance from the profession of a soldier. This led the Englishman to think of the ancient inhabitants of Rome, where the plough was so readily exchanged for the sword, and the cultivation of a rude farm for the management of public affairs. He hinted this resemblance to the Landamman, who was naturally gratified with the compliment to his country, but presently replied—"May Heaven continue among us the homebred virtues of the Romans, and preserve us from their lust of conquest and love of foreign luxuries!"

The slow pace of the travellers, with various causes of delay which it is unnecessary to dwell upon, occasioned the deputation spending two nights on the road before they reached Bâle. The small towns or villages in which they quartered, received them with such marks of respectful hospitality as they had the means to bestow, and their arrival was a signal for a little feast, with which the heads of the community uniformly regaled them.

On such occasions, while the elders of the village entertained the deputies of the Confederation, the young men of the escort were provided for by those of their own age, several of whom, usually aware of their approach, were accustomed to join in the chase of the day, and made the strangers acquainted with the spots where game was most plenty.

These feasts were never prolonged to excess, and the most special dainties which composed them were kids, lambs, and game, the produce of the mountains. Yet it seemed, both to Arthur Philipson and his father, that the advantages of good cheer were more prized by the Banneret of Berne and the Burgess of Soleure than by their host the Landamman and the Deputy of Schwitz. There was no excess committed, as we have already said; but the deputies first mentioned obviously understood the art of selecting the choicest morsels, and were connoisseurs in the good wine, chiefly of foreign growth, with which they freely washed it down. Arnold was too wise to censure what he had no means of amending: he contented himself by observing in his own person a rigorous diet, living indeed almost entirely upon vegetables and fair water, in which he was closely imitated by the old grey-bearded Nicholas Bonstetten, who seemed to make it his principal object to follow the Landamman's example in everything.

It was, as we have already said, the third day after the commencement of their journey, before the Swiss deputation reached the vicinity of Bâle, in which city, then one of the largest in the south-western extremity of Germany, they proposed taking up their abode for the evening, nothing doubting a friendly reception. The town, it is true, was not then, nor till about thirty years afterwards, a part of the Swiss Confederation, to which it was only joined in 1501; but it was a Free Imperial City, connected with Berne, Soleure, Lucerne, and other towns of Switzerland by mutual interests and constant intercourse. It was the object of the deputation to negotiate, if possible, a peace, which could not be more useful to themselves than to the city of Bâle, considering the interruptions of commerce which must be occasioned by a rupture between the Duke of Burgundy and the Cantons, and the great advantage which that city would derive by preserving a neutrality, situated as it was betwixt these two hostile powers.

They anticipated, therefore, as welcome a reception from the authorities of Bâle as they had received while in the bounds of their own Confederation, since the interests of that city were so deeply concerned in the objects of their mission. The next chapter will show how far these expectations were realised.

CHAPTER VIII.

They saw that city, welcoming the Rhine,
As from his mountain heritage he bursts,
As purposed proud Orgetorix of yore,
Leaving the desert region of the hills,
To lord it o'er the fertile plains of Gaul.

Helvetia.

The eyes of the English travellers, wearied with a succession of wild mountainous scenery, now gazed with pleasure upon a country still indeed irregular and hilly in its surface, but capable of high cultivation, and adorned with cornfields and vineyards. The Rhine, a broad and large river, poured its grey stream in a huge

sweep through the landscape, and divided into two portions the city of Bâle, which is situated on its banks. The southern part, to which the path of the Swiss deputies conducted them, displayed the celebrated cathedral, and the lofty terrace which runs in front of it, and seemed to remind the travellers that they now approached a country in which the operations of man could make themselves distinguished even among the works of nature, instead of being lost, as the fate of the most splendid efforts of human labour must have been, among those tremendous mountains which they had so lately traversed.

They were yet a mile from the entrance of the city, when the party was met by one of the magistrates, ¹²⁷attended by two or three citizens mounted on mules, the velvet housings of which expressed wealth and quality. They greeted the Landamman of Unterwalden and his party in a respectful manner, and the latter prepared themselves to hear, and make a suitable reply to, the hospitable invitation which they naturally expected to receive.

The message of the community of Bâle was, however, diametrically opposite to what they had anticipated. It was delivered with a good deal of diffidence and hesitation by the functionary who met them, and who certainly, while discharging his commission, did not appear to consider it as the most respectable which he might have borne. There were many professions of the most profound and fraternal regard for the cities of the Helvetian League, with whom the orator of Bâle declared his own state to be united in friendship and interests. But he ended by intimating, that, on account of certain cogent and weighty reasons, which should be satisfactorily explained at more leisure, the Free City of Bâle could not, this evening, receive within its walls the highly respected deputies, who were travelling, at the command of the Helvetian Diet, to the court of the Duke of Burgundy.

Philipson marked with much interest the effect which this most unexpected intimation produced on the members of the embassy. Rudolph Donnerhugel, who had joined their company as they approached Bâle, appeared less surprised than his associates, and, while he remained perfectly silent, seemed rather anxious to penetrate their sentiments than disposed to express his own. It was not the first time the sagacious merchant had ¹²⁸observed that this bold and fiery young man could, when his purposes required it, place a strong constraint upon the natural impetuosity of his temper. For the others, the Banneret's brow darkened; the face of the Burgess of Soleure became flushed like the moon when rising in the north-west; the grey-bearded Deputy of Schwitz looked anxiously on Arnold Biederman; and the Landamman himself seemed more moved than was usual in a person of his equanimity. At length he replied to the functionary of Bâle, in a voice somewhat altered by his feelings:—

"This is a singular message to the deputies of the Swiss Confederacy, bound as we are upon an amicable mission, on which depends the interest of the good citizens of Bâle, whom we have always treated as our good friends, and who still profess to be so. The shelter of their roofs, the protection of their walls, the wonted intercourse of hospitality, is what no friendly state hath a right to refuse to the inhabitants of another."

"Nor is it with their will that the community of Bâle refuse it, worthy Landamman," replied the magistrate. "Not you alone, and your worthy associates, but your escort, and your very beasts of burden, should be entertained with all the kindness which the citizens of Bâle could bestow—But we act under constraint."

"And by whom exercised?" said the Banneret, bursting out into passion. "Has the Emperor Sigismund profited so little by the example of his predecessors"——

"The Emperor," replied the delegate of Bâle, interrupting the Banneret, "is a well-intentioned and peaceful monarch, as he has been ever; but——there ¹²⁹are Burgundian troops, of late marched into the Sundgaw, and messages have been sent to our state from Count Archibald of Hagenbach."

"Enough said," replied the Landamman. "Draw not farther the veil from a weakness for which you blush. I comprehend you entirely. Bâle lies too near the citadel of La Ferette to permit its citizens to consult their own inclinations. Brother, we see where your difficulty lies—we pity you—and we forgive your inhospitality."

"Nay, but hear me to an end, worthy Landamman," answered the magistrate. "There is here in the vicinity an old hunting-seat of the Counts of Falkenstein, called Graffs-lust, ¹³⁰which, though ruinous, yet may afford better lodgings than the open air, and is capable of some defence—though Heaven forbid that any one should dare to intrude upon your repose! And hark ye hither, my worthy friends;—if you find in the old place some refreshments, as wine, beer, and the like, use them without scruple, for they are there for your accommodation."

"I do not refuse to occupy a place of security," said the Landamman; "for although the causing us to be excluded from Bâle may be only done in the spirit of petty insolence and malice, yet it may also, for what we can tell, be connected with some purpose of violence. Your provisions we thank you for; but we will not, with my consent, feed at the cost of friends who are ashamed to own us unless by stealth."

"One thing more, my worthy sir," said the official of Bâle—"You have a maiden in company, ¹³⁰who, I presume to think, is your daughter. There is but rough accommodation where you are going, even for men;—for women there is little better, though what we could we have done to arrange matters as well as may be. But rather let your daughter go with us back to Bâle, where my dame will be a mother to her, till next morning, when I will bring her to your camp in safety. We promised to shut our gates against the men of the Confederacy, but the women were not mentioned."

"You are subtle casuists, you men of Bâle," answered the Landamman; "but know, that from the time in which the Helvetians sallied forth to encounter Cæsar down to the present hour, the women of Switzerland, in the press of danger, have had their abode in the camp of their fathers, brothers, and husbands, and sought no further safety than they might find in the courage of their relations. We have enough of men to protect our women, and my niece shall remain with us, and take the fate which Heaven may send us."

"Adieu, then, worthy friend," said the magistrate of Bâle; "it grieves me to part with you thus, but evil fate will have it so. Yonder grassy avenue will conduct you to the old hunting-seat, where Heaven send that you may pass a quiet night; for, apart from other risks, men say that these ruins have no good name. Will you yet permit your niece, since such the young person is, to pass to Bâle for the night in my company?"

"If we are disturbed by beings like ourselves," said Arnold Biederman, "we have strong arms, and heavy partisans; if we should be visited, as your words would imply, by those of a different ¹³¹description, we have, or should have, good consciences, and confidence in Heaven.—Good friends, my brethren on this embassy, have I spoken your sentiments as well as mine own?"

The other deputies intimated their assent to what their companion had said, and the citizens of Bâle took a courteous farewell of their guests, endeavouring, by the excess of civility, to atone for their deficiency in effective hospitality. After their departure, Rudolph was the first to express his sense of their pusillanimous behaviour, on which he had been silent during their presence. "Coward dogs!" he said; "may the Butcher of Burgundy flay the very skins from them with his exactions, to teach them to disown old friendships, rather than abide the lightest blast of a tyrant's anger!"

"And not even their own tyrant either," said another of the group—for several of the young men had gathered round their seniors, to hear the welcome which they expected from the magistrates of Bâle.

"No," replied Ernest, one of Arnold Biederman's sons, "they do not pretend that their own prince the Emperor hath interfered with them; but a word of the Duke of Burgundy, which should be no more to them than a breath of wind from the west, is sufficient to stir them to such brutal inhospitality. It were well to march to the city, and compel them at the sword's point to give us shelter."

A murmur of applause arose amongst the youth around, which awakened the displeasure of Arnold Biederman.

"Did I hear," he said, "the tongue of a son of ¹³²mine, or was it that of a brutish Lanzknecht, ¹³²who has no pleasure but in battle or violence? Where is the modesty of the youth of Switzerland, who were wont to wait the signal for action till it pleased the elders of the canton to give it, and were as gentle as maidens till the voice of their patriarchs bade them be bold as lions?"

"I meant no harm, father," said Ernest, abashed with this rebuke, "far less any slight towards you; but I must needs say"——

"Say not a word, my son," replied Arnold, "but leave our camp to-morrow by break of day; and, as thou takest thy way back to Geierstein, to which I command thine instant return, remember, that he is not fit to visit strange countries who cannot rule his tongue before his own countrymen, and to his own father."

The Banneret of Berne, the Burgess of Soleure, even the long-bearded Deputy from Schwitz, endeavoured to intercede for the offender, and obtain a remission of his banishment; but it was in vain.

"No, my good friends and brethren, no," replied Arnold. "These young men require an example; and though I am grieved in one sense that the offence has chanced within my own family, yet I am pleased in another light, that the delinquent should be one over whom I can exercise full authority, without suspicion of

partiality.—Ernest, my son, thou hast heard my commands: Return to Geierstein with the morning's light, and let me find thee an altered man when I return thither."

The young Swiss, who was evidently much hurt and shocked at this public affront, placed one knee on the ground, and kissed his father's right hand, while Arnold, without the slightest sign of anger, bestowed his blessing upon him; and Ernest, without a word of remonstrance, fell into the rear of the party. The deputation then proceeded down the avenue which had been pointed out to them, and at the bottom of which arose the massy ruins of Grafs-lust; but there was not enough of daylight remaining to discern their exact form. They could observe as they drew nearer, and as the night became darker, that three or four windows were lighted up, while the rest of the front remained obscured in gloom. When they arrived at the place, they perceived it was surrounded by a large and deep moat, the sullen surface of which reflected, though faintly, the glimmer of the lights within.¹³⁴

CHAPTER IX.

Francisco. Give you good-night.

Marcellus. O, farewell, honest soldier.

Who hath relieved you?

Francisco. Give you good-night; Bernardo hath my place.

Hamlet.

The first occupation of our travellers was to find the means of crossing the moat, and they were not long of discovering the *tête de pont* on which the drawbridge, when lowered, had formerly rested. The bridge itself had been long decayed, but a temporary passage of fir-trees and planks had been constructed, apparently very lately, which admitted them to the chief entrance of the castle. On entering it, they found a wicket opening under the archway, which, glimmering with light, served to guide them to a hall prepared evidently for their accommodation as well as circumstances had admitted of.

A large fire of well-seasoned wood burned blithely in the chimney, and had been maintained so long there, that the air of the hall, notwithstanding its great size and somewhat ruinous aspect, felt mild and genial. There was also at the end of the apartment a stack of wood, large enough to maintain the fire had they been to remain there a week. Two or three long tables in the hall stood covered and ready for their reception; and, on looking more closely, several large hampers were found in a corner, containing cold provisions of every kind, prepared with great care, for their immediate use. The eyes of the good Burgess of Soleure twinkled when he beheld the young men in the act of transferring the supper from the hampers and arranging it on the table.

"Well," said he, "these poor men of Bâle have saved their character; since, if they have fallen short in welcome, they have abounded in good cheer."

"Ah, friend!" said Arnold Biederman, "the absence of the landlord is a great deduction from the entertainment. Better half an apple from the hand of your host, than a bridal feast without his company."

"We owe them the less for their banquet," said the Banneret. "But, from the doubtful language they held, I should judge it meet to keep a strong guard to-night, and even that some of our young men should, from time to time, patrol around the old ruins. The place is strong and defensible, and so far our thanks are due to those who have acted as our quarter-masters. We will, however, with your permission, my honoured brethren, examine the house within, and then arrange regular guards and patrols.—To your duty then, young men, and search these ruins carefully,—they may perchance contain more than ourselves; for we are now near one who, like a pilfering fox, moves more willingly by night than by day, and seeks his prey amidst ruins and wildernesses rather than in the open field."

All agreed to this proposal. The young men took torches, of which a good provision had been left for their use, and made a strict search through the ruins.¹³⁶

The greater part of the castle was much more wasted and ruinous than the portion which the citizens of Bâle seemed to have destined for the accommodation of the embassy. Some parts were roofless, and the whole desolate. The glare of light—the gleam of arms—the sound of the human voice, and echoes of mortal tread, startled from their dark recesses bats, owls, and other birds of ill omen, the usual inhabitants of such time-worn edifices, whose flight through the desolate chambers repeatedly occasioned alarm amongst those who heard the noise without seeing the cause, and shouts of laughter when it became known. They discovered that the deep moat surrounded their place of retreat on all sides, and of course that they were in safety against any attack which could be made from without, except it was attempted by the main entrance, which it was easy to barricade, and guard with sentinels. They also ascertained by strict search, that though it was possible an individual might be concealed amid such a waste of ruins, yet it was altogether impossible that any number which might be formidable to so large a party as their own could have remained there without a certainty of discovery. These particulars were reported to the Banneret, who directed Donnerhugel to take charge of a body of six of the young men, such as he should himself choose, to patrol on the outside of the building till the first cock-crowing, and at that hour to return to the castle, when the same number were to take the duty till morning dawned, and then be relieved in their turn. Rudolph declared his own intention to remain on guard the whole night; and as he was equally remarkable for vigilance as for strength and courage, the external watch was considered as safely provided for, it being settled that, in case of any sudden encounter, the deep and hoarse sound of the Swiss bugle should be the signal for sending support to the patrolling party.

Within side the castle the precautions were taken with equal vigilance. A sentinel, to be relieved every two hours, was appointed to take post at the principal gate, and other two kept watch on the other side of the castle, although the moat appeared to insure safety in that quarter.

These precautions being taken, the remainder of the party sat down to refresh themselves, the deputies occupying the upper part of the hall, while those of their escort modestly arranged themselves in the lower end of the same large apartment. Quantities of hay and straw, which were left piled in the wide castle, were put to the purpose for which undoubtedly they had been destined by the citizens of Bâle, and, with the aid of cloaks and mantles, were judged excellent good bedding by a hardy race, who, in war or the chase, were often well satisfied with a much worse night's lair.

The attention of the Bâlese had even gone so far as to provide for Anne of Geierstein separate accommodation, more suitable to her use than that assigned to the men of the party. An apartment, which had probably been the buttery of the castle, entered from the hall, and had also a doorway leading out into a passage connected with the ruins; but this last had hastily, yet carefully, been built up with large hewn stones taken from the ruins; without mortar, indeed, or any other cement, but so well secured by their own weight, that an attempt to displace them must have alarmed not only any one who might be in the apartment itself, but also those who were in the hall adjacent, or indeed in any part of the castle. In the small room thus carefully arranged and secured there were two pallet-beds and a large fire, which blazed on the hearth, and gave warmth and comfort to the apartment. Even the means of devotion were not forgotten, a small crucifix of bronze being hung over a table, on which lay a breviary.

Those who first discovered this little place of retreat came back loud in praise of the delicacy of the citizens of Bâle, who, while preparing for the general accommodation of the strangers, had not failed to provide separately and peculiarly for that of their female companion.

Arnold Biederman felt the kindness of this conduct. "We should pity our friends of Bâle, and not nourish resentment against them," he said. "They have stretched their kindness towards us as far as their personal apprehensions permitted; and that is saying no small matter for them, my masters, for no passion is so unutterably selfish as that of fear.—Anne, my love, thou art fatigued. Go to the retreat provided for you, and Lizette shall bring you from this abundant mass of provisions what will be fittest for your evening meal."

So saying, he led his niece into the little bedroom, and, looking round with an air of complacency, wished her good repose; but there was something on the maiden's brow which seemed to augur that her uncle's wishes would not be fulfilled. From the moment she had left Switzerland, her looks had become clouded; her intercourse with those who approached her had grown more brief and rare; her whole appearance was marked with secret anxiety or secret sorrow. This did not escape her uncle, who naturally imputed it to the pain of parting from him, which was probably soon to take place, and to her regret at leaving the tranquil spot in which so many years of her youth had been spent.

But Anne of Geierstein had no sooner entered the apartment than her whole frame trembled violently, and the colour leaving her cheeks entirely, she sank down on one of the pallets, where, resting her elbows on her knees, and pressing her hands on her forehead, she rather resembled a person borne down by mental distress, or oppressed by some severe illness, than one who, tired with a journey, was in haste to betake herself to needful rest. Arnold was not quicksighted as to

the many sources of female passion. He saw that his niece suffered; but imputing it only to the causes already mentioned, augmented by the hysterical effects often produced by fatigue, he gently blamed her for having departed from her character of a Swiss maiden ere she was yet out of reach of a Swiss breeze of wind. "Thou must not let the dames of Germany or Flanders think that our daughters have degenerated from their mothers; else must we fight the battles of Sempach and Laupen over again, to convince the Emperor, and this haughty Duke of Burgundy, that our men are of the same mettle with their forefathers. And as for our parting, I do not fear it. My brother is a Count of the Empire, indeed, and therefore he must needs satisfy himself that everything over which he possesses any title shall be at his command, and sends for thee to prove his right of doing so. But I know him well: He will no sooner be satisfied that he may command thy attendance at pleasure, than he will concern himself about thee no more. Thee? Alas! poor thing, in what couldst thou aid his courtly intrigues and ambitious plans? No, no—thou art not for the noble Count's purpose, and must be content to trudge back to rule the dairy at Geierstein, and be the darling of thine old peasantlike uncle."

"Would to God we were there even now!" said the maiden, in a tone of wretchedness which she strove in vain to conceal or suppress.

"That may hardly be till we have executed the purpose which brought us hither," said the literal Landamman. "But lay thee on thy pallet, Anne—take a morsel of food, and three drops of wine, and thou wilt wake to-morrow as gay as on a Swiss holiday, when the pipe sounds the *réveille*."

Anne was now able to plead a severe headache, and declining all refreshment, which she declared herself incapable of tasting, she bade her uncle good-night. She then desired Lizette to get some food for herself, cautioning her, as she returned, to make as little noise as possible, and not to break her repose if she should have the good fortune to fall asleep. Arnold Biederman then kissed his niece, and returned to the hall, where his colleagues in office were impatient to commence an attack on the provisions which were in readiness; to which the escort of young men, diminished by the patrols and sentinels, were no less disposed than their seniors.¹⁴¹

The signal of assault was given by the Deputy from Schwitz, the eldest of the party, pronouncing in patriarchal form a benediction over the meal. The travellers then commenced their operations with a vivacity which showed that the uncertainty whether they should get any food, and the delays which had occurred in arranging themselves in their quarters, had infinitely increased their appetites. Even the Landamman, whose moderation sometimes approached to abstinence, seemed that night in a more genial humour than ordinary. His friend of Schwitz, after his example, ate, drank, and spoke more than usual; while the rest of the deputies pushed their meal to the verge of a carousal. The elder Philipson marked the scene with an attentive and anxious eye, confining his applications to the wine-cup to such pledges as the politeness of the times called upon him to reply to. His son had left the hall just as the banquet began, in the manner which we are now to relate.

Arthur had proposed to himself to join the youths who were to perform the duty of sentinels within, or patrols on the outside of their place of repose, and had indeed made some arrangement for that purpose with Sigismund, the third of the Landamman's sons. But while about to steal a parting glance at Anne of Geierstein, before offering his service as he proposed, there appeared on her brow such a deep and solemn expression, as diverted his thoughts from every other subject, excepting the anxious doubts as to what could possibly have given rise to such a change. The placid openness of brow; the eye which expressed conscious and fearless innocence; the lips which, seconded by a look as frank as her words, seemed ever ready to speak, in kindness and in confidence, that which the heart dictated, were for the moment entirely changed in character and expression, and in a degree and manner for which no ordinary cause could satisfactorily account. Fatigue might have banished the rose from the maiden's beautiful complexion, and sickness or pain might have dimmed her eye and clouded her brow. But the look of deep dejection with which she fixed her eyes at times on the ground, and the startled and terrified glance which she cast around her at other intervals, must have had their rise in some different source. Neither could illness or weariness explain the manner in which her lips were contracted or compressed together, like one who makes up her mind to act or behold something that is fearful, or account for the tremor which seemed at times to steal over her insensibly, though by a strong effort she was able at intervals to throw it off. For this change of expression there must be in the heart some deeply melancholy and afflicting cause. What could that cause be?

It is dangerous for youth to behold beauty in the pomp of all her charms, with every look bent upon conquest—more dangerous to see her in the hour of unaffected and unapprehensive ease and simplicity, yielding herself to the graceful whim of the moment, and as willing to be pleased as desirous of pleasing. There are minds which may be still more affected by gazing on beauty in sorrow, and feeling that pity, that desire of comforting the lovely mourner, which the poet has described as so nearly akin to love. But to a spirit of that romantic and adventurous cast which the Middle Ages frequently produced, the sight of a young and amiable person evidently in a state of terror and suffering, which had no visible cause, was perhaps still more impressive than beauty, in her pride, her tenderness, or her sorrow. Such sentiments, it must be remembered, were not confined to the highest ranks only, but might then be found in all classes of society which were raised above the mere peasant or artisan. Young Philipson gazed on Anne of Geierstein with such intense curiosity, mingled with pity and tenderness, that the bustling scene around him seemed to vanish from his eyes, and leave no one in the noisy hall save himself and the object of his interest.

What could it be that so evidently oppressed and almost quailed a spirit so well balanced, and a courage so well tempered, when, being guarded by the swords of the bravest men perhaps to be found in Europe, and lodged in a place of strength, even the most timid of her sex might have found confidence? Surely if an attack were to be made upon them, the clamour of a conflict in such circumstances could scarce be more terrific than the roar of those cataracts which he had seen her despise? At least, he thought, she ought to be aware that there is one, who is bound by friendship and gratitude to fight to the death in her defence. Would to Heaven, he continued in the same reverie, it were possible to convey to her, without sign or speech, the assurance of my unalterable resolution to protect her in the worst of perils!—As such thoughts streamed through his mind, Anne raised her eyes in one of those fits of deep feeling which seemed to overwhelm her; and, while she cast them round the hall, with a look of apprehension, as if she expected to see amid the well-known companions of her journey some strange and unwelcome apparition, they encountered the fixed and anxious gaze of young Philipson. They were instantly bent on the ground, while a deep blush showed how much she was conscious of having attracted his attention by her previous deportment.

Arthur, on his part, with equal consciousness, blushed as deeply as the maiden herself, and drew himself back from her observation. But when Anne rose up, and was escorted by her uncle to her bedchamber, in the manner we have already mentioned, it seemed to Philipson as if she had carried with her from the apartment the lights with which it was illuminated, and left it in the twilight melancholy of some funeral hall. His deep musings were pursuing the subject which occupied them thus anxiously, when the manly voice of Donnerhugel spoke close in his ear—

"What, comrade, has our journey to-day fatigued you so much that you go to sleep upon your feet?"

"Now Heaven forbid, Hauptman," said the Englishman, starting from his reverie, and addressing Rudolph by this name (signifying Captain, or literally Head-man), which the youth of the expedition had by unanimous consent bestowed on him,—*"Heaven forbid I should sleep, if there be ought like action in the wind."*

"Where dost thou propose to be at cock-crow?" said the Swiss.

"Where duty shall call me, or your experience, noble Hauptman, shall appoint," replied Arthur. "But, with your leave, I purposed to take Sigismund's guard on the bridge till midnight or morning dawn. He still feels the sprain which he received in his spring after yonder chamois, and I persuaded him to take some uninterrupted rest, as the best mode of restoring his strength."

"He will do well to keep his counsel, then," again whispered Donnerhugel; "the old Landamman is not a man to make allowances for mishaps, when they interfere with duty. Those who are under his orders should have as few brains as a bull, as strong limbs as a bear, and be as impassable as lead or iron to all the casualties of life, and all the weaknesses of humanity."

Arthur replied in the same tone: "I have been the Landamman's guest for some time, and have seen no specimens of any such rigid discipline."

"You are a stranger," said the Swiss, "and the old man has too much hospitality to lay you under the least restraint. You are a volunteer, too, in whatever share you choose to take in our sports or our military duty; and therefore, when I ask you to walk abroad with me at the first cock-crowing, it is only in the event that such exercise shall entirely consist with your own pleasure."

"I consider myself as under your command for the time," said Philipson; "but, not to bandy courtesy, at cock-crow I shall be relieved from my watch on the drawbridge, and will be by that time glad to exchange the post for a more extended walk."

"Do you not choose more of this fatiguing, and probably unnecessary duty, than may befit your strength?" said Rudolph.

"I take no more than you do," said Arthur, "as you propose not to take rest till morning."

"True," answered Donnerhugel, "but I am a Swiss."¹⁴⁶

"And I," answered Philipson quickly, "am an Englishman."

"I did not mean what I said in the sense you take it," said Rudolph, laughing; "I only meant, that I am more interested in this matter than you can be, who are a stranger to the cause in which we are personally engaged."

"I am a stranger, no doubt," replied Arthur; "but a stranger who has enjoyed your hospitality, and who, therefore, claims a right, while with you, to a share in your labours and dangers."

"Be it so," said Rudolph Donnerhugel. "I shall have finished my first rounds at the hour when the sentinels at the castle are relieved, and shall be ready to recommence them in your good company."

"Content," said the Englishman. "And now I will to my post, for I suspect Sigismund is blaming me already, as oblivious of my promise."

They hastened together to the gate, where Sigismund willingly yielded up his weapon and his guard to young Philipson, confirming the idea sometimes entertained of him, that he was the most indolent and least spirited of the family of Geierstein. Rudolph could not suppress his displeasure.

"What would the Landamman say," he demanded, "if he saw thee thus quietly yield up post and partisan to a stranger?"

"He would say I did well," answered the young man, nothing daunted; "for he is for ever reminding us to let the stranger have his own way in everything; and English Arthur stands on this bridge by his own wish, and no asking of mine.—Therefore, kind Arthur, since thou wilt barter ¹⁴⁷warm straw and a sound sleep for frosty air and a clear moonlight, I make thee welcome with all my heart. Hear your duty. You are to stop all who enter, or attempt to enter, or till they give the password. If they are strangers, you must give alarm. But you will suffer such of our friends as are known to you to pass outwards, without challenge or alarm, because the deputation may find occasion to send messengers abroad."

"A murrain on thee, thou lazy losel!" said Rudolph—"Thou art the only sluggard of thy kin."

"Then am I the only wise man of them all," said the youth.—"Hark ye, brave Hauptman, ye have supped this evening,—have ye not?"

"It is a point of wisdom, ye owl," answered the Bernese, "not to go into the forest fasting."

"If it is wisdom to eat when we are hungry," answered Sigismund, "there can be no folly in sleeping when we are weary." So saying, and after a desperate yawn or two, the relieved sentinel halted off, giving full effect to the sprain of which he complained.

"Yet there is strength in those loitering limbs, and valour in that indolent and sluggish spirit," said Rudolph to the Englishman. "But it is time that I, who censure others, should betake me to my own task.—Hither, comrades of the watch, hither."

The Bernese accompanied these words with a whistle, which brought from within six young men, whom he had previously chosen for the duty, and who, after a hurried supper, now waited his summons. One or two of them had large bloodhounds or lyme-dogs, which, though usually ¹⁴⁸employed in the pursuit of animals of chase, were also excellent for discovering ambuscades, in which duty their services were now to be employed. One of these animals was held in a leash, by the person who, forming the advance of the party, went about twenty yards in front of them; a second was the property of Donnerhugel himself, who had the creature singularly under command. Three of his companions attended him closely, and the two others followed, one of whom bore a horn of the Bernese wild bull, by way of bugle. This little party crossed the moat by the temporary bridge, and moved on to the verge of the forest, which lay adjacent to the castle, and the skirts of which were most likely to conceal any ambuscade that could be apprehended. The moon was now up, and near the full, so that Arthur, from the elevation on which the castle stood, could trace their slow, cautious march, amid the broad silver light, until they were lost in the depths of the forest.

When this object had ceased to occupy his eyes, the thoughts of his lonely watch again returned to Anne of Geierstein, and to the singular expression of distress and apprehension which had that evening clouded her beautiful features. Then the blush which had chased, for the moment, paleness and terror from her countenance, at the instant his eyes encountered hers—was it anger—was it modesty—was it some softer feeling, more gentle than the one, more tender than the other? Young Philipson, who, like Chaucer's Squire, was "as modest as a maid," almost trembled to give to that look the favourable interpretation which a more self-satisfied gallant would have applied to it without scruple. No hue of rising or setting day ¹⁴⁹was ever so lovely in the eyes of the young man as that blush was in his recollection; nor did ever enthusiastic visionary or poetical dreamer find out so many fanciful forms in the clouds, as Arthur divined various interpretations from the indications of interest which had passed over the beautiful countenance of the Swiss maiden.

In the meantime, the thought suddenly burst on his reverie, that it could little concern him what was the cause of the perturbation she had exhibited. They had met at no distant period for the first time—they must soon part for ever. She could be nothing more to him than the remembrance of a beautiful vision, and he could have no other part in her memory save as a stranger from a foreign land, who had been a sojourner for a season in her uncle's house, but whom she could never expect to see again. When this idea intruded on the train of romantic visions which agitated him, it was like the sharp stroke of the harpoon, which awakens the whale from slumbering torpidity into violent action. The gateway in which the young soldier kept his watch seemed suddenly too narrow for him. He rushed across the temporary bridge, and hastily traversed a short space of ground in front of the *tête de pont*, or defensive work, on which its outer extremity rested.

Here for a time he paced the narrow extent to which he was confined by his duty as a sentinel, with long and rapid strides, as if he had been engaged by vow to take the greatest possible quantity of exercise upon that limited space of ground. His exertion, however, produced the effect of in some degree composing his mind, recalling him to himself, and reminding him of the numerous ¹⁵⁰reasons which prohibited his fixing his attention, much more his affections, upon this young person, however fascinating she was.

I have surely, he thought, as he slackened his pace, and shouldered his heavy partisan, sense enough left to recollect my condition and my duties—to think of my father, to whom I am all in all—and to think also on the dishonour which must accrue to me, were I capable of winning the affections of a frank-hearted and confiding girl, to whom I could never do justice by dedicating my life to return them. "No," he said to himself, "she will soon forget me, and I will study to remember her no otherwise than I would a pleasing dream, which hath for a moment crossed a night of perils and dangers, such as my life seems doomed to be."

As he spoke, he stopped short in his walk, and as he rested on his weapon a tear rose unbidden to his eye, and stole down his cheek without being wiped away. But he combated this gentler mood of passion as he had formerly battled with that which was of a wilder and more desperate character. Shaking off the dejection and sinking of spirit which he felt creeping upon him, he resumed, at the same time, the air and attitude of an attentive sentinel, and recalled his mind to the duties of his watch, which, in the tumult of his feelings, he had almost forgotten. But what was his astonishment, when, as he looked out on the clear landscape, there passed from the bridge towards the forest, crossing him in the broad moonlight, the living and moving likeness of Anne of Geierstein!¹⁵¹

CHAPTER X.

We know not when we sleep nor when we wake.

Visions distinct and perfect cross our eye,

Which to the slumberer seem realities;

And while they waked, some men have seen such sights

As set at naught the evidence of sense,

And left them well persuaded they were dreaming.

ANONYMOUS.

The apparition of Anne of Geierstein crossed her lover—her admirer, at least we must call him—within shorter time than we can tell the story. But it was distinct, perfect, and undoubted. In the very instant when the young Englishman, shaking off his fond despondency, raised his head to look out upon the scene of his

watch, she came from the nearer end of the bridge, crossing the path of the sentinel, upon whom she did not even cast a look, and passed with a rapid yet steady pace towards the verge of the woodland.

It would have been natural, though Arthur had been directed not to challenge persons who left the castle, but only such as might approach it, that he should nevertheless, had it only been in mere civility, have held some communication, however slight, with the maiden as she crossed his post. But the suddenness of her appearance took from him for the instant both speech and motion. It seemed as if his own imagination had raised up a phantom, presenting to his outward senses the form and features which engrossed his mind; and 152he was silent, partly at least from the idea that what he gazed upon was immaterial and not of this world.

It would have been no less natural that Anne of Geierstein should have in some manner acknowledged the person who had spent a considerable time under the same roof with her, had been often her partner in the dance, and her companion in the field; but she did not evince the slightest token of recognition, nor even look towards him as she passed; her eye was on the wood, to which she advanced swiftly and steadily, and she was hidden by its boughs ere Arthur had recollected himself sufficiently to determine what to do.

His first feeling was anger at himself for suffering her to pass unquestioned, when it might well chance that upon any errand which called her forth at so extraordinary a time and place he might have been enabled to afford her assistance, or at least advice. This sentiment was for a short time so predominant, that he ran towards the place where he had seen the skirt of her dress disappear, and, whispering her name as loud as the fear of alarming the castle permitted, conjured her to return, and hear him but for a few brief moments. No answer, however, was returned; and when the branches of the trees began to darken over his head and to intercept the moonlight, he recollected that he was leaving his post, and exposing his fellow-travellers, who were trusting in his vigilance, to the danger of surprise.

He hastened, therefore, back to the castle gate, with matter for deeper and more inextricable doubt and anxiety than had occupied him during the commencement of his watch. He asked himself 153in vain with what purpose that modest young maiden, whose manners were frank, but whose conduct had always seemed so delicate and reserved, could sally forth at midnight like a damsel-errant in romance, when she was in a strange country and suspicious neighbourhood; yet he rejected, as he would have shrunk from blasphemy, any interpretation which could have thrown censure upon Anne of Geierstein. No, nothing was she capable of doing for which a friend could have to blush. But connecting her previous agitation with the extraordinary fact of her leaving the castle, alone and defenceless, at such an hour, Arthur necessarily concluded it must argue some cogent reason, and, as was most likely, of an unpleasant nature.—"I will watch her return," he internally uttered, "and, if she will give me an opportunity, I will convey to her the assurance that there is one faithful bosom in her neighbourhood, which is bound in honour and gratitude to pour out every drop of its blood, if by doing so it can protect her from the slightest inconvenience. This is no silly flight of romance, for which common-sense has a right to reproach me; it is only what I ought to do, what I must do, or forego every claim to be termed a man of honesty or honour."

Yet scarce did the young man think himself anchored on a resolution which seemed unobjectionable, than his thoughts were again adrift. He reflected that Anne might have a desire to visit the neighbouring town of Bâle, to which she had been invited the day before, and where her uncle had friends. It was indeed an uncommon hour to select for such a purpose; but Arthur was aware that the Swiss maidens feared neither solitary 154walks nor late hours, and that Anne would have walked among her own hills by moonlight much farther than the distance betwixt their place of encampment and Bâle, to see a sick friend, or for any similar purpose. To press himself on her confidence, then, might be impertinence, not kindness; and as she had passed him without taking the slightest notice of his presence, it was evident she did not mean voluntarily to make him her confidant; and probably she was involved in no difficulties where his aid could be useful. In that case, the duty of a gentleman was to permit her to return as she had gone forth, unnoticed and unquestioned, leaving it with herself to hold communication with him or not as she should choose.

Another idea, belonging to the age, also passed through his mind, though it made no strong impression upon it. This form, so perfectly resembling Anne of Geierstein, might be a deception of the sight, or it might be one of those fantastic apparitions, concerning which there were so many tales told in all countries, and of which Switzerland and Germany had, as Arthur well knew, their full share. The internal and undefinable feelings which restrained him from accosting the maiden, as might have been natural for him to have done, are easily explained, on the supposition that his mortal frame shrank from an encounter with a being of a different nature. There had also been some expressions of the magistrate of Bâle, which might apply to the castle's being liable to be haunted by beings from another world. But though the general belief in such ghostly apparitions prevented the Englishman from being positively incredulous on the subject, yet the instructions of 155his father, a man of great intrepidity and distinguished good sense, had taught him to be extremely unwilling to refer anything to supernatural interferences which was capable of explanation by ordinary rules; and he therefore shook off, without difficulty, any feelings of superstitious fear which for an instant connected itself with his nocturnal adventure. He resolved finally to suppress all disquieting conjecture on the subject, and to await firmly, if not patiently, the return of the fair vision, which, if it should not fully explain the mystery, seemed at least to afford the only chance of throwing light upon it.

Fixed, therefore, in purpose, he traversed the walk which his duty permitted, with his eyes fixed on the part of the forest where he had seen the beloved form disappear, and forgetful for the moment that his watch had any other purpose than to observe her return. But from this abstraction of mind he was roused by a distant sound in the forest, which seemed the clash of armour. Recalled at once to a sense of his duty, and its importance to his father and his fellow-travellers, Arthur planted himself on the temporary bridge, where a stand could best be made, and turned both eyes and ears to watch for approaching danger. The sound of arms and footsteps came nearer—spears and helmets advanced from the greenwood glade, and twinkled in the moonlight. But the stately form of Rudolph Donnerhugel, marching in front, was easily recognised, and announced to our sentinel the return of the patrol. Upon their approach to the bridge, the challenge, and interchange of sign and countersign, which is usual on such occasions, took place in due form; and as 156Rudolph's party filed off one after another into the castle, he commanded them to wake their companions, with whom he intended to renew the patrol, and at the same time to send a relief to Arthur Philipson, whose watch on the bridge was now ended. This last fact was confirmed by the deep and distant toll of the Minster clock from the town of Bâle, which, prolonging its sullen sound over field and forest, announced that midnight was past.

"And now, comrade," continued Rudolph to the Englishman, "have the cold air and long watch determined thee to retire to food and rest, or dost thou still hold the intention of partaking our rounds?"

In very truth it would have been Arthur's choice to have remained in the place where he was, for the purpose of watching Anne of Geierstein's return from her mysterious excursion. He could not easily have found an excuse for this, however, and he was unwilling to give the haughty Donnerhugel the least suspicion that he was inferior in hardihood, or in the power of enduring fatigue, to any of the tall mountaineers, whose companion he chanced to be for the present. He did not, therefore, indulge even a moment's hesitation; but while he restored the borrowed partisan to the sluggish Sigismund, who came from the castle yawning and stretching himself like one whose slumbers had been broken by no welcome summons, when they were deepest and sweetest, he acquainted Rudolph that he retained his purpose of partaking in his reconnoitring duty. They were speedily joined by the rest of the patrolling party, amongst whom was Rudiger, the eldest son 157of the Landamman of Unterwalden; and when, led by the Bernese champion, they had reached the skirts of the forest, Rudolph commanded three of them to attend Rudiger Biederman.

"Thou wilt make thy round to the left side," said the Bernese; "I will draw off to the right—see thou keepest a good look-out, and we will meet merrily at the place appointed. Take one of the hounds with you. I will keep Wolf-fanger, who will open on a Burgundian as readily as on a bear."

Rudiger moved off with his party to the left, according to the directions received; and Rudolph, having sent forward one of his number in front, and stationed another in the rear, commanded the third to follow himself and Arthur Philipson, who thus constituted the main body of the patrol. Having intimated to their immediate attendant to keep at such distance as to allow them freedom of conversation, Rudolph addressed the Englishman with the familiarity which their recent friendship had created.—"And now, King Arthur, what thinks the Majesty of England of our Helvetic youth? Could they win guerdon in tilt or tourney, thinkest thou, noble prince? Or would they rank but amongst the coward knights of Cornouailles?"^[5]

"For tilt and tourney I cannot answer," said Arthur, summoning up his spirits to reply, "because I never beheld one of you mounted on a steed, or having spear in rest. But if strong limbs and stout hearts are to be considered, I would match you Swiss gallants with those of any country in the universe, where manhood is to be looked for, whether it be in heart or hand."¹⁵⁸

"Thou speakest us fair; and, young Englishman," said Rudolph, "know that we think as highly of thee, of which I will presently afford thee a proof. Thou talkedst but now of horses. I know but little of them; yet I judge thou wouldst not buy a steed which thou hadst only seen covered with trappings, or encumbered with saddle and bridle, but wouldst desire to look at him when stripped, and in his natural state of freedom?"

"Ay, marry, would I," said Arthur. "Thou hast spoken on that as if thou hadst been born in a district called Yorkshire, which men call the merriest part of Merry England."

"Then I tell thee," said Rudolph Donnerhugel, "that thou hast seen our Swiss youth but half, since thou hast observed them as yet only in their submissive attendance upon the elders of their Cantons, or, at most, in their mountain-sports, which, though they may show men's outward strength and activity, can throw no light on the spirit and disposition by which that strength and activity are to be guided and directed in matters of high enterprise."

The Swiss probably designed that these remarks should excite the curiosity of the stranger. But the Englishman had the image, look, and form of Anne of Geierstein, as she had passed him in the silent hours of his watch, too constantly before him, to enter willingly upon a subject of conversation totally foreign to what agitated his mind. He, therefore, only compelled himself to reply in civility, that he had no doubt his esteem for the Swiss, both aged and young, would increase in proportion with his more intimate knowledge of the nation.¹⁵⁹

He was then silent; and Donnerhugel, disappointed, perhaps, at having failed to excite his curiosity, walked also in silence by his side. Arthur, meanwhile, was considering with himself whether he should mention to his companion the circumstance which occupied his own mind, in the hope that the kinsman of Anne of Geierstein, and ancient friend of her house, might be able to throw some light on the subject.

But he felt within his mind an insurmountable objection to converse with the Swiss on a subject in which Anne was concerned. That Rudolph made pretensions to her favour could hardly be doubted; and though Arthur, had the question been put to him, must in common consistency have resigned all competition on the subject, still he could not bear to think on the possibility of his rival's success, and would not willingly have endured to hear him pronounce her name.

Perhaps it was owing to this secret irritability that Arthur, though he made every effort to conceal and to overcome the sensation, still felt a secret dislike to Rudolph Donnerhugel, whose frank but somewhat coarse familiarity was mingled with a certain air of protection and patronage, which the Englishman thought was by no means called for. He met the openness of the Bernese, indeed, with equal frankness, but he was ever and anon tempted to reject or repel the tone of superiority by which it was accompanied. The circumstances of their duel had given the Swiss no ground for such triumph; nor did Arthur feel himself included in that roll of the Swiss youth over whom Rudolph exercised domination by general consent. So little did Philipson relish this affectation of superiority, that the poor jest, that termed him King Arthur, although quite indifferent to him when applied by any of the Biedermans, was rather offensive when Rudolph took the same liberty; so that he often found himself in the awkward condition of one who is internally irritated, without having any outward manner of testifying it with propriety. Undoubtedly, the root of all this tacit dislike to the young Bernese was a feeling of rivalry; but it was a feeling which Arthur dared not avow even to himself. It was sufficiently powerful, however, to suppress the slight inclination he had felt to speak with Rudolph on the passage of the night which had most interested him; and as the topic of conversation introduced by his companion had been suffered to drop, they walked on side by side in silence, "with the beard on the shoulder," as the Spaniard says—looking round, that is, on all hands; and thus performing the duty of a vigilant watch.

At length, after they had walked nearly a mile through forest and field, making a circuit around the ruins of Graffs-lust, of such an extent as to leave no room for an ambush betwixt them and the place, the old hound, led by the vidette who was foremost, stopped, and uttered a low growl.

"How now, Wolf-fanger!" said Rudolph, advancing.—"What, old fellow! dost thou not know friends from foes? Come, what sayest thou, on better thoughts?—Thou must not lose character in thy old age—try it again."

The dog raised his head, snuffed the air all around, as if he understood what his master had said, then shook his head and tail, as if answering to his voice.¹⁶¹

"Why, there it is now," said Donnerhugel, patting the animal's shaggy back; "second thoughts are worth gold; thou seest it is a friend after all."

The dog again shook his tail, and moved forward with the same unconcern as before; Rudolph fell back into his place, and his companion said to him—

"We are about to meet Rudiger and our companions, I suppose, and the dog hears their footsteps, though we cannot."

"It can scarcely yet be Rudiger," said the Bernese; "his walk around the castle is of a wider circumference than ours. Some one approaches, however, for Wolf-fanger is again dissatisfied—Look sharply out on all sides."

As Rudolph gave his party the word to be on the alert, they reached an open glade, in which were scattered, at considerable distance from each other, some old pine-trees of gigantic size, which seemed yet huger and blacker than ordinary, from their broad sable tops and shattered branches being displayed against the clear and white moonlight. "We shall here, at least," said the Swiss, "have the advantage of seeing clearly whatever approaches. But I judge," said he, after looking around for a minute, "it is but some wolf or deer that has crossed our path, and the scent disturbs the hound—Hold—stop—yes, it must be so; he goes on."

The dog accordingly proceeded, after having given some signs of doubt, uncertainty, and even anxiety. Apparently, however, he became reconciled to what had disturbed him, and proceeded once more in the ordinary manner.

"This is singular!" said Arthur Philipson; "and, to my thinking, I saw an object close by ¹⁶²yonder patch of thicket, where, as well as I can guess, a few thorn and hazel bushes surround the stems of four or five large trees."

"My eye has been on that very thicket for these five minutes past, and I saw nothing," said Rudolph.

"Nay, but," answered the young Englishman, "I saw the object, whatever it was, while you were engaged in attending to the dog. And by your permission, I will forward and examine the spot."

"Were you, strictly speaking, under my command," said Donnerhugel, "I would command you to keep your place. If they be foes, it is essential that we should remain together. But you are a volunteer in our watch, and therefore may use your freedom."

"I thank you," answered Arthur, and sprang quickly forward.

He felt, indeed, at the moment, that he was not acting courteously as an individual, nor perhaps correctly as a soldier; and that he ought to have rendered obedience, for the time, to the captain of the party in which he had enlisted himself. But, on the other hand, the object which he had seen, though at a distance and imperfectly, seemed to bear a resemblance to the retiring form of Anne of Geierstein, as she had vanished from his eyes, an hour or two before, under the cover of the forest; and his ungovernable curiosity to ascertain whether it might not be the maiden in person, allowed him to listen to no other consideration.

Ere Rudolph had spoken out his few words of reply, Arthur was halfway to the thicket. It was, as it had seemed at a distance, of small extent, ¹⁶³and not fitted to hide any person who did not actually couch down amongst the dwarf bushes and underwood. Anything white, also, which bore the human size and form must, he thought, have been discovered among the dark-red stems and swarthy-coloured bushes which were before him. These observations were mingled with other thoughts. If it was Anne of Geierstein whom he had a second time seen, she must have left the more open path, desirous probably of avoiding notice; and what right or title had he to direct upon her the observation of the patrol? He had, he thought, observed that, in general, the maiden rather repelled than encouraged the attentions of Rudolph Donnerhugel; or, where it would have been discourteous to have rejected them entirely, that she endured without encouraging them. What, then, could be the propriety of his intruding upon her private walk, singular, indeed, from time and place, but which, on that account, she might be more desirous to keep secret from the observation of one who was disagreeable to her? Nay, was it not possible that Rudolph might derive advantage to his otherwise unacceptable suit, by possessing the knowledge of something which the maiden desired to be concealed?

As these thoughts pressed upon him, Arthur made a pause, with his eyes fixed on the thicket, from which he was now scarce thirty yards distant; and although scrutinising it with all the keen accuracy which his uncertainty and anxiety dictated, he was actuated by a strong feeling that it would be wisest to turn back to his companions, and report to Rudolph that his eyes had deceived him.¹⁶⁴

But while he was yet undecided whether to advance or return, the object which he had seen became again visible on the verge of the thicket, and advanced straight towards him, bearing, as on the former occasion, the exact dress and figure of Anne of Geierstein! This vision—for the time, place, and suddenness of the appearance made it seem rather an illusion than a reality—struck Arthur with surprise, which amounted to terror. The figure passed within a spear's-length, unchallenged by him, and giving not the slightest sign of recognition; and, directing its course to the right hand of Rudolph, and the two or three who were with him, was again lost among the broken ground and bushes.

Once more the young man was reduced to a state of the most inextricable doubt; nor was he roused from the stupor into which he was thrown, till the voice of the Bernese sounded in his ear—"Why, how now, King Arthur—art thou asleep, or art thou wounded?"

"Neither," said Philipson, collecting himself; "only much surprised."

"Surprised? and at what, most royal!"—

"Forbear foolery," said Arthur, somewhat sternly, "and answer as thou art a man—Did she not meet thee?—didst thou not see her?"

"See her!—see whom?" said Donnerhugel. "I saw no one. And I could have sworn you had seen no one either, for I had you in my eye the whole time of your absence, excepting two or three moments. If you saw aught, why gave you not the alarm?"

"Because it was only a woman," answered Arthur, faintly.¹⁶⁵

"Only a woman!" repeated Rudolph, in a tone of contempt. "By my honest word, King Arthur, if I had not seen pretty flashes of valour fly from thee at times, I should be apt to think that thou hadst only a woman's courage thyself. Strange, that a shadow by night, or a precipice in the day, should quell so bold a spirit as thou hast often shown!"—

"And as I will ever show, when occasion demands it," interrupted the Englishman, with recovered spirit. "But I swear to you, that if I be now daunted, it is by no mere earthly fears that my mind hath been for a moment subdued."

"Let us proceed on our walk," said Rudolph; "we must not neglect the safety of our friends. This appearance, of which thou speakest, may be but a trick to interrupt our duty."

They moved on through the moonlight glades. A minute's reflection restored young Philipson to his full recollection, and with that to the painful consciousness that he had played a ridiculous and unworthy part in the presence of the person whom (of the male sex, at least) he would the very last have chosen as a witness of his weakness.

He ran hastily over the relations which stood betwixt himself, Donnerhugel, the Landamman, his niece, and the rest of that family; and, contrary to the opinion which he had entertained but a short while before, settled in his own mind that it was his duty to mention to the immediate leader under whom he had placed himself, the appearance which he had twice observed in the course of that night's duty. There might be family circumstances—the payment of a vow, perhaps, or some such reason—which might render intelligible to her connections the behaviour of this young lady. Besides, he was for the present a soldier on duty, and these mysteries might be fraught with evils to be anticipated or guarded against; in either case, his companions were entitled to be made aware of what he had seen. It must be supposed that this resolution was adopted when the sense of duty, and of shame for the weakness which he had exhibited, had for the moment subdued Arthur's personal feelings towards Anne of Geierstein—feelings, also, liable to be chilled by the mysterious uncertainty which the events of that evening had cast, like a thick mist, around the object of them.

While the Englishman's reflections were taking this turn, his captain or companion, after a silence of several minutes, at length addressed him.

"I believe," he said, "my dear comrade, that, as being at present your officer, I have some title to hear from you the report of what you have just now seen, since it must be something of importance which could so strongly agitate a mind so firm as yours. But if, in your own opinion, it consists with the general safety to delay your report of what you have seen until we return to the castle, and then to deliver it to the private ear of the Landamman, you have only to intimate your purpose; and, far from urging you to place confidence in me personally, though I hope I am not undeserving of it, I will authorise your leaving us, and returning instantly to the castle."

This proposal touched him to whom it was made exactly in the right place. An absolute demand of his confidence might perhaps have been declined; the tone of moderate request and conciliation fell presently in with the Englishman's own reflections.

"I am sensible," he said, "Hauptman, that I ought to mention to you that which I have seen to-night; but on the first occasion, it did not fall within my duty to do so; and, now that I have a second time witnessed the same appearance, I have felt for these few seconds so much surprised at what I have seen, that even yet I can scarce find words to express it."

"As I cannot guess what you may have to say," replied the Bernese, "I must beseech you to be explicit. We are but poor readers of riddles, we thick-headed Switzers."

"Yet it is but a riddle which I have to place before you, Rudolph Donnerhugel," answered the Englishman, "and a riddle which is far beyond my own guessing at." He then proceeded, though not without hesitation, "While you were performing your first patrol amongst the ruins, a female crossed the bridge from within the castle, walked by my post without saying a single word, and vanished under the shadows of the forest."

"Ha!" exclaimed Donnerhugel, and made no further answer.

Arthur proceeded. "Within these five minutes, the same female form passed me a second time, issuing from the little thicket and clump of firs, and disappeared, without exchanging a word. Know, further, this apparition bore the form, face, gait, and dress of your kinswoman, Anne of Geierstein."

"Singular enough," said Rudolph, in a tone of incredulity. "I must not, I suppose, dispute your word, for you would receive doubt on my part as a mortal injury—such is your northern chivalry. Yet, let me say, I have eyes as well as you, and I scarce think they quitted you for a minute. We were not fifty yards from the place where I found you standing in amazement. How, therefore, should not we also have seen that which you say and think you saw?"

"To that I can give no answer," said Arthur. "Perhaps your eyes were not exactly turned upon me during the short space in which I saw this form—perhaps it might be visible—as they say fantastic appearances sometimes are—to only one person at a time."

"You suppose, then, that the appearance was imaginary, or fantastic?" said the Bernese.

"Can I tell you?" replied the Englishman. "The Church gives its warrant that there are such things; and surely it is more natural to believe this apparition to be an illusion, than to suppose that Anne of Geierstein, a gentle and well-nurtured maiden, should be traversing the woods at this wild hour, when safety and propriety so strongly recommend her being within doors."

"There is much in what you say," said Rudolph; "and yet there are stories afloat, though few care to mention them, which seem to allege that Anne of Geierstein is not altogether such as other maidens; and that she has been met with, in body and spirit, where she could hardly have come by her own unassisted efforts."

"Ha!" said Arthur; "so young, so beautiful, and already in league with the destroyer of mankind! It is impossible."

"I said not so," replied the Bernese; "nor have I leisure at present to explain my meaning more fully. As we return to the castle of Graffs-lust, I may have an opportunity to tell you more. But I chiefly brought you on this patrol to introduce you to some friends, whom you will be pleased to know, and who desire your acquaintance; and it is here I expect to meet them."

So saying, he turned round the projecting corner of a rock, and an unexpected scene was presented to the eyes of the young Englishman.

In a sort of nook, or corner, screened by the rocky projection, there burned a large fire of wood, and around it sat, reclined, or lay, twelve or fifteen young men in the Swiss garb, but decorated with ornaments and embroidery, which reflected back the light of the fire. The same red gleam was returned by silver wine-cups,

which circulated from hand to hand with the flasks which filled them. Arthur could also observe the relics of a banquet, to which due honour seemed to have been lately rendered.

The revellers started joyfully up at the sight of Donnerhugel and his companions, and saluted him, easily distinguished as he was by his stature, by the title of Captain, warmly and exultingly uttered, while, at the same time, every tendency to noisy acclamation was cautiously suppressed. The zeal indicated that Rudolph came most welcome—the caution that he came in secret, and was to be received with mystery.

To the general greeting he answered,—“I thank you, my brave comrades. Has Rudiger yet reached you?”

“Thou seest he has not,” said one of the party; “had it been so, we would have detained him here till your coming, brave Captain.”

“He has loitered on his patrol,” said the Bernese. 170 “We too were delayed, yet we are here before him. I bring with me, comrades, the brave Englishman, whom I mentioned to you as a desirable associate in our daring purpose.”

“He is welcome, most welcome to us,” said a young man, whose richly embroidered dress of azure blue gave him an air of authority; “most welcome is he, if he brings with him a heart and a hand to serve our noble task.”

“For both I will be responsible,” said Rudolph. “Pass the wine-cup, then, to the success of our glorious enterprise, and the health of this our new associate!”

While they were replenishing the cups with wine of a quality far superior to any which Arthur had yet tasted in these regions, he thought it right, before engaging himself in the pledge, to learn the secret object of the association which seemed desirous of adopting him.

“Before I engage my poor services to you, fair sirs, since it pleases you to desire them, permit me,” he said, “to ask the purpose and character of the undertaking in which they are to be employed.”

“Shouldst thou have brought him hither,” said the cavalier in blue to Rudolph, “without satisfying him and thyself on that point?”

“Care not thou about it, Lawrenz,” replied the Bernese, “I know my man.—Be it known, then, to you, my good friend,” he continued, addressing the Englishman, “that my comrades and I are determined at once to declare the freedom of the Swiss commerce, and to resist to the death, if it be necessary, all unlawful and extortionate demands on the part of our neighbours.” 171

“I understand so much,” said the young Englishman, “and that the present deputation proceeds to the Duke of Burgundy with remonstrances to that effect.”

“Hear me,” replied Rudolph. “The question is like to be brought to a bloody determination long ere we see the Duke of Burgundy’s most august and most gracious countenance. That his influence should be used to exclude us from Bâle, a neutral town, and pertaining to the empire, gives us cause to expect the worst reception when we enter his own dominions. We have even reason to think that we might have suffered from his hatred already, but for the vigilance of the ward which we have kept. Horsemen, from the direction of La Ferette, have this night reconnoitred our posts; and had they not found us prepared, we had, without question, been attacked in our quarters. But since we have escaped to-night, we must take care for to-morrow. For this purpose, a number of the bravest youth of the city of Bâle, incensed at the pusillanimity of their magistrates, are determined to join us, in order to wipe away the disgrace which the cowardly inhospitality of their magistracy has brought on their native place.”

“That we will do ere the sun, that will rise two hours hence, shall sink into the western sky,” said the cavalier in blue; and those around joined him in stern assent.

“Gentle sirs,” replied Arthur, when there was a pause, “let me remind you, that the embassy which you attend is a peaceful one, and that those who act as its escort ought to avoid anything which can augment the differences which it comes 172 to reconcile. You cannot expect to receive offence in the Duke’s dominions, the privileges of envoys being respected in all civilised countries; and you will, I am sure, desire to offer none.”

“We may be subjected to insult, however,” replied the Bernese, “and that through your concerns, Arthur Philipson, and those of thy father.”

“I understand you not,” replied Philipson.

“Your father,” answered Donnerhugel, “is a merchant, and bears with him wares of small bulk but high value?”

“He does so,” answered Arthur; “and what of that?”

“Marry,” answered Rudolph, “that if it be not better looked to, the Bandog of Burgundy is like to fall heir to a large proportion of your silks, satins, and jewellery work.”

“Silks, satins, and jewels!” exclaimed another of the revellers; “such wares will not pass toll-free where Archibald of Hagenbach hath authority.”

“Fair sirs,” resumed Arthur, after a moment’s consideration, “these wares are my father’s property, not mine; and it is for him, not me, to pronounce how much of them he might be content to part with in the way of toll, rather than give occasion to a fray in which his companions, who have received him into their society, must be exposed to injury as well as himself. I can only say, that he has weighty affairs at the court of Burgundy, which must render him desirous of reaching it in peace with all men; and it is my private belief that, rather than incur the loss and danger of a broil with the garrison of La Ferette, he would be contented to sacrifice all the property which he has at present with him. Therefore, I 173 must request of you, gentlemen, a space to consult his pleasure on this occasion; assuring you, that if it be his will to resist the payment of these duties to Burgundy, you shall find in me one who is fully determined to fight to the last drop of his blood.”

“Good King Arthur,” said Rudolph; “thou art a dutiful observer of the Fifth Commandment, and thy days shall be long in the land. Do not suppose us neglectful of the same duty, although, for the present, we conceive ourselves bound, in the first place, to attend to the weal of our country, the common parent of our fathers and ourselves. But as you know our profound respect for the Landamman, you need not fear that we shall willingly offer him offence, by rashly engaging in hostilities, or without some weighty reason; and an attempt to plunder his guest would have been met, on his part, with resistance to the death. I had hoped to find both you and your father prompt enough to resent such a gross injury. Nevertheless, if your father inclines to present his fleece to be shorn by Archibald of Hagenbach, whose scissors, he will find, clip pretty closely, it would be unnecessary and uncivil in us to interpose. Meantime, you have the advantage of knowing, that in case the Governor of La Ferette should be disposed to strip you of skin as well as fleece, there are more men close at hand than you looked for, whom you will find both able and willing to render you prompt assistance.”

“On these terms,” said the Englishman, “I make my acknowledgments to these gentlemen of Bâle, or whatever other country hath sent them forth, and pledge them in a brotherly cup to our further and more intimate acquaintance.” 174

“Health and prosperity to the United Cantons, and their friends!” answered the Blue Cavalier. “And death and confusion to all besides.”

The cups were replenished; and instead of a shout of applause, the young men around testified their devoted determination to the cause which was thus announced, by grasping each other’s hands, and then brandishing their weapons with a fierce yet noiseless gesture.

“Thus,” said Rudolph Donnerhugel, “our illustrious ancestors, the fathers of Swiss independence, met in the immortal field of Rutli, between Uri and Unterwalden. Thus they swore to each other, under the blue firmament of heaven, that they would restore the liberty of their oppressed country; and history can tell how well they kept their word.”

“And she shall record,” said the Blue Cavalier, “how well the present Switzers can preserve the freedom which their fathers won.—Proceed in your rounds, good Rudolph, and be assured that at the signal of the Hauptman the soldiers will not be far absent;—all is arranged as formerly, unless you have new orders to give us.”

“Hark thee hither, Lawrenz,” said Rudolph to the Blue Cavalier,—and Arthur could hear him say,—“Beware, my friend, that the Rhine wine be not abused;—if there is too much provision of it, manage to destroy the flasks;—a mule may stumble, thou knowest, or so. Give not way to Rudiger in this. He is grown a wine-bibber since he joined us. We must bring both heart and hand to what may be done to-morrow.”—They then whispered so low, that Arthur could hear nothing of their further conference, and bid each other 175 adieu, after clasping hands, as if they were renewing some solemn pledge of union.

Rudolph and his party then moved forward, and were scarce out of sight of their new associates, when the vidette, or foremost of their patrol, gave the signal of alarm. Arthur’s heart leaped to his lips—“It is Anne of Geierstein!” he said internally.

“The dogs are silent,” said the Bernese. “Those who approach must be the companions of our watch.”

They proved, accordingly, to be Rudiger and his party, who, halting on the appearance of their comrades, made and underwent a formal challenge; such advance had the Swiss already made in military discipline, which was but little and rudely studied by the infantry in other parts of Europe. Arthur could hear Rudolph take his friend Rudiger to task for not meeting him at the halting-place appointed. "It leads to new revelry on your arrival," he said, "and to-morrow must find us cool and determined."

"Cool as an icicle, noble Hauptman," answered the son of the Landamman, "and determined as the rock it hangs upon."

Rudolph again recommended temperance, and the young Biederman promised compliance. The two parties passed each other with friendly though silent greeting; and there was soon a considerable distance between them.

The country was more open on the side of the castle, around which their duty now led them, than where it lay opposite to the principal gate. The glades were broad, the trees thinly scattered over pasture land, and there were no thickets, 176ravines, or similar places of ambush, so that the eye might, in the clear moonlight, well command the country.

"Here," said Rudolph, "we may judge ourselves secure enough for some conference; and therefore may I ask thee, Arthur of England, now thou hast seen us more closely, what thinkest thou of the Switzer youth? If thou hast learned less than I could have wished, thank thine own uncommunicative temper, which retired in some degree from our confidence."

"Only in so far as I could not have answered, and therefore ought not to have received it," said Arthur. "The judgment I have been enabled to form amounts, in few words, to this: Your purposes are lofty and noble as your mountains; but the stranger from the low country is not accustomed to tread the circuitous path by which you ascend them. My foot has been always accustomed to move straight forward upon the greensward."

"You speak in riddles," answered the Bernese.

"Not so," returned the Englishman. "I think you ought plainly to mention to your seniors (the nominal leaders of young men who seem well disposed to take their own road) that you expect an attack in the neighbourhood of La Ferette, and hope for assistance from some of the townsmen of Bâle."

"Ay, truly," answered Donnerhugel; "and the Landamman would stop his journey till he despatched a messenger for a safe-conduct to the Duke of Burgundy; and should he grant it, there were an end of all hope of war."

"True," replied Arthur; "but the Landamman 177would thereby obtain his own principal object, and the sole purpose of the mission—that is, the establishment of peace."

"Peace—peace?" answered the Bernese, hastily. "Were my wishes alone to be opposed to those of Arnold Biederman, I know so much of his honour and faith, I respect so highly his valour and patriotism, that at his voice I would sheathe my sword, even if my most mortal enemy stood before me. But mine is not the single wish of a single man; the whole of my canton, and that of Soleure, are determined on war. It was by war, noble war, that our fathers came forth from the house of their captivity—it was by war, successful and glorious war, that a race, who had been held scarce so much worth thinking on as the oxen which they goaded, emerged at once into liberty and consequence, and were honoured because they were feared, as much as they had been formerly despised because they were unresisting."

"This may be all very true," said the young Englishman; "but, in my opinion, the object of your mission has been determined by your Diet or House of Commons. They have resolved to send you with others as messengers of peace; but you are secretly blowing the coals of war; and while all, or most of your senior colleagues are setting out to-morrow in expectation of a peaceful journey, you stand prepared for a combat, and look for the means of giving cause for it."

"And is it not well that I do stand so prepared?" answered Rudolph. "If our reception in Burgundy's dependencies be peaceful, as you say the rest of the deputation expect, my precautions will be needless; but at least they can do no harm. 178If it prove otherwise, I shall be the means of averting a great misfortune from my colleagues, my kinsman Arnold Biederman, my fair cousin Anne, your father, yourself—from all of us, in short, who are joyously travelling together."

Arthur shook his head. "There is something in all this," he said, "which I understand not, and will not seek to understand. I only pray that you will not make my father's concerns the subject of breaking truce; it may, as you hint, involve the Landamman in a quarrel, which he might otherwise have avoided. I am sure my father will never forgive it."

"I have pledged my word," said Rudolph, "already to that effect. But if he should like the usage of the Bandog of Burgundy less than you seem to apprehend he will, there is no harm in your knowing that, in time of need, he may be well and actively supported."

"I am greatly obliged by the assurance," replied the Englishman.

"And thou mayst thyself, my friend," continued Rudolph, "take a warning from what thou hast heard: Men go not to a bridal in armour, nor to a brawl in silken doublet."

"I will be clad to meet the worst," said Arthur; "and for that purpose I will don a light hauberk of well-tempered steel, proof against spear or arrow; and I thank you for your kindly counsel."

"Nay, thank not me," said Rudolph; "I were ill deserving to be a leader did I not make those who are to follow me—more especially so trusty a follower as thou art—aware of the time when they should buckle on their armour, and prepare for hard blows." 179

Here the conversation paused for a moment or two, neither of the speakers being entirely contented with his companion, although neither pressed any further remark.

The Bernese, judging from the feelings which he had seen predominate among the traders of his own country, had entertained little doubt that the Englishman, finding himself powerfully supported in point of force, would have caught at the opportunity to resist paying the exorbitant imposts with which he was threatened at the next town, which would probably, without any effort on Rudolph's part, have led to breaking off the truce on the part of Arnold Biederman himself, and to an instant declaration of hostilities. On the other hand, young Philipson could not understand or approve of Donnerhugel's conduct, who, himself a member of a peaceful deputation, seemed to be animated with the purpose of seizing an opportunity to kindle the flames of war.

Occupied by these various reflections, they walked side by side for some time without speaking together, until Rudolph broke silence.

"Your curiosity is then ended, Sir Englishman," said he, "respecting the apparition of Anne of Geierstein?"

"Far from it," replied Philipson; "but I would unwillingly intrude any questions on you while you are busy with the duties of your patrol."

"That may be considered as over," said the Bernese, "for there is not a bush near us to cover a Burgundian knave, and a glance around us from time to time is all that is now needful to prevent surprise. And so, listen while I tell a tale, never sung or harped in hall or bower, and which, I 180begin to think, deserves as much credit, at least, as is due to the Tales of the Round Table, which ancient troubadours and minne-singers dole out to us as the authentic chronicles of your renowned namesake."

"Of Anne's ancestors on the male side of the house," continued Rudolph, "I dare say you have heard enough, and are well aware how they dwelt in the old walls at Geierstein beside the cascade, grinding their vassals, devouring the substance of their less powerful neighbours, and plundering the goods of the travellers whom ill luck sent within ken of the vulture's eyry, the one year; and in the next, wearying the shrines for mercy for their trespasses, overwhelming the priests with the wealth which they showered upon them, and, finally, vowing vows, and making pilgrimages, sometimes as palmers, sometimes as crusaders as far as Jerusalem itself, to atone for the iniquities which they had committed without hesitation or struggle of conscience."

"Such, I have understood," replied the young Englishman, "was the history of the house of Geierstein, till Arnold, or his immediate ancestors, exchanged the lance for the sheep-hook."

"But it is said," replied the Bernese, "that the powerful and wealthy Barons of Arnheim, of Swabia, whose only female descendant became the wife to Count Albert of Geierstein, and the mother of this young person, whom Swiss call simply Anne, and Germans Countess Anne of Geierstein, were nobles of a different caste. They did not restrict their lives within the limits of sinning and repenting—of plundering harmless peasants, and pampering fat monks; but were

distinguished 181for something more than building castles with dungeons and folter-kammers, or torture-chambers, and founding monasteries with Galilees and Refectories.

"These same Barons of Arnheim were men who strove to enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge, and converted their castle into a species of college, where there were more ancient volumes than the monks have piled together in the library of St. Gall. Nor were their studies in books alone. Deep buried in their private laboratories, they attained secrets which were afterwards transmitted through the race from father to son, and were supposed to have approached nearly to the deepest recesses of alchemy. The report of their wisdom and their wealth was often brought to the Imperial footstool; and in the frequent disputes which the Emperors maintained with the Popes of old, it is said they were encouraged, if not instigated, by the counsels of the Barons of Arnheim, and supported by their treasures. It was, perhaps, such a course of politics, joined to the unusual and mysterious studies which the family of Arnheim so long pursued, which excited against them the generally received opinion, that they were assisted in their superhuman researches by supernatural influences. The priests were active in forwarding this cry against men who, perhaps, had no other fault than that of being wiser than themselves.

"Look what guests,' they said, 'are received in the halls of Arnheim! Let a Christian knight, crippled in war with the Saracens, present himself on the drawbridge, he is guerdoned with a crust and a cup of wine, and required to pass on his 182way. If a palmer, redolent of the sanctity acquired by his recent visits to the most holy shrines, and by the sacred relics which attest and reward his toil, approach the unhallowed walls, the warder bends his crossbow, and the porter shuts the gate, as if the wandering saint brought the plague with him from Palestine. But comes there a greybearded, glib-tongued Greek, with his parchment scrolls, the very letters of which are painful to Christian eyes—comes there a Jewish Rabbin, with his Talmud and Cabala—comes there a swarthy sun-burnt Moor, who can boast of having read the language of the Stars in Chaldea, the cradle of astrological science—Lo, the wandering impostor or sorcerer occupies the highest seat at the Baron of Arnheim's board, shares with him the labours of the alembic and the furnace, learns from him mystic knowledge, like that of which our first parents participated to the overthrow of their race, and requites it with lessons more dreadful than he receives, till the profane host has added to his hoard of unholy wisdom all that the pagan visitor can communicate. And these things are done in Almain, which is called the Holy Roman Empire, of which so many priests are princes!—they are done, and neither ban nor monition is issued against a race of sorcerers, who, from age to age, go on triumphing in their necromancy!"

"Such arguments, which were echoed from mitred Abbots to the cell of Anchorites, seem, nevertheless, to have made little impression on the Imperial council. But they served to excite the zeal of many a Baron and Free Count of the Empire, who were taught by them to esteem a war 183or feud with the Barons of Arnheim as partaking of the nature, and entitled to the immunities, of a crusade against the enemies of the Faith, and to regard an attack upon these obnoxious potentates as a mode of clearing off their deep scores with the Christian Church. But the Lords of Arnheim, though not seeking for quarrel, were by no means unwarlike, or averse to maintaining their own defence. Some, on the contrary, belonging to this obnoxious race, were not the less distinguished as gallant knights and good men-at-arms. They were, besides, wealthy, secured and strengthened by great alliances, and in an eminent degree wise and provident. This the parties who assailed them learned to their cost.

"The confederacies formed against the Lords of Arnheim were broken up; the attacks which their enemies meditated were anticipated and disconcerted; and those who employed actual violence were repelled with signal loss to the assailants: until at length an impression was produced in their neighbourhood, that by their accurate information concerning meditated violence, and their extraordinary powers of resisting and defeating it, the obnoxious Barons must have brought to their defence means which merely human force was incapable of overthrowing; so that, becoming as much feared as hated, they were suffered for the last generation to remain unmolested. And this was the rather the case, that the numerous vassals of this great house were perfectly satisfied with their feudal superiors, abundantly ready to rise in their defence, and disposed to believe that, whether their lords were sorcerers or no, their own condition would not be mended by exchanging 184their government, either for the rule of the crusaders in this holy warfare, or that of the churchmen by whom it was instigated. The race of these barons ended in Herman von Arnheim, the maternal grandfather of Anne of Geierstein. He was buried with his helmet, sword, and shield, as is the German custom with the last male of a noble family.

"But he left an only daughter, Sybilla of Arnheim, to inherit a considerable portion of his estate; and I never heard that the strong imputation of sorcery which attached to her house, prevented numerous applications, from persons of the highest distinction in the Empire, to her legal guardian, the Emperor, for the rich heiress's hand in marriage. Albert of Geierstein, however, though an exile, obtained the preference. He was gallant and handsome, which recommended him to Sybilla; and the Emperor, bent at the time on the vain idea of recovering his authority in the Swiss mountains, was desirous to show himself generous to Albert, whom he considered as a fugitive from his country for espousing the imperial cause. You may thus see, most noble King Arthur, that Anne of Geierstein, the only child of their marriage, descends from no ordinary stock; and that circumstances in which she may be concerned are not to be explained or judged of so easily, or upon the same grounds of reasoning, as in the case of ordinary persons."

"By my honest word, Sir Rudolph of Donnerhugel," said Arthur, studiously labouring to keep a command upon his feelings, "I can see nothing in your narrative, and understand nothing from it, unless it be that because in Germany, as in other 185countries, there have been fools who have annexed the idea of witchcraft and sorcery to the possession of knowledge and wisdom, you are therefore disposed to stigmatise a young maiden, who has always been respected and beloved by those around her, as a disciple of arts which, I trust, are as uncommon as unlawful."

Rudolph paused ere he replied.

"I could have wished," he said, "that you had been satisfied with the general character of Anne of Geierstein's maternal family, as offering some circumstances which may account for what you have, according to your own report, this night witnessed, and I am really unwilling to go into more particular details. To no one can Anne of Geierstein's fame be so dear as to me. I am, after her uncle's family, her nearest relative, and had she remained in Switzerland, or should she, as is most probable, return thither after the present visit to her father, perhaps our connection might be drawn yet closer. This has, indeed, only been prevented by certain prejudices of her uncle's respecting her father's authority, and the nearness of our relationship, which, however, comes within reach of a licence very frequently obtained. But I only mention these things, to show you how much more tender I must necessarily hold Anne of Geierstein's reputation, than it is possible for you to do, being a stranger, known to her but a short while since, and soon to part with her, as I understand your purpose, for ever."

The turn taken in this kind of apology irritated Arthur so highly, that it required all the reasons which recommended coolness to enable him to answer with assumed composure. 186

"I can have no ground, Sir Hauptman," he said, "to challenge any opinion which you may entertain of a young person with whom you are so closely connected, as you appear to be with Anne of Geierstein. I only wonder that, with such regard for her as your relationship implies, you should be disposed to receive, on popular and trivial traditions, a belief which must injuriously affect your kinswoman, more especially one with whom you intimate a wish to form a still more close connection. Bethink you, sir, that in all Christian lands, the imputation of sorcery is the most foul which can be thrown on Christian man or woman."

"And I am so far from intimating such an imputation," said Rudolph, somewhat fiercely, "that, by the good sword I wear, he that dared give breath to such a thought against Anne of Geierstein must undergo my challenge, and take my life, or lose his own. But the question is not whether the maiden herself practises sorcery, which he who avers had better get ready his tomb, and provide for his soul's safety; the doubt lies here, whether, as the descendant of a family whose relations with the unseen world are reported to have been of the closest degree, elfish and fantastical beings may not have power to imitate her form, and to present her appearance where she is not personally present—in fine, whether they have permission to play at her expense fantastical tricks, which they cannot exercise over other mortals, whose forefathers have ever regulated their lives by the rules of the Church, and died in regular communion with it. And as I sincerely desire to retain your esteem, I have no objection to communicate to you more 187particular circumstances respecting her genealogy, confirming the idea I have now expressed. But you will understand they are of the most private nature, and that I expect secrecy under the strictest personal penalty."

"I shall be silent, sir," replied the young Englishman, still struggling with suppressed passion, "on everything respecting the character of a maiden whom I am bound to respect so highly. But the fear of no man's displeasure can add a feather's weight to the guarantee of my own honour."

"Be it so," said Rudolph; "it is not my wish to awake angry feelings; but I am desirous, both for the sake of your good opinion, which I value, and also for the plainer explanation of what I have darkly intimated, to communicate to you what otherwise I would much rather have left untold."

"You must be guided by your own sense of what is necessary and proper in the case," answered Philipson; "but remember I press not on your confidence for the communication of anything that ought to remain secret, far less where that young lady is the subject."

Rudolph answered, after a minute's pause,—*"Thou hast seen and heard too much, Arthur, not to learn the whole, or at least all that I know, or apprehend, on the mysterious subject. It is impossible but the circumstances must at times recur to your recollection, and I am desirous that you should possess all the information necessary to understand them as clearly as the nature of the facts will permit. We have yet, keeping leftward to view the bog, upwards of a mile to make ere the circuit of the castle is accomplished. It will afford leisure enough for the tale I have to tell."*188

"Speak on—I listen!" answered the Englishman, divided between his desire to know all that it was possible to learn concerning Anne of Geierstein, and his dislike to hear her name pronounced with such pretensions as those of Donnerhugel, together with the revival of his original prejudices against the gigantic Swiss, whose manners, always blunt, nearly to coarseness, seemed now marked by assumed superiority and presumption. Arthur listened, however, to his wild tale, and the interest which he took in it soon overpowered all other sensations.189

CHAPTER XI.

DONNERHUGEL'S NARRATIVE.

These be the adept's doctrines—every element

Is peopled with its separate race of spirits.

The airy Sylphs on the blue ether float;

Deep in the earthy cavern skulks the Gnome;

The sea-green Naiad skims the ocean-billow,

And the fierce fire is yet a friendly home

To its peculiar sprite—the Salamander.

ANONYMOUS.

I told you (said Rudolph) that the Lords of Arnheim, though from father to son they were notoriously addicted to secret studies, were, nevertheless, like the other German nobles, followers of war and the chase. This was peculiarly the case with Anne's maternal grandfather, Herman of Arnheim, who prided himself on possessing a splendid stud of horses, and one steed in particular, the noblest ever known in these circles of Germany. I should make wild work were I to attempt a description of such an animal, so I will content myself with saying his colour was jet black, without a hair of white either on his face or feet. For this reason, and the wildness of his disposition, his master had termed him Apollyon; a circumstance which was secretly considered as tending to sanction the evil reports which touched the house of Arnheim, being, it was said, the naming of a favourite animal after a foul fiend.190

It chanced, one November day, that the Baron had been hunting in the forest, and did not reach home till nightfall. There were no guests with him, for, as I hinted to you before, the castle of Arnheim seldom received any other than those from whom its inhabitants hoped to gain augmentation of knowledge. The Baron was seated alone in his hall, illuminated with cressets and torches. His one hand held a volume covered with characters unintelligible to all save himself. The other rested on the marble table, on which was placed a flask of Tokay wine. A page stood in respectful attendance near the bottom of the large and dim apartment, and no sound was heard save that of the night wind, when it sighed mournfully through the rusty coats of mail, and waved the tattered banners which were the tapestry of the feudal hall. At once the footstep of a person was heard ascending the stairs in haste and trepidation; the door of the hall was thrown violently open, and, terrified to a degree of ecstasy, Caspar, the head of the Baron's stable, or his master of horse, stumbled up almost to the foot of the table at which his lord was seated, with the exclamation in his mouth,—

"My lord, my lord, a fiend is in the stable!"

"What means this folly?" said the Baron, arising, surprised and displeased at an interruption so unusual.

"Let me endure your displeasure," said Caspar, "if I speak not truth! Apollyon"——

Here he paused.

"Speak out, thou frightened fool," said the Baron; "is my horse sick, or injured?"

The master of the stalls again gasped forth the word, "Apollyon!"191

"Say on," said the Baron; "were Apollyon in presence personally, it were nothing to shake a brave man's mind."

"The devil," answered the master of the horse, "is in Apollyon's stall!"

"Fool!" exclaimed the nobleman, snatching a torch from the wall; "what is it that could have turned thy brain in such silly fashion? Things like thee, that are born to serve us, should hold their brains on a firmer tenure, for our sakes, if not for that of their worthless selves."

As he spoke, he descended to the court of the castle, to visit the stately range of stables which occupied all the lower part of the quadrangle on one side. He entered, where fifty gallant steeds stood in rows, on each side of the ample hall. At the side of each stall hung the weapons of offence and defence of a man-at-arms, as bright as constant attention could make them, together with the buff-coat which formed the trooper's under garment. The Baron, followed by one or two of the domestics, who had assembled full of astonishment at the unusual alarm, hastened up to the head of the stable, betwixt the rows of steeds. As he approached the stall of his favourite horse, which was the uppermost of the right-hand row, the gallant steed neither neighed, nor shook his head, nor stamped with his foot, nor gave the usual signs of joy at his lord's approach; a faint moaning, as if he implored assistance, was the only acknowledgment he gave of the Baron's presence.

Sir Herman held up the torch, and discovered that there was indeed a tall dark figure standing in the stall, resting his hand on the horse's shoulder. "Who art thou," said the Baron, "and what dost thou here?"

"I seek refuge and hospitality," replied the stranger; "and I conjure thee to grant it me, by the shoulder of thy horse, and by the edge of thy sword, and so as they may never fail thee when thy need is at the utmost!"

"Thou art, then, a brother of the Sacred Fire," said Baron Herman of Arnheim; "and I may not refuse thee the refuge which thou requirest of me, after the ritual of the Persian Magi. From whom, and for what length of time, dost thou crave my protection?"

"From those," replied the stranger, "who shall arrive in quest of me before the morning cock shall crow, and for the full space of a year and a day from this period."

"I may not refuse thee," said the Baron, "consistently with my oath and my honour. For a year and a day I will be thy pledge, and thou shalt share with me roof and chamber, wine and food. But thou too must obey the law of Zoroaster, which, as it says, Let the Stronger protect the weaker brother, says also, Let the Wiser instruct the brother who hath less knowledge. I am the stronger, and thou shalt be safe under my protection; but thou art the wiser, and must instruct me in the more secret mysteries."

"You mock your servant," said the strange visitor; "but if aught is known to Dannischemend which can avail Herman, his instructions shall be as those of a father to a son."

"Come forth, then, from thy place of refuge," said the Baron of Arnheim. "I swear to thee by the sacred fire which lives without terrestrial fuel,193and by the fraternity which is betwixt us, and by the shoulder of my horse, and the edge of my good sword, I will be thy warrant for a year and a day, if so far my power shall extend."

The stranger came forth accordingly; and those who saw the singularity of his appearance, scarce wondered at the fears of Caspar, the stall-master, when he found such a person in the stable, by what mode of entrance he was unable to conceive. When he reached the lighted hall to which the Baron conducted him, as he would have done a welcome and honoured guest, the stranger appeared to be very tall, and of a dignified aspect. His dress was Asiatic, being a long black

caftan, or gown, like that worn by Armenians, and a lofty square cap, covered with the wool of Astracan lambs. Every article of the dress was black, which gave relief to the long white beard, that flowed down over his bosom. His gown was fastened by a sash of black silk network, in which, instead of a poniard or sword, was stuck a silver case, containing writing-materials, and a roll of parchment. The only ornament of his apparel consisted in a large ruby of uncommon brilliancy, which, when he approached the light, seemed to glow with such liveliness as if the gem itself had emitted the rays which it only reflected back. To the offer of refreshment the stranger replied, "Bread I may not eat, water shall not moisten my lips, until the avenger shall have passed by the threshold."

The Baron commanded the lamps to be trimmed, and fresh torches to be lighted, and, sending his whole household to rest, remained seated in the hall along with the stranger, his suppliant. At 194the dead hour of midnight, the gates of the castle were shaken as by a whirlwind, and a voice, as of a herald, was heard to demand a herald's lawful prisoner, Dannischemend, the son of Hali. The warder then heard a lower window of the hall thrown open, and could distinguish his master's voice addressing the person who had thus summoned the castle. But the night was so dark that he might not see the speakers, and the language which they used was either entirely foreign, or so largely interspersed with strange words, that he could not understand a syllable which they said. Scarce five minutes had elapsed, when he who was without again elevated his voice as before, and said in German, "For a year and a day, then, I forbear my forfeiture;—but coming for it when that time shall elapse, I come for my right, and will no longer be withstood."

From that period, Dannischemend, the Persian, was a constant guest at the castle of Arnheim, and, indeed, never for any visible purpose crossed the drawbridge. His amusements, or studies, seemed centred in the library of the castle, and in the laboratory, where the Baron sometimes toiled in conjunction with him for many hours together. The inhabitants of the castle could find no fault in the Magus, or Persian, excepting his apparently dispensing with the ordinances of religion, since he neither went to mass nor confession, nor attended upon other religious ceremonies. The chaplain did indeed profess himself satisfied with the state of the stranger's conscience; but it had been long suspected that the worthy ecclesiastic held his easy office on the very reasonable condition of approving the principles, and asserting the 195orthodoxy, of all guests whom the Baron invited to share his hospitality.

It was observed that Dannischemend was rigid in paying his devotions, by prostrating himself in the first rays of the rising sun, and that he constructed a silver lamp of the most beautiful proportions, which he placed on a pedestal, representing a truncated column of marble, having its base sculptured with hieroglyphical imagery. With what essences he fed this flame was unknown to all, unless perhaps to the Baron; but the flame was more steady, pure, and lustrous than any which was ever seen, excepting the sun of heaven itself, and it was generally believed that the Magian made it an object of worship in the absence of that blessed luminary. Nothing else was observed of him, unless that his morals seemed severe, his gravity extreme, his general mode of life very temperate, and his fasts and vigils of frequent recurrence. Except on particular occasions, he spoke to no one of the castle but the Baron; but, as he had money and was liberal, he was regarded by the domestics with awe indeed, but without fear or dislike.

Winter was succeeded by spring, summer brought her flowers, and autumn her fruits, which ripened and were fading, when a foot-page, who sometimes attended them in the laboratory to render manual assistance when required, heard the Persian say to the Baron of Arnheim, "You will do well, my son, to mark my words; for my lessons to you are drawing to an end, and there is no power on earth which can longer postpone my fate."

"Alas, my master!" said the Baron, "and must I then lose the benefit of your direction, just 196when your guiding hand becomes necessary to place me on the very pinnacle of the temple of wisdom?"

"Be not discouraged, my son," answered the sage; "I will bequeath the task of perfecting you in your studies to my daughter, who will come hither on purpose. But remember, if you value the permanence of your family, look not upon her as aught else than a helpmate in your studies; for if you forget the instructress in the beauty of the maiden, you will be buried with your sword and your shield, as the last male of your house; and further evil, believe me, will arise; for such alliances never come to a happy issue, of which my own is an example.—But hush, we are observed."

The household of the castle of Arnheim having but few things to interest them, were the more eager observers of those which came under their notice; and when the termination of the period when the Persian was to receive shelter in the castle began to approach, some of the inmates, under various pretexts, but which resolved into very terror, absconded, while others held themselves in expectation of some striking and terrible catastrophe. None such, however, took place; and on the expected anniversary, long ere the witching hour of midnight, Dannischemend terminated his visit in the castle of Arnheim, by riding away from the gate in the guise of an ordinary traveller. The Baron had meantime taken leave of his tutor with many marks of regret, and some which amounted even to sorrow. The sage Persian comforted him by a long whisper, of which the last part only was heard—"By the first beam of sunshine she will be with you. Be kind to 197her, but not over kind." He then departed, and was never again seen or heard of in the vicinity of Arnheim.

The Baron was observed during all the day after the departure of the stranger to be particularly melancholy. He remained, contrary to his custom, in the great hall, and neither visited the library nor the laboratory, where he could no longer enjoy the company of his departed instructor. At dawn of the ensuing morning, Sir Herman summoned his page, and, contrary to his habits, which used to be rather careless in respect of apparel, he dressed himself with great accuracy; and as he was in the prime of life, and of a noble figure, he had reason to be satisfied with his appearance. Having performed his toilet, he waited till the sun had just appeared above the horizon, and, taking from the table the key of the laboratory, which the page believed must have lain there all night, he walked thither, followed by his attendant. At the door the Baron made a pause, and seemed at one time to doubt whether he should not send away the page, at another to hesitate whether he should open the door, as one might do who expected some strange sight within. He pulled up resolution, however, turned the key, threw the door open, and entered. The page followed close behind his master, and was astonished to the point of extreme terror at what he beheld, although the sight, however extraordinary, had in it nothing save what was agreeable and lovely.

The silver lamp was extinguished, or removed from its pedestal, where stood in place of it a most beautiful female figure in the Persian costume, in which the colour of pink predominated. But she 198wore no turban or headdress of any kind, saving a blue riband drawn through her auburn hair, and secured by a gold clasp, the outer side of which was ornamented by a superb opal, which, amid the changing lights peculiar to that gem, displayed internally a slight tinge of red like a spark of fire.

The figure of this young person was rather under the middle size, but perfectly well formed; the Eastern dress, with the wide trousers gathered round the ankles, made visible the smallest and most beautiful feet which had ever been seen, while hands and arms of the most perfect symmetry were partly seen from under the folds of the robe. The little lady's countenance was of a lively and expressive character, in which spirit and wit seemed to predominate; and the quick dark eye, with its beautifully formed eyebrow, seemed to presage the arch remark to which the rosy and half-smiling lip appeared ready to give utterance.

The pedestal on which she stood, or rather was perched, would have appeared unsafe had any figure heavier than her own been placed there. But, however she had been transported thither, she seemed to rest on it as lightly and safely as a linnet, when it has dropped from the sky on the tendril of a rose-bud. The first beam of the rising sun, falling through a window directly opposite to the pedestal, increased the effect of this beautiful figure, which remained as motionless as if it had been carved in marble. She only expressed her sense of the Baron of Arnheim's presence by something of a quicker respiration, and a deep blush, accompanied by a slight smile.199

Whatever reason the Baron of Arnheim might have for expecting to see some such object as now exhibited its actual presence, the degree of beauty which it presented was so much beyond his expectation, that for an instant he stood without breath or motion. At once, however, he seemed to recollect that it was his duty to welcome the fair stranger to his castle, and to relieve her from her precarious situation. He stepped forward accordingly with the words of welcome on his tongue, and was extending his arms to lift her from the pedestal, which was nearly six feet high; but the light and active stranger merely accepted the support of his hand, and descended on the floor as light and as safe as if she had been formed of gossamer. It was, indeed, only by the momentary pressure of her little hand that the Baron of Arnheim was finally made sensible that he had to do with a being of flesh and blood.

"I am come as I have been commanded," she said, looking around her. "You must expect a strict and diligent mistress, and I hope for the credit of an attentive pupil."

After the arrival of this singular and interesting being in the castle of Arnheim, various alterations took place within the interior of the household. A lady of high rank and small fortune, the respectable widow of a Count of the Empire, who was the Baron's blood relation, received and accepted an invitation to preside over her kinsman's domestic affairs, and remove, by her countenance, any suspicions which might arise from the presence of Hermione, as the beautiful Persian was generally called.

The Countess Waldstetten carried her complaisance 200so far as to be present on almost all occasions, whether in the laboratory or library, when the Baron of Arnheim received lessons from, or pursued studies with, the young and lovely tutor who had been thus strangely substituted for the aged Magus. If this lady's report was to be trusted, their pursuits were of a most extraordinary nature, and the results which she sometimes witnessed were such as to create fear as well as surprise. But she strongly vindicated them from practising unlawful arts, or overstepping the boundaries of natural science.

A better judge of such matters, the Bishop of Bamberg himself, made a visit to Arnheim, on purpose to witness the wisdom of which so much was reported through the whole Rhine-country. He conversed with Hermione, and found her deeply impressed with the truths of religion, and so perfectly acquainted with its doctrines, that he compared her to a doctor of theology in the dress of an Eastern dancing-girl. When asked regarding her knowledge of languages and science, he answered, that he had been attracted to Arnheim by the most extravagant reports on these points, but that he must return confessing "the half thereof had not been told unto him."

In consequence of this indisputable testimony, the sinister reports which had been occasioned by the singular appearance of the fair stranger were in a great measure lulled to sleep, especially as her amiable manners won the involuntary good-will of every one that approached her.

Meantime a marked alteration began to take place in the interviews between the lovely tutor and her pupil. These were conducted with the 201same caution as before, and never, so far as could be observed, took place without the presence of the Countess of Waldstetten, or some other third person of respectability. But the scenes of these meetings were no longer the scholar's library, or the chemist's laboratory;—the gardens, the groves, were resorted to for amusement, and parties of hunting and fishing, with evenings spent in the dance, seemed to announce that the studies of wisdom were for a time abandoned for the pursuits of pleasure. It was not difficult to guess the meaning of this; the Baron of Arnheim and his fair guest, speaking a language different from all others, could enjoy their private conversation, even amid all the tumult of gaiety around them; and no one was surprised to hear it formally announced, after a few weeks of gaiety, that the fair Persian was to be wedded to the Baron of Arnheim.

The manners of this fascinating young person were so pleasing, her conversation so animated, her wit so keen, yet so well tempered with good nature and modesty, that, notwithstanding her unknown origin, her high fortune attracted less envy than might have been expected in a case so singular. Above all, her generosity amazed and won the hearts of all the young persons who approached her. Her wealth seemed to be measureless, for the many rich jewels which she distributed among her fair friends would otherwise have left her without ornaments for herself. These good qualities, her liberality above all, together with a simplicity of thought and character which formed a beautiful contrast to the depth of acquired knowledge which she was well known to possess—these, 202and her total want of ostentation, made her superiority be pardoned among her companions. Still there was notice taken of some peculiarities, exaggerated perhaps by envy, which seemed to draw a mystical distinction between the beautiful Hermione and the mere mortals with whom she lived and conversed.

In the merry dance she was so unrivalled in lightness and agility that her performance seemed that of an ærial being. She could, without suffering from her exertion, continue the pleasure till she had tired out the most active revellers; and even the young Duke of Hochspringen, who was reckoned the most indefatigable at that exercise in Germany, having been her partner for half an hour, was compelled to break off the dance, and throw himself, totally exhausted, on a couch, exclaiming he had been dancing not with a woman, but with an *ignis fatuus*.

Other whispers averred that while she played with her young companions in the labyrinth and mazes of the castle gardens at hide-and-seek, or similar games of activity, she became animated with the same supernatural alertness which was supposed to inspire her in the dance. She appeared amongst her companions, and vanished from them, with a degree of rapidity which was inconceivable; and hedges, treillage, or such like obstructions, were surmounted by her in a manner which the most vigilant eye could not detect; for, after being observed on the side of the barrier at one instant, in another she was beheld close beside the spectator.

In such moments, when her eyes sparkled, her cheeks reddened, and her whole frame became 203animated, it was pretended that the opal clasp amid her tresses, the ornament which she never laid aside, shot forth the little spark, or tongue of flame, which it always displayed, with an increased vivacity. In the same manner, if in the half-darkened hall the conversation of Hermione became unusually animated, it was believed that the jewel became brilliant, and even displayed a twinkling and flashing gleam which seemed to be emitted by the gem itself, and not produced in the usual manner, by the reflection of some external light. Her maidens were also heard to surmise that when their mistress was agitated by any hasty or brief resentment (the only weakness of temper which she was sometimes observed to display), they could observe dark-red sparks flash from the mystic brooch, as if it sympathised with the wearer's emotions. The women who attended on her toilet further reported that this gem was never removed but for a few minutes, when the Baroness's hair was combed out; that she was unusually pensive and silent during the time it was laid aside, and particularly apprehensive when any liquid was brought near it. Even in the use of holy water at the door of the church she was observed to omit the sign of the cross on the forehead, for fear, it was supposed, of the water touching the valued jewel.

These singular reports did not prevent the marriage of the Baron of Arnheim from proceeding as had been arranged. It was celebrated in the usual form, and with the utmost splendour, and the young couple seemed to commence a life of happiness rarely to be found on earth. In the course of twelve months, the lovely Baroness presented her 204husband with a daughter, which was to be christened Sybilla, after the Count's mother. As the health of the child was excellent, the ceremony was postponed till the recovery of the mother from her confinement. Many were invited to be present on the occasion, and the castle was thronged with company.

It happened that amongst the guests was an old lady, notorious for playing in private society the part of a malicious fairy in a minstrel's tale. This was the Baroness of Steinfeldt, famous in the neighbourhood for her insatiable curiosity and overweening pride. She had not been many days in the castle, ere, by the aid of a female attendant, who acted as an intelligencer, she had made herself mistress of all that was heard, said, or suspected, concerning the peculiarities of the Baroness Hermione. It was on the morning of the day appointed for the christening, while the whole company were assembled in the hall, and waiting till the Baroness should appear, to pass with them to the chapel, that there arose between the censorious and haughty dame whom we have just mentioned, and the Countess Waldstetten, a violent discussion concerning some point of disputed precedence. It was referred to the Baron von Arnheim, who decided in favour of the Countess. Madame de Steinfeldt instantly ordered her palfrey to be prepared, and her attendants to mount.

"I leave this place," she said, "which a good Christian ought never to have entered; I leave a house of which the master is a sorcerer, the mistress a demon who dares not cross her brow with holy water, and their trencher companion one who, for a wretched pittance, is willing to act as 205match-maker between a wizard and an incarnate fiend!"

She then departed, with rage in her countenance and spite in her heart.

The Baron of Arnheim then stepped forward, and demanded of the knights and gentlemen around if there were any among them who would dare to make good with his sword the infamous falsehoods thrown upon himself, his spouse, and his kinswoman.

There was a general answer, utterly refusing to defend the Baroness of Steinfeldt's words in so bad a cause, and universally testifying the belief of the company that she spoke in the spirit of calumny and falsehood.

"Then let that lie fall to the ground which no man of courage will hold up," said the Baron of Arnheim; "only, all who are here this morning shall be satisfied whether the Baroness Hermione doth or doth not share the rites of Christianity."

The Countess of Waldstetten made anxious signs to him while he spoke thus; and when the crowd permitted her to approach near him, she was heard to whisper, "Oh, be not rash! try no experiment! there is something mysterious about that opal talisman; be prudent, and let the matter pass by."

The Baron, who was in a more towering passion than well became the wisdom to which he made pretence—although it will be perhaps allowed that an affront so public, and in such a time and place, was enough to shake the prudence of the most staid, and the philosophy of the most wise—answered sternly and briefly, "Are you, too, such a fool?" and retained his purpose.²⁰⁶

The Baroness of Arnheim at this moment entered the hall, looking just so pale from her late confinement as to render her lovely countenance more interesting, if less animated, than usual. Having paid her compliments to the assembled company, with the most graceful and condescending attention, she was beginning to inquire why Madame de Steinfeldt was not present, when her husband made the signal for the company to move forward to the chapel, and lent the Baroness his arm to bring up the rear. The chapel was nearly filled by the splendid company, and all eyes were bent on their host and hostess, as they entered the place of devotion immediately after four young ladies, who supported the infant babe in a light and beautiful litter.

As they passed the threshold, the Baron dipped his finger in the font-stone, and offered holy water to his lady, who accepted it, as usual, by touching his finger with her own. But then, as if to confute the calumnies of the malevolent lady of Steinfeldt, with an air of sportive familiarity which was rather unwarranted by the time and place, he flirted on her beautiful forehead a drop or two of the moisture which remained on his own hand. The opal, on which one of these drops had lighted, shot out a brilliant spark like a falling star, and became the instant afterwards lightless and colourless as a common pebble, while the beautiful Baroness sank on the floor of the chapel with a deep sigh of pain. All crowded around her in dismay. The unfortunate Hermione was raised from the ground, and conveyed to her chamber; and so much did her countenance and pulse alter, within the short time necessary to do this, that those who looked upon her pronounced her a dying woman. She was no sooner in her own apartment than she requested to be left alone with her husband. He remained an hour in the room, and when he came out he locked and double locked the door behind him. He then betook himself to the chapel, and remained there for an hour or more, prostrated before the altar.

In the meantime, most of the guests had dispersed in dismay, though some abode out of courtesy or curiosity. There was a general sense of impropriety in suffering the door of the sick lady's apartment to remain locked; but, alarmed at the whole circumstances of her illness, it was some time ere any one dared disturb the devotions of the Baron.

At length medical aid arrived, and the Countess of Waldstetten took upon her to demand the key. She spoke more than once to a man, who seemed incapable of hearing, at least of understanding, what she said. At length he gave her the key, and added sternly, as he did so, that all aid was unavailing, and that it was his pleasure that all strangers should leave the castle. There were few who inclined to stay, when, upon opening the door of the chamber in which the Baroness had been deposited little more than two hours before, no traces of her could be discovered, unless that there was about a handful of light-grey ashes, like such as might have been produced by burning fine paper, found on the bed where she had been laid. A solemn funeral was nevertheless performed, with masses, and all other spiritual rites, for the soul of the high and noble Lady Hermione of Arnheim; and it was exactly on that same day three years²⁰⁸ that the Baron himself was laid in the grave of the same chapel of Arnheim, with sword, shield, and helmet, as the last male of his family.

Here the Swiss paused, for they were approaching the bridge of the castle of Grafs-lust.²⁰⁹

CHAPTER XII.

Believe me, sir,

It carries a rare form.—But 'tis a spirit.

The Tempest.

There was a short silence after the Bernese had concluded his singular tale. Arthur Philipson's attention had been gradually and intensely attracted by a story which was too much in unison with the received ideas of the age to be encountered by the unhesitating incredulity with which it must have been heard in later and more enlightened times.

He was also considerably struck by the manner in which it had been told by the narrator, whom he had hitherto only regarded in the light of a rude huntsman or soldier; whereas he now allowed Donnerhugel credit for a more extensive acquaintance with the general manners of the world than he had previously anticipated. The Swiss rose in his opinion as a man of talent, but without making the slightest progress in his affections. "The swashbuckler," he said to himself, "has brains, as well as brawn and bones, and is fitter for the office of commanding others than I formerly thought him." Then, turning to his companion, he thanked him for the tale, which had shortened the way in so interesting a manner.

"And it is from this singular marriage," he continued, "that Anne of Geierstein derives her origin?"²¹⁰

"Her mother," answered the Swiss, "was Sybilla of Arnheim, the infant at whose christening the mother died—disappeared—or whatever you may list to call it. The barony of Arnheim, being a male fief, reverted to the Emperor. The castle has never been inhabited since the death of the last lord, and has, as I have heard, become in some sort ruinous. The occupations of its ancient proprietors, and, above all, the catastrophe of its last inhabitant, have been thought to render it no eligible place of residence."

"Did there appear anything preternatural," said the Englishman, "about the young Baroness, who married the brother of the Landamman?"

"So far as I have heard," replied Rudolph, "there were strange stories. It was said that the nurses, at the dead of night, have seen Hermione, the last Baroness of Arnheim, stand weeping by the side of the child's cradle, and other things to the same purpose. But here I speak from less correct information than that from which I drew my former narrative."

"And since the credibility of a story, not very probable in itself, must needs be granted, or withheld, according to the evidence on which it is given, may I ask you," said Arthur, "to tell me what is the authority on which you have so much reliance?"

"Willingly," answered the Swiss. "Know that Theodore Donnerhugel, the favourite page of the last Baron of Arnheim, was my father's brother. Upon his master's death he retired to his native town of Berne, and most of his time was employed in training me up to arms and martial exercises, as well according to the fashion of Germany as of Switzerland, for he was master of all. He witnessed²¹¹ with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears, great part of the melancholy and mysterious events which I have detailed to you. Should you ever visit Berne, you may see the good old man."

"You think, then," said Arthur, "that the appearance which I have this night seen is connected with the mysterious marriage of Anne of Geierstein's grandfather?"

"Nay," replied Rudolph, "think not that I can lay down any positive explanation of a thing so strange. I can only say, that unless I did you the injustice to disbelieve your testimony respecting the apparition of this evening, I know no way to account for it, except by remembering that there is a portion of the young lady's blood which is thought not to be derived from the race of Adam, but more or less directly from one of those elementary spirits which have been talked of both in ancient and modern times. But I may be mistaken. We will see how she bears herself in the morning, and whether she carries in her looks the weariness and paleness of a midnight watcher. If she doth not, we may be authorised in thinking, either that your eyes have strangely deceived you, or that they have been cheated by some spectral appearance, which is not of this world."

To this the young Englishman attempted no reply. Nor was there time for any, for they were immediately afterwards challenged by the sentinel from the drawbridge.

The question, "Who goes there?" was twice satisfactorily answered, before Sigismund would admit the patrol to cross the drawbridge.

"Ass and mule that thou art," said Rudolph, "what was the meaning of thy delay?"²¹²

"Ass and mule thyself, Hauptman!" said the Swiss, in answer to this oburgation. "I have been surprised by a goblin on my post once to-night already, and I have got so much experience upon that matter that I will not easily be caught a second time."

"What goblin, thou fool," said Donnerhugel, "would be idle enough to play his gambols at the expense of so very poor an animal as thou art?"

"Thou art as cross as my father, Hauptman," replied Sigismund, "who cries fool and blockhead at every word I speak; and yet I have lips, teeth, and tongue to speak with, just like other folk."

"We will not contest the matter, Sigismund," said Rudolph. "It is clear, that if thou dost differ from other people, it is in a particular which thou canst hardly be expected to find out or acknowledge. But what, in the name of simplicity, is it which hath alarmed thee on thy post?"

"Marry, thus it was, Hauptman," returned Sigismund Biederman. "I was something tired, you see, with looking up at the broad moon, and thinking what in the universe it could be made of, and how we came to see it just as well here as at home, this place being so many miles from Geierstein. I was tired, I say, of this and other perplexing thoughts, so I drew my fur cap down over my ears, for I promise you the wind blew shrill; and then I planted myself firm on my feet, with one of my legs a little advanced, and both my hands resting on my partisan, which I placed upright before me to rest upon; and so I shut mine eyes."

"Shut thine eyes, Sigismund, and thou upon thy watch!" exclaimed Donnerhugel.²¹³

"Care not thou for that," answered Sigismund; "I kept my ears open. And yet it was to little purpose, for something came upon the bridge with a step as stealthy as that of a mouse. I looked up with a start at the moment it was opposite to me, and when I looked up—whom think you I saw?"

"Some fool like thyself," said Rudolph, at the same time pressing Philipson's foot to make him attend to the answer; a hint which was little necessary, since he waited for it in the utmost agitation. Out it came at last.

"By St. Mark, it was our own Anne of Geierstein!"

"It is impossible!" replied the Bernese.

"I should have said so too," quoth Sigismund, "for I had peeped into her bedroom before she went thither, and it was so bedizened that a queen or a princess might have slept in it; and why should the wench get out of her good quarters, with all her friends about her to guard her, and go out to wander in the forest?"

"May be," said Rudolph, "she only looked from the bridge to see how the night waned."

"No," said Sigismund; "she was returning from the forest. I saw her when she reached the end of the bridge, and thought of striking at her, conceiving it to be the devil in her likeness. But I remembered my halberd is no birch switch to chastise boys and girls with; and had I done Anne any harm, you would all have been angry with me, and, to speak truth, I should have been ill pleased with myself; for although she doth make a jest of me now and then, yet it were a dull house ours were we to lose Anne."

"Ass," answered the Bernese, "diddst thou speak to this form, or goblin as you call it?"²¹⁴

"Indeed I did not, Captain Wiseacre. My father is ever angry with me when I speak without thinking, and I could not at that particular moment think on anything to the purpose. Neither was there time to think, for she passed me like a snow-flake upon a whirlwind. I marched into the castle after her, however, calling on her by name; so the sleepers were awakened, and men flew to their arms, and there was as much confusion as if Archibald of Hagenbach had been among us with sword and pike. And who should come out of her little bedroom, as much startled and as much in a bustle as any of us, but Mrs. Anne herself! And as she protested she had never left her room that night, why I, Sigismund Biederman, was made to stand the whole blame, as if I could prevent people's ghosts from walking. But I told her my mind when I saw them all so set against me. 'And, Mistress Anne,' quoth I, 'it's well known the kindred you come of, and, after this fair notice, if you send any of your double-gangers [\[g\]](#) to me, let them put iron skull-caps on their heads, for I will give them the length and weight of a Swiss halberd, come in what shape they list.' However, they all cried 'Shame on me!' and my father drove me out again, with as little remorse as if I had been the old house-dog, which had stolen in from his watch to the fireside."

The Bernese replied, with an air of coldness approaching to contempt, "You have slept on your watch, Sigismund—a high military offence, and ²¹⁵you have dreamed while you slept. You were in good luck that the Landamman did not suspect your negligence, or, instead of being sent back to your duty like a lazy watch-dog, you might have been scourged back like a faithless one to your kennel at Geierstein, as chanced to poor Ernest for a less matter."

"Ernest has not yet gone back, though," said Sigismund, "and I think he may pass as far into Burgundy as we shall do in this journey. I pray you, however, Hauptman, to treat me not dog-like, but as a man, and send some one to relieve me, instead of prating here in the cold night air. If there be anything to do to-morrow, as I well guess there may, a mouthful of food, and a minute of sleep, will be but a fitting preparative, and I have stood watch here these two mortal hours." With that the young giant yawned portentously, as if to enforce the reasons of his appeal.

"A mouthful and a minute?" said Rudolph,—²¹⁶"a roasted ox, and a lethargy like that of the Seven Sleepers, would scarce restore you to the use of your refreshed and waking senses. But I am your friend, Sigismund, and you are secure in my favourable report; you shall be instantly relieved, that you may sleep, if it be possible, without disturbances from dreams.—Pass on, young men" (addressing the others, who by this time had come up), "and go to your rest. Arthur of England and I will report to the Landamman and the Banneret the account of our patrol."

The patrol accordingly entered the castle, and were soon heard joining their slumbering companions. Rudolph Donnerhugel seized Arthur's ²¹⁶arm, and, while they went towards the hall, whispered in his ear,—

"These are strange passages!—How think you we should report them to the deputation?"

"That I must refer to yourself," said Arthur; "you are the captain of our watch. I have done my duty in telling you what I saw—or thought I saw—it is for you to judge how far it is fitting to communicate it to the Landamman; only, as it concerns the honour of his family, to his ear alone I think it should be confided."

"I see no occasion for that," said the Bernese, hastily; "it cannot affect or interest our general safety. But I may take occasion hereafter to speak with Anne on this subject."

This latter hint gave as much pain to Arthur as the general proposal of silence on an affair so delicate had afforded him satisfaction. But his uneasiness was of a kind which he felt it necessary to suppress, and he therefore replied with as much composure as he could assume:—

"You will act, Sir Hauptman, as your sense of duty and delicacy shall dictate. For me, I shall be silent on what you call the strange passages of the night, rendered doubly wonderful by the report of Sigismund Biederman."

"And also on what you have seen and heard concerning our auxiliaries of Berne?" said Rudolph.

"On that I shall certainly be silent," said Arthur; "unless thus far, that I mean to communicate to my father the risk of his baggage being liable to examination and seizure at La Ferette."

"It is needless," said Rudolph; "I will answer with head and hand for the safety of everything belonging to him."²¹⁷

"I thank you in his name," said Arthur; "but we are peaceful travellers, to whom it must be much more desirable to avoid a broil than to give occasion for one, even when secure of coming out of it triumphantly."

"These are the sentiments of a merchant, but not of a soldier," said Rudolph, in a cold and displeased tone; "but the matter is your own, and you must act in it as you think best. Only remember, if you go to La Ferette without our assistance, you hazard both goods and life."

They entered, as he spoke, the apartment of their fellow-travellers. The companions of their patrol had already laid themselves down amongst their sleeping comrades at the lower end of the room. The Landamman and the Bannerman of Berne heard Donnerhugel make a report, that his patrol, both before and after midnight, had been made in safety, and without any encounter which expressed either danger or suspicion. The Bernese then wrapped him in his cloak, and, lying down on the straw, with that happy indifference to accommodation, and promptitude to seize the moment of repose, which is acquired by a life of vigilance and hardship, was in a few minutes fast asleep.

Arthur remained on foot but a little longer, to dart an earnest look on the door of Anne of Geierstein's apartment, and to reflect on the wonderful occurrences of the evening. But they formed a chaotic mystery, for which he could see no clue, and the necessity of holding instant communication with his father compelled him forcibly to turn his thoughts in that direction. He was obliged to observe caution and secrecy in accomplishing his purpose. For this he laid himself down beside his ²¹⁸parent, whose couch, with the hospitality which he had experienced from the beginning of his intercourse with the kind-hearted Swiss, had been arranged in what was thought the most convenient place of the apartment, and somewhat apart from all others. He slept sound, but awoke at the touch of his son, who whispered to him in English, for the greater precaution, that he had important tidings for his private ear.

"An attack on our post?" said the elder Philipson. "Must we take to our weapons?"

"Not now," said Arthur; "and I pray of you not to rise or make alarm—this matter concerns us alone."

"Tell it instantly, my son," replied his father; "you speak to one too much used to danger to be startled at it."

"It is a case for your wisdom to consider," said Arthur. "I had information, while upon the patrol, that the Governor of La Ferette will unquestionably seize upon your baggage and merchandise, under pretext of levying dues claimed by the Duke of Burgundy. I have also been informed that our escort of Swiss youth are determined to resist this exaction, and conceive themselves possessed of the numbers and means sufficient to do so successfully."

"By St. George, that must not be!" said the elder Philipson. "It would be an evil requital to the true-hearted Landamman, to give the fiery Duke a pretext for that war which the excellent old man is so anxiously desirous to avoid, if it be possible. Any exactions, however unreasonable, I will gladly pay. But to have my papers seized on were utter ruin. I partly feared this, and it made me unwilling to join myself to the Landamman's party. We must now break off from it. This rapacious governor will not surely lay hands on the deputation, which seeks his master's court under protection of the law of nations; but I can easily see how he might make our presence with them a pretext for quarrel, which will equally suit his own avaricious spirit and the humour of these fiery young men, who are seeking for matter of offence. This shall not be taken for our sake. We will separate ourselves from the deputies, and remain behind till they are passed on. If this De Hagenbach be not the most unreasonable of men, I will find a way to content him so far as we are individually concerned. Meanwhile, I will instantly wake the Landamman," he said, "and acquaint him with our purpose."

This was immediately done, for Philipson was not slow in the execution of his resolutions. In a minute he was standing by the side of Arnold Biederman, who, raised on his elbow, was listening to his communication, while, over the shoulder of the Landamman, rose the head and long beard of the deputy from Schwitz, his large clear blue eyes gleaming from beneath a fur cap, bent on the Englishman's face, but stealing a glance aside now and then to mark the impression which what was said made upon his colleague.

"Good friend and host," said the elder Philipson, "we have heard for a certainty that our poor merchandise will be subjected to taxation or seizure on our passage through La Ferette, and I would gladly avoid all cause of quarrel, for your sake as well as our own."

"You do not doubt that we can and will protect you?" replied the Landamman. "I tell you, Englishman, that the guest of a Swiss is as safe by his side as an eagle under the wing of its dam; and to leave us because danger approaches is but a poor compliment to our courage or constancy. I am desirous of peace; but not the Duke of Burgundy himself should wrong a guest of mine, so far as my power might prevent it."

At this the deputy from Schwitz clenched a fist like a bull's knuckles, and showed it above the shoulders of his friend.

"It is even to avoid this, my worthy host," replied Philipson, "that I intend to separate from your friendly company sooner than I desire or purposed. Bethink you, my brave and worthy host, you are an ambassador seeking a national peace, I a trader seeking private gain. War, or quarrels which may cause war, are alike ruinous to your purpose and mine. I confess to you frankly, that I am willing and able to pay a large ransom, and when you are departed I will negotiate for the amount. I will abide in the town of Bâle till I have made fair terms with Archibald de Hagenbach; and even if he is the avaricious extortioner you describe him, he will be somewhat moderate with me rather than run the risk of losing his booty entirely, by my turning back or taking another route."

"You speak wisely, Sir Englishman," said the Landamman; "and I thank you for recalling my duty to my remembrance. But you must not, nevertheless, be exposed to danger. So soon as we move forward, the country will be again open to the devastations of the Burgundian Riders and Lanz-knechts, who will sweep the roads in every direction. The people of Bâle are unhappily too timorous to protect you; they would yield you up upon the Governor's first hint; and for justice or lenity, you might as well expect it in hell as from Hagenbach."

"There are conjurations, it is said, that can make hell itself tremble," said Philipson; "and I have means to propitiate even this De Hagenbach, providing I can get to private speech with him. But I own I can expect nothing from his wild riders, but to be put to death for the value of my cloak."

"If that be the case," said the Landamman, "and if you must needs separate from us, for which I deny not that you have alleged wise and worthy reasons, wherefore should you not leave Graffs-lust two hours before us? The roads will be safe, as our escort is expected; and you will probably, if you travel early, find De Hagenbach sober, and as capable as he ever is of hearing reason—that is, of perceiving his own interest. But after his breakfast is washed down with Rhine-wine, which he drinks every morning before he hears mass, his fury blinds even his avarice."

"All I want, in order to execute this scheme," said Philipson, "is the loan of a mule to carry my valise, which is packed up with your baggage."

"Take the she-mule," said the Landamman; "she belongs to my brother here from Schwitz; he will gladly bestow her on thee."

"If she were worth twenty crowns, and my comrade Arnold desired me to do so," said the old whitebeard.

"I will accept her as a loan with gratitude," said the Englishman. "But how can you dispense with the use of the creature? You have only one left."

"We can easily supply our want from Bâle," said the Landamman. "Nay, we can make this little delay serve your purpose, Sir Englishman. I named for our time of departure the first hour after daybreak; we will postpone it to the second hour, which will give us enough of time to get a horse or mule, and you, Sir Philipson, space to reach La Ferette, where I trust you will have achieved your business with De Hagenbach to your contentment, and will join company again with us as we travel through Burgundy."

"If our mutual objects will permit our travelling together, worthy Landamman," answered the merchant, "I shall esteem myself most happy in becoming the partner of your journey.—And now resume the repose which I have interrupted."

"God bless you, wise and true-hearted man," said the Landamman, rising and embracing the Englishman. "Should we never meet again, I will still remember the merchant who neglected thoughts of gain, that he might keep the path of wisdom and rectitude. I know not another who would not have risked the shedding a lake of blood to save five ounces of gold.—Farewell thou too, gallant young man. Thou hast learned among us to keep thy foot firm while on the edge of a Helvetian crag, but none can teach thee so well as thy father to keep an upright path among the morasses and precipices of human life."

He then embraced and took a kind farewell of his friends, in which, as usual, he was imitated by his friend of Schwitz, who swept with his long beard the right and left cheeks of both the Englishmen, and again made them heartily welcome to the use of his mule. All then once more composed themselves to rest, for the space which remained before the appearance of the autumnal dawn.

CHAPTER XIII.

The enmity and discord, which of late
Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your Duke
To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen,—
Who, wanting guilders to redeem their lives,
Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with their bloods,
Excludes all pity from our threat'ning looks.
Comedy of Errors.

The dawn had scarce begun to touch the distant horizon, when Arthur Philipson was on foot to prepare for his father's departure and his own, which, as arranged on the preceding night, was to take place two hours before the Landamman and his attendants proposed to leave the ruinous castle of Graffs-lust. It was no difficult matter for him to separate the neatly arranged packages which contained his father's effects from the clumsy bundles in which the baggage of the Swiss was deposited. The one set of mails was made up with the neatness of men accustomed to long and perilous journeys; the other, with the rude carelessness of those who rarely left their home, and who were altogether inexperienced.

A servant of the Landamman assisted Arthur in this task, and in placing his father's baggage on the mule belonging to the bearded deputy from Schwitz. From this man also he received instructions concerning the road from Graffs-lust to Brisach (the chief citadel of La Ferette), which was too plain and direct to render it likely that they should incur any risk of losing their way, as had befallen them when travelling on the Swiss mountains. Everything being now prepared for their

departure, the young Englishman awakened his father, and acquainted him that all was ready. He then retired towards the chimney, while his father, according to his daily custom, repeated the prayer of St. Julian, the patron of travellers, and adjusted his dress for the journey.

It will not be wondered at, that, while the father went through his devotions, and equipped himself for travel, Arthur, with his heart full of what he had seen of Anne of Geierstein for some time before, and his brain dizzy with the recollection of the incidents of the preceding night, should have kept his eyes riveted on the door of the sleeping-apartment at which he had last seen that young person disappear; that is, unless the pale and seemingly fantastic form which had twice crossed him so strangely should prove no wandering spirit of the elements, but the living substance of the person whose appearance it bore. So eager was his curiosity on this subject, that he strained his eyes to the utmost, as if it had been possible for them to have penetrated through wood and walls into the chamber of the slumbering maiden, in order to discover whether her eye or cheek bore any mark that she had last night been a watcher or a wanderer.

"But that was the proof to which Rudolph appealed," he said internally, "and Rudolph alone will have the opportunity of remarking the result. Who knows what advantage my communication may give him in his suit with yonder lovely creature? And what must she think of me, save as 226 one light of thought and loose of tongue, to whom nothing extraordinary can chance, but he must hasten to babble it into the ears of those who are nearest to him at the moment? I would my tongue had been palsied ere I said a syllable to yonder proud yet wily prize-fighter! I shall never see her more—that is to be counted for certain. I shall never know the true interpretation of those mysteries which hang around her. But to think I may have prated something tending to throw her into the power of yonder ferocious boor will be a subject of remorse to me while I live."

Here he was startled out of his reverie by the voice of his father. "Why, how now, boy? Art thou waking, Arthur, or sleeping on thy feet from the fatigue of last night's service?"

"Not so, my father," answered Arthur, at once recollecting himself. "Somewhat drowsy, perhaps; but the fresh morning air will soon put that to flight."

Walking with precaution through the group of sleepers who lay around, the elder Philipson, when they had gained the door of the apartment, turned back, and, looking on the straw couch which the large form of the Landamman, and the silvery beard of his constant companion, touched by the earliest beams of light, distinguished as that of Arnold Biederman, he muttered between his lips an involuntary adieu.

"Farewell, mirror of ancient faith and integrity,—farewell, noble Arnold,—farewell, soul of truth and candour—to whom cowardice, selfishness, and falsehood are alike unknown!"

And farewell, thought his son, to the loveliest, and most candid, yet most mysterious of maidens!—But 227 the adieu, as may well be believed, was not, like that of his father, expressed in words.

They were soon after on the outside of the gate. The Swiss domestic was liberally recompensed, and charged with a thousand kind words of farewell and of remembrance to the Landamman from his English guests, mingled with hopes and wishes that they might soon meet again in the Burgundian territory. The young man then took the bridle of the mule, and led the animal forward on their journey at an easy pace, his father walking by his side.

After a silence of some minutes, the elder Philipson addressed Arthur. "I fear me," he said, "we shall see the worthy Landamman no more. The youths who attend him are bent upon taking offence—the Duke of Burgundy will not fail, I fear, to give them ample occasion—and the peace which the excellent man desires for the land of his fathers will be shipwrecked ere they reach the Duke's presence; though, even were it otherwise, how the proudest prince in Europe will brook the moody looks of burgesses and peasants (so will Charles of Burgundy term the friends we have parted from) is a question too easily answered. A war, fatal to the interests of all concerned, save Louis of France, will certainly take place; and dreadful must be the contest, if the ranks of the Burgundian chivalry shall encounter those iron sons of the mountains, before whom so many of the Austrian nobility have been repeatedly prostrated."

"I am so much convinced of the truth of what you say, my father," replied Arthur, "that I judge even this day will not pass over without a breach of truce. I have already put on my shirt of mail, 228 in case we should meet bad company betwixt Graffs-lust and Brisach; and I would to Heaven that you would observe the same precaution. It will not delay our journey; and I confess to you, that I, at least, will travel with much greater consciousness of safety should you do so."

"I understand you, my son," replied the elder Philipson. "But I am a peaceful traveller in the Duke of Burgundy's territories, and must not willingly suppose that, while under the shadow of his banner, I must guard myself against banditti, as if I were in the wilds of Palestine. As for the authority of his officers, and the extent of their exactions, I need not tell you that they are, in our circumstances, things to be submitted to without grief or grudging."

Leaving the two travellers to journey towards Brisach at their leisure, I must transport my readers to the eastern gate of that small town, which, situated on an eminence, had a commanding prospect on every side, but especially towards Bâle. It did not properly make a part of the dominions of the Duke of Burgundy, but had been placed in his hands in pawn, or in pledge, for the repayment of a considerable sum of money, due to Charles by the Emperor Sigismund of Austria, to whom the seigniorship of the place belonged in property. But the town lay so conveniently for distressing the commerce of the Swiss, and inflicting on that people, whom he at once hated and despised, similar marks of his malevolence, as to encourage a general opinion, that the Duke of Burgundy, the implacable and unreasonable enemy of these mountaineers, would never listen to any terms of redemption, however equitable or advantageous, 229 which might have the effect of restoring to the Emperor an advanced post of such consequence to the gratification of his dislike as Brisach.

The situation of the little town was in itself strong, but the fortifications which surrounded it were barely sufficient to repel any sudden attack, and not adequate to resist for any length of time a formal siege. The morning beams had shone on the spire of the church for more than an hour, when a tall, thin, elderly man, wrapped in a morning gown, over which was buckled a broad belt, supporting on the left side a sword, on the right a dagger, approached the barbican of the eastern gate. His bonnet displayed a feather, which, or the tail of a fox in lieu of it, was the emblem of gentle blood throughout all Germany, and a badge highly prized by those who had a right to wear it.

The small party of soldiers who had kept watch there during the course of the preceding night, and supplied sentinels both for ward and outlook, took arms on the appearance of this individual, and drew themselves up in the form of a guard, which receives with military reverence an officer of importance. Archibald de Hagenbach's countenance, for it was the Governor himself, expressed that settled peevishness and ill temper which characterise the morning hours of a valetudinary debauchee. His head throbbed, his pulse was feverish, and his cheek was pale—symptoms of his having spent the last night, as was his usual custom, amid wine-stoups and flagons. Judging from the haste with which his soldiers fell into their ranks, and the awe and silence which reigned among them, it appeared that they were accustomed to 230 expect and dread his ill humour on such occasions. He glanced at them, accordingly, an inquisitive and dissatisfied look, as if he sought something on which to vent his peevishness, and then asked for the "loitering dog Kilian."

Kilian presently made his appearance, a stout hard-favoured man-at-arms, a Bavarian by birth, and by rank the personal squire of the Governor.

"What news of the Swiss churls, Kilian?" demanded Archibald de Hagenbach. "They should, by their thrifty habits, have been on the road two hours since. Have the peasant-clods presumed to ape the manners of gentlemen, and stuck by the flask till cock-crow?"

"By my faith, it may well be," answered Kilian; "the burghers of Bâle gave them full means of carousal."

"How, Kilian?—They dared not offer hospitality to the Swiss drove of bullocks, after the charge we sent them to the contrary?"

"Nay, the Bâlese received them not into the town," replied the squire; "but I learned, by sure espial, that they afforded them means of quartering at Graffs-lust, which was furnished with many a fair gammon and pasty, to speak naught of flasks of Rhine-wine, barrels of beer, and stoups of strong waters."

"The Bâlese shall answer this, Kilian," said the Governor. "Do they think I am for ever to be thrusting myself between the Duke and his pleasure on their behalf?—The fat porkers have presumed too much since we accepted some trifling gifts at their hands, more for gracing of them, than for any advantage we could make of their paltry donations. Was it not the wine from Bâle 231 which we were obliged to drink out in pint goblets, lest it should become sour before morning?"

"It was drunk out, and in pint goblets too," said Kilian; "so much I can well remember."

"Why, go to, then," said the Governor; "they shall know, these beasts of Bâle, that I hold myself no way obliged by such donations as these, and that my remembrance of the wines which I carouse rests no longer than the headache which the mixtures they drug me with never fail of late years to leave behind, for the next morning's pastime."

"Your excellency," replied the squire, "will make it, then, a quarrel between the Duke of Burgundy and the city of Bâle, that they gave this indirect degree of comfort and assistance to the Swiss deputation?"

"Ay, marry will I," said De Hagenbach, "unless there be wise men among them, who shall show me good reasons for protecting them. Oh, the Bâlese do not know our Noble Duke, nor the gift he hath for chastising the gutter-blooded citizens of a free town. Thou canst tell them, Kilian, as well as any man, how he dealt with the villains of Liège, when they would needs be pragmatical."

"I will apprise them of the matter," said Kilian, "when opportunity shall serve, and I trust I shall find them in a temper disposed to cultivate your honourable friendship."

"Nay, if it is the same to them, it is quite indifferent to me, Kilian," continued the Governor; "but, methinks, whole and sound throats are worth some purchase, were it only to swallow black-puddings and schwarz-beer, to say nothing of Westphalian hams and Nierensteiner—I say, a slashed throat is a useless thing, Kilian."232

"I will make the fat citizens to understand their danger, and the necessity of making interest," answered Kilian. "Sure, I am not now to learn how to turn the ball into your excellency's lap."

"You speak well," said Sir Archibald;—"but how chanced it thou hast so little to say to the Switzers' leaguer? I should have thought an old trooper like thee would have made their pinions flutter amidst the good cheer thou tellest me of."

"I might as well have annoyed an angry hedgehog with my bare finger," said Kilian. "I surveyed Graffs-lust myself;—there were sentinels on the castle walls, a sentinel on the bridge, besides a regular patrol of these Swiss fellows who kept strict watch. So that there was nothing to be done, otherwise, knowing your excellency's ancient quarrel, I would have had a hit at them, when they should never have known who hurt them. I will tell you, however, fairly, that these churls are acquiring better knowledge in the art of war than the best Ritter knight."

"Well, they will be the better worth the looking after when they arrive," said De Hagenbach; "they come forth in state doubtless, with all their finery, their wives' chains of silver, their own medals, and rings of lead and copper.—Ah, the base hinds, they are unworthy that a man of noble blood should ease them of their trash!"

"There is better ware among them, if my intelligence hath not deceived me," replied Kilian; "there are merchants"——

"Pshaw! the packhorses of Berne and Soleure," said the Governor, "with their paltry lumber, 233cloth too coarse to make covers for horses of any breeding, and linen that is more like hair-cloth than any composition of flax. I will strip them, however, were it but to vex the knaves. What! not content with claiming to be treated like an independent people, and sending forth deputies and embassies forsooth, they expect, I warrant, to make the indemnities of ambassadors cover the introduction of a cargo of their contraband commodities, and thus insult the noble Duke of Burgundy, and cheat him at the same time? But De Hagenbach is neither knight nor gentleman if he allow them to pass unchallenged."

"And they are better worth being stopped," said Kilian, "than your excellency supposes; for they have English merchants along with them, and under their protection."

"English merchants!" exclaimed De Hagenbach, his eyes sparkling with joy; "English merchants, Kilian! Men talk of Cathay and Ind, where there are mines of silver, and gold, and diamonds; but, on the faith of a gentleman, I believe these brutish Islanders have the caves of treasure wholly within their own foggy land! And then the variety of their rich merchandise,—Ha, Kilian! is it a long train of mules—a jolly tinkling team?—By Our Lady's glove! the sound of it is already jingling in my ears, more musically than all the harps of all the minne-singers at Heilbron!"

"Nay, my lord, there is no great train," replied the squire;—"only two men, as I am given to understand, with scarce so much baggage as loads a mule; but, it is said, of infinite value, silk and samite, lace and furs, pearls and jewellery-work—perfumes 234from the East, and gold-work from Venice."

"Raptures and paradise! say not a word more," exclaimed the rapacious knight of Hagenbach; "they are all our own, Kilian! Why, these are the very men I have dreamed of twice a week for this month past—ay, two men of middle stature, or somewhat under it—with smooth, round, fair, comely visages, having stomachs as plump as partridges, and purses as plump as their stomachs—Ha, what say'st thou to my dream, Kilian?"

"Only, that, to be quite soothfast," answered the squire, "it should have included the presence of a score, or thereabouts, of sturdy young giants as ever climbed cliff, or carried bolt to whistle at a chamois—a lusty plump of clubs, bills, and partisans, such as make shields crack like oaten cakes, and helmets ring like church-bells."

"The better, knave, the better!" exclaimed the Governor, rubbing his hands. "English pedlars to plunder! Swiss bullies to beat into submission! I wot well, we can have nothing of the Helvetian swine save their beastly bristles—it is lucky they bring these two island sheep along with them. But we must get ready our boar-spears, and clear the clipping-pens for exercise of our craft.—Here, Lieutenant Schonfeldt!"

An officer stepped forth.

"How many men are here on duty?"

"About sixty," replied the officer. "Twenty out on parties in different directions, and there may be forty or fifty in their quarters."

"Order them all under arms instantly;—hark ye, not by trumpet or bugle, but by warning them individually in their quarters, to draw to arms as 235quietly as possible, and rendezvous here at the eastern gate. Tell the villains there is booty to be gained, and they shall have their share."

"On these terms," said Schonfeldt, "they will walk over a spider's web without startling the insect that wove it. I will collect them without loss of an instant."

"I tell thee, Kilian," continued the exulting commandant, again speaking apart with his confidential attendant, "nothing could come so luckily as the chance of this onslaught. Duke Charles desires to affront the Swiss,—not, look you, that he cares to act towards them by his own direct orders, in such a manner as might be termed a breach of public faith towards a peaceful embassy; but the gallant follower who shall save his prince the scandal of such an affair, and whose actions may be termed a mistake or misapprehension, shall, I warrant you, be accounted to have done knightly service. Perchance a frown may be passed upon him in public, but in private the Duke will know how to esteem him.—Why standest thou so silent, man, and what ails thy ugly ill-looking aspect? Thou art not afraid of twenty Switzer boys, and we at the head of such a band of spears?"

"The Swiss," answered Kilian, "will give and take good blows, yet I have no fear of them. But I like not that we should trust too much to Duke Charles. That he would be, in the first instance, pleased with any dishonour done the Swiss is likely enough; but if, as your excellency hints, he finds it afterwards convenient to disown the action, he is a prince likely to give a lively colour to his disavowal by hanging up the actors."236

"Pshaw!" said the commandant, "I know where I stand. Such a trick were like enough to be played by Louis of France, but it is foreign to the blunt character of our Bold one of Burgundy.—Why the devil stand'st thou still, man, simpering like an ape at a roasted chestnut, which he thinks too warm for his fingers?"

"Your excellency is wise as well as warlike," said the esquire, "and it is not for me to contest your pleasure. But this peaceful embassy—these English merchants—if Charles goes to war with Louis, as the rumour is current, what he should most of all desire is the neutrality of Switzerland, and the assistance of England, whose King is crossing the sea with a great army. Now you, Sir Archibald of Hagenbach, may well do that in the course of this very morning which will put the Confederated Cantons in arms against Charles, and turn the English from allies into enemies."

"I care not," said the commandant; "I know the Duke's humour well, and if he, the master of so many provinces, is willing to risk them in a self-willed frolic, what is it to Archibald de Hagenbach, who has not a foot of land to lose in the cause?"

"But you have life, my lord," said the esquire.

"Ay, life!" replied the knight; "a paltry right to exist, which I have been ready to stake every day of my life for dollars—ay, and for kreutzers—and think you I will hesitate to pledge it for broad-pieces, jewels of the East, and goldsmith's work of Venice? No, Kilian; these English must be eased of their bales, that Archibald de Hagenbach may drink a purer flask than their thin Moselle, and wear a brocade doublet instead of 237greasy velvet. Nor is it less necessary that Kilian should have a seemly new jerkin, with a purse of ducats to jingle at his girdle."

"By my faith," said Kilian, "that last argument hath disarmed my scruples, and I give up the point, since it ill befits me to dispute with your excellency."

"To the work then," said his leader. "But stay—we must first take the church along with us. The Priest of St. Paul's hath been moody of late, and spread abroad strange things from the pulpit, as if we were little better than common pillagers and robbers. Nay, he hath had the insolence to warn me, as he termed it, twice, in strange form. It were well to break the growling mastiff's bald head; but since that might be ill taken by the Duke, the next point of wisdom is to fling him a bone."

"He may be a dangerous enemy," said the squire dubiously; "his power is great with the people."

"Tush!" replied Hagenbach, "I know how to disarm the shaveling. Send to him, and tell him to come hither to speak with me. Meanwhile have all our force under arms; let the barbican and barrier be well manned with archers; station spearmen in the houses on each hand of the gateway; and let the street be barricaded with carts, well bound together, but placed as if they had been there by accident—place a body of determined fellows in these carts, and behind them. So soon as the merchants and their mules enter (for that is the main point), up with your drawbridge, down with the portcullis, send a volley of arrows among those who are without, if they make 238any scuffle; disarm and secure those who have entered, and are cooped up between the barricade before, and the ambush behind and around them—And *then*, Kilian"——

"And then," said his esquire, "shall we, like merry Free Companions, be knuckle deep in the English budgets"——

"And, like jovial hunters," replied the knight, "elbow-deep in Swiss blood."

"The game will stand at bay though," answered Kilian. "They are led by that Donnerhugel whom we have heard of, whom they call the Young Bear of Berne. They will turn to their defence."

"The better, man—wouldst thou kill sheep rather than hunt wolves? Besides, our toils are set, and the whole garrison shall assist. Shame on thee, Kilian, thou wert not wont to have so many scruples!"

"Nor have I now," said Kilian. "But these Swiss bills, and two-handed swords of the breadth of four inches, are no child's play.—And then if you call all our garrison to the attack, to whom will your excellency intrust the defence of the other gates, and the circuit of the walls?"

"Lock, bolt, and chain up the gates," replied the Governor, "and bring the keys hither. There shall no one leave the place till this affair is over. Let some score of the citizens take arms for the duty of guarding the walls; and look they discharge it well, or I will lay a fine on them which they shall discharge to purpose."

"They will grumble," said Kilian. "They say, that not being the Duke's subjects, though the place is impledged to his Grace, they are not liable to military service." 239

"They lie! the cowardly slaves," answered De Hagenbach. "If I have not employed them much hitherto, it is because I scorn their assistance; nor would I now use their help, were it for anything save to keep a watch, by looking out straight before them. Let them obey, as they respect their property, persons, and families."

A deep voice behind them repeated the emphatic language of Scripture,—"*I have seen the wicked man flourish in his power even like unto a laurel, but I returned and he was not—yea, I sought him, but he was not to be found.*"

Sir Archibald de Hagenbach turned sternly, and encountered the dark and ominous looks of the Priest of St. Paul's, dressed in the vestments of his order.

"We are busy, father," said the Governor, "and will hear your preachment another time."

"I come by your summons, Sir Governor," said the priest, "or I had not intruded myself where I well knew my preachments, if you term them so, will do no good."

"Oh, I crave your mercy, reverend father," said De Hagenbach. "Yes, it is true that I did send for you, to desire your prayers and kind intercession with Our Lady and St. Paul, in some transactions which are likely to occur this morning, and in which, as the Lombard says, I do espy *roba di guadagno*."

"Sir Archibald," answered the priest calmly, "I well hope and trust that you do not forget the nature of the glorified Saints so far as to ask them for their blessing upon such exploits as you have been too oft engaged in since your arrival amongst us—an event which of itself gave token of the 240divine anger. Nay, let me say, humble as I am, that decency to a servant of the altar should check you from proposing to me to put up prayers for the success of pillage and robbery."

"I understand you, father," said the rapacious Governor, "and you shall see I do. While you are the Duke's subject, you must by your office put up your prayers for his success in matters that are fairly managed. You acknowledge this with a graceful bend of your reverend head? Well, then, I will be as reasonable as you are. Say we desire the intercession of the good Saints, and of you, their pious orator, in something a little out of the ordinary path, and, if you will, somewhat of a doubtful complexion,—are we entitled to ask you or them for their pains and trouble without a just consideration? Surely no. Therefore I vow and solemnly promise, that if I have good fortune in this morning's adventure, St. Paul shall have an altar-cloth and a basin of silver, large or little, as my booty will permit—Our Lady a web of satin for a full suit, with a necklace of pearl for holidays—and thou, priest, some twenty pieces of broad English gold, for acting as go-between betwixt ourselves and the blessed Apostles, whom we acknowledge ourselves unworthy to negotiate with in our profane person. And now, Sir Priest, do we understand each other, for I have little time to lose? I know you have hard thoughts of me, but you see the devil is not quite so horrible as he is painted."

"Do we understand each other?" answered the Black Priest of St. Paul's, repeating the Governor's question—"Alas, no! and I fear me we never shall. Hast thou never heard the words 241spoken by the holy hermit, Berchtold of Offringen, to the implacable Queen Agnes, who had revenged with such dreadful severity the assassination of her father, the Emperor Albert?"

"Not I," returned the knight; "I have neither studied the chronicles of emperors, nor the legends of hermits; and therefore, Sir Priest, an you like not my proposal, let us have no further words on the matter. I am unwont to press my favours, or to deal with priests who require entreaty, when gifts are held out to them."

"Hear yet the words of the holy man," said the priest. "The time may come, and that shortly, when you would gladly desire to hear what you scornfully reject."

"Speak on, but be brief," said Archibald de Hagenbach; "and know, though thou mayst terrify or cajole the multitude, thou now speakest to one whose resolution is fixed far beyond the power of thy eloquence to melt."

"Know, then," said the Priest of St. Paul's, "that Agnes, daughter of the murdered Albert, after shedding oceans of blood in avenging his bloody death, founded at length the rich abbey of Königsfeldt; and, that it might have a superior claim to renowned sanctity, made a pilgrimage in person to the cell of the holy hermit, and besought of him to honour her abbey by taking up his residence there. But what was his reply?—Mark it and tremble. 'Begone, ruthless woman,' said the holy man; 'God will not be served with blood-guiltiness, and rejects the gifts which are obtained by violence and robbery. The Almighty loves mercy, justice, and humanity, and by the lovers of these only will He be worshipped.' And now, 242Archibald of Hagenbach, once, twice, thrice, hast thou had warning. Live as becomes a man on whom sentence is passed, and who must expect execution."

Having spoken these words with a menacing tone and frowning aspect, the Priest of St. Paul's turned away from the Governor, whose first impulse was to command him to be arrested. But when he recollected the serious consequences which attached to the laying violent hands on a priest, he suffered him to depart in peace, conscious that his own unpopularity might render any attempt to revenge himself an act of great rashness. He called, therefore, for a beaker of Burgundy, in which he swallowed down his displeasure, and had just returned to Kilian the cup, which he had drained to the bottom, when the warden winded a blast from the watch-tower, which betokened the arrival of strangers at the gate of the city. 243

CHAPTER XIV.

I will resist such entertainment, till
My enemy has more power.

The Tempest.

"That blast was but feebly blown," said De Hagenbach, ascending to the ramparts, from which he could see what passed on the outside of the gate. "Who approaches, Kilian?"

The trusty squire was hastening to meet him with the news.

"Two men with a mule, an it please your excellency; and merchants, I presume them to be."

"Merchants? 'Sdeath, villain! pedlars you mean. Heard ever man of English merchants tramping it on foot, with no more baggage than one mule can manage to carry? They must be beggarly Bohemians, or those whom the French people call Escossais. The knaves! they shall pay with the pining of their paunches for the poverty of their purses."

"Do not be too hasty, an please your excellency," quoth the squire; "small budgets hold rich goods. But, rich or poor, they are our men, at least they have all the marks—the elder, well-sized and dark-visaged, may write fifty and five years, a beard somewhat grizzled;—the younger, some two-and-twenty, taller than the first, and a well-favoured lad, with a smooth chin and light-brown mustaches."244

"Let them be admitted," said the Governor, turning back in order again to descend to the street, "and bring them into the folter-kammer of the toll-house."

So saying, he betook himself to the place appointed, which was an apartment in the large tower that protected the eastern gateway, in which were deposited the rack, with various other instruments of torture, which the cruel and rapacious Governor was in the habit of applying to such prisoners from whom he was desirous of extorting either booty or information. He entered the apartment, which was dimly lighted, and had a lofty Gothic roof which could be but imperfectly seen, while nooses and cords hanging down from thence announced a fearful connection with various implements of rusted iron that hung round the walls or lay scattered on the floor.

A faint stream of light through one of the numerous and narrow slits, or shot-holes, with which the walls were garnished, fell directly upon the person and visage of a tall swarthy man, seated in what, but for the partial illumination, would have been an obscure corner of this evil-boding apartment. His features were regular, and even handsome, but of a character peculiarly stern and sinister. This person's dress was a cloak of scarlet; his head was bare, and surrounded by shaggy locks of black, which time had partly grizzled. He was busily employed in furbishing and burnishing a broad two-handed sword, of a peculiar shape, and considerably shorter than the weapons of that kind which we have described as used by the Swiss. He was so deeply engaged in his task, that he started as the heavy door opened with a 245jarring noise, and the sword, escaping from his hold, rolled on the stone floor with a heavy clash.

"Ha! Scharfgerichter," said the Knight, as he entered the folter-kammer, "thou art preparing for thy duty?"

"It would ill become your excellency's servant," answered the man, in a harsh deep tone, "to be found idle. But the prisoner is not far off, as I can judge by the fall of my sword, which infallibly announces the presence of him who shall feel its edge."

"The prisoners are at hand, Francis," replied the Governor; "but thy omen has deceived thee for once. They are fellows for whom a good rope will suffice, and thy sword drinks only noble blood."

"The worse for Francis Steinernherz," replied the official in scarlet: "I trusted that your excellency, who have ever been a bountiful patron, should this day have made me noble."

"Noble!" said the Governor; "thou art mad—Thou noble! The common executioner!"

"And wherefore not, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach? I think the name of Francis Steinernherz *von* Blut-acker will suit nobility, being fairly and legally won, as well as another. Nay, do not stare on me thus. If one of my profession shall do his grim office on nine men of noble birth, with the same weapon, and with a single blow to each patient, hath he not a right to his freedom from taxes, and his nobility by patent?"

"So says the law," said Sir Archibald, after reflecting for a moment,—"but rather more in scorn than seriously, I should judge, since no one was ever known to claim the benefit of it."246

"The prouder boast for him," said the functionary, "that shall be the first to demand the honours due to a sharp sword and a clean stroke. I, Francis Steinernherz, will be the first noble of my profession, when I shall have despatched one more knight of the Empire."

"Thou hast been ever in *my* service, hast thou not?" demanded De Hagenbach.

"Under what other master," replied the executioner, "could I have enjoyed such constant practice? I have executed your decrees on condemned sinners since I could swing a scourge, lift a crowbar, or wield this trusty weapon; and who can say I ever failed of my first blow, or needed to deal a second? Tristrem of the Hospital, and his famous assistants, Petit André and Trois Eschelles, are novices compared with me in the use of the noble and knightly sword. Marry, I should be ashamed to match myself with them in the field practice with bowstring and dagger; these are no feats worthy of a Christian man who would rise to honour and nobility."

"Thou art a fellow of excellent address, and I do not deny it," replied De Hagenbach. "But it cannot be—I trust it cannot be—that when noble blood is becoming scarce in the land, and proud churls are lording it over knights and barons, I myself should have caused so much to be spilled?"

"I will number the patients to your excellency by name and title," said Francis, drawing out a scroll of parchment, and reading with a commentary as he went on,—

"There was Count William of Elvershoe—he was my assay-piece, a sweet youth, and died most like a Christian."

"I remember—he was indeed a most smart 247youth, and courted my mistress," said Sir Archibald.

"He died on St. Jude's, in the year of grace 1455," said the executioner.

"Go on—but name no dates," said the Governor.

"Sir Miles of Stockenborg"—

"He drove off my cattle," observed his excellency.

"Sir Louis of Riesenfeldt"—continued the executioner.

"He made love to my wife," commented the Governor.

"The three Yung-herren of Lammerbourg—you made their father, the Count, childless in one day."

"And he made me landless," said Sir Archibald, "so that account is settled.—Thou needest read no further," he continued: "I admit thy record, though it is written in letters somewhat of the reddest. I had counted these three young gentlemen as one execution."

"You did me the greater wrong," said Francis; "they cost three good separate blows of this good sword."

"Be it so, and God be with their souls," said Hagenbach. "But thy ambition must go to sleep for a while, Scharfgerichter, for the stuff that came hither to-day is for dungeon and cord, or perhaps a touch of the rack or strappado—there is no honour to win on them."

"The worse luck mine," said the executioner. "I had dreamed so surely that your honour had made me noble;—and then the fall of my sword?"

"Take a bowl of wine, and forget your auguries."248

"With your honour's permission, no," said the executioner; "to drink before noon were to endanger the nicety of my hand."

"Be silent, then, and mind your duty," said De Hagenbach.

Francis took up his sheathless sword, wiped the dust reverently from it, and withdrew into a corner of the chamber, where he stood leaning with his hands on the pommel of the fatal weapon.

Almost immediately afterwards, Kilian entered at the head of five or six soldiers, conducting the two Philipsons, whose arms were tied down with cords.

"Approach me a chair," said the Governor, and took his place gravely beside a table, on which stood writing-materials. "Who are these men, Kilian, and wherefore are they bound?"

"So please your excellency," said Kilian, with a deep respect of manner, which entirely differed from the tone, approaching to familiarity, with which he communicated with his master in private, "we thought it well that these two strangers should not appear armed in your gracious presence; and when we required of them to surrender their weapons at the gate, as is the custom of the garrison, this young gallant must needs offer resistance. I admit he gave up his weapon at his father's command."

"It is false!" exclaimed young Philipson; but his father making a sign to him to be silent, he obeyed instantly.

"Noble sir," said the elder Philipson, "we are strangers, and unacquainted with the rules of this citadel; we are Englishmen, and unaccustomed to submit to personal mishandling; we trust you 249will have excuse for us, when we found ourselves, without any explanation of the cause, rudely seized on by we knew not

whom. My son, who is young and unthinking, did partly draw his weapon, but desisted at my command, without having altogether unsheathed his sword, far less made a blow. For myself, I am a merchant, accustomed to submit to the laws and customs of the countries in which I traffic; I am in the territories of the Duke of Burgundy, and I know his laws and customs must be just and equitable. He is the powerful and faithful ally of England, and I fear nothing while under his banner."

"Hem! hem!" replied De Hagenbach, a little disconcerted by the Englishman's composure, and perhaps recollecting, that, unless his passions were awakened (as in the case of the Swiss, whom he detested), Charles of Burgundy deserved the character of a just though severe prince,—"Fair words are well, but hardly make amends for foul actions. You have drawn swords in riot, and opposition to the Duke's soldiers, when obeying the mandates which regulate their watch."

"Surely, sir," answered Philipson, "this is a severe construction of a most natural action. But, in a word, if you are disposed to be rigorous, the simple action of drawing, or attempting to draw a sword, in a garrison town, is only punishable by pecuniary fine, and such we must pay, if it be your will."

"Now, here is a silly sheep," said Kilian to the executioner, beside whom he had stationed himself, somewhat apart from the group, "who voluntarily offers his own fleece to the clipper."

"It will scarcely serve as a ransom for his 250throat, Sir Squire," answered Francis Steinernherz; "for, look you, I dreamed last night that our master made me noble, and I knew by the fall of my sword that this is the man by whom I am to mount to gentility. I must this very day deal on him with my good sword."

"Why, thou ambitious fool," said the esquire, "this is no noble, but an island pedlar—a mere English citizen."

"Thou art deceived," said the executioner, "and hast never looked on men when they are about to die."

"Have I not?" said the squire. "Have I not looked on five pitched fields, besides skirmishes and ambuscades innumerable?"

"That tries not the courage," said the Scharfgerichter. "All men will fight when pitched against each other. So will the most paltry curs—so will the dunghill fowls. But he is brave and noble who can look on a scaffold and a block, a priest to give him absolution, and the headsman and good sword which is to mow him down in his strength, as he would look upon things indifferent; and such a man is that whom we now behold."

"Yes," answered Kilian, "but that man looks not on such an apparatus—he only sees our illustrious patron, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach."

"And he who looks upon Sir Archibald," said the executioner, "being, as yonder man assuredly is, a person of sense and apprehension, looks he not upon sword and headsman? Assuredly that prisoner apprehends as much, and being so composed as he is under such conviction, it shows him to be a nobleman by blood, or may I myself never win nobility!" 251

"Our master will come to compromise with him, I judge," replied Kilian; "he looks smilingly on him."

"Never trust to me, then," said the man in scarlet; "there is a glance in Sir Archibald's eye which betokens blood, as surely as the dog-star bodes pestilence."

While these dependants of Sir Archibald de Hagenbach were thus conversing apart, their master had engaged the prisoners in a long train of captious interrogatories concerning their business in Switzerland, their connection with the Landamman, and the cause of their travelling into Burgundy, to all which the senior Philipson gave direct and plain answers, excepting to the last. He was going, he said, into Burgundy, for the purpose of his traffic—his wares were at the disposal of the Governor, who might detain all, or any part of them, as he might be disposed to make himself answerable to his master. But his business with the Duke was of a private nature, respecting some particular matters of commerce, in which others as well as he himself were interested. To the Duke alone, he declared, would he communicate the affair; and he pressed it strongly on the Governor, that if he should sustain any damage in his own person or that of his son, the Duke's severe displeasure would be the inevitable consequence.

De Hagenbach was evidently much embarrassed by the steady tone of his prisoner, and more than once held counsel with the bottle, his never-failing oracle in cases of extreme difficulty. Philipson had readily surrendered to the Governor a list or invoice of his merchandise, which was of so inviting 252a character that Sir Archibald absolutely gloated over it. After remaining in deep meditation for some time, he raised his head and spoke thus:—

"You must be well aware, Sir Merchant, that it is the Duke's pleasure that no Swiss merchandise shall pass through his territories; and that, nevertheless, you having been, by your own account, some time in that country, and having also accompanied a body of men calling themselves Swiss Deputies, I am authorised to believe that these valuable articles are rather the property of those persons, than of a single individual of so poor an appearance as yourself, and that, should I demand pecuniary satisfaction, three hundred pieces of gold would not be an extravagant fine for so bold a practice; and you might wander where you will with the rest of your wares, so you bring them not into Burgundy."

"But it is to Burgundy, and to the Duke's presence, that I am expressly bound," said the Englishman. "If I go not thither my journey is wrecked, and the Duke's displeasure is certain to light on those who may molest me. For I make your excellency aware, that your gracious Prince already knows of my journey, and will make strict inquiry where and by whom I have been intercepted."

Again the Governor was silent, endeavouring to decide how he might best reconcile the gratification of his rapacity with precaution for his safety. After a few minutes' consideration he again addressed his prisoner.

"Thou art very positive in thy tale, my good friend; but my orders are equally so to exclude 253merchandise coming from Switzerland. What if I put thy mule and baggage under arrest?"

"I cannot withstand your power, my lord, to do what you will. I will in that case go to the Duke's footstool, and do my errand there."

"Ay, and my errand also," answered the Governor. "That is, thou wilt carry thy complaint to the Duke against the Governor of La Ferette, for executing his orders too strictly?"

"On my life and honest word," answered the Englishman, "I will make no complaint. Leave me but my ready money, without which I can hardly travel to the Duke's court, and I will look no more after these goods and wares than the stag looks after the antlers which he shed last year."

Again the Governor of La Ferette looked doubtful, and shook his head.

"Men in such a case as yours," he said, "cannot be trusted, nor, to say truth, is it reasonable to expect they should be trustworthy. These same wares, designed for the Duke's private hand, in what do they consist?"

"They are under seal," replied the Englishman.

"They are of rare value, doubtless?" continued the Governor.

"I cannot tell," answered the elder Philipson; "I know the Duke sets great store by them. But your excellency knows, that great princes sometimes place a high value on trifles."

"Bear you them about you?" said the Governor. "Take heed how you answer—Look around you on these engines, which can bring a dumb man to speak, and consider I have the power to employ them!"

"And I the courage to support their worst 254infliction," answered Philipson, with the same impenetrable coolness which he had maintained throughout the whole conference.

"Remember, also," said Hagenbach, "that I can have your person searched as thoroughly as your mails and budgets."

"I do remember that I am wholly in thy power; and that I may leave thee no excuse for employing force on a peaceful traveller, I will own to you," said Philipson, "that I have the Duke's packet in the bosom of my doublet."

"Bring it forth," answered the Governor.

"My hands are tied, both in honour and literally," said the Englishman.

"Pluck it from his bosom, Kilian," said Sir Archibald; "let us see this gear he talks of."

"Could resistance avail," replied the stout merchant, "you should pluck forth my heart first. But I pray all who are present to observe that the seals are every one whole and unbroken at this moment when it is forcibly taken from my person."

As he spoke thus he looked around on the soldiers, whose presence De Hagenbach had perhaps forgotten.

"How, dog!" said Sir Archibald, giving way to his passion, "would you stir up mutiny among my men-at-arms?—Kilian, let the soldiers wait without."

So saying, he hastily placed under cover of his own robe the small but remarkably well-secured packet which Kilian had taken from the merchant's person. The soldiers withdrew, lingering, however, and looking back, like children brought away from a show before its final conclusion.²⁵⁵

"So, fellow!" again began De Hagenbach, "we are now more private. Wilt thou deal more on the level with me, and tell me what this packet is, and whence it comes?"

"Could all your garrison be crowded into this room, I can only answer as before.—The contents I do not precisely know—the person by whom it was sent I am determined not to name."

"Perhaps your son," said the Governor, "may be more compliant."

"He cannot tell you that of which he is himself ignorant," answered the merchant.

"Perchance the rack may make you both find your tongues;—and we will try it on the young fellow first, Kilian, since thou knowest we have seen men shrink from beholding the wrenched joints of their children, that would have committed their own old sinews to the stretching with much endurance."

"You may make the trial," said Arthur, "and Heaven will give me strength to endure"——

"And me courage to behold," added his father.

All this while the Governor was turning and re-turning the little packet in his hand, curiously inspecting every fold, and regretting, doubtless, in secret, that a few patches of wax, placed under an envelope of crimson satin, and ligatures of twisted silk cord, should prevent his eager eyes from ascertaining the nature of the treasure which he doubted not it concealed. At length he again called in the soldiers, and delivered up the two prisoners to their charge, commanding that they should be kept safely, and in separate holds, and that the father, in particular, should be most carefully looked after.

"I take you all here to witness," exclaimed the elder Philipson, despising the menacing signs of De Hagenbach, "that the Governor detains from me a packet, addressed to his most gracious lord and master, the Duke of Burgundy."

De Hagenbach actually foamed at the mouth with passion.

"And should I *not* detain it?" he exclaimed, in a voice inarticulate with rage. "May there not be some foul practice against the life of our most gracious sovereign, by poison or otherwise, in this suspicious packet, brought by a most suspicious bearer? Have we never heard of poisons which do their work by the smell? And shall we, who keep the gate, as I may say, of his Grace of Burgundy's dominions, give access to what may rob Europe of its pride of chivalry, Burgundy of its prince, and Flanders of her father?—No! Away with these miscreants, soldiers—down to the lowest dungeons with them—keep them separate, and watch them carefully. This treasonable practice has been meditated with the connivance of Berne and Soleure."

Thus Sir Archibald de Hagenbach raved, with a raised voice and inflamed countenance, lashing himself as it were into passion, until the steps of the soldiers, and the clash of their arms, as they retired with the prisoners, were no longer audible. His complexion, when these had ceased, waxed paler than was natural to him—his brow was furrowed with anxious wrinkles—and his voice became lower and more hesitating than ordinary, as, turning to his esquire, he said, "Kilian, we stand upon a slippery plank, with a raging torrent beneath us—What is to be done?"²⁵⁷

"Marry, to move forward with a resolved yet prudent step," answered the crafty Kilian. "It is unlucky that all these fellows should have seen the packet, and heard the appeal of yonder iron-nerved trader. But this ill luck has befallen us, and the packet having been in your excellency's hands, you will have all the credit of having broken the seals; for, though you leave them as entire as the moment they were impressed, it will only be supposed they have been ingeniously replaced. Let us see what are the contents, before we determine what is to be done with them. They must be of rare value, since the churl merchant was well contented to leave behind all his rich mule's-load of merchandise, so that this precious packet might pass unexamined."

"They may be papers on some political matter. Many such, and of high importance, pass secretly between Edward of England and our bold Duke." Such was the reply of De Hagenbach.

"If they be papers of consequence to the Duke," answered Kilian, "we can forward them to Dijon.—Or they may be such as Louis of France would purchase with their weight of gold."

"For shame, Kilian!" said the Knight. "Wouldst thou have me betray my master's secrets to the King of France? Sooner would I lay my head on the block."

"Indeed? And yet your excellency hesitates not to"——

Here the squire stopped, apparently for fear of giving offence, by affixing a name too broad and intelligible to the practices of his patron.

"To plunder the Duke, thou wouldst say, thou impudent slave? And, saying so, thou wouldst ²⁵⁸be as dull as thou art wont to be," answered De Hagenbach. "I partake, indeed, in the plunder which the Duke takes from aliens; and reason good. Even so the hound and the hawk have their share of the quarry they bring down—ay, and the lion's share too, unless the huntsman or falconer be all the nearer to them. Such are the perquisites of my rank; and the Duke, who placed me here for the gratification of his resentment, and the bettering of my fortune, does not grudge them to a faithful servant. And, indeed, I may term myself, in so far as this territory of La Ferette extends, the Duke's full representative, or, as it may be termed, ALTER EGO—and, thereupon, I will open this packet, which, being addressed to him, is thereby equally addressed to me."

Having thus in a manner talked himself up to an idea of his own high authority, he cut the strings of the packet which he had all this while held in his hand, and, undoing the outer coverings, produced a very small case made of sandalwood.

"The contents," he said, "had need be valuable, as they lie in so little compass."

So saying he pressed the spring, and the casket, opening, displayed a necklace of diamonds, distinguished by brilliancy and size, and apparently of extraordinary value. The eyes of the avaricious Governor, and his no less rapacious attendant, were so dazzled with the unusual splendour, that for some time they could express nothing save joy and surprise.

"Ay, marry, sir," said Kilian, "the obstinate old knave had reasons for his hardihood. My own joints should have stood a strain or two ere I ²⁵⁹surrendered such sparkles as these.—And now, Sir Archibald, may your trusty follower ask you how this booty is to be divided between the Duke and his Governor, according to the most approved rules of garrison towns?"

"Faith, we will suppose the garrison stormed, Kilian; and in a storm, thou know'st, the first finder takes all—with due consideration always of his trusty followers."

"As myself, for example," said Kilian.

"Ay, and myself, for example," answered a voice, which sounded like the echo of the esquire's words, from the remote corner of the ancient apartment.

"Sdeath! we are overheard," exclaimed the Governor, starting and laying his hand on his dagger.

"Only by a faithful follower, as the worthy esquire observes," said the executioner, moving slowly forward.

"Villain, how didst thou dare watch me?" said Sir Archibald de Hagenbach.

"Trouble not yourself for that, sir," said Kilian. "Honest Steinernherz has no tongue to speak, or ear to hear, save according to your pleasure. Indeed, we must shortly have taken him into our counsels, seeing these men must be dealt upon, and that speedily."

"Indeed!" said De Hagenbach; "I had thought they might be spared."

"To tell the Duke of Burgundy how the Governor of La Ferette accounts to his treasurer for the duties and forfeitures at his custom-house?" demanded Kilian.

"Tis true," said the Knight; "dead men have ²⁶⁰neither teeth nor tongue—they bite not, and they tell no tales. Thou wilt take order with them, Scharfgerichter."

"I will, my lord," answered the executioner, "on condition that, if this must be in the way of dungeon execution, which I call cellar practice, my privilege to claim nobility shall be saved and reserved to me, and the execution shall be declared to be as effectual to my claim, as it might have been if the blow had been dealt in broad daylight, with my honourable blade of office."

De Hagenbach stared at the executioner, as not understanding what he meant; on which Kilian took occasion to explain, that the Scharfgerichter was strongly impressed, from the free and dauntless conduct of the elder prisoner, that he was a man of noble blood, from whose decapitation he would himself derive all the advantages proposed to the headsman who should execute his function on nine men of illustrious extraction.

"He may be right," said Sir Archibald, "for here is a slip of parchment, commending the bearer of this carcanet to the Duke, desiring him to accept it as a true token from one well known to him, and to give the bearer full credence in all that he should say on the part of those by whom he is sent."

"By whom is the note signed, if I may make bold to ask?" said Kilian.

"There is no name—the Duke must be supposed to collect that information from the gems, or perhaps the handwriting."

"On neither of which he is likely to have a speedy opportunity of exercising his ingenuity," said Kilian.²⁶¹

De Hagenbach looked at the diamonds, and smiled darkly. The Scharfgerichter, encouraged by the familiarity into which he had in a manner forced himself, returned to his plea, and insisted on the nobility of the supposed merchant. Such a trust, and such a letter of unlimited credence, could never, he contended, be intrusted to a man meanly born.²⁶²

"Thou art deceived, thou fool," said the Knight; "kings now use the lowest tools to do their dearest offices. Louis has set the example of putting his barber, and the valets of his chamber, to do the work formerly intrusted to dukes and peers; and other monarchs begin to think that it is better, in choosing their agents for important affairs, to judge rather by the quality of men's brains than that of their blood. And as for the stately look and bold bearing which distinguish yonder fellow in the eyes of cravens like thee, it belongs to his country, not his rank. Thou think'st it is in England as in Flanders, where a city-bred burgher of Ghent, Liège, or Ypres is as distinct an animal from a knight of Hainault as a Flanders wagon horse from a Spanish jennet. But thou art deceived. England has many a merchant as haughty of heart, and as prompt of hand, as any noble-born son of her rich bosom. But be not dejected, thou foolish man; do thy business well on this merchant, and we shall presently have on our hands the Landamman of Unterwalden, who, though a churl by his choice, is yet a nobleman by blood, and shall, by ²⁶²his well-deserved death, aid thee to get rid of the peasant slough which thou art so weary of."

"Were not your excellency better adjourn these men's fate," said Kilian, "till you hear something of them from the Swiss prisoners whom we shall presently have in our power?"

"Be it as you will," said Hagenbach, waving his hand, as if putting aside some disagreeable task. "But let all be finished ere I hear of it again."

The stern satellites bowed obedience, and the deadly conclave broke up; their chief carefully securing the valuable gems, which he was willing to purchase at the expense of treachery to the sovereign in whose employment he had enlisted himself, as well as the blood of two innocent men. Yet, with a weakness of mind not uncommon to great criminals, he shrank from the thoughts of his own baseness and cruelty, and endeavoured to banish the feeling of dishonour from his mind, by devolving the immediate execution of his villany upon his subordinate agents.²⁶³

CHAPTER XV.

And this place our forefathers built for man!

Old Play.

The dungeon in which the younger Philipson was immured was one of those gloomy caverns which cry shame on the inhumanity of our ancestors. They seem to have been almost insensible to the distinction betwixt innocence and guilt, as the consequences of mere accusation must have been far more severe in those days than is in our own that species of imprisonment which is adjudged as an express punishment for crime.

The cell of Arthur Philipson was of considerable length, but dark and narrow, and dug out of the solid rock upon which the tower was founded. A small lamp was allowed him, not, however, without some grumbling, but his arms were still kept bound; and when he asked for a draught of water, one of the grim satellites by whom he was thrust into this cell answered surlily that he might endure his thirst for all the time his life was likely to last—a gloomy response, which augured that his privations would continue as long as his life, yet neither be of long duration. By the dim lamp he had groped his way to a bench, or rough seat, cut in the rock; and, as his eyes got gradually accustomed to the obscurity of the region in which he was immured, he became aware of a ²⁶⁴ghastly cleft in the floor of his dungeon, somewhat resembling the opening of a draw-well, but irregular in its aperture, and apparently the mouth of a gulf of Nature's conformation, slightly assisted by the labour of human art.

"Here, then, is my death-bed," he said, "and that gulf perhaps the grave which yawns for my remains! Nay, I have heard of prisoners being plunged into such horrid abysses while they were yet alive, to die at leisure, crushed with wounds, their groans unheard, and their fate unpitied!"

He approached his head to the dismal cavity, and heard, as at a great depth, the sound of a sullen and, as it seemed, subterranean stream. The sunless waves appeared murmuring for their victim. Death is dreadful at all ages; but in the first springtide of youth, with all the feelings of enjoyment afloat, and eager for gratification, to be snatched forcibly from the banquet to which the individual has but just sat down, is peculiarly appalling, even when the change comes in the ordinary course of nature. But to sit, like young Philipson, on the brink of the subterranean abyss, and ruminate in horrid doubt concerning the mode in which death was to be inflicted, was a situation which might break the spirit of the boldest; and the unfortunate captive was wholly unable to suppress the natural tears that flowed from his eyes in torrents, and which his bound arms did not permit him to wipe away. We have already noticed that, although a gallant young man in aught of danger which was to be faced and overcome by active exertion, the youth was strongly imaginative, and sensitive to a powerful extent to all those exaggerations which, in a situation of helpless ²⁶⁵uncertainty, fancy lends to distract the soul of him who must passively expect an approaching evil.

Yet the feelings of Arthur Philipson were not selfish. They reverted to his father, whose just and noble character was as much formed to attract veneration, as his unceasing paternal care and affection to excite love and gratitude. He too was in the hands of remorseless villains, who were determined to conceal robbery by secret murder—he too, undaunted in so many dangers, resolute in so many encounters, lay bound and defenceless, exposed to the dagger of the meanest stabber. Arthur remembered, too, the giddy peak of the rock near Geierstein, and the grim vulture which claimed him as its prey. Here was no angel to burst through the mist, and marshal him on a path of safety—here the darkness was subterranean and eternal, saving when the captive should behold the knife of the ruffian flash against the lamp which lent him light to aim the fatal blow. This agony of mind lasted until the feelings of the unhappy prisoner arose to ecstasy. He started up, and struggled so hard to free himself of his bonds, that it seemed they should have fallen from him as from the arms of the mighty Nazarene. But the cords were of too firm a texture; and after a violent and unavailing struggle, in which the ligatures seemed to enter his flesh, the prisoner lost his balance, and, while the feeling thrilled through him that he was tumbling backward into the subterranean abyss, he fell to the ground with great force.

Fortunately he escaped the danger which in his agony he apprehended, but so narrowly, that his head struck against the low and broken fence with ²⁶⁶which the mouth of the horrible pit was partly surrounded. Here he lay stunned and motionless, and, as the lamp was extinguished in his fall, immersed in absolute and total darkness. He was recalled to sensation by a jarring noise.

"They come—they come—the murderers! Oh, Lady of Mercy! and oh, gracious Heaven, forgive my transgressions!"

He looked up, and observed, with dazzled eyes, that a dark form approached him, with a knife in one hand and a torch in the other. He might well have seemed the man who was to do the last deed upon the unhappy prisoner, if he had come alone. But he came not alone—his torch gleamed upon the white dress of a female, which was so much illuminated by it that Arthur could discover a form, and had even a glimpse of features, never to be forgotten, though now seen under circumstances least of all to be expected. The prisoner's unutterable astonishment impressed him with a degree of awe which overcame even his personal fear—"Can these things be?" was his muttered reflection. "Has she really the power of an elementary spirit? Has she conjured up this earthlike and dark demon to concur with her in my deliverance?"

It appeared as if his guess were real; for the figure in black, giving the light to Anne of Geierstein, or at least the form which bore her perfect resemblance, stooped over the prisoner, and cut the cord that bound his arms, with so much despatch that it seemed as if it fell from his person at a touch. Arthur's first attempt to arise was unsuccessful, and a second time it was the hand of Anne of Geierstein—a living hand, sensible to touch as ²⁶⁷to sight—which aided to raise and to support him, as it had formerly done when the tormented waters of the river thundered at their feet. Her touch produced an effect far beyond that of the slight personal aid which the maiden's strength could have rendered. Courage was restored to his heart, vigour and animation to his benumbed and bruised limbs; such influence does the human mind, when excited to energy, possess over the infirmities of the human body. He was about to address Anne in accents of the deepest gratitude. But the accents died away on his tongue, when the mysterious female, laying her finger on her lips, made him a sign to be silent, and at the same time beckoned

him to follow her. He obeyed in silent amazement. They passed the entrance of the melancholy dungeon, and through one or two short but intricate passages, which, cut out of the rock in some places, and built in others with hewn stone of the same kind, probably led to holds similar to that in which Arthur was so lately a captive.

The recollection that his father might be immured in some such horrid cell as he himself had just quitted, induced Arthur to pause as they reached the bottom of a small winding staircase, which conducted apparently from this region of the building.

"Come," he said, "dearest Anne, lead me to his deliverance! I must not leave my father."

She shook her head impatiently, and beckoned him on.

"If your power extends not to save my father's life, I will remain and save him or die!—Anne, dearest Anne"——268

She answered not, but her companion replied, in a deep voice, not unsuitable to his appearance, "Speak, young man, to those who are permitted to answer you; or rather, be silent, and listen to my instructions, which direct to the only course which can bring thy father to freedom and safety."

They ascended the stair, Anne of Geierstein going first; while Arthur, who followed close behind, could not help thinking that her form gave existence to a part of the light which her garment reflected from the torch. This was probably the effect of the superstitious belief impressed on his mind by Rudolph's tale respecting her mother, and which was confirmed by her sudden appearance in a place and situation where she was so little to have been expected. He had not much time, however, to speculate upon her appearance or demeanour, for, mounting the stair with a lighter pace than he was able at the time to follow closely, she was no longer to be seen when he reached the landing-place. But whether she had melted into the air, or turned aside into some other passage, he was not permitted a moment's leisure to examine.

"Here lies your way," said his sable guide; and at the same time dashing out the light, and seizing Philipson by the arm, he led him along a dark gallery of considerable length. The young man was not without some momentary misgivings, while he recollected the ominous looks of his conductor, and that he was armed with a dagger, or knife, which he could plunge of a sudden into his bosom. But he could not bring himself to dread treachery from any one whom he had seen in company with Anne of Geierstein; and in his 269heart he demanded her pardon for the fear which had flashed across him, and resigned himself to the guidance of his companion, who advanced with hasty but light footsteps, and cautioned him by a whisper to do the same.

"Our journey," he at length said, "ends here."

As he spoke, a door gave way, and admitted them into a gloomy Gothic apartment, furnished with large oaken presses, apparently filled with books and manuscripts. As Arthur looked round, with eyes dazzled with the sudden gleam of daylight from which he had been for some time excluded, the door by which they had entered disappeared. This, however, did not greatly surprise him, who judged that, being formed in appearance to correspond with the presses around the entrance which they had used, it could not when shut be distinguished from them; a device sometimes then practised, as indeed it often is at the present day. He had now a full view of his deliverer, who, when seen by daylight, showed only the vestments and features of a clergyman, without any of that expression of supernatural horror which the partial light and the melancholy appearance of all in the dungeon had combined to impress on him.

Young Philipson once more breathed with freedom, as one awakened from a hideous dream; and the supernatural qualities with which his imagination had invested Anne of Geierstein having begun to vanish, he addressed his deliverer thus: "That I may testify my thanks, holy father, where they are so especially due, let me inquire of you if Anne of Geierstein"——

"Speak of that which pertains to your house and 270family," answered the priest, as briefly as before. "Hast thou so soon forgot thy father's danger?"

"By heavens, no!" replied the youth. "Tell me but how to act for his deliverance, and thou shalt see how a son can fight for a parent!"

"It is well, for it is needful," said the priest. "Don thou this vestment, and follow me."

The vestment presented was the gown and hood of a novice.

"Draw the cowl over thy face," said the priest, "and return no answer to any man who meets thee. I will say thou art under a vow.—May Heaven forgive the unworthy tyrant who imposes on us the necessity of such profane dissimulation! Follow me close and near—beware that you speak not."

The business of disguise was soon accomplished, and the Priest of St. Paul's, for such he was, moving on, Arthur followed him a pace or two behind, assuming as well as he could the modest step and humble demeanour of a spiritual novice. On leaving the library, or study, and descending a short stair, he found himself in the street of Brisach. Irresistibly tempted to look back, he had only time, however, to see that the house he had left was a very small building of a Gothic character, on the one side of which rose the church of St. Paul's, and on the other the stern black gate-house, or entrance-tower.

"Follow me, Melchior," said the deep voice of the priest; and his keen eyes were at the same time fixed upon the supposed novice, with a look which instantly recalled Arthur to a sense of his situation.

They passed along, nobody noticing them, unless 271to greet the priest with a silent obeisance, or muttered phrase of salutation, until, having nearly gained the middle of the village, the guide turned abruptly off from the street, and, moving northward by a short lane, reached a flight of steps, which, as usual in fortified towns, led to the banquette, or walk behind the parapet, which was of the old Gothic fashion, flanked with towers from space to space, of different forms and various heights at different angles.

There were sentinels on the walls; but the watch, as it seemed, was kept not by regular soldiers, but by burghers, with spears, or swords, in their hands. The first whom they passed said to the priest, in a half-whispered tone, "Holds our purpose?"

"It holds," replied the Priest of St. Paul's.—"Benedicite!"

"*Deo Gratias!*" replied the armed citizen, and continued his walk upon the battlements.

The other sentinels seemed to avoid them; for they disappeared when they came near, or passed them without looking, or seeming to observe them. At last their walk brought them to an ancient turret, which raised its head above the wall, and in which there was a small door opening from the battlement. It was in a corner, distinct from and uncommanded by any of the angles of the fortification. In a well-guarded fortress, such a point ought to have had a sentinel for its special protection, but no one was there upon duty.

"Now mark me," said the priest, "for your father's life, and, it may be, that of many a man besides, depends upon your attention, and no less upon your despatch.—You can run?—you can leap?"272

"I feel no weariness, father, since you freed me," answered Arthur; "and the dun deer that I have often chased shall not beat me in such a wager."

"Observe then," replied the Black Priest of St. Paul's, "this turret contains a staircase, which descends to a small sallyport. I will give you entrance to it—The sallyport is barred on the inside, but not locked. It will give you access to the moat, which is almost entirely dry. On crossing it, you will find yourself in the circuit of the outer barriers. You may see sentinels, but they will not see you—speak not to them, but make your way over the palisade as you can. I trust you can climb over an undefended rampart?"

"I have surmounted a defended one," said Arthur. "What is my next charge?—All this is easy."

"You will see a species of thicket, or stretch of low bushes—make for it with all speed. When you are there, turn to the eastward; but beware, while holding that course, that you are not seen by the Burgundian Free Companions, who are on watch on that part of the walls. A volley of arrows, and the sally of a body of cavalry in pursuit, will be the consequence, if they get sight of you; and their eyes are those of the eagle, that spy the carnage afar off."

"I will be heedful," said the young Englishman.

"You will find," continued the priest, "upon the outer side of the thicket a path, or rather a sheep-track, which, sweeping at some distance from the walls, will conduct you at last into the road leading from Brisach to Bâle. Hasten forward to meet the Swiss, who are advancing. Tell them your father's hours are counted, and that 273they must press on if they would save him; and say to Rudolph Donnerhugel, in especial, that the Black Priest of St. Paul's waits to bestow upon him his blessing at the northern sallyport. Dost thou understand me?"

"Perfectly," answered the young man.

The Priest of St. Paul's then pushed open the low-browed gate of the turret, and Arthur was about to precipitate himself down the stair which opened before him.

"Stay yet a moment," said the priest, "and doff the novice's habit, which can only encumber thee."

Arthur in a trice threw it from him, and was again about to start.

"Stay yet a moment longer," continued the Black Priest. "This gown may be a tell-tale—Stay, therefore, and help me to pull off my upper garment."

Inwardly glowing with impatience, Arthur yet saw the necessity of obeying his guide; and when he had pulled the long and loose upper vestment from the old man, he stood before him in a cassock of black serge, befitting his order and profession, but begirt, not with a suitable sash such as clergymen wear, but with a most uncanonical buff-belt, supporting a short two-edged sword, calculated alike to stab and to smite.

"Give me now the novice's habit," said the venerable father, "and over that I will put the priestly vestment. Since for the present I have some tokens of the laity about me, it is fitting it should be covered with a double portion of the clerical habit."

As he spoke thus he smiled grimly; and his smile had something more frightful and withering than the stern frown, which suited better with his features, and was their usual expression.

"And now," said he, "what does the fool tarry for, when life and death are in his speed?"

The young messenger waited not a second hint, but at once descended the stairs, as if it had been by a single step, found the portal, as the priest had said, only secured by bars on the inside, offering little resistance save from their rusted state, which made it difficult to draw them. Arthur succeeded, however, and found himself at the side of the moat, which presented a green and marshy appearance. Without stopping to examine whether it was deep or shallow, and almost without being sensible of the tenacity of the morass, the young Englishman forced his way through it, and attained the opposite side, without attracting the attention of two worthy burghers of Brisach, who were the guardians of the barriers. One of them indeed was deeply employed in the perusal of some profane chronicle, or religious legend; the other was as anxiously engaged in examining the margin of the moat, in search of eels, perhaps, or frogs, for he wore over his shoulder a scrip for securing some such amphibious booty.

Seeing that, as the priest foretold, he had nothing to apprehend from the vigilance of the sentinels, Arthur dashed at the palisade, in hope to catch hold of the top of the stockade, and so to clear it by one bold leap. He overrated his powers of activity, however, or they were diminished by his recent bonds and imprisonment. He fell lightly backward on the ground, and, as he got to his feet, became aware of the presence of a soldier, in yellow and blue, the livery of De Hagenbach, who came running towards him, crying to the slothful and unobservant sentinels, "Alarm!—alarm!—you lazy swine! Stop the dog, or you are both dead men."

The fisherman, who was on the farther side, laid down his eel-spear, drew his sword, and, flourishing it over his head, advanced towards Philipson with very moderate haste. The student was yet more unfortunate, for, in his hurry to fold up his book and attend to his duty, he contrived to throw himself (inadvertently, doubtless) full in the soldier's way. The latter, who was running at top speed, encountered the burgher with a severe shock which threw both down; but the citizen, being a solid and substantial man, lay still where he fell, while the other, less weighty, and probably less prepared for the collision, lost his balance and the command of his limbs at once, and, rolling over the edge of the moat, was immersed in the mud and marsh. The fisher and the student went with deliberate speed to assist the unexpected and unwelcome partner of their watch; while Arthur, stimulated by the imminent sense of danger, sprang at the barrier with more address and vigour than before, and, succeeding in his leap, made, as he had been directed, with his utmost speed for the covert of the adjacent bushes. He reached them without hearing any alarm from the walls. But he was conscious that his situation had become extremely precarious, since his escape from the town was known to one man at least who would not fail to give the alarm in case he was able to extricate himself from the marsh—a feat, however, in which it seemed to Arthur that the armed citizens were likely to prove rather his apparent than actual assistants. While such thoughts shot across his mind, they served to augment his natural speed of foot, so that in less space than could have been thought possible, he reached the thinner extremity of the thicket, whence, as intimated by the Black Priest, he could see the eastern tower and the adjoining battlements of the town—

With hostile faces throng'd, and fiery arms.

It required, at the same time, some address on the part of the fugitive to keep so much under shelter as to prevent himself from being seen in his turn by those whom he saw so plainly. He therefore expected every moment to hear a bugle wind, or to behold that bustle and commotion among the defenders which might prognosticate a sally. Neither, however, took place, and heedfully observing the footpath, or track, which the priest had pointed out to him, young Philipson wheeled his course out of sight of the guarded towers, and soon falling into the public and frequented road, by which his father and he had approached the town in the morning, he had the happiness, by the dust and flash of arms, to see a small body of armed men advancing towards Brisach, whom he justly concluded to be the van of the Swiss deputation.

He soon met the party, which consisted of about ten men, with Rudolph Donnerhugel at their head. The figure of Philipson, covered with mud, and in some places stained with blood (for his fall in the dungeon had cost him a slight wound), attracted the wonder of every one, who crowded around to hear the news. Rudolph alone appeared unmoved. Like the visage on the ancient statues of Hercules, the physiognomy of the bulky Bernese was large and massive, having an air of indifferent and almost sullen composure, which did not change but in moments of the fiercest agitation.

He listened without emotion to the breathless tale of Arthur Philipson, that his father was in prison, and adjudged to death.

"And what else did you expect?" said the Bernese, coldly. "Were you not warned? It had been easy to have foreseen the misfortune, but it may be impossible to prevent it."

"I own—I own," said Arthur, wringing his hands, "that you were wise, and that we were foolish.—But oh! do not think of our folly in the moment of our extremity! Be the gallant and generous champion which your Cantons proclaim you—give us your aid in this deadly strait!"

"But how, or in what manner?" said Rudolph, still hesitating. "We have dismissed the Bâlese, who were willing to have given assistance, so much did your dutiful example weigh with us. We are now scarce above a score of men—how can you ask us to attack a garrison town, secured by fortifications, and where there are six times our number?"

"You have friends within the fortifications," replied Arthur—"I am sure you have. Hark in your ear—The Black Priest sent to you—to you, Rudolph Donnerhugel of Berne—that he waits to give you his blessing at the northern sallyport."

"Ay, doubtless," said Rudolph, shaking himself free of Arthur's attempt to engage him in private conference, and speaking so that all around might hear him, "there is little doubt on't; I will find a priest at the northern sallyport to confess and absolve me, and a block, axe, and headsman to strike my throat asunder when he has done. But I will scarce put the neck of my father's son into such risk. If they assassinate an English pedlar, who has never offended them, what will they do with the Bear of Berne, whose fangs and talons Archibald de Hagenbach has felt ere now?"

Young Philipson at these words clasped his hands together, and held them up to heaven, as one who abandons hope, excepting thence. The tears started to his eyes, and, clenching his hands and setting his teeth, he turned his back abruptly upon the Swiss.

"What means this passion?" said Rudolph. "Whither would you now?"

"To rescue my father, or perish with him," said Arthur; and was about to run wildly back to La Ferette, when a strong but kindly grasp detained him.

"Tarry a little till I tie my garter," said Sigismund Biederman, "and I will go with you, King Arthur."

"You? oaf!" exclaimed Rudolph. "You?—and without orders?"

"Why, look you, cousin Rudolph," said the youth, continuing, with great composure, to fasten his garter, which, after the fashion of the time, was somewhat intricately secured—"you are always telling us that we are Swiss and freemen; and what is the advantage of being a freeman, if one is not at liberty to do what he has a mind? You are my Hauptman, look you, so long as it pleases me, and no longer."

"And why shouldst thou desert me now, thou fool? Why at this minute, of all other minutes in the year?" demanded the Bernese.

"Look you," replied the insubordinate follower, "I have hunted with Arthur for this month past, and I love him—he never called me fool or idiot, because my thoughts came slower, maybe, and something duller, than those of other folk. And I love his father—the old man gave me this baldrick and this horn, which I

warrant cost many a kreutzer. He told me, too, not to be discouraged, for that it was better to think justly than to think fast, and that I had sense enough for the one if not for the other. And the kind old man is now in Hagenbach's butcher-shambles!—But we will free him, Arthur, if two men may. Thou shalt see me fight, while steel blade and ashen shaft will hold together."

So saying, he shook in the air his enormous partisan, which quivered in his grasp like a slip of willow. Indeed, if Iniquity was to be struck down like an ox, there was not one in that chosen band more likely to perform the feat than Sigismund; for though somewhat shorter in stature than his brethren, and of a less animated spirit, yet his breadth of shoulders and strength of muscles were enormous, and if thoroughly aroused and disposed for the contest, which was very rarely the case, perhaps Rudolph himself might, as far as sheer force went, have had difficulty in matching him.

Truth of sentiment and energy of expression always produce an effect on natural and generous characters. Several of the youths around began to exclaim that Sigismund said well; that if the old man had put himself in danger, it was because he thought more of the success of their negotiation than of his own safety, and had taken himself from under their protection, rather than involve them in quarrels on his account. "We are the more bound," they said, "to see him unscathed; and we will do so."

"Peace! all you wiseacres," said Rudolph, looking round with an air of superiority; "and you, Arthur of England, pass on to the Landamman, who is close behind. You know he is our chief commander, he is no less your father's sincere friend, and, whatever he may determine in your father's favour, you will find most ready executors of his pleasure in all of us."

His companions appeared to concur in this advice, and young Philipson saw that his own compliance with the recommendation was indispensable. Indeed, although he still suspected that the Bernese, by his various intrigues, as well with the Swiss youth as with those of Bâle, and, as might be inferred from the Priest of St. Paul's, by communication even within the town of La Ferette, possessed the greater power of assisting him at such a conjuncture; yet he trusted far more in the simple candour and perfect faith of Arnold Biederman, and pressed forward to tell to him his mournful tale, and crave his assistance.

From the top of a bank which he reached in a few minutes after he parted from Rudolph and the advanced guard, he saw beneath him the venerable Landamman and his associates, attended by a few of the youths, who no longer were dispersed upon the flanks of the party, but attended on them closely, and in military array, as men prepared to repel any sudden attack.²⁸¹

Behind came a mule or two with baggage, together with the animals which, in the ordinary course of their march, supported Anne of Geierstein and her attendant. Both were occupied by female figures as usual, and, to the best of Arthur's ken, the foremost had the well-known dress of Anne, from the grey mantle to a small heron's plume, which, since entering Germany, she had worn in compliance with the custom of the country, and in evidence of her rank as a maiden of birth and distinction. Yet, if the youth's eyes brought him true tidings at present, what was the character of their former information, when, scarce more than half an hour since, they had beheld, in the subterranean dungeon of Brisach, the same form which they now rested upon, in circumstances so very different! The feeling excited by this thought was powerful, but it was momentary, like the lightning which blazes through a midnight sky, which is but just seen ere it vanishes into darkness. Or, rather, the wonder excited by this marvellous incident only maintained its ground in his thoughts by allying itself with the anxiety for his father's safety, which was their predominant occupation.

"If there be indeed a spirit," he said, "which wears that beautiful form, it must be beneficent as well as lovely, and will extend to my far more deserving father the protection which his son has twice experienced."

But ere he had time to prosecute such a thought further, he had met the Landamman and his party. Here his appearance and his condition excited the same surprise as they had formerly occasioned to Rudolph and the vanguard. To the repeated interrogatories of the Landamman he gave a brief account of his own imprisonment, and of his escape, of which he suffered the whole glory to rest with the Black Priest of St. Paul's, without mentioning one word of the more interesting female apparition, by which he had been attended and assisted in his charitable task. On another point also Arthur was silent. He saw no propriety in communicating to Arnold Biederman the message which the priest had addressed to Rudolph's ear alone. Whether good should come of it or no, he held sacred the obligation of silence imposed upon him by a man from whom he had just received the most important assistance.

The Landamman was struck dumb for a moment with sorrow and surprise at the news which he heard. The elder Philipson had gained his respect, as well by the purity and steadiness of the principles which he expressed, as by the extent and depth of his information, which was peculiarly valuable and interesting to the Switzer, who felt his admirable judgment considerably fettered for want of that knowledge of countries, times, and manners, with which his English friend often supplied him.

"Let us press forward," he said to the Banneret of Berne and the other deputies; "let us offer our mediation betwixt the tyrant De Hagenbach and our friend, whose life is in danger. He must listen to us, for I know his master expects to see this Philipson at his court. The old man hinted to me so much. As we are possessed of such a secret, Archibald de Hagenbach will not dare to brave our vengeance, since we might easily send to Duke Charles information how the Governor of La Ferette abuses his power, in matters where not only the Swiss but where the Duke himself is concerned."

"Under your reverend favour, my worthy sir," answered the Banneret of Berne, "we are Swiss Deputies, and go to represent the injuries of Switzerland alone. If we embroil ourselves with the quarrels of strangers, we shall find it more difficult to settle advantageously those of our own country; and if the Duke should, by this villany done upon English merchants, bring upon him the resentment of the English monarch, such breach will only render it more a matter of peremptory necessity for him to make a treaty advantageous to the Swiss Cantons."

There was so much worldly policy in this advice, that Adam Zimmerman of Soleure instantly expressed his assent, with the additional argument, that their brother Biederman had told them scarce two hours before how these English merchants had, by his advice and their own free desire, parted company with them that morning, on purpose that they might not involve the Deputies in the quarrels which might be raised by the Governor's exactions on his merchandise.

"Now what advantage," he said, "shall we derive from this same parting of company, supposing, as my brother seems to urge, we are still to consider this Englishman's interest as if he were our fellow-traveller, and under our especial protection?"

This personal reasoning pinched the Landamman somewhat closely, for he had but a short while before descanted on the generosity of the elder Philipson, who had freely exposed himself to danger, rather than that he should embarrass their negotiation by remaining one of their company; and it completely shook the fealty of the white-bearded Nicholas Bonstetten, whose eyes wandered from the face of Zimmerman, which expressed triumphant confidence in his argument, to that of his friend the Landamman, which was rather more embarrassed than usual.

"Brethren," said Arnold at length with firmness and animation, "I erred in priding myself upon the worldly policy which I taught to you this morning. This man is not of our country, doubtless, but he is of our blood—a copy of the common Creator's image—and the more worthy of being called so, as he is a man of integrity and worth. We might not, without grievous sin, pass such a person, being in danger, without affording him relief, even if he lay accidentally by the side of our path; much less should we abandon him if the danger has been incurred in our own cause, and that we might escape the net in which he is himself caught. Be not, therefore, downcast—We do God's will in succouring an oppressed man. If we succeed by mild means, as I trust we shall, we do a good action at a cheap rate;—if not, God can assert the cause of humanity by the hands of few as well as of many."

"If such is your opinion," said the Bannerman of Berne, "not a man here will shrink from you. For me, I pleaded against my own inclinations when I advised you to avoid a breach with the Burgundian. But as a soldier, I must needs say, I would rather fight the garrison, were they double the number they talk of, in a fair field, than undertake to storm their defences."²⁸⁵

"Nay," said the Landamman, "I sincerely hope we shall both enter and depart from the town of Brisach, without deviating from the pacific character with which our mission from the Diet invests us."²⁸⁶

CHAPTER XVI.

For Somerset, off with his guilty head!
3d Part of Henry VI.

The Governor of La Ferette stood on the battlements of the eastern entrance-tower of his fortress, and looked out on the road to Bâle, when first the vanguard of the Swiss mission, then the centre and rear, appeared in the distance. At the same moment the van halting, the main body closed with it, while the females and baggage, and mules in the rear, moved in their turn up to the main body, and the whole were united in one group.

A messenger then stepped forth, and winded one of those tremendous horns, the spoils of the wild-bulls, so numerous in the Canton of Uri, that they are supposed to have given rise to its name.

"They demand admittance," said the esquire.

"They shall have it," answered Sir Archibald de Hagenbach. "Marry, how they may pass out again, is another and a deeper question."

"Think yet a moment, noble sir," continued the esquire. "Bethink you, these Switzers are very fiends in fight, and have, besides, no booty to repay the conquest—some paltry chains of good copper, perchance, or adulterated silver. You have knocked out the marrow—do not damage your teeth by trying to grind the bone."

"Thou art a fool, Kilian," answered De Hagenbach, "and it may be a coward besides. The 287 approach of some score, or at most some score and a half, of Swiss partisans, makes thee draw in thy horns like a snail at a child's finger! Mine are strong and inflexible as those of the Urus, of whom they talk so much, and on which they blow so boldly. Keep in mind, thou timid creature, that if the Swiss deputies, as they presume to call themselves, are permitted to pass free, they carry to the Duke stories of merchants bound to his court, and fraught with precious commodities, specially addressed to his Grace! Charles has then at once to endure the presence of the ambassadors, whom he contemns and hates, and learns by them that the Governor of La Ferette, permitting such to pass, has nevertheless presumed to stop those whom he would full gladly see; for what prince would not blithely welcome such a casket as that which we have taken from yonder strolling English pedlar?"

"I see not how the assault on these ambassadors will mend your excellency's plea for despoiling the Englishmen," said Kilian.

"Because thou art a blind mole, Kilian," answered his chief. "If Burgundy hears of a ruffle between my garrison and the mountain churls, whom he scorns, and yet hates, it will drown all notice of the two pedlars who have perished in the fray. If after-inquiry should come, an hour's ride transports me with my confidants into the Imperial dominions, where, though the Emperor be a spiritless fool, the rich prize I have found on these islanders will ensure me a good reception."

"I will stick by your excellency to the last," returned the esquire; "and you shall yourself witness that, if a fool, I am at least no coward." 288

"I never thought thee such when it came to hand-blows," said De Hagenbach; "but in policy thou art timid and irresolute. Hand me mine armour, Kilian, and beware thou brace it well. The Swiss pikes and swords are no wasp-stings."

"May your excellency wear it with honour and profit," said Kilian; and, according to the duty of his office, he buckled upon his principal the complete panoply of a knight of the empire. "Your purpose of assaulting the Swiss then holds firm," said Kilian. "But what pretext will your excellency assign?"

"Let me alone," said Archibald de Hagenbach, "to take one, or to make one. Do you only have Schonfeldt and the soldiers on their stations. And remember the words are—'Burgundy to the Rescue!' When these words are first spoken, let the soldiers show themselves,—when repeated, let them fall on. And now that I am accoutred, away to the churls and admit them."

Kilian bowed and withdrew.

The bugle of the Switzers had repeatedly emitted its angry roar, exasperated by the delay of nearly half an hour, without an answer from the guarded gate of Brisach; and every blast declared, by the prolonged echoes which it awakened, the increased impatience of those who summoned the town. At length the portcullis arose, the gate opened, the drawbridge fell, and Kilian, in the equipage of a man-at-arms arrayed for fight, rode forth on an ambling palfrey.

"What bold men are ye, sirs, who are here in arms before the fortress of Brisach, appertaining in right and seignorie to the thrice noble Duke of Burgundy and Lorraine, and garrisoned for his 289 cause and interest by the excellent Sir Archibald, Lord of Hagenbach, Knight of the most Holy Roman Empire?"

"So please you, Sir Esquire," said the Landamman, "for such I conjecture you to be by the feather in your bonnet, we are here with no hostile intentions; though armed, as you see, to defend us in a perilous journey, where we are something unsafe by day, and cannot always repose by night in places of security. But our arms have no offensive purpose; if they had such, our numbers had not been so few as you see them."

"What, then, is your character and purpose?" said Kilian, who had learned to use, in his master's absence, the lordly and insolent tone of the Governor himself.

"We are Delegates," answered the Landamman, in a calm and even tone of voice, without appearing to take offence at, or to observe, the insolent demeanour of the esquire, "from the Free and Confederated Cantons of the Swiss States and provinces, and from the good town of Soleure, who are accredited from our Diet of Legislature to travel to the presence of his Grace the Duke of Burgundy, on an errand of high importance to both countries, and with the hope of establishing with your master's lord—I mean with the noble Duke of Burgundy—a sure and steadfast peace, upon such terms as shall be to the mutual honour and advantage of both countries, and to avert disputes, and the effusion of Christian blood, which may otherwise be shed for want of timely and good understanding."

"Show me your letters of credence," said the esquire. 290

"Under your forgiveness, Sir Esquire," replied the Landamman, "it will be time enough to exhibit these, when we are admitted to the presence of your master the Governor."

"That is as much as to say, wilful will to it. It is well, my masters; and yet you may take this advice from Kilian of Kersberg. It is sometimes better to reel backwards than to run forwards.—My master, and my master's master, are more ticklish persons than the dealers of Bâle, to whom you sell your cheeses. Home, honest men, home! your way lies before you, and you are fairly warned."

"We thank thee for thy counsel," said the Landamman, interrupting the Banneret of Berne, who had commenced an angry reply, "supposing it kindly meant; if not, an uncivil jest is like an overcharged gun, which recoils on the cannoneer. Our road lies onward through Brisach, and onward we propose to go, and take such hap as that which we may find before us."

"Go onward then, in the devil's name," said the squire, who had entertained some hope of deterring them from pursuing their journey, but found himself effectually foiled.

The Switzers entered the town, and, stopped by the barricade of cars which the Governor had formed across the street, at about twenty yards from the gate, they drew themselves up in military order, with their little body formed into three lines, the two females and the fathers of the deputation being in the centre. The little phalanx presented a double front, one to each side of the street, while the centre line faced so as to move forward, and only waited for the removal of the barricade in order to do so. But while they stood 291 thus inactive, a knight in complete armour appeared from a side door of the great tower, under the arch of which they had entered into the town. His visor was raised, and he walked along the front of the little line formed by the Swiss, with a stern and frowning aspect.

"Who are you," he said, "who have thus far intruded yourselves in arms into a Burgundian garrison?"

"With your excellency's leave," said the Landamman, "we are men who come on a peaceful errand, though we carry arms for our own defence. Deputies we are from the towns of Berne and Soleure, the Cantons of Uri, Schwitz, and Unterwalden, come to adjust matters of importance with the gracious Duke of Burgundy and Lorraine."

"What towns, what cantons?" said the Governor of La Ferette. "I have heard no such names among the Free Cities of Germany.—Berne, truly! when became Berne a free state?"

"Since the twenty-first day of June," said Arnold Biederman, "in the year of grace one thousand three hundred and thirty-nine, on which day the battle of Laupen was fought."

"Away, vain old man!" said the Knight. "Thinkest thou that such idle boasts can avail thee here? We have heard, indeed, of some insurgent villages and communities among the Alps, and how they rebelled against the Emperor, and by the advantage of fastnesses, ambushades, and lurking-places, how they have murdered some knights and gentlemen sent against them by the Duke of Austria; but we little thought that such paltry townships and insignificant bands of mutineers had the insolence to term themselves 292 Free States, and propose to enter into negotiation as such with a mighty prince like Charles of Burgundy."

"May it please your excellency," replied the Landamman, with perfect temper; "your own laws of chivalry declare, that if the stronger wrong the weaker, or the noble does injury to the less gentle, the very act levels distinctions between them, and the doer of an injury becomes bound to give condign satisfaction, of such kind as the wronged party shall demand."

"Hence to thy hills, churl!" exclaimed the haughty Knight; "there comb thy beard and roast thy chestnuts. What! because a few rats and mice find retreat among the walls and wainscoting of our dwelling-houses, shall we therefore allow them to intrude their disgusting presence, and their airs of freedom and independence, into our personal presence? No, we will rather crush them beneath the heel of our ironshod boots."

"We are not men to be trodden on," said Arnold Biederman, calmly; "those who have attempted it have found us stumbling-blocks. Lay, Sir Knight, lay aside for an instant this haughty language, which can only lead to warfare, and listen to the words of peace. Dismiss our comrade, the English merchant Philipson, on whom you have this morning laid unlawful hands; let him pay a moderate sum for his ransom, and we, who are bound instantly to the Duke's presence, will bear a fair report to him of his Governor of La Ferette."

"You will be so generous, will you!" said Sir Archibald, in a tone of ridicule. "And what pledge shall I have that you will favour me so kindly as you propose?"²⁹³

"The word of a man who never broke his promise," answered the stoical Landamman.

"Insolent hind!" replied the Knight, "dost thou stipulate? *Thou* offer thy paltry word as a pledge betwixt the Duke of Burgundy and Archibald de Hagenbach? Know that ye go not to Burgundy at all, or you go thither with fetters on your hands and halters round your necks.—So ho, Burgundy to the Rescue!"

Instantly, as he spoke, the soldiers showed themselves before, behind, and around the narrow space where the Swiss had drawn themselves up. The battlements of the town were lined with men, others presented themselves at the doors of each house in the street, prepared to sally, and, at the windows, prepared to shoot, as well with guns as with bows and crossbows. The soldiers who defended the barricade also started up, and seemed ready to dispute the passage in front. The little band, encompassed and overmatched, but neither startled nor disheartened, stood to their arms. The centre rank under the Landamman prepared to force their way over the barricade. The two fronts stood back to back, ready to dispute the street with those that should issue from the houses. It could not fail to prove a work of no small blood and toil to subdue this handful of determined men, even with five times their number. Some sense of this, perhaps, made Sir Archibald delay giving the signal for onset, when suddenly behind arose a cry of, "Treason, treason!"

A soldier, covered with mud, rushed before the Governor, and said, in hurried accents, that, as he endeavoured to stop a prisoner who had made his escape some short time since, he had been seized ²⁹⁴by the burghers of the town, and well-nigh drowned in the moat. He added, that the citizens were even now admitting the enemy into the place.

"Kilian," said the Knight, "take two score of men—hasten to the northern sallyport; stab, cut down, or throw from the battlements, whomsoever you meet in arms, townsmen or strangers. Leave me to settle with these peasants by fair means or foul."

But ere Kilian could obey his master's commands, a shout arose in the rear, where they cried, "Bâle! Bâle!—Freedom! freedom!—The day is our own!"

Onward came the youth of Bâle, who had not been at such a distance but that Rudolph had contrived to recall them—onward came many Swiss who had hovered around the embassy, holding themselves in readiness for such a piece of service; and onward came the armed citizens of La Ferette, who, compelled to take arms and mount guard by the tyranny of De Hagenbach, had availed themselves of the opportunity to admit the Bâlese at the sallyport through which Philipson had lately made his escape.

The garrison, somewhat discouraged before by the firm aspect of the Swiss, who had held their numbers at defiance, were totally disconcerted by this new and unexpected insurrection. Most of them prepared rather to fly than to fight, and they threw themselves in numbers from the walls, as the best chance of escaping. Kilian and some others, whom pride prevented from flying, and despair from asking quarter, fought with fury, and were killed on the spot. In the midst of this confusion the Landamman kept his own bands unmoved, permitting them to take no share in the ²⁹⁵action, save to repel such violence as was offered to them.

"Stand fast all!" sounded the deep voice of Arnold Biederman along their little body. "Where is Rudolph?—Save lives, but take none.—Why, how now, Arthur Philipson! stand fast, I say."

"I cannot stand fast," said Arthur, who was in the act of leaving the ranks. "I must seek my father in the dungeons; they may be slaying him in this confusion while I stand idle here."

"By our Lady of Einsiedlen, you say well," answered the Landamman; "that I should have forgot my noble guest! I will help thee to search for him, Arthur—the affray seems well-nigh ended.—Ho, there, Sir Banneret, worthy Adam Zimmerman, my good friend Nicholas Bonstetten, keep our men standing firm—Have nothing to do with this affray, but leave the men of Bâle to answer their own deeds. I return in a few minutes."

So saying, he hurried after Arthur Philipson, whose recollection conducted him, with sufficient accuracy, to the head of the dungeon stairs. There they met an ill-looking man clad in a buff jerkin, who bore at his girdle a bunch of rusted keys, which intimated the nature of his calling.

"Show me the prison of the English merchant," said Arthur Philipson, "or thou diest by my hand!"

"Which of them desire you to see?" answered the official;—"the old man, or the young one?"

"The old," said young Philipson. "His son has escaped thee."

"Enter here then, gentlemen," said the jailer, undoing the spring-bolt of a heavy door.²⁹⁶

At the upper end of the apartment lay the man they came to seek for, who was instantly raised from the ground, and loaded with their embraces.

"My dear father!"—"My worthy guest!" said his son and friend at the same moment, "how fares it with you?"

"Well," answered the elder Philipson, "if you, my friend, and son, come, as I judge from your arms and countenance, as conquerors, and at liberty—ill, if you come to share my prison-house."

"Have no fear of that," said the Landamman; "we have been in danger, but are remarkably delivered.—Your evil lair has benumbed you. Lean on me, my noble guest, and let me assist you to better quarters."

Here he was interrupted by a heavy clash, as it seemed, of iron, and differing from the distant roar of the popular tumult, which they still heard from the open street, as men hear the deep voice of a remote and tempestuous ocean.

"By St. Peter of the fetters!" said Arthur, who instantly discovered the cause of the sound, "the jailer has cast the door to the staple, or it has escaped his grasp. The spring-lock has closed upon us, and we cannot be liberated saving from the outside.—Ho, jailer dog! villain! open the door, or thou diest!"

"He is probably out of hearing of your threats," said the elder Philipson, "and your cries avail you nothing. But are you sure the Swiss are in possession of the town?"

"We are peaceful occupants of it," answered the Landamman, "though without a blow given on our side."²⁹⁷

"Why, then," said the Englishman, "your followers will soon find you out. Arthur and I are paltry ciphers, and our absence might easily pass over unobserved; but you are too important a figure not to be missed and looked after, when the sum of your number is taken."

"I well hope it will prove so," said the Landamman, "though methinks I show but scurvily, shut up here like a cat in a cupboard when he has been stealing cream.—Arthur, my brave boy, dost thou see no means of shooting back the bolt?"

Arthur, who had been minutely examining the lock, replied in the negative; and added, that they must take patience perforce, and arm themselves to wait calmly their deliverance, which they could do nothing to accelerate.

Arnold Biederman, however, felt somewhat severely the neglect of his sons and companions.

"All my youths, uncertain whether I am alive or dead, are taking the opportunity of my absence, doubtless, for pillage and licence—and the politic Rudolph, I presume, cares not if I should never reappear on the stage—the Banneret, and the white-bearded fool Bonstetten, who calls me his friend—every neighbour has deserted me—and yet they know that I am anxious for the safety of the most insignificant of them all, as dearer to me than my own. By heavens! it looks like stratagem; and shows as if the rash young men desired to get rid of a rule too regular and peaceful to be pleasing to those who are eager for war and conquest."

The Landamman, fretted out of his usual serenity of temper, and afraid of the misbehaviour of his countrymen in his absence, thus reflected upon 298his friends and companions, while the distant noise soon died away into the most absolute and total silence.

"What is to do now?" said Arthur Philipson. "I trust they will take the opportunity of quiet to go through the roll-call, and inquire then who are a-missing."

It seemed as if the young man's wish had some efficacy, for he had scarce uttered it before the lock was turned, and the door set ajar by some one who escaped upstairs from behind it, before those who were set at liberty could obtain a glance of their deliverer.

"It is the jailer, doubtless," said the Landamman, "who may be apprehensive, as he has some reason, that we might prove more incensed at our detention in the dungeon, than grateful for our deliverance."

As they spoke thus they ascended the narrow stairs, and issued from the door of the Gate-house tower, where a singular spectacle awaited them. The Swiss Deputies and their escort still remained standing fast and firm on the very spot where Hagenbach had proposed to assail them. A few of the late Governor's soldiers, disarmed, and cowering from the rage of a multitude of the citizens, who now filled the streets, stood with downcast looks behind the phalanx of the mountaineers, as their safest place of retreat. But this was not all.

The cars, so lately placed to obstruct the passage of the street, were now joined together, and served to support a platform, or scaffold, which had been hastily constructed of planks. On this was placed a chair, in which sat a tall man, with his head, neck, and shoulders bare, the rest of his body 299clothed in bright armour. His countenance was as pale as death, yet young Philipson recognised the hard-hearted Governor, Sir Archibald Hagenbach. He appeared to be bound to the chair. On his right, and close beside him, stood the Priest of St. Paul's, muttering prayers, with his breviary in his hand; while on his left, and somewhat behind the captive, appeared a tall man, attired in red [\[h\]](#), and leaning with both hands on the naked sword, which has been described on a former occasion. The instant that Arnold Biederman appeared, and before the Landamman could open his lips to demand the meaning of what he saw, the priest drew back, the executioner stepped forward, the sword was brandished, the blow was struck, and the victim's head rolled on the scaffold. A general acclamation and clapping of hands, like that by which a crowded theatre approves of some well-graced performer, followed this feat of dexterity. While the headless corpse shot streams from the arteries, which were drunk up by the sawdust that strewed the scaffold, the executioner gracefully presented himself alternately at the four corners of the stage, modestly bowing, as the multitude greeted him with cheers of approbation.

"Nobles, knights, gentlemen of free-born blood, and good citizens," he said, "who have assisted at this act of high justice, I pray you to bear me witness that this judgment hath been executed after the form of the sentence, at one blow, and without stroke missed or repeated."

The acclamations were reiterated.

"Long live our Scharfgerichter Steinernherz, and many a tyrant may he do his duty on!"

"Noble friends," said the executioner, with the 300deepest obeisance, "I have yet another word to say, and it must be a proud one.—God be gracious to the soul of this good and noble knight, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach. He was the patron of my youth, and my guide to the path of honour. Eight steps have I made towards freedom and nobility on the heads of freeborn knights and nobles, who have fallen by his authority and command; and the ninth, by which I have attained it, is upon his own, in grateful memory of which I will expend this purse of gold, which but an hour since he bestowed on me, in masses for his soul. Gentlemen, noble friends, and now my equals, La Ferette has lost a nobleman and gained one. Our Lady be gracious to the departed knight, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach, and bless and prosper the progress of Stephen Steinernherz von Blutsacker, now free and noble of right!"[\[a\]](#)

With that he took the feather out of the cap of the deceased, which, soiled with the blood of the wearer, lay near his body upon the scaffold, and, putting it into his own official bonnet, received the homage of the crowd in loud huzzas, which were partly in earnest, partly in ridicule of such an unusual transformation.

Arnold Biederman at length found breath, which the extremity of surprise had at first denied him. Indeed, the whole execution had passed much too rapidly for the possibility of his interference.

"Who has dared to act this tragedy?" he said indignantly. "And by what right has it taken place?"

A cavalier, richly dressed in blue, replied to the question—301

"The free citizens of Bâle have acted for themselves, as the fathers of Swiss liberty set them an example; and the tyrant, De Hagenbach, has fallen by the same right which put to death the tyrant Geysler. We bore with him till his cup was brimming over, and then we bore no longer."

"I say not but that he deserved death," replied the Landamman; "but for your own sake, and for ours, you should have forborne him till the Duke's pleasure was known."

"What tell you us of the Duke?" answered Laurenz Neipperg, the same blue cavalier whom Arthur had seen at the secret rendezvous of the Bâlese youth, in company with Rudolph. "Why talk you of Burgundy to us, who are none of his subjects? The Emperor, our only rightful lord, had no title to pawn the town and fortifications of La Ferette, being as it is a dependency of Bâle, to the prejudice of our free city. He might have pledged the revenue indeed; and supposing him to have done so, the debt has been paid twice over by the exactions levied by yonder oppressor, who has now received his due. But pass on, Landamman of Unterwalden. If our actions displease you, abjure them at the footstool of the Duke of Burgundy; but, in doing so, abjure the memory of William Tell and Stauffacher, of Furst and Melchtal, the fathers of Swiss freedom."

"You speak truth," said the Landamman; "but it is in an ill-chosen and unhappy time. Patience would have remedied your evils, which none felt more deeply, or would have redressed more willingly, than I. But oh, imprudent young man, you have thrown aside the modesty of your age, and the subjection you owe to your elders. 302William Tell and his brethren were men of years and judgment, husbands and fathers, having a right to be heard in council, and to be foremost in action. Enough—I leave it with the fathers and senators of your own city, to acknowledge or to reprove your actions.—But you, my friends,—you, Banneret of Berne,—you, Rudolph,—above all, you, Nicholas Bonstetten, my comrade and my friend, why did you not take this miserable man under your protection? The action would have shown Burgundy that we were slandered by those who have declared us desirous of seeking a quarrel with him, or of inciting his subjects to revolt. Now, all these prejudices will be confirmed in the minds of men, naturally more tenacious of evil impressions than of those which are favourable."

"As I live by bread, good gossip and neighbour," answered Nicholas Bonstetten, "I thought to obey your injunctions to a tittle; so much so, that I once thought of breaking in and protecting the man, when Rudolph Donnerhugel reminded me that your last orders were, to stand firm, and let the men of Bâle answer for their own actions; and surely, said I to myself, my gossip Arnold knows better than all of us what is fitting to be done."

"Ah, Rudolph, Rudolph," said the Landamman, looking on him with a displeased countenance, "wert thou not ashamed thus to deceive an old man?"

"To say I deceived him is a hard charge; but from you, Landamman," answered the Bernese, with his usual deference, "I can bear anything. I will only say, that, being a member of this 303embassy, I am obliged to think, and to give my opinion as such, especially when he is not present who is wise enough to lead and direct us all."

"Thy words are always fair, Rudolph," replied Arnold Biederman, "and I trust so is thy meaning. Yet there are times when I somewhat doubt it.—But let disputes pass, and let me have your advice, my friends; and for that purpose go we where it may best profit us, even to the church, where we will first return our thanks for our deliverance from assassination, and then hold counsel what next is to be done."

The Landamman led the way, accordingly, to the church of St. Paul's, while his companions and associates followed in their order. This gave Rudolph, who, as youngest, suffered the others to precede him, an opportunity to beckon to him the Landamman's eldest son, Rudiger, and whisper to him to get rid of the two English merchants.

"Away with them, my dear Rudiger, by fair means, if possible; but away with them directly. Thy father is besotted with these two English pedlars, and will listen to no other counsel; and thou and I know, dearest Rudiger, that such men as these are unfit to give laws to free-born Switzers. Get the trumpery they have been robbed of, or as much of it as is extant, together as fast as thou canst, and send them a-travelling, in Heaven's name."

Rudiger nodded intelligently, and went to offer his services to expedite the departure of the elder Philipson. He found the sagacious merchant as desirous to escape from the scene of confusion now presented in the town, as the young Swiss could be to urge his departure. He only waited to recover the casket of which

De Hagenbach had possessed himself, and Rudiger Biederman set on foot a strict search after it, which was the more likely to be successful, that the simplicity of the Swiss prevented them from setting the true value upon its contents. A strict and hasty search was immediately instituted, both on the person of the dead De Hagenbach, on which the precious packet was not to be found, and on all who had approached him at his execution, or were supposed to enjoy his confidence. Young Arthur Philipson would gladly have availed himself of a few moments to bid farewell to Anne of Geierstein. But the grey wimple was no longer seen in the ranks of the Switzers, and it was reasonable to think that, in the confusion which followed the execution of De Hagenbach, and the retreat of the leaders of the little battalion, she had made her escape into some of the adjacent houses, while the soldiers around her, no longer restrained by the presence of their chiefs, had dispersed, some to search for the goods of which the Englishmen had been despoiled, others doubtless to mingle with and join in the rejoicings of the victorious youths of Bâle, and of those burghers of La Ferette by whom the fortifications of the town had been so gently surrendered.

The cry amongst them was universal, that Brisach, so long considered as the curb of the Swiss confederates, and the barrier against their commerce, should henceforth be garrisoned, as their protection against the encroachments and exactions of the Duke of Burgundy and his officers. The whole town was in a wild but joyful jubilee, while the citizens vied with each other in offering 305 to the Swiss every species of refreshment, and the youths who attended upon the mission hurried gaily, and in triumph, to profit by the circumstances, which had so unexpectedly converted the ambuscade so treacherously laid for them, into a genial and joyous reception.

Amid this scene of confusion, it was impossible for Arthur to quit his father, even to satisfy the feelings which induced him to wish for a few moments at his own disposal. Sad, thoughtful, and sorrowful, amid the general joy, he remained with the parent whom he had so much reason to love and honour, to assist him in securing and placing on their mule the various packages and bales which the honest Switzers had recovered after the death of De Hagenbach, and which they emulated each other in bringing to their rightful owner; while they were with difficulty prevailed on to accept the guerdon which the Englishman, from the means which he had still left upon his person, was disposed not merely to offer but to force upon the restorers of his property, and which, in their rude and simple ideas, seemed greatly to exceed the value of what they had recovered for him.

This scene had scarcely lasted ten or fifteen minutes, when Rudolph Donnerhugel approached the elder Philipson, and in a tone of great courtesy invited him to join the council of the Chiefs of the Embassy of the Swiss Cantons, who, he said, were desirous of having the advantage of his experience upon some important questions respecting their conduct on these unexpected occurrences.

"See to our affairs, Arthur, and stir not from the spot on which I leave you," said Philipson to 306 his son. "Look especially after the sealed packet of which I was so infamously and illegally robbed: its recovery is of the utmost consequence."

So speaking, he instantly prepared himself to attend the Bernese, who in a confidential manner whispered, as he went arm-in-arm with him towards the church of St. Paul's,—

"I think a man of your wisdom will scarce advise us to trust ourselves to the mood of the Duke of Burgundy, when he has received such an injury as the loss of this fortress, and the execution of his officer. You, at least, would be too judicious to afford us any further the advantage of your company and society, since to do so would be wilfully to engage in our shipwreck."

"I will give my best advice," answered Philipson, "when I shall be more particularly acquainted with the circumstances under which it is asked of me."

Rudolph muttered an oath, or angry exclamation, and led Philipson to the church without further argument.

In a small chapel adjoining to the church, and dedicated to St. Magnus the Martyr, the four deputies were assembled in close conclave, around the shrine in which the sainted hero stood, armed as when he lived. The Priest of St. Paul's was also present, and seemed to interest himself deeply in the debate which was taking place. When Philipson entered, all were for a moment silent, until the Landamman addressed him thus: "Seignor Philipson, we esteem you a man far travelled, well versed in the manners of foreign lands, and acquainted with the conditions of this Duke Charles of Burgundy; you are therefore fit to 307 advise us in a matter of great weight. You know with what anxiety we go on this mission for peace with the Duke; you also know what has this day happened, which may probably be represented to Charles in the worst colours. Would you advise us, in such a case, to proceed to the Duke's presence, with the odium of this action attached to us? or should we do better to return home, and prepare for war with Burgundy?"

"How do your own opinions stand on the subject?" said the cautious Englishman.

"We are divided," answered the Banneret of Berne. "I have borne the banner of Berne against her foes for thirty years; I am more willing to carry it against the lances of the knights of Hainault and Lorraine, than to undergo the rude treatment which we must look to meet at the footstool of the Duke."

"We put our heads in the lion's mouth if we go forward," said Zimmerman of Soleure;—"my opinion is, that we draw back."

"I would not advise retreat," said Rudolph Donnerhugel, "were my life alone concerned; but the Landamman of Unterwalden is the father of the United Cantons, and it would be parricide if I consented to put his life in peril. My advice is, that we return, and that the Confederacy stand on their defence."

"My opinion is different," said Arnold Biederman; "nor will I forgive any man who, whether in sincere or feigned friendship, places my poor life in the scale with the advantage of the Cantons. If we go forward, we risk our heads—be it so. But if we turn back, we involve our country in war with a power of the first magnitude in Europe. 308 Worthy citizens! you are brave in fight—show your fortitude as boldly now; and let us not hesitate to incur such personal danger as may attend ourselves, if by doing so we can gain a chance of peace for our country."

"I think and vote with my neighbour and gossip, Arnold Biederman," said the laconic deputy from Schwitz.

"You hear how we are divided in opinion," said the Landamman to Philipson. "What is your opinion?"

"I would first ask of you," said the Englishman, "what has been your part in this storming of a town occupied by the Duke's forces, and putting to death his Governor?"

"So help me, Heaven!" said the Landamman, "as I knew not of any purpose of storming the town until it unexpectedly took place."

"And for the execution of De Hagenbach," said the Black Priest, "I swear to you, stranger, by my holy order, that it took place under the direction of a competent court, whose sentence Charles of Burgundy himself is bound to respect, and whose proceedings the deputies of the Swiss mission could neither have advanced nor retarded."

"If such be the case, and if you can really prove yourselves free of these proceedings," answered Philipson, "which must needs be highly resented by the Duke of Burgundy, I would advise you by all means to proceed upon your journey; with the certainty that you will obtain from that prince a just and impartial hearing, and it may be a favourable answer. I know Charles of Burgundy; I may even say that, our different ranks and walks of life considered, I know him well. He will be deeply 309 incensed by the first tidings of what has here chanced, which he will no doubt interpret to your disfavour. But if, in the course of investigation, you are able to clear yourselves of these foul imputations, a sense of his own injustice may perhaps turn the balance in your favour, and in that case he will rush from the excess of censure into that of indulgence. But your cause must be firmly stated to the Duke, by some tongue better acquainted with the language of courts than yours; and such a friendly interpreter might I have proved to you, had I not been plundered of the valuable packet which I bore with me in order to present to the Duke, and in testimony of my commission to him."

"A paltry fetch," whispered Donnerhugel to the Banneret, "that the trader may obtain from us satisfaction for the goods of which he has been plundered."

The Landamman himself was perhaps for a moment of the same opinion.

"Merchant," he said, "we hold ourselves bound to make good to you—that is, if our substance can effect it—whatever loss you may have sustained, trusting to our protection."

"Ay, that we will," said the old man of Schwitz, "should it cost us twenty zechins to make it good."

"To your guarantee of immunity I can have no claim," said Philipson, "seeing I parted company with you before I sustained any loss. And I regret the loss, not so much for its value, although that is greater than you may fancy; but chiefly because, that the contents of the casket I bore being a token betwixt a person of considerable importance and the Duke of Burgundy, I shall 310 not, I fear, now that I am deprived of them, receive from his grace that credence which I desire,

both for my own sake and yours. Without them, and speaking only in the person of a private traveller, I may not take upon me as I might have done, when using the names of the persons whose mandates I carried."

"This important packet," said the Landamman, "shall be most rigorously sought for, and carefully re-delivered to thee. For ourselves, not a Swiss of us knows the value of its contents; so that if they are in the hands of any of our men, they will be returned of course as baubles, upon which they set no value."

As he spoke, there was a knocking at the door of the chapel. Rudolph, who stood nearest to it, having held some communication with those without, observed with a smile, which he instantly repressed, lest it had given offence to Arnold Biederman,—*"It is Sigismund, the good youth—Shall I admit him to our council?"*

"To what purpose, poor simple lad?" said his father, with a sorrowful smile.

"Yet let me undo the door," said Philipson; "he is anxious to enter, and perhaps he brings news. I have observed, Landamman, that the young man, though with slowness of ideas and expression, is strong in his principles, and sometimes happy in his conceptions."

He admitted Sigismund accordingly; while Arnold Biederman felt, on the one hand, the soothing compliment which Philipson had paid to a boy, certainly the duller of his family, and, on the other, feared some public display of his son's infirmity, or lack of understanding. Sigismund, 311 however, seemed all confidence; and he certainly had reason to be so, since, as the shortest mode of explanation, he presented to Philipson the necklace of diamonds, with the casket in which it had been deposited.

"This pretty thing is yours," he said. "I understand so much from your son Arthur, who tells me you will be glad to have it again."

"Most cordially do I thank you," said the merchant. "The necklace is certainly mine; that is, the packet of which it formed the contents was under my charge; and it is at this moment of greater additional value to me than even its actual worth, since it serves as my pledge and token for the performance of an important mission.—And how, my young friend," he continued, addressing Sigismund, "have you been so fortunate as to recover what we have sought for hitherto in vain? Let me return my best acknowledgments; and do not think me over-curious if I ask how it reached you."

"For that matter," said Sigismund, "the story is soon told. I had planted myself as near the scaffold as I could, having never beheld an execution before; and I observed the executioner, who I thought did his duty very cleverly, just in the moment that he spread a cloth over the body of De Hagenbach, snatch something from the dead man's bosom, and huddle it hastily into his own; so, when the rumour arose that an article of value was a-missing, I hurried in quest of the fellow. I found he had bespoken masses to the extent of a hundred crowns at the high altar of St. Paul's; and I traced him to the tavern of the village, where some ill-looking men were joyously drinking 312 to him as a free citizen and a nobleman. So I stepped in amongst them with my partisan, and demanded of his lordship either to surrender to me what he had thus possessed himself of, or to try the weight of the weapon I carried. His lordship, my Lord Hangman, hesitated, and was about to make a brawl. But I was something peremptory, and so he judged it best to give me the parcel, which I trust you, Seigneur Philipson, will find safe and entire as it was taken from you. And—and—I left them to conclude their festivities—and that is the whole of the story."

"Thou art a brave lad," said Philipson; "and with a heart always right, the head can seldom be far wrong. But the Church shall not lose its dues, and I take it on myself, ere I leave La Ferette, to pay for the masses which the man had ordered for the sake of De Hagenbach's soul, snatched from the world so unexpectedly." Sigismund was about to reply; but Philipson, fearing he might bring out some foolery to diminish the sense which his father had so joyously entertained of his late conduct, immediately added, "Hie away, my good youth, and give to my son Arthur this precious casket."

With simple exultation at receiving applause to which he was little accustomed, Sigismund took his leave, and the council were once more left to their own privacy. There was a moment's silence; for the Landamman could not overcome the feeling of exquisite pleasure at the sagacity which poor Sigismund, whose general conduct warranted no such expectations, had displayed on the present occasion. It was not, however, a feeling to which circumstances 313 permitted him to give vent, and he reserved it for his own secret enjoyment, as a solace to the anxiety which he had hitherto entertained concerning the limited intellect of this simple-minded young man. When he spoke, it was to Philipson, with the usual candour and manliness of his character.

"Seigneur Philipson," he said, "we will hold you bound by no offer which you made while these glittering matters were out of your possession; because a man may often think that if he were in such and such a situation he would be able to achieve certain ends which, that position being attained, he may find himself unable to accomplish. But I now ask you, whether, having thus fortunately and unexpectedly regained possession of what you say will give you certain credence with the Duke of Burgundy, you conceive yourself entitled to mediate with him on our behalf, as you formerly proposed?"

All bent forward to hear the merchant's answer.

"Landamman," he replied, "I never spoke the word in difficulty which I was not ready to redeem when that difficulty was removed. You say, and I believe, that you had no concern with this storming of La Ferette. You say also, that the life of De Hagenbach was taken by a judicature over which you had no control, and exercised none—let a protocol be drawn up, averring these circumstances, and, as far as possible, proving them. Intrust it to me—under seal if you will—and if such points be established, I will pledge my word as a—as a—as an honest man and a true-born Englishman, that the Duke of Burgundy will neither detain nor offer you any personal 314 injury. I also hope to show to Charles strong and weighty reasons why a league of friendship betwixt Burgundy and the United Cantons of Helvetia is, on his grace's part, a wise and generous measure. But it is possible I may fail in this last point; and if I do, I shall deeply grieve for it. In warranting your safe passage to the Duke's court, and your safe return from it to your own country, I think I cannot fail. If I do, my own life, and that of my beloved and only child, shall pay the ransom for my excess of confidence in the Duke's justice and honour."

The other deputies stood silent, and looked on the Landamman; but Rudolph Donnerhugel spoke.

"Are we then to trust our own lives, and, what is still dearer to us, that of our honoured associate, Arnold Biederman, on the simple word of a foreign trader? We all know the temper of the Duke, and how vindictively and relentlessly he has ever felt towards our country and its interests. Methinks this English merchant should express the nature of his interest at the court of Burgundy more plainly, if he expects us to place such implicit reliance in it."

"That, Seigneur Rudolph Donnerhugel," replied the merchant, "I find myself not at liberty to do. I pry not into your secrets, whether they belong to you as a body or as individuals. My own are sacred. If I consulted my own safety merely, I should act most wisely to part company with you here. But the object of your mission is peace; and your sudden return, after what has chanced at La Ferette, will make war inevitable. I think I can assure you of a safe and free audience from the Duke, and I am willing, for the chance of 315 securing the peace of Christendom, to encounter any personal peril which may attach to myself."

"Say no more, worthy Philipson," said the Landamman; "thy good faith is undoubted on our part, and ill luck is his who cannot read it written on thy manly forehead. We go forward, then, prepared to risk our own safety at the hand of a despotic prince, rather than leave undischarged the mission which our country has intrusted us with. He is but half a brave man who will risk his life only in the field of battle. There are other dangers, to front which is equally honourable; and since the weal of Switzerland demands that we should encounter them, not one of us will hesitate to take the risk."

The other members of the mission bowed in assent, and the conclave broke up to prepare for their farther entrance into Burgundy. 316

CHAPTER XVII.

Upon the mountain's heathery side,
The day's last lustre shone,
And rich with many a radiant hue,
Gleam'd gaily on the Rhone.

SOUTHEY.

The English merchant was now much consulted by the Swiss Commissioners in all their motions. He exhorted them to proceed with all despatch on their journey, so as to carry to the Duke their own account of the affair of Brisach, and thus anticipate all rumours less favourable to their conduct on the occasion. For this purpose Philipson recommended that the Deputies, dismissing their escort, whose arms and numbers might give umbrage and suspicion, while they were too few for defence, should themselves proceed by rapid journeys on horseback towards Dijon, or wherever the Duke might chance to be for the time.

This proposal was, however, formally resisted by the very person who had hitherto been the most ductile of the party, and the willing echo of the Landamman's pleasure. On the present occasion, notwithstanding that Arnold Biederman declared the advice of Philipson excellent, Nicholas Bonstetten stood in absolute and insurmountable opposition; because, having hitherto trusted to his own limbs for transporting himself to and fro on all occasions, he could by no means be persuaded to commit himself to the discretion of a horse. As he was found obstinately positive on this subject, it was finally determined that the two Englishmen should press forward on their journey, with such speed as they might, and that the elder of them should make the Duke acquainted with so much as to the capture of La Ferette as he had himself witnessed of the matter. The particulars which had attended the death of De Hagenbach, the Landamman assured him, would be sent to the Duke by a person of confidence, whose attestation on the subject could not be doubted.

This course was adopted, as Philipson expressed his confidence of getting an early and private audience with his grace of Burgundy.

"My best intercession," he said, "you have a good right to reckon upon; and no one can bear more direct testimony than I can to the ungovernable cruelty and rapacity of De Hagenbach, of which I had so nearly been the victim. But of his trial and execution I neither know nor can tell anything; and as Duke Charles is sure to demand why execution was done upon his officer without an appeal to his own tribunal, it will be well that you either provide me with such facts as you have to state, or send forward, at least, as speedily as possible, the evidence which you have to lay before him on that most weighty branch of the subject."

The proposal of the merchant created some visible embarrassment on the countenance of the Swiss, and it was with obvious hesitation that Arnold Biederman, having led him aside, addressed him in a whisper—318

"My good friend," he said, "mysteries are in general like the hateful mists which disfigure the noblest features of nature; yet, like mists, they will sometimes intervene when we most desire their absence, when we most desire to be plain and explicit. The manner of De Hagenbach's death you saw—we will take care that the Duke is informed of the authority by which it was inflicted. This is all that I can at present tell you on the subject; and let me add, that the less you speak of it with any one, you will be the more likely to escape inconvenience."

"Worthy Landamman," said the Englishman, "I also am by nature, and from the habits of my country, a hater of mysteries. Yet, such is my firm confidence in your truth and honour, that you shall be my guide in these dark and secret transactions, even as amongst the mists and precipices of your native land, and I rest contented in either case to place unlimited confidence in your sagacity. Let me only recommend that your explanation with Charles be instant, as well as clear and candid. Such being the case, I trust my poor interest with the Duke may be reckoned for something in your favour. Here then we part, but, as I trust, soon to meet again."

The elder Philipson now rejoined his son, whom he directed to hire horses, together with a guide, to conduct them with all speed to the presence of the Duke of Burgundy. By various inquiries in the town, and especially among the soldiers of the slain De Hagenbach, they at length learned that Charles had been of late occupied in taking possession of Lorraine, and, being now suspicious of unfriendly dispositions on the part of the Emperor 319of Germany, as well as of Sigismund Duke of Austria, had drawn a considerable part of his army together near Strasburg, in order to be prepared against any attempt of these princes, or of the Free Imperial Cities, which might interfere with his course of conquest. The Duke of Burgundy, at this period, well deserved his peculiar epithet of the Bold, since, surrounded by enemies, like one of the nobler animals of the chase, he yet astounded, by his stern and daring countenance, not only the princes and states we have mentioned, but even the King of France, equally powerful, and far more politic, than himself.

To his camp, therefore, the English travellers bent their way, each full of such deep and melancholy reflection as, perhaps, prevented his bestowing much attention on the other's state of mind. They rode as men deeply immersed in their own thoughts, and with less intercourse than had been usual betwixt them on their former journeys. The nobleness of the elder Philipson's nature, and his respect for the Landamman's probity, joined with gratitude for his hospitality, had prevented him from separating his cause from that of the Swiss deputies, nor did he now repent his generosity in adhering to them. But when he recollected the nature and importance of the personal affairs which he himself had to despatch with a proud, imperious, and irritable prince, he could not but regret the circumstances which had involved his own particular mission, of so much consequence to himself and his friends, with that of persons likely to be so highly obnoxious to the Duke as Arnold Biederman and his companions; and, however grateful for the hospitality of Geierstein, 320he regretted, nevertheless, the circumstances which had obliged him to accept of it.

The thoughts of Arthur were no less anxious. He found himself anew separated from the object to which his thoughts were, almost against his own will, constantly returning. And this second separation had taken place after he had incurred an additional load of gratitude, and found new as well as more mysterious food for his ardent imagination. How was he to reconcile the character and attributes of Anne of Geierstein, whom he had known so gentle, candid, pure, and simple, with those of the daughter of a sage, and of an elementary spirit, to whom night was as day, and an impervious dungeon the same as the open portico of a temple? Could they be identified as the same being? or, while strictly alike in shape and lineament, was the one a tenant of the earth, the other only a phantom, permitted to show itself among those of a nature in which she did not partake? Above all, must he never see her more, or receive from her own lips an explanation of the mysteries which were so awfully entwined with his recollections of her? Such were the questions which occupied the mind of the younger traveller, and prevented him from interrupting, or even observing, the reverie in which his father was plunged.

Had either of the travellers been disposed to derive amusement from the country through which their road lay, the vicinity of the Rhine was well qualified to afford it. The ground on the left bank of that noble river is indeed rather flat and tame; and the mountains of Alsace, a ridge of which sweeps along its course, do not approach so near as 321greatly to vary the level surface of the valley which divides them from its shores. But the broad stream itself, hurrying forward with dizzy rapidity, and rushing around the islets by which its course is interrupted, is one of the most majestic spectacles in nature. The right bank is dignified at once, and adorned, by the numerous eminences covered with wood, and interspersed with valleys, which constitute the district so well known by the name of the Black Forest, to which superstition attached so many terrors, and credulity such a variety of legends. Terrors, indeed, it had, of a real and existing character. The old castles, seen from time to time on the banks of the river itself, or on the ravines and large brooks which flow into it, were then no picturesque ruins, rendered interesting by the stories which were told about their former inhabitants, but constituted the real and apparently impregnable strongholds of that Robber-chivalry whom we have already frequently mentioned, and of whom, since Goethe, an author born to arouse the slumbering fame of his country, has dramatised the story of Goetz of Berlichingen, we have had so many spirit-stirring tales. The danger attending the vicinity of these fortresses was only known on the right, or German bank of the Rhine, for the breadth and depth of that noble stream effectually prevented any foray of their inhabitants from reaching Alsace. The former was in possession of the Cities or Free Towns of the Empire, and thus the feudal tyranny of the German lords was chiefly exerted at the expense of their own countrymen, who, irritated and exhausted with their rapine and oppression, were compelled to erect barriers against it, of a 322nature as interesting and extraordinary as were the wrongs from which they endeavoured to protect themselves.

But the left bank of the river, over great part of which Charles of Burgundy exercised his authority, under various characters, was under the regular protection of the ordinary magistrates, who were supported in the discharge of their duty by large bands of mercenary soldiers. These were maintained by Charles out of his private revenue; he, as well as his rival Louis, and other princes of the period, having discovered that the feudal system gave an inconvenient degree of independence to their vassals, and thinking, of course, that it was better to substitute in its place a standing army, consisting of Free Companies, or soldiers by profession. Italy furnished most of these bands, which composed the strength of Charles's army, at least the part of it in which he most trusted.

Our travellers, therefore, pursued their way by the banks of the river, in as great a degree of security as could well be enjoyed in that violent and distracted time, until at length the father, after having eyed for some time the person whom Arthur had hired to be their guide, suddenly asked of his son who or what the man was. Arthur replied that he had been too eager to get a person who knew the road, and was willing to show it, to be very particular in inquiring into his station or occupation; but that he thought, from the man's appearance, he must be one of those itinerant ecclesiastics, who travel through the country with relics, pardons, and other religious trinkets, and were in general but slightly respected, excepting by the lower orders, on whom these vendors of 323superstitious wares were often accused of practising gross deceptions.

The man's appearance was rather that of a lay devotee, or palmer, bound on his pilgrimage to different shrines, than of a mendicant friar, or questionnaire. He wore the hat, scrip, staff, and coarse dalmatic, somewhat like the military cloak of the modern hussar, which were used by such persons on their religious peregrinations. St. Peter's keys, rudely shaped out of some scarlet rag of cloth, appeared on the back of his mantle, placed, as heralds say, saltire wise. This devotee seemed a man of fifty and upwards, well-made, and stout for his age, with a cast of countenance which, though not positively ugly, was far from being well-favoured. There was shrewdness, and an alert expression in his eye and actions, which made some occasional contrast with the sanctimonious demeanour of the character he now bore. This difference betwixt his dress and physiognomy was by no means uncommon among persons of his description, many of whom embraced this mode of life, rather to indulge roving and idle habits, than from any religious call.

"Who art thou, good fellow?" said the elder Philipson; "and by what name am I to call thee while we are fellow-travellers?"

"Bartholomew, sir," said the man; "Brother Bartholomew—I might say Bartholomæus, but it does not become a poor lay brother like me to aspire to the honour of a learned termination."

"And whither does thy journey tend, good Brother Bartholomew?"

"In whichever direction your worship chooses to travel, and to require my services as guide," 324 answered the palmer; "always premising, you allow me leisure for my devotions at such holy stations as we pass on our route."

"That is, thine own journey hath no professed or pressing object or end?" said the Englishman.

"None, as your worship says, peculiar," said the itinerant; "or I might rather say, that my journey, good sir, embraces so many objects, that it is matter of indifference to me which of them I accomplish first. My vow binds me for four years to travel from one shrine, or holy place, to another; but I am not directly tied to visit them by any precise rule of rotation."

"That is to say, thy vow of pilgrimage does not prevent thee from hiring thyself to wait upon travellers as their guide," replied Philipson.

"If I can unite the devotion I owe to the blessed saints whose shrines I visit, with a service rendered to a wandering fellow-creature who desires to be directed upon his journey, I do maintain," replied Bartholomew, "that the objects are easily to be reconciled to each other."

"Especially as a little worldly profit may tend to cement the two duties together, if otherwise incompatible," said Philipson.

"It pleases your honour to say so," replied the pilgrim; "but you yourself may, if you will, derive from my good company something more than the mere knowledge of the road in which you propose to travel. I can make your journey more edifying by legends of the blessed saints whose holy relics I have visited, and pleasing, by the story of the wonderful things which I have seen and heard in my travels. I can impart to you an opportunity of providing yourself with his Holiness's 325 pardon, not only for the sins which you have committed, but also granting you indulgence for future errors."

"These things are highly available doubtless," replied the merchant; "but, good Bartholomew, when I desire to speak of them, I apply to my father confessor, to whom I have been uniformly regular in committing the charge of my conscience, and who must be, therefore, well acquainted with my state of mind, and best accustomed to prescribe what its case may require."

"Nevertheless," said Bartholomew, "I trust your worship is too religious a man, and too sound a Catholic, to pass any hallowed station without endeavouring to obtain some share of the benefits which it is the means of dispensing to those who are ready and willing to deserve them. More especially as all men, of whatever trade and degree, hold respect to the holy saint who patroniseth his own mystery; so I hope you, being a merchant, will not pass the Chapel of Our Lady of the Ferry, without making some fitting orison."

"Friend Bartholomew," said Philipson, "I have not heard of the shrine which you recommend to me; and, as my business is pressing, it were better worth my while to make a pilgrimage hither on purpose to make mine homage at a fitter season, than to delay my journey at present. This, God willing, I will not fail to do, so that I may be held excused for delaying my reverence till I can pay it more respectfully, and at greater leisure."

"May it please you not to be wroth," said the guide, "if I say that your behaviour in this matter is like that of a fool, who, finding a treasure by 326 the road-side, omits to put it in his bosom and carry it along with him, proposing to return from a distance on a future day, of express purpose to fetch it."

Philipson, something astonished at the man's pertinacity, was about to answer hastily and angrily, but was prevented by the arrival of three strangers, who rode hastily up from behind them.

The foremost of these was a young female, most elegantly attired, and mounted upon a Spanish jennet, which she reined with singular grace and dexterity. She wore on her right hand such a glove as that which was used to carry hawks, and had a merlin perched upon it. Her head was covered with a montero cap, and, as was frequently the custom at the period, she wore on her face a kind of black silk vizard, which effectually concealed her features. Notwithstanding this disguise, Arthur Philipson's heart sprang high at the appearance of these strangers, for he was at once certain he recognised the matchless form of the Swiss maiden by whom his mind was so anxiously occupied. Her attendants were a falconer with his hunting-pole, and a female, both apparently her domestics. The elder Philipson, who had no such accuracy of recollection as his son manifested upon the occasion, saw in the fair stranger only some dame or damsel of eminence engaged in the amusement of hawking, and, in return to a brief salutation, merely asked her, with suitable courtesy, as the case demanded, whether she had spent the morning in good sport.

"Indifferent, good friend," said the lady. "I dare not fly my hawk so near the broad river, lest he should soar to the other side, and so I might 327 lose my companion. But I reckon on finding better game when I have crossed to the other side of the ferry, which we are now approaching."

"Then your ladyship," said Bartholomew, "will hear mass in Hans' Chapel, and pray for your success?"

"I were a heathen to pass the holy place without doing so," replied the damsel.

"That, noble damsel, touches the point we were but now talking of," said the guide Bartholomew; "for know, fair mistress, that I cannot persuade this worthy gentleman how deeply the success of his enterprise is dependent upon his obtaining the blessing of Our Lady of the Ferry."

"The good man," said the young maiden, seriously, and even severely, "must know little of the Rhine. I will explain to the gentleman the propriety of following your advice."

She then rode close to young Philipson, and spoke in Swiss, for she had hitherto used the German language, "Do not start, but hear me!" and the voice was that of Anne of Geierstein. "Do not, I say, be surprised—or at least show not your wonder—you are beset by dangers. On this road, especially, your business is known—your lives are laid in wait for. Cross over the river at the Ferry of the Chapel, or Hans' Ferry, as it is usually termed."

Here the guide drew so near to them that it was impossible for her to continue the conversation without being overheard. At that same moment a woodcock sprang from some bushes, and the young lady threw off her merlin in pursuit.

"Sa ho—sa ho—wo ha!" hollowed the falconer, in a note which made the thicket ring 328 again; and away he rode in pursuit. The elder Philipson and the guide himself followed the chase eagerly with their eyes, so attractive was the love of that brave sport to men of all ranks. But the voice of the maiden was a lure, which would have summoned Arthur's attention from matters more deeply interesting.

"Cross the Rhine," she again repeated, "at the Ferry to Kirch-hoff, on the other side of the river. Take your lodgings at the Golden Fleece, where you will find a guide to Strasburg. I must stay here no longer."

So saying, the damsel raised herself in her saddle, struck her horse lightly with the loose reins, and the mettled animal, already impatient at her delay, and the eager burst of its companions, flew forward at such a pace, as if he had meant to emulate the flight of the hawk, and of the prey he pursued. The lady and her attendants soon vanished from the sight of the travellers.

A deep silence for some time ensued, during which Arthur studied how to communicate the warning he had received, without awakening the suspicions of their guide. But the old man broke silence himself, saying to Bartholomew, "Put your horse into more motion, I pray you, and ride onward a few yards; I would have some private conference with my son."

The guide obeyed, and, as if with the purpose of showing a mind too profoundly occupied by heavenly matters to admit a thought concerning those of this transitory world, he thundered forth a hymn in praise of St. Wendelin the Shepherd, in a strain so discordant as startled every bird from every bush by which they passed. There 329was never a more unmelodious melody, whether sacred or profane, than that under protection of which the elder Philipson thus conferred with his son.

"Arthur," he said, "I am much convinced that this howling hypocritical vagrant has some plot upon us; and I had well-nigh determined that the best mode to baffle it would be to consult my own opinion, and not his, as to our places of repose, and the direction of our journey."

"Your judgment is correct, as usual," said his son. "I am well convinced of yonder man's treachery, from a whisper in which that maiden informed me that we ought to take the road to Strasburg, by the eastern side of the river, and for that purpose cross over to a place called Kirch-hoff, on the opposite bank."

"Do you advise this, Arthur?" replied his father.

"I will pledge my life for the faith of this young person," replied his son.

"What!" said his father, "because she sits her palfrey fairly, and shows a faultless shape? Such is the reasoning of a boy—and yet my own old and cautious heart feels inclined to trust her. If our secret is known in this land, there are doubtless many who may be disposed to think they have an interest in barring my access to the Duke of Burgundy, even by the most violent means; and well you know that I should on my side hold my life equally cheap, could I discharge mine errand at the price of laying it down. I tell thee, Arthur, that my mind reproaches me for taking hitherto over little care of insuring the discharge of my commission, owing to the natural desire I 330had to keep thee in my company. There now lie before us two ways, both perilous and uncertain, by which we may reach the Duke's Court. We may follow this guide, and take the chance of his fidelity, or we may adopt the hint of yonder damsel-errant, and cross over to the other side of the Rhine, and again repossess the river at Strasburg. Both roads are perhaps equally perilous. I feel it my duty to diminish the risk of the miscarriage of my commission, by sending thee across to the right bank, while I pursue my proposed course upon the left. Thus, if one of us be intercepted, the other may escape, and the important commission which he bears may be duly executed."

"Alas, my father!" said Arthur, "how is it possible for me to obey you, when by doing so I must leave you alone, to incur so many dangers, to struggle with so many difficulties, in which my aid might be at least willing, though it could only be weak? Whatever befall us in these delicate and dangerous circumstances, let us at least meet it in company."

"Arthur, my beloved son," said his father, "in parting from thee I am splitting mine own heart in twain; but the same duty which commands us to expose our bodies to death, as peremptorily orders us not to spare our most tender affections. We must part."

"Oh, then," replied his son, eagerly, "let me at least prevail in one point. Do thou, my father, cross the Rhine, and let me prosecute the journey by the route originally proposed."

"And why, I pray you," answered the merchant, "should I go one of these roads in preference to the other?" 331

"Because," said Arthur eagerly. "I would warrant yonder maiden's faith with my life."

"Again, young man?" said his father. "And wherefore so confident in that young maiden's faith? Is it merely from the confidence which youth reposes in that which is fair and pleasing, or have you had further acquaintance with her than the late brief conversation with her admitted?"

"Can I give you an answer?" replied his son. "We have been long absent from lands of knights and ladies, and is it not natural that we should give to those who remind us of the honoured ties of chivalry and gentle blood, the instinctive credence which we refuse to such a poor wretch as this itinerant mountebank, who gains his existence by cheating, with false relics and forged legends, the poor peasants amongst whom he travels?"

"It is a vain imagination, Arthur," said his father; "not unbefitting, indeed, an aspirant to the honours of chivalry, who draws his ideas of life and its occurrences from the romances of the minstrels, but too visionary for a youth who has seen, as thou hast, how the business of this world is conducted. I tell thee, and thou wilt learn to know I say truth, that around the homely board of our host the Landamman were ranged truer tongues, and more faithful hearts, than the *cour plénière* of a monarch has to boast. Alas! the manly spirit of ancient faith and honour has fled even from the breast of kings and knights, where, as John of France said, it ought to continue to reside a constant inhabitant, if banished from all the rest of the world."

"Be that as it may, dearest father," replied the 332younger Philipson, "I pray you to be persuaded by me; and if we must part company, let it be by your taking the right bank of the Rhine, since I am persuaded it is the safest route."

"And if it be the safest," said his father, with a voice of tender reproach, "is that a reason why I should spare my own almost exhausted thread of life, and expose thine, my dear son, which has but begun its course?"

"Nay, father," answered the son with animation, "in speaking thus you do not consider the difference of our importance to the execution of the purpose which you have so long entertained, and which seems now so nigh being accomplished. Think how imperfectly I might be able to discharge it, without knowledge of the Duke's person, or credentials to gain his confidence. I might indeed repeat your words, but the circumstances would be wanting to attract the necessary faith, and of consequence, your scheme, for the success of which you have lived, and now are willing to run the risk of death, would miscarry along with me."

"You cannot shake my resolution," said the elder Philipson, "or persuade me that my life is of more importance than yours. You only remind me that it is you, and not I, who ought to be the bearer of this token to the Duke of Burgundy. Should you be successful in reaching his court or camp, your possession of these gems will be needful to attach credit to your mission; a purpose for which they would be less necessary to me, who can refer to other circumstances under which I might claim credence, if it should please Heaven to leave me alone to acquit myself of this important commission, which, may Our Lady, in her 333mercy, forefend! Understand, therefore, that, should an opportunity occur by which you can make your way to the opposite side of the Rhine, you are to direct your journey so as again to cross to this bank at Strasburg, where you will inquire for news of me at the Flying Stag, a hostelry in that city, which you will easily discover. If you hear no tidings of me at that place, you will proceed to the Duke, and deliver to him this important packet."

Here he put into his son's hand, with as much privacy as possible, the case containing the diamond necklace.

"What else your duty calls on you to do," continued the elder Philipson, "you well know; only I conjure you, let no vain inquiries after my fate interfere with the great duty you have there to discharge. In the meantime, prepare to bid me a sudden farewell, with a heart as bold and confident as when you went before me, and courageously led the way amid the rocks and storms of Switzerland. Heaven was above us then, as it is over us now. Adieu, my beloved Arthur! Should I wait till the moment of separation, there may be but short time to speak the fatal word, and no eye save thine own must see the tear which I now wipe away."

The painful feeling which accompanied this anticipation of their parting was so sincere on Arthur's part, as well as that of his father, that it did not at first occur to the former, as a source of consolation, that it seemed likely he might be placed under the guidance of the singular female, the memory of whom haunted him. True it was, that the beauty of Anne of Geierstein, as well as 334the striking circumstances in which she had exhibited herself, had on that very morning been the principal occupation of his mind; but they were now chased from it by the predominant recollection, that he was about to be separated in a moment of danger from a father so well deserving of his highest esteem and his fondest affection.

Meanwhile, that father dashed from his eye the tear which his devoted stoicism could not suppress, and, as if afraid of softening his resolution by indulging his parental fondness, he recalled the pious Bartholomew, to demand of him how far they were from the Chapel of the Ferry.

"Little more than a mile," was the reply; and when the Englishman required further information concerning the cause of its erection, he was informed, that an old boatman and fisherman, named Hans, had long dwelt at the place, who gained a precarious livelihood by transporting travellers and merchants from one bank of the river to the other. The misfortune, however, of losing first one boat and then a second, in the deep and mighty stream, with the dread inspired in travellers by the repetition of such accidents, began to render his profession an uncertain one. Being a good Catholic, the old man's distress took a devotional turn. He began to look back on his former life, and consider by what crimes he had deserved the misfortunes which darkened the evening of his days. His remorse was chiefly excited by the recollection that he had, on one occasion, when the passage was peculiarly stormy, refused to discharge his duty as a ferryman, in order to transport to the other shore a priest, who bore along with him an image of the Virgin, destined for the village of 335Kirch-hoff, on the opposite or right bank of the

Rhine. For this fault Hans submitted to severe penance, as he was now disposed to consider as culpable his doubt of the Virgin's power of protecting herself, her priest, and the bark employed in her service; besides which, the offering of a large share of his worldly goods to the church of Kirch-hoff expressed the truth of the old man's repentance. Neither did he ever again permit himself to interpose any delay in the journey of men of holy Church; but all ranks of the clergy, from the mitred prelate to the barefooted friar, might at any time of day or night have commanded the services of him and his boat.

While prosecuting so laudable a course of life, it became at length the lot of Hans to find, on the banks of the Rhine, a small image of the Virgin, thrown by the waves, which appeared to him exactly to resemble that which he had formerly ungraciously refused to carry across, when under charge of the sacristan of Kirch-hoff. He placed it in the most conspicuous part of his hut, and poured out his soul before it in devotion, anxiously inquiring for some signal by which he might discover whether he was to consider the arrival of her holy image as a pledge that his offences were forgiven. In the visions of the night, his prayers were answered, and Our Lady, assuming the form of the image, stood by his bedside, for the purpose of telling him wherefore she had come hither.

"My trusty servant," she said, "men of Belial have burned my dwelling at Kirch-hoff, spoiled my chapel, and thrown the sacred image which represents me into the swollen Rhine, which swept me downward. Now, I have resolved to dwell no longer in the neighbourhood of the profane doers of this deed, or of the cowardly vassals who dared not prevent it. I am, therefore, compelled to remove my habitation, and, in despite of the opposing current, I determined to take the shore on this side, being resolved to fix my abode with thee, my faithful servant, that the land in which thou dwellest may be blessed, as well as thou and thy household."

As the vision spoke, she seemed to wring from her tresses the water in which they had been steeped, while her disordered dress and fatigued appearance was that of one who has been buffeting with the waves.

Next morning brought intelligence that, in one of the numerous feuds of that fierce period, Kirch-hoff had been sacked, the church destroyed, and the church treasury plundered.

In consequence of the fisherman's vision being thus remarkably confirmed, Hans entirely renounced his profession; and, leaving it to younger men to supply his place as ferryman, he converted his hut into a rustic chapel, and he himself, taking orders, attended upon the shrine as a hermit, or daily chaplain. The figure was supposed to work miracles, and the ferry became renowned from its being under the protection of the Holy Image of Our Lady, and her no less holy servant.

When Bartholomew had concluded his account of the Ferry and its Chapel, the travellers had arrived at the place itself.337

CHAPTER XVIII.

Upon the Rhine, upon the Rhine they cluster,
The grapes of juice divine,
Which make the soldier's jovial courage muster;
O blessed be the Rhine!

Drinking Song.^[a]

A cottage or two on the side of the river, beside which were moored one or two fishing-boats, showed the pious Hans had successors in his profession as a boatman. The river, which at a point a little lower was restrained by a chain of islets, expanded more widely, and moved less rapidly, than when it passed these cottages, affording to the ferryman a smoother surface, and a less heavy stream to contend with, although the current was even there too strong to be borne up against, unless the river was in a tranquil state.

On the opposite bank, but a good deal lower than the hamlet which gave name to the ferry, was seated on a small eminence, screened by trees and bushes, the little town of Kirch-hoff. A skiff departing from the left bank was, even on favourable occasions, carried considerably to leeward ere it could attain the opposite side of the deep and full stream of the Rhine, so that its course was oblique towards Kirch-hoff. On the other hand, a boat departing from Kirch-hoff must have great advantage both of wind and oars, in order to land its loading or crew at the Chapel of the Ferry, unless it were under the miraculous influence which carried the image of the Virgin in that direction. The communication, therefore, from the east to the west bank was only maintained by towing boats up the stream, to such a height on the eastern side that the leeway which they made during the voyage across might correspond with the point at which they desired to arrive, and enable them to attain it with ease. Hence it naturally happened that, the passage from Alsace into Suabia being the most easy, the ferry was more used by those who were desirous of entering Germany, than by travellers who came in an opposite direction.

When the elder Philipson had by a glance around him ascertained the situation of the ferry, he said firmly to his son,—"Begone, my dear Arthur, and do what I have commanded thee."

With a heart rent with filial anxiety, the young man obeyed, and took his solitary course towards the cottages, near which the barks were moored, which were occasionally used for fishing, as well as for the purposes of the ferry.

"Your son leaves us?" said Bartholomew to the elder Philipson.

"He does for the present," said his father, "as he has certain inquiries to make in yonder hamlet."

"If they be," answered the guide, "any matters connected with your honour's road, I laud the Saints that I can better answer your inquiries than those ignorant boors, who hardly understand your language."339

"If we find that their information needs thy commentary," said Philipson, "we will request it—meanwhile, lead on to the chapel, where my son will join us."

They moved towards the chapel, but with slow steps, each turning his looks aside to the fishing-hamlet; the guide as if striving to see whether the younger traveller was returning towards them, the father anxious to descry, on the broad bosom of the Rhine, a sail unloosed, to waft his son across to that which might be considered as the safer side. But though the looks of both guide and traveller were turned in the direction of the river, their steps carried them towards the chapel, to which the inhabitants, in memory of the founder, had given the title of Hans-Kapelle.

A few trees scattered around gave an agreeable and silvan air to the place; and the chapel, that appeared on a rising ground at some distance from the hamlet, was constructed in a style of pleasing simplicity, which corresponded with the whole scene. Its small size confirmed the tradition that it had originally been merely the hut of a peasant; and the cross of fir-trees, covered with bark, attested the purpose to which it was now dedicated. The chapel and all around it breathed peace and solemn tranquillity, and the deep sound of the mighty river seemed to impose silence on each human voice which might presume to mingle with its awful murmur.

When Philipson arrived in the vicinity, Bartholomew took the advantage afforded by his silence to thunder forth two stanzas to the praise of the Lady of the Ferry, and her faithful worshipper Hans, after which he broke forth into the rapturous exclamation,—"*Come hither, ye who fear wreck, here is your safe haven!—Come hither, ye who die of thirst, here is a well of mercy open to you!—Come, those who are weary and far-travelled, this is your place of refreshment!*"—And more to the same purpose he might have said, but Philipson sternly imposed silence on him.

"If thy devotion were altogether true," he said, "it would be less clamorous; but it is well to do what is good in itself, even if it is a hypocrite who recommends it.—Let us enter this holy chapel, and pray for a fortunate issue to our precarious travels."

The pardoner caught up the last words.

"Sure was I," he said, "that your worship is too well advised to pass this holy place without imploring the protection and influence of Our Lady of the Ferry. Tarry but a moment until I find the priest who serves the altar, that he may say a mass on your behalf."

Here he was interrupted by the door of the chapel suddenly opening, when an ecclesiastic appeared on the threshold. Philipson instantly knew the Priest of St. Paul's, whom he had seen that morning at La Ferette. Bartholomew also knew him, as it would seem; for his officious hypocritical eloquence failed him in an instant, and he stood before the priest with his arms folded on his breast, like a man who waits for the sentence of condemnation.

"Villain," said the ecclesiastic, regarding the guide with a severe countenance, "dost thou lead a stranger into the houses of the Holy Saints, that thou mayst slay him, and possess thyself of his spoils? But Heaven will no longer bear with thy perfidy. Back, thou wretch, to meet thy brother miscreants, who are hastening

hitherward. Tell them thy arts were unavailing, and that the innocent stranger is under MY protection—under my protection, which those who presume to violate will meet with the reward of Archibald de Hagenbach!"

The guide stood quite motionless, while addressed by the priest in a manner equally menacing and authoritative; and no sooner did the latter cease speaking, than, without offering a word either in justification or reply, Bartholomew turned round, and retreated at a hasty pace by the same road which had conducted the traveller to the chapel.

"And do you, worthy Englishman," continued the priest, "enter into this chapel, and perform in safety those devotions, by means of which yonder hypocrite designed to detain you until his brethren in iniquity came up.—But first, wherefore are you alone? I trust naught evil hath befallen your young companion?"

"My son," said Philipson, "crosses the Rhine at yonder ferry, as we had important business to transact on the other side."

As he spoke thus, a light boat, about which two or three peasants had been for some time busy, was seen to push from the shore, and shoot into the stream, to which it was partly compelled to give way, until a sail stretched along the slender yard, and supporting the bark against the current, enabled her to stand obliquely across the river.

"Now, praise be to God!" said Philipson, who was aware that the bark he looked upon must be in the act of carrying his son beyond the reach of the dangers by which he was himself surrounded.³⁴²

"Amen!" answered the priest, echoing the pious ejaculation of the traveller. "Great reason have you to return thanks to Heaven."

"Of that I am convinced," replied Philipson; "but yet from you I hope to learn the special cause of danger from which I have escaped?"

"This is neither time nor place for such an investigation," answered the Priest of St. Paul's. "It is enough to say, that yonder fellow, well known for his hypocrisy and his crimes, was present when the young Switzer, Sigismund, reclaimed from the executioner the treasure of which you were robbed by Hagenbach. Thus Bartholomew's avarice was awakened. He undertook to be your guide to Strasburg, with the criminal intent of detaining you by the way till a party came up, against whose numbers resistance would have been in vain. But his purpose has been anticipated.—And now, ere giving vent to other worldly thoughts, whether of hope or fear—to the chapel, sir, and join in orisons to Him who hath been your aid, and to those who have interceded with him in your behalf."

Philipson entered the chapel with his guide, and joined in returning thanks to Heaven, and the tutelary power of the spot, for the escape which had been vouchsafed to him.

When this duty had been performed, Philipson intimated his purpose of resuming his journey, to which the Black Priest replied, "That far from delaying him in a place so dangerous, he would himself accompany him for some part of the journey, since he also was bound to the presence of the Duke of Burgundy."³⁴³

"You, my father!—you!" said the merchant, with some astonishment.

"And wherefore surprised?" answered the priest. "Is it so strange that one of my order should visit a prince's court? Believe me, there are but too many of them to be found there."

"I do not speak with reference to your order," answered Philipson, "but in regard of the part which you have this day acted, in abetting the execution of Archibald de Hagenbach. Know you so little of the fiery Duke of Burgundy as to imagine you can dally with his resentment with more safety than you would pull the mane of a sleeping lion?"

"I know his mood well," said the priest; "and it is not to excuse but to defend the death of De Hagenbach that I go to his presence. The Duke may execute his serfs and bondsmen at his pleasure, but there is a spell upon my life which is proof to all his power. But let me retort the question—You, Sir Englishman, knowing the conditions of the Duke so well—you, so lately the guest and travelling companion of the most unwelcome visitors who could approach him—you, implicated, in appearance at least, in the uproar at La Ferette—what chance is there of your escaping his vengeance? and wherefore will you throw yourself wantonly within his power?"

"Worthy father," said the merchant, "let each of us, without offence to the other, keep his own secret. I have, indeed, no spell to secure me from the Duke's resentment—I have limbs to suffer torture and imprisonment, and property which may be seized and confiscated. But I have had in former days many dealings with the Duke; I may even say I have laid him under obligations, and hope my interest with him may in consequence be sufficient, not only to save me from the consequences of this day's procedure, but be of some avail to my friend the Landamman."

"But if you are in reality bound to the court of Burgundy as a merchant," said the priest, "where are the wares in which you traffic? Have you no merchandise save that which you carry on your person? I heard of a sumpter-horse with baggage. Has yonder villain deprived you of it?"

This was a trying question to Philipson, who, anxious about the separation from his son, had given no direction whether the baggage should remain with himself, or should be transported to the other side of the Rhine. He was, therefore, taken at advantage by the priest's inquiry, to which he answered with some incoherence,—*"I believe my baggage is in the hamlet—that is, unless my son has taken it across the Rhine with him."*

"That we will soon learn," answered the priest.

Here a novice appeared from the vestry of the chapel at his call, and received commands to inquire at the hamlet whether Philipson's bales, with the horse which transported them, had been left there, or ferried over along with his son.

The novice, being absent a few minutes, presently returned with the baggage-horse, which, with its burden, Arthur, from regard to his father's accommodation, had left on the western side of the river. The priest looked on attentively, while the elder Philipson, mounting his own horse, and taking the rein of the other in his hand, bade the Black Priest adieu in these words,—*"And now, father, farewell! I must pass on with my bales, since there is little wisdom in travelling with them after nightfall, else would I gladly suit my pace, with your permission, so as to share the way with you."*

"If it is your obliging purpose to do so, as indeed I was about to propose," said the priest, "know I will be no stay to your journey. I have here a good horse; and Melchior, who must otherwise have gone on foot, may ride upon your sumpter-horse. I rather propose this course, as it will be rash for you to travel by night. I can conduct you to an hostelry about five miles off, which we may reach with sufficient daylight, and where you will be lodged safely for your reckoning."

The English merchant hesitated a moment. He had no fancy for any new companion on the road, and although the countenance of the priest was rather handsome, considering his years, yet the expression was such as by no means invited confidence. On the contrary, there was something mysterious and gloomy which clouded his brow, though it was a lofty one, and a similar expression gleamed in his cold grey eye, and intimated severity and even harshness of disposition. But notwithstanding this repulsive circumstance, the priest had lately rendered Philipson a considerable service, by detecting the treachery of his hypocritical guide, and the merchant was not a man to be startled from his course by any imaginary prepossessions against the looks or manners of any one, or apprehensions of machinations against himself. He only revolved in his mind the singularity attending his destiny, which, while it was necessary ³⁴⁶for him to appear before the Duke of Burgundy in the most conciliatory manner, seemed to force upon him the adoption of companions who must needs be obnoxious to that prince; and such, he was too well aware, must be the case with the Priest of St. Paul's. Having reflected for an instant, he courteously accepted the offer of the priest to guide him to some place of rest and entertainment, which must be absolutely necessary for his horse before he reached Strasburg, even if he himself could have dispensed with it.

The party being thus arranged, the novice brought forth the priest's steed, which he mounted with grace and agility, and the neophyte, being probably the same whom Arthur had represented during his escape from La Ferette, took charge, at his master's command, of the baggage-horse of the Englishman; and crossing himself, with a humble inclination of his head, as the priest passed him, he fell into the rear, and seemed to pass the time, like the false brother Bartholomew, in telling his beads, with an earnestness which had perhaps more of affected than of real piety. The Black Priest of St. Paul's, to judge by the glance which he cast upon his novice, seemed to disdain the formality of the young man's devotion. He rode upon a strong black horse, more like a warrior's charger than the ambling palfrey of a priest, and the manner in which he managed him was entirely devoid of awkwardness and timidity. His pride, whatever was its character, was not certainly of a kind altogether professional, but had its origin in other swelling thoughts which arose in his mind, to mingle with and enhance the self-consequence of a powerful ecclesiastic.³⁴⁷

As Philipson looked on his companion from time to time, his scrutinising glance was returned by a haughty smile, which seemed to say, "You may gaze on my form and features, but you cannot penetrate my mystery."

The looks of Philipson, which were never known to sink before mortal man, seemed to retort, with equal haughtiness, "Nor shall you, proud priest, know that you are now in company with one whose secret is far more important than thine own can be."

At length the priest made some advance towards conversation, by allusion to the footing upon which, by a mutual understanding, they seemed to have placed their intercourse.

"We travel then," he said, "like two powerful enchanters, each conscious of his own high and secret purpose; each in his own chariot of clouds, and neither imparting to his companion the direction or purpose of his journey."

"Excuse me, father," answered Philipson; "I have neither asked your purpose, nor concealed my own, so far as it concerns you. I repeat, I am bound to the presence of the Duke of Burgundy, and my object, like that of any other merchant, is to dispose of my wares to advantage."

"Doubtless, it would seem so," said the Black Priest, "from the extreme attention to your merchandise, which you showed not above half an hour since, when you knew not whether your bales had crossed the river with your son, or were remaining in your own charge. Are English merchants usually so indifferent to the sources of their traffic?"

"When their lives are in danger," said Philipson, "they are sometimes negligent of their fortune."

"It is well," replied the priest, and again resumed his solitary musings; until another half-hour's travelling brought them to a *dorf*, or village, which the Black Priest informed Philipson was that where he proposed to stop for the night.

"The novice," he said, "will show you the inn, which is of good reputation, and where you may lodge with safety. For me, I have to visit a penitent in this village who desires my ghostly offices;—perhaps I may see you again this evening, perhaps not till the next morning;—at any rate, adieu for the present."

So saying, the priest stopped his horse, while the novice, coming close up to Philipson's side, conducted him onward through the narrow street of the village, whilst the windows exhibited here and there a twinkling gleam, announcing that the hour of darkness was arrived. Finally, he led the Englishman through an archway into a sort of courtyard, where there stood a car or two of a particular shape, used occasionally by women when they travel, and some other vehicles of the same kind. Here the young man threw himself from the sumpter-horse, and placing the rein in Philipson's hand, disappeared in the increasing darkness, after pointing to a large but dilapidated building, along the front of which not a spark of light was to be discovered from any of the narrow and numerous windows, which were dimly visible in the twilight.

PART II

CHAPTER I.

1st Carrier. What, ostler!—a plague on thee, hast never an eye in thy head? Canst thou not hear? An 'twere not as good a deed as drink to break the pate of thee, I am a very villain—Come, and be hanged—Hast thou no faith in thee?

Gadshill. I pray thee, lend me thy lantern, to see my gelding in the stable.

2d Carrier. Nay, soft, I pray you—I know a trick worth two of that.

Gadshill. I prithee lend me thine.

3d Carrier. Ay, when? Canst tell?—Lend thee my lantern, quotha? Marry, I'll see thee hanged first.

Henry IV.

The social spirit peculiar to the French nation had already introduced into the inns of that country the gay and cheerful character of welcome upon which Erasmus, at a later period, dwells with strong emphasis, as a contrast to the saturnine and sullen reception which strangers were apt to meet with at a German caravansera. Philipson was, therefore, in expectation of being received by the busy, civil, and talkative host—by the hostess and her daughter, all softness, coquetry, and glee—the smiling and supple waiter—the officious and dimpled chambermaid. The better inns in France boast also separate rooms, where strangers could change or put in order their dress, where they might sleep without company in their bedroom, and where they could deposit their baggage in privacy and safety. But all these luxuries were as yet unknown in Germany; and in Alsace, where the scene now lies, as well as in the other dependencies of the Empire, they regarded as effeminacy everything beyond such provisions as were absolutely necessary for the supply of the wants of travellers; and even these were coarse and indifferent, and, excepting in the article of wine, sparingly ministered.

The Englishman, finding that no one appeared at the gate, began to make his presence known by calling aloud, and finally by alighting, and smiting with all his might on the doors of the hostelry for a long time, without attracting the least attention. At length the head of a grizzled servitor was thrust out at a small window, who, in a voice which sounded like that of one displeased at the interruption, rather than hopeful of advantage from the arrival of a guest, demanded what he wanted.

"Is this an inn?" replied Philipson.

"Yes," bluntly replied the domestic, and was about to withdraw from the window, when the traveller added,—

"And if it be, can I have lodgings?"

"You may come in," was the short and dry answer.

"Send some one to take the horses," replied Philipson.

"No one is at leisure," replied this most repulsive of waiters; "you must litter down your horses yourself, in the way that likes you best."

"Where is the stable?" said the merchant, whose prudence and temper were scarce proof against this Dutch phlegm.

The fellow, who seemed as sparing of his words as if, like the Princess in the fairy tale, he had dropped ducats with each of them, only pointed to a door in an outer building, more resembling that of a cellar than of a stable, and, as if weary of the conference, drew in his head, and shut the window sharply against the guest, as he would against an importunate beggar.

Cursing the spirit of independence which left a traveller to his own resources and exertions, Philipson, making a virtue of necessity, led the two nags towards the door pointed out as that of the stable, and was rejoiced at heart to see light glimmering through its chinks. He entered with his charge into a place very like the dungeon vault of an ancient castle, rudely fitted up with some racks and mangers. It was of considerable extent in point of length, and at the lower end two or three persons were engaged in tying up their horses, dressing them, and dispensing them their provender.

This last article was delivered by the ostler, a very old lame man, who neither put his hand to wisp or curry-comb, but sat weighing forth hay by the pound, and counting out corn, as it seemed, by the grain, so anxiously did he bend over his task, by the aid of a blinking light enclosed within a horn lantern. He did not even turn his head at the noise which the Englishman made on entering the place with two additional horses, far less did he seem disposed to give himself the least trouble, or the stranger the smallest assistance.

In respect of cleanliness, the stable of Augeas bore no small resemblance to that of this Alsatian *dorf*, and it would have been an exploit worthy of Hercules to have restored it to such a state of cleanliness as would have made it barely decent in the eyes, and tolerable to the nostrils, of the punctilious Englishman. But this was a matter which disgusted Philipson himself much more than those of his party which were principally concerned. They, *videlicet* the two horses, seeming perfectly to understand that the rule of the place was "first come first served," hastened to occupy the empty stalls which happened to be nearest to them. In this one of them at least was disappointed, being received by a groom with a blow across the face with a switch.

"Take that," said the fellow, "for forcing thyself into the place taken up for the horses of the Baron of Randelsheim."

Never in the course of his life had the English merchant more pain to retain possession of his temper than at that moment. Reflecting, however, on the discredit of quarrelling with such a man in such a cause, he contented himself with placing the animal, thus repulsed from the stall he had chosen, into one next to that of his companion, to which no one seemed to lay claim.

The merchant then proceeded, notwithstanding the fatigue of the day, to pay all that attention to the mute companions of his journey which they deserve from every traveller who has any share of prudence, to say nothing of humanity. The unusual degree of trouble which Philipson took to arrange his horses, although his dress, and much more his demeanour, seemed to place him above this species of servile labour, appeared to make an impression even upon the iron insensibility of the old ostler himself. He showed some alacrity in furnishing the traveller, who knew the business of a groom so well, with corn, straw, and hay, though in small quantity, and at exorbitant rates, which were instantly to be paid; nay, he even went as far as the door of the stable, that he might point across the court to the well, from which Philipson was obliged to fetch water with his own hands. The duties of the stable being finished, the merchant concluded that he had gained such an interest with the grim master of the horse, as to learn of him whether he might leave his bales safely in the stable.

"You may leave them if you will," said the ostler; "but touching their safety, you will do much more wisely if you take them with you, and give no temptation to any one by suffering them to pass from under your own eyes."

So saying, the man of oats closed his oracular jaws, nor could he be prevailed upon to unlock them again by any inquiry which his customer could devise.

In the course of this cold and comfortless reception, Philipson recollected the necessity of supporting the character of a prudent and wary trader, which he had forgotten once before in the course of the day; and, imitating what he saw the others do, who had been, like himself, engaged in taking charge of their horses, he took up his baggage, and removed himself and his property to the inn. Here he was suffered to enter, rather than admitted, into the general or public *stube*, or room of entertainment, which, like the ark of the patriarch, received all ranks without distinction, whether clean or unclean.

The *stube*, or stove, of a German inn, derived its name from the great hypocaust, which is always strongly heated to secure the warmth of the apartment in which it is placed. There travellers of every age and description assembled—there their upper garments were indiscriminately hung up around the stove to dry or to air—and the guests themselves were seen employed in various acts of ablution or personal arrangement, which are generally, in modern times, referred to the privacy of the dressing-room.

The more refined feelings of the Englishman were disgusted with this scene, and he was reluctant to mingle in it. For this reason he inquired for the private retreat of the landlord himself, trusting that, by some of the arguments powerful among his tribe, he might obtain separate quarters from the crowd, and a morsel of food, to be eaten in private. A grey-haired Ganymede, to whom he put the question where the landlord was, indicated a recess behind the huge stove, where, veiling his glory in a very dark and extremely hot corner, it pleased the great man to obscure himself from vulgar gaze. There was something remarkable about this person. Short, stout, bandy-legged, and consequential, he was in these respects like many brethren of the profession in all countries. But the countenance of the man, and still more his manners, differed more from the merry host of France or England than even the experienced Philipson was prepared to expect. He knew German customs too well to expect the suppliant and serviceable qualities of the master of a French inn, or even the more blunt and frank manners of an English landlord. But such German innkeepers as he had yet seen, though indeed arbitrary and peremptory in their country fashions, yet, being humoured in these, they, like tyrants in their hours of relaxation, dealt kindly with the guests over whom their sway extended, and mitigated, by jest and jollity, the harshness of their absolute power. But this man's brow was like a tragic volume, in which you were as unlikely to find anything of jest or amusement, as in a hermit's breviary. His answers were short, sudden, and repulsive, and the air and manner with which they were delivered was as surly as their tenor; which will appear from the following dialogue betwixt him and his guest:—

"Good host," said Philipson, in the mildest tone he could assume, "I am fatigued, and far from well—May I request to have a separate apartment, a cup of wine, and a morsel of food, in my private chamber?"

"You may," answered the landlord; but with a look strangely at variance with the apparent acquiescence which his words naturally implied.

"Let me have such accommodation, then, with your earliest convenience."

"Soft!" replied the innkeeper. "I have said that you may request these things, but not that I would grant them. If you would insist on being served differently from others, it must be at another inn than mine."

"Well, then," said the traveller, "I will shift without supper for a night—nay, more, I will be content to pay for a supper which I do not eat, if you will cause me to be accommodated with a private apartment."

"Seignor traveller," said the innkeeper, "every one here must be accommodated as well as you, since all pay alike. Whoso comes to this house of entertainment must eat as others eat, drink as others drink, sit at table with the rest of my guests, and go to bed when the company have done drinking."

"All this," said Philipson, humbling himself where anger would have been ridiculous, "is highly reasonable; and I do not oppose myself to your laws or customs. But," added he, taking his purse from his girdle, "sickness craves some privilege; and when the patient is willing to pay for it, methinks the rigour of your laws may admit of some mitigation?"

"I keep an inn, Seignor, and not a hospital. If you remain here, you shall be served with the same attention as others,—if you are not willing to do as others do, leave my house and seek another inn."

On receiving this decisive rebuff, Philipson gave up the contest, and retired from the *sanctum sanctorum* of his ungracious host, to await the arrival of supper, penned up like a bullock in a pound, amongst the crowded inhabitants of the *stube*. Some of these, exhausted by fatigue, snored away the interval between their own arrival and that of the expected repast; others conversed together on the news of the country, and others again played at dice, or such games as might serve to consume the time. The company were of various ranks, from those who were apparently wealthy and well appointed, to some whose garments and manners indicated that they were but just beyond the grasp of poverty.

A begging friar, a man apparently of a gay and pleasant temper, approached Philipson, and engaged him in conversation. The Englishman was well enough acquainted with the world to be aware, that whatever of his character and purpose it was desirable to conceal would be best hidden under a sociable and open demeanour. He, therefore, received the friar's approaches graciously, and conversed with him upon the state of Lorraine, and the interest which the Duke of Burgundy's attempt to seize that fief into his own hands was likely to create both in France and Germany. On these subjects, satisfied with hearing his fellow-traveller's sentiments, Philipson expressed no opinion of his own, but, after receiving such intelligence as the friar chose to communicate, preferred rather to talk upon the geography of the country, the facilities afforded to commerce, and the rules which obstructed or favoured trade.

While he was thus engaged in the conversation which seemed most to belong to his profession, the landlord suddenly entered the room, and, mounting on the head of an old barrel, glanced his eye slowly and steadily round the crowded apartment, and when he had completed his survey, pronounced, in a decisive tone, the double command,—*"Shut the gates! Spread the table!"*

"The Baron St. Antonio be praised!" said the friar. "Our landlord has given up hope of any more guests to-night, until which blessed time we might have starved for want of food before he had relieved us. Ay, here comes the cloth. The old gates of the courtyard are now bolted fast enough; and when Johann Mengs has once said, 'Shut the gates,' the stranger may knock on the outside as he will, but we may rest assured that it shall not be opened to him."

"Meinherr Mengs maintains strict discipline in his house," said the Englishman.

"As absolute as the Duke of Burgundy," answered the friar. "After ten o'clock, no admittance—the 'seek another inn,' which is before that a conditional hint, becomes, after the clock has struck, and the watchmen have begun their rounds, an absolute order of exclusion. He that is without remains without, and he that is within must, in like manner, continue there until the gates open at break of day. Till then the house is almost like a beleaguered citadel, John Mengs its seneschal"—

"And we its captives, good father," said Philipson. "Well, content am I. A wise traveller must submit to the control of the leaders of the people when he travels; and I hope a goodly fat potentate, like John Mengs, will be as clement as his station and dignity admit of."

While they were talking in this manner, the aged waiter, with many a weary sigh and many a groan, had drawn out certain boards, by which a table that stood in the midst of the *stube* had the capacity of being extended, so as to contain the company present, and covered it with a cloth, which was neither distinguished by extreme cleanliness nor fineness of texture. On this table, when it had been accommodated to receive the necessary number of guests, a wooden trencher and spoon, together with a glass drinking-cup, were placed before each, he being expected to serve himself with his own knife for the other purposes of the table. As for forks, they were unknown until a much later period, all the Europeans of that day making the same use of the fingers to select their morsels and transport them to the mouth which the Asiatics now practise.

The board was no sooner arranged than the hungry guests hastened to occupy their seats around it; for which purpose the sleepers were awakened, the dicers resigned their game, and the idlers and politicians broke off their sage debates, in order to secure their station at the supper-table, and be ready to perform their part in the interesting solemnity which seemed about to take place. But there is much between the cup and the lip, and not less sometimes between the covering of a table and the placing food upon it. The guests sat in order, each with his knife drawn, already menacing the victuals which were still subject to the operations of the cook. They had waited, with various degrees of patience, for full half an hour, when at length the old attendant before mentioned entered with a pitcher of thin Moselle wine, so light and so sharp-tasted that Philipson put down his cup with every tooth in his head set on edge by the slender portion which he had swallowed. The landlord, John Mengs, who had assumed a seat somewhat elevated at the head of the table, did not omit to observe this mark of insubordination, and to animadvert upon it.

"The wine likes you not, I think, my master?" said he to the English merchant.

"For wine, no," answered Philipson; "but could I see anything requiring such sauce, I have seldom seen better vinegar."¹²

This jest, though uttered in the most calm and composed manner, seemed to drive the innkeeper to fury.

"Who are you," he exclaimed, "for a foreign pedlar, that ventures to quarrel with my wine, which has been approved of by so many princes, dukes, reigning dukes, graves, rhinegraves, counts, barons, and knights of the Empire, whose shoes you are altogether unworthy even to clean? Was it not of this wine that the Count Palatine of Nimmersatt drank six quarts before he ever rose from the blessed chair in which I now sit?"

"I doubt it not, mine host," said Philipson; "nor should I think of scandalising the sobriety of your honourable guest, even if he had drunken twice the quantity."

"Silence, thou malicious railer!" said the host; "and let instant apology be made to me, and the wine which you have calumniated, or I will instantly command the supper to be postponed till midnight."

Here there was a general alarm among the guests, all abjuring any part in the censures of Philipson, and most of them proposing that John Mengs should avenge himself on the actual culprit by turning him instantly out of doors, rather than involve so many innocent and famished persons in the consequences of his guilt. The wine they pronounced excellent; some two or three even drank their glass out, to make their words good; and they all offered, if not with lives and fortunes, at least with hands and feet, to support the ban of the house against the contumacious Englishman. While petition and remonstrance were assailing John Mengs on every side, the friar, like a wise counsellor and a trusty friend, endeavoured to end the feud by advising Philipson to submit to the host's sovereignty.

"Humble thyself, my son," he said; "bend the stubbornness of thy heart before the great lord of the spigot and butt. I speak for the sake of others as well as my own; for Heaven alone knows how much longer they or I can endure this extenuating fast!"

"Worthy guests," said Philipson, "I am grieved to have offended our respected host, and am so far from objecting to the wine that I will pay for a double flagon of it, to be served all round to this honourable company—so, only, they do not ask me to share of it."

These last words were spoken aside; but the Englishman could not fail to perceive, from the wry mouths of some of the party who were possessed of a nicer palate, that they were as much afraid as himself of a repetition of the acid potation.

The friar next addressed the company with a proposal that the foreign merchant, instead of being amerced in a measure of the liquor which he had scandalised, should be mulcted in an equal quantity of the more generous wines which were usually produced after the repast had been concluded. In this mine host, as well as the guests, found their advantage; and, as Philipson made no objection, the proposal was unanimously adopted, and John Mengs gave, from his seat of dignity, the signal for supper to be served.

The long-expected meal appeared, and there was twice as much time employed in consuming as there had been in expecting it. The articles of ¹⁴which the supper consisted, as well as the mode of serving them up, were as much calculated to try the patience of the company as the delay which had preceded its appearance. Messes of broth and vegetables followed in succession, with platters of meat sodden and roasted, of which each in its turn took a formal course around the ample table, and was specially subjected to every one in rotation. Black-puddings, hung beef, dried fish, also made the circuit, with various condiments, called botargo, caviare, and similar names, composed of the roes of fish mixed with spices, and the like preparations, calculated to awaken thirst and encourage deep drinking. Flagons of wine accompanied these stimulating dainties. The liquor was so superior in flavour and strength to the ordinary wine which had awakened so much controversy, that it might be objected to on the opposite account, being so heady, fiery, and strong, that, in spite of the rebuffs which his criticism had already procured, Philipson ventured to ask for some cold water to allay it.

"You are too difficult to please, sir guest," replied the landlord, again bending upon the Englishman a stern and offended brow; "if you find the wine too strong in my house, the secret to allay its strength is to drink the less. It is indifferent to us whether you drink or not, so you pay the reckoning of those good fellows who do." And he laughed a gruff laugh.

Philipson was about to reply, but the friar, retaining his character of mediator, plucked him by the cloak, and entreated him to forbear. "You do not understand the ways of the place," said he; "it is not here as in the hostleries of England and ¹⁵France, where each guest calls for what he desires for his own use, and where he pays for what he has required, and for no more. Here we proceed on a broad principle of equality and fraternity. No one asks for anything in particular; but such provisions as the host thinks sufficient are set down before all indiscriminately; and as with the feast, so is it with the reckoning. All pay their proportions alike, without reference to the quantity of wine which one may have swallowed more than another; and thus the sick and infirm, nay, the female and the child, pay the same as the hungry peasant and strolling *lanzknecht*."

"It seems an unequal custom," said Philipson; "but travellers are not to judge. So that when a reckoning is called, every one, I am to understand, pays alike?"

"Such is the rule," said the friar,—"excepting, perhaps, some poor brother of our own order, whom Our Lady and St. Francis send into such a scene as this, that good Christians may bestow their alms upon him, and so make a step on their road to Heaven."

The first words of this speech were spoken in the open and independent tone in which the friar had begun the conversation; the last sentence died away into the professional whine of mendicancy proper to the convent, and at once apprised Philipson at what price he was to pay for the friar's counsel and mediation. Having thus explained the custom of the country, good Father Gratian turned to illustrate it by his example, and, having no objection to the new service of wine on account of its strength, he seemed well disposed to signalise himself amongst some stout toppers, who, by ¹⁶drinking deeply, appeared determined to have full pennyworths for their share of the reckoning. The good wine gradually did its office, and even the host relaxed his sullen and grim features, and smiled to see the kindling flame of hilarity catch from one to another, and at length embrace almost all the numerous guests at the table d'hôte, except a few who were too temperate to partake deeply of the wine, or too fastidious to enter into the discussions to which it gave rise. On these the host cast, from time to time, a sullen and displeased eye.

Philipson, who was reserved and silent, both in consequence of his abstinence from the wine-pot and his unwillingness to mix in conversation with strangers, was looked upon by the landlord as a defaulter in both particulars; and as he aroused his own sluggish nature with the fiery wine, Mengs began to throw out obscure hints about kill-joy, mar-company, spoil-sport, and such like epithets, which were plainly directed against the Englishman. Philipson replied, with the utmost equanimity, that he was perfectly sensible that his spirits did not at this moment render him an agreeable member of a merry company, and that with the leave of those present he would withdraw to his sleeping-apartment, and wish them all a good evening, and continuance to their mirth.

But this very reasonable proposal, as it might have elsewhere seemed, contained in it treason against the laws of German computation.

"Who are you," said John Mengs, "who presume to leave the table before the reckoning is called and settled? Sapperment der teufel! we 17are not men upon whom such an offence is to be put with impunity! You may exhibit your polite pranks in Rams-Alley if you will, or in Eastcheap, or in Smithfield; but it shall not be in John Mengs's Golden Fleece, nor will I suffer one guest to go to bed to blink out of the reckoning, and so cheat me and all the rest of my company."

Philipson looked round, to gather the sentiments of the company, but saw no encouragement to appeal to their judgment. Indeed, many of them had little judgment left to appeal to, and those who paid any attention to the matter at all were some quiet old soakers, who were already beginning to think of the reckoning, and were disposed to agree with the host in considering the English merchant as a flincher, who was determined to evade payment of what might be drunk after he left the room; so that John Mengs received the applause of the whole company, when he concluded his triumphant denunciation against Philipson.

"Yes, sir, you may withdraw if you please; but, poz element! it shall not be for this time to seek for another inn, but to the courtyard shall you go, and no farther, there to make your bed upon the stable litter; and good enough for the man that will needs be the first to break up good company."

"It is well said, my jovial host," said a rich trader from Ratisbon; "and here are some six of us—more or less—who will stand by you to maintain the good old customs of Germany; and the—umph—laudable and—and praiseworthy rules of the Golden Fleece."

"Nay, be not angry, sir," said Philipson; "yourself and your three companions, whom the good 18wine has multiplied into six, shall have your own way of ordering the matter; and since you will not permit me to go to bed, I trust that you will take no offence if I fall asleep in my chair."

"How say you? what think you, mine host?" said the citizen from Ratisbon; "may the gentleman, being drunk, as you see he is, since he cannot tell that three and one make six—I say, may he, being drunk, sleep in the elbow-chair?"

This question introduced a contradiction on the part of the host, who contended that three and one made four, not six; and this again produced a retort from the Ratisbon trader. Other clamours rose at the same time, and were at length with difficulty silenced by the stanzas of a chorus song of mirth and good fellowship, which the friar, now become somewhat oblivious of the rule of St. Francis, thundered forth with better good-will than he ever sang a canticle of King David. Under cover of this tumult, Philipson drew himself a little aside, and though he felt it impossible to sleep, as he had proposed, was yet enabled to escape the reproachful glances with which John Mengs distinguished all those who did not call for wine loudly, and drink it lustily. His thoughts roamed far from the *stube* of the Golden Fleece, and upon matter very different from that which was discussed around him, when his attention was suddenly recalled by a loud and continued knocking on the door of the hostelry.

"What have we here?" said John Mengs, his nose reddening with very indignation; "who the foul fiend presses on the Golden Fleece at such an hour, as if he thundered at the door of a bordel? To the turret window some one—Geoffrey, knave 19ostler, or thou, old Timothy, tell the rash man there is no admittance into the Golden Fleece save at timeous hours."

The men went as they were directed, and might be heard in the *stube* vying with each other in the positive denial which they gave to the ill-fated guest who was pressing for admission. They returned, however, to inform their master, that they were unable to overcome the obstinacy of the stranger, who refused positively to depart until he had an interview with Mengs himself.

Wroth was the master of the Golden Fleece at this ill-omened pertinacity, and his indignation extended, like a fiery exhalation, from his nose, all over the adjacent regions of his cheeks and brow. He started from his chair, grasped in his hand a stout stick, which seemed his ordinary sceptre or leading staff of command, and muttering something concerning cudgels for the shoulders of fools, and pitchers of fair or foul water for the drenching of their ears, he marched off to the window which looked into the court, and left his guests nodding, winking, and whispering to each other, in full expectation of hearing the active demonstrations of his wrath. It happened otherwise, however; for, after the exchange of a few indistinct words, they were astonished when they heard the noise of the unbolting and unbarring of the gates of the inn, and presently after the footsteps of men upon the stairs; and the landlord entering, with an appearance of clumsy courtesy, prayed those assembled to make room for an honoured guest, who came, though late, to add to their numbers. A tall dark form followed, muffled in a travelling-cloak; on laying aside 20which, Philipson at once recognised his late fellow-traveller, the Black Priest of St. Paul's.

There was in the circumstance itself nothing at all surprising, since it was natural that a landlord, however coarse and insolent to ordinary guests, might yet show deference to an ecclesiastic, whether from his rank in the Church or from his reputation for sanctity. But what did appear surprising to Philipson was the effect produced by the entrance of this unexpected guest. He seated himself, without hesitation, at the highest place of the board, from which John Mengs had dethroned the aforesaid trader from Ratisbon, notwithstanding his zeal for ancient German customs, his steady adherence and loyalty to the Golden Fleece, and his propensity to brimming goblets. The priest took instant and unscrupulous possession of his seat of honour, after some negligent reply to the host's unwonted courtesy; when it seemed that the effect of his long black vestments, in place of the slashed and flounced coat of his predecessor, as well as of the cold grey eye with which he slowly reviewed the company, in some degree resembled that of the fabulous Gorgon, and if it did not literally convert those who looked upon it into stone, there was yet something petrifying in the steady unmoved glance with which he seemed to survey them, looking as if desirous of reading their very inmost souls, and passing from one to another, as if each upon whom he looked in succession was unworthy of longer consideration.

Philipson felt, in his turn, that momentary examination, in which, however, there mingled nothing that seemed to convey recognition. All the courage and composure of the Englishman 21could not prevent an unpleasant feeling while under this mysterious man's eye, so that he felt a relief when it passed from him and rested upon another of the company, who seemed in turn to acknowledge the chilling effects of that freezing glance. The noise of intoxicated mirth and drunken disputation, the clamorous argument, and the still more boisterous laugh, which had been suspended on the priest's entering the eating-apartment, now, after one or two vain attempts to resume them, died away, as if the feast had been changed to a funeral, and the jovial guests had been at once converted into the lugubrious mutes who attend on such solemnities. One little rosy-faced man, who afterwards proved to be a tailor from Augsburg, ambitious, perhaps, of showing a degree of courage not usually supposed consistent with his effeminate trade, made a bold effort; and yet it was with a timid and restrained voice that he called on the jovial friar to renew his song. But whether it was that he did not dare to venture on an uncanonical pastime in presence of a brother in orders, or whether he had some other reason for declining the invitation, the merry churchman hung his head, and shook it with such an expressive air of melancholy, that the tailor drew back as if he had been detected in cabbaging from a cardinal's robes, or cribbing the lace of some cope or altar gown. In short, the revel was hushed into deep silence, and so attentive were the company to what should arrive next, that the bells of the village church, striking the first hour after midnight, made the guests start as if they heard them rung backwards, to announce an assault or conflagration. The Black Priest, who had taken 22some slight and hasty repast, which the host had made no kind of objection to supplying him with, seemed to think the bells, which announced the service of lauds, being the first after midnight, a proper signal for breaking up the party.

"We have eaten," he said, "that we may support life, let us pray that we may be fit to meet death; which waits upon life as surely as night upon day, or the shadow upon the sunbeam, though we know not when or from whence it is to come upon us."

The company, as if mechanically, bent their uncovered heads, while the priest said, with his deep and solemn voice, a Latin prayer, expressing thanks to God for protection throughout the day, and entreating for its continuance during the witching hours which were to pass ere the day again commenced. The hearers bowed their heads in token of acquiescence in the holy petition; and, when they raised them, the Black Priest of St. Paul's had followed the host out of the apartment, probably to that which was destined for his repose. His absence was no sooner perceived than signs, and nods, and even whispers were exchanged between the guests; but no one spoke above his breath, or in such connected manner, as that Philipson could understand anything distinctly from them. He himself ventured to ask the friar, who sat near him, observing at the same time the under-tone which seemed to be fashionable for the moment, whether the worthy ecclesiastic who had left them was not the Priest of St. Paul's, on the frontier town of La Ferette.

"And if you know it is he," said the friar, with a countenance and a tone from which all signs of 23intoxication were suddenly banished, "why do you ask of me?"

"Because," said the merchant, "I would willingly learn the spell which so suddenly converted so many merry tipplers into men of sober manners, and a jovial company into a convent of Carthusian friars?"

"Friend," said the friar, "thy discourse savoureth mightily of asking after what thou knowest right well. But I am no such silly duck as to be taken by a decoy. If thou knowest the Black Priest, thou canst not be ignorant of the terrors which attend his presence, and that it were safer to pass a broad jest in the holy House of Loretto than where he shows himself."

So saying, and as if desirous of avoiding further discourse, he withdrew to a distance from Philipson.

At the same moment the landlord again appeared, and, with more of the usual manners of a publican than he had hitherto exhibited, commanded his waiter, Geoffrey, to hand round to the company a sleeping-drink, or pillow-cup of distilled water, mingled with spices, which was indeed as good as Philipson himself had ever tasted. John Mengs, in the meanwhile, with somewhat of more deference, expressed to his guests a hope that his entertainment had given satisfaction; but this was in so careless a manner, and he seemed so conscious of deserving the affirmative which was expressed on all hands, that it became obvious there was very little humility in proposing the question. The old man, Timothy, was in the meantime mustering the guests, and marking with chalk on the bottom of a trencher the reckoning, 24the particulars of which were indicated by certain conventional hieroglyphics, while he showed on another the division of the sum total among the company, and proceeded to collect an equal share of it from each. When the fatal trencher, in which each man paid down his money, approached the jolly friar, his countenance seemed to be somewhat changed. He cast a piteous look towards Philipson, as the person from whom he had the most hope of relief; and our merchant, though displeased with the manner in which he had held back from his confidence, yet not unwilling in a strange country to incur a little expense, in the hope of making a useful acquaintance, discharged the mendicant's score as well as his own. The poor friar paid his thanks in many a blessing in good German and bad Latin, but the host cut them short; for, approaching Philipson with a candle in his hand, he offered his own services to show him where he might sleep, and even had the condescension to carry his mail, or portmanteau, with his own lordly hands.

"You take too much trouble, mine host," said the merchant, somewhat surprised at the change in the manner of John Mengs, who had hitherto contradicted him at every word.

"I cannot take too much pains for a guest," was the reply, "whom my venerable friend, the Priest of St. Paul's, hath especially recommended to my charge."

He then opened the door of a small bedroom, prepared for the occupation of a guest, and said to Philipson,—"Here you may rest till to-morrow at what hour you will, and for as many days more as you incline. The key will secure your wares 25against theft or pillage of any kind. I do not this for every one; for, if my guests were every one to have a bed to himself, the next thing they would demand might be a separate table; and then there would be an end of the good old German customs, and we should be as foppish and frivolous as our neighbours."

He placed the portmanteau on the floor, and seemed about to leave the apartment, when, turning about, he began a sort of apology for the rudeness of his former behaviour.

"I trust there is no misunderstanding between us, my worthy guest. You might as well expect to see one of our bears come aloft and do tricks like a jackanapes, as one of us stubborn old Germans play the feats of a French or an Italian host. Yet I pray you to note, that if our behaviour is rude our charges are honest, and our articles what they profess to be. We do not expect to make Moselle pass for Rhenish, by dint of a bow and a grin, nor will we sauce your mess with poison, like the wily Italian, and call you all the time *Illustrissimo* and *Magnifico*."

He seemed in these words to have exhausted his rhetoric, for, when they were spoken, he turned abruptly and left the apartment.

Philipson was thus deprived of another opportunity to inquire who or what this ecclesiastic could be, that had exercised such influence on all who approached him. He felt, indeed, no desire to prolong a conference with John Mengs, though he had laid aside in such a considerable degree his rude and repulsive manners; yet he longed to know who this man could be, who had power with a word to turn aside the daggers of Alsatian banditti, 26habituated as they were, like most borderers, to robbery and pillage, and to change into civility the proverbial rudeness of a German innkeeper. Such were the reflections of Philipson, as he doffed his clothes to take his much-needed repose, after a day of fatigue, danger, and difficulty, on the pallet afforded by the hospitality of the Golden Fleece, in the Rhein-Thal.27

CHAPTER II.

Macbeth. How now, ye secret, black, and midnight hags, What is't ye do?

Witches. A deed without a name.

Macbeth.

We have said in the conclusion of the last chapter, that, after a day of unwonted fatigue and extraordinary excitement, the merchant, Philipson, naturally expected to forget so many agitating passages in that deep and profound repose which is at once the consequence and the cure of extreme exhaustion. But he was no sooner laid on his lowly pallet than he felt that the bodily machine, over-laboured by so much exercise, was little disposed to the charms of sleep. The mind had been too much excited, the body was far too feverish, to suffer him to partake of needful rest. His anxiety about the safety of his son, his conjectures concerning the issue of his mission to the Duke of Burgundy, and a thousand other thoughts which recalled past events, or speculated on those which were to come, rushed upon his mind like the waves of a perturbed sea, and prevented all tendency to repose. He had been in bed about an hour, and sleep had not yet approached his couch, when he felt that the pallet on which he lay was sinking below him, and that he was in the act of descending along with it he knew not whither. The sound of ropes and pulleys was also indistinctly heard, though every caution had been taken 28to make them run smooth; and the traveller, by feeling around him, became sensible that he and the bed on which he lay had been spread upon a large trap-door, which was capable of being let down into the vaults, or apartments beneath.

Philipson felt fear in circumstances so well qualified to produce it; for how could he hope a safe termination to an adventure which had begun so strangely? But his apprehensions were those of a brave, ready-witted man, who, even in the extremity of danger, which appeared to surround him, preserved his presence of mind. His descent seemed to be cautiously managed, and he held himself in readiness to start to his feet and defend himself, as soon as he should be once more upon firm ground. Although somewhat advanced in years, he was a man of great personal vigour and activity, and unless taken at advantage, which no doubt was at present much to be apprehended, he was likely to make a formidable defence. His plan of resistance, however, had been anticipated. He no sooner reached the bottom of the vault, down to which he was lowered, than two men, who had been waiting there till the operation was completed, laid hands on him from either side, and forcibly preventing him from starting up as he intended, cast a rope over his arms, and made him a prisoner as effectually as when he was in the dungeons of La Ferette. He was obliged, therefore, to remain passive and unresisting, and await the termination of this formidable adventure. Secured as he was, he could only turn his head from one side to the other; and it was with joy that he at length saw lights twinkle, but they appeared at a great distance from him.29

From the irregular manner in which these scattered lights advanced, sometimes keeping a straight line, sometimes mixing and crossing each other, it might be inferred that the subterranean vault in which they appeared was of very considerable extent. Their number also increased; and as they collected more together, Philipson could perceive that the lights proceeded from many torches, borne by men muffled in black cloaks, like mourners at a funeral, or the Black Friars of St. Francis's Order, wearing their cowls drawn over their heads, so as to conceal their features. They appeared anxiously engaged in measuring off a portion of the apartment; and, while occupied in that employment, they sang, in the ancient German language, rhymes more rude than Philipson could well understand, but which may be imitated thus:—

Measurers of good and evil,
Bring the square, the line, the level,—
Rear the altar, dig the trench,
Blood both stone and ditch shall drench.
Cubits six, from end to end,
Must the fatal bench extend,—
Cubits six, from side to side,

Judge and culprit must divide.
On the east the Court assembles,
On the west the Accused trembles—
Answer, brethren, all and one,
Is the ritual rightly done?

A deep chorus seemed to reply to the question. Many voices joined in it, as well of persons already in the subterranean vault as of others who as yet remained without in various galleries and passages which communicated with it, and whom Philipson now presumed to be very numerous. The answer chanted ran as follows:—30

On life and soul, on blood and bone,
One for all, and all for one,
We warrant this is rightly done.
The original strain was then renewed in the same manner as before—

How wears the night?—Doth morning shine
In early radiance on the Rhine?
What music floats upon his tide?
Do birds the tardy morning chide?
Brethren, look out from hill and height,
And answer true, how wears the night?

The answer was returned, though less loud than at first, and it seemed that those by whom the reply was given were at a much greater distance than before; yet the words were distinctly heard.

The night is old; on Rhine's broad breast
Glance drowsy stars which long to rest.
No beams are twinkling in the east.
There is a voice upon the flood,
The stern still call of blood for blood;
'Tis time we listen the behest.

The chorus replied, with many additional voices—
Up, then, up! When day's at rest,
'Tis time that such as we are watchers;
Rise to judgment, brethren, rise!
Vengeance knows not sleepy eyes,
He and night are matchers.

The nature of the verses soon led Philipson to comprehend that he was in presence of the Initiated, or the Wise Men; names which were applied to the celebrated Judges of the Secret Tribunal, which continued at that period to subsist in Suabia, Franconia, and other districts of the east of Germany, which was called, perhaps from the frightful and frequent occurrence of executions by command of those invisible judges, the Red Land. Philipson had often heard that the seat of a Free Count, or chief of the Secret Tribunal, was secretly instituted even on the left bank of the Rhine, and that it maintained itself in Alsace, with the usual tenacity of those secret societies, though Duke Charles of Burgundy had expressed a desire to discover and discourage its influence so far as was possible, without exposing himself to danger from the thousands of poniards which that mysterious tribunal could put in activity against his own life;—an awful means of defence, which for a long time rendered it extremely hazardous for the sovereigns of Germany, and even the Emperors themselves, to put down by authority those singular associations.

So soon as this explanation flashed on the mind of Philipson, it gave some clue to the character and condition of the Black Priest of St. Paul's. Supposing him to be a president, or chief official of the secret association, there was little wonder that he should confide so much in the inviolability of his terrible office as to propose vindicating the execution of De Hagenbach; that his presence should surprise Bartholomew, whom he had power to have judged and executed upon the spot; and that his mere appearance at supper on the preceding evening should have appalled the guests; for though everything about the institution, its proceedings and its officers, was preserved in as much obscurity as is now practised in free-masonry, yet the secret was not so absolutely well kept as to prevent certain individuals from being guessed or hinted at as men initiated and intrusted with high authority by the Vehme-gericht, or tribunal of the bounds. When such suspicion attached to an individual, his secret power, and supposed acquaintance with all guilt, however secret, which was committed within the society in which he was conversant, made him at once the dread and hatred of every one who looked on him; and he enjoyed a high degree of personal respect, on the same terms on which it would have been yielded to a powerful enchanter, or a dreaded genie. In conversing with such a person, it was especially necessary to abstain from all questions alluding, however remotely, to the office which he bore in the Secret Tribunal; and, indeed, to testify the least curiosity upon a subject so solemn and mysterious was sure to occasion some misfortune to the inquisitive person.

All these things rushed at once upon the mind of the Englishman, who felt that he had fallen into the hands of an unsparing tribunal, whose proceedings were so much dreaded by those who resided within the circle of their power, that the friendless stranger must stand a poor chance of receiving justice at their hands, whatever might be his consciousness of innocence. While Philipson made this melancholy reflection, he resolved, at the same time, not to forsake his own cause, but defend himself as he best might; conscious as he was that these terrible and irresponsible judges were nevertheless governed by certain rules of right and wrong, which formed a check on the rigours of their extraordinary code.

He lay, therefore, devising the best means of obviating the present danger, while the persons whom he beheld glimmered before him, less like distinct and individual forms than like the phantoms of a fever, or the phantasmagoria with which a disease of the optic nerves has been known to people a sick man's chamber. At length they assembled in the centre of the apartment where they had first appeared, and seemed to arrange themselves into form and order. A great number of black torches were successively lighted, and the scene became distinctly visible. In the centre of the hall, Philipson could now perceive one of the altars which are sometimes to be found in ancient subterranean chapels. But we must pause, in order briefly to describe, not the appearance only, but the nature and constitution, of this terrible court.

Behind the altar, which seemed to be the central point, on which all eyes were bent, there were placed in parallel lines two benches covered with black cloth. Each was occupied by a number of persons, who seemed assembled as judges; but those who held the foremost bench were fewer, and appeared of a rank superior to those who crowded the seat most remote from the altar. The first seemed to be all men of some consequence, priests high in their order, knights, or noblemen; and notwithstanding an appearance of equality which seemed to pervade this singular institution, much more weight was laid upon their opinion, or testimonies. They were called Free Knights, Counts, or whatever title they might bear, while the inferior class of the judges were only termed Free and worthy Burghers. For it must be observed, that the Vehmique Institution,^[1] which was the name that it commonly bore, although its power consisted in a wide system of espionage, and the tyrannical application of force which acted upon it, was yet (so rude were the ideas of enforcing public law) accounted to confer a privilege on the country in which it was received, and only freemen were allowed to experience its influence. Serfs and peasants could not have a place among the Free Judges, their assessors, or assistants; for there was in this assembly even some idea of trying the culprit by his peers.

Besides the dignitaries who occupied the benches, there were others who stood around, and seemed to guard the various entrances to the hall of judgment, or, standing behind the seats on which their superiors were ranged, looked prepared to execute their commands. These were members of the order, though not of the highest ranks. Schöppen is the name generally assigned to them, signifying officials, or sergeants of the Vehmique court, whose doom they stood sworn to enforce, through good report and bad report, against their own nearest and most beloved, as well as in cases of ordinary malefactors.

The Schöppen, or Scabini, as they were termed in Latin, had another horrible duty to perform—that, namely, of denouncing to the tribunal whatever came under their observation, that might be construed as an offence falling under its cognisance; or, in their language, a crime against the Vehme. This duty extended to the judges as well as to the assistants, and was to be discharged without respect of persons; so that, to know, and wilfully conceal, the guilt of a mother or brother, inferred, on the part of the unfaithful official, the same penalty as if he himself had committed the crime which his silence screened from punishment. Such an institution could only prevail at a time when ordinary means of justice were excluded by the hand of power, and when, in order to bring the guilty to punishment, it required all the influence and authority of such a confederacy. In no other country than one exposed to every species of feudal tyranny, and deprived of every ordinary mode of obtaining justice or redress, could such a system have taken root and flourished.

We must now return to the brave Englishman, who, though feeling all the danger he encountered from so tremendous a tribunal, maintained nevertheless a dignified and unaltered composure.

The meeting being assembled, a coil of ropes, and a naked sword, the well-known signals and emblems of Vehmique authority, were deposited on the altar; where the sword, from its being usually straight, with a cross handle, was considered as representing the blessed emblem of Christian Redemption, and the cord as indicating the right of criminal jurisdiction, and capital punishment. Then the President of the meeting, who occupied the centre seat on the foremost bench, arose, and laying his hand on the symbols, pronounced aloud the formula expressive of the duty of the tribunal, which all the inferior judges and assistants repeated after him, in deep and hollow murmurs.

"I swear by the Holy Trinity, to aid and co-operate, without relaxation, in the things belonging to the Holy Vehme, to defend its doctrines and institutions against father and mother, brother and sister, wife and children; against fire, water, earth, and air; against all that the sun enlightens; against all that the dew moistens; against all created things of heaven and earth, or the waters under the earth; and I swear to give information to this holy judicature, of all that I know to be true, or hear repeated by credible testimony, which, by the rules of the Holy Vehme, is deserving of animadversion or punishment; and that I will not cloak, cover, or conceal, such my knowledge, neither for love, friendship, or family affection, nor for gold, silver, or precious stones; neither will I associate with such as are under the sentence of this Sacred Tribunal, by hinting to a culprit his danger, or advising him to escape, or aiding and supplying him with counsel, or means to that effect; neither will I relieve such culprit with fire, clothes, food, or shelter, though my father should require from me a cup of water in the heat of summer noon, or my brother should request to sit by my fire in the bitterest cold night of winter: And further, I vow and promise to honour this holy association, and do its behests speedily, faithfully, and firmly, in preference to those of any other tribunal whatsoever—so help me God, and His holy Evangelists."

When this oath of office had been taken, the President addressing the assembly, as men who judge in secret and punish in secret, like the Deity, desired them to say, why this "child of the cord"^[2] lay before them, bound and helpless. An individual rose from the more remote bench, and in a voice which, though altered and agitated, Philipson conceived that he recognised, declared himself the accuser, as bound by his oath, of the child of the cord, or prisoner, who lay before them.

"Bring forward the prisoner," said the President, "duly secured, as is the order of our secret law; but not with such severity as may interrupt his attention to the proceedings of the tribunal, or limit his power of hearing and replying."

Six of the assistants immediately dragged forward the pallet and platform of boards on which Philipson lay, and advanced it towards the foot of the altar. This done, each unsheathed his dagger, while two of them unloosed the cords by which the merchant's hands were secured, and admonished him in a whisper, that the slightest attempt to resist or escape would be the signal to stab him dead.

"Arise!" said the President; "listen to the charge to be preferred against you, and believe you shall in us find judges equally just and inflexible."

Philipson, carefully avoiding any gesture which might indicate a desire to escape, raised his body on the lower part of the couch, and remained seated, clothed as he was in his under-vest and *caleçons*, or drawers, so as exactly to face the muffled President of the terrible court. Even in these agitating circumstances, the mind of the undaunted Englishman remained unshaken, and his eyelid did not quiver, nor his heart beat quicker, though he seemed, according to the expression of Scripture, to be a pilgrim in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, beset by numerous snares, and encompassed by total darkness, where light was most necessary for safety.

The President demanded his name, country, and occupation.

"John Philipson," was the reply; "by birth an Englishman, by profession a merchant."

"Have you ever borne any other name and profession?" demanded the Judge.

"I have been a soldier, and, like most others, had then a name by which I was known in war."

"What was that name?"

"I laid it aside when I resigned my sword, and I do not desire again to be known by it. Moreover, I never bore it where your institutions have weight and authority," answered the Englishman.

"Know you before whom you stand?" continued the Judge.

"I may at least guess," replied the merchant.

"Tell your guess, then," continued the interrogator. "Say who we are, and wherefore are you before us?"

"I believe that I am before the Unknown, or Secret Tribunal, which is called Vehme-gericht."

"Then are you aware," answered the Judge, "that you would be safer if you were suspended by the hair over the Abyss of Schaffhausen, or if you lay below an axe, which a thread of silk alone kept back from the fall. What have you done to deserve such a fate?"

"Let those reply by whom I am subjected to it," answered Philipson, with the same composure as before.

"Speak, accuser!" said the President, "to the four quarters of heaven!—To the ears of the free judges of this tribunal, and the faithful executors of their doom!—And to the face of the child of the cord, who denies or conceals his guilt, make good the substance of thine accusation!"

"Most dreaded," answered the accuser, addressing the President, "this man hath entered the Sacred Territory, which is called the Red Land,—a stranger under a disguised name and profession. When he was yet on the eastern side of the Alps, at Turin, in Lombardy, and elsewhere, he at various times spoke of the Holy Tribunal in terms of hatred and contempt, and declared that were he Duke of Burgundy he would not permit it to extend itself from Westphalia, or Suabia, into his dominions. Also I charge him, that, nourishing this malevolent intention against the Holy Tribunal, he who now appears before the bench as child of the cord has intimated his intention to wait upon the court of the Duke of Burgundy, and use his influence with him, which he boasts will prove effectual to stir him up to prohibit the meetings of the Holy Vehme in his dominions, and to inflict on their officers, and the executors of their mandates, the punishment due to robbers and assassins."

"This is a heavy charge, brother!" said the President of the assembly, when the accuser ceased speaking. "How do you purpose to make it good?"

"According to the tenor of those secret statutes the perusal of which is prohibited to all but the initiated," answered the accuser.

"It is well," said the President; "but I ask thee once more, What are those means of proof? You speak to holy and to initiated ears."

"I will prove my charge," said the accuser, "by the confession of the party himself, and by my own oath upon the holy emblems of the Secret Judgment—that is, the steel and the cord."

"It is a legitimate offer of proof," said a member of the aristocratic bench of the assembly; "and it much concerns the safety of the system to which we are bound by such deep oaths—a system handed down to us from the most Christian and holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne, for the conversion of the heathen Saracens,

and punishing such of them as revolted again to their Pagan practices, that such criminals should be looked to. This Duke Charles of Burgundy hath already crowded his army with foreigners, whom he can easily employ against this Sacred Court, more especially with English, a fierce, insular people, wedded to their own usages, and hating those of every other nation. It is not unknown to us, that the Duke hath already encouraged opposition to the officials of the Tribunal in more than one part of his German dominions; and that in consequence, instead of submitting to their doom with reverent resignation, children of the cord have been found bold enough to resist the executioners of the Vehme, striking, wounding, and even slaying those who have received commission to put them to death. This contumacy must be put an end to; and if the accused shall be proved to be one of those by whom such doctrines are harboured and inculcated, I say let the steel and cord do their work on him."

A general murmur seemed to approve what the speaker had said; for all were conscious that the power of the Tribunal depended much more on the opinion of its being deeply and firmly rooted in the general system, than upon any regard or esteem for an institution of which all felt the severity. It followed, that those of the members who enjoyed consequence by means of their station in the ranks of the Vehme saw the necessity of supporting its terrors by occasional examples of severe punishment; and none could be more readily sacrificed than an unknown and wandering foreigner. All this rushed upon Philipson's mind, but did not prevent his making a steady reply to the accusation.

"Gentlemen," he said, "good citizens, burgesses, or by whatever other name you please to be addressed, know, that in my former days I have stood in as great peril as now, and have never turned my heel to save my life. Cords and daggers are not calculated to strike terror into those who have seen swords and lances. My answer to the accusation is, that I am an Englishman, one of a nation accustomed to yield and to receive open-handed and equal justice dealt forth in the broad light of day. I am, however, a traveller, who knows that he has no right to oppose the rules and laws of other nations because they do not resemble those of his own. But this caution can only be called for in lands where the system about which we converse is in full force and operation. If we speak of the institutions of Germany, being at the time in France or Spain, we may, without offence to the country in which they are current, dispute concerning them, as students debate upon a logical thesis in a university. The accuser objects to me, that at Turin, or elsewhere in the north of Italy, I spoke with censure of the institution under which I am now judged. I will not deny that I remember something of the kind; but it was in consequence of the question being in a manner forced upon me by two guests with whom I chanced to find myself at table. I was much and earnestly solicited for an opinion ere I gave one."

"And was that opinion," said the presiding Judge, "favourable or otherwise to the Holy and Secret Vehme-gericht? Let truth rule your tongue—remember, life is short, judgment is eternal!"

"I would not save my life at the expense of a falsehood. My opinion was unfavourable; and I expressed myself thus:—No laws or judicial proceedings can be just or commendable which exist and operate by means of a secret combination. I said, that justice could only live and exist in the open air, and that when she ceased to be public she degenerated into revenge and hatred. I said, that a system of which your own jurists have said, *non frater a fratre, non hospes a hospite, tutus*, was too much adverse to the laws of nature to be connected with or regulated by those of religion."

These words were scarcely uttered, when there burst a murmur from the Judges highly unfavourable to the prisoner,—"He blasphemes the Holy Vehme—Let his mouth be closed for ever!"

"Hear me," said the Englishman, "as you will one day wish to be yourselves heard! I say such were my sentiments, and so I expressed them—I say also, I had a right to express these opinions, whether sound or erroneous, in a neutral country, where this Tribunal neither did, nor could, claim any jurisdiction. My sentiments are still the same. I would avow them if that sword were at my bosom, or that cord around my throat. But I deny that I have ever spoken against the institutions of your Vehme, in a country where it had its course as a national mode of justice. Far more strongly, if possible, do I denounce the absurdity of the falsehood, which represents me, a wandering foreigner, as commissioned to traffic with the Duke of Burgundy about such high matters, or to form a conspiracy for the destruction of a system to which so many seem warmly attached. I never said such a thing, and I never thought it."

"Accuser," said the presiding Judge, "thou hast heard the accused—What is thy reply?"

"The first part of the charge," said the accuser, "he hath confessed in this high presence—namely, that his foul tongue hath basely slandered our holy mysteries; for which he deserves that it should be torn out of his throat. I myself, on my oath of office, will aver, as use and law is, that the rest of the accusation—namely, that which taxes him as having entered into machinations for the destruction of the Vehmique institutions—is as true as those which he has found himself unable to deny."

"In justice," said the Englishman, "the accusation, if not made good by satisfactory proof, ought to be left to the oath of the party accused, instead of permitting the accuser to establish by his own deposition the defects in his own charge."

"Stranger," replied the presiding Judge, "we permit to thy ignorance a longer and more full defence than consists with our usual forms. Know, that the right of sitting among these venerable judges confers on the person of him who enjoys it a sacredness of character which ordinary men cannot attain to. The oath of one of the initiated must counterbalance the most solemn asseveration of every one that is not acquainted with our holy secrets. In the Vehmique court all must be Vehmique. The averment of the Emperor, he being uninitiated, would not have so much weight in our counsels as that of one of the meanest of these officials. The affirmation of the accuser can only be rebutted by the oath of a member of the same Tribunal, being of superior rank."

"Then, God be gracious to me, for I have no trust save in Heaven!" said the Englishman, in solemn accents. "Yet I will not fall without an effort. I call upon thee thyself, dark spirit, who presidest in this most deadly assembly—I call upon myself, to declare on thy faith and honour, whether thou holdest me guilty of what is thus boldly averred by this false calumniator—I call upon thee by thy sacred character—by the name of"—

"Hold!" replied the presiding Judge. "The name by which we are known in open air must not be pronounced in this subterranean judgment-seat."

He then proceeded to address the prisoner and the assembly.—"I, being called on in evidence, declare that the charge against thee is so far true as it is acknowledged by thyself—namely, that thou hast in other lands than the Red Soil^[9] spoken lightly of this holy institution of justice. But I believe in my soul, and will bear witness on my honour, that the rest of the accusation is incredible and false. And this I swear, holding my hand on the dagger and the cord.—What is your judgment, my brethren, upon the case which you have investigated?"

A member of the first-seated and highest class amongst the judges, muffled like the rest, but the tone of whose voice and the stoop of whose person announced him to be more advanced in years than the other two who had before spoken, arose with difficulty, and said with a trembling voice,—

"The child of the cord who is before us has been convicted of folly and rashness in slandering our holy institution. But he spoke his folly to ears which had never heard our sacred laws—He has, therefore, been acquitted, by irrefragable testimony, of combining for the impotent purpose of undermining our power, or stirring up princes against our holy association, for which death were too light a punishment—He hath been foolish, then, but not criminal; and as the holy laws of the Vehme bear no penalty save that of death, I propose for judgment that the child of the cord be restored without injury to society, and to the upper world, having been first duly admonished of his errors."

"Child of the cord," said the presiding Judge, "thou hast heard thy sentence of acquittal. But, as thou desirest to sleep in an unbloody grave, let me warn thee, that the secrets of this night shall remain with thee, as a secret not to be communicated to father nor mother, to spouse, son, or daughter; neither to be spoken aloud nor whispered; to be told in words or written in characters; to be carved or to be painted, or to be otherwise communicated, either directly or by parable and emblem. Obey this behest, and thy life is in surety. Let thy heart then rejoice within thee, but let it rejoice with trembling. Never more let thy vanity persuade thee that thou art secure from the servants and Judges of the Holy Vehme. Though a thousand leagues lie between thee and the Red Land, and thou speakest in that where our power is not known; though thou shouldst be sheltered by thy native island, and defended by thy kindred ocean, yet, even there, I warn thee to cross thyself when thou dost so much as think of the Holy and Invisible Tribunal, and to retain thy thoughts within thine own bosom; for the Avenger may be beside thee, and thou mayst die in thy folly. Go hence, be wise, and let the fear of the Holy Vehme never pass from before thine eyes."

At the concluding words, all the lights were at once extinguished with a hissing noise. Philipson felt once more the grasp of the hands of the officials, to which he resigned himself as the safest course. He was gently prostrated on his pallet-bed, and transported back to the place from which he had been advanced to the foot

of the altar. The cordage was again applied to the platform, and Philipson was sensible that his couch rose with him for a few moments, until a slight shock apprised him that he was again brought to a level with the floor of the chamber in which he had been lodged on the preceding night, or rather morning. He pondered over the events that had passed, in which he was sensible that he owed Heaven thanks for a great deliverance. Fatigue at length prevailed over anxiety, and he fell into a deep and profound sleep, from which he was only awakened by returning light. He resolved on an instant departure from so dangerous a spot, and, without seeing any one of the household but the old ostler, pursued his journey to Strasburg, and reached that city without further accident.⁴⁸

CHAPTER III.

Away with these!—True Wisdom's world will be
Within its own creation, or in thine,
Maternal Nature! for who teems like thee
Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine?
There Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties, streams, and dells—
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells,
From grey but leafy walls, where ruin greenly dwells.
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III.

When Arthur Philipson left his father, to go on board the bark which was to waft him across the Rhine, he took but few precautions for his own subsistence, during a separation of which he calculated the duration to be very brief. Some necessary change of raiment, and a very few pieces of gold, were all which he thought it needful to withdraw from the general stock; the rest of the baggage and money he left with the sumpter-horse, which he concluded his father might need, in order to sustain his character as an English trader. Having embarked with his horse and his slender appointments on board a fishing-skiff, she instantly raised her temporary mast, spread a sail across the yard, and, supported by the force of the wind against the downward power of the current, moved across the river obliquely in the direction of Kirch-hoff, which, as we have said, lies somewhat lower on the river than Hans-Kapelle. ⁴⁹Their passage was so favourable that they reached the opposite side in a few minutes, but not until Arthur, whose eye and thoughts were on the left bank, had seen his father depart from the Chapel of the Ferry, accompanied by two horsemen, whom he readily concluded to be the guide Bartholomew, and some chance traveller who had joined him; but the second of whom was in truth the Black Priest of St. Paul's, as has been already mentioned.

This augmentation of his father's company was, he could not but think, likely to be attended with an increase of his safety, since it was not probable he would suffer a companion to be forced upon him, and one of his own choosing might be a protection, in case his guide should prove treacherous. At any rate, he had to rejoice that he had seen his father depart in safety from the spot where they had reason to apprehend some danger awaited him. He resolved, therefore, to make no stay at Kirch-hoff, but to pursue his way, as fast as possible, towards Strasburg, and rest, when darkness compelled him to stop, in one of the *dorfs*, or villages, which were situated on the German side of the Rhine. At Strasburg, he trusted, with the sanguine spirit of youth, he might again be able to rejoin his father; and if he could not altogether subdue his anxiety on their separation, he fondly nourished the hope that he might meet him in safety. After some short refreshment and repose afforded to his horse, he lost no time in proceeding on his journey down the eastern bank of the broad river.

He was now upon the most interesting side of the Rhine, walled in and repelled as the river is on that shore by the most romantic cliffs, now ⁵⁰mantled with vegetation of the richest hue, tinged with all the variegated colours of autumn; now surmounted by fortresses, over whose gates were displayed the pennons of their proud owners; or studded with hamlets, where the richness of the soil supplied to the poor labourer the food of which the oppressive hand of his superior threatened altogether to deprive him. Every stream which here contributes its waters to the Rhine winds through its own tributary dell, and each valley possesses a varying and separate character, some rich with pastures, cornfields, and vineyards, some frowning with crags and precipices, and other romantic beauties.

The principles of taste were not then explained or analysed as they have been since, in countries where leisure has been found for this investigation. But the feelings arising from so rich a landscape as is displayed by the valley of the Rhine must have been the same in every bosom, from the period when our Englishman took his solitary journey through it, in doubt and danger, till that in which it heard the indignant Childe Harold bid a proud farewell to his native country, in the vain search of a land in which his heart might throb less fiercely.

Arthur enjoyed this scene, although the fading daylight began to remind him that, alone as he was, and travelling with a very valuable charge, it would be matter of prudence to look out for some place of rest during the night. Just as he had formed the resolution of inquiring at the next habitation he should pass, which way he should follow for this purpose, the road he pursued descended into a beautiful amphitheatre filled with ⁵¹large trees, which protected from the heats of summer the delicate and tender herbage of the pasture. A large brook flowed through it, and joined the Rhine. At a short mile up the brook its waters made a crescent round a steep craggy eminence, crowned with flanking walls, and Gothic towers and turrets, enclosing a feudal castle of the first order. A part of the savannah that has been mentioned had been irregularly cultivated for wheat, which had grown a plentiful crop. It was gathered in, but the patches of deep yellow stubble contrasted with the green of the undisturbed pasture land, and with the seared and dark-red foliage of the broad oaks which stretched their arms athwart the level space. There a lad, in a rustic dress, was employed in the task of netting a brood of partridges with the assistance of a trained spaniel; while a young woman, who had the air rather of a domestic in some family of rank than that of an ordinary villager, sat on the stump of a decayed tree, to watch the progress of the amusement. The spaniel, whose duty it was to drive the partridges under the net, was perceptibly disturbed at the approach of the traveller; his attention was divided, and he was obviously in danger of marring the sport, by barking and putting up the covey, when the maiden quitted her seat, and, advancing towards Philipson, requested him, for courtesy, to pass at a greater distance, and not interfere with their amusement.

The traveller willingly complied with her request.

"I will ride, fair damsel," he said, "at whatever distance you please. And allow me, in guerdon, to ask, whether there is convent, castle, or good ⁵²man's house, where a stranger, who is belated and weary, might receive a night's hospitality?"

The girl, whose face he had not yet distinctly seen, seemed to suppress some desire to laugh, as she replied, "Hath not yon castle, think you," pointing to the distant towers, "some corner which might accommodate a stranger in such extremity?"

"Space enough, certainly," said Arthur; "but perhaps little inclination to grant it."

"I myself," said the girl, "being one, and a formidable part of the garrison, will be answerable for your reception. But as you parley with me in such hostile fashion, it is according to martial order that I should put down my visor."

So saying, she concealed her face under one of those riding-masks which at that period women often wore when they went abroad, whether for protecting their complexion or screening themselves from intrusive observation. But ere she could accomplish this operation Arthur had detected the merry countenance of Annette Veilchen, a girl who, though her attendance on Anne of Geierstein was in a menial capacity, was held in high estimation at Geierstein. She was a bold wench, unaccustomed to the distinctions of rank, which were little regarded in the simplicity of the Helvetian hills, and she was ready to laugh, jest, and flirt with the young men of the Landamman's family. This attracted no attention, the mountain manners making little distinction between the degrees of attendant and mistress, further than that the mistress was a young woman who required help, and the maiden one who was in a situation to offer and afford it. This kind of familiarity would perhaps have been dangerous in other lands, but the simplicity ⁵³of Swiss manners, and the turn of Annette's disposition, which was resolute and sensible, though rather bold and free, when compared to the manners of more civilised countries, kept all intercourse betwixt her and the young men of the family in the strict path of honour and innocence.

Arthur himself had paid considerable attention to Annette, being naturally, from his feelings towards Anne of Geierstein, heartily desirous to possess the good graces of her attendant; a point which was easily gained by the attentions of a handsome young man, and the generosity with which he heaped upon her small presents of articles of dress or ornament, which the damsel, however faithful, could find no heart to refuse.

The assurance that he was in Anne's neighbourhood, and that he was likely to pass the night under the same roof, both of which circumstances were intimated by the girl's presence and language, sent the blood in a hastier current through Arthur's veins; for though, since he had crossed the river, he had sometimes nourished hopes of again seeing her who had made so strong an impression on his imagination, yet his understanding had as often told him how slight was the chance of their meeting, and it was even now chilled by the reflection that it could be followed only by the pain of a sudden and final separation. He yielded himself, however, to the prospect of promised pleasure, without attempting to ascertain what was to be its duration or its consequence. Desirous, in the meantime, to hear as much of Anne's circumstances as Annette chose to tell, he resolved not to let that merry maiden perceive that she was known by him, until she chose of her own accord to lay aside her mystery.

While these thoughts passed rapidly through his imagination, Annette bade the lad drop his nets, and directed him that, having taken two of the best-fed partridges from the covey, and carried them into the kitchen, he was to set the rest at liberty.

"I must provide supper," said she to the traveller, "since I am bringing home unexpected company."

Arthur earnestly expressed his hope that his experiencing the hospitality of the castle would occasion no trouble to the inmates, and received satisfactory assurances upon the subject of his scruples.

"I would not willingly be the cause of inconvenience to your mistress," pursued the traveller.

"Look you there," said Annette Veilchen, "I have said nothing of master or mistress, and this poor forlorn traveller has already concluded in his own mind that he is to be harboured in a lady's bower!"

"Why, did you not tell me," said Arthur, somewhat confused at his blunder, "that you were the person of second importance in the place? A damsel, I judged, could only be an officer under a female governor."

"I do not see the justice of the conclusion," replied the maiden. "I have known ladies bear offices of trust in lords' families; nay, and over the lords themselves."

"Am I to understand, fair damsel, that you hold so predominant a situation in the castle which we are now approaching, and of which I pray you to tell me the name?"⁵⁵

"The name of the castle is Arnheim," said Annette.

"Your garrison must be a large one," said Arthur, looking at the extensive building, "if you are able to man such a labyrinth of walls and towers."

"In that point," said Annette, "I must needs own we are very deficient. At present, we rather hide in the castle than inhabit it; and yet it is well enough defended by the reports which frighten every other person who might disturb its seclusion."

"And yet you yourselves dare to reside in it?" said the Englishman, recollecting the tale which had been told by Rudolph Donnerhugel, concerning the character of the Barons of Arnheim, and the final catastrophe of the family.

"Perhaps," replied his guide, "we are too intimate with the cause of such fears to feel ourselves strongly oppressed with them—perhaps we have means of encountering the supposed terrors proper to ourselves—perhaps, and it is not the least likely conjecture, we have no choice of a better place of refuge. Such seems to be your own fate at present, sir, for the tops of the distant hills are gradually losing the lights of the evening; and if you rest not in Arnheim, well contented or not, you are likely to find no safe lodging for many a mile."

As she thus spoke she separated from Arthur, taking, with the fowler who attended her, a very steep but short footpath, which ascended straight up to the site of the castle; at the same time motioning to the young Englishman to follow a horse-track, which, more circuitous, led to the same point, and, though less direct, was considerably more easy.

He soon stood before the south front of Arnheim Castle, which was a much larger building than he had conceived, either from Rudolph's description or from the distant view. It had been erected at many different periods, and a considerable part of the edifice was less in the strict Gothic than in what has been termed the Saracenic style, in which the imagination of the architect is more florid than that which is usually indulged in the North—rich in minarets, cupolas, and similar approximations to Oriental structures. This singular building bore a general appearance of desolation and desertion, but Rudolph had been misinformed when he declared that it had become ruinous. On the contrary, it had been maintained with considerable care; and when it fell into the hands of the Emperor, although no garrison was maintained within its precincts, care was taken to keep the building in repair; and though the prejudices of the country people prevented any one from passing the night within the fearful walls, yet it was regularly visited from time to time by a person having commission from the Imperial Chancery to that effect. The occupation of the domain around the castle was a valuable compensation for this official person's labour, and he took care not to endanger the loss of it by neglecting his duty. Of late this officer had been withdrawn, and now it appeared that the young Baroness of Arnheim had found refuge in the deserted towers of her ancestors.

The Swiss damsel did not leave the youthful traveller time to study particularly the exterior of the castle, or to construe the meaning of emblems and mottoes, seemingly of an Oriental character, with which the outside was inscribed, and which expressed in various modes, more or less directly, the attachment of the builders of this extensive pile to the learning of the Eastern sages. Ere he had time to take more than a general survey of the place, the voice of the Swiss maiden called him to an angle of the wall in which there was a projection, whence a long plank extended over a dry moat, and was connected with a window in which Annette was standing.

"You have forgotten your Swiss lessons already," said she, observing that Arthur went rather timidly about crossing the temporary and precarious drawbridge.

The reflection that Anne, her mistress, might make the same observation, recalled the young traveller to the necessary degree of composure. He passed over the plank with the same *sang froid* with which he had learned to brave the far more terrific bridge beneath the ruinous castle of Geierstein. He had no sooner entered the window than Annette, taking off her mask, bade him welcome to Germany, and to old friends with new names.

"Anne of Geierstein," she said, "is no more; but you will presently see the Lady Baroness of Arnheim, who is extremely like her; and I, who was Annette Veilchen in Switzerland, the servant to a damsel who was not esteemed much greater than myself, am now the young Baroness's waiting-woman, and make everybody of less quality stand back."

"If, in such circumstances," said young Philipson, "you have the influence due to your consequence, let me beseech of you to tell the Baroness, since we must now call her so, that my present intrusion on her is occasioned by my ignorance."

"Away, away!" said the girl, laughing. "I know better what to say in your behalf. You are not the first poor man and pedlar that has got the graces of a great lady; but I warrant you it was not by making humble apologies, and talking of unintentional intrusion. I will tell her of love, which all the Rhine cannot quench, and which has driven you hither, leaving you no other choice than to come or to perish!"

"Nay, but Annette, Annette"——

"Fie on you for a fool,—make a shorter name of it,—cry Anne, Anne! and there will be more prospect of your being answered."

So saying, the wild girl ran out of the room, delighted, as a mountaineer of her description was likely to be, with the thought of having done as she would desire to be done by, in her benevolent exertions to bring two lovers together, when on the eve of inevitable separation.

In this self-approving disposition, Annette sped up a narrow turnpike stair to a closet, or dressing-room, where her young mistress was seated, and exclaimed, with open mouth,—"*Anne of Gei*——, I mean my Lady Baroness, they are come—they are come!"

"The Philipsons?" said Anne, almost breathless as she asked the question.

"Yes—no—" answered the girl; "that is, yes,—for the best of them is come, and that is Arthur."

"What meanest thou, girl? Is not Seignor Philipson, the father, along with his son?"⁵⁹

"Not he, indeed," answered Veilchen, "nor did I ever think of asking about him. He was no friend of mine, nor of any one else, save the old Landamman; and well met they were for a couple of wiseacres, with eternal proverbs in their mouths, and care upon their brows."

"Unkind, inconsiderate girl, what hast thou done?" said Anne of Geierstein. "Did I not warn and charge thee to bring them both hither? and you have brought the young man alone to a place where we are nearly in solitude! What will he—what can he think of me?"

"Why, what should I have done?" said Annette, remaining firm in her argument. "He was alone, and should I have sent him down to the *dorf* to be murdered by the Rhinegrave's Lanzknechts? All is fish, I trow, that comes to their net; and how is he to get through this country, so beset with wandering soldiers, robber barons (I beg your ladyship's pardon), and roguish Italians, flocking to the Duke of Burgundy's standard?—Not to mention the greatest terror of all, that is never in one shape or other absent from one's eye or thought."

"Hush, hush, girl! add not utter madness to the excess of folly; but let us think what is to be done. For our sake, for his own, this unfortunate young man must leave this castle instantly."

"You must take the message yourself, then, Anne—I beg pardon, most noble Baroness;—it may be very fit for a lady of high birth to send such a message, which, indeed, I have heard the Minne-singers tell in their romances; but I am sure it is not a meet one for me, or any frank-hearted Swiss girl, to carry. No more foolery; 60but remember, if you were born Baroness of Arnheim, you have been bred and brought up in the bosom of the Swiss hills, and should conduct yourself like an honest and well-meaning damsel."

"And in what does your wisdom reprehend my folly, good Mademoiselle Annette?" replied the Baroness.

"Ay, marry! now our noble blood stirs in our veins. But remember, gentle my lady, that it was a bargain between us, when I left yonder noble mountains, and the free air that blows over them, to coop myself up in this land of prisons and slaves, that I should speak my mind to you as freely as I did when our heads lay on the same pillow."

"Speak, then," said Anne, studiously averting her face as she prepared to listen; "but beware that you say nothing which it is unfit for me to hear."

"I will speak nature and common-sense; and if your noble ears are not made fit to hear and understand these, the fault lies in them, and not in my tongue. Look you, you have saved this youth from two great dangers—one at the earth-shoot at Geierstein, the other this very day, when his life was beset. A handsome young man he is, well spoken, and well qualified to gain deservedly a lady's favour. Before you saw him, the Swiss youth were at least not odious to you. You danced with them,—you jested with them,—you were the general object of their admiration,—and, as you well know, you might have had your choice through the Canton—Why, I think it possible a little urgency might have brought you to think of Rudolph Donnerhugel as your mate." 61

"Never, wench, never!" exclaimed Anne.

"Be not so very positive, my lady. Had he recommended himself to the uncle in the first place, I think, in my poor sentiment, he might at some lucky moment have carried the niece. But since we have known this young Englishman, it has been little less than contemning, despising, and something like hating, all the men whom you could endure well enough before."

"Well, well," said Anne, "I will detest and hate thee more than any of them, unless you bring your matters to an end."

"Softly, noble lady, fair and easy go far. All this argues you love the young man, and let those say that you are wrong who think there is anything wonderful in the matter. There is much to justify you, and nothing that I know against it."

"What, foolish girl! Remember my birth forbids me to love a mean man—my condition to love a poor man—my father's commands to love one whose addresses are without his consent—above all, my maidenly pride forbids me fixing my affections on one who cares not for me—nay, perhaps, is prejudiced against me by appearances."

"Here is a fine homily!" said Annette; "but I can clear every point of it as easily as Father Francis does his text in a holiday sermon. Your birth is a silly dream, which you have only learned to value within these two or three days, when, having come to German soil, some of the old German weed, usually called family pride, has begun to germinate in your heart. Think of such folly as you thought when you lived at Geierstein—that is, during all the rational part of your life, 62and this great terrible prejudice will sink into nothing. By condition, I conceive you mean estate. But Philipson's father, who is the most free-hearted of men, will surely give his son as many zechins as will stock a mountain farm. You have firewood for the cutting, and land for the occupying, since you are surely entitled to part of Geierstein, and gladly will your uncle put you in possession of it. You can manage the dairy, Arthur can shoot, hunt, fish, plough, harrow, and reap."

Anne of Geierstein shook her head, as if she greatly doubted her lover's skill in the last of the accomplishments enumerated.

"Well, well, he can learn, then," said Annette Veilchen; "and you will only live the harder the first year or so. Besides, Sigismund Biederman will aid him willingly, and he is a very horse at labour; and I know another besides, who is a friend"——

"Of thine own, I warrant," quoth the young Baroness.

"Marry, it is my poor friend Louis Sprenger; and I'll never be so false-hearted as to deny my bachelor."

"Well, well, but what is to be the end of all this?" said the Baroness, impatiently.

"The end of it, in my opinion," said Annette, "is very simple. Here are priests and prayer-books within a mile—go down to the parlour, speak your mind to your lover, or hear him speak his mind to you; join hands, go quietly back to Geierstein in the character of man and wife, and get everything ready to receive your uncle on his return. This is the way that a plain Swiss 63wench would cut off the romance of a German Baroness"——

"And break the heart of her father," said the young lady, with a sigh.

"It is more tough than you are aware of," replied Annette. "He hath not lived without you so long but that he will be able to spare you for the rest of his life, a great deal more easily than you, with all your new-fangled ideas of quality, will be able to endure his schemes of wealth and ambition, which will aim at making you the wife of some illustrious Count, like De Hagenbach, whom we saw not long since make such an edifying end, to the great example of all Robber-Chivalry upon the Rhine."

"Thy plan is naught, wench; a childish vision of a girl who never knew more of life than she has heard told over her milking-pail. Remember that my uncle entertains the highest ideas of family discipline, and that to act contrary to my father's will would destroy us in his good opinion. Why else am I here? Wherefore has he resigned his guardianship? And why am I obliged to change the habits that are dear to me, and assume the manners of a people that are strange, and therefore unpleasing to me?"

"Your uncle," said Annette firmly, "is Landamman of the Canton of Unterwalden; respects its freedom, and is the sworn protector of its laws, of which, when you, a denizen of the Confederacy, claim the protection, he cannot refuse it to you."

"Even then," said the young Baroness, "I should forfeit his good opinion, his more than paternal affection; but it is needless to dwell upon this. Know, that although I could have loved 64the young man, whom I will not deny to be as amiable as your partiality paints him—know,"—she hesitated for a moment,— "that he has never spoken a word to me on such a subject as you, without knowing either his sentiments or mine, would intrude on my consideration."

"Is it possible?" answered Annette. "I thought—I believed, though I have never pressed on your confidence—that you must—attached as you were to each other—have spoken together, like true maid and true bachelor, before now. I have done wrong, when I thought to do for the best.—Is it possible!—such things have been heard of even in our canton—is it possible he can have harboured so unutterably base purposes, as that Martin of Brisach, who made love to Adela of the Sundgau, enticed her to folly—the thing, though almost incredible, is true—fled—fled from the country and boasted of his villany, till her cousin Raymund silenced for ever his infamous triumph, by beating his brains out with his club, even in the very street of the villain's native town? By the Holy Mother of Einsiedlen! could I suspect this Englishman of meditating such treason, I would saw the plank across the moat till a fly's weight would break it, and it should be at six fathom deep that he should abye the perfidy which dared to meditate dishonour against an adopted daughter of Switzerland!"

As Annette Veilchen spoke, all the fire of her mountain courage flashed from her eyes, and she listened reluctantly while Anne of Geierstein endeavoured to obliterate the dangerous impression which her former words had impressed on her simple but faithful attendant. 65

"On my word"—she said,—“on my soul—you do Arthur Philipson injustice—foul injustice, in intimating such a suspicion;—his conduct towards me has ever been upright and honourable—a friend to a friend—a brother to a sister—could not, in all he has done and said, have been more respectful, more anxiously affectionate, more undeviatingly candid. In our frequent interviews and intercourse he has indeed seemed very kind—very attached. But had I been disposed—at times I may have been too much so—to listen to him with endurance,”—the young lady here put her hand on her forehead, but the tears streamed through her slender fingers,—“he has never spoken of any love—any preference;—if he indeed entertains any, some obstacle, insurmountable on his part, has interfered to prevent him.”

"Obstacle?" replied the Swiss damsel. "Ay, doubtless—some childish bashfulness—some foolish idea about your birth being so high above his own—some dream of modesty pushed to extremity, which considers as impenetrable the ice of a spring frost. This delusion may be broken by a moment's encouragement, and I will take the task on myself, to spare your blushes, my dearest Anne."

"No, no; for Heaven's sake, no, Veilchen!" answered the Baroness, to whom Annette had so long been a companion and confidant, rather than a domestic. "You cannot anticipate the nature of the obstacles which may prevent his thinking on what you are so desirous to promote. Hear me—My early education, and the instructions of my kind uncle, have taught me to know something more of foreigners and their fashions than I ever could have learned in our happy retirement of Geierstein; I am well-nigh convinced that these Philipsons are of rank, as they are of manners and bearing, far superior to the occupation which they appear to hold. The father is a man of deep observation, of high thought and pretension, and lavish of gifts, far beyond what consists with the utmost liberality of a trader."

"That is true," said Annette. "I will say for myself, that the silver chain he gave me weighs against ten silver crowns, and the cross which Arthur added to it, the day after the long ride we had together up towards Mount Pilatus, is worth, they tell me, as much more. There is not the like of it in the Cantons. Well, what then? They are rich, so are you. So much the better."

"Alas! Annette, they are not only rich, but noble. I am persuaded of this; for I have observed often, that even the father retreated, with an air of quiet and dignified contempt, from discussions with Donnerhugel and others, who, in our plain way, wished to fasten a dispute upon him. And when a rude observation or blunt pleasantry was pointed at the son, his eye flashed, his cheek coloured, and it was only a glance from his father which induced him to repress the retort of no friendly character which rose to his lips."

"You have been a close observer," said Annette. "All this may be true, but I noted it not. But what then, I say once more? If Arthur has some fine noble name in his own country, are not you yourself Baroness of Arnheim? And I will frankly allow it as something of worth, if it smoothes the way to a match, where I think you must look for happiness—I hope so, else I am sure it should have no encouragement from me."

"I do believe so, my faithful Veilchen; but, alas! how can you, in the state of natural freedom in which you have been bred, know, or even dream, of the various restraints which this gilded or golden chain of rank and nobility hangs upon those whom it fetters and encumbers, I fear, as much as it decorates? In every country, the distinction of rank binds men to certain duties. It may carry with it restrictions, which may prevent alliances in foreign countries—it often may prevent them from consulting their inclinations, when they wed in their own. It leads to alliances in which the heart is never consulted, to treaties of marriage, which are often formed when the parties are in the cradle, or in leading strings, but which are not the less binding on them in honour and faith. Such may exist in the present case. These alliances are often blended and mixed up with state policy; and if the interest of England, or what he deems such, should have occasioned the elder Philipson to form such an engagement, Arthur would break his own heart—the heart of any one else—rather than make false his father's word."

"The more shame to them that formed such an engagement!" said Annette. "Well, they talk of England being a free country; but if they can bar young men and women of the natural privilege to call their hands and hearts their own, I would as soon be a German serf.—Well, lady, you are wise, and I am ignorant. But what is to be done? I have brought this young man here, expecting, God knows, a happier issue to your meeting. But it is clear you cannot marry him without his asking you. Now, although I confess that, if I could think him willing to forfeit the hand of the fairest maid of the Cantons, either from want of manly courage to ask it, or from regard to some ridiculous engagement, formed betwixt his father and some other nobleman of their island of noblemen, I would not in either case grudge him a ducking in the moat; yet it is another question, whether we should send him down to be murdered among those cut-throats of the Rhinegrave; and unless we do so, I know not how to get rid of him."

"Then let the boy William give attendance on him here, and do you see to his accommodation. It is best we do not meet."

"I will," said Annette; "yet what am I to say for you? Unhappily, I let him know that you were here."

"Alas, imprudent girl! Yet why should I blame thee," said Anne of Geierstein, "when the imprudence has been so great on my own side? It is myself, who, suffering my imagination to rest too long upon this young man and his merits, have led me into this entanglement. But I will show thee that I can overcome this folly, and I will not seek in my own error a cause for evading the duties of hospitality. Go, Veilchen, get some refreshment ready. Thou shalt sup with us, and thou must not leave us. Thou shalt see me behave as becomes both a German lady and a Swiss maiden. Get me first a candle, however, my girl, for I must wash these tell-tales, my eyes, and arrange my dress."

To Annette this whole explanation had been one scene of astonishment, for, in the simple ideas of love and courtship in which she had been brought up amid the Swiss mountains, she had expected that the two lovers would have taken the first opportunity of the absence of their natural guardians, and have united themselves for ever; and she had even arranged a little secondary plot, in which she herself and Martin Sprenger, her faithful bachelor, were to reside with the young couple as friends and dependants. Silenced, therefore, but not satisfied, by the objections of her young mistress, the zealous Annette retreated murmuring to herself,—“That little hint about her dress is the only natural and sensible word she has said in my hearing. Please God, I will return and help her in the twinkling of an eye. That dressing my mistress is the only part of a waiting-lady's life that I have the least fancy for—it seems so natural for one pretty maiden to set off another—in faith we are but learning to dress ourselves at another time."

And with this sage remark Annette Veilchen tripped down stairs.⁷⁰

CHAPTER IV.

Tell me not of it—I could ne'er abide

The mummery of all that forced civility.

"Pray, seat yourself, my lord." With cringing hams

The speech is spoken, and, with bended knee,

Heard by the smiling courtier.—"Before you, sir?

It must be on the earth then." Hang it all!

The pride which cloaks itself in such poor fashion

Is scarcely fit to swell a beggar's bosom.

Old Play.

Up stairs and down stairs tripped Annette Veilchen, the soul of all that was going on in the only habitable corner of the huge castle of Arnheim. She was equal to every kind of service, and therefore popped her head into the stable to be sure that William attended properly to Arthur's horse, looked into the kitchen to see that the old cook, Marthon, roasted the partridges in due time (an interference for which she received little thanks), rummaged out a flask or two of Rhine wine from the huge Dom Daniel of a cellar, and, finally, just peeped into the parlour to see how Arthur was looking; when, having the satisfaction to see he had in the best manner he could sedulously arranged his person, she assured him that he should shortly see her mistress, who was rather indisposed, yet could not refrain from coming down to see so valued an acquaintance.

Arthur blushed when she spoke thus, and seemed so handsome in the waiting-maid's eye, that she could not help saying to herself, as she went to her young lady's room,—“Well, if true love cannot manage to bring that couple together, in spite of all the obstacles that they stand boggling at, I will never believe that there is such a thing as true love in the world, let Martin Sprenger say what he will, and swear to it on the Gospels."

When she reached the young Baroness's apartment, she found, to her surprise, that, instead of having put on what finery she possessed, that young lady's choice had preferred the same simple kirtle which she had worn during the first day that Arthur had dined at Geierstein. Annette looked at first puzzled and doubtful, then suddenly recognised the good taste which had dictated the attire, and exclaimed,—“You are right—you are right—it is best to meet him as a free-hearted Swiss maiden.”

Anne also smiled as she replied,—“But, at the same time, in the walls of Arnheim, I must appear in some respect as the daughter of my father.—Here, girl, aid me to put this gem upon the riband which binds my hair.”

It was an aigrette, or plume, composed of two feathers of a vulture, fastened together by an opal, which changed to the changing light with a variability which enchanted the Swiss damsel, who had never seen anything resembling it in her life.

“Now, Baroness Anne,” said she, “if that pretty thing be really worn as a sign of your rank, it is the only thing belonging to your dignity that I should ever think of coveting; for it doth shimmer and change colour after a most wonderful fashion, even something like one's own cheek when one is fluttered.”⁷²

“Alas, Annette!” said the Baroness, passing her hand across her eyes, “of all the gauds which the females of my house have owned, this perhaps hath been the most fatal to its possessors.”

“And why then wear it?” said Annette. “Why wear it now, of all days in the year?”

“Because it best reminds me of my duty to my father and family. And now, girl, look thou sit with us at table, and leave not the apartment; and see thou fly not to and fro to help thyself or others with anything on the board, but remain quiet and seated till William helps you to what you have occasion for.”

“Well, that is a gentle fashion, which I like well enough,” said Annette, “and William serves us so debonairly, that it is a joy to see him; yet, ever and anon, I feel as I were not Annette Veilchen herself, but only Annette Veilchen's picture, since I can neither rise, sit down, run about, nor stand still, without breaking some rule of courtly breeding. It is not so, I dare say, with you, who are always mannerly.”

“Less courtly than thou seemest to think,” said the high-born maiden; “but I feel the restraint more on the greensward, and under heaven's free air, than when I undergo it closed within the walls of an apartment.”

“Ah, true—the dancing,” said Annette; “that was something to be sorry for indeed.”

“But most am I sorry, Annette, that I cannot tell whether I act precisely right or wrong in seeing this young man, though it must be for the last time. Were my father to arrive?—Were Ital Schreckenwald to return?”

“Your father is too deeply engaged on some of his dark and mystic errands,” said the flippant Swiss; “sailed to the mountains of the Brockenberg, where witches hold their sabbath, or gone on a hunting-party with the Wild Huntsman.”

“Fie, Annette, how dare you talk thus of my father?”

“Why, I know little of him personally,” said the damsel, “and you yourself do not know much more. And how should that be false which all men say is true?”

“Why, fool, what do they say?”

“Why, that the Count is a wizard,—that your grandmother was a will-of-wisp, and old Ital Schreckenwald a born devil incarnate; and there is some truth in that, whatever comes of the rest.”

“Where is he?”

“Gone down to spend the night in the village, to see the Rhinegrave's men quartered, and keep them in some order, if possible; for the soldiers are disappointed of pay which they had been promised; and when this happens, nothing resembles a lanzknecht except a chafed bear.”

“Go we down then, girl; it is perhaps the last night which we may spend, for years, with a certain degree of freedom.”

I will not pretend to describe the marked embarrassment with which Arthur Philipson and Anne of Geierstein met; neither lifted their eyes, neither spoke intelligibly, as they greeted each other, and the maiden herself did not blush more deeply than her modest visitor; while the good-humoured Swiss girl, whose ideas of love partook of the freedom of a more Arcadian country and its customs, looked on with eyebrows a little arched, much in wonder, and a little in contempt, ⁷⁴at a couple who, as she might think, acted with such unnatural and constrained reserve. Deep was the reverence and the blush with which Arthur offered his hand to the young lady, and her acceptance of the courtesy had the same character of extreme bashfulness, agitation, and embarrassment. In short, though little or nothing intelligible passed between this very handsome and interesting couple, the interview itself did not on that account lose any interest. Arthur handed the maiden, as was the duty of a gallant of the day, into the next room, where their repast was prepared; and Annette, who watched with singular attention everything which occurred, felt with astonishment that the forms and ceremonies of the higher orders of society had such an influence, even over her free-born mind, as the rites of the Druids over that of the Roman general, when he said, I scorn them, yet they awe me.

“What can have changed them?” said Annette. “When at Geierstein they looked but like another girl and bachelor, only that Anne is so very handsome; but now they move in time and manner as if they were leading a stately pavin, and behave to each other with as much formal respect as if he were Landamman of the Unterwalden, and she the first lady of Berne. 'Tis all very fine, doubtless, but it is not the way that Martin Sprenger makes love.”

Apparently, the circumstances in which each of the young people was placed recalled to them the habits of lofty and somewhat formal courtesy to which they might have been accustomed in former days; and while the Baroness felt it necessary to ⁷⁵observe the strictest decorum, in order to qualify the reception of Arthur into the interior of her retreat, he, on the other hand, endeavoured to show, by the profoundness of his respect, that he was incapable of misusing the kindness with which he had been treated. They placed themselves at table, scrupulously observing the distance which might become a “virtuous gentleman and maid.” The youth William did the service of the entertainment with deftness and courtesy, as one well accustomed to such duty; and Annette, placing herself between them, and endeavouring, as closely as she could, to adhere to the ceremonies which she saw them observe, made practice of the civilities which were expected from the attendant of a baroness. Various, however, were the errors which she committed. Her demeanour in general was that of a greyhound in the slips, ready to start up every moment; and she was only withheld by the recollection that she was to ask for that which she had far more mind to help herself to.

Other points of etiquette were transgressed in their turn, after the repast was over, and the attendant had retired. The waiting damsel often mingled too unceremoniously in the conversation, and could not help calling her mistress by her Christian name of Anne, and, in defiance of all decorum, addressed her, as well as Philipson, with the pronoun *thou*, which then, as well as now, was a dreadful solecism in German politeness. Her blunders were so far fortunate that, by furnishing the young lady and Arthur with a topic foreign to the peculiarities of their own situation, they enabled them to withdraw their attentions from its embarrassments, and to exchange smiles at ⁷⁶poor Annette's expense. She was not long of perceiving this, and half nettled, half availing herself of the apology to speak her mind, said, with considerable spirit, “You have both been very merry, forsooth, at my expense, and all because I wished rather to rise and seek what I wanted, than wait till the poor fellow, who was kept trotting between the board and beaufet, found leisure to bring it to me. You laugh at me now, because I call you by your names, as they were given to you in the blessed church at your christening; and because I say to you *thee* and *thou*, addressing my Juncker and my Yungfrau as I would do if I were on my knees praying to Heaven. But for all your new-world fancies, I can tell you, you are but a couple of children, who do not know your own minds, and are jesting away the only leisure given you to provide for your own happiness. Nay, frown not, my sweet Mistress Baroness; I have looked at Mount Pilatus too often, to fear a gloomy brow.”

“Peace, Annette,” said her mistress, “or quit the room.”

“Were I not more your friend than I am my own,” said the headstrong and undaunted Annette, “I would quit the room, and the castle to boot, and leave you to hold your house here, with your amiable seneschal, Ital Schreckenwald.”

“If not for love, yet for shame, for charity, be silent, or leave the room.”

“Nay,” said Annette, “my bolt is shot, and I have but hinted at what all upon Geierstein Green said, the night when the bow of Buttisholz was bended. You know what the old saw says”——

"Peace! peace, for Heaven's sake, or I must needs fly!" said the young Baroness.⁷⁷

"Nay, then," said Annette, considerably changing her tone, as if afraid that her mistress should actually retire, "if you must fly, necessity must have its course. I know no one who can follow. This mistress of mine, Seignor Arthur, would require for her attendant, not a homely girl of flesh and blood like myself, but a waiting-woman with substance composed of gossamer, and breath supplied by the spirit of ether. Would you believe it—It is seriously held by many, that she partakes of the race of spirits of the elements, which makes her so much more bashful than maidens of this every-day world."

Anne of Geierstein seemed rather glad to lead away the conversation from the turn which her wayward maiden had given to it, and to turn it on more indifferent subjects, though these were still personal to herself.

"Seignor Arthur," she said, "thinks, perhaps, he has some room to nourish some such strange suspicion as your heedless folly expresses, and some fools believe, both in Germany and Switzerland. Confess, Seignor Arthur, you thought strangely of me when I passed your guard upon the bridge of Graffs-lust, on the night last past."

The recollection of the circumstances which had so greatly surprised him at the time so startled Arthur that it was with some difficulty he commanded himself, so as to attempt an answer at all; and what he did say on the occasion was broken and unconnected.

"I did hear, I own—that is, Rudolph Donnerhugel reported—But that I believed that you, gentle lady, were other than a Christian maiden"——

"Nay, if Rudolph were the reporter," said Annette, "you would hear the worst of my lady and her lineage, that is certain. He is one of those prudent personages who depreciate and find fault with the goods he has thoughts of purchasing, in order to deter other offerers. Yes, he told you a fine goblin story, I warrant you, of my lady's grandmother; and truly, it so happened, that the circumstances of the case gave, I dare say, some colour in your eyes to"——

"Not so, Annette," answered Arthur; "whatever might be said of your lady that sounded uncouth and strange, fell to the ground as incredible."

"Not quite so much so, I fancy," interrupted Annette, without heeding sign or frown. "I strongly suspect I should have had much more trouble in dragging you hither to this castle, had you known you were approaching the haunt of the Nymph of the Fire, the Salamander, as they call her, not to mention the shock of again seeing the descendant of that Maiden of the Fiery Mantle."

"Peace, once more, Annette," said her mistress; "since Fate has occasioned this meeting, let us not neglect the opportunity to disabuse our English friend of the absurd report he has listened to, with doubt and wonder perhaps, but not with absolute incredulity."

"Seignor Arthur Philipson," she proceeded, "it is true my grandfather, by the mother's side, Baron Herman of Arnheim, was a man of great knowledge in abstruse sciences. He was also a presiding judge of a tribunal of which you must have heard, called the Holy Vehme. One night a stranger, closely pursued by the agents of that body, which" (crossing herself) "it is not safe even to name, arrived at the castle and craved his protection, and the rights of hospitality. My grandfather, finding the advance which the stranger had made to the rank of Adept, gave him his protection, and became bail to deliver him to answer the charge against him, for a year and a day, which delay he was, it seems, entitled to require on his behalf. They studied together during that term, and pushed their researches into the mysteries of nature, as far, in all probability, as men have the power of urging them. When the fatal day drew nigh on which the guest must part from his host, he asked permission to bring his daughter to the castle, that they might exchange a last farewell. She was introduced with much secrecy, and after some days, finding that her father's fate was so uncertain, the Baron, with the sage's consent, agreed to give the forlorn maiden refuge in his castle, hoping to obtain from her some additional information concerning the languages and the wisdom of the East. Dannischemend, her father, left this castle, to go to render himself up to the Vehme-gericht at Fulda. The result is unknown; perhaps he was saved by Baron Arnheim's testimony, perhaps he was given up to the steel and the cord. On such matters, who dare speak?

"The fair Persian became the wife of her guardian and protector. Amid many excellences, she had one peculiarity allied to imprudence. She availed herself of her foreign dress and manners, as well as of a beauty which was said to have been marvellous, and an agility seldom equalled, to impose upon and terrify the ignorant German ladies, who, hearing her speak Persian and Arabic, were already disposed to consider her as over closely connected with unlawful arts. She was of a fanciful and imaginative disposition, and delighted to place herself in such colours and circumstances as might confirm their most ridiculous suspicions, which she considered only as matter of sport. There was no end to the stories to which she gave rise. Her first appearance in the castle was said to be highly picturesque, and to have inferred something of the marvellous. With the levity of a child, she had some childish passions, and while she encouraged the growth and circulation of the most extraordinary legends amongst some of the neighbourhood, she entered into disputes with persons of her own quality concerning rank and precedence, on which the ladies of Westphalia have at all times set great store. This cost her her life; for, on the morning of the christening of my poor mother, the Baroness of Arnheim died suddenly, even while a splendid company was assembled in the castle chapel to witness the ceremony. It was believed that she died of poison, administered by the Baroness Steinfeldt, with whom she was engaged in a bitter quarrel, entered into chiefly on behalf of her friend and companion, the Countess Waldstetten."

"And the opal gem?—and the sprinkling with water?" said Arthur Philipson.

"Ah!" replied the young Baroness, "I see you desire to hear the real truth of my family history, of which you have yet learned only the romantic legend.—The sprinkling of water was necessarily had recourse to, on my ancestress's first swoon. As for the opal, I have heard that it did indeed grow pale, but only because it is said to be the nature of that noble gem, on the approach of poison. Some part of the quarrel with the Baroness Steinfeldt was about the right of the Persian maiden to wear this stone, which an ancestor of my family won in battle from the Soldan of Trebizond. All these things were confused in popular tradition, and the real facts turned into a fairy tale."

"But you have said nothing," suggested Arthur Philipson, "on—on"——

"On what?" said his hostess.

"On your appearance last night."

"Is it possible," said she, "that a man of sense, and an Englishman, cannot guess at the explanation which I have to give, though not, perhaps, very distinctly? My father, you are aware, has been a busy man in a disturbed country, and has incurred the hatred of many powerful persons. He is, therefore, obliged to move in secret, and avoid unnecessary observation. He was, besides, averse to meet his brother, the Landamman. I was therefore told, on our entering Germany, that I was to expect a signal where and when to join him,—the token was to be a small crucifix of bronze, which had belonged to my poor mother. In my apartment at Graffs-lust I found the token, with a note from my father, making me acquainted with a secret passage proper to such places, which, though it had the appearance of being blocked up, was in fact very slightly barricaded. By this I was instructed to pass to the gate, make my escape into the woods, and meet my father at a place appointed there."

"A wild and perilous adventure," said Arthur.

"I have never been so much shocked," continued the maiden, "as at receiving this summons, compelling me to steal away from my kind and affectionate uncle, and go I knew not whither. Yet compliance was absolutely necessary. The place of meeting was plainly pointed out. A midnight walk, in the neighbourhood of protection, was to me a trifle; but the precaution of posting sentinels at the gate might have interfered with my purpose, had I not mentioned it to some of my elder cousins, the Biedermans, who readily agreed to let me pass and repass unquestioned. But you know my cousins; honest and kind-hearted, they are of a rude way of thinking, and as incapable of feeling a generous delicacy as—some other persons."—(Here there was a glance towards Annette Veilchen.)—"They exacted from me, that I should conceal myself and my purpose from Sigismund; and as they are always making sport with the simple youth, they insisted that I should pass him in such a manner as might induce him to believe that I was a spiritual apparition, and out of his terrors for supernatural beings they expected to have much amusement. I was obliged to secure their connivance at my escape on their own terms; and, indeed, I was too much grieved at the prospect of quitting my kind uncle to think much of anything else. Yet my surprise was considerable, when, contrary to expectation, I found you on the bridge as sentinel, instead of my cousin Sigismund. Your own ideas I ask not for."

"They were those of a fool," said Arthur, "of a thrice-sodden fool. Had I been aught else, I would have offered my escort. My sword"——

"I could not have accepted your protection," said Anne, calmly. "My mission was in every respect a secret one. I met my father—some intercourse had taken place betwixt him and Rudolph Donnerhugel, which induced him to alter his purpose of carrying me away with him last night. I joined him, however, early this morning, while Annette acted for a time my part amongst the Swiss pilgrims. My father desired that it should not be known when or with whom I left my uncle and his escort. I need scarce remind you, that I saw you in the dungeon."

"You were the preserver of my life," said the youth,—*"the restorer of my liberty."*

"Ask me not the reason of my silence. I was then acting under the agency of others, not under mine own. Your escape was effected, in order to establish a communication betwixt the Swiss without the fortress and the soldiers within. After the alarm at La Ferette, I learned from Sigismund Biederman that a party of banditti were pursuing your father and you, with a view to pillage and robbery. My father had furnished me with the means of changing Anne of Geierstein into a German maiden of quality. I set out instantly, and glad I am to have given you a hint which might free you from danger."

"But my father?" said Arthur.

"I have every reason to hope he is well and safe," answered the young lady. "More than I were eager to protect both you and him—poor Sigismund amongst the first.—And now, my friend, these mysteries explained, it is time we part, and for ever."

"Part!—and for ever!" repeated the youth, in a voice like a dying echo.

"It is our fate," said the maiden. "I appeal to you if it is not your duty—I tell you it is mine. You will depart with early dawn to Strasburg—and—and—we never meet again."

With an ardour of passion which he could not repress, Arthur Philipson threw himself at the feet of the maiden, whose faltering tone had clearly expressed that she felt deeply in uttering the words. She looked round for Annette, but Annette had disappeared at this most critical moment; and her mistress for a second or two was not perhaps sorry for her absence.

"Rise," she said, "Arthur—rise. You must not give way to feelings that might be fatal to yourself and me."

"Hear me, lady, before I bid you adieu, and for ever—the word of a criminal is heard, though he plead the worst cause—I am a belted knight, and the son and heir of an Earl, whose name has been spread throughout England and France, and wherever valour has had fame."

"Alas!" said she, faintly, "I have but too long suspected what you now tell me—Rise, I pray you, rise."

"Never till you hear me," said the youth, seizing one of her hands, which trembled, but hardly could be said to struggle in his grasp.—"Hear me," he said, with the enthusiasm of first love, when the obstacles of bashfulness and diffidence are surmounted,—*"My father and I are—I acknowledge it—bound on a most hazardous and doubtful expedition. You will very soon learn its issue for good or bad. If it succeed, you shall hear of me in my own character—If I fall, I must—I will—I do claim a tear from Anne of Geierstein. If I escape, I have yet a horse, a lance, and a sword; and you shall hear nobly of him whom you have thrice protected from imminent danger."*

"Arise—arise," repeated the maiden, whose tears began to flow fast, as, struggling to raise her lover, they fell thick upon his head and face. "I have heard enough—to listen to more were indeed madness, both for you and myself."

"Yet one single word," added the youth; "while Arthur has a heart, it beats for you—while Arthur can wield an arm, it strikes for you, and in your cause."

Annette now rushed into the room.

"Away, away!" she cried—"Schreckenwald has returned from the village with some horrible tidings, and I fear me he comes this way."

Arthur had started to his feet at the first signal of alarm.

"If there is danger near your lady, Annette, there is at least one faithful friend by her side."

Annette looked anxiously at her mistress.

"But Schreckenwald," she said—"Schreckenwald, your father's steward—his confidant.—Oh, think better of it—I can hide Arthur somewhere."

The noble-minded girl had already resumed her composure, and replied with dignity,—*"I have done nothing,"* she said, "to offend my father. If Schreckenwald be my father's steward, he is my vassal. I hide no guest to conciliate him. Sit down" (addressing Arthur), "and let us receive this man.—Introduce him instantly, Annette, and let us hear his tidings—and bid him remember, that when he speaks to me he addresses his mistress."

Arthur resumed his seat, still more proud of his choice from the noble and fearless spirit displayed by one who had so lately shown herself sensible to the gentlest feelings of the female sex.

Annette, assuming courage from her mistress's dauntless demeanour, clapped her hands together as she left the room, saying, but in a low voice, "I see that after all it is something to be a Baroness, if one can assert her dignity conformingly. How could I be so much frightened for this rude man!"⁸⁷

CHAPTER V.

Affairs that walk

(As they say spirits do) at midnight, have

In them a wilder nature than the business

That seeks dispatch by day.

Henry VIII. Act V.

The approach of the steward was now boldly expected by the little party. Arthur, flattered at once and elevated by the firmness which Anne had shown when this person's arrival was announced, hastily considered the part which he was to act in the approaching scene, and prudently determined to avoid all active and personal interference, till he should observe from the demeanour of Anne that such was likely to be useful or agreeable to her. He resumed his place, therefore, at a distant part of the board, on which their meal had been lately spread, and remained there, determined to act in the manner Anne's behaviour should suggest as most prudent and fitting,—veiling, at the same time, the most acute internal anxiety, by an appearance of that deferential composure, which one of inferior rank adopts when admitted to the presence of a superior. Anne, on her part, seemed to prepare herself for an interview of interest. An air of conscious dignity succeeded the extreme agitation which she had so lately displayed, and, busying herself with some articles of female work, she also seemed to expect with tranquillity the visit to which her attendant was disposed to attach so much alarm.

A step was heard upon the stair, hurried and unequal, as that of some one in confusion as well as haste; the door flew open, and *l'ital* Schreckenwald entered.

This person, with whom the details given to the elder Philipson by the Landammann Biederman have made the reader in some degree acquainted, was a tall, well-made, soldierly looking man. His dress, like that of persons of rank at the period in Germany, was more varied in colour, more cut and ornamented, slashed and jagged, than the habit worn in France and England. The never-failing hawk's feather decked his cap, secured with a medal of gold, which served as a clasp. His doublet was of buff, for defence, but *laid down*, as it was called in the tailor's craft, with rich lace on each seam, and displaying on the breast a golden chain, the emblem of his rank in the Baron's household. He entered with rather a hasty step, and busy and offended look, and said, somewhat rudely, "Why, how now, young lady—wherefore this? Strangers in the castle at this period of night!"

Anne of Geierstein, though she had been long absent from her native country, was not ignorant of its habits and customs, and knew the haughty manner in which all who were noble exerted their authority over their dependants.

"Are you a vassal of Arnheim, *l'ital* Schreckenwald, and do you speak to the Lady of Arnheim in her own castle with an elevated voice, a saucy look, and bonneted withal? Know your place; and, when you have demanded pardon for your insolence, and told your errand in such terms as befit your condition and mine, I may listen to what you have to say."

Schreckenwald's hand, in spite of him, stole to his bonnet, and uncovered his haughty brow.

"Noble lady," he said, in a somewhat milder tone, "excuse me if my haste be unmannerly, but the alarm is instant. The soldiery of the Rhinegrave have mutinied, plucked down the banners of their master, and set up an independent ensign, which they call the pennon of St. Nicholas, under which they declare that they will

maintain peace with God, and war with all the world. This castle cannot escape them, when they consider that the first course to maintain themselves must be to take possession of some place of strength. You must up then, and ride with the very peep of dawn. For the present, they are busy with the wine-skins of the peasants, but when they wake in the morning they will unquestionably march hither; and you may chance to fall into the hands of those who will think of the terrors of the castle of Arnheim as the figments of a fairy tale, and laugh at its mistress's pretensions to honour and respect."

"Is it impossible to make resistance? The castle is strong," said the young lady, "and I am unwilling to leave the house of my fathers without attempting somewhat in our defence."

"Five hundred men," said Schreckenwald, "might garrison Arnheim, battlement and tower. With a less number it were madness to attempt to keep such an extent of walls; and how to get twenty soldiers together, I am sure I know not.—So, having now the truth of the story, let me beseech you to dismiss this guest,—too young, I think, to be the inmate of a lady's bower,—and I will point to him the highest way out of the castle; for this is a strait in which we must all be contented with looking to our own safety."

"And whither is it that you propose to go?" said the Baroness, continuing to maintain, in respect to Ital Schreckenwald, the complete and calm assertion of absolute superiority, to which the seneschal gave way with such marks of impatience as a fiery steed exhibits under the management of a complete cavalier.

"To Strasburg, I propose to go,—that is, if it so please you,—with such slight escort as I can get hastily together by daybreak. I trust we may escape being observed by the mutineers; or, if we fall in with a party of stragglers, I apprehend but little difficulty in forcing my way."

"And wherefore do you prefer Strasburg as a place of asylum?"

"Because I trust we shall there meet your excellency's father, the noble Count Albert of Geierstein."

"It is well," said the young lady.—"You also, I think, Seignor Philipson, spoke of directing your course to Strasburg. If it consist with your convenience, you may avail yourself of the protection of my escort as far as that city, where you expect to meet your father."

It will readily be believed that Arthur cheerfully bowed assent to a proposal which was to prolong their remaining in society together, and might possibly, as his romantic imagination suggested, afford him an opportunity, on a road beset with dangers, to render some service of importance.⁹¹

Ital Schreckenwald attempted to remonstrate.

"Lady!—lady!"—he said, with some marks of impatience.

"Take breath and leisure, Schreckenwald," said Anne, "and you will be more able to express yourself with distinctness, and with respectful propriety."

The impatient vassal muttered an oath betwixt his teeth, and answered with forced civility,—"Permit me to state, that our case requires we should charge ourselves with the care of no one but you. We shall be few enough for your defence, and I cannot permit any stranger to travel with us."

"If," said Arthur, "I conceived that I was to be a useless incumbrance on the retreat of this noble young lady, worlds, Sir Squire, would not induce me to accept her offer. But I am neither child nor woman—I am a full-grown man, and ready to show such good service as manhood may in defence of your lady."

"If we must not challenge your valour and ability, young sir," said Schreckenwald, "who shall answer for your fidelity?"

"To question that elsewhere," said Arthur, "might be dangerous."

But Anne interfered between them. "We must straight to rest, and remain prompt for alarm, perhaps even before the hour of dawn. Schreckenwald, I trust to your care for due watch and ward.—You have men enough at least for that purpose.—And hear and mark—It is my desire and command, that this gentleman be accommodated with lodgings here for this night, and that he travel with us to-morrow. For this I will be responsible ⁹²to my father, and your part is only to obey my commands. I have long had occasion to know both the young man's father and himself, who were ancient guests of my uncle, the Landamman. On the journey you will keep the youth beside you, and use such courtesy to him as your rugged temper will permit."

Ital Schreckenwald intimated his acquiescence with a look of bitterness, which it were vain to attempt to describe. It expressed spite, mortification, humbled pride, and reluctant submission. He did submit, however, and ushered young Philipson into a decent apartment with a bed, which the fatigue and agitation of the preceding day rendered very acceptable.

Notwithstanding the ardour with which Arthur expected the rise of the next dawn, his deep repose, the fruit of fatigue, held him until the reddening of the east, when the voice of Schreckenwald exclaimed, "Up, Sir Englishman, if you mean to accomplish your boast of loyal service. It is time we were in the saddle, and we shall tarry for no sluggards."

Arthur was on the floor of the apartment, and dressed, in almost an instant, not forgetting to put on his shirt of mail, and assume whatever weapons seemed most fit to render him an efficient part of the convoy. He next hastened to seek out the stable, to have his horse in readiness; and descending for that purpose into the under story of the lower mass of buildings, he was wandering in search of the way which led to the offices, when the voice of Annette Veilchen softly whispered, "This way, Seignor Philipson; I would speak with you."⁹³

The Swiss maiden, at the same time, beckoned him into a small room, where he found her alone.

"Were you not surprised," she said, "to see my lady queen it so over Ital Schreckenwald, who keeps every other person in awe with his stern looks and cross words? But the air of command seems so natural to her, that, instead of being a baroness, she might have been an empress. It must come of birth, I think, after all, for I tried last night to take state upon me, after the fashion of my mistress, and, would you think it, the brute Schreckenwald threatened to throw me out of the window? But if ever I see Martin Sprenger again, I'll know if there is strength in a Swiss arm, and virtue in a Swiss quarter-staff.—But here I stand prating, and my lady wishes to see you for a minute ere we take to horse."

"Your lady?" said Arthur, starting. "Why did you lose an instant? why not tell me before?"

"Because I was only to keep you here till she came, and—here she is."

Anne of Geierstein entered, fully attired for her journey. Annette, always willing to do as she would wish to be done by, was about to leave the apartment, when her mistress, who had apparently made up her mind concerning what she had to do or say, commanded her positively to remain.

"I am sure," she said, "Seignor Philipson will rightly understand the feelings of hospitality—I will say of friendship—which prevented my suffering him to be expelled from my castle last night, and which have determined me this morning to admit of his company on the somewhat dangerous road to Strasburg. At the gate of that town we part, I to join my father, you to place yourself ⁹⁴under the direction of yours. From that moment intercourse between us ends, and our remembrance of each other must be as the thoughts which we pay to friends deceased."

"Tender recollections," said Arthur, passionately, "more dear to our bosoms than all we have surviving upon earth."

"Not a word in that tone," answered the maiden. "With night delusion should end, and reason awaken with dawning. One word more—Do not address me on the road; you may, by doing so, expose me to vexatious and insulting suspicion, and yourself to quarrels and peril.—Farewell, our party is ready to take horse."

She left the apartment, where Arthur remained for a moment deeply bewildered in grief and disappointment. The patience, nay, even favour, with which Anne of Geierstein had, on the previous night, listened to his passion, had not prepared him for the terms of reserve and distance which she now adopted towards him. He was ignorant that noble maids, if feeling or passion has for a moment swayed them from the strict path of principle and duty, endeavour to atone for it by instantly returning, and severely adhering, to the line from which they have made a momentary departure. He looked mournfully on Annette, who, as she had been in the room before Anne's arrival, took the privilege of remaining a minute after her departure; but he read no comfort in the glances of the confidant, who seemed as much disconcerted as himself.

"I cannot imagine what hath happened to her," said Annette; "to me she is kind as ever, but to every other person about her she plays countess ⁹⁵and baroness with a witness; and now she is begun to tyrannise over her own natural feelings—and—if this be greatness, Annette Veilchen trusts always to remain the penniless Swiss girl; she is mistress of her own freedom, and at liberty to speak with her bachelor when she pleases, so as religion and maiden modesty suffer nothing in the conversation. Oh, a single daisy twisted with content into one's hair, is worth all the opals in India, if they bind us to torment ourselves and other

people, or hinder us from speaking our mind, when our heart is upon our tongue. But never fear, Arthur; for if she has the cruelty to think of forgetting you, you may rely on one friend who, while she has a tongue, and Anne has ears, will make it impossible for her to do so."

So saying, away tripped Annette, having first indicated to Philipson the passage by which he would find the lower court of the castle. There his steed stood ready, among about twenty others. Twelve of these were accoutred with war saddles, and frontlets of proof, being intended for the use of as many cavaliers, or troopers, retainers of the family of Arnheim, whom the seneschal's exertions had been able to collect on the spur of the occasion. Two palfreys, somewhat distinguished by their trappings, were designed for Anne of Geierstein and her favourite female attendant. The other menials, chiefly boys and women servants, had inferior horses. At a signal made, the troopers took their lances and stood by their steeds, till the females and menials were mounted and in order; they then sprang into their saddles and began to move forward, slowly and with great precaution. Schreckenwald led the van, and kept 96Arthur Philipson close beside him. Anne and her attendant were in the centre of the little body, followed by the unwarlike train of servants, while two or three experienced cavaliers brought up the rear, with strict orders to guard against surprise.

On their being put into motion, the first thing which surprised Arthur was, that the horses' hoofs no longer sent forth the sharp and ringing sound arising from the collision of iron and flint, and as the morning light increased he could perceive that the fetlock and hoof of every steed, his own included, had been carefully wrapped around with a sufficient quantity of wool, to prevent the usual noise which accompanied their motions. It was a singular thing to behold the passage of the little body of cavalry down the rocky road which led from the castle, unattended with the noise which we are disposed to consider as inseparable from the motions of horse, the absence of which seemed to give a peculiar and almost an unearthly appearance to the cavalcade.

They passed in this manner the winding path which led from the castle of Arnheim to the adjacent village, which, as was the ancient feudal custom, lay so near the fortress that its inhabitants, when summoned by their lord, could instantly repair for its defence. But it was at present occupied by very different inhabitants, the mutinous soldiers of the Rhinegrave. When the party from Arnheim approached the entrance of the village, Schreckenwald made a signal to halt, which was instantly obeyed by his followers. He then rode forward in person to reconnoitre, accompanied by Arthur Philipson, both moving with the utmost 97steadiness and precaution. The deepest silence prevailed in the deserted streets. Here and there a soldier was seen, seemingly designed for a sentinel, but uniformly fast asleep.

"The swinish mutineers!" said Schreckenwald; "a fair night-watch they keep, and a beautiful morning's rouse would I treat them with, were not the point to protect yonder peevish wench.—Halt thou here, stranger, while I ride back and bring them on—there is no danger."

Schreckenwald left Arthur as he spoke, who, alone in the street of a village filled with banditti, though they were lulled into temporary insensibility, had no reason to consider his case as very comfortable. The chorus of a wassel song, which some reveller was trolling over in his sleep; or, in its turn, the growling of some village cur, seemed the signal for an hundred ruffians to start up around him. But in the space of two or three minutes, the noiseless cavalcade, headed by Ital Schreckenwald, again joined him, and followed their leader, observing the utmost precaution not to give an alarm. All went well till they reached the farther end of the village, where, although the Baaren-hauter⁹⁴ who kept guard was as drunk as his companions on duty, a large shaggy dog which lay beside him was more vigilant. As the little troop approached, the animal sent forth a ferocious yell, loud enough to have broken the rest of the Seven Sleepers, and which effectually dispelled the slumbers of its master. The soldier snatched up his carabine and fired, he knew not well at what, or for what reason. The ball, however, 98struck Arthur's horse under him, and, as the animal fell, the sentinel rushed forward to kill or make prisoner the rider.

"Haste on, haste on, men of Arnheim! care for nothing but the young lady's safety," exclaimed the leader of the band.

"Stay, I command you;—aid the stranger, on your lives!"—said Anne, in a voice which, usually gentle and meek, she now made heard by those around her, like the note of a silver clarion. "I will not stir till he is rescued."

Schreckenwald had already spurred his horse for flight; but, perceiving Anne's reluctance to follow him, he dashed back, and seizing a horse which, bridled and saddled, stood picketed near him, he threw the reins to Arthur Philipson; and pushing his own horse, at the same time, betwixt the Englishman and the soldier, he forced the latter to quit the hold he had on his person. In an instant Philipson was again mounted, when, seizing a battle-axe which hung at the saddle-bow of his new steed, he struck down the staggering sentinel, who was endeavouring again to seize upon him. The whole troop then rode off at a gallop, for the alarm began to grow general in the village; some soldiers were seen coming out of their quarters, and others were beginning to get upon horseback. Before Schreckenwald and his party had ridden a mile, they heard more than once the sound of bugles; and when they arrived upon the summit of an eminence commanding a view of the village, their leader, who, during the retreat, had placed himself in the rear of his company, now halted to reconnoitre the enemy they had left behind them. There was bustle and confusion in the street, but 99there did not appear to be any pursuit; so that Schreckenwald followed his route down the river, with speed and activity indeed, but with so much steadiness, at the same time, as not to distress the slowest horse of his party.

When they had ridden two hours and more, the confidence of their leader was so much augmented, that he ventured to command a halt at the edge of a pleasant grove, which served to conceal their number, whilst both riders and horses took some refreshment, for which purpose forage and provisions had been borne along with them. Ital Schreckenwald, having held some communication with the Baroness, continued to offer their travelling companion a sort of surly civility. He invited him to partake of his own mess, which was indeed little different from that which was served out to the other troopers, but was seasoned with a glass of wine from a more choice flask.

"To your health, brother," he said; "if you tell this day's story truly, you will allow that I was a true comrade to you two hours since, in riding through the village of Arnheim."

"I will never deny it, fair sir," said Philipson, "and I return you thanks for your timely assistance; alike, whether it sprang from your mistress's order, or your own good-will."

"Ho! ho! my friend," said Schreckenwald, laughing, "you are a philosopher, and can try conclusions while your horse lies rolling above you, and a Baaren-hauter aims his sword at your throat?—Well, since your wit hath discovered so much, I care not if you know, that I should not have had much scruple to sacrifice twenty such smooth-faced gentlemen as yourself, rather than 100the young Baroness of Arnheim had incurred the slightest danger."

"The propriety of the sentiment," said Philipson, "is so undoubtedly correct, that I subscribe to it, even though it is something discourteously expressed towards myself."

In making this reply, the young man, provoked at the insolence of Schreckenwald's manner, raised his voice a little. The circumstance did not escape observation, for, on the instant, Annette Veilchen stood before them, with her mistress's commands on them both to speak in whispers, or rather to be altogether silent.

"Say to your mistress that I am mute," said Philipson.

"Our mistress, the Baroness, says," continued Annette, with an emphasis on the title, to which she began to ascribe some talismanic influence,—"¹⁰⁰the Baroness, I tell you, says, that silence much concerns our safety, for it were most hazardous to draw upon this little fugitive party the notice of any passengers who may pass along the road during the necessary halt; and so, sirs, it is the Baroness's request that you will continue the exercise of your teeth as fast as you can, and forbear that of your tongues till you are in a safer condition."

"My lady is wise," answered Ital Schreckenwald, "and her maiden is witty. I drink, Mrs. Annette, in a cup of Rudersheimer, to the continuance of her sagacity, and of your amiable liveliness of disposition. Will it please you, fair mistress, to pledge me in this generous liquor?"

"Out, thou German wine-flask!—Out, thou eternal swill-flagon!—Heard you ever of a modest maiden who drank wine before she had dined?"¹⁰¹

"Remain without the generous inspiration then," said the German, "and nourish thy satirical vein on sour cider or acid whey."

A short space having been allowed to refresh themselves, the little party again mounted their horses, and travelled with such speed, that long before noon they arrived at the strongly fortified town of Kehl, opposite to Strasburg, on the eastern bank of the Rhine.

It is for local antiquaries to discover whether the travellers crossed from Kehl to Strasburg by the celebrated bridge of boats which at present maintains the communication across the river, or whether they were wafted over by some other mode of transportation. It is enough that they passed in safety, and had landed on the other side, where—whether she dreaded that he might forget the charge she had given him, that here they were to separate, or whether she thought that

something more might be said in the moment of parting—the young Baroness, before remounting her horse, once more approached Arthur Philipson, who too truly guessed the tenor of what she had to say.

"Gentle stranger," she said, "I must now bid you farewell. But first let me ask if you know whereabouts you are to seek your father?"

"In an inn called the Flying Stag," said Arthur, dejectedly; "but where that is situated in this large town, I know not."

"Do you know the place, Ital Schreckenwald?"

"I, young lady?—Not I—I know nothing of Strasburg and its inns. I believe most of our party are as ignorant as I am."

"You and they speak German, I suppose," said the Baroness, drily, "and can make inquiry more easily than a foreigner? Go, sir, and forget not that humanity to the stranger is a religious duty."

With that shrug of the shoulders which testifies a displeased messenger, Ital went to make some inquiry, and, in his absence, brief as it was, Anne took an opportunity to say apart,—*"Farewell!—Farewell! Accept this token of friendship, and wear it for my sake. May you be happy!"*

Her slender fingers dropped into his hand a very small parcel. He turned to thank her, but she was already at some distance; and Schreckenwald, who had taken his place by his side, said in his harsh voice, "Come, Sir Squire, I have found out your place of rendezvous, and I have but little time to play the gentleman-usher." He then rode on; and Philipson, mounted on his military charger, followed him in silence to the point where a large street joined, or rather crossed, that which led from the quay on which they had landed.

"Yonder swings the Flying Stag," said Ital, pointing to an immense sign, which, mounted on a huge wooden frame, crossed almost the whole breadth of the street.

"Your intelligence can, I think, hardly abandon you, with such a guide-post in your eye."

So saying, he turned his horse without further farewell, and rode back to join his mistress and her attendants.

Philipson's eyes rested on the same group for a moment, when he was recalled to a sense of his situation by the thoughts of his father; and, spurring his jaded horse down the cross street, he reached the hostelry of the Flying Stag.¹⁰³

CHAPTER VI.

I was, I must confess,

Great Albion's queen in former golden days;

But now mischance hath trod my title down,

And with dishonour laid me on the ground;

Where I must take like seat unto my fortune,

And to my humble seat conform myself.

Henry VI. Part III.

The hostelry of the Flying Stag, in Strasburg, was, like every inn in the empire at the period, conducted much with the same discourteous inattention to the wants and accommodation of the guests as that of John Mengs. But the youth and good looks of Arthur Philipson, circumstances which seldom or never fail to produce some effect where the fair are concerned, prevailed upon a short, plump, dimpled, blue-eyed, fair-skinned yungfrau, the daughter of the landlord of the Flying Stag (himself a fat old man, pinned to the oak chair in the *stube*), to carry herself to the young Englishman with a degree of condescension which, in the privileged race to which she belonged, was little short of degradation. She not only put her light buskins and her pretty ankles in danger of being soiled by tripping across the yard to point out an unoccupied stable, but, on Arthur's inquiry after his father, condescended to recollect that such a guest as he described had lodged in the house last night, and had said he expected to meet there a young person, his fellow-traveller.¹⁰⁴

"I will send him out to you, fair sir," said the little yungfrau with a smile, which, if things of the kind are to be valued by their rare occurrence, must have been reckoned inestimable.

She was as good as her word. In a few instants the elder Philipson entered the stable, and folded his son in his arms.

"My son—my dear son!" said the Englishman, his usual stoicism broken down and melted by natural feeling and parental tenderness,—*"Welcome to me at all times—welcome, in a period of doubt and danger—and most welcome of all, in a moment which forms the very crisis of our fate. In a few hours I shall know what we may expect from the Duke of Burgundy.—Hast thou the token?"*

Arthur's hand first sought that which was nearest to his heart, both in the literal and allegorical sense—the small parcel, namely, which Anne had given him at parting. But he recollected himself in the instant, and presented to his father the packet which had been so strangely lost and recovered at La Ferette.

"It hath run its own risk since you saw it," he observed to his father, "and so have I mine. I received hospitality at a castle last night, and behold a body of lanzknechts in the neighbourhood began in the morning to mutiny for their pay. The inhabitants fled from the castle to escape their violence, and, as we passed their leaguer in the grey of the morning, a drunken Baaren-hauter shot my poor horse, and I was forced, in the way of exchange, to take up with his heavy Flemish animal, with its steel saddle, and its clumsy chaffron."¹⁰⁵

"Our road is beset with perils," said his father. "I too have had my share, having been in great danger [he told not its precise nature] at an inn where I rested last night. But I left it in the morning, and proceeded hither in safety. I have at length, however, obtained a safe escort to conduct me to the Duke's camp near Dijon; and I trust to have an audience of him this evening. Then, if our last hope should fail, we will seek the seaport of Marseilles, hoist sail for Candia or for Rhodes, and spend our lives in defence of Christendom, since we may no longer fight for England."

Arthur heard these ominous words without reply; but they did not the less sink upon his heart, deadly as the doom of the judge which secludes the criminal from society and all its joys, and condemns him to an eternal prison-house. The bells from the cathedral began to toll at this instant, and reminded the elder Philipson of the duty of hearing mass, which was said at all hours in some one or other of the separate chapels which are contained in that magnificent pile. His son followed, on an intimation of his pleasure.

In approaching the access to this superb cathedral, the travellers found it obstructed, as is usual in Catholic countries, by the number of mendicants of both sexes, who crowded round the entrance to give the worshippers an opportunity of discharging the duty of alms-giving, so positively enjoined as a chief observance of their Church. The Englishmen extricated themselves from their importunity by bestowing, as is usual on such occasions, a donative of small coin upon those who appeared most needy, or most deserving of their charity. One tall woman stood on the steps close to the door, and extended her hand to the elder Philipson, who, struck with her appearance, exchanged for a piece of silver the copper coins which he had been distributing amongst others.

"A marvel!" she said, in the English language, but in a tone calculated only to be heard by him alone, although his son also caught the sound and sense of what she said,—*"Ay, a miracle!—An Englishman still possesses a silver piece, and can afford to bestow it on the poor!"*

Arthur was sensible that his father started somewhat at the voice or words, which bore, even in his ear, something of deeper import than the observation of an ordinary mendicant. But after a glance at the female who thus addressed him, his father passed onwards into the body of the church, and was soon engaged in attending to the solemn ceremony of the mass, as it was performed by a priest at the altar of a chapel divided from the main body of the splendid edifice, and dedicated, as it appeared from the image over the altar, to St. George; that military saint, whose real history is so obscure, though his popular legend rendered him an object of peculiar veneration during the feudal ages. The ceremony was begun and finished with all customary forms. The officiating priest, with his attendants, withdrew, and though some of the few worshippers who had assisted at the solemnity remained telling their beads, and occupied with the performance of their private devotions, far the greater part left the chapel, to visit other shrines, or to return to the prosecution of their secular affairs.

But Arthur Philipson remarked that, whilst they dropped off one after another, the tall woman who had received his father's alms continued to kneel near the altar; and he was yet more surprised to see that his father himself, who, he had many reasons to know, was desirous to spend in the church no more time than the duties of devotion absolutely claimed, remained also on his knees, with his eyes resting on the form of the veiled devotee (such she seemed from her dress), as if his own motions were to be guided by hers. By no idea which occurred to him was Arthur able to form the least conjecture as to his father's motives—he only

knew that he was engaged in a critical and dangerous negotiation, liable to influence or interruption from various quarters; and that political suspicion was so generally awake, both in France, Italy, and Flanders, that the most important agents were often obliged to assume the most impenetrable disguises, in order to insinuate themselves without suspicion into the countries where their services were required. Louis XI., in particular, whose singular policy seemed in some degree to give a character to the age in which he lived, was well known to have disguised his principal emissaries and envoys in the fictitious garbs of mendicant monks, minstrels, gypsies, and other privileged wanderers of the meanest description.

Arthur concluded, therefore, that it was not improbable that this female might, like themselves, be something more than her dress imported; and he resolved to observe his father's deportment towards her, and regulate his own actions accordingly. A bell at last announced that mass, upon a more splendid scale, was about to be celebrated before the high altar of the cathedral itself, and its sound withdrew from the sequestered chapel of St. George the few who had remained at the shrine of the military saint, excepting the father and son, and the female penitent who kneeled opposite to them. When the last of the worshippers had retired, the female arose and advanced towards the elder Philipson, who, folding his arms on his bosom, and stooping his head, in an attitude of obeisance which his son had never before seen him assume, appeared rather to wait what she had to say, than to propose addressing her.

There was a pause. Four lamps, lighted before the shrine of the saint, cast a dim radiance on his armour and steed, represented as he was in the act of transfixing with his lance the prostrate dragon, whose outstretched wings and writhing neck were in part touched by their beams. The rest of the chapel was dimly illuminated by the autumnal sun, which could scarce find its way through the stained panes of the small lanceolated window, which was its only aperture to the open air. The light fell doubtful and gloomy, tinged with the various hues through which it passed, upon the stately yet somewhat broken and dejected form of the female, and on those of the melancholy and anxious father, and his son, who, with all the eager interest of youth, suspected and anticipated extraordinary consequences from so singular an interview.

At length the female approached to the same side of the shrine with Arthur and his father, as if to be more distinctly heard, without being obliged to raise the slow solemn voice in which she had spoken.¹⁰⁹

"Do you here worship," she said, "the St. George of Burgundy, or the St. George of merry England, the flower of chivalry?"

"I serve," said Philipson, folding his hands humbly on his bosom, "the saint to whom this chapel is dedicated, and the Deity with whom I hope for his holy intercession, whether here or in my native country."

"Ay—you," said the female, "even you can forget—you, even you, who have been numbered among the mirror of knighthood—can forget that you have worshipped in the royal fane of Windsor—that you have there bent a *gartered* knee, where kings and princes kneeled around you—you can forget this, and make your orisons at a foreign shrine, with a heart undisturbed with the thoughts of what you have been,—praying, like some poor peasant, for bread and life during the day that passes over you."

"Lady," replied Philipson, "in my proudest hours, I was, before the Being to whom I preferred my prayers, but as a worm in the dust—In His eyes I am now neither less nor more, degraded as I may be in the opinion of my fellow-reptiles."

"How canst thou think thus?" said the devotee; "and yet it is well with thee that thou canst. But what have thy losses been, compared to mine!"

She put her hand to her brow, and seemed for a moment overpowered by agonising recollections.

Arthur pressed to his father's side, and inquired, in a tone of interest which could not be repressed, "Father, who is this lady?—Is it my mother?"

"No, my son," answered Philipson;—"peace, for the sake of all you hold dear or holy!"¹¹⁰

The singular female, however, heard both the question and answer, though expressed in a whisper.

"Yes," she said, "young man—I am—I should say I was—your mother; the mother, the protectress, of all that was noble in England—I am Margaret of Anjou."

Arthur sank on his knees before the dauntless widow of Henry the Sixth, who so long, and in such desperate circumstances, upheld, by unyielding courage and deep policy, the sinking cause of her feeble husband; and who, if she occasionally abused victory by cruelty and revenge, had made some atonement by the indomitable resolution with which she had supported the fiercest storms of adversity. Arthur had been bred in devoted adherence to the now dethroned line of Lancaster, of which his father was one of the most distinguished supporters; and his earliest deeds of arms, which, though unfortunate, were neither obscure nor ignoble, had been done in their cause. With an enthusiasm belonging to his age and education, he in the same instant flung his bonnet on the pavement, and knelt at the feet of his ill-fated sovereign.

Margaret threw back the veil which concealed those noble and majestic features, which even yet,—though rivers of tears had furrowed her cheek,—though care, disappointment, domestic grief, and humbled pride had quenched the fire of her eye, and wasted the smooth dignity of her forehead,—even yet showed the remains of that beauty which once was held unequalled in Europe. The apathy with which a succession of misfortunes and disappointed hopes had chilled the feelings of the unfortunate Princess was for a moment melted by the sight of the fair youth's enthusiasm. She abandoned one hand to him, which he covered with tears and kisses, and with the other stroked with maternal tenderness his curled locks, as she endeavoured to raise him from the posture he had assumed. His father, in the meanwhile, shut the door of the chapel, and placed his back against it, withdrawing himself thus from the group, as if for the purpose of preventing any stranger from entering, during a scene so extraordinary.

"And thou, then," said Margaret, in a voice where female tenderness combated strangely with her natural pride of rank, and with the calm, stoical indifference induced by the intensity of her personal misfortunes; "thou, fair youth, art the last scion of the noble stem, so many fair boughs of which have fallen in our hapless cause. Alas, alas! what can I do for thee? Margaret has not even a blessing to bestow. So wayward is her fate, that her benedictions are curses, and she has but to look on you and wish you well, to insure your speedy and utter ruin. I—I have been the fatal poison-tree, whose influence has blighted and destroyed all the fair plants that arose beside and around me, and brought death upon every one, yet am myself unable to find it!"

"Noble and royal mistress," said the elder Englishman, "let not your princely courage, which has borne such extremities, be dismayed, now that they are passed over, and that a chance at least of happier times is approaching to you and to England."

"To England, to *me*, noble Oxford!" said the forlorn and widowed Queen.—"If to-morrow's sun could place me once more on the throne of England, could it give back to me what I have lost? I speak not of wealth or power—they are as nothing in the balance—I speak not of the hosts of noble friends who have fallen in defence of me and mine—Somersets, Percys, Staffords, Cliffords—they have found their place in fame, in the annals of their country—I speak not of my husband, he has exchanged the state of a suffering saint upon earth for that of a glorified saint in heaven—But oh, Oxford! my son—my Edward!—Is it possible for me to look on this youth, and not remember that thy countess and I on the same night gave birth to two fair boys? How oft we endeavoured to prophesy their future fortunes, and to persuade ourselves that the same constellation which shone on their birth would influence their succeeding life, and hold a friendly and equal bias till they reached some destined goal of happiness and honour! Thy Arthur lives; but, alas! my Edward, born under the same auspices, fills a bloody grave!"

She wrapped her head in her mantle, as if to stifle the complaints and groans which maternal affection poured forth at these cruel recollections. Philipson, or the exiled Earl of Oxford as we may now term him, distinguished in those changeful times by the steadiness with which he had always maintained his loyalty to the line of Lancaster, saw the imprudence of indulging his sovereign in her weakness.

"Royal mistress," he said, "life's journey is that of a brief winter's day, and its course will run on, whether we avail ourselves of its progress or no. My sovereign is, I trust, too much mistress of herself to suffer lamentation for what is passed to deprive her of the power of using the present time. I am here in obedience to your command; I am to see Burgundy forthwith, and if I find him pliant to the purpose to which we would turn him, events may follow which will change into gladness our present mourning. But we must use our opportunity with speed as well as zeal. Let me know then, madam, for what reason your Majesty hath come hither, disguised and in danger? Surely it was not merely to weep over this young man that the high-minded Queen Margaret left her father's court, disguised herself in mean attire, and came from a place of safety to one of doubt at least, if not of danger?"

"You mock me, Oxford," said the unfortunate Queen, "or you deceive yourself, if you think you still serve that Margaret whose word was never spoken without a reason, and whose slightest action was influenced by a motive. Alas! I am no longer the same firm and rational being. The feverish character of grief, while it

makes one place hateful to me, drives me to another in very impotence and impatience of spirit. My father's residence, thou say'st, is safe; but is it tolerable for such a soul as mine? Can one who has been deprived of the noblest and richest kingdom of Europe—one who has lost hosts of noble friends—one who is a widowed consort, a childless mother—one upon whose head Heaven hath poured forth its last vial of unmitigated wrath,—can she stoop to be the companion of a weak old man, who, in sonnets and in music, in mummery and folly, in harping and rhyming, finds a comfort for all that poverty has that is distressing; and, what is still 114worse, even a solace in all that is ridiculous and contemptible?"

"Nay, with your leave, madam," said her counsellor, "blame not the good King René (a),^[5] because, persecuted by fortune, he has been able to find out for himself humbler sources of solace, which your prouder spirit is disposed to disdain. A contention among his minstrels has for him the animation of a knightly combat; and a crown of flowers, twined by his troubadours and graced by their sonnets, he accounts a valuable compensation for the diadems of Jerusalem, of Naples, and of both Sicilies, of which he only possesses the empty titles."

"Speak not to me of the pitiable old man," said Margaret; "sunk below even the hatred of his worst enemies, and never thought worthy of anything more than contempt. I tell thee, noble Oxford, I have been driven nearly mad with my forced residence at Aix, in the paltry circle which he calls his court. My ears, tuned as they now are only to sounds of affliction, are not so weary of the eternal tinkling of harps, and squeaking of rebecks, and snapping of castanets;—my eyes are not so tired of the beggarly affectation of court ceremonial, which is only respectable when it implies wealth and expresses power,—as my very soul is sick of the paltry ambition which can find pleasure in spangles, tassels, and trumpery, when the reality of all that is great and noble hath passed away. No, Oxford. If I am doomed to lose the last cast which fickle fortune seems to offer me, I 115will retreat into the meanest convent in the Pyrenean hills, and at least escape the insult of the idiot gaiety of my father.—Let him pass from our memory as from the page of history, in which his name will never be recorded. I have much of more importance both to hear and to tell.—And now, my Oxford, what news from Italy? Will the Duke of Milan afford us assistance with his counsels, or with his treasures?"

"With his counsels willingly, madam; but how you will relish them I know not, since he recommends to us submission to our hapless fate, and resignation to the will of Providence."

"The wily Italian! Will not, then, Galeasso advance any part of his hoards, or assist a friend, to whom he hath in his time full often sworn faith?"

"Not even the diamonds which I offered to deposit in his hands," answered the Earl, "could make him unlock his treasury to supply us with ducats for our enterprise. Yet he said, if Charles of Burgundy should think seriously of an exertion in our favour, such was his regard for that great prince, and his deep sense of your Majesty's misfortunes, that he would consider what the state of his exchequer, though much exhausted, and the condition of his subjects, though impoverished by taxes and talliages, would permit him to advance in your behalf."

"The double-faced hypocrite!" said Margaret. "If the assistance of the princely Burgundy lends us a chance of regaining what is our own, then he will give us some paltry parcel of crowns, that our restored prosperity may forget his indifference to our adversity!—But what of Burgundy? I 116have ventured hither to tell you what I have learned, and to hear report of your proceedings—a trusty watch provides for the secrecy of our interview. My impatience to see you brought me hither in this mean disguise. I have a small retinue at a convent a mile beyond the town—I have had your arrival watched by the faithful Lambert—and now I come to know your hopes or your fears, and to tell you my own."

"Royal lady," said the Earl, "I have not seen the Duke. You know his temper to be wilful, sudden, haughty, and unpersuadable. If he can adopt the calm and sustained policy which the times require, I little doubt his obtaining full amends of Louis, his sworn enemy, and even of Edward, his ambitious brother-in-law. But if he continues to yield to extravagant fits of passion, with or without provocation, he may hurry into a quarrel with the poor but hardy Helvetians, and is likely to engage in a perilous contest, in which he cannot be expected to gain anything, while he undergoes a chance of the most serious losses."

"Surely," replied the Queen, "he will not trust the usurper Edward, even in the very moment when he is giving the greatest proof of treachery to his alliance?"

"In what respect, madam?" replied Oxford. "The news you allude to has not reached me."

"How, my lord? Am I then the first to tell you that Edward of York has crossed the sea (b) with such an army as scarce even the renowned Henry V., my father-in-law, ever transported from France to Italy?"

"So much I have indeed heard was expected," 117said Oxford; "and I anticipated the effect as fatal to our cause."

"Edward is arrived," said Margaret, "and the traitor and usurper hath sent defiance to Louis of France, and demanded of him the crown of that kingdom as his own right—that crown which was placed on the head of my unhappy husband, when he was yet a child in the cradle."

"It is then decided—the English are in France!" answered Oxford, in a tone expressive of the deepest anxiety.—"And whom brings Edward with him on this expedition?"

"All—all the bitterest enemies of our house and cause—The false, the traitorous, the dishonoured George, whom he calls Duke of Clarence—the blood-drinker, Richard—the licentious Hastings—Howard—Stanley—in a word, the leaders of all those traitors whom I would not name, unless by doing so my curses could sweep them from the face of the earth."

"And—I tremble to ask," said the Earl—"Does Burgundy prepare to join them as a brother of the war, and make common cause with this Yorkish host against King Louis of France?"

"By my advices," replied the Queen, "and they are both private and sure, besides that they are confirmed by the bruit of common fame—No, my good Oxford, no!"

"For that may the Saints be praised!" answered Oxford. "Edward of York—I will not malign even an enemy—is a bold and fearless leader—But he is neither Edward the Third, nor the heroic Black Prince—nor is he that fifth Henry of Lancaster, under whom I won my spurs, and to whose lineage the thoughts of his glorious memory would 118have made me faithful, had my plighted vows of allegiance ever permitted me to entertain a thought of varying, or of defection. Let Edward engage in war with Louis without the aid of Burgundy, on which he has reckoned. Louis is indeed no hero, but he is a cautious and skilful general, more to be dreaded, perhaps, in these politic days, than if Charlemagne could again raise the Oriflamme, surrounded by Roland and all his paladins. Louis will not hazard such fields as those of Cressy, of Poitiers, or of Agincourt. With a thousand lances from Hainault, and twenty thousand crowns from Burgundy, Edward shall risk the loss of England, while he is engaged in a protracted struggle for the recovery of Normandy and Guienne. But what are the movements of Burgundy?"

"He has menaced Germany," said Margaret, "and his troops are now employed in overrunning Lorraine, of which he has seized the principal towns and castles."

"Where is Ferrand de Vaudemont—a youth, it is said, of courage and enterprise, and claiming Lorraine in right of his mother, Yolande of Anjou, the sister of your Grace?"

"Fled," replied the Queen, "into Germany or Helvetia."

"Let Burgundy beware of him," said the experienced Earl; "for should the disinherited youth obtain confederates in Germany, and allies among the hardy Swiss, Charles of Burgundy may find him a far more formidable enemy than he expects. We are strong for the present, only in the Duke's strength, and if it is wasted in idle and desultory efforts, our hopes, alas! vanish with his power, even if he should be found to have the decided 119will to assist us. My friends in England are resolute not to stir without men and money from Burgundy."

"It is a fear," said Margaret, "but not our worst fear. I dread more the policy of Louis, who, unless my espials have grossly deceived me, has even already proposed a secret peace to Edward, offering with large sums of money to purchase England to the Yorkists, and a truce of seven years."

"It cannot be," said Oxford. "No Englishman, commanding such an army as Edward must now lead, dares for very shame to retire from France without a manly attempt to recover his lost provinces."

"Such would have been the thoughts of a rightful prince," said Margaret, "who left behind him an obedient and faithful kingdom. Such may not be the thoughts of this Edward, misnamed Plantagenet, base perhaps in mind as in blood, since they say his real father was one Blackburn, an archer of Middleham—usurper, at least, if not bastard—such will not be his thoughts.^[6] Every breeze that blows from England will bring with it apprehensions of defection amongst those over whom he has usurped authority. He will not sleep in peace till he returns to England with those cut-throats, whom he relies upon for the defence of his stolen crown. He

will engage in no war with Louis, for Louis will not hesitate to soothe his pride by humiliation—to gorge his avarice and pamper his voluptuous prodigality by sums of gold—and I fear much we shall soon hear 120of the English army retiring from France with the idle boast, that they have displayed their banners once more, for a week or two, in the provinces which were formerly their own."

"It the more becomes us to be speedy in moving Burgundy to decision," replied Oxford; "and for that purpose I post to Dijon. Such an army as Edward's cannot be transported over the narrow seas in several weeks. The probability is, that they must winter in France, even if they should have truce with King Louis. With a thousand Hainault lances from the eastern part of Flanders, I can be soon in the North, where we have many friends, besides the assurance of help from Scotland. The faithful West will rise at a signal—a Clifford can be found, though the mountain mists have hid him from Richard's researches—the Welsh will assemble at the rallying word of Tudor—the Red Rose raises its head once more—and so, God save King Henry!"

"Alas!" said the Queen—"But no husband—no friend of mine—the son but of my mother-in-law by a Welsh chieftain—cold, they say, and crafty—But be it so—let me only see Lancaster triumph, and obtain revenge upon York, and I will die contented!"

"It is then your pleasure that I should make the proffers expressed by your Grace's former mandates, to induce Burgundy to stir himself in our cause? If he learns the proposal of a truce betwixt France and England, it will sting sharper than aught I can say."

"Promise all, however," said the Queen. "I know his inmost soul—it is set upon extending the dominions of his House in every direction. 121For this he has seized Gueldres—for this he now overruns and occupies Lorraine—for this he covets such poor remnants of Provence as my father still calls his own. With such augmented territories, he proposes to exchange his ducal diadem for an arched crown of independent sovereignty. Tell the Duke, Margaret can assist his views—tell him, that my father René shall disown the opposition made to the Duke's seizure of Lorraine—He shall do more—he shall declare Charles his heir in Provence, with my ample consent—tell him, the old man shall cede his dominions to him upon the instant that his Hainaulters embark for England, some small pension deducted to maintain a concert of fiddlers, and a troop of morrice-dancers. These are René's only earthly wants. Mine are still fewer—Revenge upon York, and a speedy grave!—For the paltry gold which we may need, thou hast jewels to pledge—For the other conditions, security if required."

"For these, madam, I can pledge my knightly word, in addition to your royal faith; and if more is required, my son shall be a hostage with Burgundy."

"Oh, no—no!" exclaimed the dethroned Queen, touched by perhaps the only tender feeling, which repeated and extraordinary misfortunes had not chilled into insensibility,—"Hazard not the life of the noble youth—he that is the last of the loyal and faithful House of Vere—he that should have been the brother in arms of my beloved Edward—he that had so nearly been his companion in a bloody and untimely grave! Do not involve this poor child in these fatal intrigues, which have been so baneful to his family. Let 122him go with me. Him at least I will shelter from danger whilst I live, and provide for when I am no more."

"Forgive me, madam," said Oxford, with the firmness which distinguished him. "My son, as you deign to recollect, is a De Vere, destined, perhaps, to be the last of his name. Fall, he may, but it must not be without honour. To whatever dangers his duty and allegiance call him, be it from sword or lance, axe or gibbet, to these he must expose himself frankly, when his doing so can mark his allegiance. His ancestors have shown him how to brave them all."

"True, true," exclaimed the unfortunate Queen, raising her arms wildly,—"All must perish—all that have honoured Lancaster—all that have loved Margaret, or whom she has loved! The destruction must be universal—the young must fall with the old—not a lamb of the scattered flock shall escape!"

"For God's sake, gracious madam," said Oxford, "compose yourself!—I hear them knock on the chapel door."

"It is the signal of parting," said the exiled Queen, collecting herself. "Do not fear, noble Oxford, I am not often thus; but how seldom do I see those friends, whose faces and voices can disturb the composure of my despair! Let me tie this relic about thy neck, good youth, and fear not its evil influence, though you receive it from an ill-omened hand. It was my husband's, blessed by many a prayer, and sanctified by many a holy tear; even my unhappy hands cannot pollute it. I should have bound it on my Edward's bosom on the dreadful morning of Tewkesbury fight; but he 123armed early—went to the field without seeing me, and all my purpose was vain."

She passed a golden chain round Arthur's neck as she spoke, which contained a small gold crucifix of rich but barbarous manufacture. It had belonged, said tradition, to Edward the Confessor. The knock at the door of the chapel was repeated.

"We must not tarry," said Margaret; "let us part here—you for Dijon, I to Aix, my abode of unrest in Provence. Farewell—we may meet in a better hour—yet how can I hope it? Thus I said on the morning before the fight of St. Albans—thus on the dark dawning of Towton—thus on the yet more bloody field of Tewkesbury—and what was the event? Yet hope is a plant which cannot be rooted out of a noble breast, till the last heart-string crack as it is pulled away."

So saying, she passed through the chapel door, and mingled in the miscellaneous assemblage of personages who worshipped or indulged their curiosity, or consumed their idle hours amongst the aisles of the cathedral.

Philipson and his son, both deeply impressed with the singular interview which had just taken place, returned to their inn, where they found a pursuivant, with the Duke of Burgundy's badge and livery, who informed them, that if they were the English merchants who were carrying wares of value to the court of the Duke, he had orders to afford them the countenance of his escort and inviolable character. Under his protection they set out from Strasburg; but such was the uncertainty of the Duke of Burgundy's motions, and such the numerous obstacles which occurred to 124interrupt their journey, in a country disturbed by the constant passage of troops and preparation for war, that it was evening on the second day ere they reached the plain near Dijon, on which the whole, or great part of his power, lay encamped.125

CHAPTER VII.

Thus said the Duke—thus did the Duke infer.

Richard III.

The eyes of the elder traveller were well accustomed to sights of martial splendour, yet even he was dazzled with the rich and glorious display of the Burgundian camp, in which, near the walls of Dijon, Charles, the wealthiest prince in Europe, had displayed his own extravagance, and encouraged his followers to similar profusion. The pavilions of the meanest officers were of silk and samite, while those of the nobility and great leaders glittered with cloth of silver, cloth of gold, variegated tapestry, and other precious materials, which in no other situation would have been employed as a cover from the weather, but would themselves have been thought worthy of the most careful protection. The horsemen and infantry who mounted guard were arrayed in the richest and most gorgeous armour. A beautiful and very numerous train of artillery was drawn up near the entrance of the camp, and in its commander Philipson (to give the Earl the travelling name to which our readers are accustomed) recognised Henry Colvin(c), an Englishman of inferior birth, but distinguished for his skill in conducting these terrible engines, which had of late come into general use in war. The banners and pennons which were displayed by every knight, baron, and 126man of rank floated before their tents, and the owners of these transitory dwellings sat at the door half-armed, and enjoyed the military contests of the soldiers, in wrestling, pitching the bar, and other athletic exercises.

Long rows of the noblest horses were seen at picket, prancing and tossing their heads, as impatient of the inactivity to which they were confined, or were heard neighing over the provender which was spread plentifully before them. The soldiers formed joyous groups around the minstrels and strolling jugglers, or were engaged in drinking-parties at the sutlers' tents; others strolled about with folded arms, casting their eyes now and then to the sinking sun, as if desirous that the hour should arrive which should put an end to a day unoccupied, and therefore tedious.

At length the travellers reached, amidst the dazzling varieties of this military display, the pavilion of the Duke himself, before which floated heavily in the evening breeze the broad and rich banner, in which glowed the armorial bearings and quarterings of a prince, Duke of six provinces, and Count of fifteen counties, who was, from his power, his disposition, and the success which seemed to attend his enterprises, the general dread of Europe. The pursuivant made himself known to some of the household, and the Englishmen were immediately received with courtesy, though not such as to draw attention upon them, and conveyed to a neighbouring tent, the residence of a general officer, which they were given to understand was destined for their accommodation, and where their packages accordingly were deposited, and refreshments offered them.127

"As the camp is filled," said the domestic who waited upon them, "with soldiers of different nations and uncertain dispositions, the Duke of Burgundy, for the safety of your merchandise, has ordered you the protection of a regular sentinel. In the meantime, be in readiness to wait on his Highness, seeing you may look to be presently sent for."

Accordingly, the elder Philipson was shortly after summoned to the Duke's presence, introduced by a back entrance into the ducal pavilion, and into that part of it which, screened by close curtains and wooden barricades, formed Charles's own separate apartment. The plainness of the furniture, and the coarse apparatus of the Duke's toilette, formed a strong contrast to the appearance of the exterior of the pavilion; for Charles, whose character was, in that as in other things, far from consistent, exhibited in his own person during war an austerity, or rather coarseness of dress, and sometimes of manners also, which was more like the rudeness of a German lanzknecht, than the bearing of a prince of exalted rank; while, at the same time, he encouraged and enjoined a great splendour of expense and display amongst his vassals and courtiers, as if to be rudely attired, and to despise every restraint, even of ordinary ceremony, were a privilege of the sovereign alone. Yet when it pleased him to assume state in person and manners, none knew better than Charles of Burgundy how he ought to adorn and demean himself.

Upon his toilette appeared brushes and combs, which might have claimed dismissal as past the term of service, over-worn hats and doublets, dog-leashes, 128leather-belts, and other such paltry articles; amongst which lay at random, as it seemed, the great diamond called Sanci,—the three rubies termed the Three Brothers of Antwerp,—another great diamond called the Lamp of Flanders, and other precious stones of scarcely inferior value and rarity. This extraordinary display somewhat resembled the character of the Duke himself, who mixed cruelty with justice, magnanimity with meanness of spirit, economy with extravagance, and liberality with avarice; being, in fact, consistent in nothing excepting in his obstinate determination to follow the opinion he had once formed, in every situation of things, and through all variety of risks.

In the midst of the valueless and inestimable articles of his wardrobe and toilette, the Duke of Burgundy called out to the English traveller, "Welcome, Herr Philipson—welcome, you of a nation whose traders are princes, and their merchants the mighty ones of the earth. What new commodities have you brought to gull us with? You merchants, by St. George, are a wily generation."

"Faith, no new merchandise I, my lord," answered the elder Englishman; "I bring but the commodities which I showed your Highness the last time I communicated with you, in the hope of a poor trader, that your Grace may find them more acceptable upon a review, than when you first saw them."

"It is well, Sir—Philipville, I think they call you?—you are a simple trader, or you take me for a silly purchaser, that you think to gull me with the same wares which I fancied not formerly. 129Change of fashion, man—novelty—is the motto of commerce; your Lancaster wares have had their day, and I have bought of them like others, and was like enough to have paid dear for them too. York is all the vogue now."

"It may be so among the vulgar," said the Earl of Oxford; "but for souls like your Highness, faith, honour, and loyalty are jewels which change of fancy, or mutability of taste, cannot put out of fashion."

"Why, it may be, noble Oxford," said the Duke, "that I preserve in my secret mind some veneration for these old-fashioned qualities, else why should I have such regard for your person, in which they have ever been distinguished? But my situation is painfully urgent, and should I make a false step at this crisis, I might break the purposes of my whole life. Observe me, Sir Merchant. Here has come over your old competitor, Blackburn, whom some call Edward of York and of London, with a commodity of bows and bills such as never entered France since King Arthur's time; and he offers to enter into joint adventure with me, or, in plain speech, to make common cause with Burgundy, till we smoke out of his earths the old fox Louis, and nail his hide to the stable-door. In a word, England invites me to take part with him against my most wily and inveterate enemy, the King of France; to rid myself of the chain of vassalage, and to ascend into the rank of independent princes;—how think you, noble Earl, can I forego this seducing temptation?"

"You must ask this of some of your counsellors of Burgundy," said Oxford; "it is a question 130fraught too deeply with ruin to my cause, for me to give a fair opinion on it."

"Nevertheless," said Charles, "I ask thee, as an honourable man, what objections you see to the course proposed to me? Speak your mind, and speak it freely."

"My lord, I know it is in your Highness's nature to entertain no doubts of the facility of executing anything which you have once determined shall be done. Yet, though this prince-like disposition may in some cases prepare for its own success, and has often done so, there are others, in which, persisting in our purpose, merely because we have once willed it, leads not to success, but to ruin. Look, therefore, at this English army;—winter is approaching, where are they to be lodged? how are they to be victualled? by whom are they to be paid? Is your Highness to take all the expense and labour of fitting them for the summer campaign? for, rely on it, an English army never was, nor will be, fit for service, till they have been out of their own island long enough to accustom them to military duty. They are men, I grant, the fittest for soldiers in the world; but they are not soldiers as yet, and must be trained to become such at your Highness's expense."

"Be it so," said Charles; "I think the Low Countries can find food for the beef-consuming knaves for a few weeks, and villages for them to lie in, and officers to train their sturdy limbs to war, and provost-marshal enough to reduce their refractory spirit to discipline."

"What happens next?" said Oxford. "You march to Paris, add to Edward's usurped power another kingdom; restore to him all the possessions 131which England ever had in France, Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Gascony, and all besides—Can you trust this Edward when you shall have thus fostered his strength, and made him far stronger than this Louis whom you have united to pull down?"

"By St. George, I will not dissemble with you! It is in that very point that my doubts trouble me. Edward is indeed my brother-in-law, but I am a man little inclined to put my head under my wife's girdle."

"And the times," said Philipson, "have too often shown the inefficiency of family alliances, to prevent the most gross breaches of faith."

"You say well, Earl. Clarence betrayed his father-in-law; Louis poisoned his brother—Domestic affections, pshaw! they sit warm enough by a private man's fireside, but they cannot come into fields of battle, or princes' halls, where the wind blows cold. No, my alliance with Edward by marriage were little succour to me in time of need. I would as soon ride an unbroken horse, with no better bridle than a lady's garter. But what then is the result? He wars on Louis; whichever gains the better, I, who must be strengthened in their mutual weakness, receive the advantage—The Englishmen slay the French with their cloth-yard shafts, and the Frenchmen, by skirmishes, waste, weaken, and destroy the English. With spring I take the field with an army superior to both, and then, St. George for Burgundy!"

"And if, in the meanwhile, your Highness will deign to assist, even in the most trifling degree, a cause the most honourable that ever knight laid lance in rest for,—a moderate sum of money, and 132a small body of Hainault lances, who may gain both fame and fortune by the service, may replace the injured heir of Lancaster in the possession of his native and rightful dominion."

"Ay, marry, Sir Earl," said the Duke, "you come roundly to the point; but we have seen, and indeed partly assisted, at so many turns betwixt York and Lancaster, that we have some doubt which is the side to which Heaven has given the right, and the inclinations of the people the effectual power; we are surprised into absolute giddiness by so many extraordinary revolutions of fortune as England has exhibited."

"A proof, my lord, that these mutations are not yet ended, and that your generous aid may give to the better side an effectual turn of advantage."

"And lend my cousin, Margaret of Anjou, my arm to dethrone my wife's brother? Perhaps he deserves small good-will at my hands, since he and his insolent nobles have been urging me with remonstrances, and even threats, to lay aside all my own important affairs, and join Edward, forsooth, in his knight-errant expedition against Louis. I will march against Louis at my own time, and not sooner; and, by St. George! neither island king, nor island noble, shall dictate to Charles of Burgundy. You are fine conceited companions, you English of both sides, that think the matters of your own bedlam island are as interesting to all the world as to yourselves. But neither York nor Lancaster, neither brother Blackburn nor cousin Margaret of Anjou, not with John de Vere to back her, shall gull me. Men lure no hawks with empty hands."

Oxford, familiar with the Duke's disposition, 133suffered him to exhaust himself in chafing, that any one should pretend to dictate his course of conduct, and, when he was at length silent, replied with calmness—"Do I live to hear the noble Duke of Burgundy, the mirror of European chivalry, say, that no reason has been shown to him for an adventure where a helpless queen is to be redressed—a royal house raised from the dust? Is there not immortal *los* and honour—the trumpet of fame to proclaim the sovereign, who, alone in a degenerate age, has united the duties of a generous knight with those of a princely sovereign?"—

The Duke interrupted him, striking him at the same time on the shoulder—"And King René's five hundred fiddlers to tune their cracked violins in my praise? and King René himself to listen to them, and say, 'Well fought, Duke—well played, fiddler!' I tell thee, John of Oxford, when thou and I wore maiden armour, such words as fame, honour, *los*, knightly glory, lady's love, and so forth, were good mottoes for our snow-white shields, and a fair enough argument for splintering lances—Ay, and in tilt-yard, though somewhat old for these fierce follies, I would jeopard my person in such a quarrel yet, as becomes a knight of the order. But when we come to paying down of crowns, and embarking of large squadrons, we must have to propose to our subjects some substantial excuse for plunging them in war; some proposal for the public good—or, by St. George! for our own private advantage, which is the same thing. This is the course the world runs, and, Oxford, to tell the plain truth, I mean to hold the same bias."¹³⁴

"Heaven forbid that I should expect your Highness to act otherwise than with a view to your subjects' welfare—the increase, that is, as your Grace happily expresses it, of your own power and dominion. The money we require is not in benevolence, but in loan; and Margaret is willing to deposit these jewels, of which I think your Grace knows the value, till she shall repay the sum which your friendship may advance in her necessity."

"Ha, ha!" said the Duke, "would our cousin make a pawnbroker of us, and have us deal with her like a Jewish usurer with his debtor?—Yet, in faith, Oxford, we may need the diamonds, for if this business were otherwise feasible, it is possible that I myself must become a borrower to aid my cousin's necessities. I have applied to the States of the Duchy, who are now sitting, and expect, as is reasonable, a large supply. But there are restless heads and close hands among them, and they may be niggardly—So place the jewels on the table in the meanwhile.—Well, say I am to be no sufferer in purse by this feat of knight-errantry which you propose to me, still princes enter not into war without some view of advantage?"

"Listen to me, noble sovereign. You are naturally bent to unite the great estates of your father, and those you have acquired by your own arms, into a compact and firm dukedom"——

"Call it kingdom," said Charles; "it is the worthier word."

"Into a kingdom, of which the crown shall sit as fair and even on your Grace's brow as that of France on your present suzerain, Louis."¹³⁵

"It need not such shrewdness as yours to descry that such is my purpose," said the Duke; "else, wherefore am I here with helm on my head, and sword by my side? And wherefore are my troops seizing on the strong places in Lorraine, and chasing before them the beggarly De Vaudemont, who has the insolence to claim it as his inheritance? Yes, my friend, the aggrandisement of Burgundy is a theme for which the duke of that fair province is bound to fight, while he can put foot in stirrup."

"But think you not," said the English Earl, "since you allow me to speak freely with your Grace, on the footing of old acquaintanceship, think you not that in this chart of your dominions, otherwise so fairly bounded, there is something on the southern frontier which might be arranged more advantageously for a King of Burgundy?"

"I cannot guess whither you would lead me," said the Duke, looking at a map of the Duchy and his other possessions, to which the Englishman had pointed his attention, and then turning his broad keen eye upon the face of the banished Earl.

"I would say," replied the latter, "that, to so powerful a prince as your Grace, there is no safe neighbour but the sea. Here is Provence, which interferes betwixt you and the Mediterranean; Provence, with its princely harbours, and fertile cornfields and vineyards. Were it not well to include it in your map of sovereignty, and thus touch the middle sea with one hand, while the other rested on the sea-coast of Flanders?"

"Provence, said you?" replied the Duke, eagerly. "Why, man, my very dreams are of Provence. I 136cannot smell an orange but it reminds me of its perfumed woods and bowers, its olives, citrons, and pomegranates. But how to frame pretensions to it? Shame it were to disturb René, the harmless old man, nor would it become a near relation. Then he is the uncle of Louis; and most probably, failing his daughter Margaret, or perhaps in preference to her, he hath named the French King his heir."

"A better claim might be raised up in your Grace's own person," said the Earl of Oxford, "if you will afford Margaret of Anjou the succour she requires by me."

"Take the aid thou requir'st," replied the Duke; "take double the amount of it in men and money! Let me but have a claim upon Provence, though thin as a single thread of thy Queen Margaret's hair, and let me alone for twisting it into the tough texture of a quadruple cable.—But I am a fool to listen to the dreams of one who, ruined himself, can lose little by holding forth to others the most extravagant hopes."

Charles breathed high, and changed complexion as he spoke.

"I am not such a person, my Lord Duke," said the Earl. "Listen to me—René is broken with years, fond of repose, and too poor to maintain his rank with the necessary dignity; too good-natured, or too feeble-minded, to lay further imposts on his subjects; weary of contending with bad fortune, and desirous to resign his territories"——

"His territories!" said Charles.

"Yes, all he actually possesses; and the much more extensive dominions which he has claim to, but which have passed from his sway."¹³⁷

"You take away my breath!" said the Duke. "René resign Provence! and what says Margaret—the proud, the high-minded Margaret—will she subscribe to so humiliating a proceeding?"

"For the chance of seeing Lancaster triumph in England, she would resign, not only dominion, but life itself. And, in truth, the sacrifice is less than it may seem to be. It is certain that, when René dies, the King of France will claim the old man's county of Provence as a male fief, and there is no one strong enough to back Margaret's claim of inheritance, however just it may be."

"It is just," said Charles; "it is undeniable! I will not hear of its being denied or challenged—that is, when once it is established in our own person. It is the true principle of the war for the public good, that none of the great fiefs be suffered to revert again to the crown of France, least of all while it stands on a brow so astucious and unprincipled as that of Louis. Burgundy joined to Provence—a dominion from the German Ocean to the Mediterranean! Oxford—thou art my better angel!"

"Your Grace must, however, reflect," said Oxford, "that honourable provision must be made for King René."

"Certainly, man, certainly; he shall have a score of fiddlers and jugglers to play, roar, and recite to him from morning till night. He shall have a court of troubadours, who shall do nothing but drink, flute, and fiddle to him, and pronounce *arrests of love*, to be confirmed or reversed by an appeal to himself, the supreme *Roi d'Amour*. And Margaret shall also be honourably sustained, in the manner you may point out."¹³⁸

"That will be easily settled," answered the English Earl. "If our attempts on England succeed, she will need no aid from Burgundy. If she fails, she retires into a cloister, and it will not be long that she will need the honourable maintenance which, I am sure, your Grace's generosity will willingly assign her."

"Unquestionably," answered Charles; "and on a scale which will become us both;—but, by my halidome, John of Vere, the abbess into whose cloister Margaret of Anjou shall retire will have an ungovernable penitent under her charge. Well do I know her; and, Sir Earl, I will not clog our discourse by expressing any doubts, that, if she pleases, she can compel her father to resign his estates to whomsoever she will. She is like my brache, Gorgon, who compels whatsoever hound is coupled with her to go the way she chooses, or she strangles him if he resists. So has Margaret acted with her simple-minded husband, and I am aware that her father, a fool of a different cast, must of necessity be equally tractable. I think I could have matched her,—though my very neck aches at the thought of the struggles we should have had for mastery.—But you look grave, because I jest with the pertinacious temper of my unhappy cousin."

"My lord," said Oxford, "whatever are or have been the defects of my mistress, she is in distress, and almost in desolation. She is my sovereign, and your Highness's cousin not the less."

"Enough said, Sir Earl," answered the Duke. "Let us speak seriously. Whatever we may think of the abdication of King René, I fear we shall find it difficult to make Louis XI. see the matter as favourably as we do. He will hold that the 139county of Provence is a male fief, and that neither the resignation of René nor the consent of his daughter can prevent its reverting to the crown of France, as the King of Sicily, as they call him, hath no male issue."

"That, may it please your Grace, is a question for battle to decide; and your Highness has successfully braved Louis for a less important stake. All I can say is, that, if your Grace's active assistance enables the young Earl of Richmond to succeed in his enterprise, you shall have the aid of three thousand English archers, if old John of Oxford, for want of a better leader, were to bring them over himself."

"A noble aid," said the Duke; "graced still more by him who promises to lead them. Thy succour, noble Oxford, were precious to me, did you but come with your sword by your side, and a single page at your back. I know you well, both heart and head. But let us to this gear; exiles, even the wisest, are privileged in promises, and sometimes—excuse me, noble Oxford—impose on themselves as well as on their friends. What are the hopes on which you desire me again to embark on so troubled and uncertain an ocean as these civil contests of yours?"

The Earl of Oxford produced a schedule, and explained to the Duke the plan of his expedition, to be backed by an insurrection of the friends of Lancaster, of which it is enough to say, that it was bold to the verge of temerity; but yet so well compacted and put together, as to bear, in those times of rapid revolution, and under a leader of Oxford's approved military skill and political sagacity, a strong appearance of probable success.¹⁴⁰

While Duke Charles mused over the particulars of an enterprise attractive and congenial to his own disposition,—while he counted over the affronts which he had received from his brother-in-law, Edward IV., the present opportunity for taking a signal revenge, and the rich acquisition which he hoped to make in Provence by the cession in his favour of René of Anjou and his daughter, the Englishman failed not to press on his consideration the urgent necessity of suffering no time to escape.

"The accomplishment of this scheme," he said, "demands the utmost promptitude. To have a chance of success, I must be in England, with your Grace's auxiliary forces, before Edward of York can return from France with his army."

"And having come hither," said the Duke, "our worthy brother will be in no hurry to return again. He will meet with black-eyed French women and ruby-coloured French wine, and brother Blackburn is no man to leave such commodities in a hurry."

"My Lord Duke, I will speak truth of my enemy. Edward is indolent and luxurious when things are easy around him, but let him feel the spur of necessity, and he becomes as eager as a pampered steed. Louis, too, who seldom fails in finding means to accomplish his ends, is bent upon determining the English King to recross the sea—therefore, speed, noble Prince—speed is the soul of your enterprise."

"Speed!" said the Duke of Burgundy,—"*Why*, I will go with you, and see the embarkation myself; and tried, approved soldiers you shall have, such as are nowhere to be found save in Artois and Hainault."¹⁴¹

"But pardon yet, noble Duke, the impatience of a drowning wretch urgently pressing for assistance.—When shall we to the coast of Flanders, to order this important measure?"

"Why, in a fortnight, or perchance a week, or, in a word, so soon as I shall have chastised to purpose a certain gang of thieves and robbers, who, as the scum of the caldron will always be uppermost, have got up into the fastnesses of the Alps, and from thence annoy our frontiers by contraband traffic, pillage, and robbery."

"Your Highness means the Swiss confederates?"

"Ay, the peasant churls give themselves such a name. They are a sort of manumitted slaves of Austria, and, like a ban-dog, whose chain is broken, they avail themselves of their liberty to annoy and rend whatever comes in their way."

"I travelled through their country from Italy," said the exiled Earl, "and I heard it was the purpose of the Cantons to send envoys to solicit peace of your Highness."

"Peace!" exclaimed Charles.—"*A* proper sort of peaceful proceedings those of their embassy have been! Availing themselves of a mutiny of the burghers of La Ferette, the first garrison town which they entered, they stormed the walls, seized on Archibald de Hagenbach, who commanded the place on my part, and put him to death in the market-place. Such an insult must be punished, Sir John de Vere; and if you do not see me in the storm of passion which it well deserves, it is because I have already given orders to hang up the base runagates who call themselves ambassadors."

"For God's sake, noble Duke," said the Englishman, throwing himself at Charles's feet—"for ¹⁴²your own character, for the sake of the peace of Christendom, revoke such an order if it is really given!"

"What means this passion?" said Duke Charles.—"*What* are these men's lives to thee, excepting that the consequences of a war may delay your expedition for a few days?"

"May render it altogether abortive," said the Earl; "*nay, must* needs do so.—Hear me, Lord Duke. I was with these men on a part of their journey."

"You!" said the Duke—"you a companion of the paltry Swiss peasants? Misfortune has sunk the pride of English nobility to a low ebb, when you selected such associates."

"I was thrown amongst them by accident," said the Earl. "Some of them are of noble blood, and are, besides, men for whose peaceable intentions I ventured to constitute myself their warrant."

"On my honour, my Lord of Oxford, you graced them highly, and me no less, in interfering between the Swiss and myself! Allow me to say that I condescend, when, in deference to past friendship, I permit you to speak to me of your own English affairs. Methinks you might well spare me your opinion upon topics with which you have no natural concern."

"My Lord of Burgundy," replied Oxford, "I followed your banner to Paris, and had the good luck to rescue you in the fight at Mont L'Hery, when you were beset by the French men-at-arms"—

"We have not forgot it," said Duke Charles; "and it is a sign that we keep the action in remembrance, that you have been suffered to stand ¹⁴³before us so long, pleading the cause of a set of rascals, whom we are required to spare from the gallows that groans for them, because forsooth they have been the fellow-travellers of the Earl of Oxford!"

"Not so, my lord. I ask their lives, only because they are upon a peaceful errand, and the leaders amongst them, at least, have no accession to the crime of which you complain."

The Duke traversed the apartment with unequal steps in much agitation, his large eyebrows drawn down over his eyes, his hands clenched, and his teeth set, until at length he seemed to take a resolution. He rung a handbell of silver, which stood upon his table.

"Here, Contay," he said to the gentleman of his chamber who entered, "are these mountain fellows yet executed?"

"No, may it please your Highness; but the executioner waits them so soon as the priest hath confessed them."

"Let them live," said the Duke. "We will hear to-morrow in what manner they propose to justify their proceedings towards us."

Contay bowed and left the apartment; then turning to the Englishman, the Duke said, with an indescribable mixture of haughtiness with familiarity and even kindness, but having his brows cleared, and his looks composed,—"*We* are now clear of obligation, my Lord of Oxford—you have obtained life for life—*nay*, to make up some inequality which there may be betwixt the value of the commodities bestowed, you have obtained six lives for one. I will, therefore, pay no more attention to you, should you again upbraid me ¹⁴⁴with the stumbling horse at Mont L'Hery, or your own achievements on that occasion. Most princes are contented with privately hating such men as have rendered them extraordinary services—I feel no such disposition—I only detest being reminded of having had occasion for them.—*Pshaw!* I am half choked with the effort of foregoing my own fixed resolution.—*So ho!* who waits there? Bring me to drink."

An usher entered, bearing a large silver flagon, which, instead of wine, was filled with ptisan slightly flavoured by aromatic herbs.

"I am so hot and choleric by nature," said the Duke, "that our leeches prohibit me from drinking wine. But you, Oxford, are bound by no such regimen. Get thee to thy countryman, Colvin, the general of our artillery. We commend thee to his custody and hospitality till to-morrow, which must be a busy day, since I expect to receive the answer of these wiseacres of the Dijon assembly of estates; and have also to hear (thanks to your lordship's interference) these miserable Swiss envoys, as they call themselves. Well, no more on't.—*Good-night.* You may communicate freely with Colvin, who is, like yourself, an old Lancastrian.—But hark ye, not a word respecting Provence—not even in your sleep.—Contay, conduct this English gentleman to Colvin's tent. He knows my pleasure respecting him."

"So please your Grace," answered Contay, "I left the English gentleman's son with Monsieur de Colvin."

"What! thine own son, Oxford? And with thee here? Why did you not tell me of him? Is he a true scion of the ancient tree?"¹⁴⁵

"It is my pride to believe so, my lord. He has been the faithful companion of all my dangers and wanderings."

"Happy man!" said the Duke, with a sigh. "You, Oxford, have a son to share your poverty and distress—I have none to be partner and successor to my greatness."

"You have a daughter, my lord," said the noble De Vere, "and it is to be hoped she will one day wed some powerful prince, who may be the stay of your Highness's house."

"Never! By St. George, never!" answered the Duke, sharply and shortly. "I will have no son-in-law, who may make the daughter's bed a stepping-stone to reach the father's crown. Oxford, I have spoken more freely than I am wont, perhaps more freely than I ought—but I hold some men trustworthy, and believe you, Sir John de Vere, to be one of them."

The English nobleman bowed, and was about to leave his presence, but the Duke presently recalled him.

"There is one thing more, Oxford.—The cession of Provence is not quite enough. René and Margaret must disavow this hot-brained Ferrand de Vaudemont, who is making some foolish stir in Lorraine, in right of his mother Yolande."

"My lord," said Oxford, "Ferrand is the grandson of King René, the nephew of Queen Margaret; but yet"——

"But yet, by St. George, his rights, as he calls them, on Lorraine must positively be disowned. You talk of their family feelings, while you are urging me to make war on my own brother-in-law!"¹⁴⁶

"René's best apology for deserting his grandson," answered Oxford, "will be his total inability to support and assist him. I will communicate your Grace's condition, though it is a hard one."

So saying, he left the pavilion.¹⁴⁷

CHAPTER VIII.

I humbly thank your Highness,

And am right glad to catch this good occasion

Most thoroughly to be winnow'd, where my chaff

And corn shall fly asunder.

King Henry VIII.

Colvin, the English officer, to whom the Duke of Burgundy, with splendid pay and appointments, committed the charge of his artillery, was owner of the tent assigned for the Englishman's lodging, and received the Earl of Oxford with the respect due to his rank, and to the Duke's especial orders upon that subject. He had been himself a follower of the Lancaster faction, and of course was well disposed towards one of the very few men of distinction whom he had known personally, and who had constantly adhered to that family through the train of misfortunes by which they seemed to be totally overwhelmed. A repast, of which his son had already partaken, was offered to the Earl by Colvin, who omitted not to recommend, by precept and example, the good wine of Burgundy, from which the sovereign of the province was himself obliged to refrain.

"His Grace shows command of passion in that," said Colvin. "For, sooth to speak, and only conversing betwixt friends, his temper grows too headlong to bear the spur which a cup of cordial beverage gives to the blood, and he, therefore, wisely restricts himself to such liquid as may cool rather than inflame his natural fire of disposition."

"I can perceive as much," said the Lancastrian noble. "When I first knew the noble Duke, who was then Earl of Charolois, his temper, though always sufficiently fiery, was calmness to the impetuosity which he now displays on the smallest contradiction. Such is the course of an uninterrupted flow of prosperity. He has ascended, by his own courage and the advantage of circumstances, from the doubtful place of a feudatory and tributary prince, to rank with the most powerful sovereigns in Europe, and to assume independent majesty. But I trust the noble starts of generosity which atoned for his wilful and wayward temper are not more few than formerly?"

"I have good right to say that they are not," replied the soldier of fortune, who understood generosity in the restricted sense of liberality. "The Duke is a noble and open-handed master."

"I trust his bounty is conferred on men who are as faithful and steady in their service as you, Colvin, have ever been. But I see a change in your army. I know the banners of most of the old houses in Burgundy—How is it that I observe so few of them in the Duke's camp? I see flags, and pennons, and pennoncelles; but even to me, who have been so many years acquainted with the nobility both of France and Flanders, their bearings are unknown."

"My noble Lord of Oxford," answered the officer, "it ill becomes a man who lives on the Duke's pay to censure his conduct; but his Highness hath of late trusted too much, as it seems to me, to the hired arms of foreign levies, and too little to his own native subjects and retainers. He holds it better to take into his pay large bands of German and Italian mercenary soldiers, than to repose confidence in the knights and squires who are bound to him by allegiance and feudal faith. He uses the aid of his own subjects but as the means of producing him sums of money, which he bestows on his hired troops. The Germans are honest knaves enough while regularly paid; but Heaven preserve me from the Duke's Italian bands, and that Campo-basso their leader, who waits but the highest price to sell his Highness like a sheep for the shambles!"

"Think you so ill of him?" demanded the Earl.

"So very ill indeed, that I believe," replied Colvin, "there is no sort of treachery which the heart can devise, or the arm perpetrate, that hath not ready reception in his breast, and prompt execution at his hand. It is painful, my lord, for an honest Englishman like me to serve in an army where such traitors have command. But what can I do, unless I could once more find me a soldier's occupation in my native country? I often hope it will please merciful Heaven again to awaken those brave civil wars in my own dear England, where all was fair fighting, and treason was unheard of."

Lord Oxford gave his host to understand, that there was a possibility that his pious wish of living and dying in his own country, and in the practice of his profession, was not to be despaired of. Meantime he requested of him, that early on the next morning he would procure him a pass and an escort for his son, whom he was compelled to despatch forthwith to Nancy, the residence of King René.¹⁵⁰

"What!" said Colvin, "is my young Lord of Oxford to take a degree in the Court of Love? for no other business is listened to at King René's capital, save love and poetry."

"I am not ambitious of such distinction for him, my good host," answered Oxford; "but Queen Margaret is with her father, and it is but fitting that the youth should kiss her hand."

"Enough spoken," said the veteran Lancastrian. "I trust, though winter is fast approaching, the Red Rose may bloom in spring."

He then ushered the Earl of Oxford to the partition of the tent which he was to occupy, in which there was a couch for Arthur also—their host, as Colvin might be termed, assuring them that, with peep of day, horses and faithful attendants should be ready to speed the youth on his journey to Nancy.

"And now, Arthur," said his father, "we must part once more. I dare give thee, in this land of danger, no written communication to my mistress, Queen Margaret; but say to her, that I have found the Duke of Burgundy wedded to his own views of interest, but not averse to combine them with hers. Say, that I have little doubt that he will grant us the required aid, but not without the expected resignation in his favour by herself and King René. Say, I would never have recommended such a sacrifice for the precarious chance of overthrowing the House of York, but that I am satisfied that France and Burgundy are hanging like vultures over Provence, and that the one or other, or both princes, are ready, on her father's demise, to pounce on such possessions as they have reluctantly spared to him during his life. ¹⁵¹An accommodation with Burgundy may therefore, on the one hand, insure his active co-operation in the attempt on England; and, on the other, if our high-spirited princess complies not with the Duke's request, the justice of her cause will give no additional security to her hereditary claims on her father's dominions. Bid Queen Margaret, therefore, unless she should have changed her views, obtain King René's formal deed of cession, conveying his estates to the Duke of

Burgundy, with her Majesty's consent. The necessary provisions to the King and to herself may be filled up at her Grace's pleasure, or they may be left blank. I can trust to the Duke's generosity to their being suitably arranged. All that I fear is, that Charles may embroil himself"——

"In some silly exploit, necessary for his own honour and the safety of his dominions," answered a voice behind the lining of the tent; "and, by doing so, attend to his own affairs more than to ours? Ha, Sir Earl?"

At the same time the curtain was drawn aside, and a person entered, in whom, though clothed with the jerkin and bonnet of a private soldier of the Walloon guard, Oxford instantly recognised the Duke of Burgundy's harsh features and fierce eyes, as they sparkled from under the fur and feather with which the cap was ornamented.

Arthur, who knew not the Prince's person, started at the intrusion, and laid his hand on his dagger; but his father made a signal which stayed his hand, and he gazed with wonder on the solemn respect with which the Earl received the intrusive soldier. The first word informed him of the cause.¹⁵²

"If this masking be done in proof of my faith, noble Duke, permit me to say it is superfluous."

"Nay, Oxford," answered the Duke, "I was a courteous spy; for I ceased to play the eavesdropper, at the very moment when I had reason to expect you were about to say something to anger me."

"As I am a true Knight, my Lord Duke, if you had remained behind the arras, you would only have heard the same truths which I am ready to tell in your Grace's presence, though it may have chanced they might have been more bluntly expressed."

"Well, speak them then, in whatever phrase thou wilt—they lie in their throats that say Charles of Burgundy was ever offended by advice from a well-meaning friend."

"I would then have said," replied the English Earl, "that all which Margaret of Anjou had to apprehend, was that the Duke of Burgundy, when buckling on his armour to win Provence for himself, and to afford to her his powerful assistance to assert her rights in England, was likely to be withdrawn from such high objects by an imprudently eager desire to avenge himself of imaginary affronts, offered to him, as he supposed, by certain confederacies of Alpine mountaineers, over whom it is impossible to gain any important advantage, or acquire reputation, while, on the contrary, there is a risk of losing both. These men dwell amongst rocks and deserts which are almost inaccessible, and subsist in a manner so rude, that the poorest of your subjects would starve if subjected to such diet. They are formed by nature to be the garrison of the mountain-fortresses in which she has ¹⁵³placed them;—for Heaven's sake meddle not with them, but follow forth your own nobler and more important objects, without stirring a nest of hornets, which, once in motion, may sting you into madness."

The Duke had promised patience, and endeavoured to keep his word; but the swollen muscles of his face, and his flashing eyes, showed how painful to him it was to suppress his resentment.

"You are misinformed, my lord," he said; "these men are not the inoffensive herdsmen and peasants you are pleased to suppose them. If they were, I might afford to despise them. But, flushed with some victories over the sluggish Austrians, they have shaken off all reverence for authority, assume airs of independence, form leagues, make inroads, storm towns, doom and execute men of noble birth at their pleasure.—Thou art dull, and look'st as if thou dost not apprehend me. To rouse thy English blood, and make thee sympathise with my feelings to these mountaineers, know that these Swiss are very Scots to my dominions in their neighbourhood; poor, proud, ferocious; easily offended, because they gain by war; ill to be appeased, because they nourish deep revenge; ever ready to seize the moment of advantage, and attack a neighbour when he is engaged in other affairs. The same unquiet, perfidious, and inveterate enemies that the Scots are to England, are the Swiss to Burgundy and to my allies. What say you? Can I undertake anything of consequence till I have crushed the pride of such a people? It will be but a few days' work. I will grasp the mountain-hedgehog, prickles and all, with my steel-gauntlet."¹⁵⁴

"Your Grace will then have shorter work with them," replied the disguised nobleman, "than our English Kings have had with Scotland. The wars there have lasted so long, and proved so bloody, that wise men regret we ever began them."

"Nay," said the Duke, "I will not dishonour the Scots by comparing them in all respects to these mountain-churls of the Cantons. The Scots have blood and gentry among them, and we have seen many examples of both; these Swiss are a mere brood of peasants, and the few gentlemen of birth they can boast must hide their distinction in the dress and manners of clowns. They will, I think, scarce stand against a charge of Hainaulters."

"Not if the Hainaulters find ground to ride upon. But"——

"Nay, to silence your scruples," said the Duke, interrupting him, "know, that these people encourage, by their countenance and aid, the formation of the most dangerous conspiracies in my dominions. Look here—I told you that my officer, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach, was murdered when the town of Brisach was treacherously taken by these harmless Switzers of yours. And here is a scroll of parchment, which announces that my servant was murdered by doom of the Vehme-gericht, a band of secret assassins, whom I will not permit to meet in any part of my dominions. Oh, could I but catch them above ground as they are found lurking below, they should know what the life of a nobleman is worth! Then, look at the insolence of their attestation."

The scroll bore, with the day and date adjoined, that judgment had been done on Archibald de Hagenbach, for tyranny, violence, and oppression, ¹⁵⁵by order of the Holy Vehme, and that it was executed by their officials, who were responsible for the same to their tribunal alone. It was countersigned in red ink, with the badges of the Secret Society, a coil of ropes and a drawn dagger.

"This document I found stuck to my toilette with a knife," said the Duke; "another trick by which they give mystery to their murderous jugglery."

The thought of what he had undergone in John Mengs's house, and reflections upon the extent and omnipresence of these Secret Associations, struck even the brave Englishman with an involuntary shudder.

"For the sake of every saint in heaven," he said, "forbear, my lord, to speak of these tremendous societies, whose creatures are above, beneath, and around us. No man is secure of his life, however guarded, if it be sought by a man who is careless of his own. You are surrounded by Germans, Italians, and other strangers—How many amongst these may be bound by the secret ties which withdraw men from every other social bond, to unite them together in one inextricable though secret compact? Beware, noble Prince, of the situation on which your throne is placed, though it still exhibits all the splendour of power, and all the solidity of foundation that belongs to so august a structure. I—the friend of thy house—were it with my dying breath—must needs tell thee, that the Swiss hang like an avalanche over thy head; and the Secret Associations work beneath thee like the first throes of the coming earthquake. Provoke not the contest, and the snow will rest undisturbed on the mountain-side—the agitation ¹⁵⁶of the subterranean vapours will be hushed to rest; but a single word of defiance, or one flash of indignant scorn, may call their terrors into instant action."

"You speak," said the Duke, "with more awe of a pack of naked churls, and a band of midnight assassins, than I have seen you show for real danger. Yet I will not scorn your counsel—I will hear the Swiss envoys patiently, and I will not, if I can help it, show the contempt with which I cannot but regard their pretensions to treat as independent states. On the Secret Associations I will be silent, till time gives me the means of acting in combination with the Emperor, the Diet, and the Princes of the Empire, that they may be driven from all their burrows at once.—Ha, Sir Earl, said I well?"

"It is well thought, my lord, but it may be unhappily spoken. You are in a position where one word overheard by a traitor might produce death and ruin."

"I keep no traitors about me," said Charles. "If I thought there were such in my camp, I would rather die by them at once, than live in perpetual terror and suspicion."

"Your Highness's ancient followers and servants," said the Earl, "speak unfavourably of the Count of Campo-basso, who holds so high a rank in your confidence."

"Ay," replied the Duke, with composure, "it is easy to decry the most faithful servant in a court by the unanimous hatred of all the others. I warrant me your bull-headed countryman, Colvin, has been railing against the Count like the rest of them, for Campo-basso sees nothing ¹⁵⁷amiss in any department but he reports it to me without fear or favour. And then his opinions are cast so much in the same mould with my own, that I can hardly get him to enlarge upon what he best understands, if it seems in any respect different from my sentiments. Add to this, a noble person, grace, gaiety, skill in the exercises of war, and in the courtly arts of peace—such is Campo-basso; and, being such, is he not a gem for a prince's cabinet?"

"The very materials out of which a favourite is formed," answered the Earl of Oxford, "but something less adapted for making a faithful counsellor."

"Why, thou mistrustful fool," said the Duke, "must I tell thee the very inmost secret respecting this man, Campo-basso, and will nothing short of it stay these imaginary suspicions which thy new trade of an itinerant merchant hath led thee to entertain so rashly?"

"If your Highness honours me with your confidence," said the Earl of Oxford, "I can only say that my fidelity shall deserve it."

"Know, then, thou misbelieving mortal, that my good friend and brother, Louis of France, sent me private information through no less a person than his famous barber, Oliver le Diable, that Campo-basso had for a certain sum offered to put my person into his hands, alive or dead.—You start?"

"I do indeed—recollecting your Highness's practice of riding out lightly armed, and with a very small attendance, to reconnoitre the ground and visit the outposts, and therefore how easily such a treacherous device might be carried into execution."158

"Pshaw!" answered the Duke.—"Thou seest the danger as if it were real, whereas nothing can be more certain than that, if my cousin of France had ever received such an offer, he would have been the last person to have put me on my guard against the attempt. No—he knows the value I set on Campo-basso's services, and forged the accusation to deprive me of them."

"And yet, my lord," replied the English Earl, "your Highness, by my counsel, will not unnecessarily or impatiently fling aside your armour of proof, or ride without the escort of some score of your trusty Walloons."

"Tush, man, thou wouldst make a carbonado of a fever-stirred wretch like myself, betwixt the bright iron and the burning sun. But I will be cautious though I jest thus—and you, young man, may assure my cousin, Margaret of Anjou, that I will consider her affairs as my own. And remember, youth, that the secrets of princes are fatal gifts, if he to whom they are imparted blaze them abroad; but if duly treasured up, they enrich the bearer. And thou shalt have cause to say so, if thou canst bring back with thee from Aix the deed of resignation of which thy father hath spoken.—Good-night—good-night!"

He left the apartment.

"You have just seen," said the Earl of Oxford to his son, "a sketch of this extraordinary prince, by his own pencil. It is easy to excite his ambition or thirst of power, but well-nigh impossible to limit him to the just measures by which it is most likely to be gratified. He is ever like the young archer, startled from his mark by some swallow crossing his eye, even careless as he 159draws the string. Now irregularly and offensively suspicious—now unreservedly lavish of his confidence—not long since the enemy of the line of Lancaster, and the ally of her deadly foe—now its last and only stay and hope. God mend all!—It is a weary thing to look on the game and see how it might be won, while we are debarred by the caprice of others from the power of playing it according to our own skill. How much must depend on the decision of Duke Charles upon the morrow, and how little do I possess the power of influencing him, either for his own safety or our advantage! Good-night, my son, and let us trust events to Him who alone can control them."160

CHAPTER IX.

My blood hath been too cold and temperate,

Unapt to stir at these indignities,

And you have found me; for, accordingly,

You tread upon my patience.

Henry IV.

The dawn of morning roused the banished Earl of Oxford and his son, and its lights were scarce abroad on the eastern heaven, ere their host, Colvin, entered with an attendant, bearing some bundles, which he placed on the floor of the tent, and instantly retired. The officer of the Duke's ordnance then announced that he came with a message from the Duke of Burgundy.

"His Highness," he said, "has sent four stout yeomen, with a commission of credence to my young master of Oxford, and an ample purse of gold, to furnish his expenses to Aix, and while his affairs may detain him there. Also a letter of credence to King René, to insure his reception, and two suits of honour for his use, as for an English gentleman, desirous to witness the festive solemnities of Provence, and in whose safety the Duke deigns to take deep interest. His further affairs there, if he hath any, his Highness recommends to him to manage with prudence and secrecy. His Highness hath also sent a couple of horses for his use,—one an ambling jennet for the road, and another a strong barbed horse of 161Flanders, in case he hath aught to do. It will be fitting that my young master change his dress, and assume attire more near his proper rank. His attendants know the road, and have power, in case of need, to summon, in the Duke's name, assistance from all faithful Burgundians. I have but to add, the sooner the young gentleman sets forward, it will be the better sign of a successful journey."

"I am ready to mount, the instant that I have changed my dress," said Arthur.

"And I," said his father, "have no wish to detain him on the service in which he is now employed. Neither he nor I will say more than God be with you. How and where we are to meet again, who can tell?"

"I believe," said Colvin, "that must rest on the motions of the Duke, which, perchance, are not yet determined upon; but his Highness depends upon your remaining with him, my noble lord, till the affairs of which you come to treat may be more fully decided. Something I have for your lordship's private ear, when your son hath parted on his journey."

While Colvin was thus talking with his father, Arthur, who was not above half-dressed when he entered the tent, had availed himself of an obscure corner, in which he exchanged the plain garb belonging to his supposed condition as a merchant, for such a riding-suit as became a young man of some quality attached to the Court of Burgundy. It was not without a natural sensation of pleasure that the youth resumed an apparel suitable to his birth, and which no one was personally more fitted to become; but it was with much deeper feeling that he hastily, and as secretly as possible, flung 162round his neck, and concealed under the collar and folds of his ornamented doublet, a small thin chain of gold, curiously linked in what was called Morisco work. This was the contents of the parcel which Anne of Geierstein had indulged his feelings, and perhaps her own, by putting into his hands as they parted. The chain was secured by a slight plate of gold, on which a bodkin, or a point of a knife, had traced on the one side, in distinct though light characters, ADIEU FOR EVER! while, on the reverse, there was much more obscurely traced, the word REMEMBER!—A. VON G.

All who may read this are, have been, or will be, lovers; and there is none, therefore, who may not be able to comprehend why this token was carefully suspended around Arthur's neck, so that the inscription might rest on the region of his heart, without the interruption of any substance which could prevent the pledge from being agitated by every throb of that busy organ.

This being hastily insured, a few minutes completed the rest of his toilette; and he kneeled before his father to ask his blessing, and his further commands for Aix. His father blessed him almost inarticulately, and then said, with recovered firmness, that he was already possessed of all the knowledge necessary for success on his mission.

"When you can bring me the deeds wanted," he whispered with more firmness, "you will find me near the person of the Duke of Burgundy."

They went forth of the tent in silence, and found before it the four Burgundian yeomen, tall and active-looking men, ready mounted themselves, and holding two saddled horses—the one 163accoutred for war, the other a spirited jennet, for the purposes of the journey. One of them led a sumpter-horse, on which Colvin informed Arthur he would find the change of habit necessary when he should arrive at Aix; and at the same time delivered to him a heavy purse of gold.

"Thiebault," he continued, pointing out the eldest of the attendant troopers, "may be trusted—I will be warrant for his sagacity and fidelity. The other three are picked men, who will not fear their skin-cutting."

Arthur vaulted into the saddle with a sensation of pleasure, which was natural to a young cavalier who had not for many months felt a spirited horse beneath him. The lively jennet reared with impatience. Arthur, sitting firm on his seat, as if he had been a part of the animal, only said, "Ere we are long acquainted, thy spirit, my fair roan, will be something more tamed."

"One word more, my son," said his father, and whispered in Arthur's ear, as he stooped from the saddle; "if you receive a letter from me, do not think yourself fully acquainted with the contents till the paper has been held opposite to a hot fire."

Arthur bowed, and motioned to the elder trooper to lead the way, when all, giving rein to their horses, rode off through the encampment at a round pace, the young leader signing an adieu to his father and Colvin.

The Earl stood like a man in a dream, following his son with his eyes, in a kind of reverie, which was only broken when Colvin said, "I marvel not, my lord, that you are anxious about my young master; he is a gallant youth, well worth a father's 164caring for, and the times we live in are both false and bloody."

"God and St. Mary be my witness," said the Earl, "that if I grieve, it is not for my own house only;—if I am anxious, it is not for the sake of my own son alone;—but it is hard to risk a last stake in a cause so perilous.—What commands brought you from the Duke?"

"His Grace," said Colvin, "will get on horseback after he has breakfasted. He sends you some garments, which, if not fitting your quality, are yet nearer to suitable apparel than those you now wear, and he desires that, observing your incognito as an English merchant of eminence, you will join him in his cavalcade to Dijon, where he is to receive the answer of the Estates of Burgundy concerning matters submitted to their consideration, and thereafter give public audience to the Deputies from Switzerland. His Highness has charged me with the care of finding you suitable accommodation during the ceremonies of the day, which, he thinks, you will, as a stranger, be pleased to look upon. But he probably told you all this himself, for I think you saw him last night in disguise—Nay, look as strange as you will—the Duke plays that trick too often to be able to do it with secrecy; the very horse-boys know him while he traverses the tents of the common soldiery, and sutler women give him the name of the spied spy. If it were only honest Harry Colvin who knew this, it should not cross his lips. But it is practised too openly, and too widely known. Come, noble lord, though I must teach my tongue to forego that courtesy, will you along to breakfast?"

The meal, according to the practice of the time, 165was a solemn and solid one; and a favoured officer of the Great Duke of Burgundy lacked no means, it may be believed, of rendering due hospitality to a guest having claims of such high respect. But ere the breakfast was over a clamorous flourish of trumpets announced that the Duke, with his attendants and retinue, were sounding to horse. Philipson, as he was still called, was, in the name of the Duke, presented with a stately charger, and with his host mingled in the splendid assembly which began to gather in front of the Duke's pavilion. In a few minutes the Prince himself issued forth, in the superb dress of the Order of the Golden Fleece, of which his father Philip had been the founder, and Charles was himself the patron and sovereign. Several of his courtiers were dressed in the same magnificent robes, and, with their followers and attendants, displayed so much wealth and splendour of appearance as to warrant the common saying that the Duke of Burgundy maintained the most magnificent court in Christendom. The officers of his household attended in their order, together with heralds and pursuivants, the grotesque richness of whose habits had a singular effect among those of the high clergy in their albes and dalmatiques, and of the knights and crown vassals who were arrayed in armour. Among these last, who were variously equipped, according to the different character of their service, rode Oxford, but in a peaceful habit, neither so plain as to be out of place amongst such splendour, nor so rich as to draw on him a special or particular degree of attention. He rode by the side of Colvin, his tall muscular figure and deep-marked features forming a strong contrast to the 166rough, almost ignoble, cast of countenance, and stout thick-set form, of the less distinguished soldier of fortune.

Ranged into a solemn procession, the rear of which was closed by a guard of two hundred picked arquebusiers, a description of soldiers who were just then coming into notice, and as many mounted men-at-arms, the Duke and his retinue, leaving the barriers of the camp, directed their march to the town, or rather city, of Dijon, in those days the capital of all Burgundy.

It was a town well secured with walls and ditches, which last were filled by means of a small river, named the Ousche, which combines its waters for that purpose with a torrent called Suzon. Four gates, with appropriate barbicans, outworks, and drawbridges, corresponded nearly to the cardinal points of the compass, and gave admission to the city. The number of towers, which stood high above its walls, and defended them at different angles, was thirty-three; and the walls themselves, which exceeded in most places the height of thirty feet, were built of stones hewn and squared, and were of great thickness. This stately city was surrounded on the outside with hills covered with vineyards, while from within its walls rose the towers of many noble buildings, both public and private, as well as the steeples of magnificent churches, and of well-endowed convents, attesting the wealth and devotion of the House of Burgundy.

When the trumpets of the Duke's procession had summoned the burgher guard at the gate of St. Nicholas, the drawbridge fell, the portcullis rose, the people shouted joyously, the windows were 167hung with tapestry, and as, in the midst of his retinue, Charles himself came riding on a milk-white steed, attended only by six pages under fourteen years old, with each a gilded partisan in his hand, the acclamations with which he was received on all sides showed that, if some instances of misrule had diminished his popularity, enough of it remained to render his reception into his capital decorous at least, if not enthusiastic. It is probable that the veneration attached to his father's memory counteracted for a long time the unfavourable effect which some of his own actions were calculated to produce on the public mind.

The procession halted before a large Gothic building in the centre of Dijon. This was then called Maison du Duc, as, after the union of Burgundy with France, it was termed Maison du Roy. The Maire of Dijon attended on the steps before this palace, accompanied by his official brethren, and escorted by a hundred able-bodied citizens, in black velvet cloaks, bearing half-pikes in their hands. The Maire kneeled to kiss the stirrup of the Duke, and at the moment when Charles descended from his horse every bell in the city commenced so thundering a peal, that they might almost have awakened the dead who slept in the vicinity of the steeples, which rocked with their clangour. Under the influence of this stunning peal of welcome, the Duke entered the great hall of the building, at the upper end of which were erected a throne for the sovereign, seats for his more distinguished officers of state and higher vassals, with benches behind for persons of less note. On one of these, but in a spot from which he might possess a commanding view of the whole 168assembly, as well as of the Duke himself, Colvin placed the noble Englishman; and Charles, whose quick stern eye glanced rapidly over the party when they were seated, seemed, by a nod so slight as to be almost imperceptible to those around him, to give his approbation of the arrangement adopted.

When the Duke and his assistants were seated and in order, the Maire, again approaching, in the most humble manner, and kneeling on the lowest step of the ducal throne, requested to know if his Highness's leisure permitted him to hear the inhabitants of his capital express their devoted zeal to his person, and to accept the benevolence which, in the shape of a silver cup filled with gold pieces, he had the distinguished honour to place before his feet, in name of the citizens and community of Dijon.

Charles, who at no time affected much courtesy, answered briefly and bluntly, with a voice which was naturally harsh and dissonant, "All things in their order, good Master Maire. Let us first hear what the Estates of Burgundy have to say to us. We will then listen to the burghers of Dijon."

The Maire rose and retired, bearing in his hand the silver cup, and experiencing probably some vexation, as well as surprise, that its contents had not secured an instant and gracious acceptance.

"I expected," said Duke Charles, "to have met at this hour and place our Estates of the duchy of Burgundy, or a deputation of them, with an answer to our message conveyed to them three days since by our chancellor. Is there no one here on their part?"

The Maire, as none else made any attempt to answer, said that the members of the Estates had 169been in close deliberation the whole of that morning, and doubtless would instantly wait upon his Highness when they heard that he had honoured the town with his presence.

"Go, Toison d'Or," said the Duke to the herald of the Order of the Golden Fleece,^[7] "bear to these gentlemen the tidings that we desire to know the end of their deliberations; and that neither in courtesy nor in loyalty can they expect us to wait long. Be round with them, Sir Herald, or we shall be as round with you."

While the herald was absent on his mission, we may remind our readers that in all feudalised countries (that is to say, in almost all Europe during the Middle Ages) an ardent spirit of liberty pervaded the constitution; and the only fault that could be found was, that the privileges and freedom for which the great vassals contended did not sufficiently descend to the lower orders of society, or extend protection to those who were most likely to need it. The two first ranks in the estate, the nobles and clergy, enjoyed high and important privileges, and even the third estate, or citizens, had this immunity in peculiar, that no new duties, customs, or taxes of any kind could be exacted from them save by their own consent.

The memory of Duke Philip, the father of Charles, was dear to the Burgundians; for during twenty years that sage prince had maintained his rank amongst the sovereigns of Europe with much dignity, and had accumulated treasure without exacting or receiving any great increase of supplies from the rich countries which he governed. But the extravagant schemes and immoderate expense 170of Duke Charles had already excited the suspicion of his Estates; and the mutual good-

will betwixt the prince and people began to be exchanged for suspicion and distrust on the one side, and defiance on the other. The refractory disposition of the Estates had of late increased; for they had disapproved of various wars in which their Duke had needlessly embarked, and from his levying such large bodies of mercenary troops, they came to suspect he might finally employ the wealth voted to him by his subjects for the undue extension of his royal prerogative, and the destruction of the liberties of the people.

At the same time, the Duke's uniform success in enterprises which appeared desperate as well as difficult, esteem for the frankness and openness of his character, and dread of the obstinacy and headstrong tendency of a temper which could seldom bear persuasion, and never endured opposition, still threw awe and terror around the throne, which was materially aided by the attachment of the common people to the person of the present Duke and to the memory of his father. It had been understood that upon the present occasion there was strong opposition amongst the Estates to the system of taxation proposed on the part of the Duke, and the issue was expected with considerable anxiety by the Duke's counsellors, and with fretful impatience by the sovereign himself.

After a space of about ten minutes had elapsed, the Chancellor of Burgundy, who was Archbishop of Vienne, and a prelate of high rank, entered the hall with his train; and passing behind the ducal throne to occupy one of the most distinguished places in the assembly, he stopped for a moment to urge his master to receive the answer of his Estates in a private manner, giving him at the same time to understand that the result of the deliberations had been by no means satisfactory.

"By St. George of Burgundy, my Lord Archbishop," answered the Duke, sternly and aloud, "we are not a prince of a mind so paltry that we need to shun the moody looks of a discontented and insolent faction. If the Estates of Burgundy send a disobedient and disloyal answer to our paternal message, let them deliver it in open court, that the assembled people may learn how to decide between their Duke and those petty yet intriguing spirits, who would interfere with our authority."

The chancellor bowed gravely, and took his seat; while the English Earl observed, that most of the members of the assembly, excepting such as in doing so could not escape the Duke's notice, passed some observations to their neighbours, which were received with a half-expressed nod, shrug, or shake of the head, as men treat a proposal upon which it is dangerous to decide. At the same time, Toison d'Or, who acted as master of the ceremonies, introduced into the hall a committee of the Estates, consisting of twelve members, four from each branch of the Estates, announced as empowered to deliver the answer of that assembly to the Duke of Burgundy.

When the deputation entered the hall, Charles arose from his throne, according to ancient custom, and taking from his head his bonnet, charged with a huge plume of feathers, "Health and welcome," he said, "to my good subjects of the Estates of Burgundy!" All the numerous train of courtiers rose and uncovered their heads with the same ceremony. The members of the States then dropped on one knee, the four ecclesiastics, among whom Oxford recognised the Black Priest of St. Paul's, approaching nearest to the Duke's person, the nobles kneeling behind them, and the burgesses in the rear of the whole.

"Noble Duke," said the Priest of St. Paul's, "will it best please you to hear the answer of your good and loyal Estates of Burgundy by the voice of one member speaking for the whole, or by three persons, each delivering the sense of the body to which he belongs?"

"As you will," said the Duke of Burgundy.

"A priest, a noble, and a free burgher," said the Churchman, still on one knee, "will address your Highness in succession. For though, blessed be the God who leads brethren to dwell together in unity! we are agreed in the general answer, yet each body of the Estates may have special and separate reasons to allege for the common opinion."

"We will hear you separately," said Duke Charles, casting his hat upon his head, and throwing himself carelessly back into his seat. At the same time, all who were of noble blood, whether in the committee or amongst the spectators, vouched their right to be peers of their sovereign by assuming their bonnets; and a cloud of waving plumes at once added grace and dignity to the assembly.

When the Duke resumed his seat, the deputation arose from their knees, and the Black Priest of St. Paul's, again stepping forth, addressed him in these words:—

"My Lord Duke, your loyal and faithful clergy have considered your Highness's proposal to lay tallage on your people, in order to make war on the confederate Cantons in the country of the Alps. The quarrel, my liege lord, seems to your clergy an unjust and oppressive one on your Highness's part; nor can they hope that God will bless those who arm in it. They are therefore compelled to reject your Highness's proposal."

The Duke's eye lowered gloomily on the deliverer of this unpalatable message. He shook his head with one of those stern and menacing looks which the harsh composition of his features rendered them peculiarly qualified to express. "You have spoken, Sir Priest," was the only reply which he deigned to make.

One of the four nobles, the Sire de Myrebeau, then expressed himself thus:—

"Your Highness has asked of your faithful nobles to consent to new imposts and exactions, to be levied through Burgundy, for the raising of additional bands of hired soldiers for the maintenance of the quarrels of the State. My lord, the swords of the Burgundian nobles, knights, and gentlemen have been ever at your Highness's command, as those of our ancestors have been readily wielded for your predecessors. In your Highness's just quarrel we will go farther, and fight firmer, than any hired fellows who can be procured, whether from France, or Germany, or Italy. We will not give our consent that the people should be taxed for paying mercenaries to discharge that military duty which it is alike our pride and our exclusive privilege to render."

"You have spoken, Sire de Myrebeau," were again the only words of the Duke's reply. He uttered them slowly and with deliberation, as if afraid lest some phrase of imprudent violence should escape along with what he purposed to say. Oxford thought he cast a glance towards him before he spoke, as if the consciousness of his presence was some additional restraint on his passion. "Now, Heaven grant," he said to himself, "that this opposition may work its proper effect, and induce the Duke to renounce an imprudent attempt, so hazardous and so unnecessary!"

While he muttered these thoughts, the Duke made a sign to one of the *tiers état*, or commons, to speak in his turn. The person who obeyed the signal was Martin Block, a wealthy butcher and grazier of Dijon. His words were these: "Noble Prince, our fathers were the dutiful subjects of your predecessors; we are the same to you; our children will be alike the liegemen of your successors. But, touching the request your chancellor has made to us, it is such as our ancestors never complied with; such as we are determined to refuse, and such as will never be conceded by the Estates of Burgundy, to any prince whatsoever, even to the end of time."

Charles had borne with impatient silence the speeches of the two former orators, but this blunt and hardy reply of the third Estate excited him beyond what his nature could endure. He gave way to the impetuosity of his disposition, stamped on the floor till the throne shook, and the high vault rung over their heads, and overwhelmed the bold burgher with reproaches. "Beast of burden," he said, "am I to be stunned with thy braying too? The nobles may claim leave to speak, for they can fight; the clergy may use their tongues, for it is their trade; but thou, that hast never shed blood, save that of bullocks, more stupid than thou art thyself—must thou and thy herd come hither, privileged, forsooth, to bellow at a prince's footstool? Know, brute as thou art, that steers are never introduced into temples but to be sacrificed, or butchers and mechanics brought before their sovereign, save that they may have the honour to supply the public wants from their own swelling hoards!"

A murmur of displeasure, which even the terror of the Duke's wrath could not repress, ran through the audience at these words; and the burgher of Dijon, a sturdy plebeian, replied, with little reverence: "Our purses, my Lord Duke, are our own—we will not put the strings of them into your Highness's hands, unless we are satisfied with the purposes to which the money is to be applied; and we know well how to protect our persons and our goods against foreign ruffians and plunderers."

Charles was on the point of ordering the deputy to be arrested, when, having cast his eye towards the Earl of Oxford, whose presence, in despite of himself, imposed a certain degree of restraint upon him, he exchanged that piece of imprudence for another.

"I see," he said, addressing the committee of Estates, "that you are all leagued to disappoint my purposes, and doubtless to deprive me of all the power of a sovereign, save that of wearing a coronet, and being served on the knee like a second Charles the Simple, while the Estates of my kingdom divide the power among them. But you shall know that you have to do with Charles of Burgundy, a prince who, though he has deigned to consult you, is fully able to fight battles without the aid of his nobles, since they refuse him the assistance of their swords—to defray the expense without the help of his sordid burghers—and, it may

be, to find out a path to heaven without the assistance of an ungrateful priesthood. I will show all that are here present how little my mind is affected, or my purpose changed, by your seditious reply to the message with which I honoured you.—Here, Toison d'Or, admit into our presence these men from the confederated towns and cantons, as they call themselves, of Switzerland."

Oxford, and all who really interested themselves in the Duke's welfare, heard, with the utmost apprehension, his resolution to give an audience to the Swiss Envoys, prepossessed as he was against them, and in the moment when his mood was chafed to the uttermost by the refusal of the Estates to grant him supplies. They were aware that obstacles opposed to the current of his passion were like rocks in the bed of a river, whose course they cannot interrupt, while they provoke it to rage and foam. All were sensible that the die was cast, but none who were not endowed with more than mortal prescience could have imagined how deep was the pledge which depended upon it. Oxford, in particular, conceived that the execution of his plan of a descent upon England was the principal point compromised by the Duke in his rash obstinacy; but he suspected not—he dreamed not of supposing—that the life of Charles himself, and the independence of Burgundy as a separate kingdom, hung quivering in the same scales.177

CHAPTER X.

Why, 'tis a boisterous and cruel style,
A style for challengers. Why, she defies us,
Like Turk to Christian.
As You Like It.

The doors of the hall were now opened to the Swiss deputies, who for the preceding hour had been kept in attendance on the outside of the building, without receiving the slightest of those attentions which among civilised nations are universally paid to the representatives of a foreign State. Indeed, their very appearance, dressed in coarse grey frocks, like mountain hunters or shepherds, in the midst of an assembly blazing with divers-coloured garments, gold and silver lace, embroidery, and precious stones, served to confirm the idea that they could only have come hither in the capacity of the most humble petitioners.

Oxford, however, who watched closely the deportment of his late fellow-travellers, failed not to observe that they retained each in his own person the character of firmness and indifference which formerly distinguished them. Rudolph Donnerhugel preserved his bold and haughty look; the Banneret, the military indifference which made him look with apparent apathy on all around him; the burgher of Soleure was as formal and important as ever; nor did any of the three show themselves affected in the slightest degree by the splendour of the scene around them, or embarrassed by the consideration of their own comparative inferiority of appointments. But the noble Landamman, on whom Oxford chiefly bent his attention, seemed overwhelmed with a sense of the precarious state in which his country was placed; fearing, from the rude and unhonoured manner in which they were received, that war was unavoidable, while, at the same time, like a good patriot, he mourned over the consequences of ruin to the freedom of his country by defeat, or injury to her simplicity and virtuous indifference of wealth, by the introduction of foreign luxuries and the evils attending on conquest.

Well acquainted with the opinions of Arnold Biederman, Oxford could easily explain his sadness, while his comrade Bonstetten, less capable of comprehending his friend's feelings, looked at him with the expression which may be seen in the countenance of a faithful dog, when the creature indicates sympathy with his master's melancholy, though unable to ascertain or appreciate its cause. A look of wonder now and then glided around the splendid assembly on the part of all the forlorn group, excepting Donnerhugel and the Landamman; for the indomitable pride of the one, and the steady patriotism of the other, could not for even an instant be diverted by external objects from their own deep and stern reflections.

After a silence of nearly five minutes, the Duke spoke, with the haughty and harsh manner which he might imagine belonged to his place, and which certainly expressed his character.

"Men of Berne, of Schwitz, or of whatever hamlet and wilderness you may represent, know that we had not honoured you, rebels as you are to the dominion of your lawful superiors, with an audience in our own presence, but for the intercession of a well-esteemed friend, who has sojourned among your mountains, and whom you may know by the name of Philipson, an Englishman, following the trade of a merchant, and charged with certain valuable matters of traffic to our court. To his intercession we have so far given way, that instead of commanding you, according to your demerits, to the gibbet and the wheel in the Place de Morimont, we have condescended to receive you into our own presence, sitting in our *cour plénière*, to hear from you such submission as you can offer for your outrageous storm of our town of La Ferette, the slaughter of many of our liegemen, and the deliberate murder of the noble knight, Archibald of Hagenbach, executed in your presence, and by your countenance and device. Speak—if you can say aught in defence of your felony and treason, either to deprecate just punishment, or crave undeserved mercy."

The Landamman seemed about to answer; but Rudolph Donnerhugel, with his characteristic boldness and hardihood, took the task of reply on himself. He confronted the proud Duke with an eye unappalled, and a countenance as stern as his own.

"We came not here," he said, "to compromise our own honour, or the dignity of the free people whom we represent, by pleading guilty in their name, or our own, to crimes of which we are innocent. And when you term us rebels, you must remember, that a long train of victories, whose history is written in the noblest blood of Austria, has restored to the confederacy of our communities the freedom of which an unjust tyranny in vain attempted to deprive us. While Austria was a just and beneficent mistress, we served her with our lives;—when she became oppressive and tyrannical, we assumed independence. If she has aught yet to claim from us, the descendants of Tell, Faust, and Stauffacher will be as ready to assert their liberties as their fathers were to gain them. Your Grace—if such be your title—has no concern with any dispute betwixt us and Austria. For your threats of gibbet and wheel, we are here defenceless men, on whom you may work your pleasure; but we know how to die, and our countrymen know how to avenge us."

The fiery Duke would have replied by commanding the instant arrest, and probably the immediate execution, of the whole deputation. But his chancellor, availing himself of the privilege of his office, rose, and, doffing his cap with a deep reverence to the Duke, requested leave to reply to the misproud young man, who had, he said, so greatly mistaken the purpose of his Highness's speech.

Charles, feeling perhaps at the moment too much irritated to form a calm decision, threw himself back in his chair of state, and with an impatient and angry nod gave his chancellor permission to speak.

"Young man," said that high officer, "you have mistaken the meaning of the high and mighty sovereign in whose presence you stand. Whatever be the lawful rights of Austria over the revolted villages which have flung off their allegiance to their native superior, we have no call to enter on that argument. But that for which Burgundy demands your answer is, wherefore, coming here in the guise, and with the character, of peaceful envoys, on affairs touching your own communities and the rights of the Duke's subjects, you have raised war in our peaceful dominions, stormed a fortress, massacred its garrison, and put to death a noble knight, its commander?—all of them actions contrary to the law of nations, and highly deserving of the punishment with which you have been justly threatened, but with which I hope our gracious sovereign will dispense, if you express some sufficient reason for such outrageous insolence, with an offer of due submission to his Highness's pleasure, and satisfactory reparation for such a high injury."

"You are a priest, grave sir?" answered Rudolph Donnerhugel, addressing the Chancellor of Burgundy. "If there be a soldier in this assembly who will avouch your charge, I challenge him to the combat, man to man. We did not storm the garrison of La Ferette—we were admitted into the gates in a peaceful manner, and were there instantly surrounded by the soldiers of the late Archibald de Hagenbach, with the obvious purpose of assaulting and murdering us on our peaceful mission. I promise you there had been news of more men dying than us. But an uproar broke out among the inhabitants of the town, assisted, I believe, by many neighbours, to whom the insolence and oppression of Archibald de Hagenbach had become odious, as to all who were within his reach. We rendered them no assistance; and, I trust, it was not expected that we should interfere in the favour of men who had stood prepared to do the worst against us. But not a pike or sword belonging to us or our attendants was dipped in Burgundian blood. Archibald de Hagenbach perished, it is true, on a scaffold, and I saw him die with pleasure, under a sentence pronounced by a competent court, such as is recognised in Westphalia, and its dependencies on this side of the Rhine. I am not

obliged to vindicate their proceedings; but I aver, that the Duke has received full proof of his regular sentence; and, in fine, that it was amply deserved by oppression, tyranny, and foul abuse of his authority, I will uphold against all gainsayers, with the body of a man. There lies my glove."

And, with an action suited to the language he used, the stern Swiss flung his right-hand glove on the floor of the hall. In the spirit of the age, with the love of distinction in arms which it nourished, and perhaps with the desire of gaining the Duke's favour, there was a general motion among the young Burgundians to accept the challenge, and more than six or eight gloves were hastily doffed by the young knights present, those who were more remote flinging them over the heads of the nearest, and each proclaiming his name and title as he proffered the gage of combat.

"I set at all," said the daring young Swiss, gathering the gauntlets as they fell clashing around him. "More, gentlemen, more! a glove for every finger! come on, one at once—fair lists, equal judges of the field, the combat on foot, and the weapons two-handed swords, and I will not budge for a score of you."

"Hold, gentlemen! on your allegiance, hold!" said the Duke, gratified at the same time, and somewhat appeased, by the zeal which was displayed 183in his cause—moved by the strain of reckless bravery evinced by the challenger, with a hardihood akin to his own—perhaps also not unwilling to display, in the view of his *cour plénière*, more temperance than he had been at first capable of. "Hold, I command you all.—Toison d'Or, gather up these gauntlets, and return them each to his owner. God and St. George forbid that we should hazard the life of even the least of our noble Burgundian gentry against such a churl as this Swiss peasant, who never so much as mounted a horse, and knows not a jot of knightly courtesy, or the grace of chivalry.—Carry your vulgar brawls elsewhere, young man, and know that, on the present occasion, the Place Morimont were your only fitting lists, and the hangman your meet antagonist. And you, sirs, his companions—whose behaviour in suffering this swaggerer to take the lead amongst you seems to show that the laws of nature, as well as of society, are inverted, and that youth is preferred to age, as gentry to peasants—you white-bearded men, I say, is there none of you who can speak your errand in such language as it becomes a sovereign prince to listen to?"

"God forbid else," said the Landamman, stepping forward and silencing Rudolph Donnerhugel, who was commencing an answer of defiance—"God forbid," he said, "noble Duke, that we should not be able to speak so as to be understood before your Highness, since, I trust, we shall speak the language of truth, peace, and justice. Nay, should it incline your Highness to listen to us the more favourably for our humility, I am willing to humble myself rather than you should 184shun to hear us. For my own part, I can truly say that, though I have lived, and by free choice have resolved to die, a husbandman and a hunter on the Alps of the Unterwald, I may claim by birth the hereditary right to speak before Dukes and Kings, and the Emperor himself. There is no one, my Lord Duke, in this proud assembly, who derives his descent from a nobler source than Geierstein."

"We have heard of you," said the Duke. "Men call you the peasant-count. Your birth is your shame; or perhaps your mother's, if your father had happened to have a handsome ploughman, the fitting father of one who has become a willing serf."

"No serf, my lord," answered the Landamman, "but a freeman, who will neither oppress others nor be himself tyrannised over. My father was a noble lord, my mother a most virtuous lady. But I will not be provoked, by taunt or scornful jest, to refrain from stating with calmness what my country has given me in charge to say. The inhabitants of the bleak and inhospitable regions of the Alps desire, mighty sir, to remain at peace with all their neighbours, and to enjoy the government they have chosen, as best fitted to their condition and habits, leaving all other states and countries to their free-will in the same respects. Especially, they desire to remain at peace and in unity with the princely House of Burgundy, whose dominions approach their possessions on so many points. My lord, they desire it, they entreat it, they even consent to pray for it. We have been termed stubborn, intractable, and insolent contemnors of authority, and headers of sedition and 185rebellion. In evidence of the contrary, my Lord Duke, I, who never bent a knee but to Heaven, feel no dishonour in kneeling before your Highness, as before a sovereign prince in the *cour plénière* of his dominions, where he has a right to exact homage from his subjects out of duty, and from strangers out of courtesy. No vain pride of mine," said the noble old man, his eyes swelling with tears, as he knelt on one knee, "shall prevent me from personal humiliation, when peace—that blessed peace, so dear to God, so inappreciably valuable to man—is in danger of being broken off."

The whole assembly, even the Duke himself, were affected by the noble and stately manner in which the brave old man made a genuflection, which was obviously dictated by neither meanness nor timidity. "Arise, sir," said Charles; "if we have said aught which can wound your private feelings, we retract it as publicly as the reproach was spoken, and sit prepared to hear you, as a fair-meaning envoy."

"For that, my noble lord, thanks; and I shall hold it a blessed day, if I can find words worthy of the cause I have to plead. My lord, a schedule in your Highness's hands has stated the sense of many injuries received at the hand of your Highness's officers, and those of Romont, Count of Savoy, your strict ally and adviser, we have a right to suppose, under your Highness's countenance. For Count Romont—he has already felt with whom he has to contend; but we have as yet taken no measures to avenge injuries, affronts, interruptions to our commerce, from those who have availed themselves of your Highness's 186authority to intercept our countrymen, spoil our goods, impress their persons, and even, in some instances, take their lives. The affray at La Ferette—I can vouch for what I saw—had no origin or abettance from us; nevertheless, it is impossible an independent nation can suffer the repetition of such injuries, and free and independent we are determined to remain, or to die in defence of our rights. What then must follow, unless your Highness listens to the terms which I am commissioned to offer? War, a war to extermination; for so long as one of our Confederacy can wield a halberd, so long, if this fatal strife once commences, there will be war betwixt your powerful realms and our poor and barren States. And what can the noble Duke of Burgundy gain by such a strife? Is it wealth and plunder? Alas, my lord, there is more gold and silver on the very bridle-bits of your Highness's household troops than can be found in the public treasures or private hoards of our whole Confederacy. Is it fame and glory you aspire to? There is little honour to be won by a numerous army over a few scattered bands, by men clad in mail over half-armed husbandmen and shepherds—of such conquest small were the glory. But if, as all Christian men believe, and as it is the constant trust of my countrymen, from memory of the times of our fathers,—if the Lord of Hosts should cast the balance in behalf of the fewer numbers and worse-armed party, I leave it with your Highness to judge what would, in that event, be the diminution of worship and fame. Is it extent of vassalage and dominion your Highness desires, by warring with your mountain neighbours? Know 187that you may, if it be God's will, gain our barren and rugged mountains; but, like our ancestors of old, we will seek refuge in wilder and more distant solitudes, and, when we have resisted to the last, we will starve in the icy wastes of the glaciers. Ay, men, women, and children, we will be frozen into annihilation together, ere one free Switzer will acknowledge a foreign master."

The speech of the Landamman made an obvious impression on the assembly. The Duke observed it, and his hereditary obstinacy was irritated by the general disposition which he saw entertained in favour of the ambassador. This evil principle overcame some impression which the address of the noble Biederman had not failed to make upon him. He answered with a lowering brow, interrupting the old man as he was about to continue his speech,—"*You argue falsely, Sir Count, or Sir Landamman, or by whatever name you call yourself, if you think we war on you from any hope of spoil, or any desire of glory. We know as well as you can tell us that there is neither profit nor fame to be achieved by conquering you. But sovereigns, to whom Heaven has given the power, must root out a band of robbers, though there is dishonour in measuring swords with them; and we hunt to death a herd of wolves, though their flesh is carrion, and their skins are naught.*"

The Landamman shook his grey head, and replied, without testifying emotion, and even with something approaching to a smile,—"*I am an older woodsman than you, my Lord Duke—and, it may be, a more experienced one. The boldest, the hardiest hunter, will not safely drive the wolf to his den. I have shown your Highness the poor 188chance of gain, and the great risk of loss, which even you, powerful as you are, must incur by risking a war with determined and desperate men. Let me now tell what we are willing to do to secure a sincere and lasting peace with our powerful neighbour of Burgundy. Your Grace is in the act of engrossing Lorraine, and it seems probable, under so vigorous and enterprising a Prince, your authority may be extended to the shores of the Mediterranean—be our noble friend and sincere ally, and our mountains, defended by warriors familiar with victory, will be your barriers against Germany and Italy. For your sake we will admit the Count of Savoy to terms, and restore to him our conquests, on such conditions as your Highness shall yourself judge reasonable. Of past subjects of offence on the part of your lieutenants and governors upon the frontier we will be silent, so we have assurance of no such aggressions in future. Nay, more, and it is my last and proudest offer, we will send three thousand of our youth to assist your Highness in any war which you may engage in, whether against Louis of France or the Emperor of Germany. They are a different set of men—proudly and truly may I state it—from the scum of Germany and Italy, who form themselves*"

into mercenary bands of soldiers. And, if Heaven should decide your Highness to accept our offer, there will be one corps in your army which will leave their carcasses on the field ere a man of them break their plighted troth."

A swarthy but tall and handsome man, wearing a corselet richly engraved with arabesque work, started from his seat with the air of one provoked beyond the bounds of restraint. This was the 189Count de Campo-basso, commander of Charles's Italian mercenaries, who possessed, as has been alluded to, much influence over the Duke's mind, chiefly obtained by accommodating himself to his master's opinions and prejudices, and placing before the Duke specious arguments to justify him for following his own way.

"This lofty presence must excuse me," he said, "if I speak in defence of my honour, and those of my bold lances, who have followed my fortunes from Italy to serve the bravest Prince in Christendom. I might, indeed, pass over without resentment the outrageous language of this grey-haired churl, whose words cannot affect a knight and a nobleman more than the yelling of a peasant's mastiff. But when I hear him propose to associate his bands of mutinous misgoverned ruffians with your Highness's troops, I must let him know that there is not a horse-boy in my ranks who would fight in such fellowship. No, even I myself, bound by a thousand ties of gratitude, could not submit to strive abreast with such comrades. I would fold up my banners, and lead five thousand men to seek,—not a nobler master, for the world has none such,—but wars in which we might not be obliged to blush for our assistants."

"Silence, Campo-basso!" said the Duke, "and be assured you serve a prince who knows your worth too well to exchange it for the untried and untrustful services of those whom we have only known as vexatious and malignant neighbours."

Then, addressing himself to Arnold Biederman, he said coldly and sternly, "Sir Landamman, we have heard you fairly. We have heard you, 190although you come before us with hands dyed deep in the blood of our servant, Sir Archibald de Hagenbach; for, supposing he was murdered by a villanous association,—which, by St. George! shall never, while we live and reign, raise its pestilential head on this side of the Rhine,—yet it is not the less undeniable and undenied, that you stood by in arms, and encouraged the deed the assassins performed under your countenance. Return to your mountains, and be thankful that you return in life. Tell those who sent you that I will be presently on their frontiers. A deputation of your most notable persons, who meet me with halters round their necks, torches in their left hands, in their right their swords held by the point, may learn on what conditions we will grant you peace."

"Then farewell peace, and welcome war," said the Landamman; "and be its plagues and curses on the heads of those who choose blood and strife rather than peace and union. We will meet you on our frontiers with our naked swords, but the hilts, not their points, shall be in our grasp. Charles of Burgundy, Flanders, and Lorraine, Duke of seven dukedoms, Count of seventeen earldoms, I bid you defiance; and declare war against you in the name of the confederated Cantons, and such others as shall adhere to them. There," he said, "are my letters of defiance."

The herald took from Arnold Biederman the fatal denunciation.

"Read it not, Toison d'Or!" said the haughty Duke. "Let the executioner drag it through the streets at his horse's tail, and nail it to the gibbet, to show in what account we hold the paltry scroll, 191and those who sent it.—Away, sirs!" speaking to the Swiss. "Trudge back to your wildernesses with such haste as your feet can use. When we next meet, you shall better know whom you have offended.—Get our horse ready—the council is broken up."

The Maire of Dijon, when all were in motion to leave the hall, again approached the Duke, and timidly expressed some hopes that his Highness would deign to partake of a banquet which the magistracy had prepared, in expectation he might do them such an honour.

"No, by St. George of Burgundy, Sir Maire," said Charles, with one of the withering glances by which he was wont to express indignation mixed with contempt,— "you have not pleased us so well with our breakfast as to induce us to trust our dinner to the loyalty of our good town of Dijon."

So saying, he rudely turned off from the mortified chief magistrate, and, mounting his horse, rode back to his camp, conversing earnestly on the way with the Count of Campo-basso.

"I would offer you dinner, my Lord of Oxford," said Colvin to that nobleman, when he alighted at his tent, "but I foresee, ere you could swallow a mouthful, you will be summoned to the Duke's presence; for it is our Charles's way, when he has fixed on a wrong course, to wrangle with his friends and counsellors, in order to prove it is a right one. Marry, he always makes a convert of yon supple Italian."

Colvin's augury was speedily realised; for a page almost immediately summoned the English merchant, Philipson, to attend the Duke. Without 192waiting an instant, Charles poured forth an incoherent tide of reproaches against the Estates of his dukedom, for refusing him their countenance in so slight a matter, and launched out in explanations of the necessity which he alleged there was for punishing the audacity of the Swiss. "And thou too, Oxford," he concluded, "art such an impatient fool as to wish me to engage in a distant war with England, and transport forces over the sea, when I have such insolent mutineers to chastise on my own frontiers?"

When he was at length silent, the English Earl laid before him, with respectful earnestness, the danger that appeared to be involved in engaging with a people, poor indeed, but universally dreaded, from their discipline and courage, and that under the eye of so dangerous a rival as Louis of France, who was sure to support the Duke's enemies underhand, if he did not join them openly. On this point the Duke's resolution was immovable. "It shall never," he said, "be told of me, that I uttered threats which I dared not execute. These boors have declared war against me, and they shall learn whose wrath it is that they have wantonly provoked; but I do not, therefore, renounce thy scheme, my good Oxford. If thou canst procure me this same cession of Provence, and induce old René to give up the cause of his grandson, Ferrand of Vaudemont, in Lorraine, thou wilt make it well worth my while to send thee brave aid against my brother Blackburn, who, while he is drinking healths pottle-deep in France, may well come to lose his lands in England. And be not impatient because I cannot at this very instant send men across the seas. The march which I am 193making towards Neufchatel, which is, I think, the nearest point where I shall find these churls, will be but like a morning's excursion. I trust you will go with us, old companion. I should like to see if you have forgotten, among yonder mountains, how to back a horse and lay a lance in rest."

"I will wait on your Highness," said the Earl, "as is my duty, for my motions must depend on your pleasure. But I will not carry arms, especially against those people of Helvetia, from whom I have experienced hospitality, unless it be for my own personal defence."

"Well," replied the Duke, "e'en be it so; we shall have in you an excellent judge, to tell us who best discharges his devoir against the mountain clowns."

At this point in the conversation there was a knocking at the entrance of the pavilion, and the Chancellor of Burgundy presently entered, in great haste and anxiety. "News, my lord—news of France and England," said the prelate, and then, observing the presence of a stranger, he looked at the Duke, and was silent.

"It is a faithful friend, my Lord Bishop," said the Duke; "you may tell your news before him."

"It will soon be generally known," said the chancellor. "Louis and Edward are fully accorded." Both the Duke and the English Earl started.

"I expected this," said the Duke, "but not so soon."

"The Kings have met," answered his minister.

"How—in battle?" said Oxford, forgetting himself in his extreme eagerness. 194

The chancellor was somewhat surprised, but as the Duke seemed to expect him to give an answer, he replied, "No, Sir Stranger—not in battle, but upon appointment, and in peace and amity."

"The sight must have been worth seeing," said the Duke; "when the old fox Louis, and my brother Black—I mean my brother Edward—met. Where held they their rendezvous?"

"On a bridge over the Seine, at Picquigny."

"I would thou hadst been there," said the Duke, looking to Oxford, "with a good axe in thy hand, to strike one fair blow for England, and another for Burgundy. My grandfather was treacherously slain at just such a meeting, at the Bridge of Montereau, upon the Yonne."

"To prevent a similar chance," said the chancellor, "a strong barricade, such as closes the cages in which men keep wild beasts, was raised in the midst of the bridge, and prevented the possibility of their even touching each other's hands."

"Ha, ha! By St. George, that smells of Louis's craft and caution; for the Englishman, to give him his due, is as little acquainted with fear as with policy. But what terms have they made? Where do the English army winter? What towns, fortresses, and castles are surrendered to them, in pledge, or in perpetuity?"

"None, my liege," said the chancellor. "The English army returns into England, as fast as shipping can be procured to transport them; and Louis will accommodate them with every sail and oar in his dominions, rather than they should not instantly evacuate France."

"And by what concessions has Louis bought a peace so necessary to his affairs?"¹⁹⁵

"By fair words," said the chancellor, "by liberal presents, and by some five hundred tuns of wine."

"Wine!" exclaimed the Duke. "Heardst thou ever the like, Seignor Philipson? Why, your countrymen are little better than Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Marry, I must confess I never saw an Englishman who loved a dry-lipped bargain."

"I can scarce believe this news," said the Earl of Oxford. "If this Edward were content to cross the sea with fifty thousand Englishmen merely to return again, there are in his camp both proud nobles and haughty commons enough to resist his disgraceful purpose."

"The money of Louis," said the statesman, "has found noble hands willing to clutch it. The wine of France has flooded every throat in the English army—the riot and uproar was unbounded—and at one time the town of Amiens, where Louis himself resided, was full of so many English archers, all of them intoxicated, that the person of the King of France was almost in their hands. Their sense of national honour has been lost in the universal revel, and those amongst them who would be more dignified and play the wise politicians say, that having come to France by connivance of the Duke of Burgundy, and that prince having failed to join them with his forces, they have done well, wisely, and gallantly, considering the season of the year, and the impossibility of obtaining quarters, to take tribute of France, and return home in triumph."

"And leave Louis," said Oxford, "at undisturbed freedom to attack Burgundy with all his forces?"¹⁹⁶

"Not so, friend Philipson," said Duke Charles; "know, that there is a truce betwixt Burgundy and France for the space of seven years, and had not this been granted and signed, it is probable that we might have found some means of marring the treaty betwixt Edward and Louis, even at the expense of affording those voracious islanders beef and beer during the winter months.—Sir Chancellor, you may leave us, but be within reach of a hasty summons."

When his minister left the pavilion, the Duke, who with his rude and imperious character united much kindness, if it could not be termed generosity of disposition, came up to the Lancastrian lord, who stood like one at whose feet a thunderbolt has just broken, and who is still appalled by the terrors of the shock.

"My poor Oxford," he said, "thou art stupefied by this news, which thou canst not doubt must have a fatal effect on the plan which thy brave bosom cherishes with such devoted fidelity. I would for thy sake I could have detained the English a little longer in France; but had I attempted to do so, there were an end of my truce with Louis, and of course to my power to chastise these paltry Cantons, or send forth an expedition to England. As matters stand, give me but a week to punish these mountaineers, and you shall have a larger force than your modesty has requested of me for your enterprise; and, in the meanwhile, I will take care that Blackburn and his cousin-archers have no assistance of shipping from Flanders. Tush, man, never fear it—thou wilt be in England long ere they; and, once more, rely on my assistance—always, thou knowest, the cession of 197Provence being executed, as in reason. Our cousin Margaret's diamonds we must keep for a time; and perhaps they may pass as a pledge, with some of our own, for the godly purpose of setting at freedom the imprisoned angels of our Flemish usurers, who will not lend even to their sovereign, unless on good current security. To such straits has the disobedient avarice of our Estates for the moment reduced us."

"Alas! my lord," said the dejected nobleman, "I were ungrateful to doubt the sincerity of your good intentions. But who can presume on the events of war, especially when time presses for instant decision? You are pleased to trust me. Let your Highness extend your confidence thus far: I will take my horse, and ride after the Landamman, if he hath already set forth. I have little doubt to make such an accommodation with him that you may be secure on all your south-eastern frontiers. You may then with security work your will in Lorraine and Provence."

"Do not speak of it," said the Duke, sharply; "thou forget'st thyself and me, when thou supposest that a prince, who has pledged his word to his people, can recall it like a merchant chaffering for his paltry wares. Go to—we will assist you, but we will be ourselves judge of the time and manner. Yet, having both kind will to our distressed cousin of Anjou, and being your good friend, we will not linger in the matter. Our host have orders to break up this evening and direct their march against Neufchatel, where these proud Swiss shall have a taste of the fire and sword which they have provoked."

Oxford sighed deeply, but made no further 198remonstrance; in which he acted wisely, since it was likely to have exasperated the fiery temper of the sovereign to whom it was addressed, while it was certain that it would not in the slightest degree alter his resolution.

He took farewell of the Duke, and returned to Colvin, whom he found immersed in the business of his department, and preparing for the removal of the artillery—an operation which the clumsiness of the ordnance, and the execrable state of the roads, rendered at that time a much more troublesome operation than at present, though it is even still one of the most laborious movements attending the march of an army. The Master of the Ordnance welcomed Oxford with much glee, and congratulated himself on the distinguished honour of enjoying his company during the campaign, and acquainted him that, by the especial command of the Duke, he had made fitting preparations for his accommodation, suitable to the disguised character which he meant to maintain, but in every other respect as convenient as a camp could admit of.¹⁹⁹

CHAPTER XI.

A mirthful man he was—the snows of age
Fell, but they did not chill him. Gaiety,
Even in life's closing, touch'd his teeming brain
With such wild visions as the setting sun
Raises in front of some hoar glacier,
Painting the bleak ice with a thousand hues.
Old Play.

Leaving the Earl of Oxford in attendance on the stubborn Duke of Burgundy during an expedition which the one represented as a brief excursion, more resembling a hunting-party than a campaign, and which the other considered in a much graver and more perilous light, we return to Arthur de Vere, or the younger Philipson, as he continued to be called, who was conducted by his guide with fidelity and success, but certainly very slowly, upon his journey into Provence.

The state of Lorraine, overrun by the Duke of Burgundy's army, and infested at the same time by different scattered bands, who took the field, or held out the castles, as they alleged, for the interest of Count Ferrand de Vaudemont, rendered journeying so dangerous, that it was often necessary to leave the main road, and to take circuitous tracks, in order to avoid such unfriendly encounters as travellers might otherwise have met with.

Arthur, taught by sad experience to distrust strange guides, found himself, nevertheless, in this eventful and perilous journey, disposed to rest 200considerable confidence in his present conductor, Thiebault, a Provençal by birth, intimately acquainted with the roads which they took, and, as far as he could judge, disposed to discharge his office with fidelity. Prudence alike, and the habits which he had acquired in travelling, as well as the character of a merchant which he still sustained, induced him to wave the *morgue*, or haughty superiority of a knight and noble towards an inferior personage, especially as he rightly conjectured that free intercourse with this man, whose acquirements seemed of a superior cast, was likely to render him a judge of his opinions and disposition towards him. In return for his condescension, he obtained a good deal of information concerning the province which he was approaching.

As they drew near the boundaries of Provence, the communications of Thiebault became more fluent and interesting. He could not only tell the name and history of each romantic castle which they passed, in their devious and doubtful route, but had at his command the chivalrous history of the noble knights and barons to whom they now pertained, or had belonged in earlier days, and could recount their exploits against the Saracens, by repelling their attacks upon Christendom, or their efforts to recover the Holy Sepulchre from Pagan hands. In the course of such narrations, Thiebault was led to speak of the Troubadours, a race of native poets of Provençal origin, differing widely from the minstrels of Normandy, and the adjacent provinces of France, with whose tales of chivalry, as well as the numerous translations of their works into Norman-French and English, 201Arthur, like most of the noble youth of his country, was intimately acquainted and

deeply imbued. Thiebault boasted that his grandsire, of humble birth indeed, but of distinguished talent, was one of this gifted race, whose compositions produced so great an effect on the temper and manners of their age and country. It was, however, to be regretted that, inculcating as the prime duty of life a fantastic spirit of gallantry, which sometimes crossed the Platonic bound prescribed to it, the poetry of the Troubadours was too frequently used to soften and seduce the heart, and corrupt the principles.^[8]

Arthur's attention was called to this peculiarity by Thiebault singing, which he could do with good skill, the history of a Troubadour, named William Cabestainy, who loved, *par amours*, a noble and beautiful lady, Margaret, the wife of a baron called Raymond de Roussillon. The jealous husband obtained proof of his dishonour, and, having put Cabestainy to death by assassination, he took his heart from his bosom, and causing it to be dressed like that of an animal, ordered it to be served up to his lady; and when she had eaten of the horrible mess, told her of what her banquet was composed. The lady replied, that since she had been made to partake of food so precious, no coarser morsel should ever after cross her lips. She persisted in her resolution, and thus starved herself to death. The Troubadour who celebrated this tragic history had displayed in his composition a good deal of poetic art. Glossing over the error of the lovers as the fault of their destiny, 202dwelling on their tragical fate with considerable pathos, and, finally, execrating the blind fury of the husband, with the full fervour of poetical indignation, he recorded, with vindictive pleasure, how every bold knight and true lover in the south of France assembled to besiege the baron's castle, stormed it by main force, left not one stone upon another, and put the tyrant himself to an ignominious death. Arthur was interested in the melancholy tale, which even beguiled him of a few tears; but as he thought further on its purport, he dried his eyes, and said, with some sternness,—"Thiebault, sing me no more such lays. I have heard my father say that the readiest mode to corrupt a Christian man is to bestow upon vice the pity and the praise which are due only to virtue. Your Baron of Roussillon is a monster of cruelty; but your unfortunate lovers were not the less guilty. It is by giving fair names to foul actions that those who would start at real vice are led to practise its lessons, under the disguise of virtue."

"I would you knew, Seigneur," answered Thiebault, "that this Lay of Cabestainy and the Lady Margaret of Roussillon is reckoned a masterpiece of the joyous science. Fie, sir, you are too young to be so strict a censor of morals. What will you do when your head is grey, if you are thus severe when it is scarcely brown?"

"A head which listens to folly in youth will hardly be honourable in old age," answered Arthur.

Thiebault had no mind to carry the dispute further.

"It is not for me to contend with your worship. I only think, with every true son of chivalry and 203song, that a knight without a mistress is like a sky without a star."

"Do I not know that?" answered Arthur; "but yet better remain in darkness than be guided by such false lights as shower down vice and pestilence."

"Nay, it may be your seignorie is right," answered the guide. "It is certain that even in Provence here we have lost much of our keen judgment on matters of love—its difficulties, its intricacies, and its errors, since the Troubadours are no longer regarded as usual, and since the High and Noble Parliament of Love^[9] has ceased to hold its sittings.

"But in these latter days," continued the Provençal, "kings, dukes, and sovereigns, instead of being the foremost and most faithful vassals of the Court of Cupid, are themselves the slaves of selfishness and love of gain. Instead of winning hearts by breaking lances in the lists, they are breaking the hearts of their impoverished vassals by the most cruel exactions—instead of attempting to deserve the smile and favours of their lady-loves, they are meditating how to steal castles, towns, and provinces from their neighbours. But long life to the good and venerable King René! While he has an acre of land left, his residence will be the resort of valiant knights, whose only aim is praise in arms, of true lovers, who are persecuted by fortune, and of high-toned harpers, who know how to celebrate faith and valour."

Arthur, interested in learning something more 204precise than common fame had taught him on the subject of this prince, easily induced the talkative Provençal to enlarge upon the virtues of his old sovereign's character, as just, joyous, and debonair, a friend to the most noble exercises of the chase and the tilt-yard, and still more so to the joyous science of Poetry and Music; who gave away more revenue than he received, in largesses to knights-errant and itinerant musicians, with whom his petty court was crowded, as one of the very few in which the ancient hospitality was still maintained.

Such was the picture which Thiebault drew of the last minstrel monarch; and though the eulogium was exaggerated, perhaps the facts were not overcharged.

Born of royal parentage, and with high pretensions, René had at no period of his life been able to match his fortunes to his claims. Of the kingdoms to which he asserted right, nothing remained in his possession but the county of Provence itself, a fair and friendly principality, but diminished by the many claims which France had acquired upon portions of it by advances of money to supply the personal expenses of its master, and by other portions, which Burgundy, to whom René had been a prisoner, held in pledge for his ransom. In his youth he engaged in more than one military enterprise, in the hope of attaining some part of the territory of which he was styled sovereign. His courage is not impeached, but fortune did not smile on his military adventures; and he seems at last to have become sensible that the power of admiring and celebrating warlike merit is very different from possessing that quality. In fact, 205René was a prince of very moderate parts, endowed with a love of the fine arts, which he carried to extremity, and a degree of good-humour, which never permitted him to repine at fortune, but rendered its possessor happy, when a prince of keener feelings would have died of despair. This insouciant, light-tempered, gay, and thoughtless disposition conducted René, free from all the passions which embitter life, and often shorten it, to a hale and mirthful old age. Even domestic losses, which often affect those who are proof against mere reverses of fortune, made no deep impression on the feelings of this cheerful old monarch. Most of his children had died young; René took it not to heart. His daughter Margaret's marriage with the powerful Henry of England was considered a connection much above the fortunes of the King of the Troubadours. But in the issue, instead of René deriving any splendour from the match, he was involved in the misfortunes of his daughter, and repeatedly obliged to impoverish himself to supply her ransom. Perhaps in his private soul the old king did not think these losses so mortifying as the necessity of receiving Margaret into his court and family. On fire when reflecting on the losses she had sustained, mourning over friends slain and kingdoms lost, the proudest and most passionate of princesses was ill suited to dwell with the gayest and best-humoured of sovereigns, whose pursuits she contemned, and whose lightness of temper, for finding comfort in such trifles, she could not forgive. The discomfort attached to her presence and vindictive recollections embarrassed the good-humoured old monarch, though it was unable to drive him beyond his equanimity.206

Another distress pressed him more sorely.—Yolande, a daughter of his first wife, Isabella, had succeeded to his claims upon the Duchy of Lorraine, and transmitted them to her son, Ferrand, Count of Vaudemont, a young man of courage and spirit, engaged at this time in the apparently desperate undertaking of making his title good against the Duke of Burgundy, who, with little right but great power, was seizing upon and overrunning this rich Duchy, which he laid claim to as a male fief. And to conclude, while the aged king on one side beheld his dethroned daughter in hopeless despair, and on the other his disinherited grandson in vain attempting to recover part of their rights, he had the additional misfortune to know that his nephew, Louis of France, and his cousin, the Duke of Burgundy, were secretly contending which should succeed him in that portion of Provence which he still continued to possess, and that it was only jealousy of each other which prevented his being despoiled of this last remnant of his territory. Yet amid all this distress René feasted and received guests, danced, sang, composed poetry, used the pencil or brush with no small skill, devised and conducted festivals and processions, and, studying to promote as far as possible the immediate mirth and good-humour of his subjects, if he could not materially enlarge their more permanent prosperity, was never mentioned by them, excepting as *Le bon Roi René*, a distinction conferred on him down to the present day, and due to him certainly by the qualities of his heart, if not by those of his head.

Whilst Arthur was receiving from his guide a full account of the peculiarities of King René, 207they entered the territories of that merry monarch. It was late in the autumn, and about the period when the south-eastern counties of France rather show to least advantage. The foliage of the olive-tree is then decayed and withered, and as it predominates in the landscape, and resembles the scorched complexion of the soil itself, an ashen and arid hue is given to the whole. Still, however, there were scenes in the hilly and pastoral parts of the country where the quantity of evergreens relieved the eye even in this dead season.

The appearance of the country, in general, had much in it that was peculiar.

The travellers perceived at every turn some marks of the King's singular character. Provence, as the part of Gaul which first received Roman civilisation, and as having been still longer the residence of the Grecian colony who founded Marseilles, is more full of the splendid relics of ancient architecture than any other country in Europe, Italy and Greece excepted. The good taste of the King René had dictated some attempts to clear out and to restore these memorials of

antiquity. Was there a triumphal arch or an ancient temple—huts and hovels were cleared away from its vicinity, and means were used at least to retard the approach of ruin. Was there a marble fountain, which superstition had dedicated to some sequestered naiad—it was surrounded by olives, almond and orange trees—its cistern was repaired, and taught once more to retain its crystal treasures. The huge amphitheatres and gigantic colonnades experienced the same anxious care, attesting that the noblest specimens of the fine arts found one admirer and preserver in King René, even during the course of those which are termed the dark and barbarous ages.

A change of manners could also be observed in passing from Burgundy and Lorraine, where society relished of German bluntness, into the pastoral country of Provence, where the influence of a fine climate and melodious language, joined to the pursuits of the romantic old monarch, with the universal taste for music and poetry, had introduced a civilisation of manners which approached to affectation. The shepherd literally marched abroad in the morning, piping his flocks forth to the pasture with some love-sonnet, the composition of an amorous Troubadour; and his "fleece care" seemed actually to be under the influence of his music, instead of being ungraciously insensible to its melody, as is the case in colder climates. Arthur observed, too, that the Provençal sheep, instead of being driven before the shepherd, regularly followed him, and did not disperse to feed until the swain, by turning his face round to them, remaining stationary, and, executing variations on the air which he was playing, seemed to remind them that it was proper to do so. While in motion, his huge dog, of a species which is trained to face the wolf, and who is respected by the sheep as their guardian, and not feared as their tyrant, followed his master with his ears pricked, like the chief critic and prime judge of the performance, at some tones of which he seldom failed to intimate disapprobation; while the flock, like the generality of an audience, followed in unanimous though silent applause. At the hour of noon, the shepherd had sometimes acquired an augmentation to his audience, in some comely matron or blooming maiden, with whom he had rendezvoused by such a fountain as we have described, and who listened to the husband's or lover's chalumeau, or mingled her voice with his in the duets, of which the songs of the Troubadours have left so many examples. In the cool of the evening, the dance on the village green, or the concert before the hamlet door; the little repast of fruits, cheese, and bread, which the traveller was readily invited to share, gave new charms to the illusion, and seemed in earnest to point out Provence as the Arcadia of France.

But the greatest singularity was, in the eyes of Arthur, the total absence of armed men and soldiers in this peaceful country. In England, no man stirred without his long-bow, sword, and buckler. In France, the hind wore armour even when he was betwixt the stils of his plough. In Germany, you could not look along a mile of highway but the eye was encountered by clouds of dust, out of which were seen, by fits, waving feathers and flashing armour. Even in Switzerland, the peasant, if he had a journey to make, though but of a mile or two, cared not to travel without his halberd and two-handed sword. But in Provence all seemed quiet and peaceful, as if the music of the land had lulled to sleep all its wrathful passions. Now and then a mounted cavalier might pass them, the harp at whose saddle-bow, or carried by one of his attendants, attested the character of a Troubadour, which was affected by men of all ranks; and then only a short sword on his left thigh, borne for show rather than use, was a necessary and appropriate part of his equipment.²¹⁰

"Peace," said Arthur, as he looked around him, "is an inestimable jewel; but it will be soon snatched from those who are not prepared with heart and hand to defend it."

The sight of the ancient and interesting town of Aix, where King René held his court, dispelled reflections of a general character, and recalled to the young Englishman the peculiar mission on which he was engaged.

He then required to know from the Provençal Thiebault whether his instructions were to leave him, now that he had successfully attained the end of his journey.

"My instructions," answered Thiebault, "are to remain in Aix while there is any chance of your seignorie's continuing there, to be of such use to you as you may require, either as a guide or an attendant, and to keep these men in readiness to wait upon you when you have occasion for messengers or guards. With your approbation, I will see them disposed of in fitting quarters, and receive my further instructions from your seignorie wherever you please to appoint me. I propose this separation, because I understand it is your present pleasure to be private."

"I must go to court," answered Arthur, "without any delay. Wait for me in half an hour by that fountain in the street, which projects into the air such a magnificent pillar of water, surrounded, I would almost swear, by a vapour like steam, serving as a shroud to the jet which it envelopes."

"The jet is so surrounded," answered the Provençal, "because it is supplied by a hot spring rising from the bowels of the earth, and the touch of frost on this autumn morning makes the vapour more distinguishable than usual.—But if it is good King René whom you seek, you will find him at this time walking in his chimney. Do not be afraid of approaching him, for there never was a monarch so easy of access, especially to good-looking strangers like you, seignorie."

"But his ushers," said Arthur, "will not admit me into his hall."

"His hall!" repeated Thiebault. "Whose hall?"

"Why, King René's, I apprehend. If he is walking in a chimney, it can only be in that of his hall, and a stately one it must be to give him room for such exercise."

"You mistake my meaning," said the guide, laughing. "What we call King René's chimney is the narrow parapet yonder; it extends between these two towers, has an exposure to the south, and is sheltered in every other direction. Yonder it is his pleasure to walk and enjoy the beams of the sun, on such cool mornings as the present. It nurses, he says, his poetical vein. If you approach his promenade he will readily speak to you, unless, indeed, he is in the very act of a poetical composition."

Arthur could not forbear smiling at the thoughts of a king, eighty years of age, broken down with misfortunes and beset with dangers, who yet amused himself with walking in an open parapet, and composing poetry in presence of all such of his loving subjects as chose to look on.

"If you will walk a few steps this way," said Thiebault, "you may see the good King, and judge whether or not you will accost him at present. I will dispose of the people, and await your orders at the fountain in the Corso."

Arthur saw no objection to the proposal of his guide, and was not unwilling to have an opportunity of seeing something of the good King René, before he was introduced to his presence.²¹³

CHAPTER XII.

Ay, this is he who wears the wreath of bays

Wove by Apollo and the Sisters Nine,

Which Jove's dread lightning scathes not. He hath doff

The cumbrous helm of steel, and flung aside

The yet more galling diadem of gold;

While, with a leafy circlet round his brows,

He reigns the King of Lovers and of Poets.

A cautious approach to the chimney—that is, the favourite walk of the King, who is described by Shakspeare as bearing

the style of King of Naples,

Of both the Sicilies, and Jerusalem,

Yet not so wealthy as an English yeoman,

gave Arthur the perfect survey of his Majesty in person. He saw an old man, with locks and beard, which, in amplitude and whiteness, nearly rivalled those of the envoy from Schwitz, but with a fresh and ruddy colour in his cheek, and an eye of great vivacity. His dress was showy to a degree almost inconsistent with his years; and his step, not only firm but full of alertness and vivacity, while occupied in traversing the short and sheltered walk, which he had chosen rather for comfort than for privacy, showed juvenile vigour still animating an aged frame. The old King carried his tablets and a pencil in his hand, seeming totally abstracted in his own thoughts, and indifferent to being observed by several persons from the public street beneath his elevated promenade.

Of these, some, from their dress and manner, seemed themselves Troubadours; for they held in their hands rebecks, rotes, small portable harps, and other indications of their profession. Such appeared to be stationary, as if engaged in observing and recording their remarks on the meditations of their Prince. Other

passengers, bent on their own more serious affairs, looked up to the King as to some one whom they were accustomed to see daily, but never passed without doffing their bonnets, and expressing, by a suitable obeisance, a respect and affection towards his person, which appeared to make up in cordiality of feeling what it wanted in deep and solemn deference.

René, in the meanwhile, was apparently unconscious both of the gaze of such as stood still, or the greeting of those who passed on, his mind seeming altogether engrossed with the apparent labour of some arduous task in poetry or music. He walked fast or slow as best suited the progress of composition. At times he stopped to mark hastily down on his tablets something which seemed to occur to him as deserving of preservation; at other times he dashed out what he had written, and flung down the pencil as if in a sort of despair. On these occasions, the Sibylline leaf was carefully picked up by a beautiful page, his only attendant, who reverently observed the first suitable opportunity of restoring it again to his royal hand. The same youth bore a viol, on which, at a signal from his master, he occasionally struck a few musical notes, to which the old King listened, now with a soothed and satisfied air, now with a discontented and anxious brow. At times his enthusiasm rose so high that he even hopped and skipped, with an activity which his years did not promise; at other times his motions were extremely slow, and occasionally he stood still, like one wrapped in the deepest and most anxious meditation. When he chanced to look on the group which seemed to watch his motions, and who ventured even to salute him with a murmur of applause, it was only to distinguish them with a friendly and good-humoured nod; a salutation with which, likewise, he failed not to reply to the greeting of the occasional passengers, when his earnest attention to his task, whatever it might be, permitted him to observe them.

At length the royal eye lighted upon Arthur, whose attitude of silent observation and the distinction of his figure pointed him out as a stranger. René beckoned to his page, who, receiving his master's commands in a whisper, descended from the royal chimney to the broader platform beneath, which was open to general resort. The youth, addressing Arthur with much courtesy, informed him the King desired to speak with him. The young Englishman had no alternative but that of approaching, though pondering much in his own mind how he ought to comport himself towards such a singular specimen of royalty.

When he drew near, King René addressed him in a tone of courtesy not unmingled with dignity, and Arthur's awe in his immediate presence was greater than he himself could have anticipated from his previous conception of the royal character.

"You are, from your appearance, fair sir," said King René, "a stranger in this country. By what name must we call you, and to what business are we to ascribe the happiness of seeing you at our court?"

Arthur remained a moment silent, and the good old man, imputing it to awe and timidity, proceeded in an encouraging tone.

"Modesty in youth is ever commendable; you are doubtless an acolyte in the noble and joyous science of Minstrelsy and Music, drawn hither by the willing welcome which we afford to the professors of those arts, in which—praise be to Our Lady and the saints!—we have ourselves been deemed a proficient."

"I do not aspire to the honours of a Troubadour," answered Arthur.

"I believe you," answered the King, "for your speech smacks of the northern, or Norman-French, such as is spoken in England and other unrefined nations. But you are a minstrel, perhaps, from these ultramontane parts. Be assured we despise not their efforts; for we have listened, not without pleasure and instruction, to many of their bold and wild romances, which, though rude in device and language, and therefore far inferior to the regulated poetry of our Troubadours, have yet something in their powerful and rough measure which occasionally rouses the heart like the sound of a trumpet."

"I have felt the truth of your Grace's observation, when I have heard the songs of my country," said Arthur; "but I have neither skill nor audacity to imitate what I admire—My latest residence has been in Italy."

"You are perhaps, then, a proficient in painting," said René; "an art which applies itself to the eye as poetry and music do to the ear, and is scarce less in esteem with us. If you are skilful in the art, you have come to a monarch who loves it, and the fair country in which it is practised."

"In simple truth, Sire, I am an Englishman, and my hand has been too much welk'd and hardened by practice of the bow, the lance, and the sword, to touch the harp, or even the pencil."

"An Englishman!" said René, obviously relaxing in the warmth of his welcome. "And what brings you here? England and I have long had little friendship together."

"It is even on that account that I am here," said Arthur. "I come to pay my homage to your Grace's daughter, the Princess Margaret of Anjou, whom I and many true Englishmen regard still as our Queen, though traitors have usurped her title."

"Alas, good youth," said René, "I must grieve for you, while I respect your loyalty and faith. Had my daughter Margaret been of my mind, she had long since abandoned pretensions which have drowned in seas of blood the noblest and bravest of her adherents."

The King seemed about to say more, but checked himself.

"Go to my palace," he said; "inquire for the Seneschal Hugh de Saint Cyr, he will give thee the means of seeing Margaret—that is, if it be her will to see thee. If not, good English youth, return to my palace, and thou shalt have hospitable entertainment; for a King who loves minstrelsy, music, and painting is ever most sensible to the claims of honour, virtue, and loyalty; and I read in thy looks thou art possessed of these qualities, and willingly believe thou mayst, in more quiet times, aspire to share the honours of the joyous science. But if thou hast a heart to be touched by the sense of beauty and fair proportion, it will leap within thee at the first sight of my palace, the stately grace of which may be compared to the faultless form of some high-bred dame, or the artful yet seemingly simple modulations of such a tune as we have been now composing."

The King seemed disposed to take his instrument, and indulge the youth with a rehearsal of the strain he had just arranged; but Arthur at that moment experienced the painful internal feeling of that peculiar species of shame which well-constructed minds feel when they see others express a great assumption of importance, with a confidence that they are exciting admiration, when in fact they are only exposing themselves to ridicule. Arthur, in short, took leave, "in very shame," of the King of Naples, both the Sicilies, and Jerusalem, in a manner somewhat more abrupt than ceremony demanded. The King looked after him, with some wonder at this want of breeding, which, however, he imputed to his visitor's insular education, and then again began to twangle his viol.

"The old fool!" said Arthur. "His daughter is dethroned, his dominions crumbling to pieces, his family on the eve of becoming extinct, his grandson driven from one lurking-place to another, and expelled from his mother's inheritance,—and he can find amusement in these fopperies! I thought him, with his long white beard, like Nicholas Bonstetten; but the old Swiss is a Solomon compared with him."

As these and other reflections, highly disparaging to King René, passed through Arthur's mind, he reached the place of rendezvous, and found Thiebault beneath the steaming fountain, forced from one of those hot springs which had been the delight of the Romans from an early period. Thiebault, having assured his master that his retinue, horse and man, were so disposed as to be ready on an instant's call, readily undertook to guide him to King René's palace, which, from its singularity, and indeed its beauty of architecture, deserved the eulogium which the old monarch had bestowed upon it. The front consisted of three towers of Roman architecture, two of them being placed on the angles of the palace, and the third, which served the purpose of a mausoleum, forming a part of the group, though somewhat detached from the other buildings. This last was a structure of beautiful proportions. The lower part of the edifice was square, serving as a sort of pedestal to the upper part, which was circular, and surrounded by columns of massive granite. The other two towers at the angles of the palace were round, and also ornamented with pillars, and with a double row of windows. In front of, and connected with, these Roman remains, to which a date has been assigned as early as the fifth or sixth century, arose the ancient palace of the Counts of Provence, built a century or two later, but where a rich Gothic or Moorish front contrasted, and yet harmonised, with the more regular and massive architecture of the lords of the world. It is not more than thirty or forty years since this very curious remnant of antique art was destroyed, to make room for new public buildings, which have never yet been erected.²²⁰

Arthur really experienced some sensation of the kind which the old King had prophesied, and stood looking with wonder at the ever-open gate of the palace, into which men of all kinds seemed to enter freely. After looking around for a few minutes, the young Englishman ascended the steps of a noble portico, and asked of a porter, as old and as lazy as a great man's domestic ought to be, for the seneschal named to him by the King. The corpulent janitor, with great politeness, put the stranger under the charge of a page, who ushered him to a chamber, in which he found another aged functionary of higher rank, with a comely face, a clear

composed eye, and a brow which, having never been knit into gravity, intimated that the seneschal of Aix was a proficient in the philosophy of his royal master. He recognised Arthur the moment he addressed him.

"You speak northern French, fair sir; you have lighter hair and a fairer complexion than the natives of this country—You ask after Queen Margaret—By all these marks I read you English—Her Grace of England is at this moment paying a vow at the monastery of Mont St. Victoire, and if your name be Arthur Philipson, I have commission to forward you to her presence immediately—that is, as soon as you have tasted of the royal provision."

The young man would have remonstrated, but the seneschal left him no leisure.

"Meat and mass," he said, "never hindered work—it is perilous to youth to journey too far on an empty stomach—he himself would take a mouthful with the Queen's guest, and pledge him to boot in a flask of old Hermitage."221

The board was covered with an alacrity which showed that hospitality was familiarly exercised in King René's dominions. Pasties, dishes of game, the gallant boar's head, and other delicacies were placed on the table, and the seneschal played the merry host, frequently apologising (unnecessarily) for showing an indifferent example, as it was his duty to carve before King René, and the good King was never pleased unless he saw him feed lustily as well as carve fealty.

"But for you, Sir Guest, eat freely, since you may not see food again till sunset; for the good Queen takes her misfortunes so to heart that sighs are her food, and her tears a bottle of drink, as the Psalmist hath it. But I bethink me you will need steeds for yourself and your equipage to reach Mont St. Victoire, which is seven miles from Aix."

Arthur intimated that he had a guide and horses in attendance, and begged permission to take his adieu. The worthy seneschal, his fair round belly graced with a gold chain, accompanied him to the gate with a step which a gentle fit of the gout had rendered uncertain, but which, he assured Arthur, would vanish before three days' use of the hot springs. Thiebault appeared before the gate, not with the tired steeds from which they had dismounted an hour since, but with fresh palfreys from the stable of the King.

"They are yours from the moment you have put foot in stirrup," said the seneschal; "the good King René never received back as his property a horse which he had lent to a guest; and that is perhaps one reason why his Highness and we of his household must walk often a-foot."

Here the seneschal exchanged greetings with his 222young visitor, who rode forth to seek Queen Margaret's place of temporary retirement at the celebrated monastery of St. Victoire. He demanded of his guide in which direction it lay, who pointed, with an air of triumph, to a mountain three thousand feet and upwards in height, which arose at five or six miles' distance from the town, and which its bold and rocky summit rendered the most distinguished object of the landscape. Thiebault spoke of it with unusual glee and energy, so much so as to lead Arthur to conceive that his trusty squire had not neglected to avail himself of the lavish hospitality of *Le bon Roy René*. Thiebault, however, continued to expatiate on the fame of the mountain and monastery. They derived their name, he said, from a great victory which was gained by a Roman general, named Caio Mario, against two large armies of Saracens with ultramontane names (the Teutones probably and Cimbri), in gratitude to Heaven for which victory Caio Mario vowed to build a monastery on the mountain, for the service of the Virgin Mary, in honour of whom he had been baptised. With all the importance of a local connoisseur, Thiebault proceeded to prove his general assertion by specific facts.

"Yonder," he said, "was the camp of the Saracens, from which, when the battle was apparently decided, their wives and women rushed, with horrible screams, dishevelled hair, and the gestures of furies, and for a time prevailed in stopping the flight of the men." He pointed out, too, the river, for access to which, cut off by the superior generalship of the Romans, the barbarians, whom he called Saracens, hazarded the action, and whose 223streams they empurpled with their blood. In short, he mentioned many circumstances which showed how accurately tradition will preserve the particulars of ancient events, even whilst forgetting, misstating, and confounding dates and persons.

Perceiving that Arthur lent him a not unwilling ear,—for it may be supposed that the education of a youth bred up in the heat of civil wars was not well qualified to criticise his account of the wars of a distant period,—the Provençal, when he had exhausted this topic, drew up close to his master's side, and asked, in a suppressed tone, whether he knew, or was desirous of being made acquainted with, the cause of Margaret's having left Aix, to establish herself in the monastery of St. Victoire?

"For the accomplishment of a vow," answered Arthur; "all the world knows it."

"All Aix knows the contrary," said Thiebault; "and I can tell you the truth, so I were sure it would not offend your seignorie."

"The truth can offend no reasonable man, so it be expressed in the terms of which Queen Margaret must be spoken in the presence of an Englishman."

Thus replied Arthur, willing to receive what information he could gather, and desirous, at the same time, to check the petulance of his attendant.

"I have nothing," replied his follower, "to state in disparagement of the gracious Queen, whose only misfortune is that, like her royal father, she has more titles than towns. Besides, I know well that you Englishmen, though you speak wildly of your sovereigns yourselves, will not permit others to fail in respect to them."

"Say on, then," answered Arthur.224

"Your seignorie must know, then," said Thiebault, "that the good King René has been much disturbed by the deep melancholy which afflicted Queen Margaret, and has bent himself with all his power to change it into a gayer humour. He made entertainments in public and in private; he assembled minstrels and Troubadours, whose music and poetry might have drawn smiles from one on his deathbed. The whole country resounded with mirth and glee, and the gracious Queen could not stir abroad in the most private manner, but, before she had gone a hundred paces, she lighted on an ambush, consisting of some pretty pageant, or festiuous mummary, composed often by the good King himself, which interrupted her solitude, in purpose of relieving her heavy thoughts with some pleasant pastime. But the Queen's deep melancholy rejected all these modes of dispelling it, and at length she confined herself to her own apartments, and absolutely refused to see even her royal father, because he generally brought into her presence those whose productions he thought likely to soothe her sorrow. Indeed she seemed to hear the harpers with loathing, and, excepting one wandering Englishman, who sung a rude and melancholy ballad, which threw her into a flood of tears, and to whom she gave a chain of price, she never seemed to look at, or be conscious of the presence of any one. And at length, as I have had the honour to tell your seignorie, she refused to see even her royal father unless he came alone; and that he found no heart to do."

"I wonder not at it," said the young man. "By the White Swan, I am rather surprised his mummary drove her not to frenzy."225

"Something like it indeed took place," said Thiebault; "and I will tell your seignorie how it chanced. You must know that good King René, unwilling to abandon his daughter to the foul fiend of melancholy, bethought him of making a grand effort. You must know, further, that the King, powerful in all the craft of Troubadours and Jongleurs, is held in peculiar esteem for conducting mysteries, and other of those gamesome and delightful sports and processions, with which our Holy Church permits her graver ceremonies to be relieved and diversified, to the cheering of the hearts of all true children of religion. It is admitted that no one has ever been able to approach his excellence in the arrangement of the Fête-Dieu; and the tune to which the devils cudgel King Herod, to the great edification of all Christian spectators, is of our good King's royal composition. He hath danced at Tarasconne in the ballet of St. Martha and the Dragon, and was accounted in his own person the only actor competent to present the Tarrasque. His Highness introduced also a new ritual into the consecration of the Boy Bishop, and composed an entire set of grotesque music for the Festival of Asses. In short, his Grace's strength lies in those pleasing and becoming festivities which strew the path of edification with flowers, and send men dancing and singing on their way to heaven.

"Now the good King René, feeling his own genius for such recreative compositions, resolved to exert it to the utmost, in the hope that he might thereby relieve the melancholy in which his daughter was plunged, and which infected all that approached her. It chanced, some short time 226since, that the Queen was absent for certain days, I know not where or on what business, but it gave the good King time to make his preparations. So, when his daughter returned, he with much importunity prevailed on her to make part of a religious procession to St. Sauveur, the principal church in Aix. The Queen, innocent of what was intended, decked herself with solemnity, to witness and partake of what she expected would prove a work of grave piety. But no sooner had she appeared on the esplanade in front of the palace, than more than a hundred masks, dressed up like Turks, Jews, Saracens, Moors, and I know not whom besides, crowded around, to offer her their homage, in the character of the Queen of Sheba; and a grotesque piece of music called them to arrange themselves for a ludicrous ballet, in which they addressed the Queen in the most entertaining manner, and with the most extravagant gestures. The Queen, stunned with the noise, and affronted with the

petulance of this unexpected onset, would have gone back into the palace; but the doors had been shut by the King's order so soon as she set forth, and her retreat in that direction was cut off. Finding herself excluded from the palace, the Queen advanced to the front of the façade, and endeavoured by signs and words to appease the hubbub, but the maskers, who had their instructions, only answered with songs, music, and shouts."

"I would," said Arthur, "there had been a score of English yeomen in presence, with their quarterstaves, to teach the bawling villains respect for one that has worn the crown of England!"

"All the noise that was made before was silence²²⁷ and soft music," continued Thiebault, "till that when the good King himself appeared, grotesquely dressed in the character of King Solomon"——

"To whom, of all princes, he has the least resemblance," said Arthur——

"With such capers and gesticulations of welcome to the Queen of Sheba as, I am assured by those who saw it, would have brought a dead man alive again, or killed a living man with laughing. Among other properties, he had in his hand a truncheon, somewhat formed like a fool's bauble"——

"A most fit sceptre for such a sovereign," said Arthur——

"Which was headed," continued Thiebault, "by a model of the Jewish Temple, finely gilded and curiously cut in pasteboard. He managed this with the utmost grace, and delighted every spectator by his gaiety and activity, excepting the Queen, who, the more he skipped and capered, seemed to be the more incensed, until, on his approaching her to conduct her to the procession, she seemed roused to a sort of frenzy, struck the truncheon out of his hand, and breaking through the crowd, who felt as if a tigress had leapt amongst them from a showman's cart, rushed into the royal courtyard. Ere the order of the scenic representation, which her violence had interrupted, could be restored, the Queen again issued forth, mounted and attended by two or three English cavaliers of her Majesty's suite. She forced her way through the crowd, without regarding either their safety or her own, flew like a hail-storm along the streets, and never drew bridle till she was as far up this same Mont St. Victoire as the road would permit. She was then received into the convent,²²⁸ and has since remained there; and a vow of penance is the pretext to cover over the quarrel betwixt her and her father."

"How long may it be," said Arthur, "since these things chanced?"

"It is but three days since Queen Margaret left Aix in the manner I have told you.—But we are come as far up the mountain as men usually ride. See, yonder is the monastery rising betwixt two huge rocks, which form the very top of Mont St. Victoire. There is no more open ground than is afforded by the cleft, into which the convent of St. Mary of Victory is, as it were, niched; and the access is guarded by the most dangerous precipices. To ascend the mountain, you must keep that narrow path, which, winding and turning among the cliffs, leads at length to the summit of the hill, and the gate of the monastery."

"And what becomes of you and the horses?" said Arthur.

"We will rest," said Thiebault, "in the hospital maintained by the good fathers at the bottom of the mountain, for the accommodation of those who attend on pilgrims;—for I promise you the shrine is visited by many who come from afar, and are attended both by man and horse.—Care not for me,—I shall be first under cover; but there muster yonder in the west some threatening clouds, from which your seignorie may suffer inconvenience, unless you reach the convent in time. I will give you an hour to do the feat, and will say you are as active as a chamois-hunter if you reach it within the time."

Arthur looked around him, and did indeed remark a mustering of clouds in the distant west,²²⁹ which threatened soon to change the character of the day, which had hitherto been brilliantly clear, and so serene that the falling of a leaf might have been heard. He therefore turned him to the steep and rocky path which ascended the mountain, sometimes by scaling almost precipitous rocks, and sometimes by reaching their tops by a more circuitous process. It winded through thickets of wild boxwood and other low aromatic shrubs, which afforded some pasture for the mountain goats, but were a bitter annoyance to the traveller who had to press through them. Such obstacles were so frequent, that the full hour allowed by Thiebault had elapsed before he stood on the summit of Mont St. Victoire, and in front of the singular convent of the same name.

We have already said that the crest of the mountain, consisting entirely of one bare and solid rock, was divided by a cleft or opening into two heads or peaks, between which the convent was built, occupying all the space between them. The front of the building was of the most ancient and sombre cast of the old Gothic, or rather, as it has been termed, the Saxon; and in that respect corresponded with the savage exterior of the naked cliffs, of which the structure seemed to make a part, and by which it was entirely surrounded, excepting a small open space of more level ground, where, at the expense of much toil, and by carrying earth up the hill, from different spots where they could collect it in small quantities, the good fathers had been able to arrange the accommodations of a garden.

A bell summoned a lay brother, the porter of this singularly situated monastery, to whom Arthur²³⁰ announced himself as an English merchant, Philipson by name, who came to pay his duty to Queen Margaret. The porter, with much respect, showed the stranger into the convent, and ushered him into a parlour, which, looking towards Aix, commanded an extensive and splendid prospect over the southern and western parts of Provence. This was the direction in which Arthur had approached the mountain from Aix; but the circuitous path by which he had ascended had completely carried him round the hill. The western side of the monastery, to which the parlour looked, commanded the noble view we have mentioned; and a species of balcony, which, connecting the two twin crags, at this place not above four or five yards asunder, ran along the front of the building, and appeared to be constructed for the purpose of enjoying it. But on stepping from one of the windows of the parlour upon this battlemented bartizan, Arthur became aware that the wall on which the parapet rested stretched along the edge of a precipice, which sank sheer down five hundred feet at least from the foundations of the convent. Surprised and startled at finding himself on so giddy a verge, Arthur turned his eyes from the gulf beneath him to admire the distant landscape, partly illumined, with ominous lustre, by the now westerly sun. The setting beams showed in dark red splendour a vast variety of hill and dale, champaign and cultivated ground, with towns, churches, and castles, some of which rose from among trees, while others seemed founded on rocky eminences; others again lurked by the side of streams or lakes, to which the heat and drought of the climate naturally attracted them.²³¹

The rest of the landscape presented similar objects when the weather was serene, but they were now rendered indistinct, or altogether obliterated, by the sullen shade of the approaching clouds, which gradually spread over great part of the horizon, and threatened altogether to eclipse the sun, though the lord of the horizon still struggled to maintain his influence, and, like a dying hero, seemed most glorious even in the moment of defeat. Wild sounds, like groans and howls, formed by the wind in the numerous caverns of the rocky mountain, added to the terrors of the scene, and seemed to foretell the fury of some distant storm, though the air in general was even unnaturally calm and breathless. In gazing on this extraordinary scene, Arthur did justice to the monks who had chosen this wild and grotesque situation, from which they could witness Nature in her wildest and grandest demonstrations, and compare the nothingness of humanity with her awful convulsions.

So much was Arthur awed by the scene before him, that he had almost forgotten, while gazing from the bartizan, the important business which had brought him to this place, when it was suddenly recalled by finding himself in the presence of Margaret of Anjou, who, not seeing him in the parlour of reception, had stepped upon the balcony, that she might meet with him the sooner.

The Queen's dress was black, without any ornament except a gold coronal of an inch in breadth, restraining her long black tresses, of which advancing years and misfortunes had partly altered the hue. There was placed within the circlet a black plume with a red rose, the last of the season,²³² which the good father who kept the garden had presented to her that morning, as the badge of her husband's house. Care, fatigue, and sorrow seemed to dwell on her brow and her features. To another messenger she would in all probability have administered a sharp rebuke, for not being alert in his duty to receive her as she entered; but Arthur's age and appearance corresponded with that of her loved and lost son. He was the son of a lady whom Margaret had loved with almost sisterly affection, and the presence of Arthur continued to excite in the dethroned Queen the same feelings of maternal tenderness which had been awakened on their first meeting in the Cathedral of Strasburg. She raised him as he kneeled at her feet, spoke to him with much kindness, and encouraged him to detail at full length his father's message, and such other news as his brief residence at Dijon had made him acquainted with.

She demanded which way Duke Charles had moved with his army.

"As I was given to understand by the master of his artillery," said Arthur, "towards the Lake of Neufchatel, on which side he proposes his first attack on the Swiss."

"The headstrong fool!" said Queen Margaret. "He resembles the poor lunatic, who went to the summit of the mountain that he might meet the rain halfway.—Does thy father, then," continued Margaret, "advise me to give up the last remains of the extensive territories once the dominions of our royal house, and for some thousand crowns, and the paltry aid of a few hundred lances, to relinquish what is left of our patrimony to our proud and selfish kinsman of Burgundy, who extends his 233claim to our all, and affords so little help, or even promise of help, in return?"

"I should have ill discharged my father's commission," said Arthur, "if I had left your Highness to think that he recommends so great a sacrifice. He feels most deeply the Duke of Burgundy's grasping desire of dominion. Nevertheless, he thinks that Provence must, on King René's death, or sooner, fall either to the share of Duke Charles, or to Louis of France, whatever opposition your Highness may make to such a destination; and it may be that my father, as a knight and a soldier, hopes much from obtaining the means to make another attempt on Britain. But the decision must rest with your Highness."

"Young man," said the Queen, "the contemplation of a question so doubtful almost deprives me of reason!"

As she spoke, she sank down, as one who needs rest, on a stone seat placed on the very verge of the balcony, regardless of the storm, which now began to rise with dreadful gusts of wind, the course of which being intermitted and altered by the crags round which they howled, it seemed as if in very deed Boreas, and Eurus, and Caurus, unchaining the winds from every quarter of heaven, were contending for mastery around the convent of Our Lady of Victory. Amid this tumult, and amid billows of mist which concealed the bottom of the precipice, and masses of clouds which racked fearfully over their heads, the roar of the descending waters rather resembled the fall of cataracts than the rushing of torrents of rain. The seat on which Margaret had placed herself was in a considerable degree sheltered from the storm, but 234its eddies, varying in every direction, often tossed aloft her dishevelled hair; and we cannot describe the appearance of her noble and beautiful, yet ghastly and wasted features, agitated strongly by anxious hesitation and conflicting thoughts, unless to those of our readers who have had the advantage of having seen our inimitable Siddons in such a character as this. Arthur, confounded by anxiety and terror, could only beseech her Majesty to retire before the fury of the approaching storm into the interior of the convent.

"No," she replied with firmness; "roofs and walls have ears, and monks, though they have forsworn the world, are not the less curious to know what passes beyond their cells. It is in this place you must hear what I have to say; as a soldier you should scorn a blast of wind or a shower of rain; and to me, who have often held counsel amidst the sound of trumpets and clash of arms, prompt for instant fight, the war of elements is an unnoticed trifle. I tell thee, young Arthur Vere, as I would to your father—as I would to my son—if indeed Heaven had left such a blessing to a wretch forlorn!"——

She paused, and then proceeded.

"I tell thee, as I would have told my beloved Edward, that Margaret, whose resolutions were once firm and immovable as these rocks among which we are placed, is now doubtful and variable as the clouds which are drifting around us. I told your father, in the joy of meeting once more a subject of such inappreciable loyalty, of the sacrifices I would make to assure the assistance of Charles of Burgundy, to so gallant an undertaking as that proposed to him by the faithful Oxford. 235But since I saw him I have had cause of deep reflection. I met my aged father only to offend and, I say it with shame, to insult the old man in presence of his people. Our tempers are as opposed as the sunshine, which a short space since gilded a serene and beautiful landscape, differs from the tempests which are now wasting it. I spurned with open scorn and contempt what he, in his mistaken affection, had devised for means of consolation, and, disgusted with the idle follies which he had devised for curing the melancholy of a dethroned Queen, a widowed spouse—and, alas! a childless mother,—I retired hither from the noisy and idle mirth, which was the bitterest aggravation of my sorrows. Such and so gentle is René's temper, that even my unfilial conduct will not diminish my influence over him; and if your father had announced that the Duke of Burgundy, like a knight and a sovereign, had cordially and nobly entered into the plan of the faithful Oxford, I could have found it in my heart to obtain the cession of territory his cold and ambitious policy requires, in order to insure the assistance which he now postpones to afford till he has gratified his own haughty humour by settling needless quarrels with his unoffending neighbours. Since I have been here, and calmness and solitude have given me time to reflect, I have thought on the offences I have given the old man, and on the wrongs I was about to do him. My father, let me do him justice, is also the father of his people. They have dwelt under their vines and fig-trees, in ignoble ease, perhaps, but free from oppression and exaction, and their happiness has been that of their good King. Must I change all this?—Must 236I aid in turning over these contented people to a fierce, headlong, arbitrary prince?—May I not break even the easy and thoughtless heart of my poor old father, should I succeed in urging him to do so?—These are questions which I shudder even to ask myself. On the other hand, to disappoint the toils, the venturesome hopes of your father, to forego the only opportunity which may ever again offer itself, of revenge on the bloody traitors of York, and restoration of the House of Lancaster!—Arthur, the scene around us is not so convulsed by the fearful tempest and the driving clouds, as my mind is by doubt and uncertainty."

"Alas," replied Arthur, "I am too young and inexperienced to be your Majesty's adviser in a case so arduous. I would my father had been in presence himself."

"I know what he would have said," replied the Queen; "but, knowing all, I despair of aid from human counsellors—I have sought others, but they also are deaf to my entreaties. Yes, Arthur, Margaret's misfortunes have rendered her superstitious. Know, that beneath these rocks, and under the foundation of this convent, there runs a cavern, entering by a secret and defended passage a little to the westward of the summit, and running through the mountain, having an opening to the south, from which, as from this bartizan, you can view the landscape so lately seen from this balcony, or the strife of winds and confusion of clouds which we now behold. In the middle of this cavernous thoroughfare is a natural pit, or perforation, of great but unknown depth. A stone dropped into it is heard to dash from side to side, 237until the noise of its descent, thundering from cliff to cliff, dies away in distant and faint tinkling, less loud than that of a sheep's bell at a mile's distance. The common people, in their jargon, call this fearful gulf Lou Garagoule; and the traditions of the monastery annex wild and fearful recollections to a place in itself sufficiently terrible. Oracles, it is said, spoke from thence in pagan days, by subterranean voices, arising from the abyss; and from these the Roman general is said to have heard, in strange and uncouth rhymes, promises of the victory which gives name to this mountain. These oracles, it is averred, may be yet consulted after performance of strange rites, in which heathen ceremonies are mixed with Christian acts of devotion. The abbots of Mont St. Victoire have denounced the consultation of Lou Garagoule, and the spirits who reside there, to be criminal. But as the sin may be expiated by presents to the Church, by masses, and penances, the door is sometimes opened by the complaisant fathers to those whose daring curiosity leads them, at all risks, and by whatever means, to search into futurity. Arthur, I have made the experiment, and am even now returned from the gloomy cavern, in which, according to the traditional ritual, I have spent six hours by the margin of the gulf, a place so dismal, that after its horrors even this tempestuous scene is refreshing."

The Queen stopped, and Arthur, the more struck with the wild tale that it reminded him of his place of imprisonment at La Ferette, asked anxiously if her inquiries had obtained any answer.

"None whatever," replied the unhappy Princess. 238"The demons of Garagoule, if there be such, are deaf to the suit of an unfortunate wretch like me, to whom neither friends nor fiends will afford counsel or assistance. It is my father's circumstances which prevent my instant and strong resolution. Were my own claims on this piping and paltry nation of Troubadours alone interested, I could, for the chance of once more setting my foot in merry England, as easily and willingly resign them, and their paltry coronet, as I commit to the storm this idle emblem of the royal rank which I have lost."

As Margaret spoke, she tore from her hair the sable feather and rose which the tempest had detached from the circlet in which they were placed, and tossed them from the battlement with a gesture of wild energy. They were instantly whirled off in a bickering eddy of the agitated clouds, which swept the feather far distant into empty space, through which the eye could not pursue it. But while that of Arthur involuntarily strove to follow its course, a contrary gust of wind caught the red rose, and drove it back against his breast, so that it was easy for him to catch hold of and retain it.

"Joy, joy, and good fortune, royal mistress!" he said, returning to her the emblematic flower; "the tempest brings back the badge of Lancaster to its proper owner."

"I accept the omen," said Margaret; "but it concerns yourself, noble youth, and not me. The feather, which is borne away to waste and desolation, is Margaret's emblem. My eyes will never see the restoration of the line of Lancaster. But you will live to behold it, and to aid to achieve it, 239and to dye our red rose deeper yet in the blood of tyrants and traitors. My thoughts are so strangely poised, that a feather or a flower may turn the scale. But my head is still giddy, and my heart sick.—To-morrow you shall see another Margaret, and till then adieu."

It was time to retire, for the tempest began to be mingled with fiercer showers of rain. When they re-entered the parlour, the Queen clapped her hands, and two female attendants entered.

"Let the Father Abbot know," she said, "that it is our desire that this young gentleman receive for this night such hospitality as befits an esteemed friend of ours.—Till to-morrow, young sir, farewell."

With a countenance which betrayed not the late emotion of her mind, and with a stately courtesy that would have become her when she graced the halls of Windsor, she extended her hand, which the youth saluted respectfully. After her leaving the parlour, the Abbot entered, and, in his attention to Arthur's entertainment and accommodation for the evening, showed his anxiety to meet and obey Queen Margaret's wishes.²⁴⁰

CHAPTER XIII.

Want you a man

Experienced in the world and its affairs?

Here he is for your purpose.—He's a monk.

He hath forsworn the world and all its work—

The rather that he knows it passing well,

Special the worst of it, for he's a monk.

Old Play.

While the dawn of the morning was yet grey, Arthur was awakened by a loud ringing at the gate of the monastery, and presently afterwards the porter entered the cell which had been allotted to him for his lodgings, to tell him that, if his name was Arthur Philipson, a brother of their order had brought him despatches from his father. The youth started up, hastily attired himself, and was introduced, in the parlour, to a Carmelite monk, being of the same order with the community of St. Victoire.

"I have ridden many a mile, young man, to present you with this letter," said the monk, "having undertaken to your father that it should be delivered without delay. I came to Aix last night during the storm, and, learning at the palace that you had ridden hither, I mounted as soon as the tempest abated, and here I am."

"I am beholden to you, father," said the youth, "and if I could repay your pains with a small donative to your convent"——²⁴¹

"By no means," answered the good father; "I took my personal trouble out of friendship to your father, and mine own errand led me this way. The expenses of my long journey have been amply provided for. But open your packet, I can answer your questions at leisure."

The young man accordingly stepped into an embrasure of the window, and read as follows:—

"SON ARTHUR,—Touching the state of the country, in so far as concerns the safety of travelling, know that the same is precarious. The Duke hath taken the towns of Brie and Granson, and put to death five hundred men, whom he made prisoners in garrison there. But the Confederates are approaching with a large force, and God will judge for the right. Howsoever the game may go, these are sharp wars, in which little quarter is spoken of on either side, and therefore there is no safety for men of our profession, till something decisive shall happen. In the meantime, you may assure the widowed lady, that our correspondent continues well disposed to purchase the property which she has in hand; but will scarce be able to pay the price till his present pressing affairs shall be settled, which I hope will be in time to permit us to embark the funds in the profitable adventure I told our friend of. I have employed a friar, travelling to Provence, to carry this letter, which I trust will come safe. The bearer may be trusted.

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN PHILIPSON."

Arthur easily comprehended the latter part of the epistle, and rejoiced he had received it at so critical a moment. He questioned the Carmelite on the amount of the Duke's army, which the monk stated to amount to sixty thousand men, ²⁴²while he said the Confederates, though making every exertion, had not yet been able to assemble the third part of that number. The young Ferrand de Vaudemont was with their army, and had received, it was thought, some secret assistance from France; but as he was little known in arms, and had few followers, the empty title of General which he bore added little to the strength of the Confederates. Upon the whole, he reported that every chance appeared to be in favour of Charles, and Arthur, who looked upon his success as presenting the only chance in favour of his father's enterprise, was not a little pleased to find it insured, as far as depended on a great superiority of force. He had no leisure to make further inquiries, for the Queen at that moment entered the apartment, and the Carmelite, learning her quality, withdrew from her presence in deep reverence.

The paleness of her complexion still bespoke the fatigues of the day preceding; but, as she graciously bestowed on Arthur the greetings of the morning, her voice was firm, her eye clear, and her countenance steady. "I meet you," she said, "not as I left you, but determined in my purpose. I am satisfied that if René does not voluntarily yield up his throne of Provence by some step like that which we propose, he will be hurled from it by violence, in which, it may be, his life will not be spared. We will, therefore, to work with all speed—the worst is, that I cannot leave this convent till I have made the necessary penances for having visited the Garagoule, without performing which I were no Christian woman. When you return to Aix, inquire at the palace for my secretary, with whom this line will give you credence. ²⁴³I have, even before this door of hope opened to me, endeavoured to form an estimate of King René's situation, and collected the documents for that purpose. Tell him to send me, duly sealed, and under fitting charge, the small cabinet hooped with silver. Hours of penance for past errors may be employed to prevent others; and from the contents of that cabinet I shall learn whether I am, in this weighty matter, sacrificing my father's interests to my own half-desperate hopes. But of this I have little or no doubt. I can cause the deeds of resignation and transference to be drawn up here under my own direction, and arrange the execution of them when I return to Aix, which shall be the first moment after my penance is concluded."

"And this letter, gracious madam," said Arthur, "will inform you what events are approaching, and of what importance it may be to take time by the forelock. Place me but in possession of these momentous deeds, and I will travel night and day till I reach the Duke's camp. I shall find him most likely in the moment of victory, and with his heart too much open to refuse a boon to the royal kinswoman who is surrendering to him all. We will—we must—in such an hour, obtain princely succours; and we shall soon see if the licentious Edward of York, the savage Richard, the treacherous and perjured Clarence, are hereafter to be lords of merry England, or whether they must give place to a more rightful sovereign and better man. But oh! royal madam, all depends on haste."

"True—yet a few days may—nay, must—cast the die between Charles and his opponents; and, ere making so great a surrender, it were as well to ²⁴⁴be assured that he whom we would propitiate is in capacity to assist us. All the events of a tragic and varied life have led me to see there is no such thing as an inconsiderable enemy. I will make haste, however, trusting in the interim we may have good news from the banks of the lake at Neufchatel."

"But who shall be employed to draw these most important deeds?" said the young man.

Margaret mused ere she replied,—²⁴⁵"The Father Guardian is complaisant, and I think faithful; but I would not willingly repose confidence in one of the Provençal monks. Stay, let me think—your father says the Carmelite who brought the letter may be trusted—he shall do the turn. He is a stranger, and will be silent for a piece of money. Farewell, Arthur de Vere.—You will be treated with all hospitality by my father. If thou dost receive further tidings, thou wilt let me know them; or, should I have instructions to send, thou wilt hear from me.—So, benedicite."

Arthur proceeded to wind down the mountain at a much quicker pace than he had ascended on the day before. The weather was now gloriously serene, and the beauties of vegetation, in a country where it never totally slumbers, were at once delicious and refreshing. His thoughts wandered from the crags of Mont St. Victoire to the cliff of the canton of Unterwalden, and fancy recalled the moments when his walks through such scenery were not solitary, but when there was a form by his side whose simple beauty was engraved on his memory. Such thoughts were of a preoccupying nature; and I grieve to say that they entirely drowned the recollection of the mysterious caution given him by his father, intimating that Arthur ²⁴⁵might not be able to comprehend such letters as he should receive from him, till they were warmed before a fire.

The first thing which reminded him of this singular caution was the seeing a chafing-dish of charcoal in the kitchen of the hostelry at the bottom of the mountain, where he found Thiebault and his horses. This was the first fire which he had seen since receiving his father's letter, and it reminded him not unnaturally of what

the Earl had recommended. Great was his surprise to see that, after exposing the paper to the fire as if to dry it, a word emerged in an important passage of the letter, and the concluding words now read,—“The bearer may *not* be trusted.” Well-nigh choked with shame and vexation, Arthur could think of no other remedy than instantly to return to the convent, and acquaint the Queen with this discovery, which he hoped still to convey to her in time to prevent any risk being incurred by the Carmelite's treachery.

Incensed at himself, and eager to redeem his fault, he bent his manly breast against the steep hill, which was probably never scaled in so short time as by the young heir of De Vere; for, within forty minutes from his commencing the ascent, he stood breathless and panting in the presence of Queen Margaret, who was alike surprised at his appearance and his exhausted condition.

“Trust not the Carmelite!” he exclaimed—“You are betrayed, noble Queen, and it is by my negligence. Here is my dagger—bid me strike it into my heart!”

Margaret demanded and obtained a more special explanation, and when it was given she said, “It 246is an unhappy chance; but your father's instructions ought to have been more distinct. I have told yonder Carmelite the purpose of the contracts, and engaged with him to draw them. He has but now left me to serve at the choir. There is no withdrawing the confidence I have unhappily placed; but I can easily prevail with the Father Guardian to prevent the monk from leaving the convent till we are indifferent to his secrecy. It is our best chance to secure it, and we will take care that what inconvenience he sustains by his detention shall be well recompensed. Meanwhile, rest thou, good Arthur, and undo the throat of thy mantle. Poor youth, thou art well-nigh exhausted with thy haste.”

Arthur obeyed, and sat down on a seat in the parlour; for the speed which he had exerted rendered him almost incapable of standing.

“If I could but see,” he said, “the false monk, I would find a way to charm him to secrecy!”

“Better leave him to me,” said the Queen; “and, in a word, I forbid you to meddle with him. The coif can treat better with the cowl than the casque can do. Say no more of him. I joy to see you wear around your neck the holy relic I bestowed on you;—but what Moorish charmlet is that you wear beside it? Alas! I need not ask. Your heightened colour, almost as deep as when you entered a quarter of an hour hence, confesses a true-love token. Alas! poor boy, hast thou not only such a share of thy country's woes to bear, but also thine own load of affliction, not the less poignant now that future time will show thee how fantastic it is! Margaret of Anjou could once have aided wherever thy affections 247were placed; but now she can only contribute to the misery of her friends, not to their happiness. But this lady of the charm, Arthur, is she fair—is she wise and virtuous—is she of noble birth—and does she love?”—She perused his countenance with the glance of an eagle, and continued, “To all, thou wouldst answer Yes, if shamefacedness permitted thee. Love her then in turn, my gallant boy, for love is the parent of brave actions. Go, my noble youth—high-born and loyal, valorous and virtuous, enamoured and youthful, to what mayst thou not rise? The chivalry of ancient Europe only lives in a bosom like thine. Go, and let the praises of a Queen fire thy bosom with the love of honour and achievement. In three days we meet at Aix.”

Arthur, highly gratified with the Queen's condescension, once more left her presence.

Returning down the mountain with a speed very different from that which he had used in the ascent, he again found his Provençal squire, who had remained in much surprise at witnessing the confusion in which his master had left the inn, almost immediately after he had entered it without any apparent haste or agitation. Arthur explained his hasty return by alleging he had forgot his purse at the convent. “Nay, in that case,” said Thiebault, “considering what you left and where you left it, I do not wonder at your speed, though, Our Lady save me, as I never saw living creature, save a goat with a wolf at his heels, make his way over crag and briers with half such rapidity as you did.”

They reached Aix after about an hour's riding, and Arthur lost no time in waiting upon the good 248King René, who gave him a kind reception, both in respect of the letter from the Duke of Burgundy, and in consideration of his being an Englishman, the avowed subject of the unfortunate Margaret. The placable monarch soon forgave his young guest the want of complaisance with which he had eschewed to listen to his compositions; and Arthur speedily found that to apologise for his want of breeding in that particular was likely to lead to a great deal more rehearsing than he could find patience to tolerate. He could only avoid the old King's extreme desire to recite his own poems, and perform his own music, by engaging him in speaking of his daughter Margaret. Arthur had been sometimes induced to doubt the influence which the Queen boasted herself to possess over her aged father; but, on being acquainted with him personally, he became convinced that her powerful understanding and violent passions inspired the feeble-minded and passive King with a mixture of pride, affection, and fear, which united to give her the most ample authority over him.

Although she had parted with him but a day or two since, and in a manner so ungracious on her side, René was as much overjoyed at hearing of the probability of her speedy return, as the fondest father could have been at the prospect of being reunited to the most dutiful child, whom he had not seen for years. The old King was impatient as a boy for the day of her arrival, and, still strangely unenlightened on the difference of her taste from his own, he was with difficulty induced to lay aside a project of meeting her in the character of old Palemon,—

The prince of shepherds, and their pride,

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at the head of an Arcadian procession of nymphs and swains, to inspire whose choral dances and songs every pipe and tambourine in the country was to be placed in requisition. Even the old seneschal, however, intimated his disapprobation of this species of *joyeuse entrée*; so that René suffered himself at length to be persuaded that the Queen was too much occupied by the religious impressions to which she had been of late exposed, to receive any agreeable sensation from sights or sounds of levity. The King gave way to reasons which he could not sympathise with; and thus Margaret escaped the shock of welcome, which would perhaps have driven her in her impatience back to the mountain of St. Victoire, and the sable cavern of Lou Garagoule.

During the time of her absence, the days of the court of Provence were employed in sports and rejoicings of every description; tilting at the barrier with blunted spears, riding at the ring, parties for hare-hunting and falconry, frequented by the youth of both sexes, in the company of whom the King delighted, while the evenings were consumed in dancing and music.

Arthur could not but be sensible that not long since all this would have made him perfectly happy; but the last months of his existence had developed his understanding and passions. He was now initiated in the actual business of human life, and looked on its amusements with an air of something like contempt; so that among the young and gay noblesse who composed this merry court he acquired the title of the youthful philosopher, which was not bestowed upon him, it may be supposed, as inferring anything of peculiar compliment.250

On the fourth day news was received, by an express messenger, that Queen Margaret would enter Aix before the hour of noon, to resume her residence in her father's palace. The good King René seemed, as it drew nigh, to fear the interview with his daughter as much as he had previously desired it, and contrived to make all around him partake of his fidgety anxiety. He tormented his steward and cooks to recollect what dishes they had ever observed her to taste of with approbation—he pressed the musicians to remember the tunes which she approved; and when one of them boldly replied he had never known her Majesty endure any strain with patience, the old monarch threatened to turn him out of his service for slandering the taste of his daughter. The banquet was ordered to be served at half past eleven, as if accelerating it would have had the least effect upon hurrying the arrival of the expected guests; and the old King, with his napkin over his arm, traversed the hall from window to window, wearying every one with questions, whether they saw anything of the Queen of England. Exactly as the bells tolled noon, the Queen, with a very small retinue, chiefly English, and in mourning habits like herself, rode into the town of Aix. King René, at the head of his court, failed not to descend from the front of his stately palace, and move along the street to meet his daughter. Lofty, proud, and jealous of incurring ridicule, Margaret was not pleased with this public greeting in the market-place. But she was desirous at present to make amends for her late petulance, and therefore she descended from her palfrey; and, although something shocked at seeing 251René equipped with a napkin, she humbled herself to bend the knee to him, asking at once his blessing and forgiveness.

“Thou hast—thou hast my blessing, my suffering dove,” said the simple King to the proudest and most impatient princess that ever wept for a lost crown.—“And for thy pardon, how canst thou ask it, who never didst me an offence since God made me father to so gracious a child?—Rise, I say rise—nay, it is for me to ask thy pardon—True, I said in my ignorance, and thought within myself, that my heart had indited a goodly thing—but it vexed thee. It is therefore for me to crave pardon.”—And down sank good King René upon both knees; and the people, who are usually captivated with anything resembling the trick of the scene,

applauded with much noise, and some smothered laughter, a situation in which the royal daughter and her parent seemed about to rehearse the scene of the Roman Charity.

Margaret, sensitively alive to shame, and fully aware that her present position was sufficiently ludicrous in its publicity at least, signed sharply to Arthur, whom she saw in the King's suite, to come to her; and, using his arm to rise, she muttered to him aside, and in English,—“To what saint shall I vow myself, that I may preserve patience when I so much need it!”

“For pity's sake, royal madam, recall your firmness of mind and composure,” whispered her esquire, who felt at the moment more embarrassed than honoured by his distinguished office, for he could feel that the Queen actually trembled with vexation and impatience.

They at length resumed their route to the 252palace, the father and daughter arm in arm—a posture most agreeable to Margaret, who could bring herself to endure her father's effusions of tenderness, and the general tone of his conversation, so that he was not overheard by others. In the same manner, she bore with laudable patience the teasing attentions which he addressed to her at table, noticed some of his particular courtiers, inquired after others, led the way to his favourite subjects of conversation on poetry, painting, and music, till the good King was as much delighted with the unwonted civilities of his daughter as ever was lover with the favourable confessions of his mistress, when, after years of warm courtship, the ice of her bosom is at length thawed. It cost the haughty Margaret an effort to bend herself to play this part—her pride rebuked her for stooping to flatter her father's foibles, in order to bring him over to the resignation of his dominions—yet having undertaken to do so, and so much having been already hazarded upon this sole remaining chance of success in an attack upon England, she saw, or was willing to see, no alternative.

Betwixt the banquet and the bail by which it was to be followed, the Queen sought an opportunity of speaking to Arthur.

“Bad news, my sage counsellor,” she said. “The Carmelite never returned to the convent after the service was over. Having learned that you had come back in great haste, he had, I suppose, concluded he might stand in suspicion, so he left the convent of Mont St. Victoire.”

“We must hasten the measures which your Majesty has resolved to adopt,” answered Arthur.

“I will speak with my father to-morrow. 253Meanwhile, you must enjoy the pleasures of the evening, for to you they may be pleasures.—Young lady of Boisgeline, I give you this cavalier to be your partner for the evening.”

The black-eyed and pretty Provençale curtsied with due decorum, and glanced at the handsome young Englishman with an eye of approbation; but whether afraid of his character as a philosopher, or his doubtful rank, added the saving clause,—“If my mother approves.”

“Your mother, damsel, will scarce, I think, disapprove of any partner whom you receive from the hands of Margaret of Anjou. Happy privilege of youth,” she added with a sigh, as the youthful couple went off to take their place in the *bransle*,^[10] “which can snatch a flower even on the roughest road!”

Arthur acquitted himself so well during the evening, that perhaps the young Countess was only sorry that so gay and handsome a gallant limited his compliments and attentions within the cold bounds of that courtesy enjoined by the rules of ceremony.

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CHAPTER XIV.

For I have given here my full consent

To undeck the pompous body of a king,

Make glory base, and sovereignty a slave,

Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant.

Richard II.

The next day opened a grave scene. King René had not forgotten to arrange the pleasures of the day, when, to his horror and discomfiture, Margaret demanded an interview upon serious business. If there was a proposition in the world which René from his soul detested, it was any that related to the very name of business.

“What was it that his child wanted?” he said. “Was it money? He would give her whatever ready sums he had, though he owned his exchequer was somewhat bare; yet he had received his income for the season. It was ten thousand crowns. How much should he desire to be paid to her?—the half—three parts—or the whole? All was at her command.”

“Alas, my dear father,” said Margaret, “it is not my affairs, but your own, on which I desire to speak with you.”

“If the affairs are mine,” said René, “I am surely master to put them off to another day—to some rainy dull day, fit for no better purpose. See, my love, the hawking-party are all on their steeds and ready—the horses are neighing and 255pawing—the gallants and maidens mounted, and ready with hawk on fist—the spaniels struggling in the leash. It were a sin, with wind and weather to friend, to lose so lovely a morning.”

“Let them ride their way,” said Queen Margaret, “and find their sport; for the matter I have to speak concerning involves honour and rank, life and means of living.”

“Nay, but I have to hear and judge between Calezon and John of Acqua Mortis, the two most celebrated Troubadours.”

“Postpone their cause till to-morrow,” said Margaret, “and dedicate an hour or two to more important affairs.”

“If you are peremptory,” replied King René, “you are aware, my child, I cannot say you nay.”

And with reluctance he gave orders for the hawkers to go on and follow their sport, as he could not attend them that day.

The old King then suffered himself, like an unwilling greyhound withheld from the chase, to be led into a separate apartment. To insure privacy, Margaret stationed her secretary Mordaunt, with Arthur, in an antechamber, giving them orders to prevent all intrusion.

“Nay, for myself, Margaret,” said the good-natured old man, “since it must be, I consent to be put *au secret*; but why keep old Mordaunt from taking a walk in this beautiful morning; and why prevent young Arthur from going forth with the rest? I promise you, though they term him a philosopher, yet he showed as light a pair of heels last night, with the young Countess de Boisgeline, as any gallant in Provence.” 256

“They are come from a country,” said Margaret, “in which men are trained from infancy to prefer their duty to their pleasure.”

The poor King, led into the council-closet, saw with internal shuddering the fatal cabinet of ebony, bound with silver, which had never been opened but to overwhelm him with weariness, and dolefully calculated how many yawns he must strangle ere he sustained the consideration of its contents. They proved, however, when laid before him, of a kind that excited even his interest, though painfully.

His daughter presented him with a short and clear view of the debts which were secured on his dominions, and for which they were mortgaged in various pieces and parcels. She then showed him, by another schedule, the large claims of which payment was instantly demanded, to discharge which no funds could be found or assigned. The King defended himself like others in his forlorn situation. To every claim of six, seven, or eight thousand ducats, he replied by the assertion that he had ten thousand crowns in his chancery, and showed some reluctance to be convinced, till repeatedly urged upon him, that the same sum could not be adequate to the discharge of thirty times the amount.

“Then,” said the King, somewhat impatiently, “why not pay off those who are most pressing, and let the others wait till receipts come round?”

“It is a practice which has been too often resorted to,” replied the Queen, “and it is but a part of honesty to pay creditors who have advanced their all in your Grace's service.”

“But are we not,” said René, “King of both the 257Sicilies, Naples, Arragon, and Jerusalem? And why is the monarch of such fair kingdoms to be pushed to the wall, like a bankrupt yeoman, for a few bags of paltry crowns?”

“You are indeed monarch of these kingdoms,” said Margaret; “but is it necessary to remind your Majesty that it is but as I am Queen of England, in which I have not an acre of land, and cannot command a penny of revenue? You have no dominions which are a source of revenue, save those which you see in this scroll, with an exact list of the income they afford. It is totally inadequate, you see, to maintain your state, and to pay the large engagements incurred to former creditors.”

"It is cruel to press me to the wall thus," said the poor King. "What can I do? If I am poor, I cannot help it. I am sure I would pay the debts you talk of, if I knew the way."

"Royal father, I will show it you.—Resign your useless and unavailing dignity, which, with the pretensions attending it, serves but to make your miseries ridiculous. Resign your rights as a sovereign, and the income which cannot be stretched out to the empty excesses of a beggarly court will enable you to enjoy, in ease and opulence, all the pleasures you most delight in, as a private baron."

"Margaret, you speak folly," answered René, somewhat sternly. "A king and his people are bound by ties which neither can sever without guilt. My subjects are my flock, I am their shepherd. They are assigned to my governance by Heaven, and I dare not renounce the charge of protecting them."²⁵⁸

"Were you in condition to do so," answered the Queen, "Margaret would bid you fight to the death. But don your harness, long disused—mount your war-steed—cry, René for Provence! and see if a hundred men will gather round your standard. Your fortresses are in the hands of strangers; army you have none; your vassals may have good-will, but they lack all military skill and soldierlike discipline. You stand but the mere skeleton of monarchy, which France or Burgundy may prostrate on the earth, whichever first puts forth his arm to throw it down."

The tears trickled fast down the old King's cheeks, when this unflattering prospect was set before him, and he could not forbear owning his total want of power to defend himself and his dominions, and admitting that he had often thought of the necessity of compounding for his resignation with one of his powerful neighbours.

"It was thy interest, Margaret, harsh and severe as you are, which prevented my entering, before now, into measures most painful to my feelings, but perhaps best calculated for my advantage. But I had hoped it would hold on for my day; and thou, my child, with the talents Heaven has given thee, wouldst, I thought, have found remedy for distresses which I cannot escape, otherwise than by shunning the thoughts of them."

"If it is in earnest you speak of my interest," said Margaret, "know, that your resigning Provence will satisfy the nearest, and almost the only wish that my bosom can form; but, so judge me Heaven, as it is on your account, gracious sire, as well as mine, that I advise your compliance."

"Say no more on't, child; give me the parchment²⁵⁹ of resignation, and I will sign it: I see thou hast it ready drawn; let us sign it, and then we will overtake the hawks. We must suffer woe, but there is little need to sit down and weep for it."

"Do you not ask," said Margaret, surprised at his apathy, "to whom you cede your dominions?"

"What boots it," answered the King, "since they must be no more my own? It must be either to Charles of Burgundy, or my nephew Louis—both powerful and politic princes. God send my poor people may have no cause to wish their old man back again, whose only pleasure was to see them happy and mirthful."

"It is to Burgundy you resign Provence," said Margaret.

"I would have preferred him," answered René; "he is fierce, but not malignant. One word more. Are my subjects' privileges and immunities fully secured?"

"Ampl'y," replied the Queen; "and your own wants of all kinds honourably provided for. I would not leave the stipulations in your favour in blank, though I might perhaps have trusted Charles of Burgundy, where money alone is concerned."

"I ask not for myself—with my viol and my pencil, René the Troubadour will be as happy as ever was René the King."

So saying, with practical philosophy he whistled the burden of his last composed ariette, and signed away the rest of his royal possessions without pulling off his glove, or even reading the instrument.

"What is this?" he said, looking at another and separate parchment of much briefer contents.²⁶⁰ "Must my kinsman Charles have both the Sicilies, Catalonia, Naples, and Jerusalem, as well as the poor remainder of Provence? Methinks, in decency, some greater extent of parchment should have been allowed to so ample a cession."

"That deed," said Margaret, "only disowns and relinquishes all countenance of Ferrand de Vaudemont's rash attempt on Lorraine, and renounces all quarrel on that account against Charles of Burgundy."

For once Margaret miscalculated the tractability of her father's temper. René positively started, coloured, and stammered with passion, as he interrupted her—"Only disown—only relinquish—only renounce the cause of my grandchild, the son of my dear Yolande—his rightful claims on his mother's inheritance!—Margaret, I am ashamed for thee. Thy pride is an excuse for thy evil temper but what is pride worth which can stoop to commit an act of dishonourable meanness? To desert, nay, disown, my own flesh and blood, because the youth is a bold knight under shield, and disposed to battle for his right—I were worthy that harp and horn rung out shame on me, should I listen to thee."

Margaret was overcome in some measure by the old man's unexpected opposition. She endeavoured, however, to show that there was no occasion, in point of honour, why René should engage in the cause of a wild adventurer, whose right, be it good be it bad, was only upheld by some petty and underhand supplies of money from France, and the countenance of a few of the restless banditti who inhabit the borders of all nations. But ere René could answer, voices, raised²⁶¹ to an unusual pitch, were heard in the antechamber, the door of which was flung open by an armed knight, covered with dust, who exhibited all the marks of a long journey.

"Here I am," he said, "father of my mother—behold your grandson—Ferrand de Vaudemont; the son of your lost Yolande kneels at your feet, and implores a blessing on him and his enterprise."

"Thou hast it," replied René, "and may it prosper with thee, gallant youth, image of thy sainted mother—my blessings, my prayers, my hopes, go with you!"

"And you, fair aunt of England," said the young knight, addressing Margaret, "you who are yourself dispossessed by traitors, will you not own the cause of a kinsman who is struggling for his inheritance?"

"I wish all good to your person, fair nephew," answered the Queen of England, "although your features are strange to me. But to advise this old man to adopt your cause, when it is desperate in the eyes of all wise men, were impious madness."

"Is my cause then so desperate?" said Ferrand. "Forgive me if I was not aware of it. And does my aunt Margaret say this, whose strength of mind supported Lancaster so long, after the spirits of her warriors had been quelled by defeat? What—forgive me, for my cause must be pleaded—what would you have said had my mother Yolande been capable to advise her father to disown your own Edward, had God permitted him to reach Provence in safety?"

"Edward," said Margaret, weeping as she spoke, "was incapable of desiring his friends to espouse a quarrel that was irremediable. His, too, was^{262a} cause for which mighty princes and peers laid lance in rest."

"Yet Heaven blessed it not—" said Vaudemont.

"Thine," continued Margaret, "is but embraced by the robber nobles of Germany, the upstart burghers of the Rhine cities, the paltry and clownish Confederates of the Cantons."

"But Heaven *has blessed it*," replied Vaudemont. "Know, proud woman, that I come to interrupt your treacherous intrigues; no petty adventurer, subsisting and maintaining warfare by sleight rather than force, but a conqueror from a bloody field of battle, in which Heaven has tamed the pride of the tyrant of Burgundy."

"It is false!" said the Queen, starting. "I believe it not."

"It is true," said De Vaudemont, "as true as heaven is above us.—It is four days since I left the field of Granson ([d](#)), heaped with Burgundy's mercenaries—his wealth, his jewels, his plate, his magnificent decorations, the prize of the poor Swiss, who scarce can tell their value. Know you this, Queen Margaret?" continued the young soldier, showing the well-known jewel which decorated the Duke's Order of the Golden Fleece; "think you not the lion was closely hunted when he left such trophies as these behind him?"

Margaret looked, with dazzled eyes and bewildered thoughts, upon a token which confirmed the Duke's defeat, and the extinction of her last hopes. Her father, on the contrary, was struck with the heroism of the young warrior, a quality which, except as it existed in his daughter Margaret, had, he feared, taken leave of his family. Admiring in his heart the youth who exposed²⁶³ himself to danger for the meed of praise, almost as much as he did the poets by whom the warrior's fame is rendered immortal, he hugged his grandson to his bosom, bidding him "gird on his sword in strength," and assuring him, if money could advance his affairs, he,

King René, could command ten thousand crowns, any part, or the whole of which, was at Ferrand's command; thus giving proof of what had been said of him, that his head was incapable of containing two ideas at the same time.

We return to Arthur, who, with the Queen of England's secretary, Mordaunt, had been not a little surprised by the entrance of the Count de Vaudemont, calling himself Duke of Lorraine, into the anteroom, in which they kept a kind of guard, followed by a tall strong Swiss, with a huge halberd over his shoulder. The prince naming himself, Arthur did not think it becoming to oppose his entrance to the presence of his grandfather and aunt, especially as it was obvious that his opposition must have created an affray. In the huge staring halberdier, who had sense enough to remain in the anteroom, Arthur was not a little surprised to recognise Sigismund Biederman, who, after staring wildly at him for a moment, like a dog which suddenly recognises a favourite, rushed up to the young Englishman with a wild cry of gladness, and in hurried accents told him how happy he was to meet with him, and that he had matters of importance to tell him. It was at no time easy for Sigismund to arrange his ideas, and now they were altogether confused, by the triumphant joy which he expressed for the recent victory of his countrymen over the Duke of Burgundy; 264and it was with wonder that Arthur heard his confused and rude but faithful tale.

"Look you, King Arthur, the Duke had come up with his huge army as far as Granson, which is near the outlet of the great lake of Neufchatel. There were five or six hundred Confederates in the place, and they held it till provisions failed, and then you know they were forced to give it over. But though hunger is hard to bear, they had better have borne it a day or two longer, for the butcher Charles hung them all up by the neck, upon trees round the place,—and there was no swallowing for them, you know, after such usage as that. Meanwhile all was busy on our hills, and every man that had a sword or lance accoutred himself with it. We met at Neufchatel, and some Germans joined us with the noble Duke of Lorraine. Ah, King Arthur, there is a leader!—we all think him second but to Rudolph of Donnerhugel—you saw him even now—it was he that went into that room—and you saw him before,—it is he that was the Blue Knight of Bâle; but we called him Laurenz then, for Rudolph said his presence among us must not be known to our father, and I did not know myself at that time who he really was. Well, when we came to Neufchatel we were a goodly company; we were fifteen thousand stout Confederates, and of others, Germans and Lorraine men, I will warrant you five thousand more. We heard that the Burgundian was sixty thousand in the field; but we heard, at the same time, that Charles had hung up our brethren like dogs, and the man was not among us—among the Confederates, I mean—who would stay to count heads, when the question was to 265avenge them. I would you could have heard the roar of fifteen thousand Swiss demanding to be led against the butcher of their brethren! My father himself, who, you know, is usually so eager for peace, now gave the first voice for battle; so, in the grey of the morning, we descended the lake towards Granson, with tears in our eyes and weapons in our hands, determined to have death or vengeance. We came to a sort of strait, between Vauxmoreux and the lake; there were horse on the level ground between the mountain and the lake, and a large body of infantry on the side of the hill. The Duke of Lorraine and his followers engaged the horse, while we climbed the hill to dispossess the infantry. It was with us the affair of a moment. Every man of us was at home among the crags, and Charles's men were stuck among them as thou wert, Arthur, when thou didst first come to Geierstein. But there were no kind maidens to lend them their hands to help them down. No, no—There were pikes, clubs, and halberds, many a one, to dash and thrust them from places where they could hardly keep their feet had there been no one to disturb them. So the horsemen, pushed by the Lorrainers, and seeing us upon their flanks, fled as fast as their horses could carry them. Then we drew together again on a fair field, which is *buon campagna*, as the Italian says, where the hills retire from the lake. But lo you, we had scarce arrayed our ranks, when we heard such a din and clash of instruments, such a trample of their great horses, such a shouting and crying of men, as if all the soldiers, and all the minstrels in France and Germany, were striving which should make the loudest noise. 266Then there was a huge cloud of dust approaching us, and we began to see we must do or die, for this was Charles and his whole army come to support his vanguard. A blast from the mountain dispersed the dust, for they had halted to prepare for battle. Oh, good Arthur! you would have given ten years of life but to have seen the sight. There were thousands of horse all in complete array, glancing against the sun, and hundreds of knights with crowns of gold and silver on their helmets, and thick masses of spears on foot, and cannon, as they call them. I did not know what things they were, which they drew on heavily with bullocks and placed before their army, but I knew more of them before the morning was over. Well, we were ordered to draw up in a hollow square, as we are taught at exercise, and before we pushed forwards we were commanded, as is the godly rule and guise of our warfare, to kneel down and pray to God, Our Lady, and the blessed saints; and we afterwards learned that Charles, in his arrogance, thought we asked for mercy—Ha! ha! ha! a proper jest. If my father once knelt to him, it was for the sake of Christian blood and godly peace; but on the field of battle Arnold Biederman would not have knelt to him and his whole chivalry, though he had stood alone with his sons on that field. Well, but Charles, supposing we asked grace, was determined to show us that we had asked it at a graceless face, for he cried, 'Fire my cannon on the coward slaves; it is all the mercy they have to expect from me!'—Bang—bang—bang—off went the things I told you of, like thunder and lightning, and some mischief they did, but the less that we were kneeling; 267and the saints doubtless gave the huge balls a hoist over the heads of those who were asking grace from them, but from no mortal creatures. So we had the signal to rise and rush on, and I promise you there were no sluggards. Every man felt ten men's strength. My halberd is no child's toy—if you have forgotten it, there it is—and yet it trembled in my grasp as if it had been a willow wand to drive cows with. On we went, when suddenly the cannon were silent, and the earth shook with another and continued growl and battering, like thunder under ground. It was the men-at-arms rushing to charge us. But our leaders knew their trade, and had seen such a sight before—it was, Halt, halt—kneel down in the front—stoop in the second rank—close shoulder to shoulder like brethren, lean all spears forward and receive them like an iron wall! On they rushed, and there was a rending of lances that would have served the Unterwalden old women with splinters of firewood for a twelvemonth. Down went armed horse—down went accoutred knight—down went banner and bannerman—down went peaked boot and crowned helmet, and of those who fell not a man escaped with life. So they drew off in confusion, and were getting in order to charge again, when the noble Duke Ferrand and his horsemen dashed at them in their own way, and we moved onward to support him. Thus on we pressed, and the foot hardly waited for us, seeing their cavalry so handled. Then if you had seen the dust and heard the blows! the noise of a hundred thousand thrashers, the flight of the chaff which they drive about, would be but a type of it. On my word, I almost thought it shame to dash about 268my halberd, the rout was so helplessly piteous. Hundreds were slain unresisting, and the whole army was in complete flight."

"My father—my father!" exclaimed Arthur. "In such a rout, what can have become of him?"

"He escaped safely," said the Swiss; "fled with Charles."

"It must have been a bloody field ere he fled," replied the Englishman.

"Nay," answered Sigismund, "he took no part in the fight, but merely remained by Charles; and prisoners said it was well for us, for that he is a man of great counsel and action in the wars. And as to flying, a man in such a matter must go back if he cannot press forward, and there is no shame in it, especially if you be not engaged in your own person."

As he spoke thus, their conversation was interrupted by Mordaunt, with "Hush, hush—the King and Queen come forth."

"What am I to do?" said Sigismund, in some alarm. "I care not for the Duke of Lorraine; but what am I to do when kings and queens enter?"

"Do nothing but rise, unbonnet yourself, and be silent."

Sigismund did as he was directed.

King René came forth arm in arm with his grandson; and Margaret followed, with deep disappointment and vexation on her brow. She signed to Arthur as she passed, and said to him—"Make thyself master of the truth of this most unexpected news, and bring the particulars to me. Mordaunt will introduce thee."

She then cast a look on the young Swiss, and 269replied courteously to his awkward salutation. The royal party then left the room, René bent on carrying his grandson to the sporting-party, which had been interrupted, and Margaret to seek the solitude of her private apartment, and await the confirmation of what she regarded as evil tidings.

They were no sooner passed than Sigismund observed,—"And so that is a King and Queen!—Peste! the King looks somewhat like old Jacomo, the violer, that used to scrape on the fiddle to us when he came to Geierstein in his rounds. But the Queen is a stately creature. The chief cow of the herd, who carries the bouquets and garlands, and leads the rest to the chalet, has not a statelier pace. And how deftly you approached her and spoke to her! I could not have done it with so much grace—But it is like that you have served apprentice to the court trade?"

"Leave that for the present, good Sigismund," answered Arthur, "and tell me more of this battle."

"By St. Mary, but I must have some victuals and drink first," said Sigismund, "if your credit in this fine place reaches so far."

"Doubt it not, Sigismund," said Arthur; and, by the intervention of Mordaunt, he easily procured, in a more retired apartment, a collation and wine, to which the young Biederman did great honour, smacking his lips with much gusto after the delicious wines, to which, in spite of his father's ascetic precepts, his palate was beginning to be considerably formed and habituated. When he found himself alone with a flask of *côté roti* and a biscuit, and his friend Arthur, he was easily led to continue his tale of conquest.²⁷⁰

"Well—where was I?—Oh, where we broke their infantry—well—they never rallied, and fell into greater confusion at every step—and we might have slaughtered one half of them, had we not stopped to examine Charles's camp. Mercy on us, Arthur, what a sight was there! Every pavilion was full of rich clothes, splendid armour, and great dishes and flagons, which some men said were of silver; but I knew there was not so much silver in the world, and was sure they must be of pewter, rarely burnished. Here there were hosts of laced lackeys, and grooms, and pages, and as many attendants as there were soldiers in the army; and thousands, for what I knew, of pretty maidens. By the same token, both menials and maidens placed themselves at the disposal of the victors; but I promise you that my father was right severe on any who would abuse the rights of war. But some of our young men did not mind him, till he taught them obedience with the staff of his halberd. Well, Arthur, there was fine plundering, for the Germans and French that were with us rifled everything, and some of our men followed the example—it is very catching—So I got into Charles's own pavilion, where Rudolph and some of his people were trying to keep out every one, that he might have the spoiling of it himself, I think; but neither he, nor any Bernese of them all, dared lay truncheon over my pate; so I entered, and saw them putting piles of pewter-trenchers, so clean as to look like silver, into chests and trunks. I pressed through them into the inner place, and there was Charles's pallet-bed—I will do him justice, it was the only hard one in his camp—and there were fine sparkling stones²⁷¹and pebbles lying about among gauntlets, boots, vambraces, and suchlike gear—So I thought of your father and you, and looked for something, when what should I see but my old friend here" (here he drew Queen Margaret's necklace from his bosom), "which I knew, because you remember I recovered it from the Scharfgericht at Brisach.—'Oho! you pretty sparklers,' said I, 'you shall be Burgundian no longer, but go back to my honest English friends,' and therefore"——

"It is of immense value," said Arthur, "and belongs not to my father or to me, but to the Queen you saw but now."

"And she will become it rarely," answered Sigismund. "Were she but a score, or a score and a half years younger, she were a gallant wife for a Swiss landholder. I would warrant her to keep his household in high order."

"She will reward thee liberally for recovering her property," said Arthur, scarce suppressing a smile at the idea of the proud Margaret becoming the housewife of a Swiss shepherd.

"How—reward!" said the Swiss. "Bethink thee I am Sigismund Biederman, the son of the Landamman of Unterwalden—I am not a base lanzknecht, to be paid for courtesy with piastres. Let her grant me a kind word of thanks, or the matter of a kiss, and I am well contented."

"A kiss of her hand, perhaps," said Arthur, again smiling at his friend's simplicity.

"Umph, the hand! Well, it may do for a queen of some fifty years and odd, but would be poor homage to a Queen of May."

Arthur here brought back the youth to the subject of his battle, and learned that the slaughter²⁷²of the Duke's forces in the flight had been in no degree equal to the importance of the action.

"Many rode off on horseback," said Sigismund; "and our German *reiters* flew on the spoil, when they should have followed the chase. And besides, to speak truth, Charles's camp delayed our very selves in the pursuit; but had we gone half a mile farther, and seen our friends hanging on trees, not a Confederate would have stopped from the chase while he had limbs to carry him in pursuit."

"And what has become of the Duke?"

"Charles has retreated into Burgundy, like a boar who has felt the touch of the spear, and is more enraged than hurt; but is, they say, sad and sulky. Others report that he has collected all his scattered army, and immense forces besides, and has screwed his subjects to give him money, so that we may expect another brush. But all Switzerland will join us after such a victory."

"And my father is with him?" said Arthur.

"Truly he is, and has in a right godly manner tried to set afoot a treaty of peace with my own father. But it will scarce succeed. Charles is as mad as ever; and our people are right proud of our victory, and so they well may. Nevertheless, my father forever preaches that such victories, and such heaps of wealth, will change our ancient manners, and that the ploughman will leave his labour to turn soldier. He says much about it; but why money, choice meat and wine, and fine clothing should do so much harm, I cannot bring my poor brains to see—And many better heads than mine are as much puzzled.—Here's to you, friend Arthur!—This is choice liquor!"

"And what brings you and your general, Prince²⁷³Ferrand, post to Nancy?" said the young Englishman.

"Faith, you are yourself the cause of our journey."

"I the cause?" said Arthur.—"Why, how could that be?"

"Why, it is said you and Queen Margaret are urging this old fiddling King René to yield up his territories to Charles, and to disown Ferrand in his claim upon Lorraine. And the Duke of Lorraine sent a man that you know well—that is, you do not know^{him}, but you know some of his family, and he knows more of you than you wot—to put a spoke in your wheel, and prevent your getting for Charles the county of Provence, or preventing Ferrand being troubled or traversed in his natural rights over Lorraine."

"On my word, Sigismund, I cannot comprehend you," said Arthur.

"Well," replied the Swiss, "my lot is a hard one. All our house say that I can comprehend nothing, and I shall be next told that nobody can comprehend me.—Well, in plain language, I mean my uncle, Count Albert, as he calls himself, of Geierstein—my father's brother."

"Anne of Geierstein's father!" echoed Arthur.

"Ay, truly; I thought we should find some mark to make you know him by."

"But I never saw him."

"Ay, but you have, though—An able man he is, and knows more of every man's business than the man does himself. Oh! it was not for nothing that he married the daughter of a Salamander!"

"Pshaw, Sigismund, how can you believe that nonsense?" answered Arthur.²⁷⁴

"Rudolph told me you were as much bewildered as I was that night at Grafs-lust," answered the Swiss.

"If I were so, I was the greater ass for my pains," answered Arthur.

"Well, but this uncle of mine has got some of the old conjuring books from the library at Arnheim, and they say he can pass from place to place with more than mortal speed; and that he is helped in his designs by mightier counsellors than mere men. Always, however, though so able and highly endowed, his gifts, whether coming from a lawful or unlawful quarter, bring him no abiding advantage. He is eternally plunged into strife and danger."

"I know few particulars of his life," said Arthur, disguising as much as he could his anxiety to hear more of him; "but I have heard that he left Switzerland to join the Emperor."

"True," answered the young Swiss, "and married the young Baroness of Arnheim,—but afterwards he incurred my namesake's imperial displeasure, and not less that of the Duke of Austria. They say you cannot live in Rome and strive with the Pope; so my uncle thought it best to cross the Rhine, and betake himself to Charles's court, who willingly received noblemen from all countries, so that they had good sounding names, with the title of Count, Marquis, Baron, or suchlike, to march in front of them. So my uncle was most kindly received; but within this year or two all this friendship has been broken up. Uncle Albert obtained a great lead in some mysterious societies, of which Charles disapproved, and set so hard at my poor uncle, that he was fain to take orders and²⁷⁵have his hair, rather than

lose his head. But though he cut off his hair, his brain remains as busy as ever; and although the Duke suffered him to be at large, yet he found him so often in his way, that all men believed he waited but an excuse for seizing upon him and putting him to death. But my uncle persists that he fears not Charles; and that, Duke as he is, Charles has more occasion to be afraid of him.—And so you saw how boldly he played his part at La Ferette."

"By St. George of Windsor!" exclaimed Arthur, "the Black Priest of St. Paul's?"

"Oho! you understand me now. Well, he took it upon him that Charles would not dare to punish him for his share in De Hagenbach's death; and no more did he, although uncle Albert sat and voted in the Estates of Burgundy, and stirred them up all he could to refuse giving Charles the money he asked of them. But when the Swiss war broke out, uncle Albert became assured his being a clergyman would be no longer his protection, and that the Duke intended to have him accused of corresponding with his brother and countrymen; and so he appeared suddenly in Ferrand's camp at Neufchatel, and sent a message to Charles that he renounced his allegiance, and bid him defiance."

"A singular story of an active and versatile man," said the young Englishman.

"Oh, you may seek the world for a man like uncle Albert. Then he knows everything; and he told Duke Ferrand what you were about here, and offered to go and bring more certain information—ay, though he left the Swiss camp but five or six days before the battle, and the distance between Arles and Neufchatel be four hundred miles complete, yet he met him on his return, when Duke Ferrand, with me to show him the way, was hastening hitherward, having set off from the very field of battle."

"Met him!" said Arthur—"Met whom?—Met the Black Priest of St. Paul's?"

"Ay, I mean so," replied Sigismund; "but he was habited as a Carmelite monk."

"A Carmelite!" said Arthur, a sudden light flashing on him; "and I was so blind as to recommend his services to the Queen! I remember well that he kept his face much concealed in his cowl—and I, foolish beast, to fall so grossly into the snare!—And yet perhaps it is as well the transaction was interrupted, since I fear, if carried successfully through, all must have been disconcerted by this astounding defeat."

Their conversation had thus far proceeded, when Mordaunt appearing, summoned Arthur to his royal mistress's apartment. In that gay palace, a gloomy room, whose windows looked upon some part of the ruins of the Roman edifice, but excluded every other object, save broken walls and tottering columns, was the retreat which Margaret had chosen for her own. She received Albert with a kindness more touching than it was the inmate of so proud and fiery a disposition,—of a heart assailed with many woes, and feeling them severely.

"Alas, poor Arthur!" she said, "thy life begins where thy father's threatens to end, in useless labour to save a sinking vessel. The rushing leak pours in its waters faster than human force can lighten or discharge. All—all goes wrong, when our unhappy cause becomes connected with it—Strength becomes weakness, wisdom folly, and valour cowardice. The Duke of Burgundy, hitherto victorious in all his bold undertakings, has but to entertain the momentary thought of yielding succour to Lancaster, and behold his sword is broken by a peasant's flail; and his disciplined army, held to be the finest in the world, flies like chaff before the wind; while their spoils are divided by renegade German hirelings, and barbarous Alpine shepherds!—What more hast thou learned of this strange tale?"

"Little, madam, but what you have heard. The worst additions are, that the battle was shamefully cowardlike, and completely lost, with every advantage to have won it—the best, that the Burgundian army has been rather dispersed than destroyed, and that the Duke himself has escaped, and is rallying his forces in Upper Burgundy."

"To sustain a new defeat, or engage in a protracted and doubtful contest, fatal to his reputation as defeat itself. Where is thy father?"

"With the Duke, madam, as I have been informed," replied Arthur.

"Hie to him, and say I charge him to look after his own safety, and care no further for my interests. This last blow has sunk me—I am without an ally, without a friend, without treasure"—

"Not so, madam," replied Arthur. "One piece of good fortune has brought back to your Grace this inestimable relic of your fortunes."—And, producing the precious necklace, he gave the history of its recovery.

"I rejoice at the chance which has restored these diamonds," said the Queen, "that in point of gratitude, at least, I may not be utterly bankrupt. Carry them to your father—tell him my schemes are over—and my heart, which so long clung to hope, is broken at last.—Tell him the trinkets are his own, and to his own use let him apply them. They will but poorly repay the noble earldom of Oxford, lost in the cause of her who sends them."

"Royal madam," said the youth, "be assured my father would sooner live by service as a *schwarzreiter*, than become a burden on your misfortunes."

"He never yet disobeyed command of mine," said Margaret; "and this is the last I will lay upon him. If he is too rich or too proud to benefit by his Queen's behest, he will find enough of poor Lancastrians who have fewer means or fewer scruples."

"There is yet a circumstance I have to communicate," said Arthur, and recounted the history of Albert of Geierstein, and the disguise of a Carmelite monk.

"Are you such a fool," answered the Queen, "as to suppose this man has any supernatural powers to aid him in his ambitious projects and his hasty journeys?"

"No, madam—but it is whispered that the Count Albert of Geierstein, or this Black Priest of St. Paul's, is a chief amongst the Secret Societies of Germany, which even princes dread whilst they hate them; for the man that can command a hundred daggers must be feared even by those who rule thousands of swords."

"Can this person," said the Queen, "being now a Churchman, retain authority amongst those who deal in life and death? It is contrary to the canons."

"It would seem so, royal madam; but everything in these dark institutions differs from what is practised in the light of day. Prelates are often heads of a Vehmique bench, and the Archbishop of Cologne exercises the dreadful office of their chief as Duke of Westphalia, the principal region in which these societies flourish.^[1] Such privileges attach to the secret influence of the chiefs of this dark association, as may well seem supernatural to those who are unapprised of their circumstances of which men shun to speak in plain terms."

"Let him be wizard or assassin," said the Queen, "I thank him for having contributed to interrupt my plan of the old man's cession of Provence, which, as events stand, would have stripped René of his dominions, without furthering our plan of invading England.—Once more, be stirring with the dawn, and bend thy way back to thy father, and charge him to care for himself and think no more of me. Bretagne, where the heir of Lancaster resides, will be the safest place of refuge for its bravest followers. Along the Rhine, the Invisible Tribunal, it would seem, haunts both shores, and to be innocent of ill is no security; even here the proposed treaty with Burgundy may take air, and the Provençaux carry daggers as well as crooks and pipes. But I hear the horses fast returning from the hawking-party, and the silly old man, forgetting all the eventful proceedings of the day, whistling as he ascends the steps. Well, we will soon part, and my removal will be, I think, a relief to him. Prepare for banquet and ball, for noise and nonsense—above all, to bid adieu to Aix with morning dawn."

Thus dismissed from the Queen's presence, Arthur's first care was to summon Thiebault to have all things in readiness for his departure; his next, to prepare himself for the pleasures of the evening, not perhaps so heavily affected by the failure of his negotiation as to be incapable of consolation in such a scene; for the truth was, that his mind secretly revolted at the thoughts of the simple old King being despoiled of his dominions to further an invasion of England, in which, whatever interest he might have in his daughter's rights, there was little chance of success.

If such feelings were censurable, they had their punishment. Although few knew how completely the arrival of the Duke of Lorraine, and the intelligence he brought with him, had disconcerted the plans of Queen Margaret, it was well known there had been little love betwixt the Queen and his mother Yolande; and the young Prince found himself at the head of a numerous party in the court of his grandfather, who disliked his aunt's haughty manners, and were wearied by the unceasing melancholy of her looks and conversation, and her undisguised contempt of the frivolities which passed around her. Ferrand, besides, was young, handsome, a victor just arrived from a field of battle, fought gloriously, and gained against all chances to the contrary. That he was a general favourite, and excluded Arthur Philipson, as an adherent of the unpopular Queen, from the notice her influence had on a former evening procured him, was only a natural consequence of their relative condition. But what somewhat hurt Arthur's feelings was to see his friend Sigismund the Simple, as his brethren called him, shining with the reflected glory of the Duke Ferrand of Lorraine, who introduced to all the ladies present the gallant young Swiss as Count Sigismund of Geierstein. His care had procured for his follower a dress rather more suitable for such a scene than the country attire of the count, otherwise Sigismund Biederman.

For a certain time, whatever of novelty is introduced into society is pleasing, though it has nothing else to recommend it. The Swiss were little known personally out of their own country, but they were much talked of; it was a recommendation to be of that country. Sigismund's manners were blunt—a mixture of awkwardness and rudeness, which was termed frankness during the moment of his favour. He spoke bad French and worse Italian—it gave naïveté to all he said. His limbs were too bulky to be elegant; his dancing, for Count Sigismund failed not to dance, was the bounding and gambolling of a young elephant; yet they were preferred to the handsome proportions and courtly movements of the youthful Englishman, even by the black-eyed countess in whose good graces Arthur had made some progress on the preceding evening. Arthur, thus thrown into the shade, felt as Mr. Pepys afterwards did when he tore his camlet cloak—the damage was not great, but it troubled him.

Nevertheless, the passing evening brought him some revenge. There are some works of art the defects of which are not seen till they are injudiciously placed in too strong a light, and such was the case with Sigismund the Simple. The quick-witted though fantastic Provençaux soon found out the heaviness of his intellect, and the extent of his good-nature, and amused themselves at his expense, by ironical compliments and well-veiled raillery. It is probable they would have been less delicate on the subject, had not the Swiss brought into the dancing-room along with him his eternal halberd, the size and weight and thickness of which boded little good to any one whom the owner might detect in the act of making merry at his expense. But Sigismund did no further mischief that night, except that, in achieving a superb *entrechat*, he alighted with his whole weight on the miniature foot of his pretty partner, which he well-nigh crushed to pieces.

Arthur had hitherto avoided looking towards Queen Margaret during the course of the evening, lest he should disturb her thoughts from the channel in which they were rolling, by seeming to lay a claim on her protection. But there was something so whimsical in the awkward physiognomy of the maladroit Swiss, that he could not help glancing an eye to the alcove where the Queen's chair of state was placed, to see if she observed him. The very first view was such as to rivet his attention. Margaret's head was reclined on the chair, her eyes scarcely open, her features drawn up and pinched, her hands closed with effort. The English lady of honour who stood behind her—old, deaf, and dim-sighted—had not discovered anything in her mistress's position more than the abstracted and indifferent attitude with which the Queen was wont to be present in body and absent in mind during the festivities of the Provençal court. But when Arthur, greatly alarmed, came behind the seat to press her attention to her mistress, she exclaimed, after a minute's investigation, "Mother of Heaven, the Queen is dead!" And it was so. It seemed that the last fibre of life, in that fiery and ambitious mind, had, as she herself prophesied, given way at the same time with the last thread of political hope.²⁸⁴

CHAPTER XV.

Toll, toll the bell!
Greatness is o'er,
The heart has broke,
To ache no more;
An unsubstantial pageant all—
Drop o'er the scene the funeral pall.
Old Poem.

The commotion and shrieks of fear and amazement which were excited among the ladies of the court by an event so singular and shocking, had begun to abate, and the sighs, more serious though less intrusive, of the few English attendants of the deceased Queen began to be heard, together with the groans of old King René, whose emotions were as acute as they were shortlived. The leeches had held a busy but unavailing consultation, and the body that was once a queen's was delivered to the Priest of St. Sauveur, that beautiful church in which the spoils of Pagan temples have contributed to fill up the magnificence of the Christian edifice. The stately pile was duly lighted up, and the funeral provided with such splendour as Aix could supply. The Queen's papers being examined, it was found that Margaret, by disposing of jewels and living at small expense, had realised the means of making a decent provision for life for her very few English attendants. Her diamond necklace, described in her last will as in the hands of an English merchant named John Philipson, or his son, or the price thereof, if by them sold or pledged, she left to the said John Philipson and his son Arthur Philipson, with a view to the prosecution of the design which they had been destined to advance, or, if that should prove impossible, to their own use and profit. The charge of her funeral rites was wholly intrusted to Arthur, called Philipson, with a request that they should be conducted entirely after the forms observed in England. This trust was expressed in an addition to her will, signed the very day on which she died. Arthur lost no time in despatching Thiebault express to his father, with a letter explaining, in such terms as he knew would be understood, the tenor of all that had happened since he came to Aix, and, above all, the death of Queen Margaret.

Finally, he requested directions for his motions, since the necessary delay occupied by the obsequies of a person of such eminent rank must detain him at Aix till he should receive them.

The old King sustained the shock of his daughter's death so easily, that on the second day after the event he was engaged in arranging a pompous procession for the funeral, and composing an elegy, to be sung to a tune also of his own composing, in honour of the deceased Queen, who was likened to the goddesses of heathen mythology, and to Judith, Deborah, and all the other holy women, not to mention the saints of the Christian dispensation. It cannot be concealed that, when the first burst of grief was over, King René could not help feeling that Margaret's death cut a political knot which he might have otherwise found it difficult to untie, and permitted him to take open part with his grandson, so far indeed as to afford him a considerable share of the contents of the Provençal treasury, which amounted to no larger sum than ten thousand crowns. Ferrand having received the blessing of his grandfather, in a form which his affairs rendered most important to him, returned to the resolute whom he commanded; and with him, after a most loving farewell to Arthur, went the stout but simple-minded young Swiss, Sigismund Biederman.

The little court of Aix were left to their mourning. King René, for whom ceremonial and show, whether of a joyful or melancholy character, was always matter of importance, would willingly have bestowed on solemnising the obsequies of his daughter Margaret what remained of his revenue, but was prevented from doing so, partly by remonstrances from his ministers, partly by the obstacles opposed by the young Englishman, who, acting upon the presumed will of the dead, interfered to prevent any such fantastic exhibitions being produced at the obsequies of the Queen as had disgusted her during her life.

The funeral, therefore, after many days had been spent in public prayers and acts of devotion, was solemnised with the mournful magnificence due to the birth of the deceased, and with which the Church of Rome so well knows how to affect at once the eye, ear, and feelings.

Amid the various nobles who assisted on the solemn occasion, there was one who arrived just as the tolling of the great bells of St. Sauveur had announced that the procession was already on its way to the cathedral. The stranger hastily exchanged his travelling-dress for a suit of deep mourning, which was made after the fashion proper to England. So attired, he repaired to the cathedral, where the noble mien of the cavalier imposed such respect on the attendants that he was permitted to approach close to the side of the bier; and it was across the coffin of the Queen for whom he had acted and suffered so much that the gallant Earl of Oxford exchanged a melancholy glance with his son. The assistants, especially the English servants of Margaret, gazed on them both with respect and wonder, and the elder cavalier, in particular, seemed to them no unapt representative of the faithful subjects of England, paying their last duty at the tomb of her who had so long swayed the sceptre, if not faultlessly, yet always with a bold and resolved hand.

The last sound of the solemn dirge had died away, and almost all the funeral attendants had retired, when the father and son still lingered in mournful silence beside the remains of their sovereign. The clergy at length approached, and intimated they were about to conclude the last duties, by removing the body, which had been lately occupied and animated by so haughty and restless a spirit, to the dust, darkness, and silence of the vault where the long-descended Counts of Provence awaited dissolution. Six priests raised the bier on their shoulders, others bore huge waxen torches before and behind the body, as they carried it down a private staircase which yawned in the floor to admit their descent. The last notes of the requiem, in which the churchmen joined, had died away along the high and fretted arches of the cathedral, the last flash of light which arose from the mouth of the vault had glimmered and disappeared, when the Earl of Oxford, taking his

son by the arm, led him in silence forth into a small cloistered court behind the building, where they found themselves alone. They were silent for a few minutes, for both, and particularly the father, were deeply affected. At length the Earl spoke.

"And this, then, is her end," said he. "Here, royal lady, all that we have planned and pledged life upon falls to pieces with thy dissolution! The heart of resolution, the head of policy is gone; and what avails it that the limbs of the enterprise still have motion and life? Alas, Margaret of Anjou! may Heaven reward thy virtues, and absolve thee from the consequence of thine errors! Both belonged to thy station, and, if thou didst hoist too high a sail in prosperity, never lived there princess who defied more proudly the storms of adversity, or bore up against them with such dauntless nobility of determination. With this event the drama has closed, and our parts, my son, are ended."

"We bear arms, then, against the infidels, my lord?" said Arthur, with a sigh that was, however, hardly audible.

"Not," answered the Earl, "until I learn that Henry of Richmond, the undoubted heir of the House of Lancaster, has no occasion for my services. In these jewels, of which you wrote me, so strangely lost and recovered, I may be able to supply him with resources more needful than either your services or mine. But I return no more to the camp of the Duke of Burgundy; for in him there is no help."

"Can it be possible that the power of so great a sovereign has been overthrown in one fatal battle?" said Arthur.

"By no means," replied his father. "The loss at Granson was very great; but to the strength of Burgundy it is but a scratch on the shoulders of a giant. It is the spirit of Charles himself, his wisdom at least, and his foresight, which have given way under the mortification of a defeat by such as he accounted inconsiderable enemies, and expected to have trampled down with a few squadrons of his men-at-arms. Then his temper is become froward, peevish, and arbitrary, devoted to those who flatter and, as there is too much reason to believe, betray him, and suspicious of those counsellors who give him wholesome advice. Even I have had my share of distrust. Thou knowest I refused to bear arms against our late hosts the Swiss; and he saw in that no reason for rejecting my attendance on his march. But since the defeat of Granson, I have observed a strong and sudden change, owing, perhaps, in some degree to the insinuations of Campo-basso, and not a little to the injured pride of the Duke, who was unwilling that an indifferent person in my situation, and thinking as I do, should witness the disgrace of his arms. He spoke in my hearing of lukewarm friends, cold-blooded neutrals,—of those who, not being with him, must be against him. I tell thee, Arthur de Vere, the Duke has said that which touched my honour so nearly, that nothing but the commands of Queen Margaret, and the interests of the House of Lancaster, could have made me remain in his camp. That is over—My royal mistress has no more occasion for my poor services—the Duke can spare no aid to our cause—and 290if he could, we can no longer dispose of the only bribe which might have induced him to afford us succours. The power of seconding his views on Provence is buried with Margaret of Anjou."

"What, then, is your purpose?" demanded his son.

"I propose," said Oxford, "to wait at the court of King René until I can hear from the Earl of Richmond, as we must still call him. I am aware that banished men are rarely welcome at the court of a foreign prince; but I have been the faithful follower of his daughter Margaret. I only propose to reside in disguise, and desire neither notice nor maintenance; so methinks King René will not refuse to permit me to breathe the air of his dominions, until I learn in what direction fortune or duty shall call me."

"Be assured he will not," answered Arthur. "René is incapable of a base or ignoble thought; and if he could despise trifles as he detests dishonour, he might be ranked high in the list of monarchs."

This resolution being adopted, the son presented his father at King René's court, whom he privately made acquainted that he was a man of quality, and a distinguished Lancastrian. The good King would in his heart have preferred a guest of lighter accomplishments and gayer temper to Oxford, a statesman and a soldier of melancholy and grave habits. The Earl was conscious of this, and seldom troubled his benevolent and light-hearted host with his presence. He had, however, an opportunity of rendering the old King a favour of peculiar value. This was in conducting an important treaty betwixt René and Louis XI. of France, his nephew. Upon that crafty monarch René 291finally settled his principality; for the necessity of extricating his affairs by such a measure was now apparent even to himself, every thought of favouring Charles of Burgundy in the arrangement having died with Queen Margaret. The policy and wisdom of the English Earl, who was intrusted with almost the sole charge of this secret and delicate measure, were of the utmost advantage to good King René, who was freed from personal and pecuniary vexations, and enabled to go piping and tabouring to his grave. Louis did not fail to propitiate the plenipotentiary, by throwing out distant hopes of aid to the efforts of the Lancastrian party in England. A faint and insecure negotiation was entered into upon the subject; and these affairs, which rendered two journeys to Paris necessary on the part of Oxford and his son, in the spring and summer of the year 1476, occupied them until that year was half spent.

In the meanwhile, the wars of the Duke of Burgundy with the Swiss Cantons and Count Ferrand of Lorraine continued to rage. Before midsummer 1476, Charles had assembled a new army of at least sixty thousand men, supported by one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, for the purpose of invading Switzerland, where the warlike mountaineers easily levied a host of thirty thousand Switzers, now accounted almost invincible, and called upon their confederates, the Free Cities on the Rhine, to support them with a powerful body of cavalry. The first efforts of Charles were successful. He overran the Pays de Vaud, and recovered most of the places which he had lost after the defeat at Granson. But instead of attempting to secure a well-defended frontier, or, what would have been still more 292politic, to achieve a peace upon equitable terms with his redoubtable neighbours, this most obstinate of princes resumed the purpose of penetrating into the recesses of the Alpine mountains, and chastising the mountaineers even within their own strongholds, though experience might have taught him the danger, nay desperation, of the attempt. Thus the news received by Oxford and his son, when they returned to Aix in midsummer, was, that Duke Charles had advanced to Morat (or Murten), situated upon a lake of the same name, at the very entrance of Switzerland. Here report said that Adrian de Bubenburg, a veteran knight of Berne, commanded, and maintained the most obstinate defence, in expectation of the relief which his countrymen were hastily assembling.

"Alas, my old brother-in-arms!" said the Earl to his son, on hearing these tidings, "this town besieged, these assaults repelled, this vicinity of an enemy's country, this profound lake, these inaccessible cliffs, threaten a second part of the tragedy of Granson, more calamitous perhaps than even the former!"

On the last week of June, the capital of Provence was agitated by one of those unauthorised yet generally received rumours which transmit great events with incredible swiftness, as an apple flung from hand to hand by a number of people will pass a given space infinitely faster than if borne by the most rapid series of expresses. The report announced a second defeat of the Burgundians, in terms so exaggerated as induced the Earl of Oxford to consider the greater part, if not the whole, as a fabrication.²⁹³

CHAPTER XVI.

And is the hostile troop arrived,
And have they won the day?
It must have been a bloody field
Ere Darwent fled away!
The Ettrick Shepherd.

Sleep did not close the eyes of the Earl of Oxford or his son; for although the success or defeat of the Duke of Burgundy could not now be of importance to their own private or political affairs, yet the father did not cease to interest himself in the fate of his former companion-in-arms; and the son, with the fire of youth, always eager after novelty,^[12] expected to find something to advance or thwart his own progress in every remarkable event which agitated the world.

Arthur had risen from his bed, and was in the act of attiring himself, when the tread of a horse arrested his attention. He had no sooner looked out of the window, than, exclaiming, "News, my father, news from the army!" he rushed into the street, where a cavalier, who appeared to have ridden very hard, was inquiring for the two Philipsons, father and son. He had no difficulty in recognising Colvin, the master of the Burgundian ordnance. His ghastly look bespoke distress of mind; his disordered array and broken armour, which seemed rusted with rain or stained 294with blood, gave the intelligence of some affray in which he had probably been worsted; and so exhausted was his gallant steed, that it was with difficulty the animal could stand upright. The condition of the rider was not much better. When he

alighted from his horse to greet Arthur, he reeled so much that he would have fallen without instant support. His horny eye had lost the power of speculation; his limbs possessed imperfectly that of motion, and it was with a half-suffocated voice that he muttered, "Only fatigue—want of rest and of food."

Arthur assisted him into the house, and refreshments were procured; but he refused all except a bowl of wine, after tasting which he set it down, and, looking at the Earl of Oxford with an eye of the deepest affliction, he ejaculated, "The Duke of Burgundy!"

"Slain?" replied the Earl. "I trust not!"

"It might have been better if he were," said the Englishman; "but dishonour has come before death."

"Defeated, then?" said Oxford.

"So completely and fearfully defeated," answered the soldier, "that all that I have seen of loss before was slight in comparison."

"But how, or where?" said the Earl of Oxford. "You were superior in numbers, as we were informed."

"Two to one at least," answered Colvin; "and when I speak of our encounter at this moment, I could rend my flesh with my teeth for being here to tell such a tale of shame. We had sat down for about a week before that paltry town of Murten, or Morat, or whatever it is called. The 295governor, one of those stubborn mountain bears of Berne, bade us defiance. He would not even condescend to shut his gates, but, when we summoned the town, returned for answer, we might enter if we pleased,—we should be suitably received. I would have tried to bring him to reason by a salvo or two of artillery, but the Duke was too much irritated to listen to good counsel. Stimulated by that black traitor, Campo-basso, he deemed it better to run forward with his whole force upon a place which, though I could soon have battered it about their German ears, was yet too strong to be carried by swords, lances, and hagbuts. We were beaten off with great loss, and much discouragement to the soldiers. We then commenced more regularly, and my batteries would have brought these mad Switzers to their senses. Walls and ramparts went down before the lusty cannoneers of Burgundy; we were well secured also by intrenchments against those whom we heard of as approaching to raise the siege. But, on the evening of the twentieth of this month, we learned that they were close at hand, and Charles, consulting only his own bold spirit, advanced to meet them, relinquishing the advantage of our batteries and strong position. By his orders, though against my own judgment, I accompanied him with twenty good pieces, and the flower of my people. We broke up on the next morning, and had not advanced far before we saw the lances and thick array of halberds and two-handed swords which crested the mountain. Heaven, too, added its terrors—a thunderstorm, with all the fury of those tempestuous climates, descended on both armies, but did most annoyance to ours, as our 296troops, especially the Italians, were more sensible to the torrents of rain which poured down, and the rivulets which, swelled into torrents, inundated and disordered our position. The Duke for once saw it necessary to alter his purpose of instant battle. He rode up to me, and directed me to defend with the cannon the retreat which he was about to commence, adding that he himself would in person sustain me with the men-at-arms. The order was given to retreat. But the movement gave new spirit to an enemy already sufficiently audacious. The ranks of the Swiss instantly prostrated themselves in prayer—a practice on the field of battle which I have ridiculed—but I will do so no more. When, after five minutes, they sprang again on their feet, and began to advance rapidly, sounding their horns and crying their war-cries with all their usual ferocity—behold, my lord, the clouds of heaven opened, shedding on the Confederates the blessed light of the returning sun, while our ranks were still in the gloom of the tempest. My men were discouraged. The host behind them was retreating; the sudden light thrown on the advancing Switzers showed along the mountains a profusion of banners, a glancing of arms, giving to the enemy the appearance of double the numbers that had hitherto been visible to us. I exhorted my followers to stand fast, but in doing so I thought a thought, and spoke a word, which was a grievous sin. 'Stand fast, my brave cannoneers!' I said. 'We will presently let them hear louder thunders, and show them more fatal lightnings, than their prayers have put down!' My men shouted. But it was an impious thought, a blasphemous speech, and evil came after it. 297We levelled our guns on the advancing masses as fairly as cannon were ever pointed—I can vouch it, for I laid the Grand Duchess of Burgundy myself—Ah, poor Duchess! what rude hands manage thee now!—The volley was fired, and, ere the smoke spread from the muzzles, I could see many a man and many a banner go down. It was natural to think such a discharge should have checked the attack, and whilst the smoke hid the enemy from us I made every effort again to load our cannon, and anxiously endeavoured to look through the mist to discover the state of our opponents. But ere our smoke was cleared away, or the cannon again loaded, they came headlong down on us, horse and foot, old men and boys, men-at-arms and varlets, charging up to the muzzle of the guns, and over them, with total disregard to their lives. My brave fellows were cut down, pierced through, and overrun, while they were again loading their pieces, nor do I believe that a single cannon was fired a second time."

"And the Duke?" said the Earl of Oxford. "Did he not support you?"

"Most loyally and bravely," answered Colvin, "with his own bodyguard of Walloons and Burgundians. But a thousand Italian mercenaries went off, and never showed face again. The pass, too, was cumbered with the artillery, and in itself narrow, bordering on mountains and cliffs, a deep lake close beside. In short, it was a place totally unfit for horsemen to act in. In spite of the Duke's utmost exertions, and those of the gallant Flemings who fought around him, all were borne back in complete disorder. I was on foot, 298fighting as I could, without hopes of my life, or indeed thoughts of saving it, when I saw the guns taken and my faithful cannoneers slain. But I saw Duke Charles hard pressed, and took my horse from my page that held him—Thou, too, art lost, my poor orphan boy!—I could only aid Monseigneur de la Croye and others to extricate the Duke. Our retreat became a total rout, and when we reached our rearguard, which we had left strongly encamped, the banners of the Switzers were waving on our batteries, for a large division had made a circuit through mountain passes known only to themselves, and attacked our camp, vigorously seconded by that accursed Adrian de Bubenurg, who sallied from the beleaguered town, so that our intrenchments were stormed on both sides at once.—I have more to say, but having ridden day and night to bring you these evil tidings, my tongue clings to the roof of my mouth, and I feel that I can speak no more. The rest is all flight and massacre, disgraceful to every soldier that shared in it. For my part, I confess my contumelious self-confidence and insolence to man, as well as blasphemy to Heaven. If I live, it is but to hide my disgraced head in a cowl, and expiate the numerous sins of a licentious life."

With difficulty the broken-minded soldier was prevailed upon to take some nourishment and repose, together with an opiate, which was prescribed by the physician of King René, who recommended it as necessary to preserve even the reason of his patient, exhausted by the events of the battle, and subsequent fatigue.

The Earl of Oxford, dismissing other assistance, watched alternately with his son at Colvin's bedside. 299Notwithstanding the draught that had been administered, his repose was far from sound. Sudden starts, the perspiration which started from his brow, the distortions of his countenance, and the manner in which he clenched his fists and flung about his limbs, showed that in his dreams he was again encountering the terrors of a desperate and forlorn combat. This lasted for several hours; but about noon fatigue and medicine prevailed over nervous excitement, and the defeated commander fell into a deep and untroubled repose till evening. About sunset he awakened, and, after learning with whom and where he was, he partook of refreshments, and, without any apparent consciousness of having told them before, detailed once more all the particulars of the battle of Murten.

"It were little wide of truth," he said, "to calculate that one half of the Duke's army fell by the sword, or were driven into the lake. Those who escaped are great part of them scattered, never again to unite. Such a desperate and irretrievable rout was never witnessed. We fled like deer, sheep, or any other timid animals, which only remain in company because they are afraid to separate, but never think of order or of defence."

"And the Duke?" said the Earl of Oxford.

"We hurried him with us," said the soldier, "rather from instinct than loyalty, as men flying from a conflagration snatch up what they have of value, without knowing what they are doing. Knight and knave, officer and soldier, fled in the same panic, and each blast of the horn of Uri in our rear added new wings to our flight."

"And the Duke?" repeated Oxford.300

"At first he resisted our efforts, and strove to turn back on the foe; but when the flight became general he galloped along with us, without a word spoken or a command issued. At first we thought his silence and passiveness, so unusual in a temper so fiery, were fortunate for securing his personal safety. But when we rode the whole day, without being able to obtain a word of reply to all our questions,—when he sternly refused refreshments of every kind, though he had tasted no food all that disastrous day,—when every variation of his moody and uncertain temper was sunk into silent and sullen despair, we took counsel what was to be

done, and it was by the general voice that I was despatched to entreat that you, for whose counsels alone Charles has been known to have had some occasional deference, would come instantly to his place of retreat, and exert all your influence to awaken him from this lethargy, which may otherwise terminate his existence."

"And what remedy can I interpose?" said Oxford. "You know how he neglected my advice, when following it might have served my interest as well as his own. You are aware that my life was not safe among the miscreants that surrounded the Duke, and exercised influence over him."

"Most true," answered Colvin; "but I also know he is your ancient companion-in-arms, and it would ill become me to teach the noble Earl of Oxford what the laws of chivalry require. For your lordship's safety, every honest man in the army will give willing security."

"It is for that I care least," said Oxford, indifferently; "and if indeed my presence can be of 301service to the Duke,—if I could believe that he desired it"—

"He does—he does, my lord!" said the faithful soldier, with tears in his eyes. "We heard him name your name, as if the words escaped him in a painful dream."

"I will go to him, such being the case," said Oxford.—"I will go instantly. Where did he purpose to establish his headquarters?"

"He had fixed nothing for himself on that or other matters; but Monsieur de Contay named La Rivière, near Salins, in Upper Burgundy, as the place of his retreat."

"Thither, then, will we, my son, with all haste of preparation. Thou, Colvin, hadst better remain here, and see some holy man, to be assolizied for thy hasty speech on the battle-field of Morat. There was offence in it without doubt, but it will be ill atoned for by quitting a generous master when he hath most need of your good service; and it is but an act of cowardice to retreat into the cloister, till we have no longer active duties to perform in this world."

"It is true," said Colvin, "that should I leave the Duke now, perhaps not a man would stay behind that could stell a cannon properly. The sight of your lordship cannot but operate favourably on my noble master, since it has waked the old soldier in myself. If your lordship can delay your journey till to-morrow, I will have my spiritual affairs settled, and my bodily health sufficiently restored, to be your guide to La Rivière; and, for the cloister, I will think of it when I have regained the good name which I have lost at Murten. But I will have masses said, and 302these right powerful, for the souls of my poor cannoneers."

The proposal of Colvin was adopted, and Oxford, with his son, attended by Thiebault, spent the day in preparation, excepting the time necessary to take formal leave of King René, who seemed to part with them with regret. In company with the ordnance officer of the discomfited Duke, they traversed those parts of Provence, Dauphiné, and Franche Compté which lie between Aix and the place to which the Duke of Burgundy had retreated; but the distance and inconvenience of so long a route consumed more than a fortnight on the road, and the month of July 1476 was commenced when the travellers arrived in Upper Burgundy, and at the Castle of La Rivière, about twenty miles to the south of the town of Salins. The castle, which was but of small size, was surrounded by very many tents, which were pitched in a crowded, disordered, and unsoldierlike manner, very unlike the discipline usually observed in the camp of Charles the Bold. That the Duke was present there, however, was attested by his broad banner, which, rich with all its quarterings, streamed from the battlements of the castle. The guard turned out to receive the strangers, but in a manner so disorderly that the Earl looked to Colvin for explanation. The master of the ordnance shrugged up his shoulders, and was silent.

Colvin having sent in notice of his arrival, and that of the English Earl, Monsieur de Contay caused them presently to be admitted, and expressed much joy at their arrival.

"A few of us," he said, "true servants of the Duke, are holding council here, at which your 303assistance, my noble Lord of Oxford, will be of the utmost importance. Messieurs De la Croye, De Craon, Rubempré, and others, nobles of Burgundy, are now assembled to superintend the defence of the country at this exigence."

They all expressed delight to see the Earl of Oxford, and had only abstained from thrusting their attentions on him the last time he was in the Duke's camp, as they understood it was his wish to observe incognito.

"His Grace," said De Craon, "has asked after you twice, and on both times by your assumed name of Philipson."

"I wonder not at that, my Lord of Craon," replied the English nobleman. "The origin of the name took its rise in former days, when I was here during my first exile. It was then said that we poor Lancastrian nobles must assume other names than our own, and the good Duke Philip said, as I was brother-in-arms to his son Charles, I must be called after himself, by the name of Philipson. In memory of the good sovereign, I took that name when the day of need actually arrived, and I see that the Duke thinks of our early intimacy by his distinguishing me so.—How fares his Grace?"

The Burgundians looked at each other, and there was a pause.

"Even like a man stunned, brave Oxford," at length De Contay replied. "Sieur d'Argentin, you can best inform the noble Earl of the condition of our sovereign."

"He is like a man distracted," said the future historian of that busy period. "After the battle of Granson, he was never, to my thinking, of the 304same sound judgment as before. But then, he was capricious, unreasonable, peremptory, and inconsistent, and resented every counsel that was offered, as if it had been meant in insult; was jealous of the least trespass in point of ceremonial, as if his subjects were holding him in contempt. Now there is a total change, as if this second blow had stunned him, and suppressed the violent passions which the first called into action. He is silent as a Carthusian, solitary as a hermit, expresses interest in nothing, least of all in the guidance of his army. He was, you know, anxious about his dress, so much so that there was some affectation even in the rudenesses which he practised in that matter. But, woe's me, you will see a change now; he will not suffer his hair or nails to be trimmed or arranged. He is totally heedless of respect or disrespect towards him, takes little or no nourishment, uses strong wines, which, however, do not seem to affect his understanding; he will hear nothing of war or state affairs, as little of hunting or of sport. Suppose an anchorite brought from a cell to govern a kingdom, you see in him, except in point of devotion, a picture of the fiery, active Charles of Burgundy."

"You speak of a mind deeply wounded, Sieur d'Argentin," replied the Englishman. "Think you it fit I should present myself before the Duke?"

"I will inquire," said Contay; and, leaving the apartment, returned presently, and made a sign to the Earl to follow him.

In a cabinet, or closet, the unfortunate Charles reclined in a large arm-chair, his legs carelessly stretched on a footstool, but so changed that the 305Earl of Oxford could have believed what he saw to be the ghost of the once fiery Duke. Indeed, the shaggy length of hair which, streaming from his head, mingled with his beard; the hollowness of the caverns, at the bottom of which rolled his wild eyes; the falling in of the breast, and the advance of the shoulders, gave the ghastly appearance of one who has suffered the final agony which takes from mortality the signs of life and energy. His very costume (a cloak flung loosely over him) increased his resemblance to a shrouded phantom. De Contay named the Earl of Oxford; but the Duke gazed on him with a lustreless eye, and gave him no answer.

"Speak to him, brave Oxford," said the Burgundian in a whisper; "he is even worse than usual, but perhaps he may know your voice."

Never, when the Duke of Burgundy was in the most palmy state of his fortunes, did the noble Englishman kneel to kiss his hand with such sincere reverence. He respected in him, not only the afflicted friend, but the humbled sovereign, upon whose tower of trust the lightning had so recently broken. It was probably the falling of a tear upon his hand which seemed to awake the Duke's attention, for he looked towards the Earl, and said, "Oxford—Philipson—my old—my only friend, hast thou found me out in this retreat of shame and misery?"

"I am not your only friend, my lord," said Oxford. "Heaven has given you many affectionate friends among your natural and loyal subjects. But though a stranger, and saving the allegiance I owe to my lawful sovereign, I will yield to none of them in the respect and deference which I have 306paid to your Grace in prosperity, and now come to render to you in adversity."

"Adversity indeed!" said the Duke; "irremediable, intolerable adversity! I was lately Charles of Burgundy, called the Bold—now am I twice beaten by a scum of German peasants; my standard taken, my men-at-arms put to flight, my camp twice plundered, and each time of value more than equal to the price of all Switzerland fairly lost; myself hunted like a catiff goat or chamois—The utmost spite of hell could never accumulate more shame on the head of a sovereign!"

"On the contrary, my lord," said Oxford, "it is a trial of Heaven, which calls for patience and strength of mind. The bravest and best knight may lose the saddle; he is but a laggard who lies rolling on the sand of the lists after the accident has chanced."

"Ha, laggard, say'st thou?" said the Duke, some part of his ancient spirit awakened by the broad taunt. "Leave my presence, sir, and return to it no more, till you are summoned thither"——

"Which I trust will be no later than your Grace quits your dishabille, and disposes yourself to see your vassals and friends with such ceremony as befits you and them," said the Earl composedly.

"How mean you by that, Sir Earl? You are unmannerly."

"If I be, my lord, I am taught my ill-breeding by circumstances. I can mourn over fallen dignity; but I cannot honour him who dishonours himself, by bending, like a regardless boy, beneath the scourge of evil fortune."

"And who am I that you should term me such?" said Charles, starting up in all his natural pride and ferocity; "or who are you but a miserable exile, that you should break in upon my privacy with such disrespectful upbraiding?"

"For me," replied Oxford, "I am, as you say, an unrespected exile; nor am I ashamed of my condition, since unshaken loyalty to my King and his successors has brought me to it. But in you, can I recognise the Duke of Burgundy in a sullen hermit, whose guards are a disorderly soldiery, dreadful only to their friends; whose councils are in confusion for want of their sovereign, and who himself lurks like a lamed wolf in its den, in an obscure castle, waiting but a blast of the Switzer's horn to fling open its gates, which there are none to defend; who wears not a knightly sword to protect his person, and cannot even die like a stag at bay, but must be worried like a hunted fox?"

"Death and hell, slanderous traitor!" thundered the Duke, glancing a look at his side, and perceiving himself without a weapon.—"It is well for thee I have no sword, or thou shouldst never boast of thine insolence going unpunished.—Contay, step forth like a good knight, and confute the calumniator. Say, are not my soldiers arrayed, disciplined, and in order?"

"My lord," said Contay, trembling (brave as he was in battle) at the frantic rage which Charles exhibited, "there are a numerous soldiery yet under your command, but they are in evil order, and in worse discipline, I think, than they were wont."

"I see it—I see it," said the Duke; "idle and evil counsellors are ye all.—Hearken, Sir of Contay, what have you and the rest of you been doing, holding as you do large lands and high fiefs of us, that I cannot stretch my limbs on a sick-bed, when my heart is half broken, but my troops must fall into such scandalous disorder as exposes me to the scorn and reproach of each beggarly foreigner?"

"My lord," replied Contay, more firmly, "we have done what we could. But your Grace has accustomed your mercenary generals, and leaders of Free Companies, to take their orders only from your own mouth, or hand. They clamour also for pay, and the treasurer refuses to issue it without your Grace's order, as he alleges it might cost him his head; and they will not be guided and restrained, either by us or those who compose your council."

The Duke laughed sternly, but was evidently somewhat pleased with the reply.

"Ha, ha!" he said, "it is only Burgundy who can ride his own wild horses, and rule his own wild soldiery. Hark thee, Contay—To-morrow I ride forth to review the troops—for what disorder has passed, allowance shall be made. Pay also shall be issued—but woe to those who shall have offended too deeply! Let my grooms of the chamber know to provide me fitting dress and arms. I have got a lesson" (glancing a dark look at Oxford), "and I will not again be insulted without the means of wreaking my vengeance. Begone, both of you! And, Contay, send the treasurer hither with his accounts, and woe to his soul if I find aught to complain of! Begone, I say, and send him hither."

They left the apartment with suitable obeisance. As they retired, the Duke said abruptly, "Lord of Oxford, a word with you. Where did you study medicine? In your own famed university, I suppose. Thy physic hath wrought a wonder. Yet, Doctor Philipson, it might have cost thee thy life."

"I have ever thought my life cheap," said Oxford, "when the object was to help my friend."

"Thou art indeed a friend," said Charles, "and a fearless one. But go—I have been sore troubled, and thou hast tasked my temper closely. To-morrow we will speak further; meantime, I forgive thee, and I honour thee."

The Earl of Oxford retired to the council-hall, where the Burgundian nobility, aware of what had passed, crowded around him with thanks, compliments, and congratulations. A general bustle now ensued; orders were hurried off in every direction. Those officers who had duties to perform which had been neglected, hastened to conceal or to atone for their negligence. There was a general tumult in the camp, but it was a tumult of joy; for soldiers are always most pleased when they are best in order for performing their military service; and licence or inactivity, however acceptable at times, are not, when continued, so agreeable to their nature, as strict discipline and a prospect of employment.

The treasurer, who was, luckily for him, a man of sense and method, having been two hours in private with the Duke, returned with looks of wonder, and professed that never, in Charles's most prosperous days, had he showed himself more acute in the department of finance, of which he had but that morning seemed totally incapable; and the merit was universally attributed to the visit of Lord Oxford, whose timely reprimand had, like the shot of a cannon dispersing foul mists, awakened the Duke from his black and bilious melancholy.

On the following day Charles reviewed his troops with his usual attention, directed new levies, made various dispositions of his forces, and corrected the faults of their discipline by severe orders, which were enforced by some deserved punishments (of which the Italian mercenaries of Campo-basso had a large share), and rendered palatable by the payment of arrears, which was calculated to attach them to the standard under which they served.

The Duke also, after consulting with his council, agreed to convoke meetings of the States in his different territories, redress certain popular grievances, and grant some boons which he had hitherto denied; and thus began to open a new account of popularity with his subjects, in place of that which his rashness had exhausted.

CHAPTER XVII.

Here's a weapon now,
Shall shake a conquering general in his tent,
A monarch on his throne, or reach a prelate,
However holy be his offices,
E'en while he serves the altar.

Old Play.

From this time all was activity in the Duke of Burgundy's court and army. Money was collected, soldiers were levied, and certain news of the Confederates' motions only were wanting to bring on the campaign. But although Charles was, to all outward appearance, as active as ever, yet those who were more immediately about his person were of opinion that he did not display the soundness of mind or the energy of judgment which had been admired in him before these calamities. He was still liable to fits of moody melancholy, similar to those which descended upon Saul, and was vehemently furious when aroused out of them. Indeed, the Earl of Oxford himself seemed to have lost the power which he had exercised over him at first. Nay, though in general Charles was both grateful and affectionate towards him, he evidently felt humbled by the recollection of his having witnessed his impotent and disastrous condition, and was so much afraid of Lord Oxford being supposed to lead his counsels, that he often repelled his advice, merely, as it seemed, to show his own independence of mind.

In these froward humours the Duke was much encouraged by Campo-basso. That wily traitor now saw his master's affairs tottering to their fall, and he resolved to lend his lever to the work, so as to entitle him to a share of the spoil. He regarded Oxford as one of the most able friends and counsellors who adhered to the Duke; he thought he saw in his looks that he fathomed his own treacherous purpose, and therefore he hated and feared him. Besides, in order perhaps to colour over, even to his own eyes, the abominable perfidy he meditated, he affected to be exceedingly enraged against the Duke for the late punishment of marauders belonging to his Italian bands. He believed that chastisement to have been inflicted by the advice of Oxford; and he suspected that the measure was pressed with the hope of discovering that the Italians had not pillaged for their own emolument only, but for that of their commander. Believing that Oxford was thus hostile to him, Campo-basso would have speedily found means to take him out of his path, had not the Earl himself found it prudent to observe some precautions; and the

lords of Flanders and Burgundy, who loved him for the very reasons for which the Italian abhorred him, watched over his safety with a vigilance of which he himself was ignorant, but which certainly was the means of preserving his life.

It was not to be supposed that Ferrand of Lorraine should have left his victory so long unimproved; but the Swiss Confederates, who were the strength of his forces, insisted that the first operations should take place in Savoy and the Pays de Vaud, where the Burgundians had many garrisons, which, though they received no relief, yet were not easily or speedily reduced. Besides, the Switzers being, like most of the national soldiers of the time, a kind of militia, most of them returned home, to get in their harvest, and to deposit their spoil in safety. Ferrand, therefore, though bent on pursuing his success with all the ardour of youthful chivalry, was prevented from making any movement in advance until the month of December 1476. In the meantime, the Duke of Burgundy's forces, to be least burdensome to the country, were cantoned in distant places of his dominions, where every exertion was made to perfect the discipline of the new levies. The Duke, if left to himself, would have precipitated the struggle by again assembling his forces, and pushing forward into the Helvetian territories; but, though he inwardly foamed at the recollection of Granson and Murten, the memory of these disasters was too recent to permit such a plan of the campaign. Meantime, weeks glided past, and the month of December was far advanced, when one morning, as the Duke was sitting in council, Campo-basso suddenly entered, with a degree of extravagant rapture in his countenance, singularly different from the cold, regulated, and subtle smile which was usually his utmost advance towards laughter. "*Guantes*,"^[13] he said, "*Guantes*, for luck's sake, if it please your Grace."

"And what of good fortune comes nigh us?" said the Duke. "Methought she had forgot the way to our gates."

"She has returned to them, please your Highness, with her cornucopia full of choicest gifts, ready to pour her fruit, her flowers, her treasures, on the head of the sovereign of Europe most worthy to receive them."

"The meaning of all this?" said Duke Charles. "Riddles are for children."

"The harebrained young madman Ferrand, who calls himself of Lorraine, has broken down from the mountains, at the head of a desultory army of scapegraces like himself; and what think you—ha! ha! ha!—they are overrunning Lorraine, and have taken Nancy—ha! ha! ha!"

"By my good faith, Sir Count," said Contay, astonished at the gay humour with which the Italian treated a matter so serious, "I have seldom heard a fool laugh more gaily at a more scurvy jest, than you, a wise man, laugh at the loss of the principal town of the province we are fighting for."

"I laugh," said Campo-basso, "among the spears, as my war-horse does—ha! ha!—among the trumpets. I laugh also over the destruction of the enemy, and the dividing of the spoil, as eagles scream their joy over the division of their prey; I laugh"—

"You laugh," said the Lord of Contay, waxing impatient, "when you have all the mirth to yourself, as you laughed after our losses at Granson and Murten."

"Peace, sir!" said the Duke. "The Count of Campo-basso has viewed the case as I do. This young knight-errant ventures from the protection of his mountains; and Heaven deal with me as I keep my oath, when I swear that the next fair field on which we meet shall see one of us dead! It is now the last week of the old year, and before Twelfth-Day we will see whether he or I shall find the bean in the cake.—To arms, my lords! Let our camp instantly break up, and our troops move forward towards Lorraine. Send off the Italian and Albanian light cavalry and the Stradiots to scour the country in the van—Oxford, thou wilt bear arms in this journey, wilt thou not?"

"Surely," said the Earl. "I am eating your Highness's bread; and when enemies invade, it stands with my honour to fight for your Grace as if I was your born subject. With your Grace's permission, I will despatch a pursuivant, who shall carry letters to my late kind host, the Landamman of Unterwalden, acquainting him with my purpose."

The Duke having given a ready assent, the pursuivant was dismissed accordingly, and returned in a few hours, so near had the armies approached to each other. He bore a letter from the Landamman, in a tone of courtesy and even kindness, regretting that any cause should have occurred for bearing arms against his late guest, for whom he expressed high personal regard. The same pursuivant also brought greetings from the family of the Biedermans to their friend Arthur, and a separate letter, addressed to the same person, of which the contents ran thus:—

"Rudolph Donnerhugel is desirous to give the young merchant, Arthur Philipson, the opportunity of finishing the bargain which remained unsettled between them in the castle-court of Geierstein. He is the more desirous of this, as he is aware that the said Arthur has done him wrong, in seducing the affections of a certain maiden of rank, to whom he, Philipson, is not, and cannot be, anything beyond an ordinary acquaintance. Rudolph Donnerhugel will send Arthur Philipson word when a fair and equal meeting can take place on neutral ground. In the meantime, he will be as often as possible in the first rank of the skirmishers."

Young Arthur's heart leapt high as he read the defiance, the piqued tone of which showed the state of the writer's feelings, and argued sufficiently Rudolph's disappointment on the subject of Anne of Geierstein, and his suspicion that she had bestowed her affections on the youthful stranger. Arthur found means of despatching a reply to the challenge of the Swiss, assuring him of the pleasure with which he would attend his commands, either in front of the line or elsewhere, as Rudolph might desire.

Meantime the armies were closely approaching to each other, and the light troops sometimes met. The Stradiots from the Venetian territory, a sort of cavalry resembling that of the Turks, performed much of that service on the part of the Burgundian army, for which, indeed, if their fidelity could have been relied on, they were admirably well qualified. The Earl of Oxford observed that these men, who were under the command of Campo-basso, always brought in intelligence that the enemy were in indifferent order, and in full retreat. Besides, information was communicated through their means that sundry individuals, against whom the Duke of Burgundy entertained peculiar personal dislike, and whom he specially desired to get into his hands, had taken refuge in Nancy. This greatly increased the Duke's ardour for retaking that place, which became perfectly ungovernable when he learned that Ferrand and his Swiss allies had drawn off to a neighbouring position called St. Nicholas, on the news of his arrival. The greater part of the Burgundian counsellors, together with the Earl of Oxford, protested against his besieging a place of some strength, while an active enemy lay in the neighbourhood to relieve it. They remonstrated on the smallness of his army, on the severity of the weather, on the difficulty of obtaining provisions, and exhorted the Duke that, having made such a movement as had forced the enemy to retreat, he ought to suspend decisive operations till spring. Charles at first tried to dispute and repel these arguments; but when his counsellors reminded him that he was placing himself and his army in the same situation as at Granson and Murten, he became furious at the recollection, foamed at the mouth, and only answered by oaths and imprecations, that he would be master of Nancy before Twelfth Day.

Accordingly, the army of Burgundy sat down before Nancy, in a strong position, protected by the hollow of a watercourse, and covered with thirty pieces of cannon, which Colvin had under his charge.

Having indulged his obstinate temper in thus arranging the campaign, the Duke seemed to give a little more heed to the advice of his counsellors touching the safety of his person, and permitted the Earl of Oxford, with his son, and two or three officers of his household, men of approved trust, to sleep within his pavilion, in addition to the usual guard.

It wanted three days of Christmas when the Duke sat down before Nancy, and on that very evening a tumult happened which seemed to justify the alarm for his personal safety. It was midnight, and all in the ducal pavilion were at rest, when a cry of treason arose. The Earl of Oxford, drawing his sword, and snatching up a light which burned beside him, rushed into the Duke's apartment, and found him standing on the floor totally undressed, but with his sword in his hand, and striking around him so furiously, that the Earl himself had difficulty in avoiding his blows. The rest of his officers rushed in, their weapons drawn, and their cloaks wrapped around their left arms. When the Duke was somewhat composed, and found himself surrounded by his friends, he informed them, with rage and agitation, that the officers of the Secret Tribunal had, in spite of the vigilant precautions taken, found means to gain entrance into his chamber, and charged him, under the highest penalty, to appear before the Holy Vehme upon Christmas night.

The bystanders heard this story with astonishment, and some of them were uncertain whether they ought to consider it as a reality, or a dream of the Duke's irritable fancy. But the citation was found on the Duke's toilette, written, as was the form, upon parchment, signed with three crosses, and stuck to the table with a knife. A slip of wood had been also cut from the table. Oxford read the summons with attention. It named, as usual, a place where the Duke was cited to come unarmed and unattended, and from which it was said he would be guided to the seat of judgment.

Charles, after looking at the scroll for some time, gave vent to his thoughts.

"I know from what quiver this arrow comes," he said. "It is shot by that degenerate noble, apostate priest, and accomplice of sorcerers, Albert of Geierstein. We have heard that he is among the motley group of murderers and outlaws whom the old fiddler of Provence's grandson has raked together. But, by St. George of Burgundy! neither monk's cowl, soldier's casque, nor conjurer's cap shall save him after such an insult as this. I will degrade him from knighthood, hang him from the highest steeple in Nancy, and his daughter shall choose between the meanest herd-boy in my army and the convent of *filles repentées*!"

"Whatever are your purposes, my lord," said Contay, "it were surely best be silent, when, from this late apparition, we may conjecture that more than we wot of may be within hearing."

The Duke seemed struck with this hint, and was silent, or at least only muttered oaths and threats betwixt his teeth, while the strictest search was made for the intruder on his repose. But it was in vain.

Charles continued his researches, incensed at a flight of audacity higher than ever had been ventured upon by these secret societies, who, whatever might be the dread inspired by them, had not as yet attempted to cope with sovereigns. A trusty party of Burgundians were sent on Christmas night to watch the spot (a meeting of four cross roads) named in the summons, and make prisoners of any whom they could lay hands upon; but no suspicious persons appeared at or near the place. The Duke not the less continued to impute the affront he had received to Albert of Geierstein. There was a price set upon his head; and Campo-basso, always willing to please his master's mood, undertook that some of his Italians, sufficiently experienced in such feats, should bring the obnoxious baron before him, alive or dead. Colvin, Contay, and others laughed in secret at the Italian's promises.

"Subtle as he is," said Colvin, "he will lure the wild vulture from the heavens before he gets Albert of Geierstein into his power."

Arthur, to whom the words of the Duke had given subject for no small anxiety, on account of Anne of Geierstein, and of her father for her sake, breathed more lightly on hearing his menaces held so cheaply.

It was the second day after this alarm that Oxford felt a desire to reconnoitre the camp of Ferrand of Lorraine, having some doubts whether the strength and position of it were accurately reported. He obtained the Duke's consent for this purpose, who at the same time made him and his son a present of two noble steeds of great power and speed, which he himself highly valued.

So soon as the Duke's pleasure was communicated to the Italian count, he expressed the utmost joy that he was to have the assistance of Oxford's age and experience upon an exploratory party, and selected a chosen band of an hundred Stradiots, whom he said he had sent sometimes to skirmish up to the very beards of the Switzers. The Earl showed himself much satisfied with the active and intelligent manner in which these men performed their duty, and drove before them and dispersed some parties of Ferrand's cavalry. At the entrance of a little ascending valley, Campo-basso communicated to the English noblemen that if they could advance to the farther extremity they would have a full view of the enemy's position. Two or three Stradiots then spurred on to examine this defile, and, returning back, communicated with their leader in their own language, who, pronouncing the passage safe, invited the Earl of Oxford to accompany him. They proceeded through the valley without seeing an enemy, but on issuing upon a plain at the point intimated by Campo-basso, Arthur, who was in the van of the Stradiots, and separated from his father, did indeed see the camp of Duke Ferrand within half a mile's distance; but a body of cavalry had that instant issued from it, and were riding hastily towards the gorge of the valley from which he had just emerged. He was about to wheel his horse and ride off, but, conscious of the great speed of the animal, he thought he might venture to stay for a moment's more accurate survey of the camp. The Stradiots who attended him did not wait his orders to retire, but went off, as was indeed their duty, when attacked by a superior force.

Meantime, Arthur observed that the knight who seemed leader of the advancing squadron, mounted on a powerful horse that shook the earth beneath him, bore on his shield the Bear of Berne, and had otherwise the appearance of the massive frame of Rudolph Donnerhugel. He was satisfied of this when he beheld the cavalier halt his party and advance towards him alone, putting his lance in rest, and moving slowly, as if to give him time for preparation. To accept such a challenge, in such a moment, was dangerous, but to refuse it was disgraceful; and while Arthur's blood boiled at the idea of chastising an insolent rival, he was not a little pleased at heart that their meeting on horseback gave him an advantage over the Swiss, through his perfect acquaintance with the practice of the tourney, in which Rudolph might be supposed more ignorant.

They met, as was the phrase of the time, "manful under shield." The lance of the Swiss glanced from the helmet of the Englishman, against which it was addressed, while the spear of Arthur, directed right against the centre of his adversary's body, was so justly aimed, and so truly seconded by the full fury of the career, as to pierce, not only the shield which hung round the ill-fated warrior's neck, but a breast-plate and a shirt of mail which he wore beneath it. Passing clear through the body, the steel point of the weapon was only stopped by the back-piece of the unfortunate cavalier, who fell headlong from his horse, as if struck by lightning, rolled twice or thrice over on the ground, tore the earth with his hands, and then lay prostrate a dead corpse.

There was a cry of rage and grief among those men-at-arms whose ranks Rudolph had that instant left, and many couched their lances to avenge him; but Ferrand of Lorraine, who was present in person, ordered them to make prisoner, but not to harm, the successful champion. This was accomplished, for Arthur had not time to turn his bridle for flight, and resistance would have been madness.

When brought before Ferrand, he raised his visor, and said, "Is it well, my lord, to make captive an adventurous knight, for doing his devoir against a personal challenger?"

"Do not complain, Sir Arthur of Oxford," said Ferrand, "before you experience injury. You are free, Sir Knight. Your father and you were faithful to my royal aunt Margaret, and, although she was my enemy, I do justice to your fidelity in her behalf; and from respect to her memory, disinherited as she was like myself, and to please my grandfather, who I think had some regard for you, I give you your freedom. But I must also care for your safety during your return to the camp of Burgundy. On this side of the hill we are loyal and true-hearted men, on the other they are traitors and murderers. You, Sir Count, will, I think, gladly see our captive placed in safety."

The knight to whom Ferrand addressed himself, a tall, stately man, put himself in motion to attend on Arthur, while the former was expressing to the young Duke of Lorraine the sense he entertained of his chivalrous conduct. "Farewell, Sir Arthur de Vere," said Ferrand. "You have slain a noble champion, and to me a most useful and faithful friend. But it was done nobly and openly, with equal arms, and in the front of the line; and evil befall him who entertains feud first!" Arthur bowed to his saddle-bow. Ferrand returned the salutation, and they parted.

Arthur and his new companion had ridden but a little way up the ascent, when the stranger spoke thus:—

"We have been fellow-travellers before, young man, yet you remember me not."

Arthur turned his eyes on the cavalier, and, observing that the crest which adorned his helmet was fashioned like a vulture, strange suspicions began to cross his mind, which were confirmed when the knight, opening his helmet, showed him the dark and severe features of the Priest of St. Paul's.

"Count Albert of Geierstein!" said Arthur.

"The same," replied the count, "though thou hast seen him in other garb and headgear. But tyranny drives all men to arms, and I have resumed, by the licence and command of my superiors, those which I had laid aside. A war against cruelty and oppression is holy as that waged in Palestine, in which priests bear armour."

"My Lord Count," said Arthur, eagerly, "I cannot too soon entreat you to withdraw to Sir Ferrand of Lorraine's squadron. Here you are in peril, where no strength or courage can avail you. The Duke has placed a price on your head; and the country betwixt this and Nancy swarms with Stradiots and Italian light horsemen."

"I laugh at them," answered the count. "I have not lived so long in a stormy world, amid intrigues of war and policy, to fall by the mean hand of such as they—besides, thou art with me, and I have seen but now that thou canst bear thee nobly."

"In your defence, my lord," said Arthur, who thought of his companion as the father of Anne of Geierstein, "I should try to do my best."

"What, youth!" replied Count Albert with a stern sneer, that was peculiar to his countenance; "wouldst thou aid the enemy of the lord under whose banner thou servest against his waged soldiers?"³²⁵

Arthur was somewhat abashed at the turn given to his ready offer of assistance, for which he had expected at least thanks; but he instantly collected himself, and replied, "My Lord Count Albert, you have been pleased to put yourself in peril to protect me from partisans of your party—I am equally bound to defend you from those of our side."

"It is happily answered," said the count; "yet I think there is a little blind partisan, of whom troubadours and minstrels talk, to whose instigation I might, in case of need, owe the great zeal of my protector."

He did not allow Arthur, who was a good deal embarrassed, time to reply, but proceeded: "Hear me, young man—Thy lance has this day done an evil deed to Switzerland, to Berne, and Duke Ferrand, in slaying their bravest champion. But to me the death of Rudolph Donnerhugel is a welcome event. Know that he was, as his services grew more indispensable, become importunate in requiring Duke Ferrand's interest with me for my daughter's hand. And the Duke himself, the son of a princess, blushed not to ask me to bestow the last of my house—for my brother's family are degenerate mongrels—upon a presumptuous young man, whose uncle was a domestic in the house of my wife's father, though they boasted some relationship, I believe, through an illegitimate channel, which yonder Rudolph was wont to make the most of, as it favoured his suit."

"Surely," said Arthur, "a match with one so unequal in birth, and far more in every other respect, was too monstrous to be mentioned?"

"While I lived," replied Count Albert, "never should such union have been formed, if the death both of bride and bridegroom by my dagger could have saved the honour of my house from violation. But when I—I whose days, whose very hours are numbered—shall be no more, what could prevent an undaunted suitor, fortified by Duke Ferrand's favour, by the general applause of his country, and perhaps by the unfortunate prepossession of my brother Arnold, from carrying his point against the resistance and scruples of a solitary maiden?"

"Rudolph is dead," replied Arthur, "and may Heaven assuage him from guilt! But were he alive, and urging his suit on Anne of Geierstein, he would find there was a combat to be fought!"——

"Which has been already decided," answered Count Albert. "Now, mark me, Arthur de Vere! My daughter has told me of the passages betwixt you and her. Your sentiments and conduct are worthy of the noble house you descend from, which I well know ranks with the most illustrious in Europe. You are indeed disinherited, but so is Anne of Geierstein, save such pittance as her uncle may impart to her of her paternal inheritance. If you share it together till better days (always supposing your noble father gives his consent, for my child shall enter no house against the will of its head), my daughter knows that she has my willing consent, and my blessing. My brother shall also know my pleasure. He will approve my purpose; for, though dead to thoughts of honour and chivalry, he is alive to social feelings, loves his niece, and has friendship for thee and for thy father. What say'st thou, young man, to taking a beggarly countess to aid thee in the journey of life? I believe—nay, I prophesy (for I stand so much on the edge of the grave, that methinks I command a view beyond it), that a lustre will one day, after I have long ended my doubtful and stormy life, beam on the coronets of De Vere and Geierstein."

De Vere threw himself from his horse, clasped the hand of Count Albert, and was about to exhaust himself in thanks; but the count insisted on his silence.

"We are about to part," he said. "The time is short—the place is dangerous. You are to me, personally speaking, less than nothing. Had any one of the many schemes of ambition which I have pursued led me to success, the son of a banished earl had not been the son-in-law I had chosen. Rise and remount your horse—thanks are unpleasing when they are not merited."

Arthur arose, and, mounting his horse, threw his raptures into a more acceptable form, endeavouring to describe how his love for Anne, and efforts for her happiness, should express his gratitude to her father; and, observing that the count listened with some pleasure to the picture he drew of their future life, he could not help exclaiming,—“And you, my lord—you who have been the author of all this happiness, will you not be the witness and partaker of it? Believe me, we will strive to soften the effect of the hard blows which fortune has dealt to you, and, should a ray of better luck shine upon us, it will be the more welcome that you can share it."

"Forbear such folly," said the Count Albert of Geierstein. "I know my last scene is approaching. Hear and tremble. The Duke of Burgundy is sentenced to die, and the Secret and Invisible Judges, who doom in secret and avenge in secret, like the Deity, have given the cord and the dagger to my hand."

"Oh, cast from you these vile symbols!" exclaimed Arthur, with enthusiasm; "let them find butchers and common stabbers to do such an office, and not dishonour the noble Lord of Geierstein!"

"Peace, foolish boy!" answered the count. "The oath by which I am sworn is higher than that clouded sky, more deeply fixed than those distant mountains. Nor think my act is that of an assassin, though for such I might plead the Duke's own example. I send not hirelings, like these base Stradiots, to hunt his life, without imperilling mine own. I give not his daughter—innocent of his offences—the choice betwixt a disgraceful marriage and a discreditable retreat from the world. No, Arthur de Vere, I seek Charles with the resolved mind of one who, to take the life of an adversary, exposes himself to certain death."

"I pray you speak no further of it," said Arthur, very anxiously. "Consider I serve for the present the prince whom you threaten!"——

"And art bound," interrupted the count, "to unfold to him what I tell you. I desire you should do so; and though he hath already neglected a summons of the Tribunal, I am glad to have this opportunity of sending him personal defiance. Say to Charles of Burgundy that he has wronged Albert of Geierstein. He who is injured in his honour loses all value for his life, and whoever does so has full command over that of another man. Bid him keep himself well from me, since, if he see a second sun of the approaching year rise over the distant Alps, Albert of Geierstein is forsworn.—And now begone, for I see a party approach under a Burgundian banner. They will insure your safety, but, should I remain longer, would endanger mine."

So saying, the Count of Geierstein turned his horse and rode off.³³⁰

CHAPTER XVIII.

Faint the din of battle bray'd
Distant down the heavy wind;
War and terror fled before,
Wounds and death were left behind.

MICKLE.

Arthur, left alone, and desirous perhaps to cover the retreat of Count Albert, rode towards the approaching body of Burgundian cavalry, who were arrayed under the Lord Contay's banner.

"Welcome, welcome," said that nobleman, advancing hastily to the young knight. "The Duke of Burgundy is a mile hence, with a body of horse to support the reconnoitring party. It is not half an hour since your father galloped up, and stated that you had been led into an ambuscade by the treachery of the Stradiots, and made prisoner. He has impeached Campo-basso of treason, and challenged him to the combat. They have both been sent to the camp, under charge of the Grand Marshal, to prevent their fighting on the spot, though I think our Italian showed little desire to come to blows. The Duke holds their gages, and they are to fight upon Twelfth Day."

"I doubt that day will never dawn for some who look for it," said Arthur; "but if it do, I will myself claim the combat, by my father's permission."

He then turned with Contay, and met a still larger body of cavalry under the Duke's broad banner.³³¹ He was instantly brought before Charles. The Duke heard, with some apparent anxiety, Arthur's support of his father's accusations against the Italian, in whose favour he was so deeply prejudiced. When assured that the Stradiots had been across the hill, and communicated with their leader just before he encouraged Arthur to advance, as it proved, into the midst of an ambush, the Duke shook his head, lowered his shaggy brows, and muttered to himself,—“Ill will to Oxford, perhaps—these Italians are vindictive.”—Then raising his head, he commanded Arthur to proceed.

He heard with a species of ecstasy the death of Rudolph Donnerhugel, and, taking a ponderous gold chain from his own neck, flung it over Arthur's.

"Why, thou hast forestalled all our honours, young Arthur—this was the biggest bear of them all—the rest are but suckling whelps to him! I think I have found a youthful David to match their huge thick-headed Goliath. But the idiot, to think his peasant hand could manage a lance! Well, my brave boy—what more? How camest thou off? By some wily device or agile stratagem, I warrant."

"Pardon me, my lord," answered Arthur. "I was protected by their chief, Ferrand, who considered my encounter with Rudolph Donnerhugel as a personal duel; and desirous to use fair war, as he said, dismissed me honourably, with my horse and arms."

"Umph!" said Charles, his bad humour returning; "your Prince Adventurer must play the generous—Umph—well, it belongs to his part, 332but shall not be a line for me to square my conduct by. Proceed with your story, Sir Arthur de Vere."

As Arthur proceeded to tell how and under what circumstances Count Albert of Geierstein named himself to him, the Duke fixed on him an eager look, and trembled with impatience as he fiercely interrupted him with the question—"And you—you struck him with your poniard under the fifth rib, did you not?"

"I did not, my Lord Duke—we were pledged in mutual assurance to each other."

"Yet you knew him to be my mortal enemy?" said the Duke. "Go, young man, thy lukewarm indifference has cancelled thy merit. The escape of Albert of Geierstein hath counterbalanced the death of Rudolph Donnerhugel."

"Be it so, my lord," said Arthur, boldly. "I neither claim your praises, nor deprecate your censure. I had to move me in either case motives personal to myself—Donnerhugel was my enemy, and to Count Albert I owe some kindness."

The Burgundian nobles who stood around were terrified for the effect of this bold speech. But it was never possible to guess with accuracy how such things would affect Charles. He looked around him with a laugh—"Hear you this English cockerel, my lords—what a note will he one day sound, that already crows so bravely in a prince's presence?"

A few horsemen now came in from different quarters, recounting that the Duke Ferrand and his company had retired into their encampment, and the country was clear of the enemy.

"Let us then draw back also," said Charles, 333"since there is no chance of breaking spears to-day. And thou, Arthur de Vere, attend me closely."

Arrived in the Duke's pavilion, Arthur underwent an examination, in which he said nothing of Anne of Geierstein, or her father's designs concerning him, with which he considered Charles as having nothing to do; but he frankly conveyed to him the personal threats which the count had openly used. The Duke listened with more temper, and when he heard the expression, "That a man who is desperate of his own life might command that of any other person," he said, "But there is a life beyond this, in which he who is treacherously murdered, and his base and desperate assassin, shall each meet their deserts." He then took from his bosom a gold cross, and kissed it, with much appearance of devotion. "In this," said he, "I will place my trust. If I fail in this world, may I find grace in the next.—Ho, Sir Marshal!" he exclaimed. "Let your prisoners attend us."

The Marshal of Burgundy entered with the Earl of Oxford, and stated that his other prisoner, Campo-basso, had desired so earnestly that he might be suffered to go and post his sentinels on that part of the camp intrusted to the protection of his troops, that he, the Marshal, had thought fit to comply with his request.

"It is well," said Burgundy, without further remark. "Then to you, my Lord Oxford, I would present your son, had you not already locked him in your arms. He has won great loss and honour, and done me brave service. This is a period of the year when good men forgive their enemies;—I 334know not why,—my mind was little apt to be charged with such matters,—but I feel an unconquerable desire to stop the approaching combat betwixt you and Campo-basso. For my sake, consent to be friends, and to receive back your gage of battle, and let me conclude this year—perhaps the last I may see—with a deed of peace."

"My lord," said Oxford, "it is a small thing you ask of me, since your request only enforces a Christian duty. I was enraged at the loss of my son. I am grateful to Heaven and your Grace for restoring him. To be friends with Campo-basso is to me impossible. Faith and treason, truth and falsehood, might as soon shake hands and embrace. But the Italian shall be to me no more than he has been before this rupture; and that is literally nothing. I put my honour in your Grace's hands;—if he receives back his gage, I am willing to receive mine. John de Vere needs not be apprehensive that the world will suppose that he fears Campo-basso."

The Duke returned sincere thanks, and detained the officers to spend the evening in his tent. His manners seemed to Arthur to be more placid than he had ever seen them before, while to the Earl of Oxford they recalled the earlier days in which their intimacy commenced, ere absolute power and unbounded success had spoiled Charles's rough but not ungenerous disposition. The Duke ordered a distribution of provisions and wine to the soldiers, and expressed an anxiety about their lodgings, the cure of the wounded, and the health of the army, to which he received only unpleasing answers. To some of his counsellors, apart, he said, "Were it not for our vow, we would relinquish this purpose 335till spring, when our poor soldiers might take the field with less of suffering."

Nothing else remarkable appeared in the Duke's manner, save that he inquired repeatedly after Campo-basso, and at length received accounts that he was indisposed, and that his physician had recommended rest; he had therefore retired to repose himself, in order that he might be stirring on his duty at peep of day, the safety of the camp depending much on his vigilance.

The Duke made no observation on the apology, which he considered as indicating some lurking disinclination, on the Italian's part, to meet Oxford. The guests at the ducal pavilion were dismissed an hour before midnight.

When Oxford and his son were in their own tent, the Earl fell into a deep reverie, which lasted nearly ten minutes. At length, starting suddenly up, he said, "My son, give orders to Thiebault and thy yeomen to have our horses before the tent by break of day, or rather before it; and it would not be amiss if you ask our neighbour Colvin to ride along with us. I will visit the outposts by daybreak."

"It is a sudden resolution, my lord," said Arthur.

"And yet it may be taken too late," said his father. "Had it been moonlight, I would have made the rounds to-night."

"It is dark as a wolf's throat," said Arthur. "But wherefore, my lord, can this night in particular excite your apprehensions?"

"Son Arthur, perhaps you will hold your father credulous. But my nurse, Martha Nixon, was a northern woman, and full of superstitions. In 336particular, she was wont to say, that any sudden and causeless change of a man's nature, as from licence to sobriety, from temperance to indulgence, from avarice to extravagance, from prodigality to love of money, or the like, indicates an immediate change of his fortunes—that some great alteration of circumstances, either for good or evil (and for evil most likely, since we live in an evil world), is impending over him whose disposition is so much altered. This old woman's fancy has recurred so strongly to my mind, that I am determined to see with mine own eyes, ere to-morrow's dawn, that all our guards and patrols around the camp are on the alert."

Arthur made the necessary communications to Colvin and to Thiebault, and then retired to rest.

It was ere daybreak of the first of January 1477, a period long memorable for the events which marked it, that the Earl of Oxford, Colvin, and the young Englishman, followed only by Thiebault and two other servants, commenced their rounds of the Duke of Burgundy's encampment. For the greater part of their progress they found sentinels and guards all on the alert and at their posts. It was a bitter morning. The ground was partly covered with snow,—that snow had been partly melted by a thaw, which had prevailed for two days, and partly congealed into ice by a bitter frost, which had commenced the preceding evening, and still continued. A more dreary scene could scarcely be witnessed.

But what were the surprise and alarm of the Earl of Oxford and his companions, when they came to that part of the camp which had been occupied the day before by Campo-basso and his 337Italians, who, reckoning men-at-arms and Stradiots, amounted to nigh two thousand men—not a challenge was given—not a horse neighed—no steeds were seen at picket—no guard on the camp. They examined several of the tents and huts—they were empty.

"Let us back to alarm the camp," said the Earl of Oxford; "here is treachery."

"Nay, my lord," said Colvin, "let us not carry back imperfect tidings. I have a battery an hundred yards in advance, covering the access to this hollow way; let us see if my German cannoneers are at their post, and I think I can swear that we shall find them so. The battery commands a narrow pass, by which alone the camp can be approached, and if my men are at their duty, I will pawn my life that we make the pass good till you bring up succours from the main body."

"Forward, then, in God's name!" said the Earl of Oxford.

They galloped, at every risk, over broken ground, slippery with ice in some places, incumbered with snow in others. They came to the cannon, judiciously placed to sweep the pass, which rose towards the artillery on the outward side, and then descended gently from the battery into the lower ground. The waning winter moon, mingling with the dawning light, showed them that the guns were in their places, but no sentinel was visible.

"The villains cannot have deserted!" said the astonished Colvin. "But see, there is light in their cantonment. Oh, that unhallowed distribution of wine! Their usual sin of drunkenness has beset them. I will soon drive them from their revelry."³³⁸

He sprang from his horse, and rushed into the tent whence the light issued. The cannoneers, or most of them, were still there, but stretched on the ground, their cups and flagons scattered around them; and so drenched were they in wassail, that Colvin could only, by commands and threats, awaken two or three, who, staggering, and obeying him rather from instinct than sense, reeled forward to man the battery. A heavy rushing sound, like that of men marching fast, was now heard coming up the pass.

"It is the roar of a distant avalanche," said Arthur.

"It is an avalanche of Switzers, not of snow," said Colvin. "Oh, these drunken slaves! The cannon are deeply loaded and well pointed—this volley must check them if they were fiends, and the report will alarm the camp sooner than we can do. But, oh, these drunken villains!"

"Care not for their aid," said the Earl; "my son and I will each take a linstock, and be gunners for once."

They dismounted, and bade Thiebault and the grooms look to the horses, while the Earl of Oxford and his son took each a linstock from one of the helpless gunners, three of whom were just sober enough to stand by their guns.

"Bravo!" cried the bold master of ordnance, "never was a battery so noble. Now, my mates—your pardon, my lords, for there is no time for ceremony,—and you, ye drunken knaves, take heed not to fire till I give the word, and, were the ribs of these trampers as flinty as their Alps, they shall know how old Colvin loads his guns."

They stood breathless, each by his cannon. The 339dreaded sound approached nearer and more near, till the imperfect light showed a dark and shadowy but dense column of men, armed with long spears, pole-axes, and other weapons, amidst which banners dimly floated. Colvin suffered them to approach to the distance of about forty yards, and then gave the word, Fire! But his own piece alone exploded; a slight flame flashed from the touch-hole of the others, which had been spiked by the Italian deserters, and left in reality disabled, though apparently fit for service. Had they been all in the same condition with that fired by Colvin, they would probably have verified his prophecy; for even that single discharge produced an awful effect, and made a long lane of dead and wounded through the Swiss column, in which the first and leading banner was struck down.

"Stand to it yet," said Colvin, "and aid me if possible to reload the piece."

For this, however, no time was allowed. A stately form, conspicuous in the front of the staggered column, raised up the fallen banner, and a voice as of a giant exclaimed, "What, countrymen! have you seen Murten and Granson, and are you daunted by a single gun?—Berne—Uri—Schwitz—banners forward! Unterwalden, here is your standard!—Cry your war-cries, wind your horns; Unterwalden, follow your Landamman!"

They rushed on like a raging ocean, with a roar as deafening, and a course as impetuous. Colvin, still labouring to reload his gun, was struck down in the act. Oxford and his son were overthrown by the multitude, the closeness of which prevented any blows being aimed at them. Arthur partly saved himself by getting under the gun 340he was posted at; his father, less fortunate, was much trampled upon, and must have been crushed to death but for his armour of proof. The human inundation, consisting of at least four thousand men, rushed down into the camp, continuing their dreadful shouts, soon mingled with shrill shrieks, groans, and cries of alarm.

A broad red glare rising behind the assailants, and putting to shame the pallid lights of the winter morning, first recalled Arthur to a sense of his condition. The camp was on fire in his rear, and resounded with all the various shouts of conquest and terror that are heard in a town which is stormed. Starting to his feet, he looked around him for his father. He lay near him senseless, as were the gunners, whose condition prevented their attempting an escape. Having opened his father's casque, he was rejoiced to see him give symptoms of reanimation.

"The horses, the horses!" said Arthur. "Thiebault, where art thou?"

"At hand, my lord," said that trusty attendant, who had saved himself and his charge by a prudent retreat into a small thicket, which the assailants had avoided that they might not disorder their ranks.

"Where is the gallant Colvin?" said the Earl. "Get him a horse, I will not leave him in jeopardy."

"His wars are ended, my lord," said Thiebault; "he will never mount steed more."

A look and a sigh as he saw Colvin, with the ramrod in his hand, before the muzzle of the piece, his head cleft by a Swiss battle-axe, was all the moment permitted.³⁴¹

"Whither must we take our course?" said Arthur to his father.

"To join the Duke," said the Earl of Oxford. "It is not on a day like this that I will leave him."

"So please you," said Thiebault, "I saw the Duke, followed by some half-score of his guards, riding at full speed across this hollow watercourse, and making for the open country to the northward. I think I can guide you on the track."

"If that be so," replied Oxford, "we will mount and follow him. The camp has been assailed on several places at once, and all must be over since he has fled."

With difficulty they assisted the Earl of Oxford to his horse, and rode, as fast as his returning strength permitted, in the direction which the Provençal pointed out. Their other attendants were dispersed or slain.

They looked back more than once on the camp, now one great scene of conflagration, by whose red and glaring light they could discover on the ground the traces of Charles's retreat. About three miles from the scene of their defeat, the sound of which they still heard, mingled with the bells of Nancy, which were ringing in triumph, they reached a half-frozen swamp, round which lay several dead bodies. The most conspicuous was that of Charles of Burgundy, once the possessor of such unlimited power—such unbounded wealth. He was partly stripped and plundered, as were those who lay round him. His body was pierced with several wounds, inflicted by various weapons. His sword was still in his hand, and the singular ferocity which was wont to animate his features in battle 342still dwelt on his stiffened countenance. Close behind him, as if they had fallen in the act of mutual fight, lay the corpse of Count Albert of Geierstein; and that of Ital Schreckenwald, the faithful though unscrupulous follower of the latter, lay not far distant. Both were in the dress of the men-at-arms composing the Duke's guard, a disguise probably assumed to execute the fatal commission of the Secret Tribunal. It is supposed that a party of the traitor Campo-basso's men had been engaged in the skirmish in which the Duke fell, for six or seven of them, and about the same number of the Duke's guards, were found near the spot.

The Earl of Oxford threw himself from his horse, and examined the body of his deceased brother-in-arms, with all the sorrow inspired by early remembrance of his kindness. But as he gave way to the feelings inspired by so melancholy an example of the fall of human greatness, Thiebault, who was looking out on the path they had just pursued, exclaimed, "To horse, my lord! here is no time to mourn the dead, and little to save the living—the Swiss are upon us."

"Fly thyself, good fellow," said the Earl; "and do thou, Arthur, fly also, and save thy youth for happier days. I cannot and will not fly farther. I will render me to the pursuers; if they take me to grace, it is well; if not, there is one above that will receive me to His."

"I will not fly," said Arthur, "and leave you defenceless; I will stay and share your fate."

"And I will remain also," said Thiebault; "the Switzers make fair war when their blood has not been heated by much opposition, and they have had little enough to-day."³⁴³

The party of Swiss which came up proved to be Sigismund, with his brother Ernest, and some of the youths of Unterwalden. Sigismund kindly and joyfully received them to mercy; and thus, for the third time, rendered Arthur an important service, in return for the kindness he had expressed towards him.

"I will take you to my father," said Sigismund, "who will be right glad to see you; only that he is ill at ease just now for the death of brother Rudiger, who fell with the banner in his hand, by the only cannon that was fired this morning. The rest could not bark: Campo-basso had muzzled Colvin's mastiffs, or we should many more of us have been served like poor Rudiger. But Colvin himself is killed."

"Campo-basso, then, was in your correspondence?" said Arthur.

"Not in ours—we scorn such companions—but some dealing there was between the Italian and Duke Ferrand; and having disabled the cannon, and filled the German gunners soundly drunk, he came off to our camp with fifteen hundred horse, and offered to act with us. 'But no, no!' said my father,—'traitors come not into our Swiss host;' and so, though we walked in at the door which he left open, we would not have his company. So he marched with Duke Ferrand to attack the other extremity of the camp, where he found them entrance by announcing them as the return of a reconnoitring party."

"Nay, then," said Arthur, "a more accomplished traitor never drew breath, nor one who drew his net with such success."

"You say well," answered the young Swiss.³⁴⁴

"The Duke will never, they say, be able to collect another army?"

"Never, young man," said the Earl of Oxford, "for he lies dead before you."^[14]

Sigismund started; for he had an inherent respect, and somewhat of fear, for the lofty name of Charles the Bold, and could hardly believe that the mangled corpse which now lay before him was once the personage he had been taught to dread. But his surprise was mingled with sorrow when he saw the body of his uncle, Count Albert of Geierstein.

"Oh, my uncle!" he said—"my dear uncle Albert! has all your greatness and your wisdom brought you to a death, at the side of a ditch, like any crazed beggar?—Come, this sad news must be presently told to my father, who will be concerned to hear of his brother's death, which will add gall to bitterness, coming on the back of poor Rudiger's. It is some comfort, however, that father and uncle never could abide each other."

With some difficulty they once more assisted the Earl of Oxford to horseback, and were proceeding to set forward, when the English lord said,—*"You will place a guard here, to save these bodies from further dishonour, that they may be interred with due solemnity."*

"By Our Lady of Einsiedlen! I thank you for the hint," said Sigismund. "Yes, we should do all that the Church can for uncle Albert. It is to be hoped he has not gambled away his soul beforehand, playing with Satan at odds and evens. I would we had a priest to stay by his poor body; but it matters not, since no one ever heard of a demon appearing just before breakfast."

³⁴⁵

They proceeded to the Landamman's quarters, through sights and scenes which Arthur, and even his father, so well accustomed to war in all its shapes, could not look upon without shuddering. But the simple Sigismund, as he walked by Arthur's side, contrived to hit upon a theme so interesting as to divert his sense of the horrors around them.

"Have you further business in Burgundy, now this Duke of yours is at an end?"

"My father knows best," said Arthur; "but I apprehend we have none. The Duchess of Burgundy, who must now succeed to some sort of authority in her late husband's dominion, is sister to this Edward of York, and a mortal enemy to the House of Lancaster, and to those who have stood by it faithfully. It were neither prudent nor safe to tarry where she has influence."

"In that case," said Sigismund, "my plan will fadge bravely. You shall go back to Geierstein, and take up your dwelling with us. Your father will be a brother to mine, and a better one than uncle Albert, whom he seldom saw or spoke with; while with your father he will converse from morning till night, and leave us all the work of the farm. And you, Arthur, you shall go with us, and be a brother to us all, in place of poor Rudiger, who was, to be sure, my real brother, which you cannot be: nevertheless, I did not like him so well, in respect he was not so good-natured. And then Anne—cousin Anne—is left all to my father's charge, and is now at Geierstein—and you know, King Arthur, we used to call her Queen Guenover."

"You spoke great folly then," said Arthur.³⁴⁶

"But it is great truth—For, look you, I loved to tell Anne tales of our hunting, and so forth, but she would not listen a word till I threw in something of King Arthur, and then I warrant she would sit still as a heath-hen when the hawk is in the heavens. And now Donnerhugel is slain, you know you may marry my cousin when you and she will, for nobody hath interest to prevent it."

Arthur blushed with pleasure under his helmet, and almost forgave that new-year's morning all its complicated distresses.

"You forget," he replied to Sigismund, with as much indifference as he could assume, "that I may be viewed in your country with prejudice on account of Rudolph's death."

"Not a whit, not a whit; we bear no malice for what is done in fair fight under shield. It is no more than if you had beat him in wrestling or at quoits—only it is a game cannot be played over again."

They now entered the town of Nancy. The windows were hung with tapestry, and the streets crowded with tumultuous and rejoicing multitudes, whom the success of the battle had relieved from great alarm for the formidable vengeance of Charles of Burgundy.

The prisoners were received with the utmost kindness by the Landamman, who assured them of his protection and friendship. He appeared to support the death of his son Rudiger with stern resignation.

"He had rather," he said, "his son fell in battle, than that he should live to despise the old simplicity of his country, and think the object of ³⁴⁷combat was the gaining of spoil. The gold of the dead Burgundy," he added, "would injure the morals of Switzerland more irretrievably than ever his sword did their bodies." He heard of his brother's death without surprise, but apparently with emotion.

"It was the conclusion," he said, "of a long tissue of ambitious enterprises, which often offered fair prospects, but uniformly ended in disappointment."

The Landamman further intimated that his brother had apprised him that he was engaged in an affair of so much danger that he was almost certain to perish in it, and had bequeathed his daughter to her uncle's care, with instructions respecting her.

Here they parted for the present, but shortly after, the Landamman inquired earnestly of the Earl of Oxford what his motions were like to be, and whether he could assist them.

"I think of choosing Bretagne for my place of refuge," answered the Earl, "where my wife has dwelt since the battle of Tewkesbury expelled us from England."

"Do not so," said the kind Landamman, "but come to Geierstein with the countess, where, if she can, like you, endure our mountain manners and mountain fare, you are welcome as to the house of a brother, to a soil where neither conspiracy nor treason ever flourished. Bethink you, the Duke of Bretagne is a weak prince, entirely governed by a wicked favourite, Peter Landais. He is as capable—I mean the minister—of selling brave men's blood, as a butcher of selling bullock's flesh; and you know, there are those, both in France and Burgundy, that thirst after yours."

The Earl of Oxford expressed his thanks for the proposal, and his determination to profit by it, if approved of by Henry of Lancaster, Earl of Richmond, whom he now regarded as his sovereign.

To close the tale, about three months after the battle of Nancy, the banished Earl of Oxford resumed his name of Philipson, bringing with his lady some remnants of their former wealth, which enabled them to procure a commodious residence near to Geierstein; and the Landamman's interest in the state procured for them the right of denizenship. The high blood and the moderate fortunes of Anne of Geierstein and Arthur de Vere, joined to their mutual inclination, made their marriage in every respect rational; and Annette with her bachelor took up their residence with the young people, not as servants, but mechanical aids in the duties of the farm; for Arthur continued to prefer the chase to the labours of husbandry, which was of little consequence, as his separate income amounted, in that poor country, to opulence. Time glided on, till it amounted to five years since the exiled family had been inhabitants of Switzerland. In the year 1482, the Landamman Biederman died the death of the righteous, lamented universally, as a model of the true and valiant, simple-minded and sagacious chiefs who ruled the ancient Switzers in peace, and headed them in battle. In the same year, the Earl of Oxford lost his noble countess.

But the star of Lancaster, at that period, began again to culminate, and called the banished lord and his son from their retirement, to mix once more in politics. The treasured necklace of Margaret was then put to its destined use, and the produce applied to levy those bands which shortly 349after fought the celebrated battle of Bosworth, in which the arms of Oxford and his son contributed so much to the success of Henry VII. This changed the destinies of De Vere and his lady. Their Swiss farm was conferred on Annette and her husband; and the manners and beauty of Anne of Geierstein attracted as much admiration at the English court as formerly in the Swiss chalet.

BOOK IX
THE MONASTERY
Chapter the First

O ay! the Monks, the Monks they did the mischief!
Theirs all the grossness, all the superstition
Of a most gross and superstitious age—
May He be praised that sent the healthful tempest
And scatter'd all these pestilential vapours!
But that we owed them *all* to yonder Harlot
Throned on the seven hills with her cup of gold,
I will as soon believe, with kind Sir Roger,
That old Moll White took wing with cat and broomstick,
And raised the last night's thunder.

OLD PLAY.

The village described in the Benedictine's manuscript by the name of Kennaquhair, bears the same Celtic termination which occurs in Traquhair, Caquhair, and other compounds. The learned Chalmers derives this word Quhair, from the winding course of a stream; a definition which coincides, in a remarkable degree, with the serpentine turns of the river Tweed near the village of which we speak. It has been long famous for the splendid Monastery of Saint Mary, founded by David the First of Scotland, in whose reign were formed, in the same county, the no less splendid establishments of Melrose, Jedburgh, and Kelso. The donations of land with which the King endowed these wealthy fraternities procured him from the Monkish historians the epithet of Saint, and from one of his impoverished descendants the splenetic censure, "that he had been a sore saint for the Crown."

It seems probable, notwithstanding, that David, who was a wise as well as a pious monarch, was not moved solely by religious motives to those great acts of munificence to the church, but annexed political views to his pious generosity. His possessions in Northumberland and Cumberland became precarious after the loss of the Battle of the Standard; and since the comparatively fertile valley of Teviot-dale was likely to become the frontier of his kingdom, it is probable he wished to secure at least a part of these valuable possessions by placing them in the hands of the monks, whose property was for a long time respected, even amidst the rage of a frontier war. In this manner alone had the King some chance of ensuring protection and security to the cultivators of the soil; and, in fact, for several ages the possessions of these Abbeys were each a sort of Goshen, enjoying the calm light of peace and immunity, while the rest of the country, occupied by wild clans and marauding barons, was one dark scene of confusion, blood, and unremitted outrage.

But these immunities did not continue down to the union of the crowns. Long before that period the wars betwixt England and Scotland had lost their original character of international hostilities, and had become on the part of the English, a struggle for subjugation, on that of the Scots a desperate and infuriated defence of their liberties. This introduced on both sides a degree of fury and animosity unknown to the earlier period of their history; and as religious scruples soon gave way to national hatred spurred by a love of plunder, the patrimony of the Church was no longer sacred from incursions on either side. Still, however, the tenants and vassals of the great Abbeys had many advantages over those of the lay barons, who were harassed by constant military duty, until they became desperate, and lost all relish for the arts of peace. The vassals of the church, on the other hand, were only liable to be called to arms on general occasions, and at other times were permitted in comparative quiet to possess their farms and feus. {Footnote: Small possessions conferred upon vassals and their heirs, held for a small quit-rent, or a moderate proportion of the produce. This was a favourite manner, by which the churchmen peopled the patrimony of their convents; and many descendants of such *feuars*, as they are culled, are still to be found in possession of their family inheritances in the neighbourhood of the great Monasteries of Scotland.} They of course exhibited superior skill in every thing that related to the cultivation of the soil, and were therefore both wealthier and better informed than the military retainers of the restless chiefs and nobles in their neighbourhood.

The residence of these church vassals was usually in a small village or hamlet, where, for the sake of mutual aid and protection, some thirty or forty families dwelt together. This was called the Town, and the land belonging to the various families by whom the Town was inhabited, was called the Township. They usually possessed the land in common, though in various proportions, according to their several grants. The part of the Township properly arable, and kept as such continually under the plough, was called *in-field*. Here the use of quantities of manure supplied in some degree the exhaustion of the soil, and the feuars raised tolerable oats and bear, {Footnote: Or bigg, a kind of coarse barley.} usually sowed on alternate ridges, on which the labour of the whole community was bestowed without distinction, the produce being divided after harvest, agreeably to their respective interests.

There was, besides, *out-field* land, from which it was thought possible to extract a crop now and then, after which it was abandoned to the "skiey influences," until the exhausted powers of vegetation were restored. These out-field spots were selected by any feuar at his own choice, amongst the sheep-walks and hills which were always annexed to the Township, to serve as pasturage to the community. The trouble of cultivating these patches of out-field, and the precarious chance that the crop would pay the labour, were considered as giving a right to any feuar, who chose to undertake the adventure, to the produce which might result from it.

There remained the pasturage of extensive moors, where the valleys often afforded good grass, and upon which the whole cattle belonging to the community fed indiscriminately during the summer, under the charge of the Town-herd, who regularly drove them out to pasture in the morning, and brought them back at night, without which precaution they would have fallen a speedy prey to some of the Snatchers in the neighbourhood. These are things to make modern agriculturists hold up their hands and stare; but the same mode of cultivation is not yet entirely in desuetude in some distant parts of North Britain, and may be witnessed in full force and exercise in the Zetland Archipelago.

The habitations of the church-feuars were not less primitive than their agriculture. In each village or town were several small towers, having battlements projecting over the side walls, and usually an advanced angle or two with shot-holes for flanking the door-way, which was always defended by a strong door of oak, studded with nails, and often by an exterior grated door of iron. These small peel-houses were ordinarily inhabited by the principal feuars and their families; but, upon the alarm of approaching danger, the whole inhabitants thronged from their own miserable cottages, which were situated around, to garrison these points of defence. It was then no easy matter for a hostile party to penetrate into the village, for the men were habituated to the use of bows and fire-arms, and the towers being generally so placed, that the discharge from one crossed that of another, it was impossible to assault any of them individually.

The interior of these houses was usually sufficiently wretched, for it would have been folly to have furnished them in a manner which could excite the avarice of their lawless neighbours. Yet the families themselves exhibited in their appearance a degree of comfort, information, and independence, which could hardly have been expected. Their in-field supplied them with bread and home-brewed ale, their herds and flocks with beef and mutton (the extravagance of killing lambs or calves was never thought of). Each family killed a mart, or fat bullock, in November, which was salted up for winter use, to which the good wife could, upon great occasions, add a dish of pigeons or a fat capon,—the ill-cultivated garden afforded "lang-cale,"—and the river gave salmon to serve as a relish during the season of Lent.

Of fuel they had plenty, for the bogs afforded turf; and the remains of the abused woods continued to give them logs for burning, as well as timber for the usual domestic purposes. In addition to these comforts, the good-man would now and then sally forth to the greenwood, and mark down a buck of season with his gun or his cross-bow; and the Father Confessor seldom refused him absolution for the trespass, if duly invited to take his share of the smoking haunch. Some, still bolder, made, either with their own domestics, or by associating themselves with the moss-troopers, in the language of shepherds, "a start and overloup;" and the golden ornaments and silken head-gear—worn by the females of one or two families of note, were invidiously traced by their neighbours to such successful excursions. This, however, was a more inexplicable crime in the eyes of the Abbot and Community of Saint Mary's, than the borrowing one of the "gude king's

deer;" and they failed not to discountenance and punish, by every means in their power, offences which were sure to lead to severe retaliation upon the property of the church, and which tended to alter the character of their peaceful vassalage.

As for the information possessed by those dependents of the Abbacies, they might have been truly said to be better fed than taught, even though their fare had been worse than it was. Still, however, they enjoyed opportunities of knowledge from which others were excluded. The monks were in general well acquainted with their vassals and tenants, and familiar in the families of the better class among them, where they were sure to be received with the respect due to their twofold character of spiritual father and secular landlord. Thus it often happened, when a boy displayed talents and inclination for study, one of the brethren, with a view to his being bred to the church, or out of good-nature, in order to pass away his own idle time, if he had no better motive, initiated him into the mysteries of reading and writing, and imparted to him such other knowledge as he himself possessed. And the heads of these allied families, having more time for reflection, and more skill, as well as stronger motives for improving their small properties, bore amongst their neighbours the character of shrewd, intelligent men, who claimed respect on account of their comparative wealth, even while they were despised for a less warlike and enterprising turn than the other Borderers. They lived as much as they well could amongst themselves, avoiding the company of others, and dreading nothing more than to be involved in the deadly feuds and ceaseless contentions of the secular landholders.

Such is a general picture of these communities. During the fatal wars in the commencement of Queen Mary's reign, they had suffered dreadfully by the hostile invasions. For the English, now a Protestant people, were so far from sparing the church-lands, that they forayed them with more unrelenting severity than even the possessions of the laity. But the peace of 1550 had restored some degree of tranquillity to those distracted and harassed regions, and matters began again gradually to settle upon the former footing. The monks repaired their ravaged shrines—the feuar again roofed his small fortalice which the enemy had ruined—the poor labourer rebuilt his cottage—an easy task, where a few sods, stones, and some pieces of wood from the next copse, furnished all the materials necessary. The cattle, lastly, were driven out of the wastes and thickets in which the remnant of them had been secreted; and the mighty bull moved at the head of his seraglio and their followers, to take possession of their wonted pastures. There ensued peace and quiet, the state of the age and nation considered, to the Monastery of Saint Mary, and its dependencies, for several tranquil years.

Chapter the Second.

In yon lone vale his early youth was bred,
Not solitary then—the bugle-horn
Of fell Alecto often waked its windings,
From where the brook joins the majestic river,
To the wild northern bog, the curlew's haunt,
Where oozes forth its first and feeble streamlet.
OLD PLAY.

We have said, that most of the feuars dwelt in the village belonging to their townships. This was not, however, universally the case. A lonely tower, to which the reader must now be introduced, was at least one exception to the general rule.

It was of small dimensions, yet larger than those which occurred in the village, as intimating that, in case of assault, the proprietor would have to rely upon his own unassisted strength. Two or three miserable huts, at the foot of the fortalice, held the bondsmen and tenants of the feuar. The site was a beautiful green knoll, which started up suddenly in the very throat of a wild and narrow glen, and which, being surrounded, except on one side, by the winding of a small stream, afforded a position of considerable strength.

But the great security of Glendearg, for so the place was called, lay in its secluded, and almost hidden situation. To reach the tower, it was necessary to travel three miles up the glen, crossing about twenty times the little stream, which, winding through the narrow valley, encountered at every hundred yards the opposition of a rock or precipitous bank on the one side, which altered its course, and caused it to shoot off in an oblique direction to the other. The hills which ascend on each side of this glen are very steep, and rise boldly over the stream, which is thus imprisoned within their barriers. The sides of the glen are impracticable for horse, and are only to be traversed by means of the sheep-paths which lie along their sides. It would not be readily supposed that a road so hopeless and so difficult could lead to any habitation more important than the summer shealing of a shepherd.

Yet the glen, though lonely, nearly inaccessible, and sterile, was not then absolutely void of beauty. The turf which covered the small portion of level ground on the sides of the stream, was as close and verdant as if it had occupied the scythes of a hundred gardeners once a fortnight; and it was garnished with an embroidery of daisies and wild flowers, which the scythes would certainly have destroyed. The little brook, now confined betwixt closer limits, now left at large to choose its course through the narrow valley, danced carelessly on from stream to pool, light and unturbid, as that better class of spirits who pass their way through life, yielding to insurmountable obstacles, but as far from being subdued by them as the sailor who meets by chance with an unfavourable wind, and shapes his course so as to be driven back as little as possible.

The mountains, as they would have been called in England, *Scottice* the steep *braes*, rose abruptly over the little glen, here presenting the gray face of a rock, from which the turf had been peeled by the torrents, and there displaying patches of wood and copse, which had escaped the waste of the cattle and the sheep of the feuars, and which, feathering naturally up the beds of empty torrents, or occupying the concave recesses of the bank, gave at once beauty and variety to the landscape. Above these scattered woods rose the hill, in barren, but purple majesty; the dark rich hue, particularly in autumn, contrasting beautifully with the thickets of oak and birch, the mountain ashes and thorns, the alders and quivering aspens, which chequered and varied the descent, and not less with the dark-green and velvet turf, which composed the level part of the narrow glen.

Yet, though thus embellished, the scene could neither be strictly termed sublime nor beautiful, and scarcely even picturesque or striking. But its extreme solitude pressed on the heart; the traveller felt that uncertainty whither he was going, or in what so wild a path was to terminate, which, at times, strikes more on the imagination than the grand features of a show-scene, when you know the exact distance of the inn where your dinner is bespoke, and at the moment preparing. These are ideas, however, of a far later age; for at the time we treat of, the picturesque, the beautiful, the sublime, and all their intermediate shades, were ideas absolutely unknown to the inhabitants and occasional visitors of Glendearg.

These had, however, attached to the scene feelings fitting the time. Its name, signifying the Red Valley, seems to have been derived, not only from the purple colour of the heath, with which the upper part of the rising banks was profusely clothed, but also from the dark red colour of the rocks, and of the precipitous earthen banks, which in that country are called *scaurs*. Another glen, about the head of Ettrick, has acquired the same name from similar circumstances; and there are probably more in Scotland to which it has been given.

As our Glendearg did not abound in mortal visitants, superstition, that it might not be absolutely destitute of inhabitants, had peopled its recesses with beings belonging to another world. The savage and capricious Brown Man of the Moors, a being which seems the genuine descendant of the northern dwarfs, was supposed to be seen there frequently, especially after the autumnal equinox, when the fogs were thick, and objects not easily distinguished. The Scottish fairies, too, a whimsical, irritable, and mischievous tribe, who, though at times capriciously benevolent, were more frequently adverse to mortals, were also supposed to have formed a residence in a particularly wild recess of the glen, of which the real name was, in allusion to that circumstance, *Corrie nan Shian*, which, in corrupted Celtic, signifies the Hollow of the Fairies. But the neighbours were more cautious in speaking about this place, and avoided giving it a name, from an idea common then throughout all the British and Celtic provinces of Scotland, and still retained in many places, that to speak either good or ill of this capricious

race of imaginary beings, is to provoke their resentment, and that secrecy and silence is what they chiefly desire from those who may intrude upon their revels, or discover their haunts.

A mysterious terror was thus attached to the dale, which afforded access from the broad valley of the Tweed, up the little glen we have described, to the fortalice called the Tower of Glendearg. Beyond the knoll, where, as we have said, the tower was situated, the hills grew more steep, and narrowed on the slender brook, so as scarce to leave a footpath; and there the glen terminated in a wild waterfall, where a slender thread of water dashed in a precipitous line of foam over two or three precipices. Yet farther in the same direction, and above these successive cataracts, lay a wild and extensive morass, frequented only by waterfowl, wide, waste, apparently almost interminable, and serving in a great measure to separate the inhabitants of the glen from those who lived to the northward.

To restless and indefatigable moss-troopers, indeed, these morasses were well known, and sometimes afforded a retreat. They often rode down the glen—called at this tower—asked and received hospitality—but still with a sort of reserve on the part of its more peaceful inhabitants, who entertained them as a party of North-American Indians might be received by a new European settler, as much out of fear as hospitality, while the uppermost wish of the landlord is the speedy departure of the savage guests.

This had not always been the current of feeling in the little valley and its tower. Simon Glendinning, its former inhabitant, boasted his connexion by blood to that ancient family of Glendonwyne, on the western border. He used to narrate, at his fireside, in the autumn evenings, the feats of the family to which he belonged, one of whom fell by the side of the brave Earl of Douglas at Otterbourne. On these occasions Simon usually held upon his knee an ancient broadsword, which had belonged to his ancestors before any of the family had consented to accept a fief under the peaceful dominion of the monks of St. Mary's. In modern days, Simon might have lived at ease on his own estate, and quietly murmured against the fate that had doomed him to dwell there, and cut off his access to martial renown. But so many opportunities, nay so many calls there were for him, who in those days spoke big, to make good his words by his actions, that Simon Glendinning was soon under the necessity of marching with the men of the Halidome, as it was called, of St. Mary's, in that disastrous campaign which was concluded by the battle of Pinkie.

The Catholic clergy were deeply interested in that national quarrel, the principal object of which was, to prevent the union of the infant Queen Mary, with the son of the heretical Henry VIII. The Monks had called out their vassals, under an experienced leader. Many of themselves had taken arms, and marched to the field, under a banner representing a female, supposed to personify the Scottish Church, kneeling in the attitude of prayer, with the legend, *Afflictae Sponsae ne obliviscaris*. {Footnote: Forget not the afflicted spouse.}

The Scots, however, in all their wars, had more occasion for good and cautious generals, than for excitation, whether political or enthusiastic. Their headlong and impatient courage uniformly induced them to rush into action without duly weighing either their own situation, or that of their enemies, and the inevitable consequence was frequent defeat. With the dolorous slaughter of Pinkie we have nothing to do, excepting that, among ten thousand men of low and high degree, Simon Glendinning, of the Tower of Glendearg, bit the dust, no way disparaging in his death that ancient race from which he claimed his descent.

When the doleful news, which spread terror and mourning through the whole of Scotland, reached the Tower of Glendearg, the widow of Simon, Elspeth Brydone by her family name, was alone in that desolate habitation, excepting a hind or two, alike past martial and agricultural labour, and the helpless widows and families of those who had fallen with their master. The feeling of desolation was universal;—but what availed it? The monks, their patrons and protectors, were driven from their Abbey by the English forces, who now overran the country, and enforced at least an appearance of submission on the part of the inhabitants. The Protector, Somerset, formed a strong camp among the ruins of the ancient Castle of Roxburgh, and compelled the neighbouring country to come in, pay tribute, and take assurance from him, as the phrase then went. Indeed, there was no power of resistance remaining; and the few barons, whose high spirit disdained even the appearance of surrender, could only retreat into the wildest fastnesses of the country, leaving their houses and property to the wrath of the English, who detached parties everywhere to distress, by military exaction, those whose chiefs had not made their submission. The Abbot and his community having retreated beyond the Forth, their lands were severely forayed, as their sentiments were held peculiarly inimical to the alliance with England.

Amongst the troops detached on this service was a small party, commanded by Stawarth Bolton, a captain in the English army, and full of the blunt and unpretending gallantry and generosity which has so often distinguished that nation. Resistance was in vain. Elspeth Brydone, when she descried a dozen of horsemen threading their way up the glen, with a man at their head, whose scarlet cloak, bright armour, and dancing plume, proclaimed him a leader, saw no better protection for herself than to issue from the iron grate, covered with a long mourning veil, and holding one of her two sons in each hand, to meet the Englishman—state her deserted condition—place the little tower at his command—and beg for his mercy. She stated, in a few brief words, her intention, and added, "I submit, because I have nae means of resistance."

"And I do not ask your submission, mistress, for the same reason," replied the Englishman. "To be satisfied of your peaceful intentions is all I ask; and, from what you tell me, there is no reason to doubt them."

"At least, sir," said Elspeth Brydone, "take share of what our spence and our garners afford. Your horses are tired—your folk want refreshment."

"Not a whit—not a whit," answered the honest Englishman; "it shall never be said we disturbed by carousal the widow of a brave soldier, while she was mourning for her husband.—Comrades, face about.—Yet stay," he added, checking his war-horse, "my parties are out in every direction; they must have some token that your family are under my assurance of safety.—Here, my little fellow," said he, speaking to the eldest boy, who might be about nine or ten years old, "lend me thy bonnet."

The child reddened, looked sulky, and hesitated, while the mother, with many a *fye* and *nay pshaw*, and such sarsenet chidings as tender mothers give to spoiled children, at length succeeded in snatching the bonnet from him, and handing it to the English leader.

Stawarth Bolton took his embroidered red cross from his barret-cap, and putting it into the loop of the boy's bonnet, said to the mistress, (for the title of lady was not given to dames of her degree,) "By this token, which all my people will respect, you will be freed from any importunity on the part of our forayers." {Footnote: As gallantry of all times and nations has the same mode of thinking and acting, so it often expresses itself by the same symbols. In the civil war 1745-6, a party of Highlanders, under a Chieftain of rank, came to Rose Castle, the seat of the Bishop of Carlisle, but then occupied by the family of Squire Dacre of Cumberland. They demanded quarters, which of course were not to be refused to armed men of a strange attire and unknown language. But the domestic represented to the captain of the mountaineers, that the lady of the mansion had been just delivered of a daughter, and expressed her hope, that, under these circumstances, his party would give as little trouble as possible. "God forbid," said the gallant chief, "that I or mine should be the means of adding to a lady's inconvenience at such a time. May I request to see the infant?" The child was brought, and the Highlander, taking his cockade out of his bonnet, and pinning it on the child's breast, "That will be a token," he said, "to any of our people who may come hither, that Donald McDonald of Kinloch-Moidart, has taken the family of Rose Castle under his protection." The lady who received in infancy this gage of Highland protection, is now Mary, Lady Clerk of Pennycuik; and on the 10th of June still wears the cockade which was pinned on her breast, with a white rose as a kindred decoration.} He placed it on the boy's head; but it was no sooner there, than the little fellow, his veins swelling, and his eyes shooting fire through tears, snatched the bonnet from his head, and, ere his mother could interfere, skimmed it into the brook. The other boy ran instantly to fish it out again, threw it back to his brother, first taking out the cross, which, with great veneration, he kissed and put into his bosom. The Englishman was half diverted, half surprised, with the scene.

"What mean ye by throwing away Saint George's red cross?" said he to the elder boy, in a tone betwixt jest and earnest.

"Because Saint George is a southern saint," said the child, sulkily. "Good"—said Stawarth Bolton.—"And what did you mean by taking it out of the brook again, my little fellow?" he demanded of the younger. "Because the priest says it is the common sign of salvation to all good Christians."

"Why, good again!" said the honest soldier. "I protest unto you, mistress, I envy you these boys. Are they both yours?"

Stawarth Bolton had reason to put the question, for Halbert Glendinning, the elder of the two, had hair as dark as the raven's plumage, black eyes, large, bold, and sparkling, that glittered under eyebrows of the same complexion; a skin deep embrowned, though it could not be termed swarthy, and an air of activity, frankness, and determination, far beyond his age. On the other hand, Edward, the younger brother, was light-haired, blue-eyed, and of fairer complexion, in

countenance rather pale, and not exhibiting that rosy hue which colours the sanguine cheek of robust health. Yet the boy had nothing sickly or ill-conditioned in his look, but was, on the contrary, a fair and handsome child, with a smiling face, and mild, yet cheerful eye.

The mother glanced a proud motherly glance, first at the one, and then at the other, ere she answered the Englishman, "Surely, sir, they are both my children."

"And by the same father, mistress?" said Stawarth; but, seeing a blush of displeasure arise on her brow, he instantly added, "Nay, I mean no offence; I would have asked the same question at any of my gossips in merry Lincoln.—Well, dame, you have two fair boys; I would I could borrow one, for Dame Bolton and I live childless in our old hall.—Come, little fellows, which of you will go with me?"

The trembling mother, half-fearing as he spoke, drew the children towards her, one with either hand, while they both answered the stranger. "I will not go with you," said Halbert, boldly, "for you are a false-hearted Southern; and the Southern killed my father; and I will war on you to the death, when I can draw my father's sword."

"God-a-mercy, my little levin-bolt," said Stawarth, "the goodly custom of deadly feud will never go down in thy day, I presume.—And you, my fine white-head, will you not go with me, to ride a cock-horse?" "No," said Edward, demurely, "for you are a heretic."

"Why, God-a-mercy still!" said Stawarth Bolton. "Well, dame, I see I shall find no recruits for my troop from you; and yet I do envy you these two little chubby knaves." He sighed a moment, as was visible, in spite of gorget and corslet, and then added, "And yet, my dame and I would but quarrel which of the knaves we should like best; for I should wish for the black-eyed rogue—and she, I warrant me, for that blue-eyed, fair-haired darling. Natheless, we must brook our solitary wedlock, and wish joy to those that are more fortunate. Sergeant Britton, do thou remain here till recalled—protect this family, as under assurance—do them no wrong, and suffer no wrong to be done to them, as thou wilt answer it.—Dame, Britton is a married man, old and steady; feed him on what you will, but give him not over much liquor."

Dame Glendinning again offered refreshments, but with a faltering voice, and an obvious desire her invitation should not be accepted. The fact was, that, supposing her boys as precious in the eyes of the Englishman as in her own, (the most ordinary of parental errors,) she was half afraid, that the admiration he expressed of them in his blunt manner might end in his actually carrying off one or other of the little darlings whom he appeared to covet so much. She kept hold of their hands, therefore, as if her feeble strength could have been of service, had any violence been intended, and saw with joy she could not disguise, the little party of horse countermarch, in order to descend the glen. Her feelings did not escape Bolton: "I forgive you, dame," he said, "for being suspicious that an English falcon was hovering over your Scottish moor-brood. But fear not—those who have fewest children have fewest cares; nor does a wise man covet those of another household. Adieu, dame; when the black-eyed rogue is able to drive a foray from England, teach him to spare women and children, for the sake of Stawarth Bolton."

"God be with you, gallant Southern!" said Elspeth Glendinning, but not till he was out of hearing, spurring on his good horse to regain the head of his party, whose plumage and armour were now glancing and gradually disappearing in the distance, as they wended down the glen.

"Mother," said the elder boy, "I will not say amen to a prayer for a Southern."

"Mother," said the younger, more reverentially, "is it right to pray for a heretic?"

"The God to whom I pray only knows," answered poor Elspeth; "but these two words, Southern and heretic, have already cost Scotland ten thousand of her best and bravest, and me a husband, and you a father; and, whether blessing or banning, I never wish to hear them more.—Follow me to the Place, sir," she said to Britton, "and such as we have to offer you shall be at your disposal."

Chapter the Third.

They lighted down on Tweed water
And blew their coals sae het,
And fired the March and Teviotdale,
All in an evening late.

AULD MAITLAND.

The report soon spread through the patrimony of Saint Mary's and its vicinity, that the Mistress of Glendearg had received assurance from the English Captain, and that her cattle were not to be driven off, or her corn burned. Among others who heard this report, it reached the ears of a lady, who, once much higher in rank than Elspeth Glendinning, was now by the same calamity reduced to even greater misfortune.

She was the widow of a brave soldier, Walter Avenel, descended of a very ancient Border family, who once possessed immense estates in Eskdale. These had long since passed from them into other hands, but they still enjoyed an ancient Barony of considerable extent, not very far from the patrimony of Saint Mary's, and lying upon the same side of the river with the narrow vale of Glendearg, at the head of which was the little tower of the Glendinnings. Here they had lived, bearing a respectable rank amongst the gentry of their province, though neither wealthy nor powerful. This general regard had been much augmented by the skill, courage, and enterprise which had been displayed by Walter Avenel, the last Baron.

When Scotland began to recover from the dreadful shock she had sustained after the battle of Pinkie-Cleuch, Avenel was one of the first who, assembling a small force, set an example in those bloody and unsparing skirmishes, which showed that a nation, though conquered and overrun by invaders, may yet wage against them such a war of detail as shall in the end become fatal to the foreigners. In one of these, however, Walter Avenel fell, and the news which came to the house of his father was followed by the distracting intelligence, that a party of Englishmen were coming to plunder the mansion and lands of his widow, in order, by this act of terror, to prevent others from following the example of the deceased.

The unfortunate lady had no better refuge than the miserable cottage of a shepherd among the hills, to which she was hastily removed, scarce conscious where or for what purpose her terrified attendants were removing her and her infant daughter from her own house. Here she was tended with all the duteous service of ancient times by the shepherd's wife, Tibb Tacket, who in better days had been her own bowerwoman. For a time the lady was unconscious of her misery; but when the first stunning effect of grief was so far passed away that she could form an estimate of her own situation, the widow of Avenel had cause to envy the lot of her husband in his dark and silent abode. The domestics who had guided her to her place of refuge, were presently obliged to disperse for their own safety, or to seek for necessary subsistence; and the shepherd and his wife, whose poor cottage she shared, were soon after deprived of the means of affording their late mistress even that coarse sustenance which they had gladly shared with her. Some of the English forayers had discovered and driven off the few sheep which had escaped the first researches of their avarice. Two cows shared the fate of the remnant of their stock; they had afforded the family almost their sole support, and now famine appeared to stare them in the face.

"We are broken and beggared now, out and out," said old Martin the shepherd—and he wrung his hands in the bitterness of agony, "the thieves, the harrying thieves I not a cloot left of the hail! hirsell!"

"And to see poor Grizzle and Crumbie," said his wife, "turning back their necks to the byre, and routing while the stony-hearted villains were brogging them on wi' their lances!"

"There were but four of them," said Martin, "and I have seen the day forty wad not have ventured this length. But our strength and manhood is gane with our puir maister."

"For the sake of the holy rood, whisht, man," said the goodwife, "our leddy is half gane already, as ye may see by that fleightering of the ee-lid—a word mair and she's dead outright."

"I could almost wish," said Martin, "we were a' gane, for what to do passes my puir wit. I care little for mysell, or you, Tibb,—we can make a fend—work or want—we can do baith, but she can do neither."

They canvassed their situation thus openly before the lady, convinced by the paleness of her look, her quivering lip, and dead-set eye, that she neither heard nor understood what they were saying.

"There is a way," said the shepherd, "but I kenna if she could bring her heart to it,—there's Simon Glendinning's widow of the glen yonder, has had assurance from the Southern loons, and nae soldier to steer them for one cause or other. Now, if the leddy could bow her mind to take quarters with Elspeth Glendinning till better days cast up, nae doubt it wad be doing an honour to the like of her, but——"

"An honour," answered Tibb, "ay, by my word, sic an honour as wad be pride to her kin mony a lang year after her banes were in the mould. Oh! gudeman, to hear ye even the Lady of Avenel to seeking quarters wi' a Kirk-vassal's widow!"

"Loath should I be to wish her to it," said Martin; "but what may we do?—to stay here is mere starvation; and where to go, I'm sure I ken nae mair than ony tup I ever herded."

"Speak no more of it," said the widow of Avenel, suddenly joining in the conversation, "I will go to the tower.—Dame Elspeth is of good folk, a widow, and the mother of orphans,—she will give us house-room until something be thought upon. These evil showers make the low bush better than no bield."

"See there, see there," said Martin, "you see the leddy has twice our sense."

"And natural it is," said Tibb, "seeing that she is convent-bred, and can lay silk broidery, forby white-seam and shell-work."

"Do you not think," said the lady to Martin, still clasping her child to her bosom and making it clear from what motives she desired the refuge, "that Dame Glendinning will make us welcome?"

"Blithely welcome, blithely welcome, my leddy," answered Martin, cheerily, "and we shall deserve a welcome at her hand. Men are scarce now, my leddy, with these wars; and gie me a thought of time to it, I can do as good a day's darg as ever I did in my life, and Tibb can sort cows with ony living woman."

"And muckle mair could I do," said Tibb, "were it ony feasible house; but there will be neither pearlins to mend, nor pinneres to busk up, in Elspeth Glendinning's."

"Whisht wi' your pride, woman," said the shepherd; "eneugh you can do, baith outside and inside, an ye set your mind to it; and hard it is if we twa canna work for three folk's meat, forby my dainty wee leddy there. Come awa, come awa, nae use in staying here langer; we have five Scots miles over moss and muir, and that is nae easy walk for a leddy born and bred."

Household stuff there was little or none to remove or care for; an old pony which had escaped the plunderers, owing partly to its pitiful appearance, partly from the reluctance which it showed to be caught by strangers, was employed to carry the few blankets and other trifles which they possessed. When Shagram came to his master's well-known whistle, he was surprised to find the poor thing had been wounded, though slightly, by an arrow, which one of the forayers had shot off in anger after he had long chased it in vain.

"Ay, Shagram," said the old man, as he applied something to the wound, "must you rue the lang-bow as weel as all of us?"

"What corner in Scotland rues it not!" said the Lady of Avenel.

"Ay, ay, madam," said Martin, "God keep the kindly Scot from the cloth-yard shaft, and he will keep himself from the handy stroke. But let us go our way; the trash that is left I can come back for. There is nae ane to stir it but the good neighbours, and they——"

"For the love of God, Goodman," said his wife, in a remonstrating tone, "haud your peace! Think what ye're saying, and we hae sae muckle wild land to go over before we win to the girth gate."

The husband nodded acquiescence; for it was deemed highly imprudent to speak of the fairies, either by their title of *good neighbours* or by any other, especially when about to pass the places which they were supposed to haunt.

{Footnote: This superstition continues to prevail, though one would suppose it must now be antiquated. It is only a year or two since an itinerant puppet show-man, who, disdaining to acknowledge the profession of Gines de Passamonte, called himself an artist from Vauxhall, brought a complaint of a singular nature before the author, as Sheriff of Selkirkshire. The singular dexterity with which the show-man had exhibited the machinery of his little stage, had, upon a Selkirk fair-day, excited the eager curiosity of some mechanics of Galashiels. These men, from no worse motive that could be discovered than a thirst after knowledge beyond their sphere, committed a burglary upon the barn in which the puppets had been consigned to repose, and carried them off in the nook of their plaids, when returning from Selkirk to their own village.

"But with the morning cool reflection came."

The party found, however, they could not make Punch dance, and that the whole troop were equally intractable; they had also, perhaps, some apprehensions of the Rhadamanth of the district; and, willing to be quit of their booty, they left the puppets seated in a grove by the side of the Ettrick, where they were sure to be touched by the first beams of the rising sun. Here a shepherd, who was on foot with sunrise to pen his master's sheep on a field of turnips, to his utter astonishment, saw this train, profusely gay, sitting in the little grotto. His examination proceeded thus:—

Sheriff. You saw these gay-looking things? what did you think they were?

Shepherd. Ou, I am no that free to say what I might think they were.

Sheriff. Come, lad, I must have a direct answer—who did you think they were?

Shepherd. Ou, sir, troth I am no that free to say that I mind wha I might think they were.

Sheriff. Come, come sir! I ask you distinctly, did you think they were the fairies you saw?

Shepherd. Indeed, sir, and I winna say but I might think it was the Good Neighbours.

Thus unwillingly was he brought to allude to the irritable and captious inhabitants of fairy land.}

They set forward on their pilgrimage on the last day of October. "This is thy birthday, my sweet Mary," said the mother, as a sting of bitter recollection crossed her mind. "Oh, who could have believed that the head, which, a few years since, was cradled amongst so many rejoicing friends, may perhaps this night seek a cover in vain!"

The exiled family then set forward,—Mary Avenel, a lovely girl between five and six years old, riding gipsy fashion upon Shagram, betwixt two bundles of bedding; the Lady of Avenel walking by the animal's side; Tibb leading the bridle, and old Martin walking a little before, looking anxiously around him to explore the way.

Martin's task as guide, after two or three miles' walking, became more difficult than he himself had expected, or than he was willing to avow. It happened that the extensive range of pasturage, with which he was conversant, lay to the west, and to get into the little valley of Glendearg he had to proceed easterly. In the wilder districts of Scotland, the passage from one vale to another, otherwise than by descending that which you leave, and reascending the other, is often very difficult.—Heights and hollows, mosses and rocks intervene, and all those local impediments which throw a traveller out of his course. So that Martin, however sure of his general direction, became conscious, and at length was forced reluctantly to admit, that he had missed the direct road to Glendearg, though he insisted they must be very near it. "If we can but win across this wide bog," he said, "I shall warrant ye are on the top of the tower." But to get across the bog was a point of no small difficulty. The farther they ventured into it, though proceeding with all the caution which Martin's experience recommended, the more unsound the ground became, until, after they had passed some places of great peril, their best argument for going forward came to be, that they had to encounter equal danger in returning. The Lady of Avenel had been tenderly nurtured, but what will not a woman endure when her child is in danger? Complaining less of the dangers of the road than her attendants, who had been inured to such from their infancy, she kept herself close by the side of the pony, watching its every footstep, and ready, if it should flounder in the morass, to snatch her little Mary from its back. At length they came to a place where the guide greatly hesitated, for all around him was broken lumps of heath, divided from each other by deep sloughs of black tenacious mire. After great consideration, Martin, selecting what he thought the safest path, began himself to lead forward Shagram, in order to afford greater security to the child. But Shagram snorted, laid his ears back, stretched his two feet forward, and drew his hind feet under him, so as to adopt the best possible posture for obstinate resistance, and refused to move one yard in the direction indicated. Old Martin,

much puzzled, now hesitated whether to exert his absolute authority, or to defer to the contumacious obstinacy of Shagram, and was not greatly comforted by his wife's observation, who, seeing Shagram stare with his eyes, distend his nostrils, and tremble with terror, hinted that "he surely saw more than they could see." In this dilemma, the child suddenly exclaimed—"Bonny leddy signs to us to come yon gate." They all looked in the direction where the child pointed, but saw nothing, save a wreath, of rising mist, which fancy might form into a human figure; but which afforded to Martin only the sorrowful conviction, that the danger of their situation was about to be increased by a heavy fog. He once more essayed to lead forward Shagram; but the animal was inflexible in its determination not to move in the direction Martin recommended. "Take your awn way for it, then," said Martin, "and let us see what you can do for us."

Shagram, abandoned to the discretion of his own free-will, set off boldly in the direction the child had pointed. There was nothing wonderful in this, nor in its bringing them safe to the other side of the dangerous morass; for the instinct of these animals in traversing bogs is one of the most curious parts of their nature, and is a fact generally established. But it was remarkable, that the child more than once mentioned the beautiful lady and her signals, and that Shagram seemed to be in the secret, always moving in the same direction which she indicated. The Lady of Avenel took little notice at the time, her mind being probably occupied by the instant danger; but her attendants changed expressive looks with each other more than once.

"All-Hallow Eve!" said Tibb, in a whisper to Martin.

"For the mercy of Our Lady, not a word of that now!" said Martin in reply. "Tell your beads, woman, if you cannot be silent."

When they got once more on firm ground, Martin recognized certain land-marks, or cairns, on the tops of the neighbouring hills, by which he was enabled to guide his course, and ere long they arrived at the Tower of Glendearg.

It was at the sight of this little fortalice that the misery of her lot pressed hard on the poor Lady of Avenel. When by any accident they had met at church, market, or other place of public resort, she remembered the distant and respectful air with which the wife of the warlike baron was addressed by the spouse of the humble feuar. And now, so much was her pride humbled, that she was to ask to share the precarious safety of the same feuar's widow, and her pittance of food, which might perhaps be yet more precarious. Martin probably guessed what was passing in her mind, for he looked at her with a wistful glance, as if to deprecate any change of resolution; and answering to his looks, rather than his words, she said, while the sparkle of subdued pride once more glanced from her eye, "If it were for myself alone, I could but die-but for this infant—the last pledge of Avenel—"

"True, my lady," said Martin, hastily; and, as if to prevent the possibility of her retracting, he added, "I will step on and see Dame Elspeth—I kend her husband weel, and have bought and sold with him, for as great a man as he was."

Martin's tale was soon told, and met all acceptance from her companion in misfortune. The Lady of Avenel had been meek and courteous in her prosperity; in adversity, therefore, she met with the greatest sympathy. Besides, there was a point of pride in sheltering and supporting a woman of such superior birth and rank; and, not to do Elspeth Glendinning injustice, she felt sympathy for one whose fate resembled her own in so many points, yet was so much more severe. Every species of hospitality was gladly and respectfully extended to the distressed travellers, and they were kindly requested to stay as long at Glendearg as their circumstances rendered necessary, or their inclination prompted.

Chapter the Fourth.

Ne'er be I found by thee unawed,
On that thrice hallow'd eve abroad.
When goblins haunt from flood and fen,
The steps of men.
COLLINS'S *Ode to Fear*.

As the country became more settled, the Lady of Avenel would have willingly returned to her husband's mansion. But that was no longer in her power. It was a reign of minority, when the strongest had the best right, and when acts of usurpation were frequent amongst those who had much power and little conscience.

Julian Avenel, the younger brother of the deceased Walter, was a person of this description. He hesitated not to seize upon his brother's house and lands, so soon as the retreat of the English permitted him. At first, he occupied the property in the name of his niece; but when the lady proposed to return with her child to the mansion of its fathers, he gave her to understand, that Avenel, being a male fief, descended to the brother, instead of the daughter, of the last possessor. The ancient philosopher declined a dispute with the emperor who commanded twenty legions, and the widow of Walter Avenel was in no condition to maintain a contest with the leader of twenty moss-troopers. Julian was also a man of service, who could back a friend in case of need, and was sure, therefore, to find protectors among the ruling powers. In short, however clear the little Mary's right to the possessions of her father, her mother saw the necessity of giving way, at least for the time, to the usurpation of her uncle.

Her patience and forbearance were so far attended with advantage, that Julian, for very shame's sake, could no longer suffer her to be absolutely dependant on the charity of Elspeth Glendinning. A drove of cattle and a bull (which were probably missed by some English farmer) were driven to the pastures of Glendearg; presents of raiment and household stuff were sent liberally, and some little money, though with a more sparing hand: for those in the situation of Julian Avenel could come more easily by the goods, than the representing medium of value, and made their payments chiefly in kind.

In the meantime, the widows of Walter Avenel and Simon Glendinning had become habituated to each other's society, and were unwilling to part. The lady could hope no more secret and secure residence than in the Tower of Glendearg, and she was now in a condition to support her share of the mutual housekeeping. Elspeth, on the other hand, felt pride, as well as pleasure, in the society of a guest of such distinction, and was at all times willing to pay much greater deference than the Lady of Walter Avenel could be prevailed on to accept.

Martin and his wife diligently served the united family in their several vocations, and yielded obedience to both mistresses, though always considering themselves as the especial servants of the Lady of Avenel. This distinction sometimes occasioned a slight degree of difference between Dame Elspeth and Tibb; the former being jealous of her own consequence, and the latter apt to lay too much stress upon the rank and family of her mistress. But both were alike desirous to conceal such petty squabbles from the lady, her hostess scarce yielding to her old domestic in respect for her person. Neither did the difference exist in such a degree as to interrupt the general harmony of the family, for the one wisely gave way as she saw the other become warm; and Tibb, though she often gave the first provocation, had generally the sense to be the first in relinquishing the argument.

The world which lay beyond was gradually forgotten by the inhabitants of this sequestered glen, and unless when she attended mass at the Monastery Church upon some high holiday, Alice of Avenel almost forgot that she once held an equal rank with the proud wives of the neighbouring barons and nobles who on such occasions crowded to the solemnity. The recollection gave her little pain. She loved her husband for himself, and in his inestimable loss all lesser subjects of regret had ceased to interest her. At times, indeed, she thought of claiming the protection of the Queen Regent (Mary of Guise) for her little orphan, but the fear of Julian Avenel always came between. She was sensible that he would have neither scruple nor difficulty in spiriting away the child, (if he did not proceed farther,) should he once consider its existence as formidable to his interest. Besides, he led a wild and unsettled life, mingling in all feuds and forays, wherever there was a spear to be broken; he evinced no purpose of marrying, and the fate which he continually was braving might at length remove him from his usurped inheritance. Alice of Avenel, therefore, judged it wise to check all ambitious thoughts for the present, and remain quiet in the rude, but peaceable retreat, to which Providence had conducted her.

It was upon an All-Hallow's eve, when the family had resided together for the space of three years, that the domestic circle was assembled round the blazing turf-fire, in the old narrow hall of the Tower of Glendearg. The idea of the master or mistress of the mansion feeding or living apart from their domestics, was at this

period never entertained. The highest end of the board, the most commodious settle by the fire,—these were the only marks of distinction; and the servants mingled, with deference indeed, but unproved and with freedom, in whatever conversation was going forward. But the two or three domestics, kept merely for agricultural purposes, had retired to their own cottages without, and with them a couple of wenches, usually employed within doors, the daughters of one of the hinds.

After their departure, Martin locked, first, the iron grate; and, secondly, the inner door of the tower, when the domestic circle was thus arranged. Dame Elspeth sate pulling the thread from her distaff; Tibb watched the progress of scalding the whey, which hung in a large pot upon the *crook*, a chain terminated by a hook, which was suspended in the chimney to serve the purpose of the modern crane. Martin, while busied in repairing some of the household articles, (for every man in those days was his own carpenter and smith, as well as his own tailor and shoemaker,) kept from time to time a watchful eye upon the three children.

They were allowed, however, to exercise their juvenile restlessness by running up and down the hall, behind the seats of the elder members of the family, with the privilege of occasionally making excursions into one or two small apartments which opened from it, and gave excellent opportunity to play at hide-and-seek. This night, however, the children seemed not disposed to avail themselves of their privilege of visiting these dark regions, but preferred carrying on their gambols in the vicinity of the light.

In the meanwhile, Alice of Avenel, sitting close to an iron candlestick, which supported a misshapen torch of domestic manufacture, read small detached passages from a thick clasped volume, which she preserved with the greatest care. The art of reading the lady had acquired by her residence in a nunnery during her youth, but she seldom, of late years, put it to any other use than perusing this little volume, which formed her whole library. The family listened to the portions which she selected, as to some good thing which there was a merit in hearing with respect, whether it was fully understood or no. To her daughter, Alice of Avenel had determined to impart their mystery more fully, but the knowledge was at that period attended with personal danger, and was not rashly to be trusted to a child. The noise of the romping children interrupted, from time to time, the voice of the lady, and drew on the noisy culprits the rebuke of Elspeth.

"Could they not go farther a-field, if they behoved to make such a din, and disturb the lady's good words?" And this command was backed with the threat of sending the whole party to bed if it was not attended to punctually. Acting under the injunction, the children first played at a greater distance from the party, and more quietly, and then began to stray into the adjacent apartments, as they became impatient of the restraint to which they were subjected. But, all at once, the two boys came open-mouthed into the hall, to tell that there was an armed man in the spence.

"It must be Christie of Clint-hill," said Martin, rising; "what can have brought him here at this time?"

"Or how came he in?" said Elspeth.

"Alas! what can he seek?" said the Lady of Avenel, to whom this man, a retainer of her husband's brother, and who sometimes executed his commissions at Glendearg, was an object of secret apprehension and suspicion. "Gracious heavens!" she added, rising up, "where is my child?" All rushed to the spence, Halbert Glendinning first arming himself with a rusty sword, and the younger seizing upon the lady's book. They hastened to the spence, and were relieved of a part of their anxiety by meeting Mary at the door of the apartment. She did not seem in the slightest degree alarmed, or disturbed. They rushed into the spence, (a sort of interior apartment in which the family ate their victuals in the summer season,) but there was no one there.

"Where is Christie of Clint-hill?" said Martin.

"I do not know," said little Mary; "I never saw him."

"And what made you, ye misleard loons," said Dame Elspeth to her two boys, "come yon gate into the ha', roaring like bullsegs, to frighten the leddy, and her far frae strong?" The boys looked at each other in silence and confusion, and their mother proceeded with her lecture. "Could ye find nae night for daffin but Hallowe'en, and nae time but when the leddy was reading to us about the holy Saints? May ne'er be in my fingers, if I dinna sort ye baith for it!" The eldest boy bent his eyes on the ground, the younger began to weep, but neither spoke; and the mother would have proceeded to extremities, but for the interposition of the little maiden.

"Dame Elspeth, it was *my* fault—I did say to them, that I saw a man in the spence."

"And what made you do so, child," said her mother, "to startle us all thus?"

"Because," said Mary, lowering her voice, "I could not help it."

"Not help it, Mary!—you occasioned all this idle noise, and you could not help it? How mean you by that, minion?"

"There really was an armed man in this spence," said Mary; "and because I was surprised to see him, I cried out to Halbert and Edward—"

"She has told it herself," said Halbert Glendinning, "or it had never been told by me."

"Nor by me neither," said Edward, emulously.

"Mistress Mary," said Elspeth, "you never told us anything before that was not true; tell us if this was a Hallowe'en cantrip, and make an end of it." The Lady of Avenel looked as if she would have interfered, but knew not how; and Elspeth, who was too eagerly curious to regard any distant hint, persevered in her inquiries. "Was it Christie of the Clint-hill?—I would not for a mark that he were about the house, and a body no ken where."

"It was not Christie," said Mary; "it was—it was a gentleman—a gentleman with a bright breastplate, like what I hae seen langsyne, when we dwelt at Avenel—"

"What like was he?" continued Tibb, who now took share in the investigation.

"Black-haired, black-eyed, with a peaked black beard," said the child; "and many a fold of pearling round his neck, and hanging down his breast ower his breastplate; and he had a beautiful hawk, with silver bells, standing on his left hand, with a crimson silk hood upon its head—"

"Ask her no more questions, for the love of God," said the anxious menial to Elspeth, "but look to my leddy!" But the Lady of Avenel, taking Mary in her hand, turned hastily away, and, walking into the hall, gave them no opportunity of remarking in what manner she received the child's communication, which she thus cut short. What Tibb thought of it appeared from her crossing herself repeatedly, and whispering into Elspeth's ear, "Saint Mary preserve us!—the lassie has seen her father!"

When they reached the hall, they found the lady holding her daughter on her knee, and kissing her repeatedly. When they entered, she again arose, as if to shun observation, and retired to the little apartment where her child and she occupied the same bed.

The boys were also sent to their cabin, and no one remained by the hall fire save the faithful Tibb and dame Elspeth, excellent persons both, and as thorough gossips as ever wagged a tongue.

It was but natural that they should instantly resume the subject of the supernatural appearance, for such they deemed it, which had this night alarmed the family.

"I could hae wished it had been the deil himself—be good to and preserve us!—rather than Christie o' the Clint-hill," said the matron of the mansion, "for the word runs rife in the country, that he is ane of the maist masterfu' thieves ever lap on horse."

"Hout-tout, Dame Elspeth," said Tibb, "fear ye naething frae Christie; tods keep their ain holes clean. You kirk-folk make sic a fasherie about men shifting a wee bit for their living! Our Border-lairds would ride with few men at their back, if a' the light-handed lads were out o' gate."

"Better they rade wi' nane than distress the country-side the gate they do," said Dame Elspeth.

"But wha is to haud back the Southron, then," said Tibb, "if ye take away the lances and broadswords? I trow we auld wives couldna do that wi' rock and wheel, and as little the monks wi' bell and book."

"And sae weel as the lances and broadswords hae kept them back, I trow!—I was mair beholden to ae Southron, and that was Stawarth Bolton, than to a' the border-riders ever wore Saint Andrew's cross—I reckon their skelping back and forward, and lifting honest men's gear, has been a main cause of a' the breach between us and England, and I am sure that cost me a kind goodman. They spoke about the wedding of the Prince and our Queen, but it's as like to be the driving of the Cumberland folk's stocking that brought them down on us like dragons." Tibb would not have failed in other circumstances to answer what she thought reflections disparaging to her country folk; but she recollected that Dame Elspeth was mistress of the family, curbed her own zealous patriotism, and hastened to change the subject.

"And is it not strange," she said, "that the heiress of Avenel should have seen her father this blessed night?"

"And ye think it was her father, then?" said Elspeth Glendinning.

"What else can I think?" said Tibb.

"It may hae been something waur, in his likeness," said Dame Glendinning.

"I ken naething about that," said Tibb,—"but his likeness it was, that I will be sworn to, just as he used to ride out a-hawking; for having enemies in the country, he seldom laid off the breast-plate; and for my part," added Tibb, "I dinna think a man looks like a man unless he has steel on his breast, and by his side too."

"I have no skill of your harness on breast or side either," said Dame Glendinning; "but I ken there is little luck in Hallowe'en sights, for I have had ane myself."

"Indeed, Dame Elspeth?" said old Tibb, edging her stool closer to the huge elbow-chair occupied by her friend, "I should like to hear about that."

"Ye maun ken, then, Tibb," said Dame Glendinning, "that when I was a hempie of nineteen or twenty, it wasna my fault if I wasna at a' the merry-makings time about."

"That was very natural," said Tibb; "but ye hae sobered since that, or ye wadna haud our braw gallants sae lightly."

"I have had that wad sober me or ony ane," said the matron, "Aweel, Tibb, a lass like me wasna to lack wooers, for I wasna sae ill-favoured that the tikes wad bark after me."

"How should that be," said Tibb, "and you sic a weel-favoured woman to this day?"

"Fie, fie, cummer," said the matron of Glendearg, hitching her seat of honour, in her turn, a little nearer to the cuttle-stool on which Tibb was seated; "weel-favoured is past my time of day; but I might pass then, for I wasna sae tocherless but what I had a bit land at my breast-lace. My father was portioner of Little-dearg."

"Ye hae tell'd me that before," said Tibb; "but anent the Hallowe'en?"

"Aweel, aweel, I had mair joes than ane, but I favoured nane o' them; and sae, at Hallowe'en, Father Nicolas the cellarer—he was cellarer before this father, Father Clement, that now is—was cracking his nuts and drinking his brown beer with us, and as blithe as might be, and they would have me try a cantrip to ken wha suld wed me: and the monk said there was nae ill in it, and if there was, he would assoil me for it. And wha but I into the barn to winnow my three weights o' naething—sair, sair my mind misgave me for fear of wrang-doing and wrang-suffering baith; but I had aye a bauld spirit. I had not winnowed the last weight clean out, and the moon was shining bright upon the floor, when in stalked the presence of my dear Simon Glendinning, that is now happy. I never saw him plainer in my life than I did that moment; he held up an arrow as he passed me, and I swar'd awa wi' fright. Muckle wark there was to bring me to mysell again, and sair they tried to make me believe it was a trick of Father Nicolas and Simon between them, and that the arrow was to signify Cupid's shaft, as the Father called it; and mony a time Simon wad threep it to me after I was married—gude man, he liked not it should be said that he was seen out o' the body!—But mark the end o' it, Tibb; we were married, and the gray-goose wing was the death o' him after a!"

"As it has been of ower mony brave men," said Tibb; "I wish there wasna sic a bird as a goose in the wide warld, forby the clecking that we hae at the burn-side."

"But tell me, Tibb," said Dame Glendinning, "what does your leddy aye do reading out o' that thick black book wi' the silver clasps?—there are ower mony gude words in it to come frae ony body but a priest—An it were about Robin Hood, or some o' David Lindsay's ballants, ane wad ken better what to say to it. I am no misdoubting your mistress nae way, but I wad like ill to hae a decent house haunted wi' ghaists and gyrecarlins."

"Ye hae nae reason to doubt my leddy, or ony thing she says or does, Dame Glendinning," said the faithful Tibb, something offended; "and touching the bairn, it's weel kend she was born on Hallowe'en, was nine years gane, and they that are born on Hallowe'en whiles see mair than ither folk."

"And that wad be the cause, then, that the bairn didna mak muckle din about what it saw?—if it had been my Halbert himself, forby Edward, who is of softer nature, he wad hae yammered the haill night of a constancy. But it's like Mistress Mary hae sic sights mair natural to her."

"That may weel be," said Tibb; "for on Hallowe'en she was born, as I tell ye, and our auld parish priest wad fain hae had the night ower, and All-Hallow day begun. But for a' that, the sweet bairn is just like ither bairns, as ye may see yourself; and except this blessed night, and ance before when we were in that weary bog on the road here, I kenna that it saw mair than ither folk."

"But what saw she in the bog, then," said Dame Glendinning, "forby moor-cocks and heather-blutters?"

"The wean saw something like a white leddy that weised us the gate," said Tibb; "when we were like to hae perished in the moss-hags—certain it was that Shagram reisted, and I ken Martin thinks he saw something."

"And what might the white leddy be?" said Elspeth; "have ye ony guess o' that?"

"It's weel kend that, Dame Elspeth," said Tibb; "if ye had lived under grit folk, as I hae dune, ye wadna be to seek in that matter."

"I hae aye keepit my ain ha' house abune my head," said Elspeth, not without emphasis, "and if I havena lived wi' grit folk, grit folk have lived wi' me."

"Weel, weel, dame," said Tibb, "your pardon's prayed, there was nae offence meant. But ye maun ken the great ancient families canna be just served wi' the ordinary saunts, (praise to them!) like Saunt Anthony, Saunt Cuthbert, and the like, that come and gang at every sinner's bidding, but they hae a sort of saunts or angels, or what not, to themsells; and as for the White Maiden of Avenel, she is kend ower the haill country. And she is aye seen to yammer and wail before ony o' that family dies, as was weel kend by twenty folk before the death of Walter Avenel, haly be his cast!"

"If she can do nae mair than that," said Elspeth, somewhat scornfully, "they needna make mony vows to her, I trow. Can she make nae better fend for them than that, and has naething better to do than wait on them?"

"Mony braw services can the White Maiden do for them to the boot of that, and has dune in the auld histories," said Tibb, "but I mind o' naething in my day, except it was her that the bairn saw in the bog."

"Aweel, aweel, Tibb," said Dame Glendinning, rising and lighting the iron lamp, "these are great privileges of your grand folk. But our Lady and Saunt Paul are good enough saunts for me, and I'se warrant them never leave me in a bog that they can help me out o', seeing I send four waxen candles to their chapels every Candlemas; and if they are not seen to weep at my death, I'se warrant them smile at my joyful rising again, whilk Heaven send to all of us, Amen."

"Amen," answered Tibb, devoutly; "and now it's time I should hap up the wee bit gathering turf, as the fire is ower low."

Busily she set herself to perform this duty. The relict of Simon Glendinning did but pause a moment to cast a heedful and cautious glance all around the hall, to see that nothing was out of its proper place; then, wishing Tibb good-night, she retired to repose.

"The deil's in the carline," said Tibb to herself, "because she was the wife of a cock-laird, she thinks herself grander, I trow, than the bower-woman of a lady of that ilk!" Having given vent to her suppressed spleen in this little ejaculation, Tibb also betook herself to slumber.

Chapter the Fifth.

A priest, ye cry, a priest!—lame shepherds they,
How shall they gather in the straggling flock?
Dumb dogs which bark not—how shall they compel
The loitering vagrants to the Master's fold?
Fitter to bask before the blazing fire,
And snuff the mess neat-handed Phillis dresses,
Than on the snow-wreath battle with the wolf.

REFORMATION.

The health of the Lady of Avenel had been gradually decaying ever since her disaster. It seemed as if the few years which followed her husband's death had done on her the work of half a century. She lost the fresh elasticity of form, the colour and the mien of health, and became wasted, wan, and feeble. She appeared to have no formed complaint; yet it was evident to those who looked on her, that her strength waned daily. Her lips at length became blenched and her eye dim; yet she spoke not of any desire to see a priest, until Elspeth Glendinning in her zeal could not refrain from touching upon a point which she deemed essential to salvation. Alice of Avenel received her hint kindly, and thanked her for it.

"If any good priest would take the trouble of such a journey," she said, "he should be welcome; for the prayers and lessons of the good must be at all times advantageous."

This quiet acquiescence was not quite what Elspeth Glendinning wished or expected. She made up, however, by her own enthusiasm, for the lady's want of eagerness to avail herself of ghostly counsel, and Martin was despatched with such haste as Shagram would make, to pray one of the religious men of Saint Mary's to come up to administer the last consolations to the widow of Walter Avenel.

When the Sacristan had announced to the Lord Abbot, that the Lady of the umquhile Walter de Avenel was in very weak health in the Tower of Glendearg, and desired the assistance of a father confessor, the lordly monk paused on the request.

"We do remember Walter de Avenel," he said; "a good knight and a valiant: he was dispossessed of his lands, and slain by the Southron—May not the lady come hither to the sacrament of confession? the road is distant and painful to travel."

"The lady is unwell, holy father," answered the Sacristan, "and unable to bear the journey."

"True—ay,—yes—then must one of our brethren go to her—Knowest thou if she hath aught of a jointure from this Walter de Avenel?"

"Very little, holy father," said the Sacristan; "she hath resided at Glendearg since her husband's death, well-nigh on the charity of a poor widow, called Elspeth Glendinning."

"Why, thou knowest all the widows in the country-side!" said the Abbot. "Ho! ho! ho!" and he shook his portly sides at his own jest.

"Ho! ho! ho!" echoed the Sacristan, in the tone and tune in which an inferior applauds the jest of his superior.—Then added, with a hypocritical shuffle, and a sly twinkle of his eye, "It is our duty, most holy father, to comfort the widow—He! he! he!"

This last laugh was more moderate, until the Abbot should put his sanction on the jest.

"Ho! ho!" said the Abbot; "then, to leave jesting, Father Philip, take thou thy riding gear, and go to confess this Dame Avenel."

"But," said the Sacristan—

"Give me no *Buts*; neither But nor If pass between monk and Abbot, Father Philip; the bands of discipline must not be relaxed—heresy gathers force like a snow-ball—the multitude expect confessions and preachings from the Benedictine, as they would from so many beggarly friars—and we may not desert the vineyard, though the toil be grievous unto us."

"And with so little advantage to the holy monastery," said the Sacristan.

"True, Father Philip; but wot you not that what preventeth harm doth good? This Julian de Avenel lives a light and evil life, and should we neglect the widow of his brother, he might foray our lands, and we never able to show who hurt us—moreover it is our duty to an ancient family, who, in their day, have been benefactors to the Abbey. Away with thee instantly, brother; ride night and day, an it be necessary, and let men see how diligent Abbot Boniface and his faithful children are in the execution of their spiritual duty—toil not deterring them, for the glen is five miles in length—fear not withholding them, for it is said to be haunted of spectres—nothing moving them from pursuit of their spiritual calling; to the confusion of calumnious heretics, and the comfort and edification of all true and faithful sons of the Catholic Church. I wonder what our brother Eustace will say to this?"

Breathless with his own picture of the dangers and toil which he was to encounter, and the fame which he was to acquire, (both by proxy,) the Abbot moved slowly to finish his luncheon in the refectory, and the Sacristan, with no very good will, accompanied old Martin in his return to Glendearg; the greatest impediment in the journey being the trouble of restraining his pampered mule, that she might tread in something like an equal pace with poor jaded Shagram.

After remaining an hour in private with his penitent, the monk returned moody and full of thought. Dame Elspeth, who had placed for the honoured guest some refreshment in the hall, was struck with the embarrassment which appeared in his countenance. Elspeth watched him with great anxiety. She observed there was that on his brow which rather resembled a person come from hearing the confession of some enormous crime, than the look of a confessor who resigns a reconciled penitent, not to earth, but to heaven. After long hesitating, she could not at length refrain from hazarding a question. She was sure she said, the leddy had made an easy shrift. Five years had they resided together, and she could safely say, no woman lived better.

"Woman," said the Sacristan, sternly, "thou speakest thou knowest not what—What avails clearing the outside of the platter, if the inside be foul with heresy?"

"Our dishes and trenchers are not so clean as they could be wished, holy father," said Elspeth, but half understanding what he said, and beginning with her apron to wipe the dust from the plates, of which she supposed him to complain.

"Forbear, Dame Elspeth" said the monk; "your plates are as clean as wooden trenchers and pewter flagons can well be; the foulness of which I speak is of that pestilential heresy which is daily becoming ingrained in this our Holy Church of Scotland, and as a canker-worm in the rose-garland of the Spouse."

"Holy Mother of Heaven!" said Dame Elspeth, crossing herself, "have I kept house with a heretic?"

"No, Elspeth, no," replied the monk; "it were too strong a speech for me to make of this unhappy lady, but I would I could say she is free from heretical opinions. Alas! they fly about like the pestilence by noon-day, and infect even the first and fairest of the flock! For it is easy to see of this dame, that she hath been high in judgment as in rank."

"And she can write and read, I had almost said, as weel as your reverence" said Elspeth.

"Whom doth she write to, and what doth she read?" said the monk, eagerly.

"Nay," replied Elspeth, "I cannot say I ever saw her write at all, but her maiden that was—she now serves the family—says she can write—And for reading, she has often read to us good things out of a thick black volume with silver clasps."

"Let me see it," said the monk, hastily, "on your allegiance as a true vassal—on your faith as a Catholic Christian—instantly—instantly let me see it."

The good woman hesitated, alarmed at the tone in which the confessor took up her information; and being moreover of opinion, that what so good a woman as the Lady of Avenel studied so devoutly, could not be of a tendency actually evil. But borne down by the clamour, exclamations, and something like threats used by Father Philip, she at length brought him the fatal volume. It was easy to do this without suspicion on the part of the owner, as she lay on her bed exhausted with the fatigue of a long conference with her confessor, and as the small *round*, or turret closet, in which was the book and her other trifling property, was accessible by another door. Of all her effects the book was the last she would have thought of securing, for of what use or interest could it be in a family who neither read themselves, nor were in the habit of seeing any who did? so that Dame Elspeth had no difficulty in possessing herself of the volume, although her heart all the while accused her of an ungenerous and an inhospitable part towards her friend and inmate. The double power of a landlord and a feudal superior was before her eyes; and to say truth, the boldness, with which she might otherwise have resisted this double authority, was, I grieve to say it, much qualified by the curiosity she entertained, as a daughter of Eve, to have some explanation respecting the mysterious volume which the lady cherished with so much care, yet whose contents she imparted with such caution. For never had Alice of Avenel read them any passage from the book in question until the iron door of the tower was locked, and all possibility of intrusion prevented. Even then she had shown, by the selection of particular passages, that she was more anxious to impress on their minds the principles which the volume contained, than to introduce them to it as a new rule of faith.

When Elspeth, half curious, half remorseful, had placed the book in the monk's hands, he exclaimed, after turning over the leaves, "Now, by mine order, it is as I suspected!—My mule, my mule!—I will abide no longer here—well hast thou done, dame, in placing in my hands this perilous volume."

"Is it then witchcraft or devil's work?" said Dame Elspeth, in great agitation.

"Nay, God forbid!" said the monk, signing himself with the cross, "it is the Holy Scripture. But it is rendered into the vulgar tongue, and therefore, by the order of the Holy Catholic Church, unfit to be in the hands of any lay person."

"And yet is the Holy Scripture communicated for our common salvation," said Elspeth. "Good Father, you must instruct mine ignorance better; but lack of wit cannot be a deadly sin, and truly, to my poor thinking, I should be glad to read the Holy Scripture."

"I dare say thou wouldst," said the monk; "and even thus did our mother Eve seek to have knowledge of good and evil, and thus Sin came into the world, and Death by Sin."

"I am sure, and it is true," said Elspeth. "Oh, if she had dealt by the counsel of Saint Peter and Saint Paul!"

"If she had revered the command of Heaven," said the monk, "which, as it gave her birth, life, and happiness, fixed upon the grant such conditions as best corresponded with its holy pleasure. I tell thee, Elspeth, *the Word slayeth*—that is, the text alone, read with unskilled eye and unhallowed lips, is like those strong medicines which sick men take by the advice of the learned. Such patients recover and thrive; while those dealing in them at their own hand, shall perish by their own deed."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," said the poor woman, "your reverence knows best."

"Not I," said Father Philip, in a tone as deferential as he thought could possibly become the Sacristan of Saint Mary's,— "Not I, but the Holy Father of Christendom, and our own holy father, the Lord Abbot, know best. I, the poor Sacristan of Saint Mary's, can but repeat what I hear from others my superiors. Yet of this, good woman, be assured,—the Word, the mere Word, slayeth. But the church hath her ministers to gloze and to expound the same unto her faithful congregation; and this I say, not so much, my beloved brethren—I mean my beloved sister," (for the Sacristan had got into the end of one of his old sermons.)—"This I speak not so much of the rectors, curates, and secular clergy, so called because they live after the fashion of the *seculum* or age, unbound by those ties which sequester us from the world; neither do I speak this of the mendicant friars, whether black or gray, whether crossed or uncrossed; but of the monks, and especially of the monks Benedictine, reformed on the rule of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, thence called Cistercian, of which monks, Christian brethren—sister, I would say—great is the happiness and glory of the country in possessing the holy ministers of Saint Mary's, whereof I, though an unworthy brother, may say it hath produced more saints, more bishops, more popes—may our patrons make us thankful!—than any holy foundation in Scotland. Wherefore—But I see Martin hath my mule in readiness, and I will but salute you with the kiss of sisterhood, which maketh not ashamed, and so betake me to my toilsome return, for the glen is of bad reputation for the evil spirits which haunt it. Moreover, I may arrive too late at the bridge, whereby I may be obliged to take to the river, which I observed to be somewhat waxen."

Accordingly, he took his leave of Dame Elspeth, who was confounded by the rapidity of his utterance, and the doctrine he gave forth, and by no means easy on the subject of the book, which her conscience told her she should not have communicated to any one, without the knowledge of its owner.

Notwithstanding the haste which the monk as well as the mule made to return to better quarters than they had left at the head of Glendearg; notwithstanding the eager desire Father Philip had to be the very first who should acquaint the Abbot that a copy of the book they most dreaded had been found within the Halidome, or patrimony of the Abbey; notwithstanding, moreover, certain feelings which induced him to hurry as fast as possible through the gloomy and evil-reputed glen, still the difficulties of the road, and the rider's want of habitude of quick motion, were such, that twilight came upon him ere he had nearly cleared the narrow valley. It was indeed a gloomy ride. The two sides of the vale were so near, that at every double of the river the shadows from the western sky fell upon, and totally obscured, the eastern bank; the thickets of copsewood seemed to wave with a portentous agitation of boughs and leaves, and the very crags and scaurs seemed higher and grimmer than they had appeared to the monk while he was travelling in daylight, and in company. Father Philip was heartily rejoiced, when, emerging from the narrow glen, he gained the open valley of the Tweed, which held on its majestic course from current to pool, and from pool stretched away to other currents, with a dignity peculiar to itself amongst the Scottish rivers; for whatever may have been the drought of the season, the Tweed usually fills up the space between its banks, seldom leaving those extensive sheets of shingle which deform the margins of many of the celebrated Scottish streams.

The monk, insensible to beauties which the age had not regarded as deserving of notice, was, nevertheless, like a prudent general, pleased to find himself out of the narrow glen in which the enemy might have stolen upon him unperceived. He drew up his bridle, reduced his mule to her natural and luxurious amble, instead of the agitating and broken trot at which, to his no small inconvenience, she had hitherto proceeded, and, wiping his brow, gazed forth at leisure on the broad moon, which, now mingling with the lights of evening, was rising over field and forest, village and fortalice, and, above all, over the stately Monastery, seen far and dim amid the vellow light.

The worst part of the magnificent view, in the monk's apprehension, was, that the Monastery stood on the opposite side of the river, and that of the many fine bridges which have since been built across that classical stream, not one then existed. There was, however, in recompense, a bridge then standing which has since disappeared, although its ruins may still be traced by the curious.

It was of a very peculiar form. Two strong abutments were built on either side of the river, at a part where the stream was peculiarly contracted. Upon a rock in the centre of the current was built a solid piece of masonry, constructed like the pier of a bridge, and presenting, like a pier, an angle to the current of the stream. The masonry continued solid until the pier rose to a level with the two abutments upon either side, and from thence the building rose in the form of a tower. The lower story of this tower consisted only of an archway or passage through the building, over either entrance to which hung a drawbridge with counterpoises, either of which, when dropped, connected the archway with the opposite abutment, where the farther end of the drawbridge rested. When both bridges were thus lowered, the passage over the river was complete.

The bridge-keeper, who was the dependant of a neighbouring baron, resided with his family in the second and third stories of the tower, which, when both drawbridges were raised, formed an insulated fortalice in the midst of the river. He was entitled to a small toll or custom for the passage, concerning the amount of which disputes sometimes arose between him and the passengers. It is needless to say, that the bridge-ward had usually the better in these questions, since he could at pleasure detain the traveller on the opposite side; or, suffering him to pass half way, might keep him prisoner in his tower till they were agreed on the rate of pontage.

{Footnote: A bridge of the very peculiar construction described in the text, actually existed at a small hamlet about a mile and a half above Melrose, called from the circumstance Bridge-end. It is thus noticed in Gordon's *Iter Septentrionale*:—

"In another journey through the south parts of Scotland, about a mile and a half from Melrose, in the shire of Teviotdale, I saw the remains of a curious bridge over the river Tweed, consisting of three octangular pillars, or rather towers, standing within the water, without any arches to join them. The middle one, which is the most entire, has a door towards the north, and I suppose another opposite one toward the south, which I could not see without crossing the water. In the middle of this tower is a projection or cornice surrounding it: the whole is hollow from the door upwards, and now open at the top, near which is a small window. I was informed that not long ago a countryman and his family lived in this tower—and got his livelihood by laying out planks from pillar to pillar, and conveying passengers over the river. Whether this be ancient or modern, I know not; but as it is singular in its kind I have thought fit to exhibit it."

The vestiges of this uncommon species of bridge still exist, and the author has often seen the foundations of the columns when drifting down the Tweed at night for the purpose of killing salmon by torch-light. Mr. John Mercer of Bridge-end recollects, that about fifty years ago the pillars were visible above water; and the late Mr. David Kyle, of the George Inn, Melrose, told the author that he saw a stone taken from the river bearing this inscription:—

"I, Sir John Pringle of Palmer stede, Give an hundred markis of gowd sae reid, To help to bigg my brigg ower Tweed."

Pringle of Galashiels, afterwards of Whytbank, was the Baron to whom the bridge belonged.}

But it was most frequently with the Monks of Saint Mary's that the warder had to dispute his perquisites. These holy men insisted for, and at length obtained, a right of gratuitous passage to themselves, greatly to the discontent of the bridge-keeper. But when they demanded the same immunity for the numerous pilgrims who visited the shrine, the bridge-keeper waxed restive, and was supported by his lord in his resistance. The controversy grew animated on both sides; the Abbot menaced excommunication, and the keeper of the bridge, though unable to retaliate in kind, yet made each individual monk who had to cross and recross the

river, endure a sort of purgatory, ere he would accommodate them with a passage. This was a great inconvenience, and would have proved a more serious one, but that the river was fordable for man and horse in ordinary weather.

It was a fine moonlight night, as we have already said, when Father Philip approached this bridge, the singular construction of which gives a curious idea of the insecurity of the times. The river was not in flood, but it was above its ordinary level—a *heavy water*, as it is called in that country, through which the monk had no particular inclination to ride, if he could manage the matter better.

"Peter, my good friend," cried the Sacristan, raising his voice; "my very excellent friend, Peter, be so kind as to lower the drawbridge. Peter, I say, dost thou not hear?—it is thy gossip, Father Philip, who calls thee."

Peter heard him perfectly well, and saw him into the bargain; but as he had considered the Sacristan as peculiarly his enemy in his dispute with the convent, he went quietly to bed, after reconnoitring the monk through his loop-hole, observing to his wife, that "riding the water in a moonlight night would do the Sacristan no harm, and would teach him the value of a brig the neist time, on whilk a man might pass high and dry, winter and summer, flood and ebb."

After exhausting his voice in entreaties and threats, which were equally unattended to by Peter of the Brig, as he was called, Father Philip at length moved down the river to take the ordinary ford at the head of the next stream. Cursing the rustic obstinacy of Peter, he began, nevertheless, to persuade himself that the passage of the river by the ford was not only safe, but pleasant. The banks and scattered trees were so beautifully reflected from the bosom of the dark stream, the whole cool and delicious picture formed so pleasing a contrast to his late agitation, to the warmth occasioned by his vain endeavours to move the relentless porter of the bridge, that the result was rather agreeable than otherwise.

As Father Philip came close to the water's edge, at the spot where he was to enter it, there sat a female under a large broken scathed oak-tree, or rather under the remains of such a tree, weeping, wringing her hands, and looking earnestly on the current of the river. The monk was struck with astonishment to see a female there at that time of night. But he was, in all honest service,—and if a step farther, I put it upon his own conscience,—a devoted squire of dames. After observing the maiden for a moment, although she seemed to take no notice of his presence, he was moved by her distress, and willing to offer his assistance. "Damsel," said he, "thou seemest in no ordinary distress; peradventure, like myself, thou hast been refused passage at the bridge by the churlish keeper, and thy crossing may concern thee either for performance of a vow, or some other weighty charge."

The maiden uttered some inarticulate sounds, looked at the river, and then in the face of the Sacristan. It struck Father Philip at that instant, that a Highland chief of distinction had been for some time expected to pay his vows at the shrine of Saint Mary's; and that possibly this fair maiden might be one of his family, travelling alone for accomplishment of a vow, or left behind by some accident, to whom, therefore, it would be but right and prudent to use every civility in his power, especially as she seemed unacquainted with the Lowland tongue. Such at least was the only motive the Sacristan was ever known to assign for his courtesy; if there was any other, I once more refer it to his own conscience.

To express himself by signs, the common language of all nations, the cautious Sacristan first pointed to the river, then to his mule's crupper, and then made, as gracefully as he could, a sign to induce the fair solitary to mount behind him. She seemed to understand his meaning, for she rose up as if to accept his offer; and while the good monk, who, as we have hinted, was no great cavalier, laboured, with the pressure of the right leg and the use of the left rein, to place his mule with her side to the bank in such a position that the lady might mount with ease, she rose from the ground with rather portentous activity, and at one bound sate behind the monk upon the animal, much the firmer rider of the two. The mule by no means seemed to approve of this double burden; she bounded, bolted, and would soon have thrown Father Philip over her head, had not the maiden with a firm hand detained him in the saddle.

At last the restive brute changed her humour; and, from refusing to budge off the spot, suddenly stretched her nose homeward, and dashed into the ford as fast as she could scamper. A new terror now invaded the monk's mind—the ford seemed unusually deep, the water eddied off in strong ripple from the counter of the mule, and began to rise upon her side. Philip lost his presence of mind,—which was at no time his most ready attribute, the mule yielded to the weight of the current, and as the rider was not attentive to keep her head turned up the river, she drifted downward, lost the ford and her footing at once, and began to swim with her head down the stream. And what was sufficiently strange, at the same moment, notwithstanding the extreme peril, the damsel began to sing, thereby increasing, if anything could increase, the bodily fear of the worthy Sacristan.

I.

Merrily swim we, the moon shines bright,
Both current and ripple are dancing in light.
We have roused the night raven, I heard him croak,
As we plashed along beneath the oak
That flings its broad branches so far and so wide,
Their shadows are dancing in midst of the tide.
"Who wakens my nestlings," the raven he said,
"My beak shall ere morn in his blood be red.
For a blue swoln corpse is a dainty meal.
And I'll have my share with the pike and the eel."

II.

Merrily swim we, the moon shines bright,
There's a golden gleam on the distant height;
There's a silver shower on the alders dank.
And the drooping willows that wave on the bank.
I see the abbey, both turret and tower,
It is all astir for the vesper hour;
The monks for the chapel are leaving each cell.
But Where's Father Philip, should toll the bell?

III.

Merrily swim we, the moon shines bright,
Downward we drift through shadow and light,
Under yon rock the eddies sleep,
Calm and silent, dark and deep.
The Kelpy has risen from the fathomless pool.
He has lighted his candle of death and of dool.
Look, Father, look, and you'll laugh to see
How he gapes and glares with his eyes on thee.

Good luck to your fishing, whom watch ye to-night?
 A man of mean, or a man of might?
 Is it layman or priest that must float in your cove,
 Or lover who crosses to visit his love?
 Hark! heard ye the Kelpy reply, as we pass'd,—
 "God's blessing on the warder, he lock'd the bridge fast!
 All that come to my cove are sunk,
 Priest or layman, lover or monk."

How long the damsel might have continued to sing, or where the terrified monk's journey might have ended, is uncertain. As she sung the last stanza, they arrived at, or rather in, a broad tranquil sheet of water, caused by a strong wear or damhead, running across the river, which dashed in a broad cataract over the barrier. The mule, whether from choice, or influenced by the suction of the current, made towards the cut intended to supply the convent mills, and entered it half swimming half wading, and pitching the unlucky monk to and fro in the saddle at a fearful rate.

As his person flew hither and thither, his garment became loose, and in an effort to retain it, his hand lighted on the volume of the Lady of Avenel which was in his bosom. No sooner had he grasped it, than his companion pitched him out of the saddle into the stream, where, still keeping her hand on his collar, she gave him two or three good souses in the watery fluid, so as to ensure that every other part of him had its share of wetting, and then quitted her hold when he was so near the side that by a slight effort (of a great one he was incapable) he might scramble on shore. This accordingly he accomplished, and turning his eyes to see what had become of his extraordinary companion, she was nowhere to be seen; but still he heard, as if from the surface of the river, and mixing with the noise of the water breaking over the damhead, a fragment of her wild song, which seemed to run thus:—

Landed—landed! the black book hath won.
 Else had you seen Berwick with morning sun!
 Sain ye, and save ye, and blithe mot ye be,
 For seldom they land that go swimming with me.

The ecstasy of the monk's terror could be endured no longer; his head grew dizzy, and, after staggering a few steps onward and running himself against a wall, he sunk down in a state of insensibility.

Chapter the Sixth.

Now let us sit in conclave. That these weeds
 Be rooted from the vineyard of the church.
 That these foul tares be severed from the wheat,
 We are, I trust, agreed.—Yet how to do this,
 Nor hurt the wholesome crop and tender vine-plants,
 Craves good advisement.

THE REFORMATION.

The vesper service in the Monastery Church of Saint Mary's was now over. The Abbot had disrobed himself of his magnificent vestures of ceremony, and resumed his ordinary habit, which was a black gown, worn over a white cassock, with a narrow scapulary; a decent and venerable dress, which was calculated to set off to advantage the portly mien of Abbot Boniface.

In quiet times no one could have filled the state of a mitred Abbot, for such was his dignity, more respectably than this worthy prelate. He had, no doubt, many of those habits of self-indulgence which men are apt to acquire who live for themselves alone. He was vain, moreover; and when boldly confronted, had sometimes shown symptoms of timidity, not very consistent with the high claims which he preferred as an eminent member of the church, or with the punctual deference which he exacted from his religious brethren, and all who were placed under his command. But he was hospitable, charitable, and by no means of himself disposed to proceed with severity against any one. In short, he would in other times have slumbered out his term of preferment with as much credit as any other "purple Abbot," who lived easily, but at the same time decorously—slept soundly, and did not disquiet himself with dreams.

But the wide alarm spread through the whole Church of Rome by the progress of the reformed doctrines, sorely disturbed the repose of Abbot Boniface, and opened to him a wide field of duties and cares which he had never so much as dreamed of. There were opinions to be combated and refuted—practices to be inquired into—heretics to be detected and punished—the fallen off to be reclaimed—the wavering to be confirmed—scandal to be removed from the clergy, and the vigour of discipline to be re-established. Post upon post arrived at the Monastery of Saint Mary's—horses reeking, and riders exhausted—this from the Privy Council, that from the Primate of Scotland, and this other again from the Queen Mother, exhorting, approving, condemning, requesting advice upon this subject, and requiring information upon that.

These missives Abbot Boniface received with an important air of helplessness, or a helpless air of importance,—whichever the reader may please to term it, evincing at once gratified vanity, and profound trouble of mind. The sharp-witted Primate of Saint Andrews had foreseen the deficiencies of the Abbot of St. Mary's, and endeavoured to provide for them by getting admitted into his Monastery as Sub-Prior a brother Cistercian, a man of parts and knowledge, devoted to the service of the Catholic Church, and very capable not only to advise the Abbot on occasions of difficulty, but to make him sensible of his duty in case he should, from good-nature or timidity, be disposed to shrink from it.

Father Eustace played the same part in the Monastery as the old general who, in foreign armies, is placed at the elbow of the Prince of the Blood, who nominally commands in chief, on condition of attempting nothing without the advice of his dry-nurse; and he shared the fate of all such dry-nurses, being heartily disliked as well as feared by his principal. Still, however, the Primate's intention was fully answered. Father Eustace became the constant theme and often the bugbear of the worthy Abbot, who hardly dared to turn himself in his bed without, considering what Father Eustace would think of it. In every case of difficulty, Father Eustace was summoned, and his opinion asked; and no sooner was the embarrassment removed, than the Abbot's next thought was how to get rid of his adviser. In every letter which he wrote to those in power, he recommended Father Eustace to some high church preferment, a bishopric or an abbey; and as they dropped one after another, and were otherwise conferred, he began to think, as he confessed to the Sacristan in the bitterness of his spirit, that the Monastery of St. Mary's had got a life-rent lease of their Sub-Prior.

Yet more indignant he would have been, had he suspected that Father Eustace's ambition was fixed upon his own mitre, which, from some attacks of an apoplectic nature, deemed by the Abbot's friends to be more serious than by himself, it was supposed might be shortly vacant. But the confidence which, like other dignitaries, he reposed in his own health, prevented Abbot Boniface from imagining that it held any concatenation, with the motions of Father Eustace.

The necessity under which he found himself of consulting with his grand adviser, in cases of real difficulty, rendered the worthy Abbot particularly desirous of doing without him in all ordinary cases of administration, though not without considering what Father Eustace would have said of the matter. He scorned,

therefore, to give a hint to the Sub-Prior of the bold stroke by which he had dispatched Brother Philip to Glendearg; but when the vespers came without his reappearance he became a little uneasy, the more as other matters weighed upon his mind. The feud with the warder or keeper of the bridge threatened to be attended with bad consequences, as the man's quarrel was taken up by the martial baron under whom he served; and pressing letters of an unpleasant tendency had just arrived from the Primate. Like a gouty man, who catches hold of his crutch while he curses the infirmity that induces him to use it, the Abbot, however reluctant, found himself obliged to require Eustace's presence, after the service was over, in his house, or rather palace, which was attached to, and made part of, the Monastery.

Abbot Boniface was seated in his high-backed chair, the grotesque carved back of which terminated in a mitre, before a fire where two or three large logs were reduced to one red glowing mass of charcoal. At his elbow, on an oaken stand, stood the remains of a roasted capon, on which his reverence had made his evening meal, flanked by a goodly stoup of Bordeaux of excellent flavour. He was gazing indolently on the fire, partly engaged in meditation on his past and present fortunes, partly occupied by endeavouring to trace towers and steeples in the red embers.

"Yes," thought the Abbot to himself, "in that red perspective I could fancy to myself the peaceful towers of Dundrennan, where I passed my life ere I was called to pomp and to trouble. A quiet brotherhood we were, regular in our domestic duties; and when the frailties of humanity prevailed over us, we confessed, and were absolved by each other, and the most formidable part of the penance was the jest of the convent on the culprit. I can almost fancy that I see the cloister garden, and the pear-trees which I grafted with my own hands. And for what have I changed all this, but to be overwhelmed with business which concerns me not, to be called My Lord Abbot, and to be tutored by Father Eustace? I would these towers were the Abbey of Aberbrothwick, and Father Eustace the Abbot,—or I would he were in the fire on any terms, so I were rid of him! The Primate says our Holy Father, the Pope hath an adviser—I am sure he could not live a week with such a one as mine. Then there is no learning what Father Eustace thinks till you confess your own difficulties—No hint will bring forth his opinion—he is like a miser, who will not unbuckle his purse to bestow a farthing, until the wretch who needs it has owned his excess of poverty, and wrung out the boon by importunity. And thus I am dishonoured in the eyes of my religious brethren, who behold me treated like a child which hath no sense of its own—I will bear it no longer!—Brother Bennet,"—(a lay brother answered to his call)—"tell Father Eustace that I need not his presence."

"I came to say to your reverence, that the holy father is entering even now from the cloisters."

"Be it so," said the Abbot, "he is welcome,—remove these things—or rather, place a trencher, the holy father may be a little hungry—yet, no—remove them, for there is no good fellowship in him—Let the stoup of wine remain, however, and place another cup."

The lay brother obeyed these contradictory commands in the way he judged most seemly—he removed the carcass of the half-sacked capon, and placed two goblets beside the stoup of Bourdeaux. At the same instant entered Father Eustace.

He was a thin, sharp-faced, slight-made little man, whose keen grey eyes seemed almost to look through the person to whom he addressed himself. His body was emaciated not only with the fasts which he observed with rigid punctuality, but also by the active and unwearied exercise of his sharp and piercing intellect;—

A fiery soul, which working out its way,

Fretted the puny body to decay,

And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.

He turned with conventional reverence to the Lord Abbot; and as they stood together, it was scarce possible to see a more complete difference of form and expression. The good-natured rosy face and laughing eye of the Abbot, which even his present anxiety could not greatly ruffle, was a wonderful contrast to the thin pallid cheek and quick penetrating glance of the monk, in which an eager and keen spirit glanced through eyes to which it seemed to give supernatural lustre. The Abbot opened the conversation by motioning to his monk to take a stool, and inviting to a cup of wine. The courtesy was declined with respect, yet not without a remark, that the vesper service was past.

"For the stomach's sake, brother," said the Abbot, colouring a little—"You know the text."

"It is a dangerous one," answered the monk, "to handle alone, or at late hours. Out off from human society, the juice of the grape becomes a perilous companion of solitude, and therefore I ever shun it."

Abbot Boniface had poured himself out a goblet which might hold about half an English pint; but, either struck with the truth of the observation, or ashamed to act in direct opposition to it, he suffered it to remain untasted before him, and immediately changed the subject.

"The Primate hath written to us," said he, "to make strict search within our bounds after the heretical persons denounced in this list, who have withdrawn themselves from the justice which their opinions deserve. It is deemed probable that they will attempt to retire to England by our Borders, and the Primate requireth me to watch with vigilance, and what not."

"Assuredly," said the monk, "the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain—those be they that turn the world upside down—and doubtless your reverend wisdom will with due diligence second the exertions of the Right Reverend Father in God, being in the peremptory defence of the Holy Church."

"Ay, but how is this to be done?" answered the Abbot, "Saint Mary aid us! The Primate writes to me as if I were a temporal baron—a man under command, having soldiers under him! He says, send forth—scour the country—guard the passes—Truly these men do not travel as those who would give their lives for nothing—the last who went south passed the dry-march at the Riding-burn with an escort of thirty spears, as our reverend brother the Abbot of Kelso did write unto us. How are crows and scapularies to stop the way?"

"Your bailiff is accounted a good man at arms, holy father," said Eustace; "your vassals are obliged to rise for the defence of the Holy Kirk—it is the tenure on which they hold their lands—if they will not come forth for the Church which gives them bread, let their possessions be given to others."

"We shall not be wanting," said the Abbot, collecting himself with importance, "to do whatever may advantage Holy Kirk—thyself shall hear the charge to our Bailiff and our officials—but here again is our controversy with the warden of the bridge and the Baron of Meigallot—Saint Mary! vexations do so multiply upon the House, and upon the generation, that a man wots not where to turn to! Thou didst say, Father Eustace, thou wouldst look into our evidents touching this free passage for the pilgrims?"

"I have looked into the Chartulary of the House, holy father," said Eustace, "and therein I find a written and formal grant of all duties and customs payable at the drawbridge of Brighton, not only by ecclesiastics of this foundation, but by every pilgrim truly designed to accomplish his vows at this House, to the Abbot Allford, and the monks of the House of Saint Mary in Kennaquhair, from that time and for ever. The deed is dated on Saint Bridget's Even, in the year of Redemption, 1137, and bears the sign and seal of the granter, Charles of Meigallot, great-great-grandfather of this baron, and purports to be granted for the safety of his own soul, and for the weal of the souls of his father and mother, and of all his predecessors and successors, being Barons of Meigallot."

"But he alleges," said the Abbot, "that the bridge-wards have been in possession of these dues, and have rendered them available for more than fifty years—and the baron threatens violence—meanwhile, the journey of the pilgrims is interrupted, to the prejudice of their own souls and the diminution of the revenues of Saint Mary. The Sacristan advised us to put on a boat; but the warden, whom thou knowest to be a godless man, has sworn the devil tear him, but that if they put on a boat on the laird's stream, he will rive her board from board—and then some say we should compound the claim for a small sum in silver." Here the Abbot paused a moment for a reply, but receiving none, he added, "But what thinkest thou, Father Eustace? why art thou silent?"

"Because I am surprised at the question which the Lord Abbot of Saint Mary's asks at the youngest of his brethren."

"Youngest in time of your abode with us, Brother Eustace," said the Abbot, "not youngest in years, or I think in experience. Sub-Prior also of this convent."

"I am astonished," continued Eustace, "that the Abbot of this venerable house should ask of any one whether he can alienate the patrimony of our holy and divine patroness, or give up to an unconscientious, and perhaps, a heretic baron, the rights conferred on this church by his devout progenitor. Popes and councils alike prohibit it—the honour of the living, and the weal of departed souls, alike forbid it—it may not be. To force, if he dare use it, we must surrender; but never by our consent should we see the goods of the church plundered, with as little scruple as he would drive off a herd of English bees. Rouse yourself, Reverend father,

and doubt nothing but that the good cause shall prevail. Whet the spiritual sword, and direct it against the wicked who would usurp our holy rights. Whet the temporal sword, if it be necessary, and stir up the courage and zeal of your loyal vassals."

The Abbot sighed deeply. "All this," he said, "is soon spoken by him who hath to act it not; but—" He was interrupted by the entrance of Bennet rather hastily. "The mule on which the Sacristan had set out in the morning had returned," he said, "to the convent stable all over wet, and with the saddle turned round beneath her belly."

"Sancta Maria!" said the Abbot, "our dear brother hath perished by the way!"

"It may not be," said Eustace, hastily—"let the bell be tolled—cause the brethren to get torches—alarm the village—hurry down to the river—I myself will be the foremost."

The real Abbot stood astonished and agape, when at once he beheld his office filled, and saw all which he ought to have ordered, going forward at the dictates of the youngest monk in the convent. But ere the orders of Eustace, which nobody dreamed of disputing, were carried into execution, the necessity was prevented by the sudden apparition of the Sacristan, whose supposed danger excited all the alarm.

Chapter the Seventh.

Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
Cleanse the foul bosom of the perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart.

MACBETH.

What betwixt cold and fright the afflicted Sacristan stood before his Superior, propped on the friendly arm of the convent miller, drenched with water, and scarce able to utter a syllable.

After various attempts to speak, the first words he uttered were,

"Swim we merrily—the moon shines bright."

"Swim we merrily!" retorted the Abbot, indignantly; "a merry night have ye chosen for swimming, and a becoming salutation to your Superior!"

"Our brother is bewildered," said Eustace;—"speak, Father Philip, how is it with you?"

"Good luck to your fishing,"

continued the Sacristan, making a most dolorous attempt at the tune of his strange companion.

"Good luck to your fishing!" repeated the Abbot, still more surprised than displeased; "by my halidome he is drunken with wine, and comes to our presence with his jolly catches in his throat! If bread and water can cure this folly—"

"With your pardon, venerable father," said the Sub-Prior, "of water our brother has had enough; and methinks, the confusion of his eye, is rather that of terror, than of aught unbecoming his profession. Where did you find him, Hob Miller?"

"An it please your reverence, I did but go to shut the sluice of the mill—and as I was going to shut the sluice, I heard something groan near to me; but judging it was one of Giles Fletcher's hogs—for so please you he never shuts his gate—I caught up my lever, and was about—Saint Mary forgive me!—to strike where I heard the sound, when, as the saints would have it, I heard the second groan just like that of a living man. So I called up my knaves, and found the Father Sacristan lying wet and senseless under the wall of our kiln. So soon as we brought him to himself a bit, he prayed to be brought to your reverence, but I doubt me his wits have gone a bell-wavering by the road. It was but now that he spoke in somewhat better form."

"Well!" said Brother Eustace, "thou hast done well, Hob Miller; only begone now, and remember a second time to pause, ere you strike in the dark."

"Please your reverence, it shall be a lesson to me," said the miller, "not to mistake a holy man for a hog again, so long as I live." And, making a bow, with profound humility, the miller withdrew.

"And now that this churl is gone, Father Philip," said Eustace, "wilt thou tell our venerable Superior what ails thee? art thou *vino gravatus*, man? if so we will have thee to thy cell."

"Water! water! not wine," muttered the exhausted Sacristan.

"Nay," said the monk, "if that be thy complaint, wine may perhaps cure thee;" and he reached him a cup, which the patient drank off to his great benefit.

"And now," said the Abbot, "let his garments be changed, or rather let him be carried to the infirmary; for it will prejudice our health, should we hear his narrative while he stands there, steaming like a rising hoar-frost."

"I will hear his adventure," said Eustace, "and report it to your reverence." And, accordingly, he attended the Sacristan to his cell. In about half an hour he returned to the Abbot.

"How is it with Father Philip?" said the Abbot; "and through what came he into such a state?"

"He comes from Glendearg, reverend sir," said Eustace; "and for the rest, he telleth such a legend, as has not been heard in this Monastery for many a long day." He then gave the Abbot the outlines of the Sacristan's adventures in the homeward journey, and added, that for some time he was inclined to think his brain was infirm, seeing he had sung, laughed, and wept all in the same breath.

"A wonderful thing it is to us," said the Abbot, "that Satan has been permitted to put forth his hand thus far on one of our sacred brethren!"

"True," said Father Eustace; "but for every text there is a paraphrase; and I have my suspicions, that if the drenching of Father Philip cometh of the Evil one, yet it may not have been altogether without his own personal fault."

"How!" said the Father Abbot; "I will not believe that thou makest doubt that Satan, in former days, hath been permitted to afflict saints and holy men, even as he afflicted the pious Job?"

"God forbid I should make question of it," said the monk, crossing himself; "yet, where there is an exposition of the Sacristan's tale, which is less than miraculous, I hold it safe to consider it at least, if not to abide by it. Now, this Hob the Miller hath a buxom daughter. Suppose—I say only suppose—that our Sacristan met her at the ford on her return from her uncle's on the other side, for there she hath this evening been—suppose, that, in courtesy, and to save her stripping hose and shoon, the Sacristan brought her across behind him—suppose he carried his familiarities farther than the maiden was willing to admit; and we may easily suppose, farther, that this wetting was the result of it."

"And this legend invented to deceive us!" said the Superior, reddening with wrath; "but most strictly shall it be sifted and inquired into; it is not upon us that Father Philip must hope to pass the result of his own evil practices for doings of Satan. To-morrow cite the wench to appear before us—we will examine, and we will punish."

"Under your reverence's favour," said Eustace, "that were but poor policy. As things now stand with us, the heretics catch hold of each flying report which tends to the scandal of our clergy. We must abate the evil, not only by strengthening discipline, but also by suppressing and stifling the voice of scandal. If my conjectures are true, the miller's daughter will be silent for her own sake; and your reverence's authority may also impose silence on her father, and on the Sacristan. If he is again found to afford room for throwing dishonour on his order, he can be punished with severity, but at the same time with secrecy. For what say the Decretals! *Facinora ostendi dum puniuntur, flagitia autem abscondi debent.*"

A sentence of Latin, as Eustace had before observed, had often much influence on the Abbot, because he understood it not fluently, and was ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance. On these terms they parted for the night.

The next day, Abbot Boniface strictly interrogated Philip on the real cause of his disaster of the previous night. But the Sacristan stood firm to his story; nor was he found to vary from any point of it, although the answers he returned were in some degree incoherent, owing to his intermingling with them ever and anon snatches of the strange damsel's song, which had made such deep impression on his imagination, that he could not prevent himself from imitating it repeatedly in the course of his examination. The Abbot had compassion with the Sacristan's involuntary frailty, to which something supernatural seemed annexed, and finally became of opinion, that Father Eustace's more natural explanation was rather plausible than just. And, indeed, although we have recorded the adventure as we find it written down, we cannot forbear to add that there was a schism on the subject in the convent, and that several of the brethren pretended to have good reason for thinking that the miller's black-eyed daughter was at the bottom of the affair after all. Whichever way it might be interpreted, all agreed that it had too ludicrous a sound to be permitted to get abroad, and therefore the Sacristan was charged, on his vow of obedience, to say no more of his ducking; an injunction which, having once eased his mind by telling his story, it may be well conjectured that he joyfully obeyed.

The attention of Father Eustace was much less forcibly arrested by the marvellous tale of the Sacristan's danger, and his escape, than by the mention of the volume which he had brought with him from the Tower of Glendearg. A copy of the Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, had found its way even into the proper territory of the church, and had been discovered in one of the most hidden and sequestered recesses of the Halidome of Saint Mary's.

He anxiously requested to see the volume. In this the Sacristan was unable to gratify him, for he had lost it, as far as he recollected, when the supernatural being, as he conceived her to be, took her departure from him. Father Eustace went down to the spot in person, and searched all around it, in hopes of recovering the volume in question; but his labour was in vain. He returned to the Abbot, and reported that it must have fallen into the river or the mill-stream; "for I will hardly believe," he said, "that Father Philip's musical friend would fly off with a copy of the Holy Scriptures."

"Being," said the Abbot, "as it is, an heretical translation, it may be thought that Satan may have power over it."

"Ayl!" said Father Eustace, "it is indeed his chiefest magazine of artillery, when he inspireth presumptuous and daring men to set forth their own opinions and expositions of Holy Writ. But though thus abused, the Scriptures are the source of our salvation, and are no more to be reckoned unholy, because of these rash men's proceedings, than a powerful medicine is to be contemned, or held poisonous, because bold and evil leeches have employed it to the prejudice of their patients. With the permission of your reverence, I would that this matter were looked into more closely. I will myself visit the Tower of Glendearg ere I am many hours older, and we shall see if any spectre or white woman of the wild will venture to interrupt my journey or return. Have I your reverend permission and your blessing?" he added, but in a tone that appeared to set no great store by either.

"Thou hast both, my brother," said the Abbot; but no sooner had Eustace left the apartment, than Boniface could not help breaking on the willing ear of the Sacristan his sincere wish, that any spirit, black, white, or gray, would read the adviser such a lesson, as to cure him of his presumption in esteeming himself wiser than the whole community.

"I wish him no worse lesson," said the Sacristan, "than to go swimming merrily down the river with a ghost behind, and Kelpies, night-crows, and mud-eels, all waiting to have a snatch at him.

Merrily swim we, the moon shines bright!

Good luck to your fishing, whom watch you to-night?"

"Brother Philip," said the Abbot, "we exhort thee to say thy prayers, compose thyself, and banish that foolish chant from thy mind;—it is but a deception of the devil's."

"I will essay, reverend Father," said the Sacristan, "but the tune hangs by my memory like a bur in a beggar's rags; it mingles with the psalter—the very bells of the convent seem to repeat the words, and jingle to the tune; and were you to put me to death at this very moment, it is my belief I should die singing it—'Now swim we merrily'—it is as it were a spell upon me."

He then again began to warble

"Good luck to your fishing."

And checking himself in the strain with difficulty, he exclaimed, "It is too certain—I am but a lost priest! Swim we merrily—I shall sing it at the very mass—Wo is me! I shall sing all the remainder of my life, and yet never be able to change the tune!"

The honest Abbot replied, "he knew many a good fellow in the same condition;" and concluded the remark with "ho! ho! ho!" for his reverence, as the reader may partly have observed, was one of those dull folks who love a quiet joke.

The Sacristan, well acquainted with his Superior's humour, endeavoured to join in the laugh, but his unfortunate canticle came again across his imagination, and interrupted the hilarity of his customary echo.

"By the rood, Brother Philip," said the Abbot, much moved, "you become altogether intolerable! and I am convinced that such a spell could not subsist over a person of religion, and in a religious house, unless he were under mortal sin. Wherefore, say the seven penitentiary psalms—make diligent use of thy scourge and hair-cloth—refrain for three days from all food, save bread and water—I myself will shrive thee, and we will see if this singing devil may be driven out of thee; at least I think Father Eustace himself could devise no better exorcism."

The Sacristan sighed deeply, but knew remonstrance was vain. He retired therefore to his cell, to try how far psalmody might be able to drive off the sounds of the syren tune which haunted his memory.

Meanwhile, Father Eustace proceeded to the drawbridge, in his way to the lonely valley of Glendearg. In a brief conversation with the churlish warder, he had the address to render him more tractable in the controversy betwixt him and the convent. He reminded him that his father had been a vassal under the community; that his brother was childless; and that their possession would revert to the church on his death, and might be either granted to himself the warder, or to some greater favourite of the Abbot, as matters chanced to stand betwixt them at the time. The Sub-Prior suggested to him also, the necessary connexion of interests betwixt the Monastery and the office which this man enjoyed. He listened with temper to his rude and churlish answers; and by keeping his own interest firm pitched in his view, he had the satisfaction to find that Peter gradually softened his tone, and consented to let every pilgrim who travelled upon foot pass free of exaction until Pentecost next; they who travelled on horseback or otherwise, contenting to pay the ordinary custom. Having thus accommodated a matter in which the weal of the convent was so deeply interested, Father Eustace proceeded on his journey.

Chapter the Eighth.

Nay, dally not with time, the wise man's treasure,

Though fools are lavish on't—the fatal Fisher

Hooks souls, while we waste moments.

OLD PLAY.

A November mist overspread the little valley, up which slowly but steadily rode the Monk Eustace. He was not insensible to the feeling of melancholy inspired by the scene and by the season. The stream seemed to murmur with a deep and oppressed note, as if bewailing the departure of autumn. Among the scattered copses which here and there fringed its banks, the oak-trees only retained that pallid green that precedes their russet hue. The leaves of the willows were most of them stripped from the branches, lay rustling at each breath, and disturbed by every step of the mule; while the foliage of other trees, totally withered, kept still precarious possession of the boughs, waiting the first wind to scatter them.

The monk dropped into the natural train of pensive thought which these autumnal emblems of mortal hopes are peculiarly calculated to inspire. "There," he said, looking at the leaves which lay strewed around, "lie the hopes of early youth, first formed that they may soonest wither, and loveliest in spring to become most contemptible in winter; but you, ye lingerers," he added, looking to a knot of beeches which still bore their withered leaves, "you are the proud plans of adventurous manhood, formed later, and still clinging to the mind of age, although it acknowledges their inanity! None lasts—none endures, save the foliage of the hardy oak, which only begins to show itself when that of the rest of the forest has enjoyed half its existence. A pale and decayed hue is all it possesses, but still it retains that symptom of vitality to the last.—So be it with Father Eustace! The fairy hopes of my youth I have trodden under foot like those neglected rustlers—to the prouder dreams of my manhood I look back as to lofty chimeras, of which the pith and essence have long since faded; but my religious vows, the faithful profession which I have made in my maturer age, shall retain life while aught of Eustace lives. Dangerous it may be—feeble it must be—yet live it shall, the proud determination to serve the Church of which I am a member, and to combat the heresies by which she is assailed." Thus spoke, at least thus thought, a man zealous according to his imperfect knowledge, confounding the vital interests of Christianity with the extravagant and usurped claims of the Church of Rome, and defending his cause with an ardour worthy of a better.

While moving onward in this contemplative mood, he could not help thinking more than once, that he saw in his path the form of a female dressed in white, who appeared in the attitude of lamentation. But the impression was only momentary, and whenever he looked steadily to the point where he conceived the figure appeared, it always proved that he had mistaken some natural object, a white crag, or the trunk of a decayed birch-tree with its silver bark, for the appearance in question.

Father Eustace had dwelt too long in Rome to partake the superstitious feelings of the more ignorant Scottish clergy; yet he certainly thought it extraordinary, that so strong an impression should have been made on his mind by the legend of the Sacristan. "It is strange," he said to himself, "that this story, which doubtless was the invention of Brother Philip to cover his own impropriety of conduct, should run so much in my head, and disturb my more serious thoughts—I am wont, I think, to have more command over my senses. I will repeat my prayers, and banish such folly from my recollection."

The monk accordingly began with devotion to tell his beads, in pursuance of the prescribed rule of his order, and was not again disturbed by any wanderings of the imagination, until he found himself beneath the little fortalice of Glendearg.

Dame Glendinning, who stood at the gate, set up a shout of surprise and joy at seeing the good father. "Martin," she said, "Jasper, where be a' the folk?—help the right reverend Sub-Prior to dismount, and take his mule from him.—O father! God has sent you in our need—I was just going to send man and horse to the convent, though I ought to be ashamed to give so much trouble to your reverences."

"Our trouble matters not, good dame," said Father Eustace; "in what can I pleasure you? I came hither to visit the Lady of Avenel."

"Well-a-day!" said Dame Alice, "and it was on her part that I had the boldness to think of summoning you, for the good lady will never be able to wear over the day!—Would it please you to go to her chamber?"

"Hath she not been shriven by Father Philip?" said the monk.

"Shriven she was," said the Dame of Glendearg, "and by Father Philip, as your reverence truly says—but—I wish it may have been a clean shrift—Methought Father Philip looked but moody upon it—and there was a book which he took away with him, that—" She paused as if unwilling to proceed.

"Speak out, Dame Glendinning," said the Father; "with us it is your duty to have no secrets."

"Nay, if it please your reverence, it is not that I would keep anything from your reverence's knowledge, but I fear I should prejudice the lady in your opinion; for she is an excellent lady—months and years has she dwelt in this tower, and none more exemplary than she; but this matter, doubtless, she will explain it herself to your reverence."

"I desire first to know it from you, Dame Glendinning," said the monk; "and I again repeat, it is your duty to tell it to me."

"This book, if it please your reverence, which Father Philip removed from Glendearg, was this morning returned to us in a strange manner," said the good widow.

"Returned!" said the monk; "how mean you?"

"I mean," answered Dame Glendinning, "that it was brought back to the tower of Glendearg, the saints best know how—that same book which Father Philip carried with him but yesterday. Old Martin, that is my tasker and the lady's servant, was driving out the cows to the pasture—for we have three good milk-cows, reverend father, blessed be Saint Waldave, and thanks to the holy Monastery—"

The monk groaned with impatience; but he remembered that a woman of the good dame's condition was like a top, which, if you let it spin on untouched, must at last come to a pause; but, if you interrupt it by flogging, there is no end to its gyrations. "But, to speak no more of the cows, your reverence, though they are likely cattle as ever were tied to a stake, the tasker was driving them out, and the lads, that is my Halbert and my Edward, that your reverence has seen at church on holidays, and especially Halbert,—for you patted him on the head and gave him a brooch of Saint Cuthbert, which he wears in his bonnet,—and little Mary Avenel, that is the lady's daughter, they ran all after the cattle, and began to play up and down the pasture as young folk will, your reverence. And at length they lost sight of Martin and the cows; and they began to run up a little cleugh which we call *Corri-nan-Shian*, where there is a wee bit stripe of a burn, and they saw there—Good guide us!—a White Woman sitting on the burnside wringing her hands—so the bairns were frighted to see a strange woman sitting there, all but Halbert, who will be sixteen come Whitsuntide; and, besides, he never feared ony thing—and when they went up to her—behold she was passed away!"

"For shame, good woman!" said Father Eustace; "a woman of your sense to listen to a tale so idle!—the young folk told you a lie, and that was all."

"Nay, sir, it was more than that," said the old dame; "for, besides that they never told me a lie in their lives, I must warn you that on the very ground where the White Woman was sitting, they found the Lady of Avenel's book, and brought it with them to the tower."

"That is worthy of mark at least," said the monk. "Know you no other copy of this volume within these bounds?"

"None, your reverence," returned Elspeth; "why should there?—no one could read it were there twenty."

"Then you are sure it is the very same volume which you gave to Father Philip?" said the monk.

"As sure as that I now speak with your reverence."

"It is most singular!" said the monk; and he walked across the room in a musing posture.

"I have been upon nettles to hear what your reverence would say," continued Dame Glendinning, "respecting this matter—There is nothing I would not do for the Lady of Avenel and her family, and that has been proved, and for her servants to boot, both Martin and Tibb, although Tibb is not so civil sometimes as altogether I have a right to expect; but I cannot think it beseeeming to have angels, or ghosts, or fairies, or the like, waiting upon a leddy when she is in another woman's house, in respect it is no ways creditable. Ony thing she had to do was always done to her hand, without costing her either pains or pence, as a country body says; and besides the discredit, I cannot but think that there is no safety in having such unchancy creatures about ane. But I have tied red thread round the bairns's throats," (so her fondness still called them,) "and given ilka ane of them a riding-wand of rowan-tree, forby sewing up a slip of witch-elm into their doublets; and I wish to know of your reverence if there be ony thing mair that a lone woman can do in the matter of ghosts and fairies?—Be here! that I should have named their unlucky names twice ower!"

"Dame Glendinning," answered the monk, somewhat abruptly, when the good woman had finished her narrative, "I pray you, do you know the miller's daughter?"

"Did I know Kate Happer?" replied the widow; "as well as the beggar knows his dish—a canty quean was Kate, and a special cummer of my ain maybe twenty years syne."

"She cannot be the wench I mean," said Father Eustace; "she after whom I inquire is scarce fifteen, a black-eyed girl—you may have seen her at the kirk."

"Your reverence must be in the right; and she is my cummer's nie'ce, doubtless, that you are pleased to speak of: but I thank God I have always been too duteous in attention to the mass, to know whether young wenches have black eyes or green ones."

The good father had so much of the world about him, that he was unable to avoid smiling, when the dame boasted her absolute resistance to a temptation, which was not quite so liable to beset her as those of the other sex.

"Perhaps, then," he said, "you know her usual dress, Dame Glendinning?"

"Ay, ay, father," answered the dame readily enough, "a white kirtle the wench wears, to hide the dust of the mill, no doubt—and a blue hood, that might weel be spared, for pridefulness."

"Then, may it not be she," said the father, "who has brought back this book, and stepped out of the way when the children came near her?"

The dame paused—was unwilling to combat the solution suggested by the monk—but was at a loss to conceive why the lass of the mill should come so far from home into so wild a corner merely to leave an old book with three children, from whose observation she wished to conceal herself.

Above all, she could not understand why, since she had acquaintances in the family, and since the Dame Glendinning had always paid her multure and knaveship duly, the said lass of the mill had not come in to rest herself and eat a morsel, and tell her the current news of the water.

These very objections satisfied the monk that his conjectures were right. "Dame," he said, "you must be cautious in what you say. This is an instance—I would it were the sole one—of the power of the Enemy in these days. The matter must be sifted—with a curious and a careful hand."

"Indeed," said Elspeth, trying to catch and chime in with the ideas of the Sub-Prior, "I have often thought the miller's folk at the Monastery-mill were far over careless in sifting our melder, and in bolting it too—some folk say they will not stick at whiles to put in a handful of ashes amongst Christian folk's corn-meal."

"That shall be looked after also, dame," said the Sub-Prior, not displeased to see that the good old woman went off on a false scent; "and now, by your leave, I will see this lady—do you go before, and prepare her to see me."

Dame Glendinning left the lower apartment accordingly, which the monk paced in anxious reflection, considering how he might best discharge, with humanity as well as with effect, the important duty imposed on him. He resolved to approach the bedside of the sick person with reprimands, mitigated only by a feeling for her weak condition—he determined, in case of her reply, to which late examples of hardened heretics might encourage her, to be prepared with answers to the customary scruples. High fraught, also, with zeal against her unauthorized intrusion into the priestly function, by study of the Sacred Scriptures, he imagined to himself the answers which one of the modern school of heresy might return to him—the victorious refutation which should lay the disputant prostrate at the Confessor's mercy—and the healing, yet awful exhortation, which, under pain of refusing the last consolations of religion, he designed to make to the penitent, conjuring her, as she loved her own soul's welfare, to disclose to him what she knew of the dark mystery of iniquity, by which heresies were introduced into the most secluded spots of the very patrimony of the Church herself—what agents they had who could thus glide, as it were unseen, from place to place, bring back the volume which the Church had interdicted to the spots from which it had been removed under her express auspices; and, who, by encouraging the daring and profane thirst after knowledge forbidden and useless to the laity, had encouraged the fisher of souls to use with effect his old bait of ambition and vain-glory.

Much of this premeditated disputation escaped the good father, when Elspeth returned, her tears flowing faster than her apron could dry them, and made him a signal to follow her. "How," said the monk, "is she then so near her end?—nay, the Church must not break or bruise, when comfort is yet possible;" and forgetting his polemics, the good Sub-Prior hastened to the little apartment, where, on the wretched bed which she had occupied since her misfortunes had driven her to the Tower of Glendearg, the widow of Walter Avenel had rendered up her spirit to her Creator. "My God!" said the Sub-Prior, "and has my unfortunate dallying suffered her to depart without the Church's consolation! Look to her, dame," he exclaimed, with eager impatience; "is there not yet a sparkle of the life left?—may she not be recalled—recalled but for a moment?—Oh! would that she could express, but by the most imperfect word—but by the most feeble motion, her acquiescence in the needful task of penitential prayer!—Does she not breathe?—Art thou sure she doth not?"

"She will never breathe more," said the matron. "Oh! the poor fatherless girl—now motherless also—Oh, the kind companion I have had these many years, whom I shall never see again! But she is in heaven for certain, if ever woman went there; for a woman of better life——"

"Wo to me," said the good monk, "if indeed she went not hence in good assurance—wo to the reckless shepherd, who suffered the wolf to carry a choice one from the flock, while he busied himself with trimming his sling and his staff to give the monster battle! Oh! if in the long Hereafter, aught but weal should that poor spirit share, what has my delay cost?—the value of an immortal soul!"

He then approached the body, full of the deep remorse natural to a good man of his persuasion, who devoutly believed the doctrines of the Catholic Church. "Ay," said he, gazing on the pallid corpse, from which the spirit had parted so placidly as to leave a smile upon the thin blue lips, which had been so long wasted by decay that they had parted with the last breath of animation without the slightest convulsive tremor—"Ay," said Father Eustace, "there lies the faded tree, and, as it fell, so it lies—awful thought for me, should my neglect have left it to descend in an evil direction!" He then again and again conjured Dame Glendinning to tell him what she knew of the demeanour and ordinary walk of the deceased.

All tended to the high honour of the deceased lady; for her companion, who admired her sufficiently while alive, notwithstanding some trifling points of jealousy, now idolized her after her death, and could think of no attribute of praise with which she did not adorn her memory.

Indeed, the Lady of Avenel, however she might privately doubt some of the doctrines announced by the Church of Rome, and although she had probably tacitly appealed from that corrupted system of Christianity to the volume on which Christianity itself is founded, had nevertheless been regular in her attendance on the worship of the Church, not, perhaps, extending her scruples so far as to break off communion. Such indeed was the first sentiment of the earlier reformers, who seemed to have studied, for a time at least, to avoid a schism, until the violence of the Pope rendered it inevitable.

Father Eustace, on the present occasion, listened with eagerness to everything which could lead to assure him of the lady's orthodoxy in the main points of belief; for his conscience reproached him sorely, that, instead of protracting conversation with the Dame of Glendearg, he had not instantly hastened where his presence was so necessary. "If," he said, addressing the dead body, "thou art yet free from the utmost penalty due to the followers of false doctrine—if thou dost but suffer for a time, to expiate faults done in the body, but partaking of mortal frailty more than of deadly sin, fear not that thy abode shall be long in the penal regions to which thou mayest be doomed—if vigils—if masses—if penance—if maceration of my body, till it resembles that extenuated form which the soul hath abandoned, may assure thy deliverance. The Holy Church—the godly foundation—our blessed Patroness herself, shall intercede for one whose errors were counter-balanced by so many virtues.—Leave me, dame—here, and by her bed-side, will I perform those duties—which this piteous case demands!"

Elspeth left the monk, who employed himself in fervent and sincere, though erroneous prayers, for the weal of the departed spirit. For an hour he remained in the apartment of death, and then returned to the hall, where he found the still weeping friend of the deceased.

But it would be injustice to Mrs. Glendinning's hospitality, if we suppose her to have been weeping during this long interval, or rather if we suppose her so entirely absorbed by the tribute of sorrow which she paid frankly and plentifully to her deceased friend, as to be incapable of attending to the rights of hospitality due to the holy visitor—who was confessor at once, and Sub-Prior—mighty in all religious and secular considerations, so far as the vassals of the Monastery were interested. Her barley-bread had been toasted—her choicest cask of home-brewed ale had been broached—her best butter had been placed on the hall-table, along with her most savoury ham, and her choicest cheese, ere she abandoned herself to the extremity of sorrow; and it was not till she had arranged her little repast neatly on the board, that she sat down in the chimney corner, threw her checked apron over her head, and gave way to the current of tears and sobs. In this there was no grimace or affectation. The good dame held the honours of her house to be as essential a duty, especially when a monk was her visitant, as any other pressing call upon her conscience; nor until these were suitably attended to did she find herself at liberty to indulge her sorrow for her departed friend.

When she was conscious of the Sub-Prior's presence, she rose with the same attention to his reception; but he declined all the offers of hospitality with which she endeavoured to tempt him. Not her butter, as yellow as gold, and the best, she assured him, that was made in the patrimony of St. Mary—not the barley scones, which "the departed saint, God sain her! used to say were so good"—not the ale, nor any other cates which poor Elspeth's stores afforded, could prevail on the Sub-Prior to break his fast. "This day," he said, "I must not taste food until the sun go down, happy if, in so doing, I can expiate my own negligence—happier still, if my sufferings of this trifling nature, undertaken in pure faith and singleness of heart, may benefit the soul of the deceased. Yet, dame," he added, "I may not so far forget the living in my cares for the dead, as to leave behind me that book, which is to the ignorant what, to our first parents, the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil unhappily proved—excellent indeed in itself, but fatal because used by those to whom it is prohibited."

"Oh, blithely, reverend father," said the widow of Simon Glendinning, "will I give you the book, if so be I can while it from the bairns; and indeed, poor things, as the case stands with them even now, you might take the heart out of their bodies, and they never find it out, they are sae begrutten." {Footnote: *Begrutten*—over-weeped}

"Give them this missal instead, good dame," said the father, drawing from his pocket one which was curiously illuminated with paintings, "and I will come myself, or send one at a fitting time, and teach them the meaning of these pictures."

"The bonny images!" said Dame Glendinning, forgetting for an instant her grief in her admiration, "and weel I wot," added she, "it is another sort of a book than the poor Lady of Avenel's; and blessed might we have been this day, if your reverence had found the way up the glen, instead of Father Philip, though the Sacristan is a powerful man too, and speaks as if he would ger the house fly abroad, save that the walls are gey thick. Simon's forebears (may he and they be blessed!) took care of that."

The monk ordered his mule, and was about to take his leave; and the good dame was still delaying him with questions about the funeral, when a horseman, armed and accoutred, rode into the little court-yard which surrounded the Keep.

Chapter the Ninth.

For since they rode among our doors
With splent on spauld and rusty spurs,
There grows no fruit into our furs;
Thus said John Up-on-land.

DANNATYNE MS.

The Scottish laws, which were as wisely and judiciously made as they were carelessly and ineffectually executed, had in vain endeavoured to restrain the damage done to agriculture, by the chiefs and landed proprietors retaining in their service what were called jack-men, from the *jack*, or doublet, quilted with iron which they wore as defensive armour. These military retainers conducted themselves with great insolence towards the industrious part of the community—lived in a great measure by plunder, and were ready to execute any commands of their master, however unlawful. In adopting this mode of life, men resigned the quiet hopes and regular labours of industry, for an unsettled, precarious, and dangerous trade, which yet had such charms for those once accustomed to it, that they became incapable of following any other. Hence the complaint of John Upland, a fictitious character, representing a countryman, into whose mouth the poets of the day put their general satires upon men and manners.

They ride about in such a rage,
By forest, frith, and field,
With buckler, bow, and brand.
Lo! where they ride out through the rye!
The Devil mot save the company,
Quoth John Up-on-land.

Christie of the Clinthill, the horseman who now arrived at the little Tower of Glendearg, was one of the hopeful company of whom the poet complains, as was indicated by his "splent on spauld," (iron-plates on his shoulder,) his rusted spurs, and his long lance. An iron skull-cap, none of the brightest, bore for distinction a sprig of the holly, which was Avenel's badge. A long two-edged straight sword, having a handle made of polished oak, hung down by his side. The meagre condition of his horse, and the wild and emaciated look of the rider, showed their occupation could not be accounted an easy or a thriving one. He saluted Dame Glendinning with little courtesy, and the monk with less; for the growing disrespect to the religious orders had not failed to extend itself among a class of men of such disorderly habits, although it may be supposed they were tolerably indifferent alike to the new or the ancient doctrines.

"So, our lady is dead, Dame Glendinning?" said the jack-man; "my master has sent you even now a fat bullock for her mart—it may serve for her funeral. I have left him in the upper cleugh, as he is somewhat kenspeckle, {Footnote: *Kenspeckle*—that which is easily recognized by the eye.} and is marked both with cut and birn—the sooner the skin is off, and he is in saultfat, the less like you are to have trouble—you understand me? Let me have a peck of corn for my horse, and beef and beer for myself, for I must go on to the Monastery—though I think this monk hero might do mine errand."

"Thine errand, rude man!" said the Sub-Prior, knitting his brows—

"For God's sake" cried poor Dame Glendinning, terrified at the idea of a quarrel between them,—"*O Christie!*—it is the Sub-Prior—*O* reverend sir, it is Christie of the Clinthill, the laird's chief jack-man; ye know that little havings can be expected from the like o' them."

"Are you a retainer of the Laird of Avenel?" said the monk, addressing himself to the horseman, "and do you speak thus rudely to a Brother of Saint Mary's, to whom thy master is so much beholden?"

"He means to be yet more beholden to your house, Sir Monk," answered the fellow; "for hearing his sister-in-law, the widow of Walter of Avenel, was on her death-bed, he sent me to say to the Father Abbot and the brethren, that he will hold the funeral-feast at their convent, and invites himself thereto, with a score of horse and some friends, and to abide there for three days and three nights,—having horse-meat and men's-meat at the charge of the community; of which his intention he sends due notice, that fitting preparation may be timeously made."

"Friend," said the Sub-Prior, "believe not that I will do to the Father Abbot the indignity of delivering such an errand.—Think'st thou the goods of the church were bestowed upon her by holy princes and pious nobles, now dead and gone, to be consumed in revelry by every profligate layman who numbers in his train more followers than he can support by honest means, or by his own incomings? Tell thy master, from the Sub-Prior of Saint Mary's, that the Primate hath issued his commands to us that we submit no longer to this compulsory exaction of hospitality on slight or false pretences. Our lands and goods were given to relieve pilgrims and pious persons, not to feast bands of rude soldiers."

"This to me!" said the angry spearman, "this to me and to my master—Look to yourself then, Sir Priest, and try if *Ave* and *Credo* will keep bullocks from wandering, and hay-stacks from burning."

"Dost thou menace the Holy Church's patrimony with waste and fire-raising," said the Sub-Prior, "and that in the face of the sun? I call on all who hear me to bear witness to the words this ruffian has spoken. Remember how the Lord James drowned such as you by scores in the black pool at Jeddart.—To him and to the Primate will I complain." The soldier shifted the position of his lance, and brought it down to a level with the monk's body.

Dame Glendinning began to shriek for assistance. "Tibb Tacket! Martin! where be ye all?—Christie, for the love of God, consider he is a man of Holy Kirk!"

"I care not for his spear," said the Sub-Prior; "if I am slain in defending the rights and privileges of my community, the Primate will know how to take vengeance."

"Let him look to himself," said Christie, but at the same time depositing his lance against the wall of the tower; "if the Fife men spoke true who came hither with the Governor in the last raid, Norman Leslie has him at feud, and is like to set him hard. We know Norman a true bloodhound, who will never quit the slot. But I had no design to offend the holy father," he added, thinking perhaps he had gone a little too far; "I am a rude man, bred to lance and stirrup, and not used to deal with book-learned men and priests; and I am willing to ask his forgiveness—and his blessing, if I have said aught amiss."

"For God's sake! your reverence," said the widow of Glendearg apart to the Sub-Prior, "bestow on him your forgiveness—how shall we poor folk sleep in security in the dark nights, if the convent is at feud with such men as he is?"

"You are right, dame," said the Sub-Prior, "your safety should, and must be, in the first instance consulted.—Soldier, I forgive thee, and may God bless thee and send thee honesty."

Christie of the Clinthill made an unwilling inclination with his head, and muttered apart, "that is as much as to say, God send thee starvation, But now to my master's demand, Sir Priest? What answer am I to return?"

"That the body of the widow of Walter of Avenel," answered the Father, "shall be interred as becomes her rank, and in the tomb of her valiant husband. For your master's proffered visit of three days, with such a company and retinue, I have no authority to reply to it; you must intimate your Chief's purpose to the Reverend Lord Abbot."

"That will cost me a farther ride," said the man, "but it is all in the day's work.—How now, my lad," said he to Halbert, who was handling the long lance which he had laid aside; "how do you like such a plaything?—will you go with me and be a moss-trooper?"

"The Saints in their mercy forbid!" said the poor mother; and then, afraid of having displeased Christie by the vivacity of her exclamation, she followed it up by explaining, that since Simon's death she could not look on a spear or a bow, or any implement of destruction without trembling.

"Pshaw!" answered Christie, "thou shouldst take another husband, dame, and drive such follies out of thy thoughts—what sayst thou to such a strapping lad as I? Why, this old tower of thine is fensible enough, and there is no want of clenches, and crags, and bogs, and thickets, if one was set hard; a man might bide here and keep his half-score of lads, and as many geldings, and live on what he could lay his hand on, and be kind to thee, old wench."

"Alas! Master Christie," said the matron, "that you should talk to a lone woman in such a fashion, and death in the house besides!"

"Lone woman!—why, that is the very reason thou shouldst take a mate. Thy old friend is dead, why, good—choose thou another of somewhat tougher frame, and that will not die of the pip like a young chicken.—Better still—Come, dame, let me have something to eat, and we will talk more of this."

Dame Elspeth, though she well knew the character of the man, whom in fact she both disliked and feared, could not help simpering at the personal address which he thought proper to make to her. She whispered to the Sub-Prior, "ony thing just to keep him quiet," and went into the tower to set before the soldier the food he desired, trusting betwixt good cheer and the power of her own charms, to keep Christie of the Clinthill so well amused, that the altercation betwixt him and the holy father should not be renewed.

The Sub-Prior was equally unwilling to hazard any unnecessary rupture between the community and such a person as Julian of Avenel. He was sensible that moderation, as well as firmness, was necessary to support the tottering cause of the Church of Rome; and that, contrary to former times, the quarrels betwixt the clergy and laity had, in the present, usually terminated to the advantage of the latter. He resolved, therefore, to avoid farther strife by withdrawing, but failed not, in the first place, to possess himself of the volume which the Sacristan carried off the evening before, and which had been returned to the glen in such a marvellous manner.

Edward, the younger of Dame Elspeth's boys, made great objections to the book's being removed, in which Mary would probably have joined, but that she was now in her little sleeping-chamber with Tibb, who was exerting her simple skill to console the young lady for her mother's death. But the younger Glendinning stood up in defence of her property, and, with a positiveness which had hitherto made no part of his character, declared, that now the kind lady was dead, the book was Mary's, and no one but Mary should have it.

"But if it is not a fit book for Mary to read, my dear boy," said the father, gently, "you would not wish it to remain with her?"

"The lady read it," answered the young champion of property; "and so it could not be wrong—it shall not be taken away.—I wonder where Halbert is?—listening to the bravading tales of gay Christie, I reckon,—he is always wishing for fighting, and now he is out of the way."

"Why, Edward, you would not fight with me, who am both a priest and old man?"

"If you were as good a priest as the Pope," said the boy, "and as old as the hills to boot, you shall not carry away Mary's book without her leave. I will do battle for it."

"But see you, my love," said the monk, amused with the resolute friendship manifested by the boy, "I do not take it; I only borrow it; and I leave in its place my own gay missal, as a pledge I will bring it again."

Edward opened the missal with eager curiosity, and glanced at the pictures with which it was illustrated. "Saint George and the dragon—Halbert will like that; and Saint Michael brandishing his sword over the head of the Wicked One—and that will do for Halbert too. And see the Saint John leading his lamb in the wilderness, with his little cross made of reeds, and his scrip and staff—that shall be my favourite; and where shall we find one for poor Mary?—here is a beautiful woman weeping and lamenting herself."

"This is Saint Mary Magdalen repenting of her sins, my dear boy," said the father.

"That will not suit *our* Mary; for she commits no faults, and is never angry with us, but when we do something wrong."

"Then," said the father, "I will show you a Mary, who will protect her and you, and all good children. See how fairly she is represented, with her gown covered with golden stars."

The boy was lost in wonder at the portrait of the Virgin, which the Sub-Prior turned up to him.

"This," he said, "is really like our sweet Mary; and I think I will let you take away the black book, that has no such goodly shows in it, and leave this for Mary instead. But you must promise to bring back the book, good father—for now I think upon it, Mary may like that best which was her mother's."

"I will certainly return," said the monk, evading his answer, "and perhaps I may teach you to write and read such beautiful letters as you see there written, and to paint them blue, green, and yellow, and to blazon them with gold."

"Ay, and to make such figures as these blessed Saints, and especially these two Marys?" said the boy.

"With their blessing," said the Sub-Prior, "I can teach you that art too, so far as I am myself capable of showing, and you of learning it." "Then," said Edward, "will I paint Mary's picture—and remember you are to bring back the black book; that you must promise me."

The Sub-Prior, anxious to get rid of the boy's pertinacity, and to set forward on his return to the convent, without having any further interview with Christie the galloper, answered by giving the promise Edward required, mounted his mule, and set forth on his return homeward.

The November day was well spent ere the Sub-Prior resumed his journey; for the difficulty of the road, and the various delays which he had met with at the tower, had detained him longer than he proposed. A chill easterly wind was sighing among the withered leaves, and stripping them from the hold they had yet retained on the parent trees.

"Even so," said the monk, "our prospects in this vale of time grow more disconsolate as the stream of years passes on. Little have I gained by my journey, saving the certainty that heresy is busy among us with more than his usual activity, and that the spirit of insulting religious orders, and plundering the Church's property, so general in the eastern districts of Scotland, has now come nearer home."

The tread of a horse which came up behind him, interrupted his reverie, and he soon saw he was mounted by the same wild rider whom he had left at the tower.

"Good even, my son, and benedicite," said the Sub-Prior as he passed; but the rude soldier scarce acknowledged the greeting, by bending his head; and dashing the spurs into his horse, went on at a pace which soon left the monk and his mule far behind. And there, thought the Sub-Prior, goes another plague of the times—a fellow whose birth designed him to cultivate the earth, but who is perverted by the unhallowed and unchristian divisions of the country, into a daring and dissolute robber. The barons of Scotland are now turned masterful thieves and ruffians, oppressing the poor by violence, and wasting the Church, by extorting free-quarters from abbeys and priories, without either shame or reason. I fear me I shall be too late to counsel the Abbot to make a stand against these daring *sorners* {Footnote: To *sorne*, in Scotland, is to exact free quarters against the will of the landlord. It is declared equivalent to theft, by a statute passed in the year 1445. The great chieftains oppressed the monasteries very much by exactions of this nature. The community of Aberbrothwick complained of an Earl of Angus, I think, who was in the regular habit of visiting them once a year, with a train of a thousand horse, and abiding till the whole winter provisions of the

convent were exhausted.}—"I must make haste." He struck his mule with his riding wand accordingly; but, instead of mending her pace, the animal suddenly started from the path, and the rider's utmost efforts could not force her forward.

"Art thou, too, infected with the spirit of the times?" said the Sub-Prior; "thou wert wont to be ready and serviceable, and art now as restive as any wild jack-man or stubborn heretic of them all."

While he was contending with the startled animal, a voice, like that of a female, chanted in his ear, or at least very close to it,

"Good evening-. Sir Priest, and so late as you ride,
With your mule so fair, and your mantle so wide;
But ride you through valley, or ride you o'er hill.
There is one that has warrant to wait on you still.

Back, back,
The volume black!

I have a warrant to carry it back."

The Sub-Prior looked around, but neither bush nor brake was near which could conceal an ambushed songstress. "May Our Lady have mercy on me!" he said; "I trust my senses have not forsaken me—yet how my thoughts should arrange themselves into rhymes which I despise, and music which I care not for, or why there should be the sound of a female voice in ears, in which its melody has been so long indifferent, baffles my comprehension, and almost realizes the vision of Philip the Sacristan. Come, good mule, betake thee to the path, and let us hence while our judgment serves us."

But the mule stood as if it had been rooted to the spot, backed from the point to which it was pressed by its rider, and by her ears laid close into her neck, and her eyes almost starting from their sockets, testified that she was under great terror.

While the Sub-Prior, by alternate threats and soothing, endeavoured to reclaim the wayward animal to her duty, the wild musical voice was again heard close beside him.

"What, ho! Sub-Prior, and came you but here
To conjure a book from a dead woman's bier?
Sain you, and save you, be wary and wise,
Ride back with the book, or you'll pay for your prize.

Back, back.
There's death in the track!

In the name of my master I bid thee bear back."

"In the name of MY Master," said the astonished monk, "that name before which all things created tremble, I conjure thee to say what thou art that hauntest me thus?"

The same voice replied,

"That which is neither ill nor well.
That which belongs not to Heaven nor to hell,
A wreath of the mist, a bubble of the stream,
'Twixt a waking thought and a sleeping dream;
A form that men spy
With the half-shut eye.

In the beams of the setting sun, am I."

"This is more than simple fantasy," said the Sub-Prior, rousing himself; though, notwithstanding the natural hardihood of his temper, the sensible presence of a supernatural being so near him, failed not to make his blood run cold, and his hair bristle. "I charge thee," he said aloud, "be thine errand what it will, to depart and trouble me no more! False spirit, thou canst not appal any save those who do the work negligently." The voice immediately answered:

"Vainly, Sir Prior, wouldst thou bar me my right!

Like the star when it shoots, I can dart through the night;
I can dance on the torrent and ride on the air,
And travel the world with the bonny night-mare.

Again, again,
At the crook of the glen,

Where bickers the burnie, I'll meet thee again."

The road was now apparently left open; for the mule collected herself, and changed from her posture of terror to one which promised advance, although a profuse perspiration, and general trembling of the joints, indicated the bodily terror she had undergone.

"I used to doubt the existence of Cabalists and Rosicrucians," thought the Sub-Prior, "but, by my Holy Order, I know no longer what to say!—My pulse beats temperately—my hand is cool—I am fasting from everything but sin, and possessed of my ordinary faculties—Either some fiend is permitted to bewilder me, or the tales of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and others who treat of occult philosophy, are not without foundation.—At the crook of the glen? I could have desired to avoid a second meeting, but I am on the service of the Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against me."

He moved around accordingly, but with precaution, and not without fear; for he neither knew the manner in which, or the place where his journey might be next interrupted by his invisible attendant. He descended the glen without interruption for about a mile farther, when, just at the spot where the brook approached the steep hill, with a winding so abrupt as to leave scarcely room for a horse to pass, the mule was again visited with the same symptoms of terror which had before interrupted her course. Better acquainted than before with the cause of her restiveness, the Priest employed no effort to make her proceed, but addressed himself to the object, which he doubted not was the same that had formerly interrupted him, in the words of solemn exorcism prescribed by the Church of Rome on such occasions.

In reply to his demand, the voice again sung;—

"Men of good are bold as sackless,{Footnote: Sackless—Innocent.}

Men of rude are wild and reckless,

Lie thou still

In the nook of the hill.

For those be before thee that wish thee ill."

While the Sub-Prior listened, with his head turned in the direction from which the sounds seemed to come, he felt as if something rushed against him; and ere he could discover the cause, he was pushed from his saddle with gentle but irresistible force. Before he reached the ground his senses were gone, and he lay long in a state of insensibility; for the sunset had not ceased to gild the top of the distant hill when he fell,—and when he again became conscious of existence, the pale moon was gleaming on the landscape. He awakened in a state of terror, from which, for a few minutes, he found it difficult to shake himself free. At length he sat upon the grass, and became sensible, by repeated exertion, that the only personal injury which he had sustained was the numbness arising from extreme cold. The motion of something near him made the blood again run to his heart, and by a sudden effort he started up, and, looking around, saw to his relief that the noise

was occasioned by the footsteps of his own mule. The peaceable animal had remained quietly beside her master during his trance, browsing on the grass which grew plentifully in that sequestered nook.

With some exertion he collected himself, remounted the animal, and meditating upon his wild adventure, descended the glen till its junction with the broader valley through which the Tweed winds. The drawbridge was readily dropped at his first summons; and so much had he won upon the heart of the churlish warden, that Peter appeared himself with a lantern to show the Sub-Prior his way over the perilous pass.

"By my sooth, sir," he said, holding the light up to Father Eustace's face, "you look sorely travelled and deadly pale—but a little matter serves to weary out you men of the cell. I now who speak to you—I have ridden—before I was perched up here on this pillar betwixt wind and water—it may be thirty Scots miles before I broke my fast, and have had the red of a bramble rose in my cheek all the while—But will you taste some food, or a cup of distilled waters?"

"I may not," said Father Eustace, "being under a vow; but I thank you for your kindness, and pray you to give what I may not accept to the next poor pilgrim who comes hither pale and fainting, for so it shall be the better both with him here, and with you hereafter."

"By my faith, and I will do so," said Peter Bridge-Ward, "even for thy sake—It is strange now, how this Sub-Prior gets round one's heart more than the rest of these cowed gentry, that think of nothing but quaffing and stuffing!—Wife, I say—wife, we will give a cup of distilled waters and a crust of bread unto the next pilgrim that comes over; and ye may keep for {Footnote: An old-fashioned name for an earthen jar for holding spirits.} the purpose the grunds of the last greybeard, and the ill-baked bannock which the bairns couldna eat."

While Peter issued these charitable, and, at the same time, prudent injunctions, the Sub-Prior, whose mild interference had awakened the Bridge-Ward to such an act of unwonted generosity, was pacing onward to the Monastery. In the way, he had to commune with and subdue his own rebellious heart, an enemy, he was sensible, more formidable than any which the external powers of Satan could place in his way.

Father Eustace had indeed strong temptation to suppress the extraordinary incident which had befallen him, which he was the more reluctant to confess, because he had passed so severe a judgment upon Father Philip, who, as he was not unwilling to allow, had, on his return from Glendearg, encountered obstacles somewhat similar to his own. Of this the Sub-Prior was the more convinced, when, feeling in his bosom for the Book which he had brought off from the Tower of Glendearg, he found it was amissing, which he could only account for by supposing it had been stolen from him during his trance.

"If I confess this strange visitation," thought the Sub-Prior, "I become the ridicule of all my brethren—I whom the Primate sent hither to be a watch, as it were, and a check upon their follies. I give the Abbot an advantage over me which I shall never again recover, and Heaven only knows how he may abuse it, in his foolish simplicity, to the dishonour and loss of Holy Kirk.—But then, if I make not true confession of my shame, with what face can I again presume to admonish or restrain others?—Avow, proud heart," continued he, addressing himself, "that the weal of Holy Church interests thee less in this matter than thine own humiliation—Yes, Heaven has punished thee even in that point in which thou didst deem thyself most strong, in thy spiritual pride and thy carnal wisdom. Thou hast laughed at and derided the inexperience of thy brethren—stoop thyself in turn to their derision—tell what they may not believe—affirm that which they will ascribe to idle fear, or perhaps to idle falsehood—sustain the disgrace of a silly visionary, or a wilful deceiver.—Be it so, I will do my duty, and make ample confession to my Superior. If the discharge of this duty destroys my usefulness in this house, God and Our Lady will send me where I can better serve them."

There was no little merit in the resolution thus piously and generously formed by Father Eustace. To men of any rank the esteem of their order is naturally most dear; but in the monastic establishment, cut off, as the brethren are, from other objects of ambition, as well as from all exterior friendship and relationship, the place which they hold in the opinion of each other is all in all.

But the consciousness how much he should rejoice the Abbot and most of the other monks of Saint Mary's, who were impatient of the unauthorized, yet irresistible control, which he was wont to exercise in the affairs of the convent, by a confession which would put him in a ludicrous, or perhaps even in a criminal point of view, could not weigh with Father Eustace in comparison with the task which his belief enjoined.

As, strong in his feelings of duty, he approached the exterior gate of the Monastery, he was surprised to see torches gleaming, and men assembled around it, some on horseback, some on foot, while several of the monks, distinguished through the night by their white scapularies, were making themselves busy among the crowd. The Sub-Prior was received with a unanimous shout of joy, which at once made him sensible that he had himself been the object of their anxiety.

"There he is! there he is! God be thanked—there he is, hale and fear!" exclaimed the vassals; while the monks exclaimed, "*Te Deum laudamus*—the blood of thy servants is precious in thy sight!"

"What is the matter, children? what is the matter, my brethren?" said Father Eustace, dismounting at the gate.

"Nay, brother, if thou know'st not, we will not tell thee till thou art in the refectory," answered the monks; "suffice it that the Lord Abbot had ordered these, our zealous and faithful vassals, instantly to set forth to guard thee from imminent peril—Ye may ungirth your horses, children, and dismiss; and to-morrow, each who was at this rendezvous may send to the convent kitchen for a quarter of a yard of roast beef, and a black-jack full of double ale." {Footnote: It was one of the few reminiscences of Old Parr, or Henry Jenkins, I forget which, that, at some convent in the veteran's neighbourhood, the community, before the dissolution, used to dole out roast-beef in the measure of feet and yards.}

The vassals dispersed with joyful acclamation, and the monks, with equal jubilee, conducted the Sub-Prior into the refectory.

Chapter the Tenth.

Here we stand—

Woundless and well, may Heaven's high name be bless'd for't!

As erst, ere treason couch'd a lance against us.

Decker.

No sooner was the Sub-Prior hurried into the refectory by his rejoicing companions, than the first person on whom he fixed his eye proved to be Christie of the Clinthill. He was seated in the chimney-corner, fettered and guarded, his features drawn into that air of sulky and turbid resolution with which those hardened in guilt are accustomed to view the approach of punishment. But as the Sub-Prior drew near to him, his face assumed a more wild and startled expression, while he exclaimed—"The devil! the devil himself, brings the dead back upon the living."

"Nay," said a monk to him, "say rather that Our Lady foils the attempts of the wicked on her faithful servants—our dear brother lives and moves."

"Lives and moves!" said the ruffian, rising and shuffling towards the Sub-Prior as well as his chains would permit; "nay, then, I will never trust ashen shaft and steel point more—It is even so," he added, as he gazed on the Sub-Prior with astonishment; "neither wem nor wound—not as much as a rent in his frock!"

"And whence should my wound have come?" said Father Eustace.

"From the good lance that never failed me before," replied Christie of the Clinthill.

"Heaven absolve thee for thy purpose!" said the Sub-Prior; "wouldst thou have slain a servant of the altar?"

"To choose!" answered Christie; "the Fifemen say, an the whole pack of ye were slain, there were more lost at Flodden."

"Villain! art thou heretic as well as murderer?"

"Not I, by Saint Giles," replied the rider; "I listened blithely enough to the Laird of Monance, when he told me ye were all cheats and knaves; but when he would have had me go hear one Wiseheart, a gosseller as they call him, he might as well have persuaded the wild colt that had flung one rider to kneel down and help another into the saddle."

"There is some goodness about him yet," said the Sacristan to the Abbot, who at that moment entered—"He refused to hear a heretic preacher."

"The better for him in the next world," answered the Abbot. "Prepare for death, my son,—we deliver thee over to the secular arm of our bailie, for execution on the Gallow-hill by peep of light."

"Amen!" said the ruffian; "'tis the end I must have come by sooner or later—and what care I whether I feed the crows at Saint Mary's or at Carlisle?"

"Let me implore your reverend patience for an instant," said the Sub-Prior; "until I shall inquire—"

"What!" exclaimed the Abbot, observing him for the first time—"Our dear brother restored to us when his life was unhopèd for!—nay, kneel not to a sinner like me—stand up—thou hast my blessing. When this villain came to the gate, accused by his own evil conscience, and crying out he had murdered thee, I thought that the pillar of our main aisle had fallen—no more shall a life so precious be exposed to such risks as occur in this border country; no longer shall one beloved and rescued of Heaven hold so low a station in the church as that of a poor Sub-Prior—I will write by express to the Primate for thy speedy removal and advancement."

"Nay, but let me understand," said the Sub-Prior; "did this soldier say he had slain me?"

"That he had transfixed you," answered the Abbot, "in full career with his lance—but it seems he had taken an indifferent aim. But no sooner didst thou fall to the ground mortally gored, as he deemed, with his weapon, than our blessed Patroness appeared to him, as he averred—"

"I averred no such thing," said the prisoner; "I said a woman in white interrupted me, as I was about to examine the priest's cassock, for they are usually well lined—she had a bulrush in her hand, with one touch of which she struck me from my horse, as I might strike down a child of four years old with an iron mace—and then, like a singing fiend as she was, she sung to me."

'Thank the holly-bush

That nods on thy brow;

Or with this slender rush

I had strangled thee now.'

I gathered myself up with fear and difficulty, threw myself on my horse, and came hither like a fool to get myself hanged for a rogue."

"Thou seest, honoured brother," said the Abbot to the Sub-Prior, "in what favour thou art with our blessed Patroness, that she herself becomes the guardian of thy paths—Not since the days of our blessed founder hath she shown such grace to any one. All unworthy were we to hold spiritual superiority over thee, and we pray thee to prepare for thy speedy removal to Aberbrothwick."

"Alas! my lord and father," said the Sub-Prior, "your words pierce my very soul. Under the seal of confession will I presently tell thee why I conceive myself rather the baffled sport of a spirit of another sort, than the protected favourite of the heavenly powers. But first let me ask this unhappy man a question or two."

"Do as ye list," replied the Abbot—"but you shall not convince me that it is fitting you remain in this inferior office in the convent of Saint Mary."

"I would ask of this poor man," said Father Eustace, "for what purpose he nourished the thought of putting to death one who never did him evil?"

"Ay! but thou didst menace me with evil," said the ruffian, "and no one but a fool is menaced twice. Dost thou not remember what you said touching the Primate and Lord James, and the black pool of Jedwood? Didst thou think me fool enough to wait till thou hadst betrayed me to the sack and the fork! There were small wisdom in that, methinks—as little as in coming hither to tell my own misdeeds—I think the devil was in me when I took this road—I might have remembered the proverb, 'Never Friar forgot feud.'"

"And it was solely for that—for that only hasty word of mine, uttered in a moment of impatience, and forgotten ere it was well spoken?" said Father Eustace.

"Ay! for that, and—for the love of thy gold crucifix," said Christie of the Clinthill.

"Gracious Heaven! and could the yellow metal—the glittering earth—so far overcome every sense of what is thereby represented?—Father Abbot, I pray, as a dear boon, you will deliver this guilty person to my mercy."

"Nay, brother," interposed the Sacristan, "to your doom, if you will, not to your mercy—Remember, we are not all equally favoured by our blessed Lady, nor is it likely that every frock in the Convent will serve as a coat of proof when a lance is couched against it."

"For that very reason," said the Sub-Prior, "I would not that for my worthless self the community were to fall at feud with Julian of Avenel, this man's master."

"Our Lady forbid!" said the Sacristan, "he is a second Julian the Apostate."

"With our reverend father the Abbot's permission, then," said Father Eustace, "I desire this man be freed from his chains, and suffered to depart uninjured;—and here, friend," he added, giving him the golden crucifix, "is the image for which thou wert willing to stain thy hands with murder. View it well, and may it inspire thee with other and better thoughts than those which referred to it as a piece of bullion! Part with it, nevertheless, if thy necessities require, and get thee one of such coarse substance that Mammon shall have no share in any of the reflections to which it gives rise. It was the bequest of a dear friend to me; but dearer service can it never do than that of winning a soul to Heaven."

The Borderer, now freed from his chains, stood gazing alternately on the Sub-Prior, and on the golden crucifix. "By Saint Giles," said he, "I understand ye not!—An ye give me gold for couching my lance at thee, what would you give me to level it at a heretic?"

"The Church," said the Sub-Prior, "will try the effect of her spiritual censures to bring these stray sheep into the fold, ere she employ the edge of the sword of Saint Peter."

"Ay, but," said the ruffian, "they say the Primate recommends a little strangling and burning in aid of both censure and of sword. But fare ye weel, I owe you a life, and it may be I will not forget my debt."

The bailie now came bustling in, dressed in his blue coat and bandaliers, and attended by two or three halberdiers. "I have been a thought too late in waiting upon your reverend lordship. I am grown somewhat fatter since the field of Pinkie, and my leathern coat slips not on so soon as it was wont; but the dungeon is ready, and though, as I said, I have been somewhat late—"

Here his intended prisoner walked gravely up to the officer's nose, to his great amazement.

"You have been indeed somewhat late, bailie," said he, "and I am greatly obligated to your buff-coat, and to the time you took to put it on. If the secular arm had arrived some quarter of an hour sooner, I had been out of the reach of spiritual grace; but as it is, I wish you good even, and a safe riddance out of your garment of durance, in which you have much the air of a hog in armour."

Wroth was the bailie at this comparison, and exclaimed in ire—"An it were not for the presence of the venerable Lord Abbot, thou knave—"

"Nay, an thou wouldst try conclusions," said Christie of the Clinthill, "I will meet thee at day-break by Saint Mary's Well."

"Hardened wretch!" said Father Eustace, "art thou but this instant delivered from death, and dost thou so soon morse thoughts of slaughter?"

"I will meet with thee ere it be long, thou knave," said the bailie, "and teach thee thine Oremus."

"I will meet thy cattle in a moonlight night before that day," said he of the Clinthill.

"I will have thee by the neck one misty morning, thou strong thief," answered the secular officer of the Church.

"Thou art thyself as strong a thief as ever rode," retorted Christie; "and if the worms were once feasting on that fat carcass of thine I might well hope to have thine office, by favour of these reverend men."

"A cast of their office, and a cast of mine," answered the bailie; "a cord and a confessor, that is all thou wilt have from us."

"Sirs," said the Sub-Prior, observing that his brethren began to take more interest than was exactly decorous in this wrangling betwixt justice and iniquity, "I pray you both to depart—Master Bailie, retire with your halberdiers, and trouble not the man whom we have dismissed.—And thou, Christie, or whatever be thy name, take thy departure, and remember thou owest thy life to the Lord Abbot's clemency."

"Nay, as to that," answered Christie, "I judge that I owe it to your own; but impute it to whom ye list, I owe a life among ye, and there is an end." And whistling as he went, he left the apartment, seeming as if he held the life which he had forfeited not worthy further thanks.

"Obstinate even to brutality!" said Father Eustace; "and yet who knows but some better ore may lie under so rude an exterior?"

"Save a thief from the gallows," said the Sacristan—"you know the rest of the proverb; and admitting, as may Heaven grant, that our lives and limbs are safe from this outrageous knave, who shall insure our meal and our malt, our herds and our flocks?"

"Marry, that will I, my brethren," said an aged monk. "Ah, brethren, you little know what may be made of a repentant robber. In Abbot Ingilram's days—ay, and I remember them as it were yesterday—the freebooters were the best welcome men that came to Saint Mary's. Ay, they paid tithe of every drove that they brought over from the South, and because they were something lightly come by, I have known them make the tithe a seventh—that is, if their confessor knew his business—ay, when we saw from the tower a score of fat bullocks, or a drove of sheep, coming down the valley, with two or three stout men-at-arms behind them with their glittering steel caps, and their black-jacks, and their long lances, the good Lord Abbot Ingilram was wont to say—he was a merry man—there come the tithes of the spoilers of the Egyptians! Ay, and I have seen the famous John the Armstrang—a fair man he was and a goodly, the more pity that hemp was ever heckled for him—I have seen him come into the Abbey-church with nine tassels of gold in his bonnet, and every tassel made of nine English nobles, and he would go from chapel to chapel, and from image to image, and from altar to altar, on his knees—and leave here a tassel, and there a noble, till there was as little gold on his bonnet as on my hood—you will find no such Border thieves now!"

"No, truly, Brother Nicolas," answered the Abbot; "they are more apt to take any gold the Church has left, than to bequeath or bestow any—and for cattle, beshrew me if I think they care whether beeves have fed on the meadows of Lanercost Abbey or of Saint Mary's!"

"There is no good thing left in them," said Father Nicolas; "they are clean naught—Ah, the thieves that I have seen!—such proper men! and as pitiful as proper, and as pious as pitiful!"

"It skills not talking of it, Brother Nicolas," said the Abbot; "and I will now dismiss you, my brethren, holding your meeting upon this our inquisition concerning the danger of our reverend Sub-Prior, instead of the attendance on the lauds this evening—Yet let the bells be duly rung for the edification of the laymen without, and also that the novices may give due reverence.—And now, benedicite, brethren! The cellarer will bestow on each a grace-cup and a morsel as ye pass the buttery, for ye have been turmoiled and anxious, and dangerous it is to fall asleep in such case with empty stomach."

"*Gratias agimus quam maximas, Domine reverendissime*," replied the brethren, departing in their due order.

But the Sub-Prior remained behind, and falling on his knees before the Abbot, as he was about to withdraw, craved him to hear under the seal of confession the adventures of the day. The reverend Lord Abbot yawned, and would have alleged fatigue; but to Father Eustace, of all men, he was ashamed to show indifference in his religious duties. The confession, therefore, proceeded, in which Father Eustace told all the extraordinary circumstances which had befallen him during the journey. And being questioned by the Abbot, whether he was not conscious of any secret sin, through which he might have been subjected for a time to the delusions of evil spirits, the Sub-Prior admitted, with frank avowal, that he thought he might have deserved such penance for having judged with unfraternal rigour of the report of Father Philip the Sacristan.

"Heaven," said the penitent, "may have been willing to convince me, not only that he can at pleasure open a communication betwixt us and beings of a different, and, as we word it, supernatural class, but also to punish our pride of superior wisdom, or superior courage, or superior learning."

It is well said that virtue is its own reward; and I question if duty was ever more completely recompensed, than by the audience which the reverend Abbot so unwillingly yielded to the confession of the Sub-Prior. To find the object of his fear shall we say, or of his envy, or of both, accusing himself of the very error with which he had so tacitly charged him, was a corroboration of the Abbot's judgment, a soothing of his pride, and an allaying of his fears. The sense of triumph, however, rather increased than diminished his natural good-humour; and so far was Abbot Boniface from being disposed to tyrannize over his Sub-Prior in consequence of this discovery, that in his exhortation he hovered somewhat ludicrously betwixt the natural expression of his own gratified vanity, and his timid reluctance to hurt the feelings of Father Eustace.

"My brother," said he, *ex cathedra*, "it cannot have escaped your judicious observation, that we have often declined our own judgment in favour of your opinion, even about those matters which most nearly concerned the community. Nevertheless, grieved would we be, could you think that we did this, either because we deemed our own opinion less pregnant, or our wit more shallow, than that of our brethren. For it was done exclusively to give our younger brethren, such as your much esteemed self, my dearest brother, that courage which is necessary to a free deliverance of your opinion,—we oftentimes setting apart our proper judgment, that our inferiors, and especially our dear brother the Sub-Prior, may be comforted and encouraged in proposing valiantly his own thoughts. Which our deference and humility may, in some sort, have produced in your mind, most reverend brother, that self-opinion of parts and knowledge, which hath led unfortunately to your over-estimating your own faculties, and thereby subjecting yourself, as is but too visible, to the japes and mockeries of evil spirits. For it is assured that Heaven always holdeth us in the least esteem when we deem of ourselves most highly, and also, on the other hand, it may be that we have somewhat departed from what became our high seat in this Abbey, in suffering ourselves to be too much guided, and even, as it were, controlled, by the voice of our inferior. Wherefore," continued the Lord Abbot, "in both of us such faults shall and must be amended—you hereafter presuming less upon your gifts and carnal wisdom, and I taking heed not so easily to relinquish mine own opinion for that of one lower in place and in office. Nevertheless, we would not that we should thereby lose the high advantage which we have derived, and may yet derive, from your wise counsels, which hath been so often recommended to us by our most reverend Primate. Wherefore, on affairs of high moment, we will call you to our presence in private, and listen to your opinion, which, if it shall agree with our own, we will deliver to the Chapter as emanating directly from ourselves; thus sparing you, dearest brother, that seeming victory which is so apt to engender spiritual pride, and avoiding ourselves the temptation of falling into that modest facility of opinion, whereby our office is lessened and our person (were that of consequence) rendered less important in the eyes of the community over which we preside."

Notwithstanding the high notions which, as a rigid Catholic, Father Eustace entertained of the sacrament of confession, as his Church calls it, there was some danger that a sense of the ridiculous might have stolen on him, when he heard his Superior, with such simple cunning, lay out a little plan for availing himself of the Sub-Prior's wisdom and experience, while he should take the whole credit to himself. Yet his conscience immediately told him he was right.

"I should have thought more," he reflected, "of the spiritual Superior, and less of the individual. I should have spread my mantle over the frailties of my spiritual father, and done what I might to support his character, and, of course, to extend his utility among the brethren, as well as with others. The Abbot cannot be humbled, but what the community must be humbled in his person. Her boast is, that over all her children, especially over those called to places of distinction, she can diffuse those gifts which are necessary to render them illustrious."

Actuated by these sentiments, Father Eustace frankly assented to the charge which his Superior, even in that moment of authority, had rather intimated than made, and signified his humble acquiescence in any mode of communicating his counsel which might be most agreeable to the Lord Abbot, and might best remove from himself all temptation to glory in his own wisdom. He then prayed the reverend Father to assign him such penance as might best suit his offence, intimating, at the same time, that he had already fasted the whole day.

"And it is that I complain of," answered the Abbot, instead of giving him credit for his abstinence; "it is these very penances, fasts, and vigils, of which we complain; as tending only to generate airs and fumes of vanity, which, ascending from the stomach into the head, do but puff us up with vain-glory and self-opinion. It is meet and beseeching that novices should undergo fasts and vigils; for some part of every community must fast, and young stomachs may best endure it. Besides, in them it abates wicked thoughts, and the desire of worldly delights. But, reverend brother, for those to fast who are dead and mortified to the world, as I and thou, is work of supererogation, and is but the matter of spiritual pride. Wherefore, I enjoin thee, most reverend brother, go to the buttery and drink two cups at least of good wine, eating withal a comfortable morsel, such as may best suit thy taste and stomach. And in respect that thine opinion of thy own wisdom hath at times made thee less conformable to, and companionable with, the weaker and less learned brethren, I enjoin thee, during the said repast, to choose for thy companion, our reverend brother Nicolas, and without interruption or impatience, to listen for a stricken hour to his narration, concerning those things which befel in the times of our venerable predecessor, Abbot Ingilram, on whose soul may Heaven have mercy! And for such holy exercises as may farther advantage your soul, and expiate the faults whereof you have contritely and humbly avowed yourself guilty, we will ponder upon that matter, and announce our will unto you the next morning."

It was remarkable, that after this memorable evening, the feelings of the worthy Abbot towards his adviser were much more kindly and friendly than when he deemed the Sub-Prior the impeccable and infallible person, in whose garment of virtue and wisdom no flaw was to be discerned. It seemed as if this avowal of his own imperfections had recommended Father Eustace to the friendship of the Superior, although at the same time this increase of benevolence was attended with some circumstances, which, to a man of the Sub-Prior's natural elevation of mind and temper, were more grievous than even undergoing the legends of the dull and verbose Father Nicolas. For instance, the Abbot seldom mentioned him to the other monks, without designing him our beloved Brother Eustace, poor man!—and now and then he used to warn the younger brethren against the snares of vainglory and spiritual pride, which Satan sets for the more rigidly righteous, with such looks and demonstrations as did all but expressly designate the Sub-Prior as one who had fallen at one time under such delusions. Upon these occasions, it required all the votive obedience of a monk, all the philosophical discipline of the schools, and all the patience of a Christian, to enable Father Eustace to endure the pompous and patronizing parade of his honest, but somewhat thick-headed Superior. He began himself to be desirous of leaving the Monastery, or at least he manifestly declined to interfere with its affairs, in that marked and authoritative manner, which he had at first practised.

Chapter the Eleventh.

You call this education, do you not?
Why 'tis the forced march of a herd of bullocks
Before a shouting drover. The glad van
Move on at ease, and pause a while to snatch
A passing morsel from the dewy greensward,
While all the blows, the oaths, the indignation,
Fall on the croupe of the ill-fated laggard
That cripples in the rear.

OLD PLAY.

Two or three years glided on, during which the storm of the approaching alteration in church government became each day louder and more perilous. Owing to the circumstances which we have intimated in the end of the last chapter, the Sub-Prior Eustace appeared to have altered considerably his habits of life. He afforded, on all extraordinary occasions, to the Abbot, whether privately, or in the assembled Chapter, the support of his wisdom and experience; but in his ordinary habits he seemed now to live more for himself, and less for the community, than had been his former practice.

He often absented himself for whole days from the convent; and as the adventure of Glendearg dwelt deeply on his memory, he was repeatedly induced to visit that lonely tower, and to take an interest in the orphans who had their shelter under its roof. Besides, he felt a deep anxiety to know whether the volume which he had lost, when so strangely preserved from the lance of the murderer, had again found its way back to the Tower of Glendearg. "It was strange," he thought, "that a spirit," for such he could not help judging the being whose voice he had heard, "should, on the one side, seek the advancement of heresy, and, on the other, interpose to save the life of a zealous Catholic priest."

But from no inquiry which he made of the various inhabitants of the Tower of Glendearg could he learn that the copy of the translated Scriptures, for which he made such diligent inquiry, had again been seen by any of them.

In the meanwhile, the good father's occasional visits were of no small consequence to Edward Glendinning and to Mary Avenel. The former displayed a power of apprehending and retaining whatever was taught him, which tilted Father Eustace with admiration. He was at once acute and industrious, alert and accurate; one of those rare combinations of talent and industry, which are seldom united.

It was the earnest desire of Father Eustace that the excellent qualities thus early displayed by Edward should be dedicated to the service of the Church, to which he thought the youth's own consent might be easily obtained, as he was of a calm, contemplative, retired habit, and seemed to consider knowledge as the principal object, and its enlargement as the greatest pleasure, in life. As to the mother, the Sub-Prior had little doubt that, trained as she was to view the monks of Saint Mary's with such profound reverence, she would be but too happy in an opportunity of enrolling one of her sons in its honoured community. But the good Father proved to be mistaken in both these particulars.

When he spoke to Elspeth Glendinning of that which a mother best loves to hear—the proficiency and abilities of her son—she listened with a delighted ear. But when Father Eustace hinted at the duty of dedicating to the service of the Church, talents which seemed fitted to defend and adorn it, the dame endeavoured always to shift the subject; and when pressed farther, enlarged on her own incapacity, as a lone woman, to manage the feu; on the advantage which her neighbours of the township were often taking of her unprotected state, and on the wish she had that Edward might fill his father's place, remain in the tower, and close her eyes.

On such occasions the Sub-Prior would answer, that even in a worldly point of view the welfare of the family would be best consulted by one of the sons entering into the community of Saint Mary's, as it was not to be supposed that he would fail to afford his family the important protection which he could then easily extend towards them. What could be a more pleasing prospect than to see him high in honour? or what more sweet than to have the last duties rendered to her by a son, reverend for his holiness of life and exemplary manners? Besides, he endeavoured to impress upon the dame, that her eldest son, Halbert, whose bold temper and headstrong indulgence of a wandering humour, rendered him incapable of learning, was, for that reason, as well as that he was her eldest born, fittest to bustle through the affairs of the world, and manage the little fief.

Elspeth durst not directly dissent from what was proposed, for fear of giving displeasure, and yet she always had something to say against it. Halbert, she said, was not like any of the neighbour boys—he was taller by the head, and stronger by the half, than any boy of his years within the Halidome. But he was fit for no peaceful work that could be devised. If he liked a book ill, he liked a plough or a pattle worse. He had scoured his father's old broadsword—suspended it by a belt round his waist, and seldom stirred without it. He was a sweet boy and a gentle if spoken fair, but cross him and he was a born devil. "In a word," she said, bursting into tears, "deprive me of Edward, good father, and ye bereave my house of prop and pillar; for my heart tells me that Halbert will take to his father's gates, and die his father's death."

When the conversation came to this crisis, the good-humoured monk was always content to drop the discussion for the time, trusting some opportunity would occur of removing her prejudices, for such he thought them, against Edward's proposed destination.

When, leaving the mother, the Sub-Prior addressed himself to the son, animating his zeal for knowledge, and pointing out how amply it might be gratified should he agree to take holy orders, he found the same repugnance which Dame Elspeth had exhibited. Edward pleaded a want of sufficient vocation to so serious a profession—his reluctance to leave his mother, and other objections, which the Sub-Prior treated as evasive.

"I plainly perceive," he said one day, in answer to them, "that the devil has his factors as well as Heaven, and that they are equally, or, alas! the former are perhaps more active, in bespeaking for their master the first of the market. I trust, young man, that neither idleness, nor licentious pleasure, nor the love of worldly gain and worldly grandeur, the chief baits with which the great Fisher of souls conceals his hook, are the causes of your declining the career to which I would incite you. But above all I trust—above all I hope—that the vanity of superior knowledge—a sin with which those who have made proficiency in learning are most

frequently beset—has not led you into the awful hazard of listening to the dangerous doctrines which are now afloat concerning religion. Better for you that you were as grossly ignorant as the beasts which perish, that that the pride of knowledge should induce you to lend an ear to the voice of heretics." Edward Glendinning listened to the rebuke with a downcast look, and failed not, when it was concluded, earnestly to vindicate himself from the charge of having pushed his studies into any subjects which the Church inhibited; and so the monk was left to form vain conjectures respecting the cause of his reluctance to embrace the monastic state.

It is an old proverb, used by Chaucer, and quoted by Elizabeth, that "the greatest clerks are not the wisest men;" and it is as true as if the poet had not rhymed, or the queen reasoned on it. If Father Eustace had not had his thoughts turned so much to the progress of heresy, and so little to what was passing in the tower, he might have read, in the speaking eyes of Mary Avenel, now a girl of fourteen or fifteen, reasons which might disincline her youthful companion towards the monastic vows. I have said, that she also was a promising pupil of the good father, upon whom her innocent and infantine beauty had an effect of which he was himself, perhaps, unconscious. Her rank and expectations entitled her to be taught the arts of reading and writing;—and each lesson which the monk assigned her was conned over in company with Edward, and by him explained and re-explained, and again illustrated, until she became perfectly mistress of it.

In the beginning of their studies, Halbert had been their school companion. But the boldness and impatience of his disposition soon quarrelled with an occupation in which, without assiduity and unremitted attention, no progress was to be expected. The Sub-Prior's visits were at regular intervals, and often weeks would intervene between them, in which case Halbert was sure to forget all that had been prescribed for him to learn, and much which he had partly acquired before. His deficiencies on these occasions gave him pain, but it was not of that sort which produces amendment.

For a time, like all who are fond of idleness, he endeavoured to detach the attention of his brother and Mary Avenel from their task, rather than to learn his own, and such dialogues as the following would ensue:

"Take your bonnet, Edward, and make haste—the Laird of Colmslie is at the head of the glen with his hounds."

"I care not, Halbert," answered the younger brother; "two brace of dogs may kill a deer without my being there to see them, and I must help Mary Avenel with her lesson."

"Ay! you will labour at the monk's lessons till you turn monk yourself," answered Halbert.—"Mary, will you go with me, and I will show you the cushat's nest I told you of?"

"I cannot go with you, Halbert," answered Mary, "because I must study this lesson—it will take me long to learn it—I am sorry I am so dull, for if I could get my task as fast as Edward, I should like to go with you."

"Should you indeed?" said Halbert; "then I will wait for you—and, what is more, I will try to get my lesson also."

With a smile and a sigh he took up the primer, and began heavily to con over the task which had been assigned him. As if banished from the society of the two others, he sat sad and solitary in one of the deep window-recesses, and after in vain struggling with the difficulties of his task, and his disinclination to learn it, he found himself involuntarily engaged in watching the movements of the other two students, instead of toiling any longer.

The picture which Halbert looked upon was delightful in itself, but somehow or other it afforded very little pleasure to him. The beautiful girl, with looks of simple, yet earnest anxiety, was bent on disentangling those intricacies which obstructed her progress to knowledge, and looking ever and anon to Edward for assistance, while, seated close by her side, and watchful to remove every obstacle from her way, he seemed at once to be proud of the progress which his pupil made, and of the assistance which he was able to render her. There was a bond betwixt them, a strong and interesting tie, the desire of obtaining knowledge, the pride of surmounting difficulties.

Feeling most acutely, yet ignorant of the nature and source of his own emotions, Halbert could no longer endure to look upon this quiet scene, but, starting up, dashed his book from him, and exclaimed aloud, "To the fiend I bequeath all books, and the dreamers that make them!—I would a score of Southrons would come up the glen, and we should learn how little all this muttering and scribbling is worth."

Mary Avenol and his brother started, and looked at Halbert with surprise, while he went on with great animation, his features swelling, and the tears starting into his eyes as he spoke.—"Yes, Mary—I wish a score of Southrons came up the glen this very day; and you should see one good hand, and one good sword, do more to protect you, than all the books that were ever opened, and all the pens that ever grew on a goose's wing."

Mary looked a little surprised and a little frightened at his vehemence, but instantly replied affectionately, "You are vexed, Halbert, because you do not get your lesson so fast as Edward can; and so am I, for I am as stupid as you—But come, and Edward shall sit betwixt us and teach us."

"He shall not teach *me*," said Halbert, in the same angry mood; "I never can teach *him* to do any thing that is honourable and manly, and he shall not teach *me* any of his monkish tricks.—I hate the monks, with their drawing nasal tone like so many frogs, and their long black petticoats like so many women, and their reverences, and their lordships, and their lazy vassals that do nothing but peddle in the mire with plough and harrow from Yule to Michaelmas. I will call none lord, but him who wears a sword to make his title good; and I will call none man, but he that can bear himself manlike and masterful."

"For Heaven's sake, peace, brother!" said Edward; "if such words were taken up and reported out of the house, they would be our mother's ruin."

"Report them yourself, then, and they will be *your* making, and nobody's marring save mine own. Say that Halbert Glendinning will never be vassal to an old man with a cowl and shaven crown, while there are twenty barons who wear casque and plume that lack bold followers. Let them grant you these wretched acres, and much meal may they bear you to make your *brachan*." He left the room hastily, but instantly returned, and continued to speak with the same tone of quick and irritated feeling. "And you need not think so much, neither of you, and especially you, Edward, need not think so much of your parchment book there, and your cunning in reading it. By my faith, I will soon learn to read as well as you; and—for I know a better teacher than your grim old monk, and a better book than his printed breviary; and since you like scholarcraft so well, Mary Avenel, you shall see whether Edward or I have most of it." He left the apartment, and came not again.

"What can be the matter with him?" said Mary, following Halbert with her eyes from the window, as with hasty and unequal steps he ran up the wild glen—"Where can your brother be going, Edward?—what book?—what teacher does he talk of?"

"It avails not guessing," said Edward. "Halbert is angry, he knows not why, and speaks of he knows not what; let us go again to our lessons, and he will come home when he has tired himself with scrambling among the crags as usual."

But Mary's anxiety on account of Halbert seemed more deeply rooted. She declined prosecuting the task in which they had been so pleasingly engaged, under the excuse of a headache; nor could Edward prevail upon her to resume it again that morning.

Meanwhile Halbert, his head unbonneted, his features swelled with jealous anger, and the tear still in his eye, sped up the wild and upper extremity of the little valley of Glendearg with the speed of a roebuck, choosing, as if in desperate defiance of the difficulties of the way, the wildest and most dangerous paths, and voluntarily exposing himself a hundred times to dangers which he might have escaped by turning a little aside from them. It seemed as if he wished his course to be as straight as that of the arrow to its mark.

He arrived at length in a narrow and secluded *cleuch*, or deep ravine, which ran down into the valley, and contributed a scanty rivulet to the supply of the brook with which Glendearg is watered. Up this he sped with the same precipitate haste which had marked his departure from the tower, nor did he pause and look around until he had reached the fountain from which the rivulet had its rise.

Here Halbert stopt short, and cast a gloomy, and almost a frightened glance around him. A huge rock rose in front, from a cleft of which grew a wild holly-tree, whose dark green branches rustled over the spring which arose beneath. The banks on either hand rose so high, and approached each other so closely, that it was only when the sun was at its meridian height, and during the summer solstice, that its rays could reach the bottom of the chasm in which he stood. But it was now summer, and the hour was noon, so that the unwonted reflection of the sun was dancing in the pellucid fountain.

"It is the season and the hour," said Halbert to himself; "and now I—I might soon become wiser than Edward with all his pains! Mary should see whether he alone is fit to be consulted, and to sit by her side, and hang over her as she reads, and point out every word and every letter. And she loves me better than him—I am

sure she does—for she comes of noble blood, and scorns sloth and cowardice.—And do I myself not stand here slothful and cowardly as any priest of them all?—Why should I fear to call upon this form—this shape?—Already have I endured the vision, and why not again? What can it do to me, who am a man of lith and limb, and have by my side my father's sword? Does my heart beat—do my hairs bristle, at the thought of calling up a painted shadow, and how should I face a band of Southrons in flesh and blood? By the soul of the first Glendinning, I will make proof of the charm!"

He cast the leathern brogue or buskin from his right foot, planted himself in a firm posture, unsheathed his sword, and first looking around to collect his resolution, he bowed three times deliberately towards the holly-tree, and as often to the little fountain, repeating at the same time, with a determined voice, the following rhyme:

"Thrice to the holly brake—

Thrice to the well:—

I bid thee awake,

White Maid of Avenel!

"Noon gleams on the Lake—

Noon glows on the Fell—

Wake thee, O wake,

White Maid of Avenel!"

These lines were hardly uttered, when there stood the figure of a female clothed in white, within three steps of Halbert Glendinning.

"I guess'twas frightful there to see

A lady richly clad as she—

Beautiful exceedingly." {Footnote: Coleridge's Christabelle.}

Chapter the Twelfth.

There's something in that ancient superstition,
Which, erring as it is, our fancy loves.
The spring that, with its thousand crystal bubbles,
Bursts from the bosom of some desert rock
In secret solitude, may well be deem'd
The haunt of something purer, more refined,
And mightier than ourselves.

OLD PLAY.

Young Halbert Glendinning had scarcely pronounced the mystical rhymes, than, as we have mentioned in the conclusion of the last chapter, an appearance, as of a beautiful female, dressed in white, stood within two yards of him. His terror for the moment overcame his natural courage, as well as the strong resolution which he had formed, that the figure which he had now twice seen should not a third time daunt him. But it would seem there is something thrilling and abhorrent to flesh and blood, in the consciousness that we stand in presence of a being in form like to ourselves, but so different in faculties and nature, that we can neither understand its purposes, nor calculate its means of pursuing them.

Halbert stood silent and gasped for breath, his hairs erecting themselves on his head—his mouth open—his eyes fixed, and, as the sole remaining sign of his late determined purpose, his sword pointed towards the apparition. At length with a voice of ineffable sweetness, the White Lady, for by that name we shall distinguish this being, sung, or rather chanted, the following lines:—

"Youth of the dark eye, wherefore didst thou call me?

Wherefore art thou here, if terrors can appal thee?

He that seeks to deal with us must know no fear nor failing!

To coward and churl our speech is dark, our gifts are unavailing.

The breeze that brought me hither now, must sweep Egyptian ground,

The fleecy cloud on which I ride for Araby is bound;

The fleecy cloud is drifting by, the breeze sighs for my stay,

For I must sail a thousand miles before the close of day."

The astonishment of Halbert began once more to give way to his resolution, and he gained voice enough to say, though with a faltering accent, "In the name of God, what art thou?" The answer was in melody of a different tone and measure:—

"What I am I must not show—

What I am thou couldst not know—

Something betwixt heaven and hell—

Something that neither stood nor fell—

Something that through thy wit or will

May work thee good—may work thee ill.

Neither substance quite nor shadow,

Haunting lonely moor and meadow,

Dancing; by the haunted spring,

Riding on the whirlwind's wing;

Aping in fantastic fashion

Every change of human passion,

While o'er our frozen minds they pass,

Like shadows from the mirror'd glass.

Wayward, fickle is our mood,

Hovering betwixt bad and good,

Happier than brief-dated man,
Living twenty times his span;
Far less happy, for we have
Help nor hope beyond the grave!
Man awakes to joy or sorrow;
Ours the sleep that knows no morrow.
This is all that I can show—
This is all that thou mayest know."

The White Lady paused, and appeared to await an answer; but, as Halbert hesitated how to frame his speech, the vision seemed gradually to fade, and became more and more incorporeal. Justly guessing this to be a symptom of her disappearance, Halbert compelled himself to say,—“Lady, when I saw you in the glen, and when you brought back the black book of Mary Avenel, thou didst say I should one day learn to read it.”

The White Lady replied,

"Ay! and I taught thee the word and the spell,
To waken me here by the Fairies' Well,
But thou hast loved the heron and hawk,
More than to seek my haunted walk;
And thou hast loved the lance and the sword,
More than good text and holy word;
And thou hast loved the deer to track,
More than the lines and the letters black;
And thou art a ranger of moss and of wood,
And scornest the nurture of gentle blood."

"I will do so no longer, fair maiden," said Halbert; "I desire to learn; and thou didst promise me, that when I did so desire, thou wouldst be my helper; I am no longer afraid of thy presence, and I am no longer regardless of instruction." As he uttered these words, the figure of the White Maiden grew gradually as distinct as it had been at first; and what had well-nigh faded into an ill-defined and colourless shadow, again assumed an appearance at least of corporeal consistency, although the hues were less vivid, and the outline of the figure less distinct and defined—so at least it seemed to Halbert—than those of an ordinary inhabitant of earth. "Wilt thou grant my request," he said, "fair Lady, and give to my keeping the holy book which Mary of Avenel has so often wept for?"

The White Lady replied:

"Thy craven fear my truth accused,
Thine idlehood my trust abused;
He that draws to harbour late,
Must sleep without, or burst the gate.

There is a star for thee which burn'd.
Its influence wanes, its course is turn'd;
Valour and constancy alone
Can bring thee back the chance that's flown."

"If I have been a loiterer, Lady," answered young Glendinning, "thou shalt now find me willing to press forward with double speed. Other thoughts have filled my mind, other thoughts have engaged my heart, within a brief period—and by Heaven, other occupations shall henceforward fill up my time. I have lived in this day the space of years—I came hither a boy—I will return a man—a man, such as may converse not only with his own kind, but with whatever God permits to be visible to him. I will learn the contents of that mysterious volume—I will learn why the Lady of Avenel loved it—why the priests feared, and would have stolen it—why thou didst twice recover it from their hands.—What mystery is wrapt in it?—Speak, I conjure thee!" The lady assumed an air peculiarly sad and solemn, as drooping her head, and folding her arms on her bosom, she replied:

"Within that awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries!
Happiest they of human race,
To whom God has granted grace

To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, and force the way;
And better had they ne'er been born,
Who read, to doubt, or read to scorn."

"Give me the volume, Lady," said young Glendinning. "They call me idle—they call me dull—in this pursuit my industry shall not fail, nor, with God's blessing, shall my understanding. Give me the volume." The apparition again replied:

"Many a fathom dark and deep
I have laid the book to sleep;
Ethereal fires around it glowing—
Ethereal music ever flowing—
The sacred pledge of Heav'n
All things revere.
Each in his sphere,
Save man for whom 'twas giv'n:
Lend thy hand, and thou shalt spy
Things ne'er seen by mortal eye."

Halbert Glendinning boldly reached his hand to the White Lady.

"Fearest thou to go with me?" she said, as his hand trembled at the soft and cold touch of her own—

"Fearest thou to go with me?
Still it is free to thee
A peasant to dwell:
Thou mayst drive the dull steer,
And chase the king's deer,
But never more come near

This haunted well."

"If what thou sayest be true," said the undaunted boy, "my destinies are higher than thine own. There shall be neither well nor wood which I dare not visit. No fear of aught, natural or supernatural, shall bar my path through my native valley."

He had scarce uttered the words, when they both descended through the earth with a rapidity which took away Halbert's breath and every other sensation, saving that of being hurried on with the utmost velocity. At length they stopped with a shock so sudden, that the mortal journeyer through this unknown space must have been thrown down with violence, had he not been upheld by his supernatural companion.

It was more than a minute, ere, looking around him, he beheld a grotto, or natural cavern, composed of the most splendid spars and crystals, which returned in a thousand prismatic hues the light of a brilliant flame that glowed on an altar of alabaster. This altar, with its fire, formed the central point of the grotto, which was of a round form, and very high in the roof, resembling in some respects the dome of a cathedral. Corresponding to the four points of the compass, there went off four long galleries, or arcades, constructed of the same brilliant materials with the dome itself, and the termination of which was lost in darkness.

No human imagination can conceive, or words suffice to describe, the glorious radiance which, shot fiercely forth by the flame, was returned from so many hundred thousand points of reflection, afforded by the sparry pillars and their numerous angular crystals. The fire itself did not remain steady and unmoved, but rose and fell, sometimes ascending in a brilliant pyramid of condensed flame half way up the lofty expanse, and again fading into a softer and more rosy hue, and hovering, as it were, on the surface of the altar to collect its strength for another powerful exertion. There was no visible fuel by which it was fed, nor did it emit either smoke or vapour of any kind.

What was of all the most remarkable, the black volume so often mentioned lay not only unconsumed, but untouched in the slightest degree, amid this intensity of fire, which, while it seemed to be of force sufficient to melt adamant, had no effect whatever on the sacred book thus subjected to its utmost influence.

The White Lady, having paused long enough to let young Glendinning take a complete survey of what was around him, now said in her usual chant,

"Here lies the volume thou boldly hast sought;

Touch it, and take it,—'twill dearly be bought!"

Familiarized in some degree with marvels, and desperately desirous of showing the courage he had boasted, Halbert plunged his hand, without hesitation, into the flame, trusting to the rapidity of the motion, to snatch out the volume before the fire could greatly affect him. But he was much disappointed. The flame instantly caught upon his sleeve, and though he withdrew his hand immediately, yet his arm was so dreadfully scorched, that he had well-nigh screamed with pain. He suppressed the natural expression of anguish, however, and only intimated the agony which he felt by a contortion and a muttered groan. The White Lady passed her cold hand over his arm, and, ere she had finished the following metrical chant, his pain had entirely gone, and no mark of the scorching was visible:

"Rash thy deed,

Mortal weed

To immortal flames applying;

Rasher trust

Has thing of dust,

On his own weak worth relying:

Strip thee of such fences vain,

Strip, and prove thy luck, again."

Obedient to what he understood to be the meaning of his conductress, Halbert bared his arm to the shoulder, throwing down the remains of his sleeve, which no sooner touched the floor on which he stood than it collected itself together, shrivelled itself up, and was without any visible fire reduced to light tinder, which a sudden breath of wind dispersed into empty space. The White Lady, observing the surprise of the youth, immediately repeated—

"Mortal warp and mortal woof.

Cannot brook this charmed roof;

All that mortal art hath wrought,

In our cell returns to nought.

The molten gold returns to clay,

The polish'd diamond melts away.

All is alter'd, all is flown,

Nought stands fast but truth alone.

Not for that thy quest give o'er:

Courage! prove thy chance once more."

Imboldened by her words, Halbert Glendinning made a second effort, and, plunging his bare arm into the flame, took out the sacred volume without feeling either heat or inconvenience of any kind. Astonished, and almost terrified at his own success, he beheld the flame collect itself, and shoot up into one long and final stream, which seemed as if it would ascend to the very roof of the cavern, and then, sinking as suddenly, became totally extinguished. The deepest darkness ensued; but Halbert had no time to consider his situation, for the White Lady had already caught his hand, and they ascended to upper air with the same velocity with which they had sunk into the earth.

They stood by the fountain in the Corri-nan-shian when they emerged from the bowels of the earth; but on casting a bewildered glance around him, the youth was surprised to observe, that the shadows had fallen far to the east, and that the day was well-nigh spent. He gazed on his conductress for explanation, but her figure began to fade before his eyes—her cheeks grew paler, her features less distinct, her form became shadowy, and blended itself with the mist which was ascending the hollow ravine. What had late the symmetry of form, and the delicate, yet clear hues of feminine beauty, now resembled the flitting and pale ghost of some maiden who has died for love, as it is seen indistinctly and by moonlight, by her perjured lover.

"Stay, spirit!" said the youth, imboldened by his success in the subterranean dome, "thy kindness must not leave me, as one encumbered with a weapon he knows not how to wield. Thou must teach me the art to read, and to understand this volume; else what avails it me that I possess it?"

But the figure of the White Lady still waned before his eye, until it became an outline as pale and indistinct as that of the moon, when the winter morning is far advanced, and ere she had ended the following chant, she was entirely invisible:—

"Alas! alas!

Not ours the grace

These holy characters to trace:

Idle forms of painted air,

Not to us is given to share

The boon bestow'd on Adam's race!

With patience bide.

Heaven will provide

The fitting time, the fitting guide."

The form was already gone, and now the voice itself had melted away in melancholy cadence, softening, as if the Being who spoke had been slowly wafted from the spot where she had commenced her melody.

It was at this moment that Halbert felt the extremity of the terror which he had hitherto so manfully suppressed. The very necessity of exertion had given him spirit to make it, and the presence of the mysterious Being, while it was a subject of fear in itself, had nevertheless given him the sense of protection being near to him. It was when he could reflect with composure on what had passed, that a cold tremor shot across his limbs, his hair bristled, and he was afraid to look around lest he should find at his elbow something more frightful than the first vision. A breeze arising suddenly, realized the beautiful and wild idea of the most imaginative of our modern bards {Footnote: Coleridge.}—

It fann'd his cheek, it raised his hair,
Like a meadow pale in spring;
It mingled strangely with his fears,
Yet it fell like a welcoming.

The youth stood silent and astonished for a few minutes. It seemed to him that the extraordinary Being he had seen, half his terror, half his protectress, was still hovering on the gale which swept past him, and that she might again make herself sensible to his organs of sight. "Speak!" he said, wildly tossing his arms, "speak yet again—be once more present, lovely vision!—thrice have I now seen thee, yet the idea of thy invisible presence around or beside me, makes my heart beat faster than if the earth yawned and gave up a demon."

But neither sound nor appearance indicated the presence of the White Lady, and nothing preternatural beyond what he had already witnessed, was again audible or visible. Halbert, in the meanwhile, by the very exertion of again inviting the presence of this mysterious Being, had recovered his natural audacity. He looked around once more, and resumed his solitary path down the valley into whose recesses he had penetrated.

Nothing could be more strongly contrasted than the storm of passion with which he had bounded over stock and crag, in order to plunge himself into the Corri-nan-shian, and the sobered mood in which he now returned homeward, industriously seeking out the most practicable path, not from a wish to avoid danger, but that he might not by personal toil distract his attention, deeply fixed on the extraordinary scene which he had witnessed. In the former case, he had sought by hazard and bodily exertion to indulge at once the fiery excitation of passion, and to banish the cause of the excitement from his recollection; while now he studiously avoided all interruption to his contemplative walk, lest the difficulty of the way should interfere with, or disturb, his own deep reflections. Thus slowly pacing forth his course, with the air of a pilgrim rather than of a deer-hunter, Halbert about the close of the evening regained his paternal tower.

Chapter the Thirteenth.

The Miller was of manly make,
To meet him was na mows;
There durst na ten come him to take,
Sae noited he their pows.

CHRIST'S KIRK ON THE GREEN.

It was after sunset, as we have already stated, when Halbert Glendinning returned to the abode of his father. The hour of dinner was at noon, and that of supper about an hour after sunset at this period of the year. The former had passed without Halbert's appearing; but this was no uncommon circumstance, for the chase, or any other pastime which occurred, made Halbert a frequent neglecter of hours; and his mother, though angry and disappointed when she saw him not at table, was so much accustomed to his occasional absence, and knew so little how to teach him more regularity, that a testy observation was almost all the censure with which such omissions were visited.

On the present occasion, however, the wrath of good Dame Elspeth soared higher than usual. It was not merely on account of the special tup's head and trotters, the haggis and the side of mutton, with which her table was set forth, but also because of the arrival of no less a person than Hob Miller, as he was universally termed, though the man's name was Happer.

The object of the Miller's visit to the Tower of Glendearg was like the purpose of those embassies which potentates send to each other's courts, partly ostensible, partly politic. In outward show, Hob came to visit his friends of the Halidome, and share the festivity common among country folk, after the barn-yard has been filled, and to renew old intimacies by new conviviality. But in very truth he also came to have an eye upon the contents of each stack, and to obtain such information respecting the extent of the crop reaped and gathered in by each feuar, as might prevent the possibility of *abstracted multures*.

All the world knows that the cultivators of each barony or regality, temporal or spiritual, in Scotland, are obliged to bring their corn to be grinded at the mill of the territory, for which they pay a heavy charge, called the *intown multures*. I could speak to the thirlage of *invecta et illata* too, but let that pass. I have said enough to intimate that I talk not without book. Those of the *Sucken*, or enthralled ground, were liable in penalties, if, deviating from this thirlage, (or thralldom,) they carried their grain to another mill. Now such another mill, erected on the lands of a lay-baron, lay within a tempting and convenient distance of Glendearg; and the Miller was so obliging, and his charges so moderate, that it required Hob Miller's utmost vigilance to prevent evasions of his right of monopoly.

The most effectual means he could devise was this show of good fellowship and neighbourly friendship,—under colour of which he made his annual cruise through the barony—numbered every corn-stack, and computed its contents by the boll, so that he could give a shrewd hint afterwards whether or not the grist came to the right mill.

Dame Elspeth, like her compeers, was obliged to take these domiciliary visits in the sense of politeness; but in her case they had not occurred since her husband's death, probably because the Tower of Glendearg was distant, and there was but a trifling quantity of arable or *infield* attached to it. This year there had been, upon some speculation of old Martin's, several bolls sown in the exit-field, which, the season being fine, had ripened remarkably well. Perhaps this circumstance occasioned the honest Miller's including Glendearg, on this occasion, in his annual round. Dame Glendinning received with pleasure a visit which she used formerly only to endure with patience; and she had changed her view of the matter chiefly, if not entirely, because Hob had brought with him his daughter Mysie, of whose features she could give so slight an account, but whose dress she had described so accurately to the Sub-Prior.

Hitherto this girl had been an object of very trifling consideration in the eyes of the good widow; but the Sub-Prior's particular and somewhat mysterious inquiries had set her brains to work on the subject of Mysie of the Mill; and she had here asked a broad question, and there she had thrown out an innuendo, and there again she had gradually led on to a conversation on the subject of poor Mysie. And from all inquiries and investigations she had collected, that Mysie was a dark-eyed, laughter-loving wench, with cherry-cheeks, and a skin as white as her father's finest bolted flour, out of which was made the Abbot's own wastel-bread. For her temper, she sung and laughed from morning to night; and for her fortune, a material article, besides that which the Miller might have amassed by means of his proverbial golden thumb, Mysie was to inherit a good handsome lump of land, with a prospect of the mill and mill-acres descending to her husband on an easy lease, if a fair word were spoken in season to the Abbot, and to the Prior, and to the Sub-Prior, and to the Sacristan, and so forth.

By turning and again turning these advantages over in her own mind, Elspeth at length came to be of opinion, that the only way to save her son Halbert from a life of "spur, spear, and snaffle," as they called that of the border-riders, from the dint of a cloth-yard shaft, or the loop of an inch-cord, was, that he should marry and settle, and that Mysie Happer should be his destined bride.

As if to her wish, Hob Miller arrived on his strong-built mare, bearing on a pillion behind him the lovely Mysie, with cheeks like a peony-rose, (if Dame Glendinning had ever seen one,) spirits all afloat with rustic coquetry, and a profusion of hair as black as ebony. The *beau-ideal* which Dame Glendinning had been bodying forth in her imagination, became unexpectedly realized in the buxom form of Mysie Happer, whom, in the course of half an hour, she settled upon as the maiden who was to fix the restless and untutored Halbert. True, Mysie, as the dame soon saw, was like to love dancing round a May-pole as well as managing a domestic

establishment, and Halbert was like to break more heads than he would grind stacks of corn. But then a miller should always be of manly make, and has been described so since the days of Chaucer and James I. {Footnote: The verse we have chosen for a motto, is from a poem imputed to James I. of Scotland. As for the Miller who figures among the Canterbury pilgrims, besides his sword and buckler, he boasted other attributes, all of which, but especially the last, show that he relied more on the strength of the outside than that of the inside of his skull.

The miller was a stout carl for the nones,
Full big he was of brawn, and eke of bones;
That proved well, for wheresoe'r he cam,
At wrestling he wold bear away the ram;
He was short shoulder'd, broad, a thick gnar;
There n'as no door that he n'old heave of bar,
Or break it at a running with his head, &c. }

Indeed, to be able to outdo and bully the whole *Sucken*, (once more we use this barbarous phrase,) in all athletic exercises, was one way to render easy the collection of dues which men would have disputed with a less formidable champion. Then, as to the deficiencies of the miller's wife, the dame was of opinion that they might be supplied by the activity of the miller's mother. "I will keep house for the young folk myself, for the tower is grown very lonely," thought Dame Glendinning, "and to live near the kirk will be mair comfortable in my auld age—and then Edward may agree with his brother about the feu, more especially as he is a favourite with the Sub-Prior, and then he may live in the auld tower like his worthy father before him—and wha kens but Mary Avenel, high-blood as she is, may e'en draw in her stool to the chimney-nook, and sit down here for good and a'?"—It's true she has no tocher, but the like of her for beauty and sense ne'er crossed my een; and I have kend every wench in the Halidome of St. Mary's—ay, and their mothers that bore them—ay, she is a sweet and a lovely creature as ever tied snood over brown hair—ay, and then, though her uncle keeps her out of her ain for the present time, yet it is to be thought the gray-goose shaft will find a hole in his coat of proof, as, God help us! it has done in many a better man's—And, moreover, if they should stand on their pedigree and gentle race, Edward might say to them, that is, to her gentle kith and kin, 'whilk o' ye was her best friend, when she came down the glen to Glendearg in a misty evening, on a beast mair like a cuddie than aught else?'—And if they tax him with churl's blood, Edward might say, that, forby the old proverb, how

Gentle deed
Makes gentle bleid;

yet, moreover, there comes no churl's blood from Glendinning or Brydone; for, says Edward—"

The hoarse voice of the Miller at this moment recalled the dame from her reverie, and compelled her to remember that if she meant to realize her airy castle, she must begin by laying the foundation in civility to her guest and his daughter, whom she was at that moment most strangely neglecting, though her whole plan turned on conciliating their favour and good opinion, and that, in fact, while arranging matters for so intimate a union with her company, she was suffering them to sit unnoticed, and in their riding gear, as if about to resume their journey. "And so I say, dame," concluded the Miller, (for she had not marked the beginning of his speech,) "an ye be so busied with your housekep, or ought else, why, Mysie and I will trot our way down the glen again to Johnnie Broxmuth's, who pressed us right kindly to bide with him."

Starting at once from her dream of marriages and intermarriages, mills, mill-lands, and baronies, Dame Elspeth felt for a moment like the milk-maid in the fable, when she overset the pitcher, on the contents of which so many golden dreams were founded. But the foundation of Dame Glendinning's hopes was only tottering, not overthrown, and she hastened to restore its equilibrium. Instead of attempting to account for her absence of mind and want of attention to her guests, which she might have found something difficult, she assumed the offensive, like an able general when he finds it necessary, by a bold attack, to disguise his weakness.

A loud exclamation she made, and a passionate complaint she set up against the unkindness of her old friend, who could for an instant doubt the heartiness of her welcome to him and to his hopeful daughter; and then to think of his going back to Johnny Broxmuth's, when the auld tower stood where it did, and had room in it for a friend or two in the worst of times—and he too a neighbour that his umquhile gossip Simon, blessed be his cast, used to think the best friend he had in the Halidome! And on she went, urging her complaint with so much seriousness, that she had well-nigh imposed on herself as well as upon Hob Miller, who had no mind to take any thing in dudgeon; and as it suited his plans to pass the night at Glendearg, would have been equally contented to do so even had his reception been less vehemently hospitable.

To all Elspeth's expostulations on the unkindness of his proposal to leave her dwelling, he answered composedly, "Nay, dame, what could I tell? ye might have had other grist to grind, for ye looked as if ye scarce saw us—or what know I? ye might bear in mind the words Martin and I had about the last barley ye sawed—for I ken dry multures {Footnote: Dry multures were a fine, or compensation in money, for not grinding at the mill of the thirl. It was, and is, accounted a vexatious exaction.} will sometimes stick in the throat. A man seeks but his awn, and yet folk shall hold him for both miller and miller's man, that is millar and knave, {Footnote: The under miller is, in the language of thirlage, called the knave, which, indeed, signified originally his lad. (*Knabe*—German,) but by degrees came to be taken in a worse sense. In the old translation of the Bible, Paul is made to term himself the knave of our Saviour. The allowance of meal taken by the miller's servant was called knave-ship.} all the country over."

"Alas, that you will say so, neighbour Hob," said Dame Elspeth, "or that Martin should have had any words with you about the mill-dues! I will chide him roundly for it, I promise you, on the faith of a true widow. You know full well that a lone woman is sore put upon by her servants."

"Nay, dame," said the miller, unbuckling the broad belt which made fast his cloak, and served, at the same time, to suspend by his side a swinging Andrea Ferrara, "bear no grudge at Martin, for I bear none—I take it on me as a thing of mine office, to maintain my right of culture, lock, and gowpen. {Note: The culture was the regular exaction for grinding the meal. The *lock*, signifying a small quantity, and the *gowpen*, a handful, were additional perquisites demanded by the miller, and submitted to or resisted by the *Suckener* as circumstances permitted. These and other petty dues were called in general the *Sequels*.} And reason good, for as the old song says,

I live by my mill. God bless her,
She's parent, child, and wife.

The poor old slut, I am beholden to her for my living, and bound to stand by her, as I say to my mill knaves, in right and in wrong. And so should every honest fellow stand by his bread-winner.—And so, Mysie, ye may doff your cloak since our neighbour is so kindly glad to see us—why, I think, we are as blithe to see her—not one in the Halidome pays their multures more duly, sequels, arriage, and carriage, and mill-services, used and wont."

With that the Miller hung his ample cloak without farther ceremony upon a huge pair of stag's antlers, which adorned at once the naked walls of the tower, and served for what we vulgarly call cloak-pins.

In the meantime Dame Elspeth assisted to disembarass the damsel whom she destined for her future daughter-in-law, of her hood, mantle, and the rest of her riding gear, giving her to appear as beseemed the buxom daughter of the wealthy Miller, gay and goodly, in a white kirtle, the seams of which were embroidered with green silken lace or fringe, entwined with some silver thread. An anxious glance did Elspeth cast upon the good-humoured face, which was now more fully shown to her, and was only obscured by a quantity of raven black hair, which the maid of the mill had restrained by a snood of green silk, embroidered with silver, corresponding to the trimmings of her kirtle. The countenance itself was exceedingly comely—the eyes black, large, and roguishly good-humoured—the mouth was small—the lips well formed, though somewhat full—the teeth were pearly white—and the chin had a very seducing dimple in it. The form belonging to this joyous face was full and round, and firm and fair. It might become coarse and masculine some years hence, which is the common fault of Scottish beauty; but in Mysie's sixteenth year she had the shape of a Hebe. The anxious Elspeth, with all her maternal partiality, could not help admitting within herself, that a better man

than Halbert might go farther and fare worse. She looked a little giddy, and Halbert was not nineteen; still it was time he should be settled, for to that point the dame always returned; and here was an excellent opportunity.

The simple cunning of Dame Elspeth now exhausted itself in commendations of her fair guest, from the snood, as they say, to the single-soled shoe. Mysie listened and blushed with pleasure for the first five minutes; but ere ten had elapsed, she began to view the old lady's compliments rather as subjects of mirth than of vanity, and was much more disposed to laugh at than to be flattered with them, for Nature had mingled the good-humour with which she had endowed the damsel with no small portion of shrewdness. Even Hob himself began to tire of hearing his daughter's praises, and broke in with, "Ay, ay, she is a clever quean enough; and, were she five years older, she shall lay a loaded sack on an *aver* {Note: *Aver*—properly a horse of labour.} with e'er a lass in the Halidome. But I have been looking for your two sons, dame. Men say downby that Halbert's turned a wild springald, and that we may have word of him from Westmoreland one moonlight night or another."

"God forbid, my good neighbour; God, in his mercy, forbid!" said Dame Glendinning, earnestly; for it was touching the very key-note of her apprehensions, to hint any probability that Halbert might become one of the marauders so common in the age and country. But, fearful of having betrayed too much alarm on this subject, she immediately added, "That though, since the last rout at Pinkiecleuch, she had been all of a tremble when a gun or a spear was named, or when men spoke of fighting; yet, thanks to God and our Lady, her sons were like to live and die honest and peaceful tenants to the Abbey, as their father might have done, but for that awful hosting which he went forth to with mony a brave man that never returned."

"Ye need not tell me of it, dame," said the Miller, "since I was there myself, and made two pair of legs (and these were not mine, but my mare's,) worth one pair of hands. I judged how it would be, when I saw our host break ranks, with rushing on through that broken ploughed field, and so as they had made a pricker of me, I e'en pricked off with myself while the play was good."

"Ay, ay, neighbour," said the dame, "ye were aye a wise and a wary man; if my Simon had had your wit, he might have been here to speak about it this day; but he was aye cracking of his good blood and his high kindred, and less would not serve him than to bide the bang to the last, with the earls, and knights, and squires, that had no wives to greet for them, or else had wives that cared not how soon they were widows; but that is not for the like of us. But touching my son Halbert, there is no fear of him; for if it should be his misfortune to be in the like case, he has the best pair of heels in Halidome, and could run almost as fast as your mare herself."

"Is this he, neighbour?" quoth the Miller.

"No," replied the mother; "that is my youngest son, Edward, who can read and write like the Lord Abbot himself, if it were not a sin to say so."

"Ay," said the Miller; "and is that the young clerk the Sub-Prior thinks so much of? they say he will come far ben that lad; wha kens but he may come to be Sub-Prior himself?—as broken a ship has come to land."

"To be a Prior, neighbour Miller," said Edward, "a man must first be a priest, and for that I judge I have little vocation."

"He will take to the pleugh-pettle, neighbour," said the good dame; "and so will Halbert too, I trust. I wish you saw Halbert.—Edward, where is your brother?"

"Hunting, I think," replied Edward; "at least he left us this morning to join the Laird of Colmslie and his hounds. I have heard them baying in the glen all day."

"And if I had heard that music," said the Miller, "it would have done my heart good, ay, and may be taken me two or three miles out of my road. When I was the Miller of Morebattle's knave, I have followed the hounds from Eckford to the foot of Hounam-law—followed them on foot, Dame Glendinning, ay, and led the chase when the Laird of Cessford and his gay riders were all thrown out by the mosses and gills. I brought the stag on my back to Hounam Cross, when the dogs had pulled him down. I think I see the old gray knight, as he sate so upright on his strong war-horse, all white with foam; and 'Miller,' said he to me, 'an thou wilt turn thy back on the mill, and wend with me, I will make a man of thee.' But I chose rather to abide by clap and happer, and the better luck was mine; for the proud Percy caused hang five of the Laird's henchmen at Alnwick for burning a rickle of houses some gate beyond Fowberry, and it might have been my luck as well as another man's."

"Ah, neighbour, neighbour," said Dame Glendinning, "you were aye wise and wary; but if you like hunting, I must say Halbert's the lad to please you. He hath all those fair holiday terms of hawk and hound as ready in his mouth as Tom with the tod's tail, that is the Lord Abbot's ranger."

"Ranges he not homeward at dinner-time, dame," demanded the Miller; "for we call noon the dinner-hour at Kennaquhair?"

The widow was forced to admit that, even at this important period of the day, Halbert was frequently absent; at which the Miller shook his head, intimating, at the same time, some allusion to the proverb of MacFarlane's geese, which "liked their play better than their meat." {Footnote: A brood of wild-geese, which long frequented one of the uppermost islands in Loch-Lomond, called Inch-Tavoe, were supposed to have some mysterious connexion with the ancient family of MacFarlane of that ilk, and it is said were never seen after the ruin and extinction of that house. The MacFarlanes had a house and garden upon that same island of Inch-Tavoe. Here James VI. was, on one occasion, regaled by the chieftain. His Majesty had been previously much amused by the geese pursuing each other on the Loch. But, when one which was brought to table, was found to be tough and ill fed, James observed—"that MacFarlane's geese liked their play better than their meat," a proverb which has been current ever since.}

That the delay of dinner might not increase the Miller's disposition to prejudge Halbert, Dame Glendinning called hastily on Mary Avenel to take her task of entertaining Mysie Happer, while she herself rushed to the kitchen, and, entering at once into the province of Tibb Tacket, rummaged among trenchers and dishes, snatched pots from the fire, and placed pans and gridirons on it, accompanying her own feats of personal activity with such a continued list of injunctions to Tibb, that Tibb at length lost patience, and said, "Here was as muckle wark about meating an auld miller, as if they had been to banquet the blood of Bruce." But this, as it was supposed to be spoken aside, Dame Glendinning did not think it convenient to hear.

Chapter the Fourteenth.

Nay, let me have the friends who eat my victuals,
As various as my dishes.—The feast's naught,
Where one huge plate predominates. John Plaintext,
He shall be mighty beef, our English staple;
The worthy Alderman, a butter'd dumpling;
Yon pair of whisker'd Cornets, ruffs and rees:
Their friend the Dandy, a green goose in sippets.
And so the hoard is spread at once and fill'd
On the same principle—Variety.

NEW PLAY.

"And what brave lass is this?" said Hob Miller, as Mary Avenel entered the apartment to supply the absence of Dame Elspeth Glendinning.

"The young Lady of Avenel, father," said the Maid of the Mill, dropping as low a curtsy as her rustic manners enabled her to make. The Miller, her father, doffed his bonnet, and made his reverence, not altogether so low perhaps as if the young lady had appeared in the pride of rank and riches, yet so as to give high birth the due homage which the Scotch for a length of time scrupulously rendered to it.

Indeed, from having had her mother's example before her for so many years, and from a native sense of propriety and even of dignity, Mary Avenel had acquired a demeanour, which marked her title to consideration, and effectually checked any attempt at familiarity on the part of those who might be her associates in her present situation, but could not be well termed her equals. She was by nature mild, pensive, and contemplative, gentle in disposition, and most placable when accidentally offended; but still she was of a retired and reserved habit, and shunned to mix in ordinary sports, even—when the rare occurrence of a fair or wake gave her an opportunity of mingling with companions of her own age. If at such scenes she was seen for an instant, she appeared to behold them with the composed indifference of one to whom their gaiety was a matter of no interest, and who seemed only desirous to glide away from the scene as soon as she possibly could.

Something also had transpired concerning her being born on All-hallow Eve, and the powers with which that circumstance was supposed to invest her over the invisible world. And from all-these particulars combined, the young men and women of the Halidome used to distinguish Mary among themselves by the name of the Spirit of Avenel, as if the fair but fragile form, the beautiful but rather colourless cheek, the dark blue eye, and the shady hair, had belonged rather to the immaterial than the substantial world. The general tradition of the White Lady, who was supposed to wait on the fortunes of the family of Avenel, gave a sort of zest to this piece of rural wit. It gave great offence, however, to the two sons of Simon Glendinning; and when the expression was in their presence applied to the young lady, Edward was wont to check the petulance of those who used it by strength of argument, and Halbert by strength of arm. In such cases Halbert had this advantage, that although he could render no aid to his brother's argument, yet when circumstances required it, he was sure to have that of Edward, who never indeed himself commenced a fray, but, on the other hand, did not testify any reluctance to enter into combat in Halbert's behalf or in his rescue.

But the zealous attachment of the two youths, being themselves, from the retired situation in which they dwelt, comparative strangers in the Halidome, did not serve in any degree to alter the feelings of the inhabitants towards the young lady, who seemed to have dropped amongst them from another sphere of life. Still, however, she was regarded with respect, if not with fondness; and the attention of the Sub-Prior to the family, not to mention the formidable name of Julian Avenel, which every new incident of those tumultuous times tended to render more famous, attached to his niece a certain importance. Thus some aspired to her acquaintance out of pride while the more timid of the feuars were anxious to inculcate upon their children the necessity of being respectful to the noble orphan. So that Mary Avenel, little loved because little known, was regarded with a mysterious awe, partly derived from fear of her uncle's moss-troopers, and partly from her own retired and distant habits, enhanced by the superstitious opinions of the time and country.

It was not without some portion of this awe, that Mysie felt herself left alone in company with a young person so distant in rank, and so different in bearing, from herself; for her worthy father had taken the first opportunity to step out unobserved, in order to mark how the barnyard was filled, and what prospect it afforded of grist to the mill. In youth, however, there is a sort of free-masonry, which, without much conversation, teaches young persons to estimate each other's character, and places them at ease on the shortest acquaintance. It is only when taught deceit by the commerce of the world, that we learn to shroud our character from observation, and to disguise our real sentiments from those with whom we are placed in communion.

Accordingly, the two young women were soon engaged in such objects of interest as best became their age. They visited Mary Avenel's pigeons, which she nursed with the tenderness of a mother; they turned over her slender stores of finery, which yet contained some articles that excited the respect of her companion, though Mysie was too good-humoured to nourish envy. A golden rosary, and some female ornaments marking superior rank, had been rescued in the moment of their utmost adversity, more by Tibb Tacket's presence of mind, than by the care of their owner,—who was at that sad period too much sunk in grief to pay any attention to such circumstances. They struck Mysie with a deep impression of veneration; for, excepting what the Lord Abbot and the convent might possess, she did not believe there was so much real gold in the world as was exhibited in these few trinkets, and Mary, however sage and serious, was not above being pleased with the admiration of her rustic companion.

Nothing, indeed, could exhibit a stronger contrast than the appearance of the two girls;—the good-humoured laughter-loving countenance of the Maid of the Mill, who stood gazing with unrepressed astonishment on whatever was in her inexperienced eye rare and costly, and with an humble, and at the same time cheerful acquiescence in her inferiority, asking all the little queries about the use and value of the ornaments, while Mary Avenel, with her quiet composed dignity and placidity of manner, produced them one after another for the amusement of her companion.

As they became gradually more familiar, Mysie of the Mill was just venturing to ask, why Mary Avenel never appeared at the May-pole, and to express her wonder when the young lady said she disliked dancing, when a trampling of horses at the gate of the tower interrupted their conversation.

Mysie flew to the shot-window in the full ardour of unrestrained female curiosity. "Saint Mary! sweet lady! here come two well-mounted gallants; will you step this way to look at them?"

"No," said Mary Avenel, "you shall tell me who they are."

"Well, if you like it better," said Mysie—"but how shall I know them?—Stay, I do know one of them, and so do you, lady; he is a blithe man, somewhat light of hand, they say, but the gallants of these days think no great harm of that. He is your uncle's henchman, that they call Christie of the Clinthill; and he has not his old green jerkin and the rusty blackjack over it, but a scarlet cloak, laid down with silver lace three inches broad, and a breast-plate you might see to dress your hair in, as well as in that keeking-glass in the ivory frame that you showed me even now. Come, dear lady, come to the shot-window and see him."

"If it be the man you mean, Mysie," replied the orphan of Avenel, "I shall see him soon enough, considering either the pleasure or comfort the sight will give me."

"Nay, but if you will not come to see gay Christie," replied the Maid of the Mill, her face flushed with eager curiosity, "come and tell me who the gallant is that is with him, the handsomest, the very loveliest young man I ever saw with sight."

"It is my foster-brother, Halbert Glendinning," said Mary, with, apparent indifference; for she had been accustomed to call the sons of Elspeth her foster-brethren, and to live with them as if they had been brothers in earnest.

"Nay, by Our Lady, that it is not," said Mysie; "I know the favour of both the Glendinnings well, and I think this rider be not of our country. He has a crimson velvet bonnet, and long brown hair falling down under it, and a beard on his upper lip, and his chin clean and close shaved, save a small patch on the point of the chin, and a sky-blue jerkin slashed and lined with white satin, and trunk-hose to suit, and no weapon but a rapier and dagger—Well, if I was a man, I would never wear weapon but the rapier! it is so slender and becoming, instead of having a cartload of iron at my back, like my father's broad-sword with its great rusty basket-hilt. Do you not delight in the rapier and poniard, lady?"

"The best sword," answered Mary, "if I must needs answer a question of the sort, is that which is drawn in the best cause, and which is best used when it is out of the scabbard."

"But can you not guess who this stranger should be?" said Mysie.

"Indeed, I cannot even attempt it; but to judge by his companion, it is no matter how little he is known," replied Mary.

"My benison on his bonny face," said Mysie, "if he is not going to alight here! Now, I am as much pleased as if my father had given me the silver earrings he has promised me so often;—nay, you had as well come to the window, for you must see him by and by whether you will or not." I do not know how much sooner Mary Avenel might have sought the point of observation, if she had not been scared from it by the unrestrained curiosity expressed by her buxom friend; but at length the same feeling prevailed over her sense of dignity, and satisfied with having displayed all the indifference that was necessary in point of decorum, she no longer thought herself bound to restrain her curiosity.

From the outshot or projecting window, she could perceive that Christie of the Clinthill was attended on the present occasion by a very gay and gallant cavalier, who, from the nobleness of his countenance and manner, his rich and handsome dress, and the showy appearance of his horse and furniture, must, she agreed with her new friend, be a person of some consequence.

Christie also seemed conscious of something, which made him call out with more than his usual insolence of manner, "What, ho! so ho! the house! Churl peasants, will no one answer when I call?—Ho! Martin,—Tibb,—Dame Glendinning—a murrain on you, must we stand keeping our horses in the cold here, and they steaming with heat, when we have ridden so sharply?"

At length he was obeyed, and old Martin made his appearance. "Ha!" said Christie, "art thou there, old Truepenny? here, stable me these steeds, and see them well bedded, and stretch thine old limbs by rubbing them down; and see thou quit not the stable till there is not a turned hair on either of them."

Martin took the horses to the stable as commanded, but suppressed not his indignation a moment after he could vent it with safety. "Would not any one think," he said to Jasper, an old ploughman, who, in coming to his assistance, had heard Christie's imperious injunctions, "that this loon, this Christie of the Clinthill, was laird or lord at least of him? No such thing, man! I remember him a little dirty turnspit boy in the house of Avenel, that every body in a frosty morning like this warmed his fingers by kicking or cuffing! and now he is a gentleman, and swears, d—n him and renounce him, as if the gentlemen could not so much as keep their own wickedness to themselves, without the like of him going to hell in their very company, and by the same road. I have as much a mind as ever I had to my dinner, to go back and tell him to sort his horse himself, since he is as able as I am."

"Hout tout, man!" answered Jasper, "keep a calm sough; better to fleech a fool than fight with him."

Martin acknowledged the truth of the proverb, and, much comforted therewith, betook himself to cleaning the stranger's horse with great assiduity, remarking, it was a pleasure to handle a handsome nag, and turned over the other to the charge of Jasper. Nor was it until Christie's commands were literally complied with that he deemed it proper, after fitting ablutions, to join the party in the spence; not for the purpose of waiting upon them, as a mere modern reader might possibly expect, but that he might have his share of dinner in their company.

In the meanwhile, Christie had presented his companion to Dame Glendinning as Sir Piercie Shafton, a friend of his and of his master, come to spend three or four days with little din in the tower. The good dame could not conceive how she was entitled to such an honour, and would fain have pleaded her want of every sort of convenience to entertain a guest of that quality. But, indeed, the visiter, when he cast his eyes round the bare walls, eyed the huge black chimney, scrutinized the meagre and broken furniture of the apartment, and beheld the embarrassment of the mistress of the family, intimated great reluctance to intrude upon Dame Glendinning a visit, which could scarce, from all appearances, prove otherwise than an inconvenience to her, and a penance to himself.

But the reluctant hostess and her guest had to do with an inexorable man, who silenced all expostulations with, "such was his master's pleasure. And, moreover," he continued, "though the Baron of Avenel's will must, and ought to prove law to all within ten miles around him, yet here, dame," he said, "is a letter from your petticoated baron, the lord-priest yonder, who enjoins you, as you regard his pleasure, that you afford to this good knight such decent accommodation as is in your power, suffering him to live as privately as he shall desire.—And for you, Sir Piercie Shafton," continued Christie, "you will judge for yourself, whether secrecy and safety is not more your object even now, than soft beds and high cheer. And do not judge of the dame's goods by the semblance of her cottage; for you will see by the dinner she is about to spread for us, that the vassal of the kirk is seldom found with her basket bare." To Mary Avenel, Christie presented the stranger, after the best fashion he could, as to the niece of his master the baron.

While he thus laboured to reconcile Sir Piercie Shafton to his fate, the widow, having consulted her son Edward on the real import of the Lord Abbot's injunction, and having found that Christie had given a true exposition, saw nothing else left for her but to make that fate as easy as she could to the stranger. He himself also seemed reconciled to his lot by some feeling probably of strong necessity, and accepted with a good grace the hospitality which the dame offered with a very indifferent one.

In fact, the dinner, which soon smoked before the assembled guests, was of that substantial kind which warrants plenty and comfort. Dame Glendinning had cooked it after her best manner; and, delighted with the handsome appearance which her good cheer made when placed on the table, forgot both her plans and the vexations which interrupted them, in the hospitable duty of pressing her assembled visitors to eat and drink, watching every trencher as it waxed empty, and loading it with fresh supplies ere the guest could utter a negative.

In the meanwhile, the company attentively regarded each other's motions, and seemed endeavouring to form a judgment of each other's character. Sir Piercie Shafton condescended to speak to no one but to Mary Avenel, and on her he conferred exactly the same familiar and compassionate, though somewhat scornful sort of attention, which a pretty fellow of these days will sometimes condescend to bestow on a country miss, when there is no prettier or more fashionable woman present. The manner indeed was different, for the etiquette of those times did not permit Sir Piercie Shafton to pick his teeth, or to yawn, or to gabble like the beggar whose tongue (as he says) was cut out by the Turks, or to affect deafness or blindness, or any other infirmity of the organs. But though the embroidery of his conversation was different, the groundwork was the same, and the high-flown and ornate compliments with which the gallant knight of the sixteenth century inter-larded his conversation, were as much the offspring of egotism and self-conceit, as the jargon of the coxcombs of our own days.

The English knight was, however, something daunted at finding that Mary Avenel listened with an air of indifference, and answered with wonderful brevity, to all the fine things which ought, as he conceived, to have dazzled her with their brilliancy, and puzzled her by their obscurity. But if he was disappointed in making the desired, or rather the expected impression, upon her whom he addressed, Sir Piercie Shafton's discourse was marvellous in the ears of Mysie the Miller's daughter, and not the less so that she did not comprehend the meaning of a single word which he uttered. Indeed, the gallant knight's language was far too courtly to be understood by persons of much greater acuteness than Mysie's.

It was about this period, that the "only rare poet of his time, the witty, comical, facetiously-quick, and quickly-facetious, John Lyly—he that sate at Apollo's table, and to whom Phoebus gave a wreath of his own bays without snatching" {Footnote: Such, and yet more extravagant, are the compliments paid to this author by his editor, Blount. Notwithstanding all exaggeration, Lyly was really a man of wit and imagination, though both were deformed by the most unnatural affectation that ever disgraced a printed page.}—he, in short, who wrote that singularly coxcomical work, called *Euphues and his England*, was in the very zenith of his absurdity and his reputation. The quaint, forced, and unnatural style which he introduced by his "Anatomy of Wit," had a fashion as rapid as it was momentary—all the court ladies were his scholars, and *toparler Euphuisme*, was as necessary a qualification to a courtly gallant, as those of understanding how to use his rapier, or to dance a measure.

It was no wonder that the Maid of the Mill was soon as effectually blinded by the intricacies of this erudite and courtly style of conversation, as she had ever been by the dust of her father's own meal-sacks. But there she sate with her mouth and eyes as open as the mill-door and the two windows, showing teeth as white as her father's bolted flour, and endeavouring to secure a word or two for her own future use out of the pearls of rhetoric which Sir Piercie Shafton scattered around him with such bounteous profusion.

For the male part of the company, Edward felt ashamed of his own manner and slowness of speech, when he observed the handsome young courtier, with an ease and volubility of which he had no conception, run over all the commonplace topics of high-flown gallantry. It is true the good sense and natural taste of young Glendinning soon informed him that the gallant cavalier was speaking nonsense. But, alas! where is the man of modest merit, and real talent, who has not suffered from being outshone in conversation and outstripped in the race of life, by men of less reserve, and of qualities more showy, though less substantial? and well constituted must the mind be, that can yield up the prize without envy to competitors more worthy than himself.

Edward Glendinning had no such philosophy. While he despised the jargon of the gay cavalier, he envied the facility with which he could run on, as well as the courtly tone and expression, and the perfect ease and elegance with which he offered all the little acts of politeness to which the duties of the table gave opportunity. And if I am to speak truth, I must own that he envied those qualities the more as they were all exercised in Mary Avenel's service, and, although only so far accepted as they could not be refused, intimated a wish on the stranger's part to place himself in her good graces, as the only person in the room to whom he thought it worth while to recommend himself. His title, rank, and very handsome figure, together with some sparks of wit and spirit which flashed across the cloud of nonsense which he uttered, rendered him, as the words of the old song say, "a lad for a lady's viewing;" so that poor Edward, with all his real worth and acquired knowledge, in his home-spun doublet, blue cap, and deerskin trowsers, looked like a clown beside the courtier, and, feeling the full inferiority, nourished no good-will to him by whom he was eclipsed.

Christie, on the other hand, as soon as he had satisfied to the full a commodious appetite, by means of which persons of his profession could, like the wolf and eagle, gorge themselves with as much food at one meal as might serve them for several days, began also to feel himself more in the back-ground than he liked to be. This worthy had, amongst his other good qualities, an excellent opinion of himself; and, being of a bold and forward disposition, had no mind to be thrown into the shade by any one. With an impudent familiarity which such persons mistake for graceful ease, he broke in upon the knight's finest speeches with as little remorse as he would have driven the point of his lance through a laced doublet. Sir Piercie Shafton, a man of rank and high birth, by no means encouraged or endured this familiarity, and requited the intruder either with total neglect, or such laconic replies as intimated a sovereign contempt for the rude spearman, who affected to converse with him upon terms of equality.

The Miller held his peace; for, as his usual conversation turned chiefly on his clapper and toll-dish, he had no mind to brag of his wealth in presence of Christie of the Clinthill, or to intrude his discourse on the English cavalier.

A little specimen of the conversation may not be out of place, were it but to show young ladies what fine things they have lost by living when Euphuism is out of fashion.

"Credit me, fairest lady," said the knight, "that such is the cunning of our English courtiers, of the hodiernal strain, that, as they have infinitely refined upon the plain and rustical discourse of our fathers, which, as I may say, more beseemed the mouths of country roisterers in a May-game than that of courtly gallants in a galliard, so I hold it ineffably and unutterably impossible, that those who may succeed us in that garden of wit and courtesy shall alter or amend it. Venus delighted but in the language of Mercury, Bucephalus will stoop to no one but Alexander, none can sound Apollo's pipe but Orpheus."

"Valiant sir," said Mary, who could scarcely help laughing, "we have but to rejoice in the chance which hath honoured this solitude with a glimpse of the sun of courtesy, though it rather blinds than enlightens us."

"Pretty and quaint, fairest lady," answered the Euphuist. "Ah, that I had with me my Anatomy of Wit—that all-to-be-unparalleled volume—that quintessence of human wit—that treasury of quaint invention—that exquisitely-pleasant-to-read, and inevitably-necessary-to-be-remembered manual, of all that is worthy to be known—which indoctrines the rude in civility, the dull in intellectuality, the heavy in jocosity, the blunt in gentility, the vulgar in nobility, and all of them in that unutterable perfection, of human utterance, that eloquence which no other eloquence is sufficient to praise, that art which, when we call it by its own name of Euphuism, we bestow on it its richest panegyric."

"By Saint Mary," said Christie of the Clinthill, "if your worship had told me that you had left such stores of wealth as you talk of at Prudhoe Castle, Long Dickie and I would have had them off with us if man and horse could have carried them; but you told us of no treasure I wot of, save the silver tongs for turning up your mustachoes."

The knight treated this intruder's mistake—for certainly Christie had no idea that all these epithets which sounded so rich and splendid, were lavished upon a small quarto volume—with a stare, and then turning again to Mary Avenel, the only person whom he thought worthy to address, he proceeded in his strain of high-flown oratory, "Even thus," said he, "do hogs condemn the splendour of Oriental pearls; even thus are the delicacies of a choice repast in vain offered to the long-eared grazer of the common, who turneth from them to devour a thistle. Surely as idle is it to pour forth the treasures of oratory before the eyes of the ignorant, and to spread the dainties of the intellectual banquet before those who are, morally and metaphysically speaking, no better than asses."

"Sir Knight, since that is your quality," said Edward, "we cannot strive with you in loftiness of language; but I pray you in fair courtesy, while you honour my father's house with your presence, to spare us such vile comparisons."

"Peace, good villagio," said the knight, gracefully waving his hand, "I prithee peace, kind rustic; and you, my guide, whom I may scarce call honest, let me prevail upon you to imitate the laudable taciturnity of that honest yeoman, who sits as mute as a mill-post, and of that comely damsel, who seems as with her ears she drank in what she did not altogether comprehend, even as a palfrey listening to a lute, whereof, howsoever, he knoweth not the gamut."

"Marvellous fine words," at length said Dame Glendinning, who began to be tired of sitting so long silent, "marvellous fine words, neighbour Happer, are they not?"

"Brave words—very brave words—very exceeding pyet words," answered the Miller; "nevertheless, to speak my mind, a lippy of bran were worth a bushel of them."

"I think so too, under his worship's favour," answered Christie of the Clinthill. "I well remember that at the race of Morham, as we call it, near Berwick, I took a young Southern fellow out of saddle with my lance, and cast him, it might be, a gad's length from his nag; and so, as he had some gold on his laced doublet, I deemed he might ha' the like on it in his pocket too, though that is a rule that does not aye hold good—So I was speaking to him of ransom, and out he comes with a handful of such terms as his honour there hath gleaned up, and craved me for mercy, as I was a true son of Mars, and such like."

"And obtained no mercy at thy hand, I dare be sworn," said the knight, who deigned not to speak Euphuism excepting to the fair sex.

"By my troggs," replied Christie, "I would have thrust my lance down his throat, but just then they flung open that accursed postern-gate, and forth pricked old Hunsdon, and Henry Carey, and as many fellows at their heels as turned the chase northward again. So I e'en pricked Bayard with the spur, and went off with the rest; for a man should ride when he may not wrestle, as they say in Tynedale."

"Trust me," said the knight, again turning to Mary Avenel, "if I do not pity you, lady, who, being of noble blood, are thus in a manner compelled to abide in the cottage of the ignorant, like the precious stone in the head of the toad, or like a precious garland on the brow of an ass.—But soft, what gallant have we here, whose garb savoureth more of the rustic than doth his demeanour, and whose looks seem more lofty than his habit; even as—"

"I pray you, Sir Knight," said Mary, "to spare your courtly similitudes for refined ears, and give me leave to name unto you my foster-brother, Halbert Glendinning."

"The son of the good dame of the cottage, as I opine," answered the English knight; "for by some such name did my guide discriminate the mistress of this mansion, which you, madam, enrich with your presence.—And yet, touching this juvenal, he hath that about him which belongeth to higher birth, for all are not black who dig coals—"

"Nor all white who are millers," said honest Happer, glad to get in a word, as they say, edgeways.

Halbert, who had sustained the glance of the Englishman with some impatience, and knew not what to make of his manner and language, replied with some asperity, "Sir Knight, we have in this land of Scotland an ancient saying, 'Scorn not the bush that bields you'—you are a guest of my father's house to shelter you from danger, if I am rightly informed by the domestics. Scoff not its homeliness, nor that of its inmates—ye might long have abidden at the court of England, ere we had sought your favour, or cumbered you with our society. Since your fate has sent you hither amongst us, be contented with such fare and such converse as we can afford you, and scorn us not for our kindness; for the Scots wear short patience and long daggers."

All eyes were turned on Halbert while he was thus speaking, and there was a general feeling that his countenance had an expression of intelligence, and his person an air of dignity, which they had never before observed. Whether it were that the wonderful Being with whom he had so lately held communication, had bestowed on him a grace and dignity of look and bearing which he had not before, or whether the being conversant in high matters, and called to a destiny beyond that of other men, had a natural effect in giving becoming confidence to his language and manner, we pretend not to determine. But it was evident to all, that, from this day, young Halbert was an altered man; that he acted with the steadiness, promptitude, and determination, which belonged to riper years, and bore himself with a manner which appertained to higher rank.

The knight took the rebuke with good humour. "By my mine honour," he said, "thou hast reason on thy side, good juvenal—nevertheless, I spoke not as in ridicule of the roof which relieves me, but rather in your own praise, to whom, if this roof be native, thou mayst nevertheless rise from its lowliness; even as the lark, which maketh its humble nest in the furrow, ascendeth towards the sun, as well as the eagle which buildeth her eyry in the cliff."

This high-flown discourse was interrupted by Dame Glendinning, who, with all the busy anxiety of a mother, was loading her son's trencher with food, and dinning in his ear her reproaches on account of his prolonged absence. "And see," she said, "that you do not one day get such a sight while you are walking about among the haunts of them that are not of our flesh and bone, as befell Mungo Murray when he slept on the greensward ring of the Auld Kirkhill at sunset, and wakened at daybreak in the wild hills of Breadalbane. And see that, when you are looking for deer, the red stag does not gall you as he did Diccon Thorburn, who never

overcast the wound that he took from a buck's horn. And see, when you go swaggering about with a long broadsword by your side, whilk it becomes no peaceful man to do, that you dinna meet with them that have broadsword and lance both—there are enow of rank riders in this land, that neither fear God nor regard man." Here her eye "in a fine frenzy rolling," fell full upon that of Christie of the Clinthill, and at once her fears for having given offence interrupted the current of maternal rebuke, which, like rebuke matrimonial, may be often better meant than timed. There was something of sly and watchful significance in Christie's eye, an eye gray, keen, fierce, yet wily, formed to express at once cunning, and malice, which made the dame instantly conjecture she had said too much, while she saw in imagination her twelve goodly cows go lowing down the glen in a moonlight night, with half a score of Border spearsmen at their heels.

Her voice, therefore, sunk from the elevated tone of maternal authority into a whimpering apologetic sort of strain, and she proceeded to say, "It is no that I have any ill thoughts of the Border riders, for Tibb Tacket there has often heard me say that I thought spear and bridle as natural to a Borderman as a pen to a priest, or a feather-fan to a lady; and—have you not heard me say it, Tibb?"

Tibb showed something less than her expected alacrity in attesting her mistress's deep respect for the freebooters of the southland hills; but, thus conjured, did at length reply, "Hout ay, mistress, I'se warrant I have heard you say something like that."

"Mother!" said Halbert, in a firm and commanding tone of voice, "what or whom is it that you fear under my father's roof?—I well hope that it harbours not a guest in whose presence you are afraid to say your pleasure to me or my brother? I am sorry I have been detained so late, being ignorant of the fair company which I should encounter on my return.—I pray you let this excuse suffice: and what satisfies you, will, I trust, be nothing less than acceptable to your guests."

An answer calculated so jistly betwixt the submission due to his parent, and the natural feeling of dignity in one who was by birth master of the mansion, excited universal satisfaction. And as Elspeth herself confessed to Tibb on the same evening, "She did not think it had been in the callant. Till that night, he took pets and passions if he was spoke to, and lap through the house like a four-year-auld at the least word of advice that was minted at him, but now he spoke as grave and as douce as the Lord Abbot himself. She kendna," she said, "what might be the upshot of it, but it was like he was a wonderfu' callant even now."

The party then separated, the young men retiring to their apartments, the elder to their household cares. While Christie went to see his horse properly accommodated, Edward betook himself to his book, and Halbert, who was as ingenious in employing his hands as he had hitherto appeared imperfect in mental exertion, applied himself to constructing a place of concealment in the floor of his apartment by raising a plank, beneath which he resolved to deposit that copy of the Holy Scriptures which had been so strangely regained from the possession of men and spirits.

In the meanwhile Sir Piercie Shafton sate still as a stone, in the chair in which he had deposited himself, his hands folded on his breast, his legs stretched straight out before him and resting upon the heels, his eyes cast up to the ceiling as if he had meant to count every mesh of every cobweb with which the arched roof was canopied, wearing at the same time a face of as solemn and imperturbable gravity, as if his existence had depended on the accuracy of his calculation.

He could scarce be roused from his listless state of contemplative absorption so as to take some supper, a meal at which the younger females appeared not. Sir Piercie stared around twice or thrice as if he missed something; but he asked not for them, and only evinced his sense of a proper audience being wanting, by his abstraction and absence of mind, seldom speaking until he was twice addressed, and then replying, without trope or figure, in that plain English which nobody could speak better when he had a mind.

Christie, finding himself in undisturbed possession of the conversation, indulged all who chose to listen with details of his own wild and inglorious warfare, while Dame Elspeth's curch bristled with horror, and Tibb Tacket, rejoiced to find herself once more in the company of a jackman, listened to his tales, like Desdemona to Othello's, with undisguised delight. Meantime the two young Glendinnings were each wrapped up in his own reflections, and only interrupted in them by the signal to move bedward.

Chapter the Fifteenth.

He strikes no coin, 'tis true, but coins new phrases,
And vends them forth as knaves vend gilded counters,
Which wise men scorn, and fools accept in payment.

OLD PLAY.

In the morning Christie of the Clinthill was nowhere to be seen. As this worthy personage did seldom pique himself on sounding a trumpet before his movements, no one was surprised at his moonlight departure, though some alarm was excited lest he had not made it empty-handed. So, in the language of the national ballad,

Some ran to cupboard, and some to kist,
But nought was away that could be mist.

All was in order, the key of the stable left above the door, and that of the iron-grate in the inside of the lock. In short, the retreat had been made with scrupulous attention to the security of the garrison, and so far Christie left them nothing to complain of.

The safety of the premises was ascertained by Halbert, who instead of catching up a gun or cross-bow, and sallying out for the day as had been his frequent custom, now, with a gravity beyond his years, took a survey of all around the tower, and then returned to the spence, or public apartment, in which, at the early hour of seven, the morning meal was prepared.

There he found the Euphuist in the same elegant posture of abstruse calculation which he had exhibited on the preceding evening, his arms folded in the same angle, his eyes turned up to the same cobwebs, and his heels resting on the ground as before. Tired of this affectation of indolent importance, and not much flattered with his guest's persevering in it to the last, Halbert resolved at once to break the ice, being determined to know what circumstance had brought to the tower of Glendinning a guest at once so supercilious and so silent.

"Sir Knight," he said with some firmness, "I have twice given you good morning, to which the absence of your mind hath, I presume, prevented you from yielding attention, or from making return. This exchange of courtesy is at your pleasure to give or withhold—But, as what I have further to say concerns your comfort and your motions in an especial manner, I will entreat you to give me some signs of attention, that I may be sure I am not wasting my words on a monumental image."

At this unexpected address, Sir Piercie Shafton opened his eyes, and afforded the speaker a broad stare; but as Halbert returned the glance without either confusion or dismay, the knight thought proper to change his posture, draw in his legs, raise his eyes, fix them on young Glendinning, and assume the appearance of one who listens to what is said to him. Nay, to make his purpose more evident, he gave voice to his resolution in these words, "Speak! we do hear."

"Sir Knight," said the youth, "it is the custom of this Halidome, or patrimony of St. Mary's, to trouble with inquiries no guests who receive our hospitality, providing they tarry in our house only for a single revolution of the sun. We know that both criminals and debtors come hither for sanctuary, and we scorn to extort from the pilgrim, whom chance may make our guest, an avowal of the cause of his pilgrimage and penance. But when one so high above our rank as yourself, Sir Knight, and especially one to whom the possession of such pre-eminence is not indifferent, shows his determination to be our guest for a longer time, it is our usage to inquire of him whence he comes, and what is the cause of his journey?"

The English knight gaped twice or thrice before he answered, and then replied in a bantering tone, "Truly, good villagio, your question hath in it somewhat of embarrassment, for you ask me of things concerning which I am not as yet altogether determined what answer I may find it convenient to make. Let it suffice thee,

kind juvenal, that thou hast the Lord Abbot's authority for treating me to the best of that power of thine, which, indeed, may not always so well suffice for my accommodation as either of us would desire."

"I must have a more precise answer than this, Sir Knight," said the young Glendinning.

"Friend," said the knight, "be not outrageous. It may suit your northern manners thus to press harshly upon the secrets of thy betters; but believe me, that even as the lute, struck by an unskilful hand, doth produce discords, so—" At this moment the door of the apartment opened, and Mary Avenel presented herself—"But who can talk of discords," said the knight, assuming his complimentary vein and humour, "when the soul of harmony descends upon us in the presence of surpassing beauty! For even as foxes, wolves, and other animals void of sense and reason, do fly from the presence of the resplendent sun of heaven when he arises in his glory, so do strife, wrath, and all ireful passions retreat, and, as it were, scud away, from the face which now beams upon us, with power to compose our angry passions, illuminate our errors and difficulties, soothe our wounded minds, and lull to rest our disorderly apprehensions; for as the heat and warmth of the eye of day is to the material and physical world, so is the eye which I now bow down before to that of the intellectual microcosm."

He concluded with a profound bow; and Mary Avenel, gazing from one to the other, and plainly seeing that something was amiss, could only say, "For heaven's sake, what is the meaning of this?"

The newly-acquired tact and intelligence of her foster-brother was as yet insufficient to enable him to give an answer. He was quite uncertain how he ought to deal with a guest, who preserving a singularly high tone of assumed superiority and importance, seemed nevertheless so little serious in what he said, that it was quite impossible to discern with accuracy whether he was in jest or earnest.

Forming, however, the internal resolution to bring Sir Piercie Shafton to a reckoning at a more fit place and season, he resolved to prosecute the matter no farther at present; and the entrance of his mother with the damsel of the Mill, and the return of the honest Miller from the stack-yard, where he had been numbering and calculating the probable amount of the season's grist, rendered farther discussion impossible for the moment.

In the course of the calculation it could not but strike the man of meal and grindstones, that after the church's dues were paid, and after all which he himself could by any means deduct from the crop, still the residue which must revert to Dame Glendinning could not be less than considerable. I wot not if this led the honest Miller to nourish any plans similar to those adopted by Elspeth; but it is certain that he accepted with grateful alacrity an invitation which the dame gave to his daughter, to remain a week or two as her guest at Glendearg.

The principal persons being thus in high good humour with each other, all business gave place to the hilarity of the morning repast; and so much did Sir Piercie appear gratified by the attention which was paid to every word that he uttered by the nut-brown Mysie, that, notwithstanding his high birth and distinguished quality, he bestowed on her some of the more ordinary and second-rate tropes of his elocution.

Mary Avenel, when relieved from the awkwardness of feeling the full weight of his conversation addressed to herself, enjoyed it much more; and the good knight, encouraged by those conciliating marks of approbation from the sex, for whose sake he cultivated his oratorical talents, made speedy intimation of his purpose to be more communicative than he had shown himself in his conversation with Halbert Glendinning, and gave them to understand, that it was in consequence of some pressing danger that he was at present their involuntary guest.

The conclusion of the breakfast was a signal for the separation of the company. The Miller went to prepare for his departure; his daughter to arrange matters for her unexpected stay; Edward was summoned to consultation by Martin concerning some agricultural matter, in which Halbert could not be brought to interest himself; the dame left the room upon her household concerns, and Mary was in the act of following her, when she suddenly recollected, that if she did so, the strange knight and Halbert must be left alone together, at the risk of another quarrel.

The maiden no sooner observed this circumstance, than she instantly returned from the door of the apartment, and, seating herself in a small stone window-seat, resolved to maintain that curb which she was sensible her presence imposed on Halbert Glendinning, of whose quick temper she had some apprehensions.

The stranger marked her motions, and, either interpreting them as inviting his society, or obedient to those laws of gallantry which permitted him not to leave a lady in silence and solitude, he instantly placed himself near to her side and opened the conversation as follows:—

"Credit me, fair lady" he said, addressing Mary Avenel, "it much rejoiceth me, being, as I am, a banished man from the delights of mine own country, that I shall find here in this obscure and silvan cottage of the north, a fair form and a candid soul, with whom I may explain my mutual sentiments. And let me pray you in particular, lovely lady, that, according to the universal custom now predominant in our court, the garden of superior wits, you will exchange with me some epithet whereby you may mark my devotion to your service. Be henceforward named, for example, my Protection, and let me be your Affability."

"Our northern and country manners, Sir Knight, do not permit us to exchange epithets with those to whom we are strangers," replied Mary Avenel.

"Nay, but see now," said the knight, "how you are startled! even as the unbroken steed, which swerves aside from the shaking of a handkerchief, though he must in time encounter the waving of a pennon. This courtly exchange of epithets of honour, is no more than the compliments which pass between valour and beauty, wherever they meet, and under whatever circumstances. Elizabeth of England herself calls Philip Sydney her Courage, and he in return calls that princess his Inspiration. Wherefore, my fair Protection, for by such epithet it shall be mine to denominate you—"

"Not without the young lady's consent, sir!" interrupted Halbert; "most truly do I hope your courtly and quaint breeding will not so far prevail over the more ordinary rules of civil behaviour."

"Fair tenant of an indifferent copyhold," replied the knight, with the same coolness and civility of mien, but in a tone somewhat more lofty than he used to the young lady, "we do not in the southern parts, much intermingle discourse, save with those with whom we may stand on some footing of equality; and I must, in all discretion, remind you, that the necessity which makes us inhabitants of the same cabin, doth not place us otherwise on a level with each other."

"By Saint Mary," replied young Glendinning, "it is my thought that it does; for plain men hold, that he who asks the shelter is indebted to him who gives it; and so far, therefore, is our rank equalized while this roof covers us both."

"Thou art altogether deceived," answered Sir Piercie; "and that thou mayst fully adapt thyself to our relative condition, know that I account not myself thy guest, but that of thy master, the Lord Abbot of Saint Mary's, who, for reasons best known to himself and me, chooseth to administer his hospitality to me through the means of thee, his servant and vassal, who art, therefore, in good truth, as passive an instrument of my accommodation as this ill-made and rugged joint-stool on which I sit, or as the wooden trencher from which I eat my coarse commons. Wherefore," he added, turning to Mary, "fairest mistress, or rather, as I said before, most lovely Protection—" (Footnote: There are many instances to be met with in the ancient dramas of this whimsical and conceited custom of persons who formed an intimacy, distinguishing: each, other by some quaint epithet. In *Every Man out of his Humour*, there is a humorous debate upon names most fit to bind the relation betwixt Sogliardo and Cavaliero Shift, which ends by adopting those of Countenance and Resolution. What is more to the point is in the speech of Hedon, a voluptuary and a courtier in *Cynthia's Revels*. "you know that I call Madam Plilantia my *Honour*, and she calls me her *Ambition*. Now, when I meet her in the presence, anon, I will come to her and say, 'Sweet Honour, I have hitherto contented my sense with the lilies of your hand, and now I will taste the roses of your lip.' To which she cannot but blushing answer, 'Nay, now you are too ambitious;' and then do I reply, 'I cannot be too ambitious of Honour, sweet lady. Wilt not be good?'—I think there is some remnant of this foppery preserved in masonic lodges, where each brother is distinguished by a name in the Lodge, signifying some abstract quality as Discretion, or the like. See the poems of Gavin Wilson.)

Mary Avenel was about to reply to him, when the stern, fierce, and resentful expression of voice and countenance with which Halbert exclaimed, "not from the King of Scotland, did he live, would I brook such terms!" induced her to throw herself between him and the stranger, exclaiming, "for God's sake, Halbert, beware what you do!"

"Fear not, fairest Protection," replied Sir Piercie, with the utmost serenity, "that I can be provoked by this rustical and mistaught juvenal to do aught misbecoming your presence or mine own dignity; for as soon shall the gunner's linstock give fire unto the icicle, as the spark of passion inflame my blood, tempered as it is to serenity by the respect due to the presence of my gracious Protection."

"You may well call her your protection, Sir Knight" said Halbert; "by Saint Andrew, it is the only sensible word I have heard you speak! But we may meet where her protection shall no longer afford you shelter."

"Fairest Protection," continued the courtier, not even honouring with a look, far less with a direct reply, the threat of the incensed Halbert, "doubt not that thy faithful Affability will be more commoved by the speech of this rudesby, than the bright and serene moon is perturbed by the baying of the cottage-cur, proud of the height of his own dunghill, which, in his conceit, lifteth him nearer unto the majestic luminary."

To what lengths so unsavoury a simile might have driven Halbert's indignation, is left uncertain; for at that moment Edward rushed into the apartment with the intelligence that two most important officers of the Convent, the Kitchener and Refectoner, were just arrived with a sumpter-mule, loaded with provisions, announcing that the Lord Abbot, the Sub-Prior, and the Sacristan, were on their way thither. A circumstance so very extraordinary had never been recorded in the annals of Saint Mary's, or in the traditions of Glendearg, though there was a faint legendary report that a certain Abbot had dined there in old days, after having been bewildered in a hunting expedition amongst the wilds which lie to the northward. But that the present Lord Abbot should have taken a voluntary journey to so wild and dreary a spot, the very Kamtschatka of the Halidome, was a thing never dreamt of; and the news excited the greatest surprise in all the members of the family saving Halbert alone.

This fiery youth was too full of the insult he had received to think of anything as unconnected with it. "I am glad of it," he exclaimed; "I am glad the Abbot comes hither. I will know of him by what right this stranger is sent hither to domineer over us under our father's roof, as if we were slaves and not freemen. I will tell the proud priest to his beard—"

"Alas! alas! my brother," said Edward, "think what these words may cost thee!"

"And what will, or what can they cost me," said Halbert, "that I should sacrifice my human feelings and my justifiable resentment to the fear of what the Abbot can do?"

"Our mother—our mother!" exclaimed Edward; "think, if she is deprived of her home, expelled from her property, how can you amend what your rashness may ruin?"

"It is too true, by Heaven!" said Halbert, striking his forehead. Then, stamping his foot against the floor to express the full energy of the passion to which he dared no longer give vent, he turned round and left the apartment.

Mary Avenel looked at the stranger knight, while she was endeavouring to frame a request that he would not report the intemperate violence of her foster-brother to the prejudice of his family, in the mind of the Abbot. But Sir Piercie, the very pink of courtesy, conjectured her meaning from her embarrassment, and waited not to be entreated.

"Credit me, fairest Protection," said he, "your Affability is less than capable of seeing or hearing, far less of reciting or reiterating, aught of an unseemly nature which may have chanced while I enjoyed the Elysium of your presence. The winds of idle passion may indeed rudely agitate the bosom of the rude; but the heart of the courtier is polished to resist them. As the frozen lake receives not the influence of the breeze, even so—"

The voice of Dame Glendinning, in shrill summons, here demanded Mary Avenel's attendance, who instantly obeyed, not a little glad to escape from the compliments and similes of this courtlike gallant. Nor was it apparently less a relief on his part; for no sooner was she past the threshold of the room, than he exchanged the look of formal and elaborate politeness which had accompanied each word he had uttered hitherto, for an expression of the utmost lassitude and ennui; and after indulging in one or two portentous yawns, broke forth into a soliloquy.

"What the foul fiend sent this wench hither? As if it were not sufficient plague to be harboured in a hovel that would hardly serve for a dog's kennel in England, baited by a rude peasant-boy, and dependent on the faith of a mercenary ruffian, but I cannot even have time to muse over my own mishap, but must come aloft, frisk, fidget, and make speeches, to please this pale hectic phantom, because she has gentle blood in her veins? By mine honour, setting prejudice aside, the mill-wench is the more attractive of the two—But patience, Piercie Shafton; thou must not lose thy well-earned claim to be accounted a devout servant of the fair sex, a witty-brained, prompt, and accomplished courtier. Rather thank heaven, Piercie Shafton, which hath sent thee a subject, wherein, without derogating from thy rank, (since the honours of the Avenel family are beyond dispute,) thou mayest find a whetstone for thy witty compliments, a strop whereon to sharpen thine acute engine, a butt whereat to shoot the arrows of thy gallantry. For even as a Bilboa blade, the more it is rubbed, the brighter and the sharper will it prove, so—But what need I waste my stock of similitudes in holding converse with myself?—Yonder comes the monkish retinue, like some half score of crows winging their way slowly up the valley—I hope, a'gad, they have not forgotten my trunk-mails of apparel amid the ample provision they have made for their own belly-timber—Mercy, a'gad, I were finely helped up if the vesture has miscarried among the thievish Borderers!"

Stung by this reflection, he ran hastily down stairs, and caused his horse to be saddled, that he might, as soon as possible, ascertain this important point, by meeting the Lord Abbot and his retinue as they came up the glen. He had not ridden a mile before he met them advancing with the slowness and decorum which became persons of their dignity and profession. The knight failed not to greet the Lord Abbot with all the formal compliments with which men of rank at that period exchanged courtesies. He had the good fortune to find that his mails were numbered among the train of baggage which attended upon the party; and, satisfied in that particular, he turned his horse's head, and accompanied the Abbot to the Tower of Glendearg.

Great, in the meanwhile, had been the turmoil of the good Dame Elspeth and her coadjutors, to prepare for the fitting reception of the Father Lord Abbot and his retinue. The monks had indeed taken care not to trust too much to the state of her pantry; but she was not the less anxious to make such additions as might enable her to claim the thanks of her feudal lord and spiritual father. Meeting Halbert, as, with his blood on fire, he returned from his altercation with her guest, she commanded him instantly to go forth to the hill, and not to return without venison; reminding him that he was apt enough to go thither for his own pleasure, and must now do so for the credit of the house.

The Miller, who was now hastening his journey homewards, promised to send up some salmon by his own servant. Dame Elspeth, who by this time thought she had guests enough, had begun to repent of her invitation to poor Mysie, and was just considering by what means, short of giving offence, she could send off the Maid of the Mill behind her father, and adjourn all her own aerial architecture till some future opportunity, when this unexpected generosity on the part of the sire rendered any present attempt to return his daughter on his hands too highly ungracious to be farther thought on. So the Miller departed alone on his homeward journey.

Dame Elspeth's sense of hospitality proved in this instance its own reward; for Mysie had dwelt too near the Convent to be altogether ignorant of the noble art of cookery, which her father patronized to the extent of consuming on festival days such dainties as his daughter could prepare in emulation of the luxuries of the Abbot's kitchen. Laying aside, therefore, her holiday kirtle, and adopting a dress more suitable to the occasion, the good-humored maiden bared her snowy arms above the elbows; and, as Elspeth acknowledged, in the language of the time and country, took "entire and aefauld part with her" in the labours of the day; showing unparalleled talent, and indefatigable industry, in the preparation of *mortreux*, *blanc-manger*, and heaven knows what delicacies besides, which Dame Glendinning, unassisted by her skill, dared not even have dreamt of presenting. Leaving this able substitute in the kitchen, and regretting that Mary Avenel was so brought up, that she could intrust nothing to her care, unless it might be seeing the great chamber strewn with rushes, and ornamented with such flowers and branches as the season afforded, Dame Elspeth hastily donned her best attire, and with a beating heart presented herself at the door of her little tower, to make her obeisance to the Lord Abbot as he crossed her humble threshold. Edward stood by his mother, and felt the same palpitation, which his philosophy was at a loss to account for. He was yet to learn how long it is ere our reason is enabled to triumph over the force of external circumstances, and how much our feelings are affected by novelty, and blunted by use and habit.

On the present occasion, he witnessed with wonder and awe the approach of some half-score of riders, sober men upon sober palfreys, muffled in their long black garments, and only relieved by their white scapularies, showing more like a funeral procession than aught else, and not quickening their pace beyond that which permitted easy conversation and easy digestion. The sobriety of the scene was indeed somewhat enlivened by the presence of Sir Piercie Shafton, who, to show that his skill in the manege was not inferior to his other accomplishments, kept alternately pressing and checking his gay courser, forcing him to piaffe, to caracole,

to passage, and to do all the other feats of the school, to the great annoyance of the Lord Abbot, the wonted sobriety of whose palfrey became at length discomposed by the vivacity of its companion, while the dignitary kept crying out in bodily alarm, "I do pray you—Sir Knight—good now, Sir Piercie—Be quiet, Benedict, there is a good steed—soh, poor fellow" and uttering all the other precatory and soothing exclamations by which a timid horseman usually bespeaks the favour of a frisky companion, or of his own unquiet nag, and concluding the bead-roll with a sincere *Deo gratias* so soon as he alighted in the court-yard of the Tower of Glendearg.

The inhabitants unanimously knelt down to kiss the hand of the Lord Abbot, a ceremony which even the monks were often condemned to. Good Abbot Boniface was too much fluttered by the incidents of the latter part of his journey, to go through this ceremony with much solemnity, or indeed with much patience. He kept wiping his brow with a snow-white handkerchief with one hand, while another was abandoned to the homage of his vassals; and then signing the cross with his outstretched arm, and exclaiming, "Bless ye—bless ye, my children" he hastened into the house, and murmured not a little at the darkness and steepness of the rugged winding stair, whereby he at length scaled the spence destined for his entertainment, and, overcome with fatigue, threw himself, I do not say into an easy chair, but into the easiest the apartment afforded.

Chapter the Sixteenth.

A courtier extraordinary, who by diet
Of meats and drinks, his temperate exercise,
Choice music, frequent bath, his horary shifts
Of shirts and waistcoats, means to immortalize
Mortality itself, and makes the essence
Of his whole happiness the trim of court.

MAGNETIC LADY.

When the Lord Abbot had suddenly and superciliously vanished from the eyes of his expectant vassals, the Sub-Prior made amends for the negligence of his principal, by the kind and affectionate greeting which he gave to all the members of the family, but especially to Dame Elspeth, her foster-daughter, and her son Edward. "Where," he even condescended to inquire, "is that naughty Nimrod, Halbert?—He hath not yet, I trust, turned, like his great prototype, his hunting-spear against man!"

"O no, an it please your reverence," said Dame Glendinning, "Halbert is up at the glen to get some venison, or surely he would not have been absent when such a day of honour dawned upon me and mine."

"Oh, to get savoury meat, such as our soul loveth," muttered the Sub-Prior; "it has been at times an acceptable gift.—I bid you good morrow, my good dame, as I must attend upon his lordship the Father Abbot."

"And O, reverend sir," said the good widow, detaining him, "if it might be your pleasure to take part with us if there is any thing wrong; and if there is any thing wanted, to say that it is just coming, or to make some excuses your learning best knows how. Every bit of vassail and silver work have we been spoiled of since Pinkie Cleuch, when I lost poor Simon Glendinning, that was the warst of a'."

"Never mind—never fear," said the Sub-Prior, gently extricating his garment from the anxious grasp of Dame Elspeth, "the Refectioner has with him the Abbot's plate and drinking cups; and I pray you to believe that whatever is short in your entertainment will be deemed amply made up in your good-will."

So saying, he escaped from her and went into the spence, where such preparations as haste permitted were making for the noon collation of the Abbot and the English knight. Here he found the Lord Abbot, for whom a cushion, composed of all the plaids in the house, had been unable to render Simon's huge elbow-chair a soft or comfortable place of rest.

"Benedicite!" said Abbot Boniface, "now marry fie upon these hard benches with all my heart—they are as uneasy as the *scabella* of our novices. Saint Jude be with us, Sir Knight, how have you contrived to pass over the night in this dungeon? An your bed was no softer than your seat, you might as well have slept on the stone couch of Saint Pacomius. After trotting a full ten miles, a man needs a softer seat than has fallen to my hard lot."

With sympathizing faces, the Sacristan and the Refectioner ran to raise the Lord Abbot, and to adjust his seat to his mind, which was at length accomplished in some sort, although he continued alternately to bewail his fatigue, and to exult in the conscious sense of having discharged an arduous duty. "You errant cavaliers," said he, addressing the knight, "may now perceive that others have their travail and their toils to undergo as well as your honoured faculty. And this I will say for myself and the soldiers of Saint Mary, among whom I may be termed captain, that it is not our wont to flinch from the heat of the service, or to withdraw from the good fight. No, by Saint Mary!—no sooner did I learn that you were here, and dared not for certain reasons come to the Monastery, where, with as good will, and with more convenience, we might have given you a better reception, than, striking the table with my hammer, I called a brother—Timothy, said I, let them saddle Benedict—let them saddle my black palfrey, and bid the Sub-Prior and some half-score of attendants be in readiness tomorrow after matins—we would ride to Glendearg.—Brother Timothy stared, thinking, I imagine, that his ears had scarce done him justice—but I repeated my commands, and said, Let the Kitchener and Refectioner go before to aid the poor vassals to whom the place belongs in making a suitable collation. So that you will consider, good Sir Piercie, our mutual in commodities, and forgive whatever you may find amiss."

"By my faith," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "there is nothing to forgive—If you spiritual warriors have to submit to the grievous incommunities which your lordship narrates, it would ill become me, a sinful and secular man, to complain of a bed as hard as a board, of broth which relished as if made of burnt wool, of flesh, which, in its sable and singed shape, seemed to put me on a level with Richard Coeur-de-Lion,—when he ate up the head of a Moor carbonadoed, and of other viands savouring rather of the rusticity of this northern region."

"By the good Saints, sir," said the Abbot, somewhat touched in point of his character for hospitality, of which he was in truth a most faithful and zealous professor, "it grieves me to the heart that you have found our vassals no better provided for your reception—Yet I crave leave to observe, that if Sir Piercie Shafton's affairs had permitted him to honour with his company our poor house of Saint Mary's, he might have had less to complain of in respect of easements."

"To give your lordship the reasons," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "why I could not at this present time approach your dwelling, or avail myself of its well-known and undoubted hospitality, craves either some delay, or," looking around him, "a limited audience."

The Lord Abbot immediately issued his mandate to the Refectioner: "Hie thee to the kitchen, Brother Hilarius, and there make inquiry of our brother the Kitchener, within what time he opines that our collation may be prepared, since sin and sorrow it were, considering the hardships of this noble and gallant knight, no whit mentioning or—weighing those we ourselves have endured, if we were now either to advance or retard the hour of refecton beyond the time when the viands are fit to be set before us."

Brother Hilarius parted with an eager alertness to execute the will of his Superior, and returned with the assurance, that punctually at one afternoon would the collation be ready.

"Before that time," said the accurate Refectioner, "the wafers, flamms, and pastry-meat, will scarce have had the just degree of fire which learned pottingers prescribe as fittest for the body; and if it should be past one o'clock, were it but ten minutes, our brother the Kitchener opines, that the haunch of venison would suffer in spite of the skill of the little turn-broche whom he has recommended to your holiness by his praises."

"How!" said the Abbot, "a haunch of venison!—from whence comes that dainty? I remember not thou didst intimate its presence in thy hamper of vivers."

"So please your holiness and lordship," said the Refectoner, "he is a son of the woman of the house who has shot it and sent it in—killed but now; yet, as the animal hath not left the body, the Kitchener undertakes it shall eat as tender as a young chicken—and this youth hath a special gift in shooting deer, and never misses the heart or the brain; so that the blood is not driven through the flesh, as happens too often with us. It is a hart of grease—your holiness has seldom seen such a haunch."

"Silence, Brother Hilarius," said the Abbot, wiping his mouth; "it is not becoming our order to talk of food so earnestly, especially as we must oft have our animal powers exhausted by fasting, and be accessible (as being ever mere mortals) to those signs of longing" (he again wiped his mouth) "which arise on the mention of victuals to an hungry man.—Minute down, however, the name of that youth—it is fitting merit should be rewarded, and he shall hereafter be a *frater ad succurrendum* in the kitchen and buttery."

"Alas! reverend Father and my good lord," replied the Refectoner, "I did inquire after the youth, and I learn he is one who prefers the casque to the cowl, and the sword of the flesh to the weapons of the spirit."

"And if it be so," said the Abbot, "see that thou retain him as a deputy-keeper and man-at-arms, and not as a lay brother of the Monastery—for old Tallboy, our forester, waxes dim-eyed, and hath twice spoiled a noble buck, by hitting him unwarily on the haunch. Ah! 'tis a foul fault, the abusing by evil-killing, evil-dressing, evil-appetite, or otherwise, the good creatures indulged to us for our use. Wherefore, secure us the service of this youth, Brother Hilarius, in the way that may best suit him.—And now, Sir Piercie Shafton, since the fates have assigned us a space of well-nigh an hour, ere we dare hope to enjoy more than the vapour or savour of our repast, may I pray you, of your courtesy, to tell me the cause of this visit; and, above all, to inform us, why you will not approach our more pleasant and better furnished *hospitium*?"

"Reverend Father, and my very good lord," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "it is well known to your wisdom, that there are stone walls which have ears, and that secrecy is to be looked to in matters which concern a man's head." The Abbot signed to his attendants, excepting the Sub-Prior, to leave the room, and then said, "Your valour, Sir Piercie, may freely unburden yourself before our faithful friend and counsellor Father Eustace, the benefits of whose advice we may too soon lose, inasmuch as his merits will speedily recommend him to an higher station, in which we trust he may find the blessing of a friend and adviser as valuable as himself, since I may say of him, as our claustral rhyme goeth,{Footnote: The rest of this doggerel rhyme may be found in Fosbrooke's Learned work on British Monachism.}

'Dixit Abbas ad Prioris,
Tu es homo boni moris,
Quia semper senioris
Mihi das concilia.'

Indeed," he added, "the office of Sub-Prior is altogether beneath our dear brother; nor can we elevate him unto that of Prior, which, for certain reasons, is at present kept vacant amongst us. Howbeit, Father Eustace is fully possessed of my confidence, and worthy of yours, and well may it be said of him, *Intravit in secretis nostris*."

Sir Piercie Shafton bowed to the reverend brethren, and, heaving a sigh, as if he would burst his steel cuirass, he thus commenced his speech:—

"Certes, reverend sirs, I may well heave such a suspiration, who have, as it were, exchanged heaven for purgatory, leaving the lightsome sphere of the royal court of England for a remote nook in this inaccessible desert—quitting the tilt-yard, where I was ever ready among my compeers to splinter a lance, either for the love of honour, or for the honour of love, in order to couch my knightly spear against base and pilfering besognios and marauders—exchanging the lighted halls, wherein I used nimbly to pace the swift coranto, or to move with a loftier grace in the stately galliard, for this rugged and decayed dungeon of rusty-coloured stone—quitting the gay theatre, for the solitary chimney-nook of a Scottish dog-house—bartering the sounds of the soul-ravishing lute, and the love-awaking viol-de-gamba, for the discordant squeak of a northern bagpipe—above all, exchanging the smiles of those beauties, who form a gay galaxy around the throne of England, for the cold courtesy of an untaught damsel, and the bewildered stare of a miller's maiden. More might I say of the exchange of the conversation of gallant knights and gay courtiers of mine own order and capacity, whose conceits are bright and vivid as the lightning, for that of monks and churchmen—but it were discourteous to urge that topic."

The Abbot listened to this list of complaints with great round eyes, which evinced no exact intelligence of the orator's meaning; and when the knight paused to take breath, he looked with a doubtful and inquiring eye at the Sub-Prior, not well knowing in what tone he should reply to an exordium so extraordinary. The Sub-Prior accordingly stepped in to the relief of his principal.

"We deeply sympathize with you, Sir Knight, in the several mortifications and hardships to which fate has subjected you, particularly in that which has thrown you into the society of those, who, as they were conscious they deserved not such an honour, so neither did they at all desire it. But all this goes little way to expound the cause of this train of disasters, or, in plainer words, the reason which has compelled you into a situation having so few charms for you."

"Gentle and reverend sir," replied the knight, "forgive an unhappy person, who, in giving a history of his miseries, dilateth upon them extremely, even as he who, having fallen from a precipice, looketh upward to measure the height from which he hath been precipitated."

"Yea, but," said Father Eustace, "methinks it were wiser in him to tell those who come to lift him up, which of his bones have been broken."

"You, reverend sir," said the knight, "have, in the encounter of our wits, made a fair attain; whereas I may be in some sort said to have broken my staff across. {Footnote: *Attaint* was a term of tilting used to express the champion's having *attained* his mark, or, in other words, struck his lance straight and fair against the helmet or breast of his adversary. Whereas to break the lance across, intimated a total failure in directing the point of the weapon on the object of his aim.} Pardon me, grave sir, that I speak in the language of the tilt-yard, which is doubtless strange to your reverend years.—Ah! brave resort of the noble, the fair and the gay!—Ah! throne of love, and citadel of honour!—Ah! celestial beauties, by whose bright eyes it is graced! Never more shall Piercie Shafton advance, as the centre of your radiant glances, couch his lance, and spur his horse at the sound of the spirit-stirring trumpets, nobly called the voice of war—never more shall he baffle his adversary's encounter boldly, break his spear dexterously, and ambling around the lovely circle, receive the rewards with which beauty honours chivalry!"

Here he paused, wrung his hands, looked upwards, and seemed lost in contemplation of his own fallen fortunes.

"Mad, very mad," whispered the Abbot to the Sub-Prior; "I would we were fairly rid of him; for, of a truth, I expect he will proceed from raving to mischief—Were it not better to call up the rest of the brethren?"

But the Sub-Prior knew better than his Superior how to distinguish the jargon of affectation from the ravings of insanity, and although the extremity of the knight's passion seemed altogether fantastic, yet he was not ignorant to what extravagancies the fashion of the day can conduct its votaries.

Allowing, therefore, two minutes' space to permit the knight's enthusiastic feelings to exhaust themselves, he again gravely reminded him that the Lord Abbot had taken a journey, unwonted to his age and habits, solely to learn in what he could serve Sir Piercie Shafton—that it was altogether impossible he could do so without his receiving distinct information of the situation in which he had now sought refuge in Scotland.—"The day wore on," he observed, looking at the window; "and if the Abbot should be obliged to return to the Monastery without obtaining the necessary intelligence, the regret might be mutual, but the inconvenience was like to be all on Sir Piercie's own side."

The hint was not thrown away.

"O, goddess of courtesy!" said the knight, "can I so far have forgotten thy behests as to make this good prelate's ease and time a sacrifice to my vain complaints! Know, then, most worthy, and not less worshipful, that I, your poor visitor and guest, am by birth nearly bound to the Piercie of Northumberland, whose fame is so widely blown through all parts of the world where English worth hath been known. Now, this present Earl of Northumberland, of whom I propose to give you the brief history——"

"It is altogether unnecessary," said the Abbot; "we know him to be a good and true nobleman, and a sworn upholder of our Catholic faith, in the spite of the heretical woman who now sits upon the throne of England. And it is specially as his kinsman, and as knowing that ye partake with him in such devout and faithful belief and adherence to our holy Mother Church, that we say to you, Sir Piercie Shafton, that ye be heartily welcome to us, and that, and we wist how, we would labour to do you good service in your extremity."

"For such kind offer I rest your most humble debtor," said Sir Piercie, "nor need I at this moment say more than that my Right Honourable Cousin of Northumberland, having devised with me and some others, the choice and picked spirits of the age, how and by what means the worship of God, according to the Catholic Church, might be again introduced into this distracted kingdom of England, (even as one deviseth, by the assistance of his friend, to catch and bridle a runaway steed,) it pleased him so deeply to intrust me in those communications, that my personal safety becomes, as it were, entwined or complicated therewith. Natheless, as we have had sudden reason to believe, this Princess Elizabeth, who maintaineth around her a sort of counsellors skilful in tracking whatever schemes may be pursued for bringing her title into challenge, or for erecting again the discipline of the Catholic Church, has obtained certain knowledge of the trains which we had laid before we could give fire unto them. Wherefore, my Right Honourable Cousin of Northumberland, thinking it best belike that one man should take both blame and shame for the whole, did lay the burden of all this trafficking upon my back; which load I am the rather content to bear, in that he hath always shown himself my kind and honourable kinsman, as well as that my estate, I wot not how, hath of late been somewhat insufficient to maintain the expense of those braveries, wherewith it is incumbent on us, who are chosen and selected spirits, to distinguish ourselves from the vulgar."

"So that possibly," said the Sub-Prior, "your private affairs rendered a foreign journey less incommodious to you than it might have been to the noble earl, your right worthy cousin?"

"You are right, reverend sir," answered the courtier; "*rem acu*—you have touched the point with a needle—My cost and expenses had been indeed somewhat lavish at the late triumphs and tourneys, and the flat-capp'd citizens had shown themselves unwilling to furnish my pocket for new gallantries for the honour of the nation, as well as for mine own peculiar glory—and, to speak truth, it was in some part the hope of seeing these matters amended that led me to desire a new world in England."

"So that the miscarriage of your public enterprise, with the derangement of your own private affairs," said the Sub-Prior, "have induced you to seek Scotland as a place of refuge?"

"*Rem acu*, once again," said Sir Piercie; "and not without good cause, since my neck, if I remained, might have been brought within the circumstances of a halter—and so speedy was my journey northward, that I had but time to exchange my peach-coloured doublet of Genoa velvet, thickly laid over with goldsmith's work, for this cuirass, which was made by Bonamico of Milan, and travelled northward with all speed, judging that I might do well to visit my Right Honourable Cousin of Northumberland, at one of his numerous castles. But as I posted towards Alnwick, even with the speed of a star, which, darting from its native sphere, shoots wildly downwards, I was met at Northallerton by one Henry Vaughan, a servant of my right honourable kinsman, who showed me, that as then I might not with safety come to his presence, seeing that, in obedience to orders from his court, he was obliged to issue out letters for my incarceration."

"This," said the Abbot, "seems but hard measure on the part of your honourable kinsman."

"It might be so judged, my lord," replied Sir Piercie; "nevertheless, I will stand to the death for the honour of my Right Honourable Cousin of Northumberland. Also, Henry Vaughan gave me, from my said cousin, a good horse, and a purse of gold, with two Border-prickers, as they are called, for my guides, who conducted me, by such roads and by-paths as have never been seen since the days of Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristrem, into this kingdom of Scotland, and to the house of a certain baron, or one who holds the style of such, called Julian Avenel, with whom I found such reception as the place and party could afford."

"And that," said the Abbot, "must have been right wretched; for to judge from the appetite which Julian showeth when abroad, he hath not, I judge, over-abundant provision at home."

"You are right, sir—your reverence is in the right," continued Sir Piercie; "we had but lenten fare, and, what was worse, a score to clear at the departure; for though this Julian Avenel called us to no reckoning, yet he did so extravagantly admire the fashion of my poniard—the *poignet* being of silver exquisitely hatched, and indeed the weapon being altogether a piece of exceeding rare device and beauty—that in faith I could not for very shame's sake but pray his acceptance of it; words which he gave me not the trouble of repeating twice, before he had stuck it into his greasy buff-belt, where, credit me, reverend sir, it showed more like a butcher's knife than a gentleman's dagger."

"So goodly a gift might at least have purchased you a few days' hospitality," said Father Eustace.

"Reverend sir," said Sir Piercie, "had I abidden with him, I should have been complimented out of every remnant of my wardrobe—actually flayed, by the hospitable gods I swear it! Sir, he secured my spare doublet, and had a pluck at my galligaskins—I was enforced to beat a retreat before I was altogether unrigged. That Border knave, his serving man, had a pluck at me too, and usurped a scarlet cassock and steel cuirass belonging to the page of my body, whom I was fain to leave behind me. In good time I received a letter from my Right Honourable Cousin, showing me that he had written to you in my behalf, and sent to your charge two mails filled with wearing apparel—namely, my rich crimson silk doublet, slashed out and lined with cloth of gold, which I wore at the last revels, with baldric and trimmings to correspond—also two pair black silk slops, with hanging garters of carnation silk—also the flesh-coloured silken doublet, with the trimmings of fur, in which I danced the salvage man at the Gray's-Inn mummary—also——"

"Sir Knight," said the Sub-Prior, "I pray you to spare the farther inventory of your wardrobe. The monks of Saint Mary's are no free-booting barons, and whatever part of your vestments arrived at our house, have been this day faithfully brought hither, with the mails which contained them. I may presume from what has been said, as we have indeed been, given to understand by the Earl of Northumberland, that your desire is to remain for the present as unknown and as unnoticed, as may be consistent with your high worth and distinction?"

"Alas, reverend father!" replied the courtier, "a blade when it is in the scabbard cannot give lustre, a diamond when it is in the casket cannot give light, and worth, when it is compelled by circumstances to obscure itself, cannot draw observation—my retreat can only attract the admiration of those few to whom circumstances permit its displaying itself."

"I conceive now, my venerable father and lord," said the Sub-Prior, "that your wisdom will assign such a course of conduct to this noble knight, as may be alike consistent with his safety, and with the weal of the community. For you wot well, that perilous strides have been made in these audacious days, to the destruction of all ecclesiastical foundations, and that our holy community has been repeatedly menaced. Hitherto they have found no flaw in our raiment; but a party, friendly as well to the Queen of England, as to the heretical doctrines of the schismatical church, or even to worse and wilder forms of heresy, prevails now at the court of our sovereign, who dare not yield to her suffering clergy the protection she would gladly extend to them."

"My lord, and reverend sir," said the knight, "I will gladly relieve you of my presence, while ye canvass this matter at your freedom; and to speak truly, I am desirous to see in what case the chamberlain of my noble kinsman hath found my wardrobe, and how he hath packed the same, and whether it has suffered from the journey—there are four suits of as pure and elegant device as ever the fancy of a fair lady doated upon, every one having a treble, and appropriate change of ribbons, trimmings, and fringes, which, in case of need, may as it were renew each of them, and multiply the four into twelve.—There is also my sad-coloured riding-suit, and three cut-work shirts with falling bands—I pray you, pardon me—I must needs see how matters stand with them without farther dallying."

Thus speaking, he left the room; and the Sub-Prior, looking after him significantly, added, "Where the treasure is will the heart be also."

"Saint Mary preserve our wits!" said the Abbot, stunned with the knight's abundance of words; "were man's brains ever so stuffed with silk and broadcloth, cut-work, and I wot not what besides! And what could move the Earl of Northumberland to assume for his bosom counsellor, in matters of death and danger, such a feather-brained coxcomb as this?"

"Had he been other than what he is, venerable father," said the Sub-Prior, "he had been less fitted for the part of scape-goat, to which his Right Honourable Cousin had probably destined him from the commencement, in case of their plot failing. I know something of this Piercie Shafton. The legitimacy of his mother's descent from the Piercie family, the point on which he is most jealous, hath been called in question. If hairbrained courage, and an outrageous spirit of gallantry,

can make good his pretensions to the high lineage he claims, these qualities have never been denied him. For the rest, he is one of the ruffling gallants of the time, like Howland Yorke, Stukely,

{Footnote: "Yorke," says Camden, "was a Londoner, a man of loose and dissolute behaviour, and desperately audacious—famous in his time amongst the common bullies and swaggerers, as being the first that, to the great admiration of many at his boldness, brought into England the bold and dangerous way of fencing with the rapier in duelling. Whereas, till that time, the English used to fight with long swords and bucklers, striking with the edge, and thought it no part of man either to push or strike beneath the girdle.

Having a command in the Low Countries, Yorke revolted to the Spaniards, and died miserably, poisoned, as was supposed, by his new allies. Three years afterwards, his bones were dug up and gibbeted by the command of the States of Holland.

Thomas Stukely, another distinguished gallant of the time, was bred a merchant, being the son of a rich clothier in the west. He wedded the daughter and heiress of a wealthy alderman of London, named Curtis, after whose death he squandered the riches he thus acquired in all manner of extravagance. His wife, whose fortune supplied his waste, represented to him that he ought to make more of her. Stukely replied, "I will make as much of thee, believe me, as it is possible for any to do," and he kept his word in one sense, having stripped her even of her wearing apparel, before he finally ran away from her.

Having fled to Italy, he contrived to impose upon the Pope, with a plan of invading Ireland, for which he levied soldiers, and made some preparations, but ended by engaging himself and his troops in the service of King Sebastian of Portugal. He sailed with that prince on his fatal voyage to Barbary, and fell with him at the battle of Alcazar.

Stukely, as one of the first gallants of the time, has had the honour to be chronicled in song, in Evans' Old Ballads, vol. iii, edition 1810. His fate is also introduced in a tragedy, by George Peel, as has been supposed, called the Battle of Alcazar, from which play Dryden is alleged to have taken the idea of Don Sebastian; if so, it is surprising he omitted a character so congenial to King Charles the Second's time as the witty, brave, and profligate Thomas Stukely.}

and others, who wear out their fortunes, and endanger their lives, in idle braveries, in order that they may be esteemed the only choice gallants of the time; and afterwards endeavour to repair their estate, by engaging in the desperate plots and conspiracies which wiser heads have devised. To use one of his own conceited similitudes, such courageous fools resemble hawks, which the wiser conspirator keeps hooded and blinded on his wrist until the quarry is on the wing, and who are then flown at them."

"Saint Mary," said the Abbot, "he were an evil guest to introduce into our quiet household. Our young monks make bustle enough, and more than is befitting God's servants, about their outward attire already—this knight were enough to turn their brains, from the *Vestiarium* down to the very scullion boy."

"A worse evil might follow," said the Sub-Prior: "in these bad days, the patrimony of the church is bought and sold, forfeited and distrained, as if it were the unhallowed soil appertaining to a secular baron. Think what penalty awaits us, were we convicted of harbouring a rebel to her whom they call the Queen of England! There would neither be wanting Scottish parasites to beg the lands of the foundation, nor an army from England to burn and harry the Halidome. The men of Scotland were once Scotsmen, firm and united in the love of their country, and throwing every other consideration aside when the frontier was menaced—now they are—what shall I call them—the one part French, the other part English, considering their dear native country merely as a prize-fighting stage, upon which foreigners are welcome to decide their quarrels."

"Benedictine!" replied the Abbot, "they are indeed slippery and evil times."

"And therefore," said Father Eustace, "we must walk warily—we must not, for example, bring this man—this Sir Piercie Shafton, to our house of Saint Mary's."

"But how then shall we dispose of him?" replied the Abbot; "bethink thee that he is a sufferer for holy Church's sake—that his patron, the Earl of Northumberland, hath been our friend, and that, lying so near us, he may work us weal or wo according as we deal with his kinsman."

"And, accordingly," said the Sub-Prior, "for these reasons, as well as for discharge of the great duty of Christian charity, I would protect and relieve this man. Let him not go back to Julian Avenel—that unconscientious baron would not stick to plunder the exiled stranger—Let him remain here—the spot is secluded, and if the accommodation be beneath his quality, discovery will become the less likely. We will make such means for his convenience as we can devise."

"Will he be persuaded, thinkest thou?" said the Abbot; "I will leave my own travelling bed for his repose, and send up a suitable easy-chair."

"With such easements," said the Sub-Prior, "he must not complain; and then, if threatened by any sudden danger, he can soon come down to the sanctuary, where we will harbour him in secret until means can be devised of dismissing him in safety."

"Were we not better," said the Abbot, "send him on to the court, and get rid of him at once?"

"Ay, but at the expense of our friends—this butterfly may fold his wings, and lie under cover in the cold air of Glendearg; but were he at Holyrood, he would, did his life depend on it, expand his spangled drapery in the eyes of the queen and court—Rather than fail of distinction, he would sue for love to our gracious sovereign—the eyes of all men would be upon him in the course of three short days, and the international peace of the two ends of the island endangered for a creature, who, like a silly moth, cannot abstain from fluttering round a light."

"Thou hast prevailed with me, Father Eustace," said the Abbot, "and it will go hard but I improve on thy plan—I will send up in secret, not only household stuff, but wine and wassell-bread. There is a young swankie here who shoots venison well. I will give him directions to see that the knight lacks none."

"Whatever accommodation he can have, which infers not a risk of discovery," said the Sub-Prior, "it is our duty to afford him."

"Nay," said the Abbot, "we will do more, and will instantly despatch a servant express to the keeper of our revesiary to send us such things as he may want, even this night. See it done, good father."

"I will," answered Father Eustace; "but I hear the gull clamorous for some one to truss his points.{Footnote: The points were the strings of cord or ribbon, (so called, because *pointed* with metal like the laces of women's stays,) which attached the doublet to the hose. They were very numerous, and required assistance to tie them properly, which was called *trussing*.} He will be fortunate if he lights on any one here who can do him the office of groom of the chamber."

"I would he would appear," said the Abbot, "for here comes the Refectiner with the collation—By my faith, the ride hath given me a sharp appetite!"

Chapter the Seventeenth.

I'll seek for other aid—Spirits, they say,
Flit round invisible, as thick as motes
Dance in the sunbeam. If that spell
Or necromancer's sigil can compel them,
They shall hold council with me.

JAMES DUFF.

The reader's attention must be recalled to Halbert Glendinning, who had left the Tower of Glendearg immediately after his quarrel with its new guest, Sir Piercie Shafton. As he walked with a rapid pace up the glen, Old Martin followed him, beseeching him to be less hasty.

"Halbert," said the old man, "you will never live to have white hair, if you take fire thus at every spark of provocation."

"And why should I wish it, old man," said Halbert, "if I am to be the butt that every fool may aim a shaft of scorn against?—What avails it, old man, that you yourself move, sleep, and wake, eat thy niggard meal, and repose on thy hard pallet?—Why art thou so well pleased that the morning should call thee up to daily toil, and the evening again lay thee down a wearied-out wretch? Were it not better sleep and wake no more, than to undergo this dull exchange of labour for insensibility and of insensibility for labour?"

"God help me," answered Martin, "there may be truth in what thou sayest—but walk slower, for my old limbs cannot keep pace with your young legs—walk slower, and I will tell you why age, though unlovely, is yet endurable."

"Speak on then," said Halbert, slackening his pace, "but remember we must seek venison to refresh the fatigues of these holy men, who will this morning have achieved a journey of ten miles; and if we reach not the Brocksburn head we are scarce like to see an antler."

"Then know, my good Halbert," said Martin, "whom I love as my own son, that I am satisfied to live till death calls me, because my Maker wills it. Ay, and although I spend what men call a hard life, pinched with cold in winter, and burnt with heat in summer, though I feed hard and sleep hard, and am held mean and despised, yet I bethink me, that were I of no use on the face of this fair creation, God would withdraw me from it."

"Thou poor old man," said Halbert, "and can such a vain conceit as this of thy fancied use, reconcile thee to a world where thou playest so poor a part?"

"My part was nearly as poor," said Martin, "my person nearly as much despised, the day that I saved my mistress and her child from perishing in the wilderness."

"Right, Martin," answered Halbert; "there, indeed, thou didst what might be a sufficient apology for a whole life of insignificance."

"And do you account it for nothing, Halbert, that I should have the power of giving you a lesson of patience, and submission to the destinies of Providence? Methinks there is use for the grey hairs on the old scalp, were it but to instruct the green head by precept and by example."

Halbert held down his face, and remained silent for a minute or two, and then resumed his discourse: "Martin, seest thou aught changed in me of late?"

"Surely," said Martin. "I have always known you hasty, wild, and inconsiderate, rude, and prompt to speak at the volley and without reflection; but now, methinks, your bearing, without losing its natural fire, has something in it of force and dignity which it had not before. It seems as if you had fallen asleep a carle, and awakened a gentleman."

"Thou canst judge, then, of noble bearing?" said Halbert.

"Surely," answered Martin, "in some sort I can; for I have travelled through court, and camp, and city, with my master, Walter Avenel, although he could do nothing for me in the long run, but give me room for two score of sheep on the hill—and surely even now, while I speak with you, I feel sensible that my language is more refined than it is my wont to use, and that—though I know not the reason—the rude northern dialect, so familiar to my tongue, has given place to a more town-bred speech."

"And this change in thyself and me, thou canst by no means account for?" said young Glendinning.

"Change!" replied Martin, "by our Lady it is not so much a change which I feel, as a recalling and renewing sentiments and expressions which I had some thirty years since, ere Tibb and I set up our humble household. It is singular, that your society should have this sort of influence over me, Halbert, and that I should never have experienced it ere now."

"Thinkest thou," said Halbert, "thou seest in me aught that can raise me from this base, low, despised state, into one where I may rank with those proud men, who now despise my clownish poverty?"

Martin paused an instant, and then answered, "Doubtless you may, Halbert; as broken a ship has come to land. Heard ye never of Hughie Dun, who left this Halidome some thirty-five years gone by? A deliverly fellow was Hughie—could read and write like a priest, and could wield brand and buckler with the best of the riders. I mind him—the like of him was never seen in the Halidome of Saint Mary's, and so was seen of the preferment that God sent him."

"And what was that?" said Halbert, his eyes sparkling with eagerness.

"Nothing less," answered Martin, "than body-servant to the Archbishop of Saint Andrews!"

Halbert's countenance fell.—"A servant—and to a priest? Was this all that knowledge and activity could raise him to?"

Martin, in his turn, looked with wistful surprise in the face of his young friend. "And to what could fortune lead him farther?" answered he. "The son of a kirk-feuar is not the stuff that lords and knights are made of. Courage and school craft cannot change churl's blood into gentle blood, I trow. I have heard, forby, that Hughie Dun left a good five hundred pounds of Scots money to his only daughter, and that she married the Bailie of Pittenweem."

At this moment, and while Halbert was embarrassed with devising a suitable answer, a deer bounded across their path. In an instant the crossbow was at the youth's shoulder, the bolt whistled, and the deer, after giving one bound upright, dropt dead on the green sward.

"There lies the venison our dame wanted," said Martin; "who would have thought of an out-lying stag being so low down the glen at this season?—And it is a hart of grease too, in full season, and three inches of fat on the brisket. Now this is all your luck, Halbert, that follows you, go where you like. Were you to put in for it, I would warrant you were made one of the Abbot's yeoman-prickers, and ride about in a purple doublet as bold as the best."

"Tush, man," answered Halbert, "I will serve the Queen or no one. Take thou care to have down the venison to the Tower, since they expect it. I will on to the moss. I have two or three bird-bolts at my girdle, and it may be I shall find wild-fowl."

He hastened his pace, and was soon out of sight. Martin paused for a moment, and looked after him. "There goes the making of a right gallant stripling, an ambition have not the spoiling of him—Serve the Queen! said he. By my faith, and she hath worse servants, from all that I e'er heard of him. And wherefore should he not keep a high head? They that ettle to the top of the ladder will at least get up some rounds. They that mint {Footnote: *Mint*—aim at.} at a gown of gold, will always get a sleeve of it. But come, sir, (addressing the stag,) you shall go to Glendearg on my two legs somewhat more slowly than you were frisking it even now on your own four nimble shanks. Nay, by my faith, if you be so heavy, I will content me with the best of you, and that's the haunch and the nombles, and e'en heave up the rest on the old oak-tree yonder, and come back for it with one of the yauds." {Footnote: *Yauds*—horses; more particularly horses of labour.}

While Martin returned to Glendearg with the venison, Halbert prosecuted his walk, breathing more easily since he was free of his companion. "The domestic of a proud and lazy priest—body-squire to the Archbishop of Saint Andrews," he repeated to himself; "and this, with the privilege of allying his blood with the Bailie of Pittenweem, is thought a preferment worth a brave man's struggling for;—nay more, a preferment which, if allowed, should crown the hopes, past, present, and to come, of the son of a Kirk-vassal! By Heaven, but that I find in me a reluctance to practise their acts of nocturnal rapine, I would rather take the jack and lance, and join with the Border-riders.—Something I will do. Here, degraded and dishonoured, I will not live the scorn of each whiffling stranger from the South, because, forsooth, he wears tinkling spurs on a tawney boot. This thing—this phantom, be it what it will, I will see it once more. Since I spoke with her, and touched her hand, thoughts and feelings have dawned on me, of which my former life had not even dreamed; but shall I, who feel my father's glen too narrow for my expanding spirit, brook to be bearded in it by this vain gewgaw of a courtier, and in the sight too of Mary Avenel? I will not stoop to it, by Heaven!"

As he spoke thus, he arrived in the sequestered glen of Corri-nan-shian, as it verged upon the hour of noon. A few moments he remained looking upon the fountain, and doubting in his own mind with what countenance the White Lady might receive him. She had not indeed expressly forbidden his again evoking her; but yet there was something like such a prohibition implied in the farewell, which recommended him to wait for another guide.

Halbert Glendinning did not long, however, allow himself to pause. Hardihood was the natural characteristic of his mind; and under the expansion and modification which his feelings had lately undergone, it had been augmented rather than diminished. He drew his sword, undid the buskin from his foot, bowed three times with deliberation towards the fountain, and as often towards the tree, and repeated the same rhyme as formerly,—

"Thrice to the holy brake—

Thrice to the well:—

I bid thee awake,

White Maid of Avenel!

Noon gleams on the lake—
Noon glows on the fell—
Wake thee, O wake,
White Maid of Avenel!"

His eye was on the holly bush as he spoke the last line; and it was not without an involuntary shuddering that he saw the air betwixt his eye and that object become more dim, and condense, as it were, into the faint appearance of a form, through which, however, so thin and transparent was the first appearance of the phantom, he could discern the outline of the bush, as through a veil of fine crape. But, gradually, it darkened into a more substantial appearance, and the White Lady stood before him with displeasure on her brow. She spoke, and her speech was still song, or rather measured chant; but, as if now more familiar, it flowed occasionally in modulated blank-verse, and at other times in the lyrical measure which she had used at their former meeting.

"This is the day when the fairy kind
Sits weeping alone for their hopeless lot,
And the wood-maiden sighs to the sighing wind,
And the mer-maiden weeps in her crystal grot:
For this is the day that a deed was wrought,
In which we have neither part nor share.
For the children of clay was salvation bought,
But not for the forms of sea or air!
And ever the mortal is most forlorn.
Who meeteth our race on the Friday morn."

"Spirit," said Halbert Glendinning, boldly, "it is bootless to threaten. one who holds his life at no rate. Thine anger can but slay; nor do I think thy power extendeth, or thy will stretcheth, so far. The terrors which your race produce upon others, are vain against me. My heart is hardened against fear, as by a sense of despair. If I am, as thy words infer, of a race more peculiarly the care of Heaven than thine, it is mine to call, it must be thine to answer. I am the nobler being."

As he spoke, the figure looked upon him with a fierce and ireful countenance, which, without losing the similitude of that which it usually exhibited, had a wilder and more exaggerated cast of features. The eyes seemed to contract and become more fiery, and slight convulsions passed over the face, as if it was about to be transformed into something hideous. The whole appearance resembled those faces which the imagination summons up when it is disturbed by laudanum, but which do not remain under the visionary's command, and, beautiful in their first appearance, become wild and grotesque ere we can arrest them.

But when Halbert had concluded his bold speech, the White Lady stood before him with the same pale, fixed, and melancholy aspect, which she usually bore. He had expected the agitation which she exhibited would conclude in some frightful metamorphosis. Folding her arms on her bosom, the phantom replied,—

"Daring youth! for thee it is well,
Here calling me in haunted dell,
That thy heart has not quail'd,
Nor thy courage fail'd,
And that thou couldst brook
The angry look
Of Her of Avenel.

Did one limb shiver,
Or an eyelid quiver,
Thou wert lost for ever.
Though I am form'd from the ether blue,
And my blood is of the unfallen dew.
And thou art framed of mud and dust,
'Tis thine to speak, reply I must."

"I demand of thee, then," said the youth, "by what charm it is that I am thus altered in mind and in wishes—that I think no longer of deer or dog, of bow or bolt—that my soul spurns the bounds of this obscure glen—that my blood boils at an insult from one by whose stirrup I would some days since have run for a whole summer's morn, contented and honoured by the notice of a single word? Why do I now seek to mate me with princes, and knights, and nobles?—Am I the same, who but yesterday, as it were, slumbered in contented obscurity, but who am to-day awakened to glory and ambition?—Speak—tell me, if thou canst, the meaning of this change?—Am I spell-bound?—or have I till now been under the influence of a spell, that I feel as another being, yet am conscious of remaining the same? Speak and tell me, is it to thy influence that the change is owing?"

The White Lady replied,—

"A mightier wizard far than I
Wields o'er the universe his power;
Him owns the eagle in the sky,
The turtle in the bower.
Chanceful in shape, yet mightiest still,
He wields the heart of man at will,
From ill to good, from good, to ill,
In cot and castle-tower."

"Speak not thus darkly," said the youth, colouring so deeply, that face, neck, and hands were in a sanguine glow; "make me sensible of thy purpose."

The spirit answered,—

"Ask thy heart,—whose secret cell
Is fill'd with Marv Avenel!
Ask thy pride,—why scornful look
In Mary's view it will not brook?
Ask it, why thou seek'st to rise
Among the mighty and the wise?—
Why thou spurn'st thy lowly lot?—
Why thy pastimes are forgot?
Why thou wouldst in bloody strife
Mend thy luck or lose thy life?
Ask thy heart, and it shall tell,
Sighing from its secret cell,

"Tis for Mary Avenel."

"Tell me, then," said Halbert, his cheek still deeply crimsoned, "thou who hast said to me that which I dared not say to myself, by what means shall I urge my passion—by what means make it known?"

The White Lady replied,—

"Do not ask me;

On doubts like these thou canst not task me.

We only see the passing show

Of human passions' ebb and flow;

And view the pageant's idle glance

As mortals eye the northern dance,

When thousand streamers, flashing bright,

Career it o'er the brow of night.

And gazers mark their changeful gleams,

But feel no influence from their beams."

"Yet thine own fate," replied Halbert, "unless men greatly err, is linked with that of mortals?"

The phantom answered,

"By ties mysterious link'd, our fated race

Holds strange connexion with the sons of men.

The star that rose upon the House of Avenel,

When Norman Ulric first assumed the name,

That star, when culminating in its orbit,

Shot from its sphere a drop of diamond dew,

And this bright font received it—and a Spirit

Rose from the fountain, and her date of life

Hath co-existence with the House of Avenel,

And with the star that rules it."

"Speak yet more plainly," answered young Glendinning; "of this I can understand nothing. Say, what hath forged thy wierded {Footnote: *Wierded*—fated.} link of destiny with the House of Avenel? Say, especially, what fate now overhangs that house?"

The White Lady replied,—

"Look on my girdle—on this thread of gold—

'Tis fine as web of lightest gossamer.

And, but there is a spell on't, would not bind,

Light as they are, the folds of my thin robe.

But when 'twas donn'd, it was a massive chain,

Such as might bind the champion of the Jews,

Even when his looks were longest—it hath dwindled,

Hath minish'd in its substance and its strength,

As sunk the greatness of the House of Avenel.

When this frail thread gives way. I to the elements

Resign the principles of life they lent me.

Ask me no more of this!—the stars forbid it."

"Then canst thou read the stars," answered the youth; "and mayest tell me the fate of my passion, if thou canst not aid it?"

The White Lady again replied,—

"Dim burns the once bright star of Avenel,

Dim as the beacon when the morn is nigh,

And the o'er-wearied warder leaves the light-house;

There is an influence sorrowful and fearful.

That dogs its downward course. Disastrous passion,

Fierce hate and rivalry, are in the aspect

That lowers upon its fortunes."

"And rivalry?" repeated Glendinning; "it is, then, as I feared!—But shall that English silkworm presume to beard me in my father's house, and in the presence of Mary Avenel?—Give me to meet him, spirit—give me to do away the vain distinction of rank on which he refuses me the combat. Place us on equal terms, and gleam the stars with what aspect they will, the sword of my father shall control their influences."

She answered as promptly as before,—

"Complain not of me, child of clay,

If to thy harm I yield the way.

We, who soar thy sphere above,

Know not aught of hate or love;

As will or wisdom rules thy mood,

My gifts to evil turn, or good."

"Give me to redeem my honour," said Halbert Glendinning—"give me to retort on my proud rival the insults he has thrown on me, and let the rest fare as it will. If I cannot revenge my wrong, I shall sleep quiet, and know nought of my disgrace."

The phantom failed not to reply,—

"When Piercie Shafton boasteth high,

Let this token meet his eye.

The sun is westering from the dell,

Thy wish is granted—fare thee well!"

As the White Lady spoke or chanted these last words, she undid from her locks a silver bodkin around which they were twisted, and gave it to Halbert Glendinning; then shaking her dishevelled hair till it fell like a veil around her, the outlines of her form gradually became as diffuse as her flowing tresses, her countenance grew pale as the moon in her first quarter, her features became indistinguishable, and she melted into the air.

Habit inures us to wonders; but the youth did not find himself alone by the fountain without experiencing, though in a much less degree, the revulsion of spirits which he had felt upon the phantom's former disappearance. A doubt strongly pressed upon his mind, whether it were safe to avail himself of the gifts of a spirit which did not even pretend to belong to the class of angels, and might, for aught he knew, have a much worse lineage than that which she was pleased to avow. "I will speak of it," he said, "to Edward, who is clerkly learned, and will tell me what I should do. And yet, no—Edward is scrupulous and wary.—I will prove the effect of her gift on Sir Piercie Shafton, if he again braves me, and by the issue, I will be myself a sufficient judge whether there is danger in resorting to her counsel. Home, then, home—and we shall soon learn whether that home shall longer hold me; for not again will I brook insult, with my father's sword by my side, and Mary for the spectator of my disgrace."

Chapter the Eighteenth.

I give thee eighteenpence a-day,
And my bow shall thou bear,
And over all the north country,
I make thee the chief rydere.
And I thirteenpence a-day, quoth the queen,
By God and by my faye,
Come fetch thy payment when thou wilt,
No man shall say thee nay.

WILLIAM OF CLOUDESLEY.

The manners of the age did not permit the inhabitants of Glendearg to partake of the collation which was placed in the spence of that ancient tower, before the Lord Abbot and his attendants, and Sir Piercie Shafton. Dame Glendinning was excluded, both by inferiority of rank and by sex, for (though it was a rule often neglected) the Superior of Saint Mary's was debarred from taking his meals in female society. To Mary Avenel the latter, and to Edward Glendinning the former, incapacity attached; but it pleased his lordship to require their presence in the apartment, and to say sundry kind words to them upon the ready and hospitable reception which they had afforded him.

The smoking haunch now stood upon the table; a napkin, white as snow, was, with due reverence, tucked under the chin of the Abbot by the Refectoner; and nought was wanting to commence the repast, save the presence of Sir Piercie Shafton, who at length appeared, glittering like the sun, in a carnation-velvet doublet, slashed and puffed out with cloth of silver, his hat of the newest block, surrounded by a hatband of goldsmith's work, while around his neck he wore a collar of gold, set with rubies and topazes so rich, that it vindicated his anxiety for the safety of his baggage from being founded upon his love of mere finery. This gorgeous collar or chain, resembling those worn by the knights of the highest orders of chivalry, fell down on his breast, and terminated in a medallion.

"We waited for Sir Piercie Shafton," said the Abbot, hastily assuming his place in the great chair which the Kitchener advanced to the table with ready hand.

"I pray your pardon, reverend father, and my good lord," replied that pink of courtesy; "I did but wait to cast my riding slough, and to transmew myself into some civil form meeter for this worshipful company."

"I cannot but praise your gallantry, Sir Knight," said the Abbot, "and your prudence, also, for choosing the fitting time to appear thus adorned. Certes, had that goodly chain been visible in some part of your late progress, there was risk that the lawful owner might have parted company therewith."

"This chain, said your reverence?" answered Sir Piercie; "surely it is but a toy, a trifle, a slight thing which shows but poorly with this doublet—marry, when I wear that of the murrey-coloured double-piled Genoa velvet, puffed out with cypus, the gems, being relieved and set off by the darker and more grave ground of the stuff, show like stars giving a lustre through dark clouds."

"I nothing doubt it," said the Abbot, "but I pray you to sit down at the board."

But Sir Piercie had now got into his element, and was not easily interrupted—"I own," he continued, "that slight as the toy is, it might perchance have had some captivation for Julian—Santa Maria!" said he, interrupting himself; "what was I about to say, and my fair and beauteous Protection, or shall I rather term her my Discretion, here in presence!—Indiscreet hath it been in your Affability, O most lovely Discretion, to suffer a stray word to have broke out of the penfold of his mouth, that might overleap the fence of civility, and trespass on the manor of decorum."

"Marry!" said the Abbot, somewhat impatiently, "the greatest discretion that I can see in the matter is, to eat our victuals being hot—Father Eustace, say the Benedicite, and cut up the haunch."

The Sub-Prior readily obeyed the first part of the Abbot's injunction, but paused upon the second—"It is Friday, most reverend," he said in Latin, desirous that the hint should escape, if possible, the ears of the stranger.

"We are travellers," said the Abbot, in reply, "and *viatoribus licitum est*—You know the canon—a traveller must eat what food his hard fate sets before him. I grant you all a dispensation to eat flesh this day, conditionally that you, brethren, say the Confiteor at curfew time, that the knight give alms to his ability, and that all and each of you fast from flesh on such day within the next month that shall seem most convenient;—wherefore fall to and eat your food with cheerful countenances, and you, Father Refectoner, *da mixtus*."

While the Abbot was thus stating the conditions on which his indulgence was granted, he had already half finished a slice of the noble haunch, and now washed it down with a flagon of Rhenish, modestly tempered with water.

"Well is it said," he observed, as he required from the Refectoner another slice, "that virtue is its own reward; for though this is but humble fare, and hastily prepared, and eaten in a poor chamber, I do not remember me of having had such an appetite since I was a simple brother in the Abbey of Dundrennan, and was wont to labour in the garden from morning until noons, when our Abbot struck the *Cymbalum*. Then would I enter keen with hunger, parched with thirst, (*da mihi vinum quaeso, et merum sit*), and partake with appetite of whatever was set before us, according to our rule; feast or fast day, *caritas* or *penitentia*, was the same to me. I had no stomach complaints then, which now crave both the aid of wine and choice cookery, to render my food acceptable to my palate, and easy of digestion."

"It may be, holy father," said the Sub-Prior, "an occasional ride to the extremity of Saint Mary's patrimony, may have the same happy effect on your health as the air of the garden at Dundrennan."

"Perchance, with our patroness's blessing, such progresses may advantage us," said the Abbot; "having an especial eye that our venison is carefully killed by some woodsman that is master of his craft."

"If the Lord Abbot will permit me," said the Kitchener, "I think the best way to assure his lordship on that important point, would be to retain as a yeoman-pricker, or deputy-ranger, the eldest son of this good woman, Dame Glendinning, who is here to wait upon us. I should know by mine office what belongs to killing of game, and I can safely pronounce, that never saw I, or any other *coquinarius*, a bolt so justly shot. It has cloven the very heart of the buck."

"What speak you to us of one good shot, father?" said Sir Piercie; "I would advise you that such no more maketh a shooter, than doth one swallow make a summer—I have seen this springald of whom you speak, and if his hand can send forth his shafts as boldly as his tongue doth utter presumptuous speeches, I will own him as good an archer as Robin Hood."

"Marry," said the Abbot, "and it is fitting we know the truth of this matter from the dame herself; for ill advised were we to give way to any rashness in this matter, whereby the bounties which Heaven and our patroness provide might be unskilfully mangled, and rendered unfit for worthy men's use.—Stand forth, therefore,

dame Glendinning, and tell to us, as thy liege lord and spiritual Superior, using plainness and truth, without either fear or favour, as being a matter wherein we are deeply interested, Doth this son of thine use his bow as well as the Father Kitchener avers to us?"

"So please your noble fatherhood," answered Dame Glendinning with a deep curtsy, "I should know somewhat of archery to my cost, seeing my husband—God assoilzie him!—was slain in the field of Pinkie with an arrow-shot, while he was fighting under the Kirk's banner, as became a liege vassal of the Halidome. He was a valiant man, please your reverence, and an honest; and saving that he loved a bit of venison, and shifted for his living at a time as Border-men will sometimes do, I wot not of sin that he did. And yet, though I have paid for mass after mass to the matter of a forty shilling, besides a quarter of wheat and four firlocks of rye, I can have no assurance yet that he has been delivered from purgatory."

"Dame," said the Lord Abbot, "this shall be looked into heedfully; and since thy husband fell, as thou sayest, in the Kirk's quarrel, and under her banner, rely upon it that we will have him out of purgatory forthwith—that is, always provided he be there.—But it is not of thy husband whom we now devise to speak, but of thy son; not of a shot Scotsman, but of a shot deer—Wherefore, I say, answer me to the point, is thy son a practised archer, ay or no?"

"Alack! my reverend lord," replied the widow, "and my croft would be better tilled, if I could answer your reverence that he is not.—Practised archer!—marry, holy sir, I would he would practise something else—cross-bow and long-bow, hand-gun and hack-but, falconet and saker, he can shoot with them all. And if it would please this right honourable gentleman, our guest, to hold out his hat at the distance of a hundred yards, our Halbert shall send shaft, bolt, or bullet through it, (so that right honourable gentleman swerve not, but hold out steady,) and I will forfeit a quarter of barley if he touch but a knot of his ribands. I have seen our old Martin do as much, and so has our right reverend the Sub-Prior, if he be pleased to remember it."

"I am not like to forget it, dame," said Father Eustace; "for I knew not which most to admire, the composure of the young marksman, or the steadiness of the old mark. Yet I presume not to advise Sir Piercie Shafton to subject his valuable beaver, and yet more valuable person, to such a risk, unless it should be his own special pleasure."

"Be assured it is not," said Sir Piercie Shafton, something hastily; "be well assured, holy father, that it is not. I dispute not the lad's qualities, for which your reverence vouches. But bows are but wood, strings are but flax, or the silk-worm excrement at best; archers are but men, fingers may slip, eyes may dazzle, the blindest may hit the butt, the best marker may shoot a bow's length beside. Therefore will we try no perilous experiments."

"Be that as you will, Sir Piercie," said the Abbot; "meantime we will name this youth bow-bearer in the forest granted to us by good King David, that the chase might recreate our wearied spirits, the flesh of the dear improve our poor commons, and the hides cover the books of our library; thus tending at once to the sustenance of body and soul."

"Kneel down, woman, kneel down," said the Refectoner and the Kitchener, with one voice, to Dame Glendinning, "and kiss his lordship's hand, for the grace which he has granted to thy son."

They then, as if they had been chanting the service and the responses, set off in a sort of duetto, enumerating the advantages of the situation.

"A green gown and a pair of leathern galligaskins every Pentecost," said the Kitchener.

"Four marks by the year at Candlemas," answered the Refectoner.

"A hogshead of ale at Martlemas, of the double strike, and single ale at pleasure, as he shall agree with the Cellarer—"

"Who is a reasonable man," said the Abbot, "and will encourage an active servant of the convent."

"A mess of broth and a dole of mutton or beef, at the Kitchener's, on each high holiday," resumed the Kitchener.

"The gang of two cows and a palfrey on our Lady's meadow," answered his brother officer.

"An ox-hide to make buskins of yearly, because of the brambles," echoed the Kitchener.

"And various other perquisites, *quae nunc praescribere longum*," said the Abbot, summing, with his own lordly voice, the advantages attached to the office of conventional bow-bearer.

Dame Glendinning was all this while on her knees, her head mechanically turning from the one church officer to the other, which, as they stood one on each side of her, had much the appearance of a figure moved by clock-work, and so soon as they were silent, most devotedly did she kiss the munificent hand of the Abbot. Conscious, however, of Halbert's intractability in some points, she could not help qualifying her grateful and reiterated thanks for the Abbot's bountiful proffer, with a hope that Halbert would see his wisdom, and accept of it.

"How," said the Abbot, bending his brows, "accept of it?—Woman, is thy son in his right wits?"

Elspeith, stunned by the tone in which this question was asked, was altogether unable to reply to it. Indeed, any answer she might have made could hardly have been heard, as it pleased the two office-bearers of the Abbot's table again to recommence their alternate dialogue.

"Refuse!" said the Kitchener.

"Refuse!" answered the Refectoner, echoing the other's word in a tone of still louder astonishment.

"Refuse four marks by the year!" said the one.

"Ale and beer—broth and mutton—cow's grass and palfrey's!" shouted the Kitchener.

"Gown and galligaskins!" responded the Refectoner.

"A moment's patience, my brethren," answered the Sub-Prior, "and let us not be thus astonished before cause is afforded of our amazement. This good dame best knoweth the temper and spirit of her son—this much I can say, that it lieth not towards letters or learning, of which I have in vain endeavoured to instil into him some tincture. Nevertheless, he is a youth of no common spirit, but much like those (in my weak judgment) whom God raises up among a people when he meaneth that their deliverance shall be wrought out with strength of hand and valour of heart. Such men we have seen marked with a waywardness, and even an obstinacy of character, which hath appeared intractability and stupidity to those among whom they walked and were conversant, until the very opportunity hath arrived in, which it was the will of Providence that they should be the fitting instrument of great things."

"Now, in good time hast thou spoken, Father Eustace," said the Abbot; "and we will see this swankie before we decide upon the means of employing him.—How say you, Sir Piercie Shafton, is it not the court fashion to suit the man to the office, and not the office to the man?"

"So please your reverence and lordship," answered the Northumbrian knight, "I do partly, that is, in some sort, subscribe to what your wisdom hath delivered—Nevertheless, under reverence of the Sub-Prior, we do not look for gallant leaders and national deliverers in the hovels of the mean common people. Credit me, that if there be some flashes of martial spirit about this young person, which I am not called upon to dispute, (though I have seldom seen that presumption and arrogance were made good upon the upshot by deed and action,) yet still these will prove insufficient to distinguish him, save in his own limited and lowly sphere—even as the glowworm, which makes a goodly show among the grass of the field, would be of little avail if deposited in a beacon-grate."

"Now, in good time," said the Sub-Prior, "and here comes the young huntsman to speak for himself;" for, being placed opposite to the window, he could observe Halbert as he ascended the little mound on which the tower was situated.

"Summon him to our presence," said the Lord Abbot; and with an obedient start the two attendant monks went off with emulous alertness. Dame Glendinning sprung away at the same moment, partly to gain an instant to recommend obedience to her son, partly to prevail with him to change his apparel before coming in presence of the Abbot. But the Kitchener and Refectoner, both speaking at once, had already seized each an arm, and were leading Halbert in triumph into the apartment, so that she could only ejaculate, "His will be done; but an he had but had on him his Sunday's hose!"

Limited and humble as this desire was, the fates did not grant it, for Halbert Glendinning was hurried into the presence of the Lord Abbot and his party, without a word of explanation, and without a moment's time being allowed to assume his holiday hose, which, in the language of the time, implied both breeches and stockings.

Yet, though thus suddenly presented amid the centre of all eyes, there was something in Halbert's appearance which commanded a certain degree of respect from the company into which he was so unceremoniously intruded, and the greater part of whom were disposed to consider him with hauteur if not with absolute contempt. But his appearance and reception we must devote to another chapter.

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Chapter the Nineteenth.

Now choose thee, gallant, betwixt wealth and honour;
There lies the pelf, in sum to bear thee through
The dance of youth, and the turmoil of manhood,
Yet leave enough for age's chimney-corner;
But an thou grasp to it, farewell ambition,
Farewell each hope of bettering thy condition,
And raising thy low rank above the churls
That till the earth for bread.

OLD PLAY.

It is necessary to dwell for some brief space on the appearance and demeanour of young Glendinning, ere we proceed to describe his interview with the Abbot of St. Mary's, at this momentous crisis of his life.

Halbert was now about nineteen years old, tall and active rather than strong, yet of that hardy conformation of limb and sinew, which promises great strength when the growth shall be complete, and the system confirmed. He was perfectly well made, and, like most men who have that advantage, possessed a grace and natural ease of manner and carriage, which prevented his height from being the distinguished part of his external appearance. It was not until you had compared his stature with that of those amongst or near to whom he stood, that you became sensible that the young Glendinning was upwards of six feet high. In the combination of unusual height with perfect symmetry, ease, and grace of carriage, the young heir of Glendearg, notwithstanding his rustic birth and education, had greatly the advantage even of Sir Piercie Shafton himself, whose stature was lower, and his limbs, though there was no particular point to object to, were on the whole less exactly proportioned. On the other hand, Sir Piercie's very handsome countenance afforded him as decided an advantage over the Scotsman, as regularity of features and brilliance of complexion could give over traits which were rather strongly marked than beautiful, and upon whose complexion the "skyey influences," to which he was constantly exposed, had blended the red and white into the purely nut-brown hue, which coloured alike cheeks, neck, and forehead, and blushed only in a darker glow upon the former.—Halbert's eyes supplied a marked and distinguished part of his physiognomy. They were large and of a hazel colour, and sparkled in moments of animation with such uncommon brilliancy, that it seemed as if they actually emitted light. Nature had closely curled the locks of dark-brown hair, which relieved and set off the features, such as we have described them, displaying a bold and animated disposition, much more than might have been expected from his situation, or from his previous manners, which hitherto had seemed bashful, homely, and awkward.

Halbert's dress was certainly not of that description which sets off to the best advantage a presence of itself prepossessing. His jerkin and hose were of coarse rustic cloth, and his cap of the same. A belt round his waist served at once to sustain the broad-sword which we have already mentioned, and to hold five or six arrows and bird-bolts, which were stuck into it on the right side, along with a large knife hilted with buck-horn, or, as it was then called, a dudgeon-dagger. To complete his dress, we must notice his loose buskins of deer's hide, formed so as to draw up on the leg as high as the knee, or at pleasure to be thrust down lower than the calves. These were generally used at the period by such as either had their principal occupation, or their chief pleasure, in silvan sports, as they served to protect the legs against the rough and tangled thickets into which the pursuit of game frequently led them.—And these trifling particulars complete his external appearance.

It is not easy to do justice to the manner in which young Glendinning's soul spoke through his eyes when ushered so suddenly into the company of those whom his earliest education had taught him to treat with awe and reverence. The degree of embarrassment, which his demeanor evinced, had nothing in it either meanly servile, or utterly disconcerted. It was no more than became a generous and ingenuous youth of a bold spirit, but totally inexperienced, who should for the first time be called upon to think and act for himself in such society and under such disadvantageous circumstances. There was not in his carriage a grain either of forwardness or of timidity, which a friend could have wished away.

He kneeled and kissed the Abbot's hand, then rose, and retiring two paces, bowed respectfully to the circle around, smiling gently as he received an encouraging nod from the Sub-Prior, to whom alone he was personally known, and blushing as he encountered the anxious look of Mary Avenel, who beheld with painful interest the sort of ordeal to which her foster-brother was about to be subjected. Recovering from the transient flurry of spirits into which the encounter of her glance had thrown him, he stood composedly awaiting till the Abbot should express his pleasure.

The ingenuous expression of countenance, noble form, and graceful attitude of the young man, failed not to prepossess in his favor the churchmen in whose presence he stood. The Abbot looked round, and exchanged a gracious and approving glance with his counsellor Father Eustace, although probably the appointment of a ranger, or bow-bearer, was one in which he might have been disposed to proceed without the Sub-Prior's advice, were it but to show his own free agency. But the good mien of the young man now in nomination was such, that he rather hastened to exchange congratulation on meeting with so proper a subject of promotion, than to indulge any other feeling. Father Eustace enjoyed the pleasure which a well-constituted mind derives from seeing a benefit light on a deserving object; for as he had not seen Halbert since circumstances had made so material a change in his manner and feelings, he scarce doubted that the proffered appointment would, notwithstanding his mother's uncertainty, suit the disposition of a youth who had appeared devoted to woodland sports, and a foe alike to sedentary or settled occupation of any kind. The Refectory and Kitchen were so well pleased with Halbert's prepossessing appearance, that they seemed to think that the salary, emoluments, and perquisites, the dole, the grazing, the gown, and the galligaskins, could scarce be better bestowed than on the active and graceful figure before them.

Sir Piercie Shafton, whether from being more deeply engaged in his own cogitations, or that the subject was unworthy of his notice, did not seem to partake of the general feeling of approbation excited by the young man's presence. He sat with his eyes half shut, and his arms folded, appearing to be wrapped in contemplations of a nature deeper than those arising out of the scene before him. But, notwithstanding his seeming abstraction and absence of mind, there was a flutter of vanity in Sir Piercie's very handsome countenance, an occasional change of posture from one striking attitude (or what he conceived to be such) to another, and an occasional stolen glance at the female part of the company, to spy how far he succeeded in riveting their attention, which gave a marked advantage, in comparison, to the less regular and more harsh features of Halbert Glendinning, with their composed, manly, and deliberate expression of mental fortitude.

Of the females belonging to the family of Glendearg, the Miller's daughter alone had her mind sufficiently at leisure to admire, from time to time, the graceful attitudes of Sir Piercie Shafton; for both Mary Avenel and Dame Glendinning were waiting in anxiety and apprehension the answer which Halbert was to return to the Abbot's proposal, and fearfully anticipating the consequences of his probable refusal. The conduct of his brother Edward, for a lad constitutionally shy, respectful, and even timid, was at once affectionate and noble. This younger son of Dame Elspeth had stood unnoticed in a corner, after the Abbot, at the request of the Sub-Prior, had honoured him with some passing notice, and asked him a few common-place questions about his progress in Donatus, and in the *Promptuarium Parvulorum*, without waiting for the answers. From his corner he now glided round to his brother's side, and keeping a little behind him, slid his

right hand into the huntsman's left, and by a gentle pressure, which Halbert instantly and ardently returned, expressed at once his interest in his situation, and his resolution to share his fate.

The group was thus arranged, when, after the pause of two or three minutes, which he employed in slowly sipping his cup of wine, in order that he might enter on his proposal with due and deliberate dignity, the Abbot at length expressed himself thus:—

"My son—we your lawful Superior, and the Abbot, under God's favour, of the community of Saint Mary's, have heard of your manifold good gifts—a-hem—especially touching wood-craft—and the huntsman-like fashion in which you strike your game, truly and as a yeoman should, not abusing Heaven's good benefits by spoiling the flesh, as is too often seen in careless rangers—a-hem." He made here a pause, but observing that Glendinning only replied to his compliment by a bow, he proceeded,—*"My son, we commend your modesty; nevertheless, we will that thou shouldst speak freely to us touching that which we have premeditated for thine advancement, meaning to confer on thee the office of bow-bearer and ranger, as well over the chases and forests wherein our house hath privilege by the gifts of pious kings and nobles, whose souls now enjoy the fruits of their bounties to the Church as to those which belong to us in exclusive right of property and perpetuity. Thy knee, my son—that we may, with our own hand, and without loss of time, induct thee into office."*

"Kneel down," said the Kitchener on the one side; and "Kneel down," said the Refectioner on the other.

But Halbert Glendinning remained standing.

"Were it to show gratitude and good-will for your reverend lordship's noble offer, I could not," he said, "kneel low enough, or remain long enough kneeling. But I may not kneel to take investiture of your noble gift, my Lord Abbot, being a man determined to seek my fortune otherwise."

"How is that, sir?" said the Abbot, knitting his brows; "do I hear you speak aright? and do you, a born vassal of the Halidome, at the moment when I am destining to you such a noble expression of my good-will, propose exchanging my service for that of any other?"

"My lord," said Halbert Glendinning, "it grieves me to think you hold me capable of undervaluing your gracious offer, or of exchanging your service for another. But your noble proffer doth but hasten the execution of a determination which I have long since formed."

"Ay, my son," said the Abbot, "is it indeed so?—right early have you learned to form resolutions without consulting those on whom you naturally depend. But what may it be, this sagacious resolution, if I may so far pray you?"

"To yield up to my brother and mother," answered Halbert, "mine interest in the fief of Glendearg, lately possessed by my father, Simon Glendinning: and having prayed your lordship to be the same kind and generous master to them, that your predecessors, the venerable Abbots of Saint Mary's, have been to my fathers in times past; for myself, I am determined to seek my fortune where I may best find it."

Dame Glendinning here ventured, emboldened by maternal anxiety, to break silence with an exclamation of "O my son!" Edward clinging to his brother's side, half spoke, half whispered, a similar ejaculation, of "Brother! brother!"

The Sub-Prior took up the matter in a tone of grave reprehension, which, as he conceived, the interest he had always taken in the family at Glendearg required at his hand.

"Wilful young man," he said, "what folly can urge thee to push back the hand that is stretched out to aid thee? What visionary aim hast thou before thee, that can compensate for the decent and sufficient independence which thou art now rejecting with scorn?"

"Four marks by the year, duly and truly," said the Kitchener.

"Cow's-grass, doublet, and galligaskins," responded the Refectioner.

"Peace, my brethren," said the Sub-Prior; "and may it please your lordship, venerable father, upon my petition, to allow this headstrong youth a day for consideration, and it shall be my part so to indoctrinate him, as to convince him what is due on this occasion to your lordship, and to his family, and to himself."

"Your kindness, reverend father," said the youth, "craves my dearest thanks—it is the continuance of a long train of benevolence towards me, for which I give you my gratitude, for I have nothing else to offer. It is my mishap, not your fault, that your intentions have been frustrated. But my present resolution is fixed and unalterable. I cannot accept the generous offer of the Lord Abbot; my fate calls me elsewhere, to scenes where I shall end it or mend it."

"By our Lady," said the Abbot, "I think the youth be mad indeed—or that you, Sir Piercie, judged of him most truly, when you prophesied that he would prove unfit for the promotion we designed him—it may be you knew something of this wayward humour before?"

"By the mass, not I," answered Sir Piercie Shafton, with his usual indifference. "I but judged of him by his birth and breeding; for seldom doth a good hawk come out of a kite's egg."

"Thou art thyself a kite, and kestrel to boot," replied Halbert Glendinning, without a moment's hesitation.

"This in our presence, and to a man of worship?" said the Abbot, the blood rushing to his face.

"Yes, my lord," answered the youth; "even in your presence I return to this gay man's face, the causeless dishonour—which he has flung on my name. My brave father, who fell in the cause of his country, demands that justice at the hands of his son!"

"Unmannered boy!" said the Abbot.

"Nay, my good lord," said the knight, "praying pardon for the coarse interruption, let me entreat you not to be wroth with this rustical—Credit me, the north wind shall as soon puff one of your rocks from its basis, as aught which I hold so slight and inconsiderate as the churlish speech of an untaught churl, shall move the spleen of Piercie Shafton."

"Proud as you are, Sir Knight," said Halbert, "in your imagined superiority, be not too confident that you cannot be moved."

"Faith, by nothing that thou canst urge," said Sir Piercie.

"Knowest thou, then, this token?" said young Glendinning, offering to him the silver bodkin he had received from the White Lady.

Never was such an instant change, from the most contemptuous serenity, to the most furious state of passion, as that which Sir Piercie Shafton exhibited. It was the difference between a cannon lying quiet in its embrasure, and the same gun when touched by the linstock. He started up, every limb quivering with rage, and his features so inflamed and agitated by passion, that he more resembled a demoniac, than a man under the regulation of reason. He clenched both his fists, and thrusting them forward, offered them furiously at the face of Glendinning, who was even himself startled at the frantic state of excitation which his action had occasioned. The next moment he withdrew them, struck his open palm against his own forehead, and rushed out of the room in a state of indescribable agitation. The whole matter had been so sudden, that no person present had time to interfere.

When Sir Piercie Shafton had left the apartment, there was a moment's pause of astonishment; and then a general demand that Halbert Glendinning should instantly explain by what means he had produced such a violent change in the deportment of the English cavalier.

"I did nought to him," answered Halbert Glendinning, "but what you all saw—am I to answer for his fantastic freaks of humour?"

"Boy," said the Abbot, in his most authoritative manner, "these subterfuges shall not avail thee. This is not a man to be driven from his temperament without some sufficient cause. That cause was given by thee, and must have been known to thee. I command thee, as thou wilt save thyself from worse measure, to explain to me by what means thou hast moved our friend thus—We choose not that our vassals shall drive our guests mad in our very presence, and we remain ignorant of the means whereby that purpose is effected."

"So may it please your reverence, I did but show him this token," said Halbert Glendinning, delivering it at the same time to the Abbot, who looked at it with much attention, and then, shaking his head, gravely delivered it to the Sub-Prior, without speaking a word.

Father Eustace looked at the mysterious token with some attention; and then addressing Halbert in a stern and severe voice, said, "Young man, if thou wouldst not have us suspect thee of some strange double-dealing in this matter, let us instantly know whence thou hadst this token, and how it possesses an influence on Sir Piercie Shafton?"—It would have been extremely difficult for Halbert, thus hard pressed, to have either evaded or answered so puzzling a question. To have avowed the truth might, in those times, have occasioned his being burnt at a stake, although, in ours, his confession would have only gained for him the credit of a

liar beyond all rational credibility. He was fortunately relieved by the return of Sir Piercie Shafton himself, whose ear caught, as he entered, the sound of the Sub-Prior's question.

Without waiting until Halbert Glendinning replied, he came forward, whispering to him as he passed, "Be secret—thou shalt have the satisfaction thou hast dared to seek for."

When he returned to his place, there were still marks of discomposure on his brow; but, becoming apparently collected and calm, he looked around him, and apologized for the indecorum of which he had been guilty, which he ascribed to sudden and severe indisposition. All were silent, and looked on each other with some surprise.

The Lord Abbot gave orders for all to retire from the apartment, save himself, Sir Piercie Shafton, and the Sub-Prior. "And have an eye," he added, "on that bold youth, that he escape not; for if he hath practised by charm, or otherwise, on the health of our worshipful guest, I swear by the alb and mitre which I wear, that his punishment shall be most exemplary."

"My lord and venerable father," said Halbert, bowing respectfully, "fear not but that I will abide my doom. I think you will best learn from the worshipful knight himself, what is the cause of his distemperature, and how slight my share in it has been."

"Be assured," said the knight, without looking up, however, while he spoke, "I will satisfy the Lord Abbot."

With these words the company retired, and with them young Glendinning. When the Abbot, the Sub-Prior, and the English knight were left alone, Father Eustace, contrary to his custom, could not help speaking the first. "Expound unto us, noble sir," he said, "by what mysterious means the production of this simple toy could so far move your spirit, and overcome your patience, after you had shown yourself proof to all the provocation offered by this self-sufficient and singular youth?"

The knight took the silver bodkin from the good father's hand, looked at it with great composure, and, having examined it all over, returned it to the Sub-Prior, saying at the same time, "In truth, venerable father, I cannot but marvel, that the wisdom implied alike in your silver hairs, and in your eminent rank, should, like a babbling hound, (excuse the similitude,) open thus loudly on a false scent. I were, indeed, more slight to be moved than the leaves of the aspen-tree, which wag at the least breath of heaven, could I be touched by such a trifle as this, which in no way concerns me more than if the same quantity of silver were stricken into so many groats. Truth is, that from my youth upward, I have been subjected to such a malady as you saw me visited with even now—a cruel and searching pain, which goeth through nerve and bone, even as a good brand in the hands of a brave soldier sheers through limb and sinew—but it passes away speedily, as you yourselves may judge."

"Still," said the Sub-Prior, "this will not account for the youth offering to you this piece of silver, as a token by which you were to understand something, and, as we must needs conjecture, something disagreeable."

"Your reverence is to conjecture what you will," said Sir Piercie; "but I cannot pretend to lay your judgment on the right scent when I see it at fault. I hope I am not liable to be called upon to account for the foolish actions of a malapert boy?"

"Assuredly," said the Sub-Prior, "we shall prosecute no inquiry which is disagreeable to our guest. Nevertheless," said he, looking to his Superior, "this chance may, in some sort, alter the plan your lordship had formed for your worshipful guest's residence for a brief term in this tower, as a place alike of secrecy and of security; both of which, in the terms which we now stand on with England, are circumstances to be desired."

"In truth," said the Abbot, "and the doubt is well thought on, were it as well removed; for I scarce know in the Halidome so fitting a place of refuge, yet see I not how to recommend it to our worshipful guest, considering the unrestrained petulance of this headstrong youth."

"Tush! reverend sirs—what would you make of me?" said Sir Piercie Shafton. "I protest, by mine honour, I would abide in this house were I to choose. What! I take no exceptions at the youth for showing a flash of spirit, though the spark may light on mine own head. I honour the lad for it. I protest I will abide here, and he shall aid me in striking down a deer. I must needs be friends with him, and he be such a shot: and we will speedily send down to my lord Abbot a buck of the first head, killed so artificially as shall satisfy even the reverend Kitchener."

This was said with such apparent ease and good-humour, that the Abbot made no farther observation on what had passed, but proceeded to acquaint his guest with the details of furniture, hangings, provisions, and so forth, which he proposed to send up to the Tower of Glendearg for his accommodation. This discourse, seasoned with a cup or two of wine, served to prolong the time until the reverend Abbot ordered his cavalcade to prepare for their return to the Monastery.

"As we have," he said, "in the course of this our toilsome journey, lost our meridian, {Footnote: The hour of repose at noon, which, in the middle ages, was employed in slumber, and which the monastic rules of nocturnal vigils rendered necessary.} indulgence shall be given to those of our attendants who shall, from very weariness, be unable to attend the duty at prime, {Footnote: *Prime* was the midnight service of the monks.} and this by way of misericord or *indulgentia*." {Footnote: *Misericord*, according to the learned work of Fosbrooke on British Monachism, meant not only an indulgence, or exoneration from particular duties, but also a particular apartment in a convent, where the monks assembled to enjoy such indulgences or allowances as were granted beyond the rule.}

Having benevolently intimated a boon to his faithful followers, which he probably judged would be far from unacceptable, the good Abbot, seeing all ready for his journey, bestowed his blessing on the assembled household—gave his hand to be kissed by Dame Glendinning—himself kissed the cheek of Mary Avenel, and even of the Miller's maiden, when they approached to render him the same homage—commanded Halbert to rule his temper, and to be aiding and obedient in all things to the English Knight—admonished Edward to be *discipulus impiger atque strenuus*—then took a courteous farewell of Sir Piercie Shafton, advising him to lie close, for fear of the English borderers, who might be employed to kidnap him; and having discharged these various offices of courtesy, moved forth to the courtyard, followed by the whole establishment. Here, with a heavy sigh, approaching to a groan, the venerable father heaved himself upon his palfrey, whose dark purple housings swept the ground; and, greatly comforted that the discretion of the animal's pace would be no longer disturbed by the gambadoes of Sir Piercie and his prancing war-horse, he set forth at a sober and steady trot upon his return to the Monastery.

When the Sub-Prior had mounted to accompany his principal, his eye sought out Halbert, who, partly hidden by a projection of the outward wall of the court, stood apart from, and gazing upon the departing cavalcade, and the group which assembled around them. Unsatisfied with the explanation he had received concerning the mysterious transaction of the silver bodkin, yet interesting himself in the youth, of whose character he had formed a favourable idea, the worthy monk resolved to take an early opportunity of investigating that matter. In the meanwhile, he looked upon Halbert with a serious and warning aspect, and held up his finger to him as he signed farewell. He then joined the rest of the churchmen, and followed his Superior down the valley.

Chapter the Twentieth.

I hope you'll give me cause to think you noble.
And do me right with your sword, sir, as becomes
One gentleman of honour to another;

All this is fair, sir—let us make no days on't,
I'll lead your way.

LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE.

The look and sign of warning which the Sub-Prior gave to Halbert Glendinning as they parted, went to his heart; for although he had profited much less than Edward by the good man's instructions, he had a sincere reverence for his person; and even the short time he had for deliberation tended to show him he was

embarked in a perilous adventure. The nature of the provocation which he had given to Sir Piercie Shafton he could not even conjecture; but he saw that it was of a mortal quality, and he was now to abide the consequences.

That he might not force these consequences forward by any premature renewal of their quarrel, he resolved to walk apart for an hour, and consider on what terms he was to meet this haughty foreigner. The time seemed propitious for his doing so without having the appearance of wilfully shunning the stranger, as all the members of the little household were dispersing either to perform such tasks as had been interrupted by the arrival of the dignitaries, or to put in order what had been deranged by their visit.

Leaving the tower, therefore, and descending, unobserved as he thought, the knoll on which it stood, Halbert gained the little piece of level ground which extended betwixt the descent of the hill, and the first sweep made by the brook after washing the foot of the eminence on which the tower was situated, where a few straggling birch and oak-trees served to secure him from observation. But scarcely had he reached the spot, when he was surprised to feel a smart tap upon the shoulder, and, turning around, he perceived he had been closely followed by Sir Piercie Shafton. When, whether from our state of animal spirits, want of confidence in the justice of our cause, or any other motive, our own courage happens to be in a wavering condition, nothing tends so much altogether to disconcert us, as a great appearance of promptitude on the part of our antagonist. Halbert Glendinning, both morally and constitutionally intrepid, was nevertheless somewhat troubled at seeing the stranger, whose resentment he had provoked, appear at once before him, and with an aspect which boded hostility. But though his heart might beat somewhat thicker, he was too high-spirited to exhibit any external signs of emotion.—"What is your pleasure, Sir Piercie?" he said to the English knight, enduring without apparent discomposure all the terrors which his antagonist had summoned into his aspect.

"What is my pleasure!" answered Sir Piercie; "a goodly question after the part you have acted towards me!—Young man, I know not what infatuation has led thee to place thyself in direct and insolent opposition to one who is a guest of thy liege-lord the Abbot, and who, even from the courtesy due to thy mother's roof, had a right to remain there without meeting insult. Neither do I ask, or care, by what means thou hast become possessed of the fatal secret by which thou hast dared to offer me open shame. But I must now tell thee, that the possession of it has cost thee thy life."

"Not, I trust, if my hand and sword can defend it," replied Halbert, boldly.

"True," said the Englishman, "I mean not to deprive thee of thy fair chance of self-defence. I am only sorry to think, that, young and country-bred as thou art, it can but little avail thee. But thou must be well aware, that in this quarrel I shall use no terms of quarter."

"Rely on it, proud man," answered the youth, "that I shall ask none; and although thou speakest as if I lay already at thy feet, trust me, that as I am determined never to ask thy mercy, so I am not fearful of needing it."

"Thou wilt, then," said the knight, "do nothing to avert the certain fate which thou hast provoked with such wantonness?"

"And how were that to be purchased?" replied Halbert Glendinning, more with the wish of obtaining some farther insight into the terms on which he stood with this stranger, than to make him the submission which he might require.

"Explain to me instantly," said Sir Piercie, "without equivocation or delay, by what means thou wert enabled to wound my honour so deeply—and shouldst thou point out to me by so doing an enemy more worthy of my resentment, I will permit thine own obscure insignificance to draw a veil over thine insolence."

"This is too high a flight," said Glendinning, fiercely, "for thine own presumption to soar without being checked. Thou hast come to my father's house, as well as I can guess, a fugitive and an exile, and thy first greeting to its inhabitants has been that of contempt and injury. By what means I have been able to retort that contempt, let thine own conscience tell thee. Enough for me that I stand on the privilege of a free Scotchman, and will brook no insult unreturned, and no injury unrequited."

"It is well, then," said Sir Piercie Shafton; "we will dispute this matter to-morrow morning with our swords. Let the time be daybreak, and do thou assign the place. We will go forth as if to strike a deer."

"Content," replied Halbert Glendinning: "I will guide thee to a spot where an hundred men might fight and fall without any chance of interruption."

"It is well," answered Sir Piercie Shafton. "Here then we part.—Many will say, that in thus indulging the right of a gentleman to the son of a clod-breaking peasant, I derogate from my sphere, even as the blessed sun would derogate should he condescend to compare and match his golden beams with the twinkle of a pale, blinking, expiring, gross-fed taper. But no consideration of rank shall prevent my avenging the insult thou hast offered me. We bear a smooth face, observe me, Sir Villagio, before the worshipful inmates of yonder cabin, and to-morrow we try conclusions with our swords." So saying, he turned away towards the tower.

It may not be unworthy of notice, that in the last speech only, had Sir Piercie used some of those flowers of rhetoric which characterized the usual style of his conversation. Apparently, a sense of wounded honour, and the deep desire of vindicating his injured feelings, had proved too strong for the fantastic affectation of his acquired habits. Indeed, such is usually the influence of energy of mind, when called forth and exerted, that Sir Piercie Shafton had never appeared in the eyes of his youthful antagonist half so much deserving of esteem and respect as in this brief dialogue, by which they exchanged mutual defiance. As he followed him slowly to the tower, he could not help thinking to himself, that, had the English knight always displayed this superior tone of bearing and feeling, he would not probably have felt so earnestly disposed to take offence at his hand. Mortal offence, however, had been exchanged, and the matter was to be put to mortal arbitrement.

The family met at the evening meal, when Sir Piercie Shafton extended the benignity of his countenance and the graces of his conversation far more generally over the party than he had hitherto condescended to do. The greater part of his attention was, of course, still engrossed by his divine inimitable Discretion, as he chose to term Mary Avenel; but, nevertheless there were interjectional flourishes to the Maid of the Mill, under the title of Comely Damsel, and to the Dame, under that of Worthy Matron. Nay, lest he should fail to excite their admiration by the graces of his rhetoric, he generously, and without solicitation, added those of his voice; and after regretting bitterly the absence of his viol-de-gamba, he regaled them with a song, "which," said he, "the inimitable Astrophel, whom mortals call Philip Sidney, composed in the nonage of his muse, to show the world what they are to expect from his riper years, and which will one day see the light in that not-to-be-paralleled perfection of human wit, which he has addressed to his sister, the matchless Parthenope, whom men call Countess of Pembroke; a work," he continued, "whereof his friendship hath permitted me, though unworthy, to be an occasional partaker, and whereof I may well say, that the deep afflictive tale which awakeneth our sorrows, is so relieved with brilliant similitudes, dulcet descriptions, pleasant poems, and engaging interludes, that they seem as the stars of the firmament, beautifying the dusky robe of night. And though I wot well how much the lovely and quaint language will suffer by my widowed voice, widowed in that it is no longer matched by my beloved viol-de-gamba, I will essay to give you a taste of the ravishing sweetness of the poesy of the un-to-be-imitated Astrophel."

So saying, he sung without mercy or remorse about five hundred verses, of which the two first and the four last may suffice for a specimen—

"What tongue can her perfections tell,
On whose each part all pens may dwell.

Of whose high praise arid praiseful bliss,
Goodness the pen. Heaven paper is;
The ink immortal fame doth send,
As I began so I must end."

As Sir Piercie Shafton always sung with his eyes half shut, it was not until, agreeably to the promise of poetry, he had fairly made an end, that looking round, he discovered that the greater part of his audience had, in the meanwhile, yielded to the charms of repose. Mary Avenel, indeed, from a natural sense of politeness, had contrived to keep awake through all the perplexities of the divine Astrophel; but Mysie was transported in dreams back to the dusty atmosphere of her father's mill. Edward himself, who had given his attention for some time, had at length fallen fast asleep; and the good dame's nose, could its tones have been put in regulation, might have supplied the bass of the lamented viol-de-gamba. Halbert, however, who had no temptation to give way to the charms of slumber, remained

awake with his eyes fixed on the songster; not that he was better entertained with the words, or more ravished with the execution, than the rest of the company, but rather because he admired, or perhaps envied, the composure, which could thus spend the evening in interminable madrigals, when the next morning was to be devoted to deadly combat. Yet it struck his natural acuteness of observation, that the eye of the gallant cavalier did now and then, furtively as it were, seek a glance of his countenance, as if to discover how he was taking the exhibition of his antagonist's composure and serenity of mind.

He shall read nothing in my countenance, thought Halbert, proudly, that can make him think my indifference less than his own.

And taking from the shelf a bag full of miscellaneous matters collected for the purpose, he began with great industry to dress hooks, and had finished half-a-dozen of flies (we are enabled, for the benefit of those who admire the antiquities of the gentle art of angling, to state that they were brown hackles) by the time that Sir Piercie had arrived at the conclusion of his long-winded strophes of the divine Astrophel. So that he also testified a magnanimous contempt of that which to-morrow should bring forth.

As it now waxed late, the family of Glendearg separated for the evening; Sir Piercie first saying to the dame, that "her son Albert—"

"Halbert," said Elspeth, with emphasis, "Halbert, after his goodsire, Halbert Brydone."

"Well, then, I have prayed your son, Halbert, that we may strive tomorrow, with the sun's earliness, to wake a stag from his lair, that I may see whether he be as prompt at that sport as fame bespeaks him."

"Alas! sir," answered Dame Elspeth, "he is but too prompt, an you talk of promptitude, at any thing that has steel at one end of it, and mischief at the other. But he is at your honourable disposal, and I trust you will teach him how obedience is due to our venerable father and lord, the Abbot, and prevail with him to take the bow-bearer's place in fee; for, as the two worthy monks said, it will be a great help to a widow-woman."

"Trust me, good dame," replied Sir Piercie, "it is my purpose so to indoctrinate him touching his conduct and bearing towards his betters, that he shall not lightly depart from the reverence due to them.—We meet, then, beneath the birch-trees in the plain," he said, looking to Halbert, "so soon as the eye of day hath opened its lids."—Halbert answered with a sign of acquiescence, and the knight proceeded, "And now, having wished to my fairest Discretion those pleasant dreams which wave their pinions around the couch of sleeping beauty, and to this comely damsel the bounties of Morpheus, and to all others the common good-night, I will crave you leave to depart to my place of rest, though I may say with the poet,

'Ah rest!—no rest but change of place and posture:

Ah sleep!—no sleep but worn-out Nature's swooning;

Ah bed!—no bed but cushion fill'd with stones:

Rest, sleep, nor bed, await not on an exile.'"

With a delicate obeisance he left the room, evading Dame Glendinning, who hastened to assure him he would find his accommodations for repose much more agreeable than they had been the night before, there having been store of warm coverlets, and a soft feather-bed, sent up from the Abbey. But the good knight probably thought that the grace and effect of his exit would be diminished, if he were recalled from his heroics to discuss such sublunary and domestic topics, and therefore hastened away without waiting to hear her out.

"A pleasant gentleman," said Dame Glendinning; "but I will warrant him an humorous {Footnote: *Humorous*—full of whims—thus Shakspeare, "Humorous as winter."—The vulgar word humorsome comes nearest to the meaning.}—And sings a sweet song, though it is somewhat of the longest.—Well, I make mine avow he is goodly company—I wonder when he will go away."

Having thus expressed her respect for her guest, not without intimation that she was heartily tired of his company, the good dame gave the signal for the family to disperse, and laid her injunctions on Halbert to attend Sir Piercie Shafton at daybreak, as he required.

When stretched on his pallet by his brother's side, Halbert had no small cause to envy the sound sleep which instantly settled on the eyes of Edward, but refused him any share of its influence. He saw now too well what the spirit had darkly indicated, that, in granting the boon which he had asked so unadvisedly, she had contributed more to his harm than his good. He was now sensible, too late, of the various dangers and inconveniences with which his dearest friends were threatened, alike by his discomfiture or his success in the approaching duel. If he fell, he might say personally, "good-night all." But it was not the less certain that he should leave a dreadful legacy of distress and embarrassment to his mother and family,—an anticipation which by no means tended to render the front of death, in itself a grisly object, more agreeable to his imagination. The vengeance of the Abbot, his conscience told him, was sure to descend on his mother and brother, or could only be averted by the generosity of the victor—And Mary Avenel—he should have shown himself, if he succumbed in the present combat, as inefficient in protecting her, as he had been unnecessarily active in bringing disaster on her, and on the house in which she had been protected from infancy. And to this view of the case were to be added all those imbibited and anxious feelings with which the bravest men, even in a better or less doubtful quarrel, regard the issue of a dubious conflict, the first time when it has been their fate to engage in an affair of that nature.

But however disconsolate the prospect seemed in the event of his being conquered, Halbert could expect from victory little more than the safety of his own life, and the gratification of his wounded pride. To his friends—to his mother and brother—especially to Mary Avenel—the consequences of his triumph would be more certain destruction than the contingency of his defeat and death. If the English knight survived, he might in courtesy extend his protection to them; but if he fell, nothing was likely to screen them from the vindictive measures which the Abbot and convent would surely adopt against the violation of the peace of the Halidome, and the slaughter of a protected guest by one of their own vassals, within whose house they had lodged him for shelter. These thoughts, in which neither view of the case augured aught short of ruin to his family, and that ruin entirely brought on by his own rashness, were thorns in Halbert Glendinning's pillow, and deprived his soul of peace and his eyes of slumber.

There appeared no middle course, saving one which was marked by degradation, and which, even if he stooped to it, was by no means free of danger. He might indeed confess to the English knight the strange circumstances which led to his presenting him with that token which the White Lady (in her displeasure as it now seemed) had given him, that he might offer it to Sir Piercie Shafton. But to this avowal his pride could not stoop, and reason, who is wonderfully ready to be of counsel with pride on such occasions, offered many arguments to show it would be useless as well as mean so far to degrade himself. "If I tell a tale so wonderful," thought he, "shall I not either be stigmatized as a liar, or punished as a wizard?—Were Sir Piercie Shafton generous, noble, and benevolent, as the champions of whom we hear in romance, I might indeed gain his ear, and, without demeaning myself, escape from the situation in which I am placed. But as he is, or at least seems to be, self-conceited, arrogant, vain, and presumptuous—I should but humble myself in vain—and I will not humble myself!" he said, starting out of bed, grasping his broadsword, and brandishing it in the light of the moon, which streamed through the deep niche that served them as a window; when, to his extreme surprise and terror, an airy form stood in the moonlight, but intercepted not the reflection on the floor. Dimly as it was expressed, the sound of the voice soon made him sensible he saw the White Lady.

At no time had her presence seemed so terrific to him; for when he had invoked her, it was with the expectation of the apparition, and the determination to abide the issue. But now she had come uncalled, and her presence impressed him with a sense of approaching misfortune, and with the hideous apprehension that he had associated himself with a demon, over whose motions he had no control, and of whose powers and quality he had no certain knowledge. He remained, therefore, in mere terror, gazing on the apparition, which chanted or recited in cadence the following lines—

"He whose heart for vengeance sued,

Must not shrink from shedding blood

The knot that thou hast tied with word,

Thou must loose by edge of sword."

"Avaunt thee, false Spirit!" said Halbert Glendinning; "I have bought thy advice too dearly already—Begone in the name of God!"

The Spirit laughed; and the cold unnatural sound of her laughter had something in it more fearful than the usually melancholy tones of her voice. She then replied,—

"You have summon'd me once—you have summoned me twice,
And without e'er a summons I come to you thrice;
Unask'd for, unsued for, you came to my glen;
Unsued and unask'd I am with you again."

Halbert Glendinning gave way for a moment to terror, and called on his brother, "Edward! waken, waken, for Our Lady's sake!"

Edward awaked accordingly, and asked what he wanted.

"Look out," said Halbert, "look up! seest thou no one in the room?"

"No, upon my good word," said Edward, looking out.

"What! seest thou nothing in the moonshine upon the floor there?"

"No, nothing," answered Edward, "save thyself resting on thy naked sword. I tell thee, Halbert, thou shouldst trust more to thy spiritual arms, and less to those of steel and iron. For this many a night hast thou started and moaned, and cried out of fighting, and of spectres, and of goblins—thy sleep hath not refreshed thee—thy waking hath been a dream.—Credit me, dear Halbert, say the *Pater* and *Credo*, resign thyself to the protection of God, and thou wilt sleep sound and wake in comfort."

"It may be," said Halbert slowly, and having his eye still bent on the female form which to him seemed distinctly visible,— "it may be. But tell me, dear Edward, seest thou no one on the chamber floor but me?"

"No one," answered Edward, raising himself on his elbow; "dear brother, lay aside thy weapon, say thy prayers, and lay thee down to rest."

While he thus spoke, the Spirit smiled at Halbert as if in scorn; her wan cheek faded in the wan moonlight even before the smile had passed away, and Halbert himself no longer beheld the vision to which he had so anxiously solicited his brother's attention. "May God preserve my wits!" he said, as, laying aside his weapon, he again threw himself on his bed.

"Amen! my dearest brother," answered Edward; "but we must not provoke that Heaven in our wantonness which we invoke in our misery.—Be not angry with me, my dear brother—I know not why you have totally of late estranged yourself from me—It is true, I am neither so athletic in body, nor so alert in courage, as you have been from your infancy; yet, till lately, you have not absolutely cast off my society—Believe me, I have wept in secret, though I forbore to intrude myself on your privacy. The time has been—when you held me not so cheap; and—when, if I could not follow the game so closely, or mark it so truly as you, I could fill up our intervals of pastime with pleasant tales of the olden times, which I had read or heard, and which excited even your attention as we sate and ate our provision by some pleasant spring—but now I have, though I know not why, lost thy regard and affection.—Nay, toss not thy arms about thee thus wildly," said the younger brother; "from thy strange dreams, I fear some touch of fever hath affected thy blood—let me draw closer around thee thy mantle."

"Forbear," said Halbert—"your care is needless—your complaints are without reason—your fears on my account are in vain."

"Nay, but hear me, brother," said Edward. "Your speech in sleep, and now even your waking dreams, are of beings which belong not to this world, or to our race—Our good Father Eustace says, that howbeit we may not do well to receive all idle tales of goblins and spectres, yet there is warrant from holy Scripture to believe, that the fiends haunt waste and solitary places; and that those who frequent such wildernesses alone, are the prey, or the sport, of these wandering demons. And therefore, I pray thee, brother, let me go with you when you go next up the glen, where, as you well know, there be places of evil reputation—Thou carest not for my escort; but, Halbert, such dangers are more safely encountered by the wise in judgment, than by the bold in bosom; and though I have small cause to boast of my own wisdom, yet I have that which ariseth from the written knowledge of elder times."

There was a moment during this discourse, when Halbert had well-nigh come to the resolution of disburdening his own breast, by intrusting Edward with all that weighed upon it. But when his brother reminded him that this was the morning of a high holiday, and that, setting aside all other business or pleasure, he ought to go to the Monastery and shrive himself before Father Eustace, who would that day occupy the confessional, pride stepped in and confirmed his wavering resolution. "I will not avow," he thought, "a tale so extraordinary, that I may be considered as an impostor or something worse—I will not fly from this Englishman, whose arm and sword may be no better than my own. My fathers have faced his betters, were he as much distinguished in battle as he is by his quaint discourse." Pride, which has been said to save man, and woman too, from falling, has yet a stronger influence on the mind when it embraces the cause of passion, and seldom fails to render it victorious over conscience and reason. Halbert, once determined, though not to the better course, at length slept soundly, and was only awakened by the dawn of day.

* * * * *

Chapter the Twenty-First.

Indifferent, but indifferent—pshaw, he doth it not
Like one who is his craft's master—ne'er the less
I have seen a clown confer a bloody coxcomb
On one who was a master of defence.

OLD PLAY.

With the first gray peep of dawn, Halbert Glendinning arose and hastened to dress himself, girded on his weapon, and took a cross-bow in his hand, as if his usual sport had been his sole object. He groped his way down the dark and winding staircase, and undid, with as little noise as possible, the fastenings of the inner door, and of the exterior iron grate. At length he stood free in the court-yard, and looking up to the tower, saw a signal made with a handkerchief from the window. Nothing doubting that it was his antagonist, he paused, expecting him. But it was Mary Avenel, who glided like a spirit from under the low and rugged portal.

Halbert was much surprised, and felt, he knew not why, like one caught in the act of a meditated trespass. The presence of Mary Avenel had till that moment never given him pain. She spoke, too, in a tone where sorrow seemed to mingle with reproach, while she asked him with emphasis, "What he was about to do?" He showed his cross-bow, and was about to express the pretext he had meditated, when Mary interrupted him.

"Not so, Halbert—that evasion were unworthy of one whose word has hitherto been truth. You meditate not the destruction of the deer—your hand and your heart are aimed at other game—you seek to do battle with this stranger."

"And wherefore should I quarrel with our guest?" answered Halbert, blushing deeply.

"There are, indeed, many reasons why you should not," replied the maiden, "nor is there one of avail wherefore you should—yet nevertheless, such a quarrel you are now searching after."

"Why should you suppose so, Mary?" said Halbert, endeavouring to hide his conscious purpose—"he is my mother's guest—he is protected by the Abbot and the community, who are our masters—he is of high degree also,—and wherefore should you think that I can, or dare, resent a hasty word, which he has perchance thrown out against me more from the wantonness of his wit, than the purpose of his heart?"

"Alas!" answered the maiden, "the very asking that question puts your resolution beyond a doubt. Since your childhood you were ever daring, seeking danger rather than avoiding it—delighting in whatever had the air of adventure and of courage: and it is not from fear that you will now blench from your purpose—Oh, let it then be from pity!—from pity, Halbert, to your aged mother, whom your death or victory will alike deprive of the comfort and stay of her age."

"She has my brother Edward," said Halbert, turning suddenly from her.

"She has indeed," said Mary Avenel, "the calm, the noble-minded, the considerate Edward, who has thy courage, Halbert, without thy fiery rashness,—thy generous spirit, with more of reason to guide it. He would not have heard his mother, would not have heard his adopted sister, beseech him in vain not to ruin himself, and tear up their future hopes of happiness and protection."

Halbert's heart swelled as he replied to this reproach. "Well—what avails it speaking?—you have him that is better than me—wiser, more considerate—braver, for aught I know—you are provided with a protector, and need care no more for me."

Again he turned to depart, but Mary Avenel laid her hand on his arm so gently that he scarce felt her hold, yet felt that it was impossible for him to strike it off. There he stood, one foot advanced to leave the court-yard, but so little determined on departure, that he resembled a traveller arrested by the spell of a magician, and unable either to quit the attitude of motion, or to proceed on his course.

Mary Avenel availed herself of his state of suspense. "Hear me," she said, "hear me, Halbert!—I am an orphan, and even Heaven hears the orphan—I have been the companion of your infancy, and if *you* will not hear me for an instant, from whom may Mary Avenel claim so poor a boon?"

"I hear you," said Halbert Glendinning, "but be brief, dear Mary—you mistake the nature of my business—it is but a morning of summer sport which we propose."

"Say not thus," said the maiden, interrupting him, "say not thus to me—others thou mayst deceive, but me thou canst not—There has been that in me from the earliest youth, which fraud flies from, and which imposture cannot deceive. For what fate has given me such a power I know not; but bred an ignorant maiden, in this sequestered valley, mine eyes can too often see what man would most willingly hide—I can judge of the dark purpose, though it is hid under the smiling brow, and a glance of the eye says more to me than oaths and protestations do to others."

"Then," said Halbert, "if thou canst so read the human heart,—say, dear Mary—what dost thou see in mine?—tell me that—say that what thou seest—what thou readest in this bosom, does not offend thee—say but *that*, and thou shalt be the guide of my actions, and mould me now and henceforward to honour or to dishonour at thy own free will!"

Mary Avenel became first red, and then deadly pale, as Halbert Glendinning spoke. But when, turning round at the close of his address, he took her hand, she gently withdrew it, and replied, "I cannot read the heart, Halbert, and I would not of my will know aught of yours, save what beseeems us both—I only can judge of signs, words, and actions of little outward import, more truly than those around me, as my eyes, thou knowest, have seen objects not presented to those of others."

"Let them gaze then on one whom they shall never see more," said Halbert, once more turning from her, and rushing out of the court-yard without again looking back.

Mary Avenel gave a faint scream, and clasped both her hands firmly on her forehead and eyes. She had been a minute in this attitude, when she was thus greeted by a voice from behind: "Generously done, my most clement Discretion, to hide those brilliant eyes from the far inferior beams which even now begin to gild the eastern horizon—Certes, peril there were that Phoebus, outshone in splendour, might in very shamefacedness turn back his ear, and rather leave the world in darkness, than incur the disgrace of such an encounter—Credit me, lovely Discretion—"

But as Sir Piercie Shafton (the reader will readily set down these flowers of eloquence to the proper owner) attempted to take Mary Avenel's hand, in order to proceed in his speech, she shook him abruptly off, and regarding him with an eye which evinced terror and agitation, rushed past him into the tower.

The knight stood looking after her with a countenance in which contempt was strongly mingled with mortification. "By my knighthood!" he ejaculated, "I have thrown away upon this rude rustic Phidel? a speech, which the proudest beauty at the court of Felicia (so let me call the Elysium from which I am banished!) might have termed the very matins of Cupid. Hard and inexorable was the fate that sent thee thither, Piercie Shafton, to waste thy wit upon country wenches, and thy valour upon hob-nailed clowns! But that insult—that affront—had it been offered to me by the lowest plebeian, he must have died for it by my hand, in respect the enormity of the offence doth countervail the inequality of him by whom it is given. I trust I shall find this clownish roisterer not less willing to deal in blows than in taunts."

While he held this conversation with himself, Sir Piercie Shafton was hastening to the little tuft of birch-trees which had been assigned as the place of meeting. He greeted his antagonist with a courtly salutation, followed by this commentary: "I pray you to observe, that I doff my hat to you, though so much my inferior in rank, without derogation on my part, inasmuch as my having so far honoured you in receiving and admitting your defiance, doth, in the judgment of the best martialists, in some sort and for the time, raise you to a level with me—an honour which you may and ought to account cheaply purchased, even with the loss of your life, if such should chance to be the issue of this duello."

"For which condescension," said Halbert, "I have to thank the token which I presented to you."

The knight changed colour, and grinded his teeth with rage—"Draw your weapon!" said he to Glendinning.

"Not in this spot," answered the youth; "we should be liable to interruption—Follow me, and I will bring you to a place where we shall encounter no such risk."

He proceeded to walk up the glen, resolving that their place of combat should be in the entrance of the Corri-nan-shian; both because the spot, lying under the reputation of being haunted, was very little frequented, and also because he regarded it as a place which to him might be termed fated, and which he therefore resolved should witness his death or victory. They walked up the glen for some time in silence, like honourable enemies who did not wish to contend with words, and who had nothing friendly to exchange with each other. Silence, however, was always an irksome state with Sir Piercie and, moreover, his anger was usually a hasty and short-lived passion. As, therefore, he went forth, in his own idea, in all love and honour towards his antagonist, he saw not any cause for submitting longer to the painful restraint of positive silence. He began by complimenting Halbert on the alert activity with which he surmounted the obstacles and impediments of the way.

"Trust me," said he, "worthy rustic, we have not a lighter or a firmer step in our courtlike revels, and if duly set forth by a silk hose, and trained unto that stately exercise, your leg would make an indifferent good show in a pavin or a galliard. And I doubt nothing," he added, "that you have availed yourself of some opportunity to improve yourself in the art of fence, which is more akin than dancing to our present purpose?"

"I know nothing more of fencing," said Halbert, "than hath been taught me by an old shepherd of ours, called Martin, and at whiles a lesson from Christie of the Clinthill—for the rest, I must trust to good sword, strong arm, and sound heart."

"Marry and I am glad of it, young Audacity, (I will call you my Audacity, and you will call me your Condescension, while we are on these terms of unnatural equality,) I am glad of your ignorance with all my heart. For we martialists proportion the punishments which we inflict upon our opposites, to the length and hazard of the efforts wherewith they oppose themselves to us. And I see not why you, being but a tyro, may not be held sufficiently punished for your outrecuidance, and orgillous presumption, by the loss of an ear, an eye, or even a finger, accompanied by some flesh-wound of depth and severity, suited to your error—whereas, had you been able to stand more effectually on your defence, I see not how less than your life could have atoned sufficiently for your presumption."

"Now, by God and Our Lady," said Halbert, unable any longer to restrain himself, "thou art thyself over-presumptuous, who speakest thus daringly of the issue of a combat which is not yet even begun—Are you a god, that you already dispose of my life and limbs? or are you a judge in the justice-air, telling at your ease and without risk, how the head and quarters of a condemned criminal are to be disposed of?"

"Not so, O thou,—whom I have well permitted to call thyself my Audacity. I, thy Condescension, am neither a god to judge the issue of the combat before it is fought, nor a judge to dispose at my ease and in safety of the limbs and head of a condemned criminal; but I am an indifferent good master of fence, being the first pupil of the first master of the first school of fence that our royal England affords, the said master being no other than the truly noble, and all-unutterably skilful Vincentio Saviola, from whom I learned the firm step, quick eye, and nimble hand—of which qualities thou, O my most rustical Audacity, art full like to reap the fruits so soon as we shall find a piece of ground fitting for such experiments."

They had now reached the gorge of the ravine, where Halbert had at first intended to stop; but when he observed the narrowness of the level ground, he began to consider that it was only by superior agility that he could expect to make up his deficiency in the science, as it was called, of defence. He found no spot which

afforded sufficient room to traverse for this purpose, until he gained the well-known fountain, by whose margin, and in front of the huge rock from which it sprung, was an amphitheatre of level turf, of small space indeed, compared with the great height of the cliffs with which it was surrounded on every point save that from which the rivulet issued forth, yet large enough for their present purpose.

When they had reached this spot of ground, fitted well by its gloom and sequestered situation to be a scene of mortal strife, both were surprised to observe that a grave was dug close by the foot of the rock with great neatness and regularity, the green turf being laid down upon the one side, and the earth thrown out in a heap upon the other. A mattock and shovel lay by the verge of the grave.

Sir Piercie Shafton bent his eye with unusual seriousness upon Halbert Glendinning, as he asked him sternly, "Does this bode treason, young man? And have you purpose to set upon me here as in an emboscata or place of vantage?"

"Not on my part, by Heaven!" answered the youth: "I told no one of our purpose, nor would I for the throne of Scotland take odds against a single arm."

"I believe thou wouldst not, mine Audacity," said the knight, resuming the affected manner which was become a second nature to him; "nevertheless this fosse is curiously well shaped, and might be the masterpiece of Nature's last bed-maker, I would say the sexton—Wherefore, let us be thankful to chance or some unknown friend, who hath thus provided for one of us the decencies of sepulture, and let us proceed to determine which shall have the advantage of enjoying this place of undisturbed slumber."

So saying, he stripped off his doublet and cloak, which he folded up with great care, and deposited upon a large stone, while Halbert Glendinning, not without some emotion, followed his example. Their vicinity to the favourite haunt of the White Lady led him to form conjectures concerning the incident of the grave—"It must have been her work!" he thought: "the Spirit foresaw and has provided for the fatal event of the combat—I must return from this place a homicide, or I must remain here for ever!"

The bridge seemed now broken down behind him, and the chance of coming off honourably without killing or being killed, (the hope of which issue has cheered the sinking heart of many a duellist,) seemed now altogether to be removed. Yet the very desperation of his situation gave him, on an instant's reflection, both firmness and courage, and presented to him one sole alternative, conquest, namely, or death.

"As we are here," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "unaccompanied by any patrons or seconds, it were well you should pass your hands over my sides, as I shall over yours; not that I suspect you to use any quaint device of privy armour, but in order to comply with the ancient and laudable custom practised on all such occasions."

While complying with his antagonist's humour, Halbert Glendinning went through this ceremony, Sir Piercie Shafton did not fail to solicit his attention to the quality and fineness of his wrought and embroidered shirt—"In this very shirt," said he, "O mine Audacity!—I say in this very garment, in which I am now to combat a Scottish rustic like thyself, it was my envied lot to lead the winning party at that wonderous match at ballon, made betwixt the divine Astrophel, (our matchless Sidney,) and the right honourable my very good lord of Oxford. All the beauties of Felicia (by which name I distinguish our beloved England) stood in the gallery, waving their kerchiefs at each turn of the game, and cheering the winners by their plaudits. After which noble sport we were refreshed by a suitable banquet, whereat it pleased the noble Urania (being the unmatched Countess of Pembroke) to accommodate me with her fan for the cooling my somewhat too much inflamed visage, to requite which courtesy, I said, casting my features into a smiling, yet melancholy fashion, O divinest Urania! receive again that too fatal gift, which not like the Zephyr cooleth, but like the hot breath of the Sirocco, heateth yet more that which is already inflamed. Whereupon, looking upon me somewhat scornfully, yet not so but what the experienced courtier might perceive a certain cast of approbative affection——"

Here the knight was interrupted by Halbert, who had waited with courteous patience for some little time, till he found, that far from drawing to a close, Sir Piercie seemed rather inclined to wax prolix in his reminiscences.

"Sir Knight," said the youth, "if this matter be not very much to the purpose, we will, if you object not, proceed to that which we have in hand. You should have abidden in England had you desired to waste time in words, for here we spend it in blows."

"I crave your pardon, most rusticated Audacity," answered Sir Piercie; "truly I become oblivious of every thing beside, when the recollections of the divine court of Felicia press upon my wakened memory, even as a saint is dazzled when he bethinks him of the beatific vision. Ah, felicitous Felician! delicate nurse of the fair, chosen abode of the wise, the birth-place and cradle of nobility, the temple of courtesy, the fane of sprightly chivalry—Ah, heavenly court, or rather courtly heaven! cheered with dances, lulled asleep with harmony, wakened with sprightly sports and tourneys, decored with silks and tissues, glittering with diamonds and jewels, standing on end with double-piled velvets, satins, and satinettas!"

"The token, Sir Knight, the token!" exclaimed Halbert Glendinning, who, impatient of Sir Piercie's interminable oratory, reminded him of the ground of their quarrel, as the best way to compel him to the purpose of their meeting.

And he judged right; for Sir Piercie Shafton no sooner heard him speak, than he exclaimed, "Thy death-hour has struck—betake thee to thy sword—Via!"

Both swords were unsheathed, and the combatants commenced their engagement. Halbert became immediately aware, that, as he had expected, he was far inferior to his adversary in the use of his weapon. Sir Piercie Shafton had taken no more than his own share of real merit, when he termed himself an absolutely good fencer; and Glendinning soon found that he should have great difficulty in escaping with life and honour from such a master of the sword. The English knight was master of all the mystery of the *stoccata*, *imbrocata*, *punto-reverso*, *incartata*, and so forth, which the Italian masters of defence had lately introduced into general practice. But Glendinning, on his part, was no novice in the principles of the art, according to the old Scottish fashion, and possessed the first of all qualities, a steady and collected mind. At first, being desirous to try the skill, and become acquainted with the play of his enemy, he stood on his defence, keeping his foot, hand, eye, and body, in perfect unison, and holding his sword short, and with the point towards his antagonist's face, so that Sir Piercie, in order to assail him, was obliged to make actual passes, and could not avail himself of his skill in making feints; while, on the other hand, Halbert was prompt to parry these attacks, either by shifting his ground or with the sword. The consequence was, that after two or three sharp attempts on the part of Sir Piercie, which were evaded or disconcerted by the address of his opponent, he began to assume the defensive in his turn, fearful of giving some advantage by being repeatedly the assailant. But Halbert was too cautious to press on a swordsman whose dexterity had already more than once placed him within a hair's breadth of death, which he had only escaped by uncommon watchfulness and agility.

When each had made a feint or two, there was a pause in the conflict, both as if by one assent dropping their swords' point, and looking on each other for a moment without speaking. At length Halbert Glendinning, who felt perhaps more uneasy on account of his family than he had done before he had displayed his own courage, and proved the strength of his antagonist, could not help saying, "Is the subject of our quarrel, Sir Knight, so mortal, that one of our two bodies must needs fill up that grave? or may we with honour, having proved ourselves against each other, sheathe our swords and depart friends?"

"Valiant and most rustical Audacity," said the Southron knight, "to no man on earth could you have put a question on the code of honour, who was more capable of rendering you a reason. Let us pause for the space of one venue, until I give you my opinion on this dependence, {Footnote: *Dependence*—A phrase among the brethren of the sword for an existing quarrel.} for certain it is, that brave men should not run upon their fate like brute and furious wild beasts, but should slay each other deliberately, decently, and with reason. Therefore, if we coolly examine the state of our dependence, we may the better apprehend whether the sisters three have doomed one of us to expiate the same with his blood—Dost thou understand me?"

"I have heard Father Eustace," said Halbert, after a moment's recollection, "speak of the three furies, with their thread and their shears."

"Enough—enough,"—interrupted Sir Piercie Shafton, crimsoning with a new fit of rage, "the thread of thy life is spun!"

And with these words he attacked with the utmost ferocity the Scottish youth, who had but just time to throw himself into a posture of defence. But the rash fury of the assailant, as frequently happens, disappointed its own purpose; for, as he made a desperate thrust, Halbert Glendinning avoided it, and ere the knight could recover his weapon, requited him (to use his own language) with a resolute *stoccata*, which passed through his body, and Sir Piercie Shafton fell to the ground.

Chapter the Twenty-Second.

Yes, life hath left him—every busy thought,
Each fiery passion, every strong affection,
All sense of outward ill and inward sorrow,
Are fled at once from the pale trunk before me;
And I have given that which spoke and moved,
Thought, acted, suffer'd as a living man,
To be a ghastly form of bloody clay,
Soon the foul food for reptiles.

OLD PLAY.

I believe few successful duellists (if the word successful can be applied to a superiority so fatal) have beheld their dead antagonist stretched on the earth at their feet, without wishing they could redeem with their own blood that which it has been their fate to spill. Least of all could such indifference be the lot of so young a man as Halbert Glendinning, who, unused to the sight of human blood, was not only struck with sorrow, but with terror, when he beheld Sir Piercie Shafton lie stretched on the green-sward before him, vomiting gore as if impelled by the strokes of a pump. He threw his bloody sword on the ground, and hastened to kneel and support him, vainly striving, at the same time, to stanch his wound, which seemed rather to bleed inwardly than externally.

The unfortunate knight spoke at intervals, when the syncope would permit him, and his words, so far as intelligible, partook of his affected and conceited, yet not ungenerous character.

"Most rustical youth," he said, "thy fortune hath prevailed over knightly skill—and Audacity hath overcome Condescension, even as the kite hath sometimes hawked at and struck down the falcon-gentle.—Fly and save thyself!—Take my purse—it is in the nether pocket of my carnation-coloured hose—and is worth a clown's acceptance. See that my mails, with my vestments, be sent to the Monastery of Saint Mary's"—(here his voice grew weak, and his mind and recollection seemed to waver)—"I bestow the cut velvet jerkin, with close breeches conforming—for—oh!—the good of my soul."

"Be of good comfort, sir," said Halbert, half distracted with his agony of pity and remorse. "I trust you shall yet do well—Oh for a leech!"

"Were there twenty physicians, O most generous Audacity, and that were a grave spectacle—I might not survive, my life is ebbing fast.—Commend me to the rustical nymph whom I called my Discretion—O Claridiana!—true empress of this bleeding heart—which now bleedeth in sad earnest!—Place me on the ground at my length, most rustical victor, born to quench the pride of the burning light of the most felicitous court of Feliciana—O saints and angels—knights and ladies—masques and theatres—quaint devices—chain-work and broidery—love, honour, and beauty!——"

While muttering these last words, which slid from him, as it were unawares, while doubtless he was calling to mind the glories of the English court, the gallant Sir Piercie Shafton stretched out his limbs—groaned deeply, shut his eyes, and became motionless.

The victor tore his hair for very sorrow, as he looked on the pale countenance of his victim. Life, he thought, had not utterly fled, but without better aid than his own, he saw not how it could be preserved.

"Why," he exclaimed in vain penitence, "why did I provoke him to an issue so fatal! Would to God I had submitted to the worst insult man could receive from man, rather than be the bloody instrument of this bloody deed—and doubly cursed be this evil-boding spot, which, haunted as I knew it to be by a witch or a devil, I yet chose for the place of combat! In any other place, save this, there had been help to be gotten by speed of foot, or by uplifting of voice—but here there is no one to be found by search, no one to hear my shouts, save the evil spirit who has counselled this mischief. It is not her hour—I will essay the spell howsoever; and if she can give me aid, she *shall* do it, or know of what a madman is capable even against those of another world!"

He spurned his bloody shoe from his foot, and repeated the spell with which the reader is well acquainted; but there was neither voice, apparition, nor signal of answer. The youth, in the impatience of his despair, and with the rash hardihood which formed the basis of his character, shouted aloud, "Witch—Sorceress—Fiend!—art thou deaf to my cries of help, and so ready to appear and answer those of vengeance? Arise and speak to me, or I will choke up thy fountain, tear down thy hollybush, and leave thy haunt as waste and bare as thy fatal assistance has made me waste of comfort and bare of counsel!"—This furious and raving invocation was suddenly interrupted by a distant sound, resembling a hollo, from the gorge of the ravine. "Now may Saint Mary be praised," said the youth, hastily fastening his sandal, "I hear the voice of some living man, who may give me counsel and help in this fearful extremity."

Having donned his sandal, Halbert Glendinning, hallooing at intervals, in answer to the sound which he had heard, ran with the speed of a hunted buck down the rugged defile, as if paradise had been before him, hell and all her furies behind, and his eternal happiness or misery had depended upon the speed which he exerted. In a space incredibly short for any one but a Scottish mountaineer having his nerves strung by the deepest and most passionate interest, the youth reached the entrance of the ravine, through which the rill that flows down Corri-nan-shian discharges itself, and unites with the brook that waters the little valley of Glendearg.

Here he paused, and looked around him upwards and downwards through the glen, without perceiving a human form. His heart sank within him. But the windings of the glen intercepted his prospect, and the person, whose voice he had heard, might therefore, be at no great distance, though not obvious to his sight. The branches of an oak-tree, which shot straight out from the face of a tall cliff, proffered to his bold spirit, steady head, and active limbs, the means of ascending it as a place of out-look, although the enterprise was what most men would have shrunk from. But by one bound from the earth, the active youth caught hold of the lower branch, and swung himself up into the tree, and in a minute more gained the top of the cliff, from which he could easily descry a human figure descending the valley. It was not that of a shepherd, or of a hunter, and scarcely any others used to traverse this deserted solitude, especially coming from the north, since the reader may remember that the brook took its rise from an extensive and dangerous morass which lay in that direction.

But Halbert Glendinning did not pause to consider who the traveller might be, or what might be the purpose of his journey. To know that he saw a human being, and might receive, in the extremity of his distress, the countenance and advice of a fellow-creature, was enough for him at the moment. He threw himself from the pinnacle of the cliff once more into the arms of the projecting oak-tree, whose boughs waved in middle air, anchored by the roots in a huge rift or chasm of the rock. Catching at the branch which was nearest to him, he dropped himself from that height upon the ground; and such was the athletic springiness of his youthful sinews, that he pitched there as lightly, and with as little injury, as the falcon stooping from her wheel.

To resume his race at full speed up the glen, was the work of an instant; and as he turned angle after angle of the indented banks of the valley, without meeting that which he sought, he became half afraid that the form which he had seen at such a distance had already melted into thin air, and was either a deception of his own imagination, or of the elementary spirits by which the valley was supposed to be haunted.

But to his inexpressible joy, as he turned round the base of a huge and distinguished crag, he saw, straight before and very near to him, a person, whose dress, as he viewed it hastily, resembled that of a pilgrim.

He was a man of advanced life, and wearing a long beard, having on his head a large slouched hat, without either band or brooch. His dress was a tunic of black serge, which, like those commonly called hussar-cloaks, had an upper part, which covered the arms and fell down on the lower; a small scrip and bottle, which hung at his back, with a stout staff in his hand, completed his equipage. His step was feeble, like that of one exhausted by a toilsome journey.

"Save ye, good father!" said the youth. "God and Our Lady have sent you to my assistance."

"And in what, my son, can so frail a creature as I am, be of service to you?" said the old man, not a little surprised at being thus accosted by so handsome a youth, his features discomposed by anxiety, his face flushed with exertion, his hands and much of his dress stained with blood. "A man bleeds to death in the valley here, hard by. Come with me—come with me! You are aged—you have experience—you have at least your senses—and mine have well nigh left me."

"A man—and bleeding to death—and here in this desolate spot!" said the stranger.

"Stay not to question it, father," said the youth, "but come instantly to his rescue. Follow me,—follow me, without an instant's delay."

"Nay, but, my son," said the old man, "we do not lightly follow the guides who present themselves thus suddenly in the bosom of a howling wilderness. Ere I follow thee, thou must expound to me thy name, thy purpose, and thy cause."

"There is no time to expound any thing," said Halbert; "I tell thee a man's life is at stake, and thou must come to aid him, or I will carry thee thither by force!"

"Nay, thou shalt not need," said the traveller; "if it indeed be as thou sayest, I will follow thee of free-will—the rather that I am not wholly unskilled in leech-craft, and have in my scrip that which may do thy friend a service—Yet walk more slowly, I pray thee, for I am already well-nigh forespent with travel."

With the indignant impatience of the fiery steed when compelled by his rider to keep pace with some slow drudge upon the highway, Halbert accompanied the wayfarer, burning with anxiety which he endeavoured to subdue, that he might not alarm his companion, who was obviously afraid to trust him. When they reached the place where they were to turn off the wider glen into the Corri, the traveller made a doubtful pause, as if unwilling to leave the broader path—"Young man," he said, "if thou meanest aught but good to these gray hairs, thou wilt gain little by thy cruelty—I have no earthly treasure to tempt either robber or murderer."

"And I," said the youth, "am neither—and yet—God of Heaven!—I *may* be a murderer, unless your aid comes in time to this wounded wretch!"

"Is it even so," said the traveller; "and do human passions disturb the breast of nature, even in her deepest solitude?—Yet why should I marvel that where darkness abides the works of darkness should abound?—By its fruits is the tree known—Lead on, unhappy youth—I follow thee!"

And with better will to the journey than he had evinced hitherto, the stranger exerted himself to the uttermost, and seemed to forget his own fatigue in his efforts to keep pace with his impatient guide.

What was the surprise of Halbert Glendinning, when, upon arriving at the fatal spot, he saw no appearance of the body of Sir Piercie Shafton! The traces of the fray were otherwise sufficiently visible. The knight's cloak had indeed vanished as well as his body, but his doublet remained where he had laid it down, and the turf on which he had been stretched was stained with blood in many a dark crimson spot.

As he gazed round him in terror and astonishment, Halbert's eyes fell upon the place of sepulture which had so lately appeared to gape for a victim. It was no longer open, and it seemed that earth had received the expected tenant; for the usual narrow hillock was piled over what had lately been an open grave, and the green sod was adjusted over all with the accuracy of an experienced sexton. Halbert stood aghast. The idea rushed on his mind irresistibly, that the earth-heap before him enclosed what had lately been a living, moving, and sentient fellow-creature, whom, on little provocation, his fell act had reduced to a clod of the valley, as senseless and as cold as the turf under which he rested. The hand that scooped the grave had completed its word; and whose hand could it be save that of the mysterious being of doubtful quality, whom his rashness had invoked, and whom he had suffered to intermingle in his destinies?

As he stood with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, bitterly ruing his rashness, he was roused by the voice of the stranger, whose suspicions of his guide had again been awakened by finding the scene so different from what Halbert had led him to expect.—"Young man," he said, "hast thou baited thy tongue with falsehood to cut perhaps only a few days from the life of one whom Nature will soon call home, without guilt on thy part to hasten his journey?"

"By the blessed Heaven!—by our dear Lady!" ejaculated Halbert—

"Swear not at all!" said the stranger, interrupting him, "neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by earth, for it is his footstool—nor by the creatures whom he hath made, for they are but earth and clay as we are. Let thy yea be yea, and thy nay, nay. Tell me in a word, why and for what purpose thou hast feigned a tale, to lead a bewildered traveller yet farther astray?"

"As I am a Christian man," said Glendinning, "I left him here bleeding to death—and now I nowhere spy him, and much I doubt that the tomb that thou seest has closed on his mortal remains."

"And who is he for whose fate thou art so anxious?" said the stranger; "or how is it possible that this wounded man could have been either removed from, or interred in, a place so solitary?"

"His name," said Halbert, after a moment's pause, "is Piercie Shafton—there, on that very spot I left him bleeding; and what power has conveyed him hence, I know no more than thou dost."

"Piercie Shafton?" said the stranger; "Sir Piercie Shafton of Wilverton, a kinsman, as it is said, of the great Piercie of Northumberland? If thou hast slain him, to return to the territories of the proud Abbot is to give thy neck to the gallows. He is well known, that Piercie Shafton; the meddling tool of wiser plotters—a harebrained trafficker in treason—a champion of the Pope, employed as a forlorn hope by those more politic heads, who have more will to work mischief, than valour to encounter danger.—Come with me, youth, and save thyself from the evil consequences of this deed—Guide me to the Castle of Avenel, and thy reward shall be protection and safety."

Again Halbert paused, and summoned his mind to a hasty council. The vengeance with which the Abbot was likely to visit the slaughter of Shafton, his friend, and in some measure his guest, was likely to be severe; yet, in the various contingencies which he had considered previous to their duel, he had unaccountably omitted to reflect what was to be his line of conduct in case of Sir Piercie falling by his hand. If he returned to Glendearg, he was sure to draw on his whole family, including Mary Avenel, the resentment of the Abbot and community, whereas it was possible that flight might make him be regarded as the sole author of the deed, and might avert the indignation of the monks from the rest of the inhabitants of his paternal tower. Halbert recollected also the favour expressed for the household, and especially for Edward, by the Sub-Prior; and he conceived that he could, by communicating his own guilt to that worthy ecclesiastic, when at a distance from Glendearg, secure his powerful interposition in favour of his family. These thoughts rapidly passed through his mind, and he determined on flight. The stranger's company and his promised protection came in aid of that resolution; but he was unable to reconcile the invitation which the old man gave him to accompany him for safety to the Castle of Avenel, with the connexions of Julian, the present usurper of that inheritance.

"Good father," he said, "I fear that you mistake the man with whom you wish me to harbour. Avenel guided Piercie Shafton into Scotland, and his henchman, Christie of the Clinthill, brought the Southron hither."

"Of that," said the old man, "I am well aware. Yet if thou wilt trust to me, as I have shown no reluctance to confide in thee, thou shalt find with Julian Avenel welcome, or at least safety."

"Father," replied Halbert, "though I can ill reconcile what thou sayest with what Julian Avenel hath done, yet caring little about the safety of a creature so lost as myself, and as thy words seem those of truth and honesty, and finally, as thou didst render thyself frankly up to my conduct, I will return the confidence thou hast shown, and accompany thee to the Castle of Avenel by a road which thou thyself couldst never have discovered." He led the way, and the old man followed for some time in silence.

'Tis when the wound is stiffening with the cold.
The warrior first feels pain—'tis when the heat
And fiery fever of his soul is pass'd,
The sinner feels remorse.

OLD PLAY.

The feelings of compunction with which Halbert Glendinning was visited upon this painful occasion, were deeper than belonged to an age and country in which human life was held so cheap. They fell far short certainly of those which might have afflicted a mind regulated by better religious precepts, and more strictly trained under social laws; but still they were deep and severely felt, and divided in Halbert's heart even the regret with which he parted from Mary Avenel and the tower of his fathers.

The old traveller walked silently by his side for some time, and then addressed him.—"My son, it has been said that sorrow must speak or die—Why art thou so much cast down?—Tell me thy unhappy tale, and it may be that my gray head may devise counsel and aid for your young life."

"Alas!" said Halbert Glendinning, "can you wonder why I am cast down?—I am at this instant a fugitive from my father's house, from my mother, and from my friends, and I bear on my head the blood of a man who injured me but in idle words, which I have thus bloodily requited. My heart now tells me I have done evil—it were harder than these rocks if it could bear unmoved the thought, that I have sent this man to a long account, unhoused and unshrievd."

"Pause there, my son," said the traveller. "That thou hast defaced God's image in thy neighbour's person—that thou hast sent dust to dust in idle wrath or idler pride, is indeed a sin of the deepest dye—that thou hast cut short the space which Heaven might have allowed him for repentance, makes it yet more deadly—but for all this there is balm in Gilead."

"I understand you not, father," said Halbert, struck by the solemn tone which was assumed by his companion.

The old man proceeded. "Thou hast slain thine enemy—it was a cruel deed: thou hast cut him off perchance in his sins—it is a fearful aggravation. Do yet by my counsel, and in lieu of him whom thou hast perchance consigned to the kingdom of Satan, let thine efforts wrest another subject from the reign of the Evil One."

"I understand you, father," said Halbert; "thou wouldst have me atone for my rashness by doing service to the soul of my adversary—But how may this be? I have no money to purchase masses, and gladly would I go barefoot to the Holy Land to free his spirit from purgatory, only that—"

"My son," said the old man, interrupting him, "the sinner for whose redemption I entreat you to labour, is not the dead but the living. It is not for the soul of thine enemy I would exhort thee to pray—that has already had its final doom from a Judge as merciful as he is just; nor, wert thou to coin that rock into ducats, and obtain a mass for each one, would it avail the departed spirit. Where the tree hath fallen, it must lie. But the sapling, which hath in it yet the vigour and juice of life, may be bended to the point to which it ought to incline."

"Art thou a priest, father?" said the young man, "or by what commission dost thou talk of such high matters?"

"By that of my Almighty Master," said the traveller, "under whose banner I am an enlisted soldier."

Halbert's acquaintance with religious matters was no deeper than could be derived from the Archbishop of Saint Andrew's Catechism, and the pamphlet called the Twapennie Faith, both which were industriously circulated and recommended by the monks of Saint Mary's. Yet, however indifferent and superficial a theologian, he began to suspect that he was now in company with one of the gossellers, or heretics, before whose influence the ancient system of religion now tottered to the very foundation. Bred up, as may well be presumed, in a holy horror against these formidable sectaries, the youth's first feelings were those of a loyal and devoted church vassal. "Old man," he said, "wert thou able to make good with thy hand the words that thy tongue hath spoken against our Holy Mother Church, we should have tried upon this moor which of our creeds hath the better champion."

"Nay," said the stranger, "if thou art a true soldier of Rome, thou wilt not pause from thy purpose because thou hast the odds of years and of strength on thy side. Harken to me, my son. I have showed thee how to make thy peace with Heaven, and thou hast rejected my proffer. I will now show thee how thou shalt make thy reconciliation with the powers of this world. Take this gray head from the frail body which supports it, and carry it to the chair of proud Abbot Boniface; and when thou tellest him thou hast slain Piercie Shafton, and his ire rises at the deed, lay the head of Henry Warden at his foot, and thou shalt have praise instead of censure."

Halbert Glendinning stepped back in surprise. "What! are you that Henry Warden so famous among the heretics, that even Knox's name is scarce more frequently in their mouths? Art thou he, and darest thou to approach the Halidome of Saint Mary's?"

"I am Henry Warden, of a surety," said the old man, "far unworthy to be named in the same breath with Knox, but yet willing to venture on whatever dangers my master's service may call me to."

"Hearken to me, then," said Halbert; "to slay thee, I have no heart—to make thee prisoner, were equally to bring thy blood on my head—to leave thee in this wild without a guide, were little better. I will conduct thee, as I promised, in safety to the Castle of Avenel; but breathe not, while we are on the journey, a word against the doctrines of the holy church of which I am an unworthy—but though an ignorant, a zealous member.—When thou art there arrived, beware of thyself—there is a high price upon thy head, and Julian Avenel loves the glance of gold bonnet-pieces." {Footnote: A gold coin of James V., the most beautiful of the Scottish series; so called because the effigy of the sovereignty is represented wearing a bonnet.}

"Yet thou sayest not," answered the Protestant preacher, for such he was, "that for lucre he would sell the blood of his guest?"

"Not if thou comest an invited stranger, relying on his faith," said the youth; "evil as Julian may be, he dare not break the rites of hospitality; for, loose as we on these marches may be in all other ties, these are respected amongst us even to idolatry, and his nearest relations would think it incumbent on them to spill his blood themselves, to efface the disgrace such treason would bring upon their name and lineage. But if thou goest self-invited, and without assurance of safety, I promise thee thy risk is great."

"I am in God's hand," answered the preacher; "it is on His errand that I traverse these wilds amidst dangers of every kind; while I am useful for my master's service, they shall not prevail against me, and when, like the barren fig-tree, I can no longer produce fruit, what imports it when or by whom the axe is laid to the root?"

"Your courage and devotion," said Glendinning, "are worthy of a better cause."

"That," said Warden, "cannot be—mine is the very best."

They continued their journey in silence, Halbert Glendinning tracing with the utmost accuracy the mazes of the dangerous and intricate morasses and hills which divided the Halidome from the barony of Avenel. From time to time he was obliged to stop, in order to assist his companion to cross the black intervals of quaking bog, called in the Scottish dialect *hags*, by which the firmer parts of the morass were intersected.

"Courage, old man," said Halbert, as he saw his companion almost exhausted with fatigue, "we shall soon be upon hard ground. And yet soft as this moss is, I have seen the merry falcons go through it as light as deer when the quarry was upon the flight."

"True, my son," answered Warden, "for so I will still call you, though you term me no longer father; and even so doth headlong youth pursue its pleasures, without regard to the mire and the peril of the paths through which they are hurried."

"I have already told thee," answered Halbert Glendinning, sternly, "that I will hear nothing from thee that savours of doctrine."

"Nay, but, my son," answered Warden, "thy spiritual father himself would surely not dispute the truth of what I have now spoken for your edification!"

Glendinning stoutly replied, "I know not how that may be—but I wot well it is the fashion of your brotherhood to bait your hook with fair discourse, and to hold yourselves up as angels of light, that you may the better extend the kingdom of darkness."

"May God," replied the preacher, "pardon those who have thus reported of his servants! I will not offend thee, my son, by being instant out of season—thou speakest but as thou art taught—yet sure I trust that so goodly a youth will be still rescued, like a brand from the burning."

While he thus spoke, the verge of the morass was attained, and their path lay on the declivity. Green-sward it was, and, viewed from a distance, chequered with its narrow and verdant line the dark-brown heath which it traversed, though the distinction was not so easily traced when they were walking on it. {Footnote: This sort of path, visible when looked at from a distance, but not to be seen when you are upon it, is called on the Border by the significant name of a Blind-road.} The old man pursued his journey with comparative ease; and, unwilling again to awaken the jealous zeal of his young companion for the Roman faith, he discoursed on other matters. The tone of his conversation was still grave, moral, and instructive. He had travelled much, and knew both the language and manners of other countries, concerning which Halbert Glendinning, already anticipating the possibility of being obliged to leave Scotland for the deed he had done, was naturally and anxiously desirous of information. By degrees he was more attracted by the charms of the stranger's conversation than repelled by the dread of his dangerous character as a heretic, and Halbert had called him father more than once, ere the turrets of Avenel Castle came in view.

The situation of this ancient fortress was remarkable. It occupied a small rocky islet in a mountain lake, or *tarn*, as such a piece of water is called in Westmoreland. The lake might be about a mile in circumference, surrounded by hills of considerable height, which, except where old trees and brushwood occupied the ravines that divided them from each other, were bare and heathy. The surprise of the spectator was chiefly excited by finding a piece of water situated in that high and mountainous region, and the landscape around had features which might rather be termed wild, than either romantic or sublime; yet the scene was not without its charms. Under the burning sun of summer, the clear azure of the deep unruffled lake refreshed the eye, and impressed the mind with a pleasing feeling of deep solitude. In winter, when the snow lay on the mountains around, these dazzling masses appeared to ascend far beyond their wonted and natural height, while the lake, which stretched beneath, and filled their bosom with all its frozen waves, lay like the surface of a darkened and broken mirror around the black and rocky islet, and the walls of the gray castle with which it was crowned.

As the castle occupied, either with its principal buildings, or with its flanking and outward walls, every projecting point of rock, which served as its site, it seemed as completely surrounded by water as the nest of a wild swan, save where a narrow causeway extended betwixt the islet and the shore. But the fortress was larger in appearance than in reality; and of the buildings which it actually contained, many had become ruinous and uninhabitable. In the times of the grandeur of the Avenel family, these had been occupied by a considerable garrison of followers and retainers, but they were now in a great measure deserted; and Julian Avenel would probably have fixed his habitation in a residence better suited to his diminished fortunes, had it not been for the great security which the situation of the old castle afforded to a man of his precarious and perilous mode of life. Indeed, in this respect, the spot could scarce have been more happily chosen, for it could be rendered almost completely inaccessible at the pleasure of the inhabitant. The distance betwixt the nearest shore and the islet was not indeed above an hundred yards; but then the causeway which connected them was extremely narrow, and completely divided by two cuts, one in the mid-way between the islet and shore, and another close under the outward gate of the castle. These formed a formidable, and almost insurmountable interruption to any hostile approach. Each was defended by a drawbridge, one of which, being that nearest to the castle, was regularly raised at all times during the day, and both were lifted at night. {Footnote: It is in vain to search near Melrose for any such castle as is here described. The lakes at the head of the Yarrow, and those at the rise of the water of Ale, present no object of the kind. But in Vetholm Loch, (a romantic sheet of water, in the dry march, as it is called,) there are the remains of a fortress called Lochside Tower, which, like the supposed Castle of Avenel, is built upon an island, and connected with the land by a causeway. It is much smaller than the Castle of Avenel is described, consisting only of a single tower.}

The situation of Julian Avenel, engaged in a variety of feuds, and a party to almost every dark and mysterious transaction which was on foot in that wild and military frontier, required all these precautions for his security. His own ambiguous and doubtful course of policy had increased these dangers; for as he made professions to both parties in the state, and occasionally united more actively with either the one or the other, as chanced best to serve his immediate purpose, he could not be said to have either firm allies and protectors, or determined enemies. His life was a life of expedients and of peril; and while, in pursuit of his interest, he made all the doubles which he thought necessary to attain his object, he often overran his prey, and missed that which he might have gained by observing a straighter course.

Chapter the Twenty-Fourth.

I'll walk on tiptoe; arm my eye with caution,
My heart with courage, and my hand with weapon,
Like him who ventures on a lion's den.
OLD PLAY.

When, issuing from the gorge of a pass which terminated upon the lake, the travellers came in sight of the ancient castle of Avenel, the old man looked with earnest attention upon the scene before him. The castle was, as we have said, in many places ruinous, as was evident, even at this distance, by the broken, rugged, and irregular outline of the walls and of the towers. In others it seemed more entire, and a pillar of dark smoke, which ascended from the chimneys of the donjon, and spread its long dusky pennon through the clear ether, indicated that it was inhabited. But no corn-fields or enclosed pasture-grounds on the side of the lake showed that provident attention to comfort and subsistence which usually appeared near the houses of the greater, and even of the lesser barons. There were no cottages with their patches of infield, and their crofts and gardens, surrounded by rows of massive sycamores; no church with its simple tower in the valley; no herds of sheep among the hills; no cattle on the lower ground; nothing which intimated the occasional prosecution of the arts of peace and of industry. It was plain that the inhabitants, whether few or numerous, must be considered as the garrison of the castle, living within its defended precincts, and subsisting by means which were other than peaceful.

Probably it was with this conviction that the old man, gazing on the castle, muttered to himself, "*Lapis offensionis et petra scandali!*" and then, turning to Halbert Glendinning, he added, "We may say of yonder fort as King James did of another fastness in this province, that he who built it was a thief in his heart." {Footnote: It was of Lochwood, the hereditary fortress of the Johnstones of Aunandale, a strong castle situated in the centre of a quaking bog, that James VI. made this remark.}

"But it was not so," answered Glendinning; "yonder castle was built by the old lords of Avenel, men as much beloved in peace as they were respected in war. They were the bulwark of the frontiers against foreigners, and the protectors of the natives from domestic oppression. The present usurper of their inheritance no more resembles them, than the night-prowling owl resembles a falcon, because she builds on the same rock."

"This Julian Avenel, then, holds no high place in the love and regard of his neighbours?" said Warden.

"So little," answered Halbert, "that besides the jack-men and riders with whom he has associated himself, and of whom he has many at his disposal, I know of few who voluntarily associate with him. He has been more than once outlawed both by England and Scotland, his lands declared forfeited, and his head set at a price. But in these unquiet times, a man so daring as Julian Avenel has ever found some friends willing to protect him against the penalties of the law, on condition of his secret services."

"You describe a dangerous man," replied Warden.

"You may have experience of that," replied the youth, "if you deal not the more warily;—though it may be that he also has forsaken the community of the church, and gone astray in the path of heresy."

"What your blindness terms the path of heresy," answered the reformer, "is indeed the straight and narrow way, wherein he who walks turns not aside, whether for worldly wealth or for worldly passions. Would to God this man were moved by no other and no worse spirit than that which prompts my poor endeavours to extend the kingdom of Heaven! This Baron of Avenel is personally unknown to me, is not of our congregation or of our counsel; yet I bear to him charges touching my safety, from those whom he must fear if he does not respect them, and upon that assurance I will venture upon his hold—I am now sufficiently refreshed by these few minutes of repose."

"Take then this advice for your safety," said Halbert, "and believe that it is founded upon the usage of this country and its inhabitants. If you can better shift for yourself, go not to the Castle of Avenel—if you do risk going thither, obtain from him, if possible, his safe conduct, and beware that he swears it by the Black Rood—And lastly, observe whether he eats with you at the board, or pledges you in the cup; for if he gives you not these signs of welcome, his thoughts are evil towards you."

"Alas!" said the preacher, "I have no better earthly refuge for the present than these frowning towers, but I go thither trusting to aid which is not of this earth—But thou, good youth, needest thou trust thyself in this dangerous den?"

"I," answered Halbert, "am in no danger. I am well known to Christie of the Clinthill, the henchman of this Julian Avenel; and, what is a yet better protection, I have nothing either to provoke malice or to tempt plunder."

The tramp of a steed, which clattered along the shingly banks of the loch, was now heard behind them; and, when they looked back, a rider was visible, his steel cap and the point of his long lance glancing in the setting sun, as he rode rapidly towards them.

Halbert Glendinning soon recognized Christie of the Clinthill, and made his companion aware that the henchman of Julian Avenel was approaching.

"Ha, youngling!" said Christie to Halbert, as he came up to them, "thou hast made good my word at last, and come to take service with my noble master, hast thou not? Thou shalt find a good friend and a true; and ere Saint Barnaby come round again, thou shalt know every pass betwixt Millburn Plain and Netherby, as if thou hadst been born with a jack on thy back, and a lance in thy hand.—What old carle hast thou with thee?—He is not of the brotherhood of Saint Mary's—at least he has not the buist {Footnote: *Buist*—The brand, or mark, set upon sheep or cattle, by their owners.} of these black cattle."

"He is a wayfaring man," said Halbert, "who has concerns with Julian of Avenel. For myself, I intend to go to Edinburgh to see the court and the Queen, and when I return hither we will talk of your proffer. Meantime, as thou hast often invited me to the castle, I crave hospitality there to-night for myself and my companion."

"For thyself and welcome, young comrade," replied Christie; "but we harbour no pilgrims, nor aught that looks like a pilgrim."

"So please you," said Warden, "I have letters of commendation to thy master from a sure friend, whom he will right willingly oblige in higher matters than in affording me a brief protection.—And I am no pilgrim, but renounce the same, with all its superstitious observances." He offered his letters to the horseman, who shook his head.

"These," he said, "are matters for my master, and it will be well if he can read them himself; for me, sword and lance are my book and psalter, and have been since I was twelve years old. But I will guide you to the castle, and the Baron of Avenel will himself judge of your errand."

By this time the party had reached the causeway, along which Christie advanced at a trot, intimating his presence to the warders within the castle by a shrill and peculiar whistle. At this signal the farther drawbridge was lowered. The horseman passed it, and disappeared under the gloomy portal which was beyond it.

Glendinning and his companion advancing more leisurely along the rugged causeway, stood at length under the same gateway, over which frowned, in dark red freestone, the ancient armorial bearings of the house of Avenel, which represented a female figure shrouded and muffled, which occupied the whole field. The cause of their assuming so singular a device was uncertain, but the figure was generally supposed to represent the mysterious being called the White Lady of Avenel. {Footnote: There is an ancient English family, I believe, which bears, or did bear, a ghost or spirit passant sable in a field argent. This seems to have been a device of a punning or *canting* herald.} The sight of this mouldering shield awakened in the mind of Halbert the strange circumstances which had connected his fate with that of Mary Avenel, and with the doings of the spiritual being who was attached to her house, and whom he saw here, represented in stone, as he had before seen her effigy upon the seal-ring of Walter Avenel, which, with other trinkets formerly mentioned, had been saved from pillage, and brought to Glendearg, when Mary's mother was driven from her habitation.

"You sigh, my son," said the old man, observing the impression made on his youthful companion's countenance, but mistaking the cause; "if you fear to enter, we may yet return."

"That can ye not," said Christie of the Clinthill, who emerged at that instant from the side-door under the archway. "Look yonder, and choose whether you will return skimming the water like a wild-duck, or winging the air like a plover."

They looked, and saw that the drawbridge which they had just crossed was again raised, and now interposed its planks betwixt the setting sun and the portal of the castle, deepening the gloom of the arch under which they stood. Christie laughed and bid them follow him, saying, by way of encouragement, in Halbert's ear, "Answer boldly and readily to whatever the Baron asks you. Never stop to pick your words, and above all show no fear of him—the devil is not so black as he is painted."

As he spoke thus, he introduced them into the large stone hall, at the upper end of which blazed a huge fire of wood. The long oaken table, which, as usual, occupied the midst of the apartment, was covered with rude preparations for the evening meal of the Baron and his chief domestics, five or six of whom, strong, athletic, savage-looking men, paced up and down the lower end of the hall, which rang to the jarring clang of their long swords that clashed as they moved, and to the heavy tramp of their high-heeled jack-boots. Iron jacks, or coats of buff, formed the principal part of their dress, and steel-bonnets, or large slouched hats with Spanish plumes drooping backwards, were their head attire.

The Baron of Avenel was one of those tall, muscular, martial figures, which are the favourite subjects of Salvator Rosa. He wore a cloak which had been once gaily trimmed, but which, by long wear and frequent exposure to the weather, was now faded in its colours. Thrown negligently about his tall person, it partly hid, and partly showed, a short doublet of buff, under which was in some places visible that light shirt of mail which was called a *secret*, because worn instead of more ostensible armour to protect against private assassination. A leathern belt sustained a large and heavy sword on one side, and on the other that gay poniard which had once called Sir Piercie Shafton master, of which the hatchments and gildings were already much defaced, either by rough usage or neglect.

Notwithstanding the rudeness of his apparel, Julian Avenel's manner and countenance had far more elevation than those of the attendants who surrounded him. He might be fifty or upwards, for his dark hair was mingled with gray, but age had neither tamed the fire of his eye nor the enterprise of his disposition. His countenance had been handsome, for beauty was an attribute of the family; but the lines were roughened by fatigue and exposure to the weather, and rendered coarse by the habitual indulgence of violent passions.

He seemed in deep and moody reflection, and was pacing at a distance from his dependents along the upper end of the hall, sometimes stopping from time to time to caress and feed a gos-hawk, which sat upon his wrist, with its jesses (*i. e.* the leathern straps fixed to its legs) wrapt around his hand. The bird, which seemed not insensible to its master's attention, answered his caresses by ruffling forward its feathers, and pecking playfully at his finger. At such intervals the Baron smiled, but instantly resumed the darksome air of sullen meditation. He did not even deign to look upon an object, which few could have passed and repassed so often without bestowing on it a transient glance.

This was a woman of exceeding beauty, rather gaily than richly attired, who sat on a low seat close by the huge hall chimney. The gold chains round her neck and arms,—the gay gown of green which swept the floor,—the silver embroidered girdle, with its bunch of keys, depending in house-wifely pride by a silver chain,—the yellow silken *couvrechef* (Scottice, *curch*) which was disposed around her head, and partly concealed her dark profusion of hair,—above all, the circumstance so delicately touched in the old ballad, that "the girdle was too short," the "gown of green all too strait," for the wearer's present shape, would have intimated the Baron's lady. But then the lowly seat,—the expression of deep melancholy, which was changed into a timid smile whenever she saw the least chance of catching the eye of Julian Avenel,—the subdued look of grief, and the starting tear for which that constrained smile was again exchanged when she saw herself entirely

disregarded,—these were not the attributes of a wife, or they were those of a dejected and afflicted female, who had yielded her love on less than legitimate terms.

Julian Avenel, as we have said, continued to pace the hall without paying any of that mute attention which is rendered to almost every female either by affection or courtesy. He seemed totally unconscious of her presence, or of that of his attendants, and was only roused from his own dark reflections by the notice he paid to the falcon, to which, however, the lady seemed to attend, as if studying to find either an opportunity of speaking to the Baron, or of finding something enigmatical in the expressions which he used to the bird. All this the strangers had time enough to remark; for no sooner had they entered the apartment than their usher, Christie of the Clinthill, after exchanging a significant glance with the menials or troopers at the lower end of the apartment, signed to Halbert Glendinning and to his companion to stand still near the door, while he himself, advancing nearer the table, placed himself in such a situation as to catch the Baron's observation when he should be disposed to look around, but without presuming to intrude himself on his master's notice. Indeed, the look of this man, naturally bold, hardy, and audacious, seemed totally changed when he was in presence of his master, and resembled the dejected and cowering manner of a quarrelsome dog when rebuked by his owner, or when he finds himself obliged to deprecate the violence of a superior adversary of his own species.

In spite of the novelty of his own situation, and every painful feeling connected with it, Halbert felt his curiosity interested in the female, who sat by the chimney unnoticed and unregarded. He marked with what keen and trembling solicitude she watched the broken words of Julian, and how her glance stole towards him, ready to be averted upon the slightest chance of his perceiving himself to be watched.

Meantime he went on with his dalliance with his feathered favourite, now giving, now withholding, the morsel with which he was about to feed the bird, and so exciting its appetite and gratifying it by turns. "What! more yet?—thou foul kite, thou wouldst never have done—give thee part thou wilt have all—Ay, prune thy feathers, and prink thyself gay—much thou wilt make of it now—dost think I know thee not?—dost think I see not that all that ruffling and pluming of wing and feathers is not for thy master, but to try what thou canst make of him, thou greedy gled?—well—there—take it then, and rejoice thyself—little boon goes far with thee, and with all thy sex—and so it should."

He ceased to look on the bird, and again traversed the apartment. Then taking another small piece of raw meat from the trencher, on which it was placed ready cut for his use, he began once again to tempt and tease the bird, by offering and withdrawing it, until he awakened its wild and bold disposition. "What! struggling, fluttering, aiming at me with beak and single? {Footnote: In the *kindly* language of hawking, as Lady Juliana Berners terms it, hawks' talons are called their *singles*.} So la! So la! wouldst mount? wouldst fly? the jesses are round thy clutches, fool—thou canst neither stir nor soar but by my will—Beware thou come to reclaim, wench, else I will wring thy head off one of these days—Well, have it then, and well fare thou with it.—So ho, Jenkin!" One of the attendants stepped forward—"Take the foul gled hence to the mew—or, stay; leave her, but look well to her casting and to her bathing—we will see her fly to-morrow.—How now, Christie, so soon returned?"

Christie advanced to his master, and gave an account of himself and his journey, in the way in which a police-officer holds communication with his magistrate, that is, as much by signs as by words.

"Noble sir," said that worthy satellite, "the Laird of—," he named no place, but pointed with his finger in a south-western direction,— "may not ride with you the day he purposed, because the Lord Warden has threatened that he will—"

Here another blank, intelligibly enough made up by the speaker touching his own neck with his left fore-finger, and leaning his head a little to one side.

"Cowardly caitiff!" said Julian; "by Heaven! the whole world turns sheer naught—it is not worth a brave man's living in—ye may ride a day and night, and never see a feather wave or hear a horse prance—the spirit of our fathers is dead amongst us—the very brutes are degenerated—the cattle we bring at our life's risk are mere carrion—our hawks are riflers {Footnote: So called when they only caught their prey by the feathers.}—our hounds are turnspits and trindle-tails—our men are women—and our women are—"

He looked at the female for the first time, and stopped short in the midst of what he was about to say, though there was something so contemptuous in the glance, that the blank might have been thus filled up—"Our women are such as she is."

He said it not, however, and as if desirous of attracting his attention at all risks, and in whatever manner, she rose and came forward to him, but with a timorousness ill-disguised by affected gaiety.—"Our women, Julian—what would you say of the women?"

"Nothing," answered Julian Avenel, "at least nothing but that they are kind-hearted wenches like thyself, Kate." The female coloured deeply, and returned to her seat.—"And what strangers hast thou brought with thee, Christie, that stand yonder like two stone statues?" said the Baron.

"The taller," answered Christie, "is, so please you, a young fellow called Halbert Glendinning, the eldest son of the old widow at Glendearg."

"What brings him here?" said the Baron; "hath he any message from Mary Avenel?"

"Not as I think," said Christie; "the youth is roving the country—he was always a wild slip, for I have known him since he was the height of my sword."

"What qualities hath he?" said the Baron.

"All manner of qualities," answered his follower—"he can strike a buck, track a deer, fly a hawk, halloo to a hound—he shoots in the long and crossbow to a hair's breadth—wields a lance or sword like myself nearly—backs a horse manfully and fairly—I wot not what more a man need to do to make him a gallant companion."

"And who," said the Baron, "is the old miser {Footnote: Miser, used in the sense in which it often occurs in Spenser, and which is indeed its literal import—"wretched old man."} who stands beside him?"

"Some cast of a priest as I fancy—he says he is charged with letters to you."

"Bid them come forward," said the Baron; and no sooner had they approached him more nearly, than, struck by the fine form and strength displayed by Halbert Glendinning, he addressed him thus: "I am told, young Swankie, that you are roaming the world to seek your fortune,—if you will serve Julian Avenel, you may find it without going farther."

"So please you," answered Glendinning, "something has chanced to me that makes it better I should leave this land, and I am bound for Edinburgh."

"What!—thou hast stricken some of the king's deer, I warrant,—or lightened the meadows of Saint Mary's of some of their beeves—or thou hast taken a moonlight leap over the border?"

"No, sir," said Halbert, "my case is entirely different."

"Then I warrant thee," said the Baron, "thou hast stabbed some brother churl in a fray about a wench—thou art a likely lad to wrangle in such a cause."

Ineffably disgusted at his tone and manner, Halbert Glendinning remained silent, while the thought darted across his mind, what would Julian Avenel have said, had he known the quarrel of which he spoke so lightly, had arisen on account of his own brother's daughter! "But be thy cause of flight what it will," said Julian, in continuation, "dost thou think the law or its emissaries can follow thee into this island, or arrest thee under the standard of Avenel?—Look at the depth of the lake, the strength of the walls, the length of the causeway—look at my men, and think if they are likely to see a comrade injured, or if I, their master, am a man to desert a faithful follower, in good or evil. I tell thee it shall be an eternal day of truce betwixt thee and justice, as they call it, from the instant thou hast put my colours into thy cap—thou shalt ride by the Warden's nose as thou wouldst pass an old market-woman, and ne'er a cur which follows him shall dare to bay at thee!"

"I thank you for your offers, noble sir," replied Halbert, "but I must answer in brief, that I cannot profit by them—my fortunes lead me elsewhere."

"Thou art a self-willed fool for thy pains," said Julian, turning from him; and signing Christie to approach, he whispered in his ear, "there is promise in that young fellow's looks, Christie, and we want men of limbs and sinews so compacted—those thou hast brought to me of late are the mere refuse of mankind, wretches scarce worth the arrow that ends them: this youngster is limbed like Saint George. Ply him with wine and wassail—let the wenches weave their meshes about him like spiders—thou understandest?" Christie gave a sagacious nod of intelligence, and fell back to a respectful distance from his master.—"And thou, old man," said the Baron, turning to the elder traveller, "hast thou been roaming the world after fortune too?—it seems not she has fallen into thy way."

"So please you," replied Warden, "I were perhaps more to be pitied than I am now, had I indeed met with that fortune, which, like others, I have sought in my greener days."

"Nay, understand me, friend," said the Baron; "if thou art satisfied with thy buckram gown and long staff, I also am well content thou shouldst be as poor and contemptible as is good for the health of thy body and soul—All I care to know of thee is, the cause which hath brought thee to my castle, where few crows of thy kind care to settle. Thou art, I warrant thee, some ejected monk of a suppressed convent, paying in his old days the price of the luxurious idleness in which he spent his youth.—Ay, or it may be some pilgrim with a budget of lies from Saint James of Compostella, or Our Lady of Loretto; or thou mayest be some pardoner with his budget of relics from Rome, forgiving sins at a penny a-dozen, and one to the tale.—Ay, I guess why I find thee in this boy's company, and doubtless thou wouldst have such a strapping lad as he to carry thy wallet, and relieve thy lazy shoulders; but by the mass I will cross thy cunning. I make my vow to sun and moon, I will not see a proper lad so mislead as to run the country with an old knave like Simmie and his brother. {Footnote: Two *quaestionarii*, or begging friars, whose accoutrements and roguery make the subject of an old Scottish satirical poem} Away with thee!" he added, rising in wrath, and speaking so fast as to give no opportunity of answer, being probably determined to terrify the elder guest into an abrupt flight—"Away with thee, with thy clouted coat, scrip, and scallop-shell, or, by the name of Avenel, I will have them loose the hounds on thee."

Warden waited with the greatest patience until Julian Avenel, astonished that the threats and violence of his language made no impression on him, paused in a sort of wonder, and said in a less imperious tone, "Why the fiend dost thou not answer me?"

"When you have done speaking," said Warden, in the same composed manner, "it will be full time to reply."

"Say on man, in the devil's name—but take heed—beg not here—were it but for the rinds of cheese, the refuse of the rats, or a morsel that my dogs would turn from—neither a grain of meal, nor the nineteenth part of a gray groat, will I give to any feigned limmer of thy coat."

"It may be," answered Warden, "that you would have less quarrel with my coat if you knew what it covers, I am neither a friar nor mendicant, and would be right glad to hear thy testimony against these foul deceivers of God's church, and usurpers of his rights over the Christian flock, were it given in Christian charity."

"And who or what art thou, then," said Avenel, "that thou comest to this Border land, and art neither monk, nor soldier, nor broken man?"

"I am an humble teacher of the holy word," answered Warden. "This letter from a most noble person will speak why I am here at this present time."

He delivered the letter to the Baron, who regarded the seal with some surprise, and then looked on the letter itself, which seemed to excite still more. He then fixed his eyes on the stranger, and said, in a menacing tone, "I think thou darest not betray me or deceive me?"

"I am not the man to attempt either," was the concise reply.

Julian Avenel carried the letter to the window, where he perused, or at least attempted to peruse it more than once, often looking from the paper and gazing on the stranger who had delivered it, as if he meant to read the purport of the missive in the face of the messenger. Julian at length called to the female,—"*Catherine*, bestir thee, and fetch me presently that letter which I bade thee keep ready at hand in thy casket, having no sure lockfast place of my own."

Catherine went with the readiness of one willing to be employed; and as she walked, the situation which requires a wider gown and a longer girdle, and in which woman claims from man a double portion of the most anxious care, was still more visible than before. She soon returned with the paper, and was rewarded with a cold—"I thank thee, wench; thou art a careful secretary."

This second paper he also perused and reperused more than once, and still, as he read it, bent from time to time a wary and observant eye upon Henry Warden. This examination and re-examination, though both the man and the place were dangerous, the preacher endured with the most composed and steady countenance, seeming, under the eagle, or rather the vulture eye of the baron, as unmoved as under the gaze of an ordinary and peaceful peasant. At length Julian Avenel folded both papers, and having put them into the pocket of his cloak, cleared his brow, and, coming forward, addressed his female companion. "Catherine," said he, "I have done this good man injustice, when I mistook him for one of the drones of Rome. He is a preacher, Catherine—a preacher of the—the new doctrine of the Lords of the Congregation."

"The doctrine of the blessed Scriptures," said the preacher, "purified from the devices of men."

"Sayest thou?" said Julian Avenel—"Well, thou mayest call it what thou lists; but to me it is recommended, because it flings off all those sottish dreams about saints and angels and devils, and unhorses lazy monks that have ridden us so long, and spur-galled us so hard. No more masses and corpse-gifts—no more tithes and offerings to make men poor—no more prayers or psalms to make men cowards—no more christenings and penances, and confessions and marriages."

"So please you," said Henry Warden, "it is against the corruptions, not against the fundamental doctrines, of the church, which we desire to renovate, and not to abolish."

"Prithee, peace, man," said the Baron; "we of the laity care not what you set up, so you pull merrily down what stands in our way. Specially it suits well with us of the Southland fells; for it is our profession to turn the world upside down, and we live ever the blithest life when the downer side is uppermost."

Warden would have replied; but the Baron allowed him not time, striking the table with the hilt of his dagger, and crying out,—"*Ha!* you loitering knaves, bring our supper-meal quickly. See you not this holy man is exhausted for lack of food? heard ye ever of priest or preacher that devoured not his five meals a-day?"

The attendants bustled to and fro, and speedily brought in several large smoking platters filled with huge pieces of beef, boiled and roasted, but without any variety whatsoever; without vegetables, and almost without bread, though there was at the upper end a few oat-cakes in a basket. Julian Avenel made a sort of apology to Warden.

"You have been commended to our care, Sir Preacher, since that is your style, by a person whom we highly honour."

"I am assured," said Warden, "that the most noble Lord—"

"Prithee, peace, man," said Avenel; "what need of naming names, so we understand each other? I meant but to speak in reference to your safety and comfort, of which he desires us to be chary. Now, for your safety, look at my walls and water. But touching your comfort, we have no corn of our own, and the meal-girnels of the south are less easily transported than their beeves, seeing they have no legs to walk upon. But what though? a stoup of wine thou shalt have, and of the best—thou shalt sit betwixt Catherine and me at the board-end.—And, Christie, do thou look to the young springald, and call to the cellarer for a flagon of the best."

The Baron took his wonted place at the upper end of the board; his Catherine sate down, and courteously pointed to a seat betwixt them for their reverend guest. But notwithstanding the influence both of hunger and fatigue, Henry Warden retained his standing posture.

Chapter the Twenty-Fifth.

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray—

Julian Avenel saw with surprise the demeanour of the reverend stranger. "Beshrew me," he said, "these new-fashioned religioners have fast-days, I warrant me—the old ones used to confer these blessings chiefly on the laity."

"We acknowledge no such rule," said the preacher—"We hold that our faith consists not in using or abstaining from special meats on special days; and in fasting we rend our hearts, and not our garments."

"The better—the better for yourselves, and the worse for Tom Tailor," said the Baron; "but come, sit down, or, if thou needs must e'en give us a cast of thy office, mutter thy charm."

"Sir Baron," said the preacher, "I am in a strange land, where neither mine office nor my doctrine are known, and where, it would seem, both are greatly misunderstood. It is my duty so to bear me, that in my person, however unworthy, my Master's dignity may be respected, and that sin may take not confidence from relaxation of the bonds of discipline."

"Ho la! halt there," said the Baron; "thou wert sent hither for thy safety, but not, I think, to preach to me, or control me. What is it thou wouldst have, Sir Preacher? Remember thou speakest to one somewhat short of patience, who loves a short health and a long draught."

"In a word, then," said Henry Warden, "that lady—"

"How?" said the Baron, starting—"what of her?—what hast thou to say of that dame?"

"Is she thy house-dame?" said the preacher, after a moment's pause, in which, he seemed to seek for the best mode of expressing what he had to say—"Is she, in brief, thy wife?"

The unfortunate young woman pressed both her hands on her face, as if to hide it, but the deep blush which crimsoned her brow and neck, showed that her cheeks were also glowing; and the bursting tears, which found their way betwixt her slender fingers, bore witness to her sorrow, as well as to her shame.

"Now, by my father's ashes!" said the Baron, rising and spurning from him his footstool with such violence, that it hit the wall on the opposite side of the apartment—then instantly constraining himself, he muttered, "What need to run myself into trouble for a fool's word?"—then resuming his seat, he answered coldly and scornfully—"No, Sir Priest or Sir Preacher, Catherine is not my wife—Cease thy whimpering, thou foolish wench—she is not my wife, but she is handfasted with me, and that makes her as honest a woman."

"Handfasted?"—repeated Warden.

"Knowest thou not that rite, holy man?" said Avenel, in the same tone of derision; "then I will tell thee. We Border-men are more wary than your inland clowns of Fife and Lothian—no jump in the dark for us—no clenching the fetters around our wrists till we know how they will wear with us—we take our wives, like our horses, upon trial. When we are handfasted, as we term it, we are man and wife for a year and day—that space gone by, each may choose another mate, or, at their pleasure, may call the priest to marry them for life—and this we call handfasting." {Footnote: This custom of handfasting actually prevailed in the upland days. It arose partly from the want of priests. While the convents subsisted, monks were detached on regular circuits through the wilder districts, to marry those who had lived in this species of connexion. A practice of the same kind existed in the Isle of Portland.}

"Then," said the preacher, "I tell thee, noble Baron, in brotherly love to thy soul, it is a custom licentious, gross, and corrupted, and, if persisted in, dangerous, yea, damnable. It binds thee to the frailty being while she is the object of desire—it relieves thee when she is most the subject of pity—it gives all to brutal sense, and nothing to generous and gentle affection. I say to thee, that he who can meditate the breach of such an engagement, abandoning the deluded woman and the helpless offspring, is worse than the birds of prey; for of them the males remain with their mates until the nestlings can take wing. Above all, I say it is contrary to the pure Christian doctrine, which assigns woman to man as the partner of his labour, the soother of his evil, his helpmate in peril, his friend in affliction; not as the toy of his looser hours, or as a flower, which, once cropped, he may throw aside at pleasure."

"Now, by the Saints, a most virtuous homily!" said the Baron; "quaintly conceived and curiously pronounced, and to a well-chosen congregation. Hark ye, Sir Gospeller! trow ye to have a fool in hand? Know I not that your sect rose by bluff Harry Tudor, merely because ye aided him to change *his* Kate; and wherefore should I not use the same Christian liberty with *mine*? Tush, man! bless the good food, and meddle not with what concerns thee not—thou hast no gull in Julian Avenel."

"He hath gulled and cheated himself," said the preacher, "should he even incline to do that poor sharer of his domestic cares the imperfect justice that remains to him. Can he now raise her to the rank of a pure and uncontaminated matron?—Can he deprive his child of the misery of owing birth to a mother who has erred? He can indeed give them both the rank, the state of married wife and of lawful son; but, in public opinion, their names will be smirched and sullied with a stain which his tardy efforts cannot entirely efface. Yet render it to them, Baron of Avenel, render to them this late and imperfect justice. Bid me bind you together for ever, and celebrate the day of your bridal, not with feasting or wassail, but with sorrow for past sin, and the resolution to commence a better life. Happy then will have the chance been that has drawn me to this castle, though I come driven by calamity, and unknowing where my course is bound, like a leaf travelling on the north wind."

The plain, and even coarse features, of the zealous speaker, were warmed at once and ennobled by the dignity of his enthusiasm; and the wild Baron, lawless as he was, and accustomed to spurn at the control whether of religious or moral law, felt, for the first time perhaps in his life, that he was under subjection to a mind superior to his own. He sat mute and suspended in his deliberations, hesitating betwixt anger and shame, yet borne down by the weight of the just rebuke thus boldly fulminated against him.

The unfortunate young woman, conceiving hopes from her tyrant's silence and apparent indecision, forgot both her fear and shame in her timid expectation that Avenel would relent; and fixing upon him her anxious and beseeching eyes, gradually drew near and nearer to his seat, till at length, laying a trembling hand on his cloak, she ventured to utter, "O noble Julian, listen to the good man!"

The speech and the motion were ill-timed, and wrought on that proud and wayward spirit the reverse of her wishes.

The fierce Baron started up in a fury, exclaiming, "What! thou foolish callet, art thou confederate with this strolling vagabond, whom thou hast seen beard me in my own hall! Hence with thee, and think that I am proof both to male and female hypocrisy!"

The poor girl started back, astounded at his voice of thunder and looks of fury, and, turning pale as death, endeavoured to obey his orders, and tottered towards the door. Her limbs failed in the attempt, and she fell on the stone floor in a manner which her situation might have rendered fatal—The blood gushed from her face.—Halbert Glendinning brooked not a sight so brutal, but, uttering a deep imprecation, started from his seat, and laid his hand on his sword, under the strong impulse of passing it through the body of the cruel and hard-hearted ruffian. But Christie of the Clinthill, guessing his intention, threw his arms around him, and prevented him from stirring to execute his purpose.

The impulse to such an act of violence was indeed but momentary, as it instantly appeared that Avenel himself, shocked at the effects of his violence, was lifting up and endeavouring to soothe in his own way the terrified Catherine.

"Peace," he said, "prithee, peace, thou silly minion—why, Kate, though I listen not to this tramping preacher, I said not what might happen an thou dost bear me a stout boy. There—there—dry thy tears—Call thy women.—So ho!—where be these queans?—Christie—Rowley—Hutcheon—drag them hither by the hair of the head!"

A half dozen of startled wild-looking females rushed into the room, and bore out her who might be either termed their mistress or their companion. She showed little sign of life, except by groaning faintly and keeping her hand on her side.

No sooner had this luckless female been conveyed from the apartment, than the Baron, advancing to the table, filled and drank a deep goblet of wine; then, putting an obvious restraint on his passions, turned to the preacher, who stood horror-struck at the scene he had witnessed, and said, "You have borne too hard on us, Sir Preacher—but coming with the commendations which you have brought me, I doubt not but your meaning was good. But we are a wilder folk than you inland men of Fife and Lothian. Be advised, therefore, by me—Spur not an unbroken horse—put not your ploughshare too deep into new land—Preach to us spiritual liberty, and we will hearken to you.—But we will give no way to spiritual bondage.—Sit, therefore, down, and pledge me in old sack, and we will talk over these matters."

"It is *from* spiritual bondage," said the preacher, in the same tone of admonitory reproof, "that I came to deliver you—it is from a bondage more fearful than that of the heaviest earthly gyves—it is from your own evil passions."

"Sit down," said Avenel, fiercely; "sit down while the play is good—else by my father's crest and my mother's honour!—"

"Now," whispered Christie of the Clinthill to Halbert, "if he refuse to sit down, I would not give a gray groat for his head."

"Lord Baron," said Warden, "thou hast placed me in extremity. But if the question be, whether I am to hide the light which I am commanded to show forth, or to lose the light of this world, my choice is made. I say to thee, like the Holy Baptist to Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have this woman; and I say it though bonds and death be the consequence, counting my life as nothing in comparison of the ministry to which I am called."

Julian Avenel, enraged at the firmness of this reply, flung from his right hand the cup in which he was about to drink to his guest, and from the other cast off the hawk, which flew wildly through the apartment. His first motion was to lay hand upon his dagger. But, changing his resolution, he exclaimed, "To the dungeon with this insolent stroller!—I will hear no man speak a word for him——Look to the falcon, Christie, thou fool—an she escape, I will despatch you after her every man—Away with that hypocritical dreamer—drag him hence if he resist!"

He was obeyed in both points. Christie of the Clinthill arrested the hawk's flight, by putting his foot on her jesses, and so holding her fast, while Henry Warden was led off, without having shown the slightest symptoms of terror, by two of the Baron's satellites. Julian Avenel walked the apartment for a short time in sullen silence, and despatching one of his attendants with a whispered message, which probably related to the health of the unfortunate Catherine, he said aloud, "These rash and meddling priests—By Heaven! they make us worse than we would be without them."

{Footnote: If it were necessary to name a prototype for this brutal, licentious and cruel Border chief, in an age which showed but too many such, the Laird of Black Ormiston might be selected for that purpose. He was a friend and confidant of Bothwell, and an agent in Henry Darnley's murder. At his last stage, he was, like other great offenders, a seeming penitent; and, as his confession bears, divers gentlemen and servants being in the chamber, he said, "For God's sake, sit down and pray for me, for I have been a great sinner otherwise," (that is, besides his share in Darnley's death,) "for the which God is this day punishing me; for of all men on the earth, I have been one of the proudest, and most high-minded, and most unclean of my body. But specially I have shed the innocent blood of one Michael Hunter with my own hands. Alas, therefore! because the said Michael, having me lying on my back, having a fork in his hand, might have slain me if he had pleased, and did it not, which of all things grieves me most in conscience. Also, in a rage, I hanged a poor man for a horse;—with many other wicked deeds, for whilk I ask my God mercy. It is not marvel I have been wicked, considering the wicked company that ever I have been in, but specially within the seven years by-past, in which I never saw two good men or one good deed, but all kind of wickedness, and yet God would not suffer me to be lost."—See the whole confession in the State Trials.

Another worthy of the Borders, called Geordy Bourne, of somewhat subordinate rank, was a similar picture of profligacy. He had fallen into the hands of Sir Robert Carey, then Warden of the English East Marches, who gives the following account of his prisoner's confession:—

"When all things were quiet, and the watch set at night, after supper, about ten of the clock, I took one of my men's liveries, and put it about me, and took two other of my servants with me in their liveries; and we three, as the Warden's men, came to the Provost Marshal's where Bourne was, and were let into his chamber. We sate down by him, and told him that we were desirous to see him, because we heard he was stout and valiant, and true to his friend, and that we were sorry our master could not be moved to save his life. He voluntarily of himself said, that he had lived long enough to do so many villanies as he had done; and withal told us, that he had lain with above forty men's wives, what in England what in Scotland; and that he had killed seven Englishmen with his own hands, cruelly murdering them; and that he had spent his whole time in whoring, drinking, stealing, and taking deep revenge for slight offences. He seemed to be very penitent, and much desired a minister for the comfort of his soul. We promised him to let our master know his desire, who, we knew would promptly grant it. We took leave of him; and presently I took order that Mr Selby, a very honest preacher, should go to him, and not stir from him till his execution the next morning; for after I had heard his own confession, I was resolved no conditions should save his life, and so took order, that at the gates opening the next morning, he should be carried to execution, which accordingly was performed."—*Memoirs of Sir Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth.*}

The answer which he presently received seemed somewhat to pacify his angry mood, and he took his place at the board, commanding his retinue to the like. All sat down in silence, and began the repast.

During the meal Christie in vain attempted to engage his youthful companion in carousal, or, at least, in conversation. Halbert Glendinning pleaded fatigue, and expressed himself unwilling to take any liquor stronger than the heather ale, which was at that time frequently used at meals. Thus every effort at jovialty died away, until the Baron, striking his hand against the table, as if impatient of the long unbroken silence, cried out aloud, "What, ho! my masters—are ye Border-riders, and sit as mute over your meal as a mess of monks and friars?—Some one sing, if no one list to speak. Much eaten without either mirth or music is ill of digestion.—Louis," he added, speaking to one of the youngest of his followers, "thou art ready enough to sing when no one bids thee."

The young man looked first at his master, then up to the arched roof of the hall, then drank off the horn of ale, or wine, which stood beside him, and with a rough, yet not unmelodious voice, sung the following ditty to the ancient air of "Blue bonnets over the Border."

I.

March, march, Ettrick and Teviotdale,
Why the deil dinna ye march forward in order?
March, march, Eskdale and Liddesdale,
All the Blue Bonnets are bound for the Border
Many a banner spread,
Flutters above your head,
Many a crest that is famous in story;
Mount and make ready then,
Sons of the mountain glen,
Fight for the Queen and the old Scottish glory!

II.

Come from the hills where the hirsels are grazing,
Come from the glen of the buck and the roe;
Come to the crag where the beacon is blazing,
Come with the buckler, the lance, and the bow.
Trumpets are sounding,
War-steeds are bounding,
Stand to your arms then, and march in good order;
England shall many a day
Tell of the bloody fray,
When the Blue Bonnets came over the Border!

The song, rude as it was, had in it that warlike character which at any other time would have roused Halbert's spirit; but at present the charm of minstrelsy had no effect upon him. He made it his request to Christie to suffer him to retire to rest, a request with which that worthy person, seeing no chance of making a favourable impression on his intended proselyte in his present humour, was at length pleased to comply. But no Sergeant Kite, who ever practised the profession of recruiting, was more attentive that his object should not escape him, than was Christie of the Clinthill. He indeed conducted Halbert Glendinning to a small apartment overlooking the lake, which was accommodated with a truckle bed. But before quitting him, Christie took special care to give a look to the bars which crossed the outside of the window, and when he left the apartment, he failed not to give the key a double turn; circumstances which convinced young Glendinning that there was no intention of suffering him to depart from the Castle of Avenel at his own time and pleasure. He judged it, however, most prudent to let these alarming symptoms pass without observation.

No sooner did he find himself in undisturbed solitude, than he ran rapidly over the events of the day in his recollection, and to his surprise found that his own precarious fate, and even the death of Piercie Shafton, made less impression on him than the singularly bold and determined conduct of his companion, Henry Warden. Providence, which suits its instruments to the end they are to achieve, had awakened in the cause of Reformation in Scotland, a body of preachers of more energy than refinement, bold in spirit, and strong in faith, contemners of whatever stood betwixt them and their principal object, and seeking the advancement of the great cause in which they laboured by the roughest road, provided it were the shortest. The soft breeze may wave the willow, but it requires the voice of the tempest to agitate the boughs of the oak; and, accordingly, to milder hearers, and in a less rude age, their manners would have been ill-adapted, but they were singularly successful in their mission to the rude people to whom it was addressed.

Owing to these reasons, Halbert Glendinning, who had resisted and repelled the arguments of the preacher, was forcibly struck by the firmness of his demeanour in the dispute with Julian Avenel. It might be discourteous, and most certainly it was incautious, to choose such a place and such an audience, for upbraiding with his transgressions a baron, whom both manners and situation placed in full possession of independent power. But the conduct of the preacher was uncompromising, firm, manly, and obviously grounded upon the deepest conviction which duty and principle could afford; and Glendinning, who had viewed the conduct of Avenel with the deepest abhorrence, was proportionally interested in the brave old man, who had ventured life rather than withhold the censure due to guilt. This pitch of virtue seemed to him to be in religion what was demanded by chivalry of her votaries in war; an absolute surrender of all selfish feelings, and a combination of every energy proper to the human mind, to discharge the task which duty demanded.

Halbert was at the period when youth was most open to generous emotions, and knows best how to appreciate them in others, and he felt, although he hardly knew why, that, whether catholic or heretic, the safety of this man deeply interested him. Curiosity mingled with the feeling, and led him to wonder what the nature of those doctrines could be, which stole their votary so completely from himself, and devoted him to chains or to death as their sworn champion. He had indeed been told of saints and martyrs of former days, who had braved for their religious faith the extremity of death and torture. But their spirit of enthusiastic devotion had long slept in the ease and indolent habits of their successors, and their adventures, like those of knights-errant, were rather read for amusement than for edification. A new impulse had been necessary to rekindle the energies of religious zeal, and that impulse was now operating in favour of a purer religion, with one of whose steadiest votaries the youth had now met for the first time.

The sense that he himself was a prisoner, under the power of this savage chieftain, by no means diminished Halbert's interest in the fate of his fellow sufferer, while he determined at the same time so far to emulate his fortitude, that neither threats nor suffering should compel him to enter into the service of such a master. The possibility of escape next occurred to him, and though with little hope of effecting it in that way, Glendinning proceeded to examine more particularly the window of the apartment. The apartment was situated in the first story of the castle; and was not so far from the rock, on which it was founded, but that an active and bold man might with little assistance descend to a shelf of rock which was immediately below the window, and from thence either leap or drop himself down into the lake which lay before his eye, clear and blue in the placid light of a full summer's moon.—"Were I once placed on that ledge," thought Glendinning, "Julian Avenel and Christie had seen the last of me." The size of the window favoured such an attempt, but the stanchions or iron bars seemed to form an insurmountable obstacle.

While Halbert Glendinning gazed from the window with that eagerness of hope which was prompted by the energy of his character and his determination not to yield to circumstances, his ear caught some sounds from below, and listening with more attention, he could distinguish the voice of the preacher engaged in his solitary devotions. To open a correspondence with him became immediately his object, and failing to do so by less marked sounds, he at length ventured to speak, and was answered from beneath—"Is it thou, my son?" The voice of the prisoner now sounded more distinctly than when it was first heard, for Warden had approached the small aperture, which, serving his prison for a window, opened just betwixt the wall and the rock, and admitted a scanty portion of light through a wall of immense thickness. This *soupirait* being placed exactly under Halbert's window, the contiguity permitted the prisoners to converse in a low tone, when Halbert declared his intention to escape, and the possibility he saw of achieving his purpose, but for the iron stanchions of the window—"Prove thy strength, my son, in the name of God" said the preacher. Halbert obeyed him more in despair than hope, but to his great astonishment, and somewhat to his terror, the bar parted asunder near the bottom, and the longer part being easily bent outwards, and not secured with lead in the upper socket, dropt out into Halbert's hand. He immediately whispered, but as energetically as a whisper could be expressed—"By Heaven, the bar has given way in my hand!"

"Thank Heaven, my son, instead of swearing by it," answered Warden from his dungeon.

With little effort Halbert Glendinning forced himself through the opening thus wonderfully effected, and using his leathern sword-belt as a rope to assist him, let himself safely drop on the shelf of rock upon which the preacher's window opened. But through this no passage could be effected, being scarce larger than a loop-hole for musketry, and apparently constructed for that purpose.

"Are there no means by which I can assist your escape, my father?" said Halbert.

"There are none, my son," answered the preacher; "but if thou wilt ensure my safety, that may be in thy power."

"I will labour earnestly for it," said the youth.

"Take then a letter which I will presently write, for I have the means of light and writing materials in my scrip—Hasten towards Edinburgh, and on the way thou wilt meet a body of horse marching southwards—Give this to their leader, and acquaint him of the state in which thou hast left me. It may hap that thy doing so will advantage thyself."

In a minute or two the light of a taper gleamed through the shot-hole, and very shortly after, the preacher, with the assistance of his staff, pushed a billet to Glendinning through the window.

"God bless thee, my son," said the old man, "and complete the marvellous work which he has begun."

"Amen!" answered Halbert, with solemnity, and proceeded on his enterprise.

He hesitated a moment whether he should attempt to descend to the edge of the water; but the steepness of the rock, and darkness of the night, rendered the enterprise too dangerous. He clasped his hands above his head and boldly sprung from the precipice, shooting himself forward into the air as far as he could for fear of sunken rocks, and alighted on the lake, head foremost, with such force as sunk him for a minute below the surface. But strong, long-breathed, and accustomed to such exercise, Halbert, even though encumbered with his sword, dived and rose like a seafowl, and swam across the lake in the northern direction. When he landed and looked back on the castle, he could observe that the alarm had been given, for lights glanced from window to window, and he heard the drawbridge lowered, and the tread of horses' feet upon the causeway. But, little alarmed for the consequence of a pursuit during the darkness, he wrung the water from his dress, and, plunging into the moors, directed his course to the north-east by the assistance of the polar star.

Chapter the Twenty-Sixth.

Why, what an intricate impeach is this!

I think you all have drank of Circe's cup.

If here you housed him, here he would have been;

If he were mad, he would not plead so coldly.

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

The course of our story, leaving for the present Halbert Glendinning to the guidance of his courage and his fortune, returns to the Tower of Glendearg, where matters in the meanwhile fell out, with which it is most fitting that the reader should be acquainted.

The meal was prepared at noontide with all the care which Elspeth and Tibb, assisted by the various accommodations which had been supplied from the Monastery, could bestow on it. Their dialogue ran on as usual in the intervals of their labour, partly as between mistress and servant, partly as maintained by gossips of nearly equal quality.

"Look to the minced meat, Tibb," said Elspeth; "and turn the broach even, thou good-for-nothing Simmie,—thy wits are harrying birds' nests, child.—Weel, Tibb, this is a fasheous job, this Sir Piercie lying leaguer with us up here, and wha kens for how lang?"

"A fasheous job indeed," answered her faithful attendant, "and little good did the name ever bring to fair Scotland. Ye may have your hands fuller of them than they are yet. Mony a sair heart have the Piercies given to Scots wife and bairns with their pricking on the Borders. There was Hotspur and many more of that bloody kindred, have sate in our skirts since Malcolm's time, as Martin says!"

"Martin should keep a well-scrapit tongue in his head," said Elspeth, "and not slander the kin of any body that quarters at Glendearg; forby, that Sir Piercie Shafton is much respected with the holy fathers of the community, and they will make up to us ony fasherie that we may have with him, either by good word or good deed, I'll warrant them. He is a considerate lord the Lord Abbot."

"And weel he likes a saft seat to his hinder end," said Tibb; "I have seen a belted baron sit on a bare bench, and find nae fault. But an ye are pleased, mistress, I am pleased."

"Now, in good time, here comes Mysie of the Mill.—And where hae ye been, lass for a's gane wrang without you?" said Elspeth.

"I just gaed a blink up the burn," said Mysie, "for the young lady has been down on her bed, and is no just that weel—So I gaed a gliff up the burn."

"To see the young lads come hame frae the sport, I will warrant you," said Elspeth. "Ay, ay, Tibb, that's the way the young folk guide us, Tibbie—leave us to do the wark, and out to the play themselfs."

"Ne'er a bit of that, mistress," said the Maid of the Mill, stripping her round pretty arms, and looking actively and good-humouredly round for some duty that she could discharge, "but just—I thought ye might like to ken if they were coming back, just to get the dinner forward."

"And saw ye ought of them then?" demanded Elspeth.

"Not the least tokening," said Mysie, "though I got to the head of a knowe, and though the English knight's beautiful white feather could have been seen over all the bushes in the Shaw."

"The knight's white feather!" said Dame Glendinning; "ye are a silly hempie—my Halbert's high head will be seen farther than his feather, let it be as white as it like, I trow."

Mysie made no answer, but began to knead dough for wastel-cake with all despatch, observing that Sir Piercie had partaken of that dainty, and commended it upon the preceding day. And presently, in order to place on the fire the *girdle*, or iron plate on which these cakes were to be baked, she displaced a stew-pan in which one of Tibb's delicacies were submitted to the action of the kitchen fire. Tibb muttered betwixt her teeth—"And it is the broth for my sick bairn, that maun make room for the dainty Southron's wastel-bread. It was a blithe time in Wight Wallace's day, or good King Robert's, when the pock-puddings gat naething here but hard straits and bloody crowns. But we will see how it will a' end."

Elspeth did not think it proper to notice these discontented expressions of Tibbie, but they sunk into her mind; for she was apt to consider her as a sort of authority in matters of war and policy, with which her former experience as bower-woman at Avenel Castle made her better acquainted than were the peaceful inhabitants of Halidome. She only spoke, however, to express her surprise that the hunters did not return.

"An they come not back the sooner," said Tibb, "they will fare the waur, for the meat will be roasted to a cinder—and there is poor Simmie that can turn the spit nae langer: the bairn is melting like an icicle in warm water—Gang awa, bairn, and take a mouthful of the caller air, and I will turn the broach till ye come back."

"Rin up to the bartizan at the tower-head, callant," said Dame Glendinning, "the air will be callerer there than ony gate else, and bring us word if our Halbert and the gentleman are coming down the glen."

The boy lingered long enough to allow his substitute, Tibb Tacket, heartily to tire of her own generosity, and of his cricket-stool by the side of a huge fire. He at length returned with the news that he had seen nobody. The matter was not so remarkable as far as Halbert Glendinning was concerned, for, patient alike of want and of fatigue, it was no uncommon circumstance for him to remain in the wilds till curfew time. But nobody had given Sir Piercie Shafton credit for being so keen a sportsman, and the idea of an Englishman preferring the chase to his dinner was altogether inconsistent with their preconceptions of the national character. Amidst wondering and conjecturing, the usual dinner-hour passed long away; and the inmates of the tower, taking a hasty meal themselves, adjourned their more solemn preparations until the hunters' return at night, since it seemed now certain that their sport had either carried them to a greater distance, or engaged them for a longer time than had been expected.

About four hours after noon, arrived, not the expected sportsmen, but an unlooked for visitant, the Sub-Prior from the Monastery. The scene of the preceding day had dwelt on the mind of Father Eustace, who was of that keen and penetrating cast of mind which loves not to leave unascertained whatever of mysterious is subjected to its inquiry. His kindness was interested in the family of Glendearg, which he had now known for a long time; and besides, the community was interested in the preservation of the peace betwixt Sir Piercie Shafton and his youthful host, since whatever might draw public attention on the former, could not fail to be prejudicial to the Monastery, which was already threatened by the hand of power. He found the family assembled, all but Mary Avenel, and was informed that Halbert Glendinning had accompanied the stranger on a day's sport. So far was well. They had not returned; but when did youth and sport conceive themselves bound by set hours? and the circumstance excited no alarm in his mind.

While he was conversing with Edward Glendinning touching his progress in the studies he had pointed out to him, they were startled by a shriek from Mary Avenel's apartment, which drew the whole family thither in headlong haste. They found her in a swoon in the arms of old Martin, who was bitterly accusing himself of having killed her; so indeed it seemed, for her pale features and closed eyes argued rather a dead corpse than a living person. The whole family were instantly in tumult. Snatching her from Martin's arms with the eagerness of affectionate terror, Edward bore her to the casement, that she might receive the influence of the open air; the Sub-Prior, who, like many of his profession, had some knowledge of medicine, hastened to prescribe the readiest remedies which occurred to him, and the terrified females contended with, and impeded each other, in their rival efforts to be useful.

"It has been ane of her weary ghaists," said Dame Glendinning.

"It's just a trembling on her spirits, as her blessed mother used to have," said Tibb.

"It's some ill news has come ower her," said the miller's maiden; while burnt feathers, cold water, and all the usual means of restoring suspended animation, were employed alternately, and with little effect.

At length a new assistant, who had joined the group unobserved, tendered his aid in the following terms:—"How is this, my most fair Discretion? What cause hath moved the ruby current of life to rush back to the citadel of the heart, leaving pale those features in which it should have delighted to meander for ever?—Let me approach her," he said,—"with this sovereign essence, distilled by the fair hands of the divine Urania, and powerful to recall fugitive life, even if it were trembling on the verge of departure."

Thus speaking, Sir Piercie Shafton knelt down, and most gracefully presented to the nostrils of Mary Avenel a silver pouncet-box, exquisitely chased, containing a sponge dipt in the essence which he recommended so highly. Yes, gentle reader, it was Sir Piercie Shafton himself who thus unexpectedly proffered his good offices! his cheeks, indeed, very pale, and some part of his dress stained with blood, but not otherwise appearing different from what he was on the preceding evening. But no sooner had Mary Avenel opened her eyes, and fixed them on the figure of the officious courtier, than she screamed faintly, and exclaimed,—
"Secure the murderer!"

Those present stood aghast with astonishment, and none more so than the Euphuist, who found himself so suddenly and so strangely accused by the patient whom he was endeavouring to succour, and who repelled his attempts to yield her assistance with all the energy of abhorrence. "Take him away!" she exclaimed—"take away the murderer!"

"Now, by my knighthood," answered Sir Piercie, "your lovely faculties either of mind or body are, O my most fair Discretion, obnubilated by some strange hallucination. For either your eyes do not discern that it is Piercie Shafton, your most devoted Affability, who now stands before you, or else, your eyes discerning truly, your mind hath most erroneously concluded that he hath been guilty of some delict or violence to which his hand is a stranger. No murder, O most scornful Discretion, hath been this day done, saving but that which your angry glances are now performing on your most devoted captive."

He was here interrupted by the Sub-Prior, who had, in the meantime, been speaking with Martin apart, and had received from him an account of the circumstances, which, suddenly communicated to Mary Avenel, had thrown her into this state. "Sir Knight," said the Sub-Prior, in a very solemn tone, yet with some hesitation, "circumstances have been communicated to us of a nature so extraordinary, that, reluctant as I am to exercise such authority over a guest of our venerable community, I am constrained to request from you an explanation of them. You left this tower early in the morning, accompanied by a youth, Halbert Glendinning, the eldest son of this good dame, and you return hither without him. Where, and at what hour, did you part company from him?"

The English knight paused for a moment, and then replied,—"I marvel that your reverence employs so grave a tone to enforce so light a question. I parted with the villagio whom you call Halbert Glendinning some hour or twain after sunrise."

"And at what place, I pray you?" said the monk.

"In a deep ravine, where a fountain rises at the base of a huge rock; an earth-born Titan, which heaveth up its gray head, even as—"

"Spare us farther description," said the Sub-Prior; "we know the spot. But that youth hath not since been heard of, and it will fall on you to account for him."

"My bairn! my bairn!" exclaimed Dame Glendinning. "Yes, holy father, make the villain account for my bairn!"

"I swear, good woman, by bread and by water,—which are the props of our life—"

"Swear by wine and wastel-bread, for these are the props of *thy* life, thou greedy Southron!" said Dame Glendinning;—"a base belly-god, to come here to eat the best, and practise on our lives that give it to him!"

"I tell thee, woman," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "I did but go with thy son to the hunting."

"A black hunting it has been to him, poor bairn," replied Tibb; "and sae I said it wad prove since I first saw the false Southron snout of thee. Little good comes of a Piercie's hunting, from Chevy Chase till now."

"Be silent, woman," said the Sub-Prior, "and rail not upon the English knight; we do not yet know of any thing beyond suspicion."

"We will have his heart's blood!" said Dame Glendinning; and, seconded by the faithful Tibbie, she made such a sudden onslaught on the unlucky Euphuist, as must have terminated in something serious, had not the monk, aided by Mysie Happer, interposed to protect him from their fury. Edward had left the apartment the instant the disturbance broke out, and now entered, sword in hand, followed by Martin and Jasper, the one having a hunting spear in his hand, the other a cross-bow.

"Keep the door," he said to his two attendants; "shoot him or stab him without mercy, should he attempt to break forth; if he offers an escape, by Heaven he shall die!"

"How now, Edward," said the Sub-Prior; "how is this that you so far forget yourself? meditating violence to a guest, and in my presence, who represent your liege lord?"

Edward stepped forward with his drawn sword in his hand. "Pardon me, reverend father," he said, "but in this matter the voice of nature speaks louder and stronger than yours. I turn my sword's point against this proud man, and I demand of him the blood of my brother—the blood of my father's son—of the heir of our name! If he denies to give me a true account of him, he shall not deny me vengeance."

Embarrassed as he was, Sir Piercie Shafton showed no personal fear. "Put up thy sword," he said, "young man; not in the same day does Piercie Shafton contend with two peasants."

"Hear him! he confesses the deed, holy father," said Edward.

"Be patient, my son," said the Sub-Prior, endeavouring to soothe the feelings which he could not otherwise control, "be patient—thou wilt attain the ends of justice better through my means than thine own violence—And you, women, be silent—Tibb, remove your mistress and Mary Avenel."

While Tibb, with the assistance of the other females of the household, bore the poor mother and Mary Avenel into separate apartments, and while Edward, still keeping his sword in his hand, hastily traversed the room, as if to prevent the possibility of Sir Piercie Shafton's escape, the Sub-Prior insisted upon knowing from the perplexed knight the particulars which he knew respecting Halbert Glendinning. His situation became extremely embarrassing, for what he might with safety have told of the issue of their combat was so revolting to his pride, that he could not bring himself to enter into the detail; and of Halbert's actual fate he knew, as the reader is well aware, absolutely nothing.

The father in the meanwhile pressed him with remonstrances, and prayed him to observe, he would greatly prejudice himself by declining to give a full account of the transactions of the day. "You cannot deny," he said, "that yesterday you seemed to take the most violent offence at this unfortunate youth; and that you suppressed your resentment so suddenly as to impress us all with surprise. Last night you proposed to him this day's hunting party, and you set out together by break of day. You parted, you said, at the fountain near the rock, about an hour or twain after sunrise, and it appears that before you parted you had been at strife together."

"I said not so," replied the knight. "Here is a coil indeed about the absence of a rustical bondsman, who, I dare say, hath gone off (if he be gone) to join the next rascally band of freebooters! Ye ask me, a knight of the Piercie's lineage, to account for such an insignificant fugitive, and I answer,—let me know the price of his head, and I will pay it to your convent treasurer."

"You admit, then, that you have slain my brother?" said Edward, interfering once more; "I will presently show you at what price we Scots rate the lives of our friends."

"Peace, Edward, peace—I entreat—I command thee," said the Sub-Prior. "And you, Sir Knight, think better of us than to suppose you may spend Scottish blood, and reckon for it as for wine spilt in a drunken revel. This youth was no bondsman—thou well knowest, that in thine own land thou hadst not dared to lift thy sword against the meanest subject of England, but her laws would have called thee to answer for the deed. Do not hope it will be otherwise here, for you will but deceive yourself."

"You drive me beyond my patience," said the Euphuist, "even as the over-driven ox is urged into madness!—What can I tell you of a young fellow whom I have not seen since the second hour after sunrise?"

"But can you explain in what circumstances you parted with him?" said the monk.

"What are the circumstances, in the devil's name, which you desire should be explained?—for although I protest against this constraint as alike unworthy and inhospitable, yet would I willingly end this fray, provided that by words it may be ended," said the knight.

"If these end it not," said Edward, "blows shall, and that full speedily."

"Peace, impatient boy!" said the Sub-Prior; "and do you, Sir Piercie Shafton, acquaint me why the ground is bloody by the verge of the fountain in Corri-nan-shian, where, as you say yourself, you parted from Halbert Glendinning?"

Resolute not to avow his defeat if possibly he could avoid it, the knight answered in a haughty tone, that he supposed it was no unusual thing to find the turf bloody where hunters had slain a deer.

"And did you bury your game as well as kill it?" said the monk. "We must know from you who is the tenant of that grave, that newly-made grave, beside the very fountain whose margin is so deeply crimsoned with blood?—thou seest thou canst not evade me; therefore be ingenuous, and tell us the fate of this unhappy youth, whose body is doubtless lying under that bloody turf."

"If it be," said Sir Piercie, "they must have buried him alive; for I swear to thee, reverend father, that this rustic juvenal parted from me in perfect health. Let the grave be searched, and if his body be found, then deal with me as ye list."

"It is not my sphere to determine thy fate, Sir Knight, but that of the Lord Abbot, and the right reverend Chapter. It is but my duty to collect such information as may best possess their wisdom with the matters which have chanced."

"Might I presume so far, reverend father," said the knight, "I should wish to know the author and evidence of all these suspicions, so unfoundedly urged against me?"

"It is soon told," said the Sub-Prior; "nor do I wish to disguise it, if it can avail you in your defence. This maiden, Mary Avenel, apprehending that you nourished malice against her foster-brother under a friendly brow, did advisedly send up the old man, Martin Tacket, to follow your footsteps and to prevent mischief. But it seems that your evil passions had outrun precaution: for when he came to the spot, guided by your footsteps upon the dew, he found but the bloody turf and the new covered grave; and after long and vain search through the wilds after Halbert and yourself, he brought back the sorrowful news to her who had sent him."

"Saw he not my doublet, I pray you?" said Sir Piercie; "for when I came to myself, I found that I was wrapped in my cloak, but without my under garment as your reverence may observe."

So saying, he opened his cloak, forgetting, with his characteristic inconsistency, that he showed his shirt stained with blood.

"How! cruel man," said the monk, when he observed this confirmation of his suspicions; "wilt thou deny the guilt, even while thou bearest on thy person the blood thou hast shed?—Wilt thou longer deny that thy rash hand has robbed a mother of a son, our community of a vassal, the Queen of Scotland of a liege subject? and what canst thou expect, but that, at the least, we deliver thee up to England, as undeserving our farther protection?"

"By the Saints!" said the knight, now driven to extremity, "if this blood be the witness against me, it is but rebel blood, since this morning at sunrise it flowed within my own veins."

"How were that possible, Sir Piercie Shafton," said the monk, "since I see no wound from whence it can have flowed?"

"That," said the knight, "is the most mysterious part of the transaction—See here!"

So saying, he undid his shirt collar, and, opening his bosom, showed the spot through—which Halbert's sword had passed, but already cicatrized, and bearing the appearance of a wound lately healed.

"This exhausts my patience, Sir Knight," said the Sub-Prior, "and is adding insult to violence and injury. Do you hold me for a child or an idiot, that you pretend to make me believe that the fresh blood with which your shirt is stained, flowed from a wound which has been healed for weeks or months? Unhappy mocker, thinkest thou thus to blind us? Too well do we know that it is the blood of your victim, wrestling with you in the desperate and mortal struggle, which has thus dyed your apparel."

The knight, after a moment's recollection, said in reply, "I will be open with you, my father—bid these men stand out of ear-shot, and I will tell you all I know of this mysterious business; and muse not, good father, though it may pass thy wit to expound it, for I avouch to you it is too dark for mine own."

The monk commanded Edward and the two men to withdraw, assuring the former that his conference with the prisoner should be brief, and giving him permission to keep watch at the door of the apartment; without which allowance he might, perhaps, have had some difficulty in procuring his absence. Edward had no sooner left the chamber, than he despatched messengers to one or two families of the Halidome, with whose sons his brother and he sometimes associated, to tell them that Halbert Glendinning had been murdered by an Englishman, and to require them to repair to the Tower of Glendearg without delay. The duty of revenge in such cases was held so sacred, that he had no reason to doubt they would instantly come with such assistance as would ensure the detention of the prisoner. He then locked the doors of the tower, both inner and outer, and also the gate of the court-yard. Having taken these precautions, he made a hasty visit to the females of the family, exhausting himself in efforts to console them, and in protestations that he would have vengeance for his murdered brother.

Chapter the Twenty-Seventh.

Now, by Our Lady, Sheriff, 'tis hard reckoning,
That I, with every odds of birth and barony
Should be detain'd here for the casual death
Of a wild forester, whose utmost having
Is but the brazen buckle of the belt
In which he sticks his hedge-knife.

OLD PLAY.

While Edward was making preparations for securing and punishing the supposed murderer of his brother, with an intense thirst for vengeance, which had not hitherto shown itself as part of his character, Sir Piercie Shafton made such communications as it pleased him to the Sub-Prior, who listened with great attention, though the knight's narrative was none of the clearest, especially as his self-conceit led him to conceal or abridge the details which were necessary to render it intelligible.

"You are to know," he said, "reverend father, that this rustical juvenal having chosen to offer me, in the presence of your venerable Superior, yourself, and other excellent and worthy persons, besides the damsel, Mary Avenel, whom I term my Discretion in all honour and kindness, a gross insult, rendered yet more intolerable by the time and place, my just resentment did so gain the mastery over my discretion, that I resolved to allow him the privileges of an equal, and to indulge him with the combat."

"But, Sir Knight," said the Sub-Prior, "you still leave two matters very obscure. First, why the token he presented to you gave you so much offence, as I with others witnessed; and then again, how the youth, whom you then met for the first, or, at least, the second time, knew so much of your history as enabled him so greatly to move you."

The knight coloured very deeply.

"For your first query," he said, "most reverend father, we will, if you please, pretermit it as nothing essential to the matter in hand; and for the second—I protest to you that I know as little of his means of knowledge as you do, and that I am well-nigh persuaded he deals with Sathanas, of which more anon.—Well, sir—In the evening, I failed not to veil my purpose with a pleasant brow, as is the custom amongst us martialists, who never display the bloody colours of defiance in our countenance until our hand is armed to fight under them. I amused the fair Discretion with some canzonettes, and other toys, which could not but be ravishing to her inexperienced ears. I arose in the morning, and met my antagonist, who, to say truth, for an inexperienced villagio, comported himself as stoutly as I could have desired.—So, coming to the encounter, reverend sir, I did try his mettle with some half-a-dozen of downright passes, with any one of which I could have been through his body, only that I was loth to take so fatal an advantage, but rather, mixing mercy with my just indignation, studied to inflict upon him some flesh-wound of no very fatal quality. But, sir, in the midst of my clemency, he, being instigated, I think, by the devil, did follow up his first offence with some insult of the same nature. Whereupon, being eager to punish him, I made an estramazone, and my foot slipping at the same time,—not from any fault of fence on my part, or any advantage of skill on his, but the devil having, as I said, taken up the matter in hand, and the grass being slippery,—ere I recovered my position I encountered

his sword, which he had advanced, with my undefended person, so that, as I think, I was in some sort run through the body. My juvenal, being beyond measure appalled at his own unexpected and unmerited success in this strange encounter, takes the flight and leaves me there, and I fall into a dead swoon for the lack of the blood I had lost so foolishly—and when I awake, as from a sound sleep, I find myself lying, as it like you, wrapt up in my cloak at the foot of one of the birch-trees which stand together in a clump near to this place. I feel my limbs, and experience little pain, but much weakness—I put my hand to the wound—it was whole and skinned over as you now see it—I rise and come hither; and in these words you have my whole day's story."

"I can only reply to so strange a tale," answered the monk, "that it is scarce possible that Sir Piercie Shafton can expect me to credit it. Here is a quarrel, the cause of which you conceal—a wound received in the morning, of which there is no recent appearance at sunset,—a grave filled up, in which no body is deposited—the vanquished found alive and well—the victor departed no man knows whither. These things, Sir Knight, hang not so well together, that I should receive them as gospel."

"Reverend father," answered Sir Piercie Shafton, "I pray you in the first place to observe, that if I offer peaceful and civil justification of that which I have already averred to be true, I do so only in devout deference to your dress and to your order, protesting, that to any other opposite, saving a man of religion, a lady or my liege prince, I would not deign to support that which I had once attested, otherwise than with the point of my good sword. And so much being premised, I have to add, that I can but gage my honour as a gentleman, and my faith as a Catholic Christian, that the things which I have described to you have happened to me as I have described them, and not otherwise."

"It is a deep assertion, Sir Knight," answered the Sub-Prior; "yet, bethink you, it is only an assertion, and that no reason can be alleged why things should be believed which are so contrary to reason. Let me pray you to say whether the grave, which has been seen at your place of combat, was open or closed when your encounter took place?"

"Reverend father," said the knight, "I will veil from you nothing, but show you each secret of my bosom; even as the pure fountain revealeth the smallest pebble which graces the sand at the bottom of its crystal mirror, and as—"

"Speak in plain terms, for the love of heaven!" said the monk; "these holiday phrases belong not to solemn affairs—Was the grave open when the conflict began?"

"It was," answered the knight, "I acknowledge it; even as he that acknowledgeth—"

"Nay, I pray you, fair son, forbear these similitudes, and observe me. On yesterday at even no grave was found in that place, for old Martin chanced, contrary to his wont, to go thither in quest of a strayed sheep. At break of day, by your own confession, a grave was opened in that spot, and there a combat was fought—only one of the combatants appears, and he is covered with blood, and to all appearance woundless."—Here the knight made a gesture of impatience.—"Nay, fair son, hear me but one moment—the grave is closed and covered by the sod—what can we believe, but that it conceals the bloody corpse of the fallen duellist?"

"By Heaven, it cannot!" said the knight, "unless the juvenal hath slain himself and buried himself, in order to place me in the predicament of his murderer."

"The grave shall doubtless be explored, and that by to-morrow's dawn," said the monk, "I will see it done with mine own eyes."

"But," said the prisoner, "I protest against all evidence which may arise from its contents, and do insist beforehand, that whatever may be found in that grave shall not prejudice me in my defence. I have been so haunted by diabolical deceptions in this matter, that what do I know but that the devil may assume the form of this rustical juvenal, in order to procure me farther vexation?—I protest to you, holy father, it is my very thought that there is witchcraft in all that hath befallen me. Since I entered into this northern land, in which men say that sorceries do abound, I, who am held in awe and regard even by the prime gallants in the court of Felician, have been here bearded and taunted by a clod-treading clown. I, whom Vincentio Saviola termed his nimblest and most agile disciple, was, to speak briefly, foiled by a cow-boy, who knew no more of fence than is used at every country wake. I am run, as it seemed to me, through the body, with a very sufficient stoccata, and faint on the spot; and yet, when I recover, I find myself without either wem or wound, and, lacking nothing of my apparel, saving my murrey-coloured doublet, slashed with satin, which I will pray may be inquired after, lest the devil, who transported me, should have dropped it in his passage among some of the trees or bushes—it being a choice and most fanciful piece of raiment, which I wore for the first time at the Queen's pageant in Southwark."

"Sir Knight," said the monk, "you do again go astray from this matter. I inquire of you respecting that which concerns the life of another man, and it may be, touches your own also, and you answer me with the tale of an old doublet!"

"Old!" exclaimed the knight; "now, by the gods and saints, if there be a gallant at the British Court more fancifully considerate, and more considerably fanciful, but quaintly curious, and more curiously quaint, in frequent changes of all rich articles of vesture, becoming one who may be accounted point-de-vice a courtier, I will give you leave to term me a slave and a liar."

The monk thought, but did not say, that he had already acquired right to doubt the veracity of the Euphuist, considering the marvellous tale which he had told. Yet his own strange adventure, and that of Father Philip, rushed on his mind, and forbade his coming to any conclusion. He contented himself, therefore, with observing, that these were certainly strange incidents, and requested to know if Sir Piercie Shafton had any other reason for suspecting himself to be in a manner so particularly selected for the sport of sorcery and witchcraft.

"Sir Sub-Prior," said the Euphuist, "the most extraordinary circumstance remains behind, which alone, had I neither been bearded in dispute, nor foiled in combat, nor wounded and cured in the space of a few hours, would nevertheless of itself, and without any other corroborative, have compelled me to believe myself the subject of some malevolent fascination. Reverend sir, it is not to your ears that men should tell tales of love and gallantry, nor is Sir Piercie Shafton one who, to any ears whatsoever, is wont to boast of his fair acceptance with the choice and prime beauties of the court; insomuch that a lady, none of the least resplendent constellations which revolve in that hemisphere of honour, pleasure, and beauty, but whose name I here pretermitt, was wont to call me her Taciturnity. Nevertheless truth must be spoken; and I cannot but allow, as the general report of the court, allowed in camps, and echoed back by city and country, that in the alacrity of the accost, the tender delicacy of the regard, the facetiousness of the address, the adopting and pursuing of the fancy, the solemn close and the graceful fall-off, Piercie Shafton was accounted the only gallant of the time, and so well accepted among the choicer beauties of the age, that no silk-hosed reveller of the presence-chamber, or plumed jousting of the tilt-yard, approached him by a bow's length in the ladies' regard, being the mark at which every well-born and generous juvenal aimeth his shaft. Nevertheless, reverend sir, having found in this rude place something which by blood and birth might be termed a lady, and being desirous to keep my gallant humour in exercise, as well as to show my sworn devotion to the sex in general, I did shoot off some arrows of compliment at this Mary Avenel, terming her my Discretion, with other quaint and well-imagined courtesies, rather bestowed out of my bounty than warranted by her merit, or perchance like unto the boyish fowler, who, rather than not exercise his bird-piece, will shoot at crows or magpies for lack of better game——"

"Mary Avenel is much obliged by your notice," answered the monk; "but to what does all this detail of past and present gallantry conduct us?"

"Marry, to this conclusion," answered the knight; "that either this my Discretion, or I myself, am little less than bewitched; for, instead of receiving my accost with a gratifying bow, answering my regard with a suppressed smile, accompanying my falling off or departure with a slight sigh—honours with which I protest to you the noblest dancers and proudest beauties in Felician have graced my poor services—she hath paid me as little and as cold regard as if I had been some hob-nailed clown of these bleak mountains! Nay, this very day, while I was in the act of kneeling at her feet to render her the succours of this pungent quintessence, of purest spirit distilled by the fairest hands of the court of Felician, she pushed me from her with looks which savoured of repugnance, and, as I think, thrust at me with her foot as if to spurn me from her presence. These things, reverend father, are strange, portentous, unnatural, and befall not in the current of mortal affairs, but are symptomatic of sorcery and fascination. So that, having given to your reverence a perfect, simple, and plain account of all that I know concerning this matter, I leave it to your wisdom to solve what may be found soluble in the same, it being my purpose to-morrow, with the peep of dawn, to set forward towards Edinburgh."

"I grieve to be an interruption to your designs, Sir Knight," said the monk, "but that purpose of thine may hardly be fulfilled."

"How, reverend father!" said the knight, with an air of the utmost surprise; "if what you say respects my departure, understand that it *must* be, for I have so resolved it."

"Sir Knight," reiterated the Sub-Prior, "I must once more repeat, this *cannot* be, until the Abbot's pleasure be known in the matter."

"Reverend sir," said the knight, drawing himself up with great dignity, "I desire my hearty and thankful commendations to the Abbot; but in this matter I have nothing to do with his reverend pleasure, designing only to consult my own."

"Pardon me," said the Sub-Prior; "the Lord Abbot hath in this matter a voice potential."

Sir Piercie Shafton's colour began to rise—"I marvel," he said, "to hear your reverence talk thus—What! will you, for the imagined death of a rude, low-born frampler and wrangler, venture to impinge upon the liberty of the kinsman of the house of Piercie?"

"Sir Knight," returned the Sub-Prior, civilly, "your high lineage and your kindling anger will avail you nothing in this matter—You shall not come here to seek a shelter, and then spill our blood as if it were water."

"I tell you," said the knight, "once more, as I have told you already, that there was no blood spilled but mine own!"

"That remains to be proved," replied the Sub-Prior; "we of the community of Saint Mary's of Kennaquhair, use not to take fairy tales in exchange for the lives of our liege vassals."

"We of the house of Piercie," answered Shafton, "brook neither threats nor restraint—I say I will travel to-morrow, happen what may!"

"And I," answered the Sub-Prior, in the same tone of determination, "say that I will break your journey, come what may!"

"Who shall gainsay me," said the knight, "if I make my way by force?"

"You will judge wisely to think ere you make such an attempt," answered the monk, with composure; "there are men enough in the Halidome to vindicate its rights over those who dare infringe them."

"My cousin of Northumberland will know how to revenge this usage to a beloved kinsman so near to his blood," said the Englishman.

"The Lord Abbot will know how to protect the rights of his territory, both with, the temporal and spiritual sword," said the monk. "Besides, consider, were we to send you to your kinsman at Alnwick or Warkworth to-morrow, he dare do nothing but transmit you in fetters to the Queen of England. Bethink, Sir Knight, that you stand on slippery ground, and will act most wisely in reconciling yourself to be a prisoner in this place until the Abbot shall decide the matter. There are armed men enow to countervail all your efforts at escape. Let patience and resignation, therefore, arm you to a necessary submission."

So saying, he clapped his hands, and called aloud. Edward entered, accompanied by two young men who had already joined him, and were well armed.

"Edward," said the Sub-Prior, "you will supply the English Knight here in this spence with suitable food and accommodation for the night, treating him with as much kindness as if nothing had happened between you. But you will place a sufficient guard, and look carefully that he make not his escape. Should he attempt to break forth, resist him to the death; but in no other case harm a hair of his head, as you shall be answerable."

Edward Glendinning replied,—"That I may obey your commands, reverend sir, I will not again offer myself to this person's presence; for shame it were to me to break the peace of the Halidome, but not less shame to leave my brother's death unavenged."

As he spoke, his lips grew livid, the blood forsook his cheek, and he was about to leave the apartment, when the Sub-Prior recalled him and said in a solemn tone,—"Edward, I have known you from infancy—I have done what lay within my reach to be of use to you—I say nothing of what you owe to me as the representative of your spiritual Superior—I say nothing of the duty from the vassal to the Sub-Prior—But Father Eustace expects from the pupil whom he has nurtured—he expects from Edward Glendinning, that he will not by any deed of sudden violence, however justified in his own mind by the provocation, break through the respect due to public justice, or that which he has an especial right to claim from him."

"Fear nothing, my reverend father, for so in an hundred senses may I well term you," said the young man; "fear not, I would say, that I will in any thing diminish the respect I owe to the venerable community by whom we have so long been protected, far less that I will do aught which can be personally less than respectful to you. But the blood of my brother must not cry for vengeance in vain—your reverence knows our Border creed."

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will requite it," answered the monk. "The heathenish custom of deadly feud which prevails in this land, through which each man seeks vengeance at his own hand when the death of a friend or kinsman has chanced, hath already deluged our vales with the blood of Scottish men, spilled by the hands of countrymen and kindred. It were endless to count up the fatal results. On the Eastern Border, the Homes are at feud with the Swintons and Cockburns; in our Middle Marches, the Scotts and Kerrs have spilled as much brave blood in domestic feud as might have fought a pitched field in England, could they have but forgiven and forgotten a casual rencounter that placed their names in opposition to each other. On the west frontier, the Johnstones are at war with the Maxwells, the Jardines with the Bells, drawing with them the flower of the country, which should place their breasts as a bulwark against England, into private and bloody warfare, of which it is the only end to waste and impair the forces of the country, already divided in itself. Do not, my dear son Edward, permit this bloody prejudice to master your mind. I cannot ask you to think of the crime supposed as if the blood spilled had been less dear to you—Alas! I know that is impossible. But I do require you, in proportion to your interest in the supposed sufferer, (for as yet the whole is matter of supposition,) to bear on your mind the evidence on which the guilt of the accused person must be tried. He hath spoken with me, and I confess his tale is so extraordinary, that I should have, without a moment's hesitation, rejected it as incredible, but that an affair which chanced to myself in this very glen—More of that another time—Suffice it for the present to say, that from what I have myself experienced, I deem it possible, that, extraordinary as Sir Piercie Shafton's story may seem, I hold it not utterly impossible."

"Father," said Edward Glendinning, when he saw that his preceptor paused, unwilling farther to explain upon what grounds he was inclined to give a certain degree of credit to Sir Piercie Shafton's story, while he admitted it as improbable—"Father to me you have been in every sense. You know that my hand grasped more readily to the book than to the sword; and that I lacked utterly the ready and bold spirit which distinguished—" Here his voice faltered, and he paused for a moment, and then went on with resolution and rapidity—"I would say, that I was unequal to Halbert in promptitude of heart and of hand; but Halbert is gone, and I stand his representative, and that of my father—his successor in all his rights," (while he said this his eyes shot fire,) "and bound to assert and maintain them as he would have done—therefore I am a changed man, increased in courage as in my rights and pretensions. And, reverend father, respectfully, but plainly and firmly do I say, his blood, if it has been shed by this man, shall be atoned—Halbert shall not sleep neglected in his lonely grave, as if with him the spirit of my father had ceased forever. His blood flows in my veins, and while his has been poured forth unrequited, mine will permit me no rest. My poverty and meanness of rank shall not avail the lordly murderer. My calm nature and peaceful studies shall not be his protection. Even the obligations, holy father, which I acknowledge to you, shall not be his protection. I wait with patience the judgment of the Abbot and Chapter, for the slaughter of one of their most anciently descended vassals. If they do right to my brother's memory, it is well. But mark me, father, if they shall fail in rendering me that justice, I bear a heart and a hand which, though I love not such extremities, are capable of remedying such an error. He who takes up my brother's succession must avenge his death."

The monk perceived with surprise, that Edward, with his extreme diffidence, humility, and obedient assiduity, for such were his general characteristics, had still boiling in his veins the wild principles of those from whom he was descended, and by whom he was surrounded. His eyes sparkled, his frame was agitated, and the extremity of his desire for vengeance seemed to give a vehemence to his manner resembling the restlessness of joy.

"May God help us," said Father Eustace, "for, frail wretches as we are, we cannot help ourselves under sudden and strong temptation.—Edward, I will rely on your word that you do nothing rashly."

"That will I not," said Edward,—"that, my better than father, I surely will not. But the blood of my brother,—the tears of my mother—and—and—and of Mary Avenel, shall not be shed in vain. I will not deceive you, father—if this Piercie Shafton hath slain my brother, he dies, if the whole blood of the whole house of Piercie were in his veins."

There was a deep and solemn determination in the utterance of Edward Glendinning expressive of a rooted resolution. The Sub-Prior sighed deeply, and for the moment yielded to circumstances, and urged the acquiescence of his pupil no farther. He commanded lights to be placed in the lower chamber, which for a time he paced in silence.

A thousand ideas, and even differing principles, debated with each other in his bosom. He greatly doubted the English knight's account of the duel, and of what had followed it. Yet the extraordinary and supernatural circumstances which had befallen the Sacristan and himself in that very glen, prevented him from being absolutely incredulous on the score of the wonderful wound and recovery of Sir Piercie Shafton, and prevented him from at once condemning as impossible that

which was altogether improbable. Then he was at a loss how to control the fraternal affections of Edward, with respect to whom he felt something like the keeper of a wild animal, a lion's whelp or tiger's cub, which he has held under his command from infancy, but which, when grown to maturity, on some sudden provocation displays his fangs and talons, erects his crest, resumes his savage nature, and bids defiance at once to his keeper and to all mankind.

How to restrain and mitigate an ire which the universal example of the times rendered deadly and inveterate, was sufficient cause of anxiety to Father Eustace. But he had also to consider the situation of his community, dishonoured and degraded by submitting to suffer the slaughter of a vassal to pass unavenged; a circumstance which of itself might in those times have afforded pretext for a revolt among their wavering adherents, or, on the other hand, exposed the community to imminent danger, should they proceed against a subject of England of high degree, connected with the house of Northumberland, and other northern families of high rank, who, as they possessed the means, could not be supposed to lack inclination, to wreak upon the patrimony of Saint Mary of Kennaquhair, any violence which might be offered to their kinsman.

In either case, the Sub-Prior well knew that the ostensible cause of feud, insurrection, or incursion, being once afforded, the case would not be ruled either by reason or by evidence, and he groaned in spirit when, upon counting up the chances which arose in this ambiguous dilemma, he found he had only a choice of difficulties. He was a monk, but he felt also as a man, indignant at the supposed slaughter of young Glendinning by one skilful in all the practice of arms, in which the vassal of the Monastery was most likely to be deficient; and to aid the resentment which he felt for the loss of a youth whom he had known from infancy, came in full force the sense of dishonour arising to his community from passing over so gross an insult unavenged. Then the light in which it might be viewed by those who at present presided in the stormy Court of Scotland, attached as they were to the Reformation, and allied by common faith and common interest with Queen Elizabeth, was a formidable subject of apprehension. The Sub-Prior well knew how they lusted after the revenues of the Church, (to express it in the ordinary phrase of the religious of the time,) and how readily they would grasp at such a pretext for encroaching on those of Saint Mary's, as would be afforded by the suffering to pass unpunished the death of a native Scottishman by a Catholic Englishman, a rebel to Queen Elizabeth.

On the other hand, to deliver up to England, or, which was nearly the same thing, the Scottish administration, an English knight leagued with the Piercie by kindred and political intrigue, a faithful follower of the Catholic Church, who had fled to the Halidome for protection, was, in the estimation of the Sub-Prior, an act most unworthy in itself, and meriting the malediction of Heaven, besides being, moreover, fraught with great temporal risk. If the government of Scotland was now almost entirely in the hands of the Protestant party, the Queen was still a Catholic, and there was no knowing when, amid the sudden changes which agitated that tumultuous country, she might find herself at the head of her own affairs, and able to protect those of her own faith. Then, if the Court of England and its Queen were zealously Protestant, the northern counties, whose friendship or enmity were of most consequence in the first instance to the community of Saint Mary's, contained many Catholics, the heads of whom were able, and must be supposed willing, to avenge any injury suffered by Sir Piercie Shafton.

On either side, the Sub-Prior, thinking, according to his sense of duty, most anxiously for the safety and welfare of his Monastery, saw the greatest risk of damage, blame, inroad, and confiscation. The only course on which he could determine, was to stand by the helm like a resolute pilot, watch every contingency, do his best to weather each reef and shoal, and commit the rest to heaven and his patroness.

As he left the apartment, the knight called after him, beseeching he would order his trunk-mails to be sent into his apartment, understanding he was to be guarded there for the night, as he wished to make some alteration in his apparel.

{Footnote: Sir Piercie Shafton's extreme love of dress was an attribute of the coxcombs of this period. The display made by their forefathers was in the numbers of their retinue; but as the actual influence of the nobility began to be restrained both in France and England by the increasing power of the crown, the indulgence of vanity in personal display became more inordinate. There are many allusions to this change of custom in Shakspeare and other dramatic writers, where the reader may find mention made of

"Bonds enter'd into

For gay apparel against the triumph day."

Jonson informs us, that for the first entrance of a gallant, "'twere good you turned four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks of apparel."—*Every Man out of his Humour*.

In the *Memorie* of the Somerville family, a curious instance occurs of this fashionable species of extravagance. In the year 1537, when James V. brought over his shortlived bride from France, the Lord Somerville of the day was so profuse in the expense of his apparel, that the money which he borrowed on the occasion was compensated by a perpetual annuity of threescore pounds Scottish, payable out of the barony of Carnwarth till doomsday, which was assigned by the creditor to Saint Magdalen's Chapel. By this deep expense the Lord Somerville had rendered himself so glorious in apparel, that the King, who saw so brave a gallant enter the gate of Holyrood, followed, by only two pages, called upon several of the courtiers to ascertain who it could be who was so richly dressed and so slightly attended, and he was not recognised until he entered the presence-chamber. "You are very brave, my lord," said the King, as he received his homage; "but where are all your men and attendants?" The Lord Somerville readily answered, "If it please your Majesty, here they are," pointing to the lace that was on his own and his pages' clothes: whereat the King laughed heartily, and having surveyed the finery more nearly, bade him have away with it all, and let him have his stout band of spears again.

There is a scene in Jonson's "*Every Man out of his Humour*," (Act IV. Scene 6.) in which a Euphuist of the time gives an account of the effects of a duel on the clothes of himself and his opponent, and never departs a syllable from the catalogue of his wardrobe. We shall insert it in evidence that the foppery of our ancestors was not inferior to that of our own time.

"*Fastidius*. Good faith, Signior, now you speak of a quarrel, I'll acquaint you with a difference that happened between a gallant and myself, Sir Puntarvolo. You know him if I should name him—Signor Luculento.

"*Punt*. Luculento! What inauspicious chance interposed itself to your two lives?

"*Fast*. Faith, sir, the same that sundered Agamemnon, and great Thetis' son; but let the cause escape, sir. He sent me a challenge, mixt with some few braves, which I restored; and, in fine, we met. Now indeed, sir, I must tell you, he did offer at first very desperately, but without judgment; for look you, sir, I cast myself into this figure; now he came violently on, and withal advancing his rapier to strike, I thought to have took his arm, for he had left his body to my election, and I was sure he could not recover his guard. Sir, I mist my purpose in his arm, rashed his doublet sleeves, ran him close by the left cheek and through his hair. He, again, light me here—I had on a gold cable hat-band, then new come up, about a murrey French hat I had; cuts my hat-band, and yet it was massy goldsmith's work, cuts my brim, which, by good fortune, being thick embroidered with gold twist and spangles, disappointed the force of the blow; nevertheless it grazed on my shoulder, takes me away six purls of an Italian cut-work band I wore, cost me three pounds in the Exchange but three days before.

"*Punt*. This was a strange encounter.

"*Fast*. Nay, you shall hear, sir. With this, we both fell out and breathed. Now, upon the second sign of his assault, I betook me to my former manner of defence; he, on the other side, abandoned his body to the same danger as before, and follows me still with blows; but I, being loath to take the deadly advantage that lay before me of his left side, made a kind of stramazoun, ran him up to the hilt through the doublet, through the shirt, and yet missed the skin. He, making a reverse blow, falls upon my embossed girdle,—I had thrown off the hangers a little before,—strikes off a skirt of a thick-laced satin doublet I had, lined with four taffetas, cuts off two panes embroidered with pearl, rends through the drawings-out of tissue, enters the linings, and spiks the flesh.

"*Car*. I wonder he speaks not of his wrought shirt.

"*Fast*. Here, in the opinion of mutual damage, we paused. But, ere I proceed, I must tell you, signior, that in the last encounter, not having leisure to put off my silver spurs, one of the rowels caught hold of the ruffles of my boot, and, being Spanish leather and subject to tear, overthrows me, rends me two pair of silk stockings that I put on, being somewhat of a raw morning, a peach colour and another, and strikes me some half-inch deep into the side of the calf: He, seeing the blood come, presently takes horse and away; I having bound up my wound with a piece of my wrought shirt—

"*Car*. O, comes it in there.

"Fast. Ride after him, and, lighting at the court gate both together, embraced, and marched hand in hand up into the presence. Was not this business well carried?"

"Maci. Well! yes; and by this we can guess what apparel the gentleman wore."

"Punt. 'Fore valour! it was a designment begun with much resolution, maintained with as much prowess, and ended with more humanity."}

"Ay, ay," said the monk, muttering as he went up the winding stair, "carry him his trumpery with all despatch. Alas! that man, with so many noble objects of pursuit, will amuse himself like a jackanape, with a laced jerkin and a cap and bells!—I must now to the melancholy work of consoling that which is well-nigh inconsolable, a mother weeping for her first-born."

Advancing, after a gentle knock, into the apartment of the women, he found that Mary Avenel had retired to bed, extremely indisposed, and that Dame Glendinning and Tibb were indulging their sorrows by the side of a decaying fire, and by the light of a small iron lamp, or cruize, as it was termed. Poor Elspeth's apron was thrown over her head, and bitterly did she sob and weep for "her beautiful, her brave,—the very image of her dear Simon Glendinning, the stay of her widowhood and the support of her old age."

The faithful Tibb echoed her complaints, and, more violently clamorous, made deep promises of revenge on Sir Piercie Shafton, "if there were a man left in the south who could draw a whinger, or a woman that could throw a rape." The presence of the Sub-Prior imposed silence on these clamours. He sat down by the unfortunate mother, and essayed, by such topics as his religion and reason suggested, to interrupt the current of Dame Glendinning's feelings; but the attempt was in vain. She listened, indeed, with some little interest, while he pledged his word and his influence with the Abbot, that the family which had lost their eldest-born by means of a guest received at his command, should experience particular protection at the hands of the community; and that the fief which belonged to Simon Glendinning should, with extended bounds and added privileges, be conferred on Edward.

But it was only for a very brief space that the mother's sobs were apparently softer, and her grief more mild. She soon blamed herself for casting a moment's thought upon world's gear while poor Halbert was lying stretched in his bloody shirt. The Sub-Prior was not more fortunate, when he promised that Halbert's body "should be removed to hallowed ground, and his soul secured by the prayers of the Church in his behalf." Grief would have its natural course, and the voice of the comforter was wasted in vain.

Chapter the Twenty-Eighth.

He is at liberty, I have ventured for him!
 —if the law

Find and condemn me for't, some living wenches,
 Some honest-hearted maids will sing my dirge,
 And tell to memory my death was noble,
 Dying almost a martyr.

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN.

The Sub-Prior of Saint Mary's, in taking his departure from the spence which Sir Piercie Shafton was confined, and in which some preparations were made for his passing the night as the room which might be most conveniently guarded, left more than one perplexed person behind him. There was connected with this chamber, and opening into it, a small *outshot*, or projecting part of the building, occupied by a sleeping apartment, which upon ordinary occasions, was that of Mary Avenel, and which, in the unusual number of guests who had come to the tower on the former evening, had also accommodated Mysie Happer, the Miller's daughter; for anciently, as well as in the present day, a Scottish house was always rather too narrow and limited for the extent of the owner's hospitality, and some shift and contrivance was necessary, upon any unusual occasion, to ensure the accommodation of all the guests.

The fatal news of Halbert Glendinning's death had thrown all former arrangements into confusion. Mary Avenel, whose case required immediate attention, had been transported into the apartment hitherto occupied by Halbert and his brother, as the latter proposed to watch all night, in order to prevent the escape of the prisoner. Poor Mysie had been altogether overlooked, and had naturally enough betaken herself to the little apartment which she had hitherto occupied, ignorant that the spence, through which lay the only access to it, was to be the sleeping chamber of Sir Piercie Shafton. The measures taken for securing him there had been so sudden, that she was not aware of it, until she found that the other females had been removed from the spence by the Sub-Prior's direction, and having once missed the opportunity of retreating along with them, bashfulness, and the high respect which she was taught to bear to the monks, prevented her venturing forth alone, and intruding herself on the presence of Father Eustace, while in secret conference with the Southron. There appeared no remedy but to wait till their interview was over; and, as the door was thin, and did not shut very closely, she could hear every word that passed betwixt them.

It thus happened, that without any intended intrusion on her part, she became privy to the whole conversation of the Sub-Prior and the English knight, and could also observe from the window of her little retreat, that more than one of the young men summoned by Edward arrived successively at the tower. These circumstances led her to entertain most serious apprehension that the life of Sir Piercie Shafton was in great and instant peril.

Woman is naturally compassionate, and not less willingly so when youth and fair features are on the side of him who claims her sympathy. The handsome presence, elaborate dress and address, of Sir Piercie Shafton, which had failed to make any favorable impression on the grave and lofty character of Mary Avenel, had completely dazzled and bewildered the poor Maid of the Mill. The knight had perceived this result, and, flattered by seeing that his merit was not universally underrated, he had bestowed on Mysie a good deal more of his courtesy than in his opinion her rank warranted. It was not cast away, but received with a devout sense of his condescension, and with gratitude for his personal notice, which, joined to her fears for his safety, and the natural tenderness of her disposition, began to make wild work in her heart.

"To be sure it was very wrong in him to slay Halbert Glendinning," (it was thus she argued the case with herself,) "but then he was a gentleman born, and a soldier, and so gentle and courteous withal, that she was sure the quarrel had been all of young Glendinning's own seeking; for it was well known that both these lads were so taken up with that Mary Avenel, that they never looked at another lass in the Halidome, more than if they were of a different degree. And then Halbert's dress was as clownish as his manners were haughty; and this poor young gentleman, (who was habited like any prince,) banished from his own land, was first drawn into a quarrel by a rude brangler, and then persecuted and like to be put to death by his kin and allies."

Mysie wept bitterly at the thought, and then her heart rising against such cruelty and oppression to a defenceless stranger, who dressed with so much skill, and spoke with so much grace, she began to consider whether she could not render him some assistance in this extremity.

Her mind was now entirely altered from its original purpose. At first her only anxiety had been to find the means of escaping from the interior apartment, without being noticed by any one; but now she began to think that Heaven had placed her there for the safety and protection of the persecuted stranger. She was of a simple and affectionate, but at the same time an alert and enterprising character, possessing more than female strength of body, and more than female courage, though with feelings as capable of being bewildered with gallantry of dress and language, as a fine gentleman of any generation would have desired to exercise his talents upon. "I will save him," she thought, "that is the first thing to be resolved—and then I wonder what he will say to the poor Miller's maiden, that has done for him what all the dainty dames in London or Holyrood would have been afraid to venture upon."

Prudence began to pull her sleeve as she indulged speculations so hazardous, and hinted to her that the warmer Sir Piercie Shafton's gratitude might prove, it was the more likely to be fraught with danger to his benefactress. Alas! poor Prudence, thou mayest say with our moral teacher,

"I preach for ever, but I preach in vain."

The Miller's maiden, while you pour your warning into her unwilling bosom, has glanced her eye on the small mirror by which she has placed her little lamp, and it returns to her a countenance and eyes, pretty and sparkling at all times, but ennobled at present with the energy of expression proper to those who have dared to form, and stand prepared to execute, deeds of generous audacity. "Will these features—will these eyes, joined to the benefit I am about to confer upon Sir Piercie Shafton, do nothing towards removing the distance of rank between us?"

Such was the question which female vanity asked of fancy; and though even fancy dared not answer in a ready affirmative, a middle conclusion was adopted—"Let me first succour the gallant youth, and trust to fortune for the rest."

Banishing, therefore, from her mind every thing that was personal to herself, the rash but generous girl turned her whole thoughts to the means of executing this enterprise.

The difficulties which interposed were of no ordinary nature. The vengeance of the men of that country, in cases of deadly feud, that is, in cases of a quarrel excited by the slaughter of any of their relations, was one of their most marked characteristics; and Edward, however gentle in other respects, was so fond of his brother, that there could be no doubt that he would be as signal in his revenge as the customs of the country authorized. There were to be passed the inner door of the apartment, the two gates of the tower itself, and the gate of the court-yard, ere the prisoner was at liberty; and then a guide and means of flight were to be provided, otherwise ultimate escape was impossible. But where the will of woman is strongly bent on the accomplishment of such a purpose, her wit is seldom baffled by difficulties, however embarrassing.

The Sub-Prior had not long left the apartment, ere Mysie had devised a scheme for Sir Piercie Shafton's freedom, daring, indeed, but likely to be successful, if dexterously conducted. It was necessary, however, that she should remain where she was till so late an hour, that all in the tower should have betaken themselves to repose, excepting those whose duty made them watchers. The interval she employed in observing the movements of the person in whose service she was thus boldly a volunteer.

She could hear Sir Piercie Shafton pace the floor to and fro, in reflection doubtless on his own untoward fate and precarious situation. By and by she heard him making a rustling among his trunks, which, agreeable to the order of the Sub-Prior, had been placed in the apartment to which he was confined, and which he was probably amusing more melancholy thoughts by examining and arranging. Then she could hear him resume his walk through the room, and, as if his spirits had been somewhat relieved and elevated by the survey of his wardrobe, she could distinguish that at one turn he half recited a sonnet, at another half whistled a galliard, and at the third hummed a saraband. At length she could understand that he extended himself on the temporary couch which had been allotted to him, after muttering his prayers hastily, and in a short time she concluded he must be fast asleep.

She employed the moment which intervened in considering her enterprise under every different aspect; and dangerous as it was, the steady review which she took of the various perils accompanying her purpose, furnished her with plausible devices for obviating them. Love and generous compassion, which give singly such powerful impulse to the female heart, were in this case united, and championed her to the last extremity of hazard.

It was an hour past midnight. All in the tower slept sound but those who had undertaken to guard the English prisoner; or if sorrow and suffering drove sleep from the bed of Dame Glendinning and her foster-daughter, they were too much wrapt in their own griefs to attend to external sounds. The means of striking light were at hand in the small apartment, and thus the Miller's maiden was enabled to light and trim a small lamp. With a trembling step and throbbing heart, she undid the door which separated her from the apartment in which the Southron knight was confined, and almost flinched from her fixed purpose, when she found herself in the same room with the sleeping prisoner. She scarcely trusted herself to look upon him, as he lay wrapped in his cloak, and fast asleep upon the pallet bed, but turned her eyes away while she gently pulled his mantle with no more force than was just equal to awaken him. He moved not until she had twitched his cloak a second and a third time, and then at length looking up, was about to make an exclamation in the suddenness of his surprise.

Mysie's bashfulness was conquered by her fear. She placed her fingers on her lips, in token that he must observe the most strict silence, and then pointed to the door to intimate that it was watched.

Sir Piercie Shafton now collected himself and sat upright on his couch. He gazed with surprise on the graceful figure of the young woman who stood before him; her well-formed person, her flowing hair, and the outline of her features, showed dimly, and yet to advantage, by the partial and feeble light which she held in her hand. The romantic imagination of the gallant would soon have coined some compliment proper for the occasion, but Mysie left him not time.

"I come," she said, "to save your life, which is else in great peril—if you answer me, speak as low as you can, for they have sentinelled your door with armed men."

"Comeliest of miller's daughters," answered Sir Piercie, who by this time was sitting upright on his couch, "dread nothing for my safety. Credit me, that, as in very truth, I have not spilled the red puddle (which these villagios call the blood) of their most uncivil relation, so I am under no apprehension whatever for the issue of this restraint, seeing that it cannot but be harmless to me. Natheless, to thee, O most Molendinar beauty, I return the thanks which thy courtesy may justly claim."

"Nay, but, Sir Knight," answered the maiden, in a whisper as low as it was tremulous, "I deserve no thanks unless you will act by my counsel. Edward Glendinning hath sent for Dan of the Howlet-hirst, and young Adie of Aikenshaw, and they are come with three men more, and with bow, and jack, and spear, and I heard them say to each other, and to Edward, as they alighted in the court, that they would have amends for the death of their kinsman, if the monk's cowl should smoke for it—And the vassals are so wilful now, that the Abbot himself dare not control them, for fear they turn heretics, and refuse to pay their feu-duties."

"In faith," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "it may be a shrewd temptation, and perchance the monks may rid themselves of trouble and cumber, by handing me over the march to Sir John Foster or Lord Hundson, the English wardens, and so make peace with their vassals and with England at once. Fairest Molinara, I will for once walk by thy rede, and if thou dost contrive to extricate me from this vile kennel, I will so celebrate thy wit and beauty, that the Baker's nymph of Raphael d'Urbino shall seem but a gipsey in comparison of my Molinara."

"I pray you, then, be silent," said the Miller's daughter; "for if your speech betrays that you are awake, my scheme fails utterly, and it is Heaven's mercy and Our Lady's that we are not already overheard and discovered."

"I am silent," replied the Southron, "even as the starless night—but yet—if this contrivance of thine should endanger thy safety, fair and no less kind than fair damsel, it were utterly unworthy of me to accept it at thy hand."

"Do not think of me," said Mysie, hastily; "I am safe—I will take thought for myself, if I once saw you out of this dangerous dwelling—if you would provide yourself with any part of your apparel or goods, lose no time."

The knight *did*, however, lose some time, ere he could settle in his own mind what to take and what to abandon of his wardrobe, each article of which seemed endeared to him by recollection of the feasts and revels at which it had been exhibited. For some little while Mysie left him to make his selections at leisure, for she herself had also some preparations to make for flight. But when, returning from the chamber into which she had retired, with a small bundle in her hand, she found him still indecisive, she insisted in plain terms, that he should either make up his baggage for the enterprise, or give it up entirely. Thus urged, the disconsolate knight hastily made up a few clothes into a bundle, regarded his trunk-mails with a mute expression of parting sorrow, and intimated his readiness to wait upon his kind guide.

She led the way to the door of the apartment, having first carefully extinguished her lamp, and motioning to the knight to stand close behind her, tapped once or twice at the door. She was at length answered by Edward Glendinning, who demanded to know who knocked within, and what was desired.

"Speak low," said Mysie Happer, "or you will awaken the English knight. It is I, Mysie Happer, who knock—I wish to get out—you have locked me up—and I was obliged to wait till the Southron slept."

"Locked you up!" replied Edward, in surprise.

"Yes," answered the Miller's daughter, "you have locked me up into this room—I was in Mary Avenel's sleeping apartment."

"And can you not remain there till morning," replied Edward, "since it has so chanced?"

"What!" said the Miller's daughter, in a tone of offended delicacy, "I remain here a moment longer than I can get out without discovery!—I would not, for all the Halidome of St. Mary's, remain a minute longer in the neighbourhood of a man's apartment than I can help it—For whom, or for what do you hold me? I promise you my father's daughter has been better brought up than to put in peril her good name."

"Come forth then, and get to thy chamber in silence," said Edward. So saying, he undid the bolt. The staircase without was in utter darkness, as Mysie had before ascertained. So soon as she stepped out, she took hold of Edward as if to support herself, thus interposing her person betwixt him and Sir Piercie Shaffcon, by whom she was closely followed. Thus screened from observation, the Englishman slipped past on tiptoe, unshod and in silence, while the damsel complained to Edward that she wanted a light.

"I cannot get you a light," said he, "for I cannot leave this post; but there is a fire below."

"I will sit below till morning," said the Maid of the Mill; and, tripping down stairs, heard Edward bolt and bar the door of the now tenantless apartment with vain caution.

At the foot of the stair which she descended, she found the object of her care waiting her farther directions. She recommended to him the most absolute silence, which, for once in his life, he seemed not unwilling to observe, conducted him, with as much caution as if he were walking on cracked ice, to a dark recess, used for depositing wood, and instructed him to ensconce himself behind the fagots. She herself lighted her lamp once more at the kitchen fire, and took her distaff and spindle, that she might not seem to be unemployed, in case any one came into the apartment.

From time to time, however, she stole towards the window on tiptoe, to catch the first glance of the dawn, for the farther prosecution of her adventurous project. At length she saw, to her great joy, the first peep of the morning brighten upon the gray clouds of the east, and, clasping her hands together, thanked Our Lady for the sight, and implored protection during the remainder of her enterprise. Ere she had finished her prayer, she started at feeling a man's arm across her shoulder, while a rough voice spoke in her ear—"What! menseful Mysie of the Mill so soon at her prayers?—now, benison on the bonny eyes that open so early!—I'll have a kiss for good morrow's sake."

Dan of the Howlet-hirst, for he was the gallant who paid Mysie this compliment, suited the action with the word, and the action, as is usual in such cases of rustic gallantry, was rewarded with a cuff, which Dan received as a fine gentleman receives a tap with a fan, but which, delivered by the energetic arm of the Miller's maiden, would have certainly astonished a less robust gallant.

"How now, Sir Coxcomb!" said she, "and must you be away from your guard over the English knight, to plague quiet folks with your horse-tricks!"

"Truly you are mistaken, pretty Mysie," said the clown, "for I have not yet relieved Edward at his post; and were it not a shame to let him stay any longer, by my faith, I could find it in my heart not to quit you these two hours."

"Oh, you have hours and hours enough to see any one," said Mysie; "but you must think of the distress of the household even now, and get Edward to sleep for a while, for he has kept watch this whole night."

"I will have another kiss first," answered Dan of the Howlet-hirst.

But Mysie was now on her guard, and, conscious of the vicinity of the wood-hole, offered such strenuous resistance, that the swain cursed the nymph's bad humour with very unpastoral phrase and emphasis, and ran up stairs to relieve the guard of his comrade. Stealing to the door, she heard the new sentinel hold a brief conversation with Edward, after which the latter withdrew, and the former entered upon the duties of his watch.

Mysie suffered him to walk there a little while undisturbed, until the dawning became more general, by which time she supposed he might have digested her coyness, and then presenting herself before the watchful sentinel, demanded of him "the keys of the outer tower, and of the courtyard gate."

"And for what purpose?" answered the warder.

"To milk the cows, and drive them out to their pasture," said Mysie; "you would not have the poor beasts kept in the byre a' morning, and the family in such distress, that there is na ane fit to do a turn but the byre-woman and myself?"

"And where is the byre-woman?" said Dan.

"Sitting with me in the kitchen, in case these distressed folks want any thing."

"There are the keys, then, Mysie Dorts," said the sentinel.

"Many thanks, Dan Ne'er-do-weel," answered the Maid of the Mill, and escaped down stairs in a moment.

To hasten to the wood-hole, and there to robe the English knight in a short gown and petticoat, which she had provided for the purpose, was the work of another moment. She then undid the gates of the tower, and made towards the byre, or cow-house, which stood in one corner of the courtyard. Sir Piercie Shafton remonstrated against the delay which this would occasion.

"Fair and generous Molinara," he said, "had we not better undo the outward gate, and make the best of our way hence, even like a pair of sea-mews who make towards shelter of the rocks as the storm waxes high?"

"We must drive out the cows first," said Mysie, "for a sin it were to spoil the poor widow's cattle, both for her sake and the poor beasts' own; and I have no mind any one shall leave the tower in a hurry to follow us. Besides, you must have your horse, for you will need a fleet one ere all be done."

So saying, she locked and double-locked both the inward and outward door of the tower, proceeded to the cow-house, turned out the cattle, and, giving the knight his own horse to lead, drove them before her out at the court-yard gate, intending to return for her own palfrey. But the noise attending the first operation caught the wakeful attention of Edward, who, starting to the bartizan, called to know what the matter was.

Mysie answered with great readiness, that "she was driving out the cows, for that they would be spoiled for want of looking to."

"I thank thee, kind maiden," said Edward—"and yet," he added, after a moment's pause, "what damsel is that thou hast with thee?"

Mysie was about to answer, when Sir Piercie Shafton, who apparently did not desire that the great work of his liberation should be executed without the interposition of his own ingenuity, exclaimed from beneath, "I am she, O most bucolical juvenal, under whose charge are placed the milky mothers of the herd."

"Hell and darkness!" exclaimed Edward, in a transport of fury and astonishment, "it is Piercie Shafton—What! treason! treason!—ho!—Dan—Jasper—Martin—the villain escapes!"

"To horse! to horse!" cried Mysie, and in an instant mounted behind the knight, who was already in the saddle.

Edward caught up a cross-bow, and let fly a bolt, which whistled so near Mysie's ear, that she called to her companion,—"Spur—spur, Sir Knight!—the next will not miss us.—Had it been Halbert instead of Edward who bent that bow, we had been dead."

The knight pressed his horse, which dashed past the cows, and down the knoll on which the tower was situated. Then taking the road down the valley, the gallant animal, reckless of its double burden, soon conveyed them out of hearing of the tumult and alarm with which their departure filled the Tower of Glendearg.

Thus it strangely happened, that two men were flying in different directions at the same time, each accused of being the other's murderer.

Chapter the Twenty-Ninth.

—————Sure he cannot

Be so unmanly as to leave me here;

If he do, maids will not so easily

Trust men again.

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN.

The knight continued to keep the good horse at a pace as quick as the road permitted, until they had cleared the valley of Glendearg, and entered upon the broad dale of the Tweed, which now rolled before them in crystal beauty, displaying on its opposite bank the huge gray Monastery of St. Mary's, whose towers and pinnacles were scarce yet touched by the newly-risen sun, so deeply the edifice lies shrouded under the mountains which rise to the southward.

Turning to the left, the knight continued his road down to the northern bank of the river, until they arrived nearly opposite to the weir, or dam-dike, where Father Philip concluded his extraordinary aquatic excursion.

Sir Piercie Shafton, whose brain seldom admitted more than one idea at a time, had hitherto pushed forward without very distinctly considering where he was going. But the sight of the Monastery so near to him, reminded, him that he was still on dangerous ground, and that he must necessarily provide for his safety by choosing some settled plan of escape. The situation of his guide and deliverer also occurred to him, for he was far from being either selfish or ungrateful. He listened, and discovered that the Miller's daughter was sobbing and weeping bitterly as she rested her head on his shoulder.

"What ails thee," he said, "my generous Molinara?—is there aught that Piercie Shafton can do which may show his gratitude to his deliverer?" Mysie pointed with her finger across the river, but ventured not to turn her eyes in that direction. "Nay, but speak plain, most generous damsel," said the knight, who, for once, was puzzled as much as his own elegance of speech was wont to puzzle others, "for I swear to you that I comprehend nought by the extension of thy fair digit."

"Yonder is my father's house," said Mysie, in a voice interrupted by the increased burst of her sorrow.

"And I was carrying thee discourteously to a distance from thy habitation?" said Shafton, imagining he had found out the source of her grief. "Wo worth the hour that Piercie Shafton, in attention to his own safety, neglected the accommodation of any female, far less of his most beneficent liberatrice! Dismount, then, O lovely Molinara, unless thou wouldst rather that I should transport thee on horseback to the house of thy molendinary father, which, if thou sayest the word, I am prompt to do, defying all dangers which may arise to me personally, whether by monk or miller."

Mysie suppressed her sobs, and with considerable difficulty muttered her desire to alight, and take her fortune by herself. Sir Piercie Shafton, too devoted a squire of dames to consider the most lowly as exempted from a respectful attention, independent of the claims which the Miller's maiden possessed over him, dismounted instantly from his horse, and received in his arms the poor girl, who still wept bitterly, and, when placed on the ground, seemed scarce able to support herself, or at least still clung, though, as it appeared, unconsciously, to the support he had afforded. He carried her to a weeping birch tree, which grew on the green-sward bank around which the road winded, and, placing her on the ground beneath it, exhorted her to compose herself. A strong touch of natural feeling struggled with, and half overcame, his acquired affectation, while he said, "Credit me, most generous damsel, the service you have done to Piercie Shafton he would have deemed too dearly bought, had he foreseen it was to cost you these tears and singults. Show me the cause of your grief, and if I can do aught to remove it, believe that the rights you have acquired over me will make your commands sacred as those of an empress. Speak, then, fair Molinara, and command him whom fortune hath rendered at once your debtor and your champion. What are your orders?"

"Only that you will fly and save yourself," said Mysie, mustering up her utmost efforts to utter these few words.

"Yet," said the knight, "let me not leave you without some token of remembrance." Mysie would have said there needed none, and most truly would she have spoken, could she have spoken for weeping. "Piercie Shafton is poor," he continued, "but let this chain testify he is not ungrateful to his deliverer."

He took from his neck the rich chain and medallion we have formerly mentioned, and put it into the powerless hand of the poor maiden, who neither received nor rejected it, but, occupied with more intense feelings, seemed scarce aware of what he was doing.

"We shall meet again," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "at least I trust so; meanwhile, weep no more, fair Molinara, an thou lovest me."

The phrase of conjuration was but used as an ordinary commonplace expression of the time, but bore a deeper sense to poor Mysie's ear. She dried her tears; and when the knight, in all kind and chivalrous courtesy, stooped to embrace her at their parting, she rose humbly up to receive the proffered honour in a posture of more deference, and meekly and gratefully accepted the offered salute. Sir Piercie Shafton mounted his horse, and began to ride off, but curiosity, or perhaps a stronger feeling, soon induced him to look back, when he beheld the Miller's daughter standing still motionless on the spot where they had parted, her eyes turned after him, and the unheeded chain hanging from her hand.

It was at this moment that a glimpse of the real state of Mysie's affections, and of the motive from which she had acted in the whole matter, glanced on Sir Piercie Shafton's mind. The gallants of that age, disinterested, aspiring, and lofty-minded, even in their coxcombry, were strangers to those degrading and mischievous pursuits which are usually termed low amours. They did not "chase the humble maidens of the plain," or degrade their own rank, to deprive rural innocence of peace and virtue. It followed, of course, that as conquests in this class were no part of their ambition, they were in most cases totally overlooked and unsuspected, left unimproved, as a modern would call it, where, as on the present occasion, they were casually made. The companion of Astrophel, and flower of the tilt-yard of Felician, had no more idea that his graces and good parts could attach the love of Mysie Happer, than a first-rate beauty in the boxes dreams of the fatal wound which her charms may inflict on some attorney's romantic apprentice in the pit. I suppose, in any ordinary case, the pride of rank and distinction would have pronounced on the humble admirer the doom which Beau Fielding denounced against the whole female world, "Let them look and die;" but the obligations under which he lay to the enamoured maiden, miller's daughter as she was, precluded the possibility of Sir Piercie's treating the matter *en cavalier*, and, much embarrassed, yet a little flattered at the same time, he rode back to try what could be done for the damsel's relief.

The innate modesty of poor Mysie could not prevent her showing too obvious signs of joy at Sir Piercie Shafton's return. She was betrayed by the sparkle of the rekindling eye, and a caress which, however timidly bestowed, she could not help giving to the neck of the horse which brought back the beloved rider.

"What farther can I do for you, kind Molinara?" said Sir Piercie Shafton, himself hesitating and blushing; for, to the grace of Queen Bess's age be it spoken, her courtiers wore more iron on their breasts than brass on their foreheads, and even amid their vanities preserved still the decaying spirit of chivalry, which inspired of yore the very gentle Knight of Chaucer,

Who in his port was modest as a maid.

Mysie blushed deeply, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and Sir Piercie proceeded in the same tone of embarrassed kindness. "Are you afraid to return home alone, my kind Molinara?—would you that I should accompany you?"

"Alas!" said Mysie, looking up, and her cheek changing from scarlet to pale, "I have no home left."

"How! no home!" said Shafton; "says my generous Molinara she hath no home, when yonder stands the house of her father, and but a crystal stream between?"

"Alas!" answered the Miller's maiden, "I have no longer either home or father. He is a devoted servant to the Abbey—I have offended the Abbot, and if I return home my father will kill me."

"He dare not injure thee, by Heaven!" said Sir Piercie; "I swear to thee, by my honour and knighthood, that the forces of my cousin of Northumberland shall lay the Monastery so flat, that a horse shall not stumble as he rides over it, if they should dare to injure a hair of your head! Therefore be hopeful and content, kind Mysinda, and know you have obliged one who can and will avenge the slightest wrong offered to you."

He sprung from his horse as he spoke, and, in the animation of his argument, grasped the willing hand of Mysie, (or Mysinda as he had now christened her.) He gazed too upon full black eyes, fixed upon his own with an expression which, however subdued by maidenly shame, it was impossible to mistake, on cheeks where something like hope began to restore the natural colour, and on two lips which, like double rosebuds, were kept a little apart by expectation, and showed within a line of teeth as white as pearl. All this was dangerous to look upon, and Sir Piercie Shafton, after repeating with less and less force his request that the fair Mysinda would allow him to carry her to her father's, ended by asking the fair Mysinda to go along with him—"At least," he added, "until I shall be able to conduct you to a place of safety."

Mysie Happer made no answer; but blushing scarlet betwixt joy and shame, mutely expressed her willingness to accompany the Southron Knight, by knitting her bundle closer, and preparing to resume her seat *en croupe*. "And what is your pleasure that I should do with this?" she said, holding up the chain as if she had been for the first time aware that it was in her hand.

"Keep it, fairest Mysinda, for my sake," said the Knight.

"Not so, sir," answered Mysie, gravely; "the maidens of my country take no such gifts from their superiors, and I need no token to remind me of this morning."

Most earnestly and courteously did the Knight urge her acceptance of the proposed guerdon, but on this point Mysie was resolute; feeling, perhaps, that to accept of any thing bearing the appearance of reward, would be to place the service she had rendered him on a mercenary footing. In short, she would only agree to conceal the chain, lest it might prove the means of detecting the owner, until Sir Piercie should be placed in perfect safety.

They mounted and resumed their journey, of which Mysie, as bold and sharp-witted in some points as she was simple and susceptible in others, now took in some degree the direction, having only inquired its general destination, and learned that Sir Piercie Shafton desired to go to Edinburgh, where he hoped to find friends and protection. Possessed of this information, Mysie availed herself of her local knowledge to get as soon as possible out of the bounds of the Halidome, and into those of a temporal baron, supposed to be addicted to the reformed doctrines, and upon whose limits, at least, she thought their pursuers would not attempt to hazard any violence. She was not indeed very apprehensive of a pursuit, reckoning with some confidence that the inhabitants of the Tower of Glendearg would find it a matter of difficulty to surmount the obstacles arising from their own bolts and bars, with which she had carefully secured them before setting forth on the retreat.

They journeyed on, therefore, in tolerable security, and Sir Piercie Shafton found leisure to amuse the time in high-flown speeches and long anecdotes of the court of Feliciania, to which Mysie bent an ear not a whit less attentive, that she did not understand one word out of three which was uttered by her fellow-traveller. She listened, however, and admired upon trust, as many a wise man has been contented to treat the conversation of a handsome but silly mistress. As for Sir Piercie, he was in his element; and, well assured of the interest and full approbation of his auditor, he went on spouting Euphuism of more than usual obscurity, and at more than usual length. Thus passed the morning, and noon brought them within sight of a winding stream, on the side of which arose an ancient baronial castle, surrounded by some large trees. At a small distance from the gate of the mansion, extended, as in those days was usual, a straggling hamlet, having a church in the centre.

"There are two hostelries in this Kirk-town," said Mysie, "but the worst is best for our purpose; for it stands apart from the other houses, and I ken the man weel, for he has dealt with my father for malt."

This *causa scientiae*, to use a lawyer's phrase, was ill chosen for Mysie's purpose; for Sir Piercie Shafton had, by dint of his own loquacity, been talking himself all this while into a high esteem for his fellow-traveller, and, pleased with the gracious reception which she afforded to his powers of conversation, had well-nigh forgotten that she was not herself one of those high-born beauties of whom he was recounting so many stories, when this unlucky speech at once placed the most disadvantageous circumstances attending her lineage under his immediate recollection. He said nothing, however. What indeed could he say? Nothing was so natural as that a miller's daughter should be acquainted with publicans who dealt with her father for malt, and all that was to be wondered at was the concurrence of events which had rendered such a female the companion and guide of Sir Piercie Shafton of Wilverton, kinsman of the great Earl of Northumberland, whom princes and sovereigns themselves termed cousin, because of the Piercie blood. {Footnote: Froissart tells us somewhere, (the readers of romances are indifferent to accurate reference,) that the King of France called one of the Piercies cousin, because of the blood of Northumberland.} He felt the disgrace of strolling through the country with a miller's maiden on the crupper behind him, and was even ungrateful enough to feel some emotions of shame, when he halted his horse at the door of the little inn.

But the alert intelligence of Mysie Happer spared him farther sense of derogation, by instantly springing from his horse, and cramming the ears of mine host, who came out with his mouth agape to receive a guest of the knight's appearance, with an imagined tale, in which circumstance on circumstance were huddled so fast, as to astonish Sir Piercie Shafton, whose own invention was none of the most brilliant. She explained to the publican that this was a great English knight travelling from the Monastery to the court of Scotland, after having paid his vows to Saint Mary, and that she had been directed to conduct him so far on the road; and that Ball, her palfrey, had fallen by the way, because he had been over-wrought with carrying home the last melder of meal to the portioner of Langhope; and that she had turned in Ball to graze in the Tasker's park, near Cripplecross, for he had stood as still as Lot's wife with very weariness; and that the knight had courteously insisted she should ride behind him, and that she had brought him to her kend friend's hostelry rather than to proud Peter Peddie's, who got his malt at the Mellerstane mills; and that he must get the best that the house afforded, and that he must get it ready in a moment of time, and that she was ready to help in the kitchen.

All this ran glibly off the tongue without pause on the part of Mysie Happer, or doubt on that of the landlord. The guest's horse was conducted to the stable, and he himself installed in the cleanest corner and best seat which the place afforded. Mysie, ever active and officious, was at once engaged in preparing food, in spreading the table, and in making all the better arrangements which her experience could suggest, for the honour and comfort of her companion. He would fain have resisted this; for while it was impossible not to be gratified with the eager and alert kindness which was so active in his service, he felt an undefinable pain in seeing Mysinda engaged in these menial services, and discharging them, moreover, as one to whom they were but too familiar. Yet this jarring feeling was mixed with, and perhaps balanced by, the extreme grace with which the neat-handed maiden executed these tasks, however mean in themselves, and gave to the wretched corner of a miserable inn of the period, the air of a bower, in which an enamoured fairy, or at least a shepherdess of Arcadia, was displaying, with unavailing solicitude, her designs on the heart of some knight, destined by fortune to higher thoughts, and a more splendid union.

The lightness and grace with which Mysie covered the little round table with a snow-white cloth, and arranged upon it the hastily-roasted capon, with its accompanying stoup of Bourdeaux, were but plebeian graces in themselves; but yet there were very flattering ideas excited by each glance. She was so very well made, agile at once and graceful, with her hand and arm as white as snow, and her face in which a smile contended with a blush, and her eyes which looked ever at Shafton when he looked elsewhere, and were dropped at once when they encountered his, that she was irresistible! In fine, the affectionate delicacy of her whole demeanour, joined to the promptitude and boldness she had so lately evinced, tended to ennoble the services she had rendered, as if some

—sweet engaging Grace

Put on some clothes to come abroad,

And took a waiter's place.

But, on the other hand, came the damning reflection, that these duties were not taught her by Love, to serve the beloved only, but arose from the ordinary and natural habits of a miller's daughter, accustomed, doubtless, to render the same service to every wealthier churl who frequented her father's mill. This stopped the mouth of vanity, and of the love which vanity had been hatching, as effectually as a peck of literal flour would have done.

Amidst this variety of emotions, Sir Piercie Shafton forgot not to ask the object of them to sit down and partake the good cheer which she had been so anxious to provide and to place in order. He expected that this invitation would have been bashfully, perhaps, but certainly most thankfully, accepted; but he was partly flattered, and partly piqued, by the mixture of deference and resolution with which Mysie declined his invitation. Immediately after, she vanished from the apartment, leaving the Euphuist to consider whether he was most gratified or displeased by her disappearance.

In fact, this was a point on which he would have found it difficult to make up his mind, had there been any necessity for it. As there was none, he drank a few cups of claret, and sang (to himself) a strophe or two of the canzonettes of the divine Astrophel. But in spite both of wine and of Sir Philip Sidney, the connexion in which he now stood, and that which he was in future to hold, with the lovely Molinara, or Mysinda, as he had been pleased to denominate Mysie Happer, recurred to his mind. The fashion of the times (as we have already noticed) fortunately coincided with his own natural generosity of disposition, which indeed amounted almost to extravagance, in prohibiting, as a deadly sin, alike against gallantry, chivalry, and morality, his rewarding the good offices he had received from this poor maiden, by abusing any of the advantages which her confidence in his honour had afforded. To do Sir Piercie justice, it was an idea which never entered into his head; and he would probably have dealt the most scientific *imbroccata*, *stoccata*, or *punto reverso*, which the school of Vincent Saviola had taught him, to any man who had dared to suggest to him such selfish and ungrateful meanness. On the other hand, he was a man, and foresaw various circumstances which might render their journey together in this intimate fashion a scandal and a snare. Moreover, he was a coxcomb and a courtier, and felt there was something ridiculous

in travelling the land with a miller's daughter behind his saddle, giving rise to suspicions not very creditable to either, and to ludicrous constructions, so far as he himself was concerned.

"I would," he said half aloud, "that if such might be done without harm or discredit to the too-ambitious, yet too-well-distinguishing Molinara, she and I were fairly severed, and bound on our different courses; even as we see the goodly vessel bound for the distant seas hoist sails and bear away into the deep, while the humble fly-boat carries to shore those friends, who, with wounded hearts and watery eyes, have committed to their higher destinies the more daring adventurers by whom the fair frigate is manned."

He had scarce uttered the wish when it was gratified; for the host entered to say that his worshipful knighthood's horse was ready to be brought forth as he had desired; and on his inquiry for "the—the damsel—that is—the young woman—"

"Mysie Happer," said the landlord, "has returned to her father's; but she bade me say, you could not miss the road for Edinburgh, in respect it was neither far way nor foul gate."

It is seldom we are exactly blessed with the precise fulfilment of our wishes at the moment when we utter them; perhaps, because Heaven wisely withholds what, if granted, would be often received with ingratitude. So at least it chanced in the present instance; for when mine host said that Mysie was returned homeward, the knight was tempted to reply, with an ejaculation of surprise and vexation, and a hasty demand, whither and when she had departed? The first emotions his prudence suppressed, the second found utterance.

"Where is she gane?" said the host, gazing on him, and repeating his question—"She is gane hame to her father's, it is like—and she gaed just when she gave orders about your worship's horse, and saw it well fed, (she might have trusted me, but millers and millers' kin think a' body as thief-like as themselves,) an' she's three miles on the gate by this time."

"Is she gone then?" muttered Sir Piercie, making two or three hasty strides through the narrow apartment—"Is she gone?—Well, then, let her go. She could have had but disgrace by abiding by me, and I little credit by her society. That I should have thought there was such difficulty in shaking her off! I warrant she is by this time laughing with some clown she has encountered; and my rich chain will prove a good dowry.—And ought it not to prove so? and has she not deserved it, were it ten times more valuable?—Piercie Shafton! Piercie Shafton! dost thou grudge thy deliverer the guerdon she hath so dearly won? The selfish air of this northern land hath infected thee, Piercie Shafton! and blighted the blossoms of thy generosity, even as it is said to shrivel the flowers of the mulberry.—Yet I thought," he added, after a moment's pause, "that she would not so easily and voluntarily have parted from me. But it skills not thinking of it.—Cast my reckoning, mine host, and let your groom lead forth my nag."

The good host seemed also to have some mental point to discuss, for he answered not instantly, debating perhaps whether his conscience would bear a double charge for the same guests. Apparently his conscience replied in the negative, though not without hesitation, for he at length replied—"It's daffing to lee; it winna deny that the lawing is clean paid. Ne'ertheless, if your worshipful knighthood pleases to give aught for increase of trouble—"

"How!" said the knight; "the reckoning paid? and by whom, I pray you?"

"E'en by Mysie Happer, if truth maun be spoken, as I said before," answered the honest landlord, with as many compunctious visitings for telling the verity as another might have felt for making a lie in the circumstances—"And out of the moneys supplied for your honour's journey by the Abbot, as she tauld to me. And laith were I to surcharge any gentleman that darkens my doors." He added in the confidence of honesty which his frank avowal entitled him to entertain, "Nevertheless, as I said before, if it pleases your knighthood of free good-will to consider extraordinary trouble—"

The knight cut short his argument, by throwing the landlord a rose-noble, which probably doubled the value of a Scottish reckoning, though it would have defrayed but a half one at the Three Cranes or the Vintry. The bounty so much delighted mine host, that he ran to fill the stirrup-cup (for which no charge was ever made) from a butt yet charier than that which he had pierced for the former stoup. The knight paced slowly to horse, partook of his courtesy, and thanked him with the stiff condescension of the court of Elizabeth; then mounted and followed the northern path, which was pointed out as the nearest to Edinburgh, and which, though very unlike a modern highway, bore yet so distinct a resemblance to a public and frequented road as not to be easily mistaken.

"I shall not need her guidance it seems," said he to himself, as he rode slowly onward; "and I suppose that was one reason of her abrupt departure, so different from what one might have expected.—Well, I am well rid of her. Do we not pray to be liberated from temptation? Yet that she should have erred so much in estimation of her own situation and mine, as to think of defraying the reckoning! I would I saw her once more, but to explain to her the solecism of which her inexperience hath rendered her guilty. And I fear," he added, as he emerged from some straggling trees, and looked out upon a wild moorish country, composed of a succession of swelling lumpish hills, "I fear I shall soon want the aid of this Ariadne, who might afford me a clew through the recesses of yonder mountainous labyrinth."

As the Knight thus communed with himself, his attention was caught by the sound of a horse's footsteps; and a lad, mounted on a little gray Scottish nag, about fourteen hands high, coming along a path which led from behind the trees, joined him on the high-road, if it could be termed such. The dress of the lad was completely in village fashion, yet neat and handsome in appearance. He had a jerkin of gray cloth slashed and trimmed, with black hose of the same, with deer-skin rullions or sandals, and handsome silver spurs. A cloak of a dark mulberry colour was closely drawn round the upper part of his person, and the cape in part muffled his face, which was also obscured by his bonnet of black velvet cloth, and its little plume of feathers.

Sir Piercie Shafton, fond of society, desirous also to have a guide, and, moreover, prepossessed in favour of so handsome a youth, failed not to ask him whence he came, and whither he was going. The youth looked another way, as he answered, that he was going to Edinburgh, "to seek service in some nobleman's family."

"I fear me you have run away from your last master," said Sir Piercie, "since you dare not look me in the face while you answer my question."

"Indeed, sir, I have not," answered the lad, bashfully, while, as if with reluctance, he turned round his face, and instantly withdrew it. It was a glance, but the discovery was complete. There was no mistaking the dark full eye, the cheek in which much embarrassment could not altogether disguise an expression of comic humour, and the whole figure at once betrayed, under her metamorphosis, the Maid of the Mill. The recognition was joyful, and Sir Piercie Shafton was too much pleased to have regained his companion to remember the very good reasons which had consoled him for losing her.

To his questions respecting her dress, she answered that she had obtained it in the Kirktown from a friend; it was the holiday suit of a son of hers, who had taken the field with his liege-lord, the baron of the land. She had borrowed the suit under pretence she meant to play in some mumming or rural masquerade. She had left, she said, her own apparel in exchange, which was better worth ten crowns than this was worth four.

"And the nag, my ingenious Molinara," said Sir Piercie, "whence comes the nag?"

"I borrowed him from our host at the Gled's-Nest," she replied; and added, half stifling a laugh, "he has sent to get, instead of it, our Ball, which I left in the Tasker's Park at Cripplecross. He will be lucky if he find it there."

"But then the poor man will lose his horse, most argue Mysinda," said Sir Piercie Shafton, whose English notions of property were a little startled at a mode of acquisition more congenial to the ideas of a miller's daughter (and he a Border miller to boot) than with those of an English person of quality.

"And if he does lose his horse," said Mysie, laughing, "surely he is not the first man on the marches who has had such a mischance. But he will be no loser, for I warrant he will stop the value out of moneys which he has owed my father this many a day."

"But then your father will be the loser," objected yet again the pertinacious uprightness of Sir Piercie Shafton.

"What signifies it now to talk of my father?" said the damsel, pettishly; then instantly changing to a tone of deep feeling, she added, "my father has this day lost that which will make him hold light the loss of all the gear he has left."

Struck with the accents of remorseful sorrow in which his companion uttered these few words, the English knight felt himself bound both in honour and conscience to expostulate with her as strongly as he could, on the risk of the step which she had now taken, and on the propriety of her returning to her father's house. The matter of his discourse, though adorned with many unnecessary flourishes, was honourable both to his head and heart.

The Maid of the Mill listened to his flowing periods with her head sunk on her bosom as she rode, like one in deep thought or deeper sorrow. When he had finished, she raised up her countenance, looked full on the knight, and replied with great firmness—"If you are weary of my company, Sir Piercie Shafton, you have but to say so, and the Miller's daughter will be no farther cumber to you. And do not think I will be a burden to you, if we travel together to Edinburgh; I have wit enough and pride enough to be a willing burden to no man. But if you reject not my company at present, and fear not it will be burdensome to you hereafter, speak no more to me of returning back. All that you can say to me I have said to myself; and that I am now here, is a sign that I have said it to no purpose. Let this subject, therefore, be forever ended betwixt us. I have already, in some small fashion, been useful to you, and the time may come I may be more so; for this is not your land of England, where men say justice is done with little fear or favour to great and to small; but it is a land where men do by the strong hand, and defend by the ready wit, and I know better than you the perils you are exposed to."

Sir Piercie Shafton was somewhat mortified to find that the damsel conceived her presence useful to him as a protectress as well as guide, and said something of seeking protection of nought save his own arm and his good sword. Mysie answered very quietly, that she nothing doubted his bravery; but it was that very quality of bravery which was most likely to involve him in danger. Sir Piercie Shafton, whose head never kept very long in any continued train of thinking, acquiesced without much reply, resolving in his own mind that the maiden only used this apology to disguise her real motive, of affection to his person. The romance of the situation flattered his vanity and elevated his imagination, as placing him in the situation of one of those romantic heroes of whom he had read the histories, where similar transformations made a distinguished figure.

He took many a sidelong glance at his page, whose habits of country sport and country exercise had rendered her quite adequate to sustain the character she had assumed. She managed the little nag with dexterity, and even with grace; nor did any thing appear that could have betrayed her disguise, except when a bashful consciousness of her companion's eye being fixed on her, gave her an appearance of temporary embarrassment, which greatly added to her beauty.

The couple rode forward as in the morning, pleased with themselves and with each other, until they arrived at the village where they were to repose for the night, and where all the inhabitants of the little inn, both male and female, joined in extolling the good grace and handsome countenance of the English knight, and the uncommon beauty of his youthful attendant.

It was here that Mysie Happer first made Sir Piercie Shafton sensible of the reserved manner in which she proposed to live with him. She announced him as her master, and, waiting upon him with the reverent demeanour of an actual domestic, permitted not the least approach to familiarity, not even such as the knight might with the utmost innocence have ventured upon. For example, Sir Piercie, who, as we know, was a great connoisseur in dress, was detailing to her the advantageous change which he proposed to make in her attire as soon as they should reach Edinburgh, by arraying her in his own colours of pink and carnation. Mysie Happer listened with great complacency to the unction with which he dilated upon welts, laces, slashes, and trimmings, until, carried away by the enthusiasm with which he was asserting the superiority of the falling band over the Spanish ruff, he approached his hand, in the way of illustration, towards the collar of his page's doublet. She instantly stepped back and gravely reminded him that she was alone and under his protection.

"You cannot but remember the cause which has brought me here," she continued; "make the least approach to any familiarity which you would not offer to a princess surrounded by her court, and you have seen the last of the Miller's daughter—She will vanish as the chaff disappears from the shieling-hill {Footnote: The place where corn was winnowed, while that operation was performed by the hand, was called in Scotland the Shieling-hill.} when the west wind blows."

"I do protest, fair Molinara," said Sir Piercie Shafton—but the fair Molinara had disappeared before his protest could be uttered. "A most singular wench," said he to himself; "and by this hand, as discreet as she is fair-featured—Certes, shame it were to offer her scathe or dishonour! She makes similes too, though somewhat savouring of her condition. Had she but read Euphues, and forgotten that accursed mill and shieling-hill, it is my thought that her converse would be brodered with as many and as choice pearls of compliment, as that of the most rhetorical lady in the court of Feliciania. I trust she means to return to bear me company."

But that was no part of Mysie's prudential scheme. It was then drawing to dusk, and he saw her not again until the next morning, when the horses were brought to the door that they might prosecute their journey.

But our story here necessarily leaves the English knight and his page, to return to the Tower of Glendearg.

Chapter the Thirtieth.

You call it an ill angel it may be so,
But sure I am, among the ranks which fell,
'Tis the first fiend e'er counsell'd man to rise,
And win the bliss the sprite himself had forfeited.

OLD PLAY.

We must resume our narrative at the period when Mary Avenel was conveyed to the apartment which had been formerly occupied by the two Glendinnings, and when her faithful attendant, Tibbie, had exhausted herself in useless attempts to compose and to comfort her. Father Eustace also dealt forth with well-meant kindness those apophthegms and dogmata of consolation, which friendship almost always offers to grief, though they are uniformly offered in vain. She was at length left to indulge in the desolation of her own sorrowful feelings. She felt as those who, loving for the first time, have lost what they loved, before time and repeated calamity have taught them that every loss is to a certain extent reparable or endurable.

Such grief may be conceived better than it can be described, as is well known to those who have experienced it. But Mary Avenel had been taught by the peculiarity of her situation, to regard herself as the Child of Destiny; and the melancholy and reflecting turn of her disposition gave to her sorrows a depth and breadth peculiar to her character. The grave—and it was a bloody grave—had closed, as she believed, over the youth to whom she was secretly, but most warmly attached; the force and ardour of Halbert's character bearing a singular correspondence to the energy of which her own was capable. Her sorrow did not exhaust itself in sighs and tears, but when the first shock had passed away, concentrated itself with deep and steady meditation, to collect and calculate, like a bankrupt debtor, the full amount of her loss. It seemed as if all that connected her with earth, had vanished with this broken tie. She had never dared to anticipate the probability of an ultimate union with Halbert, yet now his supposed fall seemed that of the only tree which was to shelter her from the storm. She respected the more gentle character, and more peaceful attainments, of the younger Glendinning; but it had not escaped her (what never indeed escaped woman in such circumstances) that he was disposed to place himself in competition with what she, the daughter of a proud and warlike race, deemed the more manly qualities of his elder brother; and there is no time when a woman does so little justice to the character of a surviving lover, as when comparing him with the preferred rival of whom she has been recently deprived.

The motherly, but coarse kindness of Dame Glendinning, and the doating fondness of her old domestic, seemed now the only kind feeling of which she formed the object; and she could not but reflect how little these were to be compared with the devoted attachment of a high-souled youth, whom the least glance of her eye could command, as the high-mettled steed is governed by the bridle of the rider. It was when plunged among these desolating reflections, that Mary Avenel felt the void of mind, arising from the narrow and bigoted ignorance in which Rome then educated the children of her church. Their whole religion was a ritual, and their prayers were the formal iteration of unknown words, which, in the hour of affliction, could yield but little consolation to those who from habit resorted to them. Unused to the practice of mental devotion, and of personal approach to the Divine Presence by prayer, she could not help exclaiming in her distress, "There is no aid for me on earth, and I know not how to ask it from Heaven!"

As she spoke thus in an agony of sorrow, she cast her eyes into the apartment, and saw the mysterious Spirit, which waited upon the fortunes of her house, standing in the moonlight in the midst of the room. The same form, as the reader knows, had more than once offered itself to her sight; and either her native

boldness of mind, or some peculiarity attached to her from her birth, made her now look upon it without shrinking. But the White Lady of Avenel was now more distinctly visible, and more closely present, than she had ever before seemed to be, and Mary was appalled by her presence. She would, however, have spoken; but there ran a tradition, that though others who had seen the White Lady had asked questions and received answers, yet those of the house of Avenel who had ventured to speak to her, had never long survived the colloquy. The figure, besides, as sitting up in her bed, Mary Avenel gazed on it intently, seemed by its gestures to caution her to keep silence, and at the same time to bespeak attention.

The White Lady then seemed to press one of the planks of the floor with her foot, while, in her usual low, melancholy, and musical chant, she repeated the following verses:

"Maiden, whose sorrows wail the Living Dead,
Whose eyes shall commune with the Dead Alive,
Maiden, attend! Beneath my foot lies hid
The Word, the Law, the Path, which thou dost strive
To find and canst not find.—Could spirits shed
Tears for their lot, it were my lot to weep,
Showing the road which I shall never tread,
Though my foot points it.—Sleep, eternal sleep,
Dark, long, and cold forgetfulness my lot!—
But do not thou at human ills repine,
Secure there lies full guerdon in this spot
For all the woes that wait frail Adam's line—
Stoop, then, and make it yours—I may not make it mine!"

The phantom stooped towards the floor as she concluded, as if with the intention of laying her hand on the board on which she stood. But ere she had completed that gesture, her form became indistinct, was presently only like the shade of a fleecy cloud, which passed betwixt earth and the moon, and was soon altogether invisible.

A strong impression of fear, the first which she had experienced in her life to any agitating extent, seized upon the mind of Mary Avenel, and for a minute she felt a disposition to faint. She repelled it, however, mustered her courage, and addressed herself to saints and angels, as her church recommended. Broken slumbers at length stole on her exhausted mind and frame, and she slept until the dawn was about to rise, when she was awakened by the cry of "Treason! treason! follow, follow!" which arose in the tower, when it was found that Piercie Shafton had made his escape.

Apprehensive of some new misfortune, Mary Avenel hastily arranged the dress which she had not laid aside, and, venturing to quit her chamber, learned from Tibb, who, with her gray hairs dishevelled like those of a sibyl, was flying from room to room, that the bloody Southron villain had made his escape, and that Halbert Glendinning, poor bairn, would sleep unrevenged and unquiet in his bloody grave. In the lower apartments, the young men were roaring like thunder, and venting in oaths and exclamations against the fugitives the rage which they experienced in finding themselves locked up within the tower, and debarred from their vindictive pursuit by the wily precautions of Mysie Happer. The authoritative voice of the Sub-Prior commanding silence was next heard; upon which Mary Avenel, whose tone of feeling did not lead her to enter into counsel or society with the rest of the party, again retired to her solitary chamber.

The rest of the family held counsel in the spence, Edward almost beside himself with rage, and the Sub-Prior in no small degree offended at the effrontery of Mysie Happer in attempting such a scheme, as well as at the mingled boldness and dexterity with which it had been executed. But neither surprise nor anger availed aught. The windows, well secured with iron bars for keeping assailants out, proved now as effectual for detaining the inhabitants within. The battlements were open, indeed; but without ladder or ropes to act as a substitute for wings, there was no possibility of descending from them. They easily succeeded in alarming the inhabitants of the cottages beyond the precincts of the court; but the men had been called in to strengthen the guard for the night, and only women and children remained who could contribute nothing in the emergency, except their useless exclamations of surprise, and there were no neighbours for miles around. Dame Elspeth, however, though drowned in tears, was not so unmindful of external affairs, but that she could find voice enough to tell the women and children without, to "leave their skirling, and look after the cows that she couldna get minded, what wi' the awfu' distraction of her mind, what wi' that fause slut having locked them up in their ain tower as fast as if they had been in the Jeddart tolbooth."

Meanwhile, the men finding other modes of exit impossible, unanimously concluded to force the doors with such tools as the house afforded for the purpose. These were not very proper for the occasion, and the strength of the doors was great. The interior one, formed of oak, occupied them for three mortal hours, and there was little prospect of the iron door being forced in double the time.

While they were engaged in this ungrateful toil, Mary Avenel had with much less labour acquired exact knowledge of what the Spirit had intimated in her mystic rhyme. On examining the spot which the phantom had indicated by her gestures, it was not difficult to discover that a board had been loosened, which might be raised at pleasure. On removing this piece of plank, Mary Avenel was astonished to find the Black Book, well remembered by her as her mother's favourite study, of which she immediately took possession, with as much joy as her present situation rendered her capable of feeling.

Ignorant in a great measure of its contents, Mary Avenel had been taught from her infancy to hold this volume in sacred veneration. It is probable that the deceased Lady of Walter Avenel only postponed initiating her daughter into the mysteries of the Divine Word, until she should be better able to comprehend both the lessons which it taught, and the risk at which, in those times, they were studied. Death interposed, and removed her before the times became favourable to the reformers, and before her daughter was so far advanced in age as to be fit to receive religious instruction of this deep import. But the affectionate mother had made preparations for the earthly work which she had most at heart. There were slips of paper inserted in the volume, in which, by an appeal to, and a comparison of, various passages in holy writ, the errors and human inventions with which the Church of Rome had defaced the simple edifice of Christianity, as erected by its divine architect, were pointed out. These controversial topics were treated with a spirit of calmness and Christian charity, which might have been an example to the theologians of the period; but they were clearly, fairly, and plainly argued, and supported by the necessary proofs and references. Other papers there were which had no reference whatever to polemics, but were the simple effusions of a devout mind communing with itself. Among these was one frequently used, as it seemed from the state of the manuscript, on which the mother of Mary had transcribed and placed together those affecting texts to which the heart has recourse, in affliction, and which assures us at once of the sympathy and protection afforded to the children of the promise. In Mary Avenel's state of mind, these attracted her above all the other lessons, which, coming from a hand so dear, had reached her at a time so critical, and in a manner so touching. She read the affecting promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and the consoling exhortation, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." She read them, and her heart acquiesced in the conclusion. Surely this is the word of God!

There are those to whom a sense of religion has come in storm and tempest; there are those whom it has summoned amid scenes of revelry and idle vanity; there are those, too, who have heard its "still small voice" amid rural leisure and placid contentment. But perhaps the knowledge which causeth not to err, is most frequently impressed upon the mind during seasons of affliction; and tears are the softened showers which cause the seed of Heaven to spring and take root in the human breast. At least it was thus with Mary Avenel. She was insensible to the discordant noise which rang below, the clang of bars and the jarring symphony of the levers which they used to force them, the measured shouts of the labouring inmates as they combined their strength for each heave, and gave time with their voices to the exertion of their arms, and their deeply muttered vows of revenge on the fugitives who had bequeathed them at their departure a task so toilsome and difficult. Not all this din, combined in hideous concert, and expressive of aught but peace, love, and forgiveness, could divert Mary Avenel from the new course of study on which she had so singularly entered. "The serenity of Heaven," she said, "is above me; the sounds which are around are but those of earth and earthly passion."

Meanwhile the noon was passed, and little impression was made on the iron grate, when they who laboured at it received a sudden reinforcement by the unexpected arrival of Christie of the Clinthill. He came at the head of a small party, consisting of four horsemen, who bore in their caps the sprig of holly, which was the badge of Avenel.

"What, ho!—my masters," he said, "I bring you a prisoner."

"You had better have brought us liberty," said Dan of the Howlet-hirst.

Christie looked at the state of affairs with great surprise. "An I were to be hanged for it," he said, "as I may for as little a matter, I could not forbear laughing at seeing men peeping through their own bars like so many rats in a rat-trap, and he with the beard behind, like the oldest rat in the cellar."

"Hush, thou unmannered knave," said Edward, "it is the Sub-Prior; and this is neither time, place, nor company, for your ruffian jests."

"What, ho! is my young master malapert?" said Christie; "why, man, were he my own carnal father, instead of being father to half the world, I would have my laugh out. And now it is over, I must assist you, I reckon, for you are setting very greenly about this gear—put the pinch nearer the staple, man, and hand me an iron crow through the grate, for that's the fowl to fly away with a wicket on its shoulders. I have broke into as many grates as you have teeth in your young head—ay, and broke out of them too, as the captain of the Castle of Lochmaben knows full well."

Christie did not boast more skill than he really possessed; for, applying their combined strength, under the direction of that experienced engineer, bolt and staple gave way before them, and in less than half an hour, the grate, which had so long repelled their force, stood open before them.

"And now," said Edward, "to horse, my mates, and pursue the villain Shafton!"

"Halt, there," said Christie of the Clinthill; "pursue your guest, my master's friend and my own?—there go two words to that bargain. What the foul fiend would you pursue him for?"

"Let me pass," said Edward, vehemently, "I will be staid by no man—the villain has murdered my brother!"

"What says he?" said Christie, turning to the others; "murdered? who is murdered, and by whom?"

"The Englishman, Sir Piercie Shafton," said Dan of the Howlet-hirst, "has murdered young Halbert Glendinning yesterday morning, and we have all risen to the fray."

"It is a bedlam business, I think," said Christie. "First I find you all locked up in your own tower, and next I am come to prevent you revenging a murder that was never committed!"

"I tell you," said Edward, "that my brother was slain and buried yesterday morning by this false Englishman."

"And I tell you," answered Christie, "that I saw him alive and well last night. I would I knew his trick of getting out of the grave; most men find it more hard to break through a green sod than a grated door."

Every body now paused, and looked on Christie in astonishment, until the Sub-Prior, who had hitherto avoided communication with him, came up and required earnestly to know, whether he meant really to maintain that Halbert Glendinning lived.

"Father," he said, with more respect than he usually showed to any one save his master, "I confess I may sometimes jest with those of your coat, but not with you; because, as you may partly recollect, I owe you a life. It is certain as the sun is in heaven, that Halbert Glendinning supped at the house of my master the Baron of Avenel last night, and that he came thither in company with an old man, of whom more anon."

"And where is he now?"

"The devil only can answer that question," replied Christie, "for the devil has possessed the whole family, I think. He took fright, the foolish lad, at something or other which our Baron did in his moody humour, and so he jumped into the lake and swam ashore like a wild-duck. Robin of Redcastle spoiled a good gelding in chasing him this morning."

"And why did he chase the youth?" said the Sub-Prior; "what harm had he done?"

"None that I know of," said Christie; "but such was the Baron's order, being in his mood, and all the world having gone mad, as I have said before."

"Whither away so fast, Edward?" said the monk.

"To Corri-nan-shian, Father," answered the youth.—"Martin and Dan, take pickaxe and mattock, and follow me if you be men!"

"Right," said the monk, "and fail not to give us instant notice what you find."

"If you find aught there like Halbert Glendinning," said Christie, hallooing after Edward, "I will be bound to eat him unsalted.—T is a sight to see how that fellow takes the bent!—It is in the time of action men see what lads are made of. Halbert was aye skipping up and down like a roo, and his brother used to sit in the chimney nook with his book and sic-like trash—But the lad was like a loaded hackbut, which will stand in the corner as quiet as an old crutch until ye draw the trigger, and then there is nothing but flash and smoke.—But here comes my prisoner; and, setting other matters aside, I must pray a word with you, Sir Sub-Prior, respecting him. I came on before to treat about him, but I was interrupted with this fasherie."

As he spoke, two more of Avenel's troopers rode into the court-yard, leading betwixt them a horse, on which, with his hands bound to his side, sate the reformed preacher, Henry Warden.

Chapter the Thirty-First.

At school I knew him—a sharp-witted youth,
Grave, thoughtful, and reserved among his mates,
Turning the hours of sport and food to labour,
Starving his body to inform his mind.

OLD PLAY.

The Sub-Prior, at the Borderer's request, had not failed to return to the tower, into which he was followed by Christie of the Clinthill, who, shutting the door of the apartment, drew near, and began his discourse with great confidence and familiarity.

"My master," he said, "sends me with his commendations to you, Sir Sub-Prior, above all the community of Saint Mary's, and more specially than even to the Abbot himself; for though he be termed my lord, and so forth, all the world knows that you are the tongue of the trump."

"If you have aught to say to me concerning the community," said the Sub-Prior, "it were well you proceeded in it without farther delay. Time presses, and the fate of young Glendinning dwells on my mind."

"I will be caution for him, body for body," said Christie. "I do protest to you, as sure as I am a living man, so surely is he one."

"Should I not tell his unhappy mother the joyful tidings?" said Father Eustace,—and yet better wait till they return from searching the grave. Well, Sir Jackman, your message to me from your master?"

"My lord and master," said Christie, "hath good reason to believe that, from the information of certain back friends, whom he will reward at more leisure, your reverend community hath been led to deem him ill attached to Holy Church, allied with heretics and those who favour heresy, and a hungerer after the spoils of your Abbey."

"Be brief, good henchman," said the Sub-Prior, "for the devil is ever most to be feared when he preacheth."

"Briefly, then—my master desires your friendship; and to excuse himself from the maligner's calumnies, he sends to your Abbot that Henry Warden, whose sermons have turned the world upside down, to be dealt with as Holy Church directs, and as the Abbot's pleasure may determine."

The Sub-Prior's eyes sparkled at the intelligence; for it had been accounted a matter of great importance that this man should be arrested, possessed, as he was known to be, of so much zeal and popularity, that scarcely the preaching of Knox himself had been more awakening to the people, and more formidable to the Church of Rome.

In fact, that ancient system, which so well accommodated its doctrines to the wants and wishes of a barbarous age, had, since the art of printing, and the gradual diffusion of knowledge, lain floating like some huge Leviathan, into which ten thousand reforming fishers were darting their harpoons. The Roman Church of Scotland, in particular, was at her last gasp, actually blowing blood and water, yet still with unremitted, though animal exertions, maintaining the conflict with the assailants, who on every side were plunging their weapons into her bulky body. In many large towns, the monasteries had been suppressed by the fury of the populace; in other places, their possessions had been usurped by the power of the reformed nobles; but still the hierarchy made a part of the common law of the realm, and might claim both its property and its privileges wherever it had the means of asserting them. The community of Saint Mary's of Kennaquhair was considered as being particularly in this situation. They had retained, undiminished, their territorial power and influence; and the great barons in the neighbourhood, partly from their attachment to the party in the state who still upheld the old system of religion, partly because each grudged the share of the prey which the others must necessarily claim, had as yet abstained from despoiling the Halidome. The Community was also understood to be protected by the powerful Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, whose zealous attachment to the Catholic faith caused at a later period the great rebellion of the tenth of Elizabeth.

Thus happily placed, it was supposed by the friends of the decaying cause of the Roman Catholic faith, that some determined example of courage and resolution, exercised where the franchises of the church were yet entire, and her jurisdiction undisputed, might awe the progress of the new opinions into activity; and, protected by the laws which still existed, and by the favour of the sovereign, might be the means of securing the territory which Rome yet preserved in Scotland, and perhaps of recovering that which she had lost.

The matter had been considered more than once by the northern Catholics of Scotland, and they had held communication with those of the south. Father Eustace, devoted by his public and private vows, had caught the flame, and had eagerly advised that they should execute the doom of heresy on the first reformed preacher, or, according to his sense, on the first heretic of eminence, who should venture within the precincts of the Halidome. A heart, naturally kind and noble, was, in this instance, as it has been in many more, deceived by its own generosity. Father Eustace would have been a bad administrator of the inquisitorial power of Spain, where that power was omnipotent, and where judgment was exercised without danger to those who inflicted it. In such a situation his rigour might have relented in favour of the criminal, whom it was at his pleasure to crush or to place at freedom. But in Scotland, during this crisis, the case was entirely different. The question was, whether one of the spirituality dared, at the hazard of his own life, to step forward to assert and exercise the rights of the church. Was there any who would venture to wield the thunder in her cause, or must it remain like that in the hand of a painted Jupiter, the object of derision instead of terror? The crisis was calculated to awake the soul of Eustace; for it comprised the question, whether he dared, at all hazards to himself, to execute with stoical severity a measure which, according to the general opinion, was to be advantageous to the church, and, according to ancient law, and to his firm belief, was not only justifiable but meritorious.

While such resolutions were agitated amongst the Catholics, chance placed a victim within their grasp. Henry Warden had, with the animation proper to the enthusiastic reformers of the age, transgressed, in the vehemence of his zeal, the bounds of the discretionary liberty allowed to his sect so far, that it was thought the Queen's personal dignity was concerned in bringing him to justice. He fled from Edinburgh, with recommendations, however, from Lord James Stewart, afterwards the celebrated Earl of Murray, to some of the Border chieftains of inferior rank, who were privately conjured to procure him safe passage into England. One of the principal persons to whom such recommendation was addressed, was Julian Avenel; for as yet, and for a considerable time afterwards, the correspondence and interest of Lord James lay rather with the subordinate leaders than with the chiefs of great power, and men of distinguished influence upon the Border. Julian Avenel had intrigued without scruple with both parties—yet bad as he was, he certainly would not have practised aught against the guest whom Lord James had recommended to his hospitality, had it not been for what he termed the preacher's officious inter-meddling in his family affairs. But when he had determined to make Warden rue the lecture he had read him, and the scene of public scandal which he had caused in his hall, Julian resolved, with the constitutional shrewdness of his disposition, to combine his vengeance with his interest. And therefore, instead of doing violence on the person of Henry Warden within his own castle, he determined to deliver him up to the Community of Saint Mary's, and at once make them the instruments of his own revenge, and found a claim of personal recompense, either in money, or in a grant of Abbey lands at a low quit-rent, which last began now to be the established form in which the temporal nobles plundered the spirituality.

The Sub-Prior, therefore, of Saint Mary's, unexpectedly saw the steadfast, active, and inflexible enemy of the church delivered into his hand, and felt himself called upon to make good his promises to the friends of the Catholic faith, by quenching heresy in the blood of one of its most zealous professors.

To the honour more of Father Eustace's heart than of his consistency, the communication that Henry Warden was placed within his power, struck him with more sorrow than triumph; but his next feelings were those of exultation. "It is sad," he said to himself, "to cause human suffering; it is awful to cause human blood to be spilled; but the judge to whom the sword of Saint Paul, as well as the keys of Saint Peter, are confided, must not flinch from his task. Our weapon returns into our own bosom, if not wielded with a steady and unrelenting hand against the irreconcilable enemies of the Holy Church. *Pereat iste!* It is the doom he has incurred, and were all the heretics in Scotland armed and at his back, they should not prevent its being pronounced, and, if possible, enforced.—Bring the heretic before me," he said, issuing his commands aloud, and in a tone of authority.

Henry Warden was led in, his hands still bound, but his feet at liberty.

"Clear the apartment," said the Sub-Prior, "of all but the necessary guard on the prisoner."

All retired except Christie of the Clinthill, who, having dismissed the inferior troopers whom he commanded, unsheathed his sword, and placed himself beside the door, as if taking upon him the character of sentinel.

The judge and the accused met face to face, and in that of both was enthroned the noble confidence of rectitude. The monk was about, at the utmost risk to himself and his community, to exercise what in his ignorance he conceived to be his duty. The preacher, actuated by a better-informed, yet not a more ardent zeal, was prompt to submit to execution for God's sake, and to seal, were it necessary, his mission with his blood. Placed at such a distance of time as better enables us to appreciate the tendency of the principles on which they severally acted, we cannot doubt to which the palm ought to be awarded. But the zeal of Father Eustace was as free from passion and personal views as if it had been exerted in a better cause.

They approached each other, armed each and prepared for intellectual conflict, and each intently regarding his opponent, as if either hoped to spy out some defect, some chasm in the armour of his antagonist.—As they gazed on each other, old recollections began to awake in either bosom, at the sight of features long unseen and much altered, but not forgotten. The brow of the Sub-Prior dismissed by degrees its frown of command, the look of calm yet stern defiance gradually vanished from that of Warden, and both lost for an instant that of gloomy solemnity. They had been ancient and intimate friends in youth at a foreign university, but had been long separated from each other; and the change of name, which the preacher had adopted from motives of safety, and the monk from the common custom of the convent, had prevented the possibility of their hitherto recognizing each other in the opposite parts which they had been playing in the great polemical and political drama. But now the Sub-Prior exclaimed, "Henry Wellwood!" and the preacher replied, "William Allan!"—and, stirred by the old familiar names, and never-to-be-forgotten recollections of college studies and college intimacy, their hands were for a moment locked in each other.

"Remove his bonds," said the Sub-Prior, and assisted Christie in performing that office with his own hands, although the prisoner scarcely would consent to be unbound, repeating with emphasis, that he rejoiced in the cause for which he suffered shame. When his hands were at liberty, however, he showed his sense of the kindness by again exchanging a grasp and a look of affection with the Sub-Prior.

The salute was frank and generous on either side, yet it was but the friendly recognition and greeting which are wont to take place betwixt adverse champions, who do nothing in hate but all in honour. As each felt the pressure of the situation in which they stood, he quitted the grasp of the other's hand, and fell back, confronting each other with looks more calm and sorrowful than expressive of any other passion. The Sub-Prior was the first to speak.

"And is this, then, the end of that restless activity of mind, that bold and indefatigable love of truth that urged investigation to its utmost limits, and seemed to take heaven itself by storm—is this the termination of Wellwood's career?—And having known and loved him during the best years of our youth, do we meet in our old age as judge and criminal?"

"Not as judge and criminal," said Henry Warden,—for to avoid confusion we describe him by his later and best known name—"Not as judge and criminal do we meet, but as a misguided oppressor and his ready and devoted victim. I, too, may ask, are these the harvest of the rich hopes excited by the classical learning, acute logical powers, and varied knowledge of William Allan, that he should sink to be the solitary drone of a cell, graced only above the swarm with the high commission of executing Roman malice on all who oppose Roman imposture?"

"Not to thee," answered the Sub-Prior, "be assured—not unto thee, nor unto mortal man, will I render an account of the power with which the church may have invested me. It was granted but as a deposit for her welfare—for her welfare it shall at every risk be exercised, without fear and without favour."

"I expected no less from your misguided zeal," answered the preacher; "and in me have you met one on whom you may fearlessly exercise your authority, secure that his mind at least will defy your influence, as the snows of that Mont Blanc which we saw together, shrink not under the heat of the hottest summer sun."

"I do believe thee," said the Sub-Prior, "I do believe that thine is indeed metal unmalleable by force. Let it yield then to persuasion. Let us debate these matters of faith, as we once were wont to conduct our scholastic disputes, when hours, nay, days, glided past in the mutual exercise of our intellectual powers. It may be thou mayest yet hear the voice of the shepherd, and return to the universal fold."

"No, Allan," replied the prisoner, "this is no vain question, devised by dreaming scholiasts, on which they may whet their intellectual faculties until the very metal be wasted away. The errors which I combat are like those fiends which are only cast out by fasting and prayer. Alas! not many wise, not many learned are chosen; the cottage and the hamlet shall in our days bear witness against the schools and their disciples. Thy very wisdom, which is foolishness, hath made thee, as the Greeks of old, hold as foolishness that which is the only true wisdom."

"This," said the Sub-Prior, sternly, "is the mere cant of ignorant enthusiasm, which appealeth from learning and from authority, from the sure guidance of that lamp which God hath afforded us in the Councils and in the Fathers of the Church, to a rash, self-willed, and arbitrary interpretation of the Scriptures, wrested according to the private opinion of each speculating heretic."

"I disdain to reply to the charge," replied Warden. "The question at issue between your Church and mine, is, whether we will be judged by the Holy Scriptures, or by the devices and decisions of men not less subject to error than ourselves, and who have defaced our holy religion with vain devices, reared up idols of stone and wood, in form of those, who, when they lived, were but sinful creatures, to share the worship due only to the Creator—established a toll-house betwixt heaven and hell, that profitable purgatory of which the Pope keeps the keys, like an iniquitous judge commutes punishment for bribes, and——"

"Silence, blasphemer," said the Sub-Prior, sternly, "or I will have thy blatant obloquy stopped with a gag!"

"Ay," replied Warden, "such is the freedom of the Christian conference to which Rome's priests so kindly invite us!—the gag—the rack—the axe—is the *ratio ultima Romae*. But know thou, mine ancient friend, that the character of thy former companion is not so changed by age, but that he still dares to endure for the cause of truth all that thy proud hierarchy shall dare to inflict."

"Of that," said the monk, "I nothing doubt—Thou wert ever a lion to turn against the spear of the hunter, not a stag to be dismayed at the sound of his bugle."—He walked through the room in silence. "Wellwood," he said at length, "we can no longer be friends. Our faith, our hope, our anchor on futurity, is no longer the same."

"Deep is my sorrow that thou speakest truth. May God so judge me," said the Reformer, "as I would buy the conversion of a soul like thine with my dearest heart's blood."

"To thee, and with better reason, do I return the wish," replied the Sub-Prior; "it is such an arm as thine that should defend the bulwarks of the Church, and it is now directing the battering-ram against them, and rendering practicable the breach through which all that is greedy, and all that is base, and all that is mutable and hot-headed in this innovating age, already hope to advance to destruction and to spoil. But since such is our fate, that we can no longer fight side by side as friends, let us at least act as generous enemies. You cannot have forgotten,

'O gran bonta dei caralieri antiqui!

Erano nemici, eran' de fede diversa'—

Although, perhaps," he added, stopping short in his quotation, "your new faith forbids you to reserve a place in your memory, even for what high poets have recorded of loyal faith and generous sentiment."

"The faith of Buchanan," replied the preacher, "the faith of Buchanan and of Beza, cannot be unfriendly to literature. But the poet you have quoted affords strains fitter for a dissolute court than for a convent."

"I might retort on your Theodore Beza," said the Sub-Prior, smiling; "but I hate the judgment that, like the flesh-fly, skims over whatever is sound, to detect and settle upon some spot which is tainted. But to the purpose. If I conduct thee or send thee a prisoner to St. Mary's, thou art to-night a tenant of the dungeon, to-morrow a burden to the gibbet-tree. If I were to let thee go hence at large, I were thereby wronging the Holy Church, and breaking mine own solemn vow. Other resolutions may be adopted in the capital, or better times may speedily ensue. Wilt thou remain a true prisoner upon thy parole, rescue or no rescue, as is the phrase amongst the warriors of this country? Wilt thou solemnly promise that thou wilt do so, and at my summons thou wilt present thyself before the Abbot and Chapter at Saint Mary's, and that thou wilt not stir from this house above a quarter of a mile in any direction? Wilt thou, I say, engage me thy word for this? and such is the sure trust which I repose in thy good faith, that thou shalt remain here unharmed and unsecured, a prisoner at large, subject only to appear before our court when called upon."

The preacher paused—"I am unwilling," he said, "to fetter my native liberty by any self-adopted engagement. But I am already in your power, and you may bind me to my answer. By such promise, to abide within a certain limit, and to appear when called upon, I renounce not any liberty which I at present possess, and am free to exercise; but, on the contrary, being in bonds, and at your mercy, I acquire thereby a liberty which I at present possess not. I will therefore accept of thy proffer, as what is courteously offered on thy part, and may be honourably accepted on mine."

"Stay yet," said the Sub-Prior, "one important part of thy engagement is forgotten—thou art farther to promise, that while thus left at liberty, thou wilt not preach or teach, directly or indirectly, any of those pestilent heresies by which so many souls have been in this our day won over from the kingdom of light to the kingdom of darkness."

"There we break off our treaty," said Warden, firmly—"Wo unto me if I preach not the Gospel!"

The Sub-Prior's countenance became clouded, and he again paced the apartment, and muttered, "A plague upon the self-willed fool!" then stopped short in his walk, and proceeded in his argument.—"Why, by thine own reasoning, Henry, thy refusal here is but peevish obstinacy. It is in my power to place you where your preaching can reach no human ear; in promising therefore to abstain from it, you grant nothing which you have it in your power to refuse."

"I know not that," replied Henry Warden; "thou mayest indeed cast me into a dungeon, but can I foretell that my Master hath not task-work for me to perform even in that dreary mansion? The chains of saints have, ere now, been the means of breaking the bonds of Satan. In a prison, holy Paul found the jailor whom he brought to believe the word of salvation, he and all his house."

"Nay," said the Sub-Prior, in a tone betwixt anger and scorn, "if you match yourself with the blessed Apostle, it were time we had done—prepare to endure what thy folly, as well as thy heresy, deserves.—Bind him, soldier."

With proud submission to his fate, and regarding the Sub-Prior with something which almost amounted to a smile of superiority, the preacher placed his arms so that the bonds could be again fastened round him.

"Spare me not," he said to Christie; for even that ruffian hesitated to draw the cord straitly.

The Sub-Prior, meanwhile, looked at him from under his cowl, which he had drawn over his head, and partly over his face, as if he wished to shade his own emotions. They were those of a huntsman within point-blank shot of a noble stag, who is yet too much struck with his majesty of front and of antler to take aim at him. They were those of a fowler, who, levelling his gun at a magnificent eagle, is yet reluctant to use his advantage when he sees the noble sovereign of the birds pruning himself in proud defiance of whatever may be attempted against him. The heart of the Sub-Prior (bigoted as he was) relented, and he doubted if he ought to purchase, by a rigorous discharge of what he deemed his duty, the remorse he might afterwards feel for the death of one so nobly independent in thought and character, the friend, besides, of his own happiest years, during which they had, side by side, striven in the noble race of knowledge, and indulged their intervals of repose in the lighter studies of classical and general letters.

The Sub-Prior's hand pressed his half-o'ershadowed cheek, and his eye, more completely obscured, was bent on the ground, as if to hide the workings of his relenting nature.

"Were but Edward safe from the infection," he thought to himself—"Edward, whose eager and enthusiastic mind presses forward in the chase of all that hath even the shadow of knowledge, I might trust this enthusiast with the women, after due caution to them that they cannot, without guilt, attend to his reveries."

As the Sub-Prior revolved these thoughts, and delayed the definitive order which was to determine the fate of the prisoner, a sudden noise at the entrance of the tower diverted his attention for an instant, and, his cheek and brow inflamed with all the glow of heat and determination, Edward Glendinning rushed into the room.

Chapter the Thirty-Second.

Then in my gown of sober gray
Along the mountain path I'll wander,
And wind my solitary way
To the sad shrine that courts me yonder.

There, in the calm monastic shade,
All injuries may be forgiven;
And there for thee, obdurate maid,
My orisons shall rise to heaven.

THE CRUEL LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS.

The first words which Edward uttered were,—“My brother is safe, reverend father—he is safe, thank God, and lives!—There is not in Corri-nan-shian a grave, nor a vestige of a grave. The turf around the fountain has neither been disturbed by pick-axe, spade, nor mattock, since the deer's-hair first sprang there. He lives as surely as I live!”

The earnestness of the youth—the vivacity with which he looked and moved—the springy step, outstretched hand, and ardent eye, reminded Henry Warden of Halbert, so lately his guide. The brothers had indeed a strong family resemblance, though Halbert was far more athletic and active in his person, taller and better knit in the limbs, and though Edward had, on ordinary occasions, a look of more habitual acuteness and more profound reflection. The preacher was interested as well as the Sub-Prior.

“Of whom do you speak, my son?” he said, in a tone as unconcerned as if his own fate had not been at the same instant trembling in the balance, and as if a dungeon and death did not appear to be his instant doom—“Of whom, I say, speak you? If of a youth somewhat older than you seem to be—brown-haired, open-featured, taller and stronger than you appear, yet having much of the same air and of the same tone of voice—if such a one is the brother whom you seek, it may be I can tell you news of him.”

“Speak, then, for Heaven's sake,” said Edward—“life or death lies on thy tongue!”

The Sub-Prior joined eagerly in the same request, and, without waiting to be urged, the preacher gave so minute an account of the circumstances under which he met the elder Glendinning, with so exact a description of his person, that there remained no doubt as to his identity. When he mentioned that Halbert Glendinning had conducted him to a dell in which they found the grass bloody, and a grave newly closed, and told how the youth accused himself of the slaughter of Sir Piercie Shafton, the Sub-Prior looked on Edward with astonishment.

“Didst thou not say, even now,” he said, “that there was no vestige of a grave in that spot?”

“No more vestige of the earth having been removed than if the turf had grown there since the days of Adam,” replied Edward Glendinning. “It is true,” he added, “that the adjacent grass was trampled and bloody.”

“These are delusions of the Enemy,” said the Sub-Prior, crossing himself.—“Christian men may no longer doubt of it.”

“But an it be so,” said Warden, “Christian men might better guard themselves by the sword of prayer than by the idle form of a cabalistical spell.”

“The badge of our salvation,” said the Sub-Prior, “cannot be so termed—the sign of the cross disarmeth all evil spirits.”

“Ay,” answered Henry Warden, apt and armed for controversy, “but it should be borne in the heart, not scored with the fingers in the air. That very impassive air, through which your hand passes, shall as soon bear the imprint of your action, as the external action shall avail the fond bigot who substitutes vain motions of the body, idle genuflections, and signs of the cross, for the living and heart-born duties of faith and good works.”

“I pity thee,” said the Sub-Prior, as actively ready for polemics as himself,—“I pity thee, Henry, and reply not to thee. Thou mayest as well winnow forth and measure the ocean with a sieve, as mete out the power of holy words, deeds, and signs, by the erring gauge of thine own reason.”

“Not by mine own reason would I mete them,” said Warden; “but by His holy Word, that unfading and unerring lamp of our paths, compared to which human reason is but as a glimmering and fading taper, and your boasted tradition only a misleading wildfire. Show me your Scripture warrant for ascribing virtue to such vain signs and motions!”

“I offered thee a fair field of debate,” said the Sub-Prior, “which thou didst refuse. I will not at present resume the controversy.”

“Were these my last accents,” said the reformer, “and were they uttered at the stake, half-choked with smoke, and as the fagots kindled into a blaze around me, with that last utterance I would testify against the superstitious devices of Rome.”

The Sub-Prior suppressed with pain the controversial answer which arose to his lips, and, turning to Edward Glendinning, he said, “there could be now no doubt that his mother ought presently to be informed that her son lived.”

“I told you that two hours since,” said Christie of the Clinthill, “an you would have believed me. But it seems you are more willing to take the word of an old gray sonner, whose life has been spent in pattering heresy, than mine, though I never rode a foray in my life without duly saying my paternoster.”

“Go then,” said Father Eustace to Edward; “let thy sorrowing mother know that her son is restored to her from the grave, like the child of the widow of Zarephath; at the intercession,” he added, looking at Henry Warden, “of the blessed Saint whom I invoked in his behalf.”

“Deceived thyself,” said Warden, instantly, “thou art a deceiver of others. It was no dead man, no creature of clay, whom the blessed Tishbite invoked, when, stung by the reproach of the Shunamite woman, he prayed that her son's soul might come into him again.”

"It was by his intercession, however," repeated the Sub-Prior; "for what says the Vulgate? Thus it is written: '*Et exaudivit Dominus vocem Helie; et reversa est anima pueri intra cum, et revixit*;'—and thinkest thou the intercession of a glorified saint is more feeble than when he walks on earth, shrouded in a tabernacle of clay, and seeing but with the eye of flesh?"

During this controversy Edward Glendinning appeared restless and impatient, agitated by some internal feeling, but whether of joy, grief, or expectation, his countenance did not expressly declare. He took now the unusual freedom to break in upon the discourse of the Sub-Prior, who, notwithstanding his resolution to the contrary, was obviously kindling in the spirit of controversy, which Edward diverted by conjuring his reverence to allow him to speak a few words with him in private.

"Remove the prisoner," said the Sub-Prior to Christie; "look to him carefully that he escape not; but for thy life do him no injury."

His commands being obeyed, Edward and the monk were left alone, when the Sub-Prior thus addressed him:

"What hath come over thee, Edward, that thy eye kindles so wildly, and thy cheek is thus changing from scarlet to pale? Why didst thou break in so hastily and unadvisedly upon the argument with which I was prostrating yonder heretic? And wherefore dost thou not tell thy mother that her son is restored to her by the intercession, as Holy Church well warrants us to believe, of Blessed Saint Benedict, the patron of our Order? For if ever my prayers were put forth to him with zeal, it hath been in behalf of this house, and thine eyes have seen the result—go tell it to thy mother."

"I must tell her then," said Edward, "that if she has regained one son, another is lost to her."

"What meanest thou, Edward? what language is this?" said the Sub-Prior.

"Father," said the youth, kneeling down to him, "my sin and my shame shall be told thee, and thou shalt witness my penance with thine own eyes."

"I comprehend thee not," said the Sub-Prior. "What canst thou have done to deserve such self-accusation?—Hast thou too listened," he added, knitting his brows, "to the demon of heresy, ever most effectual tempter of those, who, like yonder unhappy man, are distinguished by their love of knowledge?"

"I am guiltless in that matter," answered Glendinning, "nor have presumed to think otherwise than thou, my kind father, hast taught me, and than the Church allows."

"And what is it then, my son," said the Sub-Prior, kindly, "which thus afflicts thy conscience? speak it to me, that I may answer thee in the words of comfort; for the Church's mercy is great to those obedient children who doubt not her power."

"My confession will require her mercy," replied Edward. "My brother Halbert—so kind, so brave, so gentle, who spoke not, thought not, acted not, but in love to me, whose hand had aided me in every difficulty, whose eye watched over me like the eagle's over her nestlings, when they prove their first flight from the eyry—this brother, so kind, so gently affectionate—I heard of his sudden, his bloody, his violent death, and I rejoiced—I heard of his unexpected restoration, and I sorrowed!"

"Edward," said the father, "thou art beside thyself—what could urge thee to such odious ingratitude?—In your hurry of spirits you have mistaken the confused tenor of your feelings—Go, my son, pray and compose thy mind—we will speak of this another time."

"No, father, no," said Edward, vehemently, "now or never!—I will find the means to tame this rebellious heart of mine, or I will tear it out of my bosom—Mistake its passions?—No, father, grief can ill be mistaken for joy—All wept, all shrieked around me—my mother—the menials—she too, the cause of my crime—all wept—and I—I could hardly disguise my brutal and insane joy under the appearance of revenge—Brother, I said, I cannot give thee tears, but I will give thee blood—Yes, father, as I counted hour after hour, while I kept watch upon the English prisoner, and said, I am an hour nearer to hope and to happiness—"

"I understand thee not, Edward," said the monk, "nor can I conceive in what way thy brother's supposed murder should have affected thee with such unnatural joy—Surely the sordid desire to succeed him in his small possessions—"

"Perish the paltry trash!" said Edward, with the same emotion. "No, father, it was rivalry—it was jealous rage—it was the love of Mary Avenel, that rendered me the unnatural wretch I confess myself!"

"Of Mary Avenel!" said the Priest—"of a lady so high above either of you in name and in rank? How dared Halbert—how dared you, to presume to lift your eye to her but in honour and respect, as a superior of another degree from yours?"

"When did love wait for the sanction of heraldry?" replied Edward; "and in what but a line of dead ancestors was Mary, our mother's guest and foster-child, different from us, with whom she was brought up?—Enough, we loved—we both loved her! But the passion of Halbert was requited. He knew it not, he saw it not—but I was sharper-eyed. I saw that even when I was more approved, Halbert was more beloved. With me she would sit for hours at our common task with the cold simplicity and indifference of a sister, but with Halbert she trusted not herself. She changed colour, she was fluttered when he approached her; and when he left her, she was sad, pensive, and solitary. I bore all this—I saw my rival's advancing progress in her affections—I bore it, father, and yet I hated him not—I could not hate him!"

"And well for thee that thou didst not," said the father; "wild and headstrong as thou art, wouldst thou hate thy brother for partaking in thine own folly?"

"Father," replied Edward, "the world esteems thee wise, and holds thy knowledge of mankind high; but thy question shows that thou hast never loved. It was by an effort that I saved myself from hating my kind and affectionate brother, who, all unsuspecting of my rivalry, was perpetually loading me with kindness. Nay, there were moods of my mind, in which I could return that kindness for a time with energetic enthusiasm. Never did I feel this so strongly as on the night which parted us. But I could not help rejoicing when he was swept from my path—could not help sorrowing when he was again restored to be a stumbling-block in my paths."

"May God be gracious to thee, my son!" said the monk; "this is an awful state of mind. Even in such evil mood did the first murderer rise up against his brother, because Abel's was the more acceptable sacrifice."

"I will wrestle with the demon which has haunted me, father," replied the youth, firmly—"I will wrestle with him, and I will subdue him. But first I must remove from the scenes which are to follow here. I cannot endure that I should see Mary Avenel's eyes again flash with joy at the restoration of her lover. It were a sight to make indeed a second Cain of me! My fierce, turbid, and transitory joy discharged itself in a thirst to commit homicide, and how can I estimate the frenzy of my despair?"

"Madman!" said the Sub-Prior, "at what dreadful crime does thy fury drive?"

"My lot is determined, father," said Edward, in a resolute tone; "I will embrace the spiritual state which you have so oft recommended. It is my purpose to return with you to Saint Mary's, and, with the permission of the Holy Virgin and of Saint Benedict, to offer my profession to the Abbot."

"Not now, my son," said the Sub-Prior, "not in this distemperature of mind. The wise and good accept not gifts which are made in heat of blood, and which may be after repented of; and shall we make our offerings to wisdom and to goodness itself with less of solemn resolution and deep devotion of mind, than is necessary to make them acceptable to our own frail companions in this valley of darkness? This I say to thee, my son, not as meaning to deter thee from the good path thou art now inclined to prefer, but that thou mayst make thy vocation and thine election sure."

"There are actions, father," returned Edward, "which brook no delay, and this is one. It must be done this very *now*; or it may never be done. Let me go with you; let me not behold the return of Halbert into this house. Shame, and the sense of the injustice I have already done him, will join with these dreadful passions which urge me to do him yet farther wrong. Let me then go with you."

"With me, my son," said the Sub-Prior, "thou shalt surely go; but our rule, as well as reason and good order, require that you should dwell a space with us as a probationer, or novice, before taking upon thee those final vows, which, sequestering thee for ever from the world, dedicate thee to the service of Heaven."

"And when shall we set forth, father?" said the youth, as eagerly as if the journey which he was now undertaking led to the pleasures of a summer holiday.

"Even now, if thou wilt," said the Sub-Prior, yielding to his impetuosity—"go, then, and command them to prepare for our departure.—Yet stay," he said, as Edward, with all the awakened enthusiasm of his character, hastened from his presence, "come hither, my son, and kneel down."

Edward obeyed, and kneeled down before him. Notwithstanding his slight figure and thin features, the Sub-Prior could, from the energy of his tone, and the earnestness of his devotional manner, impress his pupils and his penitents with no ordinary feelings of personal reverence. His heart always was, as well as

seemed to be, in the duty which he was immediately performing; and the spiritual guide who thus shows a deep conviction of the importance of his office, seldom fails to impress a similar feeling upon his hearers. Upon such occasions as the present, his puny body seemed to assume more majestic stature—his spare and emaciated countenance bore a bolder, loftier, and more commanding port—his voice, always beautiful, trembled as labouring under the immediate impulse of the Divinity—and his whole demeanour seemed to bespeak, not the mere ordinary man, but the organ of the Church in which she had vested her high power for delivering sinners from their load of iniquity.

"Hast thou, my fair son," said he, "faithfully recounted the circumstances which have thus suddenly determined thee to a religious life?"

"The sins I have confessed, my father," answered Edward, "but I have not yet told of a strange appearance, which, acting in my mind, hath, I think, aided to determine my resolution."

"Tell it, then, now," returned the Sub-Prior; "it is thy duty to leave me uninstructed in nought, so that thereby I may understand the temptation that besets thee."

"I tell it with unwillingness," said Edward; "for although, God wot, I speak but the mere truth, yet even while my tongue speaks it as truth, my own ears receive it as fable."

"Yet say the whole," said Father Eustace; "neither fear rebuke from me, seeing I may know reasons for receiving as true that which others might regard as fabulous."

"Know, then, father," replied Edward, "that betwixt hope and despair—and, heavens! what a hope!—the hope to find the corpse mangled and crushed hastily in amongst the bloody clay which the foot of the scornful victor had trod down upon my good, my gentle, my courageous brother,—I sped to the glen called Corri-nan-shian; but, as your reverence has been already informed, neither the grave, which my unhallowed wishes had in spite of my better self longed to see, nor any appearance of the earth having been opened, was visible in the solitary spot where Martin had, at morning yesterday, seen the fatal hillock. You know your dalesmen, father. The place hath an evil name, and this deception of the sight inclined them to leave it. My companions became affrighted, and hastened down the glen as men caught in trespass. My hopes were too much blighted, my mind too much agitated, to fear either the living or the dead. I descended the glen more slowly than they, often looking back, and not ill pleased with the poltroonery of my companions, which left me to my own perplexed and moody humour, and induced them to hasten into the broader dale. They were already out of sight, and lost amongst the windings of the glen, when, looking back, I saw a female form standing beside the fountain——"

"How, my fair son?" said the Sub-Prior, "beware you jest not with your present situation!"

"I jest not, father," answered the youth; "it may be I shall never jest again—surely not for many a day. I saw, I say, the form of a female clad in white, such as the Spirit which haunts the house of Avenel is supposed to be. Believe me, my father, for, by heaven and earth, I say nought but what I saw with these eyes!"

"I believe thee, my son," said the monk; "proceed in thy strange story."

"The apparition," said Edward Glendinning, "sung, and thus ran her lay; for, strange as it may seem to you, her words abide by my remembrance as if they had been sung to me from infancy upward:—

'Thou who seek'st my fountain lone,
With thoughts and hopes thou dar'st not own;
Whose heart within leap'd wildly glad
When most his brow seem'd dark and sad;
Hie thee back, thou find'st not here
Corpse or coffin, grave or bier;
The Dead Alive is gone and fled—
Go thou, and join the Living Dead!

'The Living Dead, whose sober brow
Oft shrouds such thoughts as thou hast now,
Whose hearts within are seldom cured
Of passions by their vows abjured;
Where, under sad and solemn show,
Vain hopes are nursed, wild wishes glow.
Seek the convent's vaulted room,
Prayer and vigil be thy doom;
Doff the green, and don the gray,
To the cloister hence away!'"

"'Tis a wild lay," said the Sub-Prior, "and chanted, I fear me, with no good end. But we have power to turn the machinations of Satan to his shame. Edward, thou shalt go with me as thou desirest; thou shalt prove the life for which I have long thought thee best fitted—thou shalt aid, my son, this trembling hand of mine to sustain the Holy Ark, which bold unhallowed men press rashly forward to touch and to profane.—Wilt thou not first see thy mother?"

"I will see no one," said Edward, hastily; "I will risk nothing that may shake the purpose of my heart. From Saint Mary's they shall learn my destination—all of them shall learn it. My mother—Mary Avenel—my restored and happy brother—they shall all know that Edward lives no longer to the world to be a clog on their happiness. Mary shall no longer need to constrain her looks and expressions to coldness because I am nigh. She shall no longer——"

"My son," said the Sub-Prior, interrupting him, "it is not by looking back on the vanities and vexations of this world, that we fit ourselves for the discharge of duties which are not of it. Go, get our horses ready, and, as we descend the glen together, I will teach thee the truths through which the fathers and wise men of old had that precious alchemy, which can convert suffering into happiness."

Chapter the Thirty-Third.

Now, on my faith, this gear is all entangled,
Like to the yarn-clew of the drowsy knitter,
Dragg'd by the frolic kitten through the cabin,
While the good dame sits nodding o'er the fire!
Masters, attend; 'twill crave some skill to clear it.

OLD PLAY.

Edward, with the speed of one who doubts the steadiness of his own resolution, hastened to prepare the horses for their departure, and at the same time thanked and dismissed the neighbours who had come to his assistance, and who were not a little surprised both at the suddenness of his proposed departure, and at the turn affairs had taken.

"Here's cold hospitality," quoth Dan of the Howlet-hirst to his comrades; "I trow the Glendinnings may die and come alive right oft, ere I put foot in stirrup again for the matter."

Martin soothed them by placing food and liquor before them. They ate sullenly, however, and departed in bad humour.

The joyful news that Halbert Glendinning lived, was quickly communicated through the sorrowing family. The mother wept and thanked Heaven alternately; until her habits of domestic economy awakening as her feelings became calmer, she observed, "It would be an unco task to mend the yetts, and what were they to do while they were broken in that fashion? At open doors dogs come in."

Tibb remarked, "She aye thought Halbert was ower gleg at his weapon to be killed sae easily by ony Sir Piercie of them a'. They might say of these Southrons as they liked; but they had not the pith and wind of a canny Scot, when it came to close grips."

On Mary Avenel the impression was inconceivably deeper. She had but newly learned to pray, and it seemed to her that her prayers had been instantly answered—that the compassion of Heaven, which she had learned to implore in the words of Scripture, had descended upon her after a manner almost miraculous, and recalled the dead from the grave at the sound of her lamentations. There was a dangerous degree of enthusiasm in this strain of feeling, but it originated in the purest devotion.

A silken and embroidered muffler, one of the few articles of more costly attire which she possessed, was devoted to the purpose of wrapping up and concealing the sacred volume, which henceforth she was to regard as her chiefest treasure, lamenting only that, for want of a fitting interpreter, much must remain to her a book closed and a fountain sealed. She was unaware of the yet greater danger she incurred, of putting an imperfect or even false sense upon some of the doctrines which appeared most comprehensible. But Heaven had provided against both these hazards.

While Edward was preparing the horses, Christie of the Clinthill again solicited his orders respecting the reformed preacher, Henry Warden, and again the worthy monk laboured to reconcile in his own mind the compassion and esteem which, almost in spite of him, he could not help feeling for his former companion, with the duty which he owed to the Church. The unexpected resolution of Edward had removed, he thought, the chief objection to his being left at Glendearg.

"If I carry this Well-wood, or Warden, to the Monastery," he thought, "he must die—die in his heresy—perish body and soul. And though such a measure was once thought advisable, to strike terror into the heretics, yet such is now their daily increasing strength, that it may rather rouse them to fury and to revenge. True, he refuses to pledge himself to abstain from sowing his tares among the wheat; but the ground here is too barren to receive them. I fear not his making impression on these poor women, the vassals of the Church, and bred up in due obedience to her behests. The keen, searching, inquiring, and bold disposition of Edward, might have afforded fuel to the fire; but that is removed, and there is nothing left which the flame may catch to.—Thus shall he have no power to spread his evil doctrines abroad, and yet his life shall be preserved, and it may be his soul rescued as a prey from the fowler's net. I will myself contend with him in argument; for when we studied in common, I yielded not to him, and surely the cause for which I struggle will support me, were I yet more weak than I deem myself. Were this man reclaimed from his errors, an hundred-fold more advantage would arise to the Church from his spiritual regeneration, than from his temporal death."

Having finished these meditations, in which there was at once goodness of disposition and narrowness of principle, a considerable portion of self-opinion, and no small degree of self-delusion, the Sub-Prior commanded the prisoner to be brought into his presence.

"Henry," he said, "whatever a rigid sense of duty may demand of me, ancient friendship and Christian compassion forbid me to lead thee to assured death. Thou wert wont to be generous, though stern and stubborn in thy resolves; let not thy sense of what thine own thoughts term duty, draw thee farther than mine have done. Remember, that every sheep whom thou shalt here lead astray from the fold, will be demanded in time and through eternity of him who hath left thee the liberty of doing such evil. I ask no engagement of thee, save that thou remain a prisoner on thy word at this tower, and wilt appear when summoned."

"Thou hast found an invention to bind my hands," replied the preacher, "more sure than would have been the heaviest shackles in the prison of thy convent. I will not rashly do what may endanger thee with thy unhappy superiors, and I will be the more cautious, because, if we had farther opportunity of conference, I trust thine own soul may yet be rescued as a brand from the burning, and that, casting from thee the livery of Anti-Christ, that trader in human sins and human souls, I may yet assist thee to lay hold on the Rock of Ages."

The Sub-Prior heard the sentiment, so similar to that which had occurred to himself, with the same kindly feelings with which the game-cock hears and replies to the challenge of his rival.

"I bless God and Our Lady," said he, drawing himself up, "that my faith is already anchored on that Rock on which Saint Peter founded his Church."

"It is a perversion of the text," said the eager Henry Warden, "grounded on a vain play upon words—a most idle paronomasia."

The controversy would have been rekindled, and in all probability—for what can insure the good temper and moderation of polemics?—might have ended in the preacher's being transported a captive to the Monastery, had not Christie of the Clinthill observed that it was growing late, and that he, having to descend the glen, which had no good reputation, cared not greatly for travelling there after sunset. The Sub-Prior, therefore, stifled his desire of argument, and again telling the preacher, that he trusted to his gratitude and generosity, he bade him farewell.

"Be assured, my old friend," replied Warden, "that no willing act of mine shall be to thy prejudice. But if my Master shall place work before me, I must obey God rather than man."

These two men, both excellent from natural disposition and acquired knowledge, had more points of similarity than they themselves would have admitted. In truth, the chief distinction betwixt them was, that the Catholic, defending a religion which afforded little interest to the feelings, had, in his devotion to the cause he espoused, more of the head than of the heart, and was politic, cautious, and artful; while the Protestant, acting under the strong impulse of more lately-adopted conviction, and feeling, as he justly might, a more animated confidence in his cause, was enthusiastic, eager, and precipitate in his desire to advance it. The priest would have been contented to defend, the preacher aspired to conquer; and, of course, the impulse by which the latter was governed, was more active and more decisive. They could not part from each other without a second pressure of hands, and each looked in the face of his old companion, as he bade him adieu, with a countenance strongly expressive of sorrow, affection, and pity.

Father Eustace then explained briefly to Dame Glendinning, that this person was to be her guest for some days, forbidding her and her whole household, under high spiritual censures, to hold any conversation with him on religious subjects, but commanding her to attend to his wants in all other particulars.

"May Our Lady forgive me, reverend father," said Dame Glendinning, somewhat dismayed at this intelligence, "but I must needs say, that ower mony guests have been the ruin of mony a house, and I trow they will bring down Glendearg. First came the Lady of Avenel—(her soul be at rest—she meant nae ill)—but she brought with her as many bogles and fairies, as hae kept the house in care ever since, sae that we have been living as it were in a dream. And then came that English knight, if it please you, and if he hasna killed my son outright, he has chased him aff the gate, and it may be lang enough ere I see him again—forby the damage done to outer door and inner door. And now your reverence has given me the charge of a heretic, who, it is like, may bring the great horned devil himself down upon us all; and they say that it is neither door nor window will serve him, but he will take away the side of the auld tower along with him. Nevertheless, reverend father, your pleasure is doubtless to be done to our power."

"Go to, woman," said the Sub-Prior; "send for workmen from the clachan, and let them charge the expense of their repairs to the Community, and I will give the treasurer warrant to allow them. Moreover, in settling the rental mails, and feu-duties, thou shalt have allowance for the trouble and charges to which thou art now put, and I will cause strict search to be made after thy son."

The dame curtsied deep and low at each favourable expression; and when the Sub-Prior had done speaking, she added her farther hope that the Sub-Prior would hold some communing with her gossip the Miller, concerning the fate of his daughter, and expound to him that the chance had by no means happened through any negligence on her part.

"I sair doubt me, father," she said, "whether Mysie finds her way back to the Mill in a hurry; but it was all her father's own fault that let her run lamping about the country, riding on bare-backed naigs, and never settling to do a turn of wark within doors, unless it were to dress dainties at dinner-time for his ain kyte."

"You remind me, dame, of another matter of urgency," said Father Eustace; "and, God knows, too many of them press on me at this moment. This English knight must be sought out, and explanation given to him of these most strange chances. The giddy girl must also be recovered. If she hath suffered in reputation by this unhappy mistake, I will not hold myself innocent of the disgrace. Yet how to find them out I know not."

"So please you," said Christie of the Clinthill, "I am willing to take the chase, and bring them back by fair means or foul; for though you have always looked as black as night at me, whenever we have forgathered, yet I have not forgotten that had it not been for you, my neck would have kend the weight of my four quarters. If any man can track the tread of them, I will say in the face of both Merse and Teviotdale, and take the Forest to boot, I am that man. But first I have matters to treat of on my master's score, if you will permit me to ride down the glen with you."

"Nay, but my friend," said the Sub-Prior, "thou shouldst remember I have but slender cause to trust thee for a companion through a place so solitary."

"Tush! tush!" said the Jackman, "fear me not; I had the worst too surely to begin that sport again. Besides, have I not said a dozen of times, I owe you a life? and when I owe a man either a good turn or a bad, I never fail to pay it sooner or later. Moreover, beshrew me if I care to go alone down the glen, or even with my troopers, who are, every loon of them, as much devil's bairns as myself; whereas, if your reverence, since that is the word, take beads and psalter, and I come along with jack and spear, you will make the devils take the air, and I will make all human enemies take the earth."

Edward here entered, and told his reverence that his horse was prepared. At this instant his eye caught his mother's, and the resolution which he had so strongly formed was staggered when he recollected the necessity of bidding her farewell. The Sub-Prior saw his embarrassment, and came to his relief.

"Dame," said he, "I forgot to mention that your son Edward goes with me to Saint Mary's, and will not return for two or three days."

"You'll be wishing to help him to recover his brother? May the saints reward your kindness!"

The Sub-Prior returned the benediction which, in this instance, he had not very well deserved, and he and Edward set forth on their route. They were presently followed by Christie, who came up with his followers at such a speedy pace, as intimated sufficiently that his wish to obtain spiritual convoy through the glen, was extremely sincere. He had, however, other matters to stimulate his speed, for he was desirous to communicate to the Sub-Prior a message from his master Julian, connected with the delivery of the prisoner Warden; and having requested the Sub-Prior to ride with him a few yards before Edward, and the troopers of his own party, he thus addressed him, sometimes interrupting his discourse in a manner testifying that his fear of supernatural beings was not altogether lulled to rest by his confidence in the sanctity of his fellow-traveller.

"My master," said the rider, "deemed he had sent you an acceptable gift in that old heretic preacher; but it seems, from the slight care you have taken of him, that you make small account of the boon."

"Nay," said the Sub-Prior, "do not thus judge of it. The Community must account highly of the service, and will reward it to thy master in goodly fashion. But this man and I are old friends, and I trust to bring him back from the paths of perdition."

"Nay," said the moss-trooper, "when I saw you shake hands at the beginning I counted that you would fight it all out in love and honour, and that there would be no extreme dealings betwixt ye—however it is all one to my master—Saint Mary! what call you yon, Sir Monk?"

"The branch of a willow streaming across the path betwixt us and the sky."

"Beshrew me," said Christie, "if it looked not like a man's hand holding a sword.—But touching my master, he, like a prudent man, hath kept himself aloof in these broken times, until he could see with precision what footing he was to stand upon. Right tempting offers he hath had from the Lords of Congregation, whom you call heretics; and at one time he was minded, to be plain with you, to have taken their way—for he was assured that the Lord James {Footnote: Lord James Stewart, afterwards the Regent Murray.} was coming this road at the head of a round body of cavalry. And accordingly Lord James did so far reckon upon him, that he sent this man Warden, or whatsoever be his name, to my master's protection, as an assured friend; and, moreover, with tidings that he himself was marching hitherward at the head of a strong body of horse."

"Now, Our Lady forfend!" said the Sub-Prior.

"Amen!" answered Christie, in some trepidation, "did your reverence see aught?"

"Nothing whatever," replied the monk; "it was thy tale which wrested from me that exclamation."

"And it was some cause," replied he of the Clinthill, "for if Lord James should come hither, your Halidome would smoke for it. But be of good cheer—that expedition is ended before it was begun. The Baron of Avenel had sure news that Lord James has been fain to march westward with his merry-men, to protect Lord Semple against Cassilis and the Kennedies. By my faith, it will cost him a brush; for wot ye what they say of that name,—

"Twixt Wigton and the town of Ayr,
Portpatrick and the cruives of Cree,
No man need think for to bide there,
Unless he court Saint Kennedie."

"Then," said the Sub-Prior, "the Lord James's purpose of coming southwards being broken, cost this person, Henry Warden, a cold reception at Avenel Castle."

"It would not have been altogether so rough a one," said the mosstrooper; "for my master was in heavy thought what to do in these unsettled times, and would scarce have hazarded misusing a man sent to him by so terrible a leader as the Lord James. But, to speak the truth, some busy devil tempted the old man to meddle with my master's Christian liberty of hand-fasting with Catherine of Newport. So that broke the wand of peace between them, and now ye may have my master, and all the force he can make, at your devotion, for Lord James never forgave wrong done to him; and if he come by the upper hand, he will have Julian's head if there were never another of the name, as it is like there is not, excepting the bit slip of a lassie yonder. And now I have told you more of my master's affairs than he would thank me for; but you have done me a frank turn once, and I may need one at your hands again."

"Thy frankness," said the Sub-Prior, "shall surely advantage thee; for much it concerns the Church in these broken times to know the purposes and motives of those around us. But what is it that thy master expects from us in reward of good service? for I esteem him one of those who are not willing to work without their hire."

"Nay, that I can tell you flatly; for Lord James had promised him, in case he would be of his faction in these parts, an easy tack of the teindsheaves of his own Barony of Avenel, together with the lands of Cranberry-moor, which lie intersected with his own. And he will look for no less at your hand."

"But there is old Gilbert of Cranberry-moor," said the Sub-Prior; "what are we to make of him? The heretic Lord James may take on him to dispoise upon the goods and lands of the Halidome at his pleasure, because, doubtless, but for the protection of God, and the baronage which yet remain faithful to their creed, he may despoil us of them by force; but while they are the property of the Community, we may not take steadings from ancient and faithful vassals, to gratify the covetousness of those who serve God only from the lucre of gain."

"By the mass," said Christie, "it is well talking, Sir Priest; but when ye consider that Gilbert has but two half-starved cowardly peasants to follow him, and only an auld jaded aver to ride upon, fitter for the plough than for manly service; and that the Baron of Avenel never rides with fewer than ten jackmen at his back, and oftener with fifty, bodin in all that effeirs to war as if they were to do battle for a kingdom, and mounted on nags that nicker at the clash of the sword as if it were the clank of the lid of a corn-chest—I say, when ye have computed all this, ye may guess what course will best serve your Monastery."

"Friend," said the monk, "I would willingly purchase thy master's assistance on his own terms, since times leave us no better means of defence against sacrilegious spoliation of heresy; but to take from a poor man his patrimony—"

"For that matter," said the rider, "his seat would scarce be a soft one, if my master thought that Gilbert's interest stood betwixt him and what he wishes. The Halidome has land enough, and Gilbert may be quartered elsewhere."

"We will consider the possibility of so disposing the matter," said the monk, "and will expect in consequence your master's most active assistance, with all the followers he can make, to join in the defence of the Halidome, against any force by which it may be threatened."

"A man's hand and a mailed glove on that," said the jackman. "They

{Footnote: As some atonement for their laxity of morals on most occasions, the Borderers were severe observers of the faith which they had pledged, even to an enemy. If any person broke his word so plighted, the individual to whom faith had not been observed, used to bring to the next Border-meeting a glove hung on

the point of a spear, and proclaim to Scots and English the name of the defaulter. This was accounted so great a disgrace to all connected with him, that his own clansmen sometimes destroyed him, to escape the infamy he had brought on them.

Constable, a spy engaged by Sir Ralph Sadler, talks of two Border thieves, whom he used as his guides:—"That they would not care to steal, and yet that they would not betray any man that trusts in them, for all the gold in Scotland or in France. They are my guides and outlaws. If they would betray me they might get their pardons, and cause me to be hanged; but I have tried them ere this."—*Sadler's letters during the Northern Insurrection.*}

call us marauders, thieves, and what not; but the side we take we hold by.—And I will be blithe when my Baron comes to a point which side he will take, for the castle is a kind of hell, (Our Lady forgive me for naming such a word in this place!) while he is in his mood, studying how he may best advantage himself. And now, Heaven be praised, we are in the open valley, and I may swear a round oath, should aught happen to provoke it."

"My friend," said the Sub-Prior, "thou hast little merit in abstaining from oaths or blasphemy, if it be only out of fear of evil spirits."

"Nay, I am not quite a Church vassal yet," said the jackman, "and if you link the curb too tight on a young horse, I promise you he will rear—Why, it is much for me to forbear old customs on any account whatever."

The night being fine, they forded the river at the spot where the Sacristan met with his unhappy encounter with the spirit. As soon as they arrived at the gate of the Monastery, the porter in waiting eagerly exclaimed, "Reverend father, the Lord Abbot is most anxious for your presence."

"Let these strangers be carried to the great hall," said the Sub-Prior, "and be treated with the best by the cellarer; reminding them, however, of that modesty and decency of conduct which becometh guests in a house like this."

"But the Lord Abbot demands you instantly, my venerable brother," said Father Philip, arriving in great haste. "I have not seen him more discouraged or desolate of counsel since the field of Pinkie-cleugh was stricken."

"I come, my good brother, I come," said Father Eustace. "I pray thee, good brother, let this youth, Edward Glendinning, be conveyed to the Chamber of the Novices, and placed under their instructor. God hath touched his heart, and he proposeth laying aside the vanities of the world, to become a brother of our holy order; which, if his good parts be matched with fitting docility and humility, he may one day live to adorn."

"My very venerable brother," exclaimed old Father Nicholas, who came hobbling with a third summons to the Sub-Prior, "I pray thee to hasten to our worshipful Lord Abbot. The holy patroness be with us! never saw I Abbot of the House of St. Mary's in such consternation; and yet I remember me well when Father Ingelram had the news of Flodden-field."

"I come, I come, venerable brother," said Father Eustace—And having repeatedly ejaculated "I come!" he at last went to the Abbot in good earnest.

Chapter the Thirty-Fourth.

It is not texts will do it—Church artillery
Are silenced soon by real ordnance,
And canons are but vain opposed to cannon.
Go, coin your crosier, melt your church plate down
Bid the starved soldier banquet in your halls,
And quaff your long-saved hogsheads—Turn them out
Thus primed with your good cheer, to guard your wall,
And they will venture for't.—

OLD PLAY.

The Abbot received his counsellor with a tremulous eagerness of welcome, which announced to the Sub-Prior an extreme agitation of spirits, and the utmost need of good counsel. There was neither mazer-dish nor standing-cup upon the little table, at the elbow of his huge chair of state; his beads alone lay there, and it seemed as if he had been telling them in his extremity of distress. Beside the beads was placed the mitre of the Abbot, of an antique form, and blazing with precious stones, and the rich and highly-embossed crosier rested against the same table.

The Sacristan and old Father Nicholas had followed the Sub-Prior into the Abbot's apartment, perhaps with the hope of learning something of the important matter which seemed to be in hand.—They were not mistaken; for, after having ushered in the Sub-Prior, and being themselves in the act of retiring, the Abbot made them a signal to remain.

"My brethren," he said, "it is well known to you with what painful zeal we have overseen the weighty affairs of this house committed to our unworthy hand—your bread hath been given to you, and your water hath been sure—I have not wasted the revenues of the Convent on vain pleasures, as hunting or hawking, or in change of rich cope or alb, or in feasting idle bards and jesters, saving those who, according to old wont, were received in time of Christmas and Easter. Neither have I enriched either mine own relations nor strange women, at the expense of the Patrimony."

"There hath not been such a Lord Abbot," said Father Nicholas, "to my knowledge, since the days of Abbot Ingelram, who——"

At that portentous word, which always preluded a long story, the Abbot broke in.

"May God have mercy on his soul!—we talk not of him now.—What I would know of ye, my brethren, is, whether I have, in your mind, faithfully discharged the duties of mine office?"

"There has never been subject of complaint," answered the Sub-Prior.

The Sacristan, more diffuse, enumerated the various acts of indulgence and kindness which the mild government of Abbot Boniface had conferred on the brotherhood of Saint Mary's—the *indulgentiae*—the *gratias*—the *biberes*—the weekly mess of boiled almonds—the enlarged accommodation of the refectory—the better arrangement of the cellarge—the improvement of the revenue of the Monastery—the diminution of the privations of the brethren.

"You might have added, my brother," said the Abbot, listening with melancholy acquiescence to the detail of his own merits, "that I caused to be built that curious screen, which secureth the cloisters from the north-east wind.—But all these things avail nothing—As we read in holy Maccabee, *Capta est civitas per voluntatem Dei*. It hath cost me no little thought, no common toil, to keep these weighty matters in such order as you have seen them—there was both barn and binn to be kept full—Infirmery, dormitory, guest-hall, and refectory, to be looked to—processions to be made, confessions to be heard, strangers to be entertained, *veniae* to be granted or refused; and I warrant me, when every one of you was asleep in your cell, the Abbot hath lain awake for a full hour by the bell, thinking how these matters might be ordered seemly and suitably."

"May we ask, reverend my lord," said the Sub-Prior, "what additional care has now been thrown upon you, since your discourse seems to point that way?"

"Marry, this it is," said the Abbot. "The talk is not now of *biberes*,

{Footnote: The *biberes*, *caritas*, and boiled almonds, of which Abbot Boniface speaks, were special occasions for enjoying luxuries, afforded to the monks by grants from different sovereigns, or from other benefactors to the convent. There is one of these charters called *De Pitancia Centum Librarum* By this charter, which is very curious, our Robert Bruce, on the 10th January, and in the twelfth year of his reign, assigns, out of the customs of Berwick, and failing them, out of the customs of Edinburgh or Haddington, the sum of one hundred pounds, at the half-yearly terms of Pentecost and Saint Martin's in winter, to the abbot and community of the monks of Melrose. The precise purpose of this annuity is to furnish to each of the monks of the said monastery, while placed at food in the refectory, an extra mess of rice boiled with milk, or of almonds, or peas, or other pulse of that kind which could be procured in the country. This addition to their commons is to be entitled the King's Mess. And it is declared, that although any monk should, from some honest apology, want appetite or inclination to eat of the

king's mess, his share should, nevertheless, be placed on the table with those of his brethren, and afterwards carried to the gate and given to the poor. "Neither is it our pleasure," continues the bountiful sovereign, "that the dinner, which is or ought to be served up to the said monks according to their ancient rule, should be diminished in quantity, or rendered inferior in quality, on account of this our mess, so furnished as aforesaid." It is, moreover, provided, that the abbot, with the consent of the most sage of his brethren, shall name a prudent and decent monk for receiving, directing, and expending, all matters concerning this annuity for the benefit of the community, agreeably to the royal desire and intention, rendering a faithful account thereof to the abbot and superiors of the same convent. And the same charter declares the king's farther pleasure, that the said men of religion should be bound yearly and for ever, in acknowledgment of the above donation, to clothe fifteen poor men at the feast of Saint Martin in winter, and to feed them on the same day, delivering to each of them four ells of large or broad, or six ells of narrow cloth, and to each also a new pair of shoes or sandals, according to their order; and if the said monks shall fail in their engagements or any of them, it is the king's will that the fault shall be redeemed by a double performance of what has been omitted, to be executed at the sight of the chief forester of Ettrick for the time being, and before the return of Saint Martin's day succeeding that on which the omission has taken place.

Of this charter, respecting the pittance of 100/ assigned to furnish the monks of Melrose with a daily mess of boiled rice, almonds, or other pulse, to mend their commons, the antiquarian reader will be pleased, doubtless, to see the original.

CARTA REGIS ROBERTI I. ABBATI ET CONVENTUI DE MELROSS.

Carta de Pitancia Centum Librarum.

Robertus Dei gracia Rex Scottorum omnibus probis hominibus tocius terre sue Salutem. Sciatis nos pro salute anime nostre et pro salute animarum antecessorum et suocessorum nostrorum Regum Scocie Dedissee Concessisse et hac presenti Carta nostra confirmasse Deo et Beate Marie virgini et Religiosis viris Abbati et Conventui de Melross et eorum successoribus in perpetuum Centum Libras Sterlingorum Annui Redditi singulis annis percipiendas de firmis nostris Burgi Berwici super. Twedam ad terminos Pentecostis et Sancti Martini in hyeme pro equali portione vel de nova Custuma nostra Burgi predicti si firme nostre predictae ad dictam summam pecunie sufficere non poterunt vel de nova Custuma nostra Burgorum nostrorum de Edenburg et de Hadington Si firme nostre et Custuma nostra ville Berwici aliquo casu contingente ad hoc forte non sufficiant. Ita quod dicta summa pecunie Centum Librarum eis annuatim integre et absque contradictione aliqua plenarie persolvatur pre cunctis aliis quibuscunque assignacionibus per nos factis seu faciendis ad inveniendum in perpetuum singulis diebus cuilibet monacho monasterii predicti comedenti in Refectorio unum sufficiens ferculum risarum factarum cum lacte, amigdalarum vel pisarum sive aliorum ciborum consimilis condicionis inventorum in patria et illud ferculum ferculum Regis vocabitur in eternum. Et si aliquis monachus ex aliqua causa honesta de dicto ferculo comedere noluerit vel refici non poterit non minus attamen sibi de dicto ferculo ministretur et ad portam pro pauperibus deportetur. Nec volumus quod occasione ferculi nostri predicti prandium dicti Conventus de quo antiquitus communiter eis deserviri sive ministrari solebat in aliquo pejoretur seu diminuatur. Volumus insuper et ordinamus quod Abbas ejusdem monasterii qui pro tempore fuerit de consensu saniorum de Conventu specialiter constituat unum monachum providum et discretum ad recipiendum ordinandum et expendendum totam summam pecunie memorate pro utilitate conventus secundum votum et intencionem mentis nostre superius annotatum et ad reddendum fidele compotum coram Abbate et Maioribus de Conventu singulis annis de pecunia sic recepta. Et volumus quod dicti religiosi teneantur annuatim in perpetuum pro predicta donacione nostra ad perpetuam nostri memoriam vestire quindecim pauperes ad festum Sancti Martini in hieme et eosdem cibare eodem die liberando eorum cuilibet quatuor ulnas panni grossi et lati vel sex ulnas panni stricti et eorum cuilibet unum novum par sotularium de ordine suo. Et si dicti religiosi in premissis vel aliquo premissorum aliquo anno defecerint volumus quod illud quod minus perimpletum fuerit duplicetur diebus magis necessariis per visum capitalis forestarii nostri de Selkirk, qui pro tempore fuerit. Et quod dicta duplicatio fiat ante natale domini proximo sequens festum Sancti Martini predictum. In cujus rei testimonium presenti Carte nostre sigillum nostrum precipimus apponi. Testibus venerabilibus in Christo patribus Willielmo, Johanne, Willielmo et David Sancti Andree, Glasguensis, Dunkeldensis et Moraviensis ecclesiarum dei gracia episcopis Bernardo Abbate de Abirbrothock Cancellario, Duncano, Malisio, et Hugone de Fyf de Strathin et de Ross, Comitibus Waltero Senescallo Scocie, Jacobo domini de Douglas et Alexandro Fraser Camerario nostro Socie militibus. Apud Abirbrothock, decimo die Januarii. Anno Regni nostri vicesimo.}

or of *caritas*, or of boiled almonds, but of an English band coming against us from Hexham, commanded by Sir John Foster; nor is it of the screening us from the east wind, but how to escape Lord James Stewart, who cometh to lay waste and destroy with his heretic soldiers."

"I thought that purpose had been broken by the feud between Semple and the Kennedies," said the Sub-Prior, hastily.

"They have accorded that matter at the expense of the church as usual," said the Abbot; "the Earl of Cassilis is to have the teind-sheaves of his lands, which were given to the house of Crossraguel, and he has stricken hands with Stewart, who is now called Murray.—*Principes convenerunt unum adversus Dominum.*—There are the letters."

The Sub-Prior took the letters, which had come by an express messenger from the Primate of Scotland, who still laboured to uphold the tottering fabric of the system under which he was at length buried, and, stepping towards the lamp, read them with an air of deep and settled attention—the Sacristan and Father Nicholas looked as helplessly at each other, as the denizens of the poultry-yard when the hawk soars over it. The Abbot seemed bowed down with the extremity of sorrowful apprehension, but kept his eye timorously fixed on the Sub-Prior, as if striving to catch some comfort from the expression of his countenance. When at length he beheld that, after a second intent perusal of the letters, he remained still silent and full of thought, he asked him in an anxious tone, "What is to be done?"

"Our duty must be done," answered the Sub-Prior, "and the rest is in the hands of God."

"Our duty—our duty?" answered the Abbot, impatiently; "doubtless we are to do our duty; but what is that duty? or how will it serve us?—Will bell, book, and candle, drive back the English heretics? or will Murray care for psalms and antiphonars? or can I fight for the Halidome, like Judas Maccabeus, against those profane Nicanors? or send the Sacristan against this new Holofernes, to bring back his head in a basket?"

"True, my Lord Abbot," said the Sub-Prior, "we cannot fight with carnal weapons, it is alike contrary to our habit and vow; but we can die for our Convent and for our Order. Besides, we can arm those who will and can fight. The English are but few in number, trusting, as it would seem, that they will be joined by Murray, whose march has been interrupted. If Foster, with his Cumberland and Hexham bandits, ventures to march into Scotland, to pillage and despoil our House, we will levy our vassals, and, I trust, shall be found strong enough to give him battle."

"In the blessed name of Our Lady," said the Abbot, "think you that I am Petrus Eremita, to go forth the leader of an host?"

"Nay," said the Sub-Prior, "let some man skilled in war lead our people—there is Julian Avenel, an approved soldier."

"But a scoffer, a debauched person, and, in brief, a man of Belial," quoth the Abbot.

"Still," said the monk, "we must use his ministry in that to which he has been brought up. We can guerdon him richly, and indeed I already know the price of his service. The English, it is expected, will presently set forth, hoping here to seize upon Piercie Shafton, whose refuge being taken with us, they make the pretext of this unheard-of inroad."

"Is it even so?" said the Abbot; "I never judged that his body of satin and his brain of feathers boded us much good."

"Yet we must have his assistance, if possible," said the Sub-Prior; "he may interest in our behalf the great Piercie, of whose friendship he boasts, and that good and faithful Lord may break Foster's purpose. I will despatch the jackman after him with all speed.—Chiefly, however, I trust to the military spirit of the land, which will not suffer peace to be easily broken on the frontier. Credit me, my lord, it will bring to our side the hands of many, whose hearts may have gone astray after strange doctrines. The great chiefs and barons will be ashamed to let the vassals of peaceful monks fight unaided against the old enemies of Scotland."

"It may be," said the Abbot, "that Foster will wait for Murray, whose purpose hitherto is but delayed for a short space."

"By the rood, he will not," said the Sub-Prior; "we know this Sir John Foster—a pestilent heretic, he will long to destroy the church—born a Borderer, he will thirst to plunder her of her wealth—a Border-warden, he will be eager to ride in Scotland. There are too many causes to urge him on. If he joins with Murray, he will have at best but an auxiliary's share of the spoil—if he comes hither before him, he will reckon on the whole harvest of depredation as his own. Julian Avenel also has, as I have heard, some spite against Sir John Foster; they will fight, when they meet, with double determination.—Sacristan, send for our bailiff.—Where is the

roll of fencible men liable to do suit and service to the Halidome?—Send off to the Baron of Meigallot; he can raise threescore horse and better—Say to him the Monastery will compound with him for the customs of his bridge, which have been in controversy, if he will show himself a friend at such a point.—And now, my lord, let us compute our possible numbers, and those of the enemy, that human blood be not spilled in vain—Let us therefore calculate——"

"My brain is dizzied with the emergency," said the poor Abbot—"I am not, I think, more a coward than others, so far as my own person is concerned; but speak to me of marching and collecting soldiers, and calculating forces, and you may as well tell of it to the youngest novice of a nunnery. But my resolution is taken.—Brethren," he said, rising up, and coming forward with that dignity which his comely person enabled him to assume, "hear for the last time the voice of your Abbot Boniface. I have done for you the best that I could; in quieter times I had perhaps done better, for it was for quiet that I sought the cloister, which has been to me a place of turmoil, as much as if I had sate in the receipt of custom, or ridden forth as leader of an armed host. But now matters turn worse and worse, and I, as I grow old, am less able to struggle with them. Also, it becomes me not to hold a place, whereof the duties, through my default or misfortune, may be but imperfectly filled by me. Wherefore I have resolved to demit this mine high office, so that the order of these matters may presently devolve upon Father Eustatius here present, our well-beloved Sub-Prior; and I now rejoice that he hath not been provided according to his merits elsewhere, seeing that I well hope he will succeed to the mitre and staff which it is my present purpose to lay down."

"In the name of Our Lady, do nothing hastily, my lord!" said Father Nicholas—"I do remember that when the worthy Abbot Ingelram, being in his ninetyeth year—for I warrant you he could remember when Benedict the Thirteenth was deposed—and being ill at ease and bed-ridden, the brethren rounded in his ear that he were better resign his office. And what said he, being a pleasant man? marry, that while he could crook his little finger he would keep hold of the crosier with it."

The Sacristan also strongly remonstrated against the resolution of his Superior, and set down the insufficiency he pleaded to the native modesty of his disposition. The Abbot listened in downcast silence; even flattery could not win his ear.

Father Eustace took a nobler tone with his disconcerted and dejected Superior. "My Lord Abbot," he said, "if I have been silent concerning the virtues with which you have governed this house, do not think that I am unaware of them. I know that no man ever brought to your high office a more sincere wish to do well to all mankind; and if your rule has not been marked with the bold lines which sometimes distinguished your spiritual predecessors, their faults have equally been strangers to your character."

"I did not believe," said the Abbot, turning his looks to Father Eustace with some surprise, "that you, father, of all men, would have done me this justice."

"In your absence," said the Sub-Prior, "I have even done it more fully. Do not lose the good opinion which all men entertain of you, by renouncing your office when your care is most needed."

"But, my brother," said the Abbot, "I leave a more able in my place."

"That you do not," said Eustace; "because it is not necessary you should resign, in order to possess the use of whatever experience or talent I may be accounted master of. I have been long enough in this profession to know that the individual qualities which any of us may have, are not his own, but the property of the Community, and only so far useful when they promote the general advantage. If you care not in person, my lord, to deal with this troublesome matter, let me implore you to go instantly to Edinburgh, and make what friends you can in our behalf, while I in your absence will, as Sub-Prior, do my duty in defence of the Halidome. If I succeed, may the honour and praise be yours, and if I fail, let the disgrace and shame be mine own."

The Abbot mused for a space, and then replied,—"No, Father Eustatius, you shall not conquer me by your generosity. In times like these, this house must have a stronger pilotage than my weak hands afford; and he who steers the vessel must be chief of the crew. Shame were it to accept the praise of other men's labours; and, in my poor mind, all the praise which can be bestowed on him who undertakes a task so perilous and perplexing, is a meed beneath his merits. Misfortune to him would deprive him of an iota of it! Assume, therefore, your authority to-night, and proceed in the preparations you judge necessary. Let the Chapter be summoned to-morrow after we have heard mass, and all shall be ordered as I have told you. Benedicite, my brethren!—peace be with you! May the new Abbot-expectant sleep as sound as he who is about to resign his mitre."

They retired, affected even to tears. The good Abbot had shown a point of his character to which they were strangers. Even Father Eustace had held his spiritual Superior hitherto as a good-humoured, indolent, self-indulgent man, whose chief merit was the absence of gross faults; so that this sacrifice of power to a sense of duty, even if a little alloyed by the meaner motives of fear and apprehended difficulties, raised him considerably in the Sub-Prior's estimation. He even felt an aversion to profit by the resignation of the Abbot Boniface, and in a manner to rise on his ruins; but this sentiment did not long contend with those which led him to recollect higher considerations. It could not be denied that Boniface was entirely unfit for his situation in the present crisis; and the Sub-Prior felt that he himself, acting merely as a delegate, could not well take the decisive measures which the time required; the weal of the Community therefore demanded his elevation. If, besides, there crept in a feeling of a high dignity obtained, and the native exultation of a haughty spirit called to contend with the imminent dangers attached to a post of such distinction, these sentiments were so cunningly blended and amalgamated with others of a more disinterested nature, that, as the Sub-Prior himself was unconscious of their agency, we, who have a regard for him, are not solicitous to detect it.

The Abbot elect carried himself with more dignity than formerly, when giving such directions as the pressing circumstances of the times required; and those who approached him could perceive an unusual kindling of his falcon eye, and an unusual flush upon his pale and faded cheek. With briefness and precision he wrote and dictated various letters to different barons, acquainting them with the meditated invasion of the Halidome by the English, and conjuring them to lend aid and assistance as in a common cause. The temptation of advantage was held out to those whom he judged less sensible of the cause of honour, and all were urged by the motives of patriotism and ancient animosity to the English. The time had been when no such exhortations would have been necessary. But so essential was Elizabeth's aid to the reformed party in Scotland, and so strong was that party almost every where, that there was reason to believe a great many would observe neutrality on the present occasion, even if they did not go the length of uniting with the English against the Catholics.

When Father Eustace considered the number of the immediate vassals of the church whose aid he might legally command, his heart sunk at the thoughts of ranking them under the banner of the fierce and profligate Julian Avenel.

"Were the young enthusiast Halbert Glendinning to be found," thought Father Eustace in his anxiety, "I would have risked the battle under his leading, young as he is, and with better hope of God's blessing. But the bailiff is now too infirm, nor know I a chief of name whom I might trust in this important matter better than this Avenel."—He touched a bell which stood on the table, and commanded Christie of the Clinthill to be brought before him.—"Thou owest me a life," said he to that person on his entrance, "and I may do thee another good turn if thou be'st sincere with me."

Christie had already drained two standing-cups of wine, which would, on another occasion, have added to the insolence of his familiarity. But at present there was something in the augmented dignity of manner of Father Eustace, which imposed a restraint on him. Yet his answers partook of his usual character of undaunted assurance. He professed himself willing to return a true answer to all inquiries.

"Has the Baron (so styled) of Avenel any friendship with Sir John Foster, Warden of the West Marches of England?"

"Such friendship as is between the wild-cat and the terrier," replied the rider.

"Will he do battle with him should they meet?"

"As surely," answered Christie, "as ever cock fought on Shrovetide-even."

"And would he fight with Foster in the Church's quarrel?"

"On any quarrel, or upon no quarrel whatever," replied the jackman.

"We will then write to him, letting him know, that if upon occasion of an apprehended incursion by Sir John Foster, he will join his force with ours, he shall lead our men, and be gratified for doing so to the extent of his wish.—Yet one word more—Thou didst say thou couldst find out where the English knight Piercie Shafton has this day fled to?"

"That I can, and bring him back too, by fair means or force, as best likes your reverence."

"No force must be used upon him. Within what time wilt thou find him out?"

"Within thirty hours, so he have not crossed the Lothian firth—If it is to do you a pleasure, I will set off directly, and wind him as a sleuth-dog tracks the moss-trooper," answered Christie.

"Bring him hither then, and thou wilt deserve good at our hands, which I may soon have free means of bestowing on thee."

"Thanks to your reverence, I put myself in your reverence's hands. We of the spear and snaffle walk something recklessly through life; but if a man were worse than he is, your reverence knows he must live, and that's not to be done without shifting, I trow."

"Peace, sir, and begone on thine errand—thou shalt have a letter from us to Sir Piercie."

Christie made two steps towards the door; then turning back and hesitating, like one who would make an impertinent pleasantry if he dared, he asked what he was to do with the wench Mysie Happer whom the Southron knight had carried off with him.

"Am I to bring her hither, please your reverence?"

"Hither, you malapert knave?" said the churchman; "remember you to whom you speak?"

"No offence meant," replied Christie; "but if such is not your will, I would carry her to Avenel Castle, where a well-favoured wench was never unwelcome."

"Bring the unfortunate girl to her father's and break no scurril jests here," said the Sub-Prior—"See that thou guide her in all safety and honour."

"In safety, surely," said the rider, "and in such honour as her outbreak has left her.—I bid your reverence farewell, I must be on horse before cock-crow."

"What, in the dark!—how knowest thou which way to go?"

"I tracked the knight's horse-tread as far as near to the ford, as we rode along together," said Christie, "and I observed the track turn to the north-ward. He is for Edinburgh, I will warrant you—so soon as daylight comes I will be on the road again. It is a kenspeckle hoof-mark, for the shoe was made by old Eckie of Cannobie—I would swear to the curve of the caulker." So saying, he departed.

"Hateful necessity," said Father Eustace, looking after him, "that obliges us to use such implements as these! But assailed as we are on all sides, and by all conditions of men, what alternative is left us?—But now let me to my most needful task."

The Abbot elect accordingly sate down to write letters, arrange orders, and take upon him the whole charge of an institution which tottered to its fall, with the same spirit of proud and devoted fortitude wherewith the commander of a fortress, reduced nearly to the last extremity, calculates what means remain to him to protract the fatal hour of successful storm. In the meanwhile Abbot Boniface, having given a few natural sighs to the downfall of the pre-eminence he had so long enjoyed amongst his brethren, fell fast asleep, leaving the whole cares and toils of office to his assistant and {Chapter ending is missing in the original}

Chapter the Thirty-Fifth.

And when he came to broken briggs,
He slacked his bow and swam;
And when he came to grass growing,
Set down his feet and ran.

GIL MORRICE.

We return to Halbert Glendinning, who, as our readers may remember, took the high road to Edinburgh. His intercourse with the preacher, Henry Warden, from whom he received a letter at the moment of his deliverance, had been so brief, that he had not even learned the name of the nobleman to whose care he was recommended. Something like a name had been spoken indeed, but he had only comprehended that he was to meet the chief advancing towards the south, at the head of a party of horse. When day dawned on his journey he was in the same uncertainty. A better scholar would have been informed by the address of the letter, but Halbert had not so far profited by Father Eustace's lessons as to be able to decipher it. His mother-wit taught him that he must not, in such uncertain times, be too hasty in asking information of any one; and when, after a long day's journey, night surprised him near a little village, he began to be dubious and anxious concerning the issue of his journey.

In a poor country, hospitality is generally exercised freely, and Halbert, when he requested a night's quarters, did nothing either degrading or extraordinary. The old woman, to whom he made this request, granted it the more readily, that she thought she saw some resemblance between Halbert and her son Saunders, who had been killed in one of the frays so common in the time. It is true, Saunders was a short square-made fellow, with red hair and a freckled face, and somewhat bandy-legged, whereas the stranger was of a brown complexion, tall, and remarkably well-made. Nevertheless, the widow was clear that there existed a general resemblance betwixt her guest and Saunders, and kindly pressed him to share of her evening cheer. A pedlar, a man of about forty years old, was also her guest, who talked with great feeling of the misery of pursuing such a profession as his in the time of war and tumult.

"We think much of knights and soldiers," said he; "but the pedder-coffe who travels the land has need of more courage than them all. I am sure he maun face mair risk, God help him. Here have I come this length, trusting the godly Earl of Murray would be on his march to the Borders, for he was to have guestened with the Baron of Avenel; and instead of that comes news that he has gone westlandways about some tuilzie in Ayrshire. And what to do I wot not; for if I go to the south without a safeguard, the next bonny rider I meet might ease me of sack and pack, and maybe of my life to boot; and then, if I try to strike across the moors, I may be as ill off before I can join myself to that good Lord's company."

No one was quicker at catching a hint than Halbert Glendinning. He said he himself had a desire to go westward. The pedlar looked at him with a very doubtful air, when the old dame, who perhaps thought her young guest resembled the umquhile Saunders, not only in his looks, but in a certain pretty turn to sleight-of-hand, which the defunct was supposed to have possessed, tipped him the wink, and assured the pedlar he need have no doubt that her young cousin was a true man.

"Cousin!" said the pedlar, "I thought you said this youth had been a stranger."

"Ill hearing makes ill rehearsing," said the landlady; "he is a stranger to me by eye-sight, but that does not make him a stranger to me by blood, more especially seeing his likeness to my son Saunders, poor bairn."

The pedlar's scruples and jealousies being thus removed, or at least silenced, the travellers agreed that they would proceed in company together the next morning by daybreak, the pedlar acting as a guide to Glendinning, and the youth as a guard to the pedlar, until they should fall in with Murray's detachment of horse. It would appear that the lady never doubted what was to be the event of this compact, for, taking Glendinning aside, she charged him, "to be moderate with the puir body, but at all events, not to forget to take a piece of black say, to make the auld wife a new rokelay." Halbert laughed and took his leave.

It did not a little appal the pedlar, when, in the midst of a black heath, the young man told him the nature of the commission with which their hostess had charged him. He took heart, however, upon seeing the open, frank, and friendly demeanor of the youth, and vented his exclamations on the ungrateful old traitress. "I gave her," he said, "yesterday-e'en nae farther gane, a yard of that very black say, to make her a couvre-chef; but I see it is ill done to teach the cat the way to the kirk." Thus set at ease on the intentions of his companion (for in those happy days the worst was always to be expected from a stranger), the pedlar acted as Halbert's guide over moss and moor, over hill and many a dale, in such a direction as might best lead them towards the route of Murray's party. At length they arrived upon the side of an eminence, which commanded a distant prospect over a tract of savage and desolate moorland, marshy and waste—an alternate change of shingly hill and level morass, only varied by blue stagnant pools of water. A road scarcely marked winded like a serpent through the wilderness, and the pedlar, pointing to it, said—"The road from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Here we must wait, and if Murray and his train be not already passed by, we shall soon see trace of them, unless some new purpose shall have altered their resolution; for in these blessed days no man, were he the nearest the throne, as the Earl of Murray may be, knows when he lays his head on his pillow at night where it is to lie upon the following even."

They paused accordingly and sat down, the pedlar cautiously using for a seat the box which contained his treasures, and not concealing from his companion that he wore under his cloak a pistolet hanging at his belt in case of need. He was courteous, however, and offered Halbert a share of the provisions which he carried about him for refreshment. They were of the coarsest kind—oat-bread baked in cakes, oatmeal slaked with cold water, an onion or two, and a morsel of smoked ham completed the feast. But such as it was, no Scotsman of the time, had his rank been much higher than that of Glendinning, would have refused to share in it, especially as the pedlar produced, with a mysterious air, a tup's horn, which he carried slung from his shoulders, and which, when its contents were examined, produced to each party a clam-shell-full of excellent usquebaugh—a liquor strange to Halbert, for the strong waters known in the south of Scotland came from France, and in fact such were but rarely used. The pedlar recommended it as excellent, said he had procured it in his last visit to the braes of Doune, where he had securely traded under the safe-conduct of the Laird of Buchanan. He also set an example to Halbert, by devoutly emptying the cup "to the speedy downfall of Anti-Christ."

Their conviviality was scarce ended, ere a rising dust was seen on the road of which they commanded the prospect, and half a score of horsemen were dimly descried advancing at considerable speed, their casques glancing, and the points of their spears twinkling as they caught a glimpse of the sun.

"These," said the pedlar, "must be the out-scourers of Murray's party; let us lie down in the peat-hag, and keep ourselves out of sight."

"And why so?" said Halbert; "let us rather go down and make a signal to them."

"God forbid!" replied the pedlar; "do you ken so ill the customs of our Scottish nation? That plump of spears that are spurring on so fast are doubtless commanded by some wild kinsman of Morton, or some such daring fear-nothing as neither regards God nor man. It is their business, if they meet with any enemies, to pick quarrels and clear the way of them; and the chief knows nothing of what happens, coming up with his more discreet and moderate friends, it may be a full mile in the rear. Were we to go near these lads of the laird's belt, your letter would do you little good, and my pack would do me muckle black ill; they would tirl every steek of claithes from our back, fling us into a moss-hag with a stone at our heels, naked as the hour that brought us into this cumbered and sinful world, and neither Murray nor any other man ever the wiser. But if he did come to ken of it, what might he help it?—it would be accounted a mere mistake, and there were all the moan made. O credit me, youth, that when men draw cold steel on each other in their native country, they neither can nor may dwell deeply on the offences of those whose swords are useful to them."

They suffered, therefore, the vanguard, as it might be termed, of the Earl of Murray's host to pass forward; and it was not long until a denser cloud of dust began to arise to the northward.

"Now," said the pedlar, "let us hurry down the hill; for to tell the truth," said he, dragging Halbert along earnestly, "a Scottish noble's march is like a serpent—the head is furnished with fangs, and the tail hath its sting; the only harmless point of access is the main body."

"I will hasten as fast as you," said the youth; "but tell me why the rearward of such an army should be as dangerous as the van?"

"Because, as the vanguard consists of their picked wild desperates, resolute for mischief, such as neither fear God nor regard their fellow-creatures, but understand themselves bound to hurry from the road whatever is displeasing to themselves, so the rear-guard consists of misproud serving-men, who, being in charge of the baggage, take care to amend by their exactions upon travelling-merchants and others, their own thefts on their master's property. You will hear the advanced *enfants perdus*, as the French call them, and so they are indeed, namely, children of the fall, singing unclean and fulsome ballads of sin and harlotrie. And then will come on the middle-ward, when you will hear the canticles and psalms sung by the reforming nobles, and the gentry, and honest and pious clergy, by whom they are accompanied. And last of all, you will find in the rear a legend of godless lackies, palfreniers, and horse-boys, talking of nothing but dicing, drinking, and drabbing."

As the pedlar spoke, they had reached the side of the high-road, and Murray's main body was in sight, consisting of about three hundred horse, marching with great regularity, and in a closely compacted body. Some of the troopers wore the liveries of their masters, but this was not common. Most of them were dressed in such colours as chance dictated. But the majority, being clad in blue cloth, and the whole armed with cuirass and back-plate, with sleeves of mail, gauntlets, and poldroons, and either mailed hose or strong jack-boots, they had something of a uniform appearance.

Many of the leaders were clad in complete armour, and all in a certain half-military dress, which no man of quality in those disturbed times ever felt himself sufficiently safe to abandon.

The foremost of this party immediately rode up to the pedlar and to Halbert Glendinning, and demanded of them who they were. The pedlar told his story, the young Glendinning exhibited his letter, which a gentleman carried to Murray. In an instant after, the word "Halt!" was given through the squadron, and at once the onward heavy tramp, which seemed the most distinctive attribute of the body, ceased, and was heard no more. The command was announced that the troop should halt here for an hour to refresh themselves and their horses. The pedlar was assured of safe protection, and accommodated with the use of a baggage horse. But at the same time he was ordered into the rear; a command which he reluctantly obeyed, and not without wringing pathetically the hand of Halbert as he separated from him.

The young heir of Glendearg was in the meanwhile conducted to a plot of ground more raised, and therefore drier than the rest of the moor. Here a carpet was flung on the ground by way of table-cloth, and around it sat the leaders of the party, partaking of an entertainment as coarse, with relation to their rank, as that which Glendinning had so lately shared. Murray himself rose as he came forward, and advanced a step to meet him.

This celebrated person had in his appearance, as well as in his mind, much of the admirable qualities of James V. his father. Had not the stain of illegitimacy rested upon his birth, he would have filled the Scottish throne with as much honour as any of the Stewart race. But History, while she acknowledges his high talents, and much that was princely, nay, royal, in his conduct, cannot forget that ambition led him farther than honour or loyalty warranted. Brave amongst the bravest, fair in presence and in favour, skilful to manage the most intricate affairs, to attach to himself those who were doubtful, to stun and overwhelm, by the suddenness and intrepidity of his enterprises, those who were resolute in resistance, he attained, and as to personal merit certainly deserved, the highest place in the kingdom. But he abused, under the influence of strong temptation, the opportunities which his sister Mary's misfortunes and imprudence threw in his way; he supplanted his sovereign and benefactress in her power, and his history affords us one of those mixed characters, in which principle was so often sacrificed to policy, that we must condemn the statesman while we pity and regret the individual. Many events in his life gave likelihood to the charge that he himself aimed at the crown; and it is too true, that he countenanced the fatal expedient of establishing an English, that is a foreign and a hostile interest, in the councils of Scotland. But his death may be received as an atonement for his offences, and may serve to show how much more safe is the person of a real patriot, than that of the mere head of a faction, who is accounted answerable for the offences of his meanest attendants.

When Murray approached, the young rustic was naturally abashed at the dignity of his presence. The commanding form and the countenance to which high and important thoughts were familiar, the features which bore the resemblance of Scotland's long line of kings, were well calculated to impress awe and reverence. His dress had little to distinguish him from the high-born nobles and barons by whom he was attended. A buff-coat, richly embroidered with silken lace, supplied the place of armour; and a massive gold chain, with its medal, hung round his neck. His black velvet bonnet was decorated with a string of large and fair pearls, and with a small tufted feather; a long heavy sword was girt to his side, as the familiar companion of his hand. He wore gilded spurs on his boots, and these completed his equipment.

"This letter," he said, "is from the godly preacher of the word, Henry Warden, young man? is it not so?" Halbert answered in the affirmative. "And he writes to us, it would seem, in some strait, and refers us to you for the circumstances. Let us know, I pray you, how things stand with him."

In some perturbation Halbert Glendinning gave an account of the circumstances which had accompanied the preacher's imprisonment. When he came to the discussion of the *handfasting* engagement, he was struck with the ominous and displeased expression of Murray's brows, and, contrary to all prudential and politic rule, seeing something was wrong, yet not well aware what that something was, had almost stopped short in his narrative.

"What ails the fool?" said the Earl, drawing his dark-red eyebrows together, while the same dusky glow kindled on his brow—"Hast thou not learned to tell a true tale without stammering?"

"So please you," answered Halbert, with considerable address, "I have never before spoken in such a presence."

"He seems a modest youth," said Murray, turning to his next attendant, "and yet one who in a good cause will neither fear friend nor foe.—Speak on, friend, and speak freely."

Halbert then gave an account of the quarrel betwixt Julian Avenel and the preacher, which the Earl, biting his lip the while, compelled himself to listen to as a thing of indifference. At first he appeared even to take the part of the Baron.

"Henry Warden," he said, "is too hot in his zeal. The law both of God and man maketh allowance for certain alliances, though not strictly formal, and the issue of such may succeed."

This general declaration he expressed, accompanying it with a glance around upon the few followers who were present at this interview. The most of them answered—"There is no contravening that;" but one or two looked on the ground, and were silent. Murray then turned again to Glendinning, commanding him to say what next chanced, and not to omit any particular. When he mentioned the manner in which Julian had cast from him his concubine, Murray drew a deep breath, set his teeth hard, and laid his hand on the hilt of his dagger. Casting his eyes once more around the circle, which was now augmented by one or two of the reformed preachers, he seemed to devour his rage in silence, and again commanded Halbert to proceed. When he came to describe how Warden had been dragged to a dungeon, the Earl seemed to have found the point at which he might give vent to his own resentment, secure of the sympathy and approbation of all who were present. "Judge you," he said, looking to those around him, "judge you, my peers, and noble gentlemen of Scotland, betwixt me and this Julian Avenel—he hath broken his own word, and hath violated my safe-conduct—and judge you also, my reverend brethren, he hath put his hand forth upon a preacher of the gospel, and perchance may sell his blood to the worshippers of Anti-Christ!"

"Let him die the death of a traitor," said the secular chiefs, "and let his tongue be struck through with the hangman's fiery iron to avenge his perjury!"

"Let him go down to his place with Baal's priests," said the preachers, "and be his ashes cast into Tophet!"

Murray heard them with the smile of expected revenge; yet it is probable that the brutal treatment of the female, whose circumstances somewhat resembled those of the Earl's own mother, had its share in the grim smile which curled his sun-burnt cheek and its haughty lip. To Halbert Glendinning, when his narrative was finished, he spoke with great kindness.

"He is a bold and gallant youth," said he to those around, "and formed of the stuff which becomes a bustling time. There are periods when men's spirits shine bravely through them. I will know something more of him."

He questioned him more particularly concerning the Baron of Avenel's probable forces—the strength of his castle—the dispositions of his next heir, and this brought necessarily forward the sad history of his brother's daughter, Mary Avenel, which was told with an embarrassment that did not escape Murray.

"Ha! Julian Avenel," he said, "and do you provoke my resentment, when you have so much more reason to deprecate my justice! I knew Walter Avenel, a true Scotsman and a good soldier. Our sister, the Queen, must right his daughter; and were her land restored, she would be a fitting bride to some brave man who may better merit our favour than the traitor Julian."—Then looking at Halbert, he said, "Art thou of gentle blood, young man?"

Halbert, with a faltering and uncertain voice, began to speak of his distant pretensions to claim a descent from the ancient Glendonwynes of Galloway, when Murray interrupted him with a smile.

"Nay—nay—leave pedigrees to bards and heralds. In our days, each, man is the son of his own deeds. The glorious light of reformation hath shone alike on prince and peasant; and peasant as well as prince may be illustrated by fighting in its defence. It is a stirring world, where all may advance themselves who have stout hearts and strong arms. Tell me frankly why thou hast left thy father's house."

Halbert Glendinning made a frank confession of his duel with Piercie Shafton, and mentioned his supposed death.

"By my hand," said Murray, "thou art a bold sparrow-hawk, to match thee so early with such a kite as Piercie Shafton. Queen Elizabeth would give her glove filled with gold crowns to know that meddling coxcomb to be under the sod.—Would she not, Morton?"

"Ay, by my word, and esteem her glove a better gift than the crowns," replied Morton, "which few Border lads like this fellow will esteem just valuation."

"But what shall we do with this young homicide?" said Murray; "what will our preachers say?"

"Tell them of Moses and of Benaiah," said Morton; "it is but the smiting of an Egyptian when all is said out."

"Let it be so," said Murray, laughing; "but we will bury the tale, as the prophet did the body, in the sand. I will take care of this swankie.—Be near to us, Glendinning, since that is thy name. We retain thee as a squire of our household. The master of our horse will see thee fully equipped and armed."

During the expedition which he was now engaged in, Murray found several opportunities of putting Glendinning's courage and presence of mind to the test, and he began to rise so rapidly in his esteem, that those who knew the Earl considered the youth's fortune as certain. One step only was wanting to raise him to a still higher degree of confidence and favour—it was the abjuration of the Popish religion. The ministers who attended upon Murray and formed his chief support amongst the people, found an easy convert in Halbert Glendinning, who, from his earliest days, had never felt much devotion towards the Catholic faith, and who listened eagerly to more reasonable views of religion. By thus adopting the faith of his master, he rose higher in his favour, and was constantly about his person during his prolonged stay in the west of Scotland, which the intractability of those whom the Earl had to deal with, protracted from day to day, and week to week.

Chapter the Thirty-Sixth.

Faint the din of battle bray'd
Distant down the hollow wind;
War and terror fled before,
Wounds and death were left behind.
PENROSE.

The autumn of the year was well advanced, when the Earl of Morton, one morning, rather unexpectedly, entered the antechamber of Murray, in which Halbert Glendinning was in waiting.

"Call your master, Halbert," said the Earl; "I have news for him from Teviotdale; and for you too, Glendinning.—News! news! my Lord of Murray!" he exclaimed at the door of the Earl's bedroom; "come forth instantly." The Earl appeared, and greeted his ally, demanding eagerly his tidings.

"I have had a sure friend with me from the south," said Morton; "he has been at Saint Mary's Monastery, and brings important tidings." "Of what complexion?" said Murray, "and can you trust the bearer?" "He is faithful, on my life," said Morton; "I wish all around your Lordship may prove equally so."

"At what, and whom, do you point?" demanded Murray.

"Here is the Egyptian of trusty Halbert Glendinning, our Southland Moses, come alive again, and flourishing, gay and bright as ever, in that Teviotdale Goshen, the Halidome of Kennaquhair."

"What mean you, my lord?" said Murray.

"Only that your new henchman has put a false tale upon you. Piercie Shafton is alive and well; by the same token that the gull is thought to be detained there by love to a miller's daughter, who roamed the country with him in disguise."

"Glendinning," said Murray, bending his brow into his darkest frown, "thou hast not, I trust, dared to bring me a lie in thy mouth, in order to win my confidence?"

"My lord," said Halbert, "I am incapable of a lie. I should choke on one were my life to require that I pronounced it. I say, that this sword of my father was through the body—the point came out behind his back—the hilt pressed upon his breast-bone. And I will plunge it as deep in the body of any one who shall dare to charge me with falsehood."

"How, fellow!" said Morton, "wouldst thou beard a nobleman?"

"Be silent, Halbert," said Murray, "and you, my Lord of Morton, forbear him. I see truth written on his brow."

"I wish the inside of the manuscript may correspond with the superscription," replied his more suspicious ally. "Look to it, my lord, you will one day lose your life by too much confidence."

"And you will lose your friends by being too readily suspicious," answered Murray. "Enough of this—let me hear thy tidings."

"Sir John Foster," said Morton, "is about to send a party into Scotland to waste the Halidome."

"How! without waiting my presence and permission?" said Murray—"he is mad—will he come as an enemy into the Queen's country?"

"He has Elizabeth's express orders," answered Morton, "and they are not to be trifled with. Indeed, his march has been more than once projected and laid aside during the time we have been here, and has caused much alarm at Kennaquhair. Boniface, the old Abbot, has resigned, and whom think you they have chosen in his place?"

"No one surely," said Murray; "they would presume to hold no election until the Queen's pleasure and mine were known?"

Morton shrugged his shoulders—"They have chosen the pupil of old Cardinal Beatoun, that wily determined champion of Rome, the bosom-friend of our busy Primate of Saint Andrews. Eustace, late the Sub-Prior of Kennaquhair, is now its Abbot, and, like a second Pope Julius, is levying men and making musters to fight with Foster if he comes forward."

"We must prevent that meeting," said Murray, hastily; "whichever party wins the day, it were a fatal encounter for us—Who commands the troop of the Abbot?"

"Our faithful old friend, Julian Avenel, nothing less," answered Morton.

"Glendinning," said Murray, "sound trumpets to horse directly, and let all who love us get on horseback without delay—Yes, my lord, this were indeed a fatal dilemma. If we take part with our English friends, the country will cry shame on us—the very old wives will attack us with their rocks and spindles—the very stones of the street will rise up against us—we cannot set our face to such a deed of infamy. And my sister, whose confidence I already have such difficulty in preserving, will altogether withdraw it from me. Then, were we to oppose the English Warden, Elizabeth would call it a protecting of her enemies and what not, and we should lose her."

"The she-dragon," said Morton, "is the best card in our pack; and yet I would not willingly stand still and see English blades carve Scots flesh—What say you to loitering by the way, marching far and easy for fear of spoiling our horses? They might then fight dog fight bull, fight Abbot fight archer, and no one could blame us for what chanced when we were not present."

"All would blame us, James Douglas," replied Murray; "we should lose both sides—we had better advance with the utmost celerity, and do what we can to keep the peace betwixt them.—I would the nag that brought Piercie Shafton hither had broken his neck over the highest heuch in Northumberland!—He is a proper coxcomb to make all this bustle about, and to occasion perhaps a national war!"

"Had we known in time," said Douglas, "we might have had him privily waited upon as he entered the Borders; there are strapping lads enough would have rid us of him for the lucre of his spur-whang. {Footnote: *Spur-whang*—Spur-leather.} But to the saddle, James Stewart, since so the phrase goes. I hear your trumpets. Bound to horse and away—we shall soon see which nag is best breathed."

Followed by a train of about three hundred well-mounted men-at-arms, these two powerful barons directed their course to Dumfries, and from thence eastward to Teviotdale, marching at a rate which, as Morton had foretold, soon disabled a good many of their horses, so that when they approached the scene of expected action, there were not above two hundred of their train remaining in a body, and of these most were mounted on steeds which had been sorely jaded.

They had hitherto been amused and agitated by various reports concerning the advance of the English soldiers, and the degree of resistance which the Abbot was able to oppose to them. But when they were six or seven miles from Saint Mary's of Kennaquhair, a gentleman of the country, whom Murray had summoned to attend him, and on whose intelligence he knew he could rely, arrived at the head of two or three servants, "bloody with spurring, fiery red with haste." According to his report, Sir John Foster, after several times announcing, and as often delaying, his intended incursion, had at last been so stung with the news that Piercie Shafton was openly residing within the Halidome, that he determined to execute the commands of his mistress, which directed him, at every risk, to make himself master of the Euphuist's person. The Abbot's unceasing exertions had collected a body of men almost equal in number to those of the English Warden, but less practised in arms. They were united under the command of Julian Avenel, and it was apprehended they would join battle upon the banks of a small stream which forms the verge of the Halidome.

"Who knows the place?" said Murray.

"I do, my lord," answered Glendinning.

"Tis well," said the Earl; "take a score of the best-mounted horse—make what haste thou canst, and announce to them that I am coming up instantly with a strong power, and will cut to pieces, without mercy, whichever party strikes the first blow.—Davidson," said he to the gentleman who brought the intelligence, "thou shalt be my guide.—Hie thee on, Glendinning—Say to Foster, I conjure him, as he respects his mistress's service, that he will leave the matter in my hands. Say to the Abbot, I will burn the Monastery over his head, if he strikes a stroke till I come—Tell the dog, Julian Avenel, that he hath already one deep score to settle with me—I will set his head on the top of the highest pinnacle of Saint Mary's, if he presume to open another. Make haste, and spare not the spur for fear of spoiling horse-flesh."

"Your bidding shall be obeyed, my lord," said Glendinning; and choosing those whose horses were in best plight to be his attendants, he went off as fast as the jaded state of their cavalry permitted. Hill and hollow vanished from under the feet of the chargers.

They had not ridden half the way, when they met stragglers coming off from the field, whose appearance announced that the conflict was begun. Two supported in their arms a third, their elder brother, who was pierced with an arrow through the body. Halbert, who knew them to belong to the Halidome, called them by their names, and questioned them of the state of the affray; but just then, in spite of their efforts to retain him in the saddle, their brother dropped from the horse, and they dismounted in haste to receive his last breath. From men thus engaged, no information was to be obtained. Glendinning, therefore, pushed on with his little troop, the more anxiously, as he perceived other stragglers, bearing Saint Andrew's cross upon their caps and corslets, flying apparently from the field of battle. Most of these, when they were aware of a body of horsemen approaching on the road, held to the one hand or the other, at such a distance as precluded coming to speech of them. Others, whose fear was more intense, kept the onward road, galloping wildly as fast as their horses could carry them, and when questioned, only glared without reply on those who spoke to them, and rode on without drawing bridle. Several of these were also known to Halbert, who had therefore no doubt, from the circumstances in which he met them, that the men of the Halidome were defeated. He became now unspeakably anxious concerning the fate of his brother, who, he could not doubt, must have been engaged in the affray. He therefore increased the speed of his horse, so that not above five or six of his followers could keep up with him. At length he reached a little hill, at the descent of which, surrounded by a semi-circular sweep of a small stream, lay the plain which had been the scene of the skirmish.

It was a melancholy spectacle. War and terror, to use the expression of the poet, had rushed on to the field, and left only wounds and death behind them. The battle had been stoutly contested, as was almost always the case with these Border skirmishes, where ancient hatred, and mutual injuries, made men stubborn in maintaining the cause of their conflict. Towards the middle of the plain, there lay the bodies of several men who had fallen in the very act of grappling with the enemy; and there were seen countenances which still bore the stern expression of unextinguishable hate and defiance, hands which clasped the hilt of the broken falchion, or strove in vain to pluck the deadly arrow from the wound. Some were wounded, and, cowed of the courage they had lately shown, were begging aid, and craving water, in a tone of melancholy depression, while others tried to teach the faltering tongue to pronounce some half-forgotten prayer, which, even when

first learned, they had but half understood. Halbert, uncertain what course he was next to pursue, rode through the plain to see if, among the dead or wounded, he could discover any traces of his brother Edward. He experienced no interruption from the English. A distant cloud of dust announced that they were still pursuing the scattered fugitives, and he guessed, that to approach them with his followers, until they were again under some command, would be to throw away his own life, and that of his men, whom the victors would instantly confound with the Scots, against whom they had been successful. He resolved, therefore, to pause until Murray came up with his forces, to which he was the more readily moved, as he heard the trumpets of the English Warden sounding the retreat, and recalling from the pursuit. He drew his men together, and made a stand in an advantageous spot of ground, which had been occupied by the Scots in the beginning of the action, and most fiercely disputed while the skirmish lasted.

While he stood here, Halbert's ear was assailed by the feeble moan of a woman, which he had not expected to hear amid that scene, until the retreat of the foes had permitted the relations of the slain to approach, for the purpose of paying them the last duties. He looked with anxiety, and at length observed, that by the body of a knight in bright armour, whose crest, though soiled and broken, still showed the marks of rank and birth, there sat a female wrapped in a horseman's cloak, and holding something pressed against her bosom, which he soon discovered to be a child. He glanced towards the English. They advanced not, and the continued and prolonged sound of their trumpets, with the shouts of the leaders, announced that their powers would not be instantly re-assembled. He had, therefore, a moment to look after this unfortunate woman. He gave his horse to a spearman as he dismounted, and, approaching the unhappy female, asked her, in the most soothing tone he could assume, whether he could assist her in her distress. The mourner made him no direct answer; but endeavouring, with a trembling and unskilful hand, to undo the springs of the visor and gorget, said, in a tone of impatient grief, "Oh, he would recover instantly could I but give him air—land and living, life and honour, would I give for the power of undoing these cruel iron platings that suffocate him!" He that would soothe sorrow must not argue on the vanity of the most deceitful hopes. The body lay as that of one whose last draught of vital air had been drawn, and who must never more have concern with the nether sky. But Halbert Glendinning failed not to raise the visor and cast loose the gorget, when, to his great surprise, he recognized the pale face of Julian Avenel. His last fight was over, the fierce and turbid spirit had departed in the strife in which it had so long delighted.

"Alas! he is gone," said Halbert, speaking to the young woman, in whom he had now no difficulty of knowing the unhappy Catherine.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she reiterated, "do not say so—he is not dead—he is but in a swoon. I have lain as long in one myself—and then his voice would arouse me, when he spoke kindly, and said, Catherine, look up for my sake—And look up, Julian, for mine!" she said, addressing the senseless corpse; "I know you do but counterfeit to frighten me, but I am not frightened," she added, with an hysterical attempt to laugh; and then instantly changing her tone, entreated him to "speak, were it but to curse my folly. Oh, the rudest word you ever said to me would now sound like the dearest you wasted on me before I gave you all. Lift him up," she said, "lift him up, for God's sake!—have you no compassion? He promised to wed me if I bore him a boy, and this child is so like to its father!—How shall he keep his word, if you do not help me to awaken him?—Christie of the Clinthill, Rowley, Hutcheon! ye were constant at his feast, but ye fled from him at the fray, false villains as ye are!"

"Not I, by Heaven!" said a dying man, who made some shift to raise himself on his elbow, and discovered to Halbert the well-known features of Christie; "I fled not a foot, and a man can but fight while his breath lasts—mine is going fast.—So, youngster," said he, looking at Glendinning, and seeing his military dress, "thou hast ta'en the basnet at last? it is a better cap to live in than die in. I would chance had sent thy brother here instead—there was good in him—but thou art as wild, and wilt soon be as wicked as myself."

"God forbid!" said Halbert, hastily.

"Marry, and amen, with all my heart," said the wounded man, "there will be company enow without thee where I am going. But God be praised I had no hand in that wickedness," said he, looking to poor Catherine; and with some exclamation in his mouth, that sounded betwixt a prayer and a curse, the soul of Christie of the Clinthill took wing to the last account.

Deeply wrapt in the painful interest which these shocking events had excited, Glendinning forgot for a moment his own situation and duties, and was first recalled to them by a trampling of horse, and the cry of Saint George for England, which the English soldiers still continued to use. His handful of men, for most of the stragglers had waited for Murray's coming up, remained on horseback, holding their lances upright, having no command either to submit or resist.

"There stands our Captain," said one of them, as a strong party of English came up, the vanguard of Foster's troop.

"Your Captain! with his sword sheathed, and on foot in the presence of his enemy? a raw soldier, I warrant him," said the English leader. "So! ho! young man, is your dream out, and will you now answer me if you will fight or fly?"

"Neither," answered Halbert Glendinning, with great tranquillity.

"Then throw down thy sword and yield thee," answered the Englishman.

"Not till I can help myself no otherwise," said Halbert, with the same moderation of tone and manner.

"Art thou for thine own hand, friend, or to whom dost thou owe service?" demanded the English Captain.

"To the noble Earl of Murray."

"Then thou servest," said the Southron, "the most disloyal nobleman who breathes—false both to England and Scotland."

"Thou liest," said Glendinning, regardless of all consequences.

"Ha! art thou so hot how, and wert so cold but a minute since? I lie, do I? Wilt thou do battle with me on that quarrel?"

"With one to one—one to two—or two to five, as you list," said Halbert Glendinning; "grant me but a fair field."

"That thou shalt have.—Stand back, my mates," said the brave Englishman. "If I fall, give him fair play, and let him go off free with his people."

"Long life to the noble Captain!" cried the soldiers, as impatient to see the duel, as if it had been a bull-baiting.

"He will have a short life of it, though," said the sergeant, "if he, an old man of sixty, is to fight, for any reason, or for no reason, with every man he meets, and especially the young fellows he might be father to.—And here comes the Warden besides to see the sword-play."

In fact, Sir John Foster came up with a considerable body of his horsemen, just as his Captain, whose age rendered him unequal to the combat with so strong and active a youth as Glendinning, was deprived of his sword.

"Take it up for shame, old Stawarth Bolton," said the English Warden; "and thou, young man, tell me who and what thou art?"

"A follower of the Earl of Murray, who bore his will to your honour," answered Glendinning,— "but here he comes to say it himself; I see the van of his horsemen come over the hills."

"Get into order, my masters," said Sir John Foster to his followers; "you that have broken your spears, draw your swords. We are something unprovided for a second field, but if yonder dark cloud on the hill edge bring us foul weather, we must bear as bravely as our broken cloaks will bide it. Meanwhile, Stawarth, we have got the deer we have hunted for—here is Piercie Shafton hard and fast betwixt two troopers."

"Who, that lad?" said Bolton; "he is no more Piercie Shafton than I am. He hath his gay cloak indeed—but Piercie Shafton is a round dozen of years older than that slip of roguery. I have known him since he was thus high. Did you never see him in the tilt-yard or in the presence?"

"To the devil with such vanities!" said Sir John Foster; "when had I leisure for them or any thing else? During my whole life has she kept me to this hangman's office, chasing thieves one day and traitors another, in daily fear of my life; the lance never hung up in the hall, the foot never out of the stirrup, the saddles never off my nags' backs; and now, because I have been mistaken in the person of a man I never saw, I warrant me, the next letters from the Privy Council will rate me as I were a dog—a man were better dead than thus slaved and harassed."

A trumpet interrupted Foster's complaints, and a Scottish pursuivant who attended, declared "that the noble Earl of Murray desired, in all honour and safety, a personal conference with Sir John Foster, midway between their parties, with six of company in each, and ten free minutes to come and go."

"And now," said the Englishman, "comes another plague. I must go speak with yonder false Scot, and he knows how to frame his devices, to cast dust in the eyes of a plain man, as well as ever a knave in the north. I am no match for him in words, and for hard blows we are but too ill provided.—Pursuivant, we grant the

conference—and you, Sir Swordsman," (speaking to young Glendinning,) "draw off with your troopers to your own party—march—attend your Earl's trumpet.—Stawarth Bolton, put our troop in order, and be ready to move forward at the wagging of a finger.—Get you gone to your own friends, I tell you, Sir Squire, and loiter not here."

Notwithstanding this peremptory order, Halbert Glendinning could not help stopping to cast a look upon the unfortunate Catherine, who lay insensible of the danger and of the trampling of so many horses around her, insensible, as the second glance assured him, of all and forever. Glendinning almost rejoiced when he saw that the last misery of life was over, and that the hoofs of the war-horses, amongst which he was compelled to leave her, could only injure and deface a senseless corpse. He caught the infant from her arms, half ashamed of the shout of laughter which rose on all sides, at seeing an armed man in such a situation assume such an unwonted and inconvenient burden.

"Shoulder your infant!" cried a harquebusier.

"Port your infant!" said a pikeman.

"Peace, ye brutes," said Stawarth Bolton, "and respect humanity in others if you have none yourselves. I pardon the lad having done some discredit to my gray hairs, when I see him take care of that helpless creature, which ye would have trampled upon as if ye had been littered of bitch-wolves, not born of women."

While this passed, the leaders on either side met in the neutral space betwixt the forces of either, and the Earl accosted the English Warden:

"Is this fair or honest usage, Sir John, or for whom do you hold the Earl of Morton and myself, that you ride in Scotland with arrayed banner, fight, slay, and make prisoners at your own pleasure? Is it well done, think you, to spoil our land and shed our blood, after the many proofs we have given to your mistress of our devotion due to her will, saving always the allegiance due to our own sovereign?"

"My Lord of Murray," answered Foster, "all the world knows you to be a man of quick ingine and deep wisdom, and these several weeks you have held me in hand with promising to arrest my sovereign mistress's rebel, this Piercie Shafton of Wilverton, and you have never kept your word, alleging turmoils in the west, and I wot not what other causes of hinderance. Now, since he has had the insolence to return hither, and live openly within ten miles of England, I could no longer, in plain duty to my mistress and queen, tarry upon your successive delays, and therefore I have used her force to take her rebel, by the strong hand, wherever I can find him."

"And is Piercie Shafton in your hands, then?" said the Earl of Murray. "Be aware that I may not, without my own great shame, suffer you to remove him hence without doing battle."

"Will you, Lord Earl, after all the advantages you have received at the hands of the Queen of England, do battle in the cause of her rebel?" said Sir John Foster.

"Not so, Sir John," answered the Earl, "but I will fight to the death in defence of the liberties of our free kingdom of Scotland."

"By my faith," said Sir John Foster, "I am well content—my sword is not blunted with all it has done yet this day."

"By my honour, Sir John," said Sir George Heron of Chipchase, "there is but little reason we should fight these Scottish Lords e'en now, for I hold opinion with old Stawarth Bolton, and believe yonder prisoner to be no more Piercie Shafton than he is the Earl of Northumberland; and you were but ill advised to break the peace betwixt the countries for a prisoner of less consequence than that gay mischief-maker."

"Sir George," replied Foster, "I have often heard you herons are afraid of hawks—Nay, lay not hand on sword, man—I did but jest; and for this prisoner, let him be brought up hither, that we may see who or what he is—always under assurance, my Lords," he continued, addressing the Scots.

"Upon our word and honour," said Morton, "we will offer no violence."

The laugh turned against Sir John Foster considerably, when the prisoner, being brought up, proved not only a different person from Sir Piercie Shafton, but a female in man's attire.

"Pluck the mantle from the quean's face, and cast her to the horse-boys," said Foster; "she has kept such company ere now, I warrant."

Even Murray was moved to laughter, no common thing with him, at the disappointment of the English Warden; but he would not permit any violence to be offered to the fair Molinara, who had thus a second time rescued Sir Piercie Shafton at her own personal risk.

"You have already done more mischief than you can well answer," said the Earl to the English Warden, "and it were dishonour to me should I permit you to harm a hair of this young woman's head."

"My lord," said Morton, "if Sir John will ride apart with me but for one moment, I will show him such reasons as shall make him content to depart, and to refer this unhappy day's work to the judgment of the Commissioners nominated to try offences on the Border."

He then led Sir John Foster aside, and spoke to him in this manner:—"Sir John Foster, I much marvel that a man who knows your Queen Elizabeth as you do, should not know that, if you hope any thing from her, it must be for doing her useful service, not for involving her in quarrels with her neighbours without any advantage. Sir Knight, I will speak frankly what I know to be true. Had you seized the true Piercie Shafton by this ill-advised inroad; and had your deed threatened, as most likely it might, a breach betwixt the countries, your politic princess and her politic council would rather have disgraced Sir John Foster than entered into war in his behalf. But now that you have stricken short of your aim, you may rely on it you will have little thanks for carrying the matter farther. I will work thus far on the Earl of Murray, that he will undertake to dismiss Sir Piercie Shafton from the realm of Scotland.—Be well advised, and let the matter now pass off—you will gain nothing by farther violence, for if we fight, you as the fewer and the weaker through your former action, will needs have the worse."

Sir John Foster listened with his head declining on his breast-plate.

"It is a cursed chance," he said, "and I shall have little thanks for my day's work."

He then rode up to Murray, and said, that, in deference to his Lordship's presence and that of my Lord of Morton, he had come to the resolution of withdrawing himself, with his power, without farther proceedings.

"Stop there, Sir John Foster," said Murray; "I cannot permit you to retire in safety, unless you leave some one who may be surety to Scotland, that the injuries you have at present done us may be fully accounted for—you will reflect, that by permitting your retreat, I become accountable to my Sovereign, who will demand a reckoning of me for the blood of her subjects, if I suffer those who shed it to depart so easily."

"It shall never be told in England," said the Warden, "that John Foster gave pledges like a subdued man, and that on the very field on which he stands victorious.—But," he added, after a moment's pause, "if Stawarth Bolton wills to abide with you on his own free choice, I will say nothing against it; and, as I bethink me, it were better he should stay to see the dismissal of this same Piercie Shafton."

"I receive him as your hostage, nevertheless, and shall treat him as such," said the Earl of Murray. But Foster, turning away as if to give directions to Bolton and his men, affected not to hear this observation.

"There rides a faithful servant of his most beautiful and Sovereign Lady," said Murray aside to Morton. "Happy man! he knows not whether the execution of her commands may not cost him his head; and yet he is most certain that to leave them unexecuted will bring disgrace and death without reprieve. Happy are they who are not only subjected to the caprices of Dame Fortune, but held bound to account and be responsible for them, and that to a sovereign as moody and fickle as her humorous ladyship herself!"

"We also have a female Sovereign, my lord," said Morton.

"We have so, Douglas," said the Earl,—with a suppressed sigh; "but it remains to be seen how long a female hand can hold the reins of power in a realm so wild as ours. We will now go on to Saint Mary's, and see ourselves after the state of that House.—Glendinning, look to that woman, and protect her.—What the fiend, man, hast thou got in thine arms?—an infant as I live!—where couldst thou find such a charge, at such a place and moment?"

Halbert Glendinning briefly told the story. The Earl rode forward to the place where the body of Julian Avenel lay, with his unhappy companion's arms wrapped around him like the trunk of an uprooted oak borne down by the tempest with all its ivy garlands. Both were cold dead. Murray was touched in an unwonted degree, remembering, perhaps, his own birth. "What have they to answer for, Douglas," he said, "who thus abuse the sweetest gifts of affection?"

The Earl of Morton, unhappy in his marriage, was a libertine in his amours.

"You must ask that question of Henry Warden, my lord, or of John Knox—I am but a wild counsellor in women's matters."

"Forward to Saint Mary's," said the Earl; "pass the word on—Glendinning, give the infant to this same female cavalier, and let it be taken charge of. Let no dishonour be done to the dead bodies, and call on the country to bury or remove them.—Forward, I say, my masters!"

Chapter the Thirty-Seventh.

Gone to be married?—Gone to swear a peace!

KING JOHN

The news of the lost battle, so quickly carried by the fugitives to the village and convent, had spread the greatest alarm among the inhabitants. The Sacristan and other monks counselled flight; the Treasurer recommended that the church plate should be offered as a tribute to bribe the English officer; the Abbot alone was unmoved and undaunted.

"My brethren," he said, "since God has not given our people victory in the combat, it must be because he requires of us, his spiritual soldiers, to fight the good fight of martyrdom, a conflict in which nothing but our own faint-hearted cowardice can make us fail of victory. Let us assume, then, the armour of faith, and prepare, if it be necessary, to die under the ruin of these shrines, to the service of which we have devoted ourselves. Highly honoured are we all in this distinguished summons, from our dear brother Nicholas, whose gray hairs have been preserved until they should be surrounded by the crown of martyrdom, down to my beloved son Edward, who, arriving at the vineyard at the latest hour of the day, is yet permitted to share its toils with those who have laboured from the morning. Be of good courage, my children. I dare not, like my sainted predecessors, promise to you that you shall be preserved by miracle—I and you are alike unworthy of that especial interposition, which, in earlier times, turned the sword of sacrilege against the bosom of tyrants by whom it was wielded, daunted the hardened hearts of heretics with prodigies, and called down hosts of angels to defend the shrine of God and of the Virgin. Yet, by heavenly aid, you shall this day see that your Father and Abbot will not disgrace the mitre which sits upon his brow. Go to your cells, my children, and exercise your private devotions. Array yourselves also in alb and cope, as for our most solemn festivals, and be ready, when the tolling of the largest bell announces the approach of the enemy, to march forth to meet them in solemn procession. Let the church be opened to afford such refuge as may be to those of our vassals, who, from their exertion in this day's unhappy battle, or the cause, are particularly apprehensive of the rage of the enemy. Tell Sir Piercie Shafton, if he has escaped the fight—"

"I am here, most venerable Abbot," replied Sir Piercie; "and if it so seemeth meet to you, I will presently assemble such of the men as have escaped this escaramouche, and will renew the resistance, even unto the death. Certes, you will learn from all, that I did my part in this unhappy matter. Had it pleased Julian Avenel to have attended to my counsel, specially in somewhat withdrawing of his main battle, even as you may have marked the heron eschew the stoop of the falcon, receiving him rather upon his beak than upon his wing, affairs, as I do conceive, might have had a different face, and we might then, in a more bellacose manner, have maintained that affray. Nevertheless, I would not be understood to speak any thing in disregard of Julian Avenel, whom I saw fall fighting manfully with his face to his enemy, which hath banished from my memory the unseemly term of 'meddling coxcomb,' with which it pleased him something rashly to qualify my advice, and for which, had it pleased Heaven and the saints to have prolonged the life of that excellent person, I had it bound upon my soul to have put him to death with my own hand."

"Sir Piercie," said the Abbot, at length interrupting him, "our time allows brief leisure to speak what might have been."

"You are right, most venerable Lord and Father," replied the incorrigible Euphuist; "the preterite, as grammarians have it, concerns frail mortality less than the future mood, and indeed our cogitations respect chiefly the present. In a word, I am willing to head all who will follow me, and offer such opposition as manhood and mortality may permit, to the advance of the English, though they be my own countrymen; and be assured, Piercie Shafton will measure his length, being five feet ten inches, on the ground as he stands, rather than give two yards in retreat, according to the usual motion in which we retrograde."

"I thank you, Sir Knight," said the Abbot, "and I doubt not that you would make your words good; but it is not the will of Heaven that carnal weapons should rescue us. We are called to endure, not to resist, and may not waste the blood of our innocent commons in vain—Fruitless opposition becomes not men of our profession; they have my commands to resign the sword and the spear,—God and Our Lady have not blessed our banner."

"Bethink you, reverend lord," said Piercie Shafton, very eagerly, "ere you resign the defence that is in your power—there are many posts near the entry of this village, where brave men might live or die to the advantage; and I have this additional motive to make defence,—the safety, namely, of a fair friend, who, I hope, hath escaped the hands of the heretics."

"I understand you, Sir Piercie," said the Abbot—"you mean the daughter of our Convent's miller?"

"Reverend my lord," said Sir Piercie, not without hesitation, "the fair Mysinda is, as may be in some sort alleged, the daughter of one who mechanically prepareth corn to be manipulated into bread, without which we could not exist, and which is therefore an employment in itself honourable, nay necessary. Nevertheless, if the purest sentiments of a generous mind, streaming forth like the rays of the sun reflected by a diamond, may ennoble one, who is in some sort the daughter of a molendinary mechanic——"

"I have no time for all this, Sir Knight," said the Abbot; "be it enough to answer, that with our will we war no longer with carnal weapons. We of the spirituality will teach you of the temporality how to die in cold blood, our hands not clenched for resistance, but folded for prayer—our minds not filled with jealous hatred, but with Christian meekness and forgiveness—our ears not deafened, nor our senses confused, by the sound of clamorous instruments of war; but, on the contrary, our voices composed to Halleluiah, Kyrie-Eleison, and Salve Regina, and our blood temperate and cold, as those who think upon reconciling themselves with God, not of avenging themselves of their fellow-mortals."

"Lord Abbot," said Sir Piercie, "this is nothing to the fate of my Molinara, whom I beseech you to observe, I will not abandon, while golden hilt and steel blade bide together on my falchion. I commanded her not to follow us to the field, and yet methought I saw her in her page's attire amongst the rear of the combatants."

"You must seek elsewhere for the person in whose fate you are so deeply interested," said the Abbot; "and at present I will pray of your knighthood to inquire concerning her at the church, in which all our more defenceless vassals have taken refuge. It is my advice to you, that you also abide by the horns of the altar; and, Sir Piercie Shafton," he added, "be of one thing secure, that if you come to harm, it will involve the whole of this brotherhood; for never, I trust, will the meanest of us buy safety at the expense of surrendering a friend or a guest. Leave us, my son, and may God be your aid!"

When Sir Piercie Shafton had departed, and the Abbot was about to betake himself to his own cell, he was surprised by an unknown person anxiously requiring a conference, who, being admitted, proved to be no other than Henry Warden. The Abbot started as he entered, and exclaimed, angrily,—"*Ha!* are the few hours that fate allows him who may last wear the mitre of this house, not to be excused from the intrusion of heresy? Dost thou come," he said, "to enjoy the hopes which fete holds out to thy demented and accursed sect, to see the bosom of destruction sweep away the pride of old religion—to deface our shrines,—to mutilate and lay waste the bodies of our benefactors, as well as their sepulchres—to destroy the pinnacles and carved work of God's house, and Our Lady's?"

"Peace, William Allan!" said the Protestant preacher, with dignified composure; "for none of these purposes do I come. I would have these stately shrines deprived of the idols which, no longer simply regarded as the effigies of the good and of the wise, have become the objects of foul idolatry. I would otherwise have its ornaments subsist, unless as they are, or may be, a snare to the souls of men; and especially do I condemn those ravages which have been made by the heady fury of the people, stung into zeal against will-worship by bloody persecution. Against such wanton devastations I lift my testimony."

"Idle distinguisher that thou art!" said the Abbot Eustace, interrupting him; "what signifies the pretext under which thou dost despoil the house of God? and why at this present emergence will thou insult the master of it by thy ill-omened presence?"

"Thou art unjust, William Allan," said Warden; "but I am not the less settled in my resolution. Thou hast protected me some time since at the hazard of thy rank, and what I know thou holdest still dearer, at the risk of thy reputation with thine own sect. Our party is now uppermost, and, believe me, I have come down the valley, in which thou didst quarter me for sequestration's sake, simply with the wish to keep my engagements to thee."

"Ay," answered the Abbot, "and it may be, that my listening to that worldly and infirm compassion which pleaded with me for thy life, is now avenged by this impending judgment. Heaven hath smitten, it may be, the erring shepherd, and scattered the flock."

"Think better of the Divine judgments," said Warden. "Not for thy sins, which are those of thy blended education and circumstances; not for thine own sins, William Allan, art thou stricken, but for the accumulated guilt which thy mis-named Church hath accumulated on her head, and those of her votaries, by the errors and corruption of ages."

"Now, by my sure belief in the Rock of Peter," said the Abbot, "thou dost rekindle the last spark of human indignation for which my bosom has fuel—I thought I might not again have felt the impulse of earthly passion, and it is thy voice which once more calls me to the expression of human anger! yes, it is thy voice that comest to insult me in my hour of sorrow, with these blasphemous accusations of that church which hath kept the light of Christianity alive from the times of the Apostles till now."

"From the times of the Apostles?" said the preacher, eagerly. "*Negatur, Gulielme Allan*—the primitive church differed as much from that of Rome, as did light from darkness, which, did time permit, I should speedily prove. And worse dost thou judge, in saying, I come to insult thee in thy hour of affliction, being here, God wot, with the Christian wish of fulfilling an engagement I had made to my host, and of rendering myself to thy will while it had yet power to exercise aught upon me, and if it might so be, to mitigate in thy behalf the rage of the victors whom God hath sent as a scourge to thy obstinacy."

"I will none of thy intercession," said the Abbot, sternly; "the dignity to which the church has exalted me, never should have swelled my bosom more proudly in the time of the highest prosperity, than it doth at this crisis—I ask nothing of thee, but the assurance that my lenity to thee hath been the means of perverting no soul to Satan, that I have not given to the wolf any of the stray lambs whom the Great Shepherd of souls had intrusted to my charge."

"William Allan," answered the Protestant, "I will be sincere with thee. What I promised I have kept—I have withheld my voice from speaking even good things. But it has pleased Heaven to call the maiden Mary Avenel to a better sense of faith than thou and all the disciples of Rome can teach. Her I have aided with my humble power—I have extricated her from the machinations of evil spirits to which she and her house were exposed during the blindness of their Romish superstition, and, praise be to my Master, I have not reason to fear she will again be caught in thy snares."

"Wretched man!" said the Abbot, unable to suppress his rising indignation, "is it to the Abbot of St. Mary's that you boast having misled the soul of a dweller in Our Lady's Halidome into the paths of foul error and damning heresy?—Thou dost urge me, Wellwood, beyond what it becomes me to bear, and movest me to employ the few moments of power I may yet possess, in removing from the face of the earth one whose qualities, given by God, have been so utterly perverted as thine to the service of Satan."

"Do thy pleasure," said the preacher; "thy vain wrath shall not prevent my doing my duty to advantage thee, where it may be done without neglecting my higher call. I go to the Earl of Murray."

Their conference, which was advancing fast into bitter disputation, was here interrupted by the deep and sullen toll of the largest and heaviest bell of the Convent, a sound famous in the chronicles of the Community, for dispelling of tempests, and putting to flight demons, but which now only announced danger, without affording any means of warding against it. Hastily repeating his orders, that all the brethren should attend in the choir, arrayed for solemn procession, the Abbot ascended to the battlements of the lofty Monastery, by his own private staircase, and there met the Sacristan, who had been in the act of directing the tolling of the huge bell, which fell under his charge.

"It is the last time I shall discharge mine office, most venerable Father and Lord," said he to the Abbot, "for yonder come the Philistines; but I would not that the large bell of Saint Mary's should sound for the last time, otherwise than in true and full tone—I have been a sinful man for one of our holy profession," added he, looking upward, "yet may I presume to say, not a bell hath sounded out of tune from the tower of the house, while Father Philip had the superintendence of the chime and the belfry."

The Abbot, without reply, cast his eyes towards the path, which, winding around the mountain, descends upon Kennaquhair, from the south-east. He beheld at a distance a cloud of dust, and heard the neighing of many horses, while the occasional sparkle of the long line of spears, as they came downwards into the valley, announced that the band came thither in arms.

"Shame on my weakness!" said Abbot Eustace, dashing the tears from his eyes; "my sight is too much dimmed to observe their motions—look, my son Edward," for his favourite novice had again joined him, "and tell me what ensigns they bear."

"They are Scottish men, when all is done!" exclaimed Edward—"I see the white crosses—it may be the Western Borderers, or Fernieherst and his clan."

"Look at the banner," said the Abbot; "tell me, what are the blazonries?"

"The arms of Scotland," said Edward, "the lion and its tressure, quartered, as I think, with three cushions—Can it be the royal standard?"

"Alas! no," said the Abbot, "it is that of the Earl of Murray. He hath assumed with his new conquest the badge of the valiant Randolph, and hath dropt from his hereditary coat the bend which indicates his own base birth—would to God he may not have blotted it also from his memory, and aim as well at possessing the name, as the power, of a king."

"At least, my father," said Edward, "he will secure us from the violence of the Southron."

"Ay, my son, as the shepherd secures a silly lamb from the wolf, which he destines in due time to his own banquet. Oh my son, evil days are on us! A breach has been made in the walls of our sanctuary—thy brother hath fallen from the faith. Such news brought my last secret intelligence—Murray hath already spoken of rewarding his services with the hand of Mary Avenel."

"Of Mary Avenel!" said the novice, tottering towards and grasping hold of one of the carved pinnacles which adorned the proud battlement.

"Ay, of Mary Avenel, my son, who has also abjured the faith of her fathers. Weep not, my Edward, weep not, my beloved son! or weep for their apostasy, and not for their union—Bless God, who hath called thee to himself, out of the tents of wickedness; but for the grace of Our Lady and Saint Benedict, thou also hadst been a castaway."

"I endeavour, my father," said Edward, "I endeavour to forget; but what I would now blot from my memory has been the thought of all my former life—Murray dare not forward a match so unequal in birth."

"He dares do what suits his purpose—The Castle of Avenel is strong, and needs a good castellan, devoted to his service; as for the difference of their birth, he will mind it no more than he would mind defacing the natural regularity of the ground, were it necessary he should erect upon it military lines and intrenchments. But do not droop for that—awaken thy soul within thee, my son. Think you part with a vain vision, an idle dream, nursed in solitude and inaction.—I weep not, yet what am I now like to lose?—Look at these towers, where saints dwelt, and where heroes have been buried—Think that I, so briefly called to preside over the pious flock, which has dwelt here since the first light of Christianity, may be this day written down the last father of this holy community—Come, let us descend, and meet our fate. I see them approach near to the village."

The Abbot descended, the novice cast a glance around him; yet the sense of the danger impending over the stately structure, with which he was now united, was unable to banish the recollection of Mary Avenel.—"His brother's bride!" he pulled the cowl over his face, and followed his Superior.

The whole bells of the Abbey now added their peal to the death-toll of the largest which had so long sounded. The monks wept and prayed as they got themselves into the order of their procession for the last time, as seemed but too probable.

"It is well our Father Boniface hath retired to the inland," said Father Philip; "he could never have put over this day—it would have broken his heart!"

"God be with the soul of Abbot Ingelram!" said old Father Nicholas, "there were no such doings in his days.—They say we are to be put forth of the cloisters; and how I am to live any where else than where I have lived for these seventy years, I wot not—the best is, that I have not long to live any where."

A few moments after this the great gate of the Abbey was flung open, and the procession moved slowly forward from beneath its huge and richly-adorned gateway. Cross and banner, pix and chalice, shrines containing relics, and censers steaming with incense, preceded and were intermingled with the long and solemn array of the brotherhood, in their long black gowns and cowls, with their white scapularies hanging over them, the various officers of the convent each displaying his proper badge of office. In the centre of the procession came the Abbot, surrounded and supported by his chief assistants. He was dressed in his habit of high solemnity, and appeared as much unconcerned as if he had been taking his usual part in some ordinary ceremony. After him came the inferior persons of the convent; the novices in their albs or white dresses, and the lay brethren distinguished by their beards, which were seldom worn by the Fathers. Women and children, mixed with a few men, came in the rear, bewailing the apprehended desolation of their ancient sanctuary. They moved, however, in order, and restrained the marks of their sorrow to a low wailing sound, which rather mingled with than interrupted the measured chant of the monks.

In this order the procession entered the market-place of the village of Kennaquhair, which was then, as now, distinguished by an ancient cross of curious workmanship, the gift of some former monarch of Scotland. Close by the cross, of much greater antiquity, and scarcely less honoured, was an immensely large oak-tree, which perhaps had witnessed the worship of the Druids, ere the stately Monastery to which it adjoined had raised its spires in honour of the Christian faith. Like the Bentang-tree of the African villages, or the Plaistow-oak mentioned in White's Natural History of Selborne, this tree was the rendezvous of the villagers, and regarded with peculiar veneration; a feeling common to most nations, and which perhaps may be traced up to the remote period when the patriarch feasted the angels under the oak at Mamre. {Footnote: It is scarcely necessary to say, that in Melrose, the prototype of Kennaquhair, no such oak ever existed.}

The monks formed themselves each in their due place around the cross, while under the ruins of the aged tree crowded the old and the feeble, with others who felt the common alarm. When they had thus arranged themselves, there was a deep and solemn pause. The monks stilled their chant, the lay populace hushed their lamentations, and all awaited in terror and silence the arrival of those heretical forces, whom they had been so long taught to regard with fear and trembling.

A distant trampling was at length heard, and the glance of spears was seen to shine through the trees above the village. The sounds increased, and became more thick, one close continuous rushing sound, in which the tread of hoofs was mingled with the ringing of armour. The horsemen soon appeared at the principal entrance which leads into the irregular square or market-place which forms the centre of the village. They entered two by two, slowly, and in the greatest order.

The van continued to move on, riding round the open space, until they had attained the utmost point, and then turning their horses' heads to the street, stood fast; their companions followed in the same order, until the whole market-place was closely surrounded with soldiers; and the files who followed, making the same manoeuvre, formed an inner line within those who had first arrived, until the place was begirt with a quadruple file of horsemen closely drawn up. There was now a pause, of which the Abbot availed himself, by commanding the brotherhood to raise the solemn chant *De profundis clamavi*. He looked around the armed ranks, to see what impression the solemn sounds made on them. All were silent, but the brows of some had an expression of contempt, and almost all the rest bore a look of indifference; their course had been too long decided to permit past feelings of enthusiasm to be anew awakened by a procession or by a hymn.

"Their hearts are hardened," said the Abbot to himself in dejection, but not in despair; "it remains to see whether those of their leaders are equally obdurate."

The leaders, in the meanwhile, were advancing slowly, and Murray, with Morton, rode in deep conversation before a chosen band of their most distinguished followers, amongst whom came Halbert Glendinning. But the preacher Henry Warden, who, upon leaving the Monastery, had instantly joined them, was the only person admitted to their conference.

"You are determined, then," said Morton to Murray, "to give the heiress of Avenel, with all her pretensions, to this nameless and obscure young man?"

"Hath not Warden told you," said Murray, "that they have been bred together, and are lovers from their youth upward?"

"And that they are both," said Warden, "by means which may be almost termed miraculous, rescued from the delusions of Rome, and brought within the pale of the true church. My residence at Glendearg hath made me well acquainted with these things. Ill would it beseem my habit and my calling, to thrust myself into match-making and giving in marriage, but worse were it in me to see your lordships do needless wrong to the feelings which are proper to our nature, and which, being indulged honestly and under the restraints of religion, become a pledge of domestic quiet here, and future happiness in a better world. I say, that you will do ill to rend those ties asunder, and to give this maiden to the kinsman of Lord Morton, though Lord Morton's kinsman he be."

"These are fair reasons, my Lord of Murray," said Morton, "why you should refuse me so simple a boon as to bestow this silly damsel upon young Bennyngask. Speak out plainly, my lord; say you would rather see the Castle of Avenel in the hands of one who owes his name and existence solely to your favour, than in the power of a Douglas, and of my kinsman."

"My Lord of Morton," said Murray, "I have done nothing in this matter which should aggrieve you. This young man Glendinning has done me good service, and may do me more. My promise was in some degree passed to him, and that while Julian Avenel was alive, when aught beside the maiden's lily hand would have been hard to come by; whereas, you never thought of such an alliance for your kinsman, till you saw Julian lie dead yonder on the field, and knew his land to be a waif free to the first who could seize it. Come, come, my lord, you do less than justice to your gallant kinsman, in wishing him a bride bred up under the milk-pail; for this girl is a peasant wench in all but the accident of birth. I thought you had more deep respect for the honour of the Douglasses."

"The honour of the Douglasses is safe in my keeping," answered Morton, haughtily; "that of other ancient families may suffer as well as the name of Avenel, if rustics are to be matched with the blood of our ancient barons."

"This is but idle talking," answered Lord Murray; "in times like these, we must look to men and not to pedigrees. Hay was but a rustic before the battle of Loncarty—the bloody yoke actually dragged the plough ere it was emblazoned on a crest by the herald. Times of action make princes into peasants, and boors into barons. All families have sprung from one mean man; and it is well if they have never degenerated from his virtue who raised them first from obscurity."

"My Lord of Murray will please to except the house of Douglas," said Morton, haughtily; "men have seen it in the tree, but never in the sapling—have seen it in the stream, but never in the fountain."

{Footnote: The late excellent and laborious antiquary, Mr. George Chalmers, has rebuked the vaunt of the House of Douglas, or rather of Hume of Godscroft, their historian, but with less than his wonted accuracy. In the first volume of his Caledonia, he quotes the passage in Godscroft for the purpose of confuting it.

The historian (of the Douglasses) cries out, "We do not know them in the fountain, but in the stream; not in the root, but in the stem; for we know not which is the mean man that did rise above the vulgar." This assumption Mr. Chalmers conceives ill-timed, and alleges, that if the historian had attended more to research than to declamation, he might easily have seen the first mean man of this renowned family. This he alleges to have been one Theobaldus Flammaticus, or Theobald the Fleming, to whom Arnold, Abbot of Kelso, between the year 1147 and 1160, granted certain lands on Douglas water, by a deed which Mr. Chalmers conceives to be the first link of the chain of title-deeds to Douglasdale. Hence, he says, the family must renounce their family domain, or acknowledge this obscure Fleming as their ancestor. Theobald the Fleming, it is acknowledged, did not himself assume the name of Douglas; "but," says the antiquary, "his son William, who inherited his estate, called himself, and was named by others, De Duglas;" and he refers to the deeds in which he is so designed. Mr. Chalmers' full argument may be found in the first volume of his Caledonia, p. 579.

This proposition is one which a Scotsman will admit unwillingly, and only upon undeniable testimony: and as it is liable to strong grounds of challenge, the present author, with all the respect to Mr. Chalmers which his zealous and effectual researches merit, is not unwilling to take this opportunity to state some plausible grounds for doubting that Theobaldus Flammaticus was either the father of the first William de Douglas, or in the slightest degree connected with the Douglas family.

It must first be observed, that there is no reason whatever for concluding Theobaldus Flammaticus to be the father of William de Douglas, except that they both held lands upon the small river of Douglas; and that there are two strong presumptions to the contrary. For, first, the father being named Fleming, there seems no good reason why the son should have assumed a different designation: secondly, there does not occur a single instance of the name of Theobald during the long line of the Douglas pedigree, an omission very unlikely to take place had the original father of the race been so called. These are secondary considerations indeed; but they are important, in so far as they exclude any support of Mr. Chalmers' system, except from the point which he has rather assumed than proved,

namely, that the lands granted to Theobald the Fleming were the same which were granted to William de Douglas, and which constituted the original domain of which we find this powerful family lords.

Now, it happens, singularly enough, that the lands granted by the Abbot of Kelso to Theobaldus Flammaticus are not the same of which William de Douglas was in possession. Nay, it would appear, from comparing the charter granted to Theobaldus Flammaticus, that, though situated on the water of Douglas, they never made a part of the barony of that name, and therefore cannot be the same with those held by William de Douglas in the succeeding generation. But if William de Douglas did not succeed Theobaldus Flammaticus, there is no more reason for holding these two persons to be father and son than if they had lived in different provinces; and we are still as far from having discovered the first mean man of the Douglas family as Hume of Godscroft was in the 16th century. We leave the question to antiquaries and genealogists.}

In the earliest of our Scottish annals, the Black Douglas was powerful and distinguished as now."

"I bend to the honours of the house of Douglas," said Murray, somewhat ironically; "I am conscious we of the Royal House have little right to compete with them in dignity—What though we have worn crowns and carried sceptres for a few generations, if our genealogy moves no farther back than to the humble *Alanus Dapifer!*"

{Footnote: To atone to the memory of the learned and indefatigable Chalmers for having ventured to impeach his genealogical proposition concerning the descent of the Douglasses, we are bound to render him our grateful thanks for the felicitous light which he has thrown on that of the House of Stewart, still more important to Scottish history.}

The acute pen of Lord Hailes, which, like the spear of Ithuriel, conjured so many shadows from Scottish history, had dismissed among the rest those of Banquo and Fleance, the rejection of which fables left the illustrious family of Stewart without an ancestor beyond Walter the son of Allan, who is alluded to in the text. The researches of our late learned antiquary detected in this Walter, the descendant of Allan, the son of Flaald, who obtained from William the Conqueror the Castle of Oswestry in Shropshire, and was the father of an illustrious line of English nobles, by his first son, William, and by his second son, Walter, the progenitor of the royal family of Stewart.}

Morton's cheek reddened as he was about to reply; but Henry Warden availed himself of the liberty which the Protestant clergy long possessed, and exerted it to interrupt a discussion which was becoming too eager and personal to be friendly.

"My lords," he said, "I must be bold in discharging the duty of my Master. It is a shame and scandal to hear two nobles, whose hands have been so forward in the work of reformation, fall into discord about such vain follies as now occupy your thoughts. Bethink you how long you have thought with one mind, seen with one eye, heard with one ear, confirmed by your union the congregation of the Church, appalled by your joint authority the congregation of Anti-Christ; and will you now fall into discord, about an old decayed castle and a few barren hills, about the loves and likings of an humble spearman, and a damsel bred in the same obscurity, or about the still vainer questions of idle genealogy?"

"The good man hath spoken right, noble Douglas," said Murray, reaching him his hand, "our union is too essential to the good cause to be broken off upon such idle terms of dissension. I am fixed to gratify Glendinning in this matter—my promise is passed. The wars, in which I have had my share, have made many a family miserable; I will at least try if I may not make one happy. There are maids and manors enow in Scotland.—I promise you, my noble ally, that young Bennygask shall be richly wived."

"My lord," said Warden, "you speak nobly, and like a Christian. Alas! this is a land of hatred and bloodshed—let us not chase from thence the few traces that remain of gentle and domestic love.—And be not too eager for wealth to thy noble kinsman, my Lord of Morton, seeing contentment in the marriage state no way depends on it."

"If you allude to my family misfortune," said Morton, whose Countess, wedded by him for her estate and honours, was insane in her mind, "the habit you wear, and the liberty, or rather license, of your profession, protect you from my resentment."

"Alas! my lord," replied Warden, "how quick and sensitive is our self-love! When pressing forward in our high calling, we point out the errors of the Sovereign, who praises our boldness more than the noble Morton? But touch we upon his own sore, which most needs lancing, and he shrinks from the faithful chirurgeon in fear and impatient anger!"

"Enough of this, good and reverend sir," said Murray; "you transgress the prudence yourself recommended even now.—We are now close upon the village, and the proud Abbot is come forth at the head of his hive. Thou hast pleaded well for him, Warden, otherwise I had taken this occasion to pull down the nest, and chase away the rooks."

"Nay, but do not so," said Warden; "this William Allan, whom they call the Abbot Eustatius, is a man whose misfortunes would more prejudice our cause than his prosperity. You cannot inflict more than he will endure; and the more that he is made to bear, the higher will be the influence of his talents and his courage. In his conventual throne he will be but coldly looked on—disliked, it may be, and envied. But turn his crucifix of gold into a crucifix of wood—let him travel through the land, an oppressed and impoverished man, and his patience, his eloquence, and learning, will win more hearts from the good cause, than all the mitred abbots of Scotland have been able to make prey of during the last hundred years."

"Tush! tush! man," said Morton, "the revenues of the Halidome will bring more men, spears, and horses, into the field in one day, than his preaching in a whole lifetime. These are not the days of Peter the Hermit, when monks could march armies from England to Jerusalem; but gold and good deeds will still do as much or more than ever. Had Julian Avenel had but a score or two more men this morning, Sir John Foster had not missed a worse welcome. I say, confiscating the monk's revenues is drawing his fang-teeth."

"We will surely lay him under contribution," said Murray; "and, moreover, if he desires to remain in his Abbey, he will do well to produce Piercie Shafton."

As he thus spoke, they entered the market-place, distinguished by their complete armour and their lofty plumes, as well as by the number of followers bearing their colours and badges. Both these powerful nobles, but more especially Murray, so nearly allied to the crown, had at that time a retinue and household not much inferior to that of Scottish royalty. As they advanced into the market-place, a pursuivant, pressing forward from their train, addressed the monks in these words:—"The Abbot of Saint Mary's is commanded to appear before the Earl of Murray."

"The Abbot of Saint Mary's," said Eustace, "is, in the patrimony of his Convent, superior to every temporal lord. Let the Earl of Murray, if he seeks him, come himself to his presence."

On receiving this answer, Murray smiled scornfully, and, dismounting from his lofty saddle, he advanced, accompanied by Morton, and followed by others, to the body of monks assembled around the cross. There was an appearance of shrinking among them at the approach of the heretic lord, so dreaded and so powerful. But the Abbot, casting on them a glance of rebuke and encouragement, stepped forth from their ranks like a courageous leader, when he sees that his personal valour must be displayed to revive the drooping courage of his followers. "Lord James Stewart," he said, "or Earl of Murray, if that be thy title, I, Eustatius, Abbot of Saint Mary's, demand by what right you have filled our peaceful village, and surrounded our brethren, with these bands of armed men? If hospitality is sought, we have never refused it to courteous asking—if violence be meant against peaceful churchmen, let us know at once the pretext and the object?"

"Sir Abbot," said Murray, "your language would better have become another age, and a presence inferior to ours. We come not here to reply to your interrogations, but to demand of you why you have broken the peace, collecting your vassals in arms, and convoking the Queen's lieges, whereby many men have been slain, and much trouble, perchance breach of amity with England, is likely to arise?"

"*Lupus in fabula*," answered the Abbot, scornfully. "The wolf accused the sheep of muddying the stream when he drank in it above her—but it served as a pretext for devouring her. Convocate the Queen's lieges! I did so to defend the Queen's land against foreigners. I did but my duty; and I regret I had not the means to do it more effectually."

"And was it also a part of your duty to receive and harbour the Queen of England's rebel and traitor; and to inflame a war betwixt England and Scotland?" said Murray.

"In my younger days, my lord," answered the Abbot, with the same intrepidity, "a war with England was no such dreaded matter; and not merely a mitred abbot, bound by his rule to show hospitality and afford sanctuary to all, but the poorest Scottish peasant, would have been ashamed to have pleaded fear of England as the reason for shutting his door against a persecuted exile. But in those olden days, the English seldom saw the face of a Scottish nobleman, save through the bars of his visor."

"Monk!" said the Earl of Morton, sternly, "this insolence will little avail thee; the days are gone by when Rome's priests were permitted to brave noblemen with impunity. Give us up this Piercie Shafton, or by my father's crest I will set thy Abbey in a bright flame!"

"And if thou dost, Lord of Morton, its ruins will tumble above the tombs of thine own ancestors. Be the issue as God wills, the Abbot of Saint Mary's gives up no one whom he hath promised to protect."

"Abbot!" said Murray, "bethink thee ere we are driven to deal roughly—the hands of these men," he said, pointing to the soldiers, "will make wild work among shrines and cells, if we are compelled to undertake a search for this Englishman."

"Ye shall not need," said a voice from the crowd; and, advancing gracefully before the Earls, the Euphuist flung from him the mantle in which he was muffled. "Via the cloud that shadowed Shafton!" said he; "behold, my lords, the Knight of Wilverton, who spares you the guilt of violence and sacrilege."

"I protest before God and man against any infraction of the privileges of this house," said the Abbot, "by an attempt to impose violent hands upon the person of this noble knight. If there be yet spirit in a Scottish Parliament, we will make you hear of this elsewhere, my lords!"

"Spare your threats," said Murray; "it may be, my purpose with Sir Piercie Shafton is not such as thou dost suppose—Attach him, pursuivant, as our prisoner, rescue or no rescue."

"I yield myself," said the Euphuist, "reserving my right to defy my Lord of Murray and my Lord of Morton to single duel, even as one gentleman may demand satisfaction of another."

"You shall not want those who will answer your challenge, Sir Knight," replied Morton, "without aspiring to men above thine own degree."

"And where am I to find these superlative champions," said the English knight, "whose blood runs more pure than that of Piercie Shafton?"

"Here is a flight for you, my lord!" said Murray.

"As ever was flown by a wild-goose," said Stawarth Bolton, who had now approached to the front of the party.

"Who dared to say that word?" said the Euphuist, his face crimson with rage.

"Tut! man," said Bolton, "make the best of it, thy mother's father was but a tailor, old Overstitch of Holderness—Why, what! because thou art a misproud bird, and despisest thine own natural lineage, and rufflest in unpaid silks and velvets, and keepest company with gallants and cutters, must we lose our memory for that? Thy mother, Moll Overstitch, was the prettiest wench in those parts—she was wedded by wild Shafton of Wilverton, who men say, was akin to the Piercie on the wrong side of the blanket."

"Help the knight to some strong waters," said Morton; "he hath fallen from such a height, that he is stunned with the tumble."

In fact, Sir Piercie Shafton looked like a man stricken by a thunderbolt, while, notwithstanding the seriousness of the scene hitherto, no one of those present, not even the Abbot himself, could refrain from laughing at the rueful and mortified expression of his face.

"Laugh on," he said at length, "laugh on, my masters," shrugging his shoulders; "it is not for me to be offended—yet would I know full fain from that squire who is laughing with the loudest, how he had discovered this unhappy blot in an otherwise spotless lineage, and for what purpose he hath made it known?"

"I make it known?" said Halbert Glendinning, in astonishment,—for to him this pathetic appeal was made,—"I never heard the thing till this moment."

{Footnote: The contrivance of provoking the irritable vanity of Sir Piercie Shafton, by presenting him with a bodkin, indicative of his descent from a tailor, is borrowed from a German romance, by the celebrated Tieck, called *Das Peter Manchem*, *i. e.* The Dwarf Peter. The being who gives name to the tale, is the Burg-geist, or castle spectre, of a German family, whom he aids with his counsel, as he defends their castle by his supernatural power. But the Dwarf Peter is so unfortunate an adviser, that all his counsels, though producing success in the immediate results, are in the issue attended with mishap and with guilt. The youthful baron, the owner of the haunted castle, falls in love with a maiden, the daughter of a neighbouring count, a man of great pride, who refuses him the hand of the young lady, on account of his own superiority of descent. The lover, repulsed and affronted, returns to take counsel with the Dwarf Peter, how he may silence the count, and obtain the victory in the argument, the next time they enter on the topic of pedigree. The dwarf gives his patron or pupil a horse-shoe, instructing him to give it to the count when he is next giving himself superior airs on the subject of his family. It has the effect accordingly. The count, understanding it as an allusion to a misalliance of one of his ancestors with the daughter of a blacksmith, is thrown into a dreadful passion with the young lover, the consequences of which are the seduction of the young lady, and the slaughter of her father. If we suppose the dwarf to represent the corrupt part of human nature,—that "law in our members which wars against the law of our minds,"—the work forms an ingenious allegory.}

"Why, did not that old rude soldier learn it from thee?" said the knight, in increasing amazement.

"Not I, by Heaven!" said Bolton; "I never saw the youth in my life before."

"But you *have* seen him ere now, my worthy master," said Dame Glendinning, bursting in her turn from the crowd. "My son, this is Stawarth Bolton, he to whom we owe life, and the means of preserving it—if he be a prisoner, as seems most likely, use thine interest with these noble lords to be kind to the widow's friend."

"What, my Dame of the Glen!" said Bolton, "thy brow is more withered, as well as mine, since we met last, but thy tongue holds the touch better than my arm. This boy of thine gave me the foil sorely this morning. The Brown Varlet has turned as stout a trooper as I prophesied; and where is White Head?"

"Alas!" said the mother, looking down, "Edward has taken orders, and become a monk of this Abbey."

"A monk and a soldier!—Evil trades both, my good dame. Better have made one a good master fashioner, like old Overstitch, of Holderness. I sighed when I envied you the two bonny children, but I sigh not now to call either the monk or the soldier mine own. The soldier dies in the field, the monk scarce lives in the cloister."

"My dearest mother," said Halbert, "where is Edward—can I not speak with him?"

"He has just left us for the present," said Father Philip, "upon a message from the Lord Abbot."

"And Mary, my dearest mother?" said Halbert.—Mary Avenel was not far distant, and the three were soon withdrawn from the crowd, to hear and relate their various chances of fortune.

While the subordinate personages thus disposed of themselves, the Abbot held serious discussion with the two Earls, and, partly yielding to their demands, partly defending himself with skill and eloquence, was enabled to make a composition for his Convent, which left it provisionally in no worse situation than before. The Earls were the more reluctant to drive matters to extremity, since he protested, that if urged beyond what his conscience would comply with, he would throw the whole lands of the Monastery into the Queen of Scotland's hands, to be disposed of at her pleasure. This would not have answered the views of the Earls, who were contented, for the time, with a moderate sacrifice of money and lands. Matters being so far settled, the Abbot became anxious for the fate of Sir Piercie Shafton, and implored mercy in his behalf.

"He is a coxcomb," he said, "my lords, but he is a generous, though a vain fool; and it is my firm belief you have this day done him more pain than if you had run a poniard into him."

"Run a needle into him you mean, Abbot," said the Earl of Morton; "by mine honour, I thought this grandson of a fashioner of doublets was descended from a crowned head at least!"

"I hold with the Abbot," said Murray; "there were little honour in surrendering him to Elizabeth, but he shall be sent where he can do her no injury. Our pursuivant and Bolton shall escort him to Dunbar, and ship him off for Flanders.—But soft, here he comes, and leading a female, as I think."

"Lords and others," said the English knight with great solemnity, "make way for the Lady of Piercie Shafton—a secret which I listed not to make known, till fate, which hath betrayed what I vainly strove to conceal, makes me less desirous to hide that which I now announce to you."

"It is Mysie Happer, the Miller's daughter, on my life!" said Tibb Tacket. "I thought the pride of these Piercies would have a fa'."

"It is indeed the lovely Mysinda," said the knight, "whose merits towards her devoted servant deserved higher rank than he had to bestow."

"I suspect though," said Murray, "that we'd not have heard of the Miller's daughter being made a lady, had not the knight proved to be the grandson of a tailor."

"My lord," said Piercie Shafton, "it is poor valour to strike him that cannot smite again; and I hope you will consider what is due to a prisoner by the law of arms, and say nothing more on this odious subject. When I am once more mine own man, I will find a new road to dignity."

"*Shape* one, I presume," said the Earl of Morton.

"Nay, Douglas, you will drive him mad,"—said Murray; "besides, we have other matter in hand—I must see Warden wed Glendinning with Mary Avenel, and put him in possession of his wife's castle without delay. It will be best done ere our forces leave these parts."

"And I," said the Miller, "have the like grist to grind; for I hope some one of the good fathers will wed my wench with her gay bridegroom."

"It needs not," said Shafton; "the ceremonial hath been solemnly performed."

"It will not be the worse of another bolting," said the Miller; "it is always best to be sure, as I say when I chance to take multure twice from the same meal-sack."

"Stave the miller off him," said Murray, "or he will worry him dead. The Abbot, my lord, offers us the hospitality of the Convent; I move we should repair hither, Sir Piercie and all of us. I must learn to know the Maid of Avenel—to-morrow I must act as her father—All Scotland shall see how Murray can reward a faithful servant."

Mary Avenel and her lover avoided meeting the Abbot, and took up their temporary abode in a house of the village, where next day their hands were united by the Protestant preacher in presence of the two Earls. On the same day Piercie Shafton and his bride departed, under an escort which was to conduct him to the sea-side, and see him embark for the Low Countries. Early on the following morning the bands of the Earls were under march to the Castle of Avenel, to invest the young bridegroom with the property of his wife, which was surrendered to them without opposition. But not without those omens which seemed to mark every remarkable event which befell the fated family, did Mary take possession of the ancient castle of her forefathers. The same warlike form which had appeared more than once at Glendearg, was seen by Tibb Tacket and Martin, who returned with their young mistress to partake her altered fortunes. It glided before the cavalcade as they advanced upon the long causeway, paused at each drawbridge, and flourished its hand, as in triumph, as it disappeared under the gloomy archway, which was surmounted by the insignia of the house of Avenel. The two trusty servants made their vision only known to Dame Glendinning, who, with much pride of heart, had accompanied her son to see him take his rank among the barons of the land. "Oh, my dear bairn!" she exclaimed, when she heard the tale, "the castle is a grand place to be sure, but I wish ye dinna a' desire to be back in the quiet braes of Glendearg before the play be played out." But this natural reflection, springing from maternal anxiety, was soon forgotten amid the busy and pleasing task of examining and admiring the new habitation of her son.

While these affairs were passing, Edward had hidden himself and his sorrows in the paternal Tower of Glendearg, where every object was full of matter for bitter reflection. The Abbot's kindness had despatched him thither upon pretence of placing some papers belonging to the Abbey in safety and secrecy; but in reality to prevent his witnessing the triumph of his brother. Through the deserted apartments, the scene of so many bitter reflections, the unhappy youth stalked like a discontented ghost, conjuring up around him at every step new subjects for sorrow and for self-torment. Impatient, at length, of the state of irritation and agonized recollection in which he found himself, he rushed out and walked hastily up the glen, as if to shake off the load which hung upon his mind. The sun was setting when he reached the entrance of Corri-nan-shian, and the recollection of what he had seen when he last visited that haunted ravine, burst on his mind. He was in a humour, however, rather to seek out danger than to avoid it. "I will face this mystic being," he said; "she foretold the fate which has wrapt me in this dress,—I will know whether she has aught else to tell me of a life which cannot but be miserable." He failed not to see the White Spirit seated by her accustomed haunt, and singing in her usual low and sweet tone. While she sung, she seemed to look with sorrow on her golden zone, which was now diminished to the fineness of a silken thread.

"Fare thee well, thou Holly green,
Thou shall seldom now be seen,
With all thy glittering garlands bending,
As to greet my slow descending,
Startling the bewilder'd hind.
Who sees thee wave without a wind.
"Farewell, Fountain! now not long
Shalt thou murmur to my song,
While thy crystal bubbles glancing,
Keep the time in mystic dancing,
Rise and swell, are burst and lost,
Like mortal schemes by fortune crost.
"The knot of fate at length is tied,
The Churl is Lord, the Maid is bride.
Vainly did my magic sleight
Send the lover from her sight;
Wither bush, and perish well,
Fall'n is lofty Avenel!"

The vision seemed to weep while she sung; and the words impressed on Edward a melancholy belief, that the alliance of Mary with his brother might be fatal to them both.

BOOK X
THE SIEGE OF MALTA

BOOK XI
THE ABBOT
Chapter the First.

*Domum mansit—Ianam fecit.
Ancient Roman Epitaph.*

*She keepit close the hous, and birlit at the quhele.
GAWAIN DOUGLAS.*

The time which passes over our heads so imperceptibly, makes the same gradual change in habits, manners, and character, as in personal appearance. At the revolution of every five years we find ourselves another, and yet the same—there is a change of views, and no less of the light in which we regard them; a change of motives as well as of actions. Nearly twice that space had glided away over the head of Halbert Glendinning and his lady, betwixt the period of our former narrative, in which they played a distinguished part, and the date at which our present tale commences.

Two circumstances only had imbittered their union, which was otherwise as happy as mutual affection could render it. The first of these was indeed the common calamity of Scotland, being the distracted state of that unhappy country, where every man's sword was directed against his neighbour's bosom. Glendinning had proved what Murray expected of him, a steady friend, strong in battle, and wise in counsel, adhering to him, from motives of gratitude, in situations where by his own unbiassed will he would either have stood neuter, or have joined the opposite party. Hence, when danger was near—and it was seldom far distant—Sir Halbert Glendinning, for he now bore the rank of knighthood, was perpetually summoned to attend his patron on distant expeditions, or on perilous enterprises, or to assist him with his counsel in the doubtful intrigues of a half-barbarous court. He was thus frequently, and for a long space, absent from his castle and from his lady; and to this ground of regret we must add, that their union had not been blessed with children, to occupy the attention of the Lady of Avenel, while she was thus deprived of her husband's domestic society.

On such occasions she lived almost entirely secluded from the world, within the walls of her paternal mansion. Visiting amongst neighbors was a matter entirely out of the question, unless on occasions of solemn festival, and then it was chiefly confined to near kindred. Of these the Lady of Avenel had none who survived, and the dames of the neighbouring barons affected to regard her less as the heiress of the house of Avenel than as the wife of a peasant, the son of a church-vassal, raised up to mushroom eminence by the capricious favour of Murray.

The pride of ancestry, which rankled in the bosom of the ancient gentry, was more openly expressed by their ladies, and was, moreover, imbittered not a little by the political feuds of the time, for most of the Southern chiefs were friends to the authority of the Queen, and very jealous of the power of Murray. The Castle of Avenel was, therefore, on all these accounts, as melancholy and solitary a residence for its lady as could well be imagined. Still it had the essential recommendation of great security. The reader is already aware that the fortress was built upon an islet on a small lake, and was only accessible by a causeway, intersected by a double ditch, defended by two draw-bridges, so that without artillery, it might in those days be considered as impregnable. It was only necessary, therefore, to secure against surprise, and the service of six able men within the castle was sufficient for that purpose. If more serious danger threatened, an ample garrison was supplied by the male inhabitants of a little hamlet, which, under the auspices of Halbert Glendinning, had arisen on a small piece of level ground, betwixt the lake and the hill, nearly adjoining to the spot where the causeway joined the mainland. The Lord of Avenel had found it an easy matter to procure inhabitants, as he was not only a kind and beneficent overlord, but well qualified, both by his experience in arms, his high character for wisdom and integrity, and his favour with the powerful Earl of Murray, to protect and defend those who dwelt under his banner. In leaving his castle for any length of time, he had, therefore, the consolation to reflect, that this village afforded, on the slightest notice, a band of thirty stout men, which was more than sufficient for its defence; while the families of the villagers, as was usual on such occasions, fled to the recesses of the mountains, drove their cattle to the same places of shelter, and left the enemy to work their will on their miserable cottages.

One guest only resided generally, if not constantly, at the Castle of Avenel. This was Henry Warden, who now felt himself less able for the stormy task imposed on the reforming clergy; and having by his zeal given personal offence to many of the leading nobles and chiefs, did not consider himself as perfectly safe, unless when within the walls of the strong mansion of some assured friend. He ceased not, however, to serve his cause as eagerly with his pen, as he had formerly done with his tongue, and had engaged in a furious and acrimonious contest, concerning the sacrifice of the mass, as it was termed, with the Abbot Eustatius, formerly the Sub-Prior of Kennaquhair. Answers, replies, duplies, triplies, quadruples, followed thick upon each other, and displayed, as is not unusual in controversy, fully as much zeal as Christian charity. The disputation very soon became as celebrated as that of John Knox and the Abbot of Crosraguel, raged nearly as fiercely, and, for aught I know, the publications to which it gave rise may be as precious in the eyes of bibliographers. [Footnote: The tracts which appeared in the Disputation between the Scottish Reformer and Quentin Kennedy, Abbot of Crosraguel, are among the scarcest in Scottish Bibliography. See M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, p. 258.] But the engrossing nature of his occupation rendered the theologian not the most interesting companion for a solitary female; and his grave, stern, and absorbed deportment, which seldom showed any interest, except in that which concerned his religious profession, made his presence rather add to than diminish the gloom which hung over the Castle of Avenel. To superintend the tasks of numerous female domestics, was the principal part of the Lady's daily employment; her spindle and distaff, her Bible, and a solitary walk upon the battlements of the castle, or upon the causeway, or occasionally, but more seldom, upon the banks of the little lake, consumed the rest of the day. But so great was the insecurity of the period, that when she ventured to extend her walk beyond the hamlet, the warder on the watch-tower was directed to keep a sharp look-out in every direction, and four or five men held themselves in readiness to mount and sally forth from the castle on the slightest appearance of alarm.

Thus stood affairs at the castle, when, after an absence of several weeks, the Knight of Avenel, which was now the title most frequently given to Sir Halbert Glendinning, was daily expected to return home. Day after day, however, passed away, and he returned not. Letters in those days were rarely written, and the Knight must have resorted to a secretary to express his intentions in that manner; besides, intercourse of all kinds was precarious and unsafe, and no man cared to give any public intimation of the time and direction of a journey, since, if his route were publicly known, it was always likely he might in that case meet with more enemies than friends upon the road. The precise day, therefore, of Sir Halbert's return, was not fixed, but that which his lady's fond expectation had calculated upon in her own mind had long since passed, and hope delayed began to make the heart sick.

It was upon the evening of a sultry summer's day, when the sun was half-sunk behind the distant western mountains of Liddesdale, that the Lady took her solitary walk on the battlements of a range of buildings, which formed the front of the castle, where a flat roof of flag-stones presented a broad and convenient promenade. The level surface of the lake, undisturbed except by the occasional dipping of a teal-duck, or coot, was gilded with the beams of the setting luminary, and reflected, as if in a golden mirror, the hills amongst which it lay embossed. The scene, otherwise so lonely, was occasionally enlivened by the voices of the children in the village, which, softened by distance, reached the ear of the Lady, in her solitary walk, or by the distant call of the herdsman, as he guided his cattle from the glen in which they had pastured all day, to place them in greater security for the night, in the immediate vicinity of the village. The deep lowing of the cows seemed to demand the attendance of the milk-maidens, who, singing shrilly and merrily, strolled forth, each with her pail on her head, to attend to the duty of the evening. The Lady of Avenel looked and listened; the sounds which she heard reminded her of former days, when her most important employment, as well as her greatest delight, was to assist Dame Glendinning and Tibb Tackett in milking the cows at Glendearg. The thought was fraught with melancholy.

"Why was I not," she said, "the peasant girl which in all men's eyes I seemed to be? Halbert and I had then spent our life peacefully in his native glen, undisturbed by the phantoms either of fear or of ambition. His greatest pride had then been to show the fairest herd in the Halidome; his greatest danger to repel some pilfering snatcher from the Border; and the utmost distance which would have divided us, would have been the chase of some outlying deer. But, alas! what avails the blood which Halbert has shed, and the dangers which he encounters, to support a name and rank, dear to him because he has it from me, but which we shall never transmit to our posterity! with me the name of Avenel must expire."

She sighed as the reflections arose, and, looking towards the shore of the lake, her eye was attracted by a group of children of various ages, assembled to see a little ship, constructed by some village artist, perform its first voyage on the water. It was launched amid the shouts of tiny voices and the clapping of little hands, and shot bravely forth on its voyage with a favouring wind, which promised to carry it to the other side of the lake. Some of the bigger boys ran round to receive and secure it on the farther shore, trying their speed against each other as they sprang like young fawns along the shingly verge of the lake. The rest, for whom such a journey seemed too arduous, remained watching the motions of the fairy vessel from the spot where it had been launched. The sight of their sports pressed on the mind of the childless Lady of Avenel.

"Why are none of these prattlers mine?" she continued, pursuing the tenor of her melancholy reflections. "Their parents can scarce find them the coarsest food—and I, who could nurse them in plenty, I am doomed never to hear a child call me mother!"

The thought sunk on her heart with a bitterness which resembled envy, so deeply is the desire of offspring implanted in the female breast. She pressed her hands together as if she were wringing them in the extremity of her desolate feeling, as one whom Heaven had written childless. A large stag-hound of the greyhound species approached at this moment, and attracted perhaps by the gesture, licked her hands and pressed his large head against them. He obtained the desired caresses in return, but still the sad impression remained.

"Wolf," she said, as if the animal could have understood her complaints, "thou art a noble and beautiful animal; but, alas! the love and affection that I long to bestow, is of a quality higher than can fall to thy share, though I love thee much."

And, as if she were apologizing to Wolf for withholding from him any part of her regard, she caressed his proud head and crest, while, looking in her eyes, he seemed to ask her what she wanted, or what he could do to show his attachment. At this moment a shriek of distress was heard on the shore, from the playful group which had been lately so jovial. The Lady looked, and saw the cause with great agony.

The little ship, the object of the children's delighted attention, had stuck among some tufts of the plant which bears the water-lily, that marked a shoal in the lake about an arrow-flight from the shore. A hardy little boy, who had taken the lead in the race round the margin of the lake, did not hesitate a moment to strip off his *wylie-coat*, plunge into the water, and swim towards the object of their common solicitude. The first movement of the Lady was to call for help; but she observed that the boy swam strongly and fearlessly, and as she saw that one or two villagers, who were distant spectators of the incident, seemed to give themselves no uneasiness on his account, she supposed that he was accustomed to the exercise, and that there was no danger. But whether, in swimming, the boy had struck his breast against a sunken rock, or whether he was suddenly taken with cramp, or whether he had over-calculated his own strength, it so happened, that when he had disembarrassed the little plaything from the flags in which it was entangled, and sent it forward on its course, he had scarce swam a few yards in his way to the shore, than he raised himself suddenly from the water, and screamed aloud, clapping his hands at the same time with an expression of fear and pain.

The Lady of Avenel, instantly taking the alarm, called hastily to the attendants to get the boat ready. But this was an affair of some time. The only boat permitted to be used on the lake, was moored within the second cut which intersected the canal, and it was several minutes ere it could be unmoored and got under way. Meantime, the Lady of Avenel, with agonizing anxiety, saw that the efforts that the poor boy made to keep himself afloat, were now exchanged for a faint struggling, which would soon have been over, but for aid equally prompt and unhopd-for. Wolf, who, like some of that large species of greyhound, was a practised water-dog, had marked the object of her anxiety, and, quitting his mistress's side, had sought the nearest point from which he could with safety plunge into the lake. With the wonderful instinct which these noble animals have so often displayed in the like circumstances, he swam straight to the spot where his assistance was so much wanted, and seizing the child's under-dress in his mouth, he not only kept him afloat, but towed him towards the causeway. The boat having put off with a couple of men, met the dog half-way, and relieved him of his burden. They landed on the causeway, close by the gates of the castle, with their yet lifeless charge, and were there met by the Lady of Avenel, attended by one or two of her maidens, eagerly waiting to administer assistance to the sufferer.

He was borne into the castle, deposited upon a bed, and every mode of recovery resorted to, which the knowledge of the times, and the skill of Henry Warden, who professed some medical science, could dictate. For some time it was all in vain, and the Lady watched, with unspeakable earnestness, the pallid countenance of the beautiful child. He seemed about ten years old. His dress was of the meanest sort, but his long curled hair, and the noble cast of his features, partook not of that poverty of appearance. The proudest noble in Scotland might have been yet prouder could he have called that child his heir. While, with breathless anxiety, the Lady of Avenel gazed on his well-formed and expressive features, a slight shade of colour returned gradually to the cheek; suspended animation became restored by degrees, the child sighed deeply, opened his eyes, which to the human countenance produces the effect of light upon the natural landscape, stretched his arms towards the Lady, and muttered the word "Mother," that epithet, of all others, which is dearest to the female ear.

"God, madam," said the preacher, "has restored the child to your wishes; it must be yours so to bring him up, that he may not one day wish that he had perished in his innocence."

"It shall be my charge," said the Lady; and again throwing her arms around the boy, she overwhelmed him with kisses and caresses, so much was she agitated by the terror arising from the danger in which he had been just placed, and by joy at his unexpected deliverance.

"But you are not my mother," said the boy, recovering his recollection, and endeavouring, though faintly, to escape from the caresses of the Lady of Avenel; "you are not my mother,—alas! I have no mother—only I have dreamt that I had one."

"I will read the dream for you, my love," answered the Lady of Avenel; "and I will be myself your mother. Surely God has heard my wishes, and, in his own marvellous manner, hath sent me an object on which my affections may expand themselves." She looked towards Warden as she spoke. The preacher hesitated what he should reply to a burst of passionate feeling, which, perhaps, seemed to him more enthusiastic than the occasion demanded. In the meanwhile, the large stag-hound, Wolf, which, dripping wet as he was, had followed his mistress into the apartment, and had sat by the bedside, a patient and quiet spectator of all the means used for resuscitation of the being whom he had preserved, now became impatient of remaining any longer unnoticed, and began to whine and fawn upon the Lady with his great rough paws.

"Yes," she said, "good Wolf, and you shall be remembered also for your day's work; and I will think the more of you for having preserved the life of a creature so beautiful."

But Wolf was not quite satisfied with the share of attention which he thus attracted; he persisted in whining and pawing upon his mistress, his caresses rendered still more troublesome by his long shaggy hair being so much and thoroughly wetted, till she desired one of the domestics, with whom he was familiar, to call the animal out of the apartment. Wolf resisted every invitation to this purpose, until his mistress positively commanded him to be gone, in an angry tone; when, turning towards the bed on which the body still lay, half awake to sensation, half drowned in the meanders of fluctuating delirium, he uttered a deep and savage growl, curled up his nose and lips, showing his full range of white and sharpened teeth, which might have matched those of an actual wolf, and then, turning round, sullenly followed the domestic out of the apartment.

"It is singular," said the Lady, addressing Warden; "the animal is not only so good-natured to all, but so particularly fond of children. What can ail him at the little fellow whose life he has saved?"

"Dogs," replied the preacher, "are but too like the human race in their foibles, though their instinct be less erring than the reason of poor mortal man when relying upon his own unassisted powers. Jealousy, my good lady, is a passion not unknown to them, and they often evince it, not only with respect to the preferences which they see given by their masters to individuals of their own species, but even when their rivals are children. You have caressed that child much and eagerly, and the dog considers himself as a discarded favourite."

"It is a strange instinct," said the Lady; "and from the gravity with which you mention it, my reverend friend, I would almost say that you supposed this singular jealousy of my favourite Wolf, was not only well founded, but justifiable. But perhaps you speak in jest?"

"I seldom jest," answered the preacher; "life was not lent to us to be expended in that idle mirth which resembles the crackling of thorns under the pot. I would only have you derive, if it so please you, this lesson from what I have said, that the best of our feelings, when indulged to excess, may give pain to others. There is but one in which we may indulge to the utmost limit of vehemence of which our bosom is capable, secure that excess cannot exist in the greatest intensity to which it can be excited—I mean the love of our Maker."

"Surely," said the Lady of Avenel, "we are commanded by the same authority to love our neighbour?"

"Ay, madam," said Warden, "but our love to God is to be unbounded—we are to love him with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole strength. The love which the precept commands us to bear to our neighbour, has affixed to it a direct limit and qualification—we are to love our neighbour as ourself; as it is elsewhere explained by the great commandment, that we must do unto him as we would that he should do unto us. Here there is a limit, and a bound, even to the most praiseworthy of our affections, so far as they are turned upon sublunary and terrestrial objects. We are to render to our neighbour, whatever be his rank or degree, that corresponding portion of affection with which we could rationally expect we should ourselves be regarded by those standing in the same relation to us. Hence, neither husband nor wife, neither son nor daughter, neither friend nor relation, are lawfully to be made the objects of our idolatry. The Lord our God is a jealous God, and will not endure that we bestow on the creature that extremity of devotion which He who made us demands as his own share. I say to you, Lady, that even in the fairest, and purest, and most honourable feelings of our nature, there is that original taint of sin which ought to make us pause and hesitate, ere we indulge them to excess."

"I understand not this, reverend sir," said the Lady; "nor do I guess what I can have now said or done, to draw down on me an admonition which has something a taste of reproof."

"Lady," said Warden, "I crave your pardon, if I have urged aught beyond the limits of my duty. But consider, whether in the sacred promise to be not only a protectress, but a mother, to this poor child, your purpose may meet the wishes of the noble knight your husband. The fondness which you have lavished on the unfortunate, and, I own, most lovely child, has met something like a reproof in the bearing of your household dog.—Displease not your noble husband. Men, as well as animals, are jealous of the affections of those they love."

"This is too much, reverend sir," said the Lady of Avenel, greatly offended. "You have been long our guest, and have received from the Knight of Avenel and myself that honour and regard which your character and profession so justly demand. But I am yet to learn that we have at any time authorized your interference in our family arrangements, or placed you as a judge of our conduct towards each other. I pray this may be forborne in future."

"Lady," replied the preacher, with the boldness peculiar to the clergy of his persuasion at that time, "when you weary of my admonitions—when I see that my services are no longer acceptable to you, and the noble knight your husband, I shall know that my Master wills me no longer to abide here; and, praying for a continuance of his best blessings on your family I will then, were the season the depth of winter, and the hour midnight, walk out on yonder waste, and travel forth through these wild mountains, as lonely and unaided, though far more helpless, than when I first met your husband in the valley of Glendearg. But while I remain here, I will not see you err from the true path, no, not a hair's-breadth, without making the old man's voice and remonstrance heard."

"Nay, but," said the Lady, who both loved and respected the good man, though sometimes a little offended at what she conceived to be an exuberant degree of zeal, "we will not part this way, my good friend. Women are quick and hasty in their feelings; but, believe me, my wishes and my purposes towards this child are such as both my husband and you will approve of." The clergyman bowed, and retreated to his own apartment.

Chapter the Second.

*How steadfastly he fix'd his eyes on me—
His dark eyes shining through forgotten tears—
Then stretch'd his little arms, and call'd me mother!
What could I do? I took the bantling home—
I could not tell the imp he had no mother.*

COUNT BASIL.

When Warden had left the apartment, the Lady of Avenel gave way to the feelings of tenderness which the sight of the boy, his sudden danger, and his recent escape, had inspired; and no longer awed by the sternness, as she deemed it, of the preacher, heaped with caresses the lovely and interesting child. He was now, in some measure, recovered from the consequences of his accident, and received passively, though not without wonder, the tokens of kindness with which he was thus loaded. The face of the lady was strange to him, and her dress different and far more sumptuous than any he remembered. But the boy was naturally of an undaunted temper; and indeed children are generally acute physiognomists, and not only pleased by that which is beautiful in itself, but peculiarly quick in distinguishing and replying to the attentions of those who really love them. If they see a person in company, though a perfect stranger, who is by nature fond of children, the little imps seem to discover it by a sort of free-masonry, while the awkward attempts of those who make advances to them for the purpose of recommending themselves to the parents, usually fail in attracting their reciprocal attention. The little boy, therefore, appeared in some degree sensible of the lady's caresses, and it was with difficulty she withdrew herself from his pillow, to afford him leisure for necessary repose.

"To whom belongs our little rescued varlet?" was the first question which the Lady of Avenel put to her handmaiden Liliás, when they had retired to the hall.

"To an old woman in the hamlet," said Liliás, "who is even now come so far as the porter's lodge to inquire concerning his safety. Is it your pleasure that she be admitted?"

"Is it my pleasure?" said the Lady of Avenel, echoing the question with a strong accent of displeasure and surprise; "can you make any doubt of it? What woman but must pity the agony of the mother, whose heart is throbbing for the safety of a child so lovely!"

"Nay, but, madam," said Liliás, "this woman is too old to be the mother of the child; I rather think she must be his grandmother, or some more distant relation."

"Be she who she will, Liliás," replied the Lady, "she must have an aching heart while the safety of a creature so lovely is uncertain. Go instantly and bring her hither. Besides, I would willingly learn something concerning his birth."

Liliás left the hall, and presently afterwards returned, ushering in a tall female very poorly dressed, yet with more pretension to decency and cleanliness than was usually combined with such coarse garments. The Lady of Avenel knew her figure the instant she presented herself. It was the fashion of the family, that upon every Sabbath, and on two evenings in the week besides, Henry Warden preached or lectured in the chapel at the castle. The extension of the Protestant faith was, upon principle, as well as in good policy, a primary object with the Knight of Avenel. The inhabitants of the village were therefore invited to attend upon the instructions of Henry Warden, and many of them were speedily won to the doctrine which their master and protector approved. These sermons, homilies, and lectures, had made a great impression on the mind of the Abbot Eustace, or Eustatius, and were a sufficient spur to the severity and sharpness of his controversy with his old fellow-collegiate; and, ere Queen Mary was dethroned, and while the Catholics still had considerable authority in the Border provinces, he more than once threatened to levy his vassals, and assail and level with the earth that stronghold of heresy the Castle of Avenel. But notwithstanding the Abbot's impotent resentment, and notwithstanding also the disinclination of the country to favour the new religion, Henry Warden proceeded without remission in his labours, and made weekly converts from the faith of Rome to that of the reformed church. Amongst those who gave most earnest and constant attendance on his ministry, was the aged woman, whose form, tall, and otherwise too remarkable to be forgotten, the Lady had of late observed frequently as being conspicuous among the little audience. She had indeed more than once desired to know who that stately-looking woman was, whose appearance was so much above the poverty of her

vestments. But the reply had always been, that she was an Englishwoman, who was tarrying for a season at the hamlet, and that no one knew more concerning her. She now asked her after her name and birth.

"Magdalen Graeme is my name," said the woman; "I come of the Graemes of Heathergill, in Nicol Forest, [Footnote: A district of Cumberland, lying close to the Scottish border.] a people of ancient blood."

"And what make you," continued the Lady, "so far distant from your home?"

"I have no home," said Magdalen Graeme, "it was burnt by your Border-riders—my husband and my son were slain—there is not a drop's blood left in the veins of any one which is of kin to mine."

"That is no uncommon fate in these wild times, and in this unsettled land," said the Lady; "the English hands have been as deeply dyed in our blood as ever those of Scotsmen have been in yours."

"You have right to say it, Lady," answered Magdalen Graeme; "for men tell of a time when this castle was not strong enough to save your father's life, or to afford your mother and her infant a place of refuge. And why ask ye me, then, wherefore I dwell not in mine own home, and with mine own people?"

"It was indeed an idle question," answered the Lady, "where misery so often makes wanderers; but wherefore take refuge in a hostile country?"

"My neighbours were Popish and mass-mongers," said the old woman; "it has pleased Heaven to give me a clearer sight of the gospel, and I have tarried here to enjoy the ministry of that worthy man Henry Warden, who, to the praise and comfort of many, teacheth the Evangel in truth and in sincerity."

"Are you poor?" again demanded the Lady of Avenel.

"You hear me ask alms of no one," answered the Englishwoman.

Here there was a pause. The manner of the woman was, if not disrespectful, at least much less than gracious; and she appeared to give no encouragement to farther communication. The Lady of Avenel renewed the conversation on a different topic.

"You have heard of the danger in which your boy has been placed?"

"I have, Lady, and how by an especial providence he was rescued from death. May Heaven make him thankful, and me!"

"What relation do you bear to him?"

"I am his grandmother, lady, if it so please you; the only relation he hath left upon earth to take charge of him."

"The burden of his maintenance must necessarily be grievous to you in your deserted situation?" pursued the Lady.

"I have complained of it to no one," said Magdalen Graeme, with the same unmoved, dry, and unconcerned tone of voice, in which she had answered all the former questions.

"If," said the Lady of Avenel, "your grandchild could be received into a noble family, would it not advantage both him and you?"

"Received into a noble family!" said the old woman, drawing herself up, and bending her brows until her forehead was wrinkled into a frown of unusual severity; "and for what purpose, I pray you?—to be my lady's page, or my lord's jackman, to eat broken victuals, and contend with other menials for the remnants of the master's meal? Would you have him to fan the flies from my lady's face while she sleeps, to carry her train while she walks, to hand her trencher when she feeds, to ride before her on horseback, to walk after her on foot, to sing when she lists, and to be silent when she bids?—a very weathercock, which, though furnished in appearance with wings and plumage, cannot soar into the air—cannot fly from the spot where it is perched, but receives all its impulse, and performs all its revolutions, obedient to the changeable breath of a vain woman? When the eagle of Helvellyn perches on the tower of Lanercost, and turns and changes his place to show how the wind sits, Roland Graeme shall be what you would make him."

The woman spoke with a rapidity and vehemence which seemed to have in it a touch of insanity; and a sudden sense of the danger to which the child must necessarily be exposed in the charge of such a keeper, increased the Lady's desire to keep him in the castle if possible.

"You mistake me, dame," she said, addressing the old woman in a soothing manner; "I do not wish your boy to be in attendance on myself, but upon the good knight my husband. Were he himself the son of a belted earl, he could not better be trained to arms, and all that befits a gentleman, than by the instructions and discipline of Sir Halbert Glendinning."

"Ay," answered the old woman, in the same style of bitter irony, "I know the wages of that service;—a curse when the corslet is not sufficiently brightened,—a blow when the girth is not tightly drawn,—to be beaten because the hounds are at fault,—to be reviled because the foray is unsuccessful,—to stain his hands for the master's bidding in the blood alike of beast and of man,—to be a butcher of harmless deer, a murderer and defacer of God's own image, not at his own pleasure, but at that of his lord,—to live a brawling ruffian, and a common stabber—exposed to heat, to cold, to want of food, to all the privations of an anchoret, not for the love of God, but for the service of Satan,—to die by the gibbet, or in some obscure skirmish,—to sleep out his brief life in carnal security, and to awake in the eternal fire, which is never quenched."

"Nay," said the Lady of Avenel, "but to such unhallowed course of life your grandson will not be here exposed. My husband is just and kind to those who live under his banner; and you yourself well know, that youth have here a strict as well as a good preceptor in the person of our chaplain."

The old woman appeared to pause.

"You have named," she said, "the only circumstance which can move me. I must soon onward, the vision has said it—I must not tarry in the same spot—I must on,—I must on, it is my weird.—Swear, then, that you will protect the boy as if he were your own, until I return hither and claim him, and I will consent for a space to part with him. But especially swear, he shall not lack the instruction of the godly man who hath placed the gospel-truth high above those idolatrous shavelings, the monks and friars."

"Be satisfied, dame," said the Lady of Avenel; "the boy shall have as much care as if he were born of my own blood. Will you see him now?"

"No," answered the old woman sternly; "to part is enough. I go forth on my own mission. I will not soften my heart by useless tears and wailings, as one that is not called to a duty."

"Will you not accept of something to aid you in your pilgrimage?" said the Lady of Avenel, putting into her hands two crowns of the sun. The old woman flung them down on the table.

"Am I of the race of Cain," she said, "proud Lady, that you offer me gold in exchange for my own flesh and blood?"

"I had no such meaning," said the Lady, gently; "nor am I the proud woman you term me. Alas! my own fortunes might have taught me humility, even had it not been born with me."

The old woman seemed somewhat to relax her tone of severity.

"You are of gentle blood," she said, "else we had not parleyed thus long together.—You are of gentle blood, and to such," she added, drawing up her tall form as she spoke, "pride is as graceful as is the plume upon the bonnet. But for these pieces of gold, lady, you must needs resume them. I need not money. I am well provided; and I may not care for myself, nor think how, or by whom, I shall be sustained. Farewell, and keep your word. Cause your gates to be opened, and your bridges to be lowered. I will set forward this very night. When I come again, I will demand from you a strict account, for I have left with you the jewel of my life! Sleep will visit me but in snatches, food will not refresh me, rest will not restore my strength, until I see Roland Graeme. Once more, farewell."

"Make your obeisance, dame," said Lilius to Magdalen Graeme, as she retired, "make your obeisance to her ladyship, and thank her for her goodness, as is but fitting and right."

The old woman turned short around on the officious waiting-maid. "Let her make her obeisance to me then, and I will return it. Why should I bend to her?—is it because her kirtle is of silk, and mine of blue lockeraam?—Go to, my lady's waiting-woman. Know that the rank of the man rates that of the wife, and that she who marries a churl's son, were she a king's daughter, is but a peasant's bride."

Lilius was about to reply in great indignation, but her mistress imposed silence on her, and commanded that the old woman should be safely conducted to the mainland.

"Conduct her safe!" exclaimed the incensed waiting-woman, while Magdalen Graeme left the apartment; "I say, duck her in the loch, and then we will see whether she is witch or not, as every body in the village of Lochside will say and swear. I marvel your ladyship could bear so long with her insolence." But the commands of the Lady were obeyed, and the old dame, dismissed from the castle, was committed to her fortune. She kept her word, and did not long abide in that place, leaving the hamlet on the very night succeeding the interview, and wandering no one asked whither. The Lady of Avenel inquired under what circumstances she had appeared among them, but could only learn that she was believed to be the widow of some man of consequence among the Graemes who then inhabited the Debateable Land, a name given to a certain portion of territory which was the frequent subject of dispute betwixt Scotland and England—that she had suffered great wrong in some of the frequent forays by which that unfortunate district was wasted, and had been driven from her dwelling-place. She had arrived in the hamlet no one knew for what purpose, and was held by some to be a witch, by others a zealous Protestant, and by others again a Catholic devotee. Her language was mysterious, and her manners repulsive; and all that could be collected from her conversation seemed to imply that she was under the influence either of a spell or of a vow,—there was no saying which, since she talked as one who acted under a powerful and external agency.

Such were the particulars which the Lady's inquiries were able to collect concerning Magdalen Graeme, being far too meagre and contradictory to authorize any satisfactory deduction. In truth, the miseries of the time, and the various turns of fate incidental to a frontier country, were perpetually chasing from their habitations those who had not the means of defence or protection. These wanderers in the land were too often seen, to excite much attention or sympathy. They received the cold relief which was extorted by general feelings of humanity; a little excited in some breasts, and perhaps rather chilled in others, by the recollection that they who gave the charity to-day might themselves want it to-morrow. Magdalen Graeme, therefore, came and departed like a shadow from the neighbourhood of Avenel Castle.

The boy whom Providence, as she thought, had thus strangely placed under her care, was at once established a favourite with the Lady of the castle. How could it be otherwise? He became the object of those affectionate feelings, which, finding formerly no object on which to expand themselves, had increased the gloom of the castle, and imbibed the solitude of its mistress. To teach him reading and writing as far as her skill went, to attend to his childish comforts, to watch his boyish sports, became the Lady's favourite amusement. In her circumstances, where the ear only heard the lowing of the cattle from the distant hills, or the heavy step of the warder as he walked upon his post, or the half-envied laugh of her maiden as she turned her wheel, the appearance of the blooming and beautiful boy gave an interest which can hardly be conceived by those who live amid gayer and busier scenes. Young Roland was to the Lady of Avenel what the flower, which occupies the window of some solitary captive, is to the poor wight by whom it is nursed and cultivated,—something which at once excited and repaid her care; and in giving the boy her affection, she felt, as it were, grateful to him for releasing her from the state of dull apathy in which she had usually found herself during the absence of Sir Halbert Glendinning.

But even the charms of this blooming favourite were unable to chase the recurring apprehensions which arose from her husband's procrastinated return. Soon after Roland Graeme became a resident at the castle, a groom, despatched by Sir Halbert, brought tidings that business still delayed the Knight at the Court of Holyrood. The more distant period which the messenger had assigned for his master's arrival at length glided away, summer melted into autumn, and autumn was about to give place to winter, and yet he came not.

Chapter the Third.

*The waning harvest-moon shone broad and bright,
The warder's horn was heard at dead of night,
And while the portals-wide were flung,
With trampling hoofs the rocky pavement rung.*
LEYDEN.

"And you, too, would be a soldier, Roland?" said the Lady of Avenel to her young charge, while, seated on a stone chair at one end of the battlements, she saw the boy attempt, with a long stick, to mimic the motions of the warder, as he alternately shouldered, or ported, or sloped pike.

"Yes, Lady," said the boy,—for he was now familiar, and replied to her questions with readiness and alacrity,—"a soldier will I be; for there ne'er was gentleman but who belted him with the brand."

"Thou a gentleman!" said Liliás, who, as usual, was in attendance; "such a gentleman as I would make of a bean-cod with a rusty knife."

"Nay, chide him not, Liliás," said the Lady of Avenel, "for, beshrew me, but I think he comes of gentle blood—see how it musters in his face at your injurious reproof."

"Had I my will, madam," answered Liliás, "a good birchen wand should make his colour muster to better purpose still."

"On my word, Liliás," said the Lady, "one would think you had received harm from the poor boy—or is he so far on the frosty side of your favour because he enjoys the sunny side of mine?"

"Over heavens forbode, my Lady!" answered Liliás; "I have lived too long with gentles, I praise my stars for it, to fight with either follies or fantasies, whether they relate to beast, bird, or boy."

Liliás was a favourite in her own class, a spoiled domestic, and often accustomed to take more licence than her mistress was at all times willing to encourage. But what did not please the Lady of Avenel, she did not choose to hear, and thus it was on the present occasion. She resolved to look more close and sharply after the boy, who had hitherto been committed chiefly to the management of Liliás. He must, she thought, be born of gentle blood; it were shame to think otherwise of a form so noble, and features so fair;—the very wildness in which he occasionally indulged, his contempt of danger, and impatience of restraint, had in them something noble;—assuredly the child was born of high rank. Such was her conclusion, and she acted upon it accordingly. The domestics around her, less jealous, or less scrupulous than Liliás, acted as servants usually do, following the bias, and flattering, for their own purposes, the humour of the Lady; and the boy soon took on him those airs of superiority, which the sight of habitual deference seldom fails to inspire. It seemed, in truth, as if to command were his natural sphere, so easily did he use himself to exact and receive compliance with his humours. The chaplain, indeed, might have interposed to check the air of assumption which Roland Graeme so readily indulged, and most probably would have willingly rendered him that favour; but the necessity of adjusting with his brethren some disputed points of church discipline had withdrawn him for some time from the castle, and detained him in a distant part of the kingdom.

Matters stood thus in the castle of Avenel, when a winded bugle sent its shrill and prolonged notes from the shore of the lake, and was replied to cheerily by the signal of the warder. The Lady of Avenel knew the sounds of her husband, and rushed to the window of the apartment in which she was sitting. A band of about thirty spearmen, with a pennon displayed before them, winded along the indented shores of the lake, and approached the causeway. A single horseman rode at the head of the party, his bright arms catching a glance of the October sun as he moved steadily along. Even at that distance, the Lady recognized the lofty plume, bearing the mingled colours of her own liveries and those of Glendonwyne, blended with the holly-branch; and the firm seat and dignified demeanour of the rider, joined to the stately motion of the dark-brown steed, sufficiently announced Halbert Glendinning.

The Lady's first thought was that of rapturous joy at her husband's return—her second was connected with a fear which had sometimes intruded itself, that he might not altogether approve the peculiar distinction with which she had treated her orphan ward. In this fear there was implied a consciousness, that the favour she had shown him was excessive; for Halbert Glendinning was at least as gentle and indulgent, as he was firm and rational in the intercourse of his household; and to her in particular, his conduct had ever been most affectionately tender.

Yet she did fear, that, on the present occasion, her conduct might incur Sir Halbert's censure; and hastily resolving that she would not mention, the anecdote of the boy until the next day, she ordered him to be withdrawn from the apartment by Liliás.

"I will not go with Liliás, madam," answered the spoiled child, who had more than once carried his point by perseverance, and who, like his betters, delighted in the exercise of such authority,—*"I will not go to Liliás's gousty room—I will stay and see that brave warrior who comes riding so gallantly along the drawbridge."*

"You must not stay, Roland," said the Lady, more positively than she usually spoke to her little favourite.

"I will," reiterated the boy, who had already felt his consequence, and the probable chance of success.

"You *will*, Roland!" answered the Lady, "what manner of word is that? I tell you, you must go."

"*Will*," answered the forward boy, "is a word for a man, and *must* is no word for a lady."

"You are saucy, sirrah," said the Lady—"Liliás, take him with you instantly."

"I always thought," said Liliás, smiling, as she seized the reluctant boy by the arm, "that my young master must give place to my old one."

"And you, too, are malapert, mistress!" said the Lady; "hath the moon changed, that ye all of you thus forget yourselves?"

Liliás made no reply, but led off the boy, who, too proud to offer unavailing resistance, darted at his benefactress a glance, which intimated plainly, how willingly he would have defied her authority, had he possessed the power to make good his point.

The Lady of Avenel was vexed to find how much this trifling circumstance had discomposed her, at the moment when she ought naturally to have been entirely engrossed by her husband's return. But we do not recover composure by the mere feeling that agitation is mistimed. The glow of displeasure had not left the Lady's cheek, her ruffled deportment was not yet entirely composed, when her husband, unhelmeted, but still wearing the rest of his arms, entered the apartment. His appearance banished the thoughts of every thing else; she rushed to him, clasped his iron-sheathed frame in her arms, and kissed his martial and manly face with an affection which was at once evident and sincere. The warrior returned her embrace and her caress with the same fondness; for the time which had passed since their union had diminished its romantic ardour, perhaps, but it had rather increased its rational tenderness, and Sir Halbert Glendinning's long and frequent absences from his castle had prevented affection from degenerating by habit into indifference.

When the first eager greetings were paid and received, the Lady gazed fondly on her husband's face as she remarked, "You are altered, Halbert—you have ridden hard and far to-day, or you have been ill?"

"I have been well, Mary," answered the Knight, "passing well have I been; and a long ride is to me, thou well knowest, but a thing of constant custom. Those who are born noble may slumber out their lives within the walls of their castles and manor-houses; but he who hath achieved nobility by his own deeds must ever be in the saddle, to show that he merits his advancement."

While he spoke thus, the Lady gazed fondly on him, as if endeavouring to read his inmost soul; for the tone in which he spoke was that of melancholy depression. Sir Halbert Glendinning was the same, yet a different person from what he had appeared in his early years. The fiery freedom of the aspiring youth had given place to the steady and stern composure of the approved soldier and skilful politician. There were deep traces of care on those noble features, over which each emotion used formerly to pass, like light clouds across a summer sky. That sky was now, not perhaps clouded, but still and grave, like that of the sober autumn evening. The forehead was higher and more bare than in early youth, and the locks which still clustered thick and dark on the warrior's head, were worn away at the temples, not by age, but by the constant pressure of the steel cap, or helmet. His beard, according to the fashion of the time, grew short and thick, and was turned into mustaches on the upper lip, and peaked at the extremity. The cheek, weather-beaten and embrowned, had lost the glow of youth, but showed the vigorous complexion of active and confirmed manhood. Halbert Glendinning was, in a word, a knight to ride at a king's right hand, to bear his banner in war, and to be his counsellor in time of peace; for his looks expressed the considerate firmness which can resolve wisely and dare boldly. Still, over these noble features, there now spread an air of dejection, of which, perhaps, the owner was not conscious, but which did not escape the observation of his anxious and affectionate partner.

"Something has happened, or is about to happen," said the Lady of Avenel; "this sadness sits not on your brow without cause—misfortune, national or particular, must needs be at hand."

"There is nothing new that I wot of," said Halbert Glendinning; "but there is little of evil which can befall a kingdom, that may not be apprehended in this unhappy and divided realm."

"Nay, then," said the Lady, "I see there hath really been some fatal work on foot. My Lord of Murray has not so long detained you at Holyrood, save that he wanted your help in some weighty purpose."

"I have not been at Holyrood, Mary," answered the Knight; "I have been several weeks abroad."

"Abroad! and sent me no word?" replied the Lady.

"What would the knowledge have availed, but to have rendered you unhappy, my love?" replied the Knight; "your thoughts would have converted the slightest breeze that curled your own lake, into a tempest raging in the German ocean."

"And have you then really crossed the sea?" said the Lady, to whom the very idea of an element which she had never seen conveyed notions of terror and of wonder,—*"really left your own native land, and trodden distant shores, where the Scottish tongue is unheard and unknown?"*

"Really, and really," said the Knight, taking her hand in affectionate playfulness, "I have done this marvellous deed—have rolled on the ocean for three days and three nights, with the deep green waves dashing by the side of my pillow, and but a thin plank to divide me from it."

"Indeed, my Halbert," said the Lady, "that was a tempting of Divine Providence. I never bade you unbuckle the sword from your side, or lay the lance from your hand—I never bade you sit still when your honour called you to rise and ride; but are not blade and spear dangers enough for one man's life, and why would you trust rough waves and raging seas?"

"We have in Germany, and in the Low Countries, as they are called," answered Glendinning, "men who are united with us in faith, and with whom it is fitting we should unite in alliance. To some of these I was despatched on business as important as it was secret. I went in safety, and I returned in security; there is more danger to a man's life betwixt this and Holyrood, than are in all the seas that wash the lowlands of Holland."

"And the country, my Halbert, and the people," said the Lady, "are they like our kindly Scots? or what bearing have they to strangers?"

"They are a people, Mary, strong in their wealth, which renders all other nations weak, and weak in those arts of war by which other nations are strong."

"I do not understand you," said the Lady.

"The Hollander and the Fleming, Mary, pour forth their spirit in trade, and not in war; their wealth purchases them the arms of foreign soldiers, by whose aid they defend it. They erect dikes on the sea-shore to protect the land which they have won, and they levy regiments of the stubborn Switzers and hardy Germans to protect the treasures which they have amassed. And thus they are strong in their weakness; for the very wealth which tempts their masters to despoil them, arms strangers in their behalf."

"The slothful hinds!" exclaimed Mary, thinking and feeling like a Scotswoman of the period; "have they hands, and fight not for the land which bore them? They should be notched off at the elbow!"

"Nay, that were but hard justice," answered her husband; "for their hands serve their country, though not in battle, like ours. Look at these barren hills, Mary, and at that deep winding vale by which the cattle are even now returning from their scanty browse. The hand of the industrious Fleming would cover these mountains with wood, and raise corn where we now see a starved and scanty sward of heath and ling. It grieves me, Mary, when I look on that land, and think what benefit it might receive from such men as I have lately seen—men who seek not the idle fame derived from dead ancestors, or the bloody renown won in modern broils, but tread along the land, as preservers and improvers, not as tyrants and destroyers."

"These amendments would here be but a vain fancy, my Halbert," answered the Lady of Avenel; "the trees would be burned by the English foemen, ere they ceased to be shrubs, and the grain that you raised would be gathered in by the first neighbour that possessed more riders than follow your train. Why should you repine at this? The fate that made you Scotsman by birth, gave you head, and heart, and hand, to uphold the name as it must needs be upheld."

"It gave *me* no name to uphold," said Halbert, pacing the floor slowly; "my arm has been foremost in every strife—my voice has been heard in every council, nor have the wisest rebuked me. The crafty Lethington, the deep and dark Morton, have held secret council with me, and Grange and Lindsay have owned, that in the field I did the devoir of a gallant knight—but let the emergence be passed when they need my head and hand, and they only know me as son of the obscure portioner of Glendearg."

This was a theme which the Lady always dreaded; for the rank conferred on her husband, the favour in which he was held by the powerful Earl of Murray, and the high talents by which he vindicated his right to that rank and that favour, were qualities which rather increased than diminished the envy which was harboured against Sir Halbert Glendinning among a proud aristocracy, as a person originally of inferior and obscure birth, who had risen to his present eminence solely by his personal merit. The natural firmness of his mind did not enable him to despise the ideal advantages of a higher pedigree, which were held in such universal esteem by all with whom he conversed; and so open are the noblest minds to jealous inconsistencies, that there were moments in which he felt mortified that his lady should possess those advantages of birth and high descent which he himself did not enjoy, and regretted that his importance as the proprietor of Avenel was qualified by his possessing it only as the husband of the heiress. He was not so unjust as to permit any unworthy feelings to retain permanent possession of his mind, but yet they recurred from time to time, and did not escape his lady's anxious observation.

"Had we been blessed with children," she was wont on such occasions to say to herself, "had our blood been united in a son who might have joined my advantages of descent with my husband's personal worth, these painful and irksome reflections had not disturbed our union even for a moment. But the existence of such an heir, in whom our affections, as well as our pretensions, might have centred, has been denied to us."

With such mutual feelings, it cannot be wondered that it gave the Lady pain to hear her husband verging towards this topic of mutual discontent. On the present, as on other similar occasions, she endeavoured to divert the knight's thoughts from this painful channel.

"How can you," she said, "suffer yourself to dwell upon things which profit nothing? Have you indeed no name to uphold? You, the good and the brave, the wise in council, and the strong in battle, have you not to support the reputation your own deeds have won, a reputation more honourable than mere ancestry can supply? Good men love and honour you, the wicked fear, and the turbulent obey you; and is it not necessary you should exert yourself to ensure the endurance of that love, that honour, and wholesome fear, and that necessary obedience?"

As she thus spoke, the eye of her husband caught from hers courage and comfort, and it lightened as he took her hand and replied, "It is most true, my Mary, and I deserve thy rebuke, who forget what I am, in repining because I am not what I cannot be. I am now what the most famed ancestors of those I envy were, the mean man raised into eminence by his own exertions; and sure it is a boast as honourable to have those capacities which are necessary to the foundation of a family, as to be descended from one who possessed them some centuries before. The Hay of Loncarty, who bequeathed his bloody yoke to his lineage,—the 'dark gray man,' who first founded the house of Douglas, had yet less of ancestry to boast than I have. For thou knowest, Mary, that my name derives itself from a line of ancient warriors, although my immediate forefathers preferred the humble station in which thou didst first find them; and war and counsel are not less proper to the house of Glendonwyne, even, in its most remote descendants, than to the proudest of their baronage." [Footnote: This was a house of ancient descent and superior consequence, including persons who fought at Bannockburn and Otterburn, and closely connected by alliance and friendship with the great Earls of Douglas. The Knight in this story argues as most Scotsmen would do in his situation, for all of the same clan are popularly considered as descended from the same stock, and as having a right to the ancestral honor of the chief branch. This opinion, though sometimes ideal, is so strong even at this day of innovation, that it may be observed as a national difference between my countrymen and the English. If you ask an Englishman of good birth, whether a person of the same name be connected with him, he answers (*if in dubio*.) "No—he is a mere namesake." Ask a similar question of a Scot, (I mean a Scotsman,) he replies—"He is one of our clan; I daresay there is a relationship, though I do not know how distant." The Englishman thinks of discountenancing a species of rivalry in society; the Scotsman's answer is grounded on the ancient idea of strengthening the clan.]

He strode across the hall as he spoke; and the Lady smiled internally to observe how much his mind dwelt upon the prerogatives of birth, and endeavoured to establish his claims, however remote, to a share in them, at the very moment when he affected to hold them in contempt. It will easily be guessed, however, that she permitted no symptom to escape her that could show she was sensible of the weakness of her husband, a perspicacity which perhaps his proud spirit could not very easily have brooked.

As he returned from the extremity of the hall, to which he had stalked while in the act of vindicating the title of the house of Glendonwyne in its most remote branches to the full privileges of aristocracy, "Where," he said, "is Wolf? I have not seen him since my return, and he was usually the first to welcome my home-coming."

"Wolf," said the Lady, with a slight degree of embarrassment, for which perhaps, she would have found it difficult to assign any reason even to herself, "Wolf is chained up for the present. He hath been surly to my page."

"Wolf chained up—and Wolf surly to your page!" answered Sir Halbert Glendinning; "Wolf never was surly to any one; and the chain will either break his spirit or render him savage—So ho, there—set Wolf free directly."

He was obeyed; and the huge dog rushed into the hall, disturbing, by his unwieldy and boisterous gambols, the whole economy of reels, rocks, and distaffs, with which the maidens of the household were employed when the arrival of their lord was a signal to them to withdraw, and extracting from Lillas, who was summoned to put them again in order, the natural observation, "That the Laird's pet was as troublesome as the lady's page."

"And who is this page, Mary?" said the Knight, his attention again called to the subject by the observation of the waiting-woman,—"Who is this page, whom every one seems to weigh in the balance with my old friend and favourite, Wolf?—When did you aspire to the dignity of keeping a page, or who is the boy?"

"I trust, my Halbert," said the Lady, not without a blush, "you will not think your wife entitled to less attendance than other ladies of her quality?"

"Nay, Dame Mary," answered the Knight, "it is enough you desire such an attendant.—Yet I have never loved to nurse such useless menials—a lady's page—it may well suit the proud English dames to have a slender youth to bear their trains from bower to hall, fan them when they slumber, and touch the lute for them when they please to listen; but our Scottish matrons were wont to be above such vanities, and our Scottish youth ought to be bred to the spear and the stirrup."

"Nay, but, my husband," said the Lady, "I did but jest when I called this boy my page; he is in sooth a little orphan whom we saved from perishing in the lake, and whom I have since kept in the castle out of charity.—Lillas, bring little Roland hither."

Roland entered accordingly, and, flying to the Lady's side, took hold of the plaits of her gown, and then turned round, and gazed with an attention not unmingled with fear, upon the stately form of the Knight.—"Roland," said the Lady, "go kiss the hand of the noble Knight, and ask him to be thy protector."—But Roland obeyed not, and, keeping his station, continued to gaze fixedly and timidly on Sir Halbert Glendinning.—"Go to the Knight, boy," said the Lady; "what dost thou fear, child? Go, kiss Sir Halbert's hand."

"I will kiss no hand save yours, Lady," answered the boy.

"Nay, but do as you are commanded, child," replied the Lady.—"He is dashed by your presence," she said, apologizing to her husband; "but is he not a handsome boy?"

"And so is Wolf," said Sir Halbert, as he patted his huge four-footed favourite, "a handsome dog; but he has this double advantage over your new favourite, that he does what he is commanded, and hears not when he is praised."

"Nay, now you are displeased with me," replied the Lady; "and yet why should you be so? There is nothing wrong in relieving the distressed orphan, or in loving that which is in itself lovely and deserving of affection. But you have seen Mr. Warden at Edinburgh, and he has set you against the poor boy."

"My dear Mary," answered her husband, "Mr. Warden better knows his place than to presume to interfere either in your affairs or mine. I neither blame your relieving this boy, nor your kindness for him. But, I think, considering his birth and prospects, you ought not to treat him with injudicious fondness, which can only end in rendering him unfit for the humble situation to which Heaven has designed him."

"Nay, but, my Halbert, do but look at the boy," said the Lady, "and see whether he has not the air of being intended by Heaven for something nobler than a mere peasant. May he not be designed, as others have been, to rise out of a humble situation into honour and eminence?"

Thus far had she proceeded, when the consciousness that she was treading upon delicate ground at once occurred to her, and induced her to take the most natural, but the worst of all courses in such occasions, whether in conversation or in an actual bog, namely, that of stopping suddenly short in the illustration which she had commenced. Her brow crimsoned, and that of Sir Halbert Glendinning was slightly overcast. But it was only for an instant; for he was incapable of mistaking his lady's meaning, or supposing that she meant intentional disrespect to him.

"Be it as you please, my love," he replied; "I owe you too much to contradict you in aught which may render your solitary mode of life more endurable. Make of this youth what you will, and you have my full authority for doing so. But remember he is your charge, not mine—remember he hath limbs to do man's service, a soul and a tongue to worship God; breed him, therefore, to be true to his country and to Heaven; and for the rest, dispose of him as you list—it is, and shall rest, your own matter."

This conversation decided the fate of Roland Graeme, who from thence-forward was little noticed by the master of the mansion of Avenel, but indulged and favoured by its mistress.

This situation led to many important consequences, and, in truth, tended to bring forth the character of the youth in all its broad lights and deep shadows. As the Knight himself seemed tacitly to disclaim alike interest and control over the immediate favourite of his lady, young Roland was, by circumstances, exempted from the strict discipline to which, as the retainer of a Scottish man of rank, he would otherwise have been subjected, according to all the rigour of the age. But the steward, or master of the household—such was the proud title assumed by the head domestic of each petty baron—deemed it not advisable to interfere with the favourite of the Lady, and especially since she had brought the estate into the present family. Master Jasper Wingate was a man experienced, as he often boasted, in the ways of great families, and knew how to keep the steerage even when the wind and tide chanced to be in contradiction.

This prudent personage winked at much, and avoided giving opportunity for farther offence, by requesting little of Roland Graeme beyond the degree of attention which he was himself disposed to pay; rightly conjecturing, that however lowly the place which the youth might hold in the favour of the Knight of Avenel, still to make an evil report of him would make an enemy of the Lady, without securing the favour of her husband. With these prudential considerations, and doubtless not without an eye to his own ease and convenience, he taught the boy as much, and only as much, as he chose to learn, readily admitting whatever apology it pleased his pupil to allege in excuse for idleness or negligence. As the other persons in the castle, to whom such tasks were delegated, readily imitated the prudential conduct of the major-domo, there was little control used towards Roland Graeme, who, of course, learned no more than what a very active mind, and a total impatience of absolute idleness led him to acquire upon his own account, and by dint of his own exertions. The latter were especially earnest, when the Lady herself condescended to be his tutress, or to examine his progress.

It followed also from his quality as my Lady's favourite, that Roland was viewed with no peculiar good-will by the followers of the Knight, many of whom, of the same age, and apparently similar origin, with the fortunate page, were subjected to severe observance of the ancient and rigorous discipline of a feudal retainer. To these, Roland Graeme was of course an object of envy, and, in consequence, of dislike and detraction; but the youth possessed qualities which it was impossible to depreciate. Pride, and a sense of early ambition, did for him what severity and constant instruction did for others. In truth, the youthful Roland displayed that early flexibility both of body and mind, which renders exercise, either mental or bodily, rather matter of sport than of study; and it seemed as if he acquired accidentally, and by starts, those accomplishments, which earnest and constant instruction, enforced by frequent reproof and occasional chastisement, had taught to others. Such military exercises, such lessons of the period, as he found it agreeable or convenient to apply to, he learned so perfectly, as to confound those who were ignorant how often the want of constant application is compensated by vivacity of talent and ardent enthusiasm. The lads, therefore, who were more regularly trained to arms, to horsemanship, and to other necessary exercises of the period, while they envied Roland Graeme the indulgence or negligence with which he seemed to be treated, had little reason to boast of their own superior acquirements; a few hours, with the powerful exertion of a most energetic will, seemed to do for him more than the regular instruction of weeks could accomplish for others.

Under these advantages, if, indeed, they were to be termed such, the character of young Roland began to develop itself. It was bold, peremptory, decisive, and overbearing; generous, if neither withstood nor contradicted; vehement and passionate, if censured or opposed. He seemed to consider himself as attached to no one, and responsible to no one, except his mistress, and even over her mind he had gradually acquired that species of ascendancy which indulgence is so apt to occasion. And although the immediate followers and dependents of Sir Halbert Glendinning saw his ascendancy with jealousy, and often took occasion to mortify his vanity, there wanted not those who were willing to acquire the favour of the Lady of Avenel by humouring and taking part with the youth whom she protected; for although a favourite, as the poet assures us, has no friend, he seldom fails to have both followers and flatterers.

The partisans of Roland Graeme were chiefly to be found amongst the inhabitants of the little hamlet on the shore of the lake. These villagers, who were sometimes tempted to compare their own situation with that of the immediate and constant followers of the Knight, who attended him on his frequent journeys to Edinburgh and elsewhere, delighted in considering and representing themselves as more properly the subjects of the Lady of Avenel than of her husband. It is true, her wisdom and affection on all occasions discountenanced the distinction which was here implied; but the villagers persisted in thinking it must be agreeable to her to enjoy their peculiar and undivided homage, or at least in acting as if they thought so; and one chief mode by which they evinced their sentiments, was by the respect they paid to young Roland Graeme, the favourite attendant of the descendant of their ancient lords. This was a mode of flattery too pleasing to encounter rebuke or censure; and the opportunity which it afforded the youth to form, as it were, a party of his own within the limits of the ancient barony of Avenel, added not a little to the audacity and decisive tone of a character, which was by nature bold, impetuous, and uncontrollable.

Of the two members of the household who had manifested an early jealousy of Roland Graeme, the prejudices of Wolf were easily overcome; and in process of time the noble dog slept with Bran, Luath, and the celebrated hounds of ancient days. But Mr. Warden, the chaplain, lived, and retained his dislike to the youth. That good man, single-minded and benevolent as he really was, entertained rather more than a reasonable idea of the respect due to him as a minister, and exacted from the inhabitants of the castle more deference than the haughty young page, proud of his mistress's favour, and petulant from youth and situation, was at all times willing to pay. His bold and free demeanour, his attachment to rich dress and decoration, his inaptitude to receive instruction, and his hardening himself against rebuke, were circumstances which induced the good old man, with more haste than charity, to set the forward page down as a vessel of wrath, and to presage that the youth nursed that pride and haughtiness of spirit which goes before ruin and destruction. On the other hand, Roland evinced at times a marked dislike, and even something like contempt, of the chaplain. Most of the attendants and followers of Sir Halbert Glendinning entertained the same charitable thoughts as the reverend Mr. Warden; but while Roland was favoured by their lady, and endured by their lord, they saw no policy in making their opinions public.

Roland Graeme was sufficiently sensible of the unpleasant situation in which he stood; but in the haughtiness of his heart he retorted upon the other domestics the distant, cold, and sarcastic manner in which they treated him, assumed an air of superiority which compelled the most obstinate to obedience, and had the satisfaction at least to be dreaded, if he was heartily hated.

The chaplain's marked dislike had the effect of recommending him to the attention of Sir Halbert's brother, Edward, who now, under the conventual appellation of Father Ambrose, continued to be one of the few monks who, with the Abbot Eustatius, had, notwithstanding the nearly total downfall of their faith under the regency of Murray, been still permitted to linger in the cloisters at Kennaquhair. Respect to Sir Halbert had prevented their being altogether driven out of the Abbey, though their order was now in a great measure suppressed, and they were interdicted the public exercise of their ritual, and only allowed for their support a small pension out of their once splendid revenues. Father Ambrose, thus situated, was an occasional, though very rare visitant, at the Castle of Avenel, and was at such times observed to pay particular attention to Roland Graeme, who seemed to return it with more depth of feeling than consisted with his usual habits.

Thus situated, years glided on, during which the Knight of Avenel continued to act a frequent and important part in the convulsions of his distracted country; while young Graeme anticipated, both in wishes and personal accomplishments, the age which should enable him to emerge from the obscurity of his present situation.

Chapter the Fourth.

*Amid their cups that freely flow'd,
Their revelry and mirth,
A youthful lord tax'd Valentine
With base and doubtful birth.*

VALENTINE AND ORSON.

When Roland Graeme was a youth about seventeen years of age, he chanced one summer morning to descend to the mew in which Sir Halbert Glendinning kept his hawks, in order to superintend the training of an eyas, or young hawk, which he himself, at the imminent risk of neck and limbs, had taken from the celebrated eyry in the neighborhood, called Gledscraig. As he was by no means satisfied with the attention which had been bestowed on his favourite bird, he was not slack in testifying his displeasure to the falconer's lad, whose duty it was to have attended upon it.

"What, ho! sir knave," exclaimed Roland, "is it thus you feed the eyas with unwashed meat, as if you were gorging the foul brancher of a worthless hoodie-crow? by the mass, and thou hast neglected its castings also for these two days! Think'st thou I ventured my neck to bring the bird down from the crag, that thou shouldst spoil him by thy neglect?" And to add force to his remonstrances, he conferred a cuff or two on the negligent attendant of the hawks, who, shouting rather louder than was necessary under all the circumstances, brought the master falconer to his assistance.

Adam Woodcock, the falconer of Avenel, was an Englishman by birth, but so long in the service of Glendinning, that he had lost much of his notional attachment in that which he had formed to his master. He was a favourite in his department, jealous and conceited of his skill, as masters of the game usually are; for the rest of his character he was a jester and a parcel poet, (qualities which by no means abated his natural conceit,) a jolly fellow, who, though a sound Protestant, loved a flagon of ale better than a long sermon, a stout man of his hands when need required, true to his master, and a little presuming on his interest with him.

Adam Woodcock, such as we have described him, by no means relished the freedom used by young Graeme, in chastising his assistant. "Hey, hey, my Lady's page," said he, stepping between his own boy and Roland, "fair and softly, an it like your gilt jacket—hands off is fair play—if my boy has done amiss, I can beat him myself, and then you may keep your hands soft."

"I will beat him and thee too," answered Roland, without hesitation, "an you look not better after your business. See how the bird is cast away between you. I found the careless lurdane feeding him with unwashed flesh, and she an eyas." [Footnote: There is a difference amongst authorities how long the nestling hawk should be fed with flesh which has previously been washed.]

"Go to," said the falconer, "thou art but an eyas thyself, child Roland.—What knowest thou of feeding? I say that the eyas should have her meat unwashed, until she becomes a brancher—twere the ready way to give her the frounce, to wash her meat sooner, and so knows every one who knows a gled from a falcon."

"It is thine own laziness, thou false English blood, that dost nothing but drink and sleep," retorted the page, "and leaves that lither lad to do the work, which he minds as little as thou."

"And am I so idle then," said the falconer, "that have three cast of hawks to look after, at perch and mew, and to fly them in the field to boot?—and is my Lady's page so busy a man that he must take me up short?—and am I of false English blood?—I marvel what blood thou art—neither Engländer nor Scot—fish nor flesh—a bastard from the Debateable Land, without either kith, kin, or ally!—Marry, out upon thee, foul kite, that would fain be a tercel gentle!"

The reply to this sarcasm was a box on the ear, so well applied, that it overthrew the falconer into the cistern in which water was kept for the benefit of the hawks. Up started Adam Woodcock, his wrath no way appeased by the cold immersion, and seizing on a truncheon which stood by, would have soon requited the injury he had received, had not Roland laid his hand on his poniard, and sworn by all that was sacred, that if he offered a stroke towards him, he would sheath the blade in his bowels. The noise was now so great, that more than one of the household came in, and amongst others the major-domo, a grave personage, already mentioned, whose gold chain and white wand intimated his authority. At the appearance of this dignitary, the strife was for the present appeased. He embraced, however, so favourable an opportunity, to read Roland Graeme a shrewd lecture on the impropriety of his deportment to his fellow-menials, and to assure him, that, should he communicate this fray to his master, (who, though now on one of his frequent expeditions, was speedily expected to return,) which but for respect to his Lady he would most certainly do, the residence of the culprit in the Castle of Avenel would be but of brief duration. "But, however," added the prudent master of the household, "I will report the matter first to my Lady."

"Very just, very right, Master Wingate," exclaimed several voices together; "my Lady will consider if daggers, are to be drawn on us for every idle word, and whether we are to live in a well-ordered household, where there is the fear of God, or amidst drawn dirks and sharp knives."

The object of this general resentment darted an angry glance around him, and suppressing with difficulty the desire which urged him to reply in furious or in contemptuous language, returned his dagger into his scabbard, looked disdainfully around upon the assembled menials, turned short upon his heel, and pushing aside those who stood betwixt him and the door, left the apartment.

"This will be no tree for my nest," said the falconer, "if this cock-sparrow is to crow over us as he seems to do."

"He struck me with his switch yesterday," said one of the grooms, "because the tail of his worship's gelding was not trimmed altogether so as suited his humour."

"And I promise you," said the laundress, "my young master will stick nothing to call an honest woman slut and quean, if there be but a speck of soot upon his band-collar."

"If Master Wingate do not his errand to my Lady," was the general result, "there will be no tarrying in the same house with Roland Graeme."

The master of the household heard them all for some time, and then, motioning for universal silence, he addressed them with all the dignity of Malvolio himself.—

"My masters,—not forgetting you, my mistresses,—do not think the worse of me that I proceed with as much care as haste in this matter. Our master is a gallant knight, and will have his sway at home and abroad, in wood and field, in hall and bower, as the saying is. Our Lady, my benison upon her, is also a noble person of long descent, and rightful heir of this place and barony, and she also loves her will; as for that matter, show me the woman who doth not. Now, she hath favoured, doth favour, and will favour, this jack-an-ape,—for what good part about him I know not, save that as one noble lady will love a messan dog, and another a screaming popinjay, and a third a Barbary ape, so doth it please our noble dame to set her affections upon this stray elf of a page, for nought that I can think of, save that she—was the cause of his being saved (the more's the pity) from drowning." And here Master Wingate made a pause.

"I would have been his caution for a gray groat against salt water or fresh," said Roland's adversary, the falconer; "marry, if he crack not a rope for stabbing or for snatching, I will be content never to hood hawk again."

"Peace, Adam Woodcock," said Wingate, waving his hand; "I prithee, peace man—Now, my Lady liking this springald, as aforesaid, differs therein from my Lord, who loves never a bone in his skin. Now, is it for me to stir up strife betwixt them, and put as'twere my finger betwixt the bark and the tree, on account of a pragmatistical youngster, whom, nevertheless, I would willingly see whipped forth of the barony? Have patience, and this boil will break without our meddling. I have been in service since I wore a beard on my chin, till now that that beard is turned gray, and I have seldom known any one better themselves, even by taking the lady's part against the lord's; but never one who did not dirk himself, if he took the lord's against the lady's."

"And so," said Lilius, "we are to be crowed over, every one of us, men and women, cock and hen, by this little upstart?—I will try titles with him first, I promise you.—I fancy, Master Wingate, for as wise as you look, you will be pleased to tell what you have seen to-day, if my lady commands you?"

"To speak the truth when my lady commands me," answered the prudential major-domo, "is in some measure my duty, Mistress Liliās; always providing for and excepting those cases in which it cannot be spoken without breeding mischief and inconvenience to myself or my fellow-servants; for the tongue of a tale-bearer breaketh bones as well as Jeddart-staff." [Footnote: A species of battle-axe, so called as being in especial use in that ancient burgh, whose armorial bearing still represent an armed horseman brandishing such a weapon.]

"But this imp of Satan is none of your friends or fellow-servants," said Liliās; "and I trust you mean not to stand up for him against the whole family besides?"

"Credit me, Mrs. Liliās," replied the senior, "should I see the time fitting, I would, with right good-will give him a lick with the rough side of my tongue."

"Enough said, Master Wingate," answered Liliās; "then trust me his song shall soon be laid. If my mistress does not ask me what is the matter below stairs before she be ten minutes of time older, she is no born woman, and my name is not Liliās Bradbourne."

In pursuance of her plan, Mistress Liliās failed not to present herself before her mistress with all the exterior of one who is possessed of an important secret,—that is, she had the corners of her mouth turned down, her eyes raised up, her lips pressed as fast together as if they had been sewed up, to prevent her babbling, and an air of prim mystical importance diffused over her whole person and demeanour, which seemed to intimate, "I know something which I am resolved not to tell you!"

Liliās had rightly read her mistress's temper, who, wise and good as she was, was yet a daughter of grandame Eve, and could not witness this mysterious bearing on the part of her waiting-woman without longing to ascertain the secret cause. For a space, Mrs. Liliās was obdurate to all inquiries, sighed, turned her eyes up higher yet to heaven, hoped for the best, but had nothing particular to communicate. All this, as was most natural and proper, only stimulated the Lady's curiosity; neither was her importunity to be parried with,—*"Thank God, I am no makebate—no tale-bearer,—thank God, I never envied any one's favour, or was anxious to propale their misdemeanour-only, thank God, there has been no bloodshed and murder in the house—that is all."*

"Bloodshed and murder!" exclaimed the Lady, "what does the quean mean?—if you speak not plain out, you shall have something you will scarce be thankful for."

"Nay, my Lady," answered Liliās, eager to disburden her mind, or, in, Chaucer's phrase, to "unbuckle her mail," "if you bid me speak out the truth, you must not be moved with what might displease you—Roland Graeme has dirked Adam Woodstock—that is all."

"Good Heaven!" said the Lady, turning pale as ashes, "is the man slain?"

"No, madam," replied Liliās, "but slain he would have been, if there had not been ready help; but may be, it is your Ladyship's pleasure that this young esquire shall poniard the servants, as well as switch and baton them."

"Go to, minion," said the Lady, "you are saucy—tell the master of the household to attend me instantly."

Liliās hastened to seek out Mr. Wingate, and hurry him to his lady's presence, speaking as a word in season to him on the way, "I have set the stone a-trowling, look that you do not let it stand still."

The steward, too prudential a person to commit himself otherwise, answered by a sly look and a nod of intelligence, and presently after stood in the presence of the Lady of Avenel, with a look of great respect for his lady, partly real, partly affected, and an air of great sagacity, which inferred no ordinary conceit of himself.

"How is this, Wingate," said the Lady, "and what rule do you keep in the castle, that the domestics of Sir Halbert Glendinning draw the dagger on each other, as in a cavern of thieves and murderers?—is the wounded man much hurt? and what—what hath become of the unhappy boy?"

"There is no one wounded as yet, madam," replied he of the golden chain; "it passes my poor skill to say how many may be wounded before Pasche, [Footnote: Easter.] if some rule be not taken with this youth—not but the youth is a fair youth," he added, correcting himself, "and able at his exercise; but somewhat too ready with the ends of his fingers, the butt of his riding-switch, and the point of his dagger."

"And whose fault is that," said the Lady, "but yours, who should have taught him better discipline, than to brawl or to draw his dagger."

"If it please your Ladyship so to impose the blame on me," answered the steward, "it is my part, doubtless, to bear it—only I submit to your consideration, that unless I nailed his weapon to the scabbard, I could no more keep it still, than I could fix quicksilver, which defied even the skill of Raymond Lullius."

"Tell me not of Raymond Lullius," said the Lady, losing patience, "but send me the chaplain hither. You grow all of you too wise for me, during your lord's long and repeated absences. I would to God his affairs would permit him to remain at home and rule his own household, for it passes my wit and skill!"

"God forbid, my Lady!" said the old domestic, "that you should sincerely think what you are now pleased to say: your old servants might well hope, that after so many years' duty, you would do their service more justice than to distrust their gray hairs, because they cannot rule the peevish humour of a green head, which the owner carries, it may be, a brace of inches higher than becomes him."

"Leave me," said the Lady; "Sir Halbert's return must now be expected daily, and he will look into these matters himself—leave me, I say, Wingate, without saying more of it. I know you are honest, and I believe the boy is petulant; and yet I think it is my favour which hath set all of you against him."

The steward bowed and retired, after having been silenced in a second attempt to explain the motives on which he acted.

The chaplain arrived; but neither from him did the Lady receive much comfort. On the contrary, she found him disposed, in plain terms, to lay to the door of her indulgence all the disturbances which the fiery temper of Roland Graeme had already occasioned, or might hereafter occasion, in the family. "I would," he said, "honoured Lady, that you had deigned to be ruled by me in the outset of this matter, sith it is easy to stem evil in the fountain, but hard to struggle against it in the stream. You, honoured madam, (a word which I do not use according to the vain forms of this world, but because I have ever loved and honoured you as an honourable and elect lady,)—you, I say, madam, have been pleased, contrary to my poor but earnest counsel, to raise this boy from his station, into one approaching to your own."

"What mean you, reverend sir?" said the Lady; "I have made this youth a page—is there aught in my doing so that does not become my character and quality?"

"I dispute not, madam," said the pertinacious preacher, "your benevolent purpose in taking charge of this youth, or your title to give him this idle character of page, if such was your pleasure; though what the education of a boy in the train of a female can tend to, save to ingraft foppery and effeminacy on conceit and arrogance, it passes my knowledge to discover. But I blame you more directly for having taken little care to guard him against the perils of his condition, or to tame and humble a spirit naturally haughty, overbearing, and impatient. You have brought into your bower a lion's cub; delighted with the beauty of his fur, and the grace of his gambols, you have bound him with no fetters befitting the fierceness of his disposition. You have let him grow up as unawed as if he had been still a tenant of the forest, and now you are surprised, and call out for assistance, when he begins to ramp, rend, and tear, according to his proper nature."

"Mr. Warden," said the Lady, considerably offended, "you are my husband's ancient friend, and I believe your love sincere to him and to his household. Yet let me say, that when I asked you for counsel, I expected not this asperity of rebuke. If I have done wrong in loving this poor orphan lad more than others of his class, I scarce think the error merited such severe censure; and if stricter discipline were required to keep his fiery temper in order, it ought, I think, to be considered, that I am a woman, and that if I have erred in this matter, it becomes a friend's part rather to aid than to rebuke me. I would these evils were taken order with before my lord's return. He loves not domestic discord or domestic brawls; and I would not willingly that he thought such could arise from one whom I favoured—What do you counsel me to do?"

"Dismiss this youth from your service, madam," replied the preacher.

"You cannot bid me do so," said the Lady; "you cannot, as a Christian and a man of humanity, bid me turn away an unprotected creature against whom my favour, my injudicious favour if you will, has reared up so many enemies."

"It is not necessary you should altogether abandon him, though you dismiss him to another service, or to a calling better suiting his station and character," said the preacher; "elsewhere he maybe an useful and profitable member of the commonweal—here he is but a makebate, and a stumbling-block of offence. The youth has snatches of sense and of intelligence, though he lacks industry. I will myself give him letters commendatory to Olearius Schinderhausen, a learned professor at the famous university of Leyden, where they lack an under-janitor—where, besides gratis instruction, if God give him the grace to seek it, he will enjoy five merks by the year, and the professor's cast-off suit, which he disparts with biennially."

"This will never do, good Mr. Warden," said the Lady, scarce able to suppress a smile; "we will think more at large upon this matter. In the meanwhile, I trust to your remonstrances with this wild boy and with the family, for restraining these violent and unseemly jealousies and bursts of passion; and I entreat you to press on him and them their duty in this respect towards God, and towards their master."

"You shall be obeyed, madam," said Warden. "On the next Thursday I exhort the family, and will, with God's blessing, so wrestle with the demon of wrath and violence, which hath entered into my little flock, that I trust to hound the wolf out of the fold, as if he were chased away with bandogs."

This was the part of the conference from which Mr. Warden derived the greatest pleasure. The pulpit was at that time the same powerful engine for affecting popular feeling which the press has since become, and he had been no unsuccessful preacher, as we have already seen. It followed as a natural consequence, that he rather over-estimated the powers of his own oratory, and, like some of his brethren about the period, was glad of an opportunity to handle any matters of importance, whether public or private, the discussion of which could be dragged into his discourse. In that rude age the delicacy was unknown which prescribed time and place to personal exhortations; and as the court-preacher often addressed the King individually, and dictated to him the conduct he ought to observe in matters of state, so the nobleman himself, or any of his retainers, were, in the chapel of the feudal castle, often incensed or appalled, as the case might be, by the discussion of their private faults in the evening exercise, and by spiritual censures directed against them, specifically, personally, and by name. The sermon, by means of which Henry Warden purposed to restore concord and good order to the Castle of Avenel, bore for text the well-known words, "*He who striketh with the sword shall perish by the sword*," and was a singular mixture of good sense and powerful oratory with pedantry and bad taste. He enlarged a good deal on the word *striketh*, which he assured his hearers comprehended blows given with the point as well as with the edge, and more generally, shooting with hand-gun, cross-bow, or long-bow, thrusting with a lance, or doing any thing whatever by which death might be occasioned to the adversary. In the same manner, he proved satisfactorily, that the word *sword* comprehended all descriptions, whether backsword or basket-hilt, cut-and-thrust or rapier, falchion, or scimitar. "But if," he continued, with still greater animation, "the text includeth in its anathema those who strike with any of those weapons which man hath devised for the exercise of his open hostility, still more doth it comprehend such as from their form and size are devised rather for the gratification of privy malice by treachery, than for the destruction of an enemy prepared and standing upon his defence. Such," he proceeded, looking sternly at the place where the page was seated on a cushion at the feet of his mistress, and wearing in his crimson belt a gay dagger with a gilded hilt,—"*such*, more especially, I hold to be those implements of death, which, in our modern and fantastic times, are worn not only by thieves and cut-throats, to whom they most properly belong, but even by those who attend upon women, and wait in the chambers of honourable ladies. Yes, my friends,—every species of this unhappy weapon, framed for all evil and for no good, is comprehended under this deadly denunciation, whether it be a stilet, which we have borrowed from the treacherous Italian, or a dirk, which is borne by the savage Highlandman, or a whinger, which is carried by our own Border thieves and cut-throats, or a dudgeon-dagger, all are alike engines invented by the devil himself, for ready implements of deadly wrath, sudden to execute, and difficult to be parried. Even the common sword-and-buckler brawler despises the use of such a treacherous and malignant instrument, which is therefore fit to be used, not by men or soldiers, but by those who, trained under female discipline, become themselves effeminate hermaphrodites, having female spite and female cowardice added to the infirmities and evil passions of their masculine nature."

The effect which this oration produced upon the assembled congregation of Avenel cannot very easily be described. The lady seemed at once embarrassed and offended; the menials could hardly contain, under an affectation of deep attention, the joy with which they heard the chaplain launch his thunders at the head of the unpopular favourite, and the weapon which they considered as a badge of affectation and finery. Mrs. Lilies crested and drew up her head with all the deep-felt pride of gratified resentment; while the steward, observing a strict neutrality of aspect, fixed his eyes upon an old scutcheon on the opposite side of the wall, which he seemed to examine with the utmost accuracy, more willing, perhaps, to incur the censure of being inattentive to the sermon, than that of seeming to listen with marked approbation to what appeared so distasteful to his mistress.

The unfortunate subject of the harangue, whom nature had endowed with passions which had hitherto found no effectual restraint, could not disguise the resentment which he felt at being thus directly held up to the scorn, as well as the censure, of the assembled inhabitants of the little world in which he lived. His brow grew red, his lip grew pale, he set his teeth, he clenched his hand, and then with mechanical readiness grasped the weapon of which the clergyman had given so hideous a character; and at length, as the preacher heightened the colouring of his invective, he felt his rage become so ungovernable, that, fearful of being hurried into some deed of desperate violence, he rose up, traversed the chapel with hasty steps, and left the congregation.

The preacher was surprised into a sudden pause, while the fiery youth shot across him like a flash of lightning, regarding him as he passed, as if he had wished to dart from his eyes the same power of blighting and of consuming. But no sooner had he crossed the chapel, and shut with violence behind him the door of the vaulted entrance by which it communicated with the castle, than the impropriety of his conduct supplied Warden with one of those happier subjects for eloquence, of which he knew how to take advantage for making a suitable impression on his hearers. He paused for an instant, and then pronounced, in a slow and solemn voice, the deep anathema: "He hath gone out from us because he was not of us—the sick man hath been offended at the wholesome bitter of the medicine—the wounded patient hath flinched from the friendly knife of the surgeon—the sheep hath fled from the sheepfold and delivered himself to the wolf, because he could not assume the quiet and humble conduct demanded of us by the great Shepherd. Ah! my brethren, beware of wrath—beware of pride—beware of the deadly and destroying sin which so often shows itself to our frail eyes in the garments of light! What is our earthly honour? Pride, and pride only—What our earthly gifts and graces? Pride and vanity. Voyagers speak of Indian men who deck themselves with shells, and anoint themselves with pigments, and boast of their attire as we do of our miserable carnal advantages—Pride could draw down the morning-star from Heaven even to the verge of the pit—Pride and self-opinion kindled the flaming sword which waves us off from Paradise—Pride made Adam mortal, and a weary wanderer on the face of the earth, which he had else been at this day the immortal lord of—Pride brought amongst us sin, and doubles every sin it has brought. It is the outpost which the devil and the flesh most stubbornly maintain against the assaults of grace; and until it be subdued, and its barriers levelled with the very earth, there is more hope of a fool than of the sinner. Rend, then, from your bosoms this accursed shoot of the fatal apple; tear it up by the roots, though it be twisted with the chords of your life. Profit by the example of the miserable sinner that has passed from us, and embrace the means of grace while it is called to-day 'ere your conscience is seared as with a fire-brand, and your ears deafened like those of the adder, and your heart hardened like the nether mill-stone. Up, then, and be doing—wrestle and overcome; resist, and the enemy shall flee from you—Watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation, and let the stumbling of others be your warning and your example. Above all, rely not on yourselves, for such self-confidence is even the worst symptom of the disorder itself. The Pharisee, perhaps, deemed himself humble while he stooped in the Temple, and thanked God that he was not as other men, and even as the publican. But while his knees touched the marble pavement, his head was as high as the topmost pinnacle of the Temple. Do not, therefore, deceive yourselves, and offer false coin, where the purest you can present is but as dross—think not that such—will pass the assay of Omnipotent Wisdom. Yet shrink not from the task, because, as is my bounden duty, I do not disguise from you its difficulties. Self-searching can do much—Meditation can do much—Grace can do all."

And he concluded with a touching and animating exhortation to his hearers to seek divine grace, which is perfected in human weakness.

The audience did not listen to this address without being considerably affected; though it might be doubted whether the feelings of triumph, excited by the disgraceful retreat of the favourite page, did not greatly qualify in the minds of many the exhortations of the preacher to charity and to humility. And, in fact, the expression of their countenances much resembled the satisfied triumphant air of a set of children, who, having just seen a companion punished for a fault in which they had no share, con their task with double glee, both because they themselves are out of the scrape, and because the culprit is in it.

With very different feelings did the Lady of Avenel seek her own apartment. She felt angry at Warden having made a domestic matter, in which she took a personal interest, the subject of such public discussion. But this she knew the good man claimed as a branch of his Christian liberty as a preacher, and also that it was vindicated by the universal custom of his brethren. But the self-willed conduct of her protégé afforded her yet deeper concern. That he had broken through in so remarkable a degree, not only the respect due to her presence, but that which was paid to religious admonition in those days with such peculiar reverence, argued a spirit as untameable as his enemies had represented him to possess. And yet so far as he had been under her own eye, she had seen no more of that fiery spirit than appeared to her to become his years and his vivacity. This opinion might be founded in some degree on partiality; in some degree, too, it might be

owing to the kindness and indulgence which she had always extended to him; but still she thought it impossible that she could be totally mistaken in the estimate she had formed of his character. The extreme of violence is scarce consistent with a course of continued hypocrisy, (although Lilius charitably hinted, that in some instances they were happily united,) and there fore she could not exactly trust the report of others against her own experience and observation. The thoughts of this orphan boy clung to her heartstrings with a fondness for which she herself was unable to account. He seemed to have been sent to her by Heaven, to fill up those intervals of languor and vacuity which deprived her of much enjoyment. Perhaps he was not less dear to her, because she well saw that he was a favourite with no one else, and because she felt, that to give him up was to afford the judgment of her husband and others a triumph over her own; a circumstance not quite indifferent to the best of spouses of either sex.

In short, the Lady of Avenel formed the internal resolution, that she would not desert her page while her page could be rationally protected; and, with a view of ascertaining how far this might be done, she caused him to be summoned to her presence.

Chapter the Fifth.

*—In the wild storm,
The seaman hews his mast down, and the merchant
Heaves to the billows wares he once deem'd precious;
So prince and peer, 'mid popular contentions,
Cast off their favourites.*

OLD PLAY.

It was some time ere Roland Graeme appeared. The messenger (his old friend Lilius) had at first attempted to open the door of his little apartment with the charitable purpose, doubtless, of enjoying the confusion, and marking the demeanour of the culprit. But an oblong bit of iron, ycleped a bolt, was passed across the door on the inside, and prevented her benign intentions. Lilius knocked and called at intervals. "Roland—Roland Graeme—*Master* Roland Graeme" (an emphasis on the word *Master*,) "will you be pleased to undo the door?—What ails you?—are you at your prayers in private, to complete the devotion which you left unfinished in public?—Surely we must have a screened seat for you in the chapel, that your gentility may be free from the eyes of common folks!" Still no whisper was heard in reply. "Well, master Roland," said the waiting-maid, "I must tell my mistress, that if she would have an answer, she must either come herself, or send those on errand to you who can beat the door down."

"What says your Lady?" answered the page from within.

"Marry, open the door, and you shall hear," answered the waiting-maid. "I trow it becomes my Lady's message to be listened to face to face; and I will not for your idle pleasure, whistle it through a key-hole."

"Your mistress's name," said the page, opening the door, "is too fair a cover for your impertinence—What says my Lady?"

"That you will be pleased to come to her directly, in the withdrawing-room," answered Lilius. "I presume she has some directions for you concerning the forms to be observed in leaving chapel in future."

"Say to my Lady, that I will directly wait on her," answered the page; and returning into his apartment, he once more locked the door in the face of the waiting-maid.

"Rare courtesy!" muttered Lilius; and, returning to her mistress, acquainted her that Roland Graeme would wait on her when it suited his convenience.

"What, is that his addition, or your own phrase, Lilius?" said the Lady, coolly.

"Nay, madam," replied the attendant, not directly answering the question, "he looked as if he could have said much more impertinent things than that, if I had been willing to hear them.—But here he comes to answer for himself."

Roland Graeme entered the apartment with a loftier mien, and somewhat a higher colour than his wont; there was embarrassment in his manner, but it was neither that of fear nor of penitence.

"Young man," said the Lady, "what trow you I am to think of your conduct this day?"

"If it has offended you, madam, I am deeply grieved," replied the youth.

"To have offended me alone," replied the Lady, "were but little—You have been guilty of conduct which will highly offend your master—of violence to your fellow-servants, and of disrespect to God himself, in the person of his ambassador."

"Permit me again to reply," said the page, "that if I have offended my only mistress, friend, and benefactress, it includes the sum of my guilt, and deserves the sum of my penitence—Sir Halbert Glendinning calls me not servant, nor do I call him master—he is not entitled to blame me for chastising an insolent groom—nor do I fear the wrath of Heaven for treating with scorn the unauthorized interference of a meddling preacher."

The Lady of Avenel had before this seen symptoms in her favourite of boyish petulance, and of impatience of censure or reproof. But his present demeanour was of a graver and more determined character, and she was for a moment at a loss how she should treat the youth, who seemed to have at once assumed the character not only of a man, but of a bold and determined one. She paused an instant, and then assuming the dignity which was natural to her, she said, "Is it to me, Roland, that you hold this language? Is it for the purpose of making me repent the favour I have shown you, that you declare yourself independent both of an earthly and a Heavenly master? Have you forgotten what you were, and to what the loss of my protection would speedily again reduce you?"

"Lady," said the page, "I have forgot nothing, I remember but too much. I know, that but for you, I should have perished in yon blue waves," pointing, as he spoke, to the lake, which was seen through the window, agitated by the western wind. "Your goodness has gone farther, madam—you have protected me against the malice of others, and against my own folly. You are free, if you are willing, to abandon the orphan you have reared. You have left nothing undone by him, and he complains of nothing. And yet, Lady, do not think I have been ungrateful—I have endured something on my part, which I would have borne for the sake of no one but my benefactress."

"For my sake!" said the Lady; "and what is it that I can have subjected you to endure, which can be remembered with other feelings than those of thanks and gratitude?"

"You are too just, madam, to require me to be thankful for the cold neglect with which your husband has uniformly treated me—neglect not unmingled with fixed aversion. You are too just, madam, to require me to be grateful for the constant and unceasing marks of scorn and malevolence with which I have been treated by others, or for such a homily as that with which your reverend chaplain has, at my expense, this very day regaled the assembled household."

"Heard mortal ears the like of this!" said the waiting-maid, with her hands expanded and her eyes turned up to heaven; "he speaks as if he were son of an earl, or of a belted knight the least penny!"

The page glanced on her a look of supreme contempt, but vouchsafed no other answer. His mistress, who began to feel herself seriously offended, and yet sorry for the youth's folly, took up the same tone.

"Indeed, Roland, you forget yourself so strangely," said she, "that you will tempt me to take serious measures to lower you in your own opinion by reducing you to your proper station in society."

"And that," added Lilius, "would be best done by turning him out the same beggar's brat that your ladyship took him in."

"Lilius speaks too rudely," continued the Lady, "but she has spoken the truth, young man; nor do I think I ought to spare that pride which hath so completely turned your head. You have been tricked up with fine garments, and treated like the son of a gentleman, until you have forgot the fountain of your churlish blood."

"Craving your pardon, most honourable madam, Liliashath *not* spoken truth, nor does your ladyship know aught of my descent, which should entitle you to treat it with such decided scorn. I am no beggar's brat—my grandmother begged from no one, here nor elsewhere—she would have perished sooner on the bare moor. We were harried out and driven from our home—a chance which has happened elsewhere, and to others. Avenel Castle, with its lake and its towers, was not at all times able to protect its inhabitants from want and desolation."

"Hear but his assurance!" said Liliash, "he upbraids my Lady with the distresses of her family!"

"It had indeed been a theme more gratefully spared," said the Lady, affected nevertheless with the allusion.

"It was necessary, madam, for my vindication," said the page, "or I had not even hinted at a word that might give you pain. But believe, honoured Lady, I am of no churl's blood. My proper descent I know not; but my only relation has said, and my heart has echoed it back and attested the truth, that I am sprung of gentle blood, and deserve gentle usage."

"And upon an assurance so vague as this," said the Lady, "do you propose to expect all the regard, all the privileges, befitting high rank and distinguished birth, and become a contender for concessions which are only due to the noble? Go to, sir, know yourself, or the master of the household shall make you know you are liable to the scourge as a malapert boy. You have tasted too little the discipline fit for your age and station."

"The master of the household shall taste of my dagger, ere I taste of his discipline," said the page, giving way to his restrained passion. "Lady, I have been too long the vassal of a pantoufle, and the slave of a silver whistle. You must henceforth find some other to answer your call; and let him be of birth and spirit mean enough to brook the scorn of your menials, and to call a church vassal his master."

"I have deserved this insult," said the Lady, colouring deeply, "for so long enduring and fostering your petulance. Begone, sir. Leave this castle to-night—I will send you the means of subsistence till you find some honest mode of support, though I fear your imaginary grandeur will be above all others, save those of rapine and violence. Begone, sir, and see my face no more."

The page threw himself at her feet in an agony of sorrow. "My dear and honoured mistress," he said, but was unable to bring out another syllable.

"Arise, sir," said the Lady, "and let go my mantle—hypocrisy is a poor cloak for ingratitude."

"I am incapable of either, madam," said the page, springing up with the hasty start of passion which belonged to his rapid and impetuous temper. "Think not I meant to implore permission to reside here; it has been long my determination to leave Avenel, and I will never forgive myself for having permitted you to say the word begone, ere I said, 'I leave you.' I did but kneel to ask your forgiveness for an ill-considered word used in the height of displeasure, but which ill became my mouth, as addressed to you. Other grace I asked not—you have done much for me—but I repeat, that you better know what you yourself have done, than what I have suffered."

"Roland," said the Lady, somewhat appeased, and relenting towards her favourite, "you had me to appeal to when you were aggrieved. You were neither called upon to suffer wrong, nor entitled to resent it, when you were under my protection."

"And what," said the youth, "if I sustained wrong from those you loved and favoured, was I to disturb your peace with idle tale-bearings and eternal complaints? No, madam; I have borne my own burden in silence, and without disturbing you with murmurs; and the respect with which you accuse me of wanting, furnishes the only reason why I have neither appealed to you, nor taken vengeance at my own hand in a manner far more effectual. It is well, however, that we part. I was not born to be a stipendiary, favoured by his mistress, until ruined by the calumnies of others. May Heaven multiply its choicest blessings on your honoured head; and, for your sake, upon all that are dear to you!"

He was about to leave the apartment, when the Lady called upon him to return. He stood still, while she thus addressed him: "It was not my intention, nor would it be just, even in the height of my displeasure, to dismiss you without the means of support; take this purse of gold."

"Forgive me, Lady," said the boy, "and let me go hence with the consciousness that I have not been degraded to the point of accepting alms. If my poor services can be placed against the expense of my apparel and my maintenance, I only remain debtor to you for my life, and that alone is a debt which I can never repay; put up then that purse, and only say, instead, that you do not part from me in anger."

"No, not in anger," said the Lady, "in sorrow rather for your wilfulness; but take the gold, you cannot but need it."

"May God evermore bless you for the kind tone and the kind word! but the gold I cannot take. I am able of body, and do not lack friends so wholly as you may think; for the time may come that I may yet show myself more thankful than by mere words." He threw himself on his knees, kissed the hand which she did not withdraw, and then, hastily left the apartment.

Liliash, for a moment or two, kept her eye fixed on her mistress, who looked so unusually pale, that she seemed about to faint; but the Lady instantly recovered herself, and declining the assistance which her attendant offered her, walked to her own apartment.

Chapter the Sixth.

*Thou hast each secret of the household, Francis.
I dare be sworn thou hast been in the buttery,
Steeping thy curious humour in fat ale,
And in thy butler's tattle—ay, or chatting
With the glib waiting-woman o'er her comfits—
These bear the key to each domestic mystery.*

OLD PLAY.

Upon the morrow succeeding the scene we have described, the disgraced favourite left the castle; and at breakfast-time the cautious old steward and Mrs. Liliash sat in the apartment of the latter personage, holding grave converse on the important event of the day, sweetened by a small treat of comfits, to which the providence of Mr. Wingate had added a little flask of racy canary.

"He is gone at last," said the abigail, sipping her glass; "and here is to his good journey."

"Amen," answered the steward, gravely; "I wish the poor deserted lad no ill."

"And he is gone like a wild-duck, as he came," continued Mrs. Liliash; "no lowering of drawbridges, or pacing along causeways, for him. My master has pushed off in the boat which they call the little Herod, (more shame to them for giving the name of a Christian to wood and iron,) and has rowed himself by himself to the farther side of the loch, and off and away with himself, and left all his finery strewed about his room. I wonder who is to clean his trumpery out after him—though the things are worth lifting, too."

"Doubtless, Mistress Liliash," answered the master of the household, "in the which case, I am free to think, they will not long cumber the floor."

"And now tell me, Master Wingate," continued the damsel, "do not the very cockles of your heart rejoice at the house being rid of this upstart whelp, that flung us all into shadow?"

"Why, Mistress Liliash," replied Wingate, "as to rejoicing—those who have lived as long in great families as has been my lot, will be in no hurry to rejoice at any thing. And for Roland Graeme, though he may be a good riddance in the main, yet what says the very sooth proverb, 'Seldom comes a better.'"

"Seldom comes a better, indeed!" echoed Mrs. Liliash. "I say, never can come a worse, or one half so bad. He might have been the ruin of our poor dear mistress," (here she used her kerchief,) "body and soul, and estate too; for she spent more coin on his apparel than on any four servants about the house."

"Mistress Liliās," said the sage steward, "I do opine that our mistress requireth not this pity at your hands, being in all respects competent to take care of her own body, soul, and estate into the bargain."

"You would not mayhap have said so," answered the waiting-woman, "had you seen how like Lot's wife she looked when young master took his leave. My mistress is a good lady, and a virtuous, and a well-doing lady, and a well-spoken of—but I would not Sir Halbert had seen her last evening for two and a plack."

"Oh, foy! foy! foy!" reiterated the steward; "servants should hear and see, and say nothing. Besides that, my lady is utterly devoted to Sir Halbert, as well she may, being, as he is, the most renowned knight in these parts."

"Well, well," said the abigail, "I mean no more harm; but they that seek least renown abroad, are most apt to find quiet at home, that's all; and my Lady's lonesome situation is to be considered, that made her fain to take up with the first beggar's brat that a dog brought her out of the loch."

"And, therefore," said the steward, "I say, rejoice not too much, or too hastily, Mistress Liliās; for if your Lady wished a favourite to pass away the time, depend upon it, the time will not pass lighter now that he is gone. So she will have another favourite to choose for herself; and be assured, if she wishes such a toy, she will not lack one."

"And where should she choose one, but among her own tried and faithful servants," said Mrs. Liliās, "who have broken her bread, and drunk her drink, for so many years? I have known many a lady as high as she is, that never thought either of a friend or favourite beyond their own waiting-woman—always having a proper respect, at the same time, for their old and faithful master of the household, Master Wingate."

"Truly, Mistress Liliās," replied the steward, "I do partly see the mark at which you shoot, but I doubt your bolt will fall short. Matters being with our Lady as it likes you to suppose, it will neither be your crimped pinnets, Mrs. Liliās, (speaking of them with due respect,) nor my silver hair, or golden chain, that will fill up the void which Roland Graeme must needs leave in our Lady's leisure. There will be a learned young divine with some new doctrine—a learned leech with some new drug—a bold cavalier, who will not be refused the favour of wearing her colours at a running at the ring—a cunning harper that could harp the heart out of woman's breast, as they say Signer David Rizzio did to our poor Queen;—these are the sort of folk who supply the loss of a well-favoured favourite, and not an old steward, or a middle-aged waiting-woman."

"Well," replied Liliās, "you have experience, Master Wingate, and truly I would my master would leave off his picking hither and thither, and look better after the affairs of his household. There will be a papestrie among us next, for what should I see among master's clothes but a string of gold beads! I promise you, *aves* and *credos* both!—I seized on them like a falcon."

"I doubt it not, I doubt it not," said the steward, sagaciously nodding his head; "I have often noticed that the boy had strange observances which savoured of popery, and that he was very jealous to conceal them. But you will find the Catholic under the Presbyterian cloak as often as the knave under the Friar's hood—what then? we are all mortal—Right proper beads they are," he added, looking attentively at them, "and may weigh four ounces of fine gold."

"And I will have them melted down presently," she said, "before they be the misguiding of some poor blinded soul."

"Very cautious, indeed, Mistress Liliās," said the steward, nodding his head in assent.

"I will have them made," said Mrs. Liliās, "into a pair of shoe-buckles; I would not wear the Pope's trinkets, or whatever has once borne the shape of them, one inch above my instep, were they diamonds instead of gold.—But this is what has come of Father Ambrose coming about the castle, as demure as a cat that is about to steal cream."

"Father Ambrose is our master's brother," said the steward gravely.

"Very true, Master Wingate," answered the Dame; "but is that a good reason why he should pervert the king's liege subjects to papistrie?"

"Heaven forbid, Mistress Liliās," answered the sententious major-domo; "but yet there are worse folk than the Papists."

"I wonder where they are to be found," said the waiting-woman, with some asperity; "but I believe, Master Wingate, if one were to speak to you about the devil himself, you would say there were worse people than Satan."

"Assuredly I might say so," replied the steward, "supposing that I saw Satan standing at my elbow."

The waiting-woman started, and having exclaimed, "God bless us!" added, "I wonder, Master Wingate, you can take pleasure in frightening one thus."

"Nay, Mistress Liliās, I had no such purpose," was the reply; "but look you here—the Papists are but put down for the present, but who knows how long this word *present* will last? There are two great Popish earls in the north of England, that abominate the very word reformation; I mean the Northumberland and Westmoreland Earls, men of power enough to shake any throne in Christendom. Then, though our Scottish king be, God bless him, a true Protestant, yet he is but a boy; and here is his mother that was our queen—I trust there is no harm to say, God bless her too—and she is a Catholic; and many begin to think she has had but hard measure, such as the Hamiltons in the west, and some of our Border clans here, and the Gordons in the north, who are all wishing to see a new world; and if such a new world should chance to come up, it is like that the Queen will take back her own crown, and that the mass and the cross will come up, and then down go pulpits, Geneva-gowns, and black silk skull-caps."

"And have you, Master Jasper Wingate, who have heard the word, and listened unto pure and precious Mr. Henry Warden, have you, I say, the patience to speak, or but to think, of popery coming down on us like a storm, or of the woman Mary again making the royal seat of Scotland a throne of abomination? No marvel that you are so civil to the cowed monk, Father Ambrose, when he comes hither with his downcast eyes that he never raises to my Lady's face, and with his low sweet-toned voice, and his benedictes, and his benisons; and who so ready to take them kindly as Master Wingate?"

"Mistress Liliās," replied the butler, with an air which was intended to close the debate, "there are reasons for all things. If I received Father Ambrose debonairly, and suffered him to steal a word now and then with this same Roland Graeme, it was not that I cared a brass bodle for his benison or malison either, but only because I respected my master's blood. And who can answer, if Mary come in again, whether he may not be as stout a tree to lean to as ever his brother hath proved to us? For down goes the Earl of Murray when the Queen comes by her own again; and good is his luck if he can keep the head on his own shoulders. And down goes our Knight, with the Earl, his patron; and who so like to mount into his empty saddle as this same Father Ambrose? The Pope of Rome can so soon dispense with his vows, and then we should have Sir Edward the soldier, instead of Ambrose the priest."

Anger and astonishment kept Mrs. Liliās silent,—while her old friend, in his self-complacent manner, was making known to her his political speculations. At length her resentment found utterance in words of great ire and scorn. "What, Master Wingate! have you eaten my mistress's bread, to say nothing of my master's, so many years, that you could live to think of her being dispossessed of her own Castle of Avenel, by a wretched monk, who is not a drop's blood to her in the way of relation? I, that am but a woman, would try first whether my rock or his cowl was the better metal. Shame on you, Master Wingate! I if I had not held you as so old an acquaintance, this should have gone to my Lady's ears though I had been called pickthank and tale-pyot for my pains, as when I told of Roland Graeme shooting the wild swan."

Master Wingate was somewhat dismayed at perceiving, that the details which he had given of his far-sighted political views had produced on his hearer rather suspicion of his fidelity, than admiration of his wisdom, and endeavoured, as hastily as possible, to apologize and to explain, although internally extremely offended at the unreasonable view, as he deemed it, which it had pleased Mistress Liliās Bradbourne to take of his expressions; and mentally convinced that her disapprobation of his sentiments arose solely out of the consideration, that though Father Ambrose, supposing him to become the master of the castle, would certainly require the services of a steward, yet those of a waiting-woman would, in the supposed circumstances, be altogether superfluous.

After his explanation had been received as explanations usually are, the two friends separated; Liliās to attend the silver whistle which called her to her mistress's chamber, and the sapient major-domo to the duties of his own department. They parted with less than their usual degree of reverence and regard; for the steward felt that his worldly wisdom was rebuked by the more disinterested attachment of the waiting-woman, and Mistress Liliās Bradbourne was compelled to consider her old friend as something little better than a time-server.

Chapter the Seventh.

*When I hae a saxpence under my thumb,
Then I get credit in ilka town;
But when I am puir they bid me gae by—
Oh, poverty parts good company!*
OLD SONG.

While the departure of the page afforded subject for the conversation which we have detailed in our last chapter, the late favourite was far advanced on his solitary journey, without well knowing what was its object, or what was likely to be its end. He had rowed the skiff in which he left the castle, to the side of the lake most distant from the village, with the desire of escaping from the notice of the inhabitants. His pride whispered, that he would be in his discarded state, only the subject of their wonder and compassion; and his generosity told him, that any mark of sympathy which his situation should excite, might be unfavourably reported at the castle. A trifling incident convinced him he had little to fear for his friends on the latter score. He was met by a young man some years older than himself, who had on former occasions been but too happy to be permitted to share in his sports in the subordinate character of his assistant. Ralph Fisher approached to greet him, with all the alacrity of an humble friend.

"What, Master Roland, abroad on this side, and without either hawk or hound?"

"Hawk or hound," said Roland, "I will never perhaps hollo to again. I have been dismissed—that is, I have left the castle."

Ralph was surprised. "What! you are to pass into the Knight's service, and take the black jack and the lance?"

"Indeed," replied Roland Graeme, "I am not—I am now leaving the service of Avenel for ever."

"And whither are you going, then?" said the young peasant.

"Nay, that is a question which it craves time to answer—I have that matter to determine yet," replied the disgraced favourite.

"Nay, nay," said Ralph, "I warrant you it is the same to you which way you go—my Lady would not dismiss you till she had put some lining into the pouches of your doublet."

"Sordid slave!" said Roland Graeme, "dost thou think I would have accepted a boon from one who was giving me over a prey to detraction and to ruin, at the instigation of a canting priest and a meddling serving-woman? The bread that I had bought with such an alms would have choked me at the first mouthful."

Ralph looked at his quondam friend with an air of wonder not unmixed with contempt. "Well," he said, at length, "no occasion for passion—each man knows his own stomach best—but, were I on a black moor at this time of day, not knowing whither I was going, I should be glad to have a broad piece or two in my pouch, come by them as I could.—But perhaps you will go with me to my father's—that is, for a night, for to-morrow we expect my uncle Menelaus and all his folk; but, as I said, for one night——"

The cold-blooded limitation of the offered shelter to one night only, and that tendered most unwillingly, offended the pride of the discarded favourite.

"I would rather sleep on the fresh heather, as I have done many a night on less occasion," said Roland Graeme, "than in the smoky garret of your father, that smells of peat smoke and usquebaugh like a Highlander's plaid."

"You may choose, my master, if you are so nice," replied Ralph Fisher; "you may be glad to smell a peat-fire, and usquebaugh too, if you journey long in the fashion you propose. You might have said God-a-mercy for your proffer, though—it is not every one that will put themselves in the way of ill-will by harbouring a discarded serving-man."

"Ralph," said Roland Graeme, "I would pray you to remember that I have switched you before now, and this is the same riding-wand which you have tasted."

Ralph, who was a thickset clownish figure, arrived at his full strength, and conscious of the most complete personal superiority, laughed contemptuously at the threats of the slight-made stripling.

"It may be the same wand," he said, "but not the same hand; and that is as good rhyme as if it were in a ballad. Look you, my Lady's page that was, when your switch was up, it was no fear of you, but of your betters, that kept mine down—and I wot not what hinders me from clearing old scores with this hazel rung, and showing you it was your Lady's livery-coat which I spared, and not your flesh and blood, Master Roland."

In the midst of his rage, Roland Graeme was just wise enough to see, that by continuing this altercation, he would subject himself to very rude treatment from the boor, who was so much older and stronger than himself; and while his antagonist, with a sort of jeering laugh of defiance, seemed to provoke the contest, he felt the full bitterness of his own degraded condition, and burst into a passion of tears, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal with both his hands.

Even the rough churl was moved with the distress of his quondam companion.

"Nay, Master Roland," he said, "I did but as 'twere jest with thee—I would not harm thee, man, were it but for old acquaintance sake. But ever look to a man's inches ere you talk of switching—why, thine arm, man, is but like a spindle compared to mine.—But hark, I hear old Adam Woodcock hollowing to his hawk—Come along, man, we will have a merry afternoon, and go jollily to my father's in spite of the peat-smoke and usquebaugh to boot. Maybe we may put you into some honest way of winning your bread, though it's hard to come by in these broken times."

The unfortunate page made no answer, nor did he withdraw his hands from his face, and Fisher continued in what he imagined a suitable tone of comfort.

"Why, man, when you were my Lady's minion, men held you proud, and some thought you a Papist, and I wot not what; and so, now that you have no one to bear you out, you must be companionable and hearty, and wait on the minister's examinations, and put these things out of folk's head; and if he says you are in fault, you must jout your head to the stream; and if a gentleman, or a gentleman's gentleman, give you a rough word, or a light blow, you must only say, thank you for dusting my doublet, or the like, as I have done by you.—But hark to Woodcock's whistle again. Come, and I will teach you all the trick on't as we go on."

"I thank you," said Roland Graeme, endeavouring to assume an air of indifference and of superiority; "but I have another path before me, and were it otherwise, I could not tread in yours."

"Very true, Master Roland," replied the clown; "and every man knows his own matters best, and so I will not keep you from the path, as you say. Give us a grip of your hand, man, for auld lang syne.—What! not clap palms ere we part?—well, so be it—a wilful man will have his way, and so farewell, and the blessing of the morning to you."

"Good-morrow—good-morrow," said Roland, hastily; and the clown walked lightly off, whistling as he went, and glad, apparently, to be rid of an acquaintance, whose claims might be troublesome, and who had no longer the means to be serviceable to him.

Roland Graeme compelled himself to walk on while they were within sight of each other that his former intimate might not augur any vacillation of purpose, or uncertainty of object, from his remaining on the same spot; but the effort was a painful one. He seemed stunned, as it were, and giddy; the earth on which he stood felt as if unsound, and quaking under his feet like the surface of a bog; and he had once or twice nearly fallen, though the path he trode was of firm greensward. He kept resolutely moving forward, in spite of the internal agitation to which these symptoms belonged, until the distant form of his acquaintance disappeared behind the slope of a hill, when his heart failed at once; and, sitting down on the turf, remote from human ken, he gave way to the natural expressions of wounded pride, grief, and fear, and wept with unrestrained profusion and unqualified bitterness.

When the first violent paroxysm of his feelings had subsided, the deserted and friendless youth felt that mental relief which usually follows such discharges of sorrow. The tears continued to chase each other down his cheeks, but they were no longer accompanied by the same sense of desolation; an afflicting yet milder sentiment was awakened in his mind, by the recollection of his benefactress, of the unwearied kindness which had attached her to him, in spite of many acts of

provoking petulance, now recollected as offences of a deep dye, which had protected him against the machinations of others, as well as against the consequences of his own folly, and would have continued to do so, had not the excess of his presumption compelled her to withdraw her protection.

"Whatever indignity I have borne," he said, "has been the just reward of my own ingratitude. And have I done well to accept the hospitality, the more than maternal kindness, of my protectress, yet to detain from her the knowledge of my religion?—but she shall know that a Catholic has as much gratitude as a Puritan—that I have been thoughtless, but not wicked—that in my wildest moments I have loved, respected, and honoured her—and that the orphan boy might indeed be heedless, but was never ungrateful!"

He turned, as these thoughts passed through his mind, and began hastily to retread his footsteps towards the castle. But he checked the first eagerness of his repentant haste, when he reflected on the scorn and contempt with which the family were likely to see the return of the fugitive, humbled, as they must necessarily suppose him, into a supplicant, who requested pardon for his fault, and permission to return to his service. He slackened his pace, but he stood not still.

"I care not," he resolutely determined; "let them wink, point, nod, sneer, speak of the conceit which is humbled, of the pride which has had a fall—I care not; it is a penance due to my folly, and I will endure it with patience. But if she also, my benefactress, if she also should think me sordid and weak-spirited enough to beg, not for her pardon alone, but for a renewal of the advantages which I derived from her favour—*her* suspicion of my meanness I cannot—I will not brook."

He stood still, and his pride rallying with constitutional obstinacy against his more just feeling, urged that he would incur the scorn of the Lady of Avenel, rather than obtain her favour, by following the course which the first ardour of his repentant feelings had dictated to him.

"If I had but some plausible pretext," he thought, "some ostensible reason for my return, some excuse to allege which might show I came not as a degraded supplicant, or a discarded menial, I might go thither—but as I am, I cannot—my heart would leap from its place and burst."

As these thoughts swept through his mind, something passed in the air so near him as to dazzle his eyes, and almost to brush the plume in his cap. He looked up—it was the favourite falcon of Sir Halbert, which, flying around his head, seemed to claim his attention, as that of a well-known friend. Roland extended his arm, and gave the accustomed whoop, and the falcon instantly settled on his wrist, and began to prune itself, glancing at the youth from time to time an acute and brilliant beam of its hazel eye, which seemed to ask why he caressed it not with his usual fondness.

"Ah, Diamond!" he said, as if the bird understood him, "thou and I must be strangers henceforward. Many a gallant stoop have I seen thee make, and many a brave heron strike down; but that is all gone and over, and there is no hawking more for me!"

"And why not, Master Roland," said Adam Woodcock the falconer, who came at that instant from behind a few alder bushes which had concealed him from view, "why should there be no more hawking for you? Why, man, what were our life without our sports?—thou know'st the jolly old song—

*"And rather would Allan in dungeon lie,
Than live at large where the falcon cannot fly;
And Allan would rather lie in Sexton's pound,
Than live where he followed not the merry hawk and hound."*

The voice of the falconer was hearty and friendly, and the tone in which he half-sung half-recited his rude ballad, implied honest frankness and cordiality. But remembrance of their quarrel, and its consequences, embarrassed Roland, and prevented his reply. The falconer saw his hesitation, and guessed the cause.

"What now," said he, "Master Roland? do you, who are half an Englishman, think that I, who am a whole one, would keep up anger against you, and you in distress? That were like some of the Scots, (my master's reverence always excepted,) who can be fair and false, and wait their time, and keep their mind, as they say, to themselves, and touch pot and flagon with you, and hunt and hawk with you, and, after all, when time serves, pay off some old feud with the point of the dagger. Canny Yorkshire has no memory for such old sores. Why, man, an you had hit me a rough blow, maybe I would rather have taken it from you, than a rough word from another; for you have a good notion of falconry, though you stand up for washing the meat for the eyases. So give us your hand, man, and bear no malice."

Roland, though he felt his proud blood rebel at the familiarity of honest Adam's address, could not resist its downright frankness. Covering his face with the one hand, he held out the other to the falconer, and returned with readiness his friendly grasp.

"Why, this is hearty now," said Woodcock; "I always said you had a kind heart, though you have a spice of the devil in your disposition, that is certain. I came this way with the falcon on purpose to find you, and yon half-bred lubbard told me which way you took flight. You ever thought too much of that kestril-kite, Master Roland, and he knows nought of sport after all, but what he caught from you. I saw how it had been betwixt you, and I sent him out of my company with a wanion—I would rather have a riffer on my perch than a false knave at my elbow—and now, Master Roland, tell me what way wing ye?"

"That is as God pleases," replied the page, with a sigh which he could not suppress.

"Nay, man, never droop a feather for being cast off," said the falconer; "who knows but you may soar the better and fairer flight for all this yet?—Look at Diamond there, 'tis a noble bird, and shows gallantly with his hood, and bells, and jesses; but there is many a wild falcon in Norway that would not change properties with him—And that is what I would say of you. You are no longer my Lady's page, and you will not clothe so fair, or feed so well, or sleep so soft, or show so gallant—What of all that? if you are not her page, you are your own man, and may go where you will, without minding whoop or whistle. The worst is the loss of the sport, but who knows what you may come to? They say that Sir Halbert himself, I speak with reverence, was once glad to be the Abbot's forester, and now he has hounds and hawks of his own, and Adam Woodcock for a falconer to the boot."

"You are right, and say well, Adam," answered the youth, the blood mantling in his cheeks, "the falcon will soar higher without his bells than with them, though the bells be made of silver."

"That is cheerily spoken," replied the falconer; "and whither now?"

"I thought of going to the Abbey of Kennaquhair," answered Roland Graeme, "to ask the counsel of Father Ambrose."

"And joy go with you," said the falconer, "though it is likely you may find the old monks in some sorrow; they say the commons are threatening to turn them out of their cells, and make a devil's mass of it in the old church, thinking they have forborne that sport too long; and troth I am clear of the same opinion."

"Then will Father Ambrose be the better of having a friend beside him!" said the page, manfully.

"Ay, but, my young fearnought," replied the falconer, "the friend will scarce be the better of being beside Father Ambrose—he may come by the redder's lick, and that is ever the worst of the battle."

"I care not for that," said the page, "the dread of a lick should not hold me back; but I fear I may bring trouble between the brothers by visiting Father Ambrose. I will tarry to-night at Saint Cuthbert's cell, where the old priest will give me a night's shelter; and I will send to Father Ambrose to ask his advice before I go down to the convent."

"By Our Lady," said the falconer, "and that is a likely plan—and now," he continued, exchanging his frankness of manner for a sort of awkward embarrassment, as if he had somewhat to say that he had no ready means to bring out—"and now, you wot well that I wear a pouch for my hawk's meat, [Footnote: This same hag, like every thing belonging to falconry, was esteemed an honourable distinction, and worn often by the nobility and gentry. One of the Somervilles of Camnethan was called *Sir John with the red bag*, because it was his wont to wear his hawking pouch covered with satin of that colour.] and so forth; but wot you what it is lined with, Master Roland?"

"With leather, to be sure," replied Roland, somewhat surprised at the hesitation with which Adam Woodcock asked a question apparently so simple.

"With leather, lad?" said Woodcock; "ay, and with silver to the boot of that. See here," he said, showing a secret slit in the lining of his bag of office—"here they are, thirty good Harry groats as ever were struck in bluff old Hal's time, and ten of them are right heartily at your service; and now the murder is out."

Roland's first idea was to refuse his assistance; but he recollected the vows of humility which he had just taken upon him, and it occurred that this was the opportunity to put his new-formed resolution to the test. Assuming a strong command of himself, he answered Adam Woodcock with as much frankness as his

nature permitted him to wear, in doing what was so contrary to his inclinations, that he accepted thankfully of his kind offer, while, to soothe his own reviving pride, he could not help adding, "he hoped soon to requite the obligation."

"That as you list—that as you list, young man," said the falconer, with glee, counting out and delivering to his young friend the supply he had so generously offered, and then adding, with great cheerfulness,—“Now you may go through the world; for he that can back a horse, wind a horn, hollow a greyhound, fly a hawk, and play at sword and buckler, with a whole pair of shoes, a green jacket, and ten lily-white groats in his pouch, may bid Father Care hang himself in his own jesses. Farewell, and God be with you!"

So saying, and as if desirous to avoid the thanks of his companion, he turned hastily round, and left Roland Graeme to pursue his journey alone.

Chapter the Eight.

*The sacred tapers lights are gone.
Gray moss has clad the altar stone,
The holy image is o'erthrown,
The bell has ceased to toll,
The long ribb'd aisles are burst and shrunk,
The holy shrines to ruin sunk,
Departed is the pious monk,
God's blessing on his soul!*

REDIVIVA.

The cell of Saint Cuthbert, as it was called, marked, or was supposed to mark, one of those resting-places, which that venerable saint was pleased to assign to his monks, when his convent, being driven from Lindisfern by the Danes, became a peripatetic society of religionists, and bearing their patron's body on their shoulders, transported him from place to place through Scotland and the borders of England, until he was pleased at length to spare them the pain of carrying him farther, and to choose his ultimate place of rest in the lordly towers of Durham. The odour of his sanctity remained behind him at each place where he had granted the monks a transient respite from their labours; and proud were those who could assign, as his temporary resting-place, any spot within their vicinity. There were few cells more celebrated and honoured than that of Saint Cuthbert, to which Roland Graeme now bent his way, situated considerably to the north-west of the great Abbey of Kennaquhair, on which it was dependent. In the neighbourhood were some of those recommendations which weighed with the experienced priesthood of Rome, in choosing their sites for places of religion.

There was a well, possessed of some medicinal qualities, which, of course, claimed the saint for its guardian and patron, and occasionally produced some advantage to the recluse who inhabited his cell, since none could reasonably expect to benefit by the fountain who did not extend their bounty to the saint's chaplain. A few rods of fertile land afforded the monk his plot of garden ground; an eminence well clothed with trees rose behind the cell, and sheltered it from, the north and the east, while the front, opening to the south-west, looked up a wild but pleasant valley, down which wandered a lively brook, which battled with every stone that interrupted its passage.

The cell itself was rather plainly than rudely constructed—a low Gothic building with two small apartments, one of which served the priest for his dwelling-place, the other for his chapel. As there were few of the secular clergy who durst venture to reside so near the Border, the assistance of this monk in spiritual affairs had not been useless to the community, while the Catholic religion retained the ascendancy; as he could marry, christen, and administer the other sacraments of the Roman church. Of late, however, as the Protestant doctrines gained ground, he had found it convenient to live in close retirement, and to avoid, as much as possible, drawing upon himself observation or animadversion. The appearance of his habitation, however, when Roland Graeme came before it in the close of the evening, plainly showed that his caution had been finally ineffectual.

The page's first movement was to knock at the door, when he observed, to his surprise, that it was open, not from being left unlatched, but because, beat off its upper hinge, it was only fastened to the door-post by the lower, and could therefore no longer perform its functions. Somewhat alarmed at this, and receiving no answer when he knocked and called, Roland began to look more at leisure upon the exterior of the little dwelling before he ventured to enter it. The flowers, which had been trained with care against the walls, seemed to have been recently torn down, and trailed their dishonoured garlands on the earth; the latticed window was broken and dashed in. The garden, which the monk had maintained by his constant labour in the highest order and beauty, bore marks of having been lately trod down and destroyed by the hoofs of animals, and the feet of men.

The sainted spring had not escaped. It was wont to rise beneath a canopy of ribbed arches, with which the devotion of elder times had secured and protected its healing waters. These arches were now almost entirely demolished, and the stones of which they were built were tumbled into the well, as if for the purpose of choking up and destroying the fountain, which, as it had shared in other days the honour of the saint, was, in the present, doomed to partake his unpopularity. Part of the roof had been pulled down from the house itself, and an attempt had been made with crows and levers upon one of the angles, by which several large corner-stones had been forced out of their place; but the solidity of ancient mason-work had proved too great for the time or patience of the assailants, and they had relinquished their task of destruction. Such dilapidated buildings, after the lapse of years, during which nature has gradually covered the effects of violence with creeping plants, and with weather-stains, exhibit, amid their decay, a melancholy beauty. But when the visible effects of violence appear raw and recent, there is no feeling to mitigate the sense of devastation with which they impress the spectators; and such was now the scene on which the youthful page gazed, with the painful feelings it was qualified to excite.

When his first momentary surprise was over, Roland Graeme was at no loss to conjecture the cause of these ravages. The destruction of the Popish edifices did not take place at once throughout Scotland, but at different times, and according to the spirit which actuated the reformed clergy; some of whom instigated their hearers to these acts of demolition, and others, with better taste and feeling, endeavoured to protect the ancient shrines, while they desired to see them purified from the objects which had attracted idolatrous devotion. From time to time, therefore, the populace of the Scottish towns and villages, when instigated either by their own feelings of abhorrence for Popish superstition, or by the doctrines of the more zealous preachers, resumed the work of destruction, and exercised it upon some sequestered church, chapel, or cell, which had escaped the first burst of their indignation against the religion of Rome. In many places, the vices of the Catholic clergy, arising out of the wealth and the corruption of that tremendous hierarchy, furnished too good an apology for wreaking vengeance upon the splendid edifices which they inhabited; and of this an old Scottish historian gives a remarkable instance.

"Why mourn ye," said an aged matron, seeing the discontent of some of the citizens, while a stately convent was burnt by the multitude,—“why mourn ye for its destruction? If you knew half the flagitious wickedness which has been perpetrated within that house, you would rather bless the divine judgment, which permits not even the senseless walls that screened such profligacy, any longer to cumber Christian ground."

But although, in many instances, the destruction of the Roman Catholic buildings might be, in the matron's way of judging, an act of justice, and in others an act of policy, there is no doubt that the humour of demolishing monuments of ancient piety and munificence, and that in a poor country like Scotland, where there was no chance of their being replaced, was both useless, mischievous, and barbarous.

In the present instance, the unpretending and quiet seclusion of the monk of Saint Cuthbert's had hitherto saved him from the general wreck; but it would seem ruin had now at length reached him. Anxious to discover if he had at least escaped personal harm, Roland Graeme entered the half ruined cell.

The interior of the building was in a state which fully justified the opinion he had formed from its external injuries. The few rude utensils of the solitary's hut were broken down, and lay scattered on the floor, where it seemed as if a fire had been made with some of the fragments to destroy the rest of his property, and to consume, in particular, the rude old image of Saint Cuthbert, in its episcopal habit, which lay on the hearth like Dagon of yore, shattered with the axe and scorched with the flames, but only partially destroyed. In the little apartment which served as a chapel, the altar was overthrown, and the four huge stones of which it had been once composed lay scattered around the floor. The large stone crucifix which occupied the niche behind the altar, and fronted the suppliant while he paid his devotion there, had been pulled down and dashed by its own weight into three fragments. There were marks of sledge-hammers on each of these; yet the image had been saved from utter demolition by the size and strength of the remaining fragments, which, though much injured, retained enough of the original sculpture to show what it had been intended to represent.

[Footnote: I may here observe, that this is entirely an ideal scene. Saint Cuthbert, a person of established sanctity, had, no doubt, several places of worship on the Borders, where he flourished whilst living; but Tillmouth Chapel is the only one which bears some resemblance to the hermitage described in the text. It has, indeed, a well, famous for gratifying three wishes for every worshipper who shall quaff the fountain with sufficient belief in its efficacy. At this spot the Saint is said to have landed in his stone coffin, in which he sailed down the Tweed from Melrose and here the stone coffin long lay, in evidence of the fact. The late Sir Francis Blake Delaval is said to have taken the exact measure of the coffin, and to have ascertained, by hydrostatic principles, that it might have actually swum. A profane farmer in the neighborhood announced his intention of converting this last bed of the Saint into a trough for his swine; but the profanation was rendered impossible, either by the Saint, or by some pious votary in his behalf, for on the following morning the stone sarcophagus was found broken in two fragments. Tillmouth Chapel, with these points of resemblance, lies, however, in exactly the opposite direction as regards Melrose, which the supposed cell of St. Cuthbert is said to have borne towards Kennaquhair.]

Roland Graeme, secretly nursed in the tenets of Rome, saw with horror the profanation of the most sacred emblem, according to his creed, of our holy religion.

"It is the badge of our redemption," he said, "which the felons have dared to violate—would to God my weak strength were able to replace it—my humble strength, to atone for the sacrilege!"

He stooped to the task he first meditated, and with a sudden, and to himself almost an incredible exertion of power, he lifted up the one extremity of the lower shaft of the cross, and rested it upon the edge of the large stone which served for its pedestal. Encouraged by this success, he applied his force to the other extremity, and, to his own astonishment, succeeded so far as to erect the lower end of the limb into the socket, out of which it had been forced, and to place this fragment of the image upright.

While he was employed in this labour, or rather at the very moment when he had accomplished the elevation of the fragment, a voice, in thrilling and well-known accents, spoke behind him these words:—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thus would I again meet the child of my love—the hope of my aged eyes."

Roland turned round in astonishment, and the tall commanding form of Magdalen Graeme stood beside him. She was arrayed in a sort of loose habit, in form like that worn by penitents in Catholic countries, but black in colour, and approaching as near to a pilgrim's cloak as it was safe to wear in a country where the suspicion of Catholic devotion in many places endangered the safety of those who were suspected of attachment to the ancient faith. Roland Graeme threw himself at her feet. She raised and embraced him, with affection indeed, but not unmixed with gravity which amounted almost to sternness.

"Thou hast kept well," she said, "the bird in thy bosom. [Footnote: An expression used by Sir Ralph Percy, slain in the battle of Hedgely-moor in 1464, when dying, to express his having preserved unstained his fidelity to the house of Lancaster.] As a boy, as a youth, thou hast held fast thy faith amongst heretics—thou hast kept thy secret and mine own amongst thine enemies. I wept when I parted from you—I who seldom weep, then shed tears, less for thy death than for thy spiritual danger—I dared not even see thee to bid thee a last farewell—my grief, my swelling grief, had betrayed me to these heretics. But thou hast been faithful—down, down on thy knees before the holy sign, which evil men injure and blaspheme; down, and praise saints and angels for the grace they have done thee, in preserving thee from the leprous plague which cleaves to the house in which thou wert nurtured."

"If, my mother—so I must ever call you" replied Graeme,—"if I am returned such as thou wouldst wish me, thou must thank the care of the pious father Ambrose, whose instructions confirmed your early precepts, and taught me at once to be faithful and to be silent."

"Be he blessed for it," said she; "blessed in the cell and in the field, in the pulpit and at the altar—the saints rain blessings on him!—they are just, and employ his pious care to counteract the evils which his detested brother works against the realm and the church,—but he knew not of thy lineage?"

"I could not myself tell him that," answered Roland. "I knew but darkly from your words, that Sir Halbert Glendinning holds mine inheritance, and that I am of blood as noble as runs in the veins of any Scottish Baron—these are things not to be forgotten, but for the explanation I must now look to you."

"And when time suits, thou shalt not look for it in vain. But men say, my son, that thou art bold and sudden; and those who bear such tempers are not lightly to be trusted with what will strongly move them."

"Say rather, my mother," returned Roland Graeme, "that I am laggard and cold-blooded—what patience or endurance can you require of which *he* is not capable, who for years has heard his religion ridiculed and insulted, yet failed to plunge his dagger into the blasphemer's bosom!"

"Be contented, my child," replied Magdalen Graeme; "the time, which then and even now demands patience, will soon ripen to that of effort and action—great events are on the wing, and thou,—thou shalt have thy share in advancing them. Thou hast relinquished the service of the Lady of Avenel?"

"I have been dismissed from it, my mother—I have lived to be dismissed, as if I were the meanest of the train."

"It is the better, my child," replied she; "thy mind will be the more hardened to undertake that which must be performed."

"Let it be nothing, then, against the Lady of Avenel," said the page, "as thy look and words seem to imply. I have eaten her bread—I have experienced her favour—I will neither injure nor betray her."

"Of that hereafter, my son," said she; "but learn this, that it is not for thee to capitulate in thy duty, and to say this will I do, and that will I leave undone—No, Roland! God and man will no longer abide the wickedness of this generation. Seest thou these fragments—knowest thou what they represent?—and canst thou think it is for thee to make distinctions amongst a race so accursed by Heaven, that they renounce, violate, blaspheme, and destroy, whatsoever we are commanded to believe in, whatsoever we are commanded to reverence?"

As she spoke, she bent her head towards the broken image, with a countenance in which strong resentment and zeal were mingled with an expression of ecstatic devotion; she raised her left hand aloft as in the act of making a vow, and thus proceeded; "Bear witness for me, blessed symbol of our salvation, bear witness, holy saint, within whose violated temple we stand, that as it is not for vengeance of my own that my hate pursues these people, so neither, for any favour or earthly affection towards any amongst them, will I withdraw my hand from the plough, when it shall pass through the devoted furrow! Bear witness, holy saint, once thyself a wanderer and fugitive as we are now—bear witness, Mother of Mercy, Queen of Heaven—bear witness, saints and angels!"

In this high train of enthusiasm, she stood, raising her eyes through the fractured roof of the vault, to the stars which now began to twinkle through the pale twilight, while the long gray tresses which hung down over her shoulders waved in the night-breeze, which the chasm and fractured windows admitted freely.

Roland Graeme was too much awed by early habits, as well as by the mysterious import of her words, to ask for farther explanation of the purpose she obscurely hinted at. Nor did she farther press him on the subject; for, having concluded her prayer or obtestation, by clasping her hands together with solemnity, and then signing herself with the cross, she again addressed her grandson, in a tone more adapted to the ordinary business of life.

"Thou must hence," she said, "Roland, thou must hence, but not till morning—And now, how wilt thou shift for thy night's quarters?—thou hast been more softly bred than when we were companions in the misty hills of Cumberland and Liddesdale."

"I have at least preserved, my good mother, the habits which I then learned—can lie hard, feed sparingly, and think it no hardship. Since I was a wanderer with thee on the hills, I have been a hunter, and fisher, and fowler, and each of these is accustomed to sleep freely in a worse shelter than sacrilege has left us here."

"Than sacrilege has left us here!" said the matron, repeating his words, and pausing on them. "Most true, my son; and God's faithful children are now worst sheltered, when they lodge in God's own house and the demesne of his blessed saints. We shall sleep cold here, under the nightwind, which whistles through the breaches which heresy has made. They shall lie warmer who made them—ay, and through a long hereafter."

Notwithstanding the wild and singular expression of this female, she appeared to retain towards Roland Graeme, in a strong degree, that affectionate and sedulous love which women bear to their nurslings, and the children dependent on their care. It seemed as if she would not permit him to do aught for himself which in former days her attention had been used to do for him, and that she considered the tall stripling before her as being equally dependent on her careful attention as when he was the orphan child, who had owed all to her affectionate solicitude.

"What hast thou to eat now?" she said, as, leaving the chapel, they went into the deserted habitation of the priest; "or what means of kindling a fire, to defend thee from this raw and inclement air? Poor child! thou hast made slight provision for a long journey; nor hast thou skill to help thyself by wit, when means are scanty. But Our Lady has placed by thy side one to whom want, in all its forms, is as familiar as plenty and splendour have formerly been. And with want, Roland, come the arts of which she is the inventor."

With an active and officious diligence, which strangely contrasted with her late abstracted and high tone of Catholic devotion, she set about her domestic arrangements for the evening. A pouch, which was hidden under her garment, produced a flint and steel, and from the scattered fragments around (those pertaining to the image of Saint Cuthbert scrupulously excepted) she obtained splinters sufficient to raise a sparkling and cheerful fire on the hearth of the deserted cell.

"And now," she said, "for needful food."

"Think not of it, mother," said Roland, "unless you yourself feel hunger. It is a little thing for me to endure a night's abstinence, and a small atonement for the necessary transgression of the rules of the Church upon which I was compelled during my stay in the castle."

"Hunger for myself!" answered the matron—"Know, youth, that a mother knows not hunger till that of her child is satisfied." And with affectionate inconsistency, totally different from her usual manner, she added, "Roland, you must not fast; you have dispensation; you are young, and to youth food and sleep are necessities not to be dispensed with. Husband your strength, my child,—your sovereign, your religion, your country, require it. Let age macerate by fast and vigil a body which can only suffer; let youth, in these active times, nourish the limbs and the strength which action requires."

While she thus spoke, the scrip, which had produced the means of striking fire, furnished provision for a meal; of which she herself scarce partook, but anxiously watched her charge, taking a pleasure, resembling that of an epicure, in each morsel which he swallowed with a youthful appetite which abstinence had rendered unusually sharp. Roland readily obeyed her recommendations, and ate the food which she so affectionately and earnestly placed before him. But she shook her head when invited by him in return to partake of the refreshment her own cares had furnished; and when his solicitude became more pressing, she refused him in a loftier tone of rejection.

"Young man," she said, "you know not to whom or of what you speak. They to whom Heaven declares its purpose must merit its communication by mortifying the senses; they have that within which requires not the superfluity of earthly nutriment, which is necessary to those who are without the sphere of the Vision. To them the watch spent in prayer is a refreshing slumber, and the sense of doing the will of Heaven is a richer banquet than the tables of monarchs can spread before them!—But do thou sleep soft, my son," she said, relapsing from the tone of fanaticism into that of maternal affection and tenderness; "do thou sleep sound while life is but young with thee, and the cares of the day can be drowned in the slumbers of the evening. Different is thy duty and mine, and as different the means by which we must qualify and strengthen ourselves to perform it. From thee is demanded strength of body—from me, strength of soul."

When she thus spoke, she prepared with ready address a pallet-couch, composed partly of the dried leaves which had once furnished a bed to the solitary, and the guests who occasionally received his hospitality, and which, neglected by the destroyers of his humble cell, had remained little disturbed in the corner allotted for them. To these her care added some of the vestures which lay torn and scattered on the floor. With a zealous hand she selected all such as appeared to have made any part of the sacerdotal vestments, laying them aside as sacred from ordinary purposes, and with the rest she made, with dexterous promptness, such a bed as a weary man might willingly stretch himself on; and during the time she was preparing it, rejected, even with acrimony, any attempt which the youth made to assist her, or any entreaty which he urged, that she would accept of the place of rest for her own use. "Sleep thou," said she, "Roland Graeme, sleep thou—the persecuted, the disinherited orphan—the son of an ill-fated mother—sleep thou! I go to pray in the chapel beside thee."

The manner was too enthusiastically earnest, too obstinately firm, to permit Roland Graeme to dispute her will any farther. Yet he felt some shame in giving way to it. It seemed as if she had forgotten the years that had passed away since their parting; and expected to meet, in the tall, indulged, and wilful youth, whom she had recovered, the passive obedience of the child whom she had left in the Castle of Avenel. This did not fail to hurt her grandson's characteristic and constitutional pride. He obeyed, indeed, awed into submission by the sudden recurrence of former subordination, and by feelings of affection and gratitude. Still, however, he felt the yoke.

"Have I relinquished the hawk and the hound," he said, "to become the pupil of her pleasure, as if I were still a child?—I, whom even my envious mates allowed to be superior in those exercises which they took most pains to acquire, and which came to me naturally, as if a knowledge of them had been my birthright? This may not, and must not be. I will be no reclaimed sparrow-hawk, who is carried hooded on a woman's wrist, and has his quarry only shown to him when his eyes are uncovered for his flight. I will know her purpose ere it is proposed to me to aid it."

These, and other thoughts, streamed through the mind of Roland Graeme; and although wearied with the fatigues of the day, it was long ere he could compose himself to rest.

Chapter the Ninth.

*Kneel with me—swear it—"tis not in words I trust,
Save when they're fenced with an appeal to Heaven.*

OLD PLAY

After passing the night in that sound sleep for which agitation and fatigue had prepared him, Roland was awakened by the fresh morning air, and by the beams of the rising sun. His first feeling was that of surprise; for, instead of looking forth from a turret window on the Lake of Avenel, which was the prospect his former apartment afforded, an unlatticed aperture gave him the view of the demolished garden of the banished anchorite. He sat up on his couch of leaves, and arranged in his memory, not without wonder, the singular events of the preceding day, which appeared the more surprising the more he considered them. He had lost the protectress of his youth, and, in the same day, he had recovered the guide and guardian of his childhood. The former deprivation he felt ought to be matter of unceasing regret, and it seemed as if the latter could hardly be the subject of unmixed self-congratulation. He remembered this person, who had stood to him in the relation of a mother, as equally affectionate in her attention, and absolute in her authority. A singular mixture of love and fear attended upon his early remembrances as they were connected with her; and the fear that she might desire to resume the same absolute control over his motions—a fear which her conduct of yesterday did not tend much to dissipate—weighed heavily against the joy of this second meeting.

"She cannot mean," said his rising pride, "to lead and direct me as a pupil, when I am at the age of judging of my own actions?—this she cannot mean, or meaning it, will feel herself strangely deceived."

A sense of gratitude towards the person against whom his heart thus rebelled, checked his course of feeling. He resisted the thoughts which involuntarily arose in his mind, as he would have resisted an actual instigation of the foul fiend; and, to aid him in his struggle, he felt for his beads. But, in his hasty departure from the Castle of Avenel, he had forgotten and left them behind him.

"This is yet worse," he said; "but two things I learned of her under the most deadly charge of secrecy—to tell my beads, and to conceal that I did so; and I have kept my word till now; and when she shall ask me for the rosary, I must say I have forgotten it! Do I deserve she should believe me when. I say I have kept the secret of my faith, when I set so light by its symbol?"

He paced the floor in anxious agitation. In fact, his attachment to his faith was of a nature very different from that which animated the enthusiastic matron, but which, notwithstanding, it would have been his last thought to relinquish.

The early charges impressed on him by his grandmother, had been instilled into a mind and memory of a character peculiarly tenacious. Child as he was, he was proud of the confidence reposed in his discretion, and resolved to show that it had not been rashly intrusted to him. At the same time, his resolution was no more than that of a child, and must, necessarily, have gradually faded away under the operation both of precept and example, during his residence at the Castle of Avenel, but for the exhortations of Father Ambrose, who, in his lay estate, had been called Edward Glendinning. This zealous monk had been apprized, by an unsigned letter placed in his hand by a pilgrim, that a child educated in the Catholic faith was now in the Castle of Avenel, perilously situated, (so was the scroll expressed,) as ever the three children who were cast into the fiery furnace of persecution. The letter threw upon Father Ambrose the fault, should this solitary lamb, unwillingly left within the demesnes of the prowling wolf, become his final prey. There needed no farther exhortation to the monk than the idea that a soul might be endangered, and that a Catholic might become an apostate; and he made his visits more frequent than usual to the castle of Avenel, lest, through want of the private encouragement and instruction which he always found some opportunity of dispensing, the church should lose a proselyte, and, according to the Romish creed, the devil acquire a soul.

Still these interviews were rare; and though they encouraged the solitary boy to keep his secret and hold fast his religion, they were neither frequent nor long enough to inspire him with any thing beyond a blind attachment to the observances which the priest recommended. He adhered to the forms of his religion rather because he felt it would be dishonourable to change that of his fathers, than from any rational conviction or sincere belief of its mysterious doctrines. It was a principal part of the distinction which, in his own opinion, singled him out from those with whom he lived, and gave him an additional, though an internal and concealed reason, for contemning those of the household who showed an undisguised dislike of him, and for hardening himself against the instructions of the chaplain, Henry Warden.

"The fanatic preacher," he thought within himself, during some one of the chaplain's frequent discourses against the Church of Rome, "he little knows whose ears are receiving his profane doctrine, and with what contempt and abhorrence they hear his blasphemies against the holy religion by which kings have been crowned, and for which martyrs have died!"

But in such proud feelings of defiance of heresy, as it was termed, and of its professors, which associated the Catholic religion with a sense of generous independence, and that of the Protestants with the subjugation of his mind and temper to the direction of Mr. Warden, began and ended the faith of Roland Graeme, who, independently of the pride of singularity, sought not to understand, and had no one to expound to him, the peculiarities of the tenets which he professed. His regret, therefore, at missing the rosary which had been conveyed to him through the hands of Father Ambrose, was rather the shame of a soldier who has dropped his cockade, or badge of service, than that of a zealous votary who had forgotten a visible symbol of his religion.

His thoughts on the subject, however, were mortifying, and the more so from apprehension that his negligence must reach the ears of his relative. He felt it could be no one but her who had secretly transmitted these beads to Father Ambrose for his use, and that his carelessness was but an indifferent requital of her kindness.

"Nor will she omit to ask me about them," said he to himself; "for hers is a zeal which age cannot quell; and if she has not quitted her wont, my answer will not fail to incense her."

While he thus communed with himself, Magdalen Graeme entered the apartment. "The blessing of the morning on your youthful head, my son," she said, with a solemnity of expression which thrilled the youth to the heart, so sad and earnest did the benediction flow from her lips, in a tone where devotion was blended with affection. "And thou hast started thus early from thy couch to catch the first breath of the dawn? But it is not well, my Roland. Enjoy slumber while thou canst; the time is not far behind when the waking eye must be thy portion, as well as mine."

She uttered these words with an affectionate and anxious tone, which showed, that devotional as were the habitual exercises of her mind, the thoughts of her nursing yet bound her to earth with the cords of human affection and passion.

But she abode not long in a mood which she probably regarded as a momentary dereliction of her imaginary high calling—"Come," she said, "youth, up and be doing—It is time that we leave this place."

"And whither do we go?" said the young man; "or what is the object of our journey?"

The matron stepped back, and gazed on him with surprise, not unmingled with displeasure.

"To what purpose such a question?" she said; "is it not enough that I lead the way? Hast thou lived with heretics till thou hast learned to instal the vanity of thine own private judgment in place of due honour and obedience?"

"The time," thought Roland Graeme within himself, "is already come, when I must establish my freedom, or be a willing thrall for ever—I feel that I must speedily look to it."

She instantly fulfilled his foreboding, by recurring to the theme by which her thoughts seemed most constantly engrossed, although, when she pleased, no one could so perfectly disguise her religion.

"Thy beads, my son—hast thou told thy beads?"

Roland Graeme coloured high; he felt the storm was approaching, but scorned to avert it by a falsehood.

"I have forgotten my rosary," he said, "at the Castle of Avenel."

"Forgotten thy rosary!" she exclaimed; "false both to religion and to natural duty, hast thou lost what was sent so far, and at such risk, a token of the truest affection, that should have been, every bead of it, as dear to thee as thine eyeballs?"

"I am grieved it should have so chanced, mother," replied the youth, "and much did I value the token, as coming from you. For what remains, I trust to win gold enough, when I push my way in the world; and till then, beads of black oak, or a rosary of nuts, must serve the turn."

"Hear him!" said his grandmother; "young as he is, he hath learned already the lessons of the devil's school! The rosary, consecrated by the Holy Father himself, and sanctified by his blessing, is but a few knobs of gold, whose value may be replaced by the wages of his profane labour, and whose virtue may be supplied by a string of hazel-nuts!—This is heresy—So Henry Warden, the wolf who ravages the flock of the Shepherd, hath taught thee to speak and to think."

"Mother," said Roland Graeme, "I am no heretic; I believe and I pray according to the rules of our church—This misfortune I regret, but I cannot amend it."

"Thou canst repent it, though," replied his spiritual directress, "repent it in dust and ashes, atone for it by fasting, prayer, and penance, instead of looking on me with a countenance as light as if thou hadst lost but a button from thy cap."

"Mother," said Roland, "be appeased; I will remember my fault in the next confession which I have space and opportunity to make, and will do whatever the priest may require of me in atonement. For the heaviest fault I can do no more.—But, mother," he added, after a moment's pause, "let me not incur your farther displeasure, if I ask whither our journey is bound, and what is its object. I am no longer a child, but a man, and at my own disposal, with down upon my chin, and a sword by my side—I will go to the end of the world with you to do your pleasure; but I owe it to myself to inquire the purpose and direction of our travels."

"You owe it to yourself, ungrateful boy?" replied his relative, passion rapidly supplying the colour which age had long chased from her features,—*"to yourself you owe nothing—you can owe nothing—to me you owe every thing—your life when an infant—your support while a child—the means of instruction, and the hopes of honour—and, sooner than thou shouldst abandon the noble cause to which I have devoted thee, would I see thee lie a corpse at my feet!"*

Roland was alarmed at the vehement agitation with which she spoke, and which threatened to overpower her aged frame; and he hastened to reply,—*"I forget nothing of what I owe to you, my dearest mother—show me how my blood can testify my gratitude, and you shall judge if I spare it. But blindfold obedience has in it as little merit as reason."*

"Saints and angels!" replied Magdalen, "and do I hear these words from the child of my hopes, the nursling by whose bed I have kneeled, and for whose weal I have wearied every saint in heaven with prayers? Roland, by obedience only canst thou show thy affection and thy gratitude. What avails it that you might perchance adopt the course I propose to thee, were it to be fully explained? Thou wouldst not then follow my command, but thine own judgment; thou wouldst not do the will of Heaven, communicated through thy best friend, to whom thou owest thine all; but thou wouldst observe the blinded dictates of thine own imperfect reason. Hear me, Roland! a lot calls thee—solicits thee—demands thee—the proudest to which man can be destined, and it uses the voice of thine earliest, thy best, thine only friend—Wilt thou resist it? Then go thy way—leave me here—my hopes on earth are gone and withered—I will kneel me down before yonder profaned altar, and when the raging heretics return, they shall dye it with the blood of a martyr."

"But, my dearest mother," said Roland Graeme, whose early recollections of her violence were formidably renewed by these wild expressions of reckless passion, "I will not forsake you—I will abide with you—worlds shall not force me from your side—I will protect—I will defend you—I will live with you, and die for you!"

"One word, my son, were worth all these—say only, 'I will obey you.'"

"Doubt it not, mother," replied the youth, "I will, and that with all my heart; only——"

"Nay, I receive no qualifications of thy promise," said Magdalen Graeme, catching at the word, "the obedience which I require is absolute; and a blessing on thee, thou darling memory of my beloved child, that thou hast power to make a promise so hard to human pride! Trust me well, that in the design in which thou dost embark, thou hast for thy partners the mighty and the valiant, the power of the church, and the pride of the noble. Succeed or fail, live or die, thy name shall be among those with whom success or failure is alike glorious, death or life alike desirable. Forward, then, forward! life is short, and our plan is laborious—Angels, saints, and the whole blessed host of heaven, have their eyes even now on this barren and blighted land of Scotland—What say I? on Scotland? their eye is on *us*, Roland—on the frail woman, on the inexperienced youth, who, amidst the ruins which sacrilege hath made in the holy place, devote themselves to God's cause, and that of their lawful Sovereign. Amen, so be it! The blessed eyes of saints and martyrs, which see our resolve, shall witness the execution; or their ears, which hear our vow, shall hear our death-groan, drawn in the sacred cause!"

While thus speaking, she held Roland Graeme firmly with one hand, while she pointed upward with the other, to leave him, as it were, no means of protest against the obtestation to which he was thus made a party. When she had finished her appeal to Heaven, she left him no leisure for farther hesitation, or for asking any explanation of her purpose; but passing with the same ready transition as formerly, to the solicitous attentions of an anxious parent, overwhelmed him with questions concerning his residence in the Castle of Avenel, and the qualities and accomplishments he had acquired.

"It is well," she said, when she had exhausted her inquiries, "my gay goss-hawk

[Footnote: The comparison is taken from some beautiful verses in an old ballad, entitled *Fause Foodrage*, published in the *"Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."* A deposed queen, to preserve her infant son from the traitors who have slain his father, exchanges him with the female offspring of a faithful friend, and goes on to direct the education of the children, and the private signals by which the parents are to hear news each of her own offspring.

"And you shall learn my gay goss-hawk

Right well to breast a steed;

And so will I your turtle dow,

As well to write and read.

And ye shall learn my gay goss-hawk

To wield both bow and brand;

And so will I your turtle dow,

To lay gowd with her hand.

At kirk or market when we meet,

We'll dare make no avow,

But, 'Dame, how does my gay goss-hawk?'

'Madame, how does my dow?'"]

hath been well trained, and will soar high; but those who bred him will have cause to fear as well as to wonder at his flight.—Let us now," she said, "to our morning meal, and care not though it be a scanty one. A few hours' walk will bring us to more friendly quarters."

They broke their fast accordingly, on such fragments as remained of their yesterday's provision, and immediately set out on their farther journey. Magdalen Graeme led the way, with a firm and active step much beyond her years, and Roland Graeme followed, pensive and anxious, and far from satisfied with the state of dependence to which he seemed again to be reduced.

"Am I for ever," he said to himself, "to be devoured with the desire of independence and free agency, and yet to be for ever led on, by circumstances, to follow the will of others?"

Chapter the Tenth.

She dwelt unnoticed and alone,

Beside the springs of Dove:

A maid whom there was none to praise,

And very few to love.

WORDSWORTH.

In the course of their journey the travellers spoke little to each other. Magdalen Graeme chanted, from time to time, in a low voice, a part of some one of those beautiful old Latin hymns which belong to the Catholic service, muttered an Ave or a Credo, and so passed on, lost in devotional contemplation. The meditations of her grandson were more bent on mundane matters; and many a time, as a moor-fowl arose from the heath, and shot along the moor, uttering his bold crow of defiance, he thought of the jolly Adam Woodcock, and his trusty goss-hawk; or, as they passed a thicket where the low trees and bushes were intermingled with tall fern, furze, and broom, so as to form a thick and intricate cover, his dreams were of a roebuck and a brace of gaze-hounds. But frequently his mind returned to the benevolent and kind mistress whom he had left behind him, offended justly, and unreconciled by any effort of his.

"My step would be lighter," he thought, "and so would my heart, could I but have returned to see her for one instant, and to say, Lady, the orphan boy was wild, but not ungrateful!"

Travelling in these divers moods, about the hour of noon they reached a small straggling village, in which, as usual, were seen one or two of those predominating towers, or peel houses, which, for reasons of defence elsewhere detailed, were at that time to be found in every Border hamlet. A brook flowed beside the village, and watered the valley in which it stood. There was also a mansion at the end of the village, and a little way separated from it, much dilapidated, and in very bad order, but appearing to have been the abode of persons of some consideration. The situation was agreeable, being an angle formed by the stream, bearing three or four large sycamore trees, which were in full leaf, and served to relieve the dark appearance of the mansion, which was built of a deep red stone. The house itself was a large one, but was now obviously too big for the inmates; several windows were built up, especially those which opened from the lower story; others were blockaded in a less substantial manner. The court before the door, which had once been defended with a species of low outer-wall, now ruinous, was paved, but the stones were completely covered with long gray nettles, thistles, and other weeds, which, shooting up betwixt the flags, had displaced many of them from their level. Even matters demanding more peremptory attention had been left neglected, in a manner which argued sloth or poverty in the extreme. The stream, undermining a part of the bank near an angle of the ruinous wall, had brought it down, with a corner turret, the ruins of which lay in the bed of the river. The current, interrupted by the ruins which it had overthrown, and turned yet nearer to the site of the tower, had greatly enlarged the breach it had made, and was in the process of undermining the ground on which the house itself stood, unless it were speedily protected by sufficient bulwarks.

All this attracted Roland Graeme's observation, as they approached the dwelling by a winding path, which gave them, at intervals, a view of it from different points. "If we go to yonder house," he said to his mother, "I trust it is but for a short visit. It looks as if two rainy days from the north-west would send the whole into the brook."

"You see but with the eyes of the body," said the old woman; "God will defend his own, though it be forsaken and despised of men. Better to dwell on the sand, under his law, than fly to the rock of human trust."

As she thus spoke, they entered the court before the old mansion, and Roland could observe that the front of it had formerly been considerably ornamented with carved work, in the same dark-coloured freestone of which it was built. But all these ornaments had been broken down and destroyed, and only the shattered vestiges of niches and entablatures now strewed the place which they had once occupied. The larger entrance in front was walled up, but a little footpath, which, from its appearance, seemed to be rarely trodden, led to a small wicket, defended by a door well clenched with iron-headed nails, at which Magdalen Graeme knocked three times, pausing betwixt each knock, until she heard an answering tap from within. At the last knock, the wicket was opened by a pale thin female, who said, "*Benedicti qui venient in nomine Domini.*" They entered, and the portress hastily shut behind them the wicket, and made fast the massive fastenings by which it was secured.

The female led the way through a narrow entrance, into a vestibule of some extent, paved with stone, and having benches of the same solid material ranged around. At the upper end was an oriel window, but some of the intervals formed by the stone shafts and mullions were blocked up, so that the apartment was very gloomy.

Here they stopped, and the mistress of the mansion, for such she was, embraced Magdalen Graeme, and greeting her by the title of sister, kissed her with much solemnity, on either side of the face.

"The blessing of Our Lady be upon you, my sister," were her next words; and they left no doubt upon Roland's mind respecting the religion of their hostess, even if he could have suspected his venerable and zealous guide of resting elsewhere than in the habitation of an orthodox Catholic. They spoke together a few words in private, during which he had leisure to remark more particularly the appearance of his grandmother's friend.

Her age might be betwixt fifty and sixty; her looks had a mixture of melancholy and unhappiness that bordered on discontent, and obscured the remains of beauty which age had still left on her features. Her dress was of the plainest and most ordinary description, of a dark colour, and, like Magdalen Graeme's, something approaching to a religious habit. Strict neatness and cleanliness of person, seemed to intimate, that if poor, she was not reduced to squalid or heart-broken distress, and that she was still sufficiently attached to life to retain a taste for its decencies, if not its elegancies. Her manner, as well as her features and appearance, argued an original condition and education far above the meanness of her present appearance. In short, the whole figure was such as to excite the idea, "That female must have had a history worth knowing." While Roland Graeme was making this very reflection, the whispers of the two females ceased, and the mistress of the mansion, approaching him, looked on his face and person with much attention, and, as it seemed, some interest.

"This, then," she said, addressing his relative, "is the child of thine unhappy daughter, sister Magdalen; and him, the only shoot from your ancient tree, you are willing to devote to the Good Cause?"

"Yes, by the rood," answered Magdalen Graeme, in her usual tone of resolved determination, "to the good cause I devote him, flesh and fell, sinew and limb, body and soul."

"Thou art a happy woman, sister Magdalen," answered her companion, "that, lifted so high above human affection and human feeling, thou canst bind such a victim to the horns of the altar. Had I been called to make such a sacrifice—to plunge a youth so young and fair into the plots and bloodthirsty dealings of the time, not the patriarch Abraham, when he led Isaac up the mountain, would have rendered more melancholy obedience."

She then continued to look at Roland with a mournful aspect of compassion, until the intentness of her gaze occasioned his colour to rise, and he was about to move out of its influence, when he was stopped by his grand-mother with one hand, while with the other she divided the hair upon his forehead, which was now crimson with bashfulness, while she added, with a mixture of proud affection and firm resolution,—"Ay, look at him well, my sister, for on a fairer face thine eye never rested. I too, when I first saw him, after a long separation, felt as the worldly feel, and was half shaken in my purpose. But no wind can tear a leaf from the withered tree which has long been stripped of its foliage, and no mere human casualty can awaken the mortal feelings which have long slept in the calm of devotion."

While the old woman thus spoke, her manner gave the lie to her assertions, for the tears rose to her eyes while she added, "But the fairer and the more spotless the victim, is it not, my sister, the more worthy of acceptance?"

She seemed glad to escape from the sensations which agitated her, and instantly added, "He will escape, my sister—there will be a ram caught in the thicket, and the hand of our revolted brethren shall not be on the youthfull Joseph. Heaven can defend its own rights, even by means of babes and sucklings, of women and beardless boys."

"Heaven hath left us," said the other female; "for our sins and our fathers' the succours of the blessed Saints have abandoned this accursed land. We may win the crown of Martyrdom, but not that of earthly triumph. One, too, whose prudence was at this deep crisis so indispensable, has been called to a better world. The Abbot Eustatius is no more."

"May his soul have mercy!" said Magdalen Graeme, "and may Heaven, too, have mercy upon us, who linger behind in this bloody land! His loss is indeed a perilous blow to our enterprise; for who remains behind possessing his far-fetched experience, his self-devoted zeal, his consummate wisdom, and his undaunted courage! He hath fallen with the church's standard in his hand, but God will raise up another to lift the blessed banner. Whom have the Chapter elected in his room?"

"It is rumoured no one of the few remaining brethren dare accept the office. The heretics have sworn that they will permit no future election, and will heavily punish any attempt to create a new Abbot of Saint Mary's. *Conjuraverunt inter se principes, dicentes, Projiciamus laqueos ejus.*"

"*Quousque, Domine!*"—ejaculated Magdalen; "this, my sister, were indeed a perilous and fatal breach in our band; but I am firm in my belief, that another will arise in the place of him so untimely removed. Where is thy daughter Catharine?"

"In the parlour," answered the matron, "but"—She looked at Roland Graeme, and muttered something in the ear of her friend.

"Fear it not," answered Magdalen Graeme, "it is both lawful and necessary—fear nothing from him—I would he were as well grounded in the faith by which alone comes safety, as he is free from thought, deed, or speech of villany. Therein is the heretics' discipline to be commended, my sister, that they train up their youth in strong morality, and choke up every inlet to youthful folly."

"It is but a cleansing the outside of the cup," answered her friend, "a whitening of the sepulchre; but he shall see Catharine, since you, sister, judge it safe and meet.—Follow us, youth," she added, and led the way from the apartment—with her friend. These were the only words which the matron had addressed to Roland Graeme, who obeyed them in silence. As they paced through several winding passages and waste apartments with a very slow step, the young page had leisure to make some reflections on his situation,—reflections of a nature which his ardent temper considered as specially disagreeable. It seemed he had now got two mistresses, or tutoresses, instead of one, both elderly women, and both, it would seem, in league to direct his motions according to their own pleasure, and for the accomplishment of plans to which he was no party. This, he thought, was too much; arguing reasonably enough, that whatever right his grandmother and benefactress had to guide his motions, she was neither entitled to transfer her authority or divide it with another, who seemed to assume, without ceremony, the same tone of absolute command over him.

"But it shall not long continue thus," thought Roland; "I will not be all my life the slave of a woman's whistle, to go when she bids, and come when she calls. No, by Saint Andrew! the hand that can hold the lance is above the control of the distaff. I will leave them the slipp'd collar in their hands on the first opportunity, and let them execute their own devices by their own proper force. It may save them both from peril, for I guess what they meditate is not likely to prove either safe or easy—the Earl of Murray and his heresy are too well rooted to be grubbed up by two old women."

As he thus resolved, they entered a low room, in which a third female was seated. This apartment was the first he had observed in the mansion which was furnished with moveable seats, and with a wooden table, over which was laid a piece of tapestry. A carpet was spread on the floor, there was a grate in the chimney, and, in brief, the apartment had the air of being habitable and inhabited.

But Roland's eyes found better employment than to make observations on the accommodations of the chamber; for this second female inhabitant of the mansion seemed something very different from any thing he had yet seen there. At his first entry, she had greeted with a silent and low obeisance the two aged matrons, then glancing her eyes towards Roland, she adjusted a veil which hung back over her shoulders, so as to bring it over her face; an operation which she performed with much modesty, but without either affected haste or embarrassed timidity.

During this manoeuvre Roland had time to observe, that the face was that of a girl apparently not much past sixteen, and that the eyes were at once soft and brilliant. To these very favourable observations was added the certainty that the fair object to whom they referred possessed an excellent shape, bordering perhaps on *enbonpoint*, and therefore rather that of a Hebe than of a Sylph, but beautifully formed, and shown to great advantage by the close jacket and petticoat which she wore after a foreign fashion, the last not quite long enough to conceal a very pretty foot, which rested on a bar of the table at which she sate; her round arms and taper fingers very busily employed in repairing—the piece of tapestry which was spread on it, which exhibited several deplorable fissures, enough to demand the utmost skill of the most expert seamstress.

It is to be remarked, that it was by stolen glances that Roland Graeme contrived to ascertain these interesting particulars; and he thought he could once or twice, notwithstanding the texture of the veil, detect the damsel in the act of taking similar cognizance of his own person. The matrons in the meanwhile continued their separate conversation, eyeing from time to time the young people, in a manner which left Roland in no doubt that they were the subject of their conversation. At length he distinctly heard Magdalen Graeme say these words—"Nay, my sister, we must give them opportunity to speak together, and to become acquainted; they must be personally known to each other, or how shall they be able to execute what they are intrusted with?"

It seemed as if the matron, not fully satisfied with her friend's reasoning, continued to offer some objections; but they were borne down by her more dictatorial friend.

"It must be so," she said, "my dear sister; let us therefore go forth on the balcony, to finish our conversation.—And do you," she said, addressing Roland and the girl, "become acquainted with each other."

With this she stepped up to the young woman, and raising her veil, discovered features which, whatever might be their ordinary complexion, were now covered with a universal blush.

"*Licetum sit*," said Magdalen, looking at the other matron.

"*Vix licitum*," replied the other, with reluctant and hesitating acquiescence; and again adjusting the veil of the blushing girl, she dropped it so as to shade, though not to conceal her countenance, and whispered to her, in a tone loud enough for the page to hear, "Remember, Catharine, who thou art, and for what destined."

The matron then retreated with Magdalen Graeme through one of the casements of the apartment, that opened on a large broad balcony, which, with its ponderous balustrade, had once run along the whole south front of the building which faced the brook, and formed a pleasant and commodious walk in the open air. It was now in some places deprived of the balustrade, in others broken and narrowed; but, ruinous as it was, could still be used as a pleasant promenade. Here then walked the two ancient dames, busied in their private conversation; yet not so much so, but that Roland could observe the matrons, as their thin forms darkened the casement in passing or repassing before it, dart a glance into the apartment, to see how matters were going on there.

Chapter the Eleventh.

Life hath its May, and is mirthful then:

The woods are vocal, and the flowers all odour;

Its very blast has mirth in't,—and the maidens,

The while they don their cloaks to screen their kirtles,

Laugh at the rain that wets them.

OLD PLAY.

Catherine was at the happy age of innocence and buoyancy of spirit, when, after the first moment of embarrassment was over, a situation of awkwardness, like that in which she was suddenly left to make acquaintance with a handsome youth, not even known to her by name, struck her, in spite of herself, in a ludicrous point of view. She bent her beautiful eyes upon the work with which she was busied, and with infinite gravity sate out the two first turns of the matrons upon the balcony; but then, glancing her deep blue eye a little towards Roland, and observing the embarrassment under which he laboured, now shifting on his chair, and now dangling his cap, the whole man evincing that he was perfectly at a loss how to open the conversation, she could keep her composure no longer, but after a vain struggle broke out into a sincere, though a very involuntary fit of laughing, so richly accompanied by the laughter of her merry eyes, which actually glanced through the tears which the effort filled them with, and by the waving of her rich tresses, that the goddess of smiles herself never looked more lovely than Catherine at that moment. A court page would not have left her long alone in her mirth; but Roland was country-bred, and, besides, having some jealousy as well as bashfulness, he took it into his head that he was himself the object of her inextinguishable laughter. His endeavours to sympathize with Catherine, therefore, could carry him no farther than a forced giggle, which had more of displeasure than of mirth in it, and which so much enhanced that of the girl, that it seemed to render it impossible for her ever to bring her laughter to an end, with whatever anxious pains she laboured to do so. For every one has felt, that when a paroxysm of laughter has seized him at a misbecoming time and place, the efforts which he made to suppress it, nay, the very sense of the impropriety of giving way to it, tend only to augment and prolong the irresistible impulse.

It was undoubtedly lucky for Catherine, as well as for Roland, that the latter did not share in the excessive mirth of the former. For, seated as she was, with her back to the casement, Catherine could easily escape the observation of the two matrons during the course of their promenade; whereas Graeme was so placed, with his side to the window, that his mirth, had he shared that of his companion, would have been instantly visible, and could not have failed to give offence to the personages in question. He sate, however, with some impatience, until Catherine had exhausted either her power or her desire of laughing, and was returning

with good grace to the exercise of her needle, and then he observed with some dryness, that "there seemed no great occasion to recommend to them to improve their acquaintance, as it seemed, that they were already tolerably familiar."

Catherine had an extreme desire to set off upon a fresh score, but she repressed it strongly, and fixing her eyes on her work, replied by asking his pardon, and promising to avoid future offence.

Roland had sense enough to feel, that an air of offended dignity was very much misplaced, and that it was with a very different bearing he ought to meet the deep blue eyes which had borne such a hearty burden in the laughing scene. He tried, therefore, to extricate himself as well as he could from his blunder, by assuming a tone of correspondent gaiety, and requesting to know of the nymph, "how it was her pleasure that they should proceed in improving the acquaintance which had commenced so merrily."

"That," she said, "you must yourself discover; perhaps I have gone a step too far in opening our interview."

"Suppose," said Roland Graeme, "we should begin as in a tale-book, by asking each other's names and histories?"

"It is right well imagined," said Catherine, "and shows an argute judgment. Do you begin, and I will listen, and only put in a question or two at the dark parts of the story. Come, unfold then your name and history, my new acquaintance."

"I am called Roland Graeme, and that tall woman is my grandmother."

"And your tutoress?—good. Who are your parents?"

"They are both dead," replied Roland.

"Ay, but who were they? you *had* parents, I presume?"

"I suppose so," said Roland, "but I have never been able to learn much of their history. My father was a Scottish knight, who died gallantly in his stirrups—my mother was a Graeme of Hathergill, in the Debateable Land—most of her family were killed when the Debateable country was burned by Lord Maxwell and Herries of Caerlaverock."

"Is it long ago?" said the damsel.

"Before I was born," answered the page.

"That must be a great while since," said she, shaking her head gravely; "look you, I cannot weep for them."

"It needs not," said the youth, "they fell with honour."

"So much for your lineage, fair sir," replied his companion, "of whom I like the living specimen (a glance at the casement) far less than those that are dead. Your much honoured grandmother looks as if she could make one weep in sad earnest. And now, fair sir, for your own person—if you tell not the tale faster, it will be cut short in the middle; Mother Bridget pauses longer and longer every time she passes the window, and with her there is as little mirth as in the grave of your ancestors."

"My tale is soon told—I was introduced into the castle of Avenel to be page to the lady of the mansion."

"She is a strict Huguenot, is she not?" said the maiden.

"As strict as Calvin himself. But my grandmother can play the puritan when it suits her purpose, and she had some plan of her own, for quartering me in the Castle—it would have failed, however, after we had remained several weeks at the hamlet, but for an unexpected master of ceremonies—"

"And who was that?" said the girl.

"A large black dog, Wolf by name, who brought me into the castle one day in his mouth, like a hurt wild-duck, and presented me to the lady."

"A most respectable introduction, truly," said Catherine; "and what might you learn at this same castle? I love dearly to know what my acquaintances can do at need."

"To fly a hawk, hollow to a hound, back a horse, and wield lance, bow, and brand."

"And to boast of all this when you have learned it," said Catherine, "which, in France at least, is the surest accomplishment of a page. But proceed, fair sir; how came your Huguenot lord and your no less Huguenot lady to receive and keep in the family so perilous a person as a Catholic page?"

"Because they knew not that part of my history, which from infancy I have been taught to keep secret—and because my grand-dame's former zealous attendance on their heretic chaplain, had laid all this suspicion to sleep, most fair Callipolis," said the page; and in so saying, he edged his chair towards the seat of the fair querist.

"Nay, but keep your distance, most gallant sir," answered the blue-eyed maiden, "for, unless I greatly mistake, these reverend ladies will soon interrupt our amicable conference, if the acquaintance they recommend shall seem to proceed beyond a certain point—so, fair sir, be pleased to abide by your station, and reply to my questions.—By what achievements did you prove the qualities of a page, which you had thus happily acquired?"

Roland, who began to enter into the tone and spirit of the damsel's conversation, replied to her with becoming spirit.

"In no feat, fair gentlewoman, was I found inexpert, wherein there was mischief implied. I shot swans, hunted cats, frightened serving-women, chased the deer, and robbed the orchard. I say nothing of tormenting the chaplain in various ways, for that was my duty as a good Catholic."

"Now, as I am a gentlewoman," said Catherine, "I think these heretics have done Catholic penance in entertaining so all-accomplished a serving-man! And what, fair sir, might have been the unhappy event which deprived them of an inmate altogether so estimable?"

"Truly, fair gentlewoman," answered the youth, "your real proverb says that the longest lane will have a turning, and mine was more—it was, in fine, a turning off."

"Good!" said the merry young maiden, "it is an apt play on the word—and what occasion was taken for so important a catastrophe?—Nay, start not for my learning, I do know the schools—in plain phrase, why were you sent from service?"

The page shrugged his shoulders while he replied,—"A short tale is soon told—and a short horse soon curried. I made the falconer's boy taste of my switch—the falconer threatened to make me brook his cudgel—he is a kindly clown as well as a stout, and I would rather have been cudgelled by him than any man in Christendom to choose—but I knew not his qualities at that time—so I threatened to make him brook the stab, and my Lady made me brook the 'Begone,' so adieu to the page's office and the fair Castle of Avenel—I had not travelled far before I met my venerable parent—And so tell your tale, fair gentlewoman, for mine is done."

"A happy grandmother," said the maiden, "who had the luck to find the stray page just when his mistress had slipped his leash, and a most lucky page that has jumped at once from a page to an old lady's gentleman-usher!"

"All this is nothing of your history," answered Roland Graeme, began to be much interested in the congenial vivacity of this facetious young gentlewoman,—"tale for tale is fellow-traveller's justice."

"Wait till we are fellow-travellers, then," replied Catherine.

"Nay, you escape me not so," said the page; "if you deal not justly by me, I will call out to Dame Bridget, or whatever your dame be called, and proclaim you for a cheat."

"You shall not need," answered the maiden—"my history is the counterpart of your own; the same words might almost serve, change but dress and name. I am called Catherine Seyton, and I also am an orphan."

"Have your parents been long dead?"

"This is the only question," said she, throwing down her fine eyes with a sudden expression of sorrow, "that is the only question I cannot laugh at."

"And Dame Bridget is your grandmother?"

The sudden cloud passed away like that which crosses for an instant the summer sun, and she answered with her usual lively expression, "Worse by twenty degrees—Dame Bridget is my maiden aunt."

"Over gods forbode!" said Roland—"Alas! that you have such a tale to tell! and what horror comes next?"

"Your own history, exactly. I was taken upon trial for service—"

"And turned off for pinching the duenna, or affronting my lady's waiting-woman?"

"Nay, our history varies there," said the damsel—"Our mistress broke up house, or had her house broke up, which is the same thing, and I am a free woman of the forest."

"And I am as glad of it as if any one had lined my doublet with cloth of gold," said the youth.

"I thank you for your mirth," said she, "but the matter is not likely to concern you."

"Nay, but go on," said the page, "for you will be presently interrupted; the two good dames have been soaring yonder on the balcony, like two old hooded crows, and their croak grows hoarser as night comes on; they will wing to roost presently.—This mistress of yours, fair gentlewoman, who was she, in God's name?"

"Oh, she has a fair name in the world," replied Catherine Seyton. "Few ladies kept a fairer house, or held more gentlewomen in her household; my aunt Bridget was one of her housekeepers. We never saw our mistress's blessed face, to be sure, but we heard enough of her; were up early and down late, and were kept to long prayers and light food."

"Out upon the penurious old beldam!" said the page.

"For Heaven's sake, blaspheme not!" said the girl, with an expression of fear.—"God pardon us both! I meant no harm. I speak of our blessed Saint Catherine of Sienna!—may God forgive me that I spoke so lightly, and made you do a great sin and a great blasphemy. This was her nunnery, in which there were twelve nuns and an abbess. My aunt was the abbess, till the heretics turned all adrift."

"And where are your companions?" asked the youth.

"With the last year's snow," answered the maiden; "east, north, south, and west—some to France, some to Flanders, some, I fear, into the world and its pleasures. We have got permission to remain, or rather our remaining has been connived at, for my aunt has great relations among the Kerrs, and they have threatened a death-feud if any one touches us; and bow and spear are the best warrant in these times."

"Nay, then, you sit under a sure shadow," said the youth; "and I suppose you wept yourself blind when Saint Catherine broke up housekeeping before you had taken arles [Footnote: *Anglice*—Earnest-money] in her service?"

"Hush! for Heaven's sake," said the damsel, crossing herself; "no more of that! but I have not quite cried my eyes out," said she, turning them upon him, and instantly again bending them upon her work. It was one of those glances which would require the threefold plate of brass around the heart, more than it is needed by the mariners, to whom Horace recommends it. Our youthful page had no defence whatever to offer.

"What say you, Catherine," he said, "if we two, thus strangely turned out of service at the same time, should give our two most venerable duennas the torch to hold, while we walk a merry measure with each other over the floor of this weary world?"

"A goodly proposal, truly," said Catherine, "and worthy the mad-cap brain of a discarded page!—And what shifts does your worship propose we should live by?—by singing ballads, cutting purses, or swaggering on the highway? for there, I think, you would find your most productive exchequer."

"Choose, you proud peat!" said the page, drawing off in huge disdain at the calm and unembarrassed ridicule with which his wild proposal was received. And as he spoke the words, the casement was again darkened by the forms of the matrons—it opened, and admitted Magdalen Graeme and the Mother Abbess, so we must now style her, into the apartment.

Chapter the Twelfth.

*Nay, hear me, brother—I am elder, wiser,
And holier than thou—And age, and wisdom,
And holiness, have peremptory claims,
And will be listen'd to.*

OLD PLAY.

When the matrons re-entered, and put an end to the conversation—which we have detailed in the last chapter, Dame Magdalen Graeme thus addressed her grandson and his pretty companion: "Have you spoke together, my children?—Have you become known to each other as fellow-travellers on the same dark and dubious road, whom chance hath brought together, and who study to learn the tempers and dispositions of those by whom their perils are to be shared?"

It was seldom the light-hearted Catharine could suppress a jest, so that she often spoke when she would have acted more wisely in holding her peace.

"Your grandson admires the journey which you propose so very greatly, that he was even now preparing for setting out upon it instantly."

"This is to be too forward, Roland," said the dame, addressing him, "as yesterday you were over slack—the just mean lies in obedience, which both waits for the signal to start, and obeys it when given.—But once again, my children, have you so perused each other's countenances, that when you meet, in whatever disguise the times may impose upon you, you may recognize each in the other the secret agent of the mighty work in which you are to be leagued?—Look at each other, know each line and lineament of each other's countenance. Learn to distinguish by the step, by the sound of the voice, by the motion of the hand, by the glance of the eye, the partner whom Heaven hath sent to aid in working its will.—Wilt thou know that maiden, whensoever, or wheresoever you shall again meet her, my Roland Graeme?"

As readily as truly did Roland answer in the affirmative. "And thou, my daughter, wilt thou again remember the features of this youth?"

"Truly, mother," replied Catherine Seyton, "I have not seen so many men of late, that I should immediately forget your grandson, though I mark not much about him that is deserving of especial remembrance."

"Join hands, then, my children," said Magdalen Graeme; but, in saying so, was interrupted by her companion, whose conventual prejudices had been gradually giving her more and more uneasiness, and who could remain acquiescent no longer.

"Nay, my good sister, you forget," said she to Magdalen, "Catharine is the betrothed bride of Heaven—these intimacies cannot be."

"It is in the cause of Heaven that I command them to embrace," said Magdalen, with the full force of her powerful voice; "the end, sister, sanctifies the means we must use."

"They call me Lady Abbess, or Mother at the least, who address me," said Dame Bridget, drawing herself up, as if offended at her friend's authoritative manner—"the Lady of Heathergill forgets that she speaks to the Abbess of Saint Catherine."

"When I was what you call me," said Magdalen, "you indeed were the Abbess of Saint Catherine, but both names are now gone, with all the rank that the world and that the church gave to them; and we are now, to the eye of human judgment, two poor, despised, oppressed women, dragging our dishonoured old age to a humble grave. But what are we in the eye of Heaven?—Ministers, sent forth to work his will,—in whose weakness the strength of the church shall be manifested—before whom shall be humbled the wisdom of Murray, and the dark strength of Morton,—And to such wouldst thou apply the narrow rules of thy cloistered seclusion?—or, hast thou forgotten the order which I showed thee from thy Superior, subjecting thee to me in these matters?"

"On thy head, then, be the scandal and the sin," said the Abbess, sullenly.

"On mine be they both," said Magdalen. "I say, embrace each other, my children."

But Catherine, aware, perhaps, how the dispute was likely to terminate, had escaped from the apartment, and so disappointed the grandson, at least as much as the old matron.

"She is gone," said the Abbess, "to provide some little refreshment. But it will have little savour to those who dwell in the world; for I, at least, cannot dispense with the rules to which I am vowed, because it is the will of wicked men to break down the sanctuary in which they wont to be observed."

"It is well, my sister," replied Magdalen, "to pay each even the smallest tithes of mint and cummin which the church demands, and I blame not thy scrupulous observance of the rules of thine order. But they were established by the church, and for the church's benefit; and reason it is that they should give way when the salvation of the church herself is at stake."

The Abbess made no reply.

One more acquainted with human nature than the inexperienced page, might have found amusement in comparing the different kinds of fanaticisms which these two females exhibited. The Abbess, timid, narrowminded, and discontented, clung to ancient usages and pretensions which were ended by the Reformation; and was in adversity, as she had been in prosperity, scrupulous, weak-spirited, and bigoted. While the fiery and more lofty spirit of her companion suggested a wider field of effort, and would not be limited by ordinary rules in the extraordinary schemes which were suggested by her bold and irregular imagination. But Roland Graeme, instead of tracing these peculiarities of character in the two old dams, only waited with great anxiety for the return of Catherine, expecting probably that the proposal of the fraternal embrace would be renewed, as his grandmother seemed disposed to carry matters with a high hand.

His expectations, or hopes, if we may call them so, were, however, disappointed; for, when Catherine re-entered on the summons of the Abbess, and placed on the table an earthen pitcher of water, and four wooden platters, with cups of the same materials, the Dame of Heathergill, satisfied with the arbitrary mode in which she had borne down the opposition of the Abbess, pursued her victory no farther—a moderation for which her grandson, in his heart, returned her but slender thanks.

In the meanwhile, Catherine continued to place upon the table the slender preparations for the meal of a recluse, which consisted almost entirely of colewort, boiled and served up in a wooden platter, having no better seasoning than a little salt, and no better accompaniment than some coarse barley-bread, in very moderate quantity. The water-pitcher, already mentioned, furnished the only beverage. After a Latin grace, delivered by the Abbess, the guests sat down to their spare entertainment. The simplicity of the fare appeared to produce no distaste in the females, who ate of it moderately, but with the usual appearance of appetite. But Roland Graeme had been used to better cheer. Sir Halbert Glendinning, who affected even an unusual degree of nobleness in his housekeeping, maintained it in a style of genial hospitality, which rivalled that of the Northern Barons of England. He might think, perhaps, that by doing so, he acted yet more completely the part for which he was born—that of a great Baron and a leader. Two bullocks, and six sheep, weekly, were the allowance when the Baron was at home, and the number was not greatly diminished during his absence. A boll of malt was weekly brewed into ale, which was used by the household at discretion. Bread was baked in proportion for the consumption of his domestics and retainers; and in this scene of plenty had Roland Graeme now lived for several years. It formed a bad introduction to lukewarm greens and spring-water; and probably his countenance indicated some sense of the difference, for the Abbess observed, "It would seem, my son, that the tables of the heretic Baron, whom you have so long followed, are more daintily furnished than those of the suffering daughters of the church; and yet, not upon the most solemn nights of festival, when the nuns were permitted to eat their portion at mine own table, did I consider the cates, which were then served up, as half so delicious as these vegetables and this water, on which I prefer to feed, rather than do aught which may derogate from the strictness of my vow. It shall never be said that the mistress of this house made it a house of feasting, when days of darkness and of affliction were hanging over the Holy Church, of which I am an unworthy member."

"Well hast thou said, my sister," replied Magdalen Graeme; "but now it is not only time to suffer in the good cause, but to act in it. And since our pilgrim's meal is finished, let us go apart to prepare for our journey tomorrow, and to advise on the manner in which these children shall be employed, and what measures we can adopt to supply their thoughtlessness and lack of discretion."

Notwithstanding his indifferent cheer, the heart of Roland Graeme bounded high at this proposal, which he doubted not would lead to another *tête-à-tête* betwixt him and the pretty novice. But he was mistaken. Catherine, it would seem, had no mind so far to indulge him; for, moved either by delicacy or caprice, or some of those indescribable shades betwixt the one and the other, with which women love to tease, and at the same time to captivate, the ruder sex, she reminded the Abbess that it was necessary she should retire an hour before vespers; and, receiving the ready and approving nod of her Superior, she arose to withdraw. But before leaving the apartment, she made obeisance to the matrons, bending herself till her hands touched her knees, and then made a lesser reverence to Roland, which consisted in a slight bend of the body and gentle depression of the head. This she performed very demurely; but the party on whom the salutation was conferred, thought he could discern in her manner an arch and mischievous exultation over his secret disappointment.—"The devil take the saucy girl," he thought in his heart, though the presence of the Abbess should have repressed all such profane imaginations,—"she is as hard-hearted as the laughing hyaena that the story-books tell of—she has a mind that I shall not forget her this night at least."

The matrons now retired also, giving the page to understand that he was on no account to stir from the convent, or to show himself at the windows, the Abbess assigning as a reason, the readiness with which the rude heretics caught at every occasion of scandalizing the religious orders.

"This is worse than the rigour of Mr. Henry Warden, himself," said the page, when he was left alone; "for, to do him justice, however strict in requiring the most rigid attention during the time of his homilies, he left us to the freedom of our own wills afterwards—ay, and would take a share in our pastimes, too, if he thought them entirely innocent. But these old women are utterly wrapt up in gloom, mystery and self-denial.—Well, then, if I must neither stir out of the gate nor look out at window, I will at least see what the inside of the house contains that may help to pass away one's time—peradventure I may light on that blue-eyed laugher in some corner or other."

Going, therefore, out of the chamber by the entrance opposite to that through which the two matrons had departed, (for it may be readily supposed that he had no desire to intrude on their privacy.) he wandered from one chamber to another, through the deserted edifice, seeking, with boyish eagerness, some source of interest and amusement. Here he passed through a long gallery, opening on either hand into the little cells of the nuns, all deserted, and deprived of the few trifling articles of furniture which the rules of the order admitted.

"The birds are flown," thought the page; "but whether they will find themselves worse off in the open air than in these damp narrow cages, I leave my Lady Abbess and my venerable relative to settle betwixt them. I think the wild young lark whom they have left behind them, would like best to sing under God's free sky."

A winding stair, strait and narrow, as if to remind the nuns of their duties of fast and maceration, led down to a lower suite of apartments, which occupied the ground story of the house. These rooms were even more ruinous than those which he had left; for, having encountered the first fury of the assailants by whom the nunnery had been wasted, the windows had been dashed in, the doors broken down, and even the partitions betwixt the apartments, in some places, destroyed. As he thus stalked from desolation to desolation, and began to think of returning from so uninteresting a research to the chamber which he had left, he was surprised to hear the low of a cow very close to him. The sound was so unexpected at the time and place, that Roland Graeme started as if it had been the voice of a lion, and laid his hand on his dagger, while at the same moment the light and lovely form of Catherine Seyton presented itself at the door of the apartment from which the sound had issued.

"Good even to you, valiant champion!" said she: "since the days of Guy of Warwick, never was one more worthy to encounter a dun cow."

"Cow?" said Roland Graeme, "by my faith, I thought it had been the devil that roared so near me. Who ever heard of a convent containing a cow-house?"

"Cow and calf may come hither now," answered Catherine, "for we have no means to keep out either. But I advise you, kind sir, to return to the place from whence you came."

"Not till I see your charge, fair sister," answered Roland, and made his way into the apartment, in spite of the half serious half laughing remonstrances of the girl.

The poor solitary cow, now the only severe recluse within the nunnery, was quartered in a spacious chamber, which had once been the refectory of the convent. The roof was graced with groined arches, and the wall with niches, from which the images had been pulled down. These remnants of architectural ornaments were strangely contrasted with the rude crib constructed for the cow in one corner of the apartment, and the stack of fodder which was piled beside it for her food.

[Footnote: This, like the cell of Saint Cuthbert, is an imaginary scene, but I took one or two ideas of the desolation of the interior from a story told me by my father.]

In his youth—it may be near eighty years since, as he was born in 1729—he had occasion to visit an old lady who resided in a Border castle of considerable renown. Only one very limited portion of the extensive ruins sufficed for the accommodation of the inmates, and my father amused himself by wandering through the part that was untenanted. In a dining-apartment, having a roof richly adorned with arches and drops, there was deposited a large stack of hay, to which calves were helping themselves from opposite sides. As my father was scaling a dark ruinous turnpike staircase, his greyhound ran up before him, and probably was the means of saving his life, for the animal fell through a trap-door, or aperture in the stair, thus warning the owner of the danger of the ascent. As the dog continued howling from a great depth, my father got the old butler, who alone knew most of the localities about the castle, to unlock a sort of stable, in which Kill-buck was found safe and sound, the place being filled with the same commodity which littered the stalls of Augeas, and which had rendered the dog's fall an easy one.]

"By my faith," said the page, "Crombie is more lordly lodged than any one here!"

"You had best remain with her," said Catherine, "and supply by your filial attentions the offspring she has had the ill luck to lose."

"I will remain, at least, to help you to prepare her night's lair, pretty Catherine," said Roland, seizing upon a pitch-fork.

"By no means," said Catherine; "for, besides that you know not in the least how to do her that service, you will bring a chiding my way, and I get enough of that in the regular course of things."

"What! for accepting my assistance?" said the page,—*"for accepting my assistance, who am to be your confederate in some deep matter of import? That were altogether unreasonable—and, now I think on it, tell me if you can, what is this mighty emprise to which I am destined?"*

"Robbing a bird's nest, I should suppose," said Catherine, "considering the champion whom they have selected."

"By my faith," said the youth, "and he that has taken a falcon's nest in the Scaurs of Polmoodie, has done something to brag of, my fair sister.—But that is all over now—a murrain on the nest, and the eyases and their food, washed or unwashed, for it was all anon of cramming these worthless kites that I was sent upon my present travels. Save that I have met with you, pretty sister, I could eat my dagger-hilt for vexation at my own folly. But, as we are to be fellow-travellers—"

"Fellow-labourers! not fellow-travellers!" answered the girl; "for to your comfort be it known, that the Lady Abbess and I set out earlier than you and your respected relative to-morrow, and that I partly endure your company at present, because it may be long ere we meet again."

"By Saint Andrew, but it shall not though," answered Roland; "I will not hunt at all unless we are to hunt in couples."

"I suspect, in that and in other points, we must do as we are bid," replied the young lady.—"But, hark! I hear my aunt's voice."

The old lady entered in good earnest, and darted a severe glance at her niece, while Roland had the ready wit to busy himself about the halter of the cow.

"The young gentleman," said Catherine, gravely, "is helping me to tie the cow up faster to her stake, for I find that last night when she put her head out of window and lowed, she alarmed the whole village; and—we shall be suspected of sorcery among the heretics, if they do not discover the cause of the apparition, or lose our cow if they do."

"Relieve yourself of that fear," said the Abbess, somewhat ironically; "the person to whom she is now sold, comes for the animal presently."

"Good night, then, my poor companion," said Catherine, patting the animal's shoulders; "I hope thou hast fallen into kind hands, for my happiest hours of late have been spent in tending thee—I would I had been born to no better task!"

"Now, out upon thee, mean-spirited wench!" said the Abbess; "is that a speech worthy of the name of Seyton, or of the mouth of a sister of this house, treading the path of election—and to be spoken before a stranger youth, too?—Go to my oratory, minion—there read your Hours till I come thither, when I will read you such a lecture as shall make you prize the blessings which you possess."

Catherine was about to withdraw in silence, casting a half sorrowful half comic glance at Roland Graeme, which seemed to say—"You see to what your untimely visit has exposed me," when, suddenly changing her mind, she came forward to the page, and extended her hand as she bid him good evening. Their palms had pressed each other ere the astonished matron could interfere, and Catherine had time to say—"Forgive me, mother; it is long since we have seen a face that looked with kindness on us. Since these disorders have broken up our peaceful retreat, all has been gloom and malignity. I bid this youth kindly farewell, because he has come hither in kindness, and because the odds are great, that we may never again meet in this world. I guess better than he, that the schemes on which you are rushing are too mighty for your management, and that you are now setting the stone a-rolling, which must surely crush you in its descent. I bid fare-well," she added, "to my fellow-victim!"

This was spoken with a tone of deep and serious feeling, altogether different from the usual levity of Catherine's manner, and plainly showed, that beneath the giddiness of extreme youth and total inexperience, there lurked in her bosom a deeper power of sense and feeling, than her conduct had hitherto expressed.

The Abbess remained a moment silent after she had left the room. The proposed rebuke died on her tongue, and she appeared struck with the deep and foreboding, tone in which her niece had spoken her good-even. She led the way in silence to the apartment which they had formerly occupied, and where there was prepared a small refectory, as the Abbess termed it, consisting of milk and barley-bread. Magdalen Graeme, summoned to take share in this collation, appeared from an adjoining apartment, but Catherine was seen no more. There was little said during the hasty meal, and after it was finished, Roland Graeme was dismissed to the nearest cell, where some preparations had been made for his repose.

The strange circumstances in which he found himself, had their usual effect in preventing slumber from hastily descending on him, and he could distinctly hear, by a low but earnest murmuring in the apartment which he had left, that the matrons continued in deep consultation to a late hour. As they separated he heard the Abbess distinctly express herself thus: "In a word, my sister, I venerate your character and the authority with which my Superiors have invested you; yet it seems to me, that, ere entering on this perilous course, we should consult some of the Fathers of the Church."

"And how and where are we to find a faithful Bishop or Abbot at whom to ask counsel? The faithful Eustatius is no more—he is withdrawn from a world of evil, and from the tyranny of heretics. May Heaven and our Lady assoilzie him of his sins, and abridge the penance of his mortal infirmities!—Where shall we find another, with whom to take counsel?"

"Heaven will provide for the Church," said the Abbess; "and the faithful fathers who yet are suffered to remain in the house of Kennaquhair, will proceed to elect an Abbot. They will not suffer the staff to fall down, or the mitre to be unfilled, for the threats of heresy."

"That will I learn to-morrow," said Magdalen Graeme; "yet who now takes the office of an hour, save to partake with the spoilers in their work of plunder?—to-morrow will tell us if one of the thousand saints who are sprung from the House of Saint Mary's continues to look down on it in its misery.—Farewell, my sister—we meet at Edinburgh."

"Benedicite!" answered the Abbess, and they parted.

"To Kennaquhair and to Edinburgh we bend our way," thought Roland Graeme. "That information have I purchased by a sleepless hour—it suits well with my purpose. At Kennaquhair I shall see Father Ambrose;—at Edinburgh I shall find the means of shaping my own course through this bustling world, without burdening my affectionate relation—at Edinburgh, too, I shall see again the witching novice, with her blue eyes and her provoking smile."—He fell asleep, and it was to dream of Catherine Seyton.

Chapter the Thirteenth.

*What, Dagon up again!—I thought we had hurl'd him
Down on the threshold, never more to rise.
Bring wedge and axe; and, neighbours, lend your hands
And rive the idol into winter fagots!*

ATHELSTANE, OR THE CONVERTED DANE.

Roland Graeme slept long and sound, and the sun was high over the horizon, when the voice of his companion summoned him to resume their pilgrimage; and when, hastily arranging his dress, he went to attend her call, the enthusiastic matron stood already at the threshold, prepared for her journey. There was in all the deportment of this remarkable woman, a promptitude of execution, and a sternness of perseverance, founded on the fanaticism which she nursed so deeply, and which seemed to absorb all the ordinary purposes and feelings of mortality. One only human affection gleamed through her enthusiastic energies, like the broken glimpses of the sun through the rising clouds of a storm. It was her maternal fondness for her grandson—a fondness carried almost to the verge of dotage, in circumstances where the Catholic religion was not concerned, but which gave way instantly when it chanced either to thwart or come in contact with the more settled purpose of her soul, and the more devoted duty of her life. Her life she would willingly have laid down to save the earthly object of her affection; but that object itself she was ready to hazard, and would have been willing to sacrifice, could the restoration of the Church of Rome have been purchased with his blood. Her discourse by the way, excepting on the few occasions in which her extreme love of her grandson found opportunity to display itself in anxiety for his health and accommodation, turned entirely on the duty of raising up the fallen honours of the Church, and replacing a Catholic sovereign on the throne. There were times at which she hinted, though very obscurely and distantly, that she herself was foredoomed by Heaven to perform a part in this important task; and that she had more than mere human warranty for the zeal with which she engaged in it. But on this subject she expressed herself in such general language, that it was not easy to decide whether she made any actual pretensions to a direct and supernatural call, like the celebrated Elizabeth Barton, commonly called the Nun of Kent; [Footnote: A fanatic nun, called the Holy Maid of Kent, who pretended to the gift of prophecy and power of miracles. Having denounced the doom of speedy death against Henry VIII. for his marriage with Anne Boleyn, the prophetess was attainted in Parliament, and executed with her accomplices. Her imposture was for a time so successful, that even Sir Thomas More was disposed to be a believer.] or whether she dwelt upon the general duty which was incumbent on all Catholics of the time, and the pressure of which she felt in an extraordinary degree.

Yet though Magdalen Graeme gave no direct intimation of her pretensions to be considered as something beyond the ordinary class of mortals, the demeanour of one or two persons amongst the travellers whom they occasionally met, as they entered the more fertile and populous part of the valley, seemed to indicate their belief in her superior attributes. It is true, that two clowns, who drove before them a herd of cattle—one or two village wenches, who seemed bound for some merry-making—a strolling soldier, in a rusted morion, and a wandering student, as his threadbare black cloak and his satchel of books proclaimed him—passed our travellers without observation, or with a look of contempt; and, moreover, that two or three children, attracted by the appearance of a dress so nearly resembling that of a pilgrim, joined in hooting and calling "Out upon the mass-monger!" But one or two, who nourished in their bosoms respect for the downfallen hierarchy—casting first a timorous glance around, to see that no one observed them—hastily crossed themselves—bent their knee to Sister Magdalen, by which name they saluted her—kissed her hand, or even the hem of her dalmatique—received with humility the Benedicite with which she repaid their obeisance; and then starting up, and again looking timidly round to see that they had been unobserved, hastily resumed their journey. Even while within sight of persons of the prevailing faith, there were individuals bold enough, by folding their arms and bending their head, to give distant and silent intimation that they recognized Sister Magdalen, and honoured alike her person and her purpose.

She failed not to notice to her grandson these marks of honour and respect which from time to time she received. "You see," she said, "my son, that the enemies have been unable altogether to suppress the good spirit, or to root out the true seed. Amid heretics and schismatics, spoilers of the church's lands, and scoffers at saints and sacraments, there is left a remnant."

"It is true, my mother," said Roland Graeme; "but methinks they are of a quality which can help us but little. See you not all those who wear steel at their side, and bear marks of better quality, ruffle past us as they would past the meanest beggars? for those who give us any marks of sympathy, are the poorest of the poor, and most outcast of the needy, who have neither bread to share with us, nor swords to defend us, nor skill to use them if they had. That poor wretch that last kneeled to you with such deep devotion, and who seemed emaciated by the touch of some wasting disease within, and the grasp of poverty without—that pale, shivering, miserable caitiff, how can he aid the great schemes you meditate?"

"Much, my son," said the Matron, with more mildness than the page perhaps expected. "When that pious son of the church returns from the shrine of Saint Ringan, whither he now travels by my counsel, and by the aid of good Catholics,—when he returns, healed, of his wasting malady, high in health, and strong in limb, will not the glory of his faithfulness, and its miraculous reward, speak louder in the ears of this besotted people of Scotland, than the din which is weekly made in a thousand heretical pulpits?"

"Ay, but, mother, I fear the Saint's hand is out. It is long since we have heard of a miracle performed at St. Ringan's."

The matron made a dead pause, and, with a voice tremulous with emotion, asked, "Art thou so unhappy as to doubt the power of the blessed Saint?"

"Nay, mother," the youth hastened to reply, "I believe as the Holy Church commands, and doubt not Saint Ringan's power of healing; but, be it said with reverence, he hath not of late showed the inclination."

"And has this land deserved it?" said the Catholic matron, advancing hastily while she spoke, until she attained the summit of a rising ground, over which the path led, and then standing again still. "Here," she said, "stood the Cross, the limits of the Halidome of Saint Mary's—here—on this eminence—from which the eye of the holy pilgrim might first catch a view of that ancient monastery, the light of the land, the abode of Saints, and the grave of monarchs—Where is now that emblem of our faith? It lies on the earth—a shapeless block, from which the broken fragments have been carried off, for the meanest uses, till now no semblance of its original form remains. Look towards the east, my son, where the sun was wont to glitter on stately spires—from which crosses and bells have now been hurled, as if the land had been invaded once more by barbarous heathens.—Look at yonder battlements, of which we can, even at this distance, descry the partial demolition; and ask if this land can expect from the blessed saints, whose shrines and whose images have been profaned, any other miracles but those of vengeance? How long," she exclaimed, looking upward, "How long shall it be delayed?" She paused, and then resumed with enthusiastic rapidity, "Yes, my son, all on earth is but for a period—joy and grief, triumph and desolation, succeed each other like cloud and sunshine;—the vineyard shall not be forever trodden down, the gaps shall be amended, and the fruitful branches once more dressed and trimmed. Even this day—ay, even this hour, I trust to hear news of importance. Dally not—let us on—time is brief, and judgment is certain."

She resumed the path which led to the Abbey—a path which, in ancient times, was carefully marked out by posts and rails, to assist the pilgrim in his journey—these were now torn up and destroyed. A half-hour's walk placed them in front of the once splendid Monastery, which, although the church was as yet entire, had not escaped the fury of the times. The long range of cells and of apartments for the use of the brethren, which occupied two sides of the great square, were almost entirely ruinous, the interior having been consumed by fire, which only the massive architecture of the outward walls had enabled them to resist. The Abbot's house, which formed the third side of the square, was, though injured, still inhabited, and afforded refuge to the few brethren, who yet, rather by connivance than by actual authority,—were permitted to remain at Kennaquhair. Their stately offices—their pleasant gardens—the magnificent cloisters constructed for their recreation, were all dilapidated and ruinous; and some of the building materials had apparently been put into requisition by persons in the village and in the vicinity, who, formerly vassals of the Monastery, had not hesitated to appropriate to themselves a part of the spoils. Roland saw fragments of Gothic pillars richly carved, occupying the place of door-posts to the meanest huts; and here and there a mutilated statue, inverted or laid on its side, made the door-post, or threshold, of a wretched cow-house. The church itself was less injured than the other buildings of the Monastery. But the images which had been placed in the numerous niches of its columns and buttresses, having all fallen under the charge of idolatry, to which the superstitious devotion of the Papists had justly exposed them, had been broken and thrown down, without much regard to the preservation of the rich and airy canopies and pedestals on which they were placed; nor, if the devastation had stopped short at this point, could we have considered the preservation of these monuments of antiquity as an object to be put in the balance with the introduction of the reformed worship.

Our pilgrims saw the demolition of these sacred and venerable representations of saints and angels—for as sacred and venerable they had been taught to consider them—with very different feelings. The antiquary may be permitted to regret the necessity of the action, but to Magdalen Graeme it seemed a deed of

impiety, deserving the instant vengeance of heaven,—a sentiment in which her relative joined for the moment as cordially as herself. Neither, however, gave vent to their feelings in words, and uplifted hands and eyes formed their only mode of expressing them. The page was about to approach the great eastern gate of the church, but was prevented by his guide. "That gate," she said, "has long been blockaded, that the heretical rabble may not know there still exist among the brethren of Saint Mary's men who dare worship where their predecessors prayed while alive, and were interred when dead—follow me this way, my son." Roland Graeme followed accordingly; and Magdalen, casting a hasty glance to see whether they were observed, (for she had learned caution from the danger of the times,) commanded her grandson to knock at a little wicket which she pointed out to him. "But knock gently," she added, with a motion expressive of caution. After a little space, during which no answer was returned, she signed to Roland to repeat his summons for admission; and the door at length partially opening, discovered a glimpse of the thin and timid porter, by whom the duty was performed, skulking from the observation of those who stood without; but endeavouring at the same time to gain a sight of them without being himself seen. How different from the proud consciousness of dignity with which the porter of ancient days offered his important brow, and his goodly person, to the pilgrims who repaired to Kennaquhair! His solemn "*Intrate, mei filii*," was exchanged for a tremulous "You cannot enter now—the brethren are in their chambers." But, when Magdalen Graeme asked, in an under tone of voice, "Hast thou forgotten me, my brother?" he changed his apologetic refusal to "Enter, my honoured sister, enter speedily, for evil eyes are upon us."

They entered accordingly, and having waited until the porter had, with jealous haste, barred and bolted the wicket, were conducted by him through several dark and winding passages. As they walked slowly on, he spoke to the matron in a subdued voice, as if he feared to trust the very walls with the avowal which he communicated.

"Our Fathers are assembled in the Chapter-house, worthy sister—yes, in the Chapter-house—for the election of an Abbott.—Ah, Benedicite! there must be no ringing of bells—no high mass—no opening of the great gates now, that the people might see and venerate their spiritual Father! Our Fathers must hide themselves rather like robbers who choose a leader, than godly priests who elect a mitred Abbot."

"Regard not that, my brother," answered Magdalen Graeme; "the first successors of Saint Peter himself were elected, not in sunshine, but in tempests—not in the halls of the Vatican, but in the subterranean vaults and dungeons of heathen Rome—they were not gratulated with shouts and salvos of cannon-shot and of musketry, and the display of artificial fire—no, my brother—but by the hoarse summons of Lictors and Praetors, who came to drag the Fathers of the Church to martyrdom. From such adversity was the Church once raised, and by such will it now be purified.—And mark me, brother! not in the proudest days of the mitred Abbey, was a Superior ever chosen, whom his office shall so much honour, as *he* shall be honoured, who now takes it upon him in these days of tribulation. On whom, my brother, will the choice fall?"

"On whom can it fall—or, alas! who would dare to reply to the call, save the worthy pupil of the Sainted Eustatius—the good and valiant Father Ambrose?"

"I know it," said Magdalen; "my heart told me long ere your lips had uttered his name. Stand forth, courageous champion, and man the fatal breach!—Rise, bold and experienced pilot, and seize the helm while the tempest rages!—Turn back the battle, brave raiser of the fallen standard!—Wield crook and slang, noble shepherd of a scattered flock!"

"I pray you, hush, my sister!" said the porter, opening a door which led into the great church, "the brethren will be presently here to celebrate their election with a solemn mass—I must marshal them the way to the high altar—all the offices of this venerable house have now devolved on one poor decrepit old man."

He left the church, and Magdalen and Roland remained alone in that great vaulted space, whose style of rich, yet chaste architecture, referred its origin to the early part of the fourteenth century, the best period of Gothic building. But the niches were stripped of their images in the inside as well as the outside of the church; and in the pell-mell havoc, the tombs of warriors and of princes had been included in the demolition of the idolatrous shrines. Lances and swords of antique size, which had hung over the tombs of mighty warriors of former days, lay now strewed among relics, with which the devotion of pilgrims had graced those of their peculiar saints; and the fragments of the knights and dames, which had once lain recumbent, or kneeled in an attitude of devotion, where their mortal relics were reposed, were mingled with those of the saints and angels of the Gothic chisel, which the hand of violence had sent headlong from their stations.

The most fatal symptom of the whole appeared to be, that, though this violence had now been committed for many months, the Fathers had lost so totally all heart and resolution, that they had not adventured even upon clearing away the rubbish, or restoring the church to some decent degree of order. This might have been done without much labour. But terror had overpowered the scanty remains of a body once so powerful, and, sensible they were only suffered to remain in this ancient seat by connivance and from compassion, they did not venture upon taking any step which might be construed into an assertion of their ancient rights, contenting themselves with the secret and obscure exercise of their religious ceremonial, in as unostentatious a manner as was possible.

Two or three of the more aged brethren had sunk under the pressure of the times, and the ruins had been partly cleared away to permit their interment. One stone had been laid over Father Nicholas, which recorded of him in special, that he had taken the vows during the incumbency of Abbot Ingelram, the period to which his memory so frequently recurred. Another flag-stone, yet more recently deposited, covered the body of Philip the Sacristan, eminent for his aquatic excursion with the phantom of Avenel, and a third, the most recent of all, bore the outline of a mitre, and the words *Hic jacet Eustatius Abbas*; for no one dared to add a word of commendation in favour of his learning, and strenuous zeal for the Roman Catholic faith.

Magdalen Graeme looked at and perused the brief records of these monuments successively, and paused over that of Father Eustace. "In a good hour for thyself," she said, "but oh! in an evil hour for the Church, wert thou called from us. Let thy spirit be with us, holy man—encourage thy successor to tread in thy footsteps—give him thy bold and inventive capacity, thy zeal and thy discretion—even *thy* piety exceeds not his." As she spoke, a side door, which closed a passage from the Abbot's house into the church, was thrown open, that the Fathers might enter the choir, and conduct to the high altar the Superior whom they had elected.

In former times, this was one of the most splendid of the many pageants which the hierarchy of Rome had devised to attract the veneration of the faithful. The period during which the Abbacy remained vacant, was a state of mourning, or, as their emblematical phrase expressed it, of widowhood; a melancholy term, which was changed into rejoicing and triumph when a new Superior was chosen. When the folding doors were on such solemn occasions thrown open, and the new Abbot appeared on the threshold in full-blown dignity, with ring and mitre, and dalmatique and crosier, his hoary standard-bearers and his juvenile dispensers of incense preceding him, and the venerable train of monks behind him, with all besides which could announce the supreme authority to which he was now raised, his appearance was a signal for the magnificent *jubilate* to rise from the organ and music-loft, and to be joined by the corresponding bursts of Alleluiah from the whole assembled congregation. Now all was changed. In the midst of rubbish and desolation, seven or eight old men, bent and shaken as much by grief and fear as by age, shrouded hastily in the proscribed dress of their order, wandered like a procession of spectres, from the door which had been thrown open, up through the encumbered passage, to the high altar, there to instal their elected Superior a chief of ruins. It was like a band of bewildered travellers choosing a chief in the wilderness of Arabia; or a shipwrecked crew electing a captain upon the barren island on which fate has thrown them.

They who, in peaceful times, are most ambitious of authority among others, shrink from the competition at such eventful periods, when neither ease nor parade attend the possession of it, and when it gives only a painful pre-eminence both in danger and in labour, and exposes the ill-fated chieftain to the murmurs of his discontented associates, as well as to the first assault of the common enemy. But he on whom the office of the Abbot of Saint Mary's was now conferred, had a mind fitted for the situation to which he was called. Bold and enthusiastic, yet generous and forgiving—wise and skilful, yet zealous and prompt—he wanted but a better cause than the support of a decaying superstition, to have raised him to the rank of a truly great man. But as the end crowns the work, it also forms the rule by which it must be ultimately judged; and those who, with sincerity and generosity, fight and fall in an evil cause, posterity can only compassionate as victims of a generous but fatal error. Amongst these, we must rank Ambrosius, the last Abbot of Kennaquhair, whose designs must be condemned, as their success would have riveted on Scotland the chains of antiquated superstition and spiritual tyranny; but whose talents commanded respect, and whose virtues, even from the enemies of his faith, extorted esteem.

The bearing of the new Abbot served of itself to dignify a ceremonial which was deprived of all other attributes of grandeur. Conscious of the peril in which they stood, and recalling, doubtless, the better days they had seen, there hung over his brethren an appearance of mingled terror, and grief, and shame, which induced them to hurry over the office in which they were engaged, as something at once degrading and dangerous.

But not so Father Ambrose. His features, indeed, expressed a deep melancholy, as he walked up the centre aisle, amid the ruin of things which he considered as holy, but his brow was undejected, and his step firm and solemn. He seemed to think that the dominion which he was about to receive, depended in no sort upon the external circumstances under which it was conferred; and if a mind so firm was accessible to sorrow or fear, it was not on his own account, but on that of the Church to which he had devoted himself.

At length he stood on the broken steps of the high altar, barefooted, as was the rule, and holding in his hand his pastoral staff, for the gemmed ring and jewelled mitre had become secular spoils. No obedient vassals came, man after man, to make their homage, and to offer the tribute which should provide their spiritual Superior with palfrey and trappings. No Bishop assisted at the solemnity, to receive into the higher ranks of the Church nobility a dignitary, whose voice in the legislature was as potential as his own. With hasty and maimed rites, the few remaining brethren stepped forward alternately to give their new Abbot the kiss of peace, in token of fraternal affection and spiritual homage. Mass was then hastily performed, but in such precipitation as if it had been hurried over rather to satisfy the scruples of a few youths, who were impatient to set out on a hunting party, than as if it made the most solemn part of a solemn ordination. The officiating priest faltered as he spoke the service, and often looked around, as if he expected to be interrupted in the midst of his office; and the brethren listened to that which, short as it was, they wished yet more abridged.[Footnote: In Catholic countries, in order to reconcile the pleasures of the great with the observances of religion, it was common, when a party was bent for the chase, to celebrate mass, abridged and maimed of its rites, called a hunting-mass, the brevity of which was designed to correspond with the impatience of the audience.]

These symptoms of alarm increased as the ceremony proceeded, and, as it seemed, were not caused by mere apprehension alone; for, amid the pauses of the hymn, there were heard without sounds of a very different sort, beginning faintly and at a distance, but at length approaching close to the exterior of the church, and stunning with dissonant clamour those engaged in the service. The winding of horns, blown with no regard to harmony or concert; the jangling of bells, the thumping of drums, the squeaking of bagpipes, and the clash of cymbals—the shouts of a multitude, now as in laughter, now as in anger—the shrill tones of female voices, and of those of children, mingling with the deeper clamour of men, formed a Babel of sounds, which first drowned, and then awed into utter silence, the official hymns of the Convent. The cause and result of this extraordinary interruption will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter the Fourteenth.

*Not the wild billow, when it breaks its barrier—
Not the wild wind, escaping from its cavern—
Not the wild fiend, that mingles both together,
And pours their rage upon the ripening harvest,
Can match the wild freaks of this mirthful meeting—
Comic, yet fearful—droll, and yet destructive.*

THE CONSPIRACY.

The monks ceased their song, which, like that of the choristers in the legend of the Witch of Berkley, died away in a quaver of consternation; and, like a flock of chickens disturbed by the presence of the kite, they at first made a movement to disperse and fly in different directions, and then, with despair, rather than hope, huddled themselves around their new Abbot; who, retaining the lofty and undismayed look which had dignified him through the whole ceremony, stood on the higher step of the altar, as if desirous to be the most conspicuous mark on which danger might discharge itself, and to save his companions by his self-devotion, since he could afford them no other protection.

Involuntarily, as it were, Magdalen Graeme and the page stepped from the station which hitherto they had occupied unnoticed, and approached to the altar, as desirous of sharing the fate which approached the monks, whatever that might be. Both bowed reverently low to the Abbot; and while Magdalen seemed about to speak, the youth, looking towards the main entrance, at which the noise now roared most loudly, and which was at the same time assailed with much knocking, laid his hand upon his dagger.

The Abbot motioned to both to forbear: "Peace, my sister," he said, in a low tone, but which, being in a different key from the tumultuary sounds without, could be distinctly heard, even amidst the tumult;—"Peace," he said, "my sister; let the new Superior of Saint Mary's himself receive and reply to the grateful acclamations of the vassals, who come to celebrate his installation.—And thou, my son, forbear, I charge thee, to touch thy earthly weapon;—if it is the pleasure of our protectress, that her shrine be this day desecrated by deeds of violence, and polluted by blood-shedding, let it not, I charge thee, happen through the deed of a Catholic son of the church."

The noise and knocking at the outer gate became now every moment louder; and voices were heard impatiently demanding admittance. The Abbot, with dignity, and with a step which even the emergency of danger rendered neither faltering nor precipitate, moved towards the portal, and demanded to know, in a tone of authority, who it was that disturbed their worship, and what they desired?

There was a moment's silence, and then a loud laugh from without. At length a voice replied, "We desire entrance into the church; and when the door is opened you will soon see who we are."

"By whose authority do you require entrance?" said the Father.

"By authority of the right reverend Lord Abbot of Unreason."

[Footnote: We learn from no less authority than that of Napoleon Bonaparte, that there is but a single step between the sublime and ridiculous; and it is a transition from one extreme to another; so very easy, that the vulgar of every degree are peculiarly captivated with it. Thus the inclination to laugh becomes uncontrollable, when the solemnity and gravity of time, place, and circumstances, render it peculiarly improper. Some species of general license, like that which inspired the ancient Saturnalia, or the modern Carnival, has been commonly indulged to the people at all times and in almost all countries. But it was, I think, peculiar to the Roman Catholic Church, that while they studied how to render their church rites imposing and magnificent, by all that pomp, music, architecture, and external display could add to them, they nevertheless connived, upon special occasions, at the frolics of the rude vulgar, who, in almost all Catholic countries, enjoyed, or at least assumed, the privilege of making: some Lord of the revels, who, under the name of the Abbot of Unreason, the Boy Bishop, or the President of Fools, occupied the churches, profaned the holy places by a mock imitation of the sacred rites, and sung indecent parodies on hymns of the church. The indifference of the clergy, even when their power was greatest, to the indecent exhibitions which they always tolerated, and sometimes encouraged, forms a strong contrast to the sensitiveness with which they regarded any serious attempt, by preaching or writing, to impeach any of the doctrines of the church. It could only be compared to the singular apathy with which they endured, and often admired the gross novels which Chaucer, Dunbar, Boccacio, Bandello, and others, composed upon the bad morals of the clergy. It seems as if the churchmen in both instances had endeavoured to compromise with the laity, and allowed them occasionally to gratify their coarse humour by indecent satire, provided they would abstain from any grave question concerning the foundation of the doctrines on which was erected such an immense fabric of ecclesiastical power.]

But the sports thus licensed assumed a very different appearance, so soon as the Protestant doctrines began to prevail; and the license which their forefathers had exercised in mere gaiety of heart, and without the least intention of dishonouring religion by their frolics, were now persevered in by the common people as a mode of testifying their utter disregard for the Roman priesthood and its ceremonies.

I may observe, for example, the case of an apparitor sent to Borthwick from the Primate of Saint Andrews, to cite the lord of that castle, who was opposed by an Abbot of Unreason, at whose command the officer of the spiritual court was appointed to be ducked in a mill-dam, and obliged to eat up his parchment citation.

The reader may be amused with the following whimsical details of this incident, which took place in the castle of Borthwick, in the year 1517. It appears, that in consequence of a process betwixt Master George Hay de Minzeane and the Lord Borthwick, letters of excommunication had passed against the latter, on account of the contumacy of certain witnesses. William Langlands, an apparitor or macer (*bacularius*) of the See of St Andrews, presented these letters to the curate of the church of Borthwick, requiring him to publish the same at the service of high mass. It seems that the inhabitants of the castle were at this time engaged in the favourite sport of enacting the Abbot of Unreason, a species of high jinks, in which a mimic prelate was elected, who, like the Lord of Misrule in England, turned all sort of lawful authority, and particularly the church ritual, into ridicule. This frolicsome person with his retinue, notwithstanding of the apparitor's character, entered the church, seized upon the primate's officer without hesitation, and, dragging him to the mill-dam on the south side of the castle, compelled him to leap into the water. Not contented with this partial immersion, the Abbot of Unreason pronounced, that Mr. William Langlands was not yet sufficiently bathed, and therefore caused his assistants to lay him on his back in the stream, and duck him in the most satisfactory and perfect manner. The unfortunate apparitor was then conducted back to the church, where, for his refreshment after his bath, the letters of excommunication were torn to pieces, and steeped in a bowl of wine; the mock abbot being probably of opinion that a tough parchment was but dry eating, Langlands was compelled to eat the letters, and swallow the wine, and dismissed by the Abbot of Unreason, with the comfortable assurance, that if any more such letters should arrive during the continuance of his office, "they should a' gang the same gate," *i. e.* go the same road.

A similar scene occurs betwixt a sumner of the Bishop of Rochester, and Harpool, the servant of Lord Cobham, in the old play of Sir John Oldcastle, when the former compels the church-officer to eat his citation. The dialogue, which may be found in the note, contains most of the jests which may be supposed, appropriate to such an extraordinary occasion:

Harpool Marry, sir, is, this process parchment?

Sumner. Yes, marry is it.

Harpool. And this seal wax?

Sumner. It is so.

Harpool. If this be parchment, and this be wax, eat you this parchment and wax, or I will make parchment of your skin, and beat your brains into wax. Sirrah Sumner, despatch—devour, sirrah, devour.

Sumner. I am my Lord of Rochester's sumner; I came to do my office, and thou shall answer it.

Harpool. Sirrah, no railing, but, betake thyself to thy teeth. Thou shalt, eat no worse than thou bringest with thee. Thou bringest it for my lord; and wilt thou bring my lord worse than thou wilt eat thyself?

Sumner. Sir. I brought it not my lord to eat.

Harpool. O, do you Sir me now? All's one for that; I'll make you eat it for bringing it.

Sumner. I cannot eat it.

Harpool. Can you not? 'Sblood, I'll beat you till you have a stomach! (*Beats him.*)

Sumner. Oh, hold, hold, good Mr. Servingman; I will eat it.

Harpool. Be champing, be chewing, sir, or I will chew you, you rogue. Tough wax is the purest of the honey.

Sumner. The purest of the honey?—O Lord, sir, oh! oh!

Harpool. Feed, feed; 'tis wholesome, rogue, wholesome. Cannot you, like an honest sumner, walk with the devil your brother, to fetch in your bailiff's rents, but you must come to a nobleman's house with process! If the seal were broad as the lead which covers Rochester Church, thou shouldst eat it.

Sumner. Oh, I am almost choked—I am almost choked!

Harpool. Who's within there? Will you shame my lord? Is there no beer in the house? Butler, I say.

Enter BUTLER.

Butler. Here, here.

Harpool. Give him beer. Tough old sheep skin's but dry meat.

First Part of Sir John Oldcastle, Act II. Scene I.]

replied the voice from without; and, from the laugh—which followed, it seemed as if there was something highly ludicrous couched under this reply.

"I know not, and seek not to know, your meaning," replied the Abbot, "since it is probably a rude one. But begone, in the name of God, and leave his servants in peace. I speak this, as having lawful authority to command here."

"Open the door," said another rude voice, "and we will try titles with you, Sir Monk, and show you a superior we must all obey."

"Break open the doors if he dallies any longer," said a third, "and down with the carrion monks who would bar us of our privilege!" A general shout followed. "Ay, ay, our privilege! our privilege! down with the doors, and with the lurdane monks, if they make opposition!"

The knocking was now exchanged for blows with great, hammers, to which the doors, strong as they were, must soon have given way. But the Abbot, who saw resistance would be in vain, and who did not wish to incense the assailants by an attempt at offering it, besought silence earnestly, and with difficulty obtained a hearing. "My children," said he, "I will save you from committing a great sin. The porter will presently undo the gate—he is gone to fetch the keys—meantime I pray you to consider with yourselves, if you are in a state of mind to cross the holy threshold."

"Tillyvally for your papistry!" was answered from without; "we are in the mood of the monks when they are merriest, and that is when they sup beef-brewis for lanten-kail. So, if your porter hath not the gout, let him come speedily, or we heave away readily.—Said I well, comrades?"

"Bravely said, and it shall be as bravely done," said the multitude; and had not the keys arrived at that moment, and the porter in hasty terror performed his office, throwing open the great door, the populace would have saved him the trouble. The instant he had done so, the affrighted janitor fled, like one who has drawn the bolts of a flood-gate, and expects to be overwhelmed by the rushing inundation. The monks, with one consent, had withdrawn themselves behind the Abbot, who alone kept his station, about three yards from the entrance, showing no signs of fear or perturbation. His brethren—partly encouraged by his devotion, partly ashamed to desert him, and partly animated by a sense of duty.—remained huddled close together, at the back of their Superior. There was a loud laugh and huzza when the doors were opened; but, contrary to what might have been expected, no crowd of enraged assailants rushed into the church. On the contrary, there was a cry of "A halt!—a halt—to order, my masters! and let the two reverend fathers greet each other, as beseems them."

The appearance of the crowd who were thus called to order, was grotesque in the extreme. It was composed of men, women, and children, ludicrously disguised in various habits, and presenting groups equally diversified and grotesque. Here one fellow with a horse's head painted before him, and a tail behind, and the whole covered with a long foot-cloth, which was supposed to hide the body of the animal, ambled, caracoled, pranced, and plunged, as he performed the celebrated part of the hobby-horse,

[Footnote: This exhibition, the play-mare of Scotland, stood high among holyday gambols. It must be carefully separated from the wooden chargers which furnish out our nurseries. It gives rise to Hamlet's ejaculation,—

But oh, but oh, the hobby-horse is forgot!

There is a very comic scene in Beaumont and Fletcher's play of "Woman Pleased," where Hope-on-high Bombye, a puritan cobbler, refuses to dance with the hobby-horse. There was much difficulty and great variety in the motions which the hobby-horse was expected to exhibit.

The learned Mr. Douce, who has contributed so much to the illustration of our theatrical antiquities, has given us a full account of this pageant, and the burlesque horsemanship which it practised.

"The hobby-horse," says Mr. Douce, "was represented by a man equipped with as much pasteboard as was sufficient to form the head and hinder parts of a horse, the quadrupedal defects being concealed by a long mantle or footcloth that nearly touched the ground. The former, on this occasion, exerted all his skill in burlesque horsemanship. In Sympson's play of the Law-breakers, 1636, a miller personates the hobby-horse, and being angry that the Mayor of the city is put in competition with him, exclaims, 'Let the mayor play the hobby-horse among his brethren, an he will; I hope our town-lads cannot want a hobby-horse. Have I practised my reins, my careers, my pranks, my ambles, my false trots, my smooth ambles, and Canterbury paces, and shall master mayor put me beside the hobby-horse? Have I borrowed the fore-horse bells, his plumes, his braveries; nay, had his mane new shorn and frizzled, and shall the mayor put me beside the hobby-horse?'—*Douce's Illustrations*, vol. II. p. 468]

so often alluded to in our ancient drama; and which still flourishes on the stage in the battle that concludes Bayes's tragedy. To rival the address and agility displayed by this character, another personage advanced in the more formidable character of a huge dragon, with gilded wings, open jaws, and a scarlet tongue, cloven at the end, which made various efforts to overtake and devour a lad, dressed as the lovely Sabaea, daughter of the King of Egypt, who fled before him; while a martial Saint George, grotesquely armed with a goblet for a helmet, and a spit for a lance, ever and anon interfered, and compelled the monster to relinquish his prey. A bear, a wolf, and one or two other wild animals, played their parts with the discretion of Snug the joiner; for the decided preference which they gave to the use of their hind legs, was sufficient, without any formal annunciation, to assure the most timorous spectators that they had to do with habitual bipeds. There was a group of outlaws with Robin Hood and Little John at their head

[Footnote: The representation of Robin Hood was the darling Maygame both in England and Scotland, and doubtless the favourite personification was often revived, when the Abbot of Unreason, or other pretences of frolic, gave an unusual decree of license.

The Protestant clergy, who had formerly reaped advantage from the opportunities which these sports afforded them of directing their own satire and the ridicule of the lower orders against the Catholic church, began to find that, when these purposes were served, their favourite pastimes deprived them of the wish to attend divine worship, and disturbed the frame of mind in which it can be attended to advantage. The celebrated Bishop Latimer gives a very *naïve* account of the manner in which, bishop as he was, he found himself compelled to give place to Robin Hood and his followers.

"I came once myself riding on a journey homeward from London, and I sent word over night into the towne that I would preach there in the morning, because it was holiday, and me thought it was a holidayes worke. The church stood in my way, and I took my horse and my company, and went thither, (I thought I should have found a great company in the church,) and when I came there the church doore was fast locked. I tarried there halfe an houre and more. At last the key was found, and one of the parish comes to me and said,—'Sir, this is a busie day with us, we cannot hear you; it is Robin Hood's day. The parish are gone abroad to gather for Robin Hood. I pray you let them not.' I was faine there to give place to Robin Hood. I thought my rochet should have been regarded, though I were not: but it would not serve, it was faine to give place to Robin Hood's men. It is no laughing matter, my friends, it is a weeping matter, a heave matter, a heave matter. Under the pretence for gathering for Robin Hood, a traytour, and a thief, to put out a preacher; to have his office lesse esteemed; to preferre Robin Hood before the ministracion of God's word; and all this hath come of unpreaching prelates. This realme hath been ill provided for, that it hath had such corrupt judgments in it, to prefer Robin Hood to God's word."—*Bishop Latimer's sixth Sermon before King Edward*.

While the English Protestants thus preferred the outlaw's pageant to the preaching of their excellent Bishop, the Scottish calvinistic clergy, with the celebrated John Knox at their head, and backed by the authority of the magistrates of Edinburgh, who had of late been chosen exclusively from this party, found it impossible to control the rage of the populace, when they attempted to deprive them of the privilege of presenting their pageant of Robin Hood.

[Note on old Scottish spelling: leading y = modern 'th'; leading v = modern 'u']

(561) "Vpon the xxi day of Junij. Archibalde Dowglas of Kilspindie, Provost of Edr., David Symmer and Adame Fullartoun, baillies of the samyne, causit ane cordinare servant, callit James Gillion takin of befor, for playing in Edr. with Robene Hude, to wnderly the law, and put him to the knowlege of ane assyize qlk yaij haid electit of yair favoraris, quha with schort deliberatioun condemnit him to be hangit for ye said cryme. And the deaconis of ye craftsmen fearing vproare, maid great solistatus at ye handis of ye said provost and baillies, and als requirit John Knox, minister, for eschewing of tumult, to superceid ye execution of him, vnto ye tyme yai suld adverteis my Lord Duke yairof. And yan, if it wes his mynd and will yat he should be dispoit vpon, ye said deaconis and craftsmen sould convey him yaire; quha answerit, yat yai culd na way stope ye executioun of justice. Quhan ye time of ye said pouer mans hanging aprochit, and yat ye hangman wes cum to ye jibbat with ye ledder, vpoune ye qlk ye said cordinare should have bene hangit, ane certaine and remanent craftischilder, quha wes put to ye horne with ye said Gillione, ffor ye said Robene Huide's *playes*, and vyris yair assistaris and favoraris, past to wappinis, and yai brak down ye said jibbat, and yan chacit ye said provost, baillies, and Alexr. Guthrie, in ye said Alexander's writing buith, and held yame yairin; and yairefter past to ye tolbuyt, and becaus the samyne was steiket, and onnawayes culd get the keyes thairof, thai brak the said tolbuith dore with foure harberis, per force, (the said provost and baillies luckand thairon.) and not onlie put thar the said Gillione to fredome and libertie, and brocht him furth of the said tolbuith, bot alsua the remanent presonaris being thairintill; and this done, the said craftsmen's servands, with the said condemnit cordonar, past doun to the Netherbow, to have past furth thairat; bot becaus the samyne on thair coming thairto wes closet, thai past vp agane the Hie streit of the said bourghe to the Castellhill, and in this menetyrne the saidis provost and baillies, and thair assistaris being in the writing buith of the said Alexr. Guthrie, past and enterit in the said tolbuyt, and in the said servandes passage vp the Hie streit, then schote furth thairof at thame ane dog, and hurt ane servand of the said childer. This being done, thair wes nathing vthir bot the one partie schuteand out and castand stanes furth of the said tolbuyt, and the vther partie schuteand hagbuttis in the same agane. Aund sua the craftsmen's servandis, aboue written, held and inclosit the said provost and baillies continewallie in the said tolbuyth, frae three houris eftrenone, quhill aught houris at even, and na man of the said town prensit to relieve their said provost and baillies. And than thai send to the maisters of the Castell, to caush thaim if thai mycht stay the said servandis, quha maid ane maner to do the same, bot thai could not bring the same to ane finall end, ffor the said servands wold on noways stay fra, quhill thai had revengit the hurting of ane of them; and thairefter the constable of the castell come down thairfra, and he with the said maisters treatet betwix the said pties in this maner:—That the said provost and baillies sall remit to the said craftischilder, all actioun, cryme, and offenses that thai had committit aganes thame in any tyme bygane; and band and oblast thame never to pursew them thairfor; and als commandit thair maisters to resauie them agane in thair services, as thai did befor. And this being proclainit at the mercat cross, thai scalit, and the said provost and bailies come furth of the same tolbuyth." &c. &c. &c.

John Knox, who writes at large upon this tumult, informs us it was inflamed by the deacons of craftes, who, resenting; the superiority assumed over them by the magistrates, would yield no assistance to put down the tumult. "They will be magistrates alone," said the recusant deacons, "e'en let them rule the populace alone;" and accordingly they passed quietly to take *their four-hours penny*, and left the magistrates to help themselves as they could. Many persons were excommunicated for this outrage, and not admitted to church ordinances till they had made satisfaction.] —the best representation exhibited at the time; and no great wonder, since most of the actors were, by profession, the banished men and thieves whom they presented. Other masqueraders there were, of a less marked description. Men were disguised as women, and women as men—children wore the dress of aged people, and tottered with crutch-sticks in their hands, furred gowns on their little backs, and caps on their round heads—while grandsires assumed the infantine tone as well as the dress of children. Besides these, many had their faces painted, and wore their shirts over the rest of their dress; while coloured pasteboard and ribbons furnished out decorations for others. Those who wanted all these properties, blacked their faces, and turned their jackets inside out; and thus the transmutation of the whole assembly into a set of mad grotesque mummers, was at once completed.

The pause which the masqueraders made, waiting apparently for some person of the highest authority amongst them, gave those within the Abbey Church full time to observe all these absurdities. They were at no loss to comprehend their purpose and meaning.

Few readers can be ignorant, that at an early period, and during the plenitude of her power, the Church of Rome not only connived at, but even encouraged, such Saturnalian licenses as the inhabitants of Kennaquhair and the neighbourhood had now in hand, and that the vulgar, on such occasions, were not only permitted but encouraged by a number of gambols, sometimes puerile and ludicrous, sometimes immoral and profane, to indemnify themselves for the privations and penances imposed on them at other seasons. But, of all other topics for burlesque and ridicule, the rites and ceremonial of the church itself were most frequently resorted to; and, strange to say, with the approbation of the clergy themselves.

While the hierarchy flourished in full glory, they do not appear to have dreaded the consequences of suffering the people to become so irreverently familiar with things sacred; they then imagined the laity to be much in the condition of the labourer's horse, which does not submit to the bridle and the whip with greater reluctance, because, at rare intervals, he is allowed to frolic at large in his pasture, and fling out his heels in clumsy gambols at the master who usually drives him. But, when times changed—when doubt of the Roman Catholic doctrine, and hatred of their priesthood, had possessed the reformed party, the clergy discovered, too late, that no small inconvenience arose from the established practice of games and merry-makings, in which they themselves, and all they held most sacred, were made the subject of ridicule. It then became obvious to duller politicians than the Romish churchmen, that the same actions have a very different tendency when done in the spirit of sarcastic insolence and hatred, than when acted merely in exuberance of rude and uncontrollable spirits. They, therefore, though of the latest, endeavoured, where they had any remaining influence, to discourage the renewal of these indecorous festivities. In this particular, the Catholic clergy were joined by most of the reformed preachers, who were more shocked at the profanity and immorality of many of these exhibitions, than disposed to profit by the ridiculous light in which they placed the Church of Rome and her observances. But it was long ere these scandalous and immoral sports could be abrogated;—the rude multitude continued attached to their favourite pastimes, and, both in England and Scotland, the mitre of the Catholic—the rochet of the reformed bishop—and the cloak and band of the Calvinistic divine—were, in turn, compelled to give place to those jocular personages, the Pope of Fools, the Boy-Bishop, and the Abbot of Unreason. [Footnote: From the interesting novel entitled Anastasius, it seems the same burlesque ceremonies were practised in the Greek Church.]

It was the latter personage who now, in full costume, made his approach to the great door of the church of St. Mary's, accoutred in such a manner as to form a caricature, or practical parody, on the costume and attendants of the real Superior, whom he came to beard on the very day of his installation, in the presence of his clergy, and in the chancel of his church. The mock dignitary was a stout-made under-sized fellow, whose thick squab form had been rendered grotesque by a supplemental paunch, well stuffed. He wore a mitre of leather, with the front like a grenadier's cap, adorned with mock embroidery, and trinkets of tin. This surmounted a visage, the nose of which was the most prominent feature, being of unusual size, and at least as richly gemmed as his head-gear. His robe was of buckram, and his cope of canvass, curiously painted, and cut into open work. On one shoulder was fixed the painted figure of an owl; and he bore in the right hand his pastoral staff, and in the left a small mirror having a handle to it, thus resembling a celebrated jester, whose adventures, translated into English, were whilom extremely popular, and which may still be procured in black letter, for about one sterling pound per leaf.

The attendants of this mock dignitary had their proper dresses and equipage, bearing the same burlesque resemblance to the officers of the Convent which their leader did to the Superior. They followed their leader in regular procession, and the motley characters, which had waited his arrival, now crowded into the church in his train, shouting as they came,—“A hall, a hall! for the venerable Father Howleglas, the learned Monk of Misrule, and the Right Reverend Abbot of Unreason!” The discordant minstrelsy of every kind renewed its din; the boys shrieked and howled, and the men laughed and hallooed, and the women giggled and screamed, and the beasts roared, and the dragon wallopped and hissed, and the hobby-horse neighed, pranced, and capered, and the rest frisked and frolicked, clashing their hobnailed shoes against the pavement, till it sparkled with the marks of their energetic caprioles.

It was, in fine, a scene of ridiculous confusion, that deafened the ear, made the eyes giddy, and must have altogether stunned any indifferent spectator; the monks, whom personal apprehension and a consciousness that much of the popular enjoyment arose from the ridicule being directed against them, were, moreover, little comforted by the reflection, that, bold in their disguise, the mummers who whooped and capered around them, might, on slight provocation, turn their jest into earnest, or at least proceed to those practical pleasantries, which at all times arise so naturally out of the frolicsome and mischievous disposition of the populace. They looked to their Abbot amid the tumult, with such looks as landsmen cast upon the pilot when the storm is at the highest—looks which express that they are devoid of all hope arising from their own exertions, and not very confident in any success likely to attend those of their Palinurus.

The Abbot himself seemed at a stand; he felt no fear, but he was sensible of the danger of expressing his rising indignation, which he was scarcely able to suppress. He made a gesture with his hand as if commanding silence, which was at first only replied to by redoubled shouts, and peals of wild laughter. When, however, the same motion, and as nearly in the same manner, had been made by Howleglas, it was immediately obeyed by his riotous companions, who expected fresh food for mirth in the conversation betwixt the real and mock Abbot, having no small confidence in the vulgar wit and impudence of their leader. Accordingly, they began to shout, “To it, fathers—to it!”—“Fight monk, fight madcap—Abbot against Abbot is fair play, and so is reason against unreason, and malice against monkey!”

“Silence, my mates!” said Howleglas; “cannot two learned Fathers of the Church hold communion together, but you must come here with your bear-garden whoop and hollo, as if you were hounding forth a mastiff upon a mad bull? I say silence! and let this learned Father and me confer, touching matters affecting our mutual state and authority.”

“My children”—said Father Ambrose.

“My children too,—and happy children they are!” said his burlesque counterpart; “many a wise child knows not its own father, and it is well they have two to choose betwixt.”

“If thou hast aught in thee, save scoffing and ribaldry,” said the real Abbot, “permit me, for thine own soul's sake, to speak a few words to these misguided men.”

“Aught in me but scoffing, sayest thou?” retorted the Abbot of Unreason; “why, reverend brother, I have all that becomes mine office at this time a-day—I have beef, ale, and brandy-wine, with other condiments not worth mentioning; and for speaking, man—why, speak away, and we will have turn about, like honest fellows.”

During this discussion the wrath of Magdalen Graeme had risen to the uttermost; she approached the Abbot, and placing herself by his side, said in a low and yet distinct tone—“Wake and arouse thee, Father—the sword of Saint Peter is in thy hand—strike and avenge Saint Peter's patrimony!—Bind them in the chains which, being riveted by the church on earth, are riveted in Heaven—”

“Peace, sister!” said the Abbot; “let not their madness destroy our discretion—I pray thee, peace, and let me do mine office. It is the first, peradventure it may be the last time, I shall be called on to discharge it.”

“Nay, my holy brother!” said Howleglas, “I rede you, take the holy sister's advice—never throve convent without woman's counsel.”

“Peace, vain man!” said the Abbot; “and you, my brethren—”

“Nay, nay!” said the Abbot of Unreason, “no speaking to the lay people, until you have conferred with your brother of the cowl. I swear by bell, book, and candle, that no one of my congregation shall listen to one word you have to say; so you had as well address yourself to me who will.”

To escape a conference so ludicrous, the Abbot again attempted an appeal to what respectful feelings might yet remain amongst the inhabitants of the Halidome, once so devoted to their spiritual Superiors. Alas! the Abbot of Unreason had only to nourish his mock crosier, and the whooping, the hallooing, and the dancing, were renewed with a vehemence which would have defied the lungs of Stentor.

“And now, my mates,” said the Abbot of Unreason, “once again dight your gabs and be hushed—let us see if the Cock of Kennaquhair will fight or flee the pit.”

There was again a dead silence of expectation, of which Father Ambrose availed himself to address his antagonist, seeing plainly that he could gain an audience on no other terms. “Wretched man!” said he, “hast thou no better employment for thy carnal wit, than to employ it in leading these blind and helpless creatures into the pit of utter darkness?”

“Truly, my brother,” replied Howleglas, “I can see little difference betwixt your employment and mine, save that you make a sermon of a jest, and I make a jest of a sermon.”

"Unhappy being," said the Abbot, "who hast no better subject of pleasantry than that which should make thee tremble—no sounder jest than thine own sins, and no better objects for laughter than those who can absolve thee from the guilt of them!"

"Verily, my reverend brother," said the mock Abbot, "what you say might be true, if, in laughing at hypocrites, I meant to laugh at religion.—Oh, it is a precious thing to wear a long dress, with a girdle and a cowl—we become a holy pillar of Mother Church, and a boy must not play at ball against the walls for fear of breaking a painted window!"

"And will you, my friends," said the Abbot, looking round and speaking with a vehemence which secured him a tranquil audience for some time,— "will you suffer a profane buffoon, within the very church of God, to insult his ministers? Many of you—all of you, perhaps—have lived under my holy predecessors, who were called upon to rule in this church where I am called upon to suffer. If you have worldly goods, they are their gift; and, when you scorned not to accept better gifts—the mercy and forgiveness of the church—were they not ever at your command?—did we not pray while you were jovial—wake while you slept?"

"Some of the good wives of the Halidome were wont to say so," said the Abbot of Unreason; but his jest met in this instance but slight applause, and Father Ambrose, having gained a moment's attention, hastened to improve it.

"What!" said he, "and is this grateful—is it seemingly—is it honest—to assail with scorn a few old men, from whose predecessors you hold all, and whose only wish is to die in peace among these fragments of what was once the light of the land, and whose daily prayer is, that they may be removed ere that hour comes when the last spark shall be extinguished, and the land left in the darkness which it has chosen rather than light? We have not turned against you the edge of the spiritual sword, to revenge our temporal persecution; the tempest of your wrath hath despoiled us of land, and deprived us almost of our daily food, but we have not repaid it with the thunders of excommunication—we only pray your leave to live and die within the church which is our own, invoking God, our Lady, and the Holy Saints to pardon your sins, and our own, undisturbed by scurril buffoonery and blasphemy."

This speech, so different in tone and termination from that which the crowd had expected, produced an effect upon their feelings unfavourable to the prosecution of their frolic. The morris-dancers stood still—the hobby-horse surceased his capering—pipe and tabor were mute, and "silence, like a heavy cloud," seemed to descend on the once noisy rabble. Several of the beasts were obviously moved to compunction; the bear could not restrain his sobs, and a huge fox was observed to wipe his eyes with his tail. But in especial the dragon, lately so formidably rampant, now relaxed the terror of his claws, uncoiled his tremendous rings, and grumbled out of his fiery throat in a repentant tone, "By the mass, I thought no harm in exercising our old pastime, but an I had thought the good Father would have taken it so to heart, I would as soon have played your devil, as your dragon."

In this momentary pause, the Abbot stood amongst the miscellaneous and grotesque forms by which he was surrounded, triumphant as Saint Anthony, in Callot's Temptations; but Howleglas would not so resign his purpose.

"And how now, my masters!" said he, "is this fair play or no? Have you not chosen me Abbot of Unreason, and is it lawful for any of you to listen to common sense to-day? Was I not formally elected by you in solemn chapter, held in Luckie Martin's change-house, and will you now desert me, and give up your old pastime and privilege? Play out the play—and he that speaks the next word of sense or reason, or bids us think or consider, or the like of that, which befits not the day, I will have him solemnly ducked in the mill-dam!"

The rabble, mutable as usual, huzzaed, the pipe and tabor struck up, the hobby-horse pranced, the beasts roared, and even the repentant dragon began again to coil up his spires, and prepare himself for fresh gambols. But the Abbot might still have overcome, by his eloquence and his entreaties, the malicious designs of the revellers, had not Dame Magdalen Graeme given loose to the indignation which she had long suppressed.

"Scoffers," she said, "and men of Belial—Blasphemous heretics, and truculent tyrants——"

"Your patience, my sister, I entreat and I command you!" said the Abbot; "let me do my duty—disturb me not in mine office!"

But Dame Magdalen continued to thunder forth her threats in the name of Popes and Councils, and in the name of every Saint, from St. Michael downward.

"My comrades!" said the Abbot of Unreason, "this good dame hath not spoken a single word of reason, and therein may esteem herself free from the law. But what she spoke was meant for reason, and, therefore, unless she confesses and avouches all which she has said to be nonsense, it shall pass for such, so far as to incur our statutes. Wherefore, holy dame, pilgrim, or abbess, or whatever thou art, be mute with thy mummery or beware the mill-dam. We will have neither spiritual nor temporal scolds in our Diocese of Unreason!"

As he spoke thus, he extended his hand towards the old woman, while his followers shouted, "A doom—a doom!" and prepared to second his purpose, when lo! it was suddenly frustrated. Roland Graeme had witnessed with indignation the insults offered to his old spiritual preceptor, but yet had wit enough to reflect he could render him no assistance, but might well, by ineffective interference, make matters worse. But when he saw his aged relative in danger of personal violence, he gave way to the natural impetuosity of his temper, and, stepping forward, struck his poniard into the body of the Abbot of Unreason, whom the blow instantly prostrated on the pavement.

Chapter the Fifteenth.

*As when in tumults rise the ignoble crowd,
Mad are their motions, and their tongues are loud,
And stones and brands in rattling furies fly,
And all the rustic arms which fury can supply—
Then if some grave and pious man appear,
They hush their noise, and lend a listening ear.*

DRYDEN'S VIRGIL

A dreadful shout of vengeance was raised by the revellers, whose sport was thus so fearfully interrupted; but for an instant, the want of weapons amongst the multitude, as well as the inflamed features and brandished poniard of Roland Graeme, kept them at bay, while the Abbot, horror-struck at the violence, implored, with uplifted hands, pardon for blood-shed committed within the sanctuary. Magdalen Graeme alone expressed triumph in the blow her descendant had dealt to the scoffer, mixed, however, with a wild and anxious expression of terror for her grandson's safety. "Let him perish," she said, "in his blasphemy—let him die on the holy pavement which he has insulted!"

But the rage of the multitude, the grief of the Abbot, the exultation of the enthusiastic Magdalen, were all mistimed and unnecessary. Howleglas, mortally wounded as he was supposed to be, sprung alertly up from the floor, calling aloud, "A miracle, a miracle, my masters! as brave a miracle as ever was wrought in the kirk of Kennaquhair. And I charge you, my masters, as your lawfully chosen Abbot, that you touch no one without my command—You, wolf and bear, will guard this pragmatic youth, but without hurting him—And you, reverend brother, will, with your comrades, withdraw to your cells; for our conference has ended like all conferences, leaving each of his own mind, as before; and if we fight, both you, and your brethren, and the Kirk, will have the worst on't—Wherefore, pack up you pipes and begone."

The hubbub was beginning again to awaken, but still Father Ambrose hesitated, as uncertain to what path his duty called him, whether to face out the present storm, or to reserve himself for a better moment. His brother of Unreason observed his difficulty, and said, in a tone more natural and less affected than that with which he had hitherto sustained his character, "We came hither, my good sir, more in mirth than in mischief—our bark is worse than our bite—and, especially, we mean you no personal harm—wherefore, draw off while the play is good; for it is ill whistling for a hawk when she is once on the soar, and worse to snatch the

quarry from the ban-dog—Let these fellows once begin their brawl, and it will be too much for madness itself, let alone the Abbot of Unreason, to bring them back to the lure."

The brethren crowded around Father Ambrosius, and joined in urging him to give place to the torrent. The present revel was, they said, an ancient custom which his predecessors had permitted, and old Father Nicholas himself had played the dragon in the days of the Abbot Ingelram.

"And we now reap the fruit of the seed which they have so unadvisedly sown," said Ambrosius; "they taught men to make a mock of what is holy, what wonder that the descendants of scoffers become robbers and plunderers? But be it as you list, my brethren—move towards the dortour—And you, dame, I command you, by the authority which I have over you, and by your respect for that youth's safety, that you go with us without farther speech—Yet, stay—what are your intentions towards that youth whom you detain prisoner?—Wot ye," he continued, addressing Howleglas in a stern tone of voice, "that he bears the livery of the House of Avenel? They who fear not the anger of Heaven, may at least dread the wrath of man."

"Cumber not yourself concerning him," answered Howleglas, "we know right well who and what he is."

"Let me pray," said the Abbot, in a tone of entreaty, "that you do him no wrong for the rash deed—which he attempted in his imprudent zeal."

"I say, cumber not yourself about it, father," answered Howleglas, "but move off with your train, male and female, or I will not undertake to save yonder she-saint from the ducking-stool—And as for bearing of malice, my stomach has no room for it; it is," he added, clapping his hand on his portly belly, "too well bumbasted out with straw and buckram—gramercy to them both—they kept out that madcap's dagger as well as a Milan corslet could have done."

In fact, the home-driven poniard of Roland Graeme had lighted upon the stuffing of the fictitious paunch, which the Abbot of Unreason wore as a part of his characteristic dress, and it was only the force of the blow which had prostrated that reverend person on the ground for a moment.

Satisfied in some degree by this man's assurances, and compelled—to give way to superior force, the Abbot Ambrosius retired from the Church at the head of the monks, and left the court free for the revellers to work their will. But, wild and wilful as these rioters were, they accompanied the retreat of the religionists with none of those shouts of contempt and derision with which they had at first hailed them. The Abbot's discourse had affected some of them with remorse, others with shame, and all with a transient degree of respect. They remained silent until the last monk had disappeared through the side-door which communicated with their dwelling-place, and even then it cost some exhortations on the part of Howleglas, some caprioles of the hobby-horse, and some wallops of the dragon, to rouse once more the rebuked spirit of revelry.

"And how now, my masters?" said the Abbot of Unreason; "and wherefore look on me with such blank Jack-a-Lent visages? Will you lose your old pastime for an old wife's tale of saints and purgatory? Why, I thought you would have made all split long since—Come, strike up, tabor and harp, strike up, fiddle and rebeck—dance and be merry to-day, and let care come to-morrow. Bear and wolf, look to your prisoner—prance, hobby—hiss, dragon, and halloo, boys—we grow older every moment we stand idle, and life is too short to be spent in playing mumchance."

This pithy exhortation was attended with the effect desired. They fumigated the Church with burnt wool and feathers instead of incense, put foul water into the holy-water basins, and celebrated a parody on the Church-service, the mock Abbot officiating at the altar; they sung ludicrous and indecent parodies, to the tunes of church hymns; they violated whatever vestments or vessels belonging to the Abbey they could lay their hands upon; and, playing every freak which the whim of the moment could suggest to their wild caprice, at length they fell to more lasting deeds of demolition, pulled down and destroyed some carved wood-work, dashed out the painted windows which had escaped former violence, and in their rigorous search after sculpture dedicated to idolatry, began to destroy what ornaments yet remained entire upon the tombs, and around the cornices of the pillars.

The spirit of demolition, like other tastes, increases by indulgence; from these lighter attempts at mischief, the more tumultuous part of the meeting began to meditate destruction on a more extended scale—"Let us heave it down altogether, the old crow's nest," became a general cry among them; "it has served the Pope and his rooks too long;" and up they struck a ballad which was then popular among the lower classes. [Footnote: These rude rhymes are taken, with some trifling alterations, from a ballad called Trim-go-trix. It occurs in a singular collection, entitled; "A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs, collected out of sundrie parts of the Scripture, with sundry of other ballatis changed out of prophane sanges for avoyding of sin and harlotrie, with Augmentation of sundrie Gude and Godly Ballates. Edinburgh, printed by Andro Hart." This curious collection has been reprinted in Mr. John. Grahame Dalyell's Scottish Poems of the 16th century Edin. 1801, 2 vols.]

*"The Paip, that pagan full of pride,
Hath blinded us ower lang.
For where the blind the blind doth lead,
No marvel baith gae wrang.
Like prince and king,
He led the ring
Of all iniquity.
Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix,
Under the greenwood tree.*

*"The Bishop rich, he could not preach
For sporting with the lasses;
The silly friar behoved to fleech
For awmous as he passes:
The curate his creed
He could not read,—
Shame fa' company!
Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix,
Under the greenwood tree."*

Thundering out this chorus of a notable hunting song, which had been pressed into the service of some polemical poet, the followers of the Abbot of Unreason were turning every moment more tumultuous, and getting beyond the management even of that reverend prelate himself, when a knight in full armour, followed by two or three men-at-arms, entered the church, and in a stern voice commanded them to forbear their riotous mummery.

His visor was up, but if it had been lowered, the cognizance of the holly-branch sufficiently distinguished Sir Halbert Glendinning, who, on his homeward road, was passing through the village of Kennaquhair; and moved, perhaps, by anxiety for his brother's safety, had come directly to the church on hearing of the uproar.

"What is the meaning of this," he said, "my masters? are ye Christian men, and the king's subjects, and yet waste and destroy church and chancel like so many heathens?"

All stood silent, though doubtless there were several disappointed and surprised at receiving chiding instead of thanks from so zealous a protestant.

The dragon, indeed, did at length take upon him to be spokesman, and growled from the depth of his painted maw, that they did but sweep Popery out of the church with the besom of destruction.

"What! my friends," replied Sir Halbert Glendinning, "think you this mumming and masking has not more of Popery in it than have these stone walls? Take the leprosy out of your flesh, before you speak of purifying stone walls—abate your insolent license, which leads but to idle vanity and sinful excess; and know, that what you now practise, is one of the profane and unseemly sports introduced by the priests of Rome themselves, to mislead and to brutify the souls which fell into their net."

"Marry come up—are you there with your bears?" muttered the dragon, with a draconic sullenness, which was in good keeping with his character, "we had as good have been Romans still, if we are to have no freedom in our pastimes!"

"Dost thou reply to me so?" said Halbert Glendinning; "or is there any pastime in grovelling on the ground there like a gigantic kail-worm?—Get out of thy painted case, or, by my knighthood, I will treat you like the beast and reptile you have made yourself."

"Beast and reptile?" retorted the offended dragon, "setting aside your knighthood, I hold myself as well a born man as thyself."

The Knight made no answer in words, but bestowed two such blows with the butt of his lance on the petulant dragon, that had not the hoops which constituted the ribs of the machine been pretty strong, they would hardly have saved those of the actor from being broken. In all haste the masker crept out of his disguise, unwilling to abide a third buffet from the lance of the enraged Knight. And when the ex-dragon stood on the floor of the church, he presented to Halbert Glendinning the well-known countenance of Dan of the Howlet-hirst, an ancient comrade of his own, ere fate had raised him so high above the rank to which he was born. The clown looked sulkily upon the Knight, as if to upbraid him for his violence towards an old acquaintance, and Glendinning's own good-nature reproached him for the violence he had acted upon him.

"I did wrong to strike thee," he said, "Dan; but in truth, I knew thee not—thou wert ever a mad fellow—come to Avenel Castle, and we shall see how my hawks fly."

"And if we show him not falcons that will mount as merrily as rockets," said the Abbot of Unreason, "I would your honour laid as hard on my bones as you did on his even now."

"How now, Sir Knave," said the Knight, "and what has brought you hither?"

The Abbot, hastily ridding himself of the false nose which mystified his physiognomy, and the supplementary belly which made up his disguise, stood before his master in his real character, of Adam Woodcock, the falconer of Avenel.

"How, varlet!" said the Knight; "hast thou dared to come here and disturb the very house my brother was dwelling in?"

"And it was even for that reason, craving your honour's pardon, that I came hither—for I heard the country was to be up to choose an Abbot of Unreason, and sure, thought I, I that can sing, dance, leap backwards over a broadsword, and am as good a fool as ever sought promotion, have all chance of carrying the office; and if I gain my election, I may stand his honour's brother in some stead, supposing things fall roughly out at the Kirk of Saint Mary's."

"Thou art but a coggng knave," said Sir Halbert, "and well I wot, that love of ale and brandy, besides the humour of riot and frolic, would draw thee a mile, when love of my house would not bring thee a yard. But, go to—carry thy roisterers elsewhere—to the alehouse if they list, and there are crowns to pay your charges—make out the day's madness without doing more mischief, and be wise men to-morrow—and hereafter learn to serve a good cause better than by acting like buffoons or ruffians."

Obedient to his master's mandate, the falconer was collecting his discouraged followers, and whispering into their ears—"Away, away—*tace* is Latin for a candle—never mind the good Knight's puritanism—we will play the frolic out over a stand of double ale in Dame Martin the Brewster's barn-yard—draw off, harp and tabor—bagpipe and drum—mum till you are out of the church-yard, then let the welkin ring again—move on, wolf and bear—keep the hind legs till you cross the kirk-stile, and then show yourselves beasts of mettle—what devil sent him here to spoil our holiday!—but anger him not, my hearts; his lance is no goose-feather, as Dan's ribs can tell."

"By my soul," said Dan, "had it been another than my ancient comrade, I would have made my father's old fox [Footnote: *Fox*, An old-fashioned broadsword was often so called.] fly about his ears!"

"Hush! hush! man," replied Adam Woodcock, "not a word that way, as you value the safety of your bones—what man? we must take a clink as it passes, so it is not bestowed in downright ill-will."

"But I will take no such thing," said Dan of the Howlet-hirst, suddenly resisting the efforts of Woodcock, who was dragging him out of the church; when the quick military eye of Sir Halbert Glendinning detecting Roland Graeme betwixt his two guards, the Knight exclaimed, "So ho! falconer,—Woodcock,—knave, hast thou brought my Lady's page in mine own livery, to assist at this hopeful revel of thine, with your wolves and bears? Since you were at such mummings, you might, if you would, have at least saved the credit of my household, by dressing him up as a jackanapes—bring him hither, fellows!"

Adam Woodcock was too honest and downright, to permit blame to light upon the youth, when it was undeserved. "I swear," he said, "by Saint Martin of Bullions—" [Footnote: The Saint Swithin, or weeping Saint of Scotland. If his festival (fourth July) prove wet, forty days of rain are expected.]

"And what hast thou to do with Saint Martin?"

"Nay, little enough, sir, unless when he sends such rainy days that we cannot fly a hawk—but I say to your worshipful knighthood, that as I am, a true man——"

"As you are a false varlet, had been the better obtestation."

"Nay, if your knighthood allows me not to speak," said Adam, "I can hold my tongue—but the boy came not hither by my bidding, for all that."

"But to gratify his own malapert pleasure, I warrant me," said Sir Halbert Glendinning—"Come hither, young springald, and tell me whether you have your mistress's license to be so far absent from the castle, or to dishonour my livery by mingling in such a May-game?"

"Sir Halbert Glendinning," answered Roland Graeme with steadiness, "I have obtained the permission, or rather the commands, of your lady, to dispose of my time hereafter according to my own pleasure. I have been a most unwilling spectator of this May-game, since it is your pleasure so to call it; and I only wear your livery until I can obtain clothes which bear no such badge of servitude."

"How am I to understand this, young man?" said Sir Halbert Glendinning; "speak plainly, for I am no reader of riddles.—That my lady favoured thee, I know. What hast thou done to disoblige her, and occasion thy dismissal?"

"Nothing to speak of," said Adam Woodcock, answering for the boy—"a foolish quarrel with me, which was more foolishly told over again to my honoured lady, cost the poor boy his place. For my part, I will say freely, that I was wrong from beginning to end, except about the washing of the eyas's meat. There I stand to it that I was right."

With that, the good-natured falconer repeated to his master the whole history of the squabble which had brought Roland Graeme into disgrace with his mistress, but in a manner so favourable for the page, that Sir Halbert could not but suspect his generous motive.

"Thou art a good-natured fellow," he said, "Adam Woodcock."

"As ever had falcon upon fist," said Adam; "and, for that matter, so is Master Roland; but, being half a gentleman by his office, his blood is soon up, and so is mine."

"Well," said Sir Halbert, "be it as it will, my lady has acted hastily, for this was no great matter of offence to discard the lad whom she had trained up for years; but he, I doubt not, made it worse by his prating—it jumps well with a purpose, however, which I had in my mind. Draw off these people, Woodcock,—and you, Roland Graeme, attend me."

The page followed him in silence into the Abbot's house, where, stepping into the first apartment which he found open, he commanded one of his attendants to let his brother, Master Edward Glendinning, know that he desired to speak with him. The men-at-arms went gladly off to join their comrade, Adam Woodcock, and the jolly crew whom he had assembled at Dame Martin's, the hostler's wife, and the Page and Knight were left alone in the apartment. Sir Halbert Glendinning paced the floor for a moment in silence and then thus addressed his attendant—

"Thou mayest have remarked, stripling, that I have but seldom distinguished thee by much notice;—I see thy colour rises, but do not speak till thou nearest me out. I say I have never much distinguished thee, not because I did not see that in thee which I might well have praised, but because I saw something blameable, which such praises might have made worse. Thy mistress, dealing according to her pleasure in her own household, as no one had better reason or title, had picked thee from the rest, and treated thee more like a relation than a domestic; and if thou didst show some vanity and petulance under such distinction, it were injustice not to say that thou hast profited both in thy exercises and in thy breeding, and hast shown many sparkles of a gentle and manly spirit. Moreover, it were ungenerous, having bred thee up freakish and fiery, to dismiss thee to want or wandering, for showing that very peevishness and impatience of discipline which

arose from thy too delicate nurture. Therefore, and for the credit of my own household, I am determined to retain thee in my train, until I can honourably dispose of thee elsewhere, with a fair prospect of thy going through the world with credit to the house that brought thee up."

If there was something in Sir Halbert Glendinning's speech which flattered Roland's pride, there was also much that, according to his mode of thinking, was an alloy to the compliment. And yet his conscience instantly told him that he ought to accept, with grateful deference, the offer which was made him by the husband of his kind protectress; and his prudence, however slender, could not but admit he should enter the world under very different auspices as a retainer of Sir Halbert Glendinning, so famed for wisdom, courage, and influence, from those under which he might partake the wanderings, and become an agent in the visionary schemes, for such they appeared to him, of Magdalen, his relative. Still, a strong reluctance to re-enter a service from which he had been dismissed with contempt, almost counterbalanced these considerations.

Sir Halbert looked on the youth with surprise, and resumed—"You seem to hesitate, young man. Are your own prospects so inviting, that you should pause ere you accept those which I should offer to you? or, must I remind you that, although you have offended your benefactress, even to the point of her dismissing you, yet I am convinced, the knowledge that you have gone unguided on your own wild way, into a world so disturbed as ours of Scotland, cannot, in the upshot, but give her sorrow and pain; from which it is, in gratitude, your duty to preserve her, no less than it is in common wisdom your duty to accept my offered protection, for your own sake, where body and soul are alike endangered, should you refuse it."

Roland Graeme replied in a respectful tone, but at the same time with some spirit, "I am not ungrateful for such countenance as has been afforded me by the Lord of Avenel, and I am glad to learn, for the first time, that I have not had the misfortune to be utterly beneath his observation, as I had thought—And it is only needful to show me how I can testify my duty and my gratitude towards my early and constant benefactress with my life's hazard, and I will gladly peril it." He stopped.

"These are but words, young man," answered Glendinning, "large protestations are often used to supply the place of effectual service. I know nothing in which the peril of your life can serve the Lady of Avenel; I can only say, she will be pleased to learn you have adopted some course which may ensure the safety of your person, and the weal of your soul—What ails you, that you accept not that safety when it is offered you?"

"My only relative who is alive," answered Roland, "at least the only relative whom I have ever seen, has rejoined me since I was dismissed from the Castle of Avenel, and I must consult with her whether I can adopt the line to which you now call me, or whether her increasing infirmities, or the authority which she is entitled to exercise over me, may not require me to abide with her."

"Where is this relation?" said Sir Halbert Glendinning.

"In this house," answered the page.

"Go then, and seek her out," said the Knight of Avenel; "more than meet it is that thou shouldst have her approbation, yet worse than foolish would she show herself in denying it."

Roland left the apartment to seek for his grandmother; and, as he retreated, the Abbot entered.

The two brothers met as brothers who loved each other fondly, yet meet rarely together. Such indeed was the case. Their mutual affection attached them to each other; but in every pursuit, habit or sentiment, connected with the discords of the times, the friend and counsellor of Murray stood opposed to the Roman Catholic priest; nor, indeed, could they have held very much society together, without giving cause of offence and suspicion to their confederates on each side. After a close embrace on the part of both, and a welcome on that of the Abbot, Sir Halbert Glendinning expressed his satisfaction that he had come in time to appease the riot raised by Howleglas and his tumultuous followers.

"And yet," he said, "when I look on your garments, brother Edward, I cannot help thinking there still remains an Abbot of Unreason within the bounds of the Monastery."

"And wherefore carp at my garments, brother Halbert?" said the Abbot; "it is the spiritual armour of my calling, and, as such, beseems me as well as breastplate and baldrick becomes your own bosom."

"Ay, but there were small wisdom, methinks, in putting on armour where we have no power to fight; it is but a dangerous temerity to defy the foe whom we cannot resist."

"For that, my brother, no one can answer," said the Abbot, "until the battle be fought; and, were it even as you say, methinks a brave man, though desperate of victory, would rather desire to fight and fall, than to resign sword and shield on some mean and dishonourable composition with his insulting antagonist. But, let not you and I make discord of a theme on which we cannot agree, but rather stay and partake, though a heretic, of my admission feast. You need not fear, my brother, that your zeal for restoring the primitive discipline of the church will, on this occasion, be offended with the rich profusion of a conventual banquet. The days of our old friend Abbot Boniface are over; and the Superior of Saint Mary's has neither forests nor fishings, woods nor pastures, nor corn-fields;—neither flocks nor herds, bucks nor wild-fowl—granaries of wheat, nor storehouses of oil and wine, of ale and of mead. The refectory's office is ended; and such a meal as a hermit in romance can offer to a wandering knight, is all we have to set before you. But, if you will share it with us, we shall eat it with a cheerful heart, and thank you, my brother, for your timely protection against these rude scoffers."

"My dearest brother," said the Knight, "it grieves me deeply I cannot abide with you; but it would sound ill for us both were one of the reformed congregation to sit down at your admission feast; and, if I can ever have the satisfaction of affording you effectual protection, it will be much owing to my remaining unsuspected of countenancing or approving your religious rites and ceremonies. It will demand whatever consideration I can acquire among my own friends, to shelter the bold man, who, contrary to law and the edicts of parliament, has dared to take up the office of Abbot of Saint Mary's."

"Trouble not yourself with the task, my brother," replied Father Ambrosius. "I would lay down my dearest blood to know that you defended the church for the church's sake; but, while you remain unhappily her enemy, I would not that you endangered your own safety, or diminished your own comforts, for the sake of my individual protection.—But who comes hither to disturb the few minutes of fraternal communication which our evil fate allows us?"

The door of the apartment opened as the Abbot spoke, and Dame Magdalen entered.

"Who is this woman?" said Sir Halbert Glendinning, somewhat sternly, "and what does she want?"

"That you know me not," said the matron, "signifies little; I come by your own order, to give my free consent that the stripling, Roland Graeme, return to your service; and, having said so, I cumber you no longer with my presence. Peace be with you!" She turned to go away, but was stopped by inquiries of Sir Halbert Glendinning.

"Who are you?—what are you?—and why do you not await to make me answer?"

"I was," she replied, "while yet I belonged to the world, a matron of no vulgar name; now I am Magdalen, a poor pilgrim, for the sake of Holy Kirk."

"Yea," said Sir Halbert, "art thou a Catholic? I thought my dame said that Roland Graeme came of reformed kin."

"His father," said the matron, "was a heretic, or rather one who regarded neither orthodoxy or heresy—neither the temple of the church or of antichrist. I, too, for the sins of the times make sinners, have seemed to conform to your unhallowed rites—but I had my dispensation and my absolution."

"You see, brother," said Sir Halbert, with a smile of meaning towards his brother, "that we accuse you not altogether without grounds of mental equivocation."

"My brother, you do us injustice," replied the Abbot; "this woman, as her bearing may of itself warrant you, is not in her perfect mind. Thanks, I must needs say, to the persecution of your marauding barons, and of your latitudinarian clergy."

"I will not dispute the point," said Sir Halbert; "the evils of the time are unhappily so numerous, that both churches may divide them, and have enow to spare." So saying, he leaned from the window of the apartment, and winded his bugle.

"Why do you sound your horn, my brother?" said the Abbot; "we have spent but few minutes together."

"Alas!" said the elder brother, "and even these few have been sullied by disagreement. I sound to horse, my brother—the rather that, to avert the consequences of this day's rashness on your part, requires hasty efforts on mine.—Dame, you will oblige me by letting your young relative know that we mount instantly. I intend not that he shall return to Avenel with me—it would lead to new quarrels betwixt him and my household; at least to taunts which his proud heart could ill brook,

and my wish is to do him kindness. He shall, therefore, go forward to Edinburgh with one of my retinue, whom I shall send back to say what has chanced here.— You seem rejoiced at this?" he added, fixing his eyes keenly on Magdalen Graeme, who returned his gaze with calm indifference.

"I would rather," she said, "that Roland, a poor and friendless orphan, were the jest of the world at large, than of the menials at Avenel."

"Fear not, dame—he shall be scorned by neither," answered the Knight.

"It may be," she replied—"it may well be—but I will trust more to his own bearing than to your countenance." She left the room as she spoke.

The Knight looked after her as she departed, but turned instantly to his brother, and expressing, in the most affectionate terms, his wishes for his welfare and happiness, craved his leave to depart. "My knaves," he said, "are too busy at the ale-stand, to leave their revelry for the empty breath of a bugle-horn."

"You have freed them from higher restraint, Halbert," answered the Abbot, "and therein taught them to rebel against your own."

"Fear not that, Edward," exclaimed Halbert, who never gave his brother his monastic name of Ambrosius; "none obey the command of real duty so well as those who are free from the observance of slavish bondage."

He was turning to depart, when the Abbot said,— "Let us not yet part, my brother—here comes some light refreshment. Leave not the house which I must now call mine, till force expel me from it, until you have at least broken bread with me."

The poor lay brother, the same who acted as porter, now entered the apartment, bearing some simple refreshment, and a flask of wine. "He had found it," he said with officious humility, "by rummaging through every nook of the cellar."

The Knight filled a small silver cup, and, quaffing it off, asked his brother to pledge him, observing, the wine was Bacharac, of the first vintage, and great age.

"Ay," said the poor lay brother, "it came out of the nook which old brother Nicholas, (may his soul be happy!) was wont to call Abbot Ingelram's corner; and Abbot Ingelram was bred at the Convent of Wurtzburg, which I understand to be near where that choice wine grows."

"True, my reverend sir," said Sir Halbert; "and therefore I entreat my brother and you to pledge me in a cup of this orthodox vintage."

The thin old porter looked with a wishful glance towards the Abbot. "*Do veniam*," said his Superior; and the old man seized, with a trembling hand, a beverage to which he had been long unaccustomed; drained the cup with protracted delight, as if dwelling on the flavour and perfume, and set it down with a melancholy smile and shake of the head, as if bidding adieu in future to such delicious potations. The brothers smiled. But when Sir Halbert motioned to the Abbot to take up his cup and do him reason, the Abbot, in turn, shook his head, and replied—"This is no day for the Abbot of Saint Mary's to eat the fat and drink the sweat. In water from our Lady's well," he added, filling a cup with the limpid element, "I wish you, brother, all happiness, and above all, a true sight of your spiritual errors."

"And to you, my beloved Edward," replied Glendinning, "I wish the free exercise of your own free reason, and the discharge of more important duties than are connected with the idle name which you have so rashly assumed."

The brothers parted with deep regret; and yet, each confident in his opinion, felt somewhat relieved by the absence of one whom he respected so much, and with whom he could agree so little.

Soon afterwards the sound of the Knight of Avenel's trumpets was heard, and the Abbot went to the top of the tower, from whose dismantled battlements he could soon see the horsemen ascending the rising ground in the direction of the drawbridge. As he gazed, Magdalen Graeme came to his side.

"Thou art come," he said, "to catch the last glimpse of thy grandson, my sister. Yonder he wends, under the charge of the best knight in Scotland, his faith ever excepted."

"Thou canst bear witness, my father, that it was no wish either of mine or of Roland's," replied the matron, "which induced the Knight of Avenel, as he is called, again to entertain my grandson in his household—Heaven, which confounds the wise with their own wisdom, and the wicked with their own policy, hath placed him where, for the services of the Church, I would most wish him to be."

"I know not what you mean, my sister," said the Abbot.

"Reverend father," replied Magdalen, "hast thou never heard that there are spirits powerful to rend the walls of a castle asunder when once admitted, which yet cannot enter the house unless they are invited, nay, dragged over the threshold?"

[Footnote: There is a popular belief respecting evil spirits, that they cannot enter an inhabited house unless invited, nay, dragged over the threshold. There is an instance of the same superstition in the Tales of the Genii, where an enchanter is supposed to have intruded himself into the Divan of the Sultan.

"Thus," said the illustrious Misnar, 'let the enemies of Mahomet be dismayed! but inform me, O ye sages! under the semblance of which of your brethren did that foul enchanter gain admittance here?'—"May the lord of my heart," answered Baliu, the hermit of the faithful from Queda, 'triumph over all his foes! As I travelled on the mountains from Queda, and saw neither the footsteps of beasts, nor the flight of birds, behold, I chanced to pass through a cavern, in whose hollow sides I found this accursed sage, to whom I unfolded the invitation of the Sultan of India, and we, joining, journeyed towards the Divan; but ere we entered, he said unto me. 'Put thy hand forth, and pull me towards thee into the Divan, calling on the name of Mahomet, for the evil spirits are on me and vex me.'"

I have understood that many parts of these fine tales, and in particular that of the Sultan Misnar, were taken from genuine Oriental sources by the editor, Mr. James Ridley.

But the most picturesque use of this popular belief occurs in Coleridge's beautiful and tantalizing fragment of Christabel. Has not our own imaginative poet cause to fear that future ages will desire to summon him from his place of rest, as Milton longed

"To call him up, who left half told

The story of Cambuscan bold?"

The verses I refer to are when Christabel conducts into her father's castle a mysterious and malevolent being, under the guise of a distressed female stranger.

'They cross'd the moat, and Christabel

Took the key that fitted well;

A little door she open'd straight,

All in the middle of the gate;

The gate that was iron'd within and without,

Where an army in battle array had march'd out.

"The lady sank, belike through pain,

And Christabel with might and main

Lifted her up, a weary weight,

Over the threshold of the gate:

Then the lady rose again,

And moved as she were not in pain.

"So free from danger, free from fear,

They cross'd the court;—right glad they were,

And Christabel devoutly cried

To the lady by her side:

'Praise we the Virgin, all divine,

Who hath rescued thee from this distress.'

'Alas, alas!' said Geraldine,

*'I cannot speak from weariness.'
So free from danger, free from fear,
They cross'd the court: right glad they were*

]

Twice hath Roland Graeme been thus drawn into the household of Avenel by those who now hold the title. Let them look to the issue."

So saying she left the turret; and the Abbot, after pausing a moment on her words, which he imputed to the unsettled state of her mind, followed down the winding stair to celebrate his admission to his high office by fast and prayer instead of revelling and thanksgiving.

Chapter the Sixteenth.

*Youth! thou wear'st to manhood now,
Darker lip and darker brow,
Statelier step, more pensive mien,
In thy face and gate are seen:
Thou must now brook midnight watches,
Take thy food and sport by snatches;
For the gambol and the jest,
Thou wert wont to love the best,
Graver follies must thou follow,
But as senseless, false, and hollow.*

LIFE, A POEM.

Young Roland Graeme now trotted gaily forward in the train of Sir Halbert Glendinning. He was relieved from his most galling apprehension,—the encounter of the scorn and taunt which might possibly hail his immediate return to the Castle of Avenel. "There will be a change ere they see me again," he thought to himself; "I shall wear the coat of plate, instead of the green jerkin, and the steel morion for the bonnet and feather. They will be bold that may venture to break a gibe on the man-at-arms for the follies of the page; and I trust, that ere we return I shall have done something more worthy of note than hallooing a hound after a deer, or scrambling a crag for a kite's nest." He could not, indeed, help marvelling that his grandmother, with all her religious prejudices, leaning, it would seem, to the other side, had consented so readily to his re-entering the service of the House of Avenel; and yet more, at the mysterious joy with which she took leave of him at the Abbey.

"Heaven," said the dame, as she kissed her young relation, and bade him farewell, "works its own work, even by the hands of those of our enemies who think themselves the strongest and the wisest. Thou, my child, be ready to act upon the call of thy religion and country; and remember, each earthly bond which thou canst form is, compared to the ties which bind thee to them, like the loose flax to the twisted cable. Thou hast not forgot the face or form of the damsel Catherine Seyton?"

Roland would have replied in the negative, but the word seemed to stick in his throat and Magdalen continued her exhortations.

"Thou must not forget her, my son; and here I intrust thee with a token, which I trust thou wilt speedily find an opportunity of delivering with care and secrecy into her own hand."

She put here into Roland's hand a very small packet, of which she again enjoined him to take the strictest care, and to suffer it to be seen by no one save Catherine Seyton, who, she again (very unnecessarily) reminded him, was the young lady he had met on the preceding day. She then bestowed on him her solemn benediction, and bade God speed him.

There was something in her manner and her conduct which implied mystery; but Roland Graeme was not of an age or temper to waste much time in endeavoring to decipher her meaning. All that was obvious to his perception in the present journey, promised pleasure and novelty. He rejoiced that he was travelling towards Edinburgh, in order to assume the character of a man, and lay aside that of a boy. He was delighted to think that he would have an opportunity of rejoining Catherine Seyton, whose bright eyes and lively manners had made so favourable an impression on his imagination; and, as an experienced, yet high-spirited youth, entering for the first time upon active life, his heart bounded at the thought, that he was about to see all those scenes of courtly splendour and warlike adventures, of which the followers of Sir Halbert used to boast on their occasional visits to Avenel, to the wonderment and envy of those who, like Roland, knew courts and camps only by hearsay, and were condemned to the solitary sports and almost monastic seclusion of Avenel, surrounded by its lonely lake, and embossed among its pathless mountains. "They shall mention my name," he said to himself, "if the risk of my life can purchase me opportunities of distinction, and Catherine Seyton's saucy eye shall rest with more respect on the distinguished soldier, than that with which she laughed to scorn the raw and inexperienced page."—There was wanting but one accessory to complete the sense of rapturous excitation, and he possessed it by being once more mounted on the back of a fiery and active horse, instead of plodding along on foot, as had been the case during the preceding days.

Impelled by the liveliness of his own spirits, which so many circumstances tended naturally to exalt, Roland Graeme's voice and his laughter were soon distinguished amid the trampling of the horses of the retinue, and more than once attracted the attention of the leader, who remarked with satisfaction, that the youth replied with good-humoured raillery to such of the train as jested with him on his dismissal and return to the service of the House of Avenel.

"I thought the holly-branch in your bonnet had been blighted, Master Roland?" said one of the men-at-arms.

"Only pinched with half an hour's frost; you see it flourishes as green as ever."

"It is too grave a plant to flourish on so hot a soil as that headpiece of thine, Master Roland Graeme," retorted the other, who was an old equerry of Sir Halbert Glendinning.

"If it will not flourish alone," said Roland, "I will mix it with the laurel and the myrtle—and I will carry them so near the sky, that it shall make amends for their stunted growth."

Thus speaking, he dashed his spurs into his horse's sides, and, checking him at the same time, compelled him to execute a lofty caracole. Sir Halbert Glendinning looked at the demeanour of his new attendant with that sort of melancholy pleasure with which those who have long followed the pursuits of life, and are sensible of their vanity, regard the gay, young, and buoyant spirits to whom existence, as yet, is only hope and promise.

In the meanwhile, Adam Woodcock, the falconer, stripped of his masquing habit, and attired, according to his rank and calling, in a green jerkin, with a hawking-bag on the one side, and a short hanger on the other, a glove on his left hand which reached half way up his arm, and a bonnet and feather upon his head, came after the party as fast as his active little galloway-nag could trot, and immediately entered into parley with Roland Graeme.

"So, my youngster, you are once more under shadow of the holly-branch?"

"And in case to repay you, my good friend," answered Roland, "your ten groats of silver."

"Which, but an hour since," said the falconer, "you had nearly paid me with ten inches of steel. On my faith, it is written in the book of our destiny, that I must brook your dagger after all."

"Nay, speak not of that, my good friend," said the youth, "I would rather have broached my own bosom than yours; but who could have known you in the mumming dress you wore?"

"Yes," the falconer resumed,—for both as a poet and actor he had his own professional share of self-conceit,—“I think I was as good a Howleglas as ever played part at a Shrovetide revelry, and not a much worse Abbot of Unreason. I defy the Old Enemy to unmask me when I choose to keep my vizard on. What the devil brought the Knight on us before we had the game out? You would have heard me hollo my own new ballad with a voice should have reached to Berwick. But I pray you, Master Roland, be less free of cold steel on slight occasions; since, but for the stuffing of my reverend doublet, I had only left the kirk to take my place in the kirkyard.”

"Nay, spare me that feud," said Roland Graeme, "we shall have no time to fight it out; for, by our lord's command, I am bound for Edinburgh."

"I know it," said Adam Woodcock, "and even therefore we shall have time to solder up this rent by the way, for Sir Halbert has appointed me your companion and guide."

"Ay? and with what purpose?" said the page.

"That," said the falconer, "is a question I cannot answer; but I know, that be the food of the eyases washed or unwashed, and, indeed, whatever becomes of perch and mew, I am to go with you to Edinburgh, and see you safely delivered to the Regent at Holyrood."

"How, to the Regent?" said Roland, in surprise.

"Ay, by my faith, to the Regent," replied Woodcock; "I promise you, that if you are not to enter his service, at least you are to wait upon him in the character of a retainer of our Knight of Avenel."

"I know no right," said the youth, "which the Knight of Avenel hath to transfer my service, supposing that I owe it to himself."

"Hush, hush!" said the falconer; "that is a question I advise no one to stir in until he has the mountain or the lake, or the march of another kingdom, which is better than either, betwixt him and his feudal superior."

"But Sir Halbert Glendinning," said the youth, "is not my feudal superior; nor has he aught of authority—"

"I pray you, my son, to rein your tongue," answered Adam Woodcock; "my lord's displeasure, if you provoke it, will be worse to appease than my lady's. The touch of his least finger were heavier than her hardest blow. And, by my faith, he is a man of steel, as true and as pure, but as hard and as pitiless. You remember the Cock of Capperlaw, whom he hanged over his gate for a mere mistake—a poor yoke of oxen taken in Scotland, when he thought he was taking them in English land? I loved the Cock of Capperlaw; the Kerrs had not an honest man in their clan, and they have had men that might have been a pattern to the Border—men that would not have lifted under twenty cows at once, and would have held themselves dishonoured if they had taken a drift of sheep, or the like, but always managed their raids in full credit and honour.—But see, his worship halts, and we are close by the bridge. Ride up—ride up—we must have his last instructions."

It was as Adam Woodcock said. In the hollow way descending towards the bridge, which was still in the guardianship of Peter Bridgeward, as he was called, though he was now very old, Sir Halbert Glendinning halted his retinue, and beckoned to Woodcock and Graeme to advance to the head of the train.

"Woodcock," said he, "thou knowest to whom thou art to conduct this youth. And thou, young man, obey discreetly and with diligence the orders that shall be given thee. Curb thy vain and peevish temper. Be just, true, and faithful; and there is in thee that which may raise thee many a degree above thy present station. Neither shalt thou—always supposing thine efforts to be fair and honest—want the protection and countenance of Avenel."

Leaving them in front of the bridge, the centre tower of which now began to cast a prolonged shade upon the river, the Knight of Avenel turned to the left, without crossing the river, and pursued his way towards the chain of hills within whose recesses are situated the Lake and Castle of Avenel. There remained behind, the falconer, Roland Graeme, and a domestic of the Knight, of inferior rank, who was left with them to look after their horses while on the road, to carry their baggage, and to attend to their convenience.

So soon as the more numerous body of riders had turned off to pursue their journey westward, those whose route lay across the river, and was directed towards the north, summoned the Bridgeward, and demanded a free passage.

"I will not lower the bridge," answered Peter, in a voice querulous with age and ill-humour.—"Come Papist, come Protestant, ye are all the same. The Papist threatened us with Purgatory, and fleeced us with pardons—the Protestant mints at us with his sword, and cuttles us with the liberty of conscience; but never a one of either says, 'Peter, there is your penny.' I am well tired of all this, and for no man shall the bridge fall that pays me not ready money; and I would have you know I care as little for Geneva as for Rome—as little for homilies as for pardons; and the silver pennies are the only passports I will hear of."

"Here is a proper old chuff!" said Woodcock to his companion; then raising his voice, he exclaimed, "Hark thee, dog—Bridgeward, villain, dost thou think we have refused thy namesake Peter's pence to Rome, to pay thine at the bridge of Kennaquhair? Let thy bridge down instantly to the followers of the house of Avenel, or by the hand of my father, and that handled many a bridle rein, for he was a bluff Yorkshireman—I say, by my father's hand, our Knight will blow thee out of thy solan-geese's nest there in the middle of the water, with the light falconet which we are bringing southward from Edinburgh to-morrow."

The Bridgeward heard, and muttered, "A plague on falcon and falconet, on cannon and demicannon, and all the barking bull-dogs whom they halloo against stone and lime in these our days! It was a merry time when there was little besides handy blows, and it may be a flight of arrows that harmed an ashler wall as little as so many hailstones. But we must jouk and let the jaw gang by." Comforting himself in his state of diminished consequence with this pithy old proverb, Peter Bridgeward lowered the drawbridge, and permitted them to pass over. At the sight of his white hair, albeit it discovered a visage equally peevish through age and misfortune, Roland was inclined to give him an alms, but Adam Woodcock prevented him. "E'en let him pay the penalty of his former churlishness and greed," he said; "the wolf, when he has lost his teeth, should be treated no better than a cur."

Leaving the Bridgeward to lament the alteration of times, which sent domineering soldiers and feudal retainers to his place of passage, instead of peaceful pilgrims, and reduced him to become the oppressed, instead of playing the extortioner, the travellers turned them northward; and Adam Woodcock, well acquainted with that part of the country, proposed to cut short a considerable portion of the road, by traversing the little vale of Glendearg, so famous for the adventures which befell therein during the earlier part of the Benedictine's manuscript. With these, and with the thousand commentaries, representations, and misrepresentations, to which they had given rise, Roland Graeme was, of course, well acquainted; for in the Castle of Avenel, as well as in other great establishments, the inmates talked of nothing so often, or with such pleasure, as of the private affairs of their lord and lady. But while Roland was viewing with interest these haunted scenes, in which things were said to have passed beyond the ordinary laws of nature, Adam Woodcock was still regretting in his secret soul the unfinished revel and the unsung ballad, and kept every now and then, breaking out with some such verses as these:—

*"The Friars of Fail drank berry-brown ale,
The best that e'er was tasted;
The Monks of Melrose made gude kale
On Fridays, when they fasted.
Saint Monance' sister.
The gray priest kist her—
Fiend save the company!
Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix.
Under the greenwood tree."*

"By my hand, friend Woodcock," said the page, "though I know you for a hardy gospeller, that fear neither saint nor devil, yet, if I were you, I would not sing your profane songs in this valley of Glendearg, considering what has happened here before our time."

"A straw for your wandering spirits!" said Adam Woodcock; "I mind them no more than an earn cares for a string of wild-geese—they have all fled since the pulpits were filled with honest men, and the people's ears with sound doctrine. Nay, I have a touch at them in my ballad, an I had but had the good luck to have it sung to end;" and again he set off in the same key:

From haunted spring and grassy ring,

*Troop goblin, elf, and fairy;
And the kelpie must flit from the black bog-pit,
And the brownie must not tarry;
To Limbo-lake,
Their way they take,
With scarce the pith to flee.
Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix,
Under the greenwood tree.*

"I think," he added, "that could Sir Halbert's patience have stretched till we came that length, he would have had a hearty laugh, and that is what he seldom enjoys."

"If it be all true that men tell of his early life," said Roland, "he has less right to laugh at goblins than most men."

"Ay, if it be all true," answered Adam Woodcock; "but who can ensure us of that? Moreover, these were but tales the monks used to gull us simple laymen withal; they knew that fairies and hobgoblins brought aves and paternosters into repute; but, now we have given up worship of images in wood and stone, methinks it were no time to be afraid of bubbles in the water, or shadows in the air."

"However," said Roland Graeme, "as the Catholics say they do not worship wood or stone, but only as emblems of the holy saints, and not as things holy in themselves——"

"Pshaw! pshaw!" answered the falconer; "a rush for their prating. They told us another story when these baptized idols of theirs brought pike-staves and sandalled shoon from all the four winds, and whilled the old women out of their corn and their candle ends, and their butter, bacon, wool, and cheese, and when not so much as a gray goat escaped titling."

Roland Graeme had been long taught, by necessity, to consider his form of religion as a profound secret, and to say nothing whatever in its defence when assailed, lest he should draw on himself the suspicion of belonging to the unpopular and exploded church. He therefore suffered Adam Woodcock to triumph without farther opposition, marvelling in his own mind whether any of the goblins, formerly such active agents, would avenge his rude raillery before they left the valley of Glendearg. But no such consequences followed. They passed the night quietly in a cottage in the glen, and the next day resumed their route to Edinburgh.

Chapter the Seventeenth.

*Edina! Scotia's darling seat, All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once, beneath a monarch's feet, Sate legislation's sovereign powers.*

BURNS.

"This, then, is Edinburgh?" said the youth, as the fellow-travellers arrived at one of the heights to the southward, which commanded a view of the great northern capital—"This is that Edinburgh of which we have heard so much!"

"Even so," said the falconer; "yonder stands Auld Reekie—you may see the smoke hover over her at twenty miles' distance, as the gosshawk hangs over a plump of young wild-ducks—ay, yonder is the heart of Scotland, and each throb that she gives is felt from the edge of Solway to Duncan's-bay-head. See, yonder is the old Castle; and see to the right, on yon rising ground, that is the Castle of Craigmillar, which I have known a merry place in my time."

"Was it not there," said the page in a low voice, "that the Queen held her court?"

"Ay, ay," replied the falconer, "Queen she was then, though you must not call her so now. Well, they may say what they will—many a true heart will be sad for Mary Stewart, e'en if all be true men say of her; for look you, Master Roland—she was the loveliest creature to look upon that I ever saw with eye, and no lady in the land liked better the fair flight of a falcon. I was at the great match on Roslin Moor betwixt Bothwell—he was a black sight to her that Bothwell—and the Baron of Roslin, who could judge a hawk's flight as well as any man in Scotland—a butt of Rhenish and a ring of gold was the wager, and it was flown as fairly for as ever was red gold and bright wine. And to see her there on her white palfrey, that flew as if it scorned to touch more than the heather blossom; and to hear her voice, as clear and sweet as the mavis's whistle, mix among our jolly whooping and whistling; and to mark all the nobles dashing round her; happiest he who got a word or a look—tearing through moss and hagg, and venturing neck and limb to gain the praise of a bold rider, and the blink of a bonny Queen's bright eye!—she will see little hawking where she lies now—ay, ay, pomp and pleasure pass away as speedily as the wap of a falcon's wing."

"And where is this poor Queen now confined?" said Roland Graeme, interested in the fate of a woman whose beauty and grace had made so strong an impression even on the blunt and careless character of Adam Woodcock.

"Where is she now imprisoned?" said honest Adam; "why, in some castle in the north, they say—I know not where, for my part, nor is it worth while to vex one's self anent what cannot be mended—An she had guided her power well whilst she had it, she had not come to so evil a pass. Men say she must resign her crown to this little baby of a prince, for that they will trust her with it no longer. Our master has been as busy as his neighbours in all this work. If the Queen should come to her own again, Avenel Castle is like to smoke for it, unless he makes his bargain all the better." "In a castle in the north Queen Mary is confined?" said the page. "Why, ay—they say so, at least—In a castle beyond that great river which comes down yonder, and looks like a river, but it is a branch of the sea, and as bitter as brine."

"And amongst all her subjects," said the page, with some emotion, "is there none that will adventure anything for her relief?"

"That is a kittle question," said the falconer; "and if you ask it often, Master Roland, I am fain to tell you that you will be mewed up yourself in some of those castles, if they do not prefer twisting your head off, to save farther trouble with you—Adventure any thing? Lord, why, Murray has the wind in his poop now, man, and flies so high and strong, that the devil a wing of them can match him—No, no; there she is, and there she must lie, till Heaven send her deliverance, or till her son has the management of all—But Murray will never let her loose again, he knows her too well.—And hark thee, we are now bound for Holyrood, where thou wilt find plenty of news, and of courtiers to tell it—But, take my counsel, and keep a calm sough, as the Scots say—hear every man's counsel, and keep your own. And if you hap to learn any news you like, leap not up as if you were to put on armour direct in the cause—Our old Mr. Wingate says—and he knows court-cattle well—that if you are told old King Coul is come alive again, you should turn it off with, 'And is he in truth?—I heard not of it,' and should seem no more moved, than if one told you, by way of novelty, that old King Coul was dead and buried. Wherefore, look well to your bearing, Master Roland, for, I promise you, you come among a generation that are keen as a hungry hawk—And never be dagger out of sheath at every wry word you hear spoken; for you will find as hot blades as yourself, and then will be letting of blood without advice either of leech or almanack."

"You shall see how staid I will be, and how cautious, my good friend," said Graeme; "but, blessed Lady, what goodly house is that which is lying all in ruins so close to the city? Have they been playing at the Abbot of Unreason here, and ended the gambol by burning the church?"

"There again now," replied his companion, "you go down the wind like a wild haggard, that minds neither lure nor beck—that is a question you should have asked in as low a tone as I shall answer it."

"If I stay here long," said Roland Graeme, "it is like I shall lose the natural use of my voice—but what are the ruins then?"

"The Kirk of Field," said the falconer, in a low and impressive whisper, laying at the same time his finger on his lip; "ask no more about it—somebody got foul play, and somebody got the blame of it; and the game began there which perhaps may not be played out in our time.—Poor Henry Darnley! to be an ass, he understood somewhat of a hawk; but they sent him on the wing through the air himself one bright moonlight night."

The memory of this catastrophe was so recent, that the page averted his eyes with horror from the scathed ruins in which it had taken place; and the accusations against the Queen, to which it had given rise, came over his mind with such strength as to balance the compassion he had begun to entertain for her present forlorn situation.

It was, indeed, with that agitating state of mind which arises partly from horror, but more from anxious interest and curiosity, that young Graeme found himself actually traversing the scene of those tremendous events, the report of which had disturbed the most distant solitudes in Scotland, like the echoes of distant thunder rolling among the mountains.

"Now," he thought, "now or never shall I become a man, and bear my part in those deeds which the simple inhabitants of our hamlets repeat to each other, as if they were wrought by beings of a superior order to their own. I will know now, wherefore the Knight of Avenel carries his crest so much above those of the neighbouring baronage, and how it is that men, by valour and wisdom, work their way from the hoddin-gray coat to the cloak of scarlet and gold. Men say I have not much wisdom to recommend me; and if that be true, courage must do it; for I will be a man amongst living men, or a dead corpse amongst the dead."

From these dreams of ambition he turned his thoughts to those of pleasure, and began to form many conjectures, when and where he should see Catherine Seyton, and in what manner their acquaintance was to be renewed. With such conjectures he was amusing himself, when he found that they had entered the city, and all other feelings were suspended in the sensation of giddy astonishment with which an inhabitant of the country is affected, when, for the first time, he finds himself in the streets of a large and populous city, a unit in the midst of thousands.

The principal street of Edinburgh was then, as now, one of the most spacious in Europe. The extreme height of the houses, and the variety of Gothic gables and battlements, and balconies, by which the sky-line on each side was crowned and terminated, together with the width of the street itself, might have struck with surprise a more practised eye than that of young Graeme. The population, close packed within the walls of the city, and at this time increased by the number of the lords of the King's party who had thronged to Edinburgh to wait upon the Regent Murray, absolutely swarmed like bees on the wide and stately street. Instead of the shop-windows, which are now calculated for the display of goods, the traders had their open booths projecting on the street, in which, as in the fashion of the modern bazaars, all was exposed which they had upon sale. And though the commodities were not of the richest kinds, yet Graeme thought he beheld the wealth of the whole world in the various bales of Flanders cloths, and the specimens of tapestry; and, at other places, the display of domestic utensils and pieces of plate struck him with wonder. The sight of cutlers' booths, furnished with swords and poniards, which were manufactured in Scotland, and with pieces of defensive armour, imported from Flanders, added to his surprise; and, at every step, he found so much to admire and gaze upon, that Adam Woodcock had no little difficulty in prevailing on him to advance through such a scene of enchantment.

The sight of the crowds which filled the streets was equally a subject of wonder. Here a gay lady, in her muffler, or silken veil, traced her way delicately, a gentleman-usher making way for her, a page bearing up her train, and a waiting gentlewoman carrying her Bible, thus intimating that her purpose was towards the church—There he might see a group of citizens bending the same way, with their short Flemish cloaks, wide trowsers, and high-caped doublets, a fashion to which, as well as to their bonnet and feather, the Scots were long faithful. Then, again, came the clergyman himself, in his black Geneva cloak and band, lending a grave and attentive ear to the discourse of several persons who accompanied him, and who were doubtless holding serious converse on the religious subject he was about to treat of. Nor did there lack passengers of a different class and appearance.

At every turn, Roland Graeme might see a gallant ruffe along in the newer or French mode, his doublet slashed, and his points of the same colours with the lining, his long sword on one side, and his poniard on the other, behind him a body of stout serving men, proportioned to his estate and quality, all of whom walked with the air of military retainers, and were armed with sword and buckler, the latter being a small round shield, not unlike the Highland target, having a steel spike in the centre. Two of these parties, each headed by a person of importance, chanced to meet in the very centre of the street, or, as it was called, "the crown of the cause-way," a post of honour as tenaciously asserted in Scotland, as that of giving or taking the wall used to be in the more southern part of the island. The two leaders being of equal rank, and, most probably, either animated by political dislike, or by recollection of some feudal enmity, marched close up to each other, without yielding an inch to the right or the left; and neither showing the least purpose of giving way, they stopped for an instant, and then drew their swords. Their followers imitated their example; about a score of weapons at once flashed in the sun, and there was an immediate clatter of swords and bucklers, while the followers on either side cried their master's name; the one shouting "Help, a Leslie! a Leslie!" while the others answered with shouts of "Seyton! Seyton!" with the additional punning slogan, "Set on, set on—bear the knaves to the ground!"

If the falconer found difficulty in getting the page to go forward before, it was now perfectly impossible. He reined up his horse, clapped his hands, and, delighted with the fray, cried and shouted as fast as any of those who were actually engaged in it.

The noise and cries thus arising on the Highgate, as it was called, drew into the quarrel two or three other parties of gentlemen and their servants, besides some single passengers, who, hearing a fray betwixt these two distinguished names, took part in it, either for love or hatred.

The combat became now very sharp, and although the sword-and-buckler men made more clatter and noise than they did real damage, yet several good cuts were dealt among them; and those who wore rapiers, a more formidable weapon than the ordinary Scottish swords, gave and received dangerous wounds. Two men were already stretched on the causeway, and the party of Seyton began to give ground, being much inferior in number to the other, with which several of the citizens had united themselves, when young Roland Graeme, beholding their leader, a noble gentleman, fighting bravely, and hard pressed with numbers, could withhold no longer. "Adam Woodcock," he said, "an you be a man, draw, and let us take part with the Seyton." And, without waiting a reply, or listening to the falconer's earnest entreaty, that he would leave alone a strife in which he had no concern, the fiery youth sprung from his horse, drew his short sword, and shouting like the rest, "A Seyton! a Seyton! Set on! set on!" thrust forward into the throng, and struck down one of those who was pressing hardest upon the gentleman whose cause he espoused. This sudden reinforcement gave spirit to the weaker party, who began to renew the combat with much alacrity, when four of the magistrates of the city, distinguished by their velvet cloaks and gold chains, came up with a guard of halberdiers and citizens, armed with long weapons, and well accustomed to such service, thrust boldly forward, and compelled the swordsmen to separate, who immediately retreated in different directions, leaving such of the wounded on both sides, as had been disabled in the fray, lying on the street.

The falconer, who had been tearing his beard for anger at his comrade's rashness, now rode up to him with the horse which he had caught by the bridle, and accosted him with "Master Roland—master goose—master mad-cap—will it please you to get on horse, and budge? or will you remain here to be carried to prison, and made to answer for this pretty day's work?"

The page, who had begun his retreat along with the Seytons, just as if he had been one of their natural allies, was by this unceremonious application made sensible that he was acting a foolish part; and, obeying Adam Woodcock with some sense of shame, he sprang actively on horseback, and upsetting with the shoulder of the animal a city-officer, who was making towards him, he began to ride smartly down the street, along with his companion, and was quickly out of the reach of the hue and cry. In fact, rencounters of the kind were so common in Edinburgh at that period, that the disturbance seldom excited much attention after the affray was over, unless some person of consequence chanced to have fallen, an incident which imposed on his friends the duty of avenging his death on the first convenient opportunity. So feeble, indeed, was the arm of the police, that it was not unusual for such skirmishes to last for hours, where the parties were numerous and well matched. But at this time the Regent, a man of great strength of character, aware of the mischief which usually arose from such acts of violence, had prevailed with the magistrates to keep a constant guard on foot for preventing or separating such affrays as had happened in the present case.

The falconer and his young companion were now riding down the Canongate, and had slackened their pace to avoid attracting attention, the rather that there seemed to be no appearance of pursuit. Roland hung his head as one who was conscious his conduct had been none of the wisest, whilst his companion thus addressed him:

"Will you be pleased to tell me one thing, Master Roland Graeme, and that is, whether there be a devil incarnate in you or no?"

"Truly, Master Adam Woodcock," answered the page, "I would fain hope there is not."

"Then," said Adam, "I would fain know by what other influence or instigation you are perpetually at one end or the other of some bloody brawl? What, I pray, had you to do with these Seytons and Leslies, that you never heard the names of in your life before?"

"You are out there, my friend," said Roland Graeme, "I have my own reasons for being a friend to the Seytons."

"They must have been very secret reasons then," answered Adam Woodcock, "for I think I could have wagered, you had never known one of the name; and I am apt to believe still, that it was your unhallowed passion for that clashing of cold iron, which has as much charm for you as the clatter of a brass pan hath for a hive of bees, rather than any care either for Seyton or for Leslie, that persuaded you to thrust your fool's head into a quarrel that no ways concerned you. But take this for a warning, my young master, that if you are to draw sword with every man who draws sword on the Highgate here, it will be scarce worth your while to sheathe the bilbo again for the rest of your life, since, if I guess rightly, it will scarce endure on such terms for many hours—all which I leave to your serious consideration."

"By my word, Adam, I honour your advice; and I promise you, that I will practise by it as faithfully as if I were sworn apprentice to you, to the trade and mystery of bearing myself with all wisdom and safety through the new paths of life that I am about to be engaged in."

"And therein you will do well," said the falconer; "and I do not quarrel with you, Master Roland, for having a grain over much spirit, because I know one may bring to the hand a wild hawk which one never can a dung-hill hen—and so betwixt two faults you have the best on't. But besides your peculiar genius for quarrelling and lugging out your side companion, my dear Master Roland, you have also the gift of peering under every woman's muffler and screen, as if you expected to find an old acquaintance. Though were you to spy one, I should be as much surprised at it, well wotting how few you have seen of these same wild-fowl, as I was at your taking so deep an interest even now in the Seyton."

"Tush, man! nonsense and folly," answered Roland Graeme, "I but sought to see what eyes these gentle hawks have got under their hood."

"Ay, but it's a dangerous subject of inquiry," said the falconer; "you had better hold out your bare wrist for an eagle to perch upon.—Look you, Master Roland, these pretty wild-geese cannot be hawked at without risk—they have as many divings, boltings, and volleyings, as the most gamesome quarry that falcon ever flew at—And besides, every woman of them is manned with her husband, or her kind friend, or her brother, or her cousin, or her sworn servant at the least—But you heed me not, Master Roland, though I know the game so well—your eye is all on that pretty damsel who trips down the gate before us—by my certes, I will warrant her a blithe dancer either in reel or revel—a pair of silver morisco bells would become these pretty ankles as well as the jesses would suit the fairest Norway hawk."

"Thou art a fool, Adam," said the page, "and I care not a button about the girl or her ankles—But, what the foul fiend, one must look at something!"

"Very true, Master Roland Graeme," said his guide, "but let me pray you to choose your objects better. Look you, there is scarce a woman walks this High-gate with a silk screen or a pearlin muffler, but, as I said before, she has either gentleman-usher before her, or kinsman, or lover, or husband, at her elbow, or it may be a brace of stout fellows with sword and buckler, not so far behind but what they can follow close—But you heed me no more than a goss-hawk minds a yellow yoldring."

"O yes, I do—I do mind you indeed," said Roland Graeme; "but hold my nag a bit—I will be with you in the exchange of a whistle." So saying, and ere Adam Woodcock could finish the sermon which was dying on his tongue, Roland Graeme, to the falconer's utter astonishment, threw him the bridle of his jennet, jumped off horseback, and pursued down one of the closes or narrow lanes, which, opening under a vault, terminate upon the main-street, the very maiden to whom his friend had accused him of showing so much attention, and who had turned down the pass in question.

"Saint Mary, Saint Magdalen, Saint Benedict, Saint Barnabas!" said the poor falconer, when he found himself thus suddenly brought to a pause in the midst of the Canongate, and saw his young charge start off like a madman in quest of a damsel whom he had never, as Adam supposed, seen in his life before,— "Saint Satan and Saint Beelzebub—for this would make one swear saint and devil—what can have come over the lad, with a wanion! And what shall I do the whilst!—he will have his throat cut, the poor lad, as sure as I was born at the foot of Roseberry-Topping. Could I find some one to hold the horses! but they are as sharp here north-away as in canny Yorkshire herself, and quit bridle, quit titt, as we say. An I could but see one of our folks now, a holly-sprig were worth a gold tassel; or could I but see one of the Regent's men—but to leave the horses to a stranger, that I cannot—and to leave the place while the lad is in jeopardy, that I wonot."

We must leave the falconer, however, in the midst of his distress, and follow the hot-headed youth who was the cause of his perplexity.

The latter part of Adam Woodcock's sage remonstrance had been in a great measure lost upon Roland, for whose benefit it was intended; because, in one of the female forms which tripped along the street, muffled in a veil of striped silk, like the women of Brussels at this day, his eye had discerned something which closely resembled the exquisite shape and spirited bearing of Catherine Seyton.—During all the grave advice which the falconer was dinning in his ears, his eye continued intent upon so interesting an object of observation; and at length, as the damsel, just about to dive under one of the arched passages which afforded an outlet to the Canongate from the houses beneath, (a passage, graced by a projecting shield of arms, supported by two huge foxes of stone,) had lifted her veil for the purpose perhaps of descrying who the horseman was who for some time had eyed her so closely, young Roland saw, under the shade of the silken plaid, enough of the bright azure eyes, fair locks, and blithe features, to induce him, like an inexperienced and rash madcap, whose wilful ways never had been traversed by contradiction, nor much subjected to consideration, to throw the bridle of his horse into Adam Woodcock's hand, and leave him to play the waiting gentleman, while he dashed down the paved court after Catherine Seyton—all as aforesaid.

Women's wits are proverbially quick, but apparently those of Catherine suggested no better expedient than fairly to betake herself to speed of foot, in hopes of baffling the page's vivacity, by getting safely lodged before he could discover where. But a youth of eighteen, in pursuit of a mistress, is not so easily outstripped. Catherine fled across a paved court, decorated with large formal vases of stone, in which yews, cypresses, and other evergreens, vegetated in sombre sullenness, and gave a correspondent degree of solemnity to the high and heavy building in front of which they were placed as ornaments, aspiring towards a square portion of the blue hemisphere, corresponding exactly in extent to the quadrangle in which they were stationed, and all around which rose huge black walls, exhibiting windows in rows of five stories, with heavy architraves over each, bearing armorial and religious devices.

Through this court Catherine Seyton flashed like a hunted doe, making the best use of those pretty legs which had attracted the commendation even of the reflective and cautious Adam Woodcock. She hastened towards a large door in the centre of the lower front of the court, pulled the bobbin till the latch flew up, and ensconced herself in the ancient mansion. But, if she fled like a doe, Roland Graeme followed with the speed and ardour of a youthful stag-hound, loosed for the first time on his prey. He kept her in view in spite of her efforts; for it is remarkable what an advantage, in such a race, the gallant who desires to see, possesses over the maiden who wishes not to be seen—an advantage which I have known counterbalance a great start in point of distance. In short, he saw the waving of her screen, or veil, at one corner, heard the tap of her foot, light as that was, as it crossed the court, and caught a glimpse of her figure just as she entered the door of the mansion.

Roland Graeme, inconsiderate and headlong as we have described him, having no knowledge of real life but from the romances which he had read, and not an idea of checking himself in the midst of any eager impulse; possessed, besides, of much courage and readiness, never hesitated for a moment to approach the door through which the object of his search had disappeared. He, too, pulled the bobbin, and the latch, though heavy and massive, answered to the summons, and arose. The page entered with the same precipitation which had marked his whole proceeding, and found himself in a large hall, or vestibule, dimly enlightened by latticed casements of painted glass, and rendered yet dimmer through the exclusion of the sunbeams, owing to the height of the walls of those buildings by which the court-yard was enclosed. The walls of the hall were surrounded with suits of ancient and rusted armour, interchanged with huge and massive stone scutcheons, bearing double tressures, fleured and counter-fleured, wheat-sheaves, coronets, and so forth, things to which Roland Graeme gave not a moment's attention.

In fact, he only deigned to observe the figure of Catherine Seyton, who, deeming herself safe in the hall, had stopped to take breath after her course, and was reposing herself for a moment on a large oaken settle which stood at the upper end of the hall. The noise of Roland's entrance at once disturbed her; she started

up with a faint scream of surprise, and escaped through one of the several folding-doors which opened into this apartment as a common centre. This door, which Roland Graeme instantly approached, opened on a large and well-lighted gallery, at the upper end of which he could hear several voices, and the noise of hasty steps approaching towards the hall or vestibule. A little recalled to sober thought by an appearance of serious danger, he was deliberating whether he should stand fast or retire, when Catherine Seyton re-entered from a side door, running towards him with as much speed as a few minutes since she had fled from him. "Oh, what mischief brought you hither?" she said; "fly—fly, or you are a dead man,—or stay—they come—flight is impossible—say you came to ask for Lord Seyton."

She sprung from him and disappeared through the door by which she had made her second appearance; and, at the same instant, a pair of large folding-doors at the upper end of the gallery flew open with vehemence, and six or seven young gentlemen, richly dressed, pressed forward into the apartment, having, for the greater part, their swords drawn.

"Who is it," said one, "dare intrude on us in our own mansion?"

"Cut him to pieces," said another; "let him pay for this day's insolence and violence—he is some follower of the Rothes."

"No, by Saint Mary," said another; "he is a follower of the arch-fiend and ennobled clown Halbert Glendinning, who takes the style of Avenel—once a church-vassal, now a pillager of the church."

"It is so," said a fourth; "I know him by the holly-sprig, which is their cognizance. Secure the door, he must answer for this insolence."

Two of the gallants, hastily drawing their weapons, passed on to the door by which Roland had entered the hall, and stationed themselves there as if to prevent his escape. The others advanced on Graeme, who had just sense enough to perceive that any attempt at resistance would be alike fruitless and imprudent. At once, and by various voices, none of which sounded amicably, the page was required to say who he was, whence he came, his name, his errand, and who sent him hither. The number of the questions demanded of him at once, afforded a momentary apology for his remaining silent, and ere that brief truce had elapsed, a personage entered the hall, at whose appearance those who had gathered fiercely around Roland, fell back with respect.

This was a tall man, whose dark hair was already grizzled, though his high and haughty features retained all the animation of youth. The upper part of his person was undressed to his Holland shirt, whose ample folds were stained with blood. But he wore a mantle of crimson, lined with rich fur, cast around him, which supplied the deficiency of his dress. On his head he had a crimson velvet bonnet, looped up on one side with a small golden chain of many links, which, going thrice around the hat, was fastened by a medal, agreeable to the fashion amongst the grandees of the time.

"Whom have you here, sons and kinsmen," said he, "around whom you crowd thus roughly?—Know you not that the shelter of this roof should secure every one fair treatment, who shall come hither either in fair peace, or in open and manly hostility?"

"But here, my lord," answered one of the youths, "is a knave who comes on treacherous espial!"

"I deny the charge!" said Roland Graeme, boldly, "I came to inquire after my Lord Seyton."

"A likely tale," answered his accusers, "in the mouth of a follower of Glendinning."

"Stay, young men," said the Lord Seyton, for it was that nobleman himself, "let me look at this youth—By heaven, it is the very same who came so boldly to my side not very many minutes since, when some of my own knaves bore themselves with more respect to their own worshipful safety than to mine! Stand back from him, for he well deserves honour and a friendly welcome at your hands, instead of this rough treatment."

They fell back on all sides, obedient to Lord Seyton's commands, who, taking Roland Graeme by the hand, thanked him for his prompt and gallant assistance, adding, that he nothing doubted, "the same interest which he had taken in his cause in the affray, brought him hither to inquire after his hurt."

Roland bowed low in acquiescence.

"Or is there any thing in which I can serve you, to show my sense of your ready gallantry?"

But the page, thinking it best to abide by the apology for his visit which the Lord Seyton had so aptly himself suggested, replied, "that to be assured of his lordship's safety, had been the only cause of his intrusion. He judged," he added, "he had seen him receive some hurt in the affray."

"A trifle," said Lord Seyton; "I had but stripped my doublet, that the chirurgeon might put some dressing on the paltry scratch, when these rash boys interrupted us with their clamour."

Roland Graeme, making a low obeisance, was now about to depart, for, relieved from the danger of being treated as a spy, he began next to fear, that his companion, Adam Woodcock, whom he had so unceremoniously quitted, would either bring him into some farther dilemma, by venturing into the hotel in quest of him, or ride off and leave him behind altogether. But Lord Seyton did not permit him to escape so easily. "Tarry," he said, "young man, and let me know thy rank and name. The Seyton has of late been more wont to see friends and followers shrink from his side, than to receive aid from strangers—but a new world may come around, in which he may have the chance of rewarding his well-wishers."

"My name is Roland Graeme, my lord," answered the youth, "a page, who, for the present, is in the service of Sir Halbert Glendinning."

"I said so from the first," said one of the young men; "my life I will wager, that this is a shaft out of the heretic's quiver—a stratagem from first to last, to injeer into your confidence some espial of his own. They know how to teach both boys and women to play the intelligencers."

"That is false, if it be spoken of me," said Roland; "no man in Scotland should teach me such a foul part!"

"I believe thee, boy," said Lord Seyton, "for thy strokes were too fair to be dealt upon an understanding with those that were to receive them. Credit me, however, I little expected to have help at need from one of your master's household; and I would know what moved thee in my quarrel, to thine own endangering?"

"So please you, my lord," said Roland, "I think my master himself would not have stood by, and seen an honourable man borne to earth by odds, if his single arm could help him. Such, at least, is the lesson we were taught in chivalry, at the Castle of Avenel."

"The good seed hath fallen into good ground, young man," said Seyton; "but, alas! if thou practise such honourable war in these dishonourable days, when right is every where borne down by mastery, thy life, my poor boy, will be but a short one."

"Let it be short, so it be honourable," said Roland Graeme; "and permit me now, my lord, to commend me to your grace, and to take my leave. A comrade waits with my horse in the street."

"Take this, however, young man," said Lord Seyton,

[Footnote: George, fifth Lord Seton, was immovably faithful to Queen Mary during all the mutabilities of her fortune. He was grand master of the household, in which capacity he had a picture painted of himself, with his official baton, and the following motto:

In adversitate, patiens;

In prosperitate, benevolus.

Hazard, yet forward.

On various parts of his castle he inscribed, as expressing his religious and political creed, the legend:

Un Dieu, un Foy, un Roy, un Loy.

He declined to be promoted to an earldom, which Queen Mary offered him at the same time when she advanced her natural brother to be Earl of Mar, and afterwards of Murray.

On his refusing this honour, Mary wrote, or caused to be written, the following lines in Latin and French:

Sunt comites, ducesque alii; sunt denique reges;

Sethom dominum sit satis esse mihi.

Il y a des comptes, des roys, des ducs; ainsi

C'est assez pour moy d'estre Seigneur de Seton.

Which may be thus rendered:—

Earl, duke, or king, be thou that list to be:

Seton, thy lordship is enough for me.

This distich reminds us of the "pride which aped humility," in the motto of the house of Couci:

Je suis ni roy, ni prince aussi;

Je suis le Seigneur de Coucy.

After the battle of Langside, Lord Seton was obliged to retire abroad for safety, and was an exile for two years, during which he was reduced to the necessity of driving a waggon in Flanders for his subsistence. He rose to favour in James VI's reign, and assuming his paternal property, had himself painted in his waggoner's dress, and in the act of driving a wain with four horses, on the north end of a stately gallery at Seton Castle] undoing from his bonnet the golden chain and medal, "and wear it for my sake."

With no little pride Roland Graeme accepted the gift, which he hastily fastened around his bonnet, as he had seen gallants wear such an ornament, and renewing his obeisance to the Baron, left the hall, traversed the court, and appeared in the street, just as Adam Woodcock, vexed and anxious at his delay, had determined to leave the horses to their fate, and go in quest of his youthful comrade. "Whose barn hast thou broken next?" he exclaimed, greatly relieved by his appearance, although his countenance indicated that he had passed through an agitating scene.

"Ask me no questions," said Roland, leaping gaily on his horse; "but see how short time it takes to win a chain of gold," pointing to that which he now wore.

"Now, God forbid that thou hast either stolen it, or reft it by violence," said the falconer; "for, otherwise, I wot not how the devil thou couldst compass it. I have been often here, ay, for months at an end, and no one gave me either chain or medal."

"Thou seest I have got one on shorter acquaintance with the city," answered the page, "but set thine honest heart at rest; that which is fairly won and freely given, is neither reft nor stolen."

"Marry, hang thee, with thy fanfaronade [Footnote: A name given to the gold chains worn by the military men of the period. It is of Spanish origin: for the fashion of wearing these costly ornaments was much followed amongst the conquerors of the New World.] about thy neck!" said the falconer; "I think water will not drown, nor hemp strangle thee. Thou hast been discarded as my lady's page, to come in again as my lord's squire; and for following a noble young damsel into some great household, thou gettest a chain and medal, where another would have had the baton across his shoulders, if he missed having the dirk in his body. But here we come in front of the old Abbey. Bear thy good luck with you when you cross these paved stones, and, by our Lady, you may brag Scotland."

As he spoke, they checked their horses, where the huge old vaulted entrance to the Abbey or Palace of Holyrood crossed the termination of the street down which they had proceeded. The courtyard of the palace opened within this gloomy porch, showing the front of an irregular pile of monastic buildings, one wing of which is still extant, forming a part of the modern palace, erected in the days of Charles I.

At the gate of the porch the falconer and page resigned their horses to the serving-man in attendance; the falconer commanding him with an air of authority, to carry them safely to the stables. "We follow," he said, "the Knight of Avenel—We must bear ourselves for what we are here," said he in a whisper to Roland, "for every one here is looked on as they demean themselves; and he that is too modest must to the wall, as the proverb says; therefore cock thy bonnet, man, and let us brook the causeway bravely."

Assuming, therefore, an air of consequence, corresponding to what he supposed to be his master's importance and quality, Adam Woodcock led the way into the courtyard of the Palace of Holyrood.

He appears to have been fond of the arts; for there exists a beautiful family-piece of him in the centre of his family. Mr. Pinkerton, in his *Scottish Iconographia*, published an engraving of this curious portrait. The original is the property of Lord Somerville, nearly connected with the Seton family, and is at present at his lordship's fishing villa of the Pavilion, near Melrose.

Chapter the Eighteenth.

—The sky is clouded, Gaspard,

And the vexed ocean sleeps a troubled sleep,

Beneath a lurid gleam of parting sunshine.

Such slumber hangs o'er discontented lands,

While factions doubt, as yet, if they have strength

To front the open battle.

ALBION—A POEM.

The youthful page paused on the entrance of the court-yard, and implored his guide to give him a moment's breathing space. "Let me but look around me, man," said he; "you consider not I have never seen such a scene as this before.—And this is Holyrood—the resort of the gallant and gay, and the fair, and the wise, and the powerful!"

"Ay, marry, is it!" said Woodcock; "but I wish I could hood thee as they do the hawks, for thou starest as wildly as if you sought another fray or another fanfaronade. I would I had thee safely housed, for thou lookest wild as a goss-hawk."

It was indeed no common sight to Roland, the vestibule of a palace traversed by its various groups,—some radiant with gaiety—some pensive, and apparently weighed down by affairs concerning the state, or concerning themselves. Here the hoary statesman, with his cautious yet commanding look, his furred cloak and sable pantoufles; there the soldier in buff and steel, his long sword jarring against the pavement, and his whiskered upper lip and frowning brow, looking an habitual defiance of danger, which perhaps was not always made good; there again passed my lord's serving-man, high of heart, and bloody of hand, humble to his master and his master's equals, insolent to all others. To these might be added, the poor suitor, with his anxious look and depressed mien—the officer, full of his brief authority, elbowing his betters, and possibly his benefactors, out of the road—the proud priest, who sought a better benefice—the proud baron, who sought a grant of church lands—the robber chief, who came to solicit a pardon for the injuries he had inflicted on his neighbors—the plundered franklin, who came to seek vengeance for that which he had himself received. Besides there was the mustering and disposition of guards and soldiers—the despatching of messengers, and the receiving them—the trampling and neighing of horses without the gate—the flashing of arms, and rustling of plumes, and jingling of spurs, within it. In short, it was that gay and splendid confusion, in which the eye of youth sees all that is brave and brilliant, and that of experience much that is doubtful, deceitful, false, and hollow—hopes that will never be gratified—promises which will never be fulfilled—pride in the disguise of humility—and insolence in that of frank and generous bounty.

As, tired of the eager and enraptured attention which the page gave to a scene so new to him, Adam Woodcock endeavoured to get him to move forward, before his exuberance of astonishment should attract the observation of the sharp-witted denizens of the court, the falconer himself became an object of attention to a gay menial in a dark-green bonnet and feather, with a cloak of a corresponding colour, laid down, as the phrase then went, by six broad bars of silver lace, and welted with violet and silver. The words of recognition burst from both at once. "What! Adam Woodcock at court!" and "What! Michael Wing-the-wind—and how runs the hackit greyhound bitch now?"

"The waur for the wear, like ourselves, Adam—eight years this grass—no four legs will carry a dog forever; but we keep her for the breed, and so she 'scapes Border doom—But why stand you gazing there? I promise you my lord has wished for you, and asked for you."

"My Lord of Murray asked for me, and he Regent of the kingdom too!" said Adam. "I hunger and thirst to pay my duty to my good lord;—but I fancy his good lordship remembers the day's sport on Carnwath-moor; and my Drummelzier falcon, that beat the hawks from the Isle of Man, and won his lordship a hundred crowns from the Southern baron whom they called Stanley."

"Nay, not to flatter thee, Adam," said his court-friend, "he remembers nought of thee, or of thy falcon either. He hath flown many a higher flight since that, and struck his quarry too. But come, come hither away; I trust we are to be good comrades on the old score."

"What!" said Adam, "you would have me crush a pot with you; but I must first dispose of my eyas, where he will neither have girl to chase, nor lad to draw sword upon."

"Is the youngster such a one?" said Michael.

"Ay, by my hood, he flies at all game," replied Woodcock.

"Then had he better come with us," said Michael Wing-the-wind; "for we cannot have a proper carouse just now, only I would wet my lips, and so must you. I want to hear the news from Saint Mary's before you see my lord, and I will let you know how the wind sits up yonder."

While he thus spoke, he led the way to a side door which opened into the court; and threading several dark passages with the air of one who knew the most secret recesses of the palace, conducted them to a small matted chamber, where he placed bread and cheese and a foaming flagon of ale before the falconer and his young companion, who immediately did justice to the latter in a hearty draught, which nearly emptied the measure. Having drawn his breath, and dashed the froth from his whiskers, he observed, that his anxiety for the boy had made him deadly dry.

"Mend your draught," said his hospitable friend, again supplying the flagon from a pitcher which stood beside. "I know the way to the butterybar. And now, mind what I say—this morning the Earl of Morton came to my lord in a mighty chafe."

"What! they keep the old friendship, then?" said Woodcock.

"Ay, ay, man, what else?" said Michael; "one hand must scratch the other. But in a mighty chafe was my Lord of Morton, who, to say truth, looketh on such occasions altogether uncanny, and, as it were, fiendish; and he says to my lord,—for I was in the chamber taking orders about a cast of hawks that are to be fetched from Darnoway—they match your long-winged falcons, friend Adam."

"I will believe that when I see them fly as high a pitch," replied Woodcock, this professional observation forming a sort of parenthesis.

"However," said Michael, pursuing his tale, "my Lord of Morton, in a mighty chafe, asked my Lord Regent whether he was well dealt with—'for my brother,' said he, 'should have had a gift to be Commendator of Kennaquhair, and to have all the temporalities erected into a lordship of regality for his benefit; and here,' said he, 'the false monks have had the insolence to choose a new Abbot to put his claim in my brother's way; and moreover, the rascality of the neighbourhood have burnt and plundered all that was left in the Abbey, so that my brother will not have a house to dwell in, when he hath ousted the lazy hounds of priests.' And my lord, seeing him chafed, said mildly to him, 'These are shrewd tidings, Douglas, but I trust they be not true; for Halbert Glendinning went southward yesterday, with a band of spears, and assuredly, had either of these chances happened, that the monks had presumed to choose an Abbot, or that the Abbey had been burnt, as you say, he had taken order on the spot for the punishment of such insolence, and had despatched us a messenger.' And the Earl of Morton replied—now I pray you, Adam, to notice, that I say this out of love to you and your lord, and also for old comradeship, and also because Sir Halbert hath done me good, and may again—and also because I love not the Earl of Morton, as indeed more fear than like him—so then it were a foul deed in you to betray me.—'But,' said the Earl to the Regent, 'take heed, my lord, you trust not this Glendinning too far—he comes of churl's blood, which was never true to the nobles'—by Saint Andrew, these were his very words.—'And besides,' he said, 'he hath a brother, a monk in Saint Mary's, and walks all by his guidance, and is making friends on the Border with Buccleuch and with Ferniehirst, [Footnote: Both these Border Chieftains were great friends of Queen Mary.] and will join hand with them, were there likelihood of a new world.' And my lord answered, like a free noble lord as he is; 'Tush! my Lord of Morton, I will be warrant for Glendinning's faith; and for his brother, he is a dreamer, that thinks of nought but book and breviary—and if such hap have chanced as you tell of, I look to receive from Glendinning the cowl of a hanged monk, and the head of a riotous churl, by way of sharp and sudden justice.'—And my Lord of Morton left the place, and, as it seemed to me, somewhat malecontent. But since that time, my lord has asked me more than once whether there has arrived no messenger from the Knight of Avenel. And all this I have told you, that you may frame your discourse to the best purpose, for it seems to me that my lord will not be well-pleased, if aught has happened like what my Lord of Morton said, and if your lord hath not ta'en strict orders with it."

There was something in this communication which fairly blanked the bold visage of Adam Woodcock, in spite of the reinforcement which his natural hardihood had received from the berry-brown ale of Holyrood.

"What was it he said about a churl's head, that grim Lord of Morton?" said the discontented falconer to his friend.

"Nay, it was my Lord Regent, who said that he expected, if the Abbey was injured, your Knight would send him the head of the ringleader among the rioters."

"Nay, but is this done like a good Protestant," said Adam Woodcock, "or a true Lord of the Congregation? We used to be their white-boys and darlings when we pulled down the convents in Fife and Perthshire." "Ay, but that," said Michael, "was when old mother Rome held her own, and our great folks were determined she should have no shelter for her head in Scotland. But, now that the priests are fled in all quarters, and their houses and lands are given to our grantees, they cannot see that we are working the work of reformation in destroying the palaces of zealous Protestants."

"But I tell you Saint Mary's is not destroyed!" said Woodcock, in increasing agitation; "some trash of painted windows there were broken—things that no nobleman could have brooked in his house—some stone saints were brought on their marrow-bones, like old Widdrington at Chevy-Chase; but as for fire-raising, there was not so much as a lighted lunt amongst us, save the match which the dragon had to light the burning tow withal, which he was to spit against Saint George; nay, I had caution of that."

"How! Adam Woodcock," said his comrade, "I trust thou hadst no hand in such a fair work? Look you, Adam, I were loth to terrify you, and you just come from a journey; but I promise you, Earl Morton hath brought you down a Maiden from Halifax, you never saw the like of her—and she'll clasp you round the neck, and your head will remain in her arms."

"Pshaw!" answered Adam, "I am too old to have my head turned by any maiden of them all. I know my Lord of Morton will go as far for a buxom lass as anyone; but what the devil took him to Halifax all the way? and if he has got a gamester there, what hath she to do with my head?"

"Much, much!" answered Michael. "Herod's daughter, who did such execution with her foot and ankle, danced not men's heads off more cleanly than this maiden of Morton. [Footnote: Maiden of Morton—a species of Guillotine which the Regent Morton brought down from Halifax, certainly at a period considerably later than intimated in the tale. He was himself the first who suffered by the engine.] 'Tis an axe, man,—an axe which falls of itself like a sash window, and never gives the headsman the trouble to wield it."

"By my faith, a shrewd device," said Woodcock; "heaven keep us free on't!"

The page, seeing no end to the conversation betwixt these two old comrades, and anxious from what he had heard, concerning the fate of the Abbot, now interrupted their conference.

"Methinks," he said, "Adam Woodcock, thou hadst better deliver thy master's letter to the Regent; questionless he hath therein stated what has chanced at Kennaquhair, in the way most advantageous for all concerned."

"The boy is right," said Michael Wing-the-wind, "my lord will be very impatient."

"The child hath wit enough to keep himself warm," said Adam Woodcock, producing from his hawking-bag his lord's letter, addressed to the Earl of Murray, "and for that matter so have I. So, Master Roland, you will e'en please to present this yourself to the Lord Regent; his presence will be better graced by a young page than by an old falconer."

"Well said, canny Yorkshire!" replied his friend; "and but now you were so earnest to see our good lord!—Why, wouldst thou put the lad into the noose that thou mayst slip tether thyself?—or dost thou think the maiden will clasp his fair young neck more willingly than thy old sunburnt weasand?"

"Go to," answered the falconer; "thy wit towers high an it could strike the quarry. I tell thee, the youth has nought to fear—he had nothing to do with the gambol—a rare gambol it was, Michael, as mad-caps ever played; and I had made as rare a ballad, if we had had the luck to get it sung to an end. But mum for that—*face*, as I said before, is Latin for a candle. Carry the youth to the presence, and I will remain here, with bridle in hand, ready to strike the spurs up to the rowel-heads, in case the hawk flies my way.—I will soon put Soltraedge, I trow, betwixt the Regent and me, if he means me less than fair play."

"Come on then, my lad," said Michael, "since thou must needs take the spring before canny Yorkshire." So saying, he led the way through winding passages, closely followed by Roland Graeme, until they arrived at a large winding stone stair, the steps of which were so long and broad, and at the same time so low, as to render the ascent uncommonly easy. When they had ascended about the height of one story, the guide stepped aside, and pushed open the door of a dark and gloomy antechamber; so dark, indeed, that his youthful companion stumbled, and nearly fell down upon a low step, which was awkwardly placed on the very threshold.

"Take heed," said Michael Wing-the-wind, in a very low tone of voice, and first glancing cautiously round to see if any one listened—"Take heed, my young friend, for those who fall on these boards seldom rise again—Seest thou that," he added, in a still lower voice, pointing to some dark crimson stains on the floor, on which a ray of light, shot through a small aperture, and traversing the general gloom of the apartment, fell with mottled radiance—"Seest thou that, youth?—walk warily, for men have fallen here before you."

"What mean you?" said the page, his flesh creeping, though he scarce knew why; "Is it blood?"

"Ay, ay," said the domestic, in the same whispering tone, and dragging the youth on by the arm—"Blood it is,—but this is no time to question, or even to look at it. Blood it is, foully and fearfully shed, as foully and fearfully avenged. The blood," he added, in a still more cautious tone, "of Seignior David."

Roland Graeme's heart throbbed when he found himself so unexpectedly in the scene of Rizzio's slaughter, a catastrophe which had chilled with horror all even in that rude age, which had been the theme of wonder and pity through every cottage and castle in Scotland, and had not escaped that of Avenel. But his guide hurried him forward, permitting no farther question, and with the manner of one who has already tampered too much with a dangerous subject. A tap which he made at a low door at one end of the vestibule, was answered by a huissier or usher, who, opening it cautiously, received Michael's intimation that a page waited the Regent's leisure, who brought letters from the Knight of Avenel.

"The Council is breaking up," said the usher; "but give me the packet; his Grace the Regent will presently see the messenger."

"The packet," replied the page, "must be delivered into the Regent's own hands; such were the orders of my master."

The usher looked at him from head to foot, as if surprised at his boldness, and then replied, with some asperity, "Say you so, my young master? Thou crowest loudly to be but a chicken, and from a country barn-yard too."

"Were it a time or place," said Roland, "thou shouldst see I can do more than crow; but do your duty, and let the Regent know I wait his pleasure."

"Thou art but a pert knave to tell me of my duty," said the courtier in office; "but I will find a time to show you you are out of yours; meanwhile, wait there till you are wanted." So saying, he shut the door in Roland's face.

Michael Wing-the-wind, who had shrunk from his youthful companion during this altercation, according to the established maxim of courtiers of all ranks, and in all ages, now transgressed their prudential line of conduct so far as to come up to him once more. "Thou art a hopeful young springald," said he, "and I see right well old Yorkshire had reason in his caution. Thou hast been five minutes in the court, and hast employed thy time so well, as to make a powerful and a mortal enemy out of the usher of the council-chamber. Why, man, you might almost as well have offended the deputy butler!"

"I care not what he is," said Roland Graeme; "I will teach whomever I speak with to speak civilly to me in return. I did not come from Avenel to be browbeaten in Holyrood."

"Bravo, my lad!" said Michael; "it is a fine spirit if you can but hold it—but see, the door opens."

The usher appeared, and, in a more civil tone of voice and manner, said, that his Grace the Regent would receive the Knight of Avenel's message; and accordingly marshalled Roland Graeme the way into the apartment, from which the Council had been just dismissed, after finishing their consultations. There was in the room a long oaken table, surrounded by stools of the same wood, with a large elbow chair, covered with crimson velvet, at the head. Writing materials and papers were lying there in apparent disorder; and one or two of the privy counsellors who had lingered behind, assuming their cloaks, bonnets, and swords, and bidding farewell to the Regent, were departing slowly by a large door, on the opposite side to that through which the page entered. Apparently the Earl of Murray had made some jest, for the smiling countenances of the statesmen expressed that sort of cordial reception which is paid by courtiers to the condescending pleasantries of a prince.

The Regent himself was laughing heartily as he said, "Farewell, my lords, and hold me remembered to the Cock of the North."

He then turned slowly round towards Roland Graeme, and the marks of gaiety, real or assumed, disappeared from his countenance, as completely as the passing bubbles leave the dark mirror of a still profound lake into which a traveller has cast a stone; in the course of a minute his noble features had assumed their natural expression of deep and even melancholy gravity.

This distinguished statesman, for as such his worst enemies acknowledged him, possessed all the external dignity, as well as almost all the noble qualities, which could grace the power that he enjoyed; and had he succeeded to the throne as his legitimate inheritance, it is probable he would have been recorded as one of Scotland's wisest and greatest kings. But that he held his authority by the deposition and imprisonment of his sister and benefactress, was a crime which those only can excuse who think ambition an apology for ingratitude. He was dressed plainly in black velvet, after the Flemish fashion, and wore in his high-crowned hat a jewelled clasp, which looped it up on one side, and formed the only ornament of his apparel. He had his poniard by his side, and his sword lay on the council table.

Such was the personage before whom Roland Graeme now presented himself, with a feeling of breathless awe, very different from the usual boldness and vivacity of his temper. In fact, he was, from education and nature, forward, but not impudent, and was much more easily controlled by the moral superiority, arising from the elevated talents and renown of those with whom he conversed, than by pretensions founded only on rank or external show. He might have braved with indifference the presence of an earl, merely distinguished by his belt and coronet; but he felt overawed in that of the eminent soldier and statesman, the wielder of a nation's power, and the leader of her armies.—The greatest and wisest are flattered by the deference of youth—so graceful and becoming in itself; and Murray took, with much courtesy, the letter from the hands of the abashed and blushing page, and answered with complaisance to the imperfect and half-muttered greeting, which he endeavoured to deliver to him on the part of Sir Halbert of Avenel. He even paused a moment ere he broke the silk with which the letter was secured, to ask the page his name—so much he was struck with his very handsome features and form.

"Roland Graeme," he said, repeating the words after the hesitating page. "What! of the Grahams of the Lennox?"

"No, my lord," replied Roland; "my parents dwell in the Debateable Land."

Murray made no further inquiry, but proceeded to read his dispatches; during the perusal of which his brow began to assume a stern expression of displeasure, as that of one who found something which at once surprised and disturbed him. He sat down on the nearest seat, frowned till his eyebrows almost met together, read the letter twice over, and was then silent for several minutes. At length, raising his head, his eye encountered that of the usher, who in vain endeavoured to exchange the look of eager and curious observation with which he had been perusing the Regent's features, for that open and unnoticing expression of countenance, which, in looking at all, seems as if it saw and marked nothing—a cast of look which may be practised with advantage by all those, of whatever degree, who are admitted to witness the familiar and unguarded hours of their superiors. Great men are as jealous of their thoughts as the wife of King Candaules was of her charms, and will as readily punish those who have, however involuntarily, beheld them in mental deshabelle and exposure.

"Leave the apartment, Hyndman," said the Regent, sternly, "and carry your observation elsewhere. You are too knowing, sir, for your post, which, by special order, is destined for men of blunter capacity. So! now you look more like a fool than you did,"—(for Hyndman, as may easily be supposed, was not a little disconcerted by this rebuke)—"keep that confused stare, and it may keep your office. Begone, sir!"

The usher departed in dismay, not forgetting to register, amongst his other causes of dislike to Roland Graeme, that he had been the witness of this disgraceful chiding. When he had left the apartment, the Regent again addressed the page.

"Your name, you say, is Armstrong?"

"No," replied Roland, "my name is Graeme, so please you—Roland Graeme, whose forbears were designated of Heathergill, in the Debateable Land."

"Ay, I knew it was a name from the Debateable Land. Hast thou any acquaintance in Edinburgh?"

"My lord," replied Roland, willing rather to evade this question than to answer it directly, for the prudence of being silent with respect to Lord Seyton's adventure immediately struck him, "I have been in Edinburgh scarce an hour, and that for the first time in my life."

"What! and thou Sir Halbert Glendinning's page?" said the Regent.

"I was brought up as my Lady's page," said the youth, "and left Avenel Castle for the first time in my life—at least since my childhood—only three days since."

"My Lady's page!" repeated the Earl of Murray, as if speaking to himself; "it was strange to send his Lady's page on a matter of such deep concernment—Morton will say it is of a piece with the nomination of his brother to be Abbot; and yet in some sort an inexperienced youth will best serve the turn.—What hast thou been taught, young man, in thy doughty apprenticeship?"

"To hunt, my lord, and to hawk," said Roland Graeme.

"To hunt coney, and to hawk at ouzels!" said the Regent, smiling; "for such are the sports of ladies and their followers."

Graeme's cheek reddened deeply as he replied, not without some emphasis, "To hunt red-deer of the first head, and to strike down herons of the highest soar, my lord, which, in Lothian speech, may be termed, for aught I know, coney and ouzels; also I can wield a brand and couch a lance, according to our Border meaning; in inland speech these may be termed water-flags and bulrushes."

"Thy speech rings like metal," said the Regent, "and I pardon the sharpness of it for the truth.—Thou knowest, then, what belongs to the duty of a man-at-arms?"

"So far as exercise can teach—it without real service in the field," answered Roland Graeme; "but our Knight permitted none of his household to make raids, and I never had the good fortune to see a stricken field."

"The good fortune!" repeated the Regent, smiling somewhat sorrowfully, "take my word, young man, war is the only game from which both parties rise losers."

"Not always, my lord!" answered the page, with his characteristic audacity, "if fame speaks truth."

"How, sir?" said the Regent, colouring in his turn, and perhaps suspecting an indiscreet allusion to the height which he himself had attained by the hap of civil war.

"Because, my lord," said Roland Graeme, without change of tone, "he who fights well, must have fame in life, or honour in death; and so war is a game from which no one can rise a loser."

The Regent smiled and shook his head, when at that moment the door opened, and the Earl of Morton presented himself.

"I come somewhat hastily," he said, "and I enter unannounced because my news are of weight—It is as I said; Edward Glendinning is named Abbot, and—"

"Hush, my lord!" said the Regent, "I know it, but—"

"And perhaps you knew it before I did, my Lord of Murray," answered Morton, his dark red brow growing darker and redder as he spoke.

"Morton," said Murray, "suspect me not—touch not mine honour—I have to suffer enough from the calumnies of foes, let me not have to contend with the unjust suspicions of my friends.—We are not alone," said he, recollecting himself, "or I could tell you more."

He led Morton into one of the deep embrasures which the windows formed in the massive wall, and which afforded a retiring place for their conversing apart. In this recess, Roland observed them speak together with much earnestness, Murray appearing to be grave and earnest, and Morton having a jealous and offended air, which seemed gradually to give way to the assurances of the Regent.

As their conversation grew more earnest, they became gradually louder in speech, having perhaps forgotten the presence of the page, the more readily as his position in the apartment placed him put of sight, so that he found himself unwillingly privy to more of their discourse than he cared to hear. For, page though he was, a mean curiosity after the secrets of others had never been numbered amongst Roland's failings; and moreover, with all his natural rashness, he could not but doubt the safety of becoming privy to the secret discourse of these powerful and dreaded men. Still he could neither stop his ears, nor with propriety leave the apartment; and while he thought of some means of signifying his presence, he had already heard so much, that, to have produced himself suddenly would have been as awkward, and perhaps as dangerous, as in quiet to abide the end of their conference. What he overheard, however, was but an imperfect part of their communication; and although an expert politician, acquainted with the circumstances of the times, would have had little difficulty in tracing the meaning, yet Roland Graeme could only form very general and vague conjectures as to the import of their discourse.

"All is prepared," said Murray, "and Lindsay is setting forward—She must hesitate no longer—thou seest I act by thy counsel, and harden myself against softer considerations."

"True, my lord," replied Morton, "in what is necessary to gain power, you do not hesitate, but go boldly to the mark. But are you as careful to defend and preserve what you have won?—Why this establishment of domestics around her?—has not your sister men and maidens enough to tend her, but you must consent to this superfluous and dangerous retinue?"

"For shame, Morton!—a Princess, and my sister, could I do less than allow her due attendance?"

"Ay," replied Morton, "even thus fly all your shafts—smartly enough loosened from the bow, and not unskilfully aimed—but a breath of foolish affection ever crosses in the mid volley, and sways the arrow from the mark."

"Say not so, Morton," replied Murray, "I have both dared and done—"

"Yes, enough to gain, but not enough to keep—reckon not that she will think and act thus—you have wounded her deeply, both in pride and in power—it signifies nought, that you would tent now the wound with unavailing salves—as matters stand with you, you must forfeit the title of an affectionate brother, to hold that of a bold and determined statesman."

"Morton!" said Murray, with some impatience, "I brook not these taunts—what I have done I have done—what I must farther do, I must and will—but I am not made of iron like thee, and I cannot but remember—Enough of this—my purpose holds."

"And I warrant me," said Morton, "the choice of these domestic consolations will rest with—"

Here he whispered names which escaped Roland Graeme's ear. Murray replied in a similar tone, but so much raised towards the conclusion, of the sentence, that the page heard these words—"And of him I hold myself secure, by Glendinning's recommendation."

"Ay, which may be as much trustworthy as his late conduct at the Abbey of Saint Mary's—you have heard that his brother's election has taken place. Your favourite Sir Halbert, my Lord of Murray, has as much fraternal affection as yourself."

"By heaven, Morton, that taunt demanded an unfriendly answer, but I pardon it, for your brother also is concerned; but this election shall be annulled. I tell you, Earl of Morton, while I hold the sword of state in my royal nephew's name, neither Lord nor Knight in Scotland shall dispute my authority; and if I bear—with insults from my friends, it is only while I know them to be such, and forgive their follies for their faithfulness."

Morton muttered what seemed to be some excuse, and the Regent answered him in a milder tone, and then subjoined, "Besides, I have another pledge than Glendinning's recommendation, for this youth's fidelity—his nearest relative has placed herself in my hands as his security, to be dealt withal as his doings shall deserve."

"That is something," replied Morton; "but yet in fair love and goodwill, I must still pray you to keep on your guard. The foes are stirring again, as horse-flies and hornets become busy so soon as the storm-blast is over. George of Seyton was crossing the causeway this morning with a score of men at his back, and had a ruffle with my friends of the house of Leslie—they met at the Tron, and were fighting hard, when the provost, with his guard of partisans, came in thirdsman, and staved them asunder with their halberds, as men part dog and bear."

"He hath my order for such interference," said the Regent—"Has any one been hurt?"

"George of Seyton himself, by black Ralph Leslie—the devil take the rapier that ran not through from side to side! Ralph has a bloody coxcomb, by a blow from a messan-page whom nobody knew—Dick Seyton of Windygowl is run through the arm, and two gallants of the Leslies have suffered phlebotomy. This is all the gentle blood which has been spilled in the revel; but a yeoman or two on both sides have had bones broken and ears chopped. The ostlere-wives, who are like to be the only losers by their miscarriage, have dragged the knaves off the street, and are crying a drunken coronach over them."

"You take it lightly, Douglas," said the Regent; "these broils and feuds would shame the capital of the great Turk, let alone that of a Christian and reformed state. But, if I live, this gear shall be amended; and men shall say, when they read my story, that if it were my cruel hap to rise to power by the dethronement of a sister, I employed it, when gained, for the benefit of the commonweal."

"And of your friends," replied Morton; "wherefore I trust for your instant order annulling the election of this lurdane Abbot, Edward Glendinning."

"You shall be presently satisfied," said the Regent; and stepping forward, he began to call, "So ho, Hyndman!" when suddenly his eye lighted on Roland Graeme—"By my faith, Douglas," said he, turning to his friend, "here have been three at counsel!"

"Ay, but only two can keep counsel," said Morton; "the galliard must be disposed of."

"For shame, Morton—an orphan boy!—Hearken thee, my child—Thou hast told me some of thy accomplishments—canst thou speak truth?" "Ay, my lord, when it serves my turn," replied Graeme.

"It shall serve thy turn now," said the Regent; "and falsehood shall be thy destruction. How much hast thou heard or understood of what we two have spoken together?"

"But little, my lord," replied Roland Graeme boldly, "which met my apprehension, saving that it seemed to me as if in something you doubted the faith of the Knight of Avenel, under whose roof I was nurtured."

"And what hast thou to say on that point, young man?" continued the Regent, bending his eyes upon him with a keen and strong expression of observation.

"That," said the page, "depends on the quality of those who speak against his honour whose bread I have long eaten. If they be my inferiors, I say they lie, and will maintain what I say with my baton; if my equals, still I say they lie, and will do battle in the quarrel, if they list, with my sword; if my superiors"—he paused.

"Proceed boldly," said the Regent—"What if thy superiors said aught that nearly touched your master's honour?"

"I would say," replied Graeme, "that he did ill to slander the absent, and that my master was a man who could render an account of his actions to any one who should manfully demand it of him to his face."

"And it were manfully said," replied the Regent—"what thinkest thou, my Lord of Morton?"

"I think," replied Morton, "that if the young galliard resemble a certain ancient friend of ours, as much in the craft of his disposition as he does in eye and in brow, there may be a wide difference betwixt what he means and what he speaks."

"And whom meanest thou that he resembles so closely?" said Murray.

"Even the true and trusty Julian Avenel," replied Morton.

"But this youth belongs to the Debateable Land," said Murray.

"It may be so; but Julian was an outlaying striker of venison, and made many a far cast when he had a fair doe in chase."

"Pshaw!" said the Regent, "this is but idle talk—Here, thou Hyndman—thou curiosity," calling to the usher, who now entered,—"conduct this youth to his companion—You will both," he said to Graeme, "keep yourselves in readiness to travel on short notice."—And then motioning to him courteously to withdraw, he broke up the interview.

Chapter the Nineteenth.

*It is and is not—'tis the thing I sought for,
Have kneel'd for, pray'd for, risk'd my fame and life for,
And yet it is not—no more than the shadow
Upon the hard, cold, flat, and polished mirror,
Is the warm, graceful, rounded, living substance
Which it presents in form and lineament.*

OLD PLAY.

The usher, with gravity which ill concealed a jealous scowl, conducted Roland Graeme to a lower apartment, where he found his comrade the falconer. The man of office then briefly acquainted them that this would be their residence till his Grace's farther orders; that they were to go to the pantry, to the buttery, to the cellar, and to the kitchen, at the usual hours, to receive the allowances becoming their station,—instructions which Adam Woodcock's old familiarity with the court made him perfectly understand—"For your beds," he said, "you must go to the hostelry of Saint Michael's, in respect the palace is now full of the domestics of the greater nobles."

No sooner was the usher's back turned than Adam exclaimed with all the glee of eager curiosity, "And now, Master Roland, the news—the news—come unbutton thy pouch, and give us thy tidings—What says the Regent? asks he for Adam Woodcock?—and is all soldered up, or must the Abbot of Unreason strap for it?"

"All is well in that quarter," said the page; "and for the rest—But, hey-day, what! have you taken the chain and medal off from my bonnet?"

"And meet time it was, when yon usher, vinegar-faced rogue that he is, began to inquire what Popish trangam you were wearing.—By the mass, the metal would have been confiscated for conscience-sake, like your other rattle-trap yonder at Avenel, which Mistress Lillas bears about on her shoes in the guise of a pair of shoe-buckles—This comes of carrying Popish nicknacks about you."

"The jade!" exclaimed Roland Graeme, "has she melted down my rosary into buckles for her clumsy hoofs, which will set off such a garnish nearly as well as a cow's might?—But, hang her, let her keep them—many a dog's trick have I played old Lillas, for want of having something better to do, and the buckles will serve for a remembrance. Do you remember the verjuice I put into the comfits, when old Wingate and she were to breakfast together on Easter morning?"

"In troth do I, Master Roland—the major-domo's mouth was as crooked as a hawk's beak for the whole morning afterwards, and any other page in your room would have tasted the discipline of the porter's lodge for it. But my Lady's favour stood between your skin and many a jerking—Lord send you may be the better for her protection in such matters!"

"I am least grateful for it, Adam! and I am glad you put me in mind of it."

"Well, but the news, my young master," said Woodcock, "spell me the tidings—what are we to fly at next?—what did the Regent say to you?"

"Nothing that I am to repeat again," said Roland Graeme, shaking his head.

"Why, hey-day," said Adam, "how prudent we are become all of a sudden! You have advanced rarely in brief space, Master Roland. You have well nigh had your head broken, and you have gained your gold chain, and you have made an enemy, Master Usher to wit, with his two legs like hawks' perches, and you have had audience of the first man in the realm, and bear as much mystery in your brow, as if you had flown in the court-sky ever since you were hatched. I believe, in my soul, you would run with a piece of the egg-shell on your head like the curlews, which (I would we were after them again) we used to call whaups in the Halidome and its neighbourhood. But sit thee down, boy; Adam Woodcock was never the lad to seek to enter into forbidden secrets—sit thee down, and I will go and fetch the vivers—I know the butler and the pantler of old."

The good-natured falconer set forth upon his errand, busying himself about procuring their refreshment; and, during his absence, Roland Graeme abandoned himself to the strange, complicated, and yet heart-stirring reflections, to which the events of the morning had given rise. Yesterday he was of neither mark nor likelihood; a vagrant boy, the attendant on a relative, of whose sane judgment he himself had not the highest opinion; but now he had become, he knew not why, or wherefore, or to what extent, the custodian, as the Scottish phrase went, of some important state secret, in the safe keeping of which the Regent himself was concerned. It did not diminish from, but rather added to the interest of a situation so unexpected, that Roland himself did not perfectly understand wherein he stood committed by the state secrets, in which he had unwittingly become participator. On the contrary, he felt like one who looks on a romantic landscape, of which he sees the features for the first time, and then obscured with mist and driving tempest. The imperfect glimpse which the eye catches of rocks, trees, and other objects around him, adds double dignity to these shrouded mountains and darkened abysses, of which the height, depth, and extent, are left to imagination. But mortals, especially at the well-appetized age which precedes twenty years, are seldom so much engaged either by real or conjectural subjects of speculation, but that their earthly wants claim their hour of attention. And with many a smile did our hero, so the reader may term him if he will, hail the re-appearance of his friend Adam Woodcock, bearing on one platter a tremendous portion of boiled beef, and on another a plentiful allowance of greens, or rather what the Scotch call lang-kale. A groom followed with bread, salt, and the other means of setting forth a meal; and when they had both placed on the oaken table what they bore in their hands, the falconer observed, that since he knew the court, it had got harder and harder every day to the poor gentlemen and yeoman retainers, but that now it was an absolute flaying of a flea for the hide and tallow. Such thronging to the wicket, and such churlish answers, and such bare beef-bones, such a shouldering at the buttery-hatch and cellarage, and nought to be gained beyond small insufficient single ale, or at best with a single straike of malt to counterbalance a double allowance of water—"By the mass, though, my young friend," said he, while he saw the food disappearing fast under Roland's active exertions, "it is not so to well to lament for former times as to take the advantage of the present, else we are like to lose on both sides."

So saying, Adam Woodcock drew his chair towards the table, unsheathed his knife, (for every one carried that minister of festive distribution for himself,) and imitated his young companion's example, who for the moment had lost his anxiety for the future in the eager satisfaction of an appetite sharpened by youth and abstinence.

In truth, they made, though the materials were sufficiently simple, a very respectable meal, at the expense of the royal allowance; and Adam Woodcock, notwithstanding the deliberate censure which he had passed on the household beer of the palace, had taken the fourth deep draught of the black jack ere he remembered him that he had spoken in its dispraise. Flinging himself jollily and luxuriously back in an old danske elbow-chair, and looking with careless glee towards the page, extending at the same time his right leg, and stretching the other easily over it, he reminded his companion that he had not yet heard the ballad which he had made for the Abbot of Unreason's revel. And accordingly he struck merrily up with

*"The Pope, that pagan full of pride,
Has blinded us full lang."——*

Roland Graeme, who felt no great delight, as may be supposed, in the falconer's satire, considering its subject, began to snatch up his mantle, and fling it around his shoulders, an action which instantly interrupted the ditty of Adam Woodcock.

"Where the vengeance are you going now," he said, "thou restless boy?—Thou hast quicksilver in the veins of thee to a certainty, and canst no more abide any douce and sensible communing, than a hoodless hawk would keep perched on my wrist!"

"Why, Adam," replied the page, "if you must needs know, I am about to take a walk and look at this fair city. One may as well be still mewed up in the old castle of the lake, if one is to sit the live-long night between four walls, and hearken to old ballads."

"It is a new ballad—the Lord help thee!" replied Adam, "and that one of the best that ever was matched with a rousing chorus."

"Be it so," said the page, "I will hear it another day, when the rain is dashing against the windows, and there is neither steed stamping, nor spur jingling, nor feather waving in the neighbourhood to mar my marking it well. But, even now, I want to be in the world, and to look about me."

"But the never a stride shall you go without me," said the falconer, "until the Regent shall take you whole and sound off my hand; and so, if you will, we may go to the hostelrie of Saint Michael's, and there you will see company enough, but through the casement, mark you me; for as to rambling through the street to seek Seytons and Leslies, and having a dozen holes drilled in your new jacket with rapier and poniard, I will yield no way to it."

"To the hostelrie of Saint Michael's, then, with all my heart," said the page; and they left the palace accordingly, rendered to the sentinels at the gate, who had now taken their posts for the evening, a strict account of their names and business, were dismissed through a small wicket of the close-barred portal, and soon reached the inn or hostelrie of Saint Michael, which stood in a large court-yard, off the main street, close under the descent of the Calton-hill. The place, wide, waste, and uncomfortable, resembled rather an Eastern caravansary, where men found shelter indeed, but were obliged to supply themselves with every thing else, than one of our modern inns;

*Where not one comfort shall to those be lost,
Who never ask, or never feel, the cost.*

But still, to the inexperienced eye of Roland Graeme, the bustle and confusion of this place of public resort, furnished excitement and amusement. In the large room, into which they had rather found their own way than been ushered by mine host, travellers and natives of the city entered and departed, met and greeted, gamed or drank together, forming the strongest contrast to the stern and monotonous order and silence with which matters were conducted in the well-ordered household of the Knight of Avenel. Altercation of every kind, from brawling to jesting, was going on amongst the groups around them, and yet the noise and mingled voices seemed to disturb no one and indeed to be noticed by no others than by those who composed the group to which the speaker belonged.

The falconer passed through the apartment to a projecting latticed window, which formed a sort of recess from the room itself; and having here ensconced himself and his companion, he called for some refreshments; and a tapster, after he had shouted for the twentieth time, accommodated him with the remains of a cold capon and a neat's tongue, together with a pewter stoup of weak French vin-de-pays. "Fetch a stoup of brandy-wine, thou knave—We will be jolly to-night, Master Roland," said he, when he saw himself thus accommodated, "and let care come to-morrow."

But Roland had eaten too lately to enjoy the good cheer; and feeling his curiosity much sharper than his appetite, he made it his choice to look out of the lattice, which overhung a large yard, surrounded by the stables of the hostelrie, and fed his eyes on the busy sight beneath, while Adam Woodcock, after he had compared his companion to the "Laird of Macfarlane's geese, who liked their play better than their meat," disposed of his time with the aid of cup and trencher, occasionally humming the burden of his birth-strangled ballad, and beating time to it with his fingers on the little round table. In this exercise he was frequently interrupted by the exclamations of his companion, as he saw something new in the yard beneath, to attract and interest him.

It was a busy scene, for the number of gentlemen and nobles who were now crowded into the city, had filled all spare stables and places of public reception with their horses and military attendants. There were some score of yeomen, dressing their own or their masters' horses in the yard, whistling, singing, laughing, and upbraiding each other, in a style of wit which the good order of Avenel Castle rendered strange to Roland Graeme's ears. Others were busy repairing their own arms, or cleaning those of their masters. One fellow, having just bought a bundle of twenty spears, was sitting in a corner, employed in painting the white staves of the weapons with yellow and vermillion. Other lacqueys led large stag-hounds, or wolf-dogs, of noble race, carefully muzzled to prevent accidents to passengers. All came and went, mixed together and separated, under the delighted eye of the page, whose imagination had not even conceived a scene so gaily diversified with the objects he had most pleasure in beholding; so that he was perpetually breaking the quiet reverie of honest Woodcock, and the mental progress which he was making in his ditty, by exclaiming, "Look here, Adam—look at the bonny bay horse—Saint Anthony, what, a gallant forehand he hath got!—and see the goodly gray, which yonder fellow in the frieze-jacket is dressing as awkwardly as if he had never touched aught but a cow—I would I were nigh him to teach him his trade!—And lo you, Adam, the gay Milan armour that the yeoman is scouring, all steel and silver, like our Knight's prime suit, of which old Wingate makes such account—And see to yonder pretty wench, Adam, who comes tripping through them all with her milk-pail—I warrant me she has had a long walk from the loaning; she has a stammel waistcoat, like your favourite Cicely Sunderland, Master Adam!"

"By my hood, lad," answered the falconer, "it is well for thee thou wert brought up where grace grew. Even in the Castle of Avenel thou wert a wild-blood enough, but hadst thou been nurtured here, within a flight-shot of the Court, thou hadst been the veriest crack-hemp of a page that ever wore feather in thy bonnet or steel by thy side: truly, I wish it may end well with thee."

"Nay, but leave thy senseless humming and drumming, old Adam, and come to the window ere thou hast drenched thy senses in the pint-pot there. See here comes a merry minstrel with his crowd, and a wench with him, that dances with bells at her ankles; and see, the yeomen and pages leave their horses and the armour they were cleaning, and gather round, as is very natural, to hear the music. Come, old Adam, we will thither too."

"You shall call me cutt if I do go down," said Adam; "you are near as good minstrelsy as the stroller can make, if you had but the grace to listen to it."

"But the wench in the stammel waistcoat is stopping too, Adam—by heaven, they are going to dance! Frieze-jacket wants to dance with stammel waistcoat, but she is coy and recusant."

Then suddenly changing his tone of levity into one of deep interest and surprise, he exclaimed, "Queen of Heaven! what is it that I see!" and then remained silent. The sage Adam Woodcock, who was in a sort of languid degree amused with the page's exclamations, even while he professed to despise them, became at length rather desirous to set his tongue once more a-going, that he might enjoy the superiority afforded by his own intimate familiarity with all the circumstances which excited in his young companion's mind so much wonderment.

"Well, then," he said at last, "what is it you do see, Master Roland, that you have become mute all of a sudden?"

Roland returned no answer.

"I say, Master Roland Graeme," said the falconer, "it is manners in my country for a man to speak when he is spoken to."

Roland Graeme remained silent.

"The murrain is in the boy," said Adam Woodcock, "he has stared out his eyes, and talked his tongue to pieces, I think."

The falconer hastily drank off his can of wine, and came to Roland, who stood like a statue, with his eyes eagerly bent on the court-yard, though Adam Woodcock was unable to detect amongst the joyous scenes which it exhibited aught that could deserve such devoted attention.

"The lad is mazed!" said the falconer to himself.

But Roland Graeme had good reasons for his surprise, though they were not such as he could communicate to his companion.

The touch of the old minstrel's instrument, for he had already begun to play, had drawn in several auditors from the street when one entered the gate of the yard, whose appearance exclusively arrested the attention of Roland Graeme. He was of his own age, or a good deal younger, and from his dress and bearing might be of the same rank and calling, having all the air of coxcombry and pretension, which accorded with a handsome, though slight and low figure, and an elegant dress, in part hid by a large purple cloak. As he entered, he cast a glance up towards the windows, and, to his extreme astonishment, under the purple velvet bonnet and white feather, Roland recognized the features so deeply impressed on his memory, the bright and clustered tresses, the laughing full blue eyes, the well-formed eyebrows, the nose, with the slightest possible inclination to be aquiline, the ruby lip, of which an arch and half-suppressed smile seemed the habitual expression—in short, the form and face of Catherine Seyton; in man's attire, however, and mimicking, as it seemed, not unsuccessfully, the bearing of a youthful but forward page.

"Saint George and Saint Andrew!" exclaimed the amazed Roland Graeme to himself, "was there ever such an audacious quean!—she seems a little ashamed of her mummery too, for she holds the lap of her cloak to her face, and her colour is heightened—but Santa Maria, how she threads the throng, with as firm and bold a step as if she had never tied petticoat round her waist!—Holy Saints! she holds up her riding-rod as if she would lay it about some of their ears, that stand most in her way—by the hand of my father! she bears herself like the very model of pagehood.—Hey! what! sure she will not strike frieze-jacket in earnest?" But he was not long left in doubt; for the lout whom he had before repeatedly noticed, standing in the way of the bustling page, and maintaining his place with clownish obstinacy or stupidity, the advanced riding-rod was, without a moment's hesitation, sharply applied to his shoulders, in a manner which made him spring aside, rubbing the part of the body which had received so unceremonious a hint that it was in the way of his betters. The party injured growled forth an oath or two of indignation, and Roland Graeme began to think of flying down stairs to the assistance of the translated Catherine; but the laugh of the yard was against frieze-jacket, which indeed had, in those days, small chance of fair play in a quarrel with velvet and embroidery; so that the fellow, who was menial in the inn, slunk back to finish his task of dressing the bonny gray, laughed at by all, but most by the wench in the stammel waistcoat, his fellow-servant, who, to crown his disgrace, had the cruelty to cast an applauding smile upon the author of the injury, while, with a freedom more like the milk-maid of the town than she of the plains, she accosted him with—"Is there any one you want here, my pretty gentleman, that you seem in such haste?"

"I seek a sprig of a lad," said the seeming gallant, "with a sprig of holly in his cap, black hair, and black eyes, green jacket, and the air of a country coxcomb—I have sought him through every close and alley in the Canongate, the fiend gore him!"

"Why, God-a-mercy, Nun!" muttered Roland Graeme, much bewildered.

"I will inquire him presently out for your fair young worship," said the wench of the inn.

"Do," said the gallant squire, "and if you bring me to him, you shall have a groat to-night, and a kiss on Sunday when you have on a cleaner kirtle."

"Why, God-a-mercy, Nun!" again muttered Roland, "this is a note above E La."

In a moment after, the servant entered the room, and ushered in the object of his surprise.

While the disguised vestal looked with unabashed brow, and bold and rapid glance of her eye, through the various parties in the large old room, Roland Graeme, who felt an internal awkward sense of bashful confusion, which he deemed altogether unworthy of the bold and dashing character to which he aspired, determined not to be browbeaten and put down by this singular female, but to meet her with a glance of recognition so sly, so penetrating, so expressively humorous, as should show her at once he was in possession of her secret and master of her fate, and should compel her to humble herself towards him, at least into the look and manner of respectful and deprecating observance.

This was extremely well planned; but just as Roland had called up the knowing glance, the suppressed smile, the shrewd intelligent look, which was to ensure his triumph, he encountered the bold, firm, and steady gaze of his brother or sister-page, who, casting on him a falcon glance, and recognizing him at once as the object of his search, walked up with the most unconcerned look, the most free and undaunted composure, and hailed him with "You, Sir Holly-top, I would speak with you."

The steady coolness and assurance with which these words were uttered, although the voice was the very voice he had heard at the old convent, and although the features more nearly resembled those of Catharine when seen close than when viewed from a distance, produced, nevertheless, such a confusion in Roland's mind, that he became uncertain whether he was not still under a mistake from the beginning; the knowing shrewdness which should have animated his visage faded into a sheepish bashfulness, and the half-suppressed but most intelligible smile, became the senseless giggle of one who laughs to cover his own disorder of ideas.

"Do they understand a Scotch tongue in thy country, Holly-top?" said this marvellous specimen of metamorphosis. "I said I would speak with thee."

"What is your business with my comrade, my young chick of the game?" said Adam Woodcock, willing to step in to his companion's assistance, though totally at a loss to account for the sudden disappearance of all Roland's usual smartness and presence of mind.

"Nothing to you, my old cock of the perch," replied the gallant; "go mind your hawk's castings. I guess by your bag and your gauntlet that you are squire of the body to a sort of kites."

He laughed as he spoke, and the laugh reminded Roland so irresistibly of the hearty fit of risibility, in which Catherine had indulged at his expense when they first met in the old nunnery, that he could scarce help exclaiming, "Catherine Seyton, by Heavens!"—He checked the exclamation, however, and only said, "I think, sir, we two are not totally strangers to each other."

"We must have met in our dreams then" said the youth; "and my days are too busy to remember what I think on at nights."

"Or apparently to remember upon one day those whom you may have seen on the preceding eve" said Roland Graeme.

The youth in his turn cast on him a look of some surprise, as he replied, "I know no more of what you mean than does the horse I ride on—if there be offence in your words, you shall find me ready to take it as any lad in Lothian."

"You know well," said Roland, "though it pleases you to use the language of a stranger, that with you I have no purpose to quarrel."

"Let me do mine errand, then, and be rid of you," said the page. "Step hither this way, out of that old leathern fist's hearing."

They walked into the recess of the window, which Roland had left upon the youth's entrance into the apartment. The messenger then turned his back on the company, after casting a hasty and sharp glance around to see if they were observed. Roland did the same, and the page in the purple mantle thus addressed him, taking at the same time from under his cloak a short but beautifully wrought sword, with the hilt and ornaments upon the sheath of silver, massively chased and over-gilded—"I bring you this weapon from a friend, who gives it you under the solemn condition, that you will not unsheath it until you are commanded by your rightful Sovereign. For your warmth of temper is known, and the presumption with which you intrude yourself into the quarrels of others; and, therefore, this is laid upon you as a penance by those who wish you well, and whose hand will influence your destiny for good or for evil. This is what I was charged to tell you. So if you will give a fair word for a fair sword, and pledge your promise, with hand and glove, good and well; and if not, I will carry back Caliburn to those who sent it."

"And may I not ask who these are?" said Roland Graeme, admiring at the same time the beauty of the weapon thus offered him.

"My commission in no way leads me to answer such a question," said he of the purple mantle.

"But if I am offended" said Roland, "may I not draw to defend myself?"

"Not *this* weapon," answered the sword-bearer; "but you have your own at command, and, besides, for what do you wear your poniard?"

"For no good," said Adam Woodcock, who had now approached close to them, "and that I can witness as well as any one."

"Stand back, fellow," said the messenger, "thou hast an intrusive curious face, that will come by a buffet if it is found where it has no concern."

"A buffet, my young Master Malapert?" said Adam, drawing back, however; "best keep down fist, or, by Our Lady, buffet will beget buffet!"

"Be patient, Adam Woodcock," said Roland Graeme; "and let me pray you, fair sir, since by such addition you choose for the present to be addressed, may I not barely unsheathe this fair weapon, in pure simplicity of desire to know whether so fair a hilt and scabbard are matched with a befitting blade?"

"By no manner of means," said the messenger; "at a word, you must take it under the promise that you never draw it until you receive the commands of your lawful Sovereign, or you must leave it alone."

"Under that condition, and coming from your friendly hand, I accept of the sword," said Roland, taking it from his hand; "but credit me, if we are to work together in any weighty emprise, as I am induced to believe, some confidence and openness on your part will be necessary to give the right impulse to my zeal—I press for no more at present, it is enough that you understand me."

"I understand you!" said the page, exhibiting the appearance of unfeigned surprise in his turn,—"Renounce me if I do!—here you stand jiggeting, and sniggling, and looking cunning, as if there were some mighty matter of intrigue and common understanding betwixt you and me, whom you never set your eyes on before!"

"What!" said Roland Graeme, "will you deny that we have met before?"

"Marry that I will, in any Christian court," said the other page.

"And will you also deny," said Roland, "that it was recommended to us to study each other's features well, that in whatever disguise the time might impose upon us, each should recognize in the other the secret agent of a mighty work? Do not you remember, that Sister Magdalen and Dame Bridget——"

The messenger here interrupted him, shrugging up his shoulders, with a look of compassion, "Bridget and Magdalen! why, this is madness and dreaming! Hark ye, Master Holly-top, your wits are gone on wool-gathering; comfort yourself with a caudle, and thatch your brain-sick noddle with a woollen night-cap, and so God be with you!"

As he concluded this polite parting address, Adam Woodcock, who was again seated by the table on which stood the now empty can, said to him, "Will you drink a cup, young man, in the way of courtesy, now you have done your errand, and listen to a good song?" and without waiting for an answer, he commenced his ditty,—

"The Pope, that pagan full of pride,

Hath blinded us full lang—"

It is probable that the good wine had made some innovation in the falconer's brain, otherwise he would have recollected the danger of introducing any thing like political or polemical pleasantries into a public assemblage at a time when men's minds were in a state of great irritability. To do him justice, he perceived his error, and stopped short so soon as he saw that the word Pope had at once interrupted the separate conversations of the various parties which were assembled in the apartment; and that many began to draw themselves up, bridle, look big, and prepare to take part in the impending brawl; while others, more decent and cautious persons, hastily paid down their lawing, and prepared to leave the place ere bad should come to worse.

And to worse it was soon likely to come; for no sooner did Woodcock's ditty reach the ear of the stranger page, than, uplifting his riding-rod, he exclaimed, "He who speaks irreverently of the Holy Father of the church in my presence, is the cub of a heretic wolf-bitch, and I will switch him as I would a mongrel-cur."

"And I will break thy young pate," said Adam, "if thou darest to lift a finger to me." And then, in defiance of the young Drawcansir's threats, with a stout heart and dauntless accent, he again uplifted the stave.

"The Pope, that pagan full of pride,

Hath blinded—"

But Adam was able to proceed no farther, being himself unfortunately blinded by a stroke of the impatient youth's switch across his eyes. Enraged at once by the smart and the indignity, the falconer started up, and darkling as he was, for his eyes watered too fast to permit his seeing any thing, he would soon have been at close grips with his insolent adversary, had not Roland Graeme, contrary to his nature, played for once the prudent man and the peacemaker, and thrown himself betwixt them, imploring Woodcock's patience. "You know not," he said, "with whom you have to do.—And thou," addressing the messenger, who stood scornfully laughing at Adam's rage, "get thee gone, whoever thou art; if thou be'st what I guess thee, thou well knowest there are earnest reasons why thou shouldst."

"Thou hast hit it right for once, Holly-top," said the gallant, "though I guess you drew your bow at a venture.—Here, host, let this yeoman have a bottle of wine to wash the smart out of his eyes—and there is a French crown for him." So saying, he threw the piece of money on the table, and left the apartment, with a quick yet steady pace, looking firmly at right and left, as if to defy interruption: and snapping his fingers at two or three respectable burghers, who, declaring it was a shame that any one should be suffered to rant and ruffle in defence of the Pope, were labouring to find the hilts of their swords, which had got for the present unhappily entangled in the folds of their cloaks. But, as the adversary was gone ere any of them had reached his weapon, they did not think it necessary to unsheath cold iron, but merely observed to each other, "This is more than masterful violence, to see a poor man stricken in the face just for singing a ballad against the whore of Babylon! If the Pope's champions are to be bangsters in our very change-houses, we shall soon have the old shavelings back again."

"The provost should look to it," said another, "and have some five or six armed with partisans, to come in upon the first whistle, to teach these gallants their lesson. For, look you, neighbour Logleather, it is not for decent householders like ourselves to be brawling with the godless grooms and pert pages of the nobles, that are bred up to little else save bloodshed and blasphemy."

"For all that, neighbour," said Logleather, "I would have curried that youngster as properly as ever I curried a lamb's hide, had not the hilt of my bilbo been for the instant beyond my grasp; and before I could turn my girdle, gone was my master!"

"Ay," said the others, "the devil go with him, and peace abide with us—I give my rede, neighbours, that we pay the lawing, and be stepping homeward, like brother and brother; for old Saint Giles's is tolling curfew, and the street grows dangerous at night."

With that the good burghers adjusted their cloaks, and prepared for their departure, while he that seemed the briskest of the three, laying his hand on his Andrea Ferrara, observed, "that they that spoke in the praise of the Pope on the High-gate of Edinburgh, had best bring the sword of Saint Peter to defend them."

While the ill-humour excited by the insolence of the young aristocrat was thus evaporating in empty menace, Roland Graeme had to control the far more serious indignation of Adam Woodcock. "Why, man, it was but a switch across the mazzard—blow your nose, dry your eyes, and you will see all the better for it." "By this light, which I cannot see," said Adam Woodcock, "thou hast been a false friend to me, young man—neither taking up my rightful quarrel, nor letting me fight it out myself."

"Fy for shame, Adam Woodcock," replied the youth, determined to turn the tables on him, and become in turn the counsellor of good order and peaceable demeanour—"I say, fy for shame!—Alas, that you will speak thus! Here are you sent with me, to prevent my innocent youth getting into snares——"

"I wish your innocent youth were cut short with a halter, with all my heart," said Adam, who began to see which way the admonition tended. —"And instead of setting before me," continued Roland, "an example of patience and sobriety becoming the falconer of Sir Halbert Glendinning, you quaff me off I know not how many flagons of ale, besides a gallon of wine, and a full measure of strong waters."

"It was but one small pottle," said poor Adam, whom consciousness of his own indiscretion now reduced to a merely defensive warfare.

"It was enough to pottle you handsomely, however," said the page—"And then, instead of going to bed to sleep off your liquor, must you sit singing your roistering songs about popes and pagans, till you have got your eyes almost switched out of your head; and but for my interference, whom your drunken ingratitude accuses of deserting you, yon galliard would have cut your throat, for he was whipping out a whinger as broad as my hand, and as sharp as a razor—And these are lessons for an inexperienced youth!—Oh, Adam! out upon you! out upon you!"

"Marry, amen, and with all my heart," said Adam; "out upon my folly for expecting any thing but impertinent raillery from a page like thee, that if he saw his father in a scrape, would laugh at him, instead of lending him aid."

"Nay, but I will lend you aid," said the page, still laughing, "that is, I will lend thee aid to thy chamber, good Adam, where thou shalt sleep off wine and ale, ire and indignation, and awake the next morning with as much fair wit as nature has blessed thee withal. Only one thing I will warn thee, good Adam, that henceforth and for ever, when thou raillest at me for being somewhat hot at hand, and rather too prompt to out with poniard or so, thy admonition shall serve as a prologue to the memorable adventure of the switching of Saint Michael's."

With such condoling expressions he got the crest-fallen falconer to his bed, and then retired to his own pallet, where it was some time ere he could fall asleep. If the messenger whom he had seen were really Catherine Seyton, what a masculine virago and termagant must she be! and stored with what an inimitable command of insolence and assurance!—The brass on her brow would furbish the front of twenty pages; "and I should know," thought Roland, "what that amounts to—And yet, her features, her look, her light gait, her laughing eye, the art with which she disposed the mantle to show no more of her limbs than needs must be seen—I am glad she had at least that grace left—the voice, the smile—it must have been Catherine Seyton, or the devil in her likeness! One thing is good, I have silenced the eternal predications of that ass, Adam Woodcock, who has set up for being a preacher and a governor, over me, so soon as he has left the hawks' mew behind him."

And with this comfortable reflection, joined to the happy indifference which youth hath for the events of the morrow, Roland Graeme fell fast asleep.

Chapter the Twentieth.

*Now have you reft me from my staff, my guide,
Who taught my youth, as men teach untamed falcons,
To use my strength discreetly—I am reft
Of comrade and of counsel.*

OLD PLAY.

In the gray of the next morning's dawn, there was a loud knocking at the gate of the hostelrie; and those without, proclaiming that they came in the name of the Regent, were instantly admitted. A moment or two afterwards, Michael Wing-the-wind stood by the bedside of our travellers.

"Up! up!" he said, "there is no slumber where Murray hath work ado."

Both sleepers sprung up, and began to dress themselves.

"You, old friend," said Wing-the-wind to Adam Woodcock, "must to horse instantly, with this packet to the Monks of Kennaquhair; and with this," delivering them as he spoke, "to the Knight of Avenel."

"As much as commanding the monks to annul their election, I'll warrant me, of an Abbot," quoth Adam Woodcock, as he put the packets into his bag, "and charging my master to see it done—To hawk at one brother with another, is less than fair play, methinks."

"Fash not thy beard about it, old boy," said Michael, "but betake thee to the saddle presently; for if these orders are not obeyed, there will be bare walls at the Kirk of Saint Mary's, and it may be at the Castle of Avenel to boot; for I heard my Lord of Morton loud with the Regent, and we are at a pass that we cannot stand with him anent trifles."

"But," said Adam, "touching the Abbot of Unreason—what say they to that outbreak—An they be shrewishly disposed, I were better pitch the packets to Satan, and take the other side of the Border for my bield."

"Oh, that was passed over as a jest, since there was little harm done.—But, hark thee, Adam," continued his comrade, "if there was a dozen vacant abbacies in your road, whether of jest or earnest, reason or unreason, draw thou never one of their mitres over thy brows.—The time is not fitting, man!—besides, our Maiden longs to clip the neck of a fat churchman."

"She shall never sheer mine in that capacity," said the falconer, while he knotted the kerchief in two or three double folds around his sunburnt bull-neck, calling out at the same time, "Master Roland, Master Roland, make haste! we must back to perch and mew, and, thank Heaven, more than our own wit, with our bones whole, and without a stab in the stomach."

"Nay, but," said Wing-the-wind, "the page goes not back with you; the Regent has other employment for him."

"Saints and sorrows!" exclaimed the falconer—"Master Roland Graeme to remain here, and I to return to Avenel!—Why, it cannot be—the child cannot manage himself in this wide world without me, and I question if he will stoop to any other whistle than mine own; there are times I myself can hardly bring him to my lure."

It was at Roland's tongue's end to say something concerning the occasion they had for using mutually each other's prudence, but the real anxiety which Adam evinced at parting with him, took away his disposition to such ungracious raillery. The falconer did not altogether escape, however, for, in turning his face towards the lattice, his friend Michael caught a glimpse of it, and exclaimed, "I prithee, Adam Woodcock, what hast thou been doing with these eyes of thine? They are swelled to the starting from the socket!"

"Nought in the world," said he, after casting a deprecating glance at Roland Graeme, "but the effect of sleeping in this d—ned truckle without a pillow."

"Why, Adam Woodcock, thou must be grown strangely dainty," said his old companion; "I have known thee sleep all night with no better pillow than a bush of ling, and start up with the sun, as glegg as a falcon; and now thine eyes resemble——"

"Tush, man, what signifies how mine eyes look now?" said Adam—"let us but roast a crab-apple, pour a pottle of ale on it, and bathe our throats withal, thou shalt see a change in me."

"And thou wilt be in heart to sing thy jolly ballad about the Pope," said his comrade.

"Ay, that I will," replied the falconer, "that is, when we have left this quiet town five miles behind us, if you will take your hobby and ride so far on my way."

"Nay, that I may not," said Michael—"I can but stop to partake your morning draught, and see you fairly to horse—I will see that they saddle them, and toast the crab for thee, without loss of time."

During his absence the falconer took the page by the hand—"May I never hood hawk again," said the good-natured fellow, "if I am not as sorry to part with you as if you were a child of mine own, craving pardon for the freedom—I cannot tell what makes me love you so much, unless it be for the reason that I loved the vicious devil of a brown galloway nag whom my master the Knight called Satan, till Master Warden changed his name to Seyton; for he said it was over boldness to call a beast after the King of Darkness——"

"And," said the page, "it was over boldness in him, I trow, to call a vicious brute after a noble family."

"Well," proceeded Adam, "Seyton or Satan, I loved that nag over every other horse in the stable—There was no sleeping on his back—he was for ever fidgeting, bolting, rearing, biting, kicking, and giving you work to do, and maybe the measure of your back on the heather to the boot of it all. And I think I love you better than any lad in the castle, for the self-same qualities."

"Thanks, thanks, kind Adam. I regard myself bound to you for the good estimation in which you hold me."

"Nay, interrupt me not," said the falconer—"Satan was a good nag—But I say I think I shall call the two eyases after you, the one Roland, and the other Graeme; and while Adam Woodcock lives, be sure you have a friend—Here is to thee, my dear son."

Roland most heartily returned the grasp of the hand, and Woodcock, having taken a deep draught, continued his farewell speech.

"There are three things I warn you against, Roland, now that you art to tread this weary world without my experience to assist you. In the first place, never draw dagger on slight occasion—every man's doublet is not so well stuffed as a certain abbot's that you wot of. Secondly, fly not at every pretty girl, like a merlin at a thrush—you will not always win a gold chain for your labour—and, by the way, here I return to you your fanfarona—keep it close, it is weighty, and may benefit you at a pinch more ways than one. Thirdly, and to conclude, as our worthy preacher says, beware of the pottle-pot—it has drenched the judgment of wiser men than you. I could bring some instances of it, but I dare say it needeth not; for if you should forget your own mishaps, you will scarce fail to remember mine—And so farewell, my dear son."

Roland returned his good wishes, and failed not to send his humble duty to his kind Lady, charging the falconer, at the same time, to express his regret that he should have offended her, and his determination so to bear him in the world that she would not be ashamed of the generous protection she had afforded him.

The falconer embraced his young friend, mounted his stout, round-made, trotting-nag, which the serving-man, who had attended him, held ready at the door, and took the road to the southward. A sullen and heavy sound echoed from the horse's feet, as if indicating the sorrow of the good-natured rider. Every hoof-tread seemed to tap upon Roland's heart as he heard his comrade withdraw with so little of his usual alert activity, and felt that he was once more alone in the world.

He was roused from his reverie by Michael Wing-the-wind, who reminded him that it was necessary they should instantly return to the palace, as my Lord Regent went to the Sessions early in the morning. They went thither accordingly, and Wing-the-wind, a favourite old domestic, who was admitted nearer to the Regent's person and privacy, than many whose posts were more ostensible, soon introduced Graeme into a small matted chamber, where he had an audience of the present head of the troubled State of Scotland. The Earl of Murray was clad in a sad-coloured morning-gown, with a cap and slippers of the same cloth, but, even in this easy deshabillé, held his sheathed rapier in his hand, a precaution which he adopted when receiving strangers, rather in compliance with the earnest remonstrances of his friends and partisans, than from any personal apprehensions of his own. He answered with a silent nod the respectful obeisance of the page, and took one or two turns through the small apartment in silence, fixing his keen eye on Roland, as if he wished to penetrate into his very soul. At length he broke silence.

"Your name is, I think, Julian Graeme?"

"Roland Graeme, my lord, not Julian," replied the page.

"Right—I was misled by some trick of my memory—Roland Graeme, from the Debateable Land.—Roland, thou knowest the duties which belong to a lady's service?"

"I should know them, my lord," replied Roland, "having been bred so near the person of my Lady of Avenel; but I trust never more to practise them, as the Knight hath promised——"

"Be silent, young man," said the Regent, "I am to speak, and you to hear and obey. It is necessary that, for some space at least, you shall again enter into the service of a lady, who, in rank, hath no equal in Scotland; and this service accomplished, I give thee my word as Knight and Prince, that it shall open to you a course of ambition, such as may well gratify the aspiring wishes of one whom circumstances entitle to entertain much higher views than thou. I will take thee into my household and near to my person, or, at your own choice, I will give you the command of a foot-company—either is a preferment which the proudest laird in the land might be glad to ensure for a second son."

"May I presume to ask, my lord," said Roland, observing the Earl paused for a reply, "to whom my poor services are in the first place destined?"

"You will be told hereafter," said the Regent; and then, as if overcoming some internal reluctance to speak farther himself, he added, "or why should I not myself tell you, that you are about to enter into the service of a most illustrious—most unhappy lady—into the service of Mary of Scotland."

"Of the Queen, my lord!" said the page, unable to suppress his surprise.

"Of her who was the Queen!" said Murray, with a singular mixture of displeasure and embarrassment in his tone of voice. "You must be aware, young man, that her son reigns in her stead."

He sighed from an emotion, partly natural, perhaps, and partly assumed.

"And am I to attend upon her Grace in her place of imprisonment, my lord?" again demanded the page, with a straightforward and hardy simplicity, which somewhat disconcerted the sage and powerful statesman.

"She is not imprisoned," answered Murray, angrily; "God forbid she should—she is only sequestered from state affairs, and from the business of the public, until the world be so effectually settled, that she may enjoy her natural and uncontrolled freedom, without her royal disposition being exposed to the practices of wicked and designing men. It is for this purpose," he added, "that while she is to be furnished, as right is, with such attendance as may befit her present secluded state, it becomes necessary that those placed around her, are persons on whose prudence I can have reliance. You see, therefore, you are at once called on to discharge an office most honourable in itself, and so to discharge it that you may make a friend of the Regent of Scotland. Thou art, I have been told, a singularly apprehensive youth; and I perceive by thy look, that thou dost already understand what I would say on this matter. In this schedule your particular points of duty are set down at length—but the sum required of you is fidelity—I mean fidelity to myself and to the state. You are, therefore, to watch every attempt which is made, or inclination displayed, to open any communication with any of the lords who have become banders in the west—with Hamilton, Seyton, with Fleming, or the like. It is true that my gracious sister, reflecting upon the ill chances that have happened to the state of this poor kingdom, from evil counsellors who have abused her royal nature in time past, hath determined to sequester herself from state affairs in future. But it is our duty, as acting for and in the name of our infant nephew, to guard against the evils which may arise from any mutation or vacillation in her royal resolutions. Wherefore, it will be thy duty to watch, and report to our lady mother, whose guest our sister is for the present, whatever may infer a disposition to withdraw her person from the place of security in which she is lodged, or to open communication with those without. If, however, your observation should detect any thing of weight, and which may exceed mere suspicion, fail not to send notice by an especial messenger to me directly, and this ring shall be thy warrant to order horse and men on such service.—And now begone. If there be half the wit in thy head that there is apprehension in thy look, thou fully comprehendest all that I would say—Serve me faithfully, and sure as I am belted earl, thy reward shall be great."

Roland Graeme made an obeisance, and was about to depart.

The Earl signed to him to remain. "I have trusted thee deeply," he said, "young man, for thou art the only one of her suite who has been sent to her by my own recommendation. Her gentlewomen are of her own nomination—it were too hard to have barred her that privilege, though some there were who reckoned it

inconsistent with sure policy. Thou art young and handsome. Mingle in their follies, and see they cover not deeper designs under the appearance of female levity—if they do mine, do thou countermine. For the rest, bear all decorum and respect to the person of thy mistress—she is a princess, though a most unhappy one, and hath been a queen! though now, alas! no longer such! Pay, therefore, to her all honour and respect, consistent with thy fidelity to the King and me—and now, farewell.—Yet stay—you travel with Lord Lindesay, a man of the old world, rough and honest, though untaught; see that thou offend him not, for he is not patient of raillery, and thou, I have heard, art a crack-halter." This he said with a smile, then added, "I could have wished the Lord Lindesay's mission had been intrusted to some other and more gentle noble."

"And wherefore should you wish that, my lord?" said Morton, who even then entered the apartment; "the council have decided for the best—we have had but too many proofs of this lady's stubbornness of mind, and the oak that resists the sharp steel axe, must be riven with the rugged iron wedge.—And this is to be her page?—My Lord Regent hath doubtless instructed you, young man, how you shall guide yourself in these matters; I will add but a little hint on my part. You are going to the castle of a Douglas, where treachery never thrives—the first moment of suspicion will be the last of your life. My kinsman, William Douglas, understands no raillery, and if he once have cause to think you false, you will waver in the wind from the castle battlements ere the sun set upon his anger.—And is the lady to have an almoner withal?"

"Occasionally, Douglas," said the Regent; "it were hard to deny the spiritual consolation which she thinks essential to her salvation."

"You are ever too soft hearted, my lord—What! a false priest to communicate her lamentations, not only to our unfriends in Scotland, but to the Guises, to Rome, to Spain, and I know not where!"

"Fear not," said the Regent, "we will take such order that no treachery shall happen."

"Look to it then," said Morton; "you know my mind respecting the wench you have consented she shall receive as a waiting-woman—one of a family, which, of all others, has ever been devoted to her, and inimical to us. Had we not been wary, she would have been purveyed of a page as much to her purpose as her waiting-damsel. I hear a rumour that an old mad Romish pilgrimer, who passes for at least half a saint among them, was employed to find a fit subject."

"We have escaped that danger at least," said Murray, "and converted it into a point of advantage, by sending this boy of Glendinning's—and for her waiting-damsel, you cannot grudge her one poor maiden instead of her four noble Marys and all their silken train?"

"I care not so much for the waiting-maiden," said Morton, "but I cannot brook the almoner—I think priests of all persuasions are much like each other—Here is John Knox, who made such a noble puller-down, is ambitious of becoming a setter-up, and a founder of schools and colleges out of the Abbey lands, and bishops' rents, and other spoils of Rome, which the nobility of Scotland have won with their sword and bow, and with which he would endow new hives to sing the old drone."

"John is a man of God," said the Regent, "and his scheme is a devout imagination."

The sedate smile with which this was spoken, left it impossible to conjecture whether the words were meant in approbation, or in derision, of the plan of the Scottish Reformer. Turning then to Roland Graeme, as if he thought he had been long enough a witness of this conversation, he bade him get him presently to horse, since my Lord of Lindesay was already mounted. The page made his reverence, and left the apartment.

Guided by Michael Wing-the-wind, he found his horse ready saddled and prepared for the journey, in front of the palace porch, where hovered about a score of men-at-arms, whose leader showed no small symptoms of surly impatience.

"Is this the jackanape page for whom we have waited thus long?" said he to Wing-the-wind.—"And my Lord Ruthven will reach the castle long before us."

Michael assented, and added, that the boy had been detained by the Regent to receive some parting instructions. The leader made an inarticulate sound in his throat, expressive of sullen acquiescence, and calling to one of his domestic attendants, "Edward," said he, "take the gallant into your charge, and let him speak with no one else."

He then addressed, by the title of Sir Robert, an elderly and respectable-looking gentleman, the only one of the party who seemed above the rank of a retainer or domestic, and observed, that they must get to horse with all speed.

During this discourse, and while they were riding slowly along the street of the suburb, Roland had time to examine more accurately the looks and figure of the Baron, who was at their head.

Lord Lindesay of the Byres was rather touched than stricken with years. His upright stature and strong limbs, still showed him fully equal to all the exertions and fatigues of war. His thick eyebrows, now partially grizzled, lowered over large eyes full of dark fire, which seemed yet darker from the uncommon depth at which they were set in his head. His features, naturally strong and harsh, had their sternness exaggerated by one or two scars received in battle. These features, naturally calculated to express the harsher passions, were shaded by an open steel cap, with a projecting front, but having no visor, over the gorget of which fell the black and grizzled beard of the grim old Baron, and totally hid the lower part of his face. The rest of his dress was a loose buff-coat, which had once been lined with silk and adorned with embroidery, but which seemed much stained with travel, and damaged with cuts, received probably in battle. It covered a corslet, which had once been of polished steel, fairly gilded, but was now somewhat injured with rust. A sword of antique make and uncommon size, framed to be wielded with both hands, a kind of weapon which was then beginning to go out of use, hung from his neck in a baldric, and was so disposed as to traverse his whole person, the huge hilt appearing over his left shoulder, and the point reaching well-nigh to the right heel, and jarring against his spur as he walked. This unwieldy weapon could only be unsheathed by pulling the handle over the left shoulder—for no human arm was long enough to draw it in the usual manner. The whole equipment was that of a rude warrior, negligent of his exterior even to misanthropical sullenness; and the short, harsh, haughty tone, which he used towards his attendants, belonged to the same unpolished character.

The personage who rode with Lord Lindesay, at the head of the party, was an absolute contrast to him, in manner, form, and features. His thin and silky hair was already white, though he seemed not above forty-five or fifty years old. His tone of voice was soft and insinuating—his form thin, spare, and bent by an habitual stoop—his pale cheek was expressive of shrewdness and intelligence—his eye was quick though placid, and his whole demeanour mild and conciliatory. He rode an ambling nag, such as were used by ladies, clergymen, or others of peaceful professions—wore a riding habit of black velvet, with a cap and feather of the same hue, fastened up by a golden medal—and for show, and as a mark of rank rather than for use, carried a walking-sword, (as the short light rapiers were called,) without any other arms, offensive or defensive.

The party had now quitted the town, and proceeded, at a steady trot, towards the west.—As they prosecuted their journey, Roland Graeme would gladly have learned something of its purpose and tendency, but the countenance of the personage next to whom he had been placed in the train, discouraged all approach to familiarity. The Baron himself did not look more grim and inaccessible than his feudal retainer, whose grisly beard fell over his mouth like the portcullis before the gate of a castle, as if for the purpose of preventing the escape of any word, of which absolute necessity did not demand the utterance. The rest of the train seemed under the same taciturn influence, and journeyed on without a word being exchanged amongst them—more like a troop of Carthusian friars than a party of military retainers. Roland Graeme was surprised at this extremity of discipline; for even in the household of the Knight of Avenel, though somewhat distinguished for the accuracy with which decorum was enforced, a journey was a period of license, during which jest and song, and every thing within the limits of becoming mirth and pastime were freely permitted. This unusual silence was, however, so far acceptable, that it gave him time to bring any shadow of judgment which he possessed to council on his own situation and prospects, which would have appeared to any reasonable person in the highest degree dangerous and perplexing.

It was quite evident that he had, through various circumstances not under his own control, formed contradictory connexions with both the contending factions, by whose strife the kingdom was distracted, without being properly an adherent of either. It seemed also clear, that the same situation in the household of the deposed Queen, to which he was now promoted by the influence of the Regent, had been destined to him by his enthusiastic grandmother, Magdalen Graeme; for on this subject, the words which Morton had dropped had been a ray of light; yet it was no less clear that these two persons, the one the declared enemy, the other the enthusiastic votary, of the Catholic religion,—the one at the head of the King's new government, the other, who regarded that government as a criminal

usurpation—must have required and expected very different services from the individual whom they had thus united in recommending. It required very little reflection to foresee that these contradictory claims on his services might speedily place him in a situation where his honour as well as his life might be endangered. But it was not in Roland Graeme's nature to anticipate evil before it came, or to prepare to combat difficulties before they arrived. "I will see this beautiful and unfortunate Mary Stewart," said he, "of whom we have heard so much, and then there will be time enough to determine whether I will be kingsman or queensman. None of them can say I have given word or promise to either of their factions; for they have led me up and down like a blind Billy, without giving me any light into what I was to do. But it was lucky that grim Douglas came into the Regent's closet this morning, otherwise I had never got free of him without plighting my troth to do all the Earl would have me, which seemed, after all, but foul play to the poor imprisoned lady, to place her page as an espial on her."

Skipping thus lightly over a matter of such consequence, the thoughts of the hare-brained boy went a wool-gathering after more agreeable topics. Now he admired the Gothic towers of Barnbougle, rising from the seabeaten rock, and overlooking one of the most glorious landscapes in Scotland—and now he began to consider what notable sport for the hounds and the hawks must be afforded by the variegated ground over which they travelled—and now he compared the steady and dull trot at which they were then prosecuting their journey, with the delight of sweeping over hill and dale in pursuit of his favourite sports. As, under the influence of these joyous recollections, he gave his horse the spur, and made him execute a gambade, he instantly incurred the censure of his grave neighbour, who hinted to him to keep the pace, and move quietly and in order, unless he wished such notice to be taken of his eccentric movements as was likely to be very displeasing to him.

The rebuke and the restraint under which the youth now found himself, brought back to his recollection his late good-humoured and accommodating associate and guide, Adam Woodcock; and from that topic his imagination made a short flight to Avenel Castle, to the quiet and unconfined life of its inhabitants, the goodness of his early protectress, not forgetting the denizens of its stables, kennels, and hawk-mews. In a brief space, all these subjects of meditation gave way to the resemblance of that riddle of womankind, Catherine Seyton, who appeared before the eye of his mind—now in her female form, now in her male attire—now in both at once—like some strange dream, which presents to us the same individual under two different characters at the same instant. Her mysterious present also recurred to his recollection—the sword which he now wore at his side, and which he was not to draw save by command of his legitimate Sovereign! But the key of this mystery he judged he was likely to find in the issue of his present journey.

With such thoughts passing through his mind, Roland Graeme accompanied the party of Lord Lindesay to the Queen's-Ferry, which they passed in vessels that lay in readiness for them. They encountered no adventure whatever in their passage, excepting one horse being lamed in getting into the boat, an accident very common on such occasions, until a few years ago, when the ferry was completely regulated. What was more peculiarly characteristic of the olden age, was the discharge of a culverin at the party from the battlements of the old castle of Rosyth, on the north side of the Ferry, the lord of which happened to have some public or private quarrel with the Lord Lindesay, and took this mode of expressing his resentment. The insult, however, as it was harmless, remained unnoticed and unavenged, nor did any thing else occur worth notice until the band had come where Lochleven spread its magnificent sheet of waters to the beams of a bright summer's sun.

The ancient castle, which occupies an island nearly in the centre of the lake, recalled to the page that of Avenel, in which he had been nurtured. But the lake was much larger, and adorned with several islets besides that on which the fortress was situated; and instead of being embosomed in hills like that of Avenel, had upon the southern side only a splendid mountainous screen, being the descent of one of the Lomond hills, and on the other was surrounded by the extensive and fertile plain of Kinross. Roland Graeme looked with some degree of dismay on the water-girdled fortress, which then, as now, consisted only of one large donjon-keep, surrounded with a court-yard, with two round flanking-towers at the angles, which contained within its circuit some other buildings of inferior importance. A few old trees, clustered together near the castle, gave some relief to the air of desolate seclusion; but yet the page, while he gazed upon a building so sequestered, could not but feel for the situation of a captive Princess doomed to dwell there, as well as for his own. "I must have been born," he thought, "under the star that presides over ladies and lakes of water, for I cannot by any means escape from the service of the one, or from dwelling in the other. But if they allow me not the fair freedom of my sport and exercise, they shall find it as hard to confine a wild-drake, as a youth who can swim like one."

The band had now reached the edge of the water, and one of the party advancing displayed Lord Lindesay's pennon, waving it repeatedly to and fro, while that Baron himself blew a clamorous blast on his bugle. A banner was presently displayed from the roof of the castle in reply to these signals, and one or two figures were seen busied as if unmooring a boat which lay close to the islet.

"It will be some time ere they can reach us with the boat," said the companion of Lord Lindesay; "should we not do well to proceed to the town, and array ourselves in some better order, ere we appear before——"

"You may do as you list, Sir Robert," replied Lindesay, "I have neither time nor temper to waste on such vanities. She has cost me many a hard ride, and must not now take offence at the threadbare cloak and soiled doublet that I am arrayed in. It is the livery to which she has brought all Scotland."

"Do not speak so harshly," said Sir Robert; "if she hath done wrong, she hath dearly abied it; and in losing all real power, one would not deprive her of the little external homage due at once to a lady and a princess."

"I say to you once more, Sir Robert Melville," replied Lindesay, "do as you will—for me, I am now too old to dink myself as a gallant to grace the bower of dames."

"The bower of dames, my lord!" said Melville, looking at the rude old tower—"is it yon dark and grated castle, the prison of a captive Queen, to which you give so gay a name?"

"Name it as you list," replied Lindesay; "had the Regent desired to send an envoy capable to speak to a captive Queen, there are many gallants in his court who would have courted the occasion to make speeches out of Amadis of Gaul, or the Mirror of Knighthood. But when he sent blunt old Lindesay, he knew he would speak to a misguided woman, as her former misdoings and her present state render necessary. I sought not this employment—it has been thrust upon me; and I will not cumber myself with more form in the discharge of it, than needs must be tacked to such an occupation."

So saying, Lord Lindesay threw himself from horseback, and wrapping his riding-cloak around him, lay down at lazy length upon the sward, to await the arrival of the boat, which was now seen rowing from the castle towards the shore. Sir Robert Melville, who had also dismounted, walked at short turns to and fro upon the bank, his arms crossed on his breast, often looking to the castle, and displaying in his countenance a mixture of sorrow and of anxiety. The rest of the party sate like statues on horseback, without moving so much as the points of their lances, which they held upright in the air.

As soon as the boat approached a rude quay or landing-place, near to which they had stationed themselves, Lord Lindesay started up from his recumbent posture, and asked the person who steered, why he had not brought a larger boat with him to transport his retinue.

"So please you," replied the boatman, "because it is the order of our lady, that we bring not to the castle more than four persons."

"Thy lady is a wise woman," said Lindesay, "to suspect me of treachery!—Or, had I intended it, what was to hinder us from throwing you and your comrades into the lake, and filling the boat with my own fellows?"

The steersman, on hearing this, made a hasty signal to his men to back their oars, and hold off from the shore which they were approaching.

"Why, thou ass," said Lindesay, "thou didst not think that I meant thy fool's head serious harm? Hark thee, friend—with fewer than three servants I will go no whither—Sir Robert Melville will require at least the attendance of one domestic; and it will be at your peril and your lady's to refuse us admission, come hither as we are, on matters of great national concern."

The steersman answered with firmness, but with great civility of expression, that his orders were positive to bring no more than four into the island, but he offered to row back to obtain a revival of his orders.

"Do so, my friend," said Sir Robert Melville, after he had in vain endeavoured to persuade his stubborn companion to consent to a temporary abatement of his train, "row back to the castle, sith it will be no better, and obtain thy lady's orders to transport the Lord Lindesay, myself, and our retinue hither."

"And hearken," said Lord Lindesay, "take with you this page, who comes as an attendant on your lady's guest.—Dismount, sirrah," said he, addressing Roland, "and embark with them in that boat."

"And what is to become of my horse?" said Graeme; "I am answerable for him to my master."

"I will relieve you of the charge," said Lindesay; "thou wilt have little enough to do with horse, saddle, or bridle, for ten years to come—Thou mayst take the halter an thou wilt—it may stand thee in a turn."

"If I thought so," said Roland—but he was interrupted by Sir Robert Melville, who said to him good-humouredly, "Dispute it not, young friend—resistance can do no good, but may well run thee into danger."

Roland Graeme felt the justice of what he said, and, though neither delighted with the matter or manner of Lindesay's address, deemed it best to submit to necessity, and to embark without farther remonstrance. The men plied their oars. The quay, with the party of horse stationed near it, receded from the page's eyes—the castle and the islet seemed to draw near in the same proportion, and in a brief space he landed under the shadow of a huge old tree which overhung the landing place. The steersman and Graeme leaped ashore; the boatmen remained lying on their oars ready for farther service.

Chapter the Twenty-First.

*Could valour aught avail or people's love,
France had not wept Navarre's brave Henry slain;
If wit or beauty could compassion move,
The rose of Scotland had not wept in vain.
Elegy in a Royal Mausoleum. LEWIS.*

At the gate of the court-yard of Lochleven appeared the stately form of the Lady Lochleven, a female whose early charms had captivated James V., by whom she became mother of the celebrated Regent Murray. As she was of noble birth (being a daughter of the house of Mar) and of great beauty, her intimacy with James did not prevent her being afterwards sought in honourable marriage by many gallants of the time, among whom she had preferred Sir William Douglas of Lochleven. But well has it been said

—"Our pleasant vices
Are made the whips to scourge us"—

The station which the Lady of Lochleven now held as the wife of a man of high rank and interest, and the mother of a lawful family, did not prevent her nourishing a painful sense of degradation, even while she was proud of the talents, the power, and the station of her son, now prime ruler of the state, but still a pledge of her illicit intercourse. "Had James done to her," she said, in her secret heart, "the justice he owed her, she had seen in her son, as a source of unmixed delight and of unchastened pride, the lawful monarch of Scotland, and one of the ablest who ever swayed the sceptre." The House of Mar, not inferior in antiquity or grandeur to that of Drummond, would then have also boasted a Queen among its daughters, and escaped the stain attached to female frailty, even when it has a royal lover for its apology. While such feelings preyed on a bosom naturally proud and severe, they had a corresponding effect on her countenance, where, with the remains of great beauty, were mingled traits of inward discontent and peevish melancholy. It perhaps contributed to increase this habitual temperament, that the Lady Lochleven had adopted uncommonly rigid and severe views of religion, imitating in her ideas of reformed faith the very worst errors of the Catholics, in limiting the benefit of the gospel to those who profess their own speculative tenets.

In every respect, the unfortunate Queen Mary, now the compulsory guest, or rather prisoner, of this sullen lady, was obnoxious to her hostess. Lady Lochleven disliked her as the daughter of Mary of Guise, the legal possessor of those rights over James's heart and hand, of which she conceived herself to have been injuriously deprived; and yet more so as the professor of a religion which she detested worse than Paganism.

Such was the dame, who, with stately mien, and sharp yet handsome features, shrouded by her black velvet coif, interrogated the domestic who steered her barge to the shore, what had become of Lindesay and Sir Robert Melville. The man related what had passed, and she smiled scornfully as she replied, "Fools must be flattered, not foughten with.—Row back—make thy excuse as thou canst—say Lord Ruthven hath already reached this castle, and that he is impatient for Lord Lindesay's presence. Away with thee, Randal—yet stay—what galopin is that thou hast brought hither?"

"So please you, my lady, he is the page who is to wait upon——"

"Ay, the new male minion," said the Lady Lochleven; "the female attendant arrived yesterday. I shall have a well-ordered house with this lady and her retinue; but I trust they will soon find some others to undertake such a charge. Begone, Randal—and you" (to Roland Graeme) "follow me to the garden."

She led the way with a slow and stately step to the small garden, which, enclosed by a stone wall ornamented with statues, and an artificial fountain in the centre, extended its dull parterres on the side of the court-yard, with which it communicated by a low and arched portal. Within the narrow circuit of its formal and limited walks, Mary Stewart was now learning to perform the weary part of a prisoner, which, with little interval, she was doomed to sustain during the remainder of her life. She was followed in her slow and melancholy exercise by two female attendants; but in the first glance which Roland Graeme bestowed upon one so illustrious by birth, so distinguished by her beauty, accomplishments, and misfortunes, he was sensible of the presence of no other than the unhappy Queen of Scotland.

Her face, her form, have been so deeply impressed upon the imagination, that even at the distance of nearly three centuries, it is unnecessary to remind the most ignorant and uninformed reader of the striking traits which characterize that remarkable countenance, which seems at once to combine our ideas of the majestic, the pleasing, and the brilliant, leaving us to doubt whether they express most happily the queen, the beauty, or the accomplished woman. Who is there, that, at the very mention of Mary Stewart's name, has not her countenance before him, familiar as that of the mistress of his youth, or the favourite daughter of his advanced age? Even those who feel themselves compelled to believe all, or much, of what her enemies laid to her charge, cannot think without a sigh upon a countenance expressive of anything rather than the foul crimes with which she was charged when living, and which still continue to shade, if not to blacken, her memory. That brow, so truly open and regal—those eyebrows, so regularly graceful, which yet were saved from the charge of regular insipidity by the beautiful effect of the hazel eyes which they overarched, and which seem to utter a thousand histories—the nose, with all its Grecian precision of outline—the mouth, so well proportioned, so sweetly formed, as if designed to speak nothing but what was delightful to hear—the dimpled chin—the stately swan-like neck, form a countenance, the like of which we know not to have existed in any other character moving in that class of life, where the actresses as well as the actors command general and undivided attention. It is in vain to say that the portraits which exist of this remarkable woman are not like each other; for, amidst their discrepancy, each possesses general features which the eye at once acknowledges as peculiar to the vision which our imagination has raised while we read her history for the first time, and which has been impressed upon it by the numerous prints and pictures which we have seen. Indeed we cannot look on the worst of them, however deficient in point of execution, without saying that it is meant for Queen Mary; and no small instance it is of the power of beauty, that her charms should have remained the subject not merely of admiration, but of warm and chivalrous interest, after the lapse of such a length of time. We know that by far the most acute of those who, in latter days, have adopted the unfavourable view of Mary's character, longed, like the executioner before his dreadful task was performed, to kiss the fair hand of her on whom he was about to perform so horrible a duty.

Dressed, then, in a deep mourning robe, and with all those charms of face, shape, and manner, with which faithful tradition has made each reader familiar, Mary Stewart advanced to meet the Lady of Lochleven, who, on her part, endeavoured to conceal dislike and apprehension under the appearance of respectful indifference. The truth was, that she had experienced repeatedly the Queen's superiority in that species of disguised yet cutting sarcasm, with which women can successfully avenge themselves, for real and substantial injuries. It may be well doubted, whether this talent was not as fatal to its possessor as the many others enjoyed by that highly gifted, but most unhappy female; for, while it often afforded her a momentary triumph over her keepers, it failed not to exasperate their

resentment; and the satire and sarcasm in which she had indulged were frequently retaliated by the deep and bitter hardships which they had the power of inflicting. It is well known that her death was at length hastened by a letter which she wrote to Queen Elizabeth, in which she treated her jealous rival, and the Countess of Shrewsbury, with the keenest irony and ridicule.

As the ladies met together, the Queen said, bending her head at the same time, in return to the obeisance of the Lady Lochleven, "We are this day fortunate—we enjoy the company of our amiable hostess at an unusual hour, and during a period which we have hitherto been permitted to give to our private exercise. But our good hostess knows well she has at all times access to our presence, and need not observe the useless ceremony of requiring our permission."

"I am sorry my presence is deemed an intrusion by your Grace," said the Lady of Lochleven. "I came but to announce the arrival of an addition to your train," motioning with her hand towards Roland Graeme; "a circumstance to which ladies are seldom indifferent."

"Oh! I crave your ladyship's pardon; and am bent to the earth with obligations for the kindness of my nobles—or my sovereigns, shall I call them?—who have permitted me such a respectable addition to my personal retinue."

"They have indeed studied, Madam," said the Lady of Lochleven, "to show their kindness towards your Grace—something at the risk perhaps of sound policy, and I trust their doings will not be misconstrued."

"Impossible!" said the Queen; "the bounty which permits the daughter of so many kings, and who yet is Queen of the realm, the attendance of two waiting-women and a boy, is a grace which Mary Stewart can never sufficiently acknowledge. Why! my train will be equal to that of any country dame in this your kingdom of Fife, saving but the lack of a gentleman-usher, and a pair or two of blue-coated serving-men. But I must not forget, in my selfish joy, the additional trouble and charges to which this magnificent augmentation of our train will put our kind hostess, and the whole house of Lochleven. It is this prudent anxiety, I am aware, which clouds your brows, my worthy lady. But be of good cheer; the crown of Scotland has many a fair manor, and your affectionate son, and my no less affectionate brother, will endow the good knight your husband with the best of them, ere Mary should be dismissed from this hospitable castle from your ladyship's lack of means to support the charges."

"The Douglasses of Lochleven, madam," answered the lady, "have known for ages how to discharge their duty to the State, without looking for reward, even when the task was both irksome and dangerous."

"Nay! but, my dear Lochleven," said the Queen, "you are over scrupulous—I pray you accept of a goodly manor; what should support the Queen of Scotland in this her princely court, saving her own crown-lands—and who should minister to the wants of a mother, save an affectionate son like the Earl of Murray, who possesses so wonderfully both the power and inclination?—Or said you it was the danger of the task which clouded your smooth and hospitable brow?—No doubt, a page is a formidable addition to my body-guard of females; and I bethink me it must have been for that reason that my Lord of Lindesay refused even now to venture within the reach of a force so formidable, without being attended by a competent retinue."

The Lady Lochleven started, and looked something surprised; and Mary suddenly changing her manner from the smooth ironical affectation of mildness to an accent of austere command, and drawing up at the same time her fine person, said, with the full majesty of her rank, "Yes! Lady of Lochleven; I know that Ruthven is already in the castle, and that Lindesay waits on the bank the return of your barge to bring him hither along with Sir Robert Melville. For what purpose do these nobles come—and why am I not in ordinary decency apprised of their arrival?"

"Their purpose, madam," replied the Lady of Lochleven, "they must themselves explain—but a formal annunciation were needless, where your Grace hath attendants who can play the espial so well."

"Alas! poor Fleming," said the Queen, turning to the elder of the female attendants, "thou wilt be tried, condemned, and gibbeted, for a spy in the garrison, because thou didst chance to cross the great hall while my good Lady of Lochleven was parleying at the full pitch of her voice with her pilot Randal. Put black wool in thy ears, girl, as you value the wearing of them longer. Remember, in the Castle of Lochleven, ears and tongues are matters not of use, but for show merely. Our good hostess can hear, as well as speak, for us all. We excuse your farther attendance, my lady hostess," she said, once more addressing the object of her resentment, "and retire to prepare for an interview with our rebel lords. We will use the ante-chamber of our sleeping apartment as our hall of audience. You, young man," she proceeded, addressing Roland Graeme, and at once softening the ironical sharpness of her manner into good-humoured raillery, "you, who are all our male attendance, from our Lord High Chamberlain down to our least galopin, follow us to prepare our court."

She turned, and walked slowly towards the castle. The Lady of Lochleven folded her arms, and smiled in bitter resentment, as she watched her retiring steps.

"The whole male attendance!" she muttered, repeating the Queen's last words, "and well for thee had it been had thy train never been larger;" then turning to Roland, in whose way she had stood while making this pause, she made room for him to pass, saying at the same time, "Art thou already eaves-dropping? follow thy mistress, minion, and, if thou wilt, tell her what I have now said."

Roland Graeme hastened after his royal mistress and her attendants, who had just entered a postern-gate communicating betwixt the castle and the small garden. They ascended a winding-stair as high as the second story, which was in a great measure occupied by a suite of three rooms, opening into each other, and assigned as the dwelling of the captive Princess. The outermost was a small hall or ante-room, within which opened a large parlour, and from that again the Queen's bedroom. Another small apartment, which opened into the same parlour, contained the beds of the gentlewomen in waiting.

Roland Graeme stopped, as became his station, in the outermost of these apartments, there to await such orders as might be communicated to him. From the grated window of the room he saw Lindesay, Melville, and their followers disembark; and observed that they were met at the castle gate by a third noble, to whom Lindesay exclaimed, in his loud harsh voice, "My Lord of Ruthven, you have the start of us!"

At this instant, the page's attention was called to a burst of hysterical sobs from the inner apartment, and to the hurried ejaculations of the terrified females, which led him almost instantly to hasten to their assistance. When he entered, he saw that the Queen had thrown herself into the large chair which stood nearest the door, and was sobbing for breath in a strong fit of hysterical affection. The elder female supported her in her arms, while the younger bathed her face with water and with tears alternately.

"Hasten, young man!" said the elder lady, in alarm, "fly—call in assistance—she is swooning!"

But the Queen ejaculated in a faint and broken voice, "Stir not, I charge you!—call no one to witness—I am better—I shall recover instantly." And, indeed, with an effort which seemed like that of one struggling for life, she sate up in her chair, and endeavoured to resume her composure, while her features yet trembled with the violent emotion of body and mind which she had undergone. "I am ashamed of my weakness, girls," she said, taking the hands of her attendants; "but it is over—and I am Mary Stewart once more. The savage tone of that man's voice—my knowledge of his insolence—the name which he named—the purpose for which they come—may excuse a moment's weakness, and it shall be a moment's only." She snatched from her head the curch or cap, which had been disordered during her hysterical agony, shook down the thick clustered tresses of dark brown which had been before veiled under it—and, drawing her slender fingers across the labyrinth which they formed, she arose from the chair, and stood like the inspired image of a Grecian prophetess in a mood which partook at once of sorrow and pride, of smiles and of tears. "We are ill appointed," she said, "to meet our rebel subjects; but, as far as we may, we will strive to present ourselves as becomes their Queen. Follow me, my maidens," she said; "what says thy favourite song, my Fleming?"

*'My maids, come to my dressing-bower,
And deck my nut-brown hair;
Where'er ye laid a plait before,
Look ye lay ten times 'mair.'*

"Alas!" she added, when she had repeated with a smile these lines of an old ballad, "violence has already robbed me of the ordinary decorations of my rank; and the few that nature gave me have been destroyed by sorrow and by fear." Yet while she spoke thus, she again let her slender fingers stray through the wilderness of the beautiful tresses which veiled her kingly neck and swelling bosom, as if, in her agony of mind, she had not altogether lost the consciousness of her unrivalled charms. Roland Graeme, on whose youth, inexperience, and ardent sense of what was dignified and lovely, the demeanour of so fair and high-born a

lady wrought like the charm of a magician, stood rooted to the spot with surprise and interest, longing to hazard his life in a quarrel so fair as that which Mary Stewart's must needs be. She had been bred in France—she was possessed of the most distinguished beauty—she had reigned a Queen and a Scottish Queen, to whom knowledge of character was as essential as the use of vital air. In all these capacities, Mary was, of all women on the earth, most alert at perceiving and using the advantages which her charms gave her over almost all who came within the sphere of their influence. She cast on Roland a glance which might have melted a heart of stone. "My poor boy," she said, with a feeling partly real, partly politic, "thou art a stranger to us—sent to this doleful captivity from the society of some tender mother, or sister, or maiden, with whom you had freedom to tread a gay measure round the Maypole. I grieve for you; but you are the only male in my limited household—wilt thou obey my orders?"

"To the death, madam," said Graeme, in a determined tone.

"Then keep the door of mine apartment," said the Queen; "keep it till they offer actual violence, or till we shall be fitly arrayed to receive these intrusive visitors."

"I will defend it till they pass over my body," said Roland Graeme; any hesitation which he had felt concerning the line of conduct he ought to pursue being completely swept away by the impulse of the moment.

"Not so, my good youth," answered Mary; "not so, I command. If I have one faithful subject beside me, much need, God wot, I have to care for his safety. Resist them but till they are put to the shame of using actual violence, and then give way, I charge you. Remember my commands." And, with a smile expressive at once of favour and of authority, she turned from him, and, followed by her attendants, entered the bedroom.

The youngest paused for half a second ere she followed her companion, and made a signal to Roland Graeme with her hand. He had been already long aware that this was Catherine Seyton—a circumstance which could not much surprise a youth of quick intellects, who recollected the sort of mysterious discourse which had passed betwixt the two matrons at the deserted nunnery, and on which his meeting with Catherine in this place seemed to cast so much light. Yet such was the engrossing effect of Mary's presence, that it surmounted for the moment even the feelings of a youthful lover; and it was not until Catherine Seyton had disappeared, that Roland began to consider in what relation they were to stand to each other. "She held up her hand to me in a commanding manner," he thought; "perhaps she wanted to confirm my purpose for the execution of the Queen's commands; for I think she could scarce purpose to scare me with the sort of discipline which she administered to the groom in the frieze-jacket, and to poor Adam Woodcock. But we will see to that anon; meantime, let us do justice to the trust reposed in us by this unhappy Queen. I think my Lord of Murray will himself own that it is the duty of a faithful page to defend his lady against intrusion on her privacy."

Accordingly, he stepped to the little vestibule, made fast, with lock and bar, the door which opened from thence to the large staircase, and then sat himself down to attend the result. He had not long to wait—a rude and strong hand first essayed to lift the latch, then pushed and shook the door with violence, and, when it resisted his attempt to open it, exclaimed, "Undo the door there, you within!"

"Why, and at whose command," said the page, "am I to undo the door of the apartments of the Queen of Scotland?"

Another vain attempt, which made hinge and bolt jingle, showed that the impatient applicant without would willingly have entered altogether regardless of his challenge; but at length an answer was returned.

"Undo the door, on your peril—the Lord Lindesay comes to speak with the Lady Mary of Scotland."

"The Lord Lindesay, as a Scottish noble," answered the page, "must await his Sovereign's leisure."

An earnest altercation ensued amongst those without, in which Roland distinguished the remarkable harsh voice of Lindesay in reply to Sir Robert Melville, who appeared to have been using some soothing language—"No! no! no! I tell thee, no! I will place a petard against the door rather than be baulked by a profligate woman, and bearded by an insolent footboy."

"Yet, at least," said Melville, "let me try fair means in the first instance. Violence to a lady would stain your scutcheon for ever. Or await till my Lord Ruthven comes."

"I will await no longer," said Lindesay; "it is high time the business were done, and we on our return to the council. But thou mayest try thy fair play, as thou callest it, while I cause my train to prepare the petard. I came hither provided with as good gunpowder as blew up the Kirk of Field."

"For God's sake, be patient," said Melville; and, approaching the door, he said, as speaking to those within, "Let the Queen know, that I, her faithful servant, Robert Melville, do entreat her, for her own sake, and to prevent worse consequences, that she will undo the door, and admit Lord Lindesay, who brings a mission from the Council of State."

"I will do your errand to the Queen," said the page, "and report to you her answer."

He went to the door of the bedchamber, and tapping against it gently, it was opened by the elderly lady, to whom he communicated his errand, and returned with directions from the Queen to admit Sir Robert Melville and Lord Lindesay. Roland Graeme returned to the vestibule, and opened the door accordingly, into which the Lord Lindesay strode, with the air of a soldier who has fought his way into a conquered fortress; while Melville, deeply dejected, followed him more slowly.

"I draw you to witness, and to record," said the page to this last, "that, save for the especial commands of the Queen, I would have made good the entrance, with my best strength, and my best blood, against all Scotland."

"Be silent, young man," said Melville, in a tone of grave rebuke; "add not brands to fire—this is no time to make a flourish of thy boyish chivalry."

"She has not appeared even yet," said Lindesay, who had now reached the midst of the parlour or audience-room; "how call you this trifling?"

"Patience, my lord," replied Sir Robert, "time presses not—and Lord Ruthven hath not as yet descended."

At this moment the door of the inner apartment opened, and Queen Mary presented herself, advancing with an air of peculiar grace and majesty, and seeming totally unruffled, either by the visit, or by the rude manner in which it had been enforced. Her dress was a robe of black velvet; a small ruff, open in front, gave a full view of her beautifully formed chin and neck, but veiled the bosom. On her head she wore a small cap of lace, and a transparent white veil hung from her shoulders over the long black robe, in large loose folds, so that it could be drawn at pleasure over the face and person. She wore a cross of gold around her neck, and had her rosary of gold and ebony hanging from her girdle. She was closely followed by her two ladies, who remained standing behind her during the conference. Even Lord Lindesay, though the rudest noble of that rude age, was surprised into something like respect by the unconcerned and majestic mien of her, whom he had expected to find frantic with impotent passion, or dissolved in useless and vain sorrow, or overwhelmed with the fears likely in such a situation to assail fallen royalty.

"We fear we have detained you, my Lord of Lindesay," said the Queen, while she curtsied with dignity in answer to his reluctant obeisance; "but a female does not willingly receive her visitors without some minutes spent at the toilette. Men, my lord, are less dependant on such ceremonies."

Lord Lindesay, casting his eye down on his own travel-stained and disordered dress, muttered something of a hasty journey, and the Queen paid her greeting to Sir Robert Melville with courtesy, and even, as it seemed, with kindness. There was then a dead pause, during which Lindesay looked towards the door, as if expecting with impatience the colleague of their embassy. The Queen alone was entirely unembarrassed, and, as if to break the silence, she addressed Lord Lindesay, with a glance at the large and cumbersome sword which he wore, as already mentioned, hanging from his neck.

"You have there a trusty and a weighty travelling companion, my lord. I trust you expected to meet with no enemy here, against whom such a formidable weapon could be necessary? it is, methinks, somewhat a singular ornament for a court, though I am, as I well need to be, too much of a Stuart to fear a sword."

"It is not the first time, madam," replied Lindesay, bringing round the weapon so as to rest its point on the ground, and leaning one hand on the huge cross-handle, "it is not the first time that this weapon has intruded itself into the presence of the House of Stewart."

"Possibly, my lord," replied the Queen, "it may have done service to my ancestors—Your ancestors were men of loyalty"

"Ay, madam," replied he, "service it hath done; but such as kings love neither to acknowledge nor to reward. It was the service which the knife renders to the tree when trimming it to the quick, and depriving it of the superfluous growth of rank and unfruitful suckers, which rob it of nourishment."

"You talk riddles, my lord," said Mary; "I will hope the explanation carries nothing insulting with it."

"You shall judge, madam," answered Lindesay. "With this good sword was Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, girded on the memorable day when he acquired the name of Bell-the-Cat, for dragging from the presence of your great grandfather, the third James of the race, a crew of minions, flatterers, and favourites whom he hanged over the bridge of Lauder, as a warning to such reptiles how they approach a Scottish throne. With this same weapon, the same inflexible champion of Scottish honour and nobility slew at one blow Spens of Kilspindie, a courtier of your grandfather, James the fourth, who had dared to speak lightly of him in the royal presence. They fought near the brook of Fala; and Bell-the-Cat, with this blade, sheared through the thigh of his opponent, and lopped the limb as easily as a shepherd's boy slices a twig from a sapling."

"My lord," replied the Queen, reddening, "my nerves are too good to be alarmed even by this terrible history—May I ask how a blade so illustrious passed from the House of Douglas to that of Lindesay?—Methinks it should have been preserved as a consecrated relic, by a family who have held all that they could do against their king, to be done in favour of their country."

"Nay, madam," said Melville, anxiously interfering, "ask not that question of Lord Lindesay—And you, my lord, for shame—for decency—forbear to reply to it."

"It is time that this lady should hear the truth," replied Lindesay.

"And be assured," said the Queen, "that she will be moved to anger by none that you can tell her, my lord. There are cases in which just scorn has always the mastery over just anger."

"Then know," said Lindesay, "that upon the field of Carberry-hill, when that false and infamous traitor and murderer, James, sometime Earl of Bothwell, and nicknamed Duke of Orkney, offered to do personal battle with any of the associated nobles who came to drag him to justice, I accepted his challenge, and was by the noble Earl of Morton gifted with his good sword that I might therewith fight it out—Ah! so help me Heaven, had his presumption been one grain more, or his cowardice one grain less, I should have done such work with this good steel on his traitorous corpse, that the hounds and carrion-crows should have found their morsels daintily carved to their use!"

The Queen's courage well-nigh gave way at the mention of Bothwell's name—a name connected with such a train of guilt, shame, and disaster. But the prolonged boast of Lindesay gave her time to rally herself, and to answer with an appearance of cold contempt—"It is easy to slay an enemy who enters not the lists. But had Mary Stewart inherited her father's sword as well as his sceptre, the boldest of her rebels should not upon that day have complained that they had no one to cope withal. Your lordship will forgive me if I abridge this conference. A brief description of a bloody fight is long enough to satisfy a lady's curiosity; and unless my Lord of Lindesay has something more important to tell us than of the deeds which old Bell-the-Cat achieved, and how he would himself have emulated them, had time and tide permitted, we will retire to our private apartment, and you, Fleming, shall finish reading to us yonder little treatise *Des Rodomontades Espagnoles*."

"Tarry, madam," said Lindesay, his complexion reddening in his turn, "I know your quick wit too well of old to have sought an interview that you might sharpen its edge at the expense of my honour. Lord Ruthven and myself, with Sir Robert Melville as a concurrent, come to your Grace on the part of the Secret Council, to tender to you what much concerns the safety of your own life and the welfare of the State."

"The Secret Council?" said the Queen; "by what powers can it subsist or act, while I, from whom it holds its character, am here detained under unjust restraint? But it matters not—what concerns the welfare of Scotland shall be acceptable to Mary Stewart, come from whatever quarter it will—and for what concerns her own life, she has lived long enough to be weary of it, even at the age of twenty-five.—Where is your colleague, my lord?—why tarries he?"

"He comes, madam," said Melville, and Lord Ruthven entered at the instant, holding in his hand a packet. As the Queen returned his salutation she became deadly pale, but instantly recovered herself by dint of strong and sudden resolution, just as the noble, whose appearance seemed to excite such emotions in her bosom, entered the apartment in company with George Douglas, the youngest son of the Knight of Lochleven, who, during the absence of his father and brethren, acted as Seneschal of the Castle, under the direction of the elder Lady Lochleven, his father's mother.

Chapter the Twenty-Second.

*I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand;
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hand I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duteous oaths.*

RICHARD II.

Lord Ruthven had the look and bearing which became a soldier and a statesman, and the martial cast of his form and features procured him the popular epithet of Greysteil, by which he was distinguished by his intimates, after the hero of a metrical romance then generally known. His dress, which was a buff-coat embroidered, had a half-military character, but exhibited nothing of the sordid negligence which distinguished that of Lindesay. But the son of an ill-fated sire, and the father of a yet more unfortunate family, bore in his look that cast of inauspicious melancholy, by which the physiognomists of that time pretended to distinguish those who were predestined to a violent and unhappy death.

The terror which the presence of this nobleman impressed on the Queen's mind, arose from the active share he had borne in the slaughter of David Rizzio; his father having presided at the perpetration of that abominable crime, although so weak from long and wasting illness, that he could not endure the weight of his armour, having arisen from a sick-bed to commit a murder in the presence of his Sovereign. On that occasion his son also had attended and taken an active part. It was little to be wondered at, that the Queen, considering her condition when such a deed of horror was acted in her presence, should retain an instinctive terror for the principal actors in the murder. She returned, however, with grace the salutation of Lord Ruthven, and extended her hand to George Douglas, who kneeled, and kissed it with respect; the first mark of a subject's homage which Roland Graeme had seen any of them render to the captive Sovereign. She returned his greeting in silence, and there was a brief pause, during which the steward of the castle, a man of a sad brow and a severe eye, placed, under George Douglas's directions, a table and writing materials; and the page, obedient to his mistress's dumb signal, advanced a large chair to the side on which the Queen stood, the table thus forming a sort of bar which divided the Queen and her personal followers from her unwelcome visitors. The steward then withdrew after a low reverence. When he had closed the door behind him, the Queen broke silence—"With your favour, my lords, I will sit—my walks are not indeed extensive enough at present to fatigue me greatly, yet I find repose something more necessary than usual."

She sat down accordingly, and, shading her cheek with her beautiful hand, looked keenly and impressively at each of the nobles in turn. Mary Fleming applied her kerchief to her eyes, and Catherine Seyton and Roland Graeme exchanged a glance, which showed that both were too deeply engrossed with sentiments of interest and commiseration for their royal mistress, to think of any thing which regarded themselves.

"I wait the purpose of your mission, my lords," said the Queen, after she had been seated for about a minute without a word-being spoken,— "I wait your message from those you call the Secret Council.—I trust it is a petition of pardon, and a desire that I will resume my rightful throne, without using with due severity my right of punishing those who have dispossessed me of it."

"Madam," replied Ruthven, "it is painful for us to speak harsh truths to a Princess who has long ruled us. But we come to offer, not to implore, pardon. In a word, madam, we have to propose to you on the part of the Secret Council, that you sign these deeds, which will contribute greatly to the pacification of the State, the advancement of God's word, and the welfare of your own future life."

"Am I expected to take these fair words on trust, my lord? or may I hear the contents of these reconciling papers, ere I am asked to sign them?"

"Unquestionably, madam; it is our purpose and wish, you should read what you are required to sign," replied Ruthven.

"Required?" replied the Queen, with some emphasis; "but the phrase suits well the matter—read, my lord."

The Lord Ruthven proceeded to read a formal instrument, running in the Queen's name, and setting forth that she had been called, at an early age, to the administration of the crown and realm of Scotland, and had toiled diligently therein, until she was in body and spirit so wearied out and disgusted, that she was unable any longer to endure the travail and pain of State affairs; and that since God had blessed her with a fair and hopeful son, she was desirous to ensure to him, even while she yet lived, his succession to the crown, which was his by right of hereditary descent. "Wherefore," the instrument proceeded, "we, of the motherly affection we bear to our said son, have renounced and demitted, and by these our letters of free good-will, renounce and demit, the Crown, government, and guiding of the realm of Scotland, in favour of our said son, that he may succeed to us as native Prince thereof, as much as if we had been removed by disease, and not by our own proper act. And that this demission of our royal authority may have the more full and solemn effect, and none pretend ignorance, we give, grant, and commit, full and free and plain power to our trusty cousins, Lord Lindesay of the Byres, and William Lord Ruthven, to appear in our name before as many of the nobility, clergy, and burgesses, as may be assembled at Stirling, and there, in our name and behalf, publicly, and in their presence, to renounce the Crown, guidance, and government of this our kingdom of Scotland."

The Queen here broke in with an air of extreme surprise. "How is this, my lords?" she said: "Are my ears turned rebels, that they deceive me with sounds so extraordinary?—And yet it is no wonder that, having conversed so long with rebellion, they should now force its language upon my understanding. Say I am mistaken, my lords—say, for the honour of yourselves and the Scottish nobility, that my right trusty cousins of Lindesay and Ruthven, two barons of warlike fame and ancient line, have not sought the prison-house of their kind mistress for such a purpose as these words seem to imply. Say, for the sake of honour and loyalty, that my ears have deceived me."

"No, madam," said Ruthven gravely, "your ears do *not* deceive you—they deceived you when they were closed against the preachers of the evangele, and the honest advice of your faithful subjects; and when they were ever open to flattery of pickthanks and traitors, foreign cubiculars and domestic minions. The land may no longer brook the rule of one who cannot rule herself; wherefore, I pray you to comply with the last remaining wish of your subjects and counsellors, and spare yourself and us the farther agitation of matter so painful."

"And is this *all* my loving subjects require of me, my lord?" said Mary, in a tone of bitter irony. "Do they really stint themselves to the easy boon that I should yield up the crown, which is mine by birthright, to an infant which is scarcely more than a year old—fling down my sceptre, and take up a distaff—Oh no! it is too little for them to ask—That other roll of parchment contains something harder to be complied with, and which may more highly task my readiness to comply with the petitions of my lieges."

"This parchment," answered Ruthven, in the same tone of inflexible gravity, and unfolding the instrument as he spoke, "is one by which your grace constitutes your nearest in blood, and the most honourable and trustworthy of your subjects, James, Earl of Murray, Regent of the kingdom during the minority of the young King. He already holds the appointment from the Secret Council."

The Queen gave a sort of shriek, and, clapping her hands together, exclaimed, "Comes the arrow out of his quiver?—out of my brother's bow?—Alas! I looked for his return from France as my sole, at least my readiest, chance of deliverance.—And yet, when I heard he had assumed the government, I guessed he would shame to wield it in my name."

"I must pray your answer, madam," said Lord Ruthven, "to the demand of the Council."

"The demand of the Council!" said the Queen; "say rather the demand of a set of robbers, impatient to divide the spoil they have seized. To such a demand, and sent by the mouth of a traitor, whose scalp, but for my womanish mercy, should long since have stood on the city gates, Mary of Scotland has no answer."

"I trust, madam," said Lord Ruthven, "my being unacceptable to your presence will not add to your obduracy of resolution. It may become you to remember that the death of the minion, Rizzio, cost the house of Ruthven its head and leader. My father, more worthy than a whole province of such vile sycophants, died in exile, and broken-hearted."

The Queen clasped her hands on her face, and, resting her arms on the table, stooped down her head and wept so bitterly, that the tears were seen to find their way in streams between the white and slender fingers with which she endeavoured to conceal them.

"My lords," said Sir Robert Melville, "this is too much rigour. Under your lordship's favour, we came hither, not to revive old griefs, but to find the mode of avoiding new ones."

"Sir Robert Melville," said Ruthven, "we best know for what purpose we were delegated hither, and wherefore you were somewhat unnecessarily sent to attend us."

"Nay, by my hand," said Lord Lindesay, "I know not why we were cumbered with the good knight, unless he comes in place of the lump of sugar which pothecars put into their wholesome but bitter medicaments, to please a froward child—a needless labour, methinks, where men have the means to make them swallow the physic otherwise."

"Nay, my lords," said Melville, "ye best know your own secret instructions. I conceive I shall best obey mine in striving to mediate between her Grace and you."

"Be silent, Sir Robert Melville," said the Queen, arising, and her face still glowing with agitation as she spoke. "My kerchief, Fleming—I shame that traitors should have power to move me thus.—Tell me, proud lords," she added, wiping away the tears as she spoke, "by what earthly warrant can liege subjects pretend to challenge the rights of an anointed Sovereign—to throw off the allegiance they have vowed, and to take away the crown from the head on which Divine warrant hath placed it?"

"Madam," said Ruthven, "I will deal plainly with you. Your reign, from the dismal field of Pinkie-cleugh, when you were a babe in the cradle, till now that ye stand a grown dame before us, hath been such a tragedy of losses, disasters, civil dissensions, and foreign wars, that the like is not to be found in our chronicles. The French and English have, with one consent, made Scotland the battle-field on which to fight out their own ancient quarrel.—For ourselves every man's hand hath been against his brother, nor hath a year passed over without rebellion and slaughter, exile of nobles, and oppressing of the commons. We may endure it no longer, and therefore, as a prince, to whom God hath refused the gift of hearkening to wise counsel, and on whose dealings and projects no blessing hath ever descended, we pray you to give way to other rule and governance of the land, that a remnant may yet be saved to this distracted realm."

"My lord," said Mary, "it seems to me that you fling on my unhappy and devoted head those evils, which, with far more justice, I may impute to your own turbulent, wild, and untameable dispositions—the frantic violence with which you, the Magnates of Scotland, enter into feuds against each other, sticking at no cruelty to gratify your wrath, taking deep revenge for the slightest offences, and setting at defiance those wise laws which your ancestors made for stanching of such cruelty, rebelling against the lawful authority, and bearing yourselves as if there were no king in the land; or rather as if each were king in his own premises. And now you throw the blame on me—on me, whose life has been embittered—whose sleep has been broken—whose happiness has been wrecked by your dissensions. Have I not myself been obliged to traverse wilds and mountains, at the head of a few faithful followers, to maintain peace and put down oppression? Have I not worn harness on my person, and carried pistols at my saddle; fain to lay aside the softness of a woman, and the dignity of a Queen, that I might show an example to my followers?"

"We grant, madam," said Lindesay, "that the affrays occasioned by your misgovernment, may sometimes have startled you in the midst of a masque or galliard; or it may be that such may have interrupted the idolatry of the mass, or the jesuitical counsels of some French ambassador. But the longest and severest journey which your Grace has taken in my memory, was from Hawick to Hermitage Castle; and whether it was for the weal of the state, or for your own honour, rests with your Grace's conscience."

The Queen turned to him with inexpressible sweetness of tone and manner, and that engaging look which Heaven had assigned her, as if to show that the choicest arts to win men's affections may be given in vain. "Lindesay," she said, "you spoke not to me in this stern tone, and with such scurril taunt, yon fair summer evening, when you and I shot at the butts against the Earl of Mar and Mary Livingstone, and won of them the evening's collation, in the privy garden of

Saint Andrews. The Master of Lindesay was then my friend, and vowed to be my soldier. How I have offended the Lord of Lindesay I know not, unless honours have changed manners."

Hardhearted as he was, Lindesay seemed struck with this unexpected appeal, but almost instantly replied, "Madam, it is well known that your Grace could in those days make fools of whomever approached you. I pretend not to have been wiser than others. But gayer men and better courtiers soon jostled aside my rude homage, and I think your Grace cannot but remember times, when my awkward attempts to take the manners that pleased you, were the sport of the court-popinjays, the Marys and the Frenchwomen."

"My lord, I grieve if I have offended you through idle gaiety," said the Queen; "and can but say it was most unwittingly done. You are fully revenged; for through gaiety," she said with a sigh, "will I never offend any one more."

"Our time is wasting, madam," said Lord Ruthven; "I must pray your decision on this weighty matter which I have submitted to you."

"What, my lord!" said the Queen, "upon the instant, and without a moment's time to deliberate?—Can the Council, as they term themselves, expect this of me?"

"Madam," replied Ruthven, "the Council hold the opinion, that since the fatal term which passed betwixt the night of King Henry's murder and the day of Carberry-hill, your Grace should have held you prepared for the measure now proposed, as the easiest escape from your numerous dangers and difficulties."

"Great God!" exclaimed the Queen; "and is it as a boon that you propose to me, what every Christian king ought to regard as a loss of honour equal to the loss of life!—You take from me my crown, my power, my subjects, my wealth, my state. What, in the name of every saint, can you offer, or do you offer, in requital of my compliance?"

"We give you pardon," answered Ruthven, sternly—"we give you space and means to spend your remaining life in penitence and seclusion—we give you time to make your peace with Heaven, and to receive the pure Gospel, which you have ever rejected and persecuted."

The Queen turned pale at the menace which this speech, as well as the rough and inflexible tones of the speaker, seemed distinctly to infer—"And if I do not comply with your request so fiercely urged, my lord, what then follows?"

She said this in a voice in which female and natural fear was contending with the feelings of insulted dignity.—There was a pause, as if no one cared to return to the question a distinct answer. At length Ruthven spoke: "There is little need to tell to your Grace, who are well read both in the laws and in the chronicles of the realm, that murder and adultery are crimes for which ere now queens themselves have suffered death."

"And where, my lord, or how, found you an accusation so horrible, against her who stands before you?" said Queen Mary. "The foul and odious calumnies which have poisoned the general mind of Scotland, and have placed me a helpless prisoner in your hands, are surely no proof of guilt?"

"We need look for no farther proof," replied the stern Lord Ruthven, "than the shameless marriage betwixt the widow of the murdered and the leader of the band of murderers!—They that joined hands in the fated month of May, had already united hearts and counsel in the deed which preceded that marriage but a few brief weeks."

"My lord, my lord!" said the Queen, eagerly, "remember well there were more consents than mine to that fatal union, that most unhappy act of a most unhappy life. The evil steps adopted by sovereigns are often the suggestion of bad counsellors; but these counsellors are worse than fiends who tempt and betray, if they themselves are the first to call their unfortunate princes to answer for the consequences of their own advice.—Heard ye never of a bond by the nobles, my lords, recommending that ill-fated union to the ill-fated Mary? Methinks, were it carefully examined, we should see that the names of Morton and of Lindesay, and of Ruthven, may be found in that bond, which pressed me to marry that unhappy man.—Ah! stout and loyal Lord Herries, who never knew guile or dishonour, you bent your noble knee to me in vain, to warn me of my danger, and wert yet the first to draw thy good sword in my cause when I suffered for neglecting thy counsel! Faithful knight and true noble, what a difference betwixt thee and those counsellors of evil, who now threaten my life for having fallen into the snares they spread for me!"

"Madam," said Ruthven, "we know that you are an orator; and perhaps for that reason the Council has sent hither men, whose converse hath been more with the wars, than with the language of the schools or the cabals of state. We but desire to know if, on assurance of life and honour, ye will demit the rule of this kingdom of Scotland?"

"And what warrant have I," said the Queen, "that ye will keep treaty with me, if I should barter my kingly estate for seclusion, and leave to weep in secret?"

"Our honour and our word, madam," answered Ruthven.

"They are too slight and unsolid pledges, my lord," said the Queen; "add at least a handful of thistle-down to give them weight in the balance."

"Away, Ruthven," said Lindesay; "she was ever deaf to counsel, save of slaves and sycophants; let her remain by her refusal, and abide by it!"

"Stay, my lord," said Sir Robert Melville, "or rather permit me to have but a few minutes' private audience with her Grace. If my presence with you could avail aught, it must be as a mediator—do not, I conjure you, leave the castle, or break off the conference, until I bring you word how her Grace shall finally stand disposed."

"We will remain in the hall," said Lindesay, "for half an hour's space; but in despising our words and our pledge of honour, she has touched the honour of my name—let her look herself to the course she has to pursue. If the half hour should pass away without her determining to comply with the demands of the nation, her career will be brief enough."

With little ceremony the two nobles left the apartment, traversed the vestibule, and descended the winding-stairs, the clash of Lindesay's huge sword being heard as it rang against each step in his descent. George Douglas followed them, after exchanging with Melville a gesture of surprise and sympathy.

As soon as they were gone, the Queen, giving way to grief, fear, and agitation, threw herself into the seat, wrung her hands, and seemed to abandon herself to despair. Her female attendants, weeping themselves, endeavoured yet to pray her to be composed, and Sir Robert Melville, kneeling at her feet, made the same entreaty. After giving way to a passionate burst of sorrow, she at length said to Melville, "Kneel not to me, Melville—mock me not with the homage of the person, when the heart is far away—Why stay you behind with the deposed, the condemned? her who has but few hours perchance to live? You have been favoured as well as the rest; why do you continue the empty show of gratitude and thankfulness any longer than they?"

"Madam," said Sir Robert Melville, "so help me Heaven at my need, my heart is as true to you as when you were in your highest place."

"True to me! true to me!" repeated the Queen, with some scorn; "tush, Melville, what signifies the truth which walks hand in hand with my enemies' falsehood?—thy hand and thy sword have never been so well acquainted that I can trust thee in aught where manhood is required—Oh, Seyton, for thy bold father, who is both wise, true, and valiant!"

Roland Graeme could withstand no longer his earnest desire to offer his services to a princess so distressed and so beautiful. "If one sword," he said, "madam, can do any thing to back the wisdom of this grave counsellor, or to defend your rightful cause, here is my weapon, and here is my hand ready to draw and use it." And raising his sword with one hand, he laid the other upon the hilt.

As he thus held up the weapon, Catherine Seyton exclaimed, "Methinks I see a token from my father, madam;" and immediately crossing the apartment, she took Roland Graeme by the skirt of the cloak, and asked him earnestly whence he had that sword.

The page answered with surprise, "Methinks this is no presence in which to jest—Surely, damsel, you yourself best know whence and how I obtained the weapon."

"Is this a time for folly?" said Catherine Seyton; "unsheathe the sword instantly!"

"If the Queen commands me," said the youth, looking towards his royal mistress.

"For shame, maiden!" said the Queen; "wouldst thou instigate the poor boy to enter into useless strife with the two most approved soldiers in Scotland?"

"In your Grace's cause," replied the page, "I will venture my life upon them!" And as he spoke, he drew his weapon partly from the sheath, and a piece of parchment, rolled around the blade, fell out and dropped on the floor. Catherine Seyton caught it up with eager haste.

"It is my father's hand-writing," she said, "and doubtless conveys his best duteous advice to your Majesty; I know that it was prepared to be sent in this weapon, but I expected another messenger."

"By my faith, fair one," thought Roland, "and if you knew not that I had such a secret missive about me, I was yet more ignorant."

The Queen cast her eye upon the scroll, and remained a few minutes wrapped in deep thought. "Sir Robert Melville," she at length said, "this scroll advises me to submit myself to necessity, and to subscribe the deeds these hard men have brought with them, as one who gives way to the natural fear inspired by the threats of rebels and murderers. You, Sir Robert, are a wise man, and Seyton is both sagacious and brave. Neither, I think, would mislead me in this matter."

"Madam," said Melville, "if I have not the strength of body of the Lord Herries or Seyton, I will yield to neither in zeal for your Majesty's service. I cannot fight for you like these lords, but neither of them is more willing to die for your service."

"I believe it, my old and faithful counsellor," said the Queen, "and believe me, Melville, I did thee but a moment's injustice. Read what my Lord Seyton hath written to us, and give us thy best counsel."

He glanced over the parchment, and instantly replied,—"Oh! my dear and royal mistress, only treason itself could give you other advice than Lord Seyton has here expressed. He, Herries, Huntly, the English ambassador Throgmorton, and others, your friends, are all alike of opinion, that whatever deeds or instruments you execute within these walls, must lose all force and effect, as extorted from your Grace by duress, by sufferance of present evil, and fear of men, and harm to ensue on your refusal. Yield, therefore, to the tide, and be assured, that in subscribing what parchments they present to you, you bind yourself to nothing, since your act of signature wants that which alone can make it valid, the free will of the granter."

"Ay, so says my Lord Seyton," replied Mary; "yet methinks, for the daughter of so long a line of sovereigns to resign her birthright, because rebels press upon her with threats, argues little of royalty, and will read ill for the fame of Mary in future chronicles. Tush! Sir Robert Melville, the traitors may use black threats and bold words, but they will not dare to put their hands forth on our person."

"Alas! madam, they have already dared so far and incurred such peril by the lengths which they have gone, that they are but one step from the worst and uttermost."

"Surely," said the Queen, her fears again predominating, "Scottish nobles would not lend themselves to assassinate a helpless woman?"

"Bethink you, madam," he replied, "what horrid spectacles have been seen in our day; and what act is so dark, that some Scottish hand has not been found to dare it? Lord Lindesay, besides his natural sullenness and hardness of temper, is the near kinsman of Henry Darnley, and Ruthven has his own deep and dangerous plans. The Council, besides, speak of proofs by writ and word, of a casket with letters—of I know not what."

"Ah! good Melville," answered the Queen, "were I as sure of the even-handed integrity of my judges, as of my own innocence—and yet——"

"Oh! pause, madam," said Melville, "even innocence must sometimes for a season stoop to injurious blame. Besides, you are here——"

He looked round, and paused.

"Speak out, Melville," said the Queen, "never one approached my person who wished to work me evil; and even this poor page, whom I have to-day seen for the first time in my life, I can trust safely with your communication."

"Nay, madam," answered Melville, "in such emergence, and he being the bearer of Lord Seyton's message, I will venture to say, before him and these fair ladies, whose truth and fidelity I dispute not—I say I will venture to say, that there are other modes besides that of open trial, by which deposed sovereigns often die; and that, as Machiavel saith, there is but one step betwixt a king's prison and his grave."

"Oh I were it but swift and easy for the body," said the unfortunate Princess, "were it but a safe and happy change for the soul, the woman lives not that would take the step so soon as I—But, alas! Melville, when we think of death, a thousand sins, which we have trod as worms beneath our feet, rise up against us as flaming serpents. Most injuriously do they accuse me of aiding Darnley's death; yet, blessed Lady! I afforded too open occasion for the suspicion—I espoused Bothwell."

"Think not of that now, madam," said Melville, "think rather of the immediate mode of saving yourself and son. Comply with the present unreasonable demands, and trust that better times will shortly arrive."

"Madam," said Roland Graeme, "if it pleases you that I should do so, I will presently swim through the lake, if they refuse me other conveyance to the shore; I will go to the courts successively of England, France, and Spain, and will show you have subscribed these vile instruments from no stronger impulse than the fear of death, and I will do battle against them that say otherwise."

The Queen turned her round, and with one of those sweet smiles which, during the era of life's romance, overpay every risk, held her hand towards Roland, but without "speaking a word. He kneeled reverently, and kissed it, and Melville again resumed his plea.

"Madam," he said, "time presses, and you must not let those boats, which I see they are even now preparing, put forth on the lake. Here are enough of witnesses—your ladies—this bold youth—myself, when it can serve your cause effectually, for I would not hastily stand committed in this matter—but even without me here is evidence enough to show, that you have yielded to the demands of the Council through force and fear, but from no sincere and unconstrained assent. Their boats are already manned for their return—oh! permit your old servant to recall them."

"Melville," said the Queen, "thou art an ancient courtier—when didst thou ever know a Sovereign Prince recall to his presence subjects who had parted from him on such terms as those on which these envoys of the Council left us, and who yet were recalled without submission or apology?—Let it cost me both life and crown, I will not again command them to my presence."

"Alas! madam, that empty form should make a barrier! If I rightly understand, you are not unwilling to listen to real and advantageous counsel—but your scruple is saved—I hear them returning to ask your final resolution. Oh! take the advice of the noble Seyton, and you may once more command those who now usurp a triumph over you. But hush! I hear them in the vestibule."

As he concluded speaking, George Douglas opened the door of the apartment, and marshalled in the two noble envoys.

"We come, madam," said the Lord Ruthven, "to request your answer to the proposal of the Council."

"Your final answer," said Lord Lindesay; "for with a refusal you must couple the certainty that you have precipitated your fate, and renounced the last opportunity of making peace with God, and ensuring your longer abode in the world."

"My lords," said Mary, with inexpressible grace and dignity, "the evils we cannot resist we must submit to—I will subscribe these parchments with such liberty of choice as my condition permits me. Were I on yonder shore, with a fleet jennet and ten good and loyal knights around me, I would subscribe my sentence of eternal condemnation as soon as the resignation of my throne. But here, in the Castle of Lochleven, with deep water around me—and you, my lords, beside me,—I have no freedom of choice.—Give me the pen, Melville, and bear witness to what I do, and why I do it."

"It is our hope your Grace will not suppose yourself compelled by any apprehensions from us," said the Lord Ruthven, "to execute what must be your own voluntary deed."

The Queen had already stooped towards the table, and placed the parchment before her, with the pen between her fingers, ready for the important act of signature. But when Lord Ruthven had done speaking, she looked up, stopped short, and threw down the pen. "If," she said, "I am expected to declare I give away my crown of free will, or otherwise than because I am compelled to renounce it by the threat of worse evils to myself and my subjects, I will not put my name to such an untruth—not to gain full possession of England, France, and Scotland!—all once my own, in possession, or by right."

"Beware, madam," said Lindesay, and, snatching hold of the Queen's arm with his own gauntleted hand, he pressed it, in the rudeness of his passion, more closely, perhaps, than he was himself aware of,—“beware how you contend with those who are the stronger, and have the mastery of your fate!"

He held his grasp on her arm, bending his eyes on her with a stern and intimidating look, till both Ruthven and Melville cried shame; and Douglas, who had hitherto remained in a state of apparent apathy, had made a stride from the door, as if to interfere. The rude Baron then quitted his hold, disguising the confusion which he really felt at having indulged his passion to such extent, under a sullen and contemptuous smile.

The Queen immediately began, with an expression of pain, to bare the arm which he had grasped, by drawing up the sleeve of her gown, and it appeared that his gripe had left the purple marks of his iron fingers upon her flesh—"My lord," she said, "as a knight and gentleman, you might have spared my frail arm so severe a proof that you have the greater strength on your side, and are resolved to use it—But I thank you for it—it is the most decisive token of the terms on which this day's business is to rest.—I draw you to witness, both lords and ladies," she said, showing the marks of the grasp on her arm, "that I subscribe these instruments in obedience to the sign manual of my Lord of Lindesay, which you may see imprinted on mine arm."

[Footnote: The details of this remarkable event are, as given in the preceding chapter, imaginary; but the outline of the events is historical. Sir Robert Lindesay, brother to the author of the Memoirs, was at first intrusted with the delicate commission of persuading the imprisoned queen to resign her crown. As he flatly refused to interfere, they determined to send the Lord Lindesay, one of the rudest and most violent of their own faction, with instructions, first to use fair persuasions, and if these did not succeed, to enter into harder terms. Knox associates Lord Ruthven with Lindesay in this alarming commission. He was the son of that Lord Ruthven who was prime agent in the murder of Rizzio; and little mercy was to be expected from his conjunction with Lindesay.

The employment of such rude tools argued a resolution on the part of those who had the Queen's person in their power, to proceed to the utmost extremities, should they find Mary obstinate. To avoid this pressing danger, Sir Robert Melville was despatched by them to Lochleven, carrying with him, concealed in the scabbard of his sword, letters to the Queen from the Earl of Athole, Maitland of Lethington, and even from Throgmorton, the English Ambassador, who was then favourable to the unfortunate Mary, conjuring her to yield to the necessity of the times, and to subscribe such deeds as Lindesay should lay before her, without being startled by their tenor; and assuring her that her doing so, in the state of captivity under which she was placed, would neither, in law, honour, nor conscience, be binding upon her when she should obtain her liberty. Submitting by the advice of one part of her subjects to the menace of the others, and learning that Lindesay was arrived in a boasting, that is, threatening humour, the Queen, "with some reluctance, and with tears," saith Knox, subscribed one deed resigning her crown to her infant son, and another establishing the Earl of Murray regent. It seems agreed by historians that Lindesay behaved with great brutality on the occasion. The deeds were signed 24th July, 1567.]

Lindesay would have spoken, but was restrained by his colleague Ruthven, who said to him, "Peace, my lord. Let the Lady Mary of Scotland ascribe her signature to what she will, it is our business to procure it, and carry it to the Council. Should there be debate hereafter on the manner in which it was adhibited, there will be time enough for it."

Lindesay was silent accordingly, only muttering within his beard, "I meant not to hurt her; but I think women's flesh be as tender as new-fallen snow."

The Queen meanwhile subscribed the rolls of parchment with a hasty indifference, as if they had been matters of slight consequence, or of mere formality. When she had performed this painful task, she arose, and, having curtsied to the lords, was about to withdraw to her chamber. Ruthven and Sir Robert Melville made, the first a formal reverence, the second an obeisance, in which his desire to acknowledge his sympathy was obviously checked by the fear of appearing in the eyes of his colleagues too partial to his former mistress. But Lindesay stood motionless, even when they were preparing to withdraw. At length, as if moved by a sudden impulse, he walked round the table which had hitherto been betwixt them and the Queen, kneeled on one knee, took her hand, kissed it, let it fall, and arose—"Lady," he said, "thou art a noble creature, even though thou hast abused God's choicest gifts. I pay that devotion to thy manliness of spirit, which I would not have paid to the power thou hast long undeservedly wielded—I kneel to Mary Stewart, not to the Queen."

"The Queen and Mary Stewart pity thee alike, Lindesay," said Mary—"alike thee pity, and they forgive thee. An honoured soldier hadst thou been by a king's side—leagued with rebels, what art thou but a good blade in the hands of a ruffian?—Farewell, my Lord Ruthven, the smoother but the deeper traitor.—Farewell, Melville—Mayest thou find masters that can understand state policy better, and have the means to reward it more richly, than Mary Stewart.—Farewell, George of Douglas—make your respected grand-dame comprehend that we would be alone for the remainder of the day—God wot, we have need to collect our thoughts."

All bowed and withdrew; but scarce had they entered the vestibule, ere Ruthven and Lindesay were at variance. "Chide not with me, Ruthven," Lindesay was heard to say, in answer to something more indistinctly urged by his colleague—"Chide not with me, for I will not brook it! You put the hangman's office on me in this matter, and even the very hangman hath leave to ask some pardon of those on whom he does his office. I would I had as deep cause to be this lady's friend as I have to be her enemy—thou shouldst see if I spared limb and life in her quarrel."

"Thou art a sweet minion," said Ruthven, "to fight a lady's quarrel, and all for a bent brow and a tear in the eye! Such toys have been out of thy thoughts this many a year."

"Do me right, Ruthven," said Lindesay. "You are like a polished corslet of steel; it shines more gaudily, but it is not a whit softer—nay, it is five times harder than a Glasgow breastplate of hammered iron. Enough. We know each other."

They descended the stairs, were heard to summon their boats, and the Queen signed to Roland Graeme to retire to the vestibule, and leave her with her female attendants.

Chapter the Twenty-Third.

*Give me a morsel on the greensward rather,
Coarse as you will the cooking—Let the fresh spring
Bubble beside my napkin—and the free birds
Twittering and chirping, hop from bough to bough,
To claim the crumbs I leave for perquisites—
Your prison feasts I like not.*

THE WOODSMAN, A DRAMA.

A recess in the vestibule was enlightened by a small window, at which Roland Graeme stationed himself to mark the departure of the lords. He could see their followers mustering on horseback under their respective banners—the western sun glancing on their corslets and steel-caps as they moved to and fro, mounted or dismounted, at intervals. On the narrow space betwixt the castle and the water, the Lords Ruthven and Lindesay were already moving slowly to their boats, accompanied by the Lady of Lochleven, her grandson, and their principal attendants. They took a ceremonious leave of each other, as Roland could discern by their gestures, and the boats put oft from their landing-place; the boatmen stretched to their oars, and they speedily diminished upon the eye of the idle gazer, who had no better employment than to watch their motions. Such seemed also the occupation of the Lady Lochleven and George Douglas, who, returning from the landing-place, looked frequently back to the boats, and at length stopped as if to observe their progress under the window at which Roland Graeme was stationed.—As they gazed on the lake, he could hear the lady distinctly say, "And she has bent her mind to save her life at the expense of her kingdom?"

"Her life, madam!" replied her son; "I know not who would dare to attempt it in the castle of my father. Had I dreamt that it was with such purpose that Lindesay insisted on bringing his followers hither, neither he nor they should have passed the iron gate of Lochleven castle."

"I speak not of private slaughter, my son, but of open trial, condemnation, and execution; for with such she has been threatened, and to such threats she has given way. Had she not more of the false Gusian blood than of the royal race of Scotland in her veins, she had bidden them defiance to their teeth—But it is all of the same complexion, and meanness is the natural companion of profligacy.—I am discharged, forsooth, from intruding on her gracious presence this evening. Go thou, my son, and render the usual service of the meal to this unqueened Queen."

"So please you, lady mother," said Douglas, "I care not greatly to approach her presence."

"Thou art right, my son; and therefore I trust thy prudence, even because I have noted thy caution. She is like an isle on the ocean, surrounded with shelves and quicksands; its verdure fair and inviting to the eye, but the wreck of many a goodly vessel which hath approached it too rashly. But for thee, my son, I fear nought; and we may not, with our honour, suffer her to eat without the attendance of one of us. She may die by the judgment of Heaven, or the fiend may have power over her in her despair; and then we would be touched in honour to show that in our house, and at our table, she had had all fair play and fitting usage."

Here Roland was interrupted by a smart tap on the shoulders, reminding him sharply of Adam Woodcock's adventure of the preceding evening. He turned round, almost expecting to see the page of Saint Michael's hostelry. He saw, indeed, Catherine Seyton; but she was in female attire, differing, no doubt, a great deal in shape and materials from that which she had worn when they first met, and becoming her birth as the daughter of a great baron, and her rank as the attendant on a princess. "So, fair page," said she, "eaves-dropping is one of your page-like qualities, I presume."

"Fair sister," answered Roland, in the same tone, "if some friends of mine be as well acquainted with the rest of our mystery as they are with the arts of swearing, swaggering, and switching, they need ask no page in Christendom for farther insight into his vocation."

"Unless that pretty speech infer that you have yourself had the discipline of the switch since we last met, the probability whereof I nothing doubt, I profess, fair page, I am at a loss to conjecture your meaning. But there is no time to debate it now—they come with the evening meal. Be pleased, Sir Page, to do your duty."

Four servants entered bearing dishes, preceded by the same stern old steward whom Roland had already seen, and followed by George Douglas, already mentioned as the grandson of the Lady of Lochleven, and who, acting as seneschal, represented, upon this occasion, his father, the Lord of the Castle. He entered with his arms folded on his bosom, and his looks bent on the ground. With the assistance of Roland Graeme, a table was suitably covered in the next or middle apartment, on which the domestics placed their burdens with great reverence, the steward and Douglas bending low when they had seen the table properly adorned, as if their royal prisoner had sat at the board in question. The door opened, and Douglas, raising his eyes hastily, cast them again on the earth, when he perceived it was only the Lady Mary Fleming who entered.

"Her Grace," she said, "will not eat to-night."

"Let us hope she may be otherwise persuaded," said Douglas; "meanwhile, madam, please to see our duty performed."

A servant presented bread and salt on a silver plate, and the old steward carved for Douglas a small morsel in succession from each of the dishes presented, which he tasted, as was then the custom at the tables of princes, to which death was often suspected to find its way in the disguise of food.

"The Queen will not then come forth to-night?" said Douglas.

"She has so determined," replied the lady.

"Our farther attendance then is unnecessary—we leave you to your supper, fair ladies, and wish you good even."

He retired slowly as he came, and with the same air of deep dejection, and was followed by the attendants belonging to the castle. The two ladies sate down to their meal, and Roland Graeme, with ready alacrity, prepared to wait upon them. Catherine Seyton whispered to her companion, who replied with the question spoken in a low tone, but looking at the page—"Is he of gentle blood and well nurtured?"

The answer which she received seemed satisfactory, for she said to Roland, "Sit down, young gentleman, and eat with your sisters in captivity."

"Permit me rather to perform my duty in attending them," said Roland, anxious to show he was possessed of the high tone of deference prescribed by the rules of chivalry towards the fair sex, and especially to dames and maidens of quality.

"You will find, Sir Page," said Catherine, "you will have little time allowed you for your meal; waste it not in ceremony, or you may rue your politeness ere to-morrow morning."

"Your speech is too free, maiden," said the elder lady; "the modesty of the youth may teach you more fitting fashions towards one whom to-day you have seen for the first time."

Catherine Seyton cast down her eyes, but not till she had given a single glance of inexpressible archness towards Roland, whom her more grave companion now addressed in a tone of protection.

"Regard her not, young gentleman—she knows little of the world, save the forms of a country nunnery—take thy place at the board-end, and refresh thyself after thy journey."

Roland Graeme obeyed willingly, as it was the first food he had that day tasted; for Lindesay and his followers seemed regardless of human wants. Yet, notwithstanding the sharpness of his appetite, a natural gallantry of disposition, the desire of showing himself a well-nurtured gentleman, in all courtesies towards the fair sex, and, for aught I know, the pleasure of assisting Catherine Seyton, kept his attention awake, during the meal, to all those nameless acts of duty and service which gallants of that age were accustomed to render. He carved with neatness and decorum, and selected duly whatever was most delicate to place before the ladies. Ere they could form a wish, he sprung from the table, ready to comply with it—poured wine—tempered it with water—removed the exchanged trenchers, and performed the whole honours of the table, with an air at once of cheerful diligence, profound respect, and graceful promptitude.

When he observed that they had finished eating, he hastened to offer to the elder lady the silver ewer, basin, and napkin, with the ceremony and gravity which he would have used towards Mary herself. He next, with the same decorum, having supplied the basin with fair water, presented it to Catherine Seyton. Apparently, she was determined to disturb his self-possession, if possible; for, while in the act of bathing her hands, she contrived, as it were by accident, to flirt some drops of water upon the face of the assiduous assistant. But if such was her mischievous purpose she was completely disappointed; for Roland Graeme, internally piquing himself on his self-command, neither laughed nor was discomposed; and all that the maiden gained by her frolic was a severe rebuke from her companion, taxing her with mal-address and indecorum. Catherine replied not, but sat pouting, something in the humour of a spoilt child, who watches the opportunity of wreaking upon some one or other its resentment for a deserved reprimand.

The Lady Mary Fleming, in the mean-while, was naturally well pleased with the exact and reverent observance of the page, and said to Catherine, after a favourable glance at Roland Graeme,—"*You might well say, Catherine, our companion in captivity was well born and gentle nurtured. I would not make him vain by my praise, but his services enable us to dispense with those which George Douglas condescends not to afford us, save when the Queen is herself in presence.*"

"Umph! I think hardly," answered Catherine. "George Douglas is one of the most handsome gallants in Scotland, and 'tis pleasure to see him even still, when the gloom of Lochleven Castle has shed the same melancholy over him, that it has done over every thing else. When he was at Holyrood who would have said the young sprightly George Douglas would have been contented to play the locksmith here in Lochleven, with no gayer amusement than that of turning the key on two or three helpless women?—a strange office for a Knight of the Bleeding Heart—why does he not leave it to his father or his brothers?"

"Perhaps, like us, he has no choice," answered the Lady Fleming. "But, Catherine, thou hast used thy brief space at court well, to remember what George Douglas was then."

"I used mine eyes, which I suppose was what I was designed to do, and they were worth using there. When I was at the nunnery, they were very useless appurtenances; and now I am at Lochleven, they are good for nothing, save to look over that eternal work of embroidery."

"You speak thus, when you have been but a few brief hours amongst us—was this the maiden who would live and die in a dungeon, might she but have permission to wait on her gracious Queen?"

"Nay, if you chide in earnest, my jest is ended," said Catherine Seyton. "I would not yield in attachment to my poor god-mother, to the gravest dame that ever had wise saws upon her tongue, and a double-starched ruff around her throat—you know I would not, Dame Mary Fleming, and it is putting shame on me to say otherwise."

"She will challenge the other court lady," thought Roland Graeme; "she will to a certainty fling down her glove, and if Dame Mary Fleming hath but the soul to lift it, we may have a combat in the lists!"—but the answer of Lady Mary Fleming was such as turns away wrath.

"Thou art a good child," she said, "my Catherine, and a faithful; but Heaven pity him who shall have one day a creature so beautiful to delight him, and a thing so mischievous to torment him—thou art fit to drive twenty husbands stark mad."

"Nay," said Catherine, resuming the full career of her careless good-humour, "he must be half-witted beforehand, that gives me such an opportunity. But I am glad you are not angry with me in sincerity," casting herself as she spoke into the arms of her friend, and continuing, with a tone of apologetic fondness, while she kissed her on either side of the face; "you know, my dear Fleming, that I have to contend with both my father's lofty pride, and with my mother's high spirit—God bless them! they have left me these good qualities, having small portion to give besides, as times go—and so I am wilful and saucy; but let me remain only a week in this castle, and oh, my dear Fleming, my spirit will be as chastised and humble as thine own."

Dame Mary Fleming's sense of dignity, and love of form, could not resist this affectionate appeal. She kissed Catherine Seyton in her turn affectionately; while, answering the last part of her speech, she said, "Now Our Lady forbid, dear Catherine, that you should lose aught that is befitting of what becomes so well your light heart and lively humour. Keep but your sharp wit on this side of madness, and it cannot but be a blessing to us. But let me go, mad wench—I hear her Grace touch her silver call." And, extricating herself from Catherine's grasp, she went towards the door of Queen Mary's apartment, from which was heard the low tone of a silver whistle, which, now only used by the boatswains in the navy, was then, for want of bells, the ordinary mode by which ladies, even of the very highest rank, summoned their domestics. When she had made two or three steps towards the door, however, she turned back, and advancing to the young couple whom she left together, she said, in a very serious though a low tone, "I trust it is impossible that we can, any of us, or in any circumstances, forget, that, few as we are, we form the household of the Queen of Scotland; and that, in her calamity, all boyish mirth and childish jesting can only serve to give a great triumph to her enemies, who have already found their account in objecting to her the lightness of every idle folly, that the young and the gay practised in her court." So saying, she left the apartment.

Catherine Seyton seemed much struck with this remonstrance—She suffered herself to drop into the seat which she had quitted when she went to embrace Dame Mary Fleming, and for some time rested her brow upon her hands; while Roland Graeme looked at her earnestly, with a mixture of emotions which perhaps he himself could neither have analysed nor explained. As she raised her face slowly from the posture to which a momentary feeling of self-rebuke had depressed it, her eyes encountered those of Roland, and became gradually animated with their usual spirit of malicious drollery, which not unnaturally excited a similar expression in those of the equally volatile page. They sat for the space of two minutes, each looking at the other with great seriousness on their features, and much mirth in their eyes, until at length Catherine was the first to break silence.

"May I pray you, fair sir," she began, very demurely, "to tell me what you see in my face to arouse looks so extremely sagacious and knowing as those with which it is your worship's pleasure to honour me? It would seem as if there were some wonderful confidence and intimacy betwixt us, fair sir, if one is to judge from your extremely cunning looks; and so help me, Our Lady, as I never saw you but twice in my life before."

"And where were those happy occasions," said Roland, "if I may be bold enough to ask the question?"

"At the nunnery of St. Catherine's," said the damsel, "in the first instance; and, in the second, during five minutes of a certain raid or foray which it was your pleasure to make into the lodging of my lord and father, Lord Seyton, from which, to my surprise, as probably to your own, you returned with a token of friendship and favour, instead of broken bones, which were the more probable reward of your intrusion, considering the prompt ire of the house of Seyton. I am deeply mortified," she added, ironically, "that your recollection should require refreshment on a subject so important; and that my memory should be stronger than yours on such an occasion, is truly humiliating."

"Your own, memory is not so exactly correct, fair mistress," answered the page, "seeing you have forgotten meeting the third, in the hostlerie of St. Michael's, when it pleased you to lay your switch across the face of my comrade, in order, I warrant, to show that, in the house of Seyton, neither the prompt ire of its descendants, nor the use of the doublet and hose, are subject to Salique law, or confined to the use of the males."

"Fair sir," answered Catherine, looking at him with great steadiness, and some surprise, "unless your fair wits have forsaken you, I am at a loss what to conjecture of your meaning."

"By my troth, fair mistress," answered Roland, "and were I as wise a warlock as Michael Scott, I could scarce riddle the dream you read me. Did I not see you last night in the hostlerie of St. Michael's?—Did you not bring me this sword, with command not to draw it save at the command of my native and rightful Sovereign? And have I not done as you required me? Or is the sword a piece of lath—my word a bulrush—my memory a dream—and my eyes good for nought—espials which corbies might pick out of my head?"

"And if your eyes serve you not more truly on other occasions than in your vision of St. Michael," said Catherine, "I know not, the pain apart, that the corbies would do you any great injury in the deprivation—But hark, the bell—hush, for God's sake, we are interrupted.—"

The damsel was right; for no sooner had the dull toll of the castle bell begun to resound through the vaulted apartment, than the door of the vestibule flew open, and the steward, with his severe countenance, his gold chain, and his white rod, entered the apartment, followed by the same train of domestics who had placed the dinner on the table, and who now, with the same ceremonious formality, began to remove it.

The steward remained motionless as some old picture, while the domestics did their office; and when it was accomplished, every thing removed from the table, and the board itself taken from its tressels and disposed against the wall, he said aloud, without addressing any one in particular, and somewhat in the tone of a herald reading a proclamation, "My noble lady, Dame Margaret Erskine, by marriage Douglas, lets the Lady Mary of Scotland and her attendants to wit, that a servant of the true evangele, her reverend chaplain, will to-night, as usual, expound, lecture, and catechise, according to the forms of the congregation of gossellers."

"Hark you, my friend, Mr. Dryfesdale," said Catherine, "I understand this announcement is a nightly form of yours. Now, I pray you to remark, that the Lady Fleming and I—for I trust your insolent invitation concerns us only—have chosen Saint Peter's pathway to Heaven, so I see no one whom your godly exhortation, catechise, or lecture, can benefit, excepting this poor page, who, being in Satan's hand as well as yourself, had better worship with you than remain to cumber our better-advised devotions."

The page was well-nigh giving a round denial to the assertions which this speech implied, when, remembering what had passed betwixt him and the Regent, and seeing Catherine's finger raised in a monitory fashion, he felt himself, as on former occasions at the Castle of Avenel, obliged to submit to the task of dissimulation, and followed Dryfesdale down to the castle chapel, where he assisted in the devotions of the evening.

The chaplain was named Elias Henderson. He was a man in the prime of life, and possessed of good natural parts, carefully improved by the best education which those times afforded. To these qualities were added a faculty of close and terse reasoning; and, at intervals, a flow of happy illustration and natural eloquence. The religious faith of Roland Graeme, as we have already had opportunity to observe, rested on no secure basis, but was entertained rather in obedience to his grandmother's behests, and his secret desire to contradict the chaplain of Avenel Castle, than from any fixed or steady reliance which he placed on the Romish creed. His ideas had been of late considerably enlarged by the scenes he had passed through; and feeling that there was shame in not understanding something of those political disputes betwixt the professors of the ancient and the reformed faith, he listened with more attention than it had hitherto been in his nature to yield on such occasions, to an animated discussion of some of the principal points of difference betwixt the churches. So passed away the first day in the Castle of Lochleven; and those which followed it were, for some time, of a very monotonous and uniform tenor.

Chapter the Twenty-Fourth.

'Tis a weary life this—

*Vaults overhead, and grates and bars around me,
And my sad hours spent with as sad companions,
Whose thoughts are brooding: o'er their own mischances,
Far, far too deeply to take part in mine.*

THE WOODSMAN.

The course of life to which Mary and her little retinue were doomed, was in the last degree secluded and lonely, varied only as the weather permitted or rendered impossible the Queen's usual walk in the garden or on the battlements. The greater part of the morning she wrought with her ladies at those pieces of needlework, many of which still remain proofs of her indefatigable application. At such hours the page was permitted the freedom of the castle and islet; nay, he was sometimes invited to attend George Douglas when he went a-sporting upon the lake, or on its margin; opportunities of diversion which were only clouded by the remarkable melancholy which always seemed to brood on that gentleman's brow, and to mark his whole demeanour,—a sadness so profound, that Roland never observed him to smile, or to speak any word unconnected with the immediate object of their exercise.

The most pleasant part of Roland's day, was the occasional space which he was permitted to pass in personal attendance on the Queen and her ladies, together with the regular dinner-time, which he always spent with Dame Mary Fleming and Catharine Seyton. At these periods, he had frequent occasion to admire the lively spirit and inventive imagination of the latter damsel, who was unwearied in her contrivances to amuse her mistress, and to banish, for a time at least, the melancholy which preyed on her bosom. She danced, she sung, she recited tales of ancient and modern times, with that heartfelt exertion of talent, of which the pleasure lies not in the vanity of displaying it to others, but in the enthusiastic consciousness that we possess it ourselves. And yet these high accomplishments were mixed with an air of rusticity and harebrained vivacity, which seemed rather to belong to some village maid, the coquette of the ring around the Maypole, than to the high-bred descendant of an ancient baron. A touch of audacity, altogether short of effrontery, and far less approaching to vulgarity, gave as it were a wildness to all that she did; and Mary, while defending her from some of the occasional censures of her grave companion, compared her to a trained singing-bird escaped from a cage, which practises in all the luxuriance of freedom, and in full possession of the greenwood bough, the airs which it had learned during its earlier captivity.

The moments which the page was permitted to pass in the presence of this fascinating creature, danced so rapidly away, that, brief as they were, they compensated the weary dulness of all the rest of the day. The space of indulgence, however, was always brief, nor were any private interviews betwixt him and Catharine permitted, or even possible. Whether it were some special precaution respecting the Queen's household, or whether it were her general ideas of propriety, Dame Fleming seemed particularly attentive to prevent the young people from holding any separate correspondence together, and bestowed, for Catharine's sole benefit in this matter, the full stock of prudence and experience which she had acquired, when mother of the Queen's maidens of honour, and by which she had gained their hearty hatred. Casual meetings, however, could not be prevented, unless Catherine had been more desirous of shunning, or Roland Graeme less anxious in watching for them. A smile, a gibe, a sarcasm, disarmed of its severity by the arch look with which it was accompanied, was all that time permitted to pass between them on such occasions. But such passing interviews neither afforded means nor opportunity to renew the discussion of the circumstances attending their earlier acquaintance, nor to permit Roland to investigate more accurately the mysterious apparition of the page in the purple velvet cloak at the hostelry of Saint Michael's.

The winter months slipped heavily away, and spring was already advanced, when Roland Graeme observed a gradual change in the manners of his fellow-prisoners. Having no business of his own to attend to, and being, like those of his age, education, and degree, sufficiently curious concerning what passed around, he began by degrees to suspect, and finally to be convinced, that there was something in agitation among his companions in captivity, to which they did not desire that he should be privy. Nay, he became almost certain that, by some means unintelligible to him, Queen Mary held correspondence beyond the walls and waters which surrounded her prison-house, and that she nourished some secret hope of deliverance or escape. In the conversations betwixt her and her attendants, at which he was necessarily present, the Queen could not always avoid showing that she was acquainted with the events which were passing abroad in the world, and which he only heard through her report. He observed that she wrote more and worked less than had been her former custom, and that, as if desirous to lull suspicion asleep, she changed her manner towards the Lady Lochleven into one more gracious, and which seemed to express a resigned submission to her lot. "They think I am blind," he said to himself, "and that I am unfit to be trusted because I am so young, or it may be because I was sent hither by the Regent. Well!—be it so—they may be glad to confide in me in the long run; and Catherine Seyton, for as saucy as she is, may find me as safe a confidant as that sullen Douglas, whom she is always running after. It may be they are angry with me for listening to Master Elias Henderson; but it was their own fault for sending me there, and if the man speaks truth and good sense, and preaches only the word of God, he is as likely to be right as either Pope or Councils."

It is probable that in this last conjecture, Roland Graeme had hit upon the real cause why the ladies had not intrusted him with their councils. He had of late had several conferences with Henderson on the subject of religion, and had given him to understand that he stood in need of his instructions, although he had not thought there was either prudence or necessity for confessing that hitherto he had held the tenets of the Church of Rome.

Elias Henderson, a keen propagator of the reformed faith, had sought the seclusion of Lochleven Castle, with the express purpose and expectation of making converts from Rome amongst the domestics of the dethroned Queen, and confirming the faith of those who already held the Protestant doctrines. Perhaps his hopes soared a little higher, and he might nourish some expectation of a proselyte more distinguished in the person of the deposed Queen. But the pertinacity with which she and her female attendants refused to see or listen to him, rendered such hope, if he nourished it, altogether abortive.

The opportunity, therefore, of enlarging the religious information of Roland Graeme, and bringing him to a more due sense of his duties to Heaven, was hailed by the good man as a door opened by Providence for the salvation of a sinner. He dreamed not, indeed, that he was converting a Papist, but such was the ignorance which Roland displayed upon some material points of the reformed doctrine, that Master Henderson, while praising his docility to the Lady Lochleven and her grandson, seldom failed to add, that his venerable brother, Henry Warden, must be now decayed in strength and in mind, since he found a catechumen of his flock so ill-grounded in the principles of his belief. For this, indeed, Roland Graeme thought it was unnecessary to assign the true reason, which was his having made it a point of honour to forget all that Henry Warden taught him, as soon as he was no longer compelled to read it over as a lesson acquired by rote. The lessons of his new instructor, if not more impressively delivered, were received by a more willing ear, and a more awakened understanding, and the solitude of Lochleven Castle was favourable to graver thoughts than the page had hitherto entertained. He wavered yet, indeed, as one who was almost persuaded; but his attention to the chaplain's instructions procured him favour even with the stern old dame herself; and he was once or twice, but under great precaution, permitted to go to the neighbouring village of Kinross, situated on the mainland, to execute some ordinary commission of his unfortunate mistress.

For some time Roland Graeme might be considered as standing neuter betwixt the two parties who inhabited the water-girdled Tower of Lochleven; but, as he rose in the opinion of the Lady of the Castle and her chaplain, he perceived, with great grief, that he lost ground in that of Mary and her female allies.

He came gradually to be sensible that he was regarded as a spy upon their discourse, and that, instead of the ease with which they had formerly conversed in his presence, without suppressing any of the natural feelings of anger, of sorrow, or mirth, which the chance topic of the moment happened to call forth, their talk was now guardedly restricted to the most indifferent subjects, and a studied reserve observed even in their mode of treating these. This obvious want of confidence was accompanied with a correspondent change in their personal demeanor towards the unfortunate page. The Queen, who had at first treated him with marked courtesy, now scarce spoke to him, save to convey some necessary command for her service. The Lady Fleming restricted her notice to the most dry and distant expressions of civility, and Catherine Seyton became bitter in her pleasantries, and shy, cross, and pettish, in any intercourse they had together. What was yet more provoking, he saw, or thought he saw, marks of intelligence betwixt George Douglas and the beautiful Catherine Seyton; and, sharpened by jealousy, he wrought himself almost into a certainty, that the looks which they exchanged, conveyed matters of deep and serious import. "No wonder," he thought, "if, courted by the son of a proud and powerful baron, she can no longer spare a word or look to the poor fortuneless page."

In a word, Roland Graeme's situation became truly disagreeable, and his heart naturally enough rebelled against the injustice of this treatment, which deprived him of the only comfort which he had received for submitting to a confinement in other respects irksome. He accused Queen Mary and Catherine Seyton (for concerning the opinion of Dame Fleming he was indifferent) of inconsistency in being displeased with him on account of the natural consequences of an order of their own. Why did they send him to hear this overpowering preacher? The Abbot Ambrosius, he recollected, understood the weakness of their Popish cause better, when he enjoined him to repeat within his own mind, *aves*, and *credos*, and *paters*, all the while old Henry Warden preached or lectured, that so he might secure himself against lending even a momentary ear to his heretical doctrine. "But I will endure this life no longer," said he to himself, manfully; "do they suppose I would betray my mistress, because I see cause to doubt of her religion?—that would be a serving, as they say, the devil for God's sake. I will forth into the world—he that serves fair ladies, may at least expect kind looks and kind words; and I bear not the mind of a gentleman, to submit to cold treatment and suspicion, and a life-long captivity besides. I will speak to George Douglas to-morrow when we go out a-fishing."

A sleepless night was spent in agitating this magnanimous resolution, and he arose in the morning not perfectly decided in his own mind whether he should abide by it or not. It happened that he was summoned by the Queen at an unusual hour, and just as he was about to go out with George Douglas. He went to attend her commands in, the garden; but as he had his angling-rod in his hand, the circumstance announced his previous intention, and the Queen, turning to the Lady Fleming, said, "Catherine must devise some other amusement for us, *ma bonnie amie*; our discreet page has already made his party for the day's pleasure."

"I said from the beginning," answered the Lady Fleming, "that your Grace ought not to rely on being favoured with the company of a youth who has so many Huguenot acquaintances, and has the means of amusing himself far more agreeably than with us."

"I wish," said Catherine, her animated features reddening with mortification, "that his friends would sail away with him for good, and bring us in return a page (if such a thing can be found) faithful to his Queen and to his religion."

"One part of your wishes may be granted, madam," said Roland Graeme, unable any longer to restrain his sense of the treatment which he received on all sides; and he was about to add, "I heartily wish you a companion in my room, if such can be found, who is capable of enduring women's caprices without going distracted." Luckily, he recollected the remorse which he had felt at having given way to the vivacity of his temper upon a similar occasion; and, closing his lips, imprisoned, until it died on his tongue, a reproach so misbecoming the presence of majesty.

"Why do you remain there," said the Queen, "as if you were rooted to the parterre?"

"I but attend your Grace's commands," said the page.

"I have none to give you—Begone, sir."

As he left the garden to go to the boat, he distinctly heard Mary upbraid one of her attendants in these words:—"You see to what you have exposed us!"

This brief scene at once determined Roland Graeme's resolution to quit the castle, if it were possible, and to impart his resolution to George Douglas without loss of time. That gentleman, in his usual mood of silence, sate in the stern of the little skiff which they used on such occasions, trimming his fishing-tackle, and, from time to time, indicating by signs to Graeme, who pulled the oars, which way he should row. When they were a furlong or two from the castle, Roland rested on the oars, and addressed his companion somewhat abruptly,—"I have something of importance to say to you, under your pleasure, fair sir."

The pensive melancholy of Douglas's countenance at once gave way to the eager, keen, and startled look of one who expects to hear something of deep and alarming import.

"I am wearied to the very death of this Castle of Lochleven," continued Roland.

"Is that all?" said Douglas; "I know none of its inhabitants who are much better pleased with it."

"Ay, but I am neither a native of the house, nor a prisoner in it, and so I may reasonably desire to leave it."

"You might desire to quit it with equal reason," answered Douglas, "if you were both the one and the other."

"But," said Roland Graeme, "I am not only tired of living in Lochleven Castle, but I am determined to quit it."

"That is a resolution more easily taken than executed," replied Douglas.

"Not if yourself, sir, and your Lady Mother, choose to consent," answered the page.

"You mistake the matter, Roland," said Douglas; "you will find that the consent of two other persons is equally essential—that of the Lady Mary your mistress, and that of my uncle the Regent, who placed you about her person, and who will not think it proper that she should change her attendants so soon."

"And must I then remain whether I will or no?" demanded the page, somewhat appalled at a view of the subject, which would have occurred sooner to a person of more experience.

"At least," said George Douglas, "you must will to remain till my uncle consents to dismiss you."

"Frankly," said the page, "and speaking to you as a gentleman who is incapable of betraying me, I will confess, that if I thought myself a prisoner here, neither walls nor water should confine me long."

"Frankly," said Douglas, "I could not much blame you for the attempt; yet, for all that, my father, or uncle, or the earl, or any of my brothers, or in short any of the king's lords into whose hands you fell, would in such a case hang you like a dog, or like a sentinel who deserts his post; and I promise you that you will hardly escape them. But row towards Saint Serf's island—there is a breeze from the west, and we shall have sport, keeping to windward of the isle, where the ripple is strongest. We will speak more of what you have mentioned when we have had an hour's sport."

Their fishing was successful, though never did two anglers pursue even that silent and unsocial pleasure with less of verbal intercourse.

When their time was expired, Douglas took the oars in his turn, and by his order Roland Graeme steered the boat, directing her course upon the landing-place at the castle. But he also stopped in the midst of his course, and, looking around him, said to Graeme, "There is a thing which I could mention to thee; but it is so deep a secret, that even here, surrounded as we are by sea and sky, without the possibility of a listener, I cannot prevail on myself to speak it out."

"Better leave it unspoken, sir," answered Roland Graeme, "if you doubt the honour of him who alone can hear it."

"I doubt not your honour," replied George Douglas; "but you are young, imprudent, and changeful."

"Young," said Roland, "I am, and it may be imprudent—but who hath informed you that I am changeful?"

"One that knows you, perhaps, better than you know yourself," replied Douglas.

"I suppose you mean Catherine Seyton," said the page, his heart rising as he spoke; "but she is herself fifty times more variable in her humour than the very water which we are floating upon."

"My young acquaintance," said Douglas, "I pray you to remember that Catherine Seyton is a lady of blood and birth, and must not be lightly spoken of."

"Master George of Douglas," said Graeme, "as that speech seemed to be made under the warrant of something like a threat, I pray you to observe, that I value not the threat at the estimation of a fin of one of these dead trouts; and, moreover, I would have you to know that the champion who undertakes the defence of every lady of blood and birth, whom men accuse of change of faith and of fashion, is like to have enough of work on his hands."

"Go to," said the Seneschal, but in a tone of good-humour, "thou art a foolish boy, unfit to deal with any matter more serious than the casting of a net, or the flying of a hawk."

"If your secret concern Catherine Seyton," said the page, "I care not for it, and so you may tell her if you will. I wot she can shape you opportunity to speak with her, as she has ere now."

The flush which passed over Douglas's face, made the page aware that he had alighted on a truth, when he was, in fact, speaking at random; and the feeling that he had done so, was like striking a dagger into his own heart. His companion, without farther answer, resumed the oars, and pulled lustily till they arrived at the island and the castle. The servants received the produce of their spoil, and the two fishers, turning from each other in silence, went each to his several apartment. Roland Graeme had spent about an hour in grumbling against Catherine Seyton, the Queen, the Regent, and the whole house of Lochleven, with George Douglas at the head of it, when the time approached that his duty called him to attend the meal of Queen Mary. As he arranged his dress for this purpose, he grudged the

trouble, which, on similar occasions, he used, with boyish foppery, to consider as one of the most important duties of his day; and when he went to take his place behind the chair of the Queen, it was with an air of offended dignity, which could not escape her observation, and probably appeared to her ridiculous enough, for she whispered something in French to her ladies, at which the lady Fleming laughed, and Catherine appeared half diverted and half disconcerted. This pleasantry, of which the subject was concealed from him, the unfortunate page received, of course, as a new offence, and called an additional degree of sullen dignity into his mien, which might have exposed him to farther raillery, but that Mary appeared disposed to make allowance for and compassionate his feelings.

With the peculiar tact and delicacy which no woman possessed in greater perfection, she began to soothe by degrees the vexed spirit of her magnanimous attendant. The excellence of the fish which he had taken in his expedition, the high flavour and beautiful red colour of the trouts, which have long given distinction to the lake, led her first to express her thanks to her attendant for so agreeable an addition to her table, especially upon a *jour de jeune*; and then brought on inquiries into the place where the fish had been taken, their size, their peculiarities, the times when they were in season, and a comparison between the Lochleven trouts and those which are found in the lakes and rivers of the south of Scotland. The ill humour of Roland Graeme was never of an obstinate character. It rolled away like mist before the sun, and he was easily engaged in a keen and animated dissertation about Lochleven trout, and sea trout, and river trout, and bull trout, and char, which never rise to a fly, and par, which some suppose infant salmon, and *herlings*, which frequent the Nith, and *vendisises*, which are only found in the Castle-Loch of Lochmaben; and he was hurrying on with the eager impetuosity and enthusiasm of a young sportsman, when he observed that the smile with which the Queen at first listened to him died languidly away, and that, in spite of her efforts to suppress them, tears rose to her eyes. He stopped suddenly short, and, distressed in his turn, asked, "If he had the misfortune unwittingly to give displeasure to her Grace?"

"No, my poor boy," replied the Queen; "but as you numbered up the lakes and rivers of my kingdom, imagination cheated me, as it will do, and snatched me from these dreary walls away to the romantic streams of Nithsdale, and the royal towers of Lochmaben.—O land, which my fathers have so long ruled! of the pleasures which you extend so freely, your Queen is now deprived, and the poorest beggar, who may wander free from one landward town to another, would scorn to change fates with Mary of Scotland!"

"Your highness," said the Lady Fleming, "will do well to withdraw."

"Come with me, then, Fleming," said the Queen, "I would not burden hearts so young as these are, with the sight of my sorrows."

She accompanied these words with a look of melancholy compassion towards Roland and Catherine, who were now left alone together in the apartment.

The page found his situation not a little embarrassing; for, as every reader has experienced who may have chanced to be in such a situation, it is extremely difficult to maintain the full dignity of an offended person in the presence of a beautiful girl, whatever reason we may have for being angry with her. Catherine Seyton, on her part, sat still like a lingering ghost, which, conscious of the awe which its presence imposes, is charitably disposed to give the poor confused mortal whom it visits, time to recover his senses, and comply with the grand rule of demonology by speaking first. But as Roland seemed in no hurry to avail himself of her condescension, she carried it a step farther, and herself opened the conversation.

"I pray you, fair sir, if it may be permitted me to disturb your august reverie by a question so simple,—what may have become of your rosary?"

"It is lost, madam—lost some time since," said Roland, partly embarrassed and partly indignant.

"And may I ask farther, sir," said Catherine, "why you have not replaced it with another?—I have half a mind," she said, taking from her pocket a string of ebony beads adorned with gold, "to bestow one upon you, to keep for my sake, just to remind you of former acquaintance."

There was a little tremulous accent in the tone with which these words were delivered, which at once put to flight Roland Graeme's resentment, and brought him to Catherine's side; but she instantly resumed the bold and firm accent which was more familiar to her. "I did not bid you," she said, "come and sit so close by me; for the acquaintance that I spoke of, has been stiff and cold, dead and buried, for this many a day."

"Now Heaven forbid!" said the page, "it has only slept, and now that you desire it should awake, fair Catherine, believe me that a pledge of your returning favour—"

"Nay, nay," said Catherine, withholding the rosary, towards which, as he spoke, he extended his hand, "I have changed my mind on better reflection. What should a heretic do with these holy beads, that have been blessed by the father of the church himself?"

Roland winced grievously, for he saw plainly which way the discourse was now likely to tend, and felt that it must at all events be embarrassing. "Nay, but," he said, "it was as a token of your own regard that you offered them."

"Ay, fair sir, but that regard attended the faithful subject, the loyal and pious Catholic, the individual who was so solemnly devoted at the same time with myself to the same grand duty; which, you must now understand, was to serve the church and Queen. To such a person, if you ever heard of him, was my regard due, and not to him who associates with heretics, and is about to become a renegado."

"I should scarce believe, fair mistress," said Roland, indignantly, "that the vane of your favour turned only to a Catholic wind, considering that it points so plainly to George Douglas, who, I think, is both kingsman and Protestant."

"Think better of George Douglas," said Catherine, "than to believe—" and then checking herself, as if she had spoken too much, she went on, "I assure you, fair Master Roland, that all who wish you well are sorry for you."

"Their number is very few, I believe," answered Roland, "and their sorrow, if they feel any, not deeper than ten minutes' time will cure."

"They are more numerous, and think more deeply concerning you, than you seem to be aware," answered Catherine. "But perhaps they think wrong—You are the best judge in your own affairs; and if you prefer gold and church-lands to honour and loyalty, and the faith of your fathers, why should you be hampered in conscience more than others?"

"May Heaven bear witness for me," said Roland, "that if I entertain any difference of opinion—that is, if I nourish any doubts in point of religion, they have been adopted on the conviction of my own mind, and the suggestion of my own conscience!"

"Ay, ay, your conscience—your conscience!" repeated she with satiric emphasis; "your conscience is the scape-goat; I warrant it an able one—it will bear the burden of one of the best manors of the Abbey of Saint Mary of Kennaquhair, lately forfeited to our noble Lord the King, by the Abbot and community thereof, for the high crime of fidelity to their religious vows, and now to be granted by the High and Mighty Traitor, and so forth, James Earl of Murray, to the good squire of dames Roland Graeme, for his loyal and faithful service as under-espial, and deputy-turnkey, for securing the person of his lawful sovereign, Queen Mary."

"You misconstrue me cruelly," said the page; "yes, Catherine, most cruelly—God knows I would protect this poor lady at the risk of my life, or with my life; but what can I do—what can any one do for her?"

"Much may be done—enough may be done—all may be done—if men will be but true and honourable, as Scottish men were in the days of Bruce and Wallace. Oh, Roland, from what an enterprise you are now withdrawing your heart and hand, through mere fickleness and coldness of spirit!"

"How can I withdraw," said Roland, "from an enterprise which has never been communicated to me?—Has the Queen, or have you, or has any one, communicated with me upon any thing for her service which I have refused? Or have you not, all of you, held me at such distance from your counsels, as if I were the most faithless spy since the days of Ganelon?" [Footnote: Gan, Gano, or Ganelon of Mayence, is in the Romances on the subject of Charlemagne and his Paladins, always represented as the traitor by whom the Christian champions are betrayed.]

"And who," said Catherine Seyton, "would trust the sworn friend, and pupil, and companion, of the heretic preacher Henderson? ay—a proper tutor you have chosen, instead of the excellent Ambrosius, who is now turned out of house and homestead, if indeed he is not languishing in a dungeon, for withstanding the tyranny of Morton, to whose brother the temporalities of that noble house of God have been gifted away by the Regent."

"Is it possible?" said the page, "and is the excellent Father Ambrose in such distress?"

"He would account the news of your falling away from the faith of your fathers," answered Catherine, "a worse mishap than aught that tyranny can inflict on himself."

"But why," said Roland, very much moved, "why should you suppose that—that—that it is with me as you say?"

"Do you yourself deny it?" replied Catherine; "do you not admit that you have drunk the poison which you should have dashed from your lips?—Do you deny that it now ferments in your veins, if it has not altogether corrupted the springs of life?—Do you deny that you have your doubts, as you proudly term them, respecting what popes and councils have declared it unlawful to doubt of?—Is not your faith wavering, if not overthrown?—Does not the heretic preacher boast his conquest?—Does not the heretic woman of this prison-house hold up thy example to others?—Do not the Queen and the Lady Fleming believe in thy falling away?—And is there any except one—yes, I will speak it out, and think as lightly as you please of my good-will—is there one except myself that holds even a lingering hope that you may yet prove what we once all believed of you?"

"I know not," said our poor page, much embarrassed by the view which was thus presented to him of the conduct he was expected to pursue, and by a person in whom he was not the less interested that, though long a resident in Lochleven Castle, with no object so likely to attract his undivided attention, no lengthened interview had taken place since they had first met,—"I know not what you expect of me, or fear from me. I was sent hither to attend Queen Mary, and to her I acknowledge the duty of a servant through life and death. If any one had expected service of another kind, I was not the party to render it. I neither avow nor disclaim the doctrines of the reformed church.—Will you have the truth?—It seems to me that the profligacy of the Catholic clergy has brought this judgment on their own heads, and, for aught I know, it may be for their reformation. But, for betraying this unhappy Queen, God knows I am guiltless of the thought. Did I even believe worse of her, than as her servant I wish—as her subject I dare to do—I would not betray her—far from it—I would aid her in aught which could tend to a fair trial of her cause."

"Enough! enough!" answered Catherine, clasping her hands together; "then thou wilt not desert us if any means are presented, by which, placing our Royal Mistress at freedom, this case may be honestly tried betwixt her and her rebellious subjects?"

"Nay—but, fair Catherine," replied the page, "hear but what the Lord of Murray said when he sent me hither."—

"Hear but what the devil said," replied the maiden, "rather than what a false subject, a false brother, a false counsellor, a false friend, said! A man raised from a petty pensioner on the crown's bounty, to be the counsellor of majesty, and the prime distributor of the bounties of the state;—one with whom rank, fortune, title, consequence, and power, all grew up like a mushroom, by the mere warm good-will of the sister, whom, in requital, he hath mewed up in this place of melancholy seclusion—whom, in farther requital, he has deposed, and whom, if he dared, he would murder!"

"I think not so ill of the Earl of Murray," said Roland Graeme; "and sooth to speak," he added, with a smile, "it would require some bribe to make me embrace, with firm and desperate resolution, either one side or the other."

"Nay, if that is all," replied Catherine Seyton, in a tone of enthusiasm, "you shall be guerdoned with prayers from oppressed subjects—from dispossessed clergy—from insulted nobles—with immortal praise by future ages—with eager gratitude by the present—with fame on earth, and with felicity in heaven! Your country will thank you—your Queen will be debtor to you—you will achieve at once the highest from the lowest degree in chivalry—all men will honour, all women will love you—and I, sworn with you so early to the accomplishment of Queen Mary's freedom, will—yes, I will—love you better than—ever sister loved brother!" "Say on—say on!" whispered Roland, kneeling on one knee, and taking her hand, which, in the warmth of exhortation, Catherine held towards him.

"Nay," said she, pausing, "I have already said too much—far too much, if I prevail not with you—far too little if I do. But I prevail," she continued, seeing that the countenance of the youth she addressed returned the enthusiasm of her own—"I prevail; or rather the good cause prevails through its own strength—thus I devote thee to it." And as she spoke she approached her finger to the brow of the astonished youth, and, without touching it, signed the cross over his forehead—stooped her face towards him, and seemed to kiss the empty space in which she had traced the symbol; then starting up, and extricating herself from his grasp, darted into the Queen's apartment.

Roland Graeme remained as the enthusiastic maiden had left him, kneeling on one knee, with breath withheld, and with eyes fixed upon the space which the fairy form of Catherine Seyton had so lately occupied. If his thoughts were not of unmixed delight, they at least partook of that thrilling and intoxicating, though mingled sense of pain and pleasure, the most over-powering which life offers in its blended cup. He rose and retired slowly; and although the chaplain Mr. Henderson preached on that evening his best sermon against the errors of Popery, I would not engage that he was followed accurately through the train of his reasoning by the young proselyte, with a view to whose especial benefit he had handled the subject.

Chapter the Twenty-Fifth.

*And when love's torch hath set the heart in flame,
Comes Seignor Reason, with his saws and cautions,
Giving such aid as the old gray-beard Sexton,
Who from the church-vault drags the crazy engine,
To ply its dribbling ineffectual streamlet
Against a conflagration.*

OLD PLAY.

In a musing mood, Roland Graeme upon the ensuing morning betook himself to the battlements of the Castle, as a spot where he might indulge the course of his thick-coming fancies with least chance of interruption. But his place of retirement was in the present case ill chosen, for he was presently joined by Mr. Elias Henderson.

"I sought you, young man," said the preacher, "having to speak of something which concerns you nearly."

The page had no pretence for avoiding the conference which the chaplain thus offered, though he felt that it might prove an embarrassing one.

"In teaching thee, as far as my feeble knowledge hath permitted, thy duty towards God," said the chaplain, "there are particulars of your duty towards man, upon which I was unwilling long or much to insist. You are here in the service of a lady, honourable as touching her birth, deserving of all compassion as respects her misfortunes, and garnished with even but too many of those outward qualities which win men's regard and affection. Have you ever considered your regard to this Lady Mary of Scotland, in its true light and bearing?"

"I trust, reverend sir," replied Roland Graeme, "that I am well aware of the duties a servant in my condition owes to his royal mistress, especially in her lowly and distressed condition."

"True," answered the preacher; "but it is even that honest feeling which may, in the Lady Mary's case, carry thee into great crime and treachery."

"How so, reverend sir?" replied the page; "I profess I understand you not."

"I speak to you not of the crimes of this ill-advised lady," said the preacher; "they are not subjects for the ears of her sworn servant. But it is enough to say, that this unhappy person hath rejected more offers of grace, and more hopes of glory, than ever were held out to earthly princes; and that she is now, her day of favour being passed, sequestered in this lonely castle, for the common weal of the people of Scotland, and it may be for the benefit of her own soul."

"Reverend sir," said Roland, somewhat impatiently, "I am but too well aware that my unfortunate mistress is imprisoned, since I have the misfortune to share in her restraint myself—of which, to speak sooth, I am heartily weary."

"It is even of that which I am about to speak," said the chaplain, mildly; "but, first, my good Roland, look forth on the pleasant prospect of yonder cultivated plain. You see, where the smoke arises, yonder village standing half hidden by the trees, and you know it to be the dwelling-place of peace and industry. From space to space, each by the side of its own stream, you see the gray towers of barons, with cottages interspersed; and you know that they also, with their household, are now living in unity; the lance hung upon the wall, and the sword resting in its sheath. You see, too, more than one fair church, where the pure waters of life are

offered to the thirsty, and where the hungry are refreshed with spiritual food.—What would he deserve, who should bring fire and slaughter into so fair and happy a scene—who should bare the swords of the gentry and turn them against each other—who should give tower and cottage to the flames, and slake the embers with the blood of the indwellers?—What would he deserve who should lift up again that ancient Dagon of Superstition, whom the worthies of the time have beaten down, and who should once more make the churches of God the high places of Baal?"

"You have limned a frightful picture, reverend sir," said Roland Graeme; "yet I guess not whom you would charge with the purpose of effecting a change so horrible."

"God forbid," replied the preacher, "that I should say to thee, Thou art the man.—Yet beware, Roland Graeme, that thou, in serving thy mistress, hold fast the still higher service which thou owest to the peace of thy country, and the prosperity of her inhabitants; else, Roland Graeme, thou mayest be the very man upon whose head will fall the curses and assured punishment due to such work. If thou art won by the song of these sirens to aid that unhappy lady's escape from this place of penitence and security, it is over with the peace of Scotland's cottages, and with the prosperity of her palaces—and the babe unborn shall curse the name of the man who gave inlet to the disorder which will follow the war betwixt the mother and the son."

"I know of no such plan, reverend sir," answered the page, "and therefore can aid none such.—My duty towards the Queen has been simply that of an attendant; it is a task, of which, at times, I would willingly have been freed; nevertheless—"

"It is to prepare thee for the enjoyment of something more of liberty," said the preacher, "that I have endeavoured to impress upon you the deep responsibility under which your office must be discharged. George Douglas hath told the Lady Lochleven that you are weary of this service, and my intercession hath partly determined her good ladyship, that, as your discharge cannot be granted, you shall, instead, be employed in certain commissions on the mainland, which have hitherto been discharged by other persons of confidence. Wherefore, come with me to the lady, for even to-day such duty will be imposed on you."

"I trust you will hold me excused, reverend sir," said the page, who felt that an increase of confidence on the part of the Lady of the Castle and her family would render his situation in a moral view doubly embarrassing, "one cannot serve two masters—and I much fear that my mistress will not hold me excused for taking employment under another."

"Fear not that," said the preacher; "her consent shall be asked and obtained. I fear she will yield it but too easily, as hoping to avail herself of your agency to maintain correspondence with her friends, as those falsely call themselves, who would make her name the watchword for civil war."

"And thus," said the page, "I shall be exposed to suspicion on all sides; for my mistress will consider me as a spy placed on her by her enemies, seeing me so far trusted by them; and the Lady Lochleven will never cease to suspect the possibility of my betraying her, because circumstances put it into my power to do so—I would rather remain as I am."

There followed a pause of one or two minutes, during which Henderson looked steadily in Roland's countenance, as if desirous to ascertain whether there was not more in the answer than the precise words seemed to imply. He failed in this point, however; for Roland, bred a page from childhood, knew how to assume a sullen pettish cast of countenance, well enough calculated to hide all internal emotions.

"I understand thee not, Roland," said the preacher, "or rather thou thinkest on this matter more deeply than I apprehended to be in thy nature. Methought, the delight of going on shore with thy bow, or thy gun, or thy angling-rod, would have borne away all other feelings."

"And so it would," replied Roland, who perceived the danger of suffering Henderson's half-raised suspicions to become fully awake,—"I would have thought of nothing but the gun and the oar, and the wild water-fowl that tempt me by sailing among the sedges yonder so far out of flight-shot, had you not spoken of my going on shore as what was to occasion burning of town and tower, the downfall of the evangele, and the upsetting of the mass."

"Follow me, then," said Henderson, "and we will seek the Lady Lochleven."

They found her at breakfast with her grandson George Douglas.—"Peace be with your ladyship!" said the preacher, bowing to his patroness; "Roland Graeme awaits your order."

"Young man," said the lady, "our chaplain hath warranted for thy fidelity, and we are determined to give you certain errands to do for us in our town of Kinross."

"Not by my advice," said Douglas, coldly.

"I said not that it was," answered the lady, something sharply. "The mother of thy father may, I should think, be old enough to judge for herself in a matter so simple.—Thou wilt take the skiff, Roland, and two of my people, whom Dryfesdale or Randal will order out, and fetch off certain stuff of plate and hangings, which should last night be lodged at Kinross by the wains from Edinburgh."

"And give this packet," said George Douglas, "to a servant of ours, whom you will find in waiting there.—It is the report to my father," he added, looking towards his grandmother, who acquiesced by bending her head.

"I have already mentioned to Master Henderson," said Roland Graeme, "that as my duty requires my attendance on the Queen, her Grace's permission for my journey ought to be obtained before I can undertake your commission."

"Look to it, my son," said the old lady, "the scruple of the youth is honourable."

"Craving your pardon, madam, I have no wish to force myself on her presence thus early," said Douglas, in an indifferent tone; "it might displease her, and were no way agreeable to me."

"And I," said the Lady Lochleven, "although her temper hath been more gentle of late, have no will to undergo, without necessity, the rancour of her wit."

"Under your permission, madam," said the chaplain, "I will myself render your request to the Queen. During my long residence in this house she hath not deigned to see me in private, or to hear my doctrine; yet so may Heaven prosper my labours, as love for her soul, and desire to bring her into the right path, was my chief desire for coming hither."

"Take care, Master Henderson," said Douglas, in a tone which seemed almost sarcastic, "lest you rush hastily on an adventure to which you have no vocation—you are learned, and know the adage, *Ne accesseris in consilium nisi vocatus*.—Who hath required this at your hand?"

"The Master to whose service I am called," answered the preacher, looking upward,— "He who hath commanded me to be earnest in season and out of season."

"Your acquaintance hath not been much, I think, with courts or princes," continued the young Esquire.

"No, sir," replied Henderson, "but like my Master Knox, I see nothing frightful in the fair face of a pretty lady."

"My son," said the Lady of Lochleven, "quench not the good man's zeal—let him do the errand to this unhappy Princess."

"With more willingness than I would do it myself," said George Douglas. Yet something in his manner appeared to contradict his words.

The minister went accordingly, followed by Roland Graeme, and, demanding an audience of the imprisoned Princess, was admitted. He found her with her ladies engaged in the daily task of embroidery. The Queen received him with that courtesy, which, in ordinary cases, she used towards all who approached her, and the clergyman, in opening his commission, was obviously somewhat more embarrassed than he had expected to be.—"The good Lady of Lochleven—may it please your Grace—"

He made a short pause, during which Mary said, with a smile, "My Grace would, in truth, be well pleased, were the Lady Lochleven our *good* lady—But go on—what is the will of the good Lady of Lochleven?"

"She desires, madam," said the chaplain, "that your Grace will permit this young gentleman, your page, Roland Graeme, to pass to Kinross, to look after some household stuff and hangings, sent hither for the better furnishing your Grace's apartments."

"The Lady of Lochleven," said the Queen, "uses needless ceremony, in requesting our permission for that which stands within her own pleasure. We well know that this young gentleman's attendance on us had not been so long permitted, were he not thought to be more at the command of that good lady than at ours.—But we cheerfully yield consent that he shall go on her errand—with our will we would doom no living creature to the captivity which we ourselves must suffer."

"Ay, madam," answered the preacher, "and it is doubtless natural for humanity to quarrel with its prison-house. Yet there have been those, who have found, that time spent in the house of temporal captivity may be so employed as to redeem us from spiritual slavery."

"I apprehend your meaning, sir," replied the Queen, "but I have heard your apostle—I have heard Master John Knox; and were I to be perverted, I would willingly resign to the ablest and most powerful of heresiarchs, the poor honour he might acquire by overcoming my faith and my hope."

"Madam," said the preacher, "it is not to the talents or skill of the husbandman that God gives the increase—the words which were offered in vain by him whom you justly call our apostle, during the bustle and gaiety of a court, may yet find better acceptance during the leisure for reflection which this place affords. God knows, lady, that I speak in singleness of heart, as one who would as soon compare himself to the immortal angels, as to the holy man whom you have named. Yet would you but condescend to apply to their noblest use, those talents and that learning which all allow you to be possessed of—would you afford us but the slightest hope that you would hear and regard what can be urged against the blinded superstition and idolatry in which you are brought up, sure am I, that the most powerfully-gifted of my brethren, that even John Knox himself, would hasten hither, and account the rescue of your single soul from the nets of Romish error—"

"I am obliged to you and to them for their charity," said Mary; "but as I have at present but one presence-chamber, I would reluctantly see it converted into a Huguenot synod."

"At least, madam, be not thus obstinately blinded in your errors! Hear one who has hungered and thirsted, watched and prayed, to undertake the good work of your conversion, and who would be content to die the instant that a work so advantageous for yourself and so beneficial to Scotland were accomplished—Yes, lady, could I but shake the remaining pillar of the heathen temple in this land—and that permit me to term your faith in the delusions of Rome—I could be content to die overwhelmed in the ruins!"

"I will not insult your zeal, sir," replied Mary, "by saying you are more likely to make sport for the Philistines than to overwhelm them—your charity claims my thanks, for it is warmly expressed and may be truly purposed—But believe as well of me as I am willing to do of you, and think that I may be as anxious to recall you to the ancient and only road, as you are to teach me your new by-ways to paradise."

"Then, madam, if such be your generous purpose," said Henderson, eagerly, "—what hinders that we should dedicate some part of that time, unhappily now too much at your Grace's disposal, to discuss a question so weighty? You, by report of all men, are both learned and witty; and I, though without such advantages, am strong in my cause as in a tower of defence. Why should we not spend some space in endeavouring to discover which of us hath the wrong side in this important matter?"

"Nay," said Queen Mary, "I never alleged my force was strong enough to accept of a combat *en champ clos*, with a scholar and a polemic. Besides, the match is not equal. You, sir, might retire when you felt the battle go against you, while I am tied to the stake, and have no permission to say the debate wearies me.—I would be alone."

She curtsied low to him as she uttered these words; and Henderson, whose zeal was indeed ardent, but did not extend to the neglect of delicacy, bowed in return, and prepared to withdraw.

"I would," he said, "that my earnest wish, my most zealous prayer, could procure to your Grace any blessing or comfort, but especially that in which alone blessing or comfort is, as easily as the slightest intimation of your wish will remove me from your presence."

He was in the act of departing, when Mary said to him with much courtesy, "Do me no injury in your thoughts, good sir; it may be, that if my time here be protracted longer—as surely I hope it will not, trusting that either my rebel subjects will repent of their disloyalty, or that my faithful lieges will obtain the upper hand—but if my time be here protracted, it may be I shall have no displeasure in hearing one who seems so reasonable and compassionate as yourself, and I may hazard your contempt by endeavouring to recollect and repeat the reasons which schoolmen and councils give for the faith that is in me,—although I fear that, God help me! my Latin has deserted me with my other possessions. This must, however, be for another day. Meanwhile, sir, let the Lady of Lochleven employ my page as she lists—I will not afford suspicion by speaking a word to him before he goes.—Roland Graeme, my friend, lose not an opportunity of amusing thyself—dance, sing, run, and leap—all may be done merrily on the mainland; but he must have more than quicksilver in his veins who would frolic here."

"Alas! madam," said the preacher, "to what is it you exhort the youth, while time passes, and eternity summons? Can our salvation be insured by idle mirth, or our good work wrought out without fear and trembling?"

"I cannot fear or tremble," replied the Queen; "to Mary Stewart such emotions are unknown. But if weeping and sorrow on my part will atone for the boy's enjoying an hour of boyish pleasure, be assured the penance shall be duly paid."

"Nay, but, gracious lady," said the preacher, "in this you greatly err;—our tears and our sorrows are all too little for our own faults and follies, nor can we transfer them, as your church falsely teaches, to the benefit of others."

"May I pray you, sir," answered the Queen, "with as little offence as such a prayer may import, to transfer yourself elsewhere? We are sick at heart, and may not now be disposed with farther controversy—and thou, Roland, take this little purse;" (then, turning to the divine, she said, showing its contents,) "Look, reverend sir,—it contains only these two or three gold testoons, a coin which, though bearing my own poor features, I have ever found more active against me than on my side, just as my subjects take arms against me, with my own name for their summons and signal.—Take this purse, that thou mayest want no means of amusement. Fail not—fail not to bring me back news from Kinross; only let it be such as, without suspicion or offence, may be told in the presence of this reverend gentleman, or of the good Lady Lochleven herself."

The last hint was too irresistible to be withstood; and Henderson withdrew, half mortified, half pleased, with his reception; for Mary, from long habit, and the address which was natural to her, had learned, in an extraordinary degree, the art of evading discourse which was disagreeable to her feelings or prejudices, without affronting those by whom it was proffered.

Roland Graeme retired with the chaplain, at a signal from his lady; but it did not escape him, that as he left the room, stepping backwards, and making the deep obeisance due to royalty, Catherine Seyton held up her slender forefinger, with a gesture which he alone could witness, and which seemed to say, "Remember what has passed betwixt us."

The young page had now his last charge from the Lady of Lochleven. "There are revels," she said, "this day at the village—my son's authority is, as yet, unable to prevent these continued workings of the ancient leaven of folly which the Romish priests have kneaded into the very souls of the Scottish peasantry. I do not command thee to abstain from them—that would be only to lay a snare for thy folly, or to teach thee falsehood; but enjoy these vanities with moderation, and mark them as something thou must soon learn to renounce and condemn. Our chamberlain at Kinross, Luke Lundin,—Doctor, as he foolishly calleth himself,—will acquaint thee what is to be done in the matter about which thou goest. Remember thou art trusted—show thyself, therefore, worthy of trust."

When we recollect that Roland Graeme was not yet nineteen, and that he had spent his whole life in the solitary Castle of Avenel, excepting the few hours he had passed in Edinburgh, and his late residence at Lochleven, (the latter period having very little served to enlarge his acquaintance with the gay world.) we cannot wonder that his heart beat, high with hope and curiosity, at the prospect of partaking the sport even of a country wake. He hastened to his little cabin, and turned over the wardrobe with which (in every respect becoming his station) he had been supplied from Edinburgh, probably by order of the Earl of Murray. By the Queen's command he had hitherto waited upon her in mourning, or at least in sad-coloured raiment. Her condition, she said, admitted of nothing more gay. But now he selected the gayest dress his wardrobe afforded; composed of scarlet slashed with black satin, the royal colours of Scotland—combed his long curled hair—disposed his chain and medal round a beaver hat of the newest block; and with the gay falchion which had reached him in so mysterious a manner, hung by his side in an embroidered belt, his apparel, added to his natural frank mien and handsome figure, formed a most commendable and pleasing specimen of the young gallant of the period. He sought to make his parting reverence to the Queen and her ladies, but old Dryfesdale hurried him to the boat.

"We will have no private audiences," he said, "my master; since you are to be trusted with somewhat, we will try at least to save thee from the temptation of opportunity. God help thee, child," he added, with a glance of contempt at his gay clothes, "an the bear-ward be yonder from Saint Andrews, have a care thou go not near him."

"And wherefore, I pray you?" said Roland.

"Lest he take thee for one of his runaway jackanapes," answered the steward, smiling sourly.

"I wear not my clothes at thy cost," said Roland indignantly.

"Nor at thine own either, my son" replied the steward, "else would thy garb more nearly resemble thy merit and thy station."

Roland Graeme suppressed with difficulty the repartee which arose to his lips, and, wrapping his scarlet mantle around him, threw himself into the boat, which two rowers, themselves urged by curiosity to see the revels, pulled stoutly towards the west end of the lake. As they put off, Roland thought he could discover the face of Catherine Seyton, though carefully withdrawn from observation, peeping from a loophole to view his departure. He pulled off his hat, and held it up as a token that he saw and wished her adieu. A white kerchief waved for a second across the window, and for the rest of the little voyage, the thoughts of Catherine Seyton disputed ground in his breast with the expectations excited by the approaching revel. As they drew nearer and nearer the shore, the sounds of mirth and music, the laugh, the halloo, and the shout, came thicker upon the ear, and in a trice the boat was moored, and Roland Graeme hastened in quest of the chamberlain, that, being informed what time he had at his own disposal, he might lay it out to the best advantage.

Chapter the Twenty-Sixth.

*Room for the master of the ring, ye swains,
Divide your crowded ranks—before him march
The rural minstrelsy, the rattling drum,
The clamorous war-pipe, and far-echoing horn.
Rural Sports.—SOMERVILLE.*

No long space intervened ere Roland Graeme was able to discover among the crowd of revellers, who gambolled upon the open space which extends betwixt the village and the lake, a person of so great importance as Dr. Luke Lundin, upon whom devolved officially the charge of representing the lord of the land, and who was attended for support of his authority by a piper, a drummer, and four sturdy clowns armed with rusty halberds, garnished with party-coloured ribbons; myrmidons who, early as the day was, had already broken more than one head in the awful names of the Laird of Lochleven and his chamberlain.

[Footnote: At Scottish fairs, the bailie, or magistrate, deputed by the lord in whose name the meeting is held, attends the fair with his guard, decides trifling disputes, and punishes on the spot any petty delinquencies. His attendants are usually armed with halberds, and sometimes, at least, escorted by music. Thus, in the "Life and Death of Habbie Simpson," we are told of that famous minstrel,—

*"At fairs he play'd before the spear-men,
And gaily graithed in their gear-men;—
Steel bonnets, jacks, and swords shone clear then,
Like ony bead;
Now wha shall play before sic weir-men,
Since Habbie's dead!]*

As soon as this dignitary was informed that the castle skiff had arrived, with a gallant, dressed like a lord's son at the least, who desired presently to speak to him, he adjusted his ruff and his black coat, turned round his girdle till the garnished hilt of his long rapier became visible, and walked with due solemnity towards the beach. Solemn indeed he was entitled to be, even on less important occasions, for he had been bred to the venerable study of medicine, as those acquainted with the science very soon discovered from the aphorisms which ornamented his discourse. His success had not been equal to his pretensions; but as he was a native of the neighbouring kingdom of Fife, and bore distant relation to, or dependence upon, the ancient family of Lundin of that ilk, who were bound in close friendship with the house of Lochleven, he had, through their interest, got planted comfortably enough in his present station upon the banks of that beautiful lake. The profits of his chamberlainship being moderate, especially in those unsettled times, he had eked it out a little with some practice in his original profession; and it was said that the inhabitants of the village and barony of Kinross were not more effectually thirled (which may be translated enthralled) to the baron's mill, than they were to the medical monopoly of the chamberlain. Wo betide the family of the rich boor, who presumed to depart this life without a passport from Dr. Luke Lundin! for if his representatives had aught to settle with the baron, as it seldom happened otherwise, they were sure to find a cold friend in the chamberlain. He was considerate enough, however, gratuitously to help the poor out of their ailments, and sometimes out of all their other distresses at the same time.

Formal, in a double proportion, both as a physician and as a person in office, and proud of the scraps of learning which rendered his language almost universally unintelligible, Dr. Luke Lundin approached the beach, and hailed the page as he advanced towards him.—"The freshness of the morning upon you, fair sir—You are sent, I warrant me, to see if we observe here the regimen which her good ladyship hath prescribed, for eschewing all superstitious observances and idle anilities in these our revels. I am aware that her good ladyship would willingly have altogether abolished and abrogated them—But as I had the honour to quote to her from the works of the learned Hercules of Saxony, *omnis curatio est vel canonica vel coacta*,—that is, fair sir, (for silk and velvet have seldom their Latinad unguem,) every cure must be wrought either by art and induction of rule, or by constraint; and the wise physician chooseth the former. Which argument her ladyship being pleased to allow well of, I have made it my business so to blend instruction and caution with delight—*fiat mixtio*, as we say—that I can answer that the vulgar mind will be defecated and purged of anile and Popish fooleries by the medicament adhibited, so that the *primae vice* being cleansed, Master Henderson, or any other able pastor, may at will throw in tonics, and effectuate a perfect moral cure, *tuto, cito, jucunde*."

"I have no charge, Dr. Lundin," replied the page—

"Call me not doctor," said the chamberlain, "since I have laid aside my furred gown and bonnet, and retired me into this temporality of chamberlainship."

"Oh, sir," said the page, who was no stranger by report to the character of this original, "the cowl makes not the monk, neither the cord the friar—we have all heard of the cures wrought by Dr. Lundin."

"Toys, young sir—trifles," answered the leech with grave disclamation of superior skill; "the hit-or-miss practice of a poor retired gentleman, in a short cloak and doublet—Marry, Heaven sent its blessing—and this I must say, better fashioned mediciners have brought fewer patients through—*lunga roba corta scienza*, saith the Italian—ha, fair sir, you have the language?"

Roland Graeme did not think it necessary to expound to this learned Theban whether he understood him or no; but, leaving that matter uncertain, he told him he came in quest of certain packages which should have arrived at Kinross, and been placed under the chamberlain's charge the evening before.

"Body o' me!" said Doctor Lundin, "I fear our common carrier, John Auchtermuchty, hath met with some mischance, that he came not up last night with his wains—bad land this to journey in, my master; and the fool will travel by night too, although, (besides all maladies from your *tussis* to your *pestis*, which walk abroad in the night-air,) he may well fall in with half a dozen swash-bucklers, who will ease him at once of his baggage and his earthly complaints. I must send forth to inquire after him, since he hath stuff of the honourable household on hand—and, by our Lady, he hath stuff of mine too—certain drugs sent me from the city for composition of my alexipharmics—this gear must be looked to.—Hodge," said he, addressing one of his redoubted body-guard, "do thou and Toby Telford take the mickle brown aver and the black cut-tailed mare, and make out towards the Kerry-craigs, and see what tidings you can have of Auchtermuchty and his wains—I trust it is only the medicine of the pottle-pot, (being the only *medicamentum* which the beast useth,) which hath caused him to tarry on the road. Take the ribbons from your halberds, ye knaves, and get on your jacks, plate-sleeves, and knapskulls, that your presence may work some terror if you meet with opposers." He then added, turning to Roland Graeme, "I warrant me, we shall have news of the wains in brief season. Meantime it will please you to look upon the sports; but first to enter my poor lodging and take your morning's cup. For what saith the school of Salerno?"

*Poculum, mane haustum,
Restaurat naturam exhaustam."*

"Your learning is too profound for me," replied the page; "and so would your draught be likewise, I fear."

"Not a whit, fair sir—a cordial cup of sack, impregnated with wormwood, is the best anti-pestilential draught; and, to speak truth, the pestilential miasmata are now very rife in the atmosphere. We live in a happy time, young man," continued he, in a tone of grave irony, "and have many blessings unknown to our fathers—Here are two sovereigns in the land, a regnant and a claimant—that is enough of one good thing—but if any one wants more, he may find a king in every peel-house in the country; so if we lack government, it is not for want of governors. Then have we a civil war to phlebotomize us every year, and to prevent our population from starving for want of food—and for the same purpose we have the Plague proposing us a visit, the best of all recipes for thinning a land, and converting younger brothers into elder ones. Well, each man in his vocation. You young fellows of the sword desire to wrestle, fence, or so forth, with some expert adversary; and for my part, I love to match myself for life or death against that same Plague."

As they proceeded up the street of the little village towards the Doctor's lodgings, his attention was successively occupied by the various personages whom he met, and pointed out to the notice of his companion.

"Do you see that fellow with the red bonnet, the blue jerkin, and the great rough baton in his hand?—I believe that clown hath the strength of a tower—he has lived fifty years in the world, and never encouraged the liberal sciences by buying one penny-worth of medicaments.—But see you that man with the *facies hippocratica*?" said he, pointing out a thin peasant, with swelled legs, and a most cadaverous countenance; "that I call one of the worthiest men in the barony—he breakfasts, luncheons, dines, and sups by my advice, and not without my medicine; and, for his own single part, will go farther to clear out a moderate stock of pharmaceuticals, than half the country besides.—How do you, my honest friend?" said he to the party in question, with a tone of condolence.

"Very weakly, sir, since I took the electuary," answered the patient; "it neighboured ill with the two spoonfuls of pease-porridge and the kirmilk."

"Pease-porridge and kirmilk! Have you been under medicine these ten years, and keep your diet so ill?—the next morning take the electuary by itself, and touch nothing for six hours."—The poor object bowed, and limped off.

The next whom the Doctor deigned to take notice of, was a lame fellow, by whom the honour was altogether undeserved, for at sight of the mediciner, he began to shuffle away in the crowd as fast as his infirmities would permit.

"There is an ungrateful hound for you," said Doctor Lundin; "I cured him of the gout in his feet, and now he talks of the chargeableness of medicine, and makes the first use of his restored legs to fly from his physician. His *podagra* hath become a *chiragra*, as honest Martial hath it—the gout has got into his fingers, and he cannot draw his purse. Old saying and true,

Praemia cum poscit medicus, Sathan est.

We are angels when we come to cure—devils when we ask payment—but I will administer a purgation to his purse I warrant him. There is his brother too, a sordid chuff.—So ho, there! Saunders Darlet! you have been ill, I hear?"

"Just got the turn, as I was thinking to send to your honour, and I am brawly now again—it was nae great thing that ailed me."

"Hark you, sirrah," said the Doctor, "I trust you remember you are owing to the laird four stones of barleymeal, and a bow of oats; and I would have you send no more such kain-fowls as you sent last season, that looked as wretchedly as patients just dismissed from a plague-hospital; and there is hard money owing besides."

"I was thinking, sir," said the man, *more Scotico*, that is, returning no direct answer on the subject on which he was addressed, "my best way would be to come down to your honour, and take your advice yet, in case my trouble should come back."

"Do so, then, knave," replied Lundin, "and remember what Ecclesiasticus saith—'Give place to the physician-let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him.'" His exhortation was interrupted by an apparition, which seemed to strike the doctor with as much horror and surprise, as his own visage inflicted upon sundry of those persons whom he had addressed.

The figure which produced this effect on the Esculapius of the village, was that of a tall old woman, who wore a high-crowned hat and muffler. The first of these habiliments added apparently to her stature, and the other served to conceal the lower part of her face, and as the hat itself was slouched, little could be seen besides two brown cheek-bones, and the eyes of swarthy fire, that gleamed from under two shaggy gray eyebrows. She was dressed in a long dark-coloured robe of unusual fashion, bordered at the skirts, and on the stomacher, with a sort of white trimming resembling the Jewish phylacteries, on which were wrought the characters of some unknown language. She held in her hand a walking staff of black ebony.

"By the soul of Celsus," said Doctor Luke Lundin, "it is old Mother Nicneven herself—she hath come to beard me within mine own bounds, and in the very execution of mine office! Have at thy coat, Old Woman, as the song says—Hob Anster, let her presently be seized and committed to the tolbooth; and if there are any zealous brethren here who would give the hag her deserts, and duck her, as a witch, in the loch, I pray let them in no way be hindered."

But the myrmidons of Dr. Lundin showed in this case no alacrity to do his bidding. Hob Anster even ventured to remonstrate in the name of himself and his brethren. "To be sure he was to do his honour's bidding; and for a' that folks said about the skill and witcheries of Mother Nicneven, he would put his trust in God, and his hand on her collar, without dreadour. But she was no common spawwife, this Mother Nicneven, like Jean Jopp that lived in the Bricrie-baulk. She had lords and lairds that would ruffle for her. There was Moncrieff of Tippermalloch, that was Popish, and the laird of Carslogie, a kend Queen's man, were in the fair, with wha kend how many swords and bucklers at their back; and they would be sure to make a break-out if the officers meddled with the auld Popish witch-wife, who was sae weel friended; mair especially as the laird's best men, such as were not in the castle, were in Edinburgh with him, and he doubted his honour the Doctor would find ower few to make a good backing, if blades were bare."

The doctor listened unwillingly to this prudential counsel, and was only comforted by the faithful promise of his satellite, that "the old woman should," as he expressed it, "be ta'en canny the next time she trespassed on the bounds."

"And in that event," said the Doctor to his companion, "fire and fagot shall be the best of her welcome."

This he spoke in hearing of the dame herself, who even then, and in passing the Doctor, shot towards him from under her gray eyebrows a look of the most insulting and contemptuous superiority.

"This way," continued the physician, "this way," marshalling his guest into his lodging,—"take care you stumble not over a retort, for it is hazardous for the ignorant to walk in the ways of art."

The page found all reason for the caution; for besides stuffed birds, and lizards, and snakes bottled up, and bundles of simples made up, and other parcels spread out to dry, and all the confusion, not to mention the mingled and sickening smells, incidental to a druggist's stock in trade, he had also to avoid heaps of charcoal crucibles, bolt-heads, stoves, and the other furniture of a chemical laboratory.

Amongst his other philosophical qualities, Doctor Lundin failed not to be a confused sloven, and his old dame housekeeper, whose life, as she said, was spent in "redding him up," had trotted off to the mart of gaiety with other and younger folks. Much chattering and jangling therefore there was among jars, and bottles, and vials, ere the Doctor produced the salutiferous potion which he recommended so strongly, and a search equally long and noisy followed, among broken cans and cracked pipkins, ere he could bring forth a cup out of which to drink it. Both matters being at length achieved, the Doctor set the example to his guest, by quaffing off a cup of the cordial, and smacking his lips with approbation as it descended his gullet.—Roland, in turn, submitted to swallow the potion which his host so earnestly recommended, but which he found so insufferably bitter, that he became eager to escape from the laboratory in search of a draught of fair water to expel the taste. In spite of his efforts, he was nevertheless detained by the garrulity of his host, till he gave him some account of Mother Nicneven.

"I care not to speak of her," said the Doctor, "in the open air, and among the throng of people; not for fright, like yon cowardly dog Anster, but because I would give no occasion for a fray, having no leisure to look to stabs, slashes, and broken bones. Men call the old hag a prophetess—I do scarce believe she could foretell when a brood of chickens will chip the shell—Men say she reads the heavens—my black bitch knows as much of them when she sits baying the moon—Men

pretend the ancient wretch is a sorceress, a witch, and, what not—*Inter nos*, I will never contradict a rumour which may bring her to the stake which she so justly deserves; but neither will I believe that the tales of witches which they din into our ears are aught but knavery, cozenage, and old women's fables."

"In the name of Heaven, what is she then," said the page, "that you make such a stir about her?"

"She is one of those cursed old women," replied the Doctor, "who take currently and impudently upon themselves to act as advisers and curers of the sick, on the strength of some trash of herbs, some rhyme of spells, some julap or diet, drink or cordial."

"Nay, go no farther," said the page; "if they brew cordials, evil be their lot and all their partakers!"

"You say well, young man," said Dr. Lundin; "for mine own part, I know no such pests to the commonwealth as these old incarnate devils, who haunt the chambers of the brain-sick patients, that are mad enough to suffer them to interfere with, disturb, and let, the regular process of a learned and artificial cure, with their sirups, and their julaps, and diascordium, and mithridate, and my Lady What-shall-call'um's powder, and worthy Dame Trashem's pill; and thus make widows and orphans, and cheat the regular and well-studied physician, in order to get the name of wise women and skeely neighbours, and so forth. But no more on't—Mother Nicneven [Footnote: This was the name given to the grand Mother Witch, the very Hecate of Scottish popular superstition. Her name was bestowed, in one or two instances, upon sorceresses, who were held to resemble her by their superior skill in "Hell's black grammar."] and I will meet one day, and she shall know there is danger in dealing with the Doctor."

"It is a true word, and many have found it," said the page; "but under your favour, I would fain walk abroad for a little, and see these sports."

"It is well moved," said the Doctor, "and I too should be showing myself abroad. Moreover the play waits us, young man-to-day, *totus mundus agit histrionem*."—And they sallied forth accordingly into the mirthful scene.

Chapter the Twenty-Seventh.

*See on yon verdant lawn, the gathering crowd
Thickens amain; the buxom nymphs advance,
Usher'd by jolly clowns; distinctions cease,
Lost in the common joy, and the bold slave
Leans on his wealthy master unreprieved.
Rural Games.—SOMERVILLE.*

The re-appearance of the dignified Chamberlain on the street of the village was eagerly hailed by the revellers, as a pledge that the play, or dramatic representation, which had been postponed owing to his absence, was now full surely to commence. Any thing like an approach to this most interesting of all amusements, was of recent origin in Scotland, and engaged public attention in proportion. All other sports were discontinued. The dance around the Maypole was arrested—the ring broken up and dispersed, while the dancers, each leading his partner by the hand, tripped, off to the silvan theatre. A truce was in like manner achieved betwixt a huge brown bear and certain mastiffs, who were tugging and pulling at his shaggy coat, under the mediation of the bear-ward and half a dozen butchers and yeomen, who, by dint of *staving and tailing*, as it was technically termed, separated the unfortunate animals, whose fury had for an hour past been their chief amusement. The itinerant minstrel found himself deserted by the audience he had collected, even in the most interesting passage of the romance which he recited, and just as he was sending about his boy, with bonnet in hand, to collect their oblations. He indignantly stopped short in the midst of *Rosewal and Lilian*, and, replacing his three-stringed fiddle, or rebeck, in its leathern case, followed the crowd, with no good-will, to the exhibition which had superseded his own. The juggler had ceased his exertions of emitting flame and smoke, and was content to respire in the manner of ordinary mortals, rather than to play gratuitously the part of a fiery dragon. In short, all other sports were suspended, so eagerly did the revellers throng towards the place of representation.

They would err greatly, who should regulate their ideas of this dramatic exhibition upon those derived from a modern theatre; for the rude shows of Thespis were far less different from those exhibited by Euripides on the stage of Athens, with all its magnificent decorations and pomp of dresses and of scenery. In the present case, there were no scenes, no stage, no machinery, no pit, box, and gallery, no box-lobby; and, what might in poor Scotland be some consolation for other negations, there was no taking of money at the door. As in the devices of the magnanimous Bottom, the actors had a greensward plot for a stage, and a hawthorn bush for a greenroom and tiring-house; the spectators being accommodated with seats on the artificial bank which had been raised around three-fourths of the playground, the remainder being left open for the entrance and exit of the performers. Here sate the uncritical audience, the Chamberlain in the centre, as the person highest in office, all alive to enjoyment and admiration, and all therefore dead to criticism.

The characters which appeared and disappeared before the amused and interested audience, were those which fill the earlier stage in all nations—old men, cheated by their wives and daughters, pillaged by their sons, and imposed on by their domestics, a braggadocia captain, a knavish pardoner or quæstionary, a country bumpkin and a wanton city dame. Amid all these, and more acceptable than almost the whole put together, was the all-licensed fool, the Gracioso of the Spanish drama, who, with his cap fashioned into the resemblance of a coxcomb, and his bauble, a truncheon terminated by a carved figure wearing a fool's cap, in his hand, went, came, and returned, mingling in every scene of the piece, and interrupting the business, without having any share himself in the action, and ever and anon transferring his gibes from the actors on the stage to the audience who sate around, prompt to applaud the whole.

The wit of the piece, which was not of the most polished kind, was chiefly directed against the superstitious practices of the Catholic religion; and the stage artillery had on this occasion been levelled by no less a person than Doctor Lundin, who had not only commanded the manager of the entertainment to select one of the numerous satires which had been written against the Papists, (several of which were cast in a dramatic form,) but had even, like the Prince of Denmark, caused them to insert, or according to his own phrase, to infuse here and there, a few pleasantries of his own penning, on the same inexhaustible subject, hoping thereby to mollify the rigour of the Lady of Lochleven towards pastimes of this description. He failed not to jog Roland's elbow, who was sitting in state behind him, and recommend to his particular attention those favourite passages. As for the page, to whom, the very idea of such an exhibition, simple as it was, was entirely new, he beheld it with the undiminished and ecstatic delight with which men of all ranks look for the first time on dramatic representation, and laughed, shouted, and clapped his hands as the performance proceeded. An incident at length took place, which effectually broke off his interest in the business of the scene.

One of the principal personages in the comic part of the drama was, as we have already said, a quæstionary or pardoner, one of those itinerants who hawked about from place to place relics, real or pretended, with which he excited the devotion at once, and the charity of the populace, and generally deceived both the one and the other. The hypocrisy, impudence, and profligacy of these clerical wanderers, had made them the subject of satire from the time of Chaucer down to that of Heywood. Their present representative failed not to follow the same line of humour, exhibiting pig's bones for relics, and boasting the virtues of small tin crosses, which had been shaken in the holy porringer at Loreto, and of cockleshells, which had been brought from the shrine of Saint James of Compostella, all which he disposed of to the devout Catholics at nearly as high a price as antiquaries are now willing to pay for baubles of similar intrinsic value. At length the pardoner pulled from his scrip a small phial of clear water, of which he vaunted the quality in the following verses:—

*Listneth, gode people, everiche one
For in the londe of Babyllone,
Far eastward I wot it lyeth,
And is the first londe the sonne espieth,
Ther, as he cometh fro out the sé;
In this ilk londe, as thinketh me,*

*Right as holie legendes tell,
Snottreth from a roke a well,
And falleth into ane bath of ston,
Where chaste Susanne, in times long gon,*

*Wax wont to wash her bodie and lim
Mickle vertue hath that streme,
As ye shall se er that ye pas,
Ensample by this little glas—
Through nightés cold and dayés hote
Hiderward I have it brought;
Hath a wife made slip or side,
Or a maiden stepp'd aside,
Putteth this water under her nese,
Wold she nold she, she shall snee.*

The jest, as the reader skilful in the antique language of the drama must at once perceive, turned on the same pivot as in the old minstrel tales of the Drinking Horn of King Arthur, and the Mantle made Amiss. But the audience were neither learned nor critical enough to challenge its want of originality. The potent relic was, after such grimace and buffoonery as befitted the subject, presented successively to each of the female personages of the drama, not one of whom sustained the supposed test of discretion; but, to the infinite delight of the audience, sneezed much louder and longer than perhaps they themselves had counted on. The jest seemed at last worn threadbare, and the pardoner was passing on to some new pleasantry, when the jester or clown of the drama, possessing himself secretly of the phial which contained the wondrous liquor, applied it suddenly to the nose of a young woman, who, with her black silk muffler, or screen drawn over her face, was sitting in the foremost rank of the spectators, intent apparently upon the business of the stage. The contents of the phial, well calculated to sustain the credit of the pardoner's legend, set the damsel a-sneezing violently, an admission of frailty which was received with shouts of rapture by the audience. These were soon, however, renewed at the expense of the jester himself, when the insulted maiden extricated, ere the paroxysm was well over, one hand from the folds of her mantle, and bestowed on the wag a buffet, which made him reel fully his own length from the pardoner, and then acknowledge the favour by instant prostration.

No one pities a jester overcome in his vocation, and the clown met with little sympathy, when, rising from the ground, and whimpering forth his complaints of harsh treatment, he invoked the assistance and sympathy of the audience. But the Chamberlain, feeling his own dignity insulted, ordered two of his halberdiers to bring the culprit before him. When these official persons first approached the virago, she threw herself into an attitude of firm defiance, as if determined to resist their authority; and from the sample of strength and spirit which she had already displayed, they showed no alacrity at executing their commission. But on half a minute's reflection, the damsel changed totally her attitude and manner, folded her cloak around her arms in modest and maiden-like fashion, and walked of her own accord to the presence of the great man, followed and guarded by the two manful satellites. As she moved across the vacant space, and more especially as she stood at the footstool of the Doctor's judgment-seat, the maiden discovered that lightness and elasticity of step, and natural grace of manner, which connoisseurs in female beauty know to be seldom divided from it. Moreover, her neat russet-coloured jacket, and short petticoat of the same colour, displayed a handsome form and a pretty leg. Her features were concealed by the screen; but the Doctor, whose gravity did not prevent his pretensions to be a connoisseur of the school we have hinted at, saw enough to judge favourably of the piece by the sample.

He began, however, with considerable austerity of manner.—"And how now, saucy quean!" said the medical man of office; "what have you to say why I should not order you to be ducked in the loch, for lifting your hand to the man in my presence?"

"Marry," replied the culprit, "because I judge that your honour will not think the cold bath necessary for my complaints."

"A pestilent jade," said the Doctor, whispering to Roland Graeme; "and I'll warrant her a good one—her voice is as sweet as sirup.—But, my pretty maiden," said he, "you show us wonderful little of that countenance of yours—be pleased to throw aside your muffler."

"I trust your honour will excuse me till we are more private," answered the maiden; "for I have acquaintance, and I should like ill to be known in the country as the poor girl whom that scurvy knave put his jest upon."

"Fear nothing for thy good name, my sweet little modicum of candied manna," replied the Doctor, "for I protest to you, as I am Chamberlain of Lochleven, Kinross, and so forth, that the chaste Susanna herself could not have snuffed that elixir without sternutation, being in truth a curious distillation of rectified *acetum*, or vinegar of the sun, prepared by mine own hands—Wherefore, as thou sayest thou wilt come to me in private, and express thy contrition for the offence whereof thou hast been guilty, I command that all for the present go forward as if no such interruption of the prescribed course had taken place."

The damsel curtsied and tripped back to her place. The play proceeded, but it no longer attracted the attention of Roland Graeme.

The voice, the figure, and what the veil permitted to be seen of the neck and tresses of the village damsel, bore so strong a resemblance to those of Catherine Seyton, that he felt like one bewildered in the mazes of a changeful and stupifying dream. The memorable scene of the hostelrie rushed on his recollection, with all its doubtful and marvellous circumstances. Were the tales of enchantment which he had read in romances realized in this extraordinary girl? Could she transport herself from the walled and guarded Castle of Lochleven, moated with its broad lake, (towards which he cast back a look as if to ascertain it was still in existence,) and watched with such scrupulous care as the safety of a nation demanded?—Could she surmount all these obstacles, and make such careless and dangerous use of her liberty, as to engage herself publicly in a quarrel in a village fair? Roland was unable to determine whether the exertions which it must have cost her to gain her freedom or the use to which she had put it, rendered her the most unaccountable creature.

Lost in these meditations, he kept his gaze fixed on the subject of them; and in every casual motion, discovered, or thought he discovered, something which reminded him still more strongly of Catherine Seyton. It occurred to him more than once, indeed, that he might be deceiving himself by exaggerating some casual likeness into absolute identity. But then the meeting at the hostelrie of Saint Michael's returned to his mind, and it seemed in the highest degree improbable, that, under such various circumstances, mere imagination should twice have found opportunity to play him the selfsame trick. This time, however, he determined to have his doubts resolved, and for this purpose he sate during the rest of the play like a greyhound in the slip, ready to spring upon the hare the instant that she was started. The damsel, whom he watched attentively lest she should escape in the crowd when the spectacle was closed, sate as if perfectly unconscious that she was observed. But the worthy Doctor marked the direction of his eyes, and magnanimously suppressed his own inclination to become the Theseus to this Hippolyta, in deference to the rights of hospitality, which enjoined him to forbear interference with the pleasurable pursuits of his young friend. He passed one or two formal gibes upon the fixed attention which the page paid to the unknown, and upon his own jealousy; adding, however, that if both were to be presented to the patient at once, he had little doubt she would think the younger man the sounder prescription. "I fear me," he added, "we shall have no news of the knave Auchtermuchty for some time, since the vermin whom I sent after him seem to have proved corbie-messengers. So you have an hour or two on your hands, Master Page; and as the minstrels are beginning to strike up, now the play is ended, why, an you incline for a dance, yonder is the green, and there sits your partner—I trust you will hold me perfect in my diagnostics, since I see with half an eye what disease you are sick of, and have administered a pleasing remedy."

*"Discernit sapiens res (as Chambers hath it) quas
confundit asellus."*

The page hardly heard the end of the learned adage, or the charge which the Chamberlain gave him to be within reach, in case of the wains arriving suddenly, and sooner than expected—so eager he was at once to shake himself free of his learned associate, and to satisfy his curiosity regarding the unknown damsel. Yet

in the haste with which he made towards her he found time to reflect, that, in order to secure an opportunity of conversing with her in private, he must not alarm her at first accosting her. He therefore composed his manner and gait, and advancing with becoming self-confidence before three or four country-fellows who were intent on the same design, but knew not so well how to put their request into shape, he acquainted her that he, as the deputy of the venerable Chamberlain, requested the honour of her hand as a partner.

"The venerable Chamberlain," said the damsel frankly, reaching the page her hand, "does very well to exercise this part of his privilege by deputy; and I suppose the laws of the revels leave me no choice but to accept of his faithful delegate."

"Provided, fair damsel," said the page, "his choice of a delegate is not altogether distasteful to you."

"Of that, fair sir," replied the maiden, "I will tell you more when we have danced the first measure."

Catherine Seyton had admirable skill in gestic lore, and was sometimes called on to dance for the amusement of her royal mistress. Roland Graeme had often been a spectator of her skill, and sometimes, at the Queen's command, Catherine's partner on such occasions. He was, therefore, perfectly acquainted with Catherine's mode of dancing; and observed that his present partner, in grace, in agility, in quickness of ear, and precision of execution, exactly resembled her, save that the Scottish jig, which he now danced with her, required a more violent and rapid motion, and more rustic agility, than the stately pavens, lavoltas, and courantoes, which he had seen her execute in the chamber of Queen Mary. The active duties of the dance left him little time for reflection, and none for conversation; but when their *pas de deux* was finished, amidst the acclamations of the villagers, who had seldom witnessed such an exhibition, he took an opportunity, when they yielded up the green to another couple, to use the privilege of a partner and enter into conversation with the mysterious maiden, whom he still held by the hand.

"Fair partner, may I not crave the name of her who has graced me thus far?"

"You may," said the maiden; "but it is a question whether I shall answer you."

"And why?" asked Roland.

"Because nobody gives anything for nothing—and you can tell me nothing in return which I care to hear."

"Could I not tell you my name and lineage, in exchange for yours?" returned Roland.

"No!" answered the maiden, "for you know little of either."

"How?" said the page, somewhat angrily.

"Wrath you not for the matter," said the damsel; "I will show you in an instant that I know more of you than you do of yourself."

"Indeed," answered Graeme; "for whom then do you take me?"

"For the wild falcon," answered she, "whom a dog brought in his mouth to a certain castle, when he was but an unfledged eyas—for the hawk whom men dare not fly, lest he should check at game, and pounce on carrion—whom folk must keep hooded till he has the proper light of his eyes, and can discover good from evil."

"Well—be it so," replied Roland Graeme; "I guess at a part of your parable, fair mistress mine—and perhaps I know as much of you as you do of me, and can well dispense with the information which you are so niggard in giving."

"Prove that," said the maiden, "and I will give you credit for more penetration than I judged you to be gifted withal."

"It shall be proved instantly," said Roland Graeme. "The first letter of your name is S, and the last N."

"Admirable," said his partner, "guess on."

"It pleases you to-day," continued Roland, "to wear the snood and kirtle, and perhaps you may be seen to-morrow in hat and feather, hose and doublet."

"In the clout! in the clout! you have hit the very white," said the damsel, suppressing a great inclination to laugh.

"You can switch men's eyes out of their heads, as well as the heart out of their bosoms."

These last words were uttered in a low and tender tone, which, to Roland's great mortification, and somewhat to his displeasure, was so far from allaying, that it greatly increased, his partner's disposition to laughter. She could scarce compose herself while she replied, "If you had thought my hand so formidable," extricating it from his hold, "you would not have grasped it so hard; but I perceive you know me so fully, that there is no occasion to show you my face."

"Fair Catherine," said the page, "he were unworthy ever to have seen you, far less to have dwelt so long in the same service, and under the same roof with you, who could mistake your air, your gesture, your step in walking or in dancing, the turn of your neck, the symmetry of your form—none could be so dull as not to recognize you by so many proofs; but for me, I could swear even to that tress of hair that escapes from under your muffler."

"And to the face, of course, which that muffler covers," said the maiden, removing her veil, and in an instant endeavouring to replace it. She showed the features of Catherine; but an unusual degree of petulant impatience inflamed them, when, from some awkwardness in her management of the muffler, she was unable again to adjust it with that dexterity which was a principal accomplishment of the coquettes of the time.

"The fiend rive the rag to tatters!" said the damsel, as the veil fluttered about her shoulders, with an accent so earnest and decided, that it made the page start. He looked again at the damsel's face, but the information which his eyes received, was to the same purport as before. He assisted her to adjust her muffler, and both were for an instant silent. The damsel spoke first, for Roland Graeme was overwhelmed with surprise at the contrarieties which Catherine Seyton seemed to include in her person and character.

"You are surprised," said the damsel to him, "at what you see and hear—But the times which make females men, are least of all fitted for men to become women; yet you yourself are in danger of such a change."

"I in danger of becoming effeminate!" said the page.

"Yes, you, for all the boldness of your reply," said the damsel. "When you should hold fast your religion, because it is assailed on all sides by rebels, traitors, and heretics, you let it glide out of your breast like water grasped in the hand. If you are driven from the faith of your fathers from fear of a traitor, is not that womanish?—If you are cajoled by the cunning arguments of a trumpeter of heresy, or the praises of a puritanic old woman, is not that womanish?—If you are bribed by the hope of spoil and preferment, is not that womanish?—And when you wonder at my venting a threat or an execration, should you not wonder at yourself, who, pretending to a gentle name and aspiring to knighthood, can be at the same time cowardly, silly, and self-interested!"

"I would that a man would bring such a charge," said the page; "he should see, ere his life was a minute older, whether he had cause to term me coward or no."

"Beware of such big words," answered the maiden; "you said but anon that I sometimes wear hose and doublet."

"But remain still Catharine Seyton, wear what you list," said the page, endeavouring again to possess himself of her hand.

"You indeed are pleased to call me so," replied the maiden, evading his intention, "but I have many other names besides."

"And will you not reply to that," said the page, "by which you are distinguished beyond every other maiden in Scotland?"

The damsel, unallured by his praises, still kept aloof, and sung with gaiety a verse from an old ballad,

"Oh, some do call me Jack, sweet love,

And some do call me Gill;

But when I ride to Holyrood,

My name is Wilful Will."

"Wilful Will" exclaimed the page, impatiently; "say rather Will o' the Wisp—Jack with the Lantern—for never was such a deceitful or wandering meteor!"

"If I be such," replied the maiden, "I ask no fools to follow me—If they do so, it is at their own pleasure, and must be on their own proper peril."

"Nay, but, dearest Catherine," said Roland Graeme, "be for one instant serious."

"If you will call me your dearest Catherine, when I have given you so many names to choose upon," replied the damsel, "I would ask you how, supposing me for two or three hours of my life escaped from yonder tower, you have the cruelty to ask me to be serious during the only merry moments I have seen perhaps for months?"

"Ay, but, fair Catherine, there are moments of deep and true feeling, which are worth ten thousand years of the liveliest mirth; and such was that of yesterday, when you so nearly—"

"So nearly what?" demanded the damsel, hastily.

"When you approached your lips so near to the sign you had traced on my forehead."

"Mother of Heaven!" exclaimed she, in a yet fiercer tone, and with a more masculine manner than she had yet exhibited,—"Catherine Seyton approach her lips to a man's brow, and thou that man!—vassal, thou liest!"

The page stood astonished; but, conceiving he had alarmed the damsel's delicacy by alluding to the enthusiasm of a moment, and the manner in which she had expressed it, he endeavoured to falter forth an apology. His excuses, though he was unable to give them any regular shape, were accepted by his companion, who had indeed suppressed her indignation after its first explosion—"Speak no more on't," she said. "And now let us part; our conversation may attract more notice than is convenient for either of us."

"Nay, but allow me at least to follow you to some sequestered place."

"You dare not," replied the maiden.

"How," said the youth, "dare not? where is it you dare go, where I dare not follow?"

"You fear a Will o' the Wisp," said the damsel; "how would you face a fiery dragon, with an enchantress mounted on its back?"

"Like Sir Eger, Sir Grime, or Sir Greysteil," said the page; "but be there such toys to be seen here?"

"I go to Mother Nicneven's," answered the maid; "and she is witch enough to rein the horned devil, with a red silk thread for a bridle, and a rowan-tree switch for a whip."

"I will follow you," said the page.

"Let it be at some distance," said the maiden.

And wrapping her mantle round her with more success than on her former attempt, she mingled with the throng, and walked towards the village, heedfully followed by Roland Graeme at some distance, and under every precaution which he could use to prevent his purpose from being observed.

Chapter the Twenty-Eighth.

*Yes, it is he whose eyes look'd on thy childhood,
And watch'd with trembling hope thy dawn of youth,
That now, with these same eyeballs dimm'd with age,
And dimmer yet with tears, sees thy dishonour.*

OLD PLAY.

At the entrance of the principal, or indeed, so to speak, the only street in Kinross, the damsel, whose steps were pursued by Roland Graeme, cast a glance behind her, as if to be certain he had not lost trace of her and then plunged down a very narrow lane which ran betwixt two rows of poor and ruinous cottages. She paused for a second at the door of one of those miserable tenements, again cast her eye up the lane towards Roland, then lifted the latch, opened the door, and disappeared from his view.

With whatever haste the page followed her example, the difficulty which he found in discovering the trick of the latch, which did not work quite in the usual manner, and in pushing open the door, which did not yield to his first effort, delayed for a minute or two his entrance into the cottage. A dark and smoky passage led, as usual, betwixt the exterior wall of the house, and the *hallan*, or clay wall, which served as a partition betwixt it and the interior. At the end of this passage, and through the partition, was a door leading into the *ben*, or inner chamber of the cottage, and when Roland Graeme's hand was upon the latch of this door, a female voice pronounced, "*Benedictus qui veniat in nomine Domini, dammandus qui in nomine inimici.*" On entering the apartment, he perceived the figure which the chamberlain had pointed out to him as Mother Nicneven, seated beside the lowly hearth. But there was no other person in the room. Roland Graeme gazed around in surprise at the disappearance of Catherine Seyton, without paying much regard to the supposed sorceress, until she attracted and riveted his regard by the tone in which she asked him—"What seekest thou here?"

"I seek," said the page, with much embarrassment; "I seek—"

But his answer was cut short, when the old woman, drawing her huge gray eyebrows sternly together, with a frown which knitted her brow into a thousand wrinkles, arose, and erecting herself up to her full natural size, tore the kerchief from her head, and seizing Roland by the arm, made two strides across the floor of the apartment to a small window through which the light fell full on her face, and showed the astonished youth the countenance of Magdalen Graeme.—"Yes, Roland," she said, "thine eyes deceive thee not; they show thee truly the features of her whom thou hast thyself deceived, whose wine thou hast turned into gall, her bread of joyfulness into bitter poison, her hope into the blackest despair—it is she who now demands of thee, what seekest thou here?—She whose heaviest sin towards Heaven hath been, that she loved thee even better than the weal of the whole church, and could not without reluctance surrender thee even in the cause of God—she now asks you, what seekest thou here?"

While she spoke, she kept her broad black eye riveted on the youth's face, with the expression with which the eagle regards his prey ere he tears it to pieces. Roland felt himself at the moment incapable either of reply or evasion. This extraordinary enthusiast had preserved over him in some measure the ascendancy which she had acquired during his childhood; and, besides, he knew the violence of her passions and her impatience of contradiction, and was sensible that almost any reply which he could make, was likely to throw her into an ecstasy of rage. He was therefore silent; and Magdalen Graeme proceeded with increasing enthusiasm in her apostrophe—"Once more, what seek'st thou, false boy?—seek'st thou the honour thou hast renounced, the faith thou hast abandoned, the hopes thou hast destroyed?—Or didst thou seek me, the sole protectress of thy youth, the only parent whom thou hast known, that thou mayest trample on my gray hairs, even as thou hast already trampled on the best wishes of my heart?"

"Pardon me, mother," said Roland Graeme; "but, in truth and reason, I deserve not your blame. I have been treated amongst you—even by yourself, my revered parent, as well as by others—as one who lacked the common attributes of free-will and human reason, or was at least deemed unfit to exercise them. A land of enchantment have I been led into, and spells have been cast around me—every one has met me in disguise—every one has spoken to me in parables—I have been like one who walks in a weary and bewildering dream; and now you blame me that I have not the sense, and judgment, and steadiness of a waking, and a disenchanted, and a reasonable man, who knows what he is doing, and wherefore he does it. If one must walk with masks and spectres, who waft themselves from place to place as it were in vision rather than reality, it might shake the soundest faith and turn the wisest head. I sought, since I must needs avow my folly, the same Catherine Seyton with whom you made me first acquainted, and whom I most strangely find in this village of Kinross, gayest among the revellers, when I had but just left her in the well-guarded castle of Lochleven, the sad attendant of an imprisoned Queen—I sought her, and in her place I find you, my mother, more strangely disguised than even she is."

"And what hadst thou to do with Catherine Seyton?" said the matron, sternly; "is this a time or a world to follow maidens, or to dance around a Maypole? When the trumpet summons every true-hearted Scotsman around the standard of the true sovereign, shalt thou be found loitering in a lady's bower?"

"No, by Heaven, nor imprisoned in the rugged walls of an island castle!" answered Roland Graeme: "I would the blast were to sound even now, for I fear that nothing less loud will dispel the chimerical visions by which I am surrounded."

"Doubt not that it will be winded," said the matron, "and that so fearfully loud, that Scotland will never hear the like until the last and loudest blast of all shall announce to mountain and to valley that time is no more. Meanwhile, be thou but brave and constant—Serve God and honour thy sovereign—Abide by thy religion—I cannot—I will not—I dare not ask thee the truth of the terrible surmises I have heard touching thy falling away—perfect not that accursed sacrifice—and yet, even at this late hour, thou mayest be what I have hoped for the son of my dearest hope—what say I? the son of *my* hope—thou shalt be the hope of Scotland, her boast and her honour!—Even thy wildest and most foolish wishes may perchance be fulfilled—I might blush to mingle meaner motives with the noble guerdon I hold out to thee—It shames me, being such as I am, to mention the idle passions of youth, save with contempt and the purpose of censure. But we must bribe children to wholesome medicine by the offer of cates, and youth to honourable achievement with the promise of pleasure. Mark me, therefore, Roland. The love of Catherine Seyton will follow him only who shall achieve the freedom of her mistress; and believe, it may be one day in thine own power to be that happy lover. Cast, therefore, away doubt and fear, and prepare to do what religion calls for, what thy country demands of thee, what thy duty as a subject and as a servant alike require at your hand; and be assured, even the idlest or wildest wishes of thy heart will be most readily attained by following the call of thy duty." As she ceased speaking, a double knock was heard against the inner door. The matron hastily adjusting her muffler, and resuming her chair by the hearth, demanded who was there.

"*Salve in nomine sancto*," was answered from without.

"*Salvete et vos*," answered Magdalen Graeme.

And a man entered in the ordinary dress of a nobleman's retainer, wearing at his girdle a sword and buckler—"I sought you," said he, "my mother, and him whom I see with you." Then addressing himself to Roland Graeme, he said to him, "Hast thou not a packet from George Douglas?"

"I have," said the page, suddenly recollecting that which had been committed to his charge in the morning, "but I may not deliver it to any one without some token that they have a right to ask it."

"You say well," replied the serving-man, and whispered into his ear, "The packet which I ask is the report to his father—will this token suffice?"

"It will," replied the page, and taking the packet from his bosom, gave it to the man.

"I will return presently," said the serving-man, and left the cottage.

Roland had now sufficiently recovered his surprise to accost his relative in turn, and request to know the reason why he found her in so precarious a disguise, and a place so dangerous—"You cannot be ignorant," he said, "of the hatred that the Lady of Lochleven bears to those of your—that is of our religion—your present disguise lays you open to suspicion of a different kind, but inferring no less hazard; and whether as a Catholic, or as a sorceress, or as a friend to the unfortunate Queen, you are in equal danger, if apprehended within the bounds of the Douglas; and in the chamberlain who administers their authority, you have, for his own reasons, an enemy, and a bitter one."

"I know it," said the matron, her eyes kindling with triumph; "I know that, vain of his school-craft, and carnal wisdom, Luke Lundin views with jealousy and hatred the blessings which the saints have conferred on my prayers, and on the holy relics, before the touch, nay, before the bare presence of which, disease and death have so often been known to retreat.—I know he would rend and tear me; but there is a chain and a muzzle on the ban dog that shall restrain his fury, and the Master's servant shall not be offended by him until the Master's work is wrought. When that hour comes, let the shadows of the evening descend on me in thunder and in tempest; the time shall be welcome that relieves my eyes from seeing guilt, and my ears from listening to blasphemy. Do thou but be constant—play thy part as I have played and will play mine, and my release shall be like that of a blessed martyr whose ascent to heaven angels hail with psalm and song, while earth pursues him with hiss and with execration."

As she concluded, the serving-man again entered the cottage, and said, "All is well! the time holds for to-morrow night."

"What time? what holds?" exclaimed Roland Graeme; "I trust I have given the Douglas's packet to no wrong—"

"Content yourself, young man," answered the serving-man; "thou hast my word and token."

"I know not if the token be right," said the page; "and I care not much for the word of a stranger."

"What," said the matron, "although thou mayest have given a packet delivered to thy charge by one of the Queen's rebels into the hand of a loyal subject—there were no great mistake in that, thou hot-brained boy!"

"By Saint Andrew, there were foul mistake, though," answered the page; "it is the very spirit of my duty, in this first stage of chivalry, to be faithful to my trust; and had the devil given me a message to discharge, I would not (so I had plighted my faith to the contrary) betray his counsel to an angel of light."

"Now, by the love I once bore thee," said the matron, "I could slay thee with mine own hand, when I hear thee talk of a dearer faith being due to rebels and heretics, than thou owest to thy church and thy prince!"

"Be patient, my good sister," said the serving-man; "I will give him such reasons as shall counterbalance the scruples which beset him—the spirit is honourable, though now it may be mistimed and misplaced.—Follow me, young man."

"Ere I go to call this stranger to a reckoning," said the page to the matron, "is there nothing I can do for your comfort and safety?"

"Nothing," she replied, "nothing, save what will lead more to thine own honour;—the saints who have protected me thus far, will lend me succour as I need it. Tread the path of glory that is before thee, and only think of me as the creature on earth who will be most delighted to hear of thy fame.—Follow the stranger—he hath tidings for you that you little expect."

The stranger remained on the threshold as if waiting for Roland, and as soon as he saw him put himself in motion, he moved on before at a quick pace. Diving still deeper down the lane, Roland perceived that it was now bordered by buildings upon the one side only, and that the other was fenced by a high old wall, over which some trees extended their branches. Descending a good way farther, they came to a small door in the wall. Roland's guide paused, looked around an instant to see if any one were within sight, then taking a key from his pocket, opened the door and entered, making a sign to Roland Graeme to follow him. He did so, and the stranger locked the door carefully on the inside. During this operation the page had a moment to look around, and perceived that he was in a small orchard very trimly kept.

The stranger led him through an alley or two, shaded by trees loaded with summer-fruit, into a pleached arbour, where, taking the turf-seat which was on the one side, he motioned to Roland to occupy that which was opposite to him, and, after a momentary silence, opened the conversation as follows: "You have asked a better warrant than the word of a mere stranger, to satisfy you that I have the authority of George of Douglas for possessing myself of the packet intrusted to your charge."

"It is precisely the point on which I demand reckoning of you," said Roland. "I fear I have acted hastily; if so, I must redeem my error as I best may."

"You hold me then as a perfect stranger?" said the man. "Look at my face more attentively, and see if the features do not resemble those of a man much known to you formerly."

Roland gazed attentively; but the ideas recalled to his mind were so inconsistent with the mean and servile dress of the person before him, that he did not venture to express the opinion which he was irresistibly induced to form.

"Yes, my son," said the stranger, observing his embarrassment, "you do indeed see before you the unfortunate Father Ambrosius, who once accounted his ministry crowned in your preservation from the snares of heresy, but who is now condemned to lament thee as a castaway!"

Roland Graeme's kindness of heart was at least equal to his vivacity of temper—he could not bear to see his ancient and honoured master and spiritual guide in a situation which inferred a change of fortune so melancholy, but throwing himself at his feet, grasped his knees and wept aloud.

"What mean these tears, my son?" said the Abbot; "if they are shed for your own sins and follies, surely they are gracious showers, and may avail thee much—but weep not, if they fall on my account. You indeed see the Superior of the community of Saint Mary's in the dress of a poor sworder, who gives his master the use of his blade and buckler, and, if needful, of his life, for a coarse livery coat and four marks by the year. But such a garb suits the time, and, in the period of the church militant, as well becomes her prelates, as staff, mitre, and crosier, in the days of the church's triumph."

"By what fate," said the page—"and yet why," added he, checking himself, "need I ask? Catherine Seyton in some sort prepared me for this. But that the change should be so absolute—the destruction so complete!"—

"Yes, my son," said the Abbot Ambrosius, "thine own eyes beheld, in my unworthy elevation to the Abbot's stall, the last especial act of holy solemnity which shall be seen in the church of Saint Mary's, until it shall please Heaven to turn back the captivity of the church. For the present, the shepherd is smitten—ay, well-nigh to the earth—the flock are scattered, and the shrines of saints and martyrs, and pious benefactors to the church, are given to the owls of night, and the satyrs of the desert."

"And your brother, the Knight of Avenel—could he do nothing for your protection?"

"He himself hath fallen under the suspicion of the ruling powers," said the Abbot, "who are as unjust to their friends as they are cruel to their enemies. I could not grieve at it, did I hope it might estrange him from his cause; but I know the soul of Halbert, and I rather fear it will drive him to prove his fidelity to their unhappy cause, by some deed which may be yet more destructive to the church, and more offensive to Heaven. Enough of this; and now to the business of our meeting.—I trust you will hold it sufficient if I pass my word to you that the packet of which you were lately the bearer, was designed for my hands by George of Douglas?"

"Then," said the page, "is George of Douglas——"

"A true friend to his Queen, Roland; and will soon, I trust, have his eyes opened to the errors of his (miscalled) church."

"But what is he to his father, and what to the Lady of Lochleven, who has been as a mother to him?" said the page impatiently.

"The best friend to both, in time and through eternity," said the Abbot, "if he shall prove the happy instrument for redeeming the evil they have wrought, and are still working."

"Still," said the page, "I like not that good service which begins in breach of trust."

"I blame not thy scruples, my son," said the Abbot; "but the time which has wrenched asunder the allegiance of Christians to the church, and of subjects to their king, has dissolved all the lesser bonds of society; and, in such days, mere human ties must no more restrain our progress, than the brambles and briers which catch hold of his garments, should delay the path of a pilgrim who travels to pay his vows."

"But, my father,"—said the youth, and then stopt short in a hesitating manner.

"Speak on, my son," said the Abbot; "speak without fear."

"Let me not offend you then," said Roland, "when I say, that it is even this which our adversaries charge against us; when they say that, shaping the means according to the end, we are willing to commit great moral evil in order that we may work out eventual good."

"The heretics have played their usual arts on you, my son," said the Abbot; "they would willingly deprive us of the power of acting wisely and secretly, though their possession of superior force forbids our contending with them on terms of equality. They have reduced us to a state of exhausted weakness, and now would fain proscribe the means by which weakness, through all the range of nature, supplies the lack of strength and defends itself against its potent enemies. As well might the hound say to the hare, use not these wily turns to escape me, but contend with me in pitched battle, as the armed and powerful heretic demand of the down-trodden and oppressed Catholic to lay aside the wisdom of the serpent, by which alone they may again hope to raise up the Jerusalem over which they weep, and which it is their duty to rebuild—But more of this hereafter. And now, my son, I command thee on thy faith to tell me truly and particularly what has chanced to thee since we parted, and what is the present state of thy conscience. Thy relation, our sister Magdalen, is a woman of excellent gifts, blessed with a zeal which neither doubt nor danger can quench; but yet it is not a zeal altogether according to knowledge; wherefore, my son, I would willingly be myself thy interrogator, and thy counsellor, in these days of darkness and stratagem."

With the respect which he owed to his first instructor, Roland Graeme went rapidly through the events which the reader is acquainted with; and while he disguised not from the prelate the impression which had been made on his mind by the arguments of the preacher Henderson, he accidentally and almost involuntarily gave his Father Confessor to understand the influence which Catherine Seyton had acquired over his mind.

"It is with joy I discover, my dearest son," replied the Abbot, "that I have arrived in time to arrest thee on the verge of the precipice to which thou wert approaching. These doubts of which you complain, are the weeds which naturally grow up in a strong soil, and require the careful hand of the husbandman to eradicate them. Thou must study a little volume, which I will impart to thee in fitting time, in which, by Our Lady's grace, I have placed in somewhat a clearer light than heretofore, the points debated betwixt us and these heretics, who sow among the wheat the same tares which were formerly privily mingled with the good seed by the Albigenses and the Lollards. But it is not by reason alone that you must hope to conquer these insinuations of the enemy: It is sometimes by timely resistance, but oftener by timely flight. You must shut your ears against the arguments of the heresiarch, when circumstances permit you not to withdraw the foot from his company. Anchor your thoughts upon the service of Our Lady, while he is expending in vain his heretical sophistry. Are you unable to maintain your attention on heavenly objects—think rather on thine own earthly pleasures, than tempt Providence and the Saints by giving an attentive ear to the erring doctrine—think of thy hawk, thy hound, thine angling rod, thy sword and buckler—think even of Catherine Seyton, rather than give thy soul to the lessons of the tempter. Alas! my son, believe not that, worn out with woes, and bent more by affliction than by years, I have forgotten the effect of beauty over the heart of youth. Even in the watches of the night, broken by thoughts of an imprisoned Queen, a distracted kingdom, a church laid waste and ruinous, come other thoughts than these suggest, and feelings which belonged to an earlier and happier course of life. Be it so—we must bear our load as we may: and not in vain are these passions implanted in our breast, since, as now in thy case, they may come in aid of resolutions founded upon higher grounds. Yet beware, my son—this Catherine Seyton is the daughter of one of Scotland's proudest, as well as most worthy barons; and thy state may not suffer thee, as yet, to aspire so high. But thus it is—Heaven works its purposes through human folly; and Douglas's ambitious affection, as well as thine, shall contribute alike to the desired end."

"How, my father," said the page, "my suspicions are then true!—Douglas loves——"

"He does; and with a love as much misplaced as thine own; but beware of him—cross him not—thwart him not."

"Let him not cross or thwart me," said the page; "for I will not yield him an inch of way, had he in his body the soul of every Douglas that has lived since the time of the Dark Gray Man." [Footnote: By an ancient, though improbable tradition, the Douglasses are said to have derived their name from a champion who had greatly distinguished himself in an action. When the king demanded by whom the battle had been won, the attendants are said to have answered, "Sholto Douglas, sir," which is said to mean, "Yonder dark gray man." But the name is undoubtedly territorial, and taken from Douglas river and vale.]

"Nay, have patience, idle boy, and reflect that your suit can never interfere with his.—But a truce with these vanities, and let us better employ the little space which still remains to us to spend together. To thy knees, my son, and resume the long-interrupted duty of confession, that, happen what may, the hour may find in thee a faithful Catholic, relieved from the guilt of his sins by authority of the Holy Church. Could I but tell thee, Roland, the joy with which I see thee once more put thy knee to its best and fittest use! *Quid dicis, mi fili?*"

"*Culpas meas*" answered the youth; and according to the ritual of the Catholic Church, he confessed and received absolution, to which was annexed the condition of performing certain enjoined penances.

When this religious ceremony was ended, an old man, in the dress of a peasant of the better order, approached the arbour, and greeted the Abbot.—"I have waited the conclusion of your devotions," he said, "to tell you the youth is sought after by the chamberlain, and it were well he should appear without delay. Holy Saint Francis, if the halberdiers were to seek him here, they might sorely wrong my garden-plot—they are in office, and reck not where they tread, were each step on jessamine and clovegilly-flowers."

"We will speed him forth, my brother," said the Abbot; "but alas! is it possible that such trifles should live in your mind at a crisis so awful as that which is now impending?"

"Reverend father," answered the proprietor of the garden, for such he was, "how oft shall I pray you to keep your high counsel for high minds like your own? What have you required of me, that I have not granted unresistingly, though with an aching heart?"

"I would require of you to be yourself, my brother," said the Abbot Ambrosius; "to remember what you were, and to what your early vows have bound you."

"I tell thee, Father Ambrosius," replied the gardener, "the patience of the best saint that ever said pater-noster, would be exhausted by the trials to which you have put mine—What I have been, it skills not to speak at present—no one knows better than yourself, father, what I renounced, in hopes to find ease and quiet during the remainder of my days—and no one better knows how my retreat has been invaded, my fruit-trees broken, my flower-beds trodden down, my quiet frightened away, and my very sleep driven from my bed, since ever this poor Queen, God bless her, hath been sent to Lochleven.—I blame her not; being a prisoner, it is natural she should wish to get out from so vile a hold, where there is scarcely any place even for a tolerable garden, and where the water-mists, as I am told, blight all the early blossoms—I say, I cannot blame her for endeavouring for her freedom; but why I should be drawn into the scheme—why my harmless arbours, that I planted with my own hands, should become places of privy conspiracy—why my little quay, which I built for my own fishing boat, should have become a haven for secret embarkations—in short, why I should be dragged into matters where both heading and hanging are like to be the issue, I profess to you, reverend father, I am totally ignorant."

"My brother," answered the Abbot, "you are wise, and ought to know—"

"I am not—I am not—I am not wise," replied the horticulturist, pettishly, and stopping his ears with his fingers—"I was never called wise but when men wanted to engage me in some action of notorious folly."

"But, my good brother," said the Abbot—

"I am not good neither," said the peevish gardener; "I am neither good nor wise—Had I been wise, you would not have been admitted here; and were I good, methinks I should send you elsewhere to hatch plots for destroying the quiet of the country. What signifies disputing about queen or king,—when men may sit at peace—*sub umbra vitis sui*? and so would I do, after the precept of Holy Writ, were I, as you term me, wise or good. But such as I am, my neck is in the yoke, and you make me draw what weight you list.—Follow me, youngster. This reverend father, who makes in his jackman's dress nearly as reverend a figure as I myself, will agree with me in one thing at least, and that is, that you have been long enough here."

"Follow the good father, Roland," said the Abbot, "and remember my words—a day is approaching that will try the temper of all true Scotsmen—may thy heart prove faithful as the steel of thy blade!"

The page bowed in silence, and they parted; the gardener, notwithstanding his advanced age, walking on before him very briskly, and muttering as he went, partly to himself, partly to his companion, after the manner of old men of weakened intellects—"When I was great," thus ran his maundering, "and had my mule and my ambling palfrey at command, I warrant you I could have as well flown through the air as have walked at this pace. I had my gout and my rheumatics, and an hundred things besides, that hung fetters on my heels; and, now, thanks to Our Lady, and honest labour, I can walk with any good man of my age in the kingdom of Fife—Fy upon it, that experience should be so long in coming!"

As he was thus muttering, his eye fell upon the branch of a pear-tree which drooped down for want of support, and at once forgetting his haste, the old man stopped and set seriously about binding it up. Roland Graeme had both readiness, neatness of hand, and good nature in abundance; he immediately lent his aid, and in a minute or two the bough was supported, and tied up in a way perfectly satisfactory to the old man, who looked at it with great complaisance. "They are bergamots," he said, "and if you will come ashore in autumn, you shall taste of them—the like are not in Lochleven Castle—the garden there is a poor pin-fold, and the gardener, Hugh Houkham, hath little skill of his craft—so come ashore, Master Page, in autumn, when you would eat pears. But what am I thinking of—ere that time come, they may have given thee sour pears for plums. Take an old man's advice, youth, one who hath seen many days, and sat in higher places than thou canst hope for—bend thy sword into a pruning-hook, and make a dibble of thy dagger—thy days shall be the longer, and thy health the better for it,—and come to aid me in my garden, and I will teach thee the real French fashion of *imping*, which the Southron call grafting. Do this, and do it without loss of time, for there is a whirlwind coming over the land, and only those shall escape who lie too much beneath the storm to have their boughs broken by it."

So saying, he dismissed Roland Graeme, through a different door from that by which he had entered, signed a cross, and pronounced a benedicite as they parted, and then, still muttering to himself, retired into the garden, and locked the door on the inside.

Chapter the Twenty-Ninth.

Pray God she prove not masculine ere long!

KING HENRY VI.

Dismissed from the old man's garden, Roland Graeme found that a grassy paddock, in which sauntered two cows, the property of the gardener, still separated him from the village. He paced through it, lost in meditation upon the words of the Abbot. Father Ambrosius had, with success enough, exerted over him that powerful influence which the guardians and instructors of our childhood possess over our more mature youth. And yet, when Roland looked back upon what the father had said, he could not but suspect that he had rather sought to evade entering into the controversy betwixt the churches, than to repel the objections and satisfy the doubts which the lectures of Henderson had excited. "For this he had no time," said the page to himself, "neither have I now calmness and learning sufficient to judge upon points of such magnitude. Besides, it were base to quit my faith while the wind of fortune sets against it, unless I were so placed, that my conversion, should it take place, were free as light from the imputation of self-interest. I was bred a Catholic—bred in the faith of Bruce and Wallace—I will hold that faith till time and reason shall convince me that it errs. I will serve this poor Queen as a subject should serve an imprisoned and wronged sovereign—they who placed me in her service have to blame themselves—who sent me hither, a gentleman trained in the paths of loyalty and honour, when they should have sought out some truckling, coggling, double-dealing knave, who would have been at once the observant page of the Queen, and the obsequious spy of her enemies. Since I must choose betwixt aiding and betraying her, I will decide as becomes her servant and her subject; but Catherine Seyton—Catherine Seyton, beloved by Douglas and holding me on or off as the intervals of her leisure or caprice will permit—how shall I deal with the coquette?—By heaven, when I next have an opportunity, she shall render me some reason for her conduct, or I will break with her for ever!"

As he formed this doughty resolution, he crossed the stile which led out of the little enclosure, and was almost immediately greeted by Dr. Luke Lundin.

"Ha! my most excellent young friend," said the Doctor, "from whence come you?—but I note the place.—Yes, neighbour Blinkhoolie's garden is a pleasant rendezvous, and you are of the age when lads look after a bonny lass with one eye, and a dainty plum with another. But hey! you look subtriste and melancholic—I fear the maiden has proved cruel, or the plums unripe; and surely I think neighbour Blinkhoolie's damsons can scarcely have been well preserved throughout the winter—he spares the saccharine juice on his confects. But courage, man, there are more Kates in Kinross; and for the immature fruit, a glass of my double distilled *aqua mirabilis*—*probatum est*."

The page darted an ireful glance at the facetious physician; but presently recollecting that the name Kate, which had provoked his displeasure, was probably but introduced for the sake of alliteration, he suppressed his wrath, and only asked if the wains had been heard of?

"Why, I have been seeking for you this hour, to tell you that the stuff is in your boat, and that the boat waits your pleasure. Auchtermuchty had only fallen into company with an idle knave like himself, and a stoup of aquavita between them. Your boatmen lie on their oars, and there have already been made two wefts from the warder's turret to intimate that those in the castle are impatient for your return. Yet there is time for you to take a slight repast; and, as your friend and physician, I hold it unfit you should face the water-breeze with an empty stomach."

Roland Graeme had nothing for it but to return, with such cheer as he might, to the place where his boat was moored on the beach, and resisted all offer of refreshment, although the Doctor promised that he should prelude the collation with a gentle appetizer—a decoction of herbs, gathered and distilled by himself. Indeed, as Roland had not forgotten the contents of his morning cup, it is possible that the recollection induced him to stand firm in his refusal of all food, to which such an unpalatable preface was the preliminary. As they passed towards the boat, (for the ceremonious politeness of the worthy Chamberlain would not permit

the page to go thither without attendance.) Roland Graeme, amidst a group who seemed to be assembled around a party of wandering musicians, distinguished, as he thought, the dress of Catherine Seyton. He shook himself clear from his attendant, and at one spring was in the midst of the crowd, and at the side of the damsel. "Catherine," he whispered, "is it well for you to be still here?—will you not return to the castle?"

"To the devil with your Catherines and your castles!" answered the maiden, snappishly; "have you not had time enough already to get rid of your follies? Begone! I desire not your farther company, and there will be danger in thrusting it upon me."

"Nay—but if there be danger, fairest Catherine," replied Roland; "why will you not allow me to stay and share it with you?"

"Intruding fool," said the maiden, "the danger is all on thine own side—the risk in, in plain terms, that I strike thee on the mouth with the hilt of my dagger." So saying, she turned haughtily from him, and moved through the crowd, who gave way in some astonishment at the masculine activity with which she forced her way among them.

As Roland, though much irritated, prepared to follow, he was grappled on the other side by Doctor Luke Lundin, who reminded him of the loaded boat, of the two wefts, or signals with the flag, which had been made from the tower, of the danger of the cold breeze to an empty stomach, and of the vanity of spending more time upon coy wenchings and sour plums. Roland was thus, in a manner, dragged back to his boat, and obliged to launch her forth upon his return to Lochleven Castle.

That little voyage was speedily accomplished, and the page was greeted at the landing-place by the severe and caustic welcome of old Dryfesdale. "So, young gallant, you are come at last, after a delay of six hours, and after two signals from the castle? But, I warrant, some idle junketing hath occupied you too deeply to think of your service or your duty. Where is the note of the plate and household stuff?—Pray Heaven it hath not been diminished under the sleeveless care of so young a gad-about!"

"Diminished under my care, Sir Steward!" retorted the page angrily; "say so in earnest, and by Heaven your gray hair shall hardly protect your saucy tongue!"

"A truce with your swaggering, young esquire," returned the steward; "we have bolts and dungeons for brawlers. Go to my lady, and swagger before her, if thou darest—she will give thee proper cause of offence, for she has waited for thee long and impatiently."

"And where then is the Lady of Lochleven?" said the page; "for I conceive it is of her thou speakest."

"Ay—of whom else?" replied Dryfesdale; "or who besides the Lady of Lochleven hath a right to command in this castle?"

"The Lady of Lochleven is thy mistress," said Roland Graeme; "but mine is the Queen of Scotland."

The steward looked at him fixedly for a moment, with an air in which suspicion and dislike were ill concealed by an affectation of contempt. "The bragging cock-chicken," he said, "will betray himself by his rash crowing. I have marked thy altered manner in the chapel of late—ay, and your changing of glances at meal-time with a certain idle damsel, who, like thyself, laughs at all gravity and goodness. There is something about you, my master, which should be looked to. But, if you would know whether the Lady of Lochleven, or that other lady, hath a right to command thy service, thou wilt find them together in the Lady Mary's ante-room."

Roland hastened thither, not unwilling to escape from the ill-natured penetration of the old man, and marvelling at the same time what peculiarity could have occasioned the Lady of Lochleven's being in the Queen's apartment at this time of the afternoon, so much contrary to her usual wont. His acuteness instantly penetrated the meaning. "She wishes," he concluded, "to see the meeting betwixt the Queen and me on my return, that she may form a guess whether there is any private intelligence or understanding betwixt us—I must be guarded."

With this resolution he entered the parlour, where the Queen, seated in her chair, with the Lady Fleming leaning upon the back of it, had already kept the Lady of Lochleven standing in her presence for the space of nearly an hour, to the manifest increase of her very visible bad humour. Roland Graeme, on entering the apartment, made a deep obeisance to the Queen, and another to the Lady, and then stood still as if to await their farther question. Speaking almost together, the Lady Lochleven said, "So, young man, you are returned at length?"

And then stopped indignantly short, while the Queen went on without regarding her—"Roland, you are welcome home to us—you have proved the true dove and not the raven—Yet I am sure I could have forgiven you, if, once dismissed, from this water-circled ark of ours, you had never again returned to us. I trust you have brought back an olive-branch, for our kind and worthy hostess has chafed herself much on account of your long absence, and we never needed more some symbol of peace and reconciliation."

"I grieve I should have been detained, madam," answered the page; "but from the delay of the person intrusted with the matters for which I was sent, I did not receive them till late in the day."

"See you there now," said the Queen to the Lady Lochleven; "we could not persuade you, our dearest hostess, that your household goods were in all safe keeping and surety. True it is, that we can excuse your anxiety, considering that these august apartments are so scantily furnished, that we have not been able to offer you even the relief of a stool during the long time you have afforded us the pleasure of your society."

"The will, madam," said the lady, "the will to offer such accommodation was more wanting than the means."

"What!" said the Queen, looking round, and affecting surprise, "there are then stools in this apartment—one, two—no less than four, including the broken one—a royal garniture!—We observed them not—will it please your ladyship to sit?"

"No, madam, I will soon relieve you of my presence," replied the Lady Lochleven; "and while with you, my aged limbs can still better brook fatigue, than my mind stoop to accept of constrained courtesy."

"Nay, Lady of Lochleven, if you take it so deeply," said the Queen, rising and motioning to her own vacant chair, "I would rather you assumed my seat—you are not the first of your family who has done so."

The Lady of Lochleven curtsied a negative, but seemed with much difficulty to suppress the angry answer which rose to her lips.

During this sharp conversation, the page's attention had been almost entirely occupied by the entrance of Catherine Seyton, who came from the inner apartment, in the usual dress in which she attended upon the Queen, and with nothing in her manner which marked either the hurry or confusion incident to a hasty change of disguise, or the conscious fear of detection in a perilous enterprise. Roland Graeme ventured to make her an obeisance as she entered, but she returned it with an air of the utmost indifference, which, in his opinion, was extremely inconsistent with the circumstances in which they stood towards each other.—"Surely," he thought, "she cannot in reason expect to bully me out of the belief due to mine own eyes, as she tried to do concerning the apparition in the hostelry of Saint Michael's—I will try if I cannot make her feel that this will be but a vain task, and that confidence in me is the wiser and safer course to pursue."

These thoughts had passed rapidly through his mind, when the Queen, having finished her altercation with the Lady of the castle, again addressed him—"What of the revels at Kinross, Roland Graeme? Methought they were gay, if I may judge from some faint sounds of mirth and distant music, which found their way so far as these grated windows, and died when they entered them, as all that is mirthful must—But thou lookest as sad as if thou hadst come from a conventicle of the Huguenots!"

"And so perchance he hath, madam," replied the Lady of Lochleven, at whom this side-shaft was lanced. "I trust, amid yonder idle fooleries, there wanted not some pouring forth of doctrine to a better purpose than that vain mirth, which, blazing and vanishing like the crackling of dry thorns, leaves to the fools who love it nothing but dust and ashes."

"Mary Fleming," said the Queen, turning round and drawing her mantle about her, "I would that we had the chimney-grate supplied with a fagot or two of these same thorns which the Lady of Lochleven describes so well. Methinks the damp air from the lake, which stagnates in these vaulted rooms, renders them deadly cold."

"Your Grace's pleasure shall be obeyed," said the Lady of Lochleven; "yet may I presume to remind you that we are now in summer?"

"I thank you for the information, my good lady," said the Queen; "for prisoners better learn their calender from the mouth of their jailor, than from any change they themselves feel in the seasons.—Once more, Roland Graeme, what of the revels?"

"They were gay, madam," said the page, "but of the usual sort, and little worth your Highness's ear."

"Oh, you know not," said the Queen, "how very indulgent my ear has become to all that speaks of freedom and the pleasures of the free. Methinks I would rather have seen the gay villagers dance their ring round the Maypole, than have witnessed the most stately masques within the precincts of a palace. The absence of stone-wall—the sense that the green turf is under the foot which may tread it free and unrestrained, is worth all that art or splendour can add to more courtly revels."

"I trust," said the Lady Lochleven, addressing the page in her turn, "there were amongst these follies none of the riots or disturbances to which they so naturally lead?"

Roland gave a slight glance to Catherine Seyton, as if to bespeak her attention, as he replied,—"I witnessed no offence, madam, worthy of marking—none indeed of any kind, save that a bold damsel made her hand somewhat too familiar with the cheek of a player-man, and ran some hazard of being ducked in the lake."

As he uttered these words he cast a hasty glance at Catherine; but she sustained, with the utmost serenity of manner and countenance, the hint which he had deemed could not have been thrown out before her without exciting some fear and confusion.

"I will cumber your Grace no longer with my presence," said the Lady Lochleven, "unless you have aught to command me."

"Nought, our good hostess," answered the Queen, "unless it be to pray you, that on another occasion you deem it not needful to postpone your better employment to wait so long upon us."

"May it please you," added the Lady Lochleven, "to command this your gentleman to attend us, that I may receive some account of these matters which have been sent hither for your Grace's use?"

"We may not refuse what you are pleased to require, madam," answered the Queen. "Go with the lady, Roland, if our commands be indeed necessary to thy doing so. We will hear to-morrow the history of thy Kinross pleasures. For this night we dismiss thy attendance."

Roland Graeme went with the Lady of Lochleven, who failed not to ask him many questions concerning what had passed at the sports, to which he rendered such answers as were most likely to lull asleep any suspicions which she might entertain of his disposition to favour Queen Mary, taking especial care to avoid all allusion to the apparition of Magdalen Graeme, and of the Abbot Ambrosius. At length, after undergoing a long and somewhat close examination, he was dismissed with such expressions, as, coming from the reserved and stern Lady of Lochleven, might seem to express a degree of favour and countenance.

His first care was to obtain some refreshment, which was more cheerfully afforded him by a good-natured pantler than by Dryfesdale, who was, on this occasion, much disposed to abide by the fashion of Pudding-burn House, where

They who came not the first call.

Gat no more meat till the next meal.

When Roland Graeme had finished his repast, having his dismissal from the Queen for the evening, and being little inclined for such society as the castle afforded, he stole into the garden, in which he had permission to spend his leisure time, when it pleased him. In this place, the ingenuity of the contriver and disposer of the walks had exerted itself to make the most of little space, and by screens, both of stone ornamented with rude sculpture, and hedges of living green, had endeavoured to give as much intricacy and variety as the confined limits of the garden would admit.

Here the young man walked sadly, considering the events of the day, and comparing what had dropped from the Abbot with what he had himself noticed of the demeanour of George Douglas. "It must be so," was the painful but inevitable conclusion at which he arrived. "It must be by his aid that she is thus enabled, like a phantom, to transport herself from place to place, and to appear at pleasure on the mainland or on the islet.—It must be so," he repeated once more; "with him she holds a close, secret, and intimate correspondence, altogether inconsistent with the eye of favour which she has sometimes cast upon me, and destructive to the hopes which she must have known these glances have necessarily inspired." And yet (for love will hope where reason despairs) the thought rushed on his mind, that it was possible she only encouraged Douglas's passion so far as might serve her mistress's interest, and that she was of too frank, noble, and candid a nature, to hold out to himself hopes which she meant not to fulfil. Lost in these various conjectures, he seated himself upon a bank of turf which commanded a view of the lake on the one side, and on the other of that front of the castle along which the Queen's apartments were situated.

The sun had now for some time set, and the twilight of May was rapidly fading into a serene night. On the lake, the expanded water rose and fell, with the slightest and softest influence of a southern breeze, which scarcely dimpled the surface over which it passed. In the distance was still seen the dim outline of the island of Saint Serf, once visited by many a sandalled pilgrim, as the blessed spot trodden by a man of God—now neglected or violated, as the refuge of lazy priests, who had with justice been compelled to give place to the sheep and the heifers of a Protestant baron.

As Roland gazed on the dark speck, amid the lighter blue of the waters which surrounded it, the mazes of polemical discussion again stretched themselves before the eye of the mind. Had these men justly suffered their exile as licentious drones, the robbers, at once, and disgrace, of the busy hive? or had the hand of avarice and rapine expelled from the temple, not the ribalds who polluted, but the faithful priests who served the shrine in honour and fidelity? The arguments of Henderson, in this contemplative hour, rose with double force before him; and could scarcely be parried by the appeal which the Abbot Ambrosius had made from his understanding to his feelings,—an appeal which he had felt more forcibly amid the bustle of stirring life, than now when his reflections were more undisturbed. It required an effort to divert his mind from this embarrassing topic; and he found that he best succeeded by turning his eyes to the front of the tower, watching where a twinkling light still streamed from the casement of Catherine Seyton's apartment, obscured by times for a moment as the shadow of the fair inhabitant passed betwixt the taper and the window. At length the light was removed or extinguished, and that object of speculation was also withdrawn from the eyes of the meditative lover. Dare I confess the fact, without injuring his character for ever as a hero of romance? These eyes gradually became heavy; speculative doubts on the subject of religious controversy, and anxious conjectures concerning the state of his mistress's affections, became confusedly blended together in his musings; the fatigues of a busy day prevailed over the harassing subjects of contemplation which occupied his mind, and he fell fast asleep.

Sound were his slumbers, until they were suddenly dispelled by the iron tongue of the castle-bell, which sent its deep and sullen sounds wide over the bosom of the lake, and awakened the echoes of Bennarty, the hill which descends steeply on its southern bank. Roland started up, for this bell was always tolled at ten o'clock, as the signal for locking the castle gates, and placing the keys under the charge of the seneschal. He therefore hastened to the wicket by which the garden communicated with the building, and had the mortification, just as he reached it, to hear the bolt leave its sheath with a discordant crash, and enter the stone groove of the door-lintel. "Hold, hold," cried the page, "and let me in ere you lock the wicket." The voice of Dryfesdale replied from within, in his usual tone of embittered sullenness, "The hour is passed, fair master—you like not the inside of these walls—even make it a complete holiday, and spend the night as well as the day out of bounds."

"Open the door," exclaimed the indignant page, "or by Saint Giles I will make thy gold chain smoke for it!"

"Make no alarm here," retorted the impenetrable Dryfesdale, "but keep thy sinful oaths and silly threats for those that regard them—I do mine office, and carry the keys to the seneschal.—Adieu, my young master! the cool night air will advantage your hot blood."

The steward was right in what he said; for the cooling breeze was very necessary to appease the feverish fit of anger which Roland experienced, nor did the remedy succeed for some time. At length, after some hasty turns made through the garden, exhausting his passion in vain vows of vengeance, Roland Graeme began to be sensible that his situation ought rather to be held as matter of laughter than of serious resentment. To one bred a sportsman, a night spent in the open air had in it little of hardship, and the poor malice of the steward seemed more worthy of his contempt than his anger. "I would to God," he said, "that the grim old man may always have contented himself with such sportive revenge. He often looks as he were capable of doing us a darker turn." Returning, therefore, to the turf-seat which he had formerly occupied, and which was partially sheltered by a trim fence of green holly, he drew his mantle around him, stretched himself at length on the verdant settle, and endeavoured to resume that sleep which the castle bell had interrupted to so little purpose.

Sleep, like other earthly blessings, is niggard of its favours when most courted. The more Roland invoked her aid, the farther she fled from his eyelids. He had been completely awakened, first, by the sounds of the bell, and then by his own aroused vivacity of temper, and he found it difficult again to compose himself to slumber. At length, when his mind—was wearied out with a maze of unpleasing meditation, he succeeded in coaxing himself into a broken slumber. This was

again dispelled by the voices of two persons who were walking in the garden, the sound of whose conversation, after mingling for some time in the page's dreams, at length succeeded in awaking him thoroughly. He raised himself from his reclining posture in the utmost astonishment, which the circumstance of hearing two persons at that late hour conversing on the outside of the watchfully guarded Castle of Lochloven, was so well calculated to excite. His first thought was of supernatural beings; his next, upon some attempt on the part of Queen Mary's friends and followers; his last was, that George of Douglas, possessed of the keys, and having the means of ingress and egress at pleasure, was availing himself of his office to hold a rendezvous with Catherine Seyton in the castle garden. He was confirmed in this opinion by the tone of the voice, which asked in a low whisper, "whether all was ready?"

Chapter the Thirtieth.

*In some breasts passion lies conceal'd and silent,
Like war's swart powder in a castle vault,
Until occasion, like the linstock, lights it:
Then comes at once the lightning—and the thunder,
And distant echoes tell that all is rent asunder.*

OLD PLAY.

Roland Graeme, availing himself of a breach in the holly screen, and of the assistance of the full moon, which was now arisen, had a perfect opportunity, himself unobserved, to reconnoitre the persons and the motions of those by whom his rest had been thus unexpectedly disturbed; and his observations confirmed his jealous apprehensions. They stood together in close and earnest conversation within four yards of the place of his retreat, and he could easily recognize the tall form and deep voice of Douglas, and the no less remarkable dress and tone of the page at the hostelry of Saint Michael's.

"I have been at the door of the page's apartment," said Douglas, "but he is not there, or he will not answer. It is fast bolted on the inside, as is the custom, and we cannot pass through it—and what his silence may bode I know not."

"You have trusted him too far," said the other; "a feather-headed cox-comb, upon whose changeable mind and hot brain there is no making an abiding impression."

"It was not I who was willing to trust him," said Douglas, "but I was assured he would prove friendly when called upon—for——" Here he spoke so low that Roland lost the tenor of his words, which was the more provoking, as he was fully aware that he was himself the subject of their conversation.

"Nay," replied the stranger, more aloud, "I have on my side put him off with fair words, which make fools vain—but now, if you distrust him at the push, deal with him with your dagger, and so make open passage."

"That were too rash," said Douglas; "and besides, as I told you, the door of his apartment is shut and bolted. I will essay again to waken him."

Graeme instantly comprehended, that the ladies, having been somehow made aware of his being in the garden, had secured the door of the outer room in which he usually slept, as a sort of sentinel upon that only access to the Queen's apartments. But then, how came Catherine Seyton to be abroad, if the Queen and the other lady were still within their chambers, and the access to them locked and bolted?—"I will be instantly at the bottom of these mysteries," he said, "and then thank Mistress Catherine, if this be really she, for the kind use which she exhorted Douglas to make of his dagger—they seek me, as I comprehend, and they shall not seek me in vain."

Douglas had by this time re-entered the castle by the wicket, which was now open. The stranger stood alone in the garden walk, his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes cast impatiently up to the moon, as if accusing her of betraying him by the magnificence of her lustre. In a moment Roland Graeme stood before him—"A goodly night," he said, "Mistress Catherine, for a young lady to stray forth in disguise, and to meet with men in an orchard!"

"Hush!" said the stranger page, "hush, thou foolish patch, and tell us in a word if thou art friend or foe."

"How should I be friend to one who deceives me by fair words, and who would have Douglas deal with me with his poniard?" replied Roland.

"The fiend receive George of Douglas and thee too, thou born madcap and sworn marplot!" said the other; "we shall be discovered, and then death is the word."

"Catherine," said the page, "you have dealt falsely and cruelly with me, and the moment of explanation is now come—neither it nor you shall escape me."

"Madman!" said the stranger, "I am neither Kate nor Catherine—the moon shines bright enough surely to know the hart from the hind."

"That shift shall not serve you, fair mistress," said the page, laying hold on the lap of the stranger's cloak; "this time, at least, I will know with whom I deal."

"Unhand me," said she, endeavouring to extricate herself from his grasp; and in a tone where anger seemed to contend with a desire to laugh, "use you so little discretion towards a daughter of Seyton?"

But as Roland, encouraged perhaps by her risibility to suppose his violence was not unpardonably offensive, kept hold on her mantle, she said, in a sterner tone of unmixed resentment,—"Madman! let me go!—there is life and death in this moment—I would not willingly hurt thee, and yet beware!"

As she spoke she made a sudden effort to escape, and, in doing so, a pistol, which she carried in her hand or about her person, went off.

This warlike sound instantly awakened the well-warded castle. The warder blew his horn, and began to toll the castle bell, crying out at the same time, "Fie, treason! treason! cry all! cry all!"

The apparition of Catherine Seyton, which the page had let loose in the first moment of astonishment, vanished in darkness; but the plash of oars was heard, and, in a second or two, five or six harquebuses and a falconet were fired from the battlements of the castle successively, as if levelled at some object on the water. Confounded with these incidents, no way for Catherine's protection (supposing her to be in the boat which he had heard put from the shore) occurred to Roland, save to have recourse to George of Douglas. He hastened for this purpose towards the apartment of the Queen, whence he heard loud voices and much trampling of feet. When he entered, he found himself added to a confused and astonished group, which, assembled in that apartment, stood gazing upon each other. At the upper end of the room stood the Queen, equipped as for a journey, and—attended not only by the Lady Fleming, but by the omnipresent Catherine Seyton, dressed in the habit of her own sex, and bearing in her hand the casket in which Mary kept such jewels as she had been permitted to retain. At the other end of the hall was the Lady of Lochleven, hastily dressed, as one startled from slumber by the sudden alarm, and surrounded by domestics, some bearing torches, others holding naked swords, partisans, pistols, or such other weapons as they had caught up in the hurry of a night alarm. Betwixt these two parties stood George of Douglas, his arms folded on his breast, his eyes bent on the ground, like a criminal who knows not how to deny, yet continues unwilling to avow, the guilt in which he has been detected.

"Speak, George of Douglas," said the Lady of Lochleven; "speak, and clear the horrid suspicion which rests on thy name. Say, 'A Douglas was never faithless to his trust, and I am a Douglas.' Say this, my dearest son, and it is all I ask thee to say to clear thy name, even under, such a foul charge. Say it was but the wile of these unhappy women, and this false boy, which plotted an escape so fatal to Scotland—so destructive to thy father's house."

"Madam," said old Dryfesdale the steward, "this much do I say for this silly page, that he could not be accessory to unlocking the doors, since I myself this night bolted him out of the castle. Whoever limned this night-piece, the lad's share in it seems to have been small."

"Thou liest, Dryfesdale," said the Lady, "and wouldst throw the blame on thy master's house, to save the worthless life of a gipsy boy."

"His death were more desirable to me than his life," answered the steward, sullenly; "but the truth is the truth."

At these words Douglas raised his head, drew up his figure to its full height, and spoke boldly and sedately, as one whose resolution was taken. "Let no life be endangered for me. I alone——"

"Douglas," said the Queen, interrupting him, "art thou mad? Speak not, I charge you."

"Madam," he replied, bowing with the deepest respect, "gladly would I obey your commands, but they must have a victim, and let it be the true one.—Yes, madam," he continued, addressing the Lady of Lochleven, "I alone am guilty in this matter. If the word of a Douglas has yet any weight with you, believe me that this boy is innocent; and on your conscience I charge you, do him no wrong; nor let the Queen suffer hardship for embracing the opportunity of freedom which sincere loyalty—which a sentiment yet deeper—offered to her acceptance. Yes! I had planned the escape of the most beautiful, the most persecuted of women; and far from regretting that I, for a while, deceived the malice of her enemies, I glory in it, and am most willing to yield up life itself in her cause."

"Now may God have compassion on my age," said the Lady of Lochleven, "and enable me to bear this load of affliction! O Princess, born in a luckless hour, when will you cease to be the instrument of seduction and of ruin to all who approach you? O ancient house of Lochleven, famed so long for birth and honour, evil was the hour which brought the deceiver under thy roof!"

"Say not so, madam," replied her grandson; "the old honours of the Douglas line will be outshone, when one of its descendants dies for the most injured of queens—for the most lovely of women."

"Douglas," said the Queen, "must I at this moment—ay, even at this moment, when I may lose a faithful subject for ever, chide thee for forgetting what is due to me as thy Queen?"

"Wretched boy," said the distracted Lady of Lochleven, "hast thou fallen even thus far into the snare of this Moabitish woman?—hast thou bartered thy name, thy allegiance, thy knightly oath, thy duty to thy parents, thy country, and thy God, for a feigned tear, or a sickly smile, from lips which flattered the infirm Francis—lured to death the idiot Darnley—read luscious poetry with the minion Chastelar—mingled in the lays of love which were sung by the beggar Rizzio—and which were joined in rapture to those of the foul and licentious Bothwell?"

"Blaspheme not, madam!" said Douglas;—"nor you, fair Queen, and virtuous as fair, chide at this moment the presumption of thy vassal!—Think not that the mere devotion of a subject could have moved me to the part I have been performing. Well you deserve that each of your lieges should die for you; but I have done more—have done that to which love alone could compel a Douglas—I have dissembled. Farewell, then, Queen of all hearts, and Empress of that of Douglas!—When you are freed from this vile bondage—as freed you shall be, if justice remains in Heaven—and when you load with honours and titles the happy man who shall deliver you, cast one thought on him whose heart would have despised every reward for a kiss of your hand—cast one thought on his fidelity, and drop one tear on his grave." And throwing himself at her feet, he seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"This before my face!" exclaimed the Lady of Lochleven—"wilt thou court thy adulterous paramour before the eyes of a parent?—Tear them asunder, and put him under strict ward! Seize him, upon your lives!" she added, seeing that her attendants looked at each other with hesitation.

"They are doubtful," said Mary. "Save thyself, Douglas, I command thee!"

He started up from the floor, and only exclaiming, "My life or death are yours, and at your disposal!"—drew his sword, and broke through those who stood betwixt him and the door. The enthusiasm of his onset was too sudden and too lively to have been opposed by any thing short of the most decided opposition; and as he was both loved and feared by his father's vassals, none of them would offer him actual injury.

The Lady of Lochleven stood astonished at his sudden escape—"Am I surrounded," she said, "by traitors? Upon him, villains!—pursue, stab, cut him down."

"He cannot leave the island, madam," said Dryfesdale, interfering; "I have the key of the boat-chain."

But two or three voices of those who pursued from curiosity, or command of their mistress, exclaimed from below, that he had cast himself into the lake.

"Brave Douglas still!" exclaimed the Queen—"Oh, true and noble heart, that prefers death to imprisonment!"

"Fire upon him!" said the Lady of Lochleven; "if there be here a true servant of his father, let him shoot the runagate dead, and let the lake cover our shame!"

The report of a gun or two was heard, but they were probably shot rather to obey the Lady, than with any purpose of hitting the mark; and Randal immediately entering, said that Master George had been taken up by a boat from the castle, which lay at a little distance.

"Man a barge, and pursue them!" said the Lady.

"It were quite vain," said Randal; "by this time they are half way to shore, and a cloud has come over the moon."

"And has the traitor then escaped?" said the Lady, pressing her hands against her forehead with a gesture of despair; "the honour of our house is for ever gone, and all will be deemed accomplices in this base treachery."

"Lady of Lochleven," said Mary, advancing towards her, "you have this night cut off my fairest hopes—You have turned my expected freedom into bondage, and dashed away the cup of joy in the very instant I was advancing it to my lips—and yet I feel for your sorrow the pity that you deny to mine—Gladly would I comfort you if I might; but as I may not, I would at least part from you in charity."

"Away, proud woman!" said the Lady; "who ever knew so well as thou to deal the deepest wounds under the pretence of kindness and courtesy?—Who, since the great traitor, could ever so betray with a kiss?"

"Lady Douglas of Lochleven," said the Queen, "in this moment thou canst not offend me—no, not even by thy coarse and unwomanly language, held to me in the presence of menials and armed retainers. I have this night owed so much to one member of the house of Lochleven, as to cancel whatever its mistress can do or say in the wildness of her passion."

"We are bounden to you, Princess," said Lady Lochleven, putting a strong constraint on herself, and passing from her tone of violence to that of bitter irony; "our poor house hath been but seldom graced with royal smiles, and will hardly, with my choice, exchange their rough honesty for such court-honour as Mary of Scotland has now to bestow."

"They," replied Mary, "who knew so well how to *take*, may think themselves excused from the obligation implied in receiving. And that I have now little to offer, is the fault of the Douglasses and their allies."

"Fear nothing, madam," replied the Lady of Lochleven, in the same bitter tone, "you retain an exchequer which neither your own prodigality can drain, nor your offended country deprive you of. While you have fair words and delusive smiles at command, you need no other bribes to lure youth to folly."

The Queen cast not an ungratified glance on a large mirror, which, hanging on one side of the apartment, and illuminated by the torch-light, reflected her beautiful face and person. "Our hostess grows complaisant," she said, "my Fleming; we had not thought that grief and captivity had left us so well stored with that sort of wealth which ladies prize most dearly."

"Your Grace will drive this severe woman frantic," said Fleming, in a low tone. "On my knees I implore you to remember she is already dreadfully offended, and that we are in her power."

"I will not spare her, Fleming," answered the Queen; "it is against my nature. She returned my honest sympathy with insult and abuse, and I will gall her in return,—if her words are too blunt for answer, let her use her poniard if she dare!"

"The Lady Lochleven," said the Lady Fleming aloud, "would surely do well now to withdraw, and to leave her Grace to repose."

"Ay," replied the Lady, "or to leave her Grace, and her Grace's minions, to think what silly fly they may next wrap their meshes about. My eldest son is a widower—were he not more worthy the flattering hopes with which you have seduced his brother?—True, the yoke of marriage has been already thrice fitted on—but the church of Rome calls it a sacrament, and its votaries may deem it one in which they cannot too often participate."

"And the votaries of the church of Geneva," replied Mary, colouring with indignation, "as they deem marriage *no* sacrament, are said at times to dispense with the holy ceremony."—Then, as if afraid of the consequences of this home allusion to the errors of Lady Lochleven's early life, the Queen added, "Come, my Fleming, we grace her too much by this altercation; we will to our sleeping apartment. If she would disturb us again to-night, she must cause the door to be forced." So saying, she retired to her bed-room, followed by her two women.

Lady Lochleven, stunned as it were by this last sarcasm, and not the less deeply incensed that she had drawn it upon herself, remained like a statue on the spot which she had occupied when she received an affront so flagrant. Dryfesdale and Randal endeavoured to rouse her to recollection by questions.

"What is your honourable Ladyship's pleasure in the premises?"

"Shall we not double the sentinels, and place one upon the boats and another in the garden?" said Randal.

"Would you that despatches were sent to Sir William at Edinburgh, to acquaint him with what has happened?" demanded Dryfesdale; "and ought not the place of Kinross to be alarmed, lest there be force upon the shores of the lake?"

"Do all as thou wilt," said the Lady, collecting herself, and about to depart. "Thou hast the name of a good soldier, Dryfesdale, take all precautions.—Sacred Heaven! that I should be thus openly insulted!"

"Would it be your pleasure," said Dryfesdale, hesitating, "that this person—this Lady—be more severely restrained?"

"No, vassal!" answered the Lady, indignantly, "my revenge stoops not to so low a gratification. But I will have more worthy vengeance, or the tomb of my ancestors shall cover my shame!"

"And you shall have it, madam," replied Dryfesdale—"ere two suns go down, you shall term yourself amply revenged."

The Lady made no answer—perhaps did not hear his words, as she presently left the apartment. By the command of Dryfesdale, the rest of the attendants were dismissed, some to do the duty of guard, others to their repose. The steward himself remained after they had all departed; and Roland Graeme, who was alone in the apartment, was surprised to see the old soldier advance towards him with an air of greater cordiality than he had ever before assumed to him, but which sat ill on his scowling features.

"Youth," he said, "I have done thee some wrong—it is thine own fault, for thy behaviour hath seemed as light to me as the feather thou wearest in thy hat; and surely thy fantastic apparel, and idle humour of mirth and folly, have made me construe thee something harshly. But I saw this night from my casement, (as I looked out to see how thou hadst disposed of thyself in the garden,) I saw, I say, the true efforts which thou didst make to detain the companion of the perfidy of him who is no longer worthy to be called by his father's name, but must be cut off from his house like a rotten branch. I was just about to come to thy assistance when the pistol went off; and the warder (a false knave, whom I suspect to be bribed for the nonce) saw himself forced to give the alarm, which, perchance, till then he had wilfully withheld. To atone, therefore, for my injustice towards you, I would willingly render you a courtesy, if you would accept of it from my hands."

"May I first crave to know what it is?" replied the page.

"Simply to carry the news of this discovery to Holyrood, where thou mayest do thyself much grace, as well with the Earl of Morton and the Regent himself, as with Sir William Douglas, seeing thou hast seen the matter from end to end, and borne faithful part therein. The making thine own fortune will be thus lodged in thine own hand, when I trust thou wilt estrange thyself from foolish vanities, and learn to walk in this world as one who thinks upon the next."

"Sir Steward," said Roland Graeme, "I thank you for your courtesy, but I may not do your errand. I pass that I am the Queen's sworn servant, and may not be of counsel against her. But, setting this apart, methinks it were a bad road to Sir William of Lochleven's favour, to be the first to tell him of his son's defection—neither would the Regent be over well pleased to hear the infidelity of his vassal, nor Morton to learn the falsehood of his kinsman."

"Um!" said the steward, making that inarticulate sound which expresses surprise mingled with displeasure. "Nay, then, even fly where ye list; for, giddy-pated as ye may be, you know how to bear you in the world."

"I will show you my esteem is less selfish than ye think for," said the page; "for I hold truth and mirth to be better than gravity and cunning—ay, and in the end to be a match for them.—You never loved me less, Sir Steward, than you do at this moment. I know you will give me no real confidence, and I am resolved to accept no false protestations as current coin. Resume your old course—suspect me as much and watch me as closely as you will, I bid you defiance—you have met with your match."

"By Heaven, young man," said the steward, with a look of bitter malignity, "if thou darest to attempt any treachery towards the House of Lochleven, thy head shall blacken in the sun from the warder's turret!"

"He cannot commit treachery who refuses trust," said the page; "and for my head, it stands as securely on my shoulders, as on any turret that ever mason built."

"Farewell, thou prating and speckled pie," said Dryfesdale, "that art so vain of thine idle tongue and variegated coat! Beware trap and lime-twigg."

"And fare thee well, thou hoarse old raven," answered the page; "thy solemn flight, sable hue, and deep croak, are no charms against bird-bolt or hail-shot, and that thou mayst find—it is open war betwixt us, each for the cause of our mistress, and God show the right!"

"Amen, and defend his own people!" said the steward. "I will let my mistress know what addition thou hast made to this mess of traitors. Good night, Monsieur Featherpate."

"Good-night, Seignior Sowersby," replied the page; and, when the old man departed, he betook himself to rest.

Chapter the Thirty-First.

Poison'd—ill fare!—dead, forsook, cast off!—

KING JOHN.

However weary Roland Graeme might be of the Castle of Lochleven—however much he might wish that the plan for Mary's escape had been perfected, I question if he ever awoke with more pleasing feelings than on the morning after George Douglas's plan for accomplishing her deliverance had been frustrated. In the first place, he had the clearest conviction that he had misunderstood the innuendo of the Abbot, and that the affections of Douglas were fixed, not on Catherine Seyton, but on the Queen; and in the second place, from the sort of explanation which had taken place betwixt the steward and him, he felt himself at liberty, without any breach of honour towards the family of Lochleven, to contribute his best aid to any scheme which should in future be formed for the Queen's escape; and, independently of the good-will which he himself had to the enterprise, he knew he could find no surer road to the favour of Catherine Seyton. He now sought but an opportunity to inform her that he had dedicated himself to this task, and fortune was propitious in affording him one which was unusually favourable.

At the ordinary hour of breakfast, it was introduced by the steward with his usual forms, who, as soon as it was placed on the board in the inner apartment, said to Roland Graeme, with a glance of sarcastic import, "I leave you, my young sir, to do the office of sewer—it has been too long rendered to the Lady Mary by one belonging to the house of Douglas."

"Were it the prime and principal who ever bore the name," said Roland, "the office were an honour to him."

The steward departed without replying to this bravade, otherwise than by a dark look of scorn. Graeme, thus left alone, busied himself as one engaged in a labour of love, to imitate, as well as he could, the grace and courtesy with which George of Douglas was wont to render his ceremonial service at meals to the Queen of Scotland. There was more than youthful vanity—there was a generous devotion in the feeling with which he took up the task, as a brave soldier assumes the place of a comrade who has fallen in the front of battle. "I am now," he said, "their only champion: and, come weal, come wo, I will be, to the best of my skill and power, as faithful, as trustworthy, as brave, as any Douglas of them all could have been."

At this moment Catherine Seyton entered alone, contrary to her custom; and not less contrary to her custom, she entered with her kerchief at her eyes. Roland Graeme approached her with beating heart and with down-cast eyes, and asked her, in a low and hesitating voice, whether the Queen were well?

"Can you suppose it?" said Catherine. "Think you her heart and body are framed of steel and iron, to endure the cruel disappointment of yester even, and the infamous taunts of yonder puritanic hag?—Would to God that I were a man, to aid her more effectually!"

"If those who carry pistols, and batons, and poniards," said the page, "are not men, they are at least Amazons; and that is as formidable."

"You are welcome to the flash of your wit, sir," replied the damsel; "I am neither in spirits to enjoy, nor to reply to it."

"Well, then," said the page, "list to me in all serious truth. And, first, let me say, that the gear last night had been smoother, had you taken me into your counsels."

"And so we meant; but who could have guessed that Master Page should choose to pass all night in the garden, like some moon-stricken knight in a Spanish romance—instead of being in his bed-room, when Douglas came to hold communication with him on our project."

"And why," said the page, "defer to so late a moment so important a confidence?"

"Because your communications with Henderson, and—with pardon—the natural impetuosity and fickleness of your disposition, made us dread to entrust you with a secret of such consequence, till the last moment."

"And why at the last moment?" said the page, offended at this frank avowal; "why at that, or any other moment, since I had the misfortune to incur so much suspicion?"

"Nay—now you are angry again," said Catherine; "and to serve you aright I should break off this talk; but I will be magnanimous, and answer your question. Know, then, our reason for trusting you was twofold. In the first place, we could scarce avoid it, since you slept in the room through which we had to pass. In the second place——"

"Nay," said the page, "you may dispense with a second reason, when the first makes your confidence in me a case of necessity."

"Good now, hold thy peace," said Catherine. "In the second place, as I said before, there is one foolish person among us, who believes that Roland Graeme's heart is warm, though his head is giddy—that his blood is pure, though it boils too hastily—and that his faith and honour are true as the load-star, though his tongue sometimes is far less than discreet."

This avowal Catherine repeated in a low tone, with her eye fixed on the floor, as if she shunned the glance of Roland while she suffered it to escape her lips—

"And this single friend," exclaimed the youth in rapture; "this only one who would do justice to the poor Roland Graeme, and whose own generous heart taught her to distinguish between follies of the brain and faults of the heart—Will you not tell me, dearest Catherine, to whom I owe my most grateful, my most heartfelt thanks?"

"Nay," said Catherine, with her eyes still fixed on the ground, "if your own heart tell you not——"

"Dearest Catherine!" said the page, seizing upon her hand, and kneeling on one knee.

"If your own heart, I say, tell you not," said Catherine, gently disengaging her hand, "it is very ungrateful; for since the maternal kindness of the Lady Fleming——"

The page started on his feet. "By Heaven, Catherine, your tongue wears as many disguises as your person! But you only mock me, cruel girl. You know the Lady Fleming has no more regard for any one, than hath the forlorn princess who is wrought into yonder piece of old figured court tapestry."

"It may be so," said Catherine Seyton, "but you should not speak so loud."

"Pshaw!" answered the page, but at the same time lowering his voice, "she cares for no one but herself and the Queen. And you know, besides, there is no one of you whose opinion I value, if I have not your own. No—not that of Queen Mary herself."

"The more shame for you, if it be so," said Catherine, with great composure.

"Nay, but, fair Catherine," said the page, "why will you thus damp my ardour, when I am devoting myself, body and soul, to the cause of your mistress?"

"It is because in doing so," said Catherine, "you debase a cause so noble, by naming along with it any lower or more selfish motive. Believe me," she said, with kindling eyes, and while the blood mantled on her cheek, "they think vilely and falsely of women—I mean of those who deserve the name—who deem that they love the gratification of their vanity, or the mean purpose of engrossing a lover's admiration and affection, better than they love the virtue and honour of the man they may be brought to prefer. He that serves his religion, his prince, and his country, with ardour and devotion, need not plead his cause with the commonplace rant of romantic passion—the woman whom he honours with his love becomes his debtor, and her corresponding affection is engaged to repay his glorious toil."

"You hold a glorious prize for such toil," said the youth, bending his eyes on her with enthusiasm.

"Only a heart which knows how to value it," said Catherine. "He that should free this injured Princess from these dungeons, and set her at liberty among her loyal and warlike nobles, whose hearts are burning to welcome her—where is the maiden in Scotland whom the love of such a hero would not honour, were she sprung from the blood royal of the land, and he the offspring of the poorest cottager that ever held a plough?"

"I am determined," said Roland, "to take the adventure. Tell me first, however, fair Catherine, and speak it as if you were confessing to the priest—this poor Queen, I know she is unhappy—but, Catherine, do you hold her innocent? She is accused of murder."

"Do I hold the lamb guilty, because it is assailed by the wolf?" answered Catherine; "do I hold yonder sun polluted, because an earth-damp sullies his beams?"

The page sighed and looked down. "Would my conviction were as deep as thine! But one thing is clear, that in this captivity she hath wrong—She rendered herself up, on a capitulation, and the terms have been refused her—I will embrace her quarrel to the death!"

"Will you—will you, indeed?" said Catherine, taking his hand in her turn. "Oh, be but firm in mind, as thou art bold in deed and quick in resolution; keep but thy plighted faith, and after ages shall honour thee as the saviour of Scotland!"

"But when I have toiled successfully to win that Leah, Honour, thou wilt not, my Catherine," said the page, "condemn me to a new term of service for that Rachel, Love?"

"Of that," said Catherine, again extricating her hand from his grasp, "we shall have full time to speak; but Honour is the elder sister, and must be won the first."

"I may not win her," answered the page; "but I will venture fairly for her, and man can do no more. And know, fair Catherine,—for you shall see the very secret thought of my heart,—that not Honour only—not only that other and fairer sister, whom you frown on me for so much as mentioning—but the stern commands of duty also, compel me to aid the Queen's deliverance."

"Indeed!" said Catherine; "you were wont to have doubts on that matter."

"Ay, but her life was not then threatened," replied Roland.

"And is it now more endangered than heretofore?" asked Catherine Seyton, in anxious terror.

"Be not alarmed," said the page; "but you heard the terms on which your royal mistress parted with the Lady of Lochleven?"

"Too well—but too well," said Catherine; "alas! that she cannot rule her princely resentment, and refrain from encounters like these!"

"That hath passed betwixt them," said Roland, "for which woman never forgives woman. I saw the Lady's brow turn pale, and then black, when, before all the menzie, and in her moment of power, the Queen humbled her to the dust by taxing her with her shame. And I heard the oath of deadly resentment and revenge which she muttered in the ear of one, who by his answer will, I judge, be but too ready an executioner of her will."

"You terrify me," said Catherine.

"Do not so take it—call up the masculine part of your spirit—we will counteract and defeat her plans, be they dangerous as they may. Why do you look upon me thus, and weep?"

"Alas!" said Catherine, "because you stand there before me a living and breathing man, in all the adventurous glow and enterprise of youth, yet still possessing the frolic spirits of childhood—there you stand, full alike of generous enterprise and childish recklessness; and if to-day, or to-morrow, or some such brief space, you lie a mangled and lifeless corpse upon the floor of these hateful dungeons, who but Catherine Seyton will be the cause of your brave and gay career being broken short as you start from the goal? Alas! she whom you have chosen to twine your wreath, may too probably have to work your shroud!"

"And be it so, Catherine," said the page, in the full glow of youthful enthusiasm; "and *do* thou work my shroud! and if thou grace it with such tears as fall now at the thought, it will honour my remains more than an earl's mantle would my living body. But shame on this faintness of heart! the time craves a firmer mood—Be a woman, Catherine, or rather be a man—thou canst be a man if thou wilt."

Catherine dried her tears, and endeavoured to smile.

"You must not ask me," she said, "about that which so much disturbs your mind; you shall know all in time—nay, you should know all now, but that—Hush! here comes the Queen."

Mary entered from her apartment, paler than usual, and apparently exhausted by a sleepless night, and by the painful thoughts which had ill supplied the place of repose; yet the languor of her looks was so far from impairing her beauty, that it only substituted the frail delicacy of the lovely woman for the majestic grace of the Queen. Contrary to her wont, her toilette had been very hastily despatched, and her hair, which was usually dressed by Lady Fleming with great care, escaping from beneath the headtire, which had been hastily adjusted, fell in long and luxuriant tresses of Nature's own curling, over a neck and bosom which were somewhat less carefully veiled than usual.

As she stepped over the threshold of her apartment, Catherine, hastily drying her tears, ran to meet her royal mistress, and having first kneeled at her feet, and kissed her hand, instantly rose, and placing herself on the other side of the Queen, seemed anxious to divide with the Lady Fleming the honour of supporting and assisting her. The page, on his part, advanced and put in order the chair of state, which she usually occupied, and having placed the cushion and footstool for her accommodation, stepped back, and stood ready for service in the place usually occupied by his predecessor, the young Seneschal. Mary's eye rested an instant on him, and could not but remark the change of persons. Hers was not the female heart which could refuse compassion, at least, to a gallant youth who had suffered in her cause, although he had been guided in his enterprise by a too presumptuous passion; and the words "Poor Douglas!" escaped from her lips, perhaps unconsciously, as she leant herself back in her chair, and put the kerchief to her eyes.

"Yes, gracious madam," said Catherine, assuming a cheerful manner, in order to cheer her sovereign, "our gallant Knight is indeed banished—the adventure was not reserved for him; but he has left behind him a youthful Esquire, as much devoted to your Grace's service, and who, by me, makes you tender of his hand and sword."

"If they may in aught avail your Grace," said Roland Graeme, bowing profoundly.

"Alas!" said the Queen, "what needs this, Catherine?—why prepare new victims to be involved in, and overwhelmed by, my cruel fortune?—were we not better cease to struggle, and ourselves sink in the tide without farther resistance, than thus drag into destruction with us every generous heart which makes an effort in our favour?—I have had but too much of plot and intrigue around me, since I was stretched an orphan child in my very cradle, while contending nobles strove which should rule in the name of the unconscious innocent. Surely time it were that all this busy and most dangerous coil should end. Let me call my prison a convent, and my seclusion a voluntary sequestration of myself from the world and its ways."

"Speak not thus, madam, before your faithful servants," said Catherine, "to discourage their zeal at once, and to break their hearts. Daughter of Kings, be not in this hour so unkingly—Come, Roland, and let us, the youngest of her followers, show ourselves worthy of her cause—let us kneel before her footstool, and implore her to be her own magnanimous self." And leading Roland Graeme to the Queen's seat, they both kneeled down before her. Mary raised herself in her chair, and sat erect, while, extending one hand to be kissed by the page, she arranged with the other the clustering locks which shaded the bold yet lovely brow of the high-spirited Catherine.

"Alas! *ma mignône*," she said, for so in fondness she often called her young attendant, "that you should thus desperately mix with my unhappy fate the fortune of your young lives!—Are they not a lovely couple, my Fleming? and is it not heart-rending to think that I must be their ruin?"

"Not so," said Roland Graeme, "it is we, gracious Sovereign, who will be your deliverers."

"*Ex oribus parvulorum!*" said the Queen, looking upward; "if it is by the mouth of these children that Heaven calls me to resume the stately thoughts which become my birth and my rights, thou wilt grant them thy protection, and to me the power of rewarding their zeal!"—Then turning to Fleming, she instantly added,—"Thou knowest, my friend, whether to make those who have served me happy, was not ever Mary's favourite pastime. When I have been rebuked by the stern preachers of the Calvinistic heresy—when I have seen the fierce countenances of my nobles averted from me, has it not been because I mixed in the harmless pleasures of the young and gay, and rather for the sake of their happiness than my own, have mingled in the masque, the song, or the dance, with the youth of my household? Well, I repent not of it—though Knox termed it sin, and Morton degradation—I was happy, because I saw happiness around me; and woe betide the wretched jealousy that can extract guilt out of the overflowings of an unguarded gaiety!—Fleming, if we are restored to our throne, shall we not have one blithesome day at a blithesome bridal, of which we must now name neither the bride nor the bridegroom? but that bridegroom shall have the barony of Blairgowrie, a fair gift even for a Queen to give, and that bride's chaplet shall be twined with the fairest pearls that ever were found in the depths of Lochlomond; and thou thyself, Mary Fleming, the best dresser of tresses that ever busked the tresses of a Queen, and who would scorn to touch those of any woman of lower rank,—thou thyself shalt, for my love, twine them into the bride's tresses.—Look, my Fleming, suppose them such clustered locks as those of our Catherine, they would not put shame upon thy skill."

So saying, she passed her hand fondly over the head of her youthful favourite, while her more aged attendant replied despondently, "Alas! madam, your thoughts stray far from home."

"They do, my Fleming," said the Queen; "but is it well or kind in you to call them back?—God knows, they have kept the perch this night but too closely—Come, I will recall the gay vision, were it but to punish them. Yes, at that blithesome bridal, Mary herself shall forget the weight of sorrows, and the toil of state, and herself once more lead a measure.—At whose wedding was it that we last danced, my Fleming? I think care has troubled my memory—yet something of it I should remember—canst thou not aid me?—I know thou canst."

"Alas! madam," replied the lady—

"What!" said Mary, "wilt thou not help us so far? this is a peevish adherence to thine own graver opinion, which holds our talk as folly. But thou art court-bred, and wilt well understand me when I say, the Queen *commands* Lady Fleming to tell her where she led the last *branle*."

With a face deadly pale, and a mien as if she were about to sink into the earth, the court-bred dame, no longer daring to refuse obedience, faltered out—"Gracious Lady—if my memory err not—it was at a masque in Holyrood—at the marriage of Sebastian."

The unhappy Queen, who had hitherto listened with a melancholy smile, provoked by the reluctance with which the Lady Fleming brought out her story, at this ill-fated word interrupted her with a shriek so wild and loud that the vaulted apartment rang, and both Roland and Catherine sprang to their feet in the utmost terror and alarm. Meantime, Mary seemed, by the train of horrible ideas thus suddenly excited, surprised not only beyond self-command, but for the moment beyond the verge of reason.

"Traitor!" she said to the Lady Fleming, "thou wouldst slay thy sovereign—Call my French guards—a *moi! a moi! mes Français!*—I am beset with traitors in mine own palace—they have murdered my husband—Rescue! rescue for the Queen of Scotland!" She started up from her chair—her features, late so exquisitely lovely in their paleness, now inflamed with the fury of frenzy, and resembling those of a Bellona. "We will take the field ourself," she said; "warn the city—warn Lothian and Fife—saddle our Spanish barb, and bid French Paris see our petronel be charged!—Better to die at the head of our brave Scotsmen, like our grandfather at Flodden, than of a broken heart, like our ill-starred father!"

"Be patient—be composed, dearest Sovereign," said Catherine: and then addressing Lady Fleming angrily, she added, "How could you say aught that reminded her of her husband?"

The word reached the ear of the unhappy Princess, who caught it up, speaking with great rapidity. "Husband!—what husband?—Not his most Christian Majesty—he is ill at ease—he cannot mount on horseback.—Not him of the Lennox—but it was the Duke of Orkney thou wouldst say."

"For God's love, madam, be patient!" said the Lady Fleming.

But the Queen's excited imagination could by no entreaty be diverted from its course. "Bid him come hither to our aid," she said, "and bring with him his lambs, as he calls them—Bowton, Hay of Talla, Black Ormiston, and his kinsman Hob—Fie! how swart they are, and how they smell of sulphur! What! closeted with Morton? Nay, if the Douglas and the Hepburn hatch the complot together, the bird, when it breaks the shell, will scare Scotland. Will it not, my Fleming?"

"She grows wilder and wilder," said Fleming; "we have too many hearers for these strange words."

"Roland," said Catherine, "in the name of God, begone! You cannot aid us here—Leave us to deal with her alone—Away—away!"

She thrust him to the door of the anteroom; yet even when he had entered that apartment, and shut the door, he could still hear the Queen talk in a loud and determined tone, as if giving forth orders, until at length the voice died away in a feeble and continued lamentation.

At this crisis Catherine entered the anteroom. "Be not too anxious," she said, "the crisis is now over; but keep the door fast—let no one enter until she is more composed."

"In the name of God, what does this mean?" said the page; "or what was there in the Lady Fleming's words to excite so wild a transport?"

"Oh, the Lady Fleming, the Lady Fleming," said Catherine, repeating the words impatiently; "the Lady Fleming is a fool—she loves her mistress, yet knows so little how to express her love, that were the Queen to ask her for very poison, she would deem it a point of duty not to resist her commands. I could have torn her starched head-tire from her formal head—The Queen should have as soon had the heart out of my body, as the word Sebastian out of my lips—That that piece of weaved tapestry should be a woman, and yet not have wit enough to tell a lie!"

"And what was this story of Sebastian?" said the page. "By Heaven, Catherine, you are all riddles alike!"

"You are as great a fool as Fleming," returned the impatient maiden; "know ye not, that on the night of Henry Darnley's murder, and at the blowing up of the Kirk of Field, the Queen's absence was owing to her attending on a masque at Holyrood, given by her to grace the marriage of this same Sebastian, who, himself a favoured servant, married one of her female attendants, who was near to her person?"

"By Saint Giles," said the page, "I wonder not at her passion, but only marvel by what forgetfulness it was that she could urge the Lady Fleming with such a question."

"I cannot account for it," said Catherine; "but it seems as if great and violent grief and horror sometimes obscure the memory, and spread a cloud like that of an exploding cannon, over the circumstances with which they are accompanied. But I may not stay here, where I came not to moralize with your wisdom, but simply to cool my resentment against that unwise Lady Fleming, which I think hath now somewhat abated, so that I shall endure her presence without any desire to damage either her curch or vasquine. Meanwhile, keep fast that door—I would not for my life that any of these heretics saw her in the unhappy state, which, brought on her as it has been by the success of their own diabolical plottings, they would not stick to call, in their snuffling cant, the judgment of Providence."

She left the apartment just as the latch of the outward door was raised from without. But the bolt which Roland had drawn on the inside, resisted the efforts of the person desirous to enter. "Who is there?" said Graeme aloud.

"It is I," replied the harsh and yet slow voice of the steward Dryfesdale.

"You cannot enter now," returned the youth.

"And wherefore?" demanded Dryfesdale, "seeing I come but to do my duty, and inquire what mean the shrieks from the apartment of the Moabitish woman. Wherefore, I say, since such is mine errand, can I not enter?"

"Simply," replied the youth, "because the bolt is drawn, and I have no fancy to undo it. I have the right side of the door to-day, as you had last night."

"Thou art ill-advised, thou malapert boy," replied the steward, "to speak to me in such fashion; but I shall inform my Lady of thine insolence."

"The insolence," said the page, "is meant for thee only, in fair guerdon of thy discourtesy to me. For thy Lady's information, I have answer more courteous—you may say that the Queen is ill at ease, and desires to be disturbed neither by visits nor messages."

"I conjure you, in the name of God," said the old man, with more solemnity in his tone than he had hitherto used, "to let me know if her malady really gains power on her!"

"She will have no aid at your hand, or at your Lady's—wherefore, begone, and trouble us no more—we neither want, nor will accept of, aid at your hands."

With this positive reply, the steward, grumbling and dissatisfied, returned down stairs.

Chapter the Thirty-Second.

*It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves, who take their humours for a warrant
To break into the bloody house of life,
And on the winking of authority
To understand a law.*

KING JOHN.

The Lady of Lochleven sat alone in her chamber, endeavouring with sincere but imperfect zeal, to fix her eyes and her attention on the black-lettered Bible which lay before her, bound in velvet and embroidery, and adorned with massive silver clasps and knosps. But she found her utmost efforts unable to withdraw her mind from the resentful recollection of what had last night passed betwixt her and the Queen, in which the latter had with such bitter taunt reminded her of her early and long-repented transgression.

"Why," she said, "should I resent so deeply that another reproaches me with that which I have never ceased to make matter of blushing to myself? and yet, why should this woman, who reaps—at least, has reaped—the fruits of my folly, and has jostled my son aside from the throne, why should she, in the face of all my domestics, and of her own, dare to upbraid me with my shame? Is she not in my power? Does she not fear me? Ha! wily tempter, I will wrestle with thee strongly, and with better suggestions than my own evil heart can supply!"

She again took up the sacred volume, and was endeavouring to fix her attention on its contents, when she was disturbed by a tap at the door of the room. It opened at her command, and the steward Dryfesdale entered, and stood before her with a gloomy and perturbed expression on his brow.

"What has chanced, Dryfesdale, that thou lookest thus?" said his mistress—"Have there been evil tidings of my son, or of my grandchildren?"

"No, Lady," replied Dryfesdale, "but you were deeply insulted last night, and I fear me thou art as deeply avenged this morning—Where is the chaplain?"

"What mean you by hints so dark, and a question so sudden? The chaplain, as you well know, is absent at Perth upon an assembly of the brethren."

"I care not," answered the steward; "he is but a priest of Baal."

"Dryfesdale," said the Lady, sternly, "what meanest thou? I have ever heard, that in the Low Countries thou didst herd with the Anabaptist preachers, those boars which tear up the vintage—But the ministry which suits me and my house must content my retainers."

"I would I had good ghostly counsel, though," replied the steward, not attending to his mistress's rebuke, and seeming to speak to himself. "This woman of Moab——"

"Speak of her with reverence," said the Lady; "she is a king's daughter."

"Be it so," replied Dryfesdale; "she goes where there is little difference betwixt her and a beggar's child—Mary of Scotland is dying."

"Dying, and in my castle!" said the Lady, starting up in alarm; "of what disease, or by what accident?"

"Bear patience, Lady. The ministry was mine."

"Thine, villain and traitor!—how didst thou dare——"

"I heard you insulted, Lady—I heard you demand vengeance—I promised you should have it, and I now bring tidings of it."

"Dryfesdale, I trust thou ravest?" said the Lady.

"I have not," replied the steward. "That which was written of me a million of years ere I saw the light, must be executed by me. She hath that in her veins that, I fear me, will soon stop the springs of life." "Cruel villain," exclaimed the Lady, "thou hast not poisoned her?" "And if I had," said Dryfesdale, "what does it so greatly merit? Men bane vermin—why not rid them of their enemies so? in Italy they will do it for a cruizedor."

"Cowardly ruffian, begone from my sight!"

"Think better of my zeal, Lady," said the steward, "and judge not without looking around you. Lindesay, Ruthven, and your kinsman Morton, poniarded Rizzio, and yet you now see no blood on their embroidery—the Lord Semple stabbed the Lord of Sanquhar—does his bonnet sit a jot more awry on his brow? What noble lives in Scotland who has not had a share, for policy or revenge, in some such dealing?—and who imputes it to them? Be not cheated with names—a dagger or a draught work to the same end, and are little unlike—a glass phial imprisons the one, and a leathern sheath the other—one deals with the brain, the other sluices the blood—Yet, I say not I gave aught to this lady."

"What dost thou mean by thus dallying with me?" said the Lady; "as thou wouldst save thy neck from the rope it merits, tell me the whole truth of this story—thou hast long been known a dangerous man."

"Ay, in my master's service I can be cold and sharp as my sword. Be it known to you, that when last on shore, I consulted with a woman of skill and power, called Nicneven, of whom the country has rung for some brief time past. Fools asked her for charms to make them beloved, misers for means to increase their store; some demanded to know the future—an idle wish, since it cannot be altered; others would have an explanation of the past—idler still, since it cannot be recalled. I heard their queries with scorn, and demanded the means of avenging myself of a deadly enemy, for I grow old, and may trust no longer to Bilboa blade. She gave me a packet—'Mix that,' said she, 'with any liquid, and thy vengeance is complete.'"

"Villain! and you mixed it with the food of this imprisoned Lady, to the dishonour of thy master's house?"

"To redeem the insulted honour of my master's house, I mixed the contents of the packet with the jar of succory-water: They seldom fail to drain it, and the woman loves it over all."

"It was a work of hell," said the Lady Lochleven, "both the asking and the granting.—Away, wretched man, let us see if aid be yet too late!"

"They will not admit us, madam, save we enter by force—I have been twice at the door, but can obtain no entrance."

"We will beat it level with the ground, if needful—And, hold—summon Randal hither instantly.—Randal, here is a foul and evil chance befallen—send off a boat instantly to Kinross, the Chamberlain Luke Lundin is said to have skill—Fetch off, too, that foul witch Nicneven; she shall first counteract her own spell, and then be burned to ashes in the island of Saint Serf. Away, away—Tell them to hoist sail and ply oar, as ever they would have good of the Douglas's hand!"

"Mother Nicneven will not be lightly found, or fetched hither on these conditions," answered Dryfesdale.

"Then grant her full assurance of safety—Look to it, for thine own life must answer for this lady's recovery."

"I might have guessed that," said Dryfesdale, sullenly; "but it is my comfort I have avenged mine own cause, as well as yours. She hath scoffed and scripped at me, and encouraged her saucy minion of a page to ridicule my stiff gait and slow speech. I felt it borne in upon me that I was to be avenged on them."

"Go to the western turret," said the Lady, "and remain there in ward until we see how this gear will terminate. I know thy resolved disposition—thou wilt not attempt escape."

"Not were the walls of the turret of egg-shells, and the lake sheeted ice," said Dryfesdale. "I am well taught, and strong in belief, that man does nought of himself; he is but the foam on the billow, which rises, bubbles, and bursts, not by its own effort, but by the mightier impulse of fate which urges him. Yet, Lady, if I may advise, amid this zeal for the life of the Jezebel of Scotland, forget not what is due to thine own honour, and keep the matter secret as you may."

So saying, the gloomy fatalist turned from her, and stalked off with sullen composure to the place of confinement allotted to him.

His lady caught at his last hint, and only expressed her fear that the prisoner had partaken of some unwholesome food, and was dangerously ill. The castle was soon alarmed and in confusion. Randal was dispatched to the shore to fetch off Lundin, with such remedies as could counteract poison; and with farther instructions to bring mother Nicneven, if she could be found, with full power to pledge the Lady of Lochleven's word for her safety.

Meanwhile the Lady of Lochleven herself held parley at the door of the Queen's apartment, and in vain urged the page to undo it.

"Foolish boy!" she said, "thine own life and thy Lady's are at stake—Open, I say, or we will cause the door to be broken down."

"I may not open the door without my royal mistress's orders," answered Roland; "she has been very ill, and now she slumbers—if you wake her by using violence, let the consequence be on you and your followers."

"Was ever woman in a strait so fearful!" exclaimed the Lady of Lochleven—"At least, thou rash boy, beware that no one tastes the food, but especially the jar of succory-water."

She then hastened to the turret, where Dryfesdale had composedly resigned himself to imprisonment. She found him reading, and demanded of him, "Was thy fell potion of speedy operation?"

"Slow," answered the steward. "The hag asked me which I chose—I told her I loved a slow and sure revenge. 'Revenge,' said I, 'is the highest-flavoured draught which man tastes upon earth, and he should sip it by little and little—not drain it up greedily at once.'"

"Against whom, unhappy man, couldst thou nourish so fell a revenge?"

"I had many objects, but the chief was that insolent page."

"The boy!—thou inhuman man!" exclaimed the lady; "what could he do to deserve thy malice?"

"He rose in your favour, and you graced him with your commissions—that was one thing. He rose in that of George Douglas's also—that was another. He was the favourite of the Calvinistic Henderson, who hated me because my spirit disowns a separated priesthood. The Moabitish Queen held him dear—winds from each opposing point blew in his favour—the old servitor of your house was held lightly among ye—above all, from the first time I saw his face, I longed to destroy him."

"What fiend have I nurtured in my house!" replied the Lady. "May God forgive me the sin of having given thee food and raiment!"

"You might not choose, Lady," answered the steward. "Long ere this castle was builded—ay, long ere the islet which sustains it reared its head above the blue water, I was destined to be your faithful slave, and you to be my ungrateful mistress. Remember you not when I plunged amid the victorious French, in the time of this lady's mother, and brought off your husband, when those who had hung at the same breasts with him dared not attempt the rescue?—Remember how I plunged into the lake when your grandson's skiff was overtaken by the tempest, boarded, and steered her safe to the land. Lady—the servant of a Scottish baron is he who regards not his own life, or that of any other, save his master. And, for the death of the woman, I had tried the potion on her sooner, had not Master George been her taster. Her death—would it not be the happiest news that Scotland ever heard? Is she not of the bloody Guisian stock, whose sword was so often red with the blood of God's saints? Is she not the daughter of the wretched tyrant James, whom Heaven cast down from his kingdom, and his pride, even as the king of Babylon was smitten?"

"Peace, villain!" said the Lady—a thousand varied recollections thronging on her mind at the mention of her royal lover's name; "Peace, and disturb not the ashes of the dead—of the royal, of the unhappy dead. Read thy Bible; and may God grant thee to avail thyself better of its contents than thou hast yet done!" She departed hastily, and as she reached the next apartment, the tears rose in her eyes so hastily, that she was compelled to stop and use her kerchief to dry them. "I expected not this," she said, "no more than to have drawn water from the dry flint, or sap from a withered tree. I saw with a dry eye the apostacy and shame of George Douglas, the hope of my son's house—the child of my love; and yet I now weep for him who has so long lain in his grave—for him to whom I owe it that his daughter can make a scoffing and a jest of my name! But she is *his* daughter—my heart, hardened against her for so many causes, relents when a glance of her eye places her father unexpectedly before me—and as often her likeness to that true daughter of the house of Guise, her detested mother, has again confirmed my resolution. But she must not—must not die in my house, and by so foul a practice. Thank God, the operation of the potion is slow, and may be counteracted. I will to her apartment once more. But oh! that hardened villain, whose fidelity we held in such esteem, and had such high proof of! What miracle can unite so much wickedness and so much truth in one bosom!"

The Lady of Lochleven was not aware how far minds of a certain gloomy and determined cast by nature, may be warped by a keen sense of petty injuries and insults, combining with the love of gain, and sense of self-interest, and amalgamated with the crude, wild, and indigested fanatical opinions which this man had gathered among the crazy sectaries of Germany; or how far the doctrines of fatalism, which he had embraced so decidedly, sear the human conscience, by representing our actions as the result of inevitable necessity.

During her visit to the prisoner, Roland had communicated to Catherine the tenor of the conversation he had had with her at the door of the apartment. The quick intelligence of that lively maiden instantly comprehended the outline of what was believed to have happened, but her prejudices hurried her beyond the truth.

"They meant to have poisoned us," she exclaimed in horror, "and there stands the fatal liquor which should have done the deed!—Ay, as soon as Douglas ceased to be our taster, our food was likely to be fatally seasoned. Thou, Roland, who shouldst have made the essay, wert readily doomed to die with us. Oh, dearest Lady Fleming, pardon, pardon, for the injuries I said to you in my anger—your words were prompted by Heaven to save our lives, and especially that of the injured Queen. But what have we now to do? that old crocodile of the lake will be presently back to shed her hypocritical tears over our dying agonies.—Lady Fleming, what shall we do?"

"Our Lady help us in our need!" she replied; "how should I tell?—unless we were to make our plaint to the Regent."

"Make our plaint to the devil," said Catherine impatiently, "and accuse his dam at the foot of his burning throne!—The Queen still sleeps—we must gain time. The poisoning hag must not know her scheme has miscarried; the old envenomed spider has but too many ways of mending her broken web. The jar of succory-water," said she—"Roland, if thou be'st a man, help me—empty the jar on the chimney or from the window—make such waste among the viands as if we had made our usual meal, and leave the fragments on cup and porringer, but taste nothing as thou lovest thy life. I will sit by the Queen, and tell her at her waking, in what a fearful pass we stand. Her sharp wit and ready spirit will teach us what is best to be done. Meanwhile, till farther notice, observe, Roland, that the Queen is in a state of torpor—that Lady Fleming is indisposed—that character" (speaking in a lower tone) "will suit her best, and save her wits some labour in vain. I am not so much indisposed, thou understandest."

"And I?" said the page—

"You?" replied Catherine, "you are quite well—who thinks it worth while to poison puppy-dogs or pages?"

"Does this levity become the time?" asked the page.

"It does, it does," answered Catherine Seyton; "if the Queen approves, I see plainly how this disconcerted attempt may do us good service."

She went to work while she spoke, eagerly assisted by Roland. The breakfast table soon displayed the appearance as if the meal had been eaten as usual; and the ladies retired as softly as possible into the Queen's sleeping apartment. At a new summons of the Lady Lochleven, the page undid the door, and admitted her into the anteroom, asking her pardon for having withstood her, alleging in excuse, that the Queen had fallen into a heavy slumber since she had broken her fast.

"She has eaten and drunken, then?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Surely," replied the page, "according to her Grace's ordinary custom, unless upon the fasts of the church."

"The jar," she said, hastily examining it, "it is empty—drank the Lady Mary the whole of this water?"

"A large part, madam; and I heard the Lady Catherine Seyton jestingly upbraid the Lady Mary Fleming with having taken more than a just share of what remained, so that but little fell to her own lot."

"And are they well in health?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Lady Fleming," said the page, "complains of lethargy, and looks duller than usual; and the Lady Catherine of Seyton feels her head somewhat more giddy than is her wont."

He raised his voice a little as he said these words, to apprise the ladies of the part assigned to each of them, and not, perhaps, without the wish of conveying to the ears of Catherine the page-like jest which lurked in the allotment.

"I will enter the Queen's bedchamber," said the Lady of Lochleven; "my business is express."

As she advanced to the door, the voice of Catherine Seyton was heard from within—"No one can enter here—the Queen sleeps."

"I will not be controlled, young lady," replied the Lady of Lochleven; "there is, I wot, no inner bar, and I will enter in your despite."

"There is, indeed, no inner bar," answered Catherine, firmly, "but there are the staples where that bar should be; and into those staples have I thrust mine arm, like an ancestress of your own, when, better employed than the Douglasses of our days, she thus defended the bedchamber of her sovereign against murderers. Try your force, then, and see whether a Seyton cannot rival in courage a maiden of the house of Douglas."

"I dare not attempt the pass at such risk," said the Lady of Lochleven: "Strange, that this Princess, with all that justly attaches to her as blameworthy, should preserve such empire over the minds of her attendants.—Damsel, I give thee my honour that I come for the Queen's safety and advantage. Awaken her, if thou lovest her, and pray her leave that I may enter—I will retire from the door the whilst."

"Thou wilt not awaken the Queen?" said the Lady Fleming.

"What choice have we?" said the ready-witted maiden, "unless you deem it better to wait till the Lady Lochleven herself plays lady of the bedchamber. Her fit of patience will not last long, and the Queen must be prepared to meet her."

"But thou wilt bring back her Grace's fit by thus disturbing her."

"Heaven forbid!" replied Catherine; "but if so, it must pass for an effect of the poison. I hope better things, and that the Queen will be able when she wakes to form her own judgment in this terrible crisis. Meanwhile, do thou, dear Lady Fleming, practise to look as dull and heavy as the alertness of thy spirit will permit."

Catherine kneeled by the side of the Queen's bed, and, kissing her hand repeatedly, succeeded at last in awakening without alarming her. She seemed surprised to find that she was ready dressed, but sat up in her bed, and appeared so perfectly composed, that Catherine Seyton, without farther preamble, judged it safe to inform her of the predicament in which they were placed. Mary turned pale, and crossed herself again and again, when she heard the imminent danger in which she had stood. But, like the Ulysses of Homer,

—*Hardly waking yet,*

Sprung in her mind the momentary wit,

and she at once understood her situation, with the dangers and advantages that attended it.

"We cannot do better," she said, after her hasty conference with Catherine, pressing her at the same time to her bosom, and kissing her forehead; "we cannot do better than to follow the scheme so happily devised by thy quick wit and bold affection. Undo the door to the Lady Lochleven—She shall meet her match in art, though not in perfidy. Fleming, draw close the curtain, and get thee behind it—thou art a better tire-woman than an actress; do but breathe heavily, and, if thou wilt, groan slightly, and it will top thy part. Hark! they come. Now, Catherine of Medicis, may thy spirit inspire me, for a cold northern brain is too blunt for this scene!"

Ushered by Catherine Seyton, and stepping as light as she could, the Lady Lochleven was shown into the twilight apartment, and conducted to the side of the couch, where Mary, pallid and exhausted from a sleepless night, and the subsequent agitation of the morning, lay extended so listlessly as might well confirm the worst fears of her hostess.

"Now, God forgive us our sins!" said the Lady of Lochleven, forgetting her pride, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the bed; "It is too true—she is murdered!"

"Who is in the chamber?" said Mary, as if awaking from a heavy sleep. "Seyton, Fleming, where are you? I heard a strange voice. Who waits?—Call Courcelles."

"Alas! her memory is at Holyrood, though her body is at Lochleven.—Forgive, madam," continued the Lady, "if I call your attention to me—I am Margaret Erskine, of the house of Mar, by marriage Lady Douglas of Lochleven."

"Oh, our gentle hostess," answered the Queen, "who hath such care of our lodgings and of our diet—We cumber you too much and too long, good Lady of Lochleven; but we now trust your task of hospitality is well-nigh ended."

"Her words go like a knife through my heart," said the Lady of Lochleven—"With a breaking heart, I pray your Grace to tell me what is your ailment, that aid may be had, if there be yet time."

"Nay, my ailment," replied the Queen, "is nothing worth telling, or worth a leech's notice—my limbs feel heavy—my heart feels cold—a prisoner's limbs and heart are rarely otherwise—fresh air, methinks, and freedom, would soon revive me; but as the Estates have ordered it, death alone can break my prison-doors."

"Were it possible, madam," said the Lady, "that your liberty could restore your perfect health, I would myself encounter the resentment of the Regent—of my son, Sir William—of my whole friends, rather than you should meet your fate in this castle."

"Alas! madam," said the Lady Fleming, who conceived the time propitious to show that her own address had been held too lightly of; "it is but trying what good freedom may work upon us; for myself, I think a free walk on the greensward would do me much good at heart."

The Lady of Lochleven rose from the bedside, and darted a penetrating look at the elder valetudinary. "Are you so evil-disposed, Lady Fleming?"

"Evil-disposed indeed, madam," replied the court dame, "and more especially since breakfast."

"Help! help!" exclaimed Catherine, anxious to break off a conversation which boded her schemes no good; "help! I say, help! the Queen is about to pass away. Aid her, Lady Lochleven, if you be a woman!"

The Lady hastened to support the Queen's head, who, turning her eyes towards her with an air of great languor, exclaimed, "Thanks, my dearest Lady of Lochleven—notwithstanding some passages of late, I have never misconstrued or misdoubted your affection to our house. It was proved, as I have heard, before I was born."

The Lady Lochleven sprung from the floor, on which she had again knelt, and, having paced the apartment in great disorder, flung open the lattice, as if to get air.

"Now, Our Lady forgive me!" said Catherine to herself. "How deep must the love of sarcasm, be implanted in the breasts of us women, since the Queen, with all her sense, will risk ruin rather than rein in her wit!" She then adventured, stooping over the Queen's person, to press her arm with her hand, saying, at the same time, "For God's sake, madam, restrain yourself!"

"Thou art too forward, maiden," said the Queen; but immediately added, in a low whisper, "Forgive me, Catherine; but when I felt the hag's murderous hands busy about my head and neck, I felt such disgust and hatred, that I must have said something, or died. But I will be schooled to better behaviour—only see that thou let her not touch me."

"Now, God be praised!" said the Lady Lochleven, withdrawing her head from the window, "the boat comes as fast as sail and oar can send wood through water. It brings the leech and a female—certainly, from the appearance, the very person I was in quest of. Were she but well out of this castle, with our honour safe, I would that she were on the top of the wildest mountain in Norway; or I would I had been there myself, ere I had undertaken this trust."

While she thus expressed herself, standing apart at one window, Roland Graeme, from the other, watched the boat bursting through the waters of the lake, which glided from its side in ripple and in foam. He, too, became sensible, that at the stern was seated the medical Chamberlain, clad in his black velvet cloak; and that his own relative, Magdalen Graeme, in her assumed character of Mother Nieneven, stood in the bow, her hands clasped together, and pointed towards the castle, and her attitude, even at that distance, expressing enthusiastic eagerness to arrive at the landing-place. They arrived there accordingly, and while the supposed witch was detained in a room beneath, the physician was ushered to the Queen's apartment, which he entered with all due professional solemnity. Catherine had, in the meanwhile, fallen back from the Queen's bed, and taken an opportunity to whisper to Roland, "Methinks, from the information of the threadbare velvet cloak and the solemn beard, there would be little trouble in haltering yonder ass. But thy grandmother, Roland—thy grandmother's zeal will ruin us, if she get not a hint to dissemble."

Roland, without reply, glided towards the door of the apartment, crossed the parlour, and safely entered the antechamber; but when he attempted to pass farther, the word "Back! Back!" echoed from one to the other, by two men armed with carabines, convinced him that the Lady of Lochleven's suspicions had not, even in the midst of her alarms, been so far lulled to sleep as to omit the precaution of stationing sentinels on her prisoners. He was compelled, therefore, to return to the parlour, or audience-chamber, in which he found the Lady of the castle in conference with her learned leech.

"A truce with your cant phrase and your solemn foppery, Lundin," in such terms she accosted the man of art, "and let me know instantly, if thou canst tell, whether this lady hath swallowed aught that is less than wholesome?"

"Nay, but, good lady—honoured patroness—to whom I am alike bonds-man in my medical and official capacity, deal reasonably with me. If this, mine illustrious patient, will not answer a question, saving with sighs and moans—if that other honourable lady will do nought but yawn in my face when I inquire after the diagnostics—and if that other young damsel, who I profess is a comely maiden—"

"Talk not to me of comeliness or of damsels," said the Lady of Lochleven, "I say, are they evil-disposed?—In one word, man, have they taken poison, ay or no?"

"Poisons, madam," said the learned leech, "are of various sorts. There is your animal poison, as the *lepus marinus*, as mentioned by Dioscorides and Galen—there are mineral and semi-mineral poisons, as those compounded of sublimate regulus of antimony, vitriol, and the arsenical salts—there are your poisons from herbs and vegetables, as the *aqua cymbalariae*, opium, aconitum, cantharides, and the like—there are also—"

"Now, out upon thee for a learned fool! and I myself am no better for expecting an oracle from such a log," said the Lady.

"Nay, but if your ladyship will have patience—if I knew what food they have partaken of, or could see but the remnants of what they have last eaten—for as to the external and internal symptoms, I can discover nought like; for, as Galen saith in his second book *de Antidotis*—"

"Away, fool!" said the Lady; "send me that hag hither; she shall avouch what it was that she hath given to the wretch Dryfesdale, or the pilniewinks and thumbikins shall wrench it out of her finger joints!"

"Art hath no enemy unless the ignorant," said the mortified Doctor; veiling, however, his remark under the Latin version, and stepping apart into a corner to watch the result.

In a minute or two Magdalen Graeme entered the apartment, dressed as we have described her at the revel, but with her muffler thrown back, and all affectation of disguise. She was attended by two guards, of whose presence she did not seem even to be conscious, and who followed her with an air of embarrassment and timidity, which was probably owing to their belief in her supernatural power, coupled with the effect produced by her bold and undaunted demeanour. She confronted the Lady of Lochleven, who seemed to endure with high disdain the confidence of her air and manner.

"Wretched woman!" said the Lady, after essaying for a moment to bear her down, before she addressed her, by the stately severity of her look, "what was that powder which thou didst give to a servant of this house, by name Jasper Dryfesdale, that he might work out with it some slow and secret vengeance?—Confess its nature and properties, or, by the honour of Douglas, I give thee to fire and stake before the sun is lower!"

"Alas!" said Magdalen Graeme in reply, "and when became a Douglas or a Douglas's man so unfurnished in his revenge, that he should seek them at the hands of a poor and solitary woman? The towers in which your captives pine away into unptied graves, yet stand fast on their foundation—the crimes wrought in them have not yet burst their vaults asunder—your men have still their cross-bows, pistolets, and daggers—why need you seek to herbs or charms for the execution of your revenges?"

"Hear me, foul hag," said the Lady Lochleven,— "but what avails speaking to thee?—Bring Dryfesdale hither, and let them be confronted together."

"You may spare your retainers the labour," replied Magdalen Graeme. "I came not here to be confronted with a base groom, nor to answer the interrogatories of James's heretical leman—I came to speak with the Queen of Scotland—Give place there!"

And while the Lady Lochleven stood confounded at her boldness, and at the reproach she had cast upon her, Magdalen Graeme strode past her into the bedchamber of the Queen, and, kneeling on the floor, made a salutation as if, in the Oriental fashion, she meant to touch the earth with her forehead.

"Hail, Princess!" she said, "hail, daughter of many a King, but graced above them all in that thou art called to suffer for the true faith—hail to thee, the pure gold of whose crown has been tried in the seven-times heated furnace of affliction—hear the comfort which God and Our Lady send thee by the mouth of thy unworthy servant.—But first"—and stooping her head she crossed herself repeatedly, and, still upon her knees, appeared to be rapidly reciting some formula of devotion.

"Seize her, and drag her to the massy-more!—to the deepest dungeon with the sorceress, whose master, the Devil, could alone have inspired her with boldness enough to insult the mother of Douglas in his own castle!"

Thus spoke the incensed Lady of Lochleven, but the physician presumed to interpose.

"I pray of you, honoured madam, she be permitted to take her course without interruption. Peradventure we shall learn something concerning the nostrum she hath ventured, contrary to law and the rules of art, to adhibit to these ladies, through the medium of the steward Dryfesdale."

"For a fool," replied the Lady of Lochleven, "thou hast counselled wisely—I will bridle my resentment till their conference be over."

"God forbid, honoured Lady," said Doctor Lundin, "that you should suppress it longer—nothing may more endanger the frame of your honoured body; and truly, if there be witchcraft in this matter, it is held by the vulgar, and even by solid authors on Demonology, that three scruples of the ashes of the witch, when she hath been well and carefully burned at a stake, is a grand Catholicon in such matter, even as they prescribe *crinis canis rabidi*, a hair of the dog that bit the patient, in cases of hydrophobia. I warrant neither treatment, being out of the regular practice of the schools; but, in the present case, there can be little harm in trying the conclusion upon this old necromancer and quacksalver—*fiat experimentum* (as we say) *in corpore vili*."

"Peace, fool!" said the Lady, "she is about to speak."

At that moment Magdalen Graeme arose from her knees, and turned her countenance on the Queen, at the same time advancing her foot, extending her arm, and assuming the mien and attitude of a Sibyl in frenzy. As her gray hair floated back from beneath her coif, and her eye gleamed fire from under its shaggy eyebrow, the effect of her expressive though emaciated features, was heightened by an enthusiasm approaching to insanity, and her appearance struck with awe all who were present. Her eyes for a time glanced wildly around as if seeking for something to aid her in collecting her powers of expression, and her lips had a nervous and quivering motion, as those of one who would fain speak, yet rejects as inadequate the words which present themselves. Mary herself caught the infection as if by a sort of magnetic influence, and raising herself from her bed, without being able to withdraw her eyes from those of Magdalen, waited as if for the oracle of a Pythoness. She waited not long, for no sooner had the enthusiast collected herself, than her gaze became instantly steady, her features assumed a determined energy, and when she began to speak, the words flowed from her with a profuse fluency, which might have passed for inspiration, and which, perhaps, she herself mistook for such.

"Arise," she said, "Queen of France and of England! Arise, Lioness of Scotland, and be not dismayed though the nets of the hunters have encircled thee! Stoop not to feign with the false ones, whom thou shalt soon meet in the field. The issue of battle is with the God of armies, but by battle thy cause shall be tried. Lay aside, then, the arts of lower mortals, and assume those which become a Queen! True defender of the only true faith, the armoury of heaven is open to thee! Faithful daughter of the Church, take the keys of St. Peter, to bind and to loose!—Royal Princess of the land, take the sword of St. Paul, to smite and to shear! There is darkness in thy destiny;—but not in these towers, not under the rule of their haughty mistress, shall that destiny be closed—In other lands the lioness may crouch to the power of the tigress, but not in her own—not in Scotland shall the Queen of Scotland long remain captive—nor is the fate of the royal Stuart in the hands of the traitor Douglas. Let the Lady of Lochleven double her bolts and deepen her dungeons, they shall not retain thee—each element shall give thee its assistance ere thou shalt continue captive—the land shall lend its earthquakes, the water its waves, the air its tempests, the fire its devouring flames, to desolate this house, rather than it shall continue the place of thy captivity.—Hear this, and tremble, all ye who fight against the light, for she says it, to whom it hath been assured!"

She was silent, and the astonished physician said, "If there was ever an *Energumene*, or possessed demoniac, in our days, there is a devil speaking with that woman's tongue!"

"Practice," said the Lady of Lochleven, recovering her surprise; "here is all practice and imposture—To the dungeon with her!"

"Lady of Lochleven," said Mary, arising from her bed, and coming forward with her wonted dignity, "ere you make arrest on any one in our presence, hear me but one word. I have done you some wrong—I believed you privy to the murderous purpose of your vassal, and I deceived you in suffering you to believe it had taken effect. I did you wrong, Lady of Lochleven, for I perceive your purpose to aid me was sincere. We tasted not of the liquid, nor are we now sick, save that we languish for our freedom."

"It is avowed like Mary of Scotland," said Magdalen Graeme; "and know, besides, that had the Queen drained the drought to the dregs, it was harmless as the water from a sainted spring. Trow ye, proud woman," she added, addressing herself to the Lady of Lochleven, "that I—I—would have been the wretch to put poison into the hands of a servant or vassal of the house of Lochleven, knowing whom that house contained? as soon would I have furnished drug to slay my own daughter!"

"Am I thus bearded in mine own castle?" said the Lady; "to the dungeon with her!—she shall abye what is due to the vender of poisons and practiser of witchcraft."

"Yet hear me for an instant, Lady of Lochleven," said Mary; "and do you," to Magdalen, "be silent at my command.—Your steward, lady, has by confession attempted my life, and those of my household, and this woman hath done her best to save them, by furnishing him with what was harmless, in place of the fatal drugs which he expected. Methinks I propose to you but a fair exchange when I say I forgive your vassal with all my heart, and leave vengeance to God, and to his conscience, so that you also forgive the boldness of this woman in your presence; for we trust you do not hold it as a crime, that she substituted an innocent beverage for the mortal poison which was to have drenched our cup."

"Heaven forfend, madam," said the Lady, "that I should account that a crime which saved the house of Douglas from a foul breach of honour and hospitality! We have written to our son touching our vassal's delict, and he must abide his doom, which will most likely be death. Touching this woman, her trade is damnable by Scripture, and is mortally punished by the wise laws of our ancestry—she also must abide her doom."

"And have I then," said the Queen, "no claim on the house of Lochleven for the wrong I have so nearly suffered within their walls? I ask but in requital, the life of a frail and aged woman, whose brain, as yourself may judge, seems somewhat affected by years and suffering."

"If the Lady Mary," replied the inflexible Lady of Lochleven, "hath been menaced with wrong in the house of Douglas, it may be regarded as some compensation, that her complots have cost that house the exile of a valued son."

"Plead no more for me, my gracious Sovereign," said Magdalen Graeme, "nor abase yourself to ask so much as a gray hair of my head at her hands. I knew the risk at which I served my Church and my Queen, and was ever prompt to pay my poor life as the ransom. It is a comfort to think, that in slaying me, or in restraining my freedom, or even in injuring that single gray hair, the house, whose honour she boasts so highly, will have filled up the measure of their shame by the breach of their solemn written assurance of safety.—And taking from her bosom a paper, she handed it to the Queen.

"It is a solemn assurance of safety in life and limb," said Queen Mary, "with space to come and go, under the hand and seal of the Chamberlain of Kinross, granted to Magdalen Graeme, commonly called Mother Nicneven, in consideration of her consenting to put herself, for the space of twenty-four hours, if required, within the iron gate of the Castle of Lochleven."

"Knave!" said the Lady, turning to the Chamberlain, "how dared you grant her such a protection?"

"It was by your Ladyship's orders, transmitted by Randal, as he can bear witness," replied Doctor Lundin; "nay, I am only like the pharmacopolist, who compounds the drugs after the order of the mediciner."

"I remember—I remember," answered the Lady; "but I meant the assurance only to be used in case, by residing in another jurisdiction, she could not have been apprehended under our warrant."

"Nevertheless," said the Queen, "the Lady of Lochleven is bound by the action of her deputy in granting the assurance."

"Madam," replied the Lady, "the house of Douglas have never broken their safe-conduct, and never will—too deeply did they suffer by such a breach of trust, exercised on themselves, when your Grace's ancestor, the second James, in defiance of the rights of hospitality, and of his own written assurance of safety, poniarded the brave Earl of Douglas with his own hand, and within two yards of the social board, at which he had just before sat the King of Scotland's honoured guest."

"Methinks," said the Queen, carelessly, "in consideration of so very recent and enormous a tragedy, which I think only chanced some six-score years ago, the Douglasses should have shown themselves less tenacious of the company of their sovereigns, than you, Lady of Lochleven, seem to be of mine."

"Let Randal," said the Lady, "take the hag back to Kinross, and set her at full liberty, discharging her from our bounds in future, on peril of her head.—And let your wisdom," to the Chamberlain, "keep her company. And fear not for your character, though I send you in such company; for, granting her to be a witch, it would be a waste of fagots to burn you for a wizard."

The crest-fallen Chamberlain was preparing to depart; but Magdalen Graeme, collecting herself, was about to reply, when the Queen interposed, saying, "Good mother, we heartily thank you for your unfeigned zeal towards our person, and pray you, as our liege-woman, that you abstain from whatever may lead you into personal danger; and, farther, it is our will that you depart without a word of farther parley with any one in this castle. For thy present guerdon, take this small reliquary—it was given to us by our uncle the Cardinal, and hath had the benediction of the Holy Father himself;—and now depart in peace and in silence.—For you, learned sir," continued the Queen, advancing to the Doctor, who made his reverence in a manner doubly embarrassed by the awe of the Queen's presence, which made him fear to do too little, and by the apprehension of his lady's displeasure, in case he should chance to do too much—"for you, learned sir, as it was not your fault, though surely our own good fortune, that we did not need your skill at this time, it would not become us, however circumstanced, to suffer our leech to leave us without such guerdon as we can offer."

With these words, and with the grace which never forsook her, though, in the present case, there might lurk under it a little gentle ridicule, she offered a small embroidered purse to the Chamberlain, who, with extended hand and arched back, his learned face stooping until a physiognomist might have practised the metoposcological science upon it, as seen from behind betwixt his gambadoes, was about to accept of the professional recompense offered by so fair as well as illustrious a hand. But the Lady interposed, and, regarding the Chamberlain, said aloud, "No servant of our house, without instantly relinquishing that character, and incurring withal our highest displeasure, shall dare receive any gratuity at the hand of the Lady Mary."

Sadly and slowly the Chamberlain raised his depressed stature into the perpendicular attitude, and left the apartment dejectedly, followed by Magdalen Graeme, after, with mute but expressive gesture, she had kissed the reliquary with which the Queen had presented her, and, raising her clasped hands and uplifted eyes towards Heaven, had seemed to entreat a benediction upon the royal dame. As she left the castle, and went towards the quay where the boat lay, Roland Graeme, anxious to communicate with her if possible, threw himself in her way, and might have succeeded in exchanging a few words with her, as she was guarded only by the dejected Chamberlain and his halberdiers, but she seemed to have taken, in its most strict and literal acceptation, the command to be silent which she had received from the Queen; for, to the repeated signs of her grandson, she only replied by laying her finger on her lip. Dr. Lundin was not so reserved. Regret for the handsome gratuity, and for the compulsory task of self-denial imposed on him, had grieved the spirit of that worthy officer and learned mediciner—"Even thus, my friend," said he, squeezing the page's hand as he bade him farewell, "is merit rewarded. I came to cure this unhappy Lady—and I profess she well deserves the trouble, for, say what they will of her, she hath a most winning manner, a sweet voice, a gracious smile, and a most majestic wave of her hand. If she was not poisoned, say, my dear Master Roland, was that fault of mine, I being ready to cure her if she had?—and now I am denied the permission to accept my well-earned honorarium—O Galen! O Hippocrates! is the graduate's cap and doctor's scarlet brought to this pass! *Frustra fatigamus remediis aegros!*"

He wiped his eyes, stepped on the gunwale, and the boat pushed off from the shore, and went merrily across the lake, which was dimpled by the summer wind. [Footnote: A romancer, to use a Scottish phrase, wants but a hair to make a tether of. The whole detail of the steward's supposed conspiracy against the life of Mary, is grounded upon an expression in one of her letters, which affirms, that Jasper Dryfesdale, one of the Laird of Lochleven's servants, had threatened to murder William Douglas, (for his share in the Queen's escape,) and averred that he would plant a dagger in Mary's own heart.—CHALMER'S *Life of Queen Mary*, vol. i. p. 278.]

Chapter the Thirty-Third.

*Death distant?—No, alas! he's ever with us,
And shakes the dart at us in all our actings:
He lurks within our cup, while we're in health;
Sits by our sick-bed, mocks our medicines;
We cannot walk, or sit, or ride, or travel,
But Death is by to seize us when he lists.*

THE SPANISH FATHER.

From the agitating scene in the Queen's presence-chamber, the Lady of Lochleven retreated to her own apartment, and ordered the steward to be called before her.

"Have they not disarmed thee, Dryfesdale?" she said, on seeing him enter, accoutred, as usual, with sword and dagger.

"No!" replied the old man; "how should they?—Your ladyship, when you commanded me to ward, said nought of laying down my arms; and, I think none of your menials, without your order, or your son's, dare approach Jasper Dryfesdale for such a purpose.—Shall I now give up my sword to you?—it is worth little now, for it has fought for your house till it is worn down to old iron, like the pantler's old chipping knife."

"You have attempted a deadly crime—poison under trust."

"Under trust?—hem!—I know not what your ladyship thinks of it, but the world without thinks the trust was given you even for that very end; and you would have been well off had it been so ended as I proposed, and you neither the worse nor the wiser."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the lady, "and fool as well as villain, who could not even execute the crime he had planned!"

"I bid as fair for it as man could," replied Dryfesdale; "I went to a woman—a witch and a Papist—if I found not poison, it was because it was otherwise predestined. I tried fair for it; but the half-done job may be clouted, if you will."

"Villain! I am even now about to send off an express messenger to my son, to take order how thou shouldst be disposed of. Prepare thyself for death, if thou canst."

"He that looks on death, Lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as that which he may not shun, and which has its own fixed and certain hour, is ever prepared for it. He that is hanged in May will eat no flaunes [footnote: Pancakes] in midsummer—so there is the moan made for the old serving-man. But whom, pray I, send you on so fair an errand?"

"There will be no lack of messengers," answered his mistress.

"By my hand, but there will," replied the old man; "your castle is but poorly manned, considering the watches that you must keep, having this charge—There is the warder, and two others, whom you discarded for tampering with Master George; then for the warder's tower, the bailie, the donjon—five men mount each guard,

and the rest must sleep for the most part in their clothes. To send away another man, were to harass the sentinels to death—unthrifty misuse for a household. To take in new soldiers were dangerous, the charge requiring tried men. I see but one thing for it—I will do your errand to Sir William Douglas myself."

"That were indeed a resource!—And on what day within twenty years would it be done?" said the Lady.

"Even with the speed of man and horse," said Dryfesdale; "for though I care not much about the latter days of an old serving-man's life, yet I would like to know as soon as may be, whether my neck is mine own or the hangman's."

"Holdest thou thy own life so lightly?" said the Lady.

"Else I had reckoned more of that of others," said the predestinarian—"What is death?—it is but ceasing to live—And what is living?—a weary return of light and darkness, sleeping and waking, being hungered and eating. Your dead man needs neither candle nor can, neither fire nor feather-bed; and the joiner's chest serves him for an eternal frieze-jerkin."

"Wretched man! believest thou not that after death comes the judgment?"

"Lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as my mistress, I may not dispute your words; but, as spiritually speaking, you are still but a burner of bricks in Egypt, ignorant of the freedom of the saints; for, as was well shown to me by that gifted man, Nicolaus Schoefferbach, who was martyred by the bloody Bishop of Munster, he cannot sin who doth but execute that which is predestined, since—"

"Silence!" said the Lady, interrupting him,—"Answer me not with thy bold and presumptuous blasphemy, but hear me. Thou hast been long the servant of our house—"

"The born servant of the Douglas—they have had the best of me—I served them since I left Lockerbie: I was then ten years old, and you may soon add the threescore to it."

"Thy foul attempt has miscarried, so thou art guilty only in intention. It were a deserved deed to hang thee on the warder's tower; and yet in thy present mind, it were but giving a soul to Satan. I take thine offer, then—Go hence—here is my packet—I will add to it but a line, to desire him to send me a faithful servant or two to complete the garrison. Let my son deal with you as he will. If thou art wise, thou wilt make for Lockerbie so soon as thy foot touches dry land, and let the packet find another bearer; at all rates, look it miscarries not."

"Nay, madam," replied he—"I was born, as I said, the Douglas's servant, and I will be no corbie-messenger in mine old age—your message to your son shall be done as truly by me as if it concerned another man's neck. I take my leave of your honour."

The Lady issued her commands, and the old man was ferried over to the shore, to proceed on his extraordinary pilgrimage. It is necessary the reader should accompany him on his journey, which Providence had determined should not be of long duration.

On arriving at the village, the steward, although his disgrace had transpired, was readily accommodated with a horse, by the Chamberlain's authority; and the roads being by no means esteemed safe, he associated himself with Auchtermuchty, the common carrier, in order to travel in his company to Edinburgh.

The worthy waggoner, according to the established customs of all carriers, stage-coachmen, and other persons in public authority, from the earliest days to the present, never wanted good reasons for stopping upon the road, as often as he would; and the place which had most captivation for him as a resting-place was a change-house, as it was termed, not very distant from a romantic dell, well known by the name of Keirie Craigs. Attractions of a kind very different from those which arrested the progress of John Auchtermuchty and his wains, still continue to hover round this romantic spot, and none has visited its vicinity without a desire to remain long and to return soon.

Arrived near his favourite *howss*, not all the authority of Dryfesdale (much diminished indeed by the rumours of his disgrace) could prevail on the carrier, obstinate as the brutes which he drove, to pass on without his accustomed halt, for which the distance he had travelled furnished little or no pretence. Old Keltie, the landlord, who had bestowed his name on a bridge in the neighbourhood of his quondam dwelling, received the carrier with his usual festive cordiality, and adjourned with him into the house, under pretence of important business, which, I believe, consisted in their emptying together a mutchkin stoup of usquebaugh. While the worthy host and his guest were thus employed, the discarded steward, with a double portion of moroseness in his gesture and look, walked discontentedly into the kitchen of the place, which was occupied but by one guest. The stranger was a slight figure, scarce above the age of boyhood, and in the dress of a page, but bearing an air of haughty aristocratic boldness and even insolence in his look and manner, that might have made Dryfesdale conclude he had pretensions to superior rank, had not his experience taught him how frequently these airs of superiority were assumed by the domestics and military retainers of the Scottish nobility.—"The pilgrim's morning to you, old sir," said the youth; "you come, as I think, from Lochleven Castle—What news of our bonny Queen?—a fairer dove was never pent up in so wretched a dovecot."

"They that speak of Lochleven, and of those whom its walls contain," answered Dryfesdale, "speak of what concerns the Douglas; and they who speak of what concerns the Douglas, do it at their peril."

"Do you speak from fear of them, old man, or would you make a quarrel for them?—I should have deemed your age might have cooled your blood."

"Never, while there are empty-pated coxcombs at each corner to keep it warm."

"The sight of thy gray hairs keeps mine cold," said the boy, who had risen up and now sat down again.

"It is well for thee, or I had cooled it with this holly-rod," replied the steward. "I think thou be'st one of those swash-bucklers, who brawl in alehouses and taverns; and who, if words were pikes, and oaths were Andrew Ferraras, would soon place the religion of Babylon in the land once more, and the woman of Moab upon the throne."

"Now, by Saint Bennet of Seyton," said the youth, "I will strike thee on the face, thou foul-mouthed old railing heretic!"

"Saint Bennet of Seyton," echoed the steward; "a proper warrant is Saint Bennet's, and for a proper nest of wolf-birds like the Seytons!—I will arrest thee as a traitor to King James and the good Regent.—Ho! John Auchtermuchty, raise aid against the King's traitor!"

So saying, he laid his hand on the youth's collar, and drew his sword. John Auchtermuchty looked in, but, seeing the naked weapon, ran faster out than he entered. Keltie, the landlord, stood by and helped neither party, only exclaiming, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! for the love of Heaven!" and so forth. A struggle ensued, in which the young man, chafed at Dryfesdale's boldness, and unable, with the ease he expected, to extricate himself from the old man's determined grasp, drew his dagger, and with the speed of light, dealt him three wounds in the breast and body, the least of which was mortal. The old man sunk on the ground with a deep groan, and the host set up a piteous exclamation of surprise.

"Peace, ye brawling hound!" said the wounded steward; "are dagger-stabs and dying men such rarities in Scotland, that you should cry as if the house were falling?—Youth, I do not forgive thee, for there is nought betwixt us to forgive. Thou hast done what I have done to more than one—And I suffer what I have seen them suffer—it was all ordained to be thus and not otherwise. But if thou wouldst do me right, thou wilt send this packet safely to the hands of Sir William Douglas; and see that my memory suffer not, as if I would have loitered on mine errand for fear of my life."

The youth, whose passion had subsided the instant he had done the deed, listened with sympathy and attention, when another person, muffled in his cloak, entered the apartment, and exclaimed—"Good God! Dryfesdale, and expiring!"

"Ay, and Dryfesdale would that he had been dead," answered the wounded man, "rather than that his ears had heard the words of the only Douglas that ever was false—but yet it is better as it is. Good my murderer, and the rest of you, stand back a little, and let me speak with this unhappy apostate.—Kneel down by me, Master George—You have heard that I failed in my attempt to take away that Moabitish stumbling-block and her retinue—I gave them that which I thought would have removed the temptation out of thy path—and this, though I had other reasons to show to thy mother and others, I did chiefly purpose for love of thee."

"For the love of me, base poisoner!" answered Douglas, "wouldst thou have committed so horrible, so unprovoked a murder, and mentioned my name with it?"

"And wherefore not, George of Douglas?" answered Dryfesdale. "Breath is now scarce with me, but I would spend my last gasp on this argument. Hast thou not, despite the honour thou owest to thy parents, the faith that is due to thy religion, the truth that is due to thy king, been so carried away by the charms of this beautiful sorceress, that thou wouldst have helped her to escape from her prison-house, and lent her thine arm again to ascend the throne, which she had made a

place of abomination?—Nay, stir not from me—my hand, though fast stiffening, has yet force enough to hold thee—What dost thou aim at?—to wed this witch of Scotland?—I warrant thee, thou mayest succeed—her heart and hand have been oft won at a cheaper rate, than thou, fool that thou art, would think thyself happy to pay. But, should a servant of thy father's house have seen thee embrace the fate of the idiot Darnley, or of the villain Bothwell—the fate of the murdered fool, or of the living pirate—while an ounce of ratsbane would have saved thee?"

"Think on God, Dryfesdale," said George Douglas, "and leave the utterance of those horrors—Repent, if thou canst—if not, at least be silent.—Seyton, aid me to support this dying wretch, that he may compose himself to better thoughts, if it be possible."

"Seyton!" answered the dying man; "Seyton! Is it by a Seyton's hand that I fall at last?—There is something of retribution in that—since the house had nigh lost a sister by my deed." Fixing his fading eyes on the youth, he added, "He hath her very features and presence!—Stoop down, youth, and let me see thee closer—I would know thee when we meet in yonder world, for homicides will herd together there, and I have been one." He pulled Seyton's face, in spite of some resistance, closer to his own, looked at him fixedly, and added, "Thou hast begun young—thy career will be the briefer—ay, thou wilt be met with, and that anon—a young plant never throve that was watered with an old man's blood.—Yet why blame I thee? Strange turns of fate," he muttered, ceasing to address Seyton; "I designed what I could not do, and he has done what he did not perchance design.—Wondrous, that our will should ever oppose itself to the strong and uncontrollable tide of destiny—that we should strive with the stream when we might drift with the current! My brain will serve me to question it no farther—I would Schoefferbach were here—yet why?—I am on a course which the vessel can hold without a pilot.—Farewell, George of Douglas—I die true to thy father's house." He fell into convulsions at these words, and shortly after expired.

Seyton and Douglas stood looking on the dying man, and when the scene was closed, the former was the first to speak. "As I live, Douglas, I meant not this, and am sorry; but he laid hands on me, and compelled me to defend my freedom, as I best might, with my dagger. If he were ten times thy friend and follower, I can but say that I am sorry."

"I blame thee not, Seyton," said Douglas, "though I lament the chance. There is an overruling destiny above us, though not in the sense in which it was viewed by that wretched man, who, beguiled by some foreign mystagogue, used the awful word as the ready apology for whatever he chose to do—we must examine the packet."

They withdrew into an inner room, and remained deep in consultation, until they were disturbed by the entrance of Keltie, who, with an embarrassed countenance, asked Master George Douglas's pleasure respecting the disposal of the body. "Your honour knows," he added, "that I make my bread by living men, not by dead corpses; and old Mr. Dryfesdale, who was but a sorry customer while he was alive, occupies my public room now that he is deceased, and can neither call for ale nor brandy."

"Tie a stone round his neck," said Seyton, "and when the sun is down, have him to the Loch of Ore, heave him in, and let him alone for finding out the bottom."

"Under your favour, sir," said George Douglas, "it shall not be so.—Keltie, thou art a true fellow to me, and thy having been so shall advantage thee. Send or take the body to the chapel at Scotland's wall, or to the church of Ballanry, and tell what tale thou wilt of his having fallen in a brawl with some unruly guests of thine. Auchtermuchty knows nought else, nor are the times so peaceful as to admit close-looking into such accounts."

"Nay, let him tell the truth," said Seyton, "so far as it harms not our scheme.—Say that Henry Seyton met with him, my good fellow;—I care not a brass bodle for the feud."

"A feud with the Douglas was ever to be feared, however," said George, displeasure mingling with his natural deep gravity of manner.

"Not when the best of the name is on my side," replied Seyton.

"Alas! Henry, if thou meanest me, I am but half a Douglas in this emprise—half head, half heart, and half hand.—But I will think on one who can never be forgotten, and be all, or more, than any of my ancestors was ever.—Keltie, say it was Henry Seyton did the deed; but beware, not a word of me!—Let Auchtermuchty carry this packet" (which he had resealed with his own signet) "to my father at Edinburgh; and here is to pay for the funeral expenses, and thy loss of custom."

"And the washing of the floor," said the landlord, "which will be an extraordinary job; for blood they say, will scarcely ever cleanse out."

"But as for your plan," said George of Douglas, addressing Seyton, as if in continuation of what they had been before treating of, "it has a good face; but, under your favour, you are yourself too hot and too young, besides other reasons which are much against your playing the part you propose."

"We will consult the Father Abbot upon it," said the youth. "Do you ride to Kinross to-night?"

"Ay—so I purpose," answered Douglas; "the night will be dark, and suits a muffled man. [Footnote: Generally, a disguised man; originally one who wears the cloak or mantle muffled round the lower part of the face to conceal his countenance. I have on an ancient, piece of iron the representation of a robber thus accoutred, endeavouring to make his way into a house, and opposed by a mastiff, to whom he in vain offers food. The motto is *spernit dona fides*. It is part of a fire-grate said to have belonged to Archbishop Sharpe.]—Keltie, I forgot, there should be a stone laid on that man's grave, recording his name, and his only merit, which was being a faithful servant to the Douglas."

"What religion was the man of?" said Seyton; "he used words, which make me fear I have sent Satan a subject before his time."

"I can tell you little of that," said George Douglas; "he was noted for disliking both Rome and Geneva, and spoke of lights he had learned among the fierce sectaries of Lower Germany—an evil doctrine it was, if we judge by the fruits. God keep us from presumptuously judging of Heaven's secrets!"

"Amen!" said the young Seyton, "and from meeting any encounter this evening."

"It is not thy wont to pray so," said George Douglas.

"No! I leave that to you," replied the youth, "when you are seized with scruples of engaging with your father's vassals. But I would fain have this old man's blood off these hands of mine ere I shed more—I will confess to the Abbot to-night, and I trust to have light penance for ridding the earth of such a miscreant. All I sorrow for is, that he was not a score of years younger—He drew steel first, however, that is one comfort."

Chapter the Thirty-Fourth.

*Ay, Pedro,—Come you here with mask and lantern.
Ladder of ropes and other moonshine tools—
Why, youngster, thou mayst cheat the old Duenna,
Flatter the waiting-woman, bribe the valet;
But know, that I her father play the Gryphon,
Tameless and sleepless, proof to fraud or bribe,
And guard the hidden, treasure of her beauty.*

THE SPANISH FATHER.

The tenor of our tale carries us back to the Castle of Lochleven, where we take up the order of events on the same remarkable day on which Dryfesdale had been dismissed from the castle. It was past noon, the usual hour of dinner, yet no preparations seemed made for the Queen's entertainment. Mary herself had retired into her own apartment, where she was closely engaged in writing. Her attendants were together in the presence-chamber, and much disposed to speculate on the delay of the dinner; for it may be recollected that their breakfast had been interrupted. "I believe in my conscience," said the page, "that having found the poisoning scheme miscarry, by having gone to the wrong merchant for their deadly wares, they are now about to try how famine will work upon us."

Lady Fleming was somewhat alarmed at this surmise, but comforted herself by observing that the chimney of the kitchen had reeked that whole day in a manner which contradicted the supposition.—Catherine Seyton presently exclaimed, "They were bearing the dishes across the court, marshalled by the Lady Lochleven herself, dressed out in her highest and stiffest ruff, with her partlet and sleeves of cyprus, and her huge old-fashioned farthingale of crimson velvet."

"I believe on my word," said the page, approaching the window also, "it was in that very farthingale that she captivated the heart of gentle King Jamie, which procured our poor Queen her precious bargain of a brother."

"That may hardly be, Master Roland," answered the Lady Fleming, who was a great recorder of the changes of fashion, "since the farthingales came first in when the Queen Regent went to Saint Andrews, after the battle of Pinkie, and were then called *Vertugardins*—"

She would have proceeded farther in this important discussion, but was interrupted by the entrance of the Lady of Lochleven, who preceded the servants bearing the dishes, and formally discharged the duty of tasting each of them. Lady Fleming regretted, in courtly phrase, "that the Lady of Lochleven should have undertaken so troublesome an office."

"After the strange incident of this day, madam," said the Lady, "it is necessary for my honour and that of my son, that I partake whatever is offered to my involuntary guest. Please to inform the Lady Mary that I attend her commands."

"Her Majesty," replied Lady Fleming, with due emphasis on the word, "shall be informed that the Lady Lochleven waits."

Mary appeared instantly, and addressed her hostess with courtesy, which even approached to something more cordial. "This is nobly done, Lady Lochleven," she said; "for though we ourselves apprehend no danger under your roof, our ladies have been much alarmed by this morning's chance, and our meal will be the more cheerful for your presence and assurance. Please you to sit down."

The Lady Lochleven obeyed the Queen's commands, and Roland performed the office of carver and attendant as usual. But, notwithstanding what the Queen had said, the meal was silent and unsocial; and every effort which Mary made to excite some conversation, died away under the solemn and chill replies of the Lady of Lochleven. At length it became plain that the Queen, who had considered these advances as a condescension on her part, and who piqued herself justly on her powers of pleasing, became offended at the repulsive conduct of her hostess. After looking with a significant glance at Lady Fleming and Catherine, she slightly shrugged her shoulders, and remained silent. A pause ensued, at the end of which the Lady Douglas spoke:—"I perceive, madam, I am a check on the mirth of this fair company. I pray you to excuse me—I am a widow—alone here in a most perilous charge—deserted by my grandson—betrayed by my servant—I am little worthy of the grace you do me in offering me a seat at your table, where I am aware that wit and pastime are usually expected from the guests."

"If the Lady Lochleven is serious," said the Queen, "we wonder by what simplicity she expects our present meals to be seasoned with mirth. If she is a widow, she lives honoured and uncontrolled, at the head of her late husband's household. But I know at least of one widowed woman in the world, before whom the words desertion and betrayal ought never to be mentioned, since no one has been made so bitterly acquainted with their import."

"I meant not, madam, to remind you of your misfortunes, by the mention of mine," answered the Lady Lochleven, and there was again a deep silence.

Mary at length addressed Lady Fleming. "We can commit no deadly sins here, *ma bonne*, where we are so well warded and looked to; but if we could, this Carthusian silence might be useful as a kind of penance. If thou hast adjusted my wimple amiss, my Fleming, or if Catherine hath made a wry stitch in her broidery, when she was thinking of something else than her work, or if Roland Graeme hath missed a wild-duck on the wing, and broke a quarrel-pane [Footnote: Diamond-shaped; literally, formed like the head of *aquarrel*, or arrow for the crossbow.] of glass in the turret window, as chanced to him a week since, now is the time to think on your sins and to repent of them."

"Madam, I speak with all reverence," said the Lady Lochleven; "but I am old, and claim the privilege of age. Methinks your followers might find fitter subjects for repentance than the trifles you mention, and so mention—once more, I crave your pardon—as if you jested with sin and repentance both."

"You have been our taster, Lady Lochleven," said the Queen, "I perceive you would eke out your duty with that of our Father Confessor—and since you choose that our conversation should be serious, may I ask you why the Regent's promise—since your son so styles himself—has not been kept to me in that respect? From time to time this promise has been renewed, and as constantly broken. Methinks those who pretend themselves to so much gravity and sanctity, should not debar from others the religious succours which their consciences require."

"Madam, the Earl of Murray was indeed weak enough," said the Lady Lochleven, "to give so far way to your unhappy prejudices, and a religioner of the Pope presented himself on his part at our town of Kinross. But the Douglass is Lord of his own castle, and will not permit his threshold to be darkened, no not for a single moment, by an emissary belonging to the Bishop of Rome."

"Methinks it were well, then," said Mary, "that my Lord Regent would send me where there is less scruple and more charity."

"In this, madam," answered the Lady Lochleven, "you mistake the nature both of charity and of religion. Charity giveth to those who are in delirium the medicaments which may avail their health, but refuses those enticing cates and liquors which please the palate, but augment the disease."

"This your charity, Lady Lochleven, is pure cruelty, under the hypocritical disguise of friendly care. I am oppressed amongst you as if you meant the destruction both of my body and soul; but Heaven will not endure such iniquity for ever, and they who are the most active agents in it may speedily expect their reward."

At this moment Randal entered the apartment, with a look so much perturbed, that the Lady Fleming uttered a faint scream, the Queen was obviously startled, and the Lady of Lochleven, though too bold and proud to evince any marked signs of alarm, asked hastily what was the matter?

"Dryfesdale has been slain, madam," was the reply; "murdered as soon as he gained the dry land by young Master Henry Seyton."

It was now Catherine's turn to start and grow pale—"Has the murderer of the Douglas's vassal escaped?" was the Lady's hasty question.

"There was none to challenge him but old Keltie, and the carrier Auchtermuchty," replied Randal; "unlikely men to stay one of the frackest [Footnote: Boldest—most forward.] youths in Scotland of his years, and who was sure to have friends and partakers at no great distance."

"Was the deed completed?" said the Lady.

"Done, and done thoroughly," said Randal; "a Seyton seldom strikes twice—But the body was not despoiled, and your honour's packet goes forward to Edinburgh by Auchtermuchty, who leaves Keltie-Bridge early to-morrow—marry, he has drunk two bottles of aquavita to put the fright out of his head, and now sleeps them off beside his cart-avers." [Footnote: Cart-horses.]

There was a pause when this fatal tale was told. The Queen and Lady Douglas looked on each other, as if each thought how she could best turn the incident to her own advantage in the controversy, which was continually kept alive betwixt them—Catherine Seyton kept her kerchief at her eyes and wept.

"You see, madam, the bloody maxims and practice of the deluded Papists," said Lady Lochleven.

"Nay, madam," replied the Queen, "say rather you see the deserved judgment of Heaven upon a Calvinistical poisoner."

"Dryfesdale was not of the Church of Geneva, or of Scotland," said the Lady of Lochleven, hastily.

"He was a heretic, however," replied Mary; "there is but one true and unerring guide; the others lead alike into error."

"Well, madam, I trust it will reconcile you to your retreat, that this deed shows the temper of those who might wish you at liberty. Blood-thirsty tyrants, and cruel men-quellers are they all, from the Clan-Ranald and Clan-Tosach in the north, to the Fernihurst and Buccleuch in the south—the murdering Seytons in the east, and—"

"Methinks, madam, you forget that I am a Seyton?" said Catherine, withdrawing her kerchief from her face, which was now coloured with indignation.

"If I had forgot it, fair mistress, your forward bearing would have reminded me," said Lady Lochleven.

"If my brother has slain the villain that would have poisoned his Sovereign, and his sister," said Catherine, "I am only so far sorry that he should have spared the hangman his proper task. For aught farther, had it been the best Douglas in the land, he would have been honoured in falling by the Seyton's sword."

"Farewell, gay mistress," said the Lady of Lochleven, rising to withdraw; "it is such maidens as you, who make giddy-fashioned revellers and deadly brawlers. Boys must needs rise, forsooth, in the grace of some sprightly damsel, who thinks to dance through life as through a French galliard." She then made her

reverence to the Queen, and added, "Do you also, madam, fare you well, till curfew time, when I will make, perchance, more bold than welcome in attending upon your supper board.—Come with me, Randal, and tell me more of this cruel fact."

"Tis an extraordinary chance," said the Queen, when she had departed; "and, villain as he was, I would this man had been spared time for repentance. We will cause something to be done for his soul, if we ever attain our liberty, and the Church will permit such grace to a heretic.—But, tell me, Catherine, *ma mignône*—this brother of thine, who is so *frack*, as the fellow called him, bears he the same wonderful likeness to thee as formerly?"

"If your Grace means in temper, you know whether I am so *frack* as the serving-man spoke him."

"Nay, thou art prompt enough in all reasonable conscience," replied the Queen; "but thou art my own darling notwithstanding—But I meant, is this thy twin-brother as like thee in form and features as formerly? I remember thy dear mother alleged it as a reason for destining thee to the veil, that, were ye both to go at large, thou wouldst surely get the credit of some of thy brother's mad pranks."

"I believe, madam," said Catherine, "there are some unusually simple people even yet, who can hardly distinguish betwixt us, especially when, for diversion's sake, my brother hath taken a female dress,"—and as she spoke, she gave a quick glance at Roland Graeme, to whom this conversation conveyed a ray of light, welcome as ever streamed into the dungeon of a captive through the door which opened to give him freedom.

"He must be a handsome cavalier this brother of thine, if he be so like you," replied Mary. "He was in France, I think, for these late years, so that I saw him not at Holyrood."

"His looks, madam, have never been much found fault with," answered Catherine Seyton; "but I would he had less of that angry and heady spirit which evil times have encouraged amongst our young nobles. God knows, I grudge not his life in your Grace's quarrel; and love him for the willingness with which he labours for your rescue. But wherefore should he brawl with an old ruffianly serving-man, and stain at once his name with such a broil, and his hands with the blood of an old and ignoble wretch?"

"Nay, be patient, Catherine; I will not have thee traduce my gallant young knight. With Henry for my knight, and Roland Graeme for my trusty squire, methinks I am like a princess of romance, who may shortly set at defiance the dungeons and the weapons of all wicked sorcerers.—But my head aches with the agitation of the day. Take me *La Mer Des Histoires*, and resume where we left off on Wednesday.—Our Lady help thy head, girl, or rather may she help thy heart!—I asked thee for the Sea of Histories, and thou hast brought *La Cronique d'Amour*."

Once embarked upon the Sea of Histories, the Queen continued her labours with her needle, while Lady Fleming and Catherine read to her alternately for two hours.

As to Roland Graeme, it is probable that he continued in secret intent upon the Chronicle of Love, notwithstanding the censure which the Queen seemed to pass upon that branch of study. He now remembered a thousand circumstances of voice and manner, which, had his own prepossession been less, must surely have discriminated the brother from the sister; and he felt ashamed, that, having as it were by heart every particular of Catherine's gestures, words, and manners, he should have thought her, notwithstanding her spirits and levity, capable of assuming the bold step, loud tones, and forward assurance, which accorded well enough with her brother's hasty and masculine character. He endeavoured repeatedly to catch a glance of Catherine's eye, that he might judge how she was disposed to look upon him since he had made the discovery, but he was unsuccessful; for Catherine, when she was not reading herself, seemed to take so much interest in the exploits of the Teutonic knights against the Heathens of Esthonia and Livonia, that he could not surprise her eye even for a second. But when, closing the book, the Queen commanded their attendance in the garden, Mary, perhaps of set purpose, (for Roland's anxiety could not escape so practised an observer,) afforded him a favourable opportunity of accosting his mistress. The Queen commanded them to a little distance, while she engaged Lady Fleming in a particular and private conversation; the subject whereof we learn, from another authority, to have been the comparative excellence of the high standing ruff and the falling band. Roland must have been duller, and more sheepish than ever was youthful lover, if he had not endeavoured to avail himself of this opportunity.

"I have been longing this whole evening to ask of you, fair Catherine," said the page, "how foolish and unapprehensive you must have thought me, in being capable to mistake betwixt your brother and you?"

"The circumstance does indeed little honour to my rustic manners," said Catherine, "since those of a wild young man were so readily mistaken for mine. But I shall grow wiser in time; and with that view I am determined not to think of your follies, but to correct my own."

"It will be the lighter subject of meditation of the two," said Roland.

"I know not that," said Catherine, very gravely; "I fear we have been both unpardonably foolish."

"I have been mad," said Roland, "unpardonably mad. But you, lovely Catherine—"

"I," said Catherine, in the same tone of unusual gravity, "have too long suffered you to use such expressions towards me—I fear I can permit it no longer, and I blame myself for the pain it may give you."

"And what can have happened so suddenly to change our relation to each other, or alter, with such sudden cruelty, your whole deportment to me?"

"I can hardly tell," replied Catherine, "unless it is that the events of the day have impressed on my mind the necessity of our observing more distance to each other. A chance similar to that which betrayed to you the existence of my brother, may make known to Henry the terms you have used to me; and, alas! his whole conduct, as well as his deed, this day, makes me too justly apprehensive of the consequences."

"Fear nothing for that, fair Catherine," answered the page; "I am well able to protect myself against risks of that nature."

"That is to say," replied she, "that you would fight with my twin-brother to show your regard for his sister? I have heard the Queen say, in her sad hours, that men are, in love or in hate, the most selfish animals of creation; and your carelessness in this matter looks very like it. But be not so much abashed—you are no worse than others."

"You do me injustice, Catherine," replied the page, "I thought but of being threatened with a sword, and did not remember in whose hand your fancy had placed it. If your brother stood before me, with his drawn weapon in his hand, so like as he is to you in word, person, and favour, he might shed my life's blood ere I could find in my heart to resist him to his injury."

"Alas!" said she, "it is not my brother alone. But you remember only the singular circumstances in which we have met in equality, and I may say in intimacy. You think not, that whenever I re-enter my father's house, there is a gulf between us you may not pass, but with peril of your life.—Your only known relative is of wild and singular habits, of a hostile and broken clan [Footnote: A broken clan was one who had no chief able to find security for their good behaviour—a clan of outlaws; And the Graemes of the Debateable Land were in that condition.]—the rest of your lineage unknown—forgive me that I speak what is the undeniable truth."

"Love, my beautiful Catherine, despises genealogies," answered Roland Graeme.

"Love may, but so will not the Lord Seyton," rejoined the damsel.

"The Queen, thy mistress and mine, she will intercede. Oh! drive me not from you at the moment I thought myself most happy!—and if I shall aid her deliverance, said not yourself that you and she would become my debtors?"

"All Scotland will become your debtors," said Catherine; "but for the active effects you might hope from our gratitude, you must remember I am wholly subjected to my father; and the poor Queen is, for a long time, more likely to be dependant on the pleasure of the nobles of her party, than possessed of power to control them."

"Be it so," replied Roland; "my deeds shall control prejudice itself—it is a bustling world, and I will have my share. The Knight of Avenel, high as he now stands, rose from as obscure an origin as mine."

"Ay!" said Catherine, "there spoke the doughty knight of romance, that will cut his way to the imprisoned princess, through fiends and fiery dragons!"

"But if I can set the princess at large, and procure her the freedom of her own choice," said the page, "where, dearest Catherine, will that choice alight?"

"Release the princess from duress, and she will tell you," said the damsel; and breaking off the conversation abruptly, she joined the Queen so suddenly, that Mary exclaimed, half aloud—

"No more tidings of evil import—no dissension, I trust, in my limited household?"—Then looking on Catherine's blushing cheek, and Roland's expanded brow and glancing eye—"No—no," she said, "I see all is well—*Ma petite mignone*, go to my apartment and fetch me down—let me see—ay, fetch my pomander box."

And having thus disposed of her attendant in the manner best qualified to hide her confusion, the Queen added, speaking apart to Roland, "I should at least have two grateful subjects of Catherine and you; for what sovereign but Mary would aid true love so willingly?—Ay, you lay your hand on your sword—your *petite flamberge à rien* there—Well, short time will show if all the good be true that is protested to us—I hear them toll curfew from Kinross. To our chamber—this old dame hath promised to be with us again at our evening meal. Were it not for the hope of speedy deliverance, her presence would drive me distracted. But I will be patient."

"I profess," said Catherine, who just then entered, "I would I could be Henry, with all a man's privileges, for one moment—I long to throw my plate at that confect of pride and formality, and ill-nature."

The Lady Fleming reprimanded her young companion for this explosion of impatience; the Queen laughed, and they went to the presence-chamber, where almost immediately entered supper, and the Lady of the castle. The Queen, strong in her prudent resolutions, endured her presence with great fortitude and equanimity, until her patience was disturbed by a new form, which had hitherto made no part of the ceremonial of the castle. When the other attendant had retired, Randal entered, bearing the keys of the castle fastened upon a chain, and, announcing that the watch was set, and the gates locked, delivered the keys with all reverence to the Lady of Lochleven.

The Queen and her ladies exchanged with each other a look of disappointment, anger, and vexation; and Mary said aloud, "We cannot regret the smallness of our court, when we see our hostess discharge in person so many of its offices. In addition to her charges of principal steward of our household and grand almoner, she has to-night done duty as captain of our guard."

"And will continue to do so in future, madam," answered the Lady Lochleven, with much gravity; "the history of Scotland may teach me how ill the duty is performed, which is done by an accredited deputy—We have heard, madam, of favourites of later date, and as little merit, as Oliver Sinclair." [Footnote: A favourite, and said to be an unworthy one, of James V.]

"Oh, madam," replied the Queen, "my father had his female as well as his male favourites—there were the Ladies Sandilands and Olifaunt, [Footnote: The names of these ladies, and a third frail favourite of James, are preserved in an epigram too *gaillard* for quotation.] and some others, methinks; but their names cannot survive in the memory of so grave a person as you."

The Lady Lochleven looked as if she could have slain the Queen on the spot, but commanded her temper and retired from the apartment, bearing in her hand the ponderous bunch of keys.

"Now God be praised for that woman's youthful frailty!" said the Queen. "Had she not that weak point in her character, I might waste my words on her in vain—But that stain is the very reverse of what is said of the witch's mark—I can make her feel there, though she is otherwise insensible all over.—But how say you, girls—here is a new difficulty—How are these keys to be come by?—there is no deceiving or bribing this dragon, I trow."

"May I crave to know," said Roland, "whether, if your Grace were beyond the walls of the castle, you could find means of conveyance to the firm land, and protection when you are there?"

"Trust us for that, Roland," said the Queen; "for to that point our scheme is indifferent well laid."

"Then if your Grace will permit me to speak my mind, I think I could be of some use in this matter."

"As how, my good youth?—speak on," said the Queen, "and fearlessly."

"My patron the Knight of Avenel used to compel the youth educated in his household to learn the use of axe and hammer, and working in wood and iron—he used to speak of old northern champions, who forged their own weapons, and of the Highland Captain, Donald nan Ord, or Donald of the Hammer, whom he himself knew, and who used to work at the anvil with a sledge-hammer in each hand. Some said he praised this art, because he was himself of churl's blood. However, I gained some practice in it, as the Lady Catherine Seyton partly knows; for since we were here, I wrought her a silver brooch."

"Ay," replied Catharine, "but you should tell her Grace that your workmanship was so indifferent that it broke to pieces next day, and I flung it away."

"Believe her not, Roland," said the Queen; "she wept when it was broken, and put the fragments into her bosom. But for your scheme—could your skill avail to forge a second set of keys?"

"No, madam, because I know not the wards. But I am convinced I could make a set so like that hateful bunch which the Lady bore off even now, that could they be exchanged against them by any means, she would never dream she was possessed of the wrong."

"And the good dame, thank Heaven, is somewhat blind," said the Queen; "but then for a forge, my boy, and the means of labouring unobserved?"

"The armourer's forge, at which I used sometimes to work with him, is the round vault at the bottom of the turret—he was dismissed with the warder for being supposed too much attached to George Douglas. The people are accustomed to see me work there, and I warrant I shall find some excuse that will pass current with them for putting bellows and anvil to work."

"The scheme has a promising face," said the Queen; "about it, my lad, with all speed, and beware the nature of your work is not discovered."

"Nay, I will take the liberty to draw the bolt against chance visitors, so that I will have time to put away what I am working upon, before I undo the door."

"Will not that of itself attract suspicion, in a place where it is so current already?" said Catherine.

"Not a whit," replied Roland; "Gregory the armourer, and every good hammerman, locks himself in when he is about some master piece of craft. Besides, something must be risked."

"Part we then to-night," said the Queen, "and God bless you my children!—If Mary's head ever rises above water, you shall all rise along with her."

Chapter the Thirty-Fifth.

*It is a time of danger, not of revel,
When churchmen turn to masquers.*

SPANISH FATHER.

The enterprise of Roland Graeme appeared to prosper. A trinket or two, of which the work did not surpass the substance, (for the materials were silver, supplied by the Queen,) were judiciously presented to those most likely to be inquisitive into the labours of the forge and anvil, which they thus were induced to reckon profitable to others and harmless in itself. Openly, the page was seen working about such trifles. In private, he forged a number of keys resembling so nearly in weight and in form those which were presented every evening to the Lady Lochleven, that, on a slight inspection, it would have been difficult to perceive the difference. He brought them to the dark rusty colour by the use of salt and water; and, in the triumph of his art, presented them at length to Queen Mary in her presence-chamber, about an hour before the tolling of the curfew. She looked at them with pleasure, but at the same time with doubt.—"I allow," she said, "that the Lady Lochleven's eyes, which are not of the clearest, may be well deceived, could we pass those keys on her in place of the real implements of her tyranny. But how is this to be done, and which of my little court dare attempt this *tour de jongleur* with any chance of success? Could we but engage her in some earnest matter of argument—but those which I hold with her, always have been of a kind which make her grasp her keys the faster, as if she said to herself—Here I hold what sets me above your taunts and reproaches—And even for her liberty, Mary Stuart could not stoop to speak the proud heretic fair.—What shall we do? Shall

Lady Fleming try her eloquence in describing the last new head-tire from Paris?—alas! the good dame has not changed the fashion of her head-gear since Pinkie-field for aught that I know. Shall my *mignône* Catherine sing to her one of those touching airs, which draw the very souls out of me and Roland Graeme?—Alas! Dame Margaret Douglas would rather hear a Huguenot psalm of Clement Marrot, sung to the tune of *Reveillee vous, belle endormie*.—Cousins and liege counsellors, what is to be done, for our wits are really astray in this matter?—Must our man-at-arms and the champion of our body, Roland Graeme, manfully assault the old lady, and take the keys from her *par voie du fait*?"

"Nay! with your Grace's permission," said Roland, "I do not doubt being able to manage the matter with more discretion; for though, in your Grace's service, I do not fear—"

"A host of old women," interrupted Catherine, "each armed with rock and spindle, yet he has no fancy for pikes and partisans, which might rise at the cry of *Help! a Douglas, a Douglas!*"

"They that do not fear fair ladies' tongues," continued the page, "need dread nothing else.—But, gracious Liege, I am well-nigh satisfied that I could pass the exchange of these keys on the Lady Lochleven; but I dread the sentinel who is now planted nightly in the garden, which, by necessity, we must traverse."

"Our last advices from our friends on the shore have promised us assistance in that matter," replied the Queen.

"And is your Grace well assured of the fidelity and watchfulness of those without?"

"For their fidelity, I will answer with my life, and for their vigilance, I will answer with my life—I will give thee instant proof, my faithful Roland, that they are ingenuous and trusty as thyself. Come hither—Nay, Catherine, attend us; we carry not so deft a page into our private chamber alone. Make fast the door of the parlour, Fleming, and warn us if you hear the least step—or stay, go thou to the door, Catherine," (in a whisper, "thy ears and thy wits are both sharper.)—Good Fleming, attend us thyself"—(and again she whispered, "her reverend presence will be as safe a watch on Roland as thine can—so be not jealous, *mignone*.")

Thus speaking, they were lighted by the Lady Fleming into the Queen's bedroom, a small apartment enlightened by a projecting window.

"Look from that window, Roland," she said; "see you amongst the several lights which begin to kindle, and to glimmer palely through the gray of the evening from the village of Kinross-seest thou, I say, one solitary spark apart from the others, and nearer it seems to the verge of the water?—It is no brighter at this distance than the torch of the poor glowworm, and yet, my good youth, that light is more dear to Mary Stuart, than every star that twinkles in the blue vault of heaven. By that signal, I know that more than one true heart is plotting my deliverance; and without that consciousness, and the hope of freedom it gives me, I had long since stooped to my fate, and died of a broken heart. Plan after plan has been formed and abandoned, but still the light glimmers; and while it glimmers, my hope lives.—Oh! how many evenings have I sat musing in despair over our ruined schemes, and scarce hoping that I should again see that blessed signal; when it has suddenly kindled, and, like the lights of Saint Elmo in a tempest, brought hope and consolation, where there, was only dejection and despair!"

"If I mistake not," answered Roland, "the candle shines from the house of Blinkhoolie, the mail-gardener."

"Thou hast a good eye," said the Queen; "it is there where my trusty lieges—God and the saints pour blessings on them!—hold consultation for my deliverance. The voice of a wretched captive would die on these blue waters, long ere it could mingle in their councils; and yet I can hold communication—I will confide the whole to thee—I am about to ask those faithful friends if the moment for the great attempt is nigh.—Place the lamp in the window, Fleming." She obeyed, and immediately withdrew it. No sooner had she done so, than the light in the cottage of the gardener disappeared.

"Now count," said Queen Mary, "for my heart beats so thick that I cannot count myself."

The Lady Fleming began deliberately to count one, two, three, and when she had arrived at ten, the light on the shore showed its pale twinkle.

"Now, our Lady be praised!" said the Queen; "it was but two nights since, that the absence of the light remained while I could tell thirty. The hour of deliverance approaches. May God bless those who labour in it with such truth to me!—alas! with such hazard to themselves—and bless you, too, my children!—Come, we must to the audience-chamber again. Our absence might excite suspicion, should they serve supper."

They returned to the presence-chamber, and the evening concluded as usual.

The next morning, at dinner-time, an unusual incident occurred. While Lady Douglas of Lochleven performed her daily duty of assistant and taster at the Queen's table, she was told a man-at-arms had arrived, recommended by her son, but without any letter or other token than what he brought by word of mouth.

"Hath he given you that token?" demanded the Lady.

"He reserved it, as I think, for your Ladyship's ear," replied Randal.

"He doth well," said the Lady; "tell him to wait in the hall—But no—with your permission, madam," (to the Queen) "let him attend me here."

"Since you are pleased to receive your domestics in my presence," said the Queen, "I cannot choose—"

"My infirmities must plead my excuse, madam," replied the Lady; "the life I must lead here ill suits with the years which have passed over my head, and compels me to waive ceremonial."

"Oh, my good Lady," replied the Queen, "I would there were nought in this your castle more strongly compulsive than the cobweb chains of ceremony; but bolts and bars are harder matters to contend with."

As she spoke, the person announced by Randal entered the room, and Roland Graeme at once recognized in him the Abbot Ambrosius.

"What is your name, good fellow?" said the Lady.

"Edward Glendinning," answered the Abbot, with a suitable reverence.

"Art thou of the blood of the Knight of Avenel?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Ay, madam, and that nearly," replied the pretended soldier.

"It is likely enough," said the Lady, "for the Knight is the son of his own good works, and has risen from obscure lineage to his present high rank in the Estate—But he is of sure truth and approved worth, and his kinsman is welcome to us. You hold, unquestionably, the true faith?"

"Do not doubt of it, madam," said the disguised churchman.

"Hast thou a token to me from Sir William Douglas?" said the Lady.

"I have, madam," replied he; "but it must be said in private."

"Thou art right," said the Lady, moving towards the recess of a window; "say in what does it consist?"

"In the words of an old bard," replied the Abbot.

"Repeat them," answered the Lady; and he uttered, in a low tone, the lines from an old poem, called The Howlet,—

"O Douglas! Douglas!

Tender and true."

"Trusty Sir John Holland!" [Footnote: Sir John Holland's poem of the Howlet is known to collectors by the beautiful edition presented to the Bannatyne Club, by Mr. David Laing.] said the Lady Douglas, apostrophizing the poet, "a kinder heart never inspired a rhyme, and the Douglas's honour was ever on thy heart-string! We receive you among our followers, Glendinning—But, Randal, see that he keep the outer ward only, till we shall hear more touching him from our son.—Thou fearest not the night air. Glendinning?"

"In the cause of the Lady before whom I stand, I fear nothing, madam," answered the disguised Abbot.

"Our garrison, then, is stronger by one trustworthy soldier," said the matron—"Go to the buttery, and let them make much of thee."

When the Lady Lochleven had retired, the Queen said to Roland Graeme, who was now almost constantly in her company, "I spy comfort in that stranger's countenance; I know not why it should be so, but I am well persuaded he is a friend."

"Your Grace's penetration does not deceive you," answered the page; and he informed her that the Abbot of St. Mary's himself played the part of the newly arrived soldier.

The Queen crossed herself and looked upwards. "Unworthy sinner that I am," she said, "that for my sake a man so holy, and so high in spiritual office, should wear the garb of a base sworder, and run the risk of dying the death of a traitor!"

"Heaven will protect its own servant, madam," said Catherine Seyton; "his aid would bring a blessing on our undertaking, were it not already blest for its own sake."

"What I admire in my spiritual father," said Roland, "was the steady front with which he looked on me, without giving the least sign of former acquaintance. I did not think the like was possible, since I have ceased to believe that Henry was the same person with Catherine."

"But marked you not how astuciously the good father," said the Queen, "eluded the questions of the woman Lochleven, telling her the very truth, which yet she received not as such?"

Roland thought in his heart, that when the truth was spoken for the purpose of deceiving, it was little better than a lie in disguise. But it was no time to agitate such questions of conscience.

"And now for the signal from the shore," exclaimed Catherine; "my bosom tells me we shall see this night two lights instead of one gleam from that garden of Eden—And then, Roland, do you play your part manfully, and we will dance on the greensward like midnight fairies!"

Catherine's conjecture misgave not, nor deceived her. In the evening two beams twinkled from the cottage, instead of one; and the page heard, with beating heart, that the new retainer was ordered to stand sentinel on the outside of the castle. When he intimated this news to the Queen, she held her hand out to him—he knelt, and when he raised it to his lips in all dutiful homage, he found it was damp and cold as marble. "For God's sake, madam, droop not now,—sink not now!"

"Call upon our Lady, my Liege," said the Lady Fleming—"call upon your tutelar saint."

"Call the spirits of the hundred kings you are descended from," exclaimed the page; "in this hour of need, the resolution of a monarch were worth the aid of a hundred saints."

"Oh! Roland Graeme," said Mary, in a tone of deep despondency, "be true to me—many have been false to me. Alas! I have not always been true to myself. My mind misgives me that I shall die in bondage, and that this bold attempt will cost all our lives. It was foretold me by a soothsayer in France, that I should die in prison, and by a violent death, and here comes the hour—Oh, would to God it found me prepared!"

"Madam," said Catherine Seyton, "remember you are a Queen. Better we all died in bravely attempting to gain our freedom, than remained here to be poisoned, as men rid them of the noxious vermin that haunt old houses."

"You are right, Catherine," said the Queen; "and Mary will bear her like herself. But alas! your young and buoyant spirit can ill spell the causes which have broken mine. Forgive me, my children, and farewell for a while—I will prepare both mind and body for this awful venture."

They separated, till again called together by the tolling of the curfew. The Queen appeared grave, but firm and resolved; the Lady Fleming, with the art of an experienced courtier, knew perfectly how to disguise her inward tremors; Catherine's eye was fired, as if with the boldness of the project, and the half smile which dwelt upon her beautiful mouth seemed to contemn all the risk and all the consequences of discovery; Roland, who felt how much success depended on his own address and boldness, summoned together his whole presence of mind, and if he found his spirits flag for a moment, cast his eye upon Catherine, whom he thought he had never seen look so beautiful.—"I may be foiled," he thought, "but with this reward in prospect, they must bring the devil to aid them ere they cross me." Thus resolved, he stood like a greyhound in the slips, with hand, heart, and eye intent upon making and seizing opportunity for the execution of their project.

The keys had, with the wonted ceremonial, been presented to the Lady Lochleven. She stood with her back to the casement, which, like that of the Queen's apartment, commanded a view of Kinross, with the church, which stands at some distance from the town, and nearer to the lake, then connected with the town by straggling cottages. With her back to this casement, then, and her face to the table, on which the keys lay for an instant while she tasted the various dishes which were placed there, stood the Lady of Lochleven, more provokingly intent than usual—so at least it seemed to her prisoners—upon the huge and heavy bunch of iron, the implements of their restraint. Just when, having finished her ceremony as taster of the Queen's table, she was about to take up the keys, the page, who stood beside her, and had handed her the dishes in succession, looked sideways to the churchyard, and exclaimed he saw corpse-candles in the churchyard. The Lady of Lochleven was not without a touch, though a slight one, of the superstitions of the time; the fate of her sons made her alive to omens, and a corpse-light, as it was called, in the family burial-place boded death. She turned her head towards the casement—saw a distant glimmering—forgot her charge for one second, and in that second were lost the whole fruits of her former vigilance. The page held the forged keys under his cloak, and with great dexterity exchanged them for the real ones. His utmost address could not prevent a slight clash as he took up the latter bunch. "Who touches the keys?" said the Lady; and while the page answered that the sleeve of his cloak had stirred them, she looked round, possessed herself of the bunch which now occupied the place of the genuine keys, and again turned to gaze on the supposed corpse-candles.

"I hold these gleams," she said, after a moment's consideration, "to come, not from the churchyard, but from the hut of the old gardener Blinkhoolie. I wonder what thrift that churl drives, that of late he hath ever had light in his house till the night grew deep. I thought him an industrious, peaceful man—If he turns resetter of idle companions and night-walkers, the place must be rid of him."

"He may work his baskets perchance," said the page, desirous to stop the train of her suspicion.

"Or nets, may he not?" answered the Lady.

"Ay, madam," said Roland, "for trout and salmon."

"Or for fools and knaves," replied the Lady: "but this shall be looked after to-morrow.—I wish your Grace and your company a good evening.—Randal, attend us."

And Randal, who waited in the antechamber after having surrendered his bunch of keys, gave his escort to his mistress as usual, while, leaving the Queen's apartments, she retired to her own [End of paragraph missing in original]

"To-morrow" said the page, rubbing his hands with glee as he repeated the Lady's last words, "fools look to-morrow, and wise folk use to-night.—May I pray you, my gracious Liege, to retire for one half hour, until all the castle is composed to rest? I must go and rub with oil these blessed implements of our freedom. Courage and constancy, and all will go well, provided our friends on the shore fail not to send the boat you spoke of."

"Fear them not," said Catherine, "they are true as steel—if our dear mistress do but maintain her noble and royal courage."

[Footnote: In the dangerous expedition to Aberdeenshire, Randolph, the English Ambassador, gives Cecil the following account of Queen Mary's demeanour:—

"In all those garbules, I assure your honour, I never saw the Queen merrier, never dismayed; nor never thought I that stomach to be in her that I find. She repented nothing but, when the Lords and others, at Inverness, came in the morning from the watches, that she was not a man, to know what life it was to lye all night in the fields, or to walk upon the causeway with a jack and a knaps-cap, a Glasgow buckler, and a broadsword."—RANDOLPH to CECIL, *September 18, 1562.*

The writer of the above letter seems to have felt the same impression which Catherine Seyton, in the text, considered as proper to the Queen's presence among her armed subjects.

"Though we neither thought nor looked for other than on that day to have fought or never-what desperate blows would not have been given, when every man should have fought in the sight of so noble a Queen, and so many fair ladies, our enemies to have taken them from us, and we to save our honours, not to be reft of them, your honour can easily judge."—*The same to the same, September 24, 1562.*]

"Doubt not me, Catherine," replied the Queen; "a while since I was overborne, but I have recalled the spirit of my earlier and more sprightly days, when I used to accompany my armed nobles, and wish to be myself a man, to know what life it was to be in the fields with sword and buckler, jack, and knapsap."

"Oh, the lark lives not a gayer life, nor sings a lighter and gayer song than the merry soldier," answered Catherine. "Your Grace shall be in the midst of them soon, and the look of such a liege Sovereign will make each of your host worth three in the hour of need:—but I must to my task."

"We have but brief time," said Queen Mary; "one of the two lights in the cottage is extinguished—that shows the boat is put off."

"They will row very slow," said the page, "or kent where depth permits, to avoid noise.—To our several tasks—I will communicate with the good Father."

At the dead hour of midnight, when all was silent in the castle, the page put the key into the lock of the wicket which opened into the garden, and which was at the bottom of a staircase which descended from the Queen's apartment. "Now, turn smooth and softly, thou good bolt," said he, "if ever oil softened rust!" and his precautions had been so effectual, that the bolt revolved with little or no sound of resistance. He ventured not to cross the threshold, but exchanging a word with the disguised Abbot, asked if the boat were ready?

"This half hour," said the sentinel. "She lies beneath the wall, too close under the islet to be seen by the warder, but I fear she will hardly escape his notice in putting off again."

"The darkness," said the page, "and our profound silence, may take her off unobserved, as she came in. Hildebrand has the watch on the tower—a heavy-headed knave, who holds a can of ale to be the best headpiece upon a night-watch. He sleeps, for a wager."

"Then bring the Queen," said the Abbot, "and I will call Henry Seyton to assist them to the boat."

On tiptoe, with noiseless step and suppressed breath, trembling at every rustle of their own apparel, one after another the fair prisoners glided down the winding stair, under the guidance of Roland Graeme, and were received at the wicket-gate by Henry Seyton and the churchman. The former seemed instantly to take upon himself the whole direction of the enterprise. "My Lord Abbot," he said, "give my sister your arm—I will conduct the Queen—and that youth will have the honour to guide Lady Fleming."

This was no time to dispute the arrangement, although it was not that which Roland Graeme would have chosen. Catherine Seyton, who well knew the garden path, tripped on before like a sylph, rather leading the Abbot than receiving assistance—the Queen, her native spirit prevailing over female fear, and a thousand painful reflections, moved steadily forward, by the assistance of Henry Seyton—while the Lady Fleming, encumbered with her fears and her helplessness Roland Graeme, who followed in the rear, and who bore under the other arm a packet of necessities belonging to the Queen. The door of the garden, which communicated with the shore of the islet, yielded to one of the keys of which Roland had possessed himself, although not until he had tried several,—a moment of anxious terror and expectation. The ladies were then partly led, partly carried, to the side of the lake, where a boat with six rowers attended them, the men couched along the bottom to secure them from observation. Henry Seyton placed the Queen in the stern; the Abbot offered to assist Catherine, but she was seated by the Queen's side before he could utter his proffer of help; and Roland Graeme was just lifting Lady Fleming over the boat-side, when a thought suddenly occurred to him, and exclaiming, "Forgotten, forgotten! wait for me but one half-minute," he replaced on the shore the helpless Lady of the bed-chamber, threw the Queen's packet into the boat, and sped back through the garden with the noiseless speed of a bird on the wing.

"By Heaven, he is false at last!" said Seyton; "I ever feared it!"

"He is as true," said Catherine, "as Heaven itself, and that I will maintain."

"Be silent, minion," said her brother, "for shame, if not for fear—Fellows, put off, and row for your lives!"

"Help me, help me on board!" said the deserted Lady Fleming, and that louder than prudence warranted.

"Put off—put off!" cried Henry Seyton; "leave all behind, so the Queen is safe."

"Will you permit this, madam?" said Catherine, imploringly; "you leave your deliverer to death."

"I will not," said the Queen.—"Seyton I command you to stay at every risk."

"Pardon me, madam, if I disobey," said the intractable young man; and with one hand lifting in Lady Fleming, he began himself to push off the boat.

She was two fathoms' length from the shore, and the rowers were getting her head round, when Roland Graeme, arriving, bounded from the beach, and attained the boat, overturning Seyton, on whom he lighted. The youth swore a deep but suppressed oath, and stopping Graeme as he stepped towards the stern, said, "Your place is not with high-born dames—keep at the head and trim the vessel—Now give way—give way—Row, for God and the Queen!"

The rowers obeyed, and began to pull vigorously.

"Why did ye not muffle the oars?" said Roland Graeme; "the dash must awaken the sentinel—Row, lads, and get out of reach of shot; for had not old Hildebrand, the warder, supped upon poppy-porridge, this whispering must have waked him."

"It was all thine own delay," said Seyton; "thou shalt reckon, with me hereafter for that and other matters."

But Roland's apprehension was verified too instantly to permit him to reply. The sentinel, whose slumbering had withstood the whispering, was alarmed by the dash of the oars. His challenge was instantly heard. "A boat—a boat!—bring to, or I shoot!" And, as they continued to ply their oars, he called aloud, "Treason! treason!" rung the bell of the castle, and discharged his harquebuss at the boat. The ladies crowded on each other like startled wild fowl, at the flash and report of the piece, while the men urged the rowers to the utmost speed. They heard more than one ball whiz along the surface of the lake, at no great distance from their little bark; and from the lights, which glanced like meteors from window to window, it was evident the whole castle was alarmed, and their escape discovered.

"Pull!" again exclaimed Seyton; "stretch to your oars, or I will spur you to the task with my dagger—they will launch a boat immediately."

"That is cared for," said Roland; "I locked gate and wicket on them when I went back, and no boat will stir from the island this night, if doors of good oak and bolts of iron can keep men within stone-walls.—And now I resign my office of porter of Lochleven, and give the keys to the Kelpie's keeping."

As the heavy keys plunged in the lake, the Abbot,—who till then had been repeating his prayers, exclaimed, "Now, bless thee, my son! for thy ready prudence puts shame on us all."

[Footnote: It is well known that the escape of Queen Mary from Lochleven was effected by George Douglas, the youngest brother of Sir William Douglas, the lord of the castle; but the minute circumstances of the event have been a good deal confused, owing to two agents having been concerned in it who bore the same name. It has been always supposed that George Douglas was induced to abet Mary's escape by the ambitious hope that, by such service, he might merit her hand. But his purpose was discovered by his brother Sir William, and he was expelled from the castle. He continued, notwithstanding, to hover in the neighbourhood, and maintain a correspondence with the royal prisoner and others in the fortress.

If we believe the English ambassador Drury, the Queen was grateful to George Douglas, and even proposed a marriage with him; a scheme which could hardly be serious, since she was still the wife of Bothwell, but which, if suggested at all, might be with a purpose of gratifying the Regent Murray's ambition, and propitiating his favour; since he was, it must be remembered, the brother uterine of George Douglas, for whom such high honour was said to be designed.

The proposal, if seriously made, was treated as inadmissible, and Mary again resumed her purpose of escape. Her failure in her first attempt has some picturesque particulars, which might have been advantageously introduced in fictitious narrative. Drury sends Cecil the following account of the matter:—

"But after, upon the 25th of the last, (April 1567,) she interpired an escape, and was the rather near effect, through her accustomed long lying in bed all the morning. The manner of it was thus: there cometh in to her the laundress early as other times before she was wanted, and the Queen according to such a secret practice putteth on her the hood of the laundress, and so with the fardel of clothes and the muffler upon her face, passeth, out and entereth the boat to pass the Loch; which, after some space, one of them that rowed said merrily, 'Let us see what manner of dame this is,' and therewith offered to pull down her muffler, which to defend, she put up her hands, which they spied to be very fair and white; wherewith they entered into suspicion whom she was, beginning to wonder at her enterprise. Whereat she was little dismayed, but charged them, upon danger of their lives, to row her over to the shore, which they nothing regarded, but eftsongs rowed her back again, promising her it should be secreted, and especially from the lord of the house, under whose guard she lyeth. It seemeth she knew her refuge, and—where to have found it if she had once landed; for there did, and yet do linger, at a little village called Kinross, hard at the Loch side, the same George Douglas, one Sempel and one Beton, the which two were sometime her trusty servants, and, as yet appeareth, they mind her no less affection."—*Bishop Keith's History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland*, p. 490.

Notwithstanding this disappointment, little spoke of by historians, Mary renewed her attempts to escape. There was in the Castle of Lochleven a lad, named William Douglas, some relation probably of the baron, and about eighteen years old. This youth proved as accessible to Queen Mary's prayers and promises, as was the brother of his patron, George Douglas, from whom this William must be carefully kept distinct. It was young William who played the part commonly assigned to his superior, George, stealing the keys of the castle from the table on which they lay, while his lord was at supper. He let the Queen and a waiting

woman out of the apartment where they were secured, and out of the tower itself, embarked with them in a small skiff, and rowed them to the shore. To prevent instant pursuit, he, for precaution's sake, locked the iron grated door of the tower, and threw the keys into the lake. They found George Douglas and the Queen's servant, Beton, waiting for them, and Lord Seyton and James Hamilton of Orbeiston in attendance, at the head of a party of faithful followers, with whom they fled to Niddrie Castle, and from thence to Hamilton.

In narrating this romantic story, both history and tradition confuse the two Douglasses together, and confer on George the successful execution of the escape from the castle, the merit of which belongs, in reality, to the boy called William, or, more frequently, the Little Douglas, either from his youth or his slight stature. The reader will observe, that in the romance, the part of the Little Douglas has been assigned to Roland Graeme. In another case, it would be tedious to point out in a work of amusement such minute points of historical fact; but the general interest taken in the fate of Queen Mary, renders every thing of consequence which connects itself with her misfortunes.]

"I knew," said Mary, drawing her breath more freely, as they were now out of reach of the musketry—"I knew my squire's truth, promptitude, and sagacity.—I must have him my dear friends—with my no less true knights, Douglas and Seyton—but where, then, is Douglas?"

"Here, madam," answered the deep and melancholy voice of the boatman who sat next her, and who acted as steersman.

"Alas! was it you who stretched your body before me," said the Queen, "when the balls were raining around us?"

"Believe you," said he, in a low tone, "that Douglas would have resigned to any one the chance of protecting his Queen's life with his own?"

The dialogue was here interrupted by a shot or two from one of those small pieces of artillery called falconets, then used in defending castles. The shot was too vague to have any effect, but the broader flash, the deeper sound, the louder return which was made by the midnight echoes of Bennarty, terrified and imposed silence on the liberated prisoners. The boat was alongside of a rude quay or landing place, running out from a garden of considerable extent, ere any of them again attempted to speak. They landed, and while the Abbot returned thanks aloud to Heaven,—which had thus far favoured their enterprise, Douglas enjoyed the best reward of his desperate undertaking, in conducting the Queen to the house of the gardener.

Yet, not unmindful of Roland Graeme even in that moment of terror and exhaustion, Mary expressly commanded Seyton to give his assistance to Fleming, while Catherine voluntarily, and without bidding, took the arm of the page. Seyton presently resigned Lady Fleming to the care of the Abbot, alleging, he must look after their horses; and his attendants, disencumbering themselves of their boat-cloaks, hastened to assist him.

While Mary spent in the gardener's cottage the few minutes which were necessary to prepare the steeds for their departure, she perceived, in a corner, the old man to whom the garden belonged, and called him to approach. He came as it were with reluctance.

"How, brother," said the Abbot, "so slow to welcome thy royal Queen and mistress to liberty and to her kingdom!"

The old man, thus admonished, came forward, and, in good terms of speech, gave her Grace joy of her deliverance. The Queen returned him thanks in the most gracious manner, and added, "It will remain to us to offer some immediate reward for your fidelity, for we wot well your house has been long the refuge in which our trusty servants have met to concert measures for our freedom." So saying, she offered gold, and added, "We will consider your services more fully hereafter."

"Kneel, brother," said the Abbot, "kneel instantly, and thank her Grace's kindness."

"Good brother, that wert once a few steps under me, and art still many years younger," replied the gardener, pettishly, "let me do mine acknowledgments in my own way. Queens have knelt to me ere now, and in truth my knees are too old and stiff to bend even to this lovely-faced lady. May it please your Grace, if your Grace's servants have occupied my house, so that I could not call it mine own—if they have trodden down my flowers in the zeal of their midnight comings and goings, and destroyed the hope of the fruit season, by bringing their war-horses into my garden, I do but crave of your Grace in requital, that you will choose your residence as far from me as possible. I am an old man who would willingly creep to my grave as easily as I can, in peace, good-will, and quiet labour."

"I promise you fairly, good man," said the Queen, "I will not make yonder castle my residence again, if I can help it. But let me press on you this money—it will make some amends for the havoc we have made in your little garden and orchard."

"I thank your Grace, but it will make me not the least amends," said the old man. "The ruined labours of a whole year are not so easily replaced to him who has perchance but that one year to live; and besides, they tell me I must leave this place and become a wanderer in mine old age—I that have nothing on earth saving these fruit-trees, and a few old parchments and family secrets not worth knowing. As for gold, if I had loved it, I might have remained Lord Abbot of St. Mary's—and yet, I wot not—for, if Abbot Boniface be but the poor peasant Blinkhoolie, his successor, the Abbot Ambrosius, is still transmuted for the worse into the guise of a sword-and-buckler-man."

"Is this indeed the Abbot Boniface of whom I have heard?" said the Queen. "It is indeed I who should have bent the knee for your blessing, good Father."

"Bend no knee to me, Lady! The blessing of an old man, who is no longer an Abbot, go with you over dale and down—I hear the trampling of your horses."

"Farewell, Father," said the Queen. "When we are once more seated at Holyrood, we will neither forget thee nor thine injured garden."

"Forget us both," said the Ex-Abbot Boniface, "and may God be with you!"

As they hurried out of the house, they heard the old man talking and muttering to himself, as he hastily drew bolt and bar behind them.

"The revenge of the Douglasses will reach the poor old man," said the Queen. "God help me, I ruin every one whom I approach!"

"His safety is cared for," said Seyton; "he must not remain here, but will be privately conducted to a place of greater security. But I would your Grace were in the saddle.—To horse! to horse!"

The party of Seyton and of Douglas were increased to about ten by those attendants who had remained with the horses. The Queen and her ladies, with all the rest who came from the boat, were instantly mounted; and holding aloof from the village, which was already alarmed by the firing from the castle, with Douglas acting as their guide, they soon reached the open ground and began to ride as fast as was consistent with keeping together in good order.

Chapter the Thirty-Sixth.

*He mounted himself on a coal-black steed,
And her on a freckled gray,
With a bugelet horn hung down from his side,
And roundly they rode away.*

OLD BALLAD.

The influence of the free air, the rushing of the horses over high and low, the ringing of the bridles, the excitation at once arising from a sense of freedom and of rapid motion, gradually dispelled the confused and dejected sort of stupefaction by which Queen Mary was at first overwhelmed. She could not at last conceal the change of her feelings to the person who rode at her rein, and who she doubted not was the Father Ambrosius; for Seyton, with all the heady impetuosity of a youth, proud, and justly so, of his first successful adventure, assumed all the bustle and importance of commander of the little party, which escorted, in the language of the time, the Fortune of Scotland. He now led the van, now checked his bounding steed till the rear had come up, exhorted the leaders to keep a steady, though rapid pace, and commanded those who were hindmost of the party to use their spurs, and allow no interval to take place in their line of march; and anon he was beside the Queen, or her ladies, inquiring how they brooked the hasty journey, and whether they had any commands for him. But while Seyton thus busied himself in the general cause with some advantage to the regular order of the march, and a good deal of personal ostentation, the horseman who rode beside the Queen gave her his full and undivided attention, as if he had been waiting upon some superior being. When the road was rugged and dangerous, he

abandoned almost entirely the care of his own horse, and kept his hand constantly upon the Queen's bridle; if a river or larger brook traversed their course, his left arm retained her in the saddle, while his right held her palfrey's rein.

"I had not thought, reverend Father," said the Queen, when they reached the other bank, "that the convent bred such good horsemen."—The person she addressed sighed, but made no other answer.—"I know not how it is," said Queen Mary, "but either the sense of freedom, or the pleasure of my favourite exercise, from which I have been so long debarred, or both combined, seem to have given wings to me—no fish ever shot through the water, no bird through the air, with the hurried feeling of liberty and rapture with which I sweep through, this night-wind, and over these wolds. Nay, such is the magic of feeling myself once more in the saddle, that I could almost swear I am at this moment mounted on my own favourite Rosabelle, who was never matched in Scotland for swiftness, for ease of motion, and for sureness of foot."

"And if the horse which bears so dear a burden could speak," answered the deep voice of the melancholy George of Douglas, "would she not reply, who but Rosabelle ought at such an emergence as this to serve her beloved mistress, or who but Douglas ought to hold her bridle-rein?"

Queen Mary started; she foresaw at once all the evils like to arise to herself and him from the deep enthusiastic passion of this youth; but her feelings as a woman, grateful at once and compassionate, prevented her assuming the dignity of a Queen, and she endeavoured to continue the conversation in an indifferent tone.

"Methought," she said, "I heard that, at the division of my spoils, Rosabelle had become the property of Lord Morton's paramour and ladye-love Alice."

"The noble palfrey had indeed been destined to so base a lot," answered Douglas; "she was kept under four keys, and under the charge of a numerous crew of grooms and domestics—but Queen Mary needed Rosabelle, and Rosabelle is here."

"And was it well, Douglas," said Queen Mary, "when such fearful risks of various kinds must needs be encountered, that you should augment their perils to yourself for a subject of so little moment as a palfrey?"

"Do you call that of little moment," answered Douglas, "which has afforded you a moment's pleasure?—Did you not start with joy when I first said you were mounted on Rosabelle?—And to purchase you that pleasure, though it were to last no longer than the flash of lightning doth, would not Douglas have risked his life a thousand times?"

"Oh, peace, Douglas, peace," said the Queen, "this is unfitting language; and, besides, I would speak," said she, recollecting herself, "with the Abbot of Saint Mary's—Nay, Douglas, I will not let you quit my rein in displeasure."

"Displeasure, lady!" answered Douglas: "alas! sorrow is all that I can feel for your well-warranted contempt—I should be as soon displeased with Heaven for refusing the wildest wish which mortal can form."

"Abide by my rein, however," said Mary, "there is room for my Lord Abbot on the other side; and, besides, I doubt if his assistance would be so useful to Rosabelle and me as yours has been, should the road again require it."

The Abbot came up on the other side, and she immediately opened a conversation with him on the topic of the state of parties, and the plan fittest for her to pursue in consequence of her deliverance. In this conversation Douglas took little share, and never but when directly applied to by the Queen, while, as before, his attention seemed entirely engrossed by the care of Mary's personal safety. She learned, however, she had a new obligation to him, since, by his contrivance, the Abbot, whom he had furnished with the family pass-word, was introduced into the castle as one of the garrison.

Long before daybreak they ended their hasty and perilous journey before the gates of Niddrie, a castle in West Lothian, belonging to Lord Seyton. When the Queen was about to alight, Henry Seyton, preventing Douglas, received her in his arms, and, kneeling down, prayed her Majesty to enter the house of his father, her faithful servant.

"Your Grace," he added, "may repose yourself here in perfect safety—it is already garrisoned with good men for your protection; and I have sent a post to my father, whose instant arrival, at the head of five hundred men, may be looked for. Do not dismay yourself, therefore, should your sleep be broken by the trampling of horse; but only think that here are some scores more of the saucy Seytons come to attend you."

"And by better friends than the Saucy Seytons, a Scottish Queen cannot be guarded," replied Mary. "Rosabelle went fleet as the summer breeze, and well-nigh as easy; but it is long since I have been a traveller, and I feel that repose will be welcome.—Catherine, *ma mignone*, you must sleep in my apartment to-night, and bid me welcome to your noble father's castle.—Thanks, thanks to all my kind deliverers—thanks, and a good night is all I can now offer; but if I climb once more to the upper side of Fortune's wheel, I will not have her bandage. Mary Stewart will keep her eyes open, and distinguish her friends.—Seyton, I need scarcely recommend the venerable Abbot, the Douglas, and my page, to your honour able care and hospitality."

Henry Seyton bowed, and Catherine and Lady Fleming attended the Queen to her apartment; where, acknowledging to them that she should have found it difficult in that moment to keep her promise of holding her eyes open, she resigned herself to repose, and awakened not till the morning was advanced.

Mary's first feeling when she awoke, was the doubt of her freedom; and the impulse prompted her to start from bed, and hastily throwing her mantle over her shoulders, to look out at the casement of her apartment. Oh, sight of joy! instead of the crystal sheet of Lochleven, unaltered save by the influence of the wind, a landscape of wood and moorland lay before her, and the park around the castle was occupied by the troops of her most faithful and most favourite nobles.

"Rise, rise, Catherine," cried the enraptured Princess; "arise and come hither!—here are swords and spears in true hands, and glittering armour on loyal breasts. Here are banners, my girl, floating in the wind, as lightly as summer clouds—Great God! what pleasure to my weary eyes to trace their devices—thine own brave father's—the princely Hamilton's—the faithful Fleming's—See—see—they have caught a glimpse of me, and throng towards the window!"

She flung the casement open, and with her bare head, from which the tresses flew back loose and dishevelled, her fair arm slenderly veiled by her mantle, returned by motion and sign the exulting shouts of the warriors, which echoed for many a furlong around. When the first burst of ecstatic joy was over, she recollected how lightly she was dressed, and, putting her hands to her face, which was covered with blushes at the recollection, withdrew abruptly from the window. The cause of her retreat was easily conjectured, and increased the general enthusiasm for a Princess, who had forgotten her rank in her haste to acknowledge the services of her subjects. The unadorned beauties of the lovely woman, too, moved the military spectators more than the highest display of her regal state might; and what might have seemed too free in her mode of appearing before them, was more than atoned for by the enthusiasm of the moment and by the delicacy evinced in her hasty retreat. Often as the shouts died away, as often were they renewed, till wood and hill rung again; and many a deep path was made that morning on the cross of the sword, that the hand should not part with the weapon, till Mary Stewart was restored to her rights. But what are promises, what the hopes of mortals? In ten days, these gallant and devoted votaries were slain, were captives, or had fled.

Mary flung herself into the nearest seat, and still blushing, yet half smiling, exclaimed, "*Ma mignone*, what will they think of me?—to show myself to them with my bare feet hastily thrust into the slippers—only this loose mantle about me—my hair loose on my shoulders—my arms and neck so bare—Oh, the best they can suppose is, that her abode in yonder dungeon has turned their Queen's brain! But my rebel subjects saw me exposed when I was in the depth of affliction, why should I hold colder ceremony with these faithful and loyal men?—Call Fleming, however—I trust she has not forgotten the little mail with my apparel—We must be as brave as we can, *mignone*."

"Nay, madam, our good Lady Fleming was in no case to remember any thing."

"You jest, Catherine," said the Queen, somewhat offended; "it is not in her nature surely, to forget her duty so far as to leave us without a change of apparel?"

"Roland Graeme, madam, took care of that," answered Catherine; "for he threw the mail, with your highness's clothes and jewels, into the boat, ere he ran back to lock the gate—I never saw so awkward a page as that youth—the packet well-nigh fell on my head."

"He shall make thy heart amends, my girl," said Queen Mary, laughing, "for that and all other offences given. But call Fleming, and let us put ourselves into apparel to meet our faithful lords."

Such had been the preparations, and such was the skill of Lady Fleming, that the Queen appeared before her assembled nobles in such attire as became, though it could not enhance, her natural dignity. With the most winning courtesy, she expressed to each individual her grateful thanks, and dignified not only every noble, but many of the lesser barons by her particular attention.

"And whither now, my lords?" she said; "what way do your counsels determine for us?"

"To Draphane Castle," replied Lord Arbroath, "if your Majesty is so pleased; and thence to Dunbarton, to place your Grace's person in safety, after which we long to prove if these traitors will abide us in the field."

"And when do we journey?"

"We propose," said Lord Seyton, "if your Grace's fatigue will permit, to take horse after the morning's meal."

"Your pleasure, my Lords, is mine," replied the Queen; "we will rule our journey by your wisdom now, and hope hereafter to have the advantage of governing by it our kingdom.—You will permit my ladies and me, my good lords, to break our fasts along with you—We must be half soldiers ourselves, and set state apart."

Low bowed many a helmeted head at this gracious proffer, when the Queen, glancing her eyes through the assembled leaders, missed both Douglas and Roland Graeme, and inquired for them in a whisper to Catherine Seyton.

"They are in yonder oratory, madam, sad enough," replied Catherine; and the Queen observed that her favourite's eyes were red with weeping.

"This must not be," said the Queen. "Keep the company amused—I will seek them, and introduce them myself."

She went into the oratory, where the first she met was George Douglas, standing, or rather reclining, in the recess of a window, his back rested against the wall, and his arms folded on his breast. At the sight of the Queen he started, and his countenance showed, for an instant, an expression of intense delight, which was instantly exchanged for his usual deep melancholy.

"What means this?" she said; "Douglas, why does the first deviser and bold executor of the happy scheme for our freedom, shun the company of his fellow-nobles, and of the Sovereign whom he has obliged?"

"Madam," replied Douglas, "those whom you grace with your presence bring followers to aid your cause, wealth to support your state,—can offer you halls in which to feast, and impregnable castles for your defence. I am a houseless and landless man—disinherited by my mother, and laid under her malediction—disowned by my name and kindred—who bring nothing to your standard but a single sword, and the poor life of its owner."

"Do you mean to upbraid me, Douglas," replied the Queen, "by showing what you have lost for my sake?"

"God forbid, madam!" interrupted the young man, eagerly; "were it to do again, and had I ten times as much rank and wealth, and twenty times as many friends to lose, my losses would be overpaid by the first step you made, as a free princess, upon the soil of your native kingdom."

"And what then ails you, that you will not rejoice with those who rejoice upon the same joyful occasion?" said the Queen.

"Madam," replied the youth, "though exheridated and disowned, I am yet a Douglas: with most of yonder nobles my family have been in feud for ages—a cold reception amongst them, were an insult, and a kind one yet more humiliating."

"For shame, Douglas," replied the Queen, "shake off this unmanly gloom!—I can make thee match for the best of them in title and fortune, and, believe me, I will.—Go then amongst them, I command you."

"That word," said Douglas, "is enough—I go. This only let me say, that not for wealth or title would I have done that which I have done—Mary Stewart will not, and the Queen cannot, reward me."

So saying, he left the oratory, mingled with the nobles, and placed himself at the bottom of the table. The Queen looked after him, and put her kerchief to her eyes.

"Now, Our Lady pity me," she said, "for no sooner are my prison cares ended, than those which beset me as a woman and a Queen again thicken around me.—Happy Elizabeth! to whom political interest is every thing, and whose heart never betrays thy head.—And now must I seek this other boy, if I would prevent daggers-drawing betwixt him and the young Seyton."

Roland Graeme was in the same oratory, but at such a distance from Douglas, that he could not overhear what passed betwixt the Queen and him. He also was moody and thoughtful, but cleared his brow at the Queen's question, "How now, Roland? you are negligent in your attendance this morning. Are you so much overcome with your night's ride?"

"Not so, gracious madam," answered Graeme; "but I am told the page of Lochleven is not the page of Niddrie Castle; and so Master Henry Seyton hath in a manner been pleased to supersede my attendance."

"Now, Heaven forgive me," said the Queen, "how soon these cock-chickens begin to spar!—with children and boys, at least, I may be a queen.—I will have you friends.—Some one send me Henry Seyton hither." As she spoke the last words aloud, the youth whom she had named entered the apartment. "Come hither," she said, "Henry Seyton—I will have you give your hand to this youth, who so well aided in the plan of my escape."

"Willingly, madam," answered Seyton, "so that the youth will grant me, as a boon, that he touch not the hand of another Seyton whom he knows of. My hand has passed current for hers with him before now—and to win my friendship, he must give up thoughts of my sister's love."

"Henry Seyton," said the Queen, "does it become you to add any condition to my command?"

"Madam," said Henry, "I am the servant of your Grace's throne, son to the most loyal man in Scotland. Our goods, our castles, our blood, are yours: Our honour is in our own keeping. I could say more, but—"

"Nay, speak on, rude boy," said the Queen; "what avails it that I am released from Lochleven, if I am thus enthralled under the yoke of my pretended deliverers, and prevented from doing justice to one who has deserved as well of me as yourself?"

"Be not in this distemperature for me, sovereign Lady," said Roland; "this young gentleman, being the faithful servant of your Grace, and the brother of Catherine Seyton, bears that about him which will charm down my passion at the hottest."

"I warn thee once more," said Henry Seyton, haughtily, "that you make no speech which may infer that the daughter of Lord Seyton can be aught to thee beyond what she is to every churl's blood in Scotland."

The Queen was again about to interfere, for Roland's complexion rose, and it became somewhat questionable how long his love for Catherine would suppress the natural fire of his temper. But the interposition of another person, hitherto unseen, prevented Mary's interference. There was in the oratory a separate shrine, enclosed with a high screen of pierced oak, within which was placed an image of Saint Bennet, of peculiar sanctity. From this recess, in which she had been probably engaged in her devotions, issued suddenly Magdalen Graeme, and addressed Henry Seyton, in reply to his last offensive expressions,— "And of what clay, then, are they moulded these Seytons, that the blood of the Graemes may not aspire to mingle with theirs? Know, proud boy, that when I call this youth my daughter's child, I affirm his descent from Malise Earl of Strathern, called Malise with the Bright Brand; and I trow the blood of your house springs from no higher source."

"Good mother," said Seyton, "methinks your sanctity should make you superior to these worldly vanities; and indeed it seems to have rendered you somewhat oblivious touching them, since, to be of gentle descent, the father's name and lineage must be as well qualified as the mother's."

"And if I say he comes of the blood of Avenel by the father's side," replied Magdalen Graeme, "name I not blood as richly coloured as thine own?"

"Of Avenel?" said the Queen; "is my page descended of Avenel?"

"Ay, gracious Princess, and the last male heir of that ancient house—Julian Avenel was his father, who fell in battle against the Southron."

"I have heard the tale of sorrow," said the Queen; "it was thy daughter, then, who followed that unfortunate baron to the field, and died on his body? Alas! how many ways does woman's affection find to work out her own misery! The tale has oft been told and sung in hall and bower—And thou, Roland, art that child of misfortune, who was left among the dead and dying? Henry Seyton, he is thine equal in blood and birth."

"Scarcely so," said Henry Seyton, "even were he legitimate; but if the tale be told and sung aright, Julian Avenel was a false knight, and his leman a frail and credulous maiden."

"Now, by Heaven, thou liest!" said Roland Graeme, and laid his hand on his sword. The entrance of Lord Seyton, however, prevented violence.

"Save me, my lord," said the Queen, "and separate these wild and untamed spirits."

"How, Henry," said the Baron, "are my castle, and the Queen's presence, no checks on thine insolence and impetuosity?—And with whom art thou brawling?—unless my eyes spell that token false, it is with the very youth who aided me so gallantly in the skirmish with the Leslies—Let me look, fair youth, at the medal which thou wearest in thy cap. By Saint Bennet, it is the same!—Henry, I command thee to forbear him, as thou lovest my blessing——"

"And as you honour my command," said the Queen; "good service hath he done me."

"Ay, madam," replied young Seyton, "as when he carried the billet enclosed in the sword-sheath to Lochleven—marry, the good youth knew no more than a pack-horse what he was carrying."

"But I who dedicated him to this great work," said Magdalen Graeme—"I, by whose advice and agency this just heir hath been unloosed from her thralldom—I, who spared not the last remaining hope of a falling house in this great action—I, at least, knew and counselled; and what merit may be mine, let the reward, most gracious Queen, descend upon this youth. My ministry here is ended; you are free—a sovereign Princess, at the head of a gallant army, surrounded by valiant barons—My service could avail you no farther, but might well prejudice you; your fortune now rests upon men's hearts and men's swords. May they prove as trusty as the faith of women!"

"You will not leave us, mother," said the Queen—"you whose practices in our favour were so powerful, who dared so many dangers, and wore so many disguises, to blind our enemies and to confirm our friends—you will not leave us in the dawn of our reviving fortunes, ere we have time to know and to thank you?"

"You cannot know her," answered Magdalen Graeme, "who knows not herself—there are times, when, in this woman's frame of mine, there is the strength of him of Gath—in this overtoiled brain, the wisdom of the most sage counsellor—and again the mist is on me, and my strength is weakness, my wisdom folly. I have spoken before princes and cardinals—ay, noble Princess, even before the princes of thine own house of Lorraine; and I know not whence the words of persuasion came which flowed from my lips, and were drunk in by their ears.—And now, even when I most need words of persuasion, there is something which chokes my voice, and robs me of utterance."

"If there be aught in my power to do thee pleasure," said the Queen, "the barely naming it shall avail as well as all thine eloquence."

"Sovereign Lady," replied the enthusiast, "it shames me that at this high moment something of human frailty should cling to one, whose vows the saints have heard, whose labours in the rightful cause Heaven has prospered. But it will be thus while the living spirit is shrined in the clay of mortality—I will yield to the folly," she said, weeping as she spoke, "and it shall be the last." Then seizing Roland's hand, she led him to the Queen's feet, kneeling herself upon one knee, and causing him to kneel on both. "Mighty Princess," she said, "look on this flower—it was found by a kindly stranger on a bloody field of battle, and long it was ere my anxious eyes saw, and my arms pressed, all that was left of my only daughter. For your sake, and for that of the holy faith we both profess, I could leave this plant, while it was yet tender, to the nurture of strangers—ay, of enemies, by whom, perchance, his blood would have been poured forth as wine, had the heretic Glendinning known that he had in his house the heir of Julian Avenel. Since then I have seen him only in a few hours of doubt and dread, and now I part with the child of my love—for ever!—Oh, for every weary step I have made in your rightful cause, in this and in foreign lands, give protection to the child whom I must no more call mine!"

"I swear to you, mother," said the Queen, deeply affected, "that, for your sake and his own, his happiness and fortunes shall be our charge!"

"I thank you, daughter of princes," said Magdalen, and pressed her lips, first to the Queen's hand, then to the brow of her grandson. "And now," she said, drying her tears, and rising with dignity, "Earth has had its own, and Heaven claims the rest.—Lioness of Scotland, go forth and conquer! and if the prayers of a devoted votaress can avail thee, they will rise in many a land, and from many a distant shrine. I will glide like a ghost from land to land, from temple to temple; and where the very name of my country is unknown, the priests shall ask who is the Queen of that distant northern land, for whom the aged pilgrim was so fervent in prayer. Farewell! Honour be thine, and earthly prosperity, if it be the will of God—if not, may the penance thou shalt do here ensure thee happiness hereafter!—Let no one speak or follow me—my resolution is taken—my vow cannot be cancelled."

She glided from their presence as she spoke, and her last look was upon her beloved grandchild. He would have risen and followed, but the Queen and Lord Seyton interfered.

"Press not on her now," said Lord Seyton, "if you would not lose her for ever. Many a time have we seen the sainted mother, and often at the most needful moment; but to press on her privacy, or to thwart her purpose, is a crime which she cannot pardon. I trust we shall yet see her at her need—a holy woman she is for certain, and dedicated wholly to prayer and penance; and hence the heretics hold her as one distracted, while true Catholics deem her a saint."

"Let me then hope," said the Queen, "that you, my lord, will aid me in the execution of her last request."

"What! in the protection of my young second?—cheerfully—that is, in all that your majesty can think it fitting to ask of me.—Henry, give thy hand upon the instant to Roland Avenel, for so I presume he must now be called."

"And shall be Lord of the Barony," said the Queen, "if God prosper our rightful arms."

"It can only be to restore it to my kind protectress, who now holds it," said young Avenel. "I would rather be landless, all my life, than she lost a rood of ground by me."

"Nay," said the Queen, looking to Lord Seyton, "his mind matches his birth—Henry, thou hast not yet given thy hand."

"It is his," said Henry, giving it with some appearance of courtesy, but whispering Roland at the same time,—"*For all this, thou hast not my sister's.*"

"May it please your Grace," said Lord Seyton, "now that these passages are over, to honour our poor meal. Time it were that our banners were reflected in the Clyde. We must to horse with as little delay as may be."

Chapter the Thirty-Seventh.

*Ay, sir—our ancient crown, in these wild times,
Oft stood upon a cast—the gamester's ducat,
So often staked, and lost, and then regain'd,
Scarce knew so many hazards.*

THE SPANISH FATHER.

It is not our object to enter into the historical part of the reign of the ill-fated Mary, or to recount how, during the week which succeeded her flight from Lochleven, her partisans mustered around her with their followers, forming a gallant army, amounting to six thousand men. So much light has been lately thrown on the most minute details of the period, by Mr. Chalmers, in his valuable history of Queen Mary, that the reader may be safely referred to it for the fullest information which ancient records afford concerning that interesting time. It is sufficient for our purpose to say, that while Mary's head-quarters were at Hamilton, the Regent and his adherents had, in the King's name, assembled a host at Glasgow, inferior indeed to that of the Queen in numbers, but formidable from the military talents of Murray, Morton, the Laird of Grange, and others, who had been trained from their youth in foreign and domestic wars.

In these circumstances, it was the obvious policy of Queen Mary to avoid a conflict, secure that were her person once in safety, the number of her adherents must daily increase; whereas, the forces of those opposed to her must, as had frequently happened in the previous history of her reign, have diminished, and their

spirits become broken. And so evident was this to her counsellors, that they resolved their first step should be to place the Queen in the strong castle of Dunbarton, there to await the course of events, the arrival of succours from France, and the levies which were made by her adherents in every province of Scotland. Accordingly, orders were given, that all men should be on horseback or on foot, apparelled in their armour, and ready to follow the Queen's standard in array of battle, the avowed determination being to escort her to the Castle of Dunbarton in defiance of her enemies.

The muster was made upon Hamilton-Moor, and the march commenced in all the pomp of feudal times. Military music sounded, banners and pennons waved, armour glittered far and wide, and spears glanced and twinkled like stars in a frosty sky. The gallant spectacle of warlike parade was on this occasion dignified by the presence of the Queen herself, who, with a fair retinue of ladies and household attendants, and a special guard of gentlemen, amongst whom young Seyton and Roland were distinguished, gave grace at once and confidence to the army, which spread its ample files before, around, and behind her. Many churchmen also joined the cavalcade, most of whom did not scruple to assume arms, and declare their intention of wielding them in defence of Mary and the Catholic faith. Not so the Abbot of Saint Mary's. Roland had not seen this prelate since the night of their escape from Lochleven, and he now beheld him, robed in the dress of his order, assume his station near the Queen's person. Roland hastened to pull off his basnet, and beseech the Abbot's blessing.

"Thou hast it, my son!" said the priest; "I see thee now under thy true name, and in thy rightful garb. The helmet with the holly branch befits your brows well—I have long waited for the hour thou shouldst assume it."

"Then you knew of my descent, my good father?" said Roland.

"I did so, but it was under seal of confession from thy grandmother; nor was I at liberty to tell the secret, till she herself should make it known."

"Her reason for such secrecy, my father?" said Roland Avenel.

"Fear, perchance of my brother—a mistaken fear, for Halbert would not, to ensure himself a kingdom, have offered wrong to an orphan; besides that, your title, in quiet times, even had your father done your mother that justice which I well hope he did, could not have competed with that of my brother's wife, the child of Julian's elder brother."

"They need fear no competition from me," said Avenel. "Scotland is wide enough, and there are many manors to win, without plundering my benefactor. But prove to me, my reverend father, that my father was just to my mother—show me that I may call myself a legitimate Avenel, and make me your bounden slave for ever."

"Ay," replied the Abbot, "I hear the Seytons hold thee cheap for that stain on thy shield. Something, however, I have learnt from the late Abbot Boniface, which, if it prove sooth, may redeem that reproach."

"Tell me that blessed news," said Roland, "and the future service of my life—"

"Rash boy!" said the Abbot, "I should but madden thine impatient temper, by exciting hopes that may never be fulfilled—and is this a time for them? Think on what perilous march we are bound, and if thou hast a sin unconfessed, neglect not the only leisure which Heaven may perchance afford thee for confession and absolution."

"There will be time enough for both, I trust, when we reach Dunbarton," answered the page.

"Ay," said the Abbot, "thou crowest as loudly as the rest—but we are not yet at Dunbarton, and there is a lion in the path."

"Mean you Murray, Morton, and the other rebels at Glasgow, my reverend father? Tush! they dare not look on the royal banner."

"Even so," replied the Abbot, "speak many of those who are older, and should be wiser, than thou.—I have returned from the southern shires, where I left many a chief of name arming in the Queen's interest—I left the lords here wise and considerate men—I find them madmen on my return—they are willing, for mere pride and vain-glory, to brave the enemy, and to carry the Queen, as it were in triumph, past the walls of Glasgow, and under the beards of the adverse army.—Seldom does Heaven smile on such mistimed confidence. We shall be encountered, and that to the purpose."

"And so much the better," replied Roland; "the field of battle was my cradle."

"Beware it be not thy dying bed," said the Abbot. "But what avails it whispering to young wolves the dangers of the chase? You will know, perchance, ere this day is out, what yonder men are, whom you hold in rash contempt."

"Why, what are they?" said Henry Seyton, who now joined them: "have they sinews of wire, and flesh of iron?—Will lead pierce and steel cut them?—If so, reverend father, we have little to fear."

"They are evil men," said the Abbot, "but the trade of war demands no saints.—Murray and Morton are known to be the best generals in Scotland. No one ever saw Lindesay's or Ruthven's back—Kirkaldy of Grange was named by the Constable Montmorency the first soldier in Europe—My brother, too good a name for such a cause, has been far and wide known for a soldier."

"The better, the better!" said Seyton, triumphantly; "we shall have all these traitors of rank and name in a fair field before us. Our cause is the best, our numbers are the strongest, our hearts and limbs match theirs—Saint Bennet, and set on!"

The Abbot made no reply, but seemed lost in reflection; and his anxiety in some measure communicated itself to Roland Avenel, who ever, as their line of march led over a ridge or an eminence, cast an anxious look towards the towers of Glasgow, as if he expected to see symptoms of the enemy issuing forth. It was not that he feared the fight, but the issue was of such deep import to his country, and to himself, that the natural fire of his spirit burned with a less lively, though with a more intense glow. Love, honour, fame, fortune, all seemed to depend on the issue of one field, rashly hazarded perhaps, but now likely to become unavoidable and decisive.

When, at length, their march came to be nearly parallel with the city of Glasgow, Roland became sensible that the high grounds before them were already in part occupied by a force, showing, like their own, the royal banner of Scotland, and on the point of being supported by columns of infantry and squadrons of horse, which the city gates had poured forth, and which hastily advanced to sustain those troops who already possessed the ground in front of the Queen's forces. Horseman after horseman galloped in from the advanced guard, with tidings that Murray had taken the field with his whole army; that his object was to intercept the Queen's march, and his purpose unquestionable to hazard a battle. It was now that the tempers of men were subjected to a sudden and a severe trial; and that those who had too presumptuously concluded that they would pass without combat, were something disconcerted, when, at once, and with little time to deliberate, they found themselves placed in front of a resolute enemy.—Their chiefs immediately assembled around the Queen, and held a hasty council of war. Mary's quivering lip confessed the fear which she endeavoured to conceal under a bold and dignified demeanour. But her efforts were overcome by painful recollections of the disastrous issue of her last appearance in arms at Carberry-hill; and when she meant to have asked them their advice for ordering the battle, she involuntarily inquired whether there were no means of escaping without an engagement?

"Escaping?" answered the Lord Seyton; "when I stand as one to ten of your Highness's enemies, I may think of escape—but never while I stand with three to two!"

"Battle! battle!" exclaimed the assembled lords; "we will drive the rebels from their vantage ground, as the hound turns the hare on the hill side."

"Methinks, my noble lords," said the Abbot, "it were as well to prevent his gaining that advantage.—Our road lies through yonder hamlet on the brow, and whichever party hath the luck to possess it, with its little gardens and enclosures, will attain a post of great defence."

"The reverend father is right," said the Queen. "Oh, haste thee, Seyton, haste, and get thither before them—they are marching like the wind."

Seyton bowed low, and turned his horse's head.—"Your Highness honours me," he said; "I will instantly press forward, and seize the pass."

"Not before me, my lord, whose charge is the command of the vanguard," said the Lord of Arbroath.

"Before you, or any Hamilton in Scotland," said the Seyton, "having the Queen's command—Follow me, gentlemen, my vassals and kinsmen—Saint Bennet, and set on!"

"And follow me," said Arbroath, "my noble kinsmen, and brave men-tenants, we will see which will first reach the post of danger. For God and Queen Mary!"

"Ill-omened haste, and most unhappy strife," said the Abbot, who saw them and their followers rush hastily and emulously to ascend the height without waiting till their men were placed in order.—"And you, gentlemen," he continued, addressing Roland and Seyton, who were each about to follow those who hastened thus disorderly to the conflict, "will you leave the Queen's person unguarded?"

"Oh, leave me not, gentlemen!" said the Queen—"Roland and Seyton, do not leave me—there are enough of arms to strike in this fell combat—withdraw not those to whom I trust for my safety."

"We may not leave her Grace," said Roland, looking at Seyton, and turning his horse.

"I ever looked when thou wouldst find out that," rejoined the fiery youth.

Roland made no answer, but bit his lip till the blood came, and spurring his horse up to the side of Catherine Seyton's palfrey, he whispered in a low voice, "I never thought to have done aught to deserve you; but this day I have heard myself upbraided with cowardice, and my sword remained still sheathed, and all for the love of you."

"There is madness among us all," said the damsel; "my father, my brother, and you, are all alike bereft of reason. Ye should think only of this poor Queen, and you are all inspired by your own absurd jealousies—The monk is the only soldier and man of sense amongst you all.—My lord Abbot," she cried aloud, "were it not better we should draw to the westward, and wait the event that God shall send us, instead of remaining here in the highway, endangering the Queen's person, and cumbering the troops in their advance?"

"You say well, my daughter," replied the Abbot; "had we but one to guide us where the Queen's person may be in safety—Our nobles hurry to the conflict, without casting a thought on the very cause of the war."

"Follow me," said a knight, or man-at-arms, well mounted, and attired completely in black armour, but having the visor of his helmet closed, and bearing no crest on his helmet, or device upon his shield.

"We will follow no stranger," said the Abbot, "without some warrant of his truth."

"I am a stranger and in your hands," said the horseman; "if you wish to know more of me, the Queen herself will be your warrant."

The Queen had remained fixed to the spot, as if disabled by fear, yet mechanically smiling, bowing, and waving her hand, as banners were lowered and spears depressed before her, while, emulating the strife betwixt Seyton and Arbroath, band on band pressed forward their march towards the enemy. Scarce, however, had the black rider whispered something in her ear, than she assented to what he said; and when he spoke aloud, and with an air of command, "Gentlemen, it is the Queen's pleasure that you should follow me," Mary uttered, with something like eagerness, the word "Yes."

All were in motion in an instant; for the black horseman, throwing off a sort of apathy of manner, which his first appearance indicated, spurred his horse to and fro, making him take such active bounds and short turns, as showed the rider master of the animal; and getting the Queen's little retinue in some order for marching, he led them to the left, directing his course towards a castle, which, crowning a gentle yet commanding eminence, presented an extensive view over the country beneath, and in particular, commanded a view of those heights which both armies hastened to occupy, and which it was now apparent must almost instantly be the scene of struggle and dispute.

"Yonder towers," said the Abbot, questioning the sable horseman, "to whom do they belong?—and are they in the hands of friends?"

"They are untenanted," replied the stranger, "or, at least, they have no hostile inmates.—But urge these youths. Sir Abbot, to make more haste—this is but an evil time to satisfy their idle curiosity, by peering out upon the battle in which they are to take no share."

"The worse luck mine," said Henry Seyton, who overheard him—"I would rather be under my father's banner at this moment than be made Chamberlain of Holyrood, for this my present duty of peaceful ward well and patiently discharged."

"Your place under your father's banner will shortly be right dangerous," said Roland Avenel, who, pressing his horse towards the westward, had still his look reverted to the armies; "for I see yonder body of cavalry, which presses from the eastward, will reach the village ere Lord Seyton can gain it."

"They are but cavalry," said Seyton, looking attentively; "they cannot hold the village without shot of harquebuss."

"Look more closely," said Roland; "you will see that each of these horseman who advance so rapidly from Glasgow, carries a footman behind him."

"Now, by Heaven, he speaks well!" said the black cavalier; "one of you two must go carry the news to Lord Seyton and Lord Arbroath, that they hasten not their horsemen on before the foot, but advance more regularly."

"Be that my errand," said Roland, "for I first marked the stratagem of the enemy."

"But, by your leave," said Seyton, "yonder is my father's banner engaged, and it best becomes me to go to the rescue."

"I will stand by the Queen's decision," said Roland Avenel.

"What new appeal?—what new quarrel?" said Queen Mary—"Are there not in yonder dark host enemies enough to Mary Stewart, but must her very friends turn enemies to each other?"

"Nay, madam," said Roland, "the young master of Seyton and I did but dispute who should leave your person to do a most needful message to the host. He thought his rank entitled him, and I deemed that the person of least consequence, being myself, were better perilled—"

"Not so," said the Queen; "if one must leave me, be it Seyton."

Henry Seyton bowed till the white plumes on his helmet mixed with the flowing mane of his gallant war-horse, then placed himself firm in the saddle, shook his lance aloft with an air of triumph and determination, and striking his horse with the spurs, made towards his father's banner, which was still advancing up the hill, and dashed his steed over every obstacle that occurred in his headlong path.

"My brother! my father!" exclaimed Catherine, with an expression of agonized apprehension—"they are in the midst of peril, and I in safety!"

"Would to God," said Roland, "that I were with them, and could ransom every drop of their blood by two of mine!"

"Do I not know thou dost wish it?" said Catherine—"Can a woman say to a man what I have well-nigh said to thee, and yet think that he could harbour fear or faintness of heart?—There is that in yon distant sound of approaching battle that pleases me even while it affrights me. I would I were a man, that I might feel that stern delight, without the mixture of terror!"

"Ride up, ride up, Lady Catherine Seyton," cried the Abbot, as they still swept on at a rapid pace, and were now close beneath the walls of the castle—"ride up, and aid Lady Fleming to support the Queen—she gives way more and more."

They halted and lifted Mary from the saddle, and were about to support her towards the castle, when she said faintly, "Not there—not there—these walls will I never enter more!"

"Be a Queen, madam," said the Abbot, "and forget that you are a woman."

"Oh, I must forget much, much more," answered the unfortunate Mary, in an under tone, "ere I can look with steady eyes on these well-known scenes!—I must forget the days which I spent here as the bride of the lost—the murdered—"

"This is the Castle of Crookstone," said the Lady Fleming, "in which the Queen held her first court after she was married to Darnley."

"Heaven," said the Abbot, "thy hand is upon us!—Bear yet up, madam—your foes are the foes of Holy Church, and God will this day decide whether Scotland shall be Catholic or heretic."

A heavy and continued fire of cannon and musketry, bore a tremendous burden to his words, and seemed far more than they to recall the spirits of the Queen.

"To yonder tree," she said, pointing to a yew-tree which grew on a small mount close to the castle; "I know it well—from thence you may see a prospect wide as from the peaks of Schehallion."

And freeing herself from her assistants, she walked with a determined, yet somewhat wild step, up to the stem of the noble yew. The Abbot, Catherine, and Roland Avenel followed her, while Lady Fleming kept back the inferior persons of her train. The black horseman also followed the Queen, waiting on her as closely as the shadow upon the light, but ever remaining at the distance of two or three yards—he folded his arms on his bosom, turned his back to the battle, and seemed solely occupied by gazing on Mary, through the bars of his closed visor. The Queen regarded him not, but fixed her eyes upon the spreading yew."

"Ay, fair and stately tree," she said, as if at the sight of it she had been rapt away from the present scene, and had overcome the horror which had oppressed her at the first approach to Crookstone, "there thou standest, gay and goodly as ever, though thou hearest the sounds of war, instead of the vows of love. All is gone

since I last greeted thee—love and lover—vows and vower—king and kingdom.—How goes the field, my Lord Abbot?—with us, I trust—yet what but evil can Mary's eyes witness from this spot?"

Her attendants eagerly bent their eyes on the field of battle, but could discover nothing more than that it was obstinately contested. The small enclosures and cottage gardens in the village, of which they had a full and commanding view, and which shortly before lay, with their lines of sycamore and ash-trees, so still and quiet in the mild light of a May sun, were now each converted into a line of fire, canopied by smoke; and the sustained and constant report of the musketry and cannon, mingled with the shouts of meeting combatants, showed that as yet neither party had given ground.

"Many a soul finds its final departure to heaven or hell, in these awful thunders," said the Abbot; "let those that believe in the Holy Church, join me in orisons for victory in this dreadful combat."

"Not here—not here," said the unfortunate Queen; "pray not here, father, or pray in silence—my mind is too much torn between the past and the present, to dare to approach the heavenly throne—Or, if we will pray, be it for one whose fondest affections have been her greatest crimes, and who has ceased to be a queen, only because she was a deceived and a tender-hearted woman."

"Were it not well," said Roland, "that I rode somewhat nearer the hosts, and saw the fate of the day?"

"Do so, in the name of God," said the Abbot; "for if our friends are scattered, our flight must be hasty—but beware thou approach not too nigh the conflict; there is more than thine own life depends on thy safe return."

"Oh, go not too nigh," said Catherine; "but fail not to see how the Seytons fight, and how they bear themselves."

"Fear nothing, I will be on my guard," said Roland Avenel; and without waiting farther answer, rode towards the scene of conflict, keeping, as he rode, the higher and unenclosed ground, and ever looking cautiously around him, for fear of involving himself in some hostile party. As he approached, the shots rung sharp and more sharply on his ear, the shouts came wilder and wilder, and he felt that thick beating of the heart, that mixture of natural apprehension, intense curiosity, and anxiety for the dubious event, which even the bravest experience when they approach alone to a scene of interest and of danger.

At length he drew so close, that from a bank, screened by bushes and underwood, he could distinctly see where the struggle was most keenly maintained. This was in a hollow way, leading to the village, up which the Queen's vanguard had marched, with more hasty courage than well-advised conduct, for the purpose of possessing themselves of that post of advantage. They found their scheme anticipated, and the hedges and enclosures already occupied by the enemy, led by the celebrated Kirkaldy of Grange and the Earl of Morton; and not small was the loss which they sustained while struggling forward to come to close with the men-at-arms on the other side. But, as the Queen's followers were chiefly noblemen and barons, with their kinsmen and followers, they had pressed onward, contemning obstacles and danger, and had, when Roland arrived on the ground, met hand to hand at the gorge of the pass with the Regent's vanguard, and endeavoured to bear them out of the village at the spear-point; while their foes, equally determined to keep the advantage which they had attained, struggled with the like obstinacy to drive back the assailants. Both parties were on foot, and armed in proof; so that, when the long lances of the front ranks were fixed in each other's shields, corslets, and breastplates, the struggle resembled that of two bulls, who fixing their frontlets hard against each other, remain in that posture for hours, until the superior strength or obstinacy of the one compels the other to take to flight, or bears him down to the earth. Thus locked together in the deadly struggle, which swayed slowly to and fro, as one or other party gained the advantage, those who fell were trampled on alike by friends and foes; those whose weapons were broken, retired from the front rank, and had their place supplied by others; while the rearward ranks, unable otherwise to share in the combat, fired their pistols, and hurled their daggers, and the points and truncheons of the broken weapons, like javelins against the enemy.

"God and the Queen!" resounded from the one party; "God and the King!" thundered from the other; while, in the name of their sovereign, fellow-subjects on both sides shed each other's blood, and, in the name of their Creator, defaced his image. Amid the tumult was often heard the voices of the captains, shouting their commands; of leaders and chiefs, crying their gathering words; of groans and shrieks from the falling and the dying.

The strife had lasted nearly an hour. The strength of both parties seemed exhausted; but their rage was unabated, and their obstinacy unsubdued, when Roland, who turned eye and ear to all around him, saw a column of infantry, headed by a few horsemen, wheel round the base of the bank where he had stationed himself, and, levelling their long lances, attack the Queen's vanguard, closely engaged as they were in conflict on their front. The very first glance showed him that the leader who directed this movement was the Knight of Avenel, his ancient master; and the next convinced him, that its effects would be decisive. The result of the attack of fresh and unbroken forces upon the flank of those already wearied with a long and obstinate struggle, was, indeed, instantaneous.

The column of the assailants, which had hitherto shown one dark, dense, and united line of helmets, surmounted with plumage, was at once broken and hurled in confusion down the hill, which they had so long endeavoured to gain. In vain were the leaders heard calling upon their followers to stand to the combat, and seen personally resisting when all resistance was evidently vain. They were slain, or felled to the earth, or hurried backwards by the mingled tide of flight and pursuit. What were Roland's feelings on beholding the rout, and feeling that all that remained for him was to turn bridle, and endeavour to ensure the safety of the Queen's person! Yet, keen as his grief and shame might be, they were both forgotten, when, almost close beneath the bank which he occupied, he saw Henry Seyton forced away from his own party in the tumult, covered with dust and blood, and defending himself desperately against several of the enemy who had gathered around him, attracted by his gay armour. Roland paused not a moment, but pushing his steed down the bank, leaped him amongst the hostile party, dealt three or four blows amongst them, which struck down two, and made the rest stand aloof; then reaching Seyton his hand, he exhorted him to seize fast on his horse's mane.

"We live or die together this day," said he; "keep but fast hold till we are out of the press, and then my horse is yours."

Seyton heard and exerted his remaining strength, and, by their joint efforts, Roland brought him out of danger, and behind the spot from whence he had witnessed the disastrous conclusion of the fight. But no sooner were they under shelter of the trees, than Seyton let go his hold, and, in spite of Roland's efforts to support him, fell at length on the turf. "Trouble yourself no more with me," he said; "this is my first and my last battle—and I have already seen too much to wish to see the close. Hasten to save the Queen—and commend me to Catherine—she will never more be mistaken for me nor I for her—the last sword-stroke has made an eternal distinction."

"Let me aid you to mount my horse," said Roland, eagerly, "and you may yet be saved—I can find my own way on foot—turn but my horse's head westward, and he will carry you fleet and easy as the wind."

"I will never mount steed more," said the youth; "farewell—I love thee better dying, than ever I thought to have done while in life—I would that old man's blood were not on my hand!—*Sancte Benedicte, ora pro me*—Stand not to look on a dying man, but haste to save the Queen!"

These words were spoken with the last effort of his voice, and scarce were they uttered ere the speaker was no more. They recalled Roland to a sense of the duty which he had well-nigh forgotten, but they did not reach his ears only.

"The Queen—where is the Queen?" said Halbert Glendinning, who, followed by two or three horsemen, appeared at this instant. Roland made no answer, but, turning his horse, and confiding in his speed, gave him at once rein and spur, and rode over height and hollow towards the Castle of Crookstone. More heavily armed, and mounted upon a horse of less speed, Sir Halbert Glendinning followed with couched lance, calling out as he rode, "Sir, with the holly-branch, halt, and show your right to bear that badge—fly not thus cowardly, nor dishonour the cognizance thou deservest not to wear!—Halt, sir coward, or by Heaven, I will strike thee with my lance on the back, and slay thee like a dastard—I am the Knight of Avenel—I am Halbert Glendinning."

But Roland, who had no purpose of encountering his old master, and who, besides, knew the Queen's safety depended on his making the best speed he could, answered not a word to the defiance and reproaches which Sir Halbert continued to throw out against him; but making the best use of his spurs, rode yet harder than before, and had gained about a hundred yards upon his pursuer, when, coming near to the yew-tree where he had left the Queen, he saw them already getting to horse, and cried out as loud as he could, "Foes! foes!—Ride for it, fair ladies—Brave gentlemen, do your devoir to protect them!"

So saying, he wheeled his horse, and avoiding the shock of Sir Halbert Glendinning, charged one of that Knight's followers, who was nearly on a line with him, so rudely with his lance, that he overthrew horse and man. He then drew his sword and attacked the second, while the black man-at-arms, throwing himself in the

way of Glendinning, they rushed on each other so fiercely, that both horses were overthrown, and the riders lay rolling on the plain. Neither was able to arise, for the black horseman was pierced through with Glendinning's lance, and the Knight of Avenel, oppressed with the weight of his own horse and sorely bruised besides, seemed in little better plight than he whom he had mortally wounded.

"Yield thee, Sir Knight of Avenel, rescue or no rescue," said Roland, who had put a second antagonist out of condition to combat, and hastened to prevent Glendinning from renewing the conflict.

"I may not choose but yield," said Sir Halbert, "since I can no longer fight; but it shames me to speak such a word to a coward like thee!"

"Call me not coward," said Roland, lifting his visor, and helping his prisoner to rise, "since but for old kindness at thy hands, and yet more at thy lady's, I had met thee as a brave man should."

"The favourite page of my wife!" said Sir Halbert, astonished; "Ah! wretched boy, I have heard of thy treason at Lochleven."

"Reproach him not, my brother," said the Abbot, "he was but an agent in the hands of Heaven."

"To horse, to horse!" said Catherine Seyton; "mount and begone, or we are all lost. I see our gallant army flying for many a league—To horse, my Lord Abbot—To horse, Roland—my gracious Liege, to horse! Ere this, we should have ridden many a mile."

"Look on these features," said Mary, pointing to the dying knight, who had been unhelmed by some compassionate hand; "look there, and tell me if she who ruins all who love her, ought to fly a foot farther to save her wretched life!"

The reader must have long anticipated the discovery which the Queen's feelings had made before her eyes confirmed it. It was the features of the unhappy George Douglas, on which death was stamping his mark.

"Look—look at him well," said the Queen, "thus has it been with all who loved Mary Stewart!—The royalty of Francis, the wit of Chastelar, the power and gallantry of the gay Gordon, the melody of Rizzio, the portly form and youthful grace of Darnley, the bold address and courtly manners of Bothwell—and now the deep-devoted passion of the noble Douglas—nought could save them!—they looked on the wretched Mary, and to have loved her was crime enough to deserve early death! No sooner had the victim formed a kind thought of me, than the poisoned cup, the axe and block, the dagger, the mine, were ready to punish them for casting away affection on such a wretch as I am!—Importune me not—I will fly no farther—I can die but once, and I will die here."

While she spoke, her tears fell fast on the face of the dying man, who continued to fix his eyes on her with an eagerness of passion, which death itself could hardly subdue.—"Mourn not for me," he said faintly, "but care for your own safety—I die in mine armour as a Douglas should, and I die pitted by Mary Stewart!"

He expired with these words, and without withdrawing his eyes from her face; and the Queen, whose heart was of that soft and gentle mould, which in domestic life, and with a more suitable partner than Darnley, might have made her happy, remained weeping by the dead man, until recalled to herself by the Abbot, who found it necessary to use a style of unusual remonstrance. "We also, madam," he said, "we, your Grace's devoted followers, have friends and relatives to weep for. I leave a brother in imminent jeopardy—the husband of the Lady Fleming—the father and brothers of the Lady Catherine, are all in yonder bloody field, slain, it is to be feared, or prisoners. We forget the fate of our nearest and dearest, to wait on our Queen, and she is too much occupied with her own sorrows to give one thought to ours."

"I deserve not your reproach, father," said the Queen, checking her tears; "but I am docile to it—where must we go—what must we do?"

"We must fly, and that instantly," said the Abbot; "whither is not so easily answered, but we may dispute it upon the road—Lift her to her saddle, and set forward."

[Footnote: I am informed in the most polite manner, by D. MacVean, Esq. of Glasgow, that I have been incorrect in my locality, in giving an account of the battle of Langside. Crookstone Castle, he observes, lies four miles west from the field of battle, and rather in the rear of Murray's army. The real place from which Mary saw the rout of her last army, was Cathcart Castle, which, being a mile and a half east from Langside, was, situated in the rear of the Queen's own army. I was led astray in the present case, by the authority of my deceased friend, James Grahame the excellent and amiable author of the Sabbath, in his drama on the subject of Queen Mary; and by a traditionary report of Mary having seen the battle from the Castle of Crookstone, which seemed so much to increase the interest of the scene, that I have been unwilling to make, in this particular instance, the fiction give way to the fact, which last is undoubtedly in favour of Mr. MacVean's system.

It is singular how tradition, which is sometimes a sure guide to truth, is, in other cases, prone to mislead us. In the celebrated field of battle at Killiecrankie, the traveller is struck with one of those rugged pillars of rough stone, which indicate the scenes of ancient conflict. A friend of the author, well acquainted with the circumstances of the battle, was standing near this large stone, and looking on the scene around, when a highland shepherd hurried down from the hill to offer his services as cicerone, and proceeded to inform him, that Dundee was slain at that stone, which was raised to his memory. "Fie, Donald," answered my friend, "how can you tell such a story to a stranger? I am sure you know well enough that Dundee was killed at a considerable distance from this place, near the house of Fascal, and that this stone was here long before the battle, in 1688."—"Oich! oich!" said Donald, no way abashed, "and your honour's in the right, and I see you ken a' about it. And he wasna killed on the spot neither, but lived till the next morning; but a' the Saxon gentlemen like best to hear he was killed at the great stane." It is on the same principle of pleasing my readers, that I retain Crookstone Castle instead of Cathcart.

If, however, the author has taken a liberty in removing the actual field of battle somewhat to the eastward, he has been tolerably strict in adhering to the incidents of the engagement, as will appear from it comparison of events in the novel, with the following account from an old writer.

"The Regent was out on foot and all his company, except the Laird of Grange, Alexander Hume of Manderston, and some borderers to the number of two hundred. The Laird of Grange had already viewed the ground, and with all imaginable diligence caused every horseman to take behind him a footman of the Regent's, to guard behind them, and rode with speed to the head of Langside-hill, and set down the footmen with their culverings at the head of a straight lane, where there were some cottage houses and yards of great advantage. Which soldiers with their continual shot killed divers of the vaunt guard, led by the Hamiltons, who, courageously and fiercely ascending up the hill, were already out of breath, when the Regent's vaunt guard joined with them. Where the worthy Lord Hume fought on foot with his pike in his hand very manfully, assisted by the Laird of Cessford, his brother-in-law, who helped him up again when he was stricken to the ground by many strokes upon his face, through the throwing pistols at him after they had been discharged. He was also wounded with staves, and had many strokes of spears through his legs; for he and Grange, at the joining, cried to let their adversaries first lay down their spears, to bear up theirs; which spears were so thick fixed in the others' jacks, that some of the pistols and great staves that were thrown by them which were behind, might be seen lying upon the spears.

"Upon the Queen's side the Earl of Argyle commanded the battle, and the Lord of Arbroth the vaunt guard. But the Regent committed to the Laird of Grange the special care, as being an experimented captain, to oversee every danger, and to ride to every wing, to encourage and make help where greatest need was. He perceived, at the first joining, the right wing of the Regent's vaunt guard put back and like to fly, whereof the greatest part were commons of the barony of Renfrew; whereupon he rode to them, and told them that their enemy was already turning their backs, requesting them to stay and debate till he should bring them fresh men forth of the battle. Whither at full speed he did ride alone, and told the Regent that the enemy were shaken and flying away behind the little village, and desired a few number of fresh men to go with him. Where he found enough willing, as the Lord Lindesay, the Laird of Lochleven, Sir James Balfour, and all the Regent's servants, who followed him with diligence, and reinforced that wing which was beginning to fly; which fresh men with their loose weapons struck the enemies in their flank and faces, which forced them incontinent to give place and turn back after long fighting and pushing others to and fro with their spears. There were not many horsemen to pursue after them, and the Regent cried to save and not to kill, and Grange was never cruel, so that there were few slain and taken. And the only slaughter was at the first rencounter by the shot of the soldiers, which Grange had planted at the lane head behind some dikes."

It is remarkable that, while passing through the small town of Renfrew, some partisans, adherents of the House of Lennox, attempting to arrest Queen Mary and her attendants, were obliged to make way for her not without slaughter.]

They set off accordingly—Roland lingered a moment to command the attendants of the Knight of Avenel to convey their master to the Castle of Crookstone, and to say that he demanded from him no other condition of liberty, than his word, that he and his followers would keep secret the direction in which the Queen fled. As he turned his rein to depart, the honest countenance of Adam Woodcock stared upon him with an expression of surprise, which, at another time, would have

excited his hearty mirth. He had been one of the followers who had experienced the weight of Roland's arm, and they now knew each other, Roland having put up his visor, and the good yeoman having thrown away his barret-cap, with the iron bars in front, that he might the more readily assist his master. Into this barret-cap, as it lay on the ground, Roland forgot not to drop a few gold pieces, (fruits of the Queen's liberality,) and with a signal of kind recollection and enduring friendship, he departed at full gallop to overtake the Queen, the dust raised by her train being already far down the hill.

"It is not fairy-money," said honest Adam, weighing and handling the gold—"And it was Master Roland himself, that is a certain thing—the same open hand, and, by our Lady!" (shrugging his shoulders)—"the same ready fist!—My Lady will hear of this gladly, for she mourns for him as if he were her son. And to see how gay he is! But these light lads are as sure to be uppermost as the froth to be on the top of the quart-pot—Your man of solid parts remains ever a falconer." So saying, he went to aid his comrades, who had now come up in greater numbers, to carry his master into the Castle of Crookstone.

Chapter the Thirty-Eighth.

My native land, good night!

BYRON.

Many a bitter tear was shed, during the hasty flight of Queen Mary, over fallen hopes, future prospects, and slaughtered friends. The deaths of the brave Douglas, and of the fiery but gallant young Seyton, seemed to affect the Queen as much as the fall from the throne, on which she had so nearly been again seated. Catherine Seyton devoured in secret her own grief, anxious to support the broken spirits of her mistress; and the Abbot, bending his troubled thoughts upon futurity, endeavoured in vain to form some plan which had a shadow of hope. The spirit of young Roland—for he also mingled in the hasty debates held by the companions of the Queen's flight—continued unchecked and unbroken.

"Your Majesty," he said, "has lost a battle—Your ancestor, Bruce, lost seven successively, ere he sat triumphant on the Scottish throne, and proclaimed with the voice of a victor, in the field of Bannockburn, the independence of his country. Are not these heaths, which we may traverse at will, better than the locked, guarded, and lake-moated Castle of Lochleven?—We are free—in that one word there is comfort for all our losses."

He struck a bold note, but the heart of Mary made no response.

"Better," she said, "I had still been in Lochleven, than seen the slaughter made by rebels among the subjects who offered themselves to death for my sake. Speak not to me of farther efforts—they would only cost the lives of you, the friends who recommend them! I would not again undergo what I felt, when I saw from yonder mount the swords of the fell horsemen of Morton raging among the faithful Seytons and Hamiltons, for their loyalty to their Queen—I would not again feel what I felt when Douglas's life-blood stained my mantle for his love to Mary Stewart—not to be empress of all that Britain's seas enclose. Find for me some place where I can hide my unhappy head, which brings destruction on all who love it—it is the last favour that Mary asks of her faithful followers."

In this dejected mood, but still pursuing her flight with unabated rapidity, the unfortunate Mary, after having been joined by Lord Herries and a few followers, at length halted, for the first time, at the Abbey of Dundrennan, nearly sixty miles distant from the field of battle. In this remote quarter of Galloway, the Reformation not having yet been strictly enforced against the monks, a few still lingered in their cells unmolested; and the Prior, with tears and reverence, received the fugitive Queen at the gate of his convent.

"I bring you ruin, my good father," said the Queen, as she was lifted from her palfrey.

"It is welcome," said the Prior, "if it comes in the train of duty."

Placed on the ground, and supported by her ladies, the Queen looked for an instant at her palfrey, which, jaded and drooping its head, seemed as if it mourned the distresses of its mistress.

"Good Roland," said the Queen, whispering, "let Rosabelle be cared for—ask thy heart, and it will tell thee why I make this trifling request even in this awful hour."

She was conducted to her apartment, and in the hurried consultation of her attendants, the fatal resolution of the retreat to England was finally adopted. In the morning it received her approbation, and a messenger was despatched to the English warden, to pray him for safe-conduct and hospitality, on the part of the Queen of Scotland. On the next day the Abbot Ambrose walked in the garden of the Abbey with Roland, to whom he expressed his disapprobation of the course pursued. "It is madness and ruin," he said; "better commit herself to the savage Highlanders or wild Bordermen, than to the faith of Elizabeth. A woman to a rival woman—a presumptive successor to the keeping of a jealous and childless Queen!—Roland, Herries is true and loyal, but his counsel has ruined his mistress."

"Ay, ruin follows us every where," said an old man, with a spade in his hand, and dressed like a lay-brother, of whose presence, in the vehemence of his exclamation, the Abbot had not been aware—"Gaze not on me with such wonder!—I am he who was the Abbot Boniface at Kennaquhair, who was the gardener Blinkhoolie at Lochleven, hunted round to the place in which I served my noviciate, and now ye are come to rouse me up again!—A weary life I have had for one to whom peace was ever the dearest blessing!"

"We will soon rid you of our company, good father," said the Abbot; "and the Queen will, I fear, trouble your retreat no more."

"Nay, you said as much before," said the querulous old man, "and yet I was put forth from Kinross, and pillaged by troopers on the road.—They took from me the certificate that you wot of—that of the Baron—ay, he was a moss-trooper like themselves—You asked me of it, and I could never find it, but they found it—it showed the marriage of—of—my memory fails me—Now see how men differ! Father Nicholas would have told you an hundred tales of the Abbot Ingelram, on whose soul God have mercy!—He was, I warrant you, fourscore and six, and I am not more than—let me see——"

"Was not Avenel the name you seek, my good father?" said Roland, impatiently, yet moderating his tone for fear of alarming or offending the infirm old man.

"Ay, right—Avenel, Julian Avenel—You are perfect in the name—I kept all the special confessions, judging it held with my vow to do so—I could not find it when my successor, Ambrosius, spoke on't—but the troopers found it, and the Knight who commanded the party struck his breast, till the target clattered like an empty watering-can."

"Saint Mary!" said the Abbot, "in whom could such a paper excite such interest! What was the appearance of the knight, his arms, his colours?"

"Ye distract me with your questions—I dared hardly look at him—they charged me with bearing letters for the Queen, and searched my mail—This was all along of your doings at Lochleven."

"I trust in God," said the Abbot to Roland, who stood beside him, shivering and trembling "with impatience," the paper has fallen into the hands of my brother—I heard he had been with his followers on the scout betwixt Stirling and Glasgow.—Bore not the Knight a holly-bough on his helmet?—Canst thou not remember?"

"Oh, remember—remember," said the old man pettishly; "count as many years as I do, if your plots will let you, and see what, and how much, you remember.—Why, I scarce remember the pear-mains which I grafted here with my own hands some fifty years since."

At this moment a bugle sounded loudly from the beach.

"It is the death-blast to Queen Mary's royalty," said Ambrosius; "the English warden's answer has been received, favourable doubtless, for when was the door of the trap closed against the prey which it was set for?—Droop not, Roland—this matter shall be sifted to the bottom—but we must not now leave the Queen—follow me—let us do our duty, and trust the issue with God—Farewell, good Father—I will visit thee again soon."

He was about to leave the garden, followed by Roland, with half-reluctant steps. The Ex-Abbot resumed his spade.

"I could be sorry for these men," he said, "ay, and for that poor Queen, but what avail earthly sorrows to a man of fourscore?—and it is a rare dropping morning for the early colewort."

"He is stricken with age," said Ambrosius, as he dragged Roland down to the sea-beach; "we must let him take his time to collect himself—nothing now can be thought on but the fate of the Queen."

They soon arrived where she stood, surrounded by her little train, and by her side the sheriff of Cumberland, a gentleman of the house of Lowther, richly dressed and accompanied by soldiers. The aspect of the Queen exhibited a singular mixture of alacrity and reluctance to depart. Her language and gestures spoke hope and consolation to her attendants, and she seemed desirous to persuade even herself that the step she adopted was secure, and that the assurance she had received of kind reception was altogether satisfactory; but her quivering lip, and unsettled eye, betrayed at once her anguish at departing from Scotland, and her fears of confiding herself to the doubtful faith of England.

"Welcome, my Lord Abbot," she said, speaking to Ambrosius, "and you, Roland Avenel, we have joyful news for you—our loving sister's officer proffers us, in her name, a safe asylum from the rebels who have driven us from our home—only it grieves me we must here part from you for a short space."

"Part from us, madam!" said the Abbot. "Is your welcome in England, then, to commence with the abridgment of your train, and dismissal of your counsellors?"

"Take it not thus, good Father," said Mary; "the Warden and the Sheriff, faithful servants of our Royal Sister, deem it necessary to obey her instructions in the present case, even to the letter, and can only take upon them to admit me with my female attendants. An express will instantly be despatched from London, assigning me a place of residence; and I will speedily send to all of you whenever my Court shall be formed."

"Your Court formed in England! and while Elizabeth lives and reigns?" said the Abbot—"that will be when we shall see two suns in one heaven!"

"Do not think so," replied the Queen; "we are well assured of our sister's good faith. Elizabeth loves fame—and not all that she has won by her power and her wisdom will equal that which she will acquire by extending her hospitality to a distressed sister!—not all that she may hereafter do of good, wise, and great, would blot out the reproach of abusing our confidence.—Farewell, my page—now my knight—farewell for a brief season. I will dry the tears of Catherine, or I will weep with her till neither of us can weep longer."—She held out her hand to Roland, who flinging himself on his knees, kissed it with much emotion. He was about to render the same homage to Catherine, when the Queen, assuming an air of sprightliness, said, "Her lips, thou foolish boy! and, Catherine, coy it not—these English gentlemen should see, that, even in our cold clime, Beauty knows how to reward Bravery and Fidelity!"

"We are not now to learn the force of Scottish beauty, or the mettle of Scottish valour," said the Sheriff of Cumberland, courteously—"I would it were in my power to bid these attendants upon her who is herself the mistress of Scottish beauty, as welcome to England as my poor cares would make them. But our Queen's orders are positive in case of such an emergence, and they must not be disputed by her subject.—May I remind your Majesty that the tide ebbs fast?"

The Sheriff took the Queen's hand, and she had already placed her foot on the gangway, by which she was to enter the skiff, when the Abbot, starting from a trance of grief and astonishment at the words of the Sheriff, rushed into the water, and seized upon her mantle.

"She foresaw it!—She foresaw it!"—he exclaimed—"she foresaw your flight into her realm; and, foreseeing it, gave orders you should be thus received. Blinded, deceived, doomed—Princess! your fate is sealed when you quit this strand.—Queen of Scotland, thou shalt not leave thine heritage!" he continued, holding a still firmer grasp upon her mantle; "true men shall turn rebels to thy will, that they may save thee from captivity or death. Fear not the bills and bows whom that gay man has at his beck—we will withstand him by force. Oh, for the arm of my warlike brother!—Roland Avenel, draw thy sword."

The Queen stood irresolute and frightened; one foot upon the plank, the other on the sand of her native shore, which she was quitting for ever.

"What needs this violence, Sir Priest?" said the Sheriff of Cumberland; "I came hither at your Queen's command, to do her service; and I will depart at her least order, if she rejects such aid as I can offer. No marvel is it if our Queen's wisdom foresaw that such chance as this might happen amidst the turmoils of your unsettled State; and, while willing to afford fair hospitality to her Royal Sister, deemed it wise to prohibit the entrance of a broken army of her followers into the English frontier."

"You hear," said Queen Mary, gently unloosing her robe from the Abbot's grasp, "that we exercise full liberty of choice in leaving this shore; and, questionless, the choice will remain free to us in going to France, or returning to our own dominions, as we shall determine—Besides, it is too late—Your blessing, Father, and God speed thee!"

"May He have mercy on thee, Princess, and speed thee also!" said the Abbot, retreating. "But my soul tells me I look on thee for the last time!" The sails were hoisted, the oars were plied, the vessel went freshly on her way through the firth, which divides the shores of Cumberland from those of Galloway; but not till the vessel diminished to the size of a child's frigate, did the doubtful, and dejected, and dismissed followers of the Queen cease to linger on the sands; and long, long could they discern the kerchief of Mary, as she waved the oft-repeated signal of adieu to her faithful adherents, and to the shores of Scotland.

If good tidings of a private nature could have consoled Roland for parting with his mistress, and for the distresses of his sovereign, he received such comfort some days subsequent to the Queen's leaving Dundrennan. A breathless post—no other than Adam Woodcock—brought despatches from Sir Halbert Glendinning to the Abbot, whom he found with Roland, still residing at Dundrennan, and in vain torturing Boniface with fresh interrogations. The packet bore an earnest invitation to his brother to make Avenel Castle for a time his residence. "The clemency of the Regent," said the writer, "has extended pardon both to Roland and to you, upon condition of your remaining a time under my wardship. And I have that to communicate respecting the parentage of Roland, which not only you will willingly listen to, but which will be also found to afford me, as the husband of his nearest relative, some interest in the future course of his life."

The Abbot read this letter, and paused, as if considering what were best for him to do. Meanwhile, Woodcock took Roland side, and addressed him as follows:—"Now, look, Mr. Roland, that you do not let any papestrie nonsense lure either the priest or you from the right quarry. See you, you ever bore yourself as a bit of a gentleman. Read that, and thank God that threw old Abbot Boniface in our way, as two of the Seyton's men were conveying him towards Dundrennan here.—We searched him for intelligence concerning that fair exploit of yours at Lochleven, that has cost many a man his life, and me a set of sore bones—and we found what is better for your purpose than ours."

The paper which he gave, was, indeed, an attestation by Father Philip, subscribing himself unworthy Sacristan, and brother of the House of Saint Mary's, stating, "that under a vow of secrecy he had united, in the holy sacrament of marriage, Julian Avenel and Catherine Graeme; but that Julian having repented of his union, he, Father Philip, had been sinfully prevailed on by him to conceal and disguise the same, according to a complot devised betwixt him and the said Julian Avenel, whereby the poor damsel was induced to believe that the ceremony had been performed by one not in holy orders, and having no authority to that effect. Which sinful concealment the undersigned conceived to be the cause why he was abandoned to the misguiding of a water-fiend, whereby he had been under a spell, which obliged him to answer every question, even touching the most solemn matters, with idle snatches of old songs, besides being sorely afflicted with rheumatic pains ever after. Wherefore he had deposited this testificate and confession with the day and date of the said marriage, with his lawful superior Boniface, Abbot of Saint Mary's, *sub sigillo confessionis*."

It appeared by a letter from Julian, folded carefully up with the certificate, that the Abbot Boniface had, in effect, bestirred himself in the affair, and obtained from the Baron a promise to avow his marriage; but the death of both Julian and his injured bride, together with the Abbot's resignation, his ignorance of the fate of their unhappy offspring, and above all, the good father's listless and inactive disposition, had suffered the matter to become totally forgotten, until it was recalled by some accidental conversation with the Abbot Ambrosius concerning the fortunes of the Avenel family. At the request of his successor, the quondam Abbot made search for it; but as he would receive no assistance in looking among the few records of spiritual experiences and important confessions, which he had conscientiously treasured, it might have remained for ever hidden amongst them, but for the more active researches of Sir Halbert Glendinning.

"So that you are like to be heir of Avenel at last, Master Roland, after my lord and lady have gone to their place," said Adam; "and as I have but one boon to ask, I trust you will not nick me with nay."

"Not if it be in my power to say yes, my trusty friend."

"Why then, I must needs, if I live to see that day, keep on feeding the eyases with unwashed flesh," said Woodcock sturdily, as if doubting the reception that his request might meet with.

"Thou shalt feed them with what you list for me," said Roland, laughing; "I am not many months older than when I left the Castle, but I trust I have gathered wit enough to cross no man of skill in his own vocation."

"Then I would not change places with the King's falconer," said Adam Woodcock, "nor with the Queen's neither—but they say she will be mewed up and never need one.—I see it grieves you to think of it, and I could grieve for company; but what help for it?—Fortune will fly her own flight, let a man hollo himself hoarse." The Abbot and Roland journeyed to Avenel, where the former was tenderly received by his brother, while the lady wept for joy to find that in her favourite orphan she had protected the sole surviving branch of her own family. Sir Halbert Glendinning and his household were not a little surprised at the change which a brief acquaintance with the world had produced in their former inmate, and rejoiced to find, in the pettish, spoiled, and presuming page, a modest and unassuming young man, too much acquainted with his own expectations and character, to be hot or petulant in demanding the consideration which was readily and voluntarily yielded to him. The old Major Domo Wingate was the first to sing his praises, to which Mistress Lillas bore a loud echo, always hoping that God would teach him the true gospel.

To the true gospel the heart of Roland had secretly long inclined, and the departure of the good Abbot for France, with the purpose of entering into some house of his order in that kingdom, removed his chief objection to renouncing the Catholic faith. Another might have existed in the duty which he owed to Magdalen Graeme, both by birth and from gratitude. But he learned, ere he had been long a resident in Avenel, that his grandmother had died at Cologne, in the performance of a penance too severe for her age, which she had taken upon herself in behalf of the Queen and Church of Scotland, as soon as she heard of the defeat at Langside. The zeal of the Abbot Ambrosius was more regulated; but he retired into the Scottish convent of——, and so lived there, that the fraternity were inclined to claim for him the honours of canonization. But he guessed their purpose, and prayed them, on his death-bed, to do no honours to the body of one as sinful as themselves; but to send his body and his heart to be buried in Avenel burial-aisle, in the monastery of Saint Mary's, that the last Abbot of that celebrated house of devotion might sleep among its ruins.

[Footnote: This was not the explanation of the incident of searching for the heart, mentioned in the introduction to the tale, which the author originally intended. It was designed to refer to the heart of Robert Bruce. It is generally known that that great monarch, being on his death-bed, bequeathed to the good Lord James of Douglas, the task of carrying his heart to the Holy Land, to fulfil in a certain degree his own desire to perform a crusade. Upon Douglas's death, fighting against the Moors in Spain, a sort of military hors d'oeuvre to which he could have pleaded no regular call of duty, his followers brought back the Bruce's heart, and deposited it in the Abbey church of Melrose, the Kennaquhair of the tale.

This Abbey has been always particularly favoured by the Bruce. We have already seen his extreme anxiety that each of the reverend brethren should be daily supplied with a service of boiled almonds, rice and milk, pease, or the like, to be called the King's mess, and that without the ordinary service of their table being either disturbed in quantity or quality. But this was not the only mark of the benignity of good King Robert towards the monks of Melrose, since, by a charter of the date 29th May, 1326, he conferred on the Abbot of Melrose the sum of two thousand pounds sterling, for rebuilding: the church of St. Mary's, ruined by the English; and there is little or no doubt that the principal part of the remains which now display such exquisite specimens of Gothic architecture, at its very purest period, had their origin in this munificent donation. The money was to be paid out of crown lands, estates forfeited to the King, and other property or demesnes of the crown.

A very curious letter written to his son about three weeks before his death, has been pointed out to me by my friend Mr. Thomas Thomson, Deputy-Register for Scotland. It enlarges so much on the love of the royal writer to the community of Melrose, that it is well worthy of being inserted in a work connected in some degree with Scottish History.

LITERA DOMINI REGIS ROBERTI AD FILIUM SUUM DAVID.

"Robertus dei gratia Rex Scottorum, David precordialissimo filio suo, ac ceteris successoribus suis; Salutem, et sic ejus precepta tenere, ut cum sua benedictione possint regnare. Fili carissime, digne censi videtur filius, qui, paternis in bonis mores imitans, piam ejus nititur exequi voluntatem; nec proprie sibi sumit nomen heredis, qui salubribus predecessoris affectibus non adherit: Cupientes igitur, ut piam affectionem et scinceram delectionem, quam erga monasterium de Melros, ubi cor nostrum ex speciali devotione disposuimus tumularidum, et erga Religiosos ibidem Deo servientes, ipsorum vita sanctissima nos ad hoc excitante, concepimus; Tu ceterique successores mei pia scinceritate prosequarimi, ut, ex vestre dilectionis affectu dictis Religiosis nostri causa post mortem nostrum ostenso, ipsi pro nobis ad orandum ferveucius et forcius animentur: Vobis precipimus quantum possumus, instanter supplicamus, et ex toto corde injungimus, Quatinus assignacionibus quas eisdem yiris Religiosis et fabrica Ecclesie sue de novo fecimus ac eciam omnibus aliis donacionibus nostris, ipsos libere gaudere permittatis, Easdem potius si necesse fuerit augmentantes quam diminuentes, ipsorum petitiones auribus benevolis admittentes, ac ipsos contra suos invasores et emuios pia defensione protegentes. Hanc autem exhortacionem supplicacionem et preceptum tu, fili ceterique successores nostri prestanti animo complere curetis, si nostram benedictionem habere velitis, una cum benedictione filii summi Regis, qui filios docuit patrum voluntates in bono perficere, asserens in mundum se venisse non ut suam voluntatem faceret sed paternam. In testimonium autem nostre devotionis erga locum predictum sic a nobis dilectum et electum concepte, presentem literam Religiosis predictis dimittimus, nostris successoribus in posterum ostendendam. Data apud Cardros, undecimo die Maij, Anno Regni nostri vicesimo quarto."

If this charter be altogether genuine, and there is no appearance of forgery, it gives rise to a curious doubt in Scottish History. The letter announces that the King had already destined his heart to be deposited at Melrose. The resolution to send it to Palestine, under the charge of Douglas, must have been adopted betwixt 11th May 1329, the date of the letter, and 7th June of the same year, when the Bruce died; or else we must suppose that the commission of Douglas extended not only to taking the Bruce's heart to Palestine, but to bring it safe back to its final place of deposit in the Abbey of Melrose.

It would not be worth inquiring: by what caprice the author was induced to throw the incident of the Bruce's heart entirely out of the story, save merely to say, that he found himself unable to fill up the canvass he had sketched, and indisposed to prosecute the management of the supernatural machinery with which his plan, when it was first rough-hewn, was connected and combined.]

Long before that period arrived, Roland Avenel was wedded to Catherine Seyton, who, after two years' residence with her unhappy mistress, was dismissed upon her being subjected to closer restraint than had been at first exercised. She returned to her father's house, and as Roland was acknowledged for the successor and lawful heir of the ancient house of Avenel, greatly increased as the estate was by the providence of Sir Halbert Gleninning, there occurred no objections to the match on the part of her family. Her mother was recently dead when she first entered the convent; and her father, in the unsettled times which followed Queen Mary's flight to England, was not averse to an alliance with a youth, who, himself loyal to Queen Mary, still held some influence, through means of Sir Halbert Glendinning, with the party in power.

Roland and Catherine, therefore, were united, spite of their differing faiths; and the White Lady, whose apparition had been infrequent when the house of Avenel seemed verging to extinction, was seen to sport by her haunted well, with a zone of gold around her bosom as broad as the baldrick of an Earl.

BOOK XII
KENILWORTH
CHAPTER I.

*I am an innkeeper, and know my grounds,
And study them; Brain o' man, I study them.
I must have jovial guests to drive my ploughs,
And whistling boys to bring my harvests home,
Or I shall hear no flails thwack.* *THE NEW INN.*

It is the privilege of tale-tellers to open their story in an inn, the free rendezvous of all travellers, and where the humour of each displays itself without ceremony or restraint. This is specially suitable when the scene is laid during the old days of merry England, when the guests were in some sort not merely the inmates, but the messmates and temporary companions of mine Host, who was usually a personage of privileged freedom, comely presence, and good-humour. Patronized by him the characters of the company were placed in ready contrast; and they seldom failed, during the emptying of a six-hooped pot, to throw off reserve, and present themselves to each other, and to their landlord, with the freedom of old acquaintance.

The village of Cumnor, within three or four miles of Oxford, boasted, during the eighteenth of Queen Elizabeth, an excellent inn of the old stamp, conducted, or rather ruled, by Giles Gosling, a man of a goodly person, and of somewhat round belly; fifty years of age and upwards, moderate in his reckonings, prompt in his payments, having a cellar of sound liquor, a ready wit, and a pretty daughter. Since the days of old Harry Baillie of the Tabard in Southwark, no one had excelled Giles Gosling in the power of pleasing his guests of every description; and so great was his fame, that to have been in Cumnor without wetting a cup at the bonny Black Bear, would have been to avouch one's-self utterly indifferent to reputation as a traveller. A country fellow might as well return from London without looking in the face of majesty. The men of Cumnor were proud of their Host, and their Host was proud of his house, his liquor, his daughter, and himself.

It was in the courtyard of the inn which called this honest fellow landlord, that a traveller alighted in the close of the evening, gave his horse, which seemed to have made a long journey, to the hostler, and made some inquiry, which produced the following dialogue betwixt the myrmidons of the bonny Black Bear.

"What, ho! John Tapster."

"At hand, Will Hostler," replied the man of the spigot, showing himself in his costume of loose jacket, linen breeches, and green apron, half within and half without a door, which appeared to descend to an outer cellar.

"Here is a gentleman asks if you draw good ale," continued the hostler.

"Beshrew my heart else," answered the tapster, "since there are but four miles betwixt us and Oxford. Marry, if my ale did not convince the heads of the scholars, they would soon convince my pate with the pewter flagon."

"Call you that Oxford logic?" said the stranger, who had now quitted the rein of his horse, and was advancing towards the inn-door, when he was encountered by the goodly form of Giles Gosling himself.

"Is it logic you talk of, Sir Guest?" said the host; "why, then, have at you with a downright consequence—"

'The horse to the rack,

And to fire with the sack.'"

"Amen! with all my heart, my good host," said the stranger; "let it be a quart of your best Canaries, and give me your good help to drink it."

"Nay, you are but in your accidence yet, Sir Traveller, if you call on your host for help for such a sipping matter as a quart of sack; Were it a gallon, you might lack some neighbouring aid at my hand, and yet call yourself a toper."

"Fear me not," said the guest, "I will do my devoir as becomes a man who finds himself within five miles of Oxford; for I am not come from the field of Mars to discredit myself amongst the followers of Minerva."

As he spoke thus, the landlord, with much semblance of hearty welcome, ushered his guest into a large, low chamber, where several persons were seated together in different parties—some drinking, some playing at cards, some conversing, and some, whose business called them to be early risers on the morrow, concluding their evening meal, and conferring with the chamberlain about their night's quarters.

The entrance of a stranger procured him that general and careless sort of attention which is usually paid on such occasions, from which the following results were deduced:—The guest was one of those who, with a well-made person, and features not in themselves unpleasing, are nevertheless so far from handsome that, whether from the expression of their features, or the tone of their voice, or from their gait and manner, there arises, on the whole, a disinclination to their society. The stranger's address was bold, without being frank, and seemed eagerly and hastily to claim for him a degree of attention and deference which he feared would be refused, if not instantly vindicated as his right. His attire was a riding-cloak, which, when open, displayed a handsome jerkin overlaid with lace, and belted with a buff girdle, which sustained a broadsword and a pair of pistols.

"You ride well provided, sir," said the host, looking at the weapons as he placed on the table the mulled sack which the traveller had ordered.

"Yes, mine host; I have found the use on't in dangerous times, and I do not, like your modern grandees, turn off my followers the instant they are useless."

"Ay, sir?" said Giles Gosling; "then you are from the Low Countries, the land of pike and caliver?"

"I have been high and low, my friend, broad and wide, far and near. But here is to thee in a cup of thy sack; fill thyself another to pledge me, and, if it is less than superlative, e'en drink as you have brewed."

"Less than superlative?" said Giles Gosling, drinking off the cup, and smacking his lips with an air of ineffable relish,—"I know nothing of superlative, nor is there such a wine at the Three Cranes, in the Vintry, to my knowledge; but if you find better sack than that in the Sheres, or in the Canaries either, I would I may never touch either pot or penny more. Why, hold it up betwixt you and the light, you shall see the little motes dance in the golden liquor like dust in the sunbeam. But I would rather draw wine for ten clowns than one traveller.—I trust your honour likes the wine?"

"It is neat and comfortable, mine host; but to know good liquor, you should drink where the vine grows. Trust me, your Spaniard is too wise a man to send you the very soul of the grape. Why, this now, which you account so choice, were counted but as a cup of bastard at the Groyne, or at Port St. Mary's. You should travel, mine host, if you would be deep in the mysteries of the butt and pottle-pot."

"In troth, Signior Guest," said Giles Gosling, "if I were to travel only that I might be discontented with that which I can get at home, methinks I should go but on a fool's errand. Besides, I warrant you, there is many a fool can turn his nose up at good drink without ever having been out of the smoke of Old England; and so ever gramercy mine own fireside."

"This is but a mean mind of yours, mine host," said the stranger; "I warrant me, all your town's folk do not think so basely. You have gallants among you, I dare undertake, that have made the Virginia voyage, or taken a turn in the Low Countries at least. Come, cudgel your memory. Have you no friends in foreign parts that you would gladly have tidings of?"

"Troth, sir, not I," answered the host, "since ranting Robin of Drysandford was shot at the siege of the Brill. The devil take the caliver that fired the ball, for a blither lad never filled a cup at midnight! But he is dead and gone, and I know not a soldier, or a traveller, who is a soldier's mate, that I would give a peeled codling for."

"By the Mass, that is strange. What! so many of our brave English hearts are abroad, and you, who seem to be a man of mark, have no friend, no kinsman among them?"

"Nay, if you speak of kinsmen," answered Gosling, "I have one wild slip of a kinsman, who left us in the last year of Queen Mary; but he is better lost than found."

"Do not say so, friend, unless you have heard ill of him lately. Many a wild colt has turned out a noble steed.—His name, I pray you?"

"Michael Lambourne," answered the landlord of the Black Bear; "a son of my sister's—there is little pleasure in recollecting either the name or the connection."

"Michael Lambourne!" said the stranger, as if endeavouring to recollect himself—"what, no relation to Michael Lambourne, the gallant cavalier who behaved so bravely at the siege of Venlo that Grave Maurice thanked him at the head of the army? Men said he was an English cavalier, and of no high extraction."

"It could scarcely be my nephew," said Giles Gosling, "for he had not the courage of a hen-partridge for aught but mischief."

"Oh, many a man finds courage in the wars," replied the stranger.

"It may be," said the landlord; "but I would have thought our Mike more likely to lose the little he had."

"The Michael Lambourne whom I knew," continued the traveller, "was a likely fellow—went always gay and well attired, and had a hawk's eye after a pretty wench."

"Our Michael," replied the host, "had the look of a dog with a bottle at its tail, and wore a coat, every rag of which was bidding good-day to the rest."

"Oh, men pick up good apparel in the wars," replied the guest.

"Our Mike," answered the landlord, "was more like to pick it up in a frippery warehouse, while the broker was looking another way; and, for the hawk's eye you talk of, his was always after my stray spoons. He was tapster's boy here in this blessed house for a quarter of a year; and between misreckonings, miscarriages, mistakes, and misdemeanours, had he dwelt with me for three months longer, I might have pulled down sign, shut up house, and given the devil the key to keep."

"You would be sorry, after all," continued the traveller, "were I to tell you poor Mike Lambourne was shot at the head of his regiment at the taking of a scone near Maestricht?"

"Sorry!—it would be the blithest news I ever heard of him, since it would ensure me he was not hanged. But let him pass—I doubt his end will never do such credit to his friends. Were it so, I should say"—(taking another cup of sack)—"Here's God rest him, with all my heart."

"Tush, man," replied the traveller, "never fear but you will have credit by your nephew yet, especially if he be the Michael Lambourne whom I knew, and loved very nearly, or altogether, as well as myself. Can you tell me no mark by which I could judge whether they be the same?"

"Faith, none that I can think of," answered Giles Gosling, "unless that our Mike had the gallows branded on his left shoulder for stealing a silver caudle-cup from Dame Snort of Hogsditch."

"Nay, there you lie like a knave, uncle," said the stranger, slipping aside his ruff; and turning down the sleeve of his doublet from his neck and shoulder; "by this good day, my shoulder is as unscarred as thine own."

"What, Mike, boy—Mike!" exclaimed the host;—"and is it thou, in good earnest? Nay, I have judged so for this half-hour; for I knew no other person would have ta'en half the interest in thee. But, Mike, an thy shoulder be unscathed as thou sayest, thou must own that Goodman Thong, the hangman, was merciful in his office, and stamped thee with a cold iron."

"Tush, uncle—truce with your jests. Keep them to season your sour ale, and let us see what hearty welcome thou wilt give a kinsman who has rolled the world around for eighteen years; who has seen the sun set where it rises, and has travelled till the west has become the east."

"Thou hast brought back one traveller's gift with thee, Mike, as I well see; and that was what thou least didst: need to travel for. I remember well, among thine other qualities, there was no crediting a word which came from thy mouth."

"Here's an unbelieving pagan for you, gentlemen!" said Michael Lambourne, turning to those who witnessed this strange interview betwixt uncle and nephew, some of whom, being natives of the village, were no strangers to his juvenile wildness. "This may be called slaying a Cumnor fatted calf for me with a vengeance.—But, uncle, I come not from the husks and the swine-trough, and I care not for thy welcome or no welcome; I carry that with me will make me welcome, wend where I will."

So saying, he pulled out a purse of gold indifferently well filled, the sight of which produced a visible effect upon the company. Some shook their heads and whispered to each other, while one or two of the less scrupulous speedily began to recollect him as a school-companion, a townsman, or so forth. On the other hand, two or three grave, sedate-looking persons shook their heads, and left the inn, hinting that, if Giles Gosling wished to continue to thrive, he should turn his thriftless, godless nephew adrift again, as soon as he could. Gosling demeaned himself as if he were much of the same opinion, for even the sight of the gold made less impression on the honest gentleman than it usually doth upon one of his calling.

"Kinsman Michael," he said, "put up thy purse. My sister's son shall be called to no reckoning in my house for supper or lodging; and I reckon thou wilt hardly wish to stay longer where thou art e'en but too well known."

"For that matter, uncle," replied the traveller, "I shall consult my own needs and conveniences. Meantime I wish to give the supper and sleeping cup to those good townsmen who are not too proud to remember Mike Lambourne, the tapster's boy. If you will let me have entertainment for my money, so; if not, it is but a short two minutes' walk to the Hare and Tabor, and I trust our neighbours will not grudge going thus far with me."

"Nay, Mike," replied his uncle, "as eighteen years have gone over thy head, and I trust thou art somewhat amended in thy conditions, thou shalt not leave my house at this hour, and shalt e'en have whatever in reason you list to call for. But I would I knew that that purse of thine, which thou vapourest of, were as well come by as it seems well filled."

"Here is an infidel for you, my good neighbours!" said Lambourne, again appealing to the audience. "Here's a fellow will rip up his kinsman's follies of a good score of years' standing. And for the gold, why, sirs, I have been where it grew, and was to be had for the gathering. In the New World have I been, man—in the Eldorado, where urchins play at cherry-pit with diamonds, and country wenches thread rubies for necklaces, instead of rowan-tree berries; where the pantiles are made of pure gold, and the paving-stones of virgin silver."

"By my credit, friend Mike," said young Laurence Goldthred, the cutting mercer of Abingdon, "that were a likely coast to trade to. And what may lawns, cypruses, and ribands fetch, where gold is so plenty?"

"Oh, the profit were unutterable," replied Lambourne, "especially when a handsome young merchant bears the pack himself; for the ladies of that clime are bonarobas, and being themselves somewhat sunburnt, they catch fire like tinder at a fresh complexion like thine, with a head of hair inclining to be red."

"I would I might trade thither," said the mercer, chuckling.

"Why, and so thou mayest," said Michael—"that is, if thou art the same brisk boy who was partner with me at robbing the Abbot's orchard. 'Tis but a little touch of alchemy to decoct thy house and land into ready money, and that ready money into a tall ship, with sails, anchors, cordage, and all things conforming; then clap thy warehouse of goods under hatches, put fifty good fellows on deck, with myself to command them, and so hoist topsails, and hey for the New World!"

"Thou hast taught him a secret, kinsman," said Giles Gosling, "to decoct, an that be the word, his pound into a penny and his webs into a thread.—Take a fool's advice, neighbour Goldthred. Tempt not the sea, for she is a devourer. Let cards and cockatrices do their worst, thy father's bales may bide a banging for a year or two ere thou comest to the Spital; but the sea hath a bottomless appetite,—she would swallow the wealth of Lombard Street in a morning, as easily as I would a poached egg and a cup of clary. And for my kinsman's Eldorado, never trust me if I do not believe he has found it in the pouches of some such gulls as thyself.—But take no snuff in the nose about it; fall to and welcome, for here comes the supper, and I heartily bestow it on all that will take share, in honour of my hopeful nephew's return, always trusting that he has come home another man.—In faith, kinsman, thou art as like my poor sister as ever was son to mother."

"Not quite so like old Benedict Lambourne, her husband, though," said the mercer, nodding and winking. "Dost thou remember, Mike, what thou saidst when the schoolmaster's ferule was over thee for striking up thy father's crutches?—it is a wise child, saidst thou, that knows its own father. Dr. Bircham laughed till he cried again, and his crying saved yours."

"Well, he made it up to me many a day after," said Lambourne; "and how is the worthy pedagogue?"

"Dead," said Giles Gosling, "this many a day since."

"That he is," said the clerk of the parish; "I sat by his bed the whilst. He passed away in a blessed frame. 'MORIOR—MORTUUS SUM VEL FUI—MORI'—these were his latest words; and he just added, 'my last verb is conjugated.'"

"Well, peace be with him," said Mike, "he owes me nothing."

"No, truly," replied Goldthred; "and every lash which he laid on thee, he always was wont to say, he spared the hangman a labour."

"One would have thought he left him little to do then," said the clerk; "and yet Goodman Thong had no sinecure of it with our friend, after all."

"VOTO A DIOS!" exclaimed Lambourne, his patience appearing to fail him, as he snatched his broad, slouched hat from the table and placed it on his head, so that the shadow gave the sinister expression of a Spanish brave to eyes and features which naturally boded nothing pleasant. "Hark'ee, my masters—all is fair among friends, and under the rose; and I have already permitted my worthy uncle here, and all of you, to use your pleasure with the frolics of my nonage. But I carry sword and dagger, my good friends, and can use them lightly too upon occasion. I have learned to be dangerous upon points of honour ever since I served the Spaniard, and I would not have you provoke me to the degree of falling foul."

"Why, what would you do?" said the clerk.

"Ay, sir, what would you do?" said the mercer, bustling up on the other side of the table.

"Slit your throat, and spoil your Sunday's quavering, Sir Clerk," said Lambourne fiercely; "cudgel you, my worshipful dealer in flimsy sarsenets, into one of your own bales."

"Come, come," said the host, interposing, "I will have no swaggering here.—Nephew, it will become you best to show no haste to take offence; and you, gentlemen, will do well to remember, that if you are in an inn, still you are the inn-keeper's guests, and should spare the honour of his family.—I protest your silly broils make me as oblivious as yourself; for yonder sits my silent guest as I call him, who hath been my two days' inmate, and hath never spoken a word, save to ask for his food and his reckoning—gives no more trouble than a very peasant—pays his shot like a prince royal—looks but at the sum total of the reckoning, and does not know what day he shall go away. Oh, 'tis a jewel of a guest! and yet, hang-dog that I am, I have suffered him to sit by himself like a castaway in yonder obscure nook, without so much as asking him to take bite or sup along with us. It were but the right guerdon of my incivility were he to set off to the Hare and Tabor before the night grows older."

With his white napkin gracefully arranged over his left arm, his velvet cap laid aside for the moment, and his best silver flagon in his right hand, mine host walked up to the solitary guest whom he mentioned, and thereby turned upon him the eyes of the assembled company.

He was a man aged betwixt twenty-five and thirty, rather above the middle size, dressed with plainness and decency, yet bearing an air of ease which almost amounted to dignity, and which seemed to infer that his habit was rather beneath his rank. His countenance was reserved and thoughtful, with dark hair and dark eyes; the last, upon any momentary excitement, sparkled with uncommon lustre, but on other occasions had the same meditative and tranquil cast which was exhibited by his features. The busy curiosity of the little village had been employed to discover his name and quality, as well as his business at Cumnor; but nothing had transpired on either subject which could lead to its gratification. Giles Gosling, head-borough of the place, and a steady friend to Queen Elizabeth and the Protestant religion, was at one time inclined to suspect his guest of being a Jesuit, or seminary priest, of whom Rome and Spain sent at this time so many to grace the gallows in England. But it was scarce possible to retain such a prepossession against a guest who gave so little trouble, paid his reckoning so regularly, and who proposed, as it seemed, to make a considerable stay at the bonny Black Bear.

"Papists," argued Giles Gosling, "are a pinching, close-fisted race, and this man would have found a lodging with the wealthy squire at Bessellsey, or with the old Knight at Wootton, or in some other of their Roman dens, instead of living in a house of public entertainment, as every honest man and good Christian should. Besides, on Friday he stuck by the salt beef and carrot, though there were as good spitch-cocked eels on the board as ever were ta'en out of the Isis."

Honest Giles, therefore, satisfied himself that his guest was no Roman, and with all comely courtesy besought the stranger to pledge him in a draught of the cool tankard, and honour with his attention a small collation which he was giving to his nephew, in honour of his return, and, as he verily hoped, of his reformation. The stranger at first shook his head, as if declining the courtesy; but mine host proceeded to urge him with arguments founded on the credit of his house, and the construction which the good people of Cumnor might put upon such an unsocial humour.

"By my faith, sir," he said, "it touches my reputation that men should be merry in my house; and we have ill tongues amongst us at Cumnor (as where be there not?), who put an evil mark on men who pull their hat over their brows, as if they were looking back to the days that are gone, instead of enjoying the blithesome weather which God has sent us in the sweet looks of our sovereign mistress, Queen Elizabeth, whom Heaven long bless and preserve!"

"Why, mine host," answered the stranger, "there is no treason, sure, in a man's enjoying his own thoughts, under the shadow of his own bonnet? You have lived in the world twice as long as I have, and you must know there are thoughts that will haunt us in spite of ourselves, and to which it is in vain to say, Begone, and let me be merry."

"By my sooth," answered Giles Gosling, "if such troublesome thoughts haunt your mind, and will not get them gone for plain English, we will have one of Father Bacon's pupils from Oxford, to conjure them away with logic and with Hebrew—or, what say you to laying them in a glorious red sea of claret, my noble guest? Come, sir, excuse my freedom. I am an old host, and must have my talk. This peevish humour of melancholy sits ill upon you; it suits not with a sleek boot, a hat of trim block, a fresh cloak, and a full purse. A pize on it! send it off to those who have their legs swathed with a hay-wisp, their heads thatched with a felt bonnet, their jerkin as thin as a cobweb, and their pouch without ever a cross to keep the fiend Melancholy from dancing in it. Cheer up, sir! or, by this good liquor, we shall banish thee from the joys of blithesome company, into the mists of melancholy and the land of little-ease. Here be a set of good fellows willing to be merry; do not scowl on them like the devil looking over Lincoln."

"You say well, my worthy host," said the guest, with a melancholy smile, which, melancholy as it was, gave a very pleasant expression to his countenance—"you say well, my jovial friend; and they that are moody like myself should not disturb the mirth of those who are happy. I will drink a round with your guests with all my heart, rather than be termed a mar-feast."

So saying, he arose and joined the company, who, encouraged by the precept and example of Michael Lambourne, and consisting chiefly of persons much disposed to profit by the opportunity of a merry meal at the expense of their landlord, had already made some inroads upon the limits of temperance, as was evident from the tone in which Michael inquired after his old acquaintances in the town, and the bursts of laughter with which each answer was received. Giles Gosling himself was somewhat scandalized at the obstreperous nature of their mirth, especially as he involuntarily felt some respect for his unknown guest. He paused, therefore, at some distance from the table occupied by these noisy revellers, and began to make a sort of apology for their license.

"You would think," he said, "to hear these fellows talk, that there was not one of them who had not been bred to live by Stand and Deliver; and yet tomorrow you will find them a set of as painstaking mechanics, and so forth, as ever cut an inch short of measure, or paid a letter of change in light crowns over a counter. The mercer there wears his hat awry, over a shaggy head of hair, that looks like a curly water-dog's back, goes unbraced, wears his cloak on one side, and affects a ruffianly vapouring humour: when in his shop at Abingdon, he is, from his flat cap to his glistening shoes, as precise in his apparel as if he was named for mayor. He talks of breaking parks, and taking the highway, in such fashion that you would think he haunted every night betwixt Hounslow and London; when in fact he may be found sound asleep on his feather-bed, with a candle placed beside him on one side, and a Bible on the other, to fright away the goblins."

"And your nephew, mine host, this same Michael Lambourne, who is lord of the feast—is he, too, such a would-be ruffian as the rest of them?"

"Why, there you push me hard," said the host; "my nephew is my nephew, and though he was a desperate Dick of yore, yet Mike may have mended like other folks, you wot. And I would not have you think all I said of him, even now, was strict gospel; I knew the wag all the while, and wished to pluck his plumes from him. And now, sir, by what name shall I present my worshipful guest to these gallants?"

"Marry, mine host," replied the stranger, "you may call me Tressilian."

"Tressilian?" answered mine host of the Bear. "A worthy name, and, as I think, of Cornish lineage; for what says the south proverb—

'By Pol, Tre, and Pen,

You may know the Cornish men.'

Shall I say the worthy Master Tressilian of Cornwall?"

"Say no more than I have given you warrant for, mine host, and so shall you be sure you speak no more than is true. A man may have one of those honourable prefixes to his name, yet be born far from Saint Michael's Mount."

Mine host pushed his curiosity no further, but presented Master Tressilian to his nephew's company, who, after exchange of salutations, and drinking to the health of their new companion, pursued the conversation in which he found them engaged, seasoning it with many an intervening pledge.

CHAPTER II.

Talk you of young Master Lancelot? —MERCHANT OF VENICE.

After some brief interval, Master Goldthred, at the earnest instigation of mine host, and the joyous concurrence of his guest, indulged the company with, the following morsel of melody:—

*"Of all the birds on bush or tree,
Commend me to the owl,
Since he may best ensample be
To those the cup that trowl.
For when the sun hath left the west,
He chooses the tree that he loves the best,
And he whoops out his song, and he laughs at his jest;
Then, though hours be late and weather foul,
We'll drink to the health of the bonny, bonny owl.*

*"The lark is but a bumpkin fowl,
He sleeps in his nest till morn;
But my blessing upon the jolly owl,
That all night blows his horn.
Then up with your cup till you stagger in speech,
And match me this catch till you swagger and screech,
And drink till you wink, my merry men each;
For, though hours be late and weather be foul,
We'll drink to the health of the bonny, bonny owl."*

"There is savour in this, my hearts," said Michael, when the mercer had finished his song, "and some goodness seems left among you yet; but what a bead-roll you have read me of old comrades, and to every man's name tacked some ill-omened motto! And so Swashing Will of Wallingford hath bid us good-night?"

"He died the death of a fat buck," said one of the party, "being shot with a crossbow bolt, by old Thatcham, the Duke's stout park-keeper at Donnington Castle."

"Ay, ay, he always loved venison well," replied Michael, "and a cup of claret to boot—and so here's one to his memory. Do me right, my masters."

When the memory of this departed worthy had been duly honoured, Lambourne proceeded to inquire after Prance of Padworth.

"Pranced off—made immortal ten years since," said the mercer; "marry, sir, Oxford Castle and Goodman Thong, and a tenpenny-worth of cord, best know how."

"What, so they hung poor Prance high and dry? so much for loving to walk by moonlight. A cup to his memory, my masters—all merry fellows like moonlight. What has become of Hal with the Plume—he who lived near Yattenden, and wore the long feather?—I forget his name."

"What, Hal Hempseed?" replied the mercer. "Why, you may remember he was a sort of a gentleman, and would meddle in state matters, and so he got into the mire about the Duke of Norfolk's affair these two or three years since, fled the country with a pursuivant's warrant at his heels, and has never since been heard of."

"Nay, after these baulks," said Michael Lambourne, "I need hardly inquire after Tony Foster; for when ropes, and crossbow shafts, and pursuivant's warrants, and such-like gear, were so rife, Tony could hardly 'scape them."

"Which Tony Foster mean you?" said the innkeeper.

"Why, him they called Tony Fire-the-Fagot, because he brought a light to kindle the pile round Latimer and Ridley, when the wind blew out Jack Thong's torch, and no man else would give him light for love or money."

"Tony Foster lives and thrives," said the host. "But, kinsman, I would not have you call him Tony Fire-the-Fagot, if you would not brook the stab."

"How! is he grown ashamed on't?" said Lambourne, "Why, he was wont to boast of it, and say he liked as well to see a roasted heretic as a roasted ox."

"Ay, but, kinsman, that was in Mary's time," replied the landlord, "when Tony's father was reeve here to the Abbot of Abingdon. But since that, Tony married a pure precisian, and is as good a Protestant, I warrant you, as the best."

"And looks grave, and holds his head high, and scorns his old companions," said the mercer.

"Then he hath prospered, I warrant him," said Lambourne; "for ever when a man hath got nobles of his own, he keeps out of the way of those whose exchequers lie in other men's purchase."

"Prospered, quotha!" said the mercer; "why, you remember Cumnor Place, the old mansion-house beside the churchyard?"

"By the same token, I robbed the orchard three times—what of that? It was the old abbot's residence when there was plague or sickness at Abingdon."

"Ay," said the host, "but that has been long over; and Anthony Foster hath a right in it, and lives there by some grant from a great courtier, who had the church-lands from the crown. And there he dwells, and has as little to do with any poor wight in Cumnor, as if he were himself a belted knight."

"Nay," said the mercer, "it is not altogether pride in Tony neither; there is a fair lady in the case, and Tony will scarce let the light of day look on her."

"How!" said Tressilian, who now for the first time interfered in their conversation; "did ye not say this Foster was married, and to a precisian?"

"Married he was, and to as bitter a precisian as ever ate flesh in Lent; and a cat-and-dog life she led with Tony, as men said. But she is dead, rest be with her! and Tony hath but a slip of a daughter; so it is thought he means to wed this stranger, that men keep such a coil about."

"And why so?—I mean, why do they keep a coil about her?" said Tressilian.

"Why, I wot not," answered the host, "except that men say she is as beautiful as an angel, and no one knows whence she comes, and every one wishes to know why she is kept so closely mew'd up. For my part, I never saw her—you have, I think, Master Goldthred?"

"That I have, old boy," said the mercer. "Look you, I was riding hither from Abingdon. I passed under the east oriel window of the old mansion, where all the old saints and histories and such-like are painted. It was not the common path I took, but one through the Park; for the postern door was upon the latch, and I thought I might take the privilege of an old comrade to ride across through the trees, both for shading, as the day was somewhat hot, and for avoiding of dust, because I had on my peach-coloured doublet, pinked out with cloth of gold."

"Which garment," said Michael Lambourne, "thou wouldst willingly make twinkle in the eyes of a fair dame. Ah! villain, thou wilt never leave thy old tricks."

"Not so-not so," said the mercer, with a smirking laugh—"not altogether so—but curiosity, thou knowest, and a strain of compassion withal; for the poor young lady sees nothing from morn to even but Tony Foster, with his scowling black brows, his bull's head, and his bandy legs."

"And thou wouldst willingly show her a dapper body, in a silken jerkin—a limb like a short-legged hen's, in a cordovan boot—and a round, simpering, what-d'ye-lack sort of a countenance, set off with a velvet bonnet, a Turkey feather, and a gilded brooch? Ah! jolly mercer, they who have good wares are fond to show them!—Come, gentles, let not the cup stand—here's to long spurs, short boots, full bonnets, and empty skulls!"

"Nay, now, you are jealous of me, Mike," said Goldthred; "and yet my luck was but what might have happened to thee, or any man."

"Marry confound thine impudence," retorted Lambourne; "thou wouldst not compare thy pudding face, and sarsenet manners, to a gentleman, and a soldier?"

"Nay, my good sir," said Tressilian, "let me beseech you will not interrupt the gallant citizen; methinks he tells his tale so well, I could hearken to him till midnight."

"It's more of your favour than of my desert," answered Master Goldthred; "but since I give you pleasure, worthy Master Tressilian, I shall proceed, maugre all the gibes and quips of this valiant soldier, who, peradventure, hath had more cuffs than crowns in the Low Countries. And so, sir, as I passed under the great painted window, leaving my rein loose on my ambling palfrey's neck, partly for mine ease, and partly that I might have the more leisure to peer about, I hears me the lattice open; and never credit me, sir, if there did not stand there the person of as fair a woman as ever crossed mine eyes; and I think I have looked on as many pretty wenches, and with as much judgment, as other folks."

"May I ask her appearance, sir?" said Tressilian.

"Oh, sir," replied Master Goldthred, "I promise you, she was in gentlewoman's attire—a very quaint and pleasing dress, that might have served the Queen herself; for she had a forepart with body and sleeves, of ginger-coloured satin, which, in my judgment, must have cost by the yard some thirty shillings, lined with murrey taffeta, and laid down and guarded with two broad laces of gold and silver. And her hat, sir, was truly the best fashioned thing that I have seen in these parts, being of tawny taffeta, embroidered with scorpions of Venice gold, and having a border garnished with gold fringe—I promise you, sir, an absolute and all-surpassing device. Touching her skirts, they were in the old pass-devant fashion."

"I did not ask you of her attire, sir," said Tressilian, who had shown some impatience during this conversation, "but of her complexion—the colour of her hair, her features."

"Touching her complexion," answered the mercer, "I am not so special certain, but I marked that her fan had an ivory handle, curiously inlaid. And then again, as to the colour of her hair, why, I can warrant, be its hue what it might, that she wore above it a net of green silk, parcel twisted with gold."

"A most mercer-like memory!" said Lambourne. "The gentleman asks him of the lady's beauty, and he talks of her fine clothes!"

"I tell thee," said the mercer, somewhat disconcerted, "I had little time to look at her; for just as I was about to give her the good time of day, and for that purpose had puckered my features with a smile—"

"Like those of a jackanape simpering at a chestnut," said Michael Lambourne.

"Up started of a sudden," continued Goldthred, without heeding the interruption, "Tony Foster himself, with a cudgel in his hand—"

"And broke thy head across, I hope, for thine impertinence," said his entertainer.

"That were more easily said than done," answered Goldthred indignantly; "no, no—there was no breaking of heads. It's true, he advanced his cudgel, and spoke of laying on, and asked why I did not keep the public road, and such like; and I would have knocked him over the pate handsomely for his pains, only for the lady's presence, who might have swooned, for what I know."

"Now, out upon thee for a faint-spirited slave!" said Lambourne; "what adventurous knight ever thought of the lady's terror, when he went to thwack giant, dragon, or magician, in her presence, and for her deliverance? But why talk to thee of dragons, who would be driven back by a dragon-fly. There thou hast missed the rarest opportunity!"

"Take it thyself, then, bully Mike," answered Goldthred. "Yonder is the enchanted manor, and the dragon, and the lady, all at thy service, if thou darrest venture on them."

"Why, so I would for a quartern of sack," said the soldier—"or stay: I am foully out of linen—wilt thou bet a piece of Hollands against these five angels, that I go not up to the Hall to-morrow and force Tony Foster to introduce me to his fair guest?"

"I accept your wager," said the mercer; "and I think, though thou hadst even the impudence of the devil, I shall gain on thee this bout. Our landlord here shall hold stakes, and I will stake down gold till I send the linen."

"I will hold stakes on no such matter," said Gosling. "Good now, my kinsman, drink your wine in quiet, and let such ventures alone. I promise you, Master Foster hath interest enough to lay you up in lavender in the Castle at Oxford, or to get your legs made acquainted with the town-stocks."

"That would be but renewing an old intimacy, for Mike's shins and the town's wooden pinfold have been well known to each other ere now," said the mercer; "but he shall not budge from his wager, unless he means to pay forfeit."

"Forfeit?" said Lambourne; "I scorn it. I value Tony Foster's wrath no more than a shelled pea-cod; and I will visit his Lindabrides, by Saint George, be he willing or no!"

"I would gladly pay your halves of the risk, sir," said Tressilian, "to be permitted to accompany you on the adventure."

"In what would that advantage you, sir?" answered Lambourne.

"In nothing, sir," said Tressilian, "unless to mark the skill and valour with which you conduct yourself. I am a traveller who seeks for strange rencounters and uncommon passages, as the knights of yore did after adventures and feats of arms."

"Nay, if it pleasures you to see a trout tickled," answered Lambourne, "I care not how many witness my skill. And so here I drink success to my enterprise; and he that will not pledge me on his knees is a rascal, and I will cut his legs off by the garters!"

The draught which Michael Lambourne took upon this occasion had been preceded by so many others, that reason tottered on her throne. He swore one or two incoherent oaths at the mercer, who refused, reasonably enough, to pledge him to a sentiment which inferred the loss of his own wager.

"Wilt thou chop logic with me," said Lambourne, "thou knave, with no more brains than are in a skein of ravelled silk? By Heaven, I will cut thee into fifty yards of galloon lace!"

But as he attempted to draw his sword for this doughty purpose, Michael Lambourne was seized upon by the tapster and the chamberlain, and conveyed to his own apartment, there to sleep himself sober at his leisure.

The party then broke up, and the guests took their leave; much more to the contentment of mine host than of some of the company, who were unwilling to quit good liquor, when it was to be had for free cost, so long as they were able to sit by it. They were, however, compelled to remove; and go at length they did, leaving Gosling and Tressilian in the empty apartment.

"By my faith," said the former, "I wonder where our great folks find pleasure, when they spend their means in entertainments, and in playing mine host without sending in a reckoning. It is what I but rarely practise; and whenever I do, by Saint Julian, it grieves me beyond measure. Each of these empty stoups now, which my nephew and his drunken comrades have swilled off, should have been a matter of profit to one in my line, and I must set them down a dead loss. I cannot, for my heart, conceive the pleasure of noise, and nonsense, and drunken freaks, and drunken quarrels, and smut, and blasphemy, and so forth, when a man loses money instead of gaining by it. And yet many a fair estate is lost in upholding such a useless course, and that greatly contributes to the decay of publicans; for who the devil do you think would pay for drink at the Black Bear, when he can have it for nothing at my Lord's or the Squire's?"

Tressilian perceived that the wine had made some impression even on the seasoned brain of mine host, which was chiefly to be inferred from his declaiming against drunkenness. As he himself had carefully avoided the bowl, he would have availed himself of the frankness of the moment to extract from Gosling some further information upon the subject of Anthony Foster, and the lady whom the mercer had seen in his mansion-house; but his inquiries only set the host upon a new theme of declamation against the wiles of the fair sex, in which he brought, at full length, the whole wisdom of Solomon to reinforce his own. Finally, he turned his admonitions, mixed with much objurgation, upon his tapsters and drawers, who were employed in removing the relics of the entertainment, and restoring order to the apartment; and at length, joining example to precept, though with no good success, he demolished a salver with half a score of glasses, in

attempting to show how such service was done at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, then the most topping tavern in London. This last accident so far recalled him to his better self, that he retired to his bed, slept sound, and awoke a new man in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

Nay, I'll hold touch—the game shall be play'd out;

It ne'er shall stop for me, this merry wager:

That which I say when gamesome, I'll avouch

In my most sober mood, ne'er trust me else. THE HAZARD TABLE.

"And how doth your kinsman, good mine host?" said Tressilian, when Giles Gosling first appeared in the public room, on the morning following the revel which we described in the last chapter. "Is he well, and will he abide by his wager?"

"For well, sir, he started two hours since, and has visited I know not what purlieu of his old companions; hath but now returned, and is at this instant breakfasting on new-laid eggs and muscadine. And for his wager, I caution you as a friend to have little to do with that, or indeed with aught that Mike proposes. Wherefore, I counsel you to a warm breakfast upon a culiss, which shall restore the tone of the stomach; and let my nephew and Master Goldthred swagger about their wager as they list."

"It seems to me, mine host," said Tressilian, "that you know not well what to say about this kinsman of yours, and that you can neither blame nor commend him without some twinge of conscience."

"You have spoken truly, Master Tressilian," replied Giles Gosling. "There is Natural Affection whimpering into one ear, 'Giles, Giles, why wilt thou take away the good name of thy own nephew? Wilt thou defame thy sister's son, Giles Gosling? wilt thou defoul thine own nest, dishonour thine own blood?' And then, again, comes Justice, and says, 'Here is a worthy guest as ever came to the bonny Black Bear; one who never challenged a reckoning' (as I say to your face you never did, Master Tressilian—not that you have had cause), 'one who knows not why he came, so far as I can see, or when he is going away; and wilt thou, being a publican, having paid scot and lot these thirty years in the town of Cumnor, and being at this instant head-borough, wilt thou suffer this guest of guests, this man of men, this six-hooped pot (as I may say) of a traveller, to fall into the meshes of thy nephew, who is known for a swasher and a desperate Dick, a carder and a dicer, a professor of the seven damnable sciences, if ever man took degrees in them?' No, by Heaven! I might wink, and let him catch such a small butterfly as Goldthred; but thou, my guest, shall be forewarned, forearmed, so thou wilt but listen to thy trusty host."

"Why, mine host, thy counsel shall not be cast away," replied Tressilian; "however, I must uphold my share in this wager, having once passed my word to that effect. But lend me, I pray, some of thy counsel. This Foster, who or what is he, and why makes he such mystery of his female inmate?"

"Troth," replied Gosling, "I can add but little to what you heard last night. He was one of Queen Mary's Papists, and now he is one of Queen Elizabeth's Protestants; he was an onhanger of the Abbot of Abingdon; and now he lives as master of the Manor-house. Above all, he was poor, and is rich. Folk talk of private apartments in his old waste mansion-house, bedizened fine enough to serve the Queen, God bless her! Some men think he found a treasure in the orchard, some that he sold himself to the devil for treasure, and some say that he cheated the abbot out of the church plate, which was hidden in the old Manor-house at the Reformation. Rich, however, he is, and God and his conscience, with the devil perhaps besides, only know how he came by it. He has sulky ways too—breaking off intercourse with all that are of the place, as if he had either some strange secret to keep, or held himself to be made of another clay than we are. I think it likely my kinsman and he will quarrel, if Mike thrust his acquaintance on him; and I am sorry that you, my worthy Master Tressilian, will still think of going in my nephew's company."

Tressilian again answered him, that he would proceed with great caution, and that he should have no fears on his account; in short, he bestowed on him all the customary assurances with which those who are determined on a rash action are wont to parry the advice of their friends.

Meantime, the traveller accepted the landlord's invitation, and had just finished the excellent breakfast, which was served to him and Gosling by pretty Cicely, the beauty of the bar, when the hero of the preceding night, Michael Lambourne, entered the apartment. His toilet had apparently cost him some labour, for his clothes, which differed from those he wore on his journey, were of the newest fashion, and put on with great attention to the display of his person.

"By my faith, uncle," said the gallant, "you made a wet night of it, and I feel it followed by a dry morning. I will pledge you willingly in a cup of bastard.—How, my pretty coz Cicely! why, I left you but a child in the cradle, and there thou stand'st in thy velvet waistcoat, as tight a girl as England's sun shines on. Know thy friends and kindred, Cicely, and come hither, child, that I may kiss thee, and give thee my blessing."

"Concern not yourself about Cicely, kinsman," said Giles Gosling, "but e'en let her go her way, a' God's name; for although your mother were her father's sister, yet that shall not make you and her cater-cousins."

"Why, uncle," replied Lambourne, "think'st thou I am an infidel, and would harm those of mine own house?"

"It is for no harm that I speak, Mike," answered his uncle, "but a simple humour of precaution which I have. True, thou art as well gilded as a snake when he casts his old slough in the spring time; but for all that, thou creepest not into my Eden. I will look after mine Eve, Mike, and so content thee.—But how brave thou be'st, lad! To look on thee now, and compare thee with Master Tressilian here, in his sad-coloured riding-suit, who would not say that thou wert the real gentleman and he the tapster's boy?"

"Troth, uncle," replied Lambourne, "no one would say so but one of your country-breeding, that knows no better. I will say, and I care not who hears me, there is something about the real gentry that few men come up to that are not born and bred to the mystery. I wot not where the trick lies; but although I can enter an ordinary with as much audacity, rebuke the waiters and drawers as loudly, drink as deep a health, swear as round an oath, and fling my gold as freely about as any of the jingling spurs and white feathers that are around me, yet, hang me if I can ever catch the true grace of it, though I have practised an hundred times. The man of the house sets me lowest at the board, and carves to me the last; and the drawer says, 'Coming, friend,' without any more reverence or regardful addition. But, hang it, let it pass; care killed a cat. I have gentry enough to pass the trick on Tony Fire-the-Faggot, and that will do for the matter in hand."

"You hold your purpose, then, of visiting your old acquaintance?" said Tressilian to the adventurer.

"Ay, sir," replied Lambourne; "when stakes are made, the game must be played; that is gamester's law, all over the world. You, sir, unless my memory fails me (for I did steep it somewhat too deeply in the sack-butt), took some share in my hazard?"

"I propose to accompany you in your adventure," said Tressilian, "if you will do me so much grace as to permit me; and I have staked my share of the forfeit in the hands of our worthy host."

"That he hath," answered Giles Gosling, "in as fair Harry-nobles as ever were melted into sack by a good fellow. So, luck to your enterprise, since you will needs venture on Tony Foster; but, by my credit, you had better take another draught before you depart, for your welcome at the Hall yonder will be somewhat of the driest. And if you do get into peril, beware of taking to cold steel; but send for me, Giles Gosling, the head-borough, and I may be able to make something out of Tony yet, for as proud as he is."

The nephew dutifully obeyed his uncle's hint, by taking a second powerful pull at the tankard, observing that his wit never served him so well as when he had washed his temples with a deep morning's draught; and they set forth together for the habitation of Anthony Foster.

The village of Cumnor is pleasantly built on a hill, and in a wooded park closely adjacent was situated the ancient mansion occupied at this time by Anthony Foster, of which the ruins may be still extant. The park was then full of large trees, and in particular of ancient and mighty oaks, which stretched their giant arms over the high wall surrounding the demesne, thus giving it a melancholy, secluded, and monastic appearance. The entrance to the park lay through an old-fashioned gateway in the outer wall, the door of which was formed of two huge oaken leaves thickly studded with nails, like the gate of an old town.

"We shall be finely helped up here," said Michael Lambourne, looking at the gateway and gate, "if this fellow's suspicious humour should refuse us admission altogether, as it is like he may, in case this linsey-wolsey fellow of a mercer's visit to his premises has disquieted him. But, no," he added, pushing the huge gate, which gave way, "the door stands invitingly open; and here we are within the forbidden ground, without other impediment than the passive resistance of a heavy oak door moving on rusty hinges."

They stood now in an avenue overshadowed by such old trees as we have described, and which had been bordered at one time by high hedges of yew and holly. But these, having been untrimmed for many years, had run up into great bushes, or rather dwarf-trees, and now encroached, with their dark and melancholy boughs, upon the road which they once had screened. The avenue itself was grown up with grass, and, in one or two places, interrupted by piles of withered brushwood, which had been lopped from the trees cut down in the neighbouring park, and was here stacked for drying. Formal walks and avenues, which, at different points, crossed this principal approach, were, in like manner, choked up and interrupted by piles of brushwood and billets, and in other places by underwood and brambles. Besides the general effect of desolation which is so strongly impressed whenever we behold the contrivances of man wasted and obliterated by neglect, and witness the marks of social life effaced gradually by the influence of vegetation, the size of the trees and the outspreading extent of their boughs diffused a gloom over the scene, even when the sun was at the highest, and made a proportional impression on the mind of those who visited it. This was felt even by Michael Lambourne, however alien his habits were to receiving any impressions, excepting from things which addressed themselves immediately to his passions.

"This wood is as dark as a wolf's mouth," said he to Tressilian, as they walked together slowly along the solitary and broken approach, and had just come in sight of the monastic front of the old mansion, with its shafted windows, brick walls overgrown with ivy and creeping shrubs, and twisted stalks of chimneys of heavy stone-work. "And yet," continued Lambourne, "it is fairly done on the part of Foster too for since he chooses not visitors, it is right to keep his place in a fashion that will invite few to trespass upon his privacy. But had he been the Anthony I once knew him, these sturdy oaks had long since become the property of some honest woodmonger, and the manor-close here had looked lighter at midnight than it now does at noon, while Foster played fast and loose with the price, in some cunning corner in the purlieu of Whitefriars."

"Was he then such an unthrift?" asked Tressilian.

"He was," answered Lambourne, "like the rest of us, no saint, and no saver. But what I liked worst of Tony was, that he loved to take his pleasure by himself, and grudged, as men say, every drop of water that went past his own mill. I have known him deal with such measures of wine when he was alone, as I would not have ventured on with aid of the best toper in Berkshire;—that, and some sway towards superstition, which he had by temperament, rendered him unworthy the company of a good fellow. And now he has earthed himself here, in a den just befitting such a sly fox as himself."

"May I ask you, Master Lambourne," said Tressilian, "since your old companion's humour jumps so little with your own, wherefore you are so desirous to renew acquaintance with him?"

"And may I ask you, in return, Master Tressilian," answered Lambourne, "wherefore you have shown yourself so desirous to accompany me on this party?"

"I told you my motive," said Tressilian, "when I took share in your wager—it was simple curiosity."

"La you there now!" answered Lambourne. "See how you civil and discreet gentlemen think to use us who live by the free exercise of our wits! Had I answered your question by saying that it was simple curiosity which led me to visit my old comrade Anthony Foster, I warrant you had set it down for an evasion, and a turn of my trade. But any answer, I suppose, must serve my turn."

"And wherefore should not bare curiosity," said Tressilian, "be a sufficient reason for my taking this walk with you?"

"Oh, content yourself, sir," replied Lambourne; "you cannot put the change on me so easy as you think, for I have lived among the quick-stirring spirits of the age too long to swallow chaff for grain. You are a gentleman of birth and breeding—your bearing makes it good; of civil habits and fair reputation—your manners declare it, and my uncle avouches it; and yet you associate yourself with a sort of scant-of-grace, as men call me, and, knowing me to be such, you make yourself my companion in a visit to a man whom you are a stranger to—and all out of mere curiosity, forsooth! The excuse, if curiously balanced, would be found to want some scruples of just weight, or so."

"If your suspicions were just," said Tressilian, "you have shown no confidence in me to invite or deserve mine."

"Oh, if that be all," said Lambourne, "my motives lie above water. While this gold of mine lasts"—taking out his purse, chucking it into the air, and catching it as it fell—"I will make it buy pleasure; and when it is out I must have more. Now, if this mysterious Lady of the Manor—this fair Lindabrides of Tony Fire-the-Fagot—be so admirable a piece as men say, why, there is a chance that she may aid me to melt my nobles into groats; and, again, if Anthony be so wealthy a chuff as report speaks him, he may prove the philosopher's stone to me, and convert my greats into fair rose-nobles again."

"A comfortable proposal truly," said Tressilian; "but I see not what chance there is of accomplishing it."

"Not to-day, or perchance to-morrow," answered Lambourne; "I expect not to catch the old jack till. I have disposed my ground-baits handsomely. But I know something more of his affairs this morning than I did last night, and I will so use my knowledge that he shall think it more perfect than it is. Nay, without expecting either pleasure or profit, or both, I had not stepped a stride within this manor, I can tell you; for I promise you I hold our visit not altogether without risk.—But here we are, and we must make the best on't."

While he thus spoke, they had entered a large orchard which surrounded the house on two sides, though the trees, abandoned by the care of man, were overgrown and messy, and seemed to bear little fruit. Those which had been formerly trained as espaliers had now resumed their natural mode of growing, and exhibited grotesque forms, partaking of the original training which they had received. The greater part of the ground, which had once been parterres and flower-gardens, was suffered in like manner to run to waste, excepting a few patches which had been dug up and planted with ordinary pot herbs. Some statues, which had ornamented the garden in its days of splendour, were now thrown down from their pedestals and broken in pieces; and a large summer-house, having a heavy stone front, decorated with carving representing the life and actions of Samson, was in the same dilapidated condition.

They had just traversed this garden of the sluggard, and were within a few steps of the door of the mansion, when Lambourne had ceased speaking; a circumstance very agreeable to Tressilian, as it saved him the embarrassment of either commenting upon or replying to the frank avowal which his companion had just made of the sentiments and views which induced him to come hither. Lambourne knocked roundly and boldly at the huge door of the mansion, observing, at the same time, he had seen a less strong one upon a county jail. It was not until they had knocked more than once that an aged, sour-visaged domestic reconnoitred them through a small square hole in the door, well secured with bars of iron, and demanded what they wanted.

"To speak with Master Foster instantly, on pressing business of the state," was the ready reply of Michael Lambourne.

"Methinks you will find difficulty to make that good," said Tressilian in a whisper to his companion, while the servant went to carry the message to his master.

"Tush," replied the adventurer; "no soldier would go on were he always to consider when and how he should come off. Let us once obtain entrance, and all will go well enough."

In a short time the servant returned, and drawing with a careful hand both bolt and bar, opened the gate, which admitted them through an archway into a square court, surrounded by buildings. Opposite to the arch was another door, which the serving-man in like manner unlocked, and thus introduced them into a stone-paved parlour, where there was but little furniture, and that of the rudest and most ancient fashion. The windows were tall and ample, reaching almost to the roof of the room, which was composed of black oak; those opening to the quadrangle were obscured by the height of the surrounding buildings, and, as they were traversed with massive shafts of solid stone-work, and thickly painted with religious devices, and scenes taken from Scripture history, by no means admitted light in proportion to their size, and what did penetrate through them partook of the dark and gloomy tinge of the stained glass.

Tressilian and his guide had time enough to observe all these particulars, for they waited some space in the apartment ere the present master of the mansion at length made his appearance. Prepared as he was to see an inauspicious and ill-looking person, the ugliness of Anthony Foster considerably exceeded what Tressilian had anticipated. He was of middle stature, built strongly, but so clumsily as to border on deformity, and to give all his motions the ungainly awkwardness

of a left-legged and left-handed man. His hair, in arranging which men at that time, as at present, were very nice and curious, instead of being carefully cleaned and disposed into short curls, or else set up on end, as is represented in old paintings, in a manner resembling that used by fine gentlemen of our own day, escaped in sable negligence from under a furred bonnet, and hung in elf-locks, which seemed strangers to the comb, over his rugged brows, and around his very singular and unprepossessing countenance. His keen, dark eyes were deep set beneath broad and shaggy eyebrows, and as they were usually bent on the ground, seemed as if they were themselves ashamed of the expression natural to them, and were desirous to conceal it from the observation of men. At times, however, when, more intent on observing others, he suddenly raised them, and fixed them keenly on those with whom he conversed, they seemed to express both the fiercer passions, and the power of mind which could at will suppress or disguise the intensity of inward feeling. The features which corresponded with these eyes and this form were irregular, and marked so as to be indelibly fixed on the mind of him who had once seen them. Upon the whole, as Tressilian could not help acknowledging to himself, the Anthony Foster who now stood before them was the last person, judging from personal appearance, upon whom one would have chosen to intrude an unexpected and undesired visit. His attire was a doublet of russet leather, like those worn by the better sort of country folk, girt with a buff belt, in which was stuck on the right side a long knife, or dudgeon dagger, and on the other a cutlass. He raised his eyes as he entered the room, and fixed a keenly penetrating glance upon his two visitors; then cast them down as if counting his steps, while he advanced slowly into the middle of the room, and said, in a low and smothered tone of voice, "Let me pray you, gentlemen, to tell me the cause of this visit."

He looked as if he expected the answer from Tressilian, so true was Lambourne's observation that the superior air of breeding and dignity shone through the disguise of an inferior dress. But it was Michael who replied to him, with the easy familiarity of an old friend, and a tone which seemed unembarrassed by any doubt of the most cordial reception.

"Ha! my dear friend and ingle, Tony Foster!" he exclaimed, seizing upon the unwilling hand, and shaking it with such emphasis as almost to stagger the sturdy frame of the person whom he addressed, "how fares it with you for many a long year? What! have you altogether forgotten your friend, gossip, and playfellow, Michael Lambourne?"

"Michael Lambourne!" said Foster, looking at him a moment; then dropping his eyes, and with little ceremony extricating his hand from the friendly grasp of the person by whom he was addressed, "are you Michael Lambourne?"

"Ay; sure as you are Anthony Foster," replied Lambourne.

"Tis well," answered his sullen host. "And what may Michael Lambourne expect from his visit hither?"

"VOTO A DIOS," answered Lambourne, "I expected a better welcome than I am like to meet, I think."

"Why, thou gallows-bird—thou jail-rat—thou friend of the hangman and his customers!" replied Foster, "hast thou the assurance to expect countenance from any one whose neck is beyond the compass of a Tyburn tippet?"

"It may be with me as you say," replied Lambourne; "and suppose I grant it to be so for argument's sake, I were still good enough society for mine ancient friend Anthony Fire-the-Fagot, though he be, for the present, by some indescribable title, the master of Cumnor Place."

"Hark you, Michael Lambourne," said Foster; "you are a gambler now, and live by the counting of chances—compute me the odds that I do not, on this instant, throw you out of that window into the ditch there."

"Twenty to one that you do not," answered the sturdy visitor.

"And wherefore, I pray you?" demanded Anthony Foster, setting his teeth and compressing his lips, like one who endeavours to suppress some violent internal emotion.

"Because," said Lambourne coolly, "you dare not for your life lay a finger on me. I am younger and stronger than you, and have in me a double portion of the fighting devil, though not, it may be, quite so much of the undermining fiend, that finds an underground way to his purpose—who hides halts under folk's pillows, and who puts rats-bane into their porridge, as the stage-play says."

Foster looked at him earnestly, then turned away, and paced the room twice with the same steady and considerate pace with which he had entered it; then suddenly came back, and extended his hand to Michael Lambourne, saying, "Be not wroth with me, good Mike; I did but try whether thou hadst parted with aught of thine old and honourable frankness, which your enviers and backbiters called saucy impudence."

"Let them call it what they will," said Michael Lambourne, "it is the commodity we must carry through the world with us.—Uds daggers! I tell thee, man, mine own stock of assurance was too small to trade upon. I was fain to take in a ton or two more of brass at every port where I touched in the voyage of life; and I started overboard what modesty and scruples I had remaining, in order to make room for the stowage."

"Nay, nay," replied Foster, "touching scruples and modesty, you sailed hence in ballast. But who is this gallant, honest Mike?—is he a Corinthian—a cutter like thyself?"

"I prithee, know Master Tressilian, bully Foster," replied Lambourne, presenting his friend in answer to his friend's question, "know him and honour him, for he is a gentleman of many admirable qualities; and though he traffics not in my line of business, at least so far as I know, he has, nevertheless, a just respect and admiration for artists of our class. He will come to in time, as seldom fails; but as yet he is only a neophyte, only a proselyte, and frequents the company of cocks of the game, as a puny fencer does the schools of the masters, to see how a foil is handled by the teachers of defence."

"If such be his quality, I will pray your company in another chamber, honest Mike, for what I have to say to thee is for thy private ear.—Meanwhile, I pray you, sir, to abide us in this apartment, and without leaving it; there be those in this house who would be alarmed by the sight of a stranger."

Tressilian acquiesced, and the two worthies left the apartment together, in which he remained alone to await their return. [See Note 1. Foster, Lambourne, and the Black Bear.]

CHAPTER IV.

*Not serve two masters?—Here's a youth will try it—
Would fain serve God, yet give the devil his due;
Says grace before he doth a deed of villainy,
And returns his thanks devoutly when 'tis acted,—OLD PLAY.*

The room into which the Master of Cumnor Place conducted his worthy visitant was of greater extent than that in which they had at first conversed, and had yet more the appearance of dilapidation. Large oaken presses, filled with shelves of the same wood, surrounded the room, and had, at one time, served for the arrangement of a numerous collection of books, many of which yet remained, but torn and defaced, covered with dust, deprived of their costly clasps and bindings, and tossed together in heaps upon the shelves, as things altogether disregarded, and abandoned to the pleasure of every spoiler. The very presses themselves seemed to have incurred the hostility of those enemies of learning who had destroyed the volumes with which they had been heretofore filled. They were, in several places, dismantled of their shelves, and otherwise broken and damaged, and were, moreover, mantled with cobwebs and covered with dust.

"The men who wrote these books," said Lambourne, looking round him, "little thought whose keeping they were to fall into."

"Nor what yeoman's service they were to do me," quoth Anthony Foster; "the cook hath used them for scouring his pewter, and the groom hath had nought else to clean my boots with, this many a month past."

"And yet," said Lambourne, "I have been in cities where such learned commodities would have been deemed too good for such offices."

"Pshaw, pshaw," answered Foster, "they are Popish trash, every one of them—private studies of the mumping old Abbot of Abingdon. The nineteenthly of a pure gospel sermon were worth a cartload of such rakings of the kennel of Rome."

"Gad-a-mercy, Master Tony Fire-the-Fagot!" said Lambourne, by way of reply.

Foster scowled darkly at him, as he replied, "Hark ye, friend Mike; forget that name, and the passage which it relates to, if you would not have our newly-revived comradeship die a sudden and a violent death."

"Why," said Michael Lambourne, "you were wont to glory in the share you had in the death of the two old heretical bishops."

"That," said his comrade, "was while I was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and applies not to my walk or my ways now that I am called forth into the lists. Mr. Melchisedek Maultext compared my misfortune in that matter to that of the Apostle Paul, who kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned Saint Stephen. He held forth on the matter three Sabbaths past, and illustrated the same by the conduct of an honourable person present, meaning me."

"I prithee peace, Foster," said Lambourne, "for I know not how it is, I have a sort of creeping comes over my skin when I hear the devil quote Scripture; and besides, man, how couldst thou have the heart to quit that convenient old religion, which you could slip off or on as easily as your glove? Do I not remember how you were wont to carry your conscience to confession, as duly as the month came round? and when thou hadst it scoured, and burnished, and whitewashed by the priest, thou wert ever ready for the worst villainy which could be devised, like a child who is always readiest to rush into the mire when he has got his Sunday's clean jerkin on."

"Trouble not thyself about my conscience," said Foster; "it is a thing thou canst not understand, having never had one of thine own. But let us rather to the point, and say to me, in one word, what is thy business with me, and what hopes have drawn thee hither?"

"The hope of bettering myself, to be sure," answered Lambourne, "as the old woman said when she leapt over the bridge at Kingston. Look you, this purse has all that is left of as round a sum as a man would wish to carry in his slop-pouch. You are here well established, it would seem, and, as I think, well befriended, for men talk of thy being under some special protection—nay, stare not like a pig that is stuck, mon; thou canst not dance in a net and they not see thee. Now I know such protection is not purchased for nought; you must have services to render for it, and in these I propose to help thee."

"But how if I lack no assistance from thee, Mike? I think thy modesty might suppose that were a case possible."

"That is to say," retorted Lambourne, "that you would engross the whole work, rather than divide the reward. But be not over-greedy, Anthony—covetousness bursts the sack and spills the grain. Look you, when the huntsman goes to kill a stag, he takes with him more dogs than one. He has the stanch lyme-hound to track the wounded buck over hill and dale, but he hath also the fleet gaze-hound to kill him at view. Thou art the lyme-hound, I am the gaze-hound; and thy patron will need the aid of both, and can well afford to requite it. Thou hast deep sagacity—an unrelenting purpose—a steady, long-breathed malignity of nature, that surpasses mine. But then, I am the bolder, the quicker, the more ready, both at action and expedient. Separate, our properties are not so perfect; but unite them, and we drive the world before us. How sayest thou—shall we hunt in couples?"

"It is a currish proposal—thus to thrust thyself upon my private matters," replied Foster; "but thou wert ever an ill-nurtured whelp."

"You shall have no cause to say so, unless you spurn my courtesy," said Michael Lambourne; "but if so, keep thee well from me, Sir Knight, as the romance has it. I will either share your counsels or traverse them; for I have come here to be busy, either with thee or against thee."

"Well," said Anthony Foster, "since thou dost leave me so fair a choice, I will rather be thy friend than thine enemy. Thou art right; I CAN prefer thee to the service of a patron who has enough of means to make us both, and an hundred more. And, to say truth, thou art well qualified for his service. Boldness and dexterity he demands—the justice-books bear witness in thy favour; no starting at scruples in his service why, who ever suspected thee of a conscience? an assurance he must have who would follow a courtier—and thy brow is as impenetrable as a Milan visor. There is but one thing I would fain see amended in thee."

"And what is that, my most precious friend Anthony?" replied Lambourne; "for I swear by the pillow of the Seven Sleepers I will not be slothful in amending it."

"Why, you gave a sample of it even now," said Foster. "Your speech twangs too much of the old stamp, and you garnish it ever and anon with singular oaths, that savour of Papistrie. Besides, your exterior man is altogether too deboshed and irregular to become one of his lordship's followers, since he has a reputation to keep up in the eye of the world. You must somewhat reform your dress, upon a more grave and composed fashion; wear your cloak on both shoulders, and your falling band unrumpled and well starched. You must enlarge the brim of your beaver, and diminish the superfluity of your trunk-hose; go to church, or, which will be better, to meeting, at least once a month; protest only upon your faith and conscience; lay aside your swashing look, and never touch the hilt of your sword but when you would draw the carnal weapon in good earnest."

"By this light, Anthony, thou art mad," answered Lambourne, "and hast described rather the gentleman-usher to a puritan's wife, than the follower of an ambitious courtier! Yes, such a thing as thou wouldst make of me should wear a book at his girdle instead of a poniard, and might just be suspected of manhood enough to squire a proud dame-citizen to the lecture at Saint Antonlin's, and quarrel in her cause with any flat-capped threadmaker that would take the wall of her. He must ruffle it in another sort that would walk to court in a nobleman's train."

"Oh, content you, sir," replied Foster, "there is a change since you knew the English world; and there are those who can hold their way through the boldest courses, and the most secret, and yet never a swaggering word, or an oath, or a profane word in their conversation."

"That is to say," replied Lambourne, "they are in a trading copartnery, to do the devil's business without mentioning his name in the firm? Well, I will do my best to counterfeit, rather than lose ground in this new world, since thou sayest it is grown so precise. But, Anthony, what is the name of this nobleman, in whose service I am to turn hypocrite?"

"Aha! Master Michael, are you there with your bears?" said Foster, with a grim smile; "and is this the knowledge you pretend of my concerns? How know you now there is such a person IN RERUM NATURA, and that I have not been putting a jape upon you all this time?"

"Thou put a jape on me, thou sodden-brained gull?" answered Lambourne, nothing daunted. "Why, dark and muddy as thou think'st thyself, I would engage in a day's space to see as clear through thee and thy concerns, as thou callest them, as through the filthy horn of an old stable lantern."

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by a scream from the next apartment.

"By the holy Cross of Abingdon," exclaimed Anthony Foster, forgetting his Protestantism in his alarm, "I am a ruined man!"

So saying, he rushed into the apartment whence the scream issued, followed by Michael Lambourne. But to account for the sounds which interrupted their conversation, it is necessary to recede a little way in our narrative.

It has been already observed, that when Lambourne accompanied Foster into the library, they left Tressilian alone in the ancient parlour. His dark eye followed them forth of the apartment with a glance of contempt, a part of which his mind instantly transferred to himself, for having stooped to be even for a moment their familiar companion. "These are the associates, Amy"—it was thus he communed with himself—"to which thy cruel levity—thine unthinking and most unmerited falsehood, has condemned him of whom his friends once hoped far other things, and who now scorns himself, as he will be scorned by others, for the baseness he stoops to for the love of thee! But I will not leave the pursuit of thee, once the object of my purest and most devoted affection, though to me thou canst henceforth be nothing but a thing to weep over. I will save thee from thy betrayer, and from thyself; I will restore thee to thy parent—to thy God. I cannot bid the bright star again sparkle in the sphere it has shot from, but—"

A slight noise in the apartment interrupted his reverie. He looked round, and in the beautiful and richly-attired female who entered at that instant by a side-door he recognized the object of his search. The first impulse arising from this discovery urged him to conceal his face with the collar of his cloak, until he should find a favourable moment of making himself known. But his purpose was disconcerted by the young lady (she was not above eighteen years old), who ran joyfully towards him, and, pulling him by the cloak, said playfully, "Nay, my sweet friend, after I have waited for you so long, you come not to my bower to play the masquer. You are arraigned of treason to true love and fond affection, and you must stand up at the bar and answer it with face uncovered—how say you, guilty or not?"

"Alas, Amy!" said Tressilian, in a low and melancholy tone, as he suffered her to draw the mantle from his face. The sound of his voice, and still more the unexpected sight of his face, changed in an instant the lady's playful mood. She staggered back, turned as pale as death, and put her hands before her face.

Tressilian was himself for a moment much overcome, but seeming suddenly to remember the necessity of using an opportunity which might not again occur, he said in a low tone, "Amy, fear me not."

"Why should I fear you?" said the lady, withdrawing her hands from her beautiful face, which was now covered with crimson,— "Why should I fear you, Master Tressilian?—or wherefore have you intruded yourself into my dwelling, uninvited, sir, and unwished for?"

"Your dwelling, Amy!" said Tressilian. "Alas! is a prison your dwelling?—a prison guarded by one of the most sordid of men, but not a greater wretch than his employer!"

"This house is mine," said Amy—"mine while I choose to inhabit it. If it is my pleasure to live in seclusion, who shall gainsay me?"

"Your father, maiden," answered Tressilian, "your broken-hearted father, who dispatched me in quest of you with that authority which he cannot exert in person. Here is his letter, written while he blessed his pain of body which somewhat stunned the agony of his mind."

"The pain! Is my father then ill?" said the lady.

"So ill," answered Tressilian, "that even your utmost haste may not restore him to health; but all shall be instantly prepared for your departure, the instant you yourself will give consent."

"Tressilian," answered the lady, "I cannot, I must not, I dare not leave this place. Go back to my father—tell him I will obtain leave to see him within twelve hours from hence. Go back, Tressilian—tell him I am well, I am happy—happy could I think he was so; tell him not to fear that I will come, and in such a manner that all the grief Amy has given him shall be forgotten—the poor Amy is now greater than she dare name. Go, good Tressilian—I have injured thee too, but believe me I have power to heal the wounds I have caused. I robbed you of a childish heart, which was not worthy of you, and I can repay the loss with honours and advancement."

"Do you say this to me, Amy?—do you offer me pageants of idle ambition, for the quiet peace you have robbed me of!—But be it so I came not to upbraid, but to serve and to free you. You cannot disguise it from me—you are a prisoner. Otherwise your kind heart—for it was once a kind heart—would have been already at your father's bedside.—Come, poor, deceived, unhappy maiden!—all shall be forgot—all shall be forgiven. Fear not my importunity for what regarded our contract—it was a dream, and I have awaked. But come—your father yet lives—come, and one word of affection, one tear of penitence, will efface the memory of all that has passed."

"Have I not already said, Tressilian," replied she, "that I will surely come to my father, and that without further delay than is necessary to discharge other and equally binding duties?—Go, carry him the news; I come as sure as there is light in heaven—that is, when I obtain permission."

"Permission!—permission to visit your father on his sick-bed, perhaps on his death-bed!" repeated Tressilian, impatiently; "and permission from whom? From the villain, who, under disguise of friendship, abused every duty of hospitality, and stole thee from thy father's roof!"

"Do him no slander, Tressilian! He whom thou speakest of wears a sword as sharp as thine—sharper, vain man; for the best deeds thou hast ever done in peace or war were as unworthy to be named with his, as thy obscure rank to match itself with the sphere he moves in.—Leave me! Go, do mine errand to my father; and when he next sends to me, let him choose a more welcome messenger."

"Amy," replied Tressilian calmly, "thou canst not move me by thy reproaches. Tell me one thing, that I may bear at least one ray of comfort to my aged friend:—this rank of his which thou dost boast—dost thou share it with him, Amy?—does he claim a husband's right to control thy motions?"

"Stop thy base, unmannered tongue!" said the lady; "to no question that derogates from my honour do I deign an answer."

"You have said enough in refusing to reply," answered Tressilian; "and mark me, unhappy as thou art, I am armed with thy father's full authority to command thy obedience, and I will save thee from the slavery of sin and of sorrow, even despite of thyself, Amy."

"Menace no violence here!" exclaimed the lady, drawing back from him, and alarmed at the determination expressed in his look and manner; "threaten me not, Tressilian, for I have means to repel force."

"But not, I trust, the wish to use them in so evil a cause?" said Tressilian. "With thy will—thine uninfluenced, free, and natural will, Amy, thou canst not choose this state of slavery and dishonour. Thou hast been bound by some spell—entrapped by some deceit—art now detained by some compelled vow. But thus I break the charm—Amy, in the name of thine excellent, thy broken-hearted father, I command thee to follow me!"

As he spoke he advanced and extended his arm, as with the purpose of laying hold upon her. But she shrunk back from his grasp, and uttered the scream which, as we before noticed, brought into the apartment Lambourne and Foster.

The latter exclaimed, as soon as he entered, "Fire and fagot! what have we here?" Then addressing the lady, in a tone betwixt entreaty and command, he added, "Uds precious! madam, what make you here out of bounds? Retire—retire—there is life and death in this matter.—And you, friend, whoever you may be, leave this house—out with you, before my dagger's hilt and your costard become acquainted.—Draw, Mike, and rid us of the knave!"

"Not I, on my soul," replied Lambourne; "he came hither in my company, and he is safe from me by cutter's law, at least till we meet again.—But hark ye, my Cornish comrade, you have brought a Cornish flaw of wind with you hither, a hurricanoe as they call it in the Indies. Make yourself scarce—depart—vanish—or we'll have you summoned before the Mayor of Halgaver, and that before Dudman and Ramhead meet." [Two headlands on the Cornish coast. The expressions are proverbial.]

"Away, base groom!" said Tressilian.—"And you, madam, fare you well—what life lingers in your father's bosom will leave him at the news I have to tell."

He departed, the lady saying faintly as he left the room, "Tressilian, be not rash—say no scandal of me."

"Here is proper gear," said Foster. "I pray you go to your chamber, my lady, and let us consider how this is to be answered—nay, tarry not."

"I move not at your command, sir," answered the lady.

"Nay, but you must, fair lady," replied Foster; "excuse my freedom, but, by blood and nails, this is no time to strain courtesies—you MUST go to your chamber.—Mike, follow that meddling coxcomb, and, as you desire to thrive, see him safely clear of the premises, while I bring this headstrong lady to reason. Draw thy tool, man, and after him."

"I'll follow him," said Michael Lambourne, "and see him fairly out of Flanders; but for hurting a man I have drunk my morning's draught withal, 'tis clean against my conscience." So saying, he left the apartment.

Tressilian, meanwhile, with hasty steps, pursued the first path which promised to conduct him through the wild and overgrown park in which the mansion of Foster was situated. Haste and distress of mind led his steps astray, and instead of taking the avenue which led towards the village, he chose another, which, after he had pursued it for some time with a hasty and reckless step, conducted him to the other side of the demesne, where a postern door opened through the wall, and led into the open country.

Tressilian paused an instant. It was indifferent to him by what road he left a spot now so odious to his recollections; but it was probable that the postern door was locked, and his retreat by that pass rendered impossible.

"I must make the attempt, however," he said to himself; "the only means of reclaiming this lost—this miserable—this still most lovely and most unhappy girl, must rest in her father's appeal to the broken laws of his country. I must haste to apprise him of this heartrending intelligence."

As Tressilian, thus conversing with himself, approached to try some means of opening the door, or climbing over it, he perceived there was a key put into the lock from the outside. It turned round, the bolt revolved, and a cavalier, who entered, muffled in his riding-cloak, and wearing a slouched hat with a drooping feather, stood at once within four yards of him who was desirous of going out. They exclaimed at once, in tones of resentment and surprise, the one "Varney!" the other "Tressilian!"

"What make you here?" was the stern question put by the stranger to Tressilian, when the moment of surprise was past—"what make you here, where your presence is neither expected nor desired?"

"Nay, Varney," replied Tressilian, "what make you here? Are you come to triumph over the innocence you have destroyed, as the vulture or carrion-crow comes to batten on the lamb whose eyes it has first plucked out? Or are you come to encounter the merited vengeance of an honest man? Draw, dog, and defend thyself!" Tressilian drew his sword as he spoke, but Varney only laid his hand on the hilt of his own, as he replied, "Thou art mad, Tressilian. I own appearances are against me; but by every oath a priest can make or a man can swear, Mistress Amy Robsart hath had no injury from me. And in truth I were somewhat loath to hurt you in this cause—thou knowest I can fight."

"I have heard thee say so, Varney," replied Tressilian; "but now, methinks, I would fain have some better evidence than thine own word."

"That shall not be lacking, if blade and hilt be but true to me," answered Varney; and drawing his sword with the right hand, he threw his cloak around his left, and attacked Tressilian with a vigour which, for a moment, seemed to give him the advantage of the combat. But this advantage lasted not long. Tressilian added to a spirit determined on revenge a hand and eye admirably well adapted to the use of the rapier; so that Varney, finding himself hard pressed in his turn, endeavoured to avail himself of his superior strength by closing with his adversary. For this purpose, he hazarded the receiving one of Tressilian's passes in his cloak, wrapped as it was around his arm, and ere his adversary could, extricate his rapier thus entangled, he closed with him, shortening his own sword at the same time, with the purpose of dispatching him. But Tressilian was on his guard, and unsheathing his poniard, parried with the blade of that weapon the home-thrust which would otherwise have finished the combat, and, in the struggle which followed, displayed so much address, as might have confirmed, the opinion that he drew his origin from Cornwall whose natives are such masters in the art of wrestling, as, were the games of antiquity revived, might enable them to challenge all Europe to the ring. Varney, in his ill-advised attempt, received a fall so sudden and violent that his sword flew several paces from his hand and ere he could recover his feet, that of his antagonist was; pointed to his throat.

"Give me the instant means of relieving the victim of thy treachery," said Tressilian, "or take the last look of your Creator's blessed sun!"

And while Varney, too confused or too sullen to reply, made a sudden effort to arise, his adversary drew back his arm, and would have executed his threat, but that the blow was arrested by the grasp of Michael Lambourne, who, directed by the clashing of swords had come up just in time to save the life of Varney.

"Come, come, comrade;" said Lambourne, "here is enough done and more than enough; put up your fox and let us be jogging. The Black Bear growls for us."

"Off, abject!" said Tressilian, striking himself free of Lambourne's grasp; "darest thou come betwixt me and mine enemy?"

"Abject! abject!" repeated Lambourne; "that shall be answered with cold steel whenever a bowl of sack has washed out memory of the morning's draught that we had together. In the meanwhile, do you see, shog—tramp—begone—we are two to one."

He spoke truth, for Varney had taken the opportunity to regain his weapon, and Tressilian perceived it was madness to press the quarrel further against such odds. He took his purse from his side, and taking out two gold nobles, flung them to Lambourne. "There, caitiff, is thy morning wage; thou shalt not say thou hast been my guide unhired.—Varney, farewell! we shall meet where there are none to come betwixt us." So saying, he turned round and departed through the postern door.

Varney seemed to want the inclination, or perhaps the power (for his fall had been a severe one), to follow his retreating enemy. But he glared darkly as he disappeared, and then addressed Lambourne. "Art thou a comrade of Foster's, good fellow?"

"Sworn friends, as the haft is to the knife," replied Michael Lambourne.

"Here is a broad piece for thee. Follow yonder fellow, and see where he takes earth, and bring me word up to the mansion-house here. Cautious and silent, thou knave, as thou valuest thy throat."

"Enough said," replied Lambourne; "I can draw on a scent as well as a sleuth-hound."

"Begone, then," said Varney, sheathing his rapier; and, turning his back on Michael Lambourne, he walked slowly towards the house. Lambourne stopped but an instant to gather the nobles which his late companion had flung towards him so unceremoniously, and muttered to himself, while he put them upon his purse along with the gratuity of Varney, "I spoke to yonder gulls of Eldorado. By Saint Anthony, there is no Eldorado for men of our stamp equal to bonny Old England! It rains nobles, by Heaven—they lie on the grass as thick as dewdrops—you may have them for gathering. And if I have not my share of such glittering dewdrops, may my sword melt like an icicle!"

CHAPTER V.

He was a man

Versed in the world as pilot in his compass.

The needle pointed ever to that interest

Which was his loadstar, and he spread his sails

With vantage to the gale of others' passion.

—THE DECEIVER, A TRAGEDY.

Anthony Foster was still engaged in debate with his fair guest, who treated with scorn every entreaty and request that she would retire to her own apartment, when a whistle was heard at the entrance-door of the mansion.

"We are fairly sped now," said Foster; "yonder is thy lord's signal, and what to say about the disorder which has happened in this household, by my conscience, I know not. Some evil fortune dogs the heels of that unhanged rogue Lambourne, and he has 'scaped the gallows against every chance, to come back and be the ruin of me!"

"Peace, sir," said the lady, "and undo the gate to your master.—My lord! my dear lord!" she then exclaimed, hastening to the entrance of the apartment; then added, with a voice expressive of disappointment, "Pooh! it is but Richard Varney."

"Ay, madam," said Varney, entering and saluting the lady with a respectful obeisance, which she returned with a careless mixture of negligence and of displeasure, "it is but Richard Varney; but even the first grey cloud should be acceptable, when it lightens in the east, because it announces the approach of the blessed sun."

"How! comes my lord hither to-night?" said the lady, in joyful yet startled agitation; and Anthony Foster caught up the word, and echoed the question. Varney replied to the lady, that his lord purposed to attend her; and would have proceeded with some compliment, when, running to the door of the parlour, she called aloud, "Janet—Janet! come to my tiring-room instantly." Then returning to Varney, she asked if her lord sent any further commendations to her.

"This letter, honoured madam," said he, taking from his bosom a small parcel wrapped in scarlet silk, "and with it a token to the Queen of his Affections." With eager speed the lady hastened to undo the silken string which surrounded the little packet, and failing to unloose readily the knot with which it was secured, she again called loudly on Janet, "Bring me a knife—scissors—ought that may undo this envious knot!"

"May not my poor poniard serve, honoured madam?" said Varney, presenting a small dagger of exquisite workmanship, which hung in his Turkey-leather sword-belt.

"No, sir," replied the lady, rejecting the instrument which he offered—"steel poniard shall cut no true-love knot of mine."

"It has cut many, however," said Anthony Foster, half aside, and looking at Varney. By this time the knot was disentangled without any other help than the neat and nimble fingers of Janet, a simply-attired pretty maiden, the daughter of Anthony Foster, who came running at the repeated call of her mistress. A necklace of orient pearl, the companion of a perfumed billet, was now hastily produced from the packet. The lady gave the one, after a slight glance, to the charge of her attendant, while she read, or rather devoured, the contents of the other.

"Surely, lady," said Janet, gazing with admiration at the neck-string of pearls, "the daughters of Tyre wore no fairer neck-jewels than these. And then the posy, 'For a neck that is fairer'—each pearl is worth a freehold."

"Each word in this dear paper is worth the whole string, my girl. But come to my tiring-room, girl; we must be brave, my lord comes hither to-night.—He bids me grace you, Master Varney, and to me his wish is a law. I bid you to a collation in my bower this afternoon; and you, too, Master Foster. Give orders that all is fitting, and that suitable preparations be made for my lord's reception to-night." With these words she left the apartment.

"She takes state on her already," said Varney, "and distributes the favour of her presence, as if she were already the partner of his dignity. Well, it is wise to practise beforehand the part which fortune prepares us to play—the young eagle must gaze at the sun ere he soars on strong wing to meet it."

"If holding her head aloft," said Foster, "will keep her eyes from dazzling, I warrant you the dame will not stoop her crest. She will presently soar beyond reach of my whistle, Master Varney. I promise you, she holds me already in slight regard."

"It is thine own fault, thou sullen, uninventive companion," answered Varney, "who knowest no mode of control save downright brute force. Canst thou not make home pleasant to her, with music and toys? Canst thou not make the out-of-doors frightful to her, with tales of goblins? Thou livest here by the churchyard, and hast not even wit enough to raise a ghost, to scare thy females into good discipline."

"Speak not thus, Master Varney," said Foster; "the living I fear not, but I trifle not nor toy with my dead neighbours of the churchyard. I promise you, it requires a good heart to live so near it. Worthy Master Holdforth, the afternoon's lecturer of Saint Antonlin's, had a sore fright there the last time he came to visit me."

"Hold thy superstitious tongue," answered Varney; "and while thou talkest of visiting, answer me, thou paltering knave, how came Tressilian to be at the postern door?"

"Tressilian!" answered Foster, "what know I of Tressilian? I never heard his name."

"Why, villain, it was the very Cornish chough to whom old Sir Hugh Robsart destined his pretty Amy; and hither the hot-brained fool has come to look after his fair runaway. There must be some order taken with him, for he thinks he hath wrong, and is not the mean hind that will sit down with it. Luckily he knows nought of my lord, but thinks he has only me to deal with. But how, in the fiend's name, came he hither?"

"Why, with Mike Lambourne, an you must know," answered Foster.

"And who is Mike Lambourne?" demanded Varney. "By Heaven! thou wert best set up a bush over thy door, and invite every stroller who passes by to see what thou shouldst keep secret even from the sun and air."

"Ay! ay! this is a courtlike requital of my service to you, Master Richard Varney," replied Foster. "Didst thou not charge me to seek out for thee a fellow who had a good sword and an unscrupulous conscience? and was I not busying myself to find a fit man—for, thank Heaven, my acquaintance lies not amongst such companions—when, as Heaven would have it, this tall fellow, who is in all his qualities the very flashing knave thou didst wish, came hither to fix acquaintance upon me in the plenitude of his impudence; and I admitted his claim, thinking to do you a pleasure. And now see what thanks I get for disgracing myself by converse with him!"

"And did he," said Varney, "being such a fellow as thyself, only lacking, I suppose, thy present humour of hypocrisy, which lies as thin over thy hard, ruffianly heart as gold lacquer upon rusty iron—did he, I say, bring the saintly, sighing Tressilian in his train?"

"They came together, by Heaven!" said Foster; "and Tressilian—to speak Heaven's truth—obtained a moment's interview with our pretty moppet, while I was talking apart with Lambourne."

"Improvident villain! we are both undone," said Varney. "She has of late been casting many a backward look to her father's halls, whenever her lordly lover leaves her alone. Should this preaching fool whistle her back to her old perch, we were but lost men."

"No fear of that, my master," replied Anthony Foster; "she is in no mood to stoop to his lure, for she yelled out on seeing him as if an adder had stung her."

"That is good. Canst thou not get from thy daughter an inkling of what passed between them, good Foster?"

"I tell you plain, Master Varney," said Foster, "my daughter shall not enter our purposes or walk in our paths. They may suit me well enough, who know how to repent of my misdoings; but I will not have my child's soul committed to peril either for your pleasure or my lord's. I may walk among snares and pitfalls myself, because I have discretion, but I will not trust the poor lamb among them."

"Why, thou suspicious fool, I were as averse as thou art that thy baby-faced girl should enter into my plans, or walk to hell at her father's elbow. But indirectly thou mightst gain some intelligence of her?"

"And so I did, Master Varney," answered Foster; "and she said her lady called out upon the sickness of her father."

"Good!" replied Varney; "that is a hint worth catching, and I will work upon it. But the country must be rid of this Tressilian. I would have cumbered no man about the matter, for I hate him like strong poison—his presence is hemlock to me—and this day I had been rid of him, but that my foot slipped, when, to speak truth, had not thy comrade yonder come to my aid, and held his hand, I should have known by this time whether you and I have been treading the path to heaven or hell."

"And you can speak thus of such a risk!" said Foster. "You keep a stout heart, Master Varney. For me, if I did not hope to live many years, and to have time for the great work of repentance, I would not go forward with you."

"Oh! thou shalt live as long as Methuselah," said Varney, "and amass as much wealth as Solomon; and thou shalt repent so devoutly, that thy repentance shall be more famous than thy villainy—and that is a bold word. But for all this, Tressilian must be looked after. Thy ruffian yonder is gone to dog him. It concerns our fortunes, Anthony."

"Ay, ay," said Foster sullenly, "this it is to be leagued with one who knows not even so much of Scripture, as that the labourer is worthy of his hire. I must, as usual, take all the trouble and risk."

"Risk! and what is the mighty risk, I pray you?" answered Varney. "This fellow will come prowling again about your demesne or into your house, and if you take him for a house-breaker or a park-breaker, is it not most natural you should welcome him with cold steel or hot lead? Even a mastiff will pull down those who come near his kennel; and who shall blame him?"

"Ay, I have a mastiff's work and a mastiff's wage among you," said Foster. "Here have you, Master Varney, secured a good freehold estate out of this old superstitious foundation; and I have but a poor lease of this mansion under you, voidable at your honour's pleasure."

"Ay, and thou wouldst fain convert thy leasehold into a copyhold—the thing may chance to happen, Anthony Foster, if thou dost good service for it. But softly, good Anthony—it is not the lending a room or two of this old house for keeping my lord's pretty paroquet—nay, it is not the shutting thy doors and windows to keep her from flying off that may deserve it. Remember, the manor and tithes are rated at the clear annual value of seventy-nine pounds five shillings and fivepence halfpenny, besides the value of the wood. Come, come, thou must be conscionable; great and secret service may deserve both this and a better thing. And now let thy knave come and pluck off my boots. Get us some dinner, and a cup of thy best wine. I must visit this mavis, brave in apparel, unruffled in aspect, and gay in temper."

They parted and at the hour of noon, which was then that of dinner, they again met at their meal, Varney gaily dressed like a courtier of the time, and even Anthony Foster improved in appearance, as far as dress could amend an exterior so unfavourable.

This alteration did not escape Varney. Then the meal was finished, the cloth removed, and they were left to their private discourse—"Thou art gay as a goldfinch, Anthony," said Varney, looking at his host; "methinks, thou wilt whistle a jig anon. But I crave your pardon, that would secure your ejection from the congregation of the zealous botchers, the pure-hearted weavers, and the sanctified bakers of Abingdon, who let their ovens cool while their brains get heated."

"To answer you in the spirit, Master Varney," said Foster, "were—excuse the parable—to fling sacred and precious things before swine. So I will speak to thee in the language of the world, which he who is king of the world, hath taught thee, to understand, and to profit by in no common measure."

"Say what thou wilt, honest Tony," replied Varney; "for be it according to thine absurd faith, or according to thy most villainous practice, it cannot choose but be rare matter to qualify this cup of Alicant. Thy conversation is relishing and poignant, and beats caviare, dried neat's-tongue, and all other provocatives that give savour to good liquor."

"Well, then, tell me," said Anthony Foster, "is not our good lord and master's turn better served, and his antechamber more suitably filled, with decent, God-fearing men, who will work his will and their own profit quietly, and without worldly scandal, than that he should be manned, and attended, and followed by such open debauchers and ruffianly swordsmen as Tidesly, Killigrew, this fellow Lambourne, whom you have put me to seek out for you, and other such, who bear the gallows in their face and murder in their right hand—who are a terror to peaceable men, and a scandal to my lord's service?"

"Oh, content you, good Master Anthony Foster," answered Varney; "he that flies at all manner of game must keep all kinds of hawks, both short and long-winged. The course my lord holds is no easy one, and he must stand provided at all points with trusty retainers to meet each sort of service. He must have his gay courtier, like myself, to ruffle it in the presence-chamber, and to lay hand on hilt when any speaks in disparagement of my lord's honour—"

"Ay," said Foster, "and to whisper a word for him into a fair lady's ear, when he may not approach her himself."

"Then," said Varney, going on without appearing to notice the interruption, "he must have his lawyers—deep, subtle pioneers—to draw his contracts, his pre-contracts, and his post-contracts, and to find the way to make the most of grants of church-lands, and commons, and licenses for monopoly. And he must have physicians who can spice a cup or a caudle. And he must have his cabalists, like Dec and Allan, for conjuring up the devil. And he must have ruffling swordsmen, who would fight the devil when he is raised and at the wildest. And above all, without prejudice to others, he must have such godly, innocent, puritanic souls as thou, honest Anthony, who defy Satan, and do his work at the same time."

"You would not say, Master Varney," said Foster, "that our good lord and master, whom I hold to be fulfilled in all nobleness, would use such base and sinful means to rise, as thy speech points at?"

"Tush, man," said Varney, "never look at me with so sad a brow. You trap me not—nor am I in your power, as your weak brain may imagine, because I name to you freely the engines, the springs, the screws, the tackle, and braces, by which great men rise in stirring times. Sayest thou our good lord is fulfilled of all nobleness? Amen, and so be it—he has the more need to have those about him who are unscrupulous in his service, and who, because they know that his fall will overwhelm and crush them, must wager both blood and brain, soul and body, in order to keep him aloft; and this I tell thee, because I care not who knows it."

"You speak truth, Master Varney," said Anthony Foster. "He that is head of a party is but a boat on a wave, that raises not itself, but is moved upward by the billow which it floats upon."

"Thou art metaphorical, honest Anthony," replied Varney; "that velvet doublet hath made an oracle of thee. We will have thee to Oxford to take the degrees in the arts. And, in the meantime, hast thou arranged all the matters which were sent from London, and put the western chambers into such fashion as may answer my lord's humour?"

"They may serve a king on his bridal-day," said Anthony; "and I promise you that Dame Amy sits in them yonder as proud and gay as if she were the Queen of Sheba."

"'Tis the better, good Anthony," answered Varney; "we must found our future fortunes on her good liking."

"We build on sand then," said Anthony Foster; "for supposing that she sails away to court in all her lord's dignity and authority, how is she to look back upon me, who am her jailor as it were, to detain her here against her will, keeping her a caterpillar on an old wall, when she would fain be a painted butterfly in a court garden?"

"Fear not her displeasure, man," said Varney. "I will show her all thou hast done in this matter was good service, both to my lord and her; and when she chips the egg-shell and walks alone, she shall own we have hatched her greatness."

"Look to yourself, Master Varney," said Foster, "you may misreckon foully in this matter. She gave you but a frosty reception this morning, and, I think, looks on you, as well as me, with an evil eye."

"You mistake her, Foster—you mistake her utterly. To me she is bound by all the ties which can secure her to one who has been the means of gratifying both her love and ambition. Who was it that took the obscure Amy Robsart, the daughter of an impoverished and dotard knight—the destined bride of a moonstruck, moping enthusiast, like Edmund Tressilian, from her lowly fates, and held out to her in prospect the brightest fortune in England, or perchance in Europe? Why, man, it was I—as I have often told thee—that found opportunity for their secret meetings. It was I who watched the wood while he beat for the deer. It was I who, to this day, am blamed by her family as the companion of her flight; and were I in their neighbourhood, would be fain to wear a shirt of better stuff than Holland linen, lest my ribs should be acquainted with Spanish steel. Who carried their letters?—I. Who amused the old knight and Tressilian?—I. Who planned her escape?—it was I. It was I, in short, Dick Varney, who pulled this pretty little daisy from its lowly nook, and placed it in the proudest bonnet in Britain."

"Ay, Master Varney," said Foster; "but it may be she thinks that had the matter remained with you, the flower had been stuck so slightly into the cap, that the first breath of a changeable breeze of passion had blown the poor daisy to the common."

"She should consider," said Varney, smiling, "the true faith I owed my lord and master prevented me at first from counselling marriage; and yet I did counsel marriage when I saw she would not be satisfied without the—the sacrament, or the ceremony—which callest thou it, Anthony?"

"Still she has you at feud on another score," said Foster; "and I tell it you that you may look to yourself in time. She would not hide her splendour in this dark lantern of an old monastic house, but would fain shine a countess amongst countesses."

"Very natural, very right," answered Varney; "but what have I to do with that?—she may shine through horn or through crystal at my lord's pleasure, I have nought to say against it."

"She deems that you have an oar upon that side of the boat, Master Varney," replied Foster, "and that you can pull it or no, at your good pleasure. In a word, she ascribes the secrecy and obscurity in which she is kept to your secret counsel to my lord, and to my strict agency; and so she loves us both as a sentenced man loves his judge and his jailor."

"She must love us better ere she leave this place, Anthony," answered Varney. "If I have counselled for weighty reasons that she remain here for a season, I can also advise her being brought forth in the full blow of her dignity. But I were mad to do so, holding so near a place to my lord's person, were she mine enemy. Bear this truth in upon her as occasion offers, Anthony, and let me alone for extolling you in her ear, and exalting you in her opinion—KA ME, KA THEE—it is a proverb all over the world. The lady must know her friends, and be made to judge of the power they have of being her enemies; meanwhile, watch her strictly, but with all the outward observance that thy rough nature will permit. 'Tis an excellent thing that sullen look and bull-dog humour of thine; thou shouldst thank God for it, and so should my lord, for when there is aught harsh or hard-natured to be done, thou dost it as if it flowed from thine own natural doggedness, and not from orders, and so my lord escapes the scandal.—But, hark—some one knocks at the gate. Look out at the window—let no one enter—this were an ill night to be interrupted."

"It is he whom we spoke of before dinner," said Foster, as he looked through the casement; "it is Michael Lambourne."

"Oh, admit him, by all means," said the courtier; "he comes to give some account of his guest; it imports us much to know the movements of Edmund Tressilian.—Admit him, I say, but bring him not hither; I will come to you presently in the Abbot's library."

Foster left the room, and the courtier, who remained behind, paced the parlour more than once in deep thought, his arms folded on his bosom, until at length he gave vent to his meditations in broken words, which we have somewhat enlarged and connected, that his soliloquy may be intelligible to the reader.

"'Tis true," he said, suddenly stopping, and resting his right hand on the table at which they had been sitting, "this base churl hath fathomed the very depth of my fear, and I have been unable to disguise it from him. She loves me not—I would it were as true that I loved not her! Idiot that I was, to move her in my own behalf, when wisdom bade me be a true broker to my lord! And this fatal error has placed me more at her discretion than a wise man would willingly be at that of the best piece of painted Eve's flesh of them all. Since the hour that my policy made so perilous a slip, I cannot look at her without fear, and hate, and fondness, so strangely mingled, that I know not whether, were it at my choice, I would rather possess or ruin her. But she must not leave this retreat until I am assured on what

terms we are to stand. My lord's interest—and so far it is mine own, for if he sinks I fall in his train—demands concealment of this obscure marriage; and besides, I will not lend her my arm to climb to her chair of state, that she may set her foot on my neck when she is fairly seated. I must work an interest in her, either through love or through fear; and who knows but I may yet reap the sweetest and best revenge for her former scorn?—that were indeed a masterpiece of courtlike art! Let me but once be her counsel-keeper—let her confide to me a secret, did it but concern the robbery of a linnet's nest, and, fair Countess, thou art mine own!" He again paced the room in silence, stopped, filled and drank a cup of wine, as if to compose the agitation of his mind, and muttering, "Now for a close heart and an open and unruffled brow," he left the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

*The dews of summer night did fall,
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silver'd the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby.—MICKLE.*

*[This verse is the commencement of the ballad already quoted, as
what suggested the novel.]*

Four apartments; which, occupied the western side of the old quadrangle at Cumnor Place, had been fitted up with extraordinary splendour. This had been the work of several days prior to that on which our story opened. Workmen sent from London, and not permitted to leave the premises until the work was finished, had converted the apartments in that side of the building from the dilapidated appearance of a dissolved monastic house into the semblance of a royal palace. A mystery was observed in all these arrangements: the workmen came thither and returned by night, and all measures were taken to prevent the prying curiosity of the villagers from observing or speculating upon the changes which were taking place in the mansion of their once indigent but now wealthy neighbour, Anthony Foster. Accordingly, the secrecy desired was so far preserved, that nothing got abroad but vague and uncertain reports, which were received and repeated, but without much credit being attached to them.

On the evening of which we treat, the new and highly-decorated suite of rooms were, for the first time, illuminated, and that with a brilliancy which might have been visible half-a-dozen miles off, had not oaken shutters, carefully secured with bolt and padlock, and mantled with long curtains of silk and of velvet, deeply fringed with gold, prevented the slightest gleam of radiance from being seen without.

The principal apartments, as we have seen, were four in number, each opening into the other. Access was given to them by a large scale staircase, as they were then called, of unusual length and height, which had its landing-place at the door of an antechamber, shaped somewhat like a gallery. This apartment the abbot had used as an occasional council-room, but it was now beautifully wainscoted with dark, foreign wood of a brown colour, and bearing a high polish, said to have been brought from the Western Indies, and to have been wrought in London with infinite difficulty and much damage to the tools of the workmen. The dark colour of this finishing was relieved by the number of lights in silver sconces which hung against the walls, and by six large and richly-framed pictures, by the first masters of the age. A massy oaken table, placed at the lower end of the apartment, served to accommodate such as chose to play at the then fashionable game of shovel-board; and there was at the other end an elevated gallery for the musicians or minstrels, who might be summoned to increase the festivity of the evening.

From this antechamber opened a banqueting-room of moderate size, but brilliant enough to dazzle the eyes of the spectator with the richness of its furniture. The walls, lately so bare and ghastly, were now clothed with hangings of sky-blue velvet and silver; the chairs were of ebony, richly carved, with cushions corresponding to the hangings; and the place of the silver sconces which enlightened the ante-chamber was supplied by a huge chandelier of the same precious metal. The floor was covered with a Spanish foot-cloth, or carpet, on which flowers and fruits were represented in such glowing and natural colours, that you hesitated to place the foot on such exquisite workmanship. The table, of old English oak, stood ready covered with the finest linen; and a large portable court-cupboard was placed with the leaves of its embossed folding-doors displayed, showing the shelves within, decorated with a full display of plate and porcelain. In the midst of the table stood a salt-cellar of Italian workmanship—a beautiful and splendid piece of plate about two feet high, moulded into a representation of the giant Briareus, whose hundred hands of silver presented to the guests various sorts of spices, or condiments, to season their food withal.

The third apartment was called the withdrawing-room. It was hung with the finest tapestry, representing the fall of Phaeton; for the looms of Flanders were now much occupied on classical subjects. The principal seat of this apartment was a chair of state, raised a step or two from the floor, and large enough to contain two persons. It was surmounted by a canopy, which, as well as the cushions, side-curtains, and the very footcloth, was composed of crimson velvet, embroidered with seed-pearl. On the top of the canopy were two coronets, resembling those of an earl and countess. Stools covered with velvet, and some cushions disposed in the Moorish fashion, and ornamented with Arabesque needle-work, supplied the place of chairs in this apartment, which contained musical instruments, embroidery frames, and other articles for ladies' pastime. Besides lesser lights, the withdrawing-room was illuminated by four tall torches of virgin wax, each of which was placed in the grasp of a statue, representing an armed Moor, who held in his left arm a round buckler of silver, highly polished, interposed betwixt his breast and the light, which was thus brilliantly reflected as from a crystal mirror.

The sleeping chamber belonging to this splendid suite of apartments was decorated in a taste less showy, but not less rich, than had been displayed in the others. Two silver lamps, fed with perfumed oil, diffused at once a delicious odour and a trembling twilight-seeming shimmer through the quiet apartment. It was carpeted so thick that the heaviest step could not have been heard, and the bed, richly heaped with down, was spread with an ample coverlet of silk and gold; from under which peeped forth cambric sheets and blankets as white as the lambs which yielded the fleece that made them. The curtains were of blue velvet, lined with crimson silk, deeply festooned with gold, and embroidered with the loves of Cupid and Psyche. On the toilet was a beautiful Venetian mirror, in a frame of silver filigree, and beside it stood a gold posset-dish to contain the night-draught. A pair of pistols and a dagger, mounted with gold, were displayed near the head of the bed, being the arms for the night, which were presented to honoured guests, rather, it may be supposed, in the way of ceremony than from any apprehension of danger. We must not omit to mention, what was more to the credit of the manners of the time, that in a small recess, illuminated by a taper, were disposed two hassocks of velvet and gold, corresponding with the bed furniture, before a desk of carved ebony. This recess had formerly been the private oratory of the abbot; but the crucifix was removed, and instead there were placed on the desk, two Books of Common Prayer, richly bound, and embossed with silver. With this enviable sleeping apartment, which was so far removed from every sound save that of the wind sighing among the oaks of the park, that Morpheus might have coveted it for his own proper repose, corresponded two wardrobes, or dressing-rooms as they are now termed, suitably furnished, and in a style of the same magnificence which we have already described. It ought to be added, that a part of the building in the adjoining wing was occupied by the kitchen and its offices, and served to accommodate the personal attendants of the great and wealthy nobleman, for whose use these magnificent preparations had been made.

The divinity for whose sake this temple had been decorated was well worthy the cost and pains which had been bestowed. She was seated in the withdrawing-room which we have described, surveying with the pleased eye of natural and innocent vanity the splendour which had been so suddenly created, as it were, in her honour. For, as her own residence at Cumnor Place formed the cause of the mystery observed in all the preparations for opening these apartments, it was sedulously arranged that, until she took possession of them, she should have no means of knowing what was going forward in that part of the ancient building, or of exposing herself to be seen by the workmen engaged in the decorations. She had been, therefore, introduced on that evening to a part of the mansion which she had never yet seen, so different from all the rest that it appeared, in comparison, like an enchanted palace. And when she first examined and occupied these splendid rooms, it was with the wild and unrestrained joy of a rustic beauty who finds herself suddenly invested with a splendour which her most extravagant

wishes had never imagined, and at the same time with the keen feeling of an affectionate heart, which knows that all the enchantment that surrounds her is the work of the great magician Love.

The Countess Amy, therefore—for to that rank she was exalted by her private but solemn union with England's proudest Earl—had for a time flitted hastily from room to room, admiring each new proof of her lover and her bridegroom's taste, and feeling that admiration enhanced as she recollected that all she gazed upon was one continued proof of his ardent and devoted affection. "How beautiful are these hangings! How natural these paintings, which seem to contend with life! How richly wrought is that plate, which looks as if all the galleons of Spain had been intercepted on the broad seas to furnish it forth! And oh, Janet!" she exclaimed repeatedly to the daughter of Anthony Foster, the close attendant, who, with equal curiosity, but somewhat less ecstatic joy, followed on her mistress's footsteps—"oh, Janet! how much more delightful to think that all these fair things have been assembled by his love, for the love of me! and that this evening—this very evening, which grows darker every instant, I shall thank him more for the love that has created such an unimaginable paradise, than for all the wonders it contains."

"The Lord is to be thanked first," said the pretty Puritan, "who gave thee, lady, the kind and courteous husband whose love has done so much for thee. I, too, have done my poor share. But if you thus run wildly from room to room, the toil of my crimping and my curling pins will vanish like the frost-work on the window when the sun is high."

"Thou sayest true, Janet," said the young and beautiful Countess, stopping suddenly from her tripping race of enraptured delight, and looking at herself from head to foot in a large mirror, such as she had never before seen, and which, indeed, had few to match it even in the Queen's palace—"thou sayest true, Janet!" she answered, as she saw, with pardonable self-applause, the noble mirror reflect such charms as were seldom presented to its fair and polished surface; "I have more of the milk-maid than the countess, with these cheeks flushed with haste, and all these brown curls, which you laboured to bring to order, straying as wild as the tendrils of an unpruned vine. My falling ruff is chafed too, and shows the neck and bosom more than is modest and seemly. Come, Janet; we will practise state—we will go to the withdrawing-room, my good girl, and thou shalt put these rebel locks in order, and imprison within lace and cambric the bosom that beats too high."

They went to the withdrawing apartment accordingly, where the Countess playfully stretched herself upon the pile of Moorish cushions, half sitting, half reclining, half wrapt in her own thoughts, half listening to the prattle of her attendant.

While she was in this attitude, and with a corresponding expression betwixt listlessness and expectation on her fine and intelligent features, you might have searched sea and land without finding anything half so expressive or half so lovely. The wreath of brilliants which mixed with her dark-brown hair did not match in lustre the hazel eye which a light-brown eyebrow, pencilled with exquisite delicacy, and long eyelashes of the same colour, relieved and shaded. The exercise she had just taken, her excited expectation and gratified vanity, spread a glow over her fine features, which had been sometimes censured (as beauty as well as art has her minute critics) for being rather too pale. The milk-white pearls of the necklace which she wore, the same which she had just received as a true-love token from her husband, were excelled in purity by her teeth, and by the colour of her skin, saving where the blush of pleasure and self-satisfaction had somewhat stained the neck with a shade of light crimson.—"Now, have done with these busy fingers, Janet," she said to her handmaiden, who was still officiously employed in bringing her hair and her dress into order—"have done, I say. I must see your father ere my lord arrives, and also Master Richard Varney, whom my lord has highly in his esteem—but I could tell that of him would lose him favour."

"Oh, do not do so, good my lady!" replied Janet; "leave him to God, who punishes the wicked in His own time; but do not you cross Varney's path, for so thoroughly hath he my lord's ear, that few have thriven who have thwarted his courses."

"And from whom had you this, my most righteous Janet?" said the Countess; "or why should I keep terms with so mean a gentleman as Varney, being as I am, wife to his master and patron?"

"Nay, madam," replied Janet Foster, "your ladyship knows better than I; but I have heard my father say he would rather cross a hungry wolf than thwart Richard Varney in his projects. And he has often charged me to have a care of holding commerce with him."

"Thy father said well, girl, for thee," replied the lady, "and I dare swear meant well. It is a pity, though, his face and manner do little match his true purpose—for I think his purpose may be true."

"Doubt it not, my lady," answered Janet—"doubt not that my father purposes well, though he is a plain man, and his blunt looks may belie his heart."

"I will not doubt it, girl, were it only for thy sake; and yet he has one of those faces which men tremble when they look on. I think even thy mother, Janet—nay, have done with that poking-iron—could hardly look upon him without quaking."

"If it were so, madam," answered Janet Foster, "my mother had those who could keep her in honourable countenance. Why, even you, my lady, both trembled and blushed when Varney brought the letter from my lord."

"You are bold, damsel," said the Countess, rising from the cushions on which she sat half reclined in the arms of her attendant. "Know that there are causes of trembling which have nothing to do with fear.—But, Janet," she added, immediately relapsing into the good-natured and familiar tone which was natural to her, "believe me, I will do what credit I can to your father, and the rather that you, sweetheart, are his child. Alas! alas!" she added, a sudden sadness passing over her fine features, and her eyes filling with tears, "I ought the rather to hold sympathy with thy kind heart, that my own poor father is uncertain of my fate, and they say lies sick and sorrowful for my worthless sake! But I will soon cheer him—the news of my happiness and advancement will make him young again. And that I may cheer him the sooner"—she wiped her eyes as she spoke—"I must be cheerful myself. My lord must not find me insensible to his kindness, or sorrowful, when he snatches a visit to his recluse, after so long an absence. Be merry, Janet; the night wears on, and my lord must soon arrive. Call thy father hither, and call Varney also. I cherish resentment against neither; and though I may have some room to be displeased with both, it shall be their own fault if ever a complaint against them reaches the Earl through my means. Call them hither, Janet."

Janet Foster obeyed her mistress; and in a few minutes after, Varney entered the withdrawing-room with the graceful ease and unclouded front of an accomplished courtier, skilled, under the veil of external politeness, to disguise his own feelings and to penetrate those of others. Anthony Foster plodded into the apartment after him, his natural gloomy vulgarity of aspect seeming to become yet more remarkable, from his clumsy attempt to conceal the mixture of anxiety and dislike with which he looked on her, over whom he had hitherto exercised so severe a control, now so splendidly attired, and decked with so many pledges of the interest which she possessed in her husband's affections. The blundering reverence which he made, rather AT than TO the Countess, had confession in it. It was like the reverence which the criminal makes to the judge, when he at once owns his guilt and implores mercy—which is at the same time an impudent and embarrassed attempt at defence or extenuation, a confession of a fault, and an entreaty for lenity.

Varney, who, in right of his gentle blood, had pressed into the room before Anthony Foster, knew better what to say than he, and said it with more assurance and a better grace.

The Countess greeted him indeed with an appearance of cordiality, which seemed a complete amnesty for whatever she might have to complain of. She rose from her seat, and advanced two steps towards him, holding forth her hand as she said, "Master Richard Varney, you brought me this morning such welcome tidings, that I fear surprise and joy made me neglect my lord and husband's charge to receive you with distinction. We offer you our hand, sir, in reconciliation."

"I am unworthy to touch it," said Varney, dropping on one knee, "save as a subject honours that of a prince."

He touched with his lips those fair and slender fingers, so richly loaded with rings and jewels; then rising, with graceful gallantry, was about to hand her to the chair of state, when she said, "No, good Master Richard Varney, I take not my place there until my lord himself conducts me. I am for the present but a disguised Countess, and will not take dignity on me until authorized by him whom I derive it from."

"I trust, my lady," said Foster, "that in doing the commands of my lord your husband, in your restraint and so forth, I have not incurred your displeasure, seeing that I did but my duty towards your lord and mine; for Heaven, as holy writ saith, hath given the husband supremacy and dominion over the wife—I think it runs so, or something like it."

"I receive at this moment so pleasant a surprise, Master Foster," answered the Countess, "that I cannot but excuse the rigid fidelity which secluded me from these apartments, until they had assumed an appearance so new and so splendid."

"Ay lady," said Foster, "it hath cost many a fair crown; and that more need not be wasted than is absolutely necessary, I leave you till my lord's arrival with good Master Richard Varney, who, as I think, hath somewhat to say to you from your most noble lord and husband.—Janet, follow me, to see that all be in order."

"No, Master Foster," said the Countess, "we will your daughter remains here in our apartment—out of ear-shot, however, in case Varney hath ought to say to me from my lord."

Foster made his clumsy reverence, and departed, with an aspect which seemed to grudge the profuse expense which had been wasted upon changing his house from a bare and ruinous grange to an Asiatic palace. When he was gone, his daughter took her embroidery frame, and went to establish herself at the bottom of the apartment; while Richard Varney, with a profoundly humble courtesy, took the lowest stool he could find, and placing it by the side of the pile of cushions on which the Countess had now again seated herself, sat with his eyes for a time fixed on the ground, and in pro-found silence.

"I thought, Master Varney," said the Countess, when she saw he was not likely to open the conversation, "that you had something to communicate from my lord and husband; so at least I understood Master Foster, and therefore I removed my waiting-maid. If I am mistaken, I will recall her to my side; for her needle is not so absolutely perfect in tent and cross-stitch, but that my superintendence is advisable."

"Lady," said Varney, "Foster was partly mistaken in my purpose. It was not FROM but OF your noble husband, and my approved and most noble patron, that I am led, and indeed bound, to speak."

"The theme is most welcome, sir," said the Countess, "whether it be of or from my noble husband. But be brief, for I expect his hasty approach."

"Briefly then, madam," replied Varney, "and boldly, for my argument requires both haste and courage—you have this day seen Tressilian?"

"I have, sir and what of that?" answered the lady somewhat sharply.

"Nothing that concerns me, lady," Varney replied with humility. "But, think you, honoured madam, that your lord will hear it with equal equanimity?"

"And wherefore should he not? To me alone was Tressilian's visit embarrassing and painful, for he brought news of my good father's illness."

"Of your father's illness, madam!" answered Varney. "It must have been sudden then—very sudden; for the messenger whom I dispatched, at my lord's instance, found the good knight on the hunting field, cheering his beagles with his wonted jovial field-cry. I trust Tressilian has but forged this news. He hath his reasons, madam, as you well know, for disquieting your present happiness."

"You do him injustice, Master Varney," replied the Countess, with animation—"you do him much injustice. He is the freest, the most open, the most gentle heart that breathes. My honourable lord ever excepted, I know not one to whom falsehood is more odious than to Tressilian."

"I crave your pardon, madam," said Varney, "I meant the gentleman no injustice—I knew not how nearly his cause affected you. A man may, in some circumstances, disguise the truth for fair and honest purpose; for were it to be always spoken, and upon all occasions, this were no world to live in."

"You have a courtly conscience, Master Varney," said the Countess, "and your veracity will not, I think, interrupt your preferment in the world, such as it is. But touching Tressilian—I must do him justice, for I have done him wrong, as none knows better than thou. Tressilian's conscience is of other mould—the world thou speakest of has not that which could bribe him from the way of truth and honour; and for living in it with a soiled fame, the ermine would as soon seek to lodge in the den of the foul polecat. For this my father loved him; for this I would have loved him—if I could. And yet in this case he had what seemed to him, unknowing alike of my marriage and to whom I was united, such powerful reasons to withdraw me from this place, that I well trust he exaggerated much of my father's indisposition, and that thy better news may be the truer."

"Believe me they are, madam," answered Varney. "I pretend not to be a champion of that same naked virtue called truth, to the very outrance. I can consent that her charms be hidden with a veil, were it but for decency's sake. But you must think lower of my head and heart than is due to one whom my noble lord deigns to call his friend, if you suppose I could wilfully and unnecessarily palm upon your ladyship a falsehood, so soon to be detected, in a matter which concerns your happiness."

"Master Varney," said the Countess, "I know that my lord esteems you, and holds you a faithful and a good pilot in those seas in which he has spread so high and so venturous a sail. Do not suppose, therefore, I meant hardly by you, when I spoke the truth in Tressilian's vindication. I am as you well know, country-bred, and like plain rustic truth better than courtly compliment; but I must change my fashions with my sphere, I presume."

"True, madam," said Varney, smiling; "and though you speak now in jest, it will not be amiss that in earnest your present speech had some connection with your real purpose. A court-dame—take the most noble, the most virtuous, the most unimpeachable that stands around our Queen's throne—would, for example, have shunned to speak the truth, or what she thought such, in praise of a discarded suitor, before the dependant and confidant of her noble husband."

"And wherefore," said the Countess, colouring impatiently, "should I not do justice to Tressilian's worth, before my husband's friend—before my husband himself—before the whole world?"

"And with the same openness," said Varney, "your ladyship will this night tell my noble lord your husband that Tressilian has discovered your place of residence, so anxiously concealed from the world, and that he has had an interview with you?"

"Unquestionably," said the Countess. "It will be the first thing I tell him, together with every word that Tressilian said and that I answered. I shall speak my own shame in this, for Tressilian's reproaches, less just than he esteemed them, were not altogether unmerited. I will speak, therefore, with pain, but I will speak, and speak all."

"Your ladyship will do your pleasure," answered Varney; "but methinks it were as well, since nothing calls for so frank a disclosure, to spare yourself this pain, and my noble lord the disquiet, and Master Tressilian, since belike he must be thought of in the matter, the danger which is like to ensue."

"I can see nought of all these terrible consequences," said the lady composedly, "unless by imputing to my noble lord unworthy thoughts, which I am sure never harboured in his generous heart."

"Far be it from me to do so," said Varney. And then, after a moment's silence, he added, with a real or affected plainness of manner, very different from his usual smooth courtesy, "Come, madam, I will show you that a courtier dare speak truth as well as another, when it concerns the weal of those whom he honours and regards, ay, and although it may infer his own danger." He waited as if to receive commands, or at least permission, to go on; but as the lady remained silent, he proceeded, but obviously with caution. "Look around you," he said, "noble lady, and observe the barriers with which this place is surrounded, the studious mystery with which the brightest jewel that England possesses is secluded from the admiring gaze. See with what rigour your walks are circumscribed, and your movement restrained at the beck of yonder churlish Foster. Consider all this, and judge for yourself what can be the cause."

"My lord's pleasure," answered the Countess; "and I am bound to seek no other motive."

"His pleasure it is indeed," said Varney; "and his pleasure arises out of a love worthy of the object which inspires it. But he who possesses a treasure, and who values it, is oft anxious, in proportion to the value he puts upon it, to secure it from the depredations of others."

"What needs all this talk, Master Varney?" said the lady, in reply. "You would have me believe that my noble lord is jealous. Suppose it true, I know a cure for jealousy."

"Indeed, madam?" said Varney.

"It is," replied the lady, "to speak the truth to my lord at all times—to hold up my mind and my thoughts before him as pure as that polished mirror—so that when he looks into my heart, he shall only see his own features reflected there."

"I am mute, madam," answered Varney; "and as I have no reason to grieve for Tressilian, who would have my heart's blood were he able, I shall reconcile myself easily to what may befall the gentleman in consequence of your frank disclosure of his having presumed to intrude upon your solitude. You, who know my lord so much better than I, will judge if he be likely to bear the insult unavenged."

"Nay, if I could think myself the cause of Tressilian's ruin," said the Countess, "I who have already occasioned him so much distress, I might be brought to be silent. And yet what will it avail, since he was seen by Foster, and I think by some one else? No, no, Varney, urge it no more. I will tell the whole matter to my lord; and with such pleading for Tressilian's folly, as shall dispose my lord's generous heart rather to serve than to punish him."

"Your judgment, madam," said Varney, "is far superior to mine, especially as you may, if you will, prove the ice before you step on it, by mentioning Tressilian's name to my lord, and observing how he endures it. For Foster and his attendant, they know not Tressilian by sight, and I can easily give them some reasonable excuse for the appearance of an unknown stranger."

The lady paused for an instant, and then replied, "If, Varney, it be indeed true that Foster knows not as yet that the man he saw was Tressilian, I own I were unwilling he should learn what nowise concerns him. He bears himself already with austerity enough, and I wish him not to be judge or privy-councillor in my affairs."

"Tush," said Varney, "what has the surly groom to do with your ladyship's concerns?—no more, surely, than the ban-dog which watches his courtyard. If he is in aught distasteful to your ladyship, I have interest enough to have him exchanged for a seneschal that shall be more agreeable to you."

"Master Varney," said the Countess, "let us drop this theme. When I complain of the attendants whom my lord has placed around me, it must be to my lord himself.—Hark! I hear the trampling of horse. He comes! he comes!" she exclaimed, jumping up in ecstasy.

"I cannot think it is he," said Varney; "or that you can hear the tread of his horse through the closely-mantled casements."

"Stop me not, Varney—my ears are keener than thine. It is he!"

"But, madam!—but, madam!" exclaimed Varney anxiously, and still placing himself in her way, "I trust that what I have spoken in humble duty and service will not be turned to my ruin? I hope that my faithful advice will not be bewrayed to my prejudice? I implore that—"

"Content thee, man—content thee!" said the Countess, "and quit my skirt—you are too bold to detain me. Content thyself, I think not of thee."

At this moment the folding-doors flew wide open, and a man of majestic mien, muffled in the folds of a long dark riding-cloak, entered the apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

*"This is he
Who rides on the court-gale; controls its tides;
Knows all their secret shoals and fatal eddies;
Whose frown abases, and whose smile exalts.
He shines like any rainbow—and, perchance,
His colours are as transient."—OLD PLAY.*

There was some little displeasure and confusion on the Countess's brow, owing to her struggle with Varney's pertinacity; but it was exchanged for an expression of the purest joy and affection, as she threw herself into the arms of the noble stranger who entered, and clasping him to her bosom, exclaimed, "At length—at length thou art come!"

Varney discreetly withdrew as his lord entered, and Janet was about to do the same, when her mistress signed to her to remain. She took her place at the farther end of the apartment, and continued standing, as if ready for attendance.

Meanwhile the Earl, for he was of no inferior rank, returned his lady's caress with the most affectionate ardour, but affected to resist when she strove to take his cloak from him.

"Nay," she said, "but I will unmantle you. I must see if you have kept your word to me, and come as the great Earl men call thee, and not as heretofore like a private cavalier."

"Thou art like the rest of the world, Amy," said the Earl, suffering her to prevail in the playful contest; "the jewels, and feathers, and silk are more to them than the man whom they adorn—many a poor blade looks gay in a velvet scabbard."

"But so cannot men say of thee, thou noble Earl," said his lady, as the cloak dropped on the floor, and showed him dressed as princes when they ride abroad; "thou art the good and well-tried steel, whose inly worth deserves, yet disdains, its outward ornaments. Do not think Amy can love thee better in this glorious garb than she did when she gave her heart to him who wore the russet-brown cloak in the woods of Devon."

"And thou too," said the Earl, as gracefully and majestically he led his beautiful Countess towards the chair of state which was prepared for them both—"thou too, my love, hast donned a dress which becomes thy rank, though it cannot improve thy beauty. What think'st thou of our court taste?"

The lady cast a sidelong glance upon the great mirror as they passed it by, and then said, "I know not how it is, but I think not of my own person while I look at the reflection of thine. Sit thou there," she said, as they approached the chair of state, "like a thing for men to worship and to wonder at."

"Ay, love," said the Earl, "if thou wilt share my state with me."

"Not so," said the Countess; "I will sit on this footstool at thy feet, that I may spell over thy splendour, and learn, for the first time, how princes are attired."

And with a childish wonder, which her youth and rustic education rendered not only excusable but becoming, mixed as it was with a delicate show of the most tender conjugal affection, she examined and admired from head to foot the noble form and princely attire of him who formed the proudest ornament of the court of England's Maiden Queen, renowned as it was for splendid courtiers, as well as for wise counsellors. Regarding affectionately his lovely bride, and gratified by her unrepressed admiration, the dark eye and noble features of the Earl expressed passions more gentle than the commanding and aspiring look which usually sat upon his broad forehead, and in the piercing brilliancy of his dark eye; and he smiled at the simplicity which dictated the questions she put to him concerning the various ornaments with which he was decorated.

"The embroidered strap, as thou callest it, around my knee," he said, "is the English Garter, an ornament which kings are proud to wear. See, here is the star which belongs to it, and here the Diamond George, the jewel of the order. You have heard how King Edward and the Countess of Salisbury—"

"Oh, I know all that tale," said the Countess, slightly blushing, "and how a lady's garter became the proudest badge of English chivalry."

"Even so," said the Earl; "and this most honourable Order I had the good hap to receive at the same time with three most noble associates, the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Northampton, and the Earl of Rutland. I was the lowest of the four in rank—but what then? he that climbs a ladder must begin at the first round."

"But this other fair collar, so richly wrought, with some jewel like a sheep hung by the middle attached to it, what," said the young Countess, "does that emblem signify?"

"This collar," said the Earl, "with its double fusilles interchanged with these knobs, which are supposed to present flint-stones sparkling with fire, and sustaining the jewel you inquire about, is the badge of the noble Order of the Golden Fleece, once appertaining to the House of Burgundy it hath high privileges, my Amy, belonging to it, this most noble Order; for even the King of Spain himself, who hath now succeeded to the honours and demesnes of Burgundy, may not sit in judgment upon a knight of the Golden Fleece, unless by assistance and consent of the Great Chapter of the Order."

"And is this an Order belonging to the cruel King of Spain?" said the Countess. "Alas! my noble lord, that you will defile your noble English breast by bearing such an emblem! Bethink you of the most unhappy Queen Mary's days, when this same Philip held sway with her in England, and of the piles which were built for our noblest, and our wisest, and our most truly sanctified prelates and divines—and will you, whom men call the standard-bearer of the true Protestant faith, be contented to wear the emblem and mark of such a Romish tyrant as he of Spain?"

"Oh, content you, my love," answered the Earl; "we who spread our sails to gales of court favour cannot always display the ensigns we love the best, or at all times refuse sailing under colours which we like not. Believe me, I am not the less good Protestant, that for policy I must accept the honour offered me by Spain,

in admitting me to this his highest order of knighthood. Besides, it belongs properly to Flanders; and Egmont, Orange, and others have pride in seeing it displayed on an English bosom."

"Nay, my lord, you know your own path best," replied the Countess. "And this other collar, to what country does this fair jewel belong?"

"To a very poor one, my love," replied the Earl; "this is the Order of Saint Andrew, revived by the last James of Scotland. It was bestowed on me when it was thought the young widow of France and Scotland would gladly have wedded an English baron; but a free coronet of England is worth a crown matrimonial held at the humour of a woman, and owning only the poor rocks and bogs of the north."

The Countess paused, as if what the Earl last said had excited some painful but interesting train of thought; and, as she still remained silent, her husband proceeded:—

"And now, loveliest, your wish is gratified, and you have seen your vassal in such of his trim array as accords with riding vestments; for robes of state and coronets are only for princely halls."

"Well, then," said the Countess, "my gratified wish has, as usual, given rise to a new one."

"And what is it thou canst ask that I can deny?" said the fond husband.

"I wished to see my Earl visit this obscure and secret bower," said the Countess, "in all his princely array; and now, methinks I long to sit in one of his princely halls, and see him enter dressed in sober russet, as when he won poor Amy Robsart's heart."

"That is a wish easily granted," said the Earl—"the sober russet shall be donned to-morrow, if you will."

"But shall I," said the lady, "go with you to one of your castles, to see how the richness of your dwelling will correspond with your peasant habit?"

"Why, Amy," said the Earl, looking around, "are not these apartments decorated with sufficient splendour? I gave the most unbounded order, and, methinks, it has been indifferently well obeyed; but if thou canst tell me aught which remains to be done, I will instantly give direction."

"Nay, my lord, now you mock me," replied the Countess; "the gaiety of this rich lodging exceeds my imagination as much as it does my desert. But shall not your wife, my love—at least one day soon—be surrounded with the honour which arises neither from the toils of the mechanic who decks her apartment, nor from the silks and jewels with which your generosity adorns her, but which is attached to her place among the matronage, as the avowed wife of England's noblest Earl?"

"One day?" said her husband. "Yes, Amy, my love, one day this shall surely happen; and, believe me, thou canst not wish for that day more fondly than I. With what rapture could I retire from labours of state, and cares and toils of ambition, to spend my life in dignity and honour on my own broad domains, with thee, my lovely Amy, for my friend and companion! But, Amy, this cannot yet be; and these dear but stolen interviews are all I can give to the loveliest and the best beloved of her sex."

"But WHY can it not be?" urged the Countess, in the softest tones of persuasion—"why can it not immediately take place—this more perfect, this uninterrupted union, for which you say you wish, and which the laws of God and man alike command? Ah! did you but desire it half as much as you say, mighty and favoured as you are, who or what should bar your attaining your wish?"

The Earl's brow was overcast.

"Amy," he said, "you speak of what you understand not. We that toil in courts are like those who climb a mountain of loose sand—we dare make no halt until some projecting rock affords us a secure footing and resting-place. If we pause sooner, we slide down by our own weight, an object of universal derision. I stand high, but I stand not secure enough to follow my own inclination. To declare my marriage were to be the artificer of my own ruin. But, believe me, I will reach a point, and that speedily, when I can do justice to thee and to myself. Meantime, poison not the bliss of the present moment, by desiring that which cannot at present be. Let me rather know whether all here is managed to thy liking. How does Foster bear himself to you?—in all things respectful, I trust, else the fellow shall dearly rue it."

"He reminds me sometimes of the necessity of this privacy," answered the lady, with a sigh; "but that is reminding me of your wishes, and therefore I am rather bound to him than disposed to blame him for it."

"I have told you the stern necessity which is upon us," replied the Earl. "Foster is, I note, somewhat sullen of mood; but Varney warrants to me his fidelity and devotion to my service. If thou hast aught, however, to complain of the mode in which he discharges his duty, he shall abye it."

"Oh, I have nought to complain of," answered the lady, "so he discharges his task with fidelity to you; and his daughter Janet is the kindest and best companion of my solitude—her little air of precision sits so well upon her!"

"Is she indeed?" said the Earl. "She who gives you pleasure must not pass unrewarded.—Come hither, damsel."

"Janet," said the lady, "come hither to my lord."

Janet, who, as we already noticed, had discreetly retired to some distance, that her presence might be no check upon the private conversation of her lord and lady, now came forward; and as she made her reverential curtsy, the Earl could not help smiling at the contrast which the extreme simplicity of her dress, and the prim demureness of her looks, made with a very pretty countenance and a pair of black eyes, that laughed in spite of their mistress's desire to look grave.

"I am bound to you, pretty damsel," said the Earl, "for the contentment which your service hath given to this lady." As he said this, he took from his finger a ring of some price, and offered it to Janet Foster, adding, "Wear this, for her sake and for mine."

"I am well pleased, my lord," answered Janet demurely, "that my poor service hath gratified my lady, whom no one can draw nigh to without desiring to please; but we of the precious Master Holdforth's congregation seek not, like the gay daughters of this world, to twine gold around our fingers, or wear stones upon our necks, like the vain women of Tyre and of Sidon."

"Oh, what! you are a grave professor of the precise sisterhood, pretty Mistress Janet," said the Earl, "and I think your father is of the same congregation in sincerity? I like you both the better for it; for I have been prayed for, and wished well to, in your congregations. And you may the better afford the lack of ornament, Mistress Janet, because your fingers are slender, and your neck white. But here is what neither Papist nor Puritan, latitudinarian nor precisian, ever boggles or makes mouths at. E'en take it, my girl, and employ it as you list."

So saying, he put into her hand five broad gold pieces of Philip and Mary.

"I would not accept this gold either," said Janet, "but that I hope to find a use for it which will bring a blessing on us all."

"Even please thyself, pretty Janet," said the Earl, "and I shall be well satisfied. And I prithee let them hasten the evening collation."

"I have bidden Master Varney and Master Foster to sup with us, my lord," said the Countess, as Janet retired to obey the Earl's commands; "has it your approbation?"

"What you do ever must have so, my sweet Amy," replied her husband; "and I am the better pleased thou hast done them this grace, because Richard Varney is my sworn man, and a close brother of my secret council; and for the present, I must needs repose much trust in this Anthony Foster."

"I had a boon to beg of thee, and a secret to tell thee, my dear lord," said the Countess, with a faltering accent.

"Let both be for to-morrow, my love," replied the Earl. "I see they open the folding-doors into the banqueting-parlour, and as I have ridden far and fast, a cup of wine will not be unacceptable."

So saying he led his lovely wife into the next apartment, where Varney and Foster received them with the deepest reverences, which the first paid after the fashion of the court, and the second after that of the congregation. The Earl returned their salutation with the negligent courtesy of one long used to such homage; while the Countess repaid it with a punctilious solicitude, which showed it was not quite so familiar to her.

The banquet at which the company seated themselves corresponded in magnificence with the splendour of the apartment in which it was served up, but no domestic gave his attendance. Janet alone stood ready to wait upon the company; and, indeed, the board was so well supplied with all that could be desired, that little or no assistance was necessary. The Earl and his lady occupied the upper end of the table, and Varney and Foster sat beneath the salt, as was the custom with inferiors. The latter, overawed perhaps by society to which he was altogether unused, did not utter a single syllable during the repast; while Varney, with great

tact and discernment, sustained just so much of the conversation as, without the appearance of intrusion on his part, prevented it from languishing, and maintained the good-humour of the Earl at the highest pitch. This man was indeed highly qualified by nature to discharge the part in which he found himself placed, being discreet and cautious on the one hand, and, on the other, quick, keen-witted, and imaginative; so that even the Countess, prejudiced as she was against him on many accounts, felt and enjoyed his powers of conversation, and was more disposed than she had ever hitherto found herself to join in the praises which the Earl lavished on his favourite. The hour of rest at length arrived, the Earl and Countess retired to their apartment, and all was silent in the castle for the rest of the night.

Early on the ensuing morning, Varney acted as the Earl's chamberlain as well as his master of horse, though the latter was his proper office in that magnificent household, where knights and gentlemen of good descent were well contented to hold such menial situations, as nobles themselves held in that of the sovereign. The duties of each of these charges were familiar to Varney, who, sprung from an ancient but somewhat decayed family, was the Earl's page during his earlier and more obscure fortunes, and, faithful to him in adversity, had afterwards contrived to render himself no less useful to him in his rapid and splendid advance to fortune; thus establishing in him an interest resting both on present and past services, which rendered him an almost indispensable sharer of his confidence.

"Help me to do on a plainer riding-suit, Varney," said the Earl, as he laid aside his morning-gown, flowered with silk and lined with sables, "and put these chains and fetters there" (pointing to the collars of the various Orders which lay on the table) "into their place of security—my neck last night was well-nigh broke with the weight of them. I am half of the mind that they shall gall me no more. They are bonds which knaves have invented to fetter fools. How thinkest thou, Varney?"

"Faith, my good lord," said his attendant, "I think fetters of gold are like no other fetters—they are ever the weightier the welcomer."

"For all that, Varney," replied his master, "I am well-nigh resolved they shall bind me to the court no longer. What can further service and higher favour give me, beyond the high rank and large estate which I have already secured? What brought my father to the block, but that he could not bound his wishes within right and reason? I have, you know, had mine own ventures and mine own escapes. I am well-nigh resolved to tempt the sea no further, but sit me down in quiet on the shore."

"And gather cockle-shells, with Dan Cupid to aid you," said Varney.

"How mean you by that, Varney?" said the Earl somewhat hastily.

"Nay, my lord," said Varney, "be not angry with me. If your lordship is happy in a lady so rarely lovely that, in order to enjoy her company with somewhat more freedom, you are willing to part with all you have hitherto lived for, some of your poor servants may be sufferers; but your bounty hath placed me so high, that I shall ever have enough to maintain a poor gentleman in the rank befitting the high office he has held in your lordship's family."

"Yet you seem discontented when I propose throwing up a dangerous game, which may end in the ruin of both of us."

"I, my lord?" said Varney; "surely I have no cause to regret your lordship's retreat! It will not be Richard Varney who will incur the displeasure of majesty, and the ridicule of the court, when the stateliest fabric that ever was founded upon a prince's favour melts away like a morning frost-work. I would only have you yourself to be assured, my lord, ere you take a step which cannot be retracted, that you consult your fame and happiness in the course you propose."

"Speak on, then, Varney," said the Earl; "I tell thee I have determined nothing, and will weigh all considerations on either side."

"Well, then, my lord," replied Varney, "we will suppose the step taken, the frown frowned, the laugh laughed, and the moan moaned. You have retired, we will say, to some one of your most distant castles, so far from court that you hear neither the sorrow of your friends nor the glee of your enemies. We will suppose, too, that your successful rival will be satisfied (a thing greatly to be doubted) with abridging and cutting away the branches of the great tree which so long kept the sun from him, and that he does not insist upon tearing you up by the roots. Well; the late prime favourite of England, who wielded her general's staff and controlled her parliaments, is now a rural baron, hunting, hawking, drinking fat ale with country esquires, and mustering his men at the command of the high sheriff—"

"Varney, forbear!" said the Earl.

"Nay, my lord, you must give me leave to conclude my picture.—Sussex governs England—the Queen's health fails—the succession is to be settled—a road is opened to ambition more splendid than ambition ever dreamed of. You hear all this as you sit by the hob, under the shade of your hall-chimney. You then begin to think what hopes you have fallen from, and what insignificance you have embraced; and all that you might look babies in the eyes of your fair wife oftener than once a fortnight."

"I say, Varney," said the Earl, "no more of this. I said not that the step, which my own ease and comfort would urge me to, was to be taken hastily, or without due consideration to the public safety. Bear witness to me, Varney; I subdue my wishes of retirement, not because I am moved by the call of private ambition, but that I may preserve the position in which I may best serve my country at the hour of need.—Order our horses presently; I will wear, as formerly, one of the livery cloaks, and ride before the portmanteau. Thou shalt be master for the day, Varney—neglect nothing that can blind suspicion. We will to horse ere men are stirring. I will but take leave of my lady, and be ready. I impose a restraint on my own poor heart, and wound one yet more dear to me; but the patriot must subdue the husband."

Having said this in a melancholy but firm accent, he left the dressing apartment.

"I am glad thou art gone," thought Varney, "or, practised as I am in the follies of mankind, I had laughed in the very face of thee! Thou mayest tire as thou wilt of thy new bauble, thy pretty piece of painted Eve's flesh there, I will not be thy hindrance. But of thine old bauble, ambition, thou shalt not tire; for as you climb the hill, my lord, you must drag Richard Varney up with you, and if he can urge you to the ascent he means to profit by, believe me he will spare neither whip nor spur, and for you, my pretty lady, that would be Countess outright, you were best not thwart my courses, lest you are called to an old reckoning on a new score. 'Thou shalt be master,' did he say? By my faith, he may find that he spoke truer than he is aware of; and thus he who, in the estimation of so many wise-judging men, can match Burleigh and Walsingham in policy, and Sussex in war, becomes pupil to his own menial—and all for a hazel eye and a little cunning red and white, and so falls ambition. And yet if the charms of mortal woman could excuse a man's politic pate for becoming bewildered, my lord had the excuse at his right hand on this blessed evening that has last passed over us. Well—let things roll as they may, he shall make me great, or I will make myself happy; and for that softer piece of creation, if she speak not out her interview with Tressilian, as well I think she dare not, she also must traffic with me for concealment and mutual support, in spite of all this scorn. I must to the stables. Well, my lord, I order your retinue now; the time may soon come that my master of the horse shall order mine own. What was Thomas Cromwell but a smith's son? and he died my lord—on a scaffold, doubtless, but that, too, was in character. And what was Ralph Sadler but the clerk of Cromwell? and he has gazed eighteen fair lordships—VIA! I know my steerage as well as they."

So saying, he left the apartment.

In the meanwhile the Earl had re-entered the bedchamber, bent on taking a hasty farewell of the lovely Countess, and scarce daring to trust himself in private with her, to hear requests again urged which he found it difficult to parry, yet which his recent conversation with his master of horse had determined him not to grant.

He found her in a white cymar of silk lined with furs, her little feet unstockinged and hastily thrust into slippers; her unbraided hair escaping from under her midnight coif, with little array but her own loveliness, rather augmented than diminished by the grief which she felt at the approaching moment of separation.

"Now, God be with thee, my dearest and loveliest!" said the Earl, scarce tearing himself from her embrace, yet again returning to fold her again and again in his arms, and again bidding farewell, and again returning to kiss and bid adieu once more. "The sun is on the verge of the blue horizon—I dare not stay. Ere this I should have been ten miles from hence."

Such were the words with which at length he strove to cut short their parting interview. "You will not grant my request, then?" said the Countess. "Ah, false knight! did ever lady, with bare foot in slipper, seek boon of a brave knight, yet return with denial?"

"Anything, Amy, anything thou canst ask I will grant," answered the Earl—"always excepting," he said, "that which might ruin us both."

"Nay," said the Countess, "I urge not my wish to be acknowledged in the character which would make me the envy of England—as the wife, that is, of my brave and noble lord, the first as the most fondly beloved of English nobles. Let me but share the secret with my dear father! Let me but end his misery on my unworthy account—they say he is ill, the good old kind-hearted man!"

"They say?" asked the Earl hastily; "who says? Did not Varney convey to Sir Hugh all we dare at present tell him concerning your happiness and welfare? and has he not told you that the good old knight was following, with good heart and health, his favourite and wonted exercise. Who has dared put other thoughts into your head?"

"Oh, no one, my lord, no one," said the Countess, something alarmed at the tone, in which the question was put; "but yet, my lord, I would fain be assured by mine own eyesight that my father is well."

"Be contented, Amy; thou canst not now have communication with thy father or his house. Were it not a deep course of policy to commit no secret unnecessarily to the custody of more than must needs be, it were sufficient reason for secrecy that yonder Cornish man, yonder Trevanion, or Tressilian, or whatever his name is, haunts the old knight's house, and must necessarily know whatever is communicated there."

"My lord," answered the Countess, "I do not think it so. My father has been long noted a worthy and honourable man; and for Tressilian, if we can pardon ourselves the ill we have wrought him, I will wager the coronet I am to share with you one day that he is incapable of returning injury for injury."

"I will not trust him, however, Amy," said her husband—"by my honour, I will not trust him, I would rather the foul fiend intermingle in our secret than this Tressilian!"

"And why, my lord?" said the Countess, though she shuddered slightly at the tone of determination in which he spoke; "let me but know why you think thus hardly of Tressilian?"

"Madam," replied the Earl, "my will ought to be a sufficient reason. If you desire more, consider how this Tressilian is leagued, and with whom. He stands high in the opinion of this Radcliffe, this Sussex, against whom I am barely able to maintain my ground in the opinion of our suspicious mistress; and if he had me at such advantage, Amy, as to become acquainted with the tale of our marriage, before Elizabeth were fitly prepared, I were an outcast from her grace for ever—a bankrupt at once in favour and in fortune, perhaps, for she hath in her a touch of her father Henry—a victim, and it may be a bloody one, to her offended and jealous resentment."

"But why, my lord," again urged his lady, "should you deem thus injuriously of a man of whom you know so little? What you do know of Tressilian is through me, and it is I who assure you that in no circumstances will he betray your secret. If I did him wrong in your behalf, my lord, I am now the more concerned you should do him justice. You are offended at my speaking of him, what would you say had I actually myself seen him?"

"If you had," replied the Earl, "you would do well to keep that interview as secret as that which is spoken in a confessional. I seek no one's ruin; but he who thrusts himself on my secret privacy were better look well to his future walk. The bear [The Leicester cognizance was the ancient device adopted by his father, when Earl of Warwick, the bear and ragged staff.] brooks no one to cross his awful path."

"Awful, indeed!" said the Countess, turning very pale.

"You are ill, my love," said the Earl, supporting her in his arms. "Stretch yourself on your couch again; it is but an early day for you to leave it. Have you aught else, involving less than my fame, my fortune, and my life, to ask of me?"

"Nothing, my lord and love," answered the Countess faintly; "something there was that I would have told you, but your anger has driven it from my recollection."

"Reserve it till our next meeting, my love," said the Earl fondly, and again embracing her; "and barring only those requests which I cannot and dare not grant, thy wish must be more than England and all its dependencies can fulfil, if it is not gratified to the letter."

Thus saying, he at length took farewell. At the bottom of the staircase he received from Varney an ample livery cloak and slouched hat, in which he wrapped himself so as to disguise his person and completely conceal his features. Horses were ready in the courtyard for himself and Varney; for one or two of his train, intrusted with the secret so far as to know or guess that the Earl intrigued with a beautiful lady at that mansion, though her name and quality were unknown to them, had already been dismissed over-night.

Anthony Foster himself had in hand the rein of the Earl's palfrey, a stout and able nag for the road; while his old serving-man held the bridle of the more showy and gallant steed which Richard Varney was to occupy in the character of master.

As the Earl approached, however, Varney advanced to hold his master's bridle, and to prevent Foster from paying that duty to the Earl which he probably considered as belonging to his own office. Foster scowled at an interference which seemed intended to prevent his paying his court to his patron, but gave place to Varney; and the Earl, mounting without further observation, and forgetting that his assumed character of a domestic threw him into the rear of his supposed master, rode pensively out of the quadrangle, not without waving his hand repeatedly in answer to the signals which were made by the Countess with her kerchief from the windows of her apartment.

While his stately form vanished under the dark archway which led out of the quadrangle, Varney muttered, "There goes fine policy—the servant before the master!" then as he disappeared, seized the moment to speak a word with Foster. "Thou look'st dark on me, Anthony," he said, "as if I had deprived thee of a parting nod of my lord; but I have moved him to leave thee a better remembrance for thy faithful service. See here! a purse of as good gold as ever chinked under a miser's thumb and fore-finger. Ay, count them, lad," said he, as Foster received the gold with a grim smile, "and add to them the goodly remembrance he gave last night to Janet."

"How's this? how's this?" said Anthony Foster hastily; "gave he gold to Janet?"

"Ay, man, wherefore not?—does not her service to his fair lady require guerdon?"

"She shall have none on't," said Foster; "she shall return it. I know his dotage on one face is as brief as it is deep. His affections are as fickle as the moon."

"Why, Foster, thou art mad—thou dost not hope for such good fortune as that my lord should cast an eye on Janet? Who, in the fiend's name, would listen to the thrush while the nightingale is singing?"

"Thrush or nightingale, all is one to the fowler; and, Master Varney, you can sound the quail-pipe most daintily to wile wantons into his nets. I desire no such devil's preferment for Janet as you have brought many a poor maiden to. Dost thou laugh? I will keep one limb of my family, at least, from Satan's clutches, that thou mayest rely on. She shall restore the gold."

"Ay, or give it to thy keeping, Tony, which will serve as well," answered Varney; "but I have that to say which is more serious. Our lord is returning to court in an evil humour for us."

"How meanest thou?" said Foster. "Is he tired already of his pretty toy—his plaything yonder? He has purchased her at a monarch's ransom, and I warrant me he rues his bargain."

"Not a whit, Tony," answered the master of the horse; "he dotes on her, and will forsake the court for her. Then down go hopes, possessions, and safety—church-lands are resumed, Tony, and well if the holders be not called to account in Exchequer."

"That were ruin," said Foster, his brow darkening with apprehensions; "and all this for a woman! Had it been for his soul's sake, it were something; and I sometimes wish I myself could fling away the world that cleaves to me, and be as one of the poorest of our church."

"Thou art like enough to be so, Tony," answered Varney; "but I think the devil will give thee little credit for thy compelled poverty, and so thou lovest on all hands. But follow my counsel, and Cumnor Place shall be thy copyhold yet. Say nothing of this Tressilian's visit—not a word until I give thee notice."

"And wherefore, I pray you?" asked Foster, suspiciously.

"Dull beast!" replied Varney. "In my lord's present humour it were the ready way to confirm him in his resolution of retirement, should he know that his lady was haunted with such a spectre in his absence. He would be for playing the dragon himself over his golden fruit, and then, Tony, thy occupation is ended. A word to the wise. Farewell! I must follow him."

He turned his horse, struck him with the spurs, and rode off under the archway in pursuit of his lord.

"Would thy occupation were ended, or thy neck broken, damned pander!" said Anthony Foster. "But I must follow his beck, for his interest and mine are the same, and he can wind the proud Earl to his will. Janet shall give me those pieces though; they shall be laid out in some way for God's service, and I will keep them

separate in my strong chest, till I can fall upon a fitting employment for them. No contagious vapour shall breathe on Janet—she shall remain pure as a blessed spirit, were it but to pray God for her father. I need her prayers, for I am at a hard pass. Strange reports are abroad concerning my way of life. The congregation look cold on me, and when Master Holdforth spoke of hypocrites being like a whited sepulchre, which within was full of dead men's bones, methought he looked full at me. The Romish was a comfortable faith; Lambourne spoke true in that. A man had but to follow his thrift by such ways as offered—tell his beads, hear a mass, confess, and be absolved. These Puritans tread a harder and a rougher path; but I will try—I will read my Bible for an hour ere I again open mine iron chest."

Varney, meantime, spurred after his lord, whom he found waiting for him at the postern gate of the park.

"You waste time, Varney," said the Earl, "and it presses. I must be at Woodstock before I can safely lay aside my disguise, and till then I journey in some peril."

"It is but two hours' brisk riding, my lord," said Varney. "For me, I only stopped to enforce your commands of care and secrecy on yonder Foster, and to inquire about the abode of the gentleman whom I would promote to your lordship's train, in the room of Trevors."

"Is he fit for the meridian of the antechamber, think'st thou?" said the Earl.

"He promises well, my lord," replied Varney; "but if your lordship were pleased to ride on, I could go back to Cumnor, and bring him to your lordship at Woodstock before you are out of bed."

"Why, I am asleep there, thou knowest, at this moment," said the Earl; "and I pray you not to spare horse-flesh, that you may be with me at my levee."

So saying, he gave his horse the spur, and proceeded on his journey, while Varney rode back to Cumnor by the public road, avoiding the park. The latter alighted at the door of the bonny Black Bear, and desired to speak with Master Michael Lambourne, That respectable character was not long of appearing before his new patron, but it was with downcast looks.

"Thou hast lost the scent," said Varney, "of thy comrade Tressilian. I know it by thy hang-dog visage. Is this thy alacrity, thou impudent knave?"

"Cogswounds!" said Lambourne, "there was never a trail so finely hunted. I saw him to earth at mine uncle's here—stuck to him like bees'-wax—saw him at supper—watched him to his chamber, and, presto! he is gone next morning, the very hostler knows not where."

"This sounds like practice upon me, sir," replied Varney; "and if it proves so, by my soul you shall repent it!"

"Sir, the best hound will be sometimes at fault," answered Lambourne; "how should it serve me that this fellow should have thus vanished? You may ask mine host, Giles Gosling—ask the tapster and hostler—ask Cicely, and the whole household, how I kept eyes on Tressilian while he was on foot. On my soul, I could not be expected to watch him like a sick nurse, when I had seen him fairly a-bed in his chamber. That will be allowed me, surely."

Varney did, in fact, make some inquiry among the household, which confirmed the truth of Lambourne's statement. Tressilian, it was unanimously agreed, had departed suddenly and unexpectedly, betwixt night and morning.

"But I will wrong no one," said mine host; "he left on the table in his lodging the full value of his reckoning, with some allowance to the servants of the house, which was the less necessary that he saddled his own gelding, as it seems, without the hostler's assistance."

Thus satisfied of the rectitude of Lambourne's conduct, Varney began to talk to him upon his future prospects, and the mode in which he meant to bestow himself, intimating that he understood from Foster he was not disinclined to enter into the household of a nobleman.

"Have you," said he, "ever been at court?"

"No," replied Lambourne; "but ever since I was ten years old, I have dreamt once a week that I was there, and made my fortune."

"It may be your own fault if your dream comes not true," said Varney. "Are you needy?"

"Um!" replied Lambourne; "I love pleasure."

"That is a sufficient answer, and an honest one," said Varney. "Know you ought of the requisites expected from the retainer of a rising courtier?"

"I have imagined them to myself, sir," answered Lambourne; "as, for example, a quick eye, a close mouth, a ready and bold hand, a sharp wit, and a blunt conscience."

"And thine, I suppose," said Varney, "has had its edge blunted long since?"

"I cannot remember, sir, that its edge was ever over-keen," replied Lambourne. "When I was a youth, I had some few whimsies; but I rubbed them partly out of my recollection on the rough grindstone of the wars, and what remained I washed out in the broad waves of the Atlantic."

"Thou hast served, then, in the Indies?"

"In both East and West," answered the candidate for court service, "by both sea and land. I have served both the Portugal and the Spaniard, both the Dutchman and the Frenchman, and have made war on our own account with a crew of jolly fellows, who held there was no peace beyond the Line." [Sir Francis Drake, Morgan, and many a bold buccaneer of those days, were, in fact, little better than pirates.]

"Thou mayest do me, and my lord, and thyself, good service," said Varney, after a pause. "But observe, I know the world—and answer me truly, canst thou be faithful?"

"Did you not know the world," answered Lambourne, "it were my duty to say ay, without further circumstance, and to swear to it with life and honour, and so forth. But as it seems to me that your worship is one who desires rather honest truth than politic falsehood, I reply to you, that I can be faithful to the gallows' foot, ay, to the loop that dangles from it, if I am well used and well recompensed—not otherwise."

"To thy other virtues thou canst add, no doubt," said Varney, in a jeering tone, "the knack of seeming serious and religious, when the moment demands it?"

"It would cost me nothing," said Lambourne, "to say yes; but, to speak on the square, I must needs say no. If you want a hypocrite, you may take Anthony Foster, who, from his childhood, had some sort of phantom haunting him, which he called religion, though it was that sort of godliness which always ended in being great gain. But I have no such knack of it."

"Well," replied Varney, "if thou hast no hypocrisy, hast thou not a nag here in the stable?"

"Ay, sir," said Lambourne, "that shall take hedge and ditch with my Lord Duke's best hunters. Then I made a little mistake on Shooter's Hill, and stopped an ancient grazier whose pouches were better lined than his brain-pan, the bonny bay nag carried me sheer off in spite of the whole hue and cry."

"Saddle him then instantly, and attend me," said Varney. "Leave thy clothes and baggage under charge of mine host; and I will conduct thee to a service, in which, if thou do not better thyself, the fault shall not be fortune's, but thine own."

"Brave and hearty!" said Lambourne, "and I am mounted in an instant.—Knaves, hostler, saddle my nag without the loss of one second, as thou dost value the safety of thy noddle.—Pretty Cicely, take half this purse to comfort thee for my sudden departure."

"Gogsnouns!" replied the father, "Cicely wants no such token from thee. Go away, Mike, and gather grace if thou canst, though I think thou goest not to the land where it grows."

"Let me look at this Cicely of thine, mine host," said Varney; "I have heard much talk of her beauty."

"It is a sunburnt beauty," said mine host, "well qualified to stand out rain and wind, but little calculated to please such critical gallants as yourself. She keeps her chamber, and cannot encounter the glance of such sunny-day courtiers as my noble guest."

"Well, peace be with her, my good host," answered Varney; "our horses are impatient—we bid you good day."

"Does my nephew go with you, so please you?" said Gosling.

"Ay, such is his purpose," answered Richard Varney.

"You are right—fully right," replied mine host—"you are, I say, fully right, my kinsman. Thou hast got a gay horse; see thou light not unaware upon a halter—or, if thou wilt needs be made immortal by means of a rope, which thy purpose of following this gentleman renders not unlikely, I charge thee to find a gallows as far from Cumnor as thou conveniently mayest. And so I commend you to your saddle."

The master of the horse and his new retainer mounted accordingly, leaving the landlord to conclude his ill-omened farewell, to himself and at leisure; and set off together at a rapid pace, which prevented conversation until the ascent of a steep sandy hill permitted them to resume it.

"You are contented, then," said Varney to his companion, "to take court service?"

"Ay, worshipful sir, if you like my terms as well as I like yours."

"And what are your terms?" demanded Varney.

"If I am to have a quick eye for my patron's interest, he must have a dull one towards my faults," said Lambourne.

"Ay," said Varney, "so they lie not so grossly open that he must needs break his shins over them."

"Agreed," said Lambourne. "Next, if I run down game, I must have the picking of the bones."

"That is but reason," replied Varney, "so that your betters are served before you."

"Good," said Lambourne; "and it only remains to be said, that if the law and I quarrel, my patron must bear me out, for that is a chief point."

"Reason again," said Varney, "if the quarrel hath happened in your master's service."

"For the wage and so forth, I say nothing," proceeded Lambourne; "it is the secret guerdon that I must live by."

"Never fear," said Varney; "thou shalt have clothes and spending money to ruffle it with the best of thy degree, for thou goest to a household where you have gold, as they say, by the eye."

"That jumps all with my humour," replied Michael Lambourne; "and it only remains that you tell me my master's name."

"My name is Master Richard Varney," answered his companion.

"But I mean," said Lambourne, "the name of the noble lord to whose service you are to prefer me."

"How, knave, art thou too good to call me master?" said Varney hastily; "I would have thee bold to others, but not saucy to me."

"I crave your worship's pardon," said Lambourne, "but you seemed familiar with Anthony Foster; now I am familiar with Anthony myself."

"Thou art a shrewd knave, I see," replied Varney. "Mark me—I do indeed propose to introduce thee into a nobleman's household; but it is upon my person thou wilt chiefly wait, and upon my countenance that thou wilt depend. I am his master of horse. Thou wilt soon know his name—it is one that shakes the council and wields the state."

"By this light, a brave spell to conjure with," said Lambourne, "if a man would discover hidden treasures!"

"Used with discretion, it may prove so," replied Varney; "but mark—if thou conjure with it at thine own hand, it may raise a devil who will tear thee in fragments."

"Enough said," replied Lambourne; "I will not exceed my limits."

The travellers then resumed the rapid rate of travelling which their discourse had interrupted, and soon arrived at the Royal Park of Woodstock. This ancient possession of the crown of England was then very different from what it had been when it was the residence of the fair Rosamond, and the scene of Henry the Second's secret and illicit amours; and yet more unlike to the scene which it exhibits in the present day, when Blenheim House commemorates the victory of Marlborough, and no less the genius of Vanbrugh, though decried in his own time by persons of taste far inferior to his own. It was, in Elizabeth's time, an ancient mansion in bad repair, which had long ceased to be honoured with the royal residence, to the great impoverishment of the adjacent village. The inhabitants, however, had made several petitions to the Queen to have the favour of the sovereign's countenance occasionally bestowed upon them; and upon this very business, ostensibly at least, was the noble lord, whom we have already introduced to our readers, a visitor at Woodstock.

Varney and Lambourne galloped without ceremony into the courtyard of the ancient and dilapidated mansion, which presented on that morning a scene of bustle which it had not exhibited for two reigns. Officers of the Earl's household, liverymen and retainers, went and came with all the insolent fracas which attaches to their profession. The neigh of horses and the baying of hounds were heard; for my lord, in his occupation of inspecting and surveying the manor and demesne, was of course provided with the means of following his pleasure in the chase or park, said to have been the earliest that was enclosed in England, and which was well stocked with deer that had long roamed there unmolested. Several of the inhabitants of the village, in anxious hope of a favourable result from this unwonted visit, loitered about the courtyard, and awaited the great man's coming forth. Their attention was excited by the hasty arrival of Varney, and a murmur ran amongst them, "The Earl's master of the horse!" while they hurried to bespeak favour by hastily unbonneting, and proffering to hold the bridle and stirrup of the favoured retainer and his attendant.

"Stand somewhat aloof, my masters!" said Varney haughtily, "and let the domestics do their office."

The mortified citizens and peasants fell back at the signal; while Lambourne, who had his eye upon his superior's deportment, repelled the services of those who offered to assist him, with yet more discourtesy—"Stand back, Jack peasant, with a murrain to you, and let these knave footmen do their duty!"

While they gave their nags to the attendants of the household, and walked into the mansion with an air of superiority which long practice and consciousness of birth rendered natural to Varney, and which Lambourne endeavoured to imitate as well as he could, the poor inhabitants of Woodstock whispered to each other, "Well-a-day! God save us from all such misproud princexes! An the master be like the men, why, the fiend may take all, and yet have no more than his due."

"Silence, good neighbours!" said the bailiff, "keep tongue betwixt teeth; we shall know more by-and-by. But never will a lord come to Woodstock so welcome as bluff old King Harry! He would horsewhip a fellow one day with his own royal hand, and then fling him an handful of silver groats, with his own broad face on them, to 'noint the sore withal.'"

"Ay, rest be with him!" echoed the auditors; "it will be long ere this Lady Elizabeth horsewhip any of us."

"There is no saying," answered the bailiff. "Meanwhile, patience, good neighbours, and let us comfort ourselves by thinking that we deserve such notice at her Grace's hands."

Meanwhile, Varney, closely followed by his new dependant, made his way to the hall, where men of more note and consequence than those left in the courtyard awaited the appearance of the Earl, who as yet kept his chamber. All paid court to Varney, with more or less deference, as suited their own rank, or the urgency of the business which brought them to his lord's levee. To the general question of, "When comes my lord forth, Master Varney?" he gave brief answers, as, "See you not my boots? I am but just returned from Oxford, and know nothing of it," and the like, until the same query was put in a higher tone by a personage of more importance. "I will inquire of the chamberlain, Sir Thomas Copely," was the reply. The chamberlain, distinguished by his silver key, answered that the Earl only awaited Master Varney's return to come down, but that he would first speak with him in his private chamber. Varney, therefore, bowed to the company, and took leave, to enter his lord's apartment.

There was a murmur of expectation which lasted a few minutes, and was at length hushed by the opening of the folding-doors at the upper end or the apartment, through which the Earl made his entrance, marshalled by his chamberlain and the steward of his family, and followed by Richard Varney. In his noble mien and princely features, men read nothing of that insolence which was practised by his dependants. His courtesies were, indeed, measured by the rank of those to whom they were addressed, but even the meanest person present had a share of his gracious notice. The inquiries which he made respecting the condition of the manor, of the Queen's rights there, and of the advantages and disadvantages which might attend her occasional residence at the royal seat of Woodstock, seemed to show that he had most earnestly investigated the matter of the petition of the inhabitants, and with a desire to forward the interest of the place.

"Now the Lord love his noble countenance!" said the bailiff, who had thrust himself into the presence-chamber; "he looks somewhat pale. I warrant him he hath spent the whole night in perusing our memorial. Master Toughyarn, who took six months to draw it up, said it would take a week to understand it; and see if the Earl hath not knocked the marrow out of it in twenty-four hours!"

The Earl then acquainted them that he should move their sovereign to honour Woodstock occasionally with her residence during her royal progresses, that the town and its vicinity might derive, from her countenance and favour, the same advantages as from those of her predecessors. Meanwhile, he rejoiced to be the expounder of her gracious pleasure, in assuring them that, for the increase of trade and encouragement of the worthy burgesses of Woodstock, her Majesty was minded to erect the town into a Staple for wool.

This joyful intelligence was received with the acclamations not only of the better sort who were admitted to the audience-chamber, but of the commons who awaited without.

The freedom of the corporation was presented to the Earl upon knee by the magistrates of the place, together with a purse of gold pieces, which the Earl handed to Varney, who, on his part, gave a share to Lambourne, as the most acceptable earnest of his new service.

The Earl and his retinue took horse soon after to return to court, accompanied by the shouts of the inhabitants of Woodstock, who made the old oaks ring with re-echoing, "Long live Queen Elizabeth, and the noble Earl of Leicester!" The urbanity and courtesy of the Earl even threw a gleam of popularity over his attendants, as their haughty deportment had formerly obscured that of their master; and men shouted, "Long life to the Earl, and to his gallant followers!" as Varney and Lambourne, each in his rank, rode proudly through the streets of Woodstock.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOST. I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will, at the least, keep your counsel.—MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

It becomes necessary to return to the detail of those circumstances which accompanied, and indeed occasioned, the sudden disappearance of Tressilian from the sign of the Black Bear at Cumnor. It will be recollected that this gentleman, after his rencounter with Varney, had returned to Giles Gosling's caravansary, where he shut himself up in his own chamber, demanded pen, ink, and paper, and announced his purpose to remain private for the day. In the evening he appeared again in the public room, where Michael Lambourne, who had been on the watch for him, agreeably to his engagement to Varney, endeavoured to renew his acquaintance with him, and hoped he retained no unfriendly recollection of the part he had taken in the morning's scuffle.

But Tressilian repelled his advances firmly, though with civility. "Master Lambourne," said he, "I trust I have recompensed to your pleasure the time you have wasted on me. Under the show of wild bluntness which you exhibit, I know you have sense enough to understand me, when I say frankly that the object of our temporary acquaintance having been accomplished, we must be strangers to each other in future."

"VOTO!" said Lambourne, twirling his whiskers with one hand, and grasping the hilt of his weapon with the other; "if I thought that this usage was meant to insult me—"

"You would bear it with discretion, doubtless," interrupted Tressilian, "as you must do at any rate. You know too well the distance that is betwixt us, to require me to explain myself further. Good evening."

So saying, he turned his back upon his former companion, and entered into discourse with the landlord. Michael Lambourne felt strongly disposed to bully; but his wrath died away in a few incoherent oaths and ejaculations, and he sank unresistingly under the ascendancy which superior spirits possess over persons of his habits and description. He remained moody and silent in a corner of the apartment, paying the most marked attention to every motion of his late companion, against whom he began now to nourish a quarrel on his own account, which he trusted to avenge by the execution of his new master Varney's directions. The hour of supper arrived, and was followed by that of repose, when Tressilian, like others, retired to his sleeping apartment.

He had not been in bed long, when the train of sad reveries, which supplied the place of rest in his disturbed mind, was suddenly interrupted by the jar of a door on its hinges, and a light was seen to glimmer in the apartment. Tressilian, who was as brave as steel, sprang from his bed at this alarm, and had laid hand upon his sword, when he was prevented from drawing it by a voice which said, "Be not too rash with your rapier, Master Tressilian. It is I, your host, Giles Gosling."

At the same time, unshrouding the dark lantern, which had hitherto only emitted an indistinct glimmer, the goodly aspect and figure of the landlord of the Black Bear was visibly presented to his astonished guest.

"What mummery is this, mine host?" said Tressilian. "Have you supped as jollily as last night, and so mistaken your chamber? or is midnight a time for masquerading it in your guest's lodging?"

"Master Tressilian," replied mine host, "I know my place and my time as well as e'er a merry landlord in England. But here has been my hang-dog kinsman watching you as close as ever cat watched a mouse; and here have you, on the other hand, quarrelled and fought, either with him or with some other person, and I fear that danger will come of it."

"Go to, thou art but a fool, man," said Tressilian. "Thy kinsman is beneath my resentment; and besides, why shouldst thou think I had quarrelled with any one whomsoever?"

"Oh, sir," replied the innkeeper, "there was a red spot on thy very cheek-bone, which boded of a late brawl, as sure as the conjunction of Mars and Saturn threatens misfortune; and when you returned, the buckles of your girdle were brought forward, and your step was quick and hasty, and all things showed your hand and your hilt had been lately acquainted."

"Well, good mine host, if I have been obliged to draw my sword," said Tressilian, "why should such a circumstance fetch thee out of thy warm bed at this time of night? Thou seest the mischief is all over."

"Under favour, that is what I doubt. Anthony Foster is a dangerous man, defended by strong court patronage, which hath borne him out in matters of very deep concernment. And, then, my kinsman—why, I have told you what he is; and if these two old cronies have made up their old acquaintance, I would not, my worshipful guest, that it should be at thy cost. I promise you, Mike Lambourne has been making very particular inquiries at my hostler when and which way you ride. Now, I would have you think whether you may not have done or said something for which you may be waylaid, and taken at disadvantage."

"Thou art an honest man, mine host," said Tressilian, after a moment's consideration, "and I will deal frankly with thee. If these men's malice is directed against me—as I deny not but it may—it is because they are the agents of a more powerful villain than themselves."

"You mean Master Richard Varney, do you not?" said the landlord; "he was at Cumnor Place yesterday, and came not thither so private but what he was espied by one who told me."

"I mean the same, mine host."

"Then, for God's sake, worshipful Master Tressilian," said honest Gosling, "look well to yourself. This Varney is the protector and patron of Anthony Foster, who holds under him, and by his favour, some lease of yonder mansion and the park. Varney got a large grant of the lands of the Abbey of Abingdon, and Cumnor Place amongst others, from his master, the Earl of Leicester. Men say he can do everything with him, though I hold the Earl too good a nobleman to employ him as some men talk of. And then the Earl can do anything (that is, anything right or fitting) with the Queen, God bless her! So you see what an enemy you have made to yourself."

"Well—it is done, and I cannot help it," answered Tressilian.

"Uds precious, but it must be helped in some manner," said the host. "Richard Varney—why, what between his influence with my lord, and his pretending to so many old and vexatious claims in right of the abbot here, men fear almost to mention his name, much more to set themselves against his practices. You may judge by our discourses the last night. Men said their pleasure of Tony Foster, but not a word of Richard Varney, though all men judge him to be at the bottom of yonder mystery about the pretty wench. But perhaps you know more of that matter than I do; for women, though they wear not swords, are occasion for many a blade's exchanging a sheath of neat's leather for one of flesh and blood."

"I do indeed know more of that poor unfortunate lady than thou dost, my friendly host; and so bankrupt am I, at this moment, of friends and advice, that I will willingly make a counsellor of thee, and tell thee the whole history, the rather that I have a favour to ask when my tale is ended."

"Good Master Tressilian," said the landlord, "I am but a poor innkeeper, little able to adjust or counsel such a guest as yourself. But as sure as I have risen decently above the world, by giving good measure and reasonable charges, I am an honest man; and as such, if I may not be able to assist you, I am, at least, not

capable to abuse your confidence. Say away therefore, as confidently as if you spoke to your father; and thus far at least be certain, that my curiosity—for I will not deny that which belongs to my calling—is joined to a reasonable degree of discretion."

"I doubt it not, mine host," answered Tressilian; and while his auditor remained in anxious expectation, he meditated for an instant how he should commence his narrative. "My tale," he at length said, "to be quite intelligible, must begin at some distance back. You have heard of the battle of Stoke, my good host, and perhaps of old Sir Roger Robsart, who, in that battle, valiantly took part with Henry VII., the Queen's grandfather, and routed the Earl of Lincoln, Lord Geraldin and his wild Irish, and the Flemings whom the Duchess of Burgundy had sent over, in the quarrel of Lambert Simnel?"

"I remember both one and the other," said Giles Gosling; "it is sung of a dozen times a week on my ale-bench below. Sir Roger Robsart of Devon—oh, ay, 'tis him of whom minstrels sing to this hour,—

*'He was the flower of Stoke's red field,
When Martin Swart on ground lay slain;
In raging rout he never reel'd,
But like a rock did firm remain.'*

[This verse, or something similar, occurs in a long ballad, or poem, on Flodden Field, reprinted by the late Henry Weber.]

"Ay, and then there was Martin Swart I have heard my grandfather talk of, and of the jolly Almaines whom he commanded, with their slashed doublets and quaint hose, all frounced with ribands above the nether-stocks. Here's a song goes of Martin Swart, too, an I had but memory for it:—

*'Martin Swart and his men,
Saddle them, saddle them,
Martin Swart and his men;
Saddle them well.'*

[This verse of an old song actually occurs in an old play where the singer boasts,

*"Courteously I can both counter and knock
Of Martin Swart and all his merry men."]*

"True, good mine host—the day was long talked of; but if you sing so loud, you will awake more listeners than I care to commit my confidence unto."

"I crave pardon, my worshipful guest," said mine host, "I was oblivious. When an old song comes across us merry old knights of the spigot, it runs away with our discretion."

"Well, mine host, my grandfather, like some other Cornishmen, kept a warm affection to the House of York, and espoused the quarrel of this Simnel, assuming the title of Earl of Warwick, as the county afterwards, in great numbers, countenanced the cause of Perkin Warbeck, calling himself the Duke of York. My grandsire joined Simnel's standard, and was taken fighting desperately at Stoke, where most of the leaders of that unhappy army were slain in their harness. The good knight to whom he rendered himself, Sir Roger Robsart, protected him from the immediate vengeance of the king, and dismissed him without ransom. But he was unable to guard him from other penalties of his rashness, being the heavy fines by which he was impoverished, according to Henry's mode of weakening his enemies. The good knight did what he might to mitigate the distresses of my ancestor; and their friendship became so strict, that my father was bred up as the sworn brother and intimate of the present Sir Hugh Robsart, the only son of Sir Roger, and the heir of his honest, and generous, and hospitable temper, though not equal to him in martial achievements."

"I have heard of good Sir Hugh Robsart," interrupted the host, "many a time and oft; his huntsman and sworn servant, Will Badger, hath spoken of him an hundred times in this very house. A jovial knight he is, and hath loved hospitality and open housekeeping more than the present fashion, which lays as much gold lace on the seams of a doublet as would feed a dozen of tall fellows with beef and ale for a twelvemonth, and let them have their evening at the alehouse once a week, to do good to the publican."

"If you have seen Will Badger, mine host," said Tressilian, "you have heard enough of Sir Hugh Robsart; and therefore I will but say, that the hospitality you boast of hath proved somewhat detrimental to the estate of his family, which is perhaps of the less consequence, as he has but one daughter to whom to bequeath it. And here begins my share in the tale. Upon my father's death, now several years since, the good Sir Hugh would willingly have made me his constant companion. There was a time, however, at which I felt the kind knight's excessive love for field-sports detained me from studies, by which I might have profited more; but I ceased to regret the leisure which gratitude and hereditary friendship compelled me to bestow on these rural avocations. The exquisite beauty of Mistress Amy Robsart, as she grew up from childhood to woman, could not escape one whom circumstances obliged to be so constantly in her company—I loved her, in short, mine host, and her father saw it."

"And crossed your true loves, no doubt?" said mine host. "It is the way in all such cases; and I judge it must have been so in your instance, from the heavy sigh you uttered even now."

"The case was different, mine host. My suit was highly approved by the generous Sir Hugh Robsart; it was his daughter who was cold to my passion."

"She was the more dangerous enemy of the two," said the innkeeper. "I fear me your suit proved a cold one."

"She yielded me her esteem," said Tressilian, "and seemed not unwilling that I should hope it might ripen into a warmer passion. There was a contract of future marriage executed betwixt us, upon her father's intercession; but to comply with her anxious request, the execution was deferred for a twelvemonth. During this period, Richard Varney appeared in the country, and, availing himself of some distant family connection with Sir Hugh Robsart, spent much of his time in his company, until, at length, he almost lived in the family."

"That could bode no good to the place he honoured with his residence," said Gosling.

"No, by the rood!" replied Tressilian. "Misunderstanding and misery followed his presence, yet so strangely that I am at this moment at a loss to trace the gradations of their encroachment upon a family which had, till then, been so happy. For a time Amy Robsart received the attentions of this man Varney with the indifference attached to common courtesies; then followed a period in which she seemed to regard him with dislike, and even with disgust; and then an extraordinary species of connection appeared to grow up betwixt them. Varney dropped those airs of pretension and gallantry which had marked his former approaches; and Amy, on the other hand, seemed to renounce the ill-disguised disgust with which she had regarded them. They seemed to have more of privacy and confidence together than I fully liked, and I suspected that they met in private, where there was less restraint than in our presence. Many circumstances, which I noticed but little at the time—for I deemed her heart as open as her angelic countenance—have since arisen on my memory, to convince me of their private understanding. But I need not detail them—the fact speaks for itself. She vanished from her father's house; Varney disappeared at the same time; and this very day I have seen her in the character of his paramour, living in the house of his sordid dependant Foster, and visited by him, muffled, and by a secret entrance."

"And this, then, is the cause of your quarrel? Methinks, you should have been sure that the fair lady either desired or deserved your interference."

"Mine host," answered Tressilian, "my father—such I must ever consider Sir Hugh Robsart—sits at home struggling with his grief, or, if so far recovered, vainly attempting to drown, in the practice of his field-sports, the recollection that he had once a daughter—a recollection which ever and anon breaks from him under circumstances the most pathetic. I could not brook the idea that he should live in misery, and Amy in guilt; and I endeavoured to seek her out, with the hope of

inducing her to return to her family. I have found her, and when I have either succeeded in my attempt, or have found it altogether unavailing, it is my purpose to embark for the Virginia voyage."

"Be not so rash, good sir," replied Giles Gosling, "and cast not yourself away because a woman—to be brief—*IS* a woman, and changes her lovers like her suit of ribands, with no better reason than mere fantasy. And ere we probe this matter further, let me ask you what circumstances of suspicion directed you so truly to this lady's residence, or rather to her place of concealment?"

"The last is the better chosen word, mine host," answered Tressilian; "and touching your question, the knowledge that Varney held large grants of the demesnes formerly belonging to the monks of Abingdon directed me to this neighbourhood; and your nephew's visit to his old comrade Foster gave me the means of conviction on the subject."

"And what is now your purpose, worthy sir?—excuse my freedom in asking the question so broadly."

"I purpose, mine host," said Tressilian, "to renew my visit to the place of her residence to-morrow, and to seek a more detailed communication with her than I have had to-day. She must indeed be widely changed from what she once was, if my words make no impression upon her."

"Under your favour, Master Tressilian," said the landlord, "you can follow no such course. The lady, if I understand you, has already rejected your interference in the matter."

"It is but too true," said Tressilian; "I cannot deny it."

"Then, marry, by what right or interest do you process a compulsory interference with her inclination, disgraceful as it may be to herself and to her parents? Unless my judgment gulls me, those under whose protection she has thrown herself would have small hesitation to reject your interference, even if it were that of a father or brother; but as a discarded lover, you expose yourself to be repelled with the strong hand, as well as with scorn. You can apply to no magistrate for aid or countenance; and you are hunting, therefore, a shadow in water, and will only (excuse my plainness) come by ducking and danger in attempting to catch it."

"I will appeal to the Earl of Leicester," said Tressilian, "against the infamy of his favourite. He courts the severe and strict sect of Puritans. He dare not, for the sake of his own character, refuse my appeal, even although he were destitute of the principles of honour and nobleness with which fame invests him. Or I will appeal to the Queen herself."

"Should Leicester," said the landlord, "be disposed to protect his dependant (as indeed he is said to be very confidential with Varney), the appeal to the Queen may bring them both to reason. Her Majesty is strict in such matters, and (if it be not treason to speak it) will rather, it is said, pardon a dozen courtiers for falling in love with herself, than one for giving preference to another woman. Coragio then, my brave guest! for if thou layest a petition from Sir Hugh at the foot of the throne, bucklered by the story of thine own wrongs, the favourite Earl dared as soon leap into the Thames at the fullest and deepest, as offer to protect Varney in a cause of this nature. But to do this with any chance of success, you must go formally to work; and, without staying here to tilt with the master of horse to a privy councillor, and expose yourself to the dagger of his cameradoes, you should hie you to Devonshire, get a petition drawn up for Sir Hugh Robsart, and make as many friends as you can to forward your interest at court."

"You have spoken well, mine host," said Tressilian, "and I will profit by your advice, and leave you to-morrow early."

"Nay, leave me to-night, sir, before to-morrow comes," said he landlord. "I never prayed for a guest's arrival more eagerly than I do to have you safely gone, My kinsman's destiny is most like to be hanged for something, but I would not that the cause were the murder of an honoured guest of mine. 'Better ride safe in the dark,' says the proverb, 'than in daylight with a cut-throat at your elbow.' Come, sir, I move you for your own safety. Your horse and all is ready, and here is your score."

"It is somewhat under a noble," said Tressilian, giving one to the host; "give the balance to pretty Cicely, your daughter, and the servants of the house."

"They shall taste of your bounty, sir," said Gosling, "and you should taste of my daughter's lips in grateful acknowledgment, but at this hour she cannot grace the porch to greet your departure."

"Do not trust your daughter too far with your guests, my good landlord," said Tressilian.

"Oh, sir, we will keep measure; but I wonder not that you are jealous of them all.—May I crave to know with what aspect the fair lady at the Place yesterday received you?"

"I own," said Tressilian, "it was angry as well as confused, and affords me little hope that she is yet awakened from her unhappy delusion."

"In that case, sir, I see not why you should play the champion of a wench that will none of you, and incur the resentment of a favourite's favourite, as dangerous a monster as ever a knight adventurer encountered in the old story books."

"You do me wrong in the supposition, mine host—gross wrong," said Tressilian; "I do not desire that Amy should ever turn thought upon me more. Let me but see her restored to her father, and all I have to do in Europe—perhaps in the world—is over and ended."

"A wiser resolution were to drink a cup of sack, and forget her," said the landlord. "But five-and-twenty and fifty look on those matters with different eyes, especially when one cast of peepers is set in the skull of a young gallant, and the other in that of an old publican. I pity you, Master Tressilian, but I see not how I can aid you in the matter."

"Only thus far, mine host," replied Tressilian—"keep a watch on the motions of those at the Place, which thou canst easily learn without suspicion, as all men's news fly to the ale-bench; and be pleased to communicate the tidings in writing to such person, and to no other, who shall bring you this ring as a special token. Look at it; it is of value, and I will freely bestow it on you."

"Nay, sir," said the landlord, "I desire no recompense—but it seems an unadvised course in me, being in a public line, to connect myself in a matter of this dark and perilous nature. I have no interest in it."

"You, and every father in the land, who would have his daughter released from the snares of shame, and sin, and misery, have an interest deeper than aught concerning earth only could create."

"Well, sir," said the host, "these are brave words; and I do pity from my soul the frank-hearted old gentleman, who has minished his estate in good housekeeping for the honour of his country, and now has his daughter, who should be the stay of his age, and so forth, whisked up by such a kite as this Varney. And though your part in the matter is somewhat of the wildest, yet I will e'en be a madcap for company, and help you in your honest attempt to get back the good man's child, so far as being your faithful intelligencer can serve. And as I shall be true to you, I pray you to be trusty to me, and keep my secret; for it were bad for the custom of the Black Bear should it be said the bear-warder interfered in such matters. Varney has interest enough with the justices to dismount my noble emblem from the post on which he swings so gallantly, to call in my license, and ruin me from garret to cellar."

"Do not doubt my secrecy, mine host," said Tressilian; "I will retain, besides, the deepest sense of thy service, and of the risk thou dost run—remember the ring is my sure token. And now, farewell! for it was thy wise advice that I should tarry here as short a time as may be."

"Follow me, then, Sir Guest," said the landlord, "and tread as gently as if eggs were under your foot, instead of deal boards. No man must know when or how you departed."

By the aid of his dark lantern he conducted Tressilian, as soon as he had made himself ready for his journey, through a long intricacy of passages, which opened to an outer court, and from thence to a remote stable, where he had already placed his guest's horse. He then aided him to fasten on the saddle the small portmanteau which contained his necessaries, opened a postern door, and with a hearty shake of the hand, and a reiteration of his promise to attend to what went on at Cumnor Place, he dismissed his guest to his solitary journey.

CHAPTER IX.

*Far in the lane a lonely hut he found,
No tenant ventured on the unwholesome ground:
Here smokes his forge, he bares his sinewy arm,
And early strokes the sounding anvil warm;
Around his shop the steely sparkles flew,
As for the steed he shaped the bending shoe.*—GAY'S TRIVIA.

As it was deemed proper by the traveller himself, as well as by Giles Gosling, that Tressilian should avoid being seen in the neighbourhood of Cumnor by those whom accident might make early risers, the landlord had given him a route, consisting of various byways and lanes, which he was to follow in succession, and which, all the turns and short-cuts duly observed, was to conduct him to the public road to Marlborough.

But, like counsel of every other kind, this species of direction is much more easily given than followed; and what betwixt the intricacy of the way, the darkness of the night, Tressilian's ignorance of the country, and the sad and perplexing thoughts with which he had to contend, his journey proceeded so slowly, that morning found him only in the vale of Whitehorse, memorable for the defeat of the Danes in former days, with his horse deprived of a fore-foot shoe, an accident which threatened to put a stop to his journey by laming the animal. The residence of a smith was his first object of inquiry, in which he received little satisfaction from the dullness or sullenness of one or two peasants, early bound for their labour, who gave brief and indifferent answers to his questions on the subject. Anxious, at length, that the partner of his journey should suffer as little as possible from the unfortunate accident, Tressilian dismounted, and led his horse in the direction of a little hamlet, where he hoped either to find or hear tidings of such an artificer as he now wanted. Through a deep and muddy lane, he at length waded on to the place, which proved only an assemblage of five or six miserable huts, about the doors of which one or two persons, whose appearance seemed as rude as that of their dwellings, were beginning the toils of the day. One cottage, however, seemed of rather superior aspect, and the old dame, who was sweeping her threshold, appeared something less rude than her neighbours. To her Tressilian addressed the oft-repeated question, whether there was a smith in this neighbourhood, or any place where he could refresh his horse? The dame looked him in the face with a peculiar expression as she replied, "Smith! ay, truly is there a smith—what wouldst ha' wi' un, mon?"

"To shoe my horse, good dame," answered Tressilian; "you may see that he has thrown a fore-foot shoe."

"Master Holiday!" exclaimed the dame, without returning any direct answer—"Master Herasmus Holiday, come and speak to mon, and please you."

"FAVETE LINGUIS," answered a voice from within; "I cannot now come forth, Gammer Sludge, being in the very sweetest bit of my morning studies."

"Nay, but, good now, Master Holiday, come ye out, do ye. Here's a mon would to Wayland Smith, and I care not to show him way to devil; his horse hath cast shoe."

"QUID MIHI CUM CABALLO?" replied the man of learning from within; "I think there is but one wise man in the hundred, and they cannot shoe a horse without him!"

And forth came the honest pedagogue, for such his dress bespoke him. A long, lean, shambling, stooping figure was surmounted by a head thatched with lank, black hair somewhat inclining to grey. His features had the cast of habitual authority, which I suppose Dionysius carried with him from the throne to the schoolmaster's pulpit, and bequeathed as a legacy to all of the same profession, A black buckram cassock was gathered at his middle with a belt, at which hung, instead of knife or weapon, a goodly leathern pen-and-ink case. His ferula was stuck on the other side, like Harlequin's wooden sword; and he carried in his hand the tattered volume which he had been busily perusing.

On seeing a person of Tressilian's appearance, which he was better able to estimate than the country folks had been, the schoolmaster unbonneted, and accosted him with, "SALVE, DOMINE. INTELLIGISNE LINGUAM LATINAM?"

Tressilian mustered his learning to reply, "LINGUAE LATINAE HAUD PENITUS IGNARUS, VENIA TUA, DOMINE ERUDITISIME, VERNACULAM LIBENTIS LOQUOR."

The Latin reply had upon the schoolmaster the effect which the mason's sign is said to produce on the brethren of the trowel. He was at once interested in the learned traveller, listened with gravity to his story of a tired horse and a lost shoe, and then replied with solemnity, "It may appear a simple thing, most worshipful, to reply to you that there dwells, within a brief mile of these TUGURIA, the best FABER FERARIUS, the most accomplished blacksmith, that ever nailed iron upon horse. Now, were I to say so, I warrant me you would think yourself COMPOS VOTI, or, as the vulgar have it, a made man."

"I should at least," said Tressilian, "have a direct answer to a plain question, which seems difficult to be obtained in this country."

"It is a mere sending of a sinful soul to the evil un," said the old woman, "the sending a living creature to Wayland Smith."

"Peace, Gammer Sludge!" said the pedagogue; "PAUCA VERBA, Gammer Sludge; look to the furmity, Gammer Sludge; CURETUR JENTACULUM, Gammer Sludge; this gentleman is none of thy gossips." Then turning to Tressilian, he resumed his lofty tone, "And so, most worshipful, you would really think yourself FELIX BIS TERQUE should I point out to you the dwelling of this same smith?"

"Sir," replied Tressilian, "I should in that case have all that I want at present—a horse fit to carry me forward;—out of hearing of your learning." The last words he muttered to himself.

"O CAECA MENS MORTALIUM!" said the learned man "well was it sung by Junius Juvenalis, 'NUMINIBUS VOTA EXAUDITA MALIGNIS!'"

"Learned Magister," said Tressilian, "your erudition so greatly exceeds my poor intellectual capacity that you must excuse my seeking elsewhere for information which I can better understand."

"There again now," replied the pedagogue, "how fondly you fly from him that would instruct you! Truly said Quintilian—"

"I pray, sir, let Quintilian be for the present, and answer, in a word and in English, if your learning can condescend so far, whether there is any place here where I can have opportunity to refresh my horse until I can have him shod?"

"Thus much courtesy, sir," said the schoolmaster, "I can readily render you, that although there is in this poor hamlet (NOSTRA PAUPERA REGNA) no regular HOSPITIUM, as my namesake Erasmus calleth it, yet, forasmuch as you are somewhat embued, or at least tinged, as it were, with good letters, I will use my interest with the good woman of the house to accommodate you with a platter of furmity—an wholesome food for which I have found no Latin phrase—your horse shall have a share of the cow-house, with a bottle of sweet hay, in which the good woman Sludge so much abounds, that it may be said of her cow, FAENUM HABET IN CORNU; and if it please you to bestow on me the pleasure of your company, the banquet shall cost you NE SEMISSEM QUIDEM, so much is Gammer Sludge bound to me for the pains I have bestowed on the top and bottom of her hopeful heir Dickie, whom I have painfully made to travel through the accidence."

"Now, God yield ye for it, Master Herasmus," said the good Gammer, "and grant that little Dickie may be the better for his accident! And for the rest, if the gentleman list to stay, breakfast shall be on the board in the wringing of a dishclout; and for horse-meat, and man's meat, I bear no such base mind as to ask a penny."

Considering the state of his horse, Tressilian, upon the whole, saw no better course than to accept the invitation thus learnedly made and hospitably confirmed, and take chance that when the good pedagogue had exhausted every topic of conversation, he might possibly condescend to tell him where he could find the smith they spoke of. He entered the hut accordingly, and sat down with the learned Magister Erasmus Holiday, partook of his furmity, and listened to his learned account of himself for a good half hour, ere he could get him to talk upon any other topic, The reader will readily excuse our accompanying this man of learning into all the details with which he favoured Tressilian, of which the following sketch may suffice.

He was born at Hogs Norton, where, according to popular saying, the pigs play upon the organ; a proverb which he interpreted allegorically, as having reference to the herd of Epicurus, of which litter Horace confessed himself a porker. His name of Erasmus he derived partly from his father having been the son of a renowned washerwoman, who had held that great scholar in clean linen all the while he was at Oxford; a task of some difficulty, as he was only possessed of two shirts, "the

one," as she expressed herself, "to wash the other," The vestiges of one of these CAMICIAE, as Master Holiday boasted, were still in his possession, having fortunately been detained by his grandmother to cover the balance of her bill. But he thought there was a still higher and overruling cause for his having had the name of Erasmus conferred on him—namely, the secret presentiment of his mother's mind that, in the babe to be christened, was a hidden genius, which should one day lead him to rival the fame of the great scholar of Amsterdam. The schoolmaster's surname led him as far into dissertation as his Christian appellative. He was inclined to think that he bore the name of Holiday QUASI LUCUS A NON LUCENDO, because he gave such few holidays to his school. "Hence," said he, "the schoolmaster is termed, classically, LUDI MAGISTER, because he deprives boys of their play." And yet, on the other hand, he thought it might bear a very different interpretation, and refer to his own exquisite art in arranging pageants, morris-dances, May-day festivities, and such-like holiday delights, for which he assured Tressilian he had positively the purest and the most inventive brain in England; insomuch, that his cunning in framing such pleasures had made him known to many honourable persons, both in country and court, and especially to the noble Earl of Leicester. "And although he may now seem to forget me," he said, "in the multitude of state affairs, yet I am well assured that, had he some pretty pastime to array for entertainment of the Queen's Grace, horse and man would be seeking the humble cottage of Erasmus Holiday. PARVO CONTENTUS, in the meanwhile, I hear my pupils parse and construe, worshipful sir, and drive away my time with the aid of the Muses. And I have at all times, when in correspondence with foreign scholars, subscribed myself Erasmus ab Die Fausto, and have enjoyed the distinction due to the learned under that title: witness the erudite Diedrichus Buckerschockius, who dedicated to me under that title his treatise on the letter TAU. In fine, sir, I have been a happy and distinguished man."

"Long may it be so, sir!" said the traveller; "but permit me to ask, in your own learned phrase, QUID HOC AD IPHYCLI BOVES? what has all this to do with the shoeing of my poor nag?"

"FESTINA LENTE," said the man of learning, "we will presently come to that point. You must know that some two or three years past there came to these parts one who called himself Doctor Doboobie, although it may be he never wrote even MAGISTER ARTIUM, save in right of his hungry belly. Or it may be, that if he had any degrees, they were of the devil's giving; for he was what the vulgar call a white witch, a cunning man, and such like.—Now, good sir, I perceive you are impatient; but if a man tell not his tale his own way, how have you warrant to think that he can tell it in yours?"

"Well, then, learned sir, take your way," answered Tressilian; "only let us travel at a sharper pace, for my time is somewhat of the shortest."

"Well, sir," resumed Erasmus Holiday, with the most provoking perseverance, "I will not say that this same Demetrius for so he wrote himself when in foreign parts, was an actual conjurer, but certain it is that he professed to be a brother of the mystical Order of the Rosy Cross, a disciple of Geber (EX NOMINE CUJUS VENIT VERBUM VERNACULUM, GIBBERISH). He cured wounds by salving the weapon instead of the sore; told fortunes by palmistry; discovered stolen goods by the sieve and shears; gathered the right mallow and the male fern seed, through use of which men walk invisible; pretended some advances towards the panacea, or universal elixir; and affected to convert good lead into sorry silver."

"In other words," said Tressilian, "he was a quacksalver and common cheat; but what has all this to do with my nag, and the shoe which he has lost?"

"With your worshipful patience," replied the diffusive man of letters, "you shall understand that presently—PATIENTIA then, right worshipful, which word, according to our Marcus Tullius, is 'DIFFICILIUM RERUM DIURNA PERPESSIO.' This same Demetrius Doboobie, after dealing with the country, as I have told you, began to acquire fame INTER MAGNATES, among the prime men of the land, and there is likelihood he might have aspired to great matters, had not, according to vulgar fame (for I aver not the thing as according with my certain knowledge), the devil claimed his right, one dark night, and flown off with Demetrius, who was never seen or heard of afterwards. Now here comes the MEDULLA, the very marrow, of my tale. This Doctor Doboobie had a servant, a poor snake, whom he employed in trimming his furnace, regulating it by just measure—compounding his drugs—tracing his circles—cajoling his patients, ET SIC DE CAETERIS. Well, right worshipful, the Doctor being removed thus strangely, and in a way which struck the whole country with terror, this poor Zany thinks to himself, in the words of Maro, 'UNO AVULSO, NON DEFICIT ALTER;' and, even as a tradesman's apprentice sets himself up in his master's shop when he is dead or hath retired from business, so doth this Wayland assume the dangerous trade of his defunct master. But although, most worshipful sir, the world is ever prone to listen to the pretensions of such unworthy men, who are, indeed, mere SALTIM BANQUI and CHARLATANI, though usurping the style and skill of doctors of medicine, yet the pretensions of this poor Zany, this Wayland, were too gross to pass on them, nor was there a mere rustic, a villager, who was not ready to accost him in the sense of Persius, though in their own rugged words,—

*DILIUS HELLEBORUM CERTO COMPESCERE PUNCTO
NESCIS EXAMEN? VETAT HOC NATURA MEDENDI;*

which I have thus rendered in a poor paraphrase of mine own,—

*Wilt thou mix hellebore, who dost not know
How many grains should to the mixture go?
The art of medicine this forbids, I trow.*

"Moreover, the evil reputation of the master, and his strange and doubtful end, or at least sudden disappearance, prevented any, excepting the most desperate of men, to seek any advice or opinion from the servant; wherefore, the poor vermin was likely at first to swarf for very hunger. But the devil that serves him, since the death of Demetrius or Doboobie, put him on a fresh device. This knave, whether from the inspiration of the devil, or from early education, shoes horses better than e'er a man betwixt us and Iceland; and so he gives up his practice on the bipeds, the two-legged and unfledged species called mankind, and betakes him entirely to shoeing of horses."

"Indeed! and where does he lodge all this time?" said Tressilian. "And does he shoe horses well? Show me his dwelling presently."

The interruption pleased not the Magister, who exclaimed, "O CAECA MENS MORTALIUM!—though, by the way, I used that quotation before. But I would the classics could afford me any sentiment of power to stop those who are so willing to rush upon their own destruction. Hear but, I pray you, the conditions of this man," said he, in continuation, "ere you are so willing to place yourself within his danger—"

"A' takes no money for a's work," said the dame, who stood by, enraptured as it were with the line words and learned apophthegms which glided so fluently from her erudite inmate, Master Holiday. But this interruption pleased not the Magister more than that of the traveller.

"Peace," said he, "Gammer Sludge; know your place, if it be your will. SUFFLAMINA, Gammer Sludge, and allow me to expound this matter to our worshipful guest.—Sir," said he, again addressing Tressilian, "this old woman speaks true, though in her own rude style; for certainly this FABER FERRARIUS, or blacksmith, takes money of no one."

"And that is a sure sign he deals with Satan," said Dame Sludge; "since no good Christian would ever refuse the wages of his labour."

"The old woman hath touched it again," said the pedagogue; "REM ACU TETIGIT—she hath pricked it with her needle's point. This Wayland takes no money, indeed; nor doth he show himself to any one."

"And can this madman, for such I hold him," said the traveller, "know aught like good skill of his trade?"

"Oh, sir, in that let us give the devil his due—Mulciber himself, with all his Cyclops, could hardly amend him. But assuredly there is little wisdom in taking counsel or receiving aid from one who is but too plainly in league with the author of evil."

"I must take my chance of that, good Master Holiday," said Tressilian, rising; "and as my horse must now have eaten his provender, I must needs thank you for your good cheer, and pray you to show me this man's residence, that I may have the means of proceeding on my journey."

"Ay, ay, do ye show him, Master Herasmus," said the old dame, who was, perhaps, desirous to get her house freed of her guest; "a' must needs go when the devil drives."

"DO MANUS," said the Magister, "I submit—taking the world to witness, that I have possessed this honourable gentleman with the full injustice which he has done and shall do to his own soul, if he becomes thus a trinketer with Satan. Neither will I go forth with our guest myself, but rather send my pupil.—RICARDE! ADSIS, NEBULO."

"Under your favour, not so," answered the old woman; "you may peril your own soul, if you list, but my son shall budge on no such errand. And I wonder at you, Dominie Doctor, to propose such a piece of service for little Dickie."

"Nay, my good Gammer Sludge," answered the preceptor, "Ricardus shall go but to the top of the hill, and indicate with his digit to the stranger the dwelling of Wayland Smith. Believe not that any evil can come to him, he having read this morning, fasting, a chapter of the Septuagint, and, moreover, having had his lesson in the Greek Testament."

"Ay," said his mother, "and I have sewn a sprig of witch's elm in the neck of un's doublet, ever since that foul thief has begun his practices on man and beast in these parts."

"And as he goes oft (as I hugely suspect) towards this conjurer for his own pastime, he may for once go thither, or near it, to pleasure us, and to assist this stranger.—ERGO, HEUS RICARDE! ADSIS, QUAESO, MI DIDASCULE."

The pupil, thus affectionately invoked, at length came stumbling into the room; a queer, shambling, ill-made urchin, who, by his stunted growth, seemed about twelve or thirteen years old, though he was probably, in reality, a year or two older, with a carroty pate in huge disorder, a freckled, sunburnt visage, with a snub nose, a long chin, and two peery grey eyes, which had a droll obliquity of vision, approaching to a squint, though perhaps not a decided one. It was impossible to look at the little man without some disposition to laugh, especially when Gammer Sludge, seizing upon and kissing him, in spite of his struggling and kicking in reply to her caresses, termed him her own precious pearl of beauty.

"RICARDE," said the preceptor, "you must forthwith (which is PROPECTO) set forth so far as the top of the hill, and show this man of worship Wayland Smith's workshop."

"A proper errand of a morning," said the boy, in better language than Tressilian expected; "and who knows but the devil may fly away with me before I come back?"

"Ay, marry may un," said Dame Sludge; "and you might have thought twice, Master Domine, ere you sent my dainty darling on arrow such errand. It is not for such doings I feed your belly and clothe your back, I warrant you!"

"Pshaw—NUGAE, good Gammer Sludge," answered the preceptor; "I ensure you that Satan, if there be Satan in the case, shall not touch a thread of his garment; for Dickie can say his PATER with the best, and may defy the foul fiend—EUMENIDES, STYGIUMQUE NEFAS."

"Ay, and I, as I said before, have sewed a sprig of the mountain-ash into his collar," said the good woman, "which will avail more than your clerkship, I wus; but for all that, it is ill to seek the devil or his mates either."

"My good boy," said Tressilian, who saw, from a grotesque sneer on Dickie's face, that he was more likely to act upon his own bottom than by the instructions of his elders, "I will give thee a silver groat, my pretty fellow, if you will but guide me to this man's forge."

The boy gave him a knowing side-look, which seemed to promise acquiescence, while at the same time he exclaimed, "I be your guide to Wayland Smith's! Why, man, did I not say that the devil might fly off with me, just as the kite there" (looking to the window) "is flying off with one of grandam's chicks?"

"The kite! the kite!" exclaimed the old woman in return, and forgetting all other matters in her alarm, hastened to the rescue of her chickens as fast as her old legs could carry her.

"Now for it," said the urchin to Tressilian; "snatch your beaver, get out your horse, and have at the silver groat you spoke of."

"Nay, but tarry, tarry," said the preceptor—"SUFFLAMINA, RICARDE!"

"Tarry yourself," said Dickie, "and think what answer you are to make to granny for sending me post to the devil."

The teacher, aware of the responsibility he was incurring, bustled up in great haste to lay hold of the urchin and to prevent his departure; but Dickie slipped through his fingers, bolted from the cottage, and sped him to the top of a neighbouring rising ground, while the preceptor, despairing, by well-taught experience, of recovering his pupil by speed of foot, had recourse to the most honied epithets the Latin vocabulary affords to persuade his return. But to MI ANIME, CORCULUM MEUM, and all such classical endearments, the truant turned a deaf ear, and kept frisking on the top of the rising ground like a goblin by moonlight, making signs to his new acquaintance, Tressilian, to follow him.

The traveller lost no time in getting out his horse and departing to join his elvish guide, after half-forcing on the poor, deserted teacher a recompense for the entertainment he had received, which partly allayed that terror he had for facing the return of the old lady of the mansion. Apparently this took place soon afterwards; for ere Tressilian and his guide had proceeded far on their journey, they heard the screams of a cracked female voice, intermingled with the classical objurgations of Master Erasmus Holiday. But Dickie Sludge, equally deaf to the voice of maternal tenderness and of magisterial authority, skipped on unconsciously before Tressilian, only observing that "if they cried themselves hoarse, they might go lick the honey-pot, for he had eaten up all the honey-comb himself on yesterday even."

CHAPTER X.

*There entering in, they found the goodman selfe
Full busylie unto his work ybent,
Who was to weet a wretched wearish elf,
With hollow eyes and rawbone cheeks forspent,
As if he had been long in prison pent.—THE FAERY QUEENE.*

"Are we far from the dwelling of this smith, my pretty lad?" said Tressilian to his young guide.

"How is it you call me?" said the boy, looking askew at him with his sharp, grey eyes.

"I call you my pretty lad—is there any offence in that, my boy?"

"No; but were you with my grandam and Dominie Holiday, you might sing chorus to the old song of

*'We three
Tom-fools be.'*"

"And why so, my little man?" said Tressilian.

"Because," answered the ugly urchin, "you are the only three ever called me pretty lad. Now my grandam does it because she is parcel blind by age, and whole blind by kindred; and my master, the poor Dominie, does it to curry favour, and have the fullest platter of furmity and the warmest seat by the fire. But what you call me pretty lad for, you know best yourself."

"Thou art a sharp wag at least, if not a pretty one. But what do thy playfellows call thee?"

"Hobgoblin," answered the boy readily; "but for all that, I would rather have my own ugly viznomy than any of their jolter-heads, that have no more brains in them than a brick-bat."

"Then you fear not this smith whom you are going to see?"

"Me fear him!" answered the boy. "If he were the devil folk think him, I would not fear him; but though there is something queer about him, he's no more a devil than you are, and that's what I would not tell to every one."

"And why do you tell it to me, then, my boy?" said Tressilian.

"Because you are another guess gentleman than those we see here every day," replied Dickie; "and though I am as ugly as sin, I would not have you think me an ass, especially as I may have a boon to ask of you one day."

"And what is that, my lad, whom I must not call pretty?" replied Tressilian.

"Oh, if I were to ask it just now," said the boy, "you would deny it me; but I will wait till we meet at court."

"At court, Richard! are you bound for court?" said Tressilian.

"Ay, ay, that's just like the rest of them," replied the boy. "I warrant me, you think, what should such an ill-favoured, scrambling urchin do at court? But let Richard Sludge alone; I have not been cock of the roost here for nothing. I will make sharp wit mend foul feature."

"But what will your grandam say, and your tutor, Dominie Holiday?"

"E'en what they like," replied Dickie; "the one has her chickens to reckon, and the other has his boys to whip. I would have given them the candle to hold long since, and shewn this trumpery hamlet a fair pair of heels, but that Dominie promises I should go with him to bear share in the next pageant he is to set forth, and they say there are to be great revels shortly."

"And whereabouts are they to be held, my little friend?" said Tressilian.

"Oh, at some castle far in the north," answered his guide—"a world's breadth from Berkshire. But our old Dominie holds that they cannot go forward without him; and it may be he is right, for he has put in order many a fair pageant. He is not half the fool you would take him for, when he gets to work he understands; and so he can spout verses like a play-actor, when, God wot, if you set him to steal a goose's egg, he would be drubbed by the gander."

"And you are to play a part in his next show?" said Tressilian, somewhat interested by the boy's boldness of conversation and shrewd estimate of character.

"In faith," said Richard Sludge, in answer, "he hath so promised me; and if he break his word, it will be the worse for him, for let me take the bit between my teeth, and turn my head downhill, and I will shake him off with a fall that may harm his bones. And I should not like much to hurt him neither," said he, "for the tiresome old fool has painfully laboured to teach me all he could. But enough of that—here are we at Wayland Smith's forge-door."

"You jest, my little friend," said Tressilian; "here is nothing but a bare moor, and that ring of stones, with a great one in the midst, like a Cornish barrow."

"Ay, and that great flat stone in the midst, which lies across the top of these uprights," said the boy, "is Wayland Smith's counter, that you must tell down your money upon."

"What do you mean by such folly?" said the traveller, beginning to be angry with the boy, and vexed with himself for having trusted such a hare-brained guide.

"Why," said Dickie, with a grin, "you must tie your horse to that upright stone that has the ring in't, and then you must whistle three times, and lay me down your silver groat on that other flat stone, walk out of the circle, sit down on the west side of that little thicket of bushes, and take heed you look neither to right nor to left for ten minutes, or so long as you shall hear the hammer clink, and whenever it ceases, say your prayers for the space you could tell a hundred—or count over a hundred, which will do as well—and then come into the circle; you will find your money gone and your horse shod."

"My money gone to a certainty!" said Tressilian; "but as for the rest—Hark ye, my lad, I am not your school-master, but if you play off your waggery on me, I will take a part of his task off his hands, and punish you to purpose."

"Ay, when you catch me!" said the boy; and presently took to his heels across the heath, with a velocity which baffled every attempt of Tressilian to overtake him, loaded as he was with his heavy boots. Nor was it the least provoking part of the urchin's conduct, that he did not exert his utmost speed, like one who finds himself in danger, or who is frightened, but preserved just such a rate as to encourage Tressilian to continue the chase, and then darted away from him with the swiftness of the wind, when his pursuer supposed he had nearly run him down, doubling at the same time, and winding, so as always to keep near the place from which he started.

This lasted until Tressilian, from very weariness, stood still, and was about to abandon the pursuit with a hearty curse on the ill-favoured urchin, who had engaged him in an exercise so ridiculous. But the boy, who had, as formerly, planted himself on the top of a hillock close in front, began to clap his long, thin hands, point with his skinny fingers, and twist his wild and ugly features into such an extravagant expression of laughter and derision, that Tressilian began half to doubt whether he had not in view an actual hobgoblin.

Provoked extremely, yet at the same time feeling an irresistible desire to laugh, so very odd were the boy's grimaces and gesticulations, the Cornishman returned to his horse, and mounted him with the purpose of pursuing Dickie at more advantage.

The boy no sooner saw him mount his horse, than he holloed out to him that, rather than he should spoil his white-footed nag, he would come to him, on condition he would keep his fingers to himself.

"I will make no conditions with thee, thou ugly varlet!" said Tressilian; "I will have thee at my mercy in a moment."

"Aha, Master Traveller," said the boy, "there is a marsh hard by would swallow all the horses of the Queen's guard. I will into it, and see where you will go then. You shall hear the bitter bump, and the wild-drake quack, ere you get hold of me without my consent, I promise you."

Tressilian looked out, and, from the appearance of the ground behind the hillock, believed it might be as the boy said, and accordingly determined to strike up a peace with so light-footed and ready-witted an enemy. "Come down," he said, "thou mischievous brat! Leave thy mopping and mowing, and, come hither. I will do thee no harm, as I am a gentleman."

The boy answered his invitation with the utmost confidence, and danced down from his stance with a galliard sort of step, keeping his eye at the same time fixed on Tressilian's, who, once more dismounted, stood with his horse's bridle in his hand, breathless, and half exhausted with his fruitless exercise, though not one drop of moisture appeared on the freckled forehead of the urchin, which looked like a piece of dry and discoloured parchment, drawn tight across the brow of a fleshless skull.

"And tell me," said Tressilian, "why you use me thus, thou mischievous imp? or what your meaning is by telling me so absurd a legend as you wished but now to put on me? Or rather show me, in good earnest, this smith's forge, and I will give thee what will buy thee apples through the whole winter."

"Were you to give me an orchard of apples," said Dickie Sludge, "I can guide thee no better than I have done. Lay down the silver token on the flat stone—whistle three times—then come sit down on the western side of the thicket of gorse. I will sit by you, and give you free leave to wring my head off, unless you hear the smith at work within two minutes after we are seated."

"I may be tempted to take thee at thy word," said Tressilian, "if you make me do aught half so ridiculous for your own mischievous sport; however, I will prove your spell. Here, then, I tie my horse to this upright stone. I must lay my silver groat here, and whistle three times, sayest thou?"

"Ay, but thou must whistle louder than an unfledged ousel," said the boy, as Tressilian, having laid down his money, and half ashamed of the folly he practised, made a careless whistle—"you must whistle louder than that, for who knows where the smith is that you call for? He may be in the King of France's stables for what I know."

"Why, you said but now he was no devil," replied Tressilian.

"Man or devil," said Dickie, "I see that I must summon him for you;" and therewithal he whistled sharp and shrill, with an acuteness of sound that almost thrilled through Tressilian's brain. "That is what I call whistling," said he, after he had repeated the signal thrice; "and now to cover, to cover, or Whitefoot will not be shod this day."

Tressilian, musing what the upshot of this mummery was to be, yet satisfied there was to be some serious result, by the confidence with which the boy had put himself in his power, suffered himself to be conducted to that side of the little thicket of gorse and brushwood which was farthest from the circle of stones, and there sat down; and as it occurred to him that, after all, this might be a trick for stealing his horse, he kept his hand on the boy's collar, determined to make him hostage for its safety.

"Now, hush and listen," said Dickie, in a low whisper; "you will soon hear the tack of a hammer that was never forged of earthly iron, for the stone it was made of was shot from the moon." And in effect Tressilian did immediately hear the light stroke of a hammer, as when a farrier is at work. The singularity of such a sound, in so very lonely a place, made him involuntarily start; but looking at the boy, and discovering, by the arch malicious expression of his countenance, that the urchin

saw and enjoyed his slight tremor, he became convinced that the whole was a concerted stratagem, and determined to know by whom, or for what purpose, the trick was played off.

Accordingly, he remained perfectly quiet all the time that the hammer continued to sound, being about the space usually employed in fixing a horse-shoe. But the instant the sound ceased, Tressilian, instead of interposing the space of time which his guide had required, started up with his sword in his hand, ran round the thicket, and confronted a man in a farrier's leathern apron, but otherwise fantastically attired in a bear-skin dressed with the fur on, and a cap of the same, which almost hid the sooty and begrimed features of the wearer. "Come back, come back!" cried the boy to Tressilian, "or you will be torn to pieces; no man lives that looks on him." In fact, the invisible smith (now fully visible) heaved up his hammer, and showed symptoms of doing battle.

But when the boy observed that neither his own entreaties nor the menaces of the farrier appeared to change Tressilian's purpose, but that, on the contrary, he confronted the hammer with his drawn sword, he exclaimed to the smith in turn, "Wayland, touch him not, or you will come by the worse!—the gentleman is a true gentleman, and a bold."

"So thou hast betrayed me, Flibbertigibbet?" said the smith; "it shall be the worse for thee!"

"Be who thou wilt," said Tressilian, "thou art in no danger from me, so thou tell me the meaning of this practice, and why thou drivest thy trade in this mysterious fashion."

The smith, however, turning to Tressilian, exclaimed, in a threatening tone, "Who questions the Keeper of the Crystal Castle of Light, the Lord of the Green Lion, the Rider of the Red Dragon? Hence!—avoid thee, ere I summon Talpack with his fiery lance, to quell, crush, and consume!" These words he uttered with violent gesticulation, mouthing, and flourishing his hammer.

"Peace, thou vile cozeners, with thy gipsy cant!" replied Tressilian scornfully, "and follow me to the next magistrate, or I will cut thee over the pate."

"Peace, I pray thee, good Wayland!" said the boy. "Credit me, the swaggering vein will not pass here; you must cut boon whids." ["Give good words."—SLANG DIALECT.]

"I think, worshipful sir," said the smith, sinking his hammer, and assuming a more gentle and submissive tone of voice, "that when so poor a man does his day's job, he might be permitted to work it out after his own fashion. Your horse is shod, and your farrier paid—what need you cumber yourself further than to mount and pursue your journey?"

"Nay, friend, you are mistaken," replied Tressilian; "every man has a right to take the mask from the face of a cheat and a juggler; and your mode of living raises suspicion that you are both."

"If you are so determined; sir," said the smith, "I cannot help myself save by force, which I were unwilling to use towards you, Master Tressilian; not that I fear your weapon, but because I know you to be a worthy, kind, and well-accomplished gentleman, who would rather help than harm a poor man that is in a strait."

"Well said, Wayland," said the boy, who had anxiously awaited the issue of their conference. "But let us to thy den, man, for it is ill for thy health to stand here talking in the open air."

"Thou art right, Hobgoblin," replied the smith; and going to the little thicket of gorse on the side nearest to the circle, and opposite to that at which his customer had so lately crouched, he discovered a trap-door curiously covered with bushes, raised it, and, descending into the earth, vanished from their eyes. Notwithstanding Tressilian's curiosity, he had some hesitation at following the fellow into what might be a den of robbers, especially when he heard the smith's voice, issuing from the bowels of the earth, call out, "Flibbertigibbet, do you come last, and be sure to fasten the trap!"

"Have you seen enough of Wayland Smith now?" whispered the urchin to Tressilian, with an arch sneer, as if marking his companion's uncertainty.

"Not yet," said Tressilian firmly; and shaking off his momentary irresolution, he descended into the narrow staircase, to which the entrance led, and was followed by Dickie Sludge, who made fast the trap-door behind him, and thus excluded every glimmer of daylight. The descent, however, was only a few steps, and led to a level passage of a few yards' length, at the end of which appeared the reflection of a lurid and red light. Arrived at this point, with his drawn sword in his hand, Tressilian found that a turn to the left admitted him and Hobgoblin, who followed closely, into a small, square vault, containing a smith's forge, glowing with charcoal, the vapour of which filled the apartment with an oppressive smell, which would have been altogether suffocating, but that by some concealed vent the smithy communicated with the upper air. The light afforded by the red fuel, and by a lamp suspended in an iron chain, served to show that, besides an anvil, bellows, tongs, hammers, a quantity of ready-made horse-shoes, and other articles proper to the profession of a farrier, there were also stoves, alembics, crucibles, retorts, and other instruments of alchemy. The grotesque figure of the smith, and the ugly but whimsical features of the boy, seen by the gloomy and imperfect light of the charcoal fire and the dying lamp, accorded very well with all this mystical apparatus, and in that age of superstition would have made some impression on the courage of most men.

But nature had endowed Tressilian with firm nerves, and his education, originally good, had been too sedulously improved by subsequent study to give way to any imaginary terrors; and after giving a glance around him, he again demanded of the artist who he was, and by what accident he came to know and address him by his name.

"Your worship cannot but remember," said the smith, "that about three years since, upon Saint Lucy's Eve, there came a travelling juggler to a certain hall in Devonshire, and exhibited his skill before a worshipful knight and a fair company.—I see from your worship's countenance, dark as this place is, that my memory has not done me wrong."

"Thou hast said enough," said Tressilian, turning away, as wishing to hide from the speaker the painful train of recollections which his discourse had unconsciously awakened.

"The juggler," said the smith, "played his part so bravely that the clowns and clown-like squires in the company held his art to be little less than magical; but there was one maiden of fifteen, or thereby, with the fairest face I ever looked upon, whose rosy cheek grew pale, and her bright eyes dim, at the sight of the wonders exhibited."

"Peace, I command thee, peace!" said Tressilian.

"I mean your worship no offence," said the fellow; "but I have cause to remember how, to relieve the young maiden's fears, you condescended to point out the mode in which these deceptions were practised, and to baffle the poor juggler by laying bare the mysteries of his art, as ably as if you had been a brother of his order.—She was indeed so fair a maiden that, to win a smile of her, a man might well—"

"Not a word more of her, I charge thee!" said Tressilian. "I do well remember the night you speak of—one of the few happy evenings my life has known."

"She is gone, then," said the smith, interpreting after his own fashion the sigh with which Tressilian uttered these words—"she is gone, young, beautiful, and beloved as she was!—I crave your worship's pardon—I should have hammered on another theme. I see I have unwarily driven the nail to the quick."

This speech was made with a mixture of rude feeling which inclined Tressilian favourably to the poor artisan, of whom before he was inclined to judge very harshly. But nothing can so soon attract the unfortunate as real or seeming sympathy with their sorrows.

"I think," proceeded Tressilian, after a minute's silence, "thou wert in those days a jovial fellow, who could keep a company merry by song, and tale, and rebeck, as well as by thy juggling tricks—why do I find thee a laborious handicraftsman, plying thy trade in so melancholy a dwelling and under such extraordinary circumstances?"

"My story is not long," said the artist, "but your honour had better sit while you listen to it." So saying, he approached to the fire a three-footed stool, and took another himself; while Dickie Sludge, or Flibbertigibbet, as he called the boy, drew a cricket to the smith's feet, and looked up in his face with features which, as illuminated by the glow of the forge, seemed convulsed with intense curiosity. "Thou too," said the smith to him, "shalt learn, as thou well deservest at my hand, the brief history of my life; and, in troth, it were as well tell it thee as leave thee to ferret it out, since Nature never packed a shrewder wit into a more ungainly casket.—Well, sir, if my poor story may pleasure you, it is at your command, But will you not taste a stoup of liquor? I promise you that even in this poor cell I have some in store."

"Speak not of it," said Tressilian, "but go on with thy story, for my leisure is brief."

"You shall have no cause to rue the delay," said the smith, "for your horse shall be better fed in the meantime than he hath been this morning, and made fitter for travel."

With that the artist left the vault, and returned after a few minutes' interval. Here, also, we pause, that the narrative may commence in another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

*I say, my lord, can such a subtilty
(But all his craft ye must not wot of me,
And somewhat help I yet to his working),
That all the ground on which we ben riding,
Till that we come to Canterbury town,
He can all clean turnen so up so down,
And pave it all of silver and of gold.*

—THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S PROLOGUE, CANTERBURY TALES.

THE artist commenced his narrative in the following terms:—

"I was bred a blacksmith, and knew my art as well as e'er a black-thumbed, leathern-aproned, swart-faced knave of that noble mystery. But I tired of ringing hammer-tunes on iron stithies, and went out into the world, where I became acquainted with a celebrated juggler, whose fingers had become rather too stiff for legerdemain, and who wished to have the aid of an apprentice in his noble mystery. I served him for six years, until I was master of my trade—I refer myself to your worship, whose judgment cannot be disputed, whether I did not learn to ply the craft indifferently well?"

"Excellently," said Tressilian; "but be brief."

"It was not long after I had performed at Sir Hugh Robsart's, in your worship's presence," said the artist, "that I took myself to the stage, and have swaggered with the bravest of them all, both at the Black Bull, the Globe, the Fortune, and elsewhere; but I know not how—apples were so plenty that year that the lads in the twopenny gallery never took more than one bite out of them, and threw the rest of the pippin at whatever actor chanced to be on the stage. So I tired of it—renounced my half share in the company, gave my foil to my comrade, my buskins to the wardrobe, and showed the theatre a clean pair of heels."

"Well, friend, and what," said Tressilian, "was your next shift?"

"I became," said the smith, "half partner, half domestic to a man of much skill and little substance, who practised the trade of a physicianer."

"In other words," said Tressilian, "you were Jack Pudding to a quacksalver."

"Something beyond that, let me hope, my good Master Tressilian," replied the artist; "and yet to say truth, our practice was of an adventurous description, and the pharmacy which I had acquired in my first studies for the benefit of horses was frequently applied to our human patients. But the seeds of all maladies are the same; and if turpentine, tar, pitch, and beef-suet, mingled with turmeric, gum-mastick, and one bead of garlick, can cure the horse that hath been grieved with a nail, I see not but what it may benefit the man that hath been pricked with a sword. But my master's practice, as well as his skill, went far beyond mine, and dealt in more dangerous concerns. He was not only a bold, adventurous practitioner in physic, but also, if your pleasure so chanced to be, an adept who read the stars, and expounded the fortunes of mankind, genethliacally, as he called it, or otherwise. He was a learned distiller of simples, and a profound chemist—made several efforts to fix mercury, and judged himself to have made a fair hit at the philosopher's stone. I have yet a programme of his on that subject, which, if your honour understandeth, I believe you have the better, not only of all who read, but also of him who wrote it."

He gave Tressilian a scroll of parchment, bearing at top and bottom, and down the margin, the signs of the seven planets, curiously intermingled with talismanical characters and scraps of Greek and Hebrew. In the midst were some Latin verses from a cabalistical author, written out so fairly, that even the gloom of the place did not prevent Tressilian from reading them. The tenor of the original ran as follows:—

*"Si fixum solvas, faciasque volare solutum,
Et volucrem figas, facient te vivere tutum;
Si pariat ventum, valet auri pondere centum;
Ventus ubi vult spirat—Capiat qui capere potest."*

"I protest to you," said Tressilian, "all I understand of this jargon is that the last words seem to mean 'Catch who catch can.'"

"That," said the smith, "is the very principle that my worthy friend and master, Doctor Doboobie, always acted upon; until, being besotted with his own imaginations, and conceited of his high chemical skill, he began to spend, in cheating himself, the money which he had acquired in cheating others, and either discovered or built for himself, I could never know which, this secret elaboratory, in which he used to seclude himself both from patients and disciples, who doubtless thought his long and mysterious absences from his ordinary residence in the town of Farringdon were occasioned by his progress in the mystic sciences, and his intercourse with the invisible world. Me also he tried to deceive; but though I contradicted him not, he saw that I knew too much of his secrets to be any longer a safe companion. Meanwhile, his name waxed famous—or rather infamous, and many of those who resorted to him did so under persuasion that he was a sorcerer. And yet his supposed advance in the occult sciences drew to him the secret resort of men too powerful to be named, for purposes too dangerous to be mentioned. Men cursed and threatened him, and bestowed on me, the innocent assistant of his studies, the nickname of the Devil's foot-post, which procured me a volley of stones as soon as ever I ventured to show my face in the street of the village. At length my master suddenly disappeared, pretending to me that he was about to visit his elaboratory in this place, and forbidding me to disturb him till two days were past. When this period had elapsed, I became anxious, and resorted to this vault, where I found the fires extinguished and the utensils in confusion, with a note from the learned Doboobius, as he was wont to style himself, acquainting me that we should never meet again, bequeathing me his chemical apparatus, and the parchment which I have just put into your hands, advising me strongly to prosecute the secret which it contained, which would infallibly lead me to the discovery of the grand magisterium."

"And didst thou follow this sage advice?" said Tressilian.

"Worshipful sir, no," replied the smith; "for, being by nature cautious, and suspicious from knowing with whom I had to do, I made so many perquisitions before I ventured even to light a fire, that I at length discovered a small barrel of gunpowder, carefully hid beneath the furnace, with the purpose, no doubt, that as soon as I should commence the grand work of the transmutation of metals, the explosion should transmute the vault and all in it into a heap of ruins, which might serve at once for my slaughter-house and my grave. This cured me of alchemy, and fain would I have returned to the honest hammer and anvil; but who would bring a horse to be shod by the Devil's post? Meantime, I had won the regard of my honest Flibbertigibbet here, he being then at Farringdon with his master, the sage Erasmus Holiday, by teaching him a few secrets, such as please youth at his age; and after much counsel together, we agreed that, since I could get no practice in the ordinary way, I should try how I could work out business among these ignorant boors, by practising upon their silly fears; and, thanks to Flibbertigibbet, who hath spread my renown, I have not wanted custom. But it is won at too great risk, and I fear I shall be at length taken up for a wizard; so that I seek but an opportunity to leave this vault, when I can have the protection of some worshipful person against the fury of the populace, in case they chance to recognize me."

"And art thou," said Tressilian, "perfectly acquainted with the roads in this country?"

"I could ride them every inch by midnight," answered Wayland Smith, which was the name this adept had assumed.

"Thou hast no horse to ride upon," said Tressilian.

"Pardon me," replied Wayland; "I have as good a tit as ever yeoman bestrode; and I forgot to say it was the best part of the mediciner's legacy to me, excepting one or two of the choicest of his medical secrets, which I picked up without his knowledge and against his will."

"Get thyself washed and shaved, then," said Tressilian; "reform thy dress as well as thou canst, and fling away these grotesque trappings; and, so thou wilt be secret and faithful, thou shalt follow me for a short time, till thy pranks here are forgotten. Thou hast, I think, both address and courage, and I have matter to do that may require both."

Wayland Smith eagerly embraced the proposal, and protested his devotion to his new master. In a very few minutes he had made so great an alteration in his original appearance, by change of dress, trimming his beard and hair, and so forth, that Tressilian could not help remarking that he thought he would stand in little need of a protector, since none of his old acquaintance were likely to recognize him.

"My debtors would not pay me money," said Wayland, shaking his head; "but my creditors of every kind would be less easily blinded. And, in truth, I hold myself not safe, unless under the protection of a gentleman of birth and character, as is your worship."

So saying, he led the way out of the cavern. He then called loudly for Hobgoblin, who, after lingering for an instant, appeared with the horse furniture, when Wayland closed and sedulously covered up the trap-door, observing it might again serve him at his need, besides that the tools were worth somewhat. A whistle from the owner brought to his side a nag that fed quietly on the common, and was accustomed to the signal.

While he accoutred him for the journey, Tressilian drew his own girths tighter, and in a few minutes both were ready to mount.

At this moment Sludge approached to bid them farewell.

"You are going to leave me, then, my old playfellow," said the boy; "and there is an end of all our game at bo-peep with the cowardly lubbards whom I brought hither to have their broad-footed nags shed by the devil and his imps?"

"It is even so," said Wayland Smith, "the best friends must part, Flibbertigibbet; but thou, my boy, art the only thing in the Vale of Whitehorse which I shall regret to leave behind me."

"Well, I bid thee not farewell," said Dickie Sludge, "for you will be at these revels, I judge, and so shall I; for if Dominie Holiday take me not thither, by the light of day, which we see not in yonder dark hole, I will take myself there!"

"In good time," said Wayland; "but I pray you to do nought rashly."

"Nay, now you would make a child, a common child of me, and tell me of the risk of walking without leading-strings. But before you are a mile from these stones, you shall know by a sure token that I have more of the hobgoblin about me than you credit; and I will so manage that, if you take advantage, you may profit by my prank."

"What dost thou mean, boy?" said Tressilian; but Flibbertigibbet only answered with a grin and a caper, and bidding both of them farewell, and, at the same time, exhorting them to make the best of their way from the place, he set them the example by running homeward with the same uncommon velocity with which he had baffled Tressilian's former attempts to get hold of him.

"It is in vain to chase him," said Wayland Smith; "for unless your worship is expert in lark-hunting, we should never catch hold of him—and besides, what would it avail? Better make the best of our way hence, as he advises."

They mounted their horses accordingly, and began to proceed at a round pace, as soon as Tressilian had explained to his guide the direction in which he desired to travel.

After they had trotted nearly a mile, Tressilian could not help observing to his companion that his horse felt more lively under him than even when he mounted in the morning.

"Are you avised of that?" said Wayland Smith, smiling. "That is owing to a little secret of mine. I mixed that with an handful of oats which shall save your worship's heels the trouble of spurring these six hours at least. Nay, I have not studied medicine and pharmacy for nought."

"I trust," said Tressilian, "your drugs will do my horse no harm?"

"No more than the mare's milk; which foaled him," answered the artist, and was proceeding to dilate on the excellence of his recipe when he was interrupted by an explosion as loud and tremendous as the mine which blows up the rampart of a beleaguered city. The horses started, and the riders were equally surprised. They turned to gaze in the direction from which the thunder-clap was heard, and beheld, just over the spot they had left so recently, a huge pillar of dark smoke rising high into the clear, blue atmosphere. "My habitation is gone to wreck," said Wayland, immediately conjecturing the cause of the explosion. "I was a fool to mention the doctor's kind intentions towards my mansion before that limb of mischief, Flibbertigibbet; I might have guessed he would long to put so rare a frolic into execution. But let us hasten on, for the sound will collect the country to the spot."

So saying, he spurred his horse, and Tressilian also quickening his speed, they rode briskly forward.

"This, then, was the meaning of the little imp's token which he promised us?" said Tressilian. "Had we lingered near the spot, we had found it a love-token with a vengeance."

"He would have given us warning," said the smith. "I saw him look back more than once to see if we were off—'tis a very devil for mischief, yet not an ill-natured devil either. It were long to tell your honour how I became first acquainted with him, and how many tricks he played me. Many a good turn he did me too, especially in bringing me customers; for his great delight was to see them sit shivering behind the bushes when they heard the click of my hammer. I think Dame Nature, when she lodged a double quantity of brains in that misshapen head of his, gave him the power of enjoying other people's distresses, as she gave them the pleasure of laughing at his ugliness."

"It may be so," said Tressilian; "those who find themselves severed from society by peculiarities of form, if they do not hate the common bulk of mankind, are at least not altogether indisposed to enjoy their mishaps and calamities."

"But Flibbertigibbet," answered Wayland, "hath that about him which may redeem his turn for mischievous frolic; for he is as faithful when attached as he is tricky and malignant to strangers, and, as I said before, I have cause to say so."

Tressilian pursued the conversation no further, and they continued their journey towards Devonshire without further adventure, until they alighted at an inn in the town of Marlborough, since celebrated for having given title to the greatest general (excepting one) whom Britain ever produced. Here the travellers received, in the same breath, an example of the truth of two old proverbs—namely, that ILL NEWS FLY FAST, and that LISTENERS SELDOM HEAR A GOOD TALE OF THEMSELVES.

The inn-yard was in a sort of combustion when they alighted; insomuch, that they could scarce get man or boy to take care of their horses, so full were the whole household of some news which flew from tongue to tongue, the import of which they were for some time unable to discover. At length, indeed, they found it respected matters which touched them nearly.

"What is the matter, say you, master?" answered, at length, the head hostler, in reply to Tressilian's repeated questions.—"Why, truly, I scarce know myself. But here was a rider but now, who says that the devil hath flown away with him they called Wayland Smith, that wond' about three miles from the Whitehorse of Berkshire, this very blessed morning, in a flash of fire and a pillar of smoke, and rooted up the place he dwelt in, near that old cockpit of upright stones, as cleanly as if it had all been delved up for a cropping."

"Why, then," said an old farmer, "the more is the pity; for that Wayland Smith (whether he was the devil's crony or no I skill not) had a good notion of horses' diseases, and it's to be thought the bots will spread in the country far and near, an Satan has not gien un time to leave his secret behind un."

"You may say that, Gaffer Grimesby," said the hostler in return; "I have carried a horse to Wayland Smith myself, for he passed all farriers in this country."

"Did you see him?" said Dame Alison Crane, mistress of the inn bearing that sign, and deigning to term HUSBAND the owner thereof, a mean-looking hop-o'-my-thumb sort or person, whose halting gait, and long neck, and meddling, henpecked insignificance are supposed to have given origin to the celebrated old English tune of "My dame hath a lame tame Crane."

On this occasion he chirped out a repetition of his wife's question, "Didst see the devil, Jack Hostler, I say?"

"And what if I did see un, Master Crane?" replied Jack Hostler, for, like all the rest of the household, he paid as little respect to his master as his mistress herself did.

"Nay, nought, Jack Hostler," replied the pacific Master Crane; "only if you saw the devil, methinks I would like to know what un's like?"

"You will know that one day, Master Crane," said his helpmate, "an ye mend not your manners, and mind your business, leaving off such idle palabras.—But truly, Jack Hostler, I should be glad to know myself what like the fellow was."

"Why, dame," said the hostler, more respectfully, "as for what he was like I cannot tell, nor no man else, for why I never saw un."

"And how didst thou get thine errand done," said Gaffer Grimesby, "if thou seedst him not?"

"Why, I had schoolmaster to write down ailment o' nag," said Jack Hostler; "and I went wi' the ugliest slip of a boy for my guide as ever man cut out o' lime-tree root to please a child withal."

"And what was it?—and did it cure your nag, Jack Hostler?" was uttered and echoed by all who stood around.

"Why, how can I tell you what it was?" said the hostler; "simply it smelled and tasted—for I did make bold to put a pea's substance into my mouth—like hartshorn and savin mixed with vinegar; but then no hartshorn and savin ever wrought so speedy a cure. And I am dreading that if Wayland Smith be gone, the bots will have more power over horse and cattle."

The pride of art, which is certainly not inferior in its influence to any other pride whatever, here so far operated on Wayland Smith, that, notwithstanding the obvious danger of his being recognized, he could not help winking to Tressilian, and smiling mysteriously, as if triumphing in the undoubted evidence of his veterinary skill. In the meanwhile, the discourse continued.

"E'en let it be so," said a grave man in black, the companion of Gaffer Grimesby; "e'en let us perish under the evil God sends us, rather than the devil be our doctor."

"Very true," said Dame Crane; "and I marvel at Jack Hostler that he would peril his own soul to cure the bowels of a nag."

"Very true, mistress," said Jack Hostler, "but the nag was my master's; and had it been yours, I think ye would ha' held me cheap enow an I had feared the devil when the poor beast was in such a taking. For the rest, let the clergy look to it. Every man to his craft, says the proverb—the parson to the prayer-book, and the groom to his curry-comb.

"I vow," said Dame Crane, "I think Jack Hostler speaks like a good Christian and a faithful servant, who will spare neither body nor soul in his master's service. However, the devil has lifted him in time, for a Constable of the Hundred came hither this morning to get old Gaffer Pinniewinks, the trier of witches, to go with him to the Vale of Whitehorse to comprehend Wayland Smith, and put him to his probation. I helped Pinniewinks to sharpen his pincers and his poking-awl, and I saw the warrant from Justice Blindas."

"Pooh—pooh—the devil would laugh both at Blindas and his warrant, constable and witch-finder to boot," said old Dame Crank, the Papist laundress; "Wayland Smith's flesh would mind Pinniewinks' awl no more than a cambric ruff minds a hot piccadilloe-needle. But tell me, gentlefolks, if the devil ever had such a hand among ye, as to snatch away your smiths and your artists from under your nose, when the good Abbots of Abingdon had their own? By Our Lady, no!—they had their hallowed tapers; and their holy water, and their relics, and what not, could send the foulest fiends a-packing. Go ask a heretic parson to do the like. But ours were a comfortable people."

"Very true, Dame Crank," said the hostler; "so said Simpkins of Simonburn when the curate kissed his wife,—'They are a comfortable people,' said he."

"Silence, thou foul-mouthed vermin," said Dame Crank; "is it fit for a heretic horse-boy like thee to handle such a text as the Catholic clergy?"

"In troth no, dame," replied the man of oats; "and as you yourself are now no text for their handling, dame, whatever may have been the case in your day, I think we had e'en better leave un alone."

At this last exchange of sarcasm, Dame Crank set up her throat, and began a horrible exclamation against Jack Hostler, under cover of which Tressilian and his attendant escaped into the house.

They had no sooner entered a private chamber, to which Goodman Crane himself had condescended to usher them, and dispatched their worthy and obsequious host on the errand of procuring wine and refreshment, than Wayland Smith began to give vent to his self-importance.

"You see, sir," said he, addressing Tressilian, "that I nothing fabled in asserting that I possessed fully the mighty mystery of a farrier, or mareschal, as the French more honourably term us. These dog-hostlers, who, after all, are the better judges in such a case, know what credit they should attach to my medicaments. I call you to witness, worshipful Master Tressilian, that nought, save the voice of calumny and the hand of malicious violence, hath driven me forth from a station in which I held a place alike useful and honoured."

"I bear witness, my friend, but will reserve my listening," answered Tressilian, "for a safer time; unless, indeed, you deem it essential to your reputation to be translated, like your late dwelling, by the assistance of a flash of fire. For you see your best friends reckon you no better than a mere sorcerer."

"Now, Heaven forgive them," said the artist, "who confounded learned skill with unlawful magic! I trust a man may be as skilful, or more so, than the best surgeon ever meddled with horse-flesh, and yet may be upon the matter little more than other ordinary men, or at the worst no conjurer."

"God forbid else!" said Tressilian. "But be silent just for the present, since here comes mine host with an assistant, who seems something of the least."

Everybody about the inn, Dame Crane herself included, had been indeed so interested and agitated by the story they had heard of Wayland Smith, and by the new, varying, and more marvellous editions of the incident which arrived from various quarters, that mine host, in his righteous determination to accommodate his guests, had been able to obtain the assistance of none of his household, saving that of a little boy, a junior tapster, of about twelve years old, who was called Sampson.

"I wish," he said, apologizing to his guests, as he set down a flagon of sack, and promised some food immediately—"I wish the devil had flown away with my wife and my whole family instead of this Wayland Smith, who, I daresay, after all said and done, was much less worthy of the distinction which Satan has done him."

"I hold opinion with you, good fellow," replied Wayland Smith; "and I will drink to you upon that argument."

"Not that I would justify any man who deals with the devil," said mine host, after having pledged Wayland in a rousing draught of sack, "but that—saw ye ever better sack, my masters?—but that, I say, a man had better deal with a dozen cheats and scoundrel fellows, such as this Wayland Smith, than with a devil incarnate, that takes possession of house and home, bed and board."

The poor fellow's detail of grievances was here interrupted by the shrill voice of his helpmate, screaming from the kitchen, to which he instantly hobbled, craving pardon of his guests. He was no sooner gone than Wayland Smith expressed, by every contemptuous epithet in the language, his utter scorn for a nincompoop who stuck his head under his wife's apron-string; and intimated that, saving for the sake of the horses, which required both rest and food, he would advise his worshipful Master Tressilian to push on a stage farther, rather than pay a reckoning to such a mean-spirited, crow-trodden, henpecked coxcomb, as Gaffer Crane. The arrival of a large dish of good cow-heel and bacon something soothed the asperity of the artist, which wholly vanished before a choice capon, so delicately roasted that the lard frothed on it, said Wayland, like May-dew on a lily; and both Gaffer Crane and his good dame became, in his eyes, very painstaking, accommodating, obliging persons.

According to the manners of the times, the master and his attendant sat at the same table, and the latter observed, with regret, how little attention Tressilian paid to his meal. He recollected, indeed, the pain he had given by mentioning the maiden in whose company he had first seen him; but, fearful of touching upon a topic too tender to be tampered with, he chose to ascribe his abstinence to another cause.

"This fare is perhaps too coarse for your worship," said Wayland, as the limbs of the capon disappeared before his own exertions; "but had you dwelt as long as I have done in yonder dungeon, which Flibbertigibbet has translated to the upper element, a place where I dared hardly broil my food, lest the smoke should be seen without, you would think a fair capon a more welcome dainty."

"If you are pleased, friend," said Tressilian, "it is well. Nevertheless, hasten thy meal if thou canst, For this place is unfriendly to thy safety, and my concerns crave travelling."

Allowing, therefore, their horses no more rest than was absolutely necessary for them, they pursued their journey by a forced march as far as Bradford, where they reposed themselves for the night.

The next morning found them early travellers. And, not to fatigue the reader with unnecessary particulars, they traversed without adventure the counties of Wiltshire and Somerset, and about noon of the third day after Tressilian's leaving Cumnor, arrived at Sir Hugh Robsart's seat, called Lidcote Hall, on the frontiers of Devonshire.

CHAPTER XII.

Ah me! the flower and blossom of your house,

The wind hath blown away to other towers.

—JOANNA BAILLIE'S FAMILY LEGEND.

The ancient seat of Lidcote Hall was situated near the village of the same name, and adjoined the wild and extensive forest of Exmoor, plentifully stocked with game, in which some ancient rights belonging to the Robsart family entitled Sir Hugh to pursue his favourite amusement of the chase. The old mansion was a low, venerable building, occupying a considerable space of ground, which was surrounded by a deep moat. The approach and drawbridge were defended by an octagonal tower, of ancient brickwork, but so clothed with ivy and other creepers that it was difficult to discover of what materials it was constructed. The angles of this tower were each decorated with a turret, whimsically various in form and in size, and, therefore, very unlike the monotonous stone pepperboxes which, in modern Gothic architecture, are employed for the same purpose. One of these turrets was square, and occupied as a clock-house. But the clock was now standing still; a circumstance peculiarly striking to Tressilian, because the good old knight, among other harmless peculiarities, had a fidgety anxiety about the exact measurement of time, very common to those who have a great deal of that commodity to dispose of, and find it lie heavy upon their hands—just as we see shopkeepers amuse themselves with taking an exact account of their stock at the time there is least demand for it.

The entrance to the courtyard of the old mansion lay through an archway, surmounted by the foresaid tower; but the drawbridge was down, and one leaf of the iron-studded folding-doors stood carelessly open. Tressilian hastily rode over the drawbridge, entered the court, and began to call loudly on the domestics by their names. For some time he was only answered by the echoes and the howling of the hounds, whose kennel lay at no great distance from the mansion, and was surrounded by the same moat. At length Will Badger, the old and favourite attendant of the knight, who acted alike as squire of his body and superintendent of his sports, made his appearance. The stout, weather-beaten forester showed great signs of joy when he recognized Tressilian.

"Lord love you," he said, "Master Edmund, be it thou in flesh and fell? Then thou mayest do some good on Sir Hugh, for it passes the wit of man—that is, of mine own, and the curate's, and Master Mumblazen's—to do aught wi'un."

"Is Sir Hugh then worse since I went away, Will?" demanded Tressilian.

"For worse in body—no; he is much better," replied the domestic; "but he is clean mazed as it were—eats and drinks as he was wont—but sleeps not, or rather wakes not, for he is ever in a sort of twilight, that is neither sleeping nor waking. Dame Swineford thought it was like the dead palsy. But no, no, dame, said I, it is the heart, it is the heart."

"Can ye not stir his mind to any pastimes?" said Tressilian.

"He is clean and quite off his sports," said Will Badger; "hath neither touched backgammon or shovel-board, nor looked on the big book of harrowtry wi' Master Mumblazen. I let the clock run down, thinking the missing the bell might somewhat move him—for you know, Master Edmund, he was particular in counting time—but he never said a word on't, so I may e'en set the old chime a-towling again. I made bold to tread on Bungay's tail too, and you know what a round rating that would ha' cost me once a-day; but he minded the poor tyke's whine no more than a madge howlet whooping down the chimney—so the case is beyond me."

"Thou shalt tell me the rest within doors, Will. Meanwhile, let this person be ta'en to the buttery, and used with respect. He is a man of art."

"White art or black art, I would," said Will Badger, "that he had any art which could help us.—Here, Tom Butler, look to the man of art;—and see that he steals none of thy spoons, lad," he added in a whisper to the butler, who showed himself at a low window, "I have known as honest a faced fellow have art enough to do that."

He then ushered Tressilian into a low parlour, and went, at his desire, to see in what state his master was, lest the sudden return of his darling pupil and proposed son-in-law should affect him too strongly. He returned immediately, and said that Sir Hugh was dozing in his elbow-chair, but that Master Mumblazen would acquaint Master Tressilian the instant he awaked.

"But it is chance if he knows you," said the huntsman, "for he has forgotten the name of every hound in the pack. I thought, about a week since, he had gotten a favourable turn. 'Saddle me old Sorrel,' said he suddenly, after he had taken his usual night-draught out of the great silver grace-cup, 'and take the hounds to Mount Hazelhurst to-morrow.' Glad men were we all, and out we had him in the morning, and he rode to cover as usual, with never a word spoken but that the wind was south, and the scent would lie. But ere we had uncoupled the hounds, he began to stare round him, like a man that wakes suddenly out of a dream—turns bridle, and walks back to Hall again, and leaves us to hunt at leisure by ourselves, if we listed."

"You tell a heavy tale, Will," replied Tressilian; "but God must help us—there is no aid in man."

"Then you bring us no news of young Mistress Amy? But what need I ask—your brow tells the story. Ever I hoped that if any man could or would track her, it must be you. All's over and lost now. But if ever I have that Varney within reach of a flight-shot, I will bestow a forked shaft on him; and that I swear by salt and bread."

As he spoke, the door opened, and Master Mumblazen appeared—a withered, thin, elderly gentleman, with a cheek like a winter apple, and his grey hair partly concealed by a small, high hat, shaped like a cone, or rather like such a strawberry-basket as London fruiterers exhibit at their windows. He was too sententious a person to waste words on mere salutation; so, having welcomed Tressilian with a nod and a shake of the hand, he beckoned him to follow to Sir Hugh's great chamber, which the good knight usually inhabited. Will Badger followed, unasked, anxious to see whether his master would be relieved from his state of apathy by the arrival of Tressilian.

In a long, low parlour, amply furnished with implements of the chase, and with silvan trophies, by a massive stone chimney, over which hung a sword and suit of armour somewhat obscured by neglect, sat Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote, a man of large size, which had been only kept within moderate compass by the constant use of violent exercise. It seemed to Tressilian that the lethargy, under which his old friend appeared to labour, had, even during his few weeks' absence, added bulk to his person—at least it had obviously diminished the vivacity of his eye, which, as they entered, first followed Master Mumblazen slowly to a large oaken desk, on which a ponderous volume lay open, and then rested, as if in uncertainty, on the stranger who had entered along with him. The curate, a grey-headed clergyman, who had been a confessor in the days of Queen Mary, sat with a book in his hand in another recess in the apartment. He, too, signed a mournful greeting to Tressilian, and laid his book aside, to watch the effect his appearance should produce on the afflicted old man.

As Tressilian, his own eyes filling fast with tears, approached more and more nearly to the father of his betrothed bride, Sir Hugh's intelligence seemed to revive. He sighed heavily, as one who awakens from a state of stupor; a slight convulsion passed over his features; he opened his arms without speaking a word, and, as Tressilian threw himself into them, he folded him to his bosom.

"There is something left to live for yet," were the first words he uttered; and while he spoke, he gave vent to his feelings in a paroxysm of weeping, the tears chasing each other down his sunburnt cheeks and long white beard.

"I ne'er thought to have thanked God to see my master weep," said Will Badger; "but now I do, though I am like to weep for company."

"I will ask thee no questions," said the old knight; "no questions—none, Edmund. Thou hast not found her—or so found her, that she were better lost."

Tressilian was unable to reply otherwise than by putting his hands before his face.

"It is enough—it is enough. But do not thou weep for her, Edmund. I have cause to weep, for she was my daughter; thou hast cause to rejoice, that she did not become thy wife.—Great God! thou knowest best what is good for us. It was my nightly prayer that I should see Amy and Edmund wedded,—had it been granted, it had now been gall added to bitterness."

"Be comforted, my friend," said the curate, addressing Sir Hugh, "it cannot be that the daughter of all our hopes and affections is the vile creature you would bespeak her."

"Oh, no," replied Sir Hugh impatiently, "I were wrong to name broadly the base thing she is become—there is some new court name for it, I warrant me. It is honour enough for the daughter of an old Devonshire clown to be the leman of a gay courtier—of Varney too—of Varney, whose grandsire was relieved by my father, when his fortune was broken, at the battle of—the battle of—where Richard was slain—out on my memory!—and I warrant none of you will help me—"

"The battle of Bosworth," said Master Mumblazen—"stricken between Richard Crookback and Henry Tudor, grandsire of the Queen that now is, PRIMO HENRICI SEPTIMI; and in the year one thousand four hundred and eighty-five, POST CHRISTUM NATUM."

"Ay, even so," said the old knight; "every child knows it. But my poor head forgets all it should remember, and remembers only what it would most willingly forget. My brain has been at fault, Tressilian, almost ever since thou hast been away, and even yet it hunts counter."

"Your worship," said the good clergyman, "had better retire to your apartment, and try to sleep for a little space. The physician left a composing draught; and our Great Physician has commanded us to use earthly means, that we may be strengthened to sustain the trials He sends us."

"True, true, old friend," said Sir Hugh; "and we will bear our trials manfully—we have lost but a woman.—See, Tressilian,"—he drew from his bosom a long ringlet of glossy hair,— "see this lock! I tell thee, Edmund, the very night she disappeared, when she bid me good even, as she was wont, she hung about my neck, and fondled me more than usual; and I, like an old fool, held her by this lock, until she took her scissors, severed it, and left it in my hand—as all I was ever to see more of her!"

Tressilian was unable to reply, well judging what a complication of feelings must have crossed the bosom of the unhappy fugitive at that cruel moment. The clergyman was about to speak, but Sir Hugh interrupted him.

"I know what you would say, Master Curate,—After all, it is but a lock of woman's tresses; and by woman, shame, and sin, and death came into an innocent world.—And learned Master Mumblazen, too, can say scholarly things of their inferiority."

"C'EST L'HOMME," said Master Mumblazen, "QUI SE BAST, ET QUI CONSEILLE."

"True," said Sir Hugh, "and we will bear us, therefore, like men who have both mettle and wisdom in us.—Tressilian, thou art as welcome as if thou hadst brought better news. But we have spoken too long dry-lipped.—Amy, fill a cup of wine to Edmund, and another to me." Then instantly recollecting that he called upon her who could not hear, he shook his head, and said to the clergyman, "This grief is to my bewildered mind what the church of Lidcote is to our park: we may lose ourselves among the briers and thickets for a little space, but from the end of each avenue we see the old grey steeple and the grave of my forefathers. I would I were to travel that road tomorrow!"

Tressilian and the curate joined in urging the exhausted old man to lay himself to rest, and at length prevailed. Tressilian remained by his pillow till he saw that slumber at length sunk down on him, and then returned to consult with the curate what steps should be adopted in these unhappy circumstances.

They could not exclude from these deliberations Master Michael Mumblazen; and they admitted him the more readily, that besides what hopes they entertained from his sagacity, they knew him to be so great a friend to taciturnity, that there was no doubt of his keeping counsel. He was an old bachelor, of good family, but small fortune, and distantly related to the House of Robsart; in virtue of which connection, Lidcote Hall had been honoured with his residence for the last twenty years. His company was agreeable to Sir Hugh, chiefly on account of his profound learning, which, though it only related to heraldry and genealogy, with such scraps of history as connected themselves with these subjects, was precisely of a kind to captivate the good old knight; besides the convenience which he found in having a friend to appeal to when his own memory, as frequently happened, proved infirm and played him false concerning names and dates, which, and all similar deficiencies, Master Michael Mumblazen supplied with due brevity and discretion. And, indeed, in matters concerning the modern world, he often gave, in his enigmatical and heraldic phrase, advice which was well worth attending to, or, in Will Badger's language, started the game while others beat the bush.

"We have had an unhappy time of it with the good knight, Master Edmund," said the curate. "I have not suffered so much since I was torn away from my beloved flock, and compelled to abandon them to the Romish wolves."

"That was in TERTIO MARIAE," said Master Mumblazen.

"In the name of Heaven," continued the curate, "tell us, has your time been better spent than ours, or have you any news of that unhappy maiden, who, being for so many years the principal joy of this broken-down house, is now proved our greatest unhappiness? Have you not at least discovered her place of residence?"

"I have," replied Tressilian. "Know you Cumnor Place, near Oxford?"

"Surely," said the clergyman; "it was a house of removal for the monks of Abingdon."

"Whose arms," said Master Michael, "I have seen over a stone chimney in the hall,—a cross patonce betwixt four martlets."

"There," said Tressilian, "this unhappy maiden resides, in company with the villain Varney. But for a strange mishap, my sword had revenged all our injuries, as well as hers, on his worthless head."

"Thank God, that kept thine hand from blood-guiltiness, rash young man!" answered the curate. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it. It were better study to free her from the villain's nets of infamy."

"They are called, in heraldry, LAQUEI AMORIS, or LACS D'AMOUR," said Mumblazen.

"It is in that I require your aid, my friends," said Tressilian. "I am resolved to accuse this villain, at the very foot of the throne, of falsehood, seduction, and breach of hospitable laws. The Queen shall hear me, though the Earl of Leicester, the villain's patron, stood at her right hand."

"Her Grace," said the curate, "hath set a comely example of continence to her subjects, and will doubtless do justice on this inhospitable robber. But wert thou not better apply to the Earl of Leicester, in the first place, for justice on his servant? If he grants it, thou dost save the risk of making thyself a powerful adversary, which will certainly chance if, in the first instance, you accuse his master of the horse and prime favourite before the Queen."

"My mind revolts from your counsel," said Tressilian. "I cannot brook to plead my noble patron's cause the unhappy Amy's cause—before any one save my lawful Sovereign. Leicester, thou wilt say, is noble. Be it so; he is but a subject like ourselves, and I will not carry my plaint to him, if I can do better. Still, I will think on what thou hast said; but I must have your assistance to persuade the good Sir Hugh to make me his commissioner and fiduciary in this matter, for it is in his name I must speak, and not in my own. Since she is so far changed as to dote upon this empty profligate courtier, he shall at least do her the justice which is yet in his power."

"Better she died CAELEBS and SINE PROLE," said Mumblazen, with more animation than he usually expressed, "than part, PER PALE, the noble coat of Robsart with that of such a miscreant!"

"If it be your object, as I cannot question," said the clergyman, "to save, as much as is yet possible, the credit of this unhappy young woman, I repeat, you should apply, in the first instance, to the Earl of Leicester. He is as absolute in his household as the Queen in her kingdom, and if he expresses to Varney that such is his pleasure, her honour will not stand so publicly committed."

"You are right, you are right!" said Tressilian eagerly, "and I thank you for pointing out what I overlooked in my haste. I little thought ever to have besought grace of Leicester; but I could kneel to the proud Dudley, if doing so could remove one shade of shame from this unhappy damsel. You will assist me then to procure the necessary powers from Sir Hugh Robsart?"

The curate assured him of his assistance, and the herald nodded assent.

"You must hold yourselves also in readiness to testify, in case you are called upon, the openhearted hospitality which our good patron exercised towards this deceitful traitor, and the solicitude with which he laboured to seduce his unhappy daughter."

"At first," said the clergyman, "she did not, as it seemed to me, much affect his company; but latterly I saw them often together."

"SEIANT in the parlour," said Michael Mumblazen, "and PASSANT in the garden."

"I once came on them by chance," said the priest, "in the South wood, in a spring evening. Varney was muffled in a russet cloak, so that I saw not his face. They separated hastily, as they heard me rustle amongst the leaves; and I observed she turned her head and looked long after him."

"With neck REGUARDANT," said the herald. "And on the day of her flight, and that was on Saint Austen's Eve, I saw Varney's groom, attired in his liveries, hold his master's horse and Mistress Amy's palfrey, bridled and saddled PROPER, behind the wall of the churchyard."

"And now is she found mewed up in his secret place of retirement," said Tressilian. "The villain is taken in the manner, and I well wish he may deny his crime, that I may thrust conviction down his false throat! But I must prepare for my journey. Do you, gentlemen, dispose my patron to grant me such powers as are needful to act in his name."

So saying, Tressilian left the room.

"He is too hot," said the curate; "and I pray to God that He may grant him the patience to deal with Varney as is fitting."

"Patience and Varney," said Mumblazen, "is worse heraldry than metal upon metal. He is more false than a siren, more rapacious than a griffin, more poisonous than a wyvern, and more cruel than a lion rampant."

"Yet I doubt much," said the curate, "whether we can with propriety ask from Sir Hugh Robsart, being in his present condition, any deed deputing his paternal right in Mistress Amy to whomsoever—"

"Your reverence need not doubt that," said Will Badger, who entered as he spoke, "for I will lay my life he is another man when he wakes than he has been these thirty days past."

"Ay, Will," said the curate, "hast thou then so much confidence in Doctor Diddleum's draught?"

"Not a whit," said Will, "because master ne'er tasted a drop on't, seeing it was emptied out by the housemaid. But here's a gentleman, who came attending on Master Tressilian, has given Sir Hugh a draught that is worth twenty of yon un. I have spoken cunningly with him, and a better farrier or one who hath a more just notion of horse and dog ailment I have never seen; and such a one would never be unjust to a Christian man."

"A farrier! you saucy groom—and by whose authority, pray?" said the curate, rising in surprise and indignation; "or who will be warrant for this new physician?"

"For authority, an it like your reverence, he had mine; and for warrant, I trust I have not been five-and-twenty years in this house without having right to warrant the giving of a draught to beast or body—I who can gie a drench, and a ball, and bleed, or blister, if need, to my very self."

The counsellors of the house of Robsart thought it meet to carry this information instantly to Tressilian, who as speedily summoned before him Wayland Smith, and demanded of him (in private, however) by what authority he had ventured to administer any medicine to Sir Hugh Robsart?

"Why," replied the artist, "your worship cannot but remember that I told you I had made more progress into my master's—I mean the learned Doctor Doboobie's—mystery than he was willing to own; and indeed half of his quarrel and malice against me was that, besides that I got something too deep into his secrets, several discerning persons, and particularly a buxom young widow of Abingdon, preferred my prescriptions to his."

"None of thy buffoonery, sir," said Tressilian sternly. "If thou hast trifled with us—much more, if thou hast done aught that may prejudice Sir Hugh Robsart's health, thou shalt find thy grave at the bottom of a tin-mine."

"I know too little of the great ARCANUM to convert the ore to gold," said Wayland firmly. "But truce to your apprehensions, Master Tressilian. I understood the good knight's case from what Master William Badger told me; and I hope I am able enough to administer a poor dose of mandragora, which, with the sleep that must needs follow, is all that Sir Hugh Robsart requires to settle his distraught brains."

"I trust thou dealest fairly with me, Wayland?" said Tressilian.

"Most fairly and honestly, as the event shall show," replied the artist. "What would it avail me to harm the poor old man for whom you are interested?—you, to whom I owe it that Gaffer Pinniewinks is not even now rending my flesh and sinews with his accursed pincers, and probing every mole in my body with his sharpened awl (a murrain on the hands which forged it!) in order to find out the witch's mark?—I trust to yoke myself as a humble follower to your worship's train, and I only wish to have my faith judged of by the result of the good knight's slumbers."

Wayland Smith was right in his prognostication. The sedative draught which his skill had prepared, and Will Badger's confidence had administered, was attended with the most beneficial effects. The patient's sleep was long and healthful, and the poor old knight awoke, humbled indeed in thought and weak in frame, yet a much better judge of whatever was subjected to his intellect than he had been for some time past. He resisted for a while the proposal made by his friends that Tressilian should undertake a journey to court, to attempt the recovery of his daughter, and the redress of her wrongs, in so far as they might yet be repaired. "Let her go," he said; "she is but a hawk that goes down the wind; I would not bestow even a whistle to reclaim her." But though he for some time maintained this argument, he was at length convinced it was his duty to take the part to which natural affection inclined him, and consent that such efforts as could yet be made should be used by Tressilian in behalf of his daughter. He subscribed, therefore, a warrant of attorney, such as the curate's skill enabled him to draw up; for in those simple days the clergy were often the advisers of their flock in law as well as in gospel.

All matters were prepared for Tressilian's second departure, within twenty-four hours after he had returned to Lidcote Hall; but one material circumstance had been forgotten, which was first called to the remembrance of Tressilian by Master Mumblazen. "You are going to court, Master Tressilian," said he; "you will please remember that your blazonry must be ARGENT and OR—no other tinctures will pass current." The remark was equally just and embarrassing. To prosecute a suit at court, ready money was as indispensable even in the golden days of Elizabeth as at any succeeding period; and it was a commodity little at the command of the inhabitants of Lidcote Hall. Tressilian was himself poor; the revenues of good Sir Hugh Robsart were consumed, and even anticipated, in his hospitable mode of living; and it was finally necessary that the herald who started the doubt should himself solve it. Master Michael Mumblazen did so by producing a bag of money, containing nearly three hundred pounds in gold and silver of various coinage, the savings of twenty years, which he now, without speaking a syllable upon the subject, dedicated to the service of the patron whose shelter and protection had given him the means of making this little hoard. Tressilian accepted it without affecting a moment's hesitation, and a mutual grasp of the hand was all that passed betwixt them, to express the pleasure which the one felt in dedicating his all to such a purpose, and that which the other received from finding so material an obstacle to the success of his journey so suddenly removed, and in a manner so unexpected.

While Tressilian was making preparations for his departure early the ensuing morning, Wayland Smith desired to speak with him, and, expressing his hope that he had been pleased with the operation of his medicine in behalf of Sir Hugh Robsart, added his desire to accompany him to court. This was indeed what Tressilian himself had several times thought of; for the shrewdness, alertness of understanding, and variety of resource which this fellow had exhibited during the time they had travelled together, had made him sensible that his assistance might be of importance. But then Wayland was in danger from the grasp of law; and of this Tressilian reminded him, mentioning something, at the same time, of the pincers of Pinniewinks and the warrant of Master Justice Blindas. Wayland Smith laughed both to scorn.

"See you, sir!" said he, "I have changed my garb from that of a farrier to a serving-man; but were it still as it was, look at my moustaches. They now hang down; I will but turn them up, and dye them with a tincture that I know of, and the devil would scarce know me again."

He accompanied these words with the appropriate action, and in less than a minute, by setting up, his moustaches and his hair, he seemed a different person from him that had but now entered the room. Still, however, Tressilian hesitated to accept his services, and the artist became proportionably urgent.

"I owe you life and limb," he said, "and I would fain pay a part of the debt, especially as I know from Will Badger on what dangerous service your worship is bound. I do not, indeed, pretend to be what is called a man of mettle, one of those ruffling tear-cats who maintain their master's quarrel with sword and buckler. Nay, I am

even one of those who hold the end of a feast better than the beginning of a fray. But I know that I can serve your worship better, in such quest as yours, than any of these sword-and-dagger men, and that my head will be worth an hundred of their hands."

Tressilian still hesitated. He knew not much of this strange fellow, and was doubtful how far he could repose in him the confidence necessary to render him a useful attendant upon the present emergency. Ere he had come to a determination, the trampling of a horse was heard in the courtyard, and Master Mumblazen and Will Badger both entered hastily into Tressilian's chamber, speaking almost at the same moment.

"Here is a serving-man on the bonniest grey tit I ever see'd in my life," said Will Badger, who got the start—"having on his arm a silver cognizance, being a fire-drake holding in his mouth a brickbat, under a coronet of an Earl's degree," said Master Mumblazen, "and bearing a letter sealed of the same."

Tressilian took the letter, which was addressed "To the worshipful Master Edmund Tressilian, our loving kinsman—These—ride, ride, ride—for thy life, for thy life, for thy life." He then opened it, and found the following contents:—

"MASTER TRESSILIAN, OUR GOOD FRIEND AND COUSIN,

"We are at present so ill at ease, and otherwise so unhappily circumstanced, that we are desirous to have around us those of our friends on whose loving-kindness we can most especially repose confidence; amongst whom we hold our good Master Tressilian one of the foremost and nearest, both in good will and good ability. We therefore pray you, with your most convenient speed, to repair to our poor lodging, at Sayes Court, near Deptford, where we will treat further with you of matters which we deem it not fit to commit unto writing. And so we bid you heartily farewell, being your loving kinsman to command,

"RATCLIFFE, EARL OF SUSSEX."

"Send up the messenger instantly, Will Badger," said Tressilian; and as the man entered the room, he exclaimed, "Ah, Stevens, is it you? how does my good lord?"

"Ill, Master Tressilian," was the messenger's reply, "and having therefore the more need of good friends around him."

"But what is my lord's malady?" said Tressilian anxiously; "I heard nothing of his being ill."

"I know not, sir," replied the man; "he is very ill at ease. The leeches are at a stand, and many of his household suspect foul practice-witchcraft, or worse."

"What are the symptoms?" said Wayland Smith, stepping forward hastily.

"Anan?" said the messenger, not comprehending his meaning.

"What does he ail?" said Wayland; "where lies his disease?"

The man looked at Tressilian, as if to know whether he should answer these inquiries from a stranger, and receiving a sign in the affirmative, he hastily enumerated gradual loss of strength, nocturnal perspiration, and loss of appetite, faintness, etc.

"Joined," said Wayland, "to a gnawing pain in the stomach, and a low fever?"

"Even so," said the messenger, somewhat surprised.

"I know how the disease is caused," said the artist, "and I know the cause. Your master has eaten of the manna of Saint Nicholas. I know the cure too—my master shall not say I studied in his laboratory for nothing."

"How mean you?" said Tressilian, frowning; "we speak of one of the first nobles of England. Bethink you, this is no subject for buffoonery."

"God forbid!" said Wayland Smith. "I say that I know this disease, and can cure him. Remember what I did for Sir Hugh Robsart."

"We will set forth instantly," said Tressilian. "God calls us."

Accordingly, hastily mentioning this new motive for his instant departure, though without alluding to either the suspicions of Stevens, or the assurances of Wayland Smith, he took the kindest leave of Sir Hugh and the family at Lidcote Hall, who accompanied him with prayers and blessings, and, attended by Wayland and the Earl of Sussex's domestic, travelled with the utmost speed towards London.

CHAPTER XIII.

*Ay, I know you have arsenic,
Vitriol, sal-tartre, argaile, alkaly,
Cinoper: I know all.—This fellow, Captain,
Will come in time to be a great distiller,
And give a say (I will not say directly,
But very near) at the philosopher's stone. THE ALCHEMIST.*

Tressilian and his attendants pressed their route with all dispatch. He had asked the smith, indeed, when their departure was resolved on, whether he would not rather choose to avoid Berkshire, in which he had played a part so conspicuous? But Wayland returned a confident answer. He had employed the short interval they passed at Lidcote Hall in transforming himself in a wonderful manner. His wild and overgrown thicket of beard was now restrained to two small moustaches on the upper lip, turned up in a military fashion. A tailor from the village of Lidcote (well paid) had exerted his skill, under his customer's directions, so as completely to alter Wayland's outward man, and take off from his appearance almost twenty years of age. Formerly, besmeared with soot and charcoal, overgrown with hair, and bent double with the nature of his labour, disfigured too by his odd and fantastic dress, he seemed a man of fifty years old. But now, in a handsome suit of Tressilian's livery, with a sword by his side and a buckler on his shoulder, he looked like a gay ruffling serving-man, whose age might be betwixt thirty and thirty-five, the very prime of human life. His loutish, savage-looking demeanour seemed equally changed, into a forward, sharp, and impudent alertness of look and action.

When challenged by Tressilian, who desired to know the cause of a metamorphosis so singular and so absolute, Wayland only answered by singing a stave from a comedy, which was then new, and was supposed, among the more favourable judges, to augur some genius on the part of the author. We are happy to preserve the couplet, which ran exactly thus,—

*"Ban, ban, ca Caliban—
Get a new master—Be a new man."*

Although Tressilian did not recollect the verses, yet they reminded him that Wayland had once been a stage player, a circumstance which, of itself, accounted indifferently well for the readiness with which he could assume so total a change of personal appearance. The artist himself was so confident of his disguise being completely changed, or of his having completely changed his disguise, which may be the more correct mode of speaking, that he regretted they were not to pass near his old place of retreat.

"I could venture," he said, "in my present dress, and with your worship's backing, to face Master Justice Blindas, even on a day of Quarter Sessions; and I would like to know what is become of Hobgoblin, who is like to play the devil in the world, if he can once slip the string, and leave his granny and his dominie.—Ay, and the scathed vault!" he said; "I would willingly have seen what havoc the explosion of so much gunpowder has made among Doctor Demetrius Doboobie's retorts and phials. I warrant me, my fame haunts the Vale of the Whitehorse long after my body is rotten; and that many a lout ties up his horse, lays down his silver groat, and pipes like a sailor whistling in a calm for Wayland Smith to come and shoe his tit for him. But the horse will catch the founders ere the smith answers the call."

In this particular, indeed, Wayland proved a true prophet; and so easily do fables rise, that an obscure tradition of his extraordinary practice in farriery prevails in the Vale of Whitehorse even unto this day; and neither the tradition of Alfred's Victory, nor of the celebrated Pusey Horn, are better preserved in Berkshire than the wild legend of Wayland Smith. [See Note 2, Legend of Wayland Smith.]

The haste of the travellers admitted their making no stay upon their journey, save what the refreshment of the horses required; and as many of the places through which they passed were under the influence of the Earl of Leicester, or persons immediately dependent on him, they thought it prudent to disguise their names and the purpose of their journey. On such occasions the agency of Wayland Smith (by which name we shall continue to distinguish the artist, though his real name was Lancelot Wayland) was extremely serviceable. He seemed, indeed, to have a pleasure in displaying the alertness with which he could baffle investigation, and amuse himself by putting the curiosity of tapsters and inn-keepers on a false scent. During the course of their brief journey, three different and inconsistent reports were circulated by him on their account—namely, first, that Tressilian was the Lord Deputy of Ireland, come over in disguise to take the Queen's pleasure concerning the great rebel Rory Oge MacCarthy MacMahon; secondly, that the said Tressilian was an agent of Monsieur, coming to urge his suit to the hand of Elizabeth; thirdly, that he was the Duke of Medina, come over, incognito, to adjust the quarrel betwixt Philip and that princess.

Tressilian was angry, and expostulated with the artist on the various inconveniences, and, in particular, the unnecessary degree of attention to which they were subjected by the figments he thus circulated; but he was pacified (for who could be proof against such an argument?) by Wayland's assuring him that a general importance was attached to his own (Tressilian's) striking presence, which rendered it necessary to give an extraordinary reason for the rapidity and secrecy of his journey.

At length they approached the metropolis, where, owing to the more general recourse of strangers, their appearance excited neither observation nor inquiry, and finally they entered London itself.

It was Tressilian's purpose to go down directly to Deptford, where Lord Sussex resided, in order to be near the court, then held at Greenwich, the favourite residence of Elizabeth, and honoured as her birthplace. Still a brief halt in London was necessary; and it was somewhat prolonged by the earnest entreaties of Wayland Smith, who desired permission to take a walk through the city.

"Take thy sword and buckler, and follow me, then," said Tressilian; "I am about to walk myself, and we will go in company."

This he said, because he was not altogether so secure of the fidelity of his new retainer as to lose sight of him at this interesting moment, when rival factions at the court of Elizabeth were running so high. Wayland Smith willingly acquiesced in the precaution, of which he probably conjectured the motive, but only stipulated that his master should enter the shops of such chemists or apothecaries as he should point out, in walking through Fleet Street, and permit him to make some necessary purchases. Tressilian agreed, and obeying the signal of his attendant, walked successively into more than four or five shops, where he observed that Wayland purchased in each only one single drug, in various quantities. The medicines which he first asked for were readily furnished, each in succession, but those which he afterwards required were less easily supplied; and Tressilian observed that Wayland more than once, to the surprise of the shopkeeper, returned the gum or herb that was offered to him, and compelled him to exchange it for the right sort, or else went on to seek it elsewhere. But one ingredient, in particular, seemed almost impossible to be found. Some chemists plainly admitted they had never seen it; others denied that such a drug existed, excepting in the imagination of crazy alchemists; and most of them attempted to satisfy their customer, by producing some substitute, which, when rejected by Wayland, as not being what he had asked for, they maintained possessed, in a superior degree, the self-same qualities. In general they all displayed some curiosity concerning the purpose for which he wanted it. One old, meagre chemist, to whom the artist put the usual question, in terms which Tressilian neither understood nor could recollect, answered frankly, there was none of that drug in London, unless Yoglan the Jew chanced to have some of it upon hand.

"I thought as much," said Wayland. And as soon as they left the shop, he said to Tressilian, "I crave your pardon, sir, but no artist can work without his tools. I must needs go to this Yoglan's; and I promise you, that if this detains you longer than your leisure seems to permit, you shall, nevertheless, be well repaid by the use I will make of this rare drug. Permit me," he added, "to walk before you, for we are now to quit the broad street and we will make double speed if I lead the way."

Tressilian acquiesced, and, following the smith down a lane which turned to the left hand towards the river, he found that his guide walked on with great speed, and apparently perfect knowledge of the town, through a labyrinth of by-streets, courts, and blind alleys, until at length Wayland paused in the midst of a very narrow lane, the termination of which showed a peep of the Thames looking misty and muddy, which background was crossed saltierwise, as Mr. Mumblazen might have said, by the masts of two lighters that lay waiting for the tide. The shop under which he halted had not, as in modern days, a glazed window, but a paltry canvas screen surrounded such a stall as a cobbler now occupies, having the front open, much in the manner of a fishmonger's booth of the present day. A little old smock-faced man, the very reverse of a Jew in complexion, for he was very soft-haired as well as beardless, appeared, and with many courtesies asked Wayland what he pleased to want. He had no sooner named the drug, than the Jew started and looked surprised. "And vat might your vorship vant vith that drug, which is not named, mein God, in forty years as I have been chemist here?"

"These questions it is no part of my commission to answer," said Wayland; "I only wish to know if you have what I want, and having it, are willing to sell it?"

"Ay, mein God, for having it, that I have, and for selling it, I am a chemist, and sell every drug." So saying, he exhibited a powder, and then continued, "But it will cost much moneys. Vat I ave cost its weight in gold—ay, gold well-refined—I vill say six times. It comes from Mount Sinai, where we had our blessed Law given forth, and the plant blossoms but once in one hundred year."

"I do not know how often it is gathered on Mount Sinai," said Wayland, after looking at the drug offered him with great disdain, "but I will wager my sword and buckler against your gaberdine, that this trash you offer me, instead of what I asked for, may be had for gathering any day of the week in the castle ditch of Aleppo."

"You are a rude man," said the Jew; "and, besides, I ave no better than that—or if I ave, I will not sell it without order of a physician, or without you tell me vat you make of it."

The artist made brief answer in a language of which Tressilian could not understand a word, and which seemed to strike the Jew with the utmost astonishment. He stared upon Wayland like one who has suddenly recognized some mighty hero or dreaded potentate, in the person of an unknown and unmarked stranger. "Holy Elias!" he exclaimed, when he had recovered the first stunning effects of his surprise; and then passing from his former suspicious and surly manner to the very extremity of obsequiousness, he cringed low to the artist, and besought him to enter his poor house, to bless his miserable threshold by crossing it.

"Vill you not taste a cup vith the poor Jew, Zacharias Yoglan?—Vill you Tokay ave?—vill you Lachrymae taste?—vill you—"

"You offend in your proffers," said Wayland; "minister to me in what I require of you, and forbear further discourse."

The rebuked Israelite took his bunch of keys, and opening with circumspection a cabinet which seemed more strongly secured than the other cases of drugs and medicines amongst which it stood, he drew out a little secret drawer, having a glass lid, and containing a small portion of a black powder. This he offered to Wayland, his manner conveying the deepest devotion towards him, though an avaricious and jealous expression, which seemed to grudge every grain of what his customer was about to possess himself, disputed ground in his countenance with the obsequious deference which he desired it should exhibit.

"Have you scales?" said Wayland.

The Jew pointed to those which lay ready for common use in the shop, but he did so with a puzzled expression of doubt and fear, which did not escape the artist.

"They must be other than these," said Wayland sternly. "Know you not that holy things lose their virtue if weighed in an unjust balance?"

The Jew hung his head, took from a steel-plated casket a pair of scales beautifully mounted, and said, as he adjusted them for the artist's use, "With these I do mine own experiment—one hair of the high-priest's beard would turn them."

"It suffices," said the artist, and weighed out two drachms for himself of the black powder, which he very carefully folded up, and put into his pouch with the other drugs. He then demanded the price of the Jew, who answered, shaking his head and bowing,—

"No price—no, nothing at all from such as you. But you will see the poor Jew again? you will look into his laboratory, where, God help him, he hath dried himself to the substance of the withered gourd of Jonah, the holy prophet. You will ave pity on him, and show him one little step on the great road?"

"Hush!" said Wayland, laying his finger mysteriously on his mouth; "it may be we shall meet again. Thou hast already the SCHAHMAJM, as thine own Rabbis call it—the general creation; watch, therefore, and pray, for thou must attain the knowledge of Alchahest Elixir Samech ere I may commune further with thee." Then

returning with a slight nod the reverential congees of the Jew, he walked gravely up the lane, followed by his master, whose first observation on the scene he had just witnessed was, that Wayland ought to have paid the man for his drug, whatever it was.

"I pay him?" said the artist. "May the foul fiend pay me if I do! Had it not been that I thought it might displease your worship, I would have had an ounce or two of gold out of him, in exchange of the same just weight of brick dust."

"I advise you to practise no such knavery while waiting upon me," said Tressilian.

"Did I not say," answered the artist, "that for that reason alone I forbore him for the present?—Knavery, call you it? Why, yonder wretched skeleton hath wealth sufficient to pave the whole lane he lives in with dollars, and scarce miss them out of his own iron chest; yet he goes mad after the philosopher's stone. And besides, he would have cheated a poor serving-man, as he thought me at first, with trash that was not worth a penny. Match for match, quoth the devil to the collier; if his false medicine was worth my good crowns, my true brick dust is as well worth his good gold."

"It may be so, for aught I know," said Tressilian, "in dealing amongst Jews and apothecaries; but understand that to have such tricks of legerdemain practised by one attending on me diminishes my honour, and that I will not permit them. I trust thou hast made up thy purchases?"

"I have, sir," replied Wayland; "and with these drugs will I, this very day, compound the true orvietan, that noble medicine which is so seldom found genuine and effective within these realms of Europe, for want of that most rare and precious drug which I got but now from Yoglan." [Orvietan, or Venice treacle, as it was sometimes called, was understood to be a sovereign remedy against poison; and the reader must be contented, for the time he peruses these pages, to hold the same opinion, which was once universally received by the learned as well as the vulgar.]

"But why not have made all your purchases at one shop?" said his master; "we have lost nearly an hour in running from one pounder of simples to another."

"Content you, sir," said Wayland. "No man shall learn my secret; and it would not be mine long, were I to buy all my materials from one chemist."

They now returned to their inn (the famous Bell-Savage); and while the Lord Sussex's servant prepared the horses for their journey, Wayland, obtaining from the cook the service of a mortar, shut himself up in a private chamber, where he mixed, pounded, and amalgamated the drugs which he had bought, each in its due proportion, with a readiness and address that plainly showed him well practised in all the manual operations of pharmacy.

By the time Wayland's electuary was prepared the horses were ready, and a short hour's riding brought them to the present habitation of Lord Sussex, an ancient house, called Sayes Court, near Deptford, which had long pertained to a family of that name, but had for upwards of a century been possessed by the ancient and honourable family of Evelyn. The present representative of that ancient house took a deep interest in the Earl of Sussex, and had willingly accommodated both him and his numerous retinue in his hospitable mansion. Sayes Court was afterwards the residence of the celebrated Mr. Evelyn, whose "Silva" is still the manual of British planters; and whose life, manners, and principles, as illustrated in his Memoirs, ought equally to be the manual of English gentlemen.

CHAPTER XIV.

*This is rare news thou tell'st me, my good fellow;
There are two bulls fierce battling on the green
For one fair heifer—if the one goes down,
The dale will be more peaceful, and the herd,
Which have small interest in their brulziement,
May pasture there in peace. —OLD PLAY.*

Sayes Court was watched like a beleaguered fort; and so high rose the suspicions of the time, that Tressilian and his attendants were stopped and questioned repeatedly by sentinels, both on foot and horseback, as they approached the abode of the sick Earl. In truth, the high rank which Sussex held in Queen Elizabeth's favour, and his known and avowed rivalry of the Earl of Leicester, caused the utmost importance to be attached to his welfare; for, at the period we treat of, all men doubted whether he or the Earl of Leicester might ultimately have the higher rank in her regard.

Elizabeth, like many of her sex, was fond of governing by factions, so as to balance two opposing interests, and reserve in her own hand the power of making either predominate, as the interest of the state, or perhaps as her own female caprice (for to that foible even she was not superior), might finally determine. To finesse—to hold the cards—to oppose one interest to another—to bridle him who thought himself highest in her esteem, by the fears he must entertain of another equally trusted, if not equally beloved, were arts which she used throughout her reign, and which enabled her, though frequently giving way to the weakness of favouritism, to prevent most of its evil effects on her kingdom and government.

The two nobles who at present stood as rivals in her favour possessed very different pretensions to share it; yet it might be in general said that the Earl of Sussex had been most serviceable to the Queen, while Leicester was most dear to the woman. Sussex was, according to the phrase of the times, a martialist—had done good service in Ireland and in Scotland, and especially in the great northern rebellion, in 1569, which was quelled, in a great measure, by his military talents. He was, therefore, naturally surrounded and looked up to by those who wished to make arms their road to distinction. The Earl of Sussex, moreover, was of more ancient and honourable descent than his rival, uniting in his person the representation of the Fitz-Walters, as well as of the Ratcliffes; while the scutcheon of Leicester was stained by the degradation of his grandfather, the oppressive minister of Henry VII., and scarce improved by that of his father, the unhappy Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, executed on Tower Hill, August 22, 1553. But in person, features, and address, weapons so formidable in the court of a female sovereign, Leicester had advantages more than sufficient to counterbalance the military services, high blood, and frank bearing of the Earl of Sussex; and he bore, in the eye of the court and kingdom, the higher share in Elizabeth's favour, though (for such was her uniform policy) by no means so decidedly expressed as to warrant him against the final preponderance of his rival's pretensions. The illness of Sussex therefore happened so opportunely for Leicester, as to give rise to strange surmises among the public; while the followers of the one Earl were filled with the deepest apprehensions, and those of the other with the highest hopes of its probable issue. Meanwhile—for in that old time men never forgot the probability that the matter might be determined by length of sword—the retainers of each noble flocked around their patron, appeared well armed in the vicinity of the court itself, and disturbed the ear of the sovereign by their frequent and alarming debates, held even within the precincts of her palace. This preliminary statement is necessary, to render what follows intelligible to the reader. [See Note 3. Leicester and Sussex.]

On Tressilian's arrival at Sayes Court, he found the place filled with the retainers of the Earl of Sussex, and of the gentlemen who came to attend their patron in his illness. Arms were in every hand, and a deep gloom on every countenance, as if they had apprehended an immediate and violent assault from the opposite faction. In the hall, however, to which Tressilian was ushered by one of the Earl's attendants, while another went to inform Sussex of his arrival, he found only two gentlemen in waiting. There was a remarkable contrast in their dress, appearance, and manners. The attire of the elder gentleman, a person as it seemed of quality and in the prime of life, was very plain and soldierlike, his stature low, his limbs stout, his bearing ungraceful, and his features of that kind which express sound common sense, without a grain of vivacity or imagination. The younger, who seemed about twenty, or upwards, was clad in the gayest habit used by persons of quality at the period, wearing a crimson velvet cloak richly ornamented with lace and embroidery, with a bonnet of the same, encircled with a gold chain turned three times round it, and secured by a medal. His hair was adjusted very nearly like that of some fine gentlemen of our own time—that is, it was combed upwards, and made to stand as it were on end; and in his ears he wore a pair of silver earrings, having each a pearl of considerable size. The countenance of this youth, besides being regularly handsome and accompanied by a fine person, was animated and striking in a degree that seemed to speak at once the firmness of a decided and the fire of an enterprising character, the power of reflection, and the promptitude of determination.

Both these gentlemen reclined nearly in the same posture on benches near each other; but each seeming engaged in his own meditations, looked straight upon the wall which was opposite to them, without speaking to his companion. The looks of the elder were of that sort which convinced the beholder that, in looking on

the wall, he saw no more than the side of an old hall hung around with cloaks, antlers, bucklers, old pieces of armour, partisans, and the similar articles which were usually the furniture of such a place. The look of the younger gallant had in it something imaginative; he was sunk in reverie, and it seemed as if the empty space of air betwixt him and the wall were the stage of a theatre on which his fancy was mustering his own DRAMATIS PERSONAE, and treating him with sights far different from those which his awakened and earthly vision could have offered.

At the entrance of Tressilian both started from their musing, and made him welcome—the younger, in particular, with great appearance of animation and cordiality. "Thou art welcome, Tressilian," said the youth. "Thy philosophy stole thee from us when this household had objects of ambition to offer; it is an honest philosophy, since it returns thee to us when there are only dangers to be shared."

"Is my lord, then, so greatly indisposed?" said Tressilian.

"We fear the very worst," answered the elder gentleman, "and by the worst practice."

"Fie," replied Tressilian, "my Lord of Leicester is honourable."

"What doth he with such attendants, then, as he hath about him?" said the younger gallant. "The man who raises the devil may be honest, but he is answerable for the mischief which the fiend does, for all that."

"And is this all of you, my mates," inquired Tressilian, "that are about my lord in his utmost straits?"

"No, no," replied the elder gentleman, "there are Tracy, Markham, and several more; but we keep watch here by two at once, and some are weary and are sleeping in the gallery above."

"And some," said the young man, "are gone down to the Dock yonder at Deptford, to look out such a hull; as they may purchase by clubbing their broken fortunes; and as soon as all is over, we will lay our noble lord in a noble green grave, have a blow at those who have hurried him thither, if opportunity suits, and then sail for the Indies with heavy hearts and light purses."

"It may be," said Tressilian, "that I will embrace the same purpose, so soon as I have settled some business at court."

"Thou business at court!" they both exclaimed at once, "and thou make the Indian voyage!"

"Why, Tressilian," said the younger man, "art thou not wedded, and beyond these flaws of fortune, that drive folks out to sea when their bark bears fairest for the haven?—What has become of the lovely Indamira that was to match my Amoret for truth and beauty?"

"Speak not of her!" said Tressilian, averting his face.

"Ay, stands it so with you?" said the youth, taking his hand very affectionately; "then, fear not I will again touch the green wound. But it is strange as well as sad news. Are none of our fair and merry fellowship to escape shipwreck of fortune and happiness in this sudden tempest? I had hoped thou wert in harbour, at least, my dear Edmund. But truly says another dear friend of thy name,

*"What man that sees the ever whirling wheel
Of Chance, the which all mortal things doth sway,
But that thereby doth find and plainly feel,
How Mutability in them doth play
Her cruel sports to many men's decay."*

The elder gentleman had risen from his bench, and was pacing the hall with some impatience, while the youth, with much earnestness and feeling, recited these lines. When he had done, the other wrapped himself in his cloak, and again stretched himself down, saying, "I marvel, Tressilian, you will feed the lad in this silly humour. If there were ought to draw a judgment upon a virtuous and honourable household like my lord's, renounce me if I think not it were this piping, whining, childish trick of poetry, that came among us with Master Walter Wittypate here and his comrades, twisting into all manner of uncouth and incomprehensible forms of speech, the honest plain English phrase which God gave us to express our meaning withal."

"Blount believes," said his comrade, laughing, "the devil woo'd Eve in rhyme, and that the mystic meaning of the Tree of Knowledge refers solely to the art of clashing rhymes and meting out hexameters." [See Note 4. Sir Walter Raleigh.]

At this moment the Earl's chamberlain entered, and informed Tressilian that his lord required to speak with him.

He found Lord Sussex dressed, but unbraced, and lying on his couch, and was shocked at the alteration disease had made in his person. The Earl received him with the most friendly cordiality, and inquired into the state of his courtship. Tressilian evaded his inquiries for a moment, and turning his discourse on the Earl's own health, he discovered, to his surprise, that the symptoms of his disorder corresponded minutely with those which Wayland had predicated concerning it. He hesitated not, therefore, to communicate to Sussex the whole history of his attendant, and the pretensions he set up to cure the disorder under which he laboured. The Earl listened with incredulous attention until the name of Demetrius was mentioned, and then suddenly called to his secretary to bring him a certain casket which contained papers of importance. "Take out from thence," he said, "the declaration of the rascal cook whom we had under examination, and look heedfully if the name of Demetrius be not there mentioned."

The secretary turned to the passage at once, and read, "And said declarant, being examined, saith, That he remembers having made the sauce to the said sturgeon-fish, after eating of which the said noble Lord was taken ill; and he put the usual ingredients and condiments therein, namely—"

"Pass over his trash," said the Earl, "and see whether he had not been supplied with his materials by a herbalist called Demetrius."

"It is even so," answered the secretary. "And he adds, he has not since seen the said Demetrius."

"This accords with thy fellow's story, Tressilian," said the Earl; "call him hither."

On being summoned to the Earl's presence, Wayland Smith told his former tale with firmness and consistency.

"It may be," said the Earl, "thou art sent by those who have begun this work, to end it for them; but bethink, if I miscarry under thy medicine, it may go hard with thee."

"That were severe measure," said Wayland, "since the issue of medicine, and the end of life, are in God's disposal. But I will stand the risk. I have not lived so long under ground to be afraid of a grave."

"Nay, if thou be'st so confident," said the Earl of Sussex, "I will take the risk too, for the learned can do nothing for me. Tell me how this medicine is to be taken."

"That will I do presently," said Wayland; "but allow me to condition that, since I incur all the risk of this treatment, no other physician shall be permitted to interfere with it."

"That is but fair," replied the Earl; "and now prepare your drug."

While Wayland obeyed the Earl's commands, his servants, by the artist's direction, undressed their master, and placed him in bed.

"I warn you," he said, "that the first operation of this medicine will be to produce a heavy sleep, during which time the chamber must be kept undisturbed, as the consequences may otherwise be fatal. I myself will watch by the Earl with any of the gentlemen of his chamber."

"Let all leave the room, save Stanley and this good fellow," said the Earl.

"And saving me also," said Tressilian. "I too am deeply interested in the effects of this potion."

"Be it so, good friend," said the Earl. "And now for our experiment; but first call my secretary and chamberlain."

"Bear witness," he continued, when these officers arrived—"bear witness for me, gentlemen, that our honourable friend Tressilian is in no way responsible for the effects which this medicine may produce upon me, the taking it being my own free action and choice, in regard I believe it to be a remedy which God has furnished me by unexpected means to recover me of my present malady. Commend me to my noble and princely Mistress; and say that I live and die her true servant, and wish to all about her throne the same singleness of heart and will to serve her, with more ability to do so than hath been assigned to poor Thomas Ratcliffe."

He then folded his hands, and seemed for a second or two absorbed in mental devotion, then took the potion in his hand, and, pausing, regarded Wayland with a look that seemed designed to penetrate his very soul, but which caused no anxiety or hesitation in the countenance or manner of the artist.

"Here is nothing to be feared," said Sussex to Tressilian, and swallowed the medicine without further hesitation.

"I am now to pray your lordship," said Wayland, "to dispose yourself to rest as commodiously as you can; and of you, gentlemen, to remain as still and mute as if you waited at your mother's deathbed."

The chamberlain and secretary then withdrew, giving orders that all doors should be bolted, and all noise in the house strictly prohibited. Several gentlemen were voluntary watchers in the hall, but none remained in the chamber of the sick Earl, save his groom of the chamber, the artist, and Tressilian.—Wayland Smith's predictions were speedily accomplished, and a sleep fell upon the Earl, so deep and sound that they who watched his bedside began to fear that, in his weakened state, he might pass away without awakening from his lethargy. Wayland Smith himself appeared anxious, and felt the temples of the Earl slightly, from time to time, attending particularly to the state of his respiration, which was full and deep, but at the same time easy and uninterrupted.

CHAPTER XV.

*You loggerheaded and unpolish'd grooms,
What, no attendance, no regard, no duty?
Where is the foolish knave I sent before?
—TAMING OF THE SHREW.*

There is no period at which men look worse in the eyes of each other, or feel more uncomfortable, than when the first dawn of daylight finds them watchers. Even a beauty of the first order, after the vigils of a ball are interrupted by the dawn, would do wisely to withdraw herself from the gaze of her fondest and most partial admirers. Such was the pale, inauspicious, and ungrateful light which began to beam upon those who kept watch all night in the hall at Sayes Court, and which mingled its cold, pale, blue diffusion with the red, yellow, and smoky beams of expiring lamps and torches. The young gallant, whom we noticed in our last chapter, had left the room for a few minutes, to learn the cause of a knocking at the outward gate, and on his return was so struck with the forlorn and ghastly aspects of his companions of the watch that he exclaimed, "Pity of my heart, my masters, how like owls you look! Methinks, when the sun rises, I shall see you flutter off with your eyes dazzled, to stick yourselves into the next ivy-tod or ruined steeple."

"Hold thy peace, thou gibing fool," said Blount; "hold thy peace. Is this a time for jeering, when the manhood of England is perchance dying within a wall's breadth of thee?"

"There thou liest," replied the gallant.

"How, lie!" exclaimed Blount, starting up, "lie! and to me?"

"Why, so thou didst, thou peevish fool," answered the youth; "thou didst lie on that bench even now, didst thou not? But art thou not a hasty coxcomb to pick up a wry word so wrathfully? Nevertheless, loving and, honouring my lord as truly as thou, or any one, I do say that, should Heaven take him from us, all England's manhood dies not with him."

"Ay," replied Blount, "a good portion will survive with thee, doubtless."

"And a good portion with thyself, Blount, and with stout Markham here, and Tracy, and all of us. But I am he will best employ the talent Heaven has given to us all."

"As how, I prithee?" said Blount; "tell us your mystery of multiplying."

"Why, sirs," answered the youth, "ye are like goodly land, which bears no crop because it is not quickened by manure; but I have that rising spirit in me which will make my poor faculties labour to keep pace with it. My ambition will keep my brain at work, I warrant thee."

"I pray to God it does not drive thee mad," said Blount; "for my part, if we lose our noble lord, I bid adieu to the court and to the camp both. I have five hundred foul acres in Norfolk, and thither will I, and change the court pantoufle for the country hobnail."

"O base transmutation!" exclaimed his antagonist; "thou hast already got the true rustic slouch—thy shoulders stoop, as if thine hands were at the stilts of the plough; and thou hast a kind of earthy smell about thee, instead of being perfumed with essence, as a gallant and courtier should. On my soul, thou hast stolen out to roll thyself on a hay mow! Thy only excuse will be to swear by thy hilts that the farmer had a fair daughter."

"I pray thee, Walter," said another of the company, "cease thy railery, which suits neither time nor place, and tell us who was at the gate just now."

"Doctor Masters, physician to her Grace in ordinary, sent by her especial orders to inquire after the Earl's health," answered Walter.

"Ha! what?" exclaimed Tracy; "that was no slight mark of favour. If the Earl can but come through, he will match with Leicester yet. Is Masters with my lord at present?"

"Nay," replied Walter, "he is half way back to Greenwich by this time, and in high dudgeon."

"Thou didst not refuse him admittance?" exclaimed Tracy.

"Thou wert not, surely, so mad?" ejaculated Blount.

"I refused him admittance as flatly, Blount, as you would refuse a penny to a blind beggar—as obstinately, Tracy, as thou didst ever deny access to a dun."

"Why, in the fiend's name, didst thou trust him to go to the gate?" said Blount to Tracy.

"It suited his years better than mine," answered Tracy; "but he has undone us all now thoroughly. My lord may live or die, he will never have a look of favour from her Majesty again."

"Nor the means of making fortunes for his followers," said the young gallant, smiling contemptuously;—"there lies the sore point that will brook no handling. My good sirs, I sounded my lamentations over my lord somewhat less loudly than some of you; but when the point comes of doing him service, I will yield to none of you. Had this learned leech entered, think'st thou not there had been such a coil betwixt him and Tressilian's mediciner, that not the sleeper only, but the very dead might have awakened? I know what larum belongs to the discord of doctors."

"And who is to take the blame of opposing the Queen's orders?" said Tracy; "for, undeniably, Doctor Masters came with her Grace's positive commands to cure the Earl."

"I, who have done the wrong, will bear the blame," said Walter.

"Thus, then, off fly the dreams of court favour thou hast nourished," said Blount, "and despite all thy boasted art and ambition, Devonshire will see thee shine a true younger brother, fit to sit low at the board, carve turn about with the chaplain, look that the hounds be fed, and see the squire's girths drawn when he goes a-hunting."

"Not so," said the young man, colouring, "not while Ireland and the Netherlands have wars, and not while the sea hath pathless waves. The rich West hath lands undreamed of, and Britain contains bold hearts to venture on the quest of them. Adieu for a space, my masters. I go to walk in the court and look to the sentinels."

"The lad hath quicksilver in his veins, that is certain," said Blount, looking at Markham.

"He hath that both in brain and blood," said Markham, "which may either make or mar him. But in closing the door against Masters, he hath done a daring and loving piece of service; for Tressilian's fellow hath ever averred that to wake the Earl were death, and Masters would wake the Seven Sleepers themselves, if he thought they slept not by the regular ordinance of medicine."

Morning was well advanced when Tressilian, fatigued and over-watched, came down to the hall with the joyful intelligence that the Earl had awakened of himself, that he found his internal complaints much mitigated, and spoke with a cheerfulness, and looked round with a vivacity, which of themselves showed a material and

favourable change had taken place. Tressilian at the same time commanded the attendance of one or two of his followers, to report what had passed during the night, and to relieve the watchers in the Earl's chamber.

When the message of the Queen was communicated to the Earl of Sussex, he at first smiled at the repulse which the physician had received from his zealous young follower; but instantly recollecting himself, he commanded Blount, his master of the horse, instantly to take boat, and go down the river to the Palace of Greenwich, taking young Walter and Tracy with him, and make a suitable compliment, expressing his grateful thanks to his Sovereign, and mentioning the cause why he had not been enabled to profit by the assistance of the wise and learned Doctor Masters.

"A plague on it!" said Blount, as he descended the stairs; "had he sent me with a cartel to Leicester I think I should have done his errand indifferently well. But to go to our gracious Sovereign, before whom all words must be lacquered over either with gilding or with sugar, is such a confectionary matter as clean baffles my poor old English brain.—Come with me, Tracy, and come you too, Master Walter Wittypate, that art the cause of our having all this ado. Let us see if thy neat brain, that frames so many flashy fireworks, can help out a plain fellow at need with some of thy shrewd devices."

"Never fear, never fear," exclaimed the youth, "it is I will help you through; let me but fetch my cloak."

"Why, thou hast it on thy shoulders," said Blount,—"the lad is mazed."

"No, No, this is Tracy's old mantle," answered Walter. "I go not with thee to court unless as a gentleman should."

"Why," said Blount, "thy braveries are like to dazzle the eyes of none but some poor groom or porter."

"I know that," said the youth; "but I am resolved I will have my own cloak, ay, and brush my doublet to boot, ere I stir forth with you."

"Well, well," said Blount, "here is a coil about a doublet and a cloak. Get thyself ready, a God's name!"

They were soon launched on the princely bosom of the broad Thames, upon which the sun now shone forth in all its splendour.

"There are two things scarce matched in the universe," said Walter to Blount—"the sun in heaven, and the Thames on the earth."

"The one will light us to Greenwich well enough," said Blount, "and the other would take us there a little faster if it were ebb-tide."

"And this is all thou thinkest—all thou carest—all thou deemest the use of the King of Elements and the King of Rivers—to guide three such poor caitiffs as thyself, and me, and Tracy, upon an idle journey of courtly ceremony!"

"It is no errand of my seeking, faith," replied Blount, "and I could excuse both the sun and the Thames the trouble of carrying me where I have no great mind to go, and where I expect but dog's wages for my trouble—and by my honour," he added, looking out from the head of the boat, "it seems to me as if our message were a sort of labour in vain, for, see, the Queen's barge lies at the stairs as if her Majesty were about to take water."

It was even so. The royal barge, manned with the Queen's watermen richly attired in the regal liveries, and having the Banner of England displayed, did indeed lie at the great stairs which ascended from the river, and along with it two or three other boats for transporting such part of her retinue as were not in immediate attendance on the royal person. The yeomen of the guard, the tallest and most handsome men whom England could produce, guarded with their halberds the passage from the palace-gate to the river side, and all seemed in readiness for the Queen's coming forth, although the day was yet so early.

"By my faith, this bodes us no good," said Blount; "it must be some perilous cause puts her Grace in motion thus untimely, By my counsel, we were best put back again, and tell the Earl what we have seen."

"Tell the Earl what we have seen!" said Walter; "why what have we seen but a boat, and men with scarlet jerkins, and halberds in their hands? Let us do his errand, and tell him what the Queen says in reply."

So saying, he caused the boat to be pulled towards a landing-place at some distance from the principal one, which it would not, at that moment, have been thought respectful to approach, and jumped on shore, followed, though with reluctance, by his cautious and timid companions. As they approached the gate of the palace, one of the sergeant porters told them they could not at present enter, as her Majesty was in the act of coming forth. The gentlemen used the name of the Earl of Sussex; but it proved no charm to subdue the officer, who alleged, in reply, that it was as much as his post was worth to disobey in the least tittle the commands which he had received.

"Nay, I told you as much before," said Blount; "do, I pray you, my dear Walter, let us take boat and return."

"Not till I see the Queen come forth," returned the youth composedly.

"Thou art mad, stark mad, by the Mass!" answered Blount.

"And thou," said Walter, "art turned coward of the sudden. I have seen thee face half a score of shag-headed Irish kerns to thy own share of them; and now thou wouldst blink and go back to shun the frown of a fair lady!"

At this moment the gates opened, and ushers began to issue forth in array, preceded and flanked by the band of Gentlemen Pensioners. After this, amid a crowd of lords and ladies, yet so disposed around her that she could see and be seen on all sides, came Elizabeth herself, then in the prime of womanhood, and in the full glow of what in a Sovereign was called beauty, and who would in the lowest rank of life have been truly judged a noble figure, joined to a striking and commanding physiognomy. She leant on the arm of Lord Hunsdon, whose relation to her by her mother's side often procured him such distinguished marks of Elizabeth's intimacy.

The young cavalier we have so often mentioned had probably never yet approached so near the person of his Sovereign, and he pressed forward as far as the line of warders permitted, in order to avail himself of the present opportunity. His companion, on the contrary, cursing his imprudence, kept pulling him backwards, till Walter shook him off impatiently, and letting his rich cloak drop carelessly from one shoulder; a natural action, which served, however, to display to the best advantage his well-proportioned person. Unbonneting at the same time, he fixed his eager gaze on the Queen's approach, with a mixture of respectful curiosity and modest yet ardent admiration, which suited so well with his fine features that the warders, struck with his rich attire and noble countenance, suffered him to approach the ground over which the Queen was to pass, somewhat closer than was permitted to ordinary spectators. Thus the adventurous youth stood full in Elizabeth's eye—an eye never indifferent to the admiration which she deservedly excited among her subjects, or to the fair proportions of external form which chanced to distinguish any of her courtiers.

Accordingly, she fixed her keen glance on the youth, as she approached the place where he stood, with a look in which surprise at his boldness seemed to be unmingled with resentment, while a trifling accident happened which attracted her attention towards him yet more strongly. The night had been rainy, and just where the young gentleman stood a small quantity of mud interrupted the Queen's passage. As she hesitated to pass on, the gallant, throwing his cloak from his shoulders, laid it on the miry spot, so as to ensure her stepping over it dry-shod. Elizabeth looked at the young man, who accompanied this act of devoted courtesy with a profound reverence, and a blush that overspread his whole countenance. The Queen was confused, and blushed in her turn, nodded her head, hastily passed on, and embarked in her barge without saying a word.

"Come along, Sir Coxcomb," said Blount; "your gay cloak will need the brush to-day, I wot. Nay, if you had meant to make a footcloth of your mantle, better have kept Tracy's old drab-debure, which despises all colours."

"This cloak," said the youth, taking it up and folding it, "shall never be brushed while in my possession."

"And that will not be long, if you learn not a little more economy; we shall have you in CUERPO soon, as the Spaniard says."

Their discourse was here interrupted by one of the band of Pensioners.

"I was sent," said he, after looking at them attentively, "to a gentleman who hath no cloak, or a muddy one.—You, sir, I think," addressing the younger cavalier, "are the man; you will please to follow me."

"He is in attendance on me," said Blount—"on me, the noble Earl of Sussex's master of horse."

"I have nothing to say to that," answered the messenger; "my orders are directly from her Majesty, and concern this gentleman only."

So saying, he walked away, followed by Walter, leaving the others behind, Blount's eyes almost starting from his head with the excess of his astonishment. At length he gave vent to it in an exclamation, "Who the good jere would have thought this!" And shaking his head with a mysterious air, he walked to his own boat, embarked, and returned to Deptford.

The young cavalier was in the meanwhile guided to the water-side by the Pensioner, who showed him considerable respect; a circumstance which, to persons in his situation, may be considered as an augury of no small consequence. He ushered him into one of the wherries which lay ready to attend the Queen's barge, which was already proceeding; up the river, with the advantage of that flood-tide of which, in the course of their descent, Blount had complained to his associates. The two rowers used their oars with such expedition at the signal of the Gentleman Pensioner, that they very soon brought their little skiff under the stern of the Queen's boat, where she sat beneath an awning, attended by two or three ladies, and the nobles of her household. She looked more than once at the wherry in which the young adventurer was seated, spoke to those around her, and seemed to laugh. At length one of the attendants, by the Queen's order apparently, made a sign for the wherry to come alongside, and the young man was desired to step from his own skiff into the Queen's barge, which he performed with graceful agility at the fore part of the boat, and was brought aft to the Queen's presence, the wherry at the same time dropping into the rear. The youth underwent the gaze of Majesty, not the less gracefully that his self-possession was mingled with embarrassment. The muddled cloak still hung upon his arm, and formed the natural topic with which the Queen introduced the conversation.

"You have this day spoiled a gay mantle in our behalf, young man. We thank you for your service, though the manner of offering it was unusual, and something bold."

"In a sovereign's need," answered the youth, "it is each liegeman's duty to be bold."

"God's pity! that was well said, my lord," said the Queen, turning to a grave person who sat by her, and answered with a grave inclination of the head, and something of a mumbled assent.—"Well, young man, your gallantry shall not go unrewarded. Go to the wardrobe keeper, and he shall have orders to supply the suit which you have cast away in our service. Thou shalt have a suit, and that of the newest cut, I promise thee, on the word of a princess."

"May it please your Grace," said Walter, hesitating, "it is not for so humble a servant of your Majesty to measure out your bounties; but if it became me to choose—"

"Thou wouldst have gold, I warrant me," said the Queen, interrupting him. "Fie, young man! I take shame to say that in our capital such and so various are the means of thriftless folly, that to give gold to youth is giving fuel to fire, and furnishing them with the means of self-destruction. If I live and reign, these means of unchristian excess shall be abridged. Yet thou mayest be poor," she added, "or thy parents may be. It shall be gold, if thou wilt, but thou shalt answer to me for the use on't."

Walter waited patiently until the Queen had done, and then modestly assured her that gold was still less in his wish than the raiment her Majesty had before offered.

"How, boy!" said the Queen, "neither gold nor garment? What is it thou wouldst have of me, then?"

"Only permission, madam—if it is not asking too high an honour—permission to wear the cloak which did you this trifling service."

"Permission to wear thine own cloak, thou silly boy!" said the Queen.

"It is no longer mine," said Walter; "when your Majesty's foot touched it, it became a fit mantle for a prince, but far too rich a one for its former owner."

The Queen again blushed, and endeavoured to cover, by laughing, a slight degree of not displeasing surprise and confusion.

"Heard you ever the like, my lords? The youth's head is turned with reading romances. I must know something of him, that I may send him safe to his friends.—What art thou?"

"A gentleman of the household of the Earl of Sussex, so please your Grace, sent hither with his master of horse upon message to your Majesty."

In a moment the gracious expression which Elizabeth's face had hitherto maintained, gave way to an expression of haughtiness and severity.

"My Lord of Sussex," she said, "has taught us how to regard his messages by the value he places upon ours. We sent but this morning the physician in ordinary of our chamber, and that at no usual time, understanding his lordship's illness to be more dangerous than we had before apprehended. There is at no court in Europe a man more skilled in this holy and most useful science than Doctor Masters, and he came from Us to our subject. Nevertheless, he found the gate of Sayes Court defended by men with culverins, as if it had been on the borders of Scotland, not in the vicinity of our court; and when he demanded admittance in our name, it was stubbornly refused. For this slight of a kindness, which had but too much of condescension in it, we will receive, at present at least, no excuse; and some such we suppose to have been the purport of my Lord of Sussex's message."

This was uttered in a tone and with a gesture which made Lord Sussex's friends who were within hearing tremble. He to whom the speech was addressed, however, trembled not; but with great deference and humility, as soon as the Queen's passion gave him an opportunity, he replied, "So please your most gracious Majesty, I was charged with no apology from the Earl of Sussex."

"With what were you then charged, sir?" said the Queen, with the impetuosity which, amid nobler qualities, strongly marked her character. "Was it with a justification?—or, God's death! with a defiance?"

"Madam," said the young man, "my Lord of Sussex knew the offence approached towards treason, and could think of nothing save of securing the offender, and placing him in your Majesty's hands, and at your mercy. The noble Earl was fast asleep when your most gracious message reached him, a potion having been administered to that purpose by his physician; and his Lordship knew not of the ungracious repulse your Majesty's royal and most comfortable message had received, until after he awoke this morning."

"And which of his domestics, then, in the name of Heaven, presumed to reject my message, without even admitting my own physician to the presence of him whom I sent him to attend?" said the Queen, much surprised.

"The offender, madam, is before you," replied Walter, bowing very low; "the full and sole blame is mine; and my lord has most justly sent me to abye the consequences of a fault, of which he is as innocent as a sleeping man's dreams can be of a waking man's actions."

"What! was it thou?—thou thyself, that repelled my messenger and my physician from Sayes Court?" said the Queen. "What could occasion such boldness in one who seems devoted—that is, whose exterior bearing shows devotion—to his Sovereign?"

"Madam," said the youth—who, notwithstanding an assumed appearance of severity, thought that he saw something in the Queen's face that resembled not implacability—"we say in our country, that the physician is for the time the liege sovereign of his patient. Now, my noble master was then under dominion of a leech, by whose advice he hath greatly profited, who had issued his commands that his patient should not that night be disturbed, on the very peril of his life."

"Thy master hath trusted some false varlet of an empiric," said the Queen.

"I know not, madam, but by the fact that he is now—this very morning—awakened much refreshed and strengthened from the only sleep he hath had for many hours."

The nobles looked at each other, but more with the purpose to see what each thought of this news, than to exchange any remarks on what had happened. The Queen answered hastily, and without affecting to disguise her satisfaction, "By my word, I am glad he is better. But thou wert over-bold to deny the access of my Doctor Masters. Knowest thou not the Holy Writ saith, 'In the multitude of counsel there is safety'?"

"Ay, madam," said Walter; "but I have heard learned men say that the safety spoken of is for the physicians, not for the patient."

"By my faith, child, thou hast pushed me home," said the Queen, laughing; "for my Hebrew learning does not come quite at a call.—How say you, my Lord of Lincoln? Hath the lad given a just interpretation of the text?"

"The word SAFETY, most gracious madam," said the Bishop of Lincoln, "for so hath been translated, it may be somewhat hastily, the Hebrew word, being—"

"My lord," said the Queen, interrupting him, "we said we had forgotten our Hebrew.—But for thee, young man, what is thy name and birth?"

"Raleigh is my name, most gracious Queen, the youngest son of a large but honourable family of Devonshire."

"Raleigh?" said Elizabeth, after a moment's recollection. "Have we not heard of your service in Ireland?"

"I have been so fortunate as to do some service there, madam," replied Raleigh; "scarce, however, of consequence sufficient to reach your Grace's ears."

"They hear farther than you think of," said the Queen graciously, "and have heard of a youth who defended a ford in Shannon against a whole band of wild Irish rebels, until the stream ran purple with their blood and his own."

"Some blood I may have lost," said the youth, looking down, "but it was where my best is due, and that is in your Majesty's service."

The Queen paused, and then said hastily, "You are very young to have fought so well, and to speak so well. But you must not escape your penance for turning back Masters. The poor man hath caught cold on the river for our order reached him when he was just returned from certain visits in London, and he held it matter of loyalty and conscience instantly to set forth again. So hark ye, Master Raleigh, see thou fail not to wear thy muddy cloak, in token of penitence, till our pleasure be further known. And here," she added, giving him a jewel of gold, in the form of a chess-man, "I give thee this to wear at the collar."

Raleigh, to whom nature had taught intuitively, as it were, those courtly arts which many scarce acquire from long experience, knelt, and, as he took from her hand the jewel, kissed the fingers which gave it. He knew, perhaps, better than almost any of the courtiers who surrounded her, how to mingle the devotion claimed by the Queen with the gallantry due to her personal beauty; and in this, his first attempt to unite them, he succeeded so well as at once to gratify Elizabeth's personal vanity and her love of power. [See Note 5. Court favour of Sir Walter Raleigh.]

His master, the Earl of Sussex, had the full advantage of the satisfaction which Raleigh had afforded Elizabeth, on their first interview.

"My lords and ladies," said the Queen, looking around to the retinue by whom she was attended, "methinks, since we are upon the river, it were well to renounce our present purpose of going to the city, and surprise this poor Earl of Sussex with a visit. He is ill, and suffering doubtless under the fear of our displeasure, from which he hath been honestly cleared by the frank avowal of this malapert boy. What think ye? were it not an act of charity to give him such consolation as the thanks of a Queen, much bound to him for his loyal service, may perchance best minister?"

It may be readily supposed that none to whom this speech was addressed ventured to oppose its purport.

"Your Grace," said the Bishop of Lincoln, "is the breath of our nostrils." The men of war averred that the face of the Sovereign was a whetstone to the soldier's sword; while the men of state were not less of opinion that the light of the Queen's countenance was a lamp to the paths of her councillors; and the ladies agreed, with one voice, that no noble in England so well deserved the regard of England's Royal Mistress as the Earl of Sussex—the Earl of Leicester's right being reserved entire, so some of the more politic worded their assent, an exception to which Elizabeth paid no apparent attention. The barge had, therefore, orders to deposit its royal freight at Deptford, at the nearest and most convenient point of communication with Sayes Court, in order that the Queen might satisfy her royal and maternal solicitude, by making personal inquiries after the health of the Earl of Sussex.

Raleigh, whose acute spirit foresaw and anticipated important consequences from the most trifling events, hastened to ask the Queen's permission to go in the skiff; and announce the royal visit to his master; ingeniously suggesting that the joyful surprise might prove prejudicial to his health, since the richest and most generous cordials may sometimes be fatal to those who have been long in a languishing state.

But whether the Queen deemed it too presumptuous in so young a courtier to interpose his opinion unasked, or whether she was moved by a recurrence of the feeling of jealousy which had been instilled into her by reports that the Earl kept armed men about his person, she desired Raleigh, sharply, to reserve his counsel till it was required of him, and repeated her former orders to be landed at Deptford, adding, "We will ourselves see what sort of household my Lord of Sussex keeps about him."

"Now the Lord have pity on us!" said the young courtier to himself. "Good hearts, the Earl hath many a one round him; but good heads are scarce with us—and he himself is too ill to give direction. And Blount will be at his morning meal of Yarmouth herrings and ale, and Tracy will have his beastly black puddings and Rhenish; those thorough-paced Welshmen, Thomas ap Rice and Evan Evans, will be at work on their leek porridge and toasted cheese;—and she detests, they say, all coarse meats, evil smells, and strong wines. Could they but think of burning some rosemary in the great hall! but VOGUE LA GALERE, all must now be trusted to chance. Luck hath done indifferent well for me this morning; for I trust I have spoiled a cloak, and made a court fortune. May she do as much for my gallant patron!"

The royal barge soon stopped at Deptford, and, amid the loud shouts of the populace, which her presence never failed to excite, the Queen, with a canopy borne over her head, walked, accompanied by her retinue, towards Sayes Court, where the distant acclamations of the people gave the first notice of her arrival. Sussex, who was in the act of advising with Tressilian how he should make up the supposed breach in the Queen's favour, was infinitely surprised at learning her immediate approach. Not that the Queen's custom of visiting her more distinguished nobility, whether in health or sickness, could be unknown to him; but the suddenness of the communication left no time for those preparations with which he well knew Elizabeth loved to be greeted, and the rudeness and confusion of his military household, much increased by his late illness, rendered him altogether unprepared for her reception.

Cursing internally the chance which thus brought her gracious visitation on him unaware, he hastened down with Tressilian, to whose eventful and interesting story he had just given an attentive ear.

"My worthy friend," he said, "such support as I can give your accusation of Varney, you have a right to expect, alike from justice and gratitude. Chance will presently show whether I can do aught with our Sovereign, or whether, in very deed, my meddling in your affair may not rather prejudice than serve you."

Thus spoke Sussex while hastily casting around him a loose robe of sables, and adjusting his person in the best manner he could to meet the eye of his Sovereign. But no hurried attention bestowed on his apparel could remove the ghastly effects of long illness on a countenance which nature had marked with features rather strong than pleasing. Besides, he was low of stature, and, though broad-shouldered, athletic, and fit for martial achievements, his presence in a peaceful hall was not such as ladies love to look upon; a personal disadvantage, which was supposed to give Sussex, though esteemed and honoured by his Sovereign, considerable disadvantage when compared with Leicester, who was alike remarkable for elegance of manners and for beauty of person.

The Earl's utmost dispatch only enabled him to meet the Queen as she entered the great hall, and he at once perceived there was a cloud on her brow. Her jealous eye had noticed the martial array of armed gentlemen and retainers with which the mansion-house was filled, and her first words expressed her disapprobation. "Is this a royal garrison, my Lord of Sussex, that it holds so many pikes and calivers? or have we by accident overshot Sayes Court, and landed at Our Tower of London?"

Lord Sussex hastened to offer some apology.

"It needs not," she said. "My lord, we intend speedily to take up a certain quarrel between your lordship and another great lord of our household, and at the same time to reprehend this uncivilized and dangerous practice of surrounding yourselves with armed, and even with ruffianly followers, as if, in the neighbourhood of our capital, nay in the very verge of our royal residence, you were preparing to wage civil war with each other.—We are glad to see you so well recovered, my lord, though without the assistance of the learned physician whom we sent to you. Urge no excuse; we know how that matter fell out, and we have corrected for it the wild slip, young Raleigh. By the way, my lord, we will speedily relieve your household of him, and take him into our own. Something there is about him which merits to be better nurtured than he is like to be amongst your very military followers."

To this proposal Sussex, though scarce understanding how the Queen came to make it could only bow and express his acquiescence. He then entreated her to remain till refreshment could be offered, but in this he could not prevail. And after a few compliments of a much colder and more commonplace character than might have been expected from a step so decidedly favourable as a personal visit, the Queen took her leave of Sayes Court, having brought confusion thither along with her, and leaving doubt and apprehension behind.

CHAPTER XVI.

*Then call them to our presence. Face to face,
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and accused freely speak;—
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.—RICHARD II.*

"I am ordered to attend court to-morrow," said Leicester, speaking to Varney, "to meet, as they surmise, my Lord of Sussex. The Queen intends to take up matters betwixt us. This comes of her visit to Sayes Court, of which you must needs speak so lightly."

"I maintain it was nothing," said Varney; "nay, I know from a sure intelligencer, who was within earshot of much that was said, that Sussex has lost rather than gained by that visit. The Queen said, when she stepped into the boat, that Sayes Court looked like a guard-house, and smelt like an hospital. 'Like a cook's shop in Ram's Alley, rather,' said the Countess of Rutland, who is ever your lordship's good friend. And then my Lord of Lincoln must needs put in his holy oar, and say that my Lord of Sussex must be excused for his rude and old-world housekeeping, since he had as yet no wife."

"And what said the Queen?" asked Leicester hastily.

"She took him up roundly," said Varney, "and asked what my Lord Sussex had to do with a wife, or my Lord Bishop to speak on such a subject. 'If marriage is permitted,' she said, 'I nowhere read that it is enjoined.'"

"She likes not marriages, or speech of marriage, among churchmen," said Leicester.

"Nor among courtiers neither," said Varney; but, observing that Leicester changed countenance, he instantly added, "that all the ladies who were present had joined in ridiculing Lord Sussex's housekeeping, and in contrasting it with the reception her Grace would have assuredly received at my Lord of Leicester's."

"You have gathered much tidings," said Leicester, "but you have forgotten or omitted the most important of all. She hath added another to those dangling satellites whom it is her pleasure to keep revolving around her."

"Your lordship meaneth that Raleigh, the Devonshire youth," said Varney—"the Knight of the Cloak, as they call him at court?"

"He may be Knight of the Garter one day, for aught I know," said Leicester, "for he advances rapidly—she hath capped verses with him, and such fooleries. I would gladly abandon, of my own free will, the part—I have in her fickle favour; but I will not be elbowed out of it by the clown Sussex, or this new upstart. I hear Tressilian is with Sussex also, and high in his favour. I would spare him for considerations, but he will thrust himself on his fate. Sussex, too, is almost as well as ever in his health."

"My lord," replied Varney, "there will be rubs in the smoothest road, specially when it leads uphill. Sussex's illness was to us a godsend, from which I hoped much. He has recovered, indeed, but he is not now more formidable than ere he fell ill, when he received more than one foil in wrestling with your lordship. Let not your heart fail you, my lord, and all shall be well."

"My heart never failed me, sir," replied Leicester.

"No, my lord," said Varney; "but it has betrayed you right often. He that would climb a tree, my lord, must grasp by the branches, not by the blossom."

"Well, well, well!" said Leicester impatiently; "I understand thy meaning—my heart shall neither fail me nor seduce me. Have my retinue in order—see that their array be so splendid as to put down, not only the rude companions of Ratcliffe, but the retainers of every other nobleman and courtier. Let them be well armed withal, but without any outward display of their weapons, wearing them as if more for fashion's sake than for use. Do thou thyself keep close to me, I may have business for you."

The preparations of Sussex and his party were not less anxious than those of Leicester.

"Thy Supplication, impeaching Varney of seduction," said the Earl to Tressilian, "is by this time in the Queen's hand—I have sent it through a sure channel. Methinks your suit should succeed, being, as it is, founded in justice and honour, and Elizabeth being the very muster of both. But—I wot not how—the gipsy" (so Sussex was wont to call his rival on account of his dark complexion) "hath much to say with her in these holyday times of peace. Were war at the gates, I should be one of her white boys; but soldiers, like their bucklers and Bilboa blades, get out of fashion in peace time, and satin sleeves and walking rapiers bear the bell. Well, we must be gay, since such is the fashion.—Blount, hast thou seen our household put into their new braveries? But thou knowest as little of these toys as I do; thou wouldst be ready enow at disposing a stand of pikes."

"My good lord," answered Blount, "Raleigh hath been here, and taken that charge upon him—your train will glitter like a May morning. Marry, the cost is another question. One might keep an hospital of old soldiers at the charge of ten modern lackeys."

"He must not count cost to-day, Nicholas," said the Earl in reply. "I am beholden to Raleigh for his care. I trust, though, he has remembered that I am an old soldier, and would have no more of these follies than needs must."

"Nay, I understand nought about it," said Blount; "but here are your honourable lordship's brave kinsmen and friends coming in by scores to wait upon you to court, where, methinks, we shall bear as brave a front as Leicester, let him ruffle it as he will."

"Give them the strictest charges," said Sussex, "that they suffer no provocation short of actual violence to provoke them into quarrel. They have hot bloods, and I would not give Leicester the advantage over me by any imprudence of theirs."

The Earl of Sussex ran so hastily through these directions, that it was with difficulty Tressilian at length found opportunity to express his surprise that he should have proceeded so far in the affair of Sir Hugh Robsart as to lay his petition at once before the Queen. "It was the opinion of the young lady's friends," he said, "that Leicester's sense of justice should be first appealed to, as the offence had been committed by his officer, and so he had expressly told to Sussex."

"This could have been done without applying to me," said Sussex, somewhat haughtily. "I at least, ought not to have been a counsellor when the object was a humiliating reference to Leicester; and I am suprised that you, Tressilian, a man of honour, and my friend, would assume such a mean course. If you said so, I certainly understood you not in a matter which sounded so unlike yourself."

"My lord," said Tressilian, "the course I would prefer, for my own sake, is that you have adopted; but the friends of this most unhappy lady—"

"Oh, the friends—the friends," said Sussex, interrupting him; "they must let us manage this cause in the way which seems best. This is the time and the hour to accumulate every charge against Leicester and his household, and yours the Queen will hold a heavy one. But at all events she hath the complaint before her."

Tressilian could not help suspecting that, in his eagerness to strengthen himself against his rival, Sussex had purposely adopted the course most likely to throw odium on Leicester, without considering minutely whether it were the mode of proceeding most likely to be attended with success. But the step was irrevocable, and Sussex escaped from further discussing it by dismissing his company, with the command, "Let all be in order at eleven o'clock; I must be at court and in the presence by high noon precisely."

While the rival statesmen were thus anxiously preparing for their approaching meeting in the Queen's presence, even Elizabeth herself was not without apprehension of what might chance from the collision of two such fiery spirits, each backed by a strong and numerous body of followers, and dividing betwixt them, either openly or in secret, the hopes and wishes of most of her court. The band of Gentlemen Pensioners were all under arms, and a reinforcement of the yeomen of the guard was brought down the Thames from London. A royal proclamation was sent forth, strictly prohibiting nobles of whatever degree to approach the Palace with retainers or followers armed with shot or with long weapons; and it was even whispered that the High Sheriff of Kent had secret instructions to have a part of the array of the county ready on the shortest notice.

The eventful hour, thus anxiously prepared for on all sides, at length approached, and, each followed by his long and glittering train of friends and followers, the rival Earls entered the Palace Yard of Greenwich at noon precisely.

As if by previous arrangement, or perhaps by intimation that such was the Queen's pleasure, Sussex and his retinue came to the Palace from Deptford by water while Leicester arrived by land; and thus they entered the courtyard from opposite sides. This trifling circumstance gave Leicester a ascendancy in the opinion of

the vulgar, the appearance of his cavalcade of mounted followers showing more numerous and more imposing than those of Sussex's party, who were necessarily upon foot. No show or sign of greeting passed between the Earls, though each looked full at the other, both expecting perhaps an exchange of courtesies, which neither was willing to commence. Almost in the minute of their arrival the castle-bell tolled, the gates of the Palace were opened, and the Earls entered, each numerously attended by such gentlemen of their train whose rank gave them that privilege. The yeomen and inferior attendants remained in the courtyard, where the opposite parties eyed each other with looks of eager hatred and scorn, as if waiting with impatience for some cause of tumult, or some apology for mutual aggression. But they were restrained by the strict commands of their leaders, and overawed, perhaps, by the presence of an armed guard of unusual strength. In the meanwhile, the more distinguished persons of each train followed their patrons into the lofty halls and ante-chambers of the royal Palace, flowing on in the same current, like two streams which are compelled into the same channel, yet shun to mix their waters. The parties arranged themselves, as it were instinctively, on the different sides of the lofty apartments, and seemed eager to escape from the transient union which the narrowness of the crowded entrance had for an instant compelled them to submit to. The folding doors at the upper end of the long gallery were immediately afterwards opened, and it was announced in a whisper that the Queen was in her presence-chamber, to which these gave access. Both Earls moved slowly and stately towards the entrance—Sussex followed by Tressilian, Blount, and Raleigh, and Leicester by Varney. The pride of Leicester was obliged to give way to court-forms, and with a grave and formal inclination of the head, he paused until his rival, a peer of older creation than his own, passed before him. Sussex returned the reverence with the same formal civility, and entered the presence-room. Tressilian and Blount offered to follow him, but were not permitted, the Usher of the Black Rod alleging in excuse that he had precise orders to look to all admissions that day. To Raleigh, who stood back on the repulse of his companions, he said, "You, sir, may enter," and he entered accordingly. "Follow me close, Varney," said the Earl of Leicester, who had stood aloof for a moment to mark the reception of Sussex; and advancing to the entrance, he was about to pass on, when Varney, who was close behind him, dressed out in the utmost bravery of the day, was stopped by the usher, as Tressilian and Blount had been before him, "How is this, Master Bowyer?" said the Earl of Leicester. "Know you who I am, and that this is my friend and follower?" "Your lordship will pardon me," replied Bowyer stoutly; "my orders are precise, and limit me to a strict discharge of my duty." "Thou art a partial knave," said Leicester, the blood mounting to his face, "to do me this dishonour, when you but now admitted a follower of my Lord of Sussex." "My lord," said Bowyer, "Master Raleigh is newly admitted a sworn servant of her Grace, and to him my orders did not apply." "Thou art a knave—an ungrateful knave," said Leicester; "but he that hath done can undo—thou shalt not prank thee in thy authority long!" This threat he uttered aloud, with less than his usual policy and discretion; and having done so, he entered the presence-chamber, and made his reverence to the Queen, who, attired with even more than her usual splendour, and surrounded by those nobles and statesmen whose courage and wisdom have rendered her reign immortal, stood ready to receive the homage of her subjects. She graciously returned the obeisance of the favourite Earl, and looked alternately at him and at Sussex, as if about to speak, when Bowyer, a man whose spirit could not brook the insult he had so openly received from Leicester, in the discharge of his office, advanced with his black rod in his hand, and knelt down before her. "Why, how now, Bowyer?" said Elizabeth, "thy courtesy seems strangely timed!" "My Liege Sovereign," he said, while every courtier around trembled at his audacity, "I come but to ask whether, in the discharge of mine office, I am to obey your Highness's commands, or those of the Earl of Leicester, who has publicly menaced me with his displeasure, and treated me with disparaging terms, because I denied entry to one of his followers, in obedience to your Grace's precise orders?" The spirit of Henry VIII. was instantly aroused in the bosom of his daughter, and she turned on Leicester with a severity which appalled him, as well as all his followers. "God's death! my lord." such was her emphatic phrase, "what means this? We have thought well of you, and brought you near to our person; but it was not that you might hide the sun from our other faithful subjects. Who gave you license to contradict our orders, or control our officers? I will have in this court, ay, and in this realm, but one mistress, and no master. Look to it that Master Bowyer sustains no harm for his duty to me faithfully discharged; for, as I am Christian woman and crowned Queen, I will hold you dearly answerable.—Go, Bowyer, you have done the part of an honest man and a true subject. We will brook no mayor of the palace here." Bowyer kissed the hand which she extended towards him, and withdrew to his post, astonished at the success of his own audacity. A smile of triumph pervaded the faction of Sussex; that of Leicester seemed proportionally dismayed, and the favourite himself, assuming an aspect of the deepest humility, did not even attempt a word in his own escalation. He acted wisely; for it was the policy of Elizabeth to humble, not to disgrace him, and it was prudent to suffer her, without opposition or reply, to glory in the exertion of her authority. The dignity of the Queen was gratified, and the woman began soon to feel for the mortification which she had imposed on her favourite. Her keen eye also observed the secret looks of congratulation exchanged amongst those who favoured Sussex, and it was no part of her policy to give either party a decisive triumph. "What I say to my Lord of Leicester," she said, after a moment's pause, "I say also to you, my Lord of Sussex. You also must needs ruffle in the court of England, at the head of a faction of your own?" "My followers, gracious Princess," said Sussex, "have indeed ruffled in your cause in Ireland, in Scotland, and against yonder rebellious Earls in the north. I am ignorant that—" "Do you bandy looks and words with me, my lord?" said the Queen, interrupting him; "methinks you might learn of my Lord of Leicester the modesty to be silent, at least, under our censure. I say, my lord, that my grandfather and my father, in their wisdom, debarred the nobles of this civilized land from travelling with such disorderly retinues; and think you, that because I wear a coif, their sceptre has in my hand been changed into a distaff? I tell you, no king in Christendom will less brook his court to be cumbered, his people oppressed, and his kingdom's peace disturbed, by the arrogance of overgrown power, than she who now speaks with you.—My Lord of Leicester, and you, my Lord of Sussex, I command you both to be friends with each other; or by the crown I wear, you shall find an enemy who will be too strong for both of you!" "Madam," said the Earl of Leicester, "you who are yourself the fountain of honour know best what is due to mine. I place it at your disposal, and only say that the terms on which I have stood with my Lord of Sussex have not been of my seeking; nor had he cause to think me his enemy, until he had done me gross wrong." "For me, madam," said the Earl of Sussex, "I cannot appeal from your sovereign pleasure; but I were well content my Lord of Leicester should say in what I have, as he terms it, wronged him, since my tongue never spoke the word that I would not willingly justify either on foot or horseback." "And for me," said Leicester, "always under my gracious Sovereign's pleasure, my hand shall be as ready to make good my words as that of any man who ever wrote himself Ratcliffe." "My lords," said the Queen, "these are no terms for this presence; and if you cannot keep your temper, we will find means to keep both that and you close enough. Let me see you join hands, my lords, and forget your idle animosities." The two rivals looked at each other with reluctant eyes, each unwilling to make the first advance to execute the Queen's will. "Sussex," said Elizabeth, "I entreat—Leicester, I command you." Yet, so were her words accented, that the entreaty sounded like command, and the command like entreaty. They remained still and stubborn, until she raised her voice to a height which argued at once impatience and absolute command. "Sir Henry Lee," she said, to an officer in attendance, "have a guard in present readiness, and man a barge instantly.—My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, I bid you once more to join hands; and, God's death! he that refuses shall taste of our Tower fare ere he sees our face again. I will lower your proud hearts ere we part, and that I promise, on the word of a Queen!" "The prison?" said Leicester, "might be borne, but to lose your Grace's presence were to lose light and life at once.—Here, Sussex, is my hand." "And here," said Sussex, "is mine in truth and honesty; but—"

"Nay, under favour, you shall add no more," said the Queen. "Why, this is as it should be," she added, looking on them more favourably; "and when you the shepherds of the people, unite to protect them, it shall be well with the flock we rule over. For, my lords, I tell you plainly, your follies and your brawls lead to strange disorders among your servants.—My Lord of Leicester, you have a gentleman in your household called Varney?"

"Yes, gracious madam," replied Leicester; "I presented him to kiss your royal hand when you were last at Nonsuch."

"His outside was well enough," said the Queen, "but scarce so fair, I should have thought, as to have caused a maiden of honourable birth and hopes to barter her fame for his good looks, and become his paramour. Yet so it is; this fellow of yours hath seduced the daughter of a good old Devonshire knight, Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote Hall, and she hath fled with him from her father's house like a castaway.—My Lord of Leicester, are you ill, that you look so deadly pale?"

"No, gracious madam," said Leicester; and it required every effort he could make to bring forth these few words.

"You are surely ill, my lord?" said Elizabeth, going towards him with hasty speech and hurried step, which indicated the deepest concern. "Call Masters—call our surgeon in ordinary.—Where be these loitering fools?—we lose the pride of our court through their negligence.—Or is it possible, Leicester," she continued, looking on him with a very gentle aspect, "can fear of my displeasure have wrought so deeply on thee? Doubt not for a moment, noble Dudley, that we could blame THEE for the folly of thy retainer—thee, whose thoughts we know to be far otherwise employed. He that would climb the eagle's nest, my lord, cares not who are catching linnets at the foot of the precipice."

"Mark you that?" said Sussex aside to Raleigh. "The devil aids him surely; for all that would sink another ten fathom deep seems but to make him float the more easily. Had a follower of mine acted thus—"

"Peace, my good lord," said Raleigh, "for God's sake, peace! Wait the change of the tide; it is even now on the turn."

The acute observation of Raleigh, perhaps, did not deceive him; for Leicester's confusion was so great, and, indeed, for the moment, so irresistibly overwhelming, that Elizabeth, after looking at him with a wondering eye, and receiving no intelligible answer to the unusual expressions of grace and affection which had escaped from her, shot her quick glance around the circle of courtiers, and reading, perhaps, in their faces something that accorded with her own awakened suspicions, she said suddenly, "Or is there more in this than we see—or than you, my lord, wish that we should see? Where is this Varney? Who saw him?"

"An it please your Grace," said Bowyer, "it is the same against whom I this instant closed the door of the presence-room."

"An it please me?" repeated Elizabeth sharply, not at that moment in the humour of being pleased with anything.—"It does NOT please me that he should pass saucily into my presence, or that you should exclude from it one who came to justify himself from an accusation."

"May it please you," answered the perplexed usher, "if I knew, in such case, how to bear myself, I would take heed—"

"You should have reported the fellow's desire to us, Master Usher, and taken our directions. You think yourself a great man, because but now we chide a nobleman on your account; yet, after all, we hold you but as the lead-weight that keeps the door fast. Call this Varney hither instantly. There is one Tressilian also mentioned in this petition. Let them both come before us."

She was obeyed, and Tressilian and Varney appeared accordingly. Varney's first glance was at Leicester, his second at the Queen. In the looks of the latter there appeared an approaching storm, and in the downcast countenance of his patron he could read no directions in what way he was to trim his vessel for the encounter. He then saw Tressilian, and at once perceived the peril of the situation in which he was placed. But Varney was as bold-faced and ready-witted as he was cunning and unscrupulous—a skilful pilot in extremity, and fully conscious of the advantages which he would obtain could he extricate Leicester from his present peril, and of the ruin that yawned for himself should he fail in doing so.

"Is it true, sirrah," said the Queen, with one of those searching looks which few had the audacity to resist, "that you have seduced to infamy a young lady of birth and breeding, the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote Hall?"

Varney kneeled down, and replied, with a look of the most profound contrition, "There had been some love passages betwixt him and Mistress Amy Robsart."

Leicester's flesh quivered with indignation as he heard his dependant make this avowal, and for one moment he manned himself to step forward, and, bidding farewell to the court and the royal favour, confess the whole mystery of the secret marriage. But he looked at Sussex, and the idea of the triumphant smile which would clothe his cheek upon hearing the avowal sealed his lips. "Not now, at least," he thought, "or in this presence, will I afford him so rich a triumph." And pressing his lips close together, he stood firm and collected, attentive to each word which Varney uttered, and determined to hide to the last the secret on which his court-favour seemed to depend. Meanwhile, the Queen proceeded in her examination of Varney.

"Love passages!" said she, echoing his last words; "what passages, thou knave? and why not ask the wench's hand from her father, if thou hadst any honesty in thy love for her?"

"An it please your Grace," said Varney, still on his knees, "I dared not do so, for her father had promised her hand to a gentleman of birth and honour—I will do him justice, though I know he bears me ill-will—one Master Edmund Tressilian, whom I now see in the presence."

"Soh!" replied the Queen. "And what was your right to make the simple fool break her worthy father's contract, through your love PASSAGES, as your conceit and assurance terms them?"

"Madam," replied Varney, "it is in vain to plead the cause of human frailty before a judge to whom it is unknown, or that of love to one who never yields to the passion"—he paused an instant, and then added, in a very low and timid tone—"which she inflicts upon all others."

Elizabeth tried to frown, but smiled in her own despite, as she answered, "Thou art a marvellously impudent knave. Art thou married to the girl?"

Leicester's feelings became so complicated and so painfully intense, that it seemed to him as if his life was to depend on the answer made by Varney, who, after a moment's real hesitation, answered, "Yes."

"Thou false villain!" said Leicester, bursting forth into rage, yet unable to add another word to the sentence which he had begun with such emphatic passion.

"Nay, my lord," said the Queen, "we will, by your leave, stand between this fellow and your anger. We have not yet done with him.—Knew your master, my Lord of Leicester, of this fair work of yours? Speak truth, I command thee, and I will be thy warrant from danger on every quarter."

"Gracious madam," said Varney, "to speak Heaven's truth, my lord was the cause of the whole matter."

"Thou villain, wouldst thou betray me?" said Leicester.

"Speak on," said the Queen hastily, her cheek colouring, and her eyes sparkling, as she addressed Varney—"speak on. Here no commands are heard but mine."

"They are omnipotent, gracious madam," replied Varney; "and to you there can be no secrets.—Yet I would not," he added, looking around him, "speak of my master's concerns to other ears."

"Fall back, my lords," said the Queen to those who surrounded her, "and do you speak on. What hath the Earl to do with this guilty intrigue of thine? See, fellow, that thou beliest him not!"

"Far be it from me to traduce my noble patron," replied Varney; "yet I am compelled to own that some deep, overwhelming, yet secret feeling hath of late dwelt in my lord's mind, hath abstracted him from the cares of the household which he was wont to govern with such religious strictness, and hath left us opportunities to do follies, of which the shame, as in this case, partly falls upon our patron. Without this, I had not had means or leisure to commit the folly which has drawn on me his displeasure—the heaviest to endure by me which I could by any means incur, saving always the yet more dreaded resentment of your Grace."

"And in this sense, and no other, hath he been accessory to thy fault?" said Elizabeth.

"Surely, madam, in no other," replied Varney; "but since somewhat hath chanced to him, he can scarce be called his own man. Look at him, madam, how pale and trembling he stands! how unlike his usual majesty of manner!—yet what has he to fear from aught I can say to your Highness? Ah! madam, since he received that fatal packet!"

"What packet, and from whence?" said the Queen eagerly.

"From whence, madam, I cannot guess; but I am so near to his person that I know he has ever since worn, suspended around his neck and next to his heart, that lock of hair which sustains a small golden jewel shaped like a heart. He speaks to it when alone—he parts not from it when he sleeps—no heathen ever worshipped an idol with such devotion."

"Thou art a prying knave to watch thy master so closely," said Elizabeth, blushing, but not with anger; "and a tattling knave to tell over again his fooleries.—What colour might the braid of hair be that thou pratest of?"

Varney replied, "A poet, madam, might call it a thread from the golden web wrought by Minerva; but to my thinking it was paler than even the purest gold—more like the last parting sunbeam of the softest day of spring."

"Why, you are a poet yourself, Master Varney," said the Queen, smiling. "But I have not genius quick enough to follow your rare metaphors. Look round these ladies—is there"—(she hesitated, and endeavoured to assume an air of great indifference)—"is there here, in this presence, any lady, the colour of whose hair reminds thee of that braid? Methinks, without prying into my Lord of Leicester's amorous secrets, I would fain know what kind of locks are like the thread of Minerva's web, or the—what was it?—the last rays of the May-day sun."

Varney looked round the presence-chamber, his eye travelling from one lady to another, until at length it rested upon the Queen herself, but with an aspect of the deepest veneration. "I see no tresses," he said, "in this presence, worthy of such similes, unless where I dare not look on them."

"How, sir knave?" said the Queen; "dare you intimate—"

"Nay, madam," replied Varney, shading his eyes with his hand, "it was the beams of the May-day sun that dazzled my weak eyes."

"Go to—go to," said the Queen; "thou art a foolish fellow"—and turning quickly from him she walked up to Leicester.

Intense curiosity, mingled with all the various hopes, fears, and passions which influence court faction, had occupied the presence-chamber during the Queen's conference with Varney, as if with the strength of an Eastern talisman. Men suspended every, even the slightest external motion, and would have ceased to breathe, had Nature permitted such an intermission of her functions. The atmosphere was contagious, and Leicester, who saw all around wishing or fearing his advancement or his fall forgot all that love had previously dictated, and saw nothing for the instant but the favour or disgrace which depended on the nod of Elizabeth and the fidelity of Varney. He summoned himself hastily, and prepared to play his part in the scene which was like to ensue, when, as he judged from the glances which the Queen threw towards him, Varney's communications, be they what they might, were operating in his favour. Elizabeth did not long leave him in doubt; for the more than favour with which she accosted him decided his triumph in the eyes of his rival, and of the assembled court of England. "Thou hast a prating servant of this same Varney, my lord," she said; "it is lucky you trust him with nothing that can hurt you in our opinion, for believe me, he would keep no counsel."

"From your Highness," said Leicester, dropping gracefully on one knee, "it were treason he should. I would that my heart itself lay before you, barer than the tongue of any servant could strip it."

"What, my lord," said Elizabeth, looking kindly upon him, "is there no one little corner over which you would wish to spread a veil? Ah! I see you are confused at the question, and your Queen knows she should not look too deeply into her servants' motives for their faithful duty, lest she see what might, or at least ought to, displease her."

Relieved by these last words, Leicester broke out into a torrent of expressions of deep and passionate attachment, which perhaps, at that moment, were not altogether fictitious. The mingled emotions which had at first overcome him had now given way to the energetic vigour with which he had determined to support his place in the Queen's favour; and never did he seem to Elizabeth more eloquent, more handsome, more interesting, than while, kneeling at her feet, he conjured her to strip him of all his power, but to leave him the name of her servant.—"Take from the poor Dudley," he exclaimed, "all that your bounty has made him, and bid him be the poor gentleman he was when your Grace first shone on him; leave him no more than his cloak and his sword, but let him still boast he has—what in word or deed he never forfeited—the regard of his adored Queen and mistress!"

"No, Dudley!" said Elizabeth, raising him with one hand, while she extended the other that he might kiss it. "Elizabeth hath not forgotten that, whilst you were a poor gentleman, despoiled of your hereditary rank, she was as poor a princess, and that in her cause you then ventured all that oppression had left you—your life and honour. Rise, my lord, and let my hand go—rise, and be what you have ever been, the grace of our court and the support of our throne! Your mistress may be forced to chide your misdemeanours, but never without owning your merits.—And so help me God," she added, turning to the audience, who, with various feelings, witnessed this interesting scene—"so help me God, gentlemen, as I think never sovereign had a truer servant than I have in this noble Earl!"

A murmur of assent rose from the Leicestrian faction, which the friends of Sussex dared not oppose. They remained with their eyes fixed on the ground, dismayed as well as mortified by the public and absolute triumph of their opponents. Leicester's first use of the familiarity to which the Queen had so publicly restored him was to ask her commands concerning Varney's offence, "although," he said, "the fellow deserves nothing from me but displeasure, yet, might I presume to intercede—"

"In truth, we had forgotten his matter," said the Queen; "and it was ill done of us, who owe justice to our meanest as well as to our highest subject. We are pleased, my lord, that you were the first to recall the matter to our memory.—Where is Tressilian, the accuser?—let him come before us."

Tressilian appeared, and made a low and becoming reference. His person, as we have elsewhere observed, had an air of grace and even of nobleness, which did not escape Queen Elizabeth's critical observation. She looked at him with attention as he stood before her unabashed, but with an air of the deepest dejection.

"I cannot but grieve for this gentleman," she said to Leicester. "I have inquired concerning him, and his presence confirms what I heard, that he is a scholar and a soldier, well accomplished both in arts and arms. We women, my lord, are fanciful in our choice—I had said now, to judge by the eye, there was no comparison to be held between your follower and this gentleman. But Varney is a well-spoken fellow, and, to say truth, that goes far with us of the weaker sex.—look you, Master Tressilian, a bolt lost is not a bow broken. Your true affection, as I will hold it to be, hath been, it seems, but ill requited; but you have scholarship, and you know there have been false Cressidas to be found, from the Trojan war downwards. Forget, good sir, this Lady Light o' Love—teach your affection to see with a wiser eye. This we say to you, more from the writings of learned men than our own knowledge, being, as we are, far removed by station and will from the enlargement of experience in such idle toys of humorous passion. For this dame's father, we can make his grief the less by advancing his son-in-law to such station as may enable him to give an honourable support to his bride. Thou shalt not be forgotten thyself, Tressilian—follow our court, and thou shalt see that a true Troilus hath some claim on our grace. Think of what that arch-knave Shakespeare says—a plague on him, his toys come into my head when I should think of other matters. Stay, how goes it?"

*'Cressid was yours, tied with the bonds of heaven;
These bonds of heaven are slipt, dissolved, and loosed,
And with another knot five fingers tied,
The fragments of her faith are bound to Diomed.'*

You smile, my Lord of Southampton—perchance I make your player's verse halt through my bad memory. But let it suffice let there be no more of this mad matter."

And as Tressilian kept the posture of one who would willingly be heard, though, at the same time, expressive of the deepest reverence, the Queen added with some impatience, "What would the man have? The wench cannot wed both of you? She has made her election—not a wise one perchance—but she is Varney's wedded wife."

"My suit should sleep there, most gracious Sovereign," said Tressilian, "and with my suit my revenge. But I hold this Varney's word no good warrant for the truth."

"Had that doubt been elsewhere urged," answered Varney, "my sword—"

"THY sword!" interrupted Tressilian scornfully; "with her Grace's leave, my sword shall show—"

"Peace, you knaves, both!" said the Queen; "know you where you are?—This comes of your feuds, my lords," she added, looking towards Leicester and Sussex; "your followers catch your own humour, and must bandy and brawl in my court and in my very presence, like so many Matamoros.—Look you, sirs, he that speaks of drawing swords in any other quarrel than mine or England's, by mine honour, I'll bracelet him with iron both on wrist and ankle!" She then paused a minute, and resumed in a milder tone, "I must do justice betwixt the bold and mutinous knaves notwithstanding.—My Lord of Leicester, will you warrant with your honour—that is, to the best of your belief—that your servant speaks truth in saying he hath married this Amy Robsart?"

This was a home-thrust, and had nearly staggered Leicester. But he had now gone too far to recede, and answered, after a moment's hesitation, "To the best of my belief—indeed on my certain knowledge—she is a wedded wife."

"Gracious madam," said Tressilian, "may I yet request to know, when and under what circumstances this alleged marriage—"

"Out, sirrah," answered the Queen; "ALLEGED marriage! Have you not the word of this illustrious Earl to warrant the truth of what his servant says? But thou art a loser—thinkest thyself such at least—and thou shalt have indulgence; we will look into the matter ourself more at leisure.—My Lord of Leicester, I trust you remember we mean to taste the good cheer of your Castle of Kenilworth on this week ensuing. We will pray you to bid our good and valued friend, the Earl of Sussex, to hold company with us there."

"If the noble Earl of Sussex," said Leicester, bowing to his rival with the easiest and with the most graceful courtesy, "will so far honour my poor house, I will hold it an additional proof of the amicable regard it is your Grace's desire we should entertain towards each other."

Sussex was more embarrassed. "I should," said he, "madam, be but a clog on your gayer hours, since my late severe illness."

"And have you been indeed so very ill?" said Elizabeth, looking on him with more attention than before; "you are, in faith, strangely altered, and deeply am I grieved to see it. But be of good cheer—we will ourselves look after the health of so valued a servant, and to whom we owe so much. Masters shall order your diet; and that we ourselves may see that he is obeyed, you must attend us in this progress to Kenilworth."

This was said so peremptorily, and at the same time with so much kindness, that Sussex, however unwilling to become the guest of his rival, had no resource but to bow low to the Queen in obedience to her commands, and to express to Leicester, with blunt courtesy, though mingled with embarrassment, his acceptance of his invitation. As the Earls exchanged compliments on the occasion, the Queen said to her High Treasurer, "Methinks, my lord, the countenances of these our two noble peers resemble those of the two famed classic streams, the one so dark and sad, the other so fair and noble. My old Master Ascham would have chid me for forgetting the author. It is Caesar, as I think. See what majestic calmness sits on the brow of the noble Leicester, while Sussex seems to greet him as if he did our will indeed, but not willingly."

"The doubt of your Majesty's favour," answered the Lord Treasurer, "may perchance occasion the difference, which does not—as what does?—escape your Grace's eye."

"Such doubt were injurious to us, my lord," replied the Queen. "We hold both to be near and dear to us, and will with impartiality employ both in honourable service for the weal of our kingdom. But we will break their further conference at present.—My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, we have a word more with you. 'Tressilian and Varney are near your persons—you will see that they attend you at Kenilworth. And as we shall then have both Paris and Menelaus within our call, so we will have the same fair Helen also, whose fickleness has caused this broil.—Varney, thy wife must be at Kenilworth, and forthcoming at my order.—My Lord of Leicester, we expect you will look to this."

The Earl and his follower bowed low and raised their heads, without daring to look at the Queen, or at each other, for both felt at the instant as if the nets and toils which their own falsehood had woven were in the act of closing around them. The Queen, however, observed not their confusion, but proceeded to say, "My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, we require your presence at the privy-council to be presently held, where matters of importance are to be debated. We will then take the water for our divertisement, and you, my lords, will attend us.—And that reminds us of a circumstance.—Do you, Sir Squire of the Soiled Cassock" (distinguishing Raleigh by a smile), "fail not to observe that you are to attend us on our progress. You shall be supplied with suitable means to reform your wardrobe."

And so terminated this celebrated audience, in which, as throughout her life, Elizabeth united the occasional caprice of her sex with that sense and sound policy in which neither man nor woman ever excelled her.

CHAPTER XVII.

*Well, then—our course is chosen—spread the sail—
Heave oft the lead, and mark the soundings well—
Look to the helm, good master—many a shoal
Marks this stern coast, and rocks, where sits the Siren,
Who, like ambition, lures men to their ruin.—THE SHIPWRECK.*

During the brief interval that took place betwixt the dismissal of the audience and the sitting of the privy-council, Leicester had time to reflect that he had that morning sealed his own fate. "It was impossible for him now," he thought, "after having, in the face of all that was honourable in England, pledged his truth (though in an ambiguous phrase) for the statement of Varney, to contradict or disavow it, without exposing himself, not merely to the loss of court-favour, but to the highest displeasure of the Queen, his deceived mistress, and to the scorn and contempt at once of his rival and of all his compeers." This certainty rushed at once on his mind, together with all the difficulties which he would necessarily be exposed to in preserving a secret which seemed now equally essential to his safety, to his power, and to his honour. He was situated like one who walks upon ice ready to give way around him, and whose only safety consists in moving onwards, by firm and unvacillating steps. The Queen's favour, to preserve which he had made such sacrifices, must now be secured by all means and at all hazards; it was the only plank which he could cling to in the tempest. He must settle himself, therefore, to the task of not only preserving, but augmenting the Queen's partiality—he must be the favourite of Elizabeth, or a man utterly shipwrecked in fortune and in honour. All other considerations must be laid aside for the moment, and he repelled the intrusive thoughts which forced on his mind the image of, Amy, by saying to himself there would be time to think hereafter how he was to escape from the labyrinth ultimately, since the pilot who sees a Scylla under his bows must not for the time think of the more distant dangers of Charybdis.

In this mood the Earl of Leicester that day assumed his chair at the council table of Elizabeth; and when the hours of business were over, in this same mood did he occupy an honoured place near her during her pleasure excursion on the Thames. And never did he display to more advantage his powers as a politician of the first rank, or his parts as an accomplished courtier.

It chanced that in that day's council matters were agitated touching the affairs of the unfortunate Mary, the seventh year of whose captivity in England was now in doleful currency. There had been opinions in favour of this unhappy princess laid before Elizabeth's council, and supported with much strength of argument by Sussex and others, who dwelt more upon the law of nations and the breach of hospitality than, however softened or qualified, was agreeable to the Queen's ear. Leicester adopted the contrary opinion with great animation and eloquence, and described the necessity of continuing the severe restraint of the Queen of Scots, as a measure essential to the safety of the kingdom, and particularly of Elizabeth's sacred person, the lightest hair of whose head, he maintained, ought, in their lordships' estimation, to be matter of more deep and anxious concern than the life and fortunes of a rival, who, after setting up a vain and unjust pretence to the throne of England, was now, even while in the bosom of her country, the constant hope and theme of encouragement to all enemies to Elizabeth, whether at home or abroad. He ended by craving pardon of their lordships, if in the zeal of speech he had given any offence, but the Queen's safety was a theme which hurried him beyond his usual moderation of debate.

Elizabeth chid him, but not severely, for the weight which he attached unduly to her personal interests; yet she owned that, since it had been the pleasure of Heaven to combine those interests with the weal of her subjects, she did only her duty when she adopted such measures of self-preservation as circumstances

forced upon her; and if the council in their wisdom should be of opinion that it was needful to continue some restraint on the person of her unhappy sister of Scotland, she trusted they would not blame her if she requested of the Countess of Shrewsbury to use her with as much kindness as might be consistent with her safe keeping. And with this intimation of her pleasure the council was dismissed.

Never was more anxious and ready way made for "my Lord of Leicester," than as he passed through the crowded anterooms to go towards the river-side, in order to attend her Majesty to her barge—never was the voice of the ushers louder, to "make room, make room for the noble Earl!"—never were these signals more promptly and reverently obeyed—never were more anxious eyes turned on him to obtain a glance of favour, or even of mere recognition, while the heart of many a humble follower throbbed betwixt the desire to offer his congratulations, and the fear of intruding himself on the notice of one so infinitely above him. The whole court considered the issue of this day's audience, expected with so much doubt and anxiety, as a decisive triumph on the part of Leicester, and felt assured that the orb of his rival satellite, if not altogether obscured by his lustre, must revolve hereafter in a dimmer and more distant sphere. So thought the court and courtiers, from high to low; and they acted accordingly.

On the other hand, never did Leicester return the general greeting with such ready and condescending courtesy, or endeavour more successfully to gather (in the words of one who at that moment stood at no great distance from him) "golden opinions from all sorts of men."

For all the favourite Earl had a bow a smile at least, and often a kind word. Most of these were addressed to courtiers, whose names have long gone down the tide of oblivion; but some, to such as sound strangely in our ears, when connected with the ordinary matters of human life, above which the gratitude of posterity has long elevated them. A few of Leicester's interlocutory sentences ran as follows:—

"Poynings, good morrow; and how does your wife and fair daughter? Why come they not to court?—Adams, your suit is naught; the Queen will grant no more monopolies. But I may serve you in another matter.—My good Alderman Aylford, the suit of the City, affecting Queenhithe, shall be forwarded as far as my poor interest can serve.—Master Edmund Spenser, touching your Irish petition, I would willingly aid you, from my love to the Muses; but thou hast nettled the Lord Treasurer."

"My lord," said the poet, "were I permitted to explain—"

"Come to my lodging, Edmund," answered the Earl "not to-morrow, or next day, but soon.—Ha, Will Shakespeare—wild Will!—thou hast given my nephew Philip Sidney, love-powder; he cannot sleep without thy Venus and Adonis under his pillow! We will have thee hanged for the veriest wizard in Europe. Hark thee, mad wag, I have not forgotten thy matter of the patent, and of the bears."

The PLAYER bowed, and the Earl nodded and passed on—so that age would have told the tale; in ours, perhaps, we might say the immortal had done homage to the mortal. The next whom the favourite accosted was one of his own zealous dependants.

"How now, Sir Francis Denning," he whispered, in answer to his exulting salutation, "that smile hath made thy face shorter by one-third than when I first saw it this morning.—What, Master Bowyer, stand you back, and think you I bear malice? You did but your duty this morning; and if I remember aught of the passage betwixt us, it shall be in thy favour."

Then the Earl was approached, with several fantastic congees, by a person quaintly dressed in a doublet of black velvet, curiously slashed and pinked with crimson satin. A long cock's feather in the velvet bonnet, which he held in his hand, and an enormous ruff; stiffened to the extremity of the absurd taste of the times, joined with a sharp, lively, conceited expression of countenance, seemed to body forth a vain, harebrained coxcomb, and small wit; while the rod he held, and an assumption of formal authority, appeared to express some sense of official consequence, which qualified the natural pertness of his manner. A perpetual blush, which occupied rather the sharp nose than the thin cheek of this personage, seemed to speak more of "good life," as it was called, than of modesty; and the manner in which he approached to the Earl confirmed that suspicion.

"Good even to you, Master Robert Laneham," said Leicester, and seemed desirous to pass forward, without further speech.

"I have a suit to your noble lordship," said the figure, boldly following him.

"And what is it, good master keeper of the council-chamber door?"

"CLERK of the council-chamber door," said Master Robert Laneham, with emphasis, by way of reply, and of correction.

"Well, qualify thine office as thou wilt, man," replied the Earl; "what wouldst thou have with me?"

"Simply," answered Laneham, "that your lordship would be, as heretofore, my good lord, and procure me license to attend the Summer Progress unto your lordship's most beautiful and all-to-be-unmatched Castle of Kenilworth."

"To what purpose, good Master Laneham?" replied the Earl; "bethink you, my guests must needs be many."

"Not so many," replied the petitioner, "but that your nobleness will willingly spare your old servitor his crib and his mess. Bethink you, my lord, how necessary is this rod of mine to fright away all those listeners, who else would play at bo-peep with the honourable council, and be searching for keyholes and crannies in the door of the chamber, so as to render my staff as needful as a fly-flap in a butcher's shop."

"Methinks you have found out a fly-blown comparison for the honourable council, Master Laneham," said the Earl; "but seek not about to justify it. Come to Kenilworth, if you list; there will be store of fools there besides, and so you will be fitted."

"Nay, an there be fools, my lord," replied Laneham, with much glee, "I warrant I will make sport among them, for no greyhound loves to cote a hare as I to turn and course a fool. But I have another singular favour to beseech of your honour."

"Speak it, and let me go," said the Earl; "I think the Queen comes forth instantly."

"My very good lord, I would fain bring a bed-fellow with me."

"How, you irreverent rascal!" said Leicester.

"Nay, my lord, my meaning is within the canons," answered his unblushing, or rather his ever-blushing petitioner. "I have a wife as curious as her grandmother who ate the apple. Now, take her with me I may not, her Highness's orders being so strict against the officers bringing with them their wives in a progress, and so lumbering the court with womankind. But what I would crave of your lordship is to find room for her in some mummary, or pretty pageant, in disguise, as it were; so that, not being known for my wife, there may be no offence."

"The foul fiend seize ye both!" said Leicester, stung into uncontrollable passion by the recollections which this speech excited—"why stop you me with such follies?"

The terrified clerk of the chamber-door, astonished at the burst of resentment he had so unconsciously produced, dropped his staff of office from his hand, and gazed on the incensed Earl with a foolish face of wonder and terror, which instantly recalled Leicester to himself.

"I meant but to try if thou hadst the audacity which befits thine office," said he hastily. "Come to Kenilworth, and bring the devil with thee, if thou wilt."

"My wife, sir, hath played the devil ere now, in a Mystery, in Queen Mary's time; but me shall want a trifle for properties."

"Here is a crown for thee," said the Earl,— "make me rid of thee—the great bell rings."

Master Robert Laneham stared a moment at the agitation which he had excited, and then said to himself, as he stooped to pick up his staff of office, "The noble Earl runs wild humours to-day. But they who give crowns expect us witty fellows to wink at their unsettled starts; and, by my faith, if they paid not for mercy, we would finger them tightly!" [See Note 6. Robert Laneham.]

Leicester moved hastily on, neglecting the courtesies he had hitherto dispensed so liberally, and hurrying through the courtly crowd, until he paused in a small withdrawing-room, into which he plunged to draw a moment's breath unobserved, and in seclusion.

"What am I now," he said to himself, "that am thus jaded by the words of a mean, weather-beaten, goose-brained gull! Conscience, thou art a bloodhound, whose growl wakes us readily at the paltry stir of a rat or mouse as at the step of a lion. Can I not quit myself, by one bold stroke, of a state so irksome, so unhonoured? What if I kneel to Elizabeth, and, owning the whole, throw myself on her mercy?"

As he pursued this train of thought, the door of the apartment opened, and Varney rushed in.

"Thank God, my lord, that I have found you!" was his exclamation.

"Thank the devil, whose agent thou art," was the Earl's reply.

"Thank whom you will, my lord," replied Varney; "but hasten to the water-side. The Queen is on board, and asks for you."

"Go, say I am taken suddenly ill," replied Leicester; "for, by Heaven, my brain can sustain this no longer!"

"I may well say so," said Varney, with bitterness of expression, "for your place, ay, and mine, who, as your master of the horse, was to have attended your lordship, is already filled up in the Queen's barge. The new minion, Walter Raleigh, and our old acquaintance Tressilian were called for to fill our places just as I hastened away to seek you."

"Thou art a devil, Varney," said Leicester hastily; "but thou hast the mastery for the present—I follow thee."

Varney replied not, but led the way out of the palace, and towards the river, while his master followed him, as if mechanically; until, looking back, he said in a tone which savoured of familiarity at least, if not of authority, "How is this, my lord? Your cloak hangs on one side—your hose are unbraced—permit me—"

"Thou art a fool, Varney, as well as a knave," said Leicester, shaking him off, and rejecting his officious assistance. "We are best thus, sir; when we require you to order our person, it is well, but now we want you not."

So saying, the Earl resumed at once his air of command, and with it his self-possession—shook his dress into yet wilder disorder—passed before Varney with the air of a superior and master, and in his turn led the way to the river-side.

The Queen's barge was on the very point of putting off, the seat allotted to Leicester in the stern, and that to his master of the horse on the bow of the boat, being already filled up. But on Leicester's approach there was a pause, as if the bargemen anticipated some alteration in their company. The angry spot was, however, on the Queen's cheek, as, in that cold tone with which superiors endeavour to veil their internal agitation, while speaking to those before whom it would be derogation to express it, she pronounced the chilling words, "We have waited, my Lord of Leicester."

"Madam, and most gracious Princess," said Leicester, "you, who can pardon so many weaknesses which your own heart never knows, can best bestow your commiseration on the agitations of the bosom, which, for a moment, affect both head and limbs. I came to your presence a doubting and an accused subject; your goodness penetrated the clouds of defamation, and restored me to my honour, and, what is yet dearer, to your favour—is it wonderful, though for me it is most unhappy, that my master of the horse should have found me in a state which scarce permitted me to make the exertion necessary to follow him to this place, when one glance of your Highness, although, alas! an angry one, has had power to do that for me in which Esculapius might have failed?"

"How is this?" said Elizabeth hastily, looking at Varney; "hath your lord been ill?"

"Something of a fainting fit," answered the ready-witted Varney, "as your Grace may observe from his present condition. My lord's haste would not permit me leisure even to bring his dress into order."

"It matters not," said Elizabeth, as she gazed on the noble face and form of Leicester, to which even the strange mixture of passions by which he had been so lately agitated gave additional interest; "make room for my noble lord. Your place, Master Varney, has been filled up; you must find a seat in another barge."

Varney bowed, and withdrew.

"And you, too, our young Squire of the Cloak," added she, looking at Raleigh, "must, for the time, go to the barge of our ladies of honour. As for Tressilian, he hath already suffered too much by the caprice of women that I should aggrieve him by my change of plan, so far as he is concerned."

Leicester seated himself in his place in the barge, and close to the Sovereign. Raleigh rose to retire, and Tressilian would have been so ill-timed in his courtesy as to offer to relinquish his own place to his friend, had not the acute glance of Raleigh himself, who seemed not in his native element, made him sensible that so ready a disclamation of the royal favour might be misinterpreted. He sat silent, therefore, whilst Raleigh, with a profound bow, and a look of the deepest humiliation, was about to quit his place.

A noble courtier, the gallant Lord Willoughby, read, as he thought, something in the Queen's face which seemed to pity Raleigh's real or assumed semblance of mortification.

"It is not for us old courtiers," he said, "to hide the sunshine from the young ones. I will, with her Majesty's leave, relinquish for an hour that which her subjects hold dearest, the delight of her Highness's presence, and mortify myself by walking in starlight, while I forsake for a brief season the glory of Diana's own beams. I will take place in the boat which the ladies occupy, and permit this young cavalier his hour of promised felicity."

The Queen replied, with an expression betwixt mirth and earnest, "If you are so willing to leave us, my lord, we cannot help the mortification. But, under favour, we do not trust you—old and experienced as you may deem yourself—with the care of our young ladies of honour. Your venerable age, my lord," she continued, smiling, "may be better assorted with that of my Lord Treasurer, who follows in the third boat, and by whose experience even my Lord Willoughby's may be improved."

Lord Willoughby hid his disappointment under a smile—laughed, was confused, bowed, and left the Queen's barge to go on board my Lord Burleigh's. Leicester, who endeavoured to divert his thoughts from all internal reflection, by fixing them on what was passing around, watched this circumstance among others. But when the boat put off from the shore—when the music sounded from a barge which accompanied them—when the shouts of the populace were heard from the shore, and all reminded him of the situation in which he was placed, he abstracted his thoughts and feelings by a strong effort from everything but the necessity of maintaining himself in the favour of his patroness, and exerted his talents of pleasing captivation with such success, that the Queen, alternately delighted with his conversation, and alarmed for his health, at length imposed a temporary silence on him, with playful yet anxious care, lest his flow of spirits should exhaust him.

"My lords," she said, "having passed for a time our edict of silence upon our good Leicester, we will call you to counsel on a gamesome matter, more fitted to be now treated of, amidst mirth and music, than in the gravity of our ordinary deliberations. Which of you, my lords," said she, smiling, "know aught of a petition from Orson Pinnit, the keeper, as he qualifies himself, of our royal bears? Who stands godfather to his request?"

"Marry, with Your Grace's good permission, that do I," said the Earl of Sussex. "Orson Pinnit was a stout soldier before he was so mangled by the skenes of the Irish clan MacDonough; and I trust your Grace will be, as you always have been, good mistress to your good and trusty servants."

"Surely," said the Queen, "it is our purpose to be so, and in especial to our poor soldiers and sailors, who hazard their lives for little pay. We would give," she said, with her eyes sparkling, "yonder royal palace of ours to be an hospital for their use, rather than they should call their mistress ungrateful. But this is not the question," she said, her voice, which had been awakened by her patriotic feelings, once more subsiding into the tone of gay and easy conversation; "for this Orson Pinnit's request goes something further. He complains that, amidst the extreme delight with which men haunt the play-houses, and in especial their eager desire for seeing the exhibitions of one Will Shakespeare (whom I think, my lords, we have all heard something of), the manly amusement of bear-baiting is falling into comparative neglect, since men will rather throng to see these roguish players kill each other in jest, than to see our royal dogs and bears worry each other in bloody earnest.—What say you to this, my Lord of Sussex?"

"Why, truly, gracious madam," said Sussex, "you must expect little from an old soldier like me in favour of battles in sport, when they are compared with battles in earnest; and yet, by my faith, I wish Will Shakespeare no harm. He is a stout man at quarter-staff, and single falchion, though, as I am told, a halting fellow; and he stood, they say, a tough fight with the rangers of old Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecot, when he broke his deer-park and kissed his keeper's daughter."

"I cry you mercy, my Lord of Sussex," said Queen Elizabeth, interrupting him; "that matter was heard in council, and we will not have this fellow's offence exaggerated—there was no kissing in the matter, and the defendant hath put the denial on record. But what say you to his present practice, my lord, on the stage? for there lies the point, and not in any ways touching his former errors, in breaking parks, or the other follies you speak of."

"Why, truly, madam," replied Sussex, "as I said before, I wish the gamesome mad fellow no injury. Some of his whoreson poetry (I crave your Grace's pardon for such a phrase) has rung in mine ears as if the lines sounded to boot and saddle. But then it is all froth and folly—no substance or seriousness in it, as your Grace has already well touched. What are half a dozen knaves, with rusty foils and tattered targets, making but a mere mockery of a stout fight, to compare to the royal game of bear-baiting, which hath been graced by your Highness's countenance, and that of your royal predecessors, in this your princely kingdom, famous for

matchless mastiffs and bold bearwards over all Christendom? Greatly is it to be doubted that the race of both will decay, if men should throng to hear the lungs of an idle player belch forth nonsensical bombast, instead of bestowing their pence in encouraging the bravest image of war that can be shown in peace, and that is the sports of the Bear-garden. There you may see the bear lying at guard, with his red, pinky eyes watching the onset of the mastiff, like a wily captain who maintains his defence that an assailant may be tempted to venture within his danger. And then comes Sir Mastiff, like a worthy champion, in full career at the throat of his adversary; and then shall Sir Bruin teach him the reward for those who, in their over-courage, neglect the policies of war, and, catching him in his arms, strain him to his breast like a lusty wrestler, until rib after rib crack like the shot of a pistolet. And then another mastiff; as bold, but with better aim and sounder judgment, catches Sir Bruin by the nether lip, and hangs fast, while he tosses about his blood and slaver, and tries in vain to shake Sir Talbot from his hold. And then—"

"Nay, by my honour, my lord," said the Queen, laughing, "you have described the whole so admirably that, had we never seen a bear-baiting, as we have beheld many, and hope, with Heaven's allowance, to see many more, your words were sufficient to put the whole Bear-garden before our eyes.—But come, who speaks next in this case?—My Lord of Leicester, what say you?"

"Am I then to consider myself as unmuzzled, please your Grace?" replied Leicester.

"Surely, my lord—that is, if you feel hearty enough to take part in our game," answered Elizabeth; "and yet, when I think of your cognizance of the bear and ragged staff, methinks we had better hear some less partial orator."

"Nay, on my word, gracious Princess," said the Earl, "though my brother Ambrose of Warwick and I do carry the ancient cognizance your Highness deigns to remember, I nevertheless desire nothing but fair play on all sides; or, as they say, 'fight dog, fight bear.' And in behalf of the players, I must needs say that they are witty knaves, whose rants and jests keep the minds of the commons from busying themselves with state affairs, and listening to traitorous speeches, idle rumours, and disloyal insinuations. When men are agape to see how Marlow, Shakespeare, and other play artificers work out their fanciful plots, as they call them, the mind of the spectators is withdrawn from the conduct of their rulers."

"We would not have the mind of our subjects withdrawn from the consideration of our own conduct, my lord," answered Elizabeth; "because the more closely it is examined, the true motives by which we are guided will appear the more manifest."

"I have heard, however, madam," said the Dean of St. Asaph's, an eminent Puritan, "that these players are wont, in their plays, not only to introduce profane and lewd expressions, tending to foster sin and harlotry; but even to bellow out such reflections on government, its origin and its object, as tend to render the subject discontented, and shake the solid foundations of civil society. And it seems to be, under your Grace's favour, far less than safe to permit these naughty foul-mouthed knaves to ridicule the godly for their decent gravity, and, in blaspheming heaven and slandering its earthly rulers, to set at defiance the laws both of God and man."

"If we could think this were true, my lord," said Elizabeth, "we should give sharp correction for such offences. But it is ill arguing against the use of anything from its abuse. And touching this Shakespeare, we think there is that in his plays that is worth twenty Bear-gardens; and that this new undertaking of his Chronicles, as he calls them, may entertain, with honest mirth, mingled with useful instruction, not only our subjects, but even the generation which may succeed to us."

"Your Majesty's reign will need no such feeble aid to make it remembered to the latest posterity," said Leicester. "And yet, in his way, Shakespeare hath so touched some incidents of your Majesty's happy government as may countervail what has been spoken by his reverence the Dean of St. Asaph's. There are some lines, for example—I would my nephew, Philip Sidney, were here; they are scarce ever out of his mouth—they are spoken in a mad tale of fairies, love-charms, and I wot not what besides; but beautiful they are, however short they may and must fall of the subject to which they bear a bold relation—and Philip murmurs them, I think, even in his dreams."

"You tantalize us, my lord," said the Queen—"Master Philip Sidney is, we know, a minion of the Muses, and we are pleased it should be so. Valour never shines to more advantage than when united with the true taste and love of letters. But surely there are some others among our young courtiers who can recollect what your lordship has forgotten amid weightier affairs.—Master Tressilian, you are described to me as a worshipper of Minerva—remember you aught of these lines?"

Tressilian's heart was too heavy, his prospects in life too fatally blighted, to profit by the opportunity which the Queen thus offered to him of attracting her attention; but he determined to transfer the advantage to his more ambitious young friend, and excusing himself on the score of want of recollection, he added that he believed the beautiful verses of which my Lord of Leicester had spoken were in the remembrance of Master Walter Raleigh.

At the command of the Queen, that cavalier repeated, with accent and manner which even added to their exquisite delicacy of tact and beauty of description, the celebrated vision of Oberon:—

*"That very time I saw (but thou couldst not),
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid, allarm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west;
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
And the imperial vot'ress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free."*

The voice of Raleigh, as he repeated the last lines, became a little tremulous, as if diffident how the Sovereign to whom the homage was addressed might receive it, exquisite as it was. If this diffidence was affected, it was good policy; but if real, there was little occasion for it. The verses were not probably new to the Queen, for when was ever such elegant flattery long in reaching the royal ear to which it was addressed? But they were not the less welcome when repeated by such a speaker as Raleigh. Alike delighted with the matter, the manner, and the graceful form and animated countenance of the gallant young reciter, Elizabeth kept time to every cadence with look and with finger. When the speaker had ceased, she murmured over the last lines as if scarce conscious that she was overheard, and as she uttered the words,

"In maiden meditation, fancy free," she dropped into the Thames the supplication of Orson Pinnit, keeper of the royal bears, to find more favourable acceptance at Sheerness, or wherever the tide might waft it.

Leicester was spurred to emulation by the success of the young courtier's exhibition, as the veteran racer is roused when a high-mettled colt passes him on the way. He turned the discourse on shows, banquets, pageants, and on the character of those by whom these gay scenes were then frequented. He mixed acute observation with light satire, in that just proportion which was free alike from malignant slander and insipid praise. He mimicked with ready accent the manners of the affected or the clownish, and made his own graceful tone and manner seem doubly such when he resumed it. Foreign countries—their customs, their manners, the rules of their courts—the fashions, and even the dress of their ladies—were equally his theme; and seldom did he conclude without conveying some compliment, always couched in delicacy, and expressed with propriety, to the Virgin Queen, her court, and her government. Thus passed the conversation during this pleasure voyage, seconded by the rest of the attendants upon the royal person, in gay discourse, varied by remarks upon ancient classics and modern authors, and enriched by maxims of deep policy and sound morality, by the statesmen and sages who sat around and mixed wisdom with the lighter talk of a female court.

When they returned to the Palace, Elizabeth accepted, or rather selected, the arm of Leicester to support her from the stairs where they landed to the great gate. It even seemed to him (though that might arise from the flattery of his own imagination) that during this short passage she leaned on him somewhat more than the slippiness of the way necessarily demanded. Certainly her actions and words combined to express a degree of favour which, even in his proudest day he had not

till then attained. His rival, indeed, was repeatedly graced by the Queen's notice; but it was in manner that seemed to flow less from spontaneous inclination than as extorted by a sense of his merit. And in the opinion of many experienced courtiers, all the favour she showed him was overbalanced by her whispering in the ear of the Lady Derby that "now she saw sickness was a better alchemist than she before wotted of, seeing it had changed my Lord of Sussex's copper nose into a golden one."

The jest transpired, and the Earl of Leicester enjoyed his triumph, as one to whom court-favour had been both the primary and the ultimate motive of life, while he forgot, in the intoxication of the moment, the perplexities and dangers of his own situation. Indeed, strange as it may appear, he thought less at that moment of the perils arising from his secret union, than of the marks of grace which Elizabeth from time to time showed to young Raleigh. They were indeed transient, but they were conferred on one accomplished in mind and body, with grace, gallantry, literature, and valour. An accident occurred in the course of the evening which riveted Leicester's attention to this object.

The nobles and courtiers who had attended the Queen on her pleasure expedition were invited, with royal hospitality, to a splendid banquet in the hall of the Palace. The table was not, indeed, graced by the presence of the Sovereign; for, agreeable to her idea of what was at once modest and dignified, the Maiden Queen on such occasions was wont to take in private, or with one or two favourite ladies, her light and temperate meal. After a moderate interval, the court again met in the splendid gardens of the Palace; and it was while thus engaged that the Queen suddenly asked a lady, who was near to her both in place and favour, what had become of the young Squire Lack-Cloak.

The Lady Paget answered, "She had seen Master Raleigh but two or three minutes since standing at the window of a small pavilion or pleasure-house, which looked out on the Thames, and writing on the glass with a diamond ring."

"That ring," said the Queen, "was a small token I gave him to make amends for his spoiled mantle. Come, Paget, let us see what use he has made of it, for I can see through him already. He is a marvellously sharp-witted spirit." They went to the spot, within sight of which, but at some distance, the young cavalier still lingered, as the fowler watches the net which he has set. The Queen approached the window, on which Raleigh had used her gift to inscribe the following line:—

"Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall."

The Queen smiled, read it twice over, once with deliberation to Lady Paget, and once again to herself. "It is a pretty beginning," she said, after the consideration of a moment or two; "but methinks the muse hath deserted the young wit at the very outset of his task. It were good-natured—were it not, Lady Paget?—to complete it for him. Try your rhyming faculties."

Lady Paget, prosaic from her cradle upwards as ever any lady of the bedchamber before or after her, disclaimed all possibility of assisting the young poet.

"Nay, then, we must sacrifice to the Muses ourselves," said Elizabeth.

"The incense of no one can be more acceptable," said Lady Paget; "and your Highness will impose such obligation on the ladies of Parnassus—"

"Hush, Paget," said the Queen, "you speak sacrilege against the immortal Nine—yet, virgins themselves, they should be exorable to a Virgin Queen—and therefore—let me see how runs his verse—

'Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall.'

Might not the answer (for fault of a better) run thus?—

'If thy mind fail thee, do not climb at all.'"

The dame of honour uttered an exclamation of joy and surprise at so happy a termination; and certainly a worse has been applauded, even when coming from a less distinguished author.

The Queen, thus encouraged, took off a diamond ring, and saying, "We will give this gallant some cause of marvel when he finds his couplet perfected without his own interference," she wrote her own line beneath that of Raleigh.

The Queen left the pavilion; but retiring slowly, and often looking back, she could see the young cavalier steal, with the flight of a lapwing, towards the place where he had seen her make a pause. "She stayed but to observe," as she said, "that her train had taken;" and then, laughing at the circumstance with the Lady Paget, she took the way slowly towards the Palace. Elizabeth, as they returned, cautioned her companion not to mention to any one the aid which she had given to the young poet, and Lady Paget promised scrupulous secrecy. It is to be supposed that she made a mental reservation in favour of Leicester, to whom her ladyship transmitted without delay an anecdote so little calculated to give him pleasure.

Raleigh, in the meanwhile, stole back to the window, and read, with a feeling of intoxication, the encouragement thus given him by the Queen in person to follow out his ambitious career, and returned to Sussex and his retinue, then on the point of embarking to go up the river, his heart beating high with gratified pride, and with hope of future distinction.

The reverence due to the person of the Earl prevented any notice being taken of the reception he had met with at court, until they had landed, and the household were assembled in the great hall at Sayes Court; while that lord, exhausted by his late illness and the fatigues of the day, had retired to his chamber, demanding the attendance of Wayland, his successful physician. Wayland, however, was nowhere to be found; and while some of the party were, with military impatience, seeking him and cursing his absence, the rest flocked around Raleigh to congratulate him on his prospects of court-favour.

He had the good taste and judgment to conceal the decisive circumstance of the couplet to which Elizabeth had deigned to find a rhyme; but other indications had transpired, which plainly intimated that he had made some progress in the Queen's favour. All hastened to wish him joy on the mended appearance of his fortune—some from real regard, some, perhaps, from hopes that his preferment might hasten their own, and most from a mixture of these motives, and a sense that the countenance shown to any one of Sussex's household was, in fact, a triumph to the whole. Raleigh returned the kindest thanks to them all, disowning, with becoming modesty, that one day's fair reception made a favourite, any more than one swallow a summer. But he observed that Blount did not join in the general congratulation, and, somewhat hurt at his apparent unkindness, he plainly asked him the reason.

Blount replied with equal sincerity—"My good Walter, I wish thee as well as do any of these chattering gulls, who are whistling and whooping gratulations in thine ear because it seems fair weather with thee. But I fear for thee, Walter" (and he wiped his honest eye), "I fear for thee with all my heart. These court-tricks, and gambols, and flashes of fine women's favour are the tricks and trinkets that bring fair fortunes to farthings, and fine faces and witty coxcombs to the acquaintance of dull block and sharp axes."

So saying, Blount arose and left the hall, while Raleigh looked after him with an expression that blanked for a moment his bold and animated countenance.

Stanley just then entered the hall, and said to Tressilian, "My lord is calling for your fellow Wayland, and your fellow Wayland is just come hither in a sculler, and is calling for you, nor will he go to my lord till he sees you. The fellow looks as he were mazed, methinks; I would you would see him immediately."

Tressilian instantly left the hall, and causing Wayland Smith to be shown into a withdrawing apartment, and lights placed, he conducted the artist thither, and was surprised when he observed the emotion of his countenance.

"What is the matter with you, Smith?" said Tressilian; "have you seen the devil?"

"Worse, sir, worse," replied Wayland; "I have seen a basilisk. Thank God, I saw him first; for being so seen, and seeing not me, he will do the less harm."

"In God's name, speak sense," said Tressilian, "and say what you mean."

"I have seen my old master," said the artist. "Last night a friend whom I had acquired took me to see the Palace clock, judging me to be curious in such works of art. At the window of a turret next to the clock-house I saw my old master."

"Thou must needs have been mistaken," said Tressilian.

"I was not mistaken," said Wayland; "he that once hath his features by heart would know him amongst a million. He was anticly habited; but he cannot disguise himself from me, God be praised! as I can from him. I will not, however, tempt Providence by remaining within his ken. Tarleton the player himself could not so disguise himself but that, sooner or later, Doboobie would find him out. I must away to-morrow; for, as we stand together, it were death to me to remain within reach of him."

"But the Earl of Sussex?" said Tressilian.

"He is in little danger from what he has hitherto taken, provided he swallow the matter of a bean's size of the orvietan every morning fasting; but let him beware of a relapse."

"And how is that to be guarded against?" said Tressilian.

"Only by such caution as you would use against the devil," answered Wayland. "Let my lord's clerk of the kitchen kill his lord's meat himself, and dress it himself, using no spice but what he procures from the surest hands. Let the sewer serve it up himself, and let the master of my lord's household see that both clerk and sewer taste the dishes which the one dresses and the other serves. Let my lord use no perfumes which come not from well accredited persons; no unguents—no pomades. Let him, on no account, drink with strangers, or eat fruit with them, either in the way of nooning or otherwise. Especially, let him observe such caution if he goes to Kenilworth—the excuse of his illness, and his being under diet, will, and must, cover the strangeness of such practice."

"And thou," said Tressilian, "what dost thou think to make of thyself?"

"France, Spain, either India, East or West, shall be my refuge," said Wayland, "ere I venture my life by residing within ken of Doboobie, Demetrius, or whatever else he calls himself for the time."

"Well," said Tressilian, "this happens not inopportunist. I had business for you in Berkshire, but in the opposite extremity to the place where thou art known; and ere thou hadst found out this new reason for living private, I had settled to send thee thither upon a secret embassy."

The artist expressed himself willing to receive his commands, and Tressilian, knowing he was well acquainted with the outline of his business at court, frankly explained to him the whole, mentioned the agreement which subsisted betwixt Giles Gosling and him, and told what had that day been averred in the presence-chamber by Varney, and supported by Leicester.

"Thou seest," he added, "that, in the circumstances in which I am placed, it behoves me to keep a narrow watch on the motions of these unprincipled men, Varney and his complices, Foster and Lambourne, as well as on those of my Lord Leicester himself, who, I suspect, is partly a deceiver, and not altogether the deceived in that matter. Here is my ring, as a pledge to Giles Gosling. Here is besides gold, which shall be trebled if thou serve me faithfully. Away down to Cumnor, and see what happens there."

"I go with double good-will," said the artist, "first, because I serve your honour, who has been so kind to me; and then, that I may escape my old master, who, if not an absolute incarnation of the devil, has, at least, as much of the demon about him, in will, word, and action; as ever polluted humanity. And yet let him take care of me. I fly him now, as heretofore; but if, like the Scottish wild cattle, I am vexed by frequent pursuit, I may turn on him in hate and desperation. [A remnant of the wild cattle of Scotland are preserved at Chillingham Castle, near Wooler, in Northumberland, the seat of Lord Tankerville. They fly before strangers; but if disturbed and followed, they turn with fury on those who persist in annoying them.] Will your honour command my nag to be saddled? I will but give the medicine to my lord, divided in its proper proportions, with a few instructions. His safety will then depend on the care of his friends and domestics; for the past he is guarded, but let him beware of the future."

Wayland Smith accordingly made his farewell visit to the Earl of Sussex, dictated instructions as to his regimen, and precautions concerning his diet, and left Sayes Court without waiting for morning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The moment comes—

It is already come—when thou must write

The absolute total of thy life's vast sum.

The constellations stand victorious o'er thee,

The planets shoot good fortune in fair junctions,

And tell thee, "Now's the time."

—SCHILLER'S WALLENSTEIN, BY COLERIDGE.

When Leicester returned to his lodging, after a day so important and so harassing, in which, after riding out more than one gale, and touching on more than one shoal, his bark had finally gained the harbour with banner displayed, he seemed to experience as much fatigue as a mariner after a perilous storm. He spoke not a word while his chamberlain exchanged his rich court-mantle for a furred night-robe, and when this officer signified that Master Varney desired to speak with his lordship, he replied only by a sullen nod. Varney, however, entered, accepting this signal as a permission, and the chamberlain withdrew.

The Earl remained silent and almost motionless in his chair, his head reclined on his hand, and his elbow resting upon the table which stood beside him, without seeming to be conscious of the entrance or of the presence of his confidant. Varney waited for some minutes until he should speak, desirous to know what was the finally predominant mood of a mind through which so many powerful emotions had that day taken their course. But he waited in vain, for Leicester continued still silent, and the confidant saw himself under the necessity of being the first to speak. "May I congratulate your lordship," he said, "on the deserved superiority you have this day attained over your most formidable rival?"

Leicester raised his head, and answered sadly, but without anger, "Thou, Varney, whose ready invention has involved me in a web of most mean and perilous falsehood, knowest best what small reason there is for gratulation on the subject."

"Do you blame me, my lord," said Varney, "for not betraying, on the first push, the secret on which your fortunes depended, and which you have so oft and so earnestly recommended to my safe keeping? Your lordship was present in person, and might have contradicted me and ruined yourself by an avowal of the truth; but surely it was no part of a faithful servant to have done so without your commands."

"I cannot deny it, Varney," said the Earl, rising and walking across the room; "my own ambition has been traitor to my love."

"Say rather, my lord, that your love has been traitor to your greatness, and barred you from such a prospect of honour and power as the world cannot offer to any other. To make my honoured lady a countess, you have missed the chance of being yourself—"

He paused, and seemed unwilling to complete the sentence.

"Of being myself what?" demanded Leicester; "speak out thy meaning, Varney."

"Of being yourself a KING, my lord," replied Varney; "and King of England to boot! It is no treason to our Queen to say so. It would have chanced by her obtaining that which all true subjects wish her—a lusty, noble, and gallant husband."

"Thou ravest, Varney," answered Leicester. "Besides, our times have seen enough to make men loathe the Crown Matrimonial which men take from their wives' lap. There was Darnley of Scotland."

"He!" said Varney; "a, gull, a fool, a thrice-sodden ass, who suffered himself to be fired off into the air like a rocket on a rejoicing day. Had Mary had the hap to have wedded the noble Earl ONCE destined to share her throne, she had experienced a husband of different metal; and her husband had found in her a wife as complying and loving as the mate of the meanest squire who follows the hounds a-horseback, and holds her husband's bridle as he mounts."

"It might have been as thou sayest, Varney," said Leicester, a brief smile of self-satisfaction passing over his anxious countenance. "Henry Darnley knew little of women—with Mary, a man who knew her sex might have had some chance of holding his own. But not with Elizabeth, Varney for I thank God, when he gave her the heart of a woman, gave her the head of a man to control its follies. No, I know her. She will accept love-tokens, ay, and requite them with the like—put sugared sonnets in her bosom, ay, and answer them too—push gallantry to the very verge where it becomes exchange of affection; but she writes NIL ULTRA to all which is to follow, and would not barter one iota of her own supreme power for all the alphabet of both Cupid and Hymen."

"The better for you, my lord," said Varney—"that is, in the case supposed, if such be her disposition; since you think you cannot aspire to become her husband. Her favourite you are, and may remain, if the lady at Cumnor place continues in her present obscurity."

"Poor Amy!" said Leicester, with a deep sigh; "she desires so earnestly to be acknowledged in presence of God and man!"

"Ay, but, my lord," said Varney, "is her desire reasonable? That is the question. Her religious scruples are solved; she is an honoured and beloved wife, enjoying the society of her husband at such times as his weightier duties permit him to afford her his company. What would she more? I am right sure that a lady so gentle and so loving would consent to live her life through in a certain obscurity—which is, after all, not dimmer than when she was at Lidcote Hall—rather than diminish the least jot of her lord's honours and greatness by a premature attempt to share them."

"There is something in what thou sayest," said Leicester, "and her appearance here were fatal. Yet she must be seen at Kenilworth; Elizabeth will not forget that she has so appointed."

"Let me sleep on that hard point," said Varney; "I cannot else perfect the device I have on the stithy, which I trust will satisfy the Queen and please my honoured lady, yet leave this fatal secret where it is now buried. Has your lordship further commands for the night?"

"I would be alone," said Leicester. "Leave me, and place my steel casket on the table. Be within summons."

Varney retired, and the Earl, opening the window of his apartment, looked out long and anxiously upon the brilliant host of stars which glimmered in the splendour of a summer firmament. The words burst from him as at unawares, "I had never more need that the heavenly bodies should befriend me, for my earthly path is darkened and confused."

It is well known that the age reposed a deep confidence in the vain predictions of judicial astrology, and Leicester, though exempt from the general control of superstition, was not in this respect superior to his time, but, on the contrary, was remarkable for the encouragement which he gave to the professors of this pretended science. Indeed, the wish to pry into futurity, so general among the human race, is peculiarly to be found amongst those who trade in state mysteries and the dangerous intrigues and cabals of courts. With heedful precaution to see that it had not been opened, or its locks tampered with, Leicester applied a key to the steel casket, and drew from it, first, a parcel of gold pieces, which he put into a silk purse; then a parchment inscribed with planetary signs, and the lines and calculations used in framing horoscopes, on which he gazed intently for a few moments; and, lastly, took forth a large key, which, lifting aside the tapestry, he applied to a little, concealed door in the corner of the apartment, and opening it, disclosed a stair constructed in the thickness of the wall.

"Alasco," said the Earl, with a voice raised, yet no higher raised than to be heard by the inhabitant of the small turret to which the stair conducted—"Alasco, I say, descend."

"I come, my lord," answered a voice from above. The foot of an aged man was heard slowly descending the narrow stair, and Alasco entered the Earl's apartment. The astrologer was a little man, and seemed much advanced in age, for his beard was long and white, and reached over his black doublet down to his silken girdle. His hair was of the same venerable hue. But his eyebrows were as dark as the keen and piercing black eyes which they shaded, and this peculiarity gave a wild and singular cast to the physiognomy of the old man. His cheek was still fresh and ruddy, and the eyes we have mentioned resembled those of a rat in acuteness and even fierceness of expression. His manner was not without a sort of dignity; and the interpreter of the stars, though respectful, seemed altogether at his ease, and even assumed a tone of instruction and command in conversing with the prime favourite of Elizabeth.

"Your prognostications have failed, Alasco," said the Earl, when they had exchanged salutations—"he is recovering."

"My son," replied the astrologer, "let me remind you I warranted not his death; nor is there any prognostication that can be derived from the heavenly bodies, their aspects and their conjunctions, which is not liable to be controlled by the will of Heaven. ASTRA REGUNT HOMINES, SED REGIT ASTRA DEUS."

"Of what avail, then, is your mystery?" inquired the Earl.

"Of much, my son," replied the old man, "since it can show the natural and probable course of events, although that course moves in subordination to an Higher Power. Thus, in reviewing the horoscope which your Lordship subjected to my skill, you will observe that Saturn, being in the sixth House in opposition to Mars, retrograde in the House of Life, cannot but denote long and dangerous sickness, the issue whereof is in the will of Heaven, though death may probably be inferred. Yet if I knew the name of the party I would erect another scheme."

"His name is a secret," said the Earl; "yet, I must own, thy prognostication hath not been unfaithful. He has been sick, and dangerously so, not, however, to death. But hast thou again cast my horoscope as Varney directed thee, and art thou prepared to say what the stars tell of my present fortune?"

"My art stands at your command," said the old man; "and here, my son, is the map of thy fortunes, brilliant in aspect as ever beamed from those blessed signs whereby our life is influenced, yet not unchequered with fears, difficulties, and dangers."

"My lot were more than mortal were it otherwise," said the Earl. "Proceed, father, and believe you speak with one ready to undergo his destiny in action and in passion as may beseem a noble of England."

"Thy courage to do and to suffer must be wound up yet a strain higher," said the old man. "The stars intimate yet a prouder title, yet an higher rank. It is for thee to guess their meaning, not for me to name it."

"Name it, I conjure you—name it, I command you!" said the Earl, his eyes brightening as he spoke.

"I may not, and I will not," replied the old man. "The ire of princes is as the wrath of the lion. But mark, and judge for thyself. Here Venus, ascendant in the House of Life, and conjoined with Sol, showers down that flood of silver light, blent with gold, which promises power, wealth, dignity, all that the proud heart of man desires, and in such abundance that never the future Augustus of that old and mighty Rome heard from his HARUSPICES such a tale of glory, as from this rich text my lore might read to my favourite son."

"Thou dost but jest with me, father," said the Earl, astonished at the strain of enthusiasm in which the astrologer delivered his prediction.

"Is it for him to jest who hath his eye on heaven, who hath his foot in the grave?" returned the old man solemnly.

The Earl made two or three strides through the apartment, with his hand outstretched, as one who follows the beckoning signal of some phantom, waving him on to deeds of high import. As he turned, however, he caught the eye of the astrologer fixed on him, while an observing glance of the most shrewd penetration shot from under the penthouse of his shaggy, dark eyebrows. Leicester's haughty and suspicious soul at once caught fire. He darted towards the old man from the farther end of the lofty apartment, only standing still when his extended hand was within a foot of the astrologer's body.

"Wretch!" he said, "if you dare to palter with me, I will have your skin stripped from your living flesh! Confess thou hast been hired to deceive and to betray me—that thou art a cheat, and I thy silly prey and booty!"

The old man exhibited some symptoms of emotion, but not more than the furious deportment of his patron might have extorted from innocence itself.

"What means this violence, my lord?" he answered, "or in what can I have deserved it at your hand?"

"Give me proof," said the Earl vehemently, "that you have not tampered with mine enemies."

"My lord," replied the old man, with dignity, "you can have no better proof than that which you yourself elected. In that turret I have spent the last twenty-four hours under the key which has been in your own custody. The hours of darkness I have spent in gazing on the heavenly bodies with these dim eyes, and during those of light I have toiled this aged brain to complete the calculation arising from their combinations. Earthly food I have not tasted—earthly voice I have not heard. You are yourself aware I had no means of doing so; and yet I tell you—I who have been thus shut up in solitude and study—that within these twenty-four hours your star has become predominant in the horizon, and either the bright book of heaven speaks false, or there must have been a proportionate revolution in your fortunes upon earth. If nothing has happened within that space to secure your power, or advance your favour, then am I indeed a cheat, and the divine art, which was first devised in the plains of Chaldea, is a foul imposture."

"It is true," said Leicester, after a moment's reflection, "thou wert closely immured; and it is also true that the change has taken place in my situation which thou sayest the horoscope indicates."

"Wherefore this distrust then, my son?" said the astrologer, assuming a tone of admonition; "the celestial intelligences brook not diffidence, even in their favourites."

"Peace, father," answered Leicester, "I have erred in doubting thee. Not to mortal man, nor to celestial intelligence—under that which is supreme—will Dudley's lips say more in condescension or apology. Speak rather to the present purpose. Amid these bright promises thou hast said there was a threatening aspect. Can thy skill tell whence, or by whose means, such danger seems to impend?"

"Thus far only," answered the astrologer, "does my art enable me to answer your query. The infortune is threatened by the malignant and adverse aspect, through means of a youth, and, as I think, a rival; but whether in love or in prince's favour, I know not nor can I give further indication respecting him, save that he comes from the western quarter."

"The western—ha!" replied Leicester, "it is enough—the tempest does indeed brew in that quarter! Cornwall and Devon—Raleigh and Tressilian—one of them is indicated—I must beware of both. Father, if I have done thy skill injustice, I will make thee a lordly recompense."

He took a purse of gold from the strong casket which stood before him. "Have thou double the recompense which Varney promised. Be faithful—be secret—obey the directions thou shalt receive from my master of the horse, and grudge not a little seclusion or restraint in my cause—it shall be richly considered.—Here, Varney—conduct this venerable man to thine own lodging; tend him heedfully in all things, but see that he holds communication with no one."

Varney bowed, and the astrologer kissed the Earl's hand in token of adieu, and followed the master of the horse to another apartment, in which were placed wine and refreshments for his use.

The astrologer sat down to his repast, while Varney shut two doors with great precaution, examined the tapestry, lest any listener lurked behind it, and then sitting down opposite to the sage, began to question him.

"Saw you my signal from the court beneath?"

"I did," said Alasco, for by such name he was at present called, "and shaped the horoscope accordingly."

"And it passed upon the patron without challenge?" continued Varney.

"Not without challenge," replied the old man, "but it did pass; and I added, as before agreed, danger from a discovered secret, and a western youth."

"My lord's fear will stand sponsor to the one, and his conscience to the other, of these prognostications," replied Varney. "Sure never man chose to run such a race as his, yet continued to retain those silly scruples! I am fain to cheat him to his own profit. But touching your matters, sage interpreter of the stars, I can tell you more of your own fortune than plan or figure can show. You must be gone from hence forthwith."

"I will not," said Alasco peevishly. "I have been too much hurried up and down of late—immured for day and night in a desolate turret-chamber. I must enjoy my liberty, and pursue my studies, which are of more import than the fate of fifty statesmen and favourites that rise and burst like bubbles in the atmosphere of a court."

"At your pleasure," said Varney, with a sneer that habit had rendered familiar to his features, and which forms the principal characteristic which painters have assigned to that of Satan—"at your pleasure," he said; "you may enjoy your liberty and your studies until the daggers of Sussex's followers are clashing within your doublet and against your ribs." The old man turned pale, and Varney proceeded. "Wot you not he hath offered a reward for the arch-quack and poison-vender, Demetrius, who sold certain precious spices to his lordship's cook? What! turn you pale, old friend? Does Hali already see an infortune in the House of Life? Why, hark thee, we will have thee down to an old house of mine in the country, where thou shalt live with a hobnailed slave, whom thy alchemy may convert into ducats, for to such conversion alone is thy art serviceable."

"It is false, thou foul-mouthed railer," said Alasco, shaking with impotent anger; "it is well known that I have approached more nearly to projection than any hermetic artist who now lives. There are not six chemists in the world who possess so near an approximation to the grand arcanum—"

"Come, come," said Varney, interrupting him, "what means this, in the name of Heaven? Do we not know one another? I believe thee to be so perfect—so very perfect—in the mystery of cheating, that, having imposed upon all mankind, thou hast at length in some measure imposed upon thyself, and without ceasing to dupe others, hast become a species of dupe to thine own imagination. Blush not for it, man—thou art learned, and shalt have classical comfort:

'Ne quisquam Ajacem possit superare nisi Ajax.'

No one but thyself could have gulled thee; and thou hast gulled the whole brotherhood of the Rosy Cross besides—none so deep in the mystery as thou. But hark thee in thine ear: had the seasoning which spiced Sussex's broth wrought more surely, I would have thought better of the chemical science thou dost boast so highly."

"Thou art an hardened villain, Varney," replied Alasco; "many will do those things who dare not speak of them."

"And many speak of them who dare not do them," answered Varney. "But be not wroth—I will not quarrel with thee. If I did, I were fain to live on eggs for a month, that I might feed without fear. Tell me at once, how came thine art to fail thee at this great emergency?"

"The Earl of Sussex's horoscope intimates," replied the astrologer, "that the sign of the ascendant being in combustion—"

"Away with your gibberish," replied Varney; "thinkest thou it is the patron thou speakest with?"

"I crave your pardon," replied the old man, "and swear to you I know but one medicine that could have saved the Earl's life; and as no man living in England knows that antidote save myself—moreover, as the ingredients, one of them in particular, are scarce possible to be come by, I must needs suppose his escape was owing to such a constitution of lungs and vital parts as was never before bound up in a body of clay."

"There was some talk of a quack who waited on him," said Varney, after a moment's reflection. "Are you sure there is no one in England who has this secret of thine?"

"One man there was," said the doctor, "once my servant, who might have stolen this of me, with one or two other secrets of art. But content you, Master Varney, it is no part of my policy to suffer such interlopers to interfere in my trade. He pries into no mysteries more, I warrant you, for, as I well believe, he hath been wafted to heaven on the wing of a fiery dragon—peace be with him! But in this retreat of mine shall I have the use of mine elaboratory?"

"Of a whole workshop, man," said Varney; "for a reverend father abbot, who was fain to give place to bluff King Hal and some of his courtiers, a score of years since, had a chemist's complete apparatus, which he was obliged to leave behind him to his successors. Thou shalt there occupy, and melt, and puff, and blaze, and multiply, until the Green Dragon become a golden goose, or whatever the newer phrase of the brotherhood may testify."

"Thou art right, Master Varney," said the alchemist setting his teeth close and grinding them together—"thou art right even in thy very contempt of right and reason. For what thou sayest in mockery may in sober verity chance to happen ere we meet again. If the most venerable sages of ancient days have spoken the truth—if the most learned of our own have rightly received it; if I have been accepted wherever I travelled in Germany, in Poland, in Italy, and in the farther Tartary, as one to whom nature has unveiled her darkest secrets; if I have acquired the most secret signs and passwords of the Jewish Cabala, so that the greyest beard in the synagogue would brush the steps to make them clean for me;—if all this is so, and if there remains but one step—one little step—betwixt my long, deep, and dark, and subterranean progress, and that blaze of light which shall show Nature watching her richest and her most glorious productions in the very cradle—one step betwixt dependence and the power of sovereignty—one step betwixt poverty and such a sum of wealth as earth, without that noble secret, cannot minister from all her mines in the old or the new-found world; if this be all so, is it not reasonable that to this I dedicate my future life, secure, for a brief period of studious patience, to rise above the mean dependence upon favourites, and THEIR favourites, by which I am now enthralled!"

"Now, bravo! bravo! my good father," said Varney, with the usual sardonic expression of ridicule on his countenance; "yet all this approximation to the philosopher's stone wringeth not one single crown out of my Lord Leicester's pouch, and far less out of Richard Varney's. WE must have earthly and substantial services, man, and care not whom else thou canst delude with thy philosophical charlatany."

"My son Varney," said the alchemist, "the unbelief, gathered around thee like a frost-fog, hath dimmed thine acute perception to that which is a stumbling-block to the wise, and which yet, to him who seeketh knowledge with humility, extends a lesson so clear that he who runs may read. Hath not Art, thinkest thou, the means

of completing Nature's imperfect concoctions in her attempts to form the precious metals, even as by art we can perfect those other operations of incubation, distillation, fermentation, and similar processes of an ordinary description, by which we extract life itself out of a senseless egg, summon purity and vitality out of muddy dregs, or call into vivacity the inert substance of a sluggish liquid?"

"I have heard all this before," said Varney, "and my heart is proof against such cant ever since I sent twenty good gold pieces (marry, it was in the nonage of my wit) to advance the grand magisterium, all which, God help the while, vanished IN FUMO. Since that moment, when I paid for my freedom, I defy chemistry, astrology, palmistry, and every other occult art, were it as secret as hell itself, to unloose the stricture of my purse-strings. Marry, I neither defy the manna of Saint Nicholas, nor can I dispense with it. The first task must be to prepare some when thou gett'st down to my little sequestered retreat yonder, and then make as much gold as thou wilt."

"I will make no more of that dose," said the alchemist, resolutely.

"Then," said the master of the horse, "thou shalt be hanged for what thou hast made already, and so were the great secret for ever lost to mankind. Do not humanity this injustice, good father, but e'en bend to thy destiny, and make us an ounce or two of this same stuff; which cannot prejudice above one or two individuals, in order to gain lifetime to discover the universal medicine, which shall clear away all mortal diseases at once. But cheer up, thou grave, learned, and most melancholy jackanape! Hast thou not told me that a moderate portion of thy drug hath mild effects, no ways ultimately dangerous to the human frame, but which produces depression of spirits, nausea, headache, an unwillingness to change of place—even such a state of temper as would keep a bird from flying out of a cage were the door left open?"

"I have said so, and it is true," said the alchemist. "This effect will it produce, and the bird who partakes of it in such proportion shall sit for a season drooping on her perch, without thinking either of the free blue sky, or of the fair greenwood, though the one be lighted by the rays of the rising sun, and the other ringing with the newly-awakened song of all the feathered inhabitants of the forest."

"And this without danger to life?" said Varney, somewhat anxiously.

"Ay, so that proportion and measure be not exceeded; and so that one who knows the nature of the manna be ever near to watch the symptoms, and succour in case of need."

"Thou shalt regulate the whole," said Varney. "Thy reward shall be princely, if thou keepest time and touch, and exceedest not the due proportion, to the prejudice of her health; otherwise thy punishment shall be as signal."

"The prejudice of HER health!" repeated Alasco; "it is, then, a woman I am to use my skill upon?"

"No, thou fool," replied Varney, "said I not it was a bird—a reclaimed linnet, whose pipe might soothe a hawk when in mid stoop? I see thine eye sparkle, and I know thy beard is not altogether so white as art has made it—THAT, at least, thou hast been able to transmute to silver. But mark me, this is no mate for thee. This caged bird is dear to one who brooks no rivalry, and far less such rivalry as thine, and her health must over all things be cared for. But she is in the case of being commanded down to yonder Kenilworth revels, and it is most expedient—most needful—most necessary that she fly not thither. Of these necessities and their causes, it is not needful that she should know aught; and it is to be thought that her own wish may lead her to combat all ordinary reasons which can be urged for her remaining a housekeeper."

"That is but natural," said the alchemist with a strange smile, which yet bore a greater reference to the human character than the uninterested and abstracted gaze which his physiognomy had hitherto expressed, where all seemed to refer to some world distant from that which was existing around him.

"It is so," answered Varney; "you understand women well, though it may have been long since you were conversant amongst them. Well, then, she is not to be contradicted; yet she is not to be humoured. Understand me—a slight illness, sufficient to take away the desire of removing from thence, and to make such of your wise fraternity as may be called in to aid, recommend a quiet residence at home, will, in one word, be esteemed good service, and remunerated as such."

"I am not to be asked to affect the House of Life?" said the chemist.

"On the contrary, we will have thee hanged if thou dost," replied Varney.

"And I must," added Alasco, "have opportunity to do my turn, and all facilities for concealment or escape, should there be detection?"

"All, all, and everything, thou infidel in all but the impossibilities of alchemy. Why, man, for what dost thou take me?"

The old man rose, and taking a light walked towards the end of the apartment, where was a door that led to the small sleeping-room destined for his reception during the night. At the door he turned round, and slowly repeated Varney's question ere he answered it. "For what do I take thee, Richard Varney? Why, for a worse devil than I have been myself. But I am in your toils, and I must serve you till my term be out."

"Well, well," answered Varney hastily, "be stirring with grey light. It may be we shall not need thy medicine—do nought till I myself come down. Michael Lambourne shall guide you to the place of your destination." [See Note 7. Dr. Julio.]

When Varney heard the adept's door shut and carefully bolted within, he stepped towards it, and with similar precaution carefully locked it on the outside, and took the key from the lock, muttering to himself, "Worse than THEE, thou poisoning quacksalver and witch-monger, who, if thou art not a bounden slave to the devil, it is only because he disdains such an apprentice! I am a mortal man, and seek by mortal means the gratification of my passions and advancement of my prospects; thou art a vassal of hell itself—So ho, Lambourne!" he called at another door, and Michael made his appearance with a flushed cheek and an unsteady step.

"Thou art drunk, thou villain!" said Varney to him.

"Doubtless, noble sir," replied the unabashed Michael; "We have been drinking all even to the glories of the day, and to my noble Lord of Leicester and his valiant master of the horse. Drunk! odds blades and poniards, he that would refuse to swallow a dozen healths on such an evening is a base besognio, and a puckfoist, and shall swallow six inches of my dagger!"

"Hark ye, scoundrel," said Varney, "be sober on the instant—I command thee. I know thou canst throw off thy drunken folly, like a fool's coat, at pleasure; and if not, it were the worse for thee."

Lambourne drooped his head, left the apartment, and returned in two or three minutes with his face composed, his hair adjusted, his dress in order, and exhibiting as great a difference from his former self as if the whole man had been changed.

"Art thou sober now, and dost thou comprehend me?" said Varney sternly.

Lambourne bowed in acquiescence.

"Thou must presently down to Cumnor Place with the reverend man of art who sleeps yonder in the little vaulted chamber. Here is the key, that thou mayest call him by times. Take another trusty fellow with you. Use him well on the journey, but let him not escape you—pistol him if he attempt it, and I will be your warrant. I will give thee letters to Foster. The doctor is to occupy the lower apartments of the eastern quadrangle, with freedom to use the old elaboratory and its implements. He is to have no access to the lady, but such as I shall point out—only she may be amused to see his philosophical jugglery. Thou wilt await at Cumnor Place my further orders; and, as thou livest, beware of the ale-bench and the aqua vitae flask. Each breath drawn in Cumnor Place must be kept severed from common air."

"Enough, my lord—I mean my worshipful master, soon, I trust, to be my worshipful knightly master. You have given me my lesson and my license; I will execute the one, and not abuse the other. I will be in the saddle by daybreak."

"Do so, and deserve favour. Stay—ere thou goest fill me a cup of wine—not out of that flask, sirrah," as Lambourne was pouring out from that which Alasco had left half finished, "fetch me a fresh one."

Lambourne obeyed, and Varney, after rinsing his mouth with the liquor, drank a full cup, and said, as he took up a lamp to retreat to his sleeping apartment, "It is strange—I am as little the slave of fancy as any one, yet I never speak for a few minutes with this fellow Alasco, but my mouth and lungs feel as if soiled with the fumes of calcined arsenic—pah!"

So saying, he left the apartment. Lambourne lingered, to drink a cup of the freshly-opened flask. "It is from Saint John's-Berg," he said, as he paused on the draught to enjoy its flavour, "and has the true relish of the violet. But I must forbear it now, that I may one day drink it at my own pleasure." And he quaffed a goblet of water to quench the fumes of the Rhenish wine, retired slowly towards the door, made a pause, and then, finding the temptation irresistible, walked hastily back, and took another long pull at the wine flask, without the formality of a cup.

"Were it not for this accursed custom," he said, "I might climb as high as Varney himself. But who can climb when the room turns round with him like a parish-top? I would the distance were greater, or the road rougher, betwixt my hand and mouth! But I will drink nothing to-morrow save water—nothing save fair water."

CHAPTER XIX.

*PISTOL. And tidings do I bring, and lucky joys,
And happy news of price.*

FALSTAFF. I prithee now deliver them like to men of this world.

PISTOL. A foutra for the world, and worldlings base!

I speak of Africa, and golden joys. —HENRY IV. PART II.

The public room of the Black Bear at Cumnor, to which the scene of our story now returns, boasted, on the evening which we treat of, no ordinary assemblage of guests. There had been a fair in the neighbourhood, and the cutting mercer of Abingdon, with some of the other personages whom the reader has already been made acquainted with, as friends and customers of Giles Gosling, had already formed their wonted circle around the evening fire, and were talking over the news of the day.

A lively, bustling, arch fellow, whose pack, and oaken ellwand studded duly with brass points, denoted him to be of Autolycus's profession, occupied a good deal of the attention, and furnished much of the amusement, of the evening. The pedlars of those days, it must be remembered, were men of far greater importance than the degenerate and degraded hawkers of our modern times. It was by means of these peripatetic venders that the country trade, in the finer manufactures used in female dress particularly, was almost entirely carried on; and if a merchant of this description arrived at the dignity of travelling with a pack-horse, he was a person of no small consequence, and company for the most substantial yeoman or franklin whom he might meet in his wanderings.

The pedlar of whom we speak bore, accordingly, an active and unrebuked share in the merriment to which the rafters of the bonny Black Bear of Cumnor resounded. He had his smile with pretty Mistress Cicely, his broad laugh with mine host, and his jest upon dashing Master Goldthred, who, though indeed without any such benevolent intention on his own part, was the general butt of the evening. The pedlar and he were closely engaged in a dispute upon the preference due to the Spanish nether-stock over the black Gascoigne hose, and mine host had just winked to the guests around him, as who should say, "You will have mirth presently, my masters," when the trampling of horses was heard in the courtyard, and the hostler was loudly summoned, with a few of the newest oaths then in vogue to add force to the invocation. Out tumbled Will Hostler, John Tapster, and all the militia of the inn, who had slunk from their posts in order to collect some scattered crumbs of the mirth which was flying about among the customers. Out into the yard sallied mine host himself also, to do fitting salutation to his new guests; and presently returned, ushering into the apartment his own worthy nephew, Michael Lambourne, pretty tolerably drunk, and having under his escort the astrologer. Alasco, though still a little old man, had, by altering his gown to a riding-dress, trimming his beard and eyebrows, and so forth, struck at least a score of years from his apparent age, and might now seem an active man of sixty, or little upwards. He appeared at present exceedingly anxious, and had insisted much with Lambourne that they should not enter the inn, but go straight forward to the place of their destination. But Lambourne would not be controlled. "By Cancer and Capricorn," he vociferated, "and the whole heavenly host, besides all the stars that these blessed eyes of mine have seen sparkle in the southern heavens, to which these northern blinkers are but farthing candles, I will be unkindly for no one's humour—I will stay and salute my worthy uncle here. Chesu! that good blood should ever be forgotten betwixt friends!—A gallon of your best, uncle, and let it go round to the health of the noble Earl of Leicester! What! shall we not colloque together, and warm the cockles of our ancient kindness?—shall we not colloque, I say?"

"With all my heart, kinsman," said mine host, who obviously wished to be rid of him; "but are you to stand shot to all this good liquor?"

This is a question has quelled many a jovial toper, but it moved not the purpose of Lambourne's soul, "Question my means, nuncle?" he said, producing a handful of mixed gold and silver pieces; "question Mexico and Peru—question the Queen's exchequer—God save her Majesty!—she is my good Lord's good mistress."

"Well, kinsman," said mine host, "it is my business to sell wine to those who can buy it—so, Jack Tapster, do me thine office. But I would I knew how to come by money as lightly as thou dost, Mike."

"Why, uncle," said Lambourne, "I will tell thee a secret. Dost see this little old fellow here? as old and withered a chip as ever the devil put into his porridge—and yet, uncle, between you and me—he hath Potosi in that brain of his—'sblood! he can coin ducats faster than I can vent oaths."

"I will have none of his coinage in my purse, though, Michael," said mine host; "I know what belongs to falsifying the Queen's coin."

"Thou art an ass, uncle, for as old as thou art.—Pull me not by the skirts, doctor, thou art an ass thyself to boot—so, being both asses, I tell ye I spoke but metaphorically."

"Are you mad?" said the old man; "is the devil in you? Can you not let us begone without drawing all men's eyes on us?"

"Sayest thou?" said Lambourne. "Thou art deceived now—no man shall see you, an I give the word.—By heavens, masters, an any one dare to look on this old gentleman, I will slash the eyes out of his head with my poniard!—So sit down, old friend, and be merry; these are mine ingles—mine ancient inmates, and will betray no man."

"Had you not better withdraw to a private apartment, nephew?" said Giles Gosling. "You speak strange matter," he added, "and there be intelligencers everywhere."

"I care not for them," said the magnanimous Michael—"intelligencers? pshaw! I serve the noble Earl of Leicester.—Here comes the wine.—Fill round, Master Skinker, a carouse to the health of the flower of England, the noble Earl of Leicester! I say, the noble Earl of Leicester! He that does me not reason is a swine of Sussex, and I'll make him kneel to the pledge, if I should cut his hams and smoke them for bacon."

None disputed a pledge given under such formidable penalties; and Michael Lambourne, whose drunken humour was not of course diminished by this new potation, went on in the same wild way, renewing his acquaintance with such of the guests as he had formerly known, and experiencing a reception in which there was now something of deference mingled with a good deal of fear; for the least servitor of the favourite Earl, especially such a man as Lambourne, was, for very sufficient reasons, an object both of the one and of the other.

In the meanwhile, the old man, seeing his guide in this uncontrollable humour, ceased to remonstrate with him, and sitting down in the most obscure corner of the room, called for a small measure of sack, over which he seemed, as it were, to slumber, withdrawing himself as much as possible from general observation, and doing nothing which could recall his existence to the recollection of his fellow-traveller, who by this time had got into close intimacy with his ancient comrade, Goldthred of Abingdon.

"Never believe me, bully Mike," said the mercer, "if I am not as glad to see thee as ever I was to see a customer's money! Why, thou canst give a friend a sly place at a mask or a revel now, Mike; ay, or, I warrant thee, thou canst say in my lord's ear, when my honourable lord is down in these parts, and wants a Spanish ruff or the like—thou canst say in his ear, There is mine old friend, young Lawrence Goldthred of Abingdon, has as good wares, lawn, tiffany, cambric, and so forth—ay, and is as pretty a piece of man's flesh, too, as is in Berkshire, and will ruffle it for your lordship with any man of his inches; and thou mayest say—"

"I can say a hundred d—d lies besides, mercer," answered Lambourne; "what, one must not stand upon a good word for a friend!"

"Here is to thee, Mike, with all my heart," said the mercer; "and thou canst tell one the reality of the new fashions too. Here was a rogue pedlar but now was crying up the old-fashioned Spanish nether-stock over the Gascoigne hose, although thou seest how well the French hose set off the leg and knee, being adorned with parti-coloured garters and garniture in conformity."

"Excellent, excellent," replied Lambourne; "why, thy limber bit of a thigh, thrust through that bunch of slashed buckram and tiffany, shows like a housewife's distaff when the flax is half spun off!"

"Said I not so?" said the mercer, whose shallow brain was now overflowed in his turn; "where, then, where be this rascal pedlar?—there was a pedlar here but now, methinks.—Mine host, where the foul fiend is this pedlar?"

"Where wise men should be, Master Goldthred," replied Giles Gosling; "even shut up in his private chamber, telling over the sales of to-day, and preparing for the custom of to-morrow."

"Hang him, a mechanical chuff!" said the mercer; "but for shame, it were a good deed to ease him of his wares—a set of peddling knaves, who stroll through the land, and hurt the established trader. There are good fellows in Berkshire yet, mine host—your pedlar may be met withal on Maiden Castle."

"Ay," replied mine host, laughing, "and he who meets him may meet his match—the pedlar is a tall man."

"Is he?" said Goldthred.

"Is he?" replied the host; "ay, by cock and pie is he—the very pedlar he who raddled Robin Hood so tightly, as the song says,—

'Now Robin Hood drew his sword so good,

The pedlar drew his brand,

And he hath raddled him, Robin Hood,

Till he neither could see nor stand.'"

"Hang him, foul scroyle, let him pass," said the mercer; "if he be such a one, there were small worship to be won upon him.—And now tell me, Mike—my honest Mike, how wears the Hollands you won of me?"

"Why, well, as you may see, Master Goldthred," answered Mike; "I will bestow a pot on thee for the handsel.—Fill the flagon, Master Tapster."

"Thou wilt win no more Hollands, think, on such wager, friend Mike," said the mercer; "for the sulky swain, Tony Foster, rails at thee all to nought, and swears you shall ne'er darken his doors again, for that your oaths are enough to blow the roof off a Christian man's dwelling."

"Doth he say so, the mincing, hypocritical miser?" vociferated Lambourne. "Why, then, he shall come down and receive my commands here, this blessed night, under my uncle's roof! And I will ring him such a black sanctus, that he shall think the devil hath him by the skirts for a month to come, for barely hearing me."

"Nay, now the pottle-pot is uppermost, with a witness!" said the mercer. "Tony Foster obey thy whistle! Alas! good Mike, go sleep—go sleep."

"I tell thee what, thou thin-faced gull," said Michael Lambourne, in high chafe, "I will wager thee fifty angels against the first five shelves of thy shop, numbering upward from the false light, with all that is on them, that I make Tony Foster come down to this public-house before we have finished three rounds."

"I will lay no bet to that amount," said the mercer, something sobered by an offer which intimated rather too private a knowledge on Lambourne's part of the secret recesses of his shop. "I will lay no such wager," he said; "but I will stake five angels against thy five, if thou wilt, that Tony Foster will not leave his own roof, or come to ale-house after prayer time, for thee, or any man."

"Content," said Lambourne.—"Here, uncle, hold stakes, and let one of your young bleed-barrels there—one of your infant tapsters—trip presently up to The Place, and give this letter to Master Foster, and say that I, his ingel, Michael Lambourne, pray to speak with him at mine uncle's castle here, upon business of grave import.—Away with thee, child, for it is now sundown, and the wretch goeth to bed with the birds to save mutton-suet—faugh!"

Shortly after this messenger was dispatched—an interval which was spent in drinking and buffoonery—he returned with the answer that Master Foster was coming presently.

"Won, won!" said Lambourne, darting on the stakes.

"Not till he comes, if you please," said the mercer, interfering.

"Why, 'sblood, he is at the threshold," replied Michael.—"What said he, boy?"

"If it please your worship," answered the messenger, "he looked out of window, with a musketoon in his hand, and when I delivered your errand, which I did with fear and trembling, he said, with a vinegar aspect, that your worship might be gone to the infernal regions."

"Or to hell, I suppose," said Lambourne—"it is there he disposes of all that are not of the congregation."

"Even so," said the boy; "I used the other phrase as being the more poetical."

"An ingenious youth," said Michael; "shalt have a drop to whet thy poetical whistle. And what said Foster next?"

"He called me back," answered the boy, "and bid me say you might come to him if you had aught to say to him."

"And what next?" said Lambourne.

"He read the letter, and seemed in a fluster, and asked if your worship was in drink; and I said you were speaking a little Spanish, as one who had been in the Canaries."

"Out, you diminutive pint-pot, whelped of an overgrown reckoning!" replied Lambourne—"out! But what said he then?"

"Why," said the boy, "he muttered that if he came not your worship would bolt out what were better kept in; and so he took his old flat cap, and threadbare blue cloak, and, as I said before, he will be here incontinent."

"There is truth in what he said," replied Lambourne, as if speaking to himself—"my brain has played me its old dog's trick. But corragio—let him approach!—I have not rolled about in the world for many a day to fear Tony Foster, be I drunk or sober.—Bring me a flagon of cold water to christen my sack withal."

While Lambourne, whom the approach of Foster seemed to have recalled to a sense of his own condition, was busied in preparing to receive him, Giles Gosling stole up to the apartment of the pedlar, whom he found traversing the room in much agitation.

"You withdrew yourself suddenly from the company," said the landlord to the guest.

"It was time, when the devil became one among you," replied the pedlar.

"It is not courteous in you to term my nephew by such a name," said Gosling, "nor is it kindly in me to reply to it; and yet, in some sort, Mike may be considered as a limb of Satan."

"Pooh—I talk not of the swaggering ruffian," replied the pedlar; "it is of the other, who, for aught I know—But when go they? or wherefore come they?"

"Marry, these are questions I cannot answer," replied the host. "But look you, sir, you have brought me a token from worthy Master Tressilian—a pretty stone it is." He took out the ring, and looked at it, adding, as he put it into his purse again, that it was too rich a guerdon for anything he could do for the worthy donor. He was, he said, in the public line, and it ill became him to be too inquisitive into other folk's concerns. He had already said that he could hear nothing but that the lady lived still at Cumnor Place in the closest seclusion, and, to such as by chance had a view of her, seemed pensive and discontented with her solitude. "But here," he said, "if you are desirous to gratify your master, is the rarest chance that hath occurred for this many a day. Tony Foster is coming down hither, and it is but letting Mike Lambourne smell another wine-flask, and the Queen's command would not move him from the ale-bench. So they are fast for an hour or so. Now, if you will don your pack, which will be your best excuse, you may, perchance, win the ear of the old servant, being assured of the master's absence, to let you try to get some custom of the lady; and then you may learn more of her condition than I or any other can tell you."

"True—very true," answered Wayland, for he it was; "an excellent device, but methinks something dangerous—for, say Foster should return?"

"Very possible indeed," replied the host.

"Or say," continued Wayland, "the lady should render me cold thanks for my exertions?"

"As is not unlikely," replied Giles Gosling. "I marvel Master Tressilian will take such heed of her that cares not for him."

"In either case I were foully sped," said Wayland, "and therefore I do not, on the whole, much relish your device."

"Nay, but take me with you, good master serving-man," replied mine host. "This is your master's business, and not mine, you best know the risk to be encountered, or how far you are willing to brave it. But that which you will not yourself hazard, you cannot expect others to risk."

"Hold, hold," said Wayland; "tell me but one thing—goes yonder old man up to Cumnor?"

"Surely, I think so?" said the landlord; "their servant said he was to take their baggage thither. But the ale-tap has been as potent for him as the sack-spigot has been for Michael."

"It is enough," said Wayland, assuming an air of resolution. "I will thwart that old villain's projects; my affright at his baleful aspect begins to abate, and my hatred to arise. Help me on with my pack, good mine host.—And look to thyself, old Albumazar; there is a malignant influence in thy horoscope, and it gleams from the constellation Ursa Major."

So saying, he assumed his burden, and, guided by the landlord through the postern gate of the Black Bear, took the most private way from thence up to Cumnor Place.

CHAPTER XX.

CLOWN. You have of these pedlars, that have more in'em than you'd think, sister.—WINTER'S TALE, ACT IV., SCENE 3.

In his anxiety to obey the Earl's repeated charges of secrecy, as well as from his own unsocial and miserly habits, Anthony Foster was more desirous, by his mode of housekeeping, to escape observation than to resist intrusive curiosity. Thus, instead of a numerous household, to secure his charge, and defend his house, he studied as much as possible to elude notice by diminishing his attendants; so that, unless when there were followers of the Earl, or of Varney, in the mansion, one old male domestic, and two aged crones, who assisted in keeping the Countess's apartments in order, were the only servants of the family.

It was one of these old women who opened the door when Wayland knocked, and answered his petition, to be admitted to exhibit his wares to the ladies of the family, with a volley of vituperation, couched in what is there called the JOWRING dialect. The pedlar found the means of checking this vociferation by slipping a silver groat into her hand, and intimating the present of some stuff for a coif, if the lady would buy of his wares.

"God ield thee, for mine is aw in littocks. Slocket with thy pack into gham, mon—her walks in gham." Into the garden she ushered the pedlar accordingly, and pointing to an old, ruinous garden house, said, "Yonder be's her, mon—yonder be's her. Zhe will buy changes an zhe loikes stuffs."

"She has left me to come off as I may," thought Wayland, as he heard the hag shut the garden-door behind him. "But they shall not beat me, and they dare not murder me, for so little trespass, and by this fair twilight. Hang it, I will on—a brave general never thought of his retreat till he was defeated. I see two females in the old garden-house yonder—but how to address them? Stay—Will Shakespeare, be my friend in need. I will give them a taste of Autolycus." He then sung, with a good voice, and becoming audacity, the popular playhouse ditty,—

*"Lawn as white as driven snow,
Cyprus black as e'er was crow,
Gloves as sweet as damask roses,
Masks for faces and for noses."*

"What hath fortune sent us here for an unwonted sight, Janet?" said the lady.

"One of those merchants of vanity, called pedlars," answered Janet, demurely, "who utters his light wares in lighter measures. I marvel old Dorcas let him pass."

"It is a lucky chance, girl," said the Countess; "we lead a heavy life here, and this may while off a weary hour."

"Ay, my gracious lady," said Janet; "but my father?"

"He is not my father, Janet, nor I hope my master," answered the lady. "I say, call the man hither—I want some things."

"Nay," replied Janet, "your ladyship has but to say so in the next packet, and if England can furnish them they will be sent. There will come mischief on't—pray, dearest lady, let me bid the man begone!"

"I will have thee bid him come hither," said the Countess;—"or stay, thou terrified fool, I will bid him myself, and spare thee a chiding."

"Ah! well-a-day, dearest lady, if that were the worst," said Janet sadly; while the lady called to the pedlar, "Good fellow, step forward—undo thy pack; if thou hast good wares, chance has sent thee hither for my convenience and thy profit."

"What may your ladyship please to lack?" said Wayland, unstrapping his pack, and displaying its contents with as much dexterity as if he had been bred to the trade. Indeed he had occasionally pursued it in the course of his roving life, and now commended his wares with all the volubility of a trader, and showed some skill in the main art of placing prices upon them.

"What do I please to lack?" said the lady, "why, considering I have not for six long months bought one yard of lawn or cambric, or one trinket, the most inconsiderable, for my own use, and at my own choice, the better question is, What hast thou got to sell? Lay aside for me that cambric partlet and pair of sleeves—and those roundells of gold fringe, drawn out with cyprus—and that short cloak of cherry-coloured fine cloth, garnished with gold buttons and loops;—is it not of an absolute fancy, Janet?"

"Nay, my lady," replied Janet, "if you consult my poor judgment, it is, methinks, over-gaudy for a graceful habit."

"Now, out upon thy judgment, if it be no brighter, wench," said the Countess. "Thou shalt wear it thyself for penance' sake; and I promise thee the gold buttons, being somewhat massive, will comfort thy father, and reconcile him to the cherry-coloured body. See that he snap them not away, Janet, and send them to bear company with the imprisoned angels which he keeps captive in his strong-box."

"May I pray your ladyship to spare my poor father?" said Janet.

"Nay, but why should any one spare him that is so sparing of his own nature?" replied the lady.—"Well, but to our gear. That head garniture for myself, and that silver bodkin mounted with pearl; and take off two gowns of that russet cloth for Dorcas and Alison, Janet, to keep the old wretches warm against winter comes.—And stay—hast thou no perfumes and sweet bags, or any handsome casting bottles of the newest mode?"

"Were I a pedlar in earnest, I were a made merchant," thought Wayland, as he busied himself to answer the demands which she thronged one on another, with the eagerness of a young lady who has been long secluded from such a pleasing occupation. "But how to bring her to a moment's serious reflection?" Then as he exhibited his choicest collection of essences and perfumes, he at once arrested her attention by observing that these articles had almost risen to double value since the magnificent preparations made by the Earl of Leicester to entertain the Queen and court at his princely Castle of Kenilworth.

"Ha!" said the Countess hastily; "that rumour, then, is true, Janet."

"Surely, madam," answered Wayland; "and I marvel it hath not reached your noble ladyship's ears. The Queen of England feasts with the noble Earl for a week during the Summer's Progress; and there are many who will tell you England will have a king, and England's Elizabeth—God save her!—a husband, ere the Progress be over."

"They lie like villains!" said the Countess, bursting forth impatiently.

"For God's sake, madam, consider," said Janet, trembling with apprehension; "who would cumber themselves about pedlar's tidings?"

"Yes, Janet!" exclaimed the Countess; "right, thou hast corrected me justly. Such reports, blighting the reputation of England's brightest and noblest peer, can only find currency amongst the mean, the abject, and the infamous!"

"May I perish, lady," said Wayland Smith, observing that her violence directed itself towards him, "if I have done anything to merit this strange passion! I have said but what many men say."

By this time the Countess had recovered her composure, and endeavoured, alarmed by the anxious hints of Janet, to suppress all appearance of displeasure. "I were loath," she said, "good fellow, that our Queen should change the virgin style so dear to us her people—think not of it." And then, as if desirous to change the subject, she added, "And what is this paste, so carefully put up in the silver box?" as she examined the contents of a casket in which drugs and perfumes were contained in separate drawers.

"It is a remedy, Madam, for a disorder of which I trust your ladyship will never have reason to complain. The amount of a small turkey-bean, swallowed daily for a week, fortifies the heart against those black vapours which arise from solitude, melancholy, unrequited affection, disappointed hope—"

"Are you a fool, friend?" said the Countess sharply; "or do you think, because I have good-naturedly purchased your trumpery goods at your roguish prices, that you may put any gullery you will on me? Who ever heard that affections of the heart were cured by medicines given to the body?"

"Under your honourable favour," said Wayland, "I am an honest man, and I have sold my goods at an honest price. As to this most precious medicine, when I told its qualities, I asked you not to purchase it, so why should I lie to you? I say not it will cure a rooted affection of the mind, which only God and time can do; but I say that this restorative relieves the black vapours which are engendered in the body of that melancholy which broodeth on the mind. I have relieved many with it, both in court and city, and of late one Master Edmund Tressilian, a worshipful gentleman in Cornwall, who, on some slight received, it was told me, where he had set his affections, was brought into that state of melancholy which made his friends alarmed for his life."

He paused, and the lady remained silent for some time, and then asked, with a voice which she strove in vain to render firm and indifferent in its tone, "Is the gentleman you have mentioned perfectly recovered?"

"Passably, madam," answered Wayland; "he hath at least no bodily complaint."

"I will take some of the medicine, Janet," said the Countess. "I too have sometimes that dark melancholy which overclouds the brain."

"You shall not do so, madam," said Janet; "who shall answer that this fellow vends what is wholesome?"

"I will myself warrant my good faith," said Wayland; and taking a part of the medicine, he swallowed it before them. The Countess now bought what remained, a step to which Janet, by further objections, only determined her the more obstinately. She even took the first dose upon the instant, and professed to feel her heart lightened and her spirits augmented—a consequence which, in all probability, existed only in her own imagination. The lady then piled the purchases she had made together, flung her purse to Janet, and desired her to compute the amount, and to pay the pedlar; while she herself, as if tired of the amusement she at first found in conversing with him, wished him good evening, and walked carelessly into the house, thus depriving Wayland of every opportunity to speak with her in private. He hastened, however, to attempt an explanation with Janet.

"Maiden," he said, "thou hast the face of one who should love her mistress. She hath much need of faithful service."

"And well deserves it at my hands," replied Janet; "but what of that?"

"Maiden, I am not altogether what I seem," said the pedlar, lowering his voice.

"The less like to be an honest man," said Janet.

"The more so," answered Wayland, "since I am no pedlar."

"Get thee gone then instantly, or I will call for assistance," said Janet; "my father must ere this be returned."

"Do not be so rash," said Wayland; "you will do what you may repent of. I am one of your mistress's friends; and she had need of more, not that thou shouldst ruin those she hath."

"How shall I know that?" said Janet.

"Look me in the face," said Wayland Smith, "and see if thou dost not read honesty in my looks."

And in truth, though by no means handsome, there was in his physiognomy the sharp, keen expression of inventive genius and prompt intellect, which, joined to quick and brilliant eyes, a well-formed mouth, and an intelligent smile, often gives grace and interest to features which are both homely and irregular. Janet looked at him with the sly simplicity of her sect, and replied, "Notwithstanding thy boasted honesty, friend, and although I am not accustomed to read and pass judgment on such volumes as thou hast submitted to my perusal, I think I see in thy countenance something of the pedlar—something of the picaroon."

"On a small scale, perhaps," said Wayland Smith, laughing. "But this evening, or to-morrow, will an old man come hither with thy father, who has the stealthy step of the cat, the shrewd and vindictive eye of the rat, the fawning wile of the spaniel, the determined snatch of the mastiff—of him beware, for your own sake and that of your mistress. See you, fair Janet, he brings the venom of the aspic under the assumed innocence of the dove. What precise mischief he meditates towards you I cannot guess, but death and disease have ever dogged his footsteps. Say nought of this to thy mistress; my art suggests to me that in her state the fear of evil may be as dangerous as its operation. But see that she take my specific, for" (he lowered his voice, and spoke low but impressively in her ear) "it is an antidote against poison.—Hark, they enter the garden!"

In effect, a sound of noisy mirth and loud talking approached the garden door, alarmed by which Wayland Smith sprung into the midst of a thicket of overgrown shrubs, while Janet withdrew to the garden-house that she might not incur observation, and that she might at the same time conceal, at least for the present, the purchases made from the supposed pedlar, which lay scattered on the floor of the summer-house.

Janet, however, had no occasion for anxiety. Her father, his old attendant, Lord Leicester's domestic, and the astrologer, entered the garden in tumult and in extreme perplexity, endeavouring to quiet Lambourne, whose brain had now become completely fired with liquor, and who was one of those unfortunate persons who, being once stirred with the vinous stimulus, do not fall asleep like other drunkards, but remain partially influenced by it for many hours, until at length, by successive draughts, they are elevated into a state of uncontrollable frenzy. Like many men in this state also, Lambourne neither lost the power of motion, speech, or expression; but, on the contrary, spoke with unwonted emphasis and readiness, and told all that at another time he would have been most desirous to keep secret.

"What!" ejaculated Michael, at the full extent of his voice, "am I to have no welcome, no carouse, when I have brought fortune to your old, ruinous dog-house in the shape of a devil's ally, that can change slate-shivers into Spanish dollars?—Here, you, Tony Fire-the-Fagot, Papist, Puritan, hypocrite, miser, profligate, devil, compounded of all men's sins, bow down and reverence him who has brought into thy house the very mammon thou worshippest."

"For God's sake," said Foster, "speak low—come into the house—thou shalt have wine, or whatever thou wilt."

"No, old puckfoist, I will have it here," thundered the inebriated ruffian—"here, AL FRESCO, as the Italian hath it. No, no, I will not drink with that poisoning devil within doors, to be choked with the fumes of arsenic and quick-silver; I learned from villain Varney to beware of that."

"Fetch him wine, in the name of all the fiends!" said the alchemist.

"Aha! and thou wouldst spice it for me, old Truepenny, wouldst thou not? Ay, I should have copperas, and hellebore, and vitriol, and aqua fortis, and twenty devilish materials bubbling in my brain-pan like a charm to raise the devil in a witch's cauldron. Hand me the flask thyself, old Tony Fire-the-Fagot—and let it be cool—I will have no wine mulled at the pile of the old burnt bishops. Or stay, let Leicester be king if he will—good—and Varney, villain Varney, grand vizier—why, excellent!—and what shall I be, then?—why, emperor—Emperor Lambourne! I will see this choice piece of beauty that they have walled up here for their private pleasures; I will have her this very night to serve my wine-cup and put on my nightcap. What should a fellow do with two wives, were he twenty times an Earl? Answer me that, Tony boy, you old reprobate, hypocritical dog, whom God struck out of the book of life, but tormented with the constant wish to be restored to it—you old bishop-burning, blasphemous fanatic, answer me that."

"I will stick my knife to the haft in him," said Foster, in a low tone, which trembled with passion.

"For the love of Heaven, no violence!" said the astrologer. "It cannot but be looked closely into.—Here, honest Lambourne, wilt thou pledge me to the health of the noble Earl of Leicester and Master Richard Varney?"

"I will, mine old Albumazar—I will, my trusty vender of ratsbane. I would kiss thee, mine honest infractor of the Lex Julia (as they said at Leyden), didst thou not flavour so damnably of sulphur, and such fiendish apothecary's stuff.—Here goes it, up seyes—to Varney and Leicester two more noble mounting spirits—and more dark-seeking, deep-diving, high-flying, malicious, ambitious miscreants—well, I say no more, but I will whet my dagger on his heart-spone that refuses to pledge me! And so, my masters—"

Thus speaking, Lambourne exhausted the cup which the astrologer had handed to him, and which contained not wine, but distilled spirits. He swore half an oath, dropped the empty cup from his grasp, laid his hand on his sword without being able to draw it, reeled, and fell without sense or motion into the arms of the domestic, who dragged him off to his chamber, and put him to bed.

In the general confusion, Janet regained her lady's chamber unobserved, trembling like an aspen leaf, but determined to keep secret from the Countess the dreadful surmises which she could not help entertaining from the drunken ravings of Lambourne. Her fears, however, though they assumed no certain shape, kept pace with the advice of the pedlar; and she confirmed her mistress in her purpose of taking the medicine which he had recommended, from which it is probable she would otherwise have dissuaded her. Neither had these intimations escaped the ears of Wayland, who knew much better how to interpret them. He felt much compassion at beholding so lovely a creature as the Countess, and whom he had first seen in the bosom of domestic happiness, exposed to the machinations of such a gang of villains. His indignation, too, had been highly excited by hearing the voice of his old master, against whom he felt, in equal degree, the passions of hatred and fear. He nourished also a pride in his own art and resources; and, dangerous as the task was, he that night formed a determination to attain the bottom of the mystery, and to aid the distressed lady, if it were yet possible. From some words which Lambourne had dropped among his ravings, Wayland now, for the first time, felt inclined to doubt that Varney had acted entirely on his own account in wooing and winning the affections of this beautiful creature. Fame asserted of this jealous retainer that he had accommodated his lord in former love intrigues; and it occurred to Wayland Smith that Leicester himself might be the party chiefly interested. Her marriage with the Earl he could not suspect; but even the discovery of such a passing intrigue with a lady of Mistress Amy Robsart's rank was a secret of the deepest importance to the stability of the favourite's power over Elizabeth. "If Leicester himself should hesitate to stifle such a rumour by very strange means," said he to himself, "he has those about him who would do him that favour without waiting for his consent. If I would meddle in this business, it must be in such guise as my old master uses when he compounds his manna of Satan, and that is with a close mask on my face. So I will quit Giles Gosling to-morrow, and change my course and place of residence as often as a hunted fox. I should like to see this little Puritan, too, once more. She looks both pretty and intelligent to have come of such a caitiff as Anthony Fire-the-Fagot."

Giles Gosling received the adieus of Wayland rather joyfully than otherwise. The honest publican saw so much peril in crossing the course of the Earl of Leicester's favourite that his virtue was scarce able to support him in the task, and he was well pleased when it was likely to be removed from his shoulders still, however, professing his good-will, and readiness, in case of need, to do Mr. Tressilian or his emissary any service, in so far as consisted with his character of a publican.

CHAPTER XXI.

*Vaulting ambition, that o'erleaps itself,
And falls on t'other side. —MACBETH.*

The splendour of the approaching revels at Kenilworth was now the conversation through all England; and everything was collected at home, or from abroad, which could add to the gaiety or glory of the prepared reception of Elizabeth at the house of her most distinguished favourite, Meantime Leicester appeared daily to advance in the Queen's favour. He was perpetually by her side in council—willingly listened to in the moments of courtly recreation—favoured with approaches even to familiar intimacy—looked up to by all who had aught to hope at court—courted by foreign ministers with the most flattering testimonies of respect from their sovereigns,—the ALTER EGO, as it seemed, of the stately Elizabeth, who was now very generally supposed to be studying the time and opportunity for associating him, by marriage, into her sovereign power.

Amid such a tide of prosperity, this minion of fortune and of the Queen's favour was probably the most unhappy man in the realm which seemed at his devotion. He had the Fairy King's superiority over his friends and dependants, and saw much which they could not. The character of his mistress was intimately known to him. It was his minute and studied acquaintance with her humours, as well as her noble faculties, which, joined to his powerful mental qualities, and his eminent external accomplishments, had raised him so high in her favour; and it was that very knowledge of her disposition which led him to apprehend at every turn some sudden and overwhelming disgrace. Leicester was like a pilot possessed of a chart which points out to him all the peculiarities of his navigation, but which exhibits so many shoals, breakers, and reefs of rocks, that his anxious eye reaps little more from observing them than to be convinced that his final escape can be little else than miraculous.

In fact, Queen Elizabeth had a character strangely compounded of the strongest masculine sense, with those foibles which are chiefly supposed proper to the female sex. Her subjects had the full benefit of her virtues, which far predominated over her weaknesses; but her courtiers, and those about her person, had often to sustain sudden and embarrassing turns of caprice, and the sallies of a temper which was both jealous and despotic. She was the nursing-mother of her people, but she was also the true daughter of Henry VIII.; and though early sufferings and an excellent education had repressed and modified, they had not altogether destroyed, the hereditary temper of that "hard-ruled king." "Her mind," says her witty godson, Sir John Harrington, who had experienced both the smiles and the frowns which he describes, "was ofttime like the gentle air that cometh from the western point in a summer's morn—'twas sweet and refreshing to all around her. Her speech did win all affections. And again, she could put forth such alterations, when obedience was lacking, as left no doubting WHOSE daughter she was. When she smiled, it was a pure sunshine, that every one did choose to bask in, if they could; but anon came a storm from a sudden gathering of clouds, and the thunder fell in a wondrous manner on all alike." [Nugae Antiquae, vol.i., pp.355, 356-362.]

This variability of disposition, as Leicester well knew, was chiefly formidable to those who had a share in the Queen's affections, and who depended rather on her personal regard than on the indispensable services which they could render to her councils and her crown. The favour of Burleigh or of Walsingham, of a description far less striking than that by which he was himself upheld, was founded, as Leicester was well aware, on Elizabeth's solid judgment, not on her partiality, and was, therefore, free from all those principles of change and decay necessarily incident to that which chiefly arose from personal accomplishments and female predilection. These great and sage statesmen were judged of by the Queen only with reference to the measures they suggested, and the reasons by which they supported their opinions in council; whereas the success of Leicester's course depended on all those light and changeable gales of caprice and humour which thwart or favour the progress of a lover in the favour of his mistress, and she, too, a mistress who was ever and anon becoming fearful lest she should forget the dignity, or compromise the authority, of the Queen, while she indulged the affections of the woman. Of the difficulties which surrounded his power, "too great to keep or to resign," Leicester was fully sensible; and as he looked anxiously round for the means of maintaining himself in his precarious situation, and sometimes contemplated those of descending from it in safety, he saw but little hope of either. At such moments his thoughts turned to dwell upon his secret marriage and its consequences; and it was in bitterness against himself, if not against his unfortunate Countess, that he ascribed to that hasty measure, adopted in the ardour of what he now called inconsiderate passion, at once the impossibility of placing his power on a solid basis, and the immediate prospect of its precipitate downfall.

"Men say," thus ran his thoughts, in these anxious and repentant moments, "that I might marry Elizabeth, and become King of England. All things suggest this. The match is carolled in ballads, while the rabble throw their caps up. It has been touched upon in the schools—whispered in the presence-chamber—recommended from the pulpit—prayed for in the Calvinistic churches abroad—touched on by statists in the very council at home. These bold insinuations have been rebutted by no rebuke, no resentment, no chiding, scarce even by the usual female protestation that she would live and die a virgin princess. Her words

have been more courteous than ever, though she knows such rumours are abroad—her actions more gracious, her looks more kind—nought seems wanting to make me King of England, and place me beyond the storms of court-favour, excepting the putting forth of mine own hand to take that crown imperial which is the glory of the universe! And when I might stretch that hand out most boldly, it is fettered down by a secret and inextricable bond! And here I have letters from Amy," he would say, catching them up with a movement of peevishness, "persecuting me to acknowledge her openly—to do justice to her and to myself—and I wot not what. Methinks I have done less than justice to myself already. And she speaks as if Elizabeth were to receive the knowledge of this matter with the glee of a mother hearing of the happy marriage of a hopeful son! She, the daughter of Henry, who spared neither man in his anger nor woman in his desire—she to find herself tricked, drawn on with toys of passion to the verge of acknowledging her love to a subject, and he discovered to be a married man!—Elizabeth to learn that she had been dallied with in such fashion, as a gay courtier might trifle with a country wench—we should then see, to our ruin, FURENS QUID FAEMINA!" He would then pause, and call for Varney, whose advice was now more frequently resorted to than ever, because the Earl remembered the remonstrances which he had made against his secret contract. And their consultation usually terminated in anxious deliberation how, or in what manner, the Countess was to be produced at Kenilworth. These communings had for some time ended always in a resolution to delay the Progress from day to day. But at length a peremptory decision became necessary.

"Elizabeth will not be satisfied without her presence," said the Earl. "Whether any suspicion hath entered her mind, as my own apprehensions suggest, or whether the petition of Tressilian is kept in her memory by Sussex or some other secret enemy, I know not; but amongst all the favourable expressions which she uses to me, she often recurs to the story of Amy Robsart. I think that Amy is the slave in the chariot, who is placed there by my evil fortune to dash and to confound my triumph, even when at the highest. Show me thy device, Varney, for solving the inextricable difficulty. I have thrown every such impediment in the way of these accursed revels as I could propound even with a shade of decency, but to-day's interview has put all to a hazard. She said to me kindly, but peremptorily, 'We will give you no further time for preparations, my lord, lest you should altogether ruin yourself. On Saturday, the 9th of July, we will be with you at Kenilworth. We pray you to forget none of our appointed guests and suitors, and in especial this light-o'-love, Amy Robsart. We would wish to see the woman who could postpone yonder poetical gentleman, Master Tressilian, to your man, Richard Varney.'—Now, Varney, ply thine invention, whose forge hath availed us so often for sure as my name is Dudley, the danger menaced by my horoscope is now darkening around me."

"Can my lady be by no means persuaded to bear for a brief space the obscure character which circumstances impose on her?" Said Varney after some hesitation.

"How, sirrah? my Countess term herself thy wife!—that may neither stand with my honour nor with hers."

"Alas! my lord," answered Varney, "and yet such is the quality in which Elizabeth now holds her; and to contradict this opinion is to discover all."

"Think of something else, Varney," said the Earl, in great agitation; "this invention is nought. If I could give way to it, she would not; for I tell thee, Varney, if thou knowest it not, that not Elizabeth on the throne has more pride than the daughter of this obscure gentleman of Devon. She is flexible in many things, but where she holds her honour brought in question she hath a spirit and temper as apprehensive as lightning, and as swift in execution."

"We have experienced that, my lord, else had we not been thus circumstanced," said Varney. "But what else to suggest I know not. Methinks she whose good fortune in becoming your lordship's bride, and who gives rise to the danger, should do somewhat towards parrying it."

"It is impossible," said the Earl, waving his hand; "I know neither authority nor entreaties would make her endure thy name for an hour."

"It is somewhat hard, though," said Varney, in a dry tone; and, without pausing on that topic, he added, "Suppose some one were found to represent her? Such feats have been performed in the courts of as sharp-eyed monarchs as Queen Elizabeth."

"Utter madness, Varney," answered the Earl; "the counterfeit would be confronted with Tressilian, and discovery become inevitable."

"Tressilian might be removed from court," said the unhesitating Varney.

"And by what means?"

"There are many," said Varney, "by which a statesman in your situation, my lord, may remove from the scene one who pries into your affairs, and places himself in perilous opposition to you."

"Speak not to me of such policy, Varney," said the Earl hastily, "which, besides, would avail nothing in the present case. Many others there be at court to whom Amy may be known; and besides, on the absence of Tressilian, her father or some of her friends would be instantly summoned hither. Urge thine invention once more."

"My lord, I know not what to say," answered Varney; "but were I myself in such perplexity, I would ride post down to Cumnor Place, and compel my wife to give her consent to such measures as her safety and mine required."

"Varney," said Leicester, "I cannot urge her to aught so repugnant to her noble nature as a share in this stratagem; it would be a base requital to the love she bears me."

"Well, my lord," said Varney, "your lordship is a wise and an honourable man, and skilled in those high points of romantic scruple which are current in Arcadia perhaps, as your nephew, Philip Sidney, writes. I am your humble servitor—a man of this world, and only happy that my knowledge of it, and its ways, is such as your lordship has not scorned to avail yourself of. Now I would fain know whether the obligation lies on my lady or on you in this fortunate union, and which has most reason to show complaisance to the other, and to consider that other's wishes, conveniences, and safety?"

"I tell thee, Varney," said the Earl, "that all it was in my power to bestow upon her was not merely deserved, but a thousand times overpaid, by her own virtue and beauty; for never did greatness descend upon a creature so formed by nature to grace and adorn it."

"It is well, my lord, you are so satisfied," answered Varney, with his usual sardonic smile, which even respect to his patron could not at all times subdue; "you will have time enough to enjoy undisturbed the society of one so gracious and beautiful—that is, so soon as such confinement in the Tower be over as may correspond to the crime of deceiving the affections of Elizabeth Tudor. A cheaper penalty, I presume, you do not expect."

"Malicious fiend!" answered Leicester, "do you mock me in my misfortune?—Manage it as thou wilt."

"If you are serious, my lord," said Varney, "you must set forth instantly and post for Cumnor Place."

"Do thou go thyself, Varney; the devil has given thee that sort of eloquence which is most powerful in the worst cause. I should stand self-convicted of villainy, were I to urge such a deceit. Begone, I tell thee; must I entreat thee to mine own dishonour?"

"No, my lord," said Varney; "but if you are serious in entrusting me with the task of urging this most necessary measure, you must give me a letter to my lady, as my credentials, and trust to me for backing the advice it contains with all the force in my power. And such is my opinion of my lady's love for your lordship, and of her willingness to do that which is at once to contribute to your pleasure and your safety, that I am sure she will condescend to bear for a few brief days the name of so humble a man as myself, especially since it is not inferior in antiquity to that of her own paternal house."

Leicester seized on writing materials, and twice or thrice commenced a letter to the Countess, which he afterwards tore into fragments. At length he finished a few distracted lines, in which he conjured her, for reasons nearly concerning his life and honour, to consent to bear the name of Varney for a few days, during the revels at Kenilworth. He added that Varney would communicate all the reasons which rendered this deception indispensable; and having signed and sealed these credentials, he flung them over the table to Varney with a motion that he should depart, which his adviser was not slow to comprehend and to obey.

Leicester remained like one stupefied, till he heard the trampling of the horses, as Varney, who took no time even to change his dress, threw himself into the saddle, and, followed by a single servant, set off for Berkshire. At the sound the Earl started from his seat, and ran to the window, with the momentary purpose of recalling the unworthy commission with which he had entrusted one of whom he used to say he knew no virtuous property save affection to his patron. But Varney was already beyond call; and the bright, starry firmament, which the age considered as the Book of Fate, lying spread before Leicester when he opened the casement, diverted him from his better and more manly purpose.

"There they roll, on their silent but potential course," said the Earl, looking around him, "without a voice which speaks to our ear, but not without influences which affect, at every change, the indwellers of this vile, earthly planet. This, if astrologers fable not, is the very crisis of my fate! The hour approaches of which I was

taught to beware—the hour, too, which I was encouraged to hope for. A King was the word—but how?—the crown matrimonial. All hopes of that are gone—let them go. The rich Netherlands have demanded me for their leader, and, would Elizabeth consent, would yield to me THEIR crown. And have I not such a claim even in this kingdom? That of York, descending from George of Clarence to the House of Huntingdon, which, this lady failing, may have a fair chance—Huntingdon is of my house.—But I will plunge no deeper in these high mysteries. Let me hold my course in silence for a while, and in obscurity, like a subterranean river; the time shall come that I will burst forth in my strength, and bear all opposition before me."

While Leicester was thus stupefying the remonstrances of his own conscience, by appealing to political necessity for his apology, or losing himself amidst the wild dreams of ambition, his agent left town and tower behind him on his hasty journey to Berkshire. HE also nourished high hope. He had brought Lord Leicester to the point which he had desired, of committing to him the most intimate recesses of his breast, and of using him as the channel of his most confidential intercourse with his lady. Henceforward it would, he foresaw, be difficult for his patron either to dispense with his services, or refuse his requests, however unreasonable. And if this disdainful dame, as he termed the Countess, should comply with the request of her husband, Varney, her pretended husband, must needs become so situated with respect to her, that there was no knowing where his audacity might be bounded perhaps not till circumstances enabled him to obtain a triumph, which he thought of with a mixture of fiendish feelings, in which revenge for her previous scorn was foremost and predominant. Again he contemplated the possibility of her being totally intractable, and refusing obstinately to play the part assigned to her in the drama at Kenilworth.

"Alasco must then do his part," he said. "Sickness must serve her Majesty as an excuse for not receiving the homage of Mrs. Varney—ay, and a sore and wasting sickness it may prove, should Elizabeth continue to cast so favourable an eye on my Lord of Leicester. I will not forego the chance of being favourite of a monarch for want of determined measures, should these be necessary. Forward, good horse, forward—ambition and haughty hope of power, pleasure, and revenge strike their stings as deep through my bosom as I plunge the rowels in thy flanks. On, good horse, on—the devil urges us both forward!"

CHAPTER XXII.

*Say that my beauty was but small,
Among court ladies all despised,
Why didst thou rend it from that hall
Where, scornful Earl, 'twas dearly prized?*

*No more thou com'st with wonted speed,
Thy once beloved bride to see;
But be she alive, or be she dead,
I fear, stern Earl, 's the same to thee.
CUMNOR HALL, by WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE.*

The ladies of fashion of the present, or of any other period, must have allowed that the young and lovely Countess of Leicester had, besides her youth and beauty, two qualities which entitled her to a place amongst women of rank and distinction. She displayed, as we have seen in her interview with the pedlar, a liberal promptitude to make unnecessary purchases, solely for the pleasure of acquiring useless and showy trifles which ceased to please as soon as they were possessed; and she was, besides, apt to spend a considerable space of time every day in adorning her person, although the varied splendour of her attire could only attract the half satirical praise of the precise Janet, or an approving glance from the bright eyes which witnessed their own beams of triumph reflected from the mirror.

The Countess Amy had, indeed, to plead for indulgence in those frivolous tastes, that the education of the times had done little or nothing for a mind naturally gay and averse to study. If she had not loved to collect finery and to wear it, she might have woven tapestry or sewed embroidery, till her labours spread in gay profusion all over the walls and seats at Lidcote Hall; or she might have varied Minerva's labours with the task of preparing a mighty pudding against the time that Sir Hugh Robsart returned from the greenwood. But Amy had no natural genius either for the loom, the needle, or the receipt-book. Her mother had died in infancy; her father contradicted her in nothing; and Tressilian, the only one that approached her who was able or desirous to attend to the cultivation of her mind, had much hurt his interest with her by assuming too eagerly the task of a preceptor, so that he was regarded by the lively, indulged, and idle girl with some fear and much respect, but with little or nothing of that softer emotion which it had been his hope and his ambition to inspire. And thus her heart lay readily open, and her fancy became easily captivated by the noble exterior and graceful deportment and complacent flattery of Leicester, even before he was known to her as the dazzling minion of wealth and power.

The frequent visits of Leicester at Cumnor, during the earlier part of their union, had reconciled the Countess to the solitude and privacy to which she was condemned; but when these visits became rarer and more rare, and when the void was filled up with letters of excuse, not always very warmly expressed, and generally extremely brief, discontent and suspicion began to haunt those splendid apartments which love had fitted up for beauty. Her answers to Leicester conveyed these feelings too bluntly, and pressed more naturally than prudently that she might be relieved from this obscure and secluded residence, by the Earl's acknowledgment of their marriage; and in arranging her arguments with all the skill she was mistress of, she trusted chiefly to the warmth of the entreaties with which she urged them. Sometimes she even ventured to mingle reproaches, of which Leicester conceived he had good reason to complain.

"I have made her Countess," he said to Varney; "surely she might wait till it consisted with my pleasure that she should put on the coronet?"

The Countess Amy viewed the subject in directly an opposite light.

"What signifies," she said, "that I have rank and honour in reality, if I am to live an obscure prisoner, without either society or observance, and suffering in my character, as one of dubious or disgraced reputation? I care not for all those strings of pearl, which you fret me by warping into my tresses, Janet. I tell you that at Lidcote Hall, if I put but a fresh rosebud among my hair, my good father would call me to him, that he might see it more closely; and the kind old curate would smile, and Master Mumbblazen would say something about roses gules. And now I sit here, decked out like an image with gold and gems, and no one to see my finery but you, Janet. There was the poor Tressilian, too—but it avails not speaking of him."

"It doth not indeed, madam," said her prudent attendant; "and verily you make me sometimes wish you would not speak of him so often, or so rashly."

"It signifies nothing to warn me, Janet," said the impatient and incorrigible Countess; "I was born free, though I am now mewed up like some fine foreign slave, rather than the wife of an English noble. I bore it all with pleasure while I was sure he loved me; but now my tongue and heart shall be free, let them fetter these limbs as they will. I tell thee, Janet, I love my husband—I will love him till my latest breath—I cannot cease to love him, even if I would, or if he—which, God knows, may chance—should cease to love me. But I will say, and loudly, I would have been happier than I now am to have remained in Lidcote Hall, even although I must have married poor Tressilian, with his melancholy look and his head full of learning, which I cared not for. He said, if I would read his favourite volumes, there would come a time that I should be glad of having done so. I think it is come now."

"I bought you some books, madam," said Janet, "from a lame fellow who sold them in the Market-place—and who stared something boldly, at me, I promise you."

"Let me see them, Janet," said the Countess; "but let them not be of your own precise cast,—How is this, most righteous damsel?—'A PAIR OF SNUFFERS FOR THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK'—'HANDFULL OF MYRRH AND HYSSOP TO PUT A SICK SOUL TO PURGATION'—'A DRAUGHT OF WATER FROM THE VALLEY OF BACA'—'FOXES AND FIREBRANDS'—what gear call you this, maiden?"

"Nay, madam," said Janet, "it was but fitting and seemly to put grace in your ladyship's way; but an you will none of it, there are play-books, and poet-books, I trow."

The Countess proceeded carelessly in her examination, turning over such rare volumes as would now make the fortune of twenty retail booksellers. Here was a "BOKE OF COOKERY, IMPRINTED BY RICHARD LANT," and "SKELTON'S BOOKS"—"THE PASSTIME OF THE PEOPLE"—"THE CASTLE OF KNOWLEDGE," etc. But neither to this lore did the Countess's heart incline, and joyfully did she start up from the listless task of turning over the leaves of the pamphlets, and hastily did she scatter them through the floor, when the hasty clatter of horses' feet, heard in the courtyard, called her to the window, exclaiming, "It is Leicester!—it is my noble Earl!—it is my Dudley!—every stroke of his horse's hoof sounds like a note of lordly music!"

There was a brief bustle in the mansion, and Foster, with his downward look and sullen manner, entered the apartment to say, "That Master Richard Varney was arrived from my lord, having ridden all night, and craved to speak with her ladyship instantly."

"Varney?" said the disappointed Countess; "and to speak with me?—pshaw! But he comes with news from Leicester, so admit him instantly."

Varney entered her dressing apartment, where she sat arrayed in her native loveliness, adorned with all that Janet's art and a rich and tasteful undress could bestow. But the most beautiful part of her attire was her profuse and luxuriant light-brown locks, which floated in such rich abundance around a neck that resembled a swan's, and over a bosom heaving with anxious expectation, which communicated a hurried tinge of red to her whole countenance.

Varney entered the room in the dress in which he had waited on his master that morning to court, the splendour of which made a strange contrast with the disorder arising from hasty riding during a dark night and foul ways. His brow bore an anxious and hurried expression, as one who has that to say of which he doubts the reception, and who hath yet posted on from the necessity of communicating his tidings. The Countess's anxious eye at once caught the alarm, as she exclaimed, "You bring news from my lord, Master Varney—Gracious Heaven! is he ill?"

"No, madam, thank Heaven!" said Varney. "Compose yourself, and permit me to take breath ere I communicate my tidings."

"No breath, sir," replied the lady impatiently; "I know your theatrical arts. Since your breath hath sufficed to bring you hither, it may suffice to tell your tale—at least briefly, and in the gross."

"Madam," answered Varney, "we are not alone, and my lord's message was for your ear only."

"Leave us, Janet, and Master Foster," said the lady; "but remain in the next apartment, and within call."

Foster and his daughter retired, agreeably to the Lady Leicester's commands, into the next apartment, which was the withdrawing-room. The door which led from the sleeping-chamber was then carefully shut and bolted, and the father and daughter remained both in a posture of anxious attention, the first with a stern, suspicious, anxious cast of countenance, and Janet with folded hands, and looks which seemed divided betwixt her desire to know the fortunes of her mistress, and her prayers to Heaven for her safety. Anthony Foster seemed himself to have some idea of what was passing through his daughter's mind, for he crossed the apartment and took her anxiously by the hand, saying, "That is right—pray, Janet, pray; we have all need of prayers, and some of us more than others. Pray, Janet—I would pray myself, but I must listen to what goes on within—evil has been brewing, love—evil has been brewing. God forgive our sins, but Varney's sudden and strange arrival bodes us no good."

Janet had never before heard her father excite or even permit her attention to anything which passed in their mysterious family; and now that he did so, his voice sounded in her ear—she knew not why—like that of a screech-owl denouncing some deed of terror and of woe. She turned her eyes fearfully towards the door, almost as if she expected some sounds of horror to be heard, or some sight of fear to display itself.

All, however, was as still as death, and the voices of those who spoke in the inner chamber were, if they spoke at all, carefully subdued to a tone which could not be heard in the next. At once, however, they were heard to speak fast, thick, and hastily; and presently after the voice of the Countess was heard exclaiming, at the highest pitch to which indignation could raise it, "Undo the door, sir, I command you!—undo the door!—I will have no other reply!" she continued, drowning with her vehement accents the low and muttered sounds which Varney was heard to utter betwixt whiles. "What ho! without there!" she persisted, accompanying her words with shrieks, "Janet, alarm the house!—Foster, break open the door—I am detained here by a traitor! Use axe and lever, Master Foster—I will be your warrant!"

"It shall not need, madam," Varney was at length distinctly heard to say. "If you please to expose my lord's important concerns and your own to the general ear, I will not be your hindrance."

The door was unlocked and thrown open, and Janet and her father rushed in, anxious to learn the cause of these reiterated exclamations.

When they entered the apartment Varney stood by the door grinding his teeth, with an expression in which rage, and shame, and fear had each their share. The Countess stood in the midst of her apartment like a juvenile Pythoness under the influence of the prophetic fury. The veins in her beautiful forehead started into swollen blue lines through the hurried impulse of her articulation—her cheek and neck glowed like scarlet—her eyes were like those of an imprisoned eagle, flashing red lightning on the foes which it cannot reach with its talons. Were it possible for one of the Graces to have been animated by a Fury, the countenance could not have united such beauty with so much hatred, scorn, defiance, and resentment. The gesture and attitude corresponded with the voice and looks, and altogether presented a spectacle which was at once beautiful and fearful; so much of the sublime had the energy of passion united with the Countess Amy's natural loveliness. Janet, as soon as the door was open, ran to her mistress; and more slowly, yet with more haste than he was wont, Anthony Foster went to Richard Varney.

"In the Truth's name, what ails your ladyship?" said the former.

"What, in the name of Satan, have you done to her?" said Foster to his friend.

"Who, I?—nothing," answered Varney, but with sunken head and sullen voice; "nothing but communicated to her her lord's commands, which, if the lady list not to obey, she knows better how to answer it than I may pretend to do."

"Now, by Heaven, Janet!" said the Countess, "the false traitor lies in his throat! He must needs lie, for he speaks to the dishonour of my noble lord; he must needs lie doubly, for he speaks to gain ends of his own, equally execrable and unattainable."

"You have misapprehended me, lady," said Varney, with a sulky species of submission and apology; "let this matter rest till your passion be abated, and I will explain all."

"Thou shalt never have an opportunity to do so," said the Countess.—"Look at him, Janet. He is fairly dressed, hath the outside of a gentleman, and hither he came to persuade me it was my lord's pleasure—nay, more, my wedded lord's commands—that I should go with him to Kenilworth, and before the Queen and nobles, and in presence of my own wedded lord, that I should acknowledge him—HIM there—that very cloak-brushing, shoe-cleaning fellow—HIM there, my lord's lackey, for my liege lord and husband; furnishing against myself, Great God! whenever I was to vindicate my right and my rank, such weapons as would hew my just claim from the root, and destroy my character to be regarded as an honourable matron of the English nobility!"

"You hear her, Foster, and you, young maiden, hear this lady," answered Varney, taking advantage of the pause which the Countess had made in her charge, more for lack of breath than for lack of matter—"you hear that her heat only objects to me the course which our good lord, for the purpose to keep certain matters secret, suggests in the very letter which she holds in her hands."

Foster here attempted to interfere with a face of authority, which he thought became the charge entrusted to him, "Nay, lady, I must needs say you are over-hasty in this. Such deceit is not utterly to be condemned when practised for a righteous end; and thus even the patriarch Abraham feigned Sarah to be his sister when they went down to Egypt."

"Ay, sir," answered the Countess; "but God rebuked that deceit even in the father of His chosen people, by the mouth of the heathen Pharaoh. Out upon you, that will read Scripture only to copy those things which are held out to us as warnings, not as examples!"

"But Sarah disputed not the will of her husband, an it be your pleasure," said Foster, in reply, "but did as Abraham commanded, calling herself his sister, that it might be well with her husband for her sake, and that his soul might live because of her beauty."

"Now, so Heaven pardon me my useless anger," answered the Countess, "thou art as daring a hypocrite as yonder fellow is an impudent deceiver! Never will I believe that the noble Dudley gave countenance to so dastardly, so dishonourable a plan. Thus I tread on his infamy, if indeed it be, and thus destroy its remembrance for ever!"

So saying, she tore in pieces Leicester's letter, and stamped, in the extremity of impatience, as if she would have annihilated the minute fragments into which she had rent it.

"Bear witness," said Varney, collecting himself, "she hath torn my lord's letter, in order to burden me with the scheme of his devising; and although it promises nought but danger and trouble to me, she would lay it to my charge, as if I had any purpose of mine own in it."

"Thou liest, thou treacherous slave!" said the Countess in spite of Janet's attempts to keep her silent, in the sad foresight that her vehemence might only furnish arms against herself—"thou liest," she continued.—"Let me go, Janet—were it the last word I have to speak, he lies. He had his own foul ends to seek; and broader he would have displayed them had my passion permitted me to preserve the silence which at first encouraged him to unfold his vile projects."

"Madam," said Varney, overwhelmed in spite of his effrontery, "I entreat you to believe yourself mistaken."

"As soon will I believe light darkness," said the enraged Countess. "Have I drunk of oblivion? Do I not remember former passages, which, known to Leicester, had given thee the preferment of a gallows, instead of the honour of his intimacy. I would I were a man but for five minutes! It were space enough to make a craven like thee confess his villainy. But go—begone! Tell thy master that when I take the foul course to which such scandalous deceits as thou hast recommended on his behalf must necessarily lead me, I will give him a rival something worthy of the name. He shall not be supplanted by an ignominious lackey, whose best fortune is to catch a gift of his master's last suit of clothes ere it is threadbare, and who is only fit to seduce a suburb-wench by the bravery of new roses in his master's old pantoufles. Go, begone, sir! I scorn thee so much that I am ashamed to have been angry with thee."

Varney left the room with a mute expression of rage, and was followed by Foster, whose apprehension, naturally slow, was overpowered by the eager and abundant discharge of indignation which, for the first time, he had heard burst from the lips of a being who had seemed, till that moment, too languid and too gentle to nurse an angry thought or utter an intemperate expression. Foster, therefore, pursued Varney from place to place, persecuting him with interrogatories, to which the other replied not, until they were in the opposite side of the quadrangle, and in the old library, with which the reader has already been made acquainted. Here he turned round on his persevering follower, and thus addressed him, in a tone tolerably equal, that brief walk having been sufficient to give one so habituated to command his temper time to rally and recover his presence of mind.

"Tony," he said, with his usual sneering laugh, "it avails not to deny it. The Woman and the Devil, who, as thine oracle Holdforth will confirm to thee, cheated man at the beginning, have this day proved more powerful than my discretion. Yon termagant looked so tempting, and had the art to preserve her countenance so naturally, while I communicated my lord's message, that, by my faith, I thought I might say some little thing for myself. She thinks she hath my head under her girdle now, but she is deceived. Where is Doctor Alasco?"

"In his laboratory," answered Foster. "It is the hour he is spoken not withal. We must wait till noon is past, or spoil his important—what said I? important!—I would say interrupt his divine studies."

"Ay, he studies the devil's divinity," said Varney; "but when I want him, one hour must suffice as well as another. Lead the way to his pandemonium."

So spoke Varney, and with hasty and perturbed steps followed Foster, who conducted him through private passages, many of which were well-nigh ruinous, to the opposite side of the quadrangle, where, in a subterranean apartment, now occupied by the chemist Alasco, one of the Abbots of Abingdon, who had a turn for the occult sciences, had, much to the scandal of his convent, established a laboratory, in which, like other fools of the period, he spent much precious time, and money besides, in the pursuit of the grand arcanum.

Anthony Foster paused before the door, which was scrupulously secured within, and again showed a marked hesitation to disturb the sage in his operations. But Varney, less scrupulous, roused him by knocking and voice, until at length, slowly and reluctantly, the inmate of the apartment undid the door. The chemist appeared, with his eyes bleared with the heat and vapours of the stove or alembic over which he brooded and the interior of his cell displayed the confused assemblage of heterogeneous substances and extraordinary implements belonging to his profession. The old man was muttering, with spiteful impatience, "Am I for ever to be recalled to the affairs of earth from those of heaven?"

"To the affairs of hell," answered Varney, "for that is thy proper element.—Foster, we need thee at our conference."

Foster slowly entered the room. Varney, following, barred the door, and they betook themselves to secret council.

In the meanwhile, the Countess traversed the apartment, with shame and anger contending on her lovely cheek.

"The villain," she said—"the cold-blooded, calculating slave!—But I unmasked him, Janet—I made the snake uncoil all his folds before me, and crawl abroad in his naked deformity; I suspended my resentment, at the danger of suffocating under the effort, until he had let me see the very bottom of a heart more foul than hell's darkest corner.—And thou, Leicester, is it possible thou couldst bid me for a moment deny my wedded right in thee, or thyself yield it to another?—But it is impossible—the villain has lied in all.—Janet, I will not remain here longer—I fear him—I fear thy father. I grieve to say it, Janet—but I fear thy father, and, worst of all, this odious Varney, I will escape from Cumnor."

"Alas! madam, whither would you fly, or by what means will you escape from these walls?"

"I know not, Janet," said the unfortunate young lady, looking upwards! and clasping her hands together, "I know not where I shall fly, or by what means; but I am certain the God I have served will not abandon me in this dreadful crisis, for I am in the hands of wicked men."

"Do not think so, dear lady," said Janet; "my father is stern and strict in his temper, and severely true to his trust—but yet—"

At this moment Anthony Foster entered the apartment, bearing in his hand a glass cup and a small flask. His manner was singular; for, while approaching the Countess with the respect due to her rank, he had till this time suffered to become visible, or had been unable to suppress, the obdurate sulkiness of his natural disposition, which, as is usual with those of his unhappy temper, was chiefly exerted towards those over whom circumstances gave him control. But at present he showed nothing of that sullen consciousness of authority which he was wont to conceal under a clumsy affectation of civility and deference, as a ruffian hides his pistols and bludgeon under his ill-fashioned gaberdine. And yet it seemed as if his smile was more in fear than courtesy, and as if, while he pressed the Countess to taste of the choice cordial, which should refresh her spirits after her late alarm, he was conscious of meditating some further injury. His hand trembled also, his voice faltered, and his whole outward behaviour exhibited so much that was suspicious, that his daughter Janet, after she had stood looking at him in astonishment for some seconds, seemed at once to collect herself to execute some hardy resolution, raised her head, assumed an attitude and gait of determination and authority, and walking slowly betwixt her father and her mistress, took the salver from the hand of the former, and said in a low but marked and decided tone, "Father, I will fill for my noble mistress, when such is her pleasure."

"Thou, my child?" said Foster, eagerly and apprehensively; "no, my child—it is not THOU shalt render the lady this service."

"And why, I pray you," said Janet, "if it be fitting that the noble lady should partake of the cup at all?"

"Why—why?" said the seneschal, hesitating, and then bursting into passion as the readiest mode of supplying the lack of all other reason—"why, because it is my pleasure, minion, that you should not! Get you gone to the evening lecture."

"Now, as I hope to hear lecture again," replied Janet, "I will not go thither this night, unless I am better assured of my mistress's safety. Give me that flask, father"—and she took it from his reluctant hand, while he resigned it as if conscience-struck. "And now," she said, "father, that which shall benefit my mistress, cannot do ME prejudice. Father, I drink to you."

Foster, without speaking a word, rushed on his daughter and wrested the flask from her hand; then, as if embarrassed by what he had done, and totally unable to resolve what he should do next, he stood with it in his hand, one foot advanced and the other drawn back, glaring on his daughter with a countenance in which rage, fear, and convicted villainy formed a hideous combination.

"This is strange, my father," said Janet, keeping her eye fixed on his, in the manner in which those who have the charge of lunatics are said to overawe their unhappy patients; "will you neither let me serve my lady, nor drink to her myself?"

The courage of the Countess sustained her through this dreadful scene, of which the import was not the less obvious that it was not even hinted at. She preserved even the rash carelessness of her temper, and though her cheek had grown pale at the first alarm, her eye was calm and almost scornful. "Will YOU taste this rare cordial, Master Foster? Perhaps you will not yourself refuse to pledge us, though you permit not Janet to do so. Drink, sir, I pray you."

"I will not," answered Foster.

"And for whom, then, is the precious beverage reserved, sir?" said the Countess.

"For the devil, who brewed it!" answered Foster; and, turning on his heel, he left the chamber.

Janet looked at her mistress with a countenance expressive in the highest degree of shame, dismay, and sorrow.

"Do not weep for me, Janet," said the Countess kindly.

"No, madam," replied her attendant, in a voice broken by sobs, "it is not for you I weep; it is for myself—it is for that unhappy man. Those who are dishonoured before man—those who are condemned by God—have cause to mourn; not those who are innocent! Farewell, madam!" she said hastily assuming the mantle in which she was wont to go abroad.

"Do you leave me, Janet?" said her mistress—"desert me in such an evil strait?"

"Desert you, madam!" exclaimed Janet; and running back to her mistress, she imprinted a thousand kisses on her hand—"desert you I—may the Hope of my trust desert me when I do so! No, madam; well you said the God you serve will open you a path for deliverance. There is a way of escape. I have prayed night and day for light, that I might see how to act betwixt my duty to yonder unhappy man and that which I owe to you. Sternly and fearfully that light has now dawned, and I must not shut the door which God opens. Ask me no more. I will return in brief space."

So speaking, she wrapped herself in her mantle, and saying to the old woman whom she passed in the outer room that she was going to evening prayer, she left the house.

Meanwhile her father had reached once more the laboratory, where he found the accomplices of his intended guilt. "Has the sweet bird sipped?" said Varney, with half a smile; while the astrologer put the same question with his eyes, but spoke not a word.

"She has not, nor she shall not from my hands," replied Foster; "would you have me do murder in my daughter's presence?"

"Wert thou not told, thou sullen and yet faint-hearted slave," answered Varney, with bitterness, "that no MURDER as thou callest it, with that staring look and stammering tone, is designed in the matter? Wert thou not told that a brief illness, such as woman puts on in very wantonness, that she may wear her night-gear at noon, and lie on a settle when she should mind her domestic business, is all here aimed at? Here is a learned man will swear it to thee by the key of the Castle of Wisdom."

"I swear it," said Alasco, "that the elixir thou hast there in the flask will not prejudice life! I swear it by that immortal and indestructible quintessence of gold, which pervades every substance in nature, though its secret existence can be traced by him only to whom Trismegistus renders the key of the Cabala."

"An oath of force," said Varney. "Foster, thou wert worse than a pagan to disbelieve it. Believe me, moreover, who swear by nothing but by my own word, that if you be not conformable, there is no hope, no, not a glimpse of hope, that this thy leasehold may be transmuted into a copyhold. Thus, Alasco will leave your pewter artillery untransmigrated, and I, honest Anthony, will still have thee for my tenant."

"I know not, gentlemen," said Foster, "where your designs tend to; but in one thing I am bound up,—that, fall back fall edge, I will have one in this place that may pray for me, and that one shall be my daughter. I have lived ill, and the world has been too weighty with me; but she is as innocent as ever she was when on her mother's lap, and she, at least, shall have her portion in that happy City, whose walls are of pure gold, and the foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones."

"Ay, Tony," said Varney, "that were a paradise to thy heart's content.—Debate the matter with him, Doctor Alasco; I will be with you anon."

So speaking, Varney arose, and taking the flask from the table, he left the room.

"I tell thee, my son," said Alasco to Foster, as soon as Varney had left them, "that whatever this bold and profligate railer may say of the mighty science, in which, by Heaven's blessing, I have advanced so far that I would not call the wisest of living artists my better or my teacher—I say, howsoever yonder reprobate may scoff at things too holy to be apprehended by men merely of carnal and evil thoughts, yet believe that the city beheld by St. John, in that bright vision of the Christian Apocalypse, that new Jerusalem, of which all Christian men hope to partake, sets forth typically the discovery of the GRAND SECRET, whereby the most precious and perfect of nature's works are elicited out of her basest and most crude productions; just as the light and gaudy butterfly, the most beautiful child of the summer's breeze, breaks forth from the dungeon of a sordid chrysalis."

"Master Holdforth said nought of this exposition," said Foster doubtfully; "and moreover, Doctor Alasco, the Holy Writ says that the gold and precious stones of the Holy City are in no sort for those who work abomination, or who frame lies."

"Well, my son," said the Doctor, "and what is your inference from thence?"

"That those," said Foster, "who distil poisons, and administer them in secrecy, can have no portion in those unspeakable riches."

"You are to distinguish, my son," replied the alchemist, "betwixt that which is necessarily evil in its progress and in its end also, and that which, being evil, is, nevertheless, capable of working forth good. If, by the death of one person, the happy period shall be brought nearer to us, in which all that is good shall be attained, by wishing its presence—all that is evil escaped, by desiring its absence—in which sickness, and pain, and sorrow shall be the obedient servants of human wisdom, and made to fly at the slightest signal of a sage—in which that which is now richest and rarest shall be within the compass of every one who shall be obedient to the voice of wisdom—when the art of healing shall be lost and absorbed in the one universal medicine when sages shall become monarchs of the earth, and death itself retreat before their frown,—if this blessed consummation of all things can be hastened by the slight circumstance that a frail, earthly body, which must needs partake corruption, shall be consigned to the grave a short space earlier than in the course of nature, what is such a sacrifice to the advancement of the holy Millennium?"

"Millennium is the reign of the Saints," said Foster, somewhat doubtfully.

"Say it is the reign of the Sages, my son," answered Alasco; "or rather the reign of Wisdom itself."

"I touched on the question with Master Holdforth last exercising night," said Foster; "but he says your doctrine is heterodox, and a damnable and false exposition."

"He is in the bonds of ignorance, my son," answered Alasco, "and as yet burning bricks in Egypt; or, at best, wandering in the dry desert of Sinai. Thou didst ill to speak to such a man of such matters. I will, however, give thee proof, and that shortly, which I will defy that peevish divine to confute, though he should strive with me as the magicians strove with Moses before King Pharaoh. I will do projection in thy presence, my son,—in thy very presence—and thine eyes shall witness the truth."

"Stick to that, learned sage," said Varney, who at this moment entered the apartment; "if he refuse the testimony of thy tongue, yet how shall he deny that of his own eyes?"

"Varney!" said the adept—"Varney already returned! Hast thou—" he stopped short.

"Have I done mine errand, thou wouldst say?" replied Varney. "I have! And thou," he added, showing more symptoms of interest than he had hitherto exhibited, "art thou sure thou hast poured forth neither more nor less than the just measure?"

"Ay," replied the alchemist, "as sure as men can be in these nice proportions, for there is diversity of constitutions."

"Nay, then," said Varney, "I fear nothing. I know thou wilt not go a step farther to the devil than thou art justly considered for—thou wert paid to create illness, and wouldst esteem it thriftless prodigality to do murder at the same price. Come, let us each to our chamber we shall see the event to-morrow."

"What didst thou do to make her swallow it?" said Foster, shuddering.

"Nothing," answered Varney, "but looked on her with that aspect which governs madmen, women, and children. They told me in St. Luke's Hospital that I have the right look for overpowering a refractory patient. The keepers made me their compliments on't; so I know how to win my bread when my court-favour fails me."

"And art thou not afraid," said Foster, "lest the dose be disproportioned?"

"If so," replied Varney, "she will but sleep the sounder, and the fear of that shall not break my rest. Good night, my masters."

Anthony Foster groaned heavily, and lifted up his hands and eyes. The alchemist intimated his purpose to continue some experiment of high import during the greater part of the night, and the others separated to their places of repose.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Now God be good to me in this wild pilgrimage!

All hope in human aid I cast behind me.

Oh, who would be a woman?—who that fool,

A weeping, pining, faithful, loving woman?

She hath hard measure still where she hopes kindest,

And all her bounties only make ingrates. LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE.

The summer evening was closed, and Janet, just when her longer stay might have occasioned suspicion and inquiry in that zealous household, returned to Cumnor Place, and hastened to the apartment in which she had left her lady. She found her with her head resting on her arms, and these crossed upon a table which stood before her. As Janet came in, she neither looked up nor stirred.

Her faithful attendant ran to her mistress with the speed of lightning, and rousing her at the same time with her hand, conjured the Countess, in the most earnest manner, to look up and say what thus affected her. The unhappy lady raised her head accordingly, and looking on her attendant with a ghastly eye, and cheek as pale as clay—"Janet," she said, "I have drunk it."

"God be praised!" said Janet hastily—"I mean, God be praised that it is no worse; the potion will not harm you. Rise, shake this lethargy from your limbs, and this despair from your mind."

"Janet," repeated the Countess again, "disturb me not—leave me at peace—let life pass quietly. I am poisoned."

"You are not, my dearest lady," answered the maiden eagerly. "What you have swallowed cannot injure you, for the antidote has been taken before it, and I hastened hither to tell you that the means of escape are open to you."

"Escape!" exclaimed the lady, as she raised herself hastily in her chair, while light returned to her eye and life to her cheek; "but ah! Janet, it comes too late."

"Not so, dearest lady. Rise, take mine arm, walk through the apartment; let not fancy do the work of poison! So; feel you not now that you are possessed of the full use of your limbs?"

"The torpor seems to diminish," said the Countess, as, supported by Janet, she walked to and fro in the apartment; "but is it then so, and have I not swallowed a deadly draught? Varney was here since thou wert gone, and commanded me, with eyes in which I read my fate, to swallow yon horrible drug. O Janet! it must be fatal; never was harmless draught served by such a cup-bearer!"

"He did not deem it harmless, I fear," replied the maiden; "but God confounds the devices of the wicked. Believe me, as I swear by the dear Gospel in which we trust, your life is safe from his practice. Did you not debate with him?"

"The house was silent," answered the lady—"thou gone—no other but he in the chamber—and he capable of every crime. I did but stipulate he would remove his hateful presence, and I drank whatever he offered.—But you spoke of escape, Janet; can I be so happy?"

"Are you strong enough to bear the tidings, and make the effort?" said the maiden.

"Strong!" answered the Countess. "Ask the hind, when the fangs of the deerhound are stretched to gripe her, if she is strong enough to spring over a chasm. I am equal to every effort that may relieve me from this place."

"Hear me, then," said Janet. "One whom I deem an assured friend of yours has shown himself to me in various disguises, and sought speech of me, which—for my mind was not clear on the matter until this evening—I have ever declined. He was the pedlar who brought you goods—the itinerant hawk who sold me books; whenever I stirred abroad I was sure to see him. The event of this night determined me to speak with him. He awaits even now at the postern gate of the park with means for your flight.—But have you strength of body?—have you courage of mind?—can you undertake the enterprise?"

"She that flies from death," said the lady, "finds strength of body—she that would escape from shame lacks no strength of mind. The thoughts of leaving behind me the villain who menaces both my life and honour would give me strength to rise from my deathbed."

"In God's name, then, lady," said Janet, "I must bid you adieu, and to God's charge I must commit you!"

"Will you not fly with me, then, Janet?" said the Countess, anxiously. "Am I to lose thee? Is this thy faithful service?"

"Lady, I would fly with you as willingly as bird ever fled from cage, but my doing so would occasion instant discovery and pursuit. I must remain, and use means to disguise the truth for some time. May Heaven pardon the falsehood, because of the necessity!"

"And am I then to travel alone with this stranger?" said the lady. "Bethink thee, Janet, may not this prove some deeper and darker scheme to separate me perhaps from you, who are my only friend?"

"No, madam, do not suppose it," answered Janet readily; "the youth is an honest youth in his purpose to you, and a friend to Master Tressilian, under whose direction he is come hither."

"If he be a friend of Tressilian," said the Countess, "I will commit myself to his charge as to that of an angel sent from heaven; for than Tressilian never breathed mortal man more free of whatever was base, false, or selfish. He forgot himself whenever he could be of use to others. Alas! and how was he requited?"

With eager haste they collected the few necessities which it was thought proper the Countess should take with her, and which Janet, with speed and dexterity, formed into a small bundle, not forgetting to add such ornaments of intrinsic value as came most readily in her way, and particularly a casket of jewels, which she wisely judged might prove of service in some future emergency. The Countess of Leicester next changed her dress for one which Janet usually wore upon any brief journey, for they judged it necessary to avoid every external distinction which might attract attention. Ere these preparations were fully made, the moon had arisen in the summer heaven, and all in the mansion had betaken themselves to rest, or at least to the silence and retirement of their chambers.

There was no difficulty anticipated in escaping, whether from the house or garden, provided only they could elude observation. Anthony Foster had accustomed himself to consider his daughter as a conscious sinner might regard a visible guardian angel, which, notwithstanding his guilt, continued to hover around him; and therefore his trust in her knew no bounds. Janet commanded her own motions during the daytime, and had a master-key which opened the postern door of the park, so that she could go to the village at pleasure, either upon the household affairs, which were entirely confided to her management, or to attend her devotions at the meeting-house of her sect. It is true the daughter of Foster was thus liberally entrusted under the solemn condition that she should not avail herself of these privileges to do anything inconsistent with the safe-keeping of the Countess; for so her residence at Cumnor Place had been termed, since she began of late to exhibit impatience of the restrictions to which she was subjected. Nor is there reason to suppose that anything short of the dreadful suspicions which the scene of that evening had excited could have induced Janet to violate her word or deceive her father's confidence. But from what she had witnessed, she now conceived herself not only justified, but imperatively called upon, to make her lady's safety the principal object of her care, setting all other considerations aside.

The fugitive Countess with her guide traversed with hasty steps the broken and interrupted path, which had once been an avenue, now totally darkened by the boughs of spreading trees which met above their head, and now receiving a doubtful and deceiving light from the beams of the moon, which penetrated where the

axe had made openings in the wood. Their path was repeatedly interrupted by felled trees, or the large boughs which had been left on the ground till time served to make them into fagots and billets. The inconvenience and difficulty attending these interruptions, the breathless haste of the first part of their route, the exhausting sensations of hope and fear, so much affected the Countess's strength, that Janet was forced to propose that they should pause for a few minutes to recover breath and spirits. Both therefore stood still beneath the shadow of a huge old gnarled oak-tree, and both naturally looked back to the mansion which they had left behind them, whose long, dark front was seen in the gloomy distance, with its huge stacks of chimneys, turrets, and clock-house, rising above the line of the roof, and definedly visible against the pure azure blue of the summer sky. One light only twinkled from the extended and shadowy mass, and it was placed so low that it rather seemed to glimmer from the ground in front of the mansion than from one of the windows. The Countess's terror was awakened. "They follow us!" she said, pointing out to Janet the light which thus alarmed her.

Less agitated than her mistress, Janet perceived that the gleam was stationary, and informed the Countess, in a whisper, that the light proceeded from the solitary cell in which the alchemist pursued his occult experiments. "He is of those," she added, "who sit up and watch by night that they may commit iniquity. Evil was the chance which sent hither a man whose mixed speech of earthly wealth and unearthly or superhuman knowledge hath in it what does so especially captivate my poor father. Well spoke the good Master Holdforth—and, methought, not without meaning that those of our household should find therein a practical use. 'There be those,' he said, 'and their number is legion, who will rather, like the wicked Ahab, listen to the dreams of the false prophet Zedekiah, than to the words of him by whom the Lord has spoken.' And he further insisted—'Ah, my brethren, there be many Zedekiahs among you—men that promise you the light of their carnal knowledge, so you will surrender to them that of your heavenly understanding. What are they better than the tyrant Naas, who demanded the right eye of those who were subjected to him?' And further he insisted—"

It is uncertain how long the fair Puritan's memory might have supported her in the recapitulation of Master Holdforth's discourse; but the Countess now interrupted her, and assured her she was so much recovered that she could now reach the postern without the necessity of a second delay.

They set out accordingly, and performed the second part of their journey with more deliberation, and of course more easily, than the first hasty commencement. This gave them leisure for reflection; and Janet now, for the first time, ventured to ask her lady which way she proposed to direct her flight. Receiving no immediate answer—for, perhaps, in the confusion of her mind this very obvious subject of deliberation had not occurred to the Countess—Janet ventured to add, "Probably to your father's house, where you are sure of safety and protection?"

"No, Janet," said the lady mournfully; "I left Lidcote Hall while my heart was light and my name was honourable, and I will not return thither till my lord's permission and public acknowledgment of our marriage restore me to my native home with all the rank and honour which he has bestowed on me."

"And whither will you, then, madam?" said Janet.

"To Kenilworth, girl," said the Countess, boldly and freely. "I will see these revels—these princely revels—the preparation for which makes the land ring from side to side. Methinks, when the Queen of England feasts within my husband's halls, the Countess of Leicester should be no unbeseeming guest."

"I pray God you may be a welcome one!" said Janet hastily.

"You abuse my situation, Janet," said the Countess, angrily, "and you forget your own."

"I do neither, dearest madam," said the sorrowful maiden; "but have you forgotten that the noble Earl has given such strict charges to keep your marriage secret, that he may preserve his court-favour? and can you think that your sudden appearance at his castle, at such a juncture, and in such a presence, will be acceptable to him?"

"Thou thinkest I would disgrace him," said the Countess; "nay, let go my arm, I can walk without aid and work without counsel."

"Be not angry with me, lady," said Janet meekly, "and let me still support you; the road is rough, and you are little accustomed to walk in darkness."

"If you deem me not so mean as may disgrace my husband," said the Countess, in the same resentful tone, "you suppose my Lord of Leicester capable of abetting, perhaps of giving aim and authority to, the base proceedings of your father and Varney, whose errand I will do to the good Earl."

"For God's sake, madam, spare my father in your report," said Janet; "let my services, however poor, be some atonement for his errors!"

"I were most unjust, dearest Janet, were it otherwise," said the Countess, resuming at once the fondness and confidence of her manner towards her faithful attendant, "No, Janet, not a word of mine shall do your father prejudice. But thou seest, my love, I have no desire but to throw my self on my husband's protection. I have left the abode he assigned for me, because of the villainy of the persons by whom I was surrounded; but I will disobey his commands in no other particular. I will appeal to him alone—I will be protected by him alone; to no other, than at his pleasure, have I or will I communicate the secret union which combines our hearts and our destinies. I will see him, and receive from his own lips the directions for my future conduct. Do not argue against my resolution, Janet; you will only confirm me in it. And to own the truth, I am resolved to know my fate at once, and from my husband's own mouth; and to seek him at Kenilworth is the surest way to attain my purpose."

While Janet hastily revolved in her mind the difficulties and uncertainties attendant on the unfortunate lady's situation, she was inclined to alter her first opinion, and to think, upon the whole, that since the Countess had withdrawn herself from the retreat in which she had been placed by her husband, it was her first duty to repair to his presence, and possess him with the reasons for such conduct. She knew what importance the Earl attached to the concealment of their marriage, and could not but own, that by taking any step to make it public without his permission, the Countess would incur, in a high degree, the indignation of her husband. If she retired to her father's house without an explicit avowal of her rank, her situation was likely greatly to prejudice her character; and if she made such an avowal, it might occasion an irreconcilable breach with her husband. At Kenilworth, again, she might plead her cause with her husband himself, whom Janet, though distrusting him more than the Countess did, believed incapable of being accessory to the base and desperate means which his dependants, from whose power the lady was now escaping, might resort to, in order to stifle her complaints of the treatment she had received at their hands. But at the worst, and were the Earl himself to deny her justice and protection, still at Kenilworth, if she chose to make her wrongs public, the Countess might have Tressilian for her advocate, and the Queen for her judge; for so much Janet had learned in her short conference with Wayland. She was, therefore, on the whole, reconciled to her lady's proposal of going towards Kenilworth, and so expressed herself; recommending, however, to the Countess the utmost caution in making her arrival known to her husband.

"Hast thou thyself been cautious, Janet?" said the Countess; "this guide, in whom I must put my confidence, hast thou not entrusted to him the secret of my condition?"

"From me he has learned nothing," said Janet; "nor do I think that he knows more than what the public in general believe of your situation."

"And what is that?" said the lady.

"That you left your father's house—but I shall offend you again if I go on," said Janet, interrupting herself.

"Nay, go on," said the Countess; "I must learn to endure the evil report which my folly has brought upon me. They think, I suppose, that I have left my father's house to follow lawless pleasure. It is an error which will soon be removed—indeed it shall, for I will live with spotless fame, or I shall cease to live.—I am accounted, then, the paramour of my Leicester?"

"Most men say of Varney," said Janet; "yet some call him only the convenient cloak of his master's pleasures; for reports of the profuse expense in garnishing yonder apartments have secretly gone abroad, and such doings far surpass the means of Varney. But this latter opinion is little prevalent; for men dare hardly even hint suspicion when so high a name is concerned, lest the Star Chamber should punish them for scandal of the nobility."

"They do well to speak low," said the Countess, "who would mention the illustrious Dudley as the accomplice of such a wretch as Varney.—We have reached the postern. Ah! Janet, I must bid thee farewell! Weep not, my good girl," said she, endeavouring to cover her own reluctance to part with her faithful attendant under an attempt at playfulness; "and against we meet again, reform me, Janet, that precise ruff of thine for an open rabatine of lace and cut work, that will let men see thou hast a fair neck; and that kirtle of Philippine chency, with that bugle lace which befits only a chambermaid, into three-piled velvet and cloth of gold—thou wilt find plenty of stuffs in my chamber, and I freely bestow them on you. Thou must be brave, Janet; for though thou art now but the attendant of a distressed and

errant lady, who is both nameless and fameless, yet, when we meet again, thou must be dressed as becomes the gentlewoman nearest in love and in service to the first Countess in England."

"Now, may God grant it, dear lady!" said Janet—"not that I may go with gayer apparel, but that we may both wear our kirtles over lighter hearts."

By this time the lock of the postern door had, after some hard wrenching, yielded to the master-key; and the Countess, not without internal shuddering, saw herself beyond the walls which her husband's strict commands had assigned to her as the boundary of her walks. Waiting with much anxiety for their appearance, Wayland Smith stood at some distance, shrouding himself behind a hedge which bordered the high-road.

"Is all safe?" said Janet to him anxiously, as he approached them with caution.

"All," he replied; "but I have been unable to procure a horse for the lady. Giles Gosling, the cowardly hilding, refused me one on any terms whatever, lest, forsooth, he should suffer. But no matter; she must ride on my palfrey, and I must walk by her side until I come by another horse. There will be no pursuit, if you, pretty Mistress Janet, forget not thy lesson."

"No more than the wise widow of Tekoa forgot the words which Joab put into her mouth," answered Janet. "Tomorrow, I say that my lady is unable to rise."

"Ay; and that she hath aching and heaviness of the head a throbbing at the heart, and lists not to be disturbed. Fear not; they will take the hint, and trouble thee with few questions—they understand the disease."

"But," said the lady, "My absence must be soon discovered, and they will murder her in revenge. I will rather return than expose her to such danger."

"Be at ease on my account, madam," said Janet; "I would you were as sure of receiving the favour you desire from those to whom you must make appeal, as I am that my father, however angry, will suffer no harm to befall me."

The Countess was now placed by Wayland upon his horse, around the saddle of which he had placed his cloak, so folded as to make her a commodious seat.

"Adieu, and may the blessing of God wend with you!" said Janet, again kissing her mistress's hand, who returned her benediction with a mute caress. They then tore themselves asunder, and Janet, addressing Wayland, exclaimed, "May Heaven deal with you at your need, as you are true or false to this most injured and most helpless lady!"

"Amen! dearest Janet," replied Wayland; "and believe me, I will so acquit myself of my trust as may tempt even your pretty eyes, saintlike as they are, to look less scornfully on me when we next meet."

The latter part of this adieu was whispered into Janet's ear and although she made no reply to it directly, yet her manner, influenced, no doubt, by her desire to leave every motive in force which could operate towards her mistress's safety, did not discourage the hope which Wayland's words expressed. She re-entered the postern door, and locked it behind her; while, Wayland taking the horse's bridle in his hand, and walking close by its head, they began in silence their dubious and moonlight journey.

Although Wayland Smith used the utmost dispatch which he could make, yet this mode of travelling was so slow, that when morning began to dawn through the eastern mist, he found himself no farther than about ten miles distant from Cumnor. "Now, a plague upon all smooth-spoken hosts!" said Wayland, unable longer to suppress his mortification and uneasiness. "Had the false loon, Giles Gosling, but told me plainly two days since that I was to reckon nought upon him, I had shifted better for myself. But your hosts have such a custom of promising whatever is called for that it is not till the steed is to be shod you find they are out of iron. Had I but known, I could have made twenty shifts; nay, for that matter, and in so good a cause, I would have thought little to have prigged a prancer from the next common—it had but been sending back the brute to the headborough. The farcy and the founders confound every horse in the stables of the Black Bear!"

The lady endeavoured to comfort her guide, observing that the dawn would enable him to make more speed.

"True, madam," he replied; "but then it will enable other folk to take note of us, and that may prove an ill beginning of our journey. I had not cared a spark from anvil about the matter had we been further advanced on our way. But this Berkshire has been notoriously haunted, ever since I knew the country, with that sort of malicious elves who sit up late and rise early for no other purpose than to pry into other folk's affairs. I have been endangered by them ere now. But do not fear," he added, "good madam; for wit, meeting with opportunity, will not miss to find a salve for every sore."

The alarms of her guide made more impression on the Countess's mind than the comfort which he judged fit to administer along with it. She looked anxiously around her, and as the shadows withdrew from the landscape, and the heightening glow of the eastern sky promised the speedy rise of the sun, expected at every turn that the increasing light would expose them to the view of the vengeful pursuers, or present some dangerous and insurmountable obstacle to the prosecution of their journey. Wayland Smith perceived her uneasiness, and, displeased with himself for having given her cause of alarm, strode on with affected alacrity, now talking to the horse as one expert in the language of the stable, now whistling to himself low and interrupted snatches of tunes, and now assuring the lady there was no danger, while at the same time he looked sharply around to see that there was nothing in sight which might give the lie to his words while they were issuing from his mouth. Thus did they journey on, until an unexpected incident gave them the means of continuing their pilgrimage with more speed and convenience.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RICHARD. A horse!—A horse!—my kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY.....My lord, I'll help you to a horse. —RICHARD III.

Our travellers were in the act of passing a small thicket of trees close by the roadside, when the first living being presented himself whom they had seen since their departure from Cumnor Place. This was a stupid lout, seemingly a farmer's boy, in a grey jerkin, with his head bare, his hose about his heels, and huge startups upon his feet. He held by the bridle what of all things they most wanted—a palfrey, namely, with a side-saddle, and all other garniture for a woman's mounting; and he hailed Wayland Smith with, "Zur, be ye zure the party?"

"Ay, that I be, my lad," answered Wayland, without an instant's hesitation; and it must be owned that consciences trained in a stricter school of morality might have given way to an occasion so tempting. While he spoke, he caught the rein out of the boy's hand, and almost at the same time helped down the Countess from his own horse, and aided her to mount on that which chance had thus presented for her acceptance. Indeed, so naturally did the whole take place, that the Countess, as it afterwards appeared, never suspected but that the horse had been placed there to meet them by the precaution of the guide or some of his friends.

The lad, however, who was thus hastily dispossessed of his charge, began to stare hard, and scratch his head, as if seized with some qualms of conscience for delivering up the animal on such brief explanation. "I be right zure thou be'st the party," said he, muttering to himself, "but thou shouldst ha zaid BEANS, thou knawest."

"Ay, ay," said Wayland, speaking at a venture; "and thou BACON, thou knowest."

"Noa, noa," said the lad; "bide ye—bide ye—it was PEAS a should ha said."

"Well, well," answered Wayland, "Peas be it, a God's name! though Bacon were the better password."

And being by this time mounted on his own horse, he caught the rein of the palfrey from the uncertain hold of the hesitating young boor, flung him a small piece of money, and made amends for lost time by riding briskly off without further parley. The lad was still visible from the hill up which they were riding, and Wayland, as he looked back, beheld him standing with his fingers in his hair as immovable as a guide-post, and his head turned in the direction in which they were escaping from him. At length, just as they topped the hill, he saw the clown stoop to lift up the silver groat which his benevolence had imparted. "Now this is what I call a Godsend," said Wayland; "this is a bonny, well-ridden bit of a going thing, and it will carry us so far till we get you as well mounted, and then we will send it back time enough to satisfy the Hue and Cry."

But he was deceived in his expectations; and fate, which seemed at first to promise so fairly, soon threatened to turn the incident which he thus gloried in into the cause of their utter ruin.

They had not ridden a short mile from the place where they left the lad before they heard a man's voice shouting on the wind behind them, "Robbery! robbery!—Stop thief!" and similar exclamations, which Wayland's conscience readily assured him must arise out of the transaction to which he had been just accessory.

"I had better have gone barefoot all my life," he said; "it is the Hue and Cry, and I am a lost man. Ah! Wayland, Wayland, many a time thy father said horse-flesh would be the death of thee. Were I once safe among the horse-courers in Smithfield, or Turnbull Street, they should have leave to hang me as high as St. Paul's if I e'er meddled more with nobles, knights, or gentlewomen."

Amidst these dismal reflections, he turned his head repeatedly to see by whom he was chased, and was much comforted when he could only discover a single rider, who was, however, well mounted, and came after them at a speed which left them no chance of escaping, even had the lady's strength permitted her to ride as fast as her palfrey might have been able to gallop.

"There may be fair play betwixt us, sure," thought Wayland, "where there is but one man on each side, and yonder fellow sits on his horse more like a monkey than a cavalier. Pshaw! if it come to the worse, it will be easy unhorsing him. Nay, 'snails! I think his horse will take the matter in his own hand, for he has the bridle betwixt his teeth. Oons, what care I for him?" said he, as the pursuer drew yet nearer; "it is but the little animal of a mercer from Abingdon, when all is over." Even so it was, as the experienced eye of Wayland had descried at a distance. For the valiant mercer's horse, which was a beast of mettle, feeling himself put to his speed, and discerning a couple of horses riding fast at some hundred yards' distance before him, betook himself to the road with such alacrity as totally deranged the seat of his rider, who not only came up with, but passed at full gallop, those whom he had been pursuing, pulling the reins with all his might, and ejaculating, "Stop! stop!" an interjection which seemed rather to regard his own palfrey than what seamen call "the chase." With the same involuntary speed, he shot ahead (to use another nautical phrase) about a furlong ere he was able to stop and turn his horse, and then rode back towards our travellers, adjusting, as well as he could, his disordered dress, resettling himself in the saddle, and endeavouring to substitute a bold and martial frown for the confusion and dismay which sat upon his visage during his involuntary career.

Wayland had just time to caution the lady not to be alarmed, adding, "This fellow is a gull, and I will use him as such."

When the mercer had recovered breath and audacity enough to confront them, he ordered Wayland, in a menacing tone, to deliver up his palfrey.

"How?" said the smith, in King Cambyzes' vein, "are we commanded to stand and deliver on the king's highway? Then out, Excalibur, and tell this knight of prowess that dire blows must decide between us!"

"Haro and help, and hue and cry, every true man!" said the mercer. "I am withstood in seeking to recover mine own."

"Thou swearest thy gods in vain, foul paynim," said Wayland, "for I will through with mine purpose were death at the end on't. Nevertheless, know, thou false man of frail cambric and ferrateen, that I am he, even the pedlar, whom thou didst boast to meet on Maiden Castle moor, and despoil of his pack; wherefore betake thee to thy weapons presently."

"I spoke but in jest, man," said Goldthred; "I am an honest shopkeeper and citizen, who scorns to leap forth on any man from behind a hedge."

"Then, by my faith, most puissant mercer," answered Wayland, "I am sorry for my vow, which was, that wherever I met thee I would despoil thee of thy palfrey, and bestow it upon my leman, unless thou couldst defend it by blows of force. But the vow is passed and registered, and all I can do for thee is to leave the horse at Donnington, in the nearest hostelry."

"But I tell thee, friend," said the mercer, "it is the very horse on which I was this day to carry Jane Thackham, of Shottesbroke, as far as the parish church yonder, to become Dame Goldthred. She hath jumped out of the shot-window of old Gaffer Thackham's grange; and lo ye, yonder she stands at the place where she should have met the palfrey, with her camlet riding-cloak and ivory-handled whip, like a picture of Lot's wife. I pray you, in good terms, let me have back the palfrey."

"Grieved am I," said Wayland, "as much for the fair damsel as for thee, most noble imp of muslin. But vows must have their course; thou wilt find the palfrey at the Angel yonder at Donnington. It is all I may do for thee with a safe conscience."

"To the devil with thy conscience!" said the dismayed mercer. "Wouldst thou have a bride walk to church on foot?"

"Thou mayest take her on thy crupper, Sir Goldthred," answered Wayland; "it will take down thy steed's mettle."

"And how if you—if you forget to leave my horse, as you propose?" said Goldthred, not without hesitation, for his soul was afraid within him.

"My pack shall be pledged for it—yonder it lies with Giles Gosling, in his chamber with the damasked leathern hangings, stuffed full with velvet, single, double, treble-piled—rash-taffeta, and parapa—shag, damask, and mocado, plush, and grogram—"

"Hold! hold!" exclaimed the mercer; "nay, if there be, in truth and sincerity, but the half of these wares—but if ever I trust bumpkin with bonny Bayard again!"

"As you list for that, good Master Goldthred, and so good morrow to you—and well parted," he added, riding on cheerfully with the lady, while the discountenanced mercer rode back much slower than he came, pondering what excuse he should make to the disappointed bride, who stood waiting for her gallant groom in the midst of the king's highway.

"Methought," said the lady, as they rode on, "yonder fool stared at me as if he had some remembrance of me; yet I kept my muffler as high as I might."

"If I thought so," said Wayland, "I would ride back and cut him over the pate; there would be no fear of harming his brains, for he never had so much as would make pap to a sucking gosling. We must now push on, however, and at Donnington we will leave the oaf's horse, that he may have no further temptation to pursue us, and endeavour to assume such a change of shape as may baffle his pursuit if he should persevere in it."

The travellers reached Donnington without further alarm, where it became matter of necessity that the Countess should enjoy two or three hours' repose, during which Wayland disposed himself, with equal address and alacrity, to carry through those measures on which the safety of their future journey seemed to depend.

Exchanging his pedlar's gaberdine for a smock-frock, he carried the palfrey of Goldthred to the Angel Inn, which was at the other end of the village from that where our travellers had taken up their quarters. In the progress of the morning, as he travelled about his other business, he saw the steed brought forth and delivered to the cutting mercer himself, who, at the head of a valorous posse of the Hue and Cry, came to rescue, by force of arms, what was delivered to him without any other ransom than the price of a huge quantity of ale, drunk out by his assistants, thirsty, it would seem, with their walk, and concerning the price of which Master Goldthred had a fierce dispute with the headborough, whom he had summoned to aid him in raising the country.

Having made this act of prudent as well as just restitution, Wayland procured such change of apparel for the lady, as well as himself, as gave them both the appearance of country people of the better class; it being further resolved, that in order to attract the less observation, she should pass upon the road for the sister of her guide. A good but not a gay horse, fit to keep pace with his own, and gentle enough for a lady's use, completed the preparations for the journey; for making which, and for other expenses, he had been furnished with sufficient funds by Tressilian. And thus, about noon, after the Countess had been refreshed by the sound repose of several hours, they resumed their journey, with the purpose of making the best of their way to Kenilworth, by Coventry and Warwick. They were not, however, destined to travel far without meeting some cause of apprehension.

It is necessary to premise that the landlord of the inn had informed them that a jovial party, intended, as he understood, to present some of the masques or mummeries which made a part of the entertainment with which the Queen was usually welcomed on the royal Progresses, had left the village of Donnington an hour or two before them in order to proceed to Kenilworth. Now it had occurred to Wayland that, by attaching themselves in some sort to this group as soon as they should overtake them on the road, they would be less likely to attract notice than if they continued to travel entirely by themselves. He communicated his idea to the Countess, who, only anxious to arrive at Kenilworth without interruption, left him free to choose the manner in which this was to be accomplished. They pressed forward their horses, therefore, with the purpose of overtaking the party of intended revellers, and making the journey in their company; and had just seen the little party, consisting partly of riders, partly of people on foot, crossing the summit of a gentle hill, at about half a mile's distance, and disappearing on the other side, when Wayland, who maintained the most circumspect observation of all that met his eye in every direction, was aware that a rider was coming up behind them on a horse of uncommon action, accompanied by a serving-man, whose utmost efforts were unable to keep up with his master's trotting hackney, and who,

therefore, was fain to follow him at a hand gallop. Wayland looked anxiously back at these horsemen, became considerably disturbed in his manner, looked back again, and became pale, as he said to the lady, "That is Richard Varney's trotting gelding; I would know him among a thousand nags. This is a worse business than meeting the mercer."

"Draw your sword," answered the lady, "and pierce my bosom with it, rather than I should fall into his hands!"

"I would rather by a thousand times," answered Wayland, "pass it through his body, or even mine own. But to say truth, fighting is not my best point, though I can look on cold iron like another when needs must be. And indeed, as for my sword—(put on, I pray you)—it is a poor Provant rapier, and I warrant you he has a special Toledo. He has a serving-man, too, and I think it is the drunken ruffian Lambourne! upon the horse on which men say—(I pray you heartily to put on)—he did the great robbery of the west country grazier. It is not that I fear either Varney or Lambourne in a good cause—(your palfrey will go yet faster if you urge him)—but yet—(nay, I pray you let him not break off into a gallop, lest they should see we fear them, and give chase—keep him only at the full trot)—but yet, though I fear them not, I would we were well rid of them, and that rather by policy than by violence. Could we once reach the party before us, we may herd among them, and pass unobserved, unless Varney be really come in express pursuit of us, and then, happy man be his dole!"

While he thus spoke, he alternately urged and restrained his horse, desirous to maintain the fleetest pace that was consistent with the idea of an ordinary journey on the road, but to avoid such rapidity of movement as might give rise to suspicion that they were flying.

At such a pace they ascended the gentle hill we have mentioned, and looking from the top, had the pleasure to see that the party which had left Donnington before them were in the little valley or bottom on the other side, where the road was traversed by a rivulet, beside which was a cottage or two. In this place they seemed to have made a pause, which gave Wayland the hope of joining them, and becoming a part of their company, ere Varney should overtake them. He was the more anxious, as his companion, though she made no complaints, and expressed no fear, began to look so deadly pale that he was afraid she might drop from her horse. Notwithstanding this symptom of decaying strength, she pushed on her palfrey so briskly that they joined the party in the bottom of the valley ere Varney appeared on the top of the gentle eminence which they had descended.

They found the company to which they meant to associate themselves in great disorder. The women with dishevelled locks, and looks of great importance, ran in and out of one of the cottages, and the men stood around holding the horses, and looking silly enough, as is usual in cases where their assistance is not wanted. Wayland and his charge paused, as if out of curiosity, and then gradually, without making any inquiries, or being asked any questions, they mingled with the group, as if they had always made part of it.

They had not stood there above five minutes, anxiously keeping as much to the side of the road as possible, so as to place the other travellers betwixt them and Varney, when Lord Leicester's master of the horse, followed by Lambourne, came riding fiercely down the hill, their horses' flanks and the rowels of their spurs showing bloody tokens of the rate at which they travelled. The appearance of the stationary group around the cottages, wearing their buckram suits in order to protect their masking dresses, having their light cart for transporting their scenery, and carrying various fantastic properties in their hands for the more easy conveyance, let the riders at once into the character and purpose of the company.

"You are revellers," said Varney, "designing for Kenilworth?"

"RECTE QUIDEM, DOMINE SPECTATISSIME," answered one of the party.

"And why the devil stand you here?" said Varney, "when your utmost dispatch will but bring you to Kenilworth in time? The Queen dines at Warwick to-morrow, and you loiter here, ye knaves."

"I very truth, sir," said a little, diminutive urchin, wearing a vizard with a couple of sprouting horns of an elegant scarlet hue, having, moreover, a black serge jerkin drawn close to his body by lacing, garnished with red stockings, and shoes so shaped as to resemble cloven feet—"in very truth, sir, and you are in the right on't. It is my father the Devil, who, being taken in labour, has delayed our present purpose, by increasing our company with an imp too many."

"The devil he has!" answered Varney, whose laugh, however, never exceeded a sarcastic smile.

"It is even as the juvenal hath said," added the masker who spoke first; "Our major devil—for this is but our minor one—is even now at LUCINA, FER OPEM, within that very TUGURIUM."

"By Saint George, or rather by the Dragon, who may be a kinsman of the fiend in the straw, a most comical chance!" said Varney. "How sayest thou, Lambourne, wilt thou stand godfather for the nonce? If the devil were to choose a gossip, I know no one more fit for the office."

"Saving always when my betters are in presence," said Lambourne, with the civil impudence of a servant who knows his services to be so indispensable that his jest will be permitted to pass muster.

"And what is the name of this devil, or devil's dam, who has timed her turns so strangely?" said Varney. "We can ill afford to spare any of our actors."

"GAUDET NOMINE SIBYLLAE," said the first speaker; "she is called Sibyl Laneham, wife of Master Robert Laneham—"

"Clerk to the Council-chamber door," said Varney; "why, she is inexcusable, having had experience how to have ordered her matters better. But who were those, a man and a woman, I think, who rode so hastily up the hill before me even now? Do they belong to your company?"

Wayland was about to hazard a reply to this alarming inquiry, when the little diabolin again thrust in his oar.

"So please you," he said, coming close up to Varney, and speaking so as not to be overheard by his companions, "the man was our devil major, who has tricks enough to supply the lack of a hundred such as Dame Laneham; and the woman, if you please, is the sage person whose assistance is most particularly necessary to our distressed comrade."

"Oh, what! you have got the wise woman, then?" said Varney. "Why, truly, she rode like one bound to a place where she was needed. And you have a spare limb of Satan, besides, to supply the place of Mistress Laneham?"

"Ay, sir," said the boy; "they are not so scarce in this world as your honour's virtuous eminence would suppose. This master-fiend shall spit a few flashes of fire, and eruct a volume or two of smoke on the spot, if it will do you pleasure—you would think he had Aetna in his abdomen."

"I lack time just now, most hopeful imp of darkness, to witness his performance," said Varney; "but here is something for you all to drink the lucky hour—and so, as the play says, 'God be with Your labour!'"

Thus speaking, he struck his horse with the spurs, and rode on his way.

Lambourne tarried a moment or two behind his master, and rummaged his pouch for a piece of silver, which he bestowed on the communicative imp, as he said, for his encouragement on his path to the infernal regions, some sparks of whose fire, he said, he could discover flashing from him already. Then having received the boy's thanks for his generosity he also spurred his horse, and rode after his master as fast as the fire flashes from flint.

"And now," said the wily imp, sidling close up to Wayland's horse, and cutting a gambol in the air which seemed to vindicate his title to relationship with the prince of that element, "I have told them who YOU are, do you in return tell me who I am?"

"Either Flibbertigibbet," answered Wayland Smith, "or else an imp of the devil in good earnest."

"Thou hast hit it," answered Dickie Sludge. "I am thine own Flibbertigibbet, man; and I have broken forth of bounds, along with my learned preceptor, as I told thee I would do, whether he would or not. But what lady hast thou got with thee? I saw thou wert at fault the first question was asked, and so I drew up for thy assistance. But I must know all who she is, dear Wayland."

"Thou shalt know fifty finer things, my dear ingie," said Wayland; "but a truce to thine inquiries just now. And since you are bound for Kenilworth, thither will I too, even for the love of thy sweet face and waggish company."

"Thou shouldst have said my waggish face and sweet company," said Dickie; "but how wilt thou travel with us—I mean in what character?"

"E'en in that thou hast assigned me, to be sure—as a juggler; thou knowest I am used to the craft," answered Wayland.

"Ay, but the lady?" answered Flibbertigibbet. "Credit me, I think she IS one and thou art in a sea of troubles about her at this moment, as I can perceive by thy fidgeting."

"Oh, she, man!—she is a poor sister of mine," said Wayland; "she can sing and play o' the lute would win the fish out o' the stream."

"Let me hear her instantly," said the boy, "I love the lute rarely; I love it of all things, though I never heard it."

"Then how canst thou love it, Flibbertigibbet?" said Wayland.

"As knights love ladies in old tales," answered Dickie—"on hearsay."

"Then love it on hearsay a little longer, till my sister is recovered from the fatigue of her journey," said Wayland; muttering afterwards betwixt his teeth, "The devil take the imp's curiosity! I must keep fair weather with him, or we shall fare the worse."

He then proceeded to state to Master Holiday his own talents as a juggler, with those of his sister as a musician. Some proof of his dexterity was demanded, which he gave in such a style of excellence, that, delighted at obtaining such an accession to their party, they readily acquiesced in the apology which he offered when a display of his sister's talents was required. The new-comers were invited to partake of the refreshments with which the party were provided; and it was with some difficulty that Wayland Smith obtained an opportunity of being apart with his supposed sister during the meal, of which interval he availed himself to entreat her to forget for the present both her rank and her sorrows, and condescend, as the most probable chance of remaining concealed, to mix in the society of those with whom she was to travel.

The Countess allowed the necessity of the case, and when they resumed their journey, endeavoured to comply with her guide's advice, by addressing herself to a female near her, and expressing her concern for the woman whom they were thus obliged to leave behind them.

"Oh, she is well attended, madam," replied the dame whom she addressed, who, from her jolly and laughter-loving demeanour, might have been the very emblem of the Wife of Bath; "and my gossip Laneham thinks as little of these matters as any one. By the ninth day, an the revels last so long, we shall have her with us at Kenilworth, even if she should travel with her bantling on her back."

There was something in this speech which took away all desire on the Countess of Leicester's part to continue the conversation. But having broken the charm by speaking to her fellow-traveller first, the good dame, who was to play Rare Gillian of Croydon in one of the interludes, took care that silence did not again settle on the journey, but entertained her mute companion with a thousand anecdotes of revels, from the days of King Harry downwards, with the reception given them by the great folk, and all the names of those who played the principal characters; but ever concluding with "they would be nothing to the princely pleasures of Kenilworth."

"And when shall we reach Kenilworth? said the Countess, with an agitation which she in vain attempted to conceal.

"We that have horses may, with late riding, get to Warwick to-night, and Kenilworth may be distant some four or five miles. But then we must wait till the foot-people come up; although it is like my good Lord of Leicester will have horses or light carriages to meet them, and bring them up without being travel-toiled, which last is no good preparation, as you may suppose, for dancing before your betters. And yet, Lord help me, I have seen the day I would have tramped five leagues of lea-land, and turned an my toe the whole evening after, as a juggler spins a pewter platter on the point of a needle. But age has clawed me somewhat in his clutch, as the song says; though, if I like the tune and like my partner, I'll dance the hays yet with any merry lass in Warwickshire that writes that unhappy figure four with a round O after it."

If the Countess was overwhelmed with the garrulity of this good dame, Wayland Smith, on his part, had enough to do to sustain and parry the constant attacks made upon him by the indefatigable curiosity of his old acquaintance Richard Sludge. Nature had given that arch youngster a prying cast of disposition, which matched admirably with his sharp wit; the former inducing him to plant himself as a spy on other people's affairs, and the latter quality leading him perpetually to interfere, after he had made himself master of that which concerned him not. He spent the livelong day in attempting to peer under the Countess's muffler, and apparently what he could there discern greatly sharpened his curiosity.

"That sister of thine, Wayland," he said, "has a fair neck to have been born in a smithy, and a pretty taper hand to have been used for twirling a spindle—faith, I'll believe in your relationship when the crow's egg is hatched into a cygnet."

"Go to," said Wayland, "thou art a prating boy, and should be breeched for thine assurance."

"Well," said the imp, drawing off, "all I say is—remember you have kept a secret from me, and if I give thee not a Roland for thine Oliver, my name is not Dickon Sludge!"

This threat, and the distance at which Hobgoblin kept from him for the rest of the way, alarmed Wayland very much, and he suggested to his pretended sister that, on pretext of weariness, she should express a desire to stop two or three miles short of the fair town of Warwick, promising to rejoin the troop in the morning. A small village inn afforded them a resting-place, and it was with secret pleasure that Wayland saw the whole party, including Dickon, pass on, after a courteous farewell, and leave them behind.

"To-morrow, madam," he said to his charge, "we will, with your leave, again start early, and reach Kenilworth before the rout which are to assemble there."

The Countess gave assent to the proposal of her faithful guide; but, somewhat to his surprise, said nothing further on the subject, which left Wayland under the disagreeable uncertainty whether or no she had formed any plan for her own future proceedings, as he knew her situation demanded circumspection, although he was but imperfectly acquainted with all its peculiarities. Concluding, however, that she must have friends within the castle, whose advice and assistance she could safely trust, he supposed his task would be best accomplished by conducting her thither in safety, agreeably to her repeated commands.

CHAPTER XXV.

*Hark, the bells summon, and the bugle calls,
But she the fairest answers not—the tide
Of nobles and of ladies throngs the halls,
But she the loveliest must in secret hide.
What eyes were thine, proud Prince, which in the gleam
Of yon gay meteors lost that better sense,
That o'er the glow-worm doth the star esteem,
And merit's modest blush o'er courtly insolence?
—THE GLASS SLIPPER.*

The unfortunate Countess of Leicester had, from her infancy upwards, been treated by those around her with indulgence as unbounded as injudicious. The natural sweetness of her disposition had saved her from becoming insolent and ill-humoured; but the caprice which preferred the handsome and insinuating Leicester before Tressilian, of whose high honour and unalterable affection she herself entertained so firm an opinion—that fatal error, which ruined the happiness of her life, had its origin in the mistaken kindness; that had spared her childhood the painful but most necessary lesson of submission and self-command. From the same indulgence it followed that she had only been accustomed to form and to express her wishes, leaving to others the task of fulfilling them; and thus, at the most momentous period of her life, she was alike destitute of presence of mind, and of ability to form for herself any reasonable or prudent plan of conduct.

These difficulties pressed on the unfortunate lady with overwhelming force on the morning which seemed to be the crisis of her fate. Overlooking every intermediate consideration, she had only desired to be at Kenilworth, and to approach her husband's presence; and now, when she was in the vicinity of both, a thousand considerations arose at once upon her mind, startling her with accumulated doubts and dangers, some real, some imaginary, and all exalted and exaggerated by a situation alike helpless and destitute of aid and counsel.

A sleepless night rendered her so weak in the morning that she was altogether unable to attend Wayland's early summons. The trusty guide became extremely distressed on the lady's account, and somewhat alarmed on his own, and was on the point of going alone to Kenilworth, in the hope of discovering Tressilian, and intimating to him the lady's approach, when about nine in the morning he was summoned to attend her. He found her dressed, and ready for resuming her journey, but with a paleness of countenance which alarmed him for her health. She intimated her desire that the horses might be got instantly ready, and resisted with impatience her guide's request that she would take some refreshment before setting forward. "I have had," she said, "a cup of water—the wretch who is dragged to execution needs no stronger cordial, and that may serve me which suffices for him. Do as I command you." Wayland Smith still hesitated. "What would you have?" said she. "Have I not spoken plainly?"

"Yes, madam," answered Wayland; "but may I ask what is your further purpose? I only wish to know, that I may guide myself by your wishes. The whole country is afloat, and streaming towards the Castle of Kenilworth. It will be difficult travelling thither, even if we had the necessary passports for safe-conduct and free admittance; unknown and unfriended, we may come by mishap. Your ladyship will forgive my speaking my poor mind—were we not better try to find out the maskers, and again join ourselves with them?" The Countess shook her head, and her guide proceeded, "Then I see but one other remedy."

"Speak out, then," said the lady, not displeased, perhaps, that he should thus offer the advice which she was ashamed to ask; "I believe thee faithful—what wouldst thou counsel?"

"That I should warn Master Tressilian," said Wayland, "that you are in this place. I am right certain he would get to horse with a few of Lord Sussex's followers, and ensure your personal safety."

"And is it to ME you advise," said the Countess, "to put myself under the protection of Sussex, the unworthy rival of the noble Leicester?" Then, seeing the surprise with which Wayland stared upon her, and afraid of having too strongly intimated her interest in Leicester, she added, "And for Tressilian, it must not be—mention not to him, I charge you, my unhappy name; it would but double MY misfortunes, and involve HIM in dangers beyond the power of rescue." She paused; but when she observed that Wayland continued to look on her with that anxious and uncertain gaze which indicated a doubt whether her brain was settled, she assumed an air of composure, and added, "Do thou but guide me to Kenilworth Castle, good fellow, and thy task is ended, since I will then judge what further is to be done. Thou hast yet been true to me—here is something that will make thee rich amends."

She offered the artist a ring containing a valuable stone. Wayland looked at it, hesitated a moment, and then returned it. "Not," he said, "that I am above your kindness, madam, being but a poor fellow, who have been forced, God help me! to live by worse shifts than the bounty of such a person as you. But, as my old master the farrier used to say to his customers, 'No cure, no pay.' We are not yet in Kenilworth Castle, and it is time enough to discharge your guide, as they say, when you take your boots off. I trust in God your ladyship is as well assured of fitting reception when you arrive, as you may hold yourself certain of my best endeavours to conduct you thither safely. I go to get the horses; meantime, let me pray you once more, as your poor physician as well as guide, to take some sustenance."

"I will—I will," said the lady hastily. "Begone, begone instantly!—It is in vain I assume audacity," said she, when he left the room; "even this poor groom sees through my affectation of courage, and fathoms the very ground of my fears."

She then attempted to follow her guide's advice by taking some food, but was compelled to desist, as the effort to swallow even a single morsel gave her so much uneasiness as amounted well-nigh to suffocation. A moment afterwards the horses appeared at the latticed window. The lady mounted, and found that relief from the free air and change of place which is frequently experienced in similar circumstances.

It chanced well for the Countess's purpose that Wayland Smith, whose previous wandering and unsettled life had made him acquainted with almost all England, was intimate with all the byroads, as well as direct communications, through the beautiful county of Warwick. For such and so great was the throng which flocked in all directions towards Kenilworth, to see the entry of Elizabeth into that splendid mansion of her prime favourite, that the principal roads were actually blocked up and interrupted, and it was only by circuitous by-paths that the travellers could proceed on their journey.

The Queen's purveyors had been abroad, sweeping the farms and villages of those articles usually exacted during a royal Progress, and for which the owners were afterwards to obtain a tardy payment from the Board of Green Cloth. The Earl of Leicester's household officers had been scouring the country for the same purpose; and many of his friends and allies, both near and remote, took this opportunity of ingratiating themselves by sending large quantities of provisions and delicacies of all kinds, with game in huge numbers, and whole tuns of the best liquors, foreign and domestic. Thus the highroads were filled with droves of bullocks, sheep, calves, and hogs, and choked with loaded wains, whose axle-trees cracked under their burdens of wine-casks and hogsheads of ale, and huge hamper of grocery goods, and slaughtered game, and salted provisions, and sacks of flour. Perpetual stoppages took place as these wains became entangled; and their rude drivers, swearing and brawling till their wild passions were fully raised, began to debate precedence with their wagon-whips and quarterstaves, which occasional riots were usually quieted by a purveyor, deputy-marshal's man, or some other person in authority, breaking the heads of both parties.

Here were, besides, players and mummers, jugglers and showmen, of every description, traversing in joyous bands the paths which led to the Palace of Princely Pleasure; for so the travelling minstrels had termed Kenilworth in the songs which already had come forth in anticipation of the revels which were there expected. In the midst of this motley show, mendicants were exhibiting their real or pretended miseries, forming a strange though common contrast betwixt the vanities and the sorrows of human existence. All these floated along with the immense tide of population whom mere curiosity had drawn together; and where the mechanic, in his leathern apron, elbowed the dink and dainty dame, his city mistress; where clowns, with hobnailed shoes, were treading on the kibes of substantial burghers and gentlemen of worship; and where Joan of the dairy, with robust pace, and red, sturdy arms, rowed her way unward, amongst those prim and pretty moppets whose sires were knights and squires.

The throng and confusion was, however, of a gay and cheerful character. All came forth to see and to enjoy, and all laughed at the trifling inconveniences which at another time might have chafed their temper. Excepting the occasional brawls which we have mentioned among that irritable race the carmen, the mingled sounds which arose from the multitude were those of light-hearted mirth and tiptoe jollity. The musicians preluded on their instruments—the minstrels hummed their songs—the licensed jester whooped betwixt mirth and madness, as he brandished his bauble—the morrice-dancers jangled their bells—the rustics hallooed and whistled—men laughed loud, and maidens giggled shrill; while many a broad jest flew like a shuttlecock from one party, to be caught in the air and returned from the opposite side of the road by another, at which it was aimed.

No infliction can be so distressing to a mind absorbed in melancholy, as being plunged into a scene of mirth and revelry, forming an accompaniment so dissonant from its own feelings. Yet, in the case of the Countess of Leicester, the noise and tumult of this giddy scene distracted her thoughts, and rendered her this sad service, that it became impossible for her to brood on her own misery, or to form terrible anticipations of her approaching fate. She travelled on like one in a dream, following implicitly the guidance of Wayland, who, with great address, now threaded his way through the general throng of passengers, now stood still until a favourable opportunity occurred of again moving forward, and frequently turning altogether out of the direct road, followed some circuitous bypath, which brought them into the highway again, after having given them the opportunity of traversing a considerable way with greater ease and rapidity.

It was thus he avoided Warwick, within whose Castle (that fairest monument of ancient and chivalrous splendour which yet remains uninjured by time) Elizabeth had passed the previous night, and where she was to tarry until past noon, at that time the general hour of dinner throughout England, after which repast she was to proceed to Kenilworth. In the meanwhile, each passing group had something to say in the Sovereign's praise, though not absolutely without the usual mixture of satire which qualifies more or less our estimate of our neighbours, especially if they chance to be also our betters.

"Heard you," said one, "how graciously she spoke to Master Bailiff and the Recorder, and to good Master Griffin the preacher, as they kneeled down at her coach-window?"

"Ay, and how she said to little Aglionby, 'Master Recorder, men would have persuaded me that you were afraid of me, but truly I think, so well did you reckon up to me the virtues of a sovereign, that I have more reason to be afraid of you.' and then with what grace she took the fair-wrought purse with the twenty gold sovereigns, seeming as though she would not willingly handle it, and yet taking it withal."

"Ay, ay," said another, "her fingers closed on it pretty willingly methought, when all was done; and methought, too, she weighed them for a second in her hand, as she would say, I hope they be avoirdupois."

"She needed not, neighbour," said a third; "it is only when the corporation pay the accounts of a poor handicraft like me, that they put him off with clipped coin. Well, there is a God above all—little Master Recorder, since that is the word, will be greater now than ever."

"Come, good neighbour," said the first speaker "be not envious. She is a good Queen, and a generous; she gave the purse to the Earl of Leicester."

"I envious?—beshrew thy heart for the word!" replied the handicraft. "But she will give all to the Earl of Leicester anon, methinks."

"You are turning ill, lady," said Wayland Smith to the Countess of Leicester, and proposed that she should draw off from the road, and halt till she recovered. But, subduing her feelings at this and different speeches to the same purpose, which caught her ear as they passed on, she insisted that her guide should proceed to Kenilworth with all the haste which the numerous impediments of their journey permitted. Meanwhile, Wayland's anxiety at her repeated fits of indisposition, and her obvious distraction of mind, was hourly increasing, and he became extremely desirous that, according to her reiterated requests, she should be safely introduced into the Castle, where, he doubted not, she was secure of a kind reception, though she seemed unwilling to reveal on whom she reposed her hopes.

"An I were once rid of this peril," thought he, "and if any man shall find me playing squire of the body to a damosel-errant, he shall have leave to beat my brains out with my own sledge-hammer!"

At length the princely Castle appeared, upon improving which, and the domains around, the Earl of Leicester had, it is said, expended sixty thousand pounds sterling, a sum equal to half a million of our present money.

The outer wall of this splendid and gigantic structure enclosed seven acres, a part of which was occupied by extensive stables, and by a pleasure garden, with its trim arbours and parterres, and the rest formed the large base-court or outer yard of the noble Castle. The lordly structure itself, which rose near the centre of this spacious enclosure, was composed of a huge pile of magnificent castellated buildings, apparently of different ages, surrounding an inner court, and bearing in the names attached to each portion of the magnificent mass, and in the armorial bearings which were there blazoned, the emblems of mighty chiefs who had long passed away, and whose history, could Ambition have lent ear to it, might have read a lesson to the haughty favourite who had now acquired and was augmenting the fair domain. A large and massive Keep, which formed the citadel of the Castle, was of uncertain though great antiquity. It bore the name of Caesar, perhaps from its resemblance to that in the Tower of London so called. Some antiquaries ascribe its foundation to the time of Kenelph, from whom the Castle had its name, a Saxon King of Mercia, and others to an early era after the Norman Conquest. On the exterior walls frowned the scutcheon of the Clintons, by whom they were founded in the reign of Henry I.; and of the yet more redoubted Simon de Montfort, by whom, during the Barons' wars, Kenilworth was long held out against Henry III. Here Mortimer, Earl of March, famous alike for his rise and his fall, had once gaily revelled in Kenilworth, while his dethroned sovereign, Edward II., languished in its dungeons. Old John of Gaunt, "time-honoured Lancaster," had widely extended the Castle, erecting that noble and massive pile which yet bears the name of Lancaster's Buildings; and Leicester himself had outdone the former possessors, princely and powerful as they were, by erecting another immense structure, which now lies crushed under its own ruins, the monument of its owner's ambition. The external wall of this royal Castle was, on the south and west sides, adorned and defended by a lake partly artificial, across which Leicester had constructed a stately bridge, that Elizabeth might enter the Castle by a path hitherto untrodden, instead of the usual entrance to the northward, over which he had erected a gatehouse or barbican, which still exists, and is equal in extent, and superior in architecture, to the baronial castle of many a northern chief.

Beyond the lake lay an extensive chase, full of red deer, fallow deer, roes, and every species of game, and abounding with lofty trees, from amongst which the extended front and massive towers of the Castle were seen to rise in majesty and beauty. We cannot but add, that of this lordly palace, where princes feasted and heroes fought, now in the bloody earnest of storm and siege, and now in the games of chivalry, where beauty dealt the prize which valour won, all is now desolate. The bed of the lake is but a rushy swamp; and the massive ruins of the Castle only serve to show what their splendour once was, and to impress on the musing visitor the transitory value of human possessions, and the happiness of those who enjoy a humble lot in virtuous contentment.

It was with far different feelings that the unfortunate Countess of Leicester viewed those grey and massive towers, when she first beheld them rise above the embowering and richly-shaded woods, over which they seemed to preside. She, the undoubted wife of the great Earl, of Elizabeth's minion, and England's mighty favourite, was approaching the presence of her husband, and that husband's sovereign, under the protection, rather than the guidance, of a poor juggler; and though unquestioned Mistress of that proud Castle, whose lightest word ought to have had force sufficient to make its gates leap from their massive hinges to receive her, yet she could not conceal from herself the difficulty and peril which she must experience in gaining admission into her own halls.

The risk and difficulty, indeed, seemed to increase every moment, and at length threatened altogether to put a stop to her further progress at the great gate leading to a broad and fair road, which, traversing the breadth of the chase for the space of two miles, and commanding several most beautiful views of the Castle and lake, terminated at the newly constructed bridge, to which it was an appendage, and which was destined to form the Queen's approach to the Castle on that memorable occasion.

Here the Countess and Wayland found the gate at the end of this avenue, which opened on the Warwick road, guarded by a body of the Queen's mounted yeomen of the guard, armed in corselets richly carved and gilded, and wearing morions instead of bonnets, having their carabines resting with the butt-end on their thighs. These guards, distinguished for strength and stature, who did duty wherever the Queen went in person, were here stationed under the direction of a pursuivant, graced with the Bear and Ragged Staff on his arm, as belonging to the Earl of Leicester, and peremptorily refused all admittance, excepting to such as were guests invited to the festival, or persons who were to perform some part in the mirthful exhibitions which were proposed.

The press was of consequence great around the entrance, and persons of all kinds presented every sort of plea for admittance; to which the guards turned an inexorable ear, pleading, in return to fair words, and even to fair offers, the strictness of their orders, founded on the Queen's well-known dislike to the rude pressing of a multitude. With those whom such reasons did not serve they dealt more rudely, repelling them without ceremony by the pressure of their powerful, barbed horses, and good round blows from the stock of their carabines. These last manoeuvres produced undulations amongst the crowd, which rendered Wayland much afraid that he might perforce be separated from his charge in the throng. Neither did he know what excuse to make in order to obtain admittance, and he was debating the matter in his head with great uncertainty, when the Earl's pursuivant, having cast an eye upon him, exclaimed, to his no small surprise, "Yeomen, make room for the fellow in the orange-tawny cloak.—Come forward, Sir Coxcomb, and make haste. What, in the fiend's name, has kept you waiting? Come forward with your bale of woman's gear."

While the pursuivant gave Wayland this pressing yet uncourteous invitation, which, for a minute or two, he could not imagine was applied to him, the yeomen speedily made a free passage for him, while, only cautioning his companion to keep the muffler close around her face, he entered the gate leading her palfrey, but with such a drooping crest, and such a look of conscious fear and anxiety, that the crowd, not greatly pleased at any rate with the preference bestowed upon them, accompanied their admission with hooting and a loud laugh of derision.

Admitted thus within the chase, though with no very flattering notice or distinction, Wayland and his charge rode forward, musing what difficulties it would be next their lot to encounter, through the broad avenue, which was sentinelled on either side by a long line of retainers, armed with swords, and partisans richly dressed in the Earl of Leicester's liveries, and bearing his cognizance of the Bear and Ragged Staff, each placed within three paces of each other, so as to line the whole road from the entrance into the park to the bridge. And, indeed, when the lady obtained the first commanding view of the Castle, with its stately towers rising from within a long, sweeping line of outward walls, ornamented with battlements and turrets and platforms at every point of defence, with many a banner streaming from its walls, and such a bustle of gay crests and waving plumes disposed on the terraces and battlements, and all the gay and gorgeous scene, her heart, unaccustomed to such splendour, sank as if it died within her, and for a moment she asked herself what she had offered up to Leicester to deserve to become the partner of this princely splendour. But her pride and generous spirit resisted the whisper which bade her despair.

"I have given him," she said, "all that woman has to give. Name and fame, heart and hand, have I given the lord of all this magnificence at the altar, and England's Queen could give him no more. He is my husband—I am his wife—whom God hath joined, man cannot sunder. I will be bold in claiming my right; even the bolder,

that I come thus unexpected, and thus forlorn. I know my noble Dudley well! He will be something impatient at my disobeying him, but Amy will weep, and Dudley will forgive her."

These meditations were interrupted by a cry of surprise from her guide Wayland, who suddenly felt himself grasped firmly round the body by a pair of long, thin black arms, belonging to some one who had dropped himself out of an oak tree upon the croup of his horse, amidst the shouts of laughter which burst from the sentinels.

"This must be the devil, or Flibbertigibbet again!" said Wayland, after a vain struggle to disengage himself, and unhorse the urchin who clung to him; "do Kenilworth oaks bear such acorns?"

"In sooth do they, Master Wayland," said his unexpected adjunct, "and many others, too hard for you to crack, for as old as you are, without my teaching you. How would you have passed the pursuivant at the upper gate yonder, had not I warned him our principal juggler was to follow us? And here have I waited for you, having clambered up into the tree from the top of the wain; and I suppose they are all mad for want of me by this time."

"Nay, then, thou art a limb of the devil in good earnest," said Wayland. "I give thee way, good imp, and will walk by thy counsel; only, as thou art powerful be merciful."

As he spoke, they approached a strong tower, at the south extremity of the long bridge we have mentioned, which served to protect the outer gateway of the Castle of Kenilworth.

Under such disastrous circumstances, and in such singular company, did the unfortunate Countess of Leicester approach, for the first time, the magnificent abode of her almost princely husband.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SNUG. Have you the lion's part written? pray, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

QUINCE. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

When the Countess of Leicester arrived at the outer gate of the Castle of Kenilworth, she found the tower, beneath which its ample portal arch opened, guarded in a singular manner. Upon the battlements were placed gigantic warders, with clubs, battle-axes, and other implements of ancient warfare, designed to represent the soldiers of King Arthur; those primitive Britons, by whom, according to romantic tradition, the Castle had been first tenanted, though history carried back its antiquity only to the times of the Heptarchy.

Some of these tremendous figures were real men, dressed up with vizards and buskins; others were mere pageants composed of pasteboard and buckram, which, viewed from beneath, and mingled with those that were real, formed a sufficiently striking representation of what was intended. But the gigantic porter who waited at the gate beneath, and actually discharged the duties of warder, owed none of his terrors to fictitious means. He was a man whose huge stature, thews, sinews, and bulk in proportion, would have enabled him to enact Colbrand, Ascapart, or any other giant of romance, without raising himself nearer to heaven even by the altitude of a chopin. The legs and knees of this son of Anak were bare, as were his arms from a span below the shoulder; but his feet were defended with sandals, fastened with cross straps of scarlet leather studded with brazen knobs. A close jerkin of scarlet velvet looped with gold, with short breeches of the same, covered his body and a part of his limbs; and he wore on his shoulders, instead of a cloak, the skin of a black bear. The head of this formidable person was uncovered, except by his shaggy, black hair, which descended on either side around features of that huge, lumpish, and heavy cast which are often annexed to men of very uncommon size, and which, notwithstanding some distinguished exceptions, have created a general prejudice against giants, as being a dull and sullen kind of persons. This tremendous warder was appropriately armed with a heavy club spiked with steel. In fine, he represented excellently one of those giants of popular romance, who figure in every fairy tale or legend of knight-errantry.

The demeanour of this modern Titan, when Wayland Smith bent his attention to him, had in it something arguing much mental embarrassment and vexation; for sometimes he sat down for an instant on a massive stone bench, which seemed placed for his accommodation beside the gateway, and then ever and anon he started up, scratching his huge head, and striding to and fro on his post, like one under a fit of impatience and anxiety. It was while the porter was pacing before the gate in this agitated manner, that Wayland, modestly, yet as a matter of course (not, however, without some mental misgiving), was about to pass him, and enter the portal arch. The porter, however, stopped his progress, bidding him, in a thundering voice, "Stand back!" and enforcing his injunction by heaving up his steel-shod mace, and dashing it on the ground before Wayland's horse's nose with such vehemence that the pavement flashed fire, and the archway rang to the clamour. Wayland, availing himself of Dickie's hints, began to state that he belonged to a band of performers to which his presence was indispensable, that he had been accidentally detained behind, and much to the same purpose. But the warder was inexorable, and kept muttering and murmuring something betwixt his teeth, which Wayland could make little of; and addressing betwixt whiles a refusal of admittance, couched in language which was but too intelligible. A specimen of his speech might run thus:—"What, how now, my masters?" (to himself)—"Here's a stir—here's a coil."—(Then to Wayland)—"You are a loitering knave, and shall have no entrance."—(Again to himself)—"Here's a throng—here's a thrusting.—I shall ne'er get through with it—Here's a—humph—ha."—(To Wayland)—"Back from the gate, or I'll break the pate of thee."—(Once more to himself)—"Here's a—no—I shall never get through it."

"Stand still," whispered Flibbertigibbet into Wayland's ear, "I know where the shoe pinches, and will tame him in an instant."

He dropped down from the horse, and skipping up to the porter, plucked him by the tail of the bearskin, so as to induce him to decline his huge head, and whispered something in his ear. Not at the command of the lord of some Eastern talisman did ever Afrite change his horrid frown into a look of smooth submission more suddenly than the gigantic porter of Kenilworth relaxed the terrors of his looks at the instant Flibbertigibbet's whisper reached his ears. He flung his club upon the ground, and caught up Dickie Sludge, raising him to such a distance from the earth as might have proved perilous had he chanced to let him slip.

"It is even so," he said, with a thundering sound of exultation—"it is even so, my little dandieprat. But who the devil could teach it thee?"

"Do not thou care about that," said Flibbertigibbet—"but—" he looked at Wayland and the lady, and then sunk what he had to say in a whisper, which needed not be a loud one, as the giant held him for his convenience close to his ear. The porter then gave Dickie a warm caress, and set him on the ground with the same care which a careful housewife uses in replacing a cracked china cup upon her mantelpiece, calling out at the same time to Wayland and the lady, "In with you—in with you! and take heed how you come too late another day when I chance to be porter."

"Ay, ay, in with you," added Flibbertigibbet; "I must stay a short space with mine honest Philistine, my Goliath of Gath here; but I will be with you anon, and at the bottom of all your secrets, were they as deep and dark as the Castle dungeon."

"I do believe thou wouldst," said Wayland; "but I trust the secret will be soon out of my keeping, and then I shall care the less whether thou or any one knows it."

They now crossed the entrance tower, which obtained the name of the Gallery-tower, from the following circumstance: The whole bridge, extending from the entrance to another tower on the opposite side of the lake, called Mortimer's Tower, was so disposed as to make a spacious tilt-yard, about one hundred and thirty yards in length, and ten in breadth, strewed with the finest sand, and defended on either side by strong and high palisades. The broad and fair gallery, destined for the ladies who were to witness the feats of chivalry presented on this area, was erected on the northern side of the outer tower, to which it gave name. Our travellers passed slowly along the bridge or tilt-yard, and arrived at Mortimer's Tower, at its farthest extremity, through which the approach led into the outer or base-court of the Castle. Mortimer's Tower bore on its front the scutcheon of the Earl of March, whose daring ambition overthrew the throne of Edward II., and aspired to share his power with the "She-wolf of France," to whom the unhappy monarch was wedded. The gate, which opened under this ominous memorial, was guarded by many warders in rich liveries; but they offered no opposition to the entrance of the Countess and her guide, who, having passed by license of the

principal porter at the Gallery-tower, were not, it may be supposed, liable to interruption from his deputies. They entered accordingly, in silence, the great outward court of the Castle, having then full before them that vast and lordly pile, with all its stately towers, each gate open, as if in sign of unlimited hospitality, and the apartments filled with noble guests of every degree, besides dependants, retainers, domestics of every description, and all the appendages and promoters of mirth and revelry.

Amid this stately and busy scene Wayland halted his horse, and looked upon the lady, as if waiting her commands what was next to be done, since they had safely reached the place of destination. As she remained silent, Wayland, after waiting a minute or two, ventured to ask her, in direct terms, what were her next commands. She raised her hand to her forehead, as if in the act of collecting her thoughts and resolution, while she answered him in a low and suppressed voice, like the murmurs of one who speaks in a dream—"Commands? I may indeed claim right to command, but who is there will obey me!"

Then suddenly raising her head, like one who has formed a decisive resolution, she addressed a gaily-dressed domestic, who was crossing the court with importance and bustle in his countenance, "Stop, sir," she said; "I desire to speak with, the Earl of Leicester."

"With whom, an it please you?" said the man, surprised at the demand; and then looking upon the mean equipage of her who used towards him such a tone of authority, he added, with insolence, "Why, what Bess of Bedlam is this would ask to see my lord on such a day as the present?"

"Friend," said the Countess, "be not insolent—my business with the Earl is most urgent."

"You must get some one else to do it, were it thrice as urgent," said the fellow. "I should summon my lord from the Queen's royal presence to do YOUR business, should I?—I were like to be thanked with a horse-whip. I marvel our old porter took not measure of such ware with his club, instead of giving them passage; but his brain is addled with getting his speech by heart."

Two or three persons stopped, attracted by the fleeing way in which the serving-man expressed himself; and Wayland, alarmed both for himself and the lady, hastily addressed himself to one who appeared the most civil, and thrusting a piece of money into his hand, held a moment's counsel with him on the subject of finding a place of temporary retreat for the lady. The person to whom he spoke, being one in some authority, rebuked the others for their incivility, and commanding one fellow to take care of the strangers' horses, he desired them to follow him. The Countess retained presence of mind sufficient to see that it was absolutely necessary she should comply with his request; and leaving the rude lackeys and grooms to crack their brutal jests about light heads, light heels, and so forth, Wayland and she followed in silence the deputy-usher, who undertook to be their conductor.

They entered the inner court of the Castle by the great gateway, which extended betwixt the principal Keep, or Donjon, called Caesar's Tower, and a stately building which passed by the name of King Henry's Lodging, and were thus placed in the centre of the noble pile, which presented on its different fronts magnificent specimens of every species of castellated architecture, from the Conquest to the reign of Elizabeth, with the appropriate style and ornaments of each.

Across this inner court also they were conducted by their guide to a small but strong tower, occupying the north-east angle of the building, adjacent to the great hall, and filling up a space betwixt the immense range of kitchens and the end of the great hall itself. The lower part of this tower was occupied by some of the household officers of Leicester, owing to its convenient vicinity to the places where their duty lay; but in the upper story, which was reached by a narrow, winding stair, was a small octangular chamber, which, in the great demand for lodgings, had been on the present occasion fitted up for the reception of guests, though generally said to have been used as a place of confinement for some unhappy person who had been there murdered. Tradition called this prisoner Mervyn, and transferred his name to the tower. That it had been used as a prison was not improbable; for the floor of each story was arched, the walls of tremendous thickness, while the space of the chamber did not exceed fifteen feet in diameter. The window, however, was pleasant, though narrow, and commanded a delightful view of what was called the Pleasance; a space of ground enclosed and decorated with arches, trophies, statues, fountains, and other architectural monuments, which formed one access from the Castle itself into the garden. There was a bed in the apartment, and other preparations for the reception of a guest, to which the Countess paid but slight attention, her notice being instantly arrested by the sight of writing materials placed on the table (not very commonly to be found in the bedrooms of those days), which instantly suggested the idea of writing to Leicester, and remaining private until she had received his answer.

The deputy-usher having introduced them into this commodious apartment, courteously asked Wayland, whose generosity he had experienced, whether he could do anything further for his service. Upon receiving a gentle hint that some refreshment would not be unacceptable, he presently conveyed the smith to the buttery-hatch, where dressed provisions of all sorts were distributed, with hospitable profusion, to all who asked for them. Wayland was readily supplied with some light provisions, such as he thought would best suit the faded appetite of the lady, and did not omit the opportunity of himself making a hasty but hearty meal on more substantial fare. He then returned to the apartment in the turret, where he found the Countess, who had finished her letter to Leicester, and in lieu of a seal and silken thread, had secured it with a braid of her own beautiful tresses, fastened by what is called a true-love knot.

"Good friend," said she to Wayland, "whom God hath sent to aid me at my utmost need, I do beseech thee, as the last trouble you shall take for an unfortunate lady, to deliver this letter to the noble Earl of Leicester. Be it received as it may," she said, with features agitated betwixt hope and fear, "thou, good fellow, shalt have no more cumber with me. But I hope the best; and if ever lady made a poor man rich, thou hast surely deserved it at my hand, should my happy days ever come round again. Give it, I pray you, into Lord Leicester's own hand, and mark how he looks on receiving it."

Wayland, on his part, readily undertook the commission, but anxiously prayed the lady, in his turn, to partake of some refreshment; in which he at length prevailed, more through importunity and her desire to see him begone on his errand than from any inclination the Countess felt to comply with his request. He then left her, advising her to lock her door on the inside, and not to stir from her little apartment; and went to seek an opportunity of discharging her errand, as well as of carrying into effect a purpose of his own, which circumstances had induced him to form.

In fact, from the conduct of the lady during the journey—her long fits of profound silence, the irresolution and uncertainty which seemed to pervade all her movements, and the obvious incapacity of thinking and acting for herself under which she seemed to labour—Wayland had formed the not improbable opinion that the difficulties of her situation had in some degree affected her understanding.

When she had escaped from the seclusion of Cumnor Place, and the dangers to which she was there exposed, it would have seemed her most rational course to retire to her father's, or elsewhere at a distance from the power of those by whom these dangers had been created. When, instead of doing so, she demanded to be conveyed to Kenilworth, Wayland had been only able to account for her conduct by supposing that she meant to put herself under the tutelage of Tressilian, and to appeal to the protection of the Queen. But now, instead of following this natural course, she entrusted him with a letter to Leicester, the patron of Varney, and within whose jurisdiction at least, if not under his express authority, all the evils she had already suffered were inflicted upon her. This seemed an unsafe and even a desperate measure, and Wayland felt anxiety for his own safety, as well as that of the lady, should he execute her commission before he had secured the advice and countenance of a protector.

He therefore resolved, before delivering the letter to Leicester, that he would seek out Tressilian, and communicate to him the arrival of the lady at Kenilworth, and thus at once rid himself of all further responsibility, and devolve the task of guiding and protecting this unfortunate lady upon the patron who had at first employed him in her service.

"He will be a better judge than I am," said Wayland, "whether she is to be gratified in this humour of appeal to my Lord of Leicester, which seems like an act of insanity; and, therefore, I will turn the matter over on his hands, deliver him the letter, receive what they list to give me by way of guerdon, and then show the Castle of Kenilworth a pair of light heels; for, after the work I have been engaged in, it will be, I fear, neither a safe nor wholesome place of residence, and I would rather shoe colts an the coldest common in England than share in their gayest revels."

CHAPTER XXVII.

In my time I have seen a boy do wonders.

Robin, the red tinker, had a boy

Would ha run through a cat-hole. —THE COXCOMB.

Amid the universal bustle which filled the Castle and its environs, it was no easy matter to find out any individual; and Wayland was still less likely to light upon Tressilian, whom he sought so anxiously, because, sensible of the danger of attracting attention in the circumstances in which he was placed, he dared not make general inquiries among the retainers or domestics of Leicester. He learned, however, by indirect questions, that in all probability Tressilian must have been one of a large party of gentlemen in attendance on the Earl of Sussex, who had accompanied their patron that morning to Kenilworth, when Leicester had received them with marks of the most formal respect and distinction. He further learned that both Earls, with their followers, and many other nobles, knights, and gentlemen, had taken horse, and gone towards Warwick several hours since, for the purpose of escorting the Queen to Kenilworth.

Her Majesty's arrival, like other great events, was delayed from hour to hour; and it was now announced by a breathless post that her Majesty, being detained by her gracious desire to receive the homage of her lieges who had thronged to wait upon her at Warwick, it would be the hour of twilight ere she entered the Castle. The intelligence released for a time those who were upon duty, in the immediate expectation of the Queen's appearance, and ready to play their part in the solemnities with which it was to be accompanied; and Wayland, seeing several horsemen enter the Castle, was not without hopes that Tressilian might be of the number. That he might not lose an opportunity of meeting his patron in the event of this being the case, Wayland placed himself in the base-court of the Castle, near Mortimer's Tower, and watched every one who went or came by the bridge, the extremity of which was protected by that building. Thus stationed, nobody could enter or leave the Castle without his observation, and most anxiously did he study the garb and countenance of every horseman, as, passing from under the opposite Gallery-tower, they paced slowly, or curveted, along the tilt-yard, and approached the entrance of the base-court.

But while Wayland gazed thus eagerly to discover him whom he saw not, he was pulled by the sleeve by one by whom he himself would not willingly have been seen.

This was Dickie Sludge, or Flibbertigibbet, who, like the imp whose name he bore, and whom he had been accoutred in order to resemble, seemed to be ever at the ear of those who thought least of him. Whatever were Wayland's internal feelings, he judged it necessary to express pleasure at their unexpected meeting.

"Ha! is it thou, my minikin—my miller's thumb—my prince of cacodemons—my little mouse?"

"Ay," said Dickie, "the mouse which gnawed asunder the toils, just when the lion who was caught in them began to look wonderfully like an ass."

"Thy, thou little hop-the-gutter, thou art as sharp as vinegar this afternoon! But tell me, how didst thou come off with yonder jolterheaded giant whom I left thee with? I was afraid he would have stripped thy clothes, and so swallowed thee, as men peel and eat a roasted chestnut."

"Had he done so," replied the boy, "he would have had more brains in his guts than ever he had in his noddle. But the giant is a courteous monster, and more grateful than many other folk whom I have helped at a pinch, Master Wayland Smith."

"Beshrew me, Flibbertigibbet," replied Wayland, "but thou art sharper than a Sheffield whittle! I would I knew by what charm you muzzled yonder old bear."

"Ay, that is in your own manner," answered Dickie; "you think fine speeches will pass muster instead of good-will. However, as to this honest porter, you must know that when we presented ourselves at the gate yonder, his brain was over-burdened with a speech that had been penned for him, and which proved rather an overmatch for his gigantic faculties. Now this same pithy oration had been indited, like sundry others, by my learned magister, Erasmus Holiday, so I had heard it often enough to remember every line. As soon as I heard him blundering and floundering like a fish upon dry land, through the first verse, and perceived him at a stand, I knew where the shoe pinched, and helped him to the next word, when he caught me up in an ecstasy, even as you saw but now. I promised, as the price of your admission, to hide me under his bearish gaberdine, and prompt him in the hour of need. I have just now been getting some food in the Castle, and am about to return to him."

"That's right—that's right, my dear Dickie," replied Wayland; "haste thee, for Heaven's sake! else the poor giant will be utterly disconsolate for want of his dwarfish auxiliary. Away with thee, Dickie!"

"Ay, ay!" answered the boy—"away with Dickie, when we have got what good of him we can. You will not let me know the story of this lady, then, who is as much sister of thine as I am?"

"Why, what good would it do thee, thou silly elf?" said Wayland.

"Oh, stand ye on these terms?" said the boy. "Well, I care not greatly about the matter—only, I never smell out a secret but I try to be either at the right or the wrong end of it, and so good evening to ye."

"Nay, but, Dickie," said Wayland, who knew the boy's restless and intriguing disposition too well not to fear his enmity—"stay, my dear Dickie—part not with old friends so shortly! Thou shalt know all I know of the lady one day."

"Ay!" said Dickie; "and that day may prove a nigh one. Fare thee well, Wayland—I will to my large-limbed friend, who, if he have not so sharp a wit as some folk, is at least more grateful for the service which other folk render him. And so again, good evening to ye."

So saying, he cast a somerset through the gateway, and lighting on the bridge, ran with the extraordinary agility which was one of his distinguishing attributes towards the Gallery-tower, and was out of sight in an instant.

"I would to God I were safe out of this Castle again!" prayed Wayland internally; "for now that this mischievous imp has put his finger in the pie, it cannot but prove a mess fit for the devil's eating. I would to Heaven Master Tressilian would appear!"

Tressilian, whom he was thus anxiously expecting in one direction, had returned to Kenilworth by another access. It was indeed true, as Wayland had conjectured, that in the earlier part of the day he had accompanied the Earls on their cavalcade towards Warwick, not without hope that he might in that town hear some tidings of his emissary. Being disappointed in this expectation, and observing Varney amongst Leicester's attendants, seeming as if he had some purpose of advancing to and addressing him, he conceived, in the present circumstances, it was wisest to avoid the interview. He, therefore, left the presence-chamber when the High-Sheriff of the county was in the very midst of his dutiful address to her Majesty; and mounting his horse, rode back to Kenilworth by a remote and circuitous road, and entered the Castle by a small sallyport in the western wall, at which he was readily admitted as one of the followers of the Earl of Sussex, towards whom Leicester had commanded the utmost courtesy to be exercised. It was thus that he met not Wayland, who was impatiently watching his arrival, and whom he himself would have been at least equally desirous to see.

Having delivered his horse to the charge of his attendant, he walked for a space in the Pleasance and in the garden, rather to indulge in comparative solitude his own reflections, than to admire those singular beauties of nature and art which the magnificence of Leicester had there assembled. The greater part of the persons of condition had left the Castle for the present, to form part of the Earl's cavalcade; others, who remained behind, were on the battlements, outer walls, and towers, eager to view the splendid spectacle of the royal entry. The garden, therefore, while every other part of the Castle resounded with the human voice, was silent but for the whispering of the leaves, the emulous warbling of the tenants of a large aviary with their happier companions who remained denizens of the free air, and the plashing of the fountains, which, forced into the air from sculptures of fantastic and grotesque forms, fell down with ceaseless sound into the great basins of Italian marble.

The melancholy thoughts of Tressilian cast a gloomy shade on all the objects with which he was surrounded. He compared the magnificent scenes which he here traversed with the deep woodland and wild moorland which surrounded Lidcote Hall, and the image of Amy Robsart glided like a phantom through every landscape which his imagination summoned up. Nothing is perhaps more dangerous to the future happiness of men of deep thought and retired habits than the entertaining an early, long, and unfortunate attachment. It frequently sinks so deep into the mind that it becomes their dream by night and their vision by day—mixes itself with every source of interest and enjoyment; and when blighted and withered by final disappointment, it seems as if the springs of the heart were dried up along with it. This aching of the heart, this languishing after a shadow which has lost all the gaiety of its colouring, this dwelling on the remembrance of a dream from which we have been long roughly awakened, is the weakness of a gentle and generous heart, and it was that of Tressilian.

He himself at length became sensible of the necessity of forcing other objects upon his mind; and for this purpose he left the Pleasance, in order to mingle with the noisy crowd upon the walls, and view the preparation for the pageants. But as he left the garden, and heard the busy hum, mixed with music and laughter, which floated around him, he felt an uncontrollable reluctance to mix with society whose feelings were in a tone so different from his own, and resolved, instead of doing so, to retire to the chamber assigned him, and employ himself in study until the tolling of the great Castle bell should announce the arrival of Elizabeth.

Tressilian crossed accordingly by the passage betwixt the immense range of kitchens and the great hall, and ascended to the third story of Mervyn's Tower, and applying himself to the door of the small apartment which had been allotted to him, was surprised to find it was locked. He then recollected that the deputy-chamberlain had given him a master-key, advising him, in the present confused state of the Castle, to keep his door as much shut as possible. He applied this key to the lock, the bolt revolved, he entered, and in the same instant saw a female form seated in the apartment, and recognized that form to be, Amy Robsart. His first idea was that a heated imagination had raised the image on which it doted into visible existence; his second, that he beheld an apparition; the third and abiding conviction, that it was Amy herself, paler, indeed, and thinner, than in the days of heedless happiness, when she possessed the form and hue of a wood-nymph, with the beauty of a sylph—but still Amy, unequalled in loveliness by aught which had ever visited his eyes.

The astonishment of the Countess was scarce less than that of Tressilian, although it was of shorter duration, because she had heard from Wayland that he was in the Castle. She had started up at his first entrance, and now stood facing him, the paleness of her cheeks having given way to a deep blush.

"Tressilian," she said, at length, "why come you here?"

"Nay, why come you here, Amy," returned Tressilian, "unless it be at length to claim that aid, which, as far as one man's heart and arm can extend, shall instantly be rendered to you?"

She was silent a moment, and then answered in a sorrowful rather than an angry tone, "I require no aid, Tressilian, and would rather be injured than benefited by any which your kindness can offer me. Believe me, I am near one whom law and love oblige to protect me."

"The villain, then, hath done you the poor justice which remained in his power," said Tressilian, "and I behold before me the wife of Varney!"

"The wife of Varney!" she replied, with all the emphasis of scorn. "With what base name, sir, does your boldness stigmatize the—the—the—" She hesitated, dropped her tone of scorn, looked down, and was confused and silent; for she recollected what fatal consequences might attend her completing the sentence with "the Countess of Leicester," which were the words that had naturally suggested themselves. It would have been a betrayal of the secret, on which her husband had assured her that his fortunes depended, to Tressilian, to Sussex, to the Queen, and to the whole assembled court. "Never," she thought, "will I break my promised silence. I will submit to every suspicion rather than that."

The tears rose to her eyes, as she stood silent before Tressilian; while, looking on her with mingled grief and pity, he said, "Alas! Amy, your eyes contradict your tongue. That speaks of a protector, willing and able to watch over you; but these tell me you are ruined, and deserted by the wretch to whom you have attached yourself."

She looked on him with eyes in which anger sparkled through her tears, but only repeated the word "wretch!" with a scornful emphasis.

"Yes, WRETCH!" said Tressilian; "for were he aught better, why are you here, and alone, in my apartment? why was not fitting provision made for your honourable reception?"

"In your apartment?" repeated Amy—"in YOUR apartment? It shall instantly be relieved of my presence." She hastened towards the door; but the sad recollection of her deserted state at once pressed on her mind, and pausing on the threshold, she added, in a tone unutterably pathetic, "Alas! I had forgot—I know not where to go—"

"I see—I see it all," said Tressilian, springing to her side, and leading her back to the seat, on which she sunk down. "You DO need aid—you do need protection, though you will not own it; and you shall not need it long. Leaning on my arm, as the representative of your excellent and broken-hearted father, on the very threshold of the Castle gate, you shall meet Elizabeth; and the first deed she shall do in the halls of Kenilworth shall be an act of justice to her sex and her subjects. Strong in my good cause, and in the Queen's justice, the power of her minion shall not shake my resolution. I will instantly seek Sussex."

"Not for all that is under heaven!" said the Countess, much alarmed, and feeling the absolute necessity of obtaining time, at least, for consideration. "Tressilian, you were wont to be generous. Grant me one request, and believe, if it be your wish to save me from misery and from madness, you will do more by making me the promise I ask of you, than Elizabeth can do for me with all her power."

"Ask me anything for which you can allege reason," said Tressilian; "but demand not of me—"

"Oh, limit not your boon, dear Edmund!" exclaimed the Countess—"you once loved that I should call you so—limit not your boon to reason; for my case is all madness, and frenzy must guide the counsels which alone can aid me."

"If you speak thus wildly," said Tressilian, astonishment again overpowering both his grief and his resolution, "I must believe you indeed incapable of thinking or acting for yourself."

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, sinking on one knee before him, "I am not mad—I am but a creature unutterably miserable, and, from circumstances the most singular, dragged on to a precipice by the arm of him who thinks he is keeping me from it—even by yours, Tressilian—by yours, whom I have honoured, respected—all but loved—and yet loved, too—loved, too, Tressilian—though not as you wished to be."

There was an energy, a self-possession, an abandonment in her voice and manner, a total resignation of herself to his generosity, which, together with the kindness of her expressions to himself, moved him deeply. He raised her, and, in broken accents, entreated her to be comforted.

"I cannot," she said, "I will not be comforted, till you grant me my request! I will speak as plainly as I dare. I am now awaiting the commands of one who has a right to issue them. The interference of a third person—of you in especial, Tressilian—will be ruin—utter ruin to me. Wait but four-and-twenty hours, and it may be that the poor Amy may have the means to show that she values, and can reward, your disinterested friendship—that she is happy herself, and has the means to make you so. It is surely worth your patience, for so short a space?"

Tressilian paused, and weighing in his mind the various probabilities which might render a violent interference on his part more prejudicial than advantageous, both to the happiness and reputation of Amy; considering also that she was within the walls of Kenilworth, and could suffer no injury in a castle honoured with the Queen's residence, and filled with her guards and attendants—he conceived, upon the whole, that he might render her more evil than good service by intruding upon her his appeal to Elizabeth in her behalf. He expressed his resolution cautiously, however, doubting naturally whether Amy's hopes of extricating herself from her difficulties rested on anything stronger than a blinded attachment to Varney, whom he supposed to be her seducer.

"Amy," he said, while he fixed his sad and expressive eyes on hers, which, in her ecstasy of doubt, terror, and perplexity, she cast up towards him, "I have ever remarked that when others called thee girlish and wilful, there lay under that external semblance of youthful and self-willed folly deep feeling and strong sense. In this I will confide, trusting your own fate in your own hands for the space of twenty-four hours, without my interference by word or act."

"Do you promise me this, Tressilian?" said the Countess. "Is it possible you can yet repose so much confidence in me? Do you promise, as you are a gentleman and a man of honour, to intrude in my matters neither by speech nor action, whatever you may see or hear that seems to you to demand your interference? Will you so far trust me?"

"I will upon my honour," said Tressilian; "but when that space is expired—"

"Then that space is expired," she said, interrupting him, "you are free to act as your judgment shall determine."

"Is there nought besides which I can do for you, Amy?" said Tressilian.

"Nothing," said she, "save to leave me,—that is, if—I blush to acknowledge my helplessness by asking it—if you can spare me the use of this apartment for the next twenty-four hours."

"This is most wonderful!" said Tressilian; "what hope or interest can you have in a Castle where you cannot command even an apartment?"

"Argue not, but leave me," she said; and added, as he slowly and unwillingly retired, "Generous Edmund! the time may come when Amy may show she deserved thy noble attachment."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

*What, man, ne'er lack a draught, when the full can
Stands at thine elbow, and craves emptying!—
Nay, fear not me, for I have no delight
To watch men's vices, since I have myself
Of virtue nought to boast of—I'm a striker,
Would have the world strike with me, pell-mell, all.
—PANDEMONIUM.*

Tressilian, in strange agitation of mind, had hardly stepped down the first two or three steps of the winding staircase, when, greatly to his surprise and displeasure, he met Michael Lambourne, wearing an impudent familiarity of visage, for which Tressilian felt much disposed to throw him down-stairs; until he remembered the prejudice which Amy, the only object of his solicitude, was likely to receive from his engaging in any act of violence at that time and in that place.

He therefore contented himself with looking sternly upon Lambourne, as upon one whom he deemed unworthy of notice, and attempted to pass him in his way downstairs, without any symptom of recognition. But Lambourne, who, amidst the profusion of that day's hospitality, had not failed to take a deep though not an overpowering cup of sack, was not in the humour of humbling himself before any man's looks. He stopped Tressilian upon the staircase without the least bashfulness or embarrassment, and addressed him as if he had been on kind and intimate terms:—"What, no grudge between us, I hope, upon old scores, Master Tressilian?—nay, I am one who remembers former kindness rather than latter feud. I'll convince you that I meant honestly and kindly, ay, and comfortably by you."

"I desire none of your intimacy," said Tressilian—"keep company with your mates."

"Now, see how hasty he is!" said Lambourne; "and how these gentles, that are made questionless out of the porcelain clay of the earth, look down upon poor Michael Lambourne! You would take Master Tressilian now for the most maid-like, modest, simpering squire of dames that ever made love when candles were long i' the stuff—snuff, call you it? Why, you would play the saint on us, Master Tressilian, and forget that even now thou hast a commodity in thy very bedchamber, to the shame of my lord's castle, ha! ha! ha! Have I touched you, Master Tressilian?"

"I know not what you mean," said Tressilian, inferring, however, too surely, that this licentious ruffian must have been sensible of Amy's presence in his apartment; "but if," he continued, "thou art varlet of the chambers, and lackest a fee, there is one to leave mine unmolested."

Lambourne looked at the piece of gold, and put it in his pocket saying, "Now, I know not but you might have done more with me by a kind word than by this chiming rogue. But after all he pays well that pays with gold; and Mike Lambourne was never a makebate, or a spoil-sport, or the like. E'en live, and let others live, that is my motto-only, I would not let some folks cock their beaver at me neither, as if they were made of silver ore, and I of Dutch pewter. So if I keep your secret, Master Tressilian, you may look sweet on me at least; and were I to want a little backing or countenance, being caught, as you see the best of us may be, in a sort of peccadillo—why, you owe it me—and so e'en make your chamber serve you and that same bird in bower beside—it's all one to Mike Lambourne."

"Make way, sir," said Tressilian, unable to bridle his indignation, "you have had your fee."

"Um!" said Lambourne, giving place, however, while he sulkily muttered between his teeth, repeating Tressilian's words, "Make way—and you have had your fee; but it matters not, I will spoil no sport, as I said before. I am no dog in the manger—mind that."

He spoke louder and louder, as Tressilian, by whom he felt himself overawed, got farther and farther out of hearing.

"I am no dog in the manger; but I will not carry coals neither—mind that, Master Tressilian; and I will have a peep at this wench whom you have quartered so commodiously in your old haunted room—afraid of ghosts, belike, and not too willing to sleep alone. If I had done this now in a strange lord's castle, the word had been, The porter's lodge for the knave! and, have him flogged—trundle him downstairs like a turnip! Ay, but your virtuous gentlemen take strange privileges over us, who are downright servants of our senses. Well—I have my Master Tressilian's head under my belt by this lucky discovery, that is one thing certain; and I will try to get a sight of this Lindabrides of his, that is another."

CHAPTER XXIX.

*Now fare thee well, my master—if true service
Be guerdon'd with hard looks, e'en cut the tow-line,
And let our barks across the pathless flood
Hold different courses—THE SHIPWRECK.*

Tressilian walked into the outer yard of the Castle scarce knowing what to think of his late strange and most unexpected interview with Amy Robsart, and dubious if he had done well, being entrusted with the delegated authority of her father, to pass his word so solemnly to leave her to her own guidance for so many hours. Yet how could he have denied her request—dependent as she had too probably rendered herself upon Varney? Such was his natural reasoning. The happiness of her future life might depend upon his not driving her to extremities; and since no authority of Tressilian's could extricate her from the power of Varney, supposing he was to acknowledge Amy to be his wife, what title had he to destroy the hope of domestic peace, which might yet remain to her, by setting enmity betwixt them? Tressilian resolved, therefore, scrupulously to observe his word pledged to Amy, both because it had been given, and because, as he still thought, while he considered and reconsidered that extraordinary interview, it could not with justice or propriety have been refused.

In one respect, he had gained much towards securing effectual protection for this unhappy and still beloved object of his early affection. Amy was no longer mew'd up in a distant and solitary retreat under the charge of persons of doubtful reputation. She was in the Castle of Kenilworth, within the verge of the Royal Court for the time, free from all risk of violence, and liable to be produced before Elizabeth on the first summons. These were circumstances which could not but assist greatly the efforts which he might have occasion to use in her behalf.

While he was thus balancing the advantages and perils which attended her unexpected presence in Kenilworth, Tressilian was hastily and anxiously accosted by Wayland, who, after ejaculating, "Thank God, your worship is found at last!" proceeded with breathless caution to pour into his ear the intelligence that the lady had escaped from Cumnor Place.

"And is at present in this Castle," said Tressilian. "I know it, and I have seen her. Was it by her own choice she found refuge in my apartment?"

"No," answered Wayland; "but I could think of no other way of safely bestowing her, and was but too happy to find a deputy-usher who knew where you were quartered—in jolly society truly, the hall on the one hand, and the kitchen on the other!"

"Peace, this is no time for jesting," answered Tressilian sternly.

"I wot that but too well," said the artist, "for I have felt these three days as if I had a halter round my neck. This lady knows not her own mind—she will have none of your aid—commands you not to be named to her—and is about to put herself into the hands of my Lord Leicester. I had never got her safe into your chamber, had she known the owner of it."

"Is it possible," said Tressilian. "But she may have hopes the Earl will exert his influence in her favour over his villainous dependant."

"I know nothing of that," said Wayland; "but I believe, if she is to reconcile herself with either Leicester or Varney, the side of the Castle of Kenilworth which will be safest for us will be the outside, from which we can fastest fly away. It is not my purpose to abide an instant after delivery of the letter to Leicester, which waits but your commands to find its way to him. See, here it is—but no—a plague on it—I must have left it in my dog-hole, in the hay-loft yonder, where I am to sleep."

"Death and fury!" said Tressilian, transported beyond his usual patience; "thou hast not lost that on which may depend a stake more important than a thousand such lives as thine?"

"Lost it!" answered Wayland readily; "that were a jest indeed! No, sir, I have it carefully put up with my night-sack, and some matters I have occasion to use; I will fetch it in an instant."

"Do so," said Tressilian; "be faithful, and thou shalt be well rewarded. But if I have reason to suspect thee, a dead dog were in better case than thou!"

Wayland bowed, and took his leave with seeming confidence and alacrity, but, in fact, filled with the utmost dread and confusion. The letter was lost, that was certain, notwithstanding the apology which he had made to appease the impatient displeasure of Tressilian. It was lost—it might fall into wrong hands—it would then certainly occasion a discovery of the whole intrigue in which he had been engaged; nor, indeed, did Wayland see much prospect of its remaining concealed, in any event. He felt much hurt, besides, at Tressilian's burst of impatience.

"Nay, if I am to be paid in this coin for services where my neck is concerned, it is time I should look to myself. Here have I offended, for aught I know, to the death, the lord of this stately castle, whose word were as powerful to take away my life as the breath which speaks it to blow out a farthing candle. And all this for a mad lady, and a melancholy gallant, who, on the loss of a four-nooked bit of paper, has his hand on his poignado, and swears death and fury!—Then there is the Doctor and Varney.—I will save myself from the whole mess of them. Life is dearer than gold. I will fly this instant, though I leave my reward behind me."

These reflections naturally enough occurred to a mind like Wayland's, who found himself engaged far deeper than he had expected in a train of mysterious and unintelligible intrigues, in which the actors seemed hardly to know their own course. And yet, to do him justice, his personal fears were, in some degree, counterbalanced by his compassion for the deserted state of the lady.

"I care not a groat for Master Tressilian," he said; "I have done more than bargain by him, and I have brought his errant-damosel within his reach, so that he may look after her himself. But I fear the poor thing is in much danger amongst these stormy spirits. I will to her chamber, and tell her the fate which has befallen her letter, that she may write another if she list. She cannot lack a messenger, I trow, where there are so many lackeys that can carry a letter to their lord. And I will tell her also that I leave the Castle, trusting her to God, her own guidance, and Master Tressilian's care and looking after. Perhaps she may remember the ring she offered me—it was well earned, I trow; but she is a lovely creature, and—marry hang the ring! I will not bear a base spirit for the matter. If I fare ill in this world for my good-nature, I shall have better chance in the next. So now for the lady, and then for the road."

With the stealthy step and jealous eye of the cat that steals on her prey, Wayland resumed the way to the Countess's chamber, sliding along by the side of the courts and passages, alike observant of all around him, and studious himself to escape observation. In this manner he crossed the outward and inward Castle yard, and the great arched passage, which, running betwixt the range of kitchen offices and the hall, led to the bottom of the little winding-stair that gave access to the chambers of Mervyn's Tower.

The artist congratulated himself on having escaped the various perils of his journey, and was in the act of ascending by two steps at once, when he observed that the shadow of a man, thrown from a door which stood ajar, darkened the opposite wall of the staircase. Wayland drew back cautiously, went down to the inner courtyard, spent about a quarter of an hour, which seemed at least quadruple its usual duration, in walking from place to place, and then returned to the tower, in hopes to find that the lurker had disappeared. He ascended as high as the suspicious spot—there was no shadow on the wall; he ascended a few yards farther—the door was still ajar, and he was doubtful whether to advance or retreat, when it was suddenly thrown wide open, and Michael Lambourne bolted out upon the astonished Wayland. "Who the devil art thou? and what seekest thou in this part of the Castle? march into that chamber, and be hanged to thee!"

"I am no dog, to go at every man's whistle," said the artist, affecting a confidence which was belied by a timid shake in his voice.

"Sayest thou me so?—Come hither, Lawrence Staples."

A huge, ill-made and ill-looking fellow, upwards of six feet high, appeared at the door, and Lambourne proceeded: "If thou be'st so fond of this tower, my friend, thou shalt see its foundations, good twelve feet below the bed of the lake, and tenanted by certain jolly toads, snakes, and so forth, which thou wilt find mighty good company. Therefore, once more I ask you in fair play, who thou art, and what thou seekest here?"

"If the dungeon-grate once clashes behind me," thought Wayland, "I am a gone man." He therefore answered submissively, "He was the poor juggler whom his honour had met yesterday in Weatherly Bottom."

"And what juggling trick art thou playing in this tower? Thy gang," said Lambourne, "lie over against Clinton's buildings."

"I came here to see my sister," said the juggler, "who is in Master Tressilian's chamber, just above."

"Aha!" said Lambourne, smiling, "here be truths! Upon my honour, for a stranger, this same Master Tressilian makes himself at home among us, and furnishes out his cell handsomely, with all sorts of commodities. This will be a precious tale of the sainted Master Tressilian, and will be welcome to some folks, as a purse of broad pieces to me.—Hark ye, fellow," he continued, addressing Wayland, "thou shalt not give Puss a hint to steal away we must catch her in her form. So, back with that pitiful sheep-biting visage of thine, or I will fling thee from the window of the tower, and try if your juggling skill can save your bones."

"Your worship will not be so hardhearted, I trust," said Wayland; "poor folk must live. I trust your honour will allow me to speak with my sister?"

"Sister on Adam's side, I warrant," said Lambourne; "or, if otherwise, the more knave thou. But sister or no sister, thou diest on point of fox, if thou comest a-prying to this tower once more. And now I think of it—uds daggers and death!—I will see thee out of the Castle, for this is a more main concern than thy jugglery."

"But, please your worship," said Wayland, "I am to enact Arion in the pageant upon the lake this very evening."

"I will act it myself by Saint Christopher!" said Lambourne. "Orion, callest thou him?—I will act Orion, his belt and his seven stars to boot. Come along, for a rascal knave as thou art—follow me! Or stay—Lawrence, do thou bring him along."

Lawrence seized by the collar of the cloak the unresisting juggler; while Lambourne, with hasty steps, led the way to that same sallyport, or secret postern, by which Tressilian had returned to the Castle, and which opened in the western wall at no great distance from Mervyn's Tower.

While traversing with a rapid foot the space betwixt the tower and the sallyport, Wayland in vain racked his brain for some device which might avail the poor lady, for whom, notwithstanding his own imminent danger, he felt deep interest. But when he was thrust out of the Castle, and informed by Lambourne, with a tremendous oath, that instant death would be the consequence of his again approaching it, he cast up his hands and eyes to heaven, as if to call God to witness he had stood to the uttermost in defence of the oppressed; then turned his back on the proud towers of Kenilworth, and went his way to seek a humbler and safer place of refuge.

Lawrence and Lambourne gazed a little while after Wayland, and then turned to go back to their tower, when the former thus addressed his companion: "Never credit me, Master Lambourne, if I can guess why thou hast driven this poor caitiff from the Castle, just when he was to bear a part in the show that was beginning, and all this about a wench."

"Ah, Lawrence," replied Lambourne, "thou art thinking of Black Joan Jugges of Slingdon, and hast sympathy with human frailty. But, corragio, most noble Duke of the Dungeon and Lord of Limbo, for thou art as dark in this matter as thine own dominions of Little-ease. My most reverend Signior of the Low Countries of Kenilworth, know that our most notable master, Richard Varney, would give as much to have a hole in this same Tressilian's coat, as would make us some fifty midnight carousals, with the full leave of bidding the steward go snick up, if he came to startle us too soon from our goblets."

"Nay, an that be the case, thou hast right," said Lawrence Staples, the upper-warrior, or, in common phrase, the first jailer, of Kenilworth Castle, and of the Liberty and Honour belonging thereto. "But how will you manage when you are absent at the Queen's entrance, Master Lambourne; for methinks thou must attend thy master there?"

"Why thou, mine honest prince of prisons, must keep ward in my absence. Let Tressilian enter if he will, but see thou let no one come out. If the damsel herself would make a break, as 'tis not unlike she may, scare her back with rough words; she is but a paltry player's wench after all."

"Nay for that matter," said Lawrence, "I might shut the iron wicket upon her that stands without the double door, and so force per force she will be bound to her answer without more trouble."

"Then Tressilian will not get access to her," said Lambourne, reflecting a moment. "But 'tis no matter; she will be detected in his chamber, and that is all one. But confess, thou old bat's-eyed dungeon-keeper, that you fear to keep awake by yourself in that Mervyn's Tower of thine?"

"Why, as to fear, Master Lambourne," said the fellow, "I mind it not the turning of a key; but strange things have been heard and seen in that tower. You must have heard, for as short time as you have been in Kenilworth, that it is haunted by the spirit of Arthur ap Mervyn, a wild chief taken by fierce Lord Mortimer when he was one of the Lords Marchers of Wales, and murdered, as they say, in that same tower which bears his name."

"Oh, I have heard the tale five hundred times," said Lambourne, "and how the ghost is always most vociferous when they boil leeks and stirabout, or fry toasted cheese, in the culinary regions. Santo Diavolo, man, hold thy tongue, I know all about it!"

"Ay, but thou dost not, though," said the turnkey, "for as wise as thou wouldst make thyself. Ah, it is an awful thing to murder a prisoner in his ward!—you that may have given a man a stab in a dark street know nothing of it. To give a mutinous fellow a knock on the head with the keys, and bid him be quiet, that's what I call keeping order in the ward; but to draw weapon and slay him, as was done to this Welsh lord, THAT raises you a ghost that will render your prison-house untenable by any decent captive for some hundred years. And I have that regard for my prisoners, poor things, that I have put good squires and men of worship, that have taken a ride on the highway, or slandered my Lord of Leicester, or the like, fifty feet under ground, rather than I would put them into that upper chamber yonder that they call Mervyn's Bower. Indeed, by good Saint Peter of the Fetters, I marvel my noble lord, or Master Varney, could think of lodging guests there; and if this Master Tressilian could get any one to keep him company, and in especial a pretty wench, why, truly, I think he was in the right on't."

"I tell thee," said Lambourne, leading the way into the turnkey's apartment, "thou art an ass. Go bolt the wicket on the stair, and trouble not thy noddle about ghosts. Give me the wine stoup, man; I am somewhat heated with chafing with yonder rascal."

While Lambourne drew a long draught from a pitcher of claret, which he made use of without any cup, the warder went on, vindicating his own belief in the supernatural.

"Thou hast been few hours in this Castle, and hast been for the whole space so drunk, Lambourne, that thou art deaf, dumb, and blind. But we should hear less of your bragging were you to pass a night with us at full moon; for then the ghost is busiest, and more especially when a rattling wind sets in from the north-west, with some sprinkling of rain, and now and then a growl of thunder. Body o' me, what crackings and clashings, what groanings and what howlings, will there be at such times in Mervyn's Bower, right as it were over our heads, till the matter of two quarts of distilled waters has not been enough to keep my lads and me in some heart!"

"Pshaw, man!" replied Lambourne, on whom his last draught, joined to repeated visitations of the pitcher upon former occasions, began to make some innovation, "thou speakest thou knowest not what about spirits. No one knows justly what to say about them; and, in short, least said may in that matter be soonest amended. Some men believe in one thing, some in another—it is all matter of fancy. I have known them of all sorts, my dear Lawrence Lock-the-door, and sensible men too. There's a great lord—we'll pass his name, Lawrence—he believes in the stars and the moon, the planets and their courses, and so forth, and that they twinkle exclusively for his benefit, when in sober, or rather in drunken truth, Lawrence, they are only shining to keep honest fellows like me out of the kennel. Well, sir, let his humour pass; he is great enough to indulge it. Then, look ye, there is another—a very learned man, I promise you, and can vent Greek and Hebrew as fast as I can Thieves' Latin he has an humour of sympathies and antipathies—of changing lead into gold, and the like; why, via, let that pass too, and let him pay those in transmigrated coin who are fools enough to let it be current with them. Then here comest thou thyself, another great man, though neither learned nor noble, yet full six feet high, and thou, like a purblind mole, must needs believe in ghosts and goblins, and such like. Now, there is, besides, a great man—that is, a great little man, or a little great man, my dear Lawrence—and his name begins with V, and what believes he? Why, nothing, honest Lawrence—nothing in earth, heaven, or hell; and for my part, if I believe there is a devil, it is only because I think there must be some one to catch our aforesaid friend by the back 'when soul and body sever,' as the ballad says; for your antecedent will have a consequent—RARO ANTECEDENTEM, as Doctor Bircham was wont to say. But this is Greek to you now, honest Lawrence, and in sooth learning is dry work. Hand me the pitcher once more."

"In faith, if you drink more, Michael," said the warder, "you will be in sorry case either to play Arion or to wait on your master on such a solemn night; and I expect each moment to hear the great bell toll for the muster at Mortimer's Tower, to receive the Queen."

While Staples remonstrated, Lambourne drank; and then setting down the pitcher, which was nearly emptied, with a deep sigh, he said, in an undertone, which soon rose to a high one as his speech proceeded, "Never mind, Lawrence; if I be drunk, I know that shall make Varney uphold me sober. But, as I said, never mind; I can carry my drink discreetly. Moreover, I am to go on the water as Orion, and shall take cold unless I take something comfortable beforehand. Not play Orion? Let us see the best roarer that ever strained his lungs for twelve pence out-mouth me! What if they see me a little disguised? Wherefore should any man be sober to-night? answer me that. It is matter of loyalty to be merry; and I tell thee there are those in the Castle who, if they are not merry when drunk, have little chance to be merry when sober—I name no names, Lawrence. But your pottle of sack is a fine shoeing-horn to pull on a loyal humour, and a merry one. Huzza for Queen Elizabeth!—for the noble Leicester!—for the worshipful Master Varney!—and for Michael Lambourne, that can turn them all round his finger!"

So saying, he walked downstairs, and across the inner court.

The warder looked after him, shook his head, and while he drew close and locked a wicket, which, crossing the staircase, rendered it impossible for any one to ascend higher than the story immediately beneath Mervyn's Bower, as Tressilian's chamber was named, he thus soliloquized with himself—"It's a good thing to be a favourite. I well-nigh lost mine office, because one frosty morning Master Varney thought I smelled of aqua vitae; and this fellow can appear before him drunk as a wineskin, and yet meet no rebuke. But then he is a pestilent clever fellow withal, and no one can understand above one half of what he says."

CHAPTER XXX.

*Now bid the steeple rock—she comes, she comes!—
Speak for us, bells—speak for us, shrill-tongued tuckets.
Stand to thy linstock, gunner; let thy cannon
Play such a peal, as if a paynim foe
Came stretch'd in turban'd ranks to storm the ramparts.
We will have pageants too—but that craves wit,
And I'm a rough-hewn soldier.—THE VIRGIN QUEEN—A TRAGI-COMEDY.*

Tressilian, when Wayland had left him, as mentioned in the last chapter, remained uncertain what he ought next to do, when Raleigh and Blount came up to him arm in arm, yet, according to their wont, very eagerly disputing together. Tressilian had no great desire for their society in the present state of his feelings, but there was no possibility of avoiding them; and indeed he felt that, bound by his promise not to approach Amy, or take any step in her behalf, it would be his best course at once to mix with general society, and to exhibit on his brow as little as he could of the anguish and uncertainty which sat heavy at his heart. He therefore made a virtue of necessity, and hailed his comrades with, "All mirth to you, gentlemen! Whence come ye?"

"From Warwick, to be sure," said Blount; "we must needs home to change our habits, like poor players, who are fain to multiply their persons to outward appearance by change of suits; and you had better do the like, Tressilian."

"Blount is right," said Raleigh; "the Queen loves such marks of deference, and notices, as wanting in respect, those who, not arriving in her immediate attendance, may appear in their soiled and ruffled riding-dress. But look at Blount himself, Tressilian, for the love of laughter, and see how his villainous tailor hath apparelled him—in blue, green, and crimson, with carnation ribbons, and yellow roses in his shoes!"

"Why, what wouldst thou have?" said Blount. "I told the cross-legged thief to do his best, and spare no cost; and methinks these things are gay enough—gayer than thine own. I'll be judged by Tressilian."

"I agree—I agree," said Walter Raleigh. "Judge betwixt us, Tressilian, for the love of heaven!"

Tressilian, thus appealed to, looked at them both, and was immediately sensible at a single glance that honest Blount had taken upon the tailor's warrant the pied garments which he had chosen to make, and was as much embarrassed by the quantity of points and ribbons which garnished his dress, as a clown is in his holiday clothes; while the dress of Raleigh was a well-fancied and rich suit, which the wearer bore as a garb too well adapted to his elegant person to attract particular attention. Tressilian said, therefore, "That Blount's dress was finest, but Raleigh's the best fancied."

Blount was satisfied with his decision. "I knew mine was finest," he said; "if that knave Doublestitch had brought me home such a simple doublet as that of Raleigh's, I would have beat his brains out with his own pressing-iron. Nay, if we must be fools, ever let us be fools of the first head, say I."

"But why gettest thou not on thy braveries, Tressilian?" said Raleigh.

"I am excluded from my apartment by a silly mistake," said Tressilian, "and separated for the time from my baggage. I was about to seek thee, to beseech a share of thy lodging."

"And welcome," said Raleigh; "it is a noble one. My Lord of Leicester has done us that kindness, and lodged us in princely fashion. If his courtesy be extorted reluctantly, it is at least extended far. I would advise you to tell your strait to the Earl's chamberlain—you will have instant redress."

"Nay, it is not worth while, since you can spare me room," replied Tressilian—"I would not be troublesome. Has any one come hither with you?"

"Oh, ay," said Blount; "Varney and a whole tribe of Leicestrians, besides about a score of us honest Sussex folk. We are all, it seems, to receive the Queen at what they call the Gallery-tower, and witness some fooleries there; and then we're to remain in attendance upon the Queen in the Great Hall—God bless the mark!—while those who are now waiting upon her Grace get rid of their slough, and doff their riding-suits. Heaven help me, if her Grace should speak to me, I shall never know what to answer!"

"And what has detained them so long at Warwick?" said Tressilian, unwilling that their conversation should return to his own affairs.

"Such a succession of fooleries," said Blount, "as were never seen at Bartholomew-fair. We have had speeches and players, and dogs and bears, and men making monkeys and women moppets of themselves—I marvel the Queen could endure it. But ever and anon came in something of 'the lovely light of her gracious countenance,' or some such trash. Ah! vanity makes a fool of the wisest. But come, let us on to this same Gallery-tower—though I see not what thou Tressilian, canst do with thy riding-dress and boots."

"I will take my station behind thee, Blount," said Tressilian, who saw that his friend's unusual finery had taken a strong hold of his imagination; "thy goodly size and gay dress will cover my defects."

"And so thou shalt, Edmund," said Blount. "In faith I am glad thou thinkest my garb well-fancied, for all Mr. Wittypate here; for when one does a foolish thing, it is right to do it handsomely."

So saying, Blount cocked his beaver, threw out his leg, and marched manfully forward, as if at the head of his brigade of pikemen, ever and anon looking with complaisance on his crimson stockings, and the huge yellow roses which blossomed on his shoes. Tressilian followed, wrapt in his own sad thoughts, and scarce minding Raleigh, whose quick fancy, amused by the awkward vanity of his respectable friend, vented itself in jests, which he whispered into Tressilian's ear.

In this manner they crossed the long bridge, or tilt-yard, and took their station, with other gentlemen of quality, before the outer gate of the Gallery, or Entrance-tower. The whole amounted to about forty persons, all selected as of the first rank under that of knighthood, and were disposed in double rows on either side of the gate, like a guard of honour, within the close hedge of pikes and partisans which was formed by Leicester's retainers, wearing his liveries. The gentlemen carried no arms save their swords and daggers. These gallants were as gaily dressed as imagination could devise; and as the garb of the time permitted a great display of expensive magnificence, nought was to be seen but velvet and cloth of gold and silver, ribbons, feathers, gems, and golden chains. In spite of his more serious subjects of distress, Tressilian could not help feeling that he, with his riding-suit, however handsome it might be, made rather an unworthy figure among these "fierce vanities," and the rather because he saw that his deshabelle was the subject of wonder among his own friends, and of scorn among the partisans of Leicester.

We could not suppress this fact, though it may seem something at variance with the gravity of Tressilian's character; but the truth is, that a regard for personal appearance is a species of self-love, from which the wisest are not exempt, and to which the mind clings so instinctively that not only the soldier advancing to almost inevitable death, but even the doomed criminal who goes to certain execution, shows an anxiety to array his person to the best advantage. But this is a digression.

It was the twilight of a summer night (9th July, 1575), the sun having for some time set, and all were in anxious expectation of the Queen's immediate approach. The multitude had remained assembled for many hours, and their numbers were still rather on the increase. A profuse distribution of refreshments, together with roasted oxen, and barrels of ale set a-broach in different places of the road, had kept the populace in perfect love and loyalty towards the Queen and her favourite, which might have somewhat abated had fasting been added to watching. They passed away the time, therefore, with the usual popular amusements of whooping, hallooing, shrieking, and playing rude tricks upon each other, forming the chorus of discordant sounds usual on such occasions. These prevailed all through the crowded roads and fields, and especially beyond the gate of the Chase, where the greater number of the common sort were stationed; when, all of a sudden, a single rocket was seen to shoot into the atmosphere, and, at the instant, far heard over flood and field, the great bell of the Castle tolled.

Immediately there was a pause of dead silence, succeeded by a deep hum of expectation, the united voice of many thousands, none of whom spoke above their breath—or, to use a singular expression, the whisper of an immense multitude.

"They come now, for certain," said Raleigh. "Tressilian, that sound is grand. We hear it from this distance as mariners, after a long voyage, hear, upon their night-watch, the tide rush upon some distant and unknown shore."

"Mass!" answered Blount, "I hear it rather as I used to hear mine own kine lowing from the close of Wittenswestlowe."

"He will assuredly graze presently," said Raleigh to Tressilian; "his thought is all of fat oxen and fertile meadows. He grows little better than one of his own bees, and only becomes grand when he is provoked to pushing and going."

"We shall have him at that presently," said Tressilian, "if you spare not your wit."

"Tush, I care not," answered Raleigh; "but thou too, Tressilian, hast turned a kind of owl, that flies only by night—hast exchanged thy songs for screechings, and good company for an ivy-tod."

"But what manner of animal art thou thyself, Raleigh," said Tressilian, "that thou holdest us all so lightly?"

"Who—I?" replied Raleigh. "An eagle am I, that never will think of dull earth while there is a heaven to soar in, and a sun to gaze upon."

"Well bragged, by Saint Barnaby!" said Blount; "but, good Master Eagle, beware the cage, and beware the fowler. Many birds have flown as high that I have seen stuffed with straw and hung up to scare kites.—But hark, what a dead silence hath fallen on them at once!"

"The procession pauses," said Raleigh, "at the gate of the Chase, where a sibyl, one of the FATIDICAE, meets the Queen, to tell her fortune. I saw the verses; there is little savour in them, and her Grace has been already crammed full with such poetical compliments. She whispered to me, during the Recorder's speech yonder, at Ford-mill, as she entered the liberties of Warwick, how she was 'PERTAESA BARBARAE LOQUELAE.'"

"The Queen whispered to HIM!" said Blount, in a kind of soliloquy; "Good God, to what will this world come!"

His further meditations were interrupted by a shout of applause from the multitude, so tremendously vociferous that the country echoed for miles round. The guards, thickly stationed upon the road by which the Queen was to advance, caught up the acclamation, which ran like wildfire to the Castle, and announced to all within that Queen Elizabeth had entered the Royal Chase of Kenilworth. The whole music of the Castle sounded at once, and a round of artillery, with a salvo of small arms, was discharged from the battlements; but the noise of drums and trumpets, and even of the cannon themselves, was but faintly heard amidst the roaring and reiterated welcomes of the multitude.

As the noise began to abate, a broad glare of light was seen to appear from the gate of the Park, and broadening and brightening as it came nearer, advanced along the open and fair avenue that led towards the Gallery-tower; and which, as we have already noticed, was lined on either hand by the retainers of the Earl of Leicester. The word was passed along the line, "The Queen! The Queen! Silence, and stand fast!" Onward came the cavalcade, illuminated by two hundred thick waxen torches, in the hands of as many horsemen, which cast a light like that of broad day all around the procession, but especially on the principal group, of which the Queen herself, arrayed in the most splendid manner, and blazing with jewels, formed the central figure. She was mounted on a milk-white horse, which she reined with peculiar grace and dignity; and in the whole of her stately and noble carriage you saw the daughter of an hundred kings.

The ladies of the court, who rode beside her Majesty, had taken especial care that their own external appearance should not be more glorious than their rank and the occasion altogether demanded, so that no inferior luminary might appear to approach the orbit of royalty. But their personal charms, and the magnificence by which, under every prudential restraint, they were necessarily distinguished, exhibited them as the very flower of a realm so far famed for splendour and beauty. The magnificence of the courtiers, free from such restraints as prudence imposed on the ladies, was yet more unbounded.

Leicester, who glittered like a golden image with jewels and cloth of gold, rode on her Majesty's right hand, as well in quality of her host as of her master of the horse. The black steed which he mounted had not a single white hair on his body, and was one of the most renowned chargers in Europe, having been purchased by the Earl at large expense for this royal occasion. As the noble animal chafed at the slow pace of the procession, and, arching his stately neck, champed on the silver bits which restrained him, the foam flew from his mouth, and speckled his well-formed limbs as if with spots of snow. The rider well became the high place which he held, and the proud steed which he bestrode; for no man in England, or perhaps in Europe, was more perfect than Dudley in horsemanship, and all other exercises belonging to his quality. He was bareheaded as were all the courtiers in the train; and the red torchlight shone upon his long, curled tresses of dark hair, and on his noble features, to the beauty of which even the severest criticism could only object the lordly fault, as it may be termed, of a forehead somewhat too high. On that proud evening those features wore all the grateful solicitude of a subject, to show himself sensible of the high honour which the Queen was conferring on him, and all the pride and satisfaction which became so glorious a moment. Yet, though neither eye nor feature betrayed aught but feelings which suited the occasion, some of the Earl's personal attendants remarked that he was unusually pale, and they expressed to each other their fear that he was taking more fatigue than consisted with his health.

Varney followed close behind his master, as the principal esquire in waiting, and had charge of his lordship's black velvet bonnet, garnished with a clasp of diamonds and surmounted by a white plume. He kept his eye constantly on his master, and, for reasons with which the reader is not unacquainted, was, among Leicester's numerous dependants, the one who was most anxious that his lord's strength and resolution should carry him successfully through a day so agitating. For although Varney was one of the few, the very few moral monsters who contrive to lull to sleep the remorse of their own bosoms, and are drugged into moral insensibility by atheism, as men in extreme agony are lulled by opium, yet he knew that in the breast of his patron there was already awakened the fire that is never quenched, and that his lord felt, amid all the pomp and magnificence we have described, the gnawing of the worm that dieth not. Still, however, assured as Lord Leicester stood, by Varney's own intelligence, that his Countess laboured under an indisposition which formed an unanswerable apology to the Queen for her not appearing at Kenilworth, there was little danger, his wily retainer thought, that a man so ambitious would betray himself by giving way to any external weakness.

The train, male and female, who attended immediately upon the Queen's person, were, of course, of the bravest and the fairest—the highest born nobles, and the wisest counsellors, of that distinguished reign, to repeat whose names were but to weary the reader. Behind came a long crowd of knights and gentlemen, whose rank and birth, however distinguished, were thrown into shade, as their persons into the rear of a procession whose front was of such august majesty.

Thus marshalled, the cavalcade approached the Gallery-tower, which formed, as we have often observed, the extreme barrier of the Castle.

It was now the part of the huge porter to step forward; but the lubbard was so overwhelmed with confusion of spirit—the contents of one immense black jack of double ale, which he had just drunk to quicken his memory, having treacherously confused the brain it was intended to clear—that he only groaned piteously, and remained sitting on his stone seat; and the Queen would have passed on without greeting, had not the gigantic warder's secret ally, Flibbertigibbet, who lay perdue behind him, thrust a pin into the rear of the short femoral garment which we elsewhere described.

The porter uttered a sort of yell, which came not amiss into his part, started up with his club, and dealt a sound douse or two on each side of him; and then, like a coach-horse pricked by the spur, started off at once into the full career of his address, and by dint of active prompting on the part of Dickie Sludge, delivered, in sounds of gigantic intonation, a speech which may be thus abridged—the reader being to suppose that the first lines were addressed to the throng who approached the gateway; the conclusion, at the approach of the Queen, upon sight of whom, as struck by some heavenly vision, the gigantic warder dropped his club, resigned his keys, and gave open way to the Goddess of the night, and all her magnificent train.

"What stir, what turmoil, have we for the nones?

Stand back, my masters, or beware your bones!

Sirs, I'm a warder, and no man of straw,

My voice keeps order, and my club gives law.

Yet soft—nay, stay—what vision have we here?

What dainty darling's this—what peerless peer?

What loveliest face, that loving ranks unfold,

Like brightest diamond chased in purest gold?

Dazzled and blind, mine office I forsake,

My club, my key, my knee, my homage take.

Bright paragon, pass on in joy and bliss;—

Beshrew the gate that opes not wide at such a sight as this!"

[This is an imitation of Gascoigne's verses spoken by the

Herculean porter, as mentioned in the text. The original may be

found in the republication of the Princely Pleasures of

Kenilworth, by the same author, in the History of Kenilworth

already quoted. Chiswick, 1821.]

Elizabeth received most graciously the homage of the Herculean porter, and, bending her head to him in requital, passed through his guarded tower, from the top of which was poured a clamorous blast of warlike music, which was replied to by other bands of minstrelsy placed at different points on the Castle walls, and by others again stationed in the Chase; while the tones of the one, as they yet vibrated on the echoes, were caught up and answered by new harmony from different quarters.

Amidst these bursts of music, which, as if the work of enchantment, seemed now close at hand, now softened by distant space, now wailing so low and sweet as if that distance were gradually prolonged until only the last lingering strains could reach the ear, Queen Elizabeth crossed the Gallery-tower, and came upon the long bridge, which extended from thence to Mortimer's Tower, and which was already as light as day, so many torches had been fastened to the palisades on either side. Most of the nobles here alighted, and sent their horses to the neighbouring village of Kenilworth, following the Queen on foot, as did the gentlemen who had stood in array to receive her at the Gallery-tower.

On this occasion, as at different times during the evening, Raleigh addressed himself to Tressilian, and was not a little surprised at his vague and unsatisfactory answers; which, joined to his leaving his apartment without any assigned reason, appearing in an undress when it was likely to be offensive to the Queen, and some other symptoms of irregularity which he thought he discovered, led him to doubt whether his friend did not labour under some temporary derangement.

Meanwhile, the Queen had no sooner stepped on the bridge than a new spectacle was provided; for as soon as the music gave signal that she was so far advanced, a raft, so disposed as to resemble a small floating island, illuminated by a great variety of torches, and surrounded by floating pageants formed to represent sea-horses, on which sat Tritons, Nereids, and other fabulous deities of the seas and rivers, made its appearance upon the lake, and issuing from behind a small heronry where it had been concealed, floated gently towards the farther end of the bridge.

On the islet appeared a beautiful woman, clad in a watchet-coloured silken mantle, bound with a broad girdle inscribed with characters like the phylacteries of the Hebrews. Her feet and arms were bare, but her wrists and ankles were adorned with gold bracelets of uncommon size. Amidst her long, silky black hair she wore a crown or chaplet of artificial mistletoe, and bore in her hand a rod of ebony tipped with silver. Two Nymphs attended on her, dressed in the same antique and mystical guise.

The pageant was so well managed that this Lady of the Floating Island, having performed her voyage with much picturesque effect, landed at Mortimer's Tower with her two attendants just as Elizabeth presented herself before that outwork. The stranger then, in a well-penned speech, announced herself as that famous Lady of the Lake renowned in the stories of King Arthur, who had nursed the youth of the redoubted Sir Lancelot, and whose beauty 'had proved too powerful both for the wisdom and the spells of the mighty Merlin. Since that early period she had remained possessed of her crystal dominions, she said, despite the various men of fame and might by whom Kenilworth had been successively tenanted. 'The Saxons, the Danes, the Normans, the Saintlowes, the Clintons, the Montforts, the Mortimers, the Plantagenets, great though they were in arms and magnificence, had never, she said, caused her to raise her head from the waters which hid her crystal palace. But a greater than all these great names had now appeared, and she came in homage and duty to welcome the peerless Elizabeth to all sport which the Castle and its environs, which lake or land, could afford.

The Queen received this address also with great courtesy, and made answer in raillery, "We thought this lake had belonged to our own dominions, fair dame; but since so famed a lady claims it for hers, we will be glad at some other time to have further communing with you touching our joint interests."

With this gracious answer the Lady of the Lake vanished, and Arion, who was amongst the maritime deities, appeared upon his dolphin. But Lambourne, who had taken upon him the part in the absence of Wayland, being chilled with remaining immersed in an element to which he was not friendly, having never got his speech by heart, and not having, like the porter, the advantage of a prompter, paid it off with impudence, tearing off his vizard, and swearing, "Cogs bones! he was none of Arion or Orion either, but honest Mike Lambourne, that had been drinking her Majesty's health from morning till midnight, and was come to bid her heartily welcome to Kenilworth Castle."

This unpremeditated buffoonery answered the purpose probably better than the set speech would have done. The Queen laughed heartily, and swore (in her turn) that he had made the best speech she had heard that day. Lambourne, who instantly saw his jest had saved his bones, jumped on shore, gave his dolphin a kick, and declared he would never meddle with fish again, except at dinner.

At the same time that the Queen was about to enter the Castle, that memorable discharge of fireworks by water and land took place, which Master Laneham, formerly introduced to the reader, has strained all his eloquence to describe.

"Such," says the Clerk of the Council-chamber door "was the blaze of burning darts, the gleams of stars coruscant, the streams and hail of fiery sparks, lightnings of wildfire, and flight-shot of thunderbolts, with continuance, terror, and vehemency, that the heavens thundered, the waters surged, and the earth shook; and for my part, hardy as I am, it made me very vengeably afraid."

[See Laneham's Account of the Queen's Entertainment at Killingworth Castle, in 1575, a very diverting tract, written by as great a coxcomb as ever blotted paper. [See Note 6] The original is extremely rare, but it has been twice reprinted; once in Mr. Nichols's very curious and interesting collection of the Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol.i. and more lately in a beautiful antiquarian publication, termed KENILWORTH ILLUSTRATED, printed at Chiswick, for Meridow of Coventry and Radcliffe of Birmingham. It contains reprints of Laneham's Letter, Gascoigne's Princely Progress, and other scarce pieces, annotated with accuracy and ability. The author takes the liberty to refer to this work as his authority for the account of the festivities.

I am indebted for a curious ground-plan of the Castle of Kenilworth, as it existed in Queen Elizabeth's time, to the voluntary kindness of Richard Badnall Esq. of Olivebank, near Liverpool. From his obliging communication, I learn that the original sketch was found among the manuscripts of the celebrated J. J. Rousseau, when he left England. These were entrusted by the philosopher to the care of his friend Mr. Davenport, and passed from his legatee into the possession of Mr. Badnall.]

CHAPTER XXXI.

*Nay, this is matter for the month of March,
When hares are maddest. Either speak in reason,
Giving cold argument the wall of passion,
Or I break up the court. —BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.*

It is by no means our purpose to detail minutely all the princely festivities of Kenilworth, after the fashion of Master Robert Laneham, whom we quoted in the conclusion of the last chapter. It is sufficient to say that under discharge of the splendid fireworks, which we have borrowed Laneham's eloquence to describe, the Queen entered the base-court of Kenilworth, through Mortimer's Tower, and moving on through pageants of heathen gods and heroes of antiquity, who offered gifts and compliments on the bended knee, at length found her way to the Great Hall of the Castle, gorgeously hung for her reception with the richest silken tapestry, misty with perfumes, and sounding to strains of soft and delicious music. From the highly-carved oaken roof hung a superb chandelier of gilt bronze, formed like a spread eagle, whose outstretched wings supported three male and three female figures, grasping a pair of branches in each hand. The Hall was thus illuminated by twenty-four torches of wax. At the upper end of the splendid apartment was a state canopy, overshadowing a royal throne, and beside it was a door, which opened to a long suite of apartments, decorated with the utmost magnificence for the Queen and her ladies, whenever it should be her pleasure to be private.

The Earl of Leicester having handed the Queen up to her throne, and seated her there, knelt down before her, and kissing the hand which she held out, with an air in which romantic and respectful gallantry was happily mingled with the air of loyal devotion, he thanked her, in terms of the deepest gratitude, for the highest honour which a sovereign could render to a subject. So handsome did he look when kneeling before her, that Elizabeth was tempted to prolong the scene a little longer than there was, strictly speaking, necessity for; and ere she raised him, she passed her hand over his head, so near as almost to touch his long, curled, and perfumed hair, and with a movement of fondness that seemed to intimate she would, if she dared, have made the motion a slight caress.

[To justify what may be considered as a high-coloured picture, the author quotes the original of the courtly and shrewd Sir James Melville, being then Queen Mary's envoy at the court of London.

"I was required," says Sir James, "to stay till I had seen him made Earle of Leicester, and Baron of Denbigh, with great solemnity; herself (Elizabeth) helping to put on his ceremonial, he sitting on his knees before her, keeping a great gravity and a discreet behaviour; but she could not refrain from putting her hand to his neck to kittle (i.e., tickle) him, smilingly, the French Ambassador and I standing beside her."—MELVILLE'S MEMOIRS, BANNATYNE EDITION, p. 120.]

She at length raised him, and standing beside the throne, he explained to her the various preparations which had been made for her amusement and accommodation, all of which received her prompt and gracious approbation. The Earl then prayed her Majesty for permission that he himself, and the nobles who had been in attendance upon her during the journey, might retire for a few minutes, and put themselves into a guise more fitting for dutiful attendance, during which space those gentlemen of worship (pointing to Varney, Blount, Tressilian, and others), who had already put themselves into fresh attire, would have the honour of keeping her presence-chamber.

"Be it so, my lord," answered the Queen; "you could manage a theatre well, who can thus command a double set of actors. For ourselves, we will receive your courtesies this evening but clownishly, since it is not our purpose to change our riding attire, being in effect something fatigued with a journey which the concourse of our good people hath rendered slow, though the love they have shown our person hath, at the same time, made it delightful."

Leicester, having received this permission, retired accordingly, and was followed by those nobles who had attended the Queen to Kenilworth in person. The gentlemen who had preceded them, and were, of course, dressed for the solemnity, remained in attendance. But being most of them of rather inferior rank, they remained at an awful distance from the throne which Elizabeth occupied. The Queen's sharp eye soon distinguished Raleigh amongst them, with one or two others who were personally known to her, and she instantly made them a sign to approach, and accosted them very graciously. Raleigh, in particular, the adventure of whose cloak, as well as the incident of the verses, remained on her mind, was very graciously received; and to him she most frequently applied for information concerning the names and rank of those who were in presence. These he communicated concisely, and not without some traits of humorous satire, by which Elizabeth seemed much amused. "And who is yonder clownish fellow?" she said, looking at Tressilian, whose soiled dress on this occasion greatly obscured his good mien.

"A poet, if it please your Grace," replied Raleigh.

"I might have guessed that from his careless garb," said Elizabeth. "I have known some poets so thoughtless as to throw their cloaks into gutters."

"It must have been when the sun dazzled both their eyes and their judgment," answered Raleigh.

Elizabeth smiled, and proceeded, "I asked that slovenly fellow's name, and you only told me his profession."

"Tressilian is his name," said Raleigh, with internal reluctance, for he foresaw nothing favourable to his friend from the manner in which she took notice of him.

"Tressilian!" answered Elizabeth. "Oh, the Menelaus of our romance. Why, he has dressed himself in a guise that will go far to exculpate his fair and false Helen. And where is Farnham, or whatever his name is—my Lord of Leicester's man, I mean—the Paris of this Devonshire tale?"

With still greater reluctance Raleigh named and pointed out to her Varney, for whom the tailor had done all that art could perform in making his exterior agreeable; and who, if he had not grace, had a sort of tact and habitual knowledge of breeding, which came in place of it.

The Queen turned her eyes from the one to the other. "I doubt," she said, "this same poetical Master Tressilian, who is too learned, I warrant me, to remember whose presence he was to appear in, may be one of those of whom Geoffrey Chaucer says wittily, the wisest clerks are not the wisest men. I remember that Varney is a smooth-tongued varlet. I doubt this fair runaway hath had reasons for breaking her faith."

To this Raleigh durst make no answer, aware how little he should benefit Tressilian by contradicting the Queen's sentiments, and not at all certain, on the whole, whether the best thing that could befall him would not be that she should put an end at once by her authority to this affair, upon which it seemed to him Tressilian's thoughts were fixed with unavailing and distressing pertinacity. As these reflections passed through his active brain, the lower door of the hall opened, and Leicester, accompanied by several of his kinsmen, and of the nobles who had embraced his faction, re-entered the Castle Hall.

The favourite Earl was now apparelled all in white, his shoes being of white velvet; his under-stocks (or stockings) of knit silk; his upper stocks of white velvet, lined with cloth of silver, which was shown at the slashed part of the middle thigh; his doublet of cloth of silver, the close jerkin of white velvet, embroidered with silver and seed-pearl, his girdle and the scabbard of his sword of white velvet with golden buckles; his poniard and sword hilted and mounted with gold; and over all a rich, loose robe of white satin, with a border of golden embroidery a foot in breadth. The collar of the Garter, and the azure garter itself around his knee, completed the appointments of the Earl of Leicester; which were so well matched by his fair stature, graceful gesture, fine proportion of body, and handsome countenance, that at that moment he was admitted by all who saw him as the goodliest person whom they had ever looked upon. Sussex and the other nobles were also richly attired, but in point of splendour and gracefulness of mien Leicester far exceeded them all.

Elizabeth received him with great complacency. "We have one piece of royal justice," she said, "to attend to. It is a piece of justice, too, which interests us as a woman, as well as in the character of mother and guardian of the English people."

An involuntary shudder came over Leicester as he bowed low, expressive of his readiness to receive her royal commands; and a similar cold fit came over Varney, whose eyes (seldom during that evening removed from his patron) instantly perceived from the change in his looks, slight as that was, of what the Queen was speaking. But Leicester had wrought his resolution up to the point which, in his crooked policy, he judged necessary; and when Elizabeth added, "it is of the matter of Varney and Tressilian we speak—is the lady here, my lord?" his answer was ready—"Gracious madam, she is not."

Elizabeth bent her brows and compressed her lips. "Our orders were strict and positive, my lord," was her answer—

"And should have been obeyed, good my liege," replied Leicester, "had they been expressed in the form of the lightest wish. But—Varney, step forward—this gentleman will inform your Grace of the cause why the lady" (he could not force his rebellious tongue to utter the words—HIS WIFE) "cannot attend on your royal presence."

Varney advanced, and pleaded with readiness, what indeed he firmly believed, the absolute incapacity of the party (for neither did he dare, in Leicester's presence, term her his wife) to wait on her Grace.

"Here," said he, "are attestations from a most learned physician, whose skill and honour are well known to my good Lord of Leicester, and from an honest and devout Protestant, a man of credit and substance, one Anthony Foster, the gentleman in whose house she is at present bestowed, that she now labours under an illness which altogether unfits her for such a journey as betwixt this Castle and the neighbourhood of Oxford."

"This alters the matter," said the Queen, taking the certificates in her hand, and glancing at their contents.—"Let Tressilian come forward.—Master Tressilian, we have much sympathy for your situation, the rather that you seem to have set your heart deeply on this Amy Robsart, or Varney. Our power, thanks to God, and the willing obedience of a loving people, is worth much, but there are some things which it cannot compass. We cannot, for example, command the affections of a giddy young girl, or make her love sense and learning better than a courtier's fine doublet; and we cannot control sickness, with which it seems this lady is afflicted, who may not, by reason of such infirmity, attend our court here, as we had required her to do. Here are the testimonials of the physician who hath her under his charge, and the gentleman in whose house she resides, so setting forth."

"Under your Majesty's favour," said Tressilian hastily, and in his alarm for the consequence of the imposition practised on the Queen forgetting in part at least his own promise to Amy, "these certificates speak not the truth."

"How, sir!" said the Queen—"impeach my Lord of Leicester's veracity! But you shall have a fair hearing. In our presence the meanest of our subjects shall be heard against the proudest, and the least known against the most favoured; therefore you shall be heard fairly, but beware you speak not without a warrant! Take these certificates in your own hand, look at them carefully, and say manfully if you impugn the truth of them, and upon what evidence."

As the Queen spoke, his promise and all its consequences rushed on the mind of the unfortunate Tressilian, and while it controlled his natural inclination to pronounce that a falsehood which he knew from the evidence of his senses to be untrue, gave an indecision and irresolution to his appearance and utterance which made strongly against him in the mind of Elizabeth, as well as of all who beheld him. He turned the papers over and over, as if he had been an idiot,

incapable of comprehending their contents. The Queen's impatience began to become visible. "You are a scholar, sir," she said, "and of some note, as I have heard; yet you seem wondrous slow in reading text hand. How say you, are these certificates true or no?"

"Madam," said Tressilian, with obvious embarrassment and hesitation, anxious to avoid admitting evidence which he might afterwards have reason to confute, yet equally desirous to keep his word to Amy, and to give her, as he had promised, space to plead her own cause in her own way—"Madam—Madam, your Grace calls on me to admit evidence which ought to be proved valid by those who found their defence upon them."

"Why, Tressilian, thou art critical as well as poetical," said the Queen, bending on him a brow of displeasure; "methinks these writings, being produced in the presence of the noble Earl to whom this Castle pertains, and his honour being appealed to as the guarantee of their authenticity, might be evidence enough for thee. But since thou listest to be so formal—Varney, or rather my Lord of Leicester, for the affair becomes yours" (these words, though spoken at random, thrilled through the Earl's marrow and bones), "what evidence have you as touching these certificates?"

Varney hastened to reply, preventing Leicester—"So please your Majesty, my young Lord of Oxford, who is here in presence, knows Master Anthony Foster's hand and his character."

The Earl of Oxford, a young unthrift, whom Foster had more than once accommodated with loans on usurious interest, acknowledged, on this appeal, that he knew him as a wealthy and independent franklin, supposed to be worth much money, and verified the certificate produced to be his handwriting.

"And who speaks to the Doctor's certificate?" said the Queen. "Alasco, methinks, is his name."

Masters, her Majesty's physician (not the less willingly that he remembered his repulse from Sayes Court, and thought that his present testimony might gratify Leicester, and mortify the Earl of Sussex and his faction), acknowledged he had more than once consulted with Doctor Alasco, and spoke of him as a man of extraordinary learning and hidden acquirements, though not altogether in the regular course of practice. The Earl of Huntingdon, Lord Leicester's brother-in-law, and the old Countess of Rutland, next sang his praises, and both remembered the thin, beautiful Italian hand in which he was wont to write his receipts, and which corresponded to the certificate produced as his.

"And now, I trust, Master Tressilian, this matter is ended," said the Queen. "We will do something ere the night is older to reconcile old Sir Hugh Robsart to the match. You have done your duty something more than boldly; but we were no woman had we not compassion for the wounds which true love deals, so we forgive your audacity, and your uncleansed boots withal, which have well-nigh overpowered my Lord of Leicester's perfumes."

So spoke Elizabeth, whose nicety of scent was one of the characteristics of her organization, as appeared long afterwards when she expelled Essex from her presence, on a charge against his boots similar to that which she now expressed against those of Tressilian.

But Tressilian had by this time collected himself, astonished as he had at first been by the audacity of the falsehood so feasibly supported, and placed in array against the evidence of his own eyes. He rushed forward, kneeled down, and caught the Queen by the skirt of her robe. "As you are Christian woman," he said, "madam, as you are crowned Queen, to do equal justice among your subjects—as you hope yourself to have fair hearing (which God grant you) at that last bar at which we must all plead, grant me one small request! Decide not this matter so hastily. Give me but twenty-four hours' interval, and I will, at the end of that brief space, produce evidence which will show to demonstration that these certificates, which state this unhappy lady to be now ill at ease in Oxfordshire, are false as hell!"

"Let go my train, sir!" said Elizabeth, who was startled at his vehemence, though she had too much of the lion in her to fear; "the fellow must be distraught. That witty knave, my godson Harrington, must have him into his rhymes of Orlando Furioso! And yet, by this light, there is something strange in the vehemence of his demand.—Speak, Tressilian, what wilt thou do if, at the end of these four-and-twenty hours, thou canst not confute a fact so solemnly proved as this lady's illness?"

"I will lay down my head on the block," answered Tressilian.

"Pshaw!" replied the Queen, "God's light! thou speakest like a fool. What head falls in England but by just sentence of English law? I ask thee, man—if thou hast sense to understand me—wilt thou, if thou shalt fail in this improbable attempt of thine, render me a good and sufficient reason why thou dost undertake it?"

Tressilian paused, and again hesitated; because he felt convinced that if, within the interval demanded, Amy should become reconciled to her husband, he would in that case do her the worst of offices by again ripping up the whole circumstances before Elizabeth, and showing how that wise and jealous princess had been imposed upon by false testimonials. The consciousness of this dilemma renewed his extreme embarrassment of look, voice, and manner; he hesitated, looked down, and on the Queen repeating her question with a stern voice and flashing eye, he admitted with faltering words, "That it might be—he could not positively—that is, in certain events—explain the reasons and grounds on which he acted."

"Now, by the soul of King Henry," said the Queen, "this is either moonstruck madness or very knavery!—Seest thou, Raleigh, thy friend is far too Pindaric for this presence. Have him away, and make us quit of him, or it shall be the worse for him; for his flights are too unbridled for any place but Parnassus, or Saint Luke's Hospital. But come back instantly thyself, when he is placed under fitting restraint.—We wish we had seen the beauty which could make such havoc in a wise man's brain."

Tressilian was again endeavouring to address the Queen, when Raleigh, in obedience to the orders he had received, interfered, and with Blount's assistance, half led, half forced him out of the presence-chamber, where he himself indeed began to think his appearance did his cause more harm than good.

When they had attained the antechamber, Raleigh entreated Blount to see Tressilian safely conducted into the apartments allotted to the Earl of Sussex's followers, and, if necessary, recommended that a guard should be mounted on him.

"This extravagant passion," he said, "and, as it would seem, the news of the lady's illness, has utterly wrecked his excellent judgment. But it will pass away if he be kept quiet. Only let him break forth again at no rate; for he is already far in her Highness's displeasure, and should she be again provoked, she will find for him a worse place of confinement, and sterner keepers."

"I judged as much as that he was mad," said Nicholas Blount, looking down upon his own crimson stockings and yellow roses, "whenever I saw him wearing yonder damned boots, which stunk so in her nostrils. I will but see him stowed, and be back with you presently. But, Walter, did the Queen ask who I was?—methought she glanced an eye at me."

"Twenty—twenty eye-glances she sent! and I told her all—how thou wert a brave soldier, and a—But for God's sake, get off Tressilian!"

"I will—I will," said Blount; "but methinks this court-haunting is no such bad pastime, after all. We shall rise by it, Walter, my brave lad. Thou saidst I was a good soldier, and a—what besides, dearest Walter?"

"An all unutterable-codshead. For God's sake, begone!"

Tressilian, without further resistance or expostulation followed, or rather suffered himself to be conducted by Blount to Raleigh's lodging, where he was formally installed into a small truckle-bed placed in a wardrobe, and designed for a domestic. He saw but too plainly that no remonstrances would avail to procure the help or sympathy of his friends, until the lapse of the time for which he had pledged himself to remain inactive should enable him either to explain the whole circumstances to them, or remove from him every pretext or desire of further interference with the fortunes of Amy, by her having found means to place herself in a state of reconciliation with her husband.

With great difficulty, and only by the most patient and mild remonstrances with Blount, he escaped the disgrace and mortification of having two of Sussex's stoutest yeomen quartered in his apartment. At last, however, when Nicholas had seen him fairly deposited in his truckle-bed, and had bestowed one or two hearty kicks, and as hearty curses, on the boots, which, in his lately acquired spirit of foppery, he considered as a strong symptom, if not the cause, of his friend's malady, he contented himself with the modified measure of locking the door on the unfortunate Tressilian, whose gallant and disinterested efforts to save a female who had treated him with ingratitude thus terminated for the present in the displeasure of his Sovereign and the conviction of his friends that he was little better than a madman.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*The wisest Sovereigns err like private men,
And royal hand has sometimes laid the sword
Of chivalry upon a worthless shoulder,
Which better had been branded by the hangman.
What then?—Kings do their best; and they and we
Must answer for the intent, and not the event.—OLD PLAY.*

"It is a melancholy matter," said the Queen, when Tressilian was withdrawn, "to see a wise and learned man's wit thus pitifully unsettled. Yet this public display of his imperfection of brain plainly shows us that his supposed injury and accusation were fruitless; and therefore, my Lord of Leicester, we remember your suit formerly made to us in behalf of your faithful servant Varney, whose good gifts and fidelity, as they are useful to you, ought to have due reward from us, knowing well that your lordship, and all you have, are so earnestly devoted to our service. And we render Varney the honour more especially that we are a guest, and, we fear, a chargeable and troublesome one, under your lordship's roof; and also for the satisfaction of the good old Knight of Devon, Sir Hugh Robsart, whose daughter he hath married, and we trust the especial mark of grace which we are about to confer may reconcile him to his son-in-law.—Your sword, my Lord of Leicester."

The Earl unbuckled his sword, and taking it by the point, presented on bended knee the hilt to Elizabeth.

She took it slowly drew it from the scabbard, and while the ladies who stood around turned away their eyes with real or affected shuddering, she noted with a curious eye the high polish and rich, damasked ornaments upon the glittering blade.

"Had I been a man," she said, "methinks none of my ancestors would have loved a good sword better. As it is with me, I like to look on one, and could, like the Fairy of whom I have read in some Italian rhymes—were my godson Harrington here, he could tell me the passage—even trim my hair, and arrange my head-gear, in such a steel mirror as this is.—Richard Varney, come forth, and kneel down. In the name of God and Saint George, we dub thee knight! Be Faithful, Brave, and Fortunate. Arise, Sir Richard Varney."

*[The incident alluded to occurs in the poem of Orlando Innamorato
of Boiardo, libro ii. canto 4, stanza 25.]*

"Non era per ventura," etc.

It may be rendered thus:—

*As then, perchance, unguarded was the tower,
So enter'd free Anglante's dauntless knight.
No monster and no giant guard the bower
In whose recess reclined the fairy light,
Robed in a loose cymar of lily white,
And on her lap a sword of breadth and might,
In whose broad blade, as in a mirror bright,
Like maid that trims her for a festal night,
The fairy deck'd her hair, and placed her coronet aright.*

Elizabeth's attachment to the Italian school of poetry was singularly manifested on a well-known occasion. Her godson, Sir John Harrington, having offended her delicacy by translating some of the licentious passages of the Orlando Furioso, she imposed on him, as a penance, the task of rendering the WHOLE poem into English.]

Varney arose and retired, making a deep obeisance to the Sovereign who had done him so much honour.

"The buckling of the spur, and what other rites remain," said the Queen, "may be finished to-morrow in the chapel; for we intend Sir Richard Varney a companion in his honours. And as we must not be partial in conferring such distinction, we mean on this matter to confer with our cousin of Sussex."

That noble Earl, who since his arrival at Kenilworth, and indeed since the commencement of this Progress, had found himself in a subordinate situation to Leicester, was now wearing a heavy cloud on his brow; a circumstance which had not escaped the Queen, who hoped to appease his discontent, and to follow out her system of balancing policy by a mark of peculiar favour, the more gratifying as it was tendered at a moment when his rival's triumph appeared to be complete.

At the summons of Queen Elizabeth, Sussex hastily approached her person; and being asked on which of his followers, being a gentleman and of merit, he would wish the honour of knighthood to be conferred, he answered, with more sincerity than policy, that he would have ventured to speak for Tressilian, to whom he conceived he owed his own life, and who was a distinguished soldier and scholar, besides a man of unstained lineage, "only," he said, "he feared the events of that night—" And then he stopped.

"I am glad your lordship is thus considerate," said Elizabeth. "The events of this night would make us, in the eyes of our subjects, as mad as this poor brain-sick gentleman himself—for we ascribe his conduct to no malice—should we choose this moment to do him grace."

"In that case," said the Earl of Sussex, somewhat discountenanced, "your Majesty will allow me to name my master of the horse, Master Nicholas Blount, a gentleman of fair estate and ancient name, who has served your Majesty both in Scotland and Ireland, and brought away bloody marks on his person, all honourably taken and requited."

The Queen could not help shrugging her shoulders slightly even at this second suggestion; and the Duchess of Rutland, who read in the Queen's manner that she had expected that Sussex would have named Raleigh, and thus would have enabled her to gratify her own wish while she honoured his recommendation, only waited the Queen's assent to what he had proposed, and then said that she hoped, since these two high nobles had been each permitted to suggest a candidate for the honours of chivalry, she, in behalf of the ladies in presence, might have a similar indulgence.

"I were no woman to refuse you such a boon," said the Queen, smiling.

"Then," pursued the Duchess, "in the name of these fair ladies present, I request your Majesty to confer the rank of knighthood on Walter Raleigh, whose birth, deeds of arms, and promptitude to serve our sex with sword or pen, deserve such distinction from us all."

"Gramercy, fair ladies," said Elizabeth, smiling, "your boon is granted, and the gentle squire Lack-Cloak shall become the good knight Lack-Cloak, at your desire. Let the two aspirants for the honour of chivalry step forward."

Blount was not as yet returned from seeing Tressilian, as he conceived, safely disposed of; but Raleigh came forth, and kneeling down, received at the hand of the Virgin Queen that title of honour, which was never conferred on a more distinguished or more illustrious object.

Shortly afterwards Nicholas Blount entered, and hastily apprised by Sussex, who met him at the door of the hall, of the Queen's gracious purpose regarding him, he was desired to advance towards the throne. It is a sight sometimes seen, and it is both ludicrous and pitiable; when an honest man of plain common sense is surprised, by the coquetry of a pretty woman, or any other cause, into those frivolous fopperies which only sit well upon the youthful, the gay, and those to whom long practice has rendered them a second nature. Poor Blount was in this situation. His head was already giddy from a consciousness of unusual finery, and the

supposed necessity of suiting his manners to the gaiety of his dress; and now this sudden view of promotion altogether completed the conquest of the newly inhaled spirit of foppery over his natural disposition, and converted a plain, honest, awkward man into a coxcomb of a new and most ridiculous kind.

The knight-expectant advanced up the hall, the whole length of which he had unfortunately to traverse, turning out his toes with so much zeal that he presented his leg at every step with its broadside foremost, so that it greatly resembled an old-fashioned table-knife with a curved point, when seen sideways. The rest of his gait was in proportion to this unhappy amble; and the implied mixture of bashful rear and self-satisfaction was so unutterably ridiculous that Leicester's friends did not suppress a titter, in which many of Sussex's partisans were unable to resist joining, though ready to eat their nails with mortification. Sussex himself lost all patience, and could not forbear whispering into the ear of his friend, "Curse thee! canst thou not walk like a man and a soldier?" an interjection which only made honest Blount start and stop, until a glance at his yellow roses and crimson stockings restored his self-confidence, when on he went at the same pace as before.

The Queen conferred on poor Blount the honour of knighthood with a marked sense of reluctance. That wise Princess was fully aware of the propriety of using great circumspection and economy in bestowing those titles of honour, which the Stewarts, who succeeded to her throne, distributed with an imprudent liberality which greatly diminished their value. Blount had no sooner arisen and retired than she turned to the Duchess of Rutland. "Our woman wit," she said, "dear Rutland, is sharper than that of those proud things in doublet and hose. Seest thou, out of these three knights, thine is the only true metal to stamp chivalry's imprint upon?"

"Sir Richard Varney, surely—the friend of my Lord of Leicester—surely he has merit," replied the Duchess.

"Varney has a sly countenance and a smooth tongue," replied the Queen; "I fear me he will prove a knave. But the promise was of ancient standing. My Lord of Sussex must have lost his own wits, I think, to recommend to us first a madman like Tressilian, and then a clownish fool like this other fellow. I protest, Rutland, that while he sat on his knees before me, mopping and mowing as if he had scalding porridge in his mouth, I had much ado to forbear cutting him over the pate, instead of striking his shoulder."

"Your Majesty gave him a smart ACCOLADE," said the Duchess; "we who stood behind heard the blade clatter on his collar-bone, and the poor man fidgeted too as if he felt it."

"I could not help it, wench," said the Queen, laughing. "But we will have this same Sir Nicholas sent to Ireland or Scotland, or somewhere, to rid our court of so antic a chevalier; he may be a good soldier in the field, though a preposterous ass in a banqueting-hall."

The discourse became then more general, and soon after there was a summons to the banquet.

In order to obey this signal, the company were under the necessity of crossing the inner court of the Castle, that they might reach the new buildings containing the large banqueting-room, in which preparations for supper were made upon a scale of profuse magnificence, corresponding to the occasion.

The livery cupboards were loaded with plate of the richest description, and the most varied—some articles tasteful, some perhaps grotesque, in the invention and decoration, but all gorgeously magnificent, both from the richness of the work and value of the materials. Thus the chief table was adorned by a salt, ship-fashion, made of mother-of-pearl, garnished with silver and divers warlike ensigns and other ornaments, anchors, sails, and sixteen pieces of ordnance. It bore a figure of Fortune, placed on a globe, with a flag in her hand. Another salt was fashioned of silver, in form of a swan in full sail. That chivalry might not be omitted amid this splendour, a silver Saint George was presented, mounted and equipped in the usual fashion in which he bestrides the dragon. The figures were moulded to be in some sort useful. The horse's tail was managed to hold a case of knives, while the breast of the dragon presented a similar accommodation for oyster knives.

In the course of the passage from the hall of reception to the banqueting-room, and especially in the courtyard, the new-made knights were assailed by the heralds, pursuivants, minstrels, etc., with the usual cry of LARGESSE, LARGESSE, CHEVALIERS TRES HARDIS! an ancient invocation, intended to awaken the bounty of the acolytes of chivalry towards those whose business it was to register their armorial bearings, and celebrate the deeds by which they were illustrated. The call was, of course, liberally and courteously answered by those to whom it was addressed. Varney gave his largesse with an affectation of complaisance and humility. Raleigh bestowed his with the graceful ease peculiar to one who has attained his own place, and is familiar with its dignity. Honest Blount gave what his tailor had left him of his half-year's rent, dropping some pieces in his hurry, then stooping down to look for them, and then distributing them amongst the various claimants, with the anxious face and mien of the parish beadle dividing a dole among paupers.

The donations were accepted with the usual clamour and VIVATS of applause common on such occasions; but as the parties gratified were chiefly dependants of Lord Leicester, it was Varney whose name was repeated with the loudest acclamations. Lambourne, especially, distinguished himself by his vociferations of "Long life to Sir Richard Varney!—Health and honour to Sir Richard!—Never was a more worthy knight dubbed!"—then, suddenly sinking his voice, he added—"since the valiant Sir Pandarus of Troy,"—a winding-up of his clamorous applause which set all men a-laughing who were within hearing of it.

It is unnecessary to say anything further of the festivities of the evening, which were so brilliant in themselves, and received with such obvious and willing satisfaction by the Queen, that Leicester retired to his own apartment with all the giddy raptures of successful ambition. Varney, who had changed his splendid attire, and now waited on his patron in a very modest and plain undress, attended to do the honours of the Earl's COUCHER.

"How! Sir Richard," said Leicester, smiling, "your new rank scarce suits the humility of this attendance."

"I would disown that rank, my Lord," said Varney, "could I think it was to remove me to a distance from your lordship's person."

"Thou art a grateful fellow," said Leicester; "but I must not allow you to do what would abate you in the opinion of others."

While thus speaking, he still accepted without hesitation the offices about his person, which the new-made knight seemed to render as eagerly as if he had really felt, in discharging the task, that pleasure which his words expressed.

"I am not afraid of men's misconstruction," he said, in answer to Leicester's remark, "since there is not—(permit me to undo the collar)—a man within the Castle who does not expect very soon to see persons of a rank far superior to that which, by your goodness, I now hold, rendering the duties of the bedchamber to you, and accounting it an honour."

"It might, indeed, so have been"—said the Earl, with an involuntary sigh; and then presently added, "My gown, Varney; I will look out on the night. Is not the moon near to the full?"

"I think so, my lord, according to the calendar," answered Varney.

There was an abutting window, which opened on a small projecting balcony of stone, battlemented as is usual in Gothic castles. The Earl undid the lattice, and stepped out into the open air. The station he had chosen commanded an extensive view of the lake and woodlands beyond, where the bright moonlight rested on the clear blue waters and the distant masses of oak and elm trees. The moon rode high in the heavens, attended by thousands and thousands of inferior luminaries. All seemed already to be hushed in the nether world, excepting occasionally the voice of the watch (for the yeomen of the guard performed that duty wherever the Queen was present in person) and the distant baying of the hounds, disturbed by the preparations amongst the grooms and prickers for a magnificent hunt, which was to be the amusement of the next day.

Leicester looked out on the blue arch of heaven, with gestures and a countenance expressive of anxious exultation, while Varney, who remained within the darkened apartment, could (himself unnoticed), with a secret satisfaction, see his patron stretch his hands with earnest gesticulation towards the heavenly bodies.

"Ye distant orbs of living fire," so ran the muttered invocation of the ambitious Earl, "ye are silent while you wheel your mystic rounds; but Wisdom has given to you a voice. Tell me, then, to what end is my high course destined? Shall the greatness to which I have aspired be bright, pre-eminent, and stable as your own; or am I but doomed to draw a brief and glittering train along the nightly darkness, and then to sink down to earth, like the base refuse of those artificial fires with which men emulate your rays?"

He looked on the heavens in profound silence for a minute or two longer, and then again stepped into the apartment, where Varney seemed to have been engaged in putting the Earl's jewels into a casket.

"What said Alasco of my horoscope?" demanded Leicester. "You already told me; but it has escaped me, for I think but lightly of that art."

"Many learned and great men have thought otherwise," said Varney; "and, not to flatter your lordship, my own opinion leans that way."

"Ay, Saul among the prophets?" said Leicester. "I thought thou wert sceptical in all such matters as thou couldst neither see, hear, smell, taste, or touch, and that thy belief was limited by thy senses."

"Perhaps, my lord," said Varney, "I may be misled on the present occasion by my wish to find the predictions of astrology true. Alasco says that your favourite planet is culminating, and that the adverse influence—he would not use a plainer term—though not overcome, was evidently combust, I think he said, or retrograde."

"It is even so," said Leicester, looking at an abstract of astrological calculations which he had in his hand; "the stronger influence will prevail, and, as I think, the evil hour pass away. Lend me your hand, Sir Richard, to doff my gown; and remain an instant, if it is not too burdensome to your knighthood, while I compose myself to sleep. I believe the bustle of this day has fevered my blood, for it streams through my veins like a current of molten lead. Remain an instant, I pray you—I would fain feel my eyes heavy ere I closed them."

Varney officiously assisted his lord to bed, and placed a massive silver night-lamp, with a short sword, on a marble table which stood close by the head of the couch. Either in order to avoid the light of the lamp, or to hide his countenance from Varney, Leicester drew the curtain, heavy with entwined silk and gold, so as completely to shade his face. Varney took a seat near the bed, but with his back towards his master, as if to intimate that he was not watching him, and quietly waited till Leicester himself led the way to the topic by which his mind was engrossed.

"And so, Varney," said the Earl, after waiting in vain till his dependant should commence the conversation, "men talk of the Queen's favour towards me?"

"Ay, my good lord," said Varney; "of what can they else, since it is so strongly manifested?"

"She is indeed my good and gracious mistress," said Leicester, after another pause; "but it is written, 'Put not thy trust in princes.'"

"A good sentence and a true," said Varney, "unless you can unite their interest with yours so absolutely that they must needs sit on your wrist like hooded hawks."

"I know what thou meanest," said Leicester impatiently, "though thou art to-night so prudentially careful of what thou sayest to me. Thou wouldst intimate I might marry the Queen if I would?"

"It is your speech, my lord, not mine," answered Varney; "but whosoever be the speech, it is the thought of ninety-nine out of an hundred men throughout broad England."

"Ay, but," said Leicester, turning himself in his bed, "the hundredth man knows better. Thou, for example, knowest the obstacle that cannot be overleaped."

"It must, my lord, if the stars speak true," said Varney composedly.

"What, talkest thou of them," said Leicester, "that believest not in them or in aught else?"

"You mistake, my lord, under your gracious pardon," said Varney; "I believe in many things that predict the future. I believe, if showers fall in April, that we shall have flowers in May; that if the sun shines, grain will ripen; and I believe in much natural philosophy to the same effect, which, if the stars swear to me, I will say the stars speak the truth. And in like manner, I will not disbelieve that which I see wished for and expected on earth, solely because the astrologers have read it in the heavens."

"Thou art right," said Leicester, again tossing himself on his couch "Earth does wish for it. I have had advices from the reformed churches of Germany—from the Low Countries—from Switzerland—urging this as a point on which Europe's safety depends. France will not oppose it. The ruling party in Scotland look to it as their best security. Spain fears it, but cannot prevent it. And yet thou knowest it is impossible."

"I know not that, my lord," said Varney; "the Countess is indisposed."

"Villain!" said Leicester, starting up on his couch, and seizing the sword which lay on the table beside him, "go thy thoughts that way?—thou wouldst not do murder?"

"For whom, or what, do you hold me, my lord?" said Varney, assuming the superiority of an innocent man subjected to unjust suspicion. "I said nothing to deserve such a horrid imputation as your violence infers. I said but that the Countess was ill. And Countess though she be—lovely and beloved as she is—surely your lordship must hold her to be mortal? She may die, and your lordship's hand become once more your own."

"Away! away!" said Leicester; "let me have no more of this."

"Good night, my lord," said Varney, seeming to understand this as a command to depart; but Leicester's voice interrupted his purpose.

"Thou 'scapest me not thus, Sir Fool," said he; "I think thy knighthood has addled thy brains. Confess thou hast talked of impossibilities as of things which may come to pass."

"My lord, long live your fair Countess," said Varney; "but neither your love nor my good wishes can make her immortal. But God grant she live long to be happy herself, and to render you so! I see not but you may be King of England notwithstanding."

"Nay, now, Varney, thou art stark mad," said Leicester.

"I would I were myself within the same nearness to a good estate of freehold," said Varney. "Have we not known in other countries how a left-handed marriage might subsist betwixt persons of differing degree?—ay, and be no hindrance to prevent the husband from conjoining himself afterwards with a more suitable partner?"

"I have heard of such things in Germany," said Leicester.

"Ay, and the most learned doctors in foreign universities justify the practice from the Old Testament," said Varney. "And after all, where is the harm? The beautiful partner whom you have chosen for true love has your secret hours of relaxation and affection. Her fame is safe her conscience may slumber securely. You have wealth to provide royally for your issue, should Heaven bless you with offspring. Meanwhile you may give to Elizabeth ten times the leisure, and ten thousand times the affection, that ever Don Philip of Spain spared to her sister Mary; yet you know how she doted on him though so cold and neglectful. It requires but a close mouth and an open brow, and you keep your Eleanor and your fair Rosamond far enough separate. Leave me to build you a bower to which no jealous Queen shall find a clew."

Leicester was silent for a moment, then sighed, and said, "It is impossible. Good night, Sir Richard Varney—yet stay. Can you guess what meant Tressilian by showing himself in such careless guise before the Queen to-day?—to strike her tender heart, I should guess, with all the sympathies due to a lover abandoned by his mistress and abandoning himself."

Varney, smothering a sneering laugh, answered, "He believed Master Tressilian had no such matter in his head."

"How!" said Leicester; "what meanest thou? There is ever knavery in that laugh of thine, Varney."

"I only meant, my lord," said Varney, "that Tressilian has taken the sure way to avoid heart-breaking. He hath had a companion—a female companion—a mistress—a sort of player's wife or sister, as I believe—with him in Mervyn's Bower, where I quartered him for certain reasons of my own."

"A mistress!—meanest thou a paramour?"

"Ay, my lord; what female else waits for hours in a gentleman's chamber?"

"By my faith, time and space fitting, this were a good tale to tell," said Leicester. "I ever distrusted those bookish, hypocritical, seeming-virtuous scholars. Well—Master Tressilian makes somewhat familiar with my house; if I look it over, he is indebted to it for certain recollections. I would not harm him more than I can help. Keep eye on him, however, Varney."

"I lodged him for that reason," said Varney, "in Mervyn's Tower, where he is under the eye of my very vigilant, if he were not also my very drunken, servant, Michael Lambourne, whom I have told your Grace of."

"Grace!" said Leicester; "what meanest thou by that epithet?"

"It came unawares, my lord; and yet it sounds so very natural that I cannot recall it."

"It is thine own preferment that hath turned thy brain," said Leicester, laughing; "new honours are as heady as new wine."

"May your lordship soon have cause to say so from experience," said Varney; and wishing his patron good night, he withdrew. [See Note 8. Furniture of Kenilworth.]

CHAPTER XXXIII.

*Here stands the victim—there the proud betrayer,
E'en as the hind pull'd down by strangling dogs
Lies at the hunter's feet—who courteous proffers
To some high dame, the Dian of the chase,
To whom he looks for guerdon, his sharp blade,
To gash the sobbing throat. —THE WOODSMAN.*

We are now to return to Mervyn's Bower, the apartment, or rather the prison, of the unfortunate Countess of Leicester, who for some time kept within bounds her uncertainty and her impatience. She was aware that, in the tumult of the day, there might be some delay ere her letter could be safely conveyed to the hands of Leicester, and that some time more might elapse ere he could extricate himself from the necessary attendance on Elizabeth, to come and visit her in her secret bower. "I will not expect him," she said, "till night; he cannot be absent from his royal guest, even to see me. He will, I know, come earlier if it be possible, but I will not expect him before night." And yet all the while she did expect him; and while she tried to argue herself into a contrary belief, each hasty noise of the hundred which she heard sounded like the hurried step of Leicester on the staircase, hasting to fold her in his arms.

The fatigue of body which Amy had lately undergone, with the agitation of mind natural to so cruel a state of uncertainty, began by degrees strongly to affect her nerves, and she almost feared her total inability to maintain the necessary self-command through the scenes which might lie before her. But although spoiled by an over-indulgent system of education, Amy had naturally a mind of great power, united with a frame which her share in her father's woodland exercises had rendered uncommonly healthy. She summoned to her aid such mental and bodily resources; and not unconscious how much the issue of her fate might depend on her own self-possession, she prayed internally for strength of body and for mental fortitude, and resolved at the same time to yield to no nervous impulse which might weaken either.

Yet when the great bell of the Castle, which was placed in Caesar's Tower, at no great distance from that called Mervyn's, began to send its pealing clamour abroad, in signal of the arrival of the royal procession, the din was so painfully acute to ears rendered nervously sensitive by anxiety, that she could hardly forbear shrieking with anguish, in answer to every stunning clash of the relentless peal.

Shortly afterwards, when the small apartment was at once enlightened by the shower of artificial fires with which the air was suddenly filled, and which crossed each other like fiery spirits, each bent on his own separate mission, or like salamanders executing a frolic dance in the region of the Sylphs, the Countess felt at first as if each rocket shot close by her eyes, and discharged its sparks and flashes so nigh that she could feel a sense of the heat. But she struggled against these fantastic terrors, and compelled herself to arise, stand by the window, look out, and gaze upon a sight which at another time would have appeared to her at once captivating and fearful. The magnificent towers of the Castle were enveloped in garlands of artificial fire, or shrouded with tiaras of pale smoke. The surface of the lake glowed like molten iron, while many fireworks (then thought extremely wonderful, though now common), whose flame continued to exist in the opposing element, dived and rose, hissed and roared, and spouted fire, like so many dragons of enchantment sporting upon a burning lake.

Even Amy was for a moment interested by what was to her so new a scene. "I had thought it magical art," she said, "but poor Tressilian taught me to judge of such things as they are. Great God! and may not these idle splendours resemble my own hoped-for happiness—a single spark, which is instantly swallowed up by surrounding darkness—a precarious glow, which rises but for a brief space into the air, that its fall may be the lower? O Leicester! after all—all that thou hast said—hast sworn—that Amy was thy love, thy life, can it be that thou art the magician at whose nod these enchantments arise, and that she sees them as an outcast, if not a captive?"

The sustained, prolonged, and repeated bursts of music, from so many different quarters, and at so many varying points of distance, which sounded as if not the Castle of Kenilworth only, but the whole country around, had been at once the scene of solemnizing some high national festival, carried the same oppressive thought still closer to her heart, while some notes would melt in distant and falling tones, as if in compassion for her sorrows, and some burst close and near upon her, as if mocking her misery, with all the insolence of unlimited mirth. "These sounds," she said, "are mine—mine, because they are HIS; but I cannot say, Be still, these loud strains suit me not; and the voice of the meanest peasant that mingles in the dance would have more power to modulate the music than the command of her who is mistress of all."

By degrees the sounds of revelry died away, and the Countess withdrew from the window at which she had sat listening to them. It was night, but the moon afforded considerable light in the room, so that Amy was able to make the arrangement which she judged necessary. There was hope that Leicester might come to her apartment as soon as the revel in the Castle had subsided; but there was also risk she might be disturbed by some unauthorized intruder. She had lost confidence in the key since Tressilian had entered so easily, though the door was locked on the inside; yet all the additional security she could think of was to place the table across the door, that she might be warned by the noise should any one attempt to enter. Having taken these necessary precautions, the unfortunate lady withdrew to her couch, stretched herself down on it, mused in anxious expectation, and counted more than one hour after midnight, till exhausted nature proved too strong for love, for grief, for fear, nay, even for uncertainty, and she slept.

Yes, she slept. The Indian sleeps at the stake in the intervals between his tortures; and mental torments, in like manner, exhaust by long continuance the sensibility of the sufferer, so that an interval of lethargic repose must necessarily ensue, ere the pangs which they inflict can again be renewed.

The Countess slept, then, for several hours, and dreamed that she was in the ancient house at Cumnor Place, listening for the low whistle with which Leicester often used to announce his presence in the courtyard when arriving suddenly on one of his stolen visits. But on this occasion, instead of a whistle, she heard the peculiar blast of a bugle-horn, such as her father used to wind on the fall of the stag, and which huntsmen then called a MORT. She ran, as she thought, to a window that looked into the courtyard, which she saw filled with men in mourning garments. The old Curate seemed about to read the funeral service. Mumblazen, tricked out in an antique dress, like an ancient herald, held aloft a scutcheon, with its usual decorations of skulls, cross-bones, and hour-glasses, surrounding a coat-of-arms, of which she could only distinguish that it was surmounted with an Earl's coronet. The old man looked at her with a ghastly smile, and said, "Amy, are they not rightly quartered?" Just as he spoke, the horns again poured on her ear the melancholy yet wild strain of the MORT, or death-note, and she awoke.

The Countess awoke to hear a real bugle-note, or rather the combined breath of many bugles, sounding not the MORT. but the jolly REVEILLE, to remind the inmates of the Castle of Kenilworth that the pleasures of the day were to commence with a magnificent stag-hunting in the neighbouring Chase. Amy started up from her couch, listened to the sound, saw the first beams of the summer morning already twinkle through the lattice of her window, and recollected, with feelings of giddy agony, where she was, and how circumstanced.

"He thinks not of me," she said; "he will not come nigh me! A Queen is his guest, and what cares he in what corner of his huge Castle a wretch like me pines in doubt, which is fast fading into despair?" At once a sound at the door, as of some one attempting to open it softly, filled her with an ineffable mixture of joy and fear; and hastening to remove the obstacle she had placed against the door, and to unlock it, she had the precaution to ask! "Is it thou, my love?"

"Yes, my Countess," murmured a whisper in reply.

She threw open the door, and exclaiming, "Leicester!" flung her arms around the neck of the man who stood without, muffled in his cloak.

"No—not quite Leicester," answered Michael Lambourne, for he it was, returning the caress with vehemence—"not quite Leicester, my lovely and most loving duchess, but as good a man."

With an exertion of force, of which she would at another time have thought herself incapable, the Countess freed herself from the profane and profaning grasp of the drunken debauchee, and retreated into the midst of her apartment where despair gave her courage to make a stand.

As Lambourne, on entering, dropped the lap of his cloak from his face, she knew Varney's profligate servant, the very last person, excepting his detested master, by whom she would have wished to be discovered. But she was still closely muffled in her travelling dress, and as Lambourne had scarce ever been admitted to her presence at Cumnor Place, her person, she hoped, might not be so well known to him as his was to her, owing to Janet's pointing him frequently out as he crossed the court, and telling stories of his wickedness. She might have had still greater confidence in her disguise had her experience enabled her to discover that he was much intoxicated; but this could scarce have consoled her for the risk which she might incur from such a character in such a time, place, and circumstances.

Lambourne flung the door behind him as he entered, and folding his arms, as if in mockery of the attitude of distraction into which Amy had thrown herself, he proceeded thus: "Hark ye, most fair Calipolis—or most lovely Countess of clouts, and divine Duchess of dark corners—if thou takest all that trouble of skewering thyself together, like a trussed fowl, that there may be more pleasure in the carving, even save thyself the labour. I love thy first frank manner the best—like thy present as little"—(he made a step towards her, and staggered)—"as little as—such a damned uneven floor as this, where a gentleman may break his neck if he does not walk as upright as a posture-master on the tight-rope."

"Stand back!" said the Countess; "do not approach nearer to me on thy peril!"

"My peril!—and stand back! Why, how now, madam? Must you have a better mate than honest Mike Lambourne? I have been in America, girl, where the gold grows, and have brought off such a load on't—"

"Good friend," said the Countess, in great terror at the ruffian's determined and audacious manner, "I prithee begone, and leave me."

"And so I will, pretty one, when we are tired of each other's company—not a jot sooner." He seized her by the arm, while, incapable of further defence, she uttered shriek upon shriek. "Nay, scream away if you like it," said he, still holding her fast; "I have heard the sea at the loudest, and I mind a squalling woman no more than a miauling kitten. Damn me! I have heard fifty or a hundred screaming at once, when there was a town stormed."

The cries of the Countess, however, brought unexpected aid in the person of Lawrence Staples, who had heard her exclamations from his apartment below, and entered in good time to save her from being discovered, if not from more atrocious violence. Lawrence was drunk also from the debauch of the preceding night, but fortunately his intoxication had taken a different turn from that of Lambourne.

"What the devil's noise is this in the ward?" he said. "What! man and woman together in the same cell?—that is against rule. I will have decency under my rule, by Saint Peter of the Fetters!"

"Get thee downstairs, thou drunken beast," said Lambourne; "seest thou not the lady and I would be private?"

"Good sir, worthy sir!" said the Countess, addressing the jailer, "do but save me from him, for the sake of mercy!"

"She speaks fairly," said the jailer, "and I will take her part. I love my prisoners; and I have had as good prisoners under my key as they have had in Newgate or the Compter. And so, being one of my lambkins, as I say, no one shall disturb her in her pen-fold. So let go the woman: or I'll knock your brains out with my keys."

"I'll make a blood-pudding of thy midriff first," answered Lambourne, laying his left hand on his dagger, but still detaining the Countess by the arm with his right.

"So have at thee, thou old ostrich, whose only living is upon a bunch of iron keys."

Lawrence raised the arm of Michael, and prevented him from drawing his dagger; and as Lambourne struggled and strove to shake him off, the Countess made a sudden exertion on her side, and slipping her hand out of the glove on which the ruffian still kept hold, she gained her liberty, and escaping from the apartment, ran downstairs; while at the same moment she heard the two combatants fall on the floor with a noise which increased her terror. The outer wicket offered no impediment to her flight, having been opened for Lambourne's admittance; so that she succeeded in escaping down the stair, and fled into the Pleasance, which seemed to her hasty glance the direction in which she was most likely to avoid pursuit.

Meanwhile, Lawrence and Lambourne rolled on the floor of the apartment, closely grappled together. Neither had, happily, opportunity to draw their daggers; but Lawrence found space enough to clash his heavy keys across Michael's face, and Michael in return grasped the turnkey so felly by the throat that the blood gushed from nose and mouth, so that they were both gory and filthy spectacles when one of the other officers of the household, attracted by the noise of the fray, entered the room, and with some difficulty effected the separation of the combatants.

"A murrain on you both," said the charitable mediator, "and especially on you, Master Lambourne! What the fiend lie you here for, fighting on the floor like two butchers' curs in the kennel of the shambles?"

Lambourne arose, and somewhat sobered by the interposition of a third party, looked with something less than his usual brazen impudence of visage. "We fought for a wench, an thou must know," was his reply.

"A wench! Where is she?" said the officer.

"Why, vanished, I think," said Lambourne, looking around him, "unless Lawrence hath swallowed her, That filthy paunch of his devours as many distressed damsels and oppressed orphans as e'er a giant in King Arthur's history. They are his prime food; he worries them body, soul, and substance."

"Ay, ay! It's no matter," said Lawrence, gathering up his huge, ungainly form from the floor; "but I have had your betters, Master Michael Lambourne, under the little turn of my forefinger and thumb, and I shall have thee, before all's done, under my hatches. The impudence of thy brow will not always save thy shin-bones from iron, and thy foul, thirsty gullet from a hempen cord." The words were no sooner out of his mouth, when Lambourne again made at him.

"Nay, go not to it again," said the sewer, "or I will call for him shall tame you both, and that is Master Varney—Sir Richard, I mean. He is stirring, I promise you; I saw him cross the court just now."

"Didst thou, by G—!" said Lambourne, seizing on the basin and ewer which stood in the apartment. "Nay, then, element, do thy work. I thought I had enough of thee last night, when I floated about for Orion, like a cork on a fermenting cask of ale."

So saying, he fell to work to cleanse from his face and hands the signs of the fray, and get his apparel into some order.

"What hast thou done to him?" said the sewer, speaking aside to the jailer; "his face is fearfully swelled."

"It is but the imprint of the key of my cabinet—too good a mark for his gallows-face. No man shall abuse or insult my prisoners; they are my jewels, and I lock them in safe casket accordingly.—And so, mistress, leave off your wailing.—Why! why, surely, there was a woman here!"

"I think you are all mad this morning," said the sewer. "I saw no woman here, nor no man neither in a proper sense, but only two beasts rolling on the floor."

"Nay, then I am undone," said the jailer; "the prison's broken, that is all. Kenilworth prison is broken," he continued, in a tone of maudlin lamentation, "which was the strongest jail betwixt this and the Welsh Marches—ay, and a house that has had knights, and earls, and kings sleeping in it, as secure as if they had been in the Tower of London. It is broken, the prisoners fled, and the jailer in much danger of being hanged!"

So saying, he retreated down to his own den to conclude his lamentations, or to sleep himself sober. Lambourne and the sewer followed him close; and it was well for them, since the jailer, out of mere habit, was about to lock the wicket after him, and had they not been within the reach of interfering, they would have had the pleasure of being shut up in the turret-chamber, from which the Countess had been just delivered.

That unhappy lady, as soon as she found herself at liberty, fled, as we have already mentioned, into the Pleasance. She had seen this richly-ornamented space of ground from the window of Mervyn's Tower; and it occurred to her, at the moment of her escape, that among its numerous arbours, bowers, fountains, statues, and grottoes, she might find some recess in which she could lie concealed until she had an opportunity of addressing herself to a protector, to whom she might communicate as much as she dared of her forlorn situation, and through whose means she might supplicate an interview with her husband.

"If I could see my guide," she thought, "I would learn if he had delivered my letter. Even did I but see Tressilian, it were better to risk Dudley's anger, by confiding my whole situation to one who is the very soul of honour, than to run the hazard of further insult among the insolent menials of this ill-ruled place. I will not again

venture into an enclosed apartment. I will wait, I will watch; amidst so many human beings there must be some kind heart which can judge and compassionate what mine endures."

In truth, more than one party entered and traversed the Pleasance. But they were in joyous groups of four or five persons together, laughing and jesting in their own fullness of mirth and lightness of heart.

The retreat which she had chosen gave her the easy alternative of avoiding observation. It was but stepping back to the farthest recess of a grotto, ornamented with rustic work and moss-seats, and terminated by a fountain, and she might easily remain concealed, or at her pleasure discover herself to any solitary wanderer whose curiosity might lead him to that romantic retirement. Anticipating such an opportunity, she looked into the clear basin which the silent fountain held up to her like a mirror, and felt shocked at her own appearance, and doubtful at; the same time, muffled and disfigured as her disguise made her seem to herself, whether any female (and it was from the compassion of her own sex that she chiefly expected sympathy) would engage in conference with so suspicious an object. Reasoning thus like a woman, to whom external appearance is scarcely in any circumstances a matter of unimportance, and like a beauty, who had some confidence in the power of her own charms, she laid aside her travelling cloak and capotaine hat, and placed them beside her, so that she could assume them in an instant, ere one could penetrate from the entrance of the grotto to its extremity, in case the intrusion of Varney or of Lambourne should render such disguise necessary. The dress which she wore under these vestments was somewhat of a theatrical cast, so as to suit the assumed personage of one of the females who was to act in the pageant, Wayland had found the means of arranging it thus upon the second day of their journey, having experienced the service arising from the assumption of such a character on the preceding day. The fountain, acting both as a mirror and ewer, afforded Amy the means of a brief toilette, of which she availed herself as hastily as possible; then took in her hand her small casket of jewels, in case she might find them useful intercessors, and retiring to the darkest and most sequestered nook, sat down on a seat of moss, and awaited till fate should give her some chance of rescue, or of propitiating an intercessor.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Have you not seen the partridge quake,
Viewing the hawk approaching nigh?
She cuddles close beneath the brake,
Afraid to sit, afraid to fly, —PRIOR.*

It chanced, upon that memorable morning, that one of the earliest of the huntress train, who appeared from her chamber in full array for the chase, was the Princess for whom all these pleasures were instituted, England's Maiden Queen. I know not if it were by chance, or out of the befitting courtesy due to a mistress by whom he was so much honoured, that she had scarcely made one step beyond the threshold of her chamber ere Leicester was by her side, and proposed to her, until the preparations for the chase had been completed, to view the Pleasance, and the gardens which it connected with the Castle yard.

To this new scene of pleasures they walked, the Earl's arm affording his Sovereign the occasional support which she required, where flights of steps, then a favourite ornament in a garden, conducted them from terrace to terrace, and from parterre to parterre. The ladies in attendance, gifted with prudence, or endowed perhaps with the amiable desire of acting as they would be done by, did not conceive their duty to the Queen's person required them, though they lost not sight of her, to approach so near as to share, or perhaps disturb, the conversation betwixt the Queen and the Earl, who was not only her host, but also her most trusted, esteemed, and favoured servant. They contented themselves with admiring the grace of this illustrious couple, whose robes of state were now exchanged for hunting suits, almost equally magnificent.

Elizabeth's silvan dress, which was of a pale blue silk, with silver lace and AIGUILLETES, approached in form to that of the ancient Amazons, and was therefore well suited at once to her height and to the dignity of her mien, which her conscious rank and long habits of authority had rendered in some degree too masculine to be seen to the best advantage in ordinary female weeds. Leicester's hunting suit of Lincoln green, richly embroidered with gold, and crossed by the gay baldric which sustained a bugle-horn, and a wood-knife instead of a sword, became its master, as did his other vestments of court or of war. For such were the perfections of his form and mien, that Leicester was always supposed to be seen to the greatest advantage in the character and dress which for the time he represented or wore.

The conversation of Elizabeth and the favourite Earl has not reached us in detail. But those who watched at some distance (and the eyes of courtiers and court ladies are right sharp) were of opinion that on no occasion did the dignity of Elizabeth, in gesture and motion, seem so decidedly to soften away into a mien expressive of indecision and tenderness. Her step was not only slow, but even unequal, a thing most unwonted in her carriage; her looks seemed bent on the ground; and there was a timid disposition to withdraw from her companion, which external gesture in females often indicates exactly the opposite tendency in the secret mind. The Duchess of Rutland, who ventured nearest, was even heard to aver that she discerned a tear in Elizabeth's eye and a blush on her cheek; and still further, "She bent her looks on the ground to avoid mine," said the Duchess, "she who, in her ordinary mood, could look down a lion." To what conclusion these symptoms led is sufficiently evident; nor were they probably entirely groundless. The progress of a private conversation betwixt two persons of different sexes is often decisive of their fate, and gives it a turn very different perhaps from what they themselves anticipated. Gallantry becomes mingled with conversation, and affection and passion come gradually to mix with gallantry. Nobles, as well as shepherd swains, will, in such a trying moment, say more than they intended; and Queens, like village maidens, will listen longer than they should.

Horses in the meanwhile neighed and champed the bits with impatience in the base-court; hounds yelled in their couples; and yeomen, rangers, and prickers lamented the exhaling of the dew, which would prevent the scent from lying. But Leicester had another chase in view—or, to speak more justly towards him, had become engaged in it without premeditation, as the high-spirited hunter which follows the cry of the hounds that have crossed his path by accident. The Queen, an accomplished and handsome woman, the pride of England, the hope of France and Holland, and the dread of Spain, had probably listened with more than usual favour to that mixture of romantic gallantry with which she always loved to be addressed; and the Earl had, in vanity, in ambition, or in both, thrown in more and more of that delicious ingredient, until his importunity became the language of love itself.

"No, Dudley," said Elizabeth, yet it was with broken accents—"no, I must be the mother of my people. Other ties, that make the lowly maiden happy, are denied to her Sovereign. No, Leicester, urge it no more. Were I as others, free to seek my own happiness, then, indeed—but it cannot—cannot be. Delay the chase—delay it for half an hour—and leave me, my lord."

"How! leave you, madam?" said Leicester,—"has my madness offended you?"

"No, Leicester, not so!" answered the Queen hastily; "but it is madness, and must not be repeated. Go—but go not far from hence; and meantime let no one intrude on my privacy."

While she spoke thus, Dudley bowed deeply, and retired with a slow and melancholy air. The Queen stood gazing after him, and murmured to herself, "Were it possible—were it BUT possible!—but no—no; Elizabeth must be the wife and mother of England alone."

As she spoke thus, and in order to avoid some one whose step she heard approaching, the Queen turned into the grotto in which her hapless, and yet but too successful, rival lay concealed.

The mind of England's Elizabeth, if somewhat shaken by the agitating interview to which she had just put a period, was of that firm and decided character which soon recovers its natural tone. It was like one of those ancient Druidical monuments called Rocking-stones. The finger of Cupid, boy as he is painted, could put her feelings in motion; but the power of Hercules could not have destroyed their equilibrium. As she advanced with a slow pace towards the inmost extremity of the grotto, her countenance, ere she had proceeded half the length, had recovered its dignity of look, and her mien its air of command.

It was then the Queen became aware that a female figure was placed beside, or rather partly behind, an alabaster column, at the foot of which arose the pellucid fountain which occupied the inmost recess of the twilight grotto. The classical mind of Elizabeth suggested the story of Numa and Egeria, and she doubted not that some Italian sculptor had here represented the Naiad whose inspirations gave laws to Rome. As she advanced, she became doubtful whether she beheld a statue, or a form of flesh and blood. The unfortunate Amy, indeed, remained motionless, betwixt the desire which she had to make her condition known to one of her own sex, and her awe for the stately form which approached her, and which, though her eyes had never before beheld, her fears instantly suspected to be the personage she really was. Amy had arisen from her seat with the purpose of addressing the lady who entered the grotto alone, and, as she at first thought, so opportunely. But when she recollected the alarm which Leicester had expressed at the Queen's knowing aught of their union, and became more and more satisfied that the person whom she now beheld was Elizabeth herself, she stood with one foot advanced and one withdrawn, her arms, head, and hands perfectly motionless, and her cheek as pallid as the alabaster pedestal against which she leaned. Her dress was of pale sea-green silk, little distinguished in that imperfect light, and somewhat resembled the drapery of a Grecian Nymph, such an antique disguise having been thought the most secure, where so many maskers and revellers were assembled; so that the Queen's doubt of her being a living form was well justified by all contingent circumstances, as well as by the bloodless cheek and the fixed eye.

Elizabeth remained in doubt, even after she had approached within a few paces, whether she did not gaze on a statue so cunningly fashioned that by the doubtful light it could not be distinguished from reality. She stopped, therefore, and fixed upon this interesting object her princely look with so much keenness that the astonishment which had kept Amy immovable gave way to awe, and she gradually cast down her eyes, and drooped her head under the commanding gaze of the Sovereign. Still, however, she remained in all respects, saving this slow and profound inclination of the head, motionless and silent.

From her dress, and the casket which she instinctively held in her hand, Elizabeth naturally conjectured that the beautiful but mute figure which she beheld was a performer in one of the various theatrical pageants which had been placed in different situations to surprise her with their homage; and that the poor player, overcome with awe at her presence, had either forgot the part assigned her, or lacked courage to go through it. It was natural and courteous to give her some encouragement; and Elizabeth accordingly said, in a tone of condescending kindness, "How now, fair Nymph of this lovely grotto, art thou spell-bound and struck with dumbness by the charms of the wicked enchanter whom men term Fear? We are his sworn enemy, maiden, and can reverse his charm. Speak, we command thee."

Instead of answering her by speech, the unfortunate Countess dropped on her knee before the Queen, let her casket fall from her hand, and clasping her palms together, looked up in the Queen's face with such a mixed agony of fear and supplication, that Elizabeth was considerably affected.

"What may this mean?" she said; "this is a stronger passion than befits the occasion. Stand up, damsel—what wouldst thou have with us?"

"Your protection, madam," faltered forth the unhappy petitioner.

"Each daughter of England has it while she is worthy of it," replied the Queen; "but your distress seems to have a deeper root than a forgotten task. Why, and in what, do you crave our protection?"

Amy hastily endeavoured to recall what she were best to say, which might secure herself from the imminent dangers that surrounded her, without endangering her husband; and plunging from one thought to another, amidst the chaos which filled her mind, she could at length, in answer to the Queen's repeated inquiries in what she sought protection, only falter out, "Alas! I know not."

"This is folly, maiden," said Elizabeth impatiently; for there was something in the extreme confusion of the suppliant which irritated her curiosity, as well as interested her feelings. "The sick man must tell his malady to the physician; nor are WE accustomed to ask questions so oft without receiving an answer."

"I request—I implore," stammered forth the unfortunate Countess—"I beseech your gracious protection—against—against one Varney." She choked well-nigh as she uttered the fatal word, which was instantly caught up by the Queen.

"What, Varney—Sir Richard Varney—the servant of Lord Leicester! what, damsel, are you to him, or he to you?"

"I—I—was his prisoner—and he practised on my life—and I broke forth to—to—"

"To throw thyself on my protection, doubtless," said Elizabeth. "Thou shalt have it—that is, if thou art worthy; for we will sift this matter to the uttermost. Thou art," she said, bending on the Countess an eye which seemed designed to pierce her very inmost soul—"thou art Amy, daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote Hall?"

"Forgive me—forgive me, most gracious Princess!" said Amy, dropping once more on her knee, from which she had arisen.

"For what should I forgive thee, silly wench?" said Elizabeth; "for being the daughter of thine own father? Thou art brain-sick, surely. Well I see I must wring the story from thee by inches. Thou didst deceive thine old and honoured father—thy look confesses it—cheated Master Tressilian—thy blush avouches it—and married this same Varney."

Amy sprung on her feet, and interrupted the Queen eagerly with, "No, madam, no! as there is a God above us, I am not the sordid wretch you would make me! I am not the wife of that contemptible slave—of that most deliberate villain! I am not the wife of Varney! I would rather be the bride of Destruction!"

The Queen, overwhelmed in her turn by Amy's vehemence, stood silent for an instant, and then replied, "Why, God ha' mercy, woman! I see thou canst talk fast enough when the theme likes thee. Nay, tell me, woman," she continued, for to the impulse of curiosity was now added that of an undefined jealousy that some deception had been practised on her—"tell me, woman—for, by God's day, I WILL know—whose wife, or whose paramour, art thou! Speak out, and be speedy. Thou wert better dally with a lioness than with Elizabeth."

Urged to this extremity, dragged as it were by irresistible force to the verge of the precipice which she saw, but could not avoid—permitted not a moment's respite by the eager words and menacing gestures of the offended Queen, Amy at length uttered in despair, "The Earl of Leicester knows it all."

"The Earl of Leicester!" said Elizabeth, in utter astonishment. "The Earl of Leicester!" she repeated with kindling anger. "Woman, thou art set on to this—thou dost belie him—he takes no keep of such things as thou art. Thou art suborned to slander the noblest lord and the truest-hearted gentleman in England! But were he the right hand of our trust, or something yet dearer to us, thou shalt have thy hearing, and that in his presence. Come with me—come with me instantly!"

As Amy shrunk back with terror, which the incensed Queen interpreted as that of conscious guilt, Elizabeth rapidly advanced, seized on her arm, and hastened with swift and long steps out of the grotto, and along the principal alley of the Pleasance, dragging with her the terrified Countess, whom she still held by the arm, and whose utmost exertions could but just keep pace with those of the indignant Queen.

Leicester was at this moment the centre of a splendid group of lords and ladies, assembled together under an arcade, or portico, which closed the alley. The company had drawn together in that place, to attend the commands of her Majesty when the hunting-party should go forward, and their astonishment may be imagined when, instead of seeing Elizabeth advance towards them with her usual measured dignity of motion, they beheld her walking so rapidly that she was in the midst of them ere they were aware; and then observed, with fear and surprise, that her features were flushed betwixt anger and agitation, that her hair was loosened by her haste of motion, and that her eyes sparkled as they were wont when the spirit of Henry VIII. mounted highest in his daughter. Nor were they less astonished at the appearance of the pale, attenuated, half-dead, yet still lovely female, whom the Queen upheld by main strength with one hand, while with the other she waved aside the ladies and nobles who pressed towards her, under the idea that she was taken suddenly ill. "Where is my Lord of Leicester?" she said, in a tone that thrilled with astonishment all the courtiers who stood around. "Stand forth, my Lord of Leicester!"

If, in the midst of the most serene day of summer, when all is light and laughing around, a thunderbolt were to fall from the clear blue vault of heaven, and rend the earth at the very feet of some careless traveller, he could not gaze upon the smouldering chasm, which so unexpectedly yawned before him, with half the astonishment and fear which Leicester felt at the sight that so suddenly presented itself. He had that instant been receiving, with a political affectation of disavowing and misunderstanding their meaning, the half-uttered, half-intimated congratulations of the courtiers upon the favour of the Queen, carried apparently to its highest pitch during the interview of that morning, from which most of them seemed to augur that he might soon arise from their equal in rank to become their master. And now, while the subdued yet proud smile with which he disclaimed those inferences was yet curling his cheek, the Queen shot into the circle, her passions excited to the uttermost; and supporting with one hand, and apparently without an effort, the pale and sinking form of his almost expiring wife, and

pointing with the finger of the other to her half-dead features, demanded in a voice that sounded to the ears of the astounded statesman like the last dread trumpet-call that is to summon body and spirit to the judgment-seat, "Knowest thou this woman?"

As, at the blast of that last trumpet, the guilty shall call upon the mountains to cover them, Leicester's inward thoughts invoked the stately arch which he had built in his pride to burst its strong conjunction, and overwhelm them in its ruins. But the cemented stones, architrave and battlement, stood fast; and it was the proud master himself who, as if some actual pressure had bent him to the earth, kneeled down before Elizabeth, and prostrated his brow to the marble flag-stones on which she stood.

"Leicester," said Elizabeth, in a voice which trembled with passion, "could I think thou hast practised on me—on me thy Sovereign—on me thy confiding, thy too partial mistress, the base and ungrateful deception which thy present confusion surmises—by all that is holy, false lord, that head of thine were in as great peril as ever was thy father's!"

Leicester had not conscious innocence, but he had pride to support him. He raised slowly his brow and features, which were black and swoln with contending emotions, and only replied, "My head cannot fall but by the sentence of my peers. To them I will plead, and not to a princess who thus requites my faithful service."

"What! my lords," said Elizabeth, looking around, "we are defied, I think—defied in the Castle we have ourselves bestowed on this proud man!—My Lord Shrewsbury, you are Marshal of England, attach him of high treason."

"Whom does your Grace mean?" said Shrewsbury, much surprised, for he had that instant joined the astonished circle.

"Whom should I mean, but that traitor Dudley, Earl of Leicester!—Cousin of Hunsdon, order out your band of gentlemen pensioners, and take him into instant custody. I say, villain, make haste!"

Hunsdon, a rough old noble, who, from his relationship to the Boleyns, was accustomed to use more freedom with the Queen than almost any other dared to do, replied bluntly, "And it is like your Grace might order me to the Tower to-morrow for making too much haste. I do beseech you to be patient."

"Patient—God's life!" exclaimed the Queen—"name not the word to me; thou knowest not of what he is guilty!"

Amy, who had by this time in some degree recovered herself, and who saw her husband, as she conceived, in the utmost danger from the rage of an offended Sovereign, instantly (and alas! how many women have done the same) forgot her own wrongs and her own danger in her apprehensions for him, and throwing herself before the Queen, embraced her knees, while she exclaimed, "He is guiltless, madam—he is guiltless; no one can lay aught to the charge of the noble Leicester!"

"Why, minion," answered the Queen, "didst not thou thyself say that the Earl of Leicester was privy to thy whole history?"

"Did I say so?" repeated the unhappy Amy, laying aside every consideration of consistency and of self-interest. "Oh, if I did, I foully belied him. May God so judge me, as I believe he was never privy to a thought that would harm me!"

"Woman!" said Elizabeth, "I will know who has moved thee to this; or my wrath—and the wrath of kings is a flaming fire—shall wither and consume thee like a weed in the furnace!"

As the Queen uttered this threat, Leicester's better angel called his pride to his aid, and reproached him with the utter extremity of meanness which would overwhelm him for ever if he stooped to take shelter under the generous interposition of his wife, and abandoned her, in return for her kindness, to the resentment of the Queen. He had already raised his head with the dignity of a man of honour to avow his marriage, and proclaim himself the protector of his Countess, when Varney, born, as it appeared, to be his master's evil genius, rushed into the presence with every mark of disorder on his face and apparel.

"What means this saucy intrusion?" said Elizabeth.

Varney, with the air of a man altogether overwhelmed with grief and confusion, prostrated himself before her feet, exclaiming, "Pardon, my Liege, pardon!—or at least let your justice avenge itself on me, where it is due; but spare my noble, my generous, my innocent patron and master!"

Amy, who was yet kneeling, started up as she saw the man whom she deemed most odious place himself so near her, and was about to fly towards Leicester, when, checked at once by the uncertainty and even timidity which his looks had reassumed as soon as the appearance of his confidant seemed to open a new scene, she hung back, and uttering a faint scream, besought of her Majesty to cause her to be imprisoned in the lowest dungeon of the Castle—to deal with her as the worst of criminals—"but spare," she exclaimed, "my sight and hearing what will destroy the little judgment I have left—the sight of that unutterable and most shameless villain!"

"And why, sweetheart?" said the Queen, moved by a new impulse; "what hath he, this false knight, since such thou accountest him, done to thee?"

"Oh, worse than sorrow, madam, and worse than injury—he has sown dissension where most there should be peace. I shall go mad if I look longer on him!"

"Beshrew me, but I think thou art distraught already," answered the Queen.—"My Lord Hunsdon, look to this poor distressed young woman, and let her be safely bestowed, and in honest keeping, till we require her to be forthcoming."

Two or three of the ladies in attendance, either moved by compassion for a creature so interesting, or by some other motive, offered their services to look after her; but the Queen briefly answered, "Ladies, under favour, no. You have all (give God thanks) sharp ears and nimble tongues; our kinsman Hunsdon has ears of the dullest, and a tongue somewhat rough, but yet of the slowest.—Hunsdon, look to it that none have speech of her."

"By Our Lady," said Hunsdon, taking in his strong, sinewy arms the fading and almost swooning form of Amy, "she is a lovely child! and though a rough nurse, your Grace hath given her a kind one. She is safe with me as one of my own ladybirds of daughters."

So saying, he carried her off; unresistingly and almost unconsciously, his war-worn locks and long, grey beard mingling with her light-brown tresses, as her head reclined on his strong, square shoulder. The Queen followed him with her eye. She had already, with that self-command which forms so necessary a part of a Sovereign's accomplishments, suppressed every appearance of agitation, and seemed as if she desired to banish all traces of her burst of passion from the recollection of those who had witnessed it. "My Lord of Hunsdon says well," she observed, "he is indeed but a rough nurse for so tender a babe."

"My Lord of Hunsdon," said the Dean of St. Asaph—"I speak it not in defamation of his more noble qualities—hath a broad license in speech, and garnishes his discourse somewhat too freely with the cruel and superstitious oaths which savour both of profaneness and of old Papistrie."

"It is the fault of his blood, Mr. Dean," said the Queen, turning sharply round upon the reverend dignitary as she spoke; "and you may blame mine for the same distemperature. The Boleyns were ever a hot and plain-spoken race, more hasty to speak their mind than careful to choose their expressions. And by my word—I hope there is no sin in that affirmation—I question if it were much cooled by mixing with that of Tudor."

As she made this last observation she smiled graciously, and stole her eyes almost insensibly round to seek those of the Earl of Leicester, to whom she now began to think she had spoken with hasty harshness upon the unfounded suspicion of a moment.

The Queen's eye found the Earl in no mood to accept the implied offer of conciliation. His own looks had followed, with late and rueful repentance, the faded form which Hunsdon had just borne from the presence. They now reposed gloomily on the ground, but more—so at least it seemed to Elizabeth—with the expression of one who has received an unjust affront, than of him who is conscious of guilt. She turned her face angrily from him, and said to Varney, "Speak, Sir Richard, and explain these riddles—thou hast sense and the use of speech, at least, which elsewhere we look for in vain."

As she said this, she darted another resentful glance towards Leicester, while the wily Varney hastened to tell his own story.

"Your Majesty's piercing eye," he said, "has already detected the cruel malady of my beloved lady, which, unhappy that I am, I would not suffer to be expressed in the certificate of her physician, seeking to conceal what has now broken out with so much the more scandal."

"She is then distraught?" said the Queen. "Indeed we doubted not of it; her whole demeanour bears it out. I found her moping in a corner of yonder grotto; and every word she spoke—which indeed I dragged from her as by the rack—she instantly recalled and forswore. But how came she hither? Why had you her not in safe-keeping?"

"My gracious Liege," said Varney, "the worthy gentleman under whose charge I left her, Master Anthony Foster, has come hither but now, as fast as man and horse can travel, to show me of her escape, which she managed with the art peculiar to many who are afflicted with this malady. He is at hand for examination."

"Let it be for another time," said the Queen. "But, Sir Richard, we envy you not your domestic felicity; your lady railed on you bitterly, and seemed ready to swoon at beholding you."

"It is the nature of persons in her disorder, so please your Grace," answered Varney, "to be ever most inveterate in their spleen against those whom, in their better moments, they hold nearest and dearest."

"We have heard so, indeed," said Elizabeth, "and give faith to the saying."

"May your Grace then be pleased," said Varney, "to command my unfortunate wife to be delivered into the custody of her friends?"

Leicester partly started; but making a strong effort, he subdued his emotion, while Elizabeth answered sharply, "You are something too hasty, Master Varney. We will have first a report of the lady's health and state of mind from Masters, our own physician, and then determine what shall be thought just. You shall have license, however, to see her, that if there be any matrimonial quarrel betwixt you—such things we have heard do occur, even betwixt a loving couple—you may make it up, without further scandal to our court or trouble to ourselves."

Varney bowed low, and made no other answer.

Elizabeth again looked towards Leicester, and said, with a degree of condescension which could only arise out of the most heartfelt interest, "Discord, as the Italian poet says, will find her way into peaceful convents, as well as into the privacy of families; and we fear our own guards and ushers will hardly exclude her from courts. My Lord of Leicester, you are offended with us, and we have right to be offended with you. We will take the lion's part upon us, and be the first to forgive."

Leicester smoothed his brow, as by an effort; but the trouble was too deep-seated that its placidity should at once return. He said, however, that which fitted the occasion, "That he could not have the happiness of forgiving, because she who commanded him to do so could commit no injury towards him."

Elizabeth seemed content with this reply, and intimated her pleasure that the sports of the morning should proceed. The bugles sounded, the hounds bayed, the horses pranced—but the courtiers and ladies sought the amusement to which they were summoned with hearts very different from those which had leaped to the morning's REVIELLE. There was doubt, and fear, and expectation on every brow, and surmise and intrigue in every whisper.

Blount took an opportunity to whisper into Raleigh's ear, "This storm came like a levanter in the Mediterranean."

"VARIUM ET MUTABILE," answered Raleigh, in a similar tone.

"Nay, I know nought of your Latin," said Blount; "but I thank God Tressilian took not the sea during that hurricane. He could scarce have missed shipwreck, knowing as he does so little how to trim his sails to a court gale."

"Thou wouldst have instructed him!" said Raleigh.

"Why, I have profited by my time as well as thou, Sir Walter," replied honest Blount. "I am knight as well as thou, and of the earlier creation."

"Now, God further thy wit," said Raleigh. "But for Tressilian, I would I knew what were the matter with him. He told me this morning he would not leave his chamber for the space of twelve hours or thereby, being bound by a promise. This lady's madness, when he shall learn it, will not, I fear, cure his infirmity. The moon is at the fullest, and men's brains are working like yeast. But hark! they sound to mount. Let us to horse, Blount; we young knights must deserve our spurs."

CHAPTER XXXV.

*Sincerity,
Thou first of virtues! let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, although the earth should gape,
And from the gulf of hell destruction cry,
To take dissimulation's winding way. —DOUGLAS.*

It was not till after a long and successful morning's sport, and a prolonged repast which followed the return of the Queen to the Castle, that Leicester at length found himself alone with Varney, from whom he now learned the whole particulars of the Countess's escape, as they had been brought to Kenilworth by Foster, who, in his terror for the consequences, had himself posted thither with the tidings. As Varney, in his narrative, took especial care to be silent concerning those practices on the Countess's health which had driven her to so desperate a resolution, Leicester, who could only suppose that she had adopted it out of jealous impatience to attain the avowed state and appearance belonging to her rank, was not a little offended at the levity with which his wife had broken his strict commands, and exposed him to the resentment of Elizabeth.

"I have given," he said, "to this daughter of an obscure Devonshire gentleman the proudest name in England. I have made her sharer of my bed and of my fortunes. I ask but of her a little patience, ere she launches forth upon the full current of her grandeur; and the infatuated woman will rather hazard her own shipwreck and mine—will rather involve me in a thousand whirlpools, shoals, and quicksands, and compel me to a thousand devices which shame me in mine own eyes—than tarry for a little space longer in the obscurity to which she was born. So lovely, so delicate, so fond, so faithful, yet to lack in so grave a matter the prudence which one might hope from the veriest fool—it puts me beyond my patience."

"We may post it over yet well enough," said Varney, "if my lady will be but ruled, and take on her the character which the time commands."

"It is but too true, Sir Richard," said Leicester; "there is indeed no other remedy. I have heard her termed thy wife in my presence, without contradiction. She must bear the title until she is far from Kenilworth."

"And long afterwards, I trust," said Varney; then instantly added, "For I cannot but hope it will be long after ere she bear the title of Lady Leicester—I fear me it may scarce be with safety during the life of this Queen. But your lordship is best judge, you alone knowing what passages have taken place betwixt Elizabeth and you."

"You are right, Varney," said Leicester. "I have this morning been both fool and villain; and when Elizabeth hears of my unhappy marriage, she cannot but think herself treated with that premeditated slight which women never forgive. We have once this day stood upon terms little short of defiance; and to those, I fear, we must again return."

"Is her resentment, then, so implacable?" said Varney.

"Far from it," replied the Earl; "for, being what she is in spirit and in station, she has even this day been but too condescending, in giving me opportunities to repair what she thinks my faulty heat of temper."

"Ay," answered Varney; "the Italians say right—in lovers' quarrels, the party that loves most is always most willing to acknowledge the greater fault. So then, my lord, if this union with the lady could be concealed, you stand with Elizabeth as you did?"

Leicester sighed, and was silent for a moment, ere he replied.

"Varney, I think thou art true to me, and I will tell thee all. I do NOT stand where I did. I have spoken to Elizabeth—under what mad impulse I know not—on a theme which cannot be abandoned without touching every female feeling to the quick, and which yet I dare not and cannot prosecute. She can never, never forgive me for having caused and witnessed those yieldings to human passion."

"We must do something, my lord," said Varney, "and that speedily."

"There is nought to be done," answered Leicester, despondingly. "I am like one that has long toiled up a dangerous precipice, and when he is within one perilous stride of the top, finds his progress arrested when retreat has become impossible. I see above me the pinnacle which I cannot reach—beneath me the abyss into which I must fall, as soon as my relaxing grasp and dizzy brain join to hurl me from my present precarious stance."

"Think better of your situation, my lord," said Varney; "let us try the experiment in which you have but now acquiesced. Keep we your marriage from Elizabeth's knowledge, and all may yet be well. I will instantly go to the lady myself. She hates me, because I have been earnest with your lordship, as she truly suspects, in opposition to what she terms her rights. I care not for her prejudices—she SHALL listen to me; and I will show her such reasons for yielding to the pressure of the times that I doubt not to bring back her consent to whatever measures these exigencies may require."

"No, Varney," said Leicester; "I have thought upon what is to be done, and I will myself speak with Amy."

It was now Varney's turn to feel upon his own account the terrors which he affected to participate solely on account of his patron. "Your lordship will not yourself speak with the lady?"

"It is my fixed purpose," said Leicester. "Fetch me one of the livery-cloaks; I will pass the sentinel as thy servant. Thou art to have free access to her."

"But, my lord—"

"I will have no BUTS," replied Leicester; "it shall be even thus, and not otherwise. Hunsdon sleeps, I think, in Saintlowe's Tower. We can go thither from these apartments by the private passage, without risk of meeting any one. Or what if I do meet Hunsdon? he is more my friend than enemy, and thick-witted enough to adopt any belief that is thrust on him. Fetch me the cloak instantly."

Varney had no alternative save obedience. In a few minutes Leicester was muffled in the mantle, pulled his bonnet over his brows, and followed Varney along the secret passage of the Castle which communicated with Hunsdon's apartments, in which there was scarce a chance of meeting any inquisitive person, and hardly light enough for any such to have satisfied their curiosity. They emerged at a door where Lord Hunsdon had, with military precaution, placed a sentinel, one of his own northern retainers as it happened, who readily admitted Sir Richard Varney and his attendant, saying only, in his northern dialect, "I would, man, thou couldst make the mad lady be still yonder; for her moans do sae dirl through my head that I would rather keep watch on a snowdrift, in the wastes of Catlowdie."

They hastily entered, and shut the door behind them.

"Now, good devil, if there be one," said Varney, within himself, "for once help a votary at a dead pinch, for my boat is amongst the breakers!"

The Countess Amy, with her hair and her garments dishevelled, was seated upon a sort of couch, in an attitude of the deepest affliction, out of which she was startled by the opening of the door. She turned hastily round, and fixing her eye on Varney, exclaimed, "Wretch! art thou come to frame some new plan of villainy?"

Leicester cut short her reproaches by stepping forward and dropping his cloak, while he said, in a voice rather of authority than of affection, "It is with me, madam, you have to commune, not with Sir Richard Varney."

The change effected on the Countess's look and manner was like magic. "Dudley!" she exclaimed, "Dudley! and art thou come at last?" And with the speed of lightning she flew to her husband, clung round his neck, and unheeding the presence of Varney, overwhelmed him with caresses, while she bathed his face in a flood of tears, muttering, at the same time, but in broken and disjointed monosyllables, the fondest expressions which Love teaches his votaries.

Leicester, as it seemed to him, had reason to be angry with his lady for transgressing his commands, and thus placing him in the perilous situation in which he had that morning stood. But what displeasure could keep its ground before these testimonies of affection from a being so lovely, that even the negligence of dress, and the withering effects of fear, grief, and fatigue, which would have impaired the beauty of others, rendered hers but the more interesting. He received and repaid her caresses with fondness mingled with melancholy, the last of which she seemed scarcely to observe, until the first transport of her own joy was over, when, looking anxiously in his face, she asked if he was ill.

"Not in my body, Amy," was his answer.

"Then I will be well too. O Dudley! I have been ill!—very ill, since we last met!—for I call not this morning's horrible vision a meeting. I have been in sickness, in grief, and in danger. But thou art come, and all is joy, and health, and safety!"

"Alas, Amy," said Leicester, "thou hast undone me!"

"I, my lord?" said Amy, her cheek at once losing its transient flush of joy—"how could I injure that which I love better than myself?"

"I would not upbraid you, Amy," replied the Earl; "but are you not here contrary to my express commands—and does not your presence here endanger both yourself and me?"

"Does it, does it indeed?" she exclaimed eagerly; "then why am I here a moment longer? Oh, if you knew by what fears I was urged to quit Cumnor Place! But I will say nothing of myself—only that if it might be otherwise, I would not willingly return THITHER; yet if it concern your safety—"

"We will think, Amy, of some other retreat," said Leicester; "and you shall go to one of my northern castles, under the personage—it will be but needful, I trust, for a very few days—of Varney's wife."

"How, my Lord of Leicester!" said the lady, disengaging herself from his embraces; "is it to your wife you give the dishonourable counsel to acknowledge herself the bride of another—and of all men, the bride of that Varney?"

"Madam, I speak it in earnest—Varney is my true and faithful servant, trusted in my deepest secrets. I had better lose my right hand than his service at this moment. You have no cause to scorn him as you do."

"I could assign one, my lord," replied the Countess; "and I see he shakes even under that assured look of his. But he that is necessary as your right hand to your safety is free from any accusation of mine. May he be true to you; and that he may be true, trust him not too much or too far. But it is enough to say that I will not go with him unless by violence, nor would I acknowledge him as my husband were all—"

"It is a temporary deception, madam," said Leicester, irritated by her opposition, "necessary for both our safeties, endangered by you through female caprice, or the premature desire to seize on a rank to which I gave you title only under condition that our marriage, for a time, should continue secret. If my proposal disgust you, it is yourself has brought it on both of us. There is no other remedy—you must do what your own impatient folly hath rendered necessary—I command you."

"I cannot put your commands, my lord," said Amy, "in balance with those of honour and conscience. I will NOT, in this instance, obey you. You may achieve your own dishonour, to which these crooked policies naturally tend, but I will do nought that can blemish mine. How could you again, my lord, acknowledge me as a pure and chaste matron, worthy to share your fortunes, when, holding that high character, I had strolled the country the acknowledged wife of such a profligate fellow as your servant Varney?"

"My lord," said Varney interposing, "my lady is too much prejudiced against me, unhappily, to listen to what I can offer, yet it may please her better than what she proposes. She has good interest with Master Edmund Tressilian, and could doubtless prevail on him to consent to be her companion to Lidcote Hall, and there she might remain in safety until time permitted the development of this mystery."

Leicester was silent, but stood looking eagerly on Amy, with eyes which seemed suddenly to glow as much with suspicion as displeasure.

The Countess only said, "Would to God I were in my father's house! When I left it, I little thought I was leaving peace of mind and honour behind me."

Varney proceeded with a tone of deliberation. "Doubtless this will make it necessary to take strangers into my lord's counsels; but surely the Countess will be warrant for the honour of Master Tressilian, and such of her father's family—"

"Peace, Varney," said Leicester; "by Heaven I will strike my dagger into thee if again thou namest Tressilian as a partner of my counsels!"

"And wherefore not!" said the Countess; "unless they be counsels fitter for such as Varney, than for a man of stainless honour and integrity. My lord, my lord, bend no angry brows on me; it is the truth, and it is I who speak it. I once did Tressilian wrong for your sake; I will not do him the further injustice of being silent when his honour is brought in question. I can forbear," she said, looking at Varney, "to pull the mask off hypocrisy, but I will not permit virtue to be slandered in my hearing."

There was a dead pause. Leicester stood displeased, yet undetermined, and too conscious of the weakness of his cause; while Varney, with a deep and hypocritical affectation of sorrow, mingled with humility, bent his eyes on the ground.

It was then that the Countess Amy displayed, in the midst of distress and difficulty, the natural energy of character which would have rendered her, had fate allowed, a distinguished ornament of the rank which she held. She walked up to Leicester with a composed step, a dignified air, and looks in which strong affection essayed in vain to shake the firmness of conscious truth and rectitude of principle. "You have spoken your mind, my lord," she said, "in these difficulties, with which, unhappily, I have found myself unable to comply. This gentleman—this person I would say—has hinted at another scheme, to which I object not but as it displeases you. Will your lordship be pleased to hear what a young and timid woman, but your most affectionate wife, can suggest in the present extremity?"

Leicester was silent, but bent his head towards the Countess, as an intimation that she was at liberty to proceed.

"There hath been but one cause for all these evils, my lord," she proceeded, "and it resolves itself into the mysterious duplicity with which you, have been induced to surround yourself. Extricate yourself at once, my lord, from the tyranny of these disgraceful trammels. Be like a true English gentleman, knight, and earl, who holds that truth is the foundation of honour, and that honour is dear to him as the breath of his nostrils. Take your ill-fated wife by the hand, lead her to the footstool of Elizabeth's throne—say that in a moment of infatuation, moved by supposed beauty, of which none perhaps can now trace even the remains, I gave my hand to this Amy Robsart. You will then have done justice to me, my lord, and to your own honour and should law or power require you to part from me, I will oppose no objection, since I may then with honour hide a grieved and broken heart in those shades from which your love withdrew me. Then—have but a little patience, and Amy's life will not long darken your brighter prospects."

There was so much of dignity, so much of tenderness, in the Countess's remonstrance, that it moved all that was noble and generous in the soul of her husband. The scales seemed to fall from his eyes, and the duplicity and tergiversation of which he had been guilty stung him at once with remorse and shame.

"I am not worthy of you, Amy," he said, "that could weigh aught which ambition has to give against such a heart as thine. I have a bitter penance to perform, in disentangling, before sneering foes and astounded friends, all the meshes of my own deceitful policy. And the Queen—but let her take my head, as she has threatened."

"Take your head, my lord!" said the Countess, "because you used the freedom and liberty of an English subject in choosing a wife? For shame! it is this distrust of the Queen's justice, this apprehension of danger, which cannot but be imaginary, that, like scarecrows, have induced you to forsake the straightforward path, which, as it is the best, is also the safest."

"Ah, Amy, thou little knowest!" said Dudley but instantly checking himself, he added, "Yet she shall not find in me a safe or easy victim of arbitrary vengeance. I have friends—I have allies—I will not, like Norfolk, be dragged to the block as a victim to sacrifice. Fear not, Amy; thou shalt see Dudley bear himself worthy of his name. I must instantly communicate with some of those friends on whom I can best rely; for, as things stand, I may be made prisoner in my own Castle."

"Oh, my good lord," said Amy, "make no faction in a peaceful state! There is no friend can help us so well as our own candid truth and honour. Bring but these to our assistance, and you are safe amidst a whole army of the envious and malignant. Leave these behind you, and all other defence will be fruitless. Truth, my noble lord, is well painted unarmed."

"But Wisdom, Amy," answered Leicester, "is arrayed in panoply of proof. Argue not with me on the means I shall use to render my confession—since it must be called so—as safe as may be; it will be fraught with enough of danger, do what we will.—Varney, we must hence.—Farewell, Amy, whom I am to vindicate as mine own, at an expense and risk of which thou alone couldst be worthy. You shall soon hear further from me."

He embraced her fervently, muffled himself as before, and accompanied Varney from the apartment. The latter, as he left the room, bowed low, and as he raised his body, regarded Amy with a peculiar expression, as if he desired to know how far his own pardon was included in the reconciliation which had taken place betwixt her and her lord. The Countess looked upon him with a fixed eye, but seemed no more conscious of his presence than if there had been nothing but vacant air on the spot where he stood.

"She has brought me to the crisis," he muttered—"she or I am lost. There was something—I wot not if it was fear or pity—that prompted me to avoid this fatal crisis. It is now decided—she or I must PERISH."

While he thus spoke, he observed, with surprise, that a boy, repulsed by the sentinel, made up to Leicester, and spoke with him. Varney was one of those politicians whom not the slightest appearances escape without inquiry. He asked the sentinel what the lad wanted with him, and received for answer that the boy had wished him to transmit a parcel to the mad lady; but that he cared not to take charge of it, such communication being beyond his commission. His curiosity satisfied in that particular, he approached his patron, and heard him say, "Well, boy, the packet shall be delivered."

"Thanks, good Master Serving-man," said the boy, and was out of sight in an instant.

Leicester and Varney returned with hasty steps to the Earl's private apartment, by the same passage which had conducted them to Saintlowe's Tower.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I have said

This is an adulteress—I have said with whom:

More, she's a traitor, and Camillo is

A federary with her, and one that knows

What she should shame to know herself. —WINTER'S TALE.

They were no sooner in the Earl's cabinet than, taking his tablets from his pocket, he began to write, speaking partly to Varney, and partly to himself—"There are many of them close bounden to me, and especially those in good estate and high office—many who, if they look back towards my benefits, or forward towards the perils which may befall themselves, will not, I think, be disposed to see me stagger unsupported. Let me see—Knollis is sure, and through his means Guernsey and Jersey. Horsey commands in the Isle of Wight. My brother-in-law, Huntingdon, and Pembroke, have authority in Wales. Through Bedford I lead the Puritans, with their interest, so powerful in all the boroughs. My brother of Warwick is equal, well-nigh, to myself, in wealth, followers, and dependencies. Sir Owen Hopton is at my devotion; he commands the Tower of London, and the national treasure deposited there. My father and grand-father needed never to have stooped their heads to the block had they thus forecast their enterprises.—Why look you so sad, Varney? I tell thee, a tree so deep-rooted is not so easily to be torn up by the tempest."

"Alas! my lord," said Varney, with well-acted passion, and then resumed the same look of despondency which Leicester had before noted.

"Alas!" repeated Leicester; "and wherefore alas, Sir Richard? Doth your new spirit of chivalry supply no more vigorous ejaculation when a noble struggle is impending? Or, if ALAS means thou wilt flinch from the conflict, thou mayest leave the Castle, or go join mine enemies, whichever thou thinkest best."

"Not so, my lord," answered his confidant; "Varney will be found fighting or dying by your side. Forgive me, if, in love to you, I see more fully than your noble heart permits you to do, the inextricable difficulties with which you are surrounded. You are strong, my lord, and powerful; yet, let me say it without offence, you are so only by the reflected light of the Queen's favour. While you are Elizabeth's favourite, you are all, save in name, like an actual sovereign. But let her call back the honours she has bestowed, and the prophet's gourd did not wither more suddenly. Declare against the Queen, and I do not say that in the wide nation, or in this province alone, you would find yourself instantly deserted and outnumbered; but I will say, that even in this very Castle, and in the midst of your vassals, kinsmen, and dependants, you would be a captive, nay, a sentenced captive, should she please to say the word. Think upon Norfolk, my lord—upon the powerful Northumberland—the splendid Westmoreland;—think on all who have made head against this sage Princess. They are dead, captive, or fugitive. This is not like

other thrones, which can be overturned by a combination of powerful nobles; the broad foundations which support it are in the extended love and affections of the people. You might share it with Elizabeth if you would; but neither yours, nor any other power, foreign or domestic, will avail to overthrow, or even to shake it." He paused, and Leicester threw his tablets from him with an air of reckless despite. "It may be as thou sayest," he said? "and, in sooth, I care not whether truth or cowardice dictate thy forebodings. But it shall not be said I fell without a struggle. Give orders that those of my retainers who served under me in Ireland be gradually drawn into the main Keep, and let our gentlemen and friends stand on their guard, and go armed, as if they expected arm onset from the followers of Sussex. Possess the townspeople with some apprehension; let them take arms, and be ready, at a given signal, to overpower the Pensioners and Yeomen of the Guard."

"Let me remind you, my lord," said Varney, with the same appearance of deep and melancholy interest, "that you have given me orders to prepare for disarming the Queen's guard. It is an act of high treason, but you shall nevertheless be obeyed."

"I care not," said Leicester desperately—"I care not. Shame is behind me, ruin before me; I must on."

Here there was another pause, which Varney at length broke with the following words: "It is come to the point I have long dreaded. I must either witness, like an ungrateful beast, the downfall of the best and kindest of masters, or I must speak what I would have buried in the deepest oblivion, or told by any other mouth than mine."

"What is that thou sayest, or wouldst say?" replied the Earl; "we have no time to waste on words when the times call us to action."

"My speech is soon made, my lord—would to God it were as soon answered! Your marriage is the sole cause of the threatened breach with your Sovereign, my lord, is it not?"

"Thou knowest it is!" replied Leicester. "What needs so fruitless a question?"

"Pardon me, my lord," said Varney; "the use lies here. Men will wager their lands and lives in defence of a rich diamond, my lord; but were it not first prudent to look if there is no flaw in it?"

"What means this?" said Leicester, with eyes sternly fixed on his dependant; "of whom dost thou dare to speak?"

"It is—of the Countess Amy, my lord, of whom I am unhappily bound to speak; and of whom I WILL speak, were your lordship to kill me for my zeal."

"Thou mayest happen to deserve it at my hand," said the Earl; "but speak on, I will hear thee."

"Nay, then, my lord, I will be bold. I speak for my own life as well as for your lordship's. I like not this lady's tampering and trickstering with this same Edmund Tressilian. You know him, my lord. You know he had formerly an interest in her, which it cost your lordship some pains to supersede. You know the eagerness with which he has pressed on the suit against me in behalf of this lady, the open object of which is to drive your lordship to an avowal of what I must ever call your most unhappy marriage, the point to which my lady also is willing, at any risk, to urge you."

Leicester smiled constrainedly. "Thou meanest well, good Sir Richard, and wouldst, I think, sacrifice thine own honour, as well as that of any other person, to save me from what thou thinkest a step so terrible. But remember"—he spoke these words with the most stern decision—"you speak of the Countess of Leicester."

"I do, my lord," said Varney; "but it is for the welfare of the Earl of Leicester. My tale is but begun. I do most strongly believe that this Tressilian has, from the beginning of his moving in her cause, been in connivance with her ladyship the Countess."

"Thou speakest wild madness, Varney, with the sober face of a preacher. Where, or how, could they communicate together?"

"My lord," said Varney, "unfortunately I can show that but too well. It was just before the supplication was presented to the Queen, in Tressilian's name, that I met him, to my utter astonishment, at the postern gate which leads from the demesne at Cumnor Place."

"Thou met'st him, villain! and why didst thou not strike him dead?" exclaimed Leicester.

"I drew on him, my lord, and he on me; and had not my foot slipped, he would not, perhaps, have been again a stumbling-block in your lordship's path."

Leicester seemed struck dumb with surprise. At length he answered, "What other evidence hast thou of this, Varney, save thine own assertion?—for, as I will punish deeply, I will examine coolly and warily. Sacred Heaven!—but no—I will examine coldly and warily—coldly and warily." He repeated these words more than once to himself, as if in the very sound there was a sedative quality; and again compressing his lips, as if he feared some violent expression might escape from them, he asked again, "What further proof?"

"Enough, my lord," said Varney, "and to spare. I would it rested with me alone, for with me it might have been silenced for ever. But my servant, Michael Lambourne, witnessed the whole, and was, indeed, the means of first introducing Tressilian into Cumnor Place; and therefore I took him into my service, and retained him in it, though something of a debauched fellow, that I might have his tongue always under my own command." He then acquainted Lord Leicester how easy it was to prove the circumstance of their interview true, by evidence of Anthony Foster, with the corroborative testimonies of the various persons at Cumnor, who had heard the wager laid, and had seen Lambourne and Tressilian set off together. In the whole narrative, Varney hazarded nothing fabulous, excepting that, not indeed by direct assertion, but by inference, he led his patron to suppose that the interview betwixt Amy and Tressilian at Cumnor Place had been longer than the few minutes to which it was in reality limited.

"And wherefore was I not told of all this?" said Leicester sternly. "Why did all of ye—and in particular thou, Varney—keep back from me such material information?"

"Because, my lord," replied Varney, "the Countess pretended to Foster and to me that Tressilian had intruded himself upon her; and I concluded their interview had been in all honour, and that she would at her own time tell it to your lordship. Your lordship knows with what unwilling ears we listen to evil surmises against those whom we love; and I thank Heaven I am no makebate or informer, to be the first to sow them."

"You are but too ready to receive them, however, Sir Richard," replied his patron. "How knowest thou that this interview was not in all honour, as thou hast said? Methinks the wife of the Earl of Leicester might speak for a short time with such a person as Tressilian without injury to me or suspicion to herself."

"Questionless, my lord," answered Varney, "Had I thought otherwise, I had been no keeper of the secret. But here lies the rub—Tressilian leaves not the place without establishing a correspondence with a poor man, the landlord of an inn in Cumnor, for the purpose of carrying off the lady. He sent down an emissary of his, whom I trust soon to have in right sure keeping under Mervyn's Tower—Killigrew and Lambsbey are scouring the country in quest of him. The host is rewarded with a ring for keeping counsel—your lordship may have noted it on Tressilian's hand—here it is. This fellow, this agent, makes his way to the place as a pedlar; holds conferences with the lady, and they make their escape together by night; rob a poor fellow of a horse by the way, such was their guilty haste, and at length reach this Castle, where the Countess of Leicester finds refuge—I dare not say in what place."

"Speak, I command thee," said Leicester—"speak, while I retain sense enough to hear thee."

"Since it must be so," answered Varney, "the lady resorted immediately to the apartment of Tressilian, where she remained many hours, partly in company with him, and partly alone. I told you Tressilian had a paramour in his chamber; I little dreamed that paramour was—"

"Amy, thou wouldst say," answered Leicester; "but it is false, false as the smoke of hell! Ambitious she may be—fickle and impatient—'tis a woman's fault; but false to me!—never, never. The proof—the proof of this!" he exclaimed hastily.

"Carrol, the Deputy Marshal, ushered her thither by her own desire, on yesterday afternoon; Lambourne and the Warder both found her there at an early hour this morning."

"Was Tressilian there with her?" said Leicester, in the same hurried tone.

"No, my lord. You may remember," answered Varney, "that he was that night placed with Sir Nicholas Blount, under a species of arrest."

"Did Carrol, or the other fellows, know who she was?" demanded Leicester.

"No, my lord," replied Varney; "Carrol and the Warder had never seen the Countess, and Lambourne knew her not in her disguise. But in seeking to prevent her leaving the cell, he obtained possession of one of her gloves, which, I think, your lordship may know."

He gave the glove, which had the Bear and Ragged Staff, the Earl's impress, embroidered upon it in seed-pearls.

"I do—I do recognize it," said Leicester. "They were my own gift. The fellow of it was on the arm which she threw this very day around my neck!" He spoke this with violent agitation.

"Your lordship," said Varney, "might yet further inquire of the lady herself respecting the truth of these passages."

"It needs not—it needs not," said the tortured Earl; "it is written in characters of burning light, as if they were branded on my very eyeballs! I see her infamy—I can see nought else; and—gracious Heaven!—for this vile woman was I about to commit to danger the lives of so many noble friends, shake the foundation of a lawful throne, carry the sword and torch through the bosom of a peaceful land, wrong the kind mistress who made me what I am, and would, but for that hell-framed marriage, have made me all that man can be! All this I was ready to do for a woman who trinkets and traffics with my worst foes!—And thou, villain, why didst thou not speak sooner?"

"My lord," said Varney, "a tear from my lady would have blotted out all I could have said. Besides, I had not these proofs until this very morning, when Anthony Foster's sudden arrival with the examinations and declarations, which he had extorted from the innkeeper Gosling and others, explained the manner of her flight from Cumnor Place, and my own researches discovered the steps which she had taken here."

"Now, may God be praised for the light He has given! so full, so satisfactory, that there breathes not a man in England who shall call my proceeding rash, or my revenge unjust.—And yet, Varney, so young, so fair, so fawning, and so false! Hence, then, her hatred to thee, my trusty, my well-beloved servant, because you withstood her plots, and endangered her paramour's life!"

"I never gave her any other cause of dislike, my lord," replied Varney. "But she knew that my counsels went directly to diminish her influence with your lordship; and that I was, and have been, ever ready to peril my life against your enemies."

"It is too, too apparent," replied Leicester "yet with what an air of magnanimity she exhorted me to commit my head to the Queen's mercy, rather than wear the veil of falsehood a moment longer! Methinks the angel of truth himself can have no such tones of high-souled impulse. Can it be so, Varney?—can falsehood use thus boldly the language of truth?—can infamy thus assume the guise of purity? Varney, thou hast been my servant from a child. I have raised thee high—can raise thee higher. Think, think for me!—thy brain was ever shrewd and piercing—may she not be innocent? Prove her so, and all I have yet done for thee shall be as nothing—nothing, in comparison of thy recompense!"

The agony with which his master spoke had some effect even on the hardened Varney, who, in the midst of his own wicked and ambitious designs, really loved his patron as well as such a wretch was capable of loving anything. But he comforted himself, and subdued his self-reproaches, with the reflection that if he inflicted upon the Earl some immediate and transitory pain, it was in order to pave his way to the throne, which, were this marriage dissolved by death or otherwise, he deemed Elizabeth would willingly share with his benefactor. He therefore persevered in his diabolical policy; and after a moment's consideration, answered the anxious queries of the Earl with a melancholy look, as if he had in vain sought some exculpation for the Countess; then suddenly raising his head, he said, with an expression of hope, which instantly communicated itself to the countenance of his patron—"Yet wherefore, if guilty, should she have perilled herself by coming hither? Why not rather have fled to her father's, or elsewhere?—though that, indeed, might have interfered with her desire to be acknowledged as Countess of Leicester."

"True, true, true!" exclaimed Leicester, his transient gleam of hope giving way to the utmost bitterness of feeling and expression; "thou art not fit to fathom a woman's depth of wit, Varney. I see it all. She would not quit the estate and title of the wittol who had wedded her. Ay, and if in my madness I had started into rebellion, or if the angry Queen had taken my head, as she this morning threatened, the wealthy dower which law would have assigned to the Countess Dowager of Leicester had been no bad windfall to the beggarly Tressilian. Well might she goad me on to danger, which could not end otherwise than profitably to her,—Speak not for her, Varney! I will have her blood!"

"My lord," replied Varney, "the wildness of your distress breaks forth in the wildness of your language."

"I say, speak not for her!" replied Leicester; "she has dishonoured me—she would have murdered me—all ties are burst between us. She shall die the death of a traitress and adulteress, well merited both by the laws of God and man! And—what is this casket," he said, "which was even now thrust into my hand by a boy, with the desire I would convey it to Tressilian, as he could not give it to the Countess? By Heaven! the words surprised me as he spoke them, though other matters chased them from my brain; but now they return with double force. It is her casket of jewels!—Force it open, Varney—force the hinges open with thy poniard!"

"She refused the aid of my dagger once," thought Varney, as he unsheathed the weapon, "to cut the string which bound a letter, but now it shall work a mightier ministry in her fortunes."

With this reflection, by using the three-cornered stiletto-blade as a wedge, he forced open the slender silver hinges of the casket. The Earl no sooner saw them give way than he snatched the casket from Sir Richard's hand, wrenched off the cover, and tearing out the splendid contents, flung them on the floor in a transport of rage, while he eagerly searched for some letter or billet which should make the fancied guilt of his innocent Countess yet more apparent. Then stamping furiously on the gems, he exclaimed, "Thus I annihilate the miserable toys for which thou hast sold thyself, body and soul—consigned thyself to an early and timeless death, and me to misery and remorse for ever!—Tell me not of forgiveness, Varney—she is doomed!"

So saying, he left the room, and rushed into an adjacent closet, the door of which he locked and bolted.

Varney looked after him, while something of a more human feeling seemed to contend with his habitual sneer. "I am sorry for his weakness," he said, "but love has made him a child. He throws down and treads on these costly toys—with the same vehemence would he dash to pieces this frailest toy of all, of which he used to rave so fondly. But that taste also will be forgotten when its object is no more. Well, he has no eye to value things as they deserve, and that nature has given to Varney. When Leicester shall be a sovereign, he will think as little of the gales of passion through which he gained that royal port, as ever did sailor in harbour of the perils of a voyage. But these tell-tale articles must not remain here—they are rather too rich vails for the drudges who dress the chamber."

While Varney was employed in gathering together and putting them into a secret drawer of a cabinet that chanced to be open, he saw the door of Leicester's closet open, the tapestry pushed aside, and the Earl's face thrust out, but with eyes so dead, and lips and cheeks so bloodless and pale, that he started at the sudden change. No sooner did his eyes encounter the Earl's, than the latter withdrew his head and shut the door of the closet. This manoeuvre Leicester repeated twice, without speaking a word, so that Varney began to doubt whether his brain was not actually affected by his mental agony. The third time, however, he beckoned, and Varney obeyed the signal. When he entered, he soon found his patron's perturbation was not caused by insanity, but by the fullness of purpose which he entertained contending with various contrary passions. They passed a full hour in close consultation; after which the Earl of Leicester, with an incredible exertion, dressed himself, and went to attend his royal guest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting

With most admired disorder. —MACBETH.

It was afterwards remembered that during the banquets and revels which occupied the remainder of this eventful day the bearing of Leicester and of Varney were totally different from their usual demeanour. Sir Richard Varney had been held rather a man of counsel and of action than a votary of pleasure. Business, whether civil or military, seemed always to be his proper sphere; and while in festivals and revels, although he well understood how to trick them up and present them, his own part was that of a mere spectator; or if he exercised his wit, it was in a rough, caustic, and severe manner, rather as if he scoffed at the exhibition and the guests than shared the common pleasure.

But upon the present day his character seemed changed. He mixed among the younger courtiers and ladies, and appeared for the moment to be actuated by a spirit of light-hearted gaiety, which rendered him a match for the liveliest. Those who had looked upon him as a man given up to graver and more ambitious pursuits, a bitter sneerer and passer of sarcasms at the expense of those who, taking life as they find it, were disposed to snatch at each pastime it presents, now perceived with astonishment that his wit could carry as smooth an edge as their own, his laugh be as lively, and his brow as unclouded. By what art of damnable hypocrisy he could draw this veil of gaiety over the black thoughts of one of the worst of human bosoms must remain unintelligible to all but his compeers, if any such ever existed; but he was a man of extraordinary powers, and those powers were unhappily dedicated in all their energy to the very worst of purposes.

It was entirely different with Leicester. However habituated his mind usually was to play the part of a good courtier, and appear gay, assiduous, and free from all care but that of enhancing the pleasure of the moment, while his bosom internally throbbed with the pangs of unsatisfied ambition, jealousy, or resentment, his heart had now a yet more dreadful guest, whose workings could not be overshadowed or suppressed; and you might read in his vacant eye and troubled brow that his thoughts were far absent from the scenes in which he was compelling himself to play a part. He looked, moved, and spoke as if by a succession of continued efforts; and it seemed as if his will had in some degree lost the promptitude of command over the acute mind and goodly form of which it was the regent. His actions and gestures, instead of appearing the consequence of simple volition, seemed, like those of an automaton, to wait the revolution of some internal machinery ere they could be performed; and his words fell from him piecemeal, interrupted, as if he had first to think what he was to say, then how it was to be said, and as if, after all, it was only by an effort of continued attention that he completed a sentence without forgetting both the one and the other.

The singular effects which these distractions of mind produced upon the behaviour and conversation of the most accomplished courtier of England, as they were visible to the lowest and dullest menial who approached his person, could not escape the notice of the most intelligent Princess of the age. Nor is there the least doubt that the alternate negligence and irregularity of his manner would have called down Elizabeth's severe displeasure on the Earl of Leicester, had it not occurred to her to account for it by supposing that the apprehension of that displeasure which she had expressed towards him with such vivacity that very morning was dwelling upon the spirits of her favourite, and, spite of his efforts to the contrary, distracted the usual graceful tenor of his mien and the charms of his conversation. When this idea, so flattering to female vanity, had once obtained possession of her mind, it proved a full and satisfactory apology for the numerous errors and mistakes of the Earl of Leicester; and the watchful circle around observed with astonishment, that, instead of resenting his repeated negligence, and want of even ordinary attention (although these were points on which she was usually extremely punctilious), the Queen sought, on the contrary, to afford him time and means to recollect himself, and deigned to assist him in doing so, with an indulgence which seemed altogether inconsistent with her usual character. It was clear, however, that this could not last much longer, and that Elizabeth must finally put another and more severe construction on Leicester's uncourteous conduct, when the Earl was summoned by Varney to speak with him in a different apartment.

After having had the message twice delivered to him, he rose, and was about to withdraw, as it were, by instinct; then stopped, and turning round, entreated permission of the Queen to absent himself for a brief space upon matters of pressing importance.

"Go, my lord," said the Queen. "We are aware our presence must occasion sudden and unexpected occurrences, which require to be provided for on the instant. Yet, my lord, as you would have us believe ourself your welcome and honoured guest, we entreat you to think less of our good cheer, and favour us with more of your good countenance than we have this day enjoyed; for whether prince or peasant be the guest, the welcome of the host will always be the better part of the entertainment. Go, my lord; and we trust to see you return with an unwrinkled brow, and those free thoughts which you are wont to have at the disposal of your friends."

Leicester only bowed low in answer to this rebuke, and retired. At the door of the apartment he was met by Varney, who eagerly drew him apart, and whispered in his ear, "All is well!"

"Has Masters seen her?" said the Earl.

"He has, my lord; and as she would neither answer his queries, nor allege any reason for her refusal, he will give full testimony that she labours under a mental disorder, and may be best committed to the charge of her friends. The opportunity is therefore free to remove her as we proposed."

"But Tressilian?" said Leicester.

"He will not know of her departure for some time," replied Varney; "it shall take place this very evening, and to-morrow he shall be cared for."

"No, by my soul," answered Leicester; "I will take vengeance on him with mine own hand!"

"You, my lord, and on so inconsiderable a man as Tressilian! No, my lord, he hath long wished to visit foreign parts. Trust him to me—I will take care he returns not hither to tell tales."

"Not so, by Heaven, Varney!" exclaimed Leicester. "Inconsiderable do you call an enemy that hath had power to wound me so deeply that my whole after-life must be one scene of remorse and misery?—No; rather than forego the right of doing myself justice with my own hand on that accursed villain, I will unfold the whole truth at Elizabeth's footstool, and let her vengeance descend at once on them and on myself."

Varney saw with great alarm that his lord was wrought up to such a pitch of agitation, that if he gave not way to him he was perfectly capable of adopting the desperate resolution which he had announced, and which was instant ruin to all the schemes of ambition which Varney had formed for his patron and for himself. But the Earl's rage seemed at once uncontrollable and deeply concentrated, and while he spoke his eyes shot fire, his voice trembled with excess of passion, and the light foam stood on his lip.

His confidant made a bold and successful effort to obtain the mastery of him even in this hour of emotion. "My lord," he said, leading him to a mirror, "behold your reflection in that glass, and think if these agitated features belong to one who, in a condition so extreme, is capable of forming a resolution for himself."

"What, then, wouldst thou make me?" said Leicester, struck at the change in his own physiognomy, though offended at the freedom with which Varney made the appeal. "Am I to be thy ward, thy vassal,—the property and subject of my servant?"

"No, my lord," said Varney firmly, "but be master of yourself, and of your own passion. My lord, I, your born servant, am ashamed to see how poorly you bear yourself in the storm of fury. Go to Elizabeth's feet, confess your marriage—impeach your wife and her paramour of adultery—and avow yourself, amongst all your peers, the wittol who married a country girl, and was cozened by her and her book-learned gallant. Go, my lord—but first take farewell of Richard Varney, with all the benefits you ever conferred on him. He served the noble, the lofty, the high-minded Leicester, and was more proud of depending on him than he would be of commanding thousands. But the abject lord who stoops to every adverse circumstance, whose judicious resolves are scattered like chaff before every wind of passion, him Richard Varney serves not. He is as much above him in constancy of mind as beneath him in rank and fortune."

Varney spoke thus without hypocrisy, for though the firmness of mind which he boasted was hardness and impenetrability, yet he really felt the ascendancy which he vaunted; while the interest which he actually felt in the fortunes of Leicester gave unusual emotion to his voice and manner.

Leicester was overpowered by his assumed superiority it seemed to the unfortunate Earl as if his last friend was about to abandon him. He stretched his hand towards Varney as he uttered the words, "Do not leave me. What wouldst thou have me do?"

"Be thyself, my noble master," said Varney, touching the Earl's hand with his lips, after having respectfully grasped it in his own; "be yourself, superior to those storms of passion which wreck inferior minds. Are you the first who has been cozened in love—the first whom a vain and licentious woman has cheated into an affection, which she has afterwards scorned and misused? And will you suffer yourself to be driven frantic because you have not been wiser than the wisest men whom the world has seen? Let her be as if she had not been—let her pass from your memory, as unworthy of ever having held a place there. Let your strong resolve of this morning, which I have both courage, zeal, and means enough to execute, be like the fiat of a superior being, a passionless act of justice. She hath deserved death—let her die!"

While he was speaking, the Earl held his hand fast, compressed his lips hard, and frowned, as if he laboured to catch from Varney a portion of the cold, ruthless, and dispassionate firmness which he recommended. When he was silent, the Earl still continued to grasp his hand, until, with an effort at calm decision, he was able to articulate, "Be it so—she dies! But one tear might be permitted."

"Not one, my lord," interrupted Varney, who saw by the quivering eye and convulsed cheek of his patron that he was about to give way to a burst of emotion—"not a tear—the time permits it not. Tressilian must be thought of—"

"That indeed is a name," said the Earl, "to convert tears into blood. Varney, I have thought on this, and I have determined—neither entreaty nor argument shall move me—Tressilian shall be my own victim."

"It is madness, my lord; but you are too mighty for me to bar your way to your revenge. Yet resolve at least to choose fitting time and opportunity, and to forbear him until these shall be found."

"Thou shalt order me in what thou wilt," said Leicester, "only thwart me not in this."

"Then, my lord," said Varney, "I first request of you to lay aside the wild, suspected, and half-frenzied demeanour which hath this day drawn the eyes of all the court upon you, and which, but for the Queen's partial indulgence, which she hath extended towards you in a degree far beyond her nature, she had never given you the opportunity to atone for."

"Have I indeed been so negligent?" said Leicester, as one who awakes from a dream. "I thought I had coloured it well. But fear nothing, my mind is now eased—I am calm. My horoscope shall be fulfilled; and that it may be fulfilled, I will tax to the highest every faculty of my mind. Fear me not, I say. I will to the Queen instantly—not thine own looks and language shall be more impenetrable than mine. Hast thou aught else to say?"

"I must crave your signet-ring," said Varney gravely, "in token to those of your servants whom I must employ, that I possess your full authority in commanding their aid."

Leicester drew off the signet-ring which he commonly used, and gave it to Varney, with a haggard and stern expression of countenance, adding only, in a low, half-whispered tone, but with terrific emphasis, the words, "What thou dost, do quickly."

Some anxiety and wonder took place, meanwhile, in the presence-hall, at the prolonged absence of the noble Lord of the Castle, and great was the delight of his friends when they saw him enter as a man from whose bosom, to all human seeming, a weight of care had been just removed. Amply did Leicester that day redeem the pledge he had given to Varney, who soon saw himself no longer under the necessity of maintaining a character so different from his own as that which he had assumed in the earlier part of the day, and gradually relapsed into the same grave, shrewd, caustic observer of conversation and incident which constituted his usual part in society.

With Elizabeth, Leicester played his game as one to whom her natural strength of talent and her weakness in one or two particular points were well known. He was too wary to exchange on a sudden the sullen personage which he had played before he retired with Varney; but on approaching her it seemed softened into a melancholy, which had a touch of tenderness in it, and which, in the course of conversing with Elizabeth, and as she dropped in compassion one mark of favour after another to console him, passed into a flow of affectionate gallantry, the most assiduous, the most delicate, the most insinuating, yet at the same time the most respectful, with which a Queen was ever addressed by a subject. Elizabeth listened as in a sort of enchantment. Her jealousy of power was lulled asleep; her resolution to forsake all social or domestic ties, and dedicate herself exclusively to the care of her people, began to be shaken; and once more the star of Dudley culminated in the court horizon.

But Leicester did not enjoy this triumph over nature, and over conscience, without its being embittered to him, not only by the internal rebellion of his feelings against the violence which he exercised over them, but by many accidental circumstances, which, in the course of the banquet, and during the subsequent amusements of the evening, jarred upon that nerve, the least vibration of which was agony.

The courtiers were, for example, in the Great Hall, after having left the banqueting-room, awaiting the appearance of a splendid masque, which was the expected entertainment of this evening, when the Queen interrupted a wild career of wit which the Earl of Leicester was running against Lord Willoughby, Raleigh, and some other courtiers, by saying, "We will impeach you of high treason, my lord, if you proceed in this attempt to slay us with laughter. And here comes a thing may make us all grave at his pleasure, our learned physician Masters, with news belike of our poor suppliant, Lady Varney;—nay, my lord, we will not have you leave us, for this being a dispute betwixt married persons, we do not hold our own experience deep enough to decide thereon without good counsel.—How now, Masters, what thinkest thou of the runaway bride?"

The smile with which Leicester had been speaking, when the Queen interrupted him, remained arrested on his lips, as if it had been carved there by the chisel of Michael Angelo or of Chantrey; and he listened to the speech of the physician with the same immovable cast of countenance.

"The Lady Varney, gracious Sovereign," said the court physician Masters, "is sullen, and would hold little conference with me touching the state of her health, talking wildly of being soon to plead her own cause before your own presence, and of answering no meaner person's inquiries."

"Now the heavens forfend!" said the Queen; "we have already suffered from the misconstructions and broils which seem to follow this poor brain-sick lady wherever she comes.—Think you not so, my lord?" she added, appealing to Leicester with something in her look that indicated regret, even tenderly expressed, for their disagreement of that morning. Leicester compelled himself to bow low. The utmost force he could exert was inadequate to the further effort of expressing in words his acquiescence in the Queen's sentiment.

"You are vindictive," she said, "my lord; but we will find time and place to punish you. But once more to this same trouble-mirth, this Lady Varney. What of her health, Masters?"

"She is sullen, madam, as I already said," replied Masters, "and refuses to answer interrogatories, or be amenable to the authority of the mediciner. I conceive her to be possessed with a delirium, which I incline to term rather HYPOCHONDRIA than PHRENESIS; and I think she were best cared for by her husband in his own house, and removed from all this bustle of pageants, which disturbs her weak brain with the most fantastic phantoms. She drops hints as if she were some great person in disguise—some Countess or Princess perchance. God help them, such are often the hallucinations of these infirm persons!"

"Nay, then," said the Queen, "away with her with all speed. Let Varney care for her with fitting humanity; but let them rid the Castle of her forthwith she will think herself lady of all, I warrant you. It is pity so fair a form, however, should have an infirm understanding.—What think you, my lord?"

"It is pity indeed," said the Earl, repeating the words like a task which was set him.

"But, perhaps," said Elizabeth, "you do not join with us in our opinion of her beauty; and indeed we have known men prefer a statelier and more Juno-like form to that drooping fragile one that hung its head like a broken lily. Ay, men are tyrants, my lord, who esteem the animation of the strife above the triumph of an unresisting conquest, and, like sturdy champions, love best those women who can wage contest with them.—I could think with you, Rutland, that give my Lord of Leicester such a piece of painted wax for a bride, he would have wished her dead ere the end of the honeymoon."

As she said this, she looked on Leicester so expressively that, while his heart revolted against the egregious falsehood, he did himself so much violence as to reply in a whisper that Leicester's love was more lowly than her Majesty deemed, since it was settled where he could never command, but must ever obey.

The Queen blushed, and bid him be silent; yet looked as of she expected that he would not obey her commands. But at that moment the flourish of trumpets and kettle-drums from a high balcony which overlooked the hall announced the entrance of the maskers, and relieved Leicester from the horrible state of constraint and dissimulation in which the result of his own duplicity had placed him.

The masque which entered consisted of four separate bands, which followed each other at brief intervals, each consisting of six principal persons and as many torch-bearers, and each representing one of the various nations by which England had at different times been occupied.

The aboriginal Britons, who first entered, were ushered in by two ancient Druids, whose hoary hair was crowned with a chaplet of oak, and who bore in their hands branches of mistletoe. The maskers who followed these venerable figures were succeeded by two Bards, arrayed in white, and bearing harps, which they occasionally touched, singing at the same time certain stanzas of an ancient hymn to Belus, or the Sun. The aboriginal Britons had been selected from amongst the tallest and most robust young gentlemen in attendance on the court. Their masks were accommodated with long, shaggy beards and hair; their vestments were of the hides of wolves and bears; while their legs, arms, and the upper parts of their bodies, being sheathed in flesh-coloured silk, on which were traced in

grotesque lines representations of the heavenly bodies, and of animals and other terrestrial objects, gave them the lively appearance of our painted ancestors, whose freedom was first trenched upon by the Romans.

The sons of Rome, who came to civilize as well as to conquer, were next produced before the princely assembly; and the manager of the revels had correctly imitated the high crest and military habits of that celebrated people, accommodating them with the light yet strong buckler and the short two-edged sword, the use of which had made them victors of the world. The Roman eagles were borne before them by two standard-bearers, who recited a hymn to Mars, and the classical warriors followed with the grave and haughty step of men who aspired at universal conquest.

The third quadrille represented the Saxons, clad in the bearskins which they had brought with them from the German forests, and bearing in their hands the redoubtable battle-axes which made such havoc among the natives of Britain. They were preceded by two Scalds, who chanted the praises of Odin.

Last came the knightly Normans, in their mail-shirts and hoods of steel, with all the panoply of chivalry, and marshalled by two Minstrels, who sang of war and ladies' love.

These four bands entered the spacious hall with the utmost order, a short pause being made, that the spectators might satisfy their curiosity as to each quadrille before the appearance of the next. They then marched completely round the hall, in order the more fully to display themselves, regulating their steps to organs, shalms, hautboys, and virginals, the music of the Lord Leicester's household. At length the four quadrilles of maskers, ranging their torch-bearers behind them, drew up in their several ranks on the two opposite sides of the hall, so that the Romans confronting the Britons, and the Saxons the Normans, seemed to look on each other with eyes of wonder, which presently appeared to kindle into anger, expressed by menacing gestures. At the burst of a strain of martial music from the gallery the maskers drew their swords on all sides, and advanced against each other in the measured steps of a sort of Pyrrhic or military dance, clashing their swords against their adversaries' shields, and clattering them against their blades as they passed each other in the progress of the dance. It was a very pleasant spectacle to see how the various bands, preserving regularity amid motions which seemed to be totally irregular, mixed together, and then disengaging themselves, resumed each their own original rank as the music varied.

In this symbolical dance were represented the conflicts which had taken place among the various nations which had anciently inhabited Britain.

At length, after many mazy evolutions, which afforded great pleasure to the spectators, the sound of a loud-voiced trumpet was heard, as if it blew for instant battle, or for victory won. The maskers instantly ceased their mimic strife, and collecting themselves under their original leaders, or presenters, for such was the appropriate phrase, seemed to share the anxious expectation which the spectators experienced concerning what was next to appear.

The doors of the hall were thrown wide, and no less a person entered than the fiend-born Merlin, dressed in a strange and mystical attire, suited to his ambiguous birth and magical power.

About him and behind him fluttered or gambolled many extraordinary forms, intended to represent the spirits who waited to do his powerful bidding; and so much did this part of the pageant interest the menials and others of the lower class then in the Castle, that many of them forgot even the reverence due to the Queen's presence, so far as to thrust themselves into the lower part of the hall.

The Earl of Leicester, seeing his officers had some difficulty to repel these intruders, without more disturbance than was fitting where the Queen was in presence, arose and went himself to the bottom of the hall; Elizabeth, at the same time, with her usual feeling for the common people, requesting that they might be permitted to remain undisturbed to witness the pageant. Leicester went under this pretext; but his real motive was to gain a moment to himself, and to relieve his mind, were it but for one instant, from the dreadful task of hiding, under the guise of gaiety and gallantry, the lacerating pangs of shame, anger, remorse, and thirst for vengeance. He imposed silence by his look and sign upon the vulgar crowd at the lower end of the apartment; but instead of instantly returning to wait on her Majesty, he wrapped his cloak around him, and mixing with the crowd, stood in some degree an undistinguished spectator of the progress of the masque.

Merlin having entered, and advanced into the midst of the hall, summoned the presenters of the contending bands around him by a wave of his magical rod, and announced to them, in a poetical speech, that the isle of Britain was now commanded by a Royal Maiden, to whom it was the will of fate that they should all do homage, and request of her to pronounce on the various pretensions which each set forth to be esteemed the pre-eminent stock, from which the present natives, the happy subjects of that angelical Princess, derived their lineage.

In obedience to this mandate, the bands, each moving to solemn music, passed in succession before Elizabeth, doing her, as they passed, each after the fashion of the people whom they represented, the lowest and most devotional homage, which she returned with the same gracious courtesy that had marked her whole conduct since she came to Kenilworth.

The presenters of the several masques or quadrilles then alleged, each in behalf of his own troop, the reasons which they had for claiming pre-eminence over the rest; and when they had been all heard in turn, she returned them this gracious answer: "That she was sorry she was not better qualified to decide upon the doubtful question which had been propounded to her by the direction of the famous Merlin, but that it seemed to her that no single one of these celebrated nations could claim pre-eminence over the others, as having most contributed to form the Englishman of her own time, who unquestionably derived from each of them some worthy attribute of his character. Thus," she said, "the Englishman had from the ancient Briton his bold and tameless spirit of freedom; from the Roman his disciplined courage in war, with his love of letters and civilization in time of peace; from the Saxon his wise and equitable laws; and from the chivalrous Norman his love of honour and courtesy, with his generous desire for glory."

Merlin answered with readiness that it did indeed require that so many choice qualities should meet in the English, as might render them in some measure the muster of the perfections of other nations, since that alone could render them in some degree deserving of the blessings they enjoyed under the reign of England's Elizabeth.

The music then sounded, and the quadrilles, together with Merlin and his assistants, had begun to remove from the crowded hall, when Leicester, who was, as we have mentioned, stationed for the moment near the bottom of the hall, and consequently engaged in some degree in the crowd, felt himself pulled by the cloak, while a voice whispered in his ear, "My Lord, I do desire some instant conference with you."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

How is't with me, when every noise appals me? —MACBETH.

"I desire some conference with you." The words were simple in themselves, but Lord Leicester was in that alarmed and feverish state of mind when the most ordinary occurrences seem fraught with alarming import; and he turned hastily round to survey the person by whom they had been spoken. There was nothing remarkable in the speaker's appearance, which consisted of a black silk doublet and short mantle, with a black vizard on his face; for it appeared he had been among the crowd of masks who had thronged into the hall in the retinue of Merlin, though he did not wear any of the extravagant disguises by which most of them were distinguished.

"Who are you, or what do you want with me?" said Leicester, not without betraying, by his accents, the hurried state of his spirits.

"No evil, my lord," answered the mask, "but much good and honour, if you will rightly understand my purpose. But I must speak with you more privately."

"I can speak with no nameless stranger," answered Leicester, dreading he knew not precisely what from the request of the stranger; "and those who are known to me must seek another and a fitter time to ask an interview."

He would have hurried away, but the mask still detained him.

"Those who talk to your lordship of what your own honour demands have a right over your time, whatever occupations you may lay aside in order to indulge them."

"How! my honour? Who dare impeach it?" said Leicester.

"Your own conduct alone can furnish grounds for accusing it, my lord, and it is that topic on which I would speak with you."

"You are insolent," said Leicester, "and abuse the hospitable license of the time, which prevents me from having you punished. I demand your name!"

"Edmund Tressilian of Cornwall," answered the mask. "My tongue has been bound by a promise for four-and-twenty hours. The space is passed,—I now speak, and do your lordship the justice to address myself first to you."

The thrill of astonishment which had penetrated to Leicester's very heart at hearing that name pronounced by the voice of the man he most detested, and by whom he conceived himself so deeply injured, at first rendered him immovable, but instantly gave way to such a thirst for revenge as the pilgrim in the desert feels for the water-brooks. He had but sense and self-government enough left to prevent his stabbing to the heart the audacious villain, who, after the ruin he had brought upon him, dared, with such unmoved assurance, thus to practise upon him further. Determined to suppress for the moment every symptom of agitation, in order to perceive the full scope of Tressilian's purpose, as well as to secure his own vengeance, he answered in a tone so altered by restrained passion as scarce to be intelligible, "And what does Master Edmund Tressilian require at my hand?"

"Justice, my lord," answered Tressilian, calmly but firmly.

"Justice," said Leicester, "all men are entitled to. YOU, Master Tressilian, are peculiarly so, and be assured you shall have it."

"I expect nothing less from your nobleness," answered Tressilian; "but time presses, and I must speak with you to-night. May I wait on you in your chamber?"

"No," answered Leicester sternly, "not under a roof, and that roof mine own. We will meet under the free cope of heaven."

"You are discomposed or displeased, my lord," replied Tressilian; "yet there is no occasion for distemperature. The place is equal to me, so you allow me one half-hour of your time uninterrupted."

"A shorter time will, I trust, suffice," answered Leicester. "Meet me in the Pleasance when the Queen has retired to her chamber."

"Enough," said Tressilian, and withdrew; while a sort of rapture seemed for the moment to occupy the mind of Leicester.

"Heaven," he said, "is at last favourable to me, and has put within my reach the wretch who has branded me with this deep ignominy—who has inflicted on me this cruel agony. I will blame fate no more, since I am afforded the means of tracing the wiles by which he means still further to practise on me, and then of at once convicting and punishing his villainy. To my task—to my task! I will not sink under it now, since midnight, at farthest, will bring me vengeance."

While these reflections thronged through Leicester's mind, he again made his way amid the obsequious crowd, which divided to give him passage, and resumed his place, envied and admired, beside the person of his Sovereign. But could the bosom of him thus admired and envied have been laid open before the inhabitants of that crowded hall, with all its dark thoughts of guilty ambition, blighted affection, deep vengeance, and conscious sense of meditated cruelty, crossing each other like spectres in the circle of some foul enchantress, which of them, from the most ambitious noble in the courtly circle down to the most wretched menial who lived by shifting of trenchers, would have desired to change characters with the favourite of Elizabeth, and the Lord of Kenilworth?

New tortures awaited him as soon as he had rejoined Elizabeth.

"You come in time, my lord," she said, "to decide a dispute between us ladies. Here has Sir Richard Varney asked our permission to depart from the Castle with his infirm lady, having, as he tells us, your lordship's consent to his absence, so he can obtain ours. Certes, we have no will to withhold him from the affectionate charge of this poor young person; but you are to know that Sir Richard Varney hath this day shown himself so much captivated with these ladies of ours, that here is our Duchess of Rutland says he will carry his poor insane wife no farther than the lake, plunge her in to tenant the crystal palaces that the enchanted nymph told us of, and return a jolly widower, to dry his tears and to make up the loss among our train. How say you, my lord? We have seen Varney under two or three different guises—you know what are his proper attributes—think you he is capable of playing his lady such a knave's trick?"

Leicester was confounded, but the danger was urgent, and a reply absolutely necessary. "The ladies," he said, "think too lightly of one of their own sex, in supposing she could deserve such a fate; or too ill of ours, to think it could be inflicted upon an innocent female."

"Hear him, my ladies," said Elizabeth; "like all his sex, he would excuse their cruelty by imputing fickleness to us."

"Say not US, madam," replied the Earl. "We say that meaner women, like the lesser lights of heaven, have revolutions and phases; but who shall impute mutability to the sun, or to Elizabeth?"

The discourse presently afterwards assumed a less perilous tendency, and Leicester continued to support his part in it with spirit, at whatever expense of mental agony. So pleasing did it seem to Elizabeth, that the Castle bell had sounded midnight ere she retired from the company, a circumstance unusual in her quiet and regular habits of disposing of time. Her departure was, of course, the signal for breaking up the company, who dispersed to their several places of repose, to dream over the pastimes of the day, or to anticipate those of the morrow.

The unfortunate Lord of the Castle, and founder of the proud festival, retired to far different thoughts. His direction to the valet who attended him was to send Varney instantly to his apartment. The messenger returned after some delay, and informed him that an hour had elapsed since Sir Richard Varney had left the Castle by the postern gate with three other persons, one of whom was transported in a horse-litter.

"How came he to leave the Castle after the watch was set?" said Leicester. "I thought he went not till daybreak."

"He gave satisfactory reasons, as I understand," said the domestic, "to the guard, and, as I hear, showed your lordship's signet—"

"True—true," said the Earl; "yet he has been hasty. Do any of his attendants remain behind?"

"Michael Lambourne, my lord," said the valet, "was not to be found when Sir Richard Varney departed, and his master was much incensed at his absence. I saw him but now saddling his horse to gallop after his master."

"Bid him come hither instantly," said Leicester; "I have a message to his master."

The servant left the apartment, and Leicester traversed it for some time in deep meditation. "Varney is over-zealous," he said, "over-pressing. He loves me, I think; but he hath his own ends to serve, and he is inexorable in pursuit of them. If I rise, he rises; and he hath shown himself already but too, eager to rid me of this obstacle which seems to stand betwixt me and sovereignty. Yet I will not stoop to bear this disgrace. She shall be punished, but it shall be more advisedly. I already feel, even in anticipation, that over-haste would light the flames of hell in my bosom. No—one victim is enough at once, and that victim already waits me." He seized upon writing materials, and hastily traced these words:—

"Sir Richard Varney, we have resolved to defer the matter entrusted to your care, and strictly command you to proceed no further in relation to our Countess until our further order. We also command your instant return to Kenilworth as soon as you have safely bestowed that with which you are entrusted. But if the safe-placing of your present charge shall detain you longer than we think for, we command you in that case to send back our signet-ring by a trusty and speedy messenger, we having present need of the same. And requiring your strict obedience in these things, and commending you to God's keeping, we rest your assured good friend and master,

"R. LEICESTER.

"Given at our Castle of Kenilworth, the tenth of July, in the year of Salvation one thousand five hundred and seventy-five."

As Leicester had finished and sealed this mandate, Michael Lambourne, booted up to mid-thigh, having his riding-cloak girthed around him with a broad belt, and a felt cap on his head, like that of a courier, entered his apartment, ushered in by the valet.

"What is thy capacity of service?" said the Earl.

"Equerry to your lordship's master of the horse," answered Lambourne, with his customary assurance.

"Tie up thy saucy tongue, sir," said Leicester; "the jests that may suit Sir Richard Varney's presence suit not mine. How soon wilt thou overtake thy master?"

"In one hour's riding, my lord, if man and horse hold good," said Lambourne, with an instant alteration of demeanour, from an approach to familiarity to the deepest respect. The Earl measured him with his eye from top to toe.

"I have heard of thee," he said "men say thou art a prompt fellow in thy service, but too much given to brawling and to wassail to be trusted with things of moment."

"My lord," said Lambourne, "I have been soldier, sailor, traveller, and adventurer; and these are all trades in which men enjoy to-day, because they have no surety of to-morrow. But though I may misuse mine own leisure, I have never neglected the duty I owe my master."

"See that it be so in this instance," said Leicester, "and it shall do thee good. Deliver this letter speedily and carefully into Sir Richard Varney's hands."

"Does my commission reach no further?" said Lambourne.

"No," answered Leicester; "but it deeply concerns me that it be carefully as well as hastily executed."

"I will spare neither care nor horse-flesh," answered Lambourne, and immediately took his leave.

"So, this is the end of my private audience, from which I hoped so much!" he muttered to himself, as he went through the long gallery, and down the back staircase. "Cogs bones! I thought the Earl had wanted a cast of mine office in some secret intrigue, and it all ends in carrying a letter! Well, his pleasure shall be done, however; and as his lordship well says, it may do me good another time. The child must creep ere he walk, and so must your infant courtier. I will have a look into this letter, however, which he hath sealed so sloven-like." Having accomplished this, he clapped his hands together in ecstasy, exclaiming, "The Countess the Countess! I have the secret that shall make or mar me.—But come forth, Bayard," he added, leading his horse into the courtyard, "for your flanks and my spurs must be presently acquainted."

Lambourne mounted, accordingly, and left the Castle by the postern gate, where his free passage was permitted, in consequence of a message to that effect left by Sir Richard Varney.

As soon as Lambourne and the valet had left the apartment, Leicester proceeded to change his dress for a very plain one, threw his mantle around him, and taking a lamp in his hand, went by the private passage of communication to a small secret postern door which opened into the courtyard, near to the entrance of the Pleasance. His reflections were of a more calm and determined character than they had been at any late period, and he endeavoured to claim, even in his own eyes, the character of a man more sinned against than sinning.

"I have suffered the deepest injury," such was the tenor of his meditations, "yet I have restricted the instant revenge which was in my power, and have limited it to that which is manly and noble. But shall the union which this false woman has this day disgraced remain an abiding fetter on me, to check me in the noble career to which my destinies invite me? No; there are other means of disengaging such ties, without unloosing the cords of life. In the sight of God, I am no longer bound by the union she has broken. Kingdoms shall divide us, oceans roll betwixt us, and their waves, whose abysses have swallowed whole navies, shall be the sole depositories of the deadly mystery."

By such a train of argument did Leicester labour to reconcile his conscience to the prosecution of plans of vengeance, so hastily adopted, and of schemes of ambition, which had become so woven in with every purpose and action of his life that he was incapable of the effort of relinquishing them, until his revenge appeared to him to wear a face of justice, and even of generous moderation.

In this mood the vindictive and ambitious Earl entered the superb precincts of the Pleasance, then illumined by the full moon. The broad, yellow light was reflected on all sides from the white freestone, of which the pavement, balustrades, and architectural ornaments of the place were constructed; and not a single fleecy cloud was visible in the azure sky, so that the scene was nearly as light as if the sun had but just left the horizon. The numerous statues of white marble glimmered in the pale light like so many sheeted ghosts just arisen from their sepulchres, and the fountains threw their jets into the air as if they sought that their waters should be brightened by the moonbeams ere they fell down again upon their basins in showers of sparkling silver. The day had been sultry, and the gentle night-breeze which sighed along the terrace of the Pleasance raised not a deeper breath than the fan in the hand of youthful beauty. The bird of summer night had built many a nest in the bowers of the adjacent garden, and the tenants now indemnified themselves for silence during the day by a full chorus of their own unrivalled warblings, now joyous, now pathetic, now united, now responsive to each other, as if to express their delight in the placid and delicious scene to which they poured their melody.

Musing on matters far different from the fall of waters, the gleam of moonlight, or the song of the nightingale, the stately Leicester walked slowly from the one end of the terrace to the other, his cloak wrapped around him, and his sword under his arm, without seeing anything resembling the human form.

"I have been fooled by my own generosity," he said, "if I have suffered the villain to escape me—ay, and perhaps to go to the rescue of the adulteress, who is so poorly guarded."

These were his thoughts, which were instantly dispelled when, turning to look back towards the entrance, he saw a human form advancing slowly from the portico, and darkening the various objects with its shadow, as passing them successively, in its approach towards him.

"Shall I strike ere I again hear his detested voice?" was Leicester's thought, as he grasped the hilt of the sword. "But no! I will see which way his vile practice tends. I will watch, disgusting as it is, the coils and mazes of the loathsome snake, ere I put forth my strength and crush him."

His hand quitted the sword-hilt, and he advanced slowly towards Tressilian, collecting, for their meeting, all the self-possession he could command, until they came front to front with each other.

Tressilian made a profound reverence, to which the Earl replied with a haughty inclination of the head, and the words, "You sought secret conference with me, sir; I am here, and attentive."

"My lord," said Tressilian, "I am so earnest in that which I have to say, and so desirous to find a patient, nay, a favourable hearing, that I will stoop to exculpate myself from whatever might prejudice your lordship against me. You think me your enemy?"

"Have I not some apparent cause?" answered Leicester, perceiving that Tressilian paused for a reply.

"You do me wrong, my lord. I am a friend, but neither a dependant nor partisan, of the Earl of Sussex, whom courtiers call your rival; and it is some considerable time since I ceased to consider either courts or court intrigues as suited to my temper or genius."

"No doubt, sir," answered Leicester "there are other occupations more worthy a scholar, and for such the world holds Master Tressilian. Love has his intrigues as well as ambition."

"I perceive, my lord," replied Tressilian, "you give much weight to my early attachment for the unfortunate young person of whom I am about to speak, and perhaps think I am prosecuting her cause out of rivalry, more than a sense of justice."

"No matter for my thoughts, sir," said the Earl; "proceed. You have as yet spoken of yourself only—an important and worthy subject doubtless, but which, perhaps, does not altogether so deeply concern me that I should postpone my repose to hear it. Spare me further prelude, sir, and speak to the purpose if indeed you have aught to say that concerns me. When you have done, I, in my turn, have something to communicate."

"I will speak, then, without further prelude, my lord," answered Tressilian, "having to say that which, as it concerns your lordship's honour, I am confident you will not think your time wasted in listening to. I have to request an account from your lordship of the unhappy Amy Robsart, whose history is too well known to you. I regret deeply that I did not at once take this course, and make yourself judge between me and the villain by whom she is injured. My lord, she extricated herself from an unlawful and most perilous state of confinement, trusting to the effects of her own remonstrance upon her unworthy husband, and extorted from me a promise that I would not interfere in her behalf until she had used her own efforts to have her rights acknowledged by him."

"Ha," said Leicester, "remember you to whom you speak?"

"I speak of her unworthy husband, my lord," repeated Tressilian, "and my respect can find no softer language. The unhappy young woman is withdrawn from my knowledge, and sequestered in some secret place of this Castle—if she be not transferred to some place of seclusion better fitted for bad designs. This must be reformed, my lord—I speak it as authorized by her father—and this ill-fated marriage must be avouched and proved in the Queen's presence, and the lady placed without restraint and at her own free disposal. And permit me to say it concerns no one's honour that these most just demands of mine should be complied with so much as it does that of your lordship."

The Earl stood as if he had been petrified at the extreme coolness with which the man, whom he considered as having injured him so deeply, pleaded the cause of his criminal paramour, as if she had been an innocent woman and he a disinterested advocate; nor was his wonder lessened by the warmth with which

Tressilian seemed to demand for her the rank and situation which she had disgraced, and the advantages of which she was doubtless to share with the lover who advocated her cause with such effrontery. Tressilian had been silent for more than a minute ere the Earl recovered from the excess of his astonishment; and considering the prepossessions with which his mind was occupied, there is little wonder that his passion gained the mastery of every other consideration. "I have heard you, Master Tressilian," said he, "without interruption, and I bless God that my ears were never before made to tingle by the words of so frontless a villain. The task of chastising you is fitter for the hangman's scourge than the sword of a nobleman, but yet—Villain, draw and defend thyself!"

As he spoke the last words, he dropped his mantle on the ground, struck Tressilian smartly with his sheathed sword, and instantly drawing his rapier, put himself into a posture of assault. The vehement fury of his language at first filled Tressilian, in his turn, with surprise equal to what Leicester had felt when he addressed him. But astonishment gave place to resentment when the unmerited insults of his language were followed by a blow which immediately put to flight every thought save that of instant combat. Tressilian's sword was instantly drawn; and though perhaps somewhat inferior to Leicester in the use of the weapon, he understood it well enough to maintain the contest with great spirit, the rather that of the two he was for the time the more cool, since he could not help imputing Leicester's conduct either to actual frenzy or to the influence of some strong delusion.

The rencontre had continued for several minutes, without either party receiving a wound, when of a sudden voices were heard beneath the portico which formed the entrance of the terrace, mingled with the steps of men advancing hastily. "We are interrupted," said Leicester to his antagonist; "follow me."

At the same time a voice from the portico said, "The jackanape is right—they are tilting here."

Leicester, meanwhile, drew off Tressilian into a sort of recess behind one of the fountains, which served to conceal them, while six of the yeomen of the Queen's guard passed along the middle walk of the Pleasance, and they could hear one say to the rest, "We shall never find them to-night among all these squirting funnels, squirrel cages, and rabbit-holes; but if we light not on them before we reach the farther end, we will return, and mount a guard at the entrance, and so secure them till morning."

"A proper matter," said another, "the drawing of swords so near the Queen's presence, ay, and in her very palace as 'twere! Hang it, they must be some poor drunken game-cocks fallen to sparring—'twere pity almost we should find them—the penalty is chopping off a hand, is it not?—'twere hard to lose hand for handling a bit of steel, that comes so natural to one's gripe."

"Thou art a brawler thyself, George," said another; "but take heed, for the law stands as thou sayest."

"Ay," said the first, "an the act be not mildly construed; for thou knowest 'tis not the Queen's palace, but my Lord of Leicester's."

"Why, for that matter, the penalty may be as severe," said another "for an our gracious Mistress be Queen, as she is, God save her, my Lord of Leicester is as good as King."

"Hush, thou knave!" said a third; "how knowest thou who may be within hearing?"

They passed on, making a kind of careless search, but seemingly more intent on their own conversation than bent on discovering the persons who had created the nocturnal disturbance.

They had no sooner passed forward along the terrace, than Leicester, making a sign to Tressilian to follow him, glided away in an opposite direction, and escaped through the portico undiscovered. He conducted Tressilian to Mervyn's Tower, in which he was now again lodged; and then, ere parting with him, said these words, "If thou hast courage to continue and bring to an end what is thus broken off, be near me when the court goes forth to-morrow; we shall find a time, and I will give you a signal when it is fitting."

"My lord," said Tressilian, "at another time I might have inquired the meaning of this strange and furious inveteracy against me. But you have laid that on my shoulder which only blood can wash away; and were you as high as your proudest wishes ever carried you, I would have from you satisfaction for my wounded honour."

On these terms they parted, but the adventures of the night were not yet ended with Leicester. He was compelled to pass by Saintlowe's Tower, in order to gain the private passage which led to his own chamber; and in the entrance thereof he met Lord Hunsdon half clothed, and with a naked sword under his arm.

"Are you awakened, too, with this 'larum, my Lord of Leicester?" said the old soldier. "'Tis well. By gog's nails, the nights are as noisy as the day in this Castle of yours. Some two hours since I was waked by the screams of that poor brain-sick Lady Varney, whom her husband was forcing away. I promise you it required both your warrant and the Queen's to keep me from entering into the game, and cutting that Varney of yours over the head. And now there is a brawl down in the Pleasance, or what call you the stone terrace-walk where all yonder gimcracks stand?"

The first part of the old man's speech went through the Earl's heart like a knife; to the last he answered that he himself had heard the clash of swords, and had come down to take order with those who had been so insolent so near the Queen's presence.

"Nay, then," said Hunsdon, "I will be glad of your lordship's company."

Leicester was thus compelled to turn back with the rough old Lord to the Pleasance, where Hunsdon heard from the yeomen of the guard, who were under his immediate command, the unsuccessful search they had made for the authors of the disturbance; and bestowed for their pains some round dozen of curses on them, as lazy knaves and blind whoresons. Leicester also thought it necessary to seem angry that no discovery had been effected; but at length suggested to Lord Hunsdon, that after all it could only be some foolish young men who had been drinking healths pottle-deep, and who should be sufficiently scared by the search which had taken place after them. Hunsdon, who was himself attached to his cup, allowed that a pint-flagon might cover many of the follies which it had caused, "But," added he, "unless your lordship will be less liberal in your housekeeping, and restrain the overflow of ale, and wine, and wassail, I foresee it will end in my having some of these good fellows into the guard-house, and treating them to a dose of the strappado. And with this warning, good night to you."

Joyful at being rid of his company, Leicester took leave of him at the entrance of his lodging, where they had first met, and entering the private passage, took up the lamp which he had left there, and by its expiring light found the way to his own apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

*Room! room! for my horse will wince
If he comes within so many yards of a prince;
For to tell you true, and in rhyme,
He was foal'd in Queen Elizabeth's time;
When the great Earl of Lester
In his castle did feast her.*

—BEN JONSON, MASQUE OF OWLS.

The amusement with which Elizabeth and her court were next day to be regaled was an exhibition by the true-hearted men of Coventry, who were to represent the strife between the English and the Danes, agreeably to a custom long preserved in their ancient borough, and warranted for truth by old histories and chronicles. In this pageant one party of the townsfolk presented the Saxons and the other the Danes, and set forth, both in rude rhymes and with hard blows, the contentions of these two fierce nations, and the Amazonian courage of the English women, who, according to the story, were the principal agents in the general massacre of the Danes, which took place at Hocktide, in the year of God 1012. This sport, which had been long a favourite pastime with the men of Coventry, had, it seems, been put down by the influence of some zealous clergymen of the more precise cast, who chanced to have considerable influence with the magistrates. But the generality of the inhabitants had petitioned the Queen that they might have their play again, and be honoured with permission to represent it before her Highness. And when the matter was canvassed in the little council which usually attended the Queen for dispatch of business, the proposal, although opposed by some of

the stricter sort, found favour in the eyes of Elizabeth, who said that such toys occupied, without offence, the minds of many who, lacking them, might find worse subjects of pastime; and that their pastors, however commendable for learning and godliness, were somewhat too sour in preaching against the pastimes of their flocks and so the pageant was permitted to proceed.

Accordingly, after a morning repast, which Master Laneham calls an ambrosial breakfast, the principal persons of the court in attendance upon her Majesty pressed to the Gallery-tower, to witness the approach of the two contending parties of English and Danes; and after a signal had been given, the gate which opened in the circuit of the Chase was thrown wide to admit them. On they came, foot and horse; for some of the more ambitious burghers and yeomen had put themselves into fantastic dresses, imitating knights, in order to resemble the chivalry of the two different nations. However, to prevent fatal accidents, they were not permitted to appear on real horses, but had only license to accoutre themselves with those hobby-horses, as they are called, which anciently formed the chief delight of a morrice-dance, and which still are exhibited on the stage, in the grand battle fought at the conclusion of Mr. Bayes's tragedy. The infantry followed in similar disguises. The whole exhibition was to be considered as a sort of anti-masque, or burlesque of the more stately pageants in which the nobility and gentry bore part in the show, and, to the best of their knowledge, imitated with accuracy the personages whom they represented. The Hocktide play was of a different character, the actors being persons of inferior degree, and their habits the better fitted for the occasion, the more incongruous and ridiculous that they were in themselves. Accordingly their array, which the progress of our tale allows us no time to describe, was ludicrous enough; and their weapons, though sufficiently formidable to deal sound blows, were long alder-poles instead of lances, and sound cudgels for swords; and for fence, both cavalry and infantry were well equipped with stout headpieces and targets, both made of thick leather.

Captain Coxe, that celebrated humorist of Coventry, whose library of ballads, almanacs, and penny histories, fairly wrapped up in parchment, and tied round for security with a piece of whipcord, remains still the envy of antiquaries, being himself the ingenious person under whose direction the pageant had been set forth, rode valiantly on his hobby-horse before the bands of English, high-trussed, saith Laneham, and brandishing his long sword, as became an experienced man of war, who had fought under the Queen's father, bluff King Henry, at the siege of Boulogne. This chieftain was, as right and reason craved, the first to enter the lists, and passing the Gallery at the head of his myrmidons, kissed the hilt of his sword to the Queen, and executed at the same time a gambade, the like whereof had never been practised by two-legged hobby-horse. Then passing on with all his followers of cavaliers and infantry, he drew them up with martial skill at the opposite extremity of the bridge, or tilt-yard, until his antagonist should be fairly prepared for the onset.

This was no long interval; for the Danish cavalry and infantry, no way inferior to the English in number, valour, and equipment, instantly arrived, with the northern bagpipe blowing before them in token of their country, and headed by a cunning master of defence, only inferior to the renowned Captain Coxe, if to him, in the discipline of war. The Danes, as invaders, took their station under the Gallery-tower, and opposite to that of Mortimer; and when their arrangements were completely made, a signal was given for the encounter.

Their first charge upon each other was rather moderate, for either party had some dread of being forced into the lake. But as reinforcements came up on either side, the encounter grew from a skirmish into a blazing battle. They rushed upon one another, as Master Laneham testifies, like rams inflamed by jealousy, with such furious encounter that both parties were often overthrown, and the clubs and targets made a most horrible clatter. In many instances that happened which had been dreaded by the more experienced warriors who began the day of strife. The rails which defended the ledges of the bridge had been, perhaps on purpose, left but slightly fastened, and gave way under the pressure of those who thronged to the combat, so that the hot courage of many of the combatants received a sufficient cooling. These incidents might have occasioned more serious damage than became such an affray, for many of the champions who met with this mischance could not swim, and those who could were encumbered with their suits of leathern and of paper armour; but the case had been provided for, and there were several boats in readiness to pick up the unfortunate warriors and convey them to the dry land, where, dripping and dejected, they comforted themselves with the hot ale and strong waters which were liberally allowed to them, without showing any desire to re-enter so desperate a conflict.

Captain Coxe alone, that paragon of Black-Letter antiquaries, after twice experiencing, horse and man, the perilous leap from the bridge into the lake, equal to any extremity to which the favourite heroes of chivalry, whose exploits he studied in an abridged form, whether Amadis, Belianis, Bevis, or his own Guy of Warwick, had ever been subjected to—Captain Coxe, we repeat, did alone, after two such mischances, rush again into the heat of conflict, his bases and the footcloth of his hobby-horse dropping water, and twice reanimated by voice and example the drooping spirits of the English; so that at last their victory over the Danish invaders became, as was just and reasonable, complete and decisive. Worthy he was to be rendered immortal by the pen of Ben Jonson, who, fifty years afterwards, deemed that a masque, exhibited at Kenilworth, could be ushered in by none with so much propriety as by the ghost of Captain Coxe, mounted upon his redoubted hobby-horse.

These rough, rural gambols may not altogether agree with the reader's preconceived idea of an entertainment presented before Elizabeth, in whose reign letters revived with such brilliancy, and whose court, governed by a female whose sense of propriety was equal to her strength of mind, was no less distinguished for delicacy and refinement than her councils for wisdom and fortitude. But whether from the political wish to seem interested in popular sports, or whether from a spark of old Henry's rough, masculine spirit, which Elizabeth sometimes displayed, it is certain the Queen laughed heartily at the imitation, or rather burlesque, of chivalry which was presented in the Coventry play. She called near her person the Earl of Sussex and Lord Hunsdon, partly perhaps to make amends to the former for the long and private audiences with which she had indulged the Earl of Leicester, by engaging him in conversation upon a pastime which better suited his taste than those pageants that were furnished forth from the stores of antiquity. The disposition which the Queen showed to laugh and jest with her military leaders gave the Earl of Leicester the opportunity he had been watching for withdrawing from the royal presence, which to the court around, so well had he chosen his time, had the graceful appearance of leaving his rival free access to the Queen's person, instead of availing himself of his right as her landlord to stand perpetually betwixt others and the light of her countenance.

Leicester's thoughts, however, had a far different object from mere courtesy; for no sooner did he see the Queen fairly engaged in conversation with Sussex and Hunsdon, behind whose back stood Sir Nicholas Blount, grinning from ear to ear at each word which was spoken, than, making a sign to Tressilian, who, according to appointment, watched his motions at a little distance, he extricated himself from the press, and walking towards the Chase, made his way through the crowds of ordinary spectators, who, with open mouth, stood gazing on the battle of the English and the Danes. When he had accomplished this, which was a work of some difficulty, he shot another glance behind him to see that Tressilian had been equally successful; and as soon as he saw him also free from the crowd, he led the way to a small thicket, behind which stood a lackey, with two horses ready saddled. He flung himself on the one, and made signs to Tressilian to mount the other, who obeyed without speaking a single word.

Leicester then spurred his horse, and galloped without stopping until he reached a sequestered spot, environed by lofty oaks, about a mile's distance from the Castle, and in an opposite direction from the scene to which curiosity was drawing every spectator. He there dismounted, bound his horse to a tree, and only pronouncing the words, "Here there is no risk of interruption," laid his cloak across his saddle, and drew his sword.

Tressilian imitated his example punctually, yet could not forbear saying, as he drew his weapon, "My lord, as I have been known to many as one who does not fear death when placed in balance with honour, methinks I may, without derogation, ask wherefore, in the name of all that is honourable, your lordship has dared to offer me such a mark of disgrace as places us on these terms with respect to each other?"

"If you like not such marks of my scorn," replied the Earl, "betake yourself instantly to your weapon, lest I repeat the usage you complain of."

"It shall not need, my lord," said Tressilian. "God judge betwixt us! and your blood, if you fall, be on your own head."

He had scarce completed the sentence when they instantly closed in combat.

But Leicester, who was a perfect master of defence among all other exterior accomplishments of the time, had seen on the preceding night enough of Tressilian's strength and skill to make him fight with more caution than heretofore, and prefer a secure revenge to a hasty one. For some minutes they fought with equal skill and fortune, till, in a desperate lunge which Leicester successfully put aside, Tressilian exposed himself at disadvantage; and in a subsequent attempt to close,

the Earl forced his sword from his hand, and stretched him on the ground. With a grim smile he held the point of his rapier within two inches of the throat of his fallen adversary, and placing his foot at the same time upon his breast, bid him confess his villainous wrongs towards him, and prepare for death.

"I have no villainy nor wrong towards thee to confess," answered Tressilian, "and am better prepared for death than thou. Use thine advantage as thou wilt, and may God forgive you! I have given you no cause for this."

"No cause!" exclaimed the Earl, "no cause!—but why parley with such a slave? Die a liar, as thou hast lived!"

He had withdrawn his arm for the purpose of striking the fatal blow, when it was suddenly seized from behind.

The Earl turned in wrath to shake off the unexpected obstacle, but was surprised to find that a strange-looking boy had hold of his sword-arm, and clung to it with such tenacity of grasp that he could not shake him off without a considerable struggle, in the course of which Tressilian had opportunity to rise and possess himself once more of his weapon. Leicester again turned towards him with looks of unabated ferocity, and the combat would have recommenced with still more desperation on both sides, had not the boy clung to Lord Leicester's knees, and in a shrill tone implored him to listen one moment ere he prosecuted this quarrel.

"Stand up, and let me go," said Leicester, "or, by Heaven, I will pierce thee with my rapier! What hast thou to do to bar my way to revenge?"

"Much—much!" exclaimed the undaunted boy, "since my folly has been the cause of these bloody quarrels between you, and perchance of worse evils. Oh, if you would ever again enjoy the peace of an innocent mind, if you hope again to sleep in peace and unhaunted by remorse, take so much leisure as to peruse this letter, and then do as you list."

While he spoke in this eager and earnest manner, to which his singular features and voice gave a goblin-like effect, he held up to Leicester a packet, secured with a long tress of woman's hair of a beautiful light-brown colour. Enraged as he was, nay, almost blinded with fury to see his destined revenge so strangely frustrated, the Earl of Leicester could not resist this extraordinary suppliant. He snatched the letter from his hand—changed colour as he looked on the superscription—undid with faltering hand the knot which secured it—glanced over the contents, and staggering back, would have fallen, had he not rested against the trunk of a tree, where he stood for an instant, his eyes bent on the letter, and his sword-point turned to the ground, without seeming to be conscious of the presence of an antagonist towards whom he had shown little mercy, and who might in turn have taken him at advantage. But for such revenge Tressilian was too noble-minded. He also stood still in surprise, waiting the issue of this strange fit of passion, but holding his weapon ready to defend himself in case of need against some new and sudden attack on the part of Leicester, whom he again suspected to be under the influence of actual frenzy. The boy, indeed, he easily recognized as his old acquaintance Dickon, whose face, once seen, was scarcely to be forgotten; but how he came hither at so critical a moment, why his interference was so energetic, and, above all, how it came to produce so powerful an effect upon Leicester, were questions which he could not solve.

But the letter was of itself powerful enough to work effects yet more wonderful. It was that which the unfortunate Amy had written to her husband, in which she alleged the reasons and manner of her flight from Cumnor Place, informed him of her having made her way to Kenilworth to enjoy his protection, and mentioned the circumstances which had compelled her to take refuge in Tressilian's apartment, earnestly requesting he would, without delay, assign her a more suitable asylum. The letter concluded with the most earnest expressions of devoted attachment and submission to his will in all things, and particularly respecting her situation and place of residence, conjuring him only that she might not be placed under the guardianship or restraint of Varney. The letter dropped from Leicester's hand when he had perused it. "Take my sword," he said, "Tressilian, and pierce my heart, as I would but now have pierced yours!"

"My lord," said Tressilian, "you have done me great wrong, but something within my breast ever whispered that it was by egregious error."

"Error, indeed!" said Leicester, and handed him the letter; "I have been made to believe a man of honour a villain, and the best and purest of creatures a false profligate.—Wretched boy, why comes this letter now, and where has the bearer lingered?"

"I dare not tell you, my lord," said the boy, withdrawing, as if to keep beyond his reach; "but here comes one who was the messenger."

Wayland at the same moment came up; and interrogated by Leicester, hastily detailed all the circumstances of his escape with Amy, the fatal practices which had driven her to flight, and her anxious desire to throw herself under the instant protection of her husband—pointing out the evidence of the domestics of Kenilworth, "who could not," he observed, "but remember her eager inquiries after the Earl of Leicester on her first arrival."

"The villains!" exclaimed Leicester; "but oh, that worst of villains, Varney!—and she is even now in his power!"

"But not, I trust in God," said Tressilian, "with any commands of fatal import?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the Earl hastily. "I said something in madness; but it was recalled, fully recalled, by a hasty messenger, and she is now—she must now be safe."

"Yes," said Tressilian, "she **MUST** be safe, and I **MUST** be assured of her safety. My own quarrel with you is ended, my lord; but there is another to begin with the seducer of Amy Robsart, who has screened his guilt under the cloak of the infamous Varney."

"The **SEDUCER** of Amy!" replied Leicester, with a voice like thunder; "say her husband!—her misguided, blinded, most unworthy husband! She is as surely Countess of Leicester as I am belted Earl. Nor can you, sir, point out that manner of justice which I will not render her at my own free will. I need scarce say I fear not your compulsion."

The generous nature of Tressilian was instantly turned from consideration of anything personal to himself, and centred at once upon Amy's welfare. He had by no means undoubting confidence in the fluctuating resolutions of Leicester, whose mind seemed to him agitated beyond the government of calm reason; neither did he, notwithstanding the assurances he had received, think Amy safe in the hands of his dependants. "My lord," he said calmly, "I mean you no offence, and am far from seeking a quarrel. But my duty to Sir Hugh Robsart compels me to carry this matter instantly to the Queen, that the Countess's rank may be acknowledged in her person."

"You shall not need, sir," replied the Earl haughtily; "do not dare to interfere. No voice but Dudley's shall proclaim Dudley's infamy. To Elizabeth herself will I tell it; and then for Cumnor Place with the speed of life and death!"

So saying, he unbound his horse from the tree, threw himself into the saddle, and rode at full gallop towards the Castle.

"Take me before you, Master Tressilian," said the boy, seeing Tressilian mount in the same haste; "my tale is not all told out, and I need your protection."

Tressilian complied, and followed the Earl, though at a less furious rate. By the way the boy confessed, with much contrition, that in resentment at Wayland's evading all his inquiries concerning the lady, after Dickon conceived he had in various ways merited his confidence, he had purloined from him in revenge the letter with which Amy had entrusted him for the Earl of Leicester. His purpose was to have restored it to him that evening, as he reckoned himself sure of meeting with him, in consequence of Wayland's having to perform the part of Arion in the pageant. He was indeed something alarmed when he saw to whom the letter was addressed; but he argued that, as Leicester did not return to Kenilworth until that evening, it would be again in the possession of the proper messenger as soon as, in the nature of things, it could possibly be delivered. But Wayland came not to the pageant, having been in the interim expelled by Lambourne from the Castle; and the boy, not being able to find him, or to get speech of Tressilian, and finding himself in possession of a letter addressed to no less a person than the Earl of Leicester, became much afraid of the consequences of his frolic. The caution, and indeed the alarm, which Wayland had expressed respecting Varney and Lambourne, led him to judge that the letter must be designed for the Earl's own hand, and that he might prejudice the lady by giving it to any of the domestics. He made an attempt or two to obtain an audience of Leicester; but the singularity of his features and the meanness of his appearance occasioned his being always repulsed by the insolent menials whom he applied to for that purpose. Once, indeed, he had nearly succeeded, when, in prowling about, he found in the grotto the casket, which he knew to belong to the unlucky Countess, having seen it on her journey; for nothing escaped his prying eye. Having striven in vain to restore it either to Tressilian or the Countess, he put it into the hands, as we have seen, of Leicester himself, but unfortunately he did not recognize him in his disguise.

At length the boy thought he was on the point of succeeding when the Earl came down to the lower part of the hall; but just as he was about to accost him, he was prevented by Tressilian. As sharp in ear as in wit, the boy heard the appointment settled betwixt them, to take place in the Pleasance, and resolved to add a third to the party, in hope that, either in coming or returning, he might find an opportunity of delivering the letter to Leicester; for strange stories began to flit among the domestics, which alarmed him for the lady's safety. Accident, however, detained Dickon a little behind the Earl, and as he reached the arcade he saw them

engaged in combat; in consequence of which he hastened to alarm the guard, having little doubt that what bloodshed took place betwixt them might arise out of his own frolic. Continuing to lurk in the portico, he heard the second appointment which Leicester at parting assigned to Tressilian; and was keeping them in view during the encounter of the Coventry men, when, to his surprise, he recognized Wayland in the crowd, much disguised, indeed, but not sufficiently so to escape the prying glance of his old comrade. They drew aside out of the crowd to explain their situation to each other. The boy confessed to Wayland what we have above told; and the artist, in return, informed him that his deep anxiety for the fate of the unfortunate lady had brought him back to the neighbourhood of the Castle, upon his learning that morning, at a village about ten miles distant, that Varney and Lambourne, whose violence he dreaded, had both left Kenilworth over-night.

While they spoke, they saw Leicester and Tressilian separate themselves from the crowd, dogged them until they mounted their horses, when the boy, whose speed of foot has been before mentioned, though he could not possibly keep up with them, yet arrived, as we have seen, soon enough to save Tressilian's life. The boy had just finished his tale when they arrived at the Gallery-tower.

CHAPTER XL.

*High o'er the eastern steep the sun is beaming,
And darkness flies with her deceitful shadows;—
So truth prevails o'er falsehood. —OLD PLAY.*

As Tressilian rode along the bridge, lately the scene of so much riotous sport, he could not but observe that men's countenances had singularly changed during the space of his brief absence. The mock fight was over, but the men, still habited in their masking suits, stood together in groups, like the inhabitants of a city who have been just startled by some strange and alarming news.

When he reached the base-court, appearances were the same—domestics, retainers, and under-officers stood together and whispered, bending their eyes towards the windows of the Great Hall, with looks which seemed at once alarmed and mysterious.

Sir Nicholas Blount was the first person of his own particular acquaintance Tressilian saw, who left him no time to make inquiries, but greeted him with, "God help thy heart, Tressilian! thou art fitter for a clown than a courtier thou canst not attend, as becomes one who follows her Majesty. Here you are called for, wished for, waited for—no man but you will serve the turn; and hither you come with a misbegotten brat on thy horse's neck, as if thou wert dry nurse to some sucking devil, and wert just returned from airing."

"Why, what is the matter?" said Tressilian, letting go the boy, who sprung to ground like a feather, and himself dismounting at the same time.

"Why, no one knows the matter," replied Blount; "I cannot smell it out myself, though I have a nose like other courtiers. Only, my Lord of Leicester has galloped along the bridge as if he would have rode over all in his passage, demanded an audience of the Queen, and is closeted even now with her, and Burleigh and Walsingham—and you are called for; but whether the matter be treason or worse, no one knows."

"He speaks true, by Heaven!" said Raleigh, who that instant appeared; "you must immediately to the Queen's presence."

"Be not rash, Raleigh," said Blount, "remember his boots.—For Heaven's sake, go to my chamber, dear Tressilian, and don my new bloom-coloured silken hose; I have worn them but twice."

"Pshaw!" answered Tressilian; "do thou take care of this boy, Blount; be kind to him, and look he escapes you not—much depends on him."

So saying, he followed Raleigh hastily, leaving honest Blount with the bridle of his horse in one hand, and the boy in the other. Blount gave a long look after him.

"Nobody," he said, "calls me to these mysteries—and he leaves me here to play horse-keeper and child-keeper at once. I could excuse the one, for I love a good horse naturally; but to be plagued with a bratchet whelp.—Whence come ye, my fair-favoured little gossip?"

"From the Fens," answered the boy.

"And what didst thou learn there, forward imp?"

"To catch gulls, with their webbed feet and yellow stockings," said the boy.

"Umph!" said Blount, looking down on his own immense roses. "Nay, then, the devil take him asks thee more questions."

Meantime Tressilian traversed the full length of the Great Hall, in which the astonished courtiers formed various groups, and were whispering mysteriously together, while all kept their eyes fixed on the door which led from the upper end of the hall into the Queen's withdrawing apartment. Raleigh pointed to the door. Tressilian knocked, and was instantly admitted. Many a neck was stretched to gain a view into the interior of the apartment; but the tapestry which covered the door on the inside was dropped too suddenly to admit the slightest gratification of curiosity.

Upon entrance, Tressilian found himself, not without a strong palpitation of heart, in the presence of Elizabeth, who was walking to and fro in a violent agitation, which she seemed to scorn to conceal, while two or three of her most sage and confidential counsellors exchanged anxious looks with each other, but delayed speaking till her wrath abated. Before the empty chair of state in which she had been seated, and which was half pushed aside by the violence with which she had started from it, knelt Leicester, his arms crossed, and his brows bent on the ground, still and motionless as the effigies upon a sepulchre. Beside him stood the Lord Shrewsbury, then Earl Marshal of England, holding his baton of office. The Earl's sword was unbuckled, and lay before him on the floor.

"Ho, sir!" said the Queen, coming close up to Tressilian, and stamping on the floor with the action and manner of Henry himself; "you knew of this fair work—you are an accomplice in this deception which has been practised on us—you have been a main cause of our doing injustice?" Tressilian dropped on his knee before the Queen, his good sense showing him the risk of attempting any defence at that moment of irritation. "Art dumb, sirrah?" she continued; "thou knowest of this affair dost thou not?"

"Not, gracious madam, that this poor lady was Countess of Leicester."

"Nor shall any one know her for such," said Elizabeth. "Death of my life! Countess of Leicester!—I say Dame Amy Dudley; and well if she have not cause to write herself widow of the traitor Robert Dudley."

"Madam," said Leicester, "do with me what it may be your will to do, but work no injury on this gentleman; he hath in no way deserved it."

"And will he be the better for thy intercession," said the Queen, leaving Tressilian, who slowly arose, and rushing to Leicester, who continued kneeling—"the better for thy intercession, thou doubly false—thou doubly forsworn;—of thy intercession, whose villainy hath made me ridiculous to my subjects and odious to myself? I could tear out mine eyes for their blindness!"

Burleigh here ventured to interpose.

"Madam," he said, "remember that you are a Queen—Queen of England—mother of your people. Give not way to this wild storm of passion."

Elizabeth turned round to him, while a tear actually twinkled in her proud and angry eye. "Burleigh," she said, "thou art a statesman—thou dost not, thou canst not, comprehend half the scorn, half the misery, that man has poured on me!"

With the utmost caution—with the deepest reverence—Burleigh took her hand at the moment he saw her heart was at the fullest, and led her aside to an oriel window, apart from the others.

"Madam," he said, "I am a statesman, but I am also a man—a man already grown old in your councils—who have not and cannot have a wish on earth but your glory and happiness; I pray you to be composed."

"Ah! Burleigh," said Elizabeth, "thou little knowest—" here her tears fell over her cheeks in despite of her.

"I do—I do know, my honoured sovereign. Oh, beware that you lead not others to guess that which they know not!"

"Ha!" said Elizabeth, pausing as if a new train of thought had suddenly shot across her brain. "Burleigh, thou art right—thou art right—anything but disgrace—anything but a confession of weakness—anything rather than seem the cheated, slighted,—'sdeath! to think on it is distraction!"

"Be but yourself, my Queen," said Burleigh; "and soar far above a weakness which no Englishman will ever believe his Elizabeth could have entertained, unless the violence of her disappointment carries a sad conviction to his bosom."

"What weakness, my lord?" said Elizabeth haughtily; "would you too insinuate that the favour in which I held yonder proud traitor derived its source from aught—" But here she could no longer sustain the proud tone which she had assumed, and again softened as she said, "But why should I strive to deceive even thee, my good and wise servant?"

Burleigh stooped to kiss her hand with affection, and—rare in the annals of courts—a tear of true sympathy dropped from the eye of the minister on the hand of his Sovereign.

It is probable that the consciousness of possessing this sympathy aided Elizabeth in supporting her mortification, and suppressing her extreme resentment; but she was still more moved by fear that her passion should betray to the public the affront and the disappointment, which, alike as a woman and a Queen, she was so anxious to conceal. She turned from Burleigh, and sternly paced the hall till her features had recovered their usual dignity, and her mien its wonted stateliness of regular motion.

"Our Sovereign is her noble self once more," whispered Burleigh to Walsingham; "mark what she does, and take heed you thwart her not."

She then approached Leicester, and said with calmness, "My Lord Shrewsbury, we discharge you of your prisoner.—My Lord of Leicester, rise and take up your sword; a quarter of an hour's restraint under the custody of our Marshal, my lord, is, we think, no high penance for months of falsehood practised upon us. We will now hear the progress of this affair." She then seated herself in her chair, and said, "You, Tressilian, step forward, and say what you know."

Tressilian told his story generously, suppressing as much as he could what affected Leicester, and saying nothing of their having twice actually fought together. It is very probable that, in doing so, he did the Earl good service; for had the Queen at that instant found anything on account of which she could vent her wrath upon him, without laying open sentiments of which she was ashamed, it might have fared hard with him. She paused when Tressilian had finished his tale.

"We will take that Wayland," she said, "into our own service, and place the boy in our Secretary office for instruction, that he may in future use discretion towards letters. For you, Tressilian, you did wrong in not communicating the whole truth to us, and your promise not to do so was both imprudent and undutiful. Yet, having given your word to this unhappy lady, it was the part of a man and a gentleman to keep it; and on the whole, we esteem you for the character you have sustained in this matter.—My Lord of Leicester, it is now your turn to tell us the truth, an exercise to which you seem of late to have been too much a stranger."

Accordingly, she extorted, by successive questions, the whole history of his first acquaintance with Amy Robsart—their marriage—his jealousy—the causes on which it was founded, and many particulars besides. Leicester's confession, for such it might be called, was wrenched from him piecemeal, yet was upon the whole accurate, excepting that he totally omitted to mention that he had, by implication or otherwise, assented to Varney's designs upon the life of his Countess. Yet the consciousness of this was what at that moment lay nearest to his heart; and although he trusted in great measure to the very positive counter-orders which he had sent by Lambourne, it was his purpose to set out for Cumnor Place in person as soon as he should be dismissed from the presence of the Queen, who, he concluded, would presently leave Kenilworth.

But the Earl reckoned without his host. It is true his presence and his communications were gall and wormwood to his once partial mistress. But barred from every other and more direct mode of revenge, the Queen perceived that she gave her false suitor torture by these inquiries, and dwelt on them for that reason, no more regarding the pain which she herself experienced, than the savage cares for the searing of his own hands by grasping the hot pincers with which he tears the flesh of his captive enemy.

At length, however, the haughty lord, like a deer that turns to bay, gave intimation that his patience was failing. "Madam," he said, "I have been much to blame—more than even your just resentment has expressed. Yet, madam, let me say that my guilt, if it be unpardonable, was not unprovoked, and that if beauty and condescending dignity could seduce the frail heart of a human being, I might plead both as the causes of my concealing this secret from your Majesty."

The Queen was so much struck with this reply, which Leicester took care should be heard by no one but herself, that she was for the moment silenced, and the Earl had the temerity to pursue his advantage. "Your Grace, who has pardoned so much, will excuse my throwing myself on your royal mercy for those expressions which were yester-morning accounted but a light offence."

The Queen fixed her eyes on him while she replied, "Now, by Heaven, my lord, thy effrontery passes the bounds of belief, as well as patience! But it shall avail thee nothing.—What ho! my lords, come all and hear the news—my Lord of Leicester's stolen marriage has cost me a husband, and England a king. His lordship is patriarchal in his tastes—one wife at a time was insufficient, and he designed US the honour of his left hand. Now, is not this too insolent—that I could not grace him with a few marks of court-favour, but he must presume to think my hand and crown at his disposal? You, however, think better of me; and I can pity this ambitious man, as I could a child, whose bubble of soap has burst between his hands. We go to the presence-chamber.—My Lord of Leicester, we command your close attendance on us."

All was eager expectation in the hall, and what was the universal astonishment when the Queen said to those next her, "The revels of Kenilworth are not yet exhausted, my lords and ladies—we are to solemnize the noble owner's marriage."

There was an universal expression of surprise.

"It is true, on our royal word," said the Queen; "he hath kept this a secret even from us, that he might surprise us with it at this very place and time. I see you are dying of curiosity to know the happy bride. It is Amy Robsart, the same who, to make up the May-game yesterday, figured in the pageant as the wife of his servant Varney."

"For God's sake, madam," said the Earl, approaching her with a mixture of humility, vexation, and shame in his countenance, and speaking so low as to be heard by no one else, "take my head, as you threatened in your anger, and spare me these taunts! Urge not a falling man—tread not on a crushed worm."

"A worm, my lord?" said the Queen, in the same tone; "nay, a snake is the nobler reptile, and the more exact similitude—the frozen snake you wot of, which was warmed in a certain bosom—"

"For your own sake—for mine, madam," said the Earl—"while there is yet some reason left in me—"

"Speak aloud, my lord," said Elizabeth, "and at farther distance, so please you—your breath thaws our ruff. What have you to ask of us?"

"Permission," said the unfortunate Earl humbly, "to travel to Cumnor Place."

"To fetch home your bride belike?—Why, ay—that is but right, for, as we have heard, she is indifferently cared for there. But, my lord, you go not in person; we have counted upon passing certain days in this Castle of Kenilworth, and it were slight courtesy to leave us without a landlord during our residence here. Under your favour, we cannot think to incur such disgrace in the eyes of our subjects. Tressilian shall go to Cumnor Place instead of you, and with him some gentleman who hath been sworn of our chamber, lest my Lord of Leicester should be again jealous of his old rival.—Whom wouldst thou have to be in commission with thee, Tressilian?"

Tressilian, with humble deference, suggested the name of Raleigh.

"Why, ay," said the Queen; "so God ha' me, thou hast made a good choice. He is a young knight besides, and to deliver a lady from prison is an appropriate first adventure.—Cumnor Place is little better than a prison, you are to know, my lords and ladies. Besides, there are certain faitours there whom we would willingly have in safe keeping. You will furnish them, Master Secretary, with the warrant necessary to secure the bodies of Richard Varney and the foreign Alasco, dead or alive. Take a sufficient force with you, gentlemen—bring the lady here in all honour—lose no time, and God be with you!"

They bowed, and left the presence,

Who shall describe how the rest of that day was spent at Kenilworth? The Queen, who seemed to have remained there for the sole purpose of mortifying and taunting the Earl of Leicester, showed herself as skilful in that female art of vengeance, as she was in the science of wisely governing her people. The train of

state soon caught the signal, and as he walked among his own splendid preparations, the Lord of Kenilworth, in his own Castle, already experienced the lot of a disgraced courtier, in the slight regard and cold manners of alienated friends, and the ill-concealed triumph of avowed and open enemies. Sussex, from his natural military frankness of disposition, Burleigh and Walsingham, from their penetrating and prospective sagacity, and some of the ladies, from the compassion of their sex, were the only persons in the crowded court who retained towards him the countenance they had borne in the morning.

So much had Leicester been accustomed to consider court favour as the principal object of his life, that all other sensations were, for the time, lost in the agony which his haughty spirit felt at the succession of petty insults and studied neglects to which he had been subjected; but when he retired to his own chamber for the night, that long, fair tress of hair which had once secured Amy's letter fell under his observation, and, with the influence of a counter-charm, awakened his heart to nobler and more natural feelings. He kissed it a thousand times; and while he recollected that he had it always in his power to shun the mortifications which he had that day undergone, by retiring into a dignified and even prince-like seclusion with the beautiful and beloved partner of his future life, he felt that he could rise above the revenge which Elizabeth had condescended to take.

Accordingly, on the following day the whole conduct of the Earl displayed so much dignified equanimity—he seemed so solicitous about the accommodations and amusements of his guests, yet so indifferent to their personal demeanour towards him—so respectfully distant to the Queen, yet so patient of her harassing displeasure—that Elizabeth changed her manner to him, and, though cold and distant, ceased to offer him any direct affront. She intimated also with some sharpness to others around her, who thought they were consulting her pleasure in showing a neglectful conduct to the Earl, that while they remained at Kenilworth they ought to show the civility due from guests to the Lord of the Castle. In short, matters were so far changed in twenty-four hours that some of the more experienced and sagacious courtiers foresaw a strong possibility of Leicester's restoration to favour, and regulated their demeanour towards him, as those who might one day claim merit for not having deserted him in adversity. It is time, however, to leave these intrigues, and follow Tressilian and Raleigh on their journey.

The troop consisted of six persons; for, besides Wayland, they had in company a royal pursuivant and two stout serving-men. All were well-armed, and travelled as fast as it was possible with justice to their horses, which had a long journey before them. They endeavoured to procure some tidings as they rode along of Varney and his party, but could hear none, as they had travelled in the dark. At a small village about twelve miles from Kenilworth, where they gave some refreshment to their horses, a poor clergyman, the curate of the place, came out of a small cottage, and entreated any of the company who might know aught of surgery to look in for an instant on a dying man.

The empiric Wayland undertook to do his best, and as the curate conducted him to the spot, he learned that the man had been found on the highroad, about a mile from the village, by labourers, as they were going to their work on the preceding morning, and the curate had given him shelter in his house. He had received a gun-shot wound, which seemed to be obviously mortal; but whether in a brawl or from robbers they could not learn, as he was in a fever, and spoke nothing connectedly. Wayland entered the dark and lowly apartment, and no sooner had the curate drawn aside the curtain than he knew, in the distorted features of the patient, the countenance of Michael Lambourne. Under pretence of seeking something which he wanted, Wayland hastily apprised his fellow-travellers of this extraordinary circumstance; and both Tressilian and Raleigh, full of boding apprehensions, hastened to the curate's house to see the dying man.

The wretch was by this time in the agonies of death, from which a much better surgeon than Wayland could not have rescued him, for the bullet had passed clear through his body. He was sensible, however, at least in part, for he knew Tressilian, and made signs that he wished him to stoop over his bed. Tressilian did so, and after some inarticulate murmurs, in which the names of Varney and Lady Leicester were alone distinguishable, Lambourne bade him "make haste, or he would come too late." It was in vain Tressilian urged the patient for further information; he seemed to become in some degree delirious, and when he again made a signal to attract Tressilian's attention, it was only for the purpose of desiring him to inform his uncle, Giles Gosling of the Black Bear, that "he had died without his shoes after all." A convulsion verified his words a few minutes after, and the travellers derived nothing from having met with him, saving the obscure fears concerning the fate of the Countess, which his dying words were calculated to convey, and which induced them to urge their journey with the utmost speed, pressing horses in the Queen's name when those which they rode became unfit for service.

CHAPTER XLI.

*The death-bell thrice was heard to ring,
An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wing
Around the towers of Cumnor Hall. —MICKLE.*

We are now to return to that part of our story where we intimated that Varney, possessed of the authority of the Earl of Leicester, and of the Queen's permission to the same effect, hastened to secure himself against discovery of his perfidy by removing the Countess from Kenilworth Castle. He had proposed to set forth early in the morning; but reflecting that the Earl might relent in the interim, and seek another interview with the Countess, he resolved to prevent, by immediate departure, all chance of what would probably have ended in his detection and ruin. For this purpose he called for Lambourne, and was exceedingly incensed to find that his trusty attendant was abroad on some ramble in the neighbouring village, or elsewhere. As his return was expected, Sir Richard commanded that he should prepare himself for attending him on an immediate journey, and follow him in case he returned after his departure.

In the meanwhile, Varney used the ministry of a servant called Robin Tider, one to whom the mysteries of Cumnor Place were already in some degree known, as he had been there more than once in attendance on the Earl. To this man, whose character resembled that of Lambourne, though he was neither quite so prompt nor altogether so profligate, Varney gave command to have three horses saddled, and to prepare a horse-litter, and have them in readiness at the postern gate. The natural enough excuse of his lady's insanity, which was now universally believed, accounted for the secrecy with which she was to be removed from the Castle, and he reckoned on the same apology in case the unfortunate Amy's resistance or screams should render such necessary. The agency of Anthony Foster was indispensable, and that Varney now went to secure.

This person, naturally of a sour, unsocial disposition, and somewhat tired, besides, with his journey from Cumnor to Warwickshire, in order to bring the news of the Countess's escape, had early extricated himself from the crowd of wassailers, and betaken himself to his chamber, where he lay asleep, when Varney, completely equipped for travelling, and with a dark lantern in his hand, entered his apartment. He paused an instant to listen to what his associate was murmuring in his sleep, and could plainly distinguish the words, "AVE MARIA—ORA PRO NOBIS. No, it runs not so—deliver us from evil—ay, so it goes."

"Praying in his sleep," said Varney, "and confounding his old and new devotions. He must have more need of prayer ere I am done with him.—What ho! holy man, most blessed penitent!—awake—awake! The devil has not discharged you from service yet."

As Varney at the same time shook the sleeper by the arm, it changed the current of his ideas, and he roared out, "Thieves!—thieves! I will die in defence of my gold—my hard-won gold—that has cost me so dear. Where is Janet?—Is Janet safe?"

"Safe enough, thou bellowing fool!" said Varney; "art thou not ashamed of thy clamour?"

Foster by this time was broad awake, and sitting up in his bed, asked Varney the meaning of so untimely a visit. "It augurs nothing good," he added.

"A false prophecy, most sainted Anthony," returned Varney; "it augurs that the hour is come for converting thy leasehold into copyhold. What sayest thou to that?"

"Hadst thou told me this in broad day," said Foster, "I had rejoiced; but at this dead hour, and by this dim light, and looking on thy pale face, which is a ghastly contradiction to thy light words, I cannot but rather think of the work that is to be done, than the guerdon to be gained by it."

"Why, thou fool, it is but to escort thy charge back to Cumnor Place."

"Is that indeed all?" said Foster; "thou lookest deadly pale, and thou art not moved by trifles—is that indeed all?"

"Ay, that—and maybe a trifle more," said Varney.

"Ah, that trifle more!" said Foster; "still thou lookest paler and paler."

"Heed not my countenance," said Varney; "you see it by this wretched light. Up and be doing, man. Think of Cumnor Place—thine own proper copyhold. Why, thou mayest find a weekly lectureship, besides endowing Janet like a baron's daughter. Seventy pounds and odd."

"Seventy-nine pounds, five shillings and fivepence half-penny, besides the value of the wood," said Foster; "and I am to have it all as copyhold?"

"All, man—squirrels and all. No gipsy shall cut the value of a broom—no boy so much as take a bird's nest—without paying thee a quittance.—Ay, that is right—don't thy matters as fast as possible; horses and everything are ready, all save that accursed villain Lambourne, who is out on some infernal gambol."

"Ay, Sir Richard," said Foster, "you would take no advice. I ever told you that drunken profligate would fail you at need. Now I could have helped you to a sober young man."

"What, some slow-spoken, long-breathed brother of the congregation? Why, we shall have use for such also, man. Heaven be praised, we shall lack labourers of every kind.—Ay, that is right—forget not your pistols. Come now, and let us away."

"Whither?" said Anthony.

"To my lady's chamber; and, mind, she MUST along with us. Thou art not a fellow to be startled by a shriek?"

"Not if Scripture reason can be rendered for it; and it is written, 'Wives obey your husbands.' But will my lord's commands bear us out if we use violence?"

"Tush, man! here is his signet," answered Varney; and having thus silenced the objections of his associate, they went together to Lord Hunsdon's apartments, and acquainting the sentinel with their purpose, as a matter sanctioned by the Queen and the Earl of Leicester, they entered the chamber of the unfortunate Countess. The horror of Amy may be conceived when, starting from a broken slumber, she saw at her bedside Varney, the man on earth she most feared and hated. It was even a consolation to see that he was not alone, though she had so much reason to dread his sullen companion.

"Madam," said Varney, "there is no time for ceremony. My Lord of Leicester, having fully considered the exigencies of the time, sends you his orders immediately to accompany us on our return to Cumnor Place. See, here is his signet, in token of his instant and pressing commands."

"It is false!" said the Countess; "thou hast stolen the warrant—thou, who art capable of every villainy, from the blackest to the basest!"

"It is TRUE, madam," replied Varney; "so true, that if you do not instantly arise, and prepare to attend us, we must compel you to obey our orders."

"Compel! Thou darest not put it to that issue, base as thou art!" exclaimed the unhappy Countess.

"That remains to be proved, madam," said Varney, who had determined on intimidation as the only means of subduing her high spirit; "if you put me to it, you will find me a rough groom of the chambers."

It was at this threat that Amy screamed so fearfully that, had it not been for the received opinion of her insanity, she would quickly have had Lord Hunsdon and others to her aid. Perceiving, however, that her cries were vain, she appealed to Foster in the most affecting terms, conjuring him, as his daughter Janet's honour and purity were dear to him, not to permit her to be treated with unwomanly violence.

"Why, madam, wives must obey their husbands—there's Scripture warrant for it," said Foster; "and if you will dress yourself, and come with us patiently, there's no one shall lay finger on you while I can draw a pistol-trigger."

Seeing no help arrive, and comforted even by the dogged language of Foster, the Countess promised to arise and dress herself, if they would agree to retire from the room. Varney at the same time assured her of all safety and honour while in their hands, and promised that he himself would not approach her, since his presence was so displeasing. Her husband, he added, would be at Cumnor Place within twenty-four hours after they had reached it.

Somewhat comforted by this assurance, upon which, however, she saw little reason to rely, the unhappy Amy made her toilette by the assistance of the lantern, which they left with her when they quitted the apartment.

Weeping, trembling, and praying, the unfortunate lady dressed herself with sensations how different from the days in which she was wont to decorate herself in all the pride of conscious beauty! She endeavoured to delay the completing her dress as long as she could, until, terrified by the impatience of Varney, she was obliged to declare herself ready to attend them.

When they were about to move, the Countess clung to Foster with such an appearance of terror at Varney's approach that the latter protested to her, with a deep oath, that he had no intention whatever of even coming near her. "If you do but consent to execute your husband's will in quietness, you shall," he said, "see but little of me. I will leave you undisturbed to the care of the usher whom your good taste prefers."

"My husband's will!" she exclaimed. "But it is the will of God, and let that be sufficient to me. I will go with Master Foster as unresistingly as ever did a literal sacrifice. He is a father at least; and will have decency, if not humanity. For thee, Varney, were it my latest word, thou art an equal stranger to both."

Varney replied only she was at liberty to choose, and walked some paces before them to show the way; while, half leaning on Foster, and half carried by him, the Countess was transported from Saintlowe's Tower to the postern gate, where Tider waited with the litter and horses.

The Countess was placed in the former without resistance. She saw with some satisfaction that, while Foster and Tider rode close by the litter, which the latter conducted, the dreaded Varney lingered behind, and was soon lost in darkness. A little while she strove, as the road winded round the verge of the lake, to keep sight of those stately towers which called her husband lord, and which still, in some places, sparkled with lights, where wassailers were yet revelling. But when the direction of the road rendered this no longer possible, she drew back her head, and sinking down in the litter, recommended herself to the care of Providence.

Besides the desire of inducing the Countess to proceed quietly on her journey, Varney had it also in view to have an interview with Lambourne, by whom he every moment expected to be joined, without the presence of any witnesses. He knew the character of this man, prompt, bloody, resolute, and greedy, and judged him the most fit agent he could employ in his further designs. But ten miles of their journey had been measured ere he heard the hasty clatter of horse's hoofs behind him, and was overtaken by Michael Lambourne.

Fretted as he was with his absence, Varney received his profligate servant with a rebuke of unusual bitterness. "Drunken villain," he said, "thy idleness and debauched folly will stretch a halter ere it be long, and, for me, I care not how soon!"

This style of oburgation Lambourne, who was elated to an unusual degree, not only by an extraordinary cup of wine, but by the sort of confidential interview he had just had with the Earl, and the secret of which he had made himself master, did not receive with his wonted humility. "He would take no insolence of language," he said, "from the best knight that ever wore spurs. Lord Leicester had detained him on some business of import, and that was enough for Varney, who was but a servant like himself."

Varney was not a little surprised at his unusual tone of insolence; but ascribing it to liquor, suffered it to pass as if unnoticed, and then began to tamper with Lambourne touching his willingness to aid in removing out of the Earl of Leicester's way an obstacle to a rise, which would put it in his power to reward his trusty followers to their utmost wish. And upon Michael Lambourne's seeming ignorant what was meant, he plainly indicated "the litter-load, yonder," as the impediment which he desired should be removed.

"Look you, Sir Richard, and so forth," said Michael, "some are wiser than some, that is one thing, and some are worse than some, that's another. I know my lord's mind on this matter better than thou, for he hath trusted me fully in the matter. Here are his mandates, and his last words were, Michael Lambourne—for his lordship speaks to me as a gentleman of the sword, and useth not the words drunken villain, or such like phrase, of those who know not how to bear new dignities—Varney, says he, must pay the utmost respect to my Countess. I trust to you for looking to it, Lambourne, says his lordship, and you must bring back my signet from him peremptorily."

"Ay," replied Varney, "said he so, indeed? You know all, then?"

"All—all; and you were as wise to make a friend of me while the weather is fair betwixt us."

"And was there no one present," said Varney, "when my lord so spoke?"

"Not a breathing creature," replied Lambourne. "Think you my lord would trust any one with such matters, save an approved man of action like myself?"

"Most true," said Varney; and making a pause, he looked forward on the moonlight road. They were traversing a wide and open heath. The litter being at least a mile before them, was both out of sight and hearing. He looked behind, and there was an expanse, lighted by the moonbeams, without one human being in sight. He resumed his speech to Lambourne: "And will you turn upon your master, who has introduced you to this career of court-like favour—whose apprentice you have been, Michael—who has taught you the depths and shallows of court intrigue?"

"Michael not me!" said Lambourne; "I have a name will brook a MASTER before it as well as another; and as to the rest, if I have been an apprentice, my indenture is out, and I am resolute to set up for myself."

"Take thy quittance first, thou fool!" said Varney; and with a pistol, which he had for some time held in his hand, shot Lambourne through the body.

The wretch fell from his horse without a single groan; and Varney, dismounting, rifled his pockets, turning out the lining, that it might appear he had fallen by robbers. He secured the Earl's packet, which was his chief object; but he also took Lambourne's purse, containing some gold pieces, the relics of what his debauchery had left him, and from a singular combination of feelings, carried it in his hand only the length of a small river, which crossed the road, into which he threw it as far as he could fling. Such are the strange remnants of conscience which remain after she seems totally subdued, that this cruel and remorseless man would have felt himself degraded had he pocketed the few pieces belonging to the wretch whom he had thus ruthlessly slain.

The murderer reloaded his pistol after cleansing the lock and barrel from the appearances of late explosion, and rode calmly after the litter, satisfying himself that he had so adroitly removed a troublesome witness to many of his intrigues, and the bearer of mandates which he had no intentions to obey, and which, therefore, he was desirous it should be thought had never reached his hand.

The remainder of the journey was made with a degree of speed which showed the little care they had for the health of the unhappy Countess. They paused only at places where all was under their command, and where the tale they were prepared to tell of the insane Lady Varney would have obtained ready credit had she made an attempt to appeal to the compassion of the few persons admitted to see her. But Amy saw no chance of obtaining a hearing from any to whom she had an opportunity of addressing herself; and besides, was too terrified for the presence of Varney to violate the implied condition under which she was to travel free from his company. The authority of Varney, often so used during the Earl's private journeys to Cumnor, readily procured relays of horses where wanted, so that they approached Cumnor Place upon the night after they left Kenilworth.

At this period of the journey Varney came up to the rear of the litter, as he had done before repeatedly during their progress, and asked, "How does she?"

"She sleeps," said Foster. "I would we were home—her strength is exhausted."

"Rest will restore her," answered Varney. "She shall soon sleep sound and long. We must consider how to lodge her in safety."

"In her own apartments, to be sure," said Foster. "I have sent Janet to her aunt's with a proper rebuke, and the old women are truth itself—for they hate this lady cordially."

"We will not trust them, however, friend Anthony," said Varney; "We must secure her in that stronghold where you keep your gold."

"My gold!" said Anthony, much alarmed; "why, what gold have I? God help me, I have no gold—I would I had!"

"Now, marry hang thee, thou stupid brute, who thinks of or cares for thy gold? If I did, could I not find an hundred better ways to come at it? In one word, thy bedchamber, which thou hast fenced so curiously, must be her place of seclusion; and thou, thou hind, shalt press her pillows of down. I dare to say the Earl will never ask after the rich furniture of these four rooms."

This last consideration rendered Foster tractable; he only asked permission to ride before, to make matters ready, and spurring his horse, he posted before the litter, while Varney falling about threescore paces behind it, it remained only attended by Tider.

When they had arrived at Cumnor Place, the Countess asked eagerly for Janet, and showed much alarm when informed that she was no longer to have the attendance of that amiable girl.

"My daughter is dear to me, madam," said Foster gruffly; "and I desire not that she should get the court-tricks of lying and 'scaping—somewhat too much of that has she learned already, an it please your ladyship."

The Countess, much fatigued and greatly terrified by the circumstances of her journey, made no answer to this insolence, but mildly expressed a wish to retire to her chamber.

"Ay, ay," muttered Foster, "'tis but reasonable; but, under favour, you go not to your gew-gaw toy-house yonder—you will sleep to-night in better security."

"I would it were in my grave," said the Countess; "but that mortal feelings shiver at the idea of soul and body parting."

"You, I guess, have no chance to shiver at that," replied Foster. "My lord comes hither to-morrow, and doubtless you will make your own ways good with him."

"But does he come hither?—does he indeed, good Foster?"

"Oh, ay, good Foster!" replied the other. "But what Foster shall I be to-morrow when you speak of me to my lord—though all I have done was to obey his own orders?"

"You shall be my protector—a rough one indeed—but still a protector," answered the Countess. "Oh that Janet were but here!"

"She is better where she is," answered Foster—"one of you is enough to perplex a plain head. But will you taste any refreshment?"

"Oh no, no—my chamber—my chamber! I trust," she said apprehensively, "I may secure it on the inside?"

"With all my heart," answered Foster, "so I may secure it on the outside;" and taking a light, he led the way to a part of the building where Amy had never been, and conducted her up a stair of great height, preceded by one of the old women with a lamp. At the head of the stair, which seemed of almost immeasurable height, they crossed a short wooden gallery, formed of black oak, and very narrow, at the farther end of which was a strong oaken door, which opened and admitted them into the miser's apartment, homely in its accommodations in the very last degree, and, except in name, little different from a prison-room.

Foster stopped at the door, and gave the lamp to the Countess, without either offering or permitting the attendance of the old woman who had carried it. The lady stood not on ceremony, but taking it hastily, barred the door, and secured it with the ample means provided on the inside for that purpose.

Varney, meanwhile, had lurked behind on the stairs; but hearing the door barred, he now came up on tiptoe, and Foster, winking to him, pointed with self-complacence to a piece of concealed machinery in the wall, which, playing with much ease and little noise, dropped a part of the wooden gallery, after the manner of a drawbridge, so as to cut off all communication between the door of the bedroom, which he usually inhabited, and the landing-place of the high, winding stair which ascended to it. The rope by which this machinery was wrought was generally carried within the bedchamber, it being Foster's object to provide against invasion from without; but now that it was intended to secure the prisoner within, the cord had been brought over to the landing-place, and was there made fast, when Foster with much complacency had dropped the unsuspected trap-door.

Varney looked with great attention at the machinery, and peeped more than once down the abyss which was opened by the fall of the trap-door. It was dark as pitch, and seemed profoundly deep, going, as Foster informed his confederate in a whisper, nigh to the lowest vault of the Castle. Varney cast once more a fixed and long look down into this sable gulf, and then followed Foster to the part of the manor-house most usually inhabited.

When they arrived in the parlour which we have mentioned, Varney requested Foster to get them supper, and some of the choicest wine. "I will seek Alasco," he added; "we have work for him to do, and we must put him in good heart."

Foster groaned at this intimation, but made no remonstrance. The old woman assured Varney that Alasco had scarce eaten or drunken since her master's departure, living perpetually shut up in the laboratory, and talking as if the world's continuance depended on what he was doing there.

"I will teach him that the world hath other claims on him," said Varney, seizing a light, and going in quest of the alchemist. He returned, after a considerable absence, very pale, but yet with his habitual sneer on his cheek and nostril. "Our friend," he said, "has exhaled."

"How!—what mean you?" said Foster—"run away—fled with my forty pounds, that should have been multiplied a thousand-fold? I will have Hue and Cry!"

"I will tell thee a surer way," said Varney.

"How!—which way?" exclaimed Foster; "I will have back my forty pounds—I deemed them as surely a thousand times multiplied—I will have back my in-put, at the least."

"Go hang thyself, then, and sue Alasco in the Devil's Court of Chancery, for thither he has carried the cause."

"How!—what dost thou mean is he dead?"

"Ay, truly is he," said Varney; "and properly swollen already in the face and body. He had been mixing some of his devil's medicines, and the glass mask which he used constantly had fallen from his face, so that the subtle poison entered the brain, and did its work."

"SANCTA MARIA!" said Foster—"I mean, God in His mercy preserve us from covetousness and deadly sin!—Had he not had projection, think you? Saw you no ingots in the crucibles?"

"Nay, I looked not but at the dead carrion," answered Varney; "an ugly spectacle—he was swollen like a corpse three days exposed on the wheel. Pah! give me a cup of wine."

"I will go," said Foster, "I will examine myself—" He took the lamp, and hastened to the door, but there hesitated and paused. "Will you not go with me?" said he to Varney.

"To what purpose?" said Varney; "I have seen and smelled enough to spoil my appetite. I broke the window, however, and let in the air; it reeked of sulphur, and such like suffocating steams, as if the very devil had been there."

"And might it not be the act of the demon himself?" said Foster, still hesitating; "I have heard he is powerful at such times, and with such people."

"Still, if it were that Satan of thine," answered Varney, "who thus jades thy imagination, thou art in perfect safety, unless he is a most unconscionable devil indeed. He hath had two good sops of late."

"How TWO sops—what mean you?" said Foster—"what mean you?"

"You will know in time," said Varney;—"and then this other banquet—but thou wilt esteem Her too choice a morsel for the fiend's tooth—she must have her psalms, and harps, and seraphs."

Anthony Foster heard, and came slowly back to the table. "God! Sir Richard, and must that then be done?"

"Ay, in very truth, Anthony, or there comes no copyhold in thy way," replied his inflexible associate.

"I always foresaw it would land there!" said Foster. "But how, Sir Richard, how?—for not to win the world would I put hands on her."

"I cannot blame thee," said Varney; "I should be reluctant to do that myself. We miss Alasco and his manna sorely—ay, and the dog Lambourne."

"Why, where tarries Lambourne?" said Anthony.

"Ask no questions," said Varney, "thou wilt see him one day if thy creed is true. But to our graver matter. I will teach thee a spring, Tony, to catch a pewit. Yonder trap-door—yonder gimcrack of thine, will remain secure in appearance, will it not, though the supports are withdrawn beneath?"

"Ay, marry, will it," said Foster; "so long as it is not trodden on."

"But were the lady to attempt an escape over it," replied Varney, "her weight would carry it down?"

"A mouse's weight would do it," said Foster.

"Why, then, she dies in attempting her escape, and what could you or I help it, honest Tony? Let us to bed, we will adjust our project to-morrow."

On the next day, when evening approached, Varney summoned Foster to the execution of their plan. Tider and Foster's old man-servant were sent on a feigned errand down to the village, and Anthony himself, as if anxious to see that the Countess suffered no want of accommodation, visited her place of confinement. He was so much staggered at the mildness and patience with which she seemed to endure her confinement, that he could not help earnestly recommending to her not to cross the threshold of her room on any account whatever, until Lord Leicester should come, "which," he added, "I trust in God, will be very soon." Amy patiently promised that she would resign herself to her fate, and Foster returned to his hardened companion with his conscience half-eased of the perilous load that weighed on it. "I have warned her," he said; "surely in vain is the snare set in the sight of any bird!"

He left, therefore, the Countess's door unsecured on the outside, and, under the eye of Varney, withdrew the supports which sustained the falling trap, which, therefore, kept its level position merely by a slight adhesion. They withdrew to wait the issue on the ground-floor adjoining; but they waited long in vain. At length Varney, after walking long to and fro, with his face muffled in his cloak, threw it suddenly back and exclaimed, "Surely never was a woman fool enough to neglect so fair an opportunity of escape!"

"Perhaps she is resolved," said Foster, "to await her husband's return."

"True!—most true!" said Varney, rushing out; "I had not thought of that before."

In less than two minutes, Foster, who remained behind, heard the tread of a horse in the courtyard, and then a whistle similar to that which was the Earl's usual signal. The instant after the door of the Countess's chamber opened, and in the same moment the trap-door gave way. There was a rushing sound—a heavy fall—a faint groan—and all was over.

At the same instant, Varney called in at the window, in an accent and tone which was an indescribable mixture betwixt horror and raillery, "Is the bird caught?—is the deed done?"

"O God, forgive us!" replied Anthony Foster.

"Why, thou fool," said Varney, "thy toil is ended, and thy reward secure. Look down into the vault—what seest thou?"

"I see only a heap of white clothes, like a snowdrift," said Foster. "O God, she moves her arm!"

"Hurl something down on her—thy gold chest, Tony—it is an heavy one."

"Varney, thou art an incarnate fiend!" replied Foster.

"There needs nothing more—she is gone!"

"So pass our troubles," said Varney, entering the room; "I dreamed not I could have mimicked the Earl's call so well."

"Oh, if there be judgment in heaven, thou hast deserved it," said Foster, "and wilt meet it! Thou hast destroyed her by means of her best affections—it is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!"

"Thou art a fanatical ass," replied Varney; "let us now think how the alarm should be given—the body is to remain where it is."

But their wickedness was to be permitted no longer; for even while they were at this consultation, Tressilian and Raleigh broke in upon them, having obtained admittance by means of Tider and Foster's servant, whom they had secured at the village.

Anthony Foster fled on their entrance, and knowing each corner and pass of the intricate old house, escaped all search. But Varney was taken on the spot; and instead of expressing compunction for what he had done, seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in pointing out to them the remains of the murdered Countess, while at the same time he defied them to show that he had any share in her death. The despairing grief of Tressilian, on viewing the mangled and yet warm remains of what had lately been so lovely and so beloved, was such that Raleigh was compelled to have him removed from the place by force, while he himself assumed the direction of what was to be done.

Varney, upon a second examination, made very little mystery either of the crime or of its motives—alleging, as a reason for his frankness, that though much of what he confessed could only have attached to him by suspicion, yet such suspicion would have been sufficient to deprive him of Leicester's confidence, and to destroy all his towering plans of ambition. "I was not born," he said, "to drag on the remainder of life a degraded outcast; nor will I so die that my fate shall make a holiday to the vulgar herd."

From these words it was apprehended he had some design upon himself, and he was carefully deprived of all means by which such could be carried into execution. But like some of the heroes of antiquity, he carried about his person a small quantity of strong poison, prepared probably by the celebrated Demetrius Alasco. Having swallowed this potion over-night, he was found next morning dead in his cell; nor did he appear to have suffered much agony, his countenance

presenting, even in death, the habitual expression of sneering sarcasm which was predominant while he lived. "The wicked man," saith Scripture, "hath no bonds in his death."

The fate of his colleague in wickedness was long unknown. Cumnor Place was deserted immediately after the murder; for in the vicinity of what was called the Lady Dudley's Chamber, the domestics pretended to hear groans, and screams, and other supernatural noises. After a certain length of time, Janet, hearing no tidings of her father, became the uncontrolled mistress of his property, and conferred it with her hand upon Wayland, now a man of settled character, and holding a place in Elizabeth's household. But it was after they had been both dead for some years that their eldest son and heir, in making some researches about Cumnor Hall, discovered a secret passage, closed by an iron door, which, opening from behind the bed in the Lady Dudley's Chamber, descended to a sort of cell, in which they found an iron chest containing a quantity of gold, and a human skeleton stretched above it. The fate of Anthony Foster was now manifest. He had fled to this place of concealment, forgetting the key of the spring-lock; and being barred from escape by the means he had used for preservation of that gold, for which he had sold his salvation, he had there perished miserably. Unquestionably the groans and screams heard by the domestics were not entirely imaginary, but were those of this wretch, who, in his agony, was crying for relief and succour.

The news of the Countess's dreadful fate put a sudden period to the pleasures of Kenilworth. Leicester retired from court, and for a considerable time abandoned himself to his remorse. But as Varney in his last declaration had been studious to spare the character of his patron, the Earl was the object rather of compassion than resentment. The Queen at length recalled him to court; he was once more distinguished as a statesman and favourite; and the rest of his career is well known to history. But there was something retributive in his death, if, according to an account very generally received, it took place from his swallowing a draught of poison which was designed by him for another person. [See Note 9. Death of the Earl of Leicester.]

Sir Hugh Robsart died very soon after his daughter, having settled his estate on Tressilian. But neither the prospect of rural independence, nor the promises of favour which Elizabeth held out to induce him to follow the court, could remove his profound melancholy. Wherever he went he seemed to see before him the disfigured corpse of the early and only object of his affection. At length, having made provision for the maintenance of the old friends and old servants who formed Sir Hugh's family at Lidcote Hall, he himself embarked with his friend Raleigh for the Virginia expedition, and, young in years but old in grief, died before his day in that foreign land.

Of inferior persons it is only necessary to say that Blount's wit grew brighter as his yellow roses faded; that, doing his part as a brave commander in the wars, he was much more in his element than during the short period of his following the court; and that Flibbertigibbet's acute genius raised him to favour and distinction in the employment both of Burleigh and Walsingham.

BOOK XIII
THE FORTUNES OF NIGEL
CHAPTER I

*Now Scot and English are agreed,
And Saunders hastes to cross the Tweed,
Where, such the splendours that attend him,
His very mother scarce had kend him.
His metamorphosis behold,
From Glasgow frieze to cloth of gold;
His back-sword, with the iron hilt,
To rapier, fairly hatch'd and gilt;
Was ever seen a gallant braver!
His very bonnet's grown a beaver.*

The Reformation.

The long-continued hostilities which had for centuries separated the south and the north divisions of the Island of Britain, had been happily terminated by the succession of the pacific James I. to the English Crown. But although the united crown of England and Scotland was worn by the same individual, it required a long lapse of time, and the succession of more than one generation, ere the inveterate national prejudices which had so long existed betwixt the sister kingdoms were removed, and the subjects of either side of the Tweed brought to regard those upon the opposite bank as friends and as brethren.

These prejudices were, of course, most inveterate during the reign of King James. The English subjects accused him of partiality to those of his ancient kingdom; while the Scots, with equal injustice, charged him with having forgotten the land of his nativity, and with neglecting those early friends to whose allegiance he had been so much indebted.

The temper of the king, peaceable even to timidity, inclined him perpetually to interfere as mediator between the contending factions, whose brawls disturbed the Court. But, notwithstanding all his precautions, historians have recorded many instances, where the mutual hatred of two nations, who, after being enemies for a thousand years, had been so very recently united, broke forth with a fury which menaced a general convulsion; and, spreading from the highest to the lowest classes, as it occasioned debates in council and parliament, factions in the court, and duels among the gentry, was no less productive of riots and brawls amongst the lower orders.

While these heart-burnings were at the highest, there flourished in the city of London an ingenious but whimsical and self opinioned mechanic, much devoted to abstract studies, David Ramsay by name, who, whether recommended by his great skill in his profession, as the courtiers alleged, or, as was murmured among the neighbours, by his birthplace, in the good town of Dalkeith, near Edinburgh, held in James's household the post of maker of watches and horologes to his Majesty. He scorned not, however, to keep open shop within Temple Bar, a few yards to the eastward of Saint Dunstan's Church.

The shop of a London tradesman at that time, as it may be supposed, was something very different from those we now see in the same locality. The goods were exposed to sale in cases, only defended from the weather by a covering of canvass, and the whole resembled the stalls and booths now erected for the temporary accommodation of dealers at a country fair, rather than the established emporium of a respectable citizen. But most of the shopkeepers of note, and David Ramsay amongst others, had their booth connected with a small apartment which opened backward from it, and bore the same resemblance to the front shop that Robinson Crusoe's cavern did to the tent which he erected before it.

To this Master Ramsay was often accustomed to retreat to the labour of his abstruse calculations; for he aimed at improvements and discoveries in his own art, and sometimes pushed his researches, like Napier, and other mathematicians of the period, into abstract science. When thus engaged, he left the outer posts of his commercial establishment to be maintained by two stout-bodied and strong-voiced apprentices, who kept up the cry of, "What d'ye lack? what d'ye lack?" accompanied with the appropriate recommendations of the articles in which they dealt.

This direct and personal application for custom to those who chanced to pass by, is now, we believe, limited to Monmouth Street, (if it still exists even in that repository of ancient garments,) under the guardianship of the scattered remnant of Israel. But at the time we are speaking of, it was practised alike by Jew and Gentile, and served, instead of all our present newspaper puffs and advertisements, to solicit the attention of the public in general, and of friends in particular, to the unrivalled excellence of the goods, which they offered to sale upon such easy terms, that it might fairly appear that the venders had rather a view to the general service of the public, than to their own particular advantage.

The verbal proclaimers of the excellence of their commodities, had this advantage over those who, in the present day, use the public papers for the same purpose, that they could in many cases adapt their address to the peculiar appearance and apparent taste of the passengers. [This, as we have said, was also the case in Monmouth Street in our remembrance. We have ourselves been reminded of the deficiencies of our femoral habiliments, and exhorted upon that score to fit ourselves more becomingly; but this is a digression.] This direct and personal mode of invitation to customers became, however, a dangerous temptation to the young wags who were employed in the task of solicitation during the absence of the principal person interested in the traffic; and, confiding in their numbers and civic union, the 'prentices of London were often seduced into taking liberties with the passengers, and exercising their wit at the expense of those whom they had no hopes of converting into customers by their eloquence. If this were resented by any act of violence, the inmates of each shop were ready to pour forth in succour; and in the words of an old song which Dr. Johnson was used to hum,—

*"Up then rose the 'prentices all,
Living in London, both proper and tall."*

Desperate riots often arose on such occasions, especially when the Templars, or other youths connected with the aristocracy, were insulted, or conceived themselves to be so. Upon such occasions, bare steel was frequently opposed to the clubs of the citizens, and death sometimes ensued on both sides. The tardy and inefficient police of the time had no other resource than by the Alderman of the ward calling out the householders, and putting a stop to the strife by overpowering numbers, as the Capulets and Montagues are separated upon the stage.

At the period when such was the universal custom of the most respectable, as well as the most inconsiderable, shopkeepers in London, David Ramsay, on the evening to which we solicit the attention of the reader, retiring to more abstruse and private labours, left the administration of his outer shop, or booth, to the aforesaid sharp-witted, active, able-bodied, and well-voiced apprentices, namely, Jenkin Vincent and Frank Tunstall.

Vincent had been educated at the excellent foundation of Christ's Church Hospital, and was bred, therefore, as well as born, a Londoner, with all the acuteness, address, and audacity which belong peculiarly to the youth of a metropolis. He was now about twenty years old, short in stature, but remarkably strong made, eminent for his feats upon holidays at foot-ball, and other gymnastic exercises; scarce rivalled in the broad-sword play, though hitherto only exercised in the form of single-stick. He knew every lane, blind alley, and sequestered court of the ward, better than his catechism; was alike active in his master's affairs, and in his own adventures of fun and mischief; and so managed matters, that the credit he acquired by the former bore him out, or at least served for his apology, when the latter propensity led him into scrapes, of which, however, it is but fair to state, that they had hitherto inferred nothing mean or discreditable. Some aberrations there were, which David Ramsay, his master, endeavoured to reduce to regular order when he discovered them, and others which he winked at—supposing them to answer the purpose of the escapement of a watch, which disposes of a certain quantity of the extra power of that mechanical impulse which puts the whole in motion.

The physiognomy of Jin Vin—by which abbreviation he was familiarly known through the ward—corresponded with the sketch we have given of his character. His head, upon which his 'prentice's flat cap was generally flung in a careless and oblique fashion, was closely covered with thick hair of raven black, which curled

naturally and closely, and would have grown to great length, but for the modest custom enjoined by his state in life and strictly enforced by his master, which compelled him to keep it short-cropped,—not unreluctantly, as he looked with envy on the flowing ringlets, in which the courtiers, and aristocratic students of the neighbouring Temple, began to indulge themselves, as marks of superiority and of gentility.

Vincent's eyes were deep set in his head, of a strong vivid black, full of fire, roguery, and intelligence, and conveying a humorous expression, even while he was uttering the usual small-talk of his trade, as if he ridiculed those who were disposed to give any weight to his commonplaces. He had address enough, however, to add little touches of his own, which gave a turn of drollery even to this ordinary routine of the booth; and the alacrity of his manner—his ready and obvious wish to oblige—his intelligence and civility, when he thought civility necessary, made him a universal favourite with his master's customers.

His features were far from regular, for his nose was flattish, his mouth tending to the larger size, and his complexion inclining to be more dark than was then thought consistent with masculine beauty. But, in despite of his having always breathed the air of a crowded city, his complexion had the ruddy and manly expression of redundant health; his turned-up nose gave an air of spirit and raillery to what he said, and seconded the laugh of his eyes; and his wide mouth was garnished with a pair of well-formed and well-coloured lips, which, when he laughed, disclosed a range of teeth strong and well set, and as white as the very pearl. Such was the elder apprentice of David Ramsay, Memory's Monitor, watchmaker, and constructor of horologes, to his Most Sacred Majesty James I.

Jenkin's companion was the younger apprentice, though, perhaps, he might be the elder of the two in years. At any rate, he was of a much more staid and composed temper. Francis Tunstall was of that ancient and proud descent who claimed the style of the "unstained;" because, amid the various chances of the long and bloody wars of the Roses, they had, with undeviating faith, followed the House of Lancaster, to which they had originally attached themselves. The meanest sprig of such a tree attached importance to the root from which it derived itself; and Tunstall was supposed to nourish in secret a proportion of that family pride, which had exhorted tears from his widowed and almost indigent mother, when she saw herself obliged to consign him to a line of life inferior, as her prejudices suggested, to the course held by his progenitors. Yet, with all this aristocratic prejudice, his master found the well-born youth more docile, regular, and strictly attentive to his duty, than his far more active and alert comrade. Tunstall also gratified his master by the particular attention which he seemed disposed to bestow on the abstract principles of science connected with the trade which he was bound to study, the limits of which were daily enlarged with the increase of mathematical science.

Vincent beat his companion beyond the distance-post, in every thing like the practical adaptation of thorough practice, in the dexterity of hand necessary to execute the mechanical branches of the art, and doubled-distanced him in all respecting the commercial affairs of the shop. Still David Ramsay was wont to say, that if Vincent knew how to do a thing the better of the two, Tunstall was much better acquainted with the principles on which it ought to be done; and he sometimes objected to the latter, that he knew critical excellence too well ever to be satisfied with practical mediocrity.

The disposition of Tunstall was shy, as well as studious; and, though perfectly civil and obliging, he never seemed to feel himself in his place while he went through the duties of the shop. He was tall and handsome, with fair hair, and well-formed limbs, good features, well-opened light-blue eyes, a straight Grecian nose, and a countenance which expressed both good-humour and intelligence, but qualified by a gravity unsuitable to his years, and which almost amounted to dejection. He lived on the best of terms with his companion, and readily stood by him whenever he was engaged in any of the frequent skirmishes, which, as we have already observed, often disturbed the city of London about this period. But though Tunstall was allowed to understand quarter-staff (the weapon of the North country) in a superior degree, and though he was naturally both strong and active, his interference in such affrays seemed always matter of necessity; and, as he never voluntarily joined either their brawls or their sports, he held a far lower place in the opinion of the youth of the ward than his hearty and active friend Jin Vin. Nay, had it not been for the interest made for his comrade, by the intercession of Vincent, Tunstall would have stood some chance of being altogether excluded from the society of his contemporaries of the same condition, who called him, in scorn, the Cavaliero Cuddy, and the Gentle Tunstall.

On the other hand, the lad himself, deprived of the fresh air in which he had been brought up, and foregoing the exercise to which he had formerly been accustomed, while the inhabitant of his native mansion, lost gradually the freshness of his complexion, and, without showing any formal symptoms of disease, grew more thin and pale as he grew older, and at length exhibited the appearance of indifferent health, without any thing of the habits and complaints of an invalid, excepting a disposition to avoid society, and to spend his leisure time in private study, rather than mingle in the sports of his companions, or even resort to the theatres, then the general rendezvous of his class; where, according to high authority, they fought for half-bitten apples, cracked nuts, and filled the upper gallery with their clamours.

Such were the two youths who called David Ramsay master; and with both of whom he used to fret from morning till night, as their peculiarities interfered with his own, or with the quiet and beneficial course of his traffic.

Upon the whole, however, the youths were attached to their master, and he, a good-natured, though an absent and whimsical man, was scarce less so to them; and when a little warmed with wine at an occasional junketing, he used to boast, in his northern dialect, of his "two bonnie lads, and the looks that the court ladies threw at them, when visiting his shop in their caroches, when on a frolic into the city." But David Ramsay never failed, at the same time, to draw up his own tall, thin, lathy skeleton, extend his lean jaws into an alarming grin, and indicate, by a nod of his yard-long visage, and a twinkle of his little grey eye, that there might be more faces in Fleet Street worth looking at than those of Frank and Jenkin. His old neighbour, Widow Simmons, the sempstress, who had served, in her day, the very tip-top revellers of the Temple, with ruffs, cuffs, and bands, distinguished more deeply the sort of attention paid by the females of quality, who so regularly visited David Ramsay's shop, to its inmates. "The boy Frank," she admitted, "used to attract the attention of the young ladies, as having something gentle and downcast in his looks; but then he could not better himself, for the poor youth had not a word to throw at a dog. Now Jin Vin was so full of his jibes and jeers, and so willing, and so ready, and so serviceable, and so mannerly all the while, with a step that sprung like a buck's in Epping Forest, and his eye that twinkled as black as a gipsy's, that no woman who knew the world would make a comparison betwixt the lads. As for poor neighbour Ramsay himself, the man," she said, "was a civil neighbour, and a learned man, doubtless, and might be a rich man if he had common sense to back his learning; and doubtless, for a Scot, neighbour Ramsay was nothing of a bad man, but he was so constantly grimed with smoke, gilded with brass filings, and smeared with lamp-black and oil, that Dame Simmons judged it would require his whole shopful of watches to induce any feasible woman to touch the said neighbour Ramsay with any thing save a pair of tongs."

A still higher authority, Dame Ursula, wife to Benjamin Suddlechop, the barber, was of exactly the same opinion.

Such were, in natural qualities and public estimation, the two youths, who, in a fine April day, having first rendered their dutiful service and attendance on the table of their master and his daughter, at their dinner at one o'clock,—Such, O ye lads of London, was the severe discipline undergone by your predecessors!—and having regaled themselves upon the fragments, in company with two female domestics, one a cook, and maid of all work, the other called Mistress Margaret's maid, now relieved their master in the duty of the outward shop; and agreeably to the established custom, were soliciting, by their entreaties and recommendations of their master's manufacture, the attention and encouragement of the passengers.

In this species of service it may be easily supposed that Jenkin Vincent left his more reserved and bashful comrade far in the background. The latter could only articulate with difficulty, and as an act of duty which he was rather ashamed of discharging, the established words of form—"What d'ye lack?—What d'ye lack?—Clocks—watches—barnacles? —What d'ye lack?—Watches—clocks—barnacles?—What d'ye lack, sir? What d'ye lack, madam?—Barnacles—watches—clocks?"

But this dull and dry iteration, however varied by diversity of verbal arrangement, sounded flat when mingled with the rich and recommendatory oratory of the bold-faced, deep-mouthed, and ready-witted Jenkin Vincent.—"What d'ye lack, noble sir?—What d'ye lack, beauteous madam?" he said, in a tone at once bold and soothing, which often was so applied as both to gratify the persons addressed, and to excite a smile from other hearers.—"God bless your reverence," to a benefited clergyman; "the Greek and Hebrew have harmed your reverence's eyes—Buy a pair of David Ramsay's barnacles. The King—God bless his Sacred Majesty!—never reads Hebrew or Greek without them."

"Are you well avised of that?" said a fat parson from the Vale of Evesham. "Nay, if the Head of the Church wears them,—God bless his Sacred Majesty!—I will try what they can do for me; for I have not been able to distinguish one Hebrew letter from another, since—I cannot remember the time—when I had a bad fever. Choose me a pair of his most Sacred Majesty's own wearing, my good youth."

"This is a pair, and please your reverence," said Jenkin, producing a pair of spectacles which he touched with an air of great deference and respect, "which his most blessed Majesty placed this day three weeks on his own blessed nose; and would have kept them for his own sacred use, but that the setting being, as your reverence sees, of the purest jet, was, as his Sacred Majesty was pleased to say, fitter for a bishop than for a secular prince."

"His Sacred Majesty the King," said the worthy divine, "was ever a very Daniel in his judgment. Give me the barnacles, my good youth, and who can say what nose they may bestride in two years hence?—our reverend brother of Gloucester waxes in years." He then pulled out his purse, paid for the spectacles, and left the shop with even a more important step than that which had paused to enter it.

"For shame," said Tunstall to his companion; "these glasses will never suit one of his years."

"You are a fool, Frank," said Vincent, in reply; "had the good doctor wished glasses to read with, he would have tried them before buying. He does not want to look through them himself, and these will serve the purpose of being looked at by other folks, as well as the best magnifiers in the shop.—What d'ye lack?" he cried, resuming his solicitations. "Mirrors for your toilette, my pretty madam; your head-gear is something awry—pity, since it is so well fancied." The woman stopped and bought a mirror.—"What d'ye lack?—a watch, Master Sergeant—a watch that will go as long as a lawsuit, as steady and true as your own eloquence?"

"Hold your peace, sir," answered the Knight of the Coif, who was disturbed by Vin's address whilst in deep consultation with an eminent attorney; "hold your peace! You are the loudest-tongued varlet betwixt the Devil's Tavern and Guildhall."

"A watch," reiterated the undaunted Jenkin, "that shall not lose thirteen minutes in a thirteen years' lawsuit.—He's out of hearing—A watch with four wheels and a bar-movement—a watch that shall tell you, Master Poet, how long the patience of the audience will endure your next piece at the Black Bull." The bard laughed, and fumbled in the pocket of his slops till he chanced into a corner, and fairly caught, a small piece of coin.

"Here is a tester to cherish thy wit, good boy," he said.

"Gramercy," said Vin; "at the next play of yours I will bring down a set of roaring boys, that shall make all the critics in the pit, and the gallants on the stage, civil, or else the curtain shall smoke for it."

"Now, that I call mean," said Tunstall, "to take the poor rhymer's money, who has so little left behind."

"You are an owl, once again," said Vincent; "if he has nothing left to buy cheese and radishes, he will only dine a day the sooner with some patron or some player, for that is his fate five days out of the seven. It is unnatural that a poet should pay for his own pot of beer; I will drink his tester for him, to save him from such shame; and when his third night comes round, he shall have penniworths for his coin, I promise you.—But here comes another-guess customer. Look at that strange fellow—see how he gapes at every shop, as if he would swallow the wares.—O! Saint Dunstan has caught his eye; pray God he swallow not the images. See how he stands astonished, as old Adam and Eve ply their ding-dong! Come, Frank, thou art a scholar; construe me that same fellow, with his blue cap with a cock's feather in it, to show he's of gentle blood, God wot—his grey eyes, his yellow hair, his sword with a ton of iron in the handle—his grey thread-bare cloak—his step like a Frenchman—his look like a Spaniard—a book at his girdle, and a broad dudgeon-dagger on the other side, to show him half-pedant, half-bully. How call you that pageant, Frank?"

"A raw Scotsman," said Tunstall; "just come up, I suppose, to help the rest of his countrymen to gnaw old England's bones; a palmerworm, I reckon, to devour what the locust has spared."

"Even so, Frank," answered Vincent; "just as the poet sings sweetly,—

*'In Scotland he was born and bred,
And, though a beggar, must be fed.'*"

"Hush!" said Tunstall, "remember our master."

"Pshaw!" answered his mercurial companion; "he knows on which side his bread is buttered, and I warrant you has not lived so long among Englishmen, and by Englishmen, to quarrel with us for bearing an English mind. But see, our Scot has done gazing at St. Dunstan's, and comes our way. By this light, a proper lad and a sturdy, in spite of freckles and sun-burning.—He comes nearer still, I will have at him."

"And, if you do," said his comrade, "you may get a broken head—he looks not as if he would carry coals."

"A fig for your threat," said Vincent, and instantly addressed the stranger. "Buy a watch, most noble northern Thane—buy a watch, to count the hours of plenty since the blessed moment you left Berwick behind you.—Buy barnacles, to see the English gold lies ready for your gripe.—Buy what you will, you shall have credit for three days; for, were your pockets as bare as Father Fergus's, you are a Scot in London, and you will be stocked in that time." The stranger looked sternly at the waggish apprentice, and seemed to grasp his cudgel in rather a menacing fashion. "Buy physic," said the undaunted Vincent, "if you will buy neither time nor light—physic for a proud stomach, sir;—there is a 'pothecary's shop on the other side of the way."

Here the probationary disciple of Galen, who stood at his master's door in his flat cap and canvass sleeves, with a large wooden pestle in his hand, took up the ball which was flung to him by Jenkin, with, "What d'ye lack, sir?—Buy a choice Caledonian salve, *Flos sulphvr. cum butyro quant. suff.*"

"To be taken after a gentle rubbing-down with an English oaken towel," said Vincent.

The bonny Scot had given full scope to the play of this small artillery of city wit, by halting his stately pace, and viewing grimly, first the one assailant, and then the other, as if menacing either repartee or more violent revenge. But phlegm or prudence got the better of his indignation, and tossing his head as one who valued not the raillery to which he had been exposed, he walked down Fleet Street, pursued by the horse-laugh of his tormentors.

"The Scot will not fight till he see his own blood," said Tunstall, whom his north of England extraction had made familiar with all manner of proverbs against those who lay yet farther north than himself.

"Faith, I know not," said Jenkin; "he looks dangerous, that fellow—he will hit some one over the noddle before he goes far.—Hark!—hark!—they are rising."

Accordingly, the well-known cry of, "'Prentices—'prentices—Clubs—clubs!" now rang along Fleet Street; and Jenkin, snatching up his weapon, which lay beneath the counter ready at the slightest notice, and calling to Tunstall to take his bat and follow, leaped over the hatch-door which protected the outer-shop, and ran as fast as he could towards the affray, echoing the cry as he ran, and elbowing, or shoving aside, whoever stood in his way. His comrade, first calling to his master to give an eye to the shop, followed Jenkin's example, and ran after him as fast as he could, but with more attention to the safety and convenience of others; while old David Ramsay, with hands and eyes uplifted, a green apron before him, and a glass which he had been polishing thrust into his bosom, came forth to look after the safety of his goods and chattels, knowing, by old experience, that, when the cry of "Clubs" once arose, he would have little aid on the part of his apprentices.

CHAPTER II

*This, sir, is one among the Seignory,
Has wealth at will, and will to use his wealth,
And wit to increase it. Marry, his worst folly
Lies in a thriftless sort of charity,
That goes a-gadding sometimes after objects,*

Which wise men will not see when thrust upon them.

The Old Couple.

The ancient gentleman bustled about his shop, in pettish displeasure at being summoned hither so hastily, to the interruption of his more abstract studies; and, unwilling to renounce the train of calculation which he had put in progress, he mingled whimsically with the fragments of the arithmetical operation, his oratory to the passengers, and angry reflections on his idle apprentices. "What d'ye lack, sir? Madam, what d'ye lack—clocks for hall or table—night-watches—day watches?—*Locking wheel being 48—the power of retort 8—the striking pins are 48—What d'ye lack, honoured sir?—The quotient—the multiplicand—That the knaves should have gone out this blessed minute!—the acceleration being at the rate of 5 minutes, 55 seconds, 53 thirds, 59 fourths—I will switch them both when they come back—I will, by the bones of the immortal Napier!*"

Here the vexed philosopher was interrupted by the entrance of a grave citizen of a most respectable appearance, who, saluting him familiarly by the name of "Davie, my old acquaintance," demanded what had put him so much out of sorts, and gave him at the same time a cordial grasp of his hand.

The stranger's dress was, though grave, rather richer than usual. His panned hose were of black velvet, lined with purple silk, which garniture appeared at the slashes. His doublet was of purple cloth, and his short cloak of black velvet, to correspond with his hose; and both were adorned with a great number of small silver buttons richly wrought in filigree. A triple chain of gold hung round his neck; and, in place of a sword or dagger, he wore at his belt an ordinary knife for the purpose of the table, with a small silver case, which appeared to contain writing materials. He might have seemed some secretary or clerk engaged in the service of the public, only that his low, flat, and unadorned cap, and his well-blackened, shining shoes, indicated that he belonged to the city. He was a well-made man, about the middle size, and seemed in firm health, though advanced in years. His looks expressed sagacity and good-humour: and the air of respectability which his dress announced, was well supported by his clear eye, ruddy cheek, and grey hair. He used the Scottish idiom in his first address, but in such a manner that it could hardly be distinguished whether he was passing upon his friend a sort of jocular mockery, or whether it was his own native dialect, for his ordinary discourse had little provincialism.

In answer to the queries of his respectable friend, Ramsay groaned heavily, answering by echoing back the question, "What ails me, Master George? Why, every thing ails me! I profess to you that a man may as well live in Fairyland as in the Ward of Farringdon-Without. My apprentices are turned into mere goblins—they appear and disappear like spunkies, and have no more regularity in them than a watch without a scapement. If there is a ball to be tossed up, or a bullock to be driven mad, or a quean to be ducked for scolding, or a head to be broken, Jenkin is sure to be at the one end or the other of it, and then away skips Francis Tunstall for company. I think the prize-fighters, bear-leaders, and mountebanks, are in a league against me, my dear friend, and that they pass my house ten times for any other in the city. Here's an Italian fellow come over, too, that they call Punchinello; and, altogether——"

"Well," interrupted Master George, "but what is all this to the present case?"

"Why," replied Ramsay, "here has been a cry of thieves or murder, (I hope that will prove the least of it amongst these English pock-pudding swine!) and I have been interrupted in the deepest calculation ever mortal man plunged into, Master George."

"What, man!" replied Master George, "you must take patience—You are a man that deals in time, and can make it go fast and slow at pleasure; you, of all the world, have least reason to complain, if a little of it be lost now and then.—But here come your boys, and bringing in a slain man betwixt them, I think—here has been serious mischief, I am afraid."

"The more mischief the better sport," said the crabbed old watchmaker. "I am blithe, though, that it's neither of the two loons themselves.—What are ye bringing a corpse here for, ye fause villains?" he added, addressing the two apprentices, who, at the head of a considerable mob of their own class, some of whom bore evident marks of a recent fray, were carrying the body betwixt them.

"He is not dead yet, sir," answered Tunstall.

"Carry him into the apothecary's, then," replied his master. "D'ye think I can set a man's life in motion again, as if he were a clock or a timepiece?"

"For godsake, old friend," said his acquaintance, "let us have him here at the nearest—he seems only in a swoon."

"A swoon?" said Ramsay, "and what business had he to swoon in the streets? Only, if it will oblige my friend Master George, I would take in all the dead men in St. Dunstan's parish. Call Sam Porter to look after the shop." So saying, the stunned man, being the identical Scotsman who had passed a short time before amidst the jeers of the apprentices, was carried into the back shop of the artist, and there placed in an armed chair till the apothecary from over the way came to his assistance. This gentleman, as sometimes happens to those of the learned professions, had rather more lore than knowledge, and began to talk of the sinciput and occiput, and cerebrum and cerebellum, until he exhausted David Ramsay's brief stock of patience.

"Bell-um! bell-ell-um!" he repeated, with great indignation; "What signify all the bells in London, if you do not put a plaster on the child's crown?"

Master George, with better-directed zeal, asked the apothecary whether bleeding might not be useful; when, after humming and hawing for a moment, and being unable, upon the spur of the occasion, to suggest any thing else, the man of pharmacy observed, that it would, at all events, relieve the brain or cerebrum, in case there was a tendency to the depositions of any extravasated blood, to operate as a pressure upon that delicate organ.

Fortunately he was adequate to performing this operation; and, being powerfully aided by Jenkin Vincent (who was learned in all cases of broken heads) with plenty of cold water, and a little vinegar, applied according to the scientific method practised by the bottle-holders in a modern ring, the man began to raise himself on his chair, draw his cloak tightly around him, and look about like one who struggles to recover sense and recollection.

"He had better lie down on the bed in the little back closet," said Mr. Ramsay's visitor, who seemed perfectly familiar with the accommodations which the house afforded.

"He is welcome to my share of the truckle," said Jenkin,—for in the said back closet were the two apprentices accommodated in one truckle-bed,—"I can sleep under the counter."

"So can I," said Tunstall, "and the poor fellow can have the bed all night."

"Sleep," said the apothecary, "is, in the opinion of Galen, a restorative and febrifuge, and is most naturally taken in a truckle-bed."

"Where a better cannot be come by,"—said Master George; "but these are two honest lads, to give up their beds so willingly. Come, off with his cloak, and let us bear him to his couch—I will send for Dr. Irving, the king's chirurgeon—he does not live far off, and that shall be my share of the Samaritan's duty, neighbour Ramsay."

"Well, sir," said the apothecary, "it is at your pleasure to send for other advice, and I shall not object to consult with Dr. Irving or any other medical person of skill, neither to continue to furnish such drugs as may be needful from my pharmacopeia. However, whatever Dr. Irving, who, I think, hath had his degrees in Edinburgh, or Dr. Any-one-beside, be he Scottish or English, may say to the contrary, sleep, taken timeously, is a febrifuge, or sedative, and also a restorative." He muttered a few more learned words, and concluded by informing Ramsay's friend in English far more intelligible than his Latin, that he would look to him as his paymaster, for medicines, care, and attendance, furnished, or to be furnished, to this party unknown.

Master George only replied by desiring him to send his bill for what he had already to charge, and to give himself no farther trouble unless he heard from him. The pharmacoplist, who, from discoveries made by the cloak falling a little aside, had no great opinion of the faculty of this chance patient to make reimbursement, had no sooner seen his case espoused by a substantial citizen, than he showed some reluctance to quit possession of it, and it needed a short and stern hint from Master George, which, with all his good-humour, he was capable of expressing when occasion required, to send to his own dwelling this Esculapius of Temple Bar.

When they were rid of Mr. Raredrench, the charitable efforts of Jenkin and Francis, to divest the patient of his long grey cloak, were firmly resisted on his own part.—"My life suner—my life suner," he muttered in indistinct murmurs. In these efforts to retain his upper garment, which was too tender to resist much handling, it gave way at length with a loud rent, which almost threw the patient into a second syncope, and he sat before them in his under garments, the looped and

repaired wretchedness of which moved at once pity and laughter, and had certainly been the cause of his unwillingness to resign the mantle, which, like the virtue of charity, served to cover so many imperfections.

The man himself cast his eyes on his poverty-struck garb, and seemed so much ashamed of the disclosure, that, muttering between his teeth, that he would be too late for his appointment, he made an effort to rise and leave the shop, which was easily prevented by Jenkin Vincent and his comrade, who, at the nod of Master George, laid hold of and detained him in his chair.

The patient next looked round him for a moment, and then said faintly, in his broad northern language—"What sort of usage ca' ye this, gentlemen, to a stranger a sojourner in your town? Ye hae broken my head—ye hae riven my cloak, and now ye are for restraining my personal liberty! They were wiser than me," he said, after a moment's pause, "that counselled me to wear my warst claithing in the streets of London; and, if I could have got ony things warse than these mean garments,"—"which would have been very difficult," said Jin Vin, in a whisper to his companion,—"they would have been e'en ower gude for the grips o' men sae little acquainted with the laws of honest civility."

"To say the truth," said Jenkin, unable to forbear any longer, although the discipline of the times prescribed to those in his situation a degree of respectful distance and humility in the presence of parents, masters, or seniors, of which the present age has no idea—"to say the truth, the good gentleman's clothes look as if they would not brook much handling."

"Hold your peace, young man," said Master George, with a tone of authority; "never mock the stranger or the poor—the black ox has not trod on your foot yet—you know not what lands you may travel in, or what clothes you may wear, before you die."

Vincent held down his head and stood rebuked, but the stranger did not accept the apology which was made for him.

"I *am* a stranger, sir," said he, "that is certain; though methinks, that, being such, I have been somewhat familiarly treated in this town of yours; but, as for my being poor, I think I need not be charged with poverty, till I seek siller of somebody."

"The dear country all over," said Master George, in a whisper, to David Ramsay, "pride and poverty."

But David had taken out his tablets and silver pen, and, deeply immersed in calculations, in which he rambled over all the terms of arithmetic, from the simple unit to millions, billions, and trillions, neither heard nor answered the observation of his friend, who, seeing his abstraction, turned again to the Scot.

"I fancy now, Jockey, if a stranger were to offer you a noble, you would chuck it back at his head?"

"Not if I could do him honest service for it, sir," said the Scot; "I am willing to do what I may to be useful, though I come of an honourable house, and may be said to be in a sort indifferently weel provided for."

"Ay!" said the interrogator, "and what house may claim the honour of your descent?"

"An ancient coat belongs to it, as the play says," whispered Vincent to his companion.

"Come, Jockey, out with it," continued Master George, observing that the Scot, as usual with his countrymen, when asked a blunt, straightforward question, took a little time before answering it.

"I am no more Jockey, sir, than you are John," said the stranger, as if offended at being addressed by a name, which at that time was used, as Sawney now is, for a general appellation of the Scottish nation. "My name, if you must know it, is Richie Moniplies; and I come of the old and honourable house of Castle Collop, weel kend at the West-Port of Edinburgh."

"What is that you call the West-Port?" proceeded the interrogator.

"Why, an it like your honour," said Richie, who now, having recovered his senses sufficiently to observe the respectable exterior of Master George, threw more civility into his manner than at first, "the West-Port is a gate of our city, as yonder brick arches at Whitehall form the entrance of the king's palace here, only that the West-Port is of stonern work, and mair decorated with architecture and the policy of bigging."

"Nouns, man, the Whitehall gateways were planned by the great Holbein," answered Master George; "I suspect your accident has jumbled your brains, my good friend. I suppose you will tell me next, you have at Edinburgh as fine a navigable river as the Thames, with all its shipping?"

"The Thames!" exclaimed Richie, in a tone of ineffable contempt—"God bless your honour's judgment, we have at Edinburgh the Water-of-Leith and the Nor-loch!"

"And the Pow-Burn, and the Quarry-holes, and the Gusedub, ye fause loon!" answered Master George, speaking Scotch with a strong and natural emphasis; "it is such land-loupers as you, that, with your falset and fair fashions, bring reproach on our whole country."

"God forgie me, sir," said Richie, much surprised at finding the supposed southron converted into a native Scot, "I took your honour for an Englisher! But I hope there was naething wrang in standing up for ane's ain country's credit in a strange land, where all men cry her down?"

"Do you call it for your country's credit, to show that she has a lying, puffing rascal, for one of her children?" said Master George. "But come, man, never look grave on it,—as you have found a countryman, so you have found a friend, if you deserve one—and especially if you answer me truly."

"I see nae gude it wad do me to speak ought else but truth," said the worthy North Briton.

"Well, then—to begin," said Master George, "I suspect you are a son of old Mungo Moniplies, the flesher, at the West-Port."

"Your honour is a witch, I think," said Richie, grinning.

"And how dared you, sir, to uphold him for a noble?"

"I dinna ken, sir," said Richie, scratching his head; "I hear muckle of an Earl of Warwick in these southern parts,—Guy, I think his name was,—and he has great reputation here for slaying dun cows, and boars, and such like; and I am sure my father has killed more cows and boars, not to mention bulls, calves, sheep, ewes, lambs, and pigs, than the haill Baronage of England."

"Go to! you are a shrewd knave," said Master George; "charm your tongue, and take care of saucy answers. Your father was an honest burgher, and the deacon of his craft: I am sorry to see his son in so poor a coat."

"Indifferent, sir," said Richie Moniplies, looking down on his garments—"very indifferent; but it is the wonted livery of poor burghers' sons in our country—one of Luckie Want's bestowing upon us—rest us patient! The king's leaving Scotland has taken all custom frae Edinburgh; and there is hay made at the Cross, and a dainty crop of fouats in the Grass-market. There is as much grass grows where my father's stall stood, as might have been a good bite for the beasts he was used to kill."

"It is even too true," said Master George; "and while we make fortunes here, our old neighbours and their families are starving at home. This should be thought upon oftener.—And how came you by that broken head, Richie?—tell me honestly."

"Troth, sir, I'se no lee about the matter," answered Moniplies. "I was coming along the street here, and ilk ane was at me with their jests and roguery. So I thought to mysell, ye are ower mony for me to mell with; but let me catch ye in Barford's Park, or at the fit of the Vennel, I could gar some of ye sing another sang. Sae ae auld hirpling deevil of a potter behoved just to step in my way and offer me a pig, as he said, just to put my Scotch ointment in, and I gave him a push, as but natural, and the tottering deevil coupit ower amang his ain pigs, and damaged a score of them. And then the reird raise, and hadna these twa gentlemen helped me out of it, murdered I suld hae been, without remeid. And as it was, just when they got haud of my arm to have me out of the fray, I got the lick that donnerit me from a left-handed lighterman."

Master George looked to the apprentices as if to demand the truth of this story.

"It is just as he says, sir," replied Jenkin; "only I heard nothing about pigs.—The people said he had broke some crockery, and that—I beg pardon, sir—nobody could thrive within the kenning of a Scot."

"Well, no matter what they said, you were an honest fellow to help the weaker side.—And you, sirrah," continued Master George, addressing his countryman, "will call at my house to-morrow morning, agreeable to this direction."

"I will wait upon your honour," said the Scot, bowing very low; "that is, if my honourable master will permit me."

"Thy master?" said George,—"*Hast thou any other master save Want, whose livery you say you wear?*"

"Troth, in one sense, if it please your honour, I serve twa masters," said Richie; "for both my master and me are slaves to that same beldam, whom we thought to show our heels to by coming off from Scotland. So that you see, sir, I hold in a sort of black ward tenure, as we call it in our country, being the servant of a servant."

"And what is your master's name?" said Master George; and observing that Richie hesitated, he added, "Nay, do not tell me, if it is a secret."

"A secret that there is little use in keeping," said Richie; "only ye ken that our northern stomachs are ower proud to call in witnesses to our distress. No that my master is in mair than present pinch, sir," he added, looking towards the two English apprentices, "having a large sum in the Royal Treasury—that is," he continued, in a whisper to Master George,— "the king is owing him a lot of siller; but it's ill getting at it, it's like.—My master is the young Lord Glenvarloch."

Master George testified surprise at the name.— "You one of the young Lord Glenvarloch's followers, and in such a condition?"

"Troth, and I am all the followers he has, for the present that is; and blithe wad I be if he were muckle better aff than I am, though I were to bide as I am."

"I have seen his father with four gentlemen and ten lackeys at his heels," said Master George, "rustling in their laces and velvets. Well, this is a changeful world, but there is a better beyond it.—The good old house of Glenvarloch, that stood by king and country five hundred years!"

"Your honour may say a thousand," said the follower.

"I will say what I know to be true, friend," said the citizen, "and not a word more.—You seem well recovered now—can you walk?"

"Bravely, sir," said Richie; "it was but a bit dover. I was bred at the West-Port, and my cantle will stand a clour wad bring a stot down."

"Where does your master lodge?"

"We pit up, an it like your honour," replied the Scot, "in a sma' house at the fit of ane of the wynds that gang down to the water-side, with a decent man, John Christie, a ship-chandler, as they ca't. His father came from Dundee. I wotna the name of the wynd, but it's right anent the mickle kirk yonder; and your honour will mind, that we pass only by our family-name of simple Mr. Nigel Olifaunt, as keeping ourselves retired for the present, though in Scotland we be called the Lord Nigel."

"It is wisely done of your master," said the citizen. "I will find out your lodgings, though your direction be none of the clearest." So saying, and slipping a piece of money at the same time into Richie Moniplies's hand, he bade him hasten home, and get into no more affrays.

"I will take care of that now, sir," said Richie, with a look of importance, "having a charge about me. And so, wussing ye a' weel, with special thanks to these twa young gentlemen——"

"I am no gentleman," said Jenkin, flinging his cap on his head; "I am a tight London 'prentice, and hope to be a freeman one day. Frank may write himself gentleman, if he will."

"I was a gentleman once," said Tunstall, "and I hope I have done nothing to lose the name of one."

"Weel, weel, as ye list," said Richie Moniplies; "but I am mickle beholden to ye baith—and I am not a hair the less like to bear it in mind that I say but little about it just now.—Gude-night to you, my kind countryman." So saying, he thrust out of the sleeve of his ragged doublet a long bony hand and arm, on which the muscles rose like whip-cord. Master George shook it heartily, while Jenkin and Frank exchanged sly looks with each other.

Richie Moniplies would next have addressed his thanks to the master of the shop, but seeing him, as he afterwards said, "scribbling on his bit bookie, as if he were demented," he contented his politeness with "giving him a hat," touching, that is, his bonnet, in token of salutation, and so left the shop.

"Now, there goes Scotch Jockey, with all his bad and good about him," said Master George to Master David, who suspended, though unwillingly, the calculations with which he was engaged, and keeping his pen within an inch of the tablets, gazed on his friend with great lack-lustre eyes, which expressed any thing rather than intelligence or interest in the discourse addressed to him.— "That fellow," proceeded Master George, without heeding his friend's state of abstraction, "shows, with great liveliness of colouring, how our Scotch pride and poverty make liars and braggarts of us; and yet the knave, whose every third word to an Englishman is a boastful lie, will, I warrant you, be a true and tender friend and follower to his master, and has perhaps parted with his mantle to him in the cold blast, although he himself walked *in cuerpo*, as the Don says.—Strange! that courage and fidelity—for I will warrant that the knave is stout—should have no better companion than this swaggering braggadocio humour.—But you mark me not, friend Davie."

"I do—I do, most heedfully," said Davie.— "For, as the sun goeth round the dial-plate in twenty-four hours, add, for the moon, fifty minutes and a half——"

"You are in the seventh heavens, man," said his companion.

"I crave your pardon," replied Davie.— "Let the wheel A go round in twenty-four hours—I have it—and the wheel B in twenty-four hours, fifty minutes and a half—fifty-seven being to fifty-four, as fifty-nine to twenty-four hours, fifty minutes and a half, or very nearly,—I crave your forgiveness, Master George, and heartily wish you good-even."

"Good-even?" said Master George; "why, you have not wished me good-day yet. Come, old friend, lay by these tablets, or you will crack the inner machinery of *your* skull, as our friend yonder has got the outer-case of his damaged.—Good-night, quotha! I mean not to part with you so easily. I came to get my four hours' nunchion from you, man, besides a tune on the lute from my god-daughter, Mrs. Marget."

"Good faith! I was abstracted, Master George—but you know me. Whenever I get amongst the wheels," said Mr. Ramsay, "why, 'tis——"

"Lucky that you deal in small ones," said his friend; as, awakened from his reveries and calculations, Ramsay led the way up a little back-stair to the first storey, occupied by his daughter and his little household.

The apprentices resumed their places in the front-shop, and relieved Sam Porter; when Jenkin said to Tunstall—"Didst see, Frank, how the old goldsmith cottoned in with his beggarly countryman? When would one of his wealth have shaken hands so courteously with a poor Englishman?—Well, I'll say that for the best of the Scots, that they will go over head and ears to serve a countryman, when they will not wet a nail of their finger to save a Southron, as they call us, from drowning. And yet Master George is but half-bred Scot neither in that respect; for I have known him do many a kind thing to the English too."

"But hark ye, Jenkin," said Tunstall, "I think you are but half-bred English yourself. How came you to strike on the Scotsman's side after all?"

"Why, you did so, too," answered Vincent.

"Ay, because I saw you begin; and, besides, it is no Cumberland fashion to fall fifty upon one," replied Tunstall.

"And no Christ Church fashion neither," said Jenkin. "Fair play and Old England for ever!—Besides, to tell you a secret, his voice had a twang in it—in the dialect I mean—reminded me of a little tongue, which I think sweeter—sweeter than the last toll of St. Dunstan's will sound, on the day that I am shot of my indentures—Ha!—you guess who I mean, Frank?"

"Not I, indeed," answered Tunstall.— "Scotch Janet, I suppose, the laundress."

"Off with Janet in her own bucking-basket!—No, no, no!—You blind buzzard,—do you not know I mean pretty Mrs. Marget?"

"Umph!" answered Tunstall, dryly.

A flash of anger, not unmingled with suspicion, shot from Jenkin's keen black eyes.

"Umph!—and what signifies umph? I am not the first 'prentice has married his master's daughter, I suppose?"

"They kept their own secret, I fancy," said Tunstall, "at least till they were out of their time."

"I tell you what it is, Frank," answered Jenkin, sharply, "that may be the fashion of you gentlefolks, that are taught from your biggin to carry two faces under the same hood, but it shall never be mine."

"There are the stairs, then," said Tunstall, coolly; "go up and ask Mrs. Marget of our master just now, and see what sort of a face he will wear under *his* hood."

"No, I wonnot," answered Jenkin; "I am not such a fool as that neither. But I will take my own time; and all the Counts in Cumberland shall not cut my comb, and this is that which you may depend upon."

Francis made no reply; and they resumed their usual attention to the business of the shop, and their usual solicitations to the passengers.

CHAPTER III

Bobadil. I pray you, possess no gallant of your acquaintance with a knowledge of my lodging. *Master Matthew.* Who, I, sir?—Lord, sir! *Ben Jonson.*

The next morning found Nigel Olifaunt, the young Lord of Glenvarloch, seated, sad and solitary, in his little apartment, in the mansion of John Christie, the ship-chandler; which that honest tradesman, in gratitude perhaps to the profession from which he derived his chief support, appeared to have constructed as nearly as possible upon the plan of a ship's cabin.

It was situated near to Paul's Wharf, at the end of one of those intricate and narrow lanes, which, until that part of the city was swept away by the Great Fire in 1666, constituted an extraordinary labyrinth of small, dark, damp, and unwholesome streets and alleys, in one corner or other of which the plague was then as surely found lurking, as in the obscure corners of Constantinople in our own time. But John Christie's house looked out upon the river, and had the advantage, therefore, of free air, impregnated, however, with the odoriferous fumes of the articles in which the ship-chandler dealt, with the odour of pitch, and the natural scent of the ooze and sludge left by the reflux of the tide.

Upon the whole, except that his dwelling did not float with the flood-tide, and become stranded with the ebb, the young lord was nearly as comfortably accommodated as he was while on board the little trading brig from the long town of Kirkaldy, in Fife, by which he had come a passenger to London. He received, however, every attention which could be paid him by his honest landlord, John Christie; for Richie Moniplies had not thought it necessary to preserve his master's *incognito* so completely, but that the honest ship-chandler could form a guess that his guest's quality was superior to his appearance.

As for Dame Nelly, his wife, a round, buxom, laughter-loving dame, with black eyes, a tight well-laced bodice, a green apron, and a red petticoat edged with a slight silver lace, and judiciously shortened so as to show that a short heel, and a tight clean ankle, rested upon her well-burnished shoe,—she, of course, felt interest in a young man, who, besides being very handsome, good-humoured, and easily satisfied with the accommodations her house afforded, was evidently of a rank, as well as manners, highly superior to the skippers (or Captains, as they called themselves) of merchant vessels, who were the usual tenants of the apartments which she let to hire; and at whose departure she was sure to find her well-scrubbed floor soiled with the relics of tobacco, (which, spite of King James's Counterblast, was then forcing itself into use,) and her best curtains impregnated with the odour of Geneva and strong waters, to Dame Nelly's great indignation; for, as she truly said, the smell of the shop and warehouse was bad enough without these additions.

But all Mr. Olifaunt's habits were regular and cleanly, and his address, though frank and simple, showed so much of the courtier and gentleman, as formed a strong contrast with the loud halloo, coarse jests, and boisterous impatience of her maritime inmates. Dame Nelly saw that her guest was melancholy also, notwithstanding his efforts to seem contented and cheerful; and, in short, she took that sort of interest in him, without being herself aware of the extent, which an unscrupulous gallant might have been tempted to improve to the prejudice of honest John, who was at least a score of years older than his helpmate. Olifaunt, however, had not only other matters to think of, but would have regarded such an intrigue, had the idea ever occurred to him, as an abominable and ungrateful encroachment upon the laws of hospitality, his religion having been by his late father formed upon the strict principles of the national faith, and his morality upon those of the nicest honour. He had not escaped the predominant weakness of his country, an overweening sense of the pride of birth, and a disposition to value the worth and consequence of others according to the number and the fame of their deceased ancestors; but this pride of family was well subdued, and in general almost entirely concealed, by his good sense and general courtesy.

Such as we have described him, Nigel Olifaunt, or rather the young Lord Glenvarloch, was, when our narrative takes him up, under great perplexity respecting the fate of his trusty and only follower, Richard Moniplies, who had been dispatched by his young master, early the preceding morning, as far as the court at Westminster, but had not yet returned. His evening adventures the reader is already acquainted with, and so far knows more of Richie than did his master, who had not heard of him for twenty-four hours.

Dame Nelly Christie, in the meantime, regarded her guest with some anxiety, and a great desire to comfort him, if possible. She placed on the breakfast-table a noble piece of cold powdered beef, with its usual guards of turnip and carrot, recommended her mustard as coming direct from her cousin at Tewkesbury, and spiced the toast with her own hands—and with her own hands, also, drew a jug of stout and nappy ale, all of which were elements of the substantial breakfast of the period.

When she saw that her guest's anxiety prevented him from doing justice to the good cheer which she set before him, she commenced her career of verbal consolation with the usual volubility of those women in her station, who, conscious of good looks, good intentions, and good lungs, entertain no fear either of wearying themselves or of fatiguing their auditors.

"Now, what the good year! are we to send you down to Scotland as thin as you came up?—I am sure it would be contrary to the course of nature. There was my goodman's father, old Sandie Christie, I have heard he was an atomy when he came up from the North, and I am sure he died, Saint Barnaby was ten years, at twenty stone weight. I was a bare-headed girl at the time, and lived in the neighbourhood, though I had little thought of marrying John then, who had a score of years the better of me—but he is a thriving man and a kind husband—and his father, as I was saying, died as fat as a church-warden. Well, sir, but I hope I have not offended you for my little joke—and I hope the ale is to your honour's liking,—and the beef—and the mustard?"

"All excellent—all too good," answered Olifaunt; "you have every thing so clean and tidy, dame, that I shall not know how to live when I go back to my own country—if ever I go back there."

This was added as it seemed involuntarily, and with a deep sigh.

"I warrant your honour go back again if you like it," said the dame: "unless you think rather of taking a pretty well-dowered English lady, as some of your countryfolk have done. I assure you, some of the best of the city have married Scotsmen. There was Lady Trebleplumb, Sir Thomas Trebleplumb the great Turkey merchant's widow, married Sir Awley Macauley, whom your honour knows, doubtless; and pretty Mistress Doublefee, old Sergeant Doublefee's daughter, jumped out of window, and was married at May-fair to a Scotsman with a hard name; and old Pitchpost the timber merchant's daughters did little better, for they married two Irishmen; and when folks jeer me about having a Scotsman for lodger, meaning your honour, I tell them they are afraid of their daughters and their mistresses; and sure I have a right to stand up for the Scots, since John Christie is half a Scotsman, and a thriving man, and a good husband, though there is a score of years between us; and so I would have your honour cast care away, and mend your breakfast with a morsel and a draught."

"At a word, my kind hostess, I cannot," said Olifaunt; "I am anxious about this knave of mine, who has been so long absent in this dangerous town of yours."

It may be noticed in passing that Dame Nelly's ordinary mode of consolation was to disprove the existence of any cause for distress; and she is said to have carried this so far as to comfort a neighbour, who had lost her husband, with the assurance that the dear defunct would be better to-morrow, which perhaps might not have proved an appropriate, even if it had been a possible, mode of relief.

On this occasion she denied stoutly that Richie had been absent altogether twenty hours; and as for people being killed in the streets of London, to be sure two men had been found in Tower-ditch last week, but that was far to the east, and the other poor man that had his throat cut in the fields, had met his mishap near by Islington; and he that was stabbed by the young Templar in a drunken frolic, by Saint Clement's in the Strand, was an Irishman. All which evidence she produced to show that none of these casualties had occurred in a case exactly parallel with that of Richie, a Scotsman, and on his return from Westminster.

"My better comfort is, my good dame," answered Olifaunt, "that the lad is no brawler or quarreller, unless strongly urged, and that he has nothing valuable about him to any one but me."

"Your honour speaks very well," retorted the inexhaustible hostess, who protracted her task of taking away, and putting to rights, in order that she might prolong her gossip. "I'll uphold Master Moniplies to be neither reveller nor brawler, for if he liked such things, he might be visiting and junketing with the young folks about here in the neighbourhood, and he never dreams of it; and when I asked the young man to go as far as my gossip's, Dame Drinkwater, to taste a glass of aniseed,

and a bit of the groaning cheese,—for Dame Drinkwater has had twins, as I told your honour, sir,—and I meant it quite civilly to the young man, but he chose to sit and keep house with John Christie; and I dare say there is a score of years between them, for your honour's servant looks scarce much older than I am. I wonder what they could have to say to each other. I asked John Christie, but he bid me go to sleep."

"If he comes not soon," said his master, "I will thank you to tell me what magistrate I can address myself to; for besides my anxiety for the poor fellow's safety, he has papers of importance about him."

"O! your honour may be assured he will be back in a quarter of an hour," said Dame Nelly; "he is not the lad to stay out twenty-four hours at a stretch. And for the papers, I am sure your honour will pardon him for just giving me a peep at the corner, as I was giving him a small cup, not so large as my thimble, of distilled waters, to fortify his stomach against the damp, and it was directed to the King's Most Excellent Majesty; and so doubtless his Majesty has kept Richie out of civility to consider of your honour's letter, and send back a fitting reply."

Dame Nelly here hit by chance on a more available topic of consolation than those she had hitherto touched upon; for the youthful lord had himself some vague hopes that his messenger might have been delayed at Court until a fitting and favourable answer should be dispatched back to him. Inexperienced, however, in public affairs as he certainly was, it required only a moment's consideration to convince him of the improbability of an expectation so contrary to all he had heard of etiquette, as well as the dilatory proceedings in a court suit, and he answered the good-natured hostess with a sigh, that he doubted whether the king would even look on the paper addressed to him, far less take it into his immediate consideration.

"Now, out upon you for a faint-hearted gentleman!" said the good dame; "and why should he not do as much for us as our gracious Queen Elizabeth? Many people say this and that about a queen and a king, but I think a king comes more natural to us English folks; and this good gentleman goes as often down by water to Greenwich, and employs as many of the barge-men and water-men of all kinds; and maintains, in his royal grace, John Taylor, the water-poet, who keeps both a sculler and a pair of oars. And he has made a comely Court at Whitehall, just by the river; and since the king is so good a friend to the Thames, I cannot see, if it please your honour, why all his subjects, and your honour in specialty, should not have satisfaction by his hands."

"True, dame—true,—let us hope for the best; but I must take my cloak and rapier, and pray your husband in courtesy to teach me the way to a magistrate."

"Sure, sir," said the prompt dame, "I can do that as well as he, who has been a slow man of his tongue all his life, though I will give him his due for being a loving husband, and a man as well to pass in the world as any betwixt us and the top of the lane. And so there is the sitting alderman, that is always at the Guildhall, which is close by Paul's, and so I warrant you he puts all to rights in the city that wisdom can mend; and for the rest there is no help but patience. But I wish I were as sure of forty pounds as I am that the young man will come back safe and sound."

Olifaunt, in great and anxious doubt of what the good dame so strongly averred, flung his cloak on one shoulder, and was about to belt on his rapier, when first the voice of Richie Moniplies on the stair, and then that faithful emissary's appearance in the chamber, put the matter beyond question. Dame Nelly, after congratulating Moniplies on his return, and paying several compliments to her own sagacity for having foretold it, was at length pleased to leave the apartment. The truth was, that, besides some instinctive feelings of good breeding which combated her curiosity, she saw there was no chance of Richie's proceeding in his narrative while she was in the room, and she therefore retreated, trusting that her own address would get the secret out of one or other of the young men, when she should have either by himself.

"Now, in Heaven's name, what is the matter?" said Nigel Olifaunt.—"Where have you been, or what have you been about? You look as pale as death. There is blood on your hand, and your clothes are torn. What barns-breaking have you been at? You have been drunk, Richard, and fighting."

"Fighting I have been," said Richard, "in a small way; but for being drunk, that's a job ill to manage in this town, without money to come by liquor; and as for barns-breaking, the deil a thing's broken but my head. It's not made of iron, I wot, nor my claithes of chenzie-mail; so a club smashed the tane, and a claught damaged the tither. Some misleard rascals abused my country, but I think I cleared the causey of them. However, the haill hive was ower mony for me at last, and I got this eclipse on the crown, and then I was carried, beyond my kenning, to a sma' booth at the Temple Port, whare they sell the whirligigs and mony-go-rounds that measure out time as a man wad measure a tartan web; and then they bled me, wold I nold I, and were reasonably civil, especially an auld country-man of ours, of whom more hereafter."

"And at what o'clock might this be?" said Nigel.

"The twa iron carles yonder, at the kirk beside the Port, were just banging out sax o' the clock."

"And why came you not home as soon as you recovered?" said Nigel.

"In troth, my lord, every *why* has its *wherefore*, and this has a gude ane," answered his follower. "To come hame, I behoved to ken whare hame was; now, I had clean tint the name of the wynd, and the mair I asked, the mair the folk leugh, and the farther they sent me wrang; sae I gave it up till God should send daylight to help me; and as I saw mysell near a kirk at the lang run, I e'en crap in to take up my night's quarters in the kirkyard."

"In the churchyard?" said Nigel—"But I need not ask what drove you to such a pinch."

"It wasna sae much the want o' siller, my Lord Nigel," said Richie, with an air of mysterious importance, "for I was no sae absolute without means, of whilk mair anon; but I thought I wad never ware a saxpence sterling on ane of their saucy chamberlains at a hostelry, sae lang as I could sleep fresh and fine in a fair, dry, spring night. Mony a time, when I hae come hame ower late, and faund the West-Port steekit, and the waiter ill-willy, I have garr'd the sexton of Saint Cuthbert's calf-ward serve me for my quarters. But then there are dainty green graffs in Saint Cuthbert's kirkyard, whare ane may sleep as if they were in a down-bed, till they hear the lavrock singing up in the air as high as the Castle; whereas, and behold, these London kirkyards are causeyed with through-stanes, panged hard and fast tegither; and my cloak being something threadbare, made but a thin mattress, so I was fain to give up my bed before every limb about me was crippled. Dead folks may sleep yonder sound enow, but deil haet else."

"And what became of you next?" said his master.

"I just took to a canny bulkhead, as they ca' them here; that is, the boards on the tap of their bits of outshots of stalls and booths, and there I sleepit as sound as if I was in a castle. Not but I was disturbed with some of the night-walking queans and swaggering billies, but when they found there was nothing to be got by me but a slash of my Andrew Ferrara, they bid me good-night for a beggarly Scot; and I was e'en weel pleased to be sae cheap rid of them. And in the morning, I cam daikering here, but sad wark I had to find the way, for I had been east as far as the place they ca' Mile-End, though it is mair like sax-mile-end."

"Well, Richie," answered Nigel, "I am glad all this has ended so well—go get something to eat. I am sure you need it."

"In troth do I, sir," replied Moniplies; "but, with your lordship's leave—"

"Forget the lordship for the present, Richie, as I have often told you before."

"Faith," replied Richie, "I could weel forget that your honour was a lord, but then I behoved to forget that I am a lord's man, and that's not so easy. But, however," he added, assisting his description with the thumb and the two forefingers of his right hand, thrust out after the fashion of a bird's claw, while the little finger and ring-finger were closed upon the palm, "to the Court I went, and my friend that promised me a sight of his Majesty's most gracious presence, was as gude as his word, and carried me into the back offices, whare I got the best breakfast I have had since we came here, and it did me gude for the rest of the day; for as to what I have eaten in this accursed town, it is aye sauced with the disquieting thought that it maun be paid for. After a', there was but beef banes and fat brose; but king's cauff, your honour kens, is better than ither folk's corn; at ony rate, it was a' in free awmous.—But I see," he added, stopping short, "that your honour waxes impatient."

"By no means, Richie," said the young nobleman, with an air of resignation, for he well knew his domestic would not mend his pace for goading; "you have suffered enough in the embassy to have a right to tell the story in your own way. Only let me pray for the name of the friend who was to introduce you into the king's presence. You were very mysterious on the subject, when you undertook, through his means, to have the Supplication put into his Majesty's own hands, since those sent heretofore, I have every reason to think, went no farther than his secretary's."

"Weel, my lord," said Richie, "I did not tell you his name and quality at first, because I thought you would be affronted at the like of him having to do in your lordship's affairs. But mony a man climbs up in Court by waur help. It was just Laurie Linklater, one of the yeomen of the kitchen, that was my father's apprentice lang syne."

"A yeoman in the kitchen—a scullion!" exclaimed Lord Nigel, pacing the room in displeasure.

"But consider, sir," said Richie, composedly, "that a' your great friends hung back, and shunned to own you, or to advocate your petition; and then, though I am sure I wish Laurie a higher office, for your lordship's sake and for mine, and specially for his ain sake, being a friendly lad, yet your lordship must consider, that a scullion, if a yeoman of the king's most royal kitchen may be called a scullion, may weel rank with a master-cook elsewhere; being that king's cauff, as I said before, is better than—"

"You are right, and I was wrong," said the young nobleman. "I have no choice of means of making my case known, so that they be honest."

"Laurie is as honest a lad as ever lifted a ladle," said Richie; "not but what I dare to say he can lick his fingers like other folk, and reason good. But, in fine, for I see your honour is waxing impatient, he brought me to the palace, where a' was astir for the king going out to hunt or hawk on Blackheath, I think they ca'd it. And there was a horse stood with all the quarries about it, a bonny grey as ever was foaled; and the saddle and the stirrups, and the curb and bit, o' burning gowd, or silver gilded at least; and down, sir, came the king, with all his nobles, dressed out in his hunting-suit of green, doubly laced, and laid down with gowd. I minded the very face o' him, though it was lang since I saw him. But my certie, lad, thought I, times are changed since ye came fleeing down the back stairs of auld Holyrood House, in grit fear, having your breeks in your hand without time to put them on, and Frank Stewart, the wild Earl of Bothwell, hard at your haunches; and if auld Lord Glenvarloch hadna cast his mantle about his arm, and taken bluidy wounds mair than ane in your behalf, you wald not have craw'd sae crouse this day; and so saying, I could not but think your lordship's Siffication could not be less than most acceptable; and so I banged in among the crowd of lords. Laurie thought me mad, and held me by the cloak-lap till the cloth rave in his hand; and so I banged in right before the king just as he mounted, and crammed the Siffication into his hand, and he opened it like in amaze; and just as he saw the first line, I was minded to make a reverence, and I had the ill luck to hit his jaud o' a beast on the nose with my hat, and scaur the creature, and she swarved aside, and the king, that sits na mickle better than a draff-pock on the saddle, was like to have gotten a clean coup, and that might have cost my craig a raxing-and he flung down the paper among the beast's feet, and cried, 'Away wi' the fause loon that brought it!' And they grippit me, and cried treason; and I thought of the Ruthvens that were dirked in their ain house, for, it may be, as small a forfeit. However, they spak only of scourging me, and had me away to the porter's lodge to try the tawse on my back, and I was crying mercy as loud as I could; and the king, when he had righted himself on the saddle, and gathered his breath, cried to do me nae harm; for, said he, he is ane of our ain Norland stots, I ken by the rowt of him,—and they a' laughed and rowted loud enugh. And then he said, 'Gie him a copy of the Proclamation, and let him go down to the North by the next light collier, before waur come o't.' So they let me go, and rode out, a sniggering, laughing, and rounding in ilk ither's lugs. A sair life I had wi' Laurie Linklater; for he said it wad be the ruin of him. And then, when I told him it was in your matter, he said if he had known before he would have risked a scauding for you, because he minded the brave old lord, your father. And then he showed how I suld have done,—and that I suld have held up my hand to my brow, as if the grandeur of the king and his horse-graith thegither had casten the glaiks in my een, and mair jackanape tricks I suld hae played, instead of offering the Siffication, he said, as if I had been bringing guts to a bear." [Footnote: I am certain this prudential advice is not original on Mr. Linklater's part, but I am not at present able to produce my authority. I think it amounted to this, that James flung down a petition presented by some supplicant who paid no compliments to his horse, and expressed no admiration at the splendour of his furniture, saying, "Shall a king cumber himself about the petition of a beggar, while the beggar disregards the king's splendour?" It is, I think, Sir John Harrington who recommends, as a sure mode to the king's favour, to praise the paces of the royal palfrey.]

'For,' said he, 'Richie, the king is a weel-natured and just man of his ain kindly nature, but he has a wheen maggots that maun be cannily guided; and then, Richie,' says he, in a very laigh tone, 'I would tell it to nane but a wise man like yoursell, but the king has them about him wad corrupt an angel from heaven; but I could have gi'en you avisement how to have guided him, but now it's like after meat mustard.'—'Aweel, aweel, Laurie,' said I, 'it may be as you say', but since I am clear of the tawse and the porter's lodge, sifficate wha like, deil hae Richie Moniplies if he come sifficating here again.'—And so away I came, and I wasna far by the Temple Port, or Bar, or whatever they ca' it, when I met with the misadventure that I tauld you of before."

"Well, my honest Richie," said Lord Nigel, "your attempt was well meant, and not so ill conducted, I think, as to have deserved so bad an issue; but go to your beef and mustard, and we'll talk of the rest afterwards."

"There is nae mair to be spoken, sir," said his follower, "except that I met ane very honest, fair-spoken, weel-put-on gentleman, or rather burgher, as I think, that was in the whigmaleery man's back-shop; and when he learned wha I was, behold he was a kindly Scot himsell, and, what is more, a town's-bairn o' the gude town, and he behaved to compel me to take this Portugal piece, to drink, forsooth—my certie, thought I, we ken better, for we will eat it—and he spoke of paying your lordship a visit."

"You did not tell him where I lived, you knave?" said the Lord Nigel, angrily. "'Sdeath! I shall have every clownish burgher from Edinburgh come to gaze on my distress, and pay a shilling for having seen the motion of the Poor Noble!"

"Tell him where you lived?" said Richie, evading the question; "How could I tell him what I kendna mysell? If I had minded the name of the wynd, I need not have slept in the kirkyard yestreen."

"See, then, that you give no one notice of our lodging," said the young nobleman; "those with whom I have business I can meet at Paul's, or in the Court of Requests."

"This is steeking the stable-door when the steed is stolen," thought Richie to himself; "but I must put him on another pin."

So thinking, he asked the young lord what was in the Proclamation which he still held folded in his hand; "for, having little time to spell at it," said he, "your lordship well knows I ken nought about it but the grand blazon at the tap—the lion has gotten a claught of our auld Scottish shield now, but it was as weel upheld when it had a unicorn on ilk side of it."

Lord Nigel read the Proclamation, and he coloured deep with shame and indignation as he read; for the purport was, to his injured feelings, like the pouring of ardent spirits upon a recent wound.

"What deil's in the paper, my lord?" said Richie, unable to suppress his curiosity as he observed his master change colour; "I wadna ask such a thing, only the Proclamation is not a private thing, but is meant for a' men's hearing."

"It is indeed meant for all men's hearing," replied Lord Nigel, "and it proclaims the shame of our country, and the ingratitude of our Prince."

"Now the Lord preserve us! and to publish it in London, too!" ejaculated Moniplies.

"Hark ye, Richard," said Nigel Olifaunt, "in this paper the Lords of the Council set forth, that, 'in consideration of the resort of idle persons of low condition forth from his Majesty's kingdom of Scotland to his English Court—filling the same with their suits and supplications, and dishonouring the royal presence with their base, poor, and beggarly persons, to the disgrace of their country in the estimation of the English; these are to prohibit the skippers, masters of vessels and others, in every part of Scotland, from bringing such miserable creatures up to Court under pain of fine and imprisonment.'"

"I marle the skipper took us on board," said Richie.

"Then you need not marvel how you are to get back again," said Lord Nigel, "for here is a clause which says, that such idle suitors are to be transported back to Scotland at his Majesty's expense, and punished for their audacity with stripes, stocking, or incarceration, according to their demerits—that is to say, I suppose, according to the degree of their poverty, for I see no other demerit specified."

"This will scarcely," said Richie, "square with our old proverb—"

A King's face

Should give grace—

But what says the paper farther, my lord?"

"O, only a small clause which especially concerns us, making some still heavier denunciations against those suitors who shall be so bold as to approach the Court, under pretext of seeking payment of old debts due to them by the king, which, the paper states, is, of all species of importunity, that which is most odious to his Majesty."

"The king has neighbours in that matter," said Richie; "but it is not every one that can shift off that sort of cattle so easily as he does."

Their conversation was here interrupted by a knocking at the door. Olifaunt looked out at the window, and saw an elderly respectable person whom he knew not. Richie also peeped, and recognised, but, recognising, chose not to acknowledge, his friend of the preceding evening. Afraid that his share in the visit might be detected, he made his escape out of the apartment under pretext of going to his breakfast; and left their landlady the task of ushering Master George into Lord Nigel's apartment, which she performed with much courtesy.

CHAPTER IV

*Ay, sir, the clouted shoe hath oft times craft in't,
As says the rustic proverb; and your citizen,
In's grogam suit, gold chain, and well-black'd shoes,
Bears under his flat cap oft times a brain
Wiser than burns beneath the cap and feather,
Or seethes within the statesman's velvet nightcap.
Read me my Riddle.*

The young Scottish nobleman received the citizen with distant politeness, expressing that sort of reserve by which those of the higher ranks are sometimes willing to make a plebeian sensible that he is an intruder. But Master George seemed neither displeased nor disconcerted. He assumed the chair, which, in deference to his respectable appearance, Lord Nigel offered to him, and said, after a moment's pause, during which he had looked attentively at the young man, with respect not unmingled with emotion—"You will forgive me for this rudeness, my lord; but I was endeavouring to trace in your youthful countenance the features of my good old lord, your excellent father."

There was a moment's pause ere young Glenvarloch replied, still with a reserved manner,—"I have been reckoned like my father, sir; and am happy to see any one that respects his memory. But the business which calls me to this city is of a hasty as well as a private nature, and—"

"I understand the hint, my lord," said Master George, "and would not be guilty of long detaining you from business, or more agreeable conversation. My errand is almost done when I have said that my name is George Heriot, warmly befriended, and introduced into the employment of the Royal Family of Scotland, more than twenty years since, by your excellent father; and that, learning from a follower of yours that your lordship was in this city in prosecution of some business of importance, it is my duty,—it is my pleasure,—to wait on the son of my respected patron; and, as I am somewhat known both at the Court, and in the city, to offer him such aid in the furthering of his affairs as my credit and experience may be able to afford."

"I have no doubt of either, Master Heriot," said Lord Nigel, "and I thank you heartily for the good-will with which you have placed them at a stranger's disposal; but my business at Court is done and ended, and I intend to leave London and, indeed, the island, for foreign travel and military service. I may add, that the suddenness of my departure occasions my having little time at my disposal."

Master Heriot did not take the hint, but sat fast, with an embarrassed countenance however, like one who had something to say that he knew not exactly how to make effectual. At length he said, with a dubious smile, "You are fortunate, my lord, in having so soon dispatched your business at Court. Your talking landlady informs me you have been but a fortnight in this city. It is usually months and years ere the Court and a suitor shake hands and part."

"My business," said Lord Nigel, with a brevity which was intended to stop further discussion, "was summarily dispatched."

Still Master Heriot remained seated, and there was a cordial good-humour added to the reverence of his appearance, which rendered it impossible for Lord Nigel to be more explicit in requesting his absence.

"Your lordship has not yet had time," said the citizen, still attempting to sustain the conversation, "to visit the places of amusement,—the playhouses, and other places to which youth resort. But I see in your lordship's hand one of the new-invented plots of the piece, [Footnote: Meaning, probably, playbills.] which they hand about of late—May I ask what play?"

"Oh! a well-known piece," said Lord Nigel, impatiently throwing down the Proclamation, which he had hitherto been twisting to and fro in his hand,—"an excellent and well-approved piece—*A New Way to Pay Old Debts*."

Master Heriot stooped down, saying, "Ah! my old acquaintance, Philip Massinger;" but, having opened the paper and seen the purport, he looked at Lord Nigel with surprise, saying, "I trust your lordship does not think this prohibition can extend either to *your* person or your claims?"

"I should scarce have thought so myself," said the young nobleman; "but so it proves. His Majesty, to close this discourse at once, has been pleased to send me this Proclamation, in answer to a respectful Supplication for the repayment of large loans advanced by my father for the service of the State, in the king's utmost emergencies."

"It is impossible!" said the citizen—"it is absolutely impossible!—If the king could forget what was due to your father's memory, still he would not have wished—would not, I may say, have dared—to be so flagrantly unjust to the memory of such a man as your father, who, dead in the body, will long live in the memory of the Scottish people."

"I should have been of your opinion," answered Lord Nigel, in the same tone as before; "but there is no fighting with facts."

"What was the tenor of this Supplication?" said Heriot; "or by whom was it presented? Something strange there must have been in the contents, or else—"

"You may see my original draught," said the young lord, taking it out of a small travelling strong-box; "the technical part is by my lawyer in Scotland, a skilful and sensible man; the rest is my own, drawn, I hope, with due deference and modesty."

Master Heriot hastily cast his eye over the draught. "Nothing," he said, "can be more well-tempered and respectful. Is it possible the king can have treated this petition with contempt?"

"He threw it down on the pavement," said the Lord of Glenvarloch, "and sent me for answer that Proclamation, in which he classes me with the paupers and mendicants from Scotland, who disgrace his Court in the eyes of the proud English—that is all. Had not my father stood by him with heart, sword, and fortune, he might never have seen the Court of England himself."

"But by whom was this Supplication presented, my lord?" said Heriot; "for the distaste taken at the messenger will sometimes extend itself to the message."

"By my servant," said the Lord Nigel; "by the man you saw, and, I think, were kind to."

"By your servant, my lord?" said the citizen; "he seems a shrewd fellow, and doubtless a faithful; but surely—"

"You would say," said Lord Nigel, "he is no fit messenger to a king's presence?—Surely he is not; but what could I do? Every attempt I had made to lay my case before the king had miscarried, and my petitions got no farther than the budgets of clerks and secretaries; this fellow pretended he had a friend in the household that would bring him to the king's presence,—and so—"

"I understand," said Heriot; "but, my lord, why should you not, in right of your rank and birth, have appeared at Court, and required an audience, which could not have been denied to you?"

The young lord blushed a little, and looked at his dress, which was very plain; and, though in perfect good order, had the appearance of having seen service.

"I know not why I should be ashamed of speaking the truth," he said, after a momentary hesitation,—*"I had no dress suitable for appearing at Court. I am determined to incur no expenses which I cannot discharge; and I think you, sir, would not advise me to stand at the palace-door, in person, and deliver my petition, along with those who are in very deed pleading their necessity, and begging an alms."*

"That had been, indeed, unseemly," said the citizen; "but yet, my lord, my mind runs strangely that there must be some mistake.—Can I speak with your domestic?"

"I see little good it can do," answered the young lord, "but the interest you take in my misfortunes seems sincere, and therefore——" He stamped on the floor, and in a few seconds afterwards Moniplies appeared, wiping from his beard and mustaches the crumbs of bread, and the froth of the ale-pot, which plainly showed how he had been employed.—*"Will your lordship grant permission,"* said Heriot, *"that I ask your groom a few questions?"*

"His lordship's page, Master George," answered Moniplies, with a nod of acknowledgment, "if you are minded to speak according to the letter."

"Hold your saucy tongue," said his master, "and reply distinctly to the questions you are to be asked."

"And *truly*, if it like your pageship," said the citizen, "for you may remember I have a gift to discover falset."

"Weel, weel, weel," replied the domestic, somewhat embarrassed, in spite of his effrontery—"though I think that the sort of truth that serves my master, may weel serve ony ane else."

"Pages lie to their masters by right of custom," said the citizen; "and you write yourself in that band, though I think you be among the oldest of such springalds; but to me you must speak truth, if you would not have it end in the whipping-post."

"And that's e'en a bad resting-place," said the well-grown page; "so come away with your questions, Master George."

"Well, then," demanded the citizen, "I am given to understand that you yesterday presented to his Majesty's hand a Supplication, or petition, from this honourable lord, your master."

"Troth, there's nae gainsaying that, sir," replied Moniplies; "there were enow to see it besides me."

"And you pretend that his Majesty flung it from him with contempt?" said the citizen. "Take heed, for I have means of knowing the truth; and you were better up to the neck in the Nor-Loch, which you like so well, than tell a leasing where his Majesty's name is concerned."

"There is nae occasion for leasing-making about the matter," answered Moniplies, firmly; "his Majesty e'en flung it frae him as if it had dirtied his fingers."

"You hear, sir," said Olifaunt, addressing Heriot.

"Hush!" said the sagacious citizen; "this fellow is not ill named—he has more plies than one in his cloak. Stay, fellow," for Moniplies, muttering somewhat about finishing his breakfast, was beginning to shamble towards the door, "answer me this farther question—When you gave your master's petition to his Majesty, gave you nothing with it?"

"Ou, what should I give wi' it, ye ken, Master George?"

"That is what I desire and insist to know," replied his interrogator.

"Weel, then—I am not free to say, that maybe I might not just slip into the king's hand a wee bit Sifflication of mine ain, along with my lord's—just to save his Majesty trouble—and that he might consider them baith at ance."

"A supplication of your own, you varlet!" said his master.

"Ou dear, ay, my lord," said Richie—"puir bodies hae their bits of sifflications as weel as their betters."

"And pray, what might your worshipful petition import?" said Master Heriot.—*"Nay, for Heaven's sake, my lord, keep your patience, or we shall never learn the truth of this strange matter.—Speak out, sirrah, and I will stand your friend with my lord."*

"It's a lang story to tell—but the upshot is, that it's a scrape of an auld accompt due to my father's yestate by her Majesty the king's maist gracious mother, when she lived in the Castle, and had sundry providings and furnishings forth of our booth, whilk nae doubt was an honour to my father to supply, and whilk, doubtless, it will be a credit to his Majesty to satisfy, as it will be grit convenience to me to receive the saam."

"What string of impertinence is this?" said his master.

"Every word as true as e'er John Knox spoke," said Richie; "here's the bit double of the Sifflication."

Master George took a crumpled paper from the fellow's hand, and said, muttering betwixt his teeth—"Humbly showeth—um—um—his Majesty's maist gracious mother—um—um—justly addebtet and owing the sum of fifteen merks—the compt whereof followeth—Twelve nowte's feet for jellies—ane lamb, being Christmas—ane roasted capin in grease for the privy chalmers, when my Lord of Bothwell suppit with her Grace.—I think, my lord, you can hardly be surprised that the king gave this petition a brisk reception; and I conclude, Master Page, that you took care to present your own Supplication before your master's?"

"Troth did I not," answered Moniplies. "I thought to have given my lord's first, as was reason gude; and besides that, it wad have redd the gate for my ain little bill. But what wi' the dirdum an' confusion, an' the loupin here and there of the skeigh brute of a horse, I believe I crammed them baith into his hand cheek-by-jowl, and maybe my ain was bunemost; and say there was aught wrang, I am sure I had a' the fright and a' the risk—"

"And shall have all the beating, you rascal knave," said Nigel; "am I to be insulted and dishonoured by your pragmatistical insolence, in blending your base concerns with mine?"

"Nay, nay, nay, my lord," said the good-humoured citizen, interposing, "I have been the means of bringing the fellow's blunder to light—allow me interest enough with your lordship to be bail for his bones. You have cause to be angry, but still I think the knave mistook more out of conceit than of purpose; and I judge you will have the better service of him another time, if you overlook this fault—Get you gone, sirrah—I'll make your peace."

"Na, na," said Moniplies, keeping his ground firmly, "if he likes to strike a lad that has followed him for pure love, for I think there has been little servant's fee between us, a' the way frae Scotland, just let my lord be doing, and see the credit he will get by it—and I would rather (mony thanks to you though, Master George) stand by a lick of his baton, than it suld e'er be said a stranger came between us."

"Go, then," said his master, "and get out of my sight."

"Aweel I wot that is sune done," said Moniplies, retiring slowly; "I did not come without I had been ca'd for—and I wad have been away half an hour since with my gude will, only Maister George keepit me to answer his interrogation, forsooth, and that has made a' this stir."

And so he made his grumbling exit, with the tone much rather of one who has sustained an injury, than who has done wrong.

"There never was a man so plagued as I am with a malapert knave!—The fellow is shrewd, and I have found him faithful—I believe he loves me, too, and he has given proofs of it—but then he is so uplifted in his own conceit, so self-willed, and so self-opinioned, that he seems to become the master and I the man; and whatever blunder he commits, he is sure to make as loud complaints, as if the whole error lay with me, and in no degree with himself."

"Cherish him, and maintain him, nevertheless," said the citizen; "for believe my grey hairs, that affection and fidelity are now rarer qualities in a servitor, than when the world was younger. Yet, trust him, my good lord, with no commission above his birth or breeding, for you see yourself how it may chance to fall."

"It is but too evident, Master Heriot," said the young nobleman; "and I am sorry I have done injustice to my sovereign, and your master. But I am, like a true Scotsman, wise behind hand—the mistake has happened—my Supplication has been refused, and my only resource is to employ the rest of my means to carry Moniplies and myself to some counter-scarp, and die in the battle-front like my ancestors."

"It were better to live and serve your country like your noble father, my lord," replied Master George. "Nay, nay, never look down or shake your head—the king has not refused your Supplication, for he has not seen it—you ask but justice, and that his place obliges him to give to his subjects—ay, my lord, and I will say that his natural temper doth in this hold bias with his duty."

"I were well pleased to think so, and yet——" said Nigel Olifaunt,—*"I speak not of my own wrongs, but my country hath many that are unredressed."*

"My lord," said Master Heriot, "I speak of my royal master, not only with the respect due from a subject—the gratitude to be paid by a favoured servant, but also with the frankness of a free and loyal Scotsman. The king is himself well disposed to hold the scales of justice even; but there are those around him who can throw without detection their own selfish wishes and base interests into the scale. You are already a sufferer by this, and without your knowing it."

"I am surprised, Master Heriot," said the young lord, "to hear you, upon so short an acquaintance, talk as if you were familiarly acquainted with my affairs."

"My lord," replied the goldsmith, "the nature of my employment affords me direct access to the interior of the palace; I am well known to be no meddler in intrigues or party affairs, so that no favourite has as yet endeavoured to shut against me the door of the royal closet; on the contrary, I have stood well with each while he was in power, and I have not shared the fall of any. But I cannot be thus connected with the Court, without hearing, even against my will, what wheels are in motion, and how they are checked or forwarded. Of course, when I choose to seek such intelligence, I know the sources in which it is to be traced. I have told you why I was interested in your lordship's fortunes. It was last night only that I knew you were in this city, yet I have been able, in coming hither this morning, to gain for you some information respecting the impediments to your suit."

"Sir, I am obliged by your zeal, however little it may be merited," answered Nigel, still with some reserve; "yet I hardly know how I have deserved this interest."

"First let me satisfy you that it is real," said the citizen; "I blame you not for being unwilling to credit the fair professions of a stranger in my inferior class of society, when you have met so little friendship from relations, and those of your own rank, bound to have assisted you by so many ties. But mark the cause. There is a mortgage over your father's extensive estate, to the amount of 40,000 merks, due ostensibly to Peregrine Peterson, the Conservator of Scottish Privileges at Campvere."

"I know nothing of a mortgage," said the young lord; "but there is a wadset for such a sum, which, if unredeemed, will occasion the forfeiture of my whole paternal estate, for a sum not above a fourth of its value—and it is for that very reason that I press the king's government for a settlement of the debts due to my father, that I may be able to redeem my land from this rapacious creditor."

"A wadset in Scotland," said Heriot, "is the same with a mortgage on this side of the Tweed; but you are not acquainted with your real creditor. The Conservator Peterson only lends his name to shroud no less a man than the Lord Chancellor of Scotland, who hopes, under cover of this debt, to gain possession of the estate himself, or perhaps to gratify a yet more powerful third party. He will probably suffer his creature Peterson to take possession, and when the odium of the transaction shall be forgotten, the property and lordship of Glenvarloch will be conveyed to the great man by his obsequious instrument, under cover of a sale, or some similar device."

"Can this be possible?" said Lord Nigel; "the Chancellor wept when I took leave of him—called me his cousin—even his son—furnished me with letters, and, though I asked him for no pecuniary assistance, excused himself unnecessarily for not pressing it on me, alleging the expenses of his rank and his large family. No, I cannot believe a nobleman would carry deceit so far."

"I am not, it is true, of noble blood," said the citizen; "but once more I bid you look on my grey hairs, and think what can be my interest in dishonouring them with falsehood in affairs in which I have no interest, save as they regard the son of my benefactor. Reflect also, have you had any advantage from the Lord Chancellor's letters?"

"None," said Nigel Olifaunt, "except cold deeds and fair words. I have thought for some time, their only object was to get rid of me—one yesterday pressed money on me when I talked of going abroad, in order that I might not want the means of exiling myself."

"Right," said Heriot; "rather than you fled not, they would themselves furnish wings for you to fly withal."

"I will to him this instant," said the incensed youth, "and tell him my mind of his baseness."

"Under your favour," said Heriot, detaining him, "you shall not do so. By a quarrel you would become the ruin of me your informer; and though I would venture half my shop to do your lordship a service, I think you would hardly wish me to come by damage, when it can be of no service to you."

The word *shop* sounded harshly in the ear of the young nobleman, who replied hastily—"Damage, sir?—so far am I from wishing you to incur damage, that I would to Heaven you would cease your fruitless offers of serving one whom there is no chance of ultimately assisting!"

"Leave me alone for that," said the citizen: "you have now erred as far on the bow-hand. Permit me to take this Supplication—I will have it suitably engrossed, and take my own time (and it shall be an early one) for placing it, with more prudence, I trust, than that used by your follower, in the king's hand—I will almost answer for his taking up the matter as you would have him—but should he fail to do so, even then I will not give up the good cause."

"Sir," said the young nobleman, "your speech is so friendly, and my own state so helpless, that I know not how to refuse your kind proffer, even while I blush to accept it at the hands of a stranger."

"We are, I trust, no longer such," said the goldsmith; "and for my guerdon, when my mediation proves successful, and your fortunes are re-established, you shall order your first cupboard of plate from George Heriot."

"You would have a bad paymaster, Master Heriot," said Lord Nigel.

"I do not fear that," replied the goldsmith; "and I am glad to see you smile, my lord—methinks it makes you look still more like the good old lord your father; and it emboldens me, besides, to bring out a small request—that you would take a homely dinner with me to-morrow. I lodge hard by in Lombard Street. For the cheer, my lord, a mess of white broth, a fat capon well larded, a dish of beef collups for auld Scotland's sake, and it may be a cup of right old wine, that was barrelled before Scotland and England were one nation—Then for company, one or two of our own loving countrymen—and maybe my housewife may find out a bonny Scots lass or so."

"I would accept your courtesy, Master Heriot," said Nigel, "but I hear the city ladies of London like to see a man gallant—I would not like to let down a Scottish nobleman in their ideas, as doubtless you have said the best of our poor country, and I rather lack the means of bravery for the present."

"My lord, your frankness leads me a step farther," said Master George. "I—I owed your father some monies; and—nay, if your lordship looks at me so fixedly, I shall never tell my story—and, to speak plainly, for I never could carry a lie well through in my life—it is most fitting, that, to solicit this matter properly, your lordship should go to Court in a manner befitting your quality. I am a goldsmith, and live by lending money as well as by selling plate. I am ambitious to put an hundred pounds to be at interest in your hands, till your affairs are settled."

"And if they are never favourably settled?" said Nigel.

"Then, my lord," returned the citizen, "the miscarriage of such a sum will be of little consequence to me, compared with other subjects of regret."

"Master Heriot," said the Lord Nigel, "your favour is generously offered, and shall be frankly accepted. I must presume that you see your way through this business, though I hardly do; for I think you would be grieved to add any fresh burden to me, by persuading me to incur debts which I am not likely to discharge. I will therefore take your money, under the hope and trust that you will enable me to repay you punctually."

"I will convince you, my lord," said the goldsmith, "that I mean to deal with you as a creditor from whom I expect payment; and therefore, you shall, with your own good pleasure, sign an acknowledgment for these monies, and an obligation to content and repay me."

He then took from his girdle his writing materials, and, writing a few lines to the purport he expressed, pulled out a small bag of gold from a side-pouch under his cloak, and, observing that it should contain an hundred pounds, proceeded to tell out the contents very methodically upon the table. Nigel Olifaunt could not help intimating that this was an unnecessary ceremonial, and that he would take the bag of gold on the word of his obliging creditor; but this was repugnant to the old man's forms of transacting business.

"Bear with me," he said, "my good lord,—we citizens are a wary and thrifty generation; and I should lose my good name for ever within the toll of Paul's, were I to grant quittance, or take acknowledgment, without bringing the money to actual tale. I think it be right now—and, body of me," he said, looking out at the window, "yonder come my boys with my mule; for I must Westward Hoe. Put your monies aside, my lord; it is not well to be seen with such goldfinches chirping about one in the lodgings of London. I think the lock of your casket be indifferent good; if not, I can serve you at an easy rate with one that has held thousands;—it was the good old Sir Faithful Frugal's;—his spendthrift son sold the shell when he had eaten the kernel—and there is the end of a city-fortune."

"I hope yours will make a better termination, Master Heriot," said the Lord Nigel.

"I hope it will, my lord," said the old man, with a smile; "but," to use honest John Bunyan's phrase—"therewithal the water stood in his eyes," "it has pleased God to try me with the loss of two children; and for one adopted shild who ives—Ah! woe is me! and well-a-day!—But I am patient and thankful; and for the wealth God has sent me, it shall not want inheritors while there are orphan lads in Auld Reekie.—I wish you good-morrow, my lord."

"One orphan has cause to thank you already," said Nigel, as he attended him to the door of his chamber, where, resisting further escort, the old citizen made his escape.

As, in going downstairs, he passed the shop where Dame Christie stood becking, he made civil inquiries after her husband. The dame of course regretted his absence; but he was down, she said, at Deptford, to settle with a Dutch ship-master.

"Our way of business, sir," she said, "takes him much from home, and my husband must be the slave of every tarry jacket that wants but a pound of oakum."

"All business must be minded, dame," said the goldsmith. "Make my remembrances—George Heriot, of Lombard Street's remembrances—to your Goodman. I have dealt with him—he is just and punctual—true to time and engagements;—be kind to your noble guest, and see he wants nothing. Though it be his pleasure at present to lie private and retired, there be those that care for him, and I have a charge to see him supplied; so that you may let me know by your husband, my good dame, how my lord is, and whether he wants aught."

"And so he is a real lord after all?" said the good dame. "I am sure I always thought he looked like one. But why does he not go to Parliament, then?"

"He will, dame," answered Heriot, "to the Parliament of Scotland, which is his own country."

"Oh! he is but a Scots lord, then," said the good dame; "and that's the thing makes him ashamed to take the title, as they say."

"Let him not hear *you* say so, dame," replied the citizen.

"Who, I, sir?" answered she; "no such matter in my thought, sir. Scot or English, he is at any rate a likely man, and a civil man; and rather than he should want any thing, I would wait upon him myself, and come as far as Lombard Street to wait upon your worship too."

"Let your husband come to me, good dame," said the goldsmith, who, with all his experience and worth, was somewhat of a formalist and disciplinarian. "The proverb says, 'House goes mad when women gad;' and let his lordship's own man wait upon his master in his chamber—it is more seemly. God give ye good-morrow."

"Good-morrow to your worship," said the dame, somewhat coldly; and, so soon as the adviser was out of hearing, was ungracious enough to mutter, in contempt of his council, "Marry quep of your advice, for an old Scotch tinsmith, as you are! My husband is as wise, and very near as old, as yourself; and if I please him, it is well enough; and though he is not just so rich just now as some folks, yet I hope to see him ride upon his moyle, with a foot-cloth, and have his two blue-coats after him, as well as they do."

CHAPTER V

Wherefore come ye not to court? Certain 'tis the rarest sport; There are silks and jewels glistening, Prattling fools and wise men listening, Bullies among brave men justling, Beggars amongst nobles bustling; Low-breath'd talkers, minion lispers, Cutting honest throats by whispers; Wherefore come ye not to court? Skelton swears 'tis glorious sport. *Skelton Skeltonizeth.*

It was not entirely out of parade that the benevolent citizen was mounted and attended in that manner, which, as the reader has been informed, excited a gentle degree of spleen on the part of Dame Christie, which, to do her justice, vanished in the little soliloquy which we have recorded. The good man, besides the natural desire to maintain the exterior of a man of worship, was at present bound to Whitehall in order to exhibit a piece of valuable workmanship to King James, which he deemed his Majesty might be pleased to view, or even to purchase. He himself was therefore mounted upon his caparisoned mule, that he might the better make his way through the narrow, dirty, and crowded streets; and while one of his attendants carried under his arm the piece of plate, wrapped up in red baize, the other two gave an eye to its safety; for such was then the state of the police of the metropolis, that men were often assaulted in the public street for the sake of revenge or of plunder; and those who apprehended being beset, usually endeavoured, if their estate admitted such expense, to secure themselves by the attendance of armed followers. And this custom, which was at first limited to the nobility and gentry, extended by degrees to those citizens of consideration, who, being understood to travel with a charge, as it was called, might otherwise have been selected as safe subjects of plunder by the street-robber.

As Master George Heriot paced forth westward with this gallant attendance, he paused at the shop door of his countryman and friend, the ancient horologer, and having caused Tunstall, who was in attendance, to adjust his watch by the real time, he desired to speak with his master; in consequence of which summons, the old Time-meter came forth from his den, his face like a bronze bust, darkened with dust, and glistening here and there with copper filings, and his senses so bemused in the intensity of calculation, that he gazed on his friend the goldsmith for a minute before he seemed perfectly to comprehend who he was, and heard him express his invitation to David Ramsay, and pretty Mistress Margaret, his daughter, to dine with him next day at noon, to meet with a noble young countrymen, without returning any answer.

"I'll make thee speak, with a murrain to thee," muttered Heriot to himself; and suddenly changing his tone, he said aloud,—"I pray you, neighbour David, when are you and I to have a settlement for the bullion wherewith I supplied you to mount yonder hall-clock at Theobald's, and that other whirligig that you made for the Duke of Buckingham? I have had the Spanish house to satisfy for the ingots, and I must needs put you in mind that you have been eight months behind-hand."

There is something so sharp and *aigre* in the demand of a peremptory dun, that no human tympanum, however inaccessible to other tones, can resist the application. David Ramsay started at once from his reverie, and answered in a pettish tone, "Wow, George, man, what needs aw this din about sax score o' pounds? Aw the world kens I can answer aw claims on me, and you proffered yourself fair time, till his maist gracious Majesty and the noble Duke suld make settled accompts wi' me; and ye may ken, by your ain experience, that I canna gang rowting like an unmannered Highland stot to their doors, as ye come to mine." Heriot laughed, and replied, "Well, David, I see a demand of money is like a bucket of water about your ears, and makes you a man of the world at once. And now, friend, will you tell me, like a Christian man, if you will dine with me to-morrow at noon, and bring pretty Mistress Margaret, my god-daughter, with you, to meet with our noble young countryman, the Lord of Glenvarloch?"

"The young Lord of Glenvarloch!" said the old mechanist; "wi' aw my heart, and blithe I will be to see him again. We have not met these forty years—he was two years before me at the humanity classes—he is a sweet youth."

"That was his father—his father—his father!—you old dotard Dot-and-carry-one that you are," answered the goldsmith. "A sweet youth he would have been by this time, had he lived, worthy nobleman! This is his son, the Lord Nigel."

"His son!" said Ramsay; "maybe he will want something of a chronometer, or watch—few gallants care to be without them now-a-days."

"He may buy half your stock-in-trade, if ever he comes to his own, for what I know," said his friend; "but, David, remember your bond, and use me not as you did when my housewife had the sheep's-head and the cock-a-leeky boiling for you as late as two of the clock afternoon."

"She had the more credit by her cookery," answered David, now fully awake; "a sheep's-head over-boiled, were poison, according to our saying."

"Well," answered Master George, "but as there will be no sheep's-head to-morrow, it may chance you to spoil a dinner which a proverb cannot mend. It may be you may forgather with your friend, Sir Mungo Malagrowth, for I purpose to ask his worship; so, be sure and bide tryste, Davie."

"That will I—I will be true as a chronometer," said Ramsay.

"I will not trust you, though," replied Heriot.—"Hear you, Jenkin boy, tell Scots Janet to tell pretty Mistress Margaret, my god-child, she must put her father in remembrance to put on his best doublet to-morrow, and to bring him to Lombard Street at noon. Tell her they are to meet a brave young Scots lord."

Jenkin coughed that sort of dry short cough uttered by those who are either charged with errands which they do not like, or hear opinions to which they must not enter a dissent.

"Umph!" repeated Master George—who, as we have already noticed, was something of a martinet in domestic discipline—"what does *umph* mean? Will you do mine errand or not, sirrah?"

"Sure, Master George Heriot," said the apprentice, touching his cap, "I only meant, that Mistress Margaret was not likely to forget such an invitation."

"Why, no," said Master George; "she is a dutiful girl to her god-father, though I sometimes call her a jill-flirt.—And, hark ye, Jenkin, you and your comrade had best come with your clubs, to see your master and her safely home; but first shut shop, and loose the bull-dog, and let the porter stay in the fore-shop till your return. I will send two of my knaves with you; for I hear these wild youngsters of the Temple are broken out worse and lighter than ever."

"We can keep their steel in order with good handbats," said Jenkin; "and never trouble your servants for the matter."

"Or, if need be," said Tunstall, "we have swords as well as the Templars."

"Fie upon it—fie upon it, young man," said the citizen;—"An apprentice with a sword!—Marry, heaven forefend! I would as soon see him in a hat and feather."

"Well, sir," said Jenkin—"we will find arms fitting to our station, and will defend our master and his daughter, if we should tear up the very stones of the pavement."

"There spoke a London 'prentice bold," said the citizen; "and, for your comfort, my lads, you shall crush a cup of wine to the health of the Fathers of the City. I have my eye on both of you—you are thriving lads, each in his own way.—God be wi' you, Davie. Forget not to-morrow at noon." And, so saying, he again turned his mule's head westward, and crossed Temple Bar, at that slow and decent amble, which at once became his rank and civic importance, and put his pedestrian followers to no inconvenience to keep up with him.

At the Temple gate he again paused, dismounted, and sought his way into one of the small booths occupied by scriveners in the neighbourhood. A young man, with lank smooth hair combed straight to his ears, and then cropped short, rose, with a cringing reverence, pulled off a slouched hat, which he would upon no signal replace on his head, and answered with much demonstration of reverence, to the goldsmith's question of, "How goes business, Andrew?"—"Aw the better for your worship's kind countenance and maintenance."

"Get a large sheet of paper, man, and make a new pen, with a sharp neb, and fine hair-stroke. Do not slit the quill up too high, it's a wastrife course in your trade, Andrew—they that do not mind corn-pickles, never come to forpits. I have known a learned man write a thousand pages with one quill." [Footnote: A biblical commentary by Gill, which (if the author's memory serves him) occupies between five and six hundred printed quarto pages, and must therefore have filled more pages of manuscript than the number mentioned in the text, has this quatrain at the end of the volume—

"With one good pen I wrote this book,

Made of a grey goose quill;

A pen it was when it I took,

And a pen I leave it still."]

"Ah! sir," said the lad, who listened to the goldsmith, though instructing him in his own trade, with an air of veneration and acquiescence, "how sune ony puir creature like mysell may rise in the world, wi' the instruction of such a man as your worship!"

"My instructions are few, Andrew, soon told, and not hard to practise. Be honest—be industrious—be frugal—and you will soon win wealth and worship.—Here, copy me this Supplication in your best and most formal hand. I will wait by you till it is done."

The youth lifted not his eye from the paper, and laid not the pen from his hand, until the task was finished to his employer's satisfaction. The citizen then gave the young scrivener an angel; and bidding him, on his life, be secret in all business intrusted to him, again mounted his mule, and rode on westward along the Strand. It may be worth while to remind our readers, that the Temple Bar which Heriot passed, was not the arched screen, or gateway, of the present day; but an open railing, or palisade, which, at night, and in times of alarm, was closed with a barricade of posts and chains. The Strand also, along which he rode, was not, as now, a continued street, although it was beginning already to assume that character. It still might be considered as an open road, along the south side of which stood various houses and hotels belonging to the nobility, having gardens behind them down to the water-side, with stairs to the river, for the convenience of taking boat; which mansions have bequeathed the names of their lordly owners to many of the streets leading from the Strand to the Thames. The north side of the Strand was also a long line of houses, behind which, as in Saint Martin's Lane, and other points, buildings, were rapidly arising; but Covent Garden was still a garden, in the literal sense of the word, or at least but beginning to be studded with irregular buildings. All that was passing around, however, marked the rapid increase of a capital which had long enjoyed peace, wealth, and a regular government. Houses were rising in every direction; and the shrewd eye of our citizen already saw the period not distant, which should convert the nearly open highway on which he travelled, into a connected and regular street, uniting the Court and the town with the city of London.

He next passed Charing Cross, which was no longer the pleasant solitary village at which the judges were wont to breakfast on their way to Westminster Hall, but began to resemble the artery through which, to use Johnson's expression "pours the full tide of London population." The buildings were rapidly increasing, yet certainly gave not even a faint idea of its present appearance.

At last Whitehall received our traveller, who passed under one of the beautiful gates designed by Holbein, and composed of tessellated brick-work, being the same to which Moniplies had profanely likened the West-Port of Edinburgh, and entered the ample precincts of the palace of Whitehall, now full of all the confusion attending improvement. It was just at the time when James,—little suspecting that he was employed in constructing a palace, from the window of which his only son was to pass in order that he might die upon a scaffold before it,—was busied in removing the ancient and ruinous buildings of De Burgh, Henry VIII., and Queen Elizabeth, to make way for the superb architecture on which Inigo Jones exerted all his genius. The king, ignorant of futurity, was now engaged in pressing on his work; and, for that purpose, still maintained his royal apartments at Whitehall, amidst the rubbish of old buildings, and the various confusion attending the erection of the new pile, which formed at present a labyrinth not easily traversed.

The goldsmith to the Royal Household, and who, if fame spoke true, oftentimes acted as their banker,—for these professions were not as yet separated from each other,—was a person of too much importance to receive the slightest interruption from sentinel or porter; and, leaving his mule and two of his followers in the outer-court, he gently knocked at a postern-gate of the building, and was presently admitted, while the most trusty of his attendants followed him closely, with the piece of plate under his arm. This man also he left behind him in an ante-room,—where three or four pages in the royal livery, but untrussed, unbuttoned, and dressed more carelessly than the place, and nearness to a king's person, seemed to admit, were playing at dice and draughts, or stretched upon benches, and slumbering with half-shut eyes. A corresponding gallery, which opened from the ante-room, was occupied by two gentlemen-ushers of the chamber, who gave each a smile of recognition as the wealthy goldsmith entered.

No word was spoken on either side; but one of the ushers looked first to Heriot, and then to a little door half-covered by the tapestry, which seemed to say, as plain as a look could, "Lies your business that way?" The citizen nodded; and the court-attendant, moving on tiptoe, and with as much caution as if the floor had been paved with eggs, advanced to the door, opened it gently, and spoke a few words in a low tone. The broad Scottish accent of King James was heard in reply,—"Admit him instanter, Maxwell. Have you hairboured sae lang at the Court, and not learned, that gold and silver are ever welcome?"

The usher signed to Heriot to advance, and the honest citizen was presently introduced into the cabinet of the Sovereign.

The scene of confusion amid which he found the king seated, was no bad picture of the state and quality of James's own mind. There was much that was rich and costly in cabinet pictures and valuable ornaments; but they were arranged in a slovenly manner, covered with dust, and lost half their value, or at least their effect, from the manner in which they were presented to the eye. The table was loaded with huge folios, amongst which lay light books of jest and ribaldry; and, amongst notes of unmercifully long orations, and essays on king-craft, were mingled miserable roundels and ballads by the Royal 'Prentice, as he styled himself, in the art of poetry, and schemes for the general pacification of Europe, with a list of the names of the king's hounds, and remedies against canine madness.

The king's dress was of green velvet, quilted so full as to be dagger-proof—which gave him the appearance of clumsy and ungainly protuberance; while its being buttoned awry, communicated to his figure an air of distortion. Over his green doublet he wore a sad-coloured nightgown, out of the pocket of which peeped his hunting-horn. His high-crowned grey hat lay on the floor, covered with dust, but encircled by a carcanet of large balas rubies; and he wore a blue velvet nightcap, in the front of which was placed the plume of a heron, which had been struck down by a favourite hawk in some critical moment of the flight, in remembrance of which the king wore this highly honoured feather.

But such inconsistencies in dress and appointments were mere outward types of those which existed in the royal character, rendering it a subject of doubt amongst his contemporaries, and bequeathing it as a problem to future historians. He was deeply learned, without possessing useful knowledge; sagacious in many individual cases, without having real wisdom; fond of his power, and desirous to maintain and augment it, yet willing to resign the direction of that, and of himself, to the most unworthy favourites; a big and bold asserter of his rights in words, yet one who tamely saw them trampled on in deeds; a lover of negotiations, in which he was always outwitted; and one who feared war, where conquest might have been easy. He was fond of his dignity, while he was perpetually degrading it by undue familiarity; capable of much public labour, yet often neglecting it for the meanest amusement; a wit, though a pedant; and a scholar, though fond of the conversation of the ignorant and uneducated. Even his timidity of temper was not uniform; and there were moments of his life, and those critical, in which he showed the spirit of his ancestors. He was laborious in trifles, and a trifler where serious labour was required; devout in his sentiments, and yet too often profane in his language; just and beneficent by nature, he yet gave way to the iniquities and oppression of others. He was penurious respecting money which he had to give from his own hand, yet inconsiderately and unboundedly profuse of that which he did not see. In a word, those good qualities which displayed themselves in particular cases and occasions, were not of a nature sufficiently firm and comprehensive to regulate his general conduct; and, showing themselves as they occasionally did, only entitled James to the character bestowed on him by Sully—that he was the wisest fool in Christendom.

That the fortunes of this monarch might be as little of apiece as his character, he, certainly the least able of the Stewarts, succeeded peaceably to that kingdom, against the power of which his predecessors had, with so much difficulty, defended his native throne; and, lastly, although his reign appeared calculated to ensure to Great Britain that lasting tranquillity and internal peace which so much suited the king's disposition, yet, during that very reign, were sown those seeds of dissension, which, like the teeth of the fabulous dragon, had their harvest in a bloody and universal civil war.

Such was the monarch, who, saluting Heriot by the name of Jingling Geordie, (for it was his well-known custom to give nicknames to all those with whom he was on terms of familiarity,) inquired what new clatter-traps he had brought with him, to cheat his lawful and native Prince out of his siller.

"God forbid, my liege," said the citizen, "that I should have any such disloyal purpose. I did but bring a piece of plate to show to your most gracious Majesty, which, both for the subject and for the workmanship, I were loath to put into the hands of any subject until I knew your Majesty's pleasure anent it."

"Body o' me, man, let's see it, Heriot; though, by my saul, Steenie's service o' plate was sae dear a bargain, I had 'maist pawned my word as a Royal King, to keep my ain gold and silver in future, and let you, Geordie, keep yours."

"Respecting the Duke of Buckingham's plate," said the goldsmith, "your Majesty was pleased to direct that no expense should be spared, and—"

"What signifies what I desired, man? when a wise man is with fules and bairns, he maun e'en play at the chucks. But you should have had mair sense and consideration than to gie Babie Charles and Steenie their ain gate; they wad hae floored the very rooms wi' silver, and I wonder they didna."

George Heriot bowed, and said no more. He knew his master too well to vindicate himself otherwise than by a distant allusion to his order; and James, with whom economy was only a transient and momentary twinge of conscience, became immediately afterwards desirous to see the piece of plate which the goldsmith proposed to exhibit, and dispatched Maxwell to bring it to his presence. In the meantime he demanded of the citizen whence he had procured it.

"From Italy, may it please your Majesty," replied Heriot.

"It has naething in it tending to papistrie?" said the king, looking graver than his wont.

"Surely not, please your Majesty," said Heriot; "I were not wise to bring any thing to your presence that had the mark of the beast."

"You would be the mair beast yourself to do so," said the king; "it is weel kend that I wrestled wi' Dagon in my youth, and smote him on the groundsill of his own temple; a gude evidence that I should be in time called, however unworthy, the Defender of the Faith.—But here comes Maxwell, bending under his burden, like the Golden Ass of Apuleius."

Heriot hastened to relieve the usher, and to place the embossed salver, for such it was, and of extraordinary dimensions, in a light favourable for his Majesty's viewing the sculpture.

"Saul of my body, man," said the king, "it is a curious piece, and, as I think, fit for a king's chalmers; and the subject, as you say, Master George, vera adequate and beseeming—being, as I see, the judgment of Solomon—a prince in whose paths it weel becomes a' leeving monarchs to walk with emulation."

"But whose footsteps," said Maxwell, "only one of them—if a subject may say so much—hath ever overtaken."

"Haud your tongue for a fause fleecing loon!" said the king, but with a smile on his face that showed the flattery had done its part. "Look at the bonny piece of workmanship, and haud your clavering tongue.—And whase handiwork may it be, Geordie?"

"It was wrought, sir," replied the goldsmith, "by the famous Florentine, Benvenuto Cellini, and designed for Francis the First of France; but I hope it will find a fitter master."

"Francis of France!" said the king; "send Solomon, King of the Jews, to Francis of France!—Body of me, man, it would have kythed Cellini mad, had he never done ony thing else out of the gate. Francis!—why, he was a fighting fule, man,—a mere fighting fule,—got himsell ta'en at Pavia, like our ain David at Durham lang syne;—if they could hae sent him Solomon's wit, and love of peace, and godliness, they wad hae dune him a better turn. But Solomon should sit in other gate company than Francis of France."

"I trust that such will be his good fortune," said Heriot.

"It is a curious and very artificial sculpture," said the king, in continuation; "but yet, methinks, the carnifex, or executioner there, is brandishing his gully ower near the king's face, seeing he is within reach of his weapon. I think less wisdom than Solomon's wad have taught him that there was danger in edge-tools, and that he wad have bidden the smaik either sheath his shabblie, or stand farther back."

George Heriot endeavoured to alleviate this objection, by assuring the king that the vicinity betwixt Solomon and the executioner was nearer in appearance than in reality, and that the perspective should be allowed for.

"Gang to the deil wi' your prospective, man," said the king; "there canna be a waur prospective for a lawful king, wha wishes to reign in luvie, and die in peace and honour, than to have naked swords flashing in his een. I am accounted as brave as maist folks; and yet I profess to ye I could never look on a bare blade without blinking and winking. But a'thegither it is a brave piece;—and what is the price of it, man?"

The goldsmith replied by observing, that it was not his own property, but that of a distressed countryman.

"Whilk you mean to mak your excuse for asking the double of its worth, I warrant?" answered the king. "I ken the tricks of you burrows-town merchants, man."

"I have no hopes of baffling your Majesty's sagacity," said Heriot; "the piece is really what I say, and the price a hundred and fifty pounds sterling, if it pleases your Majesty to make present payment."

"A hundred and fifty punds, man! and as mony witches and warlocks to raise them!" said the irritated Monarch. "My saul, Jingling Geordie, ye are minded that your purse shall jingle to a bonny tune!—How am I to tell you down a hundred and fifty punds for what will not weigh as many merks? and ye ken that my very household servitors, and the officers of my mouth, are sax months in arrear!"

The goldsmith stood his ground against all this objugation, being what he was well accustomed to, and only answered, that, if his Majesty liked the piece, and desired to possess it, the price could be easily settled. It was true that the party required the money, but he, George Heriot, would advance it on his Majesty's account, if such were his pleasure, and wait his royal conveniency for payment, for that and other matters; the money, meanwhile, lying at the ordinary usage.

"By my honour," said James, "and that is speaking like an honest and reasonable tradesman. We maun get another subsidy frae the Commons, and that will make ae compting of it. Awa wi' it, Maxwell—awa wi' it, and let it be set where Steenie and Babie Charles shall see it as they return from Richmond.—And now that we are secret, my good auld friend Geordie, I do truly opine, that speaking of Solomon and ourselves, the hail wisdom in the country left Scotland, when we took our travels to the Southland here."

George Heriot was courtier enough to say, that "the wise naturally follow the wisest, as stags follow their leader."

"Troth, I think there is something in what thou sayest," said James; "for we ourselves, and those of our Court and household, as thou thyself, for example, are allowed by the English, for as self-opinioned as they are, to pass for reasonable good wits; but the brains of those we have left behind are all astir, and run clean hirdie-girdie, like sae mony warlocks and witches on the Devil's Sabbath e'en."

"I am sorry to hear this, my liege," said Heriot. "May it please your Grace to say what our countrymen have done to deserve such a character?"

"They are become frantic, man—clean brain-crazed," answered the king. "I cannot keep them out of the Court by all the proclamations that the heralds roar themselves hoarse with. Yesterday, nae farther gane, just as we were mounted, and about to ride forth, in rushed a thorough Edinburgh gutterblood—a ragged rascal, every dud upon whose back was bidding good-day to the other, with a coat and hat that would have served a pease-bogle, and without havings or reverence, thrusts into our hands, like a sturdy beggar, some Supplication about debts owing by our gracious mother, and siclike trash; whereat the horse spangs on end, and, but for our admirable sitting, wherein we have been thought to excel maist sovereign princes, as well as subjects, in Europe, I promise you we would have been laid endlang on the causeway."

"Your Majesty," said Heriot, "is their common father, and therefore they are the bolder to press into your gracious presence."

"I ken I am *pater patriae* well enough," said James; "but one would think they had a mind to squeeze my puddings out, that they may divide the inheritance, Ud's death, Geordie, there is not a loon among them can deliver a Supplication, as it suld be done in the face of majesty."

"I would I knew the most fitting and beseeching mode to do so," said Heriot, "were it but to instruct our poor countrymen in better fashions."

"By my halidome," said the king, "ye are a ceevileezed fellow, Geordie, and I carena if I fling awa as much time as may teach ye. And, first, see you, sir—ye shall approach the presence of majesty thus,—shadowing your eyes with your hand, to testify that you are in the presence of the Vice-gerent of Heaven.—Vera weel, George, that is done in a comely manner.—Then, sir, ye sail kneel, and make as if ye would kiss the hem of our garment, the latch of our shoe, or such like.—Very weel enacted—whilk we, as being willing to be debonair and pleasing towards our lieges, prevent thus,—and motion to you to rise;—whilk, having a boon to ask, as yet you obey not, but, gliding your hand into your pouch, bring forth your Supplication, and place it reverentially in our open palm." The goldsmith, who had complied with great accuracy with all the prescribed points of the ceremonial, here completed it, to James's no small astonishment, by placing in his hand the petition of the Lord of Glenvarloch. "What means this, ye fause loon?" said he, reddening and sputtering; "hae I been teaching you the manual exercise, that ye suld present your piece at our ain royal body?—Now, by this light, I had as lief that ye had bended a real pistolet against me, and yet this hae ye done in my very cabinet, where nought suld enter but at my ain pleasure."

"I trust your Majesty," said Heriot, as he continued to kneel, "will forgive my exercising the lesson you condescended to give me in the behalf of a friend?"

"Of a friend!" said the king; "so much the waur—so much the waur, I tell you. If it had been something to do *yoursell* good there would have been some sense in it, and some chance that you wad not have come back on me in a hurry; but a man may have a hundred friends, and petitions for every ane of them, ilk ane after other."

"Your Majesty, I trust," said Heriot, "will judge me by former experience, and will not suspect me of such presumption."

"I kenna," said the placable monarch; "the world goes daft, I think—*sed semel insanivimus omnes*—thou art my old and faithful servant, that is the truth; and, were't any thing for thy own behoof, man, thou shouldst not ask twice. But, troth, Steenie loves me so dearly, that he cares not that any one should ask favours of me but himself.—Maxwell," (for the usher had re-entered after having carried off the plate,) "get into the ante-chamber wi' your lang lugs.—In conscience, Geordie, I think as that thou hast been mine ain auld fiduciary, and wert my goldsmith when I might say with the Ethnic poet—*Non mea renidet in domo lacunar*—for, faith, they had pillaged my mither's auld house sae, that beechen bickers, and treen trenchers, and latten platters, were whiles the best at our board, and glad we were of something to put on them, without quarrelling with the metal of the dishes. D'ye mind, for thou wert in maist of our complots, how we were fain to send sax of the Blue-banders to harry the Lady of Loganhouse's dowcot and poultry-yard, and what an awfu' plaint the poor dame made against Jock of Milch, and the thieves of Annandale, wha were as sackless of the deed as I am of the sin of murder?"

"It was the better for Jock," said Heriot; "for, if I remember weel, it saved him from a strapping up at Dumfries, which he had weel deserved for other misdeeds."

"Ay, man, mind ye that?" said the king; "but he had other virtues, for he was a tight huntsman, moreover, that Jock of Milch, and could hollow to a hound till all the woods rang again. But he came to an Annandale end at the last, for Lord Torthorwald run his lance out through him.—Cocksnails, man, when I think of those wild passages, in my conscience, I am not sure but we lived merrier in auld Holyrood in those shifting days, than now when we are dwelling at heck and manger. *Cantabit vacuus*—we had but little to care for."

"And if your Majesty please to remember," said the goldsmith, "the awful task we had to gather silver-vessail and gold-work enough to make some show before the Spanish Ambassador."

"Vera true," said the king, now in a full tide of gossip, "and I mind not the name of the right leal lord that helped us with every unce he had in his house, that his native Prince might have some credit in the eyes of them that had the Indies at their beck."

"I think, if your Majesty," said the citizen, "will cast your eye on the paper in your hand, you will recollect his name."

"Ay!" said the king, "say ye sae, man?—Lord Glenvarloch, that was his name indeed—*Justus et tenax propositi*—A just man, but as obstinate as a baited bull. He stood whiles against us, that Lord Randal Olifaunt of Glenvarloch, but he was a loving and a leal subject in the main. But this supplicator maun be his son—Randal has been long gone where king and lord must go, Geordie, as weel as the like of you—and what does his son want with us?"

"The settlement," answered the citizen, "of a large debt due by your Majesty's treasury, for money advanced to your Majesty in great State emergency, about the time of the Raid of Ruthven."

"I mind the thing weel," said King James—"Od's death, man, I was just out of the clutches of the Master of Glamis and his complices, and there was never siller mair welcome to a born prince,—the mair the shame and pity that crowned king should need sic a petty sum. But what need he dun us for it, man, like a baxter at the breaking? We aught him the siller, and will pay him wi' our convenience, or make it otherwise up to him, whilk is enow between prince and subject—We are not *in meditatione fugae*, man, to be arrested thus peremptorily."

"Alas! an it please your Majesty," said the goldsmith, shaking his head, "it is the poor young nobleman's extreme necessity, and not his will, that makes him importunate; for he must have money, and that briefly, to discharge a debt due to Peregrine Peterson, Conservator of the Privileges at Campvere, or his hail hereditary barony and estate of Glenvarloch will be evicted in virtue of an unredeemed wadset."

"How say ye, man—how say ye?" exclaimed the king, impatiently; "the carle of a Conservator, the son of a Low-Dutch skipper, evict the auld estate and lordship of the house of Olifaunt?—God's bread, man, that maun not be—we maun suspend the diligence by writ of favour, or otherwise."

"I doubt that may hardly be," answered the citizen, "if it please your Majesty; your learned counsel in the law of Scotland advise, that there is no remeid but in paying the money."

"Ud's fish," said the king, "let him keep haud by the strong hand against the carle, until we can take some order about his affairs."

"Alas!" insisted the goldsmith, "if it like your Majesty, your own pacific government, and your doing of equal justice to all men, has made main force a kittle line to walk by, unless just within the bounds of the Highlands."

"Well—weel—weel, man," said the perplexed monarch, whose ideas of justice, expedience, and convenience, became on such occasions strangely embroiled; "just it is we should pay our debts, that the young man may pay his; and he must be paid, and *in verbo regis* he shall be paid—but how to come by the siller, man, is a difficult chapter—ye maun try the city, Geordie."

"To say the truth," answered Heriot, "please your gracious Majesty, what betwixt loans and benevolences, and subsidies, the city is at this present——"

"Donna tell me of what the city is," said King James; "our Exchequer is as dry as Dean Giles's discourses on the penitentiary psalms—*Ex nihilo nihil fit*—It's ill taking the breeks aff a wild Highlandman—they that come to me for siller, should tell me how to come by it—the city ye maun try, Heriot; and donna think to be called Jingling Geordie for nothing—and *in verbo regis* I will pay the lad if you get me the loan—I wonnot haggle on the terms; and, between you and me, Geordie, we will redeem the brave auld estate of Glenvarloch.—But wherefore comes not the young lord to Court, Heriot—is he comely—is he presentable in the presence?"

"No one can be more so," said George Heriot; "but——"

"Ay, I understand ye," said his Majesty—"I understand ye—*Res angusta domi*—puir lad—puir lad!—and his father a right true leal Scots heart, though stiff in some opinions. Hark ye, Heriot, let the lad have twa hundred pounds to fit him out. And, here—here"—(taking the carcanet of rubies from his old hat)—"ye have had these in pledge before for a larger sum, ye auld Levite that ye are. Keep them in gage, till I gie ye back the siller out of the next subsidy."

"If it please your Majesty to give me such directions in writing," said the cautious citizen.

"The deil is in your nicety, George," said the king; "ye are as preceese as a Puritan in form, and a mere Nullifidian in the marrow of the matter. May not a king's word serve ye for advancing your pitiful twa hundred pounds?"

"But not for detaining the crown jewels," said George Heriot.

And the king, who from long experience was inured to dealing with suspicious creditors, wrote an order upon George Heriot, his well-beloved goldsmith and jeweller, for the sum of two hundred pounds, to be paid presently to Nigel Olifaunt, Lord of Glenvarloch, to be imputed as so much debts due to him by the crown; and authorizing the retention of a carcanet of balas rubies, with a great diamond, as described in a Catalogue of his Majesty's Jewels, to remain in possession of the said George Heriot, advancer of the said sum, and so forth, until he was lawfully contented and paid thereof. By another rescript, his Majesty gave the said George Heriot directions to deal with some of the monied men, upon equitable terms, for a sum of money for his Majesty's present use, not to be under 50,000 merks, but as much more as could conveniently be procured.

"And has he ony lair, this Lord Nigel of ours?" said the king.

George Heriot could not exactly answer this question; but believed "the young lord had studied abroad."

"He shall have our own advice," said the king, "how to carry on his studies to maist advantage; and it may be we will have him come to Court, and study with Steenie and Babie Charles. And, now we think on't, away—away, George—for the bairns will be coming hame presently, and we would not as yet they kend of this matter we have been treating anent. *Propera fedem*, O Geordie. Clap your mule between your boughs, and god-den with you."

Thus ended the conference betwixt the gentle King Jamie and his benevolent jeweller and goldsmith.

CHAPTER VI

*O I do know him—tis the mouldy lemon
Which our court wits will wet their lips withal,
When they would sauce their honied conversation
With somewhat sharper flavour—Marry sir,
That virtue's wellnigh left him—all the juice
That was so sharp and poignant, is squeezed out,
While the poor rind, although as sour as ever,
Must season soon the draff we give our grunTERS,
For two legg'd things are weary on't.*

The Chamberlain—A Comedy

The good company invited by the hospitable citizen assembled at his house in Lombard Street at the "hollow and hungry hour" of noon, to partake of that meal which divides the day, being about the time when modern persons of fashion, turning themselves upon their pillow, begin to think, not without a great many doubts and much hesitation, that they will by and by commence it. Thither came the young Nigel, arrayed plainly, but in a dress, nevertheless, more suitable to his age and quality than he had formerly worn, accompanied by his servant Moniplies, whose outside also was considerably improved. His solemn and stern features glared forth from under a blue velvet bonnet, fantastically placed sideways on his head—he had a sound and tough coat of English blue broad-cloth, which, unlike his former vestment, would have stood the tug of all the apprentices in Fleet Street. The buckler and broadsword he wore as the arms of his condition, and a neat silver badge, bearing his lord's arms, announced that he was an appendage of aristocracy. He sat down in the good citizen's buttery, not a little pleased to find his attendance upon the table in the hall was likely to be rewarded with his share of a meal such as he had seldom partaken of.

Mr. David Ramsay, that profound and ingenious mechanic, was safely conducted to Lombard Street, according to promise, well washed, brushed, and cleaned, from the soot of the furnace and the forge. His daughter, who came with him, was about twenty years old, very pretty, very demure, yet with lively black eyes, that ever and anon contradicted the expression of sobriety, to which silence, reserve, a plain velvet hood, and a cambric ruff, had condemned Mistress Marget, as the daughter of a quiet citizen.

There were also two citizens and merchants of London, men ample in cloak, and many-linked golden chain, well to pass in the world, and experienced in their craft of merchandise, but who require no particular description. There was an elderly clergyman also, in his gown and cassock, a decent venerable man, partaking in his manners of the plainness of the citizens amongst whom he had his cure.

These may be dismissed with brief notice; but not so Sir Mungo Malagrowth, of Girnigo Castle, who claims a little more attention, as an original character of the time in which he flourished.

That good knight knocked at Master Heriot's door just as the clock began to strike twelve, and was seated in his chair ere the last stroke had chimed. This gave the knight an excellent opportunity of making sarcastic observations on all who came later than himself, not to mention a few rubs at the expense of those who had been so superfluous as to appear earlier.

Having little or no property save his bare designation, Sir Mungo had been early attached to Court in the capacity of whipping-boy, as the office was then called, to King James the Sixth, and, with his Majesty, trained to all polite learning by his celebrated preceptor, George Buchanan. The office of whipping-boy doomed its unfortunate occupant to undergo all the corporeal punishment which the Lord's Anointed, whose proper person was of course sacred, might chance to incur, in the course of travelling through his grammar and prosody. Under the stern rule, indeed, of George Buchanan, who did not approve of the vicarious mode of punishment, James bore the penance of his own faults, and Mungo Malagrowth enjoyed a sinecure; but James's other pedagogue, Master Patrick Young, went more ceremoniously to work, and appalled the very soul of the youthful king by the floggings which he bestowed on the whipping-boy, when the royal task was not suitably performed. And be it told to Sir Mungo's praise, that there were points about him in the highest respect suited to his official situation. He had even in youth a naturally irregular and grotesque set of features, which, when distorted by fear, pain, and anger, looked like one of the whimsical faces which present

themselves in a Gothic cornice. His voice also was high-pitched and querulous, so that, when smarting under Master Peter Young's unsparing inflictions, the expression of his grotesque physiognomy, and the superhuman yells which he uttered, were well suited to produce all the effects on the Monarch who deserved the lash, that could possibly be produced by seeing another and an innocent individual suffering for his delict.

Sir Mungo Malagrowth, for such he became, thus got an early footing at Court, which another would have improved and maintained. But, when he grew too big to be whipped, he had no other means of rendering himself acceptable. A bitter, caustic, and backbiting humour, a malicious wit, and an envy of others more prosperous than the possessor of such amiable qualities, have not, indeed, always been found obstacles to a courtier's rise; but then they must be amalgamated with a degree of selfish cunning and prudence, of which Sir Mungo had no share. His satire ran riot, his envy could not conceal itself, and it was not long after his majority till he had as many quarrels upon his hands as would have required a cat's nine lives to answer. In one of these rencontres he received, perhaps we should say fortunately, a wound, which served him as an excuse for answering no invitations of the kind in future. Sir Rullion Rattray, of Ranagullion, cut off, in mortal combat, three of the fingers of his right hand, so that Sir Mungo never could hold sword again. At a later period, having written some satirical verses upon the Lady Cockpen, he received so severe a chastisement from some persons employed for the purpose, that he was found half dead on the spot where they had thus dealt with him, and one of his thighs having been broken, and ill set, gave him a hitch in his gait, with which he hobbled to his grave. The lameness of his leg and hand, besides that they added considerably to the grotesque appearance of this original, procured him in future a personal immunity from the more dangerous consequences of his own humour; and he gradually grew old in the service of the Court, in safety of life and limb, though without either making friends or attaining preferment. Sometimes, indeed, the king was amused with his caustic sallies, but he had never art enough to improve the favourable opportunity; and his enemies (who were, for that matter, the whole Court) always found means to throw him out of favour again. The celebrated Archie Armstrong offered Sir Mungo, in his generosity, a skirt of his own fool's coat, proposing thereby to communicate to him the privileges and immunities of a professed jester—"For," said the man of motley, "Sir Mungo, as he goes on just now, gets no more for a good jest than just the king's pardon for having made it."

Even in London, the golden shower which fell around him did not moisten the blighted fortunes of Sir Mungo Malagrowth. He grew old, deaf, and peevish—lost even the spirit which had formerly animated his strictures—and was barely endured by James, who, though himself nearly as far stricken in years, retained, to an unusual and even an absurd degree, the desire to be surrounded by young people.

Sir Mungo, thus fallen into the yellow leaf of years and fortune, showed his emaciated form and faded embroidery at Court as seldom as his duty permitted; and spent his time in indulging his food for satire in the public walks, and in the aisles of Saint Paul's, which were then the general resort of newsmongers and characters of all descriptions, associating himself chiefly with such of his countrymen as he accounted of inferior birth and rank to himself. In this manner, hating and contemning commerce, and those who pursued it, he nevertheless lived a good deal among the Scottish artists and merchants, who had followed the Court to London. To these he could show his cynicism without much offence; for some submitted to his jeers and ill-humour in deference to his birth and knighthood, which in those days conferred high privileges—and others, of more sense, pitied and endured the old man, unhappy alike in his fortunes and his temper.

Amongst the latter was George Heriot, who, though his habits and education induced him to carry aristocratical feelings to a degree which would now be thought extravagant, had too much spirit and good sense to permit himself to be intruded upon to an unauthorized excess, or used with the slightest improper freedom, by such a person as Sir Mungo, to whom he was, nevertheless, not only respectfully civil, but essentially kind, and even generous.

Accordingly, this appeared from the manner in which Sir Mungo Malagrowth conducted himself upon entering the apartment. He paid his respects to Master Heriot, and a decent, elderly, somewhat severe-looking female, in a coif, who, by the name of Aunt Judith, did the honours of his house and table, with little or no portion of the supercilious acidity, which his singular physiognomy assumed when he made his bow successively to David Ramsay and the two sober citizens. He thrust himself into the conversation of the latter, to observe he had heard in Paul's, that the bankrupt concern of Pindivide, a great merchant,—who, as he expressed it, had given the crows a pudding, and on whom he knew, from the same authority, each of the honest citizens has some unsettled claim,—was like to prove a total loss—"stock and block, ship and cargo, keel and rigging, all lost, now and for ever."

The two citizens grinned at each other; but, too prudent to make their private affairs the subject of public discussion, drew their heads together, and evaded farther conversation by speaking in a whisper.

The old Scots knight next attacked the watchmaker with the same disrespectful familiarity.—"Davie," he said,—"Davie, ye donnard auld idiot, have ye no gane mad yet, with applying your mathematical science, as ye call it, to the book of Apocalypse? I expected to have heard ye make out the sign of the beast, as clear as a tout on a bawbee whistle."

"Why, Sir Mungo," said the mechanist, after making an effort to recall to his recollection what had been said to him, and by whom, "it may be, that ye are nearer the mark than ye are yourself aware of; for, taking the ten horns o' the beast, ye may easily estimate by your digitals—"

"My digits! you d—d auld, rusty, good-for-nothing time-pieces!" exclaimed Sir Mungo, while, betwixt jest and earnest, he laid on his hilt his hand, or rather his claw, (for Sir Rullion's broadsword has abridged it into that form,)—"D'ye mean to upbraid me with my mutilation?"

Master Heriot interfered. "I cannot persuade our friend David," he said, "that scriptural prophecies are intended to remain in obscurity, until their unexpected accomplishment shall make, as in former days, that fulfilled which was written. But you must not exert your knightly valour on him for all that."

"By my saul, and it would be throwing it away," said Sir Mungo, laughing. "I would as soon set out, with hound and horn, to hunt a sturdied sheep; for he is in a doze again, and up to the chin in numerals, quotients, and dividends.—Mistress Margaret, my pretty honey," for the beauty of the young citizen made even Sir Mungo Malagrowth's grim features relax themselves a little, "is your father always as entertaining as he seems just now?"

Mistress Margaret simpered, bridled, looked to either side, then straight before her; and, having assumed all the airs of bashful embarrassment and timidity which were necessary, as she thought, to cover a certain shrewd readiness which really belonged to her character, at length replied: "That indeed her father was very thoughtful, but she had heard that he took the habit of mind from her grandfather."

"Your grandfather!" said Sir Mungo,—after doubting if he had heard her aright,—"Said she her grandfather! The lassie is distraught!—I ken nae wench on this side of Temple Bar that is derived from so distant a relation."

"She has got a godfather, however, Sir Mungo," said George Heriot, again interfering; "and I hope you will allow him interest enough with you, to request you will not put his pretty godchild to so deep a blush."

"The better—the better," said Sir Mungo. "It is a credit to her, that, bred and born within the sound of Bow-bell, she can blush for any thing; and, by my saul, Master George," he continued, chucking the irritated and reluctant damsel under the chin, "she is bonny enough to make amends for her lack of ancestry—at least, in such a region as Cheapside, where, d'ye mind me, the kettle cannot call the porridge-pot—"

The damsel blushed, but not so angrily as before. Master George Heriot hastened to interrupt the conclusion of Sir Mungo's homely proverb, by introducing him personally to Lord Nigel.

Sir Mungo could not at first understand what his host said,—"Bread of Heaven, wha say ye, man?"

Upon the name of Nigel Olifaunt, Lord Glenvarloch, being again hollowed into his ear, he drew up, and, regarding his entertainer with some austerity, rebuked him for not making persons of quality acquainted with each other, that they might exchange courtesies before they mingled with other folks. He then made as handsome and courtly a congee to his new acquaintance as a man maimed in foot and hand could do; and, observing he had known my lord, his father, bid him welcome to London, and hoped he should see him at Court.

Nigel in an instant comprehended, as well from Sir Mungo's manner, as from a strict compression of their entertainer's lips, which intimated the suppression of a desire to laugh, that he was dealing with an original of no ordinary description, and accordingly, returned his courtesy with suitable punctiliousness. Sir Mungo, in the meanwhile, gazed on him with much earnestness; and, as the contemplation of natural advantages was as odious to him as that of wealth, or other adventitious benefits, he had no sooner completely perused the handsome form and good features of the young lord, than like one of the comforters of the man of Uz, he drew close up to him, to enlarge on the former grandeur of the Lords of Glenvarloch, and the regret with which he had heard, that their representative was

not likely to possess the domains of his ancestry. Anon, he enlarged upon the beauties of the principal mansion of Glenvarloch—the commanding site of the old castle—the noble expanse of the lake, stocked with wildfowl for hawking—the commanding screen of forest, terminating in a mountain-ridge abounding with deer—and all the other advantages of that fine and ancient barony, till Nigel, in spite of every effort to the contrary, was unwillingly obliged to sigh.

Sir Mungo, skilful in discerning when the withers of those he conversed with were wrung, observed that his new acquaintance winced, and would willingly have pressed the discussion; but the cook's impatient knock upon the dresser with the haft of his dudgeon-knife, now gave a signal loud enough to be heard from the top of the house to the bottom, summoning, at the same time, the serving-men to place the dinner upon the table, and the guests to partake of it.

Sir Mungo, who was an admirer of good cheer,—a taste which, by the way, might have some weight in reconciling his dignity to these city visits,—was tolled off by the sound, and left Nigel and the other guests in peace, until his anxiety to arrange himself in his due place of pre-eminence at the genial board was duly gratified. Here, seated on the left hand of Aunt Judith, he beheld Nigel occupy the station of yet higher honour on the right, dividing that matron from pretty Mistress Margaret; but he saw this with the more patience, that there stood betwixt him and the young lord a superb larded capon.

The dinner proceeded according to the form of the times. All was excellent of the kind; and, besides the Scottish cheer promised, the board displayed beef and pudding, the statutory dainties of Old England. A small cupboard of plate, very choicely and beautifully wrought, did not escape the compliments of some of the company, and an oblique sneer from Sir Mungo, as intimating the owner's excellence in his own mechanical craft.

"I am not ashamed of the workmanship, Sir Mungo," said the honest citizen. "They say, a good cook knows how to lick his own fingers; and, methinks, it were unseemly that I, who have furnished half the cupboards in broad Britain, should have my own covered with paltry pewter."

The blessing of the clergyman now left the guests at liberty to attack what was placed before them; and the meal went forward with great decorum, until Aunt Judith, in farther recommendation of the capon, assured her company that it was of a celebrated breed of poultry, which she had herself brought from Scotland.

"Then, like some of his countrymen, madam," said the pitiless Sir Mungo, not without a glance towards his landlord, "he has been well larded in England."

"There are some others of his countrymen," answered Master Heriot, "to whom all the lard in England has not been able to render that good office."

Sir Mungo sneered and reddened, the rest of the company laughed; and the satirist, who had his reasons for not coming to extremity with Master George, was silent for the rest of the dinner.

The dishes were exchanged for confections, and wine of the highest quality and flavour; and Nigel saw the entertainments of the wealthiest burgomasters, which he had witnessed abroad, fairly outshone by the hospitality of a London citizen. Yet there was nothing ostentatious, or which seemed inconsistent with the degree of an opulent burgher.

While the collation proceeded, Nigel, according to the good-breeding of the time, addressed his discourse principally to Mrs. Judith, whom he found to be a woman of a strong Scottish understanding, more inclined towards the Puritans than was her brother George, (for in that relation she stood to him, though he always called her aunt,) attached to him in the strongest degree, and sedulously attentive to all his comforts. As the conversation of this good dame was neither lively nor fascinating, the young lord naturally addressed himself next to the old horologer's very pretty daughter, who sat upon his left hand. From her, however, there was no extracting any reply beyond the measure of a monosyllable; and when the young gallant had said the best and most complaisant things which his courtesy supplied, the smile that mantled upon her pretty mouth was so slight and evanescent, as scarce to be discernible.

Nigel was beginning to tire of his company, for the old citizens were speaking with his host of commercial matters in language to him totally unintelligible, when Sir Mungo Malagrowth suddenly summoned their attention.

That amiable personage had for some time withdrawn from the company into the recess of a projecting window, so formed and placed as to command a view of the door of the house, and of the street. This situation was probably preferred by Sir Mungo on account of the number of objects which the streets of a metropolis usually offer, of a kind congenial to the thoughts of a splenetic man. What he had hitherto seen passing there, was probably of little consequence; but now a trampling of horse was heard without, and the knight suddenly exclaimed,—"By my faith, Master George, you had better go look to shop; for here comes Knighton, the Duke of Buckingham's groom, and two fellows after him, as if he were my Lord Duke himself."

"My cash-keeper is below," said Heriot, without disturbing himself, "and he will let me know if his Grace's commands require my immediate attention."

"Umph!—cash-keeper?" muttered Sir Mungo to himself, "he would have had an easy office when I first kend ye.—But," said he, speaking aloud, "will you not come to the window, at least? for Knighton has trundled a piece of silver-plate into your house—ha! ha! ha!—trundled it upon its edge, as a callan' would drive a hoop. I cannot help laughing—ha! ha! ha!—at the fellow's impudence."

"I believe you could not help laughing," said George Heriot, rising up and leaving the room, "if your best friend lay dying."

"Bitter that, my lord—ha?" said Sir Mungo, addressing Nigel. "Our friend is not a goldsmith for nothing—he hath no leaden wit. But I will go down, and see what comes on't."

Heriot, as he descended the stairs, met his cash-keeper coming up, with some concern in his face.—"Why, how now, Roberts," said the goldsmith, "what means all this, man?"

"It is Knighton, Master Heriot, from the Court—Knighton, the Duke's man. He brought back the salver you carried to Whitehall, flung it into the entrance as if it had been an old pewter platter, and bade me tell you the king would have none of your trumpery."

"Ay, indeed," said George Heriot—"None of my trumpery!—Come hither into the compting-room, Roberts.—Sir Mungo," he added, bowing to the knight, who had joined, and was preparing to follow them, "I pray your forgiveness for an instant."

In virtue of this prohibition, Sir Mungo, who, as well as the rest of the company, had overheard what passed betwixt George Heriot and his cash-keeper, saw himself condemned to wait in the outer business-room, where he would have endeavoured to slake his eager curiosity by questioning Knighton; but that emissary of greatness, after having added to the uncivil message of his master some rudeness of his own, had again scampered westward, with his satellites at his heels.

In the meanwhile, the name of the Duke of Buckingham, the omnipotent favourite both of the king and the Prince of Wales, had struck some anxiety into the party which remained in the great parlour. He was more feared than beloved, and, if not absolutely of a tyrannical disposition, was accounted haughty, violent, and vindictive. It pressed on Nigel's heart, that he himself, though he could not conceive how, nor why, might be the original cause of the resentment of the Duke against his benefactor. The others made their comments in whispers, until the sounds reached Ramsay, who had not heard a word of what had previously passed, but, plunged in those studies with which he connected every other incident and event, took up only the catchword, and replied,—"The Duke—the Duke of Buckingham—George Villiers—ay—I have spoke with Lambe about him."

"Our Lord and our Lady! Now, how can you say so, father?" said his daughter, who had shrewdness enough to see that her father was touching upon dangerous ground.

"Why, ay, child," answered Ramsay; "the stars do but incline, they cannot compel. But well you wot, it is commonly said of his Grace, by those who have the skill to cast nativities, that there was a notable conjunction of Mars and Saturn—the apparent or true time of which, reducing the calculations of Eichstadius made for the latitude of Oranienburgh, to that of London, gives seven hours, fifty-five minutes, and forty-one seconds——"

"Hold your peace, old soothsayer," said Heriot, who at that instant entered the room with a calm and steady countenance; "your calculations are true and undeniable when they regard brass and wire, and mechanical force; but future events are at the pleasure of Him who bears the hearts of kings in his hands."

"Ay, but, George," answered the watchmaker, "there was a concurrence of signs at this gentleman's birth, which showed his course would be a strange one. Long has it been said of him, he was born at the very meeting of night and day, and under crossing and contending influences that may affect both us and him."

*Full moon and high sea,
Great man shalt thou be;
Red dawning, stormy sky,
Bloody death shalt thou die."*

"It is not good to speak of such things," said Heriot, "especially of the great; stone walls have ears, and a bird of the air shall carry the matter." Several of the guests seemed to be of their host's opinion. The two merchants took brief leave, as if under consciousness that something was wrong. Mistress Margaret, her body-guard of 'prentices being in readiness, plucked her father by the sleeve, and, rescuing him from a brown study, (whether referring to the wheels of Time, or to that of Fortune, is uncertain,) wished good-night to her friend Mrs. Judith, and received her godfather's blessing, who, at the same time, put upon her slender finger a ring of much taste and some value; for he seldom suffered her to leave him without some token of his affection. Thus honourably dismissed, and accompanied by her escort, she set forth on her return to Fleet Street.

Sir Mungo had bid adieu to Master Heriot as he came out from the back compting-room, but such was the interest which he took in the affairs of his friend, that, when Master George went upstairs, he could not help walking into that sanctum sanctorum, to see how Master Roberts was employed. The knight found the cash-keeper busy in making extracts from those huge brass-clasped leathern-bound manuscript folios, which are the pride and trust of dealers, and the dread of customers whose year of grace is out. The good knight leant his elbows on the desk, and said to the functionary in a condoling tone of voice,—*"What! you have lost a good customer, I fear, Master Roberts, and are busied in making out his bill of charges?"*

Now, it chanced that Roberts, like Sir Mungo himself, was a little deaf, and, like Sir Mungo, knew also how to make the most of it; so that he answered at cross purposes,—*"I humbly crave your pardon, Sir Mungo, for not having sent in your bill of charge sooner, but my master bade me not disturb you. I will bring the items together in a moment."* So saying, he began to turn over the leaves of his book of fate, murmuring, *"Repairing ane silver seal-new clasp to his chain of office—an over-gilt brooch to his hat, being a Saint Andrew's cross, with thistles—a copper gilt pair of spurs,—this to Daniel Driver, we not dealing in the article."* He would have proceeded; but Sir Mungo, not prepared to endure the recital of the catalogue of his own petty debts, and still less willing to satisfy them on the spot, wished the bookkeeper, cavalierly, good-night, and left the house without farther ceremony. The clerk looked after him with a civil city sneer, and immediately resumed the more serious labours which Sir Mungo's intrusion had interrupted.

CHAPTER VII

*Things needful we have thought on; but the thing
Of all most needful—that which Scripture terms,
As if alone it merited regard,
The ONE thing needful—that's yet unconsider'd.
The Chamberlain.*

When the rest of the company had taken their departure from Master Heriot's house, the young Lord of Glenvarloch also offered to take leave; but his host detained him for a few minutes, until all were gone excepting the clergyman.

"My lord," then said the worthy citizen, "we have had our permitted hour of honest and hospitable pastime, and now I would fain delay you for another and graver purpose, as it is our custom, when we have the benefit of good Mr. Windsor's company, that he reads the prayers of the church for the evening before we separate. Your excellent father, my lord, would not have departed before family worship—I hope the same from your lordship."

"With pleasure, sir," answered Nigel; "and you add in the invitation an additional obligation to those with which you have loaded me. When young men forget what is their duty, they owe deep thanks to the friend who will remind them of it."

While they talked together in this manner, the serving-men had removed the folding-tables, brought forward a portable reading-desk, and placed chairs and hassocks for their master, their mistress, and the noble stranger. Another low chair, or rather a sort of stool, was placed close beside that of Master Heriot; and though the circumstance was trivial, Nigel was induced to notice it, because, when about to occupy that seat, he was prevented by a sign from the old gentleman, and motioned to another of somewhat more elevation. The clergyman took his station behind the reading-desk. The domestics, a numerous family both of clerks and servants, including Moniplies, attended, with great gravity, and were accommodated with benches.

The household were all seated, and, externally at least, composed to devout attention, when a low knock was heard at the door of the apartment; Mrs. Judith looked anxiously at her brother, as if desiring to know his pleasure. He nodded his head gravely, and looked to the door. Mrs. Judith immediately crossed the chamber, opened the door, and led into the apartment a beautiful creature, whose sudden and singular appearance might have made her almost pass for an apparition. She was deadly pale—there was not the least shade of vital red to enliven features, which were exquisitely formed, and might, but for that circumstance, have been termed transcendently beautiful. Her long black hair fell down over her shoulders and down her back, combed smoothly and regularly, but without the least appearance of decoration or ornament, which looked very singular at a period when head-gear, as it was called, of one sort or other, was generally used by all ranks. Her dress was of white, of the simplest fashion, and hiding all her person excepting the throat, face, and hands. Her form was rather beneath than above the middle size, but so justly proportioned and elegantly made, that the spectator's attention was entirely withdrawn from her size. In contradiction of the extreme plainness of all the rest of her attire, she wore a necklace which a duchess might have envied, so large and lustrous were the brilliants of which it was composed; and around her waist a zone of rubies of scarce inferior value.

When this singular figure entered the apartment, she cast her eyes on Nigel, and paused, as if uncertain whether to advance or retreat. The glance which she took of him seemed to be one rather of uncertainty and hesitation, than of bashfulness or timidity. Aunt Judith took her by the hand, and led her slowly forward—her dark eyes, however, continued to be fixed on Nigel, with an expression of melancholy by which he felt strangely affected. Even when she was seated on the vacant stool, which was placed there probably for her accommodation, she again looked on him more than once with the same pensive, lingering, and anxious expression, but without either shyness or embarrassment, not even so much as to call the slightest degree of complexion into her cheek.

So soon as this singular female had taken up the prayer-book, which was laid upon her cushion, she seemed immersed in devotional duty; and although Nigel's attention to the service was so much disturbed by this extraordinary apparition, that he looked towards her repeatedly in the course of the service, he could never observe that her eyes or her thoughts strayed so much as a single moment from the task in which she was engaged. Nigel himself was less attentive, for the appearance of this lady seemed so extraordinary, that, strictly as he had been bred up by his father to pay the most reverential attention during performance of divine service, his thoughts in spite of himself were disturbed by her presence, and he earnestly wished the prayers were ended, that his curiosity might obtain some gratification. When the service was concluded, and each had remained, according to the decent and edifying practice of the church, concentrated in mental devotion for a short space, the mysterious visitant arose ere any other person stirred; and Nigel remarked that none of the domestics left their places, or even moved, until she had first kneeled on one knee to Heriot, who seemed to bless her with his hand laid on her head, and a melancholy solemnity of look and action. She then bended her body, but without kneeling, to Mrs. Judith, and having performed these two acts of reverence, she left the room; yet just in the act of her departure, she once more turned her penetrating eyes on Nigel with a fixed look, which compelled him to turn his own aside. When he looked towards her again, he saw only the skirt of her white mantle as she left the apartment.

The domestics then rose and dispersed themselves—wine, and fruit, and spices, were offered to Lord Nigel and to the clergyman, and the latter took his leave. The young lord would fain have accompanied him, in hope to get some explanation of the apparition which he had beheld, but he was stopped by his host, who requested to speak with him in his compting-room.

"I hope, my lord," said the citizen, "that your preparations for attending Court are in such forwardness that you can go thither the day after to-morrow. It is, perhaps, the last day, for some time, that his Majesty will hold open Court for all who have pretensions by birth, rank, or office to attend upon him. On the subsequent day he goes to Theobald's, where he is so much occupied with hunting and other pleasures, that he cares not to be intruded on."

"I shall be in all outward readiness to pay my duty," said the young nobleman, "yet I have little heart to do it. The friends from whom I ought to have found encouragement and protection, have proved cold and false—I certainly will not trouble *them* for their countenance on this occasion—and yet I must confess my childish unwillingness to enter quite alone upon so new a scene."

"It is bold of a mechanic like me to make such an offer to a nobleman," said Heriot; "but I must attend at Court to-morrow. I can accompany you as far as the presence-chamber, from my privilege as being of the household. I can facilitate your entrance, should you find difficulty, and I can point out the proper manner and time of approaching the king. But I do not know," he added, smiling, "whether these little advantages will not be overbalanced by the incongruity of a nobleman receiving them from the hands of an old smith."

"From the hands rather of the only friend I have found in London," said Nigel, offering his hand.

"Nay, if you think of the matter in that way," replied the honest citizen, "there is no more to be said—I will come for you to-morrow, with a barge proper to the occasion.—But remember, my good young lord, that I do not, like some men of my degree, wish to take opportunity to step beyond it, and associate with my superiors in rank, and therefore do not fear to mortify my presumption, by suffering me to keep my distance in the presence, and where it is fitting for both of us to separate; and for what remains, most truly happy shall I be in proving of service to the son of my ancient patron."

The style of conversation led so far from the point which had interested the young nobleman's curiosity, that there was no returning to it that night. He therefore exchanged thanks and greetings with George Heriot, and took his leave, promising to be equipped and in readiness to embark with him on the second successive morning at ten o'clock.

The generation of linkboys, celebrated by Count Anthony Hamilton, as peculiar to London, had already, in the reign of James I., begun their functions, and the service of one of them with his smoky torch, had been secured to light the young Scottish lord and his follower to their lodgings, which, though better acquainted than formerly with the city, they might in the dark have run some danger of missing. This gave the ingenious Mr. Moniplies an opportunity of gathering close up to his master, after he had gone through the form of slipping his left arm into the handles of his buckler, and loosening his broadsword in the sheath, that he might be ready for whatever should befall.

"If it were not for the wine and the good cheer which we have had in yonder old man's house, my lord," said this sapient follower, "and that I ken him by report to be a just living man in many respects, and a real Edinburgh gutterblood, I should have been well pleased to have seen how his feet were shaped, and whether he had not a cloven cloot under the brow roses and cordovan shoon of his."

"Why, you rascal," answered Nigel, "you have been too kindly treated, and now that you have filled your ravenous stomach, you are railing on the good gentleman that relieved you."

"Under favour, no, my lord," said Moniplies,—"I would only like to see something mair about him. I have eaten his meat, it is true—more shame that the like of him should have meat to give, when your lordship and me could scarce have gotten, on our own account, brose and a bear bannock—I have drunk his wine, too."

"I see you have," replied his master, "a great deal more than you should have done."

"Under your patience, my lord," said Moniplies, "you are pleased to say that, because I crushed a quart with that jolly boy Jenkin, as they call the 'prentice boy, and that was out of mere acknowledgment for his former kindness—I own that I, moreover, sung the good old song of Elsie Marley, so as they never heard it chanted in their lives——"

And withal (as John Bunyan says) as they went on their way, he sung—

*"O, do ye ken Elsie Marley, honey—
The wife that sells the barley, honey?
For Elsie Marley's grown sae fine,
She winna get up to feed the swine.—
O, do ye ken——"*

Here in mid career was the songster interrupted by the stern gripe of his master, who threatened to baton him to death if he brought the city-watch upon them by his ill-timed melody.

"I crave pardon, my lord—I humbly crave pardon—only when I think of that Jen Win, as they call him, I can hardly help humming—'O, do ye ken'—But I crave your honour's pardon, and will be totally dumb, if you command me so."

"No, sirrah!" said Nigel, "talk on, for I well know you would say and suffer more under pretence of holding your peace, than when you get an unbridled license. How is it, then? What have you to say against Master Heriot?"

It seems more than probable, that in permitting this license, the young lord hoped his attendant would stumble upon the subject of the young lady who had appeared at prayers in a manner so mysterious. But whether this was the case, or whether he merely desired that Moniplies should utter, in a subdued and under tone of voice, those spirits which might otherwise have vented themselves in obstreperous song, it is certain he permitted his attendant to proceed with his story in his own way.

"And therefore," said the orator, availing himself of his immunity, "I would like to ken what sort of carle this Maister Heriot is. He hath supplied your lordship with wealth of gold, as I can understand; and if he has, I make it for certain he hath had his ain end in it, according to the fashion of the world. Now, had your lordship your own good lands at your guiding, doubtless this person, with most of his craft—goldsmiths they call themselves—I say usurers—wad be glad to exchange so many pounds of African dust, by whilk I understand gold, against so many fair acres, and hundreds of acres, of broad Scottish land."

"But you know I have no land," said the young lord, "at least none that can be affected by any debt which I can at present become obliged for—I think you need not have reminded me of that."

"True, my lord, most true; and, as your lordship says, open to the meanest capacity, without any unnecessary expositions. Now, therefore, my lord, unless Maister George Heriot has something mair to allege as a motive for his liberality, vera different from the possession of your estate—and moreover, as he could gain little by the capture of your body, wherefore should it not be your soul that he is in pursuit of?"

"My soul, you rascal!" said the young lord; "what good should my soul do him?"

"What do I ken about that?" said Moniplies; "they go about roaring and seeking whom they may devour—doubtless, they like the food that they rage so much about—and, my lord, they say," added Moniplies, drawing up still closer to his master's side, "they say that Master Heriot has one spirit in his house already."

"How, or what do you mean?" said Nigel; "I will break your head, you drunken knave, if you palter with me any longer."

"Drunken?" answered his trusty adherent, "and is this the story?—why, how could I but drink your lordship's health on my bare knees, when Master Jenkin began it to me?—hang them that would not—I would have cut the impudent knave's hams with my broadsword, that should make scruple of it, and so have made him kneel when he should have found it difficult to rise again. But touching the spirit," he proceeded, finding that his master made no answer to his valorous tirade, "your lordship has seen her with your own eyes."

"I saw no spirit," said Glenvarloch, but yet breathing thick as one who expects some singular disclosure, "what mean you by a spirit?"

"You saw a young lady come in to prayers, that spoke not a word to any one, only made becks and bows to the old gentleman and lady of the house—ken ye wha she is?"

"No, indeed," answered Nigel; "some relation of the family, I suppose."

"Deil a bit—deil a bit," answered Moniplies, hastily, "not a blood-drop's kin to them, if she had a drop of blood in her body—I tell you but what all human beings allege to be truth, that swell within hue and cry of Lombard Street—that lady, or quean, or whatever you choose to call her, has been dead in the body these many a year, though she haunts them, as we have seen, even at their very devotions."

"You will allow her to be a good spirit at least," said Nigel Olifaunt, "since she chooses such a time to visit her friends?"

"For that I kenna, my lord," answered the superstitious follower; "I ken no spirit that would have faced the right down hammer-blow of Mess John Knox, whom my father stood by in his very warst days, bating a chance time when the Court, which my father supplied with butcher-meat, was against him. But yon divine has another airt from powerful Master Rollock, and Mess David Black, of North Leith, and sic like.—Alack-a-day! wha can ken, if it please your lordship, whether sic prayers as the Southron read out of their auld blethering black mess-book there, may not be as powerful to invite fiends, as a right red-het prayer warm fraw the heart, may be powerful to drive them away, even as the Evil Spirit was driven by he smell of the fish's liver from the bridal-chamber of Sara, the daughter of Raguel? As to whilk story, nevertheless, I make scruple to say whether it be truth or not, better men than I am having doubted on that matter."

"Well, well, well," said his master, impatiently, "we are now near home, and I have permitted you to speak of this matter for once, that we may have an end to your prying folly, and your idiotical superstitions, for ever. For whom do you, or your absurd authors or informers, take this lady?"

"I can sae naething preceesely as to that," answered Moniplies; "certain it is her body died and was laid in the grave many a day since, notwithstanding she still wanders on earth, and chiefly amongst Maister Heriot's family, though she hath been seen in other places by them that well knew her. But who she is, I will not warrant to say, or how she becomes attached, like a Highland Brownie, to some peculiar family. They say she has a row of apartments of her own, ante-room, parlour, and bedroom; but deil a bed she sleeps in but her own coffin, and the walls, doors, and windows are so chinked up, as to prevent the least blink of daylight from entering; and then she dwells by torchlight—"

"To what purpose, if she be a spirit?" said Nigel Olifaunt.

"How can I tell your lordship?" answered his attendant. "I thank God I know nothing of her likings, or mislikings—only her coffin is there; and I leave your lordship to guess what a live person has to do with a coffin. As little as a ghost with a lantern, I trow."

"What reason," repeated Nigel, "can a creature, so young and so beautiful, have already habitually to contemplate her bed of last-long rest?"

"In troth, I kenna, my lord," answered Moniplies; "but there is the coffin, as they told me who have seen it: it is made of heben-wood, with silver nails, and lined all through with three-piled damask, might serve a princess to rest in."

"Singular," said Nigel, whose brain, like that of most active young spirits, was easily caught by the singular and the romantic; "does she not eat with the family?"

"Who!—she!"—exclaimed Moniplies, as if surprised at the question; "they would need a lang spoon would sup with her, I trow. Always there is something put for her into the Tower, as they call it, whilk is a whigmaleery of a whirling-box, that turns round half on the tae side o' the wa', half on the tother."

"I have seen the contrivance in foreign nunneries," said the Lord of Glenvarloch. "And is it thus she receives her food?"

"They tell me something is put in ilka day, for fashion's sake," replied the attendant; "but it's no to be supposed she would consume it, ony mair than the images of Bel and the Dragon consumed the dainty vivers that were placed before them. There are stout yeomen and chamber-queans in the house, enow to play the part of Lick-it-up-a', as well as the threescore and ten priests of Bel, besides their wives and children."

"And she is never seen in the family but when the hour of prayer arrives?" said the master.

"Never, that I hear of," replied the servant.

"It is singular," said Nigel Olifaunt, musing. "Were it not for the ornaments which she wears, and still more for her attendance upon the service of the Protestant Church, I should know what to think, and should believe her either a Catholic votaress, who, for some cogent reason, was allowed to make her cell here in London, or some unhappy Popish devotee, who was in the course of undergoing a dreadful penance. As it is, I know not what to deem of it."

His reverie was interrupted by the linkboy knocking at the door of honest John Christie, whose wife came forth with "quips, and becks, and wreathed smiles," to welcome her honoured guest on his return to his apartment.

CHAPTER VIII

*Ay! mark the matron well—and laugh not, Harry,
At her old steeple-hat and velvet guard—
I've call'd her like the ear of Dionysius;
I mean that ear-form'd vault, built o'er his dungeon,
To catch the groans and discontented murmurs
Of his poor bondsmen—Even so doth Martha
Drink up, for her own purpose, all that passes,
Or is supposed to pass, in this wide city—
She can retail it too, if that her profit
Shall call on her to do so; and retail it
For your advantage, so that you can make
Your profit jump with hers.*

The Conspiracy.

We must now introduce to the reader's acquaintance another character, busy and important far beyond her ostensible situation in society—in a word, Dame Ursula Suddlechop, wife of Benjamin Suddlechop, the most renowned barber in all Fleet Street. This dame had her own particular merits, the principal part of which was (if her own report could be trusted) an infinite desire to be of service to her fellow-creatures. Leaving to her thin half-starved partner the boast of having the most dexterous snap with his fingers of any shaver in London, and the care of a shop where starved apprentices played the faces of those who were boobies enough to trust them, the dame drove a separate and more lucrative trade, which yet had so many odd turns and windings, that it seemed in many respects to contradict itself.

Its highest and most important duties were of a very secret and confidential nature, and Dame Ursula Suddlechop was never known to betray any transaction intrusted to her, unless she had either been indifferently paid for her service, or that some one found it convenient to give her a double douceur to make her disgorge the secret; and these contingencies happened in so few cases, that her character for trustiness remained as unimpeached as that for honesty and benevolence.

In fact, she was a most admirable matron, and could be useful to the impassioned and the frail in the rise, progress, and consequences of their passion. She could contrive an interview for lovers who could show proper reasons for meeting privately; she could relieve the frail fair one of the burden of a guilty passion, and perhaps establish the hopeful offspring of unlicensed love as the heir of some family whose love was lawful, but where an heir had not followed the union. More than this she could do, and had been concerned in deeper and dearer secrets. She had been a pupil of Mrs. Turner, and learned from her the secret of making the yellow starch, and, it may be, two or three other secrets of more consequence, though perhaps none that went to the criminal extent of those whereof her mistress was accused. But all that was deep and dark in her real character was covered by the show of outward mirth and good-humour, the hearty laugh and buxom jest with which the dame knew well how to conciliate the elder part of her neighbours, and the many petty arts by which she could recommend herself to the younger, those especially of her own sex.

Dame Ursula was, in appearance, scarce past forty, and her full, but not overgrown form, and still comely features, although her person was plumped out, and her face somewhat coloured by good cheer, had a joyous expression of gaiety and good-humour, which set off the remains of beauty in the wane. Marriages, births, and christenings were seldom thought to be performed with sufficient ceremony, for a considerable distance round her abode, unless Dame Ursley, as they called

her, was present. She could contrive all sorts of pastimes, games, and jests, which might amuse the large companies which the hospitality of our ancestors assembled together on such occasions, so that her presence was literally considered as indispensable in the families of all citizens of ordinary rank, at such joyous periods. So much also was she supposed to know of life and its labyrinths, that she was the willing confidant of half the loving couples in the vicinity, most of whom used to communicate their secrets to, and receive their counsel from, Dame Ursley. The rich rewarded her services with rings, owches, or gold pieces, which she liked still better; and she very generously gave her assistance to the poor, on the same mixed principles as young practitioners in medicine assist them, partly from compassion, and partly to keep her hand in use.

Dame Ursley's reputation in the city was the greater that her practice had extended beyond Temple Bar, and that she had acquaintances, nay, patrons and patronesses, among the quality, whose rank, as their members were much fewer, and the prospect of approaching the courtly sphere much more difficult, bore a degree of consequence unknown to the present day, when the toe of the citizen presses so close on the courtier's heel. Dame Ursley maintained her intercourse with this superior rank of customers, partly by driving a small trade in perfumes, essences, pomades, head-gears from France, dishes or ornaments from China, then already beginning to be fashionable; not to mention drugs of various descriptions, chiefly for the use of the ladies, and partly by other services, more or less connected with the esoteric branches of her profession heretofore alluded to.

Possessing such and so many various modes of thriving, Dame Ursley was nevertheless so poor, that she might probably have mended her own circumstances, as well as her husband's, if she had renounced them all, and set herself quietly down to the care of her own household, and to assist Benjamin in the concerns of his trade. But Ursula was luxurious and genial in her habits, and could no more have endured the stinted economy of Benjamin's board, than she could have reconciled herself to the bald chat of his conversation.

It was on the evening of the day on which Lord Nigel Olifaunt dined with the wealthy goldsmith, that we must introduce Ursula Suddlechop upon the stage. She had that morning made a long tour to Westminster, was fatigued, and had assumed a certain large elbow-chair, rendered smooth by frequent use, placed on one side of her chimney, in which there was lit a small but bright fire. Here she observed, betwixt sleeping and waking, the simmering of a pot of well-spiced ale, on the brown surface of which bobbed a small crab-apple, sufficiently roasted, while a little mulatto girl watched, still more attentively, the process of dressing a veal sweetbread, in a silver stewpan which occupied the other side of the chimney. With these viands, doubtless, Dame Ursula proposed concluding the well spent day, of which she reckoned the labour over, and the rest at her own command. She was deceived, however; for just as the ale, or, to speak technically, the lamb's-wool, was fitted for drinking, and the little dingy maiden intimated that the sweetbread was ready to be eaten, the thin cracked voice of Benjamin was heard from the bottom of the stairs.

"Why, Dame Ursley—why, wife, I say—why, dame—why, love, you are wanted more than a strop for a blunt razor—why, dame—"

"I would some one would draw a razor across thy windpipe, thou bawling ass!" said the dame to herself, in the first moment of irritation against her clamorous helpmate; and then called aloud,—*"Why, what is the matter, Master Suddlechop? I am just going to slip into bed; I have been dagged to and fro the whole day."*

"Nay, sweetheart, it is not me," said the patient Benjamin, "but the Scots laundry-maid from neighbour Ramsay's, who must speak with you incontinent."

At the word sweetheart, Dame Ursley cast a wistful look at the mess which was stewed to a second in the stewpan, and then replied, with a sigh,—*"Bid Scots Jenny come up, Master Suddlechop. I shall be very happy to hear what she has to say;"* then added in a lower tone, "and I hope she will go to the devil in the flame of a tar-barrel, like many a Scots witch before her!"

The Scots landress entered accordingly, and having heard nothing of the last kind wish of Dame Suddlechop, made her reverence with considerable respect, and said, her young mistress had returned home unwell, and wished to see her neighbour, Dame Ursley, directly.

"And why will it not do to-morrow, Jenny, my good woman?" said Dame Ursley; "for I have been as far as Whitehall to-day already, and I am well-nigh worn off my feet, my good woman."

"Aweel!" answered Jenny, with great composure, "and if that sae be sae, I maun take the langer tramp mysell, and maun gae down the waterside for auld Mother Redcap, at the Hungerford Stairs, that deals in comforting young creatures, e'en as you do yoursell, hinny; for ane o' ye the bairn maun see before she sleeps, and that's a' that I ken on't."

So saying, the old emissary, without farther entreaty, turned on her heel, and was about to retreat, when Dame Ursley exclaimed,—*"No, no—if the sweet child, your mistress, has any necessary occasion for good advice and kind tendance, you need not go to Mother Redcap, Janet. She may do very well for skippers' wives, chandlers' daughters, and such like; but nobody shall wait on pretty Mistress Margaret, the daughter of his most Sacred Majesty's horologer, excepting and saving myself. And so I will but take my chopins and my cloak, and put on my muffler, and cross the street to neighbour Ramsay's in an instant. But tell me yourself, good Jenny, are you not something tired of your young lady's frolics and change of mind twenty times a-day?"*

"In troth, not I," said the patient drudge, "unless it may be when she is a wee fashious about washing her laces; but I have been her keeper since she was a bairn, neighbour Suddlechop, and that makes a difference."

"Ay," said Dame Ursley, still busied putting on additional defences against the night air; "and you know for certain that she has two hundred pounds a-year in good land, at her own free disposal?"

"Left by her grandmother, heaven rest her soul!" said the Scotswoman; "and to a daintier lassie she could not have bequeathed it."

"Very true, very true, mistress; for, with all her little whims, I have always said Mistress Margaret Ramsay was the prettiest girl in the ward; and, Jenny, I warrant the poor child has had no supper?"

Jenny could not say but it was the case, for, her master being out, the two 'prentice lads had gone out after shutting shop, to fetch them home, and she and the other maid had gone out to Sandy MacGivan's, to see a friend frae Scotland.

"As was very natural, Mrs. Janet," said Dame Ursley, who found her interest in assenting to all sorts of propositions from all sorts of persons.

"And so the fire went out, too,"—said Jenny.

"Which was the most natural of the whole," said Dame Suddlechop; "and so, to cut the matter short, Jenny, I'll carry over the little bit of supper that I was going to eat. For dinner I have tasted none, and it may be my young pretty Mistress Marget will eat a morsel with me; for it is mere emptiness, Mistress Jenny, that often puts these fancies of illness into young folk's heads." So saying, she put the silver posset-cup with the ale into Jenny's hands and assuming her mantle with the alacrity of one determined to sacrifice inclination to duty, she hid the stewpan under its folds, and commanded Wilsa, the little mulatto girl, to light them across the street.

"Whither away, so late?" said the barber, whom they passed seated with his starveling boys round a mess of stockfish and parsnips, in the shop below.

"If I were to tell you, Gaffer," said the dame, with most contemptuous coolness, "I do not think you could do my errand, so I will e'en keep it to myself." Benjamin was too much accustomed to his wife's independent mode of conduct, to pursue his inquiry farther; nor did the dame tarry for farther question, but marched out at the door, telling the eldest of the boys "to sit up till her return, and look to the house the whilst."

The night was dark and rainy, and although the distance betwixt the two shops was short, it allowed Dame Ursley leisure enough, while she strode along with high-tucked petticoats, to embitter it by the following grumbling reflections—"I wonder what I have done, that I must needs trudge at every old beldam's bidding, and every young minx's maggot! I have been marched from Temple Bar to Whitechapel, on the matter of a pinmaker's wife having pricked her fingers—marry, her husband that made the weapon might have salved the wound.—And here is this fantastic ape, pretty Mistress Marget, forsooth—such a beauty as I could make of a Dutch doll, and as fantastic, and humorous, and conceited, as if she were a duchess. I have seen her in the same day as changeful as a marmozet and as stubborn as a mule. I should like to know whether her little conceited noddle, or her father's old crazy calculating jolter-pate, breeds most whimsies. But then there's that two hundred pounds a-year in dirty land, and the father is held a close chuff, though a fanciful—he is our landlord besides, and she has begged a late day from him for our rent; so, God help me, I must be comfortable—besides, the little capricious devil is my only key to get at Master George Heriot's secret, and it concerns my character to find that out; and so, ANDIAMOS, as the lingua franca hath it."

Thus pondering, she moved forward with hasty strides until she arrived at the watchmaker's habitation. The attendant admitted them by means of a pass-key. Onward glided Dame Ursula, now in glimmer and now in gloom, not like the lovely Lady Cristabelle through Gothic sculpture and ancient armour, but creeping and stumbling amongst relics of old machines, and models of new inventions in various branches of mechanics with which wrecks of useless ingenuity, either in a broken or half-finished shape, the apartment of the fanciful though ingenious mechanist was continually lumbered.

At length they attained, by a very narrow staircase, pretty Mistress Margaret's apartment, where she, the cynosure of the eyes of every bold young bachelor in Fleet Street, sat in a posture which hovered between the discontented and the disconsolate. For her pretty back and shoulders were rounded into a curve, her round and dimpled chin reposed in the hollow of her little palm, while the fingers were folded over her mouth; her elbow rested on a table, and her eyes seemed fixed upon the dying charcoal, which was expiring in a small grate. She scarce turned her head when Dame Ursula entered, and when the presence of that estimable matron was more precisely announced in words by the old Scotswoman, Mistress Margaret, without changing her posture, muttered some sort of answer that was wholly unintelligible.

"Go your ways down to the kitchen with Wilsa, good Mistress Jenny," said Dame Ursula, who was used to all sorts of freaks, on the part of her patients or clients, whichever they might be termed; "put the stewpan and the porringer by the fireside, and go down below—I must speak to my pretty love, Mistress Margaret, by myself—and there is not a bachelor betwixt this and Bow but will envy me the privilege."

The attendants retired as directed, and Dame Ursula, having availed herself of the embers of charcoal, to place her stewpan to the best advantage, drew herself as close as she could to her patient, and began in a low, soothing, and confidential tone of voice, to inquire what ailed her pretty flower of neighbours.

"Nothing, dame," said Margaret somewhat pettishly, and changing her posture so as rather to turn her back upon the kind inquirer.

"Nothing, lady-bird!" answered Dame Suddlechop; "and do you use to send for your friends out of bed at this hour for nothing?"

"It was not I who sent for you, dame," replied the malecontent maiden.

"And who was it, then?" said Ursula; "for if I had not been sent for, I had not been here at this time of night, I promise you!"

"It was the old Scotch fool Jenny, who did it out of her own head, I suppose," said Margaret; "for she has been stunning me these two hours about you and Mother Redcap."

"Me and Mother Redcap!" said Dame Ursula, "an old fool indeed, that couples folk up so.—But come, come, my sweet little neighbour, Jenny is no such fool after all; she knows young folks want more and better advice than her own, and she knows, too, where to find it for them; so you must take heart of grace, my pretty maiden, and tell me what you are moping about, and then let Dame Ursula alone for finding out a cure."

"Nay, an ye be so wise, Mother Ursula," replied the girl, "you may guess what I ail without my telling you."

"Ay, ay, child," answered the complaisant matron, "no one can play better than I at the good old game of What is my thought like? Now I'll warrant that little head of yours is running on a new head-tire, a foot higher than those our city dames wear—or you are all for a trip to Islington or Ware, and your father is cross and will not consent—or——"

"Or you are an old fool, Dame Suddlechop," said Margaret, peevishly, "and must needs trouble yourself about matters you know nothing of."

"Fool as much as you will, mistress," said Dame Ursula, offended in her turn, "but not so very many years older than yourself, mistress."

"Oh! we are angry, are we?" said the beauty; "and pray, Madam Ursula, how come you, that are not so many years older than me, to talk about such nonsense to me, who am so many years younger, and who yet have too much sense to care about head-gears and Islington?"

"Well, well, young mistress," said the sage counsellor, rising, "I perceive I can be of no use here; and methinks, since you know your own matters so much better than other people do, you might dispense with disturbing folks at midnight to ask their advice."

"Why, now you are angry, mother," said Margaret, detaining her; "this comes of your coming out at eventide without eating your supper—I never heard you utter a cross word after you had finished your little morsel.—Here, Janet, a trencher and salt for Dame Ursula;—and what have you in that porringer, dame?—Filthy clammy ale, as I would live—Let Janet fling it out of the window, or keep it for my father's morning draught; and she shall bring you the pottle of sack that was set ready for him—good man, he will never find out the difference, for ale will wash down his dusty calculations quite as well as wine."

"Truly, sweetheart, I am of your opinion," said Dame Ursula, whose temporary displeasure vanished at once before these preparations for good cheer; and so, settling herself on the great easy-chair, with a three-legged table before her, she began to dispatch, with good appetite, the little delicate dish which she had prepared for herself. She did not, however, fail in the duties of civility, and earnestly, but in vain, pressed Mistress Margaret to partake her dainties. The damsel declined the invitation.

"At least pledge me in a glass of sack," said Dame Ursula; "I have heard my grandame say, that before the gossellers came in, the old Catholic father confessors and their penitents always had a cup of sack together before confession; and you are my penitent."

"I shall drink no sack, I am sure," said Margaret; "and I told you before, that if you cannot find out what ails me, I shall never have the heart to tell it."

So saying, she turned away from Dame Ursula once more, and resumed her musing posture, with her hand on her elbow, and her back, at least one shoulder, turned towards her confidant.

"Nay, then," said Dame Ursula, "I must exert my skill in good earnest.—You must give me this pretty hand, and I will tell you by palmistry, as well as any gipsy of them all, what foot it is you halt upon."

"As if I halted on any foot at all," said Margaret, something scornfully, but yielding her left hand to Ursula, and continuing at the same time her averted position.

"I see brave lines here," said Ursula, "and not ill to read neither—pleasure and wealth, and merry nights and late mornings to my Beauty, and such an equipage as shall shake Whitehall. O, have I touched you there?—and smile you now, my pretty one?—for why should not he be Lord Mayor, and go to Court in his gilded caroch, as others have done before him?"

"Lord Mayor? pshaw!" replied Margaret.

"And why pshaw at my Lord Mayor, sweetheart? or perhaps you pshaw at my prophecy; but there is a cross in every one's line of life as well as in yours, darling. And what though I see a 'prentice's flat cap in this pretty palm, yet there is a sparking black eye under it, hath not its match in the Ward of Farringdon-Without."

"Whom do you mean, dame?" said Margaret coldly.

"Whom should I mean," said Dame Ursula, "but the prince of 'prentices, and king of good company, Jenkin Vincent?"

"Out, woman—Jenkin Vincent?—a clown—a Cockney!" exclaimed the indignant damsel.

"Ay, sets the wind in that quarter, Beauty!" quoth the dame; "why, it has changed something since we spoke together last, for then I would have sworn it blew fairer for poor Jin Vin; and the poor lad dotes on you too, and would rather see your eyes than the first glimpse of the sun on the great holiday on May-day."

"I would my eyes had the power of the sun to blind his, then," said Margaret, "to teach the drudge his place."

"Nay," said Dame Ursula, "there be some who say that Frank Tunstall is as proper a lad as Jin Vin, and of surety he is third cousin to a knighthood, and come of a good house; and so mayhap you may be for northward ho!"

"Maybe I may"—answered Margaret, "but not with my father's 'prentice—I thank you, Dame Ursula."

"Nay, then, the devil may guess your thoughts for me," said Dame Ursula; "this comes of trying to shoe a filly that is eternally wincing and shifting ground!"

"Hear me, then," said Margaret, "and mind what I say.—This day I dined abroad—"

"I can tell you where," answered her counsellor,—"with your godfather the rich goldsmith—ay, you see I know something—nay, I could tell you, as I would, with whom, too."

"Indeed!" said Margaret, turning suddenly round with an accent of strong surprise, and colouring up to the eyes.

"With old Sir Mungo Malagrowther," said the oracular dame,—"he was trimmed in my Benjamin's shop in his way to the city."

"Pshaw! the frightful old mouldy skeleton!" said the damsel.

"Indeed you say true, my dear," replied the confidant,—“it is a shame to him to be out of Saint Pancras's charnel-house, for I know no other place he is fit for, the foul-mouthed old railer. He said to my husband—”

"Somewhat which signifies nothing to our purpose, I dare say," interrupted Margaret. "I must speak, then.—There dined with us a nobleman—”

"A nobleman! the maiden's mad!" said Dame Ursula.

"There dined with us, I say," continued Margaret, without regarding the interruption, "a nobleman—a Scottish nobleman."

"Now Our Lady keep her!" said the confidant, "she is quite frantic!—heard ever any one of a watchmaker's daughter falling in love with a nobleman—and a Scots nobleman, to make the matter complete, who are all as proud as Lucifer, and as poor as Job?—A Scots nobleman, quotha? I had lief you told me of a Jew pedlar. I would have you think how all this is to end, pretty one, before you jump in the dark."

"That is nothing to you, Ursula—it is your assistance," said Mistress Margaret, "and not your advice, that I am desirous to have, and you know I can make it worth your while."

"O, it is not for the sake of lucre, Mistress Margaret," answered the obliging dame; "but truly I would have you listen to some advice—bethink you of your own condition."

"My father's calling is mechanical," said Margaret, "but our blood is not so. I have heard my father say that we are descended, at a distance indeed, from the great Earls of Dalwalsey." [Footnote: The head of the ancient and distinguished house of Ramsay, and to whom, as their chief, the individuals of that name look as their origin and source of gentry. Allan Ramsay, the pastoral poet, in the same manner, makes

"Dalhousie of an auld descent,

My chief, my stoup, my ornament."]

"Ay, ay," said Dame Ursula; "even so—I never knew a Scot of you but was descended, as ye call it, from some great house or other; and a piteous descent it often is—and as for the distance you speak of, it is so great as to put you out of sight of each other. Yet do not toss your pretty head so scornfully, but tell me the name of this lordly northern gallant, and we will try what can be done in the matter."

"It is Lord Glenvarloch, whom they call Lord Nigel Olifaunt," said Margaret in a low voice, and turning away to hide her blushes.

"Marry, Heaven forefend!" exclaimed Dame Suddlechop; "this is the very devil, and something worse!"

"How mean you?" said the damsel, surprised at the vivacity of her exclamation.

"Why, know ye not," said the dame, "what powerful enemies he has at Court? know ye not—But blisters on my tongue, it runs too fast for my wit—enough to say, that you had better make your bridal-bed under a falling house, than think of young Glenvarloch."

"He IS unfortunate then?" said Margaret; "I knew it—I divined it—there was sorrow in his voice when he said even what was gay—there was a touch of misfortune in his melancholy smile—he had not thus clung to my thoughts had I seen him in all the mid-day glare of prosperity."

"Romances have cracked her brain!" said Dame Ursula; "she is a castaway girl—utterly distraught—loves a Scots lord—and likes him the better for being unfortunate! Well, mistress, I am sorry this is a matter I cannot aid you in—it goes against my conscience, and it is an affair above my condition, and beyond my management;—but I will keep your counsel."

"You will not be so base as to desert me, after having drawn my secret from me?" said Margaret, indignantly; "if you do, I know how to have my revenge; and if you do not, I will reward you well. Remember the house your husband dwells in is my father's property."

"I remember it but too well, Mistress Margaret," said Ursula, after a moment's reflection, "and I would serve you in any thing in my condition; but to meddle with such high matters—I shall never forget poor Mistress Turner, my honoured patroness, peace be with her!—she had the ill-luck to meddle in the matter of Somerset and Overbury, and so the great earl and his lady slipt their necks out of the collar, and left her and some half-dozen others to suffer in their stead. I shall never forget the sight of her standing on the scaffold with the ruff round her pretty neck, all done up with the yellow starch which I had so often helped her to make, and that was so soon to give place to a rough hempen cord. Such a sight, sweetheart, will make one loath to meddle with matters that are too hot or heavy for their handling."

"Out, you fool!" answered Mistress Margaret; "am I one to speak to you about such criminal practices as that wretch died for? All I desire of you is, to get me precise knowledge of what affair brings this young nobleman to Court."

"And when you have his secret," said Ursula, "what will it avail you, sweetheart?—and yet I would do your errand, if you could do as much for me."

"And what is it you would have of me?" said Mistress Margaret.

"What you have been angry with me for asking before," answered Dame Ursula. "I want to have some light about the story of your godfather's ghost, that is only seen at prayers."

"Not for the world," said Mistress Margaret, "will I be a spy on my kind godfather's secrets—No, Ursula—that I will never pry into, which he desires to keep hidden. But thou knowest that I have a fortune, of my own, which must at no distant day come under my own management—think of some other recompense."

"Ay, that I well know," said the counsellor—"it is that two hundred per year, with your father's indulgence, that makes you so wilful, sweetheart."

"It may be so,"—said Margaret Ramsay; "meanwhile, do you serve me truly, and here is a ring of value in pledge, that when my fortune is in my own hand, I will redeem the token with fifty broad pieces of gold."

"Fifty broad pieces of gold!" repeated the dame; "and this ring, which is a right fair one, in token you fail not of your word!—Well, sweetheart, if I must put my throat in peril, I am sure I cannot risk it for a friend more generous than you; and I would not think of more than the pleasure of serving you, only Benjamin gets more idle every day, and our family——"

"Say no more of it," said Margaret; "we understand each other. And now, tell me what you know of this young man's affairs, which made you so unwilling to meddle with them?"

"Of that I can say no great matter as yet," answered Dame Ursula; "only I know, the most powerful among his own countrymen are against him, and also the most powerful at the Court here. But I will learn more of it; for it will be a dim print that I will not read for your sake, pretty Mistress Margaret. Know you where this gallant dwells?"

"I heard by accident," said Margaret, as if ashamed of the minute particularity of her memory upon such an occasion,—“he lodges, I think—at one Christie's—if I mistake not—at Paul's Wharf—a ship-chandler's."

"A proper lodging for a young baron!—Well, but cheer you up, Mistress Margaret—If he has come up a caterpillar, like some of his countrymen, he may cast his slough like them, and come out a butterfly.—So I drink good-night, and sweet dreams to you, in another parting cup of sack; and you shall hear tidings of me within four-and-twenty hours. And, once more, I commend you to your pillow, my pearl of pearls, and Marguerite of Marguerites!"

So saying, she kissed the reluctant cheek of her young friend, or patroness, and took her departure with the light and stealthy pace of one accustomed to accommodate her footsteps to the purposes of dispatch and secrecy.

Margaret Ramsay looked after her for some time, in anxious silence. "I did ill," she at length murmured, "to let her wring this out of me; but she is artful, bold and serviceable—and I think faithful—or, if not, she will be true at least to her interest, and that I can command. I would I had not spoken, however—I have begun a hopeless work. For what has he said to me, to warrant my meddling in his fortunes?—Nothing but words of the most ordinary import—mere table-talk, and terms of course. Yet who knows"—she said, and then broke off, looking at the glass the while, which, as it reflected back a face of great beauty, probably suggested to her mind a more favourable conclusion of the sentence than she cared to trust her tongue withal.

CHAPTER IX

So pitiful a thing is suitor's state!
Most miserable man, whom wicked fate
Hath brought to Court to sue, for had I wist,
That few have found, and many a one hath miss'd!
Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
What hell it is, in suing long to bide:
To lose good days that might be better spent;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To have thy Prince's grace, yet want her Peers';
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares—
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs.
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Mother Hubbard's Tale.

On the morning of the day on which George Heriot had prepared to escort the young Lord of Glenvarloch to the Court at Whitehall, it may be reasonably supposed, that the young man, whose fortunes were likely to depend on this cast, felt himself more than usually anxious. He rose early, made his toilette with uncommon care, and, being enabled, by the generosity of his more plebeian countryman, to set out a very handsome person to the best advantage, he obtained a momentary approbation from himself as he glanced at the mirror, and a loud and distinct plaudit from his landlady, who declared at once, that, in her judgment, he would take the wind out of the sail of every gallant in the presence—so much had she been able to enrich her discourse with the metaphors of those with whom her husband dealt.

At the appointed hour, the barge of Master George Heriot arrived, handsomely manned and appointed, having a tilt, with his own cipher, and the arms of his company, painted thereupon.

The young Lord of Glenvarloch received the friend, who had evinced such disinterested attachment, with the kind courtesy which well became him.

Master Heriot then made him acquainted with the bounty of his sovereign; which he paid over to his young friend, declining what he had himself formerly advanced to him. Nigel felt all the gratitude which the citizen's disinterested friendship had deserved, and was not wanting in expressing it suitably.

Yet, as the young and high-born nobleman embarked to go to the presence of his prince, under the patronage of one whose best, or most distinguished qualification, was his being an eminent member of the Goldsmiths' Incorporation, he felt a little surprised, if not abashed, at his own situation; and Richie Moniplies, as he stepped over the gangway to take his place forward in the boat, could not help muttering,—“It was a changed day betwixt Master Heriot and his honest father in the Kraemes;—but, doubtless, there was a difference between clinking on gold and silver, and clattering upon pewter.”

On they glided, by the assistance of the oars of four stout watermen, along the Thames, which then served for the principal high-road betwixt London and Westminster; for few ventured on horseback through the narrow and crowded streets of the city, and coaches were then a luxury reserved only for the higher nobility, and to which no citizen, whatever was his wealth, presumed to aspire. The beauty of the banks, especially on the northern side, where the gardens of the nobility descended from their hotels, in many places, down to the water's edge, was pointed out to Nigel by his kind conductor, and was pointed out in vain. The mind of the young Lord of Glenvarloch was filled with anticipations, not the most pleasant, concerning the manner in which he was likely to be received by that monarch, in whose behalf his family had been nearly reduced to ruin; and he was, with the usual mental anxiety of those in such a situation, framing imaginary questions from the king, and over-toiling his spirit in devising answers to them.

His conductor saw the labour of Nigel's mind, and avoided increasing it by farther conversation; so that, when he had explained to him briefly the ceremonies observed at Court on such occasions of presentation, the rest of their voyage was performed in silence.

They landed at Whitehall Stairs, and entered the Palace after announcing their names,—the guards paying to Lord Glenvarloch the respect and honours due to his rank.

The young man's heart beat high and thick within him as he came into the royal apartments. His education abroad, conducted, as it had been, on a narrow and limited scale, had given him but imperfect ideas of the grandeur of a Court; and the philosophical reflections which taught him to set ceremonial and exterior splendour at defiance, proved, like other maxims of mere philosophy, ineffectual, at the moment they were weighed against the impression naturally made on the mind of an inexperienced youth, by the unusual magnificence of the scene. The splendid apartments through which they passed, the rich apparel of the grooms, guards, and apartments, had something in it, trifling and commonplace as it might appear to practised courtiers, embarrassing, and even alarming, to one, who went through these forms for the first time, and who was doubtful what sort of reception was to accompany his first appearance before his sovereign.

Heriot, in anxious attention to save his young friend from any momentary awkwardness, had taken care to give the necessary password to the warders, grooms of the chambers, ushers, or by whatever name they were designated; so they passed on without interruption.

In this manner they passed several ante-rooms, filled chiefly with guards, attendants of the Court, and their acquaintances, male and female, who, dressed in their best apparel, and with eyes rounded by eager curiosity to make the most of their opportunity, stood, with becoming modesty, ranked against the wall, in a manner which indicated that they were spectators, not performers, in the courtly exhibition.

Through these exterior apartments Lord Glenvarloch and his city friend advanced into a large and splendid withdrawing-room, communicating with the presence-chamber, into which ante-room were admitted those only who, from birth, their posts in the state or household, or by the particular grant of the kings, had right to attend the Court, as men entitled to pay their respects to their sovereign.

Amid this favoured and selected company, Nigel observed Sir Mungo Malagrowth, who, avoided and discountenanced by those who knew how low he stood in Court interest and favour, was but too happy in the opportunity of hooking himself upon a person of Lord Glenvarloch's rank, who was, as yet, so inexperienced as to feel it difficult to shake off an intruder.

The knight forthwith framed his grim features to a ghastly smile, and, after a preliminary and patronising nod to George Heriot, accompanied with an aristocratic wave of the hand, which intimated at once superiority and protection, he laid aside altogether the honest citizen, to whom he owed many a dinner, to attach himself exclusively to the young lord, although he suspected he might be occasionally in the predicament of needing one as much as himself. And even the notice of this original, singular and unamiable as he was, was not entirely indifferent to Lord Glenvarloch, since the absolute and somewhat constrained silence of his good friend Heriot, which left him at liberty to retire painfully to his own agitating reflections, was now relieved; while, on the other hand, he could not help feeling interest in the sharp and sarcastic information poured upon him by an observant, though discontented courtier, to whom a patient auditor, and he a man of title and rank, was as much a prize, as his acute and communicative disposition rendered him an entertaining companion to Nigel Olifaunt. Heriot, in the meantime, neglected by Sir Mungo, and avoiding every attempt by which the grateful politeness of Lord Glenvarloch strove to bring him into the conversation, stood by, with a kind of half smile on his countenance; but whether excited by Sir Mungo's wit, or arising at his expense, did not exactly appear.

In the meantime, the trio occupied a nook of the ante-room, next to the door of the presence-chamber, which was not yet thrown open, when Maxwell, with his rod of office, came bustling into the apartment, where most men, excepting those of high rank, made way for him. He stopped beside the party in which we are interested, looked for a moment at the young Scots nobleman, then made a slight obeisance to Heriot, and lastly, addressing Sir Mungo Malagrowth, began a hurried complaint to him of the misbehaviour of the gentlemen-pensioners and warders, who suffered all sort of citizens, suitors, and scribes, to sneak into the outer apartments, without either respect or decency.—"The English," he said, "were scandalised, for such a thing durst not be attempted in the queen's days. In her time, there was then the court-yard for the mobility, and the apartments for the nobility; and it reflects on your place, Sir Mungo," he added, "belonging to the household as you do, that such things should not be better ordered."

Here Sir Mungo, afflicted, as was frequently the case on such occasions, with one of his usual fits of deafness, answered, "It was no wonder the mobility used freedoms, when those whom they saw in office were so little better in blood and havings than themselves."

"You are right, sir—quite right," said Maxwell, putting his hand on the tarnished embroidery on the old knight's sleeve,—"when such fellows see men in office dressed in cast-off suits, like paltry stage-players, it is no wonder the Court is thronged with intruders."

"Were you lauding the taste of my embroidery, Maister Maxwell?" answered the knight, who apparently interpreted the deputy-chamberlain's meaning rather from his action than his words;—"it is of an ancient and liberal pattern, having been made by your mother's father, auld James Stitches, a master-fashioneer of honest repute, in Merlin's Wynd, whom I made a point to employ, as I am now happy to remember, seeing your father thought fit to intermarry with sic a person's daughter."

Maxwell looked stern; but, conscious there was nothing to be got of Sir Mungo in the way of amends, and that prosecuting the quarrel with such an adversary would only render him ridiculous, and make public a mis-alliance of which he had no reason to be proud, he covered his resentment with a sneer; and, expressing his regret that Sir Mungo was become too deaf to understand or attend to what was said to him, walked on, and planted himself beside the folding-doors of the presence-chamber, at which he was to perform the duty of deputy-chamberlain, or usher, so soon as they should be opened.

"The door of the presence is about to open," said the goldsmith, in a whisper, to his young friend; "my condition permits me to go no farther with you. Fail not to present yourself boldly, according to your birth, and offer your Supplication; which the king will not refuse to accept, and, as I hope, to consider favourably." As he spoke, the door of the presence-chamber opened accordingly, and, as is usual on such occasions, the courtiers began to advance towards it, and to enter in a slow, but continuous and uninterrupted stream.

As Nigel presented himself in his turn at the entrance, and mentioned his name and title, Maxwell seemed to hesitate. "You are not known to any one," he said. "It is my duty to suffer no one to pass to the presence, my lord, whose face is unknown to me, unless upon the word of a responsible person."

"I came with Master George Heriot," said Nigel, in some embarrassment at this unexpected interruption.

"Master Heriot's name will pass current for much gold and silver, my lord," replied Maxwell, with a civil sneer, "but not for birth and rank. I am compelled by my office to be peremptory.—The entrance is impeded—I am much concerned to say it—your lordship must stand back."

"What is the matter?" said an old Scottish nobleman, who had been speaking with George Heriot, after he had separated from Nigel, and who now came forward, observing the altercation betwixt the latter and Maxwell.

"It is only Master Deputy-Chamberlain Maxwell," said Sir Mungo Malagrowth, "expressing his joy to see Lord Glenvarloch at Court, whose father gave him his office—at least I think he is speaking to that purport—for your lordship kens my imperfection." A subdued laugh, such as the situation permitted, passed round amongst those who heard this specimen of Sir Mungo's sarcastic temper. But the old nobleman stepped still more forward, saying,—"**What!**—the son of my gallant old opponent, Ochtred Olifaunt—I will introduce him to the presence myself."

So saying, he took Nigel by the arm, without farther ceremony, and was about to lead him forward, when Maxwell, still keeping his rod across the door, said, but with hesitation and embarrassment—"My lord, this gentleman is not known, and I have orders to be scrupulous."

"**Tutti—tati, man,**" said the old lord, "I will be answerable he is his father's son, from the cut of his eyebrow—and thou, Maxwell, knewest his father well enough to have spared thy scruples. Let us pass, man." So saying, he put aside the deputy-chamberlain's rod, and entered the presence-room, still holding the young nobleman by the arm.

"Why, I must know you, man," he said; "I must know you. I knew your father well, man, and I have broke a lance and crossed a blade with him; and it is to my credit that I am living to brag of it. He was king's-man and I was queen's-man during the Douglas wars—young fellows both, that feared neither fire nor steel; and we had some old feudal quarrels besides, that had come down from father to son, with our seal-rings, two-harided broad-swords, and plate-coats, and the crests on our burghs."

"Too loud, my Lord of Huntinglen," whispered a gentleman of the chamber,—"**The King!—the King!**"

The old earl (for such he proved) took the hint, and was silent; and James, advancing from a side-door, received in succession the compliments of strangers, while a little group of favourite courtiers, or officers of the household, stood around him, to whom he addressed himself from time to time. Some more pains had been bestowed on his toilette than upon the occasion when we first presented the monarch to our readers; but there was a natural awkwardness about his figure which prevented his clothes from sitting handsomely, and the prudence or timidity of his disposition had made him adopt the custom already noticed, of wearing a dress so thickly quilted as might withstand the stroke of a dagger, which added an ungainly stiffness to his whole appearance, contrasting oddly with the frivolous, ungraceful, and fidgeting motions with which he accompanied his conversation. And yet, though the king's deportment was very undignified, he had a manner so kind, familiar, and good-humoured, was so little apt to veil over or conceal his own foibles, and had so much indulgence and sympathy for those of others, that his address, joined to his learning, and a certain proportion of shrewd mother-wit, failed not to make a favourable impression on those who approached his person.

When the Earl of Huntinglen had presented Nigel to his sovereign, a ceremony which the good peer took upon himself, the king received the young lord very graciously, and observed to his introducer, that he "was fain to see them twa stand side by side; for I trow, my Lord Huntinglen," continued he, "your ancestors, ay, and e'en your lordship's self and this lad's father, have stood front to front at the sword's point, and that is a worse posture."

"Until your Majesty," said Lord Huntinglen, "made Lord Ochtred and me cross palms, upon the memorable day when your Majesty feasted all the nobles that were at feud together, and made them join hands in your presence—"

"I mind it weel," said the king; "I mind it weel—it was a blessed day, being the nineteen of September, of all days in the year—and it was a blithe sport to see how some of the carles gined as they clapped loofs together. By my saul, I thought some of them, mair special the Hieland chieftains, wad have broken out in our own presence; but we caused them to march hand in hand to the Cross, ourselves leading the way, and there drink a blithe cup of kindness with ilk other, to the

stanching of feud, and perpetuation of amity. Auld John Anderson was Provost that year—the carle grat for joy, and the bailies and councillors danced bare-headed in our presence like five-year-auld colts, for very triumph."

"It was indeed a happy day," said Lord Huntinglen, "and will not be forgotten in the history of your Majesty's reign."

"I would not that it were, my lord," replied the monarch—"I would not that it were pretermitted in our annals. Ay, ay—*BEATI PACIFICI*. My English lieges here may weel make much of me, for I would have them to know, they have gotten the only peaceable man that ever came of my family. If James with the Fiery Face had come amongst you," he said, looking round him, "or my great grandsire, of Flodden memory!"

"We should have sent him back to the north again," whispered one English nobleman.

"At least," said another, in the same inaudible tone, "we should have had a MAN to our sovereign, though he were but a Scotsman."

"And now, my young springald," said the king to Lord Glenvarloch, "where have you been spending your calf-time?"

"At Leyden, of late, may it please your Majesty," answered Lord Nigel.

"Aha! a scholar," said the king; "and, by my saul, a modest and ingenuous youth, that hath not forgotten how to blush, like most of our travelled *Monsieurs*. We will treat him conformably."

Then drawing himself up, coughing slightly, and looking around him with the conscious importance of superior learning, while all the courtiers who understood, or understood not, Latin, pressed eagerly forward to listen, the sapient monarch prosecuted his inquiries as follows:—

"Hem! hem! *salve bis, quaterque salve, glenvarlochides noster! Nuperumne ab lugduno batavorum britanniam rediisti?*"

The young nobleman replied, bowing low—

"Imo, *rex augustissime—biennium fere apud lugdunenses Moratus sum.*"

James proceeded—

"*Biennium dicis? Bene, bene, optime factum est—non uno Die, quod dicunt,—intelligisti, domine glenvarlochiensis? Aha!*"

Nigel replied by a reverent bow, and the king, turning to those behind him, said—

"*Adolescens quidem ingenui vultus ingenuique pudoris.*" Then resumed his learned queries. "*Et quid hodie lugdunenses loquuntur—vossius vester nihilne novi scripsit?—nihil certe, quod doleo, typis recenter editit.*"

"*Valet quidem vossius, rex benevole.*" replied Nigel, "*ast senex veneratissimus annum agit, ni fallor, septuagesimum.*"

"*Virum, mehercle, vix tam grandaevum crediderim,*" replied the monarch. "*et vorstius iste?—arminii improbi successor aequae ac sectator—herosne adhuc, ut cum homero loquar, [ZOOS ESTI KAI EPI THONI DERKOV?]*" text in Greek

Nigel, by good fortune, remembered that Vorstius, the divine last mentioned in his Majesty's queries about the state of Dutch literature, had been engaged in a personal controversy with James, in which the king had taken so deep an interest, as at length to hint in his public correspondence with the United States, that they would do well to apply the secular arm to stop the progress of heresy by violent measures against the Professor's person—a demand which their Mighty Mightinesses' principles of universal toleration induced them to elude, though with some difficulty. Knowing all this, Lord Glenvarloch, though a courtier of only five minutes' standing, had address enough to reply—

"*Vivum quidem, haud diu est, hominem videbam—vigere autem quis dicat qui sub fulminibus eloquentiae tuae, rex magne, jamdudum pronus jacet, et prostratus?*"

[Footnote: Lest any lady or gentleman should suspect there is aught of mystery concealed under the sentences printed in Italics, they will be pleased to understand that they contain only a few commonplace Latin phrases, relating to the state of letters in Holland, which neither deserve, nor would endure, a literal translation.]

This last tribute to his polemical powers completed James's happiness, which the triumph of exhibiting his erudition had already raised to a considerable height. He rubbed his hands, snapped his fingers, fidgeted, chuckled, exclaimed—"Euge! Belle! Optime!" and turning to the Bishops of Exeter and Oxford, who stood behind him, he said.—"Ye see, my lords, no bad specimen of our Scottish Latinity, with which language we would all our subjects of England were as well imbued as this, and other youths of honourable birth, in our auld kingdom; also, we keep the genuine and Roman pronunciation, like other learned nations on the continent, sae that we hold communing with any scholar in the universe, who can but speak the Latin tongue; whereas ye, our learned subjects of England, have introduced into your universities, otherwise most learned, a fashion of pronouncing like unto the 'hippit foot and clippit foot' of the bride in the fairy tale, whilk manner of speech, (take it not amiss that I be round with you) can be understood by no nation on earth saving yourselves; whereby Latin, quoad anglos, ceaseth to be communis lingua, the general dragoman, or interpreter, between all the wise men of the earth."

The Bishop of Exeter bowed, as in acquiescence to the royal censure; but he of Oxford stood upright, as mindful over what subjects his see extended, and as being equally willing to become food for fagots in defence of the Latinity of the university, as for any article of his religious creed.

The king, without awaiting an answer from either prelate, proceeded to question Lord Nigel, but in the vernacular tongue,—"*Weel, my likely Alumnus of the Muses, and what make you so far from the north?*"

"To pay my homage to your Majesty," said the young nobleman, kneeling on one knee, "and to lay before you," he added, "this my humble and dutiful Supplication."

The presenting of a pistol would certainly have startled King James more, but could (setting apart the fright) hardly have been more displeasing to his indolent disposition.

"And is it even so, man?" said he; "and can no single man, were it but for the rarity of the case, ever come up frae Scotland, excepting *EX PROPOSITO*—on set purpose, to see what he can make out of his loving sovereign? It is but three days syne that we had weel nigh lost our life, and put three kingdoms into dule-weeds, from the over haste of a clumsy-handed peasant, to thrust a packet into our hand, and now we are beset by the like impediment in our very Court. To our Secretary with that gear, my lord—to our Secretary with that gear."

"I have already offered my humble Supplication to your Majesty's Secretary of State," said Lord Glenvarloch—"but it seems——"

"That he would not receive it, I warrant?" said the king, interrupting him; "bu my saul, our Secretary kens that point of king-craft, called refusing, better than we do, and will look at nothing but what he likes himself—I think I wad make a better Secretary to him than he to me.—Weel, my lord, you are welcome to London; and, as ye seem an acute and learned youth, I advise ye to turn your neb northward as soon as ye like, and settle yourself for a while at Saint Andrews, and we will be right glad to hear that you prosper in your studies.—Incumbite Remis Fortiter."

While the king spoke thus, he held the petition of the young lord carelessly, like one who only delayed till the supplicant's back was turned, to throw it away, or at least lay it aside to be no more looked at. The petitioner, who read this in his cold and indifferent looks, and in the manner in which he twisted and crumpled together the paper, arose with a bitter sense of anger and disappointment, made a profound obeisance, and was about to retire hastily. But Lord Huntinglen, who stood by him, checked his intention by an almost imperceptible touch upon the skirt of his cloak, and Nigel, taking the hint, retreated only a few steps from the royal presence, and then made a pause. In the meantime, Lord Huntinglen kneeled before James, in his turn, and said—"May it please your Majesty to remember, that upon one certain occasion you did promise to grant me a boon every year of your sacred life?"

"I mind it weel, man," answered James, "I mind it weel, and good reason why—it was when you unclasped the fause traitor Ruthven's fangs from about our royal throat, and drove your dirk into him like a true subject. We did then, as you remind us, (whilk was unnecessary,) being partly beside ourselves with joy at our liberation, promise we would grant you a free boon every year; whilk promise, on our coming to menseful possession of our royal faculties, we did confirm, restrictive always and conditionaliter, that your lordship's demand should be such as we, in our royal discretion, should think reasonable."

"Even so, gracious sovereign," said the old earl, "and may I yet farther crave to know if I have ever exceeded the bounds of your royal benevolence?"

"By my word, man, no!" said the king; "I cannot remember you have asked much for yourself, if it be not a dog or a hawk, or a buck out of our park at Theobald's, or such like. But to what serves this preface?"

"To the boon to which I am now to ask of your Grace," said Lord Huntinglen; "which is, that your Majesty would be pleased, on the instant, to look at the placet of Lord Glenvarloch, and do upon it what your own just and royal nature shall think meet and just, without reference to your Secretary or any other of your Council."

"By my saul, my lord, this is strange," said the king; "ye are pleading for the son of your enemy!"

"Of one who WAS my enemy till your Majesty made him my friend," answered Lord Huntinglen.

"Weel spoken, my lord!" said the king; "and with, a true Christian spirit. And, respecting the Supplication of this young man, I partly guess where the matter lies; and in plain troth I had promised to George Heriot to be good to the lad—But then, here the shoe pinches. Steenie and Babie Charles cannot abide him—neither can your own son, my lord; and so, methinks, he had better go down to Scotland before he comes toill luck by them."

"My son, an it please your Majesty, so far as he is concerned, shall not direct my doings," said the earl, "nor any wild-headed young man of them all."

"Why, neither shall they mine," replied the monarch; "by my father's saul, none of them all shall play Rex with me—I will do what I will, and what I ought, like a free king."

"Your Majesty will then grant me my boon?" said the Lord Huntinglen.

"Ay, marry will I—marry will I," said the king; "but follow me this way, man, where we may be more private."

He led Lord Huntinglen with rather a hurried step through the courtiers, all of whom gazed earnestly on this unwonted scene, as is the fashion of all Courts on similar occasions. The king passed into a little cabinet, and bade, in the first moment, Lord Huntinglen lock or bar the door; but countermanded his direction in the next, saying,—*"No, no, no—bread o' life, man, I am a free king—will do what I will and what I should—I am justus et tenax propositi, man—nevertheless, keep by the door, Lord Huntinglen, in case Steenie should come in with his mad humour."*

"O my poor master!" groaned the Earl of Huntinglen. "When you were in your own cold country, you had warmer blood in your veins."

The king hastily looked over the petition or memorial, every now and then glancing his eye towards the door, and then sinking it hastily on the paper, ashamed that Lord Huntinglen, whom he respected, should suspect him of timidity.

"To grant the truth," he said, after he had finished his hasty perusal, "this is a hard case; and harder than it was represented to me, though I had some inkling of it before. And so the lad only wants payment of the siller due from us, in order to reclaim his paternal estate? But then, Huntinglen, the lad will have other debts—and why burden himsell with sae mony acres of barren woodland? let the land gang, man, let the land gang; Steenie has the promise of it from our Scottish Chancellor—it is the best hunting-ground in Scotland—and Babie Charles and Steenie want to kill a buck there this next year—they maun hae the land—they maun hae the land; and our debt shall be paid to the young man plack and bawbee, and he may have the spending of it at our Court; or if he has such an eard hunger, wouns! man, we'll stuff his stomach with English land, which is worth twice as much, ay, ten times as much, as these accursed hills and heughs, and mosses and muirs, that he is sae keen after."

All this while the poor king ambled up and down the apartment in a piteous state of uncertainty, which was made more ridiculous by his shambling circular mode of managing his legs, and his ungainly fashion on such occasions of fiddling with the bunches of ribbons which fastened the lower part of his dress.

Lord Huntinglen listened with great composure, and answered, "An it please your Majesty, there was an answer yielded by Naboth when Ahab coveted his vineyard—" The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

"Ey, my lord—ey, my lord!" ejaculated James, while all the colour mounted both to his cheek and nose; "I hope ye mean not to teach me divinity? Ye need not fear, my lord, that I will shun to do justice to every man; and, since your lordship will give me no help to take up this in a more peaceful manner—whilk, methinks, would be better for the young man, as I said before,—why—since it maun be so—'sdeath, I am a free king, man, and he shall have his money and redeem his land, and make a kirk and a miln of it, an he will." So saying, he hastily wrote an order on the Scottish Exchequer for the sum in question, and then added, "How they are to pay it, I see not; but I warrant he will find money on the order among the goldsmiths, who can find it for every one but me.—And now you see, my Lord of Huntinglen, that I am neither an untrue man, to deny you the boon whilk I became bound for, nor an Ahab, to covet Naboth's vineyard; nor a mere nose-of-wax, to be twisted this way and that, by favourites and counsellors at their pleasure. I think you will grant now that I am none of those?"

"You are my own native and noble prince," said Huntinglen, as he knelt to kiss the royal hand—"just and generous, whenever you listen to the workings of your own heart."

"Ay, ay," said the king, laughing good-naturedly, as he raised his faithful servant from the ground, "that is what ye all say when I do any thing to please ye.

There—there, take the sign-manual, and away with you and this young fellow. I wonder Steenie and Babie Charles have not broken in on us before now."

Lord Huntinglen hastened from the cabinet, foreseeing a scene at which he was unwilling to be present, but which sometimes occurred when James roused himself so far as to exert his own free will, of which he boasted so much, in spite of that of his imperious favourite Steenie, as he called the Duke of Buckingham, from a supposed resemblance betwixt his very handsome countenance, and that with which the Italian artists represented the protomartyr Stephen. In fact, the haughty favourite, who had the unusual good fortune to stand as high in the opinion of the heir-apparent as of the existing monarch, had considerably diminished in his respect towards the latter; and it was apparent, to the more shrewd courtiers, that James endured his domination rather from habit, timidity, and a dread of encountering his stormy passions, than from any heartfelt continuation of regard towards him, whose greatness had been the work of his own hands. To save himself the pain of seeing what was likely to take place on the duke's return, and to preserve the king from the additional humiliation which the presence of such a witness must have occasioned, the earl left the cabinet as speedily as possible, having first carefully pocketed the important sign-manual.

No sooner had he entered the presence-room, than he hastily sought Lord Glenvarloch, who had withdrawn into the embrasure of one of the windows, from the general gaze of men who seemed disposed only to afford him the notice which arises from surprise and curiosity, and, taking him by the arm, without speaking, led him out of the presence-chamber into the first ante-room. Here they found the worthy goldsmith, who approached them with looks of curiosity, which were checked by the old lord, who said hastily, "All is well.—Is your barge in waiting?" Heriot answered in the affirmative. "Then," said Lord Huntinglen, "you shall give me a cast in it, as the watermen say; and I, in requital, will give you both your dinner; for we must have some conversation together."

They both followed the earl without speaking, and were in the second ante-room when the important annunciation of the ushers, and the hasty murmur with which all made ample way as the company repeated to each other,—*"The Duke—the Duke!"* made them aware of the approach of the omnipotent favourite.

He entered, that unhappy minion of Court favour, sumptuously dressed in the picturesque attire which will live for ever on the canvas of Vandyke, and which marks so well the proud age, when aristocracy, though undermined and nodding to its fall, still, by external show and profuse expense, endeavoured to assert its paramount superiority over the inferior orders. The handsome and commanding countenance, stately form, and graceful action and manners of the Duke of Buckingham, made him become that picturesque dress beyond any man of his time. At present, however, his countenance seemed discomposed, his dress a little more disordered than became the place, his step hasty, and his voice imperative.

All marked the angry spot upon his brow, and bore back so suddenly to make way for him, that the Earl of Huntinglen, who affected no extraordinary haste on the occasion, with his companions, who could not, if they would, have decently left him, remained as it were by themselves in the middle of the room, and in the very path of the angry favourite. He touched his cap sternly as he looked on Huntinglen, but unbonneted to Heriot, and sunk his beaver, with its shadowy plume, as low as the floor, with a profound air of mock respect. In returning his greeting, which he did simply and unaffectedly, the citizen only said,—*"Too much courtesy, my lord duke, is often the reverse of kindness."*

"I grieve you should think so, Master Heriot," answered the duke; "I only meant, by my homage, to claim your protection, sir—your patronage. You are become, I understand, a solicitor of suits—a promoter—an undertaker—a fautor of court suitors of merit and quality, who chance to be pennyless. I trust your bags will bear you out in your new boast."

"They will bear me the farther, my lord duke," answered the goldsmith, "that my boast is but small."

"O, you do yourself less than justice, my good Master Heriot," continued the duke, in the same tone of irony; "you have a marvellous court-faction, to be the son of an Edinburgh tinker. Have the goodness to prefer me to the knowledge of the high-born nobleman who is honoured and advantaged by your patronage."

"That shall be my task," said Lord Huntinglen, with emphasis. "My lord duke, I desire you to know Nigel Olifaunt, Lord Glenvarloch, representative of one of the most ancient and powerful baronial houses in Scotland.—Lord Glenvarloch, I present you to his Grace the Duke of Buckingham, representative of Sir George Villiers, Knight of Brookesby, in the county of Leicester."

The duke coloured still more high as he bowed to Lord Glenvarloch scornfully, a courtesy which the other returned haughtily, and with restrained indignation. "We know each other, then," said the duke, after a moment's pause; and as if he had seen something in the young nobleman which merited more serious notice than the bitter raillery with which he had commenced—"we know each other—and you know me, my lord, for your enemy."

"I thank you for your plainness, my lord duke," replied Nigel; "an open enemy is better than a hollow friend."

"For you, my Lord Huntinglen," said the duke, "methinks you have but now overstepped the limits of the indulgence permitted to you, as the father of the prince's friend, and my own."

"By my word, my lord duke," replied the earl, "it is easy for any one to outstep boundaries, of the existence of which he was not aware. It is neither to secure my protection nor approbation, that my son keeps such exalted company."

"O, my lord, we know you, and indulge you," said the duke; "you are one of those who presume for a life-long upon the merit of one good action."

"In faith, my lord, and if it be so," said the old earl, "I have at least the advantage of such as presume more than I do, without having done any action of merit whatever. But I mean not to quarrel with you, my lord—we can neither be friends nor enemies—you have your path, and I have mine."

Buckingham only replied by throwing on his bonnet, and shaking its lofty plume with a careless and scornful toss of the head. They parted thus; the duke walking onwards through the apartments, and the others leaving the Palace and repairing to Whitehall Stairs, where they embarked on board the barge of the citizen.

CHAPTER X

Bid not thy fortune troll upon the wheels
Of yonder dancing cubes of mottled bone;
And drown it not, like Egypt's royal harlot,
Dissolving her rich pearl in the brimm'd wine-cup.
These are the arts, Lothario, which shrink acres
Into brief yards—bring sterling pounds to farthings,
Credit to infamy; and the poor gull,
Who might have lived an honour'd, easy life,
To ruin, and an unregarded grave.
The Changes.

When they were fairly embarked on the Thames, the earl took from his pocket the Supplication, and, pointing out to George Heriot the royal warrant indorsed thereon, asked him, if it were in due and regular form? The worthy citizen hastily read it over, thrust forth his hand as if to congratulate the Lord Glenvarloch, then checked himself, pulled out his barnacles, (a present from old David Ramsay,) and again perused the warrant with the most business-like and critical attention. "It is strictly correct and formal," he said, looking to the Earl of Huntinglen; "and I sincerely rejoice at it."

"I doubt nothing of its formality," said the earl; "the king understands business well, and, if he does not practise it often, it is only because indolence obscures parts which are naturally well qualified for the discharge of affairs. But what is next to be done for our young friend, Master Heriot? You know how I am circumstanced. Scottish lords living at the English Court have seldom command of money; yet, unless a sum can be presently raised on this warrant, matters standing as you hastily hinted to me, the mortgage, wadset, or whatever it is called, will be foreclosed."

"It is true," said Heriot, in some embarrassment; "there is a large sum wanted in redemption—yet, if it is not raised, there will be an expiry of the legal, as our lawyers call it, and the estate will be evicted."

"My noble—my worthy friends, who have taken up my cause so undeservedly, so unexpectedly," said Nigel, "do not let me be a burden on your kindness. You have already done too much where nothing was merited."

"Peace, man, peace," said Lord Huntinglen, "and let old Heriot and I puzzle this scent out. He is about to open—hark to him!"

"My lord," said the citizen, "the Duke of Buckingham sneers at our city money-bags; yet they can sometimes open, to prop a falling and a noble house."

"We know they can," said Lord Huntinglen—"mind not Buckingham, he is a Peg-a-Ramsay—and now for the remedy."

"I partly hinted to Lord Glenvarloch already," said Heriot, "that the redemption money might be advanced upon such a warrant as the present, and I will engage my credit that it can. But then, in order to secure the lender, he must come in the shoes of the creditor to whom he advances payment."

"Come in his shoes!" replied the earl; "why, what have boots or shoes to do with this matter, my good friend?"

"It is a law phrase, my lord. My experience has made me pick up a few of them," said Heriot.

"Ay, and of better things along with them, Master George," replied Lord Huntinglen; "but what means it?"

"Simply this," resumed the citizen; "that the lender of this money will transact with the holder of the mortgage, or wadset, over the estate of Glenvarloch, and obtain from him such a conveyance to his right as shall leave the lands pledged for the debt, in case the warrant upon the Scottish Exchequer should prove unproductive. I fear, in this uncertainty of public credit, that without some such counter security, it will be very difficult to find so large a sum."

"Ho la!" said the Earl of Huntinglen, "halt there! a thought strikes me.—What if the new creditor should admire the estate as a hunting-field, as much as my Lord Grace of Buckingham seems to do, and should wish to kill a buck there in the summer season? It seems to me, that on your plan, Master George, our new friend will be as well entitled to block Lord Glenvarloch out of his inheritance as the present holder of the mortgage."

The citizen laughed. "I will engage," he said, "that the keenest sportsman to whom I may apply on this occasion, shall not have a thought beyond the Lord Mayor's Easter-Hunt, in Epping Forest. But your lordship's caution is reasonable. The creditor must be bound to allow Lord Glenvarloch sufficient time to redeem his estate by means of the royal warrant, and must wave in his favour the right of instant foreclosure, which may be, I should think, the more easily managed, as the right of redemption must be exercised in his own name."

"But where shall we find a person in London fit to draw the necessary writings?" said the earl. "If my old friend Sir John Skene of Halyards had lived, we should have had his advice; but time presses, and—"

"I know," said Heriot, "an orphan lad, a scrivener, that dwells by Temple Bar; he can draw deeds both after the English and Scottish fashion, and I have trusted him often in matters of weight and of importance. I will send one of my serving-men for him, and the mutual deeds may be executed in your lordship's presence; for, as things stand, there should be no delay." His lordship readily assented; and, as they now landed upon the private stairs leading down to the river from the gardens of the handsome hotel which he inhabited, the messenger was dispatched without loss of time.

Nigel, who had sat almost stupefied while these zealous friends volunteered for him in arranging the measures by which his fortune was to be disembarassed, now made another eager attempt to force upon them his broken expressions of thanks and gratitude. But he was again silenced by Lord Huntinglen, who declared he would not hear a word on that topic, and proposed instead, that they should take a turn in the pleached alley, or sit upon the stone bench which overlooked the Thames, until his son's arrival should give the signal for dinner.

"I desire to introduce Dalgarno and Lord Glenvarloch to each other," he said, "as two who will be near neighbours, and I trust will be more kind ones than their fathers were formerly. There is but three Scots miles betwixt the castles, and the turrets of the one are visible from the battlements of the other."

The old earl was silent for a moment, and appeared to muse upon the recollections which the vicinity of the castles had summoned up.

"Does Lord Dalgarno follow the Court to Newmarket next week?" said Heriot, by way of removing the conversation.

"He proposes so, I think," answered Lord Huntinglen, relapsed into his reverie for a minute or two, and then addressed Nigel somewhat abruptly—

"My young friend, when you attain possession of your inheritance, as I hope you soon will, I trust you will not add one to the idle followers of the Court, but reside on your patrimonial estate, cherish your ancient tenants, relieve and assist your poor kinsmen, protect the poor against subaltern oppression, and do what our fathers used to do, with fewer lights and with less means than we have."

"And yet the advice to keep the country," said Heriot, "comes from an ancient and constant ornament of the Court."

"From an old courtier, indeed," said the earl, "and the first of my family that could so write himself—my grey beard falls on a cambric ruff and a silken doublet—my father's descended upon a buff coat and a breast-plate. I would not that those days of battle returned; but I should love well to make the oaks of my old forest of Dalgarno ring once more with halloo, and horn, and hound, and to have the old stone-arched hall return the hearty shout of my vassals and tenants, as the bicker and the quaigh walked their rounds amongst them. I should like to see the broad Tay once more before I die—not even the Thames can match it, in my mind."

"Surely, my lord," said the citizen, "all this might be easily done—it costs but a moment's resolution, and the journey of some brief days, and you will be where you desire to be—what is there to prevent you?"

"Habits, Master George, habits," replied the earl, "which to young men are like threads of silk, so lightly are they worn, so soon broken; but which hang on our old limbs as if time had stiffened them into gyves of iron. To go to Scotland for a brief space were but labour in vain; and when I think of abiding there, I cannot bring myself to leave my old master, to whom I fancy myself sometimes useful, and whose weal and woe I have shared for so many years. But Dalgarno shall be a Scottish noble."

"Has he visited the North?" said Heriot.

"He was there last year and made such a report of the country, that the prince has expressed a longing to see it."

"Lord Dalgarno is in high grace with his Highness and the Duke of Buckingham?" observed the goldsmith.

"He is so," answered the earl,—"I pray it may be for the advantage of them all. The prince is just and equitable in his sentiments, though cold and stately in his manners, and very obstinate in his most trifling purposes; and the duke, noble and gallant, and generous and open, is fiery, ambitious, and impetuous. Dalgarno has none of these faults, and such as he may have of his own, may perchance be corrected by the society in which he moves.—See, here he comes."

Lord Dalgarno accordingly advanced from the farther end of the alley to the bench on which his father and his guests were seated, so that Nigel had full leisure to peruse his countenance and figure. He was dressed point-device, and almost to extremity, in the splendid fashion of the time, which suited well with his age, probably about five-and-twenty, with a noble form and fine countenance, in which last could easily be traced the manly features of his father, but softened by a more habitual air of assiduous courtesy than the stubborn old earl had ever condescended to assume towards the world in general. In other respects, his address was gallant, free, and unencumbered either by pride or ceremony—far remote certainly from the charge either of haughty coldness or forward impetuosity; and so far his father had justly freed him from the marked faults which he ascribed to the manners of the prince and his favourite Buckingham.

While the old earl presented his young acquaintance Lord Glenvarloch to his son, as one whom he would have him love and honour, Nigel marked the countenance of Lord Dalgarno closely, to see if he could detect aught of that secret dislike which the king had, in one of his broken expostulations, seemed to intimate, as arising from a clashing of interests betwixt his new friend and the great Buckingham. But nothing of this was visible; on the contrary, Lord Dalgarno received his new acquaintance with the open frankness and courtesy which makes conquest at once, when addressed to the feelings of an ingenuous young man. It need hardly be told that his open and friendly address met equally ready and cheerful acceptance from Nigel Olifaunt. For many months, and while a youth not much above two-and-twenty, he had been restrained by circumstances from the conversation of his equals. When, on his father's sudden death, he left the Low Countries for Scotland, he had found himself involved, to all appearance inextricably, with the details of the law, all of which threatened to end in the alienation of the patrimony which should support his hereditary rank. His term of sincere mourning, joined to injured pride, and the swelling of the heart under unexpected and undeserved misfortune, together with the uncertainty attending the issue of his affairs, had induced the young Lord of Glenvarloch to live, while in Scotland, in a very private and reserved manner. How he had passed his time in London, the reader is acquainted with. But this melancholy and secluded course of life was neither agreeable to his age nor to his temper, which was genial and sociable. He hailed, therefore, with sincere pleasure, the approaches which a young man of his own age and rank made towards him; and when he had exchanged with Lord Dalgarno some of those words and signals by which, as surely as by those of freemasonry, young people recognise a mutual wish to be agreeable to each other, it seemed as if the two noblemen had been acquainted for some time.

Just as this tacit intercourse had been established, one of Lord Huntinglen's attendants came down the alley, marshalling onwards a man dressed in black buckram, who followed him with tolerable speed, considering that, according to his sense of reverence and propriety, he kept his body bent and parallel to the horizon from the moment that he came in sight of the company to which he was about to be presented.

"Who is this, you cuckoldy knave," said the old lord, who had retained the keen appetite and impatience of a Scottish baron even during a long alienation from his native country; "and why does John Cook, with a murrain to him, keep back dinner?"

"I believe we are ourselves responsible for this person's intrusion," said George Heriot; "this is the scrivener whom we desired to see.—Look up, man, and see us in the face as an honest man should, instead of beating thy noddle charged against us thus, like a battering-ram."

The scrivener did look up accordingly, with the action of an automaton which suddenly obeys the impulse of a pressed spring. But, strange to tell, not even the haste he had made to attend his patron's mandate, a business, as Master Heriot's message expressed, of weight and importance—nay not even the state of depression in which, out of sheer humility, doubtless, he had his head stooped to the earth, from the moment he had trod the demesnes of the Earl of Huntinglen, had called any colour into his countenance. The drops stood on his brow from haste and toil, but his cheek was still pale and tallow-coloured as before; nay, what seemed stranger, his very hair, when he raised his head, hung down on either cheek as straight and sleek and undisturbed as it was when we first introduced him to our readers, seated at his quiet and humble desk.

Lord Dalgarno could not forbear a stifled laugh at the ridiculous and puritanical figure which presented itself like a starved anatomy to the company, and whispered at the same time into Lord Glenvarloch's ear—

"The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon,

Where go'st thou that goose-look?"

Nigel was too little acquainted with the English stage to understand a quotation which had already grown matter of common allusion in London. Lord Dalgarno saw that he was not understood, and continued, "That fellow, by his visage, should either be a saint, or a most hypocritical rogue—and such is my excellent opinion of human nature, that I always suspect the worst. But they seem deep in business. Will you take a turn with me in the garden, my lord, or will you remain a member of the serious conclave?"

"With you, my lord, most willingly," said Nigel; and they were turning away accordingly, when George Heriot, with the formality belonging to his station, observed, that, "as their business concerned Lord Glenvarloch, he had better remain, to make himself master of it, and witness to it."

"My presence is utterly needless, my good lord;-and, my best friend, Master Heriot," said the young nobleman, "I shall understand nothing the better for cumbering you with my ignorance in these matters; and can only say at the end, as I now say at the beginning, that I dare not take the helm out of the hand of the kind pilots who have already guided my course within sight of a fair and unhopèd-for haven. Whatever you recommend to me as fitting, I shall sign and seal; and the import of the deeds I shall better learn by a brief explanation from Master Heriot, if he will bestow so much trouble in my behalf, than by a thousand learned words and law terms from this person of skill."

"He is right," said Lord Huntinglen; "our young friend is right, in confiding these matters to you and me, Master George Heriot—he has not misplaced his confidence."

Master George Heriot cast a long look after the two young noblemen, who had now walked down the alley arm-in-arm, and at length said, "He hath not, indeed, misplaced his confidence, as your lordship well and truly says—but, nevertheless, he is not in the right path; for it behoves every man to become acquainted with his own affairs, so soon as he hath any that are worth attending to."

When he had made this observation, they applied themselves, with the scrivener, to look into various papers, and to direct in what manner writings should be drawn, which might at once afford sufficient security to those who were to advance the money, and at the same time preserve the right of the young nobleman to redeem the family estate, provided he should obtain the means of doing so, by the expected reimbursement from the Scottish Exchequer, or otherwise. It is needless to enter into those details. But it is not unimportant to mention, as an illustration of character, that Heriot went into the most minute legal details with a precision which showed that experience had made him master even of the intricacies of Scottish conveyancing; and that the Earl of Huntinglen, though far less acquainted with technical detail, suffered no step of the business to pass over, until he had attained a general but distinct idea of its import and its propriety. They seemed to be admirably seconded in their benevolent intentions towards the young Lord Glenvarloch, by the skill and eager zeal of the scrivener, whom Heriot had introduced to this piece of business, the most important which Andrew had ever transacted in his life, and the particulars of which were moreover agitated in his presence between an actual earl, and one whose wealth and character might entitle him to be an alderman of his ward, if not to be lord mayor, in his turn.

While they were thus in eager conversation on business, the good earl even forgetting the calls of his appetite, and the delay of dinner, in his anxiety to see that the scrivener received proper instructions, and that all was rightly weighed and considered, before dismissing him to engross the necessary deeds, the two young men walked together on the terrace which overhung the river, and talked on the topics which Lord Dalgarno, the elder, and the more experienced, thought most likely to interest his new friend.

These naturally regarded the pleasures attending a Court life; and Lord Dalgarno expressed much surprise at understanding that Nigel proposed an instant return to Scotland.

"You are jesting with me," he said. "All the Court rings—it is needless to mince it—with the extraordinary success of your suit—against the highest interest, it is said, now influencing the horizon at Whitehall. Men think of you—talk of you—fix their eyes on you—ask each other, who is this young Scottish lord, who has stepped so far in a single day? They augur, in whispers to each other, how high and how far you may push your fortune—and all that you design to make of it, is, to return to Scotland, eat raw oatmeal cakes, baked upon a peat-fire, have your hand shaken by every loon of a blue-bonnet who chooses to dub you cousin, though your relationship comes by Noah; drink Scots twopenny ale, eat half-starved red-deer venison, when you can kill it, ride upon a galloway, and be called my right honourable and maist worthy lord!"

"There is no great gaiety in the prospect before me, I confess," said Lord Glenvarloch, "even if your father and good Master Heriot should succeed in putting my affairs on some footing of plausible hope. And yet I trust to do something for my vassals as my ancestors before me, and to teach my children, as I have myself been taught, to make some personal sacrifices, if they be necessary, in order to maintain with dignity the situation in which they are placed by Providence."

Lord Dalgarno, after having once or twice stifled his laughter during this speech, at length broke out into a fit of mirth, so hearty and so resistless, that, angry as he was, the call of sympathy swept Nigel along with him, and despite of himself, he could not forbear to join in a burst of laughter, which he thought not only causeless, but almost impertinent.

He soon recollected himself, however, and said, in a tone qualified to allay Lord Dalgarno's extreme mirth: "This is all well, my lord; but how am I to understand your merriment?" Lord Dalgarno only answered him with redoubled peals of laughter, and at length held by Lord Glenvarloch's cloak, as if to prevent his falling down on the ground, in the extremity of his convulsion.

At length, while Nigel stood half abashed, half angry, at becoming thus the subject of his new acquaintance's ridicule, and was only restrained from expressing his resentment against the son, by a sense of the obligations he owed the father, Lord Dalgarno recovered himself, and spoke in a half-broken voice, his eyes still running with tears: "I crave your pardon, my dear Lord Glenvarloch—ten thousand times do I crave your pardon. But that last picture of rural dignity, accompanied by your grave and angry surprise at my laughing at what would have made any court-bred hound laugh, that had but so much as bayed the moon once from the court-yard at Whitehall, totally overcame me. Why, my liefest and dearest lord, you, a young and handsome fellow, with high birth, a title, and the name of an estate, so well received by the king at your first starting, as makes your further progress scarce matter of doubt, if you know how to improve it—for the king has already said you are a 'braw lad, and well studied in the more humane letters'—you, too, whom all the women, and the very marked beauties of the Court, desire to see, because you came from Leyden, were born in Scotland, and have gained a hard-contested suit in England—you, I say, with a person like a prince, an eye of fire, and a wit as quick, to think of throwing your cards on the table when the game is in your very hand, running back to the frozen north, and marrying—let me see—a tall, stalking, blue-eyed, fair-skinned bony wench, with eighteen quarters in her scutcheon, a sort of Lot's wife, newly descended from her pedestal, and with her to shut yourself up in your tapestried chamber! Uh, gad!—Swouns, I shall never survive the idea!"

It is seldom that youth, however high-minded, is able, from mere strength of character and principle, to support itself against the force of ridicule. Half angry, half mortified, and, to say truth, half ashamed of his more manly and better purpose, Nigel was unable, and flattered himself it was unnecessary, to play the part of a rigid moral patriot, in presence of a young man whose current fluency of language, as well as his experience in the highest circles of society, gave him, in spite of Nigel's better and firmer thoughts, a temporary ascendancy over him. He sought, therefore, to compromise the matter, and avoid farther debate, by frankly owning, that, if to return to his own country were not his choice, it was at least a matter of necessity. "His affairs," he said, "were unsettled, his income precarious." "And where is he whose affairs are settled, or whose income is less than precarious, that is to be found in attendance on the Court?" said Lord Dalgarno; "all are either losing or winning. Those who have wealth, come hither to get rid of it, while the happy gallants, who, like you and I, dear Glenvarloch, have little or none, have every chance to be sharers in their spoils."

"I have no ambition of that sort," said Nigel, "and if I had, I must tell you plainly, Lord Dalgarno, I have not the means to do so. I can scarce as yet call the suit I wear my own; I owe it, and I do riot blush to say so, to the friendship of yonder good man."

"I will not laugh again, if I can help it," said Lord Dalgarno. "But, Lord! that you should have gone to a wealthy goldsmith for your habit—why, I could have brought you to an honest, confiding tailor, who should have furnished you with half-a-dozen, merely for love of the little word, 'lordship,' which you place before your name;—and then your goldsmith, if he be really a friendly goldsmith, should have equipped you with such a purse of fair rose-nobles as would have bought you thrice as many suits, or done better things for you."

"I do not understand these fashions, my lord," said Nigel, his displeasure mastering his shame; "were I to attend the Court of my sovereign, it should be when I could maintain, without shifting or borrowing, the dress and retinue which my rank requires."

"Which my rank requires!" said Lord Dalgarno, repeating his last words; "that, now, is as good as if my father had spoke it. I fancy you would love to move to Court with him, followed by a round score of old blue-bottles, with white heads and red noses, with bucklers and broadswords, which their hands, trembling betwixt age and strong waters, can make no use of—as many huge silver badges on their arms, to show whose fools they are, as would furnish forth a court cupboard of plate—rogues fit for nothing but to fill our ante-chambers with the flavour of onions and genievre—pah!"

"The poor knaves!" said Lord Glenvarloch; "they have served your father, it may be, in the wars. What would become of them were he to turn them off?"

"Why, let them go to the hospital," said Dalgarno, "or to the bridge-end, to sell switches. The king is a better man than my father, and you see those who have served in HIS wars do so every day; or, when their blue coats were well worn out, they would make rare scarecrows. Here is a fellow, now, comes down the walk; the stoutest raven dared not come within a yard of that copper nose. I tell you, there is more service, as you will soon see, in my valet of the chamber, and such a lither lad as my page Lutin, than there is in a score of these old memorials of the Douglas wars, [Footnote: The cruel civil wars waged by the Scottish barons during the minority of James VI., had the name from the figure made in them by the celebrated James Douglas, Earl of Morton. Both sides executed their prisoners without mercy or favour.] where they cut each other's throats for the chance of finding twelve pennies Scots on the person of the slain. Marry, my lord, to make amends, they will eat mouldy victuals, and drink stale ale, as if their bellies were puncheons.—But the dinner-bell is going to sound—hark, it is clearing its rusty throat, with a preliminary jowl. That is another clamorous relic of antiquity, that, were I master, should soon be at the bottom of the Thames. How the foul fiend can it interest the peasants and mechanics in the Strand, to know that the Earl of Huntinglen is sitting down to dinner? But my father looks our way—we must not be late for the grace, or we shall be in DIS-grace, if you will forgive a quibble which would have made his Majesty laugh. You will find us all of a piece, and, having been accustomed to eat in saucers abroad, I am ashamed you should witness our larded capons, our mountains of beef, and oceans of brewis, as large as Highland hills and lochs; but you shall see better cheer to-morrow. Where lodge you? I will call for you. I must be your guide through the peopled desert, to certain enchanted lands, which you will scarce discover without chart and pilot. Where lodge you?"

"I will meet you in Paul's," said Nigel, a good deal embarrassed, "at any hour you please to name."

"O, you would be private," said the young lord; "nay, fear not me—I will be no intruder. But we have attained this huge larder of flesh, fowl, and fish. I marvel the oaken boards groan not under it."

They had indeed arrived in the dining-parlour of the mansion, where the table was superabundantly loaded, and where the number of attendants, to a certain extent, vindicated the sarcasms of the young nobleman. The chaplain, and Sir Mungo Malagrowth, were of the party. The latter complimented Lord Glenvarloch upon the impression he had made at Court. "One would have thought ye had brought the apple of discord in your pouch, my lord, or that you were the very firebrand of whilk Althea was delivered, and that she had lain-in in a barrel of gunpowder, for the king, and the prince, and the duke, have been by the lugs about ye, and so have many more, that kendna before this blessed day that there was such a man living on the face of the earth."

"Mind your victuals, Sir Mungo," said the earl; "they get cold while you talk."

"Troth, and that needsna, my lord," said the knight; "your lordship's dinners seldom scald one's mouth—the serving-men are turning auld, like oursell, my lord, and it is far between the kitchen and the ha'."

With this little explosion of his spleen, Sir Mungo remained satisfied, until the dishes were removed, when, fixing his eyes on the brave new doublet of Lord Dalgarno, he complimented him on his economy, pretending to recognise it as the same which his father had worn in Edinburgh in the Spanish ambassador's time. Lord Dalgarno, too much a man of the world to be moved by any thing from such a quarter, proceeded to crack some nuts with great deliberation, as he replied, that the doublet was in some sort his father's, as it was likely to cost him fifty pounds some day soon. Sir Mungo forthwith proceeded in his own way to convey this agreeable intelligence to the earl, observing, that his son was a better maker of bargains than his lordship, for he had bought a doublet as rich as that his lordship wore when the Spanish ambassador was at Holyrood, and it had cost him but fifty pounds Scots;—"that was no fool's bargain, my lord."

"Pounds sterling, if you please, Sir Mungo," answered the earl, calmly; "and a fool's bargain it is, in all the tenses. Dalgarno WAS a fool when he bought—I will be a fool when I pay—and you, Sir Mungo, craving your pardon, are a fool in praesenti, for speaking of what concerns you not."

So saying, the earl addressed himself to the serious business of the table and sent the wine around with a profusion which increased the hilarity, but rather threatened the temperance, of the company, until their joviality was interrupted by the annunciation that the scrivener had engrossed such deeds as required to be presently executed.

George Heriot rose from the table, observing, that wine-cups and legal documents were unseemly neighbours. The earl asked the scrivener if they had laid a trencher and set a cup for him in the buttery and received the respectful answer, that heaven forbid he should be such an ungracious beast as to eat or drink until his lordship's pleasure was performed.

"Thou shalt eat before thou goest," said Lord Huntinglen; "and I will have thee try, moreover, whether a cup of sack cannot bring some colour into these cheeks of thine. It were a shame to my household, thou shouldst glide out into the Strand after such a spectre-fashion as thou now wearest—Look to it, Dalgarno, for the honour of our roof is concerned."

Lord Dalgarno gave directions that the man should be attended to. Lord Glenvarloch and the citizen, in the meanwhile, signed and interchanged, and thus closed a transaction, of which the principal party concerned understood little, save that it was under the management of a zealous and faithful friend, who undertook that the money should be forthcoming, and the estate released from forfeiture, by payment of the stipulated sum for which it stood pledged, and that at the term of Lambmas, and at the hour of noon, and beside the tomb of the Regent Earl of Murray, in the High Kirk of Saint Giles, at Edinburgh, being the day and place assigned for such redemption. [Footnote: As each covenant in those days of accuracy had a special place nominated for execution, the tomb of the Regent Earl of Murray in Saint Giles's Church was frequently assigned for the purpose.]

When this business was transacted, the old earl would fain have renewed his carouse; but the citizen, alleging the importance of the deeds he had about him, and the business he had to transact betimes the next morning, not only refused to return to table, but carried with him to his barge Lord Glenvarloch, who might, perhaps, have been otherwise found more tractable.

When they were seated in the boat, and fairly once more afloat on the river, George Heriot looked back seriously on the mansion they had left—"There live," he said, "the old fashion and the new. The father is like a noble old broadsword, but harmed with rust, from neglect and inactivity; the son is your modern rapier, well-mounted, fairly gilt, and fashioned to the taste of the time—and it is time must evince if the metal be as good as the show. God grant it prove so, says an old friend to the family."

Nothing of consequence passed betwixt them, until Lord Glenvarloch, landing at Paul's Wharf, took leave of his friend the citizen, and retired to his own apartment, where his attendant, Richie, not a little elevated with the events of the day, and with the hospitality of Lord Huntinglen's house-keeping, gave a most splendid account of them to the buxom Dame Nelly, who rejoiced to hear that the sun at length was shining upon what Richie called "the right side of the hedge."

CHAPTER XI

You are not for the manner nor the times,
 They have their vices now most like to virtues;
 You cannot know them apait by any difference,
 They wear the same clothes, eat the same meat—
 Sleep i' the self-same beds, ride in those coaches,
 Or very like four horses in a coach,

As the best men and women.

Ben Jonson

On the following morning, while Nigel, his breakfast finished, was thinking how he should employ the day, there was a little bustle upon the stairs which attracted his attention, and presently entered Dame Nelly, blushing like scarlet, and scarce able to bring out—"A young nobleman, sir—no one less," she added, drawing her hand slightly over her lips, "would be so saucy—a young nobleman, sir, to wait on you!"

And she was followed into the little cabin by Lord Dalgarno, gay, easy, disembarassed, and apparently as much pleased to rejoin his new acquaintance as if he had found him in the apartments of a palace. Nigel, on the contrary, (for youth is slave to such circumstances,) was discountenanced and mortified at being surprised by so splendid a gallant in a chamber which, at the moment the elegant and high-dressed cavalier appeared in it, seemed to its inhabitant, yet lower, narrower, darker, and meaner than it had ever shown before. He would have made some apology for the situation, but Lord Dalgarno cut him short—

"Not a word of it," he said, "not a single word—I know why you ride at anchor here—but I can keep counsel—so pretty a hostess would recommend worse quarters."

"On my word—on my honour," said Lord Glenvarloch—

"Nay, nay, make no words of the matter," said Lord Dalgarno; "I am no tell-tale, nor shall I cross your walk; there is game enough in the forest, thank Heaven, and I can strike a doe for myself."

All this he said in so significant a manner, and the explanation which he had adopted seemed to put Lord Glenvarloch's gallantry on so respectable a footing, that Nigel ceased to try to undeceive him; and less ashamed, perhaps, (for such is human weakness,) of supposed vice than of real poverty, changed the discourse to something else, and left poor Dame Nelly's reputation and his own at the mercy of the young courtier's misconstruction.

He offered refreshments with some hesitation. Lord Dalgarno had long since breakfasted, but had just come from playing a set of tennis, he said, and would willingly taste a cup of the pretty hostess's single beer. This was easily procured, was drunk, was commended, and, as the hostess failed not to bring the cup herself, Lord Dalgarno profited by the opportunity to take a second and more attentive view of her, and then gravely drank to her husband's health, with an almost imperceptible nod to Lord Glenvarloch. Dame Nelly was much honoured, smoothed her apron down with her hands, and said

"Her John was greatly and truly honoured by their lordships—he was a kind painstaking man for his family, as was in the alley, or indeed, as far north as Paul's Chain."

She would have proceeded probably to state the difference betwixt their ages, as the only alloy to their nuptial happiness; but her lodger, who had no mind to be farther exposed to his gay friend's raillery, gave her, contrary to his wont, a signal to leave the room.

Lord Dalgarno looked after her, and then looked at Glenvarloch, shook his head, and repeated the well-known lines—

"My lord, beware of jealousy—it is the green-eyed monster which doth make the meat it feeds on."

"But come," he said, changing his tone, "I know not why I should worry you thus—I who have so many follies of my own, when I should rather make excuse for being here at all, and tell you wherefore I came."

So saying, he reached a seat, and, placing another for Lord Glenvarloch, in spite of his anxious haste to anticipate this act of courtesy, he proceeded in the same tone of easy familiarity:—

"We are neighbours, my lord, and are just made known to each other. Now, I know enough of the dear North, to be well aware that Scottish neighbours must be either dear friends or deadly enemies—must either walk hand-in-hand, or stand sword-point to sword-point; so I choose the hand-in-hand, unless you should reject my proffer."

"How were it possible, my lord," said Lord Glenvarloch, "to refuse what is offered so frankly, even if your father had not been a second father to me?"—And, as he took Lord Dalgarno's hand, he added—"I have, I think, lost no time, since, during one day's attendance at Court, I have made a kind friend and a powerful enemy."

"The friend thanks you," replied Lord Dalgarno, "for your just opinion; but, my dear Glenvarloch—or rather, for titles are too formal between us of the better file—what is your Christian name?"

"Nigel," replied Lord Glenvarloch.

"Then we will be Nigel and Malcolm to each other," said his visitor, "and my lord to the plebeian world around us. But I was about to ask you whom you suppose your enemy?"

"No less than the all-powerful favourite, the great Duke of Buckingham."

"You dream! What could possess you with such an opinion?" said Dalgarno.

"He told me so himself," replied Glenvarloch; "and, in so doing, dealt frankly and honourably with me."

"O, you know him not yet," said his companion; "the duke is moulded of an hundred noble and fiery qualities, that prompt him, like a generous horse, to spring aside in impatience at the least obstacle to his forward course. But he means not what he says in such passing heats—I can do more with him, I thank Heaven, than most who are around him; you shall go visit him with me, and you will see how you shall be received."

"I told you, my lord," said Glenvarloch firmly, and with some haughtiness, "the Duke of Buckingham, without the least offence, declared himself my enemy in the face of the Court; and he shall retract that aggression as publicly as it was given, ere I will make the slightest advance towards him."

"You would act becomingly in every other case," said Lord Dalgarno, "but here you are wrong. In the Court horizon Buckingham is Lord of the Ascendant, and as he is adverse or favouring, so sinks or rises the fortune of a suitor. The king would bid you remember your Phaedrus,

'Arripiens geminas, ripis cedentibus, ollas—'

and so forth. You are the vase of earth; beware of knocking yourself against the vase of iron."

"The vase of earth," said Glenvarloch, "will avoid the encounter, by getting ashore out of the current—I mean to go no more to Court."

"O, to Court you necessarily must go; you will find your Scottish suit move ill without it, for there is both patronage and favour necessary to enforce the sign-manual you have obtained. Of that we will speak more hereafter; but tell me in the meanwhile, my dear Nigel, whether you did not wonder to see me here so early?"

"I am surprised that you could find me out in this obscure corner," said Lord Glenvarloch.

"My page Lutin is a very devil for that sort of discovery," replied Lord Dalgarno; "I have but to say, 'Goblin, I would know where he or she dwells,' and he guides me thither as if by art magic."

"I hope he waits not now in the street, my lord," said Nigel; "I will send my servant to seek him."

"Do not concern yourself—he is by this time," said Lord Dalgarno, "playing at hustle-cap and chuck-farthing with the most blackguard imps upon the wharf, unless he hath foregone his old customs."

"Are you not afraid," said Lord Glenvarloch, "that in such company his morals may become depraved?"

"Let his company look to their own," answered Lord Dalgarno, coolly; "for it will be a company of real fiends in which Lutin cannot teach more mischief than he can learn: he is, I thank the gods, most thoroughly versed in evil for his years. I am spared the trouble of looking after his moralities, for nothing can make them either better or worse."

"I wonder you can answer this to his parents, my lord," said Nigel.

"I wonder where I should find his parents," replied his companion, "to render an account to them."

"He may be an orphan," said Lord Nigel; "but surely, being a page in your lordship's family, his parents must be of rank."

"Of as high rank as the gallows could exalt them to," replied Lord Dalgarno, with the same indifference; "they were both hanged, I believe—at least the gipsies, from whom I bought him five years ago, intimated as much to me.—You are surprised at this, now. But is it not better that, instead of a lazy, conceited, whey-faced

slip of gentility, to whom, in your old-world idea of the matter, I was bound to stand Sir Pedagogue, and see that he washed his hands and face, said his prayers, learned his accdens, spoke no naughty words, brushed his hat, and wore his best doublet only on Sunday,—that, instead of such a Jacky Goodchild, I should have something like this?"

He whistled shrill and clear, and the page he spoke of darted into the room, almost with the effect of an actual apparition. From his height he seemed but fifteen, but, from his face, might be two or even three years older, very neatly made, and richly dressed; with a thin bronzed visage, which marked his gipsy descent, and a pair of sparkling black eyes, which seemed almost to pierce through those whom he looked at.

"There he is," said Lord Dalgarno, "fit for every element—prompt to execute every command, good, bad, or indifferent—unmatched in his tribe, as rogue, thief, and liar."

"All which qualities," said the undaunted page, "have each in turn stood your lordship in stead."

"Out, you imp of Satan!" said his master; "vanish-begone—or my conjuring rod goes about your ears." The boy turned, and disappeared as suddenly as he had entered. "You see," said Lord Dalgarno, "that, in choosing my household, the best regard I can pay to gentle blood is to exclude it from my service—that very gallows—bird were enough to corrupt a whole antechamber of pages, though they were descended from kings and kaisers."

"I can scarce think that a nobleman should need the offices of such an attendant as your goblin," said Nigel; "you are but jesting with my inexperience."

"Time will show whether I jest or not, my dear Nigel," replied Dalgarno; "in the meantime, I have to propose to you to take the advantage of the flood-tide, to run up the river for pastime; and at noon I trust you will dine with me."

Nigel acquiesced in a plan which promised so much amusement; and his new friend and he, attended by Lutin and Moniplies, who greatly resembled, when thus associated, the conjunction of a bear and a monkey, took possession of Lord Dalgarno's wherry, which, with its badged watermen, bearing his lordship's crest on their arms, lay in readiness to receive them. The air was delightful upon the river; and the lively conversation of Lord Dalgarno added zest to the pleasures of the little voyage. He could not only give an account of the various public buildings and noblemen's houses which they passed in ascending the Thames, but knew how to season his information with abundance of anecdote, political innuendo, and personal scandal; if he had not very much wit, he was at least completely master of the fashionable tone, which in that time, as in ours, more than amply supplies any deficiency of the kind.

It was a style of conversation entirely new to his companion, as was the world which Lord Dalgarno opened to his observation; and it is no wonder that Nigel, notwithstanding his natural good sense and high spirit, admitted, more readily than seemed consistent with either, the tone of authoritative instruction which his new friend assumed towards him. There would, indeed, have been some difficulty in making a stand. To attempt a high and stubborn tone of morality, in answer to the light strain of Lord Dalgarno's conversation, which kept on the frontiers between jest and earnest, would have seemed pedantic and ridiculous; and every attempt which Nigel made to combat his companion's propositions, by reasoning as jocose as his own, only showed his inferiority in that gay species of controversy. And it must be owned, besides, though internally disapproving much of what he heard, Lord Glenvarloch, young as he was in society, became less alarmed by the language and manners of his new associate, than in prudence he ought to have been.

Lord Dalgarno was unwilling to startle his proselyte, by insisting upon any topic which appeared particularly to jar with his habits or principles; and he blended his mirth and his earnest so dexterously, that it was impossible for Nigel to discover how far he was serious in his propositions, or how far they flowed from a wild and extravagant spirit of raillery. And, ever and anon, those flashes of spirit and honour crossed his conversation, which seemed to intimate, that, when stirred to action by some adequate motive, Lord Dalgarno would prove something very different from the court-haunting and ease-loving voluptuary, which he was pleased to represent as his chosen character.

As they returned down the river, Lord Glenvarloch remarked, that the boat passed the mansion of Lord Huntinglen, and noticed the circumstance to Lord Dalgarno, observing, that he thought they were to have dined there. "Surely no," said the young nobleman, "I have more mercy on you than to gorge you a second time with raw beef and canary wine. I propose something better for you, I promise you, than such a second Scythian festivity. And as for my father, he proposes to dine to-day with my grave, ancient Earl of Northampton, whilome that celebrated putter-down of pretended prophecies, Lord Henry Howard."

"And do you not go with him?" said his companion.

"To what purpose?" said Lord Dalgarno. "To hear his wise lordship speak musty politics in false Latin, which the old fox always uses, that he may give the learned Majesty of England an opportunity of correcting his slips in grammar? That were a rare employment!"

"Nay," said Lord Nigel, "but out of respect, to wait on my lord your father."

"My lord my father," replied Lord Dalgarno, "has blue-bottles enough to wait on him, and can well dispense with such a butterfly as myself. He can lift the cup of sack to his head without my assistance; and, should the said paternal head turn something giddy, there be men enough to guide his right honourable lordship to his lordship's right honourable couch.—Now, do not stare at me, Nigel, as if my words were to sink the boat with us. I love my father—I love him dearly—and I respect him, too, though I respect not many things; a trustier old Trojan never belted a broadsword by a loop of leather. But what then? He belongs to the old world, I to the new. He has his follies, I have mine; and the less either of us sees of the other's peccadilloes, the greater will be the honour and respect—that, I think, is the proper phrase—I say the respect in which we shall hold each other. Being apart, each of us is himself, such as nature and circumstances have made him; but, couple us up too closely together, you will be sure to have in your leash either an old hypocrite or a young one, or perhaps both the one and t'other."

As he spoke thus, the boat put into the landing-place at Blackfriars. Lord Dalgarno sprung ashore, and, flinging his cloak and rapier to his page, recommended to his companion to do the like. "We are coming among a press of gallants," he said; "and, if we walked thus muffled, we shall look like your tawny-visaged Don, who wraps him close in his cloak, to conceal the defects of his doublet."

"I have known many an honest man do that, if it please your lordship," said Richie Moniplies, who had been watching for an opportunity to intrude himself on the conversation, and probably remembered what had been his own condition, in respect to cloak and doublet, at a very recent period.

Lord Dalgarno stared at him, as if surprised at his assurance; but immediately answered, "You may have known many things, friend; but, in the meanwhile, you do not know what principally concerns your master, namely, how to carry his cloak, so as to show to advantage the gold-laced seams, and the lining of sables. See how Lutin holds the sword, with his cloak cast partly over it, yet so as to set off the embossed hilt, and the silver work of the mounting.—Give your familiar your sword, Nigel," he continued, addressing Lord Glenvarloch, "that he may practise a lesson in an art so necessary."

"Is it altogether prudent," said Nigel, unclasping his weapon, and giving it to Richie, "to walk entirely unarmed?"

"And wherefore not?" said his companion. "You are thinking now of Auld Reekie, as my father fondly calls your good Scottish capital, where there is such bandying of private feuds and public factions, that a man of any note shall not cross your High Street twice, without endangering his life thrice. Here, sir, no brawling in the street is permitted. Your bull-headed citizen takes up the case so soon as the sword is drawn, and clubs is the word."

"And a hard word it is," said Richie, "as my brain-pan kens at this blessed moment."

"Were I your master, sirrah," said Lord Dalgarno, "I would make your brain-pan, as you call it, boil over, were you to speak a word in my presence before you were spoken to."

Richie murmured some indistinct answer, but took the hint, and ranked himself behind his master along with Lutin, who failed not to expose his new companion to the ridicule of the passers-by, by mimicking, as often as he could do so unobserved by Richie, his stiff and upright stalking gait and discontented physiognomy.

"And tell me now, my dear Malcolm," said Nigel, "where we are bending our course, and whether we shall dine at an apartment of yours?"

"An apartment of mine—yes, surely," answered Lord Dalgarno, "you shall dine at an apartment of mine, and an apartment of yours, and of twenty gallants besides; and where the board shall present better cheer, better wine, and better attendance, than if our whole united exhibitions went to maintain it. We are going to the most noted ordinary of London."

"That is, in common language, an inn, or a tavern," said Nigel.

"An inn, or a tavern, my most green and simple friend!" exclaimed Lord Dalgarno. "No, no—these are places where greasy citizens take pipe and pot, where the knavish pettifoggers of the law sponge on their most unhappy victims—where Templars crack jests as empty as their nuts, and where small gentry imbibe such thin potations, that they get dropsies instead of getting drunk. An ordinary is a late-invented institution, sacred to Bacchus and Comus, where the choicest noble gallants of the time meet with the first and most ethereal wits of the age,—where the wine is the very soul of the choicest grape, refined as the genius of the poet, and ancient and generous as the blood of the nobles. And then the fare is something beyond your ordinary gross terrestrial food! Sea and land are ransacked to supply it; and the invention of six ingenious cooks kept eternally upon the rack to make their art hold pace with, and if possible enhance, the exquisite quality of the materials."

"By all which rhapsody," said Lord Glenvarloch, "I can only understand, as I did before, that we are going to a choice tavern, where we shall be handsomely entertained, on paying probably as handsome a reckoning."

"Reckoning!" exclaimed Lord Dalgarno in the same tone as before, "perish the peasantry phrase! What profanation! Monsieur le Chevalier de Beaujeu, pink of Paris and flower of Gascony—he who can tell the age of his wine by the bare smell, who distils his sauces in an alembic by the aid of Lully's philosophy—who carves with such exquisite precision, that he gives to noble, knight and squire, the portion of the pheasant which exactly accords with his rank—nay, he who shall divide a becafico into twelve parts with such scrupulous exactness, that of twelve guests not one shall have the advantage of the other in a hair's breadth, or the twentieth part of a drachm, yet you talk of him and of a reckoning in the same breath! Why, man, he is the well-known and general referee in all matters affecting the mysteries of Passage, Hazard, In and In, Penneeck, and Verquire, and what not—why, Beaujeu is King of the Card-pack, and Duke of the Dice-box—HE call a reckoning like a green-aproned, red-nosed son of the vulgar spigo! O, my dearest Nigel, what a word you have spoken, and of what a person! That you know him not, is your only apology for such blasphemy; and yet I scarce hold it adequate, for to have been a day in London and not to know Beaujeu, is a crime of its own kind. But you shall know him this blessed moment, and shall learn to hold yourself in horror for the enormities you have uttered."

"Well, but mark you," said Nigel, "this worthy chevalier keeps not all this good cheer at his own cost, does he?"

"No, no," answered Lord Dalgarno; "there is a sort of ceremony which my chevalier's friends and intimates understand, but with which you have no business at present. There is, as majesty might say, a symbolum to be disbursed—in other words, a mutual exchange of courtesies take place betwixt Beaujeu and his guests. He makes them a free present of the dinner and wine, as often as they choose to consult their own felicity by frequenting his house at the hour of noon, and they, in gratitude, make the chevalier a present of a Jacobus. Then you must know, that, besides Comus and Bacchus, that princess of sublunary affairs, the Diva Fortuna, is frequently worshipped at Beaujeu's, and he, as officiating high-priest, hath, as in reason he should, a considerable advantage from a share of the sacrifice."

"In other words," said Lord Glenvarloch, "this man keeps a gaming-house."

"A house in which you may certainly game," said Lord Dalgarno, "as you may in your own chamber if you have a mind; nay, I remember old Tom Tally played a hand at put for a wager with Quinze le Va, the Frenchman, during morning prayers in St. Paul's; the morning was misty, and the parson drowsy, and the whole audience consisted of themselves and a blind woman, and so they escaped detection."

"For all this, Malcolm," said the young lord, gravely, "I cannot dine with you to-day, at this same ordinary."

"And wherefore, in the name of heaven, should you draw back from your word?" said Lord Dalgarno.

"I do not retract my word, Malcolm; but I am bound, by an early promise to my father, never to enter the doors of a gaming-house."

"I tell you this is none," said Lord Dalgarno; "it is but, in plain terms, an eating-house, arranged on civil terms, and frequented by better company, than others in this town; and if some of them do amuse themselves with cards and hazard, they are men of honour, and who play as such, and for no more than they can well afford to lose. It was not, and could not be, such houses that your father desired you to avoid. Besides, he might as well have made you swear you would never take accommodation of an inn, tavern, eating-house, or place of public reception of any kind; for there is no such place of public resort but where your eyes may be contaminated by the sight of a pack of pieces of painted pasteboard, and your ears profaned by the rattle of those little spotted cubes of ivory. The difference is, that where we go, we may happen to see persons of quality amusing themselves with a game; and in the ordinary houses you will meet bullies and sharpers, who will strive either to cheat or to swagger you out of your money."

"I am sure you would not willingly lead me to do what is wrong," said Nigel; "but my father had a horror for games of chance, religious I believe, as well as prudential. He judged from I know not what circumstance, a fallacious one I should hope, that I should have a propensity to such courses, and I have told you the promise which he exacted from me."

"Now, by my honour," said Dalgarno, "what you have said affords the strongest reason for my insisting that you go with me. A man who would shun any danger, should first become acquainted with its real bearing and extent, and that in the company of a confidential guide and guard. Do you think I myself game? Good faith, my father's oaks grow too far from London, and stand too fast rooted in the rocks of Perthshire, for me to troll them down with a die, though I have seen whole forests go down like nine-pins. No, no—these are sports for the wealthy Southron, not for the poor Scottish noble. The place is an eating-house, and as such you and I will use it. If others use it to game in, it is their fault, but neither that of the house nor ours."

Unsatisfied with this reasoning, Nigel still insisted upon the promise he had given to his father, until his companion appeared rather displeased, and disposed to impute to him injurious and unhandsome suspicions. Lord Glenvarloch could not stand this change of tone. He recollected that much was due from him to Lord Dalgarno, on account of his father's ready and efficient friendship, and something also on account of the frank manner in which the young man himself had offered him his intimacy. He had no reason to doubt his assurances, that the house where they were about to dine did not fall under the description of places which his father's prohibition referred; and finally, he was strong in his own resolution to resist every temptation to join in games of chance. He therefore pacified Lord Dalgarno, by intimating his willingness to go along with him; and, the good-humour of the young courtier instantaneously returning, he again ran on in a grotesque and rodomontade account of the host, Monsieur de Beaujeu, which he did not conclude until they had reached the temple of hospitality over which that eminent professor presided.

CHAPTER XII

—This is the very barn-yard,
Where muster daily the prime cocks o' the game,
Ruffle their pinions, crow till they are hoarse,
And spar about a barleycorn. Here too chickens,
The callow, unfledged brood of forward folly,
Learn first to rear the crest, and aim the spur,
And tune their note like full-plumed Chanticleer.
The Bear-Garden.

The Ordinary, now an ignoble sound, was in the days of James, a new institution, as fashionable among the youth of that age as the first-rate modern club-houses are amongst those of the present day. It differed chiefly, in being open to all whom good clothes and good assurance combined to introduce there. The company usually dined together at an hour fixed, and the manager of the establishment presided as master of the ceremonies.

Monsieur le Chevalier, (as he qualified himself,) Saint Priest de Beaujeu, was a sharp, thin Gascon, about sixty years old, banished from his own country, as he said, on account of an affair of honour, in which he had the misfortune to kill his antagonist, though the best swordsman in the south of France. His pretensions to quality were supported by a feathered hat, a long rapier, and a suit of embroidered taffeta, not much the worse for wear, in the extreme fashion of the Parisian court, and fluttering like a Maypole with many knots of ribbon, of which it was computed he bore at least five hundred yards about his person. But, notwithstanding this profusion of decoration, there were many who thought Monsieur le Chevalier so admirably calculated for his present situation, that nature could never have meant to place him an inch above it. It was, however, part of the amusement of the place, for Lord Dalgarno and other young men of quality to treat Monsieur de Beaujeu with a great deal of mock ceremony, which being observed by the herd of more ordinary and simple gulls, they paid him, in clumsy imitation, much real deference. The Gascon's natural forwardness being much enhanced by these circumstances, he was often guilty of presuming beyond the limits of his situation, and of course had sometimes the mortification to be disagreeably driven back into them.

When Nigel entered the mansion of this eminent person, which had been but of late the residence of a great Baron of Queen Elizabeth's court, who had retired to his manors in the country on the death of that princess, he was surprised at the extent of the accommodation which it afforded, and the number of guests who were already assembled. Feathers waved, spurs jingled, lace and embroidery glanced everywhere; and at first sight, at least, it certainly made good Lord Dalgarno's encomium, who represented the company as composed almost entirely of youth of the first quality. A more close review was not quite so favourable. Several individuals might be discovered who were not exactly at their ease in the splendid dresses which they wore, and who, therefore, might be supposed not habitually familiar with such finery. Again, there were others, whose dress, though on a general view it did not seem inferior to that of the rest of the company, displayed, on being observed more closely, some of these petty expedients, by which vanity endeavours to disguise poverty.

Nigel had very little time to make such observations, for the entrance of Lord Dalgarno created an immediate bustle and sensation among the company, as his name passed from one mouth to another. Some stood forward to gaze, others stood back to make way—those of his own rank hastened to welcome him—those of inferior degree endeavoured to catch some point of his gesture, or of his dress, to be worn and practised upon a future occasion, as the newest and most authentic fashion.

The genius loci, the Chevalier himself, was not the last to welcome this prime stay and ornament of his establishment. He came shuffling forward with a hundred apish congés and chers milors, to express his happiness at seeing Lord Dalgarno again.—"I hope you do bring back the sun with you, Milor—You did carry away the sun and moon from your pauvre Chevalier when you leave him for so long. Pardieu, I believe you take them away in your pockets."

"That must have been because you left me nothing else in them, Chevalier," answered Lord Dalgarno; "but Monsieur le Chevalier, I pray you to know my countryman and friend, Lord Glenvarloch!"

"Ah, ha! tres honore—Je m'en souviens,—oui. J'ai connu autrefois un Milor Kenfarloque en Ecosse. Yes, I have memory of him—le pere de milor apparemment—we were vera intimate when I was at Oly Root with Monsieur de la Motte—I did often play at tennis vit Milor Kenfarloque at L'Abbaie d'Oly Root—il etoit meme plus fort que moi—Ah le beaucoup de revers qu'il avoit!—I have memory, too that he was among the pretty girls—ah, un vrai diable dechaîne—Aha! I have memory—"

"Better have no more memory of the late Lord Glenvarloch," said Lord Dalgarno, interrupting the Chevalier without ceremony; who perceived that the encomium which he was about to pass on the deceased was likely to be as disagreeable to the son as it was totally undeserved by the father, who, far from being either a gamester or libertine, as the Chevalier's reminiscences falsely represented him, was, on the contrary, strict and severe in his course of life, almost to the extent of rigour.

"You have the reason, milor," answered the Chevalier, "you have the right—Qu'est ce que nous avons a faire avec le temps passe?—the time passed did belong to our fathers—our ancetres—very well—the time present is to us—they have their pretty tombs with their memories and armorials, all in brass and marbre—we have the petits plats exquis, and the soupe-a-Chevalier, which I will cause to mount up immediately."

So saying, he made a pirouette on his heel, and put his attendants in motion to place dinner on the table. Dalgarno laughed, and, observing his young friend looked grave, said to him, in a tone of reproach—"Why, what!—you are not gull enough to be angry with such an ass as that?"

"I keep my anger, I trust, for better purposes," said Lord Glenvarloch; "but I confess I was moved to hear such a fellow mention my father's name—and you, too, who told me this was no gaming-house, talked to him of having left it with emptied pockets."

"Pshaw, man!" said Lord Dalgarno, "I spoke but according to the trick of the time; besides, a man must set a piece or two sometimes, or he would be held a cullionly niggard. But here comes dinner, and we will see whether you like the Chevalier's good cheer better than his conversation."

Dinner was announced accordingly, and the two friends, being seated in the most honourable station at the board, were ceremoniously attended to by the Chevalier, who did the honours of his table to them and to the other guests, and seasoned the whole with his agreeable conversation. The dinner was really excellent, in that piquant style of cookery which the French had already introduced, and which the home-bred young men of England, when they aspired to the rank of connoisseurs and persons of taste, were under the necessity of admiring. The wine was also of the first quality, and circulated in great variety, and no less abundance. The conversation among so many young men was, of course, light, lively, and amusing; and Nigel, whose mind had been long depressed by anxiety and misfortune, naturally found himself at ease, and his spirits raised and animated.

Some of the company had real wit, and could use it both politely and to advantage; others were coxcombs, and were laughed at without discovering it; and, again, others were originals, who seemed to have no objection that the company should be amused with their folly instead of their wit. And almost all the rest who played any prominent part in the conversation had either the real tone of good society which belonged to the period, or the jargon which often passes current for it.

In short, the company and conversation was so agreeable, that Nigel's rigour was softened by it, even towards the master of ceremonies, and he listened with patience to various details which the Chevalier de Beaujeu, seeing, as he said, that Milor's taste lay for the "curieux and Futile," chose to address to him in particular, on the subject of cookery. To gratify, at the same time, the taste for antiquity, which he somehow supposed that his new guest possessed, he launched out in commendation of the great artists of former days, particularly one whom he had known in his youth, "Maitre de Cuisine to the Marechal Strozzi—tres bon gentilhomme pourtant;" who had maintained his master's table with twelve covers every day during the long and severe blockade of le petit Leyth, although he had nothing better to place on it than the quarter of a carrion-horse now and then, and the grass and weeds that grew on the ramparts. "Despardieux c'dtoit un homme superbe!" With one tistle-head, and a nettle or two, he could make a soupe for twenty guests—an haunch of a little puppy-dog made a roti des plus excellens; but his coupe de maitre was when the rendition—what you call the surrender, took place and appened; and then, dieu me damme, he made out of the hind quarter of one salted horse, forty-five couverts; that the English and Scottish officers and nobility, who had the honour to dine with Monseigneur upon the rendition, could not tell what the devil any of them were made upon at all.

The good wine had by this time gone so merrily round, and had such genial effect on the guests, that those of the lower end of the table, who had hitherto been listeners, began, not greatly to their own credit, or that of the ordinary, to make innovations.

"You speak of the siege of Leith," said a tall, raw-boned man, with thick mustaches turned up with a military twist, a broad buff belt, a long rapier, and other outward symbols of the honoured profession, which lives by killing other people—"you talk of the siege of Leith, and I have seen the place—a pretty kind of a hamlet it is, with a plain wall, or rampart, and a pigeon-house or so of a tower at every angle. Uds daggers and scabbards, if a leaguer of our days had been twenty-four hours, not to say so many months, before it, without carrying the place and all its cocklofts, one after another, by pure storm, they would have deserved no better grace than the Provost-Marshall gives when his noose is reeved."

"Saar," said the Chevalier, "Monsieur le Capitaine, I was not at the siege of the petit Leyth, and I know not what you say about the cockloft; but I will say for Monseigneur de Strozzi, that he understood the grande guerre, and was grand capitaine—plus grand—that is more great, it may be, than some of the capitaines of Angleterre, who do speak very loud—tenez, Monsieur, car c'est a vous!"

"O Monsieur," answered the swordsman, "we know the Frenchman will fight well behind his barrier of stone, or when he is armed with back, breast, and pot."

"Pot!" exclaimed the Chevalier, "what do you mean by pot—do you mean to insult me among my noble guests? Saar, I have done my duty as a pauvre gentilhomme under the Grand Henri Quatre, both at Courtrai and Yvry, and, ventre saint gris! we had neither pot nor marmite, but did always charge in our shirt." "Which refutes another base scandal," said Lord Dalgarno, laughing, "alleging that linen was scarce among the French gentlemen-at-arms."

"Gentlemen out at arms and elbows both, you mean, my lord," said the captain, from the bottom of the table. "Craving your lordship's pardon, I do know something of these same gens-d'armes."

"We will spare your knowledge at present, captain, and save your modesty at the same time the trouble of telling us how that knowledge was acquired," answered Lord Dalgarno, rather contemptuously.

"I need not speak of it, my lord," said the man of war; "the world knows it—all perhaps, but the men of mohair—the poor sneaking citizens of London, who would see a man of valour eat his very hilts for hunger, ere they would draw a farthing from their long purses to relieve them. O, if a band of the honest fellows I have seen were once to come near that cuckoo's nest of theirs!"

"A cuckoo's nest!—and that said of the city of London!" said a gallant who sat on the opposite side of the table, and who, wearing a splendid and fashionable dress, seemed yet scarce at home in it—"I will not brook to hear that repeated."

"What!" said the soldier, bending a most terrific frown from a pair of broad black eyebrows, handling the hilt of his weapon with one hand, and twirling with the other his huge mustaches; "will you quarrel for your city?"

"Ay, marry will I," replied the other. "I am a citizen, I care not who knows it; and he who shall speak a word in dispraise of the city, is an ass and a peremptory gull, and I will break his pate, to teach him sense and manners."

The company, who probably had their reasons for not valuing the captain's courage at the high rate which he himself put upon it, were much entertained at the manner in which the quarrel was taken up by the indignant citizen; and they exclaimed on all sides, "Well run, Bow-bell!"—"Well crowed, the cock of Saint Paul's!"—"Sound a charge there, or the soldier will mistake his signals, and retreat when he should advance."

"You mistake me, gentlemen," said the captain, looking round with an air of dignity. "I will but inquire whether this cavaliero citizen is of rank and degree fitted to measure swords with a man of action; (for, conceive me, gentlemen, it is not with every one that I can match myself without loss of reputation;) and in that case he shall soon hear from me honourably, by way of cartel."

"You shall feel me most dishonourably in the way of cudgel," said the citizen, starting up, and taking his sword, which he had laid in a corner. "Follow me."

"It is my right to name the place of combat, by all the rules of the sword," said the captain; "and I do nominate the Maze, in Tothill-Fields, for place—two gentlemen, who shall be indifferent judges, for witnesses;—and for time—let me say this day fortnight, at daybreak."

"And I," said the citizen, "do nominate the bowling-alley behind the house for place, the present good company for witnesses, and for time the present moment." So saying, he cast on his beaver, struck the soldier across the shoulders with his sheathed sword, and ran down stairs. The captain showed no instant alacrity to follow him; yet, at last, roused by the laugh and sneer around him, he assured the company, that what he did he would do deliberately, and, assuming his hat, which he put on with the air of Ancient Pistol, he descended the stairs to the place of combat, where his more prompt adversary was already stationed, with his sword unsheathed. Of the company, all of whom seemed highly delighted with the approaching fray, some ran to the windows which overlooked the bowling-alley, and others followed the combatants down stairs. Nigel could not help asking Dalgarno whether he would not interfere to prevent mischief.

"It would be a crime against the public interest," answered his friend; "there can no mischief happen between two such originals, which will not be a positive benefit to society, and particularly to the Chevalier's establishment, as he calls it. I have been as sick of that captain's buff belt, and red doublet, for this month past, as e'er I was of aught; and now I hope this bold linendraper will cudgel the ass out of that filthy lion's hide. See, Nigel, see the gallant citizen has ta'en his ground about a bowl's-cast forward, in the midst of the alley—the very model of a hog in armour. Behold how he prances with his manly foot, and brandishes his blade, much as if he were about to measure forth cambric with it. See, they bring on the reluctant soldado, and plant him opposite to his fiery antagonist, twelve paces still dividing them—Lo, the captain draws his tool, but, like a good general, looks over his shoulder to secure his retreat, in case the worse come on't. Behold the valiant shop-keeper stoops his head, confident, doubtless, in the civic helmet with which his spouse has fortified his skull—Why, this is the rarest of sport. By Heaven, he will run a tilt at him, like a ram."

It was even as Lord Dalgarno had anticipated; for the citizen, who seemed quite serious in his zeal for combat, perceiving that the man of war did not advance towards him, rushed onwards with as much good fortune as courage, beat down the captain's guard, and, pressing on, thrust, as it seemed, his sword clear through the body of his antagonist, who, with a deep groan, measured his length on the ground. A score of voices cried to the conqueror, as he stood fixed in astonishment at his own feat, "Away, away with you!—fly, fly—fly by the back door!—get into the Whitefriars, or cross the water to the Bankside, while we keep off the mob and the constables." And the conqueror, leaving his vanquished foeman on the ground, fled accordingly, with all speed.

"By Heaven," said Lord Dalgarno, "I could never have believed that the fellow would have stood to receive a thrust—he has certainly been arrested by positive terror, and lost the use of his limbs. See, they are raising him."

Stiff and stark seemed the corpse of the swordsman, as one or two of the guests raised him from the ground; but, when they began to open his waistcoat to search for the wound which nowhere existed, the man of war collected, his scattered spirits; and, conscious that the ordinary was no longer a stage on which to display his valour, took to his heels as fast as he could run, pursued by the laughter and shouts of the company.

"By my honour," said Lord Dalgarno, "he takes the same course with his conqueror. I trust in heaven he will overtake him, and then the valiant citizen will suppose himself haunted by the ghost of him he has slain."

"Despardieux, milor," said the Chevalier, "if he had stayed one moment, he should have had a torchon—what you call a dishclout, pinned to him for a piece of shroud, to show he be de ghost of one grand fanfaron."

"In the meanwhile," said Lord Dalgarno, "you will oblige us, Monsieur le Chevalier, as well as maintain your own honoured reputation, by letting your drawers receive the man-at-arms with a cudgel, in case he should venture to come way again."

"Ventre saint gris, milor," said the Chevalier, "leave that to me.—Begar, the maid shall throw the wash-sud upon the grand poltron!"

When they had laughed sufficiently at this ludicrous occurrence, the party began to divide themselves into little knots—some took possession of the alley, late the scene of combat, and put the field to its proper use of a bowling-ground, and it soon resounded with all the terms of the game, as "run, run-rub, rub—hold bias, you infernal trundling timber!" thus making good the saying, that three things are thrown away in a bowling-green, namely, time, money, and oaths. In the house, many of the gentlemen betook themselves to cards or dice, and parties were formed at Ombre, at Basset, at Gleek, at Primero, and other games then in fashion; while the dice were used at various games, both with and without the tables, as Hazard, In-and-in, Passage, and so forth. The play, however, did not appear to be extravagantly deep; it was certainly conducted with great decorum and fairness; nor did there appear any thing to lead the young Scotsman in the least to doubt his companion's assurance, that the place was frequented by men of rank and quality, and that the recreations they adopted were conducted upon honourable principles.

Lord Dalgarno neither had proposed play to his friend, nor joined in the amusement himself, but sauntered from one table to another, remarking the luck of the different players, as well as their capacity to avail themselves of it, and exchanging conversation with the highest and most respectable of the guests. At length, as if tired of what in modern phrase would have been termed lounging, he suddenly remembered that Burbage was to act Shakespeare's King Richard, at the

Fortune, that afternoon, and that he could not give a stranger in London, like Lord Glenvarloch, a higher entertainment than to carry him to that exhibition; "unless, indeed," he added, in a whisper, "there is paternal interdiction of the theatre as well as of the ordinary."

"I never heard my father speak of stage-plays," said Lord Glenvarloch, "for they are shows of a modern date, and unknown in Scotland. Yet, if what I have heard to their prejudice be true, I doubt much whether he would have approved of them."

"Approved of them!" exclaimed Lord Dalgarno—"why, George Buchanan wrote tragedies, and his pupil, learned and wise as himself, goes to see them, so it is next door to treason to abstain; and the cleverest men in England write for the stage, and the prettiest women in London resort to the playhouses, and I have a brace of nags at the door which will carry us along the streets like wild-fire, and the ride will digest our venison and ortolans, and dissipate the fumes of the wine, and so let's to horse—Godd'en to you, gentlemen—Godd'en, Chevalier de la Fortune."

Lord Dalgarno's grooms were in attendance with two horses, and the young men mounted, the proprietor upon a favourite barb, and Nigel upon a high-dressed jennet, scarce less beautiful. As they rode towards the theatre, Lord Dalgarno endeavoured to discover his friend's opinion of the company to which he had introduced him, and to combat the exceptions which he might suppose him to have taken. "And wherefore lookest thou sad," he said, "my pensive neophyte? Sage son of the Alma Mater of Low-Dutch learning, what aileth thee? Is the leaf of the living world which we have turned over in company, less fairly written than thou hadst been taught to expect? Be comforted, and pass over one little blot or two; thou wilt be doomed to read through many a page, as black as Infamy, with her sooty pinion, can make them. Remember, most immaculate Nigel, that we are in London, not Leyden—that we are studying life, not lore. Stand buff against the reproach of thine over-tender conscience, man, and when thou summeest up, like a good arithmetician, the actions of the day, before you balance the account on your pillow, tell the accusing spirit, to his brimstone beard, that if thine ears have heard the clatter of the devil's bones, thy hand hath not trowled them—that if thine eye hath seen the brawling of two angry boys, thy blade hath not been bared in their fray."

"Now, all this may be wise and witty," replied Nigel; "yet I own I cannot think but that your lordship, and other men of good quality with whom we dined, might have chosen a place of meeting free from the intrusion of bullies, and a better master of your ceremonial than yonder foreign adventurer."

"All shall be amended, Sancte Nigelle, when thou shalt come forth a new Peter the Hermit, to preach a crusade against dicing, drabbing, and company-keeping. We will meet for dinner in Saint Sepulchre's Church; we will dine in the chancel, drink our flask in the vestry, the parson shall draw every cork, and the clerk say amen to every health. Come man, cheer up, and get rid of this sour and unsocial humour. Credit me, that the Puritans who object to us the follies and the frailties incident to human nature, have themselves the vices of absolute devils, privy malice and backbiting hypocrisy, and spiritual pride in all its presumption. There is much, too, in life which we must see, were it only to learn to shun it. Will Shakespeare, who lives after death, and who is presently to afford thee such pleasure as none but himself can confer, has described the gallant Falconbridge as calling that man

——' a bastard to the time,

That doth not smack of observation;

Which, though I will not practise to deceive,

Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn."

But here we are at the door of the Fortune, where we shall have matchless Will speaking for himself.—Goblin, and you other lout, leave the horses to the grooms, and make way for us through the press."

They dismounted, and the assiduous efforts of Lutin, elbowing, bullying, and proclaiming his master's name and title, made way through a crowd of murmuring citizens, and clamorous apprentices, to the door, where Lord Dalgarno speedily procured a brace of stools upon the stage for his companion and himself, where, seated among other gallants of the same class, they had an opportunity of displaying their fair dresses and fashionable manners, while they criticised the piece during its progress; thus forming, at the same time, a conspicuous part of the spectacle, and an important proportion of the audience.

Nigel Olifaunt was too eagerly and deeply absorbed in the interest of the scene, to be capable of playing his part as became the place where he was seated. He felt all the magic of that sorcerer, who had displayed, within the paltry circle of a wooden booth, the long wars of York and Lancaster, compelling the heroes of either line to stalk across the scene in language and fashion as they lived, as if the grave had given up the dead for the amusement and instruction of the living. Burbage, esteemed the best Richard until Garrick arose, played the tyrant and usurper with such truth and liveliness, that when the Battle of Bosworth seemed concluded by his death, the ideas of reality and deception were strongly contending in Lord Glenvarloch's imagination, and it required him to rouse himself from his reverie, so strange did the proposal at first sound when his companion declared King Richard should sup with them at the Mermaid.

They were joined, at the same time, by a small party of the gentlemen with whom they had dined, which they recruited by inviting two or three of the most accomplished wits and poets, who seldom failed to attend the Fortune Theatre, and were even but too ready to conclude a day of amusement with a night of pleasure. Thither the whole party adjourned, and betwixt fertile cups of sack, excited spirits, and the emulous wit of their lively companions, seemed to realise the joyous boast of one of Ben Jonson's contemporaries, when reminding the bard of

"Those lyric feasts,

Where men such clusters had,

As made them nobly wild, not mad;

While yet each verse of thine

Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine."

CHAPTER XIII

Let the proud salmon gorge the feather'd hook,
Then strike, and then you have him—He will wince;
Spin out your line that it shall whistle from you
Some twenty yards or so, yet you shall have him—
Marry! you must have patience—the stout rock
Which is his trust, hath edges something sharp;
And the deep pool hath ooze and sludge enough
To mar your fishing—'less you are more careful.
Albion, or the Double Kings.

It is seldom that a day of pleasure, upon review, seems altogether so exquisite as the partaker of the festivity may have felt it while passing over him. Nigel Olifaunt, at least, did not feel it so, and it required a visit from his new acquaintance, Lord Dalgarno, to reconcile him entirely to himself. But this visit took place early after breakfast, and his friend's discourse was prefaced with a question, How he liked the company of the preceding evening?

"Why, excellently well," said Lord Glenvarloch; "only I should have liked the wit better had it appeared to flow more freely. Every man's invention seemed on the stretch, and each extravagant simile seemed to set one half of your men of wit into a brown study to produce something which should out-herod it."

"And wherefore not?" said Lord Dalgarno, "or what are these fellows fit for, but to play the intellectual gladiators before us? He of them who declares himself recreant, should, d—n him, be restricted to muddy ale, and the patronage of the Waterman's Company. I promise you, that many a pretty fellow has been mortally wounded with a quibble or a carwicket at the Mermaid, and sent from thence, in a pitiable estate, to Wit's hospital in the Vintry, where they languish to this day amongst fools and aldermen."

"It may be so," said Lord Nigel; "yet I could swear by my honour, that last night I seemed to be in company with more than one man whose genius and learning ought either to have placed him higher in our company, or to have withdrawn him altogether from a scene, where, sooth to speak, his part seemed unworthily subordinate."

"Now, out upon your tender conscience," said Lord Dalgarno; "and the fico for such outcasts of Parnassus! Why, these are the very leavings of that noble banquet of pickled herrings and Rhenish, which lost London so many of her principal witmongers and bards of misrule. What would you have said had you seen Nash or Green, when you interest yourself about the poor mimes you supped with last night? Suffice it, they had their drench and their doze, and they drank and slept as much as may save them from any necessity of eating till evening, when, if they are industrious, they will find patrons or players to feed them. [Footnote: The condition of men of wit and talents was never more melancholy than about this period. Their lives were so irregular, and their means of living so precarious, that they were alternately rioting in debauchery, or encountering and struggling with the meanest necessities. Two or three lost their lives by a surfeit brought on by that fatal banquet of Rhenish wine and pickled herrings, which is familiar to those who study the lighter literature of that age. The whole history is a most melancholy picture of genius, degraded at once by its own debaucheries, and the patronage of heartless rakes and profligates.] For the rest of their wants, they can be at no loss for cold water while the New River head holds good; and your doublets of Parnassus are eternal in duration."

"Virgil and Horace had more efficient patronage," said Nigel.

"Ay," replied his countryman, "but these fellows are neither Virgil nor Horace; besides, we have other spirits of another sort, to whom I will introduce you on some early occasion. Our Swan of Avon hath sung his last; but we have stout old Ben, with as much learning and genius as ever prompted the treader of sock and buskin. It is not, however, of him I mean now to speak; but I come to pray you, of dear love, to row up with me as far as Richmond, where two or three of the gallants whom you saw yesterday, mean to give music and syllabubs to a set of beauties, with some curious bright eyes among them—such, I promise you, as might win an astrologer from his worship of the galaxy. My sister leads the bevy, to whom I desire to present you. She hath her admirers at Court; and is regarded, though I might dispense with sounding her praise, as one of the beauties of the time."

There was no refusing an engagement, where the presence of the party invited, late so low in his own regard, was demanded by a lady of quality, one of the choice beauties of the time. Lord Glenvarloch accepted, as was inevitable, and spent a lively day among the gay and the fair. He was the gallant in attendance, for the day, upon his friend's sister, the beautiful Countess of Blackchester, who aimed at once at superiority in the realms of fashion, of power, and of wit. She was, indeed, considerably older than her brother, and had probably completed her six lustres; but the deficiency in extreme youth was more than atoned for, in the most precise and curious accuracy in attire, an early acquaintance with every foreign mode, and a peculiar gift in adapting the knowledge which she acquired, to her own particular features and complexion. At Court, she knew as well as any lady in the circle, the precise tone, moral, political, learned, or jocose, in which it was proper to answer the monarch, according to his prevailing humour; and was supposed to have been very active, by her personal interest, in procuring her husband a high situation, which the gouty old viscount could never have deserved by any merit of his own commonplace conduct and understanding.

It was far more easy for this lady than for her brother, to reconcile so young a courtier as Lord Glenvarloch to the customs and habits of a sphere so new to him. In all civilised society, the females of distinguished rank and beauty give the tone to manners, and, through these, even to morals. Lady Blackchester had, besides, interest either in the Court, or over the Court, (for its source could not be well traced,) which created friends, and overawed those who might have been disposed to play the part of enemies.

At one time, she was understood to be closely leagued with the Buckingham family, with whom her brother still maintained a great intimacy; and, although some coldness had taken place betwixt the Countess and the Duchess of Buckingham, so that they were little seen together, and the former seemed considerably to have withdrawn herself into privacy, it was whispered that Lady Blackchester's interest with the great favourite was not diminished in consequence of her breach with his lady.

Our accounts of the private Court intrigues of that period, and of the persons to whom they were intrusted, are not full enough to enable us to pronounce upon the various reports which arose out of the circumstances we have detailed. It is enough to say, that Lady Blackchester possessed great influence on the circle around her, both from her beauty, her abilities, and her reputed talents for Court intrigue; and that Nigel Olifaunt was not long of experiencing its power, as he became a slave in some degree to that species of habit, which carries so many men into a certain society at a certain hour, without expecting or receiving any particular degree of gratification, or even amusement.

His life for several weeks may be thus described. The ordinary was no bad introduction to the business of the day; and the young lord quickly found, that if the society there was not always irreproachable, still it formed the most convenient and agreeable place of meeting with the fashionable parties, with whom he visited Hyde Park, the theatres, and other places of public resort, or joined the gay and glittering circle which Lady Blackchester had assembled around her. Neither did he entertain the same scrupulous horror which led him originally even to hesitate entering into a place where gaming was permitted; but, on the contrary, began to admit the idea, that as there could be no harm done in beholding such recreation when only indulged in to a moderate degree, so, from a parity of reasoning, there could be no objection to joining in it, always under the same restrictions. But the young lord was a Scotsman, habituated to early reflection, and totally unaccustomed to any habit which inferred a careless risk or profuse waste of money. Profusion was not his natural vice, or one likely to be acquired in the course of his education; and, in all probability, while his father anticipated with noble horror the idea of his son approaching the gaming-table, he was more startled at the idea of his becoming a gaining than a losing adventurer. The second, according to his principles, had a termination, a sad one indeed, in the loss of temporal fortune—the first quality went on increasing the evil which he dreaded, and perilled at once both body and soul.

However the old lord might ground his apprehension, it was so far verified by his son's conduct, that, from an observer of the various games of chance which he witnessed, he came, by degrees, by moderate hazards, and small bets or wagers, to take a certain interest in them. Nor could it be denied, that his rank and expectations entitled him to hazard a few pieces (for his game went no deeper) against persons, who, from the readiness with which they staked their money, might be supposed well able to afford to lose it.

It chanced, or, perhaps, according to the common belief, his evil genius had so decreed, that Nigel's adventures were remarkably successful. He was temperate, cautious, cool-headed, had a strong memory, and a ready power of calculation; was besides, of a daring and intrepid character, one upon whom no one that had looked even slightly, or spoken to though but hastily, would readily have ventured to practise any thing approaching to trick, or which required to be supported by intimidation. While Lord Glenvarloch chose to play, men played with him regularly, or, according to the phrase, upon the square; and, as he found his luck change, or wished to hazard his good fortune no farther, the more professed votaries of fortune, who frequented the house of Monsieur le Chevalier de Saint Priest Beaujeu, did not venture openly to express their displeasure at his rising a winner. But when this happened repeatedly, the gamblers murmured amongst themselves equally at the caution and the success of the young Scotsman; and he became far from being a popular character among their society.

It was no slight inducement to the continuance of this most evil habit, when it was once in some degree acquired, that it seemed to place Lord Glenvarloch, haughty as he naturally was, beyond the necessity of subjecting himself to farther pecuniary obligations, which his prolonged residence in London must otherwise have rendered necessary. He had to solicit from the ministers certain forms of office, which were to render his sign-manual effectually useful; and these, though they could not be denied, were delayed in such a manner, as to lead Nigel to believe there was some secret opposition, which occasioned the demur in his business. His own impulse was, to have appeared at Court a second time, with the king's sign-manual in his pocket, and to have appealed to his Majesty himself,

whether the delay of the public officers ought to render his royal generosity unavailing. But the Lord Huntinglen, that good old peer, who had so frankly interfered in his behalf on a former occasion, and whom he occasionally visited, greatly dissuaded him from a similar adventure, and exhorted him quietly to await the deliverance of the ministers, which should set him free from dancing attendance in London.

Lord Dalgarno joined his father in deterring his young friend from a second attendance at Court, at least till he was reconciled with the Duke of Buckingham—"a matter in which," he said, addressing his father, "I have offered my poor assistance, without being able to prevail on Lord Nigel to make any—not even the least—submission to the Duke of Buckingham."

"By my faith, and I hold the laddie to be in the right on't, Malcom!" answered the stout old Scots lord.—"What right hath Buckingham, or, to speak plainly, the son of Sir George Villiers, to expect homage and fealty from one more noble than himself by eight quarters? I heard him myself, on no reason that I could perceive, term Lord Nigel his enemy; and it will never be by my counsel that the lad speaks soft word to him, till he recalls the hard one."

"That is precisely my advice to Lord Glenvarloch," answered Lord Dalgarno; "but then you will admit, my dear father, that it would be the risk of extremity for our friend to return into the presence, the duke being his enemy—better to leave it with me to take off the heat of the distemperature, with which some pickthanks have persuaded the duke to regard our friend."

"If thou canst persuade Buckingham of his error, Malcom," said his father, "for once I will say there hath been kindness and honesty in Court service. I have oft told your sister and yourself, that in the general I esteem it as lightly as may be."

"You need not doubt my doing my best in Nigel's case," answered Lord Dalgarno; "but you must think, my dear father, I must needs use slower and gentler means than those by which you became a favourite twenty years ago."

"By my faith, I am afraid thou wilt," answered his father.—"I tell thee, Malcom, I would sooner wish myself in the grave, than doubt thine honesty or honour; yet somehow it hath chanced, that honest, ready service, hath not the same acceptance at Court which it has in my younger time—and yet you rise there."

"O, the time permits not your old-world service," said Lord Dalgarno; "we have now no daily insurrections, no nightly attempts at assassination, as were the fashion in the Scottish Court. Your prompt and uncourteous sword-in-hand attendance on the sovereign is no longer necessary, and would be as unbecoming as your old-fashioned serving-men, with their badges, broadswords, and bucklers, would be at a court-mask. Besides, father, loyal haste hath its inconveniences. I have heard, and from royal lips too, that when you stuck your dagger into the traitor Ruthven, it was with such little consideration, that the point ran a quarter of an inch into the royal buttock. The king never talks of it but he rubs the injured part, and quotes his 'infandum——renovare dolorem.' But this comes of old fashions, and of wearing a long Liddesdale whinger instead of a poniard of Parma. Yet this, my dear father, you call prompt and valiant service. The king, I am told, could not sit upright for a fortnight, though all the cushions in Falkland were placed in his chair of state, and the Provost of Dunfermline's borrowed to the boot of all."

"It is a lie," said the old earl, "a false lie, forge it who list!—It is true I wore a dagger of service by my side, and not a bodkin like yours, to pick one's teeth withal—and for prompt service—Odds nouns! it should be prompt to be useful when kings are crying treason and murder with the screech of a half-throttled hen. But you young courtiers know nought of these matters, and are little better than the green geese they bring over from the Indies, whose only merit to their masters is to repeat their own words after them—a pack of mouthers, and flatterers, and ear-wigs.—Well, I am old and unable to mend, else I would break all off, and hear the Tay once more flinging himself over the Campsie Linn."

"But there is your dinner-bell, father," said Lord Dalgarno, "which, if the venison I sent you prove seasonable, is at least as sweet a sound."

"Follow me, then, youngsters, if you list," said the old earl; and strode on from the alcove in which this conversation was held, towards the house, followed by the two young men.

In their private discourse, Lord Dalgarno had little trouble in dissuading Nigel from going immediately to Court; while, on the other hand, the offers he made him of a previous introduction to the Duke of Buckingham, were received by Lord Glenvarloch with a positive and contemptuous refusal. His friend shrugged his shoulders, as one who claims the merit of having given to an obstinate friend the best counsel, and desires to be held free of the consequences of his pertinacity. As for the father, his table indeed, and his best liquor, of which he was more profuse than necessary, were at the command of his young friend, as well as his best advice and assistance in the prosecution of his affairs. But Lord Huntinglen's interest was more apparent than real; and the credit he had acquired by his gallant defence of the king's person, was so carelessly managed by himself, and so easily eluded by the favourites and ministers of the sovereign, that, except upon one or two occasions, when the king was in some measure taken by surprise, as in the case of Lord Glenvarloch, the royal bounty was never efficiently extended either to himself or to his friends.

"There never was a man," said Lord Dalgarno, whose shrewder knowledge of the English Court saw where his father's deficiency lay, "that had it so perfectly in his power to have made his way to the pinnacle of fortune as my poor father. He had acquired a right to build up a staircase, step by step, slowly and surely, letting every boon, which he begged year after year, become in its turn the resting-place for the next annual grant. But your fortunes shall not shipwreck upon the same coast, Nigel," he would conclude. "If I have fewer means of influence than my father has, or rather had, till he threw them away for butts of sack, hawks, hounds, and such carrion, I can, far better than he, improve that which I possess; and that, my dear Nigel, is all engaged in your behalf. Do not be surprised or offended that you now see me less than formerly. The stag-hunting is commenced, and the prince looks that I should attend him more frequently. I must also maintain my attendance on the duke, that I may have an opportunity of pleading your cause when occasion shall permit."

"I have no cause to plead before the duke," said Nigel, gravely; "I have said so repeatedly."

"Why, I meant the phrase no otherwise, thou churlish and suspicious disputant," answered Dalgarno, "than as I am now pleading the duke's cause with thee."

Surely I only mean to claim a share in our royal master's favourite benediction, *Beati Pacifici*."

Upon several occasions, Lord Glenvarloch's conversations, both with the old earl and his son, took a similar turn and had a like conclusion. He sometimes felt as if, betwixt the one and the other, not to mention the more unobtrusive and unboasted, but scarce less certain influence of Lady Blackchester, his affair, simple as it had become, might have been somehow accelerated. But it was equally impossible to doubt the rough honesty of the father, and the eager and officious friendship of Lord Dalgarno; nor was it easy to suppose that the countenance of the lady, by whom he was received with such distinction, would be wanting, could it be effectual in his service.

Nigel was further sensible of the truth of what Lord Dalgarno often pointed out, that the favourite being supposed to be his enemy, every petty officer, through whose hands his affair must necessarily pass, would desire to make a merit of throwing obstacles in his way, which he could only surmount by steadiness and patience, unless he preferred closing the breach, or, as Lord Dalgarno called it, making his peace with the Duke of Buckingham.

Nigel might, and doubtless would, have had recourse to the advice of his friend George Heriot upon this occasion, having found it so advantageous formerly; but the only time he saw him after their visit to Court, he found the worthy citizen engaged in hasty preparations for a journey to Paris, upon business of great importance in the way of his profession, and by an especial commission from the Court and the Duke of Buckingham, which was likely to be attended with considerable profit. The good man smiled as he named the Duke of Buckingham. He had been, he said, pretty sure that his disgrace in that quarter would not be of long duration. Lord Glenvarloch expressed himself rejoiced at that reconciliation, observing, that it had been a most painful reflection to him, that Master Heriot should, in his behalf, have incurred the dislike, and perhaps exposed himself to the ill offices, of so powerful a favourite.

"My lord," said Heriot, "for your father's son I would do much; and yet truly, if I know myself, I would do as much and risk as much, for the sake of justice, in the case of a much more insignificant person, as I have ventured for yours. But as we shall not meet for some time, I must commit to your own wisdom the farther prosecution of this matter."

And thus they took a kind and affectionate leave of each other.

There were other changes in Lord Glenvarloch's situation, which require to be noticed. His present occupations, and the habits of amusement which he had acquired, rendered his living so far in the city a considerable inconvenience. He may also have become a little ashamed of his cabin on Paul's Wharf, and

desirous of being lodged somewhat more according to his quality. For this purpose, he had hired a small apartment near the Temple. He was, nevertheless, almost sorry for what he had done, when he observed that his removal appeared to give some pain to John Christie, and a great deal to his cordial and officious landlady. The former, who was grave and saturnine in every thing he did, only hoped that all had been to Lord Glenvarloch's mind, and that he had not left them on account of any unbeseeming negligence on their part. But the tear twinkled in Dame Nelly's eye, while she recounted the various improvements she had made in the apartment, of express purpose to render it more convenient to his lordship.

"There was a great sea-chest," she said, "had been taken upstairs to the shopman's garret, though it left the poor lad scarce eighteen inches of opening to creep betwixt it and his bed; and Heaven knew—she did not—whether it could ever be brought down that narrow stair again. Then the turning the closet into an alcove had cost a matter of twenty round shillings; and to be sure, to any other lodger but his lordship, the closet was more convenient. There was all the linen, too, which she had bought on purpose—But Heaven's will be done—she was resigned."

Everybody likes marks of personal attachment; and Nigel, whose heart really smote him, as if in his rising fortunes he were disdaining the lowly accommodations and the civilities of the humble friends which had been but lately actual favours, failed not by every assurance in his power, and by as liberal payment as they could be prevailed upon to accept, to alleviate the soreness of their feelings at his departure; and a parting kiss from the fair lips of his hostess sealed his forgiveness.

Richie Moniplies lingered behind his master, to ask whether, in case of need, John Christie could help a canny Scotsman to a passage back to his own country; and receiving assurance of John's interest to that effect, he said at parting, he would remind him of his promise soon.—"For," said he, "if my lord is not weary of this London life, I ken one that is, videlicet, mysell; and I am weel determined to see Arthur's Seat again ere I am many weeks older."

CHAPTER XIV

Bingo, why, Bingo! hey, boy—here, sir, here!—
He's gone and off, but he'll be home before us;—
'Tis the most wayward cur e'er mumbled bone,
Or dogg'd a master's footstep.—Bingo loves me
Better than ever beggar loved his alms;
Yet, when he takes such humour, you may coax
Sweet Mistress Fantasy, your worship's mistress,
Out of her sullen moods, as soon as Bingo.

The Dominie And His Dog.

Richie Moniplies was as good as his word. Two or three mornings after the young lord had possessed himself of his new lodgings, he appeared before Nigel, as he was preparing to dress, having left his pillow at an hour much later than had formerly been his custom.

As Nigel looked upon his attendant, he observed there was a gathering gloom upon his solemn features, which expressed either additional importance, or superadded discontent, or a portion of both.

"How now," he said, "what is the matter this morning, Richie, that you have made your face so like the grotesque mask on one of the spouts yonder?" pointing to the Temple Church, of which Gothic building they had a view from the window.

Richie swivelled his head a little to the right with as little alacrity as if he had the crick in his neck, and instantly resuming his posture, replied,—"Mask here, mask there—it were nae such matters that I have to speak anent."

"And what matters have you to speak anent, then?" said his master, whom circumstances had inured to tolerate a good deal of freedom from his attendant.

"My lord,"—said Richie, and then stopped to cough and hem, as if what he had to say stuck somewhat in his throat.

"I guess the mystery," said Nigel, "you want a little money, Richie; will five pieces serve the present turn?"

"My lord," said Richie, "I may, it is like, want a trifle of money; and I am glad at the same time, and sorry, that it is mair plenty with your lordship than formerly."

"Glad and sorry, man!" said Lord Nigel, "why, you are reading riddles to me, Richie."

"My riddle will be briefly read," said Richie; "I come to crave of your lordship your commands for Scotland."

"For Scotland!—why, art thou mad, man?" said Nigel; "canst thou not tarry to go down with me?"

"I could be of little service," said Richie, "since you purpose to hire another page and groom."

"Why, thou jealous ass," said the young lord, "will not thy load of duty lie the lighter?—Go, take thy breakfast, and drink thy ale double strong, to put such absurdities out of thy head—I could be angry with thee for thy folly, man—but I remember how thou hast stuck to me in adversity."

"Adversity, my lord, should never have parted us," said Richie; "methinks, had the warst come to warst, I could have starved as gallantly as your lordship, or more so, being in some sort used to it; for, though I was bred at a flasher's stall, I have not through my life had a constant intimacy with collops."

"Now, what is the meaning of all this trash?" said Nigel; "or has it no other end than to provoke my patience? You know well enough, that, had I twenty serving-men, I would hold the faithful follower that stood by me in my distress the most valued of them all. But it is totally out of reason to plague me with your solemn capriccios."

"My lord," said Richie, "in declaring your trust in me, you have done what is honourable to yourself, if I may with humility say so much, and in no way undeserved on my side. Nevertheless, we must part."

"Body of me, man, why?" said Lord Nigel; "what reason can there be for it, if we are mutually satisfied?"

"My lord," said Richie Moniplies, "your lordship's occupations are such as I cannot own or countenance by my presence."

"How now, sirrah!" said his master, angrily.

"Under favour, my lord," replied his domestic, "it is unequal dealing to be equally offended by my speech and by my silence. If you can hear with patience the grounds of my departure, it may be, for aught I know, the better for you here and hereafter—if not, let me have my license of departure in silence, and so no more about it."

"Go to, sir!" said Nigel; "speak out your mind—only remember to whom you speak it."

"Weel, weel, my lord—I speak it with humility;" (never did Richie look with more starched dignity than when he uttered the word;) "but do you think this dicing and card-shuffling, and haunting of taverns and playhouses, suits your lordship—for I am sure it does not suit me?"

"Why, you are not turned precisian or puritan, fool?" said Lord Glenvarloch, laughing, though, betwixt resentment and shame, it cost him some trouble to do so.

"My lord," replied the follower, "I ken the purport of your query. I am, it may be, a little of a precisian, and I wish to Heaven I was mair worthy of the name; but let that be a pass-over.—I have stretched the duties of a serving-man as far as my northern conscience will permit. I can give my gude word to my master, or to my native country, when I am in a foreign land, even though I should leave downright truth a wee bit behind me. Ay, and I will take or give a slash with ony man that speaks to the derogation of either. But this chambering, dicing, and play-haunting, is not my element—I cannot draw breath in it—and when I hear of your lordship

winning the siller that some poor creature may full sairly miss—by my saul, if it wad serve your necessity, rather than you gained it from him, I wad take a jump over the hedge with your lordship, and cry 'Stand!' to the first grazier we met that was coming from Smithfield with the price of his Essex calves in his leathern pouch!"

"You are a simpleton," said Nigel, who felt, however, much conscience-struck; "I never play but for small sums."

"Ay, my lord," replied the unyielding domestic, "and—still with reverence—it is even sae much the waur. If you played with your equals, there might be like sin, but there wad be mair warldly honour in it. Your lordship kens, or may ken, by experience of your ain, whilk is not as yet mony weeks auld, that small sums can ill be missed by those that have nane larger; and I maun e'en be plain with you, that men notice it of your lordship, that ye play wi' nane but the misguided creatures that can but afford to lose bare stakes."

"No man dare say so!" replied Nigel, very angrily. "I play with whom I please, but I will only play for what stake I please."

"That is just what they say, my lord," said the unmerciful Richie, whose natural love of lecturing, as well as his bluntness of feeling, prevented him from having any idea of the pain which he was inflicting on his master; "these are even their own very words. It was but yesterday your lordship was pleased, at that same ordinary, to win from yonder young hafflins gentleman, with the crimson velvet doublet, and the cock's feather in his beaver—him, I mean, who fought with the ranting captain—a matter of five pounds, or thereby. I saw him come through the hall; and, if he was not cleaned out of cross and pile, I never saw a ruined man in my life."

"Impossible!" said Lord Glenvarloch—"Why, who is he? he looked like a man of substance."

"All is not gold that glistens, my lord," replied Richie; "'broidery and bullion buttons make bare pouches. And if you ask who he is—maybe I have a guess, and care not to tell."

"At least, if I have done any such fellow an injury," said the Lord Nigel, "let me know how I can repair it."

"Never fash your beard about that, my lord,—with reverence always," said Richie,—"he shall be suitably cared after. Think on him but as ane wha was running post to the devil, and got a shouldering from your lordship to help him on his journey. But I will stop him, if reason can; and so your lordship needs asks nae mair about it, for there is no use in your knowing it, but much the contrair."

"Hark you, sirrah," said his master, "I have borne with you thus far, for certain reasons; but abuse my good-nature no farther—and since you must needs go, why, go a God's name, and here is to pay your journey." So saying, he put gold into his hand, which Richie told over piece by piece, with the utmost accuracy.

"Is it all right—or are they wanting in weight—or what the devil keeps you, when your hurry was so great five minutes since?" said the young lord, now thoroughly nettled at the presumptuous precision with which Richie dealt forth his canons of morality.

"The tale of coin is complete," said Richie, with the most imperturbable gravity; "and, for the weight, though they are sae scrupulous in this town, as make mouths at a piece that is a wee bit light, or that has been cracked within the ring, my sooth, they will jump at them in Edinburgh like a cock at a grosart. Gold pieces are not so plenty there, the mair the pity!"

"The more is your folly, then," said Nigel, whose anger was only momentary, "that leave the land where there is enough of them."

"My lord," said Richie, "to be round with you, the grace of God is better than gold pieces. When Goblin, as you call yonder Monsieur Lutin,—and you might as well call him Gibbet, since that is what he is like to end in,—shall recommend a page to you, ye will hear little such doctrine as ye have heard from me.—And if they were my last words," he said, raising his voice, "I would say you are misled, and are forsaking the paths which your honourable father trode in; and, what is more, you are going—still under correction—to the devil with a dishclout, for ye are laughed at by them that lead you into these disordered bypaths."

"Laughed at!" said Nigel, who, like others of his age, was more sensible to ridicule than to reason—"Who dares laugh at me?"

"My lord, as sure as I live by bread—nay, more, as I am a true man—and, I think, your lordship never found Richie's tongue bearing aught but the truth—unless that your lordship's credit, my country's profit, or, it may be, some sma' occasion of my ain, made it unnecessary to promulgate the hail veritie,—I say then, as I am a true man, when I saw that pur creature come through the ha', at that ordinary, whilk is accurst (Heaven forgive me for swearing!) of God and man, with his teeth set, and his hands clenched, and his bonnet drawn over his brows like a desperate man, Goblin said to me, 'There goes a dunghill chicken, that your master has plucked clean enough; it will be long ere his lordship ruffle a feather with a cock of the game.' And so, my lord, to speak it out, the lackeys, and the gallants, and more especially your sworn brother, Lord Dalgarno, call you the sparrow-hawk.—I had some thought to have cracked Lutin's pate for the speech, but, after a', the controversy was not worth it."

"Do they use such terms of me?" said Lord Nigel. "Death and the devil!"

"And the devil's dam, my lord," answered Richie; "they are all three busy in London.—And, besides, Lutin and his master laughed at you, my lord, for letting it be thought that—I shame to speak it—that ye were over well with the wife of the decent honest man whose house you but now left, as not sufficient for your new bravery, whereas they said, the licentious scoffers, that you pretended to such favour when you had not courage enough for so fair a quarrel, and that the sparrow-hawk was too craven-crested to fly at the wife of a cheesemonger."—He stopped a moment, and looked fixedly in his master's face, which was inflamed with shame and anger, and then proceeded. "My lord, I did you justice in my thought, and myself too; for, thought I, he would have been as deep in that sort of profligacy as in others, if it hadna been Richie's four quarters."

"What new nonsense have you got to plague me with?" said Lord Nigel. "But go on, since it is the last time I am to be tormented with your impertinence,—go on, and make the most of your time."

"In troth," said Richie, "and so will I even do. And as Heaven has bestowed on me a tongue to speak and to advise——"

"Which talent you can by no means be accused of suffering to remain idle," said Lord Glenvarloch, interrupting him.

"True, my lord," said Richie, again waving his hand, as if to bespeak his master's silence and attention; "so, I trust, you will think some time hereafter. And, as I am about to leave your service, it is proper that ye suld know the truth, that ye may consider the snares to which your youth and innocence may be exposed, when aulder and doucer heads are withdrawn from beside you.—There has been a lusty, good-looking kimmer, of some forty, or bygone, making mony speerings about you, my lord."

"Well, sir, what did she want with me?" said Lord Nigel.

"At first, my lord," replied his sapient follower, "as she seemed to be a well-fashioned woman, and to take pleasure in sensible company, I was no way reluctant to admit her to my conversation."

"I dare say not," said Lord Nigel; "nor unwilling to tell her about my private affairs."

"Not I, truly, my lord," said the attendant;—"for, though she asked me mony questions about your fame, your fortune, your business here, and such like, I did not think it proper to tell her altogether the truth thereanent."

"I see no call on you whatever," said Lord Nigel, "to tell the woman either truth or lies upon what she had nothing to do with."

"I thought so, too, my lord," replied Richie, "and so I told her neither."

"And what did you tell her, then, you eternal babbler?" said his master, impatient of his prate, yet curious to know what it was all to end in.

"I told her," said Richie, "about your warldly fortune, and sae forth, something whilk is not truth just at this time; but which hath been truth formerly, suld be truth now, and will be truth again,—and that was, that you were in possession of your fair lands, whilk ye are but in right of as yet. Pleasant communing we had on that and other topics, until she showed the cloven foot, beginning to confer with me about some wench that she said had a good-will to your lordship, and fain she would have spoken with you in particular anent it; but when I heard of such inkings, I began to suspect she was little better than—whew!"—Here he concluded his narrative with a low, but very expressive whistle.

"And what did your wisdom do in these circumstances?" said Lord Nigel, who, notwithstanding his former resentment, could now scarcely forbear laughing.

"I put on a look, my lord," replied Richie, bending his solemn brows, "that suld give her a heartscald of walking on such errands. I laid her enormities clearly before her, and I threatened her, in sae many words, that I would have her to the ducking-stool; and she, on the contrair part, miscawed me for a forward northern tyke—and so we parted never to meet again, as I hope and trust. And so I stood between your lordship and that temptation, which might have been worse than the ordinary, or the playhouse either; since you wot well what Solomon, King of the Jews, sayeth of the strange woman—for, said I to mysell, we have taken to dicing already, and if we take to drabbing next, the Lord kens what we may land in!"

"Your impertinence deserves correction, but it is the last which, for a time at least, I shall have to forgive—and I forgive it," said Lord Glenvarloch; "and, since we are to part, Richie, I will say no more respecting your precautions on my account, than that I think you might have left me to act according to my own judgment." "Mickle better not," answered Richie—"mickle better not; we are a' frail creatures, and can judge better for ilk ither than in our ain cases. And for me, even myself, saving that case of the Sifflication, which might have happened to ony one, I have always observed myself to be much more prudential in what I have done in your lordship's behalf, than even in what I have been able to transact for my own interest—whilk last, I have, indeed, always postponed, as in duty I ought."

"I do believe thou hast," said Lord Nigel, "having ever found thee true and faithful. And since London pleases you so little, I will bid you a short farewell; and you may go down to Edinburgh until I come thither myself, when I trust you will re-enter into my service."

"Now, Heaven bless you, my lord," said Richie Moniplies, with uplifted eyes; "for that word sounds more like grace than ony has come out of your mouth this fortnight.—I give you godd'en, my lord."

So saying, he thrust forth his immense bony hand, seized on that of Lord Glenvarloch, raised it to his lips, then turned short on his heel, and left the room hastily, as if afraid of showing more emotion than was consistent with his ideas of decorum. Lord Nigel, rather surprised at his sudden exit, called after him to know whether he was sufficiently provided with money; but Richie, shaking his head, without making any other answer, ran hastily down stairs, shut the street-door heavily behind him, and was presently seen striding along the Strand.

His master almost involuntarily watched and distinguished the tall raw-boned figure of his late follower, from the window, for some time, until he was lost among the crowd of passengers. Nigel's reflections were not altogether those of self-approval. It was no good sign of his course of life, (he could not help acknowledging this much to himself,) that so faithful an adherent no longer seemed to feel the same pride in his service, or attachment to his person, which he had formerly manifested. Neither could he avoid experiencing some twinges of conscience, while he felt in some degree the charges which Richie had preferred against him, and experienced a sense of shame and mortification, arising from the colour given by others to that, which he himself would have called his caution and moderation in play. He had only the apology, that it had never occurred to himself in this light.

Then his pride and self-love suggested, that, on the other hand, Richie, with all his good intentions, was little better than a conceited, pragmatistical domestic, who seemed disposed rather to play the tutor than the lackey, and who, out of sheer love, as he alleged, to his master's person, assumed the privilege of interfering with, and controlling, his actions, besides rendering him ridiculous in the gay world, from the antiquated formality, and intrusive presumption, of his manners.

Nigel's eyes were scarce turned from the window, when his new landlord entering, presented to him a slip of paper, carefully bound round with a string of flox-silk and sealed—it had been given in, he said, by a woman, who did not stop an instant. The contents harped upon the same string which Richie Moniplies had already jarred. The epistle was in the following words:

For the Right Honourable hands of Lord Glenvarloch, "These, from a friend unknown:—

"MY LORD,

"You are trusting to an dishonest friend, and diminishing an honest reputation. An unknown but real friend of your lordship will speak in one word what you would not learn from flatterers in so many days, as should suffice for your utter ruin. He whom you think most true—I say your friend Lord Dalgarno—is utterly false to you, and doth but seek, under pretence of friendship, to mar your fortune, and diminish the good name by which you might mend it. The kind countenance which he shows to you, is more dangerous than the Prince's frown; even as to gain at Beaujeu's ordinary is more discreditable than to lose. Beware of both.—And this is all from your true but nameless friend, IGNOTO."

Lord Glenvarloch paused for an instant, and crushed the paper together—then again unfolded and read it with attention—bent his brows—mused for a moment, and then tearing it to fragments, exclaimed—"Begone for a vile calumny! But I will watch—I will observe—"

Thought after thought rushed on him; but, upon the whole, Lord Glenvarloch was so little satisfied with the result of his own reflections, that he resolved to dissipate them by a walk in the Park, and, taking his cloak and beaver, went thither accordingly.

CHAPTER XV

Tw'as when fleet Snowball's head was woxen grey,
A luckless lev'ret met him on his way.—
Who knows not Snowball—he, whose race renown'd
Is still victorious on each coursing ground?
Swaffham Newmarket, and the Roman Camp,
Have seen them victors o'er each meaner stamp—
In vain the youngling sought, with doubling wile,
The hedge, the hill, the thicket, or the stile.
Experience sage the lack of speed supplied,
And in the gap he sought, the victim died.
So was I once, in thy fair street, Saint James,
Through walking cavaliers, and car-borne dames,
Descried, pursued, turn'd o'er again, and o'er,
Coursed, coted, mouth'd by an unfeeling bore.

&c. &c. &c,

The Park of Saint James's, though enlarged, planted with verdant alleys, and otherwise decorated by Charles II., existed in the days of his grandfather, as a public and pleasant promenade; and, for the sake of exercise or pastime, was much frequented by the better classes.

Lord Glenvarloch repaired thither to dispel the unpleasant reflections which had been suggested by his parting with his trusty squire, Richie Moniplies, in a manner which was agreeable neither to his pride nor his feelings; and by the corroboration which the hints of his late attendant had received from the anonymous letter mentioned in the end of the last chapter.

There was a considerable number of company in the Park when he entered it, but, his present state of mind inducing him to avoid society, he kept aloof from the more frequented walks towards Westminster and Whitehall, and drew to the north, or, as we should now say, the Piccadilly verge of the enclosure, believing he might there enjoy, or rather combat, his own thoughts unmolested.

In this, however, Lord Glenvarloch was mistaken; for, as he strolled slowly along with his arms folded in his cloak, and his hat drawn over his eyes, he was suddenly pounced upon by Sir Mungo Malagrowth, who, either shunning or shunned, had retreated, or had been obliged to retreat, to the same less frequented corner of the Park.

Nigel started when he heard the high, sharp, and querulous tones of the knight's cracked voice, and was no less alarmed when he beheld his tall thin figure hobbling towards him, wrapped in a thread-bare cloak, on whose surface ten thousand varied stains eclipsed the original scarlet, and having his head surmounted with a well-worn beaver, bearing a black velvet band for a chain, and a capon's feather for an ostrich plume.

Lord Glenvarloch would fain have made his escape, but, as our motto intimates, a leveret had as little chance to free herself of an experienced greyhound. Sir Mungo, to continue the simile, had long ago learned to run cunning, and make sure of mouthing his game. So Nigel found himself compelled to stand and answer the hackneyed question—"What news to-day?"

"Nothing extraordinary, I believe," answered the young nobleman, attempting to pass on.

"O, ye are ganging to the French ordinary belive," replied the knight; "but it is early day yet—we will take a turn in the Park in the meanwhile—it will sharpen your appetite."

So saying, he quietly slipped his arm under Lord Glenvarloch's, in spite of all the decent reluctance which his victim could exhibit, by keeping his elbow close to his side; and having fairly grappled the prize, he proceeded to take it in tow.

Nigel was sullen and silent, in hopes to shake off his unpleasant companion; but Sir Mungo was determined, that if he did not speak, he should at least hear.

"Ye are bound for the ordinary, my lord?" said the cynic;—"weel, ye canna do better—there is choice company there, and peculiarly selected, as I am tauld, being, dootless, sic as it is desirable that young noblemen should herd withal—and your noble father wad have been blithe to see you keeping such worshipful society."

"I believe," said Lord Glenvarloch, thinking himself obliged to say something, "that the society is as good as generally can be found in such places, where the door can scarcely be shut against those who come to spend their money."

"Right, my lord—vera right," said his tormentor, bursting out into a chuckling, but most discordant laugh. "These citizen chuffs and clowns will press in amongst us, when there is but an inch of a door open. And what remedy?—Just e'en this, that as their cash gies them confidence, we should strip them of it. Flay them, my lord—singe them as the kitchen wench does the rats, and then they winna long to come back again.—Ay, ay—pluck them, plume them—and then the larded capons will not be for flying so high a wing, my lord, among the goss-hawks and sparrow-hawks, and the like."

And, therewithal, Sir Mungo fixed on Nigel his quick, sharp, grey eye, watching the effect of his sarcasm as keenly as the surgeon, in a delicate operation, remarks the progress of his anatomical scalpel.

Nigel, however willing to conceal his sensations, could not avoid gratifying his tormentor by wincing under the operation. He coloured with vexation and anger; but a quarrel with Sir Mungo Malagrowth would, he felt, be unutterably ridiculous; and he only muttered to himself the words, "Impertinent coxcomb!" which, on this occasion, Sir Mungo's imperfection of organ did not prevent him from hearing and replying to.

"Ay, ay—vera true," exclaimed the caustic old courtier—"Impertinent coxcombs they are, that thus intrude themselves on the society of their betters; but your lordship kens how to gar them as gude—ye have the trick on't.—They had a braw sport in the presence last Friday, how ye suld have routed a young shopkeeper, horse and foot, ta'en his spolia ofima, and a' the specie he had about him, down to the very silver buttons of his cloak, and sent him to graze with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Muckle honour redounded to your lordship thereby.—We were tauld the loon threw himself into the Thames in a fit of desperation. There's enow of them behind—there was mair tint on Flodden-edge."

"You have been told a budget of lies, so far as I am concerned, Sir Mungo," said Nigel, speaking loud and sternly.

"Vera likely—vera likely," said the unabashed and undismayed Sir Mungo; "naething but lies are current in the circle.—So the chield is not drowned, then?—the mair's the pity.—But I never believed that part of the story—a London dealer has mair wit in his anger. I dare swear the lad has a bonny broom-shank in his hand by this time, and is scrubbing the kennels in quest after rusty nails, to help him to begin his pack again.—He has three bairns, they say; they will help him bravely to grope in the gutters. Your good lordship may have the ruining of him again, my lord, if they have any luck in strand-scouring."

"This is more than intolerable," said Nigel, uncertain whether to make an angry vindication of his character, or to fling the old tormentor from his arm. But an instant's recollection convinced him, that, to do either, would only give an air of truth and consistency to the scandals which he began to see were affecting his character, both in the higher and lower circles. Hastily, therefore, he formed the wiser resolution, to endure Sir Mungo's studied impertinence, under the hope of ascertaining, if possible, from what source those reports arose which were so prejudicial to his reputation.

Sir Mungo, in the meanwhile, caught up, as usual, Nigel's last words, or rather the sound of them, and amplified and interpreted them in his own way. "Tolerable luck!" he repeated; "yes, truly, my lord, I am told that you have tolerable luck, and that ye ken weel how to use that jilting quean, Dame Fortune, like a canny douce lad, willing to warm yourself in her smiles, without exposing yourself to her frowns. And that is what I ca' having luck in a bag."

"Sir Mungo Malagrowth," said Lord Glenvarloch, turning towards him seriously, "have the goodness to hear me for a moment."

"As weel as I can, my lord—as weel as I can," said Sir Mungo, shaking his head, and pointing the finger of his left hand to his ear.

"I will try to speak very distinctly," said Nigel, arming himself with patience. "You take me for a noted gamester; I give you my word that you have not been rightly informed—I am none such. You owe me some explanation, at least, respecting the source from which you have derived such false information."

"I never heard ye were a great gamester, and never thought or said ye were such, my lord," said Sir Mungo, who found it impossible to avoid hearing what Nigel said with peculiarly deliberate and distinct pronunciation. "I repeat it—I never heard, said, or thought that you were a ruffling gamester,—such as they call those of the first head.—Look you, my lord, I call him a gamester, that plays with equal stakes and equal skill, and stands by the fortune of the game, good or bad; and I call him a ruffling gamester, or one of the first head, who ventures frankly and deeply upon such a wager. But he, my lord, who has the patience and prudence never to venture beyond small game, such as, at most, might crack the Christmas-box of a grocer's 'prentice, who vies with those that have little to hazard, and who therefore, having the larger stock, can always rook them by waiting for his good fortune, and by rising from the game when luck leaves him—such a one as he, my lord, I do not call a great gamester, to whatever other name he may be entitled."

"And such a mean-spirited, sordid wretch, you would infer that I am," replied Lord Glenvarloch; "one who fears the skilful, and preys upon the ignorant—who avoids playing with his equals, that he may make sure of pillaging his inferiors?—Is this what I am to understand has been reported of me?"

"Nay, my lord, you will gain nought by speaking big with me," said Sir Mungo, who, besides that his sarcastic humour was really supported by a good fund of animal courage, had also full reliance on the immunities which he had derived from the broadsword of Sir Rullion Rattray, and the baton of the satellites employed by the Lady Cockpen. "And for the truth of the matter," he continued, "your lordship best knows whether you ever lost more than five pieces at a time since you frequented Beaujeu's—whether you have not most commonly risen a winner—and whether the brave young gallants who frequent the ordinary—I mean those of noble rank, and means conforming—are in use to play upon those terms?"

"My father was right," said Lord Glenvarloch, in the bitterness of his spirit; "and his curse justly followed me when I first entered that place. There is contamination in the air, and he whose fortune avoids ruin, shall be blighted in his honour and reputation."

Sir Mungo, who watched his victim with the delighted yet wary eye of an experienced angler, became now aware, that if he strained the line on him too tightly, there was every risk of his breaking hold. In order to give him room, therefore, to play, he protested that Lord Glenvarloch "should not take his free speech in malam partem. If you were a trifle ower sicker in your amusement, my lord, it canna be denied that it is the safest course to prevent farther endangerment of your somewhat dilapidated fortunes; and if ye play with your inferiors, ye are relieved of the pain of pouching the siller of your friends and equals; forby, that the plebeian knaves have had the advantage, tecum certasse, as Ajax Telamon sayeth, apud Metamorphoseos; and for the like of them to have played with ane Scottish nobleman is an honest and honourable consideration to compensate the loss of their stake, whilk, I dare say, moreover, maist of the churls can weel afford."

"Be that as it may, Sir Mungo," said Nigel, "I would fain know—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted Sir Mungo; "and, as you say, who cares whether the fat bulls of Bashan can spare it or no? gentlemen are not to limit their sport for the like of them."

"I wish to know, Sir Mungo," said Lord Glenvarloch, "in what company you have learned these offensive particulars respecting me?"

"Dootless—dootless, my lord," said Sir Mungo; "I have ever heard, and have ever reported, that your lordship kept the best of company in a private way.—There is the fine Countess of Blackchester, but I think she stirs not much abroad since her affair with his Grace of Buckingham; and there is the gude auld-fashioned Scottish nobleman, Lord Huntinglen, an undeniable man of quality—it is pity but he could keep caup and can frae his head, whilk now and then doth'minish his reputation. And there is the gay young Lord Dalgarno, that carries the craft of gray hairs under his curled love-locks—a fair race they are, father, daughter, and son, all of the same honourable family. I think we needna speak of George Heriot, honest man, when we have nobility in question. So that is the company I have heard of your keeping, my lord, out-taken those of the ordinary."

"My company has not, indeed, been much more extended than amongst those you mention," said Lord Glenvarloch; "but in short—"

"To Court?" said Sir Mungo, "that was just what I was going to say—Lord Dalgarno says he cannot prevail on ye to come to Court, and that does ye prejudice, my lord—the king hears of you by others, when he should see you in person—I speak in serious friendship, my lord. His Majesty, when you were named in the circle short while since, was heard to say, 'Jacta est alea!—Glenvarlochides is turned dicer and drinker.'—My Lord Dalgarno took your part, and he was e'en borne down by the popular voice of the courtiers, who spoke of you as one who had betaken yourself to living a town life, and risking your baron's coronet amongst the flatcaps of the city."

"And this was publicly spoken of me," said Nigel, "and in the king's presence?"

"Spoken openly?" repeated Sir Mungo Malagrowth; "ay, by my troth was it—that is to say, it was whispered privately—whilk is as open promulgation as the thing permitted; for ye may think the Court is not like a place where men are as sib as Simmie and his brother, and roar out their minds as if they were at an ordinary."

"A curse on the Court and the ordinary both!" cried Nigel, impatiently.

"With all my heart," said the knight; "I have got little by a knight's service in the Court; and the last time I was at the ordinary, I lost four angels."

"May I pray of you, Sir Mungo, to let me know," said Nigel, "the names of those who thus make free with the character of one who can be but little known to them, and who never injured any of them?"

"Have I not told you already," answered Sir Mungo, "that the king said something to that effect—so did the Prince too;—and such being the case, ye may take it on your corporal oath, that every man in the circle who was not silent, sung the same song as they did."

"You said but now," replied Glenvarloch, "that Lord Dalgarno interfered in my behalf."

"In good troth did he," answered Sir Mungo, with a sneer; "but the young nobleman was soon borne down—by token, he had something of a catarrh, and spoke as hoarse as a roopit raven. Poor gentleman, if he had had his full extent of voice, he would have been as well listened to, dootless, as in a cause of his ain, whilk no man kens better how to plead to purpose.—And let me ask you, by the way," continued Sir Mungo, "whether Lord Dalgarno has ever introduced your lordship to the Prince, or the Duke of Buckingham, either of whom might soon carry through your suit?"

"I have no claim on the favour of either the Prince or the Duke of Buckingham," said Lord Glenvarloch.—"As you seem to have made my affairs your study, Sir Mungo, although perhaps something unnecessarily, you may have heard that I have petitioned my Sovereign for payment of a debt due to my family. I cannot doubt the king's desire to do justice, nor can I in decency employ the solicitation of his Highness the Prince, or his Grace the Duke of Buckingham, to obtain from his Majesty what either should be granted me as a right, or refused altogether."

Sir Mungo twisted his whimsical features into one of his most grotesque sneers, as he replied—

"It is a vera clear and parspicuous position of the case, my lord; and in relying thereupon, you show an absolute and unimprovable acquaintance with the King, Court, and mankind in general.—But whom have we got here?—Stand up, my lord, and make way—by my word of honour, they are the very men we spoke of—talk of the devil, and—humph!"

It must be here premised, that, during the conversation, Lord Glenvarloch, perhaps in the hope of shaking himself free of Sir Mungo, had directed their walk towards the more frequented part of the Park; while the good knight had stuck to him, being totally indifferent which way they went, provided he could keep his talons clutched upon his companion. They were still, however, at some distance from the livelier part of the scene, when Sir Mungo's experienced eye noticed the appearances which occasioned the latter part of his speech to Lord Glenvarloch. A low respectful murmur arose among the numerous groups of persons which occupied the lower part of the Park. They first clustered together, with their faces turned towards Whitehall, then fell back on either hand to give place to a splendid party of gallants, who, advancing from the Palace, came onward through the Park; all the other company drawing off the pathway, and standing uncovered as they passed.

Most of these courtly gallants were dressed in the garb which the pencil of Vandyke has made familiar even at the distance of nearly two centuries; and which was just at this period beginning to supersede the more fluttering and frivolous dress which had been adopted from the French Court of Henri Quatre.

The whole train were uncovered excepting the Prince of Wales, afterwards the most unfortunate of British monarchs, who came onward, having his long curled auburn tresses, and his countenance, which, even in early youth, bore a shade of anticipated melancholy, shaded by the Spanish hat and the single ostrich feather which drooped from it. On his right hand was Buckingham, whose commanding, and at the same time graceful, deportment, threw almost into shade the personal demeanour and majesty of the Prince on whom he attended. The eye, movements, and gestures of the great courtier were so composed, so regularly observant of all etiquette belonging to his situation, as to form a marked and strong contrast with the forward gaiety and frivolity by which he recommended himself to the favour of his "dear dad and gossip," King James. A singular fate attended this accomplished courtier, in being at once the reigning favourite of a father and son so very opposite in manners, that, to ingratiate himself with the youthful Prince, he was obliged to compress within the strictest limits of respectful observance the frolicsome and free humour which captivated his aged father.

It is true, Buckingham well knew the different dispositions both of James and Charles, and had no difficulty in so conducting himself as to maintain the highest post in the favour of both. It has indeed been supposed, as we before hinted, that the duke, when he had completely possessed himself of the affections of Charles, retained his hold in those of the father only by the tyranny of custom; and that James, could he have brought himself to form a vigorous resolution, was, in the latter years of his life especially, not unlikely to have discarded Buckingham from his counsels and favour. But if ever the king indeed meditated such a change, he was too timid, and too much accustomed to the influence which the duke had long exercised over him, to summon up resolution enough for effecting such a purpose; and at all events it is certain, that Buckingham, though surviving the master by whom he was raised, had the rare chance to experience no wane of the most splendid court-favour during two reigns, until it was at once eclipsed in his blood by the dagger of his assassin Felton.

To return from this digression: The Prince, with his train, advanced, and were near the place where Lord Glenvarloch and Sir Mungo had stood aside, according to form, in order to give the Prince passage, and to pay the usual marks of respect. Nigel could now remark that Lord Dalgarno walked close behind the Duke of Buckingham, and, as he thought, whispered something in his ear as they came onward. At any rate, both the Prince's and Duke of Buckingham's attention seemed to be directed by such circumstance towards Nigel, for they turned their heads in that direction and looked at him attentively—the Prince with a countenance, the grave, melancholy expression of which was blended with severity; while Buckingham's looks evinced some degree of scornful triumph. Lord Dalgarno did not seem to observe his friend, perhaps because the sunbeams fell from the side of the walk on which Nigel stood, obliging Malcolm to hold up his hat to screen his eyes.

As the Prince passed, Lord Glenvarloch and Sir Mungo bowed, as respect required; and the Prince, returning their obeisance with that grave ceremony which paid to every rank its due, but not a tittle beyond it, signed to Sir Mungo to come forward. Commencing an apology for his lameness as he started, which he had just completed as his hobbling gait brought him up to the Prince, Sir Mungo lent an attentive, and, as it seemed, an intelligent ear, to questions, asked in a tone so low,

that the knight would certainly have been deaf to them had they been put to him by any one under the rank of Prince of Wales. After about a minute's conversation, the Prince bestowed on Nigel the embarrassing notice of another fixed look, touched his hat slightly to Sir Mungo, and walked on.

"It is even as I suspected, my lord," said Sir Mungo, with an air which he designed to be melancholy and sympathetic, but which, in fact, resembled the grin of an ape when he has mouthed a scalding chestnut—"Ye have back-friends, my lord, that is, unfriends—or, to be plain, enemies—about the person of the Prince."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Nigel; "but I would I knew what they accuse me of."

"Ye shall hear, my lord," said Sir Mungo, "the Prince's vera words—'Sir Mungo,' said he, 'I rejoice to see you, and am glad your rheumatic troubles permit you to come hither for exercise.'—I bowed, as in duty bound—ye might remark, my lord, that I did so, whilk formed the first branch of our conversation.—His Highness then demanded of me, 'if he with whom I stood, was the young Lord Glenvarloch.' I answered, 'that you were such, for his Highness's service,' whilk was the second branch.—Thirdly, his Highness, resuming the argument, said, that 'truly he had been told so,' (meaning that he had been told you were that personage,) 'but that he could not believe, that the heir of that noble and decayed house could be leading an idle, scandalous, and precarious life, in the eating-houses and taverns of London, while the king's drums were beating, and colours flying in Germany in the cause of the Palatine, his son-in-law.'—I could, your lordship is aware, do nothing but make an obeisance; and a gracious 'Give ye good-day, Sir Mungo Malagrowth, licensed me to fall back to your lordship. And now, my lord, if your business or pleasure calls you to the ordinary, or anywhere in the direction of the city—why, have with you; for, dootless, ye will think ye have tarried lang enough in the Park, as they will likely turn at the head of the walk, and return this way—and you have a broad hint, I think, not to cross the Prince's presence in a hurry."

"You may stay or go as you please, Sir Mungo," said Nigel, with an expression of calm, but deep resentment; "but, for my own part, my resolution is taken. I will quit this public walk for pleasure of no man—still less will I quit it like one unworthy to be seen in places of public resort. I trust that the Prince and his retinue will return this way as you expect; for I will abide, Sir Mungo, and beard them."

"Beard them!" exclaimed Sir Mungo, in the extremity of surprise,— "Beard the Prince of Wales—the heir-apparent of the kingdoms!—By my saul, you shall beard him yourself then."

Accordingly, he was about to leave Nigel very hastily, when some unwonted touch of good-natured interest in his youth and experience, seemed suddenly to soften his habitual cynicism.

"The devil is in me for an auld fule!" said Sir Mungo; "but I must needs concern myself—I that owe so little either to fortune or my fellow-creatures, must, I say, needs concern myself—with this springald, whom I will warrant to be as obstinate as a pig possessed with a devil, for it's the cast of his family; and yet I maun e'en fling away some sound advice on him.—My dainty young Lord Glenvarloch, understand me distinctly, for this is no bairn's-play. When the Prince said sae much to me as I have repeated to you, it was equivalent to a command not to appear in his presence; wherefore take an auld man's advice that wishes you weel, and maybe a wee thing better than he has reason to wish ony body. Jouk, and let the jaw gae by, like a canny bairn—gang hame to your lodgings, keep your foot frae taverns, and your fingers frae the dice-box; compound your affairs quietly wi' some ane that has better favour than yours about Court, and you will get a round spell of money to carry you to Germany, or elsewhere, to push your fortune. It was a fortunate soldier that made your family four or five hundred years syne, and, if you are brave and fortunate, you may find the way to repair it. But, take my word for it, that in this Court you will never thrive."

When Sir Mungo had completed his exhortation, in which there was more of sincere sympathy with another's situation, than he had been heretofore known to express in behalf of any one, Lord Glenvarloch replied, "I am obliged to you, Sir Mungo—you have spoken, I think, with sincerity, and I thank you. But in return for your good advice, I heartily entreat you to leave me; I observe the Prince and his train are returning down the walk, and you may prejudice yourself, but cannot help me, by remaining with me."

"And that is true,"—said Sir Mungo; "yet, were I ten years younger, I would be tempted to stand by you, and gie them the meeting. But at threescore and upward, men's courage turns cauldrie; and they that canna win a living, must not endanger the small sustenance of their age. I wish you weel through, my lord, but it is an unequal fight." So saying, he turned and limped away; often looking back, however, as if his natural spirit, even in its present subdued state, aided by his love of contradiction and of debate, rendered him unwilling to adopt the course necessary for his own security.

Thus abandoned by his companion, whose departure he graced with better thoughts of him than those which he bestowed on his appearance, Nigel remained with his arms folded, and reclining against a solitary tree which overhung the path, making up his mind to encounter a moment which he expected to be critical of his fate. But he was mistaken in supposing that the Prince of Wales would either address him, or admit him to expostulation, in such a public place as the Park. He did not remain unnoticed, however, for, when he made a respectful but haughty obeisance, intimating in look and manner that he was possessed of, and undaunted by, the unfavourable opinion which the Prince had so lately expressed, Charles returned his reverence with such a frown, as is only given by those whose frown is authority and decision. The train passed on, the Duke of Buckingham not even appearing to see Lord Glenvarloch; while Lord Dalgarno, though no longer incommoded by the sunbeams, kept his eyes, which had perhaps been dazzled by their former splendour, bent upon the ground.

Lord Glenvarloch had difficulty to restrain an indignation, to which, in the circumstances, it would have been madness to have given vent. He started from his reclining posture, and followed the Prince's train so as to keep them distinctly in sight; which was very easy, as they walked slowly. Nigel observed them keep their road towards the Palace, where the Prince turned at the gate and bowed to the noblemen in attendance, in token of dismissing them, and entered the Palace, accompanied only by the Duke of Buckingham, and one or two of his equerries. The rest of the train, having returned in all dutiful humility the farewell of the Prince, began to disperse themselves through the Park.

All this was carefully noticed by Lord Glenvarloch, who, as he adjusted his cloak, and drew his sword-belt round so as to bring the hilt closer to his hand, muttered—"Dalgarno shall explain all this to me, for it is evident that he is in the secret!"

CHAPTER XVI

*Give way—give way—I must and will have justice.
And tell me not of privilege and place;
Where I am injured, there I'll sue redress.
Look to it, every one who bars my access;
I have a heart to feel the injury,
A hand to night myself, and, by my honour,
That hand shall grasp what grey-beard Law denies me.
The Chamberlain.*

It was not long ere Nigel discovered Lord Dalgarno advancing towards him in the company of another young man of quality of the Prince's train; and as they directed their course towards the south-eastern corner of the Park, he concluded they were about to go to Lord Huntinglen's. They stopped, however, and turned up another path leading to the north; and Lord Glenvarloch conceived that this change of direction was owing to their having seen him, and their desire to avoid him.

Nigel followed them without hesitation by a path which, winding around a thicket of shrubs and trees, once more conducted him to the less frequented part of the Park. He observed which side of the thicket was taken by Lord Dalgarno and his companion, and he himself, walking hastily round the other verge, was thus enabled to meet them face to face.

"Good-morrow, my Lord Dalgarno," said Lord Glenvarloch, sternly.

"Ha! my friend Nigel," answered Lord Dalgarno, in his usual careless and indifferent tone, "my friend Nigel, with business on his brow?—but you must wait till we meet at Beaujeu's at noon—Sir Ewes Haldimund and I are at present engaged in the Prince's service."

"If you were engaged in the king's, my lord," said Lord Glenvarloch, "you must stand and answer me."

"Hey-day!" said Lord Dalgarno, with an air of great astonishment, "what passion is this? Why, Nigel, this is King Cambyzes' vein!—You have frequented the theatres too much lately—Away with this folly, man; go, dine upon soup and salad, drink succory-water to cool your blood, go to bed at sun-down, and defy those foul fiends, Wrath and Misconstruction."

"I have had misconstruction enough among you," said Glenvarloch, in the same tone of determined displeasure, "and from you, my Lord Dalgarno, in particular, and all under the mask of friendship."

"Here is a proper business!"—said Dalgarno, turning as if to appeal to Sir Ewes Haldimund; "do you see this angry ruffler, Sir Ewes? A month since, he dared not have looked one of yonder sheep in the face, and now he is a prince of roisterers, a plucker of pigeons, a controller of players and poets—and in gratitude for my having shown him the way to the eminent character which he holds upon town, he comes hither to quarrel with his best friend, if not his only one of decent station."

"I renounce such hollow friendship, my lord," said Lord Glenvarloch; "I disclaim the character which, even to my very face, you labour to fix upon me, and ere we part I will call you to a reckoning for it."

"My lords both," interrupted Sir Ewes Haldimund, "let me remind you that the Royal Park is no place to quarrel in."

"I will make my quarrel good," said Nigel, who did not know, or in his passion might not have recollected, the privileges of the place, "wherever I find my enemy."

"You shall find quarelling enough," replied Lord Dalgarno, calmly, "so soon as you assign a sufficient cause for it. Sir Ewes Haldimund, who knows the Court, will warrant you that I am not backward on such occasions.—But of what is it that you now complain, after having experienced nothing save kindness from me and my family?"

"Of your family I complain not," replied Lord Glenvarloch; "they have done for me all they could, more, far more, than I could have expected; but you, my lord, have suffered me, while you called me your friend, to be traduced, where a word of your mouth would have placed my character in its true colours—and hence the injurious message which I just now received from the Prince of Wales. To permit the misrepresentation of a friend, my lord, is to share in the slander."

"You have been misinformed, my Lord Glenvarloch," said Sir Ewes Haldimund; "I have myself often heard Lord Dalgarno defend your character, and regret that your exclusive attachment to the pleasures of a London life prevented your paying your duty regularly to the King and Prince."

"While he himself," said Lord Glenvarloch, "dissuaded me from presenting myself at Court."

"I will cut this matter short," said Lord Dalgarno, with haughty coldness. "You seem to have conceived, my lord, that you and I were Pylades and Orestes—a second edition of Damon and Pythias—Theseus and Pirithois at the least. You are mistaken, and have given the name of friendship to what, on my part, was mere good-nature and compassion for a raw and ignorant countryman, joined to the cumbersome charge which my father gave me respecting you. Your character, my lord, is of no one's drawing, but of your own making. I introduced you where, as in all such places, there was good and indifferent company to be met with—your habits, or taste, made you prefer the worse. Your holy horror at the sight of dice and cards degenerated into the cautious resolution to play only at those times, and with such persons, as might ensure your rising a winner—no man can long do so, and continue to be held a gentleman. Such is the reputation you have made for yourself, and you have no right to be angry that I do not contradict in society what yourself know to be true. Let us pass on, my lord; and if you want further explanation, seek some other time and fitter place."

"No time can be better than the present," said Lord Glenvarloch, whose resentment was now excited to the uttermost by the cold-blooded and insulting manner, in which Dalgarno vindicated himself,— "no place fitter than the place where we now stand. Those of my house have ever avenged insult, at the moment, and on the spot, where it was offered, were it at the foot of the throne.—Lord Dalgarno, you are a villain! draw and defend yourself." At the same moment he unsheathed his rapier.

"Are you mad?" said Lord Dalgarno, stepping back; "we are in the precincts of the Court."

"The better," answered Lord Glenvarloch; "I will cleanse them from a calumniator and a coward." He then pressed on Lord Dalgarno, and struck him with the flat of the sword.

The fray had now attracted attention, and the cry went round, "Keep the peace—keep the peace—swords drawn in the Park!—What, ho! guards!—keepers—yeomen—rangers!" and a number of people came rushing to the spot from all sides.

Lord Dalgarno, who had half drawn his sword on receiving the blow, returned it to his scabbard when he observed the crowd thicken, and, taking Sir Ewes Haldimund by the arm, walked hastily away, only saying to Lord Glenvarloch as they left him, "You shall dearly abye this insult—we will meet again."

A decent-looking elderly man, who observed that Lord Glenvarloch remained on the spot, taking compassion on his youthful appearance, said to him, "Are you aware that this is a Star-Chamber business, young gentleman, and that it may cost you your right hand?—Shift for yourself before the keepers or constables come up—Get into Whitefriars or somewhere, for sanctuary and concealment, till you can make friends or quit the city."

The advice was not to be neglected. Lord Glenvarloch made hastily towards the issue from the Park by Saint James's Palace, then Saint James's Hospital. The hubbub increased behind him; and several peace-officers of the Royal Household came up to apprehend the delinquent. Fortunately for Nigel, a popular edition of the cause of the affray had gone abroad. It was said that one of the Duke of Buckingham's companions had insulted a stranger gentleman from the country, and that the stranger had cudgelled him soundly. A favourite, or the companion of a favourite, is always odious to John Bull, who has, besides, a partiality to those disputants who proceed, as lawyers term it, *par wye du fait*, and both prejudices were in Nigel's favour. The officers, therefore, who came to apprehend him, could learn from the spectators no particulars of his appearance, or information concerning the road he had taken; so that, for the moment, he escaped being arrested.

What Lord Glenvarloch heard among the crowd as he passed along, was sufficient to satisfy him, that in his impatient passion he had placed himself in a predicament of considerable danger. He was no stranger to the severe and arbitrary proceedings of the Court of Star-Chamber, especially in cases of breach of privilege, which made it the terror of all men; and it was no farther back than the Queen's time that the punishment of mutilation had been actually awarded and executed, for some offence of the same kind which he had just committed. He had also the comfortable reflection, that, by his violent quarrel with Lord Dalgarno, he must now forfeit the friendship and good offices of that nobleman's father and sister, almost the only persons of consideration in whom he could claim any interest; while all the evil reports which had been put in circulation concerning his character, were certain to weigh heavily against him, in a case where much must necessarily depend on the reputation of the accused. To a youthful imagination, the idea of such a punishment as mutilation seems more ghastly than death itself; and every word which he overheard among the groups which he met, mingled with, or overtook and passed, announced this as the penalty of his offence. He dreaded to increase his pace for fear of attracting suspicion, and more than once saw the ranger's officers so near him, that his wrist tingled as if already under the blade of the dismembering knife. At length he got out of the Park, and had a little more leisure to consider what he was next to do.

Whitefriars, adjacent to the Temple, then well known by the cant name of Alsatia, had at this time, and for nearly a century afterwards, the privilege of a sanctuary, unless against the writ of the Lord Chief Justice, or of the Lords of the Privy-Council. Indeed, as the place abounded with desperadoes of every description,—bankrupt citizens, ruined gamblers, irreclaimable prodigals, desperate duellists, bravoos, homicides, and debauched profligates of every description, all leagued together to maintain the immunities of their asylum,—it was both difficult and unsafe for the officers of the law to execute warrants emanating even from the highest authority, amongst men whose safety was inconsistent with warrants or authority of any kind. This Lord Glenvarloch well knew; and odious as the place of refuge was, it seemed the only one where, for a space at least, he might be concealed and secure from the immediate grasp of the law, until he should have leisure to provide better for his safety, or to get this unpleasant matter in some shape accommodated.

Meanwhile, as Nigel walked hastily forward towards the place of sanctuary, he bitterly blamed himself for suffering Lord Dalgarno to lead him into the haunts of dissipation; and no less accused his intemperate heat of passion, which now had driven him for refuge into the purlieu of profane and avowed vice and debauchery.

"Dalgarno spoke but too truly in that," were his bitter reflections; "I have made myself an evil reputation by acting on his insidious counsels, and neglecting the wholesome admonitions which ought to have claimed implicit obedience from me, and which recommended abstinence even from the slightest approach of evil. But if I escape from the perilous labyrinth in which folly and inexperience, as well as violent passions, have involved me, I will find some noble way of redeeming the lustre of a name which was never sullied until I bore it."

As Lord Glenvarloch formed these prudent resolutions, he entered the Temple Walks, whence a gate at that time opened into Whitefriars, by which, as by the more private passage, he proposed to betake himself to the sanctuary. As he approached the entrance to that den of infamy, from which his mind recoiled even while in the act of taking shelter there, his pace slackened, while the steep and broken stairs reminded him of the *facilis descensus Averni*, and rendered him doubtful whether it were not better to brave the worst which could befall him in the public haunts of honourable men, than to evade punishment by secluding himself in those of avowed vice and profligacy.

As Nigel hesitated, a young gentleman of the Temple advanced towards him, whom he had often seen, and sometimes conversed with, at the ordinary, where he was a frequent and welcome guest, being a wild young gallant, indifferently well provided with money, who spent at the theatres and other gay places of public resort, the time which his father supposed he was employing in the study of the law. But Reginald Lowestoffe, such was the young Templar's name, was of opinion that little law was necessary to enable him to spend the revenues of the paternal acres which were to devolve upon him at his father's demise, and therefore gave himself no trouble to acquire more of that science than might be imbibed along with the learned air of the region in which he had his chambers. In other respects, he was one of the wits of the place, read Ovid and Martial, aimed at quick repartee and pun, (often very far fetched,) danced, fenced, played at tennis, and performed sundry tunes on the fiddle and French horn, to the great annoyance of old Counsellor Barratter, who lived in the chambers immediately below him. Such was Reginald Lowestoffe, shrewd, alert, and well-acquainted with the town through all its recesses, but in a sort of disreputable way. This gallant, now approaching the Lord Glenvarloch, saluted him by name and title, and asked if his lordship designed for the Chevalier's this day, observing it was near noon, and the woodcock would be on the board before they could reach the ordinary.

"I do not go there to-day," answered Lord Glenvarloch. "Which way, then, my lord?" said the young Templar, who was perhaps not undesirous to parade a part at least of the street in company with a lord, though but a Scottish one.

"I—I—" said Nigel, desiring to avail himself of this young man's local knowledge, yet unwilling and ashamed to acknowledge his intention to take refuge in so disreputable a quarter, or to describe the situation in which he stood—"I have some curiosity to see Whitefriars."

"What! your lordship is for a frolic into Alsatia?" said Lowestoffe—"Have with you, my lord—you cannot have a better guide to the infernal regions than myself. I promise you there are bona-robas to be found there—good wine too, ay, and good fellows to drink it with, though somewhat suffering under the frowns of Fortune. But your lordship will pardon me—you are the last of our acquaintance to whom I would have proposed such a voyage of discovery."

"I am obliged to you, Master Lowestoffe, for the good opinion you have expressed in the observation," said Lord Glenvarloch; "but my present circumstances may render even a residence of a day or two in the sanctuary a matter of necessity."

"Indeed!" said Lowestoffe, in a tone of great surprise; "I thought your lordship had always taken care not to risk any considerable stake—I beg pardon, but if the bones have proved perfidious, I know just so much law as that a peer's person is sacred from arrest; and for mere impecuniosity, my lord, better shift can be made elsewhere than in Whitefriars, where all are devouring each other for very poverty."

"My misfortune has no connexion with want of money," said Nigel.

"Why, then, I suppose," said Lowestoffe, "you have been tilting, my lord, and have pinked your man; in which case, and with a purse reasonably furnished, you may lie perdu in Whitefriars for a twelvemonth—Marry, but you must be entered and received as a member of their worshipful society, my lord, and a frank burgher of Alsatia—so far you must condescend; there will be neither peace nor safety for you else."

"My fault is not in a degree so deadly, Master Lowestoffe," answered Lord Glenvarloch, "as you seem to conjecture—I have stricken a gentleman in the Park, that is all."

"By my hand, my lord, and you had better have struck your sword through him at Barns Elms," said the Templar. "Strike within the verge of the Court! You will find that a weighty dependence upon your hands, especially if your party be of rank and have favour."

"I will be plain with you, Master Lowestoffe," said Nigel, "since I have gone thus far. The person I struck was Lord Dalgarno, whom you have seen at Beaujeu's."

"A follower and favourite of the Duke of Buckingham!—It is a most unhappy chance, my lord; but my heart was formed in England, and cannot bear to see a young nobleman borne down, as you are like to be. We converse here greatly too open for your circumstances. The Templars would suffer no bailiff to execute a writ, and no gentleman to be arrested for a duel, within their precincts; but in such a matter between Lord Dalgarno and your lordship, there might be a party on either side. You must away with me instantly to my poor chambers here, hard by, and undergo some little change of dress, ere you take sanctuary; for else you will have the whole rascal rout of the Friars about you, like crows upon a falcon that strays into their rookery. We must have you arrayed something more like the natives of Alsatia, or there will be no life there for you."

While Lowestoffe spoke, he pulled Lord Glenvarloch along with him into his chambers, where he had a handsome library, filled with all the poems and play-books which were then in fashion. The Templar then dispatched a boy, who waited upon him, to procure a dish or two from the next cook's shop; "and this," he said, "must be your lordship's dinner, with a glass of old sack, of which my grandmother (the heavens requite her!) sent me a dozen bottles, with charge to use the liquor only with clarified whey, when I felt my breast ache with over study. Marry, we will drink the good lady's health in it, if it is your lordship's pleasure, and you shall see how we poor students eke out our mutton-commons in the hall."

The outward door of the chambers was barred so soon as the boy had re-entered with the food; the boy was ordered to keep close watch, and admit no one; and Lowestoffe, by example and precept, pressed his noble guest to partake of his hospitality. His frank and forward manners, though much differing from the courtly ease of Lord Dalgarno, were calculated to make a favourable impression; and Lord Glenvarloch, though his experience of Dalgarno's perfidy had taught him to be cautious of reposing faith in friendly professions, could not avoid testifying his gratitude to the young Templar, who seemed so anxious for his safety and accommodation.

"You may spare your gratitude any great sense of obligation, my lord," said the Templar. "No doubt I am willing to be of use to any gentleman that has cause to sing *Fortune my foe*, and particularly proud to serve your lordship's turn; but I have also an old grudge, to speak Heaven's truth, at your opposite, Lord Dalgarno."

"May I ask on what account, Master Lowestoffe?" said Lord Glenvarloch.

"O, my lord," replied the Templar, "it was for a hap that chanced after you left the ordinary, one evening about three weeks since—at least I think you were not by, as your lordship always left us before deep play began—I mean no offence, but such was your lordship's custom—when there were words between Lord Dalgarno and me concerning a certain game at gleek, and a certain mournival of aces held by his lordship, which went for eight—tib, which went for fifteen—twenty-three in all. Now I held king and queen, being three—a natural towser, making fifteen—and tiddy, nineteen. We vied the ruff, and revied, as your lordship may suppose, till the stake was equal to half my yearly exhibition, fifty as fair yellow canary birds as e'er chirped in the bottom of a green silk purse. Well, my lord, I gained the cards, and lo you! it pleases his lordship to say that we played without tiddy; and as the rest stood by and backed him, and especially the sharking Frenchman, why, I was obliged to lose more than I shall gain all the season.—So judge if I have not a crow to pluck with his lordship. Was it ever heard there was a game at gleek at the ordinary before, without counting tiddy?—marry quep upon his lordship!—Every man who comes there with his purse in his hand, is as free to make new laws as he, I hope, since touch pot touch penny makes every man equal."

As Master Lowestoffe ran over this jargon of the gaming-table, Lord Glenvarloch was both ashamed and mortified, and felt a severe pang of aristocratic pride, when he concluded in the sweeping clause that the dice, like the grave, levelled those distinguishing points of society, to which Nigel's early prejudices clung perhaps but too fondly. It was impossible, however, to object any thing to the learned reasoning of the young Templar, and therefore Nigel was contented to turn the conversation, by making some inquiries respecting the present state of White-friars. There also his host was at home.

"You know, my lord," said Master Lowestoffe, "that we Templars are a power and a dominion within ourselves, and I am proud to say that I hold some rank in our republic—was treasurer to the Lord of Misrule last year, and am at this present moment in nomination for that dignity myself. In such circumstances, we are under the necessity of maintaining an amicable intercourse with our neighbours of Alsatia, even as the Christian States find themselves often, in mere policy, obliged to make alliance with the Grand Turk, or the Barbary States."

"I should have imagined you gentlemen of the Temple more independent of your neighbours," said Lord Glenvarloch.

"You do us something too much honour, my lord," said the Templar; "the Alsatians and we have some common enemies, and we have, under the rose, some common friends. We are in the use of blocking all bailiffs out of our bounds, and we are powerfully aided by our neighbours, who tolerate not a rag belonging to them within theirs. Moreover the Alsatians have—I beg you to understand me—the power of protecting or distressing our friends, male or female, who may be obliged to seek sanctuary within their bounds. In short, the two communities serve each other, though the league is between states of unequal quality, and I may myself say, that I have treated of sundry weighty affairs, and have been a negotiator well approved on both sides.—But hark—hark—what is that?"

The sound by which Master Lowestoffe was interrupted, was that of a distant horn, winded loud and keenly, and followed by a faint and remote huzza.

"There is something doing," said Lowestoffe, "in the Whitefriars at this moment. That is the signal when their privileges are invaded by tipstaff or bailiff; and at the blast of the horn they all swarm out to the rescue, as bees when their hive is disturbed.—Jump, Jim," he said, calling out to the attendant, "and see what they are doing in Alsatia.—That bastard of a boy," he continued, as the lad, accustomed to the precipitate haste of his master, tumbled rather than ran out of the apartment, and so down stairs, "is worth gold in this quarter—he serves six masters—four of them in distinct Numbers, and you would think him present like a fairy at the mere wish of him that for the time most needs his attendance. No scout in Oxford, no gip in Cambridge, ever matched him in speed and intelligence. He knows the step of a dun from that of a client, when it reaches the very bottom of the staircase; can tell the trip of a pretty wench from the step of a bencher, when at the upper end of the court; and is, take him all in all—But I see your lordship is anxious—May I press another cup of my kind grandmother's cordial, or will you allow me to show you my wardrobe, and act as your valet or groom of the chamber?"

Lord Glenvarloch hesitated not to acknowledge that he was painfully sensible of his present situation, and anxious to do what must needs be done for his extrication.

The good-natured and thoughtless young Templar readily acquiesced, and led the way into his little bedroom, where, from bandboxes, portmanteaus, mail-trunks, not forgetting an old walnut-tree wardrobe, he began to select the articles which he thought best suited effectually to disguise his guest in venturing into the lawless and turbulent society of Alsatia.

CHAPTER XVII

*Come hither, young one,—Mark me! Thou art now
'Mongst men o' the sword, that live by reputation
More than by constant income—Single-suited
They are, I grant you; yet each single suit
Maintains, on the rough guess, a thousand followers—
And they be men, who, hazarding their all,
Needful apparel, necessary income,
And human body, and immortal soul,
Do in the very deed but hazard nothing— So strictly is that ALL bound in reversion;
Clothes to the broker, income to the usurer,
And body to disease, and soul to the foul fiend;
Who laughs to see Soldadoes and Fooladoes,
Play better than himself his game on earth.
The Mohocks.*

"Your lordship," said Reginald Lowestoffe, "must be content to exchange your decent and court-beseeming rapier, which I will retain in safe keeping, for this broadsword, with an hundredweight of rusty iron about the hilt, and to wear these huge-paned slops, instead of your civil and moderate hose. We allow no cloak, for your ruffian always walks in *cuerpo*; and the tarnished doublet of bald velvet, with its discoloured embroidery, and—I grieve to speak it—a few stains from the blood of the grape, will best suit the garb of a roaring boy. I will leave you to change your suit for an instant, till I can help to truss you."

Lowestoffe retired, while slowly, and with hesitation, Nigel obeyed his instructions. He felt displeasure and disgust at the scoundrelly disguise which he was under the necessity of assuming; but when he considered the bloody consequences which law attached to his rash act of violence, the easy and indifferent temper of James, the prejudices of his son, the overbearing influence of the Duke of Buckingham, which was sure to be thrown into the scale against him; and, above all, when he reflected that he must now look upon the active, assiduous, and insinuating Lord Dalgarno, as a bitter enemy, reason told him he was in a situation of peril which authorised all honest means, even the most unseemly in outward appearance, to extricate himself from so dangerous a predicament.

While he was changing his dress, and musing on these particulars, his friendly host re-entered the sleeping apartment—"Zounds!" he said, "my lord, it was well you went not straight into that same Alsatia of ours at the time you proposed, for the hawks have stooped upon it. Here is Jem come back with tidings, that he saw a pursuivant there with a privy-council warrant, and half a score of yeomen assistants, armed to the teeth, and the horn which we heard was sounded to call out the posse of the Friars. Indeed, when old Duke Hildebrod saw that the quest was after some one of whom he knew nothing, he permitted, out of courtesy, the man-catcher to search through his dominions, quite certain that they would take little by their motions; for Duke Hildebrod is a most judicious potentate.—Go back, you bastard, and bring us word when all is quiet."

"And who may Duke Hildebrod be?" said Lord Glenvarloch.

"Nouns! my lord," said the Templar, "have you lived so long on the town, and never heard of the valiant, and as wise and politic as valiant, Duke Hildebrod, grand protector of the liberties of Alsatia? I thought the man had never whirled a die but was familiar with his fame."

"Yet I have never heard of him, Master Lowestoffe," said Lord Glenvarloch; "or, what is the same thing, I have paid no attention to aught that may have passed in conversation respecting him."

"Why, then," said Lowestoffe—"but, first, let me have the honour of trussing you. Now, observe, I have left several of the points untied, of set purpose; and if it please you to let a small portion of your shirt be seen betwixt your doublet and the band of your upper stock, it will have so much the more rakish effect, and will attract you respect in Alsatia, where linen is something scarce. Now, I tie some of the points carefully askint, for your ruffianly gallant never appears too accurately trussed—so."

"Arrange it as you will, sir," said Nigel; "but let me hear at least something of the conditions of the unhappy district into which, with other wretches, I am compelled to retreat."

"Why, my lord," replied the Templar, "our neighbouring state of Alsatia, which the law calls the Sanctuary of White-friars, has had its mutations and revolutions like greater kingdoms; and, being in some sort a lawless, arbitrary government, it follows, of course, that these have been more frequent than our own better regulated commonwealth of the Templars, that of Gray's Inn, and other similar associations, have had the fortune to witness. Our traditions and records speak of twenty revolutions within the last twelve years, in which the aforesaid state has repeatedly changed from absolute despotism to republicanism, not forgetting the intermediate stages of oligarchy, limited monarchy, and even gynocracy; for I myself remember Alsatia governed for nearly nine months by an old fish-woman. 'I hen it fell under the dominion of a broken attorney, who was dethroned by a reformado captain, who, proving tyrannical, was deposed by a hedgeparson, who was succeeded, upon resignation of his power, by Duke Jacob Hildebrod, of that name the first, whom Heaven long preserve.'"

"And is this potentate's government," said Lord Glenvarloch, forcing himself to take some interest in the conversation, "of a despotic character?"

"Pardon me, my lord," said the Templar; "this said sovereign is too wise to incur, like many of his predecessors, the odium of wielding so important an authority by his own sole will. He has established a council of state, who regularly meet for their morning's draught at seven o'clock; convene a second time at eleven for their *ante-meridiem*, or whet; and, assembling in solemn conclave at the hour of two afternoon, for the purpose of consulting for the good of the commonwealth, are so prodigal of their labour in the service of the state, that they seldom separate before midnight. Into this worthy senate, composed partly of Duke Hildebrod's predecessors in his high office, whom he has associated with him to prevent the envy attending sovereign and sole authority, I must presently introduce your lordship, that they may admit you to the immunities of the Friars, and assign you a place of residence."

"Does their authority extend to such regulation?" said Lord Glenvarloch.

"The council account it a main point of their privileges, my lord," answered Lowestoffe; "and, in fact, it is one of the most powerful means by which they support their authority. For when Duke Hildebrod and his senate find a topping householder in the Friars becomes discontented and factious, it is but assigning him, for a lodger, some fat bankrupt, or new lesidenter, whose circumstances require refuge, and whose purse can pay for it, and the malecontent becomes as tractable as a lamb. As for the poorer refugees, they let them shift as they can; but the registration of their names in the Duke's entry-book, and the payment of garnish conforming to their circumstances, is never dispensed with; and the Friars would be a very unsafe residence for the stranger who should dispute these points of jurisdiction."

"Well, Master Lowestoffe," said Lord Glenvarloch, "I must be controlled by the circumstances which dictate to me this state of concealment—of course, I am desirous not to betray my name and rank."

"It will be highly advisable, my lord," said Lowestoffe; "and is a case thus provided for in the statutes of the republic, or monarchy, or whatsoever you call it.—He who desires that no questions shall be asked him concerning his name, cause of refuge, and the like, may escape the usual interrogations upon payment of double the garnish otherwise belonging to his condition. Complying with this essential stipulation, your lordship may register yourself as King of Bantam if you will, for not a question will be asked of you.—But here comes our scout, with news of peace and tranquillity. Now, I will go with your lordship myself, and present you to the council of Alsatia, with all the influence which I have over them as an office-bearer in the Temple, which is not slight; for they have come halting off upon all occasions when we have taken part against them, and that they well know. The time is propitious, for as the council is now met in Alsatia, so the Temple walks are quiet. Now, my lord, throw your cloak about you, to hide your present exterior. You shall give it to the boy at the foot of the stairs that go down to the Sanctuary; and as the ballad says that Queen Eleanor sunk at Charing Cross and rose at Queenhithe, so you shall sink a nobleman in the Temple Gardens, and rise an Alsatian at Whitefriars."

They went out accordingly, attended by the little scout, traversed the gardens, descended the stairs, and at the bottom the young Templar exclaimed,—"And now let us sing, with Ovid,

'In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas—'

Off, off, ye lendings!" he continued, in the same vein. "Via, the curtain that shadowed Borgia!—But how now, my lord?" he continued, when he observed Lord Glenvarloch was really distressed at the degrading change in his situation, "I trust you are not offended at my rattling folly? I would but reconcile you to your present circumstances, and give you the tone of this strange place. Come, cheer up; I trust it will only be your residence for a very few days."

Nigel was only able to press his hand, and reply in a whisper, "I am sensible of your kindness. I know I must drink the cup which my own folly has filled for me. Pardon me, that, at the first taste, I feel its bitterness."

Reginald Lowestoffe was bustling officious and good-natured; but, used to live a scrambling, rakish course of life himself, he had not the least idea of the extent of Lord Glenvarloch's mental sufferings, and thought of his temporary concealment as if it were merely the trick of a wanton boy, who plays at hide-and-seek with his tutor. With the appearance of the place, too, he was familiar—but on his companion it produced a deep sensation.

The ancient Sanctuary at Whitefriars lay considerably lower than the elevated terraces and gardens of the Temple, and was therefore generally involved in the damps and fogs arising from the Thames. The brick buildings by which it was occupied, crowded closely on each other, for, in a place so rarely privileged, every foot of ground was valuable; but, erected in many cases by persons whose funds were inadequate to their speculations, the houses were generally insufficient, and exhibited the lamentable signs of having become ruinous while they were yet new. The wailing of children, the scolding of their mothers, the miserable exhibition of ragged linens hung from the windows to dry, spoke the wants and distresses of the wretched inhabitants; while the sounds of complaint were mocked and overwhelmed in the riotous shouts, oaths, profane songs, and boisterous laughter, that issued from the alehouses and taverns, which, as the signs indicated, were equal in number to all the other houses; and, that the full character of the place might be evident, several faded, tinselled and painted females, looked boldly at the strangers from their open lattices, or more modestly seemed busied with the cracked flower-pots, filled with mignonette and rosemary, which were disposed in front of the windows, to the great risk of the passengers.

"*Semi-reducta Venus*," said the Templar, pointing to one of these nymphs, who seemed afraid of observation, and partly concealed herself behind the casement, as she chirped to a miserable blackbird, the tenant of a wicker prison, which hung outside on the black brick wall.—"I know the face of yonder waistcoateer," continued the guide; "and I could wager a rose-noble, from the posture she stands in, that she has clean head-gear and a soiled night-rail.—But here come two of the male inhabitants, smoking like moving volcanoes! These are roaring blades, whom Nicotia and Trinidad serve, I dare swear, in lieu of beef and pudding; for be it known to you, my lord, that the king's counter-blast against the Indian weed will no more pass current in Alsatia than will his writ of *capias*."

As he spoke, the two smokers approached; shaggy, uncombed ruffians, whose enormous mustaches were turned back over their ears, and mingled with the wild elf-locks of their hair, much of which was seen under the old beavers which they wore aside upon their heads, while some straggling portion escaped through the rents of the hats aforesaid. Their tarnished plush jerkins, large slops, or trunk-breeches, their broad greasy shoulder-belts, and discoloured scarfs, and, above all, the ostentatious manner in which the one wore a broad-sword and the other an extravagantly long rapier and poniard, marked the true Alsatian bully, then, and for a hundred years afterwards, a well-known character.

"Tour out," said the one ruffian to the other; "tour the bien mort twirling at the gentry cove!" [Footnote: Look sharp. See how the girl is coquetting with the strange gallants!]

"I smell a spy," replied the other, looking at Nigel. "Chalk him across the peepers with your cheery." [Footnote: Slash him over the eyes with your dagger.]

"Bing avast, bing avast!" replied his companion; "yon other is rattling Reginald Lowestoffe of the Temple—I know him; he is a good boy, and free of the province."

So saying, and enveloping themselves in another thick cloud of smoke, they went on without farther greeting.

"*Grasso in aere*!" said the Templar. "You hear what a character the impudent knave gives me; but, so it serves your lordship's turn, I care not.—And, now, let me ask your lordship what name you will assume, for we are near the ducal palace of Duke Hildebrod."

"I will be called Grahame," said Nigel; "it was my mother's name."

"Grime," repeated the Templar, "will suit Alsatia well enough—both a grim and grimy place of refuge."

"I said Grahame, sir, not Grime," said Nigel, something shortly, and laying an emphasis on the vowel—for few Scotsmen understand raillery upon the subject of their names.

"I beg pardon, my lord," answered the undisconcerted punster; "but *Graam* will suit the circumstance, too—it signifies tribulation in the High Dutch, and your lordship must be considered as a man under trouble."

Nigel laughed at the pertinacity of the Templar; who, proceeding to point out a sign representing, or believed to represent, a dog attacking a bull, and running at his head, in the true scientific style of onset,—*"There,"* said he, *"doth faithful Duke Hildebrod deal forth laws, as well as ale and strong waters, to his faithful Alsatians. Being a determined champion of Paris Garden, he has chosen a sign corresponding to his habits; and he deals in giving drink to the thirsty, that he himself may drink without paying, and receive pay for what is drunken by others.—Let us enter the ever-open gate of this second Axylus."*

As they spoke, they entered the dilapidated tavern, which was, nevertheless, more ample in dimensions, and less ruinous, than many houses in the same evil neighbourhood. Two or three haggard, ragged drawers, ran to and fro, whose looks, like those of owls, seemed only adapted for midnight, when other creatures sleep, and who by day seemed bleared, stupid, and only half awake. Guided by one of these blinking Ganymedes, they entered a room, where the feeble rays of the sun were almost wholly eclipsed by volumes of tobacco-smoke, rolled from the tubes of the company, while out of the cloudy sanctuary arose the old chant of—

*"Old Sir Simon the King,
And old Sir Simon the King,
With his malmsey nose,
And his ale-dropped hose,
And sing hey ding-a-ding-ding."*

Duke Hildebrod, who himself condescended to chant this ditty to his loving subjects, was a monstrosly fat old man, with only one eye; and a nose which bore evidence to the frequency, strength, and depth of his potations. He wore a murrey-coloured plush jerkin, stained with the overflowings of the tankard, and much the worse for wear, and unbuttoned at bottom for the ease of his enormous paunch. Behind him lay a favourite bull-dog, whose round head and single black glancing eye, as well as the creature's great corpulence, gave it a burlesque resemblance to its master.

The well-beloved counsellors who surrounded the ducal throne, incensed it with tobacco, pledged its occupier in thick clammy ale, and echoed back his choral songs, were Satraps worthy of such a Soldan. The buff jerkin, broad belt, and long sword of one, showed him to be a Low Country soldier, whose look of scowling importance, and drunken impudence, were designed to sustain his title to call himself a Roving Blade. It seemed to Nigel that he had seen this fellow somewhere or other. A hedge-parson, or buckle-beggar, as that order of priesthood has been irreverently termed, sat on the Duke's left, and was easily distinguished by his torn band, flapped hat, and the remnants of a rusty cassock. Beside the parson sat a most wretched and meagre-looking old man, with a threadbare hood of coarse kersey upon his head, and buttoned about his neck, while his pinched features, like those of old Daniel, were illuminated by

—*"an eye,*

Through the last look of dotage still cunning and sly."

On his left was placed a broken attorney, who, for some malpractices, had been struck from the roll of practitioners, and who had nothing left of his profession, except its roguery. One or two persons of less figure, amongst whom there was one face, which, like that of the soldier, seemed not unknown to Nigel, though he could not recollect where he had seen it, completed the council-board of Jacob Duke Hildebrod.

The strangers had full time to observe all this; for his grace the Duke, whether irresistibly carried on by the full tide of harmony, or whether to impress the strangers with a proper idea of his consequence, chose to sing his ditty to an end before addressing them, though, during the whole time, he closely scrutinized them with his single optic.

When Duke Hildebrod had ended his song, he informed his Peers that a worthy officer of the Temple attended them, and commanded the captain and parson to abandon their easy chairs in behalf of the two strangers, whom he placed on his right and left hand. The worthy representative of the army and the church of Alsatia went to place themselves on a crazy form at the bottom of the table, which, ill calculated to sustain men of such weight, gave way under them, and the man of the sword and man of the gown were rolled over each other on the floor, amidst the exulting shouts of the company. They arose in wrath, contending which should vent his displeasure in the loudest and deepest oaths, a strife in which the parson's superior acquaintance with theology enabled him greatly to excel the captain, and were at length with difficulty tranquillised by the arrival of the alarmed waiters with more stable chairs, and by a long draught of the cooling tankard. When this commotion was appeased, and the strangers courteously accommodated with flagons, after the fashion of the others present, the Duke drank prosperity to the Temple in the most gracious manner, together with a cup of welcome to Master Reginald Lowestoffe; and, this courtesy having been thankfully accepted, the party honoured prayed permission to call for a gallon of Rhenish, over which he proposed to open his business.

The mention of a liquor so superior to their usual potations had an instant and most favourable effect upon the little senate; and its immediate appearance might be said to secure a favourable reception of Master Lowestoffe's proposition, which, after a round or two had circulated, he explained to be the admission of his friend Master Nigel Grahame to the benefit of the sanctuary and other immunities of Alsatia, in the character of a grand compounder; for so were those termed who paid a double fee at their matriculation, in order to avoid laying before the senate the peculiar circumstances which compelled them to take refuge there.

The worthy Duke heard the proposition with glee, which glittered in his single eye; and no wonder, as it was a rare occurrence, and of peculiar advantage to his private revenue. Accordingly, he commanded his ducal register to be brought him, a huge book, secured with brass clasps like a merchant's ledger, and whose leaves, stained with wine, and slabbared with tobacco juice, bore the names probably of as many rogues as are to be found in the Calendar of Newgate.

Nigel was then directed to lay down two nobles as his ransom, and to claim privilege by reciting the following doggerel verses, which were dictated to him by the Duke:—

*"Your suppliant, by name
Nigel Grahame,
In fear of mishap
From a shoulder-tap;
And dreading a claw
From the talons of law,
That are sharper than briars:
His freedom to sue,
And rescue by you—
Thorough weapon and wit,
From warrant and writ,
From bailiff's hand,
From tipstaff's wand,
Is come hither to Whitefriars."*

As Duke Hildebrod with a tremulous hand began to make the entry, and had already, with superfluous generosity, spelled Nigel with two g's instead of one, he was interrupted by the parson. [Footnote: This curious register is still in existence, being in possession of that eminent antiquary, Dr. Dryasdust, who liberally offered the author permission to have the autograph of Duke Hildebrod engraved as an illustration of this passage. Unhappily, being rigorous as Ritson himself in

adhering to the very letter of his copy, the worthy Doctor clogged his munificence with the condition that we should adopt the Duke's orthography, and entitle the work "The Fortunes of Niggle," with which stipulation we did not think it necessary to comply.] This reverend gentleman had been whispering for a minute or two, not with the captain, but with that other individual, who dwelt imperfectly, as we have already mentioned, in Nigel's memory, and being, perhaps, still something malecontent on account of the late accident, he now requested to be heard before the registration took place.

"The person," he said, "who hath now had the assurance to propose himself as a candidate for the privileges and immunities of this honourable society, is, in plain terms, a beggarly Scot, and we have enough of these locusts in London already—if we admit such palmer-worms and caterpillars to the Sanctuary, we shall soon have the whole nation."

"We are not entitled to inquire," said Duke Hildebrod, "whether he be Scot, or French, or English; seeing he has honourably laid down his garnish, he is entitled to our protection."

"Word of denial, most Sovereign Duke," replied the parson, "I ask him no questions—his speech betrayeth him—he is a Galilean—and his garnish is forfeited for his assurance in coming within this our realm; and I call on you, Sir Duke, to put the laws in force against him!"

The Templar here rose, and was about to interrupt the deliberations of the court, when the Duke gravely assured him that he should be heard in behalf of his friend, so soon as the council had finished their deliberations.

The attorney next rose, and, intimating that he was to speak to the point of law, said—"It was easy to be seen that this gentleman did not come here in any civil case, and that he believed it to be the story they had already heard of concerning a blow given within the verge of the Park—that the Sanctuary would not bear out the offender in such case—and that the queer old Chief would send down a broom which would sweep the streets of Alsatia from the Strand to the Stairs; and it was even policy to think what evil might come to their republic, by sheltering an alien in such circumstances."

The captain, who had sat impatiently while these opinions were expressed, now sprung on his feet with the vehemence of a cork bouncing from a bottle of brisk beer, and, turning up his mustaches with a martial air, cast a glance of contempt on the lawyer and churchman, while he thus expressed his opinion.

"Most noble Duke Hildebrod! When I hear such base, skeldering, coistril propositions come from the counsellors of your grace, and when I remember the Huffs, the Muns, and the Tityretu's by whom your grace's ancestors and predecessors were advised on such occasions, I begin to think the spirit of action is as dead in Alsatia as in my old grannam; and yet who thinks so thinks a lie, since I will find as many roaring boys in the Friars as shall keep the liberties against all the scavengers of Westminster. And, if we should be overborne for a turn, death and darkness! have we not time to send the gentleman off by water, either to Paris Garden or to the bankside? and, if he is a gallant of true breed, will he not make us full amends for all the trouble we have? Let other societies exist by the law, I say that we brisk boys of the Fleet live in spite of it; and thrive best when we are in right opposition to sign and seal, writ and warrant, sergeant and tipstaff, catchpoll, and bum-bailey."

This speech was followed by a murmur of approbation, and Lowestoffe, striking in before the favourable sound had subsided, reminded the Duke and his council how much the security of their state depended upon the amity of the Templars, who, by closing their gates, could at pleasure shut against the Alsatians the communication betwixt the Friars and the Temple, and that as they conducted themselves on this occasion, so would they secure or lose the benefit of his interest with his own body, which they knew not to be inconsiderable. "And, in respect of my friend being a Scotsman and alien, as has been observed by the reverend divine and learned lawyer, you are to consider," said Lowestoffe, "for what he is pursued hither—why, for giving the bastinado, not to an Englishman, but to one of his own countrymen. And for my own simple part," he continued, touching Lord Glenvarloch at the same time, to make him understand he spoke but in jest, "if all the Scots in London were to fight a Welsh main, and kill each other to a man, the survivor would, in my humble opinion, be entitled to our gratitude, as having done a most acceptable service to poor Old England."

A shout of laughter and applause followed this ingenious apology for the client's state of alienage; and the Templar followed up his plea with the following pithy proposition:—"I know well," said he, "it is the custom of the fathers of this old and honourable republic, ripely and well to consider all their proceedings over a proper allowance of liquor; and far be it from me to propose the breach of so laudable a custom, or to pretend that such an affair as the present can be well and constitutionally considered during the discussion of a pitiful gallon of Rhenish. But, as it is the same thing to this honourable conclave whether they drink first and determine afterwards, or whether they determine first and drink afterwards, I propose your grace, with the advice of your wise and potent senators, shall pass your edict, granting to mine honourable friend the immunities of the place, and assigning him a lodging, according to your wise forms, to which he will presently retire, being somewhat spent with this day's action; whereupon I will presently order you a rundlet of Rhenish, with a corresponding quantity of neats' tongues and pickled herrings, to make you all as glorious as George-a-Green."

This overture was received with a general shout of applause, which altogether drowned the voice of the dissidents, if any there were amongst the Alsatian senate who could have resisted a proposal so popular. The words of, kind heart! noble gentleman! generous gallant! flew from mouth to mouth; the inscription of the petitioner's name in the great book was hastily completed, and the oath administered to him by the worthy Doge. Like the Laws of the Twelve Tables, of the ancient Cambro-Britons, and other primitive nations, it was couched in poetry, and ran as follows:—

*"By spigot and barrel,
By bilboe and buff;
Thou art sworn to the quarrel
Of the blades of the huff.
For Whitefriars and its claims
To be champion or martyr,
And to fight for its dames
Like a Knight of the Garter."*

Nigel felt, and indeed exhibited, some disgust at this mummary; but, the Templar reminding him that he was too far advanced to draw back, he repeated the words, or rather assented as they were repeated by Duke Hildebrod, who concluded the ceremony by allowing him the privilege of sanctuary, in the following form of prescriptive doggerel:—

*"From the touch of the tip,
From the blight of the warrant,
From the watchmen who skip
On the Harman Beck's errand;
From the bailiffs cramp speech,
That makes man a thrall,
I charm thee from each,
And I charm thee from all.
Thy freedom's complete
As a Blade of the Huff,
To be cheated and cheat,
To be cuff'd and to cuff;
To stride, swear, and swagger,
To drink till you stagger,
To stare and to stab,*

And to brandish your dagger
In the cause of your drab;
To walk wool-ward in winter,
Drink brandy, and smoke,
And go fresco in summer
For want of a cloak;
To eke out your living
By the wag of your elbow,
By fulham and gourd,
And by baring of bilboe;
To live by your shifts,
And to swear by your honour,
Are the freedom and gifts

Of which I am the donor." [Footnote: Of the cant words used in this inaugural oration, some are obvious in their meaning, others, as Harman Beck (constable), and the like, derive their source from that ancient piece of lexicography, the *Slang Dictionary*]

This homily being performed, a dispute arose concerning the special residence to be assigned the new brother of the Sanctuary; for, as the Alsations held it a maxim in their commonwealth, that ass's milk fattens, there was usually a competition among the inhabitants which should have the managing, as it was termed, of a new member of the society.

The Hector who had spoken so warmly and critically in Nigel's behalf, stood out now chivalrously in behalf of a certain Blowselinda, or Bonstrops, who had, it seems, a room to hire, once the occasional residence of Slicing Dick of Paddington, who lately suffered at Tyburn, and whose untimely exit had been hitherto mourned by the damsel in solitary widowhood, after the fashion of the turtle-dove.

The captain's interest was, however, overruled, in behalf of the old gentleman in the kersey hood, who was believed, even at his extreme age, to understand the plucking of a pigeon, as well, or better, than any man in Alsatia.

This venerable personage was an usurer of notoriety, called Trapbois, and had very lately done the state considerable service in advancing a subsidy necessary to secure a fresh importation of liquors to the Duke's cellars, the wine-merchant at the Vintry being scrupulous to deal with so great a man for any thing but ready money.

When, therefore, the old gentleman arose, and with much coughing, reminded the Duke that he had a poor apartment to let, the claims of all others were set aside, and Nigel was assigned to Trapbois as his guest.

No sooner was this arrangement made, than Lord Glenvarloch expressed to Lowestoffe his impatience to leave this discreditable assembly, and took his leave with a careless haste, which, but for the rundlet of Rhenish wine that entered just as he left the apartment, might have been taken in bad part. The young Templar accompanied his friend to the house of the old usurer, with the road to which he and some other youngsters about the Temple were even but too well acquainted. On the way, he assured Lord Glenvarloch that he was going to the only clean house in Whitefriars; a property which it owed solely to the exertions of the old man's only daughter, an elderly damsel, ugly enough to frighten sin, yet likely to be wealthy enough to tempt a puritan, so soon as the devil had got her old dad for his due. As Lowestoffe spoke thus, they knocked at the door of the house, and the sour stern countenance of the female by whom it was opened, fully confirmed all that the Templar had said of the hostess. She heard with an ungracious and discontented air the young Templar's information, that the gentleman, his companion, was to be her father's lodger, muttered something about the trouble it was likely to occasion, but ended by showing the stranger's apartment, which was better than could have been augured from the general appearance of the place, and much larger in extent than that which he occupied at Paul's Wharf, though inferior to it in neatness.

Lowestoffe, having thus seen his friend fairly installed in his new apartment, and having obtained for him a note of the rate at which he could be accommodated with victuals from a neighbouring cook's shop, now took his leave, offering, at the same time, to send the whole, or any part of Lord Glenvarloch's baggage, from his former place of residence to his new lodging. Nigel mentioned so few articles, that the Templar could not help observing, that his lordship, it would seem, did not intend to enjoy his new privileges long.

"They are too little suited to my habits and taste, that I should do so," replied Lord Glenvarloch.

"You may change your opinion to-morrow," said Lowestoffe; "and so I wish you a good even. To-morrow I will visit you betimes."

The morning came, but instead of the Templar, it brought only a letter from him. The epistle stated, that Lowestoffe's visit to Alsatia had drawn down the animadversions of some crabbed old pantaloons among the benchers, and that he judged it wise not to come hither at present, for fear of attracting too much attention to Lord Glenvarloch's place of residence. He stated, that he had taken measures for the safety of his baggage, and would send him, by a safe hand, his money-casket, and what articles he wanted. Then followed some sage advices, dictated by Lowestoffe's acquaintance with Alsatia and its manners. He advised him to keep the usurer in the most absolute uncertainty concerning the state of his funds—never to throw a main with the captain, who was in the habit of playing dry-fisted, and paying his losses with three vowels; and, finally, to beware of Duke Hildebrod, who was as sharp, he said, as a needle, though he had no more eyes than are possessed by that necessary implement of female industry.

CHAPTER XVIII

Mother. What I dazzled by a flash from Cupid's mirror, With which the boy, as mortal urchins wont, Flings back the sunbeam in the eye of passengers—Then laughs to see them stumble!

Daughter. Mother! no—It was a lightning-flash which dazzled me, And never shall these eyes see true again. *Beef and Pudding.—An Old English Comedy.*

It is necessary that we should leave our hero Nigel for a time, although in a situation neither safe, comfortable, nor creditable, in order to detail some particulars which have immediate connexion with his fortunes.

It was but the third day after he had been forced to take refuge in the house of old Trapbois, the noted usurer of Whitefriars, commonly called Golden Trapbois, when the pretty daughter of old Ramsay, the watchmaker, after having piously seen her father finish his breakfast, (from the fear that he might, in an abstruse fit of thought, swallow the salt-cellar instead of a crust of the brown loaf,) set forth from the house as soon as he was again plunged into the depth of calculation, and, accompanied only by that faithful old drudge, Janet, the Scots laundress, to whom her whims were laws, made her way to Lombard Street, and disturbed, at the unusual hour of eight in the morning, Aunt Judith, the sister of her worthy godfather.

The venerable maiden received her young visitor with no great complacency; for, naturally enough, she had neither the same admiration of her very pretty countenance, nor allowance for her foolish and girlish impatience of temper, which Master George Heriot entertained. Still Mistress Margaret was a favourite of her brother's, whose will was to Aunt Judith a supreme law; and she contented herself with asking her untimely visitor, "what she made so early with her pale, chitty face, in the streets of London?"

"I would speak with the Lady Hermione," answered the almost breathless girl, while the blood ran so fast to her face as totally to remove the objection of paleness which Aunt Judith had made to her complexion.

"With the Lady Hermione?" said Aunt Judith—"with the Lady Hermione? and at this time in the morning, when she will scarce see any of the family, even at seasonable hours? You are crazy, you silly wench, or you abuse the indulgence which my brother and the lady have shown to you."

"Indeed, indeed I have not," repeated Margaret, struggling to retain the unbidden tear which seemed ready to burst out on the slightest occasion. "Do but say to the lady that your brother's god-daughter desires earnestly to speak to her, and I know she will not refuse to see me."

Aunt Judith bent an earnest, suspicious, and inquisitive glance on her young visitor, "You might make me your secretary, my lassie," she said, "as well as the Lady Hermione. I am older, and better skilled to advise. I live more in the world than one who shuts herself up within four rooms, and I have the better means to assist you."

"O! no—no—no," said Margaret, eagerly, and with more earnest sincerity than complaisance; "there are some things to which you cannot advise me, Aunt Judith. It is a case—pardon me, my dear aunt—a case beyond your counsel."

"I am glad on't, maiden," said Aunt Judith, somewhat angrily; "for I think the follies of the young people of this generation would drive mad an old brain like mine. Here you come on the viretot, through the whole streets of London, to talk some nonsense to a lady, who scarce sees God's sun, but when he shines on a brick wall. But I will tell her you are here."

She went away, and shortly returned with a dry—"Miss Marget, the lady will be glad to see you; and that's more, my young madam, than you had a right to count upon."

Mistress Margaret hung her head in silence, too much perplexed by the train of her own embarrassed thoughts, for attempting either to conciliate Aunt Judith's kindness, or, which on other occasions would have been as congenial to her own humour, to retaliate on her cross-tempered remarks and manner. She followed Aunt Judith, therefore, in silence and dejection, to the strong oaken door which divided the Lady Hermione's apartments from the rest of George Heriot's spacious house.

At the door of this sanctuary it is necessary to pause, in order to correct the reports with which Richie Moniplies had filled his master's ear, respecting the singular appearance of that lady's attendance at prayers, whom we now own to be by name the Lady Hermione. Some part of these exaggerations had been communicated to the worthy Scotsman by Jenkin Vincent, who was well experienced in the species of wit which has been long a favourite in the city, under the names of cross-biting, giving the dor, bamboozling, cramming, hoaxing, humbugging, and quizzing; for which sport Richie Moniplies, with his solemn gravity, totally unapprehensive of a joke, and his natural propensity to the marvellous, formed an admirable subject. Farther ornaments the tale had received from Richie himself, whose tongue, especially when oiled with good liquor, had a considerable tendency to amplification, and who failed not, while he retailed to his master all the wonderful circumstances narrated by Vincent, to add to them many conjectures of his own, which his imagination had over-hastily converted into facts.

Yet the life which the Lady Hermione had led for two years, during which she had been the inmate of George Heriot's house, was so singular, as almost to sanction many of the wild reports which went abroad. The house which the worthy goldsmith inhabited, had in former times belonged to a powerful and wealthy baronial family, which, during the reign of Henry VIII., terminated in a dowager lady, very wealthy, very devout, and most unalienably attached to the Catholic faith. The chosen friend of the Honourable Lady Foljambe was the Abbess of Saint Roque's Nunnery, like herself a conscientious, rigid, and devoted Papist. When the house of Saint Roque was despotically dissolved by the fiat of the impetuous monarch, the Lady Foljambe received her friend into her spacious mansion, together with two vestal sisters, who, like their Abbess, were determined to follow the tenor of their vows, instead of embracing the profane liberty which the Monarch's will had thrown in their choice. For their residence, the Lady Foljambe contrived, with all secrecy—for Henry might not have relished her interference—to set apart a suite of four rooms, with a little closet fitted up as an oratory, or chapel; the whole apartments fenced by a stout oaken door to exclude strangers, and accommodated with a turning wheel to receive necessities, according to the practice of all nunneries. In this retreat, the Abbess of Saint Roque and her attendants passed many years, communicating only with the Lady Foljambe, who, in virtue of their prayers, and of the support she afforded them, accounted herself little less than a saint on earth. The Abbess, fortunately for herself, died before her munificent patroness, who lived deep in Queen Elizabeth's time, ere she was summoned by fate.

The Lady Foljambe was succeeded in this mansion by a sour fanatic knight, a distant and collateral relation, who claimed the same merit for expelling the priestess of Baal, which his predecessor had founded on maintaining the votaresses of Heaven. Of the two unhappy nuns, driven from their ancient refuge, one went beyond sea; the other, unable from old age to undertake such a journey, died under the roof of a faithful Catholic widow of low degree. Sir Paul Crambagge, having got rid of the nuns, spoiled the chapel of its ornaments, and had thoughts of altogether destroying the apartments, until checked by the reflection that the operation would be an unnecessary expense, since he only inhabited three rooms of the large mansion, and had not therefore the slightest occasion for any addition to its accommodations. His son proved a waster and a prodigal, and from him the house was bought by our friend George Heriot, who, finding, like Sir Paul, the house more than sufficiently ample for his accommodation, left the Foljambe apartments, or Saint Roque's rooms, as they were called, in the state in which he found them.

About two years and a half before our history opened, when Heriot was absent upon an expedition to the Continent, he sent special orders to his sister and his cash-keeper, directing that the Foljambe apartments should be fitted up handsomely, though plainly, for the reception of a lady, who would make them her residence for some time; and who would live more or less with his own family according to her pleasure. He also directed, that the necessary repairs should be made with secrecy, and that as little should be said as possible upon the subject of his letter.

When the time of his return came nigh, Aunt Judith and the household were on the tenter-hooks of impatience. Master George came, as he had intimated, accompanied by a lady, so eminently beautiful, that, had it not been for her extreme and uniform paleness, she might have been reckoned one of the loveliest creatures on earth. She had with her an attendant, or humble companion, whose business seemed only to wait upon her. This person, a reserved woman, and by her dialect a foreigner, aged about fifty, was called by the lady Monna Paula, and by Master Heriot, and others, Mademoiselle Pauline. She slept in the same room with her patroness at night, ate in her apartment, and was scarcely ever separated from her during the day.

These females took possession of the nunnery of the devout Abbess, and, without observing the same rigorous seclusion, according to the letter, seemed wellnigh to restore the apartments to the use to which they had been originally designed. The new inmates lived and took their meals apart from the rest of the family. With the domestics Lady Hermione, for so she was termed, held no communication, and Mademoiselle Pauline only such as was indispensable, which she dispatched as briefly as possible. Frequent and liberal largesses reconciled the servants to this conduct; and they were in the habit of observing to each other, that to do a service for Mademoiselle Pauline, was like finding a fairy treasure.

To Aunt Judith the Lady Hermione was kind and civil, but their intercourse was rare; on which account the elder lady felt some pangs both of curiosity and injured dignity. But she knew her brother so well, and loved him so dearly, that his will, once expressed, might be truly said to become her own. The worthy citizen was not without a spice of the dogmatism which grows on the best disposition, when a word is a law to all around. Master George did not endure to be questioned by his family, and, when he had generally expressed his will, that the Lady Hermione should live in the way most agreeable to her, and that no inquiries should be made concerning their history, or her motives for observing such strict seclusion, his sister well knew that he would have been seriously displeased with any attempt to pry into the secret.

But, though Heriot's servants were bribed, and his sister awed into silent acquiescence in these arrangements, they were not of a nature to escape the critical observation of the neighbourhood. Some opined that the wealthy goldsmith was about to turn papist, and re-establish Lady Foljambe's nunnery—others that he was going mad—others that he was either going to marry, or to do worse. Master George's constant appearance at church, and the knowledge that the supposed votaress always attended when the prayers of the English ritual were read in the family, liberated him from the first of these suspicions; those who had to transact business with him upon 'Change, could not doubt the soundness of Master Heriot's mind; and, to confute the other rumours, it was credibly reported by such as

made the matter their particular interest, that Master George Heriot never visited his guest but in presence of Mademoiselle Pauline, who sat with her work in a remote part of the same room in which they conversed. It was also ascertained that these visits scarcely ever exceeded an hour in length, and were usually only repeated once a week, an intercourse too brief and too long interrupted, to render it probable that love was the bond of their union.

The inquirers were, therefore, at fault, and compelled to relinquish the pursuit of Master Heriot's secret, while a thousand ridiculous tales were circulated amongst the ignorant and superstitious, with some specimens of which our friend Richie Moniplies had been *crammed*, as we have seen, by the malicious apprentice of worthy David Ramsay.

There was one person in the world who, it was thought, could (if she would) have said more of the Lady Hermione than any one in London, except George Heriot himself; and that was the said David Ramsay's only child, Margaret.

This girl was not much past the age of fifteen when the Lady Hermione first came to England, and was a very frequent visitor at her godfather's, who was much amused by her childish sallies, and by the wild and natural beauty with which she sung the airs of her native country. Spoilt she was on all hands; by the indulgence of her godfather, the absent habits and indifference of her father, and the deference of all around to her caprices, as a beauty and as an heiress. But though, from these circumstances, the city-beauty had become as wilful, as capricious, and as affected, as unlimited indulgence seldom fails to render those to whom it is extended; and although she exhibited upon many occasions that affectation of extreme shyness, silence, and reserve, which misses in their teens are apt to take for an amiable modesty; and, upon others, a considerable portion of that flippancy, which youth sometimes confounds with wit, Mistress Margaret had much real shrewdness and judgment, which wanted only opportunities of observation to refine it—a lively, good-humoured, playful disposition, and an excellent heart. Her acquired follies were much increased by reading plays and romances, to which she devoted a great deal of her time, and from which she adopted ideas as different as possible from those which she might have obtained from the invaluable and affectionate instructions of an excellent mother; and the freaks of which she was sometimes guilty, rendered her not unjustly liable to the charge of affectation and coquetry. But the little lass had sense and shrewdness enough to keep her failings out of sight of her godfather, to whom she was sincerely attached; and so high she stood in his favour, that, at his recommendation, she obtained permission to visit the recluse Lady Hermione.

The singular mode of life which that lady observed; her great beauty, rendered even more interesting by her extreme paleness; the conscious pride of being admitted farther than the rest of the world into the society of a person who was wrapped in so much mystery, made a deep impression on the mind of Margaret Ramsay; and though their conversations were at no time either long or confidential, yet, proud of the trust reposed in her, Margaret was as secret respecting their tenor as if every word repeated had been to cost her life. No inquiry, however artfully backed by flattery and insinuation, whether on the part of Dame Ursula, or any other person equally inquisitive, could wring from the little maiden one word of what she heard or saw, after she entered these mysterious and secluded apartments. The slightest question concerning Master Heriot's ghost, was sufficient, at her gayest moment, to check the current of her communicative prattle, and render her silent.

We mention this, chiefly to illustrate the early strength of Margaret's character—a strength concealed under a hundred freakish whims and humours, as an ancient and massive buttress is disguised by its fantastic covering of ivy and wildflowers. In truth, if the damsel had told all she heard or saw within the Foljambe apartments, she would have said but little to gratify the curiosity of inquirers.

At the earlier period of their acquaintance, the Lady Hermione was wont to reward the attentions of her little friend with small but elegant presents, and entertain her by a display of foreign rarities and curiosities, many of them of considerable value. Sometimes the time was passed in a way much less agreeable to Margaret, by her receiving lessons from Pauline in the use of the needle. But, although her preceptress practised these arts with a dexterity then only known in foreign convents, the pupil proved so incorrigibly idle and awkward, that the task of needlework was at length given up, and lessons of music substituted in their stead. Here also Pauline was excellently qualified as an instructress, and Margaret, more successful in a science for which Nature had gifted her, made proficiency both in vocal and instrumental music. These lessons passed in presence of the Lady Hermione, to whom they seemed to give pleasure. She sometimes added her own voice to the performance, in a pure, clear stream of liquid melody; but this was only when the music was of a devotional cast. As Margaret became older, her communications with the recluse assumed a different character. She was allowed, if not encouraged, to tell whatever she had remarked out of doors, and the Lady Hermione, while she remarked the quick, sharp, and retentive powers of observation possessed by her young friend, often found sufficient reason to caution her against rashness in forming opinions, and giddy petulance in expressing them.

The habitual awe with which she regarded this singular personage, induced Mistress Margaret, though by no means delighting in contradiction or reproof, to listen with patience to her admonitions, and to make full allowance for the good intentions of the patroness by whom they were bestowed; although in her heart she could hardly conceive how Madame Hermione, who never stirred from the Foljambe apartments, should think of teaching knowledge of the world to one who walked twice a-week between Temple Bar and Lombard Street, besides parading in the Park every Sunday that proved to be fair weather. Indeed, pretty Mistress Margaret was so little inclined to endure such remonstrances, that her intercourse with the inhabitants of the Foljambe apartments would have probably slackened as her circle of acquaintance increased in the external world, had she not, on the one hand, entertained an habitual reverence for her monitress, of which she could not divest herself, and been flattered, on the other, by being to a certain degree the depository of a confidence for which others thirsted in vain. Besides, although the conversation of Hermione was uniformly serious, it was not in general either formal or severe; nor was the lady offended by flights of levity which Mistress Margaret sometimes ventured on in her presence, even when they were such as made Monna Paula cast her eyes upwards, and sigh with that compassion which a devotee extends towards the votaries of a trivial and profane world. Thus, upon the whole, the little maiden was disposed to submit, though not without some wincing, to the grave admonitions of the Lady Hermione; and the rather that the mystery annexed to the person of her monitress was in her mind early associated with a vague idea of wealth and importance, which had been rather confirmed than lessened by many accidental circumstances which she had noticed since she was more capable of observation.

It frequently happens, that the counsel which we reckon intrusive when offered to us unasked, becomes precious in our eyes when the pressure of difficulties renders us more diffident of our own judgment than we are apt to find ourselves in the hours of ease and indifference; and this is more especially the case if we suppose that our adviser may also possess power and inclination to back his counsel with effectual assistance. Mistress Margaret was now in that situation. She was, or believed herself to be, in a condition where both advice and assistance might be necessary; and it was therefore, after an anxious and sleepless night, that she resolved to have recourse to the Lady Hermione, who she knew would readily afford her the one, and, as she hoped, might also possess means of giving her the other. The conversation between them will best explain the purport of the visit.

CHAPTER XIX

*By this good light, a wench of matchless mettle!
This were a leaguer-lass to love a soldier,
To bind his wounds, and kiss his bloody brow,
And sing a roundel as she help'd to arm him,
Though the rough foeman's drums were beat so nigh,
They seem'd to bear the burden.
Old Play.*

When Mistress Margaret entered the Foljambe apartment, she found the inmates employed in their usual manner; the lady in reading, and her attendant in embroidering a large piece of tapestry, which had occupied her ever since Margaret had been first admitted within these secluded chambers.

Hermione nodded kindly to her visitor, but did not speak; and Margaret, accustomed to this reception, and in the present case not sorry for it, as it gave her an interval to collect her thoughts, stooped over Monna Paula's frame and observed, in a half whisper, "You were just so far as that rose, Monna, when I first saw you—see, there is the mark where I had the bad luck to spoil the flower in trying to catch the stitch—I was little above fifteen then. These flowers make me an old woman, Monna Paula."

"I wish they could make you a wise one, my child," answered Monna Paula, in whose esteem pretty Mistress Margaret did not stand quite so high as in that of her patroness; partly owing to her natural austerity, which was something intolerant of youth and gaiety, and partly to the jealousy with which a favourite domestic regards any one whom she considers as a sort of rival in the affections of her mistress.

"What is it you say to Monna, little one?" asked the lady.

"Nothing, madam," replied Mistress Margaret, "but that I have seen the real flowers blossom three times over since I first saw Monna Paula working in her canvass garden, and her violets have not budded yet."

"True, lady-bird," replied Hermione; "but the buds that are longest in blossoming will last the longest in flower. You have seen them in the garden bloom thrice, but you have seen them fade thrice also; now, Monna Paula's will remain in blow for ever—they will fear neither frost nor tempest."

"True, madam," answered Mistress Margaret; "but neither have they life or odour."

"That, little one," replied the recluse, "is to compare a life agitated by hope and fear, and chequered with success and disappointment, and fevered by the effects of love and hatred, a life of passion and of feeling, saddened and shortened by its exhausting alternations, to a calm and tranquil existence, animated but by a sense of duties, and only employed, during its smooth and quiet course, in the unwearied discharge of them. Is that the moral of your answer?"

"I do not know, madam," answered Mistress Margaret; "but, of all birds in the air, I would rather be the lark, that sings while he is drifting down the summer breeze, than the weathercock that sticks fast yonder upon his iron perch, and just moves so much as to discharge his duty, and tell us which way the wind blows."

"Metaphors are no arguments, my pretty maiden," said the Lady Hermione, smiling.

"I am sorry for that, madam," answered Margaret; "for they are such a pretty indirect way of telling one's mind when it differs from one's betters—besides, on this subject there is no end of them, and they are so civil and becoming withal."

"Indeed?" replied the lady; "let me hear some of them, I pray you."

"It would be, for example, very bold in me," said Margaret, "to say to your ladyship, that, rather than live a quiet life, I would like a little variety of hope and fear, and liking and disliking—and—and—and the other sort of feelings which your ladyship is pleased to speak of; but I may say freely, and without blame, that I like a butterfly better than a beetle, or a trembling aspen better than a grim Scots fir, that never wags a leaf—or that of all the wood, brass, and wire that ever my father's fingers put together, I do hate and detest a certain huge old clock of the German fashion, that rings hours and half hours, and quarters and half quarters, as if it were of such consequence that the world should know it was wound up and going. Now, dearest lady, I wish you would only compare that clumsy, clanging, Dutch-looking piece of lumber, with the beautiful timepiece that Master Heriot caused my father to make for your ladyship, which uses to play a hundred merry tunes, and turns out, when it strikes the hour, a whole band of morrice dancers, to trip the hays to the measure."

"And which of these timepieces goes the truest, Margaret?" said the lady.

"I must confess the old Dutchman has the advantage in that"—said Margaret. "I fancy you are right, madam, and that comparisons are no arguments; at least mine has not brought me through."

"Upon my word, maiden Margaret," said the lady, smiling, "you have been of late thinking very much of these matters."

"Perhaps too much, madam," said Margaret, so low as only to be heard by the lady, behind the back of whose chair she had now placed herself. The words were spoken very gravely, and accompanied by a half sigh, which did not escape the attention of her to whom they were addressed. The Lady Hermione turned immediately round, and looked earnestly at Margaret, then paused for a moment, and, finally, commanded Monna Paula to carry her frame and embroidery into the antechamber. When they were left alone, she desired her young friend to come from behind the chair on the back of which she still rested, and sit down beside her upon a stool.

"I will remain thus, madam, under your favour," answered Margaret, without changing her posture; "I would rather you heard me without seeing me."

"In God's name, maiden," returned her patroness, "what is it you can have to say, that may not be uttered face to face, to so true a friend as I am?"

Without making any direct answer, Margaret only replied, "You were right, dearest lady, when you said, I had suffered my feelings too much to engross me of late. I have done very wrong, and you will be angry with me—so will my godfather, but I cannot help it—he must be rescued."

"*He*?" repeated the lady, with emphasis; "that brief little word does, indeed, so far explain your mystery;—but come from behind the chair, you silly popinjay! I will wager you have suffered yonder gay young apprentice to sit too near your heart. I have not heard you mention young Vincent for many a day—perhaps he has not been out of mouth and out of mind both. Have you been so foolish as to let him speak to you seriously?—I am told he is a bold youth."

"Not bold enough to say any thing that could displease me, madam," said Margaret.

"Perhaps, then, you were *not* displeased," said the lady; "or perhaps he has not *spoken*, which would be wiser and better. Be open-hearted, my love—your godfather will soon return, and we will take him into our consultations. If the young man is industrious, and come of honest parentage, his poverty may be no such insurmountable obstacle. But you are both of you very young, Margaret—I know your godfather will expect, that the youth shall first serve out his apprenticeship." Margaret had hitherto suffered the lady to proceed, under the mistaken impression which she had adopted, simply because she could not tell how to interrupt her; but pure despite at hearing her last words gave her boldness at length to say "I crave your pardon, madam; but neither the youth you mention, nor any apprentice or master within the city of London—"

"Margaret," said the lady, in reply, "the contemptuous tone with which you mention those of your own class, (many hundreds if not thousands of whom are in all respects better than yourself, and would greatly honour you by thinking of you,) is methinks, no warrant for the wisdom of your choice—for a choice, it seems, there is. Who is it, maiden, to whom you have thus rashly attached yourself?—rashly, I fear it must be."

"It is the young Scottish Lord Glenvarloch, madam," answered Margaret, in a low and modest tone, but sufficiently firm, considering the subject.

"The young Lord of Glenvarloch!" repeated the lady, in great surprise—"Maiden, you are distracted in your wits."

"I knew you would say so, madam," answered Margaret. "It is what another person has already told me—it is, perhaps, what all the world would tell me—it is what I am sometimes disposed to tell myself. But look at me, madam, for I will now come before you, and tell me if there is madness or distraction in my look and word, when I repeat to you again, that I have fixed my affections on this young nobleman."

"If there is not madness in your look or word, maiden, there is infinite folly in what you say," answered the Lady Hermione, sharply. "When did you ever hear that misplaced love brought any thing but wretchedness? Seek a match among your equals, Margaret, and escape the countless kinds of risk and misery that must attend an affection beyond your degree.—Why do you smile, maiden? Is there aught to cause scorn in what I say?"

"Surely no, madam," answered Margaret. "I only smiled to think how it should happen, that, while rank made such a wide difference between creatures formed from the same clay, the wit of the vulgar should, nevertheless, jump so exactly the same length with that of the accomplished and the exalted. It is but the variation of the phrase which divides them. Dame Ursley told me the very same thing which your ladyship has but now uttered; only you, madam, talk of countless misery, and Dame Ursley spoke of the gallows, and Mistress Turner, who was hanged upon it."

"Indeed?" answered the Lady Hermione; "and who may Dame Ursley be, that your wise choice has associated with me in the difficult task of advising a fool?"

"The barber's wife at next door, madam," answered Margaret, with feigned simplicity, but far from being sorry at heart, that she had found an indirect mode of mortifying her monitress. "She is the wisest woman that I know, next to your ladyship."

"A proper confidant," said the lady, "and chosen with the same delicate sense of what is due to yourself and others!—But what ails you, maiden—where are you going?"

"Only to ask Dame Ursley's advice," said Margaret, as if about to depart; "for I see your ladyship is too angry to give me any, and the emergency is pressing."

"What emergency, thou simple one?" said the lady, in a kinder tone.—"Sit down, maiden, and tell me your tale. It is true you are a fool, and a pettish fool to boot; but then you are a child—an amiable child, with all your self-willed folly, and we must help you, if we can.—Sit down, I say, as you are desired, and you will find me a safer and wiser counsellor than the barber-woman. And tell me how you come to suppose, that you have fixed your heart unalterably upon a man whom you have seen, as I think, but once."

"I have seen him oftener," said the damsel, looking down; "but I have only spoken to him once. I should have been able to get that once out of my head, though the impression was so deep, that I could even now repeat every trifling word he said; but other things have since riveted it in my bosom for ever."

"Maiden," replied the lady, "*for ever* is the word which comes most lightly on the lips in such circumstances, but which, not the less, is almost the last that we should use. The fashion of this world, its passions, its joys, and its sorrows, pass away like the winged breeze—there is nought for ever but that which belongs to the world beyond the grave."

"You have corrected me justly, madam," said Margaret calmly; "I ought only to have spoken of my present state of mind, as what will last me for my lifetime, which unquestionably may be but short."

"And what is there in this Scottish lord that can rivet what concerns him so closely in your fancy?" said the lady. "I admit him a personable man, for I have seen him; and I will suppose him courteous and agreeable. But what are his accomplishments besides, for these surely are not uncommon attributes."

"He is unfortunate, madam—most unfortunate—and surrounded by snares of different kinds, ingeniously contrived to ruin his character, destroy his estate, and, perhaps, to reach even his life. These schemes have been devised by avarice originally, but they are now followed close by vindictive ambition, animated, I think, by the absolute and concentrated spirit of malice; for the Lord Dalgarno—"

"Here, Monna Paula—Monna Paula!" exclaimed the Lady Hermione, interrupting her young friend's narrative. "She hears me not," she answered, rising and going out, "I must seek her—I will return instantly." She returned accordingly very soon after. "You mentioned a name which I thought was familiar to me," she said; "but Monna Paula has put me right. I know nothing of your lord—how was it you named him?"

"Lord Dalgarno," said Margaret;—"the wickedest man who lives. Under pretence of friendship, he introduced the Lord Glenvarloch to a gambling-house with the purpose of engaging him in deep play; but he with whom the perfidious traitor had to deal, was too virtuous, moderate, and cautious, to be caught in a snare so open. What did they next, but turn his own moderation against him, and persuade others that—because he would not become the prey of wolves, he herded with them for a share of their booty! And, while this base Lord Dalgarno was thus undermining his unsuspecting countryman, he took every measure to keep him surrounded by creatures of his own, to prevent him from attending Court, and mixing with those of his proper rank. Since the Gunpowder Treason, there never was a conspiracy more deeply laid, more basely and more deliberately pursued."

The lady smiled sadly at Margaret's vehemence, but sighed the next moment, while she told her young friend how little she knew the world she was about to live in, since she testified so much surprise at finding it full of villainy.

"But by what means," she added, "could you, maiden, become possessed of the secret views of a man so cautious as Lord Dalgarno—as villains in general are?"

"Permit me to be silent on that subject," said the maiden; "I could not tell you without betraying others—let it suffice that my tidings are as certain as the means by which I acquired them are secret and sure. But I must not tell them even to you."

"You are too bold, Margaret," said the lady, "to traffic in such matters at your early age. It is not only dangerous, but even unbecoming and unmaidenly."

"I knew you would say that also," said Margaret, with more meekness and patience than she usually showed on receiving reproof; "but, God knows, my heart acquits me of every other feeling save that of the wish to assist this most innocent and betrayed man.—I contrived to send him warning of his friend's falsehood;—alas! my care has only hastened his utter ruin, unless speedy aid be found. He charged his false friend with treachery, and drew on him in the Park, and is now liable to the fatal penalty due for breach of privilege of the king's palace."

"This is indeed an extraordinary tale," said Hermione; "is Lord Glenvarloch then in prison?"

"No, madam, thank God, but in the Sanctuary at Whitefriars—it is matter of doubt whether it will protect him in such a case—they speak of a warrant from the Lord Chief Justice—A gentleman of the temple has been arrested, and is in trouble for having assisted him in his flight.—Even his taking temporary refuge in that base place, though from extreme necessity, will be used to the further defaming him. All this I know, and yet I cannot rescue him—cannot rescue him save by your means."

"By my means, maiden?" said the lady—"you are beside yourself!—What means can I possess in this secluded situation, of assisting this unfortunate nobleman?"

"You have means," said Margaret, eagerly; "you have those means, unless I mistake greatly, which can do anything—can do everything, in this city, in this world—you have wealth, and the command of a small portion of it will enable me to extricate him from his present danger. He will be enabled and directed how to make his escape—and I—" she paused.

"Will accompany him, doubtless, and reap the fruits of your sage exertions in his behalf?" said the Lady Hermione, ironically.

"May heaven forgive you the unjust thought, lady," answered Margaret. "I will never see him more—but I shall have saved him, and the thought will make me happy."

"A cold conclusion to so bold and warm a flame," said the lady, with a smile which seemed to intimate incredulity.

"It is, however, the only one which I expect, madam—I could almost say the only one which I wish—I am sure I will use no efforts to bring about any other; if I am bold in his cause, I am timorous enough in my own. During our only interview I was unable to speak a word to him. He knows not the sound of my voice—and all that I have risked, and must yet risk, I am doing for one, who, were he asked the question, would say he has long since forgotten that he ever saw, spoke to, or sat beside, a creature of so little signification as I am."

"This is a strange and unreasonable indulgence of a passion equally fanciful and dangerous," said Lady Hermione. "You will *not* assist me, then?" said Margaret; "have good-day, then, madam—my secret, I trust, is safe in such honourable keeping."

"Tarry yet a little," said the lady, "and tell me what resource you have to assist this youth, if you were supplied with money to put it in motion."

"It is superfluous to ask me the question, madam," answered Margaret, "unless you purpose to assist me; and, if you do so purpose, it is still superfluous. You could not understand the means I must use, and time is too brief to explain."

"But have you in reality such means?" said the lady.

"I have, with the command of a moderate sum," answered Margaret Ramsay, "the power of baffling all his enemies—of eluding the passion of the irritated king—the colder but more determined displeasure of the prince—the vindictive spirit of Buckingham, so hastily directed against whomsoever crosses the path of his ambition—the cold concentrated malice of Lord Dalgarno—all, I can baffle them all!"

"But is this to be done without your own personal risk, Margaret?" replied the lady; "for, be your purpose what it will, you are not to peril your own reputation or person, in the romantic attempt of serving another; and I, maiden, am answerable to your godfather,—to your benefactor, and my own,—not to aid you in any dangerous or unworthy enterprise."

"Depend upon my word,—my oath,—dearest lady," replied the supplicant, "that I will act by the agency of others, and do not myself design to mingle in any enterprise in which my appearance might be either perilous or unwomanly."

"I know not what to do," said the Lady Hermione; "it is perhaps incautious and inconsiderate in me to aid so wild a project; yet the end seems honourable, if the means be sure—what is the penalty if he fall into their power?"

"Alas, alas! the loss of his right hand!" replied Margaret, her voice almost stifled with sobs.

"Are the laws of England so cruel? Then there is mercy in heaven alone," said the lady, "since, even in this free land, men are wolves to each other.—Compose yourself, Margaret, and tell me what money is necessary to secure Lord Glenvarloch's escape."

"Two hundred pieces," replied Margaret; "I would speak to you of restoring them—and I must one day have the power—only that I know—that is, I think—your ladyship is indifferent on that score."

"Not a word more of it," said the lady; "call Monna Paula hither."

CHAPTER XX

Credit me, friend, it hath been ever thus,

Since the ark rested on Mount Ararat.

False man hath sworn, and woman hath believed—

Repented and reproach'd, and then believed once more.

The New World.

By the time that Margaret returned with Monna Paula, the Lady Hermione was rising from the table at which she had been engaged in writing something on a small slip of paper, which she gave to her attendant.

"Monna Paula," she said, "carry this paper to Roberts the cash-keeper; let them give you the money mentioned in the note, and bring it hither presently."

Monna Paula left the room, and her mistress proceeded.

"I do not know," she said, "Margaret, if I have done, and am doing, well in this affair. My life has been one of strange seclusion, and I am totally unacquainted with the practical ways of this world—an ignorance which I know cannot be remedied by mere reading.—I fear I am doing wrong to you, and perhaps to the laws of the country which affords me refuge, by thus indulging you; and yet there is something in my heart which cannot resist your entreaties."

"O, listen to it—listen to it, dear, generous lady!" said Margaret, throwing herself on her knees and grasping those of her benefactress and looking in that attitude like a beautiful mortal in the act of supplicating her tutelary angel; "the laws of men are but the injunctions of mortality, but what the heart prompts is the echo of the voice from heaven within us."

"Rise, rise, maiden," said Hermione; "you affect me more than I thought I could have been moved by aught that should approach me. Rise and tell me whence it comes, that, in so short a time, your thoughts, your looks, your speech, and even your slightest actions, are changed from those of a capricious and fanciful girl, to all this energy and impassioned eloquence of word and action?"

"I am sure I know not, dearest lady," said Margaret, looking down; "but I suppose that, when I was a trifle, I was only thinking of trifles. What I now reflect is deep and serious, and I am thankful if my speech and manner bear reasonable proportion to my thoughts."

"It must be so," said the lady; "yet the change seems a rapid and strange one. It seems to be as if a childish girl had at once shot up into deep-thinking and impassioned woman, ready to make exertions alike, and sacrifices, with all that vain devotion to a favourite object of affection, which is often so basely rewarded."

The Lady Hermione sighed bitterly, and Monna Paula entered ere the conversation proceeded farther. She spoke to her mistress in the foreign language in which they frequently conversed, but which was unknown to Margaret.

"We must have patience for a time," said the lady to her visitor; "the cash-keeper is abroad on some business, but he is expected home in the course of half an hour."

Margaret wrung her hands in vexation and impatience.

"Minutes are precious," continued the lady; "that I am well aware of; and we will at least suffer none of them to escape us. Monna Paula shall remain below and transact our business, the very instant that Roberts returns home."

She spoke to her attendant accordingly, who again left the room.

"You are very kind, madam—very good," said the poor little Margaret, while the anxious trembling of her lip and of her hand showed all that sickening agitation of the heart which arises from hope deferred.

"Be patient, Margaret, and collect yourself," said the lady; "you may, you must, have much to do to carry through this your bold purpose—reserve your spirits, which you may need so much—be patient—it is the only remedy against the evils of life."

"Yes, madam," said Margaret, wiping her eyes, and endeavouring in vain to suppress the natural impatience of her temper;—"I have heard so—very often indeed; and I dare say I have myself, heaven forgive me, said so to people in perplexity and affliction; but it was before I had suffered perplexity and vexation myself, and I am sure I will never preach patience to any human being again, now that I know how much the medicine goes against the stomach."

"You will think better of it, maiden," said the Lady Hermione; "I also, when I first felt distress, thought they did me wrong who spoke to me of patience; but my sorrows have been repeated and continued till I have been taught to cling to it as the best, and—religious duties excepted, of which, indeed, patience forms a part—the only alleviation which life can afford them."

Margaret, who neither wanted sense nor feeling, wiped her tears hastily, and asked her patroness's forgiveness for her petulance.

"I might have thought"—she said, "I ought to have reflected, that even from the manner of your life, madam, it is plain you must have suffered sorrow; and yet, God knows, the patience which I have ever seen you display, well entitles you to recommend your own example to others."

The lady was silent for a moment, and then replied—

"Margaret, I am about to repose a high confidence in you. You are no longer a child, but a thinking and a feeling woman. You have told me as much of your secret as you dared—I will let you know as much of mine as I may venture to tell. You will ask me, perhaps, why, at a moment when your own mind is agitated, I should force upon you the consideration of my sorrows? and I answer, that I cannot withstand the impulse which now induces me to do so. Perhaps from having witnessed, for the first time these three years, the natural effects of human passion, my own sorrows have been awakened, and are for the moment too big for my own bosom—perhaps I may hope that you, who seem driving full sail on the very rock on which I was wrecked for ever, will take warning by the tale I have to tell. Enough, if you are willing to listen, I am willing to tell you who the melancholy inhabitant of the Foljambe apartments really is, and why she resides here. It will serve, at least, to while away the time until Monna Paula shall bring us the reply from Roberts."

At any other moment of her life, Margaret Ramsay would have heard with undivided interest a communication so flattering in itself, and referring to a subject upon which the general curiosity had been so strongly excited. And even at this agitating moment, although she ceased not to listen with an anxious ear and throbbing heart for the sound of Monna Paula's returning footsteps, she nevertheless, as gratitude and policy, as well as a portion of curiosity dictated, composed herself, in appearance at least, to the strictest attention to the Lady Hermione, and thanked her with humility for the high confidence she was pleased to repose in her. The Lady Hermione, with the same calmness which always attended her speech and actions, thus recounted her story to her young friend:

"My father," she said, "was a merchant, but he was of a city whose merchants are princes. I am the daughter of a noble house in Genoa, whose name stood as high in honour and in antiquity, as any inscribed in the Golden Register of that famous aristocracy."

"My mother was a noble Scottish woman. She was descended—do not start—and not remotely descended, of the house of Glenvarloch—no wonder that I was easily led to take concern in the misfortunes of this young lord. He is my near relation, and my mother, who was more than sufficiently proud of her descent, early taught me to take an interest in the name. My maternal grandfather, a cadet of that house of Glenvarloch, had followed the fortunes of an unhappy fugitive, Francis Earl of Bothwell, who, after showing his miseries in many a foreign court, at length settled in Spain upon a miserable pension, which he earned by

conforming to the Catholic faith. Ralph Olifaunt, my grandfather, separated from him in disgust, and settled at Barcelona, where, by the friendship of the governor, his heresy, as it was termed, was connived at. My father, in the course of his commerce, resided more at Barcelona than in his native country, though at times he visited Genoa.

"It was at Barcelona that he became acquainted with my mother, loved her, and married her; they differed in faith, but they agreed in affection. I was their only child. In public I conformed to the doctrines and ceremonial of the Church of Rome; but my mother, by whom these were regarded with horror, privately trained me up in those of the reformed religion; and my father, either indifferent in the matter, or unwilling to distress the woman whom he loved, overlooked or connived at my secretly joining in her devotions.

"But when, unhappily, my father was attacked, while yet in the prime of life, by a slow wasting disease, which he felt to be incurable, he foresaw the hazard to which his widow and orphan might be exposed, after he was no more, in a country so bigoted to Catholicism as Spain. He made it his business, during the two last years of his life, to realize and remit to England a large part of his fortune, which, by the faith and honour of his correspondent, the excellent man under whose roof I now reside, was employed to great advantage. Had my father lived to complete his purpose, by withdrawing his whole fortune from commerce, he himself would have accompanied us to England, and would have beheld us settled in peace and honour before his death. But heaven had ordained it otherwise. He died, leaving several sums engaged in the hands of his Spanish debtors; and, in particular, he had made a large and extensive consignment to a certain wealthy society of merchants at Madrid, who showed no willingness after his death to account for the proceeds. Would to God we had left these covetous and wicked men in possession of their booty, for such they seemed to hold the property of their deceased correspondent and friend! We had enough for comfort, and even splendour, already secured in England; but friends exclaimed upon the folly of permitting these unprincipled men to plunder us of our rightful property. The sum itself was large, and the claim having been made, my mother thought that my father's memory was interested in its being enforced, especially as the defences set up for the mercantile society went, in some degree, to impeach the fairness of his transactions.

"We went therefore to Madrid. I was then, my Margaret, about your age, young and thoughtless, as you have hitherto been—We went, I say, to Madrid, to solicit the protection of the Court and of the king, without which we were told it would be in vain to expect justice against an opulent and powerful association.

"Our residence at the Spanish metropolis drew on from weeks to months. For my part, my natural sorrow for a kind, though not a fond father, having abated, I cared not if the lawsuit had detained us at Madrid for ever. My mother permitted herself and me rather more liberty than we had been accustomed to. She found relations among the Scottish and Irish officers, many of whom held a high rank in the Spanish armies; their wives and daughters became our friends and companions, and I had perpetual occasion to exercise my mother's native language, which I had learned from my infancy. By degrees, as my mother's spirits were low, and her health indifferent, she was induced, by her partial fondness for me, to suffer me to mingle occasionally in society which she herself did not frequent, under the guardianship of such ladies as she imagined she could trust, and particularly under the care of the lady of a general officer, whose weakness or falsehood was the original cause of my misfortunes. I was as gay, Margaret, and thoughtless—I again repeat it—as you were but lately, and my attention, like yours, became suddenly riveted to one object, and to one set of feelings.

"The person by whom they were excited was young, noble, handsome, accomplished, a soldier, and a Briton. So far our cases are nearly parallel; but, may heaven forbid that the parallel should become complete! This man, so noble, so fairly formed, so gifted, and so brave—this villain, for that, Margaret, was his fittest name, spoke of love to me, and I listened—Could I suspect his sincerity? If he was wealthy, noble, and long-descended, I also was a noble and an opulent heiress. It is true, that he neither knew the extent of my father's wealth, nor did I communicate to him (I do not even remember if I myself knew it at the time) the important circumstance, that the greater part of that wealth was beyond the grasp of arbitrary power, and not subject to the precarious award of arbitrary judges. My lover might think, perhaps, as my mother was desirous the world at large should believe, that almost our whole fortune depended on the precarious suit which we had come to Madrid to prosecute—a belief which she had countenanced out of policy, being well aware that a knowledge of my father's having remitted such a large part of his fortune to England, would in no shape aid the recovery of further sums in the Spanish courts. Yet, with no more extensive views of my fortune than were possessed by the public, I believe that he, of whom I am speaking, was at first sincere in his pretensions. He had himself interest sufficient to have obtained a decision in our favour in the courts, and my fortune, reckoning only what was in Spain, would then have been no inconsiderable sum. To be brief, whatever might be his motives or temptation for so far committing himself, he applied to my mother for my hand, with my consent and approval. My mother's judgment had become weaker, but her passions had become more irritable, during her increasing illness.

"You have heard of the bitterness of the ancient Scottish feuds, of which it may be said, in the language of Scripture, that the fathers eat sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge. Unhappily—I should say *happily*, considering what this man has now shown himself to be—some such strain of bitterness had divided his house from my mother's, and she had succeeded to the inheritance of hatred. When he asked her for my hand, she was no longer able to command her passions—she raked up every injury which the rival families had inflicted upon each other during a bloody feud of two centuries—heaped him with epithets of scorn, and rejected his proposal of alliance, as if it had come from the basest of mankind.

"My lover retired in passion; and I remained to weep and murmur against fortune, and—I will confess my fault—against my affectionate parent. I had been educated with different feelings, and the traditions of the feuds and quarrels of my mother's family in Scotland, which were to her monuments and chronicles, seemed to me as insignificant and unmeaning as the actions and fantasies of Don Quixote; and I blamed my mother bitterly for sacrificing my happiness to an empty dream of family dignity.

"While I was in this humour, my lover sought a renewal of our intercourse. We met repeatedly in the house of the lady whom I have mentioned, and who, in levity, or in the spirit of intrigue, countenanced our secret correspondence. At length we were secretly married—so far did my blinded passion hurry me. My lover had secured the assistance of a clergyman of the English church. Monna Paula, who had been my attendant from infancy, was one witness of our union. Let me do the faithful creature justice—She conjured me to suspend my purpose till my mother's death should permit us to celebrate our marriage openly; but the entreaties of my lover, and my own wayward passion, prevailed over her remonstrances. The lady I have spoken of was another witness, but whether she was in full possession of my bridegroom's secret, I had never the means to learn. But the shelter of her name and roof afforded us the means of frequently meeting, and the love of my husband seemed as sincere and as unbounded as my own.

"He was eager, he said, to gratify his pride, by introducing me to one or two of his noble English friends. This could not be done at Lady D—'s; but by his command, which I was now entitled to consider as my law, I contrived twice to visit him at his own hotel, accompanied only by Monna Paula. There was a very small party, of two ladies and two gentlemen. There was music, mirth, and dancing. I had heard of the frankness of the English nation, but I could not help thinking it bordered on license during these entertainments, and in the course of the collation which followed; but I imputed my scruples to my inexperience, and would not doubt the propriety of what was approved by my husband.

"I was soon summoned to other scenes: My poor mother's disease drew to a conclusion—Happy I am that it took place before she discovered what would have cut her to the soul.

"In Spain you may have heard how the Catholic priests, and particularly the monks, besiege the beds of the dying, to obtain bequests for the good of the church. I have said that my mother's temper was irritated by disease, and her judgment impaired in proportion. She gathered spirits and force from the resentment which the priests around her bed excited by their importunity, and the boldness of the stern sect of reformers, to which she had secretly adhered, seemed to animate her dying tongue. She avowed the religion she had so long concealed; renounced all hope and aid which did not come by and through its dictates; rejected with contempt the ceremonial of the Romish church; loaded the astonished priests with reproaches for their greediness and hypocrisy, and commanded them to leave her house. They went in bitterness and rage, but it was to return with the inquisitorial power, its warrants, and its officers; and they found only the cold corpse left of her, on whom they had hoped to work their vengeance. As I was soon discovered to have shared my mother's heresy, I was dragged from her dead body, imprisoned in a solitary cloister, and treated with severity, which the Abbess assured me was due to the looseness of my life, as well as my spiritual errors. I avowed my marriage, to justify the situation in which I found myself—I implored the assistance of the Superior to communicate my situation to my husband. She

smiled coldly at the proposal, and told me the church had provided a better spouse for me; advised me to secure myself of divine grace hereafter, and deserve milder treatment here, by presently taking the veil. In order to convince me that I had no other resource, she showed me a royal decree, by which all my estate was hypothecated to the convent of Saint Magdalen, and became their complete property upon my death, or my taking the vows. As I was, both from religious principle, and affectionate attachment to my husband, absolutely immovable in my rejection of the veil, I believe—may heaven forgive me if I wrong her—that the Abbess was desirous to make sure of my spoils, by hastening the former event.

"It was a small and a poor convent, and situated among the mountains of Guadarrama. Some of the sisters were the daughters of neighbouring Hidalgoes, as poor as they were proud and ignorant; others were women immured there on account of their vicious conduct. The Superior herself was of a high family, to which she owed her situation; but she was said to have disgraced her connexions by her conduct during youth, and now, in advanced age, covetousness and the love of power, a spirit too of severity and cruelty, had succeeded to the thirst after licentious pleasure. I suffered much under this woman—and still her dark, glassy eye, her tall, shrouded form, and her rigid features, haunt my slumbers.

"I was not destined to be a mother. I was very ill, and my recovery was long doubtful. The most violent remedies were applied, if remedies they indeed were. My health was restored at length, against my own expectation and that of all around me. But, when I first again beheld the reflection of my own face, I thought it was the visage of a ghost. I was wont to be flattered by all, but particularly by my husband, for the fineness of my complexion—it was now totally gone, and, what is more extraordinary, it has never returned. I have observed that the few who now see me, look upon me as a bloodless phantom—Such has been the abiding effect of the treatment to which I was subjected. May God forgive those who were the agents of it!—I thank Heaven I can say so with as sincere a wish, as that with which I pray for forgiveness of my own sins. They now relented somewhat towards me—moved perhaps to compassion by my singular appearance, which bore witness to my sufferings; or afraid that the matter might attract attention during a visitation of the bishop, which was approaching. One day, as I was walking in the convent-garden, to which I had been lately admitted, a miserable old Moorish slave, who was kept to cultivate the little spot, muttered as I passed him, but still keeping his wrinkled face and decrepit form in the same angle with the earth—"There is Heart's Ease near the postern."

"I knew something of the symbolical language of flowers, once carried to such perfection among the Moriscoes of Spain; but if I had been ignorant of it, the captive would soon have caught at any hint which seemed to promise liberty. With all the haste consistent with the utmost circumspection—for I might be observed by the Abbess or some of the sisters from the window—I hastened to the postern. It was closely barred as usual, but when I coughed slightly, I was answered from the other side—and, O heaven! it was my husband's voice which said, 'Lose not a minute here at present, but be on this spot when the vesper bell has tolled.'

"I retired in an ecstasy of joy. I was not entitled or permitted to assist at vespers, but was accustomed to be confined to my cell while the nuns were in the choir. Since my recovery, they had discontinued locking the door; though the utmost severity was denounced against me if I left these precincts. But, let the penalty be what it would, I hastened to dare it.—No sooner had the last toll of the vesper bell ceased to sound, than I stole from my chamber, reached the garden unobserved, hurried to the postern, beheld it open with rapture, and in the next moment was in my husband's arms. He had with him another cavalier of noble mien—both were masked and armed. Their horses, with one saddled for my use, stood in a thicket hard by, with two other masked horsemen, who seemed to be servants. In less than two minutes we were mounted, and rode off as fast as we could through rough and devious roads, in which one of the domestics appeared to act as guide.

"The hurried pace at which we rode, and the anxiety of the moment, kept me silent, and prevented my expressing my surprise or my joy save in a few broken words. It also served as an apology for my husband's silence. At length we stopped at a solitary hut—the cavaliers dismounted, and I was assisted from my saddle, not by M—M—my husband, I would say, who seemed busied about his horse, but by the stranger.

"Go into the hut,' said my husband, 'change your dress with the speed of lightning—you will find one to assist you—we must forward instantly when you have shifted your apparel.'

"I entered the hut, and was received in the arms of the faithful Monna Paula, who had waited my arrival for many hours, half distracted with fear and anxiety. With her assistance I speedily tore off the detested garments of the convent, and exchanged them for a travelling suit, made after the English fashion. I observed that Monna Paula was in a similar dress. I had but just huddled on my change of attire, when we were hastily summoned to mount. A horse, I found, was provided for Monna Paula, and we resumed our route. On the way, my convent-garb, which had been wrapped hastily together around a stone, was thrown into a lake, along the verge of which we were then passing. The two cavaliers rode together in front, my attendant and I followed, and the servants brought up the rear. Monna Paula, as we rode on, repeatedly entreated me to be silent upon the road, as our lives depended on it. I was easily reconciled to be passive, for, the first fever of spirits which attended the sense of liberation and of gratified affection having passed away, I felt as it were dizzy with the rapid motion; and my utmost exertion was necessary to keep my place on the saddle, until we suddenly (it was now very dark) saw a strong light before us.

"My husband reined up his horse, and gave a signal by a low whistle twice repeated, which was answered from a distance. The whole party then halted under the boughs of a large cork-tree, and my husband, drawing himself close to my side, said, in a voice which I then thought was only embarrassed by fear for my safety,—'We must now part. Those to whom I commit you are contrabandists, who only know you as English-women, but who, for a high bribe, have undertaken to escort you through the passes of the Pyrenees as far as Saint Jean de Luz.'

"And do you not go with us?' I exclaimed with emphasis, though in a whisper.

"It is impossible,' he said, 'and would ruin all—See that you speak in English in these people's hearing, and give not the least sign of understanding what they say in Spanish—your life depends on it; for, though they live in opposition to, and evasion of, the laws of Spain, they would tremble at the idea of violating those of the church—I see them coming—farewell—farewell.'

"The last words were hastily uttered—I endeavoured to detain him yet a moment by my feeble grasp on his cloak.

"You will meet me, then, I trust, at Saint Jean de Luz?"

"Yes, yes,' he answered hastily, 'at Saint Jean de Luz you will meet your protector.'

"He then extricated his cloak from my grasp, and was lost in the darkness. His companion approached—kissed my hand, which in the agony of the moment I was scarce sensible of, and followed my husband, attended by one of the domestics."

The tears of Hermione here flowed so fast as to threaten the interruption of her narrative. When she resumed it, it was with a kind of apology to Margaret.

"Every circumstance," she said, "occurring in those moments, when I still enjoyed a delusive idea of happiness, is deeply imprinted in my remembrance, which, respecting all that has since happened, is waste and unvaried as an Arabian desert. But I have no right to inflict on you, Margaret, agitated as you are with your own anxieties, the unavailing details of my useless recollections."

Margaret's eyes were full of tears—it was impossible it could be otherwise, considering that the tale was told by her suffering benefactress, and resembled, in some respects, her own situation; and yet she must not be severely blamed, if, while eagerly pressing her patroness to continue her narrative, her eye involuntarily sought the door, as if to chide the delay of Monna Paula.

The Lady Hermione saw and forgave these conflicting emotions; and she, too, must be pardoned, if, in her turn, the minute detail of her narrative showed, that, in the discharge of feelings so long locked in her own bosom, she rather forgot those which were personal to her auditor, and by which it must be supposed Margaret's mind was principally occupied, if not entirely engrossed.

"I told you, I think, that one domestic followed the gentlemen," thus the lady continued her story, "the other remained with us for the purpose, as it seemed, of introducing us to two persons whom M—, I say, whom my husband's signal had brought to the spot. A word or two of explanation passed between them and the servant, in a sort of *patois*, which I did not understand; and one of the strangers taking hold of my bridle, the other of Monna Paula's, they led us towards the light, which I have already said was the signal of our halting. I touched Monna Paula, and was sensible that she trembled very much, which surprised me, because I knew her character to be so strong and bold as to border upon the masculine.

"When we reached the fire, the gipsy figures of those who surrounded it, with their swarthy features, large Sombrero hats, girdles stuck full of pistols and poniards, and all the other apparatus of a roving and perilous life, would have terrified me at another moment. But then I only felt the agony of having parted from my husband almost in the very moment of my rescue. The females of the gang—for there were four or five women amongst these contraband traders—received us with a sort of rude courtesy. They were, in dress and manners, not extremely different from the men with whom they associated—were almost as hardy and adventurous, carried arms like them, and were, as we learned from passing circumstances, scarce less experienced in the use of them.

"It was impossible not to fear these wild people; yet they gave us no reason to complain of them, but used us on all occasions with a kind of clumsy courtesy, accommodating themselves to our wants and our weakness during the journey, even while we heard them grumbling to each other against our effeminacy,—like some rude carrier, who, in charge of a package of valuable and fragile ware, takes every precaution for its preservation, while he curses the unwonted trouble which it occasions him. Once or twice, when they were disappointed in their contraband traffic, lost some goods in a rencontre with the Spanish officers of the revenue, and were finally pursued by a military force, their murmurs assumed a more alarming tone, in the terrified ears of my attendant and myself, when, without daring to seem to understand them, we heard them curse the insular heretics, on whose account God, Saint James, and Our Lady of the Pillar, had blighted their hopes of profit. These are dreadful recollections, Margaret."

"Why, then, dearest lady," answered Margaret, "will you thus dwell on them?"

"It is only," said the Lady Hermione, "because I linger like a criminal on the scaffold, and would fain protract the time that must inevitably bring on the final catastrophe. Yes, dearest Margaret, I rest and dwell on the events of that journey, marked as it was by fatigue and danger, though the road lay through the wildest and most desolate deserts and mountains, and though our companions, both men and women, were fierce and lawless themselves, and exposed to the most merciless retaliation from those with whom they were constantly engaged—yet would I rather dwell on these hazardous events than tell that which awaited me at Saint Jean de Luz."

"But you arrived there in safety?" said Margaret.

"Yes, maiden," replied the Lady Hermione; "and were guided by the chief of our outlawed band to the house which had been assigned for reception, with the same punctilious accuracy with which he would have delivered a bale of uncustomed goods to a correspondent. I was told a gentleman had expected me for two days—I rushed into the apartment, and, when I expected to embrace my husband—I found myself in the arms of his friend!"

"The villain!" exclaimed Margaret, whose anxiety had, in spite of herself, been a moment suspended by the narrative of the lady.

"Yes," replied Hermione, calmly, though her voice somewhat faltered, "it is the name that best—that well befits him. He, Margaret, for whom I had sacrificed all—whose love and whose memory were dearer to me than my freedom, when I was in the convent—than my life, when I was on my perilous journey—had taken his measures to shake me off, and transfer me, as a privileged wanton, to the protection of his libertine friend. At first the stranger laughed at my tears and my agony, as the hysterical passion of a deluded and overreached wanton, or the wily affection of a courtesan. My claim of marriage he laughed at, assuring me he knew it was a mere farce required by me, and submitted to by his friend, to save some reserve of delicacy; and expressed his surprise that I should consider in any other light a ceremony which could be valid neither in Spain nor England, and insultingly offered to remove my scruples, by renewing such a union with me himself. My exclamations brought Monna Paula to my aid—she was not, indeed, far distant, for she had expected some such scene."

"Good heaven!" said Margaret, "was she a confidant of your base husband?"

"No," answered Hermione, "do her not that injustice. It was her persevering inquiries that discovered the place of my confinement—it was she who gave the information to my husband, and who remarked even then that the news was so much more interesting to his friend than to him, that she suspected, from an early period, it was the purpose of the villain to shake me off. On the journey, her suspicions were confirmed. She had heard him remark to his companion, with a cold sarcastic sneer, the total change which my prison and my illness had made on my complexion; and she had heard the other reply, that the defect might be cured by a touch of Spanish red. This, and other circumstances, having prepared her for such treachery, Monna Paula now entered, completely possessed of herself, and prepared to support me. Her calm representations went farther with the stranger than the expressions of my despair. If he did not entirely believe our tale, he at least acted the part of a man of honour, who would not intrude himself on defenceless females, whatever was their character; desisted from persecuting us with his presence; and not only directed Monna Paula how we should journey to Paris, but furnished her with money for the purpose of our journey. From the capital I wrote to Master Heriot, my father's most trusted correspondent; he came instantly to Paris on receiving the letter; and—But here comes Monna Paula, with more than the sum you desired. Take it, my dearest maiden—serve this youth if you will. But, O Margaret, look for no gratitude in return!"

The Lady Hermione took the bag of gold from her attendant, and gave it to her young friend, who threw herself into her arms, kissed her on both the pale cheeks, over which the sorrows so newly awakened by her narrative had drawn many tears, then sprung up, wiped her own overflowing eyes, and left the Foljambe apartments with a hasty and resolved step.

CHAPTER XXI

Rove not from pole to pole—the man lives here

Whose razor's only equall'd by his beer;

And where, in either sense, the cockney-put

May, if he pleases, get confounded cut.

On the sign of an Alehouse kept by a Barber.

We are under the necessity of transporting our readers to the habitation of Benjamin Saddlechop, the husband of the active and efficient Dame Ursula, and who also, in his own person, discharged more offices than one. For, besides trimming locks and beards, and turning whiskers upward into the martial and swaggering curl, or downward into the drooping form which became mustaches of civil policy; besides also occasionally letting blood, either by cupping or by the lancet, extracting a stump, and performing other actions of petty pharmacy, very nearly as well as his neighbour Raredrench, the apothecary: he could, on occasion, draw a cup of beer as well as a tooth, tap a hogshead as well as a vein, and wash, with a draught of good ale, the mustaches which his art had just trimmed. But he carried on these trades apart from each other.

His barber's shop projected its long and mysterious pole into Fleet Street, painted party-coloured-wise, to represent the ribbons with which, in elder times, that ensign was garnished. In the window were seen rows of teeth displayed upon strings like rosaries—cups with a red rag at the bottom, to resemble blood, an intimation that patients might be bled, cupped, or blistered, with the assistance of "sufficient advice;" while the more profitable, but less honourable operations upon the hair of the head and beard, were briefly and gravely announced. Within was the well-worn leather chair for customers, the guitar, then called a ghittern or cittern, with which a customer might amuse himself till his predecessor was dismissed from under Benjamin's hands, and which, therefore, often played the ears of the patient metaphorically, while his chin sustained from the razor literal scarification. All, therefore, in this department, spoke the chirurgeon-barber, or the barber-chirurgeon.

But there was a little back-room, used as a private tap-room, which had a separate entrance by a dark and crooked alley, which communicated with Fleet Street, after a circuitous passage through several by-lanes and courts. This retired temple of Bacchus had also a connexion with Benjamin's more public shop by a long and narrow entrance, conducting to the secret premises in which a few old toppers used to take their morning draught, and a few gill-sippers their modicum of strong waters, in a bashful way, after having entered the barber's shop under pretence of being shaved. Besides, this obscure tap-room gave a separate admission to the apartments of Dame Ursley, which she was believed to make use of in the course of her multifarious practice, both to let herself secretly out, and

to admit clients and employers who cared not to be seen to visit her in public. Accordingly, after the hour of noon, by which time the modest and timid whettters, who were Benjamin's best customers, had each had his draught, or his thimbleful, the business of the tap was in a manner ended, and the charge of attending the back-door passed from one of the barber's apprentices to the little mulatto girl, the dingy Iris of Dame Suddlechop. Then came mystery thick upon mystery; muffled gallants, and masked females, in disguises of different fashions, were seen to glide through the intricate mazes of the alley; and even the low tap on the door, which frequently demanded the attention of the little Creole, had in it something that expressed secrecy and fear of discovery.

It was the evening of the same day when Margaret had held the long conference with the Lady Hermione, that Dame Suddlechop had directed her little portress to "keep the door fast as a miser's purse-strings; and, as she valued her saffron skin, to let in none but—" the name she added in a whisper, and accompanied it with a nod. The little domestic blinked intelligence, went to her post, and in brief time thereafter admitted and ushered into the presence of the dame, that very city-gallant whose clothes sat awkwardly upon him, and who had behaved so doughtily in the fray which befell at Nigel's first visit to Beaujeu's ordinary. The mulatto introduced him—"Missis, fine young gentleman, all over gold and velvet"—then muttered to herself as she shut the door, "fine young gentleman, he!—apprentice to him who makes the tick-tick."

It was indeed—we are sorry to say it, and trust our readers will sympathize with the interest we take in the matter—it was indeed honest Jin Vin, who had been so far left to his own devices, and abandoned by his better angel, as occasionally to travesty himself in this fashion, and to visit, in the dress of a gallant of the day, those places of pleasure and dissipation, in which it would have been everlasting discredit to him to have been seen in his real character and condition; that is, had it been possible for him in his proper shape to have gained admission. There was now a deep gloom on his brow, his rich habit was hastily put on, and buttoned awry; his belt buckled in a most disorderly fashion, so that his sword stuck outwards from his side, instead of hanging by it with graceful negligence; while his poniard, though fairly hatched and gilded, stuck in his girdle like a butcher's steel in the fold of his blue apron. Persons of fashion had, by the way, the advantage formerly of being better distinguished from the vulgar than at present; for, what the ancient farthingale and more modern hoop were to court ladies, the sword was to the gentleman; an article of dress, which only rendered those ridiculous who assumed it for the nonce, without being in the habit of wearing it. Vincent's rapier got between his legs, and, as he stumbled over it, he exclaimed—"Zounds! 'tis the second time it has served me thus—I believe the damned trinket knows I am no true gentleman, and does it of set purpose."

"Come, come, mine honest Jin Vin—come, my good boy," said the dame, in a soothing tone, "never mind these trankums—a frank and hearty London 'prentice is worth all the gallants of the inns of court."

"I was a frank and hearty London 'prentice before I knew you, Dame Suddlechop," said Vincent; "what your advice has made me, you may find a name for; since, fore George! I am ashamed to think about it myself."

"A-well-a-day," quoth the dame, "and is it even so with thee?—nay, then, I know but one cure;" and with that, going to a little corner cupboard of carved wainscoat, she opened it by the assistance of a key, which, with half-a-dozen besides, hung in a silver chain at her girdle, and produced a long flask of thin glass cased with wicker, bringing forth at the same time two Flemish rummer glasses, with long stalks and capacious wombs. She filled the one brimful for her guest, and the other more modestly to about two-thirds of its capacity, for her own use, repeating, as the rich cordial trickled forth in a smooth oily stream—"Right Rosa Solis, as ever washed mulligrubs out of a moody brain!"

But, though Jin Vin tossed off his glass without scruple, while the lady sipped hers more moderately, it did not appear to produce the expected amendment upon his humour. On the contrary, as he threw himself into the great leathern chair, in which Dame Ursley was wont to solace herself of an evening, he declared himself "the most miserable dog within the sound of Bow-bell."

"And why should you be so idle as to think yourself so, silly boy?" said Dame Suddlechop; "but 'tis always thus—fools and children never know when they are well. Why, there is not one that walks in St. Paul's, whether in flat cap, or hat and feather, that has so many kind glances from the wenches as you, when ye swagger along Fleet Street with your bat under your arm, and your cap set aside upon your head. Thou knowest well, that, from Mrs. Deputy's self down to the waist-coateers in the alley, all of them are twining and peeping betwixt their fingers when you pass; and yet you call yourself a miserable dog! and I must tell you all this over and over again, as if I were whistling the chimes of London to a pettish child, in order to bring the pretty baby into good-humour!"

The flattery of Dame Ursula seemed to have the fate of her cordial—it was swallowed, indeed, by the party to whom she presented it, and that with some degree of relish, but it did not operate as a sedative on the disturbed state of the youth's mind. He laughed for an instant, half in scorn, and half in gratified vanity, but cast a sullen look on Dame Ursley as he replied to her last words,

"You do treat me like a child indeed, when you sing over and over to me a cuckoo song that I care not a copper-filing for."

"Aha!" said Dame Ursley; "that is to say, you care not if you please all, unless you please one—You are a true lover, I warrant, and care not for all the city, from here to Whitechapel, so you could write yourself first in your pretty Peg-a-Ramsay's good-will. Well, well, take patience, man, and be guided by me, for I will be the hoop will bind you together at last."

"It is time you were so," said Jenkin, "for hitherto you have rather been the wedge to separate us."

Dame Suddlechop had by this time finished her cordial—it was not the first she had taken that day; and, though a woman of strong brain, and cautious at least, if not abstemious, in her potations, it may nevertheless be supposed that her patience was not improved by the regimen which she observed.

"Why, thou ungracious and ingrate knave," said Dame Ursley, "have not I done every thing to put thee in thy mistress's good graces? She loves gentry, the proud Scottish minx, as a Welshman loves cheese, and has her father's descent from that Duke of Daldevil, or whatsoever she calls him, as close in her heart as gold in a miser's chest, though she as seldom shows it—and none she will think of, or have, but a gentleman—and a gentleman I have made of thee, Jin Vin, the devil cannot deny that."

"You have made a fool of me," said poor Jenkin, looking at the sleeve of his jacket.

"Never the worse gentleman for that," said Dame Ursley, laughing.

"And what is worse," said he, turning his back to her suddenly, and writhing in his chair, "you have made a rogue of me."

"Never the worse gentleman for that neither," said Dame Ursley, in the same tone; "let a man bear his folly gaily and his knavery stoutly, and let me see if gravity or honesty will look him in the face now-a-days. Tut, man, it was only in the time of King Arthur or King Lud, that a gentleman was held to blemish his scutcheon by a leap over the line of reason or honesty—It is the bold look, the ready hand, the fine clothes, the brisk oath, and the wild brain, that makes the gallant now-a-days."

"I know what you have made me," said Jin Vin; "since I have given up skittles and trap-ball for tennis and bowls, good English ale for thin Bordeaux and sour Rhenish, roast-beef and pudding for woodcocks and kickshaws—my bat for a sword, my cap for a beaver, my forsooth for a modish oath, my Christmas-box for a dice-box, my religion for the devil's matins, and mine honest name for—Woman, I could brain thee, when I think whose advice has guided me in all this!"

"Whose advice, then? whose advice, then? Speak out, thou poor, petty cloak-brusher, and say who advised thee!" retorted Dame Ursley, flushed and indignant—

"Marry come up, my paltry companion—say by whose advice you have made a gamester of yourself, and a thief besides, as your words would bear—The Lord deliver us from evil!" And here Dame Ursley devoutly crossed herself.

"Hark ye, Dame Ursley Suddlechop," said Jenkin, starting up, his dark eyes flashing with anger; "remember I am none of your husband—and, if I were, you would do well not to forget whose threshold was swept when they last rode the Skimmington [Footnote: A species of triumphal procession in honour of female supremacy, when it rose to such a height as to attract the attention of the neighbourhood. It is described at full length in Hudibras. (Part II. Canto II.) As the procession passed on, those who attended it in an official capacity were wont to sweep the threshold of the houses in which Fame affirmed the mistresses to exercise paramount authority, which was given and received as a hint that their inmates might, in their turn, be made the subject of a similar ovation. The Skimmington, which in some degree resembled the proceedings of Mumbo Jumbo in an African village, has been long discontinued in England, apparently because female rule has become either milder or less frequent than among our ancestors.] upon such another scolding jade as yourself."

"I hope to see you ride up Holborn next," said Dame Ursley, provoked out of all her holiday and sugar-plum expressions, "with a nosegay at your breast, and a parson at your elbow!"

"That may well be," answered Jin Vin, bitterly, "if I walk by your counsels as I have begun by them; but, before that day comes, you shall know that Jin Vin has the brisk boys of Fleet Street still at his wink.—Yes, you jade, you shall be carted for bawd and conjurer, double-dyed in grain, and bing off to Bridewell, with every brass basin betwixt the Bar and Paul's beating before you, as if the devil were banging them with his beef-hook."

Dame Ursley coloured like scarlet, seized upon the half-emptied flask of cordial, and seemed, by her first gesture, about to hurl it at the head of her adversary; but suddenly, and as if by a strong internal effort, she checked her outrageous resentment, and, putting the bottle to its more legitimate use, filled, with wonderful composure, the two glasses, and, taking up one of them, said, with a smile, which better became her comely and jovial countenance than the fury by which it was animated the moment before—

"Here is to thee, Jin Vin, my lad, in all loving kindness, whatever spite thou bearest to me, that have always been a mother to thee."

Jenkin's English good-nature could not resist this forcible appeal; he took up the other glass, and lovingly pledged the dame in her cup of reconciliation, and proceeded to make a kind of grumbling apology for his own violence—

"For you know," he said, "it was you persuaded me to get these fine things, and go to that godless ordinary, and ruffle it with the best, and bring you home all the news; and you said, I, that was the cock of the ward, would soon be the cock of the ordinary, and would win ten times as much at gleek and primero, as I used to do at put and beggar-my-neighbour—and turn up doublets with the dice, as busily as I was wont to trowl down the ninepins in the skittle-ground—and then you said I should bring you such news out of the ordinary as should make us all, when used as you knew how to use it—and now you see what is to come of it all!"

"Tis all true thou sayest, lad," said the dame; "but thou must have patience. Rome was not built in a day—you cannot become used to your court-suit in a month's time, any more than when you changed your long coat for a doublet and hose; and in gaming you must expect to lose as well as gain—'tis the sitting gamester sweeps the board."

"The board has swept me, I know," replied Jin Vin, "and that pretty clean out.—I would that were the worst; but I owe for all this finery, and settling-day is coming on, and my master will find my account worse than it should be by a score of pieces. My old father will be called in to make them good; and I—may save the hangman a labour and do the job myself, or go the Virginia voyage."

"Do not speak so loud, my dear boy," said Dame Ursley; "but tell me why you borrow not from a friend to make up your arrear. You could lend him as much when his settling-day came round."

"No, no—I have had enough of that work," said Vincent. "Tunstall would lend me the money, poor fellow, an he had it; but his gentle, beggarly kindred, plunder him of all, and keep him as bare as a birch at Christmas. No—my fortune may be spelt in four letters, and these read, RUIN."

"Now hush, you simple craven," said the dame; "did you never hear, that when the need is highest the help is nighest? We may find aid for you yet, and sooner than you are aware of. I am sure I would never have advised you to such a course, but only you had set heart and eye on pretty Mistress Marget, and less would not serve you—and what could I do but advise you to cast your city-slough, and try your luck where folks find fortune?"

"Ay, ay—I remember your counsel well," said Jenkin; "I was to be introduced to her by you when I was perfect in my gallantries, and as rich as the king; and then she was to be surprised to find I was poor Jin Vin, that used to watch, from matin to curfew, for one glance of her eye; and now, instead of that, she has set her soul on this Scottish sparrow-hawk of a lord that won my last tester, and be cursed to him; and so I am bankrupt in love, fortune, and character, before I am out of my time, and all along of you, Mother Midnight."

"Do not call me out of my own name, my dear boy, Jin Vin," answered Ursula, in a tone betwixt rage and coaxing,— "do not; because I am no saint, but a poor sinful woman, with no more patience than she needs, to carry her through a thousand crosses. And if I have done you wrong by evil counsel, I must mend it and put you right by good advice. And for the score of pieces that must be made up at settling-day, why, here is, in a good green purse, as much as will make that matter good; and we will get old Crosspatch, the tailor, to take a long day for your clothes; and—"

"Mother, are you serious?" said Jin Vin, unable to trust either his eyes or his ears.

"In troth am I," said the dame; "and will you call me Mother Midnight now, Jin Vin?"

"Mother Midnight!" exclaimed Jenkin, hugging the dame in his transport, and bestowing on her still comely cheek a hearty and not unacceptable smack, that sounded like the report of a pistol,— "Mother Middy, rather, that has risen to light me out of my troubles—a mother more dear than she who bore me; for she, poor soul, only brought me into a world of sin and sorrow, and your timely aid has helped me out of the one and the other." And the good-natured fellow threw himself back in his chair, and fairly drew his hand across his eyes.

"You would not have me be made to ride the Skimmington then," said the dame; "or parade me in a cart, with all the brass basins of the ward beating the march to Bridewell before me?"

"I would sooner be carted to Tyburn myself," replied the penitent.

"Why, then, sit up like a man, and wipe thine eyes; and, if thou art pleased with what I have done, I will show thee how thou mayst requite me in the highest degree."

"How?" said Jenkin Vincent, sitting straight up in his chair.— "You would have me, then, do you some service for this friendship of yours?"

"Ay, marry would I," said Dame Ursley; "for you are to know, that though I am right glad to stead you with it, this gold is not mine, but was placed in my hands in order to find a trusty agent, for a certain purpose; and so—But what's the matter with you?—are you fool enough to be angry because you cannot get a purse of gold for nothing? I would I knew where such were to come by. I never could find them lying in my road, I promise you."

"No, no, dame," said poor Jenkin, "it is not for that; for, look you, I would rather work these ten bones to the knuckles, and live by my labour; but—" (and here he paused.)

"But what, man?" said Dame Ursley. "You are willing to work for what you want; and yet, when I offer you gold for the winning, you look on me as the devil looks over Lincoln."

"It is ill talking of the devil, mother," said Jenkin. "I had him even now in my head—for, look you, I am at that pass, when they say he will appear to wretched ruined creatures, and proffer them gold for the fee-simple of their salvation. But I have been trying these two days to bring my mind strongly up to the thought, that I will rather sit down in shame, and sin, and sorrow, as I am like to do, than hold on in ill courses to get rid of my present straits; and so take care, Dame Ursula, how you tempt me to break such a good resolution."

"I tempt you to nothing, young man," answered Ursula; "and, as I perceive you are too wilful to be wise, I will e'en put my purse in my pocket, and look out for some one that will work my turn with better will, and more thankfulness. And you may go your own course,—break your indenture, ruin your father, lose your character, and bid pretty Mistress Margaret farewell, for ever and a day."

"Stay, stay," said Jenkin "the woman is in as great a hurry as a brown baker when his oven is overheated. First, let me hear that which you have to propose to me."

"Why, after all, it is but to get a gentleman of rank and fortune, who is in trouble, carried in secret down the river, as far as the Isle of Dogs, or somewhere thereabout, where he may lie concealed until he can escape aboard. I know thou knowest every place by the river's side as well as the devil knows an usurer, or the beggar knows his dish."

"A plague of your similes, dame," replied the apprentice; "for the devil gave me that knowledge, and beggary may be the end on't.—But what has this gentleman done, that he should need to be under hiding? No Papist, I hope—no Catesby and Piercy business—no Gunpowder Plot?"

"Fy, fy!—what do you take me for?" said Dame Ursula. "I am as good a churchwoman as the parson's wife, save that necessary business will not allow me to go there oftener than on Christmas-day, heaven help me!—No, no—this is no Popish matter. The gentleman hath but struck another in the Park—"

"Ha! what?" said Vincent, interrupting her with a start.

"Ay, ay, I see you guess whom I mean. It is even he we have spoken of so often—just Lord Glenvarloch, and no one else."

Vincent sprung from his seat, and traversed the room with rapid and disorderly steps.

"There, there it is now—you are always ice or gunpowder. You sit in the great leathern armchair, as quiet as a rocket hangs upon the frame in a rejoicing-night till the match be fired, and then, whizz! you are in the third heaven, beyond the reach of the human voice, eye, or brain.—When you have wearied yourself with padding to and fro across the room, will you tell me your determination, for time presses? Will you aid me in this matter, or not?"

"No—no—no—a thousand times no," replied Jenkin. "Have you not confessed to me, that Margaret loves him?"

"Ay," answered the dame, "that she thinks she does; but that will not last long."

"And have I not told you but this instant," replied Jenkin, "that it was this same Glenvarloch that rooked me, at the ordinary, of every penny I had, and made a knave of me to boot, by gaining more than was my own?—O that cursed gold, which Shortyard, the mercer, paid me that morning on accompt, for mending the clock of Saint Stephen's! If I had not, by ill chance, had that about me, I could but have beggared my purse, without blemishing my honesty; and, after I had been rooked of all the rest amongst them, I must needs risk the last five pieces with that shark among the minnows!"

"Granted," said Dame Ursula. "All this I know; and I own, that as Lord Glenvarloch was the last you played with, you have a right to charge your ruin on his head. Moreover, I admit, as already said, that Margaret has made him your rival. Yet surely, now he is in danger to lose his hand, it is not a time to remember all this?"

"By my faith, but it is, though," said the young citizen. "Lose his hand, indeed? They may take his head, for what I care. Head and hand have made me a miserable wretch!"

"Now, were it not better, my prince of flat-caps," said Dame Ursula, "that matters were squared between you; and that, through means of the same Scottish lord, who has, as you say, deprived you of your money and your mistress, you should in a short time recover both?"

"And how can your wisdom come to that conclusion, dame?" said the apprentice. "My money, indeed, I can conceive—that is, if I comply with your proposal; but—my pretty Marget!—how serving this lord, whom she has set her nonsensical head upon, can do me good with her, is far beyond my conception."

"That is because, in simple phrase," said Dame Ursula, "thou knowest no more of a woman's heart than doth a Norfolk gosling. Look you, man. Were I to report to Mistress Margaret that the young lord has miscarried through thy lack of courtesy in refusing to help him, why, then, thou wert odious to her for ever. She will loathe thee as she will loathe the very cook who is to strike off Glenvarloch's hand with his cleaver—and then she will be yet more fixed in her affections towards this lord. London will hear of nothing but him—speak of nothing but him—think of nothing but him, for three weeks at least, and all that outcry will serve to keep him uppermost in her mind; for nothing pleases a girl so much as to bear relation to any one who is the talk of the whole world around her. Then, if he suffer this sentence of the law, it is a chance if she ever forgets him. I saw that handsome, proper young gentleman Babington, suffer in the Queen's time myself, and though I was then but a girl, he was in my head for a year after he was hanged. But, above all, pardoned or punished, Glenvarloch will probably remain in London, and his presence will keep up the silly girl's nonsensical fancy about him. Whereas, if he escapes—"

"Ay, show me how that is to avail me?" said Jenkin. "If he escapes," said the dame, resuming her argument, "he must resign the Court for years, if not for life; and you know the old saying, 'out of sight, and out of mind.'"

"True—most true," said Jenkin; "spoken like an oracle, most wise Ursula."

"Ay, ay, I knew you would hear reason at last," said the wily dame; "and then, when this same lord is off and away for once and for ever, who, I pray you, is to be pretty pet's confidential person, and who is to fill up the void in her affections?—why, who but thou, thou pearl of 'prentices! And then you will have overcome your own inclinations to comply with hers, and every woman is sensible of that—and you will have run some risk, too, in carrying her desires into effect—and what is it that woman likes better than bravery, and devotion to her will? Then you have her secret, and she must treat you with favour and observance, and repose confidence in you, and hold private intercourse with you, till she weeps with one eye for the absent lover whom she is never to see again, and blinks with the other blithely upon him who is in presence; and then if you know not how to improve the relation in which you stand with her, you are not the brisk lively lad that all the world takes you for—Said I well?"

"You have spoken like an empress, most mighty Ursula," said Jenkin Vincent; "and your will shall be obeyed."

"You know Alsatia well?" continued his tutoress.

"Well enough, well enough," replied he with a nod; "I have heard the dice rattle there in my day, before I must set up for gentleman, and go among the gallants at the Shavaleer Bojo's, as they call him,—the worse rookery of the two, though the feathers are the gayest."

"And they will have a respect for thee yonder, I warrant?"

"Ay, ay," replied Vin, "when I am got into my fustian doublet again, with my bit of a trunnion under my arm, I can walk Alsatia at midnight as I could do that there Fleet Street in midday—they will not one of them swagger with the prince of 'prentices, and the king of clubs—they know I could bring every tall boy in the ward down upon them."

"And you know all the watermen, and so forth?"

"Can converse with every sculler in his own language, from Richmond to Gravesend, and know all the water-cocks, from John Taylor the Poet to little Grigg the Grinner, who never pulls but he shows all his teeth from ear to ear, as if he were grimacing through a horse-collar."

"And you can take any dress or character upon you well, such as a waterman's, a butcher's, a foot-soldier's," continued Ursula, "or the like?"

"Not such a mummer as I am within the walls, and thou knowest that well enough, dame," replied the apprentice. "I can touch the players themselves, at the Ball and at the Fortune, for presenting any thing except a gentleman. Take but this d—d skin of frippery off me, which I think the devil stuck me into, and you shall put me into nothing else that I will not become as if I were born to it."

"Well, we will talk of your transmutation by and by," said the dame, "and find you clothes withal, and money besides; for it will take a good deal to carry the thing handsomely through."

"But where is that money to come from, dame?" said Jenkin; "there is a question I would fain have answered before I touch it."

"Why, what a fool art thou to ask such a question! Suppose I am content to advance it to please young madam, what is the harm then?"

"I will suppose no such thing," said Jenkin, hastily; "I know that you, dame, have no gold to spare, and maybe would not spare it if you had—so that cock will not crow. It must be from Margaret herself."

"Well, thou suspicious animal, and what if it were?" said Ursula.

"Only this," replied Jenkin, "that I will presently to her, and learn if she has come fairly by so much ready money; for sooner than connive at her getting it by any indirection, I would hang myself at once. It is enough what I have done myself, no need to engage poor Margaret in such villainy—I'll to her, and tell her of the danger—I will, by heaven!"

"You are mad to think of it," said Dame Suddlechop, considerably alarmed—"hear me but a moment. I know not precisely from whom she got the money; but sure I am that she obtained it at her godfather's."

"Why, Master George Heriot is not returned from France," said Jenkin.

"No," replied Ursula, "but Dame Judith is at home—and the strange lady, whom they call Master Heriot's ghost—she never goes abroad."

"It is very true, Dame Suddlechop," said Jenkin; "and I believe you have guessed right—they say that lady has coin at will; and if Marget can get a handful of fairy-gold, why, she is free to throw it away at will."

"Ah, Jin Vin," said the dame, reducing her voice almost to a whisper, "we should not want gold at will neither, could we but read the riddle of that lady!"

"They may read it that list," said Jenkin, "I'll never pry into what concerns me not—Master George Heriot is a worthy and brave citizen, and an honour to London, and has a right to manage his own household as he likes best.—There was once a talk of rabbling him the fifth of November before the last, because they said he

kept a nunnery in his house, like old Lady Foljambe; but Master George is well loved among the 'prentices, and we got so many brisk boys of us together as should have rabbled the rabble, had they had but the heart to rise."

"Well, let that pass," said Ursula; "and now, tell me how you will manage to be absent from shop a day or two, for you must think that this matter will not be ended sooner."

"Why, as to that, I can say nothing," said Jenkin, "I have always served duly and truly; I have no heart to play truant, and cheat my master of his time as well as his money."

"Nay, but the point is to get back his money for him," said Ursula, "which he is not likely to see on other conditions. Could you not ask leave to go down to your uncle in Essex for two or three days? He may be ill, you know."

"Why, if I must, I must," said Jenkin, with a heavy sigh; "but I will not be lightly caught treading these dark and crooked paths again."

"Hush thee, then," said the dame, "and get leave for this very evening; and come back hither, and I will introduce you to another implement, who must be employed in the matter.—Stay, stay!—the lad is mazed—you would not go into your master's shop in that guise, surely? Your trunk is in the matted chamber, with your 'prentice things—go and put them on as fast as you can."

"I think I am bewitched," said Jenkin, giving a glance towards his dress, "or that these fool's trappings have made as great an ass of me as of many I have seen wear them; but let line once be rid of the harness, and if you catch me putting it on again, I will give you leave to sell me to a gipsy, to carry pots, pans, and beggar's bantlings, all the rest of my life." So saying, he retired to change his apparel.

CHAPTER XXII

Chance will not do the work—Chance sends the breeze;

But if the pilot slumber at the helm,

The very wind that wafts us towards the port

May dash us on the shelves.—The steersman's part is vigilance,

Blow it or rough or smooth.

Old Play.

We left Nigel, whose fortunes we are bound to trace by the engagement contracted in our title-page, sad and solitary in the mansion of Trapbois the usurer, having just received a letter instead of a visit from his friend the Templar, stating reasons why he could not at that time come to see him in Alsatia. So that it appeared that his intercourse with the better and more respectable class of society, was, for the present, entirely cut off. This was a melancholy, and, to a proud mind like that of Nigel, a degrading reflection.

He went to the window of his apartment, and found the street enveloped in one of those thick, dingy, yellow-coloured fogs, which often invest the lower part of London and Westminster. Amid the darkness, dense and palpable, were seen to wander like phantoms a reveller or two, whom the morning had surprised where the evening left them; and who now, with tottering steps, and by an instinct which intoxication could not wholly overcome, were groping the way to their own homes, to convert day into night, for the purpose of sleeping off the debauch which had turned night into day. Although it was broad day in the other parts of the city, it was scarce dawn yet in Alsatia; and none of the sounds of industry or occupation were there heard, which had long before aroused the slumberers in any other quarter. The prospect was too tiresome and disagreeable to detain Lord Glenvarloch at his station, so, turning from the window, he examined with more interest the furniture and appearance of the apartment which he tenanted.

Much of it had been in its time rich and curious—there was a huge four-post bed, with as much carved oak about it as would have made the head of a man-of-war, and tapestry hangings ample enough to have been her sails. There was a huge mirror with a massy frame of gilt brass-work, which was of Venetian manufacture, and must have been worth a considerable sum before it received the tremendous crack, which, traversing it from one corner to the other, bore the same proportion to the surface that the Nile bears to the map of Egypt. The chairs were of different forms and shapes, some had been carved, some gilded, some covered with damasked leather, some with embroidered work, but all were damaged and worm-eaten. There was a picture of Susanna and the Elders over the chimney-piece, which might have been accounted a choice piece, had not the rats made free with the chaste fair one's nose, and with the beard of one of her reverend admirers.

In a word, all that Lord Glenvarloch saw, seemed to have been articles carried off by appraisement or distress, or bought as pennyworths at some obscure broker's, and huddled together in the apartment, as in a sale-room, without regard to taste or congruity.

The place appeared to Nigel to resemble the houses near the sea-coast, which are too often furnished with the spoils of wrecked vessels, as this was probably fitted up with the relics of ruined profligates.—"My own skiff is among the breakers," thought Lord Glenvarloch, "though my wreck will add little to the profits of the spoiler."

He was chiefly interested in the state of the grate, a huge assemblage of rusted iron bars which stood in the chimney, unequally supported by three brazen feet, moulded into the form of lion's claws, while the fourth, which had been bent by an accident, seemed proudly uplifted as if to paw the ground; or as if the whole article had nourished the ambitious purpose of pacing forth into the middle of the apartment, and had one foot ready raised for the journey. A smile passed over Nigel's face as this fantastic idea presented itself to his fancy.—"I must stop its march, however," he thought; "for this morning is chill and raw enough to demand some fire."

He called accordingly from the top of a large staircase, with a heavy oaken balustrade, which gave access to his own and other apartments, for the house was old and of considerable size; but, receiving no answer to his repeated summons, he was compelled to go in search of some one who might accommodate him with what he wanted.

Nigel had, according to the fashion of the old world in Scotland, received an education which might, in most particulars, be termed simple, hardy, and unostentatious; but he had, nevertheless, been accustomed to much personal deference, and to the constant attendance and ministry of one or more domestics. This was the universal custom in Scotland, where wages were next to nothing, and where, indeed, a man of title or influence might have as many attendants as he pleased, for the mere expense of food, clothes, and countenance. Nigel was therefore mortified and displeased when he found himself without notice or attendance; and the more dissatisfied, because he was at the same time angry with himself for suffering such a trifle to trouble him at all, amongst matters of more deep concernment. "There must surely be some servants in so large a house as this," said he, as he wandered over the place, through which he was conducted by a passage which branched off from the gallery. As he went on, he tried the entrance to several apartments, some of which he found were locked and others unfurnished, all apparently unoccupied; so that at length he returned to the staircase, and resolved to make his way down to the lower part of the house, where he supposed he must at least find the old gentleman, and his ill-favoured daughter. With this purpose he first made his entrance into a little low, dark parlour, containing a well-worn leathern easy-chair, before which stood a pair of slippers, while on the left side rested a crutch-handled staff; an oaken table stood before it, and supported a huge desk clamped with iron, and a massive pewter inkstand. Around the apartment were shelves, cabinets, and other places convenient for depositing papers. A sword, musketoon, and a pair of pistols, hung over the chimney, in ostentatious display, as if to intimate that the proprietor would be prompt in the defence of his premises.

"This must be the usurer's den," thought Nigel; and he was about to call aloud, when the old man, awakened even by the slightest noise, for avarice seldom sleeps sound, soon was heard from the inner room, speaking in a voice of irritability, rendered more tremulous by his morning cough.

"Ugh, ugh, ugh—who is there? I say—ugh, ugh—who is there? Why, Martha!—ugh! ugh—Martha Trapbois—here be thieves in the house, and they will not speak to me—why, Martha!—thieves, thieves—ugh, ugh, ugh!"

Nigel endeavoured to explain, but the idea of thieves had taken possession of the old man's pineal gland, and he kept coughing and screaming, and screaming and coughing, until the gracious Martha entered the apartment; and, having first outscrambled her father, in order to convince him that there was no danger, and to assure him that the intruder was their new lodger, and having as often heard her sire ejaculate—"Hold him fast—ugh, ugh—hold him fast till I come," she at length succeeded in silencing his fears and his clamour, and then coldly and dryly asked Lord Glenvarloch what he wanted in her father's apartment.

Her lodger had, in the meantime, leisure to contemplate her appearance, which did not by any means improve the idea he had formed of it by candlelight on the preceding evening. She was dressed in what was called a Queen Mary's ruff and farthingale; not the falling ruff with which the unfortunate Mary of Scotland is usually painted, but that which, with more than Spanish stiffness, surrounded the throat, and set off the morose head, of her fierce namesake, of Smithfield memory. This antiquated dress assorted well with the faded complexion, grey eyes, thin lips, and austere visage of the antiquated maiden, which was, moreover, enhanced by a black hood, worn as her head-gear, carefully disposed so as to prevent any of her hair from escaping to view, probably because the simplicity of the period knew no art of disguising the colour with which time had begun to grizzle her tresses. Her figure was tall, thin, and flat, with skinny arms and hands, and feet of the larger size, cased in huge high-heeled shoes, which added height to a stature already ungainly. Apparently some art had been used by the tailor, to conceal a slight defect of shape, occasioned by the accidental elevation of one shoulder above the other; but the praiseworthy efforts of the ingenious mechanic, had only succeeded in calling the attention of the observer to his benevolent purpose, without demonstrating that he had been able to achieve it.

Such was Mrs. Martha Trapbois, whose dry "What were you seeking here, sir?" fell again, and with reiterated sharpness, on the ear of Nigel, as he gazed upon her presence, and compared it internally to one of the faded and grim figures in the old tapestry which adorned his bedstead. It was, however, necessary to reply, and he answered, that he came in search of the servants, as he desired to have a fire kindled in his apartment on account of the rawness of the morning.

"The woman who does our char-work," answered Mistress Martha, "comes at eight o'clock—if you want fire sooner, there are fagots and a bucket of sea-coal in the stone-closet at the head of the stair—and there is a flint and steel on the upper shelf—you can light fire for yourself if you will."

"No—no—no, Martha," ejaculated her father, who, having donned his rustic tunic, with his hose all ungirt, and his feet slipshod, hastily came out of the inner apartment, with his mind probably full of robbers, for he had a naked rapier in his hand, which still looked formidable, though rust had somewhat marred its shine.—What he had heard at entrance about lighting a fire, had changed, however, the current of his ideas. "No—no—no," he cried, and each negative was more emphatic than its predecessor—"The gentleman shall not have the trouble to put on a fire—ugh—ugh. I'll put it on myself, for a con-si-de-ra-ti-on."

This last word was a favourite expression with the old gentleman, which he pronounced in a peculiar manner, gasping it out syllable by syllable, and laying a strong emphasis upon the last. It was, indeed, a sort of protecting clause, by which he guarded himself against all inconveniences attendant on the rash habit of offering service or civility of any kind, the which, when hastily snapped at by those to whom they are uttered, give the profferer sometimes room to repent his promptitude.

"For shame, father," said Martha, "that must not be. Master Grahame will kindle his own fire, or wait till the char-woman comes to do it for him, just as likes him best."

"No, child—no, child. Child Martha, no," reiterated the old miser—"no char-woman shall ever touch a grate in my house; they put—ugh, ugh—the faggot uppermost, and so the coal kindles not, and the flame goes up the chimney, and wood and heat are both thrown away. Now, I will lay it properly for the gentleman, for a consideration, so that it shall last—ugh, ugh—last the whole day." Here his vehemence increased his cough so violently, that Nigel could only, from a scattered word here and there, comprehend that it was a recommendation to his daughter to remove the poker and tongs from the stranger's fireside, with an assurance, that, when necessary, his landlord would be in attendance to adjust it himself, "for a consideration."

Martha paid as little attention to the old man's injunctions as a predominant dame gives to those of a henpecked husband. She only repeated, in a deeper and more emphatic tone of censure—"For shame, father—for shame!" then, turning to her guest, said, with her usual ungraciousness of manner—"Master Grahame—it is best to be plain with you at first. My father is an old, a very old man, and his wits, as you may see, are somewhat weakened—though I would not advise you to make a bargain with him, else you may find them too sharp for your own. For myself, I am a lone woman, and, to say truth, care little to see or converse with any one. If you can be satisfied with house-room, shelter, and safety, it will be your own fault if you have them not, and they are not always to be found in this unhappy quarter. But, if you seek deferential observance and attendance, I tell you at once you will not find them here."

"I am not wont either to thrust myself upon acquaintance, madam, or to give trouble," said the guest; "nevertheless, I shall need the assistance of a domestic to assist me to dress—Perhaps you can recommend me to such?"

"Yes, to twenty," answered Mistress Martha, "who will pick your purse while they tie your points, and cut your throat while they smooth your pillow."

"I will be his servant, myself," said the old man, whose intellect, for a moment distanced, had again, in some measure, got up with the conversation. "I will brush his cloak—ugh, ugh—and tie his points—ugh, ugh—and clean his shoes—ugh—and run on his errands with speed and safety—ugh, ugh, ugh, ugh—for a consideration."

"Good-morrow to you, sir," said Martha, to Nigel, in a tone of direct and positive dismissal. "It cannot be agreeable to a daughter that a stranger should hear her father speak thus. If you be really a gentleman, you will retire to your own apartment."

"I will not delay a moment," said Nigel, respectfully, for he was sensible that circumstances palliated the woman's rudeness. "I would but ask you, if seriously there can be danger in procuring the assistance of a serving-man in this place?"

"Young gentleman," said Martha, "you must know little of Whitefriars to ask the question. We live alone in this house, and seldom has a stranger entered it; nor should you, to be plain, had my will been consulted. Look at the door—see if that of a castle can be better secured; the windows of the first floor are grated on the outside, and within, look to these shutters."

She pulled one of them aside, and showed a ponderous apparatus of bolts and chains for securing the window-shutters, while her father, pressing to her side, seized her gown with a trembling hand, and said, in a low whisper, "Show not the trick of locking and undoing them. Show him not the trick on't, Martha—ugh, ugh—on no consideration." Martha went on, without paying him any attention.

"And yet, young gentleman, we have been more than once like to find all these defences too weak to protect our lives; such an evil effect on the wicked generation around us hath been made by the unhappy report of my poor father's wealth."

"Say nothing of that, housewife," said the miser, his irritability increased by the very supposition of his being wealthy—"Say nothing of that, or I will beat thee, housewife—beat thee with my staff, for fetching and carrying lies that will procure our throats to be cut at last—ugh, ugh.—I am but a poor man," he continued, turning to Nigel—"a very poor man, that am willing to do any honest turn upon earth, for a modest consideration."

"I therefore warn you of the life you must lead, young gentleman," said Martha; "the poor woman who does the char-work will assist you so far as in her power, but the wise man is his own best servant and assistant."

"It is a lesson you have taught me, madam, and I thank you for it—I will assuredly study it at leisure."

"You will do well," said Martha; "and as you seem thankful for advice, I, though I am no professed counsellor of others, will give you more. Make no intimacy with any one in Whitefriars—borrow no money, on any score, especially from my father, for, dotard as he seems, he will make an ass of you. Last, and best of all, stay here not an instant longer than you can help it. Farewell, sir."

"A gnarled tree may bear good fruit, and a harsh nature may give good counsel," thought the Lord of Glenvarloch, as he retreated to his own apartment, where the same reflection occurred to him again and again, while, unable as yet to reconcile himself to the thoughts of becoming his own fire-maker, he walked up and down his bedroom, to warm himself by exercise.

At length his meditations arranged themselves in the following soliloquy—by which expression I beg leave to observe once for all, that I do not mean that Nigel literally said aloud with his bodily organs, the words which follow in inverted commas, (while pacing the room by himself,) but that I myself choose to present to my dearest reader the picture of my hero's mind, his reflections and resolutions, in the form of a speech, rather than in that of a narrative. In other words, I have put his thoughts into language; and this I conceive to be the purpose of the soliloquy upon the stage as well as in the closet, being at once the most natural, and perhaps the only way of communicating to the spectator what is supposed to be passing in the bosom of the scenic personage. There are no such soliloquies in nature, it is true, but unless they were received as a conventional medium of communication betwixt the poet and the audience, we should reduce dramatic authors to the recipe of Master Puff, who makes Lord Burleigh intimate a long train of political reasoning to the audience, by one comprehensive shake of his noddle. In narrative, no doubt, the writer has the alternative of telling that his personages thought so and so, inferred thus and thus, and arrived at such and such a conclusion; but the soliloquy is a more concise and spirited mode of communicating the same information; and therefore thus communed, or thus might have communed, the Lord of Glenvarloch with his own mind.

"She is right, and has taught me a lesson I will profit by. I have been, through my whole life, one who leant upon others for that assistance, which it is more truly noble to derive from my own exertions. I am ashamed of feeling the paltry inconvenience which long habit had led me to annex to the want of a servant's assistance—I am ashamed of that; but far, far more am I ashamed to have suffered the same habit of throwing my own burden on others, to render me, since I came to this city, a mere victim of those events, which I have never even attempted to influence—a thing never acting, but perpetually acted upon—protected by one friend, deceived by another; but in the advantage which I received from the one, and the evil I have sustained from the other, as passive and helpless as a boat that drifts without oar or rudder at the mercy of the winds and waves. I became a courtier, because Heriot so advised it—a gamester, because Dalgarno so contrived it—an Alsatian, because Lowestoffe so willed it. Whatever of good or bad has befallen me, has arisen out of the agency of others, not from my own. My father's son must no longer hold this facile and puerile course. Live or die, sink or swim, Nigel Olifaunt, from this moment, shall owe his safety, success, and honour, to his own exertions, or shall fall with the credit of having at least exerted his own free agency. I will write it down in my tablets, in her very words,—'The wise man is his own best assistant.'"

He had just put his tablets in his pocket when the old charwoman, who, to add to her efficiency, was sadly crippled by rheumatism, hobbled into the room, to try if she could gain a small gratification by waiting on the stranger. She readily undertook to get Lord Glenvarloch's breakfast, and as there was an eating-house at the next door, she succeeded in a shorter time than Nigel had augured.

As his solitary meal was finished, one of the Temple porters, or inferior officers, was announced, as seeking Master Grahame, on the part of his friend, Master Lowestoffe; and, being admitted by the old woman to his apartment, he delivered to Nigel a small mail-trunk, with the clothes he had desired should be sent to him, and then, with more mystery, put into his hand a casket, or strong-boy, which he carefully concealed beneath his cloak. "I am glad to be rid on't," said the fellow, as he placed it on the table.

"Why, it is surely not so very heavy," answered Nigel, "and you are a stout young man."

"Ay, sir," replied the fellow; "but Samson himself would not have carried such a matter safely through Alsatia, had the lads of the Huff known what it was. Please to look into it, sir, and see all is right—I am an honest fellow, and it comes safe out of my hands. How long it may remain so afterwards, will depend on your own care. I would not my good name were to suffer by any after-clap."

To satisfy the scruples of the messenger, Lord Glenvarloch opened the casket in his presence, and saw that his small stock of money, with two or three valuable papers which it contained, and particularly the original sign-manual which the king had granted in his favour, were in the same order in which he had left them. At the man's further instance, he availed himself of the writing materials which were in the casket, in order to send a line to Master Lowestoffe, declaring that his property had reached him in safety. He added some grateful acknowledgments for Lowestoffe's services, and, just as he was sealing and delivering his billet to the messenger, his aged landlord entered the apartment. His threadbare suit of black clothes was now somewhat better arranged than they had been in the dishabille of his first appearance, and his nerves and intellects seemed to be less fluttered; for, without much coughing or hesitation, he invited Nigel to partake of a morning draught of wholesome single ale, which he brought in a large leathern tankard, or black-jack, carried in the one hand, while the other stirred it round with a sprig of rosemary, to give it, as the old man said, a flavour.

Nigel declined the courteous proffer, and intimated by his manner, while he did so, that he desired no intrusion on the privacy of his own apartment; which, indeed, he was the more entitled to maintain, considering the cold reception he had that morning met with when straying from its precincts into those of his landlord. But the open casket contained matter, or rather metal, so attractive to old Trapbois, that he remained fixed, like a setting-dog at a dead point, his nose advanced, and one hand expanded like the lifted forepaw, by which that sagacious quadruped sometimes indicates that it is a hare which he has in the wind. Nigel was about to break the charm which had thus arrested old Trapbois, by shutting the lid of the casket, when his attention was withdrawn from him by the question of the messenger, who, holding out the letter, asked whether he was to leave it at Mr. Lowestoffe's chambers in the Temple, or carry it to the Marshalsea?

"The Marshalsea?" repeated Lord Glenvarloch; "what of the Marshalsea?"

"Why, sir," said the man, "the poor gentleman is laid up there in lavender, because, they say, his own kind heart led him to scald his fingers with another man's broth."

Nigel hastily snatched back the letter, broke the seal, joined to the contents his earnest entreaty that he might be instantly acquainted with the cause of his confinement, and added, that, if it arose out of his own unhappy affair, it would be of a brief duration, since he had, even before hearing of a reason which so peremptorily demanded that he should surrender himself, adopted the resolution to do so, as the manliest and most proper course which his ill fortune and imprudence had left in his own power. He therefore conjured Mr. Lowestoffe to have no delicacy upon this score, but, since his surrender was what he had determined upon as a sacrifice due to his own character, that he would have the frankness to mention in what manner it could be best arranged, so as to extricate him, Lowestoffe, from the restraint to which the writer could not but fear his friend had been subjected, on account of the generous interest which he had taken in his concerns. The letter concluded, that the writer would suffer twenty-four hours to elapse in expectation of hearing from him, and, at the end of that period, was determined to put his purpose in execution. He delivered the billet to the messenger, and, enforcing his request with a piece of money, urged him, without a moment's delay, to convey it to the hands of Master Lowestoffe.

"I—I—I—will carry it to him myself," said the old usurer, "for half the consideration."

The man who heard this attempt to take his duty and perquisites over his head, lost no time in pocketing the money, and departed on his errand as fast as he could.

"Master Trapbois," said Nigel, addressing the old man somewhat impatiently, "had you any particular commands for me?"

"I—I—came to see if you rested well," answered the old man; "and—if I could do anything to serve you, on any consideration."

"Sir, I thank you," said Lord Glenvarloch—"I thank you;" and, ere he could say more, a heavy footstep was heard on the stair.

"My God!" exclaimed the old man, starting up—"Why, Dorothy—char-woman—why, daughter,—draw bolt, I say, housewives—the door hath been left a-latch!"

The door of the chamber opened wide, and in strutted the portly bulk of the military hero whom Nigel had on the preceding evening in vain endeavoured to recognise.

CHAPTER XXIII

SWASH-BUCKLER. Bilboe's the word—PIERROT. It hath been spoke too often, The spell hath lost its charm—I tell thee, friend, The meanest cur that trots the street, will turn, And snarl against your proffer'd bastinado. SWASH-BUCKLER. 'Tis art shall do it, then—I will dose the mongrels—Or, in plain terms, I'll use the private knife 'Stead of the brandish'd falchion. *Old Play.*

The noble Captain Colepepper or Peppercull, for he was known by both these names, and some others besides; had a martial and a swashing exterior, which, on the present occasion, was rendered yet more peculiar, by a patch covering his left eye and a part of the cheek. The sleeves of his thickset velvet jerkin were polished and shone with grease,—his buff gloves had huge tops, which reached almost to the elbow; his sword-belt of the same materials extended its breadth from his haunchbone to his small ribs, and supported on the one side his large black-hilted back-sword, on the other a dagger of like proportions. He paid his compliments to Nigel with that air of predetermined effrontery, which announces that it will not be repelled by any coldness of reception, asked Trapbois how he did, by the familiar title of old Peter Pillory, and then, seizing upon the black-jack, emptied it off at a draught, to the health of the last and youngest freeman of Alsatia, the noble and loving master Nigel Grahame.

When he had set down the empty pitcher and drawn his breath, he began to criticise the liquor which it had lately contained.—"Sufficient single beer, old Pillory—and, as I take it, brewed at the rate of a nutshell of malt to a butt of Thames—as dead as a corpse, too, and yet it went hissing down my throat—bubbling, by Jove, like water upon hot iron.—You left us early, noble Master Grahame, but, good faith, we had a carouse to your honour—we heard *buff* ring hollow ere we parted; we were as loving as inkle-weavers—we fought, too, to finish off the gawdy. I bear some marks of the parson about me, you see—a note of the sermon or so, which should have been addressed to my ear, but missed its mark, and reached my left eye. The man of God bears my sign-manual too, but the Duke made us friends again, and it cost me more sack than I could carry, and all the Rhenish to boot, to pledge the seer in the way of love and reconciliation—But, Caracco! 'tis a vile old canting slave for all that, whom I will one day beat out of his devil's livery into all the colours of the rainbow.—Basta!—Said I well, old Trapbois? Where is thy daughter, man?—what says she to my suit?—'tis an honest one—will have a soldier for thy son-in-law, old Pillory, to mingle the soul of martial honour with thy thieving, miching, petty-larceny blood, as men put bold brandy into muddy ale?"

"My daughter receives not company so early, noble captain," said the usurer, and concluded his speech with a dry, emphatical "ugh, ugh."

"What, upon no con-si-de-ra-ti-on?" said the captain; "and wherefore not, old Truepenny? she has not much time to lose in driving her bargain, methinks."

"Captain," said Trapbois, "I was upon some little business with our noble friend here, Master Nigel Green—ugh, ugh, ugh—"

"And you would have me gone, I warrant you?" answered the bully; "but patience, old Pillory, thine hour is not yet come, man—You see," he said, pointing to the casket, "that noble Master Grahame, whom you call Green, has got the *decuses* and the *smelt*."

"Which you would willingly rid him of, ha! ha!—ugh, ugh," answered the usurer, "if you knew how—but, lack-a-day! thou art one of those that come out for wool, and art sure to go home shorn. Why now, but that I am sworn against laying of wagers, I would risk some consideration that this honest guest of mine sends thee home penniless, if thou darest venture with him—ugh, ugh—at any game which gentlemen play at."

"Marry, thou hast me on the hip there, thou old miserly cony-catcher!" answered the captain, taking a bale of dice from the sleeve of his coat; "I must always keep company with these damnable doctors, and they have made me every baby's cully, and purged my purse into an atrophy; but never mind, it passes the time as well as aught else—How say you, Master Grahame?"

The fellow paused; but even the extremity of his impudence could scarcely hardly withstand the cold look of utter contempt with which Nigel received his proposal, returning it with a simple, "I only play where I know my company, and never in the morning."

"Cards may be more agreeable," said Captain Colepepper; "and, for knowing your company, here is honest old Pillory will tell you Jack Colepepper plays as truly on the square as e'er a man that trowled a die—Men talk of high and low dice, Fulhams and bristles, topping, knapping, slurring, stabbing, and a hundred ways of rooking besides; but broil me like a rasher of bacon, if I could ever learn the trick on 'em!"

"You have got the vocabulary perfect, sir, at the least," said Nigel, in the same cold tone.

"Yes, by mine honour have I," returned the Hector; "they are phrases that a gentleman learns about town.—But perhaps you would like a set at tennis, or a game at balloon—we have an indifferent good court hard by here, and a set of as gentleman-like blades as ever banged leather against brick and mortar."

"I beg to be excused at present," said Lord Glenvarloch; "and to be plain, among the valuable privileges your society has conferred on me, I hope I may reckon that of being private in my own apartment when I have a mind."

"Your humble servant, sir," said the captain; "and I thank you for your civility—Jack Colepepper can have enough of company, and thrusts himself on no one.—But perhaps you will like to make a match at skittles?"

"I am by no means that way disposed," replied the young nobleman,

"Or to leap a flea—run a snail—match a wherry, eh?"

"No—I will do none of these," answered Nigel.

Here the old man, who had been watching with his little peery eyes, pulled the bulky Hector by the skirt, and whispered, "Do not vapour him the huff, it will not pass—let the trout play, he will rise to the hook presently."

But the bully, confiding in his own strength, and probably mistaking for timidity the patient scorn with which Nigel received his proposals, incited also by the open casket, began to assume a louder and more threatening tone. He drew himself up, bent his brows, assumed a look of professional ferocity, and continued, "In Alsatia, look ye, a man must be neighbourly and companionable. Zouns! sir, we would slit any nose that was turned up at us honest fellows.—Ay, sir, we would slit it up to the gristle, though it had smelt nothing all its life but musk, ambergris, and court-scented water.—Rabbit me, I am a soldier, and care no more for a lord than a lamplighter!"

"Are you seeking a quarrel, sir?" said Nigel, calmly, having in truth no desire to engage himself in a discreditable broil in such a place, and with such a character.

"Quarrel, sir?" said the captain; "I am not seeking a quarrel, though I care not how soon I find one. Only I wish you to understand you must be neighbourly, that's all. What if we should go over the water to the garden, and see a bull hanked this fine morning—'sdeath, will you do nothing?"

"Something I am strangely tempted to do at this moment," said Nigel.

"Videlicet," said Colepepper, with a swaggering air, "let us hear the temptation."

"I am tempted to throw you headlong from the window, unless you presently make the best of your way down stairs."

"Throw me from the window?—hell and furies!" exclaimed the captain; "I have confronted twenty crooked sabres at Buda with my single rapier, and shall a chitty-faced, beggarly Scots lordling, speak of me and a window in the same breath?—Stand off, old Pillory, let me make Scotch collops of him—he dies the death!"

"For the love of Heaven, gentlemen," exclaimed the old miser, throwing himself between them, "do not break the peace on any consideration! Noble guest, forbear the captain—he is a very Hector of Troy—Trusty Hector, forbear my guest, he is like to prove a very Achilles-ugh-ugh—"

Here he was interrupted by his asthma, but, nevertheless, continued to interpose his person between Colepepper (who had unsheathed his whinyard, and was making vain passes at his antagonist) and Nigel, who had stepped back to take his sword, and now held it undrawn in his left hand.

"Make an end of this foolery, you scoundrel!" said Nigel—"Do you come hither to vent your noisy oaths and your bottled-up valour on me? You seem to know me, and I am half ashamed to say I have at length been able to recollect you—remember the garden behind the ordinary,—you dastardly ruffian, and the speed with which fifty men saw you run from a drawn sword.—Get you gone, sir, and do not put me to the vile labour of cudgelling such a cowardly rascal down stairs."

The bully's countenance grew dark as night at this unexpected recognition; for he had undoubtedly thought himself secure in his change of dress, and his black patch, from being discovered by a person who had seen him but once. He set his teeth, clenched his hands, and it seemed as if he was seeking for a moment's courage to fly upon his antagonist. But his heart failed, he sheathed his sword, turned his back in gloomy silence, and spoke not until he reached the door, when,

turning round, he said, with a deep oath, "If I be not avenged of you for this insolence ere many days go by, I would the gallows had my body and the devil my spirit!"

So saying, and with a look where determined spite and malice made his features savagely fierce, though they could not overcome his fear, he turned and left the house. Nigel followed him as far as the gallery at the head of the staircase, with the purpose of seeing him depart, and ere he returned was met by Mistress Martha Trapbois, whom the noise of the quarrel had summoned from her own apartment. He could not resist saying to her in his natural displeasure—"I would, madam, you could teach your father and his friends the lesson which you had the goodness to bestow on me this morning, and prevail on them to leave me the unmolested privacy of my own apartment."

"If you came hither for quiet or retirement, young man," answered she, "you have been advised to an evil retreat. You might seek mercy in the Star-Chamber, or holiness in hell, with better success than quiet in Alsatia. But my father shall trouble you no longer."

So saying, she entered the apartment, and, fixing her eyes on the casket, she said with emphasis—"If you display such a loadstone, it will draw many a steel knife to your throat."

While Nigel hastily shut the casket, she addressed her father, upbraiding him, with small reverence, for keeping company with the cowardly, hectoring, murdering villain, John Colepepper.

"Ay, ay, child," said the old man, with the cunning leer which intimated perfect satisfaction with his own superior address—"I know—I know—ugh—but I'll crossbite him—I know them all, and I can manage them—ay, ay—I have the trick on't—ugh-ugh."

"You manage, father!" said the austere damsel; "you will manage to have your throat cut, and that ere long. You cannot hide from them your gains and your gold as formerly."

"My gains, wench? my gold?" said the usurer; "alack-a-day, few of these and hard got—few and hard got."

"This will not serve you, father, any longer," said she, "and had not served you thus long, but that Bully Colepepper had contrived a cheaper way of plundering your house, even by means of my miserable self.—But why do I speak to him of all this," she said, checking herself, and shrugging her shoulders with an expression of pity which did not fall much short of scorn. "He hears me not—he thinks not of me.—Is it not strange that the love of gathering gold should survive the care to preserve both property and life?"

"Your father," said Lord Glenvarloch, who could not help respecting the strong sense and feeling shown by this poor woman, even amidst all her rudeness and severity, "your father seems to have his faculties sufficiently alert when he is in the exercise of his ordinary pursuits and functions. I wonder he is not sensible of the weight of your arguments."

"Nature made him a man senseless of danger, and that insensibility is the best thing I have derived from him," said she; "age has left him shrewdness enough to tread his old beaten paths, but not to seek new courses. The old blind horse will long continue to go its rounds in the mill, when it would stumble in the open meadow."

"Daughter!—why, wench—why, housewife!" said the old man, awakening out of some dream, in which he had been sneering and chuckling in imagination, probably over a successful piece of roguery,—“go to chamber, wench—go to chamber—draw bolts and chain—look sharp to door—let none in or out but worshipful Master Grahame—I must take my cloak, and go to Duke Hildebrod—ay, ay, time has been, my own warrant was enough; but the lower we lie, the more are we under the wind."

And, with his wonted chorus of muttering and coughing, the old man left the apartment. His daughter stood for a moment looking after him, with her usual expression of discontent and sorrow.

"You ought to persuade your father," said Nigel, "to leave this evil neighbourhood, if you are in reality apprehensive for his safety."

"He would be safe in no other quarter," said the daughter; "I would rather the old man were dead than publicly dishonoured. In other quarters he would be pelted and pursued, like an owl which ventures into sunshine. Here he was safe, while his comrades could avail themselves of his talents; he is now squeezed and fleeced by them on every pretence. They consider him as a vessel on the strand, from which each may snatch a prey; and the very jealousy which they entertain respecting him as a common property, may perhaps induce them to guard him from more private and daring assaults."

"Still, methinks, you ought to leave this place," answered Nigel, "since you might find a safe retreat in some distant country."

"In Scotland, doubtless," said she, looking at him with a sharp and suspicious eye, "and enrich strangers with our rescued wealth—Ha! young man?"

"Madam, if you knew me," said Lord Glenvarloch, "you would spare the suspicion implied in your words."

"Who shall assure me of that?" said Martha, sharply. "They say you are a brawler and a gamester, and I know how far these are to be trusted by the unhappy."

"They do me wrong, by Heaven!" said Lord Glenvarloch.

"It may be so," said Martha; "I am little interested in the degree of your vice or your folly; but it is plain, that the one or the other has conducted you hither, and that your best hope of peace, safety, and happiness, is to be gone, with the least possible delay, from a place which is always a sty for swine, and often a shambles." So saying, she left the apartment.

There was something in the ungracious manner of this female, amounting almost to contempt of him she spoke to—an indignity to which Glenvarloch, notwithstanding his poverty, had not as yet been personally exposed, and which, therefore, gave him a transitory feeling of painful surprise. Neither did the dark hints which Martha threw out concerning the danger of his place of refuge, sound by any means agreeably to his ears. The bravest man, placed in a situation in which he is surrounded by suspicious persons, and removed from all counsel and assistance, except those afforded by a valiant heart and a strong arm, experiences a sinking of the spirit, a consciousness of abandonment, which for a moment chills his blood, and depresses his natural gallantry of disposition.

But, if sad reflections arose in Nigel's mind, he had not time to indulge them; and, if he saw little prospect of finding friends in Alsatia, he found that he was not likely to be solitary for lack of visitors.

He had scarcely paced his apartment for ten minutes, endeavouring to arrange his ideas on the course which he was to pursue on quitting Alsatia, when he was interrupted by the Sovereign of the quarter, the great Duke Hildebrod himself, before whose approach the bolts and chains of the miser's dwelling fell, or withdrew, as of their own accord; and both the folding leaves of the door were opened, that he might roll himself into the house like a huge butt of liquor, a vessel to which he bore a considerable outward resemblance, both in size, shape, complexion, and contents.

"Good-morrow to your lordship," said the greasy puncheon, cocking his single eye, and rolling it upon Nigel with a singular expression of familiar impudence; whilst his grim bull-dog, which was close at his heels, made a kind of gurgling in his throat, as if saluting, in similar fashion, a starved cat, the only living thing in Trapbois' house which we have not yet enumerated, and which had flown up to the top of the tester, where she stood clutching and grinning at the mastiff, whose greeting she accepted with as much good-will as Nigel bestowed on that of the dog's master.

"Peace, Belzie!—D—n thee, peace!" said Duke Hildebrod. "Beasts and fools will be meddling, my lord."

"I thought, sir," answered Nigel, with as much haughtiness as was consistent with the cool distance which he desired to preserve, "I thought I had told you, my name at present was Nigel Grahame."

His eminence of Whitefriars on this burst out into a loud, chuckling, impudent laugh, repeating the word, till his voice was almost inarticulate,—“Niggle Green—Niggle Green—Niggle Green!—why, my lord, you would be queered in the drinking of a penny pot of Malmsey, if you cry before you are touched. Why, you have told me the secret even now, had I not had a shrewd guess of it before. Why, Master Nigel, since that is the word, I only called you my lord, because we made you a peer of Alsatia last night, when the sack was predominant.—How you look now!—Ha! ha! ha!"

Nigel, indeed, conscious that he had unnecessarily betrayed himself, replied hastily,—“he was much obliged to him for the honours conferred, but did not propose to remain in the Sanctuary long enough to enjoy them."

"Why, that may be as you will, an you will walk by wise counsel," answered the ducal porpoise; and, although Nigel remained standing, in hopes to accelerate his guest's departure, he threw himself into one of the old tapestry-backed easy-chairs, which cracked under his weight, and began to call for old Trapbois.

The crone of all work appearing instead of her master, the Duke cursed her for a careless jade, to let a strange gentleman, and a brave guest, go without his morning's draught.

"I never take one, sir," said Glenvarloch.

"Time to begin—time to begin," answered the Duke.—"Here, you old refuse of Sathan, go to our palace, and fetch Lord Green's morning draught. Let us see—what shall it be, my lord?—a humming double pot of ale, with a roasted crab dancing in it like a wherry above bridge?—or, hum—ay, young men are sweet-toothed—a quart of burnt sack, with sugar and spice?—good against the fogs. Or, what say you to sipping a gill of right distilled waters? Come, we will have them all, and you shall take your choice.—Here, you Jezebel, let Tim send the ale, and the sack, and the nipperkin of double-distilled, with a bit of diet-loaf, or some such trinket, and score it to the new comer."

Glenvarloch, bethinking himself that it might be as well to endure this fellow's insolence for a brief season, as to get into farther discreditable quarrels, suffered him to take his own way, without interruption, only observing, "You make yourself at home, sir, in my apartment; but, for the time, you may use your pleasure. Meanwhile, I would fain know what has procured me the honour of this unexpected visit?"

"You shall know that when old Deb has brought the liquor—I never speak of business dry-lipped. Why, how she drumbles—I warrant she stops to take a sip on the road, and then you will think you have had unchristian measure.—In the meanwhile, look at that dog there—look Belzebub in the face, and tell me if you ever saw a sweeter beast—never flew but at head in his life."

And, after this congenial panegyric, he was proceeding with a tale of a dog and a bull, which threatened to be somewhat of the longest, when he was interrupted by the return of the old crone, and two of his own tapsters, bearing the various kinds of drinkables which he had demanded, and which probably was the only species of interruption he would have endured with equanimity.

When the cups and cans were duly arranged upon the table, and when Deborah, whom the ducal generosity honoured with a penny farthing in the way of gratuity, had withdrawn with her satellites, the worthy potentate, having first slightly invited Lord Glenvarloch to partake of the liquor which he was to pay for, and after having observed, that, excepting three poached eggs, a pint of bastard, and a cup of clary, he was fasting from every thing but sin, set himself seriously to reinforce the radical moisture. Glenvarloch had seen Scottish lairds and Dutch burgomasters at their potatoes; but their exploits (though each might be termed a thirsty generation) were nothing to those of Duke Hildebrod, who seemed an absolute sandbed, capable of absorbing any given quantity of liquid, without being either vivified or overflowed. He drank off the ale to quench a thirst which, as he said, kept him in a fever from morning to night, and night to morning; tipped off the sack to correct the crudity of the ale; sent the spirits after the sack to keep all quiet, and then declared that, probably, he should not taste liquor till post meridiem, unless it was in compliment to some especial friend. Finally, he intimated that he was ready to proceed on the business which brought him from home so early, a proposition which Nigel readily received, though he could not help suspecting that the most important purpose of Duke Hildebrod's visit was already transacted.

In this, however, Lord Glenvarloch proved to be mistaken. Hildebrod, before opening what he had to say, made an accurate survey of the apartment, laying, from time to time, his finger on his nose, and winking on Nigel with his single eye, while he opened and shut the doors, lifted the tapestry, which concealed, in one or two places, the dilapidation of time upon the wainscoted walls, peeped into closets, and, finally, looked under the bed, to assure himself that the coast was clear of listeners and interlopers. He then resumed his seat, and beckoned confidentially to Nigel to draw his chair close to him.

"I am well as I am, Master Hildebrod," replied the young lord, little disposed to encourage the familiarity which the man endeavoured to fix on him; but the undismayed Duke proceeded as follows:

"You shall pardon me, my lord—and I now give you the title right seriously—if I remind you that our waters may be watched; for though old Trapbois be as deaf as Saint Paul's, yet his daughter has sharp ears, and sharp eyes enough, and it is of them that it is my business to speak."

"Say away, then, sir," said Nigel, edging his chair somewhat closer to the Quicksand, "although I cannot conceive what business I have either with mine host or his daughter."

"We will see that in the twinkling of a quart-pot," answered the gracious Duke; "and first, my lord, you must not think to dance in a net before old Jack Hildebrod, that has thrice your years o'er his head, and was born, like King Richard, with all his eye-teeth ready cut."

"Well, sir, go on," said Nigel.

"Why, then, my lord, I presume to say, that, if you are, as I believe you are, that Lord Glenvarloch whom all the world talk of—the Scotch gallant that has spent all, to a thin cloak and a light purse—be not moved, my lord, it is so noised of you—men call you the sparrow-hawk, who will fly at all—ay, were it in the very Park—Be not moved, my lord."

"I am ashamed, sirrah," replied Glenvarloch, "that you should have power to move me by your insolence—but beware—and, if you indeed guess who I am, consider how long I may be able to endure your tone of insolent familiarity."

"I crave pardon, my lord," said Hildebrod, with a sullen, yet apologetic look; "I meant no harm in speaking my poor mind. I know not what honour there may be in being familiar with your lordship, but I judge there is little safety, for Lowestoffe is laid up in lavender only for having shown you the way into Alsatia; and so, what is to come of those who maintain you when you are here, or whether they will get most honour or most trouble by doing so, I leave with your lordship's better judgment."

"I will bring no one into trouble on my account," said Lord Glenvarloch. "I will leave Whitefriars to-morrow. Nay, by Heaven, I will leave it this day."

"You will have more wit in your anger, I trust," said Duke Hildebrod; "listen first to what I have to say to you, and, if honest Jack Hildebrod puts you not in the way of nicking them all, may he never cast doublets, or dull a greenhorn again! And so, my lord, in plain words, you must wap and win."

"Your words must be still plainer before I can understand them," said Nigel.

"What the devil—a gamester, one who deals with the devil's bones and the doctors, and not understand Pedlar's French! Nay, then, I must speak plain English, and that's the simpleton's tongue."

"Speak, then, sir," said Nigel; "and I pray you be brief, for I have little more time to bestow on you."

"Well, then, my lord, to be brief, as you and the lawyers call it—I understand you have an estate in the north, which changes masters for want of the redeeming ready.—Ay, you start, but you cannot dance in a net before me, as I said before; and so the king runs the frowning humour on you, and the Court vapours you the go-by; and the Prince scowls at you from under his cap; and the favourite serves you out the puckered brow and the cold shoulder; and the favourite's favourite—"

"To go no further, sir," interrupted Nigel, "suppose all this true—and what follows?"

"What follows?" returned Duke Hildebrod. "Marry, this follows, that you will owe good deed, as well as good will, to him who shall put you in the way to walk with your beaver cocked in the presence, as an ye were Earl of Kildare; bully the courtiers; meet the Prince's blighting look with a bold brow; confront the favourite; baffle his deputy, and—"

"This is all well," said Nigel! "but how is it to be accomplished?"

"By making thee a Prince of Peru, my lord of the northern latitudes; propping thine old castle with ingots,—fertilizing thy failing fortunes with gold dust—it shall but cost thee to put thy baron's coronet for a day or so on the brows of an old Caduca here, the man's daughter of the house, and thou art master of a mass of treasure that shall do all I have said for thee, and—"

"What, you would have me marry this old gentlewoman here, the daughter of mine host?" said Nigel, surprised and angry, yet unable to suppress some desire to laugh.

"Nay, my lord, I would have you marry fifty thousand good sterling pounds; for that, and better, hath old Trapbois hoarded; and thou shall do a deed of mercy in it to the old man, who will lose his golden smelts in some worse way—for now that he is well-nigh past his day of work, his day of payment is like to follow."

"Truly, this is a most courteous offer," said Lord Glenvarloch; "but may I pray of your candour, most noble duke, to tell me why you dispose of a ward of so much wealth on a stranger like me, who may leave you to-morrow?"

"In sooth, my lord," said the Duke, "that question smacks more of the wit of Beaujeu's ordinary, than any word I have yet heard your lordship speak, and reason it is you should be answered. Touching my peers, it is but necessary to say, that Mistress Martha Trapbois will none of them, whether clerical or laic. The captain hath asked her, so hath the parson, but she will none of them—she looks higher than either, and is, to say truth, a woman of sense, and so forth, too profound, and of spirit something too high, to put up with greasy buff or rusty prunella. For ourselves, we need but hint that we have a consort in the land of the living, and, what is more to purpose, Mrs. Martha knows it. So, as she will not lace her kersey hood save with a quality binding, you, my lord, must be the man, and must carry off fifty thousand decuses, the spoils of five thousand bullies, cutters, and spendthrifts,—always deducting from the main sum some five thousand pounds for our princely advice and countenance, without which, as matters stand in Alsatia, you would find it hard to win the plate."

"But has your wisdom considered, sir," replied Glenvarloch, "how this wedlock can serve me in my present emergence?"

"As for that, my lord," said Duke Hildebrod, "if, with forty or fifty thousand pounds in your pouch, you cannot save yourself, you will deserve to lose your head for your folly, and your hand for being close-fisted."

"But, since your goodness has taken my matters into such serious consideration," continued Nigel, who conceived there was no prudence in breaking with a man, who, in his way, meant him favour rather than offence, "perhaps you may be able to tell me how my kindred will be likely to receive such a bride as you recommend to me?"

"Touching that matter, my lord, I have always heard your countrymen knew as well as other folks, on which side their bread was buttered. And, truly, speaking from report, I know no place where fifty thousand pounds—fifty thousand pounds, I say—will make a woman more welcome than it is likely to do in your ancient kingdom. And, truly, saving the slight twist in her shoulder, Mrs. Martha Trapbois is a person of very awful and majestic appearance, and may, for aught I know, be come of better blood than any one wots of; for old Trapbois looks not over like to be her father, and her mother was a generous, liberal sort of a woman."

"I am afraid," answered Nigel, "that chance is rather too vague to assure her a gracious reception into an honourable house."

"Why, then, my lord," replied Hildebrod, "I think it like she will be even with them; for I will venture to say, she has as much ill-nature as will make her a match for your whole clan."

"That may inconvenience me a little," replied Nigel.

"Not a whit—not a whit," said the Duke, fertile in expedients; "if she should become rather intolerable, which is not unlikely, your honourable house, which I presume to be a castle, hath, doubtless, both turrets and dungeons, and ye may bestow your bonny bride in either the one or the other, and then you know you will be out of hearing of her tongue, and she will be either above or below the contempt of your friends."

"It is sagely counselled, most equitable sir," replied Nigel, "and such restraint would be a fit meed for her folly that gave me any power over her."

"You entertain the project then, my lord?" said Duke Hildebrod.

"I must turn it in my mind for twenty-four hours," said Nigel; "and I will pray you so to order matters that I be not further interrupted by any visitors."

"We will utter an edict to secure your privacy," said the Duke; "and you do not think," he added, lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, "that ten thousand is too much to pay to the Sovereign, in name of wardship?"

"Ten thousand!" said Lord Glenvarloch; "why, you said five thousand but now."

"Aha! art avised of that?" said the Duke, touching the side of his nose with his finger; "nay, if you have marked me so closely, you are thinking on the case more nearly than I believed, till you trapped me. Well, well, we will not quarrel about the consideration, as old Trapbois would call it—do you win and wear the dame; it will be no hard matter with your face and figure, and I will take care that no one interrupts you. I will have an edict from the Senate as soon as they meet for their meridiem."

So saying, Duke Hildebrod took his leave.

CHAPTER XXIV

This is the time—Heaven's maiden sentinel
Hath quitted her high watch—the lesser spangles
Are paling one by one; give me the ladder
And the short lever—bid Anthony
Keep with his carbine the wicket-gate;
And do thou bare thy knife and follow me,
For we will in and do it—darkness like this
Is dawning of our fortunes.

Old Play.

When Duke Hildebrod had withdrawn, Nigel's first impulse was an irresistible feeling to laugh at the sage adviser, who would have thus connected him with age, ugliness, and ill-temper; but his next thought was pity for the unfortunate father and daughter, who, being the only persons possessed of wealth in this unhappy district, seemed like a wreck on the sea-shore of a barbarous country, only secured from plunder for the moment by the jealousy of the tribes among whom it had been cast. Neither could he help being conscious that his own residence here was upon conditions equally precarious, and that he was considered by the Alsations in the same light of a godsend on the Cornish coast, or a sickly but wealthy caravan travelling through the wilds of Africa, and emphatically termed by the nations of despoilers through whose regions it passes Dummala-fong, which signifies a thing given to be devoured—a common prey to all men.

Nigel had already formed his own plan to extricate himself, at whatever risk, from his perilous and degrading situation; and, in order that he might carry it into instant execution, he only awaited the return of Lowestoffe's messenger. He expected him, however, in vain, and could only amuse himself by looking through such parts of his baggage as had been sent to him from his former lodgings, in order to select a small packet of the most necessary articles to take with him, in the event of his quitting his lodgings secretly and suddenly, as speed and privacy would, he foresaw, be particularly necessary, if he meant to obtain an interview with the king, which was the course his spirit and his interest alike determined him to pursue.

While he was thus engaged, he found, greatly to his satisfaction, that Master Lowestoffe had transmitted not only his rapier and poniard, but a pair of pistols, which he had used in travelling; of a smaller and more convenient size than the large petronels, or horse pistols, which were then in common use, as being made for wearing at the girdle or in the pockets. Next to having stout and friendly comrades, a man is chiefly emboldened by finding himself well armed in case of need, and Nigel, who had thought with some anxiety on the hazard of trusting his life, if attacked, to the protection of the clumsy weapon with which Lowestoffe had equipped him, in order to complete his disguise, felt an emotion of confidence approaching to triumph, as, drawing his own good and well-tried rapier, he wiped it with his handkerchief, examined its point, bent it once or twice against the ground to prove its well-known metal, and finally replaced it in the scabbard, the more hastily, that he heard a tap at the door of his chamber, and had no mind to be found vapouring in the apartment with his sword drawn.

It was his old host who entered, to tell him with many cringes that the price of his apartment was to be a crown per diem; and that, according to the custom of Whitefriars, the rent was always payable per advance, although he never scrupled to let the money lie till a week or fortnight, or even a month, in the hands of any

honourable guest like Master Grahame, always upon some reasonable consideration for the use. Nigel got rid of the old dotard's intrusion, by throwing down two pieces of gold, and requesting the accommodation of his present apartment for eight days, adding, however, he did not think he should tarry so long.

The miser, with a sparkling eye and a trembling hand, clutched fast the proffered coin, and, having balanced the pieces with exquisite pleasure on the extremity of his withered finger, began almost instantly to show that not even the possession of gold can gratify for more than an instant the very heart that is most eager in the pursuit of it. First, the pieces might be light—with hasty hand he drew a small pair of scales from his bosom, and weighed them, first together, then separately, and smiled with glee as he saw them attain the due depression in the balance—a circumstance which might add to his profits, if it were true, as was currently reported, that little of the gold coinage was current in Alsatia in a perfect state, and that none ever left the Sanctuary in that condition.

Another fear then occurred to trouble the old miser's pleasure. He had been just able to comprehend that Nigel intended to leave the Friars sooner than the arrival of the term for which he had deposited the rent. This might imply an expectation of refunding, which, as a Scotch wag said, of all species of funding, jumped least with the old gentleman's humour. He was beginning to enter a hypothetical caveat on this subject, and to quote several reasons why no part of the money once consigned as room-rent, could be repaid back on any pretence, without great hardship to the landlord, when Nigel, growing impatient, told him that the money was his absolutely, and without any intention on his part of resuming any of it—all he asked in return was the liberty of enjoying in private the apartment he had paid for. Old Trapbois, who had still at his tongue's end much of the smooth language, by which, in his time, he had hastened the ruin of many a young spendthrift, began to launch out upon the noble and generous disposition of his new guest, until Nigel, growing impatient, took the old gentleman by the hand, and gently, yet irresistibly, leading him to the door of the chamber, put him out, but with such decent and moderate exertion of his superior strength, as to render the action in no shape indecorous, and, fastening the door, began to do that for his pistols which he had done for his favourite sword, examining with care the flints and locks, and reviewing the state of his small provision of ammunition.

In this operation he was a second time interrupted by a knocking at the door—he called upon the person to enter, having no doubt that it was Lowestoffe's messenger at length arrived. It was, however, the ungracious daughter of old Trapbois, who, muttering something about her father's mistake, laid down upon the table one of the pieces of gold which Nigel had just given to him, saying, that what she retained was the full rent for the term he had specified. Nigel replied, he had paid the money, and had no desire to receive it again.

"Do as you will with it, then," replied his hostess, "for there it lies, and shall lie for me. If you are fool enough to pay more than is reason, my father shall not be knave enough to take it."

"But your father, mistress," said Nigel, "your father told me—"

"Oh, my father, my father," said she, interrupting him,—"my father managed these affairs while he was able—I manage them now, and that may in the long run be as well for both of us."

She then looked on the table, and observed the weapons.

"You have arms, I see," she said; "do you know how to use them?"

"I should do so mistress," replied Nigel, "for it has been my occupation."

"You are a soldier, then?" she demanded.

"No farther as yet, than as every gentleman of my country is a soldier."

"Ay, that is your point of honour—to cut the throats of the poor—a proper gentlemanlike occupation for those who should protect them!"

"I do not deal in cutting throats, mistress," replied Nigel; "but I carry arms to defend myself, and my country if it needs me."

"Ay," replied Martha, "it is fairly worded; but men say you are as prompt as others in petty brawls, where neither your safety nor your country is in hazard; and that had it not been so, you would not have been in the Sanctuary to-day."

"Mistress," returned Nigel, "I should labour in vain to make you understand that a man's honour, which is, or should be, dearer to him than his life, may often call on and compel us to hazard our own lives, or those of others, on what would otherwise seem trifling contingencies."

"God's law says nought of that," said the female; "I have only read there, that thou shall not kill. But I have neither time nor inclination to preach to you—you will find enough of fighting here if you like it, and well if it come not to seek you when you are least prepared. Farewell for the present—the char-woman will execute your commands for your meals."

She left the room, just as Nigel, provoked at her assuming a superior tone of judgment and of censure, was about to be so superfluous as to enter into a dispute with an old pawnbroker's daughter on the subject of the point of honour. He smiled at himself for the folly into which the spirit of self-vindication had so nearly hurried him.

Lord Glenvarloch then applied to old Deborah the char-woman, by whose intermediation he was provided with a tolerably decent dinner; and the only embarrassment which he experienced, was from the almost forcible entry of the old dotard his landlord, who insisted upon giving his assistance at laying the cloth. Nigel had some difficulty to prevent him from displacing his arms and some papers which were lying on a small table at which he had been sitting; and nothing short of a stern and positive injunction to the contrary could compel him to use another board (though there were two in the room) for the purpose of laying the cloth.

Having at length obliged him to relinquish his purpose, he could not help observing that the eyes of the old dotard seemed still anxiously fixed upon the small table on which lay his sword and pistols; and that, amidst all the little duties which he seemed officiously anxious to render to his guest, he took every opportunity of looking towards and approaching these objects of his attention. At length, when Trapbois thought he had completely avoided the notice of his guest, Nigel, through the observation of one of the cracked mirrors, oh which channel of communication the old man had not calculated, beheld him actually extend his hand towards the table in question. He thought it unnecessary to use further ceremony, but telling his landlord, in a stern voice, that he permitted no one to touch his arms, he commanded him to leave the apartment. The old usurer commenced a maundering sort of apology, in which all that Nigel distinctly apprehended, was a frequent repetition of the word consideration, and which did not seem to him to require any other answer than a reiteration of his command to him to leave the apartment, upon pain of worse consequences.

The ancient Hebe who acted as Lord Glenvarloch's cup-bearer, took his part against the intrusion of the still more antiquated Ganymede, and insisted on old Trapbois leaving the room instantly, menacing him at the same time with her mistress's displeasure if he remained there any longer. The old man seemed more under petticoat government than any other, for the threat of the char-woman produced greater effect upon him than the more formidable displeasure of Nigel. He withdrew grumbling and muttering, and Lord Glenvarloch heard him bar a large door at the nearer end of the gallery, which served as a division betwixt the other parts of the extensive mansion, and the apartment occupied by his guest, which, as the reader is aware, had its access from the landing-place at the head of the grand staircase.

Nigel accepted the careful sound of the bolts and bars as they were severally drawn by the trembling hand of old Trapbois, as an omen that the senior did not mean again to revisit him in the course of the evening, and heartily rejoiced that he was at length to be left to uninterrupted solitude.

The old woman asked if there was aught else to be done for his accommodation; and, indeed, it had hitherto seemed as if the pleasure of serving him, or more properly the reward which she expected, had renewed her youth and activity. Nigel desired to have candles, to have a fire lighted in his apartment, and a few fagots placed beside it, that he might feed it from time to time, as he began to feel the chilly effects of the damp and low situation of the house, close as it was to the Thames. But while the old woman was absent upon his errand, he began to think in what way he should pass the long solitary evening with which he was threatened.

His own reflections promised to Nigel little amusement, and less applause. He had considered his own perilous situation in every light in which it could be viewed, and foresaw as little utility as comfort in resuming the survey. To divert the current of his ideas, books were, of course, the readiest resource; and although, like most of us, Nigel had, in his time, sauntered through large libraries, and even spent a long time there without greatly disturbing their learned contents, he was now

in a situation where the possession of a volume, even of very inferior merit, becomes a real treasure. The old housewife returned shortly afterwards with fagots, and some pieces of half-burnt wax-candles, the perquisites, probably, real or usurped, of some experienced groom of the chambers, two of which she placed in large brass candlesticks, of different shapes and patterns, and laid the others on the table, that Nigel might renew them from time to time as they burnt to the socket. She heard with interest Lord Glenvarloch's request to have a book—any sort of book—to pass away the night withal, and returned for answer, that she knew of no other books in the house than her young mistress's (as she always denominated Mistress Martha Trapbois) Bible, which the owner would not lend; and her master's Whetstone of Witte, being the second part of Arithmetic, by Robert Record, with the Cossike Practice and Rule of Equation; which promising volume Nigel declined to borrow. She offered, however, to bring him some books from Duke Hildebrod—"who sometimes, good gentleman, gave a glance at a book when the State affairs of Alsatia left him as much leisure."

Nigfil embraced the proposal, and his unwearied Iris scuttled away on this second embassy. She returned in a short time with a tattered quarto volume under her arm, and a bottle of sack in her hand; for the Duke, judging that mere reading was dry work, had sent the wine by way of sauce to help it down, not forgetting to add the price to the morning's score, which he had already run up against the stranger in the Sanctuary.

Nigel seized on the book, and did not refuse the wine, thinking that a glass or two, as it really proved to be of good quality, would be no bad interlude to his studies. He dismissed, with thanks and assurance of reward, the poor old drudge who had been so zealous in his service; trimmed his fire and candles, and placed the easiest of the old arm-chairs in a convenient posture betwixt the fire and the table at which he had dined, and which now supported the measure of sack and the lights; and thus accompanying his studies with such luxurious appliances as were in his power, he began to examine the only volume with which the ducal library of Alsatia had been able to supply him.

The contents, though of a kind generally interesting, were not well calculated to dispel the gloom by which he was surrounded. The book was entitled "God's Revenge against Murther;" not, as the bibliomaniacal reader may easily conjecture, the work which Reynolds published under that imposing name, but one of a much earlier date, printed and sold by old Wolfe; and which, could a copy now be found, would sell for much more than its weight in gold.[Footnote: Only three copies are known to exist; one in the library at Kennaquhair, and two—one foxed and cropped, the other tall and in good condition—both in the possession of an eminent member of the Roxburghe Club.—Note by CAPTAIN CLUTTERBUCK.] Nigel had soon enough of the doleful tales which the book contains, and attempted one or two other modes of killing the evening. He looked out at window, but the night was rainy, with gusts of wind; he tried to coax the fire, but the fagots were green, and smoked without burning; and as he was naturally temperate, he felt his blood somewhat heated by the canary sack which he had already drank, and had no farther inclination to that pastime. He next attempted to compose a memorial addressed to the king, in which he set forth his case and his grievances; but, speedily stung with the idea that his supplication would be treated with scorn, he flung the scroll into the fire, and, in a sort of desperation, resumed the book which he had laid aside.

Nigel became more interested in the volume at the second than at the first attempt which he made to peruse it. The narratives, strange and shocking as they were to human feeling, possessed yet the interest of sorcery or of fascination, which rivets the attention by its awakening horrors. Much was told of the strange and horrible acts of blood by which men, setting nature and humanity alike at defiance, had, for the thirst of revenge, the lust of gold, or the cravings of irregular ambition, broken into the tabernacle of life. Yet more surprising and mysterious tales were recounted of the mode in which such deeds of blood had come to be discovered and revenged. Animals, irrational animals, had told the secret, and birds of the air had carried the matter. The elements had seemed to betray the deed which had polluted them—earth had ceased to support the murderer's steps, fire to warm his frozen limbs, water to refresh his parched lips, air to relieve his gasping lungs. All, in short, bore evidence to the homicide's guilt. In other circumstances, the criminal's own awakened conscience pursued and brought him to justice; and in some narratives the grave was said to have yawned, that the ghost of the sufferer might call for revenge.

It was now wearing late in the night, and the book was still in Nigel's hands, when the tapestry which hung behind him flapped against the wall, and the wind produced by its motion waved the flame of the candles by which he was reading. Nigel started and turned round, in that excited and irritated state of mind which arose from the nature of his studies, especially at a period when a certain degree of superstition was inculcated as a point of religious faith. It was not without emotion that he saw the bloodless countenance, meagre form, and ghastly aspect of old Trapbois, once more in the very act of extending his withered hand towards the table which supported his arms. Convinced by this untimely apparition that something evil was meditated towards him, Nigel sprung up, seized his sword, drew it, and placing it at the old man's breast, demanded of him what he did in his apartment at so untimely an hour. Trapbois showed neither fear nor surprise, and only answered by some imperfect expressions, intimating he would part with his life rather than with his property; and Lord Glenvarloch, strangely embarrassed, knew not what to think of the intruder's motives, and still less how to get rid of him. As he again tried the means of intimidation, he was surprised by a second apparition from behind the tapestry, in the person of the daughter of Trapbois, bearing a lamp in her hand. She also seemed to possess her father's insensibility to danger, for, coming close to Nigel, she pushed aside impetuously his naked sword, and even attempted to take it out of his hand.

"For shame," she said, "your sword on a man of eighty years and more!—this the honour of a Scottish gentleman!—give it to me to make a spindle off!"

"Stand back," said Nigel; "I mean your father no injury—but I will know what has caused him to prowl this whole day, and even at this late hour of night, around my arms."

"Your arms!" repeated she; "alas! young man, the whole arms in the Tower of London are of little value to him, in comparison of this miserable piece of gold which I left this morning on the table of a young spendthrift, too careless to put what belonged to him into his own purse."

So saying, she showed the piece of gold, which, still remaining on the table, where she left it, had been the bait that attracted old Trapbois so frequently to the spot; and which, even in the silence of the night, had so dwelt on his imagination, that he had made use of a private passage long disused, to enter his guest's apartment, in order to possess himself of the treasure during his slumbers. He now exclaimed, at the highest tones of his cracked and feeble voice—

"It is mine—it is mine!—he gave it to me for a consideration—I will die ere I part with my property!"

"It is indeed his own, mistress," said Nigel, "and I do entreat you to restore it to the person on whom I have bestowed it, and let me have my apartment in quiet."

"I will account with you for it, then,"—said the maiden, reluctantly giving to her father the morsel of Mammon, on which he darted as if his bony fingers had been the talons of a hawk seizing its prey; and then making a contented muttering and mumbling, like an old dog after he has been fed, and just when he is wheeling himself thrice round for the purpose of lying down, he followed his daughter behind the tapestry, through a little sliding-door, which was perceived when the hangings were drawn apart.

"This shall be properly fastened to-morrow," said the daughter to Nigel, speaking in such a tone that her father, deaf, and engrossed by his acquisition, could not hear her; "to-night I will continue to watch him closely.—I wish you good repose."

These few words, pronounced in a tone of more civility than she had yet made use of towards her lodger, contained a wish which was not to be accomplished, although her guest, presently after her departure, retired to bed.

There was a slight fever in Nigel's blood, occasioned by the various events of the evening, which put him, as the phrase is, beside his rest. Perplexing and painful thoughts rolled on his mind like a troubled stream, and the more he laboured to lull himself to slumber, the farther he seemed from attaining his object. He tried all the resources common in such cases; kept counting from one to a thousand, until his head was giddy—he watched the embers of the wood fire till his eyes were dazzled—he listened to the dull moaning of the wind, the swinging and creaking of signs which projected from the houses, and the baying of here and there a homeless dog, till his very ear was weary.

Suddenly, however, amid this monotony, came a sound which startled him at once. It was a female shriek. He sat up in his bed to listen, then remembered he was in Alsatia, where brawls of every sort were current among the unruly inhabitants. But another scream, and another, and another, succeeded so close, that he was certain, though the noise was remote and sounded stifled, it must be in the same house with himself.

Nigel jumped up hastily, put on a part of his clothes, seized his sword and pistols, and ran to the door of his chamber. Here he plainly heard the screams redoubled, and, as he thought, the sounds came from the usurer's apartment. All access to the gallery was effectually excluded by the intermediate door, which

the brave young lord shook with eager, but vain impatience. But the secret passage occurred suddenly to his recollection. He hastened back to his room, and succeeded with some difficulty in lighting a candle, powerfully agitated by hearing the cries repeated, yet still more afraid lest they should sink into silence. He rushed along the narrow and winding entrance, guided by the noise, which now burst more wildly on his ear; and, while he descended a narrow staircase which terminated the passage, he heard the stifled voices of men, encouraging, as it seemed, each other. "D—n her, strike her down—silence her—beat her brains out!"—while the voice of his hostess, though now almost exhausted, was repeating the cry of "murder," and "help." At the bottom of the staircase was a small door, which gave way before Nigel as he precipitated himself upon the scene of action,—a cocked pistol in one hand, a candle in the other, and his naked sword under his arm.

Two ruffians had, with great difficulty, overpowered, or, rather, were on the point of overpowering, the daughter of Trapbois, whose resistance appeared to have been most desperate, for the floor was covered with fragments of her clothes, and handfuls of her hair. It appeared that her life was about to be the price of her defence, for one villain had drawn a long clasp-knife, when they were surprised by the entrance of Nigel, who, as they turned towards him, shot the fellow with the knife dead on the spot, and when the other advanced to him, hurled the candlestick at his head, and then attacked him with his sword. It was dark, save some pale moonlight from the window; and the ruffian, after firing a pistol without effect, and fighting a traverse or two with his sword, lost heart, made for the window, leaped over it, and escaped. Nigel fired his remaining pistol after him at a venture, and then called for light.

"There is light in the kitchen," answered Martha Trapbois, with more presence of mind than could have been expected. "Stay, you know not the way; I will fetch it myself.—Oh! my father—my poor father!—I knew it would come to this—and all along of the accursed gold!—They have murdered him!"

CHAPTER XXV

Death finds us 'mid our playthings—snatches us,
As a cross nurse might do a wayward child,
From all our toys and baubles. His rough call
Unlooses all our favourite ties on earth;
And well if they are such as may be answer'd
In yonder world, where all is judged of truly.
Old Play.

It was a ghastly scene which opened, upon Martha Trapbois's return with a light. Her own haggard and austere features were exaggerated by all the desperation of grief, fear, and passion—but the latter was predominant. On the floor lay the body of the robber, who had expired without a groan, while his blood, flowing plentifully, had crimsoned all around. Another body lay also there, on which the unfortunate woman precipitated herself in agony, for it was that of her unhappy father. In the next moment she started up, and exclaiming—"There may be life yet!" strove to raise the body. Nigel went to her assistance, but not without a glance at the open window; which Martha, as acute as if undisturbed either by passion or terror, failed not to interpret justly.

"Fear not," she cried, "fear not; they are base cowards, to whom courage is as much unknown as mercy. If I had had weapons, I could have defended myself against them without assistance or protection.—Oh! my poor father! protection comes too late for this cold and stiff corpse.—He is dead—dead!"

While she spoke, they were attempting to raise the dead body of the old miser; but it was evident, even from the feeling of the inactive weight and rigid joints, that life had forsaken her station. Nigel looked for a wound, but saw none. The daughter of the deceased, with more presence of mind than a daughter could at the time have been supposed capable of exerting, discovered the instrument of his murder—a sort of scarf, which had been drawn so tight round his throat, as to stifle his cries for assistance, in the first instance, and afterwards to extinguish life.

She undid the fatal noose; and, laying the old man's body in the arms of Lord Glenvarloch, she ran for water, for spirits, for essences, in the vain hope that life might be only suspended. That hope proved indeed vain. She chafed his temples, raised his head, loosened his nightgown, (for it seemed as if he had arisen from bed upon hearing the entrance of the villains,) and, finally, opened, with difficulty, his fixed and closely-clenched hands, from one of which dropped a key, from the other the very piece of gold about which the unhappy man had been a little before so anxious, and which probably, in the impaired state of his mental faculties, he was disposed to defend with as desperate energy as if its amount had been necessary to his actual existence.

"It is in vain—it is in vain," said the daughter, desisting from her fruitless attempts to recall the spirit which had been effectually dislodged, for the neck had been twisted by the violence of the murderers; "It is in vain—he is murdered—I always knew it would be thus; and now I witness it!"

She then snatched up the key and the piece of money, but it was only to dash them again on the floor, as she exclaimed, "Accursed be ye both, for you are the causes of this deed!"

Nigel would have spoken—would have reminded her, that measures should be instantly taken for the pursuit of the murderer who had escaped, as well as for her own security against his return; but she interrupted him sharply.

"Be silent," she said, "be silent. Think you, the thoughts of my own heart are not enough to distract me, and with such a sight as this before me? I say, be silent," she said again, and in a yet sterner tone—"Can a daughter listen, and her father's murdered corpse lying on her knees?"

Lord Glenvarloch, however overpowered by the energy of her grief, felt not the less the embarrassment of his own situation. He had discharged both his pistols—the robber might return—he had probably other assistants besides the man who had fallen, and it seemed to him, indeed, as if he had heard a muttering beneath the windows. He explained hastily to his companion the necessity of procuring ammunition.

"You are right," she said, somewhat contemptuously, "and have ventured already more than ever I expected of man. Go, and shift for yourself, since that is your purpose—leave me to my fate."

Without stopping for needless expostulation, Nigel hastened to his own room through the secret passage, furnished himself with the ammunition he sought for, and returned with the same celerity; wondering himself at the accuracy with which he achieved, in the dark, all the meanderings of the passage which he had traversed only once, and that in a moment of such violent agitation.

He found, on his return, the unfortunate woman standing like a statue by the body of her father, which she had laid straight on the floor, having covered the face with the skirt of his gown. She testified neither surprise nor pleasure at Nigel's return, but said to him calmly—"My moan is made—my sorrow—all the sorrow at least that man shall ever have noting of, is gone past; but I will have justice, and the base villain who murdered this poor defenceless old man, when he had not, by the course of nature, a twelvemonth's life in him, shall not cumber the earth long after him. Stranger, whom heaven has sent to forward the revenge reserved for this action, go to Hildebrod's—there they are awake all night in their revels—bid him come hither—he is bound by his duty, and dare not, and shall not, refuse his assistance, which he knows well I can reward. Why do ye tarry?—go instantly."

"I would," said Nigel, "but I am fearful of leaving you alone; the villains may return, and—"

"True, most true," answered Martha, "he may return; and, though I care little for his murdering me, he may possess himself of what has most tempted him. Keep this key and this piece of gold; they are both of importance—defend your life if assailed, and if you kill the villain I will make you rich. I go myself to call for aid."

Nigel would have remonstrated with her, but she had departed, and in a moment he heard the house-door clank behind her. For an instant he thought of following her; but upon recollection that the distance was but short betwixt the tavern of Hildebrod and the house of Trapbois, he concluded that she knew it better than he—incurred little danger in passing it, and that he would do well in the meanwhile to remain on the watch as she recommended.

It was no pleasant situation for one unused to such scenes to remain in the apartment with two dead bodies, recently those of living and breathing men, who had both, within the space of less than half an hour, suffered violent death; one of them by the hand of the assassin, the other, whose blood still continued to flow from the wound in his throat, and to flood all around him, by the spectator's own deed of violence, though of justice. He turned his face from those wretched relics of

mortality with a feeling of disgust, mingled with superstition; and he found, when he had done so, that the consciousness of the presence of these ghastly objects, though unseen by him, rendered him more uncomfortable than even when he had his eyes fixed upon, and reflected by, the cold, staring, lifeless eyeballs of the deceased. Fancy also played her usual sport with him. He now thought he heard the well-worn damask nightgown of the deceased usurer rustle; anon, that he heard the slaughtered bravo draw up his leg, the boot scratching the floor as if he was about to rise; and again he deemed he heard the footsteps and the whisper of the returned ruffian under the window from which he had lately escaped. To face the last and most real danger, and to parry the terrors which the other class of feelings were like to impress upon him, Nigel went to the window, and was much cheered to observe the light of several torches illuminating the street, and followed, as the murmur of voices denoted, by a number of persons, armed, it would seem, with firelocks and halberds, and attendant on Hildebrod, who (not in his fantastic office of duke, but in that which he really possessed of bailiff of the liberty and sanctuary of Whitefriars) was on his way to inquire into the crime and its circumstances.

It was a strange and melancholy contrast to see these debauchees, disturbed in the very depth of their midnight revel, on their arrival at such a scene as this. They stared on each other, and on the bloody work before them, with lack-lustre eyes; staggered with uncertain steps over boards slippery with blood; their noisy brawling voices sunk into stammering whispers; and, with spirits quelled by what they saw, while their brains were still stupefied by the liquor which they had drunk, they seemed like men walking in their sleep.

Old Hildebrod was an exception to the general condition. That seasoned cask, however full, was at all times capable of motion, when there occurred a motive sufficiently strong to set him a-rolling. He seemed much shocked at what he beheld, and his proceedings, in consequence, had more in them of regularity and propriety, than he might have been supposed capable of exhibiting upon any occasion whatever. The daughter was first examined, and stated, with wonderful accuracy and distinctness, the manner in which she had been alarmed with a noise of struggling and violence in her father's apartment, and that the more readily, because she was watching him on account of some alarm concerning his health. On her entrance, she had seen her father sinking under the strength of two men, upon whom she rushed with all the fury she was capable of. As their faces were blackened, and their figures disguised, she could not pretend, in the hurry of a moment so dreadfully agitating, to distinguish either of them as persons whom she had seen before. She remembered little more except the firing of shots, until she found herself alone with her guest, and saw that the ruffians had escaped. Lord Glenvarloch told his story as we have given it to the reader. The direct evidence thus received, Hildebrod examined the premises. He found that the villains had made their entrance by the window out of which the survivor had made his escape; yet it seemed singular that they should have done so, as it was secured with strong iron bars, which old Trapbois was in the habit of shutting with his own hand at nightfall. He minuted down with great accuracy, the state of every thing in the apartment, and examined carefully the features of the slain robber. He was dressed like a seaman of the lowest order, but his face was known to none present. Hildebrod next sent for an Alsatian surgeon, whose vices, undoing what his skill might have done for him, had consigned him to the wretched practice of this place. He made him examine the dead bodies, and make a proper declaration of the manner in which the sufferers seemed to have come by their end. The circumstances of the sash did not escape the learned judge, and having listened to all that could be heard or conjectured on the subject, and collected all particulars of evidence which appeared to bear on the bloody transaction, he commanded the door of the apartment to be locked until next morning; and carrying, the unfortunate daughter of the murdered man into the kitchen, where there was no one in presence but Lord Glenvarloch, he asked her gravely, whether she suspected no one in particular of having committed the deed.

"Do you suspect no one?" answered Martha, looking fixedly on him.

"Perhaps, I may, mistress; but it is my part to ask questions, yours to answer them. That's the rule of the game."

"Then I suspect him who wore yonder sash. Do not you know whom I mean?"

"Why, if you call on me for honours, I must needs say I have seen Captain Peppercull have one of such a fashion, and he was not a man to change his suits often."

"Send out, then," said Martha, "and have him apprehended."

"If it is he, he will be far by this time; but I will communicate with the higher powers," answered the judge.

"You would have him escape," resumed she, fixing her eyes on him sternly.

"By cock and pie," replied Hildebrod, "did it depend on me, the murdering cut-throat should hang as high as ever Haman did—but let me take my time. He has friends among us, that you wot well; and all that should assist me are as drunk as fiddlers."

"I will have revenge—I will have it," repeated she; "and take heed you trifle not with me."

"Trifle! I would sooner trifle with a she-bear the minute after they had baited her. I tell you, mistress, be but patient, and we will have him. I know all his haunts, and he cannot forbear them long; and I will have trap-doors open for him. You cannot want justice, mistress, for you have the means to get it."

"They who help me in my revenge," said Martha, "shall share those means."

"Enough said," replied Hildebrod; "and now I would have you go to my house, and get something hot—you will be but dreary here by yourself."

"I will send for the old char-woman," replied Martha, "and we have the stranger gentleman, besides."

"Umph, umph—the stranger gentleman!" said Hildebrod to Nigel, whom he drew a little apart. "I fancy the captain has made the stranger gentleman's fortune when he was making a bold dash for his own. I can tell your honour—I must not say lordship—that I think my having chanced to give the greasy buff-and-iron scoundrel some hint of what I recommended to you to-day, has put him on this rough game. The better for you—you will get the cash without the father-in-law.—You will keep conditions, I trust?"

"I wish you had said nothing to any one of a scheme so absurd," said Nigel.

"Absurd!—Why, think you she will not have thee? Take her with the tear in her eye, man—take her with the tear in her eye. Let me hear from you to-morrow. Good-night, good-night—a nod is as good as a wink. I must to my business of sealing and locking up. By the way, this horrid work has put all out of my head.—Here is a fellow from Mr. Lowestoffe has been asking to see you. As he said his business was express, the Senate only made him drink a couple of flagons, and he was just coming to beat up your quarters when this breeze blew up.—Ahey, friend! there is Master Nigel Grahame."

A young man, dressed in a green plush jerkin, with a badge on the sleeve, and having the appearance of a waterman, approached and took Nigel aside, while Duke Hildebrod went from place to place to exercise his authority, and to see the windows fastened, and the doors of the apartment locked up. The news communicated by Lowestoffe's messenger were not the most pleasant. They were intimated in a courteous whisper to Nigel, to the following effect:—That Master Lowestoffe prayed him to consult his safety by instantly leaving Whitefriars, for that a warrant from the Lord Chief-Justice had been issued out for apprehending him, and would be put in force to-morrow, by the assistance of a party of musketeers, a force which the Alsations neither would nor dared to resist.

"And so, squire," said the aquatic emissary, "my wherry is to wait you at the Temple Stairs yonder, at five this morning, and, if you would give the blood-hounds the slip, why, you may."

"Why did not Master Lowestoffe write to me?" said Nigel.

"Alas! the good gentleman lies up in lavender for it himself, and has as little to do with pen and ink as if he were a parson."

"Did he send any token to me?" said Nigel.

"Token!—ay, marry did he—token enough, an I have not forgot it," said the fellow; then, giving a hoist to the waistband of his breeches, he said,—"Ay, I have it—you were to believe me, because your name was written with an O, for Grahame. Ay, that was it, I think.—Well, shall we meet in two hours, when tide turns, and go down the river like a twelve-oared barge?"

"Where is the king just now, knowest thou?" answered Lord Glenvarloch.

"The king! why, he went down to Greenwich yesterday by water, like a noble sovereign as he is, who will always float where he can. He was to have hunted this week, but that purpose is broken, they say; and the Prince, and the Duke, and all of them at Greenwich, are as merry as minnows."

"Well," replied Nigel, "I will be ready to go at five; do thou come hither to carry my baggage."

"Ay, ay, master," replied the fellow, and left the house mixing himself with the disorderly attendants of Duke Hildebrod, who were now retiring. That potentate entreated Nigel to make fast the doors behind him, and, pointing to the female who sat by the expiring fire with her limbs outstretched, like one whom the hand of Death had already arrested, he whispered, "Mind your hits, and mind your bargain, or I will cut your bow-string for you before you can draw it."

Feeling deeply the ineffable brutality which could recommend the prosecuting such views over a wretch in such a condition, Lord Glenvarloch yet commanded his temper so far as to receive the advice in silence, and attend to the former part of it, by barring the door carefully behind Duke Hildebrod and his suite, with the tacit hope that he should never again see or hear of them. He then returned to the kitchen, in which the unhappy woman remained, her hands still clenched, her eyes fixed, and her limbs extended, like those of a person in a trance. Much moved by her situation, and with the prospect which lay before her, he endeavoured to awaken her to existence by every means in his power, and at length apparently succeeded in dispelling her stupor, and attracting her attention. He then explained to her that he was in the act of leaving Whitefriars in a few hours—that his future destination was uncertain, but that he desired anxiously to know whether he could contribute to her protection by appraising any friend of her situation, or otherwise. With some difficulty she seemed to comprehend his meaning, and thanked him with her usual short ungracious manner. "He might mean well," she said, "but he ought to know that the miserable had no friends."

Nigel said, "He would not willingly be importunate, but, as he was about to leave the Friars—" She interrupted him—

"You are about to leave the Friars? I will go with you."

"You go with me!" exclaimed Lord Glenvarloch.

"Yes," she said, "I will persuade my father to leave this murdering den." But, as she spoke, the more perfect recollection of what had passed crowded on her mind. She hid her face in her hands, and burst out into a dreadful fit of sobs, moans, and lamentations, which terminated in hysterics, violent in proportion to the uncommon strength of her body and mind.

Lord Glenvarloch, shocked, confused, and inexperienced, was about to leave the house in quest of medical, or at least female assistance; but the patient, when the paroxysm had somewhat spent its force, held him fast by the sleeve with one hand, covering her face with the other, while a copious flood of tears came to relieve the emotions of grief by which she had been so violently agitated.

"Do not leave me," she said—"do not leave me, and call no one. I have never been in this way before, and would not now," she said, sitting upright, and wiping her eyes with her apron,— "would not now—but that—but that he loved me. if he loved nothing else that was human—To die so, and by such hands!"

And again the unhappy woman gave way to a paroxysm of sorrow, mingling her tears with sobbing, wailing, and all the abandonment of female grief, when at its utmost height. At length, she gradually recovered the austerity of her natural composure, and maintained it as if by a forcible exertion of resolution, repelling, as she spoke, the repeated returns of the hysterical affection, by such an effort as that by which epileptic patients are known to suspend the recurrence of their fits. Yet her mind, however resolved, could not so absolutely overcome the affection of her nerves, but that she was agitated by strong fits of trembling, which, for a minute or two at a time, shook her whole frame in a manner frightful to witness. Nigel forgot his own situation, and, indeed, every thing else, in the interest inspired by the unhappy woman before him—an interest which affected a proud spirit the more deeply, that she herself, with correspondent highness of mind, seemed determined to owe as little as possible either to the humanity or the pity of others.

"I am not wont to be in this way," she said,— "but—but—Nature will have power over the frail beings it has made. Over you, sir, I have some right; for, without you, I had not survived this awful night. I wish your aid had been either earlier or later—but you have saved my life, and you are bound to assist in making it endurable to me."

"If you will show me how it is possible," answered Nigel.

"You are going hence, you say, instantly—carry me with you," said the unhappy woman. "By my own efforts, I shall never escape from this wilderness of guilt and misery."

"Alas! what can I do for you?" replied Nigel. "My own way, and I must not deviate from it, leads me, in all probability, to a dungeon. I might, indeed, transport you from hence with me, if you could afterwards bestow yourself with any friend."

"Friend!" she exclaimed—"I have no friend—they have long since discarded us. A spectre arising from the dead were more welcome than I should be at the doors of those who have disclaimed us; and, if they were willing to restore their friendship to me now, I would despise it, because they withdrew it from him—from him"—(here she underwent strong but suppressed agitation, and then added firmly)— "from him who lies yonder.—I have no friend." Here she paused; and then suddenly, as if recollecting herself, added, "I have no friend, but I have that will purchase many—I have that which will purchase both friends and avengers.—It is well thought of; I must not leave it for a prey to cheats and ruffians.—Stranger, you must return to yonder room. Pass through it boldly to his—that is, to the sleeping apartment; push the bedstead aside; beneath each of the posts is a brass plate, as if to support the weight, but it is that upon the left, nearest to the wall, which must serve your turn—press the corner of the plate, and it will spring up and show a keyhole, which this key will open. You will then lift a concealed trap-door, and in a cavity of the floor you will discover a small chest. Bring it hither; it shall accompany our journey, and it will be hard if the contents cannot purchase me a place of refuge."

"But the door communicating with the kitchen has been locked by these people," said Nigel.

"True, I had forgot; they had their reasons for that, doubtless," answered she. "But the secret passage from your apartment is open, and you may go that way."

Lord Glenvarloch took the key, and, as he lighted a lamp to show him the way, she read in his countenance some unwillingness to the task imposed.

"You fear?" said she—"there is no cause; the murderer and his victim are both at rest. Take courage, I will go with you myself—you cannot know the trick of the spring, and the chest will be too heavy for you."

"No fear, no fear," answered Lord Glenvarloch, ashamed of the construction she put upon a momentary hesitation, arising from a dislike to look upon what is horrible, often connected with those high-wrought minds which are the last to fear what is merely dangerous—"I will do your errand as you desire; but for you, you must not—cannot go yonder."

"I can—I will," she said. "I am composed. You shall see that I am so." She took from the table a piece of unfinished sewing-work, and, with steadiness and composure, passed a silken thread into the eye of a fine needle.— "Could I have done that," she said, with a smile yet more ghastly than her previous look of fixed despair, "had not my heart and hand been both steady?"

She then led the way rapidly up stairs to Nigel's chamber, and proceeded through the secret passage with the same haste, as if she had feared her resolution might have failed her ere her purpose was executed. At the bottom of the stairs she paused a moment, before entering the fatal apartment, then hurried through with a rapid step to the sleeping chamber beyond, followed closely by Lord Glenvarloch, whose reluctance to approach the scene of butchery was altogether lost in the anxiety which he felt on account of the survivor of the tragedy.

Her first action was to pull aside the curtains of her father's bed. The bed-clothes were thrown aside in confusion, doubtless in the action of his starting from sleep to oppose the entrance of the villains into the next apartment. The hard mattress scarcely showed the slight pressure where the emaciated body of the old miser had been deposited. His daughter sank beside the bed, clasped her hands, and prayed to heaven, in a short and affectionate manner, for support in her affliction, and for vengeance on the villains who had made her fatherless. A low-muttered and still more brief petition recommended to Heaven the soul of the sufferer, and invoked pardon for his sins, in virtue of the great Christian atonement.

This duty of piety performed, she signed to Nigel to aid her; and, having pushed aside the heavy bedstead, they saw the brass plate which Martha had described. She pressed the spring, and, at once, the plate starting up, showed the keyhole, and a large iron ring used in lifting the trap-door, which, when raised, displayed the strong box, or small chest, she had mentioned, and which proved indeed so very weighty, that it might perhaps have been scarcely possible for Nigel, though a very strong man, to have raised it without assistance.

Having replaced everything as they had found it, Nigel, with such help as his companion was able to afford, assumed his load, and made a shift to carry it into the next apartment, where lay the miserable owner, insensible to sounds and circumstances, which, if any thing could have broken his long last slumber, would

certainly have done so. His unfortunate daughter went up to his body, and had even the courage to remove the sheet which had been decently disposed over it. She put her hand on the heart, but there was no throb—held a feather to the lips, but there was no motion—then kissed with deep reverence the starting veins of the pale forehead, and then the emaciated hand.

"I would you could hear me," she said,—"*Father!* I would you could hear me swear, that, if I now save what you most valued on earth, it is only to assist me in obtaining vengeance for your death."

She replaced the covering, and, without a tear, a sigh, or an additional word of any kind, renewed her efforts, until they conveyed the strong-box betwixt them into Lord Glenvarloch's sleeping apartment. "It must pass," she said, "as part of your baggage. I will be in readiness so soon as the waterman calls." She retired; and Lord Glenvarloch, who saw the hour of their departure approach, tore down a part of the old hanging to make a covering, which he corded upon the trunk, lest the peculiarity of its shape, and the care with which it was banded and counterbanded with bars of steel, might afford suspicions respecting the treasure which it contained. Having taken this measure of precaution, he changed the rascally disguise, which he had assumed on entering Whitefriars, into a suit becoming his quality, and then, unable to sleep, though exhausted with the events of the night, he threw himself on his bed to await the summons of the waterman.

CHAPTER XXVI

Give us good voyage, gentle stream—we stun not
Thy sober ear with sounds of revelry;
Wake not the slumbering echoes of thy banks
With voice of flute and horn—we do but seek
On the broad pathway of thy swelling bosom
To glide in silent safety.

The Double Bridal.

Grey, or rather yellow light, was beginning to twinkle through the fogs of Whitefriars, when a low tap at the door of the unhappy miser announced to Lord Glenvarloch the summons of the boatman. He found at the door the man whom he had seen the night before, with a companion.

"Come, come, master, let us get afloat," said one of them, in a rough impressive whisper, "time and tide wait for no man."

"They shall not wait for me," said Lord Glenvarloch; "but I have some things to carry with me."

"Ay, ay—no man will take a pair of oars now, Jack, unless he means to load the wherry like a six-horse waggon. When they don't want to shift the whole kitt, they take a sculler, and be d—d to them. Come, come, where be your rattle-traps?"

One of the men was soon sufficiently loaded, in his own estimation at least, with Lord Glenvarloch's mail and its accompaniments, with which burden he began to trudge towards the Temple Stairs. His comrade, who seemed the principal, began to handle the trunk which contained the miser's treasure, but pitched it down again in an instant, declaring, with a great oath, that it was as reasonable to expect a man to carry Paul's on his back. The daughter of Trapbois, who had by this time joined them, muffled up in a long dark hood and mantle, exclaimed to Lord Glenvarloch—"Let them leave it if they will, let them leave it all; let us but escape from this horrible place."

We have mentioned elsewhere, that Nigel was a very athletic young man, and, impelled by a strong feeling of compassion and indignation, he showed his bodily strength singularly on this occasion, by seizing on the ponderous strong-box, and, by means of the rope he had cast around it, throwing it on his shoulders, and marching resolutely forward under a weight, which would have sunk to the earth three young gallants, at the least, of our degenerate day. The waterman followed him in amazement, calling out, "Why, master, master, you might as well gie me t'other end on't!" and anon offered his assistance to support it in some degree behind, which after the first minute or two Nigel was fain to accept. His strength was almost exhausted when he reached the wherry, which was lying at the Temple Stairs according to appointment; and, when he pitched the trunk into it, the weight sank the bow of the boat so low in the water as well-nigh to overset it.

"We shall have as hard a fare of it," said the waterman to his companion, "as if we were ferrying over an honest bankrupt with all his secreted goods—Ho, ho! good woman, what, are you stepping in for?—our gunwale lies deep enough in the water without live lumber to boot."

"This person comes with me," said Lord Glenvarloch; "she is for the present under my protection."

"Come, come, master," rejoined the fellow, "that is out of my commission. You must not double my freight on me—she may go by land—and, as for protection, her face will protect her from Berwick to the Land's End."

"You will not except at my doubling the loading, if I double the fare?" said Nigel, determined on no account to relinquish the protection of this unhappy woman, for which he had already devised some sort of plan, likely now to be baffled by the characteristic rudeness of the Thames watermen.

"Ay, by G——, but I will except, though," said the fellow with the green plush jacket: "I will overload my wherry neither for love nor money—I love my boat as well as my wife, and a thought better."

"Nay, nay, comrade," said his mate, "that is speaking no true water language. For double fare we are bound to row a witch in her eggshell if she bid us; and so pull away, Jack, and let us have no more prating."

They got into the stream-way accordingly, and, although heavily laden, began to move down the river with reasonable speed.

The lighter vessels which passed, overtook, or crossed them, in their course, failed not to assail them with their boisterous raillery, which was then called water-wit; for which the extreme plainness of Mistress Martha's features, contrasted with the youth, handsome figure, and good looks of Nigel, furnished the principal topics; while the circumstance of the boat being somewhat overloaded, did not escape their notice. They were hailed successively, as a grocer's wife upon a party of pleasure with her eldest apprentice—as an old woman carrying her grandson to school—and as a young strapping Irishman, conveying an ancient maiden to Dr. Rigmarole's, at Redriffe, who buckles beggars for a tester and a dram of Geneva. All this abuse was retorted in a similar strain of humour by Greenjacket and his companion, who maintained the war of wit with the same alacrity with which they were assailed.

Meanwhile, Lord Glenvarloch asked his desolate companion if she had thought on any place where she could remain in safety with her property. She confessed, in more detail than formerly, that her father's character had left her no friends; and that, from the time he had betaken himself to Whitefriars, to escape certain legal consequences of his eager pursuit of gain, she had lived a life of total seclusion; not associating with the society which the place afforded, and, by her residence there, as well as her father's parsimony, effectually cut off from all other company. What she now wished, was, in the first place, to obtain the shelter of a decent lodging, and the countenance of honest people, however low in life, until she should obtain legal advice as to the mode of obtaining justice on her father's murderer. She had no hesitation to charge the guilt upon Colepepper, (commonly called Peppercull,) whom she knew to be as capable of any act of treacherous cruelty, as he was cowardly, where actual manhood was required. He had been strongly suspected of two robberies before, one of which was coupled with an atrocious murder. He had, she intimated, made pretensions to her hand as the easiest and safest way of obtaining possession of her father's wealth; and, on her refusing his addresses, if they could be termed so, in the most positive terms, he had thrown out such obscure hints of vengeance, as, joined with some imperfect assaults upon the house, had kept her in frequent alarm, both on her father's account and her own.

Nigel, but that his feeling of respectful delicacy to the unfortunate woman forebade him to do so, could here have communicated a circumstance corroborative of her suspicions, which had already occurred to his own mind. He recollected the hint that old Hildebrod threw forth on the preceding night, that some communication betwixt himself and Colepepper had hastened the catastrophe. As this communication related to the plan which Hildebrod had been pleased to form, of promoting a marriage betwixt Nigel himself and the rich heiress of Trapbois, the fear of losing an opportunity not to be regained, together with the mean malignity of a low-bred ruffian, disappointed in a favourite scheme, was most likely to instigate the bravo to the deed of violence which had been committed. The reflection that his own name was in some degree implicated with the causes of this horrid tragedy, doubled Lord Glenvarloch's anxiety in behalf of the victim whom

he had rescued, while at the same time he formed the tacit resolution, that, so soon as his own affairs were put upon some footing, he would contribute all in his power towards the investigation of this bloody affair.

After ascertaining from his companion that she could form no better plan of her own, he recommended to her to take up her lodging for the time, at the house of his old landlord, Christie the ship-chandler, at Paul's Wharf, describing the decency and honesty of that worthy couple, and expressing his hopes that they would receive her into their own house, or recommend her at least to that of some person for whom they would be responsible, until she should have time to enter upon other arrangements for herself.

The poor woman received advice so grateful to her in her desolate condition, with an expression of thanks, brief indeed, but deeper than any thing had yet extracted from the austerity of her natural disposition.

Lord Glenvarloch then proceeded to inform Martha, that certain reasons, connected with his personal safety, called him immediately to Greenwich, and, therefore, it would not be in his power to accompany her to Christie's house, which he would otherwise have done with pleasure: but, tearing a leaf from his tablet, he wrote on it a few lines, addressed to his landlord, as a man of honesty and humanity, in which he described the bearer as a person who stood in singular necessity of temporary protection and good advice, for which her circumstances enabled her to make ample acknowledgment. He therefore requested John Christie, as his old and good friend, to afford her the shelter of his roof for a short time; or, if that might not be consistent with his convenience, at least to direct her to a proper lodging-and, finally, he imposed on him the additional, and somewhat more difficult commission, to recommend her to the counsel and services of an honest, at least a reputable and skilful attorney, for the transacting some law business of importance. The note he subscribed with his real name, and, delivering it to his protegee, who received it with another deeply uttered "I thank you," which spoke the sterling feelings of her gratitude better than a thousand combined phrases, he commanded the watermen to pull in for Paul's Wharf, which they were now approaching.

"We have not time," said Green-jacket; "we cannot be stopping every instant."

But, upon Nigel insisting upon his commands being obeyed, and adding, that it was for the purpose of putting the lady ashore, the waterman declared that he would rather have her room than her company, and put the wherry alongside the wharf accordingly. Here two of the porters, who ply in such places, were easily induced to undertake the charge of the ponderous strong-box, and at the same time to guide the owner to the well-known mansion of John Christie, with whom all who lived in that neighbourhood were perfectly acquainted.

The boat, much lightened of its load, went down the Thames at a rate increased in proportion. But we must forbear to pursue her in her voyage for a few minutes, since we have previously to mention the issue of Lord Glenvarloch's recommendation.

Mistress Martha Trapbois reached the shop in perfect safety, and was about to enter it, when a sickening sense of the uncertainty of her situation, and of the singularly painful task of telling her story, came over her so strongly, that she paused a moment at the very threshold of her proposed place of refuge, to think in what manner she could best second the recommendation of the friend whom Providence had raised up to her. Had she possessed that knowledge of the world, from which her habits of life had completely excluded her, she might have known that the large sum of money which she brought along with her, might, judiciously managed, have been a passport to her into the mansions of nobles, and the palaces of princes. But, however conscious of its general power, which assumes so many forms and complexions, she was so inexperienced as to be most unnecessarily afraid that the means by which the wealth had been acquired, might exclude its inheretrix from shelter even in the house of a humble tradesman.

While she thus delayed, a more reasonable cause for hesitation arose, in a considerable noise and altercation within the house, which grew louder and louder as the disputants issued forth upon the street or lane before the door.

The first who entered upon the scene was a tall raw-boned hard-favoured man, who stalked out of the shop hastily, with a gait like that of a Spaniard in a passion, who, disdaining to add speed to his locomotion by running, only condescends, in the utmost extremity of his angry haste, to add length to his stride. He faced about, so soon as he was out of the house, upon his pursuer, a decent-looking, elderly, plain tradesman—no other than John Christie himself, the owner of the shop and tenement, by whom he seemed to be followed, and who was in a state of agitation more than is usually expressed by such a person.

"I'll hear no more on't," said the personage who first appeared on the scene.—"Sir, I will hear no more on it. Besides being a most false and impudent figment, as I can testify—it is Scandaalum Magnaatum, sir—Scandaalum Magnaatum" he reiterated with a broad accentuation of the first vowel, well known in the colleges of Edinburgh and Glasgow, which we can only express in print by doubling the said first of letters and of vowels, and which would have cheered the cockles of the reigning monarch had he been within hearing,—as he was a severer stickler for what he deemed the genuine pronunciation of the Roman tongue, than for any of the royal prerogatives, for which he was at times disposed to insist so strenuously in his speeches to Parliament.

"I care not an ounce of rotten cheese," said John Christie in reply, "what you call it—but it is TRUE; and I am a free Englishman, and have right to speak the truth in my own concerns; and your master is little better than a villain, and you no more than a swaggering coxcomb, whose head I will presently break, as I have known it well broken before on lighter occasion."

And, so saying, he flourished the paring-shovel which usually made clean the steps of his little shop, and which he had caught up as the readiest weapon of working his foeman damage, and advanced therewith upon him. The cautious Scot (for such our readers must have already pronounced him, from his language and pedantry) drew back as the enraged ship-chandler approached, but in a surly manner, and bearing his hand on his sword-hilt rather in the act of one who was losing habitual forbearance and caution of deportment, than as alarmed by the attack of an antagonist inferior to himself in youth, strength, and weapons.

"Bide back," he said, "Maister Christie—I say bide back, and consult your safety, man. I have evited striking you in your ain house under muckle provocation, because I am ignorant how the laws here may pronounce respecting burglary and hamesucken, and such matters; and, besides, I would not willingly hurt ye, man, e'en on the causeway, that is free to us baith, because I mind your kindness of lang syne, and partly consider ye as a poor deceived creature. But deil d—n me, sir, and I am not wont to swear, but if you touch my Scotch shouter with that shule of yours, I will make six inches of my Andrew Ferrara deevilish intimate with your guts, neighbour."

And therewithal, though still retreating from the brandished shovel, he made one-third of the basket-hilled broadsword which he wore, visible from the sheath. The wrath of John Christie was abated, either by his natural temperance of disposition, or perhaps in part by the glimmer of cold steel, which flashed on him from his adversary's last action.

"I would do well to cry clubs on thee, and have thee ducked at the wharf," he said, grounding his shovel, however, at the same time, "for a paltry swaggerer, that would draw thy bit of iron there on an honest citizen before his own door; but get thee gone, and reckon on a salt eel for thy supper, if thou shouldst ever come near my house again. I wish it had been at the bottom of the Thames when it first gave the use of its roof to smooth-faced, oily-tongued, double-minded Scots thieves!"

"It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest," replied his adversary, not perhaps the less bold that he saw matters were taking the turn of a pacific debate; "and a pity it is that a kindly Scot should ever have married in foreign parts, and given life to a purse-proud, pudding-headed, fat-gutted, lean-brained Southron, e'en such as you, Maister Christie. But fare ye weel—fare ye weel, for ever and a day; and, if you quarrel wi' a Scot again, man, say as mickle ill o' himself as ye like, but say nane of his patron or of his countrymen, or it will scarce be your flat cap that will keep your lang lugs from the sharp abridgement of a Highland whinger, man."

"And, if you continue your insolence to me before my own door, were it but two minutes longer," retorted John Christie, "I will call the constable, and make your Scottish ankles acquainted with an English pair of stocks!"

So saying, he turned to retire into his shop with some show of victory; for his enemy, whatever might be his innate valour, manifested no desire to drive matters to extremity—conscious, perhaps, that whatever advantage he might gain in single combat with John Christie, would be more than overbalanced by incurring an affair with the constituted authorities of Old England, not at that time apt to be particularly favourable to their new fellow-subjects, in the various successive broils which were then constantly taking place between the individuals of two proud nations, who still retained a stronger sense of their national animosity during centuries, than of their late union for a few years under the government of the same prince.

Mrs. Martha Trapbois had dwelt too long in Alsatia, to be either surprised or terrified at the altercation she had witnessed. Indeed, she only wondered that the debate did not end in some of those acts of violence by which they were usually terminated in the Sanctuary. As the disputants separated from each other, she, who had no idea that the cause of the quarrel was more deeply rooted than in the daily scenes of the same nature which she had heard of or witnessed, did not hesitate to stop Master Christie in his return to his shop, and present to him the letter which Lord Glenvarloch had given to her. Had she been better acquainted with life and its business, she would certainly have waited for a more temperate moment; and she had reason to repent of her precipitation, when, without saying a single word, or taking the trouble to gather more of the information contained in the letter than was expressed in the subscription, the incensed ship chandler threw it down on the ground, trampled it in high disdain, and, without addressing a single word to the bearer, except, indeed, something much more like a hearty curse than was perfectly consistent with his own grave appearance, he retired into his shop, and shut the hatch-door.

It was with the most inexpressible anguish that the desolate, friendless and unhappy female, thus beheld her sole hope of succour, countenance, and protection, vanish at once, without being able to conceive a reason; for, to do her justice, the idea that her friend, whom she knew by the name of Nigel Grahame, had imposed on her, a solution which might readily have occurred to many in her situation, never once entered her mind. Although it was not her temper easily to bend her mind to entreaty, she could not help exclaiming after the ireful and retreating ship-chandler,—“Good Master, hear me but a moment! for mercy's sake, for honesty's sake!”

“Mercy and honesty from him, mistress!” said the Scot, who, though he essayed not to interrupt the retreat of his antagonist, still kept stout possession of the field of action,—“ye might as weel expect brandy from bean-stalks, or milk from a craig of blue whunstone. The man is mad, bom mad, to boot.”

“I must have mistaken the person to whom the letter was addressed, then;” and, as she spoke, Mistress Martha Trapbois was in the act of stooping to lift the paper which had been so uncourtously received. Her companion, with natural civility, anticipated her purpose; but, what was not quite so much in etiquette, he took a sly glance at it as he was about to hand it to her, and his eye having caught the subscription, he said, with surprise, “Glenvarloch—Nigel Olifaunt of Glenvarloch! Do you know the Lord Glenvarloch, mistress?”

“I know not of whom you speak,” said Mrs. Martha, peevishly. “I had that paper from one Master Nigel Gram.”

“Nigel Grahame!—umph.—O, ay, very true—I had forgot,” said the Scotsman. “A tall, well-set young man, about my height; bright blue eyes like a hawk's; a pleasant speech, something leaning to the kindly north-country accentuation, but not much, in respect of his having been resident abroad?”

“All this is true—and what of it all?” said the daughter of the miser.

“Hair of my complexion?”

“Yours is red,” replied she.

“I pray you peace,” said the Scotsman. “I was going to say—of my complexion, but with a deeper shade of the chestnut. Weel, mistress, if I have guessed the man aright, he is one with whom I am, and have been, intimate and familiar,—nay,—I may truly say I have done him much service in my time, and may live to do him more. I had indeed a sincere good-will for him, and I doubt he has been much at a loss since we parted; but the fault is not mine. Wherefore, as this letter will not avail you with him to whom it is directed, you may believe that heaven hath sent it to me, who have a special regard for the writer—I have, besides, as much mercy and honesty within me as man can weel make his bread with, and am willing to aid any distressed creature, that is my friend's friend, with my counsel, and otherwise, so that I am not put to much charges, being in a strange country, like a poor lamb that has wandered from its ain native hirsle, and leaves a tait of its woo' in every d—d Southron bramble that comes across it.” While he spoke thus, he read the contents of the letter, without waiting for permission, and then continued,—“And so this is all that you are wanting, my dove? nothing more than safe and honourable lodging, and sustenance, upon your own charges?”

“Nothing more,” said she. “If you are a man and a Christian, you will help me to what I need so much.”

“A man I am,” replied the formal Caledonian, “e'en sic as ye see me; and a Christian I may call myself, though unworthy, and though I have heard little pure doctrine since I came hither—a' polluted with men's devices—ahem! Weel, and if ye be an honest woman,” (here he peeped under her muffler,) “as an honest woman ye seem likely to be—though, let me tell you, they are a kind of cattle not so rife in the streets of this city as I would desire them—I was almost strangled with my own band by twa rampallians, wha wanted yestreen, nae farther gane, to harle me into a change-house—however, if ye be a decent honest woman,” (here he took another peep at features certainly bearing no beauty which could infer suspicion,) “as decent and honest ye seem to be, why, I will advise you to a decent house, where you will get douce, quiet entertainment, on reasonable terms, and the occasional benefit of my own counsel and direction—that is, from time to time, as my other avocations may permit.”

“May I venture to accept of such an offer from a stranger?” said Martha, with natural hesitation.

“Troth, I see nothing to hinder you, mistress,” replied the bonny Scot; “ye can but see the place, and do after as ye think best. Besides, we are nae such strangers, neither; for I know your friend, and you, it's like, know mine, whilk knowledge, on either hand, is a medium of communication between us, even as the middle of the string connecteth its twa ends or extremities. But I will enlarge on this farther as we pass along, gin ye list to bid your twa lazy loons of porters there lift up your little kist between them, whilk ae true Scotsman might carry under his arm. Let me tell you, mistress, ye will soon make a toom pock-end of it in Lon'on, if you hire twa knaves to do the work of ane.”

So saying, he led the way, followed by Mistress Martha Trapbois, whose singular destiny, though it had heaped her with wealth, had left her, for the moment, no wiser counsellor, or more distinguished protector, than honest Richie Moniplies, a discarded serving-man.

CHAPTER XXVII

This way lie safety and a sure retreat;
Yonder lie danger, shame, and punishment
Most welcome danger then—Nay, let me say,
Though spoke with swelling heart—welcome e'en shame
And welcome punishment—for, call me guilty,
I do but pay the tax that's due to justice;
And call me guiltless, then that punishment
Is shame to those alone who do inflict it,
The Tribunal.

We left Lord Glenvarloch, to whose fortunes our story chiefly attaches itself, gliding swiftly down the Thames. He was not, as the reader may have observed, very affable in his disposition, or apt to enter into conversation with those into whose company he was casually thrown. This was, indeed, an error in his conduct, arising less from pride, though of that feeling we do not pretend to exculpate him, than from a sort of bashful reluctance to mix in the conversation of those with whom he was not familiar. It is a fault only to be cured by experience and knowledge of the world, which soon teaches every sensible and acute person the important lesson, that amusement, and, what is of more consequence, that information and increase of knowledge, are to be derived from the conversation of every individual whatever, with whom he is thrown into a natural train of communication. For ourselves, we can assure the reader—and perhaps if we have ever been able to afford him amusement, it is owing in a great degree to this cause—that we never found ourselves in company with the stupidest of all possible companions in a post-chaise, or with the most arrant cumber-corner that ever occupied a place in the mail-coach, without finding, that, in the course of our conversation with him, we had some ideas suggested to us, either grave or gay, or some information communicated in the course of our journey, which we should have regretted not to have learned, and which we should be sorry to have immediately forgotten. But Nigel was somewhat immured within the Bastile of his rank, as some philosopher (Tom Paine, we think) has happily enough expressed that sort of shyness which men of dignified situations are apt to be beset with, rather

from not exactly knowing how far, or with whom, they ought to be familiar, than from any real touch of aristocratic pride. Besides, the immediate pressure of our adventurer's own affairs was such as exclusively to engross his attention.

He sat, therefore, wrapt in his cloak, in the stern of the boat, with his mind entirely bent upon the probable issue of the interview with his Sovereign, which it was his purpose to seek; for which abstraction of mind he may be fully justified, although perhaps, by questioning the watermen who were transporting him down the river, he might have discovered matters of high concernment to him.

At any rate, Nigel remained silent till the wherry approached the town of Greenwich, when he commanded the men to put in for the nearest landing-place, as it was his purpose to go ashore there, and dismiss them from further attendance.

"That is not possible," said the fellow with the green jacket, who, as we have already said, seemed to take on himself the charge of pilotage. "We must go," he continued, "to Gravesend, where a Scottish vessel, which dropped down the river last tide for the very purpose, lies with her anchor a-peak, waiting to carry you to your own dear northern country. Your hammock is slung, and all is ready for you, and you talk of going ashore at Greenwich, as seriously as if such a thing were possible!"

"I see no impossibility," said Nigel, "in your landing me where I desire to be landed; but very little possibility of your carrying me anywhere I am not desirous of going."

"Why, whether do you manage the wherry, or we, master?" asked Green-jacket, in a tone betwixt jest and earnest; "I take it she will go the way we row her."

"Ay," retorted Nigel, "but I take it you will row her on the course I direct you, otherwise your chance of payment is but a poor one."

"Suppose we are content to risk that," said the undaunted waterman, "I wish to know how you, who talk so big—I mean no offence, master, but you do talk big—would help yourself in such a case?"

"Simply thus," answered Lord Glenvarloch—"You saw me, an hour since, bring down to the boat a trunk that neither of you could lift. If we are to contest the destination of our voyage, the same strength which tossed that chest into the wherry, will suffice to fling you out of it; wherefore, before we begin the scuffle, I pray you to remember, that, whither I would go, there I will oblige you to carry me."

"Gramercy for your kindness," said Green-jacket; "and now mark me in return. My comrade and I are two men—and you, were you as stout as George-a-Green, can pass but for one; and two, you will allow, are more than a match for one. You mistake in your reckoning, my friend."

"It is you who mistake," answered Nigel, who began to grow warm; "it is I who am three to two, sirrah—I carry two men's lives at my girdle."

So saying, he opened his cloak and showed the two pistols which he had disposed at his girdle. Green-jacket was unmoved at the display.

"I have got," said he, "a pair of barkers that will match yours," and he showed that he also was armed with pistols; "so you may begin as soon as you list."

"Then," said Lord Glenvarloch, drawing forth and cocking a pistol, "the sooner the better. Take notice, I hold you as a ruffian, who have declared you will put force on my person; and that I will shoot you through the head if you do not instantly put me ashore at Greenwich."

The other waterman, alarmed at Nigel's gesture, lay upon his oar; but Green-jacket replied coolly—"Look you, master, I should not care a tester to venture a life with you on this matter; but the truth is, I am employed to do you good, and not to do you harm."

"By whom are you employed?" said the Lord Glenvarloch; "or who dare concern themselves in me, or my affairs, without my authority?"

"As to that," answered the waterman, in the same tone of indifference, "I shall not show my commission. For myself, I care not, as I said, whether you land at Greenwich to get yourself hanged, or go down to get aboard the Royal Thistle, to make your escape to your own country; you will be equally out of my reach either way. But it is fair to put the choice before you."

"My choice is made," said Nigel. "I have told you thrice already it is my pleasure to be landed at Greenwich."

"Write it on a piece of paper," said the waterman, "that such is your positive will; I must have something to show to my employers, that the transgression of their orders lies with yourself, not with me."

"I choose to hold this trinket in my hand for the present," said Nigel, showing his pistol, "and will write you the acquittance when I go ashore."

"I would not go ashore with you for a hundred pieces," said the waterman. "Ill luck has ever attended you, except in small gaming; do me fair justice, and give me the testimony I desire. If you are afraid of foul play while you write it, you may hold my pistols, if you will." He offered the weapons to Nigel accordingly, who, while they were under his control, and all possibility of his being taken at disadvantage was excluded, no longer hesitated to give the waterman an acknowledgment, in the following terms:—

"Jack in the Green, with his mate, belonging to the wherry called the Jolly Raven, have done their duty faithfully by me, landing me at Greenwich by my express command; and being themselves willing and desirous to carry me on board the Royal Thistle, presently lying at Gravesend." Having finished this acknowledgment, which he signed with the letters, N. O. G. as indicating his name and title, he again requested to know of the waterman, to whom he delivered it, the name of his employers.

"Sir," replied Jack in the Green, "I have respected your secret, do not you seek to pry into mine. It would do you no good to know for whom I am taking this present trouble; and, to be brief, you shall not know it—and, if you will fight in the quarrel, as you said even now, the sooner we begin the better. Only this you may be cock-sure of, that we designed you no harm, and that, if you fall into any, it will be of your own wilful seeking." As he spoke, they approached the landing-place, where Nigel instantly jumped ashore. The waterman placed his small mail-trunk on the stairs, observing that there were plenty of spare hands about, to carry it where he would.

"We part friends, I hope, my lads," said the young nobleman, offering at the same time a piece of money more than double the usual fare, to the boatmen.

"We part as we met," answered Green-jacket; "and, for your money, I am paid sufficiently with this bit of paper. Only, if you owe me any love for the cast I have given you, I pray you not to dive so deep into the pockets of the next apprentice that you find fool enough to play the cavalier.—And you, you greedy swine," said he to his companion, who still had a longing eye fixed on the money which Nigel continued to offer, "push off, or, if I take a stretcher in hand, I'll break the knave's pate of thee." The fellow pushed off, as he was commanded, but still could not help muttering, "This was entirely out of waterman's rules."

Glenvarloch, though without the devotion of the "injured Thales" of the moralist, to the memory of that great princess, had now attained

"The hallow'd soil which gave Eliza birth,"

whose halls were now less respectably occupied by her successor. It was not, as has been well shown by a late author, that James was void either of parts or of good intentions; and his predecessor was at least as arbitrary in effect as he was in theory. But, while Elizabeth possessed a sternness of masculine sense and determination which rendered even her weaknesses, some of which were in themselves sufficiently ridiculous, in a certain degree respectable, James, on the other hand, was so utterly devoid of "firm resolve," so well called by the Scottish bard,

"The stalk of carle-hemp in man,"

that even his virtues and his good meaning became laughable, from the whimsical uncertainty of his conduct; so that the wisest things he ever said, and the best actions he ever did, were often touched with a strain of the ludicrous and fidgety character of the man. Accordingly, though at different periods of his reign he contrived to acquire with his people a certain degree of temporary popularity, it never long outlived the occasion which produced it; so true it is, that the mass of mankind will respect a monarch stained with actual guilt, more than one whose foibles render him only ridiculous.

To return from this digression, Lord Glenvarloch soon received, as Green-jacket had assured him, the offer of an idle bargeman to transport his baggage where he listed; but that where was a question of momentary doubt. At length, recollecting the necessity that his hair and beard should be properly arranged before he attempted to enter the royal presence, and desirous, at the same time, of obtaining some information of the motions of the Sovereign and of the Court, he desired to be guided to the next barber's shop, which we have already mentioned as the place where news of every kind circled and centred. He was speedily shown the way to such an emporium of intelligence, and soon found he was likely to hear all he desired to know, and much more, while his head was subjected to the art of a

nimble tonsor, the glibness of whose tongue kept pace with the nimbleness of his fingers while he ran on, without stint or stop, in the following excursive manner:—

"The Court here, master?—yes, master—much to the advantage of trade—good custom stirring. His Majesty loves Greenwich—hunts every morning in the Park—all decent persons admitted that have the entries of the Palace—no rabble—frightened the king's horse with their hallooing, the uncombed slaves.—Yes, sir, the beard more peaked? Yes, master, so it is worn. I know the last cut—dress several of the courtiers—one valet-of-the-chamber, two pages of the body, the clerk of the kitchen, three running footmen, two dog-boys, and an honourable Scottish knight, Sir Munko Malgrowler."

"Malgrowther, I suppose?" said Nigel, thrusting in his conjectural emendation, with infinite difficulty, betwixt two clauses of the barber's text.

"Yes, sir—Malcrowder, sir, as you say, sir—hard names the Scots have, sir, for an English mouth. Sir Munko is a handsome person, sir—perhaps you know him—bating the loss of his fingers, and the lameness of his leg, and the length of his chin. Sir, it takes me one minute, twelve seconds, more time to trim that chin of his, than any chin that I know in the town of Greenwich, sir. But he is a very comely gentleman, for all that; and a pleasant—a very pleasant gentleman, sir—and a good-humoured, saving that he is so deaf he can never hear good of any one, and so wise, that he can never believe it; but he is a very good-natured gentleman for all that, except when one speaks too low, or when a hair turns awry.—Did I graze you, sir? We shall put it to rights in a moment, with one drop of styptic—my styptic, or rather my wife's, sir—She makes the water herself. One drop of the styptic, sir, and a bit of black taffeta patch, just big enough to be the saddle to a flea, sir—Yes, sir, rather improves than otherwise. The Prince had a patch the other day, and so had the Duke: and, if you will believe me, there are seventeen yards three quarters of black taffeta already cut into patches for the courtiers."

"But Sir Mungo Malgrowther?" again interjected Nigel, with difficulty.

"Ay, ay, sir—Sir Munko, as you say; a pleasant, good-humoured gentleman as ever—To be spoken with, did you say? O ay, easily to be spoken withal, that is, as easily as his infirmity will permit. He will presently, unless some one hath asked him forth to breakfast, be taking his bone of broiled beef at my neighbour Ned Kilderkin's yonder, removed from over the way. Ned keeps an eating-house, sir, famous for pork-griskins; but Sir Munko cannot abide pork, no more than the King's most Sacred Majesty,[Footnote: The Scots, till within the last generation, disliked swine's flesh as an article of food as much as the Highlanders do at present. It was remarked as extraordinary rapacity, when the Border predators condescended to make prey of the accursed race, whom the fiend made his habitation. Ben Jonson, in drawing James's character, says, he loved "no part of a swine."] nor my Lord Duke of Lennox, nor Lord Dalgarno,—nay, I am sure, sir, if I touched you this time, it was your fault, not mine.—But a single drop of the styptic, another little patch that would make a doublet for a flea, just under the left moustache; it will become you when you smile, sir, as well as a dimple; and if you would salute your fair mistress—but I beg pardon, you are a grave gentleman, very grave to be so young.—Hope I have given no offence; it is my duty to entertain customers—my duty, sir, and my pleasure—Sir Munko Malcrowther?—yes, sir, I dare say he is at this moment in Ned's eating-house, for few folks ask him out, now Lord Huntinglen is gone to London. You will get touched again—yes, sir—there you shall find him with his can of single ale, stirred with a sprig of rosemary, for he never drinks strong potations, sir, unless to oblige Lord Huntinglen—take heed, sir—or any other person who asks him forth to breakfast—but single beer he always drinks at Ned's, with his broiled bone of beef or mutton—or, it may be, lamb at the season—but not pork, though Ned is famous for his griskins. But the Scots never eat pork—strange that! some folk think they are a sort of Jews. There is a resemblance, sir,—Do you not think so? Then they call our most gracious Sovereign the Second Solomon, and Solomon, you know, was King of the Jews; so the thing bears a face, you see. I believe, sir, you will find yourself trimmed now to your content. I will be judged by the fair mistress of your affections. Crave pardon—no offence, I trust. Pray, consult the glass—one touch of the crisping tongs, to reduce this straggler.—Thank your munificence, sir—hope your custom while you stay in Greenwich. Would you have a tune on that glittern, to put your temper in concord for the day?—Twang, twang—twang, twang, dillo. Something out of tune, sir—too many hands to touch it—we cannot keep these things like artists. Let me help you with your cloak, sir—yes, sir—You would not play yourself, sir, would you?—Way to Sir Munko's eating-house?—Yes, sir; but it is Ned's eating-house, not Sir Munko's.—The knight, to be sure, eats there, and makes it his eating-house in some sense, sir—ha, ha! Yonder it is, removed from over the way, new white-washed posts, and red lattice—fat man in his doublet at the door—Ned himself, sir—worth a thousand pounds, they say—better singeing pigs' faces than trimming courtiers—but ours is the less mechanical vocation.—Farewell, sir; hope your custom." So saying, he at length permitted Nigel to depart, whose ears, so long tormented with continued babble, tingled when it had ceased, as if a bell had been rung close to them for the same space of time.

Upon his arrival at the eating-house, where he proposed to meet with Sir Mungo Malgrowther, from whom, in despair of better advice, he trusted to receive some information as to the best mode of introducing himself into the royal presence, Lord Glenvarloch found, in the host with whom he communed, the consequential taciturnity of an Englishman well to pass in the world. Ned Kilderkin spoke as a banker writes, only touching the needful. Being asked if Sir Mungo Malgrowther was there? he replied, No. Being interrogated whether he was expected? he said, Yes. And being again required to say when he was expected, he answered, Presently. As Lord Glenvarloch next inquired, whether he himself could have any breakfast? the landlord wasted not even a syllable in reply, but, ushering him into a neat room where there were several tables, he placed one of them before an armchair, and beckoning Lord Glenvarloch to take possession, he set before him, in a very few minutes, a substantial repast of roast-beef, together with a foaming tankard, to which refreshment the keen air of the river disposed him, notwithstanding his mental embarrassments, to do much honour.

While Nigel was thus engaged in discussing his commons, but raising his head at the same time whenever he heard the door of the apartment open, eagerly desiring the arrival of Sir Mungo Malgrowther, (an event which had seldom been expected by any one with so much anxious interest,) a personage, as it seemed, of at least equal importance with the knight, entered into the apartment, and began to hold earnest colloquy with the publican, who thought proper to carry on the conference on his side unbonneted. This important gentleman's occupation might be guessed from his dress. A milk-white jerkin, and hose of white kersey; a white apron twisted around his body in the manner of a sash, in which, instead of a war-like dagger, was stuck a long-bladed knife, hilted with buck's-horn; a white nightcap on his head, under which his hair was neatly tucked, sufficiently portrayed him as one of those priests of Comus whom the vulgar call cooks; and the air with which he rated the publican for having neglected to send some provisions to the Palace, showed that he ministered to royalty itself.

"This will never answer," he said, "Master Kilderkin—the king twice asked for sweetbreads, and fricasseed coxcombs, which are a favourite dish of his most Sacred Majesty, and they were not to be had, because Master Kilderkin had not supplied them to the clerk of the kitchen, as by bargain bound." Here Kilderkin made some apology, brief, according to his own nature, and muttered in a lowly tone after the fashion of all who find themselves in a scrape. His superior replied, in a lofty strain of voice, "Do not tell me of the carrier and his wain, and of the hen-coops coming from Norfolk with the poultry; a loyal man would have sent an express—he would have gone upon his stumps, like Widdrington. What if the king had lost his appetite, Master Kilderkin? What if his most Sacred Majesty had lost his dinner? O, Master Kilderkin, if you had but the just sense of the dignity of our profession, which is told of by the witty African slave, for so the king's most excellent Majesty designates him, Publius Terentius, Tanguam in specula—in patinas inspicerejubeo."

"You are learned, Master Linklater," replied the English publican, compelling, as it were with difficulty, his mouth to utter three or four words consecutively.

"A poor smatterer," said Mr. Linklater; "but it would be a shame to us, who are his most excellent Majesty's countrymen, not in some sort to have cherished those arts wherewith he is so deeply embued—Regis ad exemplar, Master Kilderkin, totus componitur orbis—which is as much as to say, as the king quotes the cook learns. In brief, Master Kilderkin, having had the luck to be bred where humanities may be had at the matter of an English five groats by the quarter, I, like others, have acquired—ahem-hem!—" Here, the speaker's eye having fallen upon Lord Glenvarloch, he suddenly stopped in his learned harangue, with such symptoms of embarrassment as induced Ned Kilderkin to stretch his taciturnity so far as not only to ask him what he ailed, but whether he would take any thing.

"Ail nothing," replied the learned rival of the philosophical Syrus; "Nothing—and yet I do feel a little giddy. I could taste a glass of your dame's aqua mirabilis."

"I will fetch it," said Ned, giving a nod; and his back was no sooner turned, than the cook walked near the table where Lord Glenvarloch was seated, and regarding him with a look of significance, where more was meant than met the ear, said,—"You are a stranger in Greenwich, sir. I advise you to take the opportunity to step into the Park—the western wicket was ajar when I came hither; I think it will be locked presently, so you had better make the best of your way—that is, if you have any curiosity. The venison are coming into season just now, sir, and there is a pleasure in looking at a hart of grease. I always think when they are bounding so

blithely past, what a pleasure it would be, to broach their plump haunches on a spit, and to embattle their breasts in a noble fortification of puff-paste, with plenty of black pepper."

He said no more, as Kilderkin re-entered with the cordial, but edged off from Nigel without waiting any reply, only repeating the same look of intelligence with which he had accosted him.

Nothing makes men's wits so alert as personal danger. Nigel took the first opportunity which his host's attention to the yeoman of the royal kitchen permitted, to discharge his reckoning, and readily obtained a direction to the wicket in question. He found it upon the latch, as he had been taught to expect; and perceived that it admitted him to a narrow footpath, which traversed a close and tangled thicket, designed for the cover of the does and the young fawns. Here he conjectured it would be proper to wait; nor had he been stationary above five minutes, when the cook, scalded as much with heat of motion as ever he had been by his huge fire-place, arrived almost breathless, and with his pass-key hastily locked the wicket behind him.

Ere Lord Glenvarloch had time to speculate upon this action, the man approached with anxiety, and said—"Good lord, my Lord Glenvarloch!—why will you endanger yourself thus?"

"You know me then, my friend?" said Nigel.

"Not much of that, my lord—but I know your honour's noble house well.—My name is Laurie Linklater, my lord."

"Linklater!" repeated Nigel. "I should recollect—"

"Under your lordship's favour," he continued, "I was 'prentice, my lord, to old Mungo Moniplies, the flesher at the wanton West-Port of Edinburgh, which I wish I saw again before I died. And, your honour's noble father having taken Richie Moniplies into his house to wait on your lordship, there was a sort of connexion, your lordship sees."

"Ah!" said Lord Glenvarloch, "I had almost forgot your name, but not your kind purpose. You tried to put Richie in the way of presenting a supplication to his Majesty?"

"Most true, my lord," replied the king's cook. "I had like to have come by mischief in the job; for Richie, who was always wilful, 'wadna be guided by me,' as the sang says. But nobody amongst these brave English cooks can kittle up his Majesty's most sacred palate with our own gusty Scottish dishes. So I e'en betook myself to my craft, and concocted a mess of friar's chicken for the soup, and a savoury hachis, that made the whole cabal coup the crans; and, instead of disgrace, I came by preferment. I am one of the clerks of the kitchen now, make me thankful—with a finger in the purveyor's office, and may get my whole hand in by and by."

"I am truly glad," said Nigel, "to hear that you have not suffered on my account,—still more so at your good fortune."

"You bear a kind heart, my lord," said Linklater, "and do not forget poor people; and, troth, I see not why they should be forgotten, since the king's errand may sometimes fall in the cadger's gate. I have followed your lordship in the street, just to look at such a stately shoot of the old oak-tree; and my heart jumped into my throat, when I saw you sitting openly in the eating-house yonder, and knew there was such danger to your person."

"What! there are warrants against me, then?" said Nigel.

"It is even true, my lord; and there are those who are willing to blacken you as much as they can.—God forgive them, that would sacrifice an honourable house for their own base ends!"

"Amen," said Nigel.

"For, say your lordship may have been a little wild, like other young gentlemen—"

"We have little time to talk of it, my friend," said Nigel. "The point in question is, how am I to get speech of the king?"

"The king, my lord!" said Linklater in astonishment; "why, will not that be rushing wilfully into danger?—scalding yourself, as I may say, with your own ladle?"

"My good friend," answered Nigel, "my experience of the Court, and my knowledge of the circumstances in which I stand, tell me, that the manliest and most direct road is, in my case, the surest and the safest. The king has both a head to apprehend what is just, and a heart to do what is kind."

"It is e'en true, my lord, and so we, his old servants, know," added Linklater; "but, woe's me, if you knew how many folks make it their daily and nightly purpose to set his head against his heart, and his heart against his head—to make him do hard things because they are called just, and unjust things because they are represented as kind. Woe's me! it is with his Sacred Majesty, and the favourites who work upon him, even according to the homely proverb that men taunt my calling with,—'God sends good meat, but the devil sends cooks.'"

"It signifies not talking of it, my good friend," said Nigel, "I must take my risk, my honour peremptorily demands it. They may maim me, or beggar me, but they shall not say I fled from my accusers. My peers shall hear my vindication."

"Your peers?" exclaimed the cook—"Alack-a-day, my lord, we are not in Scotland, where the nobles can bang it out bravely, were it even with the king himself, now and then. This mess must be cooked in the Star-Chamber, and that is an oven seven times heated, my lord;—and yet, if you are determined to see the king, I will not say but you may find some favour, for he likes well any thing that is appealed directly to his own wisdom, and sometimes, in the like cases, I have known him stick by his own opinion, which is always a fair one. Only mind, if you will forgive me, my lord—mind to spice high with Latin; a curm or two of Greek would not be amiss; and, if you can bring in any thing about the judgment of Solomon, in the original Hebrew, and season with a merry jest or so, the dish will be the more palatable.—Truly, I think, that, besides my skill in art, I owe much to the stripes of the Rector of the High School, who imprinted on my mind that cooking scene in the Heautontimorumenos."

"Leaving that aside, my friend," said Lord Glenvarloch, "can you inform me which way I shall most readily get to the sight and speech of the king?"

"To the sight of him readily enough," said Linklater; "he is galloping about these alleys, to see them strike the hart, to get him an appetite for a nooning—and that reminds me I should be in the kitchen. To the speech of the king you will not come so easily, unless you could either meet him alone, which rarely chances, or wait for him among the crowd that go to see him alight. And now, farewell, my lord, and God speed!—if I could do more for you, I would offer it."

"You have done enough, perhaps, to endanger yourself," said Lord Glenvarloch. "I pray you to be gone, and leave me to my fate."

The honest cook lingered, but a nearer burst of the horns apprized him that there was no time to lose; and, acquainting Nigel that he would leave the postern-door on the latch to secure his retreat in that direction, he bade God bless him, and farewell.

In the kindness of this humble countryman, flowing partly from national partiality, partly from a sense of long-remembered benefits, which had been scarce thought on by those who had bestowed them, Lord Glenvarloch thought he saw the last touch of sympathy which he was to receive in this cold and courtly region, and felt that he must now be sufficient to himself, or be utterly lost.

He traversed more than one alley, guided by the sounds of the chase, and met several of the inferior attendants upon the king's sport, who regarded him only as one of the spectators who were sometimes permitted to enter the Park by the concurrence of the officers about the Court. Still there was no appearance of James, or any of his principal courtiers, and Nigel began to think whether, at the risk of incurring disgrace similar to that which had attended the rash exploit of Richie Moniplies, he should not repair to the Palace-gate, in order to address the king on his return, when Fortune presented him the opportunity of doing so, in her own way.

He was in one of those long walks by which the Park was traversed, when he heard, first a distant rustling, then the rapid approach of hoofs shaking the firm earth on which he stood; then a distant halloo, warned by which he stood up by the side of the avenue, leaving free room for the passage of the chase. The stag, reeling, covered with foam, and blackened with sweat, his nostrils extended as he gasped for breath, made a shift to come up as far as where Nigel stood, and, without turning to bay, was there pulled down by two tall greyhounds of the breed still used by the hardy deer-stalkers of the Scottish Highlands, but which has been long unknown in England. One dog struck at the buck's throat, another dashed his sharp nose and fangs, I might almost say, into the animal's bowels. It would have been natural for Lord Glenvarloch, himself persecuted as if by hunters, to have thought upon the occasion like the melancholy Jacques; but habit is a

strange matter, and I fear that his feelings on the occasion were rather those of the practised huntsman than of the moralist. He had no time, however, to indulge them, for mark what befell.

A single horseman followed the chase, upon a steed so thoroughly subjected to the rein, that it obeyed the touch of the bridle as if it had been a mechanical impulse operating on the nicest piece of machinery; so that, seated deep in his demipique saddle, and so trussed up there as to make falling almost impossible, the rider, without either fear or hesitation, might increase or diminish the speed at which he rode, which, even on the most animating occasions of the chase, seldom exceeded three-fourths of a gallop, the horse keeping his haunches under him, and never stretching forward beyond the managed pace of the academy. The security with which he chose to prosecute even this favourite, and, in the ordinary case, somewhat dangerous amusement, as well as the rest of his equipage, marked King James. No attendant was within sight; indeed, it was often a nice strain of flattery to permit the Sovereign to suppose he had outridden and distanced all the rest of the chase.

"Weel dune, Bash—weel dune, Battie!" he exclaimed as he came up. "By the honour of a king, ye are a credit to the Braes of Balwhither!—Haud my horse, man," he called out to Nigel, without stopping to see to whom he had addressed himself—"Haud my naig, and help me doun out o' the saddle—deil ding your saul, sirrah, canna ye mak haste before these lazy smaiks come up?—haud the rein easy—dinna let him swerve—now, haud the stirrup—that will do, man, and now we are on terra firma." So saying, without casting an eye on his assistant, gentle King Jamie, unsheathing the short, sharp hanger, (couteau de chasse,) which was the only thing approaching to a sword that he could willingly endure the sight of, drew the blade with great satisfaction across the throat of the buck, and put an end at once to its struggles and its agonies.

Lord Glenvarloch, who knew well the silvan duty which the occasion demanded, hung the bridle of the king's palfrey on the branch of a tree, and, kneeling duteously down, turned the slaughtered deer upon its back, and kept the quarree in that position, while the king, too intent upon his sport to observe any thing else, drew his couteau down the breast of the animal, secundum artem; and, having made a cross cut, so as to ascertain the depth of the fat upon the chest, exclaimed, in a sort of rapture, "Three inches of white fat on the brisket!—prime—prime—as I am a crowned sinner—and deil ane o' the lazy loons in but mysell! Seven—aught—aught tines on the antlers. By G—d, a hart of aught tines, and the first of the season! Bash and Battie, blessings on the heart's-root of ye! Buss me, my bairns, buss me." The dogs accordingly fawned upon him, licked him with bloody jaws, and soon put him in such a state that it might have seemed treason had been doing its full work upon his anointed body. "Bide doun, with a mischief to ye—bide doun, with a wanion," cried the king, almost overturned by the obstreperous caresses of the large stag-hounds. "But ye are just like ither folks, gie ye an inch and ye take an ell.—And wha may ye be, friend?" he said, now finding leisure to take a nearer view of Nigel, and observing what in his first emotion of silvan delight had escaped him,— "Ye are nane of our train, man. In the name of God, what the devil are ye?"

"An unfortunate man, sire," replied Nigel.

"I dare say that," answered the king, snappishly, "or I wad have seen naething of you. My lieges keep a' their happiness to themselves; but let bowls row wrang wi' them, and I am sure to hear of it."

"And to whom else can we carry our complaints but to your Majesty, who is Heaven's vicegerent over us!" answered Nigel.

"Right, man, right—very weel spoken," said the king; "but you should leave Heaven's vicegerent some quiet on earth, too."

"If your Majesty will look on me," (for hitherto the king had been so busy, first with the dogs, and then with the mystic operation of breaking, in vulgar phrase, cutting up the deer, that he had scarce given his assistant above a transient glance,) "you will see whom necessity makes bold to avail himself of an opportunity which may never again occur."

King James looked; his blood left his cheek, though it continued stained with that of the animal which lay at his feet, he dropped the knife from his hand, cast behind him a faltering eye, as if he either meditated flight or looked out for assistance, and then exclaimed,— "Glenvarlochides! as sure as I was christened James Stewart. Here is a bonny spot of work, and me alone, and on foot too!" he added, bustling to get upon his horse.

"Forgive me that I interrupt you, my liege," said Nigel, placing himself between the king and his steed; "hear me but a moment!"

"I'll hear ye best on horseback," said the king. "I canna hear a word on foot, man, not a word; and it is not seemly to stand cheek-for-chowl confronting us that gate. Bide out of our gate, sir, we charge you on your allegiance.—The deil's in them a', what can they be doing?"

"By the crown that you wear, my liege," said Nigel, "and for which my ancestors have worthily fought, I conjure you to be composed, and to hear me but a moment!"

That which he asked was entirely out of the monarch's power to grant. The timidity which he showed was not the plain downright cowardice, which, like a natural impulse, compels a man to flight, and which can excite little but pity or contempt, but a much more ludicrous, as well as more mingled sensation. The poor king was frightened at once and angry, desirous of securing his safety, and at the same time ashamed to compromise his dignity; so that without attending to what Lord Glenvarloch endeavoured to explain, he kept making at his horse, and repeating, "We are a free king, man,—we are a free king—we will not be controlled by a subject.—In the name of God, what keeps Steenie? And, praised be his name, they are coming—Hillo, ho—here, here—Steenie, Steenie!"

The Duke of Buckingham galloped up, followed by several courtiers and attendants of the royal chase, and commenced with his usual familiarity,—"I see Fortune has graced our dear dad, as usual.—But what's this?"

"What is it? It is treason for what I ken," said the king; "and a' your wyte, Steenie. Your dear dad and gossip might have been murdered, for what you care."

"Murdered? Secure the villain!" exclaimed the Duke. "By Heaven, it is Olifaunt himself!" A dozen of the hunters dismounted at once, letting their horses run wild through the park. Some seized roughly on Lord Glenvarloch, who thought it folly to offer resistance, while others busied themselves with the king. "Are you wounded, my liege—are you wounded?"

"Not that I ken of," said the king, in the paroxysm of his apprehension, (which, by the way, might be pardoned in one of so timorous a temper, and who, in his time, had been exposed to so many strange attempts)— "Not that I ken of—but search him—search him. I am sure I saw fire-arms under his cloak. I am sure I smelled powder—I am dooms sure of that."

Lord Glenvarloch's cloak being stripped off, and his pistols discovered, a shout of wonder and of execration on the supposed criminal purpose, arose from the crowd now thickening every moment. Not that celebrated pistol, which, though resting on a bosom as gallant and as loyal as Nigel's, spread such cause less alarm among knights and dames at a late high solemnity—not that very pistol caused more temporary consternation than was so groundlessly excited by the arms which were taken from Lord Glenvarloch's person; and not Mhic-Allastair-More himself could repel with greater scorn and indignation, the insinuations that they were worn for any sinister purposes.

"Away with the wretch—the parricide—the bloody-minded villain!" was echoed on all hands; and the king, who naturally enough set the same value on his own life, at which it was, or seemed to be, rated by others, cried out, louder than all the rest, "Ay, ay—away with him. I have had enough of him and so has the country. But do him no bodily harm—and, for God's sake, sirs, if ye are sure ye have thoroughly disarmed him, put up your swords, dirks, and skenes, for you will certainly do each other a mischief."

There was a speedy sheathing of weapons at the king's command; for those who had hitherto been brandishing them in loyal bravado, began thereby to call to mind the extreme dislike which his Majesty nourished against naked steel, a foible which seemed to be as constitutional as his timidity, and was usually ascribed to the brutal murder of Rizzio having been perpetrated in his unfortunate mother's presence before he yet saw the light.

At this moment, the Prince, who had been hunting in a different part of the then extensive Park, and had received some hasty and confused information of what was going forward, came rapidly up, with one or two noblemen in his train, and amongst others Lord Dalgarno. He sprang from his horse and asked eagerly if his father were wounded.

"Not that I am sensible of, Baby Charles—but a wee matter exhausted, with struggling single-handed with the assassin.—Steenie, fill up a cup of wine—the leathern bottle is hanging at our pommel.—Buss me, then, Baby Charles," continued the monarch, after he had taken this cup of comfort; "O man, the

Commonwealth and you have had a fair escape from the heavy and bloody loss of a dear father; for we are pater patriae, as weel as pater familias.—Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus tamen cari capitis!—Woe is me, black cloth would have been dear in England, and dry een scarce!"

And, at the very idea of the general grief which must have attended his death, the good-natured monarch cried heartily himself.

"Is this possible?" said Charles, sternly; for his pride was hurt at his father's demeanour on the one hand, while on the other, he felt the resentment of a son and a subject, at the supposed attempt on the king's life. "Let some one speak who has seen what happened—My Lord of Buckingham!"

"I cannot say my lord," replied the Duke, "that I saw any actual violence offered to his Majesty, else I should have avenged him on the spot."

"You would have done wrong, then, in your zeal, George," answered the Prince; "such offenders were better left to be dealt with by the laws. But was the villain not struggling with his Majesty?"

"I cannot term it so, my lord," said the Duke, who, with many faults, would have disdained an untruth; "he seemed to desire to detain his Majesty, who, on the contrary, appeared to wish to mount his horse; but they have found pistols on his person, contrary to the proclamation, and, as it proves to be by Nigel Olifaunt, of whose ungoverned disposition your Royal Highness has seen some samples, we seem to be justified in apprehending the worst."

"Nigel Olifaunt!" said the Prince; "can that unhappy man so soon have engaged in a new trespass? Let me see those pistols."

"Ye are not so unwise as to meddle with such snap-haunces, Baby Charles?" said James—"Do not give him them, Steenie—I command you on your allegiance! They may go off of their own accord, whilk often befalls.—You will do it, then?—Saw ever a man sic wilful bairns as we are cumbered with!—Havena we guardsmen and soldiers enow, but you must unload the weapons yourself—you, the heir of our body and dignities, and sae mony men around that are paid for venturing life in our cause?"

But without regarding his father's exclamations, Prince Charles, with the obstinacy which characterised him in trifles, as well as matters of consequence, persisted in unloading the pistols with his own hand, of the double bullets with which each was charged. The hands of all around were held up in astonishment at the horror of the crime supposed to have been intended, and the escape which was presumed so narrow.

Nigel had not yet spoken a word—he now calmly desired to be heard.

"To what purpose?" answered the Prince coldly. "You knew yourself accused of a heavy offence, and, instead of rendering yourself up to justice, in terms of the proclamation, you are here found intruding yourself on his Majesty's presence, and armed with unlawful weapons."

"May it please you, sir," answered Nigel, "I wore these unhappy weapons for my own defence; and not very many hours since they were necessary to protect the lives of others."

"Doubtless, my lord," answered the Prince, still calm and unmoved,— "your late mode of life, and the associates with whom you have lived, have made you familiar with scenes and weapons of violence. But it is not to me you are to plead your cause."

"Hear me—hear me, noble Prince!" said Nigel, eagerly. "Hear me! You—even you yourself—may one day ask to be heard, and in vain."

"How, sir," said the Prince, haughtily—"how am I to construe that, my lord?"

"If not on earth, sir," replied the prisoner, "yet to Heaven we must all pray for patient and favourable audience."

"True, my lord," said the Prince, bending his head with haughty acquiescence; "nor would I now refuse such audience to you, could it avail you. But you shall suffer no wrong. We will ourselves look into your case."

"Ay, ay," answered the king, "he hath made appellatio ad Casarem—we will interrogate Glenvarlochides ourselves, time and place fitting; and, in the meanwhile, have him and his weapons away, for I am weary of the sight of them."

In consequence of directions hastily given, Nigel was accordingly removed from the presence, where, however, his words had not altogether fallen to the ground.

"This is a most strange matter, George," said the Prince to the favourite; "this gentleman hath a good countenance, a happy presence, and much calm firmness in his look and speech. I cannot think he would attempt a crime so desperate and useless."

"I profess neither love nor favour to the young man," answered Buckingham, whose high-spirited ambition bore always an open character: "but I cannot but agree with your Highness, that our dear gossip hath been something hasty in apprehending personal danger from him."

"By my saul, Steenie, ye are not blate, to say so!" said the king. "Do I not ken the smell of pouter, think ye? Who else nosed out the Fifth of November, save our royal selves? Cecil, and Suffolk, and all of them, were at fault, like sae mony mongrel tikes, when I puzzled it out: and trow ye that I cannot smell pouter? Why, 'sblood, man, Joannes Barclaius thought my ingine was in some measure inspiration, and terms his history of the plot, Series patefacti divinitus parricidii; and Spondanus, in like manner, saith of us, Divinitus evasit."

"The land was happy in your Majesty's escape," said the Duke of Buckingham, "and not less in the quick wit which tracked that labyrinth of treason by so fine and almost invisible a clew."

"Saul, man, Steenie, ye are right! There are few youths have sic true judgment as you, respecting the wisdom of their elders; and, as for this fause, traitorous smaik, I doubt he is a hawk of the same nest. Saw ye not something papistical about him? Let them look that he bears not a crucifix, or some sic Roman trinket, about him."

"It would ill become me to attempt the exculpation of this unhappy man," said Lord Dalgarno, "considering the height of his present attempt, which has made all true men's blood curdle in their veins. Yet I cannot avoid intimating, with all due submission to his Majesty's infallible judgment, in justice to one who showed himself formerly only my enemy, though he now displays himself in much blacker colours, that this Olifaunt always appeared to me more as a Puritan than as a Papist."

"Ah, Dalgarno, art thou there, man?" said the king. "And ye behoved to keep back, too, and leave us to our own natural strength and the care of Providence, when we were in grips with the villain!"

"Providence, may it please your most Gracious Majesty, would not fail to aid, in such a strait, the care of three weeping kingdoms," said Lord Dalgarno.

"Surely, man—surely," replied the king—"but a sight of your father, with his long whinyard, would have been a blithe matter a short while syne; and in future we will aid the ends of Providence in our favour, by keeping near us two stout beef-eaters of the guard.—And so this Olifaunt is a Puritan?—not the less like to be a Papist, for all that—for extremities meet, as the scholiast proveth. There are, as I have proved in my book, Puritans of papistical principles—it is just a new tout on an old horn."

Here the king was reminded by the Prince, who dreaded perhaps that he was going to recite the whole Basilicon Doron, that it would be best to move towards the Palace, and consider what was to be done for satisfying the public mind, in whom the morning's adventure was likely to excite much speculation. As they entered the gate of the Palace, a female bowed and presented a paper, which the king received, and, with a sort of groan, thrust it into his side pocket. The Prince expressed some curiosity to know its contents. "The valet in waiting will tell you them," said the king, "when I strip off my cassock. D'ye think, Baby, that I can read all that is thrust into my hands? See to me, man"—(he pointed to the pockets of his great trunk breeches, which were stuffed with papers)—"We are like an ass—that we should so speak—stooping betwixt two burdens. Ay, ay, Asinus fortis accumbens inter terminos, as the Vulgate hath it—Ay, ay, Vidi terrain quod esset optima, et supposui humerum ad portandum, et factus sum tributis serviens—I saw this land of England, and became an overburdened king thereof."

"You are indeed well loaded, my dear dad and gossip," said the Duke of Buckingham, receiving the papers which King James emptied out of his pockets.

"Ay, ay," continued the monarch; "take them to you per aversionem, bairns—the one pouch stuffed with petitions, t'other with pasquinadoes; a fine time we have on't. On my conscience, I believe the tale of Cadmus was hieroglyphical, and that the dragon's teeth whilk he sowed were the letters he invented. Ye are laughing, Baby Charles?—Mind what I say.—When I came here first frae our ain country, where the men are as rude as the weather, by my conscience, England was a bielly bit; one would have thought the king had little to do but to walk by quiet waters, per aquam refectiois. But, I kenna how or why, the place is sair changed—read that libel upon us and on our regimen. The dragon's teeth are sown, Baby Charles; I pray God they bearna their armed harvest in your day, if I suld not live to see it. God forbid I should, for there will be an awful day's kemping at the shearing of them."

"I shall know how to stifle the crop in the blade,—ha, George?" said the Prince, turning to the favourite with a look expressive of some contempt for his father's apprehensions, and full of confidence in the superior firmness and decision of his own counsels.

While this discourse was passing, Nigel, in charge of a pursuivant-at-arms, was pushed and dragged through the small town, all the inhabitants of which, having been alarmed by the report of an attack on the king's life, now pressed forward to see the supposed traitor. Amid the confusion of the moment, he could descry the face of the victualler, arrested into a stare of stolid wonder, and that of the barber grinning betwixt horror and eager curiosity. He thought that he also had a glimpse of his waterman in the green jacket.

He had no time for remarks, being placed in a boat with the pursuivant and two yeomen of the guard, and rowed up the river as fast as the arms of six stout watermen could pull against the tide. They passed the groves of masts which even then astonished the stranger with the extended commerce of London, and now approached those low and blackened walls of curtain and bastion, which exhibit here and there a piece of ordnance, and here and there a solitary sentinel under arms, but have otherwise so little of the military terrors of a citadel. A projecting low-browed arch, which had loomed over many an innocent, and many a guilty head, in similar circumstances, now spread its dark frowns over that of Nigel. The boat was put close up to the broad steps against which the tide was lapping its lazy wave. The warder on duty looked from the wicket, and spoke to the pursuivant in whispers. In a few minutes the Lieutenant of the Tower appeared, received, and granted an acknowledgment for the body of Nigel, Lord Glenvarloch.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Ye towers of Julius! London's lasting shame;
With many a foul and midnight murder fed!
Gray.

Such is the exclamation of Gray. Bandello, long before him, has said something like it; and the same sentiment must, in some shape or other, have frequently occurred to those, who, remembering the fate of other captives in that memorable state-prison, may have had but too much reason to anticipate their own. The dark and low arch, which seemed, like the entrance to Dante's Hell, to forbid hope of regress—the muttered sounds of the warders, and petty formalities observed in opening and shutting the grated wicket—the cold and constrained salutation of the Lieutenant of the fortress, who showed his prisoner that distant and measured respect which authority pays as a tax to decorum, all struck upon Nigel's heart, impressing on him the cruel consciousness of captivity.

"I am a prisoner," he said, the words escaping from him almost unawares; "I am a prisoner, and in the Tower!"

The Lieutenant bowed—"And it is my duty," he said, "to show your lordship your chamber, where, I am compelled to say, my orders are to place you under some restraint. I will make it as easy as my duty permits."

Nigel only bowed in return to this compliment, and followed the Lieutenant to the ancient buildings on the western side of the parade, and adjoining to the chapel, used in those days as a state-prison, but in ours as the mess-room of the officers of the guard upon duty at the fortress. The double doors were unlocked, the prisoner ascended a few steps, followed by the Lieutenant, and a warder of the higher class. They entered a large, but irregular, low-roofed, and dark apartment, exhibiting a very scanty proportion of furniture. The warder had orders to light a fire, and attend to Lord Glenvarloch's commands in all things consistent with his duty; and the Lieutenant, having made his reverence with the customary compliment, that he trusted his lordship would not long remain under his guardianship, took his leave.

Nigel would have asked some questions of the warder, who remained to put the apartment into order, but the man had caught the spirit of his office. He seemed not to hear some of the prisoner's questions, though of the most ordinary kind, did not reply to others, and when he did speak, it was in a short and sullen tone, which, though not positively disrespectful, was such as at least to encourage no farther communication.

Nigel left him, therefore, to do his work in silence, and proceeded to amuse himself with the melancholy task of deciphering the names, mottoes, verses, and hieroglyphics, with which his predecessors in captivity had covered the walls of their prison-house. There he saw the names of many a forgotten sufferer mingled with others which will continue in remembrance until English history shall perish. There were the pious effusions of the devout Catholic, poured forth on the eve of his sealing his profession at Tyburn, mingled with those of the firm Protestant, about to feed the fires of Smithfield. There the slender hand of the unfortunate Jane Grey, whose fate was to draw tears from future generations, might be contrasted with the bolder touch which impressed deep on the walls the Bear and Ragged Staff, the proud emblem of the proud Dudleys. It was like the roll of the prophet, a record of lamentation and mourning, and yet not unmixed with brief interjections of resignation, and sentences expressive of the firmest resolution.[Footnote: These memorials of illustrious criminals, or of innocent persons who had the fate of such, are still preserved, though at one time, in the course of repairing the rooms, they were in some danger of being whitewashed. They are preserved at present with becoming respect, and have most of them been engraved.—See BAYLEY'S History and Antiquities of the Tower of London.]

In the sad task of examining the miseries of his predecessors in captivity, Lord Glenvarloch was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door of his prison-room. It was the warder, who came to inform him, that, by order of the Lieutenant of the Tower, his lordship was to have the society and attendance of a fellow-prisoner in his place of confinement. Nigel replied hastily, that he wished no attendance, and would rather be left alone; but the warder gave him to understand, with a kind of grumbling civility, that the Lieutenant was the best judge how his prisoners should be accommodated, and that he would have no trouble with the boy, who was such a slip of a thing as was scarce worth turning a key upon.—"There, Giles," he said, "bring the child in."

Another warder put the "lad before him" into the room, and, both withdrawing, bolt crashed and chain clanged, as they replaced these ponderous obstacles to freedom. The boy was clad in a grey suit of the finest cloth, laid down with silver lace, with a buff-coloured cloak of the same pattern. His cap, which was a Montero of black velvet, was pulled over his brows, and, with the profusion of his long ringlets, almost concealed his face. He stood on the very spot where the warder had quitted his collar, about two steps from the door of the apartment, his eyes fixed on the ground, and every joint trembling with confusion and terror. Nigel could well have dispensed with his society, but it was not in his nature to behold distress, whether of body or mind, without endeavouring to relieve it.

"Cheer up," he said, "my pretty lad. We are to be companions, it seems, for a little time—at least I trust your confinement will be short, since you are too young to have done ought to deserve long restraint. Come, come—do not be discouraged. Your hand is cold and trembles? the air is warm too—but it may be the damp of this darksome room. Place you by the fire.—What! weeping-ripe, my little man? I pray you, do not be a child. You have no beard yet, to be dishonoured by your tears, but yet you should not cry like a girl. Think you are only shut up for playing truant, and you can pass a day without weeping, surely."

The boy suffered himself to be led and seated by the fire, but, after retaining for a long time the very posture which he assumed in sitting down, he suddenly changed it in order to wring his hands with an air of the bitterest distress, and then, spreading them before his face, wept so plentifully, that the tears found their way in floods through his slender fingers.

Nigel was in some degree rendered insensible to his own situation, by his feelings for the intense agony by which so young and beautiful a creature seemed to be utterly overwhelmed; and, sitting down close beside the boy, he applied the most soothing terms which occurred, to endeavour to alleviate his distress; and, with an action which the difference of their age rendered natural, drew his hand kindly along the long hair of the disconsolate child. The lad appeared so shy as even to shrink from this slight approach to familiarity—yet, when Lord Glenvarloch, perceiving and allowing for his timidity, sat down on the farther side of the fire, he appeared to be more at his ease, and to hearken with some apparent interest to the arguments which from time to time Nigel used, to induce him to moderate, at least, the violence of his grief. As the boy listened, his tears, though they continued to flow freely, seemed to escape from their source more easily, his sobs were less convulsive, and became gradually changed into low sighs, which succeeded each other, indicating as much sorrow, perhaps, but less alarm, than his first transports had shown.

"Tell me who and what you are, my pretty boy," said Nigel.—"Consider me, child, as a companion, who wishes to be kind to you, would you but teach him how he can be so."

"Sir—my lord, I mean," answered the boy, very timidly, and in a voice which could scarce be heard even across the brief distance which divided them, "you are very good—and I—am very unhappy—"

A second fit of tears interrupted what else he had intended to say, and it required a renewal of Lord Glenvarloch's good-natured expostulations and encouragements, to bring him once more to such composure as rendered the lad capable of expressing himself intelligibly. At length, however, he was able to say—"I am sensible of your goodness, my lord—and grateful for it—but I am a poor unhappy creature, and, what is worse, have myself only to thank for my misfortunes."

"We are seldom absolutely miserable, my young acquaintance," said Nigel, "without being ourselves more or less responsible for it—I may well say so, otherwise I had not been here to-day—but you are very young, and can have but little to answer for."

"O sir! I wish I could say so—I have been self-willed and obstinate—and rash and ungovernable—and now—now, how dearly do I pay the price of it!"

"Pshaw, my boy," replied Nigel; "this must be some childish frolic—some breaking out of bounds—some truant trick—And yet how should any of these have brought you to the Tower?—There is something mysterious about you, young man, which I must inquire into."

"Indeed, indeed, my lord, there is no harm about me," said the boy, more moved it would seem to confession by the last words, by which he seemed considerably alarmed, than by all the kind expostulations and arguments which Nigel had previously used. "I am innocent—that is, I have done wrong, but nothing to deserve being in this frightful place."

"Tell me the truth, then," said Nigel, in a tone in which command mingled with encouragement; "you have nothing to fear from me, and as little to hope, perhaps—yet, placed as I am, I would know with whom I speak."

"With an unhappy—boy, sir—and idle and truantly disposed, as your lordship said," answered the lad, looking up, and showing a countenance in which paleness and blushes succeeded each other, as fear and shamefacedness alternately had influence. "I left my father's house without leave, to see the king hunt in the Park at Greenwich; there came a cry of treason, and all the gates were shut—I was frightened, and hid myself in a thicket, and I was found by some of the rangers and examined—and they said I gave no good account of myself—and so I was sent hither."

"I am an unhappy, a most unhappy being," said Lord Glenvarloch, rising and walking through the apartment; "nothing approaches me but shares my own bad fate! Death and imprisonment dog my steps, and involve all who are found near me. Yet this boy's story sounds strangely.—You say you were examined, my young friend—Let me pray you to say whether you told your name, and your means of gaining admission into the Park—if so, they surely would not have detained you?"

"O, my lord," said the boy, "I took care not to tell them the name of the friend that let me in; and as to my father—I would not he knew where I now am for all the wealth in London!"

"But do you not expect," said Nigel, "that they will dismiss you till you let them know who and what you are?"

"What good will it do them to keep so useless a creature as myself?" said the boy; "they must let me go, were it but out of shame."

"Do not trust to that—tell me your name and station—I will communicate them to the Lieutenant—he is a man of quality and honour, and will not only be willing to procure your liberation, but also, I have no doubt, will intercede with your father. I am partly answerable for such poor aid as I can afford, to get you out of this embarrassment, since I occasioned the alarm owing to which you were arrested; so tell me your name, and your father's name."

"My name to you? O never, never!" answered the boy, in a tone of deep emotion, the cause of which Nigel could not comprehend.

"Are you so much afraid of me, young man," he replied, "because I am here accused and a prisoner? Consider, a man may be both, and deserve neither suspicion nor restraint. Why should you distrust me? You seem friendless, and I am myself so much in the same circumstances, that I cannot but pity your situation when I reflect on my own. Be wise; I have spoken kindly to you—I mean as kindly as I speak."

"O, I doubt it not, I doubt it not, my lord," said the boy, "and I could tell you all—that is, almost all."

"Tell me nothing, my young friend, excepting what may assist me in being useful to you," said Nigel.

"You are generous, my lord," said the boy; "and I am sure—O sure, I might safely trust to your honour—But yet—but yet—I am so sore beset—I have been so rash, so unguarded—I can never tell you of my folly. Besides, I have already told too much to one whose heart I thought I had moved—yet I find myself here."

"To whom did you make this disclosure?" said Nigel.

"I dare not tell," replied the youth.

"There is something singular about you, my young friend," said Lord Glenvarloch, withdrawing with a gentle degree of compulsion the hand with which the boy had again covered his eyes; "do not pain yourself with thinking on your situation just at present—your pulse is high, and your hand feverish—lay yourself on yonder pallet, and try to compose yourself to sleep. It is the readiest and best remedy for the fancies with which you are worrying yourself."

"I thank you for your considerate kindness, my lord," said the boy; "with your leave I will remain for a little space quiet in this chair—I am better thus than on the couch. I can think undisturbedly on what I have done, and have still to do; and if God sends slumber to a creature so exhausted, it shall be most welcome."

So saying, the boy drew his hand from Lord Nigel's, and, drawing around him and partly over his face the folds of his ample cloak, he resigned himself to sleep or meditation, while his companion, notwithstanding the exhausting scenes of this and the preceding day, continued his pensive walk up and down the apartment.

Every reader has experienced, that times occur, when far from being lord of external circumstances, man is unable to rule even the wayward realm of his own thoughts. It was Nigel's natural wish to consider his own situation coolly, and fix on the course which it became him as a man of sense and courage to adopt; and yet, in spite of himself, and notwithstanding the deep interest of the critical state in which he was placed, it did so happen that his fellow-prisoner's situation occupied more of his thoughts than did his own. There was no accounting for this wandering of the imagination, but also there was no striving with it. The pleading tones of one of the sweetest voices he had ever heard, still rung in his ear, though it seemed that sleep had now fettered the tongue of the speaker. He drew near on tiptoe to satisfy himself whether it were so. The folds of the cloak hid the lower part of his face entirely; but the bonnet, which had fallen a little aside, permitted him to see the forehead streaked with blue veins, the closed eyes, and the long silken eyelashes.

"Poor child," said Nigel to himself, as he looked on him, nestled up as it were in the folds of his mantle, "the dew is yet on thy eyelashes, and thou hast fairly wept thyself asleep. Sorrow is a rough nurse to one so young and delicate as thou art. Peace be to thy slumbers, I will not disturb them. My own misfortunes require my attention, and it is to their contemplation that I must resign myself."

He attempted to do so, but was crossed at every turn by conjectures which intruded themselves as before, and which all regarded the sleeper rather than himself. He was angry and vexed, and expostulated with himself concerning the overweening interest which he took in the concerns of one of whom he knew nothing, saving that the boy was forced into his company, perhaps as a spy, by those to whose custody he was committed—but the spell could not be broken, and the thoughts which he struggled to dismiss, continued to haunt him.

Thus passed half an hour, or more; at the conclusion of which, the harsh sound of the revolving bolts was again heard, and the voice of the warder announced that a man desired to speak with Lord Glenvarloch. "A man to speak with me, under my present circumstances!—Who can it be?" And John Christie, his landlord of Paul's Wharf, resolved his doubts, by entering the apartment. "Welcome—most welcome, mine honest landlord!" said Lord Glenvarloch. "How could I have dreamt of seeing you in my present close lodgings?" And at the same time, with the frankness of old kindness, he walked up to Christie and offered his hand; but John started back as from the look of a basilisk.

"Keep your courtesies to yourself, my lord," said he, gruffly; "I have had as many of them already as may serve me for my life."

"Why, Master Christie," said Nigel, "what means this? I trust I have not offended you?"

"Ask me no questions, my lord," said Christie, bluntly. "I am a man of peace—I came not hither to wrangle with you at this place and season. Just suppose that I am well informed of all the obligations from your honour's nobleness, and then acquaint me, in as few words as may be, where is the unhappy woman—What have you done with her?"

"What have I done with her!" said Lord Glenvarloch—"Done with whom? I know not what you are speaking of."

"Oh, yes, my lord," said Christie; "play surprise as well as you will, you must have some guess that I am speaking of the poor fool that was my wife, till she became your lordship's light-o'-love."

"Your wife! Has your wife left you? and, if she has, do you come to ask her of me?"

"Yes, my lord, singular as it may seem," returned Christie, in a tone of bitter irony, and with a sort of grin widely discordant from the discomposure of his features, the gleam of his eye, and the froth which stood on his lip, "I do come to make that demand of your lordship. Doubtless, you are surprised I should take the trouble; but, I cannot tell, great men and little men think differently. She has lain in my bosom, and drunk of my cup; and, such as she is, I cannot forget that—though I will never see her again—she must not starve, my lord, or do worse, to gain bread, though I reckon your lordship may think I am robbing the public in trying to change her courses."

"By my faith as a Christian, by my honour as a gentleman," said Lord Glenvarloch, "if aught amiss has chanced with your wife, I know nothing of it. I trust in Heaven you are as much mistaken in imputing guilt to her, as in supposing me her partner in it."

"Fie! fie! my lord," said Christie, "why will you make it so tough? She is but the wife of a clod-pated old chandler, who was idiot enough to marry a wench twenty years younger than himself. Your lordship cannot have more glory by it than you have had already; and, as for advantage and solace, I take it Dame Nelly is now unnecessary to your gratification. I should be sorry to interrupt the course of your pleasure; an old wittol should have more consideration of his condition. But, your precious lordship being mewed up here among other choice jewels of the kingdom, Dame Nelly cannot, I take it, be admitted to share the hours of dalliance which"—Here the incensed husband stammered, broke off his tone of irony, and proceeded, striking his staff against the ground—"O that these false limbs of yours, which I wish had been hamstrung when they first crossed my honest threshold, were free from the fetters they have well deserved! I would give you the odds of your youth, and your weapon, and would bequeath my soul to the foul fiend if I, with this piece of oak, did not make you such an example to all ungrateful, pick-thank courtiers, that it should be a proverb to the end of time, how John Christie swaddled his wife's fine leman!"

"I understand not your insolence," said Nigel, "but I forgive it, because you labour under some strange delusion. In so far as I can comprehend your vehement charge, it is entirely undeserved on my part. You seem to impute to me the seduction of your wife—I trust she is innocent. For me, at least, she is as innocent as an angel in bliss. I never thought of her—never touched her hand or cheek, save in honourable courtesy."

"O, ay—courtesy!—that is the very word. She always praised your lordship's honourable courtesy. Ye have cozened me between ye, with your courtesy. My lord—my lord, you came to us no very wealthy man—you know it. It was for no lucre of gain I took you and your swash-buckler, your Don Diego yonder, under my poor roof. I never cared if the little room were let or no; I could live without it. If you could not have paid for it, you should never have been asked. All the wharf knows John Christie has the means and spirit to do a kindness. When you first darkened my honest doorway, I was as happy as a man need to be, who is no youngster, and has the rheumatism. Nelly was the kindest and best-humoured wench—we might have a word now and then about a gown or a ribbon, but a kinder soul on the whole, and a more careful, considering her years, till you come—and what is she now!—But I will not be a fool to cry, if I can help it. What she is, is not the question, but where she is; and that I must learn, sir, of you."

"How can you, when I tell you," replied Nigel, "that I am as ignorant as yourself, or rather much more so? Till this moment, I never heard of any disagreement betwixt your dame and you."

"That is a lie," said John Christie, bluntly.

"How, you base villain!" said Lord Glenvarloch—"do you presume on my situation? If it were not that I hold you mad, and perhaps made so by some wrong sustained, you should find my being weaponless were no protection, I would beat your brains out against the wall."

"Ay, ay," answered Christie, "bully as ye list. Ye have been at the ordinaries, and in Alsatia, and learned the ruffian's rant, I doubt not. But I repeat, you have spoken an untruth, when you said you knew not of my wife's falsehood; for, when you were twitted with it among your gay mates, it was a common jest among you, and your lordship took all the credit they would give you for your gallantry and gratitude."

There was a mixture of truth in this part of the charge which disconcerted Lord Glenvarloch exceedingly; for he could not, as a man of honour, deny that Lord Dalgarno, and others, had occasionally jested with him on the subject of Dame Nelly, and that, though he had not played exactly *le fanfaron des vices qu'il n'avait pas*, he had not at least been sufficiently anxious to clear himself of the suspicion of such a crime to men who considered it as a merit. It was therefore with some hesitation, and in a sort of qualifying tone, that he admitted that some idle jests had passed upon such a supposition, although without the least foundation in truth. John Christie would not listen to his vindication any longer. "By your own account," he said, "you permitted lies to be told of you in jest. How do I know you are speaking truth, now you are serious? You thought it, I suppose, a fine thing to wear the reputation of having dishonoured an honest family,—who will not think that you had real grounds for your base bravado to rest upon? I will not believe otherwise for one, and therefore, my lord, mark what I have to say. You are now yourself in trouble—As you hope to come through it safely, and without loss of life and property, tell me where this unhappy woman is. Tell me, if you hope for heaven—tell me, if you fear hell—tell me, as you would not have the curse of an utterly ruined woman, and a broken-hearted man, attend you through life, and bear witness against you at the Great Day, which shall come after death. You are moved, my lord, I see it. I cannot forget the wrong you have done me. I cannot even promise to forgive it—but—tell me, and you shall never see me again, or hear more of my reproaches."

"Unfortunate man," said Lord Glenvarloch, "you have said more, far more than enough, to move me deeply. Were I at liberty, I would lend you my best aid to search out him who has wronged you, the rather that I do suspect my having been your lodger has been in some degree the remote cause of bringing the spoiler into the sheepfold."

"I am glad your lordship grants me so much," said John Christie, resuming the tone of embittered irony with which he had opened the singular conversation; "I will spare you farther reproach and remonstrance—your mind is made up, and so is mine.—So, ho, warder!" The warder entered, and John went on,—"*I want to get out, brother. Look well to your charge—it were better that half the wild beasts in their dens yonder were turned loose upon Tower Hill, than that this same smooth-faced, civil-spoken gentleman, were again returned to honest men's company!*"

So saying, he hastily left the apartment; and Nigel had full leisure to lament the waywardness of his fate, which seemed never to tire of persecuting him for crimes of which he was innocent, and investing him with the appearances of guilt which his mind abhorred. He could not, however, help acknowledging to himself, that all the pain which he might sustain from the present accusation of John Christie, was so far deserved, from his having suffered himself, out of vanity, or rather an unwillingness to encounter ridicule, to be supposed capable of a base inhospitable crime, merely because fools called it an affair of gallantry; and it was no balsam to the wound, when he recollected what Richie had told him of his having been ridiculed behind his back by the gallants of the ordinary, for affecting the reputation of an intrigue which he had not in reality spirit enough to have carried on. His simulation had, in a word, placed him in the unlucky predicament of being rallied as a braggart amongst the dissipated youths, with whom the reality of the amour would have given him credit; whilst, on the other hand, he was branded as an inhospitable seducer by the injured husband, who was obstinately persuaded of his guilt.

CHAPTER XXIX

How fares the man on whom good men would look
With eyes where scorn and censure combated,
But that kind Christian love hath taught the lesson—
That they who merit most contempt and hate,
Do most deserve our pity.—

Old Play.

It might have seemed natural that the visit of John Christie should have entirely diverted Nigel's attention from his slumbering companion, and, for a time, such was the immediate effect of the chain of new ideas which the incident introduced; yet, soon after the injured man had departed, Lord Glenvarloch began to think it extraordinary that the boy should have slept so soundly, while they talked loudly in his vicinity. Yet he certainly did not appear to have stirred. Was he well—was he only feigning sleep? He went close to him to make his observations, and perceived that he had wept, and was still weeping, though his eyes were closed. He touched him gently on the shoulder—the boy shrunk from his touch, but did not awake. He pulled him harder, and asked him if he was sleeping.

"Do they waken folk in your country to know whether they are asleep or no?" said the boy, in a peevish tone.

"No, my young sir," answered Nigel; "but when they weep in the manner you do in your sleep, they awaken them to see what ails them."

"It signifies little to any one what ails me," said the boy.

"True," replied Lord Glenvarloch; "but you knew before you went to sleep how little I could assist you in your difficulties, and you seemed disposed, notwithstanding, to put some confidence in me."

"If I did, I have changed my mind," said the lad.

"And what may have occasioned this change of mind, I trow?" said Lord Glenvarloch. "Some men speak through their sleep—perhaps you have the gift of hearing in it?"

"No, but the Patriarch Joseph never dreamt truer dreams than I do."

"Indeed!" said Lord Glenvarloch. "And, pray, what dream have you had that has deprived me of your good opinion; for that, I think, seems the moral of the matter?"

"You shall judge yourself," answered the boy. "I dreamed I was in a wild forest, where there was a cry of hounds, and winding of horns, exactly as I heard in Greenwich Park."

"That was because you were in the Park this morning, you simple child," said Nigel.

"Stay, my lord," said the youth. "I went on in my dream, till, at the top of a broad green alley, I saw a noble stag which had fallen into the toils; and methought I knew that he was the very stag which the whole party were hunting, and that if the chase came up, the dogs would tear him to pieces, or the hunters would cut his throat; and I had pity on the gallant stag, and though I was of a different kind from him, and though I was somewhat afraid of him, I thought I would venture something to free so stately a creature; and I pulled out my knife, and just as I was beginning to cut the meshes of the net, the animal started up in my face in the likeness of a tiger, much larger and fiercer than any you may have seen in the ward of the wild beasts yonder, and was just about to tear me limb from limb, when you awaked me."

"Methinks," said Nigel, "I deserve more thanks than I have got, for rescuing you from such a danger by waking you. But, my pretty master, methinks all this tale of a tiger and a stag has little to do with your change of temper towards me."

"I know not whether it has or no," said the lad; "but I will not tell you who I am."

"You will keep your secret to yourself then, peevish boy," said Nigel, turning from him, and resuming his walk through the room; then stopping suddenly, he said—

"And yet you shall not escape from me without knowing that I penetrate your mystery."

"My mystery!" said the youth, at once alarmed and irritated—"what mean you, my lord?"

"Only that I can read your dream without the assistance of a Chaldean interpreter, and my exposition is—that my fair companion does not wear the dress of her sex."

"And if I do not, my lord," said his companion, hastily starting up, and folding her cloak tight around her, "my dress, such as it is, covers one who will not disgrace it."

"Many would call that speech a fair challenge," said Lord Glenvarloch, looking on her fixedly; "women do not masquerade in men's clothes, to make use of men's weapons."

"I have no such purpose," said the seeming boy; "I have other means of protection, and powerful—but I would first know what is your purpose."

"An honourable and a most respectful one," said Lord Glenvarloch; "whatever you are—whatever motive may have brought you into this ambiguous situation, I am sensible—every look, word, and action of yours, makes me sensible, that you are no proper subject of importunity, far less of ill usage. What circumstances can have forced you into so doubtful a situation, I know not; but I feel assured there is, and can be, nothing in them of premeditated wrong, which should expose you to cold-blooded insult. From me you have nothing to dread."

"I expected nothing less from your nobleness, my lord," answered the female; "my adventure, though I feel it was both desperate and foolish, is not so very foolish, nor my safety here so utterly unprotected, as at first sight—and in this strange dress, it may appear to be. I have suffered enough, and more than enough, by the degradation of having been seen in this unfeminine attire, and the comments you must necessarily have made on my conduct—but I thank God that I am so far protected, that I could not have been subjected to insult unavenged." When this extraordinary explanation had proceeded thus far, the warder appeared, to place before Lord Glenvarloch a meal, which, for his present situation, might be called comfortable, and which, if not equal to the cookery of the celebrated Chevalier Beaujeu, was much superior in neatness and cleanliness to that of Alsatia. A warder attended to do the honours of the table, and made a sign to the disguised female to rise and assist him in his functions. But Nigel, declaring that he knew the youth's parents, interfered, and caused his companion to eat along with him. She consented with a sort of embarrassment, which rendered her pretty features yet more interesting. Yet she maintained with a natural grace that sort of good-breeding which belongs to the table; and it seemed to Nigel, whether already prejudiced in her favour by the extraordinary circumstances of their meeting, or whether really judging from what was actually the fact, that he had seldom seen a young person comport herself with more decorous propriety, mixed with ingenuous simplicity; while the consciousness of the peculiarity of her situation threw a singular colouring over her whole demeanour, which could be neither said to be formal, nor easy, nor embarrassed, but was compounded of, and shaded with, an interchange of all these three characteristics. Wine was placed on the table, of which she could not be prevailed on to taste a glass. Their conversation was, of course, limited by the presence of the warder to the business of the table: but Nigel had, long ere the cloth was removed, formed the resolution, if possible, of making himself master of this young person's history, the more especially as he now began to think that the tones of her voice and her features were not so strange to him as he had originally supposed. This, however, was a conviction which he adopted slowly, and only as it dawned upon him from particular circumstances during the course of the repast.

At length the prison-meal was finished, and Lord Glenvarloch began to think how he might most easily enter upon the topic he meditated, when the warder announced a visitor.

"Soh!" said Nigel, something displeased, "I find even a prison does not save one from importunate visitations."

He prepared to receive his guest, however, while his alarmed companion flew to the large cradle-shaped chair, which had first served her as a place of refuge, drew her cloak around her, and disposed herself as much as she could to avoid observation. She had scarce made her arrangements for that purpose when the door opened, and the worthy citizen, George Heriot, entered the prison-chamber.

He cast around the apartment his usual sharp, quick glance of observation, and, advancing to Nigel, said—"My lord, I wish I could say I was happy to see you."

"The sight of those who are unhappy themselves, Master Heriot, seldom produces happiness to their friends—I, however, am glad to see you."

He extended his hand, but Heriot bowed with much formal complaisance, instead of accepting the courtesy, which in those times, when the distinction of ranks was much guarded by etiquette and ceremony, was considered as a distinguished favour.

"You are displeased with me, Master Heriot," said Lord Glenvarloch, reddening, for he was not deceived by the worthy citizen's affectation of extreme reverence and respect.

"By no means, my lord," replied Heriot; "but I have been in France, and have thought it is well to import, along with other more substantial articles, a small sample of that good-breeding which the French are so renowned for."

"It is not kind of you," said Nigel, "to bestow the first use of it on an old and obliged friend."

Heriot only answered to this observation with a short dry cough, and then proceeded.

"Hem! hem! I say, ahem! My lord, as my French politeness may not carry me far, I would willingly know whether I am to speak as a friend, since your lordship is pleased to term me such; or whether I am, as befits my condition, to confine myself to the needful business which must be treated of between us."

"Speak as a friend by all means, Master Heriot," said Nigel; "I perceive you have adopted some of the numerous prejudices against me, if not all of them. Speak out, and frankly—what I cannot deny I will at least confess."

"And I trust, my lord, redress," said Heriot.

"So far as in my power, certainly," answered Nigel.

"Ah I my lord," continued Heriot, "that is a melancholy though a necessary restriction; for how lightly may any one do an hundred times more than the degree of evil which it may be within his power to repair to the sufferers and to society! But we are not alone here," he said, stopping, and darting his shrewd eye towards the muffled figure of the disguised maiden, whose utmost efforts had not enabled her so to adjust her position as altogether to escape observation. More anxious to prevent her being discovered than to keep his own affairs private, Nigel hastily answered—"Tis a page of mine; you may speak freely before him. He is of France, and knows no English."

"I am then to speak freely," said Heriot, after a second glance at the chair; "perhaps my words may be more free than welcome."

"Go on, sir," said Nigel, "I have told you I can bear reproof."

"In one word, then, my lord—why do I find you in this place, and whelmed with charges which must blacken a name rendered famous by ages of virtue?"

"Simply, then, you find me here," said Nigel, "because, to begin from my original error, I would be wiser than my father."

"It was a difficult task, my lord," replied Heriot; "your father was voiced generally as the wisest and one of the bravest men of Scotland."

"He commanded me," continued Nigel, "to avoid all gambling; and I took upon me to modify this injunction into regulating my play according to my skill, means, and the course of my luck."

"Ay, self opinion, acting on a desire of acquisition, my lord—you hoped to touch pitch and not to be defiled," answered Heriot. "Well, my lord, you need not say, for I have heard with much regret, how far this conduct diminished your reputation. Your next error I may without scruple remind you of—My lord, my lord, in whatever degree Lord Dalgarno may have failed towards you, the son of his father should have been sacred from your violence."

"You speak in cold blood, Master Heriot, and I was smarting under a thousand wrongs inflicted on me under the mask of friendship."

"That is, he gave your lordship bad advice, and you," said Heriot—

"Was fool enough to follow his counsel," answered Nigel—"But we will pass this, Master Heriot, if you please. Old men and young men, men of the sword and men of peaceful occupation, always have thought, always will think, differently on such subjects."

"I grant," answered Heriot, "the distinction between the old goldsmith and the young nobleman—still you should have had patience for Lord Huntinglen's sake, and prudence for your own. Supposing your quarrel just—"

"I pray you to pass on to some other charge," said Lord Glenvarloch.

"I am not your accuser, my lord; but I trust in heaven, that your own heart has already accused you bitterly on the inhospitable wrong which your late landlord has sustained at your hand."

"Had I been guilty of what you allude to," said Lord Glenvarloch,— "had a moment of temptation hurried me away, I had long ere now most bitterly repented it. But whoever may have wronged the unhappy woman, it was not I—I never heard of her folly until within this hour."

"Come, my lord," said Heriot, with some severity, "this sounds too much like affectation. I know there is among our modern youth a new creed respecting adultery as well as homicide—I would rather hear you speak of a revision of the Decalogue, with mitigated penalties in favour of the privileged orders—I would rather hear you do this than deny a fact in which you have been known to glory."

"Glory!—I never did, never would have taken honour to myself from such a cause," said Lord Glenvarloch. "I could not prevent other idle tongues, and idle brains, from making false inferences."

"You would have known well enough how to stop their mouths, my lord," replied Heriot, "had they spoke of you what was displeasing to your ears, and what the truth did not warrant.—Come, my lord, remember your promise to confess; and, indeed, to confess is, in this case, in some slight sort to redress. I will grant you are young—the woman handsome—and, as I myself have observed, light-headed enough. Let me know where she is. Her foolish husband has still some compassion for her—will save her from infamy—perhaps, in time, receive her back; for we are a good-natured generation we traders. Do not, my lord, emulate those who work mischief merely for the pleasure of doing so—it is the very devil's worst quality."

"Your grave remonstrances will drive me mad," said Nigel. "There is a show of sense and reason in what you say; and yet, it is positively insisting on my telling the retreat of a fugitive of whom I know nothing earthly."

"It is well, my lord," answered Heriot, coldly. "You have a right, such as it is, to keep your own secrets; but, since my discourse on these points seems so totally unavailing, we had better proceed to business. Yet your father's image rises before me, and seems to plead that I should go on."

"Be it as you will, sir," said Glenvarloch; "he who doubts my word shall have no additional security for it."

"Well, my lord.—In the Sanctuary at Whitefriars—a place of refuge so unsuitable to a young man of quality and character—I am told a murder was committed."

"And you believe that I did the deed, I suppose?"

"God forbid, my lord!" said Heriot. "The coroner's inquest hath sat, and it appeared that your lordship, under your assumed name of Grahame, behaved with the utmost bravery."

"No compliment, I pray you," said Nigel; "I am only too happy to find, that I did not murder, or am not believed to have murdered, the old man."

"True, my lord," said Heriot; "but even in this affair there lacks explanation. Your lordship embarked this morning in a wherry with a female, and, it is said, an immense sum of money, in specie and other valuables—but the woman has not since been heard of."

"I parted with her at Paul's Wharf," said Nigel, "where she went ashore with her charge. I gave her a letter to that very man, John Christie."

"Ay, that is the waterman's story; but John Christie denies that he remembers anything of the matter."

"I am sorry to hear this," said the young nobleman; "I hope in Heaven she has not been trepanned, for the treasure she had with her."

"I hope not, my lord," replied Heriot; "but men's minds are much disturbed about it. Our national character suffers on all hands. Men remember the fatal case of Lord Sanquhar, hanged for the murder of a fencing-master; and exclaim, they will not have their wives whored, and their property stolen, by the nobility of Scotland."

"And all this is laid to my door!" said Nigel; "my exculpation is easy."

"I trust so, my lord," said Heriot;—"nay, in this particular, I do not doubt it.—But why did you leave Whitefriars under such circumstances?"

"Master Reginald Lowestoffe sent a boat for me, with intimation to provide for my safety."

"I am sorry to say," replied Heriot, "that he denies all knowledge of your lordship's motions, after having dispatched a messenger to you with some baggage."

"The watermen told me they were employed by him."

"Watermen!" said Heriot; "one of these proves to be an idle apprentice, an old acquaintance of mine—the other has escaped; but the fellow who is in custody persists in saying he was employed by your lordship, and you only."

"He lies!" said Lord Glenvarloch, hastily;—"He told me Master Lowestoffe had sent him.—I hope that kind-hearted gentleman is at liberty?"

"He is," answered Heriot; "and has escaped with a rebuke from the benchers, for interfering in such a matter as your lordship's. The Court desire to keep well with the young Templars in these times of commotion, or he had not come off so well."

"That is the only word of comfort I have heard from you," replied Nigel. "But this poor woman,—she and her trunk were committed to the charge of two porters."

"So said the pretended waterman; but none of the fellows who ply at the wharf will acknowledge the employment.—I see the idea makes you uneasy, my lord; but every effort is made to discover the poor woman's place of retreat—if, indeed, she yet lives.—And now, my lord, my errand is spoken, so far as it relates exclusively to your lordship; what remains, is matter of business of a more formal kind."

"Let us proceed to it without delay," said Lord Glenvarloch. "I would hear of the affairs of any one rather than of my own."

"You cannot have forgotten, my lord," said Heriot, "the transaction which took place some weeks since at Lord Huntinglen's—by which a large sum of money was advanced for the redemption of your lordship's estate?"

"I remember it perfectly," said Nigel; "and your present austerity cannot make me forget your kindness on the occasion."

Heriot bowed gravely, and went on.—"That money was advanced under the expectation and hope that it might be replaced by the contents of a grant to your lordship, under the royal sign-manual, in payment of certain monies due by the crown to your father.—I trust your lordship understood the transaction at the time—I trust you now understand my resumption of its import, and hold it to be correct?"

"Undeniably correct," answered Lord Glenvarloch. "If the sums contained in the warrant cannot be recovered, my lands become the property of those who paid off the original holders of the mortgage, and now stand in their right."

"Even so, my lord," said Heriot. "And your lordship's unhappy circumstances having, it would seem, alarmed these creditors, they are now, I am sorry to say, pressing for one or other of these alternatives—possession of the land, or payment of their debt."

"They have a right to one or other," answered Lord Glenvarloch; "and as I cannot do the last in my present condition, I suppose they must enter on possession."

"Stay, my lord," replied Heriot; "if you have ceased to call me a friend to your person, at least you shall see I am willing to be such to your father's house, were it but for the sake of your father's memory. If you will trust me with the warrant under the sign-manual, I believe circumstances do now so stand at Court, that I may be able to recover the money for you."

"I would do so gladly," said Lord Glenvarloch, "but the casket which contains it is not in my possession. It was seized when I was arrested at Greenwich."

"It will be no longer withheld from you," said Heriot; "for, I understand, my Master's natural good sense, and some information which he has procured, I know not how, has induced him to contradict the whole charge of the attempt on his person. It is entirely hushed up; and you will only be proceeded against for your violence on Lord Dalgarno, committed within the verge of the Palace—and that you will find heavy enough to answer."

"I will not shrink under the weight," said Lord Glenvarloch. "But that is not the present point.—If I had that casket—"

"Your baggage stood in the little ante-room, as I passed," said the citizen; "the casket caught my eye. I think you had it of me. It was my old friend Sir Faithful Frugal's. Ay; he, too, had a son—"

Here he stopped short.

"A son who, like Lord Glenvarloch's, did no credit to his father.—Was it not so you would have ended the sentence, Master Heriot?" asked the young nobleman.

"My lord, it was a word spoken rashly," answered Heriot. "God may mend all in his own good time. This, however, I will say, that I have sometimes envied my friends their fair and flourishing families; and yet have I seen such changes when death has removed the head, so many rich men's sons penniless, the heirs of so many knights and nobles acreless, that I think mine own estate and memory, as I shall order it, has a fair chance of outliving those of greater men, though God has given me no heir of my name. But this is from the purpose.—Ho! warder, bring in Lord Glenvarloch's baggage." The officer obeyed. Seals had been placed upon the trunk and casket, but were now removed, the warder said, in consequence of the subsequent orders from Court, and the whole was placed at the prisoner's free disposal.

Desirous to bring this painful visit to a conclusion, Lord Glenvarloch opened the casket, and looked through the papers which it contained, first hastily, and then more slowly and accurately; but it was all in vain. The Sovereign's signed warrant had disappeared.

"I thought and expected nothing better," said George Heriot, bitterly. "The beginning of evil is the letting out of water. Here is a fair heritage lost, I dare say, on a foul cast at dice, or a conjuring trick at cards!—My lord, your surprise is well played. I give you full joy of your accomplishments. I have seen many as young brawlers and spendthrifts, but never as young and accomplished a dissembler.—Nay, man, never bend your angry brows on me. I speak in bitterness of heart, from what I remember of your worthy father; and if his son hears of his degeneracy from no one else, he shall hear it from the old goldsmith."

This new suspicion drove Nigel to the very extremity of his patience; yet the motives and zeal of the good old man, as well as the circumstances of suspicion which created his displeasure, were so excellent an excuse for it, that they formed an absolute curb on the resentment of Lord Glenvarloch, and constrained him, after two or three hasty exclamations, to observe a proud and sullen silence. At length, Master Heriot resumed his lecture.

"Hark you, my lord," he said, "it is scarce possible that this most important paper can be absolutely assigned away. Let me know in what obscure corner, and for what petty sum, it lies pledged—something may yet be done."

"Your efforts in my favour are the more generous," said Lord Glenvarloch, "as you offer them to one whom you believe you have cause to think hardly of—but they are altogether unavailing. Fortune has taken the field against me at every point. Even let her win the battle."

"Zouns!" exclaimed Heriot, impatiently,— "you would make a saint swear! Why, I tell you, if this paper, the loss of which seems to sit so light on you, be not found, farewell to the fair lordship of Glenvarloch—firth and forest—lea and furrow—lake and stream—all that has been in the house of Olifaunt since the days of William the Lion!"

"Farewell to them, then," said Nigel,— "and that moan is soon made."

"Sdeath! my lord, you will make more moan for it ere you die," said Heriot, in the same tone of angry impatience.

"Not I, my old friend," said Nigel. "If I mourn, Master Heriot, it will be for having lost the good opinion of a worthy man, and lost it, as I must say, most undeservedly."

"Ay, ay, young man," said Heriot, shaking his head, "make me believe that if you can.—To sum the matter up," he said, rising from his seat, and walking towards that occupied by the disguised female, "for our matters are now drawn into small compass, you shall as soon make me believe that this masquerading mummer, on whom I now lay the hand of paternal authority, is a French page, who understands no English."

So saying, he took hold of the supposed page's cloak, and, not without some gentle degree of violence, led into the middle of the apartment the disguised fair one, who in vain attempted to cover her face, first with her mantle, and afterwards with her hands; both which impediments Master Heriot removed something unceremoniously, and gave to view the detected daughter of the old chronologist, his own fair god-daughter, Margaret Ramsay.

"Here is goodly gear!" he said; and, as he spoke, he could not prevent himself from giving her a slight shake, for we have elsewhere noticed that he was a severe disciplinarian.—"How comes it, minion, that I find you in so shameless a dress, and so unworthy a situation? Nay, your modesty is now mistimed—it should have come sooner. Speak, or I will—"

"Master Heriot," said Lord Glenvarloch, "whatever right you may have over this maiden elsewhere, while in my apartment she is under my protection."

"Your protection, my lord!—a proper protector!—and how long, mistress, have you been under my lord's protection? Speak out forsooth!"

"For the matter of two hours, godfather," answered the maiden, with a countenance bent to the ground, and covered with blushes, "but it was against my will."

"Two hours!" repeated Heriot,— "space enough for mischief.—My lord, this is, I suppose, another victim offered to your character of gallantry—another adventure to be boasted of at Beaujeu's ordinary? Methinks the roof under which you first met this silly maiden should have secured her, at least, from such a fate."

"On my honour, Master Heriot," said Lord Glenvarloch, "you remind me now, for the first time, that I saw this young lady in your family. Her features are not easily forgotten, and yet I was trying in vain to recollect where I had last looked on them. For your suspicions, they are as false as they are injurious both to her and me. I had but discovered her disguise as you entered. I am satisfied, from her whole behaviour, that her presence here in this dress was involuntary; and God forbid that I have been capable of taking advantage of it to her prejudice."

"It is well mouthed, my lord," said Master Heriot; "but a cunning clerk can read the Apocrypha as loud as the Scripture. Frankly, my lord, you are come to that pass, where your words will not be received without a warrant."

"I should not speak, perhaps," said Margaret, the natural vivacity of whose temper could never be long suppressed by any situation, however disadvantageous, "but I cannot be silent. Godfather, you do me wrong—and no less wrong to this young nobleman. You say his words want a warrant. I know where to find a warrant for some of them, and the rest I deeply and devoutly believe without one."

"And I thank you, maiden," replied Nigel, "for the good opinion you have expressed. I am at that point, it seems, though how I have been driven to it I know not, where every fair construction of my actions and motives is refused me. I am the more obliged to her who grants me that right which the world denies me. For you, lady, were I at liberty, I have a sword and arm should know how to guard your reputation."

"Upon my word, a perfect Amadis and Oriana!" said George Heriot. "I should soon get my throat cut betwixt the knight and the princess, I suppose, but that the beef-eaters are happily within halloo.—Come, come, Lady Light-o'-Love—if you mean to make your way with me, it must be by plain facts, not by speeches from romaunts and play-books. How, in Heaven's name, came you here?"

"Sir," answered Margaret, "since I must speak, I went to Greenwich this morning with Monna Paula, to present a petition to the king on the part of the Lady Hermione."

"Mercy-a-gad!" exclaimed Heriot, "is she in the dance, too? Could she not have waited my return to stir in her affairs? But I suppose the intelligence I sent her had rendered her restless. Ah! woman, woman—he that goes partner with you, had need of a double share of patience, for you will bring none into the common stock.—Well, but what on earth had this embassy of Monna Paula's to do with your absurd disguise? Speak out."

"Monna Paula was frightened," answered Margaret, "and did not know how to set about the errand, for you know she scarce ever goes out of doors—and so—and so—I agreed to go with her to give her courage; and, for the dress, I am sure you remember I wore it at a Christmas mumming, and you thought it not unbecoming."

"Yes, for a Christmas parlour," said Heriot, "but not to go a-masking through the country in. I do remember it, minion, and I knew it even now; that and your little shoe there, linked with a hint I had in the morning from a friend, or one who called himself such, led to your detection."—Here Lord Glenvarloch could not help giving a glance at the pretty foot, which even the staid citizen thought worth recollection—it was but a glance, for he saw how much the least degree of observation added to Margaret's distress and confusion. "And tell me, maiden," continued Master Heriot, for what we have observed was by-play,— "did the Lady Hermione know of this fair work?"

"I dared not have told her for the world," said Margaret—"she thought one of our apprentices went with Monna Paula."

It may be here noticed, that the words, "our apprentices," seemed to have in them something of a charm to break the fascination with which Lord Glenvarloch had hitherto listened to the broken, yet interesting details of Margaret's history.

"And wherefore went he not?—he had been a fitter companion for Monna Paula than you, I wot," said the citizen.

"He was otherwise employed," said Margaret, in a voice scarce audible.

Master George darted a hasty glance at Nigel, and when he saw his features betoken no consciousness, he muttered to himself,— "It must be better than I feared.—And so this cursed Spaniard, with her head full, as they all have, of disguises, trap-doors, rope-ladders, and masks, was jade and fool enough to take you with her on this wild goose errand?—And how sped you, I pray?"

"Just as we reached the gate of the Park," replied Margaret, "the cry of treason was raised. I know not what became of Monna, but I ran till I fell into the arms of a very decent serving-man, called Linklater; and I was fain to tell him I was your god-daughter, and so he kept the rest of them from me, and got me to speech of his Majesty, as I entreated him to do."

"It is the only sign you showed in the whole matter that common sense had not utterly deserted your little skull," said Heriot.

"His Majesty," continued the damsel, "was so gracious as to receive me alone, though the courtiers cried out against the danger to his person, and would have searched me for arms, God help me, but the king forbade it. I fancy he had a hint from Linklater how the truth stood with me."

"Well, maiden, I ask not what passed," said Heriot; "it becomes not me to pry into my Master's secrets. Had you been closeted with his grandfather the Red Tod of Saint Andrews, as Davie Lindsay used to call him, by my faith, I should have had my own thoughts of the matter; but our Master, God bless him, is douce and temperate, and Solomon in every thing, save in the chapter of wives and concubines."

"I know not what you mean, sir," answered Margaret. "His Majesty was most kind and compassionate, but said I must be sent hither, and that the Lieutenant's lady, the Lady Mansel, would have a charge of me, and see that I sustained no wrong; and the king promised to send me in a tilted barge, and under conduct of a person well known to you; and thus I come to be in the Tower."

"But how, or why, in this apartment, nymph?" said George Heriot—"Expound that to me, for I think the riddle needs reading."

"I cannot explain it, sir, further, than that the Lady Mansel sent me here, in spite of my earnest prayers, tears, and entreaties. I was not afraid of any thing, for I knew I should be protected. But I could have died then—could die now—for very shame and confusion!"

"Well, well, if your tears are genuine," said Heriot, "they may the sooner wash out the memory of your fault—Knows your father aught of this escape of yours?"

"I would not for the world he did," replied she; "he believes me with the Lady Hermione."

"Ay, honest Davy can regulate his horologes better than his family.—Come, damsel, now I will escort you back to the Lady Mansel, and pray her, of her kindness, that when she is again trusted with a goose, she will not give it to the fox to keep.—The warders will let us pass to my lady's lodgings, I trust."

"Stay but one moment," said Lord Glenvarloch. "Whatever hard opinion you may have formed of me, I forgive you, for time will show that you do me wrong; and you yourself, I think, will be the first to regret the injustice you have done me. But involve not in your suspicions this young person, for whose purity of thought angels themselves should be vouchers. I have marked every look, every gesture; and whilst I can draw breath, I shall ever think of her with—"

"Think not at all of her, my lord," answered George Heriot, interrupting him; "it is, I have a notion, the best favour you can do her;—or think of her as the daughter of Davy Ramsay, the clockmaker, no proper subject for fine speeches, romantic adventures, or high-flown Arcadian compliments. I give you god-den, my lord. I think not altogether so harshly as my speech may have spoken. If I can help—that is, if I saw my way clearly through this labyrinth—but it avails not talking now. I give your lordship god-den.—Here, warder! Permit us to pass to the Lady Hansel's apartment." The warder said he must have orders from the Lieutenant; and as he retired to procure them, the parties remained standing near each other, but without speaking, and scarce looking at each other save by stealth, a situation which, in two of the party at least, was sufficiently embarrassing. The difference of rank, though in that age a consideration so serious, could not prevent Lord Glenvarloch from seeing that Margaret Ramsay was one of the prettiest young women he had ever beheld—from suspecting, he could scarce tell why, that he himself was not indifferent to her—from feeling assured that he had been the cause of much of her present distress—admiration, self-love, and generosity, acting in favour of the same object; and when the yeoman returned with permission to his guests to withdraw, Nigel's obeisance to the beautiful daughter of the mechanic was marked with an expression, which called up in her cheeks as much colour as any incident of the eventful day had hitherto excited. She returned the courtesy timidly and irresolutely—clung to her godfather's arm, and left the apartment, which, dark as it was, had never yet appeared so obscure to Nigel, as when the door closed behind her.

Yet though thou shouldst be dragg'd in scorn
To yonder ignominious tree,
Thou shall not want one faithful friend
To share the cruel fates' decree.

Ballad of Jemmy Dawson.

Master George Heriot and his ward, as she might justly be termed, for his affection to Margaret imposed on him all the cares of a guardian, were ushered by the yeoman of the guard to the lodging of the Lieutenant, where they found him seated with his lady. They were received by both with that decorous civility which Master Heriot's character and supposed influence demanded, even at the hand of a punctilious old soldier and courtier like Sir Edward Mansel. Lady Mansel received Margaret with like courtesy, and informed Master George that she was now only her guest, and no longer her prisoner.

"She is at liberty," she said, "to return to her friends under your charge—such is his Majesty's pleasure."

"I am glad of it, madam," answered Heriot, "but only I could have wished her freedom had taken place before her foolish interview with that singular young man; and I marvel your ladyship permitted it."

"My good Master Heriot," said Sir Edward, "we act according to the commands of one better and wiser than ourselves—our orders from his Majesty must be strictly and literally obeyed; and I need not say that the wisdom of his Majesty doth more than ensure—"

"I know his Majesty's wisdom well," said Heriot; "yet there is an old proverb about fire and flax—well, let it pass."

"I see Sir Mungo Malagrowther stalking towards the door of the lodging," said the Lady Mansel, "with the gait of a lame crane—it is his second visit this morning."

"He brought the warrant for discharging Lord Glenvarloch of the charge of treason," said Sir Edward.

"And from him," said Heriot, "I heard much of what had befallen; for I came from France only late last evening, and somewhat unexpectedly."

As they spoke, Sir Mungo entered the apartment—saluted the Lieutenant of the Tower and his lady with ceremonious civility—honoured George Heriot with a patronising nod of acknowledgment, and accosted Margaret with—"Hey! my young charge, you have not doffed your masculine attire yet?"

"She does not mean to lay it aside, Sir Mungo," said Heriot, speaking loud, "until she has had satisfaction from you, for betraying her disguise to me, like a false knight—and in very deed, Sir Mungo, I think when you told me she was rambling about in so strange a dress, you might have said also that she was under Lady Mansel's protection."

"That was the king's secret, Master Heriot," said Sir Mungo, throwing himself into a chair with an air of atrabilious importance; "the other was a well-meaning hint to yourself, as the girl's friend."

"Yes," replied Heriot, "it was done like yourself—enough told to make me unhappy about her—not a word which could relieve my uneasiness."

"Sir Mungo will not hear that remark," said the lady; "we must change the subject.—Is there any news from Court, Sir Mungo? you have been to Greenwich?"

"You might as well ask me, madam," answered the Knight, "whether there is any news from hell."

"How, Sir Mungo, how!" said Sir Edward, "measure your words something better—You speak of the Court of King James."

"Sir Edward, if I spoke of the court of the twelve Kaisers, I would say it is as confused for the present as the infernal regions. Courtiers of forty years' standing, and such I may write myself, are as far to seek in the matter as a minnow in the Maelstrom. Some folk say the king has frowned on the Prince—some that the Prince has looked grave on the duke—some that Lord Glenvarloch will be hanged for high treason—and some that there is matter against Lord Dalgarno that may cost him as much as his head's worth."

"And what do you, that are a courtier of forty years' standing, think of it all?" said Sir Edward Mansel.

"Nay, nay, do not ask him, Sir Edward," said the lady, with an expressive look to her husband.

"Sir Mungo is too witty," added Master Heriot, "to remember that he who says aught that may be repeated to his own prejudice, does but load a piece for any of the company to shoot him dead with, at their pleasure and convenience."

"What!" said the bold Knight, "you think I am afraid of the trepan? Why now, what if I should say that Dalgarno has more wit than honesty,—the duke more sail than ballast,—the Prince more pride than prudence,—and that the king—" The Lady Mansel held up her finger in a warning manner—"that the king is my very good master, who has given me, for forty years and more, dog's wages, videlicet, bones and beating.—Why now, all this is said, and Archie Armstrong [Footnote: The celebrated Court jester.] says worse than this of the best of them every day."

"The more fool he," said George Heriot; "yet he is not so utterly wrong, for folly is his best wisdom. But do not you, Sir Mungo, set your wit against a fool's, though he be a court fool."

"A fool, said you?" replied Sir Mungo, not having fully heard what Master Heriot said, or not choosing to have it thought so,—"I have been a fool indeed, to hang on at a close-fisted Court here, when men of understanding and men of action have been making fortunes in every other place of Europe. But here a man comes indifferently off unless he gets a great key to turn," (looking at Sir Edward,) "or can beat tattoo with a hammer on a pewter plate.—Well, sirs, I must make as much haste back on mine errand as if I were a fee'd messenger.—Sir Edward and my lady, I leave my commendations with you—and my good-will with you, Master Heriot—and for this breaker of bounds, if you will act by my counsel, some maceration by fasting, and a gentle use of the rod, is the best cure for her giddy fits."

"If you propose for Greenwich, Sir Mungo," said the Lieutenant, "I can spare you the labour—the king comes immediately to Whitehall."

"And that must be the reason the council are summoned to meet in such hurry," said Sir Mungo. "Well—I will, with your permission, go to the poor lad Glenvarloch, and bestow some comfort on him."

The Lieutenant seemed to look up, and pause for a moment as if in doubt.

"The lad will want a pleasant companion, who can tell him the nature of the punishment which he is to suffer, and other matters of concernment. I will not leave him until I show him how absolutely he hath ruined himself from feather to spur, how deplorable is his present state, and how small his chance of mending it."

"Well, Sir Mungo," replied the Lieutenant, "if you really think all this likely to be very consolatory to the party concerned, I will send a warder to conduct you."

"And I," said George Heriot, "will humbly pray of Lady Mansel, that she will lend some of her handmaiden's apparel to this giddy-brained girl; for I shall forfeit my reputation if I walk up Tower Hill with her in that mad guise—and yet the silly lassie looks not so ill in it neither."

"I will send my coach with you instantly," said the obliging lady.

"Faith, madam, and if you will honour us by such courtesy, I will gladly accept it at your hands," said the citizen, "for business presses hard on me, and the forenoon is already lost, to little purpose."

The coach being ordered accordingly, transported the worthy citizen and his charge to his mansion in Lombard Street. There he found his presence was anxiously expected by the Lady Hermione, who had just received an order to be in readiness to attend upon the Royal Privy Council in the course of an hour; and upon whom, in her inexperience of business, and long retirement from society and the world, the intimation had made as deep an impression as if it had not been the necessary consequence of the petition which she had presented to the king by Monna Paula. George Heriot gently blamed her for taking any steps in an affair so important until his return from France, especially as he had requested her to remain quiet, in a letter which accompanied the evidence he had transmitted to her from Paris. She could only plead in answer the influence which her immediately stirring in the matter was likely to have on the affair of her kinsman Lord Glenvarloch, for she was ashamed to acknowledge how much she had been gained on by the eager importunity of her youthful companion. The motive of Margaret's eagerness was, of course, the safety of Nigel; but we must leave it to time to show in what particulars that came to be connected with the petition of the Lady Hermione. Meanwhile, we return to the visit with which Sir Mungo Malagrowther favoured the afflicted young nobleman in his place of captivity.

The Knight, after the usual salutations, and having prefaced his discourse with a great deal of professed regret for Nigel's situation, sat down beside him, and composing his grotesque features into the most lugubrious despondence, began his raven song as follows:—

"I bless God, my lord, that I was the person who had the pleasure to bring his Majesty's mild message to the Lieutenant, discharging the higher prosecution against ye, for any thing meditated against his Majesty's sacred person; for, admit you be prosecuted on the lesser offence, or breach of privilege of the Palace and its precincts, usque ad mutilationem, even to dismemberation, as it is most likely you will, yet the loss of a member is nothing to being hanged and drawn quick, after the fashion of a traitor."

"I should feel the shame of having deserved such a punishment," answered Nigel, "more than the pain of undergoing it."

"Doubtless, my lord, the having, as you say, deserved it, must be an excruciation to your own mind," replied his tormentor; "a kind of mental and metaphysical hanging, drawing, and quartering, which may be in some measure equipollent with the external application of hemp, iron, fire, and the like, to the outer man."

"I say, Sir Mungo," repeated Nigel, "and beg you to understand my words, that I am unconscious of any error, save that of having arms on my person when I chanced to approach that of my Sovereign."

"Ye are right, my lord, to acknowledge nothing," said Sir Mungo. "We have an old proverb,—Confess, and—so forth. And indeed, as to the weapons, his Majesty has a special ill-will at all arms whatsoever, and more especially pistols; but, as I said, there is an end of that matter. [Footnote: Wilson informs us that when Colonel Grey, a Scotsman who affected the buff dress even in the time of peace, appeared in that military garb at Court, the king, seeing him with a case of pistols at his girdle, which he never greatly liked, told him, merrily, "he was now so fortified, that, if he were but well victualled, he would be impregnable."—WILSON'S Life and Reign of James VI., apud KENNET'S History of England, vol. ii. p. 389. In 1612, the tenth year of James's reign, there was a rumour abroad that a shipload of pocket-pistols had been exported from Spain, with a view to a general massacre of the Protestants. Proclamations were of consequence sent forth, prohibiting all persons from carrying pistols under a foot long in the barrel. Ibid. p. 690.] I wish you as well through the next, which is altogether unlikely."

"Surely, Sir Mungo," answered Nigel, "you yourself might say something in my favour concerning the affair in the Park. None knows better than you that I was at that moment urged by wrongs of the most heinous nature, offered to me by Lord Dalgarno, many of which were reported to me by yourself, much to the inflammation of my passion."

"Alack-a-day!—Alack-a-day!" replied Sir Mungo, "I remember but too well how much your choler was inflamed, in spite of the various remonstrances which I made to you respecting the sacred nature of the place. Alas! alas! you cannot say you leaped into the mire for want of warning."

"I see, Sir Mungo, you are determined to remember nothing which can do me service," said Nigel.

"Blithely would I do ye service," said the Knight; "and the best whilk I can think of is, to tell you the process of the punishment to the whilk you will be indubitably subjected, I having had the good fortune to behold it performed in the Queen's time, on a chield that had written a pasquinado. I was then in my Lord Gray's train, who lay leaguer here, and being always covetous of pleasing and profitable sights, I could not dispense with being present on the occasion."

"I should be surprised, indeed," said Lord Glenvarloch, "if you had so far put restraint upon your benevolence, as to stay away from such an exhibition."

"Hey! was your lordship praying me to be present at your own execution?" answered the Knight. "Troth, my lord, it will be a painful sight to a friend, but I will rather punish myself than baulk you. It is a pretty pageant, in the main—a very pretty pageant. The fallow came on with such a bold face, it was a pleasure to look on him. He was dressed all in white, to signify harmlessness and innocence. The thing was done on a scaffold at Westminster—most likely yours will be at the Charing. There were the Sheriffs and the Marshal's men, and what not—the executioner, with his cleaver and mallet, and his man, with a pan of hot charcoal, and the irons for cautery. He was a dexterous fallow that Derrick. This man Gregory is not fit to jipper a joint with him; it might be worth your lordship's while to have the loon sent to a barber-surgeon's, to learn some needful scantling of anatomy—it may be for the benefit of yourself and other unhappy sufferers, and also a kindness to Gregory."

"I will not take the trouble," said Nigel.—"If the laws will demand my hand, the executioner may get it off as he best can. If the king leaves it where it is, it may chance to do him better service."

"Vera noble—vera grand, indeed, my lord," said Sir Mungo; "it is pleasant to see a brave man suffer. This fallow whom I spoke of—This Tubbs, or Stubbs, or whatever the plebeian was called, came forward as bold as an emperor, and said to the people, 'Good friends, I come to leave here the hand of a true Englishman,' and clapped it on the dressing-block with as much ease as if he had laid it on his sweetheart's shoulder; whereupon Derrick the hangman, adjusting, d'ye mind me, the edge of his cleaver on the very joint, hit it with the mallet with such force, that the hand flew off as far from the owner as a gauntlet which the challenger casts down in the tilt-yard. Well, sir, Stubbs, or Tubbs, lost no whit of countenance, until the fallow clapped the hissing-hot iron on his raw stump. My lord, it fizzed like a rasher of bacon, and the fallow set up an elritch screech, which made some think his courage was abated; but not a whit, for he plucked off his hat with his left hand, and waved it, crying, 'God save the Queen, and confound all evil counsellors!' The people gave him three cheers, which he deserved for his stout heart; and, truly, I hope to see your lordship suffer with the same magnanimity."

"I thank you, Sir Mungo," said Nigel, who had not been able to forbear some natural feelings of an unpleasant nature during this lively detail,— "I have no doubt the exhibition will be a very engaging one to you and the other spectators, whatever it may prove to the party principally concerned."

"Vera engaging," answered Sir Mungo, "vera interesting—vera interesting indeed, though not altogether so much so as an execution for high treason. I saw Digby, the Winters, Fawkes, and the rest of the gunpowder gang, suffer for that treason, whilk was a vera grand spectacle, as well in regard to their sufferings, as to their constancy in enduring."

"I am the more obliged to your goodness, Sir Mungo," replied Nigel, "that has induced you, although you have lost the sight, to congratulate me on my escape from the hazard of making the same edifying appearance."

"As you say, my lord," answered Sir Mungo, "the loss is chiefly in appearance. Nature has been very bountiful to us, and has given duplicates of some organs, that we may endure the loss of one of them, should some such circumstance chance in our pilgrimage. See my poor dexter, abridged to one thumb, one finger, and a stump,—by the blow of my adversary's weapon, however, and not by any carnificial knife. Weel, sir, this poor maimed hand doth me, in some sort, as much service as ever; and, admit yours to be taken off by the wrist, you have still your left hand for your service, and are better off than the little Dutch dwarf here about town, who threads a needle, limns, writes, and tosses a pike, merely by means of his feet, without ever a hand to help him."

"Well, Sir Mungo," said Lord Glenvarloch, "this is all no doubt very consolatory; but I hope the king will spare my hand to fight for him in battle, where, notwithstanding all your kind encouragement, I could spend my blood much more cheerfully than on a scaffold."

"It is even a sad truth," replied Sir Mungo, "that your lordship was but too like to have died on a scaffold—not a soul to speak for you but that deluded lassie Maggie Ramsay."

"Whom mean you?" said Nigel, with more interest than he had hitherto shown in the Knight's communications.

"Nay, who should I mean, but that travestied lassie whom we dined with when we honoured Heriot the goldsmith? Ye ken best how you have made interest with her, but I saw her on her knees to the king for you. She was committed to my charge, to bring her up hither in honour and safety. Had I had my own will, I would have had her to Bridewell, to flog the wild blood out of her—a cutty quean, to think of wearing the breeches, and not so much as married yet!"

"Hark ye, Sir Mungo Malagrowth," answered Nigel, "I would have you talk of that young person with fitting respect."

"With all the respect that befits your lordship's paramour, and Davy Ramsay's daughter, I shall certainly speak of her, my lord," said Sir Mungo, assuming a dry tone of irony.

Nigel was greatly disposed to have made a serious quarrel of it, but with Sir Mungo such an affair would have been ridiculous; he smothered his resentment, therefore, and conjured him to tell what he had heard and seen respecting this young person.

"Simply, that I was in the ante-room when she had audience, and heard the king say, to my great perplexity, 'Pulchra sane puella;' and Maxwell, who hath but indifferent Latin ears, thought that his Majesty called on him by his own name of Sawney, and thrust into the presence, and there I saw our Sovereign James, with his own hand, raising up the lassie, who, as I said heretofore, was travestied in man's attire. I should have had my own thoughts of it, but our gracious Master is auld, and was nae great gillravager among the queans even in his youth; and he was comforting her in his own way and saying,—'Ye needna greet about it, my

bonnie woman, Glenvarlochides shall have fair play; and, indeed, when the hurry was off our spirits, we could not believe that he had any design on our person. And touching his other offences, we will look wisely and closely into the matter.' So I got charge to take the young fence-louper to the Tower here, and deliver her to the charge of Lady Mansel; and his Majesty charged me to say not a word to her about your offences, for, said he, the poor thing is breaking her heart for him." "And on this you have charitably founded the opinion to the prejudice of this young lady, which you have now thought proper to express?" said Lord Glenvarloch. "In honest truth, my lord," replied Sir Mungo, "what opinion would you have me form of a wench who gets into male habiliments, and goes on her knees to the king for a wild young nobleman? I wot not what the fashionable word may be, for the phrase changes, though the custom abides. But truly I must needs think this young leddy—if you call Watchie Ramsay's daughter a young leddy—demeans herself more like a leddy of pleasure than a leddy of honour." "You do her egregious wrong, Sir Mungo," said Nigel; "or rather you have been misled by appearances." "So will all the world be misled, my lord," replied the satirist, "unless you were doing that to disabuse them which your father's son will hardly judge it fit to do." "And what may that be, I pray you?" "E'en marry the lass—make her Laddy Glenvarloch.—Ay, ay, ye may start—but it's the course you are driving on. Rather marry than do worse, if the worst be not done already."

"Sir Mungo," said Nigel, "I pray you to forbear this subject, and rather return to that of the mutilation, upon which it pleased you to enlarge a short while since." "I have not time at present," said Sir Mungo, hearing the clock strike four; "but so soon as you shall have received sentence, my lord, you may rely on my giving you the fullest detail of the whole solemnity; and I give you my word, as a knight and a gentleman, that I will myself attend you on the scaffold, whoever may cast sour looks on me for doing so. I bear a heart, to stand by a friend in the worst of times." So saying, he wished Lord Glenvarloch farewell; who felt as heartily rejoiced at his departure, though it may be a bold word, as any person who had ever undergone his society.

But, when left to his own reflections, Nigel could not help feeling solitude nearly as irksome as the company of Sir Mungo Malagrowth. The total wreck of his fortune,—which seemed now to be rendered unavoidable by the loss of the royal warrant, that had afforded him the means of redeeming his paternal estate,—was an unexpected and additional blow. When he had seen the warrant he could not precisely remember; but was inclined to think, it was in the casket when he took out money to pay the miser for his lodgings at Whitefriars. Since then, the casket had been almost constantly under his own eye, except during the short time he was separated from his baggage by the arrest in Greenwich Park. It might, indeed, have been taken out at that time, for he had no reason to think either his person or his property was in the hands of those who wished him well; but, on the other hand, the locks of the strong-box had sustained no violence that he could observe, and, being of a particular and complicated construction, he thought they could scarce be opened without an instrument made on purpose, adapted to their peculiarities, and for this there had been no time. But, speculate as he would on the matter, it was clear that this important document was gone, and probable that it had passed into no friendly hands. "Let it be so," said Nigel to himself; "I am scarcely worse off respecting my prospects of fortune, than when I first reached this accursed city. But to be hampered with cruel accusations, and stained with foul suspicions—to be the object of pity of the most degrading kind to yonder honest citizen, and of the malignity of that envious and atrabilious courtier, who can endure the good fortune and good qualities of another no more than the mole can brook sunshine—this is indeed a deplorable reflection; and the consequences must stick to my future life, and impede whatever my head, or my hand, if it is left me, might be able to execute in my favour."

The feeling, that he is the object of general dislike and dereliction, seems to be one of the most unendurably painful to which a human being can be subjected. The most atrocious criminals, whose nerves have not shrunk from perpetrating the most horrid cruelty, endure more from the consciousness that no man will sympathise with their sufferings, than from apprehension of the personal agony of their impending punishment; and are known often to attempt to palliate their enormities, and sometimes altogether to deny what is established by the clearest proof, rather than to leave life under the general ban of humanity. It was no wonder that Nigel, labouring under the sense of general, though unjust suspicion, should, while pondering on so painful a theme, recollect that one, at least, had not only believed him innocent, but hazarded herself, with all her feeble power, to interpose in his behalf.

"Poor girl!" he repeated; "poor, rash, but generous maiden! your fate is that of her in Scottish story, who thrust her arm into the staple of the door, to oppose it as a bar against the assassins who threatened the murder of her sovereign. The deed of devotion was useless; save to give an immortal name to her by whom it was done, and whose blood flows, it is said, in the veins of my house."

I cannot explain to the reader, whether the recollection of this historical deed of devotion, and the lively effect which the comparison, a little overstrained perhaps, was likely to produce in favour of Margaret Ramsay, was not qualified by the concomitant ideas of ancestry and ancient descent with which that recollection was mingled. But the contending feelings suggested a new train of ideas.—"Ancestry," he thought, "and ancient descent, what are they to me?—My patrimony alienated—my title become a reproach—for what can be so absurd as titled beggary?—my character subjected to suspicion,—I will not remain in this country; and should I, at leaving it, procure the society of one so lovely, so brave, and so faithful, who should say that I derogated from the rank which I am virtually renouncing?" There was something romantic and pleasing, as he pursued this picture of an attached and faithful pair, becoming all the world to each other, and stemming the tide of fate arm in arm; and to be linked thus with a creature so beautiful, and who had taken such devoted and disinterested concern in his fortunes, formed itself into such a vision as romantic youth loves best to dwell upon. Suddenly his dream was painfully dispelled, by the recollection, that its very basis rested upon the most selfish ingratitude on his own part. Lord of his castle and his towers, his forests and fields, his fair patrimony and noble name, his mind would have rejected, as a sort of impossibility, the idea of elevating to his rank the daughter of a mechanic; but, when degraded from his nobility, and plunged into poverty and difficulties, he was ashamed to feel himself not unwilling, that this poor girl, in the blindness of her affection, should abandon all the better prospects of her own settled condition, to embrace the precarious and doubtful course which he himself was condemned to. The generosity of Nigel's mind recoiled from the selfishness of the plan of happiness which he projected; and he made a strong effort to expel from his thoughts for the rest of the evening this fascinating female, or, at least, not to permit them to dwell upon the perilous circumstance, that she was at present the only creature living who seemed to consider him as an object of kindness. He could not, however, succeed in banishing her from his slumbers, when, after having spent a weary day, he betook himself to a perturbed couch. The form of Margaret mingled with the wild mass of dreams which his late adventures had suggested; and even when, copying the lively narrative of Sir Mungo, fancy presented to him the blood bubbling and hissing on the heated iron, Margaret stood behind him like a spirit of light, to breathe healing on the wound. At length nature was exhausted by these fantastic creations, and Nigel slept, and slept soundly, until awakened in the morning by the sound of a well-known voice, which had often broken his slumbers about the same hour.

CHAPTER XXXI

Many, come up, sir, with your gentle blood!
Here's a red stream beneath this coarse blue doublet,
That warms the heart as kindly as if drawn
From the far source of old Assyrian kings.
Who first made mankind subject to their sway.

Old Play.

The sounds to which we alluded in our last, were no other than the grumbling tones of Richie Moniplies's voice.

This worthy, like some other persons who rank high in their own opinion, was very apt, when he could have no other auditor, to hold conversation with one who was sure to be a willing listener—I mean with himself. He was now brushing and arranging Lord Glenvarloch's clothes, with as much composure and quiet assiduity as if he had never been out of his service, and grumbling betwixt whiles to the following purpose:—"Hump—ay, time cloak and jerkin were through my hands—I question if horsehair has been passed over them since they and I last parted. The embroidery finely frayed too—and the gold buttons of the cloak—By

my conscience, and as I am an honest man, there is a round dozen of them gane! This comes of Alsatian frolics—God keep us with his grace, and not give us over to our own devices!—I see no sword—but that will be in respect of present circumstances."

Nigel for some time could not help believing that he was still in a dream, so improbable did it seem that his domestic, whom he supposed to be in Scotland, should have found him out, and obtained access to him, in his present circumstances. Looking through the curtains, however, he became well assured of the fact, when he beheld the stiff and bony length of Richie, with a visage charged with nearly double its ordinary degree of importance, employed sedulously in brushing his master's cloak, and refreshing himself with whistling or humming, from interval to interval, some snatch of an old melancholy Scottish ballad-tune. Although sufficiently convinced of the identity of the party, Lord Glenvarloch could not help expressing his surprise in the superfluous question—"In the name of Heaven, Richie, is this you?"

"And wha else suld it be, my lord?" answered Richie; "I dreamna that your lordship's levee in this place is like to be attended by ony that are not bounded thereto by duty."

"I am rather surprised," answered Nigel, "that it should be attended by any one at all—especially by you, Richie; for you know that we parted, and I thought you had reached Scotland long since."

"I crave your lordship's pardon, but we have not parted yet, nor are soon likely so to do; for there gang twa folk's votes to the unmaking of a bargain, as to the making of ane. Though it was your lordship's pleasure so to conduct yourself that we were like to have parted, yet it was not, on reflection, my will to be gone. To be plain, if your lordship does not ken when you have a good servant, I ken when I have a kind master; and to say truth, you will be easier served now than ever, for there is not much chance of your getting out of bounds."

"I am indeed bound over to good behaviour," said Lord Glenvarloch, with a smile; "but I hope you will not take advantage of my situation to be too severe on my follies, Richie?"

"God forbid, my lord—God forbid!" replied Richie, with an expression betwixt a conceited consciousness of superior wisdom and real feeling—"especially in consideration of your lordship's having a due sense of them. I did indeed remonstrate, as was my humble duty, but I scorn to cast that up to your lordship now—Na, na, I am myself an erring creature—very conscious of some small weaknesses—there is no perfection in man."

"But, Richie," said Lord Glenvarloch, "although I am much obliged to you for your proffered service, it can be of little use to me here, and may be of prejudice to yourself."

"Your lordship shall pardon me again," said Richie, whom the relative situation of the parties had invested with ten times his ordinary dogmatism; "but as I will manage the matter, your lordship shall be greatly benefited by my service, and I myself no whit prejudiced."

"I see not how that can be, my friend," said Lord Glenvarloch, "since even as to your pecuniary affairs—"

"Touching my pecuniars, my lord," replied Richie, "I am indifferently weel provided; and, as it chances, my living here will be no burden to your lordship, or distress to myself. Only I crave permission to annex certain conditions to my servitude with your lordship."

"Annex what you will," said Lord Glenvarloch, "for you are pretty sure to take your own way, whether you make any conditions or not. Since you will not leave me, which were, I think, your wisest course, you must, and I suppose will, serve me only on such terms as you like yourself."

"All that I ask, my lord," said Richie, gravely, and with a tone of great moderation, "is to have the uninterrupted command of my own motions, for certain important purposes which I have now in hand, always giving your lordship the solace of my company and attendance, at such times as may be at once convenient for me, and necessary for your service."

"Of which, I suppose, you constitute yourself sole judge," replied Nigel, smiling.

"Unquestionably, my lord," answered Richie, gravely; "for your lordship can only know what yourself want; whereas I, who see both sides of the picture, ken both what is the best for your affairs, and what is the most needful for my own."

"Richie, my good friend," said Nigel, "I fear this arrangement, which places the master much under the disposal of the servant, would scarce suit us if we were both at large; but a prisoner as I am, I may be as well at your disposal as I am at that of so many other persons; and so you may come and go as you list, for I suppose you will not take my advice, to return to your own country, and leave me to my fate."

"The deil be in my feet if I do," said Moniplies,— "I am not the lad to leave your lordship in foul weather, when I followed you and fed upon you through the whole summer day, And besides, there may be brave days behind, for a' that has come and gane yet; for

"It's hame, and it's hame, and it's hame we fain would be, Though the cloud is in the lift, and the wind is on the lea; For the sun through the mirk blinks blithe on mine ee, Says,—'I'll shine on ye yet in our ain country!'"

Having sung this stanza in the manner of a ballad-singer, whose voice has been cracked by matching his windpipe against the bugle of the north blast, Richie Moniplies aided Lord Glenvarloch to rise, attended his toilet with every possible mark of the most solemn and deferential respect, then waited upon him at breakfast, and finally withdrew, pleading that he had business of importance, which would detain him for some hours.

Although Lord Glenvarloch necessarily expected to be occasionally annoyed by the self-conceit and dogmatism of Richie Moniplies's character, yet he could not but feel the greatest pleasure from the firm and devoted attachment which this faithful follower had displayed in the present instance, and indeed promised himself an alleviation of the ennui of his imprisonment, in having the advantage of his services. It was, therefore, with pleasure that he learned from the warder, that his servant's attendance would be allowed at all times when the general rules of the fortress permitted the entrance of strangers.

In the meanwhile, the magnanimous Richie Moniplies had already reached Tower Wharf. Here, after looking with contempt on several scullers by whom he was plied, and whose services he rejected with a wave of his hand, he called with dignity, "First oars!" and stirred into activity several lounging Tritons of the higher order, who had not, on his first appearance, thought it worth while to accost him with proffers of service. He now took possession of a wherry, folded his arms within his ample cloak, and sitting down in the stern with an air of importance, commanded them to row to Whitehall Stairs. Having reached the Palace in safety, he demanded to see Master Linklater, the under-clerk of his Majesty's kitchen. The reply was, that he was not to be spoken withal, being then employed in cooking a mess of cock-a-leekie for the king's own mouth.

"Tell him," said Moniplies, "that it is a dear countryman of his, who seeks to converse with him on matter of high import."

"A dear countryman?" said Linklater, when this pressing message was delivered to him. "Well, let him come in and be d—d, that I should say sae! This now is some red-headed, long-legged, gillie-white-foot frae the West Port, that, hearing of my promotion, is come up to be a turn-broche, or deputy scullion, through my interest. It is a great hinderance to any man who would rise in the world, to have such friends to hang by his skirts, in hope of being towed up along with him.—Ha! Richie Moniplies, man, is it thou? And what has brought ye here? If they should ken thee for the loon that scared the horse the other day!—"

"No more o' that, neighbour," said Richie,— "I am just here on the auld errand—I maun speak with the king."

"The king? Ye are red wud," said Linklater; then shouted to his assistant in the kitchen, "Look to the broches, ye knaves—pisces purga—Salsamenta fac macerentur pulchre—I will make you understand Latin, ye knaves, as becomes the scullions of King James." Then in a cautious tone, to Richie's private ear, he continued, "Know ye not how ill your master came off the other day?—I can tell you that job made some folk shake for their office."

"Weel, but, Laurie, ye maun befriend me this time, and get this wee bit sifflication slipped into his Majesty's ain most gracious hand. I promise you the contents will be most grateful to him."

"Richie," answered Linklater, "you have certainly sworn to say your prayers in the porter's lodge, with your back bare; and twa grooms, with dog-whips, to cry amen to you."

"Na, na, Laurie, lad," said Richie, "I ken better what belongs to sifflications than I did yon day; and ye will say that yourself, if ye will but get that bit note to the king's hand."

"I will have neither hand nor foot in the matter," said the cautious Clerk of the Kitchen; "but there is his Majesty's mess of cock-a-leekie just going to be served to him in his closet—I cannot prevent you from putting the letter between the gilt bowl and the platter; his sacred Majesty will see it when he lifts the bowl, for he aye drinks out the broth."

"Enough said," replied Richie, and deposited the paper accordingly, just before a page entered to carry away the mess to his Majesty.

"Aweel, aweel, neighbour," said Laurence, when the mess was taken away, "if ye have done ony thing to bring yoursell to the withy, or the scourging post, it is your ain wilful deed."

"I will blame no other for it," said Richie; and with that undismayed pertinacity of conceit, which made a fundamental part of his character, he abode the issue, which was not long of arriving.

In a few minutes Maxwell himself arrived in the apartment, and demanded hastily who had placed a writing on the king's trencher, Linklater denied all knowledge of it; but Richie Moniplies, stepping boldly forth, pronounced the emphatical confession, "I am the man."

"Follow me, then," said Maxwell, after regarding him with a look of great curiosity.

They went up a private staircase,—even that private staircase, the privilege of which at Court is accounted a nearer road to power than the grandes entrees themselves. Arriving in what Richie described as an "ill redd-up" ante-room, the usher made a sign to him to stop, while he went into the king's closet. Their conference was short, and as Maxwell opened the door to retire, Richie heard the conclusion of it.

"Ye are sure he is not dangerous?—I was caught once.—Bide within call, but not nearer the door than within three geometrical cubits. If I speak loud, start to me like a falcon—If I speak loun, keep your lang lugs out of ear-shot—and now let him come in."

Richie passed forward at Maxwell's mute signal, and in a moment found himself in the presence of the king. Most men of Richie's birth and breeding, and many others, would have been abashed at finding themselves alone with their Sovereign. But Richie Moniplies had an opinion of himself too high to be controlled by any such ideas; and having made his stiff reverence, he arose once more into his perpendicular height, and stood before James as stiff as a hedge-stake.

"Have ye gotten them, man? have ye gotten them?" said the king, in a fluttered state, betwixt hope and eagerness, and some touch of suspicious fear. "Gie me them—gie me them—before ye speak a word, I charge you, on your allegiance."

Richie took a box from his bosom, and, stooping on one knee, presented it to his Majesty, who hastily opened it, and having ascertained that it contained a certain carcanet of rubies, with which the reader was formerly made acquainted, he could not resist falling into a sort of rapture, kissing the gems, as if they had been capable of feeling, and repeating again and again with childish delight, "Onyx cum prole, silexque—Onyx cum prole! Ah, my bright and bonny sparklers, my heart louns light to see you again." He then turned to Richie, upon whose stoical countenance his Majesty's demeanour had excited something like a grim smile, which James interrupted his rejoicing to reprehend, saying, "Take heed, sir, you are not to laugh at us—we are your anointed Sovereign."

"God forbid that I should laugh!" said Richie, composing his countenance into its natural rigidity. "I did but smile, to bring my visage into coincidence and conformity with your Majesty's physiognomy."

"Ye speak as a dutiful subject, and an honest man," said the king; "but what deil's your name, man?"

"Even Richie Moniplies, the son of auld Mungo Moniplies, at the West Port of Edinburgh, who had the honour to supply your Majesty's mother's royal table, as weel as your Majesty's, with flesh and other vivers, when time was."

"Aha!" said the king, laughing,—for he possessed, as a useful attribute of his situation, a tenacious memory, which recollected every one with whom he was brought into casual contact,—"Ye are the self-same traitor who had weeligh coupit us endlang on the causey of our ain courtyard? but we stuck by our mare. Equam memento rebus in arduis servare. Weel, be not dismayed, Richie; for, as many men have turned traitors, it is but fair that a traitor, now and then, suld prove to be, contra expectanda, a true man. How cam ye by our jewels, man?—cam ye on the part of George Heriot?"

"In no sort," said Richie. "May it please your Majesty, I come as Harry Wynd fought, utterly for my own hand, and on no man's errand; as, indeed, I call no one master, save Him that made me, your most gracious Majesty who governs me, and the noble Nigel Olifaunt, Lord of Glenvarloch, who maintained me as lang as he could maintain himself, poor nobleman!"

"Glenvarlochides again!" exclaimed the king; "by my honour, he lies in ambush for us at every corner!—Maxwell knocks at the door. It is George Heriot come to tell us he cannot find these jewels.—Get thee behind the arras, Richie—stand close, man—sneeze not—cough not—breathe not!—Jingling Geordie is so damnably ready with his gold-ends of wisdom, and sae accursedly backward with his gold-ends of siller, that, by our royal saul, we are glad to get a hair in his neck."

Richie got behind the arras, in obedience to the commands of the good-natured king, while the Monarch, who never allowed his dignity to stand in the way of a frolic, having adjusted, with his own hand, the tapestry, so as to complete the ambush, commanded Maxwell to tell him what was the matter without. Maxwell's reply was so low as to be lost by Richie Moniplies, the peculiarity of whose situation by no means abated his curiosity and desire to gratify it to the uttermost.

"Let Geordie Heriot come in," said the king; and, as Richie could observe through a slit in the tapestry, the honest citizen, if not actually agitated, was at least discomposed. The king, whose talent for wit, or humour, was precisely of a kind to be gratified by such a scene as ensued, received his homage with coldness, and began to talk to him with an air of serious dignity, very different from the usual indecorous levity of his behaviour. "Master Heriot," he said, "if we aright remember, we opignorated in your hands certain jewels of the Crown, for a certain sum of money—Did we, or did we not?"

"My most gracious Sovereign," said Heriot, "indisputably your Majesty was pleased to do so."

"The property of which jewels and cimelia remained with us," continued the king, in the same solemn tone, "subject only to your claim of advance thereupon; which advance being repaid, gives us right to repossession of the thing opignorated, or pledged, or laid in wad. Voetius, Vinnius, Groenwigeneus, Pagenstecher, —all who have treated de Contractu Opignorationis, consentiunt in eundem,—gree on the same point. The Roman law, the English common law, and the municipal law of our ain ancient kingdom of Scotland, though they split in mair particulars than I could desire, unite as strictly in this as the three strands of a twisted rope."

"May it please your Majesty," replied Heriot, "it requires not so many learned authorities to prove to any honest man, that his interest in a pledge is determined when the money lent is restored."

"Weel, sir, I proffer restoration of the sum lent, and I demand to be repossessed of the jewels pledged with you. I gave ye a hint, brief while since, that this would be essential to my service, for, as approaching events are like to call us into public, it would seem strange if we did not appear with those ornaments, which are heirlooms of the Crown, and the absence whereof is like to place us in contempt and suspicion with our liege subjects."

Master George Heriot seemed much moved by this address of his Sovereign, and replied with emotion, "I call Heaven to witness, that I am totally harmless in this matter, and that I would willingly lose the sum advanced, so that I could restore those jewels, the absence of which your Majesty so justly laments. Had the jewels remained with me, the account of them would be easily rendered; but your Majesty will do me the justice to remember, that, by your express order, I transferred them to another person, who advanced a large sum, just about the time of my departure for Paris. The money was pressingly wanted, and no other means to come by it occurred to me. I told your Majesty, when I brought the needful supply, that the man from whom the monies were obtained, was of no good repute; and your most princely answer was, smelling to the gold—Non olet, it smells not of the means that have gotten it."

"Weel, man," said the king, "but what needs a' this din? If ye gave my jewels in pledge to such a one, suld ye not, as a liege subject, have taken care that the redemption was in our power? And are we to suffer the loss of our cimelia by your neglect, besides being exposed to the scorn and censure of our lieges, and of the foreign ambassadors?"

"My lord and liege king," said Heriot, "God knows, if my bearing blame or shame in this matter would keep it from your Majesty, it were my duty to endure both, as a servant grateful for many benefits; but when your Majesty considers the violent death of the man himself, the disappearance of his daughter, and of his wealth, I

trust you will remember that I warned your Majesty, in humble duty, of the possibility of such casualties, and prayed you not to urge me to deal with him on your behalf."

"But you brought me nae better means," said the king—"Geordie, ye brought me nae better means. I was like a deserted man; what could I do but grip to the first siller that offered, as a drowning man grasps to the willow-wand that comes readiest?—And now, man, what for have ye not brought back the jewels? they are surely above ground, if ye wad make strict search."

"All strict search has been made, may it please your Majesty," replied the citizen; "hue and cry has been sent out everywhere, and it has been found impossible to recover them."

"Difficult, ye mean, Geordie, not impossible," replied the king; "for that whilk is impossible, is either naturally so, exempli gratia, to make two into three; or morally so, as to make what is truth falsehood; but what is only difficult may come to pass, with assistance of wisdom and patience; as, for example, Jingling Geordie, look here!" And he displayed the recovered treasure to the eyes of the astonished jeweller, exclaiming, with great triumph, "What say ye to that, Jingle?—By my sceptre and crown, the man stares as if he took his native prince for a warlock! us that are the very malleus maleficarum, the contunding and contrituring hammer of all witches, sorcerers, magicians, and the like; he thinks we are taking a touch of the black art outsells!—But gang thy way, honest Geordie; thou art a good plain man, but nane of the seven sages of Greece; gang thy way, and mind the soothfast word which you spoke, small time syne, that there is one in this land that comes near to Solomon, King of Israel, in all his gifts, except in his love to strange women, forby the daughter of Pharaoh."

If Heriot was surprised at seeing the jewels so unexpectedly produced at the moment the king was upbraiding him for the loss of them, this allusion to the reflection which had escaped him while conversing with Lord Glenvarloch, altogether completed his astonishment; and the king was so delighted with the superiority which it gave him at the moment, that he rubbed his hands, chuckled, and finally, his sense of dignity giving way to the full feeling of triumph, he threw himself into his easy-chair, and laughed with unconstrained violence till he lost his breath, and the tears ran plentifully down his cheeks as he strove to recover it. Meanwhile, the royal cachinnation was echoed out by a discordant and portentous laugh from behind the arras, like that of one who, little accustomed to give way to such emotions, feels himself at some particular impulse unable either to control or to modify his obstreperous mirth. Heriot turned his head with new surprise towards the place, from which sounds so unfitting the presence of a monarch seemed to burst with such emphatic clamour.

The king, too, somewhat sensible of the indecorum, rose up, wiped his eyes, and calling,—"Todlowrie, come out o' your den," he produced from behind the arras the length of Richie Moniplies, still laughing with as unrestrained mirth as ever did gossip at a country christening. "Whisht, man, whisht, man," said the king; "ye needna nicher that gait, like a cusser at a caup o' corn, e'en though it was a pleasing jest, and our ain framing. And yet to see Jingling Geordie, that bauds himself so much the wiser than other folk—to see him, ha! ha! ha!—in the vein of Eucdio apud Plautum, distressing himself to recover what was lying at his elbow—"Peril, interii, occidi—quo curram? quo non curram?—Tene, tene—quem? quis? nescio—nihil video."

"Ah! Geordie, your een are sharp enough to look after gowd and silver, gems, rubies, and the like of that, and yet ye kenna how to come by them when they are lost.—Ay, ay—look at them, man—look at them—they are a' right and tight, sound and round, not a doublet crept in amongst them."

George Heriot, when his first surprise was over, was too old a courtier to interrupt the king's imaginary triumph, although he darted a look of some displeasure at honest Richie, who still continued on what is usually termed the broad grin. He quietly examined the stones, and finding them all perfect, he honestly and sincerely congratulated his Majesty on the recovery of a treasure which could not have been lost without some dishonour to the crown; and asked to whom he himself was to pay the sums for which they had been pledged, observing, that he had the money by him in readiness.

"Ye are in a deevil of a hurry, when there is paying in the case, Geordie," said the king.—"What's a' the haste, man? The jewels were restored by an honest, kindly countryman of ours. There he stands, and wha kens if he wants the money on the nail, or if he might not be as weel pleased wi' a bit rescript on our treasury some six months hence? Ye ken that our Exchequer is even at a low ebb just now, and ye cry pay, pay, pay, as if we had all the mines of Ophir."

"Please your Majesty," said Heriot, "if this man has the real right to these monies, it is doubtless at his will to grant forbearance, if he will. But when I remember the guise in which I first saw him, with a tattered cloak and a broken head, I can hardly conceive it.—Are not you Richie Moniplies, with the king's favour?"

"Even sae, Master Heriot—of the ancient and honourable house of Castle Collop, near to the West Port of Edinburgh," answered Richie.

"Why, please your Majesty, he is a poor serving-man," said Heriot. "This money can never be honestly at his disposal."

"What for no?" said the king. "Wad ye have naeboddy spraickle up the brae but yoursell, Geordie? Your ain cloak was thin enough when ye cam here, though ye have lined it gay and weel. And for serving-men, there has mony a red-shank cam over the Tweed wi' his master's wallet on his shoulders, that now rustles it wi' his six followers behind him. There stands the man himsell; speer at him, Geordie."

"His may not be the best authority in the case," answered the cautious citizen.

"Tut, tut, man," said the king, "ye are over scrupulous. The knave deer-stealers have an apt phrase, Non est inquirendum unde venit VENISON. He that brings the gudes hath surely a right to dispose of the gear.—Hark ye, friend, speak the truth and shame the deil. Have ye plenary powers to dispose on the redemption-money as to delay of payments, or the like, ay or no?"

"Full power, an it like your gracious Majesty," answered Richie Moniplies; "and I am maist willing to subscribe to whatsoever may in any wise accommodate your Majesty anent the redemption-money, trusting your Majesty's grace will be kind to me in one sma' favour."

"Ey, man," said the king, "come ye to me there? I thought ye wad e'en be like the rest of them.—One would think our subjects' lives and goods were all our ain, and holden of us at our free will; but when we stand in need of ony matter of siller from them, which chances more frequently than we would it did, deil a boddle is to be had, save on the auld terms of giff-gaff. It is just niffer for niffer.—Aweel, neighbour, what is it that ye want—some monopoly, I reckon? Or it may be a grant of kirk-lands and teinds, or a knighthood, or the like? Ye maun be reasonable, unless ye propose to advance more money for our present occasions."

"My liege," answered Richie Moniplies, "the owner of these monies places them at your Majesty's command, free of all pledge or usage as long as it is your royal pleasure, providing your Majesty will condescend to show some favour to the noble Lord Glenvarloch, presently prisoner in your royal Tower of London."

"How, man—how,—man—how, man!" exclaimed the king, reddening and stammering, but with emotions more noble than those by which he was sometimes agitated—"What is that you dare to say to us?—Sell our justice!—sell our mercy!—and we a crowned king, sworn to do justice to our subjects in the gate, and responsible for our stewardship to Him that is over all kings?"—Here he reverently looked up, touched his bonnet, and continued, with some sharpness,—"We dare not traffic in such commodities, sir; and, but that ye are a poor ignorant creature, that have done us this day some not unpleasant service, we wad have a red iron driven through your tongue, in terrorem of others.—Awa with him, Geordie,—pay him, plack and bawbee, out of our monies in your hands, and let them care that come ahint."

Richie, who had counted with the utmost certainty upon the success of this master-stroke of policy, was like an architect whose whole scaffolding at once gives way under him. He caught, however, at what he thought might break his fall. "Not only the sum for which the jewels were pledged," he said, "but the double of it, if required, should be placed at his Majesty's command, and even without hope or condition of repayment, if only—"

But the king did not allow him to complete the sentence, crying out with greater vehemence than before, as if he dreaded the stability of his own good resolutions,—"Awa wi' him—swith awa wi' him! It is time he were gane, if he doubles his bode that gate. And, for your life, letna Steenie, or ony of them, hear a word from his mouth; for wha kens what trouble that might bring me into! Ne inducas in tentationem—Vade retro, Sathanas!—Amen."

In obedience to the royal mandate, George Heriot hurried the abashed petitioner out of the presence and out of the Palace; and, when they were in the Palace-yard, the citizen, remembering with some resentment the airs of equality which Richie had assumed towards him in the commencement of the scene which had just taken place, could not forbear to retaliate, by congratulating him with an ironical smile on his favour at Court, and his improved grace in presenting a supplication.

"Never fash your beard about that, Master George Heriot," said Richie, totally undismayed; "but tell me when and where I am to sifflicate you for eight hundred pounds sterling, for which these jewels stood engaged?"

"The instant that you bring with you the real owner of the money," replied Heriot; "whom it is important that I should see on more accounts than one."

"Then will I back to his Majesty," said Richie Moniplies, stoutly, "and get either the money or the pledge back again. I am fully commissionate to act in that matter."

"It may be so, Richie," said the citizen, "and perchance it may not be so neither, for your tales are not all gospel; and, therefore, be assured I will see that it is so, ere I pay you that large sum of money. I shall give you an acknowledgment for it, and I will keep it prestable at a moment's warning. But, my good Richard Moniplies, of Castle Collop, near the West Port of Edinburgh, in the meantime I am bound to return to his Majesty on matters of weight." So speaking, and mounting the stair to re-enter the Palace, he added, by way of summing up the whole,— "George Heriot is over old a cock to be caught with chaff."

Richie stood petrified when he beheld him re-enter the Palace, and found himself, as he supposed, left in the lurch.— "Now, plague on ye," he muttered, "for a cunning auld skinflint! that, because ye are an honest man yourself, forsooth, must needs deal with all the world as if they were knaves. But deil be in me if ye beat me yet!—Gude guide us! yonder comes Laurie Linklater next, and he will be on me about the sifflication.—I winna stand him, by Saint Andrew!" So saying and changing the haughty stride with which he had that morning entered the precincts of the Palace, into a skulking shamble, he retreated for his wherry, which was in attendance, with speed which, to use the approved phrase on such occasions, greatly resembled a flight.

CHAPTER XXXII

Benedict. This looks not like a nuptial.

Much Ado About Nothing.

Master George Heriot had no sooner returned to the king's apartment, than James inquired of Maxwell if the Earl of Huntinglen was in attendance, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, desired that he should be admitted. The old Scottish Lord having made his reverence in the usual manner, the king extended his hand to be kissed, and then began to address him in a tone of great sympathy.

"We told your lordship in our secret epistle of this morning, written with our ain hand, in testimony we have neither pretermitted nor forgotten your faithful service, that we had that to communicate to you that would require both patience and fortitude to endure, and therefore exhorted you to peruse some of the most pithy passages of Seneca, and of Boethius de Consolatione, that the back may be, as we say, fitted for the burden—This we commend to you from our ain experience.

'Non ignara mail, miseris succurrere disco,'

sayeth Dido, and I might say in my own person, non ignarus; but to change the gender would affect the prosody, whereof our southern subjects are tenacious. So, my Lord of Huntinglen, I trust you have acted by our advice, and studied patience before ye need it—venienti occurrere morbo—mix the medicament when the disease is coming on."

"May it please your Majesty," answered Lord Huntinglen, "I am more of an old soldier than a scholar—and if my own rough nature will not bear me out in any calamity, I hope I shall have grace to try a text of Scripture to boot."

"Ay, man, are you there with your bears?" said the king; "The Bible, man," (touching his cap,) "is indeed principium et fons—but it is pity your lordship cannot peruse it in the original. For although we did ourselves promote that work of translation,—since ye may read, at the beginning of every Bible, that when some palpable clouds of darkness were thought like to have overshadowed the land, after the setting of that bright occidental star, Queen Elizabeth; yet our appearance, like that of the sun in his strength, instantly dispelled these surmised mists,—I say, that although, as therein mentioned, we countenanced the preaching of the gospel, and especially the translation of the Scriptures out of the original sacred tongues; yet nevertheless, we ourselves confess to have found a comfort in consulting them in the original Hebrew, whilk we do not perceive even in the Latin version of the Septuagint, much less in the English traduction."

"Please your Majesty," said Lord Huntinglen, "if your Majesty delays communicating the bad news with which your honoured letter threatens me, until I am capable to read Hebrew like your Majesty, I fear I shall die in ignorance of the misfortune which hath befallen, or is about to befall, my house."

"You will learn it but too soon, my lord," replied the king. "I grieve to say it, but your son Dalgarno, whom I thought a very saint, as he was so much with Steenie and Baby Charles, hath turned out a very villain."

"Villain!" repeated Lord Huntinglen; and though he instantly checked himself, and added, "but it is your Majesty speaks the word," the effect of his first tone made the king step back as if he had received a blow. He also recovered himself again, and said in the pettish way which usually indicated his displeasure—"Yes, my lord, it was we that said it—non surdo canis—we are not deaf—we pray you not to raise your voice in speech with us—there is the bonny memorial—read, and judge for yourself."

The king then thrust into the old nobleman's hand a paper, containing the story of the Lady Hermione, with the evidence by which it was supported, detailed so briefly and clearly, that the infamy of Lord Dalgarno, the lover by whom she had been so shamefully deceived, seemed undeniable. But a father yields not up so easily the cause of his son.

"May it please your Majesty," he said, "why was this tale not sooner told? This woman hath been here for years—wherefore was the claim on my son not made the instant she touched English ground?"

"Tell him how that came about, Geordie," said the king, dressing Heriot.

"I grieve to distress my Lord Huntinglen," said Heriot; "but I must speak the truth. For a long time the Lady Hermione could not brook the idea of making her situation public; and when her mind became changed in that particular, it was necessary to recover the evidence of the false marriage, and letters and papers connected with it, which, when she came to Paris, and just before I saw her, she had deposited with a correspondent of her father in that city. He became afterwards bankrupt, and in consequence of that misfortune the lady's papers passed into other hands, and it was only a few days since I traced and recovered them. Without these documents of evidence, it would have been imprudent for her to have preferred her complaint, favoured as Lord Dalgarno is by powerful friends."

"Ye are saucy to say sae," said the king; "I ken what ye mean weel enough—ye think Steenie wad hae putten the weight of his foot into the scales of justice, and garr'd them whomle the bucket—ye forget, Geordie, wha it is whose hand uphauls them. And ye do poor Steenie the mair wrang, for he confessed it ance before us and our privy council, that Dalgarno would have put the quean aff on him, the puir simple bairn, making him trow that she was a light-o'-love; in whilk mind he remained assured even when he parted from her, albeit Steenie might hae weel thought ane of thae cattle wadna hae resisted the like of him."

"The Lady Hermione," said George Heriot, "has always done the utmost justice to the conduct of the duke, who, although strongly possessed with prejudice against her character, yet scorned to avail himself of her distress, and on the contrary supplied her with the means of extricating herself from her difficulties."

"It was e'en like himself—blessings on his bonny face!" said the king; "and I believed this lady's tale the mair readily, my Lord Huntinglen, that she spake nae ill of Steenie—and to make a lang tale short, my lord, it is the opinion of our council and ourself, as weel as of Baby Charles and Steenie, that your son maun amend his wrong by wedding this lady, or undergo such disgrace and discountenance as we can bestow."

The person to whom he spoke was incapable of answering him. He stood before the king motionless, and glaring with eyes of which even the lids seemed immovable, as if suddenly converted into an ancient statue of the times of chivalry, so instantly had his hard features and strong limbs been arrested into rigidity by the blow he had received—And in a second afterwards, like the same statue when the lightning breaks upon it, he sunk at once to the ground with a heavy groan. The king was in the utmost alarm, called upon Heriot and Maxwell for help, and, presence of mind not being his forte, ran to and fro in his cabinet, exclaiming—"My ancient and beloved servant—who saved our anointed self! vae atque dolor! My Lord of Huntinglen, look up—look up, man, and your son may marry the Queen of Sheba if he will."

By this time Maxwell and Heriot had raised the old nobleman, and placed him on a chair; while the king, observing that he began to recover himself, continued his consolations more methodically.

"Haud up your head—haud up your head, and listen to your ain kind native Prince. If there is shame, man, it comesna empty-handed—there is siller to gild it—a gude tocher, and no that bad a pedigree;—if she has been a loon, it was your son made her sae, and he can make her an honest woman again."

These suggestions, however reasonable in the common case, gave no comfort to Lord Huntinglen, if indeed he fully comprehended them; but the blubbing of his good-natured old master, which began to accompany and interrupt his royal speech, produced more rapid effect. The large tear gushed reluctantly from his eye, as he kissed the withered hands, which the king, weeping with less dignity and restraint, abandoned to him, first alternately and then both together, until the feelings of the man getting entirely the better of the Sovereign's sense of dignity, he grasped and shook Lord Huntinglen's hands with the sympathy of an equal and a familiar friend.

"Compone lachrymas," said the Monarch; "be patient, man, be patient; the council, and Baby Charles, and Steenie, may a' gang to the deevil—he shall not marry her since it moves you so deeply."

"He shall marry her, by God!" answered the earl, drawing himself up, dashing the tear from his eyes, and endeavouring to recover his composure. "I pray your Majesty's pardon, but he shall marry her, with her dishonour for her dowry, were she the veriest courtesan in all Spain—If he gave his word, he shall make his word good, were it to the meanest creature that haunts the streets—he shall do it, or my own dagger shall take the life that I gave him. If he could stoop to use so base a fraud, though to deceive infamy, let him wed infamy."

"No, no!" the Monarch continued to insinuate, "things are not so bad as that—Steenie himself never thought of her being a streetwalker, even when he thought the worst of her."

"If it can at all console my Lord of Huntinglen," said the citizen, "I can assure him of this lady's good birth, and most fair and unspotted fame."

"I am sorry for it," said Lord Huntinglen—then interrupting himself, he said—"Heaven forgive me for being ungrateful for such comfort!—but I am well-nigh sorry she should be as you represent her, so much better than the villain deserves. To be condemned to wed beauty and innocence and honest birth—"

"Ay, and wealth, my lord—wealth," insinuated the king, "is a better sentence than his perfidy has deserved."

"It is long," said the embittered father, "since I saw he was selfish and hardhearted; but to be a perjured liar—I never dreaded that such a blot would have fallen on my race! I will never look on him again."

"Hoot ay, my lord, hoot ay," said the king; "ye maun tak him to task roundly. I grant you should speak more in the vein of Demea than Mitio, vi nempe et via pervulgata patrum; but as for not seeing him again, and he your only son, that is altogether out of reason. I tell ye, man, (but I would not for a boddle that Baby Charles heard me,) that he might gie the glaiks to half the lasses of Lonnun, ere I could find in my heart speak such harsh words as you have said of this deil of a Dalgarno of yours."

"May it please your Majesty to permit me to retire," said Lord Huntinglen, "and dispose of the case according to your own royal sense of justice, for I desire no favour for him."

"Aweel, my lord, so be it; and if your lordship can think," added the Monarch, "of any thing in our power which might comfort you—"

"Your Majesty's gracious sympathy," said Lord Huntinglen, "has already comforted me as far as earth can; the rest must be from the King of kings."

"To Him I commend you, my auld and faithful servant," said James with emotion, as the earl withdrew from his presence. The king remained fixed in thought for some time, and then said to Heriot, "Jingling Geordie, ye ken all the privy doings of our Court, and have dune so these thirty years, though, like a wise man, ye hear, and see, and say nothing. Now, there is a thing I fain wad ken, in the way of philosophical inquiry—Did you ever hear of the umquhile Lady Huntinglen, the departed Countess of this noble earl, ganging a wee bit gleed in her walk through the world; I mean in the way of slipping a foot, casting a leglin-girth, or the like, ye understand me?"

[Footnote: A leglin-girth is the lowest hoop upon a leglin, or milk-pail. Allan Ramsay applies the phrase in the same metaphorical sense.

"Or bairns can read, they first maun spell, I learn'd this frae my mammy, And cast a leglin-girth mysell, Lang ere I married Tammy."

Christ's Kirk On The Green.]

"On my word as an honest man," said George Heriot, somewhat surprised at the question, "I never heard her wronged by the slightest breath of suspicion. She was a worthy lady, very circumspect in her walk, and lived in great concord with her husband, save that the good Countess was something of a puritan, and kept more company with ministers than was altogether agreeable to Lord Huntinglen, who is, as your Majesty well knows, a man of the old rough world, that will drink and swear."

"O Geordie!" exclaimed the king, "these are auld-warld frailties, of whilk we dare not pronounce even ourselves absolutely free. But the world grows worse from day to day, Geordie. The juveniles of this age may weel say with the poet—

'Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit Nos nequiores—'

This Dalgarno does not drink so much, or swear so much, as his father; but he wenches, Geordie, and he breaks his word and oath baith. As to what you say of the leddy, and the ministers, we are a' fallible creatures, Geordie, priests and kings, as weel as others; and wha kens but what that may account for the difference between this Dalgarno and his father? The earl is the vera soul of honour, and cares nae mair for world's gear than a noble hound for the quest of a foulmart; but as for his son, he was like to brazen us a' out—ourselves, Steenie, Baby Charles, and our council—till he heard of the tocher, and then, by my kingly crown, he lap like a cock at a grossart! These are discrepancies betwixt parent and son not to be accounted for naturally, according to Baptista Porta, Michael Scott de secretis, and others.—Ah, Jingling Geordie, if your clouting the caldron, and jingling on pots, pans, and veshels of all manner of metal, hadna jingled a' your grammar out of your head, I could have touched on that matter to you at mair length."

Heriot was too plain-spoken to express much concern for the loss of his grammar learning on this occasion; but after modestly hinting that he had seen many men who could not fill their father's bonnet, though no one had been suspected of wearing their father's nightcap, he inquired "whether Lord Dalgarno had consented to do the Lady Hermione justice."

"Troth, man, I have small doubt that he will," quoth the king; "I gave him the schedule of her worldly substance, which you delivered to us in the council, and we allowed him half-an-hour to chew the cud upon that. It is rare reading for bringing him to reason. I left Baby Charles and Steenie laying his duty before him; and if he can resist doing what they desire him—why, I wish he would teach me the gate of it. O Geordie, Jingling Geordie, it was grand to hear Baby Charles laying down the guilt of dissimulation, and Steenie lecturing on the turpitude of incontinence!"

"I am afraid," said George Heriot, more hastily than prudently, "I might have thought of the old proverb of Satan reproving sin."

"Deil hae our saul, neighbour," said the king, reddening, "but ye are not blate! I gie ye license to speak freely, and, by our saul, ye do not let the privilege become lost non utendo—it will suffer no negative prescription in your hands. Is it fit, think ye, that Baby Charles should let his thoughts be publicly seen?—No—no—princes' thoughts are arcana imperii—Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare. Every liege subject is bound to speak the whole truth to the king, but there is nae reciprocity of obligation—and for Steenie having been whiles a dike-louper at a time, is it for you, who are his goldsmith, and to whom, I doubt, he awes an uncomatable sum, to cast that up to him?"

Heriot did not feel himself called on to play the part of Zeno and sacrifice himself for upholding the cause of moral truth; he did not desert it, however, by disavowing his words, but simply expressed sorrow for having offended his Majesty, with which the placable king was sufficiently satisfied.

"And now, Geordie, man," quoth he, "we will to this culprit, and hear what he has to say for himself, for I will see the job cleared this blessed day. Ye maun come wi' me, for your evidence may be wanted."

The king led the way, accordingly, into a larger apartment, where the Prince, the Duke of Buckingham, and one or two privy counsellors were seated at a table, before which stood Lord Dalgarno, in an attitude of as much elegant ease and indifference as could be expressed, considering the stiff dress and manners of the times.

All rose and bowed reverently, while the king, to use a north country word, expressive of his mode of locomotion, toddled to his chair or throne, making a sign to Heriot to stand behind him.

"We hope," said his Majesty, "that Lord Dalgarno stands prepared to do justice to this unfortunate lady, and to his own character and honour?"

"May I humbly inquire the penalty," said Lord Dalgarno, "in case I should unhappily find compliance with your Majesty's demands impossible?"

"Banishment frae our Court, my lord," said the king; "frae our Court and our countenance."

"Unhappy exile that I may be!" said Lord Dalgarno, in a tone of subdued irony—"I will at least carry your Majesty's picture with me, for I shall never see such another king."

"And banishment, my lord," said the Prince, sternly, "from these our dominions."

"That must be by form of law, please your Royal Highness," said Dalgarno, with an affectation of deep respect; "and I have not heard that there is a statute, compelling us, under such penalty, to marry every woman we may play the fool with. Perhaps his Grace of Buckingham can tell me?"

"You are a villain, Dalgarno," said the haughty and vehement favourite.

"Fie, my lord, fie!—to a prisoner, and in presence of your royal and paternal gossip!" said Lord Dalgarno. "But I will cut this deliberation short. I have looked over this schedule of the goods and effects of Erminia Pauletti, daughter of the late noble—yes, he is called the noble, or I read wrong, Giovanni Pauletti, of the Houee of Sansovino, in Genoa, and of the no less noble Lady Maud Olifaunt, of the House of Glenvarloch—Well, I declare that I was pre-contracted in Spain to this noble lady, and there has passed betwixt us some certain proelibatio matrimonii; and now, what more does this grave assembly require of me?"

"That you should repair the gross and infamous wrong you have done the lady, by marrying her within this hour," said the Prince.

"O, may it please your Royal Highness," answered Dalgarno, "I have a trifling relationship with an old Earl, who calls himself my father, who may claim some vote in the matter. Alas! every son is not blessed with an obedient parent!" He hazarded a slight glance towards the throne, to give meaning to his last words.

"We have spoken ourselves with Lord Huntinglen," said the king, "and are authorised to consent in his name."

"I could never have expected this intervention of a proxaneta, which the vulgar translate blackfoot, of such eminent dignity," said Dalgarno, scarce concealing a sneer. "And my father hath consented? He was wont to say, ere we left Scotland, that the blood of Huntinglen and of Glenvarloch would not mingle, were they poured into the same basin. Perhaps he has a mind to try the experiment?"

"My lord," said James, "we will not be longer trifled with—Will you instantly, and sine mora, take this lady to your wife, in our chapel?"

"Statim atque instanter," answered Lord Dalgarno; "for I perceive by doing so, I shall obtain power to render great services to the commonwealth—I shall have acquired wealth to supply the wants of your Majesty, and a fair wife to be at the command of his Grace of Buckingham."

The Duke rose, passed to the end of the table where Lord Dalgarno was standing, and whispered in his ear, "You have placed a fair sister at my command ere now."

This taunt cut deep through Lord Dalgarno's assumed composure. He started as if an adder had stung him, but instantly composed himself, and, fixing on the Duke's still smiling countenance an eye which spoke unutterable hatred, he pointed the forefinger of his left hand to the hilt of his sword, but in a manner which could scarce be observed by any one save Buckingham. The Duke gave him another smile of bitter scorn, and returned to his seat, in obedience to the commands of the king, who continued calling out, "Sit down, Steenie, sit down, I command ye—we will hae nae harnsbreaking here."

"Your Majesty needs not fear my patience," said Lord Dalgarno; "and that I may keep it the better, I will not utter another word in this presence, save those enjoined to me in that happy portion of the Prayer-Book, which begins with Dearly Beloved, and ends with amazement."

"You are a hardened villain, Dalgarno," said the king; "and were I the lass, by my father's saul, I would rather brook the stain of having been your concubine, than run the risk of becoming your wife. But she shall be under our special protection.—Come, my lords, we will ourselves see this blithesome bridal." He gave the signal by rising, and moved towards the door, followed by the train. Lord Dalgarno attended, speaking to none, and spoken to by no one, yet seeming as easy and unembarrassed in his gait and manner as if in reality a happy bridegroom.

They reached the Chapel by a private entrance, which communicated from the royal apartment. The Bishop of Winchester, in his pontifical dress, stood beside the altar; on the other side, supported by Monna Paula, the colourless, faded, half-lifeless form of the Lady Hermione, or Erminia Pauletti. Lord Dalgarno bowed profoundly to her, and the Prince, observing the horror with which she regarded him, walked up, and said to her, with much dignity,—"*Madam, ere you put yourself under the authority of this man, let me inform you, he hath in the fullest degree vindicated your honour, so far as concerns your former intercourse. It is for you to consider whether you will put your fortune and happiness into the hands of one, who has shown himself unworthy of all trust.*"

The lady, with much difficulty, found words to make reply. "I owe to his Majesty's goodness," she said, "the care of providing me some reservation out of my own fortune, for my decent sustenance. The rest cannot be better disposed than in buying back the fair fame of which I am deprived, and the liberty of ending my life in peace and seclusion."

"The contract has been drawn up," said the king, "under our own eye, specially discharging the potestas maritalis, and agreeing they shall live separate. So buckle them, my Lord Bishop, as fast as you can, that they may sunder again the sooner."

The Bishop accordingly opened his book and commenced the marriage ceremony, under circumstances so novel and so inauspicious. The responses of the bride were only expressed by inclinations of the head and body; while those of the bridegroom were spoken boldly and distinctly, with a tone resembling levity, if not scorn. When it was concluded, Lord Dalgarno advanced as if to salute the bride, but seeing that she drew back in fear and abhorrence, he contented himself with making her a low bow. He then drew up his form to its height, and stretched himself as if examining the power of his limbs, but elegantly, and without any forcible change of attitude. "I could caper yet," he said "though I am in fetters—but they are of gold, and lightly worn.—Well, I see all eyes look cold on me, and it is time I should withdraw. The sun shines elsewhere than in England! But first I must ask how this fair Lady Dalgarno is to be bestowed. Methinks it is but decent I should know. Is she to be sent to the harem of my Lord Duke? Or is this worthy citizen, as before—"

"Hold thy base ribald tongue!" said his father, Lord Huntinglen, who had kept in the background during the ceremony, and now stepping suddenly forward, caught the lady by the arm, and confronted her unworthy husband.—"*The Lady Dalgarno,*" he continued, "*shall remain as a widow in my house. A widow I esteem her, as much as if the grave had closed over her dishonoured husband.*"

Lord Dalgarno exhibited momentary symptoms of extreme confusion, and said, in a submissive tone, "If you, my lord, can wish me dead, I cannot, though your heir, return the compliment. Few of the first-born of Israel," he added, recovering himself from the single touch of emotion he had displayed, "can say so much with truth. But I will convince you ere I go, that I am a true descendant of a house famed for its memory of injuries."

"I marvel your Majesty will listen to him longer," said Prince Charles. "Methinks we have heard enough of his daring insolence."

But James, who took the interest of a true gossip in such a scene as was now passing, could not bear to cut the controversy short, but imposed silence on his son, with "Whisht, Baby Charles—there is a good bairn, whisht!—I want to hear what the frontless loon can say."

"Only, sir," said Dalgarno, "that but for one single line in this schedule, all else that it contains could not have bribed me to take that woman's hand into mine."

"That line maun have been the SUMMA TOTALIS," said the king.

"Not so, sire," replied Dalgarno. "The sum total might indeed have been an object for consideration even to a Scottish king, at no very distant period; but it would have had little charms for me, save that I see here an entry which gives me the power of vengeance over the family of Glenvarloch; and learn from it that yonder pale bride, when she put the wedding-torch into my hand, gave me the power of burning her mother's house to ashes!"

"How is that?" said the king. "What is he speaking about, Jingling Geordie?"

"This friendly citizen, my liege," said Lord Dalgarno, "hath expended a sum belonging to my lady, and now, I thank heaven, to me, in acquiring a certain mortgage, or wanset, over the estate of Glenvarloch, which, if it be not redeemed before to-morrow at noon, will put me in possession of the fair demesnes of those who once called themselves our house's rivals."

"Can this be true?" said the king.

"It is even but too true, please your Majesty," answered the citizen. "The Lady Hermione having advanced the money for the original creditor, I was obliged, in honour and honesty, to take the rights to her; and doubtless, they pass to her husband."

"But the warrant, man," said the king—"the warrant on our Exchequer—Couldna that supply the lad wi' the means of redemption?"

"Unhappily, my liege, he has lost it, or disposed of it—It is not to be found. He is the most unlucky youth!"

"This is a proper spot of work!" said the king, beginning to amble about and play with the points of his doublet and hose, in expression of dismay. "We cannot aid him without paying our debts twice over, and we have, in the present state of our Exchequer, scarce the means of paying them once."

"You have told me news," said Lord Dalgarno, "but I will take no advantage."

"Do not," said his father, "be a bold villain, since thou must be one, and seek revenge with arms, and not with the usurer's weapons."

"Pardon me, my lord," said Lord Dalgarno. "Pen and ink are now my surest means of vengeance; and more land is won by the lawyer with the ram-skin, than by the Andrea Ferrara with his sheepshead handle. But, as I said before, I will take no advantages. I will await in town to-morrow, near Covent Garden; if any one will pay the redemption-money to my scrivener, with whom the deeds lie, the better for Lord Glenvarloch; if not, I will go forward on the next day, and travel with all dispatch to the north, to take possession."

"Take a father's malison with you, unhappy wretch!" said Lord Huntinglen.

"And a king's, who is pater patriae," said James.

"I trust to bear both lightly," said Lord Dalgarno; and bowing around him, he withdrew; while all present, oppressed, and, as it were, overawed, by his determined effrontery, found they could draw breath more freely, when he at length relieved them of his society. Lord Huntinglen, applying himself to comfort his new daughter-in-law, withdrew with her also; and the king, with his privy-council, whom he had not dismissed, again returned to his council-chamber, though the hour was unusually late. Heriot's attendance was still commanded, but for what reason was not explained to him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

—I'll play the eavesdropper.

Richard III., Act V., Scene 3.

James had no sooner resumed his seat at the council-board than he began to hitch in his chair, cough, use his handkerchief, and make other intimations that he meditated a long speech. The council composed themselves to the beseeeming degree of attention. Charles, as strict in his notions of decorum, as his father was indifferent to it, fixed himself in an attitude of rigid and respectful attention, while the haughty favourite, conscious of his power over both father and son, stretched himself more easily on his seat, and, in assuming an appearance of listening, seemed to pay a debt to ceremonial rather than to duty.

"I doubt not, my lords," said the Monarch, "that some of you may be thinking the hour of refection is past, and that it is time to ask with the slave in the comedy—Quid de symbolo?—Nevertheless, to do justice and exercise judgment is our meat and drink; and now we are to pray your wisdom to consider the case of this unhappy youth, Lord Glenvarloch, and see whether, consistently with our honour, any thing can be done in his favour."

"I am surprised at your Majesty's wisdom making the inquiry," said the Duke; "it is plain this Dalgarno hath proved one of the most insolent villains on earth, and it must therefore be clear, that if Lord Glenvarloch had run him through the body, there would but have been out of the world a knave who had lived in it too long. I think Lord Glenvarloch hath had much wrong; and I regret that, by the persuasions of this false fellow, I have myself had some hand in it."

"Ye speak like a child, Steenie—I mean my Lord of Buckingham," answered the king, "and as one that does not understand the logic of the schools; for an action may be inconsequential or even meritorious, quoad hominem, that is, as touching him upon whom it is acted; and yet most criminal, quoad locum, or considering the place wherein it is done; as a man may lawfully dance Chrichty Beardie or any other dance in a tavern, but not inter parietes ecclesiae. So that, though it may have been a good deed to have sticked Lord Dalgarno, being such as he has shown himself, anywhere else, yet it fell under the plain statute, when violence was offered within the verge of the Court. For, let me tell you, my lords, the statute against striking would be of no small use in our Court, if it could be eluded by justifying the person stricken to be a knave. It is much to be lamented that I ken nae Court in Christendom where knaves are not to be found; and if men are to break the peace under pretence of beating them, why, it will rain Jeddart staves [Footnote: The old-fashioned weapon called the Jeddart staff was a species of battle-axe. Of a very great tempest, it is said, in the south of Scotland, that it rains Jeddart staves, as in England the common people talk of its raining cats and dogs.] in our very ante-chamber."

"What your Majesty says," replied Prince Charles, "is marked with your usual wisdom—the precincts of palaces must be sacred as well as the persons of kings, which are respected even in the most barbarous nations, as being one step only beneath their divinities. But your Majesty's will can control the severity of this and every other law, and it is in your power, on consideration of his case, to grant the rash young man a free pardon."

"Rem acu tetigisti, Carole, mi puerule," answered the king; "and know, my lords, that we have, by a shrewd device and gift of our own, already sounded the very depth of this Lord Glenvarloch's disposition. I trow there be among you some that remember my handling in the curious case of my Lady Lake, and how I trimmed them about the story of hearkening behind the arras. Now this put me to cogitation, and I remembered me of having read that Dionysius, King of Syracuse, whom historians call Tyrannos, which signifieth not in the Greek tongue, as in ours, a truculent usurper, but a royal king who governs, it may be, something more strictly than we and other lawful monarchs, whom the ancients termed Basileis—Now this Dionysius of Syracuse caused cunning workmen to build for himself a lugg—D'ye ken what that is, my Lord Bishop?"

"A cathedral, I presume to guess," answered the Bishop.

"What the deil, man—I crave your lordship's pardon for swearing—but it was no cathedral—only a lurking-place called the king's lugg, or ear, where he could sit undescried, and hear the converse of his prisoners. Now, sirs, in imitation of this Dionysius, whom I took for my pattern, the rather that he was a great linguist and grammarian, and taught a school with good applause after his abdication, (either he or his successor of the same name, it matters not whilk)—I have caused them to make a lugg up at the state-prison of the Tower yonder, more like a pulpit than a cathedral, my Lord Bishop—and communicating with the arras behind the Lieutenant's chamber, where we may sit and privily hear the discourse of such prisoners as are pent up there for state-offences, and so creep into the very secrets of our enemies."

The Prince cast a glance towards the Duke, expressive of great vexation and disgust. Buckingham shrugged his shoulders, but the motion was so slight as to be almost imperceptible.

"Weel, my lords, ye ken the fray at the hunting this morning—I shall not get out of the trembling exies until I have a sound night's sleep—just after that, they bring ye in a pretty page that had been found in the Park. We were warned against examining him ourselves by the anxious care of those around us; nevertheless, holding our life ever at the service of these kingdoms, we commanded all to avoid the room, the rather that we suspected this boy to be a girl. What think ye, my lords?—few of you would have thought I had a hawk's eye for sic gear; but we thank God, that though we are old, we know so much of such toys as may beseeem a man of decent gravity. Weel, my lords, we questioned this maiden in male attire ourselves, and I profess it was a very pretty interrogatory, and well followed. For, though she at first professed that she assumed this disguise in order to countenance the woman who should present us with the Lady Hermione's petition, for whom she professed entire affection; yet when we, suspecting anguis in herba, did put her to the very question, she was compelled to own a virtuous attachment for Glenvarlochides, in such a pretty passion of shame and fear, that we had much ado to keep our own eyes from keeping company with hers in weeping. Also,

she laid before us the false practices of this Dalgarno towards Glenvarlochides, inveigling him into houses of ill resort, and giving him evil counsel under pretext of sincere friendship, whereby the inexperienced lad was led to do what was prejudicial to himself, and offensive to us. But, however prettily she told her tale, we determined not altogether to trust to her narration, but rather to try the experiment whilk we had devised for such occasions. And having ourselves speedily passed from Greenwich to the Tower, we constituted ourselves eavesdropper, as it is called, to observe what should pass between Glenvarlochides and his page, whom we caused to be admitted to his apartment, well judging that if they were of counsel together to deceive us, it could not be but something of it would spunk out—And what think ye we saw, my lords?—Naething for you to sniggle and laugh at, Steenie—for I question if you could have played the temperate and Christian-like part of this poor lad Glenvarloch. He might be a Father of the Church in comparison of you, man.—And then, to try his patience yet farther, we loosed on him a courtier and a citizen, that is Sir Mungo Malagrowth and our servant George Heriot here, wha dang the poor lad about, and didna greatly spare our royal selves.—You mind, Georgie, what you said about the wives and concubines? but I forgie ye, man—nae need of kneeling, I forgie ye—the readier, that it regards a certain particular, whilk, as it added not much to Solomon's credit, the lack of it cannot be said to impinge on ours. Aweel, my lords, for all temptation of sore distress and evil example, this poor lad never loosed his tongue on us to say one unbecoming word—which inclines us the rather, acting always by your wise advice, to treat this affair of the Park as a thing done in the heat of blood, and under strong provocation, and therefore to confer our free pardon on Lord Glenvarloch."

"I am happy your gracious Majesty," said the Duke of Buckingham, "has arrived at that conclusion, though I could never have guessed at the road by which you attained it."

"I trust," said Prince Charles, "that it is not a path which your Majesty will think it consistent with your high dignity to tread frequently."

"Never while I live again, Baby Charles, that I give you my royal word on. They say that hearkeners hear ill tales of themselves—by my saul, my very ears are tingling wi' that auld sorrow Sir Mungo's sarcasms. He called us close-fisted, Steenie—I am sure you can contradict that. But it is mere envy in the auld mutilated sinner, because he himself has neither a noble to hold in his loof, nor fingers to close on it if he had." Here the king lost recollection of Sir Mungo's irreverence in chuckling over his own wit, and only farther alluded to it by saying—"We must give the old maunderer bos in linguam—something to stop his mouth, or he will rail at us from Dan to Beersheba.—And now, my lords, let our warrant of mercy to Lord Glenvarloch be presently expedited, and he put to his freedom; and as his estate is likely to go so sleeveless a gate, we will consider what means of favour we can show him.—My lords, I wish you an appetite to an early supper—for our labours have approached that term.—Baby Charles and Steenie, you will remain till our couchee.—My Lord Bishop, you will be pleased to stay to bless our meat.—Geordie Heriot, a word with you apart."

His Majesty then drew the citizen into a corner, while the counsellors, those excepted who had been commanded to remain, made their obeisance, and withdrew. "Geordie," said the king, "my good and trusty servant"—Here he busied his fingers much with the points and ribbons of his dress,—"Ye see that we have granted, from our own natural sense of right and justice, that which yon long-backed fallow, Moniplies I think they ca' him, proffered to purchase from us with a mighty bribe; whilk we refused, as being a crowned king, who wad neither sell our justice nor our mercy for pecuniar consideration. Now, what think ye should be the upshot of this?"

"My Lord Glenvarloch's freedom, and his restoration to your Majesty's favour," said Heriot.

"I ken that," said the king, peevishly. "Ye are very dull to-day. I mean, what do you think this fallow Moniplies should think about the matter?"

"Surely that your Majesty is a most good and gracious sovereign," answered Heriot.

"We had need to be gude and gracious baith," said the king, still more pettishly, "that have idiots about us that cannot understand what we mint at, unless we speak it out in braid Lowlands. See this chield Moniplies, sir, and tell him what we have done for Lord Glenvarloch, in whom he takes such part, out of our own gracious motion, though we refused to do it on ony proffer of private advantage. Now, you may put it till him, as if of your own mind, whether it will be a gracious or a dutiful part in him, to press us for present payment of the two or three hundred miserable pounds for whilk we were obliged to opignorate our jewels? Indeed, mony men may think ye wad do the part of a good citizen, if you took it on yourself to refuse him payment, seeing he hath had what he professed to esteem full satisfaction, and considering, moreover, that it is evident he hath no pressing need of the money, whereof we have much necessity."

George Heriot sighed internally. "O my Master," thought he—"my dear Master, is it then fated you are never to indulge any kingly or noble sentiment, without its being sullied by some afterthought of interested selfishness!"

The king troubled himself not about what he thought, but taking him by the collar, said,—"Ye ken my meaning now, Jingler—awa wi' ye. You are a wise man—manage it your ain gate—but forget not our present straits." The citizen made his obeisance, and withdrew.

"And now, bairns," said the king, "what do you look upon each other for—and what have you got to ask of your dear dad and gossip?"

"Only," said the Prince, "that it would please your Majesty to command the lurking-place at the prison to be presently built up—the groans of a captive should not be brought in evidence against him."

"What! build up my lugg, Baby Charles? And yet, better deaf than hear ill tales of oneself. So let them build it up, hard and fast, without delay, the rather that my back is sair with sitting in it for a whole hour.—And now let us see what the cooks have been doing for us, bonny bairns."

CHAPTER XXXIV

To this brave man the knight repairs
For counsel in his law affairs;
And found him mounted in his pew.
With books and money placed for show,
Like nest-eggs to make clients lay,
And for his false opinion pay.
Hudibras.

Our readers may recollect a certain smooth-tongued, lank-haired, buckram-suited, Scottish scrivener, who, in the earlier part of this history, appeared in the character of a protege of George Heriot. It is to his house we are about to remove, but times have changed with him. The petty booth hath become a chamber of importance—the buckram suit is changed into black velvet; and although the wearer retains his puritanical humility and politeness to clients of consequence, he can now look others broad in the face, and treat them with a full allowance of superior opulence, and the insolence arising from it. It was but a short period that had achieved these alterations, nor was the party himself as yet entirely accustomed to them, but the change was becoming less embarrassing to him with every day's practice. Among other acquisitions of wealth, you may see one of Davy Ramsay's best timepieces on the table, and his eye is frequently observing its revolutions, while a boy, whom he employs as a scribe, is occasionally sent out to compare its progress with the clock of Saint Dunstan.

The scrivener himself seemed considerably agitated. He took from a strong-box a bundle of parchments, and read passages of them with great attention; then began to soliloquize—"There is no outlet which law can suggest—no back-door of evasion—none—if the lands of Glenvarloch are not redeemed before it rings noon, Lord Dalgarno has them a cheap pennyworth. Strange, that he should have been at last able to set his patron at defiance, and achieve for himself the fair estate, with the prospect of which he so long flattered the powerful Buckingham.—Might not Andrew Skurliewhitter nick him as neatly? He hath been my patron—true—not more than Buckingham was his; and he can be so no more, for he departs presently for Scotland. I am glad of it—I hate him, and I fear him. He knows too many of my secrets—I know too many of his. But, no—no—no—I need never attempt it, there are no means of over-reaching him.—Well, Willie, what o'clock?"

"Ele'en hours just chappit, sir."

"Go to your desk without, child," said the scrivener. "What to do next—I shall lose the old Earl's fair business, and, what is worse, his son's foul practice. Old Heriot looks too close into business to permit me more than the paltry and ordinary dues. The Whitefriars business was profitable, but it has become unsafe ever since—pah!—what brought that in my head just now? I can hardly hold my pen—if men should see me in this way!—Willie," (calling aloud to the boy,) "a cup of distilled waters—Soh!—now I could face the devil."

He spoke the last words aloud, and close by the door of the apartment, which was suddenly opened by Richie Moniplies, followed by two gentlemen, and attended by two porters bearing money-bags. "If ye can face the devil, Maister Skurliewhitter," said Richie, "ye will be the less likely to turn your back on a sack or twa o' siller, which I have ta'en the freedom to bring you. Sathanas and Mammon are near akin." The porters, at the same time, ranged their load on the floor.

"I—I,"—stammered the surprised scrivener—"I cannot guess what you mean, sir."

"Only that I have brought you the redemption-money on the part of Lord Glenvarloch, in discharge of a certain mortgage over his family inheritance. And here, in good time, comes Master Reginald Lowestoffe, and another honourable gentleman of the Temple, to be witnesses to the transaction."

"I—I incline to think," said the scrivener, "that the term is expired."

"You will pardon us, Master Scrivener," said Lowestoffe. "You will not baffle us—it wants three-quarters of noon by every clock in the city."

"I must have time, gentlemen," said Andrew, "to examine the gold by tale and weight."

"Do so at your leisure, Master Scrivener," replied Lowestoffe again. "We have already seen the contents of each sack told and weighed, and we have put our seals on them. There they stand in a row, twenty in number, each containing three hundred yellow-hammers—we are witnesses to the lawful tender."

"Gentlemen," said the scrivener, "this security now belongs to a mighty lord. I pray you, abate your haste, and let me send for Lord Dalgarno,—or rather I will run for him myself."

So saying, he took up his hat; but Lowestoffe called out,—"Friend Moniplies, keep the door fast, an thou be'st a man! he seeks but to put off the time.—In plain terms, Andrew, you may send for the devil, if you will, who is the mightiest lord of my acquaintance, but from hence you stir not till you have answered our proposition, by rejecting or accepting the redemption-money fairly tendered—there it lies—take it, or leave it, as you will. I have skill enough to know that the law is mightier than any lord in Britain—I have learned so much at the Temple, if I have learned nothing else. And see that you trifle not with it, lest it make your long ears an inch shorter, Master Skurliewhitter."

"Nay, gentlemen, if you threaten me," said the scrivener, "I cannot resist compulsion."

"No threats—no threats at all, my little Andrew," said Lowestoffe; "a little friendly advice only—forget not, honest Andrew, I have seen you in Alsatia."

Without answering a single word, the scrivener sat down, and drew in proper form a full receipt for the money proffered.

"I take it on your report, Master Lowestoffe," he said; "I hope you will remember I have insisted neither upon weight nor tale—I have been civil—if there is deficiency I shall come to loss."

"Fillip his nose with a gold-piece, Richie," quoth the Templar. "Take up the papers, and now wend we merrily to dine thou wot'st where."

"If I might choose," said Richie, "it should not be at yonder roguish ordinary; but as it is your pleasure, gentlemen, the treat shall be given wheresoever you will have it."

"At the ordinary," said the one Templar.

"At Beaujeu's," said the other; "it is the only house in London for neat wines, nimble drawers, choice dishes, and—"

"And high charges," quoth Richie Moniplies. "But, as I said before, gentlemen, ye have a right to command me in this thing, having so frankly rendered me your service in this small matter of business, without other stipulation than that of a slight banquet."

The latter part of this discourse passed in the street, where, immediately afterwards, they met Lord Dalgarno. He appeared in haste, touched his hat slightly to Master Lowestoffe, who returned his reverence with the same negligence, and walked slowly on with his companion, while Lord Dalgarno stopped Richie Moniplies with a commanding sign, which the instinct of education compelled Moniplies, though indignant, to obey.

"Whom do you now follow, sirrah?" demanded the noble.

"Whomsoever goeth before me, my lord," answered Moniplies.

"No sauciness, you knave—I desire to know if you still serve Nigel Olifaunt?" said Dalgarno.

"I am friend to the noble Lord Glenvarloch," answered Moniplies, with dignity.

"True," replied Lord Dalgarno, "that noble lord has sunk to seek friends among lackeys—Nevertheless,—hark thee hither,—nevertheless, if he be of the same mind as when we last met, thou mayst show him, that, on to-morrow, at four afternoon, I shall pass northward by Enfield Chase—I will be slenderly attended, as I design to send my train through Barnet. It is my purpose to ride an easy pace through the forest, and to linger a while by Camlet Moat—he knows the place; and, if he be aught but an Alsatian bully, will think it fitter for some purposes than the Park. He is, I understand, at liberty, or shortly to be so. If he fail me at the place nominated, he must seek me in Scotland, where he will find me possessed of his father's estate and lands."

"Humph!" muttered Richie; "there go twa words to that bargain."

He even meditated a joke on the means which he was conscious he possessed of baffling Lord Dalgarno's expectations; but there was something of keen and dangerous excitement in the eyes of the young nobleman, which prompted his discretion for once to rule his wit, and he only answered—

"God grant your lordship may well brook your new conquest—when you get it. I shall do your errand to my lord—whilk is to say," he added internally, "he shall never hear a word of it from Richie. I am not the lad to put him in such hazard."

Lord Dalgarno looked at him sharply for a moment, as if to penetrate the meaning of the dry ironical tone, which, in spite of Richie's awe, mingled with his answer, and then waved his hand, in signal he should pass on. He himself walked slowly till the trio were out of sight, then turned back with hasty steps to the door of the scrivener, which he had passed in his progress, knocked, and was admitted.

Lord Dalgarno found the man of law with the money-bags still standing before him; and it escaped not his penetrating glance, that Skurliewhitter was disconcerted and alarmed at his approach.

"How now, man," he said; "what! hast thou not a word of oily compliment to me on my happy marriage?—not a word of most philosophical consolation on my disgrace at Court?—Or has my mien, as a wittol and discarded favourite, the properties of the Gorgon's head, the turbatae Palladis arma, as Majesty might say?"

"My lord, I am glad—my lord, I am sorry,"—answered the trembling scrivener, who, aware of the vivacity of Lord Dalgarno's temper, dreaded the consequence of the communication he had to make to him.

"Glad and sorry!" answered Lord Dalgarno. "That is blowing hot and cold, with a witness. Hark ye, you picture of petty-larceny personified—if you are sorry I am a cuckold, remember I am only mine own, you knave—there is too little blood in her cheeks to have sent her astray elsewhere. Well, I will bear mine antler'd honours as I may—gold shall gild them; and for my disgrace, revenge shall sweeten it. Ay, revenge—and there strikes the happy hour!"

The hour of noon was accordingly heard to peal from Saint Dunstan's. "Well banged, brave hammers!" said Lord Dalgarno, in triumph.—"The estate and lands of Glenvarloch are crushed beneath these clanging blows. If my steel to-morrow prove but as true as your iron maces to-day, the poor landless lord will little miss what your peal hath cut him out from.—The papers—the papers, thou varlet! I am to-morrow Northward, ho! At four, afternoon, I am bound to be at Camlet Moat, in the Enfield Chase. To-night most of my retinue set forward. The papers!—Come, dispatch."

"My lord, the—the papers of the Glenvarloch mortgage—I—I have them not."

"Have them not!" echoed Lord Dalgarno,—"Hast thou sent them to my lodgings, thou varlet? Did I not say I was coming hither?—What mean you by pointing to that money? What villainy have you done for it? It is too large to be come honestly by."

"Your lordship knows best," answered the scrivener, in great perturbation. "The gold is your own. It is—it is—"

"Not the redemption-money of the Glenvarloch estate!" said Dalgarno. "Dare not say it is, or I will, upon the spot, divorce your pettifogging soul from your carrion carcass!" So saying, he seized the scrivener by the collar, and shook him so vehemently, that he tore it from the cassock.

"My lord, I must call for help," said the trembling caitiff, who felt at that moment all the bitterness of the mortal agony—"It was the law's act, not mine. What could I do?"

"Dost ask?—why, thou snivelling dribblet of damnation, were all thy oaths, tricks, and lies spent? or do you hold yourself too good to utter them in my service? Thou shouldst have lied, cozened, out-sworn truth itself, rather than stood betwixt me and my revenge! But mark me," he continued; "I know more of your pranks than would hang thee. A line from me to the Attorney-General, and thou art sped."

"What would you have me to do, my lord?" said the scrivener. "All that art and law can accomplish, I will try."

"Ah, are you converted? do so, or pity of your life!" said the lord; "and remember I never fail my word.—Then keep that accursed gold," he continued. "Or, stay, I will not trust you—send me this gold home presently to my lodging. I will still forward to Scotland, and it shall go hard but that I hold out Glenvarloch Castle against the owner, by means of the ammunition he has himself furnished. Thou art ready to serve me?" The scrivener professed the most implicit obedience.

"Then remember, the hour was past ere payment was tendered—and see thou hast witnesses of trusty memory to prove that point."

"Tush, my lord, I will do more," said Andrew, reviving—"I will prove that Lord Glenvarloch's friends threatened, swaggered, and drew swords on me.—Did your lordship think I was ungrateful enough to have suffered them to prejudice your lordship, save that they had bare swords at my throat?"

"Enough said," replied Dalgarno; "you are perfect—mind that you continue so, as you would avoid my fury. I leave my page below—get porters, and let them follow me instantly with the gold."

So saying, Lord Dalgarno left the scrivener's habitation.

Skurliewhitter, having dispatched his boy to get porters of trust for transporting the money, remained alone and in dismay, meditating by what means he could shake himself free of the vindictive and ferocious nobleman, who possessed at once a dangerous knowledge of his character, and the power of exposing him, where exposure would be ruin. He had indeed acquiesced in the plan, rapidly sketched, for obtaining possession of the ransomed estate, but his experience foresaw that this would be impossible; while, on the other hand, he could not anticipate the various consequences of Lord Dalgarno's resentment, without fears, from which his sordid soul recoiled. To be in the power, and subject both to the humours and the extortions of a spendthrift young lord, just when his industry had shaped out the means of fortune,—it was the most cruel trick which fate could have played the incipient usurer.

While the scrivener was in this fit of anxious anticipation, one knocked at the door of the apartment; and, being desired to enter, appeared in the coarse riding-cloak of uncut Wiltshire cloth, fastened by a broad leather belt and brass buckle, which was then generally worn by graziers and countrymen. Skurliewhitter, believing he saw in his visitor a country client who might prove profitable, had opened his mouth to request him to be seated, when the stranger, throwing back his frieze hood which he had drawn over his face, showed the scrivener features well imprinted in his recollection, but which he never saw without a disposition to swoon.

"Is it you?" he said, faintly, as the stranger replaced the hood which concealed his features.

"Who else should it be?" said his visitor.

"Thou son of parchment, got betwixt the inkhorn And the stuff'd process-bag—that mayest call The pen thy father, and the ink thy mother,

The wax thy brother, and the sand thy sister

And the good pillory thy cousin allied—

Rise, and do reverence unto me, thy better!"

"Not yet down to the country," said the scrivener, "after every warning? Do not think your grazier's cloak will bear you out, captain—no, nor your scraps of stage-plays."

"Why, what would you have me to do?" said the captain—"Would you have me starve? If I am to fly, you must eke my wings with a few feathers. You can spare them, I think."

"You had means already—you have had ten pieces—What is become of them?"

"Gone," answered Captain Colepepper—"Gone, no matter where—I had a mind to bite, and I was bitten, that's all—I think my hand shook at the thought of t'other night's work, for I trowled the doctors like a very baby."

"And you have lost all, then?—Well, take this and be gone," said the scrivener.

"What, two poor smelts! Marry, plague of your bounty!—But remember, you are as deep in as I."

"Not so, by Heaven!" answered the scrivener; "I only thought of easing the old man of some papers and a trifle of his gold, and you took his life."

"Were he living," answered Colepepper, "he would rather have lost it than his money.—But that is not the question, Master Skurliewhitter—you undid the private bolts of the window when you visited him about some affairs on the day ere he died—so satisfy yourself, that, if I am taken, I will not swing alone. Pity Jack Hemsfield is dead, it spoils the old catch,

'And three merry men, and three merry men,

And three merry men are we,

As ever did sing three parts in a string,

All under the triple tree."

"For God's sake, speak lower," said the scrivener; "is this a place or time to make your midnight catches heard?—But how much will serve your turn? I tell you I am but ill provided."

"You tell me a lie, then," said the bully—"a most palpable and gross lie.—How much, d'ye say, will serve my turn? Why, one of these bags will do for the present."

"I swear to you that these bags of money are not at my disposal."

"Not honestly, perhaps," said the captain, "but that makes little difference betwixt us."

"I swear to you," continued the scrivener "they are in no way at my disposal—they have been delivered to me by tale—I am to pay them over to Lord Dalgarno, whose boy waits for them, and I could not skelder one piece out of them, without risk of hue and cry."

"Can you not put off the delivery?" said the bravo, his huge hand still fumbling with one of the bags, as if his fingers longed to close on it.

"Impossible," said the scrivener, "he sets forward to Scotland to-morrow."

"Ay!" said the bully, after a moment's thought—"Travels he the north road with such a charge?"

"He is well accompanied," added the scrivener; "but yet—"

"But yet—but what?" said the bravo.

"Nay, I meant nothing," said the scrivener.

"Thou didst—thou hadst the wind of some good thing," replied Colepepper; "I saw thee pause like a setting dog. Thou wilt say as little, and make as sure a sign, as a well-bred spaniel."

"All I meant to say, captain, was, that his servants go by Barnet, and he himself, with his page, pass through Enfield Chase; and he spoke to me yesterday of riding a soft pace."

"Aha!—Comest thou to me there, my boy?"

"And of resting"—continued the scrivener,— "resting a space at Camlet Moat."

"Why, this is better than cock-fighting!" said the captain.

"I see not how it can advantage you, captain," said the scrivener. "But, however, they cannot ride fast, for his page rides the sumpter-horse, which carries all that weight," pointing to the money on the table. "Lord Dalgarno looks sharp to the world's gear."

"That horse will be obliged to those who may ease him of his burden," said the bravo; "and egad, he may be met with.—He hath still that page—that same Lutin—that goblin? Well, the boy hath set game for me ere now. I will be revenged, too, for I owe him a grudge for an old score at the ordinary. Let me see—Black Feltham, and Dick Shakebag—we shall want a fourth—I love to make sure, and the booty will stand parting, besides what I can bucket them out of. Well, scrivener, lend me two pieces.—Bravely done—nobly imparted! Give ye good-den." Wrapping his disguise closer around him, away he went. When he had left the room, the scrivener wrung his hands, and exclaimed, "More blood—more blood! I thought to have had done with it, but this time there was no fault with me—none—and then I shall have all the advantage. If this ruffian falls, there is truce with his tugs at my purse-strings; and if Lord Dalgarno dies—as is most likely, for though as much afraid of cold steel as a debtor of a dun, this fellow is a deadly shot from behind a bush,—then am I in a thousand ways safe—safe—safe." We willingly drop the curtain over him and his reflections.

CHAPTER XXXV

We are not worst at once—the course of evil
Begins so slowly, and from such slight source,
An infant's hand might stem its breach with clay;
But let the stream get deeper, and philosophy—
Ay, and religion too—shall strive in vain
To turn the headlong torrent.

Old Play.

The Templars had been regaled by our friend Richie Moniplies in a private chamber at Beaujeu's, where he might be considered as good company; for he had exchanged his serving-man's cloak and jerkin for a grave yet handsome suit of clothes, in the fashion of the times, but such as might have befitted an older man than himself. He had positively declined presenting himself at the ordinary, a point to which his companions were very desirous to have brought him, for it will be easily believed that such wags as Lowestoffe and his companion were not indisposed to a little merriment at the expense of the raw and pedantic Scotsman; besides the chance of easing him of a few pieces, of which he appeared to have acquired considerable command. But not even a succession of measures of sparkling sack, in which the little brilliant atoms circulated like motes in the sun's rays, had the least effect on Richie's sense of decorum. He retained the gravity of a judge, even while he drank like a fish, partly from his own natural inclination to good liquor, partly in the way of good fellowship towards his guests. When the wine began to make some innovation on their heads, Master Lowestoffe, tired, perhaps, of the humours of Richie, who began to become yet more stoically contradictory and dogmatical than even in the earlier part of the entertainment, proposed to his friend to break up their debauch and join the gamesters.

The drawer was called accordingly, and Richie discharged the reckoning of the party, with a generous remuneration to the attendants, which was received with cap and knee, and many assurances of—"Kindly welcome, gentlemen."

"I grieve we should part so soon, gentlemen," said Richie to his companions,—"and I would you had cracked another quart ere you went, or stayed to take some slight matter of supper, and a glass of Rhenish. I thank you, however, for having graced my poor collation thus far; and I commend you to fortune, in your own courses, for the ordinary neither was, is, nor shall be, an element of mine."

"Fare thee well, then," said Lowestoffe, "most sapient and sententious Master Moniplies. May you soon have another mortgage to redeem, and may I be there to witness it; and may you play the good fellow, as heartily as you have done this day."

"Nay, gentlemen, it is merely of your grace to say so—but, if you would but hear me speak a few words of admonition respecting this wicked ordinary—"

"Reserve the lesson, most honourable Richie," said Lowestoffe, "until I have lost all my money," showing, at the same time, a purse indifferently well provided, "and then the lecture is likely to have some weight."

"And keep my share of it, Richie," said the other Templar, showing an almost empty purse, in his turn, "till this be full again, and then I will promise to hear you with some patience."

"Ay, ay, gallants," said Richie, "the full and the empty gang a' ae gate, and that is a grey one—but the time will come."

"Nay, it is come already," said Lowestoffe, "they have set out the hazard table. Since you will peremptorily not go with us, why, farewell, Richie."

"And farewell, gentlemen," said Richie, and left the house, into which they had returned.

Moniplies was not many steps from the door, when a person, whom, lost in his reflections on gaming, ordinaries, and the manners of the age, he had not observed, and who had been as negligent on his part, ran full against him; and, when Richie desired to know whether he meant "ony incivility," replied by a curse on Scotland, and all that belonged to it. A less round reflection on his country would, at any time, have provoked Richie, but more especially when he had a double quart of Canary and better in his pate. He was about to give a very rough answer, and to second his word by action, when a closer view of his antagonist changed his purpose.

"You are the vera lad in the world," said Richie, "whom I most wished to meet."

"And you," answered the stranger, "or any of your beggarly countrymen, are the last sight I should ever wish to see. You Scots are ever fair and false, and an honest man cannot thrive within eyeshot of you."

"As to our poverty, friend," replied Richie, "that is as Heaven pleases; but touching our falseness, I'll prove to you that a Scotsman bears as leal and true a heart to his friend as ever beat in English doublet."

"I care not whether he does or not," said the gallant. "Let me go—why keep you hold of my cloak? Let me go, or I will thrust you into the kennel."

"I believe I could forgie ye, for you did me a good turn once, in plucking me out of it," said the Scot.

"Beshrew my fingers, then, if they did so," replied the stranger. "I would your whole country lay there, along with you; and Heaven's curse blight the hand that helped to raise them!—Why do you stop my way?" he added, fiercely.

"Because it is a bad one, Master Jenkin," said Richie. "Nay, never start about it, man—you see you are known. Alack-a-day! that an honest man's son should live to start at hearing himself called by his own name!" Jenkin struck his brow violently with his clenched fist.

"Come, come," said Richie, "this passion availeth nothing. Tell me what gate go you?"

"To the devil!" answered Jin Vin.

"That is a black gate, if you speak according to the letter," answered Richie; "but if metaphorically, there are worse places in this great city than the Devil Tavern; and I care not if I go thither with you, and bestow a pottle of burnt sack on you—it will correct the crudities of my stomach, and form a gentle preparative for the leg of a cold pullet."

"I pray you, in good fashion, to let me go," said Jenkin. "You may mean me kindly, and I wish you to have no wrong at my hand; but I am in the humour to be dangerous to myself, or any one."

"I will abide the risk," said the Scot, "if you will but come with me; and here is a place convenient, a howff nearer than the Devil, whilk is but an ill-omened drouthy name for a tavern. This other of the Saint Andrew is a quiet place, where I have ta'en my whetter now and then, when I lodged in the neighbourhood of the Temple with Lord Glenvarloch.—What the deil's the matter wi' the man, garr'd him gie sic a spang as that, and almaist brought himself and me on the causeway?"

"Do not name that false Scot's name to me," said Jin Vin, "if you would not have me go mad!—I was happy before I saw him—he has been the cause of all the ill that has befallen me—he has made a knave and a madman of me!"

"If you are a knave," said Richie, "you have met an officer—if you are daft, you have met a keeper; but a gentle officer and a kind keeper. Look you, my gude friend, there has been twenty things said about this same lord, in which there is no more truth than in the leasings of Mahound. The warst they can say of him is, that he is not always so amenable to good advice as I would pray him, you, and every young man to be. Come wi' me—just come ye wi' me; and, if a little spell of siller and a great deal of excellent counsel can relieve your occasions, all I can say is, you have had the luck to meet one capable of giving you both, and maist willing to bestow them."

The pertinacity of the Scot prevailed over the sullenness of Vincent, who was indeed in a state of agitation and incapacity to think for himself, which led him to yield the more readily to the suggestions of another. He suffered himself to be dragged into the small tavern which Richie recommended, and where they soon found themselves seated in a snug niche, with a reeking pottle of burnt sack, and a paper of sugar betwixt them. Pipes and tobacco were also provided, but were only used by Richie, who had adopted the custom of late, as adding considerably to the gravity and importance of his manner, and affording, as it were, a bland and pleasant accompaniment to the words of wisdom which flowed from his tongue. After they had filled their glasses and drank them in silence, Richie repeated the question, whither his guest was going when they met so fortunately.

"I told you," said Jenkin, "I was going to destruction—I mean to the gaming-house. I am resolved to hazard these two or three pieces, to get as much as will pay for a passage with Captain Sharker, whose ship lies at Gravesend, bound for America—and so Eastward, ho!—I met one devil in the way already, who would have tempted me from my purpose, but I spurned him from me—you may be another for what I know.—What degree of damnation do you propose for me," he added wildly, "and what is the price of it?"

"I would have you to know," answered Richie, "that I deal in no such commodities, whether as buyer or seller. But if you will tell me honestly the cause of your distress, I will do what is in my power to help you out of it,—not being, however, prodigal of promises, until I know the case; as a learned physician only gives advice when he has observed the diagnostics."

"No one has any thing to do with my affairs," said the poor lad; and folding his arms on the table, he laid his head upon them, with the sullen dejection of the overburdened lama, when it throws itself down to die in desperation.

Richard Moniplies, like most folk who have a good opinion of themselves, was fond of the task of consolation, which at once displayed his superiority, (for the consoler is necessarily, for the time at least, superior to the afflicted person,) and indulged his love of talking. He inflicted on the poor penitenta harangue of pitiless length, stuffed full of the usual topics of the mutability of human affairs—the eminent advantages of patience under affliction—the folly of grieving for what hath no remedy—the necessity of taking more care for the future, and some gentle rebukes on account of the past, which acid he threw in to assist in subduing the patient's obstinacy, as Hannibal used vinegar in cutting his way through rocks. It was not in human nature to endure this flood of commonplace eloquence in silence; and Jin Vin, whether desirous of stopping the flow of words—crammed thus into his ear, "against the stomach of his sense," or whether confiding in Richie's protestations of friendship, which the wretched, says Fielding, are ever so ready to believe, or whether merely to give his sorrows vent in words, raised his head, and turning his red and swollen eyes to Richie—

"Cocksbones, man, only hold thy tongue, and thou shall know all about it,—and then all I ask of thee is to shake hands and part.—This Margaret Ramsay,—you have seen her, man?"

"Once," said Richie, "once, at Master George Heriot's in Lombard Street—I was in the room when they dined."

"Ay, you helped to shift their trenchers, I remember," said Jin Vin. "Well, that same pretty girl—and I will uphold her the prettiest betwixt Paul's and the Bar—she is to be wedded to your Lord Glenvarloch, with a pestilence on him!"

"That is impossible," said Richie; "it is raving nonsense, man—they make April gouks of you cockneys every month in the year—The Lord Glenvarloch marry the daughter of a Lonnon mechanic! I would as soon believe the great Prester John would marry the daughter of a Jew packman."

"Hark ye, brother," said Jin Vin, "I will allow no one to speak disregardfully of the city, for all I am in trouble."

"I crave your pardon, man—I meant no offence," said Richie; "but as to the marriage, it is a thing simply impossible."

"It is a thing that will take place, though, for the Duke and the Prince, and all of them, have a finger in it; and especially the old fool of a king, that makes her out to be some great woman in her own country, as all the Scots pretend to be, you know."

"Master Vincent, but that you are under affliction," said the consoler, offended on his part, "I would hear no national reflections."

The afflicted youth apologised in his turns, but asserted, "it was true that the king said Peg-a-Ramsay was some far-off sort of noblewoman; and that he had taken a great interest in the match, and had run about like an old gander, cackling about Peggie ever since he had seen her in hose and doublet—and no wonder," added poor Vin, with a deep sigh.

"This may be all true," said Richie, "though it sounds strange in my ears; but, man, you should not speak evil of dignities—Curse not the king, Jenkin; not even in thy bed-chamber—stone walls have ears—no one has a right to know better than I."

"I do not curse the foolish old man," said Jenkin; "but I would have them carry things a peg lower.—If they were to see on a plain field thirty thousand such pikes as I have seen in the artillery gardens, it would not be their long-haired courtiers would help them, I trow." [Footnote: Clarendon remarks, that the importance of the military exercise of the citizens was severely felt by the cavaliers during the civil war, notwithstanding the ridicule that had been showered upon it by the dramatic poets of the day. Nothing less than habitual practice could, at the battle of Newbury and elsewhere, have enabled the Londoners to keep their ranks as pikemen, in spite of the repeated charge of the fiery Prince Rupert and his gallant cavaliers.]

"Hout tout, man," said Richie, "mind where the Stewarts come frae, and never think they would want spears or claymores either; but leaving sic matters, whilk are perilous to speak on, I say once more, what is your concern in all this matter?"

"What is it?" said Jenkin; "why, have I not fixed on Peg-a-Ramsay to be my true love, from the day I came to her old father's shop? and have I not carried her pattens and her chopines for three years, and borne her prayer-book to church, and brushed the cushion for her to kneel down upon, and did she ever say me nay?"

"I see no cause she had," said Richie, "if the like of such small services were all that ye proffered. Ah, man! there are few—very few, either of fools or of wise men, ken how to guide a woman."

"Why, did I not serve her at the risk of my freedom, and very nigh at the risk of my neck? Did she not—no, it was not her neither, but that accursed beldam whom she caused to work upon me—persuade me like a fool to turn myself into a waterman to help my lord, and a plague to him, down to Scotland? and instead of going peaceably down to the ship at Gravesend, did not he rant and bully, and show his pistols, and make me land him at Greenwich, where he played some swaggering pranks, that helped both him and me into the Tower?"

"Aha!" said Richie, throwing more than his usual wisdom into his looks, "so you were the green-jacketed waterman that rowed Lord Glenvarloch down the river?"

"The more fool I, that did not souse him in the Thames," said Jenkin; "and I was the lad who would not confess one word of who and what I was, though they threatened to make me hug the Duke of Exeter's daughter." [Footnote: A particular species of rack, used at the Tower of London, was so called.]

"Wha is she, man?" said Richie; "she must be an ill-fashioned piece, if you're so much afraid of her, and she come of such high kin."

"I mean the rack—the rack, man," said Jenkin. "Where were you bred that never heard of the Duke of Exeter's daughter? But all the dukes and duchesses in England could have got nothing out of me—so the truth came out some other way, and I was set free.—Home I ran, thinking myself one of the cleverest and happiest fellows in the ward. And she—she—she wanted to pay me with money for all my true service! and she spoke so sweetly and so coldly at the same time, I wished myself in the deepest dungeon of the Tower—I wish they had racked me to death before I heard this Scottishman was to chouse me out of my sweetheart!"

"But are ye sure ye have lost her?" said Richie; "it sounds strange in my ears that my Lord Glenvarloch should marry the daughter of a dealer,—though there are uncouth marriages made in London, I'll allow that."

"Why, I tell you this lord was no sooner clear of the Tower, than he and Master George Heriot comes to make proposals for her, with the king's assent, and what not; and fine fair-day prospects of Court favour for this lord, for he hath not an acre of land."

"Well, and what said the auld watch-maker?" said Richie; "was he not, as might weel beseem him, ready to loop out of his skin-case for very joy?"

"He multiplied six figures progressively, and reported the product—then gave his consent."

"And what did you do?"

"I rushed into the streets," said the poor lad, "with a burning heart and a blood-shot eye—and where did I first find myself, but with that beldam, Mother Suddlechop—and what did she propose to me, but to take the road?"

"Take the road, man? in what sense?" said Richie.

"Even as a clerk to Saint Nicholas—as a highwayman, like Pains and Peto, and the good fellows in the play—and who think you was to be my captain?—for she had the whole out ere I could speak to her—I fancy she took silence for consent, and thought me damned too unutterably to have one thought left that savoured of redemption—who was to be my captain, but the knave that you saw me cudgel at the ordinary when you waited on Lord Glenvarloch, a cowardly, sharking, thievish bully about town here, whom they call Colepepper."

"Colepepper—umph—I know somewhat of that smaik," said Richie; "ken ye by any chance where he may be heard of, Master Jenkin?—ye wad do me a sincere service to tell me."

"Why, he lives something obscurely," answered the apprentice, "on account of suspicion of some villainy—I believe that horrid murder in Whitefriars, or some such matter. But I might have heard all about him from Dame Suddlechop, for she spoke of my meeting him at Enfield Chase, with some other good fellows, to do a robbery on one that goes northward with a store of treasure."

"And you did not agree to this fine project?" said Moniplies.

"I cursed her for a hag, and came away about my business," answered Jenkin.

"Ay, and what said she to that, man? That would startle her," said Richie.

"Not a whit. She laughed, and said she was in jest," answered Jenkin; "but I know the she-devil's jest from her earnest too well to be taken in that way. But she knows I would never betray her."

"Betray her! No," replied Richie; "but are ye in any shape bound to this birkie Peppercull, or Colepepper, or whatever they call him, that ye suld let him do a robbery on the honest gentleman that is travelling to the north, and may be a kindly Scot, for what we know?"

"Ay—going home with a load of English money," said Jenkin. "But be he who he will, they may rob the whole world an they list, for I am robbed and ruined."

Richie filled his friend's cup up to the brim, and insisted that he should drink what he called "clean caup out." "This love," he said, "is but a bairnly matter for a brisk young fellow like yourself, Master Jenkin. And if ye must needs have a whimsy, though I think it would be safer to venture on a staid womanly body, why, here be as bonny lasses in London as this Peg-a-Ramsay. You need not sigh sae deeply, for it is very true—there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Now wherefore should you, who are as brisk and trig a young fellow of your inches as the sun needs to shine on—wherefore need you sit moping this way, and not try some bold way to better your fortune?"

"I tell you, Master Moniplies," said Jenkin, "I am as poor as any Scot among you—I have broke my indenture, and I think of running my country."

"A-well-a-day!" said Richie; "but that maunna be, man—I ken weel, by sad experience, that poortith takes away pith, and the man sits full still that has a rent in his breeks. [Footnote: This elegant speech was made by the Earl of Douglas, called Tineman after being wounded and made prisoner at the battle of Shrewsbury, where

"His well labouring sword

Had three times slain the semblance of the king,"]

But courage, man; you have served me heretofore, and I will serve you now. If you will but bring me to speech of this same captain, it will be the best day's work you ever did."

"I guess where you are, Master Richard—you would save your countryman's long purse," said Jenkin. "I cannot see how that should advantage me, but I reck not if I should bear a hand. I hate that braggart, that bloody-minded, cowardly bully. If you can get me mounted I care not if I show you where the dame told me I should meet him—but you must stand to the risk, for though he is a coward himself, I know he will have more than one stout fellow with him."

"We'll have a warrant, man," said Richie, "and the hue and cry, to boot."

"We will have no such thing," said Jenkin, "if I am to go with you. I am not the lad to betray any one to the harmanbeck. You must do it by manhood if I am to go with you. I am sworn to cutter's law, and will sell no man's blood."

"Aweel," said Richie, "a wilful man must have his way; ye must think that I was born and bred where cracked crowns were plentier than whole ones. Besides, I have two noble friends here, Master Lowestoffe of the Temple, and his cousin Master Ringwood, that will blithely be of so gallant a party."

"Lowestoffe and Ringwood!" said Jenkin; "they are both brave gallants—they will be sure company. Know you where they are to be found?"

"Ay, marry do I," replied Richie. "They are fast at the cards and dice, till the sma' hours, I warrant them."

"They are gentlemen of trust and honour," said Jenkin, "and, if they advise it, I will try the adventure. Go, try if you can bring them hither, since you have so much to say with, them. We must not be seen abroad together.—I know not how it is, Master Moniplies," continued he, as his countenance brightened up, and while, in his turn, he filled the cups, "but I feel my heart something lighter since I have thought of this matter."

"Thus it is to have counsellors, Master Jenkin," said Richie; "and truly I hope to hear you say that your heart is as light as a lavrock's, and that before you are many days aulder. Never smile and shake your head, but mind what I tell you—and bide here in the meanwhile, till I go to seek these gallants. I warrant you, cart-ropes would not hold them back from such a ploy as I shall propose to them."

CHAPTER XXXVI

The thieves have bound the true men—

Now, could thou and I rob the thieves, and go
merrily to London.

Henry IV., Part I.

The sun was high upon the glades of Enfield Chase, and the deer, with which it then abounded, were seen sporting in picturesque groups among the ancient oaks of the forest, when a cavalier and a lady, on foot, although in riding apparel, sauntered slowly up one of the long alleys which were cut through the park for the convenience of the hunters. Their only attendant was a page, who, riding a Spanish jennet, which seemed to bear a heavy cloak-bag, followed them at a respectful distance. The female, attired in all the fantastic finery of the period, with more than the usual quantity of bugles, flounces, and trimmings, and holding her fan of ostrich feathers in one hand, and her riding-mask of black velvet in the other, seemed anxious, by all the little coquetry practised on such occasions, to secure the notice of her companion, who sometimes heard her prattle without seeming to attend to it, and at other times interrupted his train of graver reflections, to reply to her.

"Nay, but, my lord—my lord, you walk so fast, you will leave me behind you.—Nay, I will have hold of your arm, but how to manage with my mask and my fan? Why would you not let me bring my waiting-gentlewoman to follow us, and hold my things? But see, I will put my fan in my girdle, so!—and now that I have a hand to hold you with, you shall not run away from me."

"Come on, then," answered the gallant, "and let us walk apace, since you would not be persuaded to stay with your gentlewoman, as you call her, and with the rest of the baggage.—You may perhaps see that, though, you will not like to see."

She took hold of his arm accordingly; but as he continued to walk at the same pace, she shortly let go her hold, exclaiming that he had hurt her hand. The cavalier stopped, and looked at the pretty hand and arm which she showed him, with exclamations against his cruelty. "I dare say," she said, baring her wrist and a part of her arm, "it is all black and blue to the very elbow."

"I dare say you are a silly little fool," said the cavalier, carelessly kissing the aggrieved arm; "it is only a pretty incarnate which sets off the blue veins."

"Nay, my lord, now it is you are silly," answered the dame; "but I am glad I can make you speak and laugh on any terms this morning. I am sure, if I did insist on following you into the forest, it was all for the sake of diverting you. I am better company than your page, I trow.—And now, tell me, these pretty things with horns, be they not deer?"

"Even such they be, Nelly," answered her neglectful attendant.

"And what can the great folk do with so many of them, forsooth?"

"They send them to the city, Nell, where wise men make venison pasties of their flesh, and wear their horns for trophies," answered Lord Dalgarno, whom our reader has already recognised.

"Nay, now you laugh at me, my lord," answered his companion; "but I know all about venison, whatever you may think. I always tasted it once a year when we dined with Mr. Deputy," she continued, sadly, as a sense of her degradation stole across a mind bewildered with vanity and folly, "though he would not speak to me now, if we met together in the narrowest lane in the Ward!"

"I warrant he would not," said Lord Dalgarno, "because thou, Nell, wouldst dash him with a single look; for I trust thou hast more spirit than to throw away words on such a fellow as he?"

"Who, I!" said Dame Nelly. "Nay, I scorn the proud princex too much for that. Do you know, he made all the folk in the Ward stand cap in hand to him, my poor old John Christie and all?" Here her recollection began to overflow at her eyes.

"A plague on your whimpering," said Dalgarno, somewhat harshly,—"Nay, never look pale for the matter, Nell. I am not angry with you, you simple fool. But what would you have me think, when you are eternally looking back upon your dungeon yonder by the river, which smelt of pitch and old cheese worse than a Welshman does of onions, and all this when I am taking you down to a castle as fine as is in Fairy Land!"

"Shall we be there to-night, my lord?" said Nelly, drying her tears.

"To-night, Nelly?—no, nor this night fortnight."

"Now, the Lord be with us, and keep us!—But shall we not go by sea, my lord?—I thought everybody came from Scotland by sea. I am sure Lord Glenvarloch and Richie Moniplies came up by sea."

"There is a wide difference between coming up and going down, Nelly," answered Lord Dalgarno.

"And so there is, for certain," said his simple companion. "But yet I think I heard people speaking of going down to Scotland by sea, as well as coming up. Are you well advised of the way?—Do you think it possible we can go by land, my sweet lord?"

"It is but trying, my sweet lady," said Lord Dalgarno. "Men say England and Scotland are in the same island, so one would hope there may be some road betwixt them by land."

"I shall never be able to ride so far," said the lady.

"We will have your saddle stuffed softer," said the lord. "I tell you that you shall mew your city slough, and change from the caterpillar of a paltry lane into the butterfly of a prince's garden. You shall have as many tires as there are hours in the day—as many handmaidens as there are days in the week—as many menials as there are weeks in the year—and you shall ride a hunting and hawking with a lord, instead of waiting upon an old ship-chandler, who could do nothing but hawk and spit."

"Ay, but will you make me your lady?" said Dame Nelly.

"Ay, surely—what else?" replied the lord—"My lady-love."

"Ay, but I mean your lady-wife," said Nelly.

"Truly, Nell, in that I cannot promise to oblige you. A lady-wife," continued Dalgarno, "is a very different thing from a lady-love."

"I heard from Mrs. Suddlechop, whom you lodged me with since I left poor old John Christie, that Lord Glenvarloch is to marry David Ramsay the clockmaker's daughter?"

"There is much betwixt the cup and the lip, Nelly. I wear something about me may break the bans of that hopeful alliance, before the day is much older," answered Lord Dalgarno.

"Well, but my father was as good a man as old Davy Ramsay, and as well to pass in the world, my lord; and, therefore, why should you not marry me? You have done me harm enough, I trow—wherefore should you not do me this justice?"

"For two good reasons, Nelly. Fate put a husband on you, and the king passed a wife upon me," answered Lord Dalgarno.

"Ay, my lord," said Nelly, "but they remain in England, and we go to Scotland."

"Thy argument is better than thou art aware of," said Lord Dalgarno. "I have heard Scottish lawyers say the matrimonial tie may be unclasped in our happy country by the gentle hand of the ordinary course of law, whereas in England it can only be burst by an act of Parliament. Well, Nelly, we will look into that matter; and whether we get married again or no, we will at least do our best to get unmarried."

"Shall we indeed, my honey-sweet lord? and then I will think less about John Christie, for he will marry again, I warrant you, for he is well to pass; and I would be glad to think he had somebody to take care of him, as I used to do, poor loving old man! He was a kind man, though he was a score of years older than I; and I hope and pray he will never let a young lord cross his honest threshold again!"

Here the dame was once more much inclined to give way to a passion of tears; but Lord Dalgarno conjured down the emotion, by saying with some asperity—"I am weary of these April passions, my pretty mistress, and I think you will do well to preserve your tears for some more pressing occasion. Who knows what turn of fortune may in a few minutes call for more of them than you can render?"

"Goodness, my lord! what mean you by such expressions? John Christie (the kind heart!) used to keep no secrets from me, and I hope your lordship will not hide your counsel from me?"

"Sit down beside me on this bank," said the nobleman; "I am bound to remain here for a short space, and if you can be but silent, I should like to spend a part of it in considering how far I can, on the present occasion, follow the respectable example which you recommend to me."

The place at which he stopped was at that time little more than a mound, partly surrounded by a ditch, from which it derived the name of Camlet Moat. A few hewn stones there were, which had escaped the fate of many others that had been used in building different lodges in the forest for the royal keepers. These vestiges, just sufficient to show that "herein former times the hand of man had been," marked the ruins of the abode of a once illustrious but long-forgotten family, the Mandevilles, Earls of Essex, to whom Enfield Chase and the extensive domains adjacent had belonged in elder days. A wild woodland prospect led the eye at various points through broad and seemingly interminable alleys, which, meeting at this point as at a common centre, diverged from each other as they receded, and had, therefore, been selected by Lord Dalgarno as the rendezvous for the combat, which, through the medium of Richie Moniplies, he had offered to his injured friend, Lord Glenvarloch.

"He will surely come?" he said to himself; "cowardice was not wont to be his fault—at least he was bold enough in the Park.—Perhaps yonder churl may not have carried my message? But no—he is a sturdy knave—one of those would prize their master's honour above their life.—Look to the palfrey, Lutin, and see thou let him not loose, and cast thy falcon glance down every avenue to mark if any one comes.—Buckingham has undergone my challenge, but the proud minion pleads the king's paltry commands for refusing to answer me. If I can baffle this Glenvarloch, or slay him—if I can spoil him of his honour or his life, I shall go down to Scotland with credit sufficient to gild over past mischances. I know my dear countrymen—they never quarrel with any one who brings them home either gold or martial glory, much more if he has both gold and laurels."

As he thus reflected, and called to mind the disgrace which he had suffered, as well as the causes he imagined for hating Lord Glenvarloch, his countenance altered under the influence of his contending emotions, to the terror of Nelly, who, sitting unnoticed at his feet, and looking anxiously in his face, beheld the cheek kindle, the mouth become compressed, the eye dilated, and the whole countenance express the desperate and deadly resolution of one who awaits an instant and decisive encounter with a mortal enemy. The loneliness of the place, the scenery so different from that to which alone she had been accustomed, the dark and sombre air which crept so suddenly over the countenance of her seducer, his command imposing silence upon her, and the apparent strangeness of his conduct in idling away so much time without any obvious cause, when a journey of such length lay before them, brought strange thoughts into her weak brain. She had read of women, seduced from their matrimonial duties by sorcerers allied to the hellish powers, nay, by the Father of Evil himself, who, after conveying his victim into some desert remote from human kind, exchanged the pleasing shape in which he gained her affections, for all his natural horrors. She chased this wild idea away as it crowded itself upon her weak and bewildered imagination; yet she might have lived to see it realised allegorically, if not literally, but for the accident which presently followed.

The page, whose eyes were remarkably acute, at length called out to his master, pointing with his finger at the same time down one of the alleys, that horsemen were advancing in that direction. Lord Dalgarno started up, and shading his eyes with his hand, gazed eagerly down the alley; when, at the same instant, he received a shot, which, grazing his hand, passed right through his brain, and laid him a lifeless corpse at the feet, or rather across the lap, of the unfortunate victim of his profligacy. The countenance, whose varied expression she had been watching for the last five minutes, was convulsed for an instant, and then stiffened into rigidity for ever. Three ruffians rushed from the brake from which the shot had been fired, ere the smoke was dispersed. One, with many imprecations seized on the page; another on the female, upon whose cries he strove by the most violent threats to impose silence; whilst the third began to undo the burden from the page's horse. But an instant rescue prevented their availing themselves of the advantage they had obtained.

It may easily be supposed that Richie Moniplies, having secured the assistance of the two Templars, ready enough to join in any thing which promised a fray, with Jin Vin to act as their guide, had set off, gallantly mounted and well armed, under the belief that they would reach Camlet Moat before the robbers, and apprehend them in the fact. They had not calculated that, according to the custom of robbers in other countries, but contrary to that of the English highwayman of those days, they meant to ensure robbery by previous murder. An accident also happened to delay them a little while on the road. In riding through one of the glades of the forest, they found a man dismounted and sitting under a tree, groaning with such bitterness of spirit, that Lowestoffe could not forbear asking if he was hurt. In answer, he said he was an unhappy man in pursuit of his wife, who had been carried off by a villain; and as he raised his countenance, the eyes of Richie, to his great astonishment, encountered the visage of John Christie.

"For the Almighty's sake, help me, Master Moniplies!" he said; "I have learned my wife is but a short mile before, with that black villain Lord Dalgarno."

"Have him forward by all means," said Lowestoffe; "a second Orpheus seeking his Eurydice!—Have him forward—we will save Lord Dalgarno's purse, and ease him of his mistress—Have him with us, were it but for the variety of the adventure. I owe his lordship a grudge for rooking me. We have ten minutes good."

But it is dangerous to calculate closely in matters of life and death. In all probability the minute or two which was lost in mounting John Christie behind one of their party, might have saved Lord Dalgarno from his fate. Thus his criminal amour became the indirect cause of his losing his life; and thus "our pleasant vices are made the whips to scourge us."

The riders arrived on the field at full gallop the moment after the shot was fired; and Richie, who had his own reasons for attaching himself to Colepepper, who was bustling to untie the portmanteau from the page's saddle, pushed against him with such violence as to overthrow him, his own horse at the same time stumbling and dismounting his rider, who was none of the first equestrians. The undaunted Richie immediately arose, however, and grappled with the ruffian with such good-will, that, though a strong fellow, and though a coward now rendered desperate, Moniplies got him under, wrenched a long knife from his hand, dealt him a desperate stab with his own weapon, and leaped on his feet; and, as the wounded man struggled to follow his example, he struck him upon the head with the butt-end of a musketoon, which last blow proved fatal.

"Bravo, Richie!" cried Lowestoffe, who had himself engaged at sword-point with one of the ruffians, and soon put him to flight,—*"Bravo! why, man, there lies Sin, struck down like an ox, and Iniquity's throat cut like a calf."*

"I know not why you should upbraid me with my upbringing, Master Lowestoffe," answered Richie, with great composure; "but I can tell you, the shambles is not a bad place for training one to this work."

The other Templar now shouted loudly to them,—*"If ye be men, come hither—here lies Lord Dalgarno, murdered!"*

Lowestoffe and Richie ran to the spot, and the page took the opportunity, finding himself now neglected on all hands, to ride off in a different direction; and neither he, nor the considerable sum with which his horse was burdened, were ever heard of from that moment.

The third ruffian had not waited the attack of the Templar and Jin Vin, the latter of whom had put down old Christie from behind him that he might ride the lighter; and the whole five now stood gazing with horror on the bloody corpse of the young nobleman, and the wild sorrow of the female, who tore her hair and shrieked in the most disconsolate manner, until her agony was at once checked, or rather received a new direction, by the sudden and unexpected appearance of her husband, who, fixing on her a cold and severe look, said, in a tone suited to his manner—*"Ay, woman! thou takest on sadly for the loss of thy paramour."*—Then, looking on the bloody corpse of him from whom he had received so deep an injury, he repeated the solemn words of Scripture,—*"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it."*—*"I, whom thou hast injured, will be first to render thee the decent offices due to the dead."*

So saying, he covered the dead body with his cloak, and then looking on it for a moment, seemed to reflect on what he had next to perform. As the eye of the injured man slowly passed from the body of the seducer to the partner and victim of his crime, who had sunk down to his feet, which she clasped without venturing to look up, his features, naturally coarse and saturnine, assumed a dignity of expression which overawed the young Templars, and repulsed the officious forwardness of Richie Moniplies, who was at first eager to have thrust in his advice and opinion. *"Kneel not to me, woman,"* he said, *"but kneel to the God thou hast offended, more than thou couldst offend such another worm as thyself. How often have I told thee, when thou wert at the gayest and the lightest, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall? Vanity brought folly, and folly brought sin, and sin hath brought death, his original companion. Thou must needs leave duty, and decency, and domestic love, to revel it gaily with the wild and with the wicked; and there thou liest like a crushed worm, writhing beside the lifeless body of thy paramour. Thou hast done me much wrong—dishonoured me among friends—driven credit from my house, and peace from my fireside—But thou wert my first and only love, and I will not see thee an utter castaway, if it lies with me to prevent it.—Gentlemen, I render ye such thanks as a broken-hearted man can give.—Richard, commend me to your honourable master. I added gall to the bitterness of his affliction, but I was deluded.—Rise up, woman, and follow me."*

He raised her up by the arm, while, with streaming eyes, and bitter sobs, she endeavoured to express her penitence. She kept her hands spread over her face, yet suffered him to lead her away; and it was only as they turned around a brake which concealed the scene they had left, that she turned back, and casting one wild and hurried glance towards the corpse of Dalgarno, uttered a shriek, and clinging to her husband's arm, exclaimed wildly,—*"Save me—save me! They have murdered him!"*

Lowestoffe was much moved by what he had witnessed; but he was ashamed, as a town-gallant, of his own unfashionable emotion, and did a force to his feelings when he exclaimed,—*"Ay, let them go—the kind-hearted, believing, forgiving husband—the liberal, accommodating spouse. O what a generous creature is your*

true London husband!—Horns hath he, but, tame as a fatted ox, he goreth not. I should like to see her when she hath exchanged her mask and riding-beaver for her peaked hat and muffler. We will visit them at Paul's Wharf, coz—it will be a convenient acquaintance."

"You had better think of catching the gipsy thief, Lutin," said Richie Moniplies; "for, by my faith, he is off with his master's baggage and the siller." A keeper with his assistants, and several other persons, had now come to the spot, and made hue and cry after Lutin, but in vain. To their custody the Templars surrendered the dead bodies, and after going through some formal investigation, they returned, with Richard and Vincent, to London, where they received great applause for their gallantry.—Vincent's errors were easily expiated, in consideration of his having been the means of breaking up this band of villains; and there is some reason to think, that what would have diminished the credit of the action in other instances, rather added to it in the actual circumstances, namely, that they came too late to save Lord Dalgarno. George Heriot, who suspected how matters stood with Vincent, requested and obtained permission from his master to send the poor young fellow on an important piece of business to Paris. We are unable to trace his fate farther, but believe it was prosperous, and that he entered into an advantageous partnership with his fellow-apprentice, upon old Davy Ramsay retiring from business, in consequence of his daughter's marriage. That eminent antiquary, Dr. Dryasdust, is possessed of an antique watch, with a silver dial-plate, the mainspring being a piece of catgut instead of a chain, which bears the names of Vincent and Tunstall, Memory-Monitors. Master Lowestoffe failed not to vindicate his character as a man of gaiety, by inquiring after John Christie and Dame Nelly; but greatly to his surprise, (indeed to his loss, for he had wagered ten pieces that he would domesticate himself in the family,) he found the good-will, as it was called, of the shop, was sold, the stock auctioned, and the late proprietor and his wife gone, no one knew whither. The prevailing belief was, that they had emigrated to one of the new settlements in America. Lady Dalgarno received the news of her unworthy husband's death with a variety of emotions, among which, horror that he should have been cut off in the middle career of his profligacy, was the most prominent. The incident greatly deepened her melancholy, and injured her health, already shaken by previous circumstances. Repossessed of her own fortune by her husband's death, she was anxious to do justice to Lord Glenvarloch, by treating for the recovery of the mortgage. But the scrivener, having taken fright at the late events, had left the city and absconded, so that it was impossible to discover into whose hands the papers had now passed. Richard Moniplies was silent, for his own reasons; the Templars, who had witnessed the transaction, kept the secret at his request, and it was universally believed that the scrivener had carried off the writings along with him. We may here observe, that fears similar to those of Skurlewittier freed London for ever from the presence of Dame Suddlechop, who ended her career in the Rasp-haus, (viz. Bridewell,) of Amsterdam. The stout old Lord Huntinglen, with a haughty carriage and unmoistened eye, accompanied the funeral procession of his only son to its last abode; and perhaps the single tear which fell at length upon the coffin, was given less to the fate of the individual, than to the extinction of the last male of his ancient race.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Jacques. There is, suie, another flood toward, and these couples are coming to the ark!—Here comes a pair of very strange beasts.
As You Like It.

The fashion of such narratives as the present, changes like other earthly things. Time was that the tale-teller was obliged to wind up his story by a circumstantial description of the wedding, bedding, and throwing the stocking, as the grand catastrophe to which, through so many circumstances of doubt and difficulty, he had at length happily conducted his hero and heroine. Not a circumstance was then omitted, from the manly ardour of the bridegroom, and the modest blushes of the bride, to the parson's new surplice, and the silk tabinet mantua of the bridesmaid. But such descriptions are now discarded, for the same reason, I suppose, that public marriages are no longer fashionable, and that, instead of calling together their friends to a feast and a dance, the happy couple elope in a solitary post-chaise, as secretly as if they meant to go to Gretna-Green, or to do worse. I am not ungrateful for a change which saves an author the trouble of attempting in vain to give a new colour to the commonplace description of such matters; but, notwithstanding, I find myself forced upon it in the present instance, as circumstances sometimes compel a stranger to make use of an old road which has been for some time shut up. The experienced reader may have already remarked, that the last chapter was employed in sweeping out of the way all the unnecessary and less interesting characters, that I might clear the floor for a blithe bridal.

In truth, it would be unpardonable to pass over slightly what so deeply interested our principal personage, King James. That learned and good-humoured monarch made no great figure in the politics of Europe; but then, to make amends, he was prodigiously busy, when he could find a fair opportunity of intermeddling with the private affairs of his loving subjects, and the approaching marriage of Lord Glenvarloch was matter of great interest to him. He had been much struck (that is, for him, who was not very accessible to such emotions) with the beauty and embarrassment of the pretty Peg-a-Ramsay, as he called her, when he first saw her, and he glorified himself greatly on the acuteness which he had displayed in detecting her disguise, and in carrying through the whole inquiry which took place in consequence of it.

He laboured for several weeks, while the courtship was in progress, with his own royal eyes, so as wellnigh to wear out, he declared, a pair of her father's best barnacles, in searching through old books and documents, for the purpose of establishing the bride's pretensions to a noble, though remote descent, and thereby remove the only objection which envy might conceive against the match. In his own opinion, at least, he was eminently successful; for, when Sir Mungo Malagrowth one day, in the presence-chamber, took upon him to grieve bitterly for the bride's lack of pedigree, the monarch cut him short with, "Ye may save your grief for your ain next occasions, Sir Mungo; for, by our royal saul, we will uphault her father, Davy Ramsay, to be a gentleman of nine descents, whase great gudesire came of the auld martial stock of the House of Dalwalsey, than whom better men never did, and better never will, draw sword for king and country. Heard ye never of Sir William Ramsay of Dalwalsey, man, of whom John Fordoun saith,—'He was bellicosissimus, nobilissimus?'—His castle stands to witness for itself, not three miles from Dalkeith, man, and within a mile of Bannockrig. Davy Ramsay came of that auld and honoured stock, and I trust he hath not derogated from his ancestors by his present craft. They all wrought wi' steel, man; only the auld knights drilled holes wi' their swords in their enemies' corslets, and he saws nicks in his brass wheels. And I hope it is as honourable to give eyes to the blind as to slash them out of the head of those that see, and to show us how to value our time as it passes, as to fling it away in drinking, brawling, spear-splintering, and such-like unchristian doings. And you maun understand, that Davy Ramsay is no mechanic, but follows a liberal art, which approacheth almost to the act of creating a living being, seeing it may be said of a watch, as Claudius saith of the sphere of Archimedes, the Syracusan—

"*Inclusus variis famulatur spiritus astris, Et vivum certis motibus urget opus.*"

"Your Majesty had best give auld Davy a coat-of-arms, as well as a pedigree," said Sir Mungo.

"It's done, or ye bade, Sir Mungo," said the king; "and I trust we, who are the fountain of all earthly honour, are free to spirit a few drops of it on one so near our person, without offence to the Knight of Castle Girnigo. We have already spoken with the learned men of the Herald's College, and we propose to grant him an augmented coat-of-arms, being his paternal coat, charged with the crown-wheel of a watch in chief, for a difference; and we purpose to add Time and Eternity, for supporters, as soon as the Garter King-at-Arms shall be able to devise how Eternity is to be represented."

"I would make him twice as muckle as Time," [Footnote: Chaucer says, there is nothing new but what it has been old. The reader has here the original of an anecdote which has since been fathered on a Scottish Chief of our own time.] said Archie Armstrong, the Court fool, who chanced to be present when the king stated this dilemma. "Peace, man—ye shall be whippet," said the king, in return for this hint; "and you, my liege subjects of England, may weel take a hint from what we have said, and not be in such a hurry to laugh at our Scottish pedigrees, though they be somewhat long derived, and difficult to be deduced. Ye see that a man of right gentle blood may, for a season, lay by his gentry, and yet ken where to find it, when he has occasion for it. It would be as unseemly for a packman, or pedlar, as ye call a travelling merchant, whilk is a trade to which our native subjects of Scotland are specially addicted, to be blazing his genealogy in the faces of those to whom he sells a bawbee's worth of ribbon, as it would be to him to have a beaver on his head, and a rapier by his side, when the pack was on his shoulders. Na, na—he hings his sword on the cleek, lays his beaver on the shelf, puts his pedigree into his pocket, and gangs as doucely and cannily about his peddling craft as if his blood was nae better than ditch-water; but let our pedlar be transformed, as I have kend it happen mair than ance, into a bein thriving merchant, then ye shall have a transformation, my lords.

'In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas—'

Out he pulls his pedigree, on he buckles his sword, gives his beaver a brush, and cocks it in the face of all creation. We mention these things at the mair length, because we would have you all to know, that it is not without due consideration of the circumstances of all parties, that we design, in a small and private way, to honour with our own royal presence the marriage of Lord Glenvarloch with Margaret Ramsay, daughter and heiress of David Ramsay, our horologer, and a cadet only thrice removed from the ancient house of Dalwolsay. We are grieved we cannot have the presence of the noble Chief of that House at the ceremony; but where there is honour to be won abroad the Lord Dalwolsay is seldom to be found at home. Sic fuit, est, et erit. -Jingling Geordie, as ye stand to the cost of the marriage feast, we look for good cheer."

Heriot bowed, as in duty bound. In fact, the king, who was a great politician about trifles, had manoeuvred greatly on this occasion, and had contrived to get the Prince and Buckingham dispatched on an expedition to Newmarket, in order that he might find an opportunity in their absence of indulging himself in his own gossiping, cohering habits, which were distasteful to Charles, whose temper inclined to formality, and with which even the favourite, of late, had not thought it worth while to seem to sympathise. When the levee was dismissed, Sir Mungo Malagrowth seized upon the worthy citizen in the court-yard of the Palace, and detained him, in spite of all his efforts, for the purpose of subjecting him to the following scrutiny:—

"This is a sair job on you, Master George—the king must have had little consideration—this will cost you a bonny penny, this wedding dinner?"

"It will not break me, Sir Mungo," answered Heriot; "the king hath a right to see the table which his bounty hath supplied for years, well covered for a single day."

"Vera true, vera true—we'll have a' to pay, I doubt, less or mair—a sort of penny-wedding it will prove, where all men contribute to the young folk's maintenance, that they may not have just four bare legs in a bed together. What do you propose to give, Master George?—we begin with the city when money is in question."

[Footnote: The penny-wedding of the Scots, now disused even among the lowest ranks, was a peculiar species of merry-making, at which, if the wedded pair were popular, the guests who convened, contributed considerable sums under pretence of paying for the bridal festivity, but in reality to set the married folk afloat in the world.]

"Only a trifle, Sir Mungo—I give my god-daughter the marriage ring; it is a curious jewel—I bought it in Italy; it belonged to Cosmo de Medici. The bride will not need my help—she has an estate which belonged to her maternal grandfather."

"The auld soap-boiler," said Sir Mungo; "it will need some of his suds to scour the blot out of the Glenvarloch shield—I have heard that estate was no great things."

"It is as good as some posts at Court, Sir Mungo, which are coveted by persons of high quality," replied George Heriot.

"Court favour, said ye? Court favour, Master Heriot?" replied Sir Mungo, choosing then to use his malady of misapprehension; "Moonshine in water, poor thing, if that is all she is to be tochered with—I am truly solicitous about them."

"I will let you into a secret," said the citizen, "which will relieve your tender anxiety. The dowager Lady Dalgarno gives a competent fortune to the bride, and settles the rest of her estate upon her nephew the bridegroom."

"Ay, say ye sae?" said Sir Mungo, "just to show her regard to her husband that is in the tomb—lucky that her nephew did not send him there; it was a strange story that death of poor Lord Dalgarno—some folk think the poor gentleman had much wrong. Little good comes of marrying the daughter of the house you are at feud with; indeed, it was less poor Dalgarno's fault, than theirs that forced the match on him; but I am glad the young folk are to have something to live on, come how it like, whether by charity or inheritance. But if the Lady Dalgarno were to sell all she has, even to her very wylie-coat, she canna gie them back the fair Castle of Glenvarloch—that is lost and gane—lost and gane."

"It is but too true," said George Heriot; "we cannot discover what has become of the villain Andrew Skurliewhitter, or what Lord Dalgarno has done with the mortgage."

"Assigned it away to some one, that his wife might not get it after he was gane; it would have disturbed him in his grave, to think Glenvarloch should get that land back again," said Sir Mungo; "depend on it, he will have ta'en sure measures to keep that noble lordship out of her grips or her nevy's either."

"Indeed it is but too probable, Sir Mungo," said Master Heriot; "but as I am obliged to go and look after many things in consequence of this ceremony, I must leave you to comfort yourself with the reflection."

"The bride-day, you say, is to be on the thirtieth of the instant month?" said Sir Mungo, holloing after the citizen; "I will be with you in the hour of cause."

"The king invites the guests," said George Heriot, without turning back.

"The base-born, ill-bred mechanic!" soliloquised Sir Mungo, "if it were not the odd score of pounds he lent me last week, I would teach him how to bear himself to a man of quality! But I will be at the bridal banquet in spite of him."

Sir Mungo contrived to get invited, or commanded, to attend on the bridal accordingly, at which there were but few persons present; for James, on such occasions, preferred a snug privacy, which gave him liberty to lay aside the encumbrance, as he felt it to be, of his regal dignity. The company was very small, and indeed there were at least two persons absent whose presence might have been expected. The first of these was the Lady Dalgarno, the state of whose health, as well as the recent death of her husband, precluded her attendance on the ceremony. The other absentee was Richie Moniplies, whose conduct for some time past had been extremely mysterious. Regulating his attendance on Lord Glenvarloch entirely according to his own will and pleasure, he had, ever since the rencounter in Enfield Chase, appeared regularly at his bedside in the morning, to assist him to dress, and at his wardrobe in the evening. The rest of the day he disposed of at his own pleasure, without control from his lord, who had now a complete establishment of attendants. Yet he was somewhat curious to know how the fellow disposed of so much of his time; but on this subject Richie showed no desire to be communicative.

On the morning of the bridal-day, Richie was particularly attentive in doing all a valet-de-chambre could, so as to set off to advantage the very handsome figure of his master; and when he had arranged his dress to the utmost exactness, and put to his long curled locks what he called "the finishing touch of the redding-kaim," he gravely kneeled down, kissed his hand, and bade him farewell, saying that he humbly craved leave to discharge himself of his lordship's service.

"Why, what humour is this?" said Lord Glenvarloch; "if you mean to discharge yourself of my service, Richie, I suppose you intend to enter my wife's?"

"I wish her good ladyship that shall soon be, and your good lordship, the blessings of as good a servant as myself, in heaven's good time," said Richie; "but fate hath so ordained it, that I can henceforth only be your servant in the way of friendly courtesy."

"Well, Richie," said the young lord, "if you are tired of service, we will seek some better provision for you; but you will wait on me to the church, and partake of the bridal dinner?"

"Under favour, my lord," answered Richie; "I must remind you of our covenant, having presently some pressing business of mine own, whilk will detain me during the ceremony; but I will not fail to prie Master George's good cheer, in respect he has made very costly fare, whilk it would be unthankful not to partake of."

"Do as you list," answered Lord Glenvarloch; and having bestowed a passing thought on the whimsical and pragmatismal disposition of his follower, he dismissed the subject for others better suited to the day.

The reader must fancy the scattered flowers which strewed the path of the happy couple to church—the loud music which accompanied the procession—the marriage service performed by a bishop—the king, who met them at Saint Paul's, giving away the bride,—to the great relief of her father, who had thus time, during the ceremony, to calculate the just quotient to be laid on the pinion of report in a timepiece which he was then putting together.

When the ceremony was finished, the company were transported in the royal carriages to George Heriot's, where a splendid collation was provided for the marriage-guests in the Foljambe apartments. The king no sooner found himself in this snug retreat, than, casting from him his sword and belt with such haste as if they burnt his fingers, and flinging his plumed hat on the table, as who should say, Lie there, authority! he swallowed a hearty cup of wine to the happiness of the married couple, and began to amble about the room, mumping, laughing, and cracking jests, neither the wittiest nor the most delicate, but accompanied and applauded by shouts of his own mirth, in order to encourage that of the company. Whilst his Majesty was in the midst of this gay humour, and a call to the banquet

was anxiously expected, a servant whispered Master Heriot forth of the apartment. When he re-entered, he walked up to the king, and, in his turn whispered something, at which James started.

"He is not wanting his siller?" said the king, shortly and sharply.

"By no means, my liege," answered Heriot. "It is a subject he states himself as quite indifferent about, so long as it can pleasure your Majesty."

"Body of us, man!" said the king, "it is the speech of a true man and a loving subject, and we will grace him accordingly—what though he be but a carle—a twopenny cat may look at a king. Swith, man! have him—pundite fores.—Moniplies?—They should have called the chield Monypennies, though I sall warrant you English think we have not such a name in Scotland."

"It is an ancient and honourable stock, the Monypennies," said Sir Mungo Malagrowth; "the only loss is, there are sae few of the name."

"The family seems to increase among your countrymen, Sir Mungo," said Master Lowestoffe, whom Lord Glenvarloch had invited to be present, "since his Majesty's happy accession brought so many of you here."

"Right, sir—right," said Sir Mungo, nodding and looking at George Heriot; "there have some of ourselves been the better of that great blessing to the English nation."

As he spoke, the door flew open, and in entered, to the astonishment of Lord Glenvarloch, his late serving-man Richie Moniplies, now sumptuously, nay, gorgeously, attired in a superb brocaded suit, and leading in his hand the tall, thin, withered, somewhat distorted form of Martha Trapbois, arrayed in a complete dress of black velvet, which suited so strangely with the pallid and severe melancholy of her countenance, that the king himself exclaimed, in some perturbation, "What the deil has the fallow brought us here? Body of our regal selves! it is a corpse that has run off with the mort-cloth!"

"May I sifficate your Majesty to be gracious unto her?" said Richie; "being that she is, in respect of this morning's wark, my ain wedded wife, Mrs. Martha Moniplies by name."

"Saul of our body, man! but she looks wondrous grim," answered King James. "Art thou sure she has not been in her time maid of honour to Queen Mary, our kinswoman, of redhot memory?"

"I am sure, an it like your Majesty, that she has brought me fifty thousand pounds of good siller, and better; and that has enabled me to pleasure your Majesty, and other folk."

"Ye need have said naething about that, man," said the king; "we ken our obligations in that sma' matter, and we are glad this rudas spouse of thine hath bestowed her treasure on ane wha kens to put it to the profit of his king and country.—But how the deil did ye come by her, man?"

"In the auld Scottish fashion, my liege. She is the captive of my bow and my spear," answered Moniplies. "There was a convention that she should wed me when I avenged her father's death—so I slew, and took possession."

"It is the daughter of Old Trapbois, who has been missed so long," said Lowestoffe.—"Where the devil could you mew her up so closely, friend Richie?"

"Master Richard, if it be your will," answered Richie; "or Master Richard Moniplies, if you like it better. For mewing of her up, I found her a shelter, in all honour and safety, under the roof of an honest countryman of my own—and for secrecy, it was a point of prudence, when wantons like you were abroad, Master Lowestoffe."

There was a laugh at Richie's magnanimous reply, on the part of every one but his bride, who made to him a signal of impatience, and said, with her usual brevity and sternness,—"*Peace—peace, I pray you, peace. Let us do that which we came for.*" So saying, she took out a bundle of parchments, and delivering them to Lord Glenvarloch, she said aloud,—"*I take this royal presence, and all here, to witness, that I restore the ransomed lordship of Glenvarloch to the right owner, as free as ever it was held by any of his ancestors.*"

"I witnessed the redemption of the mortgage," said Lowestoffe; "but I little dreamt by whom it had been redeemed."

"No need ye should," said Richie; "there would have been small wisdom in crying roast-meat."

"Peace," said his bride, "once more.—This paper," she continued, delivering another to Lord Glenvarloch, "is also your property—take it, but spare me the question how it came into my custody."

The king had bustled forward beside Lord Glenvarloch, and fixing an eager eye on the writing, exclaimed—"Body of ourselves, it is our royal sign-manual for the money which was so long out of sight!—How came you by it, Mistress Bride?"

"It is a secret," said Martha, dryly.

"A secret which my tongue shall never utter," said Richie, resolutely,—"*unless the king commands me on my allegiance.*"

"I do—I do command you," said James, trembling and stammering with the impatient curiosity of a gossip; while Sir Mungo, with more malicious anxiety to get at the bottom of the mystery, stooped his long thin form forward like a bent fishing-rod, raised his thin grey locks from his ear, and curved his hand behind it to collect every vibration of the expected intelligence. Martha in the meantime frowned most ominously on Richie, who went on undauntedly to inform the king, "that his deceased father-in-law, a good careful man in the main, had a' touch of worldly wisdom about him, that at times marred the uprightness of his walk; he liked to dabble among his neighbour's gear, and some of it would at times stick to his fingers in the handling."

"For shame, man, for shame!" said Martha; "since the infamy of the deed must be told, be it at least briefly.—Yes, my lord," she added, addressing Glenvarloch, "the piece of gold was not the sole bait which brought the miserable old man to your chamber that dreadful night—his object, and he accomplished it, was to purloin this paper. The wretched scrivener was with him that morning, and, I doubt not, urged the doting old man to this villainy, to offer another bar to the ransom of your estate. If there was a yet more powerful agent at the bottom of this conspiracy, God forgive it to him at this moment, for he is now where the crime must be answered!"

"Amen!" said Lord Glenvarloch, and it was echoed by all present.

"For my father," continued she, with her stern features twitched by an involuntary and convulsive movement, "his guilt and folly cost him his life; and my belief is constant, that the wretch, who counselled him that morning to purloin the paper, left open the window for the entrance of the murderers."

Every body was silent for an instant; the king was first to speak, commanding search instantly to be made for the guilty scrivener. "I, lictor," he concluded, "*colliga manus—caput obnubito-infelici suspendite arbori.*"

Lowestoffe answered with due respect, that the scrivener had absconded at the time of Lord Dalgarno's murder, and had not been heard of since.

"Let him be sought for," said the king. "And now let us change the discourse—these stories make one's very blood grew, and are altogether unfit for bridal festivity. Hymen, O Hymeneel!" added he, snapping his fingers, "Lord Glenvarloch, what say you to Mistress Moniplies, this bonny bride, that has brought you back your father's estate on your bridal day?"

"Let him say nothing, my liege," said Martha; "that will best suit his feelings and mine."

"There is redemption-money, at the least, to be repaid," said Lord Glenvarloch; "in that I cannot remain debtor."

"We will speak of it hereafter," said Martha; "my debtor you cannot be." And she shut her mouth as if determined to say nothing more on the subject.

Sir Mungo, however, resolved not to part with the topic, and availing himself of the freedom of the moment, said to Richie—"A queer story that of your father-in-law, honest man; methinks your bride thanked you little for ripping it up."

"I make it a rule, Sir Mungo," replied Richie, "always to speak any evil I know about my family myself, having observed, that if I do not, it is sure to be told by ither folks."

"But, Richie," said Sir Mungo, "it seems to me that this bride of yours is like to be master and mair in the conjugal state."

"If she abides by words, Sir Mungo," answered Richie, "I thank heaven I can be as deaf as any one; and if she comes to dunts, I have twa hands to paik her with."

"Weel said, Richie, again," said the king; "you have gotten it on baith haffits, Sir Mungo.—Troth, Mistress Bride, for a fule, your gudeman has a pretty turn of wit."

"There are fools, sire," replied she, "who have wit, and fools who have courage—aye, and fools who have learning, and are great fools notwithstanding.—I chose this man because he was my protector when I was desolate, and neither for his wit nor his wisdom. He is truly honest, and has a heart and hand that make

amends for some folly. Since I was condemned to seek a protector through the world, which is to me a wilderness, I may thank God that I have come by no worse."

"And that is sae sensibly said," replied the king, "that, by my saul, I'll try whether I canna make him better. Kneel down, Richie—somebody lend me a rapier—yours, Mr. Langstaff, (that's a brave name for a lawyer,)—ye need not flash it out that gate, Templar fashion, as if ye were about to pink a bailiff!"

He took the drawn sword, and with averted eyes, for it was a sight he loved not to look on, endeavoured to lay it on Richie's shoulder, but nearly stuck it into his eye. Richie, starting back, attempted to rise, but was held down by Lowestoffe, while Sir Mungo, guiding the royal weapon, the honour-bestowing blow was given and received: "Surge, carnifex—Rise up, Sir Richard Moniplies, of Castle-Collop!—And, my lords and lieges, let us all to our dinner, for the cock-a-leekie is cooling."

BOOK XIV
A LEGEND OF MONTROSE
CHAPTER I.

*Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun,
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery,
And prove their doctrine orthodox,
By apostolic blows and knocks.—BUTLER.*

It was during the period of that great and bloody Civil War which agitated Britain during the seventeenth century, that our tale has its commencement. Scotland had as yet remained free from the ravages of intestine war, although its inhabitants were much divided in political opinions; and many of them, tired of the control of the Estates of Parliament, and disapproving of the bold measure which they had adopted, by sending into England a large army to the assistance of the Parliament, were determined on their part to embrace the earliest opportunity of declaring for the King, and making such a diversion as should at least compel the recall of General Leslie's army out of England, if it did not recover a great part of Scotland to the King's allegiance. This plan was chiefly adopted by the northern nobility, who had resisted with great obstinacy the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant, and by many of the chiefs of the Highland clans, who conceived their interest and authority to be connected with royalty, who had, besides, a decided aversion to the Presbyterian form of religion, and who, finally, were in that half savage state of society, in which war is always more welcome than peace.

Great commotions were generally expected to arise from these concurrent causes; and the trade of incursion and depredation, which the Scotch Highlanders at all times exercised upon the Lowlands, began to assume a more steady, avowed, and systematic form, as part of a general military system.

Those at the head of affairs were not insensible to the peril of the moment, and anxiously made preparations to meet and to repel it. They considered, however, with satisfaction, that no leader or name of consequence had as yet appeared to assemble an army of royalists, or even to direct the efforts of those desultory bands, whom love of plunder, perhaps, as much as political principle, had hurried into measures of hostility. It was generally hoped that the quartering a sufficient number of troops in the Lowlands adjacent to the Highland line, would have the effect of restraining the mountain chieftains; while the power of various barons in the north, who had espoused the Covenant, as, for example, the Earl Mareschal, the great families of Forbes, Leslie, and Irvine, the Grants, and other Presbyterian clans, might counterbalance and bridle, not only the strength of the Ogilvies and other cavaliers of Angus and Kincardine, but even the potent family of the Gordons, whose extensive authority was only equalled by their extreme dislike to the Presbyterian model.

In the West Highlands the ruling party numbered many enemies; but the power of these disaffected clans was supposed to be broken, and the spirit of their chieftains intimidated, by the predominating influence of the Marquis of Argyle, upon whom the confidence of the Convention of Estates was reposed with the utmost security; and whose power in the Highlands, already exorbitant, had been still farther increased by concessions extorted from the King at the last pacification. It was indeed well known that Argyle was a man rather of political enterprise than personal courage, and better calculated to manage an intrigue of state, than to control the tribes of hostile mountaineers; yet the numbers of his clan, and the spirit of the gallant gentlemen by whom it was led, might, it was supposed, atone for the personal deficiencies of their chief; and as the Campbells had already severely humbled several of the neighbouring tribes, it was supposed these would not readily again provoke an encounter with a body so powerful.

Thus having at their command the whole west and south of Scotland, indisputably the richest part of the kingdom,—Fifeshire being in a peculiar manner their own, and possessing many and powerful friends even north of the Forth and Tay,—the Scottish Convention of Estates saw no danger sufficient to induce them to alter the line of policy they had adopted, or to recall from the assistance of their brethren of the English Parliament that auxiliary army of twenty thousand men, by means of which accession of strength, the King's party had been reduced to the defensive, when in full career of triumph and success.

The causes which moved the Convention of Estates at this time to take such an immediate and active interest in the civil war of England, are detailed in our historians, but may be here shortly recapitulated. They had indeed no new injury or aggression to complain of at the hand of the King, and the peace which had been made between Charles and his subjects of Scotland had been carefully observed; but the Scottish rulers were well aware that this peace had been extorted from the King, as well by the influence of the parliamentary party in England, as by the terror of their own arms. It is true, King Charles had since then visited the capital of his ancient kingdom, had assented to the new organization of the church, and had distributed honours and rewards among the leaders of the party which had shown themselves most hostile to his interests; but it was suspected that distinctions so unwillingly conferred would be resumed as soon as opportunity offered. The low state of the English Parliament was seen in Scotland with deep apprehension; and it was concluded, that should Charles triumph by force of arms against his insurgent subjects of England, he would not be long in exacting from the Scotch the vengeance which he might suppose due to those who had set the example of taking up arms against him. Such was the policy of the measure which dictated the sending the auxiliary army into England; and it was avowed in a manifesto explanatory of their reasons for giving this timely and important aid to the English Parliament. The English Parliament, they said, had been already friendly to them, and might be so again; whereas the King, although he had so lately established religion among them according to their desires, had given them no ground to confide in his royal declaration, seeing they had found his promises and actions inconsistent with each other. "Our conscience," they concluded, "and God, who is greater than our conscience, beareth us record, that we aim altogether at the glory of God, peace of both nations, and honour of the King, in suppressing and punishing in a legal way, those who are the troublers of Israel, the firebrands of hell, the Korahs, the Balaams, the Doegs, the Rabshakehs, the Hamans, the Tobiahs, the Sanballats of our time, which done, we are satisfied. Neither have we begun to use a military expedition to England as a mean for compassing those our pious ends, until all other means which we could think upon have failed us: and this alone is left to us, ULTIMUM ET UNICUM REMEDIUM, the last and only remedy."

Leaving it to casuists to determine whether one contracting party is justified in breaking a solemn treaty, upon the suspicion that, in certain future contingencies, it might be infringed by the other, we shall proceed to mention two other circumstances that had at least equal influence with the Scottish rulers and nation, with any doubts which they entertained of the King's good faith.

The first of these was the nature and condition of their army; headed by a poor and discontented nobility, under whom it was officered chiefly by Scottish soldiers of fortune, who had served in the German wars until they had lost almost all distinction of political principle, and even of country, in the adoption of the mercenary faith, that a soldier's principal duty was fidelity to the state or sovereign from whom he received his pay, without respect either to the justice of the quarrel, or to their own connexion with either of the contending parties. To men of this stamp, Grotius applies the severe character—NULLUM VITAE GENUS ET IMPROBIUS, QUAM EORUM, QUI SINE CAUSAE RESPECTU MERCEDE CONDUCTI, MILITANT. To these mercenary soldiers, as well as to the needy gentry with whom they were mixed in command, and who easily imbibed the same opinions, the success of the late short invasion of England in 1641 was a sufficient reason for renewing so profitable an experiment. The good pay and free quarters of England had made a feeling impression upon the recollection of these military adventurers, and the prospect of again levying eight hundred and fifty pounds a-day, came in place of all arguments, whether of state or of morality.

Another cause inflamed the minds of the nation at large, no less than the tempting prospect of the wealth of England animated the soldiery. So much had been written and said on either side concerning the form of church government, that it had become a matter of infinitely more consequence in the eyes of the multitude than the doctrines of that gospel which both churches had embraced. The Prelatists and Presbyterians of the more violent kind became as illiberal as the Papists, and would scarcely allow the possibility of salvation beyond the pale of their respective churches. It was in vain remarked to these zealots, that had the Author of our holy religion considered any peculiar form of church government as essential to salvation, it would have been revealed with the same precision as under the Old Testament dispensation. Both parties continued as violent as if they could have pleaded the distinct commands of Heaven to justify their intolerance, Laud, in the days of his domination, had fired the train, by attempting to impose upon the Scottish people church ceremonies foreign to their habits and opinions. The

success with which this had been resisted, and the Presbyterian model substituted in its place, had endeared the latter to the nation, as the cause in which they had triumphed. The Solemn League and Covenant, adopted with such zeal by the greater part of the kingdom, and by them forced, at the sword's point, upon the others, bore in its bosom, as its principal object, the establishing the doctrine and discipline of the Presbyterian church, and the putting down all error and heresy; and having attained for their own country an establishment of this golden candlestick, the Scots became liberally and fraternally anxious to erect the same in England. This they conceived might be easily attained by lending to the Parliament the effectual assistance of the Scottish forces. The Presbyterians, a numerous and powerful party in the English Parliament, had hitherto taken the lead in opposition to the King; while the Independents and other sectaries, who afterwards, under Cromwell, resumed the power of the sword, and overset the Presbyterian model both in Scotland and England, were as yet contented to lurk under the shelter of the wealthier and more powerful party. The prospect of bringing to a uniformity the kingdoms of England and Scotland in discipline and worship, seemed therefore as fair as it was desirable.

The celebrated Sir Henry Vane, one of the commissioners who negotiated the alliance betwixt England and Scotland, saw the influence which this bait had upon the spirits of those with whom he dealt; and although himself a violent Independent, he contrived at once to gratify and to elude the eager desires of the Presbyterians, by qualifying the obligation to reform the Church of England, as a change to be executed "according to the word of God, and the best reformed churches." Deceived by their own eagerness, themselves entertaining no doubts on the JUS DIVINUM of their own ecclesiastical establishments, and not holding it possible such doubts could be adopted by others, the Convention of Estates and the Kirk of Scotland conceived, that such expressions necessarily inferred the establishment of Presbytery; nor were they undeceived, until, when their help was no longer needful, the sectaries gave them to understand, that the phrase might be as well applied to Independency, or any other mode of worship, which those who were at the head of affairs at the time might consider as agreeable "to the word of God, and the practice of the reformed churches." Neither were the outwitted Scottish less astonished to find, that the designs of the English sectaries struck against the monarchical constitution of Britain, it having been their intention to reduce the power of the King, but by no means to abrogate the office. They fared, however, in this respect, like rash physicians, who commence by over-physicking a patient, until he is reduced to a state of weakness, from which cordials are afterwards unable to recover him.

But these events were still in the womb of futurity. As yet the Scottish Parliament held their engagement with England consistent with justice, prudence, and piety, and their military undertaking seemed to succeed to their very wish. The junction of the Scottish army with those of Fairfax and Manchester, enabled the Parliamentary forces to besiege York, and to fight the desperate action of Long-Marston Moor, in which Prince Rupert and the Marquis of Newcastle were defeated. The Scottish auxiliaries, indeed, had less of the glory of this victory than their countrymen could desire. David Leslie, with their cavalry, fought bravely, and to them, as well as to Cromwell's brigade of Independents, the honour of the day belonged; but the old Earl of Leven, the covenanting general, was driven out of the field by the impetuous charge of Prince Rupert, and was thirty miles distant, in full flight towards Scotland, when he was overtaken by the news that his party had gained a complete victory.

The absence of these auxiliary troops, upon this crusade for the establishment of Presbyterianism in England, had considerably diminished the power of the Convention of Estates in Scotland, and had given rise to those agitations among the anti-covenanters, which we have noticed at the beginning of this chapter.

CHAPTER II.

*His mother could for him as cradle set
Her husband's rusty iron corselet;
Whose jangling sound could hush her babe to rest,
That never plain'd of his uneasy nest;
Then did he dream of dreary wars at hand,
And woke, and fought, and won, ere he could stand.*—HALL'S SATIRES

It was towards the close of a summer's evening, during the anxious period which we have commemorated, that a young gentleman of quality, well mounted and armed, and accompanied by two servants, one of whom led a sumpter horse, rode slowly up one of those steep passes, by which the Highlands are accessible from the Lowlands of Perthshire. [The beautiful pass of Leny, near Callander, in Monteith, would, in some respects, answer this description.] Their course had lain for some time along the banks of a lake, whose deep waters reflected the crimson beams of the western sun. The broken path which they pursued with some difficulty, was in some places shaded by ancient birches and oak-trees, and in others overhung by fragments of huge rock. Elsewhere, the hill, which formed the northern side of this beautiful sheet of water, arose in steep, but less precipitous acclivity, and was arrayed in heath of the darkest purple. In the present times, a scene so romantic would have been judged to possess the highest charms for the traveller; but those who journey in days of doubt and dread, pay little attention to picturesque scenery.

The master kept, as often as the wood permitted, abreast of one or both of his domestics, and seemed earnestly to converse with them, probably because the distinctions of rank are readily set aside among those who are made to be sharers of common danger. The dispositions of the leading men who inhabit this wild country, and the probability of their taking part in the political convulsions that were soon expected, were the subjects of their conversation.

They had not advanced above half way up the lake, and the young gentleman was pointing to his attendants the spot where their intended road turned northwards, and, leaving the verge of the loch, ascended a ravine to the right hand, when they discovered a single horseman coming down the shore, as if to meet them. The gleam of the sunbeams upon his head-piece and corslet showed that he was in armour, and the purpose of the other travellers required that he should not pass unquestioned. "We must know who he is," said the young gentleman, "and whither he is going." And putting spurs to his horse, he rode forward as fast as the rugged state of the road would permit, followed by his two attendants, until he reached the point where the pass along the side of the lake was intersected by that which descended from the ravine, securing thus against the possibility of the stranger eluding them, by turning into the latter road before they came up with him.

The single horseman had mended his pace, when he first observed the three riders advance rapidly towards him; but when he saw them halt and form a front, which completely occupied the path, he checked his horse, and advanced with great deliberation; so that each party had an opportunity to take a full survey of the other. The solitary stranger was mounted upon an able horse, fit for military service, and for the great weight which he had to carry, and his rider occupied his demipique, or war-saddle, with an air that showed it was his familiar seat. He had a bright burnished head-piece, with a plume of feathers, together with a cuirass, thick enough to resist a musket-ball, and a back-piece of lighter materials. These defensive arms he wore over a buff jerkin, along with a pair of gauntlets, or steel gloves, the tops of which reached up to his elbow, and which, like the rest of his armour, were of bright steel. At the front of his military saddle hung a case of pistols, far beyond the ordinary size, nearly two feet in length, and carrying bullets of twenty to the pound. A buff belt, with a broad silver buckle, sustained on one side a long straight double-edged broadsword, with a strong guard, and a blade calculated either to strike or push. On the right side hung a dagger of about eighteen inches in length; a shoulder-belt sustained at his back a musketoon or blunderbuss, and was crossed by a bandolier containing his charges of ammunition. Thigh-pieces of steel, then termed taslets, met the tops of his huge jack-boots, and completed the equipage of a well-armed trooper of the period.

The appearance of the horseman himself corresponded well with his military equipage, to which he had the air of having been long inured. He was above the middle size, and of strength sufficient to bear with ease the weight of his weapons, offensive and defensive. His age might be forty and upwards, and his countenance was that of a resolute weather-beaten veteran, who had seen many fields, and brought away in token more than one scar. At the distance of about thirty yards he halted and stood fast, raised himself on his stirrups, as if to reconnoitre and ascertain the purpose of the opposite party, and brought his musketoon

under his right arm, ready for use, if occasion should require it. In everything but numbers, he had the advantage of those who seemed inclined to interrupt his passage.

The leader of the party was, indeed, well mounted and clad in a buff coat, richly embroidered, the half-military dress of the period; but his domestics had only coarse jackets of thick felt, which could scarce be expected to turn the edge of a sword, if wielded by a strong man; and none of them had any weapons, save swords and pistols, without which gentlemen, or their attendants, during those disturbed times, seldom stirred abroad.

When they had stood at gaze for about a minute, the younger gentleman gave the challenge which was then common in the mouth of all strangers who met in such circumstances—"For whom are you?"

"Tell me first," answered the soldier, "for whom are you?—the strongest party should speak first."

"We are for God and King Charles," answered the first speaker.—"Now tell your faction, you know ours."

"I am for God and my standard," answered the single horseman.

"And for which standard?" replied the chief of the other party—"Cavalier or Roundhead, King or Convention?"

"By my troth, sir," answered the soldier, "I would be loath to reply to you with an untruth, as a thing unbecoming a cavalier of fortune and a soldier. But to answer your query with befitting veracity, it is necessary I should myself have resolved to whilk of the present divisions of the kingdom I shall ultimately adhere, being a matter whereon my mind is not as yet preceesely ascertained."

"I should have thought," answered the gentleman, "that, when loyalty and religion are at stake, no gentleman or man of honour could be long in choosing his party."

"Truly, sir," replied the trooper, "if ye speak this in the way of vituperation, as meaning to impugn my honour or genteelity, I would blithely put the same to issue, venturing in that quarrel with my single person against you three. But if you speak it in the way of logical ratiocination, whilk I have studied in my youth at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, I am ready to prove to ye LOGICE, that my resolution to defer, for a certain season, the taking upon me either of these quarrels, not only becometh me as a gentleman and a man of honour, but also as a person of sense and prudence, one imbued with humane letters in his early youth, and who, from thenceforward, has followed the wars under the banner of the invincible Gustavus, the Lion of the North, and under many other heroic leaders, both Lutheran and Calvinist, Papist and Arminian."

After exchanging a word or two with his domestics, the younger gentleman replied, "I should be glad, sir, to have some conversation with you upon so interesting a question, and should be proud if I can determine you in favour of the cause I have myself espoused. I ride this evening to a friend's house not three miles distant, whither, if you choose to accompany me, you shall have good quarters for the night, and free permission to take your own road in the morning, if you then feel no inclination to join with us."

"Whose word am I to take for this?" answered the cautious soldier—"A man must know his guarantee, or he may fall into an ambushade."

"I am called," answered the younger stranger, "the Earl of Menteith, and, I trust, you will receive my honour as a sufficient security."

"A worthy nobleman," answered the soldier, "whose parole is not to be doubted." With one motion he replaced his musketoon at his back, and with another made his military salute to the young nobleman, and continuing to talk as he rode forward to join him—"And, I trust," said he, "my own assurance, that I will be BON CAMARADO to your lordship in peace or in peril, during the time we shall abide together, will not be altogether vilipended in these doubtful times, when, as they say, a man's head is safer in a steel-cap than in a marble palace."

"I assure you, sir," said Lord Menteith, "that to judge from your appearance, I most highly value the advantage of your escort; but, I trust, we shall have no occasion for any exercise of valour, as I expect to conduct you to good and friendly quarters."

"Good quarters, my lord," replied the soldier, "are always acceptable, and are only to be postponed to good pay or good booty,—not to mention the honour of a cavalier, or the needful points of commanded duty. And truly, my lord, your noble proffer is not the less welcome, in that I knew not preceesely this night where I and my poor companion" (patting his horse), "were to find lodgments."

"May I be permitted to ask, then," said Lord Menteith, "to whom I have the good fortune to stand quarter-master?"

"Truly, my lord," said the trooper, "my name is Dalgetty—Dugald Dalgetty, Ritt-master Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, at your honourable service to command. It is a name you may have seen in GALLO BELGICUS, the SWEDISH INTELLIGENCER, or, if you read High Dutch, in the FLIEGENDEN MERCOEUR of Leipsic. My father, my lord, having by unthrifty courses reduced a fair patrimony to a nonentity, I had no better shift, when I was eighteen years auld, than to carry the learning whilk I had acquired at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, my gentle bluid and designation of Drumthwacket, together with a pair of stalwarth arms, and legs conform, to the German wars, there to push my way as a cavalier of fortune. My lord, my legs and arms stood me in more stead than either my gentle kin or my book-lear, and I found myself trailing a pike as a private gentleman under old Sir Ludovick Leslie, where I learned the rules of service so tightly, that I will not forget them in a hurry. Sir, I have been made to stand guard eight hours, being from twelve at noon to eight o'clock of the night, at the palace, armed with back and breast, head-piece and bracelets, being iron to the teeth, in a bitter frost, and the ice was as hard as ever was flint; and all for stopping an instant to speak to my landlady, when I should have gone to roll-call."

"And, doubtless, sir," replied Lord Menteith, "you have gone through some hot service, as well as this same cold duty you talk of?"

"Surely, my lord, it doth not become me to speak; but he that hath seen the fields of Leipsic and of Lutzen, may be said to have seen pitched battles. And one who hath witnessed the intaking of Frankfort, and Spanheim, and Nuremberg, and so forth, should know somewhat about leaguers, storms, onslaughts and outfalls."

"But your merit, sir, and experience, were doubtless followed by promotion?"

"It came slow, my lord, dooms slow," replied Dalgetty; "but as my Scottish countrymen, the fathers of the war, and the raisers of those valorous Scottish regiments that were the dread of Germany, began to fall pretty thick, what with pestilence and what with the sword, why we, their children, succeeded to their inheritance. Sir, I was six years first private gentleman of the company, and three years lance speisade; disdaining to receive a halberd, as unbecoming my birth. Wherefore I was ultimately promoted to be a fahndragger, as the High Dutch call it (which signifies an ancient), in the King's Leif Regiment of Black-Horse, and thereafter I arose to be lieutenant and ritt-master, under that invincible monarch, the bulwark of the Protestant faith, the Lion of the North, the terror of Austria, Gustavus the Victorious."

"And yet, if I understand you, Captain Dalgetty,—I think that rank corresponds with your foreign title of ritt-master—"

"The same grade preceesely," answered Dalgetty; "ritt-master signifying literally file-leader."

"I was observing," continued Lord Menteith, "that, if I understood you right, you had left the service of this great Prince."

"It was after his death—it was after his death, sir," said Dalgetty, "when I was in no shape bound to continue mine adherence. There are things, my lord, in that service, that cannot but go against the stomach of any cavalier of honour. In especial, albeit the pay be none of the most superabundant, being only about sixty dollars a-month to a ritt-master, yet the invincible Gustavus never paid above one-third of that sum, whilk was distributed monthly by way of loan; although, when justly considered, it was, in fact, a borrowing by that great monarch of the additional two-thirds which were due to the soldier. And I have seen some whole regiments of Dutch and Holsteiners mutiny on the field of battle, like base scullions, crying out Gelt, gelt, signifying their desire of pay, instead of falling to blows like our noble Scottish blades, who ever disdained, my lord, postponing of honour to filthy lucre."

"But were not these arrears," said Lord Menteith, "paid to the soldiery at some stated period?"

"My lord," said Dalgetty, "I take it on my conscience, that at no period, and by no possible process, could one creutzer of them ever be recovered. I myself never saw twenty dollars of my own all the time I served the invincible Gustavus, unless it was from the chance of a storm or victory, or the fetching in some town or doorp, when a cavalier of fortune, who knows the usage of wars, seldom faileth to make some small profit."

"I begin rather to wonder, sir," said Lord Menteith, "that you should have continued so long in the Swedish service, than that you should have ultimately withdrawn from it."

"Neither I should," answered the Ritt-master; "but that great leader, captain, and king, the Lion of the North, and the bulwark of the Protestant faith, had a way of winning battles, taking towns, over-running countries, and levying contributions, whilk made his service irresistibly delectable to all true-bred cavaliers who follow the noble profession of arms. Simple as I ride here, my lord, I have myself commanded the whole stift of Dunklespiel on the Lower Rhine, occupying the Palsgrave's palace, consuming his choice wines with my comrades, calling in contributions, requisitions, and caduacs, and not failing to lick my fingers, as became a good cook. But truly all this glory hastened to decay, after our great master had been shot with three bullets on the field of Lutzen; wherefore, finding that Fortune had changed sides, that the borrowings and lendings went on as before out of our pay, while the caduacs and casualties were all cut off, I e'en gave up my commission, and took service with Wallenstein, in Walter Butler's Irish regiment."

"And may I beg to know of you," said Lord Menteith, apparently interested in the adventures of this soldier of fortune, "how you liked this change of masters?"

"Indifferent well," said the Captain—"very indifferent well. I cannot say that the Emperor paid much better than the great Gustavus. For hard knocks, we had plenty of them. I was often obliged to run my head against my old acquaintances, the Swedish feathers, whilk your honour must conceive to be double-pointed stakes, shod with iron at each end, and planted before the squad of pikes to prevent an onfall of the cavalry. The whilk Swedish feathers, although they look gay to the eye, resembling the shrubs or lesser trees of ane forest, as the puissant pikes, arranged in battalia behind them, correspond to the tall pines thereof, yet, nevertheless, are not altogether so soft to encounter as the plumage of a goose. Howbeit, in despite of heavy blows and light pay, a cavalier of fortune may thrive indifferently well in the Imperial service, in respect his private casualties are nothing so closely looked to as by the Swede; and so that an officer did his duty on the field, neither Wallenstein nor Pappenheim, nor old Tilly before them, would likely listen to the objurgations of boors or burghers against any commander or soldado, by whom they chanced to be somewhat closely shorn. So that an experienced cavalier, knowing how to lay, as our Scottish phrase runs, 'the head of the sow to the tail of the grice,' might get out of the country the pay whilk he could not obtain from the Emperor."

"With a full hand, sir, doubtless, and with interest," said Lord Menteith.

"Indubitably, my lord," answered Dalgetty, composedly; "for it would be doubly disgraceful for any soldado of rank to have his name called in question for any petty delinquency."

"And pray, Sir," continued Lord Menteith, "what made you leave so gainful a service?"

"Why, truly, sir," answered the soldier, "an Irish cavalier, called O'Quilligan, being major of our regiment, and I having had words with him the night before, respecting the worth and precedence of our several nations, it pleased him the next day to deliver his orders to me with the point of his baton advanced and held aloof, instead of declining and trailing the same, as is the fashion from a courteous commanding officer towards his equal in rank, though, it may be, his inferior in military grade. Upon this quarrel, sir, we fought in private rencontre; and as, in the perquisitions which followed, it pleased Walter Butler, our oberst, or colonel, to give the lighter punishment to his countryman, and the heavier to me, whereupon, ill-stomaching such partiality, I exchanged my commission for one under the Spaniard."

"I hope you found yourself better off by the change?" said Lord Menteith.

"In good sooth," answered the Ritt-master, "I had but little to complain of. The pay was somewhat regular, being furnished by the rich Flemings and Walloons of the Low Country. The quarters were excellent; the good wheaten loaves of the Flemings were better than the Provant rye-bread of the Swede, and Rhenish wine was more plenty with us than ever I saw the black-beer of Rostock in Gustavus's camp. Service there was none, duty there was little; and that little we might do, or leave undone, at our pleasure; an excellent retirement for a cavalier somewhat weary of field and leaguer, who had purchased with his blood as much honour as might serve his turn, and was desirous of a little ease and good living."

"And may I ask," said Lord Menteith, "why you, Captain, being, as I suppose, in the situation you describe, retired from the Spanish service also?"

"You are to consider, my lord, that your Spaniard," replied Captain Dalgetty, "is a person altogether unparalleled in his own conceit, where-through he maketh not fit account of such foreign cavaliers of valour as are pleased to take service with him. And a galling thing it is to every honourable soldado, to be put aside, and postponed, and obliged to yield preference to every puffing signor, who, were it the question which should first mount a breach at push of pike, might be apt to yield willing place to a Scottish cavalier. Moreover, sir, I was pricked in conscience respecting a matter of religion."

"I should not have thought, Captain Dalgetty," said the young nobleman, "that an old soldier, who had changed service so often, would have been too scrupulous on that head."

"No more I am, my lord," said the Captain, "since I hold it to be the duty of the chaplain of the regiment to settle those matters for me, and every other brave cavalier, inasmuch as he does nothing else that I know of for his pay and allowances. But this was a particular case, my lord, a CASUS IMPROVISUS, as I may say, in whilk I had no chaplain of my own persuasion to act as my adviser. I found, in short, that although my being a Protestant might be winked at, in respect that I was a man of action, and had more experience than all the Dons in our TERTIA put together, yet, when in garrison, it was expected I should go to mass with the regiment. Now, my lord, as a true Scottish man, and educated at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, I was bound to uphold the mass to be an act of blinded papistry and utter idolatry, whilk I was altogether unwilling to homologate by my presence. True it is, that I consulted on the point with a worthy countryman of my own, one Father Fatsides, of the Scottish Covenant in Wurtzburg—"

"And I hope," observed Lord Menteith, "you obtained a clear opinion from this same ghostly father?"

"As clear as it could be," replied Captain Dalgetty, "considering we had drunk six flasks of Rhenish, and about two mutchkins of Kirchenwasser. Father Fatsides informed me, that, as nearly as he could judge for a heretic like myself, it signified not much whether I went to mass or not, seeing my eternal perdition was signed and sealed at any rate, in respect of my impenitent and obdurate perseverance in my damnable heresy. Being discouraged by this response, I applied to a Dutch pastor of the reformed church, who told me, he thought I might lawfully go to mass, in respect that the prophet permitted Naaman, a mighty man of valour, and an honourable cavalier of Syria, to follow his master into the house of Rimmon, a false god, or idol, to whom he had vowed service, and to bow down when the king was leaning upon his hand. But neither was this answer satisfactory to me, both because there was an unco difference between an anointed King of Syria and our Spanish colonel, whom I could have blown away like the peeling of an ingan, and chiefly because I could not find the thing was required of me by any of the articles of war; neither was I proffered any consideration, either in perquisite or pay, for the wrong I might thereby do to my conscience."

"So you again changed your service?" said Lord Menteith.

"In troth did I, my lord; and after trying for a short while two or three other powers, I even took on for a time with their High Mightinesses the States of Holland."

"And how did their service jump with your humour?" again demanded his companion.

"O! my lord," said the soldier, in a sort of enthusiasm, "their behaviour on pay-day might be a pattern to all Europe—no borrowings, no lendings, no offsets no arrears—all balanced and paid like a banker's book. The quarters, too, are excellent, and the allowances unchallengeable; but then, sir, they are a preceese, scrupulous people, and will allow nothing for peccadilloes. So that if a boor complains of a broken head, or a beer-seller of a broken can, or a daft wench does but squeak loud enough to be heard above her breath, a soldier of honour shall be dragged, not before his own court-martial, who can best judge of and punish his demerits, but before a base mechanical burgo-master, who shall menace him with the rasp-house, the cord, and what not, as if he were one of their own mean, amphibious, twenty-breeched boors. So not being able to dwell longer among those ungrateful plebeians, who, although unable to defend themselves by their proper strength, will nevertheless allow the noble foreign cavalier who engages with them nothing beyond his dry wages, which no honourable spirit will put in competition with a liberal license and honourable countenance, I resolved to leave the service of the Mynheers. And hearing at this time, to my exceeding satisfaction, that there is something to be doing this summer in my way in this my dear native country, I am come hither, as they say, like a beggar to a bridal, in order to give my loving countrymen the advantage of that experience which I have acquired in foreign parts. So your lordship has an outline of my brief story, excepting my deportment in those passages of action in the field, in leaguers, storms, and onslaughts, whilk would be wearisome to narrate, and might, peradventure, better befit any other tongue than mine own."

CHAPTER III.

*For pleas of right let statesmen vex their head,
Battle's my business, and my guerdon bread;
And, with the sworded Switzer, I can say,
The best of causes is the best of pay.—DONNE.*

The difficulty and narrowness of the road had by this time become such as to interrupt the conversation of the travellers, and Lord Menteith, reining back his horse, held a moment's private conversation with his domestics. The Captain, who now led the van of the party, after about a quarter of a mile's slow and toilsome advance up a broken and rugged ascent, emerged into an upland valley, to which a mountain stream acted as a drain, and afforded sufficient room upon its greensward banks for the travellers to pursue their journey in a more social manner.

Lord Menteith accordingly resumed the conversation, which had been interrupted by the difficulties of the way. "I should have thought," said he to Captain Dalgetty, "that a cavalier of your honourable mark, who hath so long followed the valiant King of Sweden, and entertains such a suitable contempt for the base mechanical States of Holland, would not have hesitated to embrace the cause of King Charles, in preference to that of the low-born, roundheaded, canting knaves, who are in rebellion against his authority?"

"Ye speak reasonably, my lord," said Dalgetty, "and, CAETERIS PARIBUS, I might be induced to see the matter in the same light. But, my lord, there is a southern proverb, fine words butter no parsnips. I have heard enough since I came here, to satisfy me that a cavalier of honour is free to take any part in this civil embroilment whilk he may find most convenient for his own peculiar. Loyalty is your pass-word, my lord—Liberty, roars another chield from the other side of the strath—the King, shouts one war-cry—the Parliament, roars another—Montrose, for ever, cries Donald, waving his bonnet—Argyle and Leven, cries a south-country Saunders, vapouring with his hat and feather. Fight for the bishops, says a priest, with his gown and rochet—Stand stout for the Kirk, cries a minister, in a Geneva cap and band.—Good watchwords all—excellent watchwords. Whilk cause is the best I cannot say. But sure am I, that I have fought knee-deep in blood many a day for one that was ten degrees worse than the worst of them all."

"And pray, Captain Dalgetty," said his lordship, "since the pretensions of both parties seem to you so equal, will you please to inform us by what circumstances your preference will be determined?"

"Simply upon two considerations, my lord," answered the soldier. "Being, first, on which side my services would be in most honourable request;—And, secondly, whilk is a corollary of the first, by whilk party they are likely to be most gratefully requited. And, to deal plainly with you, my lord, my opinion at present doth on both points rather incline to the side of the Parliament."

"Your reasons, if you please," said Lord Menteith, "and perhaps I may be able to meet them with some others which are more powerful."

"Sir, I shall be amenable to reason," said Captain Dalgetty, "supposing it addresses itself to my honour and my interest. Well, then, my lord, here is a sort of Highland host assembled, or expected to assemble, in these wild hills, in the King's behalf. Now, sir, you know the nature of our Highlanders. I will not deny them to be a people stout in body and valiant in heart, and courageous enough in their own wild way of fighting, which is as remote from the usages and discipline of war as ever was that of the ancient Scythians, or of the salvage Indians of America that now is, They havena sae mickle as a German whistle, or a drum, to beat a march, an alarm, a charge, a retreat, a reveille, or the tattoo, or any other point of war; and their damnable skirlin' pipes, whilk they themselves pretend to understand, are unintelligible to the ears of any cavaliero accustomed to civilised warfare. So that, were I undertaking to discipline such a breechless mob, it were impossible for me to be understood; and if I were understood, judge ye, my lord, what chance I had of being obeyed among a band of half salvages, who are accustomed to pay to their own lairds and chiefs, allenarly, that respect and obedience whilk ought to be paid to commissionate officers. If I were teaching them to form battalia by extracting the square root, that is, by forming your square battalion of equal number of men of rank and file, corresponding to the square root of the full number present, what return could I expect for communicating this golden secret of military tactic, except it may be a dirk in my wame, on placing some M'Alister More M'Shemei or Capperfae, in the flank or rear, when he claimed to be in the van?—Truly, well saith holy writ, 'if ye cast pearls before swine, they will turn again and rend ye.'"

"I believe, Anderson," said Lord Menteith, looking back to one of his servants, for both were close behind him, "you can assure this gentleman, we shall have more occasion for experienced officers, and be more disposed to profit by their instructions, than he seems to be aware of."

"With your honour's permission," said Anderson, respectfully raising his cap, "when we are joined by the Irish infantry, who are expected, and who should be landed in the West Highlands before now, we shall have need of good soldiers to discipline our levies."

"And I should like well—very well, to be employed in such service," said Dalgetty; "the Irish are pretty fellows—very pretty fellows—I desire to see none better in the field. I once saw a brigade of Irish, at the taking of Frankfort upon the Oder, stand to it with sword and pike until they beat off the blue and yellow Swedish brigades, esteemed as stout as any that fought under the immortal Gustavus. And although stout Hepburn, valiant Lumsdale, courageous Monroe, with myself and other cavaliers, made entry elsewhere at point of pike, yet, had we all met with such opposition, we had returned with great loss and little profit. Wherefore these valiant Irishes, being all put to the sword, as is usual in such cases, did nevertheless gain immortal praise and honour; so that, for their sakes, I have always loved and honoured those of that nation next to my own country of Scotland."

"A command of Irish," said Menteith, "I think I could almost promise you, should you be disposed to embrace the royal cause."

"And yet," said Captain Dalgetty, "my second and greatest difficulty remains behind; for, although I hold it a mean and sordid thing for a soldado to have nothing in his mouth but pay and gelt, like the base cullions, the German lanz-knechts, whom I mentioned before; and although I will maintain it with my sword, that honour is to be preferred before pay, free quarters, and arrears, yet, EX CONTRARIO, a soldier's pay being the counterpart of his engagement of service, it becomes a wise and considerate cavalier to consider what remuneration he is to receive for his service, and from what funds it is to be paid. And truly, my lord, from what I can see and hear, the Convention are the purse-masters. The Highlanders, indeed, may be kept in humour, by allowing them to steal cattle; and for the Irishes, your lordship and your noble associates may, according to the practice of the wars in such cases, pay them as seldom or as little as may suit your pleasure or convenience; but the same mode of treatment doth not apply to a cavalier like me, who must keep up his horses, servants, arms, and equipage, and who neither can, nor will, go to warfare upon his own charges."

Anderson, the domestic who had before spoken now respectfully addressed his master.—"I think, my lord," he said, "that, under your lordship's favour, I could say something to remove Captain Dalgetty's second objection also. He asks us where we are to collect our pay; now, in my poor mind, the resources are as open to us as to the Covenanters. They tax the country according to their pleasure, and dilapidate the estates of the King's friends; now, were we once in the Lowlands, with our Highlanders and our Irish at our backs, and our swords in our hands, we can find many a fat traitor, whose ill-gotten wealth shall fill our military chest and satisfy our soldiery. Besides, confiscations will fall in thick; and, in giving donations of forfeited lands to every adventurous cavalier who joins his standard, the King will at once reward his friends and punish his enemies. In short, he that joins these Roundhead dogs may get some miserable pittance of pay—he that joins our standard has a chance to be knight, lord, or earl, if luck serve him."

"Have you ever served, my good friend?" said the Captain to the spokesman.

"A little, sir, in these our domestic quarrels," answered the man, modestly.

"But never in Germany or the Low Countries?" said Dalgetty.

"I never had the honour," answered Anderson.

"I profess," said Dalgetty, addressing Lord Menteith, "your lordship's servant has a sensible, natural, pretty idea of military matters; somewhat irregular, though, and smells a little too much of selling the bear's skin before he has hunted him.—I will take the matter, however, into my consideration."

"Do so, Captain," said Lord Menteith; "you will have the night to think of it, for we are now near the house, where I hope to ensure you a hospitable reception."

"And that is what will be very welcome," said the Captain, "for I have tasted no food since daybreak but a farl of oatcake, which I divided with my horse. So I have been fain to draw my sword-belt three bores tighter for very extenuation, lest hunger and heavy iron should make the gird slip."

CHAPTER IV.

*Once on a time, no matter when,
Some Glunimies met in a glen;
As deft and tight as ever wore
A durk, a targe, and a claymore,
Short hose, and belted plaid or trews,
In Uist, Lochaber, Skye, or Lewes,
Or cover'd hard head with his bonnet;
Had you but known them, you would own it.—MESTON.*

A hill was now before the travellers, covered with an ancient forest of Scottish firs, the topmost of which, flinging their scathed branches across the western horizon, gleamed ruddy in the setting sun. In the centre of this wood rose the towers, or rather the chimneys, of the house, or castle, as it was called, destined for the end of their journey.

As usual at that period, one or two high-ridged narrow buildings, intersecting and crossing each other, formed the CORPS DE LOGIS. A protecting bartizan or two, with the addition of small turrets at the angles, much resembling pepper-boxes, had procured for Darnlinvarach the dignified appellation of a castle. It was surrounded by a low court-yard wall, within which were the usual offices.

As the travellers approached more nearly, they discovered marks of recent additions to the defences of the place, which had been suggested, doubtless, by the insecurity of those troublesome times. Additional loop-holes for musketry were struck out in different parts of the building, and of its surrounding wall. The windows had just been carefully secured by stanchions of iron, crossing each other athwart and end-long, like the grates of a prison. The door of the court-yard was shut; and it was only after cautious challenge that one of its leaves was opened by two domestics, both strong Highlanders, and both under arms, like Bitias and Pandarus in the Aeneid, ready to defend the entrance if aught hostile had ventured an intrusion.

When the travellers were admitted into the court, they found additional preparations for defence. The walls were scaffolded for the use of fire-arms, and one or two of the small guns, called sackers, or falcons, were mounted at the angles and flanking turrets.

More domestics, both in the Highland and Lowland dress, instantly rushed from the anterior of the mansion, and some hastened to take the horses of the strangers, while others waited to marshal them a way into the dwelling-house. But Captain Dalgetty refused the proffered assistance of those who wished to relieve him of the charge of his horse. "It is my custom, my friends, to see Gustavus (for so I have called him, after my invincible master) accommodated myself; we are old friends and fellow-travellers, and as I often need the use of his legs, I always lend him in my turn the service of my tongue, to call for whatever he has occasion for;" and accordingly he strode into the stable after his steed without farther apology.

Neither Lord Menteith nor his attendants paid the same attention to their horses, but, leaving them to the proffered care of the servants of the place, walked forward into the house, where a sort of dark vaulted vestibule displayed, among other miscellaneous articles, a huge barrel of two-penny ale, beside which were ranged two or three wooden queichs, or bickers, ready, it would appear, for the service of whoever thought proper to employ them. Lord Menteith applied himself to the spigot, drank without ceremony, and then handed the stoup to Anderson, who followed his master's example, but not until he had flung out the drop of ale which remained, and slightly rinsed the wooden cup.

"What the deil, man," said an old Highland servant belonging to the family, "can she no drink after her ain master without washing the cup and spilling the ale, and be tanned to her!"

"I was bred in France," answered Anderson, "where nobody drinks after another out of the same cup, unless it be after a young lady."

"The teil's in their nicety!" said Donald; "and if the ale be gude, fat the waur is't that another man's beard's been in the queich before ye?"

Anderson's companion drank without observing the ceremony which had given Donald so much offence, and both of them followed their master into the low-arched stone hall, which was the common rendezvous of a Highland family. A large fire of peats in the huge chimney at the upper end shed a dim light through the apartment, and was rendered necessary by the damp, by which, even during the summer, the apartment was rendered uncomfortable. Twenty or thirty targets, as many claymores, with dirks, and plaids, and guns, both match-lock and fire-lock, and long-bows, and cross-bows, and Lochaber axes, and coats of plate armour, and steel bonnets, and headpieces, and the more ancient habergeons, or shirts of reticulated mail, with hood and sleeves corresponding to it, all hung in confusion about the walls, and would have formed a month's amusement to a member of a modern antiquarian society. But such things were too familiar, to attract much observation on the part of the present spectators.

There was a large clumsy oaken table, which the hasty hospitality of the domestic who had before spoken, immediately spread with milk, butter, goat-milk cheese, a flagon of beer, and a flask of usquebae, designed for the refreshment of Lord Menteith; while an inferior servant made similar preparations at the bottom of the table for the benefit of his attendants. The space which intervened between them was, according to the manners of the times, sufficient distinction between master and servant, even though the former was, as in the present instance, of high rank. Meanwhile the guests stood by the fire—the young nobleman under the chimney, and his servants at some little distance.

"What do you think, Anderson," said the former, "of our fellow-traveller?"

"A stout fellow," replied Anderson, "if all be good that is upcome. I wish we had twenty such, to put our Teagues into some sort of discipline."

"I differ from you, Anderson," said Lord Menteith; "I think this fellow Dalgetty is one of those horse-leeches, whose appetite for blood being only sharpened by what he has sucked in foreign countries, he is now returned to batten upon that of his own. Shame on the pack of these mercenary swordmen! they have made the name of Scot through all Europe equivalent to that of a pitiful mercenary, who knows neither honour nor principle but his month's pay, who transfers his allegiance from standard to standard, at the pleasure of fortune or the highest bidder; and to whose insatiable thirst for plunder and warm quarters we owe much of that civil dissension which is now turning our swords against our own bowels. I had scarce patience with the hired gladiator, and yet could hardly help laughing at the extremity of his impudence."

"Your lordship will forgive me," said Anderson, "if I recommend to you, in the present circumstances, to conceal at least a part of this generous indignation; we cannot, unfortunately, do our work without the assistance of those who act on baser motives than our own. We cannot spare the assistance of such fellows as our friend the soldado. To use the canting phrase of the saints in the English Parliament, the sons of Zeruiah are still too many for us."

"I must dissemble, then, as well as I can," said Lord Menteith, "as I have hitherto done, upon your hint. But I wish the fellow at the devil with all my heart."

"Ay, but still you must remember, my lord," resumed Anderson, "that to cure the bite of a scorpion, you must crush another scorpion on the wound—But stop, we shall be overheard."

From a side-door in the hall glided a Highlander into the apartment, whose lofty stature and complete equipment, as well as the eagle's feather in his bonnet, and the confidence of his demeanour, announced to be a person of superior rank. He walked slowly up to the table, and made no answer to Lord Menteith, who, addressing him by the name of Allan, asked him how he did.

"Ye manna speak to her e'en now," whispered the old attendant.

The tall Highlander, sinking down upon the empty settle next the fire, fixed his eyes upon the red embers and the huge heap of turf, and seemed buried in profound abstraction. His dark eyes, and wild and enthusiastic features, bore the air of one who, deeply impressed with his own subjects of meditation, pays little attention to exterior objects. An air of gloomy severity, the fruit perhaps of ascetic and solitary habits, might, in a Lowlander, have been ascribed to religious fanaticism; but by that disease of the mind, then so common both in England and the Lowlands of Scotland, the Highlanders of this period were rarely infected. They had, however, their own peculiar superstitions, which overclouded the mind with thick-coming fancies, as completely as the puritanism of their neighbours.

"His lordship's honour," said the Highland servant sideling up to Lord Menteith, and speaking in a very low tone, "his lordship manna speak to Allan even now, for the cloud is upon his mind."

Lord Menteith nodded, and took no farther notice of the reserved mountaineer.

"Said I not," asked the latter, suddenly raising his stately person upright, and looking at the domestic—"said I not that four were to come, and here stand but three on the hall floor?"

"In troth did ye say sae, Allan," said the old Highlander, "and here's the fourth man coming clinking in at the yett e'en now from the stable, for he's shelled like a partan, wi' aim on back and breast, haunch and shanks. And am I to set her chair up near the Menteith's, or down wi' the honest gentlemen at the foot of the table?"

Lord Menteith himself answered the enquiry, by pointing to a seat beside his own.

"And here she comes," said Donald, as Captain Dalgetty entered the hall; "and I hope gentlemens will all take bread and cheese, as we say in the glens, until better meat be ready, until the Tiernach comes back frae the hill wi' the southern gentlefolk, and then Dugald Cook will show himself wi' his kid and hill venison."

In the meantime, Captain Dalgetty had entered the apartment, and walking up to the seat placed next Lord Menteith, was leaning on the back of it with his arms folded. Anderson and his companion waited at the bottom of the table, in a respectful attitude, until they should receive permission to seat themselves; while three or four Highlanders, under the direction of old Donald, ran hither and thither to bring additional articles of food, or stood still to give attendance upon the guests. In the midst of these preparations, Allan suddenly started up, and snatching a lamp from the hand of an attendant, held it close to Dalgetty's face, while he perused his features with the most heedful and grave attention.

"By my honour," said Dalgetty, half displeased, as, mysteriously shaking his head, Allan gave up the scrutiny—"I trow that lad and I will ken each other when we meet again."

Meanwhile Allan strode to the bottom of the table, and having, by the aid of his lamp, subjected Anderson and his companion to the same investigation, stood a moment as if in deep reflection; then, touching his forehead, suddenly seized Anderson by the arm, and before he could offer any effectual resistance, half led and half dragged him to the vacant seat at the upper end, and having made a mute intimation that he should there place himself, he hurried the soldado with the same unceremonious precipitation to the bottom of the table. The Captain, exceedingly incensed at this freedom, endeavoured to shake Allan from him with violence; but, powerful as he was, he proved in the struggle inferior to the gigantic mountaineer, who threw him off with such violence, that after reeling a few paces, he fell at full length, and the vaulted hall rang with the clash of his armour. When he arose, his first action was to draw his sword and to fly at Allan, who, with folded arms, seemed to await his onset with the most scornful indifference. Lord Menteith and his attendants interposed to preserve peace, while the Highlanders, snatching weapons from the wall, seemed prompt to increase the broil.

"He is mad," whispered Lord Menteith, "he is perfectly mad; there is no purpose in quarrelling with him."

"If your lordship is assured that he is NON COMPOS MENTIS," said Captain Dalgetty, "the whilk his breeding and behaviour seem to testify, the matter must end here, seeing that a madman can neither give an affront, nor render honourable satisfaction. But, by my saul, if I had my provstnt and a bottle of Rhenish under my belt, I should hive stood otherways up to him. And yet it's a pity he should be sae weak in the intellectuals, being a strong proper man of body, fit to handle pike, morgenstern, or any other military implement whatsoever." [This was a sort of club or mace, used in the earlier part of the seventeenth century in the defence of breaches and walls. When the Germans insulted a Scotch regiment then besieged in Trailsund, saying they heard there was a ship come from Denmark to them laden with tobacco pipes, "One of our soldiers," says Colonel Robert Munro, "showing them over the work a morgenstern, made of a large stock banded with iron, like the shaft of a halberd, with a round globe at the end with cross iron pikes, saith, 'Here is one of the tobacco pipes, wherewith we will beat out your brains when you intend to storm us.'"]

Peace was thus restored, and the party seated themselves agreeably to their former arrangement, with which Allan, who had now returned to his settle by the fire, and seemed once more immersed in meditation, did not again interfere. Lord Menteith, addressing the principal domestic, hastened to start some theme of conversation which might obliterate all recollection of the fray that had taken place. "The laird is at the hill then, Donald, I understand, and some English strangers with him?"

"At the hill he is, an it like your honour, and two Saxon calaberos are with him sure eneugh; and that is Sir Miles Musgrave and Christopher Hall, both from the Cumraik, as I think they call their country."

"Hall and Musgrave?" said Lord Menteith, looking at his attendants, "the very men that we wished to see."

"Troth," said Donald, "an' I wish I had never seen them between the een, for they're come to herry us out o' house and ha'."

"Why, Donald," said Lord Menteith, "you did not use to be so churlish of your beef and ale; southland though they be, they'll scarce eat up all the cattle that's going on the castle mains."

"Teil care an they did," said Donald, "an that were the warst o't, for we have a wheen canny trewsmen here that wadna let us want if there was a horned beast atween this and Perth. But this is a warse job—it's nae less than a wager."

"A wager!" repeated Lord Menteith, with some surprise.

"Troth," continued Donald, to the full as eager to tell his news as Lord Menteith was curious to hear them, "as your lordship is a friend and kinsman o' the house, an' as ye'll hear eneugh o't in less than an hour, I may as weel tell ye mysell. Ye sall be pleased then to know, that when our Laird was up in England where he gangs oftener than his friends can wish, he was biding at the house o' this Sir Miles Musgrave, an' there was putten on the table six candlesticks, that they tell me were twice as muckle as the candlesticks in Dunblane kirk, and neither airn, brass, nor tin, but a' solid silver, nae less;—up wi' their English pride, has sae muckle, and kens sae little how to guide it! Sae they began to jeer the Laird, that he saw nae sic graith in his ain poor country; and the Laird, scorning to hae his country put down without a word for its credit, swore, like a gude Scotsman, that he had mair candlesticks, and better candlesticks, in his ain castle at hame, than were ever lighted in a hall in Cumberland, an Cumberland be the name o' the country."

"That was patriotically said," observed Lord Menteith.

"Fary true," said Donald; "but her honour had better hae hauden her tongue: for if ye say ony thing amang the Saxons that's a wee by ordinar, they clink ye down for a wager as fast as a Lowland smith would hammer shoon on a Highland shelly. An' so the Laird behaved either to gae back o' his word, or wager twa hunder merks; and sa he e'en tock the wager, rather than be shamed wi' the like o' them. And now he's like to get it to pay, and I'm thinking that's what makes him sae swear to come hame at e'en."

"Indeed," said Lord Menteith, "from my idea of your family plate, Donald, your master is certain to lose such a wager."

"Your honour may swear that; an' where he's to get the siller I kenna, although he borrowed out o' twenty purses. I advised him to pit the twa Saxon gentlemen and their servants cannily into the pit o' the tower till they gae up the bagain o' free gude-will, but the Laird winna hear reason."

Allan here started up, strode forward, and interrupted the conversation, saying to the domestic in a voice like thunder, "And how dared you to give my brother such dishonourable advice? or how dare you to say he will lose this or any other wager which it is his pleasure to lay?"

"Troth, Allan M'Aulay," answered the old man, "it's no for my father's son to gainsay what your father's son thinks fit to say, an' so the Laird may no doubt win his wager. A' that I ken against it is, that the teil a candlestick, or ony thing like it, is in the house, except the auld airn branches that has been here since Laird Kenneth's time, and the tin sconces that your father gard be made by auld Willie Winkie the tinkler, mair be token that deil an unce of siller plate is about the house at a', forby the lady's auld posset dish, that wants the cover and ane o' the lugs."

"Peace, old man!" said Allan, fiercely; "and do you, gentlemen, if your refection is finished, leave this apartment clear; I must prepare it for the reception of these southern guests."

"Come away," said the domestic, pulling Lord Menteith by the sleeve; "his hour is on him," said he, looking towards Allan, "and he will not be controlled."

They left the hall accordingly, Lord Menteith and the Captain being ushered one way by old Donald, and the two attendants conducted elsewhere by another Highlander. The former had scarcely reached a sort of withdrawing apartment ere they were joined by the lord of the mansion, Angus M'Aulay by name, and his English guests. Great joy was expressed by all parties, for Lord Menteith and the English gentlemen were well known to each other; and on Lord Menteith's introduction, Captain Dalgetty was well received by the Laird. But after the first burst of hospitable congratulation was over, Lord Menteith could observe that there was a shade of sadness on the brow of his Highland friend.

"You must have heard," said Sir Christopher Hall, "that our fine undertaking in Cumberland is all blown up. The militia would not march into Scotland, and your prick-ear'd Covenanters have been too hard for our friends in the southern shires. And so, understanding there is some stirring work here, Musgrave and I, rather than sit idle at home, are come to have a campaign among your kilts and plaids."

"I hope you have brought arms, men, and money with you," said Lord Menteith, smiling.

"Only some dozen or two of troopers, whom we left at the last Lowland village," said Musgrave, "and trouble enough we had to get them so far."

"As for money," said his companion, "We expect a small supply from our friend and host here."

The Laird now, colouring highly, took Menteith a little apart, and expressed to him his regret that he had fallen into a foolish blunder.

"I heard it from Donald," said Lord Menteith, scarce able to suppress a smile.

"Devil take that old man," said M'Aulay, "he would tell every thing, were it to cost one's life; but it's no jesting matter to you neither, my lord, for I reckon on your friendly and fraternal benevolence, as a near kinsman of our house, to help me out with the money due to these pock-puddings; or else, to be plain wi' ye, the deil a M'Aulay will there be at the muster, for curse me if I do not turn Covenanter rather than face these fellows without paying them; and, at the best, I shall be ill enough off, getting both the scaith and the scorn."

"You may suppose, cousin," said Lord Menteith, "I am not too well equipt just now; but you may be assured I shall endeavour to help you as well as I can, for the sake of old kindred, neighbourhood, and alliance."

"Thank ye—thank ye—thank ye," reiterated M'Aulay; "and as they are to spend the money in the King's service, what signifies whether you, they, or I pay it?—we are a' one man's bairns, I hope? But you must help me out too with some reasonable excuse, or else I shall be for taking to Andrew Ferrara; for I like not to be treated like a liar or a braggart at my own board-end, when, God knows, I only meant to support my honour, and that of my family and country."

Donald, as they were speaking, entered, with rather a blither face than he might have been expected to wear, considering the impending fate of his master's purse and credit. "Gentlemens, her dinner is ready, and HER CANDLES ARE LIGHTED TOO," said Donald, with a strong guttural emphasis on the last clause of his speech.

"What the devil can he mean?" said Musgrave, looking to his countryman.

Lord Menteith put the same question with his eyes to the Laird, which M'Aulay answered by shaking his head.

A short dispute about precedence somewhat delayed their leaving the apartment. Lord Menteith insisted upon yielding up that which belonged to his rank, on consideration of his being in his own country, and of his near connexion with the family in which they found themselves. The two English strangers, therefore, were first ushered into the hall, where an unexpected display awaited them. The large oaken table was spread with substantial joints of meat, and seats were placed in order for the guests. Behind every seat stood a gigantic Highlander, completely dressed and armed after the fashion of his country, holding in his right hand his drawn sword, with the point turned downwards, and in the left a blazing torch made of the bog-pine. This wood, found in the morasses, is so full of turpentine, that, when split and dried, it is frequently used in the Highlands instead of candles. The unexpected and somewhat startling apparition was seen by the red glare of the torches, which displayed the wild features, unusual dress, and glittering arms of those who bore them, while the smoke, eddying up to the roof of the hall, over-canopied them with a volume of vapour. Ere the strangers had recovered from their surprise, Allan stepped forward, and pointing with his sheathed broadsword to the torch-bearers, said, in a deep and stern tone of voice, "Behold, gentlemen cavaliers, the chandeliers of my brother's house, the ancient fashion of our ancient name; not one of these men knows any law but their Chiefs command—Would you dare to compare to THEM in value the richest ore that ever was dug out of the mine? How say you, cavaliers?—is your wager won or lost?"

"Lost; lost," said Musgrave, gaily—"my own silver candlesticks are all melted and riding on horseback by this time, and I wish the fellows that enlisted were half as trusty as these.—Here, sir," he added to the Chief, "is your money; it impairs Hall's finances and mine somewhat, but debts of honour must be settled."

"My father's curse upon my father's son," said Allan, interrupting him, "if he receive from you one penny! It is enough that you claim no right to exact from him what is his own."

Lord Menteith eagerly supported Allan's opinion, and the elder M'Aulay readily joined, declaring the whole to be a fool's business, and not worth speaking more about. The Englishmen, after some courteous opposition, were persuaded to regard the whole as a joke.

"And now, Allan," said the Laird, "please to remove your candles; for, since the Saxon gentlemen have seen them, they will eat their dinner as comfortably by the light of the old tin sconces, without scorfishing them with so much smoke."

Accordingly, at a sign from Allan, the living chandeliers, recovering their broadswords, and holding the point erect, marched out of the hall, and left the guests to enjoy their refreshment. [Such a bet as that mentioned in the text is said to have been taken by MacDonald of Keppoch, who extricated himself in the manner there narrated.]

CHAPTER V.

*Thareby so fearlesse and so fell he grew,
That his own syre and maister of his guise
Did often tremble at his horrid view;
And if for dread of hurt would him advise,
The angry beastes not rashly to despise,
Nor too much to provoke; for he would learne
The lion stoup to him in lowly wise,
(A lesson hard,) and make the libbard sterne
Leave roaring, when in rage he for revenge did earne.—SPENSER.*

Notwithstanding the proverbial epicurism of the English,—proverbial, that is to say, in Scotland at the period,—the English visitors made no figure whatever at the entertainment, compared with the portentous voracity of Captain Dalgetty, although that gallant soldier had already displayed much steadiness and pertinacity in his attack upon the lighter refreshment set before them at their entrance, by way of forlorn hope. He spoke to no one during the time of his meal; and it was not until the victuals were nearly withdrawn from the table, that he gratified the rest of the company, who had watched him with some surprise, with an account of the reasons why he ate so very fast and so very long.

"The former quality," he said, "he had acquired, while he filled a place at the bursar's table at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen; when," said he; "if you did not move your jaws as fast as a pair of castanets, you were very unlikely to get any thing to put between them. And as for the quantity of my food, be it known to this honourable company," continued the Captain, "that it's the duty of every commander of a fortress, on all occasions which offer, to secure as much munition and vivres as their magazines can possibly hold, not knowing when they may have to sustain a siege or a blockade. Upon which principle, gentlemen," said he, "when a cavalier finds that provant is good and abundant, he will, in my estimation, do wisely to victual himself for at least three days, as there is no knowing when he may come by another meal."

The Laird expressed his acquiescence in the prudence of this principle, and recommended to the veteran to add a tass of brandy and a flagon of claret to the substantial provisions he had already laid in, to which proposal the Captain readily agreed.

When dinner was removed, and the servants had withdrawn, excepting the Laird's page, or henchman, who remained in the apartment to call for or bring whatever was wanted, or, in a word, to answer the purposes of a modern bell-wire, the conversation began to turn upon politics, and the state of the country; and Lord Menteith enquired anxiously and particularly what clans were expected to join the proposed muster of the King's friends.

"That depends much, my lord, on the person who lifts the banner," said the Laird; "for you know we Highlanders, when a few clans are assembled, are not easily commanded by one of our own Chiefs, or, to say the truth, by any other body. We have heard a rumour, indeed, that Colkitto—that is, young Colkitto, or Alaster M'Donald, is come over the Kyle from Ireland, with a body of the Earl of Antrim's people, and that they had got as far as Ardnamurchan. They might have been here before now, but, I suppose, they loitered to plunder the country as they came along."

"Will Colkitto not serve you for a leader, then?" said Lord Menteith.

"Colkitto?" said Allan M'Aulay, scornfully; "who talks of Colkitto?—There lives but one man whom we will follow, and that is Montrose."

"But Montrose, sir," said Sir Christopher Hall, "has not been heard of since our ineffectual attempt to rise in the north of England. It is thought he has returned to the King at Oxford for farther instructions."

"Returned!" said Allan, with a scornful laugh; "I could tell ye, but it is not worth my while; ye will know soon enough."

"By my honour, Allan," said Lord Menteith, "you will weary out your friends with this intolerable, froward, and sullen humour—But I know the reason," added he, laughing; "you have not seen Annot Lyle to-day."

"Whom did you say I had not seen?" said Allan, sternly.

"Annot Lyle, the fairy queen of song and minstrelsy," said Lord Menteith.

"Would to God I were never to see her again," said Allan, sighing, "On condition the same weird were laid on you!"

"And why on me?" said Lord Menteith, carelessly.

"Because," said Allan, "it is written on your forehead, that you are to be the ruin of each other." So saying, he rose up and left the room.

"Has he been long in this way?" asked Lord Menteith, addressing his brother.

"About three days," answered Angus; "the fit is wellnigh over, he will be better to-morrow.—But come, gentlemen, don't let the tappit-hen scraugh to be emptied. The King's health, King Charles's health! and may the covenanting dog that refuses it, go to Heaven by the road of the Grassmarket!"

The health was quickly pledged, and as fast succeeded by another, and another, and another, all of a party cast, and enforced in an earnest manner. Captain Dalgetty, however, thought it necessary to enter a protest.

"Gentlemen cavaliers," he said, "I drink these healths, PRIMO, both out of respect to this honourable and hospitable roof-tree, and, SECUNDO, because I hold it not good to be preceese in such matters, INTER POCULA; but I protest, agreeable to the warrandice granted by this honourable lord, that it shall be free to me, notwithstanding my present complaisance, to take service with the Covenanters to-morrow, providing I shall be so minded."

M'Aulay and his English guests stared at this declaration, which would have certainly bred new disturbance, if Lord Menteith had not taken up the affair, and explained the circumstances and conditions. "I trust," he concluded, "we shall be able to secure Captain Dalgetty's assistance to our own party."

"And if not," said the Laird, "I protest, as the Captain says, that nothing that has passed this evening, not even his having eaten my bread and salt, and pledged me in brandy, Bourdeaux, or usquebaugh, shall prejudice my cleaving him to the neck-bone."

"You shall be heartily welcome," said the Captain, "providing my sword cannot keep my head, which it has done in worse dangers than your fend is likely to make for me."

Here Lord Menteith again interposed, and the concord of the company being with no small difficulty restored, was cemented by some deep carouses. Lord Menteith, however, contrived to break up the party earlier than was the usage of the Castle, under pretence of fatigue and indisposition. This was somewhat to the disappointment of the valiant Captain, who, among other habits acquired in the Low countries, had acquired both a disposition to drink, and a capacity to bear, an exorbitant quantity of strong liquors.

Their landlord ushered them in person to a sort of sleeping gallery, in which there was a four-post bed, with tartan curtains, and a number of cribs, or long hamper, placed along the wall, three of which, well stuffed with blooming heather, were prepared for the reception of guests.

"I need not tell your lordship," said M'Aulay to Lord Menteith, a little apart, "our Highland mode of quartering. Only that, not liking you should sleep in the room alone with this German land-louper, I have caused your servants' beds to be made here in the gallery. By G—d, my lord, these are times when men go to bed with a throat hale and sound as ever swallowed brandy, and before next morning it may be gaping like an oyster-shell."

Lord Menteith thanked him sincerely, saying, "It was just the arrangement he would have requested; for, although he had not the least apprehension of violence from Captain Dalgetty, yet Anderson was a better kind of person, a sort of gentleman, whom he always liked to have near his person."

"I have not seen this Anderson," said M'Aulay; "did you hire him in England?"

"I did so," said Lord Menteith; "you will see the man to-morrow; in the meantime I wish you good-night."

His host left the apartment after the evening salutation, and was about to pay the same compliment to Captain Dalgetty, but observing him deeply engaged in the discussion of a huge pitcher filled with brandy posset, he thought it a pity to disturb him in so laudable an employment, and took his leave without farther ceremony.

Lord Menteith's two attendants entered the apartment almost immediately after his departure. The good Captain, who was now somewhat encumbered with his good cheer, began to find the undoing of the clasps of his armour a task somewhat difficult, and addressed Anderson in these words, interrupted by a slight hiccup,—"*Anderson, my good friend, you may read in Scripture, that he that putteth off his armour should not boast himself like he that putteth it on—I believe that is not the right word of command; but the plain truth of it is, I am like to sleep in my corslet, like many an honest fellow that never waked again, unless you unloose this buckle.*"

"Undo his armour, Sibbald," said Anderson to the other servant.

"By St. Andrew!" exclaimed the Captain, turning round in great astonishment, "here's a common fellow—a stipendiary with four pounds a-year and a livery cloak, thinks himself too good to serve Ritt-master Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, who has studied humanity at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, and served half the princes of Europe!"

"Captain Dalgetty," said Lord Menteith, whose lot it was to stand peacemaker throughout the evening, "please to understand that Anderson waits upon no one but myself; but I will help Sibbald to undo your corslet with much pleasure."

"Too much trouble for you, my lord," said Dalgetty; "and yet it would do you no harm to practise how a handsome harness is put on and put off. I can step in and out of mine like a glove; only to-night, although not EBRIUS, I am, in the classic phrase, VINO CIBOQUE GRAVATUS."

By this time he was unshelled, and stood before the fire musing with a face of drunken wisdom on the events of the evening. What seemed chiefly to interest him, was the character of Allan M'Aulay. "To come over the Englishmen so cleverly with his Highland torch-bearers—eight bare-breeched Rories for six silver candlesticks!—it was a master-piece—a TOUR DE PASSE—it was perfect legerdemain—and to be a madman after all!—I doubt greatly, my lord" (shaking his head), "that I must allow him, notwithstanding his relationship to your lordship, the privileges of a rational person, and either baton him sufficiently to expiate the violence offered to my person, or else bring it to a matter of mortal arbitrement, as becometh an insulted cavalier."

"If you care to hear a long story," said Lord Menteith, "at this time of night, I can tell you how the circumstances of Allan's birth account so well for his singular character, as to put such satisfaction entirely out of the question."

"A long story, my lord," said Captain Dalgetty, "is, next to a good evening draught and a warm nightcap, the best shoeinghorn for drawing on a sound sleep. And since your lordship is pleased to take the trouble to tell it, I shall rest your patient and obliged auditor."

"Anderson," said Lord Menteith, "and you, Sibbald, are dying to hear, I suppose, of this strange man too! and I believe I must indulge your curiosity, that you may know how to behave to him in time of need. You had better step to the fire then."

Having thus assembled an audience about him, Lord Menteith sat down upon the edge of the four-post bed, while Captain Dalgetty, wiping the relics of the posset from his beard and mustachoes, and repeating the first verse of the Lutheran psalm, ALLE GUTER GEISTER LOBEN DEN HERRN, etc. rolled himself into one of the places of repose, and thrusting his shock pate from between the blankets, listened to Lord Menteith's relation in a most luxurious state, between sleeping and waking.

"The father," said Lord Menteith, "of the two brothers, Angus and Allan M'Aulay, was a gentleman of consideration and family, being the chief of a Highland clan, of good account, though not numerous; his lady, the mother of these young men, was a gentlewoman of good family, if I may be permitted to say so of one nearly connected with my own. Her brother, an honourable and spirited young man, obtained from James the Sixth a grant of forestry, and other privileges, over a royal chase adjacent to this castle; and, in exercising and defending these rights, he was so unfortunate as to involve himself in a quarrel with some of our Highland freebooters or caterans, of whom I think, Captain Dalgetty, you must have heard."

"And that I have," said the Captain, exerting himself to answer the appeal. "Before I left the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, Dugald Garr was playing the devil in the Garioch, and the Farquharsons on Dee-side, and the Clan Chattan on the Gordons' lands, and the Grants and Camerons in Moray-land. And since that, I have seen the Cravats and Pandours in Pannonia and Transylvania, and the Cossacks from the Polish frontier, and robbers, banditti, and barbarians of all countries besides, so that I have a distinct idea of your broken Highlandmen."

"The clan," said Lord Menteith, "with whom the maternal uncle of the M'Aulays had been placed in feud, was a small sept of banditti, called, from their houseless state, and their incessantly wandering among the mountains and glens, the Children of the Mist. They are a fierce and hardy people, with all the irritability, and wild and vengeful passions, proper to men who have never known the restraint of civilized society. A party of them lay in wait for the unfortunate Warden of the Forest, surprised him while hunting alone and unattended, and slew him with every circumstance of inventive cruelty. They cut off his head, and resolved, in a bravado, to exhibit it at the castle of his brother-in-law. The laird was absent, and the lady reluctantly received as guests, men against whom, perhaps, she was afraid to shut her gates. Refreshments were placed before the Children of the Mist, who took an opportunity to take the head of their victim from the plaid in which it was wrapt, placed it on the table, put a piece of bread between the lifeless jaws, bidding them do their office now, since many a good meal they had eaten at that table. The lady, who had been absent for some household purpose, entered at this moment, and, upon beholding her brother's head, fled like an arrow out of the house into the woods, uttering shriek upon shriek. The ruffians, satisfied with this savage triumph, withdrew. The terrified menials, after overcoming the alarm to which they had been subjected, sought their unfortunate mistress in every direction, but she was nowhere to be found. The miserable husband returned next day, and, with the assistance of his people, undertook a more anxious and distant search, but to equally little purpose. It was believed universally, that, in the ecstasy of her terror, she must either have thrown herself over one of the numerous precipices which overhang the river, or into a deep lake about a mile from the castle. Her loss was the more lamented, as she was six months advanced in her pregnancy; Angus M'Aulay, her eldest son, having been born about eighteen months before.—But I tire you, Captain Dalgetty, and you seem inclined to sleep."

"By no means," answered the soldier; "I am no whit somnolent; I always hear best with my eyes shut. It is a fashion I learned when I stood sentinel."

"And I daresay," said Lord Menteith, aside to Anderson, "the weight of the halberd of the sergeant of the rounds often made him open them."

Being apparently, however, in the humour of story-telling, the young nobleman went on, addressing himself chiefly to his servants, without minding the slumbering veteran.

"Every baron in the country," said he, "now swore revenge for this dreadful crime. They took arms with the relations and brother-in-law of the murdered person, and the Children of the Mist were hunted down, I believe, with as little mercy as they had themselves manifested. Seventeen heads, the bloody trophies of their vengeance, were distributed among the allies, and fed the crows upon the gates of their castles. The survivors sought out more distant wildernesses, to which they retreated."

"To your right hand, counter-march and retreat to your former ground," said Captain Dalgetty; the military phrase having produced the correspondent word of command; and then starting up, professed he had been profoundly attentive to every word that had been spoken.

"It is the custom in summer," said Lord Menteith, without attending to his apology, "to send the cows to the upland pastures to have the benefit of the grass; and the maids of the village, and of the family, go there to milk them in the morning and evening. While thus employed, the females of this family, to their great terror, perceived that their motions were watched at a distance by a pale, thin, meagre figure, bearing a strong resemblance to their deceased mistress, and passing, of course, for her apparition. When some of the boldest resolved to approach this faded form, it fled from them into the woods with a wild shriek. The husband, informed of this circumstance, came up to the glen with some attendants, and took his measures so well as to intercept the retreat of the unhappy fugitive, and to secure the person of his unfortunate lady, though her intellect proved to be totally deranged. How she supported herself during her wandering in the woods could not be known—some supposed she lived upon roots and wild-berries, with which the woods at that season abounded; but the greater part of the vulgar were satisfied that she must have subsisted upon the milk of the wild does, or been nourished by the fairies, or supported in some manner equally marvellous. Her re-appearance was more easily accounted for. She had seen from the thicket the milking of the cows, to superintend which had been her favourite domestic employment, and the habit had prevailed even in her deranged state of mind."

"In due season the unfortunate lady was delivered of a boy, who not only showed no appearance of having suffered from his mother's calamities, but appeared to be an infant of uncommon health and strength. The unhappy mother, after her confinement, recovered her reason—at least in a great measure, but never her health and spirits. Allan was her only joy. Her attention to him was unremitting; and unquestionably she must have impressed upon his early mind many of those superstitious ideas to which his moody and enthusiastic temper gave so ready a reception. She died when he was about ten years old. Her last words were spoken to him in private; but there is little doubt that they conveyed an injunction of vengeance upon the Children of the Mist, with which he has since amply complied."

"From this moment, the habits of Allan M'Aulay were totally changed. He had hitherto been his mother's constant companion, listening to her dreams, and repeating his own, and feeding his imagination, which, probably from the circumstances preceding his birth, was constitutionally deranged, with all the wild and terrible superstitions so common to the mountaineers, to which his unfortunate mother had become much addicted since her brother's death. By living in this manner, the boy had gotten a timid, wild, startled look, loved to seek out solitary places in the woods, and was never so much terrified, as by the approach of

children of the same age. I remember, although some years younger, being brought up here by my father upon a visit, nor can I forget the astonishment with which I saw this infant-hermit shun every attempt I made to engage him in the sports natural to our age. I can remember his father bewailing his disposition to mine, and alleging, at the same time, that it was impossible for him to take from his wife the company of the boy, as he seemed to be the only consolation that remained to her in this world, and as the amusement which Allan's society afforded her seemed to prevent the recurrence, at least in its full force, of that fearful malady by which she had been visited. But, after the death of his mother, the habits and manners of the boy seemed at once to change. It is true he remained as thoughtful and serious as before; and long fits of silence and abstraction showed plainly that his disposition, in this respect, was in no degree altered. But at other times, he sought out the rendezvous of the youth of the clan, which he had hitherto seemed anxious to avoid. He took share in all their exercises; and, from his very extraordinary personal strength, soon excelled his brother and other youths, whose age considerably exceeded his own. They who had hitherto held him in contempt, now feared, if they did not love him; and, instead of Allan's being esteemed a dreaming, womanish, and feeble-minded boy, those who encountered him in sports or military exercise, now complained that, when heated by the strife, he was too apt to turn game into earnest, and to forget that he was only engaged in a friendly trial of strength.—But I speak to regardless ears," said Lord Menteith, interrupting himself, for the Captain's nose now gave the most indisputable signs that he was fast locked in the arms of oblivion.

"If you mean the ears of that snorting swine, my lord," said Anderson, "they are, indeed, shut to anything that you can say; nevertheless, this place being unfit for more private conference, I hope you will have the goodness to proceed, for Sibbald's benefit and for mine. The history of this poor young fellow has a deep and wild interest in it."

"You must know, then," proceeded Lord Menteith, "that Allan continued to increase in strength and activity, till his fifteenth year, about which time he assumed a total independence of character, and impatience of control, which much alarmed his surviving parent. He was absent in the woods for whole days and nights, under pretence of hunting, though he did not always bring home game. His father was the more alarmed, because several of the Children of the Mist, encouraged by the increasing troubles of the state, had ventured back to their old haunts, nor did he think it altogether safe to renew any attack upon them. The risk of Allan, in his wanderings, sustaining injury from these vindictive freebooters, was a perpetual source of apprehension.

"I was myself upon a visit to the castle when this matter was brought to a crisis. Allan had been absent since day-break in the woods, where I had sought for him in vain; it was a dark stormy night, and he did not return. His father expressed the utmost anxiety, and spoke of detaching a party at the dawn of morning in quest of him; when, as we were sitting at the supper-table, the door suddenly opened, and Allan entered the room with a proud, firm, and confident air. His intractability of temper, as well as the unsettled state of his mind, had such an influence over his father, that he suppressed all other tokens of displeasure, excepting the observation that I had killed a fat buck, and had returned before sunset, while he supposed Allan, who had been on the hill till midnight, had returned with empty hands. 'Are you sure of that?' said Allan, fiercely; 'here is something will tell you another tale.'

"We now observed his hands were bloody, and that there were spots of blood on his face, and waited the issue with impatience; when suddenly, undoing the corner of his plaid, he rolled down on the table a human head, bloody and new severed, saying at the same time, 'Lie thou where the head of a better man lay before ye.' From the haggard features, and matted red hair and beard, partly grizzled with age, his father and others present recognised the head of Hector of the Mist, a well-known leader among the outlaws, redoubted for strength and ferocity, who had been active in the murder of the unfortunate Forester, uncle to Allan, and had escaped by a desperate defence and extraordinary agility, when so many of his companions were destroyed. We were all, it may be believed, struck with surprise, but Allan refused to gratify our curiosity; and we only conjectured that he must have overcome the outlaw after a desperate struggle, because we discovered that he had sustained several wounds from the contest. All measures were now taken to ensure him against the vengeance of the freebooters; but neither his wounds, nor the positive command of his father, nor even the locking of the gates of the castle and the doors of his apartment, were precautions adequate to prevent Allan from seeking out the very persons to whom he was peculiarly obnoxious. He made his escape by night from the window of the apartment, and laughing at his father's vain care, produced on one occasion the head of one, and upon another those of two, of the Children of the Mist. At length these men, fierce as they were, became appalled by the inveterate animosity and audacity with which Allan sought out their recesses. As he never hesitated to encounter any odds, they concluded that he must bear a charmed life, or fight under the guardianship of some supernatural influence. Neither gun, dirk, nor dourlach [DOURLACH—quiver; literally, satchel—of arrows.], they said, availed aught against him. They imputed this to the remarkable circumstances under which he was born; and at length five or six of the stoutest caterans of the Highlands would have fled at Allan's halloo, or the blast of his horn.

"In the meanwhile, however, the Children of the Mist carried on their old trade, and did the M'Aulays, as well as their kinsmen and allies, as much mischief as they could. This provoked another expedition against the tribe, in which I had my share; we surprised them effectually, by besetting at once the upper and under passes of the country, and made such clean work as is usual on these occasions, burning and slaying right before us. In this terrible species of war, even the females and the helpless do not always escape. One little maiden alone, who smiled upon Allan's drawn dirk, escaped his vengeance upon my earnest entreaty. She was brought to the castle, and here bred up under the name of Annot Lyle, the most beautiful little fairy certainly that ever danced upon a heath by moonlight. It was long ere Allan could endure the presence of the child, until it occurred to his imagination, from her features perhaps, that she did not belong to the hated blood of his enemies, but had become their captive in some of their incursions; a circumstance not in itself impossible, but in which he believes as firmly as in holy writ. He is particularly delighted by her skill in music, which is so exquisite, that she far exceeds the best performers in this country in playing on the clairsach, or harp. It was discovered that this produced upon the disturbed spirits of Allan, in his gloomiest moods, beneficial effects, similar to those experienced by the Jewish monarch of old; and so engaging is the temper of Annot Lyle, so fascinating the innocence and gaiety of her disposition, that she is considered and treated in the castle rather as the sister of the proprietor, than as a dependent upon his charity. Indeed, it is impossible for any one to see her without being deeply interested by the ingenuity, liveliness, and sweetness of her disposition."

"Take care, my lord," said Anderson, smiling; "there is danger in such violent commendations. Allan M'Aulay, as your lordship describes him, would prove no very safe rival."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Lord Menteith, laughing, yet blushing at the same time; "Allan is not accessible to the passion of love; and for myself," said he, more gravely; "Annot's unknown birth is a sufficient reason against serious designs, and her unprotected state precludes every other."

"It is spoken like yourself, my lord," said Anderson.—"But I trust you will proceed with your interesting story."

"It is wellnigh finished," said Lord Menteith; "I have only to add, that from the great strength and courage of Allan M'Aulay, from his energetic and uncontrollable disposition, and from an opinion generally entertained and encouraged by himself that he holds communion with supernatural beings, and can predict future events, the clan pay a much greater degree of deference to him than even to his brother, who is a bold-hearted rattling Highlander, but with nothing which can possibly rival the extraordinary character of his younger brother."

"Such a character," said Anderson, "cannot but have the deepest effect on the minds of a Highland host. We must secure Allan, my lord, at all events. What between his bravery and his second sight—"

"Hush!" said Lord Menteith, "that owl is awaking."

"Do you talk of the second sight, or DEUTERO-SCOPIA?" said the soldier; "I remember memorable Major Munro telling me how Murdoch Mackenzie, born in Assint, a private gentleman in a company, and a pretty soldier, foretold the death of Donald Tough, a Lochaber man, and certain other persons, as well as the hurt of the major himself at a sudden onfall at the siege of Trailsund."

"I have often heard of this faculty," observed Anderson, "but I have always thought those pretending to it were either enthusiasts or impostors."

"I should be loath," said Lord Menteith, "to apply either character to my kinsman, Allan M'Aulay. He has shown on many occasions too much acuteness and sense, of which you this night had an instance, for the character of an enthusiast; and his high sense of honour, and manliness of disposition, free him from the charge of imposture."

"Your lordship, then," said Anderson, "is a believer in his supernatural attributes?"

"By no means," said the young nobleman; "I think that he persuades himself that the predictions which are, in reality, the result of judgment and reflection, are supernatural impressions on his mind, just as fanatics conceive the workings of their own imagination to be divine inspiration—at least, if this will not serve you, Anderson, I have no better explanation to give; and it is time we were all asleep after the toilsome journey of the day."

CHAPTER VI.

Coming events cast their shadows before.—CAMPBELL.

At an early hour in the morning the guests of the castle sprung from their repose; and, after a moment's private conversation with his attendants, Lord Menteith addressed the soldier, who was seated in a corner burnishing his corslet with rot-stone and chamois-leather, while he hummed the old song in honour of the victorious Gustavus Adolphus:—

When cannons are roaring, and bullets are flying,

The lad that would have honour, boys, must never fear dying.

"Captain Dalgetty," said Lord Menteith, "the time is come that we must part, or become comrades in service."

"Not before breakfast, I hope?" said Captain Dalgetty.

"I should have thought," replied his lordship, "that your garrison was victualled for three days at least."

"I have still some stowage left for beef and bannocks," said the Captain; "and I never miss a favourable opportunity of renewing my supplies."

"But," said Lord Menteith, "no judicious commander allows either flags of truce or neutrals to remain in his camp longer than is prudent; and therefore we must know your mind exactly, according to which you shall either have a safe-conduct to depart in peace, or be welcome to remain with us."

"Truly," said the Captain, "that being the case, I will not attempt to protract the capitulation by a counterfeited parley, (a thing excellently practised by Sir James Ramsay at the siege of Hannau, in the year of God 1636,) but I will frankly own, that if I like your pay as well as your provant and your company, I care not how soon I take the oath to your colours."

"Our pay," said Lord Menteith, "must at present be small, since it is paid out of the common stock raised by the few amongst us who can command some funds—As major and adjutant, I dare not promise Captain Dalgetty more than half a dollar a-day."

"The devil take all halves and quarters!" said the Captain; "were it in my option, I could no more consent to the halving of that dollar, than the woman in the Judgment of Solomon to the dismemberment of the child of her bowels."

"The parallel will scarce hold, Captain Dalgetty, for I think you would rather consent to the dividing of the dollar, than give it up entire to your competitor. However, in the way of arrears, I may promise you the other half-dollar at the end of the campaign."

"Ah! these arrearages!" said Captain Dalgetty, "that are always promised, and always go for nothing! Spain, Austria, and Sweden, all sing one song. Oh! long life to the Hoganmogans! if they were no officers of soldiers, they were good paymasters.—And yet, my lord, if I could but be made certiorate that my natural hereditament of Drumthwacket had fallen into possession of any of these loons of Covenanters, who could be, in the event of our success, conveniently made a traitor of, I have so much value for that fertile and pleasant spot, that I would e'en take on with you for the campaign."

"I can resolve Captain Dalgetty's question," said Sibbald, Lord Menteith's second attendant; "for if his estate of Drumthwacket be, as I conceive, the long waste moor so called, that lies five miles south of Aberdeen, I can tell him it was lately purchased by Elias Strachan, as rank a rebel as ever swore the Covenant."

"The crop-eared hound!" said Captain Dalgetty, in a rage; "What the devil gave him the assurance to purchase the inheritance of a family of four hundred years standing?—CYNTHIUS AUREM VELLET, as we used to say at Mareschal-College; that is to say, I will pull him out of my father's house by the ears. And so, my Lord Menteith, I am yours, hand and sword, body and soul, till death do us part, or to the end of the next campaign, whichever event shall first come to pass."

"And I," said the young nobleman, "rivet the bargain with a month's pay in advance."

"That is more than necessary," said Dalgetty, pocketing the money however. "But now I must go down, look after my war-saddle and abuilziements, and see that Gustavus has his morning, and tell him we have taken new service."

"There goes your precious recruit," said Lord Menteith to Anderson, as the Captain left the room; "I fear we shall have little credit of him."

"He is a man of the times, however," said Anderson; "and without such we should hardly be able to carry on our enterprise."

"Let us go down," answered Lord Menteith, "and see how our muster is likely to thrive, for I hear a good deal of bustle in the castle."

When they entered the hall, the domestics keeping modestly in the background, morning greetings passed between Lord Menteith, Angus M'Aulay, and his English guests, while Allan, occupying the same settle which he had filled the preceding evening, paid no attention whatever to any one. Old Donald hastily rushed into the apartment. "A message from Vich Alister More; [The patronymic of MacDonell of Glengarry.] he is coming up in the evening."

"With how many attendants?" said M'Aulay.

"Some five-and-twenty or thirty," said Donald, "his ordinary retinue."

"Shake down plenty of straw in the great barn," said the Laird.

Another servant here stumbled hastily in, announcing the expected approach of Sir Hector M'Lean, "who is arriving with a large following."

"Put them in the malt-kiln," said M'Aulay; "and keep the breadth of the middenstead between them and the M'Donalds; they are but unfriends to each other."

Donald now re-entered, his visage considerably lengthened—"The tell's i' the folk," he said; "the hail Hielands are a-steer, I think. Evan Dhu, of Lochiel, will be here in an hour, with Lord kens how many gillies."

"Into the great barn with them beside the M'Donalds," said the Laird.

More and more chiefs were announced, the least of whom would have accounted it derogatory to his dignity to stir without a retinue of six or seven persons. To every new annunciation, Angus M'Aulay answered by naming some place of accommodation,—the stables, the loft, the cow-house, the sheds, every domestic office, were destined for the night to some hospitable purpose or other. At length the arrival of M'Dougal of Lorn, after all his means of accommodation were exhausted, reduced him to some perplexity. "What the devil is to be done, Donald?" said he; "the great barn would hold fifty more, if they would lie heads and thraws; but there would be drawn dirks among them which should lie upper-most, and so we should have bloody puddings before morning!"

"What needs all this?" said Allan, starting up, and coming forward with the stern abruptness of his usual manner; "are the Gael to-day of softer flesh or whiter blood than their fathers were? Knock the head out of a cask of usquebae; let that be their night-gear—their plaids their bed-clothes—the blue sky their canopy, and the heather their couch.—Come a thousand more, and they would not quarrel on the broad heath for want of room!"

"Allan is right," said his brother; "it is very odd how Allan, who, between ourselves," said he to Musgrave, "is a little wowf, [WOWF, i.e. crazed.] seems at times to have more sense than us all put together. Observe him now."

"Yes," continued Allan, fixing his eyes with a ghastly stare upon the opposite side of the hall, "they may well begin as they are to end; many a man will sleep this night upon the heath, that when the Martinmas wind shalt blow shall lie there stark enough, and reck little of cold or lack of covering."

"Do not forespeak us, brother," said Angus; "that is not lucky."

"And what luck is it then that you expect?" said Allan; and straining his eyes until they almost started from their sockets, he fell with a convulsive shudder into the arms of Donald and his brother, who, knowing the nature of his fits, had come near to prevent his fall. They seated him upon a bench, and supported him until he came to himself, and was about to speak.

"For God's sake, Allan," said his brother, who knew the impression his mystical words were likely to make on many of the guests, "say nothing to discourage us."

"Am I he who discourages you?" said Allan; "let every man face his world as I shall face mine. That which must come, will come; and we shall stride gallantly over many a field of victory, ere we reach yon fatal slaughter-place, or tread yon sable scaffolds."

"What slaughter-place? what scaffolds?" exclaimed several voices; for Allan's renown as a seer was generally established in the Highlands.

"You will know that but too soon," answered Allan. "Speak to me no more, I am weary of your questions." He then pressed his hand against his brow, rested his elbow upon his knee, and sunk into a deep reverie.

"Send for Annot Lyle, and the harp," said Angus, in a whisper, to his servant; "and let those gentlemen follow me who do not fear a Highland breakfast."

All accompanied their hospitable landlord excepting only Lord Menteith, who lingered in one of the deep embrasures formed by the windows of the hall. Annot Lyle shortly after glided into the room, not ill described by Lord Menteith as being the lightest and most fairy figure that ever trode the turf by moonlight. Her stature, considerably less than the ordinary size of women, gave her the appearance of extreme youth, insomuch, that although she was near eighteen, she might have passed for four years younger. Her figure, hands, and feet, were formed upon a model of exquisite symmetry with the size and lightness of her person, so that Titania herself could scarce have found a more fitting representative. Her hair was a dark shade of the colour usually termed flaxen, whose clustering ringlets suited admirably with her fair complexion, and with the playful, yet simple, expression of her features. When we add to these charms, that Annot, in her orphan state, seemed the gayest and happiest of maidens, the reader must allow us to claim for her the interest of almost all who looked on her. In fact, it was impossible to find a more universal favourite, and she often came among the rude inhabitants of the castle, as Allan himself, in a poetical mood, expressed it, "like a sunbeam on a sullen sea," communicating to all others the cheerfulness that filled her own mind.

Annot, such as we have described her, smiled and blushed, when, on entering the apartment, Lord Menteith came from his place of retirement, and kindly wished her good-morning.

"And good-morning to you, my lord," returned she, extending her hand to her friend; "we have seldom seen you of late at the castle, and now I fear it is with no peaceful purpose."

"At least, let me not interrupt your harmony, Annot," said Lord Menteith, "though my arrival may breed discord elsewhere. My cousin Allan needs the assistance of your voice and music."

"My preserver," said Annot Lyle, "has a right to my poor exertions; and you, too, my lord,—you, too, are my preserver, and were the most active to save a life that is worthless enough, unless it can benefit my protectors."

So saying, she sate down at a little distance upon the bench on which Allan M'Aulay was placed, and tuning her clairsach, a small harp, about thirty inches in height, she accompanied it with her voice. The air was an ancient Gaelic melody, and the words, which were supposed to be very old, were in the same language; but we subjoin a translation of them, by Secundus Macpherson, Esq. of Glenforghen, which, although submitted to the fetters of English rhythm, we trust will be found nearly as genuine as the version of Ossian by his celebrated namesake.

*"Birds of omen dark and foul,
Night-crow, raven, bat, and owl,
Leave the sick man to his dream—
All night long he heard your scream—
Haste to cave and ruin'd tower,
Ivy, tod, or dinged bower,
There to wink and mope, for, hark!
In the mid air sings the lark.*

*"Hie to moorish gills and rocks,
Prowling wolf and wily fox,—
Hie you fast, nor turn your view,
Though the lamb bleats to the ewe.
Couch your trains, and speed your flight,
Safety parts with parting night;
And on distant echo borne,
Comes the hunter's early horn.*

*"The moon's wan crescent scarcely gleams,
Ghost-like she fades in morning beams;
Hie hence each peevish imp and fay,
That scare the pilgrim on his way:—
Quench, kelpy! quench, in bog and fen,
Thy torch that cheats benighted men;
Thy dance is o'er, thy reign is done,
For Benyieglo hath seen the sun.*

*"Wild thoughts, that, sinful, dark, and deep,
O'erpower the passive mind in sleep,
Pass from the slumberer's soul away,
Like night-mists from the brow of day:
Foul hag, whose blasted visage grim
Smothers the pulse, unnerves the limb,
Spur thy dark palfrey, and begone!
Thou dardest not face the godlike sun."*

As the strain proceeded, Allan M'Aulay gradually gave signs of recovering his presence of mind, and attention to the objects around him. The deep-knit furrows of his brow relaxed and smoothed themselves; and the rest of his features, which had seemed contorted with internal agony, relapsed into a more natural state. When he raised his head and sat upright, his countenance, though still deeply melancholy, was divested of its wildness and ferocity; and in its composed state, although by no means handsome, the expression of his features was striking, manly, and even noble. His thick, brown eyebrows, which had hitherto been drawn close together, were now slightly separated, as in the natural state; and his grey eyes, which had rolled and flashed from under them with an unnatural and portentous gleam, now recovered a steady and determined expression.

"Thank God!" he said, after sitting silent for about a minute, until the very last sounds of the harp had ceased to vibrate, "my soul is no longer darkened—the mist hath passed from my spirit."

"You owe thanks, cousin Allan," said Lord Menteith, coming forward, "to Annot Lyle, as well as to heaven, for this happy change in your melancholy mood."

"My noble cousin Menteith," said Allan, rising and greeting him very respectfully, as well as kindly, "has known my unhappy circumstances so long, that his goodness will require no excuse for my being thus late in bidding him welcome to the castle."

"We are too old acquaintances, Allan," said Lord Menteith, "and too good friends, to stand on the ceremonial of outward greeting; but half the Highlands will be here to-day, and you know, with our mountain Chiefs, ceremony must not be neglected. What will you give little Annot for making you fit company to meet Evan Dhu, and I know not how many bonnets and feathers?"

"What will he give me?" said Annot, smiling; "nothing less, I hope, than the best ribbon at the Fair of Doune."

"The Fair of Doune, Annot?" said Allan sadly; "there will be bloody work before that day, and I may never see it; but you have well reminded me of what I have long intended to do."

Having said this, he left the room.

"Should he talk long in this manner," said Lord Menteith, "you must keep your harp in tune, my dear Annot."

"I hope not," said Annot, anxiously; "this fit has been a long one, and probably will not soon return. It is fearful to see a mind, naturally generous and affectionate, afflicted by this constitutional malady."

As she spoke in a low and confidential tone, Lord Menteith naturally drew close, and stooped forward, that he might the better catch the sense of what she said. When Allan suddenly entered the apartment, they as naturally drew back from each other with a manner expressive of consciousness, as if surprised in a conversation which they wished to keep secret from him. This did not escape Allan's observation; he stopt short at the door of the apartment—his brows were contracted—his eyes rolled; but it was only the paroxysm of a moment. He passed his broad sinewy hand across his brow, as if to obliterate these signs of emotion, and advanced towards Annot, holding in his hand a very small box made of oakwood, curiously inlaid. "I take you to witness," he said, "cousin Menteith, that I give this box and its contents to Annot Lyle. It contains a few ornaments that belonged to my poor mother—of trifling value, you may guess, for the wife of a Highland laird has seldom a rich jewel-casket."

"But these ornaments," said Annot Lyle, gently and timidly refusing the box, "belong to the family—I cannot accept—"

"They belong to me alone, Annot," said Allan, interrupting her; "they were my mother's dying bequest. They are all I can call my own, except my plaid and my claymore. Take them, therefore—they are to me valueless trinkets—and keep them for my sake—should I never return from these wars."

So saying, he opened the case, and presented it to Annot. "If," said he, "they are of any value, dispose of them for your own support, when this house has been consumed with hostile fire, and can no longer afford you protection. But keep one ring in memory of Allan, who has done, to requite your kindness, if not all he wished, at least all he could."

Annot Lyle endeavoured in vain to restrain the gathering tears, when she said, "ONE ring, Allan, I will accept from you as a memorial of your goodness to a poor orphan, but do not press me to take more; for I cannot, and will not, accept a gift of such disproportioned value."

"Make your choice, then," said Allan; "your delicacy may be well founded; the others will assume a shape in which they may be more useful to you."

"Think not of it," said Annot, choosing from the contents of the casket a ring, apparently the most trifling in value which it contained; "keep them for your own, or your brother's bride.—But, good heavens!" she said, interrupting herself, and looking at the ring, "what is this that I have chosen?"

Allan hastened to look upon it, with eyes of gloomy apprehension; it bore, in enamel, a death's head above two crossed daggers. When Allan recognised the device, he uttered a sigh so deep, that she dropped the ring from her hand, which rolled upon the floor. Lord Menteith picked it up, and returned it to the terrified Annot.

"I take God to witness," said Allan, in a solemn tone, "that your hand, young lord, and not mine, has again delivered to her this ill-omened gift. It was the mourning ring worn by my mother in memorial of her murdered brother."

"I fear no omens," said Annot, smiling through her tears; "and nothing coming through the hands of my two patrons," so she was wont to call Lord Menteith and Allan, "can bring bad luck to the poor orphan."

She put the ring on her finger, and, turning to her harp, sung, to a lively air, the following verses of one of the fashionable songs of the period, which had found its way, marked as it was with the quaint hyperbolical taste of King Charles's time, from some court masque to the wilds of Perthshire:—

*"Gaze not upon the stars, fond sage,
In them no influence lies;
To read the fate of youth or age,
Look on my Helen's eyes.*

*"Yet, rash astrologer, refrain!
Too dearly would be won
The prescience of another's pain,
If purchased by thine own."*

"She is right, Allan," said Lord Menteith; "and this end of an old song is worth all we shall gain by our attempt to look into futurity."

"She is WRONG, my lord," said Allan, sternly, "though you, who treat with lightness the warnings I have given you, may not live to see the event of the omen.—laugh not so scornfully," he added, interrupting himself "or rather laugh on as loud and as long as you will; your term of laughter will find a pause ere long."

"I care not for your visions, Allan," said Lord Menteith; "however short my span of life, the eye of no Highland seer can see its termination."

"For heaven's sake," said Annot Lyle, interrupting him, "you know his nature, and how little he can endure—"

"Fear me not," said Allan, interrupting her,—"my mind is now constant and calm.—But for you, young lord," said he, turning to Lord Menteith, "my eye has sought you through fields of battle, where Highlanders and Lowlanders lay strewn as thick as ever the rooks sat on those ancient trees," pointing to a rookery which was seen from the window—"my eye sought you, but your corpse was not there—my eye sought you among a train of unresisting and disarmed captives, drawn up within the bounding walls of an ancient and rugged fortress;—flash after flash—platoon after platoon—the hostile shot fell amongst them, They dropped like the dry leaves in autumn, but you were not among their ranks;—scaffolds were prepared—blocks were arranged, saw-dust was spread—the priest was ready with his book, the headsman with his axe—but there, too, mine eye found you not."

"The gibbet, then, I suppose, must be my doom?" said Lord Menteith. "Yet I wish they had spared me the halter, were it but for the dignity of the peerage."

He spoke this scornfully, yet not without a sort of curiosity, and a wish to receive an answer; for the desire of prying into futurity frequently has some influence even on the minds of those who disavow all belief in the possibility of such predictions.

"Your rank, my lord, will suffer no dishonour in your person, or by the manner of your death. Three times have I seen a Highlander plant his dirk in your bosom—and such will be your fate."

"I wish you would describe him to me," said Lord Menteith, "and I shall save him the trouble of fulfilling your prophecy, if his plaid be passible to sword or pistol."

"Your weapons," said Allan, "would avail you little; nor can I give you the information you desire. The face of the vision has been ever averted from me."

"So be it then," said Lord Menteith, "and let it rest in the uncertainty in which your augury has placed it. I shall dine not the less merrily among plaids, and dirks, and kilts to-day."

"It may be so," said Allan; "and, it may be, you do well to enjoy these moments, which to me are poisoned by auguries of future evil. But I," he continued—"I repeat to you, that this weapon—that is, such a weapon as this," touching the hilt of the dirk which he wore, "carries your fate." "In the meanwhile," said Lord Menteith, "you, Allan, have frightened the blood from the cheeks of Annot Lyle—let us leave this discourse, my friend, and go to see what we both understand,—the progress of our military preparations."

They joined Angus M'Aulay and his English guests, and, in the military discussions which immediately took place, Allan showed a clearness of mind, strength of judgment, and precision of thought, totally inconsistent with the mystical light in which his character has been hitherto exhibited.

CHAPTER VII.

*When Albin her claymore indignantly draws,
When her bonneted chieftains around her shall crowd,
Clan-Ranald the dauntless, and Moray the proud,
All plaided and plumed in their tartan array—LOCHEIL'S WARNING.*

Whoever saw that morning, the Castle of Darnlinvarach, beheld a busy and a gallant sight.

The various Chiefs, arriving with their different retinues, which, notwithstanding their numbers, formed no more than their usual equipage and body-guard upon occasions of solemnity, saluted the lord of the castle and each other with overflowing kindness, or with haughty and distant politeness, according to the circumstances of friendship or hostility in which their clans had recently stood to each other. Each Chief, however small his comparative importance, showed the full disposition to exact from the rest the deference due to a separate and independent prince; while the stronger and more powerful, divided among themselves by recent contentions or ancient feuds, were constrained in policy to use great deference to the feelings of their less powerful brethren, in order, in case of need, to attach as many well-wishers as might be to their own interest and standard. Thus the meeting of Chiefs resembled not a little those ancient Diets of the Empire, where the smallest FREY-GRAF, who possessed a castle perched upon a barren crag, with a few hundred acres around it, claimed the state and honours of a sovereign prince, and a seat according to his rank among the dignitaries of the Empire.

The followers of the different leaders were separately arranged and accommodated, as room and circumstances best permitted, each retaining however his henchman, who waited, close as the shadow, upon his person, to execute whatever might be required by his patron.

The exterior of the castle afforded a singular scene. The Highlanders, from different islands, glens, and straths, eyed each other at a distance with looks of emulation, inquisitive curiosity, or hostile malevolence; but the most astounding part of the assembly, at least to a Lowland ear, was the rival performance of the bagpipers. These warlike minstrels, who had the highest opinion, each, of the superiority of his own tribe, joined to the most overweening idea of the importance connected with his profession, at first, performed their various pibrochs in front each of his own clan. At length, however, as the black-cocks towards the end of the season, when, in sportsman's language, they are said to flock or crowd, attracted together by the sound of each others' triumphant crow, even so did the pipers, swelling their plaids and tartans in the same triumphant manner in which the birds ruffle up their feathers, begin to approach each other within such distance as might give to their brethren a sample of their skill. Walking within a short interval, and eyeing each other with looks in which self-importance and defiance might be traced, they strutted, puffed, and plied their screaming instruments, each playing his own favourite tune with such a din, that if an Italian musician had lain buried within ten miles of them, he must have risen from the dead to run out of hearing.

The Chieftains meanwhile had assembled in close conclave in the great hall of the castle. Among them were the persons of the greatest consequence in the Highlands, some of them attracted by zeal for the royal cause, and many by aversion to that severe and general domination which the Marquis of Argyle, since his rising to such influence in the state, had exercised over his Highland neighbours. That statesman, indeed, though possessed of considerable abilities, and great power, had failings, which rendered him unpopular among the Highland chiefs. The devotion which he professed was of a morose and fanatical character; his ambition appeared to be insatiable, and inferior chiefs complained of his want of bounty and liberality. Add to this, that although a Highlander, and of a family distinguished for valour before and since, Gillespie Grumach [GRUMACH—ill-favored.] (which, from an obliquity in his eyes, was the personal distinction he bore in the Highlands, where titles of rank are unknown) was suspected of being a better man in the cabinet than in the field. He and his tribe were particularly obnoxious to the M'Donalds and the M'Leans, two numerous septs, who, though disunited by ancient feuds, agreed in an intense dislike to the Campbells, or, as they were called, the Children of Diarmid.

For some time the assembled Chiefs remained silent, until some one should open the business of the meeting. At length one of the most powerful of them commenced the diet by saying,—“We have been summoned hither, M'Aulay, to consult of weighty matters concerning the King's affairs, and those of the state; and we crave to know by whom they are to be explained to us?”

M'Aulay, whose strength did not lie in oratory, intimated his wish that Lord Menteith should open the business of the council. With great modesty, and at the same time with spirit, that young lord said, “he wished what he was about to propose had come from some person of better known and more established character. Since, however, it lay with him to be spokesman, he had to state to the Chiefs assembled, that those who wished to throw off the base yoke which fanaticism had endeavoured to wreath round their necks, had not a moment to lose. ‘The Covenanters,’” he said, “after having twice made war upon their sovereign, and having extorted from him every request, reasonable or unreasonable, which they thought proper to demand—after their Chiefs had been loaded with dignities and favours—after having publicly declared, when his Majesty, after a gracious visit to the land of his nativity, was upon his return to England, that he returned a contented king from a contented people,—after all this, and without even the pretext for a national grievance, the same men have, upon doubts and suspicions, equally dishonourable to the King, and groundless in themselves, detached a strong army to assist his rebels in England, in a quarrel with which Scotland had no more to do than she has with the wars in Germany. It was well,” he said, “that the eagerness with which this treasonable purpose was pursued, had blinded the junta who now usurped the government of Scotland to the risk which they were about to incur. The army which they had dispatched to England under old Leven comprehended their veteran soldiers, the strength of those armies which had been levied in Scotland during the two former wars—”

Here Captain Dalgetty endeavoured to rise, for the purpose of explaining how many veteran officers, trained in the German wars, were, to his certain knowledge, in the army of the Earl of Leven. But Allan M'Aulay holding him down in his seat with one hand, pressed the fore-finger of the other upon his own lips, and, though with some difficulty, prevented his interference. Captain Dalgetty looked upon him with a very scornful and indignant air, by which the other's gravity was in no way moved, and Lord Menteith proceeded without farther interruption.

“The moment,” he said, “was most favourable for all true-hearted and loyal Scotchmen to show, that the reproach their country had lately undergone arose from the selfish ambition of a few turbulent and seditious men, joined to the absurd fanaticism which, disseminated from five hundred pulpits, had spread like a land-flood over the Lowlands of Scotland. He had letters from the Marquis of Huntly in the north, which he should show to the Chiefs separately. That nobleman, equally loyal and powerful was determined to exert his utmost energy in the common cause, and the powerful Earl of Seaforth was prepared to join the same standard. From the Earl of Airly, and the Ogilvies in Angusshire, he had had communications equally decided; and there was no doubt that these, who, with the Hays, Leiths, Burnets, and other loyal gentlemen, would be soon on horseback, would form a body far more than sufficient to overawe the northern Covenanters, who had already experienced their valour in the well-known rout which was popularly termed the Trot of Turiff. South of Forth and Tay,” he said, “the King had many friends, who, oppressed by enforced oaths, compulsory levies, heavy taxes, unjustly imposed and unequally levied, by the tyranny of the Committee of Estates, and the inquisitorial insolence of the Presbyterian divines, waited but the waving of the royal banner to take up arms. Douglas, Traquair, Roxburgh, Hume, all friendly to the royal cause, would counterbalance,” he said, “the covenanting interest in the south; and two gentlemen, of name and quality, here present, from the north of England, would answer for the zeal of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Northumberland. Against so many gallant gentlemen the southern Covenanters could but arm raw levies; the Whigamores of the western shires, and the ploughmen and mechanics of the Low-country. For the West Highlands, he knew no interest which the Covenanters possessed there, except that of one individual, as well known as he was odious. But was there a single man, who, on casting his eye round this hall, and recognising the power, the gallantry, and the dignity of the chiefs assembled, could entertain a moment's doubt of their success against the utmost force which Gillespie Grumach could collect against them? He had only farther to add, that considerable funds, both of money

and ammunition, had been provided for the army"—(Here Dalgetty pricked up his ears)—"that officers of ability and experience in the foreign wars, one of whom was now present," (the Captain drew himself up, and looked round,) "had engaged to train such levies as might require to be disciplined;—and that a numerous body of auxiliary forces from Ireland, having been detached from the Earl of Antrim, from Ulster, had successfully accomplished their descent upon the main land, and, with the assistance of Clanranald's people, having taken and fortified the Castle of Mingarry, in spite of Argyle's attempts to intercept them, were in full march to this place of rendezvous. It only remained," he said, "that the noble Chiefs assembled, laying aside every lesser consideration, should unite, heart and hand, in the common cause; send the fiery cross through their clans, in order to collect their utmost force, and form their junction with such celerity as to leave the enemy no time, either for preparation, or recovery from the panic which would spread at the first sound of their pibroch. He himself," he said, "though neither among the richest nor the most powerful of the Scottish nobility, felt that he had to support the dignity of an ancient and honourable house, the independence of an ancient and honourable nation, and to that cause he was determined to devote both life and fortune. If those who were more powerful were equally prompt, he trusted they would deserve the thanks of their King, and the gratitude of posterity."

Loud applause followed this speech of Lord Menteith, and testified the general acquiescence of all present in the sentiments which he had expressed; but when the shout had died away, the assembled Chiefs continued to gaze upon each other as if something yet remained to be settled. After some whispers among themselves, an aged man, whom his grey hairs rendered respectable, although he was not of the highest order of Chiefs, replied to what had been said.

"Thane of Menteith," he said, "you have well spoken; nor is there one of us in whose bosom the same sentiments do not burn like fire. But it is not strength alone that wins the fight; it is the head of the commander, as well as the arm of the soldier, that brings victory. I ask of you who is to raise and sustain the banner under which we are invited to rise and muster ourselves? Will it be expected that we should risk our children, and the flower of our kinsmen, ere we know to whose guidance they are to be intrusted? This were leading those to slaughter, whom, by the laws of God and man, it is our duty to protect. Where is the royal commission, under which the lieges are to be convoked in arms? Simple and rude as we may be deemed, we know something of the established rules of war, as well as of the laws of our country; nor will we arm ourselves against the general peace of Scotland, unless by the express commands of the King, and under a leader fit to command such men as are here assembled."

"Where would you find such a leader," said another Chief, starting up, "saving the representative of the Lord of the Isles, entitled by birth and hereditary descent to lead forth the array of every clan of the Highlands; and where is that dignity lodged, save in the house of Vich Alister More?"

"I acknowledge," said another Chief, eagerly interrupting the speaker, "the truth in what has been first said, but not the inference. If Vich Alister More desires to be held representative of the Lord of the Isles, let him first show his blood is redder than mine."

"That is soon tried," said Vich Alister More, laying his hand upon the basket hilt of his claymore. Lord Menteith threw himself between them, entreating and imploring each to remember that the interests of Scotland, the liberty of their country, and the cause of their King, ought to be superior in their eyes to any personal disputes respecting descent, rank, and precedence. Several of the Highland Chiefs, who had no desire to admit the claims of either chieftain, interfered to the same purpose, and none with more emphasis than the celebrated Evan Dhu.

"I have come from my lakes," he said, "as a stream descends from the hills, not to turn again, but to accomplish my course. It is not by looking back to our own pretensions that we shall serve Scotland or King Charles. My voice shall be for that general whom the King shall name, who will doubtless possess those qualities which are necessary to command men like us. High-born he must be, or we shall lose our rank in obeying him—wise and skilful, or we shall endanger the safety of our people—bravest among the brave, or we shall peril our own honour—temperate, firm, and manly, to keep us united. Such is the man that must command us. Are you prepared, Thane of Menteith, to say where such a general is to be found?"

"There is but ONE," said Allan M'Aulay; "and here," he said, laying his hand upon the shoulder of Anderson, who stood behind Lord Menteith, "here he stands!"

The general surprise of the meeting was expressed by an impatient murmur; when Anderson, throwing back the cloak in which his face was muffled, and stepping forward, spoke thus:—"I did not long intend to be a silent spectator of this interesting scene, although my hasty friend has obliged me to disclose myself somewhat sooner than was my intention. Whether I deserve the honour reposed in me by this parchment will best appear from what I shall be able to do for the King's service. It is a commission under the great seal, to James Graham, Earl of Montrose, to command those forces which are to be assembled for the service of his Majesty in this kingdom."

A loud shout of approbation burst from the assembly. There was, in fact, no other person to whom, in point of rank, these proud mountaineers would have been disposed to submit. His inveterate and hereditary hostility to the Marquis of Argyle insured his engaging in the war with sufficient energy, while his well-known military talents, and his tried valour, afforded every hope of his bringing it to a favourable conclusion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our plot is a good plot as ever was laid; our friends true and constant: a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation: an excellent plot, very good friends.—HENRY IV Part I.

No sooner had the general acclamation of joyful surprise subsided, than silence was eagerly demanded for reading the royal commission; and the bonnets, which hitherto each Chief had worn, probably because unwilling to be the first to uncover, were now at once vailed in honour of the royal warrant. It was couched in the most full and ample terms, authorizing the Earl of Montrose to assemble the subjects in arms, for the putting down the present rebellion, which divers traitors and seditious persons had levied against the King, to the manifest forfeiture, as it stated, of their allegiance, and to the breach of the pacification between the two kingdoms. It enjoined all subordinate authorities to be obedient and assisting to Montrose in his enterprise; gave him the power of making ordinances and proclamations, punishing misdemeanours, pardoning criminals, placing and displacing governors and commanders. In fine, it was as large and full a commission as any with which a prince could intrust a subject. As soon as it was finished, a shout burst from the assembled Chiefs, in testimony of their ready submission to the will of their sovereign. Not contented with generally thanking them for a reception so favourable, Montrose hastened to address himself to individuals. The most important Chiefs had already been long personally known to him, but even to those of inferior consequence he now introduced himself and by the acquaintance he displayed with their peculiar designations, and the circumstances and history of their clans, he showed how long he must have studied the character of the mountaineers, and prepared himself for such a situation as he now held.

While he was engaged in these acts of courtesy, his graceful manner, expressive features, and dignity of deportment, made a singular contrast with the coarseness and meanness of his dress. Montrose possessed that sort of form and face, in which the beholder, at the first glance, sees nothing extraordinary, but of which the interest becomes more impressive the longer we gaze upon them. His stature was very little above the middle size, but in person he was uncommonly well-built, and capable both of exerting great force, and enduring much fatigue. In fact, he enjoyed a constitution of iron, without which he could not have sustained the trials of his extraordinary campaigns, through all of which he subjected himself to the hardships of the meanest soldier. He was perfect in all exercises, whether peaceful or martial, and possessed, of course, that graceful ease of deportment proper to those to whom habit has rendered all postures easy. His long brown hair, according to the custom of men of quality among the Royalists, was parted on the top of his head, and trained to hang down on each side in curled locks, one of which, descending two or three inches lower than the others, intimated Montrose's compliance with that fashion against which it pleased Mr. Prynne, the puritan, to write a treatise, entitled, THE UNLOVELINESS OF LOVE-LOCKS. The features which these tresses enclosed, were of that kind which derive their interest from the character of the man, rather than from the regularity of their form. But a high nose, a full, decided, well-opened, quick grey eye, and a sanguine complexion, made amends for some coarseness and irregularity in the subordinate parts of the face; so that, altogether, Montrose might be termed rather a handsome, than a hard-featured man. But those who saw him when his soul looked through those eyes with all the energy and fire of genius—those who

heard him speak with the authority of talent, and the eloquence of nature, were impressed with an opinion even of his external form, more enthusiastically favourable than the portraits which still survive would entitle us to ascribe to it. Such, at least, was the impression he made upon the assembled Chiefs of the mountaineers, over whom, as upon all persons in their state of society, personal appearance has no small influence.

In the discussions which followed his discovering himself, Montrose explained the various risks which he had run in his present undertaking. His first attempt had been to assemble a body of loyalists in the north of England, who, in obedience to the orders of the Marquis of Newcastle, he expected would have marched into Scotland; but the disinclination of the English to cross the Border, and the delay of the Earl of Antrim, who was to have landed in the Solway Frith with his Irish army, prevented his executing this design. Other plans having in like manner failed, he stated that he found himself under the necessity of assuming a disguise to render his passage secure through the Lowlands, in which he had been kindly assisted by his kinsman of Menteith. By what means Allan M'Aulay had come to know him, he could not pretend to explain. Those who knew Allan's prophetic pretensions, smiled mysteriously; but he himself only replied, that "the Earl of Montrose need not be surprised if he was known to thousands, of whom he himself could retain no memory."

"By the honour of a cavalier," said Captain Dalgetty, finding at length an opportunity to thrust in his word, "I am proud and happy in having an opportunity of drawing a sword under your lordship's command; and I do forgive all grudge, malecontent, and malice of my heart, to Mr. Allan M'Aulay, for having thrust me down to the lowest seat of the board yestreen. Certes, he hath this day spoken so like a man having full command of his senses, that I had resolved in my secret purpose that he was no way entitled to claim the privilege of insanity. But since I was only postponed to a noble earl, my future commander-in-chief, I do, before you all, recognise the justice of the preference, and heartily salute Allan as one who is to be his BON-CAMARADO."

Having made this speech, which was little understood or attended to, without putting off his military glove, he seized on Allan's hand, and began to shake it with violence, which Allan, with a gripe like a smith's vice, returned with such force, as to drive the iron splents of the gauntlet into the hand of the wearer.

Captain Dalgetty might have construed this into a new affront, had not his attention, as he stood blowing and shaking the injured member, been suddenly called by Montrose himself.

"Hear this news," he said, "Captain Dalgetty—I should say Major Dalgetty,—the Irish, who are to profit by your military experience, are now within a few leagues of us."

"Our deer-stalkers," said Angus M'Aulay, "who were abroad to bring in venison for this honourable party, have heard of a band of strangers, speaking neither Saxon nor pure Gaelic, and with difficulty making themselves understood by the people of the country, who are marching this way in arms, under the leading, it is said, of Alaster M'Donald, who is commonly called Young Colkitto."

"These must be our men," said Montrose; "we must hasten to send messengers forward, both to act as guides and to relieve their wants."

"The last," said Angus M'Aulay, "will be no easy matter; for I am informed, that, excepting muskets and a very little ammunition, they want everything that soldiers should have; and they are particularly deficient in money, in shoes, and in raiment."

"There is at least no use in saying so," said Montrose, "in so loud a tone. The puritan weavers of Glasgow shall provide them plenty of broad-cloth, when we make a descent from the Highlands; and if the ministers could formerly preach the old women of the Scottish boroughs out of their webs of napery, to make tents to the fellows on Dunse Law, [The Covenanters encamped on Dunse Law, during the troubles of 1639.] I will try whether I have not a little interest both to make these godly dames renew their patriotic gift, and the prick-eared knaves, their husbands, open their purses."

"And respecting arms," said Captain Dalgetty, "if your lordship will permit an old cavalier to speak his mind, so that the one-third have muskets, my darling weapon would be the pike for the remainder, whether for resisting a charge of horse, or for breaking the infantry. A common smith will make a hundred pike-heads in a day; here is plenty of wood for shafts; and I will uphold, that, according to the best usages of war, a strong battalion of pikes, drawn up in the fashion of the Lion of the North, the immortal Gustavus, would beat the Macedonian phalanx, of which I used to read in the Mareschal-College, when I studied in the ancient town of Bon-accord; and further, I will venture to predicate—"

The Captain's lecture upon tactics was here suddenly interrupted by Allan M'Aulay, who said, hastily,—"Room for an unexpected and unwelcome guest!"

At the same moment, the door of the hall opened, and a grey-haired man, of a very stately appearance, presented himself to the assembly. There was much dignity, and even authority, in his manner. His stature was above the common size, and his looks such as were used to command. He cast a severe, and almost stern glance upon the assembly of Chiefs. Those of the higher rank among them returned it with scornful indifference; but some of the western gentlemen of inferior power, looked as if they wished themselves elsewhere.

"To which of this assembly," said the stranger, "am I to address myself as leader? or have you not fixed upon the person who is to hold an office at least as perilous as it is honourable?"

"Address yourself to me, Sir Duncan Campbell," said Montrose, stepping forward.

"To you!" said Sir Duncan Campbell, with some scorn.

"Yes,—to me," repeated Montrose,—"to the Earl of Montrose, if you have forgot him."

"I should now, at least," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "have had some difficulty in recognising him in the disguise of a groom.—and yet I might have guessed that no evil influence inferior to your lordship's, distinguished as one who troubles Israel, could have collected together this rash assembly of misguided persons."

"I will answer unto you," said Montrose, "in the manner of your own Puritans. I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house. But let us leave an altercation, which is of little consequence but to ourselves, and hear the tidings you have brought from your Chief of Argyle; for I must conclude that it is in his name that you have come to this meeting."

"It is in the name of the Marquis of Argyle," said Sir Duncan Campbell,—"in the name of the Scottish Convention of Estates, that I demand to know the meaning of this singular convocation. If it is designed to disturb the peace of the country, it were but acting like neighbours, and men of honour, to give us some intimation to stand upon our guard."

"It is a singular, and new state of affairs in Scotland," said Montrose, turning from Sir Duncan Campbell to the assembly, "when Scottish men of rank and family cannot meet in the house of a common friend without an inquisitorial visit and demand, on the part of our rulers, to know the subject of our conference. Methinks our ancestors were accustomed to hold Highland huntings, or other purposes of meeting, without asking the leave either of the great M'Callum More himself, or any of his emissaries or dependents."

"The times have been such in Scotland," answered one of the Western Chiefs, "and such they will again be, when the intruders on our ancient possessions are again reduced to be Lairds of Lochow instead of overspreading us like a band of devouring locusts."

"Am I to understand, then," said Sir Duncan, "that it is against my name alone that these preparations are directed? or are the race of Diarmid only to be sufferers in common with the whole of the peaceful and orderly inhabitants of Scotland?"

"I would ask," said a wild-looking Chief, starting hastily up, "one question of the Knight of Ardenvoehr, ere he proceeds farther in his daring catechism.—Has he brought more than one life to this castle, that he ventures to intrude among us for the purposes of insult?"

"Gentlemen," said Montrose, "let me implore your patience; a messenger who comes among us for the purpose of embassy, is entitled to freedom of speech and safe-conduct. And since Sir Duncan Campbell is so pressing, I care not if I inform him, for his guidance, that he is in an assembly of the King's loyal subjects, convoked by me, in his Majesty's name and authority, and as empowered by his Majesty's royal commission."

"We are to have, then, I presume," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "a civil war in all its forms? I have been too long a soldier to view its approach with anxiety; but it would have been for my Lord of Montrose's honour, if, in this matter, he had consulted his own ambition less, and the peace of the country more."

"Those consulted their own ambition and self-interest, Sir Duncan," answered Montrose, "who brought the country to the pass in which it now stands, and rendered necessary the sharp remedies which we are now reluctantly about to use."

"And what rank among these self-seekers," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "we shall assign to a noble Earl, so violently attached to the Covenant, that he was the first, in 1639, to cross the Tyne, wading middle deep at the head of his regiment, to charge the royal forces? It was the same, I think, who imposed the Covenant upon the burgesses and colleges of Aberdeen, at the point of sword and pike."

"I understand your sneer, Sir Duncan," said Montrose, temperately; "and I can only add, that if sincere repentance can make amends for youthful error, and for yielding to the artful representation of ambitious hypocrites, I shall be pardoned for the crimes with which you taunt me. I will at least endeavour to deserve forgiveness, for I am here, with my sword in my hand, willing to spend the best blood of my body to make amends for my error; and mortal man can do no more."

"Well, my lord," said Sir Duncan, "I shall be sorry to carry back this language to the Marquis of Argyle. I had it in farther charge from the Marquis, that, to prevent the bloody feuds which must necessarily follow a Highland war, his lordship will be contented if terms of truce could be arranged to the north of the Highland line, as there is ground enough in Scotland to fight upon, without neighbours destroying each other's families and inheritances."

"It is a peaceful proposal," said Montrose, smiling, "such as it should be, coming from one whose personal actions have always been more peaceful than his measures. Yet, if the terms of such a truce could be equally fixed, and if we can obtain security, for that, Sir Duncan, is indispensable,—that your Marquis will observe these terms with strict fidelity, I, for my part, should be content to leave peace behind us, since we must needs carry war before us. But, Sir Duncan, you are too old and experienced a soldier for us to permit you to remain in our leaguer, and witness our proceedings; we shall therefore, when you have refreshed yourself, recommend your speedy return to Inverary, and we shall send with you a gentleman on our part to adjust the terms of the Highland armistice, in case the Marquis shall be found serious in proposing such a measure." Sir Duncan Campbell assented by a bow.

"My Lord of Menteith," continued Montrose, "will you have the goodness to attend Sir Duncan Campbell of Ardenvoehr, while we determine who shall return with him to his Chief? M'Aulay will permit us to request that he be entertained with suitable hospitality."

"I will give orders for that," said Allan M'Aulay, rising and coming forward. "I love Sir Duncan Campbell; we have been joint sufferers in former days, and I do not forget it now."

"My Lord of Menteith," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "I am grieved to see you, at your early age, engaged in such desperate and rebellious courses."

"I am young," answered Menteith, "yet old enough to distinguish between right and wrong, between loyalty and rebellion; and the sooner a good course is begun, the longer and the better have I a chance of running it."

"And you too, my friend, Allan M'Aulay," said Sir Duncan, taking his hand, "must we also call each other enemies, that have been so often allied against a common foe?" Then turning round to the meeting, he said, "Farewell, gentlemen; there are so many of you to whom I wish well, that your rejection of all terms of mediation gives me deep affliction. May Heaven," he said, looking upwards, "judge between our motives, and those of the movers of this civil commotion!"

"Amen," said Montrose; "to that tribunal we all submit us."

Sir Duncan Campbell left the hall, accompanied by Allan M'Aulay and Lord Menteith. "There goes a true-bred Campbell," said Montrose, as the envoy departed, "for they are ever fair and false."

"Pardon me, my lord," said Evan Dhu; "hereditary enemy as I am to their name, I have ever found the Knight of Ardenvoehr brave in war, honest in peace, and true in council."

"Of his own disposition," said Montrose, "such he is undoubtedly; but he now acts as the organ or mouth-piece of his Chief, the Marquis, the falsest man that ever drew breath. And, M'Aulay," he continued in a whisper to his host, "lest he should make some impression upon the inexperience of Menteith, or the singular disposition of your brother, you had better send music into their chamber, to prevent his inveigling them into any private conference."

"The devil a musician have I," answered M'Aulay, "excepting the piper, who has nearly broke his wind by an ambitious contention for superiority with three of his own craft; but I can send Annot Lyle and her harp." And he left the apartment to give orders accordingly.

Meanwhile a warm discussion took place, who should undertake the perilous task of returning with Sir Duncan to Inverary. To the higher dignitaries, accustomed to consider themselves upon an equality even with M'Callum More, this was an office not to be proposed; unto others who could not plead the same excuse, it was altogether unacceptable. One would have thought Inverary had been the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the inferior chiefs showed such reluctance to approach it. After a considerable hesitation, the plain reason was at length spoken out, namely, that whatever Highlander should undertake an office so distasteful to M'Callum More, he would be sure to treasure the offence in his remembrance, and one day or other to make him bitterly repent of it.

In this dilemma, Montrose, who considered the proposed armistice as a mere stratagem on the part of Argyle, although he had not ventured bluntly to reject it in presence of those whom it concerned so nearly, resolved to impose the danger and dignity upon Captain Dalgetty, who had neither clan nor estate in the Highlands upon which the wrath of Argyle could wreak itself.

"But I have a neck though," said Dalgetty, bluntly; "and what if he chooses to avenge himself upon that? I have known a case where an honourable ambassador has been hanged as a spy before now. Neither did the Romans use ambassadors much more mercifully at the siege of Capua, although I read that they only cut off their hands and noses, put out their eyes, and suffered them to depart in peace."

"By my honour Captain Dalgetty," said Montrose, "should the Marquis, contrary to the rules of war, dare to practise any atrocity against you, you may depend upon my taking such signal vengeance that all Scotland shall ring of it."

"That will do but little for Dalgetty," returned the Captain; "but corragio! as the Spaniard says. With the Land of Promise full in view, the Moor of Drumthwacket, MEA PAUPERA REGNA, as we said at Mareschal-College, I will not refuse your Excellency's commission, being conscious it becomes a cavalier of honour to obey his commander's orders, in defiance both of gibbet and sword."

"Gallantly resolved," said Montrose; "and if you will come apart with me, I will furnish you with the conditions to be laid before M'Callum More, upon which we are willing to grant him a truce for his Highland dominions."

With these he need not trouble our readers. They were of an evasive nature, calculated to meet a proposal which Montrose considered to have been made only for the purpose of gaining time. When he had put Captain Dalgetty in complete possession of his instructions, and when that worthy, making his military obeisance, was near the door of his apartment, Montrose made him a sign to return.

"I presume," said he, "I need not remind an officer who has served under the great Gustavus, that a little more is required of a person sent with a flag of truce than mere discharge of his instructions, and that his general will expect from him, on his return, some account of the state of the enemy's affairs, as far as they come under his observation. In short, Captain Dalgetty, you must be UN PEU CLAIR-VOYANT."

"Ah ha! your Excellency," said the Captain, twisting his hard features into an inimitable expression of cunning and intelligence, "if they do not put my head in a poke, which I have known practised upon honourable soldados who have been suspected to come upon such errands as the present, your Excellency may rely on a preceese narration of whatever Dugald Dalgetty shall hear or see, were it even how many turns of tune there are in M'Callum More's pibroch, or how many checks in the sett of his plaid and trews."

"Enough," answered Montrose; "farewell, Captain Dalgetty; and as they say that a lady's mind is always expressed in her postscript, so I would have you think that the most important part of your commission lies in what I have last said to you."

Dalgetty once more grinned intelligence, and withdrew to victual his charger and himself, for the fatigues of his approaching mission.

At the door of the stable, for Gustavus always claimed his first care,—he met Angus M'Aulay and Sir Miles Musgrave, who had been looking at his horse; and, after praising his points and carriage, both united in strongly dissuading the Captain from taking an animal of such value with him upon his present very fatiguing journey.

Angus painted in the most alarming colours the roads, or rather wild tracks, by which it would be necessary for him to travel into Argyleshire, and the wretched huts or bothies where he would be condemned to pass the night, and where no forage could be procured for his horse, unless he could eat the stumps of old heather. In short, he pronounced it absolutely impossible, that, after undertaking such a pilgrimage, the animal could be in any case for military service. The

Englishman strongly confirmed all that Angus had said, and gave himself, body and soul, to the devil, if he thought it was not an act little short of absolute murder to carry a horse worth a farthing into such a waste and inhospitable desert. Captain Dalgetty for an instant looked steadily, first at one of the gentlemen and next at the other, and then asked them, as if in a state of indecision, what they would advise him to do with Gustavus under such circumstances.

"By the hand of my father, my dear friend," answered M'Aulay, "if you leave the beast in my keeping, you may rely on his being fed and sorted according to his worth and quality, and that upon your happy return, you will find him as sleek as an onion boiled in butter."

"Or," said Sir Miles Musgrave, "if this worthy cavalier chooses to part with his charger for a reasonable sum, I have some part of the silver candlesticks still dancing the heels in my purse, which I shall be very willing to transfer to his."

"In brief, mine honourable friends," said Captain Dalgetty, again eyeing them both with an air of comic penetration, "I find it would not be altogether unacceptable to either of you, to have some token to remember the old soldier by, in case it shall please M'Callum More to hang him up at the gate of his own castle. And doubtless it would be no small satisfaction to me, in such an event, that a noble and loyal cavalier like Sir Miles Musgrave, or a worthy and hospitable chieftain like our excellent landlord, should act as my executor."

Both hastened to protest that they had no such object, and insisted again upon the impassable character of the Highland paths. Angus M'Aulay mumbled over a number of hard Gaelic names, descriptive of the difficult passes, precipices, corries, and beals, through which he said the road lay to Inverary, when old Donald, who had now entered, sanctioned his master's account of these difficulties, by holding up his hands, and elevating his eyes, and shaking his head, at every gruttural which M'Aulay pronounced. But all this did not move the inflexible Captain.

"My worthy friends," said he, "Gustavus is not new to the dangers of travelling, and the mountains of Bohemia; and (no disparagement to the beals and corries Mr. Angus is pleased to mention, and of which Sir Miles, who never saw them, confirms the horrors,) these mountains may compete with the vilest roads in Europe. In fact, my horse hath a most excellent and social quality; for although he cannot pledge in my cup, yet we share our loaf between us, and it will be hard if he suffers famine where cakes or bannocks are to be found. And, to cut this matter short, I beseech you, my good friends, to observe the state of Sir Duncan Campbell's palfrey, which stands in that stall before us, fat and fair; and, in return for your anxiety on my account, I give you my honest asseveration, that while we travel the same road, both that palfrey and his rider shall lack for food before either Gustavus or I."

Having said this he filled a large measure with corn, and walked up with it to his charger, who, by his low whinnying neigh, his pricked ears, and his pawing, showed how close the alliance was betwixt him and his rider. Nor did he taste his corn until he had returned his master's caresses, by licking his hands and face. After this interchange of greeting, the steed began to his provender with an eager dispatch, which showed old military habits; and the master, after looking on the animal with great complacency for about five minutes, said,—"Much good may it do your honest heart, Gustavus;—now must I go and lay in provant myself for the campaign."

He then departed, having first saluted the Englishman and Angus M'Aulay, who remained looking at each other for some time in silence, and then burst out into a fit of laughter.

"That fellow," said Sir Miles Musgrave, "is formed to go through the world."

"I shall think so too," said M'Aulay, "if he can slip through M'Callum More's fingers as easily as he has done through ours."

"Do you think," said the Englishman, "that the Marquis will not respect, in Captain Dalgetty's person, the laws of civilized war?"

"No more than I would respect a Lowland proclamation," said Angus M'Aulay.—"But come along, it is time I were returning to my guests."

CHAPTER IX.

*. . . . In a rebellion,
When what's not meet, but what must be, was law,
Then were they chosen, in a better hour,
Let what is meet be said it must be meet,
And throw their power i' the dust.—CORIOLANUS.*

In a small apartment, remote from the rest of the guests assembled at the castle, Sir Duncan Campbell was presented with every species of refreshment, and respectfully attended by Lord Menteith, and by Allan M'Aulay. His discourse with the latter turned upon a sort of hunting campaign, in which they had been engaged together against the Children of the Mist, with whom the Knight of Ardenvoehr, as well as the M'Aulays, had a deadly and irreconcilable feud. Sir Duncan, however, speedily endeavoured to lead back the conversation to the subject of his present errand to the castle of Darnlinvarach.

"It grieved him to the very heart," he said, "to see that friends and neighbours, who should stand shoulder to shoulder, were likely to be engaged hand to hand in a cause which so little concerned them. What signifies it," he said, "to the Highland Chiefs, whether King or Parliament got uppermost? Were it not better to let them settle their own differences without interference, while the Chiefs, in the meantime, took the opportunity of establishing their own authority in a manner not to be called in question hereafter by either King or Parliament?" He reminded Allan M'Aulay that the measures taken in the last reign to settle the peace, as they were called, in the Lewis, as part of a deliberate plan, formed to introduce strangers among the Celtic tribes, to destroy by degrees their ancient customs and mode of government, and to despoil them of the inheritance of their fathers. [In the reign of James VI., an attempt of rather an extraordinary kind was made to civilize the extreme northern part of the Hebridean Archipelago. That monarch granted the property of the Island of Lewis, as if it had been an unknown and savage country, to a number of Lowland gentlemen, called undertakers, chiefly natives of the shire of Fife, that they might colonize and settle there. The enterprise was at first successful, but the natives of the island, MacLeods and MacKenzies, rose on the Lowland adventurers, and put most of them to the sword.] "And yet," he continued, addressing Allan, "it is for the purpose of giving despotic authority to the monarch by whom these designs have been nursed, that so many Highland Chiefs are upon the point of quarrelling with, and drawing the sword against, their neighbours, allies, and ancient confederates." "It is to my brother," said Allan, "it is to the eldest son of my father's house, that the Knight of Ardenvoehr must address these remonstrances. I am, indeed, the brother of Angus; but in being so, I am only the first of his clansmen, and bound to show an example to the others by my cheerful and ready obedience to his commands."

"The cause also," said Lord Menteith, interposing, "is far more general than Sir Duncan Campbell seems to suppose it. It is neither limited to Saxon nor to Gael, to mountain nor to strath, to Highlands nor to Lowlands. The question is, if we will continue to be governed by the unlimited authority assumed by a set of persons in no respect superior to ourselves, instead of returning to the natural government of the Prince against whom they have rebelled. And respecting the interest of the Highlands in particular," he added, "I crave Sir Duncan Campbell's pardon for my plainness; but it seems very clear to me, that the only effect produced by the present usurpation, will be the aggrandisement of one overgrown clan at the expense of every independent Chief in the Highlands."

"I will not reply to you, my lord," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "because I know your prejudices, and from whom they are borrowed; yet you will pardon my saying, that being at the head of a rival branch of the House of Graham, I have both read of and known an Earl of Menteith, who would have disdained to have been tutored in politics, or to have been commanded in war, by an Earl of Montrose."

"You will find it in vain, Sir Duncan," said Lord Menteith, haughtily, "to set my vanity in arms against my principles. The King gave my ancestors their title and rank; and these shall never prevent my acting, in the royal cause, under any one who is better qualified than myself to be a commander-in-chief. Least of all, shall any miserable jealousy prevent me from placing my hand and sword under the guidance of the bravest, the most loyal, the most heroic spirit among our Scottish nobility."

"Pity," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "that you cannot add to this panegyric the farther epithets of the most steady, and the most consistent. But I have no purpose of debating these points with you, my lord," waving his hand, as if to avoid farther discussion; "the die is cast with you; allow me only to express my sorrow for the disastrous fate to which Angus M'Aulay's natural rashness, and your lordship's influence, are dragging my gallant friend Allan here, with his father's clan, and many a brave man besides."

"The die is cast for us all, Sir Duncan," replied Allan, looking gloomy, and arguing on his own hypochondriac feelings; "the iron hand of destiny branded our fate upon our forehead long ere we could form a wish, or raise a finger in our own behalf. Were this otherwise, by what means does the Seer ascertain the future from those shadowy presages which haunt his waking and his sleeping eye? Nought can be foreseen but that which is certain to happen."

Sir Duncan Campbell was about to reply, and the darkest and most contested point of metaphysics might have been brought into discussion betwixt two Highland disputants, when the door opened, and Annot Lyle, with her clairshach in her hand, entered the apartment. The freedom of a Highland maiden was in her step and in her eye; for, bred up in the closest intimacy with the Laird of M'Aulay and his brother, with Lord Menteith, and other young men who frequented Darnlinvarach, she possessed none of that timidity which a female, educated chiefly among her own sex, would either have felt, or thought necessary to assume, on an occasion like the present.

Her dress partook of the antique, for new fashions seldom penetrated into the Highlands, nor would they easily have found their way to a castle inhabited chiefly by men, whose sole occupation was war and the chase. Yet Annot's garments were not only becoming, but even rich. Her open jacket, with a high collar, was composed of blue cloth, richly embroidered, and had silver clasps to fasten, when it pleased the wearer. Its sleeves, which were wide, came no lower than the elbow, and terminated in a golden fringe; under this upper coat, if it can be so termed, she wore an under dress of blue satin, also richly embroidered, but which was several shades lighter in colour than the upper garment. The petticoat was formed of tartan silk, in the sett, or pattern, of which the colour of blue greatly predominated, so as to remove the tawdry effect too frequently produced in tartan, by the mixture and strong opposition of colours. An antique silver chain hung round her neck, and supported the WREST, or key, with which she turned her instrument. A small ruff rose above her collar, and was secured by a brooch of some value, an old keepsake from Lord Menteith. Her profusion of light hair almost hid her laughing eyes, while, with a smile and a blush, she mentioned that she had M'Aulay's directions to ask them if they chose music. Sir Duncan Campbell gazed with considerable surprise and interest at the lovely apparition, which thus interrupted his debate with Allan M'Aulay.

"Can this," he said to him in a whisper, "a creature so beautiful and so elegant, be a domestic musician of your brother's establishment?"

"By no means," answered Allan, hastily, yet with some hesitation; "she is a—a—near relation of our family—and treated," he added, more firmly, "as an adopted daughter of our father's house."

As he spoke thus, he arose from his seat, and with that air of courtesy which every Highlander can assume when it suits him to practise it, he resigned it to Annot, and offered to her, at the same time, whatever refreshments the table afforded, with an assiduity which was probably designed to give Sir Duncan an impression of her rank and consequence. If such was Allan's purpose, however, it was unnecessary. Sir Duncan kept his eyes fixed upon Annot with an expression of much deeper interest than could have arisen from any impression that she was a person of consequence. Annot even felt embarrassed under the old knight's steady gaze; and it was not without considerable hesitation, that, tuning her instrument, and receiving an assenting look from Lord Menteith and Allan, she executed the following ballad, which our friend, Mr. Secundus M'Pherson, whose goodness we had before to acknowledge, has thus translated into the English tongue:

THE ORPHAN MAID.

*November's hail-cloud drifts away,
November's sunbeam wan
Looks coldly on the castle grey,
When forth comes Lady Anne.*

*The orphan by the oak was set,
Her arms, her feet, were bare,
The hail-drops had not melted yet,
Amid her raven hair.*

*"And, Dame," she said, "by all the ties
That child and mother know,
Aid one who never knew these joys,
Relieve an orphan's woe."*

*The Lady said, "An orphan's state
Is hard and sad to bear;
Yet worse the widow'd mother's fate,
Who mourns both lord and heir.*

*"Twelve times the rolling year has sped,
Since, when from vengeance wild
Of fierce Strathallan's Chief I fled,
Forth's eddies whelm'd my child."*

*"Twelve times the year its course has born,"
The wandering maid replied,
"Since fishers on St. Bridget's morn
Drew nets on Campsie side.*

*"St. Bridget sent no scaly spoil;—
An infant, wellnigh dead,
They saved, and rear'd in want and toil,
To beg from you her bread."*

That orphan maid the lady kiss'd—

*"My husband's looks you bear;
St. Bridget and her morn be bless'd!
You are his widow's heir."*

*They've robed that maid, so poor and pale,
In silk and sandals rare;
And pearls, for drops of frozen hail,
Are glistening in her hair.*

The admirers of pure Celtic antiquity, notwithstanding the elegance of the above translation, may be desirous to see a literal version from the original Gaelic, which we therefore subjoin; and have only to add, that the original is deposited with Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

*The hail-blast had drifted away upon the wings of the gale
of autumn. The sun looked from between the clouds, pale as
the wounded hero who rears his head feebly on the heath when
the roar of battle hath passed over him.*

*Finele, the Lady of the Castle, came forth to see her
maidens pass to the herds with their leglins [Milk-pails].*

*There sat an orphan maiden beneath the old oak-tree of
appointment. The withered leaves fell around her, and her
heart was more withered than they.*

*The parent of the ice [poetically taken from the frost]
still congealed the hail-drops in her hair; they were like
the specks of white ashes on the twisted boughs of the
blackened and half-consumed oak that blazes in the hall.*

*And the maiden said, "Give me comfort, Lady, I am an orphan
child." And the Lady replied, "How can I give that which I
have not? I am the widow of a slain lord,—the mother of a
perished child. When I fled in my fear from the vengeance
of my husband's foes, our bark was overwhelmed in the tide,
and my infant perished. This was on St. Bridget's morn,
near the strong Lyns of Campsie. May ill luck light upon
the day." And the maiden answered, "It was on St. Bridget's
morn, and twelve harvests before this time, that the
fishermen of Campsie drew in their nets neither grilse nor
salmon, but an infant half dead, who hath since lived in
misery, and must die, unless she is now aided." And the Lady
answered, "Blessed be Saint Bridget and her morn, for these
are the dark eyes and the falcon look of my slain lord; and
thine shall be the inheritance of his widow." And she
called for her waiting attendants, and she bade them clothe
that maiden in silk, and in samite; and the pearls which
they wove among her black tresses, were whiter than the
frozen hail-drops.*

While the song proceeded, Lord Menteith observed, with some surprise, that it appeared to produce a much deeper effect upon the mind of Sir Duncan Campbell, than he could possibly have anticipated from his age and character. He well knew that the Highlanders of that period possessed a much greater sensibility both for tale and song than was found among their Lowland neighbours; but even this, he thought, hardly accounted for the embarrassment with which the old man withdrew his eyes from the songstress, as if unwilling to suffer them to rest on an object so interesting. Still less was it to be expected, that features which expressed pride, stern common sense, and the austere habit of authority, should have been so much agitated by so trivial a circumstance. As the Chief's brow became clouded, he drooped his large shaggy grey eyebrows until they almost concealed his eyes, on the lids of which something like a tear might be seen to glisten. He remained silent and fixed in the same posture for a minute or two, after the last note had ceased to vibrate. He then raised his head, and having looked at Annot Lyle, as if purposing to speak to her, he as suddenly changed that purpose, and was about to address Allan, when the door opened, and the Lord of the Castle made his appearance.

CHAPTER X.

*Dark on their journey lour'd the gloomy day,
Wild were the hills, and doubtful grew the way;
More dark, more gloomy, and more doubtful, show'd
The mansion, which received them from the road.*
—THE TRAVELLERS, A ROMANCE.

Angus M'Aulay was charged with a message which he seemed to find some difficulty in communicating; for it was not till after he had framed his speech several different ways, and blundered them all, that he succeeded in letting Sir Duncan Campbell know, that the cavalier who was to accompany him was waiting in readiness, and that all was prepared for his return to Inverary. Sir Duncan Campbell rose up very indignantly; the affront which this message implied immediately driving out of his recollection the sensibility which had been awakened by the music.

"I little expected this," he said, looking indignantly at Angus M'Aulay. "I little thought that there was a Chief in the West Highlands, who, at the pleasure of a Saxon, would have bid the Knight of Ardenvoehr leave his castle, when the sun was declining from the meridian, and ere the second cup had been filled. But farewell, sir, the food of a churl does not satisfy the appetite; when I next revisit Darnlinvarach, it shall be with a naked sword in one hand, and a firebrand in the other."

"And if you so come," said Angus, "I pledge myself to meet you fairly, though you brought five hundred Campbells at your back, and to afford you and them such entertainment, that you shall not again complain of the hospitality of Darnlinvarach."

"Threatened men," said Sir Duncan, "live long. Your turn for gasconading, Laird of M'Aulay, is too well known, that men of honour should regard your vaunts. To you, my lord, and to Allan, who have supplied the place of my churlish host, I leave my thanks.—And to you, pretty mistress," he said, addressing Annot Lyle, "this little token, for having opened a fountain which hath been dry for many a year." So saying, he left the apartment, and commanded his attendants to be summoned. Angus M'Aulay, equally embarrassed and incensed at the charge of inhospitality, which was the greatest possible affront to a Highlander, did not follow Sir Duncan to the court-yard, where, mounting his palfrey, which was in readiness, followed by six mounted attendants, and accompanied by the noble Captain Dalgetty, who had also awaited him, holding Gustavus ready for action, though he did not draw his girths and mount till Sir Duncan appeared, the whole cavalcade left the castle.

The journey was long and toilsome, but without any of the extreme privations which the Laird of M'Aulay had prophesied. In truth, Sir Duncan was very cautious to avoid those nearer and more secret paths, by means of which the county of Argyre was accessible from the eastward; for his relation and chief, the Marquis, was used to boast, that he would not for a hundred thousand crowns any mortal should know the passes by which an armed force could penetrate into his country.

Sir Duncan Campbell, therefore, rather shunned the Highlands, and falling into the Low-country, made for the nearest seaport in the vicinity, where he had several half-decked galleys, or birlings, as they were called, at his command. In one of these they embarked, with Gustavus in company, who was so seasoned to adventure, that land and sea seemed as indifferent to him as to his master.

The wind being favourable, they pursued their way rapidly with sails and oars; and early the next morning it was announced to Captain Dalgetty, then in a small cabin beneath the hall-deck, that the galley was under the walls of Sir Duncan Campbell's castle.

Ardenvohr, accordingly, rose high above him, when he came upon the deck of the galley. It was a gloomy square tower, of considerable size and great height, situated upon a headland projecting into the salt-water lake, or arm of the sea, which they had entered on the preceding evening. A wall, with flanking towers at each angle, surrounded the castle to landward; but, towards the lake, it was built so near the brink of the precipice as only to leave room for a battery of seven guns, designed to protect the fortress from any insult from that side, although situated too high to be of any effectual use according to the modern system of warfare.

The eastern sun, rising behind the old tower, flung its shadow far on the lake, darkening the deck of the galley, on which Captain Dalgetty now walked, waiting with some impatience the signal to land. Sir Duncan Campbell, as he was informed by his attendants, was already within the walls of the castle; but no one encouraged the Captain's proposal of following him ashore, until, as they stated, they should receive the direct permission or order of the Knight of Ardenvohr. In a short time afterwards the mandate arrived, while a boat, with a piper in the bow, bearing the Knight of Ardenvohr's crest in silver upon his left arm, and playing with all his might the family march, entitled "The Campbells are coming," approached to conduct the envoy of Montrose to the castle of Ardenvohr. The distance between the galley and the beach was so short as scarce to require the assistance of the eight sturdy rowers, in bonnets, short coats, and trews, whose efforts sent the boat to the little creek in which they usually landed, before one could have conceived that it had left the side of the birling. Two of the boatmen, in spite of Dalgetty's resistance, horsed the Captain on the back of a third Highlander, and, wading through the surf with him, landed him high and dry upon the beach beneath the castle rock. In the face of this rock there appeared something like the entrance of a low-browed cavern, towards which the assistants were preparing to hurry our friend Dalgetty, when, shaking himself loose from them with some difficulty, he insisted upon seeing Gustavus safely landed before he proceeded one step farther. The Highlanders could not comprehend what he meant, until one who had picked up a little English, or rather Lowland Scotch, exclaimed, "Houts! it's a' about her horse, ta useless baste." Farther remonstrance on the part of Captain Dalgetty was interrupted by the appearance of Sir Duncan Campbell himself, from the mouth of the cavern which we have described, for the purpose of inviting Captain Dalgetty to accept of the hospitality of Ardenvohr, pledging his honour, at the same time, that Gustavus should be treated as became the hero from whom he derived his name, not to mention the important person to whom he now belonged. Notwithstanding this satisfactory guarantee, Captain Dalgetty would still have hesitated, such was his anxiety to witness the fate of his companion Gustavus, had not two Highlanders seized him by the arms, two more pushed him on behind, while a fifth exclaimed, "Hout awa wi' the daft Sassenach! does she no hear the Laird bidding her up to her ain castle, wi' her special voice, and isna that very mickle honour for the like o' her?"

Thus impelled, Captain Dalgetty could only for a short space keep a reverted eye towards the galley in which he had left the partner of his military toils. In a few minutes afterwards he found himself involved in the total darkness of a staircase, which, entering from the low-browed cavern we have mentioned, winded upwards through the entrails of the living rock.

"The cursed Highland salvages!" muttered the Captain, half aloud; "what is to become of me, if Gustavus, the namesake of the invincible Lion of the Protestant League, should be lamed among their untenty hands!"

"Have no fear of that," said the voice of Sir Duncan, who was nearer to him than he imagined; "my men are accustomed to handle horses, both in embarking and dressing them, and you will soon see Gustavus as safe as when you last dismounted from his back."

Captain Dalgetty knew the world too well to offer any farther remonstrance, whatever uneasiness he might suppress within his own bosom. A step or two higher up the stair showed light and a door, and an iron-grated wicket led him out upon a gallery cut in the open face of the rock, extending a space of about six or eight yards, until he reached a second door, where the path re-entered the rock, and which was also defended by an iron portcullis. "An admirable traverse," observed the Captain; "and if commanded by a field-piece, or even a few muskets, quite sufficient to ensure the place against a storming party."

Sir Duncan Campbell made no answer at the time; but, the moment afterwards, when they had entered the second cavern, he struck with the stick which he had in his hand, first on the one side, and then on the other of the wicket, and the sullen ringing sound which replied to the blows, made Captain Dalgetty sensible that there was a gun placed on each side, for the purpose of raking the gallery through which they had passed, although the embrasures, through which they might be fired on occasion, were masked on the outside with sods and loose stones. Having ascended the second staircase, they found themselves again on an open platform and gallery, exposed to a fire both of musketry and wall-guns, if, being come with hostile intent, they had ventured farther. A third flight of steps, cut in the rock like the former, but not caverned over, led them finally into the battery at the foot of the tower. This last stair also was narrow and steep, and, not to mention the fire which might be directed on it from above, one or two resolute men, with pikes and battle-axes, could have made the pass good against hundreds; for the staircase would not admit two persons abreast, and was not secured by any sort of balustrade, or railing, from the sheer and abrupt precipice, on the foot of which the tide now rolled with a voice of thunder. So that, under the jealous precautions used to secure this ancient Celtic fortress, a person of weak nerves, and a brain liable to become dizzy, might have found it something difficult to have achieved the entrance to the castle, even supposing no resistance had been offered.

Captain Dalgetty, too old a soldier to feel such tremors, had no sooner arrived in the court-yard, than he protested to God, the defences of Sir Duncan's castle reminded him more of the notable fortress of Spandau, situated in the March of Brandenburg, than of any place whilk it had been his fortune to defend in the course of his travels. Nevertheless, he criticised considerably the mode of placing the guns on the battery we have noticed, observing, that "where cannon were perched, like to scarts or sea-gulls on the top of a rock, he had ever observed that they astonished more by their noise than they dismayed by the skaith or damage which they occasioned."

Sir Duncan, without replying, conducted the soldier into the tower; the defences of which were a portcullis and ironclenched oaken door, the thickness of the wall being the space between them. He had no sooner arrived in a hall hung with tapestry, than the Captain prosecuted his military criticism. It was indeed suspended by the sight of an excellent breakfast, of which he partook with great avidity; but no sooner had he secured this meal, than he made the tour of the apartment, examining the ground around the Castle very carefully from each window in the room. He then returned to his chair, and throwing himself back into it at his length, stretched out one manly leg, and tapping his jack-boot with the riding-rod which he carried in his hand, after the manner of a half-bred man who affects ease in the society of his betters, he delivered his unasked opinion as follows:—"This house of yours, now, Sir Duncan, is a very pretty defensible sort of a tenement, and yet it is hardly such as a cavaliero of honour would expect to maintain his credit by holding out for many days. For, Sir Duncan, if it pleases you to notice, your house

is overcrowded, and slighted, or commanded, as we military men say, by yonder round hillock to the landward, whereon an enemy might stell such a battery of cannon as would make ye glad to beat a chamade within forty-eight hours, unless it pleased the Lord extraordinarily to show mercy."

"There is no road," replied Sir Duncan, somewhat shortly, "by which cannon can be brought against Ardenvoehr. The swamps and morasses around my house would scarce carry your horse and yourself, excepting by such paths as could be rendered impassable within a few hours."

"Sir Duncan," said the Captain, "it is your pleasure to suppose so; and yet we martial men say, that where there is a sea-coast there is always a naked side, seeing that cannon and munition, where they cannot be transported by land, may be right easily brought by sea near to the place where they are to be put in action. Neither is a castle, however secure in its situation, to be accounted altogether invincible, or, as they say, impregnable; for I protest t'ye, Sir Duncan, that I have known twenty-five men, by the mere surprise and audacity of the attack, win, at point of pike, as strong a hold as this of Ardenvoehr, and put to the sword, captivate, or hold to the ransom, the defenders, being ten times their own number."

Notwithstanding Sir Duncan Campbell's knowledge of the world, and his power of concealing his internal emotion, he appeared piqued and hurt at these reflections, which the Captain made with the most unconscious gravity, having merely selected the subject of conversation as one upon which he thought himself capable of shining, and, as they say, of laying down the law, without exactly recollecting that the topic might not be equally agreeable to his landlord.

"To cut this matter short," said Sir Duncan, with an expression of voice and countenance somewhat agitated, "it is unnecessary for you to tell me, Captain Dalgetty, that a castle may be stormed if it is not valorously defended, or surprised if it is not heedfully watched. I trust this poor house of mine will not be found in any of these predicaments, should even Captain Dalgetty himself choose to beleaguer it."

"For all that, Sir Duncan," answered the persevering commander, "I would premonish you, as a friend, to trace out a sconce upon that round hill, with a good graffe, or ditch, whilk may be easily accomplished by compelling the labour of the boors in the vicinity; it being the custom of the valourous Gustavus Adolphus to fight as much by the spade and shovel, as by sword, pike, and musket. Also, I would advise you to fortify the said sconce, not only by a fousie, or graffe, but also by certain stackets, or palisades."—(Here Sir Duncan, becoming impatient, left the apartment, the Captain following him to the door, and raising his voice as he retreated, until he was fairly out of hearing.)—"The whilk stackets, or palisades, should be artificially framed with re-entering angles and loop-holes, or crenelles, for musketry, whereof it shall arise that the foeman—The Highland brute! the old Highland brute! They are as proud as peacocks, and as obstinate as tups—and here he has missed an opportunity of making his house as pretty an irregular fortification as an invading army ever broke their teeth upon.—But I see," he continued, looking own from the window upon the bottom of the precipice, "they have got Gustavus safe ashore—Proper fellow! I would know that toss of his head among a whole squadron. I must go to see what they are to make of him."

He had no sooner reached, however, the court to the seaward, and put himself in the act of descending the staircase, than two Highland sentinels, advancing their Lochaber axes, gave him to understand that this was a service of danger.

"Diavolo!" said the soldier, "and I have got no pass-word. I could not speak a syllable of their salvage gibberish, an it were to save me from the provost-marshal."

"I will be your surety, Captain Dalgetty," said Sir Duncan, who had again approached him without his observing from whence; "and we will go together, and see how your favourite charger is accommodated."

He conducted him accordingly down the staircase to the beach, and from thence by a short turn behind a large rock, which concealed the stables and other offices belonging to the castle, Captain Dalgetty became sensible, at the same time, that the side of the castle to the land was rendered totally inaccessible by a ravine, partly natural and partly scarped with great care and labour, so as to be only passed by a drawbridge. Still, however, the Captain insisted, not withstanding the triumphant air with which Sir Duncan pointed out his defences, that a sconce should be erected on Drumsnab, the round eminence to the east of the castle, in respect the house might be annoyed from thence by burning bullets full of fire, shot out of cannon, according to the curious invention of Stephen Bathian, King of Poland, whereby that prince utterly ruined the great Muscovite city of Moscow. This invention, Captain Dalgetty owned, he had not yet witnessed, but observed, "that it would give him particular delectation to witness the same put to the proof against Ardenvoehr, or any other castle of similar strength," observing, "that so curious an experiment could not but afford the greatest delight to all admirers of the military art."

Sir Duncan Campbell diverted this conversation by carrying the soldier into his stables, and suffering him to arrange Gustavus according to his own will and pleasure. After this duty had been carefully performed, Captain Dalgetty proposed to return to the castle, observing, it was his intention to spend the time betwixt this and dinner, which, he presumed, would come upon the parade about noon, in burnishing his armour, which having sustained some injury from the sea-air, might, he was afraid, seem discreditable in the eyes of M'Callum More. Yet, while they were returning to the castle, he failed not to warn Sir Duncan Campbell against the great injury he might sustain by any sudden onfall of an enemy, whereby his horses, cattle, and granaries, might be cut off and consumed, to his great prejudice; wherefore he again strongly conjured him to construct a sconce upon the round hill called Drumsnab, and offered his own friendly services in lining out the same. To this disinterested advice Sir Duncan only replied by ushering his guest to his apartment, and informing him that the tolling of the castle bell would make him aware when dinner was ready.

CHAPTER XI.

Is this thy castle, Baldwin? Melancholy
Displays her sable banner from the donjon,
Darkening the foam of the whole surge beneath.
Were I a habitant, to see this gloom
Pollute the face of nature, and to hear
The ceaseless sound of wave, and seabird's scream,
I'd wish me in the hut that poorest peasant
E'er framed, to give him temporary shelter.—BROWN.

The gallant Ritt-master would willingly have employed his leisure in studying the exterior of Sir Duncan's castle, and verifying his own military ideas upon the nature of its defences. But a stout sentinel, who mounted guard with a Lochaber-axe at the door of his apartment, gave him to understand, by very significant signs, that he was in a sort of honourable captivity.

It is strange, thought the Ritt-master to himself, how well these salvages understand the rules and pratique of war. Who should have pre-supposed their acquaintance with the maxim of the great and godlike Gustavus Adolphus, that a flag of truce should be half a messenger half a spy?—And, having finished burnishing his arms, he sate down patiently to compute how much half a dollar per diem would amount to at the end of a six-months' campaign; and, when he had settled that problem, proceeded to the more abstruse calculations necessary for drawing up a brigade of two thousand men on the principle of extracting the square root.

From his musings, he was roused by the joyful sound of the dinner bell, on which the Highlander, lately his guard, became his gentleman-usher, and marshalled him to the hall, where a table with four covers bore ample proofs of Highland hospitality. Sir Duncan entered, conducting his lady, a tall, faded, melancholy female, dressed in deep mourning. They were followed by a Presbyterian clergyman, in his Geneva cloak, and wearing a black silk skull-cap, covering his short hair so closely, that it could scarce be seen at all, so that the unrestricted ears had an undue predominance in the general aspect. This ungraceful fashion was universal

at the time, and partly led to the nicknames of roundheads, prick-eared curs, and so forth, which the insolence of the cavaliers liberally bestowed on their political enemies.

Sir Duncan presented his military guest to his lady, who received his technical salutation with a stiff and silent reverence, in which it could scarce be judged whether pride or melancholy had the greater share. The churchman, to whom he was next presented, eyed him with a glance of mingled dislike and curiosity. The Captain, well accustomed to worse looks from more dangerous persons, cared very little either for those of the lady or of the divine, but bent his whole soul upon assaulting a huge piece of beef, which smoked at the nether end of the table. But the onslaught, as he would have termed it, was delayed, until the conclusion of a very long grace, betwixt every section of which Dalgetty handled his knife and fork, as he might have done his musket or pike when going upon action, and as often resigned them unwillingly when the prolix chaplain commenced another clause of his benediction. Sir Duncan listened with decency, though he was supposed rather to have joined the Covenanters out of devotion to his chief, than real respect for the cause either of liberty or of Presbytery. His lady alone attended to the blessing, with symptoms of deep acquiescence.

The meal was performed almost in Carthusian silence; for it was none of Captain Dalgetty's habits to employ his mouth in talking, while it could be more profitably occupied. Sir Duncan was absolutely silent, and the lady and churchman only occasionally exchanged a few words, spoken low, and indistinctly.

But, when the dishes were removed, and their place supplied by liquors of various sorts, Captain Dalgetty no longer had, himself, the same weighty reasons for silence, and began to tire of that of the rest of the company. He commenced a new attack upon his landlord, upon the former ground.

"Touching that round monticle, or hill, or eminence, termed Drumsnab, I would be proud to hold some dialogue with you, Sir Duncan, on the nature of the scone to be there constructed; and whether the angles thereof should be acute or obtuse—anent whilk I have heard the great Velt-Mareschal Bannier hold a learned argument with General Tiefenbach during a still-stand of arms."

"Captain Dalgetty," answered Sir Duncan very dryly, "it is not our Highland usage to debate military points with strangers. This castle is like to hold out against a stronger enemy than any force which the unfortunate gentlemen we left at Darnlinvarach are able to bring against it."

A deep sigh from the lady accompanied the conclusion of her husband's speech, which seemed to remind her of some painful circumstance.

"He who gave," said the clergyman, addressing her in a solemn tone, "hath taken away. May you, honourable lady, be long enabled to say, Blessed be his name!" To this exhortation, which seemed intended for her sole behoof, the lady answered by an inclination of her head, more humble than Captain Dalgetty had yet observed her make. Supposing he should now find her in a more conversible humour, he proceeded to accost her.

"It is indubitably very natural that your ladyship should be downcast at the mention of military preparations, whilk I have observed to spread perturbation among women of all nations, and almost all conditions. Nevertheless, Penthesilea, in ancient times, and also Joan of Arc, and others, were of a different kidney. And, as I have learned while I served the Spaniard, the Duke of Alva in former times had the leaguer-lasses who followed his camp marshalled into TERTIAS (whilk me call regiments), and officered and commanded by those of their own feminine gender, and regulated by a commander-in chief, called in German Hureweibler, or, as we would say vernacularly, Captain of the Queans. True it is, they were persons not to be named as parallel to your ladyship, being such QUAE QUAESTUM CORPORIBUS FACIEBANT, as we said of Jean Drochiels at Mareschal-College; the same whom the French term CURTISANNES, and we in Scottish—"

"The lady will spare you the trouble of further exposition, Captain Dalgetty," said his host, somewhat sternly; to which the clergyman added, "that such discourse better befitted a watch-tower guarded by profane soldiery than the board of an honourable person, and the presence of a lady of quality."

"Craving your pardon, Dominie, or Doctor, AUT QUOCUNQUE ALIO NOMINE GAUDES, for I would have you to know I have studied polite letters," said the unabashed envoy, filling a great cup of wine, "I see no ground for your reproof, seeing I did not speak of those TURPES PERSONAE, as if their occupation or character was a proper subject of conversation for this lady's presence, but simply PAR ACCIDENS, as illustrating the matter in hand, namely, their natural courage and audacity, much enhanced, doubtless, by the desperate circumstances of their condition."

"Captain Dalgetty," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "to break short this discourse, I must acquaint you, that I have some business to dispatch to-night, in order to enable me to ride with you to-morrow towards Inverary; and therefore—"

"To ride with this person to-morrow!" exclaimed his lady; "such cannot be your purpose, Sir Duncan, unless you have forgotten that the morrow is a sad anniversary, and dedicated to as sad a solemnity."

"I had not forgotten," answered Sir Duncan; "how is it possible I can ever forget? but the necessity of the times requires I should send this officer onward to Inverary, without loss of time."

"Yet, surely, not that you should accompany him in person?" enquired the lady.

"It were better I did," said Sir Duncan; "yet I can write to the Marquis, and follow on the subsequent day.—Captain Dalgetty, I will dispatch a letter for you, explaining to the Marquis of Argyle your character and commission, with which you will please to prepare to travel to Inverary early to-morrow morning."

"Sir Duncan Campbell," said Dalgetty, "I am doubtless at your discretionary disposal in this matter; not the less, I pray you to remember the blot which will fall upon your own escutcheon, if you do in any way suffer me, being a commissionate flag of truce, to be circumvented in this matter, whether CLAM, VI, VEL PRECARIO; I do not say by your assent to any wrong done to me, but even through absence of any due care on your part to prevent the same."

"You are under the safeguard of my honour, sir," answered Sir Duncan Campbell, "and that is more than a sufficient security. And now," continued he, rising, "I must set the example of retiring."

Dalgetty saw himself under the necessity of following the hint, though the hour was early; but, like a skilful general, he availed himself of every instant of delay which circumstances permitted. "Trusting to your honourable parole," said he, filling his cup, "I drink to you, Sir Duncan, and to the continuance of your honourable-house." A sigh from Sir Duncan was the only reply. "Also, madam," said the soldier, replenishing the quaigh with all possible dispatch, "I drink to your honourable health, and fulfilment of all your virtuous desires—and, reverend sir" (not forgetting to fit the action to the words), "I fill this cup to the drowning of all unkindness betwixt you and Captain Dalgetty—I should say Major—and, in respect the flagon contains but one cup more, I drink to the health of all honourable cavaliers and brave soldados—and, the flask being empty, I am ready, Sir Duncan, to attend your functionary or sentinel to my place of private repose." He received a formal permission to retire, and an assurance, that as the wine seemed to be to his taste, another measure of the same vintage should attend him presently, in order to soothe the hours of his solitude.

No sooner had the Captain reached the apartment than this promise was fulfilled; and, in a short time afterwards, the added comforts of a pasty of red-deer venison rendered him very tolerant both of confinement and want of society. The same domestic, a sort of chamberlain, who placed this good cheer in his apartment, delivered to Dalgetty a packet, sealed and tied up with a silken thread, according to the custom of the time, addressed with many forms of respect to the High and Mighty Prince, Archibald, Marquis of Argyle, Lord of Lorne, and so forth. The chamberlain at the same time apprized the Ritt-master, that he must take horse at an early hour for Inverary, where the packet of Sir Duncan would be at once his introduction and his passport. Not forgetting that it was his object to collect information as well as to act as an envoy, and desirous, for his own sake, to ascertain Sir Duncan's reasons for sending him onward without his personal attendance, the Ritt-master enquired the domestic, with all the precaution that his experience suggested, what were the reasons which detained Sir Duncan at home on the succeeding day. The man, who was from the Lowlands, replied, "that it was the habit of Sir Duncan and his lady to observe as a day of solemn fast and humiliation the anniversary on which their castle had been taken by surprise, and their children, to the number of four, destroyed cruelly by a band of Highland freebooters during Sir Duncan's absence upon an expedition which the Marquis of Argyle had undertaken against the Macleans of the Isle of Mull."

"Truly," said the soldier, "your lord and lady have some cause for fast and humiliation. Nevertheless, I will venture to pronounce, that if he had taken the advice of any experienced soldier, having skill in the practiques of defending places of advantage, he would have built a scone upon the small hill which is to the left of the draw-brigg. And this I can easily prove to you, mine honest friend; for, holding that pasty to be the castle—What's your name, friend?"

"Lorimer, sir," replied the man.

"Here is to your health, honest Lorimer.—I say, Lorimer—holding that pasty to be the main body or citadel of the place to be defended, and taking the marrow-bone for the sconce to be erected—"

"I am sorry, sir," said Lorimer, interrupting him, "that I cannot stay to hear the rest of your demonstration; but the bell will presently ring. As worthy Mr. Graneangowl, the Marquis's own chaplain, does family worship, and only seven of our household out of sixty persons understand the Scottish tongue, it would misbecome any one of them to be absent, and greatly prejudice me in the opinion of my lady. There are pipes and tobacco, sir, if you please to drink a whiff of smoke, and if you want anything else, it shall be forthcoming two hours hence, when prayers are over." So saying, he left the apartment.

No sooner was he gone, than the heavy toll of the castle-bell summoned its inhabitants together; and was answered by the shrill clamour of the females, mixed with the deeper tones of the men, as, talking Earse at the top of their throats, they hurried from different quarters by a long but narrow gallery, which served as a communication to many rooms, and, among others, to that in which Captain Dalgetty was stationed. There they go as if they were beating to the roll-call, thought the soldier to himself; if they all attend the parade, I will look out, take a mouthful of fresh air, and make mine own observations on the practicabilities of this place. Accordingly, when all was quiet, he opened his chamber door, and prepared to leave it, when he saw his friend with the axe advancing towards him from the distant end of the gallery, half whistling, a Gaelic tune. To have shown any want of confidence, would have been at once impolitic, and unbecoming his military character; so the Captain, putting the best face upon his situation he could, whistled a Swedish retreat, in a tone still louder than the notes of his sentinel; and retreating pace by pace, with an air of indifference, as if his only purpose had been to breathe a little fresh air, he shut the door in the face of his guard, when the fellow had approached within a few paces of him.

It is very well, thought the Ritt-master to himself; he annuls my parole by putting guards upon me, for, as we used to say at Mareschal-College, FIDES ET FIDUCIA SUNT RELATIVA [See Note I]; and if he does not trust my word, I do not see how I am bound to keep it, if any motive should occur for my desiring to depart from it. Surely the moral obligation of the parole is relaxed, in as far as physical force is substituted instead thereof.

Thus comforting himself in the metaphysical immunities which he deduced from the vigilance of his sentinel, Ritt-master Dalgetty retired to his apartment, where, amid the theoretical calculations of tactics, and the occasional more practical attacks on the flask and pasty, he consumed the evening until it was time to go to repose. He was summoned by Lorimer at break of day, who gave him to understand, that, when he had broken his fast, for which he produced ample materials, his guide and horse were in attendance for his journey to Inverary. After complying with the hospitable hint of the chamberlain, the soldier proceeded to take horse. In passing through the apartments, he observed that domestics were busily employed in hanging the great hall with black cloth, a ceremony which, he said, he had seen practised when the immortal Gustavus Adolphus lay in state in the Castle of Wolgast, and which, therefore, he opined, was a testimonial of the strictest and deepest mourning.

When Dalgetty mounted his steed, he found himself attended, or perhaps guarded, by five or six Campbells, well armed, commanded by one, who, from the target at his shoulder, and the short cock's feather in his bonnet, as well as from the state which he took upon himself, claimed the rank of a Dunniewassel, or clansman of superior rank; and indeed, from his dignity of deportment, could not stand in a more distant degree of relationship to Sir Duncan, than that of tenth or twelfth cousin at farthest. But it was impossible to extract positive information on this or any other subject, inasmuch as neither this commander nor any of his party spoke English. The Captain rode, and his military attendants walked; but such was their activity, and so numerous the impediments which the nature of the road presented to the equestrian mode of travelling, that far from being retarded by the slowness of their pace, his difficulty was rather in keeping up with his guides. He observed that they occasionally watched him with a sharp eye, as if they were jealous of some effort to escape; and once, as he lingered behind at crossing a brook, one of the gillies began to blow the match of his piece, giving him to understand that he would run some risk in case of an attempt to part company. Dalgetty did not augur much good from the close watch thus maintained upon his person; but there was no remedy, for an attempt to escape from his attendants in an impervious and unknown country, would have been little short of insanity. He therefore plodded patiently on through a waste and savage wilderness, treading paths which were only known to the shepherds and cattle-drivers, and passing with much more of discomfort than satisfaction many of those sublime combinations of mountainous scenery which now draw visitors from every corner of England, to feast their eyes upon Highland grandeur, and mortify their palates upon Highland fare.

At length they arrived on the southern verge of that noble lake upon which Inverary is situated; and a bugle, which the Dunniewassel winded till rock and greenwood rang, served as a signal to a well-manned galley, which, starting from a creek where it lay concealed, received the party on board, including Gustavus; which sagacious quadruped, an experienced traveller both by water and land, walked in and out of the boat with the discretion of a Christian.

Embarked on the bosom of Loch Fine, Captain Dalgetty might have admired one of the grandest scenes which nature affords. He might have noticed the rival rivers Aray and Shiray, which pay tribute to the lake, each issuing from its own dark and wooded retreat. He might have marked, on the soft and gentle slope that ascends from the shores, the noble old Gothic castle, with its varied outline, embattled walls, towers, and outer and inner courts, which, so far as the picturesque is concerned, presented an aspect much more striking than the present massive and uniform mansion. He might have admired those dark woods which for many a mile surrounded this strong and princely dwelling, and his eye might have dwelt on the picturesque peak of Duniquoich, starting abruptly from the lake, and raising its scathed brow into the mists of middle sky, while a solitary watch-tower, perched on its top like an eagle's nest, gave dignity to the scene by awakening a sense of possible danger. All these, and every other accompaniment of this noble scene, Captain Dalgetty might have marked, if he had been so minded. But, to confess the truth, the gallant Captain, who had eaten nothing since daybreak, was chiefly interested by the smoke which ascended from the castle chimneys, and the expectations which this seemed to warrant of his encountering an abundant stock of provant, as he was wont to call supplies of this nature.

The boat soon approached the rugged pier, which abutted into the loch from the little town of Inverary, then a rude assemblage of huts, with a very few stone mansions interspersed, stretching upwards from the banks of Loch Fine to the principal gate of the castle, before which a scene presented itself that might easily have quelled a less stout heart, and turned a more delicate stomach, than those of Ritt-master Dugald Dalgetty, titular of Drumthwacket.

CHAPTER XII.

For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless, unfix'd in principle and place,
In power unpleased, impatient in disgrace.
—ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL.

The village of Inverary, now a neat country town, then partook of the rudeness of the seventeenth century, in the miserable appearance of the houses, and the irregularity of the unpaved street. But a stronger and more terrible characteristic of the period appeared in the market-place, which was a space of irregular width, half way betwixt the harbour, or pier, and the frowning castle-gate, which terminated with its gloomy archway, portcullis, and flankers, the upper end of the vista. Midway this space was erected a rude gibbet, on which hung five dead bodies, two of which from their dress seemed to have been Lowlanders, and the other three corpses were muffled in their Highland plaids. Two or three women sate under the gallows, who seemed to be mourning, and singing the coronach of the deceased in a low voice. But the spectacle was apparently of too ordinary occurrence to have much interest for the inhabitants at large, who, while they thronged to look at the military figure, the horse of an unusual size, and the burnished panoply of Captain Dalgetty, seemed to bestow no attention whatever on the piteous spectacle which their own market-place afforded.

The envoy of Montrose was not quite so indifferent; and, hearing a word or two of English escape from a Highlander of decent appearance, he immediately halted Gustavus and addressed him, "The Provost-Marshal has been busy here, my friend. May I crave of you what these delinquents have been justified for?" He looked towards the gibbet as he spoke; and the Gael, comprehending his meaning rather by his action than his words, immediately replied, "Three gentlemen caterans,—God sain them," (crossing himself)—"twa Sassenach bits o' bodies, that wadna do something that M'Callum More bade them;" and turning from Dalgetty with an air of indifference, away he walked, staying no farther question.

Dalgetty shrugged his shoulders and proceeded, for Sir Duncan Campbell's tenth or twelfth cousin had already shown some signs of impatience.

At the gate of the castle another terrible spectacle of feudal power awaited him. Within a stockade or palisade, which seemed lately to have been added to the defences of the gate, and which was protected by two pieces of light artillery, was a small enclosure, where stood a huge block, on which lay an axe. Both were smeared with recent blood, and a quantity of saw-dust strewed around, partly retained and partly obliterated the marks of a very late execution.

As Dalgetty looked on this new object of terror, his principal guide suddenly twitched him by the skirt of his jerkin, and having thus attracted his attention, winked and pointed with his finger to a pole fixed on the stockade, which supported a human head, being that, doubtless, of the late sufferer. There was a leer on the Highlander's face, as he pointed to this ghastly spectacle, which seemed to his fellow-traveller ominous of nothing good.

Dalgetty dismounted from his horse at the gateway, and Gustavus was taken from him without his being permitted to attend him to the stable, according to his custom.

This gave the soldier a pang which the apparatus of death had not conveyed.—"Poor Gustavus!" said he to himself, "if anything but good happens to me, I had better have left him at Darnlinvarach than brought him here among these Highland salvages, who scarce know the head of a horse from his tail. But duty must part a man from his nearest and dearest—

"When the cannons are roaring, lads, and the colours are flying,

The lads that seek honour must never fear dying;

Then, stout cavaliers, let us toil our brave trade in,

And fight for the Gospel and the bold King of Sweden."

Thus silencing his apprehensions with the but-end of a military ballad, he followed his guide into a sort of guard-room filled with armed Highlanders. It was intimated to him that he must remain here until his arrival was communicated to the Marquis. To make this communication the more intelligible, the doughty Captain gave to the Dunniewassel Sir Duncan Campbell's packet, desiring, as well as he could, by signs, that it should be delivered into the Marquis's own hand. His guide nodded, and withdrew.

The Captain was left about half an hour in this place, to endure with indifference, or return with scorn, the inquisitive, and, at the same time, the inimical glances of the armed Gael, to whom his exterior and equipage were as much subject of curiosity, as his person and country seemed matter of dislike. All this he bore with military nonchalance, until, at the expiration of the above period, a person dressed in black velvet, and wearing a gold chain like a modern magistrate of Edinburgh, but who was, in fact, steward of the household to the Marquis of Argyle, entered the apartment, and invited, with solemn gravity, the Captain to follow him to his master's presence.

The suite of apartments through which he passed, were filled with attendants or visitors of various descriptions, disposed, perhaps, with some ostentation, in order to impress the envoy of Montrose with an idea of the superior power and magnificence belonging to the rival house of Argyle. One ante-room was filled with lacqueys, arrayed in brown and yellow, the colours of the family, who, ranged in double file, gazed in silence upon Captain Dalgetty as he passed betwixt their ranks. Another was occupied by Highland gentlemen and chiefs of small branches, who were amusing themselves with chess, backgammon, and other games, which they scarce intermitted to gaze with curiosity upon the stranger. A third was filled with Lowland gentlemen and officers, who seemed also in attendance; and, lastly, the presence-chamber of the Marquis himself showed him attended by a levee which marked his high importance.

This apartment, the folding doors of which were opened for the reception of Captain Dalgetty, was a long gallery, decorated with tapestry and family portraits, and having a vaulted ceiling of open wood-work, the extreme projections of the beams being richly carved and gilded. The gallery was lighted by long lanceolated Gothic casements, divided by heavy shafts, and filled with painted glass, where the sunbeams glimmered dimly through boars'-heads, and galleys, and batons, and swords, armorial bearings of the powerful house of Argyle, and emblems of the high hereditary offices of Justiciary of Scotland, and Master of the Royal Household, which they long enjoyed. At the upper end of this magnificent gallery stood the Marquis himself, the centre of a splendid circle of Highland and Lowland gentlemen, all richly dressed, among whom were two or three of the clergy, called in, perhaps, to be witnesses of his lordship's zeal for the Covenant. The Marquis himself was dressed in the fashion of the period, which Vandyke has so often painted, but his habit was sober and uniform in colour, and rather rich than gay. His dark complexion, furrowed forehead, and downcast look, gave him the appearance of one frequently engaged in the consideration of important affairs, and who has acquired, by long habit, an air of gravity and mystery, which he cannot shake off even where there is nothing to be concealed. The cast with his eyes, which had procured him in the Highlands the nickname of Gillespie Grumach (or the grim), was less perceptible when he looked downward, which perhaps was one cause of his having adopted that habit. In person, he was tall and thin, but not without that dignity of deportment and manners, which became his high rank. Something there was cold in his address, and sinister in his look, although he spoke and behaved with the usual grace of a man of such quality. He was adored by his own clan, whose advancement he had greatly studied, although he was in proportion disliked by the Highlanders of other septs, some of whom he had already stripped of their possessions, while others conceived themselves in danger from his future schemes, and all dreaded the height to which he was elevated.

We have already noticed, that in displaying himself amidst his councillors, his officers of the household, and his train of vassals, allies, and dependents, the Marquis of Argyle probably wished to make an impression on the nervous system of Captain Dugald Dalgetty. But that doughty person had fought his way, in one department or another, through the greater part of the Thirty Years' War in Germany, a period when a brave and successful soldier was a companion for princes. The King of Sweden, and, after his example, even the haughty Princes of the Empire, had found themselves fain, frequently to compound with their dignity, and silence, when they could not satisfy the pecuniary claims of their soldiers, by admitting them to unusual privileges and familiarity. Captain Dugald Dalgetty had it to boast, that he had sate with princes at feasts made for monarchs, and therefore was not a person to be brow-beat even by the dignity which surrounded M'Callum More. Indeed, he was naturally by no means the most modest man in the world, but, on the contrary, had so good an opinion of himself, that into whatever company he chanced to be thrown, he was always proportionally elevated in his own conceit; so that he felt as much at ease in the most exalted society as among his own ordinary companions. In this high opinion of his own rank, he was greatly fortified by his ideas of the military profession, which, in his phrase, made a valiant cavalier a camarade to an emperor.

When introduced, therefore, into the Marquis's presence-chamber, he advanced to the upper end with an air of more confidence than grace, and would have gone close up to Argyle's person before speaking, had not the latter waved his hand, as a signal to him to stop short. Captain Dalgetty did so accordingly, and having made his military congee with easy confidence, he thus accosted the Marquis: "Give you good morrow, my lord—or rather I should say, good even; BESO A USTED LOS MANOS, as the Spaniard says."

"Who are you, sir, and what is your business?" demanded the Marquis, in a tone which was intended to interrupt the offensive familiarity of the soldier.

"That is a fair interrogative, my lord," answered Dalgetty, "which I shall forthwith answer as becomes a cavalier, and that PEREMPTORIE, as we used to say at Mareschal-College."

"See who or what he is, Neal," said the Marquis sternly, to a gentleman who stood near him.

"I will save the honourable gentleman the labour of investigation," continued the Captain. "I am Dugald Dalgetty, of Drumthwacket, that should be, late Ritt-master in various services, and now Major of I know not what or whose regiment of Irishes; and I am come with a flag of truce from a high and powerful lord, James Earl of Montrose, and other noble persons now in arms for his Majesty. And so, God save King Charles!"

"Do you know where you are, and the danger of dallying with us, sir," again demanded the Marquis, "that you reply to me as if I were a child or a fool? The Earl of Montrose is with the English malignants; and I suspect you are one of those Irish runagates, who are come into this country to burn and slay, as they did under Sir Phelim O'Neale."

"My lord," replied Captain Dalgetty, "I am no renegade, though a Major of Irishes, for which I might refer your lordship to the invincible Gustavus Adolphus the Lion of the North, to Bannier, to Oxenstiern, to the warlike Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Tilly, Wallenstein, Piccolomini, and other great captains, both dead and living; and touching the noble Earl of Montrose, I pray your lordship to peruse these my full powers for treating with you in the name of that right honourable commander." The Marquis looked slightly at the signed and sealed paper which Captain Dalgetty handed to him, and, throwing it with contempt upon a table, asked those around him what he deserved who came as the avowed envoy and agent of malignant traitors, in arms against the state?

"A high gallows and a short shrift," was the ready answer of one of the bystanders.

"I will crave of that honourable cavalier who hath last spoken," said Dalgetty, "to be less hasty in forming his conclusions, and also of your lordship to be cautious in adopting the same, in respect such threats are to be held out only to base bisognos, and not to men of spirit and action, who are bound to peril themselves as freely in services of this nature, as upon sieges, battles, or onslaughts of any sort. And albeit I have not with me a trumpet, or a white flag, in respect our army is not yet equipped with its full appointments, yet the honourable cavaliers and your lordship must concede unto me, that the sanctity of an envoy who cometh on matter of truth or parole, consisteth not in the fanfare of a trumpet, which is but a sound, or in the flap of a white flag, which is but an old rag in itself, but in the confidence reposed by the party sending, and the party sent, in the honour of those to whom the message is to be carried, and their full reliance that they will respect the JUS GENTIUM, as well as the law of arms, in the person of the commissioner."

"You are not come hither to lecture us upon the law of arms, sir," said the Marquis, "which neither does nor can apply to rebels and insurgents; but to suffer the penalty of your insolence and folly for bringing a traitorous message to the Lord Justice General of Scotland, whose duty calls upon him to punish such an offence with death."

"Gentlemen," said the Captain, who began much to dislike the turn which his mission seemed about to take, "I pray you to remember, that the Earl of Montrose will hold you and your possessions liable for whatever injury my person, or my horse, shall sustain by these unseemly proceedings, and that he will be justified in executing retributive vengeance on your persons and possessions."

This menace was received with a scornful laugh, while one of the Campbells replied, "It is a far cry to Lochow;" proverbial expression of the tribe, meaning that their ancient hereditary domains lay beyond the reach of an invading enemy. "But, gentlemen," further urged the unfortunate Captain, who was unwilling to be condemned, without at least the benefit of a full hearing, "although it is not for me to say how far it may be to Lochow, in respect I am a stranger to these parts, yet, what is more to the purpose, I trust you will admit that I have the guarantee of an honourable gentleman of your own name, Sir Duncan Campbell of Ardenvohr, for my safety on this mission; and I pray you to observe, that in breaking the truce towards me, you will highly prejudice his honour and fair fame." This seemed to be new information to many of the gentlemen, for they spoke aside with each other, and the Marquis's face, notwithstanding his power of suppressing all external signs of his passions, showed impatience and vexation.

"Does Sir Duncan of Ardenvohr pledge his honour for this person's safety, my lord?" said one of the company, addressing the Marquis.

"I do not believe it," answered the Marquis; "but I have not yet had time to read his letter."

"We will pray your lordship to do so," said another of the Campbells; "our name must not suffer discredit through the means of such a fellow as this."

"A dead fly," said a clergyman, "maketh the ointment of the apothecary to stink."

"Reverend sir," said Captain Dalgetty, "in respect of the use to be derived, I forgive you the unsavouriness of your comparison; and also remit to the gentleman in the red bonnet, the disparaging epithet of FELLOW, which he has discourteously applied to me, who am no way to be distinguished by the same, unless in so far as I have been called fellow-soldier by the great Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, and other choice commanders, both in Germany and the Low Countries. But, touching Sir Duncan Campbell's guarantee of my safety, I will gage my life upon his making my words good thereanent, when he comes hither to-morrow."

"If Sir Duncan be soon expected, my Lord," said one of the intercessors, "it would be a pity to anticipate matters with this poor man."

"Besides that," said another, "your lordship—I speak with reverence—should, at least, consult the Knight of Ardenvohr's letter, and learn the terms on which this Major Dalgetty, as he calls himself, has been sent hither by him."

They closed around the Marquis, and conversed together in a low tone, both in Gaelic and English. The patriarchal power of the Chiefs was very great, and that of the Marquis of Argyle, armed with all his grants of hereditary jurisdiction, was particularly absolute. But there interferes some check of one kind or other even in the most despotic government. That which mitigated the power of the Celtic Chiefs, was the necessity which they lay under of conciliating the kinsmen who, under them, led out the lower orders to battle, and who formed a sort of council of the tribe in time of peace. The Marquis on this occasion thought himself under the necessity of attending to the remonstrances of this senate, or more properly COUNCIL, of the name of Campbell, and, slipping out of the circle, gave orders for the prisoner to be removed to a place of security.

"Prisoner!" exclaimed Dalgetty, exerting himself with such force as wellnigh to shake off two Highlanders, who for some minutes past had waited the signal to seize him, and kept for that purpose close at his back. Indeed the soldier had so nearly attained his liberty, that the Marquis of Argyle changed colour, and stepped back two paces, laying, however, his hand on his sword, while several of his clan, with ready devotion, threw themselves betwixt him and the apprehended vengeance of the prisoner. But the Highland guards were too strong to be shaken off, and the unlucky Captain, after having had his offensive weapons taken from him, was dragged off and conducted through several gloomy passages to a small side-door grated with iron, within which was another of wood. These were opened by a grim old Highlander with a long white beard, and displayed a very steep and narrow flight of steps leading downward. The Captain's guards pushed him down two or three steps, then, unloosing his arms, left him to grope his way to the bottom as he could; a task which became difficult and even dangerous, when the two doors being successively locked left the prisoner in total darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Whatever stranger visits here,
We pity his sad case,
Unless to worship he draw near
The King of Kings—his Grace.

—BURNS'S EPIGRAM ON A VISIT TO INVERARY.

The Captain, finding himself deprived of light in the manner we have described, and placed in a very uncertain situation, proceeded to descend the narrow and broken stair with all the caution in his power, hoping that he might find at the bottom some place to repose himself. But with all his care he could not finally avoid making a false step, which brought him down the four or five last steps too hastily to preserve his equilibrium. At the bottom he stumbled over a bundle of something soft, which stirred and uttered a groan, so deranging the Captain's descent, that he floundered forward, and finally fell upon his hands and knees on the floor of a damp and stone-paved dungeon.

When Dalgetty had recovered, his first demand was to know over whom he had stumbled.

"He was a man a month since," answered a hollow and broken voice.

"And what is he now, then," said Dalgetty, "that he thinks it fitting to lie upon the lowest step of the stairs, and clew'd up like a hurchin, that honourable cavaliers, who chance to be in trouble, may break their noses over him?"

"What is he now?" replied the same voice; "he is a wretched trunk, from which the boughs have one by one been lopped away, and which cares little how soon it is torn up and hewed into billets for the furnace."

"Friend," said Dalgetty, "I am sorry for you; but PATIENZA, as the Spaniard says. If you had but been as quiet as a log, as you call yourself, I should have saved some excoriations on my hands and knees."

"You are a soldier," replied his fellow-prisoner; "do you complain on account of a fall for which a boy would not bemoan himself?"

"A soldier?" said the Captain; "and how do you know, in this cursed dark cavern, that I am a soldier?"

"I heard your armour clash as you fell," replied the prisoner, "and now I see it glimmer. When you have remained as long as I in this darkness, your eyes will distinguish the smallest eft that crawls on the floor."

"I had rather the devil picked them out!" said Dalgetty; "if this be the case, I shall wish for a short turn of the rope, a soldier's prayer, and a leap from a ladder. But what sort of provant have you got here—what food, I mean, brother in affliction?"

"Bread and water once a day," replied the voice.

"Prithee, friend, let me taste your loaf," said Dalgetty; "I hope we shall play good comrades while we dwell together in this abominable pit."

"The loaf and jar of water," answered the other prisoner, "stand in the corner, two steps to your right hand. Take them, and welcome. With earthly food I have wellnigh done."

Dalgetty did not wait for a second invitation, but, groping out the provisions, began to munch at the stale black oaten loaf with as much heartiness as we have seen him play his part at better viands.

"This bread," he said, muttering (with his mouth full at the same time), "is not very savoury; nevertheless, it is not much worse than that which we ate at the famous leaguer at Werben, where the valorous Gustavus foiled all the efforts of the celebrated Tilly, that terrible old hero, who had driven two kings out of the field—namely, Ferdinand of Bohemia and Christian of Denmark. And anent this water, which is none of the most sweet, I drink in the same to your speedy deliverance, comrade, not forgetting mine own, and devoutly wishing it were Rhenish wine, or humming Lubeck beer, at the least, were it but in honour of the pledge."

While Dalgetty ran on in this way, his teeth kept time with his tongue, and he speedily finished the provisions which the benevolence or indifference of his companion in misfortune had abandoned to his voracity. When this task was accomplished, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and seating himself in a corner of the dungeon in which he could obtain a support on each side (for he had always been an admirer of elbow-chairs, he remarked, even from his youth upward), he began to question his fellow-captive.

"Mine honest friend," said he, "you and I, being comrades at bed and board, should be better acquainted. I am Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, and so forth, Major in a regiment of loyal Irishes, and Envoy Extraordinary of a High and Mighty Lord, James Earl of Montrose.—Pray, what may your name be?"

"It will avail you little to know," replied his more taciturn companion.

"Let me judge of that matter," answered the soldier.

"Well, then—Ranald MacEagh is my name—that is, Ranald Son of the Mist."

"Son of the Mist!" ejaculated Dalgetty. "Son of utter darkness, say I. But, Ranald, since that is your name, how came you in possession of the provost's court of guard? what the devil brought you here, that is to say?"

"My misfortunes and my crimes," answered Ranald. "Know ye the Knight of Ardenvohr?"

"I do know that honourable person," replied Dalgetty.

"But know ye where he now is?" replied Ranald.

"Fasting this day at Ardenvohr," answered the Envoy, "that he may feast to-morrow at Inverary; in which last purpose if he chance to fail, my lease of human service will be something precarious."

"Then let him know, one claims his intercession, who is his worst foe and his best friend," answered Ranald.

"Truly I shall desire to carry a less questionable message," answered Dalgetty, "Sir Duncan is not a person to play at reading riddles with."

"Craven Saxon," said the prisoner, "tell him I am the raven that, fifteen years since, stooped on his tower of strength and the pledges he had left there—I am the hunter that found out the wolfs den on the rock, and destroyed his offspring—I am the leader of the band which surprised Ardenvohr yesterday was fifteen years, and gave his four children to the sword."

"Truly, my honest friend," said Dalgetty, "if that is your best recommendation to Sir Duncan's favour, I would pretermitt my pleading thereupon, in respect I have observed that even the animal creation are incensed against those who intromit with their offspring forcibly, much more any rational and Christian creatures, who have had violence done upon their small family. But I pray you in courtesy to tell me, whether you assailed the castle from the hillock called Drumsnab, whilk I uphold to be the true point of attack, unless it were to be protected by a sconce."

"We ascended the cliff by ladders of withies or saplings," said the prisoner, "drawn up by an accomplice and clansman, who had served six months in the castle to enjoy that one night of unlimited vengeance. The owl whooped around us as we hung betwixt heaven and earth; the tide roared against the foot of the rock, and dashed asunder our skiff, yet no man's heart failed him. In the morning there was blood and ashes, where there had been peace and joy at the sunset."

"It was a pretty camisade, I doubt not, Ranald MacEagh, a very sufficient onslaught, and not unworthily discharged. Nevertheless, I would have pressed the house from that little hillock called Drumsnab. But yours is a pretty irregular Scythian fashion of warfare, Ranald, much resembling that of Turks, Tartars, and other Asiatic people.—But the reason, my friend, the cause of this war—the TETERRIMA CAUSA, as I may say? Deliver me that, Ranald."

"We had been pushed at by the M'Aulays, and other western tribes," said Ranald, "till our possessions became unsafe for us."

"Ah ha!" said Dalgetty; "I have faint remembrance of having heard of that matter. Did you not put bread and cheese into a man's mouth, when he had never a stomach whereunto to transmit the same?"

"You have heard, then," said Ranald, "the tale of our revenge on the haughty forester?"

"I bethink me that I have," said Dalgetty, "and that not of an old date. It was a merry jest that, of cramming the bread into the dead man's mouth, but somewhat too wild and salvage for civilized acceptation, besides wasting the good victuals. I have seen when at a siege or a leaguer, Ranald, a living soldier would have been the better, Ranald, for that crust of bread, whilk you threw away on a dead pow."

"We were attacked by Sir Duncan," continued MacEagh, "and my brother was slain—his head was withering on the battlements which we scaled—I vowed revenge, and it is a vow I have never broken."

"It may be so," said Dalgetty; "and every thorough-bred soldier will confess that revenge is a sweet morsel; but in what manner this story will interest Sir Duncan in your justification, unless it should move him to intercede with the Marquis to change the manner thereof from hanging, or simple suspension, to breaking your limbs on the roue or wheel, with the coulter of a plough, or otherwise putting you to death by torture, surpasses my comprehension. Were I you, Ranald, I would be for mickenning Sir Duncan, keeping my own secret, and departing quietly by suffocation, like your ancestors before you."

"Yet hearken, stranger," said the Highlander. "Sir Duncan of Ardenvohr had four children. Three died under our dirks, but the fourth survives; and more would he give to dandle on his knee the fourth child which remains, than to rack these old bones, which care little for the utmost indulgence of his wrath. One word, if I list to speak it, could turn his day of humiliation and fasting into a day of thankfulness and rejoicing, and breaking of bread. O, I know it by my own heart? Dearer to me is the child Kenneth, who chaseth the butterfly on the banks of the Aven, than ten sons who are mouldering in earth, or are preyed on by the fowls of the air."

"I presume, Ranald," continued Dalgetty, "that the three pretty fellows whom I saw yonder in the market-place, strung up by the head like rizzer'd haddocks, claimed some interest in you?"

There was a brief pause ere the Highlander replied, in a tone of strong emotion,— "They were my sons, stranger—they were my sons!—blood of my blood—bone of my bone!—fleet of foot—unerring in aim—unvanquished by foemen till the sons of Diarmid overcame them by numbers! Why do I wish to survive them? The old trunk will less feel the rending up of its roots, than it has felt the lopping off of its graceful boughs. But Kenneth must be trained to revenge—the young eagle must learn from the old how to stoop on his foes. I will purchase for his sake my life and my freedom, by discovering my secret to the Knight of Ardenvohr."

"You may attain your end more easily," said a third voice, mingling in the conference, "by entrusting it to me."

All Highlanders are superstitious. "The Enemy of Mankind is among us!" said Ranald MacEagh, springing to his feet. His chains clattered as he rose, while he drew himself as far as they permitted from the quarter whence the voice appeared to proceed. His fear in some degree communicated itself to Captain Dalgetty, who began to repeat, in a sort of polyglot gibberish, all the exorcisms he had ever heard of, without being able to remember more than a word or two of each.

"IN NOMINE DOMINI, as we said at Mareschal-College—SANTISSMA MADRE DI DIOS, as the Spaniard has it—ALLE GUTEN GEISTER LOBEN DEN HERRN, saith the blessed Psalmist, in Dr. Luther's translation—"

"A truce with your exorcisms," said the voice they had heard before; "though I come strangely among you, I am mortal like yourselves, and my assistance may avail you in your present strait, if you are not too proud to be counselled."

While the stranger thus spoke, he withdrew the shade of a dark lantern, by whose feeble light Dalgetty could only discern that the speaker who had thus mysteriously united himself to their company, and mixed in their conversation, was a tall man, dressed in a livery cloak of the Marquis. His first glance was to his feet, but he saw neither the cloven foot which Scottish legends assign to the foul fiend, nor the horse's hoof by which he is distinguished in Germany. His first enquiry was, how the stranger had come among them?

"For," said he, "the creak of these rusty bars would have been heard had the door been made patent; and if you passed through the keyhole, truly, sir, put what face you will on it, you are not fit to be enrolled in a regiment of living men."

"I reserve my secret," answered the stranger, "until you shall merit the discovery by communicating to me some of yours. It may be that I shall be moved to let you out where I myself came in."

"It cannot be through the keyhole, then," said Captain Dalgetty, "for my corslet would stick in the passage, were it possible that my head-piece could get through. As for secrets, I have none of my own, and but few appertaining to others. But impart to us what secrets you desire to know; or, as Professor Snufflegreek used to say at the Mareschal-College, Aberdeen, speak that I may know thee."

"It is not with you I have first to do," replied the stranger, turning his light full on the mild and wasted features, and the large limbs of the Highlander, Ranald MacEagh, who, close drawn up against the walls of the dungeon, seemed yet uncertain whether his guest was a living being.

"I have brought you something, my friend," said the stranger, in a more soothing tone, "to mend your fare; if you are to die to-morrow, it is no reason wherefore you should not live to-night."

"None at all—no reason in the creation," replied the ready Captain Dalgetty, who forthwith began to unpack the contents of a small basket which the stranger had brought under his cloak, while the Highlander, either in suspicion or disdain, paid no attention to the good cheer.

"Here's to thee, my friend," said the Captain, who, having already dispatched a huge piece of roasted kid, was now taking a pull at the wine-flask. "What is thy name, my good friend?"

"Murdoch Campbell, sir," answered the servant, "a lackey of the Marquis of Argyle, and occasionally acting as under-warden."

"Then here is to thee once more, Murdoch," said Dalgetty, "drinking to you by your proper name for the better luck sake. This wine I take to be Calcavella. Well, honest Murdoch, I take it on me to say, thou deservest to be upper-warden, since thou showest thyself twenty times better acquainted with the way of victualling honest gentlemen that are under misfortune, than thy principal. Bread and water? out upon him! It was enough, Murdoch, to destroy the credit of the Marquis's dungeon. But I see you would converse with my friend, Ranald MacEagh here. Never mind my presence; I'll get me into this corner with the basket, and I will warrant my jaws make noise enough to prevent my ears from hearing you."

Notwithstanding this promise, however, the veteran listened with all the attention he could to gather their discourse, or, as he described it himself, "laid his ears back in his neck, like Gustavus, when he heard the key turn in the girmell-kist." He could, therefore, owing to the narrowness of the dungeon, easily overhear the following dialogue.

"Are you aware, Son of the Mist," said the Campbell, "that you will never leave this place excepting for the gibbet?"

"Those who are dearest to me," answered MacEagh, "have trode that path before me."

"Then you would do nothing," asked the visitor, "to shun following them?"

The prisoner writhed himself in his chains before returning an answer.

"I would do much," at length he said; "not for my own life, but for the sake of the pledge in the glen of Strath-Aven."

"And what would you do to turn away the bitterness of the hour?" again demanded Murdoch; "I care not for what cause ye mean to shun it."

"I would do what a man might do, and still call himself a man."

"Do you call yourself a man," said the interrogator, "who have done the deeds of a wolf?"

"I do," answered the outlaw; "I am a man like my forefathers—while wrapt in the mantle of peace, we were lambs—it was rent from us, and ye now call us wolves. Give us the huts ye have burned, our children whom ye have murdered, our widows whom ye have starved—collect from the gibbet and the pole the mangled carcasses, and whitened skulls of our kinsmen—bid them live and bless us, and we will be your vassals and brothers—till then, let death, and blood, and mutual wrong, draw a dark veil of division between us."

"You will then do nothing for your liberty," said the Campbell.

"Anything—but call myself the friend of your tribe," answered MacEagh.

"We scorn the friendship of banditti and caterans," retorted Murdoch, "and would not stoop to accept it.—What I demand to know from you, in exchange for your liberty, is, where the daughter and heiress of the Knight of Ardenvohr is now to be found?"

"That you may wed her to some beggarly kinsman of your great master," said Ranald, "after the fashion of the Children of Diarmid! Does not the valley of Glenorquhy, to this very hour, cry shame on the violence offered to a helpless infant whom her kinsmen were conveying to the court of the Sovereign? Were not her escort compelled to hide her beneath a cauldron, round which they fought till not one remained to tell the tale? and was not the girl brought to this fatal castle, and afterwards wedded to the brother of M'Callum More, and all for the sake of her broad lands?" [Such a story is told of the heiress of the clan of Calder, who was made prisoner in the manner described, and afterwards wedded to Sir Duncan Campbell, from which union the Campbells of Cawdor have their descent.]

"And if the tale be true," said Murdoch, "she had a preferment beyond what the King of Scots would have conferred on her. But this is far from the purpose. The daughter of Sir Duncan of Ardenvohr is of our own blood, not a stranger; and who has so good a right to know her fate as M'Callum More, the chief of her clan?"

"It is on his part, then, that you demand it!" said the outlaw. The domestic of the Marquis assented.

"And you will practise no evil against the maiden?—I have done her wrong enough already."

"No evil, upon the word of a Christian man," replied Murdoch.

"And my guerdon is to be life and liberty?" said the Child of the Mist.

"Such is our paction," replied the Campbell.

"Then know, that the child whom I saved out of compassion at the spoiling of her father's tower of strength, was bred as an adopted daughter of our tribe, until we were worsted at the pass of Ballenduthil, by the fiend incarnate and mortal enemy of our tribe, Allan M'Aulay of the Bloody hand, and by the horsemen of Lennox, under the heir of Menteith."

"Fell she into the power of Allan of the Bloody hand," said Murdoch, "and she a reputed daughter of thy tribe? Then her blood has gilded the dirk, and thou hast said nothing to rescue thine own forfeited life."

"If my life rest on hers," answered the outlaw, "it is secure, for she still survives; but it has a more insecure reliance—the frail promise of a son of Diarmid."

"That promise shall not fail you," said the Campbell, "if you can assure me that she survives, and where she is to be found."

"In the Castle of Darlinvarach," said Randal MacEagh, "under the name of Annot Lyle. I have often heard of her from my kinsmen, who have again approached their native woods, and it is not long since mine old eyes beheld her."

"You!" said Murdoch, in astonishment, "you, a chief among the Children of the Mist, and ventured so near your mortal foe?"

"Son of Diarmid, I did more," replied the outlaw; "I was in the hall of the castle, disguised as a harper from the wild shores of Skianach. My purpose was to have plunged my dirk in the body of the M'Aulay with the Bloody hand, before whom our race trembles, and to have taken thereafter what fate God should send me. But I saw Annot Lyle, even when my hand was on the hilt of my dagger. She touched her clairsach [Harp] to a song of the Children of the Mist, which she had learned when her dwelling was amongst us. The woods in which we had dwelt pleasantly, rustled their green leaves in the song, and our streams were there with the sound of all their waters. My hand forsook the dagger; the fountains of mine eyes were opened, and the hour of revenge passed away.—And now, Son of Diarmid, have I not paid the ransom of my head?"

"Ay," replied Murdoch, "if your tale be true; but what proof can you assign for it?"

"Bear witness, heaven and earth," exclaimed the outlaw, "he already looks how he may step over his word!"

"Not so," replied Murdoch; "every promise shall be kept to you when I am assured you have told me the truth.—But I must speak a few words with your companion in captivity."

"Fair and false—ever fair and false," muttered the prisoner, as he threw himself once more on the floor of his dungeon.

Meanwhile, Captain Dalgetty, who had attended to every word of this dialogue, was making his own remarks on it in private. "What the HENKER can this sly fellow have to say to me? I have no child, either of my own, so far as I know, or of any other person, to tell him a tale about. But let him come on—he will have some manoeuvring ere he turn the flank of the old soldier."

Accordingly, as if he had stood pike in hand to defend a breach, he waited with caution, but without fear, the commencement of the attack.

"You are a citizen of the world, Captain Dalgetty," said Murdoch Campbell, "and cannot be ignorant of our old Scotch proverb, GIF-GAF, [In old English, KA ME KA THEE, i.e. mutually serving each other.] which goes through all nations and all services."

"Then I should know something of it," said Dalgetty; "for, except the Turks, there are few powers in Europe whom I have not served; and I have sometimes thought of taking a turn either with Bethlem Gabor, or with the Janizaries."

"A man of your experience and unprejudiced ideas, then, will understand me at once," said Murdoch, "when I say, I mean that your freedom shall depend on your true and up right answer to a few trifling questions respecting the gentlemen you have left; their state of preparation; the number of their men, and nature of their appointments; and as much as you chance to know about their plan of operations."

"Just to satisfy your curiosity," said Dalgetty, "and without any farther purpose?"

"None in the world," replied Murdoch; "what interest should a poor devil like me take in their operations?"

"Make your interrogations, then," said the Captain, "and I will answer them PREREMTORIE."

"How many Irish may be on their march to join James Graham the delinquent?"

"Probably ten thousand," said Captain Dalgetty.

"Ten thousand!" replied Murdoch angrily; "we know that scarce two thousand landed at Ardnamurchan."

"Then you know more about them than I do," answered Captain Dalgetty, with great composure. "I never saw them mustered yet, or even under arms."

"And how many men of the clans may be expected?" demanded Murdoch.

"As many as they can make," replied the Captain.

"You are answering from the purpose, sir," said Murdoch "speak plainly, will there be five thousand men?"

"There and thereabouts," answered Dalgetty.

"You are playing with your life, sir, if you trifle with me," replied the catechist; "one whistle of mine, and in less than ten minutes your head hangs on the drawbridge."

"But to speak candidly, Mr. Murdoch," replied the Captain "do you think it is a reasonable thing to ask me after the secrets of our army, and I engaged to serve for the whole campaign? If I taught you how to defeat Montrose, what becomes of my pay, arrears, and chance of booty?"

"I tell you," said Campbell, "that if you be stubborn, your campaign shall begin and end in a march to the block at the castle-gate, which stands ready for such land-laufers; but if you answer my questions faithfully, I will receive you into my—into the service of M'Callum More."

"Does the service afford good pay?" said Captain Dalgetty.

"He will double yours, if you will return to Montrose and act under his direction."

"I wish I had seen you, sir, before taking on with him," said Dalgetty, appearing to meditate.

"On the contrary, I can afford you more advantageous terms now," said the Campbell; "always supposing that you are faithful."

"Faithful, that is, to you, and a traitor to Montrose," answered the Captain.

"Faithful to the cause of religion and good order," answered Murdoch, "which sanctifies any deception you may employ to serve it."

"And the Marquis of Argyle—should I incline to enter his service, is he a kind master?" demanded Dalgetty.

"Never man kinder," quoth Campbell.

"And bountiful to his officers?" pursued the Captain.

"The most open hand in Scotland," replied Murdoch.

"True and faithful to his engagements?" continued Dalgetty.

"As honourable a nobleman as breathes," said the clansman.

"I never heard so much good of him before," said Dalgetty; "you must know the Marquis well,—or rather you must be the Marquis himself!—Lord of Argyle," he added, throwing himself suddenly on the disguised nobleman, "I arrest you in the name of King Charles, as a traitor. If you venture to call for assistance, I will wrench round your neck."

The attack which Dalgetty made upon Argyle's person was so sudden and unexpected, that he easily prostrated him on the floor of the dungeon, and held him down with one hand, while his right, grasping the Marquis's throat, was ready to strangle him on the slightest attempt to call for assistance.

"Lord of Argyle," he said, "it is now my turn to lay down the terms of capitulation. If you list to show me the private way by which you entered the dungeon, you shall escape, on condition of being my LOCUM TENENS, as we said at the Mareschal-College, until your warder visits his prisoners. But if not, I will first strangle you—I learned the art from a Polonian heyduck, who had been a slave in the Ottoman seraglio—and then seek out a mode of retreat."

"Villain! you would not murder me for my kindness," murmured Argyle.

"Not for your kindness, my lord," replied Dalgetty: "but first, to teach your lordship the JUS GENTIUM towards cavaliers who come to you under safe-conduct; and secondly, to warn you of the danger of proposing dishonourable terms to any worthy soldado, in order to tempt him to become false to his standard during the term of his service."

"Spare my life," said Argyle, "and I will do as you require."

Dalgetty maintained his gripe upon the Marquis's throat, compressing it a little while he asked questions, and relaxing it so far as to give him the power of answering them.

"Where is the secret door into the dungeon?" he demanded.

"Hold up the lantern to the corner on your right hand, you will discern the iron which covers the spring," replied the Marquis.

"So far so good.—Where does the passage lead to?"

"To my private apartment behind the tapestry," answered the prostrate nobleman.

"From thence how shall I reach the gateway?"

"Through the grand gallery, the anteroom, the lackeys' waiting hall, the grand guardroom—"

"All crowded with soldiers, factionaries, and attendants?—that will never do for me, my lord;—have you no secret passage to the gate, as you have to your dungeons? I have seen such in Germany."

"There is a passage through the chapel," said the Marquis, "opening from my apartment."

"And what is the pass-word at the gate?"

"The sword of Levi," replied the Marquis; "but if you will receive my pledge of honour, I will go with you, escort you through every guard, and set you at full liberty with a passport."

"I might trust you, my lord, were your throat not already black with the grasp of my fingers—as it is, BESO LOS MANOS A USTED, as the Spaniard says. Yet you may grant me a passport;—are there writing materials in your apartment?"

"Surely; and blank passports ready to be signed. I will attend you there," said the Marquis, "instantly."

"It were too much honour for the like of me," said Dalgetty; "your lordship shall remain under charge of mine honest friend Ranald MacEagh; therefore, prithee let me drag you within reach of his chain.—Honest Ranald, you see how matters stand with us. I shall find the means, I doubt not, of setting you at freedom.

Meantime, do as you see me do; clap your hand thus on the weasand of this high and mighty prince, under his ruff, and if he offer to struggle or cry out, fail not, my worthy Ranald, to squeeze doughtily; and if it be AD DELIQUIUM, Ranald, that is, till he swoon, there is no great matter, seeing he designed your gullet and mine to still harder usage."

"If he offer at speech or struggle," said Ranald, "he dies by my hand."

"That is right, Ranald—very spirited:—A thorough-going friend that understands a hint is worth a million!"

Thus resigning the charge of the Marquis to his new confederate, Dalgetty pressed the spring, by which the secret door flew open, though so well were its hinges polished and oiled, that it made not the slightest noise in revolving. The opposite side of the door was secured by very strong bolts and bars, beside which hung one or two keys, designed apparently to undo fetterlocks. A narrow staircase, ascending up through the thickness of the castle-wall, landed, as the Marquis had truly informed him, behind the tapestry of his private apartment. Such communications were frequent in old feudal castles, as they gave the lord of the fortress, like a second Dionysius, the means of hearing the conversation of his prisoners, or, if he pleased, of visiting them in disguise, an experiment which had terminated so unpleasantly on the present occasion for Gillespie Grumach. Having examined previously whether there was any one in the apartment, and finding the coast clear, the Captain entered, and hastily possessing himself of a blank passport, several of which lay on the table, and of writing materials, securing, at the same time, the Marquis's dagger, and a silk cord from the hangings, he again descended into the cavern, where, listening a moment at the door, he could hear the half-stifled voice of the Marquis making great proffers to MacEagh, on condition he would suffer him to give an alarm.

"Not for a forest of deer—not for a thousand head of cattle," answered the freebooter; "not for all the lands that ever called a son of Diarmid master, will I break the troth I have plighted to him of the iron-garment!"

"He of the iron-garment," said Dalgetty, entering, "is bounden unto you, MacEagh, and this noble lord shall be bounden also; but first he must fill up this passport with the names of Major Dugald Dalgetty and his guide, or he is like to have a passport to another world."

The Marquis subscribed, and wrote, by the light of the dark lantern, as the soldier prescribed to him.

"And now, Ranald," said Dalgetty, "strip thy upper garment—thy plaid I mean, Ranald, and in it will I muffle the M'Callum More, and make of him, for the time, a Child of the Mist;—Nay, I must bring it over your head, my lord, so as to secure us against your mistimed clamour.—So, now he is sufficiently muffled;—hold down your hands, or, by Heaven, I will stab you to the heart with your own dagger!—nay, you shall be bound with nothing less than silk, as your quality deserves.—So, now he is secure till some one comes to relieve him. If he ordered us a late dinner, Ranald, he is like to be the sufferer;—at what hour, my good Ranald, did the jailor usually appear?"

"Never till the sun was beneath the western wave," said MacEagh. "Then, my friend, we shall have three hours good," said the cautious Captain. "In the meantime, let us labour for your liberation."

To examine Ranald's chain was the next occupation. It was undone by means of one of the keys which hung behind the private door, probably deposited there, that the Marquis might, if he pleased, dismiss a prisoner, or remove him elsewhere without the necessity of summoning the warden. The outlaw stretched his benumbed arms, and bounded from the floor of the dungeon in all the ecstasy of recovered freedom.

"Take the livery-coat of that noble prisoner," said Captain Dalgetty; "put it on, and follow close at my heels."

The outlaw obeyed. They ascended the private stair, having first secured the door behind them, and thus safely reached the apartment of the Marquis.

[The precarious state of the feudal nobles introduced a great deal of espionage into their castles. Sir Robert Carey mentions his having put on the cloak of one of his own wardens to obtain a confession from the mouth of Geordie Bourne, his prisoner, whom he caused presently to be hanged in return for the frankness of his communication. The fine old Border castle of Naworth contains a private stair from the apartment of the Lord William Howard, by which he could visit the dungeon, as is alleged in the preceding chapter to have been practised by the Marquis of Argyle.]

CHAPTER XIV.

This was the entry then, these stairs—but whither after?

Yet he that's sure to perish on the land

May quit the nicety of card and compass,

And trust the open sea without a pilot.—TRAGEDY OF BENNOVALT.

"Look out for the private way through the chapel, Ranald," said the Captain, "while I give a hasty regard to these matters."

Thus speaking, he seized with one hand a bundle of Argyle's most private papers, and with the other a purse of gold, both of which lay in a drawer of a rich cabinet, which stood invitingly open. Neither did he neglect to possess himself of a sword and pistols, with powder-flask and balls, which hung in the apartment.

"Intelligence and booty," said the veteran, as he pouched the spoils, "each honourable cavalier should look to, the one on his general's behalf, and the other on

his own. This sword is an Andrew Ferrara, and the pistols better than mine own. But a fair exchange is no robbery. Soldados are not to be endangered, and endangered gratuitously, my Lord of Argyle.—But soft, soft, Ranald; wise Man of the Mist, whither art thou bound?"

It was indeed full time to stop MacEagh's proceedings; for, not finding the private passage readily, and impatient, it would seem, of farther delay, he had caught down a sword and target, and was about to enter the great gallery, with the purpose, doubtless, of fighting his way through all opposition.

"Hold, while you live," whispered Dalgetty, laying hold on him. "We must be perdue, if possible. So bar we this door, that it may be thought M'Callum More would be private—and now let me make a reconnaissance for the private passage."

By looking behind the tapestry in various places, the Captain at length discovered a private door, and behind that a winding passage, terminated by another door, which doubtless entered the chapel. But what was his disagreeable surprise to hear, on the other side of this second door, the sonorous voice of a divine in the act of preaching.

"This made the villain," he said, "recommend this to us as a private passage. I am strongly tempted to return and cut his throat."

He then opened very gently the door, which led into a latticed gallery used by the Marquis himself, the curtains of which were drawn, perhaps with the purpose of having it supposed that he was engaged in attendance upon divine worship, when, in fact, he was absent upon his secular affairs. There was no other person in the seat; for the family of the Marquis,—such was the high state maintained in those days,—sate during service in another gallery, placed somewhat lower than that of the great man himself. This being the case, Captain Dalgetty ventured to ensconce himself in the gallery, of which he carefully secured the door. Never (although the expression be a bold one) was a sermon listened to with more impatience, and less edification, on the part of one, at least, of the audience. The Captain heard SIXTEENTHLY-SEVENTEENTHLY-EIGHTEENTHLY and TO CONCLUDE, with a sort of feeling like protracted despair. But no man can lecture (for the service was called a lecture) for ever; and the discourse was at length closed, the clergyman not failing to make a profound bow towards the latticed gallery, little suspecting whom he honoured by that reverence. To judge from the haste with which they dispersed, the domestics of the Marquis were scarce more pleased with their late occupation than the anxious Captain Dalgetty; indeed, many of them being Highlandmen, had the excuse of not understanding a single word which the clergyman spoke, although they gave their attendance on his doctrine by the special order of M'Callum More, and would have done so had the preacher been a Turkish Imaum.

But although the congregation dispersed thus rapidly, the divine remained behind in the chapel, and, walking up and down its Gothic precincts, seemed either to be meditating on what he had just been delivering, or preparing a fresh discourse for the next opportunity. Bold as he was, Dalgetty hesitated what he ought to do. Time, however, pressed, and every moment increased the chance of their escape being discovered by the jailor visiting the dungeon perhaps before his wonted time, and discovering the exchange which had been made there. At length, whispering Ranald, who watched all his motions, to follow him and preserve his countenance, Captain Dalgetty, with a very composed air, descended a flight of steps which led from the gallery into the body of the chapel. A less experienced adventurer would have endeavoured to pass the worthy clergyman rapidly, in hopes to escape unnoticed. But the Captain, who foresaw the manifest danger of failing in such an attempt, walked gravely to meet the divine upon his walk in the midst of the chancel, and, pulling off his cap, was about to pass him after a formal reverence. But what was his surprise to view in the preacher the very same person with whom he had dined in the castle of Ardenvohr! Yet he speedily recovered his composure; and ere the clergyman could speak, was the first to address him. "I could not," he said, "leave this mansion without bequeathing to you, my very reverend sir, my humble thanks for the homily with which you have this evening favoured us."

"I did not observe, sir," said the clergyman, "that you were in the chapel."

"It pleased the honourable Marquis," said Dalgetty, modestly, "to grace me with a seat in his own gallery." The divine bowed low at this intimation, knowing that such an honour was only vouchsafed to persons of very high rank. "It has been my fate, sir," said the Captain, "in the sort of wandering life which I have led, to have heard different preachers of different religions—as for example, Lutheran, Evangelical, Reformed, Calvinistical, and so forth, but never have I listened to such a homily as yours."

"Call it a lecture, worthy sir," said the divine, "such is the phrase of our church."

"Lecture or homily," said Dalgetty, "it was, as the High Germans say, GANZ FORTRE FLICH; and I could not leave this place without testifying unto you what inward emotions I have undergone during your edifying prelection; and how I am touched to the quick, that I should yesterday, during the refection, have seemed to infringe on the respect due to such a person as yourself."

"Alas! my worthy sir," said the clergyman, "we meet in this world as in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, not knowing against whom we may chance to encounter. In truth, it is no matter of marvel, if we sometimes jostle those, to whom, if known, we would yield all respect. Surely, sir, I would rather have taken you for a profane malignant than for such a devout person as you prove, who reverences the great Master even in the meanest of his servants."

"It is always my custom to do so, learned sir," answered Dalgetty; "for in the service of the immortal Gustavus—but I detain you from your meditations,"—his desire to speak of the King of Sweden being for once overpowered by the necessity of his circumstances.

"By no means, my worthy sir," said the clergyman. "What was, I pray you, the order of that great Prince, whose memory is so dear to every Protestant bosom?"

"Sir, the drums beat to prayers morning and evening, as regularly as for parade; and if a soldier passed without saluting the chaplain, he had an hour's ride on the wooden mare for his pains. Sir, I wish you a very good evening—I am obliged to depart the castle under M'Callum More's passport."

"Stay one instant, sir," said the preacher; "is there nothing I can do to testify my respect for the pupil of the great Gustavus, and so admirable a judge of preaching?"

"Nothing, sir," said the Captain, "but to shew me the nearest way to the gate—and if you would have the kindness," he added, with great effrontery, "to let a servant bring my horse with him, the dark grey gelding—call him Gustavus, and he will prick up his ears—for I know not where the castle-stables are situated, and my guide," he added, looking at Ranald, "speaks no English."

"I hasten to accommodate you," said the clergyman; "your way lies through that cloistered passage."

"Now, Heaven's blessing upon your vanity!" said the Captain to himself. "I was afraid I would have had to march off without Gustavus."

In fact, so effectually did the chaplain exert himself in behalf of so excellent a judge of composition, that while Dalgetty was parleying with the sentinels at the drawbridge, showing his passport, and giving the watchword, a servant brought him his horse, ready saddled for the journey. In another place, the Captain's sudden appearance at large after having been publicly sent to prison, might have excited suspicion and enquiry; but the officers and domestics of the Marquis were accustomed to the mysterious policy of their master, and never supposed aught else than that he had been liberated and intrusted with some private commission by their master. In this belief, and having received the parole, they gave him free passage.

Dalgetty rode slowly through the town of Inverary, the outlaw attending upon him like a foot-page at his horse's shoulder. As they passed the gibbet, the old man looked on the bodies and wrung his hands. The look and gesture were momentary, but expressive of indescribable anguish. Instantly recovering himself, Ranald, in passing, whispered somewhat to one of the females, who, like Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, seemed engaged in watching and mourning the victims of feudal injustice and cruelty. The woman started at his voice, but immediately collected herself and returned for answer a slight inclination of the head.

Dalgetty continued his way out of the town, uncertain whether he should try to seize or hire a boat and cross the lake, or plunge into the woods, and there conceal himself from pursuit. In the former event he was liable to be instantly pursued by the galleys of the Marquis, which lay ready for sailing, their long yard-arms pointing to the wind, and what hope could he have in an ordinary Highland fishing-boat to escape from them? If he made the latter choice, his chance either of supporting or concealing himself in those waste and unknown wildernesses, was in the highest degree precarious. The town lay now behind him, yet what hand to turn to for safety he was unable to determine, and began to be sensible, that in escaping from the dungeon at Inverary, desperate as the matter seemed, he had only accomplished the easiest part of a difficult task. If retaken, his fate was now certain; for the personal injury he had offered to a man so powerful and so vindictive, could be atoned for only by instant death. While he pondered these distressing reflections, and looked around with a countenance which plainly expressed indecision, Ranald MacEagh suddenly asked him, "which way he intended to journey?"

"And that, honest comrade," answered Dalgetty, "is precisely the question which I cannot answer you. Truly I begin to hold the opinion, Ranald, that we had better have stuck by the brown loaf and water-pitcher until Sir Duncan arrived, who, for his own honour, must have made some fight for me."

"Saxon," answered MacEagh, "do not regret having exchanged the foul breath of yonder dungeon for the free air of heaven. Above all, repent not that you have served a Son of the Mist. Put yourself under my guidance, and I will warrant your safety with my head."

"Can you guide me safe through these mountains, and back to the army of Montrose?" said Dalgetty.

"I can," answered MacEagh; "there lives not a man to whom the mountain passes, the caverns, the glens, the thickets, and the corries are known, as they are to the Children of the Mist. While others crawl on the level ground, by the sides of lakes and streams, ours are the steep hollows of the inaccessible mountains, the birth-place of the desert springs. Not all the bloodhounds of Argyle can trace the fastnesses through which I can guide you."

"Say'st thou so, honest Ranald?" replied Dalgetty; "then have on with thee; for of a surety I shall never save the ship by my own pilotage."

The outlaw accordingly led the way into the wood, by which the castle is surrounded for several miles, walking with so much dispatch as kept Gustavus at a round trot, and taking such a number of cross cuts and turns, that Captain Dalgetty speedily lost all idea where he might be, and all knowledge of the points of the compass. At length, the path, which had gradually become more difficult, altogether ended among thickets and underwood. The roaring of a torrent was heard in the neighbourhood, the ground became in some places broken, in others boggy, and everywhere unfit for riding.

"What the foul fiend," said Dalgetty, "is to be done here? I must part with Gustavus, I fear."

"Take no care for your horse," said the outlaw; "he shall soon be restored to you."

As he spoke, he whistled in a low tune, and a lad, half-dressed in tartan, half naked, having only his own shaggy hair, tied with a thong of leather, to protect his head and face from sun and weather, lean, and half-starved in aspect, his wild grey eyes appearing to fill up ten times the proportion usually allotted to them in the human face, crept out, as a wild beast might have done, from a thicket of brambles and briars.

"Give your horse to the gillie," said Ranald MacEagh; "your life depends upon it."

"Och! och!" exclaimed the despairing veteran; "Eheu! as we used to say at Mareschal-College, must I leave Gustavus in such grooming!"

"Are you frantic, to lose time thus!" said his guide; "do we stand on friends' ground, that you should part with your horse as if he were your brother? I tell you, you shall have him again; but if you never saw the animal, is not life better than the best colt ever mare foaled?"

"And that is true too, mine honest friend," sighed Dalgetty; "yet if you knew but the value of Gustavus, and the things we two have done and suffered together—See, he turns back to look at me!—Be kind to him, my good breechless friend, and I will requite you well." So saying, and withal sniffing a little to swallow his grief, he turned from the heart-rending spectacle in order to follow his guide.

To follow his guide was no easy matter, and soon required more agility than Captain Dalgetty could master. The very first plunge after he had parted from his charger, carried him, with little assistance from a few overhanging boughs, or projecting roots of trees, eight foot sheer down into the course of a torrent, up which the Son of the Mist led the way. Huge stones, over which they scrambled,—thickets of them and brambles, through which they had to drag themselves,—rocks which were to be climbed on the one side with much labour and pain, for the purpose of an equally precarious descent upon the other; all these, and many such interruptions, were surmounted by the light-footed and half-naked mountaineer with an ease and velocity which excited the surprise and envy of Captain Dalgetty, who, encumbered by his head-piece, corslet, and other armour, not to mention his ponderous jack-boots, found himself at length so much exhausted by fatigue, and the difficulties of the road, that he sate down upon a stone in order to recover his breath, while he explained to Ranald MacEagh the difference betwixt travelling EXPEDITUS and IMPEDITUS, as these two military phrases were understood at Mareschal-College, Aberdeen. The sole answer of the mountaineer was to lay his hand on the soldier's arm, and point backward in the direction of the wind. Dalgetty could spy nothing, for evening was closing fast, and they were at the bottom of a dark ravine. But at length he could distinctly hear at a distance the sullen toll of a large bell.

"That," said he, "must be the alarm—the storm-clock, as the Germans call it."

"It strikes the hour of your death," answered Ranald, "unless you can accompany me a little farther. For every toll of that bell a brave man has yielded up his soul."

"Truly, Ranald, my trusty friend," said Dalgetty, "I will not deny that the case may be soon my own; for I am so forfoughen (being, as I explained to you, IMPEDITUS, for had I been EXPEDITUS, I mind not pedestrian exercise the flourish of a fife), that I think I had better ensconce myself in one of these bushes, and even lie quiet there to abide what fortune God shall send me. I entreat you, mine honest friend Ranald, to shift for yourself, and leave me to my fortune, as the Lion of the North, the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, my never-to-be-forgotten master (whom you must surely have heard of, Ranald, though you may have heard of no one else), said to Francis Albert, Duke of Saxe-Lauenburgh, when he was mortally wounded on the plains of Lutzen. Neither despair altogether of my safety, Ranald, seeing I have been in as great pinches as this in Germany—more especially, I remember me, that at the fatal battle of Nerlingen—after which I changed service—"

"If you would save your father's son's breath to help his child out of trouble, instead of wasting it upon the tales of Seannachies," said Ranald, who now grew impatient of the Captain's loquacity, "or if your feet could travel as fast as your tongue, you might yet lay your head on an unbloody pillow to-night."

"Something there is like military skill in that," replied the Captain, "although wantonly and irreverently spoken to an officer of rank. But I hold it good to pardon such freedoms on a march, in respect of the Saturnalian license indulged in such cases to the troops of all nations. And now, resume thine office, friend Ranald, in respect I am well-breathed; or, to be more plain, I PRAE, SEQUAR, as we used to say at Mareschal-College."

Comprehending his meaning rather from his motions than his language, the Son of the Mist again led the way, with an unerring precision that looked like instinct, through a variety of ground the most difficult and broken that could well be imagined. Dragging along his ponderous boots, encumbered with thigh-pieces, gauntlets, corslet, and back-piece, not to mention the buff jerkin which he wore under all these arms, talking of his former exploits the whole way, though Ranald paid not the slightest attention to him, Captain Dalgetty contrived to follow his guide a considerable space farther, when the deep-mouthed baying of a hound was heard coming down the wind, as if opening on the scent of its prey.

"Black hound," said Ranald, "whose throat never boded good to a Child of the Mist, ill fortune to her who littered thee! hast thou already found our trace? But thou art too late, swart hound of darkness, and the deer has gained the herd."

So saying, he whistled very softly, and was answered in a tone equally low from the top of a pass, up which they had for some time been ascending. Mending their pace, they reached the top, where the moon, which had now risen bright and clear, showed to Dalgetty a party of ten or twelve Highlanders, and about as many women and children, by whom Ranald MacEagh was received with such transports of joy, as made his companion easily sensible that those by whom he was surrounded, must of course be Children of the Mist. The place which they occupied well suited their name and habits. It was a beetling crag, round which winded a very narrow and broken footpath, commanded in various places by the position which they held.

Ranald spoke anxiously and hastily to the children of his tribe, and the men came one by one to shake hands with Dalgetty, while the women, clamorous in their gratitude, pressed round to kiss even the hem of his garment. "They plight their faith to you," said Ranald MacEagh, "for requital of the good deed you have done to the tribe this day."

"Enough said, Ranald," answered the soldier, "enough said—tell them I love not this shaking of hands—it confuses ranks and degrees in military service; and as to kissing of gauntlets, puldrons, and the like, I remember that the immortal Gustavus, as he rode through the streets of Nuremberg, being thus worshipped by the poulace (being doubtless far more worthy of it than a poor though honourable cavalier like myself), did say unto them, in the way of rebuke, 'If you idolize me thus like a god, who shall assure you that the vengeance of Heaven will not soon prove me to be a mortal?'—And so here, I suppose you intend to make a stand against your followers, Ranald—VOTO A DIOS, as the Spaniard says?—a very pretty position—as pretty a position for a small peloton of men as I have seen in my service—no enemy can come towards it by the road without being at the mercy of cannon and musket.—But then, Ranald, my trusty comrade, you have no cannon, I dare to aver, and I do not see that any of these fellows have muskets either. So with what artillery you propose making good the pass, before you come to hand blows, truly, Ranald, it passeth my apprehension."

"With the weapons and with the courage of our fathers," said MacEagh; and made the Captain observe, that the men of his party were armed with bows and arrows.

"Bows and arrows!" exclaimed Dalgetty; "ha! ha! ha! have we Robin Hood and Little John back again? Bows and arrows! why, the sight has not been seen in civilized war for a hundred years. Bows and arrows! and why not weavers' beams, as in the days of Goliath? Ah! that Dugald Dalgetty, of Drumthwacket, should live to see men fight with bows and arrows!—The immortal Gustavus would never have believed it—nor Wallenstein—nor Butler—nor old Tilly,—Well, Ranald, a cat can have but its claws—since bows and arrows are the word, e'en let us make the best of it. Only, as I do not understand the scope and range of such old-fashioned artillery, you must make the best disposition you can out of your own head for MY taking the command, whilk I would have gladly done had you been to fight with any Christian weapons, is out of the question, when you are to combat like quivered Numidians. I will, however, play my part with my pistols in the approaching melley, in respect my carbine unhappily remains at Gustavus's saddle.—My service and thanks to you," he continued, addressing a mountaineer who offered him a bow; "Dugald Dalgetty may say of himself, as he learned at Mareschal-College,

"Non eget Mauri jaculis, neque arcu,

Nec venenatis gravis sagittis,

Fusce, pharetra;

whilk is to say—"

Ranald MacEagh a second time imposed silence on the talkative commander as before, by pulling his sleeve, and pointing down the pass. The bay of the bloodhound was now approaching nearer and nearer, and they could hear the voices of several persons who accompanied the animal, and hallooed to each other as they dispersed occasionally, either in the hurry of their advance, or in order to search more accurately the thickets as they came along. They were obviously drawing nearer and nearer every moment. MacEagh, in the meantime, proposed to Captain Dalgetty to disencumber himself of his armour, and gave him to understand that the women should transport it to a place of safety.

"I crave your pardon, sir," said Dalgetty, "such is not the rule of our foreign service in respect I remember the regiment of Finland cuirassiers reprimanded, and their kettle-drums taken from them, by the immortal Gustavus, because they had assumed the permission to march without their corslets, and to leave them with the baggage. Neither did they strike kettle-drums again at the head of that famous regiment until they behaved themselves so notably at the field of Leipsic; a lesson whilk is not to be forgotten, any more than that exclamation of the immortal Gustavus, 'Now shall I know if my officers love me, by their putting on their armour; since, if my officers are slain, who shall lead my soldiers into victory?' Nevertheless, friend Ranald, this is without prejudice to my being rid of these somewhat heavy boots, providing I can obtain any other succedaneum; for I presume not to say that my bare soles are fortified so as to endure the flints and thorns, as seems to be the case with your followers."

To rid the Captain of his cumbrous greaves, and case his feet in a pair of brogues made out of deerskin, which a Highlander stripped off for his accommodation, was the work of a minute, and Dalgetty found himself much lightened by the exchange. He was in the act of recommending to Ranald MacEagh, to send two or three of his followers a little lower to reconnoitre the pass, and, at the same time, somewhat to extend his front, placing two detached archers at each flank by way of posts of observation, when the near cry of the hound apprised them that the pursuers were at the bottom of the pass. All was then dead silence; for, loquacious as he was on other occasions, Captain Dalgetty knew well the necessity of an ambush keeping itself under covert.

The moon gleamed on the broken pathway, and on the projecting cliffs of rock round which it winded, its light intercepted here and there by the branches of bushes and dwarf-trees, which, finding nourishment in the crevices of the rocks, in some places overshadowed the brow and ledge of the precipice. Below, a thick copse-wood lay in deep and dark shadow, somewhat resembling the billows of a half-seen ocean. From the bosom of that darkness, and close to the bottom of the precipice, the hound was heard at intervals baying fearfully, sounds which were redoubled by the echoes of the woods and rocks around. At intervals, these sunk into deep silence, interrupted only by the plashing noise of a small runnel of water, which partly fell from the rock, partly found a more silent passage to the bottom along its projecting surface. Voices of men were also heard in stifled converse below; it seemed as if the pursuers had not discovered the narrow path which led to the top of the rock, or that, having discovered it, the peril of the ascent, joined to the imperfect light, and the uncertainty whether it might not be defended, made them hesitate to attempt it.

At length a shadowy figure was seen, which raised itself up from the abyss of darkness below, and, emerging into the pale moonlight, began cautiously and slowly to ascend the rocky path. The outline was so distinctly marked, that Captain Dalgetty could discover not only the person of a Highlander, but the long gun which he carried in his hand, and the plume of feathers which decorated his bonnet. "TAUSEND TEIFLEN! that I should say so, and so like to be near my latter end!" ejaculated the Captain, but under his breath, "what will become of us, now they have brought musketry to encounter our archers?"

But just as the pursuer had attained a projecting piece of rock about half way up the ascent, and, pausing, made a signal for those who were still at the bottom to follow him, an arrow whistled from the bow of one of the Children of the Mist, and transfixed him with so fatal a wound, that, without a single effort to save himself, he lost his balance, and fell headlong from the cliff on which he stood, into the darkness below. The crash of the boughs which received him, and the heavy sound of his fall from thence to the ground, was followed by a cry of horror and surprise, which burst from his followers. The Children of the Mist, encouraged in proportion to the alarm this first success had caused among the pursuers, echoed back the clamour with a loud and shrill yell of exultation, and, showing themselves on the brow of the precipice, with wild cries and vindictive gestures, endeavoured to impress on their enemies a sense at once of their courage, their numbers, and their state of defence. Even Captain Dalgetty's military prudence did not prevent his rising up, and calling out to Ranald, more loud than prudence warranted, "CAROCCO, comrade, as the Spaniard says! The long-bow for ever! In my poor apprehension now, were you to order a file to advance and take position—"

"The Sassenach!" cried a voice from beneath, "mark the Sassenach sidier! I see the glitter of his breastplate." At the same time three muskets were discharged; and while one ball rattled against the corslet of proof, to the strength of which our valiant Captain had been more than once indebted for his life, another penetrated the armour which covered the front of his left thigh, and stretched him on the ground. Ranald instantly seized him in his arms, and bore him back from the edge of the precipice, while he dolefully ejaculated, "I always told the immortal Gustavus, Wallenstein, Tilly, and other men of the sword, that, in my poor mind, taslets ought to be made musket-proof."

With two or three earnest words in Gaelic, MacEagh commended the wounded man to the charge of the females, who were in the rear of his little party, and was then about to return to the contest. But Dalgetty detained him, grasping a firm hold of his plaid.—"I know not how this matter may end—but I request you will inform Montrose, that I died like a follower of the immortal Gustavus—and I pray you, take heed how you quit your present strength, even for the purpose of pursuing the enemy, if you gain any advantage—and—and—"

Here Dalgetty's breath and eyesight began to fail him through loss of blood, and MacEagh, availing himself of this circumstance, extricated from his grasp the end of his own mantle, and substituted that of a female, by which the Captain held stoutly, thereby securing, as he conceived, the outlaw's attention to the military instructions which he continued to pour forth while he had any breath to utter them, though they became gradually more and more incoherent—"And, comrade, you will be sure to keep your musketeers in advance of your stand of pikes, Lochaber-axes, and two-handed swords—Stand fast, dragoons, on the left flank!—where was I?—Ay, and, Ranald, if ye be minded to retreat, leave some lighted matches burning on the branches of the trees—it shows as if they were lined with shot—But I forget—ye have no match-locks nor habergeons—only bows and arrows—bows and arrows! ha! ha! ha!"

Here the Captain sunk back in an exhausted condition, altogether unable to resist the sense of the ludicrous which, as a modern man-at-arms, he connected with the idea of these ancient weapons of war. It was a long time ere he recovered his senses; and, in the meantime, we leave him in the care of the Daughters of the Mist; nurses as kind and attentive, in reality, as they were wild and uncouth in outward appearance.

CHAPTER XV.

But if no faithless action stain
Thy true and constant word,
I'll make thee famous by my pen,
And glorious by my sword.

I'll serve thee in such noble ways
As ne'er were known before;
I'll deck and crown thy head with bays,
And love thee more and more.—MONTROSE'S LINES.

We must now leave, with whatever regret, the valiant Captain Dalgetty, to recover of his wounds or otherwise as fate shall determine, in order briefly to trace the military operations of Montrose, worthy as they are of a more important page, and a better historian. By the assistance of the chieftains whom we have commemorated, and more especially by the junction of the Murrays, Stewarts, and other clans of Athole, which were peculiarly zealous in the royal cause, he soon assembled an army of two or three thousand Highlanders, to whom he successfully united the Irish under Colkitto. This last leader, who, to the great embarrassment of Milton's commentators, is commemorated in one of that great poet's sonnets, was properly named Alister, or Alexander M'Donnell, by birth a Scottish islesman, and related to the Earl of Antrim, to whose patronage he owed the command assigned him in the Irish troops. In many respects he merited this distinction. He was brave to intrepidity, and almost to insensibility; very strong and active in person, completely master of his weapons, and always ready to show the example in the extremity of danger. To counterbalance these good qualities, it must be recorded, that he was inexperienced in military tactics, and of a jealous and presumptuous disposition, which often lost to Montrose the fruits of Colkitto's gallantry. Yet such is the predominance of outward personal qualities in the eyes of a mild people, that the feats of strength and courage shown by this champion, seem to have made a stronger impression upon the minds of the Highlanders, than the military skill and chivalrous spirit of the great Marquis of Montrose. Numerous traditions are still preserved in the Highland glens concerning Alister M'Donnell, though the name of Montrose is rarely mentioned among them.

[Milton's book, entitled TETRACHORDON, had been ridiculed, it would seem, by the divines assembled at Westminster, and others, on account of the hardness of the title; and Milton in his sonnet retaliates upon the barbarous Scottish names which the Civil War had made familiar to English ears:—

. . . why is it harder, sirs, than Gordon,
COLKITTO or M'Donald, or Gallasp?
These rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek,
That would have made Quintillian stare and gasp.

"We may suppose," says Bishop Newton, "that these were persons of note among the Scotch ministers, who were for pressing and enforcing the Covenant;" whereas Milton only intends to ridicule the barbarism of Scottish names in general, and quotes, indiscriminately, that of Gillespie, one of the Apostles of the Covenant, and those of Colkitto and M'Donnell (both belonging to one person), one of its bitterest enemies.]

The point upon which Montrose finally assembled his little army, was in Strathearn, on the verge of the Highlands of Perthshire, so as to menace the principal town of that county.

His enemies were not unprepared for his reception. Argyle, at the head of his Highlanders, was dogging the steps of the Irish from the west to the east, and by force, fear, or influence, had collected an army nearly sufficient to have given battle to that under Montrose. The Lowlands were also prepared, for reasons which we assigned at the beginning of this tale. A body of six thousand infantry, and six or seven thousand cavalry, which profanely assumed the title of God's army, had been hastily assembled from the shires of Fife, Angus, Perth, Stirling, and the neighbouring counties. A much less force in former times, nay, even in the preceding reign, would have been sufficient to have secured the Lowlands against a more formidable descent of Highlanders, than those united under Montrose; but times had changed strangely within the last half century. Before that period, the Lowlanders were as constantly engaged in war as the mountaineers, and were incomparably better disciplined and armed. The favourite Scottish order of battle somewhat resembled the Macedonian phalanx. Their infantry formed a compact body, armed with long spears, impenetrable even to the men-at-arms of the age, though well mounted, and arrayed in complete proof. It may easily be conceived, therefore, that their ranks could not be broken by the disorderly charge of Highland infantry armed for close combat only, with swords, and ill furnished with missile weapons, and having no artillery whatever.

This habit of fight was in a great measure changed by the introduction of muskets into the Scottish Lowland service, which, not being as yet combined with the bayonet, was a formidable weapon at a distance, but gave no assurance against the enemy who rushed on to close quarters. The pike, indeed, was not wholly disused in the Scottish army; but it was no longer the favourite weapon, nor was it relied upon as formerly by those in whose hands it was placed; insomuch that Daniel Lupton, a tactician of the day, has written a book expressly upon the superiority of the musket. This change commenced as early as the wars of Gustavus Adolphus, whose marches were made with such rapidity, that the pike was very soon thrown aside in his army, and exchanged for fire-arms. A circumstance which necessarily accompanied this change, as well as the establishment of standing armies, whereby war became a trade, was the introduction of a laborious and complicated system of discipline, combining a variety of words of command with corresponding operations and manoeuvres, the neglect of any one of which was sure to throw the whole into confusion. War therefore, as practised among most nations of Europe, had assumed much more than formerly the character of a profession or mystery, to which previous practice and experience were indispensable requisites. Such was the natural consequence of standing armies, which had almost everywhere, and particularly in the long German wars, superseded what may be called the natural discipline of the feudal militia.

The Scottish Lowland militia, therefore, laboured under a double disadvantage when opposed to Highlanders. They were divested of the spear, a weapon which, in the hands of their ancestors, had so often repelled the impetuous assaults of the mountaineer; and they were subjected to a new and complicated species of discipline, well adapted, perhaps, to the use of regular troops, who could be rendered completely masters of it, but tending only to confuse the ranks of citizen soldiers, by whom it was rarely practised, and imperfectly understood. So much has been done in our own time in bringing back tactics to their first principles, and in getting rid of the pedantry of war, that it is easy for us to estimate the disadvantages under which a half-trained militia laboured, who were taught to consider success as depending upon their exercising with precision a system of tactics, which they probably only so far comprehended as to find out when they were wrong, but without the power of getting right again. Neither can it be denied, that, in the material points of military habits and warlike spirit, the Lowlanders of the seventeenth century had sunk far beneath their Highland countrymen.

From the earliest period down to the union of the crowns, the whole kingdom of Scotland, Lowlands as well as Highlands, had been the constant scene of war, foreign and domestic; and there was probably scarce one of its hardy inhabitants, between the age of sixteen and sixty, who was not as willing in point of fact as he was literally bound in law, to assume arms at the first call of his liege lord, or of a royal proclamation. The law remained the same in sixteen hundred and forty-five as a hundred years before, but the race of those subjected to it had been bred up under very different feelings. They had sat in quiet under their vine and under their fig-tree, and a call to battle involved a change of life as new as it was disagreeable. Such of them, also, who lived near unto the Highlands, were in continual and disadvantageous contact with the restless inhabitants of those mountains, by whom their cattle were driven off, their dwellings plundered, and their persons insulted, and who had acquired over them that sort of superiority arising from a constant system of aggression. The Lowlanders, who lay more remote, and out of reach of these depredations, were influenced by the exaggerated reports circulated concerning the Highlanders, whom, as totally differing in laws,

language, and dress, they were induced to regard as a nation of savages, equally void of fear and of humanity. These various prepossessions, joined to the less warlike habits of the Lowlanders, and their imperfect knowledge of the new and complicated system of discipline for which they had exchanged their natural mode of fighting, placed them at great disadvantage when opposed to the Highlander in the field of battle. The mountaineers, on the contrary, with the arms and courage of their fathers, possessed also their simple and natural system of tactics, and bore down with the fullest confidence upon an enemy, to whom anything they had been taught of discipline was, like Saul's armour upon David, a hinderance rather than a help, "because they had not proved it."

It was with such disadvantages on the one side, and such advantages on the other, to counterbalance the difference of superior numbers and the presence of artillery and cavalry, that Montrose encountered the army of Lord Elcho upon the field of Tippermuir. The Presbyterian clergy had not been wanting in their efforts to rouse the spirit of their followers, and one of them, who harangued the troops on the very day of battle, hesitated not to say, that if ever God spoke by his mouth, he promised them, in His name, that day, a great and assured victory. The cavalry and artillery were also reckoned sure warrants of success, as the novelty of their attack had upon former occasions been very discouraging to the Highlanders. The place of meeting was an open heath, and the ground afforded little advantage to either party, except that it allowed the horse of the Covenanters to act with effect.

A battle upon which so much depended, was never more easily decided. The Lowland cavalry made a show of charging; but, whether thrown into disorder by the fire of musketry, or deterred by a disaffection to the service said to have prevailed among the gentlemen, they made no impression on the Highlanders whatever, and recoiled in disorder from ranks which had neither bayonets nor pikes to protect them. Montrose saw, and instantly availed himself of this advantage. He ordered his whole army to charge, which they performed with the wild and desperate valour peculiar to mountaineers. One officer of the Covenanters alone, trained in the Italian wars, made a desperate defence upon the right wing. In every other point their line was penetrated at the first onset; and this advantage once obtained, the Lowlanders were utterly unable to contend at close quarters with their more agile and athletic enemies. Many were slain on the field, and such a number in the pursuit, that above one-third of the Covenanters were reported to have fallen; in which number, however, must be computed a great many fat burgesses who broke their wind in the flight, and thus died without stroke of sword. [We choose to quote our authority for a fact so singular:—"A great many burgesses were killed—twenty-five householders in St. Andrews—many were bursten in the flight, and died without stroke."—See Baillie's Letters, vol. ii. page 92.]

The victors obtained possession of Perth, and obtained considerable sums of money, as well as ample supplies of arms and ammunition. But those advantages were to be balanced against an almost insurmountable inconvenience that uniformly attended a Highland army. The clans could be in no respect induced to consider themselves as regular soldiers, or to act as such. Even so late as the year 1745-6, when the Chevalier Charles Edward, by way of making an example, caused a soldier to be shot for desertion, the Highlanders, who composed his army, were affected as much by indignation as by fear. They could not conceive any principle of justice upon which a man's life could be taken, for merely going home when it did not suit him to remain longer with the army. Such had been the uniform practice of their fathers. When a battle was over, the campaign was, in their opinion, ended; if it was lost, they sought safety in their mountains—if won, they returned there to secure their booty. At other times they had their cattle to look after, and their harvests to sow or reap, without which their families would have perished for want. In either case, there was an end of their services for the time; and though they were easily enough recalled by the prospect of fresh adventures and more plunder, yet the opportunity of success was, in the meantime, lost, and could not afterwards be recovered. This circumstance serves to show, even if history had not made us acquainted with the same fact, that the Highlanders had never been accustomed to make war with the view of permanent conquest, but only with the hope of deriving temporary advantage, or deciding some immediate quarrel. It also explains the reason why Montrose, with all his splendid successes, never obtained any secure or permanent footing in the Lowlands, and why even those Lowland noblemen and gentlemen, who were inclined to the royal cause, showed diffidence and reluctance to join an army of a character so desultory and irregular, as might lead them at all times to apprehend that the Highlanders securing themselves by a retreat to their mountains, would leave whatever Lowlanders might have joined them to the mercy of an offended and predominant enemy. The same consideration will also serve to account for the sudden marches which Montrose was obliged to undertake, in order to recruit his army in the mountains, and for the rapid changes of fortune, by which we often find him obliged to retreat from before those enemies over whom he had recently been victorious. If there should be any who read these tales for any further purpose than that of immediate amusement, they will find these remarks not unworthy of their recollection.

It was owing to such causes, the slackness of the Lowland loyalists and the temporary desertion of his Highland followers, that Montrose found himself, even after the decisive victory of Tippermuir, in no condition to face the second army with which Argyle advanced upon him from the westward. In this emergency, supplying by velocity the want of strength, he moved suddenly from Perth to Dundee, and being refused admission into that town, fell northward upon Aberdeen, where he expected to be joined by the Gordons and other loyalists. But the zeal of these gentlemen was, for the time, effectually bridled by a large body of Covenanters, commanded by the Lord Burleigh, and supposed to amount to three thousand men. These Montrose boldly attacked with half their number. The battle was fought under the walls of the city, and the resolute valour of Montrose's followers was again successful against every disadvantage.

But it was the fate of this great commander, always to gain the glory, but seldom to reap the fruits of victory. He had scarcely time to repose his small army in Aberdeen, ere he found, on the one hand, that the Gordons were likely to be deterred from joining him, by the reasons we have mentioned, with some others peculiar to their chief, the Marquis of Huntly; on the other hand, Argyle, whose forces had been augmented by those of several Lowland noblemen, advanced towards Montrose at the head of an army much larger than he had yet had to cope with. These troops moved, indeed, with slowness, corresponding to the cautious character of their commander; but even that caution rendered Argyle's approach formidable, since his very advance implied, that he was at the head of an army irresistibly superior.

There remained one mode of retreat open to Montrose, and he adopted it. He threw himself into the Highlands, where he could set pursuit at defiance, and where he was sure, in every glen, to recover those recruits who had left his standard to deposit their booty in their native fastnesses. It was thus that the singular character of the army which Montrose commanded, while, on the one hand, it rendered his victory in some degree nugatory, enabled him, on the other, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, to secure his retreat, recruit his forces, and render himself more formidable than ever to the enemy, before whom he had lately been unable to make a stand.

On the present occasion he threw himself into Badenoch, and rapidly traversing that district, as well as the neighbouring country of Athole, he alarmed the Covenanters by successive attacks upon various unexpected points, and spread such general dismay, that repeated orders were dispatched by the Parliament to Argyle, their commander, to engage, and disperse Montrose at all rates.

These commands from his superiors neither suited the haughty spirit, nor the temporizing and cautious policy, of the nobleman to whom they were addressed. He paid, accordingly, no regard to them, but limited his efforts to intrigues among Montrose's few Lowland followers, many of whom had become disgusted with the prospect of a Highland campaign, which exposed their persons to intolerable fatigue, and left their estates at the Covenanters' mercy. Accordingly, several of them left Montrose's camp at this period. He was joined, however, by a body of forces of more congenial spirit, and far better adapted to the situation in which he found himself. This reinforcement consisted of a large body of Highlanders, whom Colkitto, dispatched for that purpose, had levied in Argyleshire. Among the most distinguished was John of Moidart, called the Captain of Clan Ranald, with the Stewarts of Appin, the Clan Gregor, the Clan M'Nab, and other tribes of inferior distinction. By these means, Montrose's army was so formidably increased, that Argyle cared no longer to remain in the command of that opposed to him, but returned to Edinburgh, and there threw up his commission, under pretence that his army was not supplied with reinforcements and provisions in the manner in which they ought to have been. From thence the Marquis returned to Inverary, there, in full security, to govern his feudal vassals, and patriarchal followers, and to repose himself in safety on the faith of the Clan proverb already quoted—"It is a far cry to Lochow."

CHAPTER XVI.

Such mountains steep, such craggy hills,
His army on one side enclose:
The other side, great griesly gills
Did fence with fenny mire and moss.

Which when the Earl understood,
He council craved of captains all,
Who bade set forth with mournful mood,
And take such fortune as would fall.
—FLODDEN FIELD, AN ANCIENT POEM.

Montrose had now a splendid career in his view, provided he could obtain the consent of his gallant, but desultory troops, and their independent chieftains. The Lowlands lay open before him without an army adequate to check his career; for Argyle's followers had left the Covenanters' host when their master threw up his commission, and many other troops, tired of the war, had taken the same opportunity to disband themselves. By descending Strath-Tay, therefore, one of the most convenient passes from the Highlands, Montrose had only to present himself in the Lowlands, in order to rouse the slumbering spirit of chivalry and of loyalty which animated the gentlemen to the north of the Forth. The possession of these districts, with or without a victory, would give him the command of a wealthy and fertile part of the kingdom, and would enable him, by regular pay, to place his army on a permanent footing, to penetrate as far as the capital, perhaps from thence to the Border, where he deemed it possible to communicate with the yet unsubdued forces of King Charles.

Such was the plan of operations by which the truest glory was to be acquired, and the most important success insured for the royal cause. Accordingly it did not escape the ambitious and daring spirit of him whose services had already acquired him the title of the Great Marquis. But other motives actuated many of his followers, and perhaps were not without their secret and unacknowledged influence upon his own feelings.

The Western Chiefs in Montrose's army, almost to a man, regarded the Marquis of Argyle as the most direct and proper object of hostilities. Almost all of them had felt his power; almost all, in withdrawing their fencible men from their own glens, left their families and property exposed to his vengeance; all, without exception, were desirous of diminishing his sovereignty; and most of them lay so near his territories, that they might reasonably hope to be gratified by a share of his spoil.

To these Chiefs the possession of Inverary and its castle was an event infinitely more important and desirable than the capture of Edinburgh. The latter event could only afford their clansmen a little transitory pay or plunder; the former insured to the Chiefs themselves indemnity for the past, and security for the future. Besides these personal reasons, the leaders, who favoured this opinion, plausibly urged, that though, at his first descent into the Lowlands, Montrose might be superior to the enemy, yet every day's march he made from the hills must diminish his own forces, and expose him to the accumulated superiority of any army which the Covenanters could collect from the Lowland levies and garrisons. On the other hand, by crushing Argyle effectually, he would not only permit his present western friends to bring out that proportion of their forces which they must otherwise leave at home for protection of their families; but farther, he would draw to his standard several tribes already friendly to his cause, but who were prevented from joining him by fear of M'Callum More.

These arguments, as we have already hinted, found something responsive in Montrose's own bosom, not quite consonant with the general heroism of his character. The houses of Argyle and Montrose had been in former times, repeatedly opposed to each other in war and in politics, and the superior advantages acquired by the former, had made them the subject of envy and dislike to the neighbouring family, who, conscious of equal desert, had not been so richly rewarded. This was not all. The existing heads of these rival families had stood in the most marked opposition to each other since the commencement of the present troubles.

Montrose, conscious of the superiority of his talents, and of having rendered great service to the Covenanters at the beginning of the war, had expected from that party the supereminence of council and command, which they judged it safer to intrust to the more limited faculties, and more extensive power, of his rival Argyle. The having awarded this preference, was an injury which Montrose never forgave the Covenanters; and he was still less likely to extend his pardon to Argyle, to whom he had been postponed. He was therefore stimulated by every feeling of hatred which could animate a fiery temper in a fierce age, to seek for revenge upon the enemy of his house and person; and it is probable that these private motives operated not a little upon his mind, when he found the principal part of his followers determined rather to undertake an expedition against the territories of Argyle, than to take the far more decisive step of descending at once into the Lowlands.

Yet whatever temptation Montrose found to carry into effect his attack upon Argyleshire, he could not easily bring himself to renounce the splendid achievement of a descent upon the Lowlands. He held more than one council with the principal Chiefs, combating, perhaps, his own secret inclination as well as theirs. He laid before them the extreme difficulty of marching even a Highland army from the eastward into Argyleshire, through passes scarcely practicable for shepherds and deer-stalkers, and over mountains, with which even the clans lying nearest to them did not pretend to be thoroughly acquainted. These difficulties were greatly enhanced by the season of the year, which was now advancing towards December, when the mountain-passes, in themselves so difficult, might be expected to be rendered utterly impassable by snowstorms. These objections neither satisfied nor silenced the Chiefs, who insisted upon their ancient mode of making war, by driving the cattle, which, according to the Gaelic phrase, "fed upon the grass of their enemy." The council was dismissed late at night, and without coming to any decision, excepting that the Chiefs, who supported the opinion that Argyle should be invaded, promised to seek out among their followers those who might be most capable of undertaking the office of guides upon the expedition.

Montrose had retired to the cabin which served him for a tent, and stretched himself upon a bed of dry fern, the only place of repose which it afforded. But he courted sleep in vain, for the visions of ambition excluded those of Morpheus. In one moment he imagined himself displaying the royal banner from the reconquered Castle of Edinburgh, detaching assistance to a monarch whose crown depended upon his success, and receiving in requital all the advantages and preferments which could be heaped upon him whom a king delighteth to honour. At another time this dream, splendid as it was, faded before the vision of gratified vengeance, and personal triumph over a personal enemy. To surprise Argyle in his stronghold of Inverary—to crush in him at once the rival of his own house and the chief support of the Presbyterians—to show the Covenanters the difference between the preferred Argyle and the postponed Montrose, was a picture too flattering to feudal vengeance to be easily relinquished.

While he lay thus busied with contradictory thoughts and feelings, the soldier who stood sentinel upon his quarters announced to the Marquis that two persons desired to speak with his Excellency.

"Their names?" answered Montrose, "and the cause of their urgency at such a late hour?"

On these points, the sentinel, who was one of Colkitto's Irishmen, could afford his General little information; so that Montrose, who at such a period durst refuse access to no one, lest he might have been neglecting some important intelligence, gave directions, as a necessary precaution, to put the guard under arms, and then prepared to receive his untimely visitors. His groom of the chambers had scarce lighted a pair of torches, and Montrose himself had scarce risen from his couch, when two men entered, one wearing a Lowland dress, of shamoy leather worn almost to tatters; the other a tall upright old Highlander, of a complexion which might be termed iron-grey, wasted and worn by frost and tempest.

"What may be your commands with me, my friends?" said the Marquis, his hand almost unconsciously seeking the butt of one of his pistols; for the period, as well as the time of night, warranted suspicions which the good mien of his visitors was not by any means calculated to remove.

"I pray leave to congratulate you," said the Lowlander, "my most noble General, and right honourable lord, upon the great battles which you have achieved since I had the fortune to be detached from you, It was a pretty affair that tuilzie at Tippermuir; nevertheless, if I might be permitted to counsel—"

"Before doing so," said the Marquis, "will you be pleased to let me know who is so kind as to favour me with his opinion?"

"Truly, my lord," replied the man, "I should have hoped that was unnecessary, seeing it is not so long since I took on in your service, under promise of a commission as Major, with half a dollar of daily pay and half a dollar of arrears; and I am to trust your lordship has not forgotten my pay as well as my person?"

"My good friend, Major Dalgetty," said Montrose, who by this time perfectly recollected his man, "you must consider what important things have happened to put my friends' faces out of my memory, besides this imperfect light; but all conditions shall be kept.—And what news from Argyleshire, my good Major? We have long given you up for lost, and I was now preparing to take the most signal vengeance upon the old fox who infringed the law of arms in your person."

"Truly, my noble lord," said Dalgetty, "I have no desire that my return should put any stop to so proper and becoming an intention; verily it is in no shape in the Earl of Argyle's favour or mercy that I now stand before you, and I shall be no intercessor for him. But my escape is, under Heaven, and the excellent dexterity which, as an old and accomplished cavalier, I displayed in effecting the same,—I say, under these, it is owing to the assistance of this old Highlander, whom I venture to recommend to your lordship's special favour, as the instrument of saving your lordship's to command, Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket."

"A thankworthy service," said the Marquis, gravely, "which shall certainly be requited in the manner it deserves."

"Kneel down, Ranald," said Major Dalgetty (as we must now call him), "kneel down, and kiss his Excellency's hand."

The prescribed form of acknowledgment not being according to the custom of Ranald's country, he contented himself with folding his arms on his bosom, and making a low inclination of his head.

"This poor man, my lord," said Major Dalgetty, continuing his speech with a dignified air of protection towards Ranald M'Eagh, "has strained all his slender means to defend my person from mine enemies, although having no better weapons of a missile sort than bows and arrows, whilk your lordship will hardly believe."

"You will see a great many such weapons in my camp," said Montrose, "and we find them serviceable." [In fact, for the admirers of archery it may be stated, not only that many of the Highlanders in Montrose's army used these antique missiles, but even in England the bow and quiver, once the glory of the bold yeomen of that land, were occasionally used during the great civil wars.]

"Serviceable, my lord!" said Dalgetty; "I trust your lordship will permit me to be surprised—bows and arrows!—I trust you will forgive my recommending the substitution of muskets, the first convenient opportunity. But besides defending me, this honest Highlander also was at the pains of curing me, in respect that I had got a touch of the wars in my retreat, which merits my best requital in this special introduction of him to your lordship's notice and protection."

"What is your name, my friend?" said Montrose, turning to the Highlander.

"It may not be spoken," answered the mountaineer.

"That is to say," interpreted Major Dalgetty, "he desires to have his name concealed, in respect he hath in former days taken a castle, slain certain children, and done other things, whilk, as your good lordship knows, are often practised in war time, but excite no benevolence towards the perpetrator in the friends of those who sustain injury. I have known, in my military experience, many brave cavaliers put to death by the boors, simply for having used military license upon the country."

"I understand," said Montrose: "This person is at feud with some of our followers. Let him retire to the court of guard, and we will think of the best mode of protecting him."

"You hear, Ranald," said Major Dalgetty, with an air of superiority, "his Excellency wishes to hold privy council with me, you must go to the court of guard.—He does not know where that is, poor fellow!—he is a young soldier for so old a man; I will put him under the charge of a sentinel, and return to your lordship incontinent." He did so, and returned accordingly.

Montrose's first enquiry respected the embassy to Inverary; and he listened with attention to Dalgetty's reply, notwithstanding the prolixity of the Major's narrative. It required an effort from the Marquis to maintain his attention; but no one better knew, that where information is to be derived from the report of such agents as Dalgetty, it can only be obtained by suffering them to tell their story in their own way. Accordingly the Marquis's patience was at length rewarded. Among other spoils which the Captain thought himself at liberty to take, was a packet of Argyle's private papers. These he consigned to the hands of his General; a humour of accounting, however, which went no farther, for I do not understand that he made any mention of the purse of gold which he had appropriated at the same time that he made seizure of the papers aforesaid. Snatching a torch from the wall, Montrose was in an instant deeply engaged in the perusal of these documents, in which it is probable he found something to animate his personal resentment against his rival Argyle.

"Does he not fear me?" said he; "then he shall feel me. Will he fire my castle of Murdoch?—Inverary shall raise the first smoke.—O for a guide through the skirts of Strath-Fillan!"

Whatever might be Dalgetty's personal conceit, he understood his business sufficiently to guess at Montrose's meaning. He instantly interrupted his own prolix narration of the skirmish which had taken place, and the wound he had received in his retreat, and began to speak to the point which he saw interested his General.

"If," said he, "your Excellency wishes to make an infall into Argyleshire, this poor man, Ranald, of whom I told you, together with his children and companions, know every pass into that land, both leading from the east and from the north."

"Indeed!" said Montrose; "what reason have you to believe their knowledge so extensive?"

"So please your Excellency," answered Dalgetty, "during the weeks that I remained with them for cure of my wound, they were repeatedly obliged to shift their quarters, in respect of Argyle's repeated attempts to repossess himself of the person of an officer who was honoured with Your Excellency's confidence; so that I had occasion to admire the singular dexterity and knowledge of the face of the country with which they alternately achieved their retreat and their advance; and when, at length, I was able to repair to your Excellency's standard, this honest simple creature, Ranald MacEagh, guided me by paths which my steed Gustavus (which your lordship may remember) trode with perfect safety, so that I said to myself, that where guides, spies, or intelligencers, were required in a Highland campaign in that western country, more expert persons than he and his attendants could not possibly be desired."

"And can you answer for this man's fidelity?" said Montrose; "what is his name and condition?"

"He is an outlaw and robber by profession, something also of a homicide or murderer," answered Dalgetty; "and by name, called Ranald MacEagh; whilk signifies, Ranald, the Son of the Mist."

"I should remember something of that name," said Montrose, pausing: "Did not these Children of the Mist perpetrate some act of cruelty upon the M'Aulays?"

Major Dalgetty mentioned the circumstance of the murder of the forester, and Montrose's active memory at once recalled all the circumstances of the feud.

"It is most unlucky," said Montrose, "this inexpiable quarrel between these men and the M'Aulays. Allan has borne himself bravely in these wars, and possesses, by the wild mystery of his behaviour and language, so much influence over the minds of his countrymen, that the consequences of disobliging him might be serious. At the same time, these men being so capable of rendering useful service, and being as you say, Major Dalgetty, perfectly trustworthy—"

"I will pledge my pay and arrears, my horse and arms, my head and neck, upon their fidelity," said the Major; "and your Excellency knows, that a soldado could say no more for his own father."

"True," said Montrose; "but as this is a matter of particular moment, I would willingly know the grounds of so positive an assurance."

"Concisely then, my lord," said the Major, "not only did they disdain to profit by a handsome reward which Argyle did me the honour to place upon this poor head of mine, and not only did they abstain from pillaging my personal property, whilk was to an amount that would have tempted regular soldiers in any service of Europe; and not only did they restore me my horse, whilk your Excellency knows to be of value, but I could not prevail on them to accept one stiver, doit, or maravedi, for the trouble and expenses of my sick bed. They actually refused my coined money when freely offered,—a tale seldom to be told in a Christian land."

"I admit," said Montrose, after a moment's reflection, "that their conduct towards you is good evidence of their fidelity; but how to secure against the breaking out of this feud?" He paused, and then suddenly added, "I had forgot I have supped, while you, Major, have been travelling by moonlight."

He called to his attendants to fetch a stoup of wine and some refreshments. Major Dalgetty, who had the appetite of a convalescent returned from Highland quarters, needed not any pressing to partake of what was set before him, but proceeded to dispatch his food with such alacrity, that the Marquis, filling a cup of wine, and drinking to his health, could not help remarking, that coarse as the provisions of his camp were, he was afraid Major Dalgetty had fared much worse during his excursion into Argyleshire.

"Your Excellency may take your corporal oath upon that," said the worthy Major, speaking with his mouth full; "for Argyle's bread and water are yet stale and mouldy in my recollection, and though they did their best, yet the viands that the Children of the Mist procured for me, poor helpless creatures as they were, were so unrefreshful to my body, that when enclosed in my armour, whilk I was fain to leave behind me for expedition's sake, I rattled therein like the shrivelled kernel in a nut that hath been kept on to a second Hallowe'en."

"You must take the due means to repair these losses, Major Dalgetty."

"In troth," answered the soldier, "I shall hardly be able to compass that, unless my arrears are to be exchanged for present pay; for I protest to your Excellency, that the three stone weight which I have lost were simply raised upon the regular accountings of the States of Holland."

"In that case," said the Marquis, "you are only reduced to good marching order. As for the pay, let us once have victory—victory, Major, and your wishes, and all our wishes, shall be amply fulfilled. Meantime, help yourself to another cup of wine."

"To your Excellency's health," said the Major, filling a cup to the brim, to show the zeal with which he drank the toast, "and victory over all our enemies, and particularly over Argyle! I hope to twitch another handful from his board myself—I have had one pluck at it already."

"Very true," answered Montrose; "but to return to those men of the Mist. You understand, Dalgetty, that their presence here, and the purpose for which we employ them, is a secret between you and me?"

Delighted, as Montrose had anticipated, with this mark of his General's confidence, the Major laid his hand upon his nose, and nodded intelligence.

"How many may there be of Ranauld's followers?" continued the Marquis.

"They are reduced, so far as I know, to some eight or ten men," answered Major Dalgetty, "and a few women and children."

"Where are they now?" demanded Montrose.

"In a valley, at three miles' distance," answered the soldier, "awaiting your Excellency's command; I judged it not fit to bring them to your leaguer without your Excellency's orders."

"You judged very well," said Montrose; "it would be proper that they remain where they are, or seek some more distant place of refuge. I will send them money, though it is a scarce article with me at present."

"It is quite unnecessary," said Major Dalgetty; "your Excellency has only to hint that the M'Aulays are going in that direction, and my friends of the Mist will instantly make volte-face, and go to the right about."

"That were scarce courteous," said the Marquis. "Better send them a few dollars to purchase them some cattle for the support of the women and children."

"They know how to come by their cattle at a far cheaper rate," said the Major; "but let it be as your Excellency wills."

"Let Ranauld MacEagh," said Montrose, "select one or two of his followers, men whom he can trust, and who are capable of keeping their own secret and ours; these, with their chief for scout-master-general, shall serve for our guides. Let them be at my tent to-morrow at daybreak, and see, if possible, that they neither guess my purpose, nor hold any communication with each other in private.—This old man, has he any children?"

"They have been killed or hanged," answered the Major, "to the number of a round dozen, as I believe—but he hath left one grand-child, a smart and hopeful youth, whom I have noted to be never without a pebble in his plaid-nook, to fling at whatsoever might come in his way; being a symbol, that, like David, who was accustomed to sling smooth stones taken from the brook, he may afterwards prove an adventurous warrior."

"That boy, Major Dalgetty," said the Marquis, "I will have to attend upon my own person. I presume he will have sense enough to keep his name secret?"

"Your Excellency need not fear that," answered Dalgetty; "these Highland imps, from the moment they chip the shell—"

"Well," interrupted Montrose, "that boy shall be pledge for the fidelity of his parent, and if he prove faithful, the child's preferment shall be his reward.—And now, Major Dalgetty, I will license your departure for the night; tomorrow you will introduce this MacEagh, under any name or character he may please to assume. I presume his profession has rendered him sufficiently expert in all sort of disguises; or we may admit John of Moidart into our schemes, who has sense, practicability, and intelligence, and will probably allow this man for a time to be disguised as one of his followers. For you, Major, my groom of the chambers will be your quarter-master for this evening."

Major Dalgetty took his leave with a joyful heart greatly elated with the reception he had met with, and much pleased with the personal manners of his new General, which, as he explained at great length to Ranauld MacEagh, reminded him in many respects of the demeanour of the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, and Bulwark of the Protestant Faith.

CHAPTER XVII.

The march begins in military state,
And nations on his eyes suspended wait;
Stern famine guards the solitary coast,
And winter barricades the realms of frost.
He comes,—nor want, nor cold, his course delay.
—VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES.

By break of day Montrose received in his cabin old MacEagh, and questioned him long and particularly as to the means of approaching the country of Argyle. He made a note of his answers, which he compared with those of two of his followers, whom he introduced as the most prudent and experienced. He found them to correspond in all respects; but, still unsatisfied where precaution was so necessary, the Marquis compared the information he had received with that he was able to collect from the Chiefs who lay most near to the destined scene of invasion, and being in all respects satisfied of its accuracy, he resolved to proceed in full reliance upon it.

In one point Montrose changed his mind. Having judged it unfit to take the boy Kenneth into his own service, lest, in case of his birth being discovered, it should be resented as an offence by the numerous clans who entertained a feudal enmity to this devoted family, he requested the Major to take him in attendance upon himself; and as he accompanied this request with a handsome DOUCEUR, under pretence of clothing and equipping the lad, this change was agreeable to all parties.

It was about breakfast-time, when Major Dalgetty, being dismissed by Montrose, went in quest of his old acquaintances, Lord Menteith and the M'Aulays, to whom he longed to communicate his own adventures, as well as to learn from them the particulars of the campaign. It may be imagined he was received with great glee by men to whom the late uniformity of their military life had rendered any change of society an interesting novelty. Allan M'Aulay alone seemed to recoil from his former acquaintance, although, when challenged by his brother, he could render no other reason than a reluctance to be familiar with one who had been so lately

in the company of Argyle, and other enemies. Major Dalgetty was a little alarmed by this sort of instinctive consciousness which Allan seemed to entertain respecting the society he had been lately keeping; he was soon satisfied, however, that the perceptions of the seer in this particular were not infallible. As Ranald MacEagh was to be placed under Major Dalgetty's protection and superintendence, it was necessary he should present him to those persons with whom he was most likely to associate. The dress of the old man had, in the meantime, been changed from the tartan of his clan to a sort of clothing peculiar to the men of the distant Isles, resembling a waistcoat with sleeves, and a petticoat, all made in one piece. This dress was laced from top to bottom in front, and bore some resemblance to that called Polonaise, still worn by children in Scotland of the lower rank. The tartan hose and bonnet completed the dress, which old men of the last century remembered well to have seen worn by the distant Islesmen who came to the Earl of Mar's standard in the year 1715.

Major Dalgetty, keeping his eye on Allan as he spoke, introduced Ranald MacEagh under the fictitious name of Ranald MacGillihuron in Benbecula, who had escaped with him out of Argyle's prison. He recommended him as a person skilful in the arts of the harper and the senachie, and by no means contemptible in the quality of a second-sighted person or seer. While making this exposition, Major Dalgetty stammered and hesitated in a way so unlike the usual glib forwardness of his manner, that he could not have failed to have given suspicion to Allan M'Aulay, had not that person's whole attention been engaged in steadily perusing the features of the person thus introduced to him. This steady gaze so much embarrassed Ranald MacEagh, that his hand was beginning to sink down towards his dagger, in expectation of a hostile assault, when Allan, suddenly crossing the floor of the hut, extended his hand to him in the way of friendly greeting. They sat down side by side, and conversed in a low mysterious tone of voice. Menteith and Angus M'Aulay were not surprised at this, for there prevailed among the Highlanders who pretended to the second-sight, a sort of Freemasonry, which generally induced them, upon meeting, to hold communication with each other on the nature and extent of their visionary experiences.

"Does the sight come gloomy upon your spirits?" said Allan to his new acquaintance.

"As dark as the shadow upon the moon," replied Ranald, "when she is darkened in her mid-course in heaven, and prophets foretell of evil times."

"Come hither," said Allan, "come more this way, I would converse with you apart; for men say that in your distant islands the sight is poured forth with more clearness and power than upon us, who dwell near the Sassenach."

While they were plunged into their mystic conference, the two English cavaliers entered the cabin in the highest possible spirits, and announced to Angus M'Aulay that orders had been issued that all should hold themselves in readiness for an immediate march to the westward. Having delivered themselves of their news with much glee, they paid their compliments to their old acquaintance Major Dalgetty, whom they instantly recognised, and enquired after the health of his charger, Gustavus.

"I humbly thank you, gentlemen," answered the soldier, "Gustavas is well, though, like his master, somewhat barer on the ribs than when you offered to relieve me of him at Darnlinvarach; and let me assure you, that before you have made one or two of those marches which you seem to contemplate with so much satisfaction in prospect, you will leave, my good knights, some of your English beef, and probably an English horse or two, behind you."

Both exclaimed that they cared very little what they found or what they left, provided the scene changed from dogging up and down Angus and Aberdeenshire, in pursuit of an enemy who would neither fight nor run away.

"If such be the case," said Angus M'Aulay, "I must give orders to my followers, and make provision too for the safe conveyance of Annot Lyle; for an advance into M'Callum More's country will be a farther and fouler road than these pinks of Cumbrian knighthood are aware of." So saying, he left the cabin.

"Annot Lyle!" repeated Dalgetty, "is she following the campaign?"

"Surely," replied Sir Giles Musgrave, his eye glancing slightly from Lord Menteith to Allan M'Aulay; "we could neither march nor fight, advance nor retreat, without the influence of the Princess of Harps."

"The Princess of Broadwords and Targets, I say," answered his companion; "for the Lady of Montrose herself could not be more courteously waited upon; she has four Highland maidens, and as many bare-legged gillies, to wait upon her orders."

"And what would you have, gentlemen?" said Allan, turning suddenly from the Highlander with whom he was in conversation; "would you yourselves have left an innocent female, the companion of your infancy, to die by violence, or perish by famine? There is not, by this time, a roof upon the habitation of my fathers—our crops have been destroyed, and our cattle have been driven—and you, gentlemen, have to bless God, that, coming from a milder and more civilized country, you expose only your own lives in this remorseless war, without apprehension that your enemies will visit with their vengeance the defenceless pledges you may have left behind you."

The Englishmen cordially agreed that they had the superiority in this respect; and the company, now dispersing, went each to his several charge or occupation. Allan lingered a moment behind, still questioning the reluctant Ranald MacEagh upon a point in his supposed visions, by which he was greatly perplexed.

"Repeatedly," he said, "have I had the sight of a Gael, who seemed to plunge his weapon into the body of Menteith,—of that young nobleman in the scarlet laced cloak, who has just now left the bothy. But by no effort, though I have gazed till my eyes were almost fixed in the sockets, can I discover the face of this Highlander, or even conjecture who he may be, although his person and air seem familiar to me." [See Note II.—Wraiths.]

"Have you reversed your own plaid," said Ranald, "according to the rule of the experienced Seers in such case?"

"I have," answered Allan, speaking low, and shuddering as if with internal agony.

"And in what guise did the phantom then appear to you?" said Ranald.

"With his plaid also reversed," answered Allan, in the same low and convulsed tone.

"Then be assured," said Ranald, "that your own hand, and none other, will do the deed of which you have witnessed the shadow."

"So has my anxious soul a hundred times surmised," replied Allan. "But it is impossible! Were I to read the record in the eternal book of fate, I would declare it impossible—we are bound by the ties of blood, and by a hundred ties more intimate—we have stood side by side in battle, and our swords have reeked with the blood of the same enemies—it is IMPOSSIBLE I should harm him!"

"That you WILL do so," answered Ranald, "is certain, though the cause be hid in the darkness of futurity. You say," he continued, suppressing his own emotions with difficulty, "that side by side you have pursued your prey like bloodhounds—have you never seen bloodhounds turn their fangs against each other, and fight over the body of a throttled deer?"

"It is false!" said M'Aulay, starting up, "these are not the forebodings of fate, but the temptation of some evil spirit from the bottomless pit!" So saying, he strode out of the cabin.

"Thou hast it!" said the Son of the Mist, looking after him with an air of exultation; "the barbed arrow is in thy side! Spirits of the slaughtered, rejoice! soon shall your murderers' swords be dyed in each other's blood."

On the succeeding morning all was prepared, and Montrose advanced by rapid marches up the river Tay, and poured his desultory forces into the romantic vale around the lake of the same name, which lies at the head of that river. The inhabitants were Campbells, not indeed the vassals of Argyle, but of the allied and kindred house of Glenorchy, which now bears the name of Breadalbane. Being taken by surprise, they were totally unprepared for resistance, and were compelled to be passive witnesses of the ravages which took place among their flocks and herds. Advancing in this manner to the vale of Loch Dochart, and laying waste the country around him, Montrose reached the most difficult point of his enterprise.

To a modern army, even with the assistance of the good military road which now leads up by Teindrum to the head of Loch Awe, the passage of these extensive wilds would seem a task of some difficulty. But at this period, and for long afterwards, there was no road or path whatsoever; and to add to the difficulty, the mountains were already covered with snow. It was a sublime scene to look up to them, piled in great masses, one upon another, the front rank of dazzling whiteness, while those which arose behind them caught a rosy tint from the setting of a clear wintry sun. Ben Cruachan, superior in magnitude, and seeming the very citadel of the Genius of the Region, rose high above the others, showing his glimmering and scathed peak to the distance of many miles.

The followers of Montrose were men not to be daunted by the sublime, yet terrible prospect before them. Many of them were of that ancient race of Highlanders, who not only willingly made their couch in the snow, but considered it as effeminate luxury to use a snowball for a pillow. Plunder and revenge lay beyond the frozen mountains which they beheld, and they did not permit themselves to be daunted by the difficulty of traversing them. Montrose did not allow their spirits time to subside. He ordered the pipes to play in the van the ancient pibroch entitled, "HOGGIL NAM BO," etc. (that is, We come through snow-drift to drive the prey), the shrilling sounds of which had often struck the vales of the Lennox with terror. [It is the family-march of the M'Farlanes, a warlike and predatory clan, who inhabited the western banks of Loch-Lomond. See WAVERLY, Note XV.] The troops advanced with the nimble alacrity of mountaineers, and were soon involved in the dangerous pass, through which Ranald acted as their guide, going before them with a select party, to track out the way.

The power of man at no time appears more contemptible than when it is placed in contrast with scenes of natural terror and dignity. The victorious army of Montrose, whose exploits had struck terror into all Scotland, when ascending up this terrific pass, seemed a contemptible handful of stragglers, in the act of being devoured by the jaws of the mountain, which appeared ready to close upon them. Even Montrose half repented the boldness of his attempt, as he looked down from the summit of the first eminence which he attained, upon the scattered condition of his small army. The difficulty of getting forward was so great, that considerable gaps began to occur in the line of march, and the distance between the van, centre, and rear, was each moment increased in a degree equally incommodious and dangerous. It was with great apprehension that Montrose looked upon every point of advantage which the hill afforded, in dread it might be found occupied by an enemy prepared for defence; and he often afterwards was heard to express his conviction, that had the passes of Strath-Fillan been defended by two hundred resolute men, not only would his progress have been effectually stopped, but his army must have been in danger of being totally cut off. Security, however, the bane of many a strong country and many a fortress, betrayed, on this occasion, the district of Argyle to his enemies. The invaders had only to contend with the natural difficulties of the path, and with the snow, which, fortunately, had not fallen in any great quantity. The army no sooner reached the summit of the ridge of hills dividing Argyleshire from the district of Breadalbane, than they rushed down upon the devoted vales beneath them with a fury sufficiently expressive of the motives which had dictated a movement so difficult and hazardous.

Montrose divided his army into three bodies, in order to produce a wider and more extensive terror, one of which was commanded by the Captain of Clan Ranald, one intrusted to the leading of Colkitto, and the third remained under his own direction. He was thus enabled to penetrate the country of Argyle at three different points. Resistance there was none. The flight of the shepherds from the hills had first announced in the peopled districts this formidable irruption, and wherever the clansmen were summoned out, they were killed, disarmed, and dispersed, by an enemy who had anticipated their motions. Major Dalgetty, who had been sent forward against Inverary with the few horse of the army that were fit for service, managed his matters so well, that he had very nearly surprised Argyle, as he expressed it, INTER POCULA; and it was only a rapid flight by water which saved that chief from death or captivity. But the punishment which Argyle himself escaped fell heavily upon his country and clan, and the ravages committed by Montrose on that devoted land, although too consistent with the genius of the country and times, have been repeatedly and justly quoted as a blot on his actions and character.

Argyle in the meantime had fled to Edinburgh, to lay his complaints before the Convention of Estates. To meet the exigence of the moment, a considerable army was raised under General Baillie, a Presbyterian officer of skill and fidelity, with whom was joined in command the celebrated Sir John Urrie, a soldier of fortune like Dalgetty, who had already changed sides twice during the Civil War, and was destined to turn his coat a third time before it was ended. Argyle also, burning with indignation, proceeded to levy his own numerous forces, in order to avenge himself of his feudal enemy. He established his head-quarters at Dunbarton, where he was soon joined by a considerable force, consisting chiefly of his own clansmen and dependants. Being there joined by Baillie and Urrie, with a very considerable army of regular forces, he prepared to march into Argyleshire, and chastise the invader of his paternal territories.

But Montrose, while these two formidable armies were forming a junction, had been recalled from that ravaged country by the approach of a third, collected in the north under the Earl of Seaforth, who, after some hesitation, having embraced the side of the Covenanters, had now, with the assistance of the veteran garrison of Inverness, formed a considerable army, with which he threatened Montrose from Inverness-shire. Enclosed in a wasted and unfriendly country, and menaced on each side by advancing enemies of superior force, it might have been supposed that Montrose's destruction was certain. But these were precisely the circumstances under which the active and enterprising genius of the Great Marquis was calculated to excite the wonder and admiration of his friends, the astonishment and terror of his enemies. As if by magic, he collected his scattered forces from the wasteful occupation in which they had been engaged; and scarce were they again united, ere Argyle and his associate generals were informed, that the royalists, having suddenly disappeared from Argyleshire, had retreated northwards among the dusky and impenetrable mountains of Lochaber.

The sagacity of the generals opposed to Montrose immediately conjectured, that it was the purpose of their active antagonist to fight with, and, if possible, to destroy Seaforth, ere they could come to his assistance. This occasioned a corresponding change in their operations. Leaving this chieftain to make the best defence he could, Urrie and Baillie again separated their forces from those of Argyle; and, having chiefly horse and Lowland troops under their command, they kept the southern side of the Grampian ridge, moving along eastward into the county of Angus, resolving from thence to proceed into Aberdeenshire, in order to intercept Montrose, if he should attempt to escape in that direction.

Argyle, with his own levies and other troops, undertook to follow Montrose's march; so that, in case he should come to action either with Seaforth, or with Baillie and Urrie, he might be placed between two fires by this third army, which, at a secure distance, was to hang upon his rear.

For this purpose, Argyle once more moved towards Inverary, having an opportunity, at every step, to deplore the severities which the hostile clans had exercised on his dependants and country. Whatever noble qualities the Highlanders possessed, and they had many, clemency in treating a hostile country was not of the number; but even the ravages of hostile troops combined to swell the number of Argyle's followers. It is still a Highland proverb, He whose house is burnt must become a soldier; and hundreds of the inhabitants of these unfortunate valleys had now no means of maintenance, save by exercising upon others the severities they had themselves sustained, and no future prospect of happiness, excepting in the gratification of revenge. His bands were, therefore, augmented by the very circumstances which had desolated his country, and Argyle soon found himself at the head of three thousand determined men, distinguished for activity and courage, and commanded by gentlemen of his own name, who yielded to none in those qualities. Under himself, he conferred the principal command upon Sir Duncan Campbell of Ardenvohr, and another Sir Duncan Campbell of Auchenbreck, [This last character is historical] an experienced and veteran soldier, whom he had recalled from the wars of Ireland for this purpose. The cold spirit of Argyle himself, however, clogged the military councils of his more intrepid assistants; and it was resolved, notwithstanding their increased force, to observe the same plan of operations, and to follow Montrose cautiously, in whatever direction he should march, avoiding an engagement until an opportunity should occur of falling upon his rear, while he should be engaged with another enemy in front.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Piobracht au Donuil-dhu,
Piobrachet au Donuil,
Piobrachet agus S'breittach
Feacht an Innerlochy.

The war-tune of Donald the Black,
The war-tune of Black Donald,

The pipes and the banner
Are up in the rendezvous of Inverlochy.

The military road connecting the chains of forts, as it is called, and running in the general line of the present Caledonian Canal, has now completely opened the great glen, or chasm, extending almost across the whole island, once doubtless filled by the sea, and still affording basins for that long line of lakes, by means of which modern art has united the German and Atlantic Oceans. The paths or tracks by which the natives traversed this extensive valley, were, in 1645-6, in the same situation as when they awaked the strain of an Irish engineer officer, who had been employed in converting them into practicable military roads, and whose eulogium begins, and, for aught I know, ends, as follows:

Had you seen but these roads before they were made, You would have held up your hands and bless'd General Wade.

But, bad as the ordinary paths were, Montrose avoided them, and led his army, like a herd of wild deer, from mountain to mountain, and from forest to forest, where his enemies could learn nothing of his motions, while he acquired the most perfect knowledge respecting theirs from the friendly clans of Cameron and M'Donnell, whose mountainous districts he now traversed. Strict orders had been given that Argyle's advance should be watched, and that all intelligence respecting his motions should be communicated instantly to the General himself.

It was a moonlight night, and Montrose, worn out by the fatigues of the day, was laid down to sleep in a miserable shieling. He had only slumbered two hours, when some one touched his shoulder. He looked up, and, by the stately form and deep voice, easily recognised the Chief of the Camerons.

"I have news for you," said that leader, "which is worth while to arise and listen to."

"M'Ilduy [Mhich-Connel Dhu, the descendant of Black Donald.] can bring no other," said Montrose, addressing the Chief by his patronymic title—"are they good or bad?"

"As you may take them," said the Chieftain.

"Are they certain?" demanded Montrose.

"Yes," answered M'Ilduy, "or another messenger should have brought them. Know that, tired with the task imposed upon me of accompanying that unhappy Dalgetty and his handful of horse, who detained me for hours on the march at the pace of a crippled badger, I made a stretch of four miles with six of my people in the direction of Inverlochy, and there met with Ian of Glenroy, who had been out for intelligence. Argyle is moving upon Inverlochy with three thousand chosen men, commanded by the flower of the sons of Diarmid.—These are my news—they are certain—it is for you to construe their purport."

"Their purport must be good," answered Montrose, readily and cheerfully; "the voice of M'Ilduy is ever pleasant in the ears of Montrose, and most pleasant when it speaks of some brave enterprise at hand—What are our musters?"

He then called for light, and easily ascertained that a great part of his followers having, as usual, dispersed to secure their booty, he had not with him above twelve or fourteen hundred men.

"Not much above a third," said Montrose, pausing, "of Argyle's force, and Highlanders opposed to Highlanders.—With the blessing of God upon the royal cause, I would not hesitate were the odds but one to two."

"Then do not hesitate," said Cameron; "for when your trumpets shall sound to attack M'Callum More, not a man of these glens will remain deaf to the summons. Glengarry—Keppoch—I myself—would destroy, with fire and sword, the wretch who should remain behind under any pretence whatsoever. To-morrow, or the next day, shall be a day of battle to all who bear the name of M'Donnell or Cameron, whatever be the event."

"It is gallantly said, my noble friend," said Montrose, grasping his hand, "and I were worse than a coward did I not do justice to such followers, by entertaining the most indubitable hopes of success. We will turn back on this M'Callum More, who follows us like a raven to devour the relics of our army, should we meet braver men who may be able to break its strength! Let the Chiefs and leaders be called together as quickly as possible; and you, who have brought us the first news of this joyful event,—for such it shall be,—you, M'Ilduy, shall bring it to a joyful issue, by guiding us the best and nearest road against our enemy."

"That will I willingly do," said M'Ilduy; "if I have shown you paths by which to retreat through these dusky wilds, with far more readiness will I teach you how to advance against your foe."

A general bustle now prevailed, and the leaders were everywhere startled from the rude couches on which they had sought temporary repose.

"I never thought," said Major Dalgetty, when summoned up from a handful of rugged heather roots, "to have parted from a bed as hard as a stable-broom with such bad will; but, indubitably, having but one man of military experience in his army, his Excellency the Marquis may be vindicated in putting him upon hard duty." So saying, he repaired to the council, where, notwithstanding his pedantry, Montrose seemed always to listen to him with considerable attention; partly because the Major really possessed military knowledge and experience, and often made suggestions which were found of advantage, and partly because it relieved the General from the necessity of deferring entirely to the opinion of the Highland Chiefs, and gave him additional ground for disputing it when it was not agreeable to his own. On the present occasion, Dalgetty joyfully acquiesced in the proposal of marching back and confronting Argyle, which he compared to the valiant resolution of the great Gustavus, who moved against the Duke of Bavaria, and enriched his troops by the plunder of that fertile country, although menaced from the northward by the large army which Wallenstein had assembled in Bohemia.

The Chiefs of Glengarry, Keppoch, and Lochiel, whose clans, equal in courage and military fame to any in the Highlands, lay within the neighbourhood of the scene of action, dispatched the fiery cross through their vassals, to summon every one who could bear arms to meet the King's lieutenant, and to join the standards of their respective Chiefs, as they marched towards Inverlochy. As the order was emphatically given, it was speedily and willingly obeyed. Their natural love of war, their zeal for the royal cause,—for they viewed the King in the light of a chief whom his clansmen had deserted,—as well as their implicit obedience to their own patriarch, drew in to Montrose's army not only all in the neighbourhood who were able to bear arms, but some who, in age at least, might have been esteemed past the use of them. During the next day's march, which, being directed straight through the mountains of Lochaber, was unsuspected by the enemy, his forces were augmented by handfuls of men issuing from each glen, and ranging themselves under the banners of their respective Chiefs. This was a circumstance highly inspiring to the rest of the army, who, by the time they approached the enemy, found their strength increased considerably more than one-fourth, as had been prophesied by the valiant leader of the Camerons.

While Montrose executed this counter-march, Argyle had, at the head of his gallant army, advanced up the southern side of Loch-Eil, and reached the river Lochy, which combines that lake with Loch-Lochy. The ancient Castle of Inverlochy, once, as it is said, a royal fortress, and still, although dismantled, a place of some strength and consideration, offered convenient head-quarters, and there was ample room for Argyle's army to encamp around him in the valley, where the Lochy joins Loch-Eil. Several barges had attended, loaded with provisions, so that they were in every respect as well accommodated as such an army wished or expected to be. Argyle, in council with Auchenbreck and Ardenvohr, expressed his full confidence that Montrose was now on the brink of destruction; that his troops must gradually diminish as he moved eastward through such uncouth paths; that if he went westward, he must encounter Urrie and Baillie; if northward, fall into the hands of Seaforth; or should he choose any halting-place, he would expose himself to be attacked by three armies at once.

"I cannot rejoice in the prospect, my lord," said Auchebreck, "that James Grahame will be crushed with little assistance of ours. He has left a heavy account in Argyleshire against him, and I long to reckon with him drop of blood for drop of blood. I love not the payment of such debts by third hands."

"You are too scrupulous," said Argyle; "what signifies it by whose hands the blood of the Grahames is spilt? It is time that of the sons of Diarmid should cease to flow.—What say you, Ardenvohr?"

"I say, my lord," replied Sir Duncan, "that I think Auchenbreck will be gratified, and will himself have a personal opportunity of settling accounts with Montrose for his depredations. Reports have reached our outposts that the Camerons are assembling their full strength on the skirts of Ben-Nevis; this must be to join the advance of Montrose, and not to cover his retreat."

"It must be some scheme of harassing and depredation," said Argyle, "devised by the inveterate malignity of M'Ilduy, which he terms loyalty. They can intend no more than an attack on our outposts, or some annoyance to to-morrow's march."

"I have sent out scouts," said Sir Duncan, "in every direction, to procure intelligence; and we must soon hear whether they really do assemble any force, upon what point, or with what purpose."

It was late ere any tidings were received; but when the moon had arisen, a considerable bustle in the camp, and a noise immediately after heard in the castle, announced the arrival of important intelligence. Of the scouts first dispersed by Ardenvoehr, some had returned without being able to collect anything, save uncertain rumours concerning movements in the country of the Camerons. It seemed as if the skirts of Ben-Nevis were sending forth those unaccountable and portentous sounds with which they sometimes announce the near approach of a storm. Others, whose zeal carried them farther upon their mission, were entrapped and slain, or made prisoners, by the inhabitants of the fastnesses into which they endeavoured to penetrate. At length, on the rapid advance of Montrose's army, his advanced guard and the outposts of Argyle became aware of each other's presence, and after exchanging a few musket-shots and arrows, fell back to their respective main bodies, to convey intelligence and receive orders.

Sir Duncan Campbell, and Auchenbreck, instantly threw themselves on horseback, in order to visit the state of the outposts; and Argyle maintained his character of commander-in-chief with reputation, by making a respectable arrangement of his forces in the plain, as it was evident that they might now expect a night alarm, or an attack in the morning at farthest. Montrose had kept his forces so cautiously within the defiles of the mountain, that no effort which Auchenbreck or Ardenvoehr thought it prudent to attempt, could ascertain his probable strength. They were aware, however, that, at the utmost computation, it must be inferior to their own, and they returned to Argyle to inform him of the amount of their observations; but that nobleman refused to believe that Montrose could be in presence himself. He said, "It was a madness, of which even James Grahame, in his height of presumptuous frenzy, was incapable; and he doubted not that their march was only impeded by their ancient enemies, Glencoe, Keppoch, and Glengarry; and perhaps M'Vourigh, with his M'Phersons, might have assembled a force, which he knew must be greatly inferior in numbers to his own, and whom, therefore, he doubted not to disperse by force, or by terms of capitulation."

The spirit of Argyle's followers was high, breathing vengeance for the disasters which their country had so lately undergone; and the night passed in anxious hopes that the morning might dawn upon their vengeance. The outposts of either army kept a careful watch, and the soldiers of Argyle slept in the order of battle which they were next day to occupy.

A pale dawn had scarce begun to tinge the tops of these immense mountains, when the leaders of both armies prepared for the business of the day. It was the second of February, 1645-6. The clansmen of Argyle were arranged in two lines, not far from the angle between the river and the lake, and made an appearance equally resolute and formidable. Auchenbreck would willingly have commenced the battle by an attack on the outposts of the enemy, but Argyle, with more cautious policy, preferred receiving to making the onset. Signals were soon heard, that they would not long wait for it in vain. The Campbells could distinguish, in the gorge of the mountains, the war-tunes of various clans as they advanced to the onset. That of the Camerons, which bears the ominous words, addressed to the wolves and ravens, "Come to me, and I will give you flesh," was loudly re-echoed from their native glens. In the language of the Highland bards, the war voice of Glengarry was not silent; and the gathering tunes of other tribes could be plainly distinguished, as they successively came up to the extremity of the passes from which they were to descend into the plain.

"You see," said Argyle to his kinsmen, "it is as I said, we have only to deal with our neighbours; James Grahame has not ventured to show us his banner."

At this moment there resounded from the gorge of the pass a lively flourish of trumpets, in that note with which it was the ancient Scottish fashion to salute the royal standard.

"You may hear, my lord, from yonder signal," said Sir Duncan Campbell, "that he who pretends to be the King's Lieutenant, must be in person among these men."

"And has probably horse with him," said Auchenbreck, "which I could not have anticipated. But shall we look pale for that, my lord, when we have foes to fight, and wrongs to revenge?"

Argyle was silent, and looked upon his arm, which hung in a sash, owing to a fall which he had sustained in a preceding march.

"It is true," interrupted Ardenvoehr, eagerly, "my Lord of Argyle, you are disabled from using either sword or pistol; you must retire on board the galleys—your life is precious to us as a head—your hand cannot be useful to us as a soldier."

"No," said Argyle, pride contending with irresolution, "it shall never be said that I fled before Montrose; if I cannot fight, I will at least die in the midst of my children."

Several other principal Chiefs of the Campbells, with one voice, conjured and obtested their Chieftain to leave them for that day to the leading of Ardenvoehr and Auchenbreck, and to behold the conflict from a distance and in safety.—We dare not stigmatize Argyle with poltroonery; for, though his life was marked by no action of bravery, yet he behaved with so much composure and dignity in the final and closing scene, that his conduct upon the present and similar occasions, should be rather imputed to indecision than to want of courage. But when the small still voice within a man's own breast, which tells him that his life is of consequence to himself, is seconded by that of numbers around him, who assure him that it is of equal advantage to the public, history affords many examples of men more habitually daring than Argyle, who have consulted self-preservation when the temptations to it were so powerfully increased.

"See him on board, if you will, Sir Duncan," said Auchenbreck to his kinsman; "It must be my duty to prevent this spirit from spreading farther among us."

So saying, he threw himself among the ranks, entreating, commanding, and conjuring the soldiers, to remember their ancient fame and their present superiority; the wrongs they had to revenge, if successful, and the fate they had to dread, if vanquished; and imparting to every bosom a portion of the fire which glowed in his own. Slowly, meanwhile, and apparently with reluctance, Argyle suffered himself to be forced by his officious kinsmen to the verge of the lake, and was transported on board of a galley, from the deck of which he surveyed with more safety than credit the scene which ensued.

Sir Duncan Campbell of Ardenvoehr, notwithstanding the urgency of the occasion, stood with his eyes riveted on the boat which bore his Chieftain from the field of battle. There were feelings in his bosom which could not be expressed; for the character of a Chief was that of a father, and the heart of a clansman durst not dwell upon his failings with critical severity as upon those of other men. Argyle, too, harsh and severe to others, was generous and liberal among his kinsmen, and the noble heart of, Ardenvoehr was wrung with bitter anguish, when he reflected to what interpretation his present conduct might subject him.

"It is better it should be so," said he to himself, devouring his own emotion; "but—of his line of a hundred sires, I know not one who would have retired while the banner of Diarmid waved in the wind, in the face of its most inveterate foes!"

A loud shout now compelled him to turn, and to hasten with all dispatch to his post, which was on the right flank of Argyle's little army.

The retreat of Argyle had not passed unobserved by his watchful enemy, who, occupying the superior ground, could mark every circumstance which passed below. The movement of three or four horsemen to the rear showed that those who retreated were men of rank.

"They are going," said Dalgetty, "to put their horses out of danger, like prudent cavaliers. Yonder goes Sir Duncan Campbell, riding a brown bay gelding, which I had marked for my own second charger."

"You are wrong, Major," said Montrose, with a bitter smile, "they are saving their precious Chief—Give the signal for assault instantly—send the word through the ranks.—Gentlemen, noble Chiefs, Glengarry, Keppoch, M'Vourigh, upon them instantly!—Ride to M'Ilduy, Major Dalgetty, and tell him to charge as he loves Lochaber—return and bring our handful of horse to my standard. They shall be placed with the Irish as a reserve."

CHAPTER XIX.

As meets a rock a thousand waves, so Inisfail met Lochlin.

—OSSIAN.

The trumpets and bagpipes, those clamorous harbingers of blood and death, at once united in the signal for onset, which was replied to by the cry of more than two thousand warriors, and the echoes of the mountain glens behind them. Divided into three bodies, or columns, the Highland followers of Montrose poured from

the defiles which had hitherto concealed them from their enemies, and rushed with the utmost determination upon the Campbells, who waited their charge with the greatest firmness. Behind these charging columns marched in line the Irish, under Colkitto, intended to form the reserve. With them was the royal standard, and Montrose himself; and on the flanks were about fifty horse, under Dalgetty, which by wonderful exertions had been kept in some sort fit for service.

The right column of Royalists was led by Glengarry, the left by Lochiel, and the centre by the Earl of Menteith, who preferred fighting on foot in a Highland dress to remaining with the cavalry.

The Highlanders poured on with the proverbial fury of their country, firing their guns, and discharging their arrows, at a little distance from the enemy, who received the assault with the most determined gallantry. Better provided with musketry than their enemies, stationary also, and therefore taking the more decisive aim, the fire of Argyle's followers was more destructive than that which they sustained. The royal clans, perceiving this, rushed to close quarters, and succeeded on two points in throwing their enemies into disorder. With regular troops this must have achieved a victory; but here Highlanders were opposed to Highlanders, and the nature of the weapons, as well as the agility of those who wielded them, was equal on both sides.

Their strife was accordingly desperate; and the clash of the swords and axes, as they encountered each other, or rung upon the targets, was mingled with the short, wild, animating shrieks with which Highlanders accompany the battle, the dance, or indeed violent exertion of any kind. Many of the foes opposed were personally acquainted, and sought to match themselves with each other from motives of hatred, or a more generous emulation of valour. Neither party would retreat an inch, while the place of those who fell (and they fell fast on both sides) was eagerly supplied by others, who thronged to the front of danger. A steam, like that which arises from a seething cauldron, rose into the thin, cold, frosty air, and hovered above the combatants.

So stood the fight on the right and the centre, with no immediate consequence, except mutual wounds and death.

On the right of the Campbells, the Knight of Ardenvohr obtained some advantage, through his military skill and by strength of numbers. He had moved forward obliquely the extreme flank of his line at the instant the Royalists were about to close, so that they sustained a fire at once on front and in flank, and, despite the utmost efforts of their leader, were thrown into some confusion. At this instant, Sir Duncan Campbell gave the word to charge, and thus unexpectedly made the attack at the very moment he seemed about to receive it. Such a change of circumstances is always discouraging, and often fatal. But the disorder was remedied by the advance of the Irish reserve, whose heavy and sustained fire compelled the Knight of Ardenvohr to forego his advantage, and content himself with repulsing the enemy. The Marquis of Montrose, in the meanwhile, availing himself of some scattered birch trees, as well as of the smoke produced by the close fire of the Irish musketry, which concealed the operation, called upon Dalgetty to follow him with the horse, and wheeling round so as to gain the right flank and even the rear of the enemy, he commanded his six trumpets to sound the charge. The clang of the cavalry trumpets, and the noise of the galloping of the horse, produced an effect upon Argyle's right wing which no other sounds could have impressed them with. The mountaineers of that period had a superstitious dread of the war-horse, like that entertained by the Peruvians, and had many strange ideas respecting the manner in which that animal was trained to combat. When, therefore, they found their ranks unexpectedly broken, and that the objects of their greatest terror were suddenly in the midst of them, the panic, in spite of Sir Duncan's attempts to stop it, became universal. Indeed, the figure of Major Dalgetty alone, sheathed in impenetrable armour, and making his horse caracole and bound, so as to give weight to every blow which he struck, would have been a novelty in itself sufficient to terrify those who had never seen anything more nearly resembling such a cavalier, than a SHELTY waddling under a Highlander far bigger than itself. The repulsed Royalists returned to the charge; the Irish, keeping their ranks, maintained a fire equally close and destructive. There was no sustaining the fight longer. Argyle's followers began to break and fly, most towards the lake, the remainder in different directions. The defeat of the right wing, of itself decisive, was rendered irreparable by the death of Auchenbreck, who fell while endeavouring to restore order.

The Knight of Ardenvohr, with two or three hundred men, all gentlemen of descent and distinguished gallantry,—for the Campbells are supposed to have had more gentlemen in their ranks than any of the Highland clans, endeavoured, with unavailing heroism, to cover the tumultuary retreat of the common file. Their resolution only proved fatal to themselves, as they were charged again and again by fresh adversaries, and forced to separate from each other, until at length their aim seemed only to be to purchase an honourable death by resisting to the very last.

"Good quarter, Sir Duncan," called out Major Dalgetty, when he discovered his late host, with one or two others, defending himself against several Highlanders; and, to enforce his offer, he rode up to him with his sword uplifted. Sir Duncan's reply was the discharge of a reserved pistol, which took effect not on the person of the rider, but on that of his gallant horse, which, shot through the heart, fell dead under him. Ranald MacEagh, who was one of those who had been pressing Sir Duncan hard, took the opportunity to cut him down with his broadsword, as he turned from him in the act of firing the pistol.

Allan M'Aulay came up at this moment. They were, excepting Ranald, followers of his brother who were engaged on that part of the field, "Villains!" he said, "which of you has dared to do this, when it was my positive order that the Knight of Ardenvohr should be taken alive?"

Half-a-dozen of busy hands, which were emulously employed in plundering the fallen knight, whose arms and accoutrements were of a magnificence befitting his quality, instantly forbore the occupation, and half the number of voices exculpated themselves, by laying the blame on the Skyeman, as they called Ranald MacEagh.

"Dog of an Islander!" said Allan, forgetting, in his wrath, their prophetic brotherhood, "follow the chase, and harm him no farther, unless you mean to die by my hand." They were at this moment left almost alone; for Allan's threats had forced his own clan from the spot, and all around had pressed onwards toward the lake, carrying before them noise, terror, and confusion, and leaving behind only the dead and dying. The moment was tempting to MacEagh's vengeful spirit.—"That I should die by your hand, red as it is with the blood of my kindred," said he, answering the threat of Allan in a tone as menacing as his own, "is not more likely than that you should fall by mine." With that, he struck at M'Aulay with such unexpected readiness, that he had scarce time to intercept the blow with his target.

"Villain!" said Allan, in astonishment, "what means this?"

"I am Ranald of the Mist!" answered the Islesman, repeating the blow; and with that word, they engaged in close and furious conflict. It seemed to be decreed, that in Allan M'Aulay had arisen the avenger of his mother's wrongs upon this wild tribe, as was proved by the issue of the present, as well as of former combats. After exchanging a few blows, Ranald MacEagh was prostrated by a deep wound on the skull; and M'Aulay, setting his foot on him, was about to pass the broadsword through his body, when the point of the weapon was struck up by a third party, who suddenly interposed. This was no other than Major Dalgetty, who, stunned by the fall, and encumbered by the dead body of his horse, had now recovered his legs and his understanding. "Hold up your sword," said he to M'Aulay, "and prejudice this person no farther, in respect that he is here in my safeconduct, and in his Excellency's service; and in regard that no honourable cavalier is at liberty, by the law martial, to avenge his own private injuries, FLAGRANTE BELLO, MULTO MAJUS FLAGRANTE PRAELIO."

"Fool!" said Allan, "stand aside, and dare not to come between the tiger and his prey!"

But, far from quitting his point, Dalgetty stepped across the fallen body of MacEagh, and gave Allan to understand, that if he called himself a tiger, he was likely, at present, to find a lion in his path. There required no more than the gesture and tone of defiance to turn the whole rage of the military Seer against the person who was opposing the course of his vengeance, and blows were instantly exchanged without farther ceremony.

The strife betwixt Allan and MacEagh had been unnoticed by the stragglers around, for the person of the latter was known to few of Montrose's followers; but the scuffle betwixt Dalgetty and him, both so well known, attracted instant attention; and fortunately, among others, that of Montrose himself, who had come for the purpose of gathering together his small body of horse, and following the pursuit down Loch-Eil. Aware of the fatal consequences of dissension in his little army, he pushed his horse up to the spot, and seeing MacEagh on the ground, and Dalgetty in the attitude of protecting him against M'Aulay, his quick apprehension instantly caught the cause of quarrel, and as instantly devised means to stop it. "For shame," he said, "gentlemen cavaliers, brawling together in so glorious a field of victory!—Are you mad? Or are you intoxicated with the glory which you have both this day gained?"

"It is not my fault, so please your Excellency," said Dalgetty. "I have been known a BONUS SOCIUS, A BON CAMARADO, in all the services of Europe; but he that touches a man under my safeguard—"

"And he," said Allan, speaking at the same time, "who dares to bar the course of my just vengeance—"

"For shame, gentlemen!" again repeated Montrose; "I have other business for you both,—business of deeper importance than any private quarrel, which you may easily find a more fitting time to settle. For you, Major Dalgetty, kneel down."

"Kneel!" said Dalgetty; "I have not learned to obey that word of command, saving when it is given from the pulpit. In the Swedish discipline, the front rank do indeed kneel, but only when the regiment is drawn up six file deep."

"Nevertheless," repeated Montrose,—"kneel down, in the name of King Charles and of his representative."

When Dalgetty reluctantly obeyed, Montrose struck him lightly on the neck with the flat of his sword, saying,—"In reward of the gallant service of this day, and in the name and authority of our Sovereign, King Charles, I dub thee knight; be brave, loyal, and fortunate. And now, Sir Dugald Dalgetty, to your duty. Collect what horsemen you can, and pursue such of the enemy as are flying down the side of the lake. Do not disperse your force, nor venture too far; but take heed to prevent their rallying, which very little exertion may do. Mount, then, Sir Dugald, and do your duty."

"But what shall I mount?" said the new-made chevalier. "Poor Gustavus sleeps in the bed of honour, like his immortal namesake! and I am made a knight, a rider, as the High Dutch have it, just when I have not a horse left to ride upon." [In German, as in Latin, the original meaning of the word Ritter, corresponding to Eques, is merely a horseman.]

"That shall not be said," answered Montrose, dismounting; "I make you a present of my own, which has been thought a good one; only, I pray you, resume the duty you discharge so well."

With many acknowledgments, Sir Dugald mounted the steed so liberally bestowed upon him; and only beseeching his Excellency to remember that MacEagh was under his safe-conduct, immediately began to execute the orders assigned to him, with great zeal and alacrity.

"And you, Allan M'Aulay," said Montrose, addressing the Highlander, who, leaning his sword-point on the ground, had regarded the ceremony of his antagonist's knighthood with a sneer of sullen scorn,—"you, who are superior to the ordinary men led by the paltry motives of plunder, and pay, and personal distinction,—you, whose deep knowledge renders you so valuable a counsellor,—is it YOU whom I find striving with a man like Dalgetty, for the privilege of trampling the remains of life out of so contemptible an enemy as lies there? Come, my friend, I have other work for you. This victory, skilfully improved, shall win Seaforth to our party. It is not disloyalty, but despair of the good cause, that has induced him to take arms against us. These arms, in this moment of better augury, he may be brought to unite with ours. I shall send my gallant friend, Colonel Hay, to him, from this very field of battle, but he must be united in commission with a Highland gentleman of rank, befitting that of Seaforth, and of talents and of influence such as may make an impression upon him. You are not only in every respect the fittest for this most important mission, but, having no immediate command, your presence may be more easily spared than that of a Chief whose following is in the field. You know every pass and glen in the Highlands, as well as the manners and customs of every tribe. Go therefore to Hay, on the right wing; he has instructions, and expects you. You will find him with Glenmorrison's men; be his guide, his interpreter, and his colleague."

Allan M'Aulay bent on the Marquis a dark and penetrating glance, as if to ascertain whether this sudden mission was not conferred for some latent and unexplained purpose. But Montrose, skilful in searching the motives of others, was an equal adept in concealing his own. He considered it as of the last consequence, in this moment of enthusiasm and exalted passion, to remove Allan from the camp for a few days, that he might provide, as his honour required, for the safety of those who had acted as his guides, when he trusted the Seer's quarrel with Dalgetty might be easily made up. Allan, at parting, only recommended to the Marquis the care of Sir Duncan Campbell, whom Montrose instantly directed to be conveyed to a place of safety. He took the same precaution for MacEagh, committing the latter, however, to a party of the Irish, with directions that he should be taken care of, but that no Highlander, of any clan, should have access to him.

The Marquis then mounted a led horse, which was held by one of his attendants, and rode on to view the scene of his victory, which was more decisive than even his ardent hopes had anticipated. Of Argyle's gallant army of three thousand men, fully one-half fell in the battle, or in the flight. They had been chiefly driven back upon that part of the plain where the river forms an angle with the lake, so that there was no free opening either for retreat or escape. Several hundreds were forced into the lake and drowned. Of the survivors, about one-half escaped by swimming the river, or by an early flight along the left bank of the lake. The remainder threw themselves into the old Castle of Inverlochy; but being without either provisions or hopes of relief, they were obliged to surrender, on condition of being suffered to return to their homes in peace. Arms, ammunition, standards, and baggage, all became the prey of the conquerors.

This was the greatest disaster that ever befell the race of Diarmid, as the Campbells were called in the Highlands; it being generally remarked that they were as fortunate in the issue of their undertakings, as they were sagacious in planning, and courageous in executing them. Of the number slain, nearly five hundred were dunniwassels, or gentlemen claiming descent from known and respected houses. And, in the opinion of many of the clan, even this heavy loss was exceeded by the disgrace arising from the inglorious conduct of their Chief, whose galley weighed anchor when the day was lost, and sailed down the lake with all the speed to which sails and oars could impel her.

CHAPTER XX.

*Faint the din of battle bray'd,
Distant down the hollow wind;
War and terror fled before,
Wounds and death remain'd behind.—PENROSE.*

Montrose's splendid success over his powerful rival was not attained without some loss, though not amounting to the tenth of what he inflicted. The obstinate valour of the Campbells cost the lives of many brave men of the opposite party; and more were wounded, the Chief of whom was the brave young Earl of Menteith, who had commanded the centre. He was but slightly touched, however, and made rather a graceful than a terrible appearance when he presented to his general the standard of Argyle, which he had taken from the standard-bearer with his own hand, and slain him in single combat. Montrose dearly loved his noble kinsman, in whom there was conspicuous a flash of the generous, romantic, disinterested chivalry of the old heroic times, entirely different from the sordid, calculating, and selfish character, which the practice of entertaining mercenary troops had introduced into most parts of Europe, and of which degeneracy Scotland, which furnished soldiers of fortune for the service of almost every nation, had been contaminated with a more than usual share. Montrose, whose native spirit was congenial, although experience had taught him how to avail himself of the motives of others, used to Menteith neither the language of praise nor of promise, but clasped him to his bosom as he exclaimed, "My gallant kinsman!" And by this burst of heartfelt applause was Menteith thrilled with a warmer glow of delight, than if his praises had been recorded in a report of the action sent directly to the throne of his sovereign.

"Nothing," he said, "my lord, now seems to remain in which I can render any assistance; permit me to look after a duty of humanity—the Knight of Ardenvoehr, as I am told, is our prisoner, and severely wounded."

"And well he deserves to be so," said Sir Dugald Dalgetty, who came up to them at that moment with a prodigious addition of acquired importance, "since he shot my good horse at the time that I was offering him honourable quarter, which, I must needs say, was done more like an ignorant Highland cateran, who has not sense enough to erect a sconce for the protection of his old hurley-house of a castle, than like a soldier of worth and quality."

"Are we to condole with you then," said Lord Menteith, "upon the loss of the famed Gustavus?"

"Even so, my lord," answered the soldier, with a deep sigh, "DIEM CLAUSIT SUPREMUM, as we said at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen. Better so than be smothered like a cadger's pony in some flow-moss, or snow-wreath, which was like to be his fate if this winter campaign lasted longer. But it has pleased his Excellency" (making an inclination to Montrose) "to supply his place by the gift of a noble steed, whom I have taken the freedom to name 'LOYALTY'S REWARD,' in memory of this celebrated occasion."

"I hope," said the Marquis, "you'll find Loyalty's Reward, since you call him so, practised in all the duties of the field,—but I must just hint to you, that at this time, in Scotland, loyalty is more frequently rewarded with a halter than with a horse."

"Ahem! your Excellency is pleased to be facetious. Loyalty's Reward is as perfect as Gustavus in all his exercises, and of a far finer figure. Marry! his social qualities are less cultivated, in respect he has kept till now inferior company."

"Not meaning his Excellency the General, I hope," said Lord Menteith. "For shame, Sir Dugald!"

"My lord," answered the knight gravely, "I am incapable to mean anything so utterly unbecoming. What I asseverate is, that his Excellency, having the same intercourse with his horse during his exercise, that he hath with his soldiers when training them, may form and break either to every feat of war which he chooses to practise, and accordingly that this noble charger is admirably managed. But as it is the intercourse of private life that formeth the social character, so I do not apprehend that of the single soldier to be much polished by the conversation of the corporal or the sergeant, or that of Loyalty's Reward to have been much dulcified, or ameliorated, by the society of his Excellency's grooms, who bestow more oaths, and kicks, and thumps, than kindness or caresses, upon the animals intrusted to their charge; whereby many a generous quadruped, rendered as it were misanthropic, manifests during the rest of his life a greater desire to kick and bite his master, than to love and to honour him."

"Spoken like an oracle," said Montrose. "Were there an academy for the education of horses to be annexed to the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, Sir Dugald Dalgetty alone should fill the chair."

"Because, being an ass," said Menteith, aside to the General, "there would be some distant relation between the professor and the students."

"And now, with your Excellency's permission," said the new-made knight, "I am going to pay my last visit to the remains of my old companion in arms."

"Not with the purpose of going through the ceremonial of interment?" said the Marquis, who did not know how far Sir Dugald's enthusiasm might lead him; "consider our brave fellows themselves will have but a hasty burial."

"Your Excellency will pardon me," said Dalgetty; "my purpose is less romantic. I go to divide poor Gustavus's legacy with the fowls of heaven, leaving the flesh to them, and reserving to myself his hide; which, in token of affectionate remembrance, I purpose to form into a cassock and trowsers, after the Tartar fashion, to be worn under my armour, in respect my nether garments are at present shamefully the worse of the wear.—Alas! poor Gustavus, why didst thou not live at least one hour more, to have borne the honoured weight of knighthood upon thy loins!"

He was now turning away, when the Marquis called after him,—"*As you are not likely to be anticipated in this act of kindness, Sir Dugald, to your old friend and companion, I trust,*" said the Marquis, "you will first assist me, and our principal friends, to discuss some of Argyle's good cheer, of which we have found abundance in the Castle."

"Most willingly, please your Excellency," said Sir Dugald; "as meat and mass never hinder work. Nor, indeed, am I afraid that the wolves or eagles will begin an onslaught on Gustavus to-night, in regard there is so much better cheer lying all around. But," added he, "as I am to meet two honourable knights of England, with others of the knightly degree in your lordship's army, I pray it may be explained to them, that now, and in future, I claim precedence over them all, in respect of my rank as a Banneret, dubbed in a field of stricken battle."

"The devil confound him!" said Montrose, speaking aside; "he has contrived to set the kiln on fire as fast as I put it out.—'This is a point, Sir Dugald,'" said he, gravely addressing him, "which I shall reserve for his Majesty's express consideration; in my camp, all must be upon equality, like the Knights of the Round Table; and take their places as soldiers should, upon the principle of,—first come, first served."

"Then I shall take care," said Menteith, apart to the Marquis, "that Don Dugald is not first in place to-day.—Sir Dugald," added he, raising his voice, "as you say your wardrobe is out of repair, had you not better go to the enemy's baggage yonder, over which there is a guard placed? I saw them take out an excellent buff suit, embroidered in front in silk and silver."

"VOTO A DIOS! as the Spaniard says," exclaimed the Major, "and some beggarly gilly may get it while I stand prating here!"

The prospect of booty having at once driven out of his head both Gustavus and the provant, he set spurs to Loyalty's Reward, and rode off through the field of battle.

"There goes the hound," said Menteith, "breaking the face, and trampling on the body, of many a better man than himself; and as eager on his sordid spoil as a vulture that stoops upon carrion. Yet this man the world calls a soldier—and you, my lord, select him as worthy of the honours of chivalry, if such they can at this day be termed. You have made the collar of knighthood the decoration of a mere bloodhound."

"What could I do?" said Montrose. "I had no half-picked bones to give him, and bribed in some manner he must be,—I cannot follow the chase alone. Besides, the dog has good qualities."

"If nature has given him such," said Menteith, "habit has converted them into feelings of intense selfishness. He may be punctilious concerning his reputation, and brave in the execution of his duty, but it is only because without these qualities he cannot rise in the service;—nay, his very benevolence is selfish; he may defend his companion while he can keep his feet, but the instant he is down, Sir Dugald will be as ready to ease him of his purse, as he is to convert the skin of Gustavus into a buff jerkin."

"And yet, if all this were true, cousin," answered Montrose, "there is something convenient in commanding a soldier, upon whose motives and springs of action you can calculate to a mathematical certainty. A fine spirit like yours, my cousin, alive to a thousand sensations to which this man's is as impervious as his corslet,—it is for such that thy friend must feel, while he gives his advice." Then, suddenly changing his tone, he asked Menteith when he had seen Annot Lyle.

The young Earl coloured deeply, and answered, "Not since last evening,—excepting," he added, with hesitation, "for one moment, about half an hour before the battle began."

"My dear Menteith," said Montrose, very kindly, "were you one of the gay cavaliers of Whitehall, who are, in their way, as great self-seekers as our friend Dalgetty, should I need to plague you with enquiring into such an amourette as this? it would be an intrigue only to be laughed at. But this is the land of enchantment, where nets strong as steel are wrought out of ladies' tresses, and you are exactly the destined knight to be so fettered. This poor girl is exquisitely beautiful, and has talents formed to captivate your romantic temper. You cannot think of injuring her—you cannot think of marrying her?"

"My lord," replied Menteith, "you have repeatedly urged this jest, for so I trust it is meant, somewhat beyond bounds. Annot Lyle is of unknown birth,—a captive,—the daughter, probably, of some obscure outlaw; a dependant on the hospitality of the M'Aulays."

"Do not be angry, Menteith," said the Marquis, interrupting him; "you love the classics, though not educated at Mareschal-College; and you may remember how many gallant hearts captive beauty has subdued:—

Movit Ajacem, Telamone natum,

Forma captivae dominum Tecmessae.

In a word, I am seriously anxious about this—I should not have time, perhaps," he added very gravely, "to trouble you with my lectures on the subject, were your feelings, and those of Annot, alone interested; but you have a dangerous rival in Allan M'Aulay; and there is no knowing to what extent he may carry his resentment. It is my duty to tell you that the King's service may be much prejudiced by dissensions betwixt you."

"My lord," said Menteith, "I know what you mean is kind and friendly; I hope you will be satisfied when I assure you, that Allan M'Aulay and I have discussed this circumstance; and that I have explained to him, that it is utterly remote from my character to entertain dishonourable views concerning this unprotected female; so, on the other hand, the obscurity of her birth prevents my thinking of her upon other terms. I will not disguise from your lordship, what I have not disguised from M'Aulay,—that if Annot Lyle were born a lady, she should share my name and rank; as matters stand, it is impossible. This explanation, I trust, will satisfy your lordship, as it has satisfied a less reasonable person."

Montrose shrugged his shoulders. "And, like true champions in romance," he said, "you have agreed, that you are both to worship the same mistress, as idolaters do the same image, and that neither shall extend his pretensions farther?"

"I did not go so far, my lord," answered Menteith—"I only said in the present circumstances—and there is no prospect of their being changed,—I could, in duty to myself and family, stand in no relation to Annot Lyle, but as that of friend or brother—But your lordship must excuse me; I have," said he, looking at his arm, round which he had tied his handkerchief, "a slight hurt to attend to."

"A wound?" said Montrose, anxiously; "let me see it.—Alas!" he said, "I should have heard nothing of this, had I not ventured to tent and sound another more secret and more rankling one, Menteith; I am sorry for you—I too have known—But what avails it to awake sorrows which have long slumbered!"

So saying, he shook hands with his noble kinsman, and walked into the castle.

Annot Lyle, as was not unusual for females in the Highlands, was possessed of a slight degree of medical and even surgical skill. It may readily be believed, that the profession of surgery, or medicine, as a separate art, was unknown; and the few rude rules which they observed were intrusted to women, or to the aged, whom constant casualties afforded too much opportunity of acquiring experience. The care and attention, accordingly, of Annot Lyle, her attendants, and others acting under her direction, had made her services extremely useful during this wild campaign. And most readily had these services been rendered to friend and foe, wherever they could be most useful. She was now in an apartment of the castle, anxiously superintending the preparation of vulnerary herbs, to be applied to the wounded; receiving reports from different females respecting those under their separate charge, and distributing what means she had for their relief, when Allan M'Aulay suddenly entered the apartment. She started, for she had heard that he had left the camp upon a distant mission; and, however accustomed she was to the gloom of his countenance, it seemed at present to have even a darker shade than usual. He stood before her perfectly silent, and she felt the necessity of being the first to speak.

"I thought," she said, with some effort, "you had already set out."

"My companion awaits me," said Allan; "I go instantly." Yet still he stood before her, and held her by the arm, with a pressure which, though insufficient to give her pain, made her sensible of his great personal strength, his hand closing on her like the gripe of a manacle.

"Shall I take the harp?" she said, in a timid voice; "is—is the shadow falling upon you?"

Instead of replying, he led her to the window of the apartment, which commanded a view of the field of the slain, with all its horrors. It was thick spread with dead and wounded, and the spoilers were busy tearing the clothes from the victims of war and feudal ambition, with as much indifference as if they had not been of the same species, and themselves exposed, perhaps to-morrow, to the same fate.

"Does the sight please you?" said M'Aulay.

"It is hideous!" said Annot, covering her eyes with her hands; "how can you bid me look upon it?"

"You must be inured to it," said he, "if you remain with this destined host—you will soon have to search such a field for my brother's corpse—for Menteith's—for mine—but that will be a more indifferent task—You do not love me!"

"This is the first time you have taxed me with unkindness," said Annot, weeping. "You are my brother—my preserver—my protector—and can I then BUT love you?—But your hour of darkness is approaching, let me fetch my harp—"

"Remain," said Allan, still holding her fast; "be my visions from heaven or hell, or from the middle sphere of disembodied spirits—or be they, as the Saxons hold, but the delusions of an over-heated fancy, they do not now influence me; I speak the language of the natural, of the visible world.—You love not me, Annot—you love Menteith—by him you are beloved again, and Allan is no more to you than one of the corpses which encumber yonder heath."

It cannot be supposed that this strange speech conveyed any new information to her who was thus addressed. No woman ever lived who could not, in the same circumstances, have discerned long since the state of her lover's mind. But by thus suddenly tearing off the veil, thin as it was, Allan prepared her to expect consequences violent in proportion to the enthusiasm of his character. She made an effort to repel the charge he had stated.

"You forget," she said, "your own worth and nobleness when you insult so very helpless a being, and one whom fate has thrown so totally into your power. You know who and what I am, and how impossible it is that Menteith or you can use language of affection to me, beyond that of friendship. You know from what unhappy race I have too probably derived my existence."

"I will not believe it," said Allan, impetuously; "never flowed crystal drop from a polluted spring."

"Yet the very doubt," pleaded Annot, "should make you forbear to use this language to me."

"I know," said M'Aulay, "it places a bar between us—but I know also that it divides you not so inseparably from Menteith.—Hear me, my beloved Annot!—leave this scene of terrors and danger—go with me to Kintail—I will place you in the house of the noble Lady of Seaforth—or you shall be removed in safety to Icolmkill, where some women yet devote themselves to the worship of God, after the custom of our ancestors."

"You consider not what you ask of me," replied Annot; "to undertake such a journey under your sole guardianship, were to show me less scrupulous than maiden ought. I will remain here, Allan—here under the protection of the noble Montrose; and when his motions next approach the Lowlands, I will contrive some proper means to relieve you of one, who has, she knows not how, become an object of dislike to you."

Allan stood as if uncertain whether to give way to sympathy with her distress, or to anger at her resistance.

"Annot," he said, "you know too well how little your words apply to my feelings towards you—but you avail yourself of your power, and you rejoice in my departure, as removing a spy upon your intercourse with Menteith. But beware both of you," he added, in a stern tone; "for when was it ever heard that an injury was offered to Allan M'Aulay, for which he exacted not tenfold vengeance?"

So saying, he pressed her arm forcibly, pulled the bonnet over his brows, and strode out of the apartment.

CHAPTER XXI.

*—After you're gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd,
What stirr'd it so.—Alas! I found it love.
Yet far from lust, for could I but have lived
In presence of you, I had had my end.—PHILASTER.*

Annot Lyle had now to contemplate the terrible gulf which Allan M'Aulay's declaration of love and jealousy had made to open around her. It seemed as if she was tottering on the very brink of destruction, and was at once deprived of every refuge, and of all human assistance. She had long been conscious that she loved Menteith dearer than a brother; indeed, how could it be otherwise, considering their early intimacy, the personal merit of the young nobleman, his assiduous attentions,—and his infinite superiority in gentleness of disposition, and grace of manners, over the race of rude warriors with whom she lived? But her affection was of that quiet, timid, meditative character, which sought rather a reflected share in the happiness of the beloved object, than formed more presumptuous or daring hopes. A little Gaelic song, in which she expressed her feelings, has been translated by the ingenious and unhappy Andrew M'Donald; and we willingly transcribe the lines:—

*Wert thou, like me, in life's low vale,
With thee how blest, that lot I'd share;
With thee I'd fly wherever gale
Could waft, or bounding galley bear.
But parted by severe decree,
Far different must our fortunes prove;*

*May thine be joy—enough for me
To weep and pray for him I love.*

*The pangs this foolish heart must feel,
When hope shall be forever flown,
No sullen murmur shall reveal,
No selfish murmurs ever own.
Nor will I through life's weary years,
Like a pale drooping mourner move,
While I can think my secret tears
May wound the heart of him I love.*

The furious declaration of Allan had destroyed the romantic plan which she had formed, of nursing in secret her pensive tenderness, without seeking any other requital. Long before this, she had dreaded Allan, as much as gratitude, and a sense that he softened towards her a temper so haughty and so violent, could permit her to do; but now she regarded him with unalloyed terror, which a perfect knowledge of his disposition, and of his preceding history, too well authorised her to entertain. Whatever was in other respects the nobleness of his disposition, he had never been known to resist the wilfulness of passion,—he walked in the house, and in the country of his fathers, like a tamed lion, whom no one dared to contradict, lest they should awaken his natural vehemence of passion. So many years had elapsed since he had experienced contradiction, or even expostulation, that probably nothing but the strong good sense, which, on all points, his mysticism excepted, formed the ground of his character, prevented his proving an annoyance and terror to the whole neighbourhood. But Annot had no time to dwell upon her fears, being interrupted by the entrance of Sir Dugald Dalgetty.

It may well be supposed, that the scenes in which this person had passed his former life, had not much qualified him to shine in female society. He himself felt a sort of consciousness that the language of the barrack, guard-room, and parade, was not proper to entertain ladies. The only peaceful part of his life had been spent at Mareschal-College, Aberdeen; and he had forgot the little he had learned there, except the arts of darning his own hose, and dispatching his commons with unusual celerity, both which had since been kept in good exercise by the necessity of frequent practice. Still it was from an imperfect recollection of what he had acquired during this pacific period, that he drew his sources of conversation when in company with women; in other words, his language became pedantic when it ceased to be military.

"Mistress Annot Lyle," said he, upon the present occasion, "I am just now like the half-pike, or spontoon of Achilles, one end of which could wound and the other cure—a property belonging neither to Spanish pike, brown-bill, partizan, halberd, Lochaber-axe, or indeed any other modern staff-weapon whatever." This compliment he repeated twice; but as Annot scarce heard him the first time, and did not comprehend him the second, he was obliged to explain.

"I mean," he said, "Mistress Annot Lyle, that having been the means of an honourable knight receiving a severe wound in this day's conflict,—he having pistoled, somewhat against the law of arms, my horse, which was named after the immortal King of Sweden,—I am desirous of procuring him such solacement as you, madam, can supply, you being like the heathen god Esculapius" (meaning possibly Apollo), "skilful not only in song and in music, but in the more noble art of chirurgery—OPIFERQUE PER ORBEM DICOR."

"If you would have the goodness to explain," said Annot, too sick at heart to be amused by Sir Dugald's airs of pedantic gallantry.

"That, madam," replied the Knight, "may not be so easy, as I am out of the habit of construing—but we shall try. DICOR, supply EGO—I am called,—OPIFER? OPIFER?—I remember SIGNIFER and FURCIFER—but I believe OPIFER stands in this place for M.D., that is, Doctor of Physic."

"This is a busy day with us all," said Annot; "will you say at once what you want with me?"

"Merely," replied Sir Dugald, "that you will visit my brother knight, and let your maiden bring some medicaments for his wound, which threatens to be what the learned call a DAMNUM FATALE."

Annot Lyle never lingered in the cause of humanity. She informed herself hastily of the nature of the injury, and interesting herself for the dignified old Chief whom she had seen at Darnlinvarach, and whose presence had so much struck her, she hastened to lose the sense of her own sorrow for a time, in the attempt to be useful to another.

Sir Dugald with great form ushered Annot Lyle to the chamber of her patient, in which, to her surprise, she found Lord Menteith. She could not help blushing deeply at the meeting, but, to hide her confusion, proceeded instantly to examine the wound of the Knight of Ardenvoehr, and easily satisfied herself that it was beyond her skill to cure it. As for Sir Dugald, he returned to a large outhouse, on the floor of which, among other wounded men, was deposited the person of Ranald of the Mist.

"Mine old friend," said the Knight, "as I told you before, I would willingly do anything to pleasure you, in return for the wound you have received while under my safe-conduct. I have, therefore, according to your earnest request, sent Mrs. Annot Lyle to attend upon the wound of the knight of Ardenvoehr, though wherein her doing so should benefit you, I cannot imagine.—I think you once spoke of some blood relationship between them; but a soldado, in command and charge like me, has other things to trouble his head with than Highland genealogies."

And indeed, to do the worthy Major justice, he never enquired after, listened to, or recollected, the business of other people, unless it either related to the art military, or was somehow or other connected with his own interest, in either of which cases his memory was very tenacious.

"And now, my good friend of the Mist," said he, "can you tell me what has become of your hopeful grandson, as I have not seen him since he assisted me to disarm after the action, a negligence which deserveth the strapado?"

"He is not far from hence," said the wounded outlaw—"lift not your hand upon him, for he is man enough to pay a yard of leathern scourge with a foot of tempered steel."

"A most improper vaunt," said Sir Dugald; "but I owe you some favours, Ranald, and therefore shall let it pass."

"And if you think you owe me anything," said the outlaw, "it is in your power to requite me by granting me a boon."

"Friend Ranald," answered Dalgetty, "I have read of these boons in silly story-books, whereby simple knights were drawn into engagements to their great prejudice; wherefore, Ranald, the more prudent knights of this day never promise anything until they know that they may keep their word anent the premises, without any displeasure or incommode to themselves. It may be, you would have me engage the female surgeon to visit your wound; though you ought to consider, Ranald, that the uncleanness of the place where you are deposited may somewhat soil the gaiety of her garments, concerning the preservation of which, you may have observed, women are apt to be inordinately solicitous. I lost the favour of the lady of the Grand Pensionary of Amsterdam, by touching with the sole of my boot the train of her black velvet gown, which I mistook for a foot-cloth, it being half the room distant from her person."

"It is not to bring Annot Lyle hither," answered MacEagh, "but to transport me into the room where she is in attendance upon the Knight of Ardenvoehr. Somewhat I have to say of the last consequence to them both."

"It is something out of the order of due precedence," said Dalgetty, "to carry a wounded outlaw into the presence of a knight; knighthood having been of yore, and being, in some respects, still, the highest military grade, independent always of commissioned officers, who rank according to their patents; nevertheless, as your boon, as you call it, is so slight, I shall not deny compliance with the same." So saying, he ordered three files of men to transport MacEagh on their shoulders to Sir Duncan Campbell's apartment, and he himself hastened before to announce the cause of his being brought thither. But such was the activity of the soldiers employed, that they followed him close at the heels, and, entering with their ghastly burden, laid MacEagh on the floor of the apartment. His features, naturally wild, were now distorted by pain; his hands and scanty garments stained with his own blood, and those of others, which no kind hand had wiped away, although the wound in his side had been secured by a bandage.

"Are you," he said, raising his head painfully towards the couch where lay stretched his late antagonist, "he whom men call the Knight of Ardenvohr?"

"The same," answered Sir Duncan,— "what would you with one whose hours are now numbered?"

"My hours are reduced to minutes," said the outlaw; "the more grace, if I bestow them in the service of one, whose hand has ever been against me, as mine has been raised higher against him."

"Thine higher against me!—Crushed worm!" said the Knight, looking down on his miserable adversary.

"Yes," answered the outlaw, in a firm voice, "my arm hath been highest. In the deadly contest betwixt us, the wounds I have dealt have been deepest, though thine have neither been idle nor unfelt.—I am Ranald MacEagh—I am Ranald of the Mist—the night that I gave thy castle to the winds in one huge blaze of fire, is now matched with the day in which you have fallen under the sword of my fathers.—Remember the injuries thou hast done our tribe—never were such inflicted, save by one, beside thee. HE, they say, is fated and secure against our vengeance—a short time will show."

"My Lord Menteith," said Sir Duncan, raising himself out of his bed, "this is a proclaimed villain, at once the enemy of King and Parliament, of God and man—one of the outlawed banditti of the Mist; alike the enemy of your house, of the M'Aulays, and of mine. I trust you will not suffer moments, which are perhaps my last, to be embittered by his barbarous triumph."

"He shall have the treatment he merits," said Menteith; "let him be instantly removed."

Sir Dugald here interposed, and spoke of Ranald's services as a guide, and his own pledge for his safety; but the high harsh tones of the outlaw drowned his voice.

"No," said he, "be rack and gibbet the word! let me wither between heaven and earth, and gorge the hawks and eagles of Ben-Nevis; and so shall this haughty Knight, and this triumphant Thane, never learn the secret I alone can impart; a secret which would make Ardenvohr's heart leap with joy, were he in the death agony, and which the Earl of Menteith would purchase at the price of his broad earldom.—Come hither, Annot Lyle," he said, raising himself with unexpected strength; "fear not the sight of him to whom thou hast clung in infancy. Tell these proud men, who disdain thee as the issue of mine ancient race, that thou art no blood of ours,—no daughter of the race of the Mist, but born in halls as lordly, and cradled on couch as soft, as ever soothed infancy in their proudest palaces."

"In the name of God," said Menteith, trembling with emotion, "if you know aught of the birth of this lady, do thy conscience the justice to disburden it of the secret before departing from this world!"

"And bless my enemies with my dying breath?" said MacEagh, looking at him malignantly.—"Such are the maxims your priests preach—but when, or towards whom, do you practise them? Let me know first the worth of my secret ere I part with it—What would you give, Knight of Ardenvohr, to know that your superstitious fasts have been vain, and that there still remains a descendant of your house?—I pause for an answer—without it, I speak not one word more."

"I could," said Sir Duncan, his voice struggling between the emotions of doubt, hatred, and anxiety—"I could—but that I know thy race are like the Great Enemy, liars and murderers from the beginning—but could it be true thou tellest me, I could almost forgive thee the injuries thou hast done me."

"Hear it!" said Ranald; "he hath wagered deeply for a son of Diarmid—And you, gentle Thane—the report of the camp says, that you would purchase with life and lands the tidings that Annot Lyle was no daughter of proscription, but of a race noble in your estimation as your own—Well—It is for no love I tell you—The time has been that I would have exchanged this secret against liberty; I am now bartering it for what is dearer than liberty or life.—Annot Lyle is the youngest, the sole surviving child of the Knight of Ardenvohr, who alone was saved when all in his halls besides was given to blood and ashes."

"Can this man speak truth?" said Annot Lyle, scarce knowing what she said; "or is this some strange delusion?"

"Maiden," replied Ranald, "hadst thou dwelt longer with us, thou wouldst have better learnt to know how to distinguish the accents of truth. To that Saxon lord, and to the Knight of Ardenvohr, I will yield such proofs of what I have spoken, that incredulity shall stand convinced. Meantime, withdraw—I loved thine infancy, I hate not thy youth—no eye hates the rose in its blossom, though it groweth upon a thorn, and for thee only do I something regret what is soon to follow. But he that would avenge him of his foe must not reckon though the guiltless be engaged in the ruin."

"He advises well, Annot," said Lord Menteith; "in God's name retire! if—if there be aught in this, your meeting with Sir Duncan must be more prepared for both your sakes."

"I will not part from my father, if I have found one!" said Annot—"I will not part from him under circumstances so terrible."

"And a father you shall ever find in me," murmured Sir Duncan.

"Then," said Menteith, "I will have MacEagh removed into an adjacent apartment, and will collect the evidence of his tale myself. Sir Dugald Dalgetty will give me his attendance and assistance."

"With pleasure, my lord," answered Sir Dugald.—"I will be your confessor, or assessor—either or both. No one can be so fit, for I had heard the whole story a month ago at Inverary castle—but onslaughts like that of Ardenvohr confuse each other in my memory, which is besides occupied with matters of more importance."

Upon hearing this frank declaration, which was made as they left the apartment with the wounded man, Lord Menteith darted upon Dalgetty a look of extreme anger and disdain, to which the self-conceit of the worthy commander rendered him totally insensible.

CHAPTER XXII.

*I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.*
—CONQUEST OF GRANADA

The Earl of Menteith, as he had undertaken, so he proceeded to investigate more closely the story told by Ranald of the Mist, which was corroborated by the examination of his two followers, who had assisted in the capacity of guides. These declarations he carefully compared with such circumstances concerning the destruction of his castle and family as Sir Duncan Campbell was able to supply; and it may be supposed he had forgotten nothing relating to an event of such terrific importance. It was of the last consequence to prove that this was no invention of the outlaw's, for the purpose of passing an impostor as the child and heiress of Ardenvohr.

Perhaps Menteith, so much interested in believing the tale, was not altogether the fittest person to be intrusted with the investigation of its truth; but the examinations of the Children of the Mist were simple, accurate, and in all respects consistent with each other. A personal mark was referred to, which was known to have been borne by the infant child of Sir Duncan, and which appeared upon the left shoulder of Annot Lyle. It was also well remembered, that when the miserable relics of the other children had been collected, those of the infant had nowhere been found. Other circumstances of evidence, which it is unnecessary to quote, brought the fullest conviction not only to Menteith, but to the unprejudiced mind of Montrose, that in Annot Lyle, an humble dependant, distinguished only by beauty and talent, they were in future to respect the heiress of Ardenvohr.

While Menteith hastened to communicate the result of these enquiries to the persons most interested, the outlaw demanded to speak with his grandchild, whom he usually called his son. "He would be found," he said, "in the outer apartment, in which he himself had been originally deposited."

Accordingly, the young savage, after a close search, was found lurking in a corner, coiled up among some rotten straw, and brought to his grandsire.

"Kenneth," said the old outlaw, "hear the last words of the sire of thy father. A Saxon soldier, and Allan of the Red-hand, left this camp within these few hours, to travel to the country to Caberfae. Pursue them as the bloodhound pursues the hurt deer—swim the lake—climb the mountain—thread the forest—tarry not until you join them;" and then the countenance of the lad darkened as his grandfather spoke, and he laid his hand upon a knife which stuck in the thong of leather that

confined his scanty plaid. "No!" said the old man; "it is not by thy hand he must fall. They will ask the news from the camp—say to them that Annot Lyle of the Harp is discovered to be the daughter of Duncan of Ardenvoehr; that the Thane of Menteith is to wed her before the priest; and that you are sent to bid guests to the bridal. Tarry not their answer, but vanish like the lightning when the black cloud swallows it.—And now depart, beloved son of my best beloved! I shall never more see thy face, nor hear the light sound of thy footstep—yet tarry an instant and hear my last charge. Remember the fate of our race, and quit not the ancient manners of the Children of the Mist. We are now a straggling handful, driven from every vale by the sword of every clan, who rule in the possessions where their forefathers hewed the wood, and drew the water for ours. But in the thicket of the wilderness, and in the mist of the mountain, Kenneth, son of Eracht, keep thou unsoiled the freedom which I leave thee as a birthright. Barter it not neither for the rich garment, nor for the stone-roof, nor for the covered board, nor for the couch of down—on the rock or in the valley, in abundance or in famine—in the leafy summer, and in the days of the iron winter—Son of the Mist! be free as thy forefathers. Own no lord—receive no law—take no hire—give no stipend—build no hut—enclose no pasture—sow no grain;—let the deer of the mountain be thy flocks and herds—if these fail thee, prey upon the goods of our oppressors—of the Saxons, and of such Gael as are Saxons in their souls, valuing herds and flocks more than honour and freedom. Well for us that they do so—it affords the broader scope for our revenge. Remember those who have done kindness to our race, and pay their services with thy blood, should the hour require it. If a MacIain shall come to thee with the head of the king's son in his hand, shelter him, though the avenging army of the father were behind him; for in Glencoe and Ardnamurchan, we have dwelt in peace in the years that have gone by. The sons of Diarmid—the race of Darnlinvarach—the riders of Menteith—my curse on thy head, Child of the Mist, if thou spare one of those names, when the time shall offer for cutting them off! and it will come anon, for their own swords shall devour each other, and those who are scattered shall fly to the Mist, and perish by its Children. Once more, begone—shake the dust from thy feet against the habitations of men, whether banded together for peace or for war. Farewell, beloved! and mayst thou die like thy forefathers, ere infirmity, disease, or age, shall break thy spirit—Begone!—begone!—live free—requite kindness—avenge the injuries of thy race!"

The young savage stooped, and kissed the brow of his dying parent; but accustomed from infancy to suppress every exterior sign of emotion, he parted without tear or adieu, and was soon far beyond the limits of Montrose's camp.

Sir Dugald Dalgetty, who was present during the latter part of this scene, was very little edified by the conduct of MacEagh upon the occasion. "I cannot think, my friend Ranald," said he, "that you are in the best possible road for a dying man. Storms, onslaughts, massacres, the burning of suburbs, are indeed a soldier's daily work, and are justified by the necessity of the case, seeing that they are done in the course of duty; for burning of suburbs, in particular, it may be said that they are traitors and cut-throats to all fortified towns. Hence it is plain, that a soldier is a profession peculiarly favoured by Heaven, seeing that we may hope for salvation, although we daily commit actions of so great violence. But then, Ranald, in all services of Europe, it is the custom of the dying soldier not to vaunt him of such doings, or to recommend them to his fellows; but, on the contrary, to express contrition for the same, and to repeat, or have repeated to him, some comfortable prayer; which, if you please, I will intercede with his Excellency's chaplain to prefer on your account. It is otherwise no point of my duty to put you in mind of those things; only it may be for the ease of your conscience to depart more like a Christian, and less like a Turk, than you seem to be in a fair way of doing."

The only answer of the dying man—for as such Ranald MacEagh might now be considered—was a request to be raised to such a position that he might obtain a view from the window of the Castle. The deep frost mist, which had long settled upon the top of the mountains, was now rolling down each rugged glen and gully, where the craggy ridges showed their black and irregular outline, like desert islands rising above the ocean of vapour. "Spirit of the Mist!" said Ranald MacEagh, "called by our race our father, and our preserver—receive into thy tabernacle of clouds, when this pang is over, him whom in life thou hast so often sheltered." So saying, he sunk back into the arms of those who upheld him, spoke no further word, but turned his face to the wall for a short space.

"I believe," said Dalgetty, "my friend Ranald will be found in his heart to be little better than a heathen." And he renewed his proposal to procure him the assistance of Dr. Wisheart, Montrose's military chaplain; "a man," said Sir Dugald, "very clever in his exercise, and who will do execution on your sins in less time than I could smoke a pipe of tobacco."

"Saxon," said the dying man, "speak to me no more of thy priest—I die contented. Hadst thou ever an enemy against whom weapons were of no avail—whom the ball missed, and against whom the arrow shivered, and whose bare skin was as impenetrable to sword and dirk as thy steel garment—Heardst thou ever of such a foe?"

"Very frequently, when I served in Germany," replied Sir Dugald. "There was such a fellow at Ingolstadt; he was proof both against lead and steel. The soldiers killed him with the butts of their muskets."

"This impassible foe," said Ranald, without regarding the Major's interruption, "who has the blood dearest to me upon his hands—to this man I have now bequeathed agony of mind, jealousy, despair, and sudden death,—or a life more miserable than death itself. Such shall be the lot of Allan of the Red-hand, when he learns that Annot weds Menteith and I ask no more than the certainty that it is so, to sweeten my own bloody end by his hand."

"If that be the case," said the Major, "there's no more to be said; but I shall take care as few people see you as possible, for I cannot think your mode of departure can be at all creditable or exemplary to a Christian army." So saying, he left the apartment, and the Son of the Mist soon after breathed his last.

Menteith, in the meanwhile, leaving the new-found relations to their mutual feelings of mingled emotion, was eagerly discussing with Montrose the consequences of this discovery. "I should now see," said the Marquis, "even had I not before observed it, that your interest in this discovery, my dear Menteith, has no small reference to your own happiness. You love this new-found lady,—your affection is returned. In point of birth, no exceptions can be made; in every other respect, her advantages are equal to those which you yourself possess—think, however, a moment. Sir Duncan is a fanatic—Presbyterian, at least—in arms against the King; he is only with us in the quality of a prisoner, and we are, I fear, but at the commencement of a long civil war. Is this a time, think you, Menteith, for you to make proposals for his heiress? Or what chance is there that he will now listen to it?"

Passion, an ingenious, as well as an eloquent advocate, supplied the young nobleman with a thousand answers to these objections. He reminded Montrose that the Knight of Ardenvoehr was neither a bigot in politics nor religion. He urged his own known and proved zeal for the royal cause, and hinted that its influence might be extended and strengthened by his wedding the heiress of Ardenvoehr. He pleaded the dangerous state of Sir Duncan's wound, the risk which must be run by suffering the young lady to be carried into the country of the Campbells, where, in case of her father's death, or continued indisposition, she must necessarily be placed under the guardianship of Argyle, an event fatal to his (Menteith's) hopes, unless he could stoop to purchase his favour by abandoning the King's party.

Montrose allowed the force of these arguments, and owned, although the matter was attended with difficulty, yet it seemed consistent with the King's service that it should be concluded as speedily as possible.

"I could wish," said he, "that it were all settled in one way or another, and that this fair Briseis were removed from our camp before the return of our Highland Achilles, Allan M'Aulay.—I fear some fatal feud in that quarter, Menteith—and I believe it would be best that Sir Duncan be dismissed on his parole, and that you accompany him and his daughter as his escort. The journey can be made chiefly by water, so will not greatly incommode his wound—and your own, my friend, will be an honourable excuse for the absence of some time from my camp."

"Never!" said Menteith. "Were I to forfeit the very hope that has so lately dawned upon me, never will I leave your Excellency's camp while the royal standard is displayed. I should deserve that this trifling scratch should gangrene and consume my sword-arm, were I capable of holding it as an excuse for absence at this crisis of the King's affairs."

"On this, then, you are determined?" said Montrose.

"As fixed as Ben-Nevis," said the young nobleman.

"You must, then," said Montrose, "lose no time in seeking an explanation with the Knight of Ardenvoehr. If this prove favourable, I will talk myself with the elder M'Aulay, and we will devise means to employ his brother at a distance from the army until he shall be reconciled to his present disappointment. Would to God

some vision would descend upon his imagination fair enough to obliterate all traces of Annot Lyle! That perhaps you think impossible, Menteith?—Well, each to his service; you to that of Cupid, and I to that of Mars."

They parted, and in pursuance of the scheme arranged, Menteith, early on the ensuing morning, sought a private interview with the wounded Knight of Ardenvohr, and communicated to him his suit for the hand of his daughter. Of their mutual attachment Sir Duncan was aware, but he was not prepared for so early a declaration on the part of Menteith. He said, at first, that he had already, perhaps, indulged too much in feelings of personal happiness, at a time when his clan had sustained so great a loss and humiliation, and that he was unwilling, therefore, farther to consider the advancement of his own house at a period so calamitous. On the more urgent suit of the noble lover, he requested a few hours to deliberate and consult with his daughter, upon a question so highly important. The result of this interview and deliberation was favourable to Menteith. Sir Duncan Campbell became fully sensible that the happiness of his new-found daughter depended upon a union with her lover; and unless such were now formed, he saw that Argyle would throw a thousand obstacles in the way of a match in every respect acceptable to himself. Menteith's private character was so excellent, and such was the rank and consideration due to his fortune and family, that they outbalanced, in Sir Duncan's opinion, the difference in their political opinions. Nor could he have resolved, perhaps, had his own opinion of the match been less favourable, to decline an opportunity of indulging the new-found child of his hopes. There was, besides, a feeling of pride which dictated his determination. To produce the Heiress of Ardenvohr to the world as one who had been educated a poor dependant and musician in the family of Darnlinvarach, had something in it that was humiliating. To introduce her as the betrothed bride, or wedded wife, of the Earl of Menteith, upon an attachment formed during her obscurity, was a warrant to the world that she had at all times been worthy of the rank to which she was elevated.

It was under the influence of these considerations that Sir Duncan Campbell announced to the lovers his consent that they should be married in the chapel of the Castle, by Montrose's chaplain, and as privately as possible. But when Montrose should break up from Inverlochy, for which orders were expected in the course of a very few days, it was agreed that the young Countess should depart with her father to his Castle, and remain there until the circumstances of the nation permitted Menteith to retire with honour from his present military employment. His resolution being once taken, Sir Duncan Campbell would not permit the maidenly scruples of his daughter to delay its execution; and it was therefore resolved that the bridal should take place the next evening, being the second after the battle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*My maid—my blue-eyed maid, he bore away,
Due to the toils of many a bloody day.—ILLIAD.*

It was necessary, for many reasons, that Angus M'Aulay, so long the kind protector of Annot Lyle, should be made acquainted with the change in the fortunes of his late protegee; and Montrose, as he had undertaken, communicated to him these remarkable events. With the careless and cheerful indifference of his character, he expressed much more joy than wonder at Annot's good fortune; had no doubt whatever she would merit it, and as she had always been bred in loyal principles, would convey the whole estate of her grim fanatical father to some honest fellow who loved the king. "I should have no objection that my brother Allan should try his chance," added he, "notwithstanding that Sir Duncan Campbell was the only man who ever charged Darnlinvarach with inhospitality. Annot Lyle could always charm Allan out of the sullen, and who knows whether matrimony might not make him more a man of this world?" Montrose hastened to interrupt the progress of his castle-building, by informing him that the lady was already wooed and won, and, with her father's approbation, was almost immediately to be wedded to his kinsman, the Earl of Menteith; and that in testimony of the high respect due to M'Aulay, so long the lady's protector, he was now to request his presence at the ceremony. M'Aulay looked very grave at this intimation, and drew up his person with the air of one who thought that he had been neglected.

"He contrived," he said, "that his uniform kind treatment of the young lady, while so many years under his roof, required something more upon such an occasion than a bare compliment of ceremony. He might," he thought, "without arrogance, have expected to have been consulted. He wished his kinsman of Menteith well, no man could wish him better; but he must say he thought he had been hasty in this matter. Allan's sentiments towards the young lady had been pretty well understood, and he, for one, could not see why the superior pretensions which he had upon her gratitude should have been set aside, without at least undergoing some previous discussion."

Montrose, seeing too well where all this pointed, entreated M'Aulay to be reasonable, and to consider what probability there was that the Knight of Ardenvohr could be brought to confer the hand of his sole heiress upon Allan, whose undeniable excellent qualities were mingled with others, by which they were overclouded in a manner that made all tremble who approached him.

"My lord," said Angus M'Aulay, "my brother Allan has, as God made us all, faults as well as merits; but he is the best and bravest man of your army, be the other who he may, and therefore ill deserved that his happiness should have been so little consulted by your Excellency—by his own near kinsman—and by a young person who owes all to him and to his family."

Montrose in vain endeavoured to place the subject in a different view; this was the point in which Angus was determined to regard it, and he was a man of that calibre of understanding, who is incapable of being convinced when he has once adopted a prejudice. Montrose now assumed a higher tone, and called upon Angus to take care how he nourished any sentiments which might be prejudicial to his Majesty's service. He pointed out to him, that he was peculiarly desirous that Allan's efforts should not be interrupted in the course of his present mission; "a mission," he said, "highly honourable for himself, and likely to prove most advantageous to the King's cause. He expected his brother would hold no communication with him upon other subjects, nor stir up any cause of dissension, which might divert his mind from a matter of such importance."

Angus answered somewhat sulkily, that "he was no makebate, or stirrer-up of quarrels; he would rather be a peacemaker. His brother knew as well as most men how to resent his own quarrels—as for Allan's mode of receiving information, it was generally believed he had other sources than those of ordinary couriers. He should not be surprised if they saw him sooner than they expected."

A promise that he would not interfere, was the farthest to which Montrose could bring this man, thoroughly good-tempered as he was on all occasions, save when his pride, interest, or prejudices, were interfered with. And at this point the Marquis was fain to leave the matter for the present.

A more willing guest at the bridal ceremony, certainly a more willing attendant at the marriage feast, was to be expected in Sir Dugald Dalgetty, whom Montrose resolved to invite, as having been a confidant to the circumstances which preceded it. But even Sir Dugald hesitated, looked on the elbows of his doublet, and the knees of his leather breeches, and mumbled out a sort of reluctant acquiescence in the invitation, providing he should find it possible, after consulting with the noble bridegroom. Montrose was somewhat surprised, but scorning to testify displeasure, he left Sir Dugald to pursue his own course.

This carried him instantly to the chamber of the bride-groom, who, amidst the scanty wardrobe which his camp-equipage afforded, was seeking for such articles as might appear to the best advantage upon the approaching occasion. Sir Dugald entered, and paid his compliments, with a very grave face, upon his approaching happiness, which, he said, "he was very sorry he was prevented from witnessing."

"In plain truth," said he, "I should but disgrace the ceremony, seeing that I lack a bridal garment. Rents, and open seams, and tatters at elbows in the apparel of the assistants, might presage a similar solution of continuity in your matrimonial happiness—and to say truth, my lord, you yourself must partly have the blame of this disappointment, in respect you sent me upon a fool's errand to get a buff-coat out of the booty taken by the Camerons, whereas you might as well have sent me to fetch a pound of fresh butter out of a black dog's throat. I had no answer, my lord, but brandished dirks and broadswords, and a sort of growling and jabbering in what they call their language. For my part, I believe these Highlanders to be no better than absolute pagans, and have been much scandalized by the manner in which my acquaintance, Ranald MacEagh, was pleased to beat his final march, a little while since."

In Menteith's state of mind, disposed to be pleased with everything, and everybody, the grave complaint of Sir Dugald furnished additional amusement. He requested his acceptance of a very handsome buff-dress which was lying on the floor. "I had intended it," he said, "for my own bridal-garment, as being the least formidable of my warlike equipments, and I have here no peaceful dress."

Sir Dugald made the necessary apologies—would not by any means deprive—and so forth, until it happily occurred to him that it was much more according to military rule that the Earl should be married in his back and breast pieces, which dress he had seen the bridegroom wear at the union of Prince Leo of Wittlesbach with the youngest daughter of old George Frederick, of Saxony, under the auspices of the gallant Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, and so forth. The good-natured young Earl laughed, and acquiesced; and thus having secured at least one merry face at his bridal, he put on a light and ornamented cuirass, concealed partly by a velvet coat, and partly by a broad blue silk scarf, which he wore over his shoulder, agreeably to his rank, and the fashion of the times.

Everything was now arranged; and it had been settled that, according to the custom of the country, the bride and bridegroom should not again meet until they were before the altar. The hour had already struck that summoned the bridegroom thither, and he only waited in a small anteroom adjacent to the chapel, for the Marquis, who condescended to act as bride's-man upon the occasion. Business relating to the army having suddenly required the Marquis's instant attention, Menteith waited his return, it may be supposed, in some impatience; and when he heard the door of the apartment open, he said, laughing, "You are late upon parade."

"You will find I am too early," said Allan M'Aulay, who burst into the apartment. "Draw, Menteith, and defend yourself like a man, or die like a dog!"

"You are mad, Allan!" answered Menteith, astonished alike at his sudden appearance, and at the unutterable fury of his demeanour. His cheeks were livid—his eyes started from their sockets—his lips were covered with foam, and his gestures were those of a demoniac.

"You lie, traitor!" was his frantic reply—"you lie in that, as you lie in all you have said to me. Your life is a lie!"

"Did I not speak my thoughts when I called you mad," said Menteith, indignantly, "your own life were a brief one. In what do you charge me with deceiving you?"

"You told me," answered M'Aulay, "that you would not marry Annot Lyle!—False traitor!—she now waits you at the altar."

"It is you who speak false," retorted Menteith. "I told you the obscurity of her birth was the only bar to our union—that is now removed; and whom do you think yourself, that I should yield up my pretensions in your favour?"

"Draw then," said M'Aulay; "we understand each other."

"Not now," said Menteith, "and not here. Allan, you know me well—wait till to-morrow, and you shall have fighting enough."

"This hour—this instant—or never," answered M'Aulay.

"Your triumph shall not go farther than the hour which is stricken. Menteith, I entreat you by our relationship—by our joint conflicts and labours—draw your sword, and defend your life!" As he spoke, he seized the Earl's hand, and wrung it with such frantic earnestness, that his grasp forced the blood to start under the nails. Menteith threw him off with violence, exclaiming, "Begone, madman!"

"Then, be the vision accomplished!" said Allan; and, drawing his dirk, struck with his whole gigantic force at the Earl's bosom. The temper of the corslet threw the point of the weapon upwards, but a deep wound took place between the neck and shoulder; and the force of the blow prostrated the bridegroom on the floor. Montrose entered at one side of the anteroom. The bridal company, alarmed at the noise, were in equal apprehension and surprise; but ere Montrose could almost see what had happened, Allan M'Aulay had rushed past him, and descended the castle stairs like lightning. "Guards, shut the gate!" exclaimed Montrose—"Seize him—kill him, if he resists!—He shall die, if he were my brother!"

But Allan prostrated, with a second blow of his dagger, a sentinel who was upon duty—traversed the camp like a mountain-deer, though pursued by all who caught the alarm—threw himself into the river, and, swimming to the opposite side, was soon lost among the woods. In the course of the same evening, his brother Angus and his followers left Montrose's camp, and, taking the road homeward, never again rejoined him.

Of Allan himself it is said, that, in a wonderfully short space after the deed was committed, he burst into a room in the Castle of Inverary, where Argyle was sitting in council, and flung on the table his bloody dirk.

"Is it the blood of James Grahame?" said Argyle, a ghastly expression of hope mixing with the terror which the sudden apparition naturally excited.

"It is the blood of his minion," answered M'Aulay—"It is the blood which I was predestined to shed, though I would rather have spilt my own."

Having thus spoken, he turned and left the castle, and from that moment nothing certain is known of his fate. As the boy Kenneth, with three of the Children of the Mist, were seen soon afterwards to cross Lochfine, it is supposed they dogged his course, and that he perished by their hand in some obscure wilderness.

Another opinion maintains, that Allan M'Aulay went abroad and died a monk of the Carthusian order. But nothing beyond bare presumption could ever be brought in support of either opinion.

His vengeance was much less complete than he probably fancied; for Menteith, though so severely wounded as to remain long in a dangerous state, was, by having adopted Major Dalgetty's fortunate recommendation of a cuirass as a bridal-garment, happily secured from the worst consequences of the blow. But his services were lost to Montrose; and it was thought best, that he should be conveyed with his intended countess, now truly a mourning bride, and should accompany his wounded father-in-law to the castle of Sir Duncan at Ardenvohr. Dalgetty followed them to the water's edge, reminding Menteith of the necessity of erecting a scone on Drumsnab to cover his lady's newly-acquired inheritance.

They performed their voyage in safety, and Menteith was in a few weeks so well in health, as to be united to Annot in the castle of her father.

The Highlanders were somewhat puzzled to reconcile Menteith's recovery with the visions of the second sight, and the more experienced Seers were displeased with him for not having died. But others thought the credit of the vision sufficiently fulfilled, by the wound inflicted by the hand, and with the weapon, foretold; and all were of opinion, that the incident of the ring, with the death's head, related to the death of the bride's father, who did not survive her marriage many months.

The incredulous held, that all this was idle dreaming, and that Allan's supposed vision was but a consequence of the private suggestions of his own passion, which, having long seen in Menteith a rival more beloved than himself, struggled with his better nature, and impressed upon him, as it were involuntarily, the idea of killing his competitor.

Menteith did not recover sufficiently to join Montrose during his brief and glorious career; and when that heroic general disbanded his army and retired from Scotland, Menteith resolved to adopt the life of privacy, which he led till the Restoration. After that happy event, he occupied a situation in the land befitting his rank, lived long, happy alike in public regard and in domestic affection, and died at a good old age.

Our DRAMATIS PERSONAE have been so limited, that, excepting Montrose, whose exploits and fate are the theme of history, we have only to mention Sir Dugald Dalgetty. This gentleman continued, with the most rigorous punctuality, to discharge his duty, and to receive his pay, until he was made prisoner, among others, upon the field of Philiphaugh. He was condemned to share the fate of his fellow-officers upon that occasion, who were doomed to death rather by denunciations from the pulpit, than the sentence either of civil or military tribunal; their blood being considered as a sort of sin-offering to take away the guilt of the land, and the fate imposed upon the Canaanites, under a special dispensation, being impiously and cruelly applied to them.

Several Lowland officers, in the service of the Covenanters, interceded for Dalgetty on this occasion, representing him as a person whose skill would be useful in their army, and who would be readily induced to change his service. But on this point they found Sir Dugald unexpectedly obstinate. He had engaged with the King for a certain term, and, till that was expired, his principles would not permit any shadow of changing. The Covenanters, again, understood no such nice distinction, and he was in the utmost danger of falling a martyr, not to this or that political principle, but merely to his own strict ideas of a military enlistment. Fortunately, his friends discovered, by computation, that there remained but a fortnight to elapse of the engagement he had formed, and to which, though certain it was never to be renewed, no power on earth could make him false. With some difficulty they procured a reprieve for this short space, after which they found him perfectly willing to come under any engagements they chose to dictate. He entered the service of the Estates accordingly, and wrought himself forward to be Major in Gilbert Ker's corps, commonly called the Kirk's Own Regiment of Horse. Of his farther history we know nothing, until we find him in possession of his

paternal estate of Drumthwacket, which he acquired, not by the sword, but by a pacific intermarriage with Hannah Strachan, a matron somewhat stricken in years, the widow of the Aberdeenshire Covenanter.

Sir Dugald is supposed to have survived the Revolution, as traditions of no very distant date represent him as cruising about in that country, very old, very deaf, and very full of interminable stories about the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North, and the bulwark of the Protestant Faith.

BOOK XV
THE CAVALIER OF WOODSTOCK
Chapter the First.

*Some were for gospel ministers,
And some for red-coat seculars,
As men most fit t' hold forth the word,
And wield the one and th' other sword.*

BUTLER'S HUDIBRAS.

There is a handsome parish church in the town of Woodstock — I am told so, at least, for I never saw it, having scarce time, when at the place, to view the magnificence of Blenheim, its painted halls, and tapestried bowers, and then return in due season to dine in hall with my learned friend, the provost of —; being one of those occasions on which a man wrongs himself extremely, if he lets his curiosity interfere with his punctuality. I had the church accurately described to me, with a view to this work; but, as I have some reason to doubt whether my informant had ever seen the inside of it himself, I shall be content to say that it is now a handsome edifice, most part of which was rebuilt forty or fifty years since, although it still contains some arches of the old chantry, founded, it is said, by King John. It is to this more ancient part of the building that my story refers. On a morning in the end of September, or beginning of October, in the year 1652, being a day appointed for a solemn thanksgiving for the decisive victory at Worcester, a respectable audience was assembled in the old chantry, or chapel of King John. The condition of the church and character of the audience both bore witness to the rage of civil war, and the peculiar spirit of the times. The sacred edifice showed many marks of dilapidation. The windows, once filled with stained glass, had been dashed to pieces with pikes and muskets, as matters of and pertaining to idolatry. The carving on the reading-desk was damaged, and two fair screens of beautiful sculptured oak had been destroyed, for the same pithy and conclusive reason. The high altar had been removed, and the gilded railing, which was once around it, was broken down and carried off. The effigies of several tombs were mutilated, and now lay scattered about the church,

Torn from their destined niche — unworthy meed

Of knightly counsel or heroic deed!

The autumn wind piped through empty aisles, in which the remains of stakes and trevisses of rough-hewn timber, as well as a quantity of scattered hay and trampled straw, seemed to intimate that the hallowed precincts had been, upon some late emergency, made the quarters of a troop of horse.

The audience, like the building, was abated in splendour. None of the ancient and habitual worshippers during peaceful times, were now to be seen in their carved galleries, with hands shadowing their brows, while composing their minds to pray where their fathers had prayed, and after the same mode of worship. The eye of the yeoman and peasant sought in vain the tall form of old Sir Henry Lee, of Ditchley, as, wrapped in his lace cloak, and with beard and whiskers duly composed, he moved slowly through the aisles, followed by the faithful mastiff, or bloodhound, which in old time had saved his master by his fidelity, and which regularly followed him to church. Bevis, indeed, fell under the proverb which avers, "He is a good dog which goes to church;" for, bating an occasional temptation to warble along with the accord, he behaved himself as decorously as any of the congregation, and returned as much edified, perhaps, as most of them. The damsels of Woodstock looked as vainly for the laced cloaks, jingling spurs, slashed boots, and tall plumes, of the young cavaliers of this and other high-born houses, moving through the streets and the church-yard with the careless ease, which indicates perhaps rather an overweening degree of self-confidence, yet shows graceful when mingled with good-humour and courtesy. The good old dames, too, in their white hoods and black velvet gowns — their daughters, "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes," — where were they all now, who, when they entered the church, used to divide men's thoughts between them and Heaven? "But, ah! Alice Lee — so sweet, so gentle, so condescending in thy loveliness — [thus proceeds a contemporary annalist, whose manuscript we have deciphered] — why is my story to turn upon thy fallen fortunes? and why not rather to the period when, in the very dismounting from your palfrey, you attracted as many eyes as if an angel had descended — as many blessings as if the benignant being had come fraught with good tidings? No creature wert thou of an idle romancer's imagination — no being fantastically bedizened with inconsistent perfections; — thy merits made me love thee well — and for thy faults — so well did they show amid thy good qualities, that I think they made me love thee better."

With the house of Lee had disappeared from the chantry of King John others of gentle blood and honoured lineage — Freemantles, Winklecombes, Drycotts, &c.; for the air that blew over the towers of Oxford was unfavourable to the growth of Puritanism, which was more general in the neighbouring counties. There were among the congregation, however, one or two that, by their habits and demeanour, seemed country gentlemen of consideration, and there were also present some of the notables of the town of Woodstock, cutlers or glovers chiefly, whose skill in steel or leather had raised them to a comfortable livelihood. These dignitaries wore long black cloaks, plaited close at the neck, and, like peaceful citizens, carried their Bibles and memorandum-books at their girdles, instead of knife or sword. [This custom among the Puritans is mentioned often in old plays, and among others in the Widow of Watling Street.] This respectable, but least numerous part of the audience, were such decent persons as had adopted the Presbyterian form of faith, renouncing the liturgy and hierarchy of the Church of England, and living under the tuition of the Rev. Nehemiah Holdenough, much famed for the length and strength of his powers of predication. With these grave seniors sate their goodly dames in ruff and gorget, like the portraits which in catalogues of paintings are designed "wife of a burgomaster," and their pretty daughters, whose study, like that of Chaucer's physician, was not always in the Bible, but who were, on the contrary, when a glance could escape the vigilance of their honoured mothers, inattentive themselves, and the cause of inattention in others.

But, besides these dignified persons, there were in the church a numerous collection of the lower orders, some brought thither by curiosity, but many of them unwashed artificers, bewildered in the theological discussions of the time, and of as many various sects as there are colours in the rainbow. The presumption of these learned Thebans being in exact proportion to their ignorance, the last was total and the first boundless. Their behaviour in the church was any thing but reverential or edifying. Most of them affected a cynical contempt for all that was only held sacred by human sanction — the church was to these men but a steeple-house, the clergyman, an ordinary person; her ordinances, dry bran and sapless pottage unfitted for the spiritualized palates of the saints, and the prayer, an address to Heaven, to which each acceded or not as in his too critical judgment he conceived fit.

The elder amongst them sate or lay on the benches, with their high steeple-crowned hats pulled over their severe and knitted brows, waiting for the Presbyterian parson, as mastiffs sit in dumb expectation of the bull that is to be brought to the stake. The younger mixed, some of them, a bolder license of manners with their heresies; they gazed round on the women, yawned, coughed, and whispered, eat apples, and cracked nuts, as if in the gallery of a theatre ere the piece commences.

Besides all these, the congregation contained a few soldiers, some in corslets and steel caps, some in buff, and others in red coats. These men of war had their bandeliers, with ammunition, slung around them, and rested on their pikes and muskets. They, too, had their peculiar doctrines on the most difficult points of religion, and united the extravagances of enthusiasm with the most determined courage and resolution in the field. The burghers of Woodstock looked on these military saints with no small degree of awe; for though not often sullied with deeds of plunder or cruelty, they had the power of both absolutely in their hands, and the peaceful citizen had no alternative, save submission to whatever the ill-regulated and enthusiastic imaginations of their martial guides might suggest.

After some time spent in waiting for him, Mr. Holdenough began to walk up the aisles of the chapel, not with the slow and dignified carriage with which the old Rector was of yore wont to maintain the dignity of the surplice, but with a hasty step, like one who arrives too late at an appointment, and bustles forward to make the best use of his time. He was a tall thin man, with an adust complexion, and the vivacity of his eye indicated some irascibility of temperament. His dress was brown, not black, and over his other vestments he wore, in honour of Calvin, a Geneva cloak of a blue colour, which fell backwards from his shoulders as he posted on to the pulpit. His grizzled hair was cut as short as shears could perform the feat, and covered with a black silk scull-cap, which stuck so close to his head, that the two ears expanded from under it as if they had been intended as handles by which to lift the whole person. Moreover, the worthy divine wore

spectacles, and a long grizzled peaked beard, and he carried in his hand a small pocket-bible with silver clasps. Upon arriving at the pulpit, he paused a moment to take breath, then began to ascend the steps by two at a time.

But his course was arrested by a strong hand, which seized his cloak. It was that of one who had detached himself from the group of soldiery. He was a stout man of middle stature, with a quick eye, and a countenance, which, though plain, had yet an expression that fixed the attention. His dress, though not strictly military, partook of that character. He wore large hose made of calves-leather, and a tuck, as it was then called, or rapier, of tremendous length, balanced on the other side by a dagger. The belt was morocco, garnished with pistols.

The minister, thus intercepted in his duty, faced round upon the party who had seized him, and demanded, in no gentle tone, the meaning of the interruption.

"Friend," quoth the intruder, "is it thy purpose to hold forth to these good people?"

"Ay, marry is it," said the clergyman, "and such is my bounden duty. Woe to me if I preach not the gospel — Prithee, friend, let me not in my labour" —

"Nay," said the man of warlike mien, "I am myself minded to hold forth; therefore, do thou desist, or if thou wilt do by my advice, remain and fructify with those poor goslings, to whom I am presently about to shake forth the crumbs of comfortable doctrine."

"Give place, thou man of Satan," said the priest, waxing wroth, "respect mine order — my cloth."

"I see no more to respect in the cut of thy cloak, or in the cloth of which it is fashioned," said the other, "than thou didst in the Bishop's rockets — they were black and white, thou art blue and brown. Sleeping dogs every one of you, lying down, loving to slumber — shepherds that starve the flock but will not watch it, each looking to his own gain — hum."

Scenes of this indecent kind were so common at the time, that no one thought of interfering; the congregation looked on in silence, the better class scandalized, and the lower orders, some laughing, and others backing the soldier or minister as their fancy dictated. Meantime the struggle waxed fiercer; Mr. Holdenough clamoured for assistance.

"Master Mayor of Woodstock," he exclaimed, "wilt thou be among those wicked magistrates, who bear the sword in vain? — Citizens, will you not help your pastor? — Worthy Alderman, will you see me strangled on the pulpit stairs by this man of buff and Belial? — But lo, I will overcome him, and cast his cords from me."

As Holdenough spoke, he struggled to ascend the pulpit stairs, holding hard on the banisters. His tormentor held fast by the skirts of the cloak, which went nigh to the choking of the wearer, until, as he spoke the words last mentioned, in a half-strangled voice, Mr. Holdenough dexterously slipped the string which tied it round his neck, so that the garment suddenly gave way; the soldier fell backwards down the steps, and the liberated divine skipped into the pulpit, and began to give forth a psalm of triumph over his prostrate adversary. But a great hubbub in the church marred his exultation, and although he and his faithful clerk continued to sing the hymn of victory, their notes were only heard by fits, like the whistle of a curlew during a gale of wind.

The cause of the tumult was as follows:— The Mayor was a zealous Presbyterian, and witnessed the intrusion of the soldier with great indignation from the very beginning, though he hesitated to interfere with an armed man while on his legs and capable of resistance. But no sooner did he behold the champion of independency sprawling on his back, with the divine's Geneva cloak fluttering in his hands, than the magistrate rushed forward, exclaiming that such insolence was not to be endured, and ordered his constables to seize the prostrate champion, proclaiming, in the magnanimity of wrath, "I will commit every red-coat of them all — I will commit him were he Noll Cromwell himself!"

The worthy Mayor's indignation had overmastered his reason when he made this mistimed vaunt; for three soldiers, who had hitherto stood motionless like statues, made each a stride in advance, which placed them betwixt the municipal officers and the soldier, who was in the act of rising; then making at once the movement of resting arms according to the manual as then practised, their musket-buts rang on the church pavement, within an inch of the gouty toes of Master Mayor. The energetic magistrate, whose efforts in favour of order were thus checked, cast one glance on his supporters, but that was enough to show him that force was not on his side. All had shrunk back on hearing that ominous clatter of stone and iron. He was obliged to descend to expostulation.

"What do you mean, my masters?" said he; "is it like a decent and God-fearing soldiery, who have wrought such things for the land as have never before been heard of, to brawl and riot in the church, or to aid, abet, and comfort a profane fellow, who hath, upon a solemn thanksgiving excluded the minister from his own pulpit?"

"We have nought to do with thy church, as thou call'st it," said he who, by a small feather in front of his morion, appeared to be the corporal of the party; — "we see not why men of gifts should not be heard within these citadels of superstition, as well as the voice of the men of crape of old, and the men of cloak now. Wherefore, we will pluck yon Jack Presbyter out of his wooden sentinel-box, and our own watchman shall relieve the guard, and mount thereon, and cry aloud and spare not."

"Nay, gentlemen," said the Mayor, "if such be your purpose, we have not the means to withstand you, being, as you see, peaceful and quiet men — But let me first speak with this worthy minister, Nehemiah Holdenough, to persuade him to yield up his place for the time without farther scandal."

The peace-making Mayor then interrupted the quavering Holdenough and the clerk, and prayed both to retire, else there would, he said, be certainly strife.

"Strife!" replied the Presbyterian divine, with scorn; "no fear of strife among men that dare not testify against this open profanation of the Church, and daring display of heresy. Would your neighbours of Banbury have brooked such an insult?"

"Come, come, Master Holdenough," said the Mayor, "put us not to mutiny and cry Clubs. I tell you once more, we are not men of war or blood."

"Not more than may be drawn by the point of a needle," said the preacher, scornfully. — "Ye tailors of Woodstock! — for what is a Glover but a tailor working on kidskin? — I forsake you, in scorn of your faint hearts and feeble hands, and will seek me elsewhere a flock which will not fly from their shepherd at the braying of the first wild ass which cometh from out the great desert."

So saying, the aggrieved divine departed from his pulpit, and shaking the dust from his shoes, left the church as hastily as he had entered it, though with a different reason for his speed. The citizens saw his retreat with sorrow, and not without a compunctious feeling, as if conscious that they were not playing the most courageous part in the world. The Mayor himself and several others left the church, to follow and appease him.

The Independent orator, late prostrate, was now triumphant, and inducting himself into the pulpit without farther ceremony, he pulled a Bible from his pocket, and selected his text from the forty-fifth psalm — "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously." — Upon this theme, he commenced one of those wild declamations common at the period, in which men were accustomed to wrest and pervert the language of Scripture, by adapting to it modern events.

(See "Vindication of the Book of Common Prayer, against the contumelious Slanders of the Fanatic Party terming it Porridge.")

The author of this singular and rare tract indulges in the allegorical style, till he fairly hunts down the allegory.

"But as for what you call porridge, who hatched the name I know not, neither is it worth the enquiring after, for I hold porridge good food. It is better to a sick man than meat, for a sick man will sooner eat pottage than meat. Pottage will digest with him when meat will not: pottage will nourish the blood, fill the veins, run into every part of a man, make him warmer; so will these prayers do, set our soul and body in a heat, warm our devotion, work fervency in us, lift up our soul to God. For there be herbs of God's own planting in our pottage as ye call it — the Ten Commandments, dainty herbs to season any pottage in the world; there is the Lord's Prayer, and that is a most sweet pot-herb, cannot be denied; then there is also David's herbs, his prayers and psalms, helps to make our pottage relish well; the psalm of the blessed Virgin, a good pot-herb. Though they be, as some term them, *cock-crowed* pottage, yet they are as sweet, as good, as dainty, and as fresh, as they were at first. The sun hath not made them sour with its heat, neither hath the cold water taken away their vigour and strength. Compare them with the Scriptures, and see if they be not as well seasoned and crumbed. If you find any thing in them that is either too salt, too fresh, or too bitter, that herb shall be taken out and better put in, if it can be got, or none. And as in kitchen pottage there are many good herbs, so there is likewise in this church pottage, as ye call it. For first, there is in kitchen pottage good water to make them so; on the contrary, in the other pottage there is the water of life. 2. There is salt, to season them; so in the other is a prayer of grace to season their hearts. 3. There is oatmeal to nourish the body, in the other is the bread of life. 4. There is thyme in them to

relish them, and it is very wholesome — in the other is the wholesome exhortation not to harden our heart while it is called today. This relisheth well. 5. There is a small onion to give a taste — in the other is a good herb, called Lord have mercy on us. These, and many other holy herbs are contained in it, all boiling in the heart of man, will make as good pottage as the world can afford, especially if you use these herbs for digestion. The herb repentance, the herb grace, the herb faith, the herb love, the herb hope, the herb good works, the herb feeling, the herb zeal, the herb fervency, the herb ardency, the herb constancy, with many more of this nature, most excellent for digestion." *Ohe! jam satis.* In this manner the learned divine hunts his metaphor at a very cold scent, through a pamphlet of six mortal quarto pages.)

The language which, in its literal sense, was applied to King David, and typically referred to the coming of the Messiah, was, in the opinion of the military orator, most properly to be interpreted of Oliver Cromwell, the victorious general of the infant Commonwealth, which was never destined to come of age. "Gird on thy sword!" exclaimed the preacher emphatically, "and was not that a pretty bit of steel as ever dangled from a corslet, or rung against a steel saddle? Ay, ye prick up your ears now, ye cutlers of Woodstock, as if ye should know something of a good fox broad sword — Did you forge it, I trow? — was the steel quenched with water from Rosamond's well, or the blade blessed by the old cuckoldy priest of Godstow? You would have us think, I warrant me, that you wrought it and welded it, grinded and polished it, and all the while it never came on a Woodstock stithy! You were all too busy making whittles for the lazy crape-men of Oxford, bouncing priests, whose eyes were so closed up with fat, that they could not see Destruction till she had them by the throat. But I can tell you where the sword was forged, and tempered, and welded, and grinded, and polished. When you were, as I said before, making whittles for false priests, and daggers for dissolute G— d d — n— me cavaliers, to cut the people of England's throats with — it was forged at Long Marston Moor, where blows went faster than ever rung hammer on anvil — and it was tempered at Naseby, in the best blood of the cavaliers — and it was welded in Ireland against the walls of Drogheda — and it was grinded on Scottish lives at Dunbar — and now of late it was polished in Worcester, till it shines as bright as the sun in the middle heaven, and there is no light in England that shall come nigh unto it."

Here the military part of the congregation raised a hum of approbation, which, being a sound like the "hear, hear," of the British House of Commons, was calculated to heighten the enthusiasm of the orator, by intimating the sympathy of the audience. "And then," resumed the preacher, rising in energy as he found that his audience partook in these feelings, "what saith the text? — Ride on prosperously — do not stop — do not call a halt — do not quit the saddle — pursue the scattered fliers — sound the trumpet — not a levant or a flourish, but a point of war — sound, boot and saddle — to horse and away — a charge! — follow after the young Man! — what part have we in him? — Slay, take, destroy, divide the spoil! Blessed art thou, Oliver, on account of thine honour — thy cause is clear, thy call is undoubted — never has defeat come near thy leading-staff, nor disaster attended thy banner. Ride on, flower of England's soldiers! ride on, chosen leader of God's champions! gird up the loins of thy resolution, and be steadfast to the mark of thy high calling."

Another deep and stern hum, echoed by the ancient embow'd arches of the old chantry, gave him an opportunity of an instant's repose; when the people of Woodstock heard him, and not without anxiety, turn the stream of his oratory into another channel.

"But wherefore, ye people of Woodstock, do I say these things to you, who claim no portion in our David, no interest in England's son of Jesse? — You, who were fighting as well as your might could (and it was not very formidable) for the late Man, under that old blood-thirsty papist Sir Jacob Aston — are you not now plotting, or ready to plot, for the restoring, as ye call it, of the young Man, the unclean son of the slaughtered tyrant — the fugitive after whom the true hearts of England are now following, that they may take and slay him? — 'Why should your rider turn his bridle our way?' say you in your hearts; 'we will none of him; if we may help ourselves, we will rather turn us to wallow in the mire of monarchy, with the sow that was washed but newly.' Come, men of Woodstock, I will ask, and do you answer me. Hunger ye still after the flesh-pots of the monks of Godstow? and ye will say, Nay; — but wherefore, except that the pots are cracked and broken, and the fire is extinguished wherewith thy oven used to boil? And again, I ask, drink ye still of the well of fornications of the fair Rosamond? — ye will say, Nay; — but wherefore?"

Here the orator, ere he could answer the question in his own way, was surprised by the following reply, very pithily pronounced by one of the congregation: — "Because you, and the like of you, have left us no brandy to mix with it."

All eyes turned to the audacious speaker, who stood beside one of the thick sturdy Saxon pillars, which he himself somewhat resembled, being short of stature, but very strongly made, a squat broad Little John sort of figure, leaning on a quarterstaff, and wearing a jerkin, which, though now sorely stained and discoloured, had once been of the Lincoln green, and showed remnants of having been laced. There was an air of careless, good humoured audacity about the fellow; and, though under military restraint, there were some of the citizens who could not help crying out — "Well said, Joceline Joliffe!"

"Jolly Joceline, call ye him?" proceeded the preacher, without showing either confusion or displeasure at the interruption — "I will make him Joceline of the jail, if he interrupts me again. One of your park-keepers, I warrant, that can never forget they have borne C. R. upon their badges and bugle-horns, even as a dog bears his owner's name on his collar — a pretty emblem for Christian men! But the brute beast hath the better of him — the brute weareth his own coat, and the caitiff thrall wears his master's. I have seen such a wag make a rope's end wag ere now. — Where was I? — Oh, rebuking you for your backslidings, men of Woodstock. — Yes, then ye will say ye have renounced Popery, and ye have renounced Prelacy, and then ye wipe your mouth like Pharisees, as ye are; and who but you for purity of religion! But I tell you, ye are but like Jehu the son of Nimshi, who broke down the house of Baal, yet departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. Even so ye eat not fish on Friday with the blinded Papists, nor minced-pies on the 25th day of December, like the slothful Prelatists; but ye will gorge on sack-posset each night in the year with your blind Presbyterian guide, and ye will speak evil of dignities, and revile the Commonwealth; and ye will glorify yourselves in your park of Woodstock, and say, 'Was it not walled in first of any other in England, and that by Henry, son of William called the Conqueror?' And ye have a princely Lodge therein, and call the same a Royal Lodge; and ye have an oak which ye call the King's Oak; and ye steal and eat the venison of the park, and ye say, 'This is the king's venison, we will wash it down with a cup to the king's health — better we eat it than those round-headed commonwealth knaves.' But listen unto me and take warning. For these things come we to controversy with you. And our name shall be a cannon-shot, before which your Lodge, in the pleasantness whereof ye take pastime, shall be blown into ruins; and we will be as a wedge to split asunder the King's Oak into billets to heat a baker's oven; and we will dispark your park, and slay your deer, and eat them ourselves, neither shall you have any portion thereof, whether in neck or haunch. Ye shall not haft a ten-penny knife with the horns thereof, neither shall ye cut a pair of breeches out of the hide, for all ye be cutlers and glovers; and ye shall have no comfort or support neither from the sequestered traitor Henry Lee, who called himself Ranger of Woodstock, nor from any on his behalf; for they are coming hither who shall be called Mahershalal-hash-baz, because he maketh haste to the spoil."

Here ended the wild effusion, the latter part of which fell heavy on the souls of the poor citizens of Woodstock, as tending to confirm a report of an unpleasant nature which had been lately circulated. The communication with London was indeed slow, and the news which it transmitted were uncertain; no less uncertain were the times themselves, and the rumours which were circulated, exaggerated by the hopes and fears of so many various factions. But the general stream of report, so far as Woodstock was concerned, had of late run uniformly in one direction. Day after day they had been informed, that the fatal fiat of Parliament had gone out, for selling the park of Woodstock, destroying its lodge, disparking its forest, and erasing, as far as they could be erased, all traces of its ancient fame. Many of the citizens were likely to be sufferers on this occasion, as several of them enjoyed, either by sufferance or right, various convenient privileges of pasturage, cutting firewood, and the like, in the royal chase; and all the inhabitants of the little borough were hurt to think, that the scenery of the place was to be destroyed, its edifices ruined, and its honours rent away. This is a patriotic sensation often found in such places, which ancient distinctions and long-cherished recollections of former days, render so different from towns of recent date. The natives of Woodstock felt it in the fullest force. They had trembled at the anticipated calamity; but now, when it was announced by the appearance of those dark, stern, and at the same time omnipotent soldiers — now that they heard it proclaimed by the mouth of one of their military preachers — they considered their fate as inevitable. The causes of disagreement among themselves were for the time forgotten, as the congregation, dismissed without psalmody or benediction, went slowly and mournfully homeward, each to his own place of abode.

Chapter the Second.

Come forth, old man — Thy daughter's side

*Is now the fitting place for thee:
When time hath quell'd the oak's bold pride,
The youthful tendril yet may hide
The ruins of the parent tree.*

When the sermon was ended, the military orator wiped his brow; for, notwithstanding the coolness of the weather, he was heated with the vehemence of his speech and action. He then descended from the pulpit, and spoke a word or two to the corporal who commanded the party of soldiers, who, replying by a sober nod of intelligence, drew his men together, and marched them in order to their quarters in the town.

The preacher himself, as if nothing extraordinary had happened, left the church and sauntered through the streets of Woodstock, with the air of a stranger who was viewing the town, without seeming to observe that he was himself in his turn anxiously surveyed by the citizens, whose furtive yet frequent glances seemed to regard him as something alike suspected and dreadful, yet on no account to be provoked. He heeded them not, but stalked on in the manner affected by the distinguished fanatics of the day; a stiff solemn pace, a severe and at the same time a contemplative look, like that of a man discomposed at the interruptions which earthly objects forced upon him, obliging him by their intrusion to withdraw his thoughts for an instant from celestial things. Innocent pleasures of what kind soever they held in suspicion and contempt, and innocent mirth they abominated. It was, however, a cast of mind that formed men for great and manly actions, as it adopted principle, and that of an unselfish character, for the ruling motive, instead of the gratification of passion. Some of these men were indeed hypocrites, using the cloak of religion only as a covering for their ambition; but many really possessed the devotional character, and the severe republican virtue, which others only affected. By far the greater number hovered between these extremes, felt to a certain extent the power of religion, and complied with the times in affecting a great deal.

The individual, whose pretensions to sanctity, written as they were upon his brow and gait, have given rise to the above digression, reached at length the extremity of the principal street, which terminates upon the park of Woodstock. A battlemented portal of Gothic appearance defended the entrance to the avenue. It was of mixed architecture, but on the whole, though composed of the styles of the different ages when it had received additions, had a striking and imposing effect. An immense gate, composed of rails of hammered iron, with many a flourish and scroll, displaying as its uppermost ornament the ill-fated cipher of C. R., was now decayed, being partly wasted with rust, partly by violence.

The stranger paused, as if uncertain whether he should demand or assay entrance. He looked through the grating down an avenue skirted by majestic oaks, which led onward with a gentle curve, as if into the depths of some ample and ancient forest. The wicket of the large iron gate being left unwittingly open, the soldier was tempted to enter, yet with some hesitation, as he that intrudes upon ground which he conjectures may be prohibited — indeed his manner showed more reverence for the scene than could have been expected from his condition and character. He slackened his stately and consequential pace, and at length stood still, and looked around him.

Not far from the gate, he saw rising from the trees one or two ancient and venerable turrets, bearing each its own vane of rare device glittering in the autumn sun. These indicated the ancient hunting seat, or Lodge, as it was called, which had, since the time of Henry II., been occasionally the residence of the English monarchs, when it pleased them to visit the woods of Oxford, which then so abounded with game, that, according to old Fuller, huntsmen and falconers were nowhere better pleased. The situation which the Lodge occupied was a piece of flat ground, now planted with sycamores, not far from the entrance to that magnificent spot where the spectator first stops to gaze upon Blenheim, to think of Marlborough's victories, and to applaud or criticise the cumbrous magnificence of Vanburgh's style.

There, too, paused our military preacher, but with other thoughts, and for other purpose, than to admire the scene around him. It was not long afterwards when he beheld two persons, a male and a female, approaching slowly, and so deeply engaged in their own conversation that they did not raise their eyes to observe that there stood a stranger in the path before them. The soldier took advantage of their state of abstraction, and, desirous at once to watch their motions and avoid their observation, he glided beneath one of the huge trees which skirted the path, and whose boughs, sweeping the ground on every side, ensured him against discovery, unless in case of an actual search.

In the meantime, the gentleman and lady continued to advance, directing their course to a rustic seat, which still enjoyed the sunbeams, and was placed adjacent to the tree where the stranger was concealed.

The man was elderly, yet seemed bent more by sorrow and infirmity than by the weight of years. He wore a mourning cloak, over a dress of the same melancholy colour, cut in that picturesque form which Vandyck has rendered immortal. But although the dress was handsome, it was put on with a carelessness which showed the mind of the wearer ill at ease. His aged, yet still handsome countenance, had the same air of consequence which distinguished his dress and his gait. A striking part of his appearance was a long white beard, which descended far over the breast of his slashed doublet, and looked singular from its contrast in colour with his habit.

The young lady, by whom this venerable gentleman seemed to be in some degree supported as they walked arm in arm, was a slight and sylphlike form, with a person so delicately made, and so beautiful in countenance, that it seemed the earth on which she walked was too grossly massive a support for a creature so aerial. But mortal beauty must share human sorrows. The eyes of the beautiful being showed tokens of tears; her colour was heightened as she listened to her aged companion; and it was plain, from his melancholy yet displeased look, that the conversation was as distressing to himself as to her. When they sate down on the bench we have mentioned, the gentleman's discourse could be distinctly overheard by the eavesdropping soldier, but the answers of the young lady reached his ear rather less distinctly.

"It is not to be endured!" said the old man, passionately; "it would stir up a paralytic wretch to start up a soldier. My people have been thinned, I grant you, or have fallen off from me in these times — I owe them no grudge for it, poor knaves; what should they do waiting on me when the pantry has no bread and the buttery no ale? But we have still about us some rugged foresters of the old Woodstock breed — old as myself most of them — what of that? old wood seldom warps in the wetting; — I will hold out the old house, and it will not be the first time that I have held it against ten times the strength that we hear of now."

"Alas! my dear father!" — said the young lady, in a tone which seemed to intimate his proposal of defence to be altogether desperate.

"And why, alas?" said the gentleman, angrily; "is it because I shut my door against a score or two of these blood-thirsty hypocrites?"

"But their masters can as easily send a regiment or an army, if they will," replied the lady; "and what good would your present defence do, excepting to exasperate them to your utter destruction?"

"Be it so, Alice," replied her father; "I have lived my time, and beyond it. I have outlived the kindest and most princelike of masters. What do I do on the earth since the dismal thirtieth of January? The parricide of that day was a signal to all true servants of Charles Stewart to avenge his death, or die as soon after as they could find a worthy opportunity."

"Do not speak thus, sir," said Alice Lee; "it does not become your gravity and your worth to throw away that life which may yet be of service to your king and country — it will not and cannot always be thus. England will not long endure the rulers which these bad times have assigned her. In the meanwhile — [here a few words escaped the listener's ears] — and beware of that impatience, which makes bad worse."

"Worse?" exclaimed the impatient old man, "*What* can be worse? Is it not at the worst already? Will not these people expel us from the only shelter we have left — dilapidate what remains of royal property under my charge — make the palace of princes into a den of thieves, and then wipe their mouths and thank God, as if they had done an alms-deed?"

"Still," said his daughter, "there is hope behind, and I trust the King is ere this out of their reach — We have reason to think well of my brother Albert's safety."

"Ay, Albert! there again," said the old man, in a tone of reproach; "had it not been for thy entreaties I had gone to Worcester myself; but I must needs lie here like a worthless hound when the hunt is up, when who knows what service I might have shown? An old man's head is sometimes useful when his arm is but little worth. But you and Albert were so desirous that he should go alone — and now, who can say what has become of him?"

"Nay, nay, father," said Alice, "we have good hope that Albert escaped from that fatal day; young Abney saw him a mile from the field."

"Young Abney lied, I believe," said the father, in the same humour of contradiction — "Young Abney's tongue seems quicker than his hands, but far slower than his horse's heels when he leaves the roundheads behind him. I would rather Albert's dead body were laid between Charles and Cromwell, than hear he fled as early as young Abney."

"My dearest father," said the young lady, weeping as she spoke, "what can I say to comfort you?"

"Comfort me, say'st thou, girl? I am sick of comfort — an honourable death, with the ruins of Woodstock for my monument, were the only comfort to old Henry Lee. Yes, by the memory of my fathers! I will make good the Lodge against these rebellious robbers."

"Yet be ruled, dearest father," said the maiden, "and submit to that which we cannot gainsay. My uncle Everard" —

Here the old man caught at her unfinished words. "Thy uncle Everard, wench! — Well, get on. — What of thy precious and loving uncle Everard?"

"Nothing, sir," she said, "if the subject displeases you."

"Displeases me?" he replied, "why should it displease me? or if it did, why shouldst thou, or any one, affect to care about it? What is it that hath happened of late years — what is it can be thought to happen that astrologer can guess at, which can give pleasure to us?"

"Fate," she replied, "may have in store the joyful restoration of our banished Prince."

"Too late for my time, Alice," said the knight, "if there be such a white page in the heavenly book, it will not be turned until long after my day. — But I see thou wouldst escape me. — In a word, what of thy uncle Everard?"

"Nay, sir," said Alice, "God knows I would rather be silent for ever, than speak what might, as you would take it, add to your present distemperature."

"Distemperature!" said her father; "Oh, thou art a sweet lipped physician, and wouldst, I warrant me, drop nought but sweet balm, and honey, and oil, on my distemperature — if that is the phrase for an old man's ailment, when he is wellnigh heart-broken. — Once more, what of thy uncle Everard?"

His last words were uttered in a high and peevish tone of voice; and Alice Lee answered her father in a trembling and submissive tone.

"I only meant to say, sir, that I am well assured that my uncle Everard, when we quit this place" —

"That is to say, when we are kicked out of it by crop-eared canting villains like himself. — But on with thy bountiful uncle — what will he do? — will he give us the remains of his worshipful and economical housekeeping, the fragments of a thrice-sacked capon twice a-week, and a plentiful fast on the other five days? — Will he give us beds beside his half-starved nags, and put them under a short allowance of straw, that his sister's husband — that I should have called my deceased angel by such a name! — and his sister's daughter, may not sleep on the stones? Or will he send us a noble each, with a warning to make it last, for he had never known the ready-penny so hard to come by? Or what else will your uncle Everard do for us? Get us a furlough to beg? Why, I can do that without him."

"You misconstrue him much," answered Alice, with more spirit than she had hitherto displayed; "and would you but question your own heart, you would acknowledge — I speak with reverence — that your tongue utters what your better judgment would disown. My uncle Everard is neither a miser nor a hypocrite — neither so fond of the goods of this world that he would not supply our distresses amply, nor so wedded to fanatical opinions as to exclude charity for other sects beside his own."

"Ay, ay, the Church of England is a sect with him, I doubt not, and perhaps with thee too, Alice," said the knight. "What is a Muggletonian, or a Ranter, or a Brownist, but a sectary? and thy phrase places them all, with Jack Presbyter himself, on the same footing with our learned prelates and religious clergy! Such is the cant of the day thou livest in, and why shouldst thou not talk like one of the wise virgins and psalm-singing sisters, since, though thou hast a profane old cavalier for a father, thou art own niece to pious uncle Everard?"

"If you speak thus, my dear father," said Alice, "what can I answer you? Hear me but one patient word, and I shall have discharged my uncle Everard's commission."

"Oh, it is a commission, then? Surely, I suspected so much from the beginning — nay, have some sharp guess touching the ambassador also. — Come, madam, the mediator, do your errand, and you shall have no reason to complain of my patience."

"Then, sir," replied his daughter, "my uncle Everard desires you would be courteous to the commissioners, who come here to sequester the parks and the property; or, at least, heedfully to abstain from giving them obstacle or opposition: it can, he says, do no good, even on your own principles, and it will give a pretext for proceeding against you as one in the worst degree of malignity, which he thinks may otherwise be prevented. Nay, he has good hope, that if you follow his counsel, the committee may, through the interest he possesses, be inclined to remove the sequestration of your estate on a moderate line. Thus says my uncle; and having communicated his advice, I have no occasion to urge your patience with farther argument."

"It is well thou dost not, Alice," answered Sir Henry Lee, in a tone of suppressed anger; "for, by the blessed Rood, thou hast well nigh led me into the heresy of thinking thee no daughter of mine. — Ah! my beloved companion, who art now far from the sorrows and cares of this weary world, couldst thou have thought that the daughter thou didst clasp to thy bosom, would, like the wicked wife of Job, become a temptress to her father in the hour of affliction, and recommend to him to make his conscience truckle to his interest, and to beg back at the bloody hands of his master's and perhaps his son's murderers, a wretched remnant of the royal property he has been robbed of! — Why, wench, if I must beg, think'st thou I will sue to those who have made me a mendicant? No. I will never show my grey beard, worn in sorrow for my sovereign's death, to move the compassion of some proud sequestrator, who perhaps was one of the parricides. No. If Henry Lee must sue for food, it shall be of some sound loyalist like himself, who, having but half a loaf remaining, will not nevertheless refuse to share it with him. For his daughter, she may wander her own way, which leads her to a refuge with her wealthy roundhead kinsfolk; but let her no more call him father, whose honest indigence she has refused to share!"

"You do me injustice, sir," answered the young lady, with a voice animated yet faltering, "cruel injustice. God knows, your way is my way, though it lead to ruin and beggary; and while you tread it, my arm shall support you while you will accept an aid so feeble."

"Thou word'st me, girl," answered the old cavalier, "thou word'st me, as Will Shakspeare says — thou speakest of lending me thy arm; but thy secret thought is thyself to hang upon Markham Everard's."

"My father, my father," answered Alice, in a tone of deep grief, "what can thus have altered your clear judgment and kindly heart! — Accursed be these civil commotions; not only do they destroy men's bodies, but they pervert their souls; and the brave, the noble, the generous, become suspicious, harsh, and mean! Why upbraid me with Markham Everard? Have I seen or spoke to him since you forbid him my company, with terms less kind — I will speak it truly — than was due even to the relationship betwixt you? Why think I would sacrifice to that young man my duty to you? Know, that were I capable of such criminal weakness, Markham Everard were the first to despise me for it."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes, but she could not hide her sobs, nor conceal the distress they intimated. The old man was moved.

"I cannot tell," he said, "what to think of it. Thou seem'st sincere, and wert ever a good and kindly daughter — how thou hast let that rebel youth creep into thy heart I wot not; perhaps it is a punishment on me, who thought the loyalty of my house was like undefiled ermine. Yet here is a damned spot, and on the fairest gem of all — my own dear Alice. But do not weep — we have enough to vex us. Where is it that Shakspeare hath it:—

'Gentle daughter,

Give even way unto my rough affairs:

Put you not on the temper of the times,

Nor be, like them, to Percy troublesome.'"

"I am glad," answered the young lady, "to hear you quote your favourite again, sir. Our little jars are ever wellnigh ended when Shakspeare comes in play."

"His book was the closet-companion of my blessed master," said Sir Henry Lee; "after the Bible, (with reverence for naming them together,) he felt more comfort in it than in any other; and as I have shared his disease, why, it is natural I should take his medicine. Albeit, I pretend not to my master's art in explaining the dark passages; for I am but a rude man, and rustically brought up to arms and hunting."

"You have seen Shakspeare yourself, sir?" said the young lady.

"Silly wench," replied the knight, "he died when I was a mere child — thou hast heard me say so twenty times; but thou wouldst lead the old man away from the tender subject. Well, though I am not blind, I can shut my eyes and follow. Ben Jonson I knew, and could tell thee many a tale of our meetings at the Mermaid, where, if there was much wine, there was much wit also. We did not sit blowing tobacco in each other's faces, and turning up the whites of our eyes as we turned up the bottom of the wine-pot. Old Ben adopted me as one of his sons in the muses. I have shown you, have I not, the verses, 'To my much beloved son, the worshipful Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, Knight and Baronet?'"

"I do not remember them at present, sir," replied Alice.

"I fear ye lie, wench," said her father; "but no matter — thou canst not get any more fooling out of me just now. The Evil Spirit hath left Saul for the present. We are now to think what is to be done about leaving Woodstock — or defending it?"

"My dearest father," said Alice, "can you still nourish a moment's hope of making good the place?"

"I know not, wench," replied Sir Henry; "I would fain have a parting blow with them, 'tis certain — and who knows where a blessing may alight? But then, my poor knaves that must take part with me in so hopeless a quarrel — that thought hampers me I confess."

"Oh, let it do so, sir," replied Alice; "there are soldiers in the town, and there are three regiments at Oxford!"

"Ah, poor Oxford!" exclaimed Sir Henry, whose vacillating state of mind was turned by a word to any new subject that was suggested — "Seat of learning and loyalty! these rude soldiers are unfit inmates for thy learned halls and poetical bowers; but thy pure and brilliant lamp shall defy the foul breath of a thousand churls, were they to blow at it like Boreas. The burning bush shall not be consumed, even by the heat of this persecution."

"True, sir," said Alice, "and it may not be useless to recollect, that any stirring of the royalists at this unpropitious moment will make them deal yet more harshly with the University, which they consider as being at the bottom of every thing which moves for the King in these parts."

"It is true, wench," replied the knight; "and small cause would make the villains sequester the poor remains which the civil wars have left to the colleges. That, and the risk of my poor fellows — Well! thou hast disarmed me, girl. I will be as patient and calm as a martyr."

"Pray God you keep your word, sir!" replied his daughter; "but you are ever so much moved at the sight of any of these men, that" —

"Would you make a child of me, Alice?" said Sir Henry. "Why, know you not that I can look upon a viper, or a toad, or a bunch of engendering adders, without any worse feeling than a little disgust? and though a roundhead, and especially a red-coat, are in my opinion more poisonous than vipers, more loathsome than toads, more hateful than knotted adders, yet can I overcome my nature so far, that should one of them appear at this moment, thyself should see how civilly I would entreat him."

As he spoke, the military preacher abandoned his leafy screen, and stalking forward, stood unexpectedly before the old cavalier, who stared at him, as if he had thought his expressions had actually raised a devil.

"Who art thou?" at length said Sir Henry, in a raised and angry voice, while his daughter clung to his arm in terror, little confident that her father's pacific resolutions would abide the shock of this unwelcome apparition.

"I am, one," replied the soldier, "who neither fear nor shame to call myself a poor day-labourer in the great work of England — umph! — Ay, a simple and sincere upholder of the good old cause."

"And what the devil do you seek here?" said the old knight, fiercely.

"The welcome due to the steward of the Lords Commissioners," answered the soldier.

"Welcome art thou as salt would be to sore eyes," said the cavalier; "but who be your Commissioners, man?"

The soldier with little courtesy held out a scroll, which Sir Henry took from him betwixt his finger and thumb, as if it were a letter from a pest-house; and held it at as much distance from his eyes, as his purpose of reading it would permit. He then read aloud, and as he named the parties one by one, he added a short commentary on each name, addressed, indeed, to Alice, but in such a tone that showed he cared not for its being heard by the soldier.

"*Desborough* — the ploughman Desborough — as grovelling a clown as is in England — a fellow that would be best at home like an ancient Scythian, under the tilt of a waggon — d — n him. *Harrison* — a bloody-minded, ranting enthusiast, who read the Bible to such purpose, that he never lacked a text to justify a murder — d — n him too. *Bletson* — a true-blue Commonwealth's man, one of Harrison's Rota Club, with his noddle full of new fangled notions about government, the clearest object of which is to establish the tail upon the head; a fellow who leaves you the statutes and law of old England, to prate of Rome and Greece — sees the Areopagus in Westminster-Hall, and takes old Noll for a Roman consul — Adad, he is like to prove a dictator amongst them instead. Never mind — d — n Bletson too."

"Friend," said the soldier, "I would willingly be civil, but it consists not with my duty to hear these godly men, in whose service I am, spoken of after this irreverent and unbecoming fashion. And albeit I know that you malignants think you have a right to make free with that damnation, which you seem to use as your own portion, yet it is superfluous to invoke it against others, who have better hopes in their thoughts, and better words in their mouths."

"Thou art but a canting varlet," replied the knight; "and yet thou art right in some sense — for it is superfluous to curse men who already are damned as black as the smoke of hell itself."

"I prithee forbear," continued the soldier, "for manners' sake, if not for conscience — grisly oaths suit ill with grey beards."

"Nay, that is truth, if the devil spoke it," said the knight; "and I thank Heaven I can follow good counsel, though old Nick gives it. And so, friend, touching these same Commissioners, bear them this message; that Sir Henry Lee is keeper of Woodstock Park, with right of waif and stray, vert and venison, as complete as any of them have to their estate — that is, if they possess any estate but what they have gained by plundering honest men. Nevertheless, he will give place to those who have made their might their right, and will not expose the lives of good and true men, where the odds are so much against them. And he protests that he makes this surrender, neither as acknowledging of these so termed Commissioners, nor as for his own individual part fearing their force, but purely to avoid the loss of English blood, of which so much hath been spilt in these late times."

"It is well spoken," said the steward of the Commissioners; "and therefore, I pray you, let us walk together into the house, that thou may'st deliver up unto me the vessels, and gold and silver ornaments, belonging unto the Egyptian Pharaoh, who committed them to thy keeping."

"What vessels?" exclaimed the fiery old knight; "and belonging to whom? Unbaptized dog, speak civil of the Martyr in my presence, or I will do a deed misbecoming of me on that caitiff corpse of thine!" — And shaking his daughter from his right arm, the old man laid his hand on his rapier.

His antagonist, on the contrary, kept his temper completely, and waving his hand to add impression to his speech, he said, with a calmness which aggravated Sir Henry's wrath, "Nay, good friend, I prithee be still, and brawl not — it becomes not grey hairs and feeble arms to rail and rant like drunkards. Put me not to use the carnal weapon in mine own defence, but listen to the voice of reason. See'st thou not that the Lord hath decided this great controversy in favour of us and ours, against thee and thine? Wherefore, render up thy stewardship peacefully, and deliver up to me the chattels of the Man, Charles Stewart."

"Patience is a good nag, but she will bolt," said the knight, unable longer to rein in his wrath. He plucked his sheathed rapier from his side, struck the soldier a severe blow with it, and instantly drawing it, and throwing the scabbard over the trees, placed himself in a posture of defence, with his sword's point within half a yard of the steward's body. The latter stepped back with activity, threw his long cloak from his shoulders, and drawing his long tuck, stood upon his guard. The swords clashed smartly together, while Alice, in her terror, screamed wildly for assistance. But the combat was of short duration. The old cavalier had attacked a man as cunning of fence as he himself, or a little more so, and possessing all the strength and activity of which time had deprived Sir Henry, and the calmness which the other had lost in his passion. They had scarce exchanged three passes ere the sword of the knight flew up in the air, as if it had gone in search of the scabbard; and burning with shame and anger, Sir Henry stood disarmed, at the mercy of his antagonist. The republican showed no purpose of abusing his victory; nor did he, either during the combat, or after the victory was won, in any respect alter the sour and grave composure which reigned upon his countenance — a combat of life and death seemed to him a thing as familiar, and as little to be feared, as an ordinary bout with foils.

"Thou art delivered into my hands," he said, "and by the law of arms I might smite thee under the fifth rib, even as Asahel was struck dead by Abner, the son of Ner, as he followed the chase on the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah, in the way of the wilderness of Gibeon; but far be it from me to spill thy remaining drops of blood. True it is, thou art the captive of my sword and of my spear; nevertheless, seeing that there may be a turning from thy evil ways, and a returning to those which are good, if the Lord enlarge thy date for repentance and amendment, wherefore should it be shortened by a poor sinful mortal, who is, speaking truly, but thy fellow-worm."

Sir Henry Lee remained still confused, and unable to answer, when there arrived a fourth person, whom the cries of Alice had summoned to the spot. This was Joceline Joliffe, one of the under-keepers of the walk, who, seeing how matters stood, brandished his quarterstaff, a weapon from which he never parted, and having made it describe the figure of eight in a flourish through the air, would have brought it down with a vengeance upon the head of the steward, had not Sir Henry interposed.

"We must trail bats now, Joceline — our time of shouldering them is past. It skills not striving against the stream — the devil rules the roast, and makes our slaves our tutors."

At this moment another auxiliary rushed out of the thicket to the knight's assistance. It was a large wolf-dog, in strength a mastiff, in form and almost in fleetness a greyhound. Bevis was the noblest of the kind which ever pulled down a stag, tawny coloured like a lion, with a black muzzle and black feet, just edged with a line of white round the toes. He was as tractable as he was strong and bold. Just as he was about to rush upon the soldier, the words, "Peace, Bevis!" from Sir Henry, converted the lion into a lamb, and instead of pulling the soldier down, he walked round and round, and snuffed, as if using all his sagacity to discover who the stranger could be, towards whom, though of so questionable an appearance, he was enjoined forbearance. Apparently he was satisfied, for he laid aside his doubtful and threatening demonstrations, lowered his ears, smoothed down his bristles, and wagged his tail.

Sir Henry, who had great respect for the sagacity of his favourite, said in a low voice to Alice, "Bevis is of thy opinion and counsels submission. There is the finger of Heaven in this to punish the pride, ever the fault of our house. — Friend," he continued, addressing the soldier, "thou hast given the finishing touch to a lesson, which ten years of constant misfortune have been unable fully to teach me. Thou hast distinctly shown me the folly of thinking that a good cause can strengthen a weak arm. God forgive me for the thought, but I could almost turn infidel, and believe that Heaven's blessing goes ever with the longest sword; but it will not be always thus. God knows his time. — Reach me my Toledo, Joceline, yonder it lies; and the scabbard, see where it hangs on the tree. — Do not pull at my cloak, Alice, and look so miserably frightened; I shall be in no hurry to betake me to bright steel again, I promise thee. — For thee, good fellow, I thank thee, and will make way for thy masters without farther dispute or ceremony. Joceline Joliffe is nearer thy degree than I am, and will make surrender to thee of the Lodge and household stuff. Withhold nothing, Joliffe — let them have all. For me, I will never cross the threshold again — but where to rest for a night? I would trouble no one in Woodstock — hum — ay — it shall be so. Alice and I, Joceline, will go down to thy hut by Rosamond's well; we will borrow the shelter of thy roof for one night at least; thou wilt give us welcome, wilt thou not? — How now — a clouded brow?"

Joceline certainly looked embarrassed, directed a first glance to Alice, then looked to Heaven, then to earth, and last to the four quarters of the horizon, and then murmured out, "Certainly — without question — might he but run down to put the house in order."

"Order enough — order enough for those that may soon be glad of clean straw in a barn," said the knight; "but if thou hast an ill-will to harbour any obnoxious or malignant persons, as the phrase goes, never shame to speak it out, man. 'Tis true, I took thee up when thou wert but a ragged Robin," (as the keeper's followers in the New Forest are called in popular language,) "made a keeper of thee, and so forth. What of that? Sailors think no longer of the wind than when it forwards them on the voyage — thy betters turn with the tide, why should not such a poor knave as thou?"

"God pardon your honour for your harsh judgment," said Joliffe. "The hut is yours, such as it is, and should be were it a King's palace, as I wish it were even for your honour's sake, and Mistress Alice's — only I could wish your honour would condescend to let me step down before, in case any neighbour be there — or — or — just to put matters something into order for Mistress Alice and your honour — just to make things something seemly and shapely."

"Not a whit necessary," said the knight, while Alice had much trouble in concealing her agitation. "If thy matters are unseemly, they are fitter for a defeated knight — if they are unshapely, why, the liker to the rest of a world, which is all unshaped. Go thou with that man. — What is thy name, friend?"

"Joseph Tomkins is my name in the flesh," said the steward. "Men call me Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins."

"If thou hast deserved such names, considering what trade thou hast driven, thou art a jewel indeed," said the knight; "yet if thou hast not, never blush for the matter, Joseph, for if thou art not in truth honest, thou hast all the better chance to keep the fame of it — the title and the thing itself have long walked separate ways. Farewell to thee — and farewell to fair Woodstock!"

So saying, the old knight turned round, and pulling his daughter's arm through his own, they walked onward into the forest, in the same manner in which they were introduced to the reader.

Chapter the Third.

*Now, ye wild blades, that make loose inns your stage,
To vapour forth the acts of this sad age,
Stout Edgehill fight, the Newberries and the West,
And northern clashes, where you still fought best;
Your strange escapes, your dangers void of fear,
When bullets flew between the head and ear,
Whether you fought by Damme or the Spirit,
Of you I speak.*

LEGEND OF CAPTAIN JONES.

Joseph Tomkins and Joliffe the keeper remained for some time in silence, as they stood together looking along the path in which the figures of the Knight of Ditchley and pretty Mistress Alice had disappeared behind the trees. They then gazed on each other in doubt, as men who scarce knew whether they stood on hostile or on friendly terms together, and were at a loss how to open a conversation. They heard the knight's whistle summon Bevis; but though the good hound turned his head and pricked his ears at the sound, yet he did not obey the call, but continued to snuff around Joseph Tomkins's cloak.

"Thou art a rare one, I fear me," said the keeper, looking to his new acquaintance. "I have heard of men who have charms to steal both dogs and deer."

"Trouble not thyself about my qualities, friend," said Joseph Tomkins, "but bethink thee of doing thy master's bidding."

Joceline did not immediately answer, but at length, as if in sign of truce, stuck the end of his quarterstaff upright in the ground, and leant upon it as he said gruffly — "So, my tough old knight and you were at drawn bilbo, by way of afternoon service, sir preacher — Well for you I came not up till the blades were done jingling, or I had rung even-song upon your pate."

The Independent smiled grimly as he replied, "Nay, friend, it is well for thyself, for never should sexton have been better paid for the knell he tolled. Nevertheless, why should there be war betwixt us, or my hand be against thine? Thou art but a poor knave, doing thy master's order, nor have I any desire that my own blood or thine should be shed touching this matter. — Thou art, I understand, to give me peaceful possession of the Palace of Woodstock, so called — though there is now no palace in England, no, nor shall be in the days that come after, until we shall enter the palace of the New Jerusalem, and the reign of the Saints shall commence on earth."

"Pretty well begun already, friend Tomkins," said the keeper; "you are little short of being kings already upon the matter as it now stands; and for your Jerusalem I wot not, but Woodstock is a pretty nest-egg to begin with. — Well, will you shog — will you on — will you take sasine and livery? — You heard my orders."

"Umph — I know not," said Tomkins. "I must beware of ambuscades, and I am alone here. Moreover, it is the High Thanksgiving appointed by Parliament, and owned to by the army — also the old man and the young woman may want to recover some of their clothes and personal property, and I would not that they were

balked on my account. Wherefore, if thou wilt deliver me possession tomorrow morning, it shall be done in personal presence of my own followers, and of the Presbyterian man the Mayor, so that the transfer may be made before witnesses; whereas, were there none with us but thou to deliver, and I to take possession, the men of Belial might say, Go to, Trusty Tomkins hath been an Edomite — Honest Joe hath been as an Ishmaelite, rising up early and dividing the spoil with them that served the Man — yea, they that wore beards and green Jerkins, as in remembrance of the Man and of his government.”

Joceline fixed his keen dark eyes upon the soldier as he spoke, as if in design to discover whether there was fair play in his mind or not. He then applied his five fingers to scratch a large shock head of hair, as if that operation was necessary to enable him to come to a conclusion. “This is all fair sounding, brother,” said he; “but I tell you plainly there are some silver mugs, and platters, and flagons, and so forth, in yonder house, which have survived the general sweep that sent all our plate to the smelting-pot, to put our knight’s troop on horseback. Now, if thou takest not these off my hand, I may come to trouble, since it may be thought I have minished their numbers. — Whereas, I being as honest a fellow —

“As ever stole venison,” said Tomkins — “nay, I do owe thee an interruption.”

“Go to, then,” replied the keeper; “if a stag may have come to mischance in my walk, it was no way in the course of dishonesty, but merely to keep my old dame’s pan from rusting; but for silver porringers, tankards, and such like, I would as soon have drunk the melted silver, as stolen the vessel made out of it. So that I would not wish blame or suspicion fell on me in this matter. And, therefore, if you will have the things rendered even now — why so — and if not, hold me blameless.”

“Ay, truly,” said Tomkins; “and who is to hold me blameless, if they should see cause to think any thing minished? Not the right worshipful Commissioners, to whom the property of the estate is as their own; therefore, as thou say’st, we must walk warily in the matter. To lock up the house and leave it, were but the work of simple ones. What say’st thou to spend the night there, and then nothing can be touched without the knowledge of us both?”

“Why, concerning that,” answered the keeper, “I should be at my hut to make matters somewhat conformable for the old knight and Mistress Alice, for my old dame Joan is something dunny, and will scarce know how to manage — and yet — to speak the truth, by the mass I would rather not see Sir Henry to-night, since what has happened today hath roused his spleen, and it is a peradventure he may have met something at the hut which will scarce tend to cool it.”

“It is a pity,” said Tomkins, “that being a gentleman of such grave and goodly presence, he should be such a malignant cavalier, and that he should, like the rest of that generation of vipers, have clothed himself with curses as with a garment.”

“Which is as much as to say, the tough old knight hath a habit of swearing,” said the keeper, grinning at a pun, which has been repeated since his time; “but who can help it? it comes of use and wont. Were you now, in your bodily self, to light suddenly on a Maypole, with all the blithe morris-dancers prancing around it to the merry pipe and tabor, with bells jingling, ribands fluttering, lads frisking and laughing, lasses leaping till you might see where the scarlet garter fastened the light blue hose, I think some feeling, resembling either natural sociality, or old use and wont, would get the better, friend, even of thy gravity, and thou wouldst fling thy cuckoldy steeple-hat one way, and that blood-thirsty long sword another, and trip, like the noodles of Hogs-Norton, when the pigs play on the organ.”

The Independent turned fiercely round on the keeper, and replied, “How now, Mr. Green Jerkin? what language is this to one whose hand is at the plough? I advise thee to put curb on thy tongue, lest thy ribs pay the forfeit.”

“Nay, do not take the high tone with me, brother” answered Joceline; “remember thou hast not the old knight of sixty-five to deal with, but a fellow as bitter and prompt as thyself — it may be a little more so — younger, at all events — and prithee, why shouldst thou take such umbrage at a Maypole? I would thou hadst known one Phil Hazeldine of these parts — He was the best morris-dancer betwixt Oxford and Burford.”

“The more shame to him,” answered the Independent; “and I trust he has seen the error of his ways, and made himself (as, if a man of action, he easily might) fit for better company than wood-hunters, deer-stealers, Maid Marions, swash-bucklers, deboshed revellers, bloody brawlers, maskers, and mummers, lewd men and light women, fools and fiddlers, and carnal self-pleasers of every description.”

“Well,” replied the keeper, “you are out of breath in time; for here we stand before the famous Maypole of Woodstock.”

They paused in an open space of meadow-land, beautifully skirted by large oaks and sycamores, one of which, as king of the forest, stood a little detached from the rest, as if scorning the vicinity of any rival. It was scathed and gnarled in the branches, but the immense trunk still showed to what gigantic size the monarch of the forest can attain in the groves of merry England.

“That is called the King’s Oak,” said Joceline; “the oldest men of Woodstock know not how old it is; they say Henry used to sit under it with fair Rosamond, and see the lasses dance, and the lads of the village run races, and wrestle for belts or bonnets.”

“I nothing doubt it, friend,” said Tomkins; “a tyrant and a harlot were fitting patron and patroness for such vanities.”

“Thou mayst say thy say, friend,” replied the keeper, “so thou lettest me say mine. There stands the Maypole, as thou seest, half a flight-shot from the King’s Oak, in the midst of the meadow. The King gave ten shillings from the customs of Woodstock to make a new one yearly, besides a tree fitted for the purpose out of the forest. Now it is warped, and withered, and twisted, like a wasted brier-rod. The green, too, used to be close-shaved, and rolled till it was smooth as a velvet mantle — now it is rough and overgrown.”

“Well, well, friend Joceline,” said the Independent, “but where was the edification of all this? — what use of doctrine could be derived from a pipe and tabor? or was there ever aught like wisdom in a bagpipe?”

“You may ask better scholars that,” said Joceline; “but methinks men cannot be always grave, and with the hat over their brow. A young maiden will laugh as a tender flower will blow — ay, and a lad will like her the better for it; just as the same blithe Spring that makes the young birds whistle, bids the blithe fawns skip. There have come worse days since the jolly old times have gone by:— I tell thee, that in the holydays which you, Mr. Longsword, have put down, I have seen this greensward alive with merry maidens and manly fellows. The good old rector himself thought it was no sin to come for a while and look on, and his goodly cassock and scarf kept us all in good order, and taught us to limit our mirth within the bounds of discretion. We might, it may be, crack a broad jest, or pledge a friendly cup a turn too often, but it was in mirth and good neighbour-hood — Ay, and if there was a bout at single-stick, or a bellyful of boxing, it was all for love and kindness; and better a few dry blows in drink, than the bloody doings we have had in sober earnest, since the presbyter’s cap got above the bishop’s mitre, and we exchanged our goodly rectors and learned doctors, whose sermons were all bolstered up with as much Greek and Latin as might have confounded the devil himself, for weavers and cobblers, and such other pulpit volunteers, as — as we heard this morning — It will out.”

“Well, friend,” said the Independent, with patience scarcely to have been expected, “I quarrel not with thee for nauseating my doctrine. If thine ear is so much tickled with tabor tunes and morris tripping, truly it is not likely thou shouldst find pleasant savour in more wholesome and sober food. But let us to the Lodge, that we may go about our business there before the sun sets.”

“Troth, and that may be advisable for more reasons than one,” said the keeper; “for there have been tales about the Lodge which have made men afeard to harbour there after nightfall.”

“Were not yon old knight, and yonder damsel his daughter, wont to dwell there?” said the Independent. “My information said so.”

“Ay, truly did they,” said Joceline; “and while they kept a jolly house-hold, all went well enough; for nothing banishes fear like good ale. But after the best of our men went to the wars, and were slain at Naseby fight, they who were left found the Lodge more lonesome, and the old knight has been much deserted of his servants:— marry, it might be, that he has lacked silver of late to pay groom and lackey.”

“A potential reason for the diminution of a household,” said the soldier.

“Right, sir, even so,” replied the keeper. “They spoke of steps in the great gallery, heard by dead of the night, and voices that whispered at noon, in the matted chambers; and the servants pretended that these things scared them away; but, in my poor judgment, when Martinmas and Whitsuntide came round without a penny-fee, the old blue-bottles of serving-men began to think of creeping elsewhere before the frost chilled them. — No devil so frightful as that which dances in the pocket where there is no cross to keep him out.”

“You were reduced, then, to a petty household?” said the Independent.

"Ay, marry, were we," said Joceline; "but we kept some half-score together, what with blue-bottles in the Lodge, what with green caterpillars of the chase, like him who is yours to command; we stuck together till we found a call to take a morning's ride somewhere or other."

"To the town of Worcester," said the soldier, "where you were crushed like vermin and palmer worms, as you are."

"You may say your pleasure," replied the keeper; "I'll never contradict a man who has got my head under his belt. Our backs are at the wall, or you would not be here."

"Nay, friend," said the Independent, "thou riskest nothing by thy freedom and trust in me. I can be *bon camarado* to a good soldier, although I have striven with him even to the going down of the sun. — But here we are in front of the Lodge."

They stood accordingly in front of the old Gothic building, irregularly constructed, and at different times, as the humour of the English monarchs led them to taste the pleasures of Woodstock Chase, and to make such improvements for their own accommodation as the increasing luxury of each age required. The oldest part of the structure had been named by tradition Fair Rosamond's Tower; it was a small turret of great height, with narrow windows, and walls of massive thickness. The Tower had no opening to the ground, or means of descending, a great part of the lower portion being solid mason-work. It was traditionally said to have been accessible only by a sort of small drawbridge, which might be dropped at pleasure from a little portal near the summit of the turret, to the battlements of another tower of the same construction, but twenty feet lower, and containing only a winding staircase, called in Woodstock Love's Ladder; because it is said, that by ascending this staircase to the top of the tower, and then making use of the drawbridge, Henry obtained access to the chamber of his paramour.

This tradition had been keenly impugned by Dr. Rochecliffe, the former rector of Woodstock, who insisted, that what was called Rosamond's Tower, was merely an interior keep, or citadel, to which the lord or warden of the castle might retreat, when other points of safety failed him; and either protract his defence, or, at the worst, stipulate for reasonable terms of surrender. The people of Woodstock, jealous of their ancient traditions, did not relish this new mode of explaining them away; and it is even said, that the Mayor, whom we have already introduced, became Presbyterian, in revenge of the doubts cast by the rector upon this important subject, rather choosing to give up the Liturgy than his fixed belief in Rosamond's Tower, and Love's Ladder.

The rest of the Lodge was of considerable extent, and of different ages; comprehending a nest of little courts, surrounded by buildings which corresponded with each other, sometimes within-doors, sometimes by crossing the courts, and frequently in both ways. The different heights of the buildings announced that they could only be connected by the usual variety of staircases, which exercised the limbs of our ancestors in the sixteenth and earlier centuries, and seem sometimes to have been contrived for no other purpose.

The varied and multiplied fronts of this irregular building were, as Dr. Rochecliffe was wont to say, an absolute banquet to the architectural antiquary, as they certainly contained specimens of every style which existed, from the pure Norman of Henry of Anjou, down to the composite, half Gothic half classical architecture of Elizabeth and her successor. Accordingly, the rector was himself as much enamoured of Woodstock as ever was Henry of Fair Rosamond; and as his intimacy with Sir Henry Lee permitted him entrance at all times to the Royal Lodge, he used to spend whole days in wandering about the antique apartments, examining, measuring, studying, and finding out excellent reasons for architectural peculiarities, which probably only owed their existence to the freakish fancy of a Gothic artist. But the old antiquary had been expelled from his living by the intolerance and troubles of the times, and his successor, Nehemiah Holdenough, would have considered an elaborate investigation of the profane sculpture and architecture of blinded and blood-thirsty Papists, together with the history of the dissolute amours of old Norman monarchs, as little better than a bowing down before the calves of Bethel, and a drinking of the cup of abominations. — We return to the course of our story.

"There is," said the Independent Tomkins, after he had carefully perused the front of the building, "many a rare monument of olden wickedness about this miscalled Royal Lodge; verily, I shall rejoice much to see the same destroyed, yea, burned to ashes, and the ashes thrown into the brook Kedron, or any other brook, that the land may be cleansed from the memory thereof, neither remember the iniquity with which their fathers have sinned."

The keeper heard him with secret indignation, and began to consider with himself, whether, as they stood but one to one, and without chance of speedy interference, he was not called upon, by his official duty, to castigate the rebel who used language so defamatory. But he fortunately recollected, that the strife must be a doubtful one — that the advantage of arms was against him — and that, in especial, even if he should succeed in the combat, it would be at the risk of severe retaliation. It must be owned, too, that there was something about the Independent so dark and mysterious, so grim and grave, that the more open spirit of the keeper felt oppressed, and, if not overawed, at least kept in doubt concerning him; and he thought it wisest, as well as safest, for his master and himself, to avoid all subjects of dispute, and know better with whom he was dealing, before he made either friend or enemy of him.

The great gate of the Lodge was strongly bolted, but the wicket opened on Joceline's raising the latch. There was a short passage of ten feet, which had been formerly closed by a portcullis at the inner end, while three loopholes opened on either side, through which any daring intruder might be annoyed, who, having surprised the first gate, must be thus exposed to a severe fire before he could force the second. But the machinery of the portcullis was damaged, and it now remained a fixture, brandishing its jaw, well furnished with iron fangs, but incapable of dropping it across the path of invasion.

The way, therefore, lay open to the great hall or outer vestibule of the Lodge. One end of this long and dusky apartment was entirely occupied by a gallery, which had in ancient times served to accommodate the musicians and minstrels. There was a clumsy staircase at either side of it, composed of entire logs of a foot square; and in each angle of the ascent was placed, by way of sentinel, the figure of a Norman foot-soldier, having an open casque on his head, which displayed features as stern as the painter's genius could devise. Their arms were buff-jackets, or shirts of mail, round bucklers, with spikes in the centre, and buskins which adorned and defended the feet and ankles, but left the knees bare. These wooden warders held great swords, or maces, in their hands, like military guards on duty. Many an empty hook and brace, along the walls of the gloomy apartment, marked the spots from which arms, long preserved as trophies, had been, in the pressure of the wars, once more taken down, to do service in the field, like veterans whom extremity of danger recalls to battle. On other rusty fastenings were still displayed the hunting trophies of the monarchs to whom the Lodge belonged, and of the silvan knights to whose care it had been from time to time confided.

At the nether end of the hall, a huge, heavy, stone-wrought chimney-piece projected itself ten feet from the wall, adorned with many a cipher, and many a scutcheon of the Royal House of England. In its present state, it yawned like the arched mouth of a funeral vault, or perhaps might be compared to the crater of an extinguished volcano. But the sable complexion of the massive stone-work, and all around it, showed that the time had been when it sent its huge fires blazing up the huge chimney, besides puffing many a volume of smoke over the heads of the jovial guests, whose royalty or nobility did not render them sensitive enough to quarrel with such slight inconvenience. On these occasions, it was the tradition of the house, that two cart-loads of wood was the regular allowance for the fire between noon and curfew, and the andirons, or dogs, as they were termed, constructed for retaining the blazing firewood on the hearth, were wrought in the shape of lions of such gigantic size as might well warrant the legend. There were long seats of stone within the chimney, where, in despite of the tremendous heat, monarchs were sometimes said to have taken their station, and amused themselves with broiling the *umbles*, or *dowsels*, of the deer, upon the glowing embers, with their own royal hands, when happy the courtier who was invited to taste the royal cookery. Tradition was here also ready with her record, to show what merry gibes, such as might be exchanged between prince and peer, had flown about at the jolly banquet which followed the Michaelmas hunt. She could tell, too, exactly, where King Stephen sat when he darned his own princely hose, and knew most of the odd tricks he had put upon little Winkin, the tailor of Woodstock.

Most of this rude revelry belonged to the Plantagenet times. When the house of Tudor ascended to the throne, they were more chary of their royal presence, and feasted in halls and chambers far within, abandoning the outmost hall to the yeomen of the guard, who mounted their watch there, and passed away the night with wassail and mirth, exchanged sometimes for frightful tales of apparitions and sorceries, which made some of those grow pale, in whose ears the trumpet of a French foeman would have sounded as jollily as a summons to the woodland chase.

Joceline pointed out the peculiarities of the place to his gloomy companion more briefly than we have detailed them to the reader. The Independent seemed to listen with some interest at first, but, flinging it suddenly aside, he said in a solemn tone, "Perish, Babylon, as thy master Nebuchadnezzar hath perished! He is a wanderer, and thou shalt be a waste place — yea, and a wilderness — yea, a desert of salt, in which there shall be thirst and famine."

"There is like to be enough of both to-night," said Joceline, "unless the good knight's larder be somewhat fuller than it is wont."

"We must care for the creature-comforts," said the Independent, "but in due season, when our duties are done. Whither lead these entrances?"

"That to the right," replied the keeper, "leads to what are called, the state-apartments, not used since the year sixteen hundred and thirty-nine, when his blessed Majesty"—

"How, sir!" interrupted the Independent, in a voice of thunder, "dost thou speak of Charles Stewart as blessing, or blessed? — beware the proclamation to that effect."

"I meant no harm," answered the keeper, suppressing his disposition to make a harsher reply. "My business is with bolts and bucks, not with titles and state affairs. But yet, whatever may have happed since, that poor King was followed with blessings enough from Woodstock, for he left a glove full of broad pieces for the poor of the place"—

"Peace, friend," said the Independent; "I will think thee else one of those besotted and blinded Papists, who hold, that bestowing of alms is an atonement and washing away of the wrongs and oppressions which have been wrought by the almsgiver. Thou sayest, then, these were the apartments of Charles Stewart?"

"And of his father, James, before him, and Elizabeth, before *him*, and bluff King Henry, who builded that wing, before them all."

"And there, I suppose, the knight and his daughter dwelt?"

"No," replied Joceline; "Sir Henry Lee had too much reverence for — for things which are now thought worth no reverence at all — Besides, the state-rooms are unaired, and in indifferent order, since of late years. The Knight Ranger's apartment lies by that passage to the left."

"And whither goes yonder stair, which seems both to lead upwards and downwards?"

"Upwards," replied the keeper, "it leads to many apartments, used for various purposes, of sleeping, and other accommodation. Downwards, to the kitchen, offices, and vaults of the castle, which, at this time of the evening, you cannot see without lights."

"We will to the apartments of your knight, then," said the Independent. "Is there fitting accommodation there?"

"Such as has served a person of condition, whose lodging is now worse appointed," answered the honest keeper, his bile rising so fast that he added, in a muttering and inaudible tone, "so it may well serve a crop-eared knave like thee."

He acted as the usher, however, and led on towards the ranger's apartments.

This suite opened by a short passage from the hall, secured at time of need by two oaken doors, which could be fastened by large bars of the same, that were drawn out of the wall, and entered into square holes, contrived for their reception on the other side of the portal. At the end of this passage, a small ante-room received them, into which opened the sitting apartment of the good knight — which, in the style of the time, might have been termed a fair summer parlour — lighted by two oriel windows, so placed as to command each of them a separate avenue, leading distant and deep into the forest. The principal ornament of the apartment, besides two or three family portraits of less interest, was a tall full-length picture, that hung above the chimney-piece, which, like that in the hall, was of heavy stone-work, ornamented with carved scutcheons, emblazoned with various devices. The portrait was that of a man about fifty years of age, in complete plate armour, and painted in the harsh and dry manner of Holbein — probably, indeed, the work of that artist, as the dates corresponded. The formal and marked angles, points and projections of the armour, were a good subject for the harsh pencil of that early school. The face of the knight was, from the fading of the colours, pale and dim, like that of some being from the other world, yet the lines expressed forcibly pride and exultation.

He pointed with his leading-staff, or truncheon, to the background, where, in such perspective as the artist possessed, were depicted the remains of a burning church, or monastery, and four or five soldiers, in red cassocks, bearing away in triumph what seemed a brazen font or laver. Above their heads might be traced in scroll, "*Lee Victor sic voluit*." Right opposite to the picture, hung, in a niche in the wall, a complete set of tilting armour, the black and gold colours, and ornaments of which exactly corresponded with those exhibited in the portrait.

The picture was one of those which, from something marked in the features and expression, attract the observation even of those who are ignorant of art. The Independent looked at it until a smile passed transiently over his clouded brow. Whether he smiled to see the grim old cavalier employed in desecrating a religious house — (an occupation much conforming to the practice of his own sect) — whether he smiled in contempt of the old painter's harsh and dry mode of working — or whether the sight of this remarkable portrait revived some other ideas, the under-keeper could not decide.

The smile passed away in an instant, as the soldier looked to the oriel windows. The recesses within them were raised a step or two from the wall. In one was placed a walnut-tree reading-desk, and a huge stuffed arm-chair, covered with Spanish leather. A little cabinet stood beside, with some of its shuttles and drawers open, displaying hawks-bells, dog-whistles, instruments for trimming falcons' feathers, bridle-bits of various constructions, and other trifles connected with silvan sport.

The other little recess was differently furnished. There lay some articles of needle-work on a small table, besides a lute, with a book having some airs written down in it, and a frame for working embroidery. Some tapestry was displayed around the recess, with more attention to ornament than was visible in the rest of the apartment; the arrangement of a few bow-pots, with such flowers as the fading season afforded, showed also the superintendence of female taste.

Tomkins cast an eye of careless regard upon these subjects of female occupation, then stepped into the farther window, and began to turn the leaves of a folio, which lay open on the reading-desk, apparently with some interest. Joceline, who had determined to watch his motions without interfering with them, was standing at some distance in dejected silence, when a door behind the tapestry suddenly opened, and a pretty village maid tripped out with a napkin in her hand, as if she had been about some household duty.

"How now, Sir Impudence?" she said to Joceline in a smart tone; "what do you here prowling about the apartments when the master is not at home?"

But instead of the answer which perhaps she expected, Joceline Joliffe cast a mournful glance towards the soldier in the oriel window, as if to make what he said fully intelligible, and replied with a dejected appearance and voice, "Alack, my pretty Phoebe, there come those here that have more right or might than any of us, and will use little ceremony in coming when they will, and staying while they please."

He darted another glance at Tomkins, who still seemed busy with the book before him, then sidled close to the astonished girl, who had continued looking alternately at the keeper and at the stranger, as if she had been unable to understand the words of the first, or to comprehend the meaning of the second being present.

"Go," whispered Joliffe, approaching his mouth so near her cheek, that his breath waved the curls of her hair; "go, my dearest Phoebe, trip it as fast as a fawn down to my lodge — I will soon be there, and"—

"Your lodge, indeed" said Phoebe; "you are very bold, for a poor kill-buck that never frightened any thing before save a dun deer — *Your* lodge, indeed! — I am like to go there, I think." "Hush, hush! Phoebe — here is no time for jesting. Down to my hut, I say, like a deer, for the knight and Mrs. Alice are both there, and I fear will not return hither again. — All's naught, girl — and our evil days are come at last with a vengeance — we are fairly at bay and fairly hunted down."

"Can this be, Joceline?" said the poor girl, turning to the keeper with an expression of fright in her countenance, which she had hitherto averted in rural coquetry.

"As sure, my dearest Phoebe, as"—

The rest of the asseveration was lost in Phoebe's ear, so closely did the keeper's lips approach it; and if they approached so very near as to touch her cheek, grief, like impatience, hath its privileges, and poor Phoebe had enough of serious alarm to prevent her from demurring upon such a trifle.

But no trifle was the approach of Joceline's lips to Phoebe's pretty though sunburnt cheek, in the estimation of the Independent, who, a little before the object of Joceline's vigilance, had been more lately in his turn the observer of the keeper's demeanour, so soon as the interview betwixt Phoebe and him had become so interesting. And when he remarked the closeness of Joceline's argument, he raised his voice to a pitch of harshness that would have rivalled that of an ungreased and rusty saw, and which at once made Joceline and Phoebe spring six feet apart, each in contrary directions, and if Cupid was of the party, must have sent him out at the window like it wild duck flying from a culverin. Instantly throwing himself into the attitude of a preacher and a reprover of vice, "How now!" he exclaimed, "shameless and impudent as you are! — What — chambering and wantoning in our very presence! — How — would you play your pranks before the steward of

the Commissioners of the High Court of Parliament, as ye would in a booth at the fulsome fair, or amidst the trappings and tracings of a profane dancing-school, where the scoundrel minstrels make their ungodly weapons to squeak, 'Kiss and be kind, the fiddler's blind?' — But here," he said, dealing a perilous thump upon the volume — "Here is the King and high priest of those vices and follies! — Here is he, whom men of folly profanely call nature's miracle! — Here is he, whom princes chose for their cabinet-keeper, and whom maids of honour take for their bed-fellow! — Here is the prime teacher of fine words, foppery and folly — Here!" — (dealing another thump upon the volume — and oh! revered of the Roxburghe, it was the first folio — beloved of the Bannatyne, it was Hemmings and Condel — it was the *editio princeps*)—"On thee," he continued — "on thee, William Shakspeare, I charge whate'er of such lawless idleness and immodest folly hath defiled the land since thy day!"

"By the mass, a heavy accusation," said Joceline, the bold recklessness of whose temper could not be long overawed; "Odds pitlikins, is our master's old favourite, Will of Stratford, to answer for every buss that has been snatched since James's time? — a perilous reckoning truly — but I wonder who is sponable for what lads and lasses did before his day?" "Scoff not," said the soldier, "lest I, being called thereto by the voice within me, do deal with thee as a scorner. Verily, I say, that since the devil fell from Heaven, he never lacked agents on earth; yet nowhere hath he met with a wizard having such infinite power over men's souls as this pestilent fellow Shakspeare. Seeks a wife a foul example for adultery, here she shall find it — Would a man know how to train his fellow to be a murderer, here shall he find tutoring — Would a lady marry a heathen negro, she shall have chronicled example for it — Would any one scorn at his Maker, he shall be furnished with a jest in this book — Would he defy his brother in the flesh, he shall be accommodated with a challenge — Would you be drunk, Shakspeare will cheer you with a cup — Would you plunge in sensual pleasures, he will soothe you to indulgence, as with the lascivious sounds of a lute. This, I say, this book is the well-head and source of all those evils which have overrun the land like a torrent, making men scoffers, doubters, deniers, murderers, makebates, and lovers of the wine-pot, haunting unclean places, and sitting long at the evening-wine. Away with him, away with him, men of England! to Tophet with his wicked book, and to the Vale of Hinnom with his accursed bones! Verily but that our march was hasty when we passed Stratford, in the year 1643, with Sir William Waller; but that our march was hasty" —

"Because Prince Rupert was after you with his cavaliers," muttered the incorrigible Joceline.

"I say," continued the zealous trooper, raising his voice and extending his arm — "but that our march was by command hasty, and that we turned not aside in our riding, closing our ranks each one upon the other as becomes men of war, I had torn on that day the bones of that preceptor of vice and debauchery from the grave, and given them to the next dunghill. I would have made his memory a scoff and a hissing!"

"That is the bitterest thing he has said yet," observed the keeper. "Poor Will would have liked the hissing worse than all the rest." "Will the gentleman say any more?" enquired Phoebe in a whisper. "Lack-a-day, he talks brave words, if one knew but what they meant. But it is a mercy our good knight did not see him ruffle the book at that rate — Mercy on us, there would certainly have been bloodshed. — But oh, the father — see how he is twisting his face about! — Is he ill of the colic, think'st thou, Joceline? Or, may I offer him a glass of strong waters?"

"Hark thee hither, wench!" said the keeper, "he is but loading his blunderbuss for another volley; and while he turns up his eyes, and twists about his face, and clenches his fist, and shuffles and tramples with his feet in that fashion, he is bound to take no notice of any thing. I would be sworn to cut his purse, if he had one, from his side, without his feeling it."

"La! Joceline," said Phoebe, "and if he abides here in this turn of times, I dare say the gentleman will be easily served."

"Care not thou about that," said Joliffe: "but tell me softly and hastily, what is in the pantry?"

"Small housekeeping enough," said Phoebe; "a cold capon and some comfits, and the great standing venison pasty, with plenty of spice — a manchet or two besides, and that is all."

"Well, it will serve for a pinch — wrap thy cloak round thy comely body — get a basket and a brace of trenchers and towels, they are heinously impoverished down yonder — carry down the capon and the manchets — the pasty must abide with this same soldier and me, and the pie-crust will serve us for bread."

"Rarely," said Phoebe; "I made the paste myself — it is as thick as the walls of Fair Rosamond's Tower."

"Which two pairs of jaws would be long in gnawing through, work hard as they might," said the keeper. "But what liquor is there?"

"Only a bottle of Alicant, and one of sack, with the stone jug of strong waters," answered Phoebe.

"Put the wine-flasks into thy basket," said Joceline, "the knight must not lack his evening draught — and down with thee to the hut like a lapwing. There is enough for supper, and tomorrow is a new day. — Ha! by heaven I thought yonder man's eye watched us — No — he only rolled it round him in a brown study — Deep enough doubtless, as they all are. — But d — n him, he must be bottomless if I cannot sound him before the night's out. — Hie thee away, Phoebe."

But Phoebe was a rural coquette, and, aware that Joceline's situation gave him no advantage of avenging the challenge in a fitting way, she whispered in his ear, "Do you think our knight's friend, Shakspeare, really found out all these naughty devices the gentleman spoke of?"

Off she darted while she spoke, while Joliffe menaced future vengeance with his finger, as he muttered, "Go thy way, Phoebe Mayflower, the lightest-footed and lightest-hearted wench that ever tripped the sod in Woodstock-park! — After her, Bevis, and bring her safe to our master at the hut."

The large greyhound arose like a human servitor who had received an order, and followed Phoebe through the hall, first licking her hand to make her sensible of his presence, and then putting himself to a slow trot, so as best to accommodate himself to the light pace of her whom he convoyed, whom Joceline had not extolled for her activity without due reason. While Phoebe and her guardian thread the forest glades, we return to the Lodge.

The Independent now seemed to start as if from a reverie. "Is the young woman gone?" said he.

"Ay, marry is she," said the keeper, "and if your worship hath farther commands, you must rest contented with male attendance."

"Commands — umph — I think the damsel might have tarried for another exhortation," said the soldier — "truly, I profess my mind was much inclined toward her for her edification."

"Oh, sir," replied Joliffe, "she will be at church next Sunday, and if your military reverence is pleased again to hold forth amongst us, she will have use of the doctrine with the rest. But young maidens of these parts hear no private homilies. — And what is now your pleasure? Will you look at the other rooms, and at the few plate articles which have been left?"

"Umph — no," said the Independent — "it wears late, and gets dark — thou hast the means of giving us beds, friend?"

"Better you never slept in," replied the keeper.

"And wood for a fire, and a light, and some small pittance of creature-comforts for refreshment of the outward man?" continued the soldier.

"Without doubt," replied the keeper, displaying a prudent anxiety to gratify this important personage.

In a few minutes a great standing candlestick was placed on an oaken table. The mighty venison pasty, adorned with parsley, was placed on the board on a clean napkin; the stone-bottle of strong waters, with a blackjack full of ale, formed comfortable appendages; and to this meal sate down in social manner the soldier, occupying a great elbow-chair, and the keeper, at his invitation, using the more lowly accommodation of a stool, at the opposite side of the table. Thus agreeably employed, our history leaves them for the present.

Chapter the Fourth.

Yon path of greensward

Winds round by sparry grot and gay pavilion;

There is no flint to gall thy tender foot,

There's ready shelter from each breeze, or shower. —

But duty guides not that way — see her stand,

With wand entwined with amaranth, near yon cliffs.

Oft where she leads thy blood must mark thy footsteps,

*Of where she leads thy head must bear the storm.
And thy shrunk form endure heat, cold, and hunger;
But she will guide thee up to noble heights,
Which he who gains seems native of the sky,
While earthly things lie stretch'd beneath his feet,
Diminish'd, shrunk, and valueless —*

ANONYMOUS.

The reader cannot have forgotten that after his scuffle with the commonwealth soldier, Sir Henry Lee, with his daughter Alice, had departed to take refuge in the hut of the stout keeper Joceline Joliffe. They walked slow, as before, for the old knight was at once oppressed by perceiving these last vestiges of royalty fall into the hands of republicans, and by the recollection of his recent defeat. At times he paused, and, with his arms folded on his bosom, recalled all the circumstances attending his expulsion from a house so long his home. It seemed to him that, like the champions of romance of whom he had sometimes read, he himself was retiring from the post which it was his duty to guard, defeated by a Paynim knight, for whom the adventure had been reserved by fate. Alice had her own painful subjects of recollection, nor had the tenor of her last conversation with her father been so pleasant as to make her anxious to renew it until his temper should be more composed; for with an excellent disposition, and much love to his daughter, age and misfortunes, which of late came thicker and thicker, had given to the good knight's passions a wayward irritability unknown to his better days. His daughter, and one or two attached servants, who still followed his decayed fortunes, soothed his frailty as much as possible, and pitied him even while they suffered under its effects.

It was a long time ere he spoke, and then he referred to an incident already noticed. "It is strange," he said, "that Bevis should have followed Joceline and that fellow rather than me."

"Assure yourself, sir," replied Alice, "that his sagacity saw in this man a stranger, whom he thought himself obliged to watch circumspectly, and therefore he remained with Joceline."

"Not so, Alice," answered Sir Henry; "he leaves me because my fortunes have fled from me. There is a feeling in nature, affecting even the instinct, as it is called, of dumb animals, which teaches them to fly from misfortune. The very deer there will butt a sick or wounded buck from the herd; hurt a dog, and the whole kennel will fall on him and worry him; fishes devour their own kind when they are wounded with a spear; cut a crow's wing, or break its leg, the others will buffet it to death."

"That may be true of the more irrational kinds of animals among each other," said Alice, "for their whole life is well nigh a warfare; but the dog leaves his own race to attach himself to ours; forsakes, for his master, the company, food, and pleasure of his own kind; and surely the fidelity of such a devoted and voluntary servant as Bevis hath been in particular, ought not to be lightly suspected."

"I am not angry with the dog, Alice; I am only sorry," replied her father. "I have read, in faithful chronicles, that when Richard II. and Henry of Bolingbroke were at Berkeley Castle, a dog of the same kind deserted the King, whom he had always attended upon, and attached himself to Henry, whom he then saw for the first time. Richard foretold, from the desertion of his favourite, his approaching deposition. The dog was afterwards kept at Woodstock, and Bevis is said to be of his breed, which was heedfully kept up. What I might foretell of mischief from his desertion, I cannot guess, but my mind assures me it bodes no good."

There was a distant rustling among the withered leaves, a bouncing or galloping sound on the path, and the favourite dog instantly joined his master.

"Come into court, old knave," said Alice, cheerfully, "and defend thy character, which is wellnigh endangered by this absence." But the dog only paid her courtesy by gamboling around them, and instantly plunged back again, as fast as he could scamper.

"How now, knave?" said the knight; "thou art too well trained, surely, to take up the chase without orders." A minute more showed them Phoebe Mayflower approaching, her light pace so little impeded by the burden which she bore, that she joined her master and young mistress just as they arrived at the keeper's hut, which was the boundary of their journey. Bevis, who had shot a-head to pay his compliments to Sir Henry his master, had returned again to his immediate duty, the escorting Phoebe and her cargo of provisions. The whole party stood presently assembled before the door of the keeper's hut.

In better times, a substantial stone habitation, fit for the yeoman-keeper of a royal walk, had adorned this place. A fair spring gushed out near the spot, and once traversed yards and courts, attached to well-built and convenient kennels and mews. But in some of the skirmishes which were common during the civil wars, this little silvan dwelling had been attacked and defended, stormed and burnt. A neighbouring squire, of the Parliament side of the question, took advantage of Sir Henry Lee's absence, who was then in Charles's camp, and of the decay of the royal cause, and had, without scruple, carried off the hewn stones, and such building materials as the fire left unconsumed, and repaired his own manor-house with them. The yeoman-keeper, therefore, our friend Joceline, had constructed, for his own accommodation, and that of the old woman he called his dame, a wattled hut, such as his own labour, with that of a neighbour or two, had erected in the course of a few days. The walls were plastered with clay, white-washed, and covered with vines and other creeping plants; the roof was neatly thatched, and the whole, though merely a hut, had, by the neat-handed Joliffe, been so arranged as not to disgrace the condition of the dweller.

The knight advanced to the entrance; but the ingenuity of the architect, for want of a better lock to the door, which itself was but of wattles curiously twisted, had contrived a mode of securing the latch on the inside with a pin, which prevented it from rising; and in this manner it was at present fastened. Conceiving that this was some precaution of Joliffe's old housekeeper, of whose deafness they were all aware, Sir Henry raised his voice to demand admittance, but in vain. Irritated at this delay, he pressed the door at once with foot and hand, in a way which the frail barrier was unable to resist; it gave way accordingly, and the knight thus forcibly entered the kitchen, or outward apartment, of his servant. In the midst of the floor, and with a posture which indicated embarrassment, stood a youthful stranger, in a riding-suit.

"This may be my last act of authority here," said the knight, seizing the stranger by the collar, "but I am still Ranger of Woodstock for this night at least — Who, or what art thou?"

The stranger dropped the riding-mantle in which his face was muffled, and at the same time fell on one knee.

"Your poor kinsman, Markham Everard," he said, "who came hither for your sake, although he fears you will scarce make him welcome for his own."

Sir Henry started back, but recovered himself in an instant, as one who recollected that he had a part of dignity to perform. He stood erect, therefore, and replied, with considerable assumption of stately ceremony:

"Fair kinsman, it pleases me that you are come to Woodstock upon the very first night that, for many years which have passed, is likely to promise you a worthy or a welcome reception."

"Now God grant it be so, that I rightly hear and duly understand you," said the young man; while Alice, though she was silent, kept her looks fixed on her father's face, as if desirous to know whether his meaning was kind towards his nephew, which her knowledge of his character inclined her greatly to doubt.

The knight meanwhile darted a sardonic look, first on his nephew, then on his daughter, and proceeded — "I need not, I presume, inform Mr. Markham Everard, that it cannot be our purpose to entertain him, or even to offer him a seat in this poor hut."

"I will attend you most willingly to the Lodge," said the young gentleman. "I had, indeed, judged you were already there for the evening, and feared to intrude upon you. But if you would permit me, my dearest uncle, to escort my kinswoman and you back to the Lodge, believe me, amongst all which you have so often done of good and kind, you never conferred benefit that will be so dearly prized."

"You mistake me greatly, Mr. Markham Everard," replied the knight. "It is not our purpose to return to the Lodge to-night, nor, by Our Lady, tomorrow neither. I meant but to intimate to you in all courtesy, that at Woodstock Lodge you will find those for whom you are fitting society, and who, doubtless, will afford you a willing welcome; which I, sir, in this my present retreat, do not presume to offer to a person of your consequence."

"For Heaven's sake," said the young man, turning to Alice, "tell me how I am to understand language so mysterious."

Alice, to prevent his increasing the restrained anger of her father, compelled herself to answer, though it was with difficulty, "We are expelled from the Lodge by soldiers."

"Expelled — by soldiers!" exclaimed Everard, in surprise — "there is no legal warrant for this."

"None at all," answered the knight, in the same tone of cutting irony which he had all along used, "and yet as lawful a warrant, as for aught that has been wrought in England this twelvemonth and more. You are, I think, or were, an Inns-of-Court-man — marry, sir, your enjoyment of your profession is like that lease which a prodigal wishes to have of a wealthy widow. You have already survived the law which you studied, and its expiry doubtless has not been without a legacy — some decent pickings, some merciful increases, as the phrase goes. You have deserved it two ways — you wore buff and bandalier, as well as wielded pen and ink — I have not heard if you held forth too."

"Think of me and speak of me as harshly as you will, sir," said Everard, submissively. "I have but in this evil time, guided myself by my conscience, and my father's commands."

"O, and you talk of conscience," said the old knight, "I must have mine eye upon you, as Hamlet says. Never yet did Puritan cheat so grossly as when he was appealing to his conscience; and as for thy *father* —"

He was about to proceed in a tone of the same invective, when the young man interrupted him, by saying, in a firm tone, "Sir Henry Lee, you have ever been thought noble — Say of me what you will, but speak not of my father what the ear of a son should not endure, and which yet his arm cannot resent. To do me such wrong is to insult an unarmed man, or to beat a captive."

Sir Henry paused, as if struck by the remark. "Thou hast spoken truth in that, Mark, wert thou the blackest Puritan whom hell ever vomited, to distract an unhappy country."

"Be that as you will to think it," replied Everard; "but let me not leave you to the shelter of this wretched hovel. The night is drawing to storm — let me but conduct you to the Lodge, and expel those intruders, who can, as yet at least, have no warrant for what they do. I will not linger a moment behind them, save just to deliver my father's message. — Grant me but this much, for the love you once bore me!"

"Yes, Mark," answered his uncle, firmly, but sorrowfully, "thou speakest truth — I did love thee once. The bright-haired boy whom I taught to ride, to shoot, to hunt — whose hours of happiness were spent with me, wherever those of graver labours were employed — I did love that boy — ay, and I am weak enough to love even the memory of what he was. — But he is gone, Mark — he is gone; and in his room I only behold an avowed and determined rebel to his religion and to his king — a rebel more detestable on account of his success, the more infamous through the plundered wealth with which he hopes to gild his villany. — But I am poor, thou think'st, and should hold my peace, lest men say, 'Speak, sirrah, when you should.' — Know, however, that, indigent and plundered as I am, I feel myself dishonoured in holding even but this much talk with the tool of usurping rebels. — Go to the Lodge, if thou wilt — yonder lies the way — but think not that, to regain my dwelling there, or all the wealth I ever possessed in my wealthiest days, I would accompany thee three steps on the greensward. If I must be thy companion, it shall be only when thy red-coats have tied my hands behind me, and bound my legs beneath my horse's belly. Thou mayst be my fellow traveller then, I grant thee, if thou wilt, but not sooner."

Alice, who suffered cruelly during this dialogue, and was well aware that farther argument would only kindle the knight's resentment still more highly, ventured at last, in her anxiety, to make a sign to her cousin to break off the interview, and to retire, since her father commanded his absence in a manner so peremptory. Unhappily, she was observed by Sir Henry, who, concluding that what he saw was evidence of a private understanding betwixt the cousins, his wrath acquired new fuel, and it required the utmost exertion of self-command, and recollection of all that was due to his own dignity, to enable him to veil his real fury under the same ironical manner which he had adopted at the beginning of this angry interview.

"If thou art afraid," he said, "to trace our forest glades by night, respected stranger, to whom I am perhaps bound to do honour as my successor in the charge of these walks, here seems to be a modest damsel, who will be most willing to wait on thee, and be thy bow-bearer. — Only, for her mother's sake, let there pass some slight form of marriage between you — Ye need no license or priest in these happy days, but may be buckled like beggars in a ditch, with a hedge for a church-roof, and a tinker for a priest. I crave pardon of you for making such an officious and simple request — perhaps you are a ranter — or one of the family of Love, or hold marriage rites as unnecessary, as Knipperdoling, or Jack of Leyden?"

"For mercy's sake, forbear such dreadful jesting, my father! and do you, Markham, begone, in God's name, and leave us to our fate — your presence makes my father rave."

"Jesting!" said Sir Henry, "I was never more serious — Raving! — I was never more composed — I could never brook that falsehood should approach me — I would no more bear by my side a dishonoured daughter than a dishonoured sword; and this unhappy day hath shown that both can fail."

"Sir Henry," said young Everard, "load not your soul with a heavy crime, which be assured you do, in treating your daughter thus unjustly. It is long now since you denied her to me, when we were poor and you were powerful. I acquiesced in your prohibition of all suit and intercourse. God knoweth what I suffered — but I acquiesced. Neither is it to renew my suit that I now come hither, and have, I do acknowledge, sought speech of her — not for her own sake only, but for yours also. Destruction hovers over you, ready to close her pinions to stoop, and her talons to clutch — Yes, sir, look contemptuous as you will, such is the case; and it is to protect both you and her that I am here."

"You refuse then my free gift," said Sir Henry Lee; "or perhaps you think it loaded with too hard conditions?"

"Shame, shame on you, Sir Henry," said Everard, waxing warm in his turn; "have your political prejudices so utterly warped every feeling of a father, that you can speak with bitter mockery and scorn of what concerns your own daughter's honour? — Hold up your head, fair Alice, and tell your father he has forgotten nature in his fantastic spirit of loyalty. — Know, Sir Henry, that though I would prefer your daughter's hand to every blessing which Heaven could bestow on me, I would not accept it — my conscience would not permit me to do so, when I knew it must withdraw her from her duty to you."

"Your conscience is over-scrupulous, young man; — carry it to some dissenting rabbi, and he who takes all that comes to net, will teach thee it is sinning against our mercies to refuse any good thing that is freely offered to us."

"When it is freely offered, and kindly offered — not when the offer is made in irony and insult — Fare thee well, Alice — if aught could make me desire to profit by thy father's wild wish to cast thee from him in a moment of unworthy suspicion, it would be that while indulging in such sentiments, Sir Henry Lee is tyrannically oppressing the creature, who of all others is most dependent on his kindness — who of all others will most feel his severity, and whom, of all others, he is most bound to cherish and support."

"Do not fear for me, Mr. Everard," exclaimed Alice, aroused from her timidity by a dread of the consequences not unlikely to ensue, where civil war sets relations, as well as fellow-citizens, in opposition to each other. — "Oh, begone, I conjure you, begone! Nothing stands betwixt me and my father's kindness, but these unhappy family divisions — but your ill-timed presence here — for Heaven's sake, leave us!"

"So, mistress!" answered the hot old cavalier, "you play lady paramount already; and who but you! — you would dictate to our train, I warrant, like Goneril and Regan! But I tell thee, no man shall leave my house — and, humble as it is, *this* is now my house — while he has aught to say to me that is to be spoken, as this young man now speaks, with a bent brow and a lofty tone. — Speak out, sir, and say your worst!"

"Fear not my temper, Mrs. Alice," said Everard, with equal firmness and placidity of manner; "and you, Sir Henry, do not think that if I speak firmly, I mean therefore to speak in anger, or officiously. You have taxed me with much, and, were I guided by the wild spirit of romantic chivalry, much which, even from so near a relative, I ought not, as being by birth, and in the world's estimation, a gentleman, to pass over without reply. Is it your pleasure to give me patient hearing?"

"If you stand on your defence," answered the stout old knight, "God forbid that you should not challenge a patient hearing — ay, though your pleading were two parts disloyalty and one blasphemy — Only, be brief — this has already lasted but too long."

"I will, Sir Henry," replied the young man; "yet it is hard to crowd into a few sentences, the defence of a life which, though short, has been a busy one — too busy, your indignant gesture would assert. But I deny it; I have drawn my sword neither hastily, nor without due consideration, for a people whose rights have been

trampled on, and whose consciences have been oppressed — Frown not, sir — such is not your view of the contest, but such is mine. For my religious principles, at which you have scoffed, believe me, that though they depend not on set forms, they are no less sincere than your own, and thus far purer — excuse the word — that they are unmingled with the blood-thirsty dictates of a barbarous age, which you and others have called the code of chivalrous honour. Not my own natural disposition, but the better doctrine which my creed has taught, enables me to bear your harsh revilings without answering in a similar tone of wrath and reproach. You may carry insult to extremity against me at your pleasure — not on account of our relationship alone, but because I am bound in charity to endure it. This, Sir Henry, is much from one of our house. But, with forbearance far more than this requires, I can refuse at your hands the gift, which, most of all things under heaven, I should desire to obtain, because duty calls upon her to sustain and comfort you, and because it were sin to permit you, in your blindness, to spurn your comforter from your side. — Farewell, sir — not in anger, but in pity — We may meet in a better time, when your heart and your principles shall master the unhappy prejudices by which they are now overclouded. — Farewell — farewell, Alice!”

The last words were repeated twice, and in a tone of feeling and passionate grief, which differed utterly from the steady and almost severe tone in which he had addressed Sir Henry Lee. He turned and left the hut so soon as he had uttered these last words; and, as if ashamed of the tenderness which had mingled with his accents, the young commonwealth’s-man turned and walked sternly and resolvedly forth into the moonlight, which now was spreading its broad light and autumnal shadows over the woodland.

So soon as he departed, Alice, who had been during the whole scene in the utmost terror that her father might have been hurried, by his natural heat of temper, from violence of language into violence of action, sunk down upon a settle twisted out of willow boughs, like most of Joceline’s few moveables, and endeavoured to conceal the tears which accompanied the thanks she rendered in broken accents to Heaven, that, notwithstanding the near alliance and relationship of the parties, some fatal deed had not closed an interview so perilous and so angry. Phoebe Mayflower blubbered heartily for company, though she understood but little of what had passed; just, indeed, enough to enable her afterwards to report to some half-dozen particular friends, that her old master, Sir Henry, had been perilous angry, and almost fought with young Master Everard, because he had wellnigh carried away her young mistress. —“And what could he have done better?” said Phoebe, “seeing the old man had nothing left either for Mrs. Alice or himself; and as for Mr. Mark Everard and our young lady, oh! they had spoken such loving things to each other as are not to be found in the history of Argalus and Parthenia, who, as the story-book tells, were the truest pair of lovers in all Arcadia, and Oxfordshire to boot.”

Old Goody Jellycot had popped her scarlet hood into the kitchen more than once while the scene was proceeding; but, as the worthy dame was parcel blind and more than parcel deaf, knowledge was excluded by two principal entrances; and though she comprehended, by a sort of general instinct, that the gentlefolk were at high words, yet why they chose Joceline’s hut for the scene of their dispute was as great a mystery as the subject of the quarrel.

But what was the state of the old cavalier’s mood, thus contradicted, as his most darling principles had been, by the last words of his departing nephew? The truth is, that he was less thoroughly moved than his daughter expected; and in all probability his nephew’s bold defence of his religious and political opinions rather pacified than aggravated his displeasure. Although sufficiently impatient of contradiction, still evasion and subterfuge were more alien to the blunt old Ranger’s nature than manly vindication and direct opposition; and he was wont to say, that he ever loved the buck best who stood boldest at bay. He graced his nephew’s departure, however, with a quotation from Shakspeare, whom, as many others do, he was wont to quote from a sort of habit and respect, as a favourite of his unfortunate master, without having either much real taste for his works, or great skill in applying the passages which he retained on his memory.

“Mark,” he said, “mark this, Alice — the devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. Why, this young fanatic cousin of thine, with no more beard than I have seen on a clown playing Maid Marion on May-day, when the village barber had shaved him in too great a hurry, shall match any bearded Presbyterian or Independent of them all, in laying down his doctrines and his uses, and bethumping us with his texts and his homilies. I would worthy and learned Doctor Rocheccliffe had been here, with his battery ready-mounted from the Vulgate, and the Septuagint, and what not — he would have battered the presbyterian spirit out of him with a wanion. However, I am glad the young man is no sneaker; for, were a man of the devil’s opinion in religion, and of Old Noll’s in politics, he were better open on it full cry, than deceive you by hunting counter, or running a false scent. Come — wipe thine eyes — the fray is over, and not like to be stirred again soon, I trust.”

Encouraged by these words, Alice rose, and, bewildered as she was, endeavoured to superintend the arrangements for their meal and their repose in their new habitation. But her tears fell so fast, they marred her counterfeited diligence; and it was well for her that Phoebe, though too ignorant and too simple to comprehend the extent of her distress, could afford her material assistance, in lack of mere sympathy.

With great readiness and address, the damsel set about every thing that was requisite for preparing the supper and the beds; now screaming into Dame Jellycot’s ear, now whispering into her mistress’s, and artfully managing, as if she was merely the agent, under Alice’s orders. When the cold viands were set forth, Sir Henry Lee kindly pressed his daughter to take refreshment, as if to make up, indirectly, for his previous harshness towards her; while he himself, like an experienced campaigner, showed, that neither the mortifications nor brawls of the day, nor the thoughts of what was to come tomorrow, could diminish his appetite for supper, which was his favourite meal. He ate up two-thirds of the capon, and, devoting the first bumper to the happy restoration of Charles, second of the name, he finished a quart of wine; for he belonged to a school accustomed to feed the flame of their loyalty with copious brimmers. He even sang a verse of “The King shall enjoy his own again,” in which Phoebe, half-sobbing, and Dame Jellycot, screaming against time and tune, were contented to lend their aid, to cover Mistress Alice’s silence.

At length the jovial knight betook himself to his rest on the keeper’s straw pallet, in a recess adjoining to the kitchen, and, unaffected by his change of dwelling, slept fast and deep. Alice had less quiet rest in old Goody Jellycot’s wicker couch, in the inner apartment; while the dame and Phoebe slept on a mattress, stuffed with dry leaves, in the same chamber, soundly as those whose daily toil gains their daily bread, and, whom morning calls up only to renew the toils of yesterday.

Chapter the Fifth.

*My tongue pads slowly under this new language,
And starts and stumbles at these uncouth phrases.
They may be great in worth and weight, but hang
Upon the native glibness of my language
Like Saul’s plate-armour on the shepherd boy,
Encumbering and not arming him.*

J. B.

As Markham Everard pursued his way towards the Lodge, through one of the long sweeping glades which traversed the forest, varying in breadth, till the trees were now so close that the boughs made darkness over his head, then receding farther to let in glimpses of the moon, and anon opening yet wider into little meadows, or savannahs, on which the moonbeams lay in silvery silence; as he thus proceeded on his lonely course, the various effects produced by that delicious light on the oaks, whose dark leaves, gnarled branches, and massive trunks it gilded, more or less partially, might have drawn the attention of a poet or a painter.

But if Everard thought of anything saving the painful scene in which he had just played his part, and of which the result seemed the destruction of all his hopes, it was of the necessary guard to be observed in his night-walk. The times were dangerous and unsettled; the roads full of disbanded soldiers, and especially of royalists, who made their political opinions a pretext for disturbing the country with marauding parties and robberies. Deer-stealers also, who are ever a desperate banditti, had of late infested Woodstock Chase. In short, the dangers of the place and period were such, that Markham Everard wore his loaded pistols at his belt, and carried his drawn sword under his arm, that he might be prepared for whatever peril should cross his path.

He heard the bells of Woodstock Church ring curfew, just as he was crossing one of the little meadows we have described, and they ceased as he entered an overshadowed and twilight part of the path beyond. It was there that he heard some one whistling; and, as the sound became clearer, it was plain the person was advancing towards him. This could hardly be a friend; for the party to which he belonged rejected, generally speaking, all music, unless psalmody. “If a man is merry, let him sing psalms,” was a text which they were pleased to interpret as literally and to as little purpose as they did some others; yet it was too continued a

sound to be a signal amongst night-walkers, and too light and cheerful to argue any purpose of concealment on the part of the traveller, who presently exchanged his whistling for singing, and trolled forth the following stanza to a jolly tune, with which the old cavaliers were wont to wake the night owl:

Hey for cavaliers! Ho for cavaliers!

Pray for cavaliers!

Rub a dub — rub a dub!

Have at old Beelzebub —

Oliver smokes for fear.

"I should know that voice," said Everard, uncocking the pistol which he had drawn from his belt, but continuing to hold it in his hand. Then came another fragment:

Hash them — slash them —

All to pieces dash them.

"So ho!" cried Markham, "who goes there, and for whom?"

"For Church and King," answered a voice, which presently added, "No, d — n me — I mean *against* Church and King, and for the people that are uppermost — I forget which they are."

"Roger Wildrake, as I guess?" said Everard.

"The same — Gentleman; of Squattlesea-mere, in the moist county of Lincoln."

"Wildrake!" said Markham — "Wildgoose you should be called. You have been moistening your own throat to some purpose, and using it to gabble tunes very suitable to the times, to be sure!"

"Faith, the tune's a pretty tune enough, Mark, only out of fashion a little — the more's the pity."

"What could I expect," said Everard, "but to meet some ranting, drunken cavalier, as desperate and dangerous as night and sack usually make them? What if I had rewarded your melody by a ball in the gullet?"

"Why, there would have been a piper paid — that's all," said Wildrake. "But wherefore come you this way now? I was about to seek you at the hut."

"I have been obliged to leave it — I will tell you the cause hereafter," replied Markham.

"What! the old play-hunting cavalier was cross, or Chloe was unkind?"

"Jest not, Wildrake — it is all over with me," said Everard.

"The devil it is," exclaimed Wildrake, "and you take it thus quietly! — Zounds! let us back together — I'll plead your cause for you — I know how to tickle up an old knight and a pretty maiden — Let me alone for putting you *rectus in curia*, you canting rogue. — D— n me, Sir Henry Lee, says I, your nephew is a piece of a Puritan — it won't deny — but I'll uphold him a gentleman and a pretty fellow, for all that. — Madam, says I, you may think your cousin looks like a psalm-singing weaver, in that bare felt, and with that rascally brown cloak; that band, which looks like a baby's clout, and those loose boots, which have a whole calf-skin in each of them — but let him wear on the one side of his head a castor, with a plume befitting his quality; give him a good Toledo by his side, with a brodered belt and an inlaid hilt, instead of the ton of iron contained in that basket-hilted black Andrew Ferrara; put a few smart words in his mouth — and, blood and wounds! madam, says I—"

"Prithee, truce with this nonsense, Wildrake," said Everard, "and tell me if you are sober enough to hear a few words of sober reason?"

"Pshaw! man, I did but crack a brace of quarts with yonder puritanic, roundheaded soldiers, up yonder at the town; and rat me but I passed myself for the best man of the party; twanged my nose, and turned up my eyes, as I took my can — Pah! the very wine tasted of hypocrisy. I think the rogue corporal smoked something at last — as for the common fellows, never stir, but *they* asked me to say grace over another quart."

"This is just what I wished to speak with you about, Wildrake," said Markham — "You hold me, I am sure, for your friend?"

"True as steel. — Chums at College and at Lincoln's Inn — we have been Nisus and Euryalus, Theseus and Pirithous, Orestes and Pylades; and, to sum up the whole with a puritanic touch, David and Jonathan, all in one breath. Not even politics, the wedge that rends families and friendships asunder, as iron rives oak, have been able to split us."

"True," answered Markham: "and when you followed the King to Nottingham, and I enrolled under Essex, we swore, at our parting, that whichever side was victorious, he of us who adhered to it, should protect his less fortunate comrade."

"Surely, man, surely; and have you not protected me accordingly? Did you not save me from hanging? and am I not indebted to you for the bread I eat?"

"I have but done that which, had the times been otherwise, you, my dear Wildrake, would, I am sure, have done for me. But, as I said, that is just what I wished to speak to you about. Why render the task of protecting you more difficult than it must necessarily be at any rate? Why thrust thyself into the company of soldiers, or such like, where thou art sure to be warmed into betraying thyself? Why come hollowing and whooping out cavalier ditties, like a drunken trooper of Prince Rupert, or one of Wilmot's swaggering body-guards?"

"Because I may have been both one and t'other in my day, for aught that you know," replied Wildrake. "But, oddsfish! is it necessary I should always be reminding you, that our obligation of mutual protection, our league of offensive and defensive, as I may call it, was to be carried into effect without reference to the politics or religion of the party protected, or the least obligation on him to conform to those of his friend?"

"True," said Everard; "but with this most necessary qualification, that the party should submit to such outward conformity to the times as should make it more easy and safe for his friend to be of service to him. Now, you are perpetually breaking forth, to the hazard of your own safety and my credit."

"I tell you, Mark, and I would tell your namesake the apostle, that you are hard on me. You have practised sobriety and hypocrisy from your hanging sleeves till your Geneva cassock — from the cradle to this day — and it is a thing of nature to you; and you are surprised that a rough, rattling, honest fellow, accustomed to speak truth all his life, and especially when he found it at the bottom of a flask, cannot be so perfect a prig as thyself — Zooks! there is no equality betwixt us — A trained diver might as well, because he can retain his breath for ten minutes without inconvenience, upbraid a poor devil for being like to burst in twenty seconds, at the bottom of ten fathoms water — And, after all, considering the guise is so new to me, I think I bear myself indifferently well — try me!"

"Are there any more news from Worcester fight?" asked Everard, in a tone so serious that it imposed on his companion, who replied in his genuine character —

"Worse! — d — n me, worse an hundred times than reported — totally broken. Noll hath certainly sold himself to the devil, and his lease will have an end one day — that is all our present comfort."

"What! and would this be your answer to the first red-coat who asked the question?" said Everard. "Methinks you would find a speedy passport to the next corps de garde."

"Nay, nay," answered Wildrake, "I thought you asked me in your own person. — Lack-a-day! a great mercy — a glorifying mercy — a crowning mercy — a vouchsafing — an uplifting — I profess the malignants are scattered from Dan to Beersheba — smitten, hip and thigh, even until the going down of the sun!"

"Hear you aught of Colonel Thornhaugh's wounds?"

"He is dead," answered Wildrake, "that's one comfort — the roundheaded rascal! — Nay, hold! it was but a trip of the tongue — I meant, the sweet godly youth."

"And hear you aught of the young man, King of Scotland, as they call him?" said Everard.

"Nothing but that he is hunted like a partridge on the mountains. May God deliver him, and confound his enemies! — Zoons, Mark Everard, I can fool it no longer. Do you not remember, that at the Lincoln's-Inn gambols — though you did not mingle much in them, I think — I used always to play as well as any of them when it came to the action, but they could never get me to rehearse conformably. It's the same at this day. I hear your voice, and I answer to it in the true tone of my heart; but when I am in the company of your snuffling friends, you have seen me act my part indifferent well."

"But indifferent, indeed," replied Everard; "however, there is little call on you to do aught, save to be modest and silent. Speak little, and lay aside, if you can, your big oaths and swaggering looks — set your hat even on your brows."

"Ay, that is the curse! I have been always noted for the jaunty manner in which I wear my castor — Hard when a man's merits become his enemies!"

"You must remember you are my clerk."

"Secretary," answered Wildrake: "let it be secretary, if you love me."

"It must be clerk, and nothing else — plain clerk — and remember to be civil and obedient," replied Everard.

"But you should not lay on your commands with so much ostentatious superiority, Master Markham Everard. Remember, I am your senior of three years' standing. Confound me, if I know how to take it!"

"Was ever such a fantastic wrong-head! — For my sake, if not for thine own, bend thy freakish folly to listen to reason. Think that I have incurred both risk and shame on thy account."

"Nay, thou art a right good fellow, Mark," replied the cavalier; "and for thy sake I will do much — but remember to cough, and cry hem! when thou seest me like to break bounds. And now, tell me whither we are bound for the night."

"To Woodstock Lodge, to look after my uncle's property," answered Markham Everard: "I am informed that soldiers have taken possession — Yet how could that be if thou foundest the party drinking in Woodstock?"

"There was a kind of commissary or steward, or some such rogue, had gone down to the Lodge," replied Wildrake; "I had a peep at him."

"Indeed!" replied Everard.

"Ay, verily," said Wildrake, "to speak your own language. Why, as I passed through the park in quest of you, scarce half an hour since, I saw a light in the Lodge — Step this way, you will see it yourself."

"In the north-west angle?" returned Everard. "It is from a window in what they call Victor Lee's apartment."

"Well," resumed Wildrake, "I had been long one of Lundsford's lads, and well used to patrolling duty — So, rat me, says I, if I leave a light in my rear, without knowing what it means. Besides, Mark, thou hadst said so much to me of thy pretty cousin, I thought I might as well have a peep, if I could."

"Thoughtless, incorrigible man! to what dangers do you expose yourself and your friends, in mere wantonness! — But go on."

"By this fair moonshine, I believe thou art jealous, Mark Everard!" replied his gay companion; "there is no occasion; for, in any case, I, who was to see the lady, was steeled by honour against the charms of my friend's Chloe — Then the lady was not to see me, so could make no comparisons to thy disadvantage, thou knowest — Lastly, as it fell out, neither of us saw the other at all."

"Of that I am well aware. Mrs. Alice left the Lodge long before sunset, and never returned. What didst thou see to introduce with such preface?"

"Nay, no great matter," replied Wildrake; "only getting upon a sort of buttress, (for I can climb like any cat that ever mewed in any gutter,) and holding on by the vines and creepers which grew around, I obtained a station where I could see into the inside of that same parlour thou spokest of just now."

"And what saw'st thou there?" once more demanded Everard.

"Nay, no great matter, as I said before," replied the cavalier; "for in these times it is no new thing to see churls carousing in royal or noble chambers. I saw two rascallions engaged in emptying a solemn stoup of strong waters, and dispatching a huge venison pasty, which greasy mess, for their convenience, they had placed on a lady's work-table — One of them was trying an air on a lute."

"The profane villains!" exclaimed Everard, "it was Alice's."

"Well said, comrade — I am glad your phlegm can be moved. I did but throw in these incidents of the lute and the table, to try if it was possible to get a spark of human spirit out of you, besanctified as you are."

"What like were the men?" said young Everard.

"The one a slouch-hatted, long-cloaked, sour-faced fanatic, like the rest of you, whom I took to be the steward or commissary I heard spoken of in the town; the other was a short sturdy fellow, with a wood-knife at his girdle, and a long quarterstaff lying beside him — a black-haired knave, with white teeth and a merry countenance — one of the under-rangers or bow-bearers of these walks, I fancy."

"They must have been Desborough's favourite, trusty Tomkins," said Everard, "and Joceline Joliffe, the keeper. Tomkins is Desborough's right hand — an Independent, and hath pourings forth, as he calls them. Some think that his gifts have the better of his grace. I have heard of his abusing opportunities."

"They were improving them when I saw them," replied Wildrake, "and made the bottle smoke for it — when, as the devil would have it, a stone, which had been dislodged from the crumbling buttress, gave way under my weight. A clumsy fellow like thee would have been so long thinking what was to be done, that he must needs have followed it before he could make up his mind; but I, Mark, I hopped like a squirrel to an ivy twig, and stood fast — was wellnigh shot, though, for the noise alarmed them both. They looked to the oriel, and saw me on the outside; the fanatic fellow took out a pistol — as they have always such texts in readiness hanging beside the little clasped Bible, thou know'st — the keeper seized his hunting-pole — I treated them both to a roar and a grin — thou must know I can grimace like a baboon — I learned the trick from a French player, who could twist his jaws into a pair of nut-crackers — and therewithal I dropped myself sweetly on the grass, and ran off so trippingly, keeping the dark side of the wall as long as I could, that I am wellnigh persuaded they thought I was their kinsman, the devil, come among them uncalled. They were abominably startled."

"Thou art most fearfully rash, Wildrake," said his companion; "we are now bound for the house — what if they should remember thee?"

"Why, it is no treason, is it? No one has paid for peeping since Tom of Coventry's days; and if he came in for a reckoning, belike it was for a better treat than mine. But trust me, they will no more know me, than a man who had only seen your friend Noll at a conventicle of saints, would know the same Oliver on horseback, and charging with his lobster-tailed squadron; or the same Noll cracking a jest and a bottle with wicked Waller the poet."

"Hush! not a word of Oliver, as thou dost value thyself and me. It is ill jesting with the rock you may split on. — But here is the gate — we will disturb these honest gentlemen's recreations."

As he spoke, he applied the large and ponderous knocker to the hall-door. "Rat-tat-tat-too!" said Wildrake; "there is a fine alarm to you cuckolds and round-heads." He then half-mimicked, half-sung the march so called:—

"Cuckolds, come dig, cuckolds, come dig;

Round about cuckolds, come dance to my jig!"

"By Heaven! this passes Midsummer frenzy," said Everard, turning angrily to him.

"Not a bit, not a bit," replied Wildrake; "it is but a slight expectoration, just like what one makes before beginning a long speech. I will be grave for an hour together, now I have got that point of war out of my head."

As he spoke, steps were heard in the hall, and the wicket of the great door was partly opened, but secured with a chain in case of accidents. The visage of Tomkins, and that of Joceline beneath it, appeared at the chink, illuminated by the lamp which the latter held in his hand, and Tomkins demanded the meaning of this alarm.

"I demand instant admittance!" said Everard. "Joliffe, you know me well?"

"I do, sir," replied Joceline, "and could admit you with all my heart; but, alas! sir, you see I am not key-keeper — Here is the gentleman whose warrant I must walk by — The Lord help me, seeing times are such as they be!"

"And when that gentleman, who I think may be Master Desborough's valet" —

"His honour's unworthy secretary, an it please you," interposed Tomkins; while Wildrake whispered in Everard's ear; "I will be no longer secretary. Mark, thou wert quite right — the clerk must be the more gentlemanly calling."

"And if you are Master Desborough's secretary, I presume you know me and my condition well enough," said Everard, addressing the Independent, "not to hesitate to admit me and my attendant to a night's quarters in the Lodge?"

"Surely not, surely not," said the Independent — "that is, if your worship thinks you would be better accommodated here than up at the house of entertainment in the town, which men unprofitably call Saint George's Inn. There is but confined accommodation here, your honour — and we have been frayed out of our lives already by the visitation of Satan — albeit his fiery dart is now quenched."

"This may be all well in its place, Sir Secretary," said Everard; "and you may find a corner for it when you are next tempted to play the preacher. But I will take it for no apology for keeping me here in the cold harvest wind; and if not presently received, and suitably too, I will report you to your master for insolence in your office."

The secretary of Desborough did not dare offer farther opposition; for it is well known that Desborough himself only held his consequence as a kinsman of Cromwell; and the Lord-General, who was well nigh paramount already, was known to be strongly favourable both to the elder and younger Everard. It is true, they were Presbyterians and he an Independent; and that though sharing those feelings of correct morality and more devoted religious feeling, by which, with few exceptions, the Parliamentary party were distinguished, the Everards were not disposed to carry these attributes to the extreme of enthusiasm, practised by so many others at the time. Yet it was well known that whatever might be Cromwell's own religious creed, he was not uniformly bounded by it in the choice of his favourites, but extended his countenance to those who could serve him, even, although, according to the phrase of the time, they came out of the darkness of Egypt. The character of the elder Everard stood very high for wisdom and sagacity; besides, being of a good family and competent fortune, his adherence would lend a dignity to any side he might espouse. Then his son had been a distinguished and successful soldier, remarkable for the discipline he maintained among his men, the bravery which he showed in the time of action, and the humanity with which he was always ready to qualify the consequences of victory. Such men were not to be neglected, when many signs combined to show that the parties in the state, who had successfully accomplished the deposition and death of the King, were speedily to quarrel among themselves about the division of the spoils. The two Everards were therefore much courted by Cromwell, and their influence with him was supposed to be so great, that trusty Master Secretary Tomkins cared not to expose himself to risk, by contending with Colonel Everard for such a trifle as a night's lodging.

Joceline was active on his side — more lights were obtained — more wood thrown on the fire — and the two newly-arrived strangers were introduced into Victor Lee's parlour, as it was called, from the picture over the chimney-piece, which we have already described. It was several minutes ere Colonel Everard could recover his general stoicism of deportment, so strongly was he impressed by finding himself in the apartment, under whose roof he had passed so many of the happiest hours of his life. There was the cabinet, which he had seen opened with such feelings of delight when Sir Henry Lee deigned to give him instructions in fishing, and to exhibit hooks and lines, together with all the materials for making the artificial fly, then little known. There hung the ancient family picture, which, from some odd mysterious expressions of his uncle relating to it, had become to his boyhood, nay, his early youth, a subject of curiosity and of fear. He remembered how, when left alone in the apartment, the searching eye of the old warrior seemed always bent upon him, in whatever part of the room he placed himself, and how his childish imagination was perturbed at a phenomenon, for which he could not account.

With these came a thousand dearer and warmer recollections of his early attachment to his pretty cousin Alice, when he assisted her at her lessons, brought water for her flowers, or accompanied her while she sung; and he remembered that while her father looked at them with a good-humoured and careless smile, he had once heard him mutter, "And if it should turn out so — why, it might be best for both," and the theories of happiness he had reared on these words. All these visions had been dispelled by the trumpet of war, which called Sir Henry Lee and himself to opposite sides; and the transactions of this very day had shown, that even Everard's success as a soldier and a statesman seemed absolutely to prohibit the chance of their being revived.

He was waked out of this unpleasing reverie by the approach of Joceline, who, being possibly a seasoned toper, had made the additional arrangements with more expedition and accuracy, than could have been expected from a person engaged as he had been since night-fall.

He now wished to know the Colonel's directions for the night.

"Would he eat anything?"

"No."

"Did his honour choose to accept Sir Henry Lee's bed, which was ready prepared?"

"Yes."

"That of Mistress Alice Lee should be prepared for the Secretary."

"On pain of thine ears — No," replied Everard.

"Where then was the worthy Secretary to be quartered?"

"In the dog-kennel, if you list," replied Colonel Everard; "but," added he, stepping to the sleeping apartment of Alice, which opened from the parlour, locking it, and taking out the key, "no one shall profane this chamber."

"Had his honour any other commands for the night?"

"None, save to clear the apartment of yonder man. My clerk will remain with me — I have orders which must be written out. — Yet stay — Thou gavest my letter this morning to Mistress Alice?"

"I did."

"Tell me, good Joceline, what she said when she received it?"

"She seemed much concerned, sir; and indeed I think that she wept a little — but indeed she seemed very much distressed."

"And what message did she send to me?"

"None, may it please your honour — She began to say, 'Tell my cousin Everard that I will communicate my uncle's kind purpose to my father, if I can get fitting opportunity — but that I greatly fear' — and there checked herself, as it were, and said, 'I will write to my cousin; and as it may be late ere I have an opportunity of speaking with my father, do thou come for my answer after service.' — So I went to church myself, to while away the time; but when I returned to the Chase, I found this man had summoned my master to surrender, and, right or wrong, I must put him in possession of the Lodge. I would fain have given your honour a hint that the old knight and my young mistress were like to take you on the form, but I could not mend the matter."

"Thou hast done well, good fellow, and I will remember thee. — And now, my masters," he said, advancing to the brace of clerks or secretaries, who had in the meanwhile sate quietly down beside the stone bottle, and made up acquaintance over a glass of its contents — "Let me remind you, that the night wears late."

"There is something cries tinkle, tinkle, in the bottle yet," said Wildrake, in reply.

"Hem! hem! hem!" coughed the Colonel of the Parliament service; and if his lips did not curse his companion's imprudence, I will not answer for what arose in his heart — "Well!" he said, observing that Wildrake had filled his own glass and Tomkins's, "take that parting glass and begone."

"Would you not be pleased to hear first," said Wildrake, "how this honest gentleman saw the devil to-night look through a pane of yonder window, and how he thinks he had a mighty strong resemblance to your worship's humble slave and varlet scribbler? Would you but hear this, sir, and just sip a glass of this very recommendable strong waters?"

"I will drink none, sir," said Colonel Everard sternly; "and I have to tell *you*, that you have drunken a glass too much already. — Mr. Tomkins, sir, I wish you good night."

"A word in season at parting," said Tomkins, standing up behind the long leathern back of a chair, hemming and snuffling as if preparing for an exhortation.

"Excuse me, sir," replied Markham Everard sternly; "you are not now sufficiently yourself to guide the devotion of others."

"Woe be to them that reject!" said the Secretary of the Commissioners, stalking out of the room — the rest was lost in shutting the door, or suppressed for fear of offence.

"And now, fool Wildrake, begone to thy bed — yonder it lies," pointing to the knight's apartment.

"What, thou hast secured the lady's for thyself? I saw thee put the key in thy pocket."

"I would not — indeed I could not sleep in that apartment — I can sleep nowhere — but I will watch in this arm-chair. — I have made him place wood for repairing the fire. — Good now, go to bed thyself, and sleep off thy liquor."

"Liquor! — I laugh thee to scorn, Mark — thou art a milksop, and the son of a milksop, and know'st not what a good fellow can do in the way of crushing an honest cup."

"The whole vices of his faction are in this poor fellow individually," said the Colonel to himself, eyeing his protégé askance, as the other retreated into the bedroom, with no very steady pace — "He is reckless, intemperate, dissolute; — and if I cannot get him safely shipped for France, he will certainly be both his own ruin and mine. — Yet, withal, he is kind, brave, and generous, and would have kept the faith with me which he now expects from me; and in what consists the merit of our truth, if we observe not our plighted word when we have promised, to our hurt? I will take the liberty, however, to secure myself against farther interruption on his part."

So saying, he locked the door of communication betwixt the sleeping-room, to which the cavalier had retreated, and the parlour; — and then, after pacing the floor thoughtfully, returned to his seat, trimmed the lamp, and drew out a number of letters. — "I will read these over once more," he said, "that, if possible, the thought of public affairs may expel this keen sense of personal sorrow. Gracious Providence, where is this to end! We have sacrificed the peace of our families, the warmest wishes of our young hearts, to right the country in which we were born, and to free her from oppression; yet it appears, that every step we have made towards liberty, has but brought us in view of new and more terrific perils, as he who travels in a mountainous region, is by every step which elevates him higher, placed in a situation of more imminent hazard."

He read long and attentively, various tedious and embarrassed letters, in which the writers, placing before him the glory of God, and the freedom and liberties of England, as their supreme ends, could not, by all the ambagitory expressions they made use of, prevent the shrewd eye of Markham Everard from seeing, that self-interest and views of ambition, were the principal moving springs at the bottom of their plots.

Chapter the Sixth.

Sleep steals on us even like his brother Death —

We know not when it comes — we know it must come —

We may affect to scorn and to contemn it,

For 'tis the highest pride of human misery

To say it knows not of an opiate;

Yet the reft parent, the despairing lover,

Even the poor wretch who waits for execution,

Feels this oblivion, against which he thought

His woes had arm'd his senses, steal upon him,

And through the fenceless citadel — the body —

Surprise that haughty garrison — the mind.

HERBERT.

Colonel Everard experienced the truth contained in the verses of the quaint old bard whom we have quoted above. Amid private grief, and anxiety for a country long a prey to civil war, and not likely to fall soon under any fixed or well-established form of government, Everard and his father had, like many others, turned their eyes to General Cromwell, as the person whose valour had made him the darling of the army, whose strong sagacity had hitherto predominated over the high talents by which he had been assailed in Parliament, as well as over his enemies in the field, and who was alone in the situation to *settle the nation*, as the phrase then went; or, in other words, to dictate the mode of government. The father and son were both reputed to stand high in the General's favour. But Markham Everard was conscious of some particulars, which induced him to doubt whether Cromwell actually, and at heart, bore either to his father or to himself that good-will which was generally believed. He knew him for a profound politician, who could veil for any length of time his real sentiments of men and things, until they could be displayed without prejudice to his interest. And he moreover knew that the General was not likely to forget the opposition which the Presbyterian party had offered to what Oliver called the Great Matter — the trial, namely, and execution of the King. In this opposition, his father and he had anxiously concurred, nor had the arguments, nor even the half-expressed threats of Cromwell, induced them to flinch from that course, far less to permit their names to be introduced into the commission nominated to sit in judgment on that memorable occasion.

This hesitation had occasioned some temporary coldness between the General and the Everards, father and son. But as the latter remained in the army, and bore arms under Cromwell both in Scotland, and finally at Worcester, his services very frequently called forth the approbation of his commander. After the fight of Worcester, in particular, he was among the number of those officers on whom Oliver, rather considering the actual and practical extent of his own power, than the name under which he exercised it, was with difficulty withheld from imposing the dignity of Knights-Bannerets at his own will and pleasure. It therefore seemed, that all recollection of former disagreement was obliterated, and that the Everards had regained their former stronghold in the General's affections. There were, indeed, several who doubted this, and who endeavoured to bring over this distinguished young officer to some other of the parties which divided the infant Commonwealth. But to these proposals he turned a deaf ear. Enough of blood, he said, had been spilled — it was time that the nation should have repose under a firmly-established government, of strength sufficient to protect property, and of lenity enough to encourage the return of tranquillity. This, he thought, could only be accomplished by means of Cromwell, and the greater part of England was of the same opinion. It is true, that, in thus submitting to the domination of a successful soldier, those who did so, forgot the principles upon which they had drawn the sword against the late King. But in revolutions, stern and high principles are often obliged to give way to the current of existing circumstances; and in many a case, where wars have been waged for points of metaphysical right, they have been at last gladly terminated, upon the mere hope of obtaining general tranquillity, as, after many a long siege, a garrison is often glad to submit on mere security for life and limb.

Colonel Everard, therefore, felt that the support which he afforded Cromwell, was only under the idea, that, amid a choice of evils, the least was likely to ensue from a man of the General's wisdom and valour being placed at the head of the state; and he was sensible, that Oliver himself was likely to consider his attachment as lukewarm and imperfect, and measure his gratitude for it upon the same limited scale.

In the meanwhile, however, circumstances compelled him to make trial of the General's friendship. The sequestration of Woodstock, and the warrant to the Commissioners to dispose of it as national property, had been long granted, but the interest of the elder Everard had for weeks and months deferred its execution. The hour was now approaching when the blow could be no longer parried, especially as Sir Henry Lee, on his side, resisted every proposal of submitting himself to the existing government, and was therefore, now that his hour of grace was passed, enrolled in the list of stubborn and irreclaimable malignants, with whom the Council of State was determined no longer to keep terms. The only mode of protecting the old knight and his daughter, was to interest, if possible, the General himself in the matter; and revolving all the circumstances connected with their intercourse, Colonel Everard felt that a request, which would so immediately interfere with the interests of Desborough, the brother-in-law of Cromwell, and one of the present Commissioners, was putting to a very severe trial the friendship of the latter. Yet no alternative remained.

With this view, and agreeably to a request from Cromwell, who at parting had been very urgent to have his written opinion upon public affairs, Colonel Everard passed the earlier part of the night in arranging his ideas upon the state of the Commonwealth, in a plan which he thought likely to be acceptable to Cromwell, as it exhorted him, under the aid of Providence, to become the saviour of the state, by convoking a free Parliament, and by their aid placing himself at the head of some form of liberal and established government, which might supersede the state of anarchy, in which the nation was otherwise likely to be merged. Taking a general view of the totally broken condition of the Royalists, and of the various factions which now convulsed the state, he showed how this might be done without bloodshed or violence. From this topic he descended to the propriety of keeping up the becoming state of the Executive Government, in whose hands soever it

should be lodged, and thus showed Cromwell, as the future Stadtholder, or Consul, or Lieutenant-General of Great Britain and Ireland, a prospect of demesne and residence becoming his dignity. Then he naturally passed to the disparking and destroying of the royal residences of England, made a woful picture of the demolition which impended over Woodstock, and interceded for the preservation of that beautiful seat, as a matter of personal favour, in which he found himself deeply interested.

Colonel Everard, when he had finished his letter, did not find himself greatly risen in his own opinion. In the course of his political conduct, he had till this hour avoided mixing up personal motives with his public grounds of action, and yet he now felt himself making such a composition. But he comforted himself, or at least silenced this unpleasing recollection, with the consideration, that the weal of Britain, studied under the aspect of the times, absolutely required that Cromwell should be at the head of the government; and that the interest of Sir Henry Lee, or rather his safety and his existence, no less emphatically demanded the preservation of Woodstock, and his residence there. Was it a fault of his, that the same road should lead to both these ends, or that his private interest, and that of the country, should happen to mix in the same letter? He hardened himself, therefore, to the act, made up and addressed his packet to the Lord-General, and then sealed it with his seal of arms. This done, he lay back in the chair; and, in spite of his expectations to the contrary, fell asleep in the course of his reflections, anxious and harassing as they were, and did not awaken until the cold grey light of dawn was peeping through the eastern oriel.

He started at first, rousing himself with the sensation of one who awakes in a place unknown to him; but the localities instantly forced themselves on his recollection. The lamp burning dimly in the socket, the wood fire almost extinguished in its own white embers, the gloomy picture over the chimney-piece, the sealed packet on the table — all reminded him of the events of yesterday, and his deliberations of the succeeding night. "There is no help for it," he said; "it must be Cromwell or anarchy. And probably the sense that his title, as head of the Executive Government, is derived merely from popular consent, may check the too natural proneness of power to render itself arbitrary. If he govern by Parliaments, and with regard to the privileges of the subject, wherefore not Oliver as well as Charles? But I must take measures for having this conveyed safely to the hands of this future sovereign prince. It will be well to take the first word of influence with him, since there must be many who will not hesitate to recommend counsels more violent and precipitate."

He determined to intrust the important packet to the charge of Wildrake, whose rashness was never so distinguished, as when by any chance he was left idle and unemployed; besides, even if his faith had not been otherwise unimpeachable, the obligations which he owed to his friend Everard must have rendered it such.

These conclusions passed through Colonel Everard's mind, as, collecting the remains of wood in the chimney, he gathered them into a hearty blaze, to remove the uncomfortable feeling of dullness which pervaded his limbs; and by the time he was a little more warm, again sunk into a slumber, which was only dispelled by the beams of morning peeping into his apartment.

He arose, roused himself, walked up and down the room, and looked from the large oriel window on the nearest objects, which were the untrimmed hedges and neglected walks of a certain wilderness, as it is called in ancient treatises on gardening, which, kept of yore well ordered, and in all the pride of the topiary art, presented a succession of yew-trees cut into fantastic forms, of close alleys, and of open walks, filling about two or three acres of ground on that side of the Lodge, and forming a boundary between its immediate precincts and the open Park. Its enclosure was now broken down in many places, and the hinds with their fawns fed free and unstartled up to the very windows of the silvan palace.

This had been a favourite scene of Markham's sports when a boy. He could still distinguish, though now grown out of shape, the verdant battlements of a Gothic castle, all created by the gardener's shears, at which he was accustomed to shoot his arrows; or, stalking before it like the Knight-errants of whom he read, was wont to blow his horn, and bid defiance to the supposed giant or Paynim knight, by whom it was garrisoned. He remembered how he used to train his cousin, though several years younger than himself, to bear a part in those revels of his boyish fancy, and to play the character of an elfin page, or a fairy, or an enchanted princess. He remembered, too, many particulars of their later acquaintance, from which he had been almost necessarily led to the conclusion, that from an early period their parents had entertained some idea, that there might be a well-fitted match betwixt his fair cousin and himself. A thousand visions, formed in so bright a prospect, had vanished along with it, but now returned like shadows, to remind him of all he had lost — and for what? — "For the sake of England," his proud consciousness replied — "Of England, in danger of becoming the prey at once of bigotry and tyranny." And he strengthened himself with the recollection, "If I have sacrificed my private happiness, it is that my country may enjoy liberty of conscience, and personal freedom; which, under a weak prince and usurping statesman, she was but too likely to have lost."

But the busy fiend in his breast would not be repulsed by the bold answer. "Has thy resistance," it demanded, "availed thy country, Markham Everard? Lies not England, after so much bloodshed, and so much misery, as low beneath the sword of a fortunate soldier, as formerly under the sceptre of an encroaching prince? Are Parliament, or what remains of them, fitted to contend with a leader, master of his soldiers' hearts, as bold and subtle as he is impenetrable in his designs! This General, who holds the army, and by that the fate of the nation in his hand, will he lay down his power because philosophy would pronounce it his duty to become a subject?"

He dared not answer that his knowledge of Cromwell authorised him to expect any such act of self-denial. Yet still he considered that in times of such infinite difficulty, that must be the best government, however little desirable in itself, which should most speedily restore peace to the land, and stop the wounds which the contending parties were daily inflicting on each other. He imagined that Cromwell was the only authority under which a steady government could be formed, and therefore had attached himself to his fortune, though not without considerable and recurring doubts, how far serving the views of this impenetrable and mysterious General was consistent with the principles under which he had assumed arms.

While these things passed in his mind, Everard looked upon the packet which lay on the table addressed to the Lord-General, and which he had made up before sleep. He hesitated several times, when he remembered its purport, and in what degree he must stand committed with that personage, and bound to support his plans of aggrandizement, when once that communication was in Oliver Cromwell's possession.

"Yet it must be so," he said at last, with a deep sigh. "Among the contending parties, he is the strongest — the wisest and most moderate — and ambitious though he be, perhaps not the most dangerous. Some one must be trusted with power to preserve and enforce general order, and who can possess or wield such power like him that is head of the victorious armies of England? Come what will in future, peace and the restoration of law ought to be our first and most pressing object. This remnant of a parliament cannot keep their ground against the army, by mere appeal to the sanction of opinion. If they design to reduce the soldiery, it must be by actual warfare, and the land has been too long steeped in blood. But Cromwell may, and I trust will, make a moderate accommodation with them, on grounds by which peace may be preserved; and it is to this which we must look and trust for a settlement of the kingdom, alas! and for the chance of protecting my obstinate kinsman from the consequences of his honest though absurd pertinacity."

Silencing some internal feelings of doubt and reluctance by such reasoning as this, Markham Everard continued in his resolution to unite himself with Cromwell in the struggle which was evidently approaching betwixt the civil and military authorities; not as the course which, if at perfect liberty, he would have preferred adopting, but as the best choice between two dangerous extremities to which the times had reduced him. He could not help trembling, however, when he recollected that his father, though hitherto the admirer of Cromwell, as the implement by whom so many marvels had been wrought in England, might not be disposed to unite with his interest against that of the Long Parliament, of which he had been, till partly laid aside by continued indisposition, an active and leading member. This doubt also he was obliged to swallow or strangle, as he might; but consoled himself with the ready argument, that it was impossible his father could see matters in another light than that in which they occurred to himself.

Chapter the Seventh.

Determined at length to dispatch his packet to the General without delay, Colonel Everard approached the door of the apartment, in which, as was evident from the heavy breathing within, the prisoner Wildrake enjoyed a deep slumber, under the influence of liquor at once and of fatigue. In turning the key, the bolt, which was rather rusty, made a resistance so noisy, as partly to attract the sleeper's attention, though not to awake him. Everard stood by his bedside, as he heard him mutter, "Is it morning already, jailor? — Why, you dog, an you had but a cast of humanity in you, you would qualify your vile news with a cup of sack; — hanging is sorry work, my masters — and sorrow's dry."

"Up, Wildrake — up, thou ill-omened dreamer," said his friend, shaking him by the collar.

"Hands off!" answered the sleeper. — "I can climb a ladder without help, I trow." — He then sate up in the bed, and opening his eyes, stared around him, and exclaimed, "Zounds! Mark, is it only thou? I thought it was all over with me — fetters were struck from my legs — rope drawn round my gullet — irons knocked off my hands — hempen cravat tucked on — all ready for a dance in the open element upon slight footing."

"Truce with thy folly, Wildrake; sure the devil of drink, to whom thou hast, I think, sold thyself" —

"For a hogshead of sack," interrupted Wildrake; "the bargain was made in a cellar in the Vintry."

"I am as mad as thou art, to trust any thing to thee," said Markham; "I scarce believe thou hast thy senses yet."

"What should ail me?" said Wildrake — "I trust I have not tasted liquor in my sleep, saving that I dreamed of drinking small-beer with Old Noll, of his own brewing. But do not look so glum, man — I am the same Roger Wildrake that I ever was; as wild as a mallard, but as true as a game-cock. I am thine own chum, man — bound to thee by thy kind deeds — *devinctus beneficio* — there is Latin for it; and where is the thing thou wilt charge me with, that I wilt not, or dare not execute, were it to pick the devil's teeth with my rapier, after he had breakfasted upon round-heads?"

"You will drive me mad," said Everard. — "When I am about to intrust all I have most valuable on earth to your management, your conduct and language are those of a mere Bedlamite. Last night I made allowance for thy drunken fury; but who can endure thy morning madness? — it is unsafe for thyself and me, Wildrake — it is unkind — I might say ungrateful."

"Nay, do not say *that*, my friend," said the cavalier, with some show of feeling; "and do not judge of me with a severity that cannot apply to such as I am. We who have lost our all in these sad jars, who are compelled to shift for our living, not from day to day, but from meal to meal — we whose only hiding place is the jail, whose prospect of final repose is the gallows — what canst thou expect from us, but to bear such a lot with a light heart, since we should break down under it with a heavy one?"

This was spoken in a tone of feeling which found a responding string in Everard's bosom. He took his friend's hand, and pressed it kindly.

"Nay, if I seemed harsh to thee, Wildrake, I profess it was for thine own sake more than mine. I know thou hast at the bottom of thy levity, as deep a principle of honour and feeling as ever governed a human heart. But thou art thoughtless — thou art rash — and I protest to thee, that wert thou to betray thyself in this matter, in which I trust thee, the evil consequences to myself would not afflict me more than the thought of putting thee into such danger."

"Nay, if you take it on that tone, Mark," said the cavalier, making an effort to laugh, evidently that he might conceal a tendency to a different emotion, "thou wilt make children of us both — babes and sucklings, by the hilt of this bilbo. — Come, trust me; I can be cautious when time requires it — no man ever saw me drink when an alert was expected — and not one poor pint of wine will I taste until I have managed this matter for thee. Well, I am thy secretary — clerk — I had forgot — and carry thy dispatches to Cromwell, taking good heed not to be surprised or choused out of my lump of loyalty, (striking his finger on the packet,) and I am to deliver it to the most loyal hands to which it is most humbly addressed — Adzooks, Mark, think of it a moment longer — Surely thou wilt not carry thy perverseness so far as to strike in with this bloody-minded rebel? — Bid me give him three inches of my dudgeon-dagger, and I will do it much more willingly than present him with thy packet."

"Go to," replied Everard, "this is beyond our bargain. If you will help me it is well; if not, let me lose no time in debating with thee, since I think every moment an age till the packet is in the General's possession. It is the only way left me to obtain some protection, and a place of refuge for my uncle and his daughter."

"That being the case," said the cavalier, "I will not spare the spur. My nag up yonder at the town will be ready for the road in a trice, and thou mayst reckon on my being with Old Noll — thy General, I mean — in as short time as man and horse may consume betwixt Woodstock and Windsor, where I think I shall for the present find thy friend keeping possession where he has slain."

"Hush, not a word of that. Since we parted last night, I have shaped thee a path which will suit thee better than to assume the decency of language and of outward manner, of which thou hast so little. I have acquainted the General that thou hast been by bad example and bad education" —

"Which is to be interpreted by contraries, I hope," said Wildrake; "for sure I have been as well born and bred up as any lad of Leicestershire might desire."

"Now, I prithee, hush — thou hast, I say, by bad example become at one time a malignant, and mixed in the party of the late King. But seeing what things were wrought in the nation by the General, thou hast come to a clearness touching his calling to be a great implement in the settlement of these distracted kingdoms. This account of thee will not only lead him to pass over some of thy eccentricities, should they break out in spite of thee, but will also give thee an interest with him as being more especially attached to his own person."

"Doubtless," said Wildrake, "as every fisher loves best the trouts that are of his own tickling."

"It is likely, I think, he will send thee hither with letters to me," said the Colonel, "enabling me to put a stop to the proceedings of these sequestrators, and to give poor old Sir Henry Lee permission to linger out his days among the oaks he loves to look upon. I have made this my request to General Cromwell, and I think my father's friendship and my own may stretch so far on his regard without risk of cracking, especially standing matters as they now do — thou dost understand?"

"Entirely well," said the cavalier; "stretch, quotha! — I would rather stretch a rope than hold commerce with the old King-killing ruffian. But I have said I will be guided by thee, Markham, and rat me but I will."

"Be cautious, then," said Everard, "mark well what he does and says — more especially what he does; for Oliver is one of those whose mind is better known by his actions than by his words; and stay — I warrant thee thou wert setting off without a cross in thy purse?"

"Too true, Mark," said Wildrake; "the last noble melted last night among yonder blackguard troopers of yours."

"Well, Roger," replied the Colonel, "that is easily mended." So saying, he slipped his purse into his friend's hand. "But art thou not an inconsiderate weather-brained fellow, to set forth as thou wert about to do, without any thing to bear thy charges; what couldst thou have done?"

"Faith, I never thought of that; I must have cried *Stand*, I suppose, to the first pursy townsman or greasy grazier that I met o' the heath — it is many a good fellow's shift in these bad times."

"Go to," said Everard; "be cautious — use none of your loose acquaintance — rule your tongue — beware of the wine-pot — for there is little danger if thou couldst only but keep thyself sober — Be moderate in speech, and forbear oaths or vaunting."

"In short, metamorphose myself into such a prig as thou art, Mark — Well," said Wildrake, "so far as outside will go, I think I can make a *Hope-on-High-Bomby*¹ as well as thou canst. Ah! those were merry days when we saw Mills present Bomby at the Fortune playhouse, Mark, ere I had lost my laced cloak and the jewel in my ear, or thou hadst gotten the wrinkle on thy brow, and the puritanic twist of thy mustache!"

"They were like most worldly pleasures, Wildrake," replied Everard, "sweet in the mouth and bitter in digestion. — But away with thee; and when thou bring'st back my answer, thou wilt find me either here or at Saint George's Inn, at the little borough. — Good luck to thee — Be but cautious how thou bearest thyself."

The Colonel remained in deep meditation. — "I think," he said, "I have not pledged myself too far to the General. A breach between him and the Parliament seems inevitable, and would throw England back into civil war, of which all men are wearied. He may dislike my messenger — yet that I do not greatly fear. He knows I would choose such as I can myself depend on, and hath dealt enough with the stricter sort to be aware that there are among them, as well as elsewhere, men who can hide two faces under one hood."

Chapter the Eighth.

*For there in lofty air was seen to stand
The stern Protector of the conquer'd land;
Draw in that look with which he wept and swore,
Turn'd out the members and made fast the door,
Ridding the house of every knave and drone,
Forced — though it grieved his soul — to rule alone.*

Leaving Colonel Everard to his meditations, we follow the jolly cavalier, his companion, who, before mounting at the George, did not fail to treat himself to his morning-draught of eggs and muscadine, to enable him to face the harvest wind.

Although he had suffered himself to be sunk in the extravagant license which was practised by the cavaliers, as if to oppose their conduct in every point to the preciseness of their enemies, yet Wildrake, well-born and well-educated, and endowed with good natural parts, and a heart which even debauchery, and the wild life of a roaring cavalier, had not been able entirely to corrupt, moved on his present embassy with a strange mixture of feelings, such as perhaps he had never in his life before experienced.

His feelings as a loyalist led him to detest Cromwell, whom in other circumstances he would scarce have wished to see, except in a field of battle, where he could have had the pleasure to exchange pistol-shots with him. But with this hatred there was mixed a certain degree of fear. Always victorious wherever he fought, the remarkable person whom Wildrake was now approaching had acquired that influence over the minds of his enemies, which constant success is so apt to inspire — they dreaded while they hated him — and joined to these feelings, was a restless meddling curiosity, which made a particular feature in Wildrake's character, who, having long had little business of his own, and caring nothing about that which he had, was easily attracted by the desire of seeing whatever was curious or interesting around him.

"I should like to see the old rascal after all," he said, "were it but to say that I *had* seen him."

He reached Windsor in the afternoon, and felt on his arrival the strongest inclination to take up his residence at some of his old haunts, when he had occasionally frequented that fair town in gayer days. But resisting all temptations of this kind, he went courageously to the principal inn, from which its ancient emblem, the Garter, had long disappeared. The master, too, whom Wildrake, experienced in his knowledge of landlords and hostleries, had remembered a dashing Mine Host of Queen Bess's school, had now sobered down to the temper of the times, shook his head when he spoke of the Parliament, wielded his spigot with the gravity of a priest conducting a sacrifice, wished England a happy issue out of all her difficulties, and greatly lauded his Excellency the Lord-General. Wildrake also remarked, that his wine was better than it was wont to be, the Puritans having an excellent gift at detecting every fallacy in that matter; and that his measures were less and his charges larger — circumstances which he was induced to attend to, by mine host talking a good deal about his conscience.

He was told by this important personage, that the Lord-General received frankly all sorts of persons; and that he might obtain access to him next morning, at eight o'clock, for the trouble of presenting himself at the Castle-gate, and announcing himself as the bearer of despatches to his Excellency.

To the Castle the disguised cavalier repaired at the hour appointed. Admittance was freely permitted to him by the red-coated soldier, who, with austere looks, and his musket on his shoulder, mounted guard at the external gate of that noble building. Wildrake passed through the underward or court, gazing as he passed upon the beautiful Chapel, which had but lately received, in darkness and silence, the unhonoured remains of the slaughtered King of England. Rough as Wildrake was, the recollection of this circumstance affected him so strongly, that he had nearly turned back in a sort of horror, rather than face the dark and daring man, to whom, amongst all the actors in that melancholy affair, its tragic conclusion was chiefly to be imputed. But he felt the necessity of subduing all sentiments of this nature, and compelled himself to proceed in a negotiation intrusted to his conduct by one to whom he was so much obliged as Colonel Everard. At the ascent, which passed by the Round Tower, he looked to the ensign-staff, from which the banner of England was wont to float. It was gone, with all its rich emblazonry, its gorgeous quarterings, and splendid embroidery; and in its room waved that of the Commonwealth, the cross of Saint George, in its colours of blue and red, not yet intersected by the diagonal cross of Scotland, which was soon after assumed, as if in evidence of England's conquest over her ancient enemy. This change of ensigns increased the train of his gloomy reflections, in which, although contrary to his wont, he became so deeply wrapped, that the first thing which recalled him to himself, was the challenge from the sentinel, accompanied with a stroke of the butt of his musket on the pavement, with an emphasis which made Wildrake start.

"Whither away, and who are you?"

"The bearer of a packet," answered Wildrake, "to the worshipful the Lord-General."

"Stand till I call the officer of the guard."

The corporal made his appearance, distinguished above those of his command by a double quantity of band round his neck, a double height of steeple-crowned hat, a larger allowance of cloak, and a treble proportion of sour gravity of aspect. It might be read on his countenance, that he was one of those resolute enthusiasts to whom Oliver owed his conquests, whose religious zeal made them even more than a match for the high-spirited and high-born cavaliers, who exhausted their valour in vain defence of their sovereign's person and crown. He looked with grave solemnity at Wildrake, as if he was making in his own mind an inventory of his features and dress; and having fully perused them, he required "to know his business."

"My business," said Wildrake, as firmly as he could — for the close investigation of this man had given him some unpleasant nervous sensations — "my business is with your General."

"With his Excellency the Lord-General, thou wouldst say?" replied the corporal. "Thy speech, my friend, savours too little of the reverence due to his Excellency."

"D— n his Excellency!" was at the lips of the cavalier; but prudence kept guard, and permitted not the offensive words to escape the barrier. He only bowed, and was silent.

"Follow me," said the starched figure whom he addressed; and Wildrake followed him accordingly into the guard-house, which exhibited an interior characteristic of the times, and very different from what such military stations present at the present day.

By the fire sat two or three musketeers, listening to one who was expounding some religious mystery to them. He began half beneath his breath, but in tones of great volubility, which tones, as he approached the conclusion, became sharp and eager, as challenging either instant answer or silent acquiescence. The audience seemed to listen to the speaker with immovable features, only answering him with clouds of tobacco-smoke, which they rolled from under their thick mustaches. On a bench lay a soldier on his face: whether asleep, or in a fit of contemplation, it was impossible to decide. In the midst of the floor stood an officer, as he seemed by his embroidered shoulder-belt and scarf round his waist, otherwise very plainly attired, who was engaged in drilling a stout bumpkin, lately enlisted, to the manual, as it was then used. The motions and words of command were twenty at the very least; and until they were regularly brought to an end, the corporal did not permit Wildrake either to sit down or move forward beyond the threshold of the guard-house. So he had to listen in succession to — Poise your musket — Rest your musket — Cock your musket — Handle your primers — and many other forgotten words of discipline, until at length the words, "Order your musket," ended the drill for the time. "Thy name, friend?" said the officer to the recruit, when the lesson was over.

"Ephraim," answered the fellow, with an affected twang through the nose.

"And what besides Ephraim?"

"Ephraim Cobb, from the goodly city of Gloucester, where I have dwelt for seven years, serving apprentice to a praiseworthy cordwainer."

"It is a goodly craft," answered the officer; "but casting in thy lot with ours, doubt not that thou shalt be set beyond thine awl, and thy last to boot."

A grim smile of the speaker accompanied this poor attempt at a pun; and then turning round to the corporal, who stood two paces off, with the face of one who seemed desirous of speaking, said, "How now, corporal, what tidings?"

"Here is one with a packet, an please your Excellency," said the corporal — "Surely my spirit doth not rejoice in him, seeing I esteem him as a wolf in sheep's clothing."

By these words, Wildrake learned that he was in the actual presence of the remarkable person to whom he was commissioned; and he paused to consider in what manner he ought to address him.

The figure of Oliver Cromwell was, as is generally known, in no way prepossessing. He was of middle stature, strong and coarsely made, with harsh and severe features, indicative, however, of much natural sagacity and depth of thought. His eyes were grey and piercing; his nose too large in proportion to his other features, and of a reddish hue.

His manner of speaking, when he had the purpose to make himself distinctly understood, was energetic and forcible, though neither graceful nor eloquent. No man could on such occasion put his meaning into fewer and more decisive words. But when, as it often happened, he had a mind to play the orator, for the benefit of people's ears, without enlightening their understanding, Cromwell was wont to invest his meaning, or that which seemed to be his meaning, in such a mist of words, surrounding it with so many exclusions and exceptions, and fortifying it with such a labyrinth of parentheses, that though one of the most shrewd men in England, he was, perhaps, the most unintelligible speaker that ever perplexed an audience. It has been long since said by the historian, that a collection of the Protector's speeches would make, with a few exceptions, the most nonsensical book in the world; but he ought to have added, that nothing could be more nervous, concise, and intelligible, than what he really intended should be understood.

It was also remarked of Cromwell, that though born of a good family, both by father and mother, and although he had the usual opportunities of education and breeding connected with such an advantage, the fanatic democratic ruler could never acquire, or else disdained to practise, the courtesies usually exercised among the higher classes in their intercourse with each other. His demeanour was so blunt as sometimes might be termed clownish, yet there was in his language and manner a force and energy corresponding to his character, which impressed awe, if it did not impose respect; and there were even times when that dark and subtle spirit expanded itself, so as almost to conciliate affection. The turn for humour, which displayed itself by fits, was broad, and of a low, and sometimes practical character. Something there was in his disposition congenial to that of his countrymen; a contempt of folly, a hatred of affectation, and a dislike of ceremony, which, joined to the strong intrinsic qualities of sense and courage, made him in many respects not an unfit representative of the democracy of England.

His religion must always be a subject of much doubt, and probably of doubt which he himself could hardly have cleared up. Unquestionably there was a time in his life when he was sincerely enthusiastic, and when his natural temper, slightly subject to hypochondria, was strongly agitated by the same fanaticism which influenced so many persons of the time. On the other hand, there were periods during his political career, when we certainly do him no injustice in charging him with a hypocritical affectation. We shall probably judge him, and others of the same age, most truly, if we suppose that their religious professions were partly influential in their own breasts, partly assumed in compliance with their own interest. And so ingenious is the human heart in deceiving itself as well as others, that it is probable neither Cromwell himself, nor those making similar pretensions to distinguished piety, could exactly have fixed the point at which their enthusiasm terminated and their hypocrisy commenced; or rather, it was a point not fixed in itself, but fluctuating with the state of health, of good or bad fortune, of high or low spirits, affecting the individual at the period.

Such was the celebrated person, who, turning round on Wildrake, and scanning his countenance closely, seemed so little satisfied with what he beheld, that he instinctively hitched forward his belt, so as to bring the handle of his tuck-sword within his reach. But yet, folding his arms in his cloak, as if upon second thoughts laying aside suspicion, or thinking precaution beneath him, he asked the cavalier what he was, and whence he came?

"A poor gentleman, sir — that is, my lord," — answered Wildrake; "last from Woodstock."

"And what may your tidings be, sir *gentleman*?" said Cromwell, with an emphasis. "Truly I have seen those most willing to take upon them that title, bear themselves somewhat short of wise men, and good men, and true men, with all their gentility; yet gentleman was a good title in old England, when men remembered what it was construed to mean."

"You say truly, sir," replied Wildrake, suppressing, with difficulty, some of his usual wild expletives; "formerly gentlemen were found in gentlemen's places, but now the world is so changed that you shall find the brodered belt has changed place with the under spur-leather."

"Say'st thou me?" said the General; "I profess thou art a bold companion, that can bandy words so wantonly; — thou ring'st somewhat too loud to be good metal, methinks. And, once again, what are thy tidings with me?"

"This packet," said Wildrake, "commended to your hands by Colonel Markham Everard."

"Alas, I must have mistaken thee," answered Cromwell, mollified at the mention of a man's name whom he had great desire to make his own; "forgive us, good friend, for such, we doubt not, thou art. Sit thee down, and commune with thyself as thou may'st, until we have examined the contents of thy packet. Let him be looked to, and have what he lacks." So saying the General left the guard-house, where Wildrake took his seat in the corner, and awaited with patience the issue of his mission.

The soldiers now thought themselves obliged to treat him with more consideration, and offered him a pipe of Trinidado, and a black jack filled with October. But the look of Cromwell, and the dangerous situation in which he might be placed by the least chance of detection, induced Wildrake to decline these hospitable offers, and stretching back in his chair, and affecting slumber, he escaped notice or conversation, until a sort of aide-de-camp, or military officer in attendance, came to summon him to Cromwell's presence.

By this person he was guided to a postern-gate, through which he entered the body of the Castle, and penetrating through many private passages and staircases, he at length was introduced into a small cabinet, or parlour, in which was much rich furniture, some bearing the royal cipher displayed, but all confused and disarranged, together with several paintings in massive frames, having their faces turned towards the wall, as if they had been taken down for the purpose of being removed.

In this scene of disorder, the victorious General of the Commonwealth was seated in a large easy-chair, covered with damask, and deeply embroidered, the splendour of which made a strong contrast with the plain, and even homely character of his apparel; although in look and action he seemed like one who felt that the seat which might have in former days held a prince, was not too much distinguished for his own fortunes and ambition. Wildrake stood before him, nor did he ask him to sit down.

"Pearson," said Cromwell, addressing himself to the officer in attendance, "wait in the gallery, but be within call." Pearson bowed, and was retiring. "Who are in the gallery beside?"

"Worthy Mr. Gordon, the chaplain, was holding forth but now to Colonel Overton, and four captains of your Excellency's regiment."

"We would have it so," said the General; "we would not there were any corner in our dwelling where the hungry soul might not meet with manna. Was the good man carried onward in his discourse?"

"Mightily borne through," said Pearson; "and he was touching the rightful claims which the army, and especially your Excellency, hath acquired by becoming the instruments in the great work; — not instruments to be broken asunder and cast away when the day of their service is over, but to be preserved, and held precious, and prized for their honourable and faithful labours, for which they have fought and marched, and fasted, and prayed, and suffered cold and sorrow; while others, who would now gladly see them disbanded, and broken, and cashiered, eat of the fat, and drink of the strong."

"Ah, good man!" said Cromwell, "and did he touch upon this so feelingly! I could say something — but not now. Begone, Pearson, to the gallery. Let not our friends lay aside their swords, but watch as well as pray."

Pearson retired; and the General, holding the letter of Everard in his hand, looked again for a long while fixedly at Wildrake, as if considering in what strain he should address him.

When he did speak, it was, at first, in one of those ambiguous discourses which we have already described, and by which it was very difficult for any one to understand his meaning, if, indeed, he knew himself. We shall be as concise in our statement, as our desire to give the very words of a man so extraordinary will permit.

"This letter," he said, "you have brought us from your master, or patron, Markham Everard; truly an excellent and honourable gentleman as ever bore a sword upon his thigh, and one who hath ever distinguished himself in the great work of delivering these three poor unhappy nations. Answer me not: I know what thou wouldst say. — And this letter he hath sent to me by thee, his clerk, or secretary, in whom he hath confidence, and in whom he prays me to have trust, that there may be a careful messenger between us. And lastly, he hath sent thee to me — Do not answer — I know what thou wouldst say — to me, who, albeit, I am of that small consideration, that it would be too much honour for me even to bear a halberd in this great and victorious army of England, am nevertheless exalted to the

rank of holding the guidance and the leading-staff thereof. — Nay, do not answer, my friend — I know what thou wouldst say. Now, when communing thus together, our discourse taketh, in respect to what I have said, a threefold argument, or division: First, as it concerneth thy master; secondly, as it concerneth us and our office; thirdly and lastly, as it toucheth thyself. — Now, as concerning this good and worthy gentleman, Colonel Markham Everard, truly he hath played the man from the beginning of these unhappy buffetings, not turning to the right or to the left, but holding ever in his eye the mark at which he aimed. Ay, truly, a faithful, honourable gentleman, and one who may well call me friend; and truly I am pleased to think that he doth so. Nevertheless, in this vale of tears, we must be governed less by our private respects and partialities, than by those higher principles and points of duty, whereupon the good Colonel Markham Everard hath ever framed his purposes, as, truly, I have endeavoured to form mine, that we may all act as becometh good Englishmen and worthy patriots. Then, as for Woodstock, it is a great thing which the good Colonel asks, that it should be taken from the spoil of the godly and left in keeping of the men of Moab, and especially of the malignant, Henry Lee, whose hand hath been ever against us when he might find room to raise it; I say, he hath asked a great thing, both in respect of himself and me. For we of this poor but godly army of England, are holden, by those of the Parliament, as men who should render in spoil for them, but be no sharer of it ourselves; even as the buck, which the hounds pull to earth, furnisheth no part of their own food, but they are lashed off from the carcass with whips, like those which require punishment for their forwardness, not reward for their services. Yet I speak not this so much in respect of this grant of Woodstock, in regard, that, perhaps, their Lordships of the Council, and also the Committeemen of this Parliament, may graciously think they have given me a portion in the matter, in relation that my kinsman Desborough hath an interest allowed him therein; which interest, as he hath well deserved it for his true and faithful service to these unhappy and devoted countries, so it would ill become me to diminish the same to his prejudice, unless it were upon great and public respects. Thus thou seest how it stands with me, my honest friend, and in what mind I stand touching thy master's request to me; which yet I do not say that I can altogether, or unconditionally, grant or refuse, but only tell my simple thoughts with regard thereto. Thou understandest me, I doubt not?"

Now, Roger Wildrake, with all the attention he had been able to pay to the Lord-General's speech, had got so much confused among the various clauses of the harangue, that his brain was bewildered, like that of a country clown when he chances to get himself involved among a crowd of carriages, and cannot stir a step to get out of the way of one of them, without being in danger of being ridden over by the others.

The General saw his look of perplexity, and began a new oration, to the same purpose as before; spoke of his love for his kind friend the Colonel — his regard for his pious and godly kinsman, Master Desborough — the great importance of the Palace and Park of Woodstock — the determination of the Parliament that it should be confiscated, and the produce brought into the coffers of the state — his own deep veneration for the authority of Parliament, and his no less deep sense of the injustice done to the army — how it was his wish and will that all matters should be settled in an amicable and friendly manner, without self-seeking, debate, or strife, betwixt those who had been the hands acting, and such as had been the heads governing, in that great national cause — how he was willing, truly willing, to contribute to this work, by laying down, not his commission only, but his life also, if it were requested of him, or could be granted with safety to the poor soldiers, to whom, silly poor men, he was bound to be as a father, seeing that they had followed him with the duty and affection of children.

And here he arrived at another dead pause, leaving Wildrake as uncertain as before, whether it was or was not his purpose to grant Colonel Everard the powers he had asked for the protection of Woodstock against the Parliamentary Commissioners. Internally he began to entertain hopes that the justice of Heaven, or the effects of remorse, had confounded the regicide's understanding. But no — he could see nothing but sagacity in that steady stern eye, which, while the tongue poured forth its periphrastic language in such profusion, seemed to watch with severe accuracy the effect which his oratory produced on the listener.

"Egad," thought the cavalier to himself, becoming a little familiar with the situation in which he was placed, and rather impatient of a conversation — which led to no visible conclusion or termination, "If Noll were the devil himself, as he is the devil's darling, I will not be thus nose-led by him. I'll e'en brusque it a little, if he goes on at this rate, and try if I can bring him to a more intelligible mode of speaking."

Entertaining this bold purpose, but half afraid to execute it, Wildrake lay by for an opportunity of making the attempt, while Cromwell was apparently unable to express his own meaning. He was already beginning a third panegyric upon Colonel Everard, with sundry varied expressions of his own wish to oblige him, when Wildrake took the opportunity to strike in, on the General's making one of his oratorical pauses.

"So please you" he said bluntly, "your worship has already spoken on two topics of your discourse, your own worthiness, and that of my master, Colonel Everard. But, to enable me to do mine errand, it would be necessary to bestow a few words on the third head."

"The third?" said Cromwell.

"Ay," said Wildrake, "which, in your honour's subdivision of your discourse, touched on my unworthy self. What am I to do — what portion am I to have in this matter?"

Oliver started at once from the tone of voice he had hitherto used, and which somewhat resembled the purring of a domestic cat, into the growl of the tiger when about to spring. "*Thy* portion, jail-bird!" he exclaimed, "the gallows — thou shalt hang as high as Haman, if thou betray counsel! — But," he added, softening his voice, "keep it like a true man, and my favour will be the making of thee. Come hither — thou art bold, I see, though somewhat saucy. Thou hast been a malignant — so writes my worthy friend Colonel Everard; but thou hast now given up that falling cause. I tell thee, friend, not all that the Parliament or the army could do would have pulled down the Stewarts out of their high places, saving that Heaven had a controversy with them. Well, it is a sweet and comely thing to buckle on one's armour in behalf of Heaven's cause; otherwise truly, for mine own part, these men might have remained upon the throne even unto this day. Neither do I blame any for aiding them, until these successive great judgments have overwhelmed them and their house. I am not a bloody man, having in me the feeling of human frailty; but, friend, whosoever putteth his hand to the plough, in the great actings which are now on foot in these nations, had best beware that he do not look back; for, rely upon my simple word, that if you fail me, I will not spare on you one foot's length of the gallows of Haman. Let me therefore know, at a word, if the leaven of thy malignancy is altogether drubbed out of thee?" "Your honourable lordship," said the cavalier, shrugging up his shoulders, "has done that for most of us, so far as cudgelling to some tune can perform it."

"Say'st thou?" said the General, with a grim smile on his lip, which seemed to intimate that he was not quite inaccessible to flattery; "yea, truly, thou dost not lie in that — we have been an instrument. Neither are we, as I have already hinted, so severely bent against those who have striven against us as malignants, as others may be. The parliament-men best know their own interest and their own pleasure; but, to my poor thinking, it is full time to close these jars, and to allow men of all kinds the means of doing service to their country; and we think it will be thy fault if thou art not employed to good purpose for the state and thyself, on condition thou puttest away the old man entirely from thee, and givest thy earnest attention to what I have to tell thee."

"Your lordship need not doubt my attention," said the cavalier. And the republican General, after another pause, as one who gave his confidence not without hesitation, proceeded to explain his views with a distinctness which he seldom used, yet not without his being a little biassed now and then, by his long habits of circumlocution, which indeed he never laid entirely aside, save in the field of battle.

"Thou seest," he said, "my friend, how things stand with me. The Parliament, I care not who knows it, love me not — still less do the Council of State, by whom they manage the executive government of the kingdom. I cannot tell why thy nourish suspicion against me, unless it is because I will not deliver this poor innocent army, which has followed me in so many military actions, to be now pulled asunder, broken piecemeal and reduced, so that they who have protected the state at the expense of their blood, will not have, perchance, the means of feeding themselves by their labour; which, methinks, were hard measure, since it is taking from Esau his birthright, even without giving him a poor mess of pottage."

"Esau is likely to help himself, I think," replied Wildrake.

"Truly, thou say'st wisely," replied the General; "it is ill starving an armed man, if there is food to be had for taking — nevertheless, far be it from me to encourage rebellion, or want of due subordination to these our rulers. I would only petition, in a due and becoming, a sweet and harmonious manner, that they would listen to our conditions, and consider our necessities. But, sir, looking on me, and estimating me so little as they do, you must think that it would be a provocation in me towards the Council of State, as well as the Parliament, if, simply to gratify your worthy master, I were to act contrary to their purposes, or deny currency to the commission under their authority, which is as yet the highest in the State — and long may it be so for me! — to carry on the sequestration which they intend. And

would it not also be said, that I was lending myself to the malignant interest, affording this den of the blood-thirsty and lascivious tyrants of yore, to be in this our day a place of refuge to that old and inveterate Amalekite, Sir Henry Lee, to keep possession of the place in which he hath so long glorified himself? Truly it would be a perilous matter."

"Am I then to report," said Wildrake, "an it please you, that you cannot stead Colonel Everard in this matter?"

"Unconditionally, ay — but, taken conditionally, the answer may be otherwise," — answered Cromwell. "I see thou art not able to fathom my purpose, and therefore I will partly unfold it to thee. — But take notice, that, should thy tongue betray my counsel, save in so far as carrying it to thy master, by all the blood which has been shed in these wild times, thou shalt die a thousand deaths in one!"

"Do not fear me, sir," said Wildrake, whose natural boldness and carelessness of character was for the present time borne down and quelled, like that of falcon's in the presence of the eagle.

"Hear me, then," said Cromwell, "and let no syllable escape thee. Knowest thou not the young Lee, whom they call Albert, a malignant like his father, and one who went up with the young Man to that last ruffle which we had with him at Worcester — May we be grateful for the victory!"

"I know there is such a young gentleman as Albert Lee," said Wildrake.

"And knowest thou not — I speak not by way of prying into the good Colonel's secrets, but only as it behoves me to know something of the matter, that I may best judge how I am to serve him — Knowest thou not that thy master, Markham Everard, is a suitor after the sister of this same malignant, a daughter of the old Keeper, called Sir Henry Lee?"

"All this I have heard," said Wildrake, "nor can I deny that I believe in it."

"Well then, go to. — When the young man Charles Stewart fled from the field of Worcester, and was by sharp chase and pursuit compelled to separate himself from his followers, I know by sure intelligence that this Albert Lee was one of the last who remained with him, if not indeed the very last."

"It was devilish like him," said the cavalier, without sufficiently weighing his expressions, considering in what presence they were to be uttered — "And I'll uphold him with my rapier, to be a true chip of the old block!"

"Ha, swearest thou?" said the General. "Is this thy reformation?"

"I never swear, so please you," replied Wildrake, recollecting himself, "except there is some mention of malignants and cavaliers in my hearing; and then the old habit returns, and I swear like one of Goring's troopers."

"Out upon thee," said the General; "what can it avail thee to practise a profanity so horrible to the ears of others, and which brings no emolument to him who uses it?"

"There are, doubtless, more profitable sins in the world than the barren and unprofitable vice of swearing," was the answer which rose to the lips of the cavalier; but that was exchanged for a profession of regret for having given offence. The truth was, the discourse began to take a turn which rendered it more interesting than ever to Wildrake, who therefore determined not to lose the opportunity for obtaining possession of the secret that seemed to be suspended on Cromwells lips; and that could only be through means of keeping guard upon his own.

"What sort of a house is Woodstock?" said the General, abruptly.

"An old mansion," said Wildrake, in reply; "and, so far as I could judge by a single night's lodgings, having abundance of backstairs, also subterranean passages, and all the communications under ground, which are common in old raven-nests of the sort."

"And places for concealing priests, unquestionably," said Cromwell. "It is seldom that such ancient houses lack secret stalls wherein to mew up these calves of Bethel."

"Your Honour's Excellency," said Wildrake, "may swear to that."

"I swear not at all," replied the General, drily. — "But what think'st thou, good fellow? — I will ask thee a blunt question — Where will those two Worcester fugitives that thou wottest of be more likely to take shelter — and that they must be sheltered somewhere I well know — than, in this same old palace, with all the corners and concealment whereof young Albert hath been acquainted ever since his earliest infancy?"

"Truly," said Wildrake, making an effort to answer the question with seeming indifference, while the possibility of such an event, and its consequences, flashed fearfully upon his mind — "Truly, I should be of your honour's opinion, but that I think the company, who, by the commission of Parliament, have occupied Woodstock, are likely to fright them thence, as a cat scares doves from a pigeon-house. The neighbourhood, with reverence, of Generals Desborough and Harrison, will suit ill with fugitives from Worcester field."

"I thought as much, and so, indeed, would I have it," answered the General. "Long may it be ere our names shall be aught but a terror to our enemies. But in this matter, if thou art an active plotter for thy master's interest, thou might'st, I should think, work out something favourable to his present object."

"My brain is too poor to reach the depth of your honourable purpose," said Wildrake.

"Listen, then, and let it be to profit," answered Cromwell. "Assuredly the conquest at Worcester was a great and crowning mercy; yet might we seem to be but small in our thankfulness for the same, did we not do what in us lies towards the ultimate improvement and final conclusion of the great work which has been thus prosperous in our hands, professing, in pure humility and singleness of heart, that we do not, in any way, deserve our instrumentality to be remembered, nay, would rather pray and entreat, that our name and fortunes were forgotten, than that the great work were in itself incomplete. Nevertheless, truly, placed as we now are, it concerns us more nearly than others — that is, if so poor creatures should at all speak of themselves as concerned, whether more or less, with these changes which have been wrought around — not, I say, by ourselves, or our own power, but by the destiny to which we were called, fulfilling the same with all meekness and humility — I say it concerns us nearly that all things should be done in conformity with the great work which hath been wrought, and is yet working, in these lands. Such is my plain and simple meaning. Nevertheless, it is much to be desired that this young man, this King of Scots, as he called himself — this Charles Stewart — should not escape forth from the nation, where his arrival has wrought so much disturbance and bloodshed."

"I have no doubt," said the cavalier, looking down, "that your lordship's wisdom hath directed all things as they may best lead towards such a consummation; and I pray your pains may be paid as they deserve."

"I thank thee, friend," said Cromwell, with much humility; "doubtless we shall meet our reward, being in the hands of a good paymaster, who never passeth Saturday night. But understand me, friend — I desire no more than my own share in the good work. I would heartily do what poor kindness I can to your worthy master, and even to you in your degree — for such as I do not converse with ordinary men, that our presence may be forgotten like an every-day's occurrence. We speak to men like thee for their reward or their punishment; and I trust it will be the former which thou in thine office wilt merit at my hand."

"Your honour," said Wildrake, "speaks like one accustomed to command."

"True; men's minds are likened to those of my degree by fear and reverence," said the General; — "but enough of that, desiring, as I do, no other dependency on my special person than is alike to us all upon that which is above us. But I would desire to cast this golden ball into your master's lap. He hath served against this Charles Stewart and his father. But he is a kinsman near to the old knight Lee, and stands well affected towards his daughter. *Thou* also wilt keep a watch, my friend — that ruffling look of thine will procure thee the confidence of every malignant, and the prey cannot approach this cover, as though to shelter, like a coney in the rocks, but thou wilt be sensible of his presence."

"I make a shift to comprehend your Excellency," said the cavalier; "and I thank you heartily for the good opinion you have put upon me, and which, I pray I may have some handsome opportunity of deserving, that I may show my gratitude by the event. But still, with reverence, your Excellency's scheme seems unlikely, while Woodstock remains in possession of the sequestrators. Both the old knight and his son, and far more such a fugitive as your honor hinted at, will take special care not to approach it till they are removed."

"It is for that I have been dealing with thee thus long," said the General. — "I told thee that I was something unwilling, upon slight occasion, to dispossess the sequestrators by my own proper warrant, although having, perhaps, sufficient authority in the state both to do so, and to despise the murmurs of those who blame

me. In brief, I would be both to tamper with my privileges, and make experiments between their strength, and the powers of the commission granted by others, without pressing need, or at least great prospect of advantage. So, if thy Colonel will undertake, for his love of the Republic, to find the means of preventing its worst and nearest danger, which must needs occur from the escape of this young Man, and will do his endeavour to stay him, in case his flight should lead him to Woodstock, which I hold very likely, I will give thee an order to these sequestrators, to evacuate the palace instantly; and to the next troop of my regiment, which lies at Oxford, to turn them out by the shoulders, if they make any scruples — Ay, even, for example's sake, if they drag Desborough out foremost, though he be wedded to my sister."

"So please you, sir," said Wildrake, "and with your most powerful warrant, I trust I might expel the commissioners, even without the aid of your most warlike and devout troopers."

"That is what I am least anxious about," replied the General; "I should like to see the best of them sit after I had nodded to them to begone — always excepting the worshipful House, in whose name our commissions run; but who, as some think, will be done with politics ere it be time to renew them. Therefore, what chiefly concerns me to know, is, whether thy master will embrace a traffic which hath such a fair promise of profit with it. I am well convinced that, with a scout like thee, who hast been in the cavaliers' quarters, and canst, I should guess, resume thy drinking, ruffianly, health-quaffing manners whenever thou hast a mind, he must discover where this Stewart hath ensconced himself. Either the young Lee will visit the old one in person, or he will write to him, or hold communication with him by letter. At all events, Markham Everard and thou must have an eye in every hair of your head." While he spoke, a flush passed over his brow, he rose from his chair, and paced the apartment in agitation. "Woe to you, if you suffer the young adventurer to escape me! — you had better be in the deepest dungeon in Europe, than breathe the air of England, should you but dream of playing me false. I have spoken freely to thee, fellow — more freely than is my wont — the time required it. But, to share my confidence is like keeping a watch over a powder-magazine, the least and most insignificant spark blows thee to ashes. Tell your master what I said — but not how I said it — Fie, that I should have been betrayed into this distemperature of passion! — begone, sirrah. Pearson shall bring thee sealed orders — Yet, stay — thou hast something to ask."

"I would know," said Wildrake, to whom the visible anxiety of the General gave some confidence, "what is the figure of this young gallant, in case I should find him?"

"A tall, rawboned, swarthy lad, they say he has shot up into. Here is his picture by a good hand, some time since." He turned round one of the portraits which stood with its face against the wall; but it proved not to be that of Charles the Second, but of his unhappy father.

The first motion of Cromwell indicated a purpose of hastily replacing the picture, and it seemed as if an effort were necessary to repress his disinclination to look upon it. But he did repress it, and, placing the picture against the wall, withdrew slowly and sternly, as if, in defiance of his own feelings, he was determined to gain a place from which to see it to advantage. It was well for Wildrake that his dangerous companion had not turned an eye on him, for *his* blood also kindled when he saw the portrait of his master in the hands of the chief author of his death. Being a fierce and desperate man, he commanded his passion with great difficulty; and if, on its first violence, he had been provided with a suitable weapon, it is possible Cromwell would never have ascended higher in his bold ascent towards supreme power.

But this natural and sudden flash of indignation, which rushed through the veins of an ordinary man like Wildrake, was presently subdued, when confronted with the strong yet stifled emotion displayed by so powerful a character as Cromwell. As the cavalier looked on his dark and bold countenance, agitated by inward and indescribable feelings, he found his own violence of spirit die away and lose itself in fear and wonder. So true it is, that as greater lights swallow up and extinguish the display of those which are less, so men of great, capacious, and overruling minds, bear aside and subdue, in their climax of passion, the more feeble wills and passions of others; as, when a river joins a brook, the fiercer torrent shoulders aside the smaller stream.

Wildrake stood a silent, inactive, and almost a terrified spectator, while Cromwell, assuming a firm sternness of eye and manner, as one who compels himself to look on what some strong internal feeling renders painful and disgusting to him, proceeded, in brief and interrupted expressions, but yet with a firm voice, to comment on the portrait of the late King. His words seemed less addressed to Wildrake, than to be the spontaneous unburdening of his own bosom, swelling under recollection of the past and anticipation of the future.

"That Flemish painter" he said — "that Antonio Vandyck — what a power he has! Steel may mutilate, warriors may waste and destroy — still the King stands uninjured by time; and our grandchildren, while they read his history, may look on his image, and compare the melancholy features with the woful tale. — It was a stern necessity — it was an awful deed! The calm pride of that eye might have ruled worlds of crouching Frenchmen, or supple Italians, or formal Spaniards; but its glances only roused the native courage of the stern Englishman. — Lay not on poor sinful man, whose breath is in, his nostrils, the blame that he falls, when Heaven never gave him strength of nerves to stand! The weak rider is thrown by his unruly horse, and trampled to death — the strongest man, the best cavalier, springs to the empty saddle, and uses bit and spur till the fiery steed knows its master. Who blames him, who, mounted aloft, rides triumphantly amongst the people, for having succeeded, where the unskilful and feeble fell and died? Verily he hath his reward: Then, what is that piece of painted canvas to me more than others? No; let him show to others the reproaches of that cold, calm face, that proud yet complaining eye: Those who have acted on higher respects have no cause to start at painted shadows. Not wealth nor power brought me from my obscurity. The oppressed consciences, the injured liberties of England, were the banner that I followed."

He raised his voice so high, as if pleading in his own defence before some tribunal, that Pearson, the officer in attendance, looked into the apartment; and observing his master, with his eyes kindling, his arm extended, his foot advanced, and his voice raised, like a general in the act of commanding the advance of his army, he instantly withdrew.

"It was other than selfish regards that drew me forth to action," continued Cromwell, "and I dare the world — ay, living or dead I challenge — to assert that I armed for a private cause, or as a means of enlarging my fortunes. Neither was there a trooper in the regiment who came there with less of personal ill will to yonder unhappy" —

At this moment the door of the apartment opened, and a gentlewoman entered, who, from her resemblance to the General, although her features were soft and feminine, might be immediately recognised as his daughter. She walked up to Cromwell, gently but firmly passed her arm through his, and said to him in a persuasive tone, "Father, this is not well — you have promised me this should not happen."

The General hung down his head, like one who was either ashamed of the passion to which he had given way, or of the influence which was exercised over him. He yielded, however, to the affectionate impulse, and left the apartment, without again turning his head towards the portrait which had so much affected him, or looking towards Wildrake, who remained fixed in astonishment.

Chapter the Ninth.

DOCTOR. — *Go to, go to — You have known what you should not.*

MACBETH.

Wildrake was left in the cabinet, as we have said, astonished and alone. It was often noised about, that Cromwell, the deep and sagacious statesman, the calm and intrepid commander, he who had overcome such difficulties, and ascended to such heights, that he seemed already to bestride the land which he had conquered, had, like many other men of great genius, a constitutional taint of melancholy, which sometimes displayed itself both in words and actions, and had been first observed in that sudden and striking change, when, abandoning entirely the dissolute freaks of his youth, he embraced a very strict course of religious observances, which, upon some occasions, he seemed to consider as bringing him into more near and close contact with the spiritual world. This extraordinary man is said sometimes, during that period of his life, to have given way to spiritual delusions, or, as he himself conceived them, prophetic inspirations of approaching grandeur, and of strange, deep, and mysterious agencies, in which he was in future to be engaged, in the same manner as his younger years had been marked by fits of exuberant and excessive frolic and debaucheries. Something of this kind seemed to explain the ebullition of passion which he had now manifested.

With wonder at what he had witnessed, Wildrake felt some anxiety on his own account. Though not the most reflecting of mortals, he had sense enough to know, that it is dangerous to be a witness of the infirmities of men high in power; and he was left so long by himself, as induced him to entertain some secret doubts, whether the General might not be tempted to take means of confining or removing a witness, who had seen him lowered, as it seemed, by the suggestions of his own conscience, beneath that lofty flight, which, in general, he affected to sustain above the rest of the sublunary world.

In this, however, he wronged Cromwell, who was free either from an extreme degree of jealous suspicion, or from any thing which approached towards blood-thirstiness. Pearson appeared, after a lapse of about an hour, and, intimating to Wildrake that he was to follow, conducted him into a distant apartment, in which he found the General seated on a couch. His daughter was in the apartment, but remained at some distance, apparently busied with some female needle-work, and scarce turned her head as Pearson and Wildrake entered.

At a sign from the Lord-General, Wildrake approached him as before. "Comrade," he said, "your old friends the cavaliers look on me as their enemy, and conduct themselves towards me as if they desired to make me such. I profess they are labouring to their own prejudice; for I regard, and have ever regarded them, as honest and honourable fools, who were silly enough to run their necks into nooses and their heads against stonewalls, that a man called Stewart, and no other, should be king over them. Fools! are there no words made of letters that would sound as well as Charles Stewart, with that magic title beside them? Why, the word King is like a lighted lamp, that throws the same bright gilding upon any combination of the alphabet, and yet you must shed your blood for a name! But thou, for thy part, shalt have no wrong from me. Here is an order, well warranted, to clear the Lodge at Woodstock, and abandon it to thy master's keeping, or those whom he shall appoint. He will have his uncle and pretty cousin with him, doubtless. Fare thee well — think on what I told thee. They say beauty is a loadstone to yonder long lad thou dost wot of; but I reckon he has other stars at present to direct his course than bright eyes and fair hair. Be it as it may, thou knowst my purpose — peer out, peer out; keep a constant and careful look-out on every ragged patch that wanders by hedge-row or lane — these are days when a beggar's cloak may cover a king's ransom. There are some broad Portugal pieces for thee — something strange to thy pouch, I ween. — Once more, think on what thou hast heard, and," he added, in a lower and more impressive tone of voice, "forget what thou hast seen. My service to thy master; — and, yet once again, *remember*— and *forget*." — Wildrake made his obeisance, and, returning to his inn, left Windsor with all possible speed.

It was afternoon in the same day when the cavalier rejoined his round-head friend, who was anxiously expecting him at the inn in Woodstock appointed for their rendezvous.

"Where hast thou been? — what hast thou seen? — what strange uncertainty is in thy looks? — and why dost thou not answer me?"

"Because," said Wildrake, laying aside his riding cloak and rapier, "you ask so many questions at once. A man has but one tongue to answer with, and mine is well-nigh glued to the roof of my mouth."

"Will drink unloosen it?" said the Colonel; "though I dare say thou hast tried that spell at every ale-house on the road. Call for what thou wouldst have, man, only be quick."

"Colonel Everard," answered Wildrake, "I have not tasted so much as a cup of cold water this day."

"Then thou art out of humour for that reason," said the Colonel; "salve thy sore with brandy, if thou wilt, but leave being so fantastic and unlike to thyself, as thou showest in this silent mood."

"Colonel Everard," replied the cavalier, very gravely, "I am an altered man."

"I think thou dost alter," said Everard, "every day in the year, and every hour of the day. Come, good now, tell me, hast thou seen the General, and got his warrant for clearing out the sequestrators from Woodstock?"

"I have seen the devil," said Wildrake, "and have, as thou say'st, got a warrant from him."

"Give it me hastily," said Everard, catching at the packet.

"Forgive me, Mark," said Wildrake; "if thou knewest the purpose with which this deed is granted — if thou knewest — what it is not my purpose to tell thee — what manner of hopes are founded on thy accepting it, I have that opinion of thee, Mark Everard, that thou wouldst as soon take a red-hot horse-shoe from the anvil with thy bare hand, as receive into it this slip of paper."

"Come, come," said Everard, "this comes of some of your exalted ideas of loyalty, which, excellent within certain bounds, drive us mad when encouraged up to some heights. Do not think, since I must needs speak plainly with thee, that I see without sorrow the downfall of our ancient monarchy, and the substitution of another form of government in its stead; but ought my regret for the past to prevent my acquiescing and aiding in such measures as are likely to settle the future? The royal cause is ruined, hadst thou and every cavalier in England sworn the contrary; ruined, not to rise again — for many a day at least. The Parliament, so often draughted and drained of those who were courageous enough to maintain their own freedom of opinion, is now reduced to a handful of statesmen, who have lost the respect of the people, from the length of time during which they have held the supreme management of affairs. They cannot stand long unless they were to reduce the army; and the army, late servants, are now masters, and will refuse to be reduced. They know their strength, and that they may be an army subsisting on pay and free quarters throughout England as long as they will. I tell thee, Wildrake, unless we look to the only man who can rule and manage them, we may expect military law throughout the land; and I, for mine own part, look for any preservation of our privileges that may be vouchsafed to us, only through the wisdom and forbearance of Cromwell. Now you have my secret. You are aware that I am not doing the best I would, but the best I can. I wish — not so ardently as thou, perhaps — yet I *do* wish that the King could have been restored on good terms of composition, safe for us and for himself. And now, good Wildrake, rebel as thou thinkest me, make me no worse a rebel than an unwilling one. God knows, I never laid aside love and reverence to the King, even in drawing my sword against his ill advisers."

"Ah, plague on you," said Wildrake, "that is the very cant of it — that's what you all say. All of you fought against the King in pure love and loyalty, and not otherwise. However, I see your drift, and I own that I like it better than I expected. The army is your bear now, and old Noll is your bearward; and you are like a country constable, who makes interest with the bearward that he may prevent him from letting bruin loose. Well, there may come a day when the sun will shine on our side of the fence, and thereon shall you, and all the good fair-weather folks who love the stronger party, come and make common cause with us."

Without much attending to what his friend said, Colonel Everard carefully studied the warrant of Cromwell. "It is bolder and more peremptory than I expected," he said. "The General must feel himself strong, when he opposes his own authority so directly to that of the Council of State and the Parliament."

"You will not hesitate to act upon it?" said Wildrake.

"That I certainly will not," answered Everard; "but I must wait till I have the assistance of the Mayor, who, I think, will gladly see these fellows ejected from the Lodge. I must not go altogether upon military authority, if possible." Then, stepping to the door of the apartment, he despatched a servant of the house in quest of the Chief Magistrate, desiring he should be made acquainted that Colonel Everard desired to see him with as little loss of time as possible.

"You are sure he will come, like a dog at a whistle," said Wildrake. "The word captain, or colonel, makes the fat citizen trot in these days, when one sword is worth fifty corporation charters. But there are dragoons yonder, as well as the grim-faced knave whom I frightened the other evening when I showed my face in at the window. Think'st thou the knaves will show no rough play?"

"The General's warrant will weigh more with them than a dozen acts of Parliament," said Everard. — "But it is time thou eatest, if thou hast in truth ridden from Windsor hither without baiting."

"I care not about it," said Wildrake: "I tell thee, your General gave me a breakfast, which, I think, will serve me one while, if I am ever able to digest it. By the mass, it lay so heavy on my conscience, that I carried it to church to see if I could digest it there with my other sins. But not a whit."

"To church! — to the door of the church, thou meanest," said Everard. "I know thy way — thou art ever wont to pull thy hat off reverently at the threshold; but for crossing it, that day seldom comes."

"Well," replied Wildrake, "and if I do pull off my castor and kneel, is it not seemly to show the same respects in a church which we offer in a palace? It is a dainty matter, is it not, to see your Anabaptists, and Brownists, and the rest of you, gather to a sermon with as little ceremony as hogs to a trough! But here comes food, and now for a grace, if I can remember one."

Everard was too much interested about the fate of his uncle and his fair cousin, and the prospect of restoring them to their quiet home, under the protection of that formidable truncheon which was already regarded as the leading-staff of England, to remark, that certainly a great alteration had taken place in the manners and outward behaviour at least of his companion. His demeanour frequently evinced a sort of struggle betwixt old habits of indulgence, and some newly formed resolutions of abstinence; and it was almost ludicrous to see how often the hand of the neophyte directed itself naturally to a large black leathern jack, which contained two double flagons of strong ale, and how often, diverted from its purpose by the better reflections of the reformed toper, it seized, instead, upon a large ewer of salubrious and pure water.

It was not difficult to see that the task of sobriety was not yet become easy, and that, if it had the recommendation of the intellectual portion of the party who had resolved upon it, the outward man yielded a reluctant and restive compliance. But honest Wildrake had been dreadfully frightened at the course proposed to him by Cromwell, and, with a feeling not peculiar to the Catholic religion, had formed a solemn resolution within his own mind, that, if he came off safe and with honour from this dangerous interview, he would show his sense of Heaven's favour, by renouncing some of the sins which most easily beset him, and especially that of intemperance, to which, like many of his wild compeers, he was too much addicted.

This resolution, or vow, was partly prudential as well as religious; for it occurred to him as very possible, that some matters of a difficult and delicate nature might be thrown into his hands at the present emergency, during the conduct of which it would be fitting for him to act by some better oracle than that of the Bottle, celebrated by Rabelais. In full compliance with this prudent determination, he touched neither the ale nor the brandy which were placed before him, and declined peremptorily the sack with which his friend would have garnished the board. Nevertheless, just as the boy removed the trenchers and napkins, together with the large black-jack which we have already mentioned, and was one or two steps on his way to the door, the sinewy arm of the cavalier, which seemed to elongate itself on purpose, (as it extended far beyond the folds of the threadbare jacket,) arrested the progress of the retiring Ganymede, and seizing on the black-jack, conveyed it to the lips, which were gently breathing forth the aspiration, "D— n — I mean. Heaven forgive me — we are poor creatures of clay — one modest sip must be permitted to our frailty."

So murmuring, he glued the huge flagon to his lips, and as the head was slowly and gradually inclined backwards, in proportion as the right hand elevated the bottom of the pitcher, Everard had great doubts whether the drinker and the cup were likely to part until the whole contents of the latter had been transferred to the person of the former. Roger Wildrake stinted, however, when, by a moderate computation, he had swallowed at one draught about a quart and a half.

He then replaced it on the salver, fetched a long breath to refresh his lungs, bade the boy get him gone with the rest of the liquors, in a tone which inferred some dread of his constancy, and then, turning to his friend Everard, he expatiated in praise of moderation, observing, that the mouthful which he had just taken had been of more service to him than if he had remained quaffing healths at table for four hours together.

His friend made no reply, but could not help being privately of opinion that Wildrake's temperance had done as much execution on the tankard in his single draught, as some more moderate topers might have effected if they had sat sipping for an evening. But the subject was changed by the entrance of the landlord, who came to announce to his honour Colonel Everard, that the worshipful Mayor of Woodstock, with the Rev. Master Holdenough, were come to wait upon him.

Chapter the Tenth.

Here we have one head

Upon two bodies — your two-headed bullock

Is but an ass to such a prodigy.

These two have but one meaning, thought, and counsel:

And when the single noddle has spoke out,

The four legs scrape assent to it.

OLD PLAY.

In the goodly form of the honest Mayor, there was a bustling mixture of importance and embarrassment, like the deportment of a man who was conscious that he had an important part to act, if he could but exactly discover what that part was. But both were mingled with much pleasure at seeing Everard, and he frequently repeated his welcomes and all-hails before he could be brought to attend to what that gentleman said in reply.

"Good, worthy Colonel, you are indeed a desirable sight to Woodstock at all times, being, as I may say, almost our townsman, as you have dwelt so much and so long at the palace. Truly, the matter begins almost to pass my wit, though I have transacted the affairs of this borough for many a long day; and you are come to my assistance like, like"—

"*Tanquam Deus ex machina*, as the Ethnic poet hath it," said Master Holdenough, "although I do not often quote from such books. — Indeed, Master Markham Everard — or worthy Colonel, as I ought rather to say — you are simply the most welcome man who has come to Woodstock since the days of old King Harry."

"I had some business with you, my good friend," said the Colonel, addressing the Mayor; "I shall be glad if it should so happen at the same time, that I may find occasion to pleasure you or your worthy pastor."

"No question you can do so, good sir," interposed Master Holdenough; "you have the heart, sir, and you have the hand; and we are much in want of good counsel, and that from a man of action. I am aware, worthy Colonel, that you and your worthy father have ever borne yourselves in these turmoils like men of a truly Christian and moderate spirit, striving to pour oil into the wounds of the land, which some would rub with vitriol and pepper: and we know you are faithful children of that church which we have reformed from its papistical and prelatical tenets."

"My good and reverend friend," said Everard, "I respect the piety and learning of many of your teachers; but I am also for liberty of conscience to all men. I neither side with sectaries, nor do I desire to see them the object of suppression by violence."

"Sir, sir," said the Presbyterian, hastily, "all this hath a fair sound; but I would you should think what a fine country and church we are like to have of it, amidst the errors, blasphemies, and schisms, which are daily introduced into the church and kingdom of England, so that worthy Master Edwards, in his Gangrena, declareth, that our native country is about to become the very sink and cess-pool of all schisms, heresies, blasphemies, and confusions, as the army of Hannibal was said to be the refuse of all nations — *Colluvies omnium gentium*. — Believe me, worthy Colonel, that they of the Honourable House view all this over lightly, and with the winking connivance of old Eli. These instructors, the schismatics, shoulder the orthodox ministers out of their pulpits, thrust themselves into families, and break up the peace thereof, stealing away men's hearts from the established faith."

"My good Master Holdenough," replied the Colonel, interrupting the zealous preacher, "there is ground of sorrow for all these unhappy discords; and I hold with you, that the fiery spirits of the present time have raised men's minds at once above sober-minded and sincere religion, and above decorum and common sense. But there is no help save patience. Enthusiasm is a stream that may foam off in its own time, whereas it is sure to bear down every barrier which is directly opposed to it. — But what are these schismatical proceedings to our present purpose?"

"Why, partly this, sir," said Holdenough, "although perhaps you may make less of it than I should have thought before we met. — I was myself — I, Nehemiah Holdenough, (he added consequentially,) was forcibly expelled from my own pulpit, even as a man should have been thrust out of his own house, by an alien, and an intruder — a wolf, who was not at the trouble even to put on sheep's clothing, but came in his native wolfish attire of buff and bandalier, and held forth in my stead to the people, who are to me as a flock to the lawful shepherd. It is too true, sir — Master Mayor saw it, and strove to take such order to prevent it as man might, though," turning to the Mayor, "I think still you might have striven a little more."

"Good now, good Master Holdenough, do not let us go back on that question," said the Mayor. "Guy of Warwick, or Bevis of Hampton, might do something with this generation; but truly, they are too many and too strong for the Mayor of Woodstock."

"I think Master Mayor speaks very good sense," said the Colonel; "if the Independents are not allowed to preach, I fear me they will not fight; — and then if you were to have another rising of cavaliers?"

"There are worse folks may rise than cavaliers," said Holdenough.

"How, sir?" replied Colonel Everard. "Let me remind you, Master Holdenough, that is no safe language in the present state of the nation."

"I say," said the Presbyterian, "there are worse folk may rise than cavaliers; and I will prove what I say. The devil is worse than the worst cavalier that ever drank a health, or swore an oath — and the devil has arisen at Woodstock Lodge!"

"Ay, truly hath he," said the Mayor, "bodily and visibly, in figure and form — An awful time we live in!"

"Gentlemen, I really know not how I am to understand you," said Everard.

"Why, it was even about the devil we came to speak with you," said the Mayor; "but the worthy minister is always so hot upon the sectaries" —

"Which are the devil's brats, and nearly akin to him," said Master Holdenough. "But true it is, that the growth of these sects has brought up the Evil One even upon the face of the earth, to look after his own interest, where he finds it most thriving."

"Master Holdenough," said the Colonel, "if you speak figuratively, I have already told you that I have neither the means nor the skill sufficient to temper these religious heats. But if you design to say that there has been an actual apparition of the devil, I presume to think that you, with your doctrine and your learning, would be a fitter match for him than a soldier like me."

"True, sir; and I have that confidence in the commission which I hold, that I would take the field against the foul fiend without a moment's delay," said Holdenough; "but the place in which he hath of late appeared, being Woodstock, is filled with those dangerous and impious persons, of whom I have been but now complaining; and though, confident in my own resources, I dare venture in disputation with their Great Master himself; yet without your protection, most worthy Colonel, I see not that I may with prudence trust myself with the tossing and goading of Desborough, or the bloody and devouring bear Harrison, or the cold and poisonous snake Bletson — all of whom are now at the Lodge, doing license and taking spoil as they think meet; and, as all men say, the devil hath come to make a fourth with them."

"In good truth, worthy and noble sir," said the Mayor, "it is even as Master Holdenough says — our privileges are declared void, our cattle seized in the very pastures. They talk of cutting down and disparting the fair Chase, which has been so long the pleasure of so many kings, and making Woodstock of as little note as any paltry village. I assure you we heard of your arrival with joy, and wondered at your keeping yourself so close in your lodgings. We know no one save your father or you, that are like to stand the poor burgesses' friend in this extremity, since almost all the gentry around are malignants, and under sequestration. We trust, therefore, you will make strong intercession in our behalf."

"Certainly, Master Mayor," said the Colonel, who saw himself with pleasure anticipated; "it was my very purpose to have interfered in this matter; and I did but keep myself alone until I should be furnished with some authority from the Lord-General."

"Powers from the Lord-General!" said the Mayor, thrusting the clergy-man with his elbow — "Dost thou hear that? — What cock will fight that cock? — We shall carry it now over their necks, and Woodstock shall be brave Woodstock still!"

"Keep thine elbow from my side, friend," said Holdenough, annoyed by the action which the Mayor had suited to his words; "and may the Lord send that Cromwell prove not as sharp to the people of England as thy bones against my person! Yet I approve that we should use his authority to stop the course of these men's proceedings."

"Let us set out, then," said Colonel Everard; "and I trust we shall find the gentlemen reasonable and obedient."

The functionaries, laic and clerical, assented with much joy; and the Colonel required and received Wildrake's assistance in putting on his cloak and rapier, as if he had been the dependent whose part he acted. The cavalier contrived, however, while doing him these menial offices, to give his friend a shrewd pinch, in order to maintain the footing of secret equality betwixt them.

The Colonel was saluted, as they passed through the streets, by many of the anxious inhabitants, who seemed to consider his intervention as affording the only chance of saving their fine Park, and the rights of the corporation, as well as of individuals, from ruin and confiscation.

As they entered the Park, the Colonel asked his companions, "What is this you say of apparitions being seen amongst them?"

"Why, Colonel," said the clergyman, "you know yourself that Woodstock was always haunted?"

"I have lived therein many a day," said the Colonel; "and I know I never saw the least sign of it, although idle people spoke of the house as they do of all old mansions, and gave the apartments ghosts and spectres to fill up the places of as many of the deceased great, as had ever dwelt there."

"Nay, but, good Colonel," said the clergyman, "I trust you have not reached the prevailing sin of the times, and become indifferent to the testimony in favour of apparitions, which appears so conclusive to all but atheists, and advocates for witches?"

"I would not absolutely disbelieve what is so generally affirmed," said the Colonel; "but my reason leads me to doubt most of the stories which I have heard of this sort, and my own experience never went to confirm any of them."

"Ay, but trust me," said Holdenough, "there was always a demon of one or the other species about this Woodstock. Not a man or woman in the town but has heard stories of apparitions in the forest, or about the old castle. Sometimes it is a pack of hounds, that sweep along, and the whoops and halloos of the huntsmen, and the winding of horns and the galloping of horse, which is heard as if first more distant, and then close around you — and then anon it is a solitary huntsman, who asks if you can tell him which way the stag has gone. He is always dressed in green; but the fashion of his clothes is some five hundred years old. This is what we call Demon Meridianum — the noon-day spectre."

"My worthy and reverend sir," said the Colonel, "I have lived at Woodstock many seasons, and have traversed the Chase at all hours. Trust me, what you hear from the villagers is the growth of their idle folly and superstition."

"Colonel," replied Holdenough, "a negative proves nothing. What signifies, craving your pardon, that you have not seen anything, be it earthly or be it of the other world, to detract from the evidence of a score of people who have? — And besides, there is the Demon Nocturnum — the being that walketh by night; he has been among these Independents and schismatics last night. Ay, Colonel, you may stare; but it is even so — they may try whether he will mend their gifts, as they profanely call them, of exposition and prayer. No, sir, I trow, to master the foul fiend there goeth some competent knowledge of theology, and an acquaintance of the humane letters, ay, and a regular clerical education and clerical calling."

"I do not in the least doubt," said the Colonel, "the efficacy of your qualifications to lay the devil; but still I think some odd mistake has occasioned this confusion amongst them, if there has any such in reality existed. Desborough is a blockhead, to be sure; and Harrison is fanatic enough to believe anything. But there is Bletson, on the other hand, who believes nothing. — What do you know of this matter, good Master Mayor?"

"In sooth, and it was Master Bletson who gave the first alarm," replied the magistrate; "or, at least, the first distinct one. You see, sir, I was in bed with my wife, and no one else; and I was as fast asleep as a man can desire to be at two hours after midnight, when, behold you, they came knocking at my bedroom door, to tell me there was an alarm in Woodstock, and that the bell of the Lodge was ringing at that dead hour of the night as hard as ever it rung when it called the court to dinner."

"Well, but the cause of this alarm?" said the Colonel.

"You shall hear, worthy Colonel, you shall hear," answered the Mayor, waving his hand with dignity; for he was one of those persons who will not be hurried out of their own pace. "So Mrs. Mayor would have persuaded me, in her love and affection, poor wretch, that to rise at such an hour out of my own warm bed, was like to bring on my old complaint the lumbago, and that I should send the people to Alderman Dutton. — Alderman Devil, Mrs. Mayor, said I; — I beg your reverence's pardon for using such a phrase — Do you think I am going to lie a-bed when the town is on fire, and the cavaliers up, and the devil to pay; — I beg pardon again, parson. — But here we are before the gate of the Palace; will it not please you to enter?"

"I would first hear the end of your story," said the Colonel; "that is, Master Mayor, if it happens to have an end."

"Every thing hath an end," said the Mayor, "and that which we call a pudding hath two. — Your worship will forgive me for being facetious. Where was I? — Oh, I jumped out of bed, and put on my red plush breeches, with the blue nether stocks, for I always make a point of being dressed suitably to my dignity, night and day, summer or winter, Colonel Everard; and I took the Constable along with me, in case the alarm should be raised by night-walkers or thieves, and called up worthy Master Holdenough out of his bed, in case it should turn out to be the devil. And so I thought I was provided for the worst, and so away we came; and, by and by, the soldiers who came to the town with Master Tomkins, who had been called to arms, came marching down to Woodstock as fast as their feet would carry them; so I gave our people the sign to let them pass us, and out-march us, as it were, and this for a twofold reason."

"I will be satisfied," interrupted the Colonel, "with one good reason. You desired the red-coats should have the *first* of the fray?"

"True, sir, very true; — and also that they should have the *last* of it, in respect that fighting is their especial business. However, we came on at a slow pace, as men who are determined to do their duty without fear or favour, when suddenly we saw something white haste away up the avenue towards the town, when six of our constables and assistants fled at once, as conceiving it to be an apparition called the White Woman of Woodstock."

"Look you there, Colonel," said Master Holdenough, "I told you there were demons of more kinds than one, which haunt the ancient scenes of royal debauchery and cruelty."

"I hope you stood your own ground, Master Mayor?" said the Colonel.

"I — yes — most assuredly — that is, I did not, strictly speaking, keep my ground; but the town-clerk and I retreated — retreated, Colonel, and without confusion or dishonour, and took post behind worthy Master Holdenough, who, with the spirit of a lion, threw himself in the way of the supposed spectre, and attacked it with such a siserary of Latin as might have scared the devil himself, and thereby plainly discovered that it was no devil at all, nor white woman, neither woman of any colour, but worshipful Master Bletson, a member of the House of Commons, and one of the commissioners sent hither upon this unhappy sequestration of the Wood, Chase, and Lodge of Woodstock."

"And this was all you saw of the demon?" said the Colonel.

"Truly, yes," answered the Mayor; "and I had no wish to see more. However, we conveyed Master Bletson, as in duty bound, back to the Lodge, and he was ever maundering by the way how that he met a party of scarlet devils incarnate marching down to the Lodge; but, to my poor thinking, it must have been the Independent dragoons who had just passed us."

"And more incarnate devils I would never wish to see," said Wildrake, who could remain silent no longer. His voice, so suddenly heard, showed how much the Mayor's nerves were still alarmed, for he started and jumped aside with an alacrity of which no one would at first sight suppose a man of his portly dignity to have been capable. Everard imposed silence on his intrusive attendant; and, desirous to hear the conclusion of this strange story, requested the Mayor to tell him how the matter ended, and whether they stopped the supposed spectre.

"Truly, worthy sir," said the Mayor, "Master Holdenough was quite venturesome upon confronting, as it were, the devil, and compelling him to appear under the real form of Master Joshua Bletson, member of Parliament for the borough of Littlefaith."

"In sooth, Master Mayor," said the divine, "I were strangely ignorant of my own commission and its immunities, if I were to value opposing myself to Satan, or any Independent in his likeness, all of whom, in the name of Him I serve, I do defy, spit at, and trample under my feet; and because Master Mayor is something tedious, I will briefly inform your honour that we saw little of the Enemy that night, save what Master Bletson said in the first feeling of his terrors, and save what we might collect from the disordered appearance of the Honourable Colonel Desborough and Major-General Harrison."

"And what plight were they in, I pray you?" demanded the Colonel.

"Why, worthy sir, every one might see with half an eye that they had been engaged in a fight wherein they had not been honoured with perfect victory; seeing that General Harrison was stalking up and down the parlour, with his drawn sword in his hand, talking to himself, his doublet unbuttoned, his points untrussed, his garters loose, and like to throw him down as he now and then trode on them, and gaping and grinning like a mad player. And yonder sate Desborough with a dry pottle of sack before him, which he had just emptied, and which, though the element in which he trusted, had not restored him sense enough to speak, or courage enough to look over his shoulder. He had a Bible in his hand, forsooth, as if it would of itself make battle against the Evil One; but I peered over his shoulder, and, alas! the good gentleman held the bottom of the page uppermost. It was as if one of your musketeers, noble and valued sir, were to present the butt of his piece at the enemy instead of the muzzle — ha, ha, ha! it was a sight to judge of schismatics by; both in point of head, and in point of heart, in point of skill, and in point of courage. Oh! Colonel, then was the time to see the true character of an authorised pastor of souls over those unhappy men, who leap into the fold without due and legal authority, and will, forsooth, preach, teach, and exhort, and blasphemously term the doctrine of the Church saltless porridge and dry chips!"

"I have no doubt you were ready to meet the danger, reverend sir; but I would fain know of what nature it was, and from whence it was to be apprehended?"

"Was it for me to make such inquiry?" said the clergyman, triumphantly. "Is it for a brave soldier to number his enemies, or inquire from what quarter they are to come? No, sir, I was there with match lighted, bullet in my mouth, and my harquebuss shouldered, to encounter as many devils as hell could pour in, were they countless as motes in the sunbeam, and although they came from all points of the compass. The Papists talk of the temptation of St. Anthony — pshaw! let them double all the myriads which the brain of a crazy Dutch painter hath invented, and you will find a poor Presbyterian divine — I will answer for one at least — who, not in his own strength, but his Master's, will receive the assault in such sort, that far from returning against him as against yonder poor hound, day after day, and night after night, he will at once pack them off as with a vengeance to the uttermost parts of Assyria!"

"Still," said the Colonel, "I pray to know whether you saw anything upon which to exercise your pious learning?"

"Saw?" answered the divine; "no, truly, I saw nothing, nor did I look for anything. Thieves will not attack well-armed travellers, nor will devils or evil spirits come against one who bears in his bosom the word of truth, in the very language in which it was first dictated. No, sir, they shun a divine who can understand the holy text, as a crow is said to keep wide of a gun loaded with hailshot."

They had walked a little way back upon their road, to give time for this conversation; and the Colonel, perceiving it was about to lead to no satisfactory explanation of the real cause of alarm on the preceding night, turned round, and observing it was time they should go to the Lodge, began to move in that direction with his three companions.

It had now become dark, and the towers of Woodstock arose high above the umbrageous shroud which the forest spread around the ancient and venerable mansion. From one of the highest turrets, which could still be distinguished as it rose against the clear blue sky, there gleamed a light like that of a candle within the building. The Mayor stopt short, and catching fast hold of the divine, and then of Colonel Everard, exclaimed, in a trembling and hasty, but suppressed tone,

"Do you see yonder light?"

"Ay, marry do I," said Colonel Everard; "and what does that matter? — a light in a garret-room of such an old mansion as Woodstock is no subject of wonder, I trow."

"But a light from Rosamond's Tower is surely so," said the Mayor.

"True," said the Colonel, something surprised, when, after a careful examination, he satisfied himself that the worthy magistrate's conjecture was right. "That is indeed Rosamond's Tower; and as the drawbridge, by which it was accessible has been destroyed for centuries, it is hard to say what chance could have lighted a lamp in such an inaccessible place."

"That light burns with no earthly fuel," said the Mayor; "neither from whale nor olive oil, nor bees-wax, nor mutton-suet either. I dealt in these commodities, Colonel, before I went into my present line; and I can assure you I could distinguish the sort of light they give, one from another, at a greater distance than yonder turret — Look you, that is no earthly flame. — See you not something blue and reddish upon the edges? — that bodes full well where it comes from. — Colonel, in my opinion we had better go back to sup at the town, and leave the Devil and the red-coats to settle their matters together for to-night; and then when we come back the next morning, we will have a pull with the party that chances to keep a-field."

"You will do as you please, Master Mayor," said Everard, "but my duty requires me that I should see the Commissioners to-night."

"And mine requires me to see the foul Fiend," said Master Holdenough, "if he dare make himself visible to me. I wonder not that, knowing who is approaching, he betakes himself to the very citadel, the inner and the last defences of this ancient and haunted mansion. He is dainty, I warrant you, and must dwell where is a relish of luxury and murder about the walls of his chamber. In yonder turret sinned Rosamond, and in yonder turret she suffered; and there she sits, or more likely, the Enemy in her shape, as I have heard true men of Woodstock tell. I wait on you, good Colonel — Master Mayor will do as he pleases. The strong man hath fortified himself in his dwelling-house, but lo, there cometh another stronger than he."

"For me," said the Mayor, "who am as unlearned as I am unwarlike, I will not engage either — with the Powers of the Earth, or the Prince of the Powers of the Air, and I would we were again at Woodstock; — and hark ye, good fellow," slapping Wildrake on the shoulder, "I will bestow on thee a shilling wet and a shilling dry if thou wilt go back with me."

"Gadzookers, Master Mayor," said, Wildrake, neither flattered by the magistrate's familiarity of address, nor captivated by his munificence — "I wonder who the devil made you and me fellows? and, besides, do you think I would go back to Woodstock with your worshipful cods-head, when, by good management, I may get a peep of fair Rosamond, and see whether she was that choice and incomparable piece of ware, which the world has been told of by rhymers and ballad-makers?"

"Speak less lightly and wantonly, friend," said the divine; "we are to resist the devil that he may flee from us, and not to tamper with him, or enter into his counsels, or traffic with the merchandise of his great Vanity Fair."

"Mind what the good man says, Wildrake," said the Colonel; "and take heed another time how thou dost suffer thy wit to outrun discretion."

"I am beholden to the reverend gentleman for his advice," answered Wildrake, upon whose tongue it was difficult to impose any curb whatever, even when his own safety rendered it most desirable. "But, gadzookers, let him have had what experience he will in fighting with the Devil, he never saw one so black as I had a tussle with — not a hundred years ago."

"How, friend," said the clergyman, who understood every thing literally when apparitions were mentioned, "have you had so late a visitation of Satan? Believe me, then, that I wonder why thou darest to entertain his name so often and so lightly, as I see thou dost use it in thy ordinary discourse. But when and where didst thou see the Evil One?"

Everard hastily interposed, lest by something yet more strongly alluding to Cromwell, his imprudent squire should, in mere wantonness, betray his interview with the General. "The young man raves," he said, "of a dream which he had the other night, when he and I slept together in Victor Lee's chamber, belonging to the Ranger's apartments at the Lodge."

"Thanks for help at a pinch, good patron," said Wildrake, whispering into Everard's ear, who in vain endeavoured to shake him off — "a fib never failed a fanatic."

"You, also, spoke something too lightly of these matters, considering the work which we have in hand, worthy Colonel," said the Presbyterian divine. "Believe me, the young man, thy servant, was more likely to see visions than to dream merely idle dreams in that apartment; for I have always heard, that, next to Rosamond's Tower, in which, as I said, she played the wanton, and was afterwards poisoned by Queen Eleanor, Victor Lee's chamber was the place in the Lodge of Woodstock more peculiarly the haunt of evil spirits. — I pray you, young man, tell me this dream or vision of yours."

"With all my heart, sir," said Wildrake — then addressing his patron, who began to interfere, he said, "Tush, sir, you have had the discourse for an hour, and why should not I hold forth in my turn? By this darkness, if you keep me silent any longer, I will turn Independent preacher, and stand up in your despite for the freedom of private judgment. — And so, reverend sir, I was dreaming of a carnal divertisement called a bull-baiting; and methought they were venturing dogs at head, as merrily as e'er I saw them at Tutbury bull-running; and methought I heard some one say, there was the Devil come to have a sight of the bull-ring. Well, I thought that, gadswoons, I would have a peep at his Infernal Majesty. So I looked, and there was a butcher in greasy woollen, with his steel by his side; but he was none of the Devil. And there was a drunken cavalier, with his mouth full of oaths, and his stomach full of emptiness, and a gold-laced waistcoat in a very dilapidated condition, and a ragged hat — with a piece of a feather in it; and he was none of the Devil neither. And here was a miller, his hands dusty with meal, and every atom of it stolen; and there was a vintner, his green apron stained with wine, and every drop of it sophisticated; but neither was the old gentleman I looked for to be detected among these artisans of iniquity. At length, sir, I saw a grave person with cropped hair, a pair of longish and projecting ears, a band as broad as a slobbering bib under his chin, a brown coat surmounted by a Geneva cloak, and I had old Nicholas at once in his genuine paraphernalia, by —."

"Shame, shame!" said Colonel Everard. "What! behave thus to an old gentleman and a divine!"

"Nay, let him proceed," said the minister, with perfect equanimity: "if thy friend, or secretary, is gibing, I must have less patience than becomes my profession, if I could not bear an idle jest, and forgive him who makes it. Or if, on the other hand, the Enemy has really presented himself to the young man in such a guise as he intimates, wherefore should we be surprised that he, who can take upon him the form of an angel of light, should be able to assume that of a frail and peaceable mortal, whose spiritual calling and profession ought, indeed, to induce him to make his life an example to others; but whose conduct, nevertheless, such is the imperfection of our unassisted nature, sometimes rather presents us with a warning of what we should shun?"

"Now, by the mass, honest domine — I mean reverend sir — I crave you a thousand pardons," said Wildrake, penetrated by the quietness and patience of the presbyter's rebuke. "By St. George, if quiet patience will do it, thou art fit to play a game at foils with the Devil himself, and I would be contented to hold stakes."

As he concluded an apology, which was certainly not uncalled for, and seemed to be received in perfectly good part, they approached so close to the exterior door of the Lodge, that they were challenged with the emphatic *Stand*, by a sentinel who mounted guard there. Colonel Everard replied, *A friend*; and the sentinel repeating his command, "Stand, friend," proceeded to call the corporal of the guard. The corporal came forth, and at the same time turned out his guard. Colonel Everard gave his name and designation, as well as those of his companions, on which the corporal said, "he doubted not there would be orders for his instant admission; but, in the first place, Master Tomkins must be consulted, that he might learn their honours' mind."

"How, sir!" said the Colonel, "do you, knowing who I am, presume to keep me on the outside of your post?"

"Not if your honour pleases to enter," said the corporal, "and undertakes to be my warranty; but such are the orders of my post."

"Nay, then, do your duty," said the Colonel; "but are the cavaliers up, or what is the matter, that you keep so close and strict a watch?"

The fellow gave no distinct answer, but muttered between his mustaches something about the Enemy, and the roaring Lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Presently afterwards Tomkins appeared, followed by two servants, bearing lights in great standing brass candlesticks. They marched before Colonel Everard and his party, keeping as close to each other as two cloves of the same orange, and starting from time to time; and shuddering as they passed through sundry intricate passages, they led up a large and ample wooden staircase, the banisters, rail, and lining of which were executed in black oak, and finally into a long saloon, or parlour, where there was a prodigious fire, and about twelve candles of the largest size distributed in sconces against the wall. There were seated the Commissioners, who now held in their power the ancient mansion and royal domain of Woodstock.

Chapter the Eleventh.

*The bloody bear, an independent beast,
Unlick'd to forms, in groans his hate express'd —
Next him the buffoon ape, as atheists use,
Mimick'd all sects, and had his own to choose.*

HIND AND PANTHER.

The strong light in the parlour which we have described, served to enable Everard easily to recognise his acquaintances, Desborough, Harrison, and Bletson, who had assembled round an oak table of large dimensions, placed near the blazing chimney, on which were arranged wine, and ale, and materials for smoking, then the general indulgence of the time. There was a species of movable cupboard set betwixt the table and the door, calculated originally for a display of plate upon grand occasions, but at present only used as a screen; which purpose it served so effectually, that, ere he had coasted around it, Everard heard the following

fragment of what Desborough was saying, in his strong coarse voice:—"Sent him to share with us, I've warrant ye — It was always his Excellency my brother-in-law's way — if he made a treat for five friends, he would invite more than the table could hold — I have known him ask three men to eat two eggs."

"Hush, hush," said Bletson; and the servants, making their appearance from behind the tall cupboard, announced Colonel Everard. It may not be uninteresting to the reader to have a description, of the party into which he now entered.

Desborough was a stout, bull-necked man, of middle-size, with heavy vulgar features, grizzled bushy eyebrows, and walleyes. The flourish of his powerful relative's fortunes had burst forth in the finery of his dress, which was much more ornamented than was usual among the roundheads. There was embroidery on his cloak, and lace upon his band; his hat displayed a feather with a golden clasp, and all his habiliments were those of a cavalier, or follower of the court, rather than the plain dress of a parliamentarian officer. But, Heaven knows, there was little of courtlike grace or dignity in the person or demeanour of the individual, who became his fine suit as the hog on the sign-post does his gilded armour. It was not that he was positively deformed, or misshaped, for, taken in detail, the figure was well enough. But his limbs seemed to act upon different and contradictory principles. They were not, as the play says, in a concatenation accordingly; — the right hand moved as if it were upon bad terms with the left, and the legs showed an inclination to foot it in different and opposite directions. In short, to use an extravagant comparison, the members of Colonel Desborough seemed rather to resemble the disputatious representatives of a federative congress, than the well-ordered union of the orders of the state, in a firm and well-compacted monarchy, where each holds his own place, and all obey the dictates of a common head.

General Harrison, the second of the Commissioners, was a tall, thin, middle-aged man, who had risen into his high situation in the army, and his intimacy with Cromwell, by his dauntless courage in the field, and the popularity he had acquired by his exalted enthusiasm amongst the military saints, sectaries, and Independents, who composed the strength of the existing army. Harrison was of mean extraction, and bred up to his father's employment of a butcher. Nevertheless, his appearance, though coarse, was not vulgar, like that of Desborough, who had so much the advantage of him in birth and education. He had a masculine height and strength of figure, was well made and in his manner announced a rough military character, which might be feared, but could not easily become the object of contempt or ridicule. His aquiline nose and dark black eyes set off to some advantage a countenance otherwise irregular, and the wild enthusiasm that sometimes sparkled in them as he dilated on his opinions to others, and often seemed to slumber under his long dark eyelashes as he mused upon them himself, gave something strikingly wild, and even noble to his aspect. He was one of the chief leaders of those who were called Fifth-Monarchy men, who, going even beyond the general fanaticism of the age, presumptuously interpreted the Book of the Revelations after their own fancies, considered that the second Advent of the Messiah, and the Millenium, or reign of the Saints upon earth, was close at hand, and that they themselves, illuminated, as they believed, with the power of foreseeing these approaching events, were the chosen instruments for the establishment of the New Reign, or Fifth Monarchy, as it was called, and were fated also to win its honours, whether celestial or terrestrial.

When this spirit of enthusiasm, which operated like a partial insanity, was not immediately affecting Harrison's mind, he was a shrewd worldly man, and a good soldier; one who missed no opportunity of mending his fortune, and who, in expecting the exaltation of the Fifth Monarchy, was, in the meanwhile, a ready instrument for the establishment of the Lord-General's supremacy. Whether it was owing to his early occupation, and habits of indifference to pain or bloodshed acquired in the shambles, to natural disposition and want of feeling, or, finally, to the awakened character of his enthusiasm, which made him look upon those who opposed him, as opposing the Divine will, and therefore meriting no favour or mercy, is not easy to say; but all agreed, that after a victory, or the successful storm of a town, Harrison was one of the most cruel and pitiless men in Cromwell's army; always urging some misapplied text to authorize the continued execution of the fugitives, and sometimes even putting to death those who had surrendered themselves prisoners. It was said, that at times the recollection of some of those cruelties troubled his conscience, and disturbed the dreams of beatification in which his imagination indulged.

When Everard entered the apartment, this true representative of the fanatic soldiers of the day, who filled those ranks and regiments which Cromwell had politically kept on foot, while he procured the reduction of those in which the Presbyterian interest predominated, was seated a little apart from the others, his legs crossed, and stretched out at length towards the fire, his head resting on his elbow, and turned upwards, as if studying, with the most profound gravity, the half-seen carving of the Gothic roof.

Bletson remains to be mentioned, who, in person and figure, was diametrically different from the other two. There was neither foppery nor slovenliness in his exterior, nor had he any marks of military service or rank about his person. A small walking rapier seemed merely worn as a badge of his rank as a gentleman, without his hand having the least purpose of becoming acquainted with the hilt, or his eye with the blade. His countenance was thin and acute, marked with lines which thought rather than age had traced upon it; and a habitual sneer on his countenance, even, when he least wished to express contempt on his features, seemed to assure the individual addressed, that in Bletson he conversed with a person of intellect far superior to his own. This was a triumph of intellect only, however; for on all occasions of difference respecting speculative opinions, and indeed on all controversies whatsoever, Bletson avoided the ultimate *ratio* of blows and knocks.

Yet this peaceful gentleman had found himself obliged to serve personally in the Parliamentary army at the commencement of the Civil War, till happening unluckily to come in contact with the fiery Prince Rupert, his retreat was judged so precipitate, that it required all the shelter that his friends could afford, to keep him free of an impeachment or a court-martial. But as Bletson spoke well, and with great effect in the House of Commons, which was his natural sphere, and was on that account high in the estimation of his party, his behaviour at Edgehill was passed over, and he continued to take an active share in all the political events of that bustling period, though he faced not again the actual front of war.

Bletson's theoretical politics had long inclined him to espouse the opinions of Harrington and others, who adopted the visionary idea of establishing a pure democratical republic in so extensive a country as Britain. This was a rash theory, where there is such an infinite difference betwixt ranks, habits, education, and morals — where there is such an immense disproportion betwixt the wealth of individuals — and where a large portion of the inhabitants consist of the inferior classes of the large towns and manufacturing districts — men unfitted to bear that share in the direction of a state, which must be exercised by the members of a republic in the proper sense of the word. Accordingly, as soon as the experiment was made, it became obvious that no such form of government could be adopted with the smallest chance of stability; and the question came only to be, whether the remnant, or, as it was vulgarly called, the Rump of the Long Parliament, now reduced by the seclusion of so many of the members to a few scores of persons, should continue, in spite of their unpopularity, to rule the affairs of Britain? Whether they should cast all loose by dissolving themselves, and issuing writs to convoke a new Parliament, the composition of which no one could answer for, any more than for the measures they might take when assembled? Or lastly, whether Cromwell, as actually happened, was not to throw the sword into the balance, and boldly possess himself of that power which the remnant of the Parliament were unable to hold, and yet afraid to resign?

Such being the state of parties, the Council of State, in distributing the good things in their gift, endeavoured to soothe and gratify the army, as a beggar flings crusts to a growling mastiff. In this view Desborough had been created a Commissioner in the Woodstock matter to gratify Cromwell, Harrison to soothe the fierce Fifth-Monarchy men, and Bletson as a sincere republican, and one of their own leaven.

But if they supposed Bletson had the least intention of becoming a martyr to his republicanism, or submitting to any serious loss on account of it, they much mistook the man. He entertained their principles sincerely and not the less that they were found impracticable; for the miscarriage of his experiment no more converts the political speculator, than the explosion of a retort undeceives an alchemist. But Bletson was quite prepared to submit to Cromwell, or any one else who might be possessed of the actual authority. He was a ready subject in practice to the powers existing, and made little difference betwixt various kinds of government, holding in theory all to be nearly equal in imperfection, so soon as they diverged from the model of Harrington's Oceana. Cromwell had already been tampering with him, like wax between his finger and thumb, and which he was ready shortly to seal with, smiling at the same time to himself when he beheld the Council of State giving rewards to Bletson, as their faithful adherent, while he himself was secure of his allegiance, how soon soever the expected change of government should take place.

But Bletson was still more attached to his metaphysical than his political creed, and carried his doctrines of the perfectibility of mankind as far as he did those respecting the conceivable perfection of a model of government; and as in the one case he declared against all power which did not emanate from the people

themselves, so, in his moral speculations, he was unwilling to refer any of the phenomena of nature to a final cause. When pushed, indeed, very hard, Bletson was compelled to mutter some inarticulate and unintelligible doctrines concerning an *Animus Mundi*, or Creative Power in the works of Nature, by which she originally called into existence, and still continues to preserve, her works. To this power, he said, some of the purest metaphysicians rendered a certain degree of homage; nor was he himself inclined absolutely to censure those, who, by the institution of holydays, choral dances, songs, and harmless feasts and libations, might be disposed to celebrate the great goddess Nature; at least dancing, singing, feasting, and sporting, being conformable things to both young and old, they might as well sport, dance, and feast, in honour of such appointed holydays, as under any other pretext. But then this moderate show of religion was to be practised under such exceptions as are admitted by the Highgate oath; and no one was to be compelled to dance, drink, sing, or feast, whose taste did not happen to incline them to such diversions; nor was any one to be obliged to worship the creative power, whether under the name of the *Animus Mundi*, or any other whatsoever. The interference of the Deity in the affairs of mankind he entirely disowned, having proved to his own satisfaction that the idea originated entirely in priestcraft. In short, with the shadowy metaphysical exception aforesaid, Mr. Joshua Bletson of Darlington, member for Littlefaith, came as near the predicament of an atheist, as it is perhaps possible for a man to do. But we say this with the necessary salvo; for we have known many like Bletson, whose curtains have been shrewdly shaken by superstition, though their fears were unsanctioned by any religious faith. The devils, we are assured, believe and tremble; but on earth there are many, who, in worse plight than even the natural children of perdition, tremble without believing, and fear even while they blaspheme. It follows, of course, that nothing could be treated with more scorn by Mr. Bletson, than the debates about Prelacy and Presbytery, about Presbytery and Independency, about Quakers and Anabaptists, Muggletonians and Brownists, and all the various sects with which the Civil War had commenced, and by which its dissensions were still continued. "It was," he said, "as if beasts of burden should quarrel amongst themselves about the fashion of their halters and pack-saddles, instead of embracing a favourable opportunity of throwing them aside." Other witty and pithy remarks he used to make when time and place suited; for instance, at the club called the Rota, frequented by St. John, and established by Harrington, for the free discussion of political and religious subjects.

But when Bletson was out of this academy, or stronghold of philosophy, he was very cautious how he carried his contempt of the general prejudice in favour of religion and Christianity further than an implied objection or a sneer. If he had an opportunity of talking in private with an ingenuous and intelligent youth, he sometimes attempted to make a proselyte, and showed much address in bribing the vanity of inexperience, by suggesting that a mind like his ought to spurn the prejudices impressed upon it in childhood; and when assuming the *latus clavus* of reason, assuring him that such as he, laying aside the *bull* of juvenile incapacity, as Bletson called it, should proceed to examine and decide for himself. It frequently happened, that the youth was induced to adopt the doctrines in whole, or in part, of the sage who had seen his natural genius, and who had urged him to exert it in examining, detecting, and declaring for himself, and thus flattery gave proselytes to infidelity, which could not have been gained by all the powerful eloquence or artful sophistry of the infidel.

These attempts to extend the influence of what was called freethinking and philosophy, were carried on, as we have hinted, with a caution dictated by the timidity of the philosopher's disposition. He was conscious his doctrines were suspected, and his proceedings watched, by the two principal sects of Prelatists and Presbyterians, who, however inimical to each other, were still more hostile to one who was an opponent, not only to a church establishment of any kind, but to every denomination of Christianity. He found it more easy to shroud himself among the Independents, whose demands were for a general liberty of conscience, or an unlimited toleration, and whose faith, differing in all respects and particulars, was by some pushed into such wild errors, as to get totally beyond the bounds of every species of Christianity, and approach very near to infidelity itself, as extremes of each kind are said to approach each other. Bletson mixed a good deal among those sectaries; and such was his confidence in his own logic and address, that he is supposed to have entertained hopes of bringing to his opinions in time the enthusiastic Vane, as well as the no less enthusiastic Harrison, provided he could but get them to resign their visions of a Fifth Monarchy, and induce them to be contented with a reign of Philosophers in England for the natural period of their lives, instead of the reign of the Saints during the Millenium.

Such was the singular group into which Everard was now introduced; showing, in their various opinions, upon how many devious coasts human nature may make shipwreck, when she has once let go her hold on the anchor which religion has given her to lean upon; the acute self-conceit and worldly learning of Bletson — the rash and ignorant conclusions of the fierce and under-bred Harrison, leading them into the opposite extremes of enthusiasm and infidelity, while Desborough, constitutionally stupid, thought nothing about religion at all; and while the others were active in making sail on different but equally erroneous courses, he might be said to perish like a vessel, which springs a leak and founders in the roadstead. It was wonderful to behold what a strange variety of mistakes and errors, on the part of the King and his Ministers, on the part of the Parliament and their leaders, on the part of the allied kingdoms of Scotland and England towards each other, had combined to rear up men of such dangerous opinions and interested characters among the arbiters of the destiny of Britain.

Those who argue for party's sake, will see all the faults on the one side, without deigning to look at those on the other; those who study history for instruction, will perceive that nothing but the want of concession on either side, and the deadly height to which the animosity of the King's and Parliament's parties had arisen, could have so totally overthrown the well-poised balance of the English constitution. But we hasten to quit political reflections, the rather that ours, we believe, will please neither Whig nor Tory.

Chapter the Twelfth.

*Three form a College — an you give us four,
Let him bring his share with him.*

BRAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Mr. Bletson arose and paid his respects to Colonel Everard, with the ease and courtesy of a gentleman of the time; though on every account grieved at his intrusion, as a religious man who held his free-thinking principles in detestation, and would effectually prevent his conversion of Harrison, and even of Desborough, if any thing could be moulded out of such a clod, to the worship of the *Animus Mundi*. Moreover, Bletson knew Everard to be a man of steady probity, and by no means disposed to close with a scheme on which he had successfully sounded the other two, and which was calculated to assure the Commissioners of some little private indemnification for the trouble they were to give themselves in the public business. The philosopher was yet less pleased, when he saw the magistrate the pastor who had met him in his flight of the preceding evening, when he had been seen, *parma non bene relicta*, with cloak and doublet left behind him.

The presence of Colonel Everard was as displeasing to Desborough as to Bletson: but the former having no philosophy in him, nor an idea that it was possible for any man to resist helping himself out of untold money, was chiefly embarrassed by the thought, that the plunder which they might be able to achieve out of their trust, might, by this unwelcome addition to their number, be divided into four parts instead of three; and this reflection added to the natural awkwardness with which he grumbled forth a sort of welcome, addressed to Everard.

As for Harrison, he remained like one on higher thoughts intent; his posture unmoved, his eyes fixed on the ceiling as before, and in no way indicating the least consciousness that the company had been more than doubled around him.

Meantime, Everard took his place at the table, as a man who assumed his own right, and pointed to his companions to sit down nearer the foot of the board. Wildrake so far misunderstood his signals, as to sit down above the Mayor; but rallying his recollection at a look from his patron, he rose and took his place lower, whistling, however, as he went, a sound at which the company stared, as at a freedom highly unbecoming. To complete his indecorum, he seized upon a pipe, and filling it from a large tobacco-box, was soon immersed in a cloud of his own raising; from which a hand shortly after emerged, seized on the black-jack of ale, withdrew it within the vapoury sanctuary, and, after a potential draught, replaced it upon the table, its owner beginning to renew the cloud which his intermitted exercise of the tube had almost allowed to subside.

Nobody made any observation on his conduct, out of respect, probably, to Colonel Everard, who bit his lip, but continued silent; aware that censure might extract some escapade more unequivocally characteristic of a cavalier, from his refractory companion. As silence seemed awkward, and the others made no advances to break it, beyond the ordinary salutation, Colonel Everard at length said, "I presume, gentlemen, that you are somewhat surprised at my arrival here, and thus intruding myself into your meeting?"

"Why the dickens should we be surprised, Colonel?" said Desborough; "we know his Excellency, my brother-in-law Noll's — I mean my Lord Cromwell's way, of overquartering his men in the towns he marches through. Thou hast obtained a share in our commission?"

"And in that," said Bletson, smiling and bowing, "the Lord-General has given us the most acceptable colleague that could have been added to our number. No doubt your authority for joining with us must be under warrant of the Council of State?"

"Of that, gentlemen," said the Colonel, "I will presently advise you." — He took out his warrant accordingly, and was about to communicate the contents; but observing that there were three or four half-empty flasks upon the table, that Desborough looked more stupid than usual, and that the philosopher's eyes were reeling in his head, notwithstanding the temperance of Bletson's usual habits, he concluded that they had been fortifying themselves against the horrors of the haunted mansion, by laying in a store of what is called Dutch courage, and therefore prudently resolved to postpone his more important business with them till the cooler hour of morning. He, therefore, instead of presenting the General's warrant superseding their commission, contented himself with replying — "My business has, of course, some reference to your proceedings here. But here is — excuse my curiosity — a reverend gentleman," pointing to Holdenough, "who has told me that you are so strangely embarrassed here, as to require both the civil and spiritual authority to enable you to keep possession of Woodstock."

"Before we go into that matter," said Bletson, blushing up to the eyes at the recollection of his own fears, so manifestly displayed, yet so inconsistent with his principles, "I should like to know who this other stranger is, who has come with the worthy magistrate, and the no less worthy Presbyterian?"

"Meaning me?" said Wildrake, laying his pipe aside; "Gadzooks, the time hath been that I could have answered the question with a better title; but at present I am only his honour's poor clerk, or secretary, whichever is the current phrase."

"Fore George, my lively blade, thou art a frank fellow of thy tattle," said Desborough. "There is my secretary Tomkins, whom men sillily enough call Fibbet, and the honourable Lieutenant-General Harrison's secretary Bibbet, who are now at supper below stairs, that durst not for their ears speak a phrase above their breath in the presence of their betters, unless to answer a question."

"Yes, Colonel Everard," said the philosopher, with his quiet smile, glad, apparently, to divert the conversation from the topic of last night's alarm, and recollections which humbled his self-love and self-satisfaction — "yes; and when Master Fibbet and Master Bibbet *do* speak, their affirmations are as much in a common mould of mutual attestation, as their names would accord in the verses of a poet. If Master Fibbet happens to tell a fiction, Master Bibbet swears it as truth. If Master Bibbet chances to have gotten drunk in the fear of the Lord, Master Fibbet swears he is sober. I have called my own secretary Gibbet, though his name chances to be only Gibeon, a worthy Israelite at your service, but as pure a youth as ever picked a lamb-bone at Paschal. But I call him Gibbet, merely to make up the holy trefoil with another rhyme. This squire of thine, Colonel Everard, looks as if he might be worthy to be coupled with the rest of the fraternity."

"Not I, truly," said the cavalier; "I'll be coupled with no Jew that was ever whelped, and no Jewess neither."

"Scorn not for that, young man," said the philosopher; "the Jews are, in point of religion, the elder brethren, you know."

"The Jews older than the Christians?" said Desborough, "fore George, they will have thee before the General Assembly, Bletson, if thou venturdest to say so."

Wildrake laughed without ceremony at the gross ignorance of Desborough, and was joined by a sniggling response from behind the cupboard, which, when inquired into, proved to be produced by the serving-men. These worthies, timorous as their betters, when they were supposed to have left the room, had only withdrawn to their present place of concealment.

"How now, ye rogues," said Bletson, angrily; "do you not know your duty better?"

"We beg your worthy honour's pardon," said one of the men, "but we dared not go down stairs without a light."

"A light, ye cowardly poltroons?" said the philosopher; "what — to show which of you looks palest when a rat squeaks? — but take a candlestick and begone, you cowardly villains! the devils you are so much afraid of must be but paltry kites, if they hawk at such bats as you are."

The servants, without replying, took up one of the candlesticks, and prepared to retreat, Trusty Tomkins at the head of the troop, when suddenly, as they arrived at the door of the parlour, which had been left half open, it was shut violently. The three terrified domestics tumbled back into the middle of the room, as if a shot had been discharged in their face, and all who were at the table started to their feet.

Colonel Everard was incapable of a moment's fear, even if any thing frightful had been seen; but he remained stationary, to see what his companions would do, and to get at the bottom, if possible, of the cause of their alarm upon an occasion so trifling. The philosopher seemed to think that *he* was the person chiefly concerned to show manhood on the occasion.

He walked to the door accordingly, murmuring at the cowardice of the servants; but at such a snail's pace, that it seemed he would most willingly have been anticipated by any one whom his reproaches had roused to exertion. "Cowardly blockheads!" he said at last, seizing hold of the handle of the door, but without turning it effectually round — "dare you not open a door?" — (still fumbling with the lock) — "dare you not go down a stair-case without a light? Here, bring me the candle, you cowardly villains! — By Heaven, something sighs on the outside!"

As he spoke, he let go the handle of the parlour door, and stepped back a pace or two into the apartment, with cheeks as pale as the band he wore.

"*Deus adjutor meus!*" said the Presbyterian clergyman, rising from his seat. "Give place, sir," addressing Bletson; "it would seem I know more of this matter than thou, and I bless Heaven I am armed for the conflict."

Bold as a grenadier about to mount a breach, yet with the same belief in the existence of a great danger to be encountered, as well as the same reliance in the goodness of his cause, the worthy man stepped before the philosophical Bletson, and taking a light from a sconce in one hand, quietly opened the door with the other, and standing in the threshold, said, "Here is nothing!"

"And who expected to see any thing," said Bletson, "excepting those terrified oafs, who take fright at every puff of wind that whistles through the passages of this old dungeon?"

"Mark you, Master Tomkins," said one of the waiting-men in a whisper to the steward — "See how boldly the minister pressed forward before all of them. Ah! Master Tomkins, our parson is the real commissioned officer of the church — your lay-preachers are no better than a parcel of club-men and volunteers."

"Follow me those who list," said Master Holdenough, "or go before me those who choose, I will walk through the habitable places of this house before I leave it, and satisfy myself whether Satan hath really mingled himself among these dreary dens of ancient wickedness, or whether, like the wicked of whom holy David speaketh, we are afraid, and flee when no one pursueth."

Harrison, who had heard these words, sprung from his seat, and drawing his sword, exclaimed, "Were there as many fiends in the house as there are hairs on my head, upon this cause I will charge them up to their very trenches!"

So saying, he brandished his weapon, and pressed to the head of the column, where he moved side by side with the minister. The Mayor of Woodstock next joined the body, thinking himself safer perhaps in the company of his pastor; and the whole train moved forward in close order, accompanied by the servants bearing lights, to search the Lodge for some cause of that panic with which they seemed to be suddenly seized.

"Nay, take me with you, my friends," said Colonel Everard, who had looked on in surprise, and was now about to follow the party, when Bletson laid hold on his cloak, and begged him to remain.

"You see, my good Colonel," he said, affecting a courage which his shaking voice belied, "here are only you and I and honest Desborough left behind in garrison, while all the others are absent on a sally. We must not hazard the whole troops in one sortie — that were unmilitary — Ha, ha, ha!"

"In the name of Heaven, what means all this?" said Everard. "I heard a foolish tale about apparitions as I came this way, and now I find you all half mad with fear, and cannot get a word of sense among so many of you. Fie, Colonel Desborough — fie, Master Bletson — try to compose yourselves, and let me know, in Heaven's name, the cause of all this disturbance. One would be apt to think your brains were turned."

"And so mine well may," said Desborough, "ay, and overturned too, since my bed last night was turned upside down, and I was placed for ten minutes heels uppermost, and head downmost, like a bullock going to be shod."

"What means this nonsense, Master Bletson? — Desborough must have had the nightmare."

"No, faith, Colonel! the goblins, or whatever else they were, had been favourable to honest Desborough, for they reposed the whole of his person on that part of his body which — Hark, did you not hear something? — is the central point of gravity, namely, his head."

"Did you see any thing to alarm you?" said the Colonel.

"Nothing," said Bletson; "but we heard hellish noises, as all our people did; and I, believing little of ghosts and apparitions, concluded the cavaliers were taking us at advantage; so, remembering Rainsborough's fate, I e'en jumped the window, and ran to Woodstock, to call the soldiers to the rescue of Harrison and Desborough."

"And did you not first go to see what the danger was?"

"Ah, my good friend, you forget that I laid down my commission at the time of the self-denying ordinance. It would have been quite inconsistent with my duty as a Parliament-man to be brawling amidst a set of ruffians, without any military authority. No — when the Parliament commanded me to sheath my sword, Colonel, I have too much veneration for their authority to be found again with it drawn in my hand."

"But the Parliament," said Desborough, hastily, "did not command you to use your heels when your hands could have saved a man from choking. Odds dickens! you might have stopped when you saw my bed canted heels uppermost, and me half stifled in the bed-clothes — you might, I say, have stopped and lent a hand to put it to rights, instead of jumping out of the window, like a new-shorn sheep, so soon as you had run across my room."

"Nay, worshipful Master Desborough," said Bletson, winking at Everard, to show that he was playing on his thick-sculled colleague, "how could I tell your particular mode of reposing? — there are many tastes — I have known men who slept by choice on a slope or angle of forty-five."

"Yes, but did ever a man sleep standing on his head, except by miracle?" said Desborough.

"Now, as to miracles" — said the philosopher, confident in the presence of Everard, besides that an opportunity of scoffing at religion really in some degree diverted his fear — "I leave these out of the question, seeing that the evidence on such subjects seems as little qualified to carry conviction as a horse-hair to land a leviathan."

A loud clap of thunder, or a noise as formidable, rang through the Lodge as the scoffer had ended, which struck him pale and motionless, and made Desborough throw himself on his knees, and repeat exclamations and prayers in much admired confusion.

"There must be contrivance here," exclaimed Everard; and snatching one of the candles from a sconce, he rushed out of the apartment, little heeding the entreaties of the philosopher, who, in the extremity of his distress, conjured him by the *Animus Mundi* to remain to the assistance of a distressed philosopher endangered by witches, and a Parliament-man assaulted by ruffians. As for Desborough, he only gaped like a clown in a pantomime; and, doubtful whether to follow or stop, his natural indolence prevailed, and he sat still.

When on the landing-place of the stairs, Everard paused a moment to consider which was the best course to take. He heard the voices of men talking fast and loud, like people who wish to drown their fears, in the lower story; and aware that nothing could be discovered by those whose inquiries were conducted in a manner so noisy, he resolved to proceed in a different direction, and examine the second floor, which he had now gained.

He had known every corner, both of the inhabited and uninhabited part of the mansion, and availed himself of the candle to traverse two or three intricate passages, which he was afraid he might not remember with sufficient accuracy. This movement conveyed him to a sort of *oeil-de-boeuf*, an octagon vestibule, or small hall, from which various rooms opened. Amongst these doors, Everard selected that which led to a very long, narrow, and dilapidated gallery, built in the time of Henry VIII., and which, running along the whole south-west side of the building, communicated at different points with the rest of the mansion. This he thought was likely to be the post occupied by those who proposed to act the sprites upon the occasion; especially as its length and shape gave him some idea that it was a spot where the bold thunder might in many ways be imitated.

Determined to ascertain the truth if possible, he placed his light on a table in the vestibule, and applied himself to open the door into the gallery. At this point he found himself strongly opposed either by a bolt drawn, or, as he rather conceived, by somebody from within resisting his attempt. He was induced to believe the latter, because the resistance slackened and was renewed, like that of human strength, instead of presenting the permanent opposition of an inanimate obstacle. Though Everard was a strong and active young man, he exhausted his strength in the vain attempt to open the door; and having paused to take breath, was about to renew his efforts with foot and shoulder, and to call at the same time for assistance, when to his surprise, on again attempting the door more gently, in order to ascertain if possible where the strength of the opposing obstacle was situated, he found it gave way to a very slight impulse, some impediment fell broken to the ground, and the door flew wide open. The gust of wind, occasioned by the sudden opening of the door, blew out the candle, and Everard was left in darkness, save where the moonshine, which the long side-row of latticed windows dimmed, could imperfectly force its way into the gallery, which lay in ghostly length before him.

The melancholy and doubtful twilight was increased by a quantity of creeping plants on the outside, which, since all had been neglected in these ancient halls, now completely overgrown, had in some instances greatly diminished, and in others almost quite choked up, the space of the lattices, extending between the heavy stone shaftwork which divided the windows, both lengthways and across. On the other side there were no windows at all, and the gallery had been once hung round with paintings, chiefly portraits, by which that side of the apartment had been adorned. Most of the pictures had been removed, yet the empty frames of some, and the tattered remnants of others, were still visible along the extent of the waste gallery; the look of which was so desolate, and it appeared so well adapted for mischief, supposing there were enemies near him, that Everard could not help pausing at the entrance, and recommending himself to God, ere, drawing his sword, he advanced into the apartment, treading as lightly as possible, and keeping in the shadow as much as he could.

Markham Everard was by no means superstitious, but he had the usual credulity of the times; and though he did not yield easily to tales of supernatural visitations, yet he could not help thinking he was in the very situation, where, if such things were ever permitted, they might be expected to take place, while his own stealthy and ill-assured pace, his drawn weapon, and extended arms, being the very attitude and action of doubt and suspicion, tended to increase in his mind the gloomy feelings of which they are the usual indications, and with which they are constantly associated. Under such unpleasant impressions, and conscious of the neighbourhood of something unfriendly, Colonel Everard had already advanced about half along the gallery, when he heard some one sigh very near him, and a low soft voice pronounce his name.

"Here I am," he replied, while his heart beat thick and short. "Who calls on Markham Everard?"

Another sigh was the only answer.

"Speak," said the Colonel, "whoever or whatsoever you are, and tell with what intent and purpose you are lurking in these apartments?"

"With a better intent than yours," returned the soft voice.

"Than mine!" answered Everard in great surprise. "Who are you that dare judge of my intents?"

"What, or who are you, Markham Everard, who wander by moonlight through these deserted halls of royalty, where none should be but those who mourn their downfall, or are sworn to avenge it?"

"It is — and yet it cannot be," said Everard; "yet it is, and must be. Alice Lee, the devil or you speaks. Answer me, I conjure you! — speak openly — on what dangerous scheme are you engaged? where is your father? why are you here? — wherefore do you run so deadly a venture? — Speak, I conjure you, Alice Lee!"

"She whom you call on is at the distance of miles from this spot. What if her Genius speaks when she is absent? — what if the soul of an ancestress of hers and yours were now addressing you? — what if?" —

"Nay," answered Everard, "but what if the dearest of human beings has caught a touch of her father's enthusiasm? — what if she is exposing her person to danger, her reputation to scandal, by traversing in disguise and darkness a house filled with armed men? Speak to me, my fair cousin, in your own person. I am furnished with powers to protect my uncle, Sir Henry — to protect you too, dearest Alice, even against the consequences of this visionary and wild attempt. Speak — I see where you are, and, with all my respect, I cannot submit to be thus practised upon. Trust me — trust your cousin Markham with your hand, and believe that he will die or place you in honourable safety."

As he spoke, he exercised his eyes as keenly as possible to detect where the speaker stood; and it seemed to him, that about three yards from him there was a shadowy form, of which he could not discern even the outline, placed as it was within the deep and prolonged shadow thrown by a space of wall intervening betwixt two windows, upon that side of the room from which the light was admitted. He endeavoured to calculate, as well as he could, the distance betwixt himself and the object which he watched, under the impression, that if, by even using a slight degree of compulsion, he could detach his beloved Alice from the confederacy into which he supposed her father's zeal for the cause of royalty had engaged her, he would be rendering them both the most essential favour. He could not indeed but conclude, that however successfully the plot which he conceived to be in agitation had proceeded against the timid Bletson, the stupid Desborough, and the crazy Harrison, there was little doubt that at length their artifices must necessarily bring shame and danger on those engaged in it.

It must also be remembered, that Everard's affection to his cousin, although of the most respectful and devoted character, partook less of the distant veneration which a lover of those days entertained for the lady whom he worshipped with humble diffidence, than of the fond and familiar feelings which a brother entertains towards a younger sister, whom he thinks himself entitled to guide, advise, and even in some degree to control. So kindly and intimate had been their intercourse, that he had little more hesitation in endeavouring to arrest her progress in the dangerous course in which she seemed to be engaged, even at the risk of giving her momentary offence, than he would have had in snatching her from a torrent or conflagration, at the chance of hurting her by the violence of his grasp. All this passed through his mind in the course of a single minute; and he resolved at all events to detain her on the spot, and compel, if possible, an explanation from her. With this purpose, Everard again conjured his cousin, in the name of Heaven, to give up this idle and dangerous mummery; and lending an accurate ear to her answer, endeavoured from the sound to calculate as nearly as possible the distance between them.

"I am not she for whom you take me," said the voice; "and dearer regards than aught connected with her life or death, bid me warn you to keep aloof, and leave this place."

"Not till I have convinced you of your childish folly," said the Colonel, springing forward, and endeavouring to catch hold of her who spoke to him. But no female form was within his grasp. On the contrary, he was met by a shock which could come from no woman's arm, and which was rude enough to stretch him on his back on the floor. At the same time he felt the point of a sword at his throat, and his hands so completely mastered, that not the slightest defence remained to him.

"A cry for assistance," said a voice near him, but not that which he had hitherto heard, "will be stifled in your blood! — No harm is meant you — be wise and be silent."

The fear of death, which Everard had often braved in the field of battle, became more intense as he felt himself in the hands of unknown assassins, and totally devoid of all means of defence. The sharp point of the sword pricked his bare throat, and the foot of him who held it was upon his breast. He felt as if a single thrust would put an end to life, and all the feverish joys and sorrows which agitate us so strangely, and from which we are yet so reluctant to part. Large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead — his heart throbbed, as if it would burst from its confinement in the bosom — he experienced the agony which fear imposes on the brave man, acute in proportion to that which pain inflicts when it subdues the robust and healthy.

"Cousin Alice," — he attempted to speak, and the sword's point pressed his throat yet more closely — "Cousin, let me not be murdered in a manner so fearful!"

"I tell you," replied the voice, "that you speak to one who is not here; but your life is not aimed at, provided you swear on your faith as a Christian, and your honour as a gentleman, that you will conceal what has happened, whether from the people below, or from any other person. On this condition you may rise; and if you seek her, you will find Alice Lee at Joceline's cottage, in the forest."

"Since I may not help myself otherwise," said Everard, "I swear, as I have a sense of religion and honour, I will say nothing of this violence, nor make any search after those who are concerned in it."

"For that we care nothing," said the voice. "Thou hast an example how well thou mayst catch mischief on thy own part; but we are in case to defy thee. Rise, and begone!"

The foot, the sword's-point, were withdrawn, and Everard was about to start up hastily, when the voice, in the same softness of tone which distinguished it at first, said, "No haste — cold and bare steel is yet around thee. Now — now — now — (the words dying away as at a distance) — thou art free. Be secret and be safe."

Markham Everard arose, and, in rising, embarrassed his feet with his own sword, which he had dropped when springing forward, as he supposed, to lay hold of his fair cousin. He snatched it up in haste, and as his hand clasped the hilt, his courage, which had given way under the apprehension of instant death, began to return; he considered, with almost his usual composure, what was to be done next. Deeply affronted at the disgrace which he had sustained, he questioned for an instant whether he ought to keep his extorted promise, or should not rather summon assistance, and make haste to discover and seize those who had been recently engaged in such violence on his person. But these persons, be they who they would, had had his life in their power — he had pledged his word in ransom of it — and what was more, he could not divest himself of the idea that his beloved Alice was a confidant, at least, if not an actor, in the confederacy which had thus baffled him. This prepossession determined his conduct; for, though angry at supposing she must have been accessory to his personal ill-treatment, he could not in any event think of an instant search through the mansion, which might have compromised her safety, or that of his uncle. "But I will to the hut," he said — "I will instantly to the hut, ascertain her share in this wild and dangerous confederacy, and snatch her from ruin, if it be possible."

As, under the influence of the resolution which he had formed, Everard groped his way through the gallery and regained the vestibule, he heard his name called by the well-known voice of Wildrake. "What — ho! — holloa! — Colonel Everard — Mark Everard — it is dark as the devil's mouth — speak — where are you? — The witches are keeping their hellish sabbath here, as I think. — Where are you?"

"Here, here!" answered Everard. "Cease your bawling. Turn to the left, and you will meet me."

Guided by his voice, Wildrake soon appeared, with a light in one hand, and his drawn sword in the other. "Where have you been?" he said — "What has detained you? — Here are Bletson and the brute Desborough terrified out of their lives, and Harrison raving mad, because the devil will not be civil enough to rise to fight him in single *duello*."

"Saw or heard you nothing as you came along?" said Everard.

"Nothing," said his friend, "excepting that when I first entered this cursed ruinous labyrinth, the light was struck out of my hand, as if by a switch, which obliged me to return for another."

"I must come by a horse instantly, Wildrake, and another for myself, if it be possible."

"We can take two of those belonging to the troopers," answered Wildrake. "But for what purpose should we run away, like rats, at this time in the evening? — Is the house falling?"

"I cannot answer you," said the Colonel, pushing forward into a room where there were some remains of furniture.

Here the cavalier took a more strict view of his person, and exclaimed in wonder, "What the devil have you been fighting with, Markham, that has bedizened you after this sorry fashion?"

"Fighting!" exclaimed Everard.

"Yes," replied his trusty attendant. "I say fighting. Look at yourself in the mirror."

He did, and saw he was covered with dust and blood. The latter proceeded from a scratch which he had received in the throat, as he struggled to extricate himself. With unaffected alarm, Wildrake undid his friend's collar, and with eager haste proceeded to examine the wound, his hands trembling, and his eyes glistening with apprehension for his benefactor's life. When, in spite of Everard's opposition, he had examined the hurt, and found it trifling, he resumed the natural wildness of his character, perhaps the more readily that he had felt shame in departing from it, into one which expressed more of feeling than he would be thought to possess.

"If that be the devil's work, Mark," said he, "the foul fiend's claws are not nigh so formidable as they are represented; but no one shall say that your blood has been shed unrevenged, while Roger Wildrake was by your side. Where left you this same imp? I will back to the field of fight, confront him with my rapier, and were his nails tenpenny nails, and his teeth as long as those of a harrow, he shall render me reason for the injury he has done you."

"Madness — madness!" exclaimed Everard; "I had this trifling hurt by a fall — a basin and towel will wipe it away. Meanwhile, if you will ever do me kindness, get the troop-horses — command them for the service of the public, in the name of his Excellency the General. I will but wash, and join you in an instant before the gate."

"Well, I will serve you, Everard, as a mute serves the Grand Signior, without knowing why or wherefore. But will you go without seeing these people below?"

"Without seeing any one," said Everard; "lose no time, for God's sake."

He found out the non-commissioned officer, and demanded the horses in a tone of authority, to which the corporal yielded undisputed obedience, as one well aware of Colonel Everard's military rank and consequence. So all was in a minute or two ready for the expedition.

Chapter the Thirteenth.

She kneeled, and saintlike

Cast her eyes to heaven, and pray'd devoutly.

KING HENRY VIII.

Colonel Everard's departure at the late hour, for, so it was then thought, of seven in the evening, excited much speculation. There was a gathering of menials and dependents in the outer chamber or hall, for no one doubted that his sudden departure was owing to his having, as they expressed it, "seen something," and all desired to know how a man of such acknowledged courage as Everard, looked under the awe of a recent apparition. But he gave them no time to make comments; for, striding through the hall wrapt in his riding suit, he threw himself on horseback, and rode furiously through the Chase, towards the hut of the keeper Joliffe.

It was the disposition of Markham Everard to be hot, keen, earnest, impatient, and decisive to a degree of precipitation. The acquired habits which education had taught, and which the strong moral and religious discipline of his sect had greatly strengthened, were such as to enable him to conceal, as well as to check, this constitutional violence, and to place him upon his guard against indulging it. But when in the high tide of violent excitation, the natural impetuosity of the young soldier's temper was sometimes apt to overcome these artificial obstacles, and then, like a torrent foaming over a wear, it became more furious, as if in revenge for the constrained calm which it had been for some time obliged to assume. In these instances he was accustomed to see only that point to which his thoughts were bent, and to move straight towards it, whether a moral object, or the storming of a breach, without either calculating, or even appearing to see, the difficulties which were before him.

At present, his ruling and impelling motive was to detach his beloved cousin, if possible, from the dangerous and discreditable machinations in which he suspected her to have engaged, or, on the other hand, to discover that she really had no concern with these stratagems. He should know how to judge of that in some measure, he thought, by finding her present or absent at the hut, towards which he was now galloping. He had read, indeed, in some ballad or minstrel's tale, of a singular deception practised on a jealous old man, by means of a subterranean communication between his house and that of a neighbour, which the lady in question made use of to present herself in the two places alternately, with such speed, and so much address, that, after repeated experiments, the dotard was deceived into the opinion, that his wife, and the lady who was so very like her, and to whom his neighbour paid so much attention, were two different persons. But in the present case there was no room for such a deception; the distance was too great, and as he took by much the nearest way from the castle, and rode full speed, it would be impossible, he knew, for his cousin, who was a timorous horsewoman even by daylight, to have got home before him.

Her father might indeed be displeased at his interference; but what title had he to be so? — Was not Alice Lee the near relation of his blood, the dearest object of his heart, and would he now abstain from an effort to save her from the consequences of a silly and wild conspiracy, because the old knight's spleen might be awakened by Everard's making his appearance at their present dwelling contrary to his commands? No. He would endure the old man's harsh language, as he endured the blast of the autumn wind, which was howling around him, and swinging the crashing branches of the trees under which he passed, but could not oppose, or even retard, his journey.

If he found not Alice, as he had reason to believe she would be absent, to Sir Henry Lee himself he would explain what he had witnessed. However she might have become accessory to the juggling tricks performed at Woodstock, he could not but think it was without her father's knowledge, so severe a judge was the old knight of female propriety, and so strict an assessor of female decorum. He would take the same opportunity, he thought, of stating to him the well-grounded hopes he entertained, that his dwelling at the Lodge might be prolonged, and the sequestrators removed from the royal mansion and domains, by other means than those of the absurd species of intimidation which seemed to be resorted to, to scare them from thence.

All this seemed to be so much within the line of his duty as a relative, that it was not until he halted at the door of the ranger's hut, and threw his bridle into Wildrake's hand, that Everard recollected the fiery, high, and unbending character of Sir Henry Lee, and felt, even when his fingers were on the latch, a reluctance to intrude himself upon the presence of the irritable old knight.

But there was no time for hesitation. Bevis, who had already bayed more than once from within the Lodge, was growing impatient, and Everard had but just time to bid Wildrake hold the horses until he should send Joceline to his assistance, when old Joan unpinned the door, to demand who was without at that time of the night. To have attempted anything like an explanation with poor dame Joan, would have been quite hopeless; the Colonel, therefore, put her gently aside, and shaking himself loose from the hold she had laid on his cloak, entered the kitchen of Joceline's dwelling. Bevis, who had advanced to support Joan in her opposition, humbled his lion-port, with that wonderful instinct which makes his race remember so long those with whom they have been familiar, and acknowledged his master's relative, by doing homage in his fashion, with his head and tail.

Colonel Everard, more uncertain in his purpose every moment as the necessity of its execution drew near, stole over the floor like one who treads in a sick chamber, and opening the door of the interior apartment with a slow and trembling hand, as he would have withdrawn the curtains of a dying friend, he saw, within, the scene which we are about to describe.

Sir Henry Lee sat in a wicker arm-chair by the fire. He was wrapped in a cloak, and his limbs extended on a stool, as if he were suffering from gout or indisposition. His long white beard flowing over the dark-coloured garment, gave him more the appearance of a hermit than of an aged soldier or man of quality; and that character was increased by the deep and devout attention with which he listened to a respectable old man, whose dilapidated dress showed still something of the clerical habit, and who, with a low, but full and deep voice, was reading the Evening Service according to the Church of England. Alice Lee kneeled at the feet of her father, and made the responses with a voice that might have suited the choir of angels; and a modest and serious devotion, which suited the melody of her tone. The face of the officiating clergyman would have been good-looking, had it not been disfigured with a black patch which covered the left eye and a part of his face, and had not the features which were visible been marked with the traces of care and suffering.

When Colonel Everard entered, the clergyman raised his finger, as cautioning him to forbear disturbing the divine service of the evening, and pointed to a seat; to which, struck deeply with the scene he had witnessed, the intruder stole with as light a step as possible, and knelt devoutly down as one of the little congregation. Everard had been bred by his father what was called a Puritan; a member of a sect who, in the primitive sense of the word, were persons that did not except against the doctrines of the Church of England, or even in all respects against its hierarchy, but chiefly dissented from it on the subject of certain ceremonies, habits, and forms of ritual, which were insisted upon by the celebrated and unfortunate Laud with ill-timed tenacity. But even if, from the habits of his father's house, Everard's opinions had been diametrically opposed to the doctrines of the English Church, he must have been reconciled to them by the regularity with which the service was performed in his uncle's family at Woodstock, who, during the blossom of his fortunes, generally had a chaplain residing in the Lodge for that special purpose.

Yet deep as was the habitual veneration with which he heard the impressive service of the Church, Everard's eyes could not help straying towards Alice, and his thoughts wandering to the purpose of his presence there. She seemed to have recognised him at once, for there was a deeper glow than usual upon her cheek, her fingers trembled as they turned the leaves of her prayerbook, and her voice, lately as firm as it was melodious, faltered when she repeated the responses. It

appeared to Everard, as far as he could collect by the stolen glances which he directed towards her, that the character of her beauty, as well as of her outward appearance, had changed with her fortunes.

The beautiful and high-born young lady had now approached as nearly as possible to the brown stuff dress of an ordinary village maiden; but what she had lost in gaiety of appearance, she had gained as it seemed in dignity. Her beautiful light-brown tresses, now folded around her head, and only curled where nature had so arranged them, gave her an air of simplicity, which did not exist when her head-dress showed the skill of a curious tire-woman. A light joyous air, with something of a humorous expression, which seemed to be looking for amusement, had vanished before the touch of affliction, and a calm melancholy supplied its place, which seemed on the watch to administer comfort to others. Perhaps the former arch, though innocent expression of countenance, was uppermost in her lover's recollection, when he concluded that Alice had acted a part in the disturbances which had taken place at the Lodge. It is certain, that when he now looked upon her, it was with shame for having nourished such a suspicion, and the resolution to believe rather that the devil had imitated her voice, than that a creature, who seemed so much above the feelings of this world, and so nearly allied to the purity of the next, should have had the indelicacy to mingle in such manoeuvres as he himself and others had been subjected to.

These thoughts shot through his mind, in spite of the impropriety of indulging them at such a moment. The service now approached the close, and a good deal to Colonel Everard's surprise, as well as confusion, the officiating priest, in firm and audible tone, and with every attribute of dignity, prayed to the Almighty to bless and preserve "Our Sovereign Lord, King Charles, the lawful and undoubted King of these realms." The petition (in those days most dangerous) was pronounced with a full, raised, and distinct articulation, as if the priest challenged all who heard him to dissent, if they dared. If the republican officer did not assent to the petition, he thought at least it was no time to protest against it.

The service was concluded in the usual manner, and the little congregation arose. It now included Wildrake, who had entered during the latter prayer, and was the first of the party to speak, running up to the priest, and shaking him by the hand most heartily, swearing at the same time, that he truly rejoiced to see him. The good clergyman returned the pressure with a smile, observing he should have believed his asseveration without an oath. In the meanwhile, Colonel Everard, approaching his uncle's seat, made a deep inclination of respect, first to Sir Henry Lee, and then to Alice, whose colour now spread from her cheek to her brow and bosom.

"I have to crave your excuse," said the Colonel with hesitation, "for having chosen for my visit, which I dare not hope would be very agreeable at any time, a season most peculiarly unsuitable."

"So far from it, nephew," answered Sir Henry, with much more mildness of manner than Everard had dared to expect, "that your visits at other times would be much more welcome, had we the fortune to see you often at our hours of worship."

"I hope the time will soon come, sir, when Englishmen of all sects and denominations," replied Everard, "will be free in conscience to worship in common the great Father, whom they all after their manner call by that affectionate name."

"I hope so too, nephew," said the old man in the same unaltered tone; "and we will not at present dispute, whether you would have the Church of England coalesce with the Conventicle, or the Conventicle conform to the Church. It was, I ween, not to settle jarring creeds, that you have honoured our poor dwelling, where, to say the truth, we dared scarce have expected to see you again, so coarse was our last welcome."

"I should be happy to believe," said Colonel Everard, hesitating, "that — that — in short my presence was not now so unwelcome here as on that occasion."

"Nephew," said Sir Henry, "I will be frank with you. When you were last here, I thought you had stolen from me a precious pearl, which at one time it would have been my pride and happiness to have bestowed on you; but which, being such as you have been of late, I would bury in the depths of the earth rather than give to your keeping. This somewhat chafed, as honest Will says, 'the rash humour which my mother gave me.' I thought I was robbed, and I thought I saw the robber before me. I am mistaken — I am not robbed; and the attempt without the deed I can pardon."

"I would not willingly seek offence in your words, sir," said Colonel Everard, "when their general purport sounds kind; but I can protest before Heaven, that my views and wishes towards you and your family are as void of selfish hopes and selfish ends, as they are fraught with love to you and to yours."

"Let us hear them, man; we are not much accustomed to good wishes now-a-days; and their very rarity will make them welcome."

"I would willingly, Sir Henry, since you might not choose me to give you a more affectionate name, convert those wishes into something effectual for your comfort. Your fate, as the world now stands, is bad, and, I fear, like to be worse."

"Worse than I expect it cannot be. Nephew, I do not shrink before my changes of fortune. I shall wear coarser clothes — I shall feed on more ordinary food — men will not doff their cap to me as they were wont, when I was the great and the wealthy. What of that? Old Harry Lee loved his honour better than his title, his faith better than his land and lordship. Have I not seen the 30th of January? I am neither Philomath nor astrologer; but old Will teaches me, that when green leaves fall winter is at hand, and that darkness will come when the sun sets."

"Bethink you, sir," said Colonel Everard, "if, without any submission asked, any oath taken, any engagement imposed, express or tacit, excepting that you are not to excite disturbances in the public peace, you can be restored to your residence in the Lodge, and your usual fortunes and perquisites there — I have great reason to hope this may be permitted, if not expressly, at least on sufferance."

"Yes, I understand you. I am to be treated like the royal coin, marked with the ensign of the Rump to make it pass current, although I am too old to have the royal insignia grinded off from me. Kinsman, I will have none of this. I have lived at the Lodge too long; and let me tell you, I had left it in scorn long since, but for the orders of one whom I may yet live to do service to. I will take nothing from the usurpers, be their name Rump or Cromwell — be they one devil or legion — I will not take from them an old cap to cover my grey hairs — a cast cloak to protect my frail limbs from the cold. They shall not say they have, by their unwilling bounty, made Abraham rich — I will live, as I will die, the Loyal Lee."

"May I hope you will think of it, sir; and that you will, perhaps, considering what slight submission is asked, give me a better answer?"

"Sir, if I retract my opinion, which is not my wont, you shall hear of it. — And now, cousin, have you more to say? We keep that worthy clergyman in the outer room."

"Something I had to say — something touching my cousin Alice," said Everard, with embarrassment; "but I fear that the prejudices of both are so strong against me" —

"Sir, I dare turn my daughter loose to you — I will go join the good doctor in dame Joan's apartment. I am not unwilling that you should know that the girl hath, in all reasonable sort, the exercise of her free will."

He withdrew, and left the cousins together.

Colonel Everard advanced to Alice, and was about to take her hand. She drew back, took the seat which her father had occupied, and pointed out to him one at some distance.

"Are we then so much estranged, my dearest Alice?" he said.

"We will speak of that presently," she replied. "In the first place, let me ask the cause of your visit here at so late an hour."

"You heard," said Everard, "what I stated to your father?"

"I did; but that seems to have been only part of your errand — something there seemed to be which applied particularly to me."

"It was a fancy — a strange mistake," answered Everard. "May I ask if you have been abroad this evening?"

"Certainly not," she replied. "I have small temptation to wander from my present home, poor as it is; and whilst here, I have important duties to discharge. But why does Colonel Everard ask so strange a question?"

"Tell me in turn, why your cousin Markham has lost the name of friendship and kindred, and even of some nearer feeling, and then I will answer you, Alice?"

"It is soon answered," she said. "When you drew your sword against my father's cause — almost against his person — I studied, more than I should have done, to find excuse for you. I knew, that is, I thought I knew your high feelings of public duty — I knew the opinions in which you had been bred up; and I said, I will not,

even for this, cast him off — he opposes his King because he is loyal to his country. You endeavoured to avert the great and concluding tragedy of the 30th of January; and it confirmed me in my opinion, that Markham Everard might be misled, but could not be base or selfish.”

“And what has changed your opinion, Alice? or who dare,” said Everard, reddening, “attach such epithets to the name of Markham Everard?”

“I am no subject,” she said, “for exercising your valour, Colonel Everard, nor do I mean to offend. But you will find enough of others who will avow, that Colonel Everard is truckling to the usurper Cromwell, and that all his fair pretexts of forwarding his country’s liberties, are but a screen for driving a bargain with the successful encroacher, and obtaining the best terms he can for himself and his family.”

“For myself — never!”

“But for your family you have — Yes, I am well assured that you have pointed out to the military tyrant, the way in which he and his satraps may master the government. Do you think my father or I would accept an asylum purchased at the price of England’s liberty, and your honour?”

“Gracious Heaven, Alice, what is this? You accuse me of pursuing the very course which so lately had your approbation!”

“When you spoke with authority of your father, and recommended our submission to the existing government, such as it was, I own I thought — that my father’s grey head might, without dishonour, have remained under the roof where it had so long been sheltered. But did your father sanction your becoming the adviser of yonder ambitious soldier to a new course of innovation, and his abettor in the establishment of a new species of tyranny? — It is one thing to submit to oppression, another to be the agent of tyrants — And O, Markham — their bloodhound!”

“How! bloodhound? — what mean you? — I own it is true I could see with content the wounds of this bleeding country stanch’d, even at the expense of beholding Cromwell, after his matchless rise, take a yet farther step to power — but to be his bloodhound! What is your meaning?”

“It is false, then? — I thought I could swear it had been false.”

“What, in the name of God, is it you ask?”

“It is false that you are engaged to betray the young King of Scotland?”

“Betray him! I betray him, or any fugitive? Never! I would he were well out of England — I would lend him my aid to escape, were he in the house at this instant; and think in acting so I did his enemies good service, by preventing their soiling themselves with his blood — but betray him, never!”

“I knew it — I was sure it was impossible. Oh, be yet more honest; disengage yourself from yonder gloomy and ambitious soldier! Shun him and his schemes, which are formed in injustice, and can only be realized in yet more blood!”

“Believe me,” replied Everard, “that I choose the line of policy best befitting the times.”

“Choose that,” she said, “which best befits duty, Markham — which best befits truth and honour. Do your duty, and let Providence decide the rest. — Farewell! we tempt my father’s patience too far — you know his temper — farewell, Markham.”

She extended her hand, which he pressed to his lips, and left the apartment. A silent bow to his uncle, and a sign to Wildrake, whom he found in the kitchen of the cabin, were the only tokens of recognition exhibited, and leaving the hut, he was soon mounted, and, with his companion, advanced on his return to the Lodge.

Chapter the Fourteenth.

Deeds are done on earth

Which have their punishment ere the earth closes

Upon the perpetrators. Be it the working

Of the remorse-stirr’d fancy, or the vision,

Distinct and real, of unearthly being,

All ages witness, that beside the couch

Of the fell homicide oft stalks the ghost

Of him he slew, and shows the shadowy wound.

OLD PLAY.

Everard had come to Joceline’s hut as fast as horse could bear him, and with the same impetuosity of purpose as of speed. He saw no choice in the course to be pursued, and felt in his own imagination the strongest right to direct, and even reprove, his cousin, beloved as she was, on account of the dangerous machinations with which she appeared to have connected herself. He returned slowly, and in a very different mood.

Not only had Alice, prudent as beautiful, appeared completely free from the weakness of conduct which seemed to give him some authority over her, but her views of policy, if less practicable, were so much more direct and noble than his own, as led him to question whether he had not compromised himself too rashly with Cromwell, even although the state of the country was so greatly divided and torn by faction, that the promotion of the General to the possession of the executive government seemed the only chance of escaping a renewal of the Civil War. The more exalted and purer sentiments of Alice lowered him in his own eyes; and though unshaken in his opinion, that it were better the vessel should be steered by a pilot having no good title to the office, than that she should run upon the breakers, he felt that he was not espousing the most direct, manly, and disinterested side of the question.

As he rode on, immersed in these unpleasant contemplations, and considerably lessened in his own esteem by what had happened, Wildrake, who rode by his side, and was no friend to long silence, began to enter into conversation. “I have been thinking, Mark,” said he, “that if you and I had been called to the bar — as, by the by, has been in danger of happening to me in more senses than one — I say, had we become barristers, I would have had the better oiled tongue of the two — the fairer art of persuasion.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Everard, “though I never heard thee use any, save to induce an usurer to lend thee money, or a taverner to abate a reckoning.”

“And yet this day, or rather night, I could have, as I think, made a conquest which baffled you.”

“Indeed?” said the Colonel, becoming attentive.

“Why, look you,” said Wildrake, “it was a main object with you to induce Mistress Alice Lee — By Heaven, she is an exquisite creature — I approve of your taste, Mark — I say, you desire to persuade her, and the stout old Trojan her father, to consent to return to the Lodge, and live there quietly, and under connivance, like gentlefolk, instead of lodging in a hut hardly fit to harbour a Tom of Bedlam.”

“Thou art right; such, indeed, was a great part of my object in this visit,” answered Everard.

“But perhaps you also expected to visit there yourself, and so keep watch over pretty Mistress Lee — eh?”

“I never entertained so selfish a thought,” said Everard; “and if this nocturnal disturbance at the mansion were explained and ended, I would instantly take my departure.”

“Your friend Noll would expect something more from you,” said Wildrake; “he would expect, in case the knight’s reputation for loyalty should draw any of our poor exiles and wanderers about the Lodge, that you should be on the watch and ready to snap them. In a word, as far as I can understand his long-winded speeches, he would have Woodstock a trap, your uncle and his pretty daughter the bait of toasted-cheese — craving your Chloe’s pardon for the comparison — you the spring-fall which should bar their escape, his Lordship himself being the great grimalkin to whom they are to be given over to be devoured.”

“Dared Cromwell mention this to thee in express terms?” said Everard, pulling up his horse, and stopping in the midst of the road.

“Nay, not in express terms, which I do not believe he ever used in his life; you might as well expect a drunken man to go straight forward; but he insinuated as much to me, and indicated that you might deserve well of him — Gadzo, the damnable proposal sticks in my throat — by betraying our noble and rightful King, (here he pulled off his hat,) whom God grant in health and wealth long to reign, as the worthy clergyman says, though I fear just now his Majesty is both sick and sorry, and never a penny in his pouch to boot.”

“This tallies with what Alice hinted,” said Everard; “but how could she know it? didst thou give her any hint of such a thing?”

“I!” replied the cavalier, “I, who never saw Mistress Alice in my life till to-night, and then only for an instant — zooks, man, how is that possible?”

"True," replied Everard, and seemed lost in thought. At length he spoke — "I should call Cromwell to account for his bad opinion of me; for, even though not seriously expressed, but, as I am convinced it was, with the sole view of proving you, and perhaps myself, it was, nevertheless, a misconstruction to be resented."

"I'll carry a cartel for you, with all my heart and soul," said Wildrake; "and turn out with his godliness's second, with as good will as I ever drank a glass of sack."

"Pshaw," replied Everard, "those in his high place fight no single combats. But tell me, Roger Wildrake, didst thou thyself think me capable of the falsehood and treachery implied in such a message?"

"I!" exclaimed Wildrake. "Markham Everard, you have been my early friend, my constant benefactor. When Colchester was reduced, you saved me from the gallows, and since that thou hast twenty times saved me from starving. But, by Heaven, if I thought you capable of such villany as your General recommended — by yonder blue sky, and all the works of creation which it bends over, I would stab you with my own hand!"

"Death," replied Everard, "I should indeed deserve, but not from you, perhaps; but fortunately, I cannot, if I would, be guilty of the treachery you would punish. Know that I had this day secret notice, and from Cromwell himself, that the young Man has escaped by sea from Bristol."

"Now, God Almighty be blessed, who protected him through so many dangers!" exclaimed Wildrake. "Huzza! — Up hearts, cavaliers! — Hey for cavaliers! — God bless King Charles! — Moon and stars, catch my hat!" — and he threw it up as high as he could into the air. The celestial bodies which he invoked did not receive the present dispatched to them; but, as in the case of Sir Henry Lee's scabbard, an old gnarled oak became a second time the receptacle of a waif and stray of loyal enthusiasm. Wildrake looked rather foolish at the circumstance, and his friend took the opportunity of admonishing him.

"Art thou not ashamed to bear thee so like a schoolboy?"

"Why," said Wildrake, "I have but sent a Puritan's hat upon a loyal errand. I laugh to think how many of the schoolboys thou talk'st of will be cheated into climbing the pollard next year, expecting to find the nest of some unknown bird in yonder unmeasured margin of felt."

"Hush now, for God's sake, and let us speak calmly," said Everard. "Charles has escaped, and I am glad of it. I would willingly have seen him on his father's throne by composition, but not by the force of the Scottish army, and the incensed and vengeful royalists."

"Master Markham Everard," began the cavalier, interrupting him — "Nay, hush, dear Wildrake," said Everard; "let us not dispute a point on which we cannot agree, and give me leave to go on. — I say, since the young Man has escaped, Cromwell's offensive and injurious stipulation falls to the ground; and I see not why my uncle and his family should not again enter their own house, under the same terms of connivance as many other royalists. What may be incumbent on me is different, nor can I determine my course until I have an interview with the General, which, as I think, will end in his confessing that he threw in this offensive proposal to sound us both. It is much in his manner; for he is blunt, and never sees or feels the punctilious honour which the gallants of the day stretch to such delicacy."

"I'll acquit him of having any punctilio about him," said Wildrake, "either touching honour or honesty. Now, to come back to where we started. Supposing you were not to reside in person at the Lodge, and to forbear even visiting there, unless on invitation, when such a thing can be brought about, I tell you frankly, I think your uncle and his daughter might be induced to come back to the Lodge, and reside there as usual. At least the clergyman, that worthy old cock, gave me to hope as much."

"He had been hasty in bestowing his confidence," said Everard.

"True," replied Wildrake; "he confided in me at once; for he instantly saw my regard for the Church. I thank Heaven I never passed a clergyman in his canonicals without pulling my hat off — (and thou knowest, the most desperate duel I ever fought was with young Grayless of the Inner Temple, for taking the wall of the Reverend Dr. Bunce) — Ah, I can gain a chaplain's ear instantly. Gadzooks, they know whom they have to trust to in such a one as I."

"Dost thou think, then," said Colonel Everard, "or rather does this clergyman think, that if they were secure of intrusion from me, the family would return to the Lodge, supposing the intruding Commissioners gone, and this nocturnal disturbance explained and ended?"

"The old Knight," answered Wildrake, "may be wrought upon by the Doctor to return, if he is secure against intrusion. As for disturbances, the stout old boy, so far as I can learn in two minutes' conversation, laughs at all this turmoil as the work of mere imagination, the consequence of the remorse of their own evil consciences; and says that goblin or devil was never heard of at Woodstock, until it became the residence of such men as they, who have now usurped the possession."

"There is more than imagination in it," said Everard. "I have personal reason to know there is some conspiracy carrying on, to render the house untenable by the Commissioners. I acquit my uncle of accession to such a silly trick; but I must see it ended ere I can agree to his and my cousin's residing where such a confederacy exists; for they are likely to be considered as the contrivers of such pranks, be the actual agent who he may."

"With reference to your better acquaintance with the gentleman, Everard, I should rather suspect the old father of Puritans (I beg your pardon again) has something to do with the business; and if so, Lucifer will never look near the true old Knight's beard, nor abide a glance of yonder maiden's innocent blue eyes. I will uphold them as safe as pure gold in a miser's chest."

"Sawest thou aught thyself, which makes thee think thus?"

"Not a quill of the devil's pinion saw I," replied Wildrake. "He supposes himself too secure of an old cavalier, who must steal, hang, or drown, in the long run, so he gives himself no trouble to look after the assured booty. But I heard the serving-fellows prate of what they had seen and heard; and though their tales were confused enough, yet if there was any truth among them at all, I should say the devil must have been in the dance. — But, holla! here comes some one upon us. — Stand, friend — who art thou?"

"A poor day-labourer in the great work of England — Joseph Tomkins by name — Secretary to a godly and well-endowed leader in this poor Christian army of England, called General Harrison."

"What news, Master Tomkins?" said Everard; "and why are you on the road at this late hour?"

"I speak to the worthy Colonel Everard, as I judge?" said Tomkins; "and truly I am glad of meeting your honour. Heaven knows, I need such assistance as yours. — Oh, worthy Master Everard! — Here has been a sounding of trumpets, and a breaking of vials, and a pouring forth, and" —

"Prithee, tell me in brief, what is the matter — where is thy master — and, in a word, what has happened?"

"My master is close by, parading it in the little meadow, beside the hugeous oak, which is called by the name of the late Man; ride but two steps forward, and you may see him walking swiftly to and fro, advancing all the while the naked weapon."

Upon proceeding as directed, but with as little noise as possible, they descried a man, whom of course they concluded must be Harrison, walking to and fro beneath the King's oak, as a sentinel under arms, but with more wildness of demeanour. The tramp of the horses did not escape his ear; and they heard him call out, as if at the head of the brigade — "Lower pikes against cavalry! — Here comes Prince Rupert — Stand fast, and you shall turn them aside, as a bull would toss a cur-dog. Lower your pikes still, my hearts, the end secured against your foot — down on your right knee, front rank — spare not for the spoiling of your blue aprons. — Ha — Zerobabel — ay, that is the word!"

"In the name of Heaven, about whom or what is he talking?" said Everard; "wherefore does he go about with his weapon drawn?"

"Truly, sir, when aught disturbs my master, General Harrison, he is something rapt in the spirit, and conceives that he is commanding a reserve of pikes at the great battle of Armageddon — and for his weapon, alack, worthy sir, wherefore should he keep Sheffield steel in calves' leather, when there are fiends to be combated — incarnate fiends on earth, and raging infernal fiends under the earth?"

"This is intolerable," said Everard. "Listen to me, Tomkins. Thou art not now in the pulpit, and I desire none of thy preaching language. I know thou canst speak intelligibly when thou art so minded. Remember, I may serve or harm thee; and as you hope or fear any thing on my part, answer straight-forward — What has happened to drive out thy master to the wild wood at this time of night?"

"Forsooth, worthy and honoured sir, I will speak with the precision I may. True it is, and of verity, that the breath of man, which is in his nostrils, goeth forth and returneth" —

"Hark you, sir," said Colonel Everard, "take care where you ramble in your correspondence with me. You have heard how at the great battle of Dunbar in Scotland, the General himself held a pistol to the head of Lieutenant Hewcreed, threatening to shoot him through the brain if he did not give up holding forth, and put his squadron in line to the front. Take care, sir."

"Verily, the lieutenant then charged with an even and unbroken order," said Tomkins, "and bore a thousand plaids and bonnets over the beach before him into the sea. Neither shall I pretermitt or postpone your honour's commands, but speedily obey them, and that without delay."

"Go to, fellow; thou knowest what I would have," said Everard; "speak at once; I know thou canst if thou wilt. Trusty Tomkins is better known than he thinks for."

"Worthy sir," said Tomkins, in a much less periphrastic style, "I will obey your worship as far as the spirit will permit. Truly, it was not an hour since, when my worshipful master being at table with Master Bibbet and myself, not to mention the worshipful Master Bletson and Colonel Desborough, and behold there was a violent knocking at the gate, as of one in haste. Now, of a certainty, so much had our household been harassed with witches and spirits, and other objects of sound and sight, that the sentinels could not be brought to abide upon their posts without doors, and it was only by a provision of beef and strong liquors that we were able to maintain a guard of three men in the hall, who nevertheless ventured not to open the door, lest they should be surprised with some of the goblins wherewith their imaginations were overwhelmed. And they heard the knocking, which increased until it seemed that the door was well-nigh about to be beaten down. Worthy Master Bibbet was a little overcome with liquor, (as is his fashion, good man, about this time of the evening,) not that he is in the least given to ebriety, but simply, that since the Scottish campaign he hath had a perpetual ague, which obliges him so to nourish his frame against the damps of the night; wherefore, as it is well known to your honour that I discharge the office of a faithful servant, as well to Major-General Harrison, and the other Commissioners, as to my just and lawful master, Colonel Desborough"—

"I know all that. — And now that thou art trusted by both, I pray to Heaven thou mayest merit the trust," said Colonel Everard.

"And devoutly do I pray," said Tomkins, "that your worshipful prayers may be answered with favour; for certainly to be, and to be called and entitled, Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins, is to me more than ever would be an Earl's title, were such things to be granted anew in this regenerated government."

"Well, go on — go on — or if thou dalliest much longer, I will make bold to dispute the article of your honesty. I like short tales, sir, and doubt what is told with a long unnecessary train of words."

"Well, good sir, be not hasty. As I said before, the doors rattled till you would have thought the knocking was reiterated in every room of the Palace. The bell rung out for company, though we could not find that any one tolled the clapper, and the guards let off their firelocks, merely because they knew not what better to do. So, Master Bibbet being, as I said, unsusceptible of his duty, I went down with my poor rapier to the door, and demanded who was there; and I was answered in a voice, which, I must say, was much like another voice, that it was one wanting Major-General Harrison. So, as it was then late, I answered mildly, that General Harrison was betaking himself to his rest, and that any who wished to speak to him must return on the morrow morning, for that after nightfall the door of the Palace, being in the room of a garrison, would be opened to no one. So, the voice replied, and bid me open directly, without which he would blow the folding leaves of the door into the middle of the hall. And therewithal the noise recommenced, that we thought the house would have fallen; and I was in some measure constrained to open the door, even like a besieged garrison which can hold out no longer."

"By my honour, and it was stoutly done of you, I must say," said Wildrake — who had been listening with much interest. "I am a bold dare-devil enough, yet when I had two inches of oak plank between the actual fiend and me, hang him that would demolish the barrier between us, say I — I would as soon, when aboard, bore a hole in the ship, and let in the waves; for you know we always compare the devil to the deep sea."

"Prithee, peace, Wildrake," said Everard, "and let him go on with his history. — Well, and what saw'st thou when the door was opened? — the great Devil with his horns and claws thou wilt say, no doubt."

"No, sir, I will say nothing but what is true. When I undid the door, one man stood there, and he, to seeming, a man of no extraordinary appearance. He was wrapped in a taffeta cloak of a scarlet colour, and with a red lining. He seemed as if he might have been in his time a very handsome man, but there was something of paleness and sorrow in his face — a long love-lock and long hair he wore, even after the abomination of the cavaliers, and the unloveliness, as learned Master Prynne well termed it, of love-locks — a jewel in his ear — a blue scarf over his shoulder, like a military commander for the King, and a hat with a white plume, bearing a peculiar hatband."

"Some unhappy officer of cavaliers, of whom so many are in hiding, and seeking shelter through the country," briefly replied Everard.

"True, worthy sir — right as a judicious exposition. But there was something about this man (if he was a man) whom I, for one, could not look upon without trembling; nor the musketeers — who were in the hall, without betraying much alarm, and swallowing, as they will themselves aver, the very bullets — which they had in their mouths for loading their carabines and muskets. Nay, the wolf and deer-dogs, that are the fiercest of their kind, fled from this visitor, and crept into holes and corners, moaning and wailing in a low and broken tone. He came into the middle of the hall, and still he seemed no more than an ordinary man, only somewhat fantastically dressed, in a doublet of black velvet pinked upon scarlet satin under his cloak, a jewel in his ear, with large roses in his shoes, and a kerchief in his hand, which he sometimes pressed against his left side."

"Gracious Heavens!" said Wildrake, coming close up to Everard, and whispering in his ear, with accents which terror rendered tremulous, (a mood of mind most unusual to the daring man, who seemed now overcome by it)—"it must have been poor Dick Robison the player, in the very dress in which I have seen him play Philaster — ay, and drunk a jolly bottle with him after it at the Mermaid! I remember how many frolics we had together, and all his little fantastic fashions. He served for his old master, Charles, in Mohun's troop, and was murdered by this butcher's dog, as I have heard, after surrender, at the battle of Naseby-field."

"Hush! I have heard of the deed," said Everard; "for God's sake hear the man to an end. — Did this visitor speak to thee, my friend?"

"Yes, sir, in a pleasing tone of voice, but somewhat fanciful in the articulation, and like one who is speaking to an audience as from a bar or a pulpit, more than in the voice of ordinary men on ordinary matters. He desired to see Major-General Harrison."

"He did! — and you," said Everard, infected by the spirit of the time, which, as is well known, leaned to credulity upon all matters of supernatural agency — "what did you do?"

"I went up to the parlour, and related that such a person enquired for him. He started when I told him, and eagerly desired to know the man's dress; but no sooner did I mention his dress, and the jewel in his ear, than he said, 'Begone! tell him I will not admit him to speech of me. Say that I defy him, and will make my defiance good at the great battle in the valley of Armageddon, when the voice of the angel shall call all fowls which fly under the face of heaven to feed on the flesh of the captain and the soldier, the warhorse and his rider. Say to the Evil One, I have power to appeal our conflict even till that day, and that in the front of that fearful day he will again meet with Harrison.' I went back with this answer to the stranger, and his face was writhed into such a deadly frown as a mere human brow hath seldom worn. 'Return to him,' he said, 'and say it is MY HOUR, and that if he come not instantly down to speak with me, I will mount the stairs to him. Say that I COMMAND him to descend, by the token, that, on the field of Naseby, *he did not the work negligently*.'"

"I have heard," whispered Wildrake — who felt more and more strongly the contagion of superstition — "that these words were blasphemously used by Harrison when he shot my poor friend Dick."

"What happened next?" said Everard. "See that thou speakest the truth."

"As gospel unexpounded by a steeple-man," said the Independent; "yet truly it is but little I have to say. I saw my master come down, with a blank, yet resolved air; and when he entered the hall and saw the stranger, he made a pause. The other waved on him as if to follow, and walked out at the portal. My worthy patron seemed as if he were about to follow, yet again paused, when this visitant, be he man or fiend, re-entered, and said, 'Obey thy doom.'

'By pathless march by greenwood tree,

It is thy weird to follow me —

To follow me through the ghastly moonlight —

To follow me through the shadows of night —

To follow me, comrade, still art thou bound;
I conjure thee by the unstaunch'd wound —
I conjure thee by the last words I spoke
When the body slept and the spirit awoke,
In the very last pangs of the deadly stroke.'

"So saying, he stalked out, and my master followed him into the wood. — I followed also at a distance. But when I came up, my master was alone, and bearing himself as you now behold him."

"Thou hast had a wonderful memory, friend," said the Colonel, coldly, "to remember these rhymes in a single recitation — there seems something of practice in all this."

"A single recitation, my honoured sir?" exclaimed the Independent — "alack, the rhyme is seldom out of my poor master's mouth, when, as sometimes haps, he is less triumphant in his wrestles with Satan. But it was the first time I ever heard it uttered by another; and, to say truth, he ever seems to repeat it unwillingly, as a child after his pedagogue, and as it was not indited by his own head, as the Psalmist saith."

"It is singular," said Everard; — "I have heard and read that the spirits of the slaughtered have strange power over the slayer; but I am astonished to have it insisted upon that there may be truth in such tales. Roger Wildrake — what art thou afraid of, man? — why dost thou shift thy place thus?"

"Fear? it is not fear — it is hate, deadly hate. — I see the murderer of poor Dick before me, and — see, he throws himself into a posture of fence — Sa — sa — say'st thou, brood of a butcher's mastiff? thou shalt not want an antagonist."

Ere any one could stop him, Wildrake threw aside his cloak, drew his sword, and almost with a single bound cleared the distance betwixt him and Harrison, and crossed swords with the latter, as he stood brandishing his weapon, as if in immediate expectation of an assailant. Accordingly, the Republican General was not for an instant taken at unawares, but the moment the swords clashed, he shouted, "Ha! I feel thee now, thou hast come in body at last. — Welcome! welcome! — the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

"Part them, part them!" cried Everard, as he and Tomkins, at first astonished at the suddenness of the affray, hastened to interfere. Everard, seizing on the cavalier, drew him forcibly backwards, and Tomkins contrived, with risk and difficulty, to master Harrison's sword, while the General exclaimed, "Ha! two to one — two to one! — thus fight demons." Wildrake, on his side, swore a dreadful oath, and added, "Markham, you have cancelled every obligation I owed you — they are all out of sight — gone, d — n me!"

"You have indeed acquitted these obligations rarely," said Everard, "Who knows how this affair shall be explained and answered?"

"I will answer it with my life," said Wildrake.

"Good now, be silent," said Tomkins, "and let me manage. It shall be so ordered that the good General shall never know that he hath encountered with a mortal man; only let that man of Moab put his sword into the scabbard's rest, and be still."

"Wildrake, let me entreat thee to sheathe thy sword," said Everard, "else, on my life, thou must turn it against me."

"No, 'fore George, not so mad as that neither, but I'll have another day with him."

"Thou, another day!" exclaimed Harrison, whose eye had still remained fixed on the spot where he found such palpable resistance. "Yes, I know thee well; day by day, week by week, thou makest the same idle request, for thou knowest that my heart quivers at thy voice. But my hand trembles not when opposed to thine — the spirit is willing to the combat, if the flesh be weak when opposed to that which is not of the flesh."

"Now, peace all, for Heaven's sake," — said the steward Tomkins; then added, addressing his master, "there is no one here, if it please your Excellency, but Tomkins and the worthy Colonel Everard."

General Harrison, as sometimes happens in cases of partial insanity, (that is, supposing his to have been a case of mental delusion,) though firmly and entirely persuaded of the truth of his own visions, yet was not willing to speak on the subject to those who, he knew, would regard them as imaginary. Upon this occasion, he assumed the appearance of perfect ease and composure, after the violent agitation he had just manifested, in a manner which showed how anxious he was to disguise his real feelings from Everard, whom he considered so unlikely to participate in them.

He saluted the Colonel with profound ceremony, and talked of the fineness of the evening, which had summoned him forth of the Lodge, to take a turn in the Park, and enjoy the favourable weather. He then took Everard by the arm, and walked back with him towards the Lodge, Wildrake and Tomkins following close behind and leading the horses. Everard, desirous to gain some light on these mysterious incidents, endeavoured to come on the subject more than once, by a mode of interrogation, which Harrison (for madmen are very often unwilling to enter on the subject of their mental delusion) parried with some skill, or addressed himself for aid to his steward Tomkins, who was in the habit of being voucher for his master upon all occasions, which led to Desborough's ingenious nickname of Fibbet.

"And wherefore had you your sword drawn, my worthy General," said Everard, "when you were only on an evening walk of pleasure?"

"Truly, excellent Colonel, these are times when men must watch with their loins girded, and their lights burning, and their weapons drawn. The day draweth nigh, believe me or not as you will, that men must watch lest they be found naked and unarmed, when the seven trumpets shall sound, Boot and saddle; and the pipes of Jezer shall strike up, Horse and away."

"True, good General; but methought I saw you making passes, even now, as if you were fighting," said Everard.

"I am of a strange fantasy, friend Everard," answered Harrison; "and when I walk alone, and happen, as but now, to have my weapon drawn, I sometimes, for exercise' sake, will practise a thrust against such a tree as that. It is a silly pride men have in the use of weapons. I have been accounted a master of fence, and have fought for prizes when I was unregenerated, and before I was called to do my part in the great work, entering as a trooper into our victorious General's first regiment of horse."

"But methought," said Everard, "I heard a weapon clash with yours?"

"How? a weapon clash with my sword? — How could that be, Tomkins?"

"Truly, sir," said Tomkins, "it must have been a bough of the tree; they have them of all kinds here, and your honour may have pushed against one of them, which the Brazilians call iron-wood, a block of which, being struck with a hammer, saith Purchas in his Pilgrimage, ringeth like an anvil."

"Truly, it may be so," said Harrison; "for those rulers who are gone, assembled in this their abode of pleasure many strange trees and plants, though they gathered not of the fruit of that tree which beareth twelve manner of fruits, or of those leaves which are for the healing of the nations."

Everard pursued his investigation; for he was struck with the manner in which Harrison evaded his questions, and the dexterity with which he threw his transcendental and fanatical notions, like a sort of veil, over the darker visions excited by remorse and conscious guilt.

"But," said he, "if I may trust my eyes and ears, I cannot but still think that you had a real antagonist. — Nay, I am sure I saw a fellow, in a dark-coloured jerkin, retreat through the wood."

"Did you?" said Harrison, with a tone of surprise, while his voice faltered in spite of him — "Who could he be? — Tomkins, did you see the fellow Colonel Everard talks of with the napkin in his hand — the bloody napkin which he always pressed to his side?"

This last expression, in which Harrison gave a mark different from that which Everard had assigned, but corresponding to Tomkins's original description of the supposed spectre, had more effect on Everard in confirming the steward's story, than anything he had witnessed or heard. The voucher answered the draft upon him as promptly as usual, that he had seen such a fellow glide past them into the thicket — that he dared to say he was some deer-stealer, for he had heard they were become very audacious.

"Look ye there now, Master Everard," said Harrison, hurrying from the subject — "Is it not time now that we should lay aside our controversies, and join hand in hand to repairing the breaches of our Zion? Happy and contented were I, my excellent friend, to be a treader of mortar, or a bearer of a hod, upon this occasion, under our great leader, with whom Providence has gone forth in this great national controversy; and truly, so devoutly do I hold by our excellent and victorious

General Oliver, whom Heaven long preserve — that were he to command me, I should not scruple to pluck forth of his high place the man whom they call speaker, even as I lent a poor hand to pluck down the man whom they called King. — Wherefore, as I know your judgment holdeth with mine on this matter, let me urge unto you lovingly, that we may act as brethren, and build up the breaches, and re-establish the bulwarks of our English Zion, whereby we shall be doubtless chosen as pillars and buttresses, under our excellent Lord-General, for supporting and sustaining the same, and endowed with proper revenues and incomes, both spiritual and temporal, to serve as a pedestal, on which we may stand, seeing that otherwise our foundation will be on the loose sand. — Nevertheless," continued he, his mind again diverging from his views of temporal ambition into his visions of the Fifth Monarchy, "these things are but vanity in respect of the opening of the book which is sealed; for all things approach speedily towards lightning and thundering, and unloosing of the great dragon from the bottomless pit, wherein he is chained."

With this mingled strain of earthly politics, and fanatical prediction, Harrison so overpowered Colonel Everard, as to leave him no time to urge him farther on the particular circumstances of his nocturnal skirmish, concerning which it is plain he had no desire to be interrogated. They now reached the Lodge of Woodstock.

Chapter the Fifteenth.

*Now the wasted brands do glow,
While the screech-owl, sounding loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe,
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets out its sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide.*

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Before the gate of the palace the guards were now doubled. Everard demanded the reason of this from the corporal, whom he found in the hall with his soldiers, sitting or sleeping around a great fire, maintained at the expense of the carved chairs and benches with fragments of which it was furnished.

"Why, verily," answered the man, "the *corps-degarde*, as your worship says, will be harassed to pieces by such duty; nevertheless, fear hath gone abroad among us, and no man will mount guard alone. We have drawn in, however, one or two of our outposts from Banbury and elsewhere, and we are to have a relief from Oxford tomorrow."

Everard continued minute enquiries concerning the sentinels that were posted within as well as without the Lodge; and found that, as they had been stationed under the eye of Harrison himself, the rules of prudent discipline had been exactly observed in the distribution of the posts. There remained nothing therefore for Colonel Everard to do, but, remembering his own adventure of the evening, to recommend that an additional sentinel should be placed, with a companion, if judged indispensable, in that vestibule, or ante-room, from which the long gallery where he had met with the *rencontre*, and other suites of apartments, diverged. The corporal respectfully promised all obedience to his orders. The serving-men being called, appeared also in double force. Everard demanded to know whether the Commissioners had gone to bed, or whether he could get speech with them? "They are in their bedroom, forsooth," replied one of the fellows; "but I think they be not yet undressed."

"What!" said Everard, "are Colonel Desborough and Master Bletson both in the same sleeping apartment?"

"Their honours have so chosen it," said the man; "and their honours' secretaries remain upon guard all night."

"It is the fashion to double guards all over the house," said Wildrake. "Had I a glimpse of a tolerably good-looking house-maid now, I should know how to fall into the fashion."

"Peace, fool!" said Everard. — "And where are the Mayor and Master Holdenough?"

"The Mayor is returned to the borough on horseback, behind the trooper, who goes to Oxford for the reinforcement; and the man of the steeple-house hath quartered himself in the chamber which Colonel Desborough had last night, being that in which he is most likely to meet the — your honour understands. The Lord pity us, we are a harassed family!"

"And where be General Harrison's knaves," said Tomkins, "that they do not marshal him to his apartment?"

"Here — here — here, Master Tomkins," said three fellows, pressing forward, with the same consternation on their faces which seemed to pervade the whole inhabitants of Woodstock.

"Away with you, then," said Tomkins; — "speak not to his worship — you see he is not in the humour."

"Indeed," observed Colonel Everard, "he looks singularly wan — his features seem writhen as by a palsy stroke; and though he was talking so fast while we came along, he hath not opened his mouth since we came to the light."

"It is his manner after such visitations," said Tomkins. — "Give his honour your arms, Zedekiah and Jonathan, to lead him off — I will follow instantly. — You, Nicodemus, tarry to wait upon me — it is not well walking alone in this mansion."

"Master Tomkins," said Everard, "I have heard of you often as a sharp, intelligent man — tell me fairly, are you in earnest afraid of any thing supernatural haunting this house?"

"I would be loth to run the chance, sir," said Tomkins very gravely; "by looking on my worshipful master, you may form a guess how the living look after they have spoken with the dead." He bowed low, and took his leave. Everard proceeded to the chamber which the two remaining Commissioners had, for comfort's sake, chosen to inhabit in company. They were preparing for bed as he went into their apartment. Both started as the door opened — both rejoiced when they saw it was only Everard who entered.

"Hark ye hither," said Bletson, pulling him aside, "sawest thou ever ass equal to Desborough? — the fellow is as big as an ox, and as timorous as a sheep. He has insisted on my sleeping here, to protect him. Shall we have a merry night on't, ha? We will, if thou wilt take the third bed, which was prepared for Harrison; but he is gone out, like a mooncalf, to look for the valley of Armageddon in the Park of Woodstock."

"General Harrison has returned with me but now," said Everard.

"Nay but, as I shall live, he comes not into our apartment," said Desborough, overhearing his answer. "No man that has been supping, for aught I know, with the Devil, has a right to sleep among Christian folk."

"He does not propose so," said Everard; "he sleeps, as I understand, apart — and alone."

"Not quite alone, I dare say," said Desborough; "for Harrison hath a sort of attraction for goblins — they fly round him like moths about a candle:— But, I prithee, good Everard, do thou stay with us. I know not how it is, but although thou hast not thy religion always in thy mouth, nor speakest many hard words about it, like Harrison — nor makest long preachments, like a certain most honourable relation of mine who shall be nameless, yet somehow I feel myself safer in thy company than with any of them. As for this Bletson, he is such a mere blasphemer, that I fear the Devil will carry him away ere morning."

"Did you ever hear such a paltry coward?" said Bletson, apart to Everard. "Do tarry, however, mine honoured Colonel — I know your zeal to assist the distressed, and you see Desborough is in that predicament, that he will require near him more than one example to prevent him thinking of ghosts and fiends."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you, gentlemen," said Everard; "but I have settled my mind to sleep in Victor Lee's apartment, so I wish you good night; and, if you would repose without disturbance, I would advise that you commend yourselves, during the watches of the night, to Him unto whom night is even as mid-day. I had intended to have spoke with you this evening on the subject of my being here; but I will defer the conference till tomorrow, when, I think, I will be able to show you excellent reasons for leaving Woodstock."

"We have seen plenty such already," said Desborough; "for one, I came here to serve the estate, with some moderate advantage to myself for my trouble; but if I am set upon my head again to-night, as I was the night before, I would not stay longer to gain a king's crown; for I am sure my neck would be unfitted to bear the weight of it."

"Good night," exclaimed Everard; and was about to go, when Bletson again pressed close, and whispered to him, "Hark thee, Colonel — you know my friendship for thee — I do implore thee to leave the door of thy apartment open, that if thou meetest with any disturbance, I may hear thee call, and be with thee upon the very instant. Do this, dear Everard, my fears for thee will keep me awake else; for I know that, notwithstanding your excellent sense, you entertain some of those superstitious ideas which we suck in with our mother's milk, and which constitute the ground of our fears in situations like the present; therefore leave thy door open, if you love me, that you may have ready assistance from me in case of need."

"My master," said Wildrake, "trusts, first, in his Bible, sir, and then in his good sword. He has no idea that the Devil can be baffled by the charm of two men lying in one room, still less that the foul fiend can be argued out of existence by the Nullifidians of the Rota."

Everard seized his imprudent friend by the collar, and dragged him off as he was speaking, keeping fast hold of him till they were both in the chamber of Victor Lee, where they had slept on a former occasion. Even then he continued to hold Wildrake, until the servant had arranged the lights, and was dismissed from the room; then letting him go, addressed him with the upbraiding question, "Art thou not a prudent and sagacious person, who in times like these seek'st every opportunity to argue yourself into a broil, or embroil yourself in an argument? Out on you!"

"Ay, out on me indeed," said the cavalier; "out on me for a poor tame-spirited creature, that submits to be bandied about in this manner, by a man who is neither better born nor better bred than myself. I tell thee, Mark, you make an unfair use of your advantages over me. Why will you not let me go from you, and live and die after my own fashion?"

"Because, before we had been a week separate, I should hear of your dying after the fashion of a dog. Come, my good friend, what madness was it in thee to fall foul on Harrison, and then to enter into useless argument with Bletson?"

"Why, we are in the Devil's house, I think, and I would willingly give the landlord his due wherever I travel. To have sent him Harrison, or Bletson now, just as a lunch to stop his appetite, till Crom"—

"Hush! stone walls have ears," said Everard, looking around him. "Here stands thy night-drink. Look to thy arms, for we must be as careful as if the Avenger of Blood were behind us. Yonder is thy bed — and I, as thou seest, have one prepared in the parlour. The door only divides us."

"Which I will leave open, in case thou shouldst holla for assistance, as yonder Nullifidian hath it — But how hast thou got all this so well put in order, good patron?"

"I gave the steward Tomkins notice of my purpose to sleep here."

"A strange fellow that," said Wildrake, "and, as I judge, has taken measure of every one's foot — all seems to pass through his hands."

"He is, I have understood," replied Everard, "one of the men formed by the times — has a ready gift of preaching and expounding, which keeps him in high terms with the Independents; and recommends himself to the more moderate people by his intelligence and activity."

"Has his sincerity ever been doubted?" said Wildrake.

"Never, that I heard of," said the Colonel; "on the contrary, he has been familiarly called Honest Joe, and Trusty Tomkins. For my part, I believe his sincerity has always kept pace with his interest. — But come, finish thy cup, and to bed. — What, all emptied at one draught!"

"Adszoekers, yes — my vow forbids me to make two on't; but, never fear — the nightcap will only warm my brain, not clog it. So, man or devil, give me notice if you are disturbed, and rely on me in a twinkling." So saying, the cavalier retreated into his separate apartment, and Colonel Everard, taking off the most cumbrous part of his dress, lay down in his hose and doublet, and composed himself to rest.

He was awakened from sleep by a slow and solemn strain of music, which died away as at a distance. He started up, and felt for his arms, which he found close beside him. His temporary bed being without curtains, he could look around him without difficulty; but as there remained in the chimney only a few red embers of the fire which he had arranged before he went to sleep, it was impossible he could discern any thing. He felt, therefore, in spite of his natural courage, that undefined and thrilling species of tremor which attends a sense that danger is near, and an uncertainty concerning its cause and character. Reluctant as he was to yield belief to supernatural occurrences, we have already said he was not absolutely incredulous; as perhaps, even in this more sceptical age, there are many fewer complete and absolute infidels on this particular than give themselves out for such. Uncertain whether he had not dreamed of these sounds which seemed yet in his ears, he was unwilling to risk the raillery of his friend by summoning him to his assistance. He sat up, therefore, in his bed, not without experiencing that nervous agitation to which brave men as well as cowards are subject; with this difference, that the one sinks under it, like the vine under the hailstorm, and the other collects his energies to shake it off, as the cedar of Lebanon is said to elevate its boughs to disperse the snow which accumulates upon them.

The story of Harrison, in his own absolute despite, and notwithstanding a secret suspicion which he had of trick or connivance, returned on his mind at this dead and solitary hour. Harrison, he remembered, had described the vision by a circumstance of its appearance different from that which his own remark had been calculated to suggest to the mind of the visionary; — that bloody napkin, always pressed to the side, was then a circumstance present either to his bodily eye, or to that of his agitated imagination. Did, then, the murdered revisit the living haunts of those who had forced them from the stage with all their sins unaccounted for? And if they did, might not the same permission authorise other visitations of a similar nature, to warn — to instruct — to punish? Rash are they, was his conclusion, and credulous, who receive as truth every tale of the kind; but no less rash may it be, to limit the power of the Creator over the works which he has made, and to suppose that, by the permission of the Author of Nature, the laws of Nature may not, in peculiar cases, and for high purposes, be temporarily suspended.

While these thoughts passed through Everard's mind, feelings unknown to him, even when he stood first on the rough and perilous edge of battle, gained ground upon him. He feared he knew not what; and where an open and discernible peril would have drawn out his courage, the absolute uncertainty of his situation increased his sense of the danger. He felt an almost irresistible desire to spring from his bed and heap fuel on the dying embers, expecting by the blaze to see some strange sight in his chamber. He was also strongly tempted to awaken Wildrake; but shame, stronger than fear itself, checked these impulses. What! should it be thought that Markham Everard, held one of the best soldiers who had drawn a sword in this sad war — Markham Everard, who had obtained such distinguished rank in the army of the Parliament, though so young in years, was afraid of remaining by himself in a twilight-room at midnight? It never should be said.

This was, however, no charm for his unpleasant current of thought. There rushed on his mind the various traditions of Victor Lee's chamber, which, though he had often despised them as vague, unauthenticated, and inconsistent rumours, engendered by ancient superstition, and transmitted from generation to generation by loquacious credulity, had something in them, which, did not tend to allay the present unpleasant state of his nerves. Then, when he recollected the events of that very afternoon, the weapon pressed against his throat, and the strong arm which threw him backward on the floor — if the remembrance served to contradict the idea of flitting phantoms, and unreal daggers, it certainly induced him to believe, that there was in some part of this extensive mansion a party of cavaliers, or malignants, harboured, who might arise in the night, overpower the guards, and execute upon them all, but on Harrison in particular, as one of the regicide judges, that vengeance, which was so eagerly thirsted for by the attached followers of the slaughtered monarch.

He endeavoured to console himself on this subject by the number and position of the guards, yet still was dissatisfied with himself for not having taken yet more exact precautions, and for keeping an extorted promise of silence, which might consign so many of his party to the danger of assassination. These thoughts, connected with his military duties, awakened another train of reflections. He bethought himself, that all he could now do, was to visit the sentries, and ascertain that they were awake, alert, on the watch, and so situated, that in time of need they might be ready to support each other. — "This better befits me," he thought, "than to be here like a child, frightening myself with the old woman's legend, which I have laughed at when a boy. What although old Victor Lee was a sacrilegious man, as common report goes, and brewed ale in the font which he brought from the ancient palace of Holyrood, while church and building were in flames? And what although his eldest son was when a child scalded to death in the same vessel? How many churches have been demolished since his time? How many fonts

desecrated? So many indeed, that were the vengeance of Heaven to visit such aggressions in a supernatural manner, no corner in England, no, not the most petty parish church, but would have its apparition. — Tush, these are idle fancies, unworthy, especially, to be entertained by those educated to believe that sanctity resides in the intention and the act, not in the buildings or fonts, or the form of worship.”

As thus he called together the articles of his Calvinistic creed, the bell of the great clock (a token seldom silent in such narratives) tolled three, and was immediately followed by the hoarse call of the sentinels through vault and gallery, up stairs and beneath, challenging and answering each other with the usual watch-word, All's Well. Their voices mingled with the deep boom of the bell, yet ceased before that was silent, and when they had died away, the tingling echo of the prolonged knell was scarcely audible. Ere yet that last distant tingling had finally subsided into silence, it seemed as if it again was awakened; and Everard could hardly judge at first whether a new echo had taken up the falling cadence, or whether some other and separate sound was disturbing anew the silence to which the deep knell had, as its voice ceased, consigned the ancient mansion and the woods around it.

But the doubt was soon cleared up. The musical tones which had mingled with the dying echoes of the knell, seemed at first to prolong, and afterwards to survive them. A wild strain of melody, beginning at a distance, and growing louder as it advanced, seemed to pass from room to room, from cabinet to gallery, from hall to bower, through the deserted and dishonoured ruins of the ancient residence of so many sovereigns; and, as it approached, no soldier gave alarm, nor did any of the numerous guests of various degrees, who spent an unpleasant and terrified night in that ancient mansion, seem to dare to announce to each other the inexplicable cause of apprehension.

Everard's excited state of mind did not permit him to be so passive. The sounds approached so nigh, that it seemed they were performing, in the very next apartment, a solemn service for the dead, when he gave the alarm, by calling loudly to his trusty attendant and friend Wildrake, who slumbered in the next chamber with only a door betwixt them, and even that ajar. “Wildrake — Wildrake! — Up — Up! Dost thou not hear the alarm?” There was no answer from Wildrake, though the musical sounds, which now rung through the apartment, as if the performers had actually been, within its precincts, would have been sufficient to awaken a sleeping person, even without the shout of his comrade and patron.

“Alarm! — Roger Wildrake — alarm!” again called Everard, getting out of bed and grasping his weapons — “Get a light, and cry alarm!” There was no answer. His voice died away as the sound of the music seemed also to die; and the same soft sweet voice, which still to his thinking resembled that of Alice Lee, was heard in his apartment, and, as he thought, at no distance from him.

“Your comrade will not answer,” said the low soft voice. “Those only hear the alarm whose consciences feel the call!”

“Again this mummerly!” said Everard. “I am better armed than I was of late; and but for the sound of that voice, the speaker had bought his trifling dear.”

It was singular, we may observe in passing, that the instant the distinct sounds of the human voice were heard by Everard, all idea of supernatural interference was at an end, and the charm by which he had been formerly fettered appeared to be broken; so much is the influence of imaginary or superstitious terror dependent (so far as respects strong judgments at least) upon what is vague or ambiguous; and so readily do distinct tones, and express ideas, bring such judgments back to the current of ordinary life. The voice returned answer, as addressing his thoughts as well as his words.

“We laugh at the weapons thou thinkest should terrify us — Over the guardians of Woodstock they have no power. Fire, if thou wilt, and try the effect of thy weapons. But know, it is not our purpose to harm thee — thou art of a falcon breed, and noble in thy disposition, though, unreclaimed and ill-nurtured, thou hauntest with kites and carrion crows. Wing thy flight from hence on the morrow, for if thou tarriest with the bats, owls, vultures and ravens, which have thought to nestle here, thou wilt inevitably share their fate. Away then, that these halls may be swept and garnished for the reception of those who have a better right to inhabit them.”

Everard answered in a raised voice. — “Once more I warn you, think not to defy me in vain. I am no child to be frightened by goblins' tales; and no coward, armed as I am, to be alarmed at the threats of banditti. If I give you a moment's indulgence, it is for the sake of dear and misguided friends, who may be concerned with this dangerous gambol. Know, I can bring a troop of soldiers round the castle, who will search its most inward recesses for the author of this audacious frolic; and if that search should fail, it will cost but a few barrels of gunpowder to make the mansion a heap of ruins, and bury under them the authors of such an ill-judged pastime.”

“You speak proudly, Sir Colonel,” said another voice, similar to that harsher and stronger tone by which he had been addressed in the gallery; “try your courage in this direction.”

“You should not dare me twice,” said Colonel Everard, “had I a glimpse of light to take aim by.”

As he spoke, a sudden gleam of light was thrown with a brilliancy which almost dazzled the speaker, showing distinctly a form somewhat resembling that of Victor Lee, as represented in his picture, holding in one hand a lady completely veiled, and in the other his leading-staff, or truncheon. Both figures were animated, and, as it appeared, standing within six feet of him.

“Were it not for the woman,” said Everard, “I would not be thus mortally dared.”

“Spare not for the female form, but do your worst,” replied the same voice. “I defy you.”

“Repeat your defiance when I have counted thrice,” said Everard, “and take the punishment of your insolence. Once — I have cocked my pistol — Twice — I never missed my aim — By all that is sacred, I fire if you do not withdraw. When I pronounce the next number, I will shoot you dead where you stand. I am yet unwilling to shed blood — I give you another chance of flight — once — twice — THRICE!”

Everard aimed at the bosom, and discharged his pistol. The figure waved its arm in an attitude of scorn; and a loud laugh arose, during which the light, as gradually growing weaker, danced and glimmered upon the apparition of the aged knight, and then disappeared. Everard's life-blood ran cold to his heart — “Had he been of human mould,” he thought, “the bullet must have pierced him — but I have neither will nor power to fight with supernatural beings.”

The feeling of oppression was now so strong as to be actually sickening. He groped his way, however, to the fireside, and flung on the embers which were yet gleaming, a handful of dry fuel. It presently blazed, and afforded him light to see the room in every direction. He looked cautiously, almost timidly, around, and half expected some horrible phantom to become visible. But he saw nothing save the old furniture, the reading desk, and other articles, which had been left in the same state as when Sir Henry Lee departed. He felt an uncontrollable desire, mingled with much repugnance, to look at the portrait of the ancient knight, which the form he had seen so strongly resembled. He hesitated betwixt the opposing feelings, but at length snatched, with desperate resolution, the taper which he had extinguished, and relighted it, ere the blaze of the fuel had again died away. He held it up to the ancient portrait of Victor Lee, and gazed on it with eager curiosity, not unmingled with fear. Almost the childish terrors of his earlier days returned, and he thought the severe pale eye of the ancient warrior followed his, and menaced him with its displeasure. And although he quickly argued himself out of such an absurd belief, yet the mixed feelings of his mind were expressed in words that seemed half addressed to the ancient portrait.

“Soul of my mother's ancestor,” he said, “be it for weal or for woe, by designing men, or by supernatural beings, that these ancient halls are disturbed, I am resolved to leave them on the morrow.”

“I rejoice to hear it, with all my soul,” said a voice behind him.

He turned, saw a tall figure in white, with a sort of turban upon its head, and dropping the candle in the exertion, instantly grappled with it.

“*Thou* at least art palpable,” he said.

“Palpable?” answered he whom he grasped so strongly — “Sdeath, methinks you might know that — without the risk of choking me; and if you loose me not, I'll show you that two can play at the game of wrestling.”

“Roger Wildrake!” said Everard, letting the cavalier loose, and stepping back.

“Roger Wildrake? ay, truly. Did you take me for Roger Bacon, come to help you raise the devil? — for the place smells of sulphur consumedly.”

“It is the pistol I fired — Did you not hear it?”

“Why, yes, it was the first thing waked me — for that nightcap which I pulled on, made me sleep like a dormouse — Pshaw, I feel my brains giddy with it yet.”

"And wherefore came you not on the instant? — I never needed help more."

"I came as fast as I could," answered Wildrake; "but it was some time ere I got my senses collected, for I was dreaming of that cursed field at Naseby — and then the door of my room was shut, and hard to open, till I played the locksmith with my foot."

"How! it was open when I went to bed," said Everard.

"It was locked when I came out of bed, though," said Wildrake, "and I marvel you heard me not when I forced it open."

"My mind was occupied otherwise," said Everard.

"Well," said Wildrake, "but what has happened? — Here am I bolt upright, and ready to fight, if this yawning fit will give me leave — Mother Redcap's mightiest is weaker than I drank last night, by a bushel to a barleycorn — I have quaffed the very elixir of malt — Ha — yaw."

"And some opiate besides, I should think," said Everard.

"Very like — very like — less than the pistol-shot would waken me; even me, who with but an ordinary grace-cup, sleep as lightly as a maiden on the first of May, when she watches for the earliest beam to go to gather dew. But what are you about to do next?"

"Nothing," answered Everard.

"Nothing?" said Wildrake, in surprise.

"I speak it," said Colonel Everard, "less for your information, than for that of others who may hear me, that I will leave the Lodge this morning, and, if it is possible, remove the Commissioners."

"Hark," said Wildrake, "do you not hear some noise like the distant sound of the applause of a theatre? The goblins of the place rejoice in your departure."

"I shall leave Woodstock," said Everard, "to the occupation of my uncle Sir Henry Lee, and his family, if they choose to resume it; not that I am frightened into this as a concession to the series of artifices which have been played off on this occasion, but solely because such was my intention from the beginning. But let me warn," (he added, raising his voice,)—"let me warn the parties concerned in this combination, that though it may pass off successfully on a fool like Desborough, a visionary like Harrison, a coward like Bletson"—

Here a voice distinctly spoke, as standing near them—"or a wise, moderate, and resolute person, like Colonel Everard."

"By Heaven, the voice came from the picture," said Wildrake, drawing his sword; "I will pink his plated armour for him."

"Offer no violence," said Everard, startled at the interruption, but resuming with firmness what he was saying—"Let those engaged be aware, that however this string of artifices may be immediately successful, it must, when closely looked into, be attended with the punishment of all concerned — the total demolition of Woodstock, and the irremediable downfall of the family of Lee. Let all concerned think of this, and desist in time."

He paused, and almost expected a reply, but none such came.

"It is a very odd thing," said Wildrake; "but — yaw-ha — my brain cannot compass it just now; it whirls round like a toast in a bowl of muscadine; I must sit down — haw-yaw — and discuss it at leisure — Gramercy, good elbow-chair."

So saying, he threw himself, or rather sank gradually down on a large easy-chair which had been often pressed by the weight of stout Sir Henry Lee, and in an instant was sound asleep. Everard was far from feeling the same inclination for slumber, yet his mind was relieved of the apprehension of any farther visitation that night; for he considered his treaty to evacuate Woodstock as made known to, and accepted in all probability by, those whom the intrusion of the Commissioners had induced to take such singular measures for expelling them. His opinion, which had for a time bent towards a belief in something supernatural in the disturbances, had now returned to the more rational mode of accounting for them by dexterous combination, for which such a mansion as Woodstock afforded so many facilities.

He heaped the hearth with fuel, lighted the candle, and examining poor Wildrake's situation, adjusted him as easily in the chair as he could, the cavalier stirring his limbs no more than an infant. His situation went far, in his patron's opinion, to infer trick and confederacy, for ghosts have no occasion to drug men's possets. He threw himself on the bed, and while he thought these strange circumstances over, a sweet and low strain of music stole through the chamber, the words "Good night — good night — good night," thrice repeated, each time in a softer and more distant tone, seeming to assure him that the goblins and he were at truce, if not at peace, and that he had no more disturbance to expect that night. He had scarcely the courage to call out a "good night," for, after all his conviction of the existence of a trick, it was so well performed as to bring with it a feeling of fear, just like what an audience experience during the performance of a tragic scene, which they know to be unreal, and which yet affects their passions by its near approach to nature. Sleep overtook him at last, and left him not till broad daylight on the ensuing morning.

Chapter the Sixteenth.

And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger.

*At whose approach ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyard.*

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

With the fresh air and the rising of morning, every feeling of the preceding night had passed away from Colonel Everard's mind, excepting wonder how the effects which he had witnessed could be produced. He examined the whole room, sounding bolt, floor, and wainscot with his knuckles and cane, but was unable to discern any secret passages; while the door, secured by a strong cross-bolt, and the lock besides, remained as firm as when he had fastened it on the preceding evening. The apparition resembling Victor Lee next called his attention. Ridiculous stories had been often circulated, of this figure, or one exactly resembling it, having been met with by night among the waste apartments and corridors of the old palace; and Markham Everard had often heard such in his childhood. He was angry to recollect his own deficiency of courage, and the thrill which he felt on the preceding night, when by confederacy, doubtless, such an object was placed before his eyes.

"Surely," he said, "this fit of childish folly could not make me miss my aim — more likely that the bullet had been withdrawn clandestinely from the pistol."

He examined that which was undischarged — he found the bullet in it. He investigated the apartment opposite to the point at which he had fired, and, at five feet from the floor in a direct line between the bed-side and the place where the appearance had been seen, a pistol-ball had recently buried itself in the wainscot. He had little doubt, therefore, that he had fired in a just direction; and indeed to have arrived at the place where it was lodged, the bullet must have passed through the appearance at which he aimed, and proceeded point blank to the wall beyond. This was mysterious, and induced him to doubt whether the art of witchcraft or conjuration had not been called in to assist the machinations of those daring conspirators, who, being themselves mortal, might, nevertheless, according to the universal creed of the times, have invoked and obtained assistance from the inhabitants of another world.

His next investigation respected the picture of Victor Lee itself. He examined it minutely as he stood on the floor before it, and compared its pale, shadowy, faintly-traced outlines, its faded colours, the stern repose of the eye, and death-like pallidness of the countenance, with its different aspect on the preceding night, when illuminated by the artificial light which fell full upon it, while it left every other part of the room in comparative darkness. The features seemed then to have an unnatural glow, while the rising and falling of the flame in the chimney gave the head and limbs something which resembled the appearance of actual motion. Now, seen by day, it was a mere picture of the hard and ancient school of Holbein; last night, it seemed for the moment something more. Determined to get to the bottom of this contrivance if possible, Everard, by the assistance of a table and chair, examined the portrait still more closely, and endeavoured to ascertain the existence of any private spring, by which it might be slipt aside — a contrivance not unfrequent in ancient buildings, which usually abounded with means of access and escape, communicated to none but the lords of the castle, or their immediate confidants. But the panel on which Victor Lee was painted was firmly fixed in the wainscoting of the apartment, of which it made a part, and the Colonel satisfied himself that it could not have been used for the purpose which he had suspected. He next aroused his faithful squire, Wildrake, who, notwithstanding his deep share of the "blessedness of sleep," had scarce even yet got rid of the effects of the grace-cup of the preceding evening. "It was the reward," according to his own view of the matter, "of his temperance; one single draught having made him sleep

more late and more sound than a matter of half-a-dozen, or from thence to a dozen pulls, would have done, when he was guilty of the enormity of rere-suppers, ² and of drinking deep after them."

"Had your temperate draught," said Everard, "been but a thought more strongly seasoned, Wildrake, thou hadst slept so sound that the last trump only could have waked thee."

"And then," answered Wildrake, "I should have waked with a headache, Mark; for I see my modest sip has not exempted me from that epilogue. — But let us go forth, and see how the night, which we have passed so strangely, has been spent by the rest of them. I suspect they are all right willing to evacuate Woodstock, unless they have either rested better than we, or at least been more lucky in lodgings."

"In that case, I will dispatch thee down to Joceline's hut, to negotiate the re-entrance of Sir Henry Lee and his family into their old apartments, where, my interest with the General being joined with the indifferent repute of the place itself, I think they have little chance of being disturbed either by the present, or by any new Commissioners."

"But how are they to defend themselves against the fiends, my gallant Colonel?" said Wildrake. "Methinks had I an interest in yonder pretty girl, such as thou dost boast, I should be loth to expose her to the terrors of a residence at Woodstock, where these devils — I beg their pardon, for I suppose they hear every word we say — these merry goblins — make such gay work from twilight till morning."

"My dear Wildrake," said the Colonel, "I, as well as you, believe it possible that our speech may be overheard; but I care not, and will speak my mind plainly. I trust Sir Henry and Alice are not engaged in this silly plot; I cannot reconcile it with the pride of the one, the modesty of the other, nor the good sense of both, that any motive could engage them in so strange a conjunction. But the fiends are all of your own political persuasion, Wildrake, all true-blue cavaliers; and I am convinced, that Sir Henry and Alice Lee, though they be unconnected with them, have not the slightest cause to be apprehensive of their goblin machinations. Besides, Sir Henry and Joceline must know every corner about the place: it will be far more difficult to play off any ghostly machinery upon him than upon strangers. But let us to our toilet, and when water and brush have done their work, we will enquire — what is next to be done."

"Nay, that wretched puritan's garb of mine is hardly worth brushing," said Wildrake; "and but for this hundred-weight of rusty iron, with which thou hast bedizened me, I look more like a bankrupt Quaker than anything else. But I'll make *you* as spruce as ever was a canting rogue of your party."

So saying, and humming at the same time the cavalier tune —

"Though for a time we see Whitehall

With cobwebs hung around the wall,

Yet Heaven shall make amends for all.

When the King shall enjoy his own again." —

"Thou forgettest who are without," said Colonel Everard.

"No — I remember who are within," replied his friend. "I only sing to my merry goblins, who will like me all the better for it. Tush, man, the devils are my *bonos socios*, and when I see them, I will warrant they prove such roaring boys as I knew when I served under Lunford and Goring, fellows with long nails that nothing escaped, bottomless stomachs, that nothing filled — mad for pillaging, ranting, drinking, and fighting — sleeping rough on the trenches, and dying stubbornly in their boots. Ah! those merry days are gone. Well, it is the fashion to make a grave face on't among cavaliers, and specially the parsons that have lost their tithe-pigs; but I was fitted for the element of the time, and never did or can desire merrier days than I had during that same barbarous, bloody, and unnatural rebellion."

"Thou wert ever a wild sea-bird, Roger, even according to your name; liking the gale better than the calm, the boisterous ocean better than the smooth lake, and your rough, wild struggle against the wind, than daily food, ease and quiet."

"Pshaw! a fig for your smooth lake, and your old woman to feed me with brewer's grains, and the poor drake obliged to come swattering whenever she whistles! Everard, I like to feel the wind rustle against my pinions — now diving, now on the crest of the wave, now in ocean, now in sky — that is the wild-drake's joy, my grave one! And in the Civil War so it went with us — down in one county, up in another, beaten today, victorious tomorrow — now starving in some barren leaguer — now revelling in a Presbyterian's pantry — his cellars, his plate-chest, his old judicial thumb-ring, his pretty serving-wench, all at command!"

"Hush, friend," said Everard; "remember I hold that persuasion." "More the pity, Mark, more the pity," said Wildrake; "but, as you say, it is needless talking of it. Let us e'en go and see how your Presbyterian pastor, Mr. Holdenough, has fared, and whether he has proved more able to foil the foul Fiend than have you his disciple and auditor."

They left the apartment accordingly, and were overwhelmed with the various incoherent accounts of sentinels and others, all of whom had seen or heard something extraordinary in the course of the night. It is needless to describe particularly the various rumours which each contributed to the common stock, with the greater alacrity that in such cases there seems always to be a sort of disgrace in not having seen or suffered as much as others.

The most moderate of the narrators only talked of sounds like the mewing of a cat, or the growling of a dog, especially the squeaking of a pig. They heard also as if it had been nails driven and saws used, and the clashing of fetters, and the rustling of silk gowns, and the notes of music, and in short all sorts of sounds which have nothing to do with each other. Others swore they had smelt savours of various kinds, chiefly bituminous, indicating a Satanic derivation; others did not indeed swear, but protested, to visions of men in armour, horses without heads, asses with horns, and cows with six legs, not to mention black figures, whose cloven hoofs gave plain information what realm they belonged to.

But these strongly-attested cases of nocturnal disturbances among the sentinels had been so general as to prevent alarm and succour on any particular point, so that those who were on duty called in vain on the *corps-de-garde*, who were trembling on their own post; and an alert enemy might have done complete execution on the whole garrison. But amid this general *alerte*, no violence appeared to be meant, and annoyance, not injury, seemed to have been the goblins' object, excepting in the case of one poor fellow, a trooper, who had followed Harrison in half his battles, and now was sentinel in that very vestibule upon which Everard had recommended them to mount a guard. He had presented his carabine at something which came suddenly upon him, when it was wrested out of his hands, and he himself knocked down with the butt-end of it. His broken head, and the drenched bedding of Desborough, upon whom a tub of ditch-water had been emptied during his sleep, were the only pieces of real evidence to attest the disturbances of the night.

The reports from Harrison's apartment were, as delivered by the grave Master Tomkins, that truly the General had passed the night undisturbed, though there was still upon him a deep sleep, and a folding of the hands to slumber; from which Everard argued that the machinators had esteemed Harrison's part of the reckoning sufficiently paid off on the preceding evening.

He then proceeded to the apartment doubly garrisoned by the worshipful Desborough, and the philosophical Bletson. They were both up and dressing themselves; the former open-mouthed in his feeling of fear and suffering. Indeed, no sooner had Everard entered, than the ducked and dismayed Colonel made a dismal complaint of the way he had spent the night, and murmured not a little against his worshipful kinsman for imposing a task upon him which inferred so much annoyance.

"Could not his Excellency, my kinsman Noll," he said, "have given his poor relative and brother-in-law a sop somewhere else than out of this Woodstock, which seems to be the devil's own porridge-pot? I cannot sup broth with the devil; I have no long spoon — not I. Could he not have quartered me in some quiet corner, and given this haunted place to some of his preachers and prayers, who know the Bible as well as the muster-roll? whereas I know the four hoofs of a clean-going nag, or the points of a team of oxen, better than all the books of Moses. But I will give it over, at once and for ever; hopes of earthly gain shall never make me run the risk of being carried away bodily by the devil, besides being set upon my head one whole night, and soused with ditch-water the next — No, no; I am too wise for that."

Master Bletson had a different part to act. He complained of no personal annoyances; on the contrary, he declared he should have slept as well as ever he did in his life but for the abominable disturbances around him, of men calling to arms every half hour, when so much as a cat trotted by one of their posts — He would rather, he said, "have slept among a whole sabaoth of witches, if such creatures could be found."

"Then you think there are no such things as apparitions, Master Bletson?" said Everard. "I used to be sceptical on the subject; but, on my life, to-night has been a strange one."

"Dreams, dreams, dreams, my simple Colonel," said Bletson, though, his pale face and shaking limbs belied the assumed courage with which he spoke. "Old Chaucer, sir, hath told us the real moral on't — He was an old frequenter of the forest of Woodstock, here" —

"Chaser?" said Desborough; "some huntsman, belike, by his name. Does he walk, like Hearne at Windsor?"

"Chaucer," said Bletson, "my dear Desborough, is one of those wonderful fellows, as Colonel Everard knows, who live many a hundred years after they are buried, and whose words haunt our ears after their bones are long mouldered in the dust."

"Ay, ay! well," answered Desborough, to whom this description of the old poet was unintelligible — "I for one desire his room rather than his company; one of your conjurers, I warrant him. But what says he to the matter?"

"Only a slight spell, which I will take the freedom to repeat to Colonel Everard," said Bletson; "but which would be as bad as Greek to thee, Desborough. Old Geoffrey lays the whole blame of our nocturnal disturbance on superfluity of humours,

'Which causen folk to dred in their dreams
Of arrowes, and of fire with red gleams,
Right as the humour of melancholy
Causeth many a man in sleep to cry
For fear of great bulls and bears black,
And others that black devils will them take.'"

While he was thus declaiming, Everard observed a book sticking out from beneath the pillow of the bed lately occupied by the honourable member.

"Is that Chaucer?" he said, making to the volume; "I would like to look at the passage" —

"Chaucer?" said Bletson, hastening to interfere; "no — that is Lucretius, my darling Lucretius. I cannot let you see it; I have some private marks."

But by this time Everard had the book in his hand. "Lucretius?" he said; "no, Master Bletson, this is not Lucretius, but a fitter comforter in dread or in danger — Why should you be ashamed of it? Only, Bletson, instead of resting your head, if you can but anchor your heart upon this volume, it may serve you in better stead than Lucretius or Chaucer either."

"Why, what book is it?" said Bletson, his pale cheek colouring with the shame of detection. "Oh! the Bible!" throwing it down contemptuously; "some book of my fellow Gibeon's; these Jews have been always superstitious — ever since Juvenal's time, thou knowest —

"Qualiacunque voles Judaei somnia vendunt."

"He left me the old book for a spell, I warrant you; for 'tis a well-meaning fool."

"He would scarce have left the New Testament as well as the Old," said Everard. "Come, my dear Bletson, do not be ashamed of the wisest thing you ever did in your life, supposing you took your Bible in an hour of apprehension, with a view to profit by the contents."

Bletson's vanity was so much galled that it overcame his constitutional cowardice. His little thin fingers quivered for eagerness, his neck and cheeks were as red as scarlet, and his articulation was as thick and vehement as — in short, as if he had been no philosopher.

"Master Everard," he said, "you are a man of the sword, sir; and, sir, you seem to suppose yourself entitled to say whatever comes into your mind with respect to civilians, sir. But I would have you remember, sir, that there are bounds beyond which human patience may be urged, sir — and jests which no man of honour will endure, sir — and therefore I expect an apology for your present language, Colonel Everard, and this unmannerly jesting, sir — or you may chance to hear from me in a way that will not please you."

Everard could not help smiling at this explosion of valour, engendered by irritated self-love.

"Look you, Master Bletson," he said, "I have been a soldier, that is true, but I was never a bloody-minded one; and, as a Christian, I am unwilling to enlarge the kingdom of darkness by sending a new vassal thither before his time. If Heaven gives you time to repent, I see no reason why my hand should deprive you of it, which, were we to have a rencontre, would be your fate in the thrust of a sword, or the pulling of a trigger — I therefore prefer to apologise; and I call Desborough, if he has recovered his wits, to bear evidence that I *do* apologise for having suspected you, who are completely the slave of your own vanity, of any tendency, however slight, towards grace or good sense. And I farther apologise for the time that I have wasted in endeavouring to wash an Ethiopian white, or in recommending rational enquiry to a self-willed atheist."

Bletson, overjoyed at the turn the matter had taken — for the defiance was scarce out of his mouth ere he began to tremble for the consequences — answered with great eagerness and servility of manner — "Nay, dearest Colonel, say no more of it — an apology is all that is necessary among men of honour — it neither leaves dishonour with him who asks it, nor infers degradation on him who makes it."

"Not such an apology as I have made, I trust," said the Colonel.

"No, no — not in the least," answered Bletson — "one apology serves me just as well as another, and Desborough will bear witness you have made one, and that is all there can be said on the subject."

"Master Desborough and you," rejoined the Colonel, "will take care how the matter is reported, I dare say; and I only recommend to both, that, if mentioned at all, it may be told correctly."

"Nay, nay, we will not mention it at all," said Bletson, "we will forget it from this moment. Only, never suppose me capable of superstitious weakness. Had I been afraid of an apparent and real danger — why such fear is natural to man — and I will not deny that the mood of mind may have happened to me as well as to others. But to be thought capable of resorting to spells, and sleeping with books under my pillow to secure myself against ghosts — on my word, it was enough to provoke one to quarrel, for the moment, with his very best friend. — And now, Colonel, what is to be done, and how is our duty to be executed at this accursed place? If I should get such a wetting as Desborough's, why I should die of catarrh, though you see it hurts him no more than a bucket of water thrown over a post-horse. You are, I presume, a brother in our commission — how are you of opinion we should proceed?"

"Why, in good time here comes Harrison," said Everard, "and I will lay my commission from the Lord-General before you all; which, as you see, Colonel Desborough, commands you to desist from acting on your present authority, and intimates his pleasure accordingly, that you withdraw from this place."

Desborough took the paper and examined the signature. — "It is Noll's signature sure enough," said he, dropping his under jaw; "only, every time of late he has made the *Oliver* as large as a giant, while the *Cromwell* creeps after like a dwarf, as if the surname were like to disappear one of these days altogether. But is his Excellency, our kinsman, Noll Cromwell (since he has the surname yet) so unreasonable as to think his relations and friends are to be set upon their heads till they have the crick in their neck — drenched as if they had been plunged in a horse-pond — frightened, day and night, by all sort of devils, witches, and fairies, and get not a penny of smart-money? Adzooks, (forgive me for swearing,) if that's the case I had better home to my farm, and mind team and herd, than dangle after such a thankless person, though I *have* wived his sister. She was poor enough when I took her, for as high as Noll holds his head now."

"It is not my purpose," said Bletson, "to stir debate in this honourable meeting; and no one will doubt the veneration and attachment which I bear to our noble General, whom the current of events, and his own matchless qualities of courage and constancy, have raised so high in these deplorable days. — If I were to term him a direct and immediate emanation of the ANIMUS MUNDI itself — something which Nature had produced in her proudest hour, while exerting herself, as is her law, for the preservation of the creatures to whom she has given existence — should scarce exhaust the ideas which I entertain of him. Always protesting that I am by no means to be held as admitting, but merely as granting for the sake of argument, the possible existence of that species of emanation, or exhalation, from the ANIMUS MUNDI, of which I have made mention. I appeal to you, Colonel Desborough, who are his Excellency's relation — to you, Colonel Everard, who hold the dearer title of his friend, whether I have overrated my zeal in his behalf?"

Everard bowed at this pause, but Desborough gave a more complete authentication. "Nay, I can bear witness to that. I have seen when you were willing to tie his points or brush his cloak, or the like — and to be treated thus ungratefully — and gudgeoned of the opportunities which had been given you" —

"It is not for that," said Bletson, waving his hand gracefully. "You do me wrong, Master Desborough — you do indeed, kind sir — although I know you meant it not — No, sir — no partial consideration of private interest prevailed on me to undertake this charge. It was conferred on me by the Parliament of England, in whose name this war commenced, and by the Council of State, who are the conservators of England's liberty. And the chance and serene hope of serving the country, the confidence that I — and you, Master Desborough — and you, worthy General Harrison — superior, as I am, to all selfish considerations — to which I am sure you also, good Colonel Everard, would be superior, had you been named in this Commission, as I would to Heaven you had — I say, the hope of serving the country, with the aid of such respectable associates, one and all of them — as well as you, Colonel Everard, supposing you to have been of the number, induced me to accept of this opportunity, whereby I might, gratuitously, with your assistance, render so much advantage to our dear mother the Commonwealth of England. — Such was my hope — my trust — my confidence. And now comes my Lord-General's warrant to dissolve the authority by which we are entitled to act. Gentlemen, I ask this honourable meeting, (with all respect to his Excellency,) whether his Commission be paramount to that from which he himself directly holds his commission? No one will say so. I ask whether he has climbed into the seat from which the late Man descended, or hath a great seal, or means to proceed by prerogative in such a case? I cannot see reason to believe it, and therefore I must resist such doctrine. I am in your judgment, my brave and honourable colleagues; but, touching my own poor opinion, I feel myself under the unhappy necessity of proceeding in our commission, as if the interruption had not taken place; with this addition, that the Board of Sequestrators should sit, by day, at this same Lodge of Woodstock, but that, to reconcile the minds of weak brethren, who may be afflicted by superstitious rumours, as well as to avoid any practice on our persons by the malignants, who, I am convinced, are busy in this neighbourhood, we should remove our sittings after sunset to the George Inn, in the neighbouring borough."

"Good Master Bletson," replied Colonel Everard, "it is not for me to reply to you; but you may know in what characters this army of England and their General write their authority. I fear me the annotation on this precept of the General, will be expressed by the march of a troop of horse from Oxford to see it executed. I believe there are orders out for that effect; and you know by late experience, that the soldier will obey his General equally against King and Parliament."

"That obedience is conditional," said Harrison, starting fiercely up. "Know'st thou not, Markham Everard, that I have followed the man Cromwell as close as the bull-dog follows his master? — and so I will yet; — but I am no spaniel, either to be beaten, or to have the food I have earned snatched from me, as if I were a vile cur, whose wages are a whipping, and free leave to wear my own skin. I looked, amongst the three of us, that we might honestly, and piously, and with advantage to the Commonwealth, have gained out of this commission three, or it may be five thousand pounds. And does Cromwell imagine I will part with it for a rough word? No man goeth a warfare on his own charges. He that serves the altar must live by the altar — and the saints must have means to provide them with good harness and fresh horses against the unsealing and the pouring forth. Does Cromwell think I am so much of a tame tiger as to permit him to rend from me at pleasure the miserable dole he hath thrown me? Of a surety I will resist; and the men who are here, being chiefly of my own regiment — men who wait, and who expect, with lamps burning and loins girded, and each one his weapon bound upon his thigh, will aid me to make this house good against every assault — ay, even against Cromwell himself, until the latter coming — Selah! Selah!" —

"And I," said Desborough, "will levy troops and protect your out-quarters, not choosing at present to close myself up in garrison" —

"And I," said Bletson, "will do my part, and hie me to town and lay the matter before Parliament, arising in my place for that effect."

Everard was little moved by all these threats. The only formidable one, indeed, was that of Harrison, whose enthusiasm, joined with his courage, and obstinacy, and character among the fanatics of his own principles, made him a dangerous enemy. Before trying any arguments with the refractory Major-General, Everard endeavoured to moderate his feelings, and threw something in about the late disturbances.

"Talk not to me of supernatural disturbances, young man — talk not to me of enemies in the body or out of the body. Am I not the champion chosen and commissioned to encounter and to conquer the great Dragon, and the Beast which cometh out of the sea? Am I not to command the left wing, and two regiments of the centre, when the Saints shall encounter with the countless legions of Grog and Magog? I tell thee that my name is written on the sea of glass mingled with fire, and that I will keep this place of Woodstock against all mortal men, and against all devils, whether in field or chamber, in the forest or in the meadow, even till the Saints reign in the fulness of their glory."

Everard saw it was then time to produce two or three lines under Cromwell's hand, which he had received from the General, subsequently to the communication through Wildrake. The information they contained was calculated to allay the disappointment of the Commissioners. This document assigned as the reason of superseding the Woodstock Commission, that he should probably propose to the Parliament to require the assistance of General Harrison, Colonel Desborough, and Master Bletson, the honourable member for Littlefaith, in a much greater matter, namely, the disposing of the royal property, and disparking of the King's forest at Windsor. So soon as this idea was started, all parties pricked up their ears; and their drooping, and gloomy, and vindictive looks began to give place to courteous smiles, and to a cheerfulness, which laughed in their eyes, and turned their mustaches upwards.

Colonel Desborough acquitted his right honourable and excellent cousin and kinsman of all species of unkindness; Master Bletson discovered, that the interest of the state was trebly concerned in the good administration of Windsor more than in that of Woodstock. As for Harrison, he exclaimed, without disguise or hesitation, that the gleanings of the grapes of Windsor was better than the vintage of Woodstock. Thus speaking, the glance of his dark eye expressed as much triumph in the proposed earthly advantage, as if it had not been, according to his vain persuasion, to be shortly exchanged for his share in the general reign of the Millennium. His delight, in short, resembled the joy of an eagle, who preys upon a lamb in the evening with not the less relish, because she descries in the distant landscape an hundred thousand men about to join battle with daybreak, and to give her an endless feast on the hearts and lifeblood of the valiant. Yet though all agreed that they would be obedient to the General's pleasure in this matter, Bletson proposed, as a precautionary measure, in which all agreed, that they should take up their abode for some time in the town of Woodstock, to wait for their new commissions respecting Windsor; and this upon the prudential consideration, that it was best not to slip one knot until another was first tied.

Each Commissioner, therefore, wrote to Oliver individually, stating, in his own way, the depth and height, length and breadth, of his attachment to him. Each expressed himself resolved to obey the General's injunctions to the uttermost; but with the same scrupulous devotion to the Parliament, each found himself at a loss how to lay down the commission intrusted to them by that body, and therefore felt bound in conscience to take up his residence at the borough of Woodstock, that he might not seem to abandon the charge committed to them, until they should be called to administrate the weightier matter of Windsor, to which they expressed their willingness instantly to devote themselves, according to his Excellency's pleasure.

This was the general style of their letters, varied by the characteristic flourishes of the writers. Desborough, for example, said something about the religious duty of providing for one's own household, only he blundered the text. Bletson wrote long and big words about the political obligation incumbent on every member of the community, on every person, to sacrifice his time and talents to the service of his country; while Harrison talked of the littleness of present affairs, in comparison of the approaching tremendous change of all things beneath the sun. But although the garnishing of the various epistles was different, the result came to the same, that they were determined at least to keep sight of Woodstock, until they were well assured of some better and more profitable commission.

Everard also wrote a letter in the most grateful terms to Cromwell, which would probably have been less warm had he known more distinctly than his follower chose to tell him, the expectation under which the wily General had granted his request. He acquainted his Excellency with his purpose of continuing at Woodstock, partly to assure himself of the motions of the three Commissioners, and to watch whether they did not again enter upon the execution of the trust, which they had for the present renounced — and partly to see that some extraordinary circumstances, which had taken place in the Lodge, and which would doubtless transpire, were not followed by any explosion to the disturbance of the public peace. He knew (as he expressed himself) that his Excellency was so much the friend of order, that he would rather disturbances or insurrections were prevented than punished; and he conjured the General to repose confidence in his exertions for the public service by every mode within his power; not aware, it will be observed, in what peculiar sense his general pledge might be interpreted. These letters being made up into a packet, were forwarded to Windsor by a trooper, detached on that errand.

*We do that in our zeal,
Our calmer moments are afraid to answer.*

ANONYMOUS.

While the Commissioners were preparing to remove themselves from the Lodge to the inn at the borough of Woodstock, with all that state and bustle which attend the movements of great persons, and especially of such to whom greatness is not entirely familiar, Everard held some colloquy with the Presbyterian clergyman, Master Holdenough, who had issued from the apartment which he had occupied, as it were in defiance of the spirits by whom the mansion was supposed to be disturbed, and whose pale cheek, and pensive brow, gave token that he had not passed the night more comfortably than the other inmates of the Lodge of Woodstock. Colonel Everard having offered to procure the reverend gentleman some refreshment, received this reply:—"This day shall I not taste food, saving that which we are assured of as sufficient for our sustenance, where it is promised that our bread shall be given us, and our water shall be sure. Not that I fast, in the papistical opinion that it adds to those merits, which are but an accumulation of filthy rags; but because I hold it needful that no grosser sustenance should this day cloud my understanding, or render less pure and vivid the thanks I owe to Heaven for a most wonderful preservation."

"Master Holdenough," said Everard, "you are, I know, both a good man and a bold one, and I saw you last night courageously go upon your sacred duty, when soldiers, and tried ones, seemed considerably alarmed."

"Too courageous — too venturesome" was Master Holdenough's reply, the boldness of whose aspect seemed completely to have died away. "We are frail creatures, Master Everard, and frailest when we think ourselves strongest. Oh, Colonel Everard," he added, after a pause, and as if the confidence was partly involuntary, "I have seen that which I shall never survive!"

"You surprise me, reverend sir," said Everard; — "may I request you will speak more plainly? I have heard some stories of this wild night, nay, have witnessed strange things myself; but, methinks, I would be much interested in knowing the nature of your disturbance."

"Sir," said the clergyman, "you are a discreet gentleman; and though I would not willingly that these heretics, schismatics, Brownists, Muggletonians, Anabaptists, and so forth, had such an opportunity of triumph, as my defeat in this matter would have afforded them, yet with you, who have been ever a faithful follower of our Church, and are pledged to the good cause by the great National League and Covenant, surely I would be more open. Sit we down, therefore, and let me call for a glass of pure water, for as yet I feel some bodily faltering; though, I thank Heaven, I am in mind resolute and composed as a merely mortal man may after such a vision. — They say, worthy Colonel, that looking on such things foretells, or causes, speedy death — I know not if it be true; but if so, I only depart like the tired sentinel when his officer releases him from his post; and glad shall I be to close these wearied eyes against the sight, and shut these harassed ears against the croaking, as of frogs, of Antinomians, and Pelagians, and Socinians, and Arminians, and Arians, and Nullifidians, which have come up into our England, like those filthy reptiles into the house of Pharaoh."

Here one of the servants who had been summoned, entered with a cup of water, gazing at the same time in the face of the clergyman, as if his stupid grey eyes were endeavouring to read what tragic tale was written on his brow; and shaking his empty skull as he left the room, with the air of one who was proud of having discovered that all was not exactly right, though he could not so well guess what was wrong.

Colonel Everard invited the good man to take some refreshment more genial than the pure element, but he declined: "I am in some sort a champion" he said; "and though I have been foiled in the late controversy with the Enemy, still I have my trumpet to give the alarm, and my sharp sword to smite withal; therefore, like the Nazarites of old, I will eat nothing that cometh of the vine, neither drink wine nor strong drink, until these my days of combat shall have passed away."

Kindly and respectfully the Colonel anew pressed Master Holdenough to communicate the events that had befallen him on the preceding night; and the good clergyman proceeded as follows, with that little characteristic touch of vanity in his narrative, which naturally arose out of the part he had played in the world, and the influence which he had exercised over the minds of others. "I was a young man at the University of Cambridge," he said, "when I was particularly bound in friendship to a fellow-student, perhaps because we were esteemed (though it is vain to mention it) the most hopeful scholars at our college; and so equally advanced, that it was difficult, perhaps, to say which was the greater proficient in his studies. Only our tutor, Master Purefoy, used to say, that if my comrade had the advantage of me in gifts, I had the better of him in grace; for he was attached to the profane learning of the classics, always unprofitable, often impious and impure; and I had light enough to turn my studies into the sacred tongues. Also we differed in our opinions touching the Church of England, for he held Arminian opinions, with Laud, and those who would connect our ecclesiastical establishment with the civil, and make the Church dependent on the breath of an earthly man. In fine, he favoured Prelacy both in essentials and ceremonial; and although, we parted with tears and embraces, it was to follow very different courses. He obtained a living, and became a great controversial writer in behalf of the Bishops and of the Court. I also, as is well known to you, to the best of my poor abilities, sharpened my pen in the cause of the poor oppressed people, whose tender consciences rejected the rites and ceremonies more befitting a papistical than a reformed Church, and which, according to the blinded policy of the Court, were enforced by pains and penalties. Then came the Civil War, and I — called thereunto by my conscience, and nothing fearing or suspecting what miserable consequences have chanced through the rise of these Independents — consented to lend my countenance and labour to the great work, by becoming chaplain to Colonel Harrison's regiment. Not that I mingled with carnal weapons in the field — which Heaven forbid that a minister of the altar should — but I preached, exhorted, and, in time of need, was a surgeon, as well to the wounds of the body as of the soul. Now, it fell, towards the end of the war, that a party of malignants had seized on a strong house in the shire of Shrewsbury, situated on a small island advanced into a lake, and accessible only by a small and narrow causeway. From thence they made excursions, and vexed the country; and high time it was to suppress them, so that a part of our regiment went to reduce them; and I was requested to go, for they were few in number to take in so strong a place, and the Colonel judged that my exhortations would make them do valiantly. And so, contrary to my wont, I went forth with them, even to the field, where there was valiant fighting on both sides. Nevertheless, the malignants shooting their wall-pieces at us, had so much the advantage, that, after bursting their gates with a salvo of our cannon, Colonel Harrison ordered his men to advance on the causeway, and try to carry the place by storm. Nonetheless, although our men did valiantly, advancing in good order, yet being galled on every side by the fire, they at length fell into disorder, and were retreating with much loss, Harrison himself valiantly bringing up the rear, and defending them as he could against the enemy, who sallied forth in pursuit of them, to smite them hip and thigh. Now, Colonel Everard, I am a man of a quick and vehement temper by nature, though better teaching than the old law hath made me mild and patient as you now see me. I could not bear to see our Israelites flying before the Philistines, so I rushed upon the causeway, with the Bible in one hand, and a halberd, which I had caught up, in the other, and turned back the foremost fugitives, by threatening to strike them down, pointing out to them at the same time a priest in his cassock, as they call it, who was among the malignants, and asking them whether they would not do as much for a true servant of Heaven, as the uncircumcised would for a priest of Baal. My words and strokes prevailed; they turned at once, and shouting out, Down with Baal and his worshippers! they charged the malignants so unexpectedly home, that they not only drove them back into their house of garrison, but entered it with them, as the phrase is, pell-mell. I also was there, partly hurried on by the crowd, partly to prevail on our enraged soldiers to give quarter; for it grieved my heart to see Christians and Englishmen hashed down with swords and gunstocks, like curs in the street, when there is an alarm of mad-dogs. In this way, the soldiers fighting and slaughtering, and I calling to them to stay their hand, we gained the very roof of the building, which was in part leaded, and to which, as a last tower of refuge, those of the cavaliers, who yet escaped, had retired. I was myself, I may say, forced up the narrow winding staircase by our soldiers, who rushed on like dogs of chase upon their prey; and when extricated from the passage, I found myself in the midst of a horrid scene. The scattered defenders were, some resisting with the fury of despair; some on their knees, imploring for compassion in words and tones to break a man's heart when he thinks on them; some were calling on God for mercy; and it was time, for man had none. They were stricken down, thrust through, flung from the battlements into the lake; and the wild cries of the victors, mingled with the groans, shrieks, and clamours, of the vanquished, made a sound so horrible, that only death can erase it from my memory. And the men who butchered their fellow-creatures thus, were neither pagans from distant savage lands, nor ruffians, the refuse and offscourings of our own people. They were in calm blood reasonable, nay, religious men, maintaining a fair repute both

heavenward and earthward. Oh, Master Everard, your trade of war should be feared and avoided, since it converts such men into wolves towards their fellow creatures."

"It is a stern necessity," said Everard, looking down, "and as such alone is justifiable. But proceed, reverend sir; I see not how this storm, an incident but e'en too frequent on both sides during the late war, connects with the affair of last night."

"You shall hear anon," said Mr. Holdenough; then paused as one who makes an effort to compose himself before continuing a relation, the tenor of which agitated him with much violence. "In this infernal tumult," he resumed — "for surely nothing on earth could so much resemble hell, as when men go thus loose in mortal malice on their fellow-creatures — I saw the same priest whom I had distinguished on the causeway, with one or two other malignants, pressed into a corner by the assailants, and defending themselves to the last, as those who had no hope. — I saw him — I knew him — Oh, Colonel Everard!"

He grasped Everard's hand with his own left hand, and pressed the palm of his right to his face and forehead, sobbing aloud.

"It was your college companion?" said Everard, anticipating the catastrophe.

"Mine ancient — mine only friend — with whom I had spent the happy days of youth! — I rushed forward — I struggled — I entreated. — But my eagerness left me neither voice nor language — all was drowned in the wretched cry which I had myself raised — Down with the priest of Baal! Slay Mattan — slay him were he between the altars! — Forced over the battlements, but struggling for life, I could see him cling to one of those projections which were formed to carry the water from the leads, but they hacked at his arms and hands. I heard the heavy fall into the bottomless abyss below. Excuse me — I cannot go on."

"He may have escaped."

"Oh! no, no, no — the tower was four stories in height. Even those who threw themselves into the lake from the lower windows, to escape by swimming, had no safety; for mounted troopers on the shore caught the same bloodthirsty humour which had seized the storming party, galloped around the margin of the lake, and shot those who were struggling for life in the water, or cut them down as they strove to get to land. They were all cut off and destroyed. — Oh! may the blood shed on that day remain silent! — Oh! that the earth may receive it in her recesses! — Oh! that it may be mingled for ever with the dark waters of that lake, so that it may never cry for vengeance against those whose anger was fierce, and who slaughtered in their wrath! — And, oh! may the erring man be forgiven who came into their assembly, and lent his voice to encourage their, cruelty! — Oh! Albany, my brother, my brother, I have lamented for thee even as David for Jonathan!"³

The good man sobbed aloud, and so much did Colonel Everard sympathize with his emotions, that he forebore to press him upon the subject of his own curiosity until the full tide of remorseful passion had for the time abated. It was, however, fierce and agitating, the more so, perhaps, that indulgence in strong mental feeling of any kind was foreign to the severe and ascetic character of the man, and was therefore the more overpowering when it had at once surmounted all restraints. Large tears flowed down the trembling features of his thin, and usually stern, or at least austere countenance; he eagerly returned the compression of Everard's hand, as if thankful for the sympathy which the caress implied.

Presently after, Master Holdenough wiped his eyes, withdrew his hand gently from that of Everard, shaking it kindly as they parted, and proceeded with more composure: "Forgive me this burst of passionate feeling, worthy Colonel. I am conscious it little becomes a man of my cloth, who should be the bearer of consolation to others, to give way in mine own person to an extremity of grief, weak at least, if indeed it is not sinful; for what are we, that we should weep and murmur touching that which is permitted? But Albany was to me as a brother. The happiest days of my life, ere my call to mingle myself in the strife of the land had awakened me to my duties, were spent in his company. I — but I will make the rest of my story short." — Here he drew his chair close to that of Everard, and spoke in a solemn and mysterious tone of voice, almost lowered to a whisper — "I saw him last night."

"Saw *him* — saw whom?" said Everard. "Can you mean the person whom?" —

"Whom I saw so ruthlessly slaughtered," said the clergyman — "My ancient college friend — Joseph Albany."

"Master Holdenough, your cloth and your character alike must prevent your jesting on such a subject as this."

"Jesting!" answered Holdenough; "I would as soon jest on my death-bed — as soon jest upon the Bible."

"But you must have been deceived," answered Everard, hastily; "this tragical story necessarily often returns to your mind, and in moments when the imagination overcomes the evidence of the outward senses, your fancy must have presented to you an unreal appearance. Nothing more likely, when the mind is on the stretch after something supernatural, than that the imagination should supply the place with a chimera, while the over-excited feelings render it difficult to dispel the delusion."

"Colonel Everard," replied Holdenough, with austerity, "in discharge of my duty I must not fear the face of man; and, therefore, I tell you plainly, as I have done before with more observance, that when you bring your carnal learning and judgment, as it is but too much your nature to do, to investigate the hidden things of another world, you might as well measure with the palm of your hand the waters of the Isis. Indeed, good sir, you err in this, and give men too much pretence to confound your honourable name with witch-advocates, free-thinkers, and atheists, even with such as this man Bletson, who, if the discipline of the church had its hand strengthened, as it was in the beginning of the great conflict, would have been long ere now cast out of the pale, and delivered over to the punishment of the flesh, that his spirit might, if possible, be yet saved."

"You mistake, Master Holdenough," said Colonel Everard; "I do not deny the existence of such preternatural visitations, because I cannot, and dare not, raise the voice of my own opinion against the testimony of ages, supported by such learned men as yourself. Nevertheless, though I grant the possibility of such things, I have scarce yet heard of an instance in my days so well fortified by evidence, that I could at once and distinctly say, This must have happened by supernatural agency, and not otherwise."

"Hear, then, what I have to tell," said the divine, "on the faith of a man, a Christian, and, what is more, a servant of our Holy Church; and, therefore, though unworthy, an elder and a teacher among Christians. I had taken my post yester evening in the half-furnished apartment, wherein hangs a huge mirror, which might have served Goliath of Gath to have admired himself in, when clothed from head to foot in his brazen armour. I the rather chose this place, because they informed me it was the nearest habitable room to the gallery in which they say you had been yourself assailed that evening by the Evil One. — Was it so, I pray you?"

"By some one with no good intentions I was assailed in that apartment. So far," said Colonel Everard, "you were correctly informed."

"Well, I chose my post as well as I might, even as a resolved general approaches his camp, and casts up his mound as nearly as he can to the besieged city. And, of a truth, Colonel Everard, if I felt some sensation of bodily fear — for even Elias, and the prophets, who commanded the elements, had a portion in our frail nature, much more such a poor sinful being as myself — yet was my hope and my courage high; and I thought of the texts which I might use, not in the wicked sense of periapts, or spells, as the blinded papists employ them, together with the sign of the cross and other fruitless forms, but as nourishing and supporting that true trust and confidence in the blessed promises, being the true shield of faith wherewith the fiery darts of Satan may be withstood and quenched. And thus armed and prepared, I sate me down to read, at the same time to write, that I might compel my mind to attend to those subjects which became the situation in which I was placed, as preventing any unlicensed excursions of the fancy, and leaving no room for my imagination to brood over idle fears. So I methodised, and wrote down what I thought meet for the time, and peradventure some hungry souls may yet profit by the food which I then prepared."

"It was wisely and worthily done, good and reverend sir," replied Colonel Everard. "I pray you to proceed."

"While I was thus employed, sir, and had been upon the matter for about three hours, not yielding to weariness, a strange thrilling came over my senses, and the large and old-fashioned apartment seemed to wax larger, more gloomy, and more cavernous, while the air of the night grew more cold and chill. I know not if it was that the fire began to decay, or whether there cometh before such things as were then about to happen, a breath and atmosphere, as it were, of terror, as Job saith in a well-known passage, 'Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made my bones to shake;' and there was a tingling noise in my ears, and a dizziness in my brain, so that I felt like those who call for aid when there is no danger, and was even prompted to flee, when I saw no one to pursue. It was then that something seemed to pass behind me, casting a reflection on the great mirror before which I had placed my writing-table, and which I saw by assistance of the large standing light which was then in front of the glass. And I looked up, and I saw in the glass distinctly the appearance of a man — as sure as these words

issue from my mouth, it was no other than the same Joseph Albany — the companion of my youth — he whom I had seen precipitated down the battlements of Clidesbrough Castle into the deep lake below!"

"What did you do?"

"It suddenly rushed on my mind," said the divine, "that the stoical philosopher Athenodorus had eluded the horrors of such a vision by patiently pursuing his studies; and it shot at the same time across my mind, that I, a Christian divine, and a Steward of the Mysteries, had less reason to fear evil, and better matter on which to employ my thoughts, than was possessed by a Heathen, who was blinded even by his own wisdom. So, instead of betraying any alarm, or even turning my head around, I pursued my writing, but with a beating heart, I admit, and with a throbbing hand."

"If you could write at all," said the Colonel, "with such an impression on your mind, you may take the head of the English army for dauntless resolution."

"Our courage is not our own, Colonel," said the divine, "and not as ours should it be vaunted of. And again, when you speak of this strange vision as an impression on my fancy, and not a reality obvious to my senses, let me tell you once more, your worldly wisdom is but foolishness touching the things that are not worldly."

"Did you not look again upon the mirror?" said the Colonel.

"I did, when I had copied out the comfortable text, 'Thou shalt tread down Satan under thy feet.'"

"And what did you then see?"

"The reflection of the same Joseph Albany," said Holdenough, "passing slowly as from behind my chair — the same in member and lineament that I had known him in his youth, excepting that his cheek had the marks of the more advanced age at which he died, and was very pale."

"What did you then?"

"I turned from the glass, and plainly saw the figure which had made the reflection in the mirror retreating towards the door, not fast, nor slow, but with a gliding steady pace. It turned again when near the door, and again showed me its pale, ghastly countenance, before it disappeared. But how it left the room, whether by the door, or otherwise, my spirits were too much hurried to remark exactly; nor have I been able, by any effort of recollection, distinctly to remember."

"This is a strange, and, as coming from you, a most excellently well-attested apparition," answered Everard. "And yet, Master Holdenough, if the other world has been actually displayed, as you apprehend, and I will not dispute the possibility, assure yourself there are also wicked men concerned in these machinations. I myself have undergone some rencontres with visitants who possessed bodily strength, and wore, I am sure, earthly weapons."

"Oh! doubtless, doubtless," replied Master Holdenough; "Beelzebub loves to charge with horse and foot mingled, as was the fashion of the old Scottish general, Davie Leslie. He has his devils in the body as well as his devils disembodied, and uses the one to support and back the other."

"It may be as you say, reverend sir," answered the Colonel. — "But what do you advise in this case?"

"For that I must consult with my brethren," said the divine; "and if there be but left in our borders five ministers of the true kirk, we will charge Satan in full body, and you shall see whether we have not power over him to resist till he shall flee from us. But failing that ghostly armament against these strange and unearthly enemies, truly I would recommend, that as a house of witchcraft and abomination, this polluted den of ancient tyranny and prostitution should be totally consumed by fire, lest Satan, establishing his head-quarters so much to his mind, should find a garrison and a fastness from which he might sally forth to infest the whole neighbourhood. Certain it is, that I would recommend to no Christian soul to inhabit the mansion; and, if deserted, it would become a place for wizards to play their pranks, and witches to establish their Sabbath, and those who, like Demas, go about after the wealth of this world, seeking for gold and silver to practise spells and charms to the prejudice of the souls of the covetous. Trust me, therefore, it were better that it were spoiled and broken down, not leaving one stone upon another."

"I say nay to that, my good friend," said the Colonel; "for the Lord-General hath permitted, by his license, my mother's brother, Sir Henry Lee, and his family, to return into the house of his fathers, being indeed the only roof under which he hath any chance of obtaining shelter for his grey hairs."

"And was this done by your advice, Markham Everard?" said the divine austere.

"Certainly it was," returned the Colonel. — "And wherefore should I not exert mine influence to obtain a place of refuge for the brother of my mother?"

"Now, as sure as thy soul liveth," answered the presbyter, "I had believed this from no tongue but thine own. Tell me, was it not this very Sir Henry Lee, who, by the force of his buffcoats and his greenjerkins, enforced the Papist Laie's order to remove the altar to the eastern end of the church at Woodstock? — and did not he swear by his beard, that he would hang in the very street of Woodstock whoever should deny to drink the King's health? — and is not his hand red with the blood of the saints? — and hath there been a ruffler in the field for prelacy and high prerogative more unmitigable or fiercer?"

"All this may have been as you say, good Master Holdenough," answered the Colonel; "but my uncle is now old and feeble, and hath scarce a single follower remaining, and his daughter is a being whom to look upon would make the sternest weep for pity; a being who" —

"Who is dearer to Everard," said Holdenough, "than his good name, his faith to his friends, his duty to his religion; — this is no time to speak with sugared lips. The paths in which you tread are dangerous. You are striving to raise the papistical candlestick which Heaven in its justice removed out of its place — to bring back to this hall of sorceries those very sinners who are bewitched with them. I will not permit the land to be abused by their witchcrafts. — They shall not come hither."

He spoke this with vehemence, and striking his stick against the ground; and the Colonel, very much dissatisfied, began to express himself haughtily in return.

"You had better consider your power to accomplish your threats, Master Holdenough," he said, "before you urge them so peremptorily."

"And have I not the power to bind and to loose?" said the clergyman.

"It is a power little available, save over those of your own Church," said Everard, with a tone something contemptuous.

"Take heed — take heed," said the divine, who, though an excellent, was, as we have elsewhere seen, an irritable man. — "Do not insult me; but think honourably of the messenger, for the sake of Him whose commission he carries. — Do not, I say, defy me — I am bound to discharge my duty, were it to the displeasing of my twin brother."

"I can see nought your office has to do in the matter," said Colonel Everard; "and I, on my side, give you warning not to attempt to meddle beyond your commission."

"Right — you hold me already to be as submissive as one of your grenadiers," replied the clergyman, his acute features trembling with a sense of indignity, so as even to agitate his grey hair; "but beware, sir, I am not so powerless as you suppose. I will invoke every true Christian in Woodstock to gird up his loins, and resist the restoration of prelacy, oppression, and malignancy within our borders. I will stir up the wrath of the righteous against the oppressor — the Ishmaelite — the Edomite — and against his race, and against those who support him and encourage him to rear up his horn. I will call aloud, and spare not, and arouse the many whose love hath waxed cold, and the multitude who care for none of these things. There shall be a remnant to listen to me; and I will take the stick of Joseph, which was in the hand of Ephraim, and go down to cleanse this place of witches and sorcerers, and of enchantments, and will cry and exhort, saying — Will you plead for Baal? — will you serve him? Nay, take the prophets of Baal — let not a man escape!"

"Master Holdenough, Master Holdenough," said Colonel Everard, with much impatience, "by the tale yourself told me, you have exhorted upon that text once too often already."

The old man struck his palm forcibly against his forehead, and fell back into a chair as these words were uttered, as suddenly, and as much without power of resistance, as if the Colonel had fired a pistol through his head. Instantly regretting the reproach which he had suffered to escape him in his impatience, Everard hastened to apologise, and to offer every conciliatory excuse, however inconsistent, which occurred to him on the moment. But the old man was too deeply affected — he rejected his hand, lent no ear to what he said, and finally started up, saying sternly, "You have abused my confidence, sir — abused it vilely, to turn it into my own reproach: had I been a man of the sword, you dared not — But enjoy your triumph, sir, over an old man, and your father's friend — strike at the wound his imprudent confidence showed you."

"Nay, my worthy and excellent friend," said the Colonel —

"Friend!" answered the old man, starting up — "We are foes, sir — foes now, and for ever!"

So saying, and starting from the seat into which he had rather fallen than thrown himself, he ran out of the room with a precipitation of step which he was apt to use upon occasions of irritable feeling, and which was certainly more eager than dignified, especially as he muttered while he ran, and seemed as if he were keeping up his own passion, by recounting over and over the offence which he had received.

"So!" said Colonel Everard, "and there was not strife enough between mine uncle and the people of Woodstock already, but I must needs increase it, by chafing this irritable and quick-tempered old man, eager as I knew him to be in his ideas of church-government, and stiff in his prejudices respecting all who dissent from him! The mob of Woodstock will rise; for though he would not get a score of them to stand by him in any honest or intelligible purpose, yet let him cry havoc and destruction, and I will warrant he has followers enow. And my uncle is equally wild and unpersuadable. For the value of all the estate he ever had, he would not allow a score of troopers to be quartered in the house for defence; and if he be alone, or has but Joceline to stand by him, he will be as sure to fire upon those who come to attack the Lodge, as if he had a hundred men in garrison; and then what can chance but danger and bloodshed?"

This progress of melancholy anticipation was interrupted by the return of Master Holdenough, who, hurrying into the room, with the same precipitate pace at which he had left it, ran straight up to the Colonel, and said, "Take my hand, Markham — take my hand hastily; for the old Adam is whispering at my heart, that it is a disgrace to hold it extended so long."

"Most heartily do I receive your hand, my venerable friend," said Everard, "and I trust in sign of renewed amity."

"Surely, surely," — said the divine, shaking his hand kindly; "thou hast, it is true, spoken bitterly, but thou hast spoken truth in good time; and I think — though your words were severe — with a good and kindly purpose. Verily, and of a truth, it were sinful in me again to be hasty in provoking violence, remembering that which you have upbraided me with" —

"Forgive me, good Master Holdenough," said Colonel Everard, "it was a hasty word; I meant not in serious earnest to *upbraid*."

"Peace, I pray you, peace," said the divine; "I say, the allusion to that which you have *most justly* upbraided me with — though the charge aroused the gall of the old man within me, the inward tempter being ever on the watch to bring us to his lure — ought, instead of being resented, to have been acknowledged by me as a favour, for so are the wounds of a friend termed faithful. And surely I, who have by one unhappy exhortation to battle and strife sent the living to the dead — and I fear brought back even the dead among the living — should now study peace and good will, and reconciliation of difference, leaving punishment to the Great Being whose laws are broken, and vengeance to Him who hath said, I will repay it."

The old man's mortified features lighted up with a humble confidence as he made this acknowledgment; and Colonel Everard, who knew the constitutional infirmities, and the early prejudices of professional consequence and exclusive party opinion, which he must have subdued ere arriving at such a tone of candour, hastened to express his admiration of his Christian charity, mingled with reproaches on himself for having so deeply injured his feelings.

"Think not of it — think not of it, excellent young man," said Holdenough; "we have both erred — I in suffering my zeal to outrun my charity, you perhaps in pressing hard on an old and peevish man, who had so lately poured out his sufferings into your friendly bosom. Be it all forgotten. Let your friends, if they are not deterred by what has happened at this manor of Woodstock, resume their habitation as soon as they will. If they can protect themselves against the powers of the air, believe me, that if I can prevent it by aught in my power, they shall have no annoyance from earthly neighbours; and assure yourself, good sir, that my voice is still worth something with the worthy Mayor, and the good Aldermen, and the better sort of housekeepers up yonder in the town, although the lower classes are blown about with every wind of doctrine. And yet farther, be assured, Colonel, that should your mother's brother, or any of his family, learn that they have taken up a rash bargain in returning to this unhappy and unhallowed house, or should they find any qualms in their own hearts and consciences which require a ghostly comforter, Nehemiah Holdenough will be as much at their command by night or day, as if they had been bred up within the holy pale of the Church in which he is an unworthy minister; and neither the awe of what is fearful to be seen within these walls, nor his knowledge of their blinded and carnal state, as bred up under a prelate's dispensation, shall prevent him doing what lies in his poor abilities for their protection and edification."

"I feel all the force of your kindness, reverend sir," said Colonel Everard, "but I do not think it likely that my uncle will give you trouble on either score. He is a man much accustomed to be his own protector in temporal danger, and in spiritual doubts to trust to his own prayers and those of his Church."

"I trust I have not been superfluous in offering mine assistance," said the old man, something jealous that his proffered spiritual aid had been held rather intrusive.

"I ask pardon if that is the case, I humbly ask pardon — I would not willingly be superfluous."

The Colonel hastened to appease this new alarm of the watchful jealousy of his consequence, which, joined with a natural heat of temper which he could not always subdue, were the good man's only faults.

They had regained their former friendly footing, when Roger Wildrake returned from the hut of Joceline, and whispered his master that his embassy had been successful. The Colonel then addressed the divine, and informed him, that as the Commissioners had already given up Woodstock, and as his uncle, Sir Henry Lee, proposed to return to the Lodge about noon, he would, if his reverence pleased, attend him up to the borough.

"Will you not tarry," said the reverend man, with something like inquisitive apprehension in his voice, "to welcome your relatives upon their return to this their house?"

"No, my good friend," said Colonel Everard; "the part which I have taken in these unhappy broils, perhaps also the mode of worship in which I have been educated, have so prejudiced me in mine uncle's opinion, that I must be for some time a stranger to his house and family."

"Indeed! I rejoice to hear it with all my heart and soul," said the divine. "Excuse my frankness — I do indeed rejoice; I had thought — no matter what I had thought; I would not again give offence. But truly though the maiden hath a pleasant feature, and he, as all men say, is in human things unexceptionable, yet — but I give you pain — in sooth, I will say no more unless you ask my sincere and unprejudiced advice, which you shall command, but which I will not press on you superfluously. Wend we to the borough together — the pleasant solitude of the forest may dispose us to open our hearts to each other."

They did walk up to the little town in company, and somewhat to Master Holdenough's surprise, the Colonel, though they talked on various subjects, did not request of him any ghostly advice on the subject of his love to his fair cousin, while, greatly beyond the expectation of the soldier, the clergyman kept his word, and in his own phrase, was not so superfluous as to offer upon so delicate a point his unasked counsel.

Chapter the Eighteenth.

*Then are the harpies gone — Yet ere we perch
Where such foul birds have roosted, let us cleanse
The foul obscenity they've left behind them.*

AGAMEMNON.

The embassy of Wildrake had been successful, chiefly through the mediation of the Episcopal divine, whom we formerly found acting in the character of a chaplain to the family, and whose voice had great influence on many accounts with its master.

A little before high noon, Sir Henry Lee, with his small household, were again in unchallenged possession of their old apartments at the Lodge of Woodstock; and the combined exertions of Joceline Joliffe, of Phoebe, and of old Joan, were employed in putting to rights what the late intruders had left in great disorder.

Sir Henry Lee had, like all persons of quality of that period, a love of order amounting to precision, and felt, like a fine lady whose dress has been disordered in a crowd, insulted and humiliated by the rude confusion into which his household goods had been thrown, and impatient till his mansion was purified from all marks of intrusion. In his anger he uttered more orders than the limited number of his domestics were likely to find time or hands to execute. "The villains have left such sulphureous steams behind them, too," said the old knight, "as if old Davie Leslie and the whole Scottish army had quartered among them."

"It may be near as bad," said Joceline, "for men say, for certain, it was the Devil came down bodily among them, and made them troop off."

"Then," said the knight, "is the Prince of Darkness a gentleman, as old Will Shakspeare says. He never interferes with those of his own coat, for the Lees have been here, father and son, these five hundred years, without disquiet; and no sooner came these misbegotten churls, than he plays his own part among them."

"Well, one thing he and they have left us," said Joliffe, "which we may thank them for; and that is, such a well-filled larder and buttery as has been seldom seen in Woodstock Lodge this many a day: carcasses of mutton, large rounds of beef, barrels of confectioners' ware, pipes and runlets of sack, muscadine, ale, and what not. We shall have a royal time on't through half the winter; and Joan must get to salting and pickling presently."

"Out, villain!" said the knight; "are we to feed on the fragments of such scum of the earth as these? Cast them forth instantly! Nay," checking himself, "that were a sin; but give them to the poor, or see them sent to the owners. And, hark ye, I will none of their strong liquors. I would rather drink like a hermit all my life, than seem to pledge such scoundrels as these in their leavings, like a miserable drawer, who drains off the ends of the bottles after the guests have paid their reckoning, and gone off. And, hark ye, I will taste no water from the cistern out of which these slaves have been serving themselves — fetch me down a pitcher from Rosamond's spring."

Alice heard this injunction, and well guessing there was enough for the other members of the family to do, she quietly took a small pitcher, and flinging a cloak around her, walked out in person to procure Sir Henry the water which he desired. Meantime, Joceline said, with some hesitation, "that a man still remained, belonging to the party of these strangers, who was directing about the removal of some trunks and mails which belonged to the Commissioners, and who could receive his honour's commands about the provisions."

"Let him come hither." (The dialogue was held in the hall.) "Why do you hesitate and drumble in that manner?"

"Only, sir," said Joceline, "only perhaps your honour might not wish to see him, being the same who, not long since" — He paused.

"Sent my rapier a-hawking through the firmament, thou wouldst say? Why, when did I take spleen at a man for standing his ground against me? Roundhead as he is, man, I like him the better of that, not the worse. I hunger and thirst to have another turn with him. I have thought on his passado ever since, and I believe, were it to try again, I know a feat would control it. Fetch him directly."

Trusty Tomkins was presently ushered in, bearing himself with an iron gravity, which neither the terrors of the preceding night, nor the dignified demeanour of the high-born personage before whom he stood, were able for an instant to overcome.

"How now, good fellow?" said Sir Henry; "I would fain see something more of thy fence, which baffled me the other evening; but truly, I think the light was somewhat too faint for my old eyes. Take a foil, man — I walk here in the hall, as Hamlet says; and 'tis the breathing-time of day with me. Take a foil, then, in thy hand."

"Since it is your worship's desire," said the steward, letting fall his long cloak, and taking the foil in his hand.

"Now," said the knight, "if your fitness speaks, mine is ready. Methinks the very stepping on this same old pavement hath charmed away the gout which threatened me. Sa — sa — I tread as firm as a game-cock."

They began the play with great spirit; and whether the old knight really fought more coolly with the blunt than with the sharp weapon, or whether the steward gave him some grains of advantage in this merely sportive encounter, it is certain Sir Henry had the better in the assault. His success put him into excellent humour.

"There," said he, "I found your trick — nay, you cheat me not twice the same way. There was a very palpable hit. Why, had I had but light enough the other night — But it skills not speaking of it — Here we leave off. I must not fight, as we unwise cavaliers did with you roundhead rascals, beating you so often that we taught you to beat us at last. And good now, tell me why you are leaving your larder so full here? Do you think I or my family can use broken victuals? What, have you no better employment for your rounds of sequestered beef than to leave them behind you when you shift your quarters?"

"So please your honour," said Tomkins, "it may be that you desire not the flesh of beeves, of rams, or of goats. Nevertheless, when you know that the provisions were provided and paid for out of your own rents and stock at Ditchley, sequestered to the use of the state more than a year since, it may be you will have less scruple to use them for your own behoof."

"Rest assured that I shall," said Sir Henry; "and glad you have helped me to a share of mine own. Certainly I was an ass to suspect your masters of subsisting, save at honest men's expense."

"And as for the rumps of beeves," continued Tomkins, with the same solemnity, "there is a rump at Westminster, which will stand us of the army much hacking and hewing yet, ere it is discussed to our mind."

Sir Henry paused, as if to consider what was the meaning of this innuendo; for he was not a person of very quick apprehension. But having at length caught the meaning of it, he burst into an explosion of louder laughter than Joceline had seen him indulge in for a long while.

"Right, knave," he said, "I taste thy jest — It is the very moral of the puppet-show. Faustus raised the devil, as the Parliament raised the army, and then, as the devil flies away with Faustus, so will the army fly away with the Parliament, or the rump, as thou call'st it, or sitting part of the so-called Parliament. And then, look you, friend, the very devil of all hath my willing consent to fly away with the army in its turn, from the highest general down to the lowest drum-boy. Nay, never look fierce for the matter; remember there is daylight enough now for a game at sharps."

Trusty Tomkins appeared to think it best to suppress his displeasure; and observing that the wains were ready to transport the Commissioners' property to the borough, took a grave leave of Sir Henry Lee.

Meantime the old man continued to pace his recovered hall, rubbing his hands, and evincing greater signs of glee than he had shown since the fatal 30th of January.

"Here we are again in the old frank, Joliffe; well victualled too. How the knave solved my point of conscience! — the dullest of them is a special casuist where the question concerns profit. Look out if there are not some of our own ragged regiment lurking about, to whom a bellyful would be a God-send, Joceline. Then his fence, Joceline, though the fellow foins well, very sufficient well. But thou saw'st how I dealt with him when I had fitting light, Joceline."

"Ay, and so your honour did," said Joceline. "You taught him to know the Duke of Norfolk, from Saunders Gardner. I'll warrant him he will not wish to come under your honour's thumb again."

"Why, I am waxing old," said Sir Henry; "but skill will not rust through age, though sinews must stiffen. But my age is like a lusty winter, as old Will says, frosty but kindly; and what if, old as we are, we live to see better days yet! I promise thee, Joceline, I love this jarring betwixt the rogues of the board and the rogues of the sword. When thieves quarrel, true men have a chance of coming by their own."

Thus triumphed the old cavalier, in the treble glory of having recovered his dwelling — regained, as he thought, his character as a man of fence, and finally, discovered some prospect of a change of times, in which he was not without hopes that something might turn up for the royal interest.

Meanwhile, Alice, with a prouder and a lighter heart than had danced in her bosom for several days, went forth with a gaiety to which she of late had been a stranger, to contribute her assistance to the regulation and supply of the household, by bringing the fresh water wanted from fair Rosamond's well.

Perhaps she remembered, that when she was but a girl, her cousin Markham used, among others, to make her perform that duty, as presenting the character of some captive Trojan princess, condemned by her situation to draw the waters from some Grecian spring, for the use of the proud victor. At any rate, she certainly joyed to see her father reinstated in his ancient habitation; and the joy was not the less sincere, that she knew their return to Woodstock had been procured by means of her cousin, and that even in her father's prejudiced eyes, Everard had been in some degree exculpated of the accusations the old knight had brought against him; and that, if a reconciliation had not yet taken place, the preliminaries had been established on which such a desirable conclusion might easily be founded. It was like the commencement of a bridge; when the foundation is securely laid, and the piers raised above the influence of the torrent, the throwing of the arches may be accomplished in a subsequent season.

The doubtful fate of her only brother might have clouded even this momentary gleam of sunshine; but Alice had been bred up during the close and frequent contest of civil war, and had acquired the habit of hoping in behalf of those dear to her, until hope was lost. In the present case, all reports seemed to assure her of her brother's safety.

Besides these causes for gaiety, Alice Lee had the pleasing feeling that she was restored to the habitation and the haunts of her childhood, from which she had not departed without much pain, the more felt, perhaps, because suppressed, in order to avoid irritating her father's sense of his misfortune. Finally, she enjoyed for the instant the gleam of self-satisfaction by which we see the young and well-disposed so often animated, when they can be, in common phrase, helpful to those whom they love, and perform at the moment of need some of those little domestic tasks, which age receives with so much pleasure from the dutiful hands of youth. So that, altogether, as she hasted through the remains and vestiges of a wilderness already mentioned, and from thence about a bow-shot into the Park, to bring a pitcher of water from Rosamond's spring, Alice Lee, her features enlivened and her complexion a little raised by the exercise, had, for the moment, regained the gay and brilliant vivacity of expression which had been the characteristic of her beauty in her earlier and happier days.

This fountain of old memory had been once adorned with architectural ornaments in the style of the sixteenth century, chiefly relating to ancient mythology. All these were now wasted and overthrown, and existed only as moss-covered ruins, while the living spring continued to furnish its daily treasures, unrivalled in purity, though the quantity was small, gushing out amid disjointed stones, and bubbling through fragments of ancient sculpture.

With a light step and laughing brow the young Lady of Lee was approaching, the fountain usually so solitary, when she paused on beholding some one seated beside it. She proceeded, however, with confidence, though with a step something less gay, when she observed that the person was a female; some menial perhaps from the town, whom a fanciful mistress occasionally dispatched for the water of a spring, supposed to be peculiarly pure, or some aged woman, who made a little trade by carrying it to the better sort of families, and selling it for a trifle. There was no cause, therefore, for apprehension.

Yet the terrors of the times were so great, that Alice did not see a stranger even of her own sex without some apprehension. Denaturalized women had as usual followed the camps of both armies during the Civil War; who, on the one side with open profligacy and profanity, on the other with the fraudulent tone of fanaticism or hypocrisy, exercised nearly in like degree their talents, for murder or plunder. But it was broad daylight, the distance from the Lodge was but trifling, and though a little alarmed at seeing a stranger where she expected deep solitude, the daughter of the haughty old Knight had too much of the lion about her, to fear without some determined and decided cause.

Alice walked, therefore, gravely on toward the fount, and composed her looks as she took a hasty glance of the female who was seated there, and addressed herself to her task of filling her pitcher.

The woman, whose presence had surprised and somewhat startled Alice Lee, was a person of the lower rank, whose red cloak, russet kirtle, handkerchief trimmed with Coventry blue, and a coarse steeple hat, could not indicate at best any thing higher than the wife of a small farmer, or, perhaps, the helpmate of a bailiff or hind. It was well if she proved nothing worse. Her clothes, indeed, were of good materials; but, what the female eye discerns with half a glance, they were indifferently adjusted and put on. This looked as if they did not belong to the person by whom they were worn, but were articles of which she had become the mistress by some accident, if not by some successful robbery. Her size, too, as did not escape Alice, even in the short perusal she afforded the stranger, was unusual; her features swarthy and singularly harsh, and her manner altogether unpropitious. The young lady almost wished, as she stooped to fill her pitcher, that she had rather turned back, and sent Joceline on the errand; but repentance was too late now, and she had only to disguise as well as she could her unpleasant feelings.

"The blessings of this bright day to one as bright as it is," said the stranger, with no unfriendly, though a harsh voice.

"I thank you," said Alice in reply; and continued to fill her pitcher busily, by assistance of an iron bowl which remained still chained to one of the stones beside the fountain.

"Perhaps, my pretty maiden, if you would accept my help, your work would be sooner done," said the stranger.

"I thank you," said Alice; "but had I needed assistance, I could have brought those with me who had rendered it."

"I do not doubt of that, my pretty maiden," answered the female; "there are too many lads in Woodstock with eyes in their heads — No doubt you could have brought with you any one of them who looked on you, if you had listed."

Alice replied not a syllable, for she did not like the freedom used by the speaker, and was desirous to break off the conversation.

"Are you offended, my pretty mistress?" said the stranger; "that was far from my purpose. — I will put my question otherwise. — Are the good dames of Woodstock so careless of their pretty daughters as to let the flower of them all wander about the wild chase without a mother, or a somebody to prevent the fox from running away with the lamb? — that carelessness, methinks, shows small kindness."

"Content yourself, good woman, I am not far from protection and assistance," said Alice, who liked less and less the effrontery of her new acquaintance.

"Alas! my pretty maiden," said the stranger, patting with her large and hard hand the head which Alice had kept bended down towards the water which she was laving, "it would be difficult to hear such a pipe as yours at the town of Woodstock, scream as loud as you would."

Alice shook the woman's hand angrily off, took up her pitcher, though not above half full, and as she saw the stranger rise at the same time, said, not without fear doubtless, but with a natural feeling of resentment and dignity, "I have no reason to make my cries heard as far as Woodstock; were there occasion for my crying for help at all, it is nearer at hand."

She spoke not without a warrant; for, at the moment, broke through the bushes, and stood by her side, the noble hound Bevis; fixing on the stranger his eyes that glanced fire, raising every hair on his gallant mane as upright as the bristles of a wild boar when hard pressed, grinning till a case of teeth, which would have matched those of any wolf in Russia, were displayed in full array, and, without either barking or springing, seeming, by his low determined growl, to await but the signal for dashing at the female, whom he plainly considered as a suspicious person.

But the stranger was undaunted. "My pretty maiden," she said, "you have indeed a formidable guardian there, where cockneys or bumpkins are concerned; but we who have been at the wars know spells for taming such furious dragons; and therefore let not your four-footed protector go loose on me, for he is a noble animal, and nothing but self-defence would induce me to do him injury." So saying, she drew a pistol from her bosom, and cocked it — pointing it towards the dog, as if apprehensive that he would spring upon her.

"Hold, woman, hold!" said Alice Lee; "the dog will not do you harm. — Down, Bevis, couch down. — And ere you attempt to hurt him, know he is the favourite hound of Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, the keeper of Woodstock Park, who would severely revenge any injury offered to him."

"And you, pretty one, are the old knight's house-keeper, doubtless? I have often heard the Lees have good taste."

"I am his daughter, good woman."

"His daughter! — I was blind — but yet it is true, nothing less perfect could answer the description which all the world has given of Mistress Alice Lee. I trust that my folly has given my young mistress no offence, and that she will allow me, in token of reconciliation, to fill her pitcher, and carry it as far as she will permit."

"As you will, good mother; but I am about to return instantly to the Lodge, to which, in these times, I cannot admit strangers. You can follow me no farther than the verge of the wilderness, and I am already too long from home: I will send some one to meet and relieve you of the pitcher." So saying, she turned her back, with a feeling of terror which she could hardly account for, and began to walk quickly towards the Lodge, thinking thus to get rid of her troublesome acquaintance.

But she reckoned without her host; for in a moment her new companion was by her side, not running, indeed, but walking with prodigious long unwomanly strides, which soon brought her up with the hurried and timid steps of the frightened maiden. But her manner was more respectful than formerly, though her voice sounded remarkably harsh and disagreeable, and her whole appearance suggested an undefined, yet irresistible feeling of apprehension.

"Pardon a stranger, lovely Mistress Alice," said her persecutor, "that was not capable of distinguishing between a lady of your high quality and a peasant wench, and who spoke to you with a degree of freedom, ill-befitting your rank, certainly, and condition, and which, I fear, has given you offence."

"No offence whatever," replied Alice; "but, good woman, I am near home, and can excuse your farther company. — You are unknown to me."

"But it follows not," said the stranger, "that *your* fortunes may not be known to *me*, fair Mistress Alice. Look on my swarthy brow — England breeds none such — and in the lands from which I come, the sun which blackens our complexion, pours, to make amends, rays of knowledge into our brains, which are denied to those of your lukewarm climate. Let me look upon your pretty hand — (attempting to possess herself of it,) — and I promise you, you shall hear what will please you."

"I hear what does *not* please me," said Alice, with dignity; "you must carry your tricks of fortune-telling and palmistry to the women of the village. — We of the gentry hold them to be either imposture or unlawful knowledge."

"Yet you would fain hear of a certain Colonel, I warrant you, whom certain unhappy circumstances have separated from his family; you would give better than silver if I could assure you that you would see him in a day or two — ay, perhaps, sooner."

"I know nothing of what you speak, good woman; if you want alms, there is a piece of silver — it is all I have in my purse."

"It were pity that I should take it," said the female; "and yet give it me — for the princess in the fairy tale must ever deserve, by her generosity, the bounty of the benevolent fairy, before she is rewarded by her protection."

"Take it — take it — give me my pitcher," said Alice, "and begone — yonder comes one of my father's servants. — What, ho! — Joceline — Joceline!"

The old fortune-teller hastily dropped something into the pitcher as she restored it to Alice Lee, and, plying her long limbs, disappeared speedily under cover of the wood.

Bevis turned, and barked, and showed some inclination to harass the retreat of this suspicious person, yet, as if uncertain, ran towards Joliffe, and fawned on him, as to demand his advice and encouragement. Joceline pacified the animal, and, coming up to his young lady, asked her, with surprise, what was the matter, and whether she had been frightened? Alice made light of her alarm, for which, indeed, she could not have assigned any very competent reason, for the manners of the woman, though bold and intrusive, were not menacing. She only said she had met a fortune-teller by Rosamond's Well, and had had some difficulty in shaking her off.

"Ah, the gipsy thief," said Joceline, "how well she scented there was food in the pantry! — they have noses like ravens, these strollers. Look you, Mistress Alice, you shall not see a raven or a carrion-crow in all the blue sky for a mile round you; but let a sheep drop suddenly down on the green-sward, and before the poor creature's dead you shall see a dozen of such guests croaking, as if inviting each other to the banquet. — Just so it is with these sturdy beggars. You will see few enough of them when there's nothing to give, but when hough's in the pot, they will have share on't."

"You are so proud of your fresh supply of provender," said Alice, "that you suspect all of a design on't. I do not think this woman will venture near your kitchen, Joceline."

"It will be best for her health," said Joceline, "lest I give her a ducking for digestion. — But give me the pitcher, Mistress Alice — meeter I bear it than you. — How now? what jingles at the bottom? have you lifted the pebbles as well as the water?"

"I think the woman dropped something into the pitcher," said Alice.

"Nay, we must look to that, for it is like to be a charm, and we have enough of the devil's ware about Woodstock already — we will not spare for the water — I can run back and fill the pitcher." He poured out the water upon the grass, and at the bottom of the pitcher was found a gold ring, in which was set a ruby, apparently of some value.

"Nay, if this be not enchantment, I know not what is," said Joceline. "Truly, Mistress Alice, I think you had better throw away this gimcrack. Such gifts from such hands are a kind of press-money which the devil uses for enlisting his regiment of witches; and if they take but so much as a bean from him, they become his bond-slaves for life — Ay, you look at the gew-gaw, but tomorrow you will find a lead ring, and a common pebble in its stead."

"Nay, Joceline, I think it will be better to find out that dark-complexioned woman, and return to her what seems of some value. So, cause enquiry to be made, and be sure you return her ring. It seems too valuable to be destroyed."

"Umph! that is always the way with women," murmured Joceline. "You will never get the best of them, but she is willing to save a bit of finery. — Well, Mistress Alice, I trust that you are too young and too pretty to be enlisted in a regiment of witches."

"I shall not be afraid of it till you turn conjuror," said Alice; "so hasten to the well, where you are like still to find the woman, and let her know that Alice Lee desires none of her gifts, any more than she did of her society."

So saying, the young lady pursued her way to the Lodge, while Joceline went down to Rosamond's Well to execute her commission. But the fortune-teller, or whoever she might be, was nowhere to be found; neither, finding that to be the case, did Joceline give himself much trouble in tracking her farther.

"If this ring, which I dare say the jade stole somewhere," said the underkeeper to himself, "be worth a few nobles, it is better in honest hands than in that of vagabonds. My master has a right to all waifs and strays, and certainly such a ring, in possession of a gipsy, must be a waif. So I shall confiscate it without scruple, and apply the produce to the support of Sir Henry's household, which is like to be poor enough. Thank Heaven, my military experience has taught me how to carry hooks at my finger-ends — that is trooper's law. Yet, hang it, after all, I had best take it to Mark Everard and ask his advice — I hold him now to be your learned counsellor in law where Mistress Alice's affairs are concerned, and my learned Doctor, who shall be nameless, for such as concern Church and State and Sir Henry Lee. — And I'll give them leave to give mine umbles to the kites and ravens if they find me conferring my confidence where it is not safe."

Chapter the Nineteenth.

*Being skillless in these parts, which, to a stranger,
Unguided and unfriended, often prove
Rough and inhospitable.*

TWELFTH NIGHT.

There was a little attempt at preparation, now that the dinner hour was arrived, which showed that, in the opinion of his few but faithful domestics, the good knight had returned in triumph to his home.

The great tankard, exhibiting in bas-relief the figure of Michael subduing the Arch-enemy, was placed on the table, and Joceline and Phoebe dutifully attended; the one behind the chair of Sir Henry, the other to wait upon her young mistress, and both to make out, by formal and regular observance, the want of a more numerous train.

"A health to King Charles!" said the old knight, handing the massive tankard to his daughter; "drink it, my love, though it be rebel ale which they have left us. I will pledge thee; for the toast will excuse the liquor, had Noll himself brewed it."

The young lady touched the goblet with her lip, and returned it to her father, who took a copious draught.

"I will not say blessing on their hearts," said he; "though I must own they drank good ale."

"No wonder, sir; they come lightly by the malt, and need not spare it," said Joceline.

"Say'st thou?" said the knight; "thou shalt finish the tankard thyself for that very jest's sake."

Nor was his follower slow in doing reason to the royal pledge. He bowed, and replaced the tankard, saying, after a triumphant glance at the sculpture, "I had a gibe with that same red-coat about the Saint Michael just now."

"Red-coat — ha! what red-coat?" said the hasty old man. "Do any of these knaves still lurk about Woodstock? — Quoit him down stairs instantly, Joceline. — Know we not Galloway nags?"

"So please you, he is in some charge here, and will speedily be gone. — It is he — he who had a rencontre with your honour in the wood."

"Ay, but I paid him off for it in the hall, as you yourself saw. — I was never in better fence in my life, Joceline. That same steward fellow is not so utterly black-hearted a rogue as the most of them, Joceline. He fences well — excellent well. I will have thee try a bout in the hall with him tomorrow, though I think he will be too hard for thee. I know thy strength to an inch."

He might say this with some truth; for it was Joceline's fashion, when called on, as sometimes happened, to fence with his patron, just to put forth as much of his strength and skill as obliged the Knight to contend hard for the victory, which, in the long run, he always contrived to yield up to him, like a discreet serving-man.

"And what said this roundheaded steward of our great Saint Michael's standing cup?"

"Marry, he scoffed at our good saint, and said he was little better than one of the golden calves of Bethel. But I told him he should not talk so, until one of their own roundheaded saints had given the devil as complete a cross-buttock as Saint Michael had given him, as 'tis carved upon the cup there. I trow that made him silent enough. And then he would know whether your honour and Mistress Alice, not to mention old Joan and myself, since it is your honour's pleasure I should take my bed here, were not afraid to sleep in a house that had been so much disturbed. But I told him we feared no fiends or goblins, having the prayers of the Church read every evening."

"Joceline," said Alice, interrupting him, "wert thou mad? You know at what risk to ourselves and the good doctor the performance of that duty takes place."

"Oh, Mistress Alice," said Joceline, a little abashed, "you may be sure I spoke not a word of the doctor — No, no — I did not let him into the secret that we had such a reverend chaplain. — I think I know the length of this man's foot. We have had a jollification or so together. He is hand and glove with me, for as great a fanatic as he is."

"Trust him not too far," said the knight. "Nay, I fear thou hast been imprudent already, and that it will be unsafe for the good man to come here after nightfall, as is proposed. These Independents have noses like bloodhounds, and can smell out a loyalist under any disguise."

"If your honour thinks so," said Joceline, "I'll watch for the doctor with good will, and bring him into the Lodge by the old condemned postern, and so up to this apartment; and sure this man Tomkins would never presume to come hither; and the doctor may have a bed in Woodstock Lodge, and he never the wiser; or, if your honour does not think that safe, I can cut his throat for you, and I would not mind it a pin."

"God forbid!" said the knight. "He is under our roof, and a guest, though not an invited one. — Go, Joceline; it shall be thy penance, for having given thy tongue too much license, to watch for the good doctor, and to take care of his safety while he continues with us. An October night or two in the forest would finish the good man."

"He's more like to finish our October than our October is to finish him," said the keeper; and withdrew under the encouraging smile of his patron.

He whistled Bevis along with him to share in his watch; and having received exact information where the clergyman was most likely to be found, assured his master that he would give the most pointed attention to his safety. When the attendants had withdrawn, having previously removed the remains of the meal, the old knight, leaning back in his chair, encouraged pleasanter visions than had of late passed through his imagination, until by degrees he was surprised by actual slumber; while his daughter, not venturing to move but on tiptoe, took some needle-work, and bringing it close by the old man's side, employed her fingers on this task, bending her eyes from time to time on her parent, with the affectionate zeal, if not the effective power, of a guardian angel. At length, as the light faded away, and night came on, she was about to order candles to be brought. But, remembering how indifferent a couch Joceline's cottage had afforded, she could not think of interrupting the first sound and refreshing sleep which her father had enjoyed, in all probability, for the last two nights and days.

She herself had no other amusement, as she sat facing one of the great oriel windows, the same by which Wildrake had on a former occasion looked in upon Tomkins and Joceline while at their computations, than watching the clouds, which a lazy wind sometimes chased from the broad disk of the harvest-moon, sometimes permitted to accumulate, and exclude her brightness. There is, I know not why, something peculiarly pleasing to the imagination, in contemplating the Queen of Night, when she is *wading*, as the expression is, among the vapours which she has not power to dispel, and which on their side are unable entirely to quench her lustre. It is the striking image of patient virtue, calmly pursuing her path through good report and bad report, having that excellence in herself which ought to command all admiration, but bedimmed in the eyes of the world, by suffering, by misfortune, by calumny.

As some such reflections, perhaps, were passing through Alice's imagination, she became sensible, to her surprise and alarm, that some one had clambered up upon the window, and was looking into the room. The idea of supernatural fear did not in the slightest degree agitate Alice. She was too much accustomed to the place and situation; for folk do not see spectres in the scenes with which they have been familiar from infancy. But danger from maurauders in a disturbed country was a more formidable subject of apprehension, and the thought armed Alice, who was naturally high spirited, with such desperate courage, that she snatched a pistol from the wall, on which some fire-arms hung, and while she screamed to her father to awake, had the presence of mind to present it at the intruder. She did so the more readily, because she imagined she recognised in the visage, which she partially saw, the features of the woman whom she had met with at Rosamond's Well, and which had appeared to her peculiarly harsh and suspicious. Her father at the same time seized his sword and came forward, while the person at the window, alarmed at these demonstrations, and endeavouring to descend, missed footing, as had Cavaliero Wildrake before, and went down to the earth with no small noise. Nor was the reception on the bosom of our common mother either soft or safe; for, by a most terrific bark and growl, they heard that Bevis had come up and seized on the party, ere he or she could gain their feet.

"Hold fast, but worry not," said the old knight. — "Alice, thou art the queen of wenches! Stand fast here till I run down and secure the rascal."

"For God's sake, no, my dearest father!" Alice exclaimed; "Joceline will be up immediately — Hark! — I hear him."

There was indeed a bustle below, and more than one light danced to and fro in confusion, while those who bore them called to each other, yet suppressing their voices as they spoke, as men who would only be heard by those they addressed. The individual who had fallen under the power of Bevis was most impatient in his situation, and called with least precaution — "Here, Lee — Forester — take the dog off, else I must shoot him."

"If thou dost," said Sir Henry, from the window, "I blow thy brains out on the spot. Thieves, Joceline, thieves! come up and secure this ruffian. — Bevis, hold on!"

"Back, Bevis; down, sir!" cried Joceline. "I am coming, I am coming, Sir Henry — Saint Michael, I shall go distracted!"

A terrible thought suddenly occurred to Alice; could Joceline have become unfaithful, that he was calling Bevis off the villain, instead of encouraging the trusty dog to secure him? Her father, meantime, moved perhaps by some suspicion of the same kind, hastily stepped aside out of the moonlight, and pulled Alice close to him, so as to be invisible from without, yet so placed as to hear what should pass. The scuffle between Bevis and his prisoner seemed to be ended by Joceline's interference, and there was close whispering for an instant, as of people in consultation.

"All is quiet now," said one voice; "I will up and prepare the way for you." And immediately a form presented itself on the outside of the window, pushed open the lattice, and sprang into the parlour. But almost ere his step was upon the floor, certainly before he had obtained any secure footing, the old knight, who stood ready with his rapier drawn, made a desperate pass, which bore the intruder to the ground. Joceline, who clambered up next with a dark lantern in his hand, uttered a dreadful exclamation, when he saw what had happened, crying out, "Lord in heaven, he has slain his own son!"

"No, no — I tell you no," said the fallen young man, who was indeed young Albert Lee, the only son of the old knight; "I am not hurt. No noise, on your lives; get lights instantly." At the same time, he started from the floor as quickly as he could, under the embarrassment of a cloak and doublet skewered as it were together by the rapier of the old knight, whose pass, most fortunately, had been diverted from the body of Albert by the interruption of his cloak, the blade passing right across his back, piercing the clothes, while the hilt coming against his side with the whole force of the lunge, had borne him to the ground.

Joceline all the while enjoined silence to every one, under the strictest conjurations. "Silence, as you would long live on earth — silence, as ye would have a place in heaven; be but silent for a few minutes — all our lives depend on it."

Meantime he procured lights with inexpressible dispatch, and they then beheld that Sir Henry, on hearing the fatal words, had sunk back on one of the large chairs, without either motion, colour, or sign of life.

"Oh, brother, how could you come in this manner?" said Alice.

"Ask no questions — Good God! for what am I reserved!" He gazed on his father as he spoke, who, with clay-cold features rigidly fixed, and his arms extended in the most absolute helplessness, looked rather the image of death upon a monument, than a being in whom existence was only suspended. "Was my life spared," said Albert, raising his hands with a wild gesture to heaven, "only to witness such a sight as this!"

"We suffer what Heaven permits, young man; we endure our lives while Heaven continues them. Let me approach." The same clergyman who had read the prayers at Joceline's hut now came forward. "Get water," he said, "instantly." And the helpful hand and light foot of Alice, with the ready-witted tenderness which never stagnates in vain lamentations while there is any room for hope, provided with incredible celerity all that the clergyman called for.

"It is but a swoon," he said, on feeling Sir Henry's palm; "a swoon produced from the instant and unexpected shock. Rouse thee up, Albert; I promise thee it will be nothing save a syncope — A cup, my dearest Alice, and a ribbon or a bandage. I must take some blood — some aromatics, too, if they can be had, my good Alice."

But while Alice procured the cup and bandage, stripped her father's sleeve, and seemed by intuition even to anticipate every direction of the reverend doctor, her brother, hearing no word, and seeing no sign of comfort, stood with both hands clasped and elevated into the air, a monument of speechless despair. Every feature in his face seemed to express the thought, "Here lies my father's corpse, and it is I whose rashness has slain him!"

But when a few drops of blood began to follow the lancet — at first falling singly, and then trickling in a freer stream — when, in consequence of the application of cold water to the temples, and aromatics to the nostrils, the old man sighed feebly, and made an effort to move his limbs, Albert Lee changed his posture, at once to throw himself at the feet of the clergyman, and kiss, if he would have permitted him, his shoes and the hem of his raiment.

"Rise, foolish youth," said the good man, with a reproving tone; "must it be always thus with you? Kneel to Heaven, not to the feeblest of its agents. You have been saved once again from great danger; would you deserve Heaven's bounty, remember you have been preserved for other purposes than you now think on. Begone, you and Joceline — you have a duty to discharge; and be assured it will go better with your father's recovery than he see you not for a few minutes. Down — down to the wilderness, and bring in your attendant."

"Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks," answered Albert Lee; and, springing through the lattice, he disappeared as unexpectedly as he had entered. At the same time Joceline followed him, and by the same road.

Alice, whose fears for her father were now something abated, upon this new movement among the persons of the scene, could not resist appealing to her venerable assistant. "Good doctor, answer me but one question. Was my brother Albert here just now, or have I dreamed all that has happened for these ten minutes past? Methinks, but for your presence, I could suppose the whole had passed in my sleep; that horrible thrust — that death-like, corpse-like old man — that soldier in mute despair; I must indeed have dreamed."

"If you have dreamed, my sweet Alice," said the doctor, "I wish every sick-nurse had your property, since you have been attending to our patient better during your sleep than most of these old dormice can do when they are most awake. But your dream came through the gate of horn, my pretty darling, which you must remind me to explain to you at leisure. Albert has really been here, and will be here again."

"Albert!" repeated Sir Henry, "who names my son?"

"It is I, my kind patron," said the doctor; "permit me to bind up your arm."

"My wound? — with all my heart, doctor," said Sir Henry, raising himself, and gathering his recollection by degrees. "I knew of old thou wert body-curer as well as soul-curer, and served my regiment for surgeon as well as chaplain. — But where is the rascal I killed? — I never made a fairer *stramaçon* in my life. The shell of my rapier struck against his ribs. So, dead he must be, or my right hand has forgot its cunning."

"Nobody was slain," said the doctor; "we must thank God for that, since there were none but friends to slay. Here is a good cloak and doublet, though, wounded in a fashion which will require some skill in tailor-craft to cure. But I was your last antagonist, and took a little blood from you, merely to prepare you for the pleasure and surprise of seeing your son, who, though hunted pretty close, as you may believe, hath made his way from Worcester hither, where, with Joceline's assistance, we will care well enough for his safety. It was even for this reason that I pressed you to accept of your nephew's proposal to return to the old Lodge, where a hundred men might be concealed, though a thousand were making search to discover them. Never such a place for hide-and-seek, as I shall make good when I can find means to publish my Wonders of Woodstock."

"But, my son — my dear son," said the knight, "shall I not then instantly see him! and wherefore did you not forewarn me of this joyful event?"

"Because I was uncertain of his motions," said the doctor, "and rather thought he was bound for the sea-side, and that it would be best to tell you of his fate when he was safe on board, and in full sail for France. We had appointed to let you know all when I came hither to-night to join you. But there is a red-coat in the house whom we care not to trust farther than we could not help. We dared not, therefore, venture in by the hall; and so, prowling round the building, Albert informed us, that an old prank of his, when a boy, consisted of entering by this window. A lad who was with us would needs make the experiment, as there seemed to be no light in the chamber, and the moonlight without made us liable to be detected. His foot slipped, and our friend Bevis came upon us."

"In good truth, you acted simply," said Sir Henry, "to attack a garrison without a summons. But all this is nothing to my son, Albert — where is he? — Let me see him."

"But, Sir Henry, wait," said the doctor, "till your restored strength" —

"A plague of my restored strength, man!" answered the knight, as his old spirit began to awaken within him. — "Dost not remember, that I lay on Edgehill-field all night, bleeding like a bullock from five several wounds, and wore my armour within six weeks? and you talk to me of the few drops of blood that follow such a scratch as a cat's claw might have made!"

"Nay, if you feel so courageous," said the doctor, "I will fetch your son — he is not far distant."

So saying, he left the apartment, making a sign to Alice to remain, in case any symptoms of her father's weakness should return.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Sir Henry never seemed to recollect the precise nature of the alarm, which had at once, and effectually as the shock of the thunderbolt, for the moment suspended his faculties. Something he said more than once of being certain he had done mischief with that *stramaçon*, as he called it; but his mind did not recur to that danger, as having been incurred by his son. Alice, glad to see that her father appeared to have forgotten a circumstance so fearful, (as men often forget the blow, or other sudden cause, which has thrown them into a swoon,) readily excused herself from throwing much light on the matter, by pleading the general confusion. And in a few minutes, Albert cut off all farther enquiry, by entering the room, followed by the doctor, and throwing himself alternately into the arms of his father and of his sister.

Chapter the Twentieth.

*The boy is — hark ye, sirrah — what's your name? —
Oh, Jacob — ay, I recollect — the same.*

CRABBE.

The affectionate relatives were united as those who, meeting under great adversity, feel still the happiness of sharing it in common. They embraced again and again, and gave way to those expansions of the heart, which at once express and relieve the pressure of mental agitation. At length the tide of emotion began to subside; and Sir Henry, still holding his recovered son by the hand, resumed the command of his feelings which he usually practised.

"So you have seen the last of our battles, Albert," he said, "and the King's colours have fallen for ever before the rebels."

"It is but even so," said the young man — "the last cast of the die was thrown, and, alas! lost at Worcester; and Cromwell's fortune carried it there, as it has wherever he has shown himself."

"Well — it can but be for a time — it can but be for a time," answered his father; "the devil is potent, they say, in raising and gratifying favourites, but he can grant but short leases. — And the King — the King, Albert — the King — in my ear — close, close!"

"Our last news were confident that he had escaped from Bristol."

"Thank God for that — thank God for that!" said the knight. "Where didst thou leave him?"

"Our men were almost all cut to pieces at the bridge," Albert replied; "but I followed his Majesty with about five hundred other officers and gentlemen, who were resolved to die around him, until as our numbers and appearance drew the whole pursuit after us, it pleased his Majesty to dismiss us, with many thanks and words of comfort to us in general, and some kind expressions to most of us in especial. He sent his royal greeting to you, sir, in particular, and said more than becomes me to repeat."

"Nay, I will hear it every word, boy," said Sir Henry; "is not the certainty that thou hast discharged thy duty, and that King Charles owns it, enough to console me for all we have lost and suffered, and wouldst thou stint me of it from a false shamefacedness? — I will have it out of thee, were it drawn from thee with cords!"

"It shall need no such compulsion," said the young man — "It was his Majesty's pleasure to bid me tell Sir Henry Lee, in his name, that if his son could not go before his father in the race of loyalty, he was at least following him closely, and would soon move side by side."

"Said he so?" answered the knight — "Old Victor Lee will look down with pride on thee, Albert! — But I forget — you must be weary and hungry."

"Even so," said Albert; "but these are things which of late I have been in the habit of enduring for safety's sake."

"Joceline! — what ho, Joceline!"

The under-keeper entered, and received orders to get supper prepared directly.

"My son and Dr. Rochecliffe are half starving," said the knight. "And there is a lad, too, below," said Joceline; "a page, he says, of Colonel Albert's, whose belly rings cupboard too, and that to no common tune; for I think he could eat a horse, as the Yorkshireman says, behind the saddle. He had better eat at the sideboard; for he has devoured a whole loaf of bread and butter, as fast as Phoebe could cut it, and it has not staid his stomach for a minute — and truly I think you had better keep him under your own eyes, for the steward beneath might ask him troublesome questions if he went below — And then he is impatient, as all your gentlemen pages are, and is saucy among the women."

"Whom is it he talks of? — what page hast thou got, Albert, that bears himself so ill?" said Sir Henry.

"The son of a dear friend, a noble lord of Scotland, who followed the great Montrose's banner — afterwards joined the King in Scotland, and came with him as far as Worcester. He was wounded the day before the battle, and conjured me to take this youth under my charge, which I did, something unwillingly; but I could not refuse a father, perhaps on his death-bed, pleading for the safety of an only son."

"Thou hadst deserved an halter, hadst thou hesitated" said Sir Henry; "the smallest tree can always give some shelter — and it pleases me to think the old stock of Lee is not so totally prostrate, but it may yet be a refuge for the distressed. Fetch the youth in; — he is of noble blood, and these are no times of ceremony — he shall sit with us at the same table, page though he be; and if you have not schooled him handsomely in his manners, he may not be the worse of some lessons from me."

"You will excuse his national drawling accent, sir?" said Albert, "though I know you like it not."

"I have small cause, Albert," answered the knight — "small cause. — Who stirred up these disunions? — the Scots. Who strengthened the hands of Parliament, when their cause was well nigh ruined? — the Scots again. Who delivered up the King, their countryman, who had flung himself upon their protection? — the Scots again. But this lad's father, you say, has fought on the part of the noble Montrose; and such a man as the great Marquis may make amends for the degeneracy of a whole nation."

"Nay, father," said Albert, "and I must add, that though this lad is uncouth and wayward, and, as you will see, something wilful, yet the King has not a more zealous friend in England; and, when occasion offered, he fought stoutly, too, in his defence — I marvel he comes not."

"He hath taken the bath" said Joceline, "and nothing less would serve than that he should have it immediately — the supper, he said, might be got ready in the meantime; and he commands all about him as if he were in his father's old castle, where he might have called long enough, I warrant, without any one to hear him."

"Indeed?" said Sir Henry, "this must be a forward chick of the game, to crow so early. — What is his name?"

"His name? — it escapes me every hour, it is so hard a one," said Albert — "Kerneguy is his name — Louis Kerneguy; his father was Lord Killstewers, of Kincardineshire."

"Kerneguy, and Killstewers, and Kin — what d'ye call it? — Truly," said the knight, "these northern men's names and titles smack of their origin — they sound like a north-west wind, rumbling and roaring among heather and rocks."

"It is but the asperities of the Celtic and Saxon dialects," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "which, according to Verstegan, still linger in those northern parts of the island. — But peace — here comes supper, and Master Louis Kerneguy."

Supper entered accordingly, borne in by Joceline and Phoebe, and after it, leaning on a huge knotty stick, and having his nose in the air like a questing hound — for his attention was apparently more fixed on the good provisions that went before him, than any thing else — came Master Kerneguy, and seated himself, without much ceremony, at the lower end of the table.

He was a tall, rawboned lad, with a shock head of hair, fiery red, like many of his country, while the harshness of his national features was increased by the contrast of his complexion, turned almost black by the exposure to all sorts of weather, which, in that skulking and rambling mode of life, the fugitive royalists had been obliged to encounter. His address was by no means prepossessing, being a mixture of awkwardness and forwardness, and showing in a remarkable degree, how a want of easy address may be consistent with an admirable stock of assurance. His face intimated having received some recent scratches, and the care of Dr. Rochecliffe had decorated it with a number of patches, which even enhanced its natural plainness. Yet the eyes were brilliant and expressive, and, amid his ugliness — for it amounted to that degree of irregularity — the face was not deficient in some lines which expressed both sagacity and resolution.

The dress of Albert himself was far beneath his quality, as the son of Sir Henry Lee, and commander of a regiment in the royal service; but that of his page was still more dilapidated. A disastrous green jerkin, which had been changed to a hundred hues by sun and rain, so that the original could scarce be discovered, huge cloutery shoes, leathern breeches — such as were worn by hedgers — coarse grey worsted stockings, were the attire of the honourable youth, whose limping gait, while it added to the ungainliness of his manner, showed, at the same time, the extent of his sufferings. His appearance bordered so much upon what is vulgarly called the queer, that even with Alice it would have excited some sense of ridicule, had not compassion been predominant.

The grace was said, and the young squire of Ditchley, as well as Dr. Rochecliffe, made an excellent figure at a meal, the like of which, in quality and abundance, did not seem to have lately fallen to their share. But their feats were child's-play to those of the Scottish youth. Far from betraying any symptoms of the bread and butter with which he had attempted to close the orifice of his stomach, his appetite appeared to have been sharpened by a nine-days' fast; and the knight was disposed to think that the very genius of famine himself, come forth from his native regions of the north, was in the act of honouring him with a visit, while, as if afraid of losing a moment's exertion, Master Kerneguy never looked either to right or left, or spoke a single word to any at table.

"I am glad to see that you have brought a good appetite for our country fare, young gentleman," said Sir Henry.

"Bread of gude, sir!" said the page, "an ye'll find flesh, I'll find appetite conforming, ony day o' the year. But the truth is, sir, that the appeteezement has been coming on for three days or four, and the meat in this southland of yours has been scarce, and hard to come by; so, sir, I'm making up for lost time, as the piper of Sligo said, when he eat a hail side o' mutton."

"You have been country-bred, young man," said the knight, who, like others of his time, held the reins of discipline rather tight over the rising generation; "at least, to judge from the youths of Scotland whom I have seen at his late Majesty's court in former days; they had less appetite, and more — more" — As he sought the qualifying phrase, which might supply the place of "good manners," his guest closed the sentence in his own way — "And more meat, it may be — the better luck theirs."

Sir Henry stared and was silent. His son seemed to think it time to interpose — "My dear father," he said, "think how many years have run since the Thirty-eight, when the Scottish troubles first began, and I am sure that you will not wonder that, while the Barons of Scotland have been, for one cause or other, perpetually in the field, the education of their children at home must have been much neglected, and that young men of my friend's age know better how to use a broadsword, or to toss a pike, than the decent ceremonials of society."

"The reason is a sufficient one," said the knight, "and, since thou sayest thy follower Kernigo can fight, we'll not let him lack victuals, a God's name. — See, he looks angrily still at yonder cold loin of mutton — for God's sake put it all on his plate!"

"I can bide the bit and the buffet," said the honourable Master Kerneguy — "a hungry tike ne'er minds a blaud with a rough bane."

"Now, God ha'e mercy, Albert, but if this be the son of a Scots peer," said Sir Henry to his son, in a low tone of voice, "I would not be the English ploughman who would change manners with him for his ancient blood, and his nobility, and his estate to boot, an he has one. — He has eaten, as I am a Christian, near four pounds of solid butcher's meat, and with the grace of a wolf tugging at the carcass of a dead horse. — Oh, he is about to drink at last — Soh! — he wipes his mouth, though — and dips his fingers in the ewer — and dries them, I profess, with the napkin! — there is some grace in him, after all."

"Here is wussing all your vera gude healths!" said the youth of quality, and took a draught in proportion to the solids which he had sent before; he then flung his knife and fork awkwardly on the trencher, which he pushed back towards the centre of the table, extended his feet beneath it till they rested on their heels, folded his arms on his well-replenished stomach, and, lolling back in his chair, looked much as if he was about to whistle himself asleep.

"Soh!" said the knight — "the honourable Master Kernigo hath laid down his arms. — Withdraw these things, and give us our glasses — Fill them around, Joceline; and if the devil or the whole Parliament were within hearing, let them hear Henry Lee of Ditchley drink a health to King Charles, and confusion to his enemies!"

"Amen!" said a voice from behind the door.

All the company looked at each other in astonishment, at a response so little expected. It was followed by a solemn and peculiar tap, such as a kind of freemasonry had introduced among royalists, and by which they were accustomed to make themselves and their principles known to each other, when they met by accident.

"There is no danger," said Albert, knowing the sign — "it is a friend; — yet I wish he had been at a greater distance just now."

"And why, my son, should you wish the absence of one true man, who may, perhaps, wish to share our abundance, on one of those rare occasions when we have superfluity at our disposal? — Go, Joceline, see who knocks — and, if a safe man, admit him."

"And if otherwise," said Joceline, "methinks I shall be able to prevent his troubling the good company."

"No violence, Joceline, on your life," said Albert Lee; and Alice echoed, "For God's sake, no violence!"

"No unnecessary violence at least," said the good knight; "for if the time demands it, I will have it seen that I am master of my own house." Joceline Joliffe nodded assent to all parties, and went on tiptoe to exchange one or two other mysterious symbols and knocks, ere he opened the door. It, may be here remarked, that this species of secret association, with its signals of union, existed among the more dissolute and desperate class of cavaliers, men habituated to the dissipated life which they had been accustomed to in an ill-disciplined army, where everything like order and regularity was too apt to be accounted a badge of puritanism. These were the "roaring boys" who met in hedge alehouses, and when they had by any chance obtained a little money or a little credit, determined to create a counter-revolution by declaring their sittings permanent, and proclaimed, in the words of one of their choicest ditties —

"We'll drink till we bring

In triumph back the king."

The leaders and gentry, of a higher description and more regular morals, did not indeed partake such excesses, but they still kept their eye upon a class of persons, who, from courage and desperation, were capable of serving on an advantageous occasion the fallen cause of royalty; and recorded the lodges and blind taverns at which they met, as wholesale merchants know the houses of call of the mechanics whom they may have occasion to employ, and can tell where they may find them when need requires it. It is scarce necessary to add, that among the lower class, and sometimes even among the higher, there were men found capable of betraying the projects and conspiracies of their associates, whether well or indifferently combined, to the governors of the state. Cromwell, in particular, had gained some correspondents of this kind of the highest rank, and of the most undoubted character, among the royalists, who, if they made scruple of impeaching or betraying individuals who confided in them, had no hesitation in giving the government such general information as served to enable him to disappoint the purposes of any plot or conspiracy.

To return to our story. In much shorter time than we have spent in reminding the reader of these historical particulars, Joliffe had made his mystic communication; and being duly answered as by one of the initiated, he undid the door, and there entered our old friend Roger Wildrake, round-head in dress, as his safety and dependence on Colonel Everard compelled him to be, but that dress worn in a most cavalier-like manner, and forming a stronger contrast than usual with the demeanour and language of the wearer, to which it was never very congenial.

His puritanic hat, the emblem of that of Ralpho in the prints to Hudibras, or, as he called it, his felt umbrella, was set most knowingly on one side of the head, as if it had been a Spanish hat and feather; his straight square-caped sad-coloured cloak was flung gaily upon one shoulder, as if it had been of three-ply taffeta, lined with crimson silk; and he paraded his huge calf-skin boots, as if they had been silken hose and Spanish leather shoes, with roses on the instep. In short, the airs which he gave himself, of a most thorough-paced wild gallant and cavalier, joined to a glistening of self-satisfaction in his eye, and an inimitable swagger in his gait, which completely announced his thoughtless, conceited, and reckless character, formed a most ridiculous contrast to his gravity of attire.

It could not, on the other hand, be denied, that in spite of the touch of ridicule which attached to his character, and the loose morality which he had learned in the dissipation of town pleasures, and afterwards in the disorderly life of a soldier, Wildrake had points about him both to make him feared and respected. He was handsome, even in spite of his air of debauched effrontery; a man of the most decided courage, though his vaunting rendered it sometimes doubtful; and entertained a sincere sense of his political principles, such as they were, though he was often so imprudent in asserting and boasting of them, as, joined with his dependence on Colonel Everard, induced prudent men to doubt his sincerity.

Such as he was, however, he entered the parlour of Victor Lee, where his presence was any thing but desirable to the parties present, with a jaunty step, and a consciousness of deserving the best possible reception. This assurance was greatly aided by circumstances which rendered it obvious, that if the jocund cavalier had limited himself to one draught of liquor that evening, in terms of his vow of temperance, it must have been a very deep and long one.

"Save ye, gentlemen, save ye. — Save you, good Sir Henry Lee, though I have scarce the honour to be known to you. — Save you, worthy doctor, and a speedy resurrection to the fallen Church of England."

"You are welcome, sir," said Sir Henry Lee, whose feelings of hospitality, and of the fraternal reception due to a royalist sufferer, induced him to tolerate this intrusion more than he might have done otherwise. "If you have fought or suffered for the King, sir, it is an excuse for joining us, and commanding our services in any thing in our power — although at present we are a family-party. — But I think I saw you in waiting upon Master Markham Everard, who calls himself Colonel Everard. — If your message is from him, you may wish to see me in private?"

"Not at all, Sir Henry, not at all. — It is true, as my ill hap will have it, that being on the stormy side of the hedge — like all honest men — you understand me, Sir Henry — I am glad, as it were, to gain something from my old friend and comrade's countenance — not by truckling or disowning my principles, sir — I defy such practises; — but, in short, by doing him any kindness in my power when he is pleased to call on me. So I came down here with a message from him to the old roundheaded son of a — (I beg the young lady's pardon, from the crown of her head down to the very toes of her slipper) — And so, sir, chancing as I was stumbling out in the dark, I heard you give a toast, sir, which warmed my heart, sir, and ever will, sir, till death chills it; — and so I made bold to let you know there was an honest man within hearing."

Such was the self-introduction of Master Wildrake, to which the knight replied, by asking him to sit down, and take a glass of sack to his Majesty's glorious restoration. Wildrake, at this hint, squeezed in without ceremony beside the young Scotsman, and not only pledged his landlord's toast, but seconded its import, by volunteering a verse or two of his favourite loyal ditty — "The King shall enjoy his own again." The heartiness which he threw into his song opened still farther the heart of the old knight, though Albert and Alice looked at each other with looks resentful of the intrusion, and desirous to put an end to it. The honourable Master Kerneguy either possessed that happy indifference of temper which does not deign to notice such circumstances, or he was able to assume the appearance of it to perfection, as he sat sipping sack, and cracking walnuts, without testifying the least sense that an addition had been made to the party. Wildrake, who liked the liquor and the company, showed no unwillingness to repay his landlord, by being at the expense of the conversation.

"You talk of fighting and suffering, Sir Henry Lee. Lord help us, we have all had our share. All the world knows what Sir Henry Lee has done from Edgefield downwards, wherever a loyal sword was drawn, or a loyal flag fluttered. Ah, God help us! I have done something too. My name is Roger Wildrake of Squattlesea-

mere, Lincoln; not that you are ever like to have heard it before, but I was captain in Lunsford's light-horse, and afterwards with Goring. I was a child-eater, sir — a babe-bolter."

"I have heard of your regiment's exploits, sir; and perhaps you may find I have seen some of them, if we should spend ten minutes together. And I think I have heard of your name too. I beg to drink your health, Captain Wildrake of Squattlesea-mere, Lincolnshire."

"Sir Henry, I drink yours in this pint bumper, and upon my knee; and I would do as much for that young gentleman" — (looking at Albert) — "and the squire of the green cassock too, holding it for green, as the colours are not to my eyes altogether clear and distinguishable."

It was a remarkable part of what is called by theatrical folk the by-play of this scene, that Albert was conversing apart with Dr. Rochecliffe in whispers, even more than the divine seemed desirous of encouraging; yet, to whatever their private conversation referred, it did not deprive the young Colonel of the power of listening to what was going forward in the party at large, and interfering from time to time, like a watch-dog, who can distinguish the slightest alarm, even when employed in the engrossing process of taking his food.

"Captain Wildrake," said Albert, "we have no objection — I mean, my friend and I — to be communicative on proper occasions; but you, sir, who are so old a sufferer, must needs know, that at such casual meetings as this, men do not mention their names unless they are specially wanted. It is a point of conscience, sir, to be able to say, if your principal, Captain Everard or Colonel Everard, if he be a Colonel, should examine you upon oath, I did not know who the persons were whom I heard drink such and such toasts."

"Faith, I have a better way of it, worthy sir," answered Wildrake; "I never can, for the life of me, remember that there were any such and such toasts drunk at all. It's a strange gift of forgetfulness I have."

"Well, sir," replied the younger Lee; "but we, who have unhappily more tenacious memories, would willingly abide by the more general rule."

"Oh, sir," answered Wildrake, "with all my heart. I intrude on no man's confidence, d — n me — and I only spoke for civility's sake, having the purpose of drinking your health in a good fashion" — (Then he broke forth into melody) —

"Then let the health go round, a-round, a-round, a-round,

Then let the health go round;

For though your stocking be of silk,

Your knee shall kiss the ground, a-ground, a-ground, a-ground,

Your knee shall kiss the ground."

"Urge it no farther," said Sir Henry, addressing his son; "Master Wildrake is one of the old school — one of the tantivy boys; and we must bear a little, for if they drink hard they fought well. I will never forget how a party came up and rescued us clerks of Oxford, as they called the regiment I belonged to, out of a cursed embroglio during the attack on Brentford. I tell you we were enclosed with the cockneys' pikes both front and rear, and we should have come off but ill had not Lunford's light-horse, the babe-eaters, as they called them, charged up to the pike's point, and brought us off."

"I am glad you thought on that, Sir Henry," said Wildrake; "and do you remember what the officer of Lunsford's said?"

"I think I do," said Sir Henry, smiling.

"Well, then, did not he call out, when the women were coming down, howling like sirens as they were — 'Have none of you a plump child that you could give us to break our fast upon?'"

"Truth itself!" said the knight; "and a great fat woman stepped forward with a baby, and offered it to the supposed cannibal."

All at the table, Master Kerneguy excepted, who seemed to think that good food of any kind required no apology, held up their hands in token of amazement.

"Ay," said Wildrake, "the — a-hem! — I crave the lady's pardon again, from tip of top-knot to hem of farthingale — but the cursed creature proved to be a parish nurse, who had been paid for the child half a year in advance. Gad, I took the babe out of the bitch-wolf's hand; and I have contrived, though God knows I have lived in a skeldering sort of way myself, to breed up bold Breakfast, as I call him, ever since. It was paying dear for a jest, though."

"Sir, I honour you for your humanity," said the old knight — "Sir, I thank you for your courage — Sir, I am glad to see you here," said the good knight, his eyes watering almost to overflowing. "So you were the wild officer who cut us out of the toils; Oh, sir, had you but stopped when I called on you, and allowed us to clear the streets of Brentford with our musketeers, we would have been at London Stone that day! But your good will was the same."

"Ay, truly was it," said Wildrake, who now sat triumphant and glorious in his easy-chair; "and here is to all the brave hearts, sir, that fought and fell in that same storm of Brentford. We drove all before us like chaff, till the shops, where they sold strong waters, and other temptations, brought us up. Gad, sir, we, the babe-eaters, had too many acquaintances in Brentford, and our stout Prince Rupert was ever better at making way than drawing off. Gad, sir, for my own poor share, I did but go into the house of a poor widow lady, who maintained a charge of daughters, and whom I had known of old, to get my horse fed, a morsel of meat, and so forth, when these cockney-pikes of the artillery ground, as you very well call them, rallied, and came in with their armed heads, as boldly as so many Cotswold rams. I sprang down stairs, got to my horse — but, egad, I fancy all my troop had widows and orphan maidens to comfort as well as I, for only five of us got together. We cut our way through successfully; and Gad, gentlemen, I carried my little Breakfast on the pommel before me; and there was such a hollowing and screeching, as if the whole town thought I was to kill, roast, and eat the poor child, so soon as I got to quarters. But devil a cockney charged up to my bonny bay, poor lass, to rescue little cake-bread; they only cried haro, and out upon me."

"Alas, alas!" said the knight, "we made ourselves seem worse than we were; and we were too bad to deserve God's blessing even in a good cause. But it is needless to look back; we did not deserve victories when God gave them, for we never improved them like good soldiers, or like Christian men; and so we gave these canting scoundrels the advantage of us, for they assumed, out of mere hypocrisy, the discipline and orderly behaviour which we, who drew our swords in a better cause, ought to have practised out of true principle. But here is my hand, Captain. I have often wished to see the honest fellow who charged up so smartly in our behalf, and I reverence you for the care you took of the poor child. I am glad this dilapidated place has still some hospitality to offer you, although we cannot treat you to roasted babes or stewed sucklings — eh, Captain?"

"Truth, Sir Henry, the scandal was sore against us on that score. I remember Lacy, who was an old play-actor, and a lieutenant in ours, made drollery on it in a play which was sometimes acted at Oxford, when our hearts were something up, called, I think, the Old Troop."

So saying, and feeling more familiar as his merits were known, he hitched his chair up against that of the Scottish lad, who was seated next him, and who, in shifting his place, was awkward enough to disturb, in his turn, Alice Lee, who sate opposite, and, a little offended, or at least embarrassed, drew her chair away from the table.

"I crave pardon," said the honourable Master Kerneguy; "but, sir," to Master Wildrake, "ye hae e'en garr'd me hurt the young lady's shank."

"I crave your pardon, sir, and much more that of the fair lady, as is reasonable; though, rat me, sir, if it was I set your chair a-trundling in that way. Zooks, sir, I have brought with me no plague, nor pestilence, nor other infectious disorder, that ye should have started away as if I had been a leper, and discomposed the lady, which I would have prevented with my life, sir. Sir, if ye be northern born, as your tongue bespeaks, egad, it was I ran the risk in drawing near you; so there was small reason for you to bolt."

"Master Wildrake," said Albert, interfering, "this young gentleman is a stranger as well as you, under protection of Sir Henry's hospitality, and it cannot be agreeable for my father to see disputes arise among his guests. You may mistake the young gentleman's quality from his present appearance — this is the Honourable Master Louis Kerneguy, sir, son of my Lord Killstewers of Kincardineshire, one who has fought for the King, young as he is."

"No dispute shall rise through me, sir — none through me," said Wildrake; "your exposition sufficeth, sir. — Master Louis Girnigo, son of my Lord Kilsteer, in Gringardenshire, I am your humble slave, sir, and drink your health, in token that I honour you, and all true Scots who draw their Andrew Ferraras on the right side, sir."

"I'se beholden to you, and thank you, sir," said the young man, with some haughtiness of manner, which hardly corresponded with his rusticity; "and I wuss your health in a ceevil way."

Most judicious persons would have here dropped the conversation; but it was one of Wildrake's marked peculiarities, that he could never let matters stand when they were well. He continued to plague the shy, proud, and awkward lad with his observations. "You speak your national dialect pretty strongly, Master Girnigo," said he, "but I think not quite the language of the gallants that I have known among the Scottish cavaliers — I knew, for example, some of the Gordons, and others of good repute, who always put an *f* for *wh*, as *faat* for *what*, *fan* for *when*, and the like."

Albert Lee here interposed, and said that the provinces of Scotland, like those of England, had their different modes of pronunciation.

"You are very right, sir," said Wildrake. "I reckon myself, now, a pretty good speaker of their cursed jargon — no offence, young gentleman; and yet, when I took a turn with some of Montrose's folk, in the South Highlands, as they call their beastly wildernesses, (no offence again,) I chanced to be by myself, and to lose my way, when I said to a shepherd-fellow, making my mouth as wide, and my voice as broad as I could, *whore am I ganging till?* — confound me if the fellow could answer me, unless, indeed, he was sulky, as the bumpkins will be now and then to the gentlemen of the sword."

This was familiarly spoken, and though partly addressed to Albert, was still more directed to his immediate neighbour, the young Scotsman, who seemed, from bashfulness, or some other reason, rather shy of his intimacy. To one or two personal touches from Wildrake's elbow, administered during his last speech, by way of a practical appeal to him in particular, he only answered, "Misunderstandings were to be expected when men converse in national deealects."

Wildrake, now considerably drunker than he ought to have been in civil company, caught up the phrase and repeated it:—"Misunderstanding, sir — Misunderstanding, sir? — I do not know how I am to construe that, sir; but to judge from the information of these scratches on your honourable visnomy, I should augur that you had been of late at misunderstanding with the cat, sir."

"You are mistaken, then, friend, for it was with the dowg," answered the Scotsman, dryly, and cast a look towards Albert.

"We had some trouble with the watch-dogs in entering so late in the evening," said Albert, in explanation, "and this youth had a fall among some rubbish, by which he came by these scratches."

"And now, dear Sir Henry," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "allow us to remind you of your gout, and our long journey. I do it the rather that my good friend your son has been, during the whole time of supper, putting questions to me aside, which had much better be reserved till tomorrow — May we therefore ask permission to retire to our night's rest?"

"These private committees in a merry meeting," said Wildrake, "are a solecism in breeding. They always put me in mind of the cursed committees at Westminster. — But shall we roost before we rouse the night-owl with a catch?"

"Aha, canst thou quote Shakspeare?" said Sir Henry, pleased at discovering a new good quality in his acquaintance, whose military services were otherwise but just able to counterbalance the intrusive freedom of his conversation. "In the name of merry Will," he continued — "whom I never saw, though I have seen many of his comrades, as Alleyn, Hemmings, and so on — we will have a single catch, and one rouse about, and then to bed."

After the usual discussion about the choice of the song, and the parts which each was to bear, they united their voices in trolling a loyal glee, which was popular among the party at the time, and in fact believed to be composed by no less a person than Dr. Rochecliffe himself.

GLEE FOR KING CHARLES.

Bring the bowl which you boast,

Fill it up to the brim;

'Tis to him we love most,

And to all who love him.

Brave gallants, stand up.

And avauant, ye base carles!

Were there death in the cup,

Here's a health to King Charles!

Though he wanders through dangers,

Unaided, unknown,

Dependent 'on strangers,

Estranged from his own;

Though 'tis under our breath,

Amidst forfeits and perils,

Here's to honour and faith,

And a health to King Charles!

Let such honours abound

As the time can afford.

The knee on the ground,

And the hand on the sword;

But the time shall come round.

When, 'mid Lords, Dukes, and Earls,

The loud trumpets shall sound

Here's a health to King Charles!

After this display of loyalty, and a final libation, the party took leave of each other for the night. Sir Henry offered his old acquaintance Wildrake a bed for the evening, who weighed the matter somewhat in this fashion: "Why, to speak truth, my patron will expect me at the borough — but then he is used to my staying out of doors a-nights. Then there's the Devil, that they say haunts Woodstock; but with the blessing of this reverend Doctor, I defy him and all his works — I saw him not when I slept here twice before, and I am sure if he was absent then, he has not come back with Sir Henry Lee and his family. So I accept your courtesy, Sir Henry, and I thank you, as a cavalier of Lunsford should thank one of the fighting clerks of Oxon. God bless the King! I care not who hears it, and confusion to Noll and his red nose!" Off he went accordingly with a bottle-swagger, guided by Joceline, to whom Albert, in the meantime, had whispered, to be sure to quarter him far enough from the rest of the family.

Young Lee then saluted his sister, and, with the formality of those times, asked and received his father's blessing with an affectionate embrace. His page seemed desirous to imitate one part of his example, but was repelled by Alice, who only replied to his offered salute with a curtsy. He next bowed his head in an awkward fashion to her father, who wished him a good night. "I am glad to see, young man," he said, "that you have at least learned the reverence due to age. It should always be paid, sir; because in doing so you render that honour to others which you will expect yourself to receive when you approach the close of your life. More will I speak with you at leisure, on your duties as a page, which office in former days used to be the very school of chivalry; whereas of late, by the disorderly times, it has become little better than a school of wild and disordered license; which made rare Ben Jonson exclaim" —

"Nay, father," said Albert, interposing, "you must consider this day's fatigue, and the poor lad is almost asleep on his legs — tomorrow he will listen with more profit to your kind admonitions. — And you, Louis, remember at least one part of your duty — take the candles and light us — here Joceline comes to show us the way. Once more, good night, good Dr. Rochecliffe — good night, all."

Chapter the Twenty-First.

GROOM. *Hail, noble prince!*

KING RICHARD. *Thanks, noble peer;
The cheapest of us is a groat too dear.*

RICHARD II

Albert and his page were ushered by Joceline to what was called the Spanish Chamber, a huge old scrambling bedroom, rather in a dilapidated condition, but furnished with a large standing-bed for the master, and a trundle-bed for the domestic, as was common at a much later period in old English houses, where the gentleman often required the assistance of a groom of the chambers to help him to bed, if the hospitality had been exuberant. The walls were covered with hangings of cordovan leather, stamped with gold, and representing fights between the Spaniards and Moriscoes, bull-feasts, and other sports peculiar to the Peninsula, from which it took its name of the Spanish Chamber. These hangings were in some places entirely torn down, in others defaced and hanging in tatters. But Albert stopped not to make observations, anxious, it seemed, to get Joceline out of the room; which he achieved by hastily answering his offers of fresh fuel, and more liquor, in the negative, and returning, with equal conciseness, the under-keeper's good wishes for the evening. He at length retired, somewhat unwillingly, and as if he thought that his young master might have bestowed a few more words upon a faithful old retainer after so long absence.

Joliffe was no sooner gone, than, before a single word was spoken between Albert Lee and his page, the former hastened to the door, examined lock, latch, and bolt, and made them fast, with the most scrupulous attention. He superadded to these precautions that of a long screw-bolt, which he brought out of his pocket, and which he screwed on to the staple in such a manner as to render it impossible to withdraw it, or open the door, unless by breaking it down. The page held a light to him during the operation, which his master went through with much exactness and dexterity. But when Albert arose from his knee, on which he had rested during the accomplishment of this task, the manner of the companions was on the sudden entirely changed towards each other. The honourable Master Kerneguy, from a cubbish lout of a raw Scotsman, seemed to have acquired at once all the grace and ease of motion and manner, which could be given by an acquaintance of the earliest and most familiar kind with the best company of the time.

He gave the light he held to Albert, with the easy indifference of a superior, who rather graces than troubles his dependent by giving him some slight service to perform. Albert, with the greatest appearance of deference, assumed in his turn the character of torch-bearer, and lighted his page across the chamber, without turning his back upon him as he did so. He then set the light on the table by the bedside, and approaching the young man with deep reverence, received from him the soiled green jacket, with the same profound respect as if he had been a first lord of the bedchamber, or other officer of the household of the highest distinction, disrobing his Sovereign of the Mantle of the Garter. The person to whom this ceremony was addressed endured it for a minute or two with profound gravity, and then bursting out a-laughing, exclaimed to Albert, "What a devil means all this formality? — thou complimentest with these miserable rags as if they were silks and sables, and with poor Louis Kerneguy as if he were the King of Great Britain!"

"And if your Majesty's commands, and the circumstances of the time, have made me for a moment seem to forget that you are my sovereign, surely I may be permitted to render my homage as such while you are in your own royal palace of Woodstock?"

"Truly," replied the disguised Monarch, "the sovereign and the palace are not ill matched; — these tattered hangings and my ragged jerkin suit each other admirably. — *This Woodstock!* — *this* the bower where the royal Norman revelled with the fair Rosamond Clifford! — Why, it is a place of assignation for owls." Then, suddenly recollecting himself, with his natural courtesy, he added, as if fearing he might have hurt Albert's feelings — "But the more obscure and retired, it is the fitter for our purpose, Lee; and if it does seem to be a roost for owls, as there is no denying, why we know it has nevertheless brought up eagles."

He threw himself as he spoke upon a chair, and indolently, but gracefully, received the kind offices, of Albert, who undid the coarse buttonings of the leathern gamashes which defended his legs, and spoke to him the whilst:—"What a fine specimen of the olden time is your father, Sir Henry! It is strange I should not have seen him before; — but I heard my father often speak of him as being among the flower of our real old English gentry. By the mode in which he began to school me, I can guess you had a tight taskmaster of him, Albert — I warrant you never wore hat in his presence, eh?"

"I never cocked it at least in his presence, please your Majesty, as I have seen some youngsters do," answered Albert; "indeed if I had, it must have been a stout beaver to have saved me from a broken head."

"Oh, I doubt it not," replied the king; "a fine old gentleman — but with that, methinks, in his countenance, that assures you he would not hate the child in sparing the rod. — Hark ye, Albert — Suppose the same glorious Restoration come round — which, if drinking to its arrival can hasten it, should not be far distant — for in that particular our adherents never neglect their duty, suppose it come, therefore, and that thy father, as must be of course, becomes an Earl and one of the Privy Council, oddsfish, man, I shall be as much afraid of him as ever was my grandfather Henri Quatre of old Sully. — Imagine there were such a trinket now about the Court as the Fair Rosamond, or La Belle Gabrielle, what a work there would be of pages, and grooms of the chamber, to get the pretty rogue clandestinely shuffled out by the backstairs, like a prohibited commodity, when the step of the Earl of Woodstock was heard in the antechamber!"

"I am glad to see your Majesty so — merry after your fatiguing journey."

"The fatigue was nothing, man," said Charles; "a kind welcome and a good meal made amends for all that. But they must have suspected thee of bringing a wolf from the braes of Badenoch along with you, instead of a two-legged being, with no more than the usual allowance of mortal stowage for provisions. I was really ashamed of my appetite; but thou knowest I had eat nothing for twenty-four hours, save the raw egg you stole for me from the old woman's hen-roost — I tell thee, I blushed to show myself so ravenous before that high-bred and respectable old gentleman your father, and the very pretty girl your sister — or cousin, is she?"

"She is my sister," said Albert Lee, dryly, and added, in the same breath, "Your Majesty's appetite suited well enough with the character of a raw northern lad. — Would your Majesty now please to retire to rest?"

"Not for a minute or two," said the King, retaining his seat. "Why, man, I have scarce had my tongue unchained today; and to talk with that northern twang, and besides, the fatigue of being obliged to speak every word in character — Gad, it's like walking as the galley-slaves do on the Continent, with a twenty-four pound shot chained to their legs — they may drag it along, but they cannot move with comfort. And, by the way, thou art slack in paying me my well-deserved tribute of compliment on my counterfeiting. — Did I not play Louis Kerneguy as round as a ring?"

"If your Majesty asks my serious opinion, perhaps I may be forgiven if I say your dialect was somewhat too coarse for a Scottish youth of high birth, and your behaviour perhaps a little too churlish. I thought too — though I pretend not to be skilful — that some of your Scottish sounded as if it were not genuine."

"Not genuine? — there is no pleasing thee, Albert. — Why, who should speak genuine Scottish but myself? — Was I not their King for a matter of ten months? and if I did not get knowledge of their language, I wonder what else I got by it. Did not east country, and south country, and west country, and Highlands, caw, croak, and shriek about me, as the deep guttural, the broad drawl, and the high sharp yelp predominated by turns? — Oddsfish, man, have I not been speeched at by their orators, addressed by their senators, rebuked by their kirkmen? Have I not sate on the cutty-stool, mon, [again assuming the northern dialect,] and thought it grace of worthy Mrs John Gillespie, that I was permitted to do penance in my own privy chamber, instead of the face of the congregation? and wilt thou tell me, after all, that I cannot speak Scotch enough to baffle an Oxon Knight and his family?"

"May it please your Majesty — I begun by saying I was no judge of the Scottish language."

"Pshaw — it is mere envy; just so you said at Norton's, that I was too courteous and civil for a young page — now you think me too rude."

"And there is a medium, if one could find it," said Albert, defending his opinion in the same tone in which the King attacked him; "so this morning, when you were in the woman's dress, you raised your petticoats rather unbecomingly high, as you waded through the first little stream; and when I told you of it, to mend the matter, you dragged through the next without raising them at all."

"O, the devil take the woman's dress!" said Charles; "I hope I shall never be driven to that disguise again. Why, my ugly face was enough to put gowns, caps, and kirtles, out of fashion for ever — the very dogs fled from me — Had I passed any hamlet that had but five huts in it, I could not have escaped the cucking-stool. — I was a libel on womankind. These leathern conveniences are none of the gayest, but they are *propria quae maribus*; and right glad am I to be repossessed of them. I can tell you too, my friend, I shall resume all my masculine privileges with my proper habiliments; and as you say I have been too coarse to-night, I will

behave myself like a courtier to Mistress Alice tomorrow. I made a sort of acquaintance with her already, when I seemed to be of the same sex with herself, and found out there are other Colonels in the wind besides you, Colonel Albert Lee."

"May it please your Majesty," said Albert — and then stopped short, from the difficulty of finding words to express the unpleasant nature of his feelings. They could not escape Charles; but he proceeded without scruple. "I pique myself on seeing as far into the hearts of young ladies as most folk, though God knows they are sometimes too deep for the wisest of us. But I mentioned to your sister in my character of fortune-teller — thinking, poor simple man, that a country girl must have no one but her brother to dream about — that she was anxious about a certain Colonel. I had hit the theme, but not the person; for I alluded to you, Albert; and I presume the blush was too deep ever to be given to a brother. So up she got, and away she flew from me like a lap-wing. I can excuse her — for, looking at myself in the well, I think if I had met such a creature as I seemed, I should have called fire and fagot against it. — Now, what think you, Albert — who can this Colonel be, that more than rivals you in your sister's affection?"

Albert, who well knew that the King's mode of thinking, where the fair sex was concerned, was far more gay than delicate, endeavoured to put a stop to the present topic by a grave answer.

"His sister," he said, "had been in some measure educated with the son of her maternal uncle, Markham Everard; but as his father and he himself had adopted the cause of the roundheads, the families had in consequence been at variance; and any projects which might have been formerly entertained, were of course long since dismissed on all sides."

"You are wrong, Albert, you are wrong," said the King, pitilessly pursuing his jest. "You Colonels, whether you wear blue or orange sashes, are too pretty fellows to be dismissed so easily, when once you have acquired an interest. But Mistress Alice, so pretty, and who wishes the restoration of the King with such a look and accent, as if she were an angel whose prayers must needs bring it down, must not be allowed to retain any thoughts of a canting roundhead — What say you — will you give me leave to take her to task about it? — After all, I am the party most concerned in maintaining true allegiance among my subjects; and if I gain the pretty maiden's good will, that of the sweetheart's will soon follow. This was jolly King Edward's way — Edward the Fourth, you know. The king-making Earl of Warwick — the Cromwell of his day — dethroned him more than once; but he had the hearts of the merry dames of London, and the purses and veins of the cockneys bled freely, till they brought him home again. How say you? — shall I shake off my northern slough, and speak with Alice in my own character, showing what education and manners have done for me, to make the best amends they can for an ugly face?"

"May it please your Majesty," said Albert, in an altered and embarrassed tone, "I did not expect" —

Here he stopped, not able to find words adequate at the same time to express his sentiments, and respectful enough to the King, while in his father's house, and under his own protection.

"And what is it that Master Lee does not expect?" said Charles, with marked gravity on his part.

Again Albert attempted a reply, but advanced no farther than, "I would hope, if it please your Majesty" — when he again stopped short, his deep and hereditary respect for his sovereign, and his sense of the hospitality due to his misfortunes, preventing his giving utterance to his irritated feelings.

"And what does Colonel Albert Lee hope?" said Charles, in the same dry and cold manner in which he had before spoken. — "No answer? — Now, I *hope* that Colonel Lee does not see in a silly jest anything offensive to the honour of his family, since methinks that were an indifferent compliment to his sister, his father, and himself, not to mention Charles Stewart, whom he calls his King; and I *expect*, that I shall not be so hardly construed, as to be supposed capable of forgetting that Mistress Alice Lee is the daughter of my faithful subject and host, and the sister of my guide and preserver. — Come, come, Albert," he added, changing at once to his naturally frank and unceremonious manner, "you forget how long I have been abroad where men, women, and children, talk gallantry morning, noon, and night, with no more serious thought than just to pass away the time; and I forget, too, that you are of the old-fashioned English school, a son after Sir Henry's own heart, and don't understand raillery upon such subjects. — But I ask your pardon, Albert, sincerely, if I have really hurt you."

So saying, he extended his hand to Colonel Lee, who, feeling he had been rather too hasty in construing the King's jest in an unpleasant sense, kissed it with reverence, and attempted an apology.

"Not a word — not a word," said the good-natured Prince, raising his penitent adherent as he attempted to kneel; "we understand each other. You are somewhat afraid of the gay reputation which I acquired in Scotland; but I assure you, I will be as stupid as you or your cousin Colonel could desire, in presence of Mistress Alice Lee, and only bestow my gallantry, should I have any to throw away, upon the pretty little waiting-maid who attended at supper — unless you should have monopolized her ear for your own benefit, Colonel Albert?"

"It is monopolized, sure enough, though not by me, if it please your Majesty, but by Joceline Joliffe, the under-keeper, whom we must not disoblige, as we have trusted him so far already, and may have occasion to repose even entire confidence in him. I half think he suspects who Louis Kerneuguy may in reality be."

"You are an engrossing set, you wooers of Woodstock," said the King, laughing. "Now, if I had a fancy, as a Frenchman would not fail to have in such a case, to make pretty speeches to the deaf old woman I saw in the kitchen, as a pisaller, I dare say I should be told that her ear was engrossed for Dr. Rochecriffe's sole use?"

"I marvel at your Majesty's good spirits," said Albert, "that after a day of danger, fatigue, and accidents, you should feel the power of amusing yourself thus."

"That is to say, the groom of the chambers wishes his Majesty would go to sleep? — Well, one word or two on more serious business, and I have done. — I have been completely directed by you and Rochecriffe — I have changed my disguise from female to male upon the instant, and altered my destination from Hampshire to take shelter here — Do you still hold it the wiser course?"

"I have great confidence in Dr. Rochecriffe," replied Albert, "whose acquaintance with the scattered royalists enables him to gain the most accurate intelligence. His pride in the extent of his correspondence, and the complication of his plots and schemes for your Majesty's service, is indeed the very food he lives upon; but his sagacity is equal to his vanity. I repose, besides, the utmost faith in Joliffe. Of my father and sister I would say nothing; yet I would not, without reason, extend the knowledge of your Majesty's person farther than it is indispensably necessary."

"Is it handsome in me," said Charles, pausing, "to withhold my full confidence from Sir Henry Lee?"

"Your Majesty heard of his almost death-swoon of last night — what would agitate him most deeply must not be hastily communicated."

"True; but are we safe from a visit of the red-coats — they have them in Woodstock as well as in Oxford?" said Charles.

"Dr. Rochecriffe says, not unwisely," answered Lee, "that it is best sitting near the fire when the chimney smokes; and that Woodstock, so lately in possession of the sequestrators, and still in the vicinity of the soldiers, will be less suspected, and more carelessly searched, than more distant corners, which might seem to promise more safety. Besides," he added, "Rochecriffe is in possession of curious and important news concerning the state of matters at Woodstock, highly favourable to your Majesty's being concealed in the palace for two or three days, till shipping is provided. The Parliament, or usurping Council of State, had sent down sequestrators, whom their own evil conscience, assisted, perhaps, by the tricks of some daring cavaliers, had frightened out of the Lodge, without much desire to come back again. Then the more formidable usurper, Cromwell, had granted a warrant of possession to Colonel Everard, who had only used it for the purpose of repossessing his uncle in the Lodge, and who kept watch in person at the little borough, to see that Sir Henry was not disturbed."

"What! Mistress Alice's Colonel?" said the King — "that sounds alarming; — for grant that he keeps the other fellows at bay, think you not, Master Albert, he will have an hundred errands a-day, to bring him here in person?"

"Dr. Rochecriffe says," answered Lee, "the treaty between Sir Henry and his nephew binds the latter not to approach the Lodge, unless invited; — indeed, it was not without great difficulty, and strongly arguing the good consequences it might produce to your Majesty's cause, that my father could be prevailed on to occupy Woodstock at all; but be assured he will be in no hurry to send an invitation to the Colonel."

"And be you assured that the Colonel will come without waiting for one," said Charles. "Folk cannot judge rightly where sisters are concerned — they are too familiar with the magnet to judge of its powers of attraction. — Everard will be here, as if drawn by cart-ropes — fetters, not to talk of promises, will not hold him — and then, methinks, we are in some danger."

"I hope not," said Albert. "In the first place, I know Markham is a slave to his word: besides, were any chance to bring him here, I think I could pass your Majesty upon him without difficulty, as Louis Kerneguy. Then, although my cousin and I have not been on good terms for these some years, I believe him incapable of betraying your Majesty; and lastly, if I saw the least danger of it, I would, were he ten times the son of my mother's sister, run my sword through his body, ere he had time to execute his purpose."

"There is but another question," said Charles, "and I will release you, Albert:— You seem to think yourself secure from search. It may be so; but, in any other country, this tale of goblins which is flying about would bring down priests and ministers of justice to examine the reality of the story, and mobs of idle people to satisfy their curiosity."

"Respecting the first, sir, we hope and understand that Colonel Everard's influence will prevent any immediate enquiry, for the sake of preserving undisturbed the peace of his uncle's family; and as for any one coming without some sort of authority, the whole neighbours have so much love and fear of my father, and are, besides, so horribly alarmed about the goblins of Woodstock, that fear will silence curiosity."

"On the whole, then," said Charles, "the chances of safety seem to be in favour of the plan we have adopted, which is all I can hope for in a condition where absolute safety is out of the question. The Bishop recommended Dr. Rochecliffe as one of the most ingenious, boldest, and most loyal sons of the Church of England; you, Albert Lee, have marked your fidelity by a hundred proofs. To you and your local knowledge I submit myself. — And now, prepare our arms — alive I will not be taken; — yet I will not believe that a son of the King of England, and heir of her throne, could be destined to danger in his own palace, and under the guard of the loyal Lees."

Albert Lee laid pistols and swords in readiness by the King's bed and his own; and Charles, after some slight apology, took his place in the larger and better bed, with a sigh of pleasure, as from one who had not lately enjoyed such an indulgence. He bid good night to his faithful attendant, who deposited himself on his trundle; and both monarch and subject were soon fast asleep.

Chapter the Twenty-Second.

*Give Sir Nicholas Threlkeld praise;
Hear it, good man, old in days,
Thou tree of succour and of rest
To this young bird that was distress'd;
Beneath thy branches he did stay;
And he was free to sport and play,
When falcons were abroad for prey.*

WORDSWORTH.

The fugitive Prince slept, in spite of danger, with the profound repose which youth and fatigue inspire. But the young cavalier, his guide and guard, spent a more restless night, starting from time to time, and listening; anxious, notwithstanding Dr. Rochecliffe's assurances, to procure yet more particular knowledge concerning the state of things around them, than he had been yet able to collect.

He rose early after daybreak; but although he moved with as little noise as was possible, the slumbers of the hunted Prince were easily disturbed. He started up in his bed, and asked if there was any alarm.

"None, please your Majesty," replied Lee; "only, thinking on the questions your Majesty was asking last night, and the various chances there are of your Majesty's safety being endangered from unforeseen accidents, I thought of going thus early, both to communicate with Dr. Rochecliffe, and to keep such a look-out as befits the place, where are lodged for the time the Fortunes of England. I fear I must request of your Majesty, for your own gracious security, that you have the goodness to condescend to secure the door with your own hand after I go out."

"Oh, talk not to Majesty, for Heaven's sake, dear Albert!" answered the poor King, endeavouring in vain to put on a part of his clothes, in order to traverse the room. — "When a King's doublet and hose are so ragged that he can no more find his way into them than he could have travelled through the forest of Deane without a guide, good faith, there should be an end of Majesty, until it chances to be better accommodated. Besides, there is the chance of these big words bolting out at unawares, when there are ears to hear them whom we might think dangerous."

"Your commands shall be obeyed," said Lee, who had now succeeded in opening the door; from which he took his departure, leaving the King, who had hustled along the floor for that purpose, with his dress wofully ill arranged, to make it fast again behind him, and begging him in no case to open to any one, unless he or Rochecliffe were of the party who summoned him.

Albert then set out in quest of Dr. Rochecliffe's apartment, which was only known to himself and the faithful Joliffe, and had at different times accommodated that steady churchman with a place of concealment, when, from his bold and busy temper, which led him into the most extensive and hazardous machinations on the King's behalf, he had been strictly sought after by the opposite party. Of late, the inquest after him had died entirely away, as he had prudently withdrawn himself from the scene of his intrigues. Since the loss of the battle of Worcester, he had been afloat again, and more active than ever; and had, by friends and correspondents, and especially the Bishop of — — been the means of directing the King's flight towards Woodstock, although it was not until the very day of his arrival that he could promise him a safe reception at that ancient mansion.

Albert Lee, though he revered both the undaunted spirit and ready resources of the bustling and intriguing churchman, felt he had not been enabled by him to answer some of Charles's questions yesternight, in a way so distinct as one trusted with the King's safety ought to have done; and it was now his object to make himself personally acquainted, if possible, with the various bearings of so weighty a matter, as became a man on whom so much of the responsibility was likely to descend.

Even his local knowledge was scarce adequate to find the Doctor's secret apartment, had he not traced his way after a genial flavour of roasted game through divers blind passages, and up and down certain very useless stairs, through cupboards and hatchways, and so forth, to a species of sanctum sanctorum, where Joceline Joliffe was ministering to the good Doctor a solemn breakfast of wild-fowl, with a cup of small beer stirred with a sprig of rosemary, which Dr. Rochecliffe preferred to all strong potations. Beside him sat Bevis on his tail, slobbering and looking amiable, moved by the rare smell of the breakfast, which had quite overcome his native dignity of disposition.

The chamber in which the Doctor had established himself was a little octangular room, with walls of great thickness, within which were fabricated various issues, leading in different directions, and communicating with different parts of the building. Around him were packages with arms, and near him one small barrel, as it seemed, of gunpowder; many papers in different parcels, and several keys for correspondence in cipher; two or three scrolls covered with hieroglyphics were also beside him, which Albert took for plans of nativity; and various models of machinery, in which Dr. Rochecliffe was an adept. There were also tools of various kinds, masks, cloaks, and a dark lantern, and a number of other indescribable trinkets belonging to the trade of a daring plotter in dangerous times. Last, there was a casket with gold and silver coin of different countries, which was left carelessly open, as if it were the least of Dr. Rochecliffe's concern, although his habits in general announced narrow circumstances, if not actual poverty. Close by the divine's plate lay a Bible and Prayer-book, with some proof sheets, as they are technically called, seemingly fresh from the press. There was also within the reach of his hand a dirk, or Scottish poniard, a powder-horn, and a musketoon, or blunderbuss, with a pair of handsome pocket-pistols. In the midst of this miscellaneous collection, the Doctor sat eating his breakfast with great appetite, as little dismayed by the various implements of danger around him, as a workman is when accustomed to the perils of a gunpowder manufactory.

"So, young gentleman," he said, getting up and extending his hand, "are you come to breakfast with me in good fellowship, or to spoil my meal this morning, as you did my supper last night, by asking untimely questions?"

"I will pick a bone with you with all my heart," said Albert; "and if you please, Doctor, I would ask some questions which seem not quite untimely."

So saying he sat down, and assisted the Doctor in giving a very satisfactory account of a brace of wild-ducks and a leash of teal. Bevis, who maintained his place with great patience and insinuation, had his share of a collop, which was also placed on the well-furnished board; for, like most high-bred dogs, he declined eating waterfowl.

"Come hither then, Albert Lee," said the Doctor, laying down his knife and fork, and plucking the towel from his throat, so soon as Joceline was withdrawn; "thou art still the same lad thou wert when I was thy tutor — never satisfied with having got a grammar rule, but always persecuting me with questions why the rule stood so, and not otherwise — over-curious after information which thou couldst not comprehend, as Bevis slobbered and whined for the duck-wing, which he could not eat."

"I hope you will find me more reasonable, Doctor," answered Albert; "and at the same time, that you will recollect I am not now *sub ferula*, but am placed in circumstances where I am not at liberty to act upon the *ipse dixit* of any man, unless my own judgment be convinced. I shall deserve richly to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, should any misfortune happen by my misgovernment in this business."

"And it is therefore, Albert, that I would have thee trust the whole to me, without interfering. Thou sayest, forsooth, thou art not *sub ferula*; but recollect that while you have been fighting in the field, I have been plotting in the study — that I know all the combinations of the King's friends, ay, and all the motions of his enemies, as well as a spider knows every mesh of his web. Think of my experience, man. Not a cavalier in the land but has heard of Rochecliffe, the Plotter. I have been a main limb in every thing that has been attempted since forty-two — penned declarations, conducted correspondence, communicated with chiefs, recruited followers, commissioned arms, levied money, appointed rendezvouses. I was in the Western Riding; and before that, in the City Petition, and in Sir John Owen's stir in Wales; in short, almost in every plot for the King, since Tomkins and Challoner's matter."

"But were not all these plots unsuccessful?" said Albert; "and were not Tomkins and Challoner hanged, Doctor?"

"Yes, my young friend," answered the Doctor, gravely, "as many others have been with whom I have acted; but only because they did not follow my advice implicitly. You never heard that I was hanged myself?"

"The time may come, Doctor," said Albert; "The pitcher goes oft to the well. — The proverb, as my father would say, is somewhat musty. But I, too, have some confidence in my own judgment; and, much as I honour the Church, I cannot altogether subscribe to passive obedience. I will tell you in one word what points I must have explanation on; and it will remain with you to give it, or to return a message to the King that you will not explain your plan; in which case, if he acts by my advice, he will leave Woodstock, and resume his purpose of getting to the coast without delay."

"Well, then," said the Doctor, "thou suspicious monster, make thy demands, and, if they be such as I can answer without betraying confidence, I will reply to them."

"In the first place, then, what is all this story about ghosts, and witch-crafts, and apparitions? and do you consider it as safe for his Majesty to stay in a house subject to such visitations, real or pretended?"

"You must be satisfied with my answer *in verbo sacerdotis* — the circumstances you allude to will not give the least annoyance to Woodstock during the King's residence. I cannot explain farther; but for this I will be bound, at the risk of my neck."

"Then," said Lee, "we must take Dr. Rochecliffe's bail that the devil will keep the peace towards our Sovereign Lord the King — good. Now there lurked about this house the greater part of yesterday, and perhaps slept here, a fellow called Tomkins — a bitter Independent, and a secretary, or clerk, or something or other, to the regicide dog Desborough. The man is well known — a wild ranter in religious opinions, but in private affairs far-sighted, cunning, and interested even as any rogue of them all."

"Be assured we will avail ourselves of his crazy fanaticism to mislead his wicked cunning; — a child may lead a hog, if it has wit to fasten a cord to the ring in its nose," replied the Doctor.

"You may be deceived," said Albert; "the age has many such as this fellow, whose views of the spiritual and temporal world are so different, that they resemble the eyes of a squinting man; one of which, oblique and distorted, sees nothing but the end of his nose, while the other, instead of partaking the same defect, views strongly, sharply, and acutely, whatever is subjected to its scrutiny."

"But we will put a patch on the better eye," said the Doctor, "and he shall only be allowed to speculate with the imperfect optic. You must know, this fellow has always seen the greatest number, and the most hideous apparitions; he has not the courage of a cat in such matters, though stout enough when he hath temporal antagonists before him. I have placed him under the charge of Joceline Joliffe, who, betwixt plying him with sack and ghost-stories, would make him incapable of knowing what was done, if you were to proclaim the King in his presence."

"But why keep such a fellow here at all?"

"Oh, sir, content you; — he lies leaguer, as a sort of ambassador for his worthy masters, and we are secure from any intrusion so long as they get all the news of Woodstock from Trusty Tomkins."

"I know Joceline's honesty well," said Albert; "and if he can assure me that he will keep a watch over this fellow, I will so far trust in him. He does not know the depth of the stake, 'tis true, but that my life is concerned will be quite enough to keep him vigilant. — Well, then, I proceed:— What if Markham Everard comes down on us?"

"We have his word to the contrary," answered Rochecliffe — "his word of honour, transmitted by his friend:— Do you think it likely he will break it?"

"I hold him incapable of doing so," answered Albert; "and, besides, I think Markham would make no bad use of any thing which might come to his knowledge — Yet God forbid we should be under the necessity of trusting any who ever wore the Parliament's colours in a matter of such dear concernment!"

"Amen!" said the Doctor. — "Are your doubts silenced now?"

"I still have an objection," said Albert, "to yonder impudent rakehell fellow, styling himself a cavalier, who rushed himself on our company last night, and gained my father's heart by a story of the storm of Brentford, which I dare say the rogue never saw."

"You mistake him, dear Albert," replied Rochecliffe — "Roger Wildrake, although till of late I only knew him by name, is a gentleman, was bred at the Inns of Court, and spent his estate in the King's service."

"Or rather in the devil's service," said Albert. "It is such fellows as he, who, sunk from the license of their military habits into idle debauched ruffians, infest the land with riots and robberies, brawl in hedge alehouses and cellars where strong waters are sold at midnight, and, with their deep oaths, their hot loyalty, and their drunken valour, make decent men abominate the very name of cavalier."

"Alas!" said the Doctor, "it is but too true; but what can you expect? When the higher and more qualified classes are broken down and mingled undistinguishably with the lower orders, they are apt to lose the most valuable marks of their quality in the general confusion of morals and manners — just as a handful of silver medals will become defaced and discoloured if jumbled about among the vulgar copper coin. Even the prime medal of all, which we royalists would so willingly wear next our very hearts, has not, perhaps, entirely escaped some deterioration — But let other tongues than mine speak on that subject."

Albert Lee paused deeply after having heard these communications on the part of Rochecliffe. "Doctor," he said, "it is generally agreed, even by some who think you may occasionally have been a little over busy in putting men upon dangerous actions"—

"May God forgive them who entertain so false an opinion of me," said the Doctor.

—"That, nevertheless, you have done and suffered more in the King's behalf than any man of your function."

"They do me but justice there," said Dr. Rochecliffe — "absolute justice."

"I am therefore disposed to abide by your opinion, if, all things considered, you think it safe that we should remain at Woodstock."

"That is not the question," answered the divine.

"And what is the question, then?" replied the young soldier.

"Whether any safer course can be pointed out. I grieve to say, that the question must be comparative, as to the point of option. Absolute safety is — alas the while! — out of the question on all sides. Now, I say Woodstock is, fenced and guarded as at present, by far the most preferable place of concealment."

"Enough," replied Albert; "I give up to you the question, as to a person whose knowledge of such important affairs, not to mention your age and experience, is more intimate and extensive than mine can be."

"You do well," answered Rochecliffe; "and if others had acted with the like distrust of their own knowledge, and confidence in competent persons, it had been better for the age. This makes Understanding bar himself up within his fortalice, and Wit betake himself to his high tower." (Here he looked around his cell with an air of self-complacency.) "The wise man foreseeth the tempest, and hideth himself."

"Doctor," said Albert, "let our foresight serve others far more precious than either of us. Let me ask you, if you have well considered whether our precious charge should remain in society with the family, or betake himself to some of the more hidden corners of the house?"

"Hum!" said the Doctor, with an air of deep reflection — "I think he will be safest as Louis Kernequy, keeping himself close beside you" —

"I fear it will be necessary," added Albert, "that I scout abroad a little, and show myself in some distant part of the country, lest, coming here in quest of me, they should find higher game."

"Pray do not interrupt me — Keeping himself close beside you or your father, in or near to Victor Lee's apartment, from which you are aware he can make a ready escape, should danger approach. This occurs to me as best for the present — I hope to hear of the vessel today — tomorrow at farthest."

Albert Lee bid the active but opiniated man good morrow; admiring how this species of intrigue had become a sort of element in which the Doctor seemed to enjoy himself, notwithstanding all that the poet has said concerning the horrors which intervene betwixt the conception and execution of a conspiracy.

In returning from Dr. Rochecliffe's sanctuary, he met with Joceline, who was anxiously seeking him. "The young Scotch gentleman," he said, in a mysterious manner, "has arisen from bed, and, hearing me pass, he called me into his apartment."

"Well," replied Albert, "I will see him presently."

"And he asked me for fresh linen and clothes. Now, sir, he is like a man who is quite accustomed to be obeyed, so I gave him a suit which happened to be in a wardrobe in the west tower, and some of your linen to conform; and when he was dressed, he commanded me to show him to the presence of Sir Henry Lee and my young lady. I would have said something, sir, about waiting till you came back, but he pulled me goodnaturedly by the hair, (as, indeed, he has a rare humour of his own,) and told me, he was guest to Master Albert Lee, and not his prisoner; so, sir, though I thought you might be displeased with me for giving him the means of stirring abroad, and perhaps being seen by those who should not see him, what could I say?"

"You are a sensible fellow, Joceline, and comprehend always what is recommended to you. This youth will not be controlled, I fear, by either of us; but we must look the closer after his safety. You keep your watch over that prying fellow the steward?"

"Trust him to my care — on that side have no fear. But ah, sir! I would we had the young Scot in his old clothes again, for the riding-suit of yours which he now wears hath set him off in other-guess fashion."

From the manner in which the faithful dependent expressed himself, Albert saw that he suspected who the Scottish page in reality was; yet he did not think it proper to acknowledge to him a fact of such importance, secure as he was equally of his fidelity, whether explicitly trusted to the full extent, or left to his own conjectures. Full of anxious thought, he went to the apartment of Victor Lee, in which Joliffe told him he would find the party assembled. The sound of laughter, as he laid his hand on the lock of the door, almost made him start, so singularly did it jar with the doubtful and melancholy reflections which engaged his own mind. He entered, and found his father in high good-humour, laughing and conversing freely with his young charge, whose appearance was, indeed, so much changed to the better in externals, that it seemed scarce possible a night's rest, a toilet, and a suit of decent clothes, could have done so much in his favour in so short a time. It could not, however, be imputed to the mere alteration of dress, although that, no doubt, had its effect. There was nothing splendid in that which Louis Kernequy (we continue to call him by his assumed name) now wore. It was merely a riding-suit of grey cloth, with some silver lace, in the fashion of a country gentleman of the time. But it happened to fit him very well, and to become his very dark complexion, especially as he now held up his head, and used the manners, not only of a well-behaved but of a highly-accomplished gentleman. When he moved, his clumsy and awkward limp was exchanged for a sort of shuffle, which, as it might be the consequence of a wound in those perilous times, had rather an interesting than an ungainly effect. At least it was as genteel an expression that the party had been overhauled, as the most polite pedestrian could propose to himself.

The features of the Wanderer were harsh as ever, but his red shock peruke, for such it proved, was laid aside, his sable elf-locks were trained, by a little of Joceline's assistance, into curls, and his fine black eyes shone from among the shade of these curls, and corresponded with the animated, though not handsome, character of the whole head. In his conversation, he had laid aside all the coarseness of dialect which he had so strongly affected on the preceding evening; and although he continued to speak a little Scotch, for the support of his character as a young gentleman of that nation, yet it was not in a degree which rendered his speech either uncouth or unintelligible, but merely afforded a certain Doric tinge essential to the personage he represented. No person on earth could better understand the society in which he moved; exile had made him acquainted with life in all its shades and varieties; — his spirits, if not uniform, were elastic — he had that species of Epicurean philosophy, which, even in the most extreme difficulties and dangers, can, in an interval of ease, however brief, avail itself of the enjoyments of the moment — he was, in short, in youth and misfortune, as afterwards in his regal condition, a good-humoured but hard-hearted voluptuary — wise, save where his passions intervened — beneficent, save when prodigality had deprived him of the means, or prejudice of the wish, to confer benefits — his faults such as might often have drawn down hatred, but that they were mingled with so much urbanity, that the injured person felt it impossible to retain the full sense of his wrongs.

Albert Lee found the party, consisting of his father, sister, and the supposed page, seated by the breakfast-table, at which he also took his place. He was a pensive and anxious beholder of what passed, while the page, who had already completely gained the heart of the good old cavalier, by mimicking the manner in which the Scottish divines preached in favour of Ma gude Lord Marquis of Argyle and the Solemn League and Covenant, was now endeavouring to interest the fair Alice by such anecdotes, partly of warlike and perilous adventure, as possessed the same degree of interest for the female ear which they have had ever since Desdemona's days. But it was not only of dangers by land and sea that the disguised page spoke; but much more, and much oftener, on foreign revels, banquets, balls, where the pride of France, of Spain, or of the Low Countries, was exhibited in the eyes of their most eminent beauties. Alice being a very young girl, who, in consequence of the Civil War, had been almost entirely educated in the country, and often in great seclusion, it was certainly no wonder that she should listen with willing ears, and a ready smile, to what the young gentleman, their guest, and her brother's protegee, told with so much gaiety, and mingled with such a shade of dangerous adventure, and occasionally of serious reflection, as prevented the discourse from being regarded as merely light and frivolous.

In a word, Sir Henry Lee laughed, Alice smiled from time to time, and all were satisfied but Albert, who would himself, however, have been scarce able to allege a sufficient reason for his depression of spirits. The materials of breakfast were at last removed, under the active superintendence of the neat-handed Phoebe, who looked over her shoulder, and lingered more than once, to listen to the fluent discourse of their new guest, whom, on the preceding evening, she had, while in attendance at supper, accounted one of the most stupid inmates to whom the gates of Woodstock had been opened since the times of Fair Rosamond.

Louis Kernequy then, when they were left only four in the chamber, without the interruption of domestics, and the successive bustle occasioned by the discussion and removal of the morning meal, became apparently sensible, that his friend and ostensible patron Albert ought not altogether to be suffered to drop to leeward in the conversation, while he was himself successfully engaging the attention of those members of his family to whom he had become so recently known. He went behind his chair, therefore, and, leaning on the back, said with a good-humoured tone, which made his purpose entirely intelligible —

"Either my good friend, guide, and patron, has heard worse news this morning than he cares to tell us, or he must have stumbled over my tattered jerkin and leathern hose, and acquired, by contact, the whole mass of stupidity which I threw off last night with those most dolorous garments. Cheer up, my dear Colonel Albert, if your affectionate page may presume to say so — you are in company with those whose society, dear to strangers, must be doubly so to you. Odds-fish, man, cheer up! I have seen you gay on a biscuit and a mouthful of water-cresses — don't let your heart fail you on Rhenish wine and venison."

"Dear Louis," said Albert, rousing himself into exertion, and somewhat ashamed of his own silence, "I have slept worse, and been astir earlier than you."

"Be it so," said his father; "yet I hold it no good excuse for your sullen silence. Albert, you have met your sister and me, so long separated from you, so anxious on your behalf, almost like mere strangers, and yet you are returned safe to us, and you find us well."

"Returned indeed — but for safety, my dear father, that word must be a stranger to us Worcester folk for some time. However, it is not my own safety about which I am anxious."

"About whose, then, should you be anxious? — All accounts agree that the King is safe out of the dogs' jaws."

"Not without some danger, though," muttered Louis, thinking of his encounter with Bevis on the preceding evening.

"No, not without danger, indeed," echoed the knight; "but, as old Will says —

'There's such divinity doth hedge a king,

That treason dares not peep at what it would.'

"No, no — thank God, that's cared for; our Hope and Fortune is escaped, so all news affirm, escaped from Bristol — if I thought otherwise, Albert, I should be as sad as you are. For the rest of it, I have lurked a month in this house when discovery would have been death, and that is no longer since than after Lord Holland and the Duke of Buckingham's rising at Kingston; and hang me, if I thought once of twisting my brow into such a tragic fold as yours, but cocked my hat at misfortune as a cavalier should."

"If I might put in a word," said Louis, "it would be to assure Colonel Albert Lee that I verily believe the King would think his own hap, wherever he may be, much the worse that his best subjects were seized with dejection on his account."

"You answer boldly on the King's part, young man," said Sir Henry.

"Oh, my father was meikle about the King's hand," answered Louis, recollecting his present character.

"No wonder, then," said Sir Henry, "that you have so soon recovered your good spirits and good breeding, when you heard of his Majesty's escape. Why, you are no more like the lad we saw last night, than the best hunter I ever had was like a dray-horse."

"Oh, there is much in rest, and food, and grooming," answered Louis. "You would hardly know the tired jade you dismounted from last night, when she is brought out prancing and neighing the next morning, rested, refreshed, and ready to start again — especially if the brute hath some good blood, for such pick up unco fast."

"Well, then, but since thy father was a courtier, and thou hast learned, I think, something of the trade, tell us a little, Master Kerneguy, of him we love most to hear about — the King; we are all safe and secret, you need not be afraid. He was a hopeful youth; I trust his flourishing blossom now gives promise of fruit?"

As the knight spoke, Louis bent his eyes on the ground, and seemed at first uncertain what to answer. But, admirable at extricating himself from such dilemmas, he replied, "that he really could not presume to speak on such a subject in the presence of his patron, Colonel Albert Lee, who must be a much better judge of the character of King Charles than he could pretend to be."

Albert was accordingly next assailed by the Knight, seconded by Alice, for some account of his Majesty's character.

"I will speak but according to facts," said Albert; "and then I must be acquitted of partiality. If the King had not possessed enterprise and military skill, he never would have attempted the expedition to Worcester; — had he not had personal courage, he had not so long disputed the battle that Cromwell almost judged it lost. That he possesses prudence and patience, must be argued from the circumstances attending his flight; and that he has the love of his subjects is evident, since, necessarily known to many, he has been betrayed by none."

"For shame, Albert!" replied his sister; "is that the way a good cavalier doles out the character of his Prince, applying an instance at every concession, like a pedlar measuring linen with his rod? — Out upon you! — no wonder you were beaten, if you fought as coldly for your King as you now talk for him."

"I did my best to trace a likeness from what I have seen and known of the original, sister Alice," replied her brother. — "If you would have a fancy portrait, you must get an artist of more imagination than I have to draw it for you."

"I will be that artist myself" said Alice; "and, in *my* portrait, our Monarch shall show all that he ought to be, having such high pretensions — all that he must be, being so loftily descended — all that I am sure he is, and that every loyal heart in the kingdom ought to believe him."

"Well said, Alice," quoth the old knight — "Look thou upon this picture, and on this! — Here is our young friend shall judge. I wager my best nag — that is, I would wager him had I one left — that Alice proves the better painter of the two. — My son's brain is still misty, I think, since his defeat — he has not got the smoke of Worcester out of it. Plague on thee! — a young man, and cast down for one beating? Had you been banged twenty times like me, it had been time to look grave. — But come, Alice, forward; the colours are mixed on your pallet — forward with something that shall show like one of Vandyck's living portraits, placed beside the dull dry presentation there of our ancestor Victor Lee."

Alice, it must be observed, had been educated by her father in the notions of high and even exaggerated loyalty, which characterized the cavaliers, and she was really an enthusiast in the royal cause. But, besides, she was in good spirits at her brother's happy return, and wished to prolong the gay humour in which her father had of late scarcely ever indulged.

"Well, then," she said, "though I am no Apelles, I will try to paint an Alexander, such as I hope, and am determined to believe, exists in the person of our exiled sovereign, soon I trust to be restored. And I will not go farther than his own family. He shall have all the chivalrous courage, all the warlike skill, of Henry of France, his grandfather, in order to place him on the throne; all his benevolence, love of his people, patience even of displeasing advice, sacrifice of his own wishes and pleasures to the commonweal, that, seated there, he may be blest while living, and so long remembered when dead, that for ages after it shall be thought sacrilege to breathe an aspersion against the throne which he had occupied! Long after he is dead, while there remains an old man who has seen him, were the condition of that survivor no higher than a groom or a menial, his age shall be provided for at the public charge, and his grey hairs regarded with more distinction than an earl's coronet, because he remembers the Second Charles, the monarch of every heart in England!"

While Alice spoke, she was hardly conscious of the presence of any one save her father and brother; for the page withdrew himself somewhat from the circle, and there was nothing to remind her of him. She gave the reins, therefore, to her enthusiasm; and as the tears glittered in her eye, and her beautiful features became animated, she seemed like a descended cherub proclaiming the virtues of a patriot monarch. The person chiefly interested in her description held himself back, as we have said, and concealed his own features, yet so as to preserve a full view of the beautiful speaker.

Albert Lee, conscious in whose presence this eulogium was pronounced, was much embarrassed; but his father, all whose feelings were flattered by the panegyric, was in rapture.

"So much for the *King*, Alice," he said, "and now for the *Man*."

"For the man," replied Alice, in the same tone, "need I wish him more than the paternal virtues of his unhappy father, of whom his worst enemies have recorded, that if moral virtues and religious faith were to be selected as the qualities which merited a crown, no man could plead the possession of them in a higher or more indisputable degree. Temperate, wise, and frugal, yet munificent in rewarding merit — a friend to letters and the muses, but a severe discourager of the misuse of such gifts — a worthy gentleman — a kind master — the best friend, the best father, the best Christian!" — Her voice began to falter, and her father's handkerchief was already at his eyes.

"He was, girl, he was!" exclaimed Sir Henry; "but no more on't, I charge ye — no more on't — enough; let his son but possess his virtues, with better advisers, and better fortunes, and he will be all that England, in her warmest wishes, could desire."

There was a pause after this; for Alice felt as if she had spoken too frankly and too zealously for her sex and youth. Sir Henry was occupied in melancholy recollections on the fate of his late sovereign, while Kerneguy and his supposed patron felt embarrassed, perhaps from a consciousness that the real Charles fell far short of his ideal character, as designed in such glowing colours. In some cases, exaggerated or inappropriate praise becomes the most severe satire.

But such reflections were not of a nature to be long willingly cherished by the person to whom they might have been of great advantage. He assumed a tone of raillery, which is, perhaps, the readiest mode of escaping from the feelings of self-reproof. "Every cavalier," he said, "should bend his knee to thank Mistress Alice

Lee for having made such a flattering portrait of the King their master, by laying under contribution for his benefit the virtues of all his ancestors; only there was one point he would not have expected a female painter to have passed over in silence. When she made him, in right of his grandfather and father, a muster of royal and individual excellences, why could she not have endowed him at the same time with his mother's personal charms? Why should not the son of Henrietta Maria, the finest woman of her day, add the recommendations of a handsome face and figure to his internal qualities? He had the same hereditary title to good looks as to mental qualifications; and the picture, with such an addition, would be perfect in its way — and God send it might be a resemblance."

"I understand you, Master Kerneguy," said Alice; "but I am no fairy, to bestow, as those do in the nursery tales, gifts which Providence has denied. I am woman enough to have made enquiries on the subject, and I know the general report is, that the King, to have been the son of such handsome parents, is unusually hard-favoured."

"Good God, sister!" said Albert, starting impatiently from his seat. "Why, you yourself told me so," said Alice, surprised at the emotion he testified; "and you said" — "This is intolerable," muttered Albert; "I must out to speak with Joceline without delay — Louis," (with an imploring look to Kerneguy,) "you will surely come with me?"

"I would with all my heart," said Kerneguy, smiling maliciously; "but you see how I suffer still from lameness. — Nay, nay, Albert," he whispered, resisting young Lee's attempt to prevail on him to leave the room, "can you suppose I am fool enough to be hurt by this? — on the contrary, I have a desire of profiting by it."

"May God grant it!" said Lee to himself, as he left the room — "it will be the first lecture you ever profited by; and the devil confound the plots and plotters who made me bring you to this place!" So saying, he carried his discontent forth into the Park.

Chapter the Twenty-Third.

*For there, they say, he daily doth frequent
With unrestrained loose companions;
While he, young, wanton, and effeminate boy,
Takes on the point of honour, to support
So dissolute a crew.*

RICHARD II.

The conversation which Albert had in vain endeavoured to interrupt, flowed on in the same course after he had left the room. It entertained Louis Kerneguy; for personal vanity, or an over-sensitiveness to deserved reproof, were not among the faults of his character, and were indeed incompatible with an understanding, which, combined with more strength of principle, steadiness of exertion, and self-denial, might have placed Charles high on the list of English monarchs. On the other hand, Sir Henry listened with natural delight to the noble sentiments uttered by a being so beloved as his daughter. His own parts were rather steady than brilliant; and he had that species of imagination which is not easily excited without the action of another, as the electrical globe only scintillates when rubbed against its cushion. He was well pleased, therefore, when Kerneguy pursued the conversation, by observing that Mistress Alice Lee had not explained how the same good fairy that conferred moral qualities, could not also remove corporeal blemishes.

"You mistake, sir," said Alice. "I confer nothing. I do but attempt to paint our King such as I *hope* he is — such as I am sure he *may* be, should he himself desire to be so. The same general report which speaks of his countenance as unprepossessing, describes his talents as being of the first order. He has, therefore, the means of arriving at excellence, should he cultivate them sedulously and employ them usefully — should he rule his passions and be guided by his understanding. Every good man cannot be wise; but it is in the power of every wise man, if he pleases, to be as eminent for virtue as for talent."

Young Kerneguy rose briskly, and took a turn through the room; and ere the knight could make any observation on the singular vivacity in which he had indulged, he threw himself again into his chair, and said, in rather an altered tone of voice — "It seems, then, Mistress Alice Lee, that the good friends who have described this poor King to you, have been as unfavourable in their account of his morals as of his person?"

"The truth must be better known to you, sir," said Alice, "than it can be to me. Some rumours there have been which accuse him of a license, which, whatever allowance flatterers make for it, does not, to say the least, become the son of the Martyr — I shall be happy to have these contradicted on good authority."

"I am surprised at your folly," said Sir Henry Lee, "in hinting at such things, Alice; a pack of scandal, invented by the rascals who have usurped the government — a thing devised by the enemy."

"Nay, sir," said Kerneguy, laughing, "we must not let our zeal charge the enemy with more scandal than they actually deserve. Mistress Alice has put the question to me. I can only answer, that no one can be more devotedly attached to the King than I myself — that I am very partial to his merits and blind to his defects; — and that, in short, I would be the last man in the world to give up his cause where it was tenable. Nevertheless, I must confess, that if all his grandfather of Navarre's morals have not descended to him, this poor King has somehow inherited a share of the specks that were thought to dim the lustre of that great Prince — that Charles is a little soft-hearted, or so, where beauty is concerned. — Do not blame him too severely, pretty Mistress Alice; when a man's hard fate has driven him among thorns, it were surely hard to prevent him from trifling with the few roses he may find among them?"

Alice, who probably thought the conversation had gone far enough, rose while Master Kerneguy was speaking, and was leaving the room before he had finished, without apparently hearing the interrogation with which he concluded. Her father approved of her departure, not thinking the turn which Kerneguy had given to the discourse altogether fit for her presence; and, desirous civilly to break off the conversation, "I see," he said, "this is about the time, when, as Will says, the household affairs will call my daughter hence; I will therefore challenge you, young gentleman, to stretch your limbs in a little exercise with me, either at single rapier, or rapier and poniard, back-sword, spadron, or your national weapons of broad-sword and target; for all or any of which I think we shall find implements in the hall."

It would be too high a distinction, Master Kerneguy said, for a poor page to be permitted to try a passage of arms with a knight so renowned as Sir Henry Lee, and he hoped to enjoy so great an honour before he left Woodstock; but at the present moment his lameness continued to give him so much pain, that he should shame himself in the attempt.

Sir Henry then offered to read him a play of Shakspeare, and for this purpose turned up King Richard II. But hardly had he commenced with

"Old John of Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster,"

when the young gentleman was seized with such an incontrollable fit of the cramp as could only be relieved by immediate exercise. He therefore begged permission to be allowed to saunter abroad for a little while, if Sir Henry Lee considered he might venture without danger.

"I can answer for the two or three of our people that are still left about the place," said Sir Henry; "and I know my son has disposed them so as to be constantly on the watch. If you hear the bell toll at the Lodge, I advise you to come straight home by the way of the King's Oak, which you see in yonder glade towering above the rest of the trees. We will have some one stationed there to introduce you secretly into the house."

The page listened to these cautions with the impatience of a schoolboy, who, desirous of enjoying his holiday, hears without marking the advice of tutor or parent, about taking care not to catch cold, and so forth.

The absence of Alice Lee had removed all which had rendered the interior of the Lodge agreeable, and the mercurial young page fled with precipitation from the exercise and amusement which Sir Henry had proposed. He girded on his rapier, and threw his cloak, or rather that which belonged to his borrowed suit, about him, bringing up the lower part so as to muffle the face and show only the eyes over it, which was a common way of wearing them in those days, both in streets, in the country, and in public places, when men had a mind to be private, and to avoid interruption from salutations and greetings in the market-place. He hurried across the open space which divided the front of the Lodge from the wood, with the haste of a bird, escaped from the cage, which, though joyful at its liberation, is at the same time sensible of its need of protection and shelter. The wood seemed to afford these to the human fugitive, as it might have done to the bird in question.

When under the shadow of the branches, and within the verge of the forest, covered from observation, yet with the power of surveying the front of the Lodge, and all the open ground before it, the supposed Louis Kerneguy meditated on his escape.

"What an infliction — to fence with a gouty old man, who knows not, I dare say, a trick of the sword which was not familiar in the days of old Vincent Saviolo! or, as a change of misery, to hear him read one of those wildernesses of scenes which the English call a play, from prologue to epilogue — from Enter the first to the final *Exeunt omnes* — an unparalleled horror — a penance which would have made a dungeon darker, and added dullness even to Woodstock!"

Here he stopped and looked around, then continued his meditations — "So, then, it was here that the gay old Norman secluded his pretty mistress — I warrant, without having seen her, that Rosamond Clifford was never half so handsome as that lovely Alice Lee. And what a soul there is in the girl's eye! — with what abandonment of all respects, save that expressing the interest of the moment, she poured forth her tide of enthusiasm! Were I to be long here, in spite of prudence, and half-a-dozen very venerable obstacles beside, I should be tempted to try to reconcile her to the indifferent visage of this same hard-favoured Prince. — Hard favoured? — it is a kind of treason for one who pretends to so much loyalty, to say so of the King's features, and in my mind deserves punishment. — Ah, pretty Mistress Alice! many a Mistress Alice before you has made dreadful exclamations on the irregularities of mankind, and the wickedness of the age, and ended by being glad to look out for apologies for their own share in them. But then her father — the stout old cavalier — my father's old friend — should such a thing befall, it would break his heart. — Break a pudding's-end — he has more sense. If I give his grandson a title to quarter the arms of England, what matter if a bar sinister is drawn across them? — Pshaw! far from an abatement, it is a point of addition — the heralds in their next visitation will place him higher in the roll for it. Then, if he did wince a little at first, does not the old traitor deserve it; — first, for his disloyal intention of punching mine anointed body black and blue with his vile foils — and secondly, his atrocious complot with Will Shakspeare, a fellow as much out of date as himself, to read me to death with five acts of a historical play, or chronicle, 'being the piteous Life and Death of Richard the Second?' Odds-fish, my own life is piteous enough, as I think; and my death may match it, for aught I see coming yet. Ah, but then the brother — my friend — my guide — my guard — So far as this little proposed intrigue concerns him, such practising would be thought not quite fair. But your bouncing, swaggering, revengeful brothers exist only on the theatre. Your dire revenge, with which a brother persecuted a poor fellow who had seduced his sister, or been seduced by her, as the case might be, as relentlessly as if he had trodden on his toes without making an apology, is entirely out of fashion, since Dorset killed the Lord Bruce many a long year since. Pshaw! when a King is the offender, the bravest man sacrifices nothing by pocketing a little wrong which he cannot personally resent. And in France, there is not a noble house, where each individual would not cock his hat an inch higher, if they could boast of such a left-handed alliance with the Grand Monarque."

Such were the thoughts which rushed through the mind of Charles, at his first quitting the Lodge of Woodstock, and plunging into the forest that surrounded it. His profligate logic, however, was not the result of his natural disposition, nor received without scruple by his sound understanding. It was a train of reasoning which he had been led to adopt from his too close intimacy with the witty and profligate youth of quality by whom he had been surrounded. It arose from the evil communication with Villiers, Wilmot, Sedley, and others, whose genius was destined to corrupt that age, and the Monarch on whom its character afterwards came so much to depend. Such men, bred amidst the license of civil war, and without experiencing that curb which in ordinary times the authority of parents and relations imposes upon the headlong passions of youth, were practised in every species of vice, and could recommend it as well by precept as by example, turning into pitiless ridicule all those nobler feelings which withhold men from gratifying lawless passion. The events of the King's life had also favoured his reception of this Epicurean doctrine. He saw himself, with the highest claims to sympathy and assistance, coldly treated by the Courts which he visited, rather as a permitted supplicant, than an exiled Monarch. He beheld his own rights and claims treated with scorn and indifference; and, in the same proportion, he was reconciled to the hard-hearted and selfish course of dissipation, which promised him immediate indulgence. If this was obtained at the expense of the happiness of others, should he of all men be scrupulous upon the subject, since he treated others only as the world treated him?

But although the foundations of this unhappy system had been laid, the Prince was not at this early period so fully devoted to it as he was found to have become, when a door was unexpectedly opened for his restoration. On the contrary, though the train of gay reasoning which we have above stated, as if it had found vent in uttered language, did certainly arise in his mind, as that which would have been suggested by his favourite counsellors on such occasions, he recollected that what might be passed over as a peccadillo in France or the Netherlands, or turned into a diverting novel or pasquinade by the wits of his own wandering Court, was likely to have the aspect of horrid ingratitude and infamous treachery among the English gentry, and would inflict a deep, perhaps an incurable wound upon his interests, among the more aged and respectable part of his adherents. Then it occurred to him — for his own interest did not escape him, even in this mode of considering the subject — that he was in the power of the Lees, father and son, who were always understood to be at least sufficiently punctilious on the score of honour; and if they should suspect such an affront as his imagination had conceived, they could be at no loss to find means of the most ample revenge, either by their own hands, or by those of the ruling faction.

"The risk of re-opening the fatal window at Whitehall, and renewing the tragedy of the Man in the Mask, were a worse penalty," was his final reflection, "than the old stool of the Scottish penance; and pretty though Alice Lee is, I cannot afford to intrigue at such a hazard. So, farewell, pretty maiden! unless, as sometimes has happened, thou hast a humour to throw thyself at thy King's feet, and then I am too magnanimous to refuse thee my protection. Yet, when I think of the pale clay-cold figure of the old man, as he lay last night extended before me, and imagine the fury of Albert Lee raging with impatience, his hand on a sword which only his loyalty prevents him from plunging into his sovereign's heart — nay, the picture is too horrible! Charles must for ever change his name to Joseph, even if he were strongly tempted; which may Fortune in mercy prohibit!"

To speak the truth of a prince, more unfortunate in his early companions, and the callousness which he acquired by his juvenile adventures and irregular mode of life, than in his natural disposition, Charles came the more readily to this wise conclusion, because he was by no means subject to those violent and engrossing passions, to gratify which the world has been thought well lost. His amours, like many of the present day, were rather matters of habit and fashion, than of passion and affection: and, in comparing himself in this respect to his grandfather, Henry IV., he did neither his ancestor nor himself perfect justice. He was, to parody the words of a bard, himself actuated by the stormy passions which an intriguer often only simulates —

None of those who loved so kindly,
None of those who loved so blindly.

An amour was with him a matter of amusement, a regular consequence, as it seemed to him, of the ordinary course of things in society. He was not at the trouble to practise seductive arts, because he had seldom found occasion to make use of them; his high rank, and the profligacy of part of the female society with which he had mingled, rendering them unnecessary. Added to this, he had, for the same reason, seldom been crossed by the obstinate interference of relations, or even of husbands, who had generally seemed not unwilling to suffer such matters to take their course.

So that, notwithstanding his total looseness of principle, and systematic disbelief in the virtue of women, and the honour of men, as connected with the character of their female relatives, Charles was not a person to have studiously introduced disgrace into a family, where a conquest might have been violently disputed, attained with difficulty, and accompanied with general distress, not to mention the excitation of all fiercer passions against the author of the scandal.

But the danger of the King's society consisted in his being much of an unbeliever in the existence of such cases as were likely to be embittered by remorse on the part of the principal victim, or rendered perilous by the violent resentment of her connexions or relatives. He had even already found such things treated on the continent as matters of ordinary occurrence, subject, in all cases where a man of high influence was concerned, to an easy arrangement; and he was really, generally speaking, sceptical on the subject of severe virtue in either sex, and apt to consider it as a veil assumed by prudery in women, and hypocrisy in men, to extort a higher reward for their compliance.

While we are discussing the character of his disposition to gallantry, the Wanderer was conducted, by the walk he had chosen, through several whimsical turns, until at last it brought him under the windows of Victor Lee's apartment, where he descried Alice watering and arranging some flowers placed on the oriel window, which was easily accessible by daylight, although at night he had found it a dangerous attempt to scale it. But not Alice only, her father also showed himself near

the window, and beckoned him up. The family party seemed now more promising than before, and the fugitive Prince was weary of playing battledore and shuttlecock with his conscience, and much disposed to let matters go as chance should determine.

He climbed lightly up the broken ascent, and was readily welcomed by the old knight, who held activity in high honour. Alice also seemed glad to see the lively and interesting young man; and by her presence, and the unaffected mirth with which she enjoyed his sallies, he was animated to display those qualities of wit and humour, which nobody possessed in a higher degree.

His satire delighted the old gentleman, who laughed till his eyes ran over as he heard the youth, whose claims to his respect he little dreamed of, amusing him with successive imitations of the Scottish Presbyterian clergymen, of the proud and poor Hidalgo of the North, of the fierce and over-weening pride and Celtic dialect of the mountain chief, of the slow and more pedantic Lowlander, with all of which his residence in Scotland had made him familiar. Alice also laughed, and applauded, amused herself, and delighted to see that her father was so; and the whole party were in the highest glee, when Albert Lee entered, eager to find Louis Kerneguy, and to lead him away to a private colloquy with Dr. Rochecliffe, whose zeal, assiduity, and wonderful possession of information, had constituted him their master-pilot in those difficult times.

It is unnecessary to introduce the reader to the minute particulars of their conference. The information obtained was so far favourable, that the enemy seemed to have had no intelligence of the King's route towards the south, and remained persuaded that he had made his escape from Bristol, as had been reported, and as had indeed been proposed; but the master of the vessel prepared for the King's passage had taken the alarm, and sailed without his royal freight. His departure, however, and the suspicion of the service in which he was engaged, served to make the belief general, that the King had gone off along with him.

But though this was cheering, the Doctor had more unpleasant tidings from the sea-coast, alleging great difficulties in securing a vessel, to which it might be fit to commit a charge so precious; and, above all, requesting his Majesty might on no account venture to approach the shore, until he should receive advice that all the previous arrangements had been completely settled.

No one was able to suggest a safer place of residence than that which he at present occupied. Colonel Everard was deemed certainly not personally unfriendly to the King; and Cromwell, as was supposed, reposed in Everard an unbounded confidence. The interior presented numberless hiding-places, and secret modes of exit, known to no one but the ancient residents of the Lodge — nay, far better to Rochecliffe than to any of them; as, when Rector at the neighbouring town, his prying disposition as an antiquary had induced him to make very many researches among the old ruins — the results of which he was believed, in some instances, to have kept to himself.

To balance these conveniences, it was no doubt true, that the Parliamentary Commissioners were still at no great distance, and would be ready to resume their authority upon the first opportunity. But no one supposed such an opportunity was likely to occur; and all believed, as the influence of Cromwell and the army grew more and more predominant, that the disappointed Commissioners would attempt nothing in contradiction to his pleasure, but wait with patience an indemnification in some other quarter for their vacated commissions. Report, through the voice of Master Joseph Tomkins, stated, that they had determined, in the first place, to retire to Oxford, and were making preparations accordingly. This promised still farther to insure the security of Woodstock. It was therefore settled, that the King, under the character of Louis Kerneguy, should remain an inmate of the Lodge, until a vessel should be procured for his escape, at the port which might be esteemed the safest and most convenient.

Chapter the Twenty-Fourth.

*The deadliest snakes are those which, twined 'mongst flowers,
Blend their bright colouring with the varied blossoms,
Their fierce eyes glittering like the spangled dew-drop;
In all so like what nature has most harmless,
That sportive innocence, which dreads no danger,
Is poison'd unawares.*

OLD PLAY.

Charles (we must now give him his own name) was easily reconciled to the circumstances which rendered his residence at Woodstock advisable. No doubt he would much rather have secured his safety by making an immediate escape out of England; but he had been condemned already to many uncomfortable lurking-places, and more disagreeable disguises, as well as to long and difficult journeys, during which, between pragmatistical officers of justice belonging to the prevailing party, and parties of soldiers whose officers usually took on them to act on their own warrant, risk of discovery had more than once become very imminent. He was glad, therefore, of comparative repose, and of comparative safety.

Then it must be considered, that Charles had been entirely reconciled to the society at Woodstock since he had become better acquainted with it. He had seen, that, to interest the beautiful Alice, and procure a great deal of her company, nothing more was necessary than to submit to the humours, and cultivate the intimacy, of the old cavalier her father. A few bouts at fencing, in which Charles took care not to put out his more perfect skill, and full youthful strength and activity — the endurance of a few scenes from Shakspeare, which the knight read with more zeal than taste — a little skill in music, in which the old man had been a proficient — the deference paid to a few old-fashioned opinions, at which Charles laughed in his sleeve — were all-sufficient to gain for the disguised Prince an interest in Sir Henry Lee, and to conciliate in an equal degree the good-will of his lovely daughter.

Never were there two young persons who could be said to commence this species of intimacy with such unequal advantages. Charles was a libertine, who, if he did not in cold blood resolve upon prosecuting his passion for Alice to a dishonourable conclusion, was at every moment liable to be provoked to attempt the strength of a virtue, in which he was no believer. Then Alice, on her part, hardly knew even what was implied by the word libertine or seducer. Her mother had died early in the commencement of the Civil War, and she had been bred up chiefly with her brother and cousin; so that she had an unfearing and unsuspicious frankness of manner, upon which Charles was not unwilling or unlikely to put a construction favourable to his own views. Even Alice's love for her cousin — the first sensation which awakens the most innocent and simple mind to feelings of shyness and restraint towards the male sex in general — had failed to excite such an alarm in her bosom. They were nearly related; and Everard, though young, was several years her elder, and had, from her infancy, been an object of her respect as well as of her affection. When this early and childish intimacy ripened into youthful love, confessed and returned, still it differed in some shades from the passion existing between lovers originally strangers to each other, until their affections have been united in the ordinary course of courtship. Their love was fonder, more familiar, more perfectly confidential; purer too, perhaps, and more free from starts of passionate violence, or apprehensive jealousy.

The possibility that any one could have attempted to rival Everard in her affection, was a circumstance which never occurred to Alice; and that this singular Scottish lad, whom she laughed with on account of his humour, and laughed at for his peculiarities, should be an object of danger or of caution, never once entered her imagination. The sort of intimacy to which she admitted Kerneguy was the same to which she would have received a companion of her own sex, whose manners she did not always approve, but whose society she found always amusing.

It was natural that the freedom of Alice Lee's conduct, which arose from the most perfect indifference, should pass for something approaching to encouragement in the royal gallant's apprehension, and that any resolutions he had formed against being tempted to violate the hospitality of Woodstock, should begin to totter, as opportunities for doing so became more frequent.

These opportunities were favoured by Albert's departure from Woodstock the very day after his arrival. It had been agreed, in full council with Charles and Rochecliffe, that he should go to visit his uncle Everard in the county of Kent, and, by showing himself there, obviate any cause of suspicion which might arise from his residence at Woodstock, and remove any pretext for disturbing his father's family on account of their harbouring one who had been so lately in arms. He had also undertaken, at his own great personal risk, to visit different points on the sea-coast, and ascertain the security of different places for providing shipping for the King's leaving England.

These circumstances were alike calculated to procure the King's safety, and facilitate his escape. But Alice was thereby deprived of the presence of her brother, who would have been her most watchful guardian, but who had set down the King's light talk upon a former occasion to the gaiety of his humour, and would have thought he had done his sovereign great injustice, had he seriously suspected him of such a breach of hospitality as a dishonourable pursuit of Alice would have implied.

There were, however, two of the household at Woodstock, who appeared not so entirely reconciled with Louis Kerneguy or his purposes. The one was Bevis, who seemed, from their first unfriendly rencontre, to have kept up a pique against their new guest, which no advances on the part of Charles were able to soften. If the page was by chance left alone with his young mistress, Bevis chose always to be of the party; came close by Alice's chair, and growled audibly when the gallant drew near her. "It is a pity," said the disguised Prince, "that your Bevis is not a bull-dog, that we might dub him a roundhead at once — He is too handsome, too noble, too aristocratic, to nourish those inhospitable prejudices against a poor houseless cavalier. I am convinced the spirit of Pym or Hampden has transmigrated into the rogue and continues to demonstrate his hatred against royalty and all its adherents."

Alice would then reply, that Bevis was loyal in word and deed, and only partook her father's prejudices against the Scots, which, she could not but acknowledge, were tolerably strong.

"Nay, then," said the supposed Louis, "I must find some other reason, for I cannot allow Sir Bevis's resentment to rest upon national antipathy. So we will suppose that some gallant cavalier, who wended to the wars and never returned, has adopted this shape to look back upon the haunts he left so unwillingly, and is jealous at seeing even poor Louis Kerneguy drawing near to the lady of his lost affections." — He approached her chair as he spoke, and Bevis gave one of his deep growls.

"In that case, you had best keep your distance," said Alice, laughing, "for the bite of a dog, possessed by the ghost of a jealous lover, cannot be very safe." And the King carried on the dialogue in the same strain — which, while it led Alice to apprehend nothing more serious than the apish gallantry of a fantastic boy, certainly induced the supposed Louis Kerneguy to think that he had made one of those conquests which often and easily fall to the share of sovereigns. Notwithstanding the acuteness of his apprehension, he was not sufficiently aware that the Royal Road to female favour is only open to monarchs when they travel in grand costume, and that when they woo incognito, their path of courtship is liable to the same windings and obstacles which obstruct the course of private individuals.

There was, besides Bevis, another member of the family, who kept a look-out upon Louis Kerneguy, and with no friendly eye. Phoebe Mayflower, though her experience extended not beyond the sphere of the village, yet knew the world much better than her mistress, and besides she was five years older. More knowing, she was more suspicious. She thought that odd-looking Scotch boy made more up to her young mistress than was proper for his condition of life; and, moreover, that Alice gave him a little more encouragement than Parthenia would have afforded to any such Jack-a-dandy, in the absence of Argalus — for the volume treating of the loves of these celebrated Arcadians was then the favourite study of swains and damsels throughout merry England. Entertaining such suspicions, Phoebe was at a loss how to conduct herself on the occasion, and yet resolved she would not see the slightest chance of the course of Colonel Everard's true love being obstructed, without attempting a remedy. She had a peculiar favour for Markham herself; and, moreover, he was, according to her phrase, as handsome and personable a young man as was in Oxfordshire; and this Scottish scarecrow was no more to be compared to him than chalk was to cheese. And yet she allowed that Master Girniguy had a wonderfully well-oiled tongue, and that such gallants were not to be despised. What was to be done? — she had no facts to offer, only vague suspicion; and was afraid to speak to her mistress, whose kindness, great as it was, did not, nevertheless, encourage familiarity.

She sounded Joceline; but he was, she knew not why, so deeply interested about this unlucky lad, and held his importance so high, that she could make no impression on him. To speak to the old knight would have been to raise a general tempest. The worthy chaplain, who was, at Woodstock, grand referee on all disputed matters, would have been the damsel's most natural resource, for he was peaceful as well as moral by profession, and politic by practice. But it happened he had given Phoebe unintentional offence by speaking of her under the classical epithet of *Rustica Fidele*, the which epithet, as she understood it not, she held herself bound to resent as contumelious, and declaring she was not fonder of a *fiddle* than other folk, had ever since shunned all intercourse with Dr. Rochecliffe which she could easily avoid.

Master Tomkins was always coming and going about the house under various pretexts; but he was a roundhead, and she was too true to the cavaliers to introduce any of the enemy as parties to their internal discords; besides, he had talked to Phoebe herself in a manner which induced her to decline everything in the shape of familiarity with him. Lastly, Cavaliero Wildrake might have been consulted; but Phoebe had her own reasons for saying, as she did with some emphasis, that Cavaliero Wildrake was an impudent London rake. At length she resolved to communicate her suspicions to the party having most interest in verifying or confuting them.

"I'll let Master Markham Everard know, that there is a wasp buzzing about his honey-comb," said Phoebe; "and, moreover, that I know that this young Scotch Scapegrace shifted himself out of a woman's into a man's dress at Goody Green's, and gave Goody Green's Dolly a gold-piece to say nothing about it; and no more she did to any one but me, and she knows best herself whether she gave change for the gold or not — but Master Louis is a saucy jackanapes, and like enough to ask it."

Three or four days elapsed while matters continued in this condition — the disguised Prince sometimes thinking on the intrigue which Fortune seemed to have thrown in his way for his amusement, and taking advantage of such opportunities as occurred to increase his intimacy with Alice Lee; but much oftener harassing Dr. Rochecliffe with questions about the possibility of escape, which the good man finding himself unable to answer, secured his leisure against royal importunity, by retreating into the various unexplored recesses of the Lodge, known perhaps only to himself, who had been for nearly a score of years employed in writing the Wonders of Woodstock.

It chanced on the fourth day, that some trifling circumstance had called the knight abroad; and he had left the young Scotsman, now familiar in the family, along with Alice, in the parlour of Victor Lee. Thus situated, he thought the time not unpropitious for entering upon a strain of gallantry, of a kind which might be called experimental, such as is practised by the Croats in skirmishing, when they keep bridle in hand, ready to attack the enemy, or canter off without coming to close quarters, as circumstances may recommend. After using for nearly ten minutes a sort of metaphysical jargon, which might, according to Alice's pleasure, have been interpreted either into gallantry, or the language of serious pretension, and when he supposed her engaged in fathoming his meaning, he had the mortification to find, by a single and brief question, that he had been totally unattended to, and that Alice was thinking on anything at the moment rather than the sense of what he had been saying. She asked him if he could tell what it was o'clock, and this with an air of real curiosity concerning the lapse of time, which put coquetry wholly out of the question.

"I will go look at the sundial, Mistress Alice," said the gallant, rising and colouring, through a sense of the contempt with which he thought himself treated.

"You will do me a pleasure, Master Kerneguy," said Alice, without the least consciousness of the indignation she had excited.

Master Louis Kerneguy left the room accordingly, not, however, to procure the information required, but to vent his anger and mortification, and to swear, with more serious purpose than he had dared to do before, that Alice should rue her insolence. Good-natured as he was, he was still a prince, unaccustomed to contradiction, far less to contempt, and his self pride felt, for the moment, wounded to the quick. With a hasty step he plunged into the Chase, only remembering his own safety so far as to choose the deeper and sequestered avenues, where, walking on with the speedy and active step, which his recovery from fatigue now permitted him to exercise according to his wont, he solaced his angry purposes, by devising schemes of revenge on the insolent country coquette, from which no consideration of hospitality was in future to have weight enough to save her.

The irritated gallant passed

"The dial-stone, aged and green,"

without deigning to ask it a single question; nor could it have satisfied his curiosity if he had, for no sun happened to shine at the moment. He then hastened forward, muffling himself in his cloak, and assuming a stooping and slouching gait, which diminished his apparent height. He was soon involved in the deep and

dim alleys of the wood, into which he had insensibly plunged himself, and was traversing it at a great rate, without having any distinct idea in what direction he was going, when suddenly his course was arrested, first by a loud hello, and then by a summons to stand, accompanied by what seemed still more startling and extraordinary, the touch of a cane upon his shoulder, imposed in a good-humoured but somewhat imperious manner.

There were few symptoms of recognition which would have been welcome at this moment; but the appearance of the person who had thus arrested his course, was least of all that he could have anticipated as timely or agreeable. When he turned, on receiving the signal, he beheld himself close to a young man, nearly six feet in height, well made in joint and limb, but the gravity of whose apparel, although handsome and gentlemanlike, and a sort of precision in his habit, from the cleanness and stiffness of his band to the unsullied purity of his Spanish-leather shoes, bespoke a love of order which was foreign to the impoverished and vanquished cavaliers, and proper to the habits of those of the victorious party, who could afford to dress themselves handsomely; and whose rule — that is, such as regarded the higher and more respectable classes — enjoined decency and sobriety of garb and deportment. There was yet another weight against the Prince in the scale, and one still more characteristic of the inequality in the comparison, under which he seemed to labour. There was strength in the muscular form of the stranger who had brought him to this involuntary parley, authority and determination in his brow, a long rapier on the left, and a poniard or dagger on the right side of his belt, and a pair of pistols stuck into it, which would have been sufficient to give the unknown the advantage, (Louis Kerneguy having no weapon but his sword,) even had his personal strength approached nearer than it did to that of the person by whom he was thus suddenly stopped.

Bitterly regretting the thoughtless fit of passion that brought him into his present situation, but especially the want of the pistols he had left behind, and which do so much to place bodily strength and weakness upon an equal footing, Charles yet availed himself of the courage and presence of mind, in which few of his unfortunate family had for centuries been deficient. He stood firm and without motion, his cloak still wrapped round the lower part of his face, to give time for explanation, in case he was mistaken for some other person.

This coolness produced its effect; for the other party said — with doubt and surprise on his part, “Joceline Joliffe, is it not? — if I know not Joceline Joliffe, I should at least know my own cloak.”

“I am not Joceline Joliffe, as you may see, sir,” said Kerneguy, calmly, drawing himself erect to show the difference of size, and dropping the cloak from his face and person.

“Indeed!” replied the stranger, in surprise; “then, Sir Unknown, I have to express my regret at having used my cane in intimating that I wished you to stop. From that dress, which I certainly recognise for my own, I concluded you must be Joceline, in whose custody I had left my habit at the Lodge.”

“If it had been Joceline, sir,” replied the supposed Kerneguy, with perfect composure, “methinks you should not have struck so hard.” The other party was obviously confused by the steady calmness with which he was encountered. The sense of politeness dictated, in the first place, an apology for a mistake, when he thought he had been tolerably certain of the person. Master Kerneguy was not in a situation to be punctilious; he bowed gravely, as indicating his acceptance of the excuse offered, then turned, and walked, as he conceived, towards the Lodge; though he had traversed the woods which were cut with various alleys in different directions, too hastily to be certain of the real course which he wished to pursue.

He was much embarrassed to find that this did not get him rid of the companion whom he had thus involuntarily acquired. Walked he slow, walked he fast, his friend in the genteel but puritanic habit, strong in person, and well armed, as we have described him, seemed determined to keep him company, and, without attempting to join, or enter into conversation, never suffered him to outstrip his surveillance for more than two or three yards. The Wanderer mended his pace; but, although he was then, in his youth, as afterwards in his riper age, one of the best walkers in Britain, the stranger, without advancing his pace to a run, kept fully equal to him, and his persecution became so close and constant, and inevitable, that the pride and fear of Charles were both alarmed, and he began to think that, whatever the danger might be of a single-handed rencontre, he would nevertheless have a better bargain of this tall satellite if they settled the debate betwixt them in the forest, than if they drew near any place of habitation, where the man in authority was likely to find friends and concurrents.

Betwixt anxiety, therefore, vexation, and anger, Charles faced suddenly round on his pursuer, as they reached a small narrow glade, which led to the little meadow over which presided the King’s Oak, the ragged and scathed branches and gigantic trunk of which formed a vista to the little wild avenue.

“Sir,” said he to his pursuer, “you have already been guilty of one piece of impertinence towards me. You have apologised; and knowing no reason why you should distinguish me as an object of incivility, I have accepted your excuse without scruple. Is there any thing remains to be settled betwixt us, which causes you to follow me in this manner? If so, I shall be glad to make it a subject of explanation or satisfaction, as the case may admit of. I think you can owe me no malice; for I never saw you before to my knowledge. If you can give any good reason for asking it, I am willing to render you personal satisfaction. If your purpose is merely impertinent curiosity, I let you know that I will not suffer myself to be dogged in my private walks by any one.”

“When I recognise my own cloak on another man’s shoulders,” replied the stranger, dryly, “methinks I have a natural right to follow and see what becomes of it; for know, sir, though I have been mistaken as to the wearer, yet I am confident I had as good a right to stretch my cane across the cloak you are muffled in, as ever had any one to brush his own garments. If, therefore, we are to be friends, I must ask, for instance, how you came by that cloak, and where you are going with it? I shall otherwise make bold to stop you, as one who has sufficient commission to do so.”

“Oh, unhappy cloak,” thought the Wanderer, “ay, and thrice unhappy the idle fancy that sent me here with it wrapped around my nose, to pick quarrels and attract observation, when quiet and secrecy were peculiarly essential to my safety!”

“If you will allow me to guess, sir,” continued the stranger, who was no other than Markham Everard, “I will convince you that you are better known than you think for.”

“Now, Heaven forbid!” prayed the party addressed, in silence, but with as much devotion as ever he applied to a prayer in his life. Yet even in this moment of extreme urgency, his courage and composure did not fail; and he recollected it was of the utmost importance not to seem startled, and to answer so as, if possible, to lead the dangerous companion with whom he had met, to confess the extent of his actual knowledge or suspicions concerning him.

“If you know me, sir,” he said, “and are a gentleman, as your appearance promises, you cannot be at a loss to discover to what accident you must attribute my wearing these clothes, which you say are yours.” “Oh, sir,” replied Colonel Everard, his wrath in no sort turned away by the mildness of the stranger’s answer — “we have learned our Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and we know for what purposes young men of quality travel in disguise — we know that even female attire is resorted to on certain occasions — We have heard of *Vertumnus* and *Pomona*.”

The Monarch, as he weighed these words, again uttered a devout prayer, that this ill-looking affair might have no deeper root than the jealousy of some admirer of Alice Lee, promising to himself, that, devotee as he was to the fair sex, he would make no scruple of renouncing the fairest of Eve’s daughters in order to get out of the present dilemma.

“Sir,” he said, “you seem to be a gentleman. I have no objection to tell you, as such, that I also am of that class.”

“Or somewhat higher, perhaps?” said Everard.

“A gentleman,” replied Charles, “is a term which comprehends all ranks entitled to armorial bearings — A duke, a lord, a prince, is no more than a gentleman; and if in misfortune as I am, he may be glad if that general term of courtesy is allowed him.”

“Sir,” replied Everard, “I have no purpose to entrap you to any acknowledgment fatal to your own safety — nor do I hold it my business to be active in the arrest of private individuals, whose perverted sense of national duty may have led them into errors, rather to be pitied than punished by candid men. But if those who have brought civil war and disturbance into their native country, proceed to carry dishonour and disgrace into the bosom of families — if they attempt to carry on their private debaucheries to the injury of the hospitable roofs which afford them refuge from the consequences of their public crimes, do you think, my lord, that we shall bear it with patience?”

“If it is your purpose to quarrel with me,” said the Prince, “speak it out at once like a gentleman. You have the advantage, no doubt, of arms; but it is not that odds which will induce me to fly from a single man. If, on the other hand, you are disposed to hear reason, I tell you in calm words, that I neither suspect the offence to which you allude, nor comprehend why you give me the title of my Lord.”

"You deny, then, being the Lord Wilmot?" said Everard.

"I may do so most safely," said the Prince.

"Perhaps you rather style yourself Earl of Rochester? We heard that the issuing of some such patent by the King of Scots was a step which your ambition proposed."

"Neither lord nor earl am I, as sure as I have a Christian soul to be saved. My name is"—

"Do not degrade yourself by unnecessary falsehood, my lord; and that to a single man, who, I promise you, will not invoke public justice to assist his own good sword should he see cause to use it. Can you look at that ring, and deny that you are Lord Wilmot?"

He handed to the disguised Prince a ring which he took from his purse, and his opponent instantly knew it for the same he had dropped into Alice's pitcher at the fountain, obeying only, through imprudently, the gallantry of the moment, in giving a pretty gem to a handsome girl, whom he had accidentally frightened.

"I know the ring," he said; "it has been in my possession. How it should prove me to be Lord Wilmot, I cannot conceive; and beg to say, it bears false witness against me."

"You shall see the evidence," answered Everard; and, resuming the ring, he pressed a spring ingeniously contrived in the collet of the setting, on which the stone flew back, and showed within it the cipher of Lord Wilmot beautifully engraved in miniature, with a coronet. —"What say you now, sir?"

"That probabilities are no proofs," said the Prince; "there is nothing here save what may be easily accounted for. I am the son of a Scottish nobleman, who was mortally wounded and made prisoner at Worcester fight. When he took leave, and bid me fly, he gave me the few valuables he possessed, and that among others. I have heard him talk of having changed rings with Lord Wilmot, on some occasion in Scotland, but I never knew the trick of the gem which you have shown me."

In this it may be necessary to say, Charles spoke very truly; nor would he have parted with it in the way he did, had he suspected it would be easily recognised. He proceeded after a minute's pause:—"Once more, sir — I have told you much that concerns my safety — if you are generous, you will let me pass, and I may do you on some future day as good service. If you mean to arrest me, you must do so here, and at your own peril, for I will neither walk farther your way, nor permit you to dog me on mine. If you let me pass, I will thank you: if not, take to your weapon."

"Young gentleman," said Colonel Everard, "whether you be actually the gay young nobleman for whom I took you, you have made me uncertain; but, intimate as you say your family has been with him, I have little doubt that you are proficient in the school of debauchery, of which Wilmot and Villiers are professors, and their hopeful Master a graduated student. Your conduct at Woodstock, where you have rewarded the hospitality of the family by meditating the most deadly wound to their honour, has proved you too apt a scholar in such an academy. I intended only to warn you on this subject — it will be your own fault if I add chastisement to admonition."

"Warn me, sir!" said the Prince indignantly, "and chastisement! This is presuming more on my patience than is consistent with your own safety — Draw, sir."— So saying, he laid his hand on his sword.

"My religion," said Everard, "forbids me to be rash in shedding blood — Go home, sir — be wise — consult the dictates of honour as well as prudence. Respect the honour of the House of Lee, and know there is one nearly allied to it, by whom your motions will be called to severe account."

"Aha!" said the Prince, with a bitter laugh, "I see the whole matter now — we have our roundheaded Colonel, our puritan cousin before us — the man of texts and morals, whom Alice Lee laughs at so heartily. If your religion, sir, prevents you from giving satisfaction, it should prevent you from offering insult to a person of honour."

The passions of both were now fully up — they drew mutually, and began to fight, the Colonel relinquishing the advantage he could have obtained by the use of his fire-arms. A thrust of the arm, or a slip of the foot, might, at the moment, have changed the destinies of Britain, when the arrival of a third party broke off the combat.

Chapter the Twenty-Fifth.

Stay — for the King has thrown his warder down.

RICHARD II.

The combatants, whom we left engaged at the end of the last chapter, made mutual passes at each other with apparently equal skill and courage. Charles had been too often in action, and too long a party as well as a victim to civil war, to find any thing new or surprising in being obliged to defend himself with his own hands; and Everard had been distinguished, as well for his personal bravery, as for the other properties of a commander. But the arrival of a third party prevented the tragic conclusion of a combat, in which the success of either party must have given him much cause for regretting his victory.

It was the old knight himself, who arrived, mounted upon a forest pony, for the war and sequestration had left him no steed of a more dignified description. He thrust himself between the combatants, and commanded them on their lives to hold. So soon as a glance from one to the other had ascertained to him whom he had to deal with, he demanded, "Whether the devils of Woodstock, whom folk talked about, had got possession of them both, that they were tilting at each other within the verge of the royal liberties? Let me tell both of you," he said, "that while old Henry Lee is at Woodstock, the immunities of the Park shall be maintained as much as if the King were still on the throne. None shall fight duellos here, excepting the stags in their season. Put up, both of you, or I shall lug out as thirdsman, and prove perhaps the worst devil of the three! — As Will says —

'I'll so maul you and your toasting-irons,

That you shall think the devil has come from hell.'"

The combatants desisted from their encounter, but stood looking at each other sullenly, as men do in such a situation, each unwilling to seem to desire peace more than the other, and averse therefore to be the first to sheathe his sword.

"Return your weapons, gentlemen, upon the spot," said the knight yet more peremptorily, "one and both of you, or you will have something to do with me, I promise you. You may be thankful times are changed. I have known them such, that your insolence might have cost each of you your right hand, if not redeemed with a round sum of money. Nephew, if you do not mean to alienate me for ever, I command you to put up. — Master Kerneguy, you are my guest. I request of you not to do me the insult of remaining with your sword drawn, where it is my duty to see peace observed."

"I obey you, Sir Henry," said the King, sheathing his rapier — "I hardly indeed know wherefore I was assaulted by this gentleman. I assure you, none respects the King's person or privileges more than myself — though the devotion is somewhat out of fashion."

"We may find a place to meet, sir," replied Everard, "where neither the royal person nor privileges can be offended."

"Faith, very hardly, sir," said Charles, unable to suppress the rising jest — "I mean, the King has so few followers, that the loss of the least of them might be some small damage to him; but, risking all that, I will meet you wherever there is fair field for a poor cavalier to get off in safety, if he has the luck in fight."

Sir Henry Lee's first idea had been fixed upon the insult offered to the royal demesne; he now began to turn them towards the safety of his kinsman, and of the young royalist, as he deemed him. "Gentlemen," he said, "I must insist on this business being put to a final end. Nephew Markham, is this your return for my condescension in coming back to Woodstock on your warrant, that you should take an opportunity to cut the throat of my guest?"

"If you knew his purpose as well as I do," — said Markham, and then paused, conscious that he might only incense his uncle without convincing him, as any thing he might say of Kerneguy's addresses to Alice was likely to be imputed to his own jealous suspicions — he looked on the ground, therefore, and was silent.

"And you, Master Kerneguy," said Sir Henry, "can you give me any reason why you seek to take the life of this young man, in whom, though unhappily forgetful of his loyalty and duty, I must yet take some interest, as my nephew by affinity?"

"I was not aware the gentleman enjoyed that honour, which certainly would have protected him from my sword," answered Kerneguy. "But the quarrel is his; nor can I tell any reason why he fixed it upon me, unless it were the difference of our political opinions."

"You know the contrary," said Everard; "you know that I told you you were safe from me as a fugitive royalist — and your last words showed you were at no loss to guess my connexion with Sir Henry. That, indeed, is of little consequence. I should debase myself did I use the relationship as a means of protection from you, or any one."

As they thus disputed, neither choosing to approach the real cause of quarrel, Sir Henry looked from one to the other, with a peace-making conscience, exclaiming —

"Why, what an intricate impeach is this?

I think you both have drunk of Circe's cup.'

"Come, my young masters, allow an old man to mediate between you. I am not shortsighted in such matters — The mother of mischief is no bigger than a gnat's wing; and I have known fifty instances in my own day, when, as Will says —

'Gallants have been confronted hardily,

In single opposition, hand to hand.'

in which, after the field was fought, no one could remember the cause of quarrel. — Tush! a small thing will do it — the taking of the wall — or the gentle rub of the shoulder in passing each other, or a hasty word, or a misconceived gesture — Come, forget your cause of quarrel, be what it will — you have had your breathing, and though you put up your rapiers unbloodied, that was no default of yours, but by command of your elder, and one who had right to use authority. In Malta, where the duello is punctiliously well understood, the persons engaged in a single combat are bound to halt on the command of a knight, or priest, or lady, and the quarrel so interrupted is held as honourably terminated, and may not be revived. — Nephew, it is, I think, impossible that you can nourish spleen against this young gentleman for having fought for his king. Hear my honest proposal, Markham — You know I bear no malice, though I have some reason to be offended with you — Give the young man your hand in friendship, and we will back to the Lodge, all three together, and drink a cup of sack in token of reconciliation."

Markham Everard found himself unable to resist this approach towards kindness on his uncle's part. He suspected, indeed, what was partly the truth, that it was not entirely from reviving good-will, but also, that his uncle thought, by such attention, to secure his neutrality at least, if not his assistance, for the safety of the fugitive royalist. He was sensible that he was placed in an awkward predicament; and that he might incur the suspicions of his own party, for holding intercourse even with a near relation, who harboured such guests. But, on the other hand, he thought his services to the Commonwealth had been of sufficient importance to outweigh whatever envy might urge on that topic. Indeed, although the Civil War had divided families much, and in many various ways, yet when it seemed ended by the triumph of the republicans, the rage of political hatred began to relent, and the ancient ties of kindred and friendship regained at least a part of their former influence. Many reunions were formed; and those who, like Everard, adhered to the conquering party, often exerted themselves for the protection of their deserted relatives.

As these things rushed through his mind, accompanied with the prospect of a renewed intercourse with Alice Lee, by means of which he might be at hand to protect her against every chance, either of injury or insult, he held out his hand to the supposed Scottish page, saying at the same time, "That, for his part, he was very ready to forget the cause of quarrel, or rather, to consider it as arising out of a misapprehension, and to offer Master Kerneguy such friendship as might exist between honourable men, who had embraced different sides in politics."

Unable to overcome the feeling of personal dignity, which prudence recommended him to forget, Louis Kerneguy in return bowed low, but without accepting Everard's proffered hand.

"He had no occasion," he said, "to make any exertions to forget the cause of quarrel, for he had never been able to comprehend it; but as he had not shunned the gentleman's resentment, so he was now willing to embrace and return any degree of his favour, with which he might be pleased to honour him."

Everard withdrew his hand with a smile, and bowed in return to the salutation of the page, whose stiff reception of his advances he imputed to the proud pettish disposition of a Scotch boy, trained up in extravagant ideas of family consequence and personal importance, which his acquaintance with the world had not yet been sufficient to dispel.

Sir Henry Lee, delighted with the termination of the quarrel, which he supposed to be in deep deference to his own authority, and not displeased with the opportunity of renewing some acquaintance with his nephew, who had, notwithstanding his political demerits, a warmer interest in his affections than he was, perhaps, himself aware of, said, in a tone of consolation, "Never be mortified, young gentlemen. I protest it went to my heart to part you, when I saw you stretching yourselves so handsomely, and in fair love of honour, without any malicious or blood-thirsty thoughts. I promise you, had it not been for my duty as Ranger here, and sworn to the office, I would rather have been your umpire than your hinderance. — But a finished quarrel is a forgotten quarrel; and your tilting should have no further consequence excepting the appetite it may have given you."

So saying, he urged forward his pony, and moved in triumph towards the Lodge by the nearest alley. His feet almost touching the ground, the ball of his toe just resting in the stirrup — the forepart of the thigh brought round to the saddle — the heels turned outwards, and sunk as much as possible — his body precisely erect — the reins properly and systematically divided in his left hand, his right holding a riding-rod diagonally pointed towards the horse's left ear — he seemed a champion of the manege, fit to have reined Bucephalus himself. His youthful companions, who attended on either hand like equerries, could scarcely suppress a smile at the completely adjusted and systematic posture of the rider, contrasted with the wild and diminutive appearance of the pony, with its shaggy coat, and long tail and mane, and its keen eyes sparkling like red coals from amongst the mass of hair which fell over its small countenance. If the reader has the Duke of Newcastle's book on horsemanship, (*splendida moles!*) he may have some idea of the figure of the good knight, if he can conceive such a figure as one of the cavaliers there represented, seated, in all the graces of his art, on a Welsh or Exmoor pony, in its native savage state, without grooming or discipline of any kind; the ridicule being greatly enhanced by the disproportion of size betwixt the animal and its rider.

Perhaps the knight saw their wonder, for the first words he said after they left the ground were, "Pixie, though small, is mettlesome, gentlemen," (here he contrived that Pixie should himself corroborate the assertion, by executing a gambade,)—"he is diminutive, but full of spirit; — indeed, save that I am somewhat too large for an elfin horseman," (the knight was upwards of six feet high,) "I should remind myself, when I mount him, of the Fairy King, as described by Mike Drayton:—

Himself he on an ear-wig set,

Yet scarce upon his back could get,

So oft and high he did curvet,

Ere he himself did settle.

He made him stop, and turn, and bound,

To gallop, and to trot the round.

He scarce could stand on any ground,

He was so full of mettle."

"My old friend, Pixie," said Everard, stroking the pony's neck, "I am glad that he has survived all these bustling days — Pixie must be above twenty years old, Sir Henry?"

"Above twenty years, certainly. Yes, nephew Markham, war is a whirlwind in a plantation, which only spares what is least worth leaving. Old Pixie and his old master have survived many a tall fellow, and many a great horse — neither of them good for much themselves. Yet, as Will says, an old man can do somewhat. So Pixie and I still survive."

So saying, he again contrived that Pixie should show some remnants of activity.

"Still survive?" said the young Scot, completing the sentence which the good knight had left unfinished —"ay, still survive,

'To witch the world with noble horsemanship.'"

Everard coloured, for he felt the irony; but not so his uncle, whose simple vanity never permitted him to doubt the sincerity of the compliment.

"Are you advised of that?" he said. "In King James's time, indeed, I have appeared in the tilt-yard, and there you might have said —

'You saw young Harry with his beaver up.'

"As to seeing *old* Harry, why" — Here the knight paused, and looked as a bashful man in labour of a pun — "As to old Harry — why, you might as well see the *devil*. You take me, Master Kerneguy — the devil, you know, is my namesake — ha — ha — ha! — Cousin Everard, I hope your precision is not startled by an innocent jest?"

He was so delighted with the applause of both his companions, that he recited the whole of the celebrated passage referred to, and concluded with defying the present age, bundle all its wits, Donne, Cowley, Waller, and the rest of them together, to produce a poet of a tenth part of the genius of old Will.

"Why, we are said to have one of his descendants among us — Sir William D'Avenant," said Louis Kerneguy; "and many think him as clever a fellow."

"What!" exclaimed Sir Henry — "Will D'Avenant, whom I knew in the North, an officer under Newcastle, when the Marquis lay before Hull? — why, he was an honest cavalier, and wrote good doggrel enough; but how came he a-kin to Will Shakspeare, I trow?"

"Why," replied the young Scot, "by the surer side of the house, and after the old fashion, if D'Avenant speaks truth. It seems that his mother was a good-looking, laughing, buxom mistress of an inn between Stratford and London, at which Will Shakspeare often quartered as he went down to his native town; and that out of friendship and gossipred, as we say in Scotland, Will Shakspeare became godfather to Will D'Avenant; and not contented with this spiritual affinity, the younger Will is for establishing some claim to a natural one, alleging that his mother was a great admirer of wit, and there were no bounds to her complaisance for men of genius."

"Out upon the hound!" said Colonel Everard; "would he purchase the reputation of descending from poet, or from prince, at the expense of his mother's good fame? — his nose ought to be slit."

"That would be difficult," answered the disguised Prince, recollecting the peculiarity of the bard's countenance. ⁴

"Will D'Avenant the son of Will Shakspeare?" said the knight, who had not yet recovered his surprise at the enormity of the pretension; "why, it reminds me of a verse in the Puppet-show of Phaeton, where the hero complains to his mother —

'Besides, by all the village boys I am sham'd,

You the Sun's son, you rascal, you be d — d!'

"I never heard such unblushing assurance in my life! — Will D'Avenant the son of the brightest and best poet that ever was, is, or will be? — But I crave your pardon, nephew — You, I believe, love no stage plays."

"Nay, I am not altogether so precise as you would make me, uncle. I have loved them perhaps too well in my time, and now I condemn them not altogether, or in gross, though I approve not their excesses and extravagances. — I cannot, even in Shakspeare, but see many things both scandalous to decency and prejudicial to good manners — many things which tend to ridicule virtue, or to recommend vice — at least to mitigate the hideousness of its features. I cannot think these fine poems are an useful study, and especially for the youth of either sex, in which bloodshed is pointed out as the chief occupation of the men, and intrigue as the sole employment of the women."

In making these observations, Everard was simple enough to think that he was only giving his uncle an opportunity of defending a favourite opinion, without offending him by a contradiction, which was so limited and mitigated. But here, as on other occasions, he forgot how obstinate his uncle was in his views, whether of religion, policy, or taste, and that it would be as easy to convert him to the Presbyterian form of government, or engage him to take the abjuration oath, as to shake his belief in Shakspeare. There was another peculiarity in the good knight's mode of arguing, which Everard, being himself of a plain and downright character, and one whose religious tenets were in some degree unfavourable to the suppressions and simulations often used in society, could never perfectly understand. Sir Henry, sensible of his natural heat of temper, was wont scrupulously to guard against it, and would for some time, when in fact much offended, conduct a debate with all the external appearance of composure, till the violence of his feelings would rise so high as to overcome and bear away the artificial barriers opposed to it, and rush down upon the adversary with accumulating wrath. It thus frequently happened, that, like a wily old general, he retreated in the face of his disputant in good order and by degrees, with so moderate a degree of resistance, as to draw on his antagonist's pursuit to the spot, where, at length, making a sudden and unexpected attack, with horse, foot, and artillery at once, he seldom failed to confound the enemy, though he might not overthrow him.

It was on this principle, therefore, that, hearing Everard's last observation, he disguised his angry feelings, and answered, with a tone where politeness was called in to keep guard upon passion, "That undoubtedly the Presbyterian gentry had given, through the whole of these unhappy times, such proofs of an humble, unassuming, and unambitious desire of the public good, as entitled them to general credit for the sincerity of those very strong scruples which they entertained against works, in which the noblest, sentiments of religion and virtue — sentiments which might convert hardened sinners, and be placed with propriety in the mouths of dying saints and martyrs — happened, from the rudeness and coarse taste of the times, to be mixed with some broad jests, and similar matter, which lay not much in the way, excepting of those who painfully sought such stuff out, that they might use it in vilifying what was in itself deserving of the highest applause. But what he wished especially to know from his nephew was, whether any of those gifted men, who had expelled the learned scholars and deep divines of the Church of England from the pulpit, and now flourished in their stead, received any inspiration from the muses, (if he might use so profane a term without offence to Colonel Everard,) or whether they were not as sottishly and brutally averse from elegant letters, as they were from humanity and common sense?"

Colonel Everard might have guessed, by the ironical tone in which this speech was delivered, what storm was mustering within his uncle's bosom — nay, he might have conjectured the state of the old knight's feelings from his emphasis on the word Colonel, by which epithet, as that which most connected his nephew with the party he hated, he never distinguished Everard, unless when his wrath was rising; while, on the contrary, when disposed to be on good terms with him, he usually called him Kinsman, or Nephew Markham. Indeed, it was under a partial sense that this was the case, and in the hope to see his cousin Alice, that the Colonel forbore making any answer to the harangue of his uncle, which had concluded just as the old knight had alighted at the door of the Lodge, and was entering the hall, followed by his two attendants.

Phoebe at the same time made her appearance in the hall, and received orders to bring some "beverage" for the gentlemen. The Hebe of Woodstock failed not to recognise and welcome Everard by an almost imperceptible curtsy; but she did not serve her interest, as she designed, when she asked the knight, as a question of course, whether he commanded the attendance of Mistress Alice. A stern *No*, was the decided reply; and the ill-timed interference seemed to increase his previous irritation against Everard for his depreciation of Shakspeare. "I would insist," said Sir Henry, resuming the obnoxious subject, "were it fit for a poor disbanded cavalier to use such a phrase towards a commander of the conquering army — upon, knowing whether the convulsion which has sent us saints and prophets without end, has not also afforded us a poet with enough both of gifts and grace to outshine poor old Will, the oracle and idol of us blinded and carnal cavaliers."

"Surely, sir," replied Colonel Everard; "I know verses written by a friend of the Commonwealth, and those, too, of a dramatic character, which, weighed in an impartial scale, might equal even the poetry of Shakspeare, and which are free from the fustian and indelicacy with which that great bard was sometimes content to feed the coarse appetites of his barbarous audience."

"Indeed!" said the knight, keeping down his wrath with difficulty. "I should like to be acquainted with this master-piece of poetry! — May we ask the name of this distinguished person?"

"It must be Vicars, or Withers, at least," said the feigned page.

"No, sir," replied Everard, "nor Drummond of Hawthornden, nor Lord Stirling neither. And yet the verses will vindicate what I say, if you will make allowance for indifferent recitation, for I am better accustomed to speak to a battalion than to those who love the muses. The speaker is a lady benighted, who, having lost her way in a pathless forest, at first expresses herself agitated by the supernatural fears to which her situation gave rise."

"A play, too, and written by a roundhead author!" said Sir Henry in surprise.

"A dramatic production at least," replied his nephew; and began to recite simply, but with feeling, the lines now so well known, but which had then obtained no celebrity, the fame of the author resting upon the basis rather of his polemical and political publications, than on the poetry doomed in after days to support the eternal structure of his immortality.

'These thoughts may startle, but will not, astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience.'

"My own opinion, nephew Markham, my own opinion," said Sir Henry, with a burst of admiration; "better expressed, but just what I said when the scoundrelly roundheads pretended to see ghosts at Woodstock — Go on, I prithee."

Everard proceeded:—

"O welcome pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd. —
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?"

"The rest has escaped me," said the reciter; "and I marvel I have been able to remember so much."

Sir Henry Lee, who had expected some effusion very different from those classical and beautiful lines, soon changed the scornful expression of his countenance, relaxed his contorted upper lip, and, stroking down his beard with his left hand, rested the forefinger of the right upon his eyebrow, in sign of profound attention. After Everard had ceased speaking, the old man signed as at the end of a strain of sweet music. He then spoke in a gentler manner than formerly.

"Cousin Markham," he said, "these verses flow sweetly, and sound in my ears like the well-touched warbling of a lute. But thou knowest I am somewhat slow of apprehending the full meaning of that which I hear for the first time. Repeat me these verses again, slowly and deliberately; for I always love to hear poetry twice, the first time for sound, and the latter time for sense."

Thus encouraged, Everard recited again the lines with more hardihood and better effect; the knight distinctly understanding, and from his looks and motions, highly applauding them.

"Yes!" he broke out, when Everard was again silent — "Yes, I do call that poetry — though it were even written by a Presbyterian, or an Anabaptist either. Ay, there were good and righteous people to be found even amongst the offending towns which were destroyed by fire. And certainly I have heard, though with little credence (begging your pardon, cousin. Everard,) that there are men among you who have seen the error of their ways in rebelling against the best and kindest of masters, and bringing it to that pass that he was murdered by a gang yet fiercer than themselves. Ay, doubtless, the gentleness of spirit, and the purity of mind, which dictated those beautiful lines, has long ago taught a man so amiable to say, I have sinned, I have sinned. Yes, I doubt not so sweet a harp has been broken, even in remorse, for the crimes he was witness to; and now he sits drooping for the shame and sorrow of England — all his noble rhymes, as Will says, 'Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh.'

Dost thou not think so, Master Kerneguy?"

"Not I, Sir Henry," answered the page, somewhat maliciously.

"What, dost not believe the author of these lines must needs be of the better file, and leaning to our persuasion?"

"I think, Sir Henry, that the poetry qualifies the author to write a play on the subject of Dame Potiphar and her recusant lover; and as for his calling — that last metaphor of the cloud in a black coat or cloak, with silver lining, would have dubbed him a tailor with me, only that I happen to know that he is a schoolmaster by profession, and by political opinions qualified to be Poet Laureate to Cromwell; for what Colonel Everard has repeated with such unction, is the production of no less celebrated a person than John Milton."

"John Milton!" exclaimed Sir Henry in astonishment — "What! John Milton, the blasphemous and bloody-minded author of the *Defensio Populi Anglicani*! — the advocate of the infernal High Court of Fiends; the creature and parasite of that grand impostor, that loathsome hypocrite, that detestable monster, that prodigy of the universe, that disgrace of mankind, that landscape of iniquity, that sink of sin, and that compendium of baseness, Oliver Cromwell!"

"Even the same John Milton," answered Charles; "schoolmaster to little boys, and tailor to the clouds, which he furnishes with suits of black, lined with silver, at no other expense than that of common sense."

"Markham Everard," said the old knight, "I will never forgive thee — never, never. Thou hast made me speak words of praise respecting one whose offal should fatten the region-kites. Speak not to me, sir, but begone! Am I, your kinsman and benefactor, a fit person to be juggled out of my commendation and eulogy, and brought to bedaub such a whitened sepulchre as the sophist Milton?"

"I profess," said Everard, "this is hard measure, Sir Henry. You pressed me — you defied me, to produce poetry as good as Shakspeare's. I only thought of the verses, not of the politics of Milton."

"Oh yes, sir," replied Sir Henry; "we well know your power of making distinctions; you could make war against the King's prerogative, without having the least design against his person. Oh Heaven forbid! But Heaven will hear and judge you. Set down the beverage, Phoebe" — (this was added by way of parenthesis to Phoebe, who entered with refreshment) — "Colonel Everard is not thirsty — You have wiped your mouths, and said you have done no evil. But though you have deceived man, yet God you cannot deceive. And you shall wipe no lips in Woodstock, either after meat or drink, I promise you."

Charged thus at once with the faults imputed to his whole religious sect and political party, Everard felt too late of what imprudence he had been guilty in giving the opening, by disputing his uncle's taste in dramatic poetry. He endeavoured to explain — to apologise.

"I mistook your purpose, honoured sir, and thought you really desired to know something of our literature; and in repeating what you deemed not unworthy your hearing, I profess I thought I was doing you pleasure, instead of stirring your indignation."

"O ay!" returned the knight, with unmitigated rigour of resentment — "profess — profess — Ay, that is the new phrase of asseveration, instead of the profane adjuration of courtiers and cavaliers — Oh, sir, *profess* less and *practise* more — and so good day to you. Master Kerneguy, you will find beverage in my apartment."

While Phoebe stood gaping in admiration at the sudden quarrel which had arisen, Colonel Everard's vexation and resentment was not a little increased by the nonchalance of the young Scotsman, who, with his hands thrust into his pockets, (with a courtly affectation of the time,) had thrown himself into one of the antique chairs, and, though habitually too polite to laugh aloud, and possessing that art of internal laughter by which men of the world learn to indulge their mirth without incurring quarrels, or giving direct offence, was at no particular pains to conceal that he was exceedingly amused by the result of the Colonel's visit to Woodstock. Colonel Everard's patience, however, had reached bounds which it was very likely to surpass; for, though differing widely in politics, there was a resemblance betwixt the temper of the uncle and nephew.

"Damnation" exclaimed the Colonel, in a tone which became a puritan as little as did the exclamation itself.

"Amen!" said Louis Kerneguy, but in a tone so soft and gentle, that the ejaculation seemed rather to escape him than to be designedly uttered. "Sir!" said Everard, striding towards him in that sort of humour, when a man, full of resentment, would not unwillingly find an object on which to discharge it.

"*Plait-it?*" said the page, in the most equable tone, looking up in his face with the most unconscious innocence.

"I wish to know, sir," retorted Everard, "the meaning of that which you said just now?"

"Only a pouring out of the spirit, worthy sir," returned Kerneguy — "a small skiff dispatched to Heaven on my own account, to keep company with your holy petition just now expressed."

"Sir, I have known a merry gentleman's bones broke for such a smile as you wear just now," replied Everard.

"There, look you now" answered the malicious page, who could not weigh even the thoughts of his safety against the enjoyment of his jest — "If you had stuck to your professions, worthy sir, you must have choked by this time; but your round execration bolted like a cork from a bottle of cider, and now allows your wrath to come foaming out after it, in the honest unbaptized language of common ruffians."

"For Heaven's sake, Master Girnegy," said Phoebe, "forbear giving the Colonel these bitter words! And do you, good Colonel Markham, scorn to take offence at his hands — he is but a boy."

"If the Colonel or you choose, Mistress Phoebe, you shall find me a man — I think the gentleman can say something to the purpose already. — Probably he may recommend to you the part of the Lady in Comus; and I only hope his own admiration of John Milton will not induce him to undertake the part of Samson Agonistes, and blow up this old house with execration, or pull it down in wrath about our ears."

"Young man," said the Colonel, still in towering passion, "if you respect my principles for nothing else, be grateful to the protection which, but for them, you would not easily attain."

"Nay, then," said the attendant, "I must fetch those who have more influence with you than I have," and away tripped Phoebe; while Kerneguy answered Everard in the same provoking tone of calm indifference — "Before you menace me with a thing so formidable as your resentment, you ought to be certain whether I may not be compelled by circumstances to deny you the opportunity you seem to point at."

At this moment Alice, summoned no doubt by her attendant, entered the hall hastily.

"Master Kerneguy," she said, "my father requests to see you in Victor Lee's apartment."

Kerneguy arose and bowed, but seemed determined to remain till Everard's departure, so as to prevent any explanation betwixt the cousins. "Markham," said Alice, hurriedly — "Cousin Everard — I have but a moment to remain here — for God's sake, do you instantly begone! — be cautious and patient — but do not tarry here — my father is fearfully incensed."

"I have had my uncle's word for that, madam," replied Everard, "as well as his injunction to depart, which I will obey without delay. I was not aware that you would have seconded so harsh an order quite so willingly; but I go, madam, sensible I leave those behind whose company is more agreeable."

"Unjust — ungenerous — ungrateful!" said Alice; but fearful her words might reach ears for which they were not designed, she spoke them in a voice so feeble, that her cousin, for whom they were intended, lost the consolation they were calculated to convey.

He bowed coldly to Alice, as taking leave, and said, with an air of that constrained courtesy which sometimes covers, among men of condition, the most deadly hatred, "I believe, Master Kerneguy, that I must make it convenient at present to suppress my own peculiar opinions on the matter which we have hinted at in our conversation, in which case I will send a gentleman, who, I hope, may be able to conquer yours."

The supposed Scotsman made him a stately, and at the same time a condescending bow, said he should expect the honour of his commands, offered his hand to Mistress Alice, to conduct her back to her father's apartment, and took a triumphant leave of his rival.

Everard, on the other hand, stung beyond his patience, and, from the grace and composed assurance of the youth's carriage, still conceiving him to be either Wilmot, or some of his compeers in rank and profligacy, returned to the town of Woodstock, determined not to be outbearded, even though he should seek redress by means which his principles forbade him to consider as justifiable.

Chapter the Twenty-Sixth.

Boundless intemperance

In nature is a tyranny — it hath been

The untimely emptying of many a throne,

And fall of many kings.

MACBETH.

While Colonel Everard retreated in high indignation from the little refectory, which Sir Henry Lee had in his good-humour offered, and withdrawn under the circumstances of provocation which we have detailed, the good old knight, scarce recovered from his fit of passion, partook of it with his daughter and guest, and shortly after, recollecting some silvan task, (for, though to little efficient purpose, he still regularly attended to his duties as Ranger,) he called Bevis, and went out, leaving the two young people together.

"Now," said the amorous Prince to himself, "that Alice is left without her lion, it remains to see whether she is herself of a tigress breed. — So, Sir Bevis has left his charge," he said loud; "I thought the knights of old, those stern guardians of which he is so fit a representative, were more rigorous in maintaining a vigilant guard."

"Bevis," said Alice, "knows that his attendance on me is totally needless; and, moreover, he has other duties to perform, which every true knight prefers to dangling the whole morning by a lady's sleeve."

"You speak treason against all true affection," said the gallant; "a lady's lightest wish should to a true knight be more binding than aught excepting the summons of his sovereign. I wish, Mistress Alice, you would but intimate your slightest desire to me, and you should see how I have practised obedience."

"You never brought me word what o'clock it was this morning," replied the young lady, "and there I sate questioning of the wings of Time, when I should have remembered that gentlemen's gallantry can be quite as fugitive as Time himself. How do you know what your disobedience may have cost me and others? Pudding and paste may have been burned to a cinder, for, sir, I practise the old domestic rule of visiting the kitchen; or I may have missed prayers, or I may have been too late for an appointment, simply by the negligence of Master Louis Kerneguy failing to let me know the hour of the day."

"O," replied Kerneguy, "I am one of those lovers who cannot endure absence — I must be eternally at the feet of my fair enemy — such, I think, is the title with which romances teach us to grace the fair and cruel to whom we devote our hearts and lives. — Speak for me, good lute," he added, taking up the instrument, "and show whether I know not my duty."

He sung, but with more taste than execution, the air of a French rondelai, to which some of the wits or sonnetteers, in his gay and roving train, had adapted English verses.

An hour with thee! — When earliest day

Dapples with gold the eastern grey,

Oh, what, can frame my mind to bear

The toil and turmoil, cark and care.

New griefs, which coming hours unfold,

And sad remembrance of the old? —

One hour with thee!

One hour with thee! — When burning June

Waves his red flag at pitch of noon;

What shall repay the faithful swain,

His labour on the sultry plain,

And more than cave or sheltering bough,

Cool feverish blood, and throbbing brow? —
One hour with thee!
One hour with thee! — When sun is set,
O, what can teach me to forget
The thankless labours of the day;
The hopes, the wishes, flung away:
The increasing wants, and lessening gains,
The master's pride, who scorns my pains? —
One hour with thee!

"Truly, there is another verse," said the songster; "but I sing it not to you, Mistress Alice, because some of the prudes of the court liked it not." "I thank you, Master Louis," answered the young lady, "both for your discretion in singing what has given me pleasure, and in forbearing what might offend me. Though a country girl, I pretend to be so far of the court mode, as to receive nothing which does not pass current among the better class there."

"I would," answered Louis, "that you were so well confirmed in their creed, as to let all pass with you, to which court ladies would give currency."

"And what would be the consequence?" said Alice, with perfect composure.

"In that case," said Louis, embarrassed like a general who finds that his preparations for attack do not seem to strike either fear or confusion into the enemy — "in that case you would forgive me, fair Alice, if I spoke to you in a warmer language than that of mere gallantry — if I told you how much my heart was interested in what you consider as idle jesting — if I seriously owned it was in your power to make me the happiest or the most miserable of human beings."

"Master Kerneguy," said Alice, with the same unshaken nonchalance, "let us understand each other. I am little acquainted with high-bred manners, and I am unwilling, I tell you plainly, to be accounted a silly country girl, who, either from ignorance or conceit, is startled at every word of gallantry addressed to her by a young man, who, for the present, has nothing better to do than coin and circulate such false compliments. But I must not let this fear of seeming rustic and awkwardly timorous carry me too far; and being ignorant of the exact limits, I will take care to stop within them."

"I trust, madam," said Kerneguy, "that however severely you may be disposed to judge of me, your justice will not punish me too severely for an offence, of which your charms are alone the occasion?"

"Hear me out, sir, if you please," resumed Alice. "I have listened to you when you spoke *en berger* — nay, my complaisance has been so great, as to answer you *en bergère* — for I do not think any thing except ridicule can come of dialogues between Lindor and Jeanneton; and the principal fault of the style is its extreme and tiresome silliness and affectation. But when you begin to kneel, offer to take my hand, and speak with a more serious tone, I must remind you of our real characters. I am the daughter of Sir Henry Lee, sir; you are, or profess to be, Master Louis Kerneguy, my brother's page, and a fugitive for shelter under my father's roof, who incurs danger by the harbour he affords you, and whose household, therefore, ought not to be disturbed by your displeasing importunities."

"I would to Heaven, fair Alice," said the King, "that your objections to the suit which I am urging, not in jest, but most seriously, as that on which my happiness depends, rested only on the low and precarious station of Louis Kerneguy! — Alice, thou hast the soul of thy family, and must needs love honour. I am no more the needy Scottish page, whom I have, for my own purposes, personated, than I am the awkward lout, whose manners I adopted on the first night of our acquaintance. This hand, poor as I seem, can confer a coronet."

"Keep it," said Alice, "for some more ambitious damsel, my lord — for such I conclude is your title, if this romance be true — I would not accept your hand, could you confer a duchy."

"In one sense, lovely Alice, you have neither overrated my power nor my affection. It is your King — it is Charles Stewart who speaks to you! — he can confer duchies, and if beauty can merit them, it is that of Alice Lee. Nay, nay — rise — do not kneel — it is for your sovereign to kneel to thee, Alice, to whom he is a thousand times more devoted than the wanderer Louis dared venture to profess himself. My Alice has, I know, been trained up in those principles of love and obedience to her sovereign, that she cannot, in conscience or in mercy, inflict on him such a wound as would be implied in the rejection of his suit."

In spite of all Charles's attempts to prevent her, Alice had persevered in kneeling on one knee, until she had touched with her lip the hand with which he attempted to raise her. But this salutation ended, she stood upright, with her arms folded on her bosom — her looks humble, but composed, keen, and watchful, and so possessed of herself, so little flattered by the communication which the King had supposed would have been overpowering, that he scarce knew in what terms next to urge his solicitation.

"Thou art silent — thou art silent," he said, "my pretty Alice. Has the King no more influence with thee than the poor Scottish page?"

"In one sense, every influence," said Alice; "for he commands my best thoughts, my best wishes, my earnest prayers, my devoted loyalty, which, as the men of the House of Lee have been ever ready to testify with the sword, so are the women bound to seal, if necessary, with their blood. But beyond the duties of a true and devoted subject, the King is even less to Alice Lee than poor Louis Kerneguy. The Page could have tendered an honourable union — the Monarch can but offer a contaminated coronet."

"You mistake, Alice — you mistake," said the King, eagerly. "Sit down and let me speak to you — sit down — What is't you fear?"

"I fear nothing, my liege," answered Alice. "What *can* I fear from the King of Britain — I, the daughter of his loyal subject, and under my father's roof? But I remember the distance betwixt us; and though I might trifle and jest with mine equal, to my King I must only appear in the dutiful posture of a subject, unless where his safety may seem to require that I do not acknowledge his dignity."

Charles, though young, being no novice in such scenes, was surprised to encounter resistance of a kind which had not been opposed to him in similar pursuits, even in cases where he had been unsuccessful. There was neither anger, nor injured pride, nor disorder, nor disdain, real or affected, in the manners and conduct of Alice. She stood, as it seemed, calmly prepared to argue on the subject, which is generally decided by passion — showed no inclination to escape from the apartment, but appeared determined to hear with patience the suit of the lover — while her countenance and manner intimated that she had this complaisance only in deference to the commands of the King.

"She is ambitious," thought Charles; "it is by dazzling her love of glory, not by mere passionate entreaties, that I must hope to be successful. — I pray you be seated, my fair Alice," he said; "the lover entreats — the King commands you."

"The King," said Alice, "may permit the relaxation of the ceremonies due to royalty, but he cannot abrogate the subject's duty, even by express command. I stand here while it is your Majesty's pleasure to address — a patient listener, as in duty bound."

"Know then, simple girl," said the King, "that in accepting my proffered affection and protection, you break through no law either of virtue or morality. Those who are born to royalty are deprived of many of the comforts of private life — chiefly that which is, perhaps, the dearest and most precious, the power of choosing their own mates for life. Their formal weddings are guided upon principles of political expedience only, and those to whom they are wedded are frequently, in temper, person, and disposition, the most unlikely to make them happy. Society has commiseration, therefore, towards us, and binds our unwilling and often unhappy wedlocks with chains of a lighter and more easy character than those which fetter other men, whose marriage ties, as more voluntarily assumed, ought, in proportion, to be more strictly binding. And therefore, ever since the time that old Henry built these walls, priests and prelates, as well as nobles and statesmen, have been accustomed to see a fair Rosamond rule the heart of an affectionate monarch, and console him for the few hours of constraint and state which he must bestow upon some angry and jealous Eleanor. To such a connection the world attaches no blame; they rush to the festival to admire the beauty of the lovely Esther, while the imperious Vashti is left to queen it in solitude; they throng the palace to ask her protection, whose influence is more in the state an hundred times than that of the proud consort; her offspring rank with the nobles of the land, and vindicate by their courage, like the celebrated Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, their descent from royalty and from love. From such connections our richest ranks of nobles are recruited; and the mother lives, in the greatness of her posterity honoured and blest, as she died lamented and wept in the arms of love and friendship."

"Did Rosamond so die, my lord?" said Alice. "Our records say she was poisoned by the injured Queen — poisoned, without time allowed to call to God for the pardon of her many faults. Did her memory so live? I have heard that, when the Bishop purified the church at Godstowe, her monument was broken open by his orders, and her bones thrown out into unconsecrated ground."

"Those were rude old days, sweet Alice," answered Charles; "queens are not now so jealous, nor bishops so rigorous. And know, besides, that in the lands to which I would lead the loveliest of her sex, other laws obtain, which remove from such ties even the slightest show of scandal. There is a mode of matrimony, which, fulfilling all the rites of the Church, leaves no stain on the conscience; yet investing the bride with none of the privileges peculiar to her husband's condition, infringes not upon the duties which the King owes to his subjects. So that Alice Lee may, in all respects, become the real and lawful wife of Charles Stewart, except that their private union gives her no title to be Queen of England."

"My ambition," said Alice, "will be sufficiently gratified to see Charles king, without aiming to share either his dignity in public, or his wealth and regal luxury in private."

"I understand thee, Alice," said the King, hurt but not displeased. "You ridicule me, being a fugitive, for speaking like a king. It is a habit, I admit, which I have learned, and of which even misfortune cannot cure me. But my case is not so desperate as you may suppose. My friends are still many in these kingdoms; my allies abroad are bound, by regard to their own interest, to espouse my cause. I have hopes given me from Spain, from France, and from other nations; and I have confidence that my father's blood has not been poured forth in vain, nor is doomed to dry up without due vengeance. My trust is in Him from whom princes derive their title, and, think what thou wilt of my present condition, I have perfect confidence that I shall one day sit on the throne of England."

"May God grant it!" said Alice; "and that he *may* grant it, noble Prince, deign to consider — whether you now pursue a conduct likely to conciliate his favour. Think of the course you recommend to a motherless maiden, who has no better defence against your sophistry, than what a sense of morality, together with the natural feeling of female dignity inspires. Whether the death of her father, which would be the consequence of her imprudence; — whether the despair of her brother, whose life has been so often in peril to save that of your Majesty; — whether the dishonour of the roof which has sheltered you, will read well in your annals, or are events likely to propitiate God, whose controversy with your House has been but too visible, or recover the affections of the people of England, in whose eyes such actions are an abomination, I leave to your own royal mind to consider."

Charles paused, struck with a turn to the conversation which placed his own interests more in collision with the gratification of his present passion than he had supposed.

"If your Majesty," said Alice, curtsying deeply, "has no farther commands for my attendance, may I be permitted to withdraw?"

"Stay yet a little, strange and impracticable girl," said the King; "and answer me but one question:— Is it the lowness of my present fortunes that makes my suit contemptible?"

"I have nothing to conceal, my liege," she said, "and my answer shall be as plain and direct as the question you have asked. If I could have been moved to an act of ignominious, insane, and ungrateful folly, it could only arise from my being blinded by that passion, which I believe is pleaded as an excuse for folly and for crime much more often than it has a real existence. I must, in short, have been in love, as it is called — and that might have been — with my equal, but surely never with my sovereign, whether such only in title, or in possession of his kingdom."

"Yet loyalty was ever the pride, almost the ruling passion, of your family, Alice," said the King.

"And could I reconcile that loyalty," said Alice, "with indulging my sovereign, by permitting him to prosecute a suit dishonourable to himself as to me? Ought I, as a faithful subject, to join him in a folly, which might throw yet another stumbling-block in the path to his restoration, and could only serve to diminish his security, even if he were seated upon his throne?"

"At this rate," said Charles, discontentedly, "I had better have retained my character of the page, than assumed that of a sovereign, which it seems is still more irreconcilable with my wishes."

"My candour shall go still farther," said Alice. "I could have felt as little for Louis Kerneguy as for the heir of Britain; for such love as I have to bestow, (and it is not such as I read of in romance, or hear poured forth in song,) has been already conferred on another object. This gives your Majesty pain — I am sorry for it — but the wholesomest medicines are often bitter."

"Yes," answered the King, with some asperity, "and physicians are reasonable enough to expect their patients to swallow them, as if they were honeycomb. It is true, then, that whispered tale of the cousin Colonel, and the daughter of the loyal Lee has set her heart upon a rebellious fanatic?"

"My love was given ere I knew what these words fanatic and rebel meant. I recalled it not, for I am satisfied, that amidst the great distractions which divide the kingdom, the person to whom you allude has chosen his part, erroneously, perhaps, but conscientiously — he, therefore, has still the highest place in my affection and esteem. More he cannot have, and will not ask, until some happy turn shall reconcile these public differences, and my father be once more reconciled to him. Devoutly do I pray that such an event may occur by your Majesty's speedy and unanimous restoration!"

"You have found out a reason," said the King, pettishly, "to make me detest the thought of such a change — nor have you, Alice, any sincere interest to pray for it. On the contrary, do you not see that your lover, walking side by side with Cromwell, may, or rather must, share his power? nay, if Lambert does not anticipate him, he may trip up Oliver's heels, and reign in his stead. And think you not he will find means to overcome the pride of the loyal Lees, and achieve an union, for which things are better prepared than that which Cromwell is said to meditate betwixt one of his brats and the no less loyal heir of Fauconberg?"

"Your Majesty," said Alice, "has found a way at length to avenge yourself — if what I have said deserves vengeance."

"I could point out a yet shorter road to your union," said Charles, without minding her distress, or perhaps enjoying the pleasure of retaliation. "Suppose that you sent your Colonel word that there was one Charles Stewart here, who had come to disturb the Saints in their peaceful government, which they had acquired by prayer and preaching, pike and gun — and suppose he had the art to bring down a half-score of troopers, quite enough, as times go, to decide the fate of this heir of royalty — think you not the possession of such a prize as this might obtain from the Rumpers, or from Cromwell, such a reward as might overcome your father's objections to a roundhead's alliance, and place the fair Alice and her cousin Colonel in full possession of their wishes?"

"My liege," said Alice, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes sparkling — for she too had her share of the hereditary temperament of her family — "this passes my patience. I have heard, without expressing anger, the most ignominious persuasions addressed to myself, and I have vindicated myself for refusing to be the paramour of a fugitive Prince, as if I had been excusing myself from accepting a share of an actual crown. But do you think I can hear all who are dear to me slandered without emotion or reply? I will not, sir; and were you seated with all the terrors of your father's Star-chamber around you, you should hear me defend the absent and the innocent. Of my father I will say nothing, but that if he is now without wealth — without state, almost without a sheltering home and needful food — it is because he spent all in the service of the King. He needed not to commit any act of treachery or villany to obtain wealth — he had an ample competence in his own possessions. For Markham Everard — he knows no such thing as selfishness — he would not, for broad England, had she the treasures of Peru in her bosom, and a paradise on her surface, do a deed that would disgrace his own name, or injure the feelings of another — Kings, my liege, may take a lesson from him. My liege, for the present I take my leave."

"Alice, Alice — stay!" exclaimed the King. "She is gone. — This must be virtue — real, disinterested, overawing virtue — or there is no such thing on earth. Yet Wilmot and Villiers will not believe a word of it, but add the tale to the other wonders of Woodstock. 'Tis a rare wench! and I profess, to use the Colonel's obtestation, that I know not whether to forgive and be friends with her, or study a dire revenge. If it were not for that accursed cousin — that puritan Colonel — I could forgive every thing else to so noble a wench. But a roundheaded rebel preferred to me — the preference avowed to my face, and justified with the assertion, that a king might take a lesson from him — it is gall and wormwood. If the old man had not come up this morning as he did, the King should have taken or given a lesson, and a severe one. It was a mad rencontre to venture upon with my rank and responsibility — and yet this wench has made me so angry with her, and so envious of him, that if an opportunity offered, I should scarce be able to forbear him. — Ha! whom have we here?"

The interjection at the conclusion of this royal soliloquy, was occasioned by the unexpected entrance of another personage of the drama.

BENEDICT. *Shall I speak a word in your ear?*

CLAUDIO. *God bless me from a challenge.*

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

As Charles was about to leave the apartment, he was prevented by the appearance of Wildrake, who entered with an unusual degree of swagger in his gait, and of fantastic importance on his brow. "I crave your pardon, fair sir," he said; "but, as they say in my country, when doors are open dogs enter. I have knocked and called in the hall to no purpose; so, knowing the way to this parlour, sir — for I am a light partisan, and the road I once travel I never forget — I ventured to present myself unannounced."

"Sir Henry Lee is abroad, sir, I believe, in the Chase," said Charles, coldly, for the appearance of this somewhat vulgar debauchee was not agreeable to him at the moment, "and Master Albert Lee has left the Lodge for two or three days."

"I am aware of it, sir," said Wildrake; "but I have no business at present with either."

"And with whom is your business?" said Charles; "that is, if I may be permitted to ask — since I think it cannot in possibility be with me."

"Pardon me in turn, sir," answered the cavalier; "in no possibility can it be imparted to any other but yourself, if you be, as I think you are, though in something better habit, Master Louis Girnigo, the Scottish gentleman who waits upon Master Albert Lee."

"I am all you are like to find for him," answered Charles.

"In truth," said the cavalier, "I do perceive a difference, but rest, and better clothing, will do much; and I am glad of it, since I would be sorry to have brought a message, such as I am charged with, to a tatterdemalion."

"Let us get to the business, sir, if you please," said the King — "you have a message for me, you say?"

"True, sir," replied Wildrake; "I am the friend of Colonel Markham Everard, sir, a tall man, and a worthy person in the field, although I could wish him a better cause — A message I have to you, it is certain, in a slight note, which I take the liberty of presenting with the usual formalities." So saying, he drew his sword, put the billet he mentioned upon the point, and making a profound bow, presented it to Charles.

The disguised Monarch accepted of it, with a grave return of the salute, and said, as he was about to open the letter, "I am not, I presume, to expect friendly contents in an epistle presented in so hostile a manner?"

"A-hem, sir," replied the ambassador, clearing his voice, while he arranged a suitable answer, in which the mild strain of diplomacy might be properly maintained; "not utterly hostile, I suppose, sir, is the invitation, though it be such as must be construed in the commencement rather bellicose and pugnacious. I trust, sir, we shall find that a few thrusts will make a handsome conclusion of the business; and so, as my old master used to say, *Pax nascitur ex bello*. For my own poor share, I am truly glad to have been graced by my friend, Markham Everard, in this matter — the rather as I feared the puritan principles with which he is imbued, (I will confess the truth to you, worthy sir,) might have rendered him unwilling, from certain scruples, to have taken the gentlemanlike and honourable mode of righting himself in such a case as the present. And as I render a friend's duty to my friend, so I humbly hope, Master Louis Girnigo, that I do no injustice to you, in preparing the way for the proposed meeting, where, give me leave to say, I trust, that if no fatal accident occur, we shall be all better friends when the skirmish is over than we were before it began."

"I should suppose so, sir, in any case," said Charles, looking at the letter; "worse than mortal enemies we can scarce be, and it is that footing upon which this billet places us."

"You say true, sir," said Wildrake; "it is, sir, a cartel, introducing to a single combat, for the pacific object of restoring a perfect good understanding betwixt the survivors — in case that fortunately that word can be used in the plural after the event of the meeting."

"In short, we only fight, I suppose," replied the King, "that we may come to a perfectly good and amicable understanding?"

"You are right again, sir; and I thank you for the clearness of your apprehension," said Wildrake. — "Ah, sir, it is easy to do with a person of honour and of intellect in such a case as this. And I beseech you, sir, as a personal kindness to myself, that, as the morning is like to be frosty, and myself am in some sort rheumatic — as war will leave its scars behind, sir — I say, I will entreat of you to bring with you some gentleman of honour, who will not disdain to take part in what is going forward — a sort of pot-luck, sir — with a poor old soldier like myself — that we may take no harm by standing unoccupied during such cold weather."

"I understand, sir," replied Charles; "if this matter goes forward, be assured I will endeavour to provide you with a suitable opponent."

"I shall remain greatly indebted to you, sir," said Wildrake; "and I am by no means curious about the quality of my antagonist. It is true I write myself esquire and gentleman, and should account myself especially honoured by crossing my sword with that of Sir Henry or Master Albert Lee; but, should that not be convenient, I will not refuse to present my poor person in opposition to any gentleman who has served the King — which I always hold as a sort of letters of nobility in itself, and, therefore, would on no account decline the duello with such a person."

"The King is much obliged to you, sir," said Charles, "for the honour you do his faithful subjects."

"O, sir, I am scrupulous on that point — very scrupulous. — When there is a roundhead in question, I consult the Herald's books, to see that he is entitled to bear arms, as is Master Markham Everard, without which, I promise you, I had borne none of his cartel. But a cavalier is with me a gentleman, of course — Be his birth ever so low, his loyalty has ennobled his condition."

"It is well, sir," said the King. "This paper requests me to meet Master Everard at six tomorrow morning, at the tree called the King's Oak — I object neither to place nor time. He proffers the sword, at which, he says, we possess some equality — I do not decline the weapon; for company, two gentlemen — I shall endeavour to procure myself an associate, and a suitable partner for you, sir, if you incline to join in the dance."

"I kiss your hand, sir, and rest yours, under a sense of obligation," answered the envoy.

"I thank you, sir," continued the King; "I will therefore be ready at place and time, and suitably furnished; and I will either give your friend such satisfaction with my sword as he requires, or will render him such cause for not doing so as he will be contented with."

"You will excuse me, sir," said Wildrake, "if my mind is too dull, under the circumstances, to conceive any alternative that can remain betwixt two men of honour in such a case, excepting — sa — sa —" He threw himself into a fencing position, and made a pass with his sheathed rapier, but not directed towards the person of the King, whom he addressed.

"Excuse me, sir," said Charles, "if I do not trouble your intellects with the consideration of a case which may not occur. — But, for example, I may plead urgent employment on the part of the public." This he spoke in a low and mysterious tone of voice, which Wildrake appeared perfectly to comprehend; for he laid his forefinger on his nose with what he meant for a very intelligent and apprehensive nod.

"Sir," said he, "if you be engaged in any affair for the King, my friend shall have every reasonable degree of patience — Nay, I will fight him myself in your stead, merely to stay his stomach, rather than you should be interrupted. — And, sir, if you can find room in your enterprise for a poor gentleman that has followed Lunsford and Goring, you have but to name day, time, and place of rendezvous; for truly, sir, I am tired of the scald hat, cropped hair, and undertaker's cloak, with which my friend has bedizened me, and would willingly ruffle it out once more in the King's cause, when whether I be banged or hanged, I care not."

"I shall remember what you say, sir, should an opportunity occur," said the King; "and I wish his Majesty had many such subjects — I presume our business is now settled?"

"When you shall have been pleased, sir, to give me a trifling scrap of writing, to serve for my credentials — for such, you know, is the custom — your written cartel hath its written answer."

"That, sir, will I presently do," said Charles, "and in good time, here are the materials."

"And, sir," continued the envoy — "Ah! — ahem! — if you have interest in the household for a cup of sack — I am a man of few words, and am somewhat hoarse with much speaking — moreover, a serious business of this kind always makes one thirsty. — Besides, sir, to part with dry lips argues malice, which God forbid should exist in such an honourable conjuncture."

"I do not boast much influence in the house, sir," said the King; "but if you would have the condescension to accept of this broad piece towards quenching your thirst at the George"—

"Sir," said the cavalier, (for the times admitted of this strange species of courtesy, nor was Wildrake a man of such peculiar delicacy as keenly to dispute the matter,)—"I am once again beholden to you. But I see not how it consists with my honour to accept of such accommodation, unless you were to accompany and partake?"

"Pardon me, sir," replied Charles, "my safety recommends that I remain rather private at present."

"Enough said," Wildrake observed; "poor cavaliers must not stand on ceremony. I see, sir, you understand cutter's law — when one tall fellow has coin, another must not be thirsty. I wish you, sir, a continuance of health and happiness until tomorrow, at the King's Oak, at six o'clock."

"Farewell, sir," said the King, and added, as Wildrake went down the stair whistling, "Hey for cavaliers," to which air his long rapier, jarring against the steps and banisters, bore no unsuitable burden — "Farewell, thou too just emblem of the state, to which war, and defeat, and despair, have reduced many a gallant gentleman."

During the rest of the day, there occurred nothing peculiarly deserving of notice. Alice sedulously avoided showing towards the disguised Prince any degree of estrangement or shyness, which could be discovered by her father, or by any one else. To all appearance, the two young persons continued on the same footing in every respect. Yet she made the gallant himself sensible, that this apparent intimacy was assumed merely to save appearances, and in no way designed as retracting from the severity with which she had rejected his suit. The sense that this was the case, joined to his injured self-love, and his enmity against a successful rival, induced Charles early to withdraw himself to a solitary walk in the wilderness, where, like Hercules in the Emblem of Cebes, divided betwixt the personifications of Virtue and of Pleasure, he listened alternately to the voice of Wisdom and of passionate Folly.

Prudence urged to him the importance of his own life to the future prosecution of the great object in which he had for the present miscarried — the restoration of monarchy in England, the rebuilding of the throne, the regaining the crown of his father, the avenging his death, and restoring to their fortunes and their country the numerous exiles, who were suffering poverty and banishment on account of their attachment to his cause. Pride too, or rather a just and natural sense of dignity, displayed the unworthiness of a Prince descending to actual personal conflict with a subject of any degree, and the ridicule which would be thrown on his memory, should he lose his life for an obscure intrigue by the hand of a private gentleman. What would his sage counsellors, Nicholas and Hyde — what would his kind and wise governor, the Marquis of Hertford, say to such an act of rashness and folly? Would it not be likely to shake the allegiance of the staid and prudent persons of the royalist party, since wherefore should they expose their lives and estates to raise to the government of a kingdom a young man who could not command his own temper? To this was to be added, the consideration that even his success would add double difficulties to his escape, which already seemed sufficiently precarious. If, stopping short of death, he merely had the better of his antagonist, how did he know that he might not seek revenge by delivering up to government the malignant Louis Kerneguy, whose real character could not in that case fail to be discovered?

These considerations strongly recommended to Charles that he should clear himself of the challenge without fighting; and the reservation under which he had accepted it, afforded him some opportunity of doing so.

But Passion also had her arguments, which she addressed to a temper rendered irritable by recent distress and mortification. In the first place, if he was a prince, he was also a gentleman, entitled to resent as such, and obliged to give or claim the satisfaction expected on occasion of differences among gentlemen. With Englishmen, she urged, he could never lose interest by showing himself ready, instead of sheltering himself under his royal birth and pretensions, to come frankly forward and maintain what he had done or said on his own responsibility. In a free nation, it seemed as if he would rather gain than lose in the public estimation by a conduct which could not but seem gallant and generous. Then a character for courage was far more necessary to support his pretensions than any other kind of reputation; and the lying under a challenge, without replying to it, might bring his spirit into question. What would Villiers and Wilmot say of an intrigue, in which he had allowed himself to be shamefully baffled by a country girl, and had failed to revenge himself on his rival? The pasquinades which they would compose, the witty sarcasms which they would circulate on the occasion, would be harder to endure than the grave rebukes of Hertford, Hyde, and Nicholas. This reflection, added to the stings of youthful and awakened courage, at length fixed his resolution, and he returned to Woodstock determined to keep his appointment, come of it what might.

Perhaps there mingled with his resolution a secret belief that such a rencontre would not prove fatal. He was in the flower of his youth, active in all his exercises, and no way inferior to Colonel Everard, as far as the morning's experiment had gone, in that of self-defence. At least, such recollection might pass through his royal mind, as he hummed to himself a well-known ditty, which he had picked up during his residence in Scotland —

"A man may drink and not be drunk;

A man may fight and not be slain;

A man may kiss a bonnie lass,

And yet be welcome back again."

Meanwhile the busy and all-directing Dr. Rochecliffe had contrived to intimate to Alice that she must give him a private audience, and she found him by appointment in what was called the study, once filled with ancient books, which, long since converted into cartridges, had made more noise in the world at their final exit, than during the space which had intervened betwixt that and their first publication. The Doctor seated himself in a high-backed leathern easy-chair, and signed to Alice to fetch a stool and sit down beside him.

"Alice," said the old man, taking her hand affectionately, "thou art a good girl, a wise girl, a virtuous girl, one of those whose price is above rubies — not that *rubies* is the proper translation — but remind me to tell you of that another time. Alice, thou knowest who this Louis Kerneguy is — nay, hesitate not to me — I know every thing — I am well aware of the whole matter. Thou knowest this honoured house holds the Fortunes of England." Alice was about to answer. "Nay, speak not, but listen to me, Alice — How does he bear himself towards you?"

Alice coloured with the deepest crimson. "I am a country-bred girl," she said, "and his manners are too courtlike for me."

"Enough said — I know it all. Alice, he is exposed to a great danger tomorrow, and you must be the happy means to prevent him."

"I prevent him! — how, and in what manner?" said Alice, in surprise. "It is my duty, as a subject, to do anything — anything that may become my father's daughter"—

Here she stopped, considerably embarrassed.

"Yes," continued the Doctor, "tomorrow he hath made an appointment — an appointment with Markham Everard; the hour and place are set — six in the morning, by the King's Oak. If they meet, one will probably fall."

"Now, may God forefend they should meet," said Alice, turning as suddenly pale as she had previously reddened. "But harm cannot come of it; Everard will never lift his sword against the King."

"For that," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "I would not warrant. But if that unhappy young gentleman shall have still some reserve of the loyalty which his general conduct entirely disavows, it would not serve us here; for he knows not the King, but considers him merely as a cavalier, from whom he has received injury."

"Let him know the truth, Doctor Rochecliffe, let him know it instantly," said Alice; "*he* lift hand against the King, a fugitive and defenceless! He is incapable of it. My life on the issue, he becomes most active in his preservation."

"That is the thought of a maiden, Alice," answered the Doctor; "and, as I fear, of a maiden whose wisdom is misled by her affections. It were worse than treason to admit a rebel officer, the friend of the arch-traitor Cromwell, into so great a secret. I dare not answer for such rashness. Hammond was trusted by his father, and you know what came of it."

"Then let my father know. He will meet Markham, or send to him, representing the indignity done to him by attacking his guest."

"We dare not let your father into the secret who Louis Kerneguy really is. I did but hint the possibility of Charles taking refuge at Woodstock, and the rapture into which Sir Henry broke out, the preparations for accommodation and the defence which he began to talk of, plainly showed that the mere enthusiasm of his loyalty would have led to a risk of discovery. It is you, Alice, who must save the hopes of every true royalist."

"!" answered Alice; "it is impossible. — Why cannot my father be induced to interfere, as in behalf of his friend and guest, though he know him as no other than Louis Kerneguy?"

"You have forgot your father's character, my young friend," said the Doctor; "an excellent man, and the best of Christians, till there is a clashing of swords, and then he starts up the complete martialist, as deaf to every pacific reasoning as if he were a game-cock."

"You forget, Doctor Rocheclyffe," said Alice, "that this very morning, if I understand the thing aright, my father prevented them from fighting."

"Ay," answered the Doctor, "because he deemed himself bound to keep the peace in the Royal-Park; but it was done with such regret, Alice, that, should he find them at it again, I am clear to foretell he will only so far postpone the combat as to conduct them to some unprivileged ground, and there bid them tilt and welcome, while he regaled his eyes with a scene so pleasing. No, Alice, it is you, and you only, who can help us in this extremity."

"I see no possibility," said she, again colouring, "how I can be of the least use."

"You must send a note," answered Dr. Rocheclyffe, "to the King — a note such as all women know how to write better than any man can teach them — to meet you at the precise hour of the rendezvous. He will not fail you, for I know his unhappy foible."

"Doctor Rocheclyffe," said Alice gravely — "you have known me from infancy — What have you seen in me to induce you to believe that I should ever follow such unbecoming counsel?"

"And if you have known *me* from infancy," retorted the Doctor, "what have you seen of *me* that you should suspect me of giving counsel to my friend's daughter, which it would be misbecoming in her to follow? You cannot be fool enough, I think, to suppose, that I mean you should carry your complaisance farther than to keep him in discourse for an hour or two, till I have all in readiness for his leaving this place, from which I can frighten him by the terrors of an alleged search? — So, C. S. mounts his horse and rides off, and Mistress Alice Lee has the honour of saving him."

"Yes, at the expense of my own reputation," said Alice, "and the risk of an eternal stain on my family. You say you know all. What can the King think of my appointing an assignation with him after what has passed, and how will it be possible to disabuse him respecting the purpose of my doing so?"

"I will disabuse him, Alice; I will explain the whole."

"Doctor Rocheclyffe," said Alice, "you propose what is impossible. You can do much by your ready wit and great wisdom; but if new-fallen snow were once sullied, not all your art could wash it clean again; and it is altogether the same with a maiden's reputation."

"Alice, my dearest child," said the Doctor, "bethink you that if I recommended this means of saving the life of the King, at least rescuing him from instant peril, it is because I see no other of which to avail myself. If I bid you assume, even for a moment, the semblance of what is wrong, it is but in the last extremity, and under circumstances which cannot return — I will take the surest means to prevent all evil report which can arise from what I recommend."

"Say not so, Doctor," said Alice; "better undertake to turn back the Isis than to stop the course of calumny. The King will make boast to his whole licentious court, of the ease with which, but for a sudden alarm, he could have brought off Alice Lee as a paramour — the mouth which confers honour on others, will then be the means to deprive me of mine. Take a fitter course, one more becoming your own character and profession. Do not lead him to fail in an engagement of honour, by holding out the prospect of another engagement equally dishonourable, whether false or true. Go to the King himself, speak to him, as the servants of God have a right to speak, even to earthly sovereigns. Point out to him the folly and the wickedness of the course he is about to pursue — urge upon him, that he fear the sword, since wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword. Tell him, that the friends who died for him in the field at Worcester, on the scaffolds, and on the gibbets, since that bloody day — that the remnant who are in prison, scattered, fled, and ruined on his account, deserve better of him and his father's race, than that he should throw away his life in an idle brawl — Tell him, that it is dishonest to venture that which is not his own, dishonourable to betray the trust which brave men have reposed in his virtue and in his courage."

Dr. Rocheclyffe looked on her with a melancholy smile, his eyes glistening as he said, "Alas! Alice, even I could not plead that just cause to him so eloquently or so impressively as thou dost. But, alack! Charles would listen to neither. It is not from priests or women, he would say, that men should receive counsel in affairs of honour."

"Then, hear me, Doctor Rocheclyffe — I will appear at the place of rendezvous, and I will prevent the combat — do not fear that I can do what I say — at a sacrifice, indeed, but not that of my reputation. My heart may be broken" — she endeavoured to stifle her sobs with difficulty — "for the consequence; but not in the imagination of a man, and far less that man her sovereign, shall a thought of Alice Lee be associated with dishonour." She hid her face in her handkerchief, and burst out into unrestrained tears.

"What means this hysterical passion?" said Dr. Rocheclyffe, surprised and somewhat alarmed by the vehemence of her grief — "Maiden, I must have no concealments; I must know."

"Exert your ingenuity, then, and discover it," said Alice — for a moment put out of temper at the Doctor's pertinacious self-importance — "Guess my purpose, as you can guess at every thing else. It is enough to have to go through my task, I will not endure the distress of telling it over, and that to one who — forgive me, dear Doctor — might not think my agitation on this occasion fully warranted."

"Nay, then, my young mistress, you must be ruled," said Rocheclyffe; "and if I cannot make you explain yourself, I must see whether your father can gain so far on you." So saying, he arose somewhat displeased, and walked towards the door.

"You forget what you yourself told me, Doctor Rocheclyffe," said Alice, "of the risk of communicating this great secret to my father."

"It is too true," he said, stopping short and turning round; "and I think, wench, thou art too smart for me, and I have not met many such. But thou art a good girl, and wilt tell me thy device of free-will — it concerns my character and influence with the King, that I should be fully acquainted with whatever is *actum atque tractatum*, done and treated of in this matter."

"Trust your character to me, good Doctor," said Alice, attempting to smile; "it is of firmer stuff than those of women, and will be safer in my custody than mine could have been in yours. And thus much I condescend — you shall see the whole scene — you shall go with me yourself, and much will I feel emboldened and heartened by your company."

"That is something," said the Doctor, though not altogether satisfied with this limited confidence. "Thou wert ever a clever wench, and I will trust thee; indeed, trust thee I find I must, whether voluntarily or no."

"Meet me, then," said Alice, "in the wilderness tomorrow. But first tell me, are you well assured of time and place? — a mistake were fatal."

"Assure yourself my information is entirely accurate," said the Doctor, resuming his air of consequence, which had been a little diminished during the latter part of their conference.

"May I ask," said Alice, "through what channel you acquired such important information?"

"You may ask, unquestionably," he answered, now completely restored to his supremacy; "but whether I will answer or not, is a very different question. I conceive neither your reputation nor my own is interested in your remaining in ignorance on that subject. So I have my secrets as well as you, mistress; and some of them, I fancy, are a good deal more worth knowing."

"Be it so," said Alice, quietly; "if you will meet me in the wilderness by the broken dial at half-past five exactly, we will go together tomorrow, and watch them as they come to the rendezvous. I will on the way get the better of my present timidity, and explain to you the means I design to employ to prevent mischief. You can perhaps think of making some effort which may render my interference, unbecoming and painful as it must be, altogether unnecessary."

"Nay, my child," said the Doctor, "if you place yourself in my hands, you will be the first that ever had reason to complain of my want of conduct, and you may well judge you are the very last (one excepted) whom I would see suffer for want of counsel. At half-past five, then, at the dial in the wilderness — and God bless our undertaking!"

Here their interview was interrupted by the sonorous voice of Sir Henry Lee, which shouted their names, "Daughter Alice — Doctor Rochecliffe," through passage and gallery.

"What do you here," said he, entering, "sitting like two crows in a mist, when we have such rare sport below? Here is this wild crack-brained boy Louis Kerneguy, now making me laugh till my sides are fit to split, and now playing on his guitar sweetly enough to win a lark from the heavens. — Come away with you, come away. It is hard work to laugh alone."

Chapter the Twenty-Eighth.

This is the place, the centre of the grove;

Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.

JOHN HOME.

The sun had risen on the broad boughs of the forest, but without the power of penetrating into its recesses, which hung rich with heavy dewdrops, and were beginning on some of the trees to exhibit the varied tints of autumn; it being the season when Nature, like a prodigal whose race is well-nigh run, seems desirous to make up in profuse gaiety and variety of colours, for the short space which her splendour has then to endure. The birds were silent — and even Robin-redbreast, whose chirruping song was heard among the bushes near the Lodge, emboldened by the largesses with which the good old knight always encouraged his familiarity, did not venture into the recesses of the wood, where he encountered the sparrow-hawk, and other enemies of a similar description, preferring the vicinity of the dwellings of man, from whom he, almost solely among the feathered tribes, seems to experience disinterested protection.

The scene was therefore at once lovely and silent, when the good Dr. Rochecliffe, wrapped in a scarlet roquelaure, which had seen service in its day, muffling his face more from habit than necessity, and supporting Alice on his arm, (she also defended by a cloak against the cold and damp of the autumn morning,) glided through the tangled and long grass of the darkest alleys, almost ankle-deep in dew, towards the place appointed for the intended duel. Both so eagerly maintained the consultation in which they were engaged, that they were alike insensible of the roughness and discomforts of the road, though often obliged to force their way through brushwood and coppice, which poured down on them all the liquid pearls with which they were loaded, till the mantles they were wrapped in hung lank by their sides, and clung to their shoulders heavily charged with moisture. They stopped when they had attained a station under the coppice, and shrouded by it, from which they could see all that passed on the little esplanade before the King's Oak, whose broad and scathed form, contorted and shattered limbs, and frowning brows, made it appear like some ancient war-worn champion, well selected to be the umpire of a field of single combat.

The first person who appeared at the rendezvous was the gay cavalier Roger Wildrake. He also was wrapped in his cloak, but had discarded his puritanic beaver, and wore in its stead a Spanish hat, with a feather and gilt hatband, all of which had encountered bad weather and hard service; but to make amends for the appearance of poverty by the show of pretension, the castor was accurately adjusted after what was rather profanely called the *d — me cut*, used among the more desperate cavaliers. He advanced hastily, and exclaimed aloud — "First in the field after all, by Jove, though I bilked Everard in order to have my morning draught. — It has done me much good," he added, smacking his lips. — "Well, I suppose I should search the ground ere my principal comes up, whose Presbyterian watch trudges as slow as his Presbyterian step."

He took his rapier from under his cloak, and seemed about to search the thickets around.

"I will prevent him," whispered the Doctor to Alice. "I will keep faith with you — you shall not come on the scene — *nisi dignus vindice nodus* — I'll explain that another time. *Vindex* is feminine as well as masculine, so the quotation is defensible. — Keep you close."

So saying, he stepped forward on the esplanade, and bowed to Wildrake.

"Master Louis Kerneguy," said Wildrake, pulling off his hat; but instantly discovering his error, he added, "But no — I beg your pardon, sir — Fatter, shorter, older. — Mr. Kerneguy's friend, I suppose, with whom I hope to have a turn by and by. — And why not now, sir, before our principals come up? Just a snack to stay the orifice of the stomach, till the dinner is served, sir? What say you?"

"To open the orifice of the stomach more likely, or to give it a new one," said the Doctor.

"True, sir," said Roger, who seemed now in his element; "you say well — that is as thereafter may be. — But come, sir, you wear your face muffled. I grant you, it is honest men's fashion at this unhappy time; the more is the pity. But we do all above board — we have no traitors here. I'll get into my gears first, to encourage you, and show you that you have to deal with a gentleman, who honours the King, and is a match fit to fight with any who follow him, as doubtless you do, sir, since you are the friend of Master Louis Kerneguy."

All this while, Wildrake was busied undoing the clasps of his square-caped cloak.

"Off — off, ye lendings," he said, "borrowings I should more properly call you —"

So saying, he threw the cloak from him, and appeared in *cuerpo*, in a most cavalier-like doublet, of greasy crimson satin, pinked and slashed with what had been once white tiffany; breeches of the same; and nether-stocks, or, as we now call them, stockings, darned in many places, and which, like those of Poins, had been once peach-coloured. A pair of pumps, ill calculated for a walk through the dew, and a broad shoulderbelt of tarnished embroidery, completed his equipment.

"Come, sir!" he exclaimed; "make haste, off with your slough — Here I stand tight and true — as loyal a lad as ever stuck rapier through a roundhead. — Come, sir, to your tools!" he continued; "we may have half-a-dozen thrusts before they come yet, and shame them for their tardiness. — Pshaw!" he exclaimed, in a most disappointed tone, when the Doctor, unfolding his cloak, showed his clerical dress; "Tush! it's but the parson after all!"

Wildrake's respect for the Church, however, and his desire to remove one who might possibly interrupt a scene to which he looked forward with peculiar satisfaction, induced him presently to assume another tone.

"I beg pardon," he said, "my dear Doctor — I kiss the hem of your cassock — I do, by the thundering Jove — I beg your pardon again. — But I am happy I have met with you — They are raving for your presence at the Lodge — to marry, or christen, or bury, or confess, or something very urgent. — For Heaven's sake, make haste!"

"At the Lodge?" said the Doctor; "why, I left the Lodge this instant — I was there later, I am sure, than you could be, who came the Woodstock road."

"Well," replied Wildrake, "it is at Woodstock they want you. — Rat it, did I say the Lodge? — No, no — Woodstock — Mine host cannot be hanged — his daughter married — his bastard christened, or his wife buried — without the assistance of a *real* clergyman — Your Holdenoughs won't do for them. — He's a true man mine host; so, as you value your function, make haste."

"You will pardon me, Master Wildrake," said the Doctor — "I wait for Master Louis Kerneguy."

"The devil you do!" exclaimed Wildrake. "Why, I always knew the Scots could do nothing without their minister; but d — n it, I never thought they put them to this use neither. But I have known jolly customers in orders, who understood how to handle the sword as well as their prayer-book. You know the purpose of our meeting, Doctor. Do you come only as a ghostly comforter — or as a surgeon, perhaps — or do you ever take bilboa in hand? — Sa — sa!"

Here he made a fencing demonstration with his sheathed rapier.

"I have done so, sir, on necessary occasion," said Dr. Rochecliffe.

"Good sir, let this stand for a necessary one," said Wildrake. "You know my devotion for the Church. If a divine of your skill would do me the honour to exchange but three passes with me, I should think myself happy for ever."

"Sir," said Rochecliffe, smiling, "were there no other objection to what you propose, I have not the means — I have no weapon."

"What? you want the *de quoi*? that is unlucky indeed. But you have a stout cane in your hand — what hinders our trying a pass (my rapier being sheathed of course) until our principals come up? My pumps are full of this frost-dew; and I shall be a toe or two out of pocket, if I am to stand still all the time they are stretching themselves; for, I fancy, Doctor, you are of my opinion, that the matter will not be a fight of cock-sparrows."

"My business here is to make it, if possible, be no fight at all," said the divine.

"Now, rat me, Doctor, but that is too spiteful," said Wildrake; "and were it not for my respect for the Church, I could turn Presbyterian, to be revenged."

"Stand back a little, if you please, sir," said the Doctor; "do not press forward in that direction." — For Wildrake, in the agitation of his movements, induced by his disappointment, approached the spot where Alice remained still concealed.

"And wherefore not, I pray you, Doctor?" said the cavalier.

But on advancing a step, he suddenly stopped short, and muttered to himself, with a round oath of astonishment, "A petticoat in the coppice, by all that is reverend, and at this hour in the morning — *Whew — ew — ew!*" — He gave vent to his surprise in a long low interjectional whistle; then turning to the Doctor, with his finger on the side of his nose, "You're sly, Doctor, d — d sly! But why not give me a hint of your — your commodity there — your contraband goods? Gad, sir, I am not a man to expose the eccentricities of the Church."

"Sir," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "you are impertinent; and if time served, and it were worth my while, I would chastise you."

And the Doctor, who had served long enough in the wars to have added some of the qualities of a captain of horse to those of a divine, actually raised his cane, to the infinite delight of the rake, whose respect for the Church was by no means able to subdue his love of mischief.

"Nay, Doctor," said he, "if you wield your weapon broadsword-fashion, in that way, and raise it as high as your head, I shall be through you in a twinkling." So saying, he made a pass with his sheathed rapier, not precisely at the Doctor's person, but in that direction; when Rochecliffe, changing the direction of his cane from the broadsword guard to that of the rapier, made the cavalier's sword spring ten yards out of his hand, with all the dexterity of my friend Francalanza. At this moment both the principal parties appeared on the field.

Everard exclaimed angrily to Wildrake, "Is this your friendship? In Heaven's name, what make you in that fool's jacket, and playing the pranks of a jack-pudding?" while his worthy second, somewhat crest-fallen, held down his head, like a boy caught in roguery, and went to pick up his weapon, stretching his head, as he passed, into the coppice, to obtain another glimpse, if possible, of the concealed object of his curiosity.

Charles in the meantime, still more surprised at what he beheld, called out on his part — "What! Doctor Rochecliffe become literally one of the church militant, and tilting with my friend cavalier Wildrake? May I use the freedom to ask him to withdraw, as Colonel Everard and I have some private business to settle?"

It was Dr. Rochecliffe's cue, on this important occasion, to have armed himself with the authority of his sacred office, and used a tone of interference which might have overawed even a monarch, and made him feel that his monitor spoke by a warrant higher than his own. But the indiscreet latitude he had just given to his own passion, and the levity in which he had been detected, were very unfavourable to his assuming that superiority, to which so uncontrollable a spirit as that of Charles, wilful as a prince, and capricious as a wit, was at all likely to submit. The Doctor did, however, endeavour to rally his dignity, and replied, with the gravest, and at the same time the most respectful, tone he could assume, that he also had business of the most urgent nature, which prevented him from complying with Master Kerneguy's wishes and leaving the spot.

"Excuse this untimely interruption," said Charles, taking off his hat, and bowing to Colonel Everard, "which I will immediately put an end to." Everard gravely returned his salute, and was silent.

"Are you mad, Doctor Rochecliffe?" said Charles — "or are you deaf? — or have you forgotten your mother-tongue? I desired you to leave this place."

"I am not mad," said the divine, rousing up his resolution, and regaining the natural firmness of his voice — "I would prevent others from being so; I am not deaf — I would pray others to hear the voice of reason and religion; I have not forgotten my mother-tongue — but I have come hither to speak the language of the Master of kings and princes."

"To fence with broomsticks, I should rather suppose," said the King — "Come, Doctor Rochecliffe, this sudden fit of assumed importance befits you as little as your late frolic. You are not, I apprehend, either a Catholic priest or a Scotch Mass-John to claim devoted obedience from your hearers, but a Church-of-England-man, subject to the rules of that Communion — and to its HEAD." In speaking the last words, the King lowered his voice to a low and impressive whisper. Everard observing this drew back, the natural generosity of his temper directing him to avoid overhearing private discourse, in which the safety of the speakers might be deeply concerned. They continued, however, to observe great caution in their forms of expression.

"Master Kerneguy," said the clergyman, "it is not I who assume authority or control over your wishes — God forbid; I do but tell you what reason, Scripture, religion, and morality, alike prescribe for your rule of conduct."

"And I, Doctor," said the King, smiling, and pointing to the unlucky cane, "will take your example rather than your precept. If a reverend clergyman will himself fight a bout at single-stick, what right can he have to interfere in gentlemen's quarrels? — Come, sir, remove yourself, and do not let your present obstinacy cancel former obligations."

"Bethink yourself," said the divine — "I can say one word which will prevent all this."

"Do it," replied the King, "and in doing so belie the whole tenor and actions of an honourable life — abandon the principles of your Church, and become a perjured traitor and an apostate, to prevent another person from discharging his duty as a gentleman! This were indeed killing your friend to prevent the risk of his running himself into danger. Let the Passive Obedience, which is so often in your mouth, and no doubt in your head, put your feet for once into motion, and step aside for ten minutes. Within that space your assistance may be needed, either as body-curer or soul-curer."

"Nay, then," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "I have but one argument left."

While this conversation was carried on apart, Everard had almost forcibly detained by his own side his follower, Wildrake, whose greater curiosity, and lesser delicacy, would otherwise have thrust him forward, to get, if possible, into the secret. But when he saw the Doctor turn into the coppice, he whispered eagerly to Everard — "A gold Carolus to a commonwealth farthing, the Doctor has not only come to preach a peace, but has brought the principal conditions along with him!"

Everard made no answer; he had already unsheathed his sword; and Charles hardly saw Rochecliffe's back fairly turned, than he lost no time in following his example. But, ere they had done more than salute each other, with the usual courteous nourish of their weapons, Dr. Rochecliffe again stood between them, leading in his hand Alice Lee, her garments dank with dew, and her long hair heavy with moisture, and totally uncurled. Her face was extremely pale, but it was the paleness of desperate resolution, not of fear. There was a dead pause of astonishment — the combatants rested on their swords — and even the forwardness of Wildrake only vented itself in half-suppressed ejaculations, as, "Well done, Doctor — this beats the 'parson among the pease' — No less than your patron's daughter — And Mistress Alice, whom I thought a very snowdrop, turned out a dog-violet after all — a Lindabrides, by heavens, and altogether one of ourselves." Excepting these unheeded mutterings, Alice was the first to speak.

"Master Everard," she said — "Master Kerneguy, you are surprised to see me here — Yet, why should I not tell the reason at once? Convinced that I am, however guiltlessly, the unhappy cause of your misunderstanding, I am too much interested to prevent fatal consequences to pause upon any step which may end it. — Master Kerneguy, have my wishes, my entreaties, my prayers — have your noble thoughts — the recollections of your own high duties, no weight with you in this matter? Let me entreat you to consult reason, religion, and common sense, and return your weapon."

"I am obedient as an Eastern slave, madam," answered Charles, sheathing his sword; "but I assure you, the matter about which you distress yourself is a mere trifle, which will be much better settled betwixt Colonel Everard and myself in five minutes, than with the assistance of the whole Convocation of the Church, with a female parliament to assist their reverend deliberations. — Mr. Everard, will you oblige me by walking a little farther? — We must change ground, it seems."

"I am ready to attend you, sir," said Everard, who had sheathed his sword so soon as his antagonist did so.

"I have then no interest with you, sir," said Alice, continuing to address the King — "Do you not fear I should use the secret in my power to prevent this affair going to extremity? Think you this gentleman, who raises his hand against you, if he knew?" —

"If he knew that I were Lord Wilmot, you would say? — Accident has given him proof to that effect, with which he is already satisfied, and I think you would find it difficult to induce him to embrace a different opinion."

Alice paused, and looked on the King with great indignation, the following words dropping from her mouth by intervals, as if they burst forth one by one in spite of feelings that would have restrained them — "Cold — selfish — ungrateful — unkind! — Woe to the land which" — Here she paused with marked emphasis, then added — "which shall number thee, or such as thee, among her nobles and rulers!"

"Nay, fair Alice," said Charles, whose good nature could not but feel the severity of this reproach, though too slightly to make all the desired impression, "You are too unjust to me — too partial to a happier man. Do not call me unkind; I am but here to answer Mr. Everard's summons. I could neither decline attending, nor withdraw now I am here, without loss of honour; and my loss of honour would be a disgrace which must extend to many — I cannot fly from Mr. Everard — it would be too shameful. If he abides by his message, it must be decided as such affairs usually are. If he retreats or yields it up, I will, for your sake, wave punctilio. I will not even ask an apology for the trouble it has afforded me, but let all pass as if it were the consequence of some unhappy mistake, the grounds of which shall remain on my part unenquired into. — This I will do for your sake, and it is much for a man of honour to condescend so far — You know that the condescension from me in particular is great indeed. Then do not call me ungenerous, or ungrateful, or unkind, since I am ready to do all, which, as a man, I can do, and more perhaps than as a man of honour I ought to do."

"Do you hear this, Markham Everard?" exclaimed Alice — "do you hear this? — The dreadful option is left entirely at your disposal. You were wont to be temperate in passion, religious, forgiving — will you, for a mere punctilio, drive on this private and unchristian broil to a murderous extremity? Believe me, if you now, contrary to all the better principles of your life, give the reins to your passions, the consequences may be such as you will rue for your lifetime, and even, if Heaven have not mercy, rue after your life is finished."

Markham Everard remained for a moment gloomily silent — with his eyes fixed on the ground. At length he looked up, and answered her — "Alice, you are a soldier's daughter — a soldier's sister. All your relations, even including one whom you then entertained some regard for, have been made soldiers by these unhappy discords. Yet you have seen them take the field — in some instances on contrary sides, to do their duty where their principles called them, without manifesting this extreme degree of interest."

He continued, "However, what is the true concern here is our relations with your own self, and mine is with this gentleman's interest in you. I had expected that our disagreement could be dealt with as men dispute matters of honor. With your intrusion this cannot be done. I have few other options for politely resolving this, for you would surely hate the one who killed the other, to the loss of us both. Therefore," addressing Charles, "in the interest of avoid this fate, I am forced to yield my interest in her to you; and, as I will never be the means of giving her pain, I trust you will not think I act unworthily in retracting the letter which gave you the trouble of attending this place at this hour. — Alice," he said, turning his head towards her, "Farewell, Alice, at once, and for ever!"

The poor young lady, whose adventitious spirit had almost deserted her, attempted to repeat the word farewell, but failing in the attempt, only accomplished a broken and imperfect sound, and would have sunk to the ground, but for Dr. Rochecliffe, who caught her as she fell. Roger Wildrake, also, who had twice or thrice put to his eyes what remained of a kerchief, interested by the lady's evident distress, though unable to comprehend the mysterious cause, hastened to assist the divine in supporting so fair a burden.

Meanwhile, the disguised Prince had beheld the whole in silence, but with an agitation to which he was unwonted, and which his swarthy features, and still more his motions, began to betray. His posture was at first absolutely stationary, with his arms folded on his bosom, as one who waits to be guided by the current of events; presently after, he shifted his position, advanced and retired his foot, clenched and opened his hand, and otherwise showed symptoms that he was strongly agitated by contending feelings — was on the point, too, of forming some sudden resolution, and yet still in uncertainty what course he should pursue.

But when he saw Markham Everard, after one look of unspeakable anguish towards Alice, turning his back to depart, he broke out into his familiar ejaculation, "Oddsfish! this must not be." In three strides he overtook the slowly retiring Everard, tapped him smartly on the shoulder, and, as he turned round, said, with an air of command, which he well knew how to adopt at pleasure, "One word with you, sir."

"At your pleasure, sir," replied Everard; and naturally conjecturing the purpose of his antagonist to be hostile, took hold of his rapier with the left hand, and laid the right on the hilt, not displeased at the supposed call; for anger is at least as much akin to disappointment as pity is said to be to love.

"Pshaw!" answered the King, "that cannot be *now* — Colonel Everard, I am CHARLES STEWART!"

Everard recoiled in the greatest surprise, and next exclaimed, "Impossible — it cannot be! The King of Scots has escaped from Bristol. — My Lord Wilmot, your talents for intrigue are well known; but this will not pass upon me."

"The King of Scots, Master Everard," replied Charles, "since you are so pleased to limit his sovereignty — at any rate, the Eldest Son of the late Sovereign of Britain — is now before you; therefore it is impossible he could have escaped from Bristol. Doctor Rochecliffe shall be my voucher, and will tell you, moreover, that Wilmot is of a fair complexion and light hair; mine, you may see, is swart as a raven."

Rochecliffe, seeing what was passing, abandoned Alice to the care of Wildrake, whose extreme delicacy in the attempts he made to bring her back to life, formed an amiable contrast to his usual wildness, and occupied him so much, that he remained for the moment ignorant of the disclosure in which he would have been so much interested. As for Dr. Rochecliffe, he came forward, wringing his hands in all the demonstration of extreme anxiety, and with the usual exclamations attending such a state.

"Peace, Doctor Rochecliffe!" said the King, with such complete self-possession as indeed became a prince; "we are in the hands, I am satisfied, of a man of honour. Master Everard must be pleased in finding only a fugitive prince in the person in whom he thought he had discovered a successful rival. He cannot but be aware of the feelings which prevented me from taking advantage of the cover which this young lady's devoted loyalty afforded me, at the risk of her own happiness. He is the party who is to profit by my candour; and certainly I have a right to expect that my condition, already indifferent enough, shall not be rendered worse by his becoming privy to it under such circumstances. At any rate, the avowal is made; and it is for Colonel Everard to consider how he is to conduct himself."

"Oh, your Majesty! my Liege! my King! my royal Prince!" exclaimed Wildrake, who, at length discovering what was passing, had crawled on his knees, and seizing the King's hand, was kissing it, more like a child mumbling gingerbread, or like a lover devouring the yielded hand of his mistress, than in the manner in which such salutations pass at court — "If my dear friend Mark Everard should prove a dog on this occasion, rely on me I will cut his throat on the spot, were I to do the same for myself the moment afterwards!"

"Hush, hush, my good friend and loyal subject," said the King, "and compose yourself; for though I am obliged to put on the Prince for a moment, we have not privacy or safety to receive our subjects in King Cambyzes' vein."

Everard, who had stood for a time utterly confounded, awoke at length like a man from a dream.

"Sire," he said, bowing low, and with profound deference, "if I do not offer you the homage of a subject with knee and sword, it is because God, by whom kings reign, has denied you for the present the power of ascending your throne without rekindling civil war. For your safety being endangered by me, let not such an imagination for an instant cross your mind. Had I not respected your person — were I not bound to you for the candour with which your noble avowal has prevented the misery of my future life, your misfortunes would have rendered your person as sacred, so far as I can protect it, as it could be esteemed by the most devoted royalist in the kingdom. If your plans are soundly considered, and securely laid, think that all which is now passed is but a dream. If they are in such a state that I can aid them, saving my duty to the Commonwealth, which will permit me to be privy to no schemes of actual violence, your Majesty may command my services."

"It may be I may be troublesome to you, sir," said the King; "for my fortunes are not such as to permit me to reject even the most limited offers of assistance; but if I can, I will dispense with applying to you. I would not willingly put any man's compassion at war with his sense of duty on my account. — Doctor, I think there will be no farther tilting today, either with sword or cane; so we may as well return to the Lodge, and leave these" — looking at Alice and Everard — "who may have more to say in explanation."

"No — no!" exclaimed Alice, who was now perfectly come to herself, and partly by her own observation, and partly from the report of Dr. Rochecliffe, comprehended all that had taken place — "My cousin Everard and I have nothing to explain; he will forgive me for having riddled with him when I dared not speak plainly; and I forgive him for having read my riddle wrong. But my father has my promise — we must not correspond or converse for the present — I return instantly to the Lodge, and he to Woodstock, unless you, sire," bowing to the King, "command his duty otherwise. Instant to the town, Cousin Markham; and if danger should approach, give us warning."

Everard would have delayed her departure, would have excused himself for his unjust suspicion, would have said a thousand things; but she would not listen to him, saying, for all other answer — "Farewell, Markham, till God send better days!"

"She is an angel of truth and beauty," said Roger Wildrake; "and I, like a blasphemous heretic, called her a Lindabrides!"⁵ But has your Majesty, craving your pardon, no commands for poor Hodge Wildrake, who will blow out his own or any other man's brains in England, to do your Grace a pleasure?"

"We entreat our good friend Wildrake to do nothing hastily," said Charles, smiling; "such brains as his are rare, and should not be rashly dispersed, as the like may not be easily collected. We recommend him to be silent and prudent — to tilt no more with loyal clergymen of the Church of England, and to get himself a new jacket with all convenient speed, to which we beg to contribute our royal aid. When fit time comes, we hope to find other service for him."

As he spoke, he slid ten pieces into the hand of poor Wildrake, who, confounded with the excess of his loyal gratitude, blubbered like a child, and would have followed the King, had not Dr. Rochecliffe, in few words, but peremptory, insisted that he should return with his patron, promising him he should certainly be employed in assisting the King's escape, could an opportunity be found of using his services.

"Be so generous, reverend sir, and you bind me to you for ever," said the cavalier; "and I conjure you not to keep malice against me on account of the foolery you wot of."

"I have no occasion, Captain Wildrake," said the Doctor, "for I think I had the best of it."

"Well, then, Doctor, I forgive you on my part: and I pray you, for Christian charity, let me have a finger in this good service; for as I live in hope of it, rely that I shall die of disappointment."

While the Doctor and soldier thus spoke together, Charles took leave of Everard, (who remained uncovered while he spoke to him,) with his usual grace — "I need not bid you no longer be jealous of me," said the King; "for I presume you will scarce think of a match betwixt Alice and me, which would be too losing a one on her side. For other thoughts, the wildest libertine could not entertain them towards so high-minded a creature; and believe me, that my sense of her merit did not need this last distinguished proof of her truth and loyalty. I saw enough of her from her answers to some idle sallies of gallantry, to know with what a lofty character she is endowed. Mr. Everard, her happiness I see depends on you, and I trust you will be the careful guardian of it. If we can take any obstacle out of the way of your joint happiness, be assured we will use our influence. — Farewell, sir; if we cannot be better friends, do not at least let us entertain harder or worse thoughts of each other than we have now."

There was something in the manner of Charles that was extremely affecting; something too, in his condition as a fugitive in the kingdom which was his own by inheritance, that made a direct appeal to Everard's bosom — though in contradiction to the dictates of that policy which he judged it his duty to pursue in the distracted circumstances of the country. He remained, as we have said, uncovered; and in his manner testified the highest expression of reverence, up to the point when such might seem a symbol of allegiance. He bowed so low as almost to approach his lips to the hand of Charles — but he did not kiss it. — "I would rescue your person, sir," he said, "with the purchase of my own life. More" — He stopped short, and the King took up his sentence where it broke off — "More you cannot do," said Charles, "to maintain an honourable consistency — but what you have said is enough. You cannot render homage to my proffered hand as that of a sovereign, but you will not prevent my taking yours as a friend — if you allow me to call myself so — I am sure, as a well-wisher at least."

The generous soul of Everard was touched — He took the King's hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"Oh!" he said, "were better times to come" —

"Bind yourself to nothing, dear Everard," said the good-natured Prince, partaking his emotion — "We reason ill while our feelings are moved. I will recruit no man to his loss, nor will I have my fallen fortunes involve those of others, because they have humanity enough to pity my present condition. If better times come, why we will meet again, and I hope to our mutual satisfaction. If not, as your future father-in-law would say," (a benevolent smile came over his face, and accorded not unmeetly with his glistening eyes,) — "If not, this parting was well made."

Everard turned away with a deep bow, almost choking under contending feelings; the uppermost of which was a sense of the generosity with which Charles, at his own imminent risk, had cleared away the darkness that seemed about to overwhelm his prospects of happiness for life — mixed with a deep sense of the perils by which he was environed. He returned to the little town, followed by his attendant Wildrake, who turned back so often, with weeping eyes, and hands clasped and uplifted as supplicating Heaven, that Everard was obliged to remind him that his gestures might be observed by some one, and occasion suspicion.

The generous conduct of the King during the closing part of this remarkable scene, had not escaped Alice's notice; and, erasing at once from her mind all resentment of Charles's former conduct, and all the suspicions they had deservedly excited, awakened in her bosom a sense of the natural goodness of his disposition, which permitted her to unite regard for his person, with that reverence for his high office in which she had been educated as a portion of her creed. She felt convinced, and delighted with the conviction, that his virtues were his own, his libertinism the fault of education, or rather want of education, and the corrupting advice of sycophants and flatterers. She could not know, or perhaps did not in that moment consider, that in a soil where no care is taken to eradicate tares, they will outgrow and smother the wholesome seed, even if the last is more natural to the soil. For, as Dr. Rochecliffe informed her afterwards for her edification, promising, as was his custom, to explain the precise words on some future occasion, if she would put him in mind — *Virtus rectorem ducemque desiderat; Vitia sine magistro discuntur*.⁶ There was no room for such reflections at present. Conscious of mutual sincerity, by a sort of intellectual communication, through which individuals are led to understand each other better, perhaps, in delicate circumstances, than by words, reserve and simulation appeared to be now banished from the intercourse between the King and Alice. With manly frankness, and, at the same time, with princely condescension, he requested her, exhausted as she was, to accept of his arm on the way homeward, instead of that of Dr. Rochecliffe; and Alice accepted of his support with modest humility, but without a shadow of mistrust or fear. It seemed as if the last half hour had satisfied them perfectly with the character of each other, and that each had full conviction of the purity and sincerity of the other's intentions.

Dr. Rochecliffe, in the meantime, had fallen some four or five paces behind; for, less light and active than Alice, (who had, besides, the assistance of the King's support,) he was unable, without effort and difficulty, to keep up with the pace of Charles, who then was, as we have elsewhere noticed, one of the best walkers in England, and was sometimes apt to forget (as great men will) that others were inferior to him in activity.

"Dear Alice," said the King, but as if the epithet were entirely fraternal, "I like your Everard much — I would to God he were of our determination — But since that cannot be, I am sure he will prove a generous enemy." "May it please you, sire," said Alice, modestly, but with some firmness, "my cousin will never be your Majesty's personal enemy — and he is one of the few on whose slightest word you may rely more than on the oath of those who profess more strongly and formally. He is utterly incapable of abusing your Majesty's most generous and voluntary confidence."

"On my honour, I believe so, Alice," replied the King: "But oddsfish! my girl, let Majesty sleep for the present — it concerns my safety, as I told your brother lately — Call me sir, then, which belongs alike to king, peer, knight, and gentleman — or rather let me be wild Louis Kerneguy again." Alice looked down, and shook her head. "That cannot be, please your Majesty."

"What! Louis was a saucy companion — a naughty presuming boy — and you cannot abide him? — Well, perhaps you are right — But we will wait for Dr. Rochecliffe" — he said, desirous, with good-natured delicacy, to make Alice aware that he had no purpose of engaging her in any discussion which could recall painful ideas. They paused accordingly, and again she felt relieved and grateful.

"I cannot persuade our fair friend, Mistress Alice, Doctor," said the King, "that she must, in prudence, forbear using titles of respect to me, while there are such very slender means of sustaining them."

"It is a reproach to earth and to fortune," answered the divine, as fast as his recovered breath would permit him, "that your most sacred Majesty's present condition should not accord with the rendering of those honours which are your own by birth, and which, with God's blessing on the efforts of your loyal subjects, I hope to see rendered to you as your hereditary right, by the universal voice of the three kingdoms."

"True, Doctor," replied the King; "but, in the meanwhile, can you expound to Mistress Alice Lee two lines of Horace, which I have carried in my thick head several years, till now they have come pat to my purpose. As my canny subjects of Scotland say, If you keep a thing seven years you are sure to find a use for it at last —

Telephus — ay, so it begins —

'Telephus et Peleus, cum pauper et exul uterque,
Projicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba.'

"I will explain the passage to Mistress Alice," said the Doctor, "when she reminds me of it — or rather," (he added, recollecting that his ordinary dilatory answer on such occasions ought not to be returned when the order for exposition emanated from his Sovereign,) "I will repeat a poor couplet from my own translation of the poem —

'Heroes and kings, in exile forced to roam.

Leave swelling phrase and seven-leagued words at home.'

"A most admirable version, Doctor," said Charles; "I feel all its force, and particularly the beautiful rendering of sesquipedalia verba into seven-leagued boots — words I mean — it reminds me, like half the things I meet with in this world, of the *Contes de Commère L'Oye*." ¹

Thus conversing they reached the Lodge; and as the King went to his chamber to prepare for the breakfast summons, now impending, the idea crossed his mind, "Wilnot, and Villiers, and Killigrew, would laugh at me, did they hear of a campaign in which neither man nor woman had been conquered — But, oddsfish! let them laugh as they will, there is something at my heart which tells me, that for once in my life I have acted well."

That day and the next were spent in tranquillity, the King waiting impatiently for the intelligence, which was to announce to him that a vessel was prepared somewhere on the coast. None such was yet in readiness; but he learned that the indefatigable Albert Lee was, at great personal risk, traversing the sea-coast from town to village, and endeavouring to find means of embarkation among the friends of the royal cause, and the correspondents of Dr. Rochecliffe.

Chapter the Twenty-Ninth.

Ruffian, let go that rude uncivil touch!

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

At this time we should give some account of the other actors in our drama, the interest due to the principal personages having for some time engrossed our attention exclusively.

We are, therefore, to inform the reader, that the lingering longings of the Commissioners, who had been driven forth of their proposed paradise of Woodstock, not by a cherub indeed, but, as they thought, by spirits of another sort, still detained them in the vicinity. They had, indeed, left the little borough under pretence of indifferent accommodation. The more palpable reasons were, that they entertained some resentment against Everard, as the means of their disappointment, and had no mind to reside where their proceedings could be overlooked by him, although they took leave in terms of the utmost respect. They went, however, no farther than Oxford, and remained there, as ravens, who are accustomed to witness the chase, sit upon a tree or crag, at a little distance, and watch the disembowelling of the deer, expecting the relics which fall to their share. Meantime, the University and City, but especially the former, supplied them with some means of employing their various faculties to advantage, until the expected moment, when, as they hoped, they should either be summoned to Windsor, or Woodstock should once more be abandoned to their discretion.

Bletson, to pass the time, vexed the souls of such learned and pious divines and scholars, as he could intrude his hateful presence upon, by sophistry, atheistical discourse, and challenges to them to impugn the most scandalous theses. Desborough, one of the most brutally ignorant men of the period, got himself nominated the head of a college, and lost no time in cutting down trees, and plundering plate. As for Harrison, he preached in full uniform in Saint Mary's Church, wearing his buff-coat, boots, and spurs, as if he were about to take the field for the fight at Armageddon. And it was hard to say, whether the seat of Learning, Religion, and Loyalty, as it is called by Clarendon, was more vexed by the rapine of Desborough, the cold scepticism of Bletson, or the frantic enthusiasm of the Fifth-Monarchy Champion.

Ever and anon, soldiers, under pretence of relieving guard, or otherwise, went and came betwixt Woodstock and Oxford, and maintained, it may be supposed, a correspondence with Trusty Tomkins, who, though he chiefly resided in the town of Woodstock, visited the Lodge occasionally, and to whom, therefore, they doubtless trusted for information concerning the proceedings there.

Indeed, this man Tomkins seemed by some secret means to have gained the confidence in part, if not in whole, of almost every one connected with these intrigues. All closeted him, all conversed with him in private; those who had the means propitiated him with gifts, those who had not were liberal of promises. When he chanced to appear at Woodstock, which always seemed as it were by accident — if he passed through the hall, the knight was sure to ask him to take the foils, and was equally certain to be, after less or more resistance, victorious in the encounter; so, in consideration of so many triumphs, the good Sir Henry almost forgave him the sins of rebellion and puritanism. Then, if his slow and formal step was heard in the passages approaching the gallery, Dr. Rochecliffe, though he never introduced him to his peculiar boudoir, was sure to meet Master Tomkins in some neutral apartment, and to engage him in long conversations, which apparently had great interest for both.

Neither was the Independent's reception below stairs less gracious than above. Joceline failed not to welcome him with the most cordial frankness; the pasty and the flagon were put in immediate requisition, and good cheer was the general word. The means for this, it may be observed, had grown more plenty at Woodstock since the arrival of Dr. Rochecliffe, who, in quality of agent for several royalists, had various sums of money at his disposal. By these funds it is likely that Trusty Tomkins also derived his own full advantage.

In his occasional indulgence in what he called a fleshly frailty, (and for which he said he had a privilege,) which was in truth an attachment to strong liquors, and that in no moderate degree, his language, at other times remarkably decorous and reserved, became wild and animated. He sometimes talked with all the unction of an old debauchee, of former exploits, such as deer-stealing, orchard-robbing, drunken gambols, and desperate affrays in which he had been engaged in the earlier part of his life, sung bacchanalian and amorous ditties, dwelt sometimes upon adventures which drove Phoebe Mayflower from the company, and penetrated even the deaf ears of Dame Jellicot, so as to make the buttery in which he held his carousals no proper place for the poor old woman.

In the middle of these wild rants, Tomkins twice or thrice suddenly ran into religious topics, and spoke mysteriously, but with great animation, and a rich eloquence, on the happy and pre-eminent saints, who were saints, as he termed them, indeed — Men who had stormed the inner treasure-house of Heaven, and possessed themselves of its choicest jewels. All other sects he treated with the utmost contempt, as merely quarrelling, as he expressed it, like hogs over a trough about husks and acorns; under which derogatory terms, he included alike the usual rites and ceremonies of public devotion, the ordinances of the established churches of Christianity, and the observances, nay, the forbearances, enjoined by every class of Christians. Scarcely hearing, and not at all understanding him, Joceline, who seemed his most frequent confidant on such occasions, generally led him back into some strain of rude mirth, or old recollection of follies before the Civil Wars, without caring about or endeavouring to analyze the opinion of this saint of an evil fashion, but fully sensible of the protection which his presence afforded at Woodstock, and confident in the honest meaning of so freespoken a fellow, to whom ale and brandy, when better liquor was not to be come by,

seemed to be principal objects of life, and who drank a health to the King, or any one else, whenever required, provided the cup in which he was to perform the libation were but a brimmer.

These peculiar doctrines, which were entertained by a sect sometimes termed the Family of Love, but more commonly Ranters, had made some progress in times when such variety of religious opinions were prevalent, that men pushed the jarring heresies to the verge of absolute and most impious insanity. Secrecy had been enjoined on these frantic believers in a most blasphemous doctrine, by the fear of consequences, should they come to be generally announced; and it was the care of Master Tomkins to conceal the spiritual freedom which he pretended to have acquired, from all whose resentment would have been stirred by his public avowal of them. This was not difficult; for their profession of faith permitted, nay, required their occasional conformity with the sectaries or professors of any creed which chanced to be uppermost.

Tomkins had accordingly the art to pass himself on Dr. Rochecliffe as still a zealous member of the Church of England, though serving under the enemy's colours, as a spy in their camp; and as he had on several times given him true and valuable intelligence, this active intriguer was the more easily induced to believe his professions.

Nevertheless, lest this person's occasional presence at the Lodge, which there were perhaps no means to prevent without exciting suspicion, should infer danger to the King's person, Rochecliffe, whatever confidence he otherwise reposed in him, recommended that, if possible, the King should keep always out of his sight, and when accidentally discovered, that he should only appear in the character of Louis Kerneguy. Joseph Tomkins, he said, was, he really believed, Honest Joe; but honesty was a horse which might be overburdened, and there was no use in leading our neighbour into temptation.

It seemed as if Tomkins himself had acquiesced in this limitation of confidence exercised towards him, or that he wished to seem blinder than he really was to the presence of this stranger in the family. It occurred to Joceline, who was a very shrewd fellow, that once or twice, when by inevitable accident Tomkins had met Kerneguy, he seemed less interested in the circumstance than he would have expected from the man's disposition, which was naturally prying and inquisitive. "He asked no questions about the young stranger," said Joceline — "God avert that he knows or suspects too much!" But his suspicions were removed, when, in the course of their subsequent conversation, Joseph Tomkins mentioned the King's escape from Bristol as a thing positively certain, and named both the vessel in which, he said, he had gone off, and the master who commanded her, seeming so convinced of the truth of the report, that Joceline judged it impossible he could have the slightest suspicion of the reality.

Yet, notwithstanding this persuasion, and the comradeship which had been established between them, the faithful under-keeper resolved to maintain a strict watch over his gossip Tomkins, and be in readiness to give the alarm should occasion arise. True, he thought, he had reason to believe that his said friend, notwithstanding his drunken and enthusiastic rants, was as trustworthy as he was esteemed by Dr. Rochecliffe; yet still he was an adventurer, the outside and lining of whose cloak were of different colours, and a high reward, and pardon for past acts of malignancy, might tempt him once more to turn his tippet. For these reasons Joceline kept a strict, though unostentatious watch over Trusty Tomkins.

We have said, that the discreet seneschal was universally well received at Woodstock, whether in the borough or at the Lodge, and that even Joceline Joliffe was anxious to conceal any suspicions which he could not altogether repress, under a great show of cordial hospitality. There were, however, two individuals, who, for very different reasons, nourished personal dislike against the individual so generally acceptable.

One was Nehemiah Holdenough, who remembered, with great bitterness of spirit, the Independent's violent intrusion into his pulpit, and who ever spoke of him in private as a lying missionary, into whom Satan had put a spirit of delusion; and preached, besides, a solemn sermon on the subject of the false prophet, out of whose mouth came frogs. The discourse was highly prized by the Mayor and most of the better class, who conceived that their minister had struck a heavy blow at the very root of Independency. On the other hand, those of the private spirit contended, that Joseph Tomkins had made a successful and triumphant rally, in an exhortation on the evening of the same day, in which he proved, to the conviction of many handicraftsmen, that the passage in Jeremiah, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bare rule by their means," was directly applicable to the Presbyterian system of church government. The clergyman dispatched an account of his adversary's conduct to the Reverend Master Edwards, to be inserted in the next edition of Gangraena, as a pestilent heretic; and Tomkins recommended the parson to his master, Desborough, as a good subject on whom to impose a round fine, for vexing the private spirit; assuring him, at the same time, that though the minister might seem poor, yet if a few troopers were quartered on him till the fine was paid, every rich shopkeeper's wife in the borough would rob the till, rather than go without the mammon of unrighteousness with which to redeem their priest from sufferance; holding, according to his expression, with Laban, "You have taken from me my gods, and what have I more?" There was, of course, little cordiality between the polemical disputants, when religious debate took so worldly a turn.

But Joe Tomkins was much more concerned at the evil opinion which seemed to be entertained against him, by one whose good graces he was greatly more desirous to obtain than those of Nehemiah Holdenough. This was no other than pretty Mistress Phoebe Mayflower, for whose conversion he had felt a strong vocation, ever since his lecture upon Shakspeare on their first meeting at the Lodge. He seemed desirous, however, to carry on this more serious work in private, and especially to conceal his labours from his friend Joceline Joliffe, lest, perchance, he had been addicted to jealousy. But it was in vain that he plied the faithful damsel, sometimes with verses from the Canticles, sometimes with quotations from Green's Arcadia, or pithy passages from Venus and Adonis, and doctrines of a nature yet more abstruse, from the popular work entitled Aristotle's Masterpiece. Unto no wooing of his, sacred or profane, metaphysical or physical, would Phoebe Mayflower seriously incline.

The maiden loved Joceline Joliffe, on the one hand; and, on the other, if she disliked Joseph Tomkins when she first saw him, as a rebellious puritan, she had not been at all reconciled by finding reason to regard him as a hypocritical libertine. She hated him in both capacities — never endured his conversation when she could escape from it — and when obliged to remain, listened to him only because she knew he had been so deeply trusted, that to offend him might endanger the security of the family, in the service of which she had been born and bred up, and to whose interest she was devoted. For reasons somewhat similar, she did not suffer her dislike of the steward to become manifest before Joceline Joliffe, whose spirit, as a forester and a soldier, might have been likely to bring matters to an arbitrement, in which the *couteau de chasse* and quarterstaff of her favourite, would have been too unequally matched with the long rapier and pistols which his dangerous rival always carried about his person. But it is difficult to blind jealousy — when there is any cause of doubt; and perhaps the sharp watch maintained by Joceline on his comrade, was prompted not only by his zeal for the King's safety, but by some vague suspicion that Tomkins was not ill disposed to poach upon his own fair manor.

Phoebe, in the meanwhile, like a prudent girl, sheltered herself as much as possible by the presence of Goody Jellicot. Then, indeed, it is true the Independent, or whatever he was, used to follow her with his addresses to very little purpose; for Phoebe seemed as deaf, through wilfulness, as the old matron by natural infirmity. This indifference highly incensed her new lover, and induced him anxiously to watch for a time and place, in which he might plead his suit with an energy that should command attention. Fortune, that malicious goddess, who so often ruins us by granting the very object of our vows, did at length procure him such an opportunity as he had long coveted.

It was about sunset, or shortly after, when Phoebe, upon whose activity much of the domestic arrangements depended, went as far as fair Rosamond's spring to obtain water for the evening meal, or rather to gratify the prejudice of the old knight, who believed that celebrated fountain afforded the choicest supplies of the necessary element. Such was the respect in which he was held by his whole family, that to neglect any of his wishes that could be gratified, though with inconvenience to themselves, would, in their estimation, have been almost equal to a breach of religious duty.

To fill the pitcher had, we know, been of late a troublesome task; but Joceline's ingenuity had so far rendered it easy, by repairing rudely a part of the ruined front of the ancient fountain, that the water was collected, and trickling along a wooden spout, dropped from a height of about two feet. A damsel was thereby enabled to place her pitcher under the slowly dropping supply, and, without toil to herself, might wait till her vessel was filled.

Phoebe Mayflower, on the evening we allude to, saw, for the first time, this little improvement; and, justly considering it as a piece of gallantry of her silvan admirer, designed to save her the trouble of performing her task in a more inconvenient manner, she gratefully employed the minutes of ease which the

contrivance procured her, in reflecting on the good-nature and ingenuity of the obliging engineer, and perhaps in thinking he might have done as wisely to have waited till she came to the fountain, that he might have secured personal thanks for the trouble he had taken. But then she knew he was detained in the buttery with that odious Tomkins, and rather than have seen the Independent along with him, she would have renounced the thought of meeting Joceline.

As she was thus reflecting, Fortune was malicious enough to send Tomkins to the fountain, and without Joceline. When she saw his figure darken the path up which he came, an anxious reflection came over the poor maiden's breast, that she was alone, and within the verge of the forest, where in general persons were prohibited to come during the twilight, for fear of disturbing the deer settling to their repose. She encouraged herself, however, and resolved to show no sense of fear, although, as the steward approached, there was something in the man's look and eye no way calculated to allay her apprehensions.

"The blessings of the evening upon you, my pretty maiden," he said. "I meet you even as the chief servant of Abraham, who was a steward like myself, met Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, at the well of the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia. Shall I not, therefore, say to you, set down thy pitcher that I may drink?"

"The pitcher is at your service, Master Tomkins," she replied, "and you may drink as much as you will; but you have, I warrant, drank better liquor, and that not long since."

It was, indeed, obvious that the steward had arisen from a revel, for his features were somewhat flushed, though he had stopped far short of intoxication. But Phoebe's alarm at his first appearance was rather increased when she observed how he had been lately employed.

"I do but use my privilege, my pretty Rebecca; the earth is given to the saints, and the fulness thereof. They shall occupy and enjoy it, both the riches of the mine, and the treasures of the vine; and they shall rejoice, and their hearts be merry within them. Thou hast yet to learn the privileges of the saints, my Rebecca."

"My name is Phoebe," said the maiden, in order to sober the enthusiastic rapture which he either felt or affected.

"Phoebe after the flesh," he said, "but Rebecca being spiritualised; for art thou not a wandering and stray sheep? — and am I not sent to fetch thee within the fold? — Wherefore else was it said, Thou shalt find her seated by the well, in the wood which is called after the ancient harlot, Rosamond?"

"You have found me sitting here sure enough," said Phoebe; "but if you wish to keep me company, you must walk to the Lodge with me; and you shall carry my pitcher for me, if you will be so kind. I will hear all the good things you have to say to me as we go along. But Sir Henry calls for his glass of water regularly before prayers."

"What!" exclaimed Tomkins, "hath the old man of bloody hand and perverse heart sent thee hither to do the work of a bondswoman? Verily thou shalt return enfranchised; and for the water thou hast drawn for him, it shall be poured forth, even as David caused to be poured forth the water of the well of Bethlehem."

So saying, he emptied the water pitcher, in spite of Phoebe's exclamations and entreaties. He then replaced the vessel beneath the little conduit, and continued:—"Know that this shall be a token to thee. The filling of that pitcher shall be like the running of a sand-glass; and if within the time which shall pass ere it rises to the brim, thou shalt listen to the words which I shall say to thee, then it shall be well with thee, and thy place shall be high among those who, forsaking the instruction which is as milk for babes and sucklings, eat the strong food which nourishes manhood. But if the pitcher shall overbrim with water ere thy ear shall hear and understand, thou shalt then be given as a prey, and as a bondswoman, unto those who shall possess the fat and the fair of the earth."

"You frighten me, Master Tomkins," said Phoebe, "though I am sure you do not mean to do so. I wonder how you dare speak words so like the good words in the Bible, when you know how you laughed at your own master, and all the rest of them — when you helped to play the hobgoblins at the Lodge."

"Think'st thou then, thou simple fool, that in putting that deceit upon Harrison and the rest, I exceeded my privileges? — Nay, verily. — Listen to me, foolish girl. When in former days I lived the most wild, malignant rakehell in Oxfordshire, frequenting wakes and fairs, dancing around May-poles, and showing my lustihood at football and cudgel-playing — Yea, when I was called, in the language of the uncircumcised, Philip Hazeldine, and was one of the singers in the choir, and one of the ringers in the steeple, and served the priest yonder, by name Rochecliffe, I was not farther from the straight road than when, after long reading, I at length found one blind guide after another, all burners of bricks in Egypt. I left them one by one, the poor tool Harrison being the last; and by my own unassisted strength, I have struggled forward to the broad and blessed light, whereof thou too, Phoebe, shalt be partaker."

"I thank you, Master Tomkins," said Phoebe, suppressing some fear under an appearance of indifference; "but I shall have light enough to carry home my pitcher, would you but let me take it; and that is all the want of light I shall have this evening."

So saying, she stooped to take the pitcher from the fountain; but he snatched hold of her by the arm, and prevented her from accomplishing her purpose. Phoebe, however, was the daughter of a bold forester, prompt at thoughts of self-defence; and though she missed getting hold of the pitcher, she caught up instead a large pebble, which she kept concealed in her right hand.

"Stand up, foolish maiden, and listen," said the Independent, sternly; "and know, in one word, that sin, for which the spirit of man is punished with the vengeance of Heaven, lieth not in the corporal act, but in the thought of the sinner. Believe, lovely Phoebe, that to the pure all acts are pure, and that sin is in our thought, not in our actions — even as the radiance of the day is dark to a blind man, but seen and enjoyed by him whose eyes receive it. To him who is but a novice in the things of the spirit, much is enjoined, much is prohibited; and he is fed with milk fit for babes — for him are ordinances, prohibitions, and commands. But the saint is above these ordinances and restraints. — To him, as to the chosen child of the house, is given the pass-key to open all locks which withhold him from the enjoyment of his heart's desire. Into such pleasant paths will I guide thee, lovely Phoebe, as shall unite in joy, in innocent freedom, pleasures, which, to the unprivileged, are sinful and prohibited." "I really wish, Master Tomkins, you would let me go home," said Phoebe, not comprehending the nature of his doctrine, but disliking at once his words and his manner. He went on, however, with the accursed and blasphemous doctrines, which, in common with others of the pretended saints, he had adopted, after having long shifted from one sect to another, until he settled in the vile belief, that sin, being of a character exclusively spiritual, only existed in the thoughts, and that the worst actions were permitted to those who had attained to the pitch of believing themselves above ordinance. "Thus, my Phoebe," he continued, endeavouring to draw her towards him "I can offer thee more than ever was held out to woman since Adam first took his bride by the hand. It shall be for others to stand dry-lipped, doing penance, like papists, by abstinence, when the vessel of pleasure pours forth its delights. Dost thou love money? — I have it, and can procure more — am at liberty to procure it on every hand, and by every means — the earth is mine and its fulness. Do you desire power? — which of these poor cheated commissioner-fellows' estates dost thou covet, I will work it out for thee; for I deal with a mightier spirit than any of them. And it is not without warrant that I have aided the malignant Rochecliffe, and the clown Joliffe, to frighten and baffle them in the guise they did. Ask what thou wilt, Phoebe, I can give, or I can procure it for thee — Then enter with me into a life of delight in this world, which shall prove but an anticipation of the joys of Paradise hereafter!"

Again the fanatical voluptuary endeavoured to pull the poor girl towards him, while she, alarmed, but not scared out of her presence of mind, endeavoured, by fair entreaty, to prevail on him to release her. But his features, in themselves not marked, had acquired a frightful expression, and he exclaimed, "No, Phoebe — do not think to escape — thou art given to me as a captive — thou hast neglected the hour of grace, and it has glided past — See, the water trickles over thy pitcher, which was to be a sign between us — Therefore I will urge thee no more with words, of which thou art not worthy, but treat thee as a recusant of offered grace."

"Master Tomkins," said Phoebe, in an imploring tone, "consider, for God's sake, I am a fatherless child — do me no injury, it would be a shame to your strength and your manhood — I cannot understand your fine words — I will think on them till tomorrow." Then, in rising resentment, she added more vehemently — "I will not be used rudely — stand off, or I will do you a mischief." But, as he pressed upon her with a violence, of which the object could not be mistaken, and endeavoured to secure her right hand, she exclaimed, "Take it then, with a wanion to you!" — and struck him an almost stunning blow on the face, with the pebble which she held ready for such an extremity.

The fanatic let her go, and staggered backward, half stupified; while Phoebe instantly betook herself to flight, screaming for help as she ran, but still grasping the victorious pebble. Irritated to frenzy by the severe blow which he had received, Tomkins pursued, with every black passion in his soul and in his face, mingled with fear least his villany should be discovered. He called on Phoebe loudly to stop, and had the brutality to menace her with one of his pistols if she continued to fly. Yet she slackened not her pace for his threats, and he must either have executed them, or seen her escape to carry the tale to the Lodge, had she not unhappily

stumbled over the projecting root of a fir-tree. But as he rushed upon his prey, rescue interposed in the person of Joceline Joliffe, with his quarterstaff on his shoulder. "How now? what means this?" he said, stepping between Phoebe and her pursuer. Tomkins, already roused to fury, made no other answer than by discharging at Joceline the pistol which he held in his hand. The ball grazed the under keeper's face, who, in requital of the assault, and saying "Aha! Let ash answer iron," applied his quarterstaff with so much force to the Independent's head, that lighting on the left temple, the blow proved almost instantly mortal. A few convulsive struggles were accompanied with these broken words — "Joceline — I am gone — but I forgive thee — Doctor Rochecliffe — I wish I had minded more — Oh! — the clergyman — the funeral service" — As he uttered these words, indicative, it may be, of his return to a creed, which perhaps he had never abjured so thoroughly as he had persuaded himself, his voice was lost in a groan, which, rattling in the throat, seemed unable to find its way to the air. These were the last symptoms of life: the clenched hands presently relaxed — the closed eyes opened, and stared on the heavens a lifeless jelly — the limbs extended themselves and stiffened. The body, which was lately animated with life, was now a lump of senseless clay — the soul, dismissed from its earthly tenement in a moment so unhallowed, was gone before the judgment-seat.

"Oh, what have you done? — what have you done, Joceline!" exclaimed Phoebe; "you have killed the man!"

"Better than he should have killed me," answered Joceline; "for he was none of the blinkers that miss their mark twice running. — And yet I am sorry for him. — Many a merry bout have we had together when he was wild Philip Hazeldine, and then he was bad enough; but since he daubed over his vices with hypocrisy, he seems to have proved worse devil than ever."

"Oh, Joceline, come away," said poor Phoebe, "and do not stand gazing on him thus;" for the woodsman, resting on his fatal weapon, stood looking down on the corpse with the appearance of a man half stunned at the event.

"This comes of the ale pitcher," she continued, in the true style of female consolation, "as I have often told you — For Heaven's sake, come to the Lodge, and let us consult what is to be done."

"Stay first, girl, and let me drag him out of the path; we must not have him lie herein all men's sight — Will you not help me, wench?"

"I cannot, Joceline — I would not touch a lock on him for all Woodstock."

"I must to this gear myself, then," said Joceline, who, a soldier as well as a woodsman, still had great reluctance to the necessary task. Something in the face and broken words of the dying man had made a deep and terrific impression on nerves not easily shaken. He accomplished it, however, so far as to drag the late steward out of the open path, and bestow his body amongst the undergrowth of brambles and briers, so as not to be visible unless particularly looked for. He then returned to Phoebe, who had sate speechless all the while beneath the tree over whose roots she had stumbled.

"Come away, wench," he said, "come away to the Lodge, and let us study how this is to be answered for — the mishap of his being killed will strangely increase our danger. What had he sought of thee, wench, when you ran from him like a madwoman? — But I can guess — Phil was always a devil among the girls, and I think, as Doctor Rochecliffe says, that, since he turned saint, he took to himself seven devils worse than himself. — Here is the very place where I saw him, with his sword in his hand raised against the old knight, and he a child of the parish — it was high treason at least — but, by my faith, he hath paid for it at last."

"But, oh, Joceline," said Phoebe, "how could you take so wicked a man into your counsels, and join him in all his plots about scaring the roundhead gentlemen?"

"Why look thee, wench, I thought I knew him at the first meeting especially when Bevis, who was bred here when he was a dog-leader, would not fly at him; and when we made up our old acquaintance at the Lodge, I found he kept up a close correspondence with Doctor Rochecliffe, who was persuaded that he was a good King's man, and held consequently good intelligence with him. — The doctor boasts to have learned much through his means; I wish to Heaven he may not have been as communicative in turn."

"Oh, Joceline," said the waiting-woman, "you should never have let him within the gate of the Lodge!"

"No more I would, if I had known how to keep him out; but when he went so frankly into our scheme, and told me how I was to dress myself like Robinson the player, whose ghost haunted Harrison — I wish no ghost may haunt me! — when he taught me how to bear myself to terrify his lawful master, what could I think, wench? I only trust the Doctor has kept the great secret of all from his knowledge. — But here we are at the Lodge. Go to thy chamber, wench, and compose thyself. I must seek out Doctor Rochecliffe; he is ever talking of his quick and ready invention. Here come times, I think, that will demand it all."

Phoebe went to her chamber accordingly; but the strength arising from the pressure of danger giving way when the danger was removed, she quickly fell into a succession of hysterical fits, which required the constant attention of Dame Jellicot, and the less alarmed, but more judicious care of Mistress Alice, before they even abated in their rapid recurrence.

The under-keeper carried his news to the politic Doctor, who was extremely disconcerted, alarmed, nay angry with Joceline, for having slain a person on whose communications he had accustomed himself to rely. Yet his looks declared his suspicion, whether his confidence had not been too rashly conferred — a suspicion which pressed him the more anxiously, that he was unwilling to avow it, as a derogation from his character for shrewdness, on which he valued himself.

Dr. Rochecliffe's reliance, however, on the fidelity of Tomkins, had apparently good grounds. Before the Civil Wars, as may be partly collected from what has been already hinted at, Tomkins, under his true name of Hazeldine, had been under the protection of the Rector of Woodstock, occasionally acted as his clerk, was a distinguished member of his choir, and, being a handy and ingenious fellow, was employed in assisting the antiquarian researches of Dr. Rochecliffe through the interior of Woodstock. When he engaged in the opposite side in the Civil Wars, he still kept up his intelligence with the divine, to whom he had afforded what seemed valuable information from time to time. His assistance had latterly been eminently useful in aiding the Doctor, with the assistance of Joceline and Phoebe, in contriving and executing the various devices by which the Parliamentary Commissioners had been expelled from Woodstock. Indeed, his services in this respect had been thought worthy of no less a reward than a present of what plate remained at the Lodge, which had been promised to the Independent accordingly. The Doctor, therefore, while admitting he might be a bad man, regretted him as a useful one, whose death, if enquired after, was likely to bring additional danger on a house which danger already surrounded, and which contained a pledge so precious.

Chapter the Thirtieth.

CASSIO. *That thrust had been my enemy indeed,
But that my coat is better than thou know'st.*

OTHELLO.

On the dark October night succeeding the evening on which Tomkins was slain, Colonel Everard, besides his constant attendant Roger Wildrake, had Master Nehemiah Holdenough with him as a guest at supper. The devotions of the evening having been performed according to the Presbyterian fashion, a light entertainment, and a double quart of burnt claret, were placed before his friends at nine o'clock, an hour unusually late. Master Holdenough soon engaged himself in a polemical discourse against Sectaries and Independents, without being aware that his eloquence was not very interesting to his principal hearer, whose ideas in the meanwhile wandered to Woodstock and all which it contained — the Prince, who lay concealed there — his uncle — above all, Alice Lee. As for Wildrake, after bestowing a mental curse both on Sectaries and Presbyterians, as being, in his opinion, never a barrel the better herring, he stretched out his limbs, and would probably have composed himself to rest, but that he as well as his patron had thoughts which murdered sleep.

The party were waited upon by a little gipsy-looking boy, in an orange-tawny doublet, much decayed, and garnished with blue worsted lace. The rogue looked somewhat stinted in size, but active both in intelligence and in limb, as his black eyes seemed to promise by their vivacity. He was an attendant of Wildrake's choice, who had conferred on him the *nom de guerre* of Spitfire, and had promised him promotion so soon as his young protégé, Breakfast, was fit to succeed him in his present office. It need scarce be said that the manège was maintained entirely at the expense of Colonel Everard, who allowed Wildrake to arrange the household very much according to his pleasure. The page did not omit, in offering the company wine from time to time, to accommodate Wildrake with about twice the number of opportunities of refreshing himself which he considered it necessary to afford to the Colonel or his reverend guest.

While they were thus engaged, the good divine lost in his own argument, and the hearers in their private thoughts, their attention was about half-past ten arrested by a knocking at the door of the house. To those who have anxious hearts, trifles give cause of alarm.

Even a thing so simple as a knock at the door may have a character which excites apprehension. This was no quiet gentle tap, intimating a modest intruder; no redoubled rattle, as the pompous annunciation of some vain person; neither did it resemble the formal summons to formal business, nor the cheerful visit of some welcome friend. It was a single blow, solemn and stern, if not actually menacing in the sound. The door was opened by some of the persons of the house; a heavy foot ascended the stair, a stout man entered the room, and drawing the cloak from his face, said, "Markham Everard, I greet thee in God's name." It was General Cromwell.

Everard, surprised and taken at unawares, endeavoured in vain to find words to express his astonishment. A bustle occurred in receiving the General, assisting him to uncloak himself, and offering in dumb show the civilities of reception. The General cast his keen eye around the apartment, and fixing it first on the divine, addressed Everard as follows: "A reverend man I see is with thee. Thou art not one of those, good Markham, who let the time unnoted and unimproved pass away. Casting aside the things of this world — pressing forward to those of the next — it is by thus using our time in this poor seat of terrestrial sin and care, that we may, as it were — But how is this?" he continued, suddenly changing his tone, and speaking briefly, sharply, and anxiously; "one hath left the room since I entered?"

Wildrake had, indeed, been absent for a minute or two, but had now returned, and stepped forward from a bay window, as if he had been out of sight only, not out of the apartment. "Not so, sir; I stood but in the background out of respect. Noble General, I hope all is well with the Estate, that your Excellency makes us so late a visit? Would not your Excellency choose some?"

"Ah!" said Oliver, looking sternly and fixedly at him — "Our trusty Go-between — our faithful confidant. — No, sir; at present I desire nothing more than a kind reception, which, methinks, my friend Markham Everard is in no hurry to give me."

"You bring your own welcome, my lord," said Everard, compelling himself to speak. "I can only trust it was no bad news that made your Excellency a late traveller, and ask, like my follower, what refreshment I shall command for your accommodation."

"The state is sound and healthy, Colonel Everard," said the General; "and yet the less so, that many of its members, who have been hitherto workers together, and propounders of good counsel, and advancers of the public weal, have now waxed cold in their love and in their affection for the Good Cause, for which we should be ready, in our various degrees, to act and do so soon as we are called to act that whereunto we are appointed, neither rashly nor over-slothfully, neither lukewarmly nor over-violently, but with such a frame and disposition, in which zeal and charity may, as it were, meet and kiss each other in our streets. Howbeit, because we look back after we have put our hand to the plough, therefore is our force waxed dim."

"Pardon me, sir," said Nehemiah Holdenough, who, listening with some impatience, began to guess in whose company he stood — "Pardon me, for unto this I have a warrant to speak."

"Ah! ah!" said Cromwell. "Surely, most worthy sir, we grieve the Spirit when we restrain those pourings forth, which, like water from a rock" —

"Nay, therein I differ from you, sir," said Holdenough; "for as there is the mouth to transmit the food, and the profit to digest what Heaven hath sent; so is the preacher ordained to teach and the people to hear; the shepherd to gather the flock into the sheepfold, the sheep to profit by the care of the shepherd."

"Ah! my worthy sir," said Cromwell, with much unction, "methinks you verge upon the great mistake, which supposes that churches are tall large houses built by masons, and hearers are men — wealthy men, who pay tithes, the larger as well as the less; and that the priests, men in black gowns or grey cloaks, who receive the same, are in guerdon the only distributors of Christian blessings; whereas, in my apprehension, there is more of Christian liberty in leaving it to the discretion of the hungry soul to seek his edification where it can be found, whether from the mouth of a lay teacher, who claimeth his warrant from Heaven alone, or at the dispensation of those who take ordinations and degrees from synods and universities, at best but associations of poor sinful creatures like themselves."

"You speak you know not what, sir," replied Holdenough, impatiently. "Can light come out of darkness, sense out of ignorance, or knowledge of the mysteries of religion from such ignorant mediciners as give poisons instead of wholesome medicaments, and cram with filth the stomachs of such as seek to them for food?" This, which the Presbyterian divine uttered rather warmly, the General answered with the utmost mildness.

"Lack-a-day, lack-a-day! a learned man, but intemperate; over-zeal hath eaten him up. — A well-a-day, sir, you may talk of your regular gospel-meals, but a word spoken in season by one whose heart is with your heart, just perhaps when you are riding on to encounter an enemy, or are about to mount a breach, is to the poor spirit like a rasher on the coals, which the hungry shall find preferable to a great banquet, at such times when the full soul loatheth the honey-comb. Nevertheless, although I speak thus in my poor judgment, I would not put force on the conscience of any man, leaving to the learned to follow the learned, and the wise to be instructed by the wise, while poor simple wretched souls are not to be denied a drink from the stream which runneth by the way. — Ay, verily, it will be a comely sight in England when men shall go on as in a better world, bearing with each other's infirmities, joining in each other's comforts. — Ay, truly, the rich drink out of silver flagons, and goblets of silver, the poor out of paltry bowls of wood — and even so let it be, since they both drink the same element."

Here an officer opened the door and looked in, to whom Cromwell, exchanging the canting drawl, in which it seemed he might have gone on interminably, for the short brief tone of action, called out, "Pearson, is he come?"

"No, sir," replied Pearson; "we have enquired for him at the place you noted, and also at other haunts of his about the town."

"The knave!" said Cromwell, with bitter emphasis; "can he have proved false? — No, no, his interest is too deeply engaged. We shall find him by and by. Hark thee hither."

While this conversation was going forward, the reader must imagine the alarm of Everard. He was certain that the personal attendance of Cromwell must be on some most important account, and he could not but strongly suspect that the General had some information respecting Charles's lurking place. If taken, a renewal of the tragedy of the 30th of January was instantly to be apprehended, and the ruin of the whole family of Lee, with himself probably included, must be the necessary consequence.

He looked eagerly for consolation at Wildrake, whose countenance expressed much alarm, which he endeavoured to bear out with his usual look of confidence. But the weight within was too great; he shuffled with his feet, rolled his eyes, and twisted his hands, like an unassured witness before an acute and not to be deceived judge.

Oliver, meanwhile, left his company not a minute's leisure to take counsel together. Even while his perplexed eloquence flowed on in a stream so mazy that no one could discover which way its course was tending, his sharp watchful eye rendered all attempts of Everard to hold communication with Wildrake, even by signs, altogether vain. Everard, indeed, looked for an instant at the window, then glanced at Wildrake, as if to hint there might be a possibility to escape that way. But the cavalier had replied with a disconsolate shake of the head, so slight as to be almost imperceptible. Everard, therefore, lost all hope, and the melancholy feeling of approaching and inevitable evil, was only varied by anxiety concerning the shape and manner in which it was about to make its approach.

But Wildrake had a spark of hope left. The very instant Cromwell entered he had got out of the room, and down to the door of the house. "Back — back!" repeated by two armed sentinels, convinced him that, as his fears had anticipated, the General had come neither unattended nor unprepared. He turned on his heel, ran up stairs, and meeting on the landing-place the boy whom he called Spitfire, hurried him into the small apartment which he occupied as his own. Wildrake had been shooting that morning, and game lay on the table. He pulled a feather from a woodcock's wing, and saying hastily, "For thy life, Spitfire, mind my orders — I will put thee safe out at the window into the court — the yard wall is not high — and there will be no sentry there — Fly to the Lodge, as thou wouldst win Heaven, and give this feather to Mistress Alice Lee, if possible — if not, to Joceline Joliffe — say I have won the wages of the young lady. Dost mark me, boy?"

The sharp-witted youth clapped his hand in his master's, and only replied, "Done, and done."

Wildrake opened the window, and, though the height was considerable, he contrived to let the boy down safely by holding his cloak. A heap of straw on which Spitfire lighted rendered the descent perfectly safe, and Wildrake saw him scramble over the wall of the court-yard, at the angle which bore on a back lane; and so rapidly was this accomplished, that the cavalier had just re-entered the room, when, the bustle attending Cromwell's arrival subsiding, his own absence began to be noticed.

He remained during Cromwell's lecture on the vanity of creeds, anxious in mind whether he might not have done better to send an explicit verbal message, since there was no time to write. But the chance of the boy being stopped, or becoming confused with feeling himself the messenger of a hurried and important communication, made him, on the whole, glad that he had preferred a more enigmatical way of conveying the intelligence. He had, therefore, the advantage of his patron, for he was conscious still of a spark of hope.

Pearson had scarce shut the door, when Holdenough, as ready in arms against the future Dictator as he had been prompt to encounter the supposed phantoms and fiends of Woodstock, resumed his attack upon the schismatics, whom he undertook to prove to be at once soul-slayers, false brethren, and false messengers; and was proceeding to allege texts in behalf of his proposition, when Cromwell, apparently tired of the discussion, and desirous to introduce a discourse more accordant with his real feelings, interrupted him, though very civilly, and took the discourse into his own hands.

"Lack-a-day," he said, "the good man speaks truth, according to his knowledge and to his lights — ay, bitter truths, and hard to be digested, while we see as men see, and not with the eyes of angels. — False messengers, said the reverend man? — ay, truly, the world is full of such. You shall see them who will carry your secret message to the house of your mortal foe, and will say to him, 'Lo! my master is going forth with a small train, by such and such desolate places; be you speedy, therefore, that you may arise and slay him.' And another, who knoweth where the foe of your house, and enemy of your person, lies hidden, shall, instead of telling his master thereof, carry tidings to the enemy even where he lurketh, saying, 'Lo! my master knoweth of your secret abode — up now, and fly, lest he come on thee like a lion on his prey.' — But shall this go without punishment?" looking at Wildrake with a withering glance. "Now, as my soul liveth, and as He liveth who hath made me a ruler in Israel, such false messengers shall be knitted to gibbets on the wayside, and their right hands shall be nailed above their heads, in an extended position, as if pointing out to others the road from which they themselves have strayed!"

"Surely," said Master Holdenough, "it is right to cut off such offenders."

"Thank ye, Mass-John," muttered Wildrake; "when did the Presbyterian fail to lend the devil a shove?"

"But, I say," continued Holdenough, "that the matter is estranged from our present purpose, for the false brethren of whom I spoke are" —

"Right, excellent sir, they be those of our own house," answered Cromwell; "the good man is right once more. Ay, of whom can we now say that he is a true brother, although he has lain in the same womb with us? Although we have struggled in the same cause, eat at the same table, fought in the same battle, worshipped at the same throne, there shall be no truth in him. — Ah, Markham Everard, Markham Everard!"

He paused at this ejaculation; and Everard, desirous at once of knowing how far he stood committed, replied, "Your Excellency seems to have something in your mind in which I am concerned. May I request you will speak it out, that I may know what I am accused of?"

"Ah, Mark, Mark," replied the General, "there needeth no accuser speak when the still small voice speaks within us. Is there not moisture on thy brow, Mark Everard? Is there not trouble in thine eye? Is there not a failure in thy frame? And who ever saw such things in noble and stout Markham Everard, whose brow was only moist after having worn the helmet for a summer's day; whose hand only shook when it had wielded for hours the weighty falchion? — But go to, man! thou doubtst over much. Hast thou not been to me as a brother, and shall I not forgive thee even the seventy-seventh time? The knave hath tarried somewhere, who should have done by this time an office of much import. Take advantage of his absence, Mark; it is a grace that God gives thee beyond expectance. I do not say, fall at my feet; but speak to me as a friend to his friend."

"I have never said any thing to your Excellency that was in the least undeserving the title you have assigned to me," said Colonel Everard, proudly.

"Nay, nay, Markham," answered Cromwell; "I say not you have. But — but you ought to have remembered the message I sent you by that person" (pointing to Wildrake); "and you must reconcile it with your conscience, how, having such a message, guarded with such reasons, you could think yourself at liberty to expel my friends from Woodstock, being determined to disappoint my object, whilst you availed yourself of the boon, on condition of which my warrant was issued."

Everard was about to reply, when, to his astonishment, Wildrake stepped forward; and with a voice and look very different from his ordinary manner, and approaching a good deal to real dignity of mind, said, boldly and calmly, "You are mistaken, Master Cromwell; and address yourself to the wrong party here."

The speech was so sudden and intrepid that Cromwell stepped a pace back, and motioned with his right hand towards his weapon, as if he had expected that an address of a nature so unusually bold was to be followed by some act of violence. He instantly resumed his indifferent posture; and, irritated at a smile which he observed on Wildrake's countenance, he said, with the dignity of one long accustomed to see all tremble before him, "This to me, fellow! Know you to whom you speak?"

"Fellow!" echoed Wildrake, whose reckless humour was now completely set afloat — "No fellow of yours, Master Oliver. I have known the day when Roger Wildrake of Squattlesea-mere, Lincoln, a handsome young gallant, with a good estate, would have been thought no fellow of the bankrupt brewer of Huntingdon."

"Be silent!" said Everard; "be silent, Wildrake, if you love your life!"

"I care not a maravedi for my life," said Wildrake. "Zounds, if he dislikes what I say, let him take to his tools! I know, after all, he hath good blood in his veins! and I will indulge him with a turn in the court yonder, had he been ten times a brewer."

"Such ribaldry, friend," said Oliver, "I treat with the contempt it deserves. But if thou hast any thing to say touching the matter in question speak out like a man, though thou look'st more like a beast."

"All I have to say is," replied Wildrake, "that whereas you blame Everard for acting on your warrant, as you call it, I can tell you he knew not a word of the rascally conditions you talk of. I took care of that; and you may take the vengeance on me, if you list."

"Slave! dare you tell this to *me*?" said Cromwell, still heedfully restraining his passion, which he felt was about to discharge itself upon an unworthy object.

"Ay, you will make every Englishman a slave, if you have your own way," said Wildrake, not a whit abashed; — for the awe which had formerly overcome him when alone with this remarkable man, had vanished, now that they were engaged in an altercation before witnesses. — "But do your worst, Master Oliver; I tell you beforehand, the bird has escaped you."

"You dare not say so! — Escaped? — So ho! Pearson! tell the soldiers to mount instantly. — Thou art a lying fool! — Escaped? — Where, or from whence?"

"Ay, that is the question," said Wildrake; "for look you, sir — that men do go from hence is certain — but how they go, or to what quarter" —

Cromwell stood attentive, expecting some useful hint from the careless impetuosity of the cavalier, upon the route which the King might have taken.

— "Or to what quarter, as I said before, why, your Excellency, Master Oliver, may e'en find that out yourself."

As he uttered the last words he unsheathed his rapier, and made a full pass at the General's body. Had his sword met no other impediment than the buff jerkin, Cromwell's course had ended on the spot. But, fearful of such attempts, the General wore under his military dress a shirt of the finest mail, made of rings of the best steel, and so light and flexible that it was little or no encumbrance to the motions of the wearer. It proved his safety on this occasion, for the rapier sprung in shivers; while the owner, now held back by Everard and Holdenough, flung the hilt with passion on the ground, exclaiming, "Be damned the hand that forged thee! — To serve me so long, and fail me when thy true service would have honoured us both for ever! But no good could come of thee, since thou wert pointed, even in jest, at a learned divine of the Church of England."

In the first instant of alarm — and perhaps suspecting Wildrake might be supported by others, Cromwell half drew from his bosom a concealed pistol, which he hastily returned, observing that both Everard and the clergyman were withholding the cavalier from another attempt.

Pearson and a soldier or two rushed in — "Secure that fellow," said the General, in the indifferent tone of one to whom imminent danger was too familiar to cause irritation — "Bind him — but not so hard, Pearson;" — for the men, to show their zeal, were drawing their belts, which they used for want of cords, brutally tight round Wildrake's limbs. "He would have assassinated me, but I would reserve him for his fit doom."

"Assassinated! — I scorn your words, Master Oliver," said Wildrake; "I proffered you a fair duello."

"Shall we shoot him in the street, for an example?" said Pearson to Cromwell; while Everard endeavoured to stop Wildrake from giving further offence.

"On your life harm him not; but let him be kept in safe ward, and well looked after," said Cromwell; while the prisoner exclaimed to Everard, "I prithee let me alone — I am now neither thy follower, nor any man's, and I am as willing to die as ever I was to take a cup of liquor. — And hark ye, speaking of that, Master Oliver,

you were once a jolly fellow, prithee let one of thy lobsters here advance yonder tankard to my lips, and your Excellency shall hear a toast, a song, and a — secret.”

“Unloose his head, and hand the debauched beast the tankard,” said Oliver; “while yet he exists, it were shame to refuse him the element he lives in.”

“Blessings on your head for once,” said Wildrake, whose object in continuing this wild discourse was, if possible, to gain a little delay, when every moment was precious. “Thou hast brewed good ale, and that’s warrant for a blessing. For my toast and my song, here they go together —

Son of a witch,

Mayst thou die in a ditch,

With the hutchers who back thy quarrels;

And rot above ground,

While the world shall resound

A welcome to Royal King Charles.

And now for my secret, that you may not say I had your liquor for nothing — I fancy my song will scarce pass current for much — My secret is, Master Cromwell — that the bird is flown — and your red nose will be as white as your winding-sheet before you can smell out which way.”

“Pshaw, rascal,” answered Cromwell, contemptuously, “keep your scurrile jests for the gibbet foot.”

“I shall look on the gibbet more boldly,” replied Wildrake, “than I have seen you look on the Royal Martyr’s picture.”

This reproach touched Cromwell to the very quick. — “Villain!” he exclaimed; “drag him hence, draw out a party, and — But hold, not now — to prison with him — let him be close watched, and gagged, if he attempts to speak to the sentinels — Nay, hold — I mean, put a bottle of brandy into his cell, and he will gag himself in his own way, I warrant you — When day comes, that men can see the example, he shall be gagged after my fashion.”

During the various breaks in his orders, the General was evidently getting command of his temper; and though he began in fury, he ended with the contemptuous sneer of one who overlooks the abusive language of an inferior. Something remained on his mind notwithstanding, for he continued standing, as if fixed to the same spot in the apartment, his eyes bent on the ground, and with closed hand pressed against his lips, like a man who is musing deeply. Pearson, who was about to speak to him, drew back, and made a sign to those in the room to be silent.

Master Holdenough did not mark, or, at least, did not obey it. Approaching the General, he said, in a respectful but firm tone, “Did I understand it to be your Excellency’s purpose that this poor man shall die next morning?”

“Hah!” exclaimed Cromwell, starting from his reverie, “what say’st thou?”

“I took leave to ask, if it was your will that this unhappy man should die tomorrow?”

“Whom saidst thou?” demanded Cromwell: “Markham Everard — shall he die, saidst thou?”

“God forbid!” replied Holdenough, stepping back — “I asked whether this blinded creature, Wildrake, was to be so suddenly cut off?”

“Ay, marry is he,” said Cromwell, “were the whole General Assembly of Divines at Westminster — the whole Sanhedrim of Presbytery — to offer bail for him.”

“If you will not think better of it, sir,” said Holdenough, “at least give not the poor man the means of destroying his senses — Let me go to him as a divine, to watch with him, in case he may yet be admitted into the vineyard at the latest hour — yet brought into the sheepfold, though he has neglected the call of the pastor till time is wellnigh closed upon him.”

“For God’s sake,” said Everard, who had hitherto kept silence, because he knew Cromwell’s temper on such occasions, “think better of what you do!”

“Is it for thee to teach me?” replied Cromwell; “think thou of thine own matters, and believe me it will require all thy wit. — And for you, reverend sir, I will have no father-confessors attend my prisoners — no tales out of school. If the fellow thirsts after ghostly comfort, as he is much more like to thirst after a quarter of brandy, there is Corporal Humgudgeon, who commands the *corps de garde*, will preach and pray as well as the best of ye. — But this delay is intolerable — Comes not this fellow yet?”

“No, sir,” replied Pearson. “Had we not better go down to the Lodge? The news of our coming hither may else get there before us.”

“True,” said Cromwell, speaking aside to his officer, “but you know Tomkins warned us against doing so, alleging there were so many postern-doors, and sallyports, and concealed entrances in the old house, that it was like a rabbit-warren, and that an escape might be easily made under our very noses, unless he were with us, to point out all the ports which should be guarded. He hinted, too, that he might be delayed a few minutes after his time of appointment — but we have now waited half-an-hour.”

“Does your Excellency think Tomkins is certainly to be depended upon?” said Pearson.

“As far as his interest goes, unquestionably,” replied the General. “He has ever been the pump by which I have sucked the marrow out of many a plot, in special those of the conceited fool Rochecliffe, who is goose enough to believe that such a fellow as Tomkins would value any thing beyond the offer of the best bidder. And yet it groweth late — I fear we must to the Lodge without him — Yet, all things well considered, I will tarry here till midnight. — Ah! Everard, thou mightest put this gear to rights if thou wilt! Shall some foolish principle of fantastic punctilio have more weight with thee, man, than have the pacification and welfare of England; the keeping of faith to thy friend and benefactor, and who will be yet more so, and the fortune and security of thy relations? Are these, I say, lighter in the balance than the cause of a worthless boy, who, with his father and his father’s house, have troubled Israel for fifty years?”

“I do not understand your Excellency, nor at what service you point, which I can honestly render,” replied Everard. “That which is dishonest I should be loth that you proposed.”

“Then this at least might suit your honesty, or scrupulous humour, call it which thou wilt,” said Cromwell. “Thou knowest, surely, all the passages about Jezebel’s palace down yonder? — Let me know how they may be guarded against the escape of any from within.”

“I cannot pretend to aid you in this matter,” said Everard; “I know not all the entrances and posterns about Woodstock, and if I did, I am not free in conscience to communicate with you on this occasion.”

“We shall do without you, sir,” replied Cromwell, haughtily; “and if aught is found which may criminate you, remember you have lost right to my protection.”

“I shall be sorry,” said Everard, “to have lost your friendship, General; but I trust my quality as an Englishman may dispense with the necessity of protection from any man. I know no law which obliges me to be spy or informer, even if I were in the way of having opportunity to do service in either honourable capacity.”

“Well, sir,” said Cromwell, “for all your privileges and qualities, I will make bold to take you down to the Lodge at Woodstock to-night, to enquire into affairs in which the State is concerned. — Come hither, Pearson.” He took a paper from his pocket, containing a rough sketch or ground-plan of Woodstock Lodge, with the avenues leading to it. — “Look here,” he said, “we must move in two bodies on foot, and with all possible silence — thou must march to the rear of the old house of iniquity with twenty file of men, and dispose them around it the wisest thou canst. Take the reverend man there along with you. He must be secured at any rate, and may serve as a guide. I myself will occupy the front of the Lodge, and thus having stopt all the earths, thou wilt come to me for farther orders — silence and dispatch is all. — But for the dog Tomkins, who broke appointment with me, he had need render a good excuse, or woe to his father’s son! — Reverend sir, be pleased to accompany that officer. — Colonel Everard, you are to follow me; but first give your sword to Captain Pearson, and consider yourself as under arrest.”

Everard gave his sword to Pearson without any comment, and with the most anxious presage of evil followed the Republican General, in obedience to commands which it would have been useless to dispute.

Chapter the Thirty-First.

“Were my son William here but now,

He wadna fail the pledge.”

Wi’ that in at the door there ran

A ghastly-looking page —

*"I saw them, master, O! I saw,
Beneath the thornie brae,
Of black-mail'd warriors many a rank;
'Revenge!' he cried, 'and gae.'"*

HENRY MACKENZIE.

The little party at the Lodge were assembled at supper, at the early hour of eight o'clock. Sir Henry Lee, neglecting the food that was placed on the table, stood by a lamp on the chimney-piece, and read a letter with mournful attention.

"Does my son write to you more particularly than to me, Doctor Rochecliffe?" said the knight. "He only says here, that he will return probably this night; and that Master Kerneguy must be ready to set off with him instantly. What can this haste mean? Have you heard of any new search after our suffering party? I wish they would permit me to enjoy my son's company in quiet but for a day."

"The quiet which depends on the wicked ceasing from troubling," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "is connected, not by days and hours, but by minutes. Their glut of blood at Worcester had satiated them for a moment, but their appetite, I fancy, has revived."

"You have news, then, to that purpose?" said Sir Henry.

"Your son," replied the Doctor, "wrote to me by the same messenger: he seldom fails to do so, being aware of what importance it is that I should know every thing that passes. Means of escape are provided on the coast, and Master Kerneguy must be ready to start with your son the instant he appears."

"It is strange," said the knight; "for forty years I have dwelt in this house, man and boy, and the point only was how to make the day pass over our heads; for if I did not scheme out some hunting match or hawking, or the like, I might have sat here on my arm-chair, as undisturbed as a sleeping dormouse, from one end of the year to the other; and now I am more like a hare on her form, that dare not sleep unless with her eyes open, and scuds off when the wind rustles among the fern."

"It is strange," said Alice, looking at Dr. Rochecliffe, "that the roundhead steward has told you nothing of this. He is usually communicative enough of the motions of his party; and I saw you close together this morning."

"I must be closer with him this evening," said the Doctor gloomily; "but he will not blab."

"I wish you may not trust him too much," said Alice in reply. — "To me, that man's face, with all its shrewdness, evinces such a dark expression, that methinks I read treason in his very eye."

"Be assured, that matter is looked to," answered the Doctor, in the same ominous tone as before. No one replied, and there was a chilling and anxious feeling of apprehension which seemed to sink down on the company at once, like those sensations which make such constitutions as are particularly subject to the electrical influence, conscious of an approaching thunder-storm.

The disguised Monarch, apprised that day to be prepared on short notice to quit his temporary asylum, felt his own share of the gloom which involved the little society. But he was the first also to shake it off, as what neither suited his character nor his situation. Gaiety was the leading distinction of the former, and presence of mind, not depression of spirits, was required by the latter.

"We make the hour heavier," he said, "by being melancholy about it. Had you not better join me, Mistress Alice, in Patrick Carey's jovial farewell? — Ah, you do not know Pat Carey — a younger brother of Lord Falkland's?"

"A brother of the immortal Lord Falkland's, and write songs!" said the Doctor.

"Oh, Doctor, the Muses take tithe as well as the Church," said Charles, "and have their share in every family of distinction. You do not know the words, Mistress Alice, but you can aid me, notwithstanding, in the burden at least —

'Come, now that we're parting, and 'tis one to ten
If the towers of sweet Woodstock I e'er see agen,
Let us e'en have a frolic, and drink like tall men,
While the goblet goes merrily round."

The song arose, but not with spirit. It was one of those efforts at forced mirth, by which, above all other modes of expressing it, the absence of real cheerfulness is most distinctly animated. Charles stopt the song, and upbraided the choristers.

"You sing, my dear Mistress Alice, as if you were chanting one of the seven penitential psalms; and you, good Doctor, as if you recited the funeral service."

The Doctor rose hastily from the table, and turned to the window; for the expression connected singularly with the task which he was that evening to discharge. Charles looked at him with some surprise; for the peril in which he lived, made him watchful of the slightest motions of those around him — then turned to Sir Henry, and said, "My honoured host, can you tell any reason for this moody fit, which has so strangely crept upon us all?"

"Not I, my dear Louis," replied the knight; "I have no skill in these nice quilllets of philosophy. I could as soon undertake to tell you the reason why Bevis turns round three times before he lies down. I can only say for myself, that if age and sorrow and uncertainty be enough to break a jovial spirit, or at least to bend it now and then, I have my share of them all; so that I, for one, cannot say that I am sad merely because I am not merry. I have but too good cause for sadness. I would I saw my son, were it but for a minute."

Fortune seemed for once disposed to gratify the old man; for Albert Lee entered at that moment. He was dressed in a riding suit, and appeared to have travelled hard. He cast his eye hastily around as he entered. It rested for a second on that of the disguised Prince, and, satisfied with the glance which he received in lieu, he hastened, after the fashion of the olden day, to kneel down to his father, and request his blessing.

"It is thine, my boy," said the old man; a tear springing to his eyes as he laid his hand on the long locks, which distinguished the young cavalier's rank and principles, and which, usually combed and curled with some care, now hung wild and dishevelled about his shoulders. They remained an instant in this posture, when the old man suddenly started from it, as if ashamed of the emotion which he had expressed before so many witnesses, and passing the back of his hand hastily across his eyes, bid Albert get up and mind his supper, "since I dare say you have ridden fast and far since you last baited — and we'll send round a cup to his health, if Doctor Rochecliffe and the company please — Joceline, thou knave, skink about — thou look'st as if thou hadst seen a ghost."

"Joceline," said Alice, "is sick for sympathy — one of the stags ran at Phoebe Mayflower today, and she was fain to have Joceline's assistance to drive the creature off — the girl has been in fits since she came home."

"Silly slut," said the old knight — "She a woodman's daughter! — But, Joceline, if the deer gets dangerous, you must send a broad arrow through him."

"It will not need, Sir Henry," said Joceline, speaking with great difficulty of utterance — "he is quiet enough now — he will not offend in that sort again."

"See it be so," replied the knight; "remember Mistress Alice often walks in the Chase. And now, fill round, and fill too, a cup to thyself to overred thy fear, as mad Will has it. Tush, man, Phoebe will do well enough — she only screamed and ran, that thou might'st have the pleasure to help her. Mind what thou dost, and do not go spilling the wine after that fashion. — Come, here is a health to our wanderer, who has come to us again."

"None will pledge it more willingly than I," said the disguised Prince, unconsciously assuming an importance which the character he personated scarce warranted; but Sir Henry, who had become fond of the supposed page, with all his peculiarities, imposed only a moderate rebuke upon his petulance. "Thou art a merry, good-humoured youth, Louis," he said, "but it is a world to see how the forwardness of the present generation hath gone beyond the gravity and reverence which in my youth was so regularly observed towards those of higher rank and station — I dared no more have given my own tongue the rein, when there was a doctor of divinity in company, than I would have dared to have spoken in church in service time."

"True, sir," said Albert, hastily interfering; "but Master Kerneguy had the better right to speak at present, that I have been absent on his business as well as my own, have seen several of his friends, and bring him important intelligence."

Charles was about to rise and beckon Albert aside, naturally impatient to know what news he had procured, or what scheme of safe escape was now decreed for him. But Dr. Rochecliffe twitched his cloak, as a hint to him to sit still, and not show any extraordinary motive for anxiety, since, in case of a sudden discovery of his real quality, the violence of Sir Henry Lee's feelings might have been likely to attract too much attention.

Charles, therefore, only replied, as to the knight's stricture, that he had a particular title to be sudden and unceremonious in expressing his thanks to Colonel Lee — that gratitude was apt to be unmannerly — finally, that he was much obliged to Sir Henry for his admonition; and that quit Woodstock when he would, "he was sure to leave it a better man than he came there."

His speech was of course ostensibly directed towards the father; but a glance at Alice assured her that she had her full share in the compliment.

"I fear," he concluded, addressing Albert, "that you come to tell us our stay here must be very short."

"A few hours only," said Albert — "just enough for needful rest for ourselves and our horses. I have procured two which are good and tried. But Doctor Rochecliffe broke faith with me. I expected to have met some one down at Joceline's hut, where I left the horses; and finding no person, I was delayed an hour in littering them down myself, that they might be ready for tomorrow's work — for we must be off before day."

"I — I — intended to have sent Tomkins — but — but" — hesitated the Doctor, "I" —

"The roundheaded rascal was drunk, or out of the way, I presume," said Albert. "I am glad of it — you may easily trust him too far."

"Hitherto he has been faithful," said the Doctor, "and I scarce think he will fail me now. But Joceline will go down and have the horses in readiness in the morning." Joceline's countenance was usually that of alacrity itself on a case extraordinary. Now, however, he seemed to hesitate.

"You will go with me a little way, Doctor?" he said, as he edged himself closely to Rochecliffe.

"How? puppy, fool, and blockhead," said the knight, "wouldst thou ask Doctor Rochecliffe to bear thee company at this hour? — Out, hound! — get down to the kennel yonder instantly, or I will break the knave's pate of thee."

Joceline looked with an eye of agony at the divine, as if entreating him to interfere in his behalf; but just as he was about to speak, a most melancholy howling arose at the hall-door, and a dog was heard scratching for admittance.

"What ails Bevis next?" said the old knight. "I think this must be All-Fools-day, and that every thing around me is going mad!"

The same sound startled Albert and Charles from a private conference in which they had engaged, and Albert ran to the hall-door to examine personally into the cause of the noise.

"It is no alarm," said the old knight to Kerneguy, "for in such cases the dog's bark is short, sharp, and furious. These long howls are said to be ominous. It was even so that Bevis's grandsire bayed the whole livelong night on which my poor father died. If it comes now as a presage, God send it regard the old and useless, not the young, and those who may yet serve King and country!"

The dog had pushed past Colonel Lee, who stood a little while at the hall-door to listen if there were any thing stirring without, while Bevis advanced into the room where the company were assembled, bearing something in his mouth, and exhibiting, in an unusual degree, that sense of duty and interest which a dog seems to show when he thinks he has the charge of something important. He entered therefore, drooping his long tail, slouching his head and ears, and walking with the stately yet melancholy dignity of a war-horse at his master's funeral. In this manner he paced through the room, went straight up to Joceline, who had been regarding him with astonishment, and uttering a short and melancholy howl, laid at his feet the object which he bore in his mouth. Joceline stooped, and took from the floor a man's glove, of the fashion worn by the troopers, having something like the old-fashioned gauntleted projections of thick leather arising from the wrist, which go half way up to the elbow, and secure the arm against a cut with a sword. But Joceline had no sooner looked at what in itself was so common an object, than he dropped it from his hand, staggered backward, uttered a groan, and nearly fell to the ground.

"Now, the coward's curse be upon thee for an idiot!" said the knight, who had picked up the glove, and was looking at it — "thou shouldst be sent back to school, and flogged till the craven's blood was switched out of thee — What dost thou look at but a glove, thou base poltroon, and a very dirty glove, too? Stay, here is writing — Joseph Tomkins? Why, that is the roundheaded fellow — I wish he hath not come to some mischief, for this is not dirt on the cheveron, but blood. Bevis may have bit the fellow, and yet the dog seemed to love him well too, or the stag may have hurt him. Out, Joceline, instantly, and see where he is — wind your bugle."

"I cannot go," said Joliffe, "unless" — and again he looked piteously at Dr. Rochecliffe, who saw no time was to be lost in appeasing the ranger's terrors, as his ministry was most needful in the present circumstances. — "Get spade and mattock," he whispered to him, "and a dark lantern, and meet me in the Wilderness."

Joceline left the room; and the Doctor, before following him, had a few words of explanation with Colonel Lee. His own spirit, far from being dismayed on the occasion, rather rose higher, like one whose natural element was intrigue and danger. "Here hath been wild work," he said, "since you parted. Tomkins was rude to the wench Phoebe — Joceline and he had a brawl together, and Tomkins is lying dead in the thicket, not far from Rosamond's Well. It will be necessary that Joceline and I go directly to bury the body; for besides that some one might stumble upon it, and raise an alarm, this fellow Joceline will never be fit for any active purpose till it is under ground. Though as stout as a lion, the under-keeper has his own weak side, and is more afraid of a dead body than a living one. When do you propose to start tomorrow?"

"By daybreak, or earlier," said Colonel Lee; "but we will meet again. A vessel is provided, and I have relays in more places than one — we go off from the coast of Sussex; and I am to get a letter at — — acquainting me precisely with the spot."

"Wherefore not go off instantly?" said the Doctor.

"The horses would fail us," replied Albert; "they have been hard ridden today."

"Adieu," said Rochecliffe, "I must to my task — Do you take rest and repose for yours. To conceal a slaughtered body, and convey on the same night a king from danger and captivity, are two feats which have fallen to few folks save myself; but let me not, while putting on my harness, boast myself as if I were taking it off after a victory." So saying he left the apartment, and, muffling himself in his cloak, went out into what was called the Wilderness.

The weather was a raw frost. The mists lay in partial wreaths upon the lower grounds; but the night, considering that the heavenly bodies were in a great measure hidden by the haze, was not extremely dark. Dr. Rochecliffe could not, however, distinguish the under-keeper until he had hemmed once or twice, when Joceline answered the signal by showing a glimpse of light from the dark lantern which he carried. Guided by this intimation of his presence, the divine found him leaning against a buttress which had once supported a terrace, now ruinous. He had a pickaxe and shovel, together with a deer's hide hanging over his shoulder.

"What do you want with the hide, Joceline," said Dr. Rochecliffe, "that you lumber it about with you on such an errand?"

"Why, look you, Doctor," he answered, "it is as well to tell you all about it. The man and I — he there — you know whom I mean — had many years since a quarrel about this deer. For though we were great friends, and Philip was sometimes allowed by my master's permission to help me in mine office, yet I knew, for all that, Philip Hazeldine was sometimes a trespasser. The deer-stealers were very bold at that time, it being just before the breaking out of the war, when men were becoming unsettled — And so it chanced, that one day, in the Chase, I found two fellows, with their faces blacked and shirts over their clothes, carrying as prime a buck between them as any was in the park. I was upon them in the instant — one escaped, but I got hold of the other fellow, and who should it prove to be but trusty Phil Hazeldine! Well, I don't know whether it was right or wrong, but he was my old friend and pot-companion, and I took his word for amendment in future; and he helped me to hang up the deer on a tree, and I came back with a horse to carry him to the Lodge, and tell the knight the story, all but Phil's name. But the rogues had been too clever for me; for they had flayed and dressed the deer, and quartered him, and carried him off, and left the hide and horns, with a chime, saying —

'The haunch to thee,

The breast to me,

The hide and the horns for the keeper's fee.'

And this I knew for one of Phil's mad pranks, that he would play in those days with any lad in the country. But I was so nettled that I made the deer's hide be curried and dressed by a tanner, and swore that it should be his winding-sheet or mine; and though I had long repented my rash oath, yet now, Doctor, you see what it is come to — though I forgot it, the devil did not."

"It was a very wrong thing to make a vow so sinful," said Rochecliffe; "but it would have been greatly worse had you endeavoured to keep it. Therefore, I bid you cheer up," said the good divine; "for in this unhappy case, I could not have wished, after what I have heard from Phoebe and yourself, that you should have kept your hand still, though I may regret that the blow has proved fatal. Nevertheless, thou hast done even that which was done by the great and inspired legislator, when he beheld an Egyptian tyrannizing over a Hebrew, saying that, in the case present, it was a female, when, says the Septuagint, *Percussum Egyptium abscondit sabulo*; the meaning whereof I will explain to you another time. Wherefore, I exhort you not to grieve beyond measure; for although this circumstance is unhappy in time and place, yet, from what Phoebe hath informed me of yonder wretch's opinions, it is much to be regretted that his brains had not been beaten out in his cradle, rather than that he had grown up to be one of those Grindlestonians, or Muggletonians, in whom is the perfection of every foul and blasphemous heresy, united with such an universal practice of hypocritical assentation as would deceive their master, even Satan himself."

"Nevertheless, sir," said the forester, "I hope you will bestow some of the service of the Church on this poor man, as it was his last wish, naming you, sir, at the same time; and unless this were done, I should scarce dare to walk out in the dark again for my whole life."

"Thou art a silly fellow; but if," continued the Doctor, "he named me as he departed, and desired the last rites of the Church, there was, it may be, a turning from evil and a seeking to good even in his last moments; and if Heaven granted him grace to form a prayer so fitting, wherefore should man refuse it? All I fear is the briefness of time."

"Nay, your reverence may cut the service somewhat short," said Joceline; "assuredly he does not deserve the whole of it; only if something were not to be done, I believe I should flee the country. They were his last words; and methinks he sent Bevis with his glove to put me in mind of them."

"Out, fool! Do you think," said the Doctor, "dead men send gauntlets to the living, like knights in a romance; or, if so, would they choose dogs to carry their challenges? I tell thee, fool, the cause was natural enough. Bevis, questing about, found the body, and brought the glove to you to intimate where it was lying, and to require assistance; for such is the high instinct of these animals towards one in peril."

"Nay, if you think so, Doctor," said Joceline — "and, doubtless, I must say, Bevis took an interest in the man — if indeed it was not something worse in the shape of Bevis, for methought his eyes looked wild and fiery, as if he would have spoken."

As he talked thus, Joceline rather hung back, and, in doing so, displeased the Doctor, who exclaimed, "Come along, thou lazy laggard! Art thou a soldier, and a brave one, and so much afraid of a dead man? Thou hast killed men in battle and in chase, I warrant thee."

"Ay, but their backs were to me," said Joceline. "I never saw one of them cast back his head, and glare at me as yonder fellow did, his eye retaining a glance of hatred, mixed with terror and reproach, till it became fixed like a jelly. And were you not with me, and my master's concerns, and something else, very deeply at stake, I promise you I would not again look at him for all Woodstock."

"You must, though," said the Doctor, suddenly pausing, "for here is the place where he lies. Come hither deep into the copse; take care of stumbling — Here is a place just fitting, and we will draw the briars over the grave afterwards."

As the Doctor thus issued his directions, he assisted also in the execution of them; and while his attendant laboured to dig a shallow and mishapen grave, a task which the state of the soil, perplexed with roots, and hardened by the influence of the frost, rendered very difficult, the divine read a few passages out of the funeral service, partly in order to appease the superstitious terrors of Joceline, and partly because he held it matter of conscience not to deny the Church's rites to one who had requested their aid in extremity.

Chapter the Thirty Second.

Case ye, case ye — on with your vizards.

HENRY IV.

The company whom we had left in Victor Lee's parlour were about to separate for the night, and had risen to take a formal leave of each other, when a tap was heard at the hall-door. Albert, the vidette of the party, hastened to open it, enjoining, as he left the room, the rest to remain quiet, until he had ascertained the cause of the knocking. When he gained the portal, he called to know who was there, and what they wanted at so late an hour.

"It is only me," answered a treble voice.

"And what is your name, my little fellow?" said Albert.

"Spitfire, sir," replied the voice without.

"Spitfire?" said Albert.

"Yes, sir," replied the voice; "all the world calls me so, and Colonel Everard himself. But my name is Spittal for all that."

"Colonel Everard? arrive you from him?" demanded young Lee.

"No, sir; I come, sir, from Roger Wildrake, esquire, of Squattlesea-mere, if it like you," said the boy; "and I have brought a token to Mistress Lee, which I am to give into her own hands, if you would but open the door, sir, and let me in-but I can do nothing with a three-inch board between us."

"It is some freak of that drunken rakehell," said Albert, in a low voice, to his sister, who had crept out after him on tiptoe.

"Yet, let us not be hasty in concluding so," said the young lady; "at this moment the least trifle may be of consequence. — What tokens has Master Wildrake sent me, my little boy?"

"Nay, nothing very valuable neither," replied the boy; "but he was so anxious you should get it, that he put me out of window as one would chuck out a kitten, that I might not be stopped by the soldiers."

"Hear you?" said Alice to her brother; "undo the gate, for God's sake." Her brother, to whom her feelings of suspicion were now sufficiently communicated, opened the gate in haste, and admitted the boy, whose appearance, not much dissimilar to that of a skinned rabbit in a livery, or a monkey at a fair, would at another time have furnished them with amusement. The urchin messenger entered the hall, making several odd bows, and delivered the woodcock's feather with much ceremony to the young lady, assuring her it was the prize she had won upon a wager about hawking.

"I prithee, my little man," said Albert, "was your master drunk or sober, when he sent thee all this way with a feather at this time of night?"

"With reverence, sir," said the boy, "he was what he calls sober, and what I would call concerned in liquor for any other person."

"Curse on the drunken coxcomb!" said Albert — "There is a tester for thee, boy, and tell thy master to break his jests on suitable persons, and at fitting times."

"Stay yet a minute," exclaimed Alice; "we must not go too fast — this craves wary walking."

"A feather," said Albert; "all this work about a feather! Why, Doctor Rochecliffe, who can suck intelligence out of every trifle as a magpie would suck an egg, could make nothing of this."

"Let us try what we can do without him then," said Alice. Then addressing herself to the boy — "So there are strangers at your master's?"

"At Colonel Everard's, madam, which is the same thing," said Spitfire.

"And what manner of strangers," said Alice; "guests, I suppose?"

"Ay, mistress," said the boy, "a sort of guests that make themselves welcome wherever they come, if they meet not a welcome from their landlord — soldiers, madam."

"The men that have long been lying at Woodstock," said Albert.

"No, sir," said Spitfire, "new comers, with gallant buff-coats and steel breastplates; and their commander — your honour and your ladyship never saw such a man — at least I am sure Bill Spitfire never did."

"Was he tall or short?" said Albert, now much alarmed.

"Neither one nor other," said the boy; "stout made, with slouching shoulders; a nose large, and a face one would not like to say No to. He had several officers with him, I saw him but for a moment, but I shall never forget him while I live."

"You are right," said Albert Lee to his sister, pulling her to one side, "quite right — the Archfiend himself is upon us!"

"And the feather," said Alice, whom fear had rendered apprehensive of slight tokens, "means flight — and a woodcock is a bird of passage."

"You have hit it," said her brother; "but the time has taken us cruelly short. Give the boy a trifle more — nothing that can excite suspicion, and dismiss him. I must summon Rochecliffe and Joceline."

He went accordingly, but, unable to find those he sought, he returned with hasty steps to the parlour, where, in his character of Louis, the page was exerting himself to detain the old knight, who, while laughing at the tales he told him, was anxious to go to see what was passing in the hall.

"What is the matter, Albert?" said the old man; "who calls at the Lodge at so undue an hour, and wherefore is the hall-door opened to them? I will not have my rules, and the regulations laid down for keeping this house, broken through, because I am old and poor. Why answer you not? why keep a chattering with Louis Kernequy, and neither of you all the while minding what I say? — Daughter Alice, have you sense and civility enough to tell me, what or who it is that is admitted here contrary to my general orders?"

"No one, sir," replied Alice; "a boy brought a message, which I fear is an alarming one."

"There is only fear, sir," said Albert, stepping forward, "that whereas we thought to have stayed with you till tomorrow, we must now take farewell of you to-night."

"Not so, brother," said Alice, "you must stay and aid the defence here — if you and Master Kernequy are both missed, the pursuit will be instant, and probably successful; but if you stay, the hiding-places about this house will take some time to search. You can change coats with Kernequy too."

"Right, noble wench," said Albert; "most excellent — yes — Louis, I remain as Kernequy, you fly as young Master Lee."

"I cannot see the justice of that," said Charles.

"Nor I neither," said the knight, interfering. "Men come and go, lay schemes, and alter them, in my house, without deigning to consult me! And who is Master Kernequy, or what is he to me, that my son must stay and take the chance of mischief, and this your Scotch page is to escape in his dress? I will have no such contrivance carried into effect, though it were the finest cobweb that was ever woven in Doctor Rochecliffe's brains. — I wish you no ill, Louis; thou art a lively boy; but I have been somewhat too lightly treated in this, man."

"I am fully of your opinion, Sir Henry," replied the person whom he addressed. "You have been, indeed, repaid for your hospitality by want of that confidence, which could never have been so justly reposed. But the moment is come, when I must say, in a word, I am that unfortunate Charles Stewart, whose lot it has been to become the cause of ruin to his best friends, and whose present residence in your family threatens to bring destruction to you, and all around you."

"Master Louis Kernequy," said the knight very angrily, "I will teach you to choose the subjects of your mirth better when you address them to me; and, moreover, very little provocation would make me desire to have an ounce or two of that malapert blood from you."

"Be still, sir, for God's sake!" said Albert to his father. "This is indeed THE KING; and such is the danger of his person, that every moment we waste may bring round a fatal catastrophe."

"Good God!" said the father, clasping his hands together, and about to drop on his knees, "has my earnest wish been accomplished! and is it in such a manner as to make me pray it had never taken place!"

He then attempted to bend his knee to the King — kissed his hand, while large tears trickled from his eyes — then said, "Pardon, my Lord — your Majesty, I mean — permit me to sit in your presence but one instant till my blood beats more freely, and then" —

Charles raised his ancient and faithful subject from the ground; and even in that moment of fear, and anxiety, and danger, insisted on leading him to his seat, upon which he sunk in apparent exhaustion, his head drooping upon his long white beard, and big unconscious tears mingling with its silver hairs. Alice and Albert remained with the King, arguing and urging his instant departure.

"The horses are at the under-keeper's hut," said Albert, "and the relays only eighteen or twenty miles off. If the horses can but carry you so far" —

"Will you not rather," interrupted Alice, "trust to the concealments of this place, so numerous and so well tried — Rochecliffe's apartments, and the yet farther places of secrecy?"

"Alas!" said Albert, "I know them only by name. My father was sworn to confide them to but one man, and he had chosen Rochecliffe."

"I prefer taking the field to any hiding-hole in England," said the King. "Could I but find my way to this hut where the horses are, I would try what arguments whip and spur could use to get them to the rendezvous, where I am to meet Sir Thomas Acland and fresh cattle. Come with me, Colonel Lee, and let us run for it. The roundheads have beat us in battle; but if it come to a walk or a race, I think I can show which has the best mettle."

"But then," said Albert, "we lose all the time which may otherwise be gained by the defence of this house — leaving none here but my poor father, incapable from his state of doing any thing; and you will be instantly pursued by fresh horses, while ours are unfit for the road. Oh, where is the villain Joceline!"

"What can have become of Doctor Rochecliffe?" said Alice; "he that is so ready with advice; — where can they be gone? Oh, if my father could but rouse himself!"

"Your father *is* roused," said Sir Henry, rising and stepping up to them with all the energy of full manhood in his countenance and motions — "I did but gather my thoughts — for when did they fail a Lee when his King needed counsel or aid?" He then began to speak, with the ready and distinct utterance of a general at the head of an army, ordering every motion for attack and defence — unmoved himself, and his own energy compelling obedience, and that cheerful obedience, from all who heard him. "Daughter," he said, "beat up dame Jellicot — Let Phoebe rise if she were dying, and secure doors and windows."

"That hath been done regularly since — we have been thus far honoured," said his daughter, looking at the King — "yet, let them go through the chambers once more." And Alice retired to give the orders, and presently returned.

The old knight proceeded, in the same decided tone of promptitude and dispatch — "Which is your first stage?"

"Gray's — Rothebury, by Henley, where Sir Thomas Acland and young Knolles are to have horses in readiness," said Albert; "but how to get there with our weary cattle?"

"Trust me for that," said the knight; and proceeding with the same tone of authority — "Your Majesty must instantly to Joceline's lodge," he said, "there are your horses and your means of flight. The secret places of this house, well managed, will keep the rebel dogs in play two or three hours good — Rochecliffe is, I fear, kidnapped, and his Independent hath betrayed him — Would I had judged the villain better! I would have struck him through at one of our trials of fence, with an unbated weapon, as Will says. — But for your guide when on horseback, half a bowshot from Joceline's hut is that of old Martin the verdurer; he is a score of years older than I, but as fresh as an old oak — beat up his quarters, and let him ride with you for death and life. He will guide you to your relay, for no fox that ever earthed in the Chase knows the country so well for seven leagues around."

"Excellent, my dearest father, excellent," said Albert; "I had forgot Martin the verdurer."

"Young men forget all," answered the knight — "Alas, that the limbs should fail, when the head which can best direct them — is come perhaps to its wisest!"

"But the tired horses," said the King — "could we not get fresh cattle?"

"Impossible at this time of night," answered Sir Henry; "but tired horses may do much with care and looking to." He went hastily to the cabinet which stood in one of the oriel windows, and searched for something in the drawers, pulling out one after another.

"We lose time, father," said Albert, afraid that the intelligence and energy which the old man displayed had been but a temporary flash of the lamp, which was about to relapse into evening twilight.

"Go to, sir boy," said his father, sharply; "is it for thee to tax me in this presence! — Know, that were the whole roundheads that are out of hell in present assemblage round Woodstock, I could send away the Royal Hope of England by a way that the wisest of them could never guess. — Alice, my love, ask no questions, but speed to the kitchen, and fetch a slice or two of beef, or better of venison; cut them long, and thin, d'y'e mark me" —

"This is wandering of the mind," said Albert apart to the King. "We do him wrong, and your Majesty harm, to listen to him."

"I think otherwise," said Alice, "and I know my father better than you." So saying, she left the room, to fulfil her father's orders.

"I think so, too," said Charles — "in Scotland the Presbyterian ministers, when thundering in their pulpits on my own sins and those of my house, took the freedom to call me to my face Jeroboam, or Rehoboam, or some such name, for following the advice of young counsellors — Oddsfish, I will take that of the grey beard for once, for never saw I more sharpness and decision than in the countenance of that noble old man."

By this time Sir Henry had found what he was seeking. "In this tin box," he said, "are six balls prepared of the most cordial spices, mixed with medicaments of the choicest and most invigorating quality. Given from hour to hour, wrapt in a covering of good beef or venison, a horse of spirit will not flag for five hours, at the speed of fifteen miles an hour; and, please God, the fourth of the time places your Majesty in safety — what remains may be useful on some future occasion. Martin knows how to administer them; and Albert's weary cattle shall be ready, if walked gently for ten minutes, in running to devour the way, as old Will says — nay, waste not time in speech, your Majesty does me but too much honour in using what is your own. — Now, see if the coast is clear, Albert, and let his Majesty set off instantly — We will play our parts but ill, if any take the chase after him for these two hours that are between night and day — Change dresses, as you proposed, in yonder sleeping apartment — something may be made of that too."

"But, good Sir Henry," said the King, "your zeal overlooks a principal point. I have, indeed, come from the under-keeper's hut you mention to this place, but it was by daylight, and under guidance — I shall never find my way thither in utter darkness, and without a guide — I fear you must let the Colonel go with me; and I entreat and command, you will put yourself to no trouble or risk to defend the house — only make what delay you can in showing its secret recesses."

"Rely on me, my royal and liege Sovereign," said Sir Henry; "but Albert *must* remain here, and Alice shall guide your Majesty to Joceline's hut in his stead."

"Alice!" said Charles, stepping back in surprise — "why, it is dark night — and — and — and —" He glanced his eye towards Alice, who had by this time returned to the apartment, and saw doubt and apprehension in her look; an intimation, that the reserve under which he had placed his disposition for gallantry, since the morning of the proposed duel, had not altogether effaced the recollection of his previous conduct. He hastened to put a strong negative upon a proposal which appeared so much to embarrass her. "It is impossible for me, indeed, Sir Henry, to use Alice's services — I must walk as if blood-hounds were at my heels."

"Alice shall trip it," said the knight, "with any wench in Oxfordshire; and what would your Majesty's best speed avail, if you know not the way to go?"

"Nay, nay, Sir Henry," continued the King, "the night is too dark — we stay too long — I will find it myself."

"Lose no time in exchanging your dress with Albert," said Sir Henry — "leave me to take care of the rest."

Charles, still inclined to expostulate, withdrew, however, into the apartment where young Lee and he were to exchange clothes; while Sir Henry said to his daughter, "Get thee a cloak, wench, and put on thy thickest shoes. Thou might'st have ridden Pixie, but he is something spirited, and them art a timid horsewoman, and ever wert so — the only weakness I have known of thee."

"But, my father," said Alice, fixing her eyes earnestly on Sir Henry's face, "must I really go along with the King? might not Phoebe, or dame Jellicot, go with us?"

"No — no — no," answered Sir Henry; "Phoebe, the silly slut, has, as you well know, been in fits to-night, and I take it, such a walk as you must take is no charm for hysterics — Dame Jellicot hobbles as slow as a broken-winded mare — besides, her deafness, were there occasion to speak to her — No — no — you shall go alone and entitle yourself to have it written on your tomb, 'Here lies she who saved the King!' — And, hark you, do not think of returning to-night, but stay at the verdurer's with his niece — the Park and Chase will shortly be filled with our enemies, and whatever chances here you will learn early enough in the morning."

"And what is it I may then learn?" said Alice — "Alas, who can tell? — O, dearest father, let me stay and share your fate! I will pull off the timorous woman, and fight for the King, if it be necessary. — But — I cannot think of becoming his only attendant in the dark night, and through a road so lonely."

"How!" said the knight, raising his voice; "do you bring ceremonious and silly scruples forward, when the King's safety, nay his life is at stake! By this mark of loyalty," stroking his grey beard as he spoke, "could I think thou wert other than becomes a daughter of the house of Lee, I would" —

At this moment the King and Albert interrupted him by entering the apartment, having exchanged dresses, and, from their stature, bearing some resemblance to each other, though Charles was evidently a plain, and Lee a handsome young man. Their complexions were different; but the difference could not be immediately noticed, Albert having adopted a black peruke, and darkened his eyebrows.

Albert Lee walked out to the front of the mansion, to give one turn around the Lodge, in order to discover in what direction any enemies might be approaching, that they might judge of the road which it was safest for the royal fugitive to adopt. Meanwhile the King, who was first in entering the apartment, had heard a part of the angry answer which the old knight made to his daughter, and was at no loss to guess the subject of his resentment. He walked up to him with the dignity which he perfectly knew how to assume when he chose it.

"Sir Henry," he said, "it is our pleasure, nay our command, that you forbear all exertion of paternal authority in this matter. Mistress Alice, I am sure, must have good and strong reasons for what she wishes; and I should never pardon myself were she placed in an unpleasant situation on my account. I am too well acquainted with woods and wildernesses to fear losing my way among my native oaks of Woodstock."

"Your Majesty shall not incur the danger," said Alice, her temporary hesitation entirely removed by the calm, clear, and candid manner in which Charles uttered these last words. "You shall run no risk that I can prevent; and the unhappy chances of the times in which I have lived have from experience made the forest as well known to me by night as by day. So, if you scorn not my company, let us away instantly."

"If your company is given with good-will, I accept it with gratitude," replied the monarch.

"Willingly," she said, "most willingly. Let me be one of the first to show that zeal and that confidence, which I trust all England will one day emulously display in behalf of your Majesty."

She uttered these words with an alacrity of spirit, and made the trifling change of habit with a speed and dexterity, which showed that all her fears were gone, and that her heart was entirely in the mission on which her father had dispatched her.

"All is safe around," said Albert Lee, showing himself; "you may take which passage you will — the most private is the best."

Charles went gracefully up to Sir Henry Lee ere his departure, and took him by the hand. — "I am too proud to make professions," he said, "which I may be too poor ever to realize. But while Charles Stewart lives, he lives the obliged and indebted debtor of Sir Henry Lee."

"Say not so, please your Majesty, say not so," exclaimed the old man, struggling with the hysterical sobs which rose to his throat. "He who might claim all, cannot become indebted by accepting some small part."

"Farewell, good friend, farewell!" said the King; "think of me as a son, a brother to Albert and to Alice, who are, I see, already impatient. Give me a father's blessing, and let me be gone."

"The God, through whom kings reign, bless your Majesty," said Sir Henry, kneeling and turning his reverend face and clasped hands up to Heaven — "The Lord of Hosts bless you, and save your Majesty from your present dangers, and bring you in his own good time to the safe possession of the crown that is your due!"

Charles received this blessing like that of a father, and Alice and he departed on their journey.

As they left the apartment, the old knight let his hands sink gently as he concluded this fervent ejaculation, his head sinking at the same time. His son dared not disturb his meditation, yet feared the strength of his feelings might overcome that of his constitution, and that he might fall into a swoon. At length, he ventured to approach and gradually touch him. The old knight started to his feet, and was at once the same alert, active-minded, forecasting director, which he had shown himself a little before.

"You are right, boy," he said, "we must be up and doing. They lie, the roundheaded traitors, that call him dissolute and worthless! He hath feelings worthy the son of the blessed Martyr. You saw, even in the extremity of danger, he would have perilled his safety rather than take Alice's guidance when the silly wench seemed in doubt about going. Profligacy is intensely selfish, and thinks not of the feelings of others. But hast thou drawn bolt and bar after them? I vow I scarce saw when they left the hall."

"I let them out at the little postern," said the Colonel; "and when I returned, I was afraid I had found you ill."

"Joy — joy, only joy, Albert — I cannot allow a thought of doubt to cross my breast. God will not desert the descendant of an hundred kings — the rightful heir will not be given up to the ruffians. There was a tear in his eye as he took leave of me — I am sure of it. Wouldst not die for him, boy?"

"If I lay my life down for him to-night," said Albert, "I would only regret it, because I should not hear of his escape tomorrow."

"Well, let us to this gear," said the knight; "think'st thou know'st enough of his manner, clad as thou art in his dress, to induce the women to believe thee to be the page Kerneguy?"

"Umph," replied Albert, "it is not easy to bear out a personification of the King, when women are in the case. But there is only a very little light below, and I can try."

"Do so instantly," said his father; "the knaves will be here presently." Albert accordingly left the apartment, while the knight continued — "If the women be actually persuaded that Kerneguy be still here, it will add strength to my plot — the beagles will open on a false scent, and the royal stag be safe in cover ere they regain the slot of him. Then to draw them on from hiding-place to hiding-place! Why, the east will be grey before they have sought the half of them! — Yes, I will play at bob-cherry with them, hold the bait to their nose which they are never to gorge upon! I will drag a trail for them which will take them some time to puzzle out. — But at what cost do I do this?" continued the old knight, interrupting his own joyous soliloquy — "Oh, Absalom, Absalom, my son! my son! — But let him go; he can but die as his fathers have died; and in the cause for which they lived. But he comes — Hush! — Albert, hast thou succeeded? hast thou taken royalty upon thee so as to pass current?"

"I have, sir," replied Albert; "the women will swear that Louis Kerneguy was in the house this very last minute."

"Right, for they are good and faithful creatures," said the knight, "and would swear what was for his Majesty's safety at any rate; yet they will do it with more nature and effect, if they believe they are swearing truth. — How didst thou impress the deceit upon them?"

"By a trifling adoption of the royal manner, sir, not worth mentioning."

"Out, rogue!" replied the knight. "I fear the King's character will suffer under your mummery."

"Umph," said Albert, muttering what he dared not utter aloud — "were I to follow the example close up, I know whose character would be in the greatest danger."

"Well, now we must adjust the defence of the outworks, the signals, &c. betwixt us both, and the best way to baffle the enemy for the longest time possible." He then again had recourse to the secret drawers of his cabinet, and pulled out a piece of parchment, on which was a plan. "This," said he, "is a scheme of the citadel, as I call it, which may hold out long enough after you have been forced to evacuate the places of retreat you are already acquainted with. The ranger was always sworn to keep this plan secret, save from one person only, in case of sudden death. — Let us sit down and study it together."

They accordingly adjusted their measures in a manner which will better show itself from what afterwards took place, than were we to state the various schemes which they proposed, and provisions made against events that did not arrive.

At length young Lee, armed and provided with some food and liquor, took leave of his father, and went and shut himself up in Victor Lee's apartment, from which was an opening to the labyrinth of private apartments, or hiding-places, that had served the associates so well in the fantastic tricks which they had played off at the expense of the Commissioners of the Commonwealth.

"I trust," said Sir Henry, sitting down by his desk, after having taken a tender farewell of his son, "that Rocheclyffe has not blabbed out the secret of the plot to yonder fellow Tomkins, who was not unlikely to prate of it out of school. — But here am I seated — perhaps for the last time, with my Bible on the one hand, and old Will on the other, prepared, thank God, to die as I have lived. — I marvel they come not yet," he said, after waiting for some time — "I always thought the devil had a smarter spur to give his agents, when they were upon his own special service."

Chapter the Thirty-Third.

*But see, his face is black, and full of blood;
His eye-balls farther out than when he lived,
Staring full ghastly, like a strangled man;
His hair uprear'd — his nostrils stretch'd with struggling,
His hands abroad display'd, as one who grasp'd
And tugg'd for life, and was by strength subdued.*

HENRY VI. PART I.

Had those whose unpleasant visit Sir Henry expected come straight to the Lodge, instead of staying for three hours at Woodstock, they would have secured their prey. But the Familist, partly to prevent the King's escape, partly to render himself of more importance in the affair, had represented the party at the Lodge as being constantly on the alert, and had therefore inculcated upon Cromwell the necessity of his remaining quiet until he (Tomkins) should appear to give him notice that the household were retired to rest. On this condition he undertook, not only to discover the apartment in which the unfortunate Charles slept, but, if possible, to find some mode of fastening the door on the outside, so as to render flight impossible. He had also promised to secure the key of a postern, by which the soldiers might be admitted into the house without exciting alarm. Nay, the matter might, by means of his local knowledge, be managed, as he represented it, with such security, that he would undertake to place his Excellency, or whomsoever he might appoint for the service, by the side of Charles Stewart's bed, ere he had slept off the last night's claret. Above all, he had stated, that, from the style of the old house, there were many passages and posterns which must be carefully guarded before the least alarm was caught by those within, otherwise the success of the whole enterprise might be endangered. He had therefore besought Cromwell to wait for him at the village, if he found him not there on his arrival; and assured him that the marching and countermarching of soldiers was at present so common, that even if any news were carried to the Lodge that fresh troops had arrived in the borough, so ordinary a circumstance would not give them the least alarm. He recommended that the soldiers chosen for this service should be such as could be depended upon — no fainters in spirit — none who turn back from Mount Gilead for fear of the Amalekites, but men of war, accustomed to strike with the sword, and to need no second blow. Finally, he represented that it would be wisely done if the General should put Pearson, or any other officer whom he could completely trust, into the command of the detachment, and keep his own person, if he should think it proper to attend, secret even from the soldiers.

All this man's counsels Cromwell had punctually followed. He had travelled in the van of this detachment of one hundred picked soldiers, whom he had selected for the service, men of dauntless resolution, bred in a thousand dangers, and who were steeled against all feelings of hesitation and compassion, by the deep and gloomy fanaticism which was their chief principle of action — men to whom, as their General, and no less as the chief among the Elect, the commands of Oliver were like a commission from the Deity.

Great and deep was the General's mortification at the unexpected absence of the personage on whose agency he so confidently reckoned, and many conjectures he formed as to the cause of such mysterious conduct. Some times he thought Tomkins had been overcome by liquor, a frailty to which Cromwell knew him to be addicted; and when he held this opinion he discharged his wrath in maledictions, which, of a different kind from the wild oaths and curses of the cavaliers, had yet in them as much blasphemy, and more determined malevolence. At other times he thought some unexpected alarm, or perhaps some drunken cavalier revel, had caused the family of Woodstock Lodge to make later hours than usual. To this conjecture, which appeared the most probable of any, his mind often recurred; and it was the hope that Tomkins would still appear at the rendezvous, which induced him to remain at the borough, anxious to receive communication from his emissary, and afraid of endangering the success of the enterprise by any premature exertion on his own part.

In the meantime, Cromwell, finding it no longer possible to conceal his personal presence, disposed of every thing so as to be ready at a minute's notice. Half his soldiers he caused to dismount, and had the horses put into quarters; the other half were directed to keep their horses saddled, and themselves ready to mount at a moment's notice. The men were brought into the house by turns, and had some refreshment, leaving a sufficient guard on the horses, which was changed from time to time.

Thus Cromwell waited with no little uncertainty, often casting an anxious eye upon Colonel Everard, who, he suspected, could, if he chose it, well supply the place of his absent confidant. Everard endured this calmly, with unaltered countenance, and brow neither ruffled nor dejected.

Midnight at length tolled, and it became necessary to take some decisive step. Tomkins might have been treacherous; or, a suspicion which approached more near to the reality, his intrigue might have been discovered, and he himself murdered or kidnapped by the vengeful royalists. In a word, if any use was to be made of the chance which fortune afforded of securing the most formidable claimant of the supreme power, which he already aimed at, no farther time was to be lost. He at length gave orders to Pearson to get the men under arms; he directed him concerning the mode of forming them, and that they should march with the utmost possible silence; or as it was given out in the orders, "Even as Gideon marched in silence when he went down against the camp of the Midianites, with only Phurah his servant. Peradventure," continued this strange document, "we too may learn of what yonder Midianites have dreamed."

A single patrol, followed by a corporal and five steady, experienced soldiers, formed the advanced guard of the party; then followed the main body. A rear-guard of ten men guarded Everard and the minister. Cromwell required the attendance of the former, as it might be necessary to examine him, or confront him with others; and he carried Master Holdenough with him, because he might escape if left behind, and perhaps raise some tumult in the village. The Presbyterians, though they not only concurred with, but led the way in the civil war, were at its conclusion highly dissatisfied with the ascendancy of the military sectaries, and not to be trusted as cordial agents in anything where their interest was concerned. The infantry being disposed of as we have noticed, marched off from the left of their line, Cromwell and Pearson, both on foot, keeping at the head of the centre, or main body of the detachment. They were all armed with petronels, short guns similar to the modern carbine, and, like them, used by horsemen. They marched in the most profound silence and with the utmost regularity, the whole body moving like one man.

About one hundred yards behind the rearmost of the dismounted party, came the troopers who remained on horseback; and it seemed as if even the irrational animals were sensible to Cromwell's orders, for the horses did not neigh, and even appeared to place their feet on the earth cautiously, and with less noise than usual.

Their leader, full of anxious thoughts, never spoke, save to enforce by whispers his caution respecting silence, while the men, surprised and delighted to find themselves under the command of their renowned General, and destined, doubtless, for some secret service of high import, used the utmost precaution in attending to his reiterated orders.

They marched down the street of the little borough in the order we have mentioned. Few of the townsmen were abroad; and one or two, who had protracted the orgies of the evening to that unusual hour, were too happy to escape the notice of a strong party of soldiers, who often acted in the character of police, to inquire about their purpose for being under arms so late, or the route which they were pursuing.

The external gate of the Chase had, ever since the party had arrived at Woodstock, been strictly guarded by three file of troopers, to cut off all communication between the Lodge and the town. Spitfire, Wildrake's emissary, who had often been a bird-nesting, or on similar mischievous excursions in the forest, had evaded these men's vigilance by climbing over a breach, with which he was well acquainted, in a different part of the wall.

Between this party and the advanced guard of Cromwell's detachment, a whispered challenge was exchanged, according to the rules of discipline. The infantry entered the Park, and were followed by the cavalry, who were directed to avoid the hard road, and ride as much as possible upon the turf which bordered on the avenue. Here, too, an additional precaution was used, a file or two of foot soldiers being detached to search the woods on either hand, and make prisoner, or, in the event of resistance, put to death, any whom they might find lurking there, under what pretence soever.

Meanwhile, the weather began to show itself as propitious to Cromwell, as he had found most incidents in the course of his successful career. The grey mist, which had hitherto obscured everything, and rendered marching in the wood embarrassing and difficult, had now given way to the moon, which, after many efforts, at length forced her way through the vapour, and hung her dim dull cresset in the heavens, which she enlightened, as the dying lamp of an anchorite does the cell in which he reposes. The party were in sight of the front of the palace, when Holdenough whispered to Everard, as they walked near each other — "See ye not, yonder flutters the mysterious light in the turret of the incontinent Rosamond? This night will try whether the devil of the Sectaries or the devil of the Malignants shall prove the stronger. O, sing jubilee, for the kingdom of Satan is divided against itself!"

Here the divine was interrupted by a non-commissioned officer, who came hastily, yet with noiseless steps, to say, in a low stern whisper — "Silence, prisoner in the rear — silence on pain of death."

A moment afterwards the whole party stopped their march, the word halt being passed from one to another, and instantly obeyed.

The cause of this interruption was the hasty return of one of the flanking party to the main body, bringing news to Cromwell that they had seen a light in the wood at some distance on the left.

"What can it be?" said Cromwell, his low stern voice, even in a whisper, making itself distinctly heard. "Does it move, or is it stationary?"

"So far as we can judge, it moveth not," answered the trooper.

"Strange — there is no cottage near the spot where it is seen."

"So please your Excellency, it may be a device of Sathan," said Corporal Humgudgeon, snuffing through his nose; "he is mighty powerful in these parts of late."

"So please your idiocy, thou art an ass," said Cromwell; but, instantly recollecting that the corporal had been one of the adjutators or tribunes of the common soldiers, and was therefore to be treated with suitable respect, he said, "Nevertheless, if it be the device of Satan, please it the Lord we will resist him, and the foul slave shall fly from us. — Pearson," he said, resuming his soldierlike brevity, "take four file, and see what is yonder — No — the knaves may shrink from thee. Go thou straight to the Lodge — invest it in the way we agreed, so that a bird shall not escape out of it — form an outward and an inward ring of sentinels, but give no alarm until I come. Should any attempt to escape, KILL them." — He spoke that command with terrible emphasis. — "Kill them on the spot," he repeated, "be they who or what they will. Better so than trouble the Commonwealth with prisoners."

Pearson heard, and proceeded to obey his commander's orders.

Meanwhile, the future Protector disposed the small force which remained with him in such a manner that they should approach from different points at once the light which excited his suspicions, and gave them orders to creep as near to it as they could, taking care not to lose each other's support, and to be ready to rush in at the same moment, when he should give the sign, which was to be a loud whistle. Anxious to ascertain the truth with his own eyes, Cromwell, who had by instinct all the habits of military foresight, which, in others, are the result of professional education and long experience, advanced upon the object of his curiosity. He skulked from tree to tree with the light step and prowling sagacity of an Indian bush-fighter; and before any of his men had approached so near as to descry them, he saw, by the lantern which was placed on the ground, two men, who had been engaged in digging what seemed to be an ill-made grave. Near them lay extended something wrapped in a deer's hide, which greatly resembled the dead body of a man. They spoke together in a low voice, yet so that their dangerous auditor could perfectly overhear what they said.

"It is done at last," said one; "the worst and hardest labour I ever did in my life. I believe there is no luck about me left. My very arms feel as if they did not belong to me; and, strange to tell, toil as hard as I would, I could not gather warmth in my limbs."

"I have warmed me enough," said Rochecliffe, breathing short with fatigue.

"But the cold lies at my heart," said Joceline; "I scarce hope ever to be warm again. It is strange, and a charm seems to be on us. Here have we been nigh two hours in doing what Diggon the sexton would have done to better purpose in half a one."

"We are wretched spadesmen enough," answered Dr. Rochecliffe. "Every man to his tools — thou to thy bugle-horn, and I to my papers in cipher. — But do not be discouraged; it is the frost on the ground, and the number of roots, which rendered our task difficult. And now, all due rites done to this unhappy man, and having read over him the service of the Church, *valeat quantum*, let us lay him decently in this place of last repose; there will be small lack of him above ground. So cheer up thy heart, man, like a soldier as thou art; we have read the service over his body; and should times permit it, we will have him removed to consecrated ground, though he is all unworthy of such favour. Here, help me to lay him in the earth; we will drag briers and thorns over the spot, when we have shovelled dust upon dust; and do thou think of this chance more manfully; and remember, thy secret is in thine own keeping."

"I cannot answer for that," said Joceline. "Methinks the very night winds among the leaves will tell of what we have been doing — methinks the trees themselves will say, 'there is a dead corpse lies among our roots.' Witnesses are soon found when blood hath been spilled."

"They are so, and that right early," exclaimed Cromwell, starting from the thicket, laying hold on Joceline, and putting a pistol to his head. At any other period of his life, the forester would, even against the odds of numbers, have made a desperate resistance; but the horror he had felt at the slaughter of an old companion, although in defence of his own life, together with fatigue and surprise, had altogether unmanned him, and he was seized as easily as a sheep is secured by the butcher. Dr. Rochecliffe offered some resistance, but was presently secured by the soldiers who pressed around him.

"Look, some of you," said Cromwell, "what corpse this is upon whom these lewd sons of Belial have done a murder — Corporal Grace-be-here Humgudgeon, see if thou knowest the face."

"I profess I do, even as I should do mine own in a mirror," snuffled the corporal, after looking on the countenance of the dead man by the help of the lantern. "Of a verity it is our trusty brother in the faith, Joseph Tomkins."

"Tomkins!" exclaimed Cromwell, springing forward and satisfying himself with a glance at the features of the corpse — "Tomkins! — and murdered, as the fracture of the temple intimates! — dogs that ye are, confess the truth — You have murdered him because you have discovered his treachery — I should say his true spirit towards the Commonwealth of England, and his hatred of those complots in which you would have engaged his honest simplicity."

"Ay," said Grace-be-here Humgudgeon, "and then to misuse his dead body with your papistical doctrines, as if you had crammed cold porridge into its cold mouth. I pray thee, General, let these men's bonds be made strong."

"Forbear, corporal," said Cromwell; "our time presses. — Friend, to you — whom I believe to be Doctor Anthony Rochecliffe by name and surname, I have to give the choice of being hanged at daybreak tomorrow, or making atonement for the murder of one of the Lord's people, by telling what thou knowest of the secrets which are in yonder house."

"Truly, sir," replied Rochecliffe, "you found me but in my duty as a clergyman, interring the dead; and respecting answering your questions, I am determined myself, and do advise my fellow-sufferer on this occasion" —

"Remove him," said Cromwell; "I know his stiffneckedness of old, though I have made him plough in my furrow, when he thought he was turning up his own swathe — Remove him to the rear, and bring hither the other fellow. — Come thou here — this way — closer — closer. — Corporal Grace-be-here, do thou keep thy hand upon the belt with which he is bound. We must take care of our life for the sake of this distracted country, though, lack-a-day, for its own proper worth we could peril it for a pin's point. — Now, mark me, fellow, choose betwixt buying thy life by a full confession, or being tucked presently up to one of these old oaks — How likest thou that?"

"Truly, master," answered the under-keeper, affecting more rusticity than was natural to him, (for his frequent intercourse with Sir Henry Lee had partly softened and polished his manners,) "I think the oak is like to bear a lusty acorn — that is all."

"Dally not with me, friend," continued Oliver; "I profess to thee in sincerity I am no trifler. What guests have you seen at yonder house called the Lodge?"

"Many a brave guest in my day, I'se warrant ye, master," said Joceline. "Ah, to see how the chimneys used to smoke some twelve years back! Ah, sir, a sniff of it would have dined a poor man."

"Out, rascal!" said the General, "dost thou jeer me? Tell me at once what guests have been of late in the Lodge — and look thee, friend, be assured, that in rendering me this satisfaction, thou shalt not only rescue thy neck from the halter, but render also an acceptable service to the State, and one which I will see fittingly rewarded. For, truly, I am not of those who would have the rain fall only on the proud and stately plants, but rather would, so far as my poor wishes and prayers are concerned, that it should also fall upon the lowly and humble grass and corn, that the heart of the husbandman may be rejoiced, and that as the cedar of Lebanon waxes in its height, in its boughs, and in its roots, so may the humble and lowly hyssop that groweth upon the walls flourish, and — and, truly — Understand'st thou me, knave?"

"Not entirely, if it please your honour," said Joceline; "but it sounds as if you were preaching a sermon, and has a marvellous twang of doctrine with it."

"Then, in one word — thou knowest there is one Louis Kerneguy, or Carnego, or some such name, in hiding at the Lodge yonder?"

"Nay, sir," replied the under-keeper, "there have been many coming and going since Worcester-field; and how should I know who they are? — my service is out of doors, I trow."

"A thousand pounds," said Cromwell, "do I tell down to thee, if thou canst place that boy in my power."

"A thousand pounds is a marvellous matter, sir," said Joceline; "but I have more blood on my hand than I like already. I know not how the price of life may thrive — and, 'scape or hang, I have no mind to try."

"Away with him to the rear," said the General; "and let him not speak with his yoke-fellow yonder — Fool that I am, to waste time in expecting to get milk from mules. — Move on towards the Lodge."

They moved with the same silence as formerly, notwithstanding the difficulties which they encountered from being unacquainted with the road and its various intricacies. At length they were challenged, in a low voice, by one of their own sentinels, two concentric circles of whom had been placed around the Lodge, so close to each other, as to preclude the possibility of an individual escaping from within. The outer guard was maintained partly by horse upon the roads and open lawn, and where the ground was broken and bushy, by infantry. The inner circle was guarded by foot soldiers only. The whole were in the highest degree alert, expecting some interesting and important consequences from the unusual expedition on which they were engaged.

"Any news, Pearson?" said the General to his aide-de-camp, who came instantly to report to his superior.

He received for answer, "None."

Cromwell led his officer forward just opposite to the door of the Lodge, and there paused betwixt the circles of guards, so that their conversation could not be overheard.

He then pursued his enquiry, demanding, "Were there any lights — any appearances of stirring — any attempt at sally — any preparation for defence?"

"All as silent as the valley of the shadow of death — Even as the vale of Jehosaphat."

"Pshaw! tell me not of Jehosaphat, Pearson," said Cromwell. "These words are good for others, but not for thee. Speak plainly, and like a blunt soldier as thou art. Each man hath his own mode of speech; and bluntness, not sanctity, is thine."

"Well then, nothing has been stirring," said Pearson. — "Yet peradventure" —

"Peradventure not me," said Cromwell, "or thou wilt tempt me to knock thy teeth out. I ever distrust a man when he speaks after another fashion from his own."

"Zounds! let me speak to an end," answered Pearson, "and I will speak in what language your Excellency will."

"Thy zounds, friend," said Oliver, "showeth little of grace, but much of sincerity. Go to then — thou knowest I love and trust thee. Hast thou kept close watch? It behoves us to know that, before giving the alarm."

"On my soul," said Pearson, "I have watched as closely as a cat at a mouse-hole. It is beyond possibility that any thing could have eluded our vigilance, or even stirred within the house, without our being aware of it."

"Tis well," said Cromwell; "thy services shall not be forgotten, Pearson. Thou canst not preach and pray, but thou canst obey thine orders, Gilbert Pearson, and that may make amends."

"I thank your Excellency," replied Pearson; "but I beg leave to chime in with the humours of the times. A poor fellow hath no right to hold himself singular."

He paused, expecting Cromwell's orders what next was to be done, and, indeed, not a little surprised that the General's active and prompt spirit had suffered him during a moment so critical to cast away a thought upon a circumstance so trivial as his officer's peculiar mode of expressing himself. He wondered still more, when, by a brighter gleam of moonshine than he had yet enjoyed, he observed that Cromwell was standing motionless, his hands supported upon his sword, which he had taken out of the belt, and his stern brows bent on the ground. He waited for some time impatiently, yet afraid to interfere, lest he should awaken this

unwonted fit of ill-timed melancholy into anger and impatience. He listened to the muttering sounds which escaped from the half-opening lips of his principal, in which the words, "hard necessity," which occurred more than once, were all of which the sense could be distinguished. "My Lord-General," at length he said, "time flies."

"Peace, busy fiend, and urge me not!" said Cromwell. "Think'st thou, like other fools, that I have made a paction with the devil for success, and am bound to do my work within an appointed hour, lest the spell should lose its force?"

"I only think, my Lord-General," said Pearson, "that Fortune has put into your coffer what you have long desired to make prize of, and that you hesitate."

Cromwell sighed deeply as he answered, "Ah, Pearson, in this troubled world, a man, who is called like me to work great things in Israel, had need to be, as the poets feign, a thing made of hardened metal, immovable to feelings of human charities, impassible, resistless. Pearson, the world will hereafter, perchance, think of me as being such a one as I have described, 'an iron man, and made of iron mould.'— Yet they will wrong my memory — my heart is flesh, and my blood is mild as that of others. When I was a sportsman, I have wept for the gallant heron that was struck down, by my hawk, and sorrowed for the hare which lay screaming under the jaws of my greyhound; and canst thou think it a light thing to me, that, the blood of this lad's father lying in some measure upon my head, I should now put in peril that of the son? They are of the kindly race of English sovereigns, and, doubtless, are adored like to demigods by those of their own party. I am called Parricide, Blood-thirsty Usurper, already, for shedding the blood of one man, that the plague might be stayed — or as Achan was slain that Israel might thereafter stand against the face of their enemies. Nevertheless, who has spoke unto me graciously since that high deed? Those who acted in the matter with me are willing that I should be the scape-goat of the atonement — those who looked on and helped not, bear themselves now as if they had been borne down by violence; and while I looked that they should shout applause on me, because of the victory of Worcester, whereof the Lord had made me the poor instrument, they look aside to say, 'Ha! ha! the King-killer, the Parricide — soon shall his place be made desolate.'— Truly it is a great thing, Gilbert Pearson, to be lifted above the multitude; but when one feeleth that his exaltation is rather hailed with hate and scorn than with love and reverence — in sooth, it is still a hard matter for a mild, tender-conscienced, infirm spirit to bear — and God be my witness, that, rather than do this new deed, I would shed my own best heart's-blood in a pitched field, twenty against one." Here he fell into a flood of tears, which he sometimes was wont to do. This extremity of emotion was of a singular character. It was not actually the result of penitence, and far less that of absolute hypocrisy, but arose merely from the temperature of that remarkable man, whose deep policy, and ardent enthusiasm, were intermingled with a strain of hypochondriacal passion, which often led him to exhibit scenes of this sort, though seldom, as now, when he was called to the execution of great undertakings.

Pearson, well acquainted as he was with the peculiarities of his General, was baffled and confounded by this fit of hesitation and contrition, by which his enterprising spirit appeared to be so suddenly paralysed. After a moment's silence, he said, with some dryness of manner, "If this be the case, it is a pity your Excellency came hither. Corporal Humgudgeon and I, the greatest saint and greatest sinner in your army, had done the deed, and divided the guilt and the honour betwixt us."

"Ha!" said Cromwell, as if touched to the quick, "wouldst thou take the prey from the lion?"

"If the lion behaves like a village cur," said Pearson boldly, "who now barks and seems as if he would tear all to pieces, and now flies from a raised stick or a stone, I know not why I should fear him. If Lambert had been here, there had been less speaking and more action."

"Lambert! What of Lambert?" said Cromwell, very sharply.

"Only," said Pearson, "that I long since hesitated whether I should follow your Excellency or him — and I begin to be uncertain whether I have made the best choice, that's all."

"Lambert!" exclaimed Cromwell impatiently, yet softening his voice lest he should be overheard descanting on the character of his rival — "What is Lambert? — a tulip-fancying fellow, whom nature intended for a Dutch gardener at Delft or Rotterdam. Ungrateful as thou art, what could Lambert have done for thee?"

"He would not," answered Pearson, "have stood here hesitating before a locked door, when fortune presented the means of securing, by one blow, his own fortune, and that of all who followed him."

"Thou art right, Gilbert Pearson," said Cromwell, grasping his officer's hand, and strongly pressing it. "Be the half of this bold accompt thine, whether the reckoning be on earth or heaven."

"Be the whole of it mine hereafter," said Pearson hardily, "so your Excellency have the advantage of it upon earth. Step back to the rear till I force the door — there may be danger, if despair induce them to make a desperate sally."

"And if they do sally, is there one of my Ironsides who fears fire or steel less than myself?" said the General. "Let ten of the most determined men follow us, two with halberds, two with petronels, the others with pistols — Let all their arms be loaded, and fire without hesitation, if there is any attempt to resist or to sally forth — Let Corporal Humgudgeon be with them, and do thou remain here, and watch against escape, as thou wouldst watch for thy salvation."

The General then struck at the door with the hilt of his sword — at first with a single blow or two, then with a reverberation of strokes that made the ancient building ring again. This noisy summons was repeated once or twice without producing the least effect.

"What can this mean?" said Cromwell; "they cannot surely have fled, and left the house empty."

"No," replied Pearson, "I will ensure you against that; but your Excellency strikes so fiercely, you allow no time for an answer. Hark! I hear the baying of a hound, and the voice of a man who is quieting him — Shall we break in at once, or hold parley?"

"I will speak to them first," said Cromwell. — "Hollo! who is within there?"

"Who is it enquires?" answered Sir Henry Lee from the interior; "or what want you here at this dead hour?"

"We come by warrant of the Commonwealth of England," said the General.

"I must see your warrant ere I undo either bolt or latch," replied the knight; "we are enough of us to make good the castle: neither I nor my fellows will deliver it up but upon good quarter and conditions; and we will not treat for these save in fair daylight."

"Since you will not yield to our right, you must try our might," replied Cromwell. "Look to yourselves within; the door will be in the midst of you in five minutes."

"Look to yourselves without," replied the stout-hearted Sir Henry; "we will pour our shot upon you, if you attempt the least violence."

But, alas! while he assumed this bold language, his whole garrison consisted of two poor terrified women; for his son, in conformity with the plan which they had fixed upon, had withdrawn from the hall into the secret recesses of the palace.

"What can they be doing now, sir?" said Phoebe, hearing a noise as it were of a carpenter turning screw-nails, mixed with a low buzz of men talking.

"They are fixing a petard," said the knight, with great composure. "I have noted thee for a clever wench, Phoebe, and I will explain it to thee: 'Tis a metal pot, shaped much like one of the roguish knaves' own sugarloaf hats, supposing it had narrower brims — it is charged with some few pounds of fine gunpowder. Then—"

"Gracious! we shall be all blown up!" exclaimed Phoebe — the word gunpowder being the only one which she understood in the knight's description.

"Not a bit, foolish girl. Pack old Dame Jellicot into the embrasure of yonder window," said the knight, "on that side of the door, and we will ensconce ourselves on this, and we shall have time to finish my explanation, for they have bungling engineers. We had a clever French fellow at Newark would have done the job in the firing of a pistol."

They had scarce got into the place of security when the knight proceeded with his description. — "The petard being formed, as I tell you, is secured with a thick and strong piece of plank, termed the madrier, and the whole being suspended, or rather secured against the gate to be forced — But thou mindest me not?"

"How can I, Sir Henry," she said, "within reach of such a thing as you speak of? — O Lord! I shall go mad with very terror — we shall be crushed — blown up — in a few minutes!"

"We are secure from the explosion," replied the knight, gravely, "which will operate chiefly in a forward direction into the middle of the chamber; and from any fragments that may fly laterally, we are sufficiently guarded by this deep embrasure."

"But they will slay us when they enter," said Phoebe.

"They will give thee fair quarter, wench," said Sir Henry; "and if I do not bestow a brace of balls on that rogue engineer, it is because I would not incur the penalty inflicted by martial law, which condemns to the edge of the sword all persons who attempt to defend an untenable post. Not that I think the rigour of the law could reach Dame Jellicot or thyself, Phoebe, considering that you carry no arms. If Alice had been here she might indeed have done somewhat, for she can use a birding-piece."

Phoebe might have appealed to her own deeds of that day, as more allied to feats of mêlée and battle, than any which her young lady ever acted; but she was in an agony of inexpressible terror, expecting, from the knight's account of the petard, some dreadful catastrophe, of what nature she did not justly understand, notwithstanding his liberal communication on the subject.

"They are strangely awkward at it," said Sir Henry; "little Boutirlin would have blown the house up before now. — Ah! he is a fellow would take the earth like a rabbit — if he had been here, never may I stir but he would have countermined them ere now, and

—"Tis sport to have the engineer

Hoist with his own petard.'

as our immortal Shakspeare has it."

"Oh, Lord, the poor mad old gentleman," thought Phoebe — "Oh, sir, had you not better leave alone playbooks, and think of your end?" uttered she aloud, in sheer terror and vexation of spirit.

"If I had not made up my mind to that many days since," answered the knight, "I had not now met this hour with a free bosom —

'As gentle and as jocund as to rest,

Go I to death — truth hath a quiet breast."

As he spoke, a broad glare of light flashed from without, through the windows of the hall, and betwixt the strong iron stanchions with which they were secured — a broad discoloured light it was, which shed a red and dusky illumination on the old armour and weapons, as if it had been the reflection of a conflagration. Phoebe screamed aloud, and, forgetful of reverence in the moment of passion, clung close to the knight's cloak and arm, while Dame Jellicot, from her solitary niche, having the use of her eyes, though bereft of her hearing, yelled like an owl when the moon breaks out suddenly.

"Take care, good Phoebe," said the knight; "you will prevent my using my weapon if you hang upon me thus. — The bungling fools cannot fix their petard without the use of torches! Now let me take the advantage of this interval. — Remember what I told thee, and how to put off time."

"Oh, Lord — ay, sir," said Phoebe, "I will say any thing, Oh, Lord, that it were but over! — Ah! ah!"—(two prolonged screams)—"I hear something hissing like a serpent."

"It is the fusee, as we martialists call it," replied the knight; "that is, Phoebe, the match which fires the petard, and which is longer or shorter, according to the distance."

Here the knight's discourse was cut short by a dreadful explosion, which, as he had foretold, shattered the door, strong as it was, to pieces, and brought down the glass clattering from the windows with all the painted heroes and heroines, who had been recorded on that fragile place of memory for centuries. The women shrieked incessantly, and were answered by the bellowing of Bevis, though shut up at a distance from the scene of action. The knight, shaking Phoebe from him with difficulty, advanced into the hall to meet those who rushed in, with torches lighted and weapons prepared.

"Death to all who resist — life to those who surrender!" exclaimed Cromwell, stamping with his foot. "Who commands this garrison?"

"Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley," answered the old knight, stepping forward; "who, having no other garrison than two weak women, is compelled to submit to what he would willingly have resisted."

"Disarm the inveterate and malignant rebel," cried Oliver. "Art thou not ashamed, sir, to detain me before the door of a house which you had no force to defend? Wearest thou so white a beard, and knowest thou not, that to refuse surrendering an indefensible post, by the martial law, deserves hanging?"

"My beard and I," said Sir Henry, "have settled that matter between us, and agree right cordially. It is better to run the risk of being hanged, like honest men, than to give up our trust like cowards and traitors."

"Ha! say'st thou?" said Cromwell; "thou hast powerful motives, I doubt not, for running thy head into a noose. But I will speak with thee by and by. — Ho! Pearson, Gilbert Pearson, take this scroll — Take the elder woman with thee — Let her guide you to the various places therein mentioned — Search every room therein set down, and arrest, or lay upon the slightest resistance, whomsoever you find there. Then note those places marked as commanding points for cutting off intercourse through the mansion — the landing-places of the great staircase, the great gallery, and so forth. Use the woman civilly. The plan annexed to the scroll will point out the posts, even if she prove stupid or refractory. Meanwhile, the corporal, with a party, will bring the old man and the girl there to some apartment — the parlour, I think, called Victor Lee's, will do as well as another. — We will then be out of this stifling smell of gunpowder."

So saying, and without requiring any farther assistance or guidance, he walked towards the apartment he had named. Sir Henry had his own feelings, when he saw the unhesitating decision with which the General led the way, and which seemed to intimate a more complete acquaintance with the various localities of Woodstock than was consistent with his own present design, to engage the Commonwealth party in a fruitless search through the intricacies of the Lodge.

"I will now ask thee a few questions, old man," said the General, when they had arrived in the room; "and I warn thee, that hope of pardon for thy many and persevering efforts against the Commonwealth, can be no otherwise merited than by the most direct answers to the questions I am about to ask."

Sir Henry bowed. He would have spoken, but he felt his temper rising high, and became afraid it might be exhausted before the part he had settled to play, in order to afford the King time for his escape, should be brought to an end.

"What household have you had here, Sir Henry Lee, within these few days — what guests — what visitors? We know that your means of house-keeping are not so profuse as usual, so the catalogue cannot be burdensome to your memory."

"Far from it," replied the knight, with unusual command of temper, "my daughter, and latterly my son, have been my guests; and I have had these females, and one Joceline Joliffe, to attend upon us."

"I do not ask after the regular members of your household, but after those who have been within your gates, either as guests, or as malignant fugitives taking shelter."

"There may have been more of both kinds, sir, than I, if it please your valour, am able to answer for," replied the knight. "I remember my kinsman Everard was here one morning — Also, I bethink me, a follower of his, called Wildrake."

"Did you not also receive a young cavalier, called Louis Garnegey?" said Cromwell.

"I remember no such name, were I to hang for it," said the knight. "Kerneguy, or some such word," said the General; "we will not quarrel for a sound."

"A Scotch lad, called Louis Kerneguy, was a guest of mine," said Sir Henry, "and left me this morning for Dorsetshire."

"So late!" exclaimed Cromwell, stamping with his foot — "How fate contrives to baffle us, even when she seems most favourable! — What direction did he take, old man?" continued Cromwell — "what horse did he ride — who went with him?"

"My son went with him," replied the knight; "he brought him here as the son of a Scottish lord. — I pray you, sir, to be finished with these questions; for although I owe thee, as Will Shakspeare says,

Respect for thy great place, and let the devil

Be sometimes honoured for his burning throne —

yet I feel my patience wearing thin."

Cromwell here whispered to the corporal, who in turn uttered orders to two soldiers, who left the room. "Place the knight aside; we will now examine the servant damsel," said the General. — "Dost them know," said he to Phoebe, "of the presence of one Louis Kerneguy, calling himself a Scotch page, who came here a few days since?"

"Surely, sir," she replied, "I cannot easily forget him; and I warrant no well-looking wench that comes into his way will be like to forget him either."

"Aha," said Cromwell, "sayst thou so? truly I believe the woman will prove the truer witness. — When did he leave this house?"

"Nay, I know nothing of his movements, not I," said Phoebe; "I am only glad to keep out of his way. But if he have actually gone hence, I am sure he was here some two hours since, for he crossed me in the lower passage, between the hall and the kitchen."

"How did you know it was he?" demanded Cromwell.

"By a rude enough token," said Phoebe. — "La, sir, you do ask such questions!" she added, hanging down her head.

Humgudgeon here interfered, taking upon himself the freedom of a co-adjutor. "Verily," he said, "if what the damsel is called to speak upon hath aught unseemly, I crave your Excellency's permission to withdraw, not desiring that my nightly meditations may be disturbed with tales of such a nature."

"Nay, your honour," said Phoebe, "I scorn the old man's words, in the way of seemliness or unseemliness either. Master Louis did but snatch a kiss, that is the truth of it, if it must be told."

Here Humgudgeon groaned deeply, while his Excellency avoided laughing with some difficulty. "Thou hast given excellent tokens, Phoebe," he said; "and if they be true, as I think they seem to be, thou shalt not lack thy reward. — And here comes our spy from the stables."

"There are not the least signs," said the trooper, "that horses have been in the stables for a month — there is no litter in the stalls, no hay in the racks, the corn-bins are empty, and the mangers are full of cobwebs."

"Ay, ay," said the old knight, "I have seen when I kept twenty good horses in these stalls, with many a groom and stable-boy to attend them."

"In the meanwhile," said Cromwell, "their present state tells little for the truth of your own story, that there were horses today, on which this Kerneguy and your son fled from justice."

"I did not say that the horses were kept there," said the knight. "I have horses and stables elsewhere."

"Fie, fie, for shame, for shame!" said the General; "can a white-bearded man, I ask it once more, be a false witness?"

"Faith, sir," said Sir Henry Lee, "it is a thriving trade, and I wonder not that you who live on it are so severe in prosecuting interlopers. But it is the times, and those who rule the times, that make grey-beards deceivers."

"Thou art facetious friend, as well as daring in thy malignity," said Cromwell; "but credit me, I will cry quittance with you ere I am done. Whereunto lead these doors?"

"To bedrooms," answered the knight.

"Bedrooms! only to bedrooms?" said the Republican General, in a voice which indicated such was the internal occupation of his thoughts, that he had not fully understood the answer.

"Lord, sir," said the knight, "why should you make it so strange? I say these doors lead to bedrooms — to places where honest men sleep, and rogues lie awake."

"You are running up a farther account, Sir Henry," said the General; "but we will balance it once and for all."

During the whole of the scene, Cromwell, whatever might be the internal uncertainty of his mind, maintained the most strict temperance in language and manner, just as if he had no farther interest in what was passing, than as a military man employed in discharging the duty enjoined him by his superiors. But the restraint upon his passion was but

"The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below."

But mortal pleasure, what art thou in truth?

The torrent's smoothness ere it dash, below.

CAMPBELL'S *Gertrude of Wyoming*.

The course of his resolution was hurried on even more forcibly, because no violence of expression attended or announced its current. He threw himself into a chair, with a countenance that indicated no indecision of mind, but a determination which awaited only the signal for action. Meanwhile the knight, as if resolved in nothing to forego the privileges of his rank and place, sat himself down in turn, and putting on his hat, which lay on a table, regarded the General with a calm look of fearless indifference. The soldiers stood around, some holding the torches, which illuminated the apartment with a lurid and sombre glare of light, the others resting upon their weapons. Phoebe, with her hands folded, her eyes turned upwards till the pupils were scarce visible, and every shade of colour banished from her ruddy cheek, stood like one in immediate apprehension of the sentence of death being pronounced, and instant execution commanded.

Heavy steps were at last heard, and Pearson and some of the soldiers returned. This seemed to be what Cromwell waited for. He started up, and asked hastily,

"Any news, Pearson? any prisoners — any malignants slain in thy defence?"

"None, so please your Excellency," said the officer.

"And are thy sentinels all carefully placed, as Tomkins' scroll gave direction, and with fitting orders?"

"With the most deliberate care," said Pearson.

"Art thou very sure," said Cromwell, pulling him a little to one side, "that this is all well and duly cared for? Bethink thee, that when we engage ourselves in the private communications, all will be lost should the party we look for have the means of dodging us by an escape into the more open rooms, and from thence perhaps into the forest."

"My Lord-General," answered Pearson, "if placing the guards on the places pointed out in this scroll be sufficient, with the strictest orders to stop, and, if necessary, to stab or shoot, whoever crosses their post, such orders are given to men who will not fail to execute them. If more is necessary, your Excellency has only to speak."

"No — no — no, Pearson," said the General, "thou hast done well. — This night over, and let it end but as we hope, thy reward shall not be wanting. — And now to business. — Sir Henry Lee, undo me the secret spring of yonder picture of your ancestor. Nay, spare yourself the trouble and guilt of falsehood or equivocation, and, I say, undo me that spring presently."

"When I acknowledge you for my master, and wear your livery, I may obey your commands," answered the knight; "even then I would need first to understand them."

"Wench," said Cromwell, addressing Phoebe, "go thou undo the spring — you could do it fast enough when you aided at the gambols of the demons of Woodstock, and terrified even Mark Everard, who, I judged, had more sense."

"Oh Lord, sir, what shall I do?" said Phoebe, looking to the knight; "they know all about it. What shall I do?"

"For thy life, hold out to the last, wench! Every minute is worth a million."

"Ha! heard you that, Pearson?" said Cromwell to the officer; then, stamping with his foot, he added, "Undo the spring, or I will else use levers and wrenching-irons — Or, ha! another petard were well bestowed — Call the engineer."

"O Lord, sir," cried Phoebe, "I shall never live another peter — I will open the spring."

"Do as thou wilt," said Sir Henry; "it shall profit them but little."

Whether from real agitation, or from a desire to gain time, Phoebe was some minutes ere she could get the spring to open; it was indeed secured with art, and the machinery on which it acted was concealed in the frame of the portrait. The whole, when fastened, appeared quite motionless, and betrayed, as when examined by Colonel Everard, no external mark of its being possible to remove it. It was now withdrawn, however, and showed a narrow recess, with steps which ascended on one side into the thickness of the wall. Cromwell was now like a greyhound slipped from the leash with the prey in full view. — "Up," he cried, "Pearson, thou art

swifter than I— Up thou next, corporal." With more agility than could have been expected from his person or years, which were past the meridian of life, and exclaiming, "Before, those with the torches!" he followed the party, like an eager huntsman in the rear of his hounds, to encourage at once and direct them, as they penetrated into the labyrinth described by Dr. Rocheccliffe in the "Wonders of Woodstock."

Chapter the Thirty-Fourth.

*The King, therefore, for his defence
Against the furious Queen,
At Woodstock builded such a bower,
As never yet was seen.
Most curiously that bower was built,
Of stone and timber strong;
An hundred and fifty doors
Did to this bower belong;
And they so cunningly contrived,
With turnings round about,
That none but with a clew of thread
Could enter in or out.*

BALLAD OF FAIR ROSAMOND.

The tradition of the country, as well as some historical evidence, confirmed the opinion that there existed, within the old Royal Lodge at Woodstock, a labyrinth, or connected series of subterranean passages, built chiefly by Henry II., for the security of his mistress, Rosamond Clifford, from the jealousy of his Queen, the celebrated Eleanor. Dr. Rocheccliffe, indeed, in one of those fits of contradiction with which antiquaries are sometimes seized, was bold enough to dispute the alleged purpose of the perplexed maze of rooms and passages, with which the walls of the ancient palace were perforated; but the fact was undeniable, that in raising the fabric some Norman architect had exerted the utmost of the complicated art, which they have often shown elsewhere, in creating secret passages, and chambers of retreat and concealment. There were stairs, which were ascended merely, as it seemed, for the purpose of descending again — passages, which, after turning and winding for a considerable way, returned to the place where they set out — there were trapdoors and hatchways, panels and portcullises. Although Oliver was assisted by a sort of ground-plan, made out and transmitted by Joseph Tomkins, whose former employment in Dr. Rocheccliffe's service had made him fully acquainted with the place, it was found imperfect; and, moreover, the most serious obstacles to their progress occurred in the shape of strong doors, party-walls, and iron-grates — so that the party blundered on in the dark, uncertain whether they were not going farther from, rather than approaching, the extremity of the labyrinth. They were obliged to send for mechanics, with sledge-hammers and other instruments, to force one or two of those doors, which resisted all other means of undoing them. Labouring along in these dusky passages, where, from time to time, they were like to be choked by the dust which their acts of violence excited, the soldiers were obliged to be relieved oftener than once, and the bulky Corporal Grace-be-here himself puffed and blew like a grampus that has got into shoal water. Cromwell alone continued, with unabated zeal, to push on his researches — to encourage the soldiers, by the exhortations which they best understood, against fainting for lack of faith — and to secure, by sentinels at proper places, possession of the ground which they had already explored. His acute and observing eye detected, with a sneering smile, the cordage and machinery by which the bed of poor Desborough had been inverted, and several remains of the various disguises, as well as private modes of access, by which Desborough, Bletson, and Harrison, had been previously imposed upon. He pointed them out to Pearson, with no farther comment than was implied in the exclamation, "The simple fools!"

But his assistants began to lose heart and be discouraged, and required all his spirit to raise theirs. He then called their attention to voices which they seemed to hear before them, and urged these as evidence that they were moving on the track of some enemy of the Commonwealth, who, for the execution of his malignant plots, had retreated into these extraordinary fastnesses.

The spirits of the men became at last downcast, notwithstanding all this encouragement. They spoke to each other in whispers, of the devils of Woodstock, who might be all the while decoying them forward to a room said to exist in the Palace, where the floor, revolving on an axis, precipitated those who entered into a bottomless abyss. Humgudgeon hinted, that he had consulted the Scripture that morning by way of lot, and his fortune had been to alight on the passage, "Eutychus fell down from the third loft." The energy and authority of Cromwell, however, and the refreshment of some food and strong waters, reconciled them to pursuing their task.

Nevertheless, with all their unwearied exertions, morning dawned on the search before they had reached Dr. Rocheccliffe's sitting apartment, into which, after all, they obtained entrance by a mode much more difficult than that which the Doctor himself employed. But here their ingenuity was long at fault. From the miscellaneous articles that were strewed around, and the preparations made for food and lodging, it seemed they had gained the very citadel of the labyrinth; but though various passages opened from it, they all terminated in places with which they were already acquainted, or communicated with the other parts of the house, where their own sentinels assured them none had passed. Cromwell remained long in deep uncertainty. Meantime he directed Pearson to take charge of the ciphers, and more important papers which lay on the table. "Though there is little there," he said, "that I have not already known, by means of Trusty Tomkins — Honest Joseph — for an artful and thorough-paced agent, the like of thee is not left in England."

After a considerable pause, during which he sounded with the pommel of his sword almost every stone in the building, and every plank on the floor, the General gave orders to bring the old knight and Dr. Rocheccliffe to the spot, trusting that he might work out of them some explanation of the secrets of this apartment.

"So please your Excellency, to let me deal with him," said Pearson, who was a true soldier of fortune, and had been a buccaneer in the West Indies, "I think that, by a whipcord twitched tight round their forehead, and twisted about with a pistol-but, I could make either the truth start from their lips, or the eyes from their head."

"Out upon thee, Pearson!" said Cromwell, with abhorrence; "we have no warrant for such cruelty, neither as Englishmen nor Christians. We may slay malignants as we crush noxious animals, but to torture them is a deadly sin; for it is written, 'He made them to be pitied of those who carried them captive.' Nay, I recall the order even for their examination, trusting that wisdom will be granted us without it, to discover their most secret devices."

There was a pause accordingly, during which an idea seized upon Cromwell's imagination — "Bring me hither," he said, "yonder stool," and placing it beneath one of the windows, of which there were two so high in the wall as not to be accessible from the floor, he clambered up into the entrance of the window, which was six or seven feet deep, corresponding with the thickness of the wall. "Come up hither, Pearson," said the General; "but ere thou comest, double the guard at the foot of the turret called Love's Ladder, and bid them bring up the other petard — So now, come thou hither."

The inferior officer, however brave in the field, was one of those whom a great height strikes with giddiness and sickness. He shrunk back from the view of the precipice, on the verge of which Cromwell was standing with complete indifference, till the General, catching the hand of his follower, pulled him forward as far as he would advance. "I think," said the General, "I have found the clew, but by this light it is no easy one! See you, we stand in the portal near the top of Rosamond's Tower; and yon turret, which rises opposite to our feet, is that which is called Love's Ladder, from which the drawbridge reached that admitted the profligate Norman tyrant to the bower of his mistress."

"True, my lord, but the drawbridge is gone," said Pearson.

"Ay, Pearson," replied the General; "but an active man might spring from the spot we stand upon to the battlements of yonder turret."

"I do not think so, my lord," said Pearson.

"What?" said Cromwell; "not if the avenger of blood were behind you, with his slaughter-weapon in his hand?"

"The fear of instant death might do much," answered Pearson; "but when I look at that sheer depth on either side, and at the empty chasm between us and yonder turret, which is, I warrant you, twelve feet distant, I confess the truth, nothing short of the most imminent danger should induce me to try. Pah — the thought

makes my head grow giddy! — I tremble to see your Highness stand there, balancing yourself as if you meditated a spring into the empty air. I repeat, I would scarce stand so near the verge as does your Highness, for the rescue of my life.”

“Ah, base and degenerate spirit!” said the General; “soul of mud and clay, wouldst thou not do it, and much more, for the possession of empire! — that is, peradventure,” continued he, changing his tone as one who has said too much, “shouldst thou be called on to do this, that thereby becoming a great man in the tribes of Israel, thou mightest redeem the captivity of Jerusalem — ay, and it may be, work some great work for the afflicted people of this land?”

“Your Highness may feel such calls,” said the officer; “but they are not for poor Gilbert Pearson, your faithful follower. You made a jest of me yesterday, when I tried to speak your language; and I am no more able to fulfil your designs than to use your mode of speech.”

“But, Pearson,” said Cromwell, “thou hast thrice, yea, four times, called me your Highness.”

“Did I, my lord? I was not sensible of it. I crave your pardon,” said the officer.

“Nay,” said Oliver, “there was no offence. I do indeed stand high, and I may perchance stand higher — though, alas, it were fitter for a simple soul like me to return to my plough and my husbandry. Nevertheless, I will not wrestle against the Supreme will, should I be called on to do yet more in that worthy cause. For surely he who hath been to our British Israel as a shield of help, and a sword of excellency, making her enemies be found liars unto her, will not give over the flock to those foolish shepherds of Westminster, who shear the sheep and feed them not, and who are in very deed hirelings, not shepherds.”

“I trust to see your lordship quoit them all down stairs,” answered Pearson. “But may I ask why we pursue this discourse even now, until we have secured the common enemy?”

“I will tarry no jot of time,” said the General; “fence the communication of Love’s Ladder, as it is called, below, as I take it for almost certain, that the party whom we have driven from fastness to fastness during the night, has at length sprung to the top of yonder battlements from the place where we now stand. Finding the turret is guarded below, the place he has chosen for his security will prove a rat-trap, from whence there is no returning.”

“There is a cask of gunpowder in this cabinet,” said Pearson; “were it not better, my lord, to mine the tower, if he will not render himself, and send the whole turret with its contents one hundred feet in the air?”

“Ah, silly man,” said Cromwell, striking him familiarly on the shoulder; “if thou hadst done this without telling me, it had been good service. But we will first summon the turret, and then think whether the petard will serve our turn — it is but mining at last. — Blow a summons there, down below.”

The trumpets rang at his bidding, till the old walls echoed from every recess and vaulted archway. Cromwell, as if he cared not to look upon the person whom he expected to appear, drew back, like a necromancer afraid of the spectre which he has evoked.

“He has come to the battlement,” said Pearson to his General.

“In what dress or appearance?” answered Cromwell, from within the chamber.

“A grey riding-suit, passmented with silver, russet walking-boots, a cut band, a grey hat and plume, black hair.”

“It is he, it is he!” said Cromwell; “and another crowning mercy is vouchsafed!”

Meantime, Pearson and young Lee exchanged defiance from their respective posts.

“Surrender,” said the former, “or we blow you up in your fastness.”

“I am come of too high a race to surrender to rebels,” said Albert, assuming the air with which, in such a condition, a king might have spoken. “I bear you to witness,” cried Cromwell, exultingly, “he hath refused quarter. Of a surety, his blood be on his head. — One of you bring down the barrel of powder. As he loves to soar high, we will add what can be taken from the soldiers’ bandoliers. — Come with me, Pearson; thou understandest this gear. — Corporal Grace-be-here, stand thou fast on the platform of the window where Captain Pearson and I stood but even now, and bend the point of thy partisan against any who shall attempt to pass. Thou art as strong as a bull; and I will back thee against despair itself.”

“But,” said the corporal, mounting reluctantly, “the place is as the pinnacle of the Temple; and it is written, that Eutychus fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead.”

“Because he slept upon his post,” answered Cromwell readily. “Beware thou of carelessness, and thus thy feet shall be kept from stumbling. — You four soldiers, remain here to support the corporal, if it be necessary; and you, as well as the corporal, will draw into the vaulted passage the minute the trumpets sound a retreat. It is as strong as a casemate, and you may lie there safe from the effects of the mine. Thou, Zerubbabel Robins, I know wilt be their lance-prisade.”^g Robins bowed, and the General departed to join those who were without.

As he reached the door of the hall, the petard was heard to explode, and he saw that it had succeeded; for the soldiers rushed, brandishing their swords and pistols, in at the postern of the turret, whose gate had been successfully forced. A thrill of exultation, but not unmingled with horror shot across the veins of the ambitious soldier.

“Now — now!” he cried; “they are dealing with him!”

His expectations were deceived. Pearson and the others returned disappointed, and reported they had been stopt by a strong trap-door of grated iron, extended over the narrow stair; and they could see there was an obstacle of the same kind some ten feet higher. To remove it by force, while a desperate and well armed man had the advantage of the steps above them, might cost many lives. “Which, lack-a-day,” said the General, “it is our duty to be tender of. What dost thou advise, Gilbert Pearson?”

“We must use powder, my lord,” answered Pearson, who saw his master was too modest to reserve to himself the whole merit of the proceeding — “There may be a chamber easily and conveniently formed under the foot of the stair. We have a sausage, by good luck, to form the train — and so” —

“Ah!” said Cromwell, “I know thou canst manage such gear well — But, Gilbert, I go to visit the posts, and give them orders to retire to a safe distance when the retreat is sounded. You will allow them five minutes for this purpose.”

“Three is enough for any knave of them all,” said Pearson. “They will be lame indeed, that require more on such a service. — I ask but one, though I fire the train myself.”

“Take heed,” said Cromwell, “that the poor soul be listened to, if he asks quarter. It may be, he may repent him of his hard-heartedness and call for mercy.”

“And mercy he shall have,” answered Pearson, “provided he calls loud enough to make me hear him; for the explosion of that damned petard has made me as deaf as the devil’s dam.”

“Hush, Gilbert, hush!” said Cromwell; “you offend in your language.”

“Zooks, sir, I must speak either in your way, or in my own,” said Pearson, “unless I am to be dumb as well as deaf! — Away with you, my lord, to visit the posts; and you will presently hear me make some noise in the world.”

Cromwell smiled gently at his aide-de-camp’s petulance, patted him on the shoulder, and called him a mad fellow, walked a little way, then turned back to whisper, “What thou dost, do quickly;” then returned again towards the outer circle of guards, turning his head from time to time, as if to assure himself that the corporal, to whom he had intrusted the duty, still kept guard with his advanced weapon upon the terrific chasm between Rosamond’s Tower and the corresponding turret. Seeing him standing on his post, the General muttered between his mustaches, “The fellow hath the strength and courage of a bear; and yonder is a post where one shall do more to keep back than an hundred in making way.” He cast a last look on the gigantic figure, who stood in that airy position, like some Gothic statue, the weapon half levelled against the opposite turret, with the butt rested against his right foot, his steel cap and burnished corslet glittering in the rising sun.

Cromwell then passed on to give the necessary orders, that such sentinels as might be endangered at their present posts by the effect of the mine, should withdraw at the sound of the trumpet to the places which he pointed out to them. Never, on any occasion of his life, did he display more calmness and presence of mind. He was kind, nay, facetious, with the soldiers, who adored him; and yet he resembled the volcano before the eruption commences — all peaceful and quiet without, while an hundred contradictory passions were raging in his bosom.

Corporal Humgudgeon, meanwhile, remained steady upon his post; yet, though as determined a soldier as ever fought among the redoubted regiment of Ironsides, and possessed of no small share of that exalted fanaticism which lent so keen an edge to the natural courage of those stern religionists, the veteran felt his present situation to be highly uncomfortable. Within a pike's length of him arose a turret, which was about to be dispersed in massive fragments through the air; and he felt small confidence in the length of time which might be allowed for his escape from such a dangerous vicinity. The duty of constant vigilance upon his post, was partly divided by this natural feeling, which induced him from time to time to bend his eyes on the miners below, instead of keeping them riveted on the opposite turret.

At length the interest of the scene arose to the uttermost. After entering and returning from the turret, and coming out again more than once, in the course of about twenty minutes Pearson issued, as it might be supposed, for the last time, carrying in his hand, and uncoiling, as he went along, the sausage, or linen bag, (so called from its appearance,) which, strongly sewed together, and crammed with gunpowder, was to serve as a train betwixt the mine to be sprung, and the point occupied by the engineer who was to give fire. He was in the act of finally adjusting it, when the attention of the corporal on the tower became irresistibly and exclusively riveted upon the preparations for the explosion. But while he watched the aide-decamp drawing his pistol to give fire, and the trumpeter handling his instrument as waiting the order to sound the retreat, fate rushed on the unhappy sentinel in a way he least expected.

Young, active, bold, and completely possessed of his presence of mind, Albert Lee, who had been from the loopholes a watchful observer of every measure which had been taken by his besiegers, had resolved to make one desperate effort for self-preservation. While the head of the sentinel on the opposite platform was turned from him, and bent rather downwards, he suddenly sprung across the chasm, though the space on which he lighted was scarce wide enough for two persons, threw the surprised soldier from his precarious stand, and jumped himself down into the chamber. The gigantic trooper went sheer down twenty feet, struck against a projecting battlement, which launched the wretched man outwards, and then fell on the earth with such tremendous force, that the head, which first touched the ground, dented a hole in the soil of six inches in depth, and was crushed like an eggshell. Scarce knowing what had happened, yet startled and confounded at the descent of this heavy body, which fell at no great distance from him, Pearson snapt his pistol at the train, no previous warning given; the powder caught, and the mine exploded. Had it been strongly charged with powder, many of those without might have suffered; but the explosion was only powerful enough to blow out, in a lateral direction, a part of the wall just above the foundation, sufficient, however, to destroy the equipoise of the building. Then, amid a cloud of smoke, which began gradually to encircle the turret like a shroud, arising slowly from its base to its summit, it was seen to stagger and shake by all who had courage to look steadily at a sight so dreadful. Slowly, at first, the building inclined outwards, then rushed precipitately to its base, and fell to the ground in huge fragments, the strength of its resistance showing the excellence of the mason-work. The engineer, so soon as he had fired the train, fled in such alarm that he wellnigh ran against his General, who was advancing towards him, while a huge stone from the summit of the building, flying farther than the rest, lighted within a yard of them.

"Thou hast been over hasty, Pearson," said Cromwell, with the greatest composure possible — "hath no one fallen in that same tower of Siloe?"

"Some one fell," said Pearson, still in great agitation, "and yonder lies his body half-buried in the rubbish."

With a quick and resolute step Cromwell approached the spot, and exclaimed, "Pearson, thou hast ruined me — the young Man hath escaped. — This is our own sentinel — plague on the idiot! Let him rot beneath the ruins which crushed him!"

A cry now resounded from the platform of Rosamond's Tower, which appeared yet taller than formerly, deprived of the neighbouring turret, which emulated though it did not attain to its height — "A prisoner, noble General — a prisoner — the fox whom we have chased all night is now in the snare — the Lord hath delivered him into the hand of his servants."

"Look you keep him in safe custody," exclaimed Cromwell, "and bring him presently down to the apartment from which the secret passages have their principal entrance."

"Your Excellency shall be obeyed."

The proceedings of Albert Lee, to which these exclamations related, had been unfortunate. He had dashed from the platform, as we have related, the gigantic strength of the soldier opposed to him, and had instantly jumped down into Rochcliffe's chamber. But the soldiers stationed there threw themselves upon him, and after a struggle, which was hopelessly maintained against such advantage of numbers, had thrown the young cavalier to the ground, two of them, drawn down by his strenuous exertions, falling across him. At the same moment a sharp and severe report was heard, which, like a clap of thunder in the immediate vicinity, shook all around them, till the strong and solid tower tottered like the masts of a stately vessel when about to part by the board. In a few seconds, this was followed by another sullen sound, at first low, and deep, but augmenting like the roar of a cataract, as it descends, reeling, bellowing, and rushing, as if to astound both heaven and earth. So awful, indeed, was the sound of the neighbour tower as it fell, that both the captive, and those who struggled with him, continued for a minute or two passive in each other's grasp.

Albert was the first who recovered consciousness and activity. He shook off those who lay above him, and made a desperate effort to gain his feet, in which he partly succeeded. But as he had to deal with men accustomed to every species of danger, and whose energies were recovered nearly as soon as his own, he was completely secured, and his arms held down. Loyal and faithful to his trust, and resolved to sustain to the last the character which he had assumed, he exclaimed, as his struggles were finally overpowered, "Rebel villains! would you slay your king?"

"Ha, heard you that?" cried one of the soldiers to the lance-prisade, who commanded the party. "Shall I not strike this son of a wicked father under the fifth rib, even as the tyrant of Moab was smitten by Ehud with a dagger of a cubit's length?"

But Robins answered, "Be it far from us, Merciful Strickalthrow, to slay in cold blood the captive of our bow and of our spear. Me thinks, since the storm of Tredagh ² we have shed enough of blood — therefore, on your lives do him no evil; but take from him his arms, and let us bring him before the chosen Instrument, even our General, that he may do with him what is meet in his eyes."

By this time the soldier, whose exultation had made him the first to communicate the intelligence from the battlements to Cromwell, returned, and brought commands corresponding to the orders of their temporary officer; and Albert Lee, disarmed and bound, was conducted as a captive into the apartment which derived its name from the victories of his ancestor, and placed in the presence of General Cromwell.

Running over in his mind the time which had elapsed since the departure Charles till the siege, if it may be termed so, had terminated in his own capture, Albert had every reason to hope that his Royal Master must have had time to accomplish his escape. Yet he determined to maintain to the last a deceit which might for a time insure the King's safety. The difference betwixt them could not, he thought, be instantly discovered, begrimed as he was with dust and smoke, and with blood issuing from some scratches received in the scuffle.

In this evil plight, but bearing himself with such dignity as was adapted to the princely character, Albert was ushered into the apartment of Victor Lee, where, in his father's own chair, reclined the triumphant enemy of the cause to which the house of Lee had been hereditarily faithful.

Chapter the Thirty-Fifth.

A barren title hast thou bought too dear,

Why didst thou tell me that thou wert a king?

HENRY IV. PART I.

Oliver Cromwell arose from his seat as the two veteran soldiers, Zerubbabel Robins and Merciful Strickalthrow, introduced into the apartment the prisoner, whom they held by the arms, and fixed his stern hazel eye on Albert long before he could give vent to the ideas which were swelling in his bosom. Exultation was the most predominant.

"Art not thou," he at length said, "that Egyptian which, before these days, madest an uproar, and ledest out into the wilderness many thousand men, who were murderers! — Ha, youth, I have hunted thee from Stirling to Worcester, from Worcester to Woodstock, and we have met at last!"

"I would," replied Albert, speaking in the character which he had assumed, "that we had met where I could have shown thee the difference betwixt a rightful King and an ambitious Usurper!"

"Go to, young man," said Cromwell; "say rather the difference between a judge raised up for the redemption of England, and the son of those Kings whom the Lord in his anger permitted to reign over her. But we will not waste useless words. God knows that it is not of our will that we are called to such high matters, being as humble in our thoughts as we are of ourselves; and in our unassisted nature frail and foolish; and unable to render a reason but for the better spirit within us, which is not of us. — Thou art weary, young man, and thy nature requires rest and refection, being doubtless dealt with delicately, as one who hath fed on the fat, and drunk of the sweet, and who hath been clothed in purple and fine linen."

Here the General suddenly stopt, and then abruptly exclaimed — "But is this — Ay! whom have we here? These are not the locks of the swarthy lad Charles Stewart? — A cheat! a cheat!"

Albert hastily cast his eyes on a mirror which stood in the room, and perceived that a dark peruke, found among Dr. Rocheclyffe's miscellaneous wardrobe, had been disordered in the scuffle with the soldiery, and that his own light-brown hair was escaping from beneath it.

"Who is this?" said Cromwell, stamping with fury — "Pluck the disguise from him."

The soldiers did so; and bringing him at the same time towards the light, the deception could not be maintained for a moment longer with any possibility of success. Cromwell came up to him with his teeth set, and grinding against each other as he spoke, his hands clenched, and trembling with emotion, and speaking with a voice low-pitched, bitterly and deeply emphatic, such as might have preceded a stab with his dagger. "Thy name, young man?"

He was answered calmly and firmly, while the countenance of the speaker wore a cast of triumph, and even contempt.

"Albert Lee of Ditchley, a faithful subject of King Charles."

"I might have guessed it," said Cromwell. — "Ay, and to King Charles shalt thou go as soon as it is noon on the dial. — Pearson," he continued, "let him be carried to the others; and let them be executed at twelve exactly."

"All, sir?" said Pearson, surprised; for Cromwell, though he at times made formidable examples, was, in general, by no means sanguinary.

"All!" — repeated Cromwell, fixing his eye on young Lee. "Yes, young sir, your conduct has devoted to death thy father, thy kinsman, and the stranger that was in thine household. Such wreck hast thou brought on thy father's house."

"My father, too — my aged father!" said Albert, looking upward, and endeavouring to raise his hands in the same direction, which was prevented by his bonds. "The Lord's will be done!"

"All this havoc can be saved, if," said the General, "thou wilt answer one question — Where is the young Charles Stewart, who was called King of Scotland?"

"Under Heaven's protection, and safe from thy power," was the firm and unhesitating answer of the young royalist.

"Away with him to prison!" said Cromwell; "and from thence to execution with the rest of them, as malignants taken in the fact. Let a courtmartial sit on them presently."

"One word," said young Lee, as they led him from the room. "Stop, stop," said Cromwell, with the agitation of renewed hope — "let him be heard."

"You love texts of Scripture," said Albert — "Let this be the subject of your next homily — 'Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?'"

"Away with him," said the General; "let him die the death. — I have said it."

As Cromwell spoke these words, his aide-de-camp observed that he became unwontedly pale.

"Your Excellency is overtoiled in the public service," said Pearson; "a course of the stag in the evening will refresh you. The old knight hath a noble hound here, if we can but get him to hunt without his master, which may be hard, as he is faithful, and" —

"Hang him up!" said Cromwell.

"What — whom — hang the noble dog? Your Excellency was wont to love a good hound?"

"It matters not," said Cromwell; "let him be killed. Is it not written, that they slew in the valley of Achor, not only the accursed Achan, with his sons and his daughters, but also his oxen and asses, and his sheep, and every live thing belonging unto him? And even thus shall we do to the malignant family of Lee, who have aided Sisera in his flight, when Israel might have been delivered of his trouble for ever. But send out couriers and patrols — Follow, pursue, watch in every direction — Let my horse be ready at the door in five minutes, or bring me the first thou canst find."

It seemed to Pearson that this was something wildly spoken, and that the cold perspiration was standing upon the General's brow as he said it. He therefore again pressed the necessity of repose, and it would appear that nature seconded strongly the representation. Cromwell arose, and made a step or two towards the door of the apartment; but stopped, staggered, and, after a pause, sat down in a chair. "Truly, friend Pearson," he said, "this weary carcass of ours is an impediment to us, even in our most necessary business, and I am fitter to sleep than to watch, which is not my wont. Place guards, therefore, till we repose ourselves for an hour or two. Send out in every direction, and spare not for horses' flesh. Wake me if the court-martial require instruction, and forget not to see the sentence punctually executed on the Lees, and those who were arrested with them."

As Cromwell spoke thus, he arose and half-opened a bedroom door, when Pearson again craved pardon for asking if he had rightly understood his Excellency, that all the prisoners were to be executed.

"Have I not said it?" answered Cromwell, displeasedly. "Is it because thou art a man of blood, and hast ever been, that thou dost affect these scruples to show thyself tenderhearted at my expense? I tell thee, that if there lack one in the full tale of execution, thine own life shall pay the forfeit."

So saying, he entered the apartment, followed by the groom of his chamber, who attended upon Pearson's summons.

When his General had retired, Pearson remained in great perplexity what he ought to do; and that from no scruples of conscience, but from uncertainty whether he might not err either in postponing, or in too hastily and too literally executing, the instructions he had received.

In the meantime, Strickalthrow and Robins had returned, after lodging Albert in prison, to the room where Pearson was still musing on his General's commands. Both these men were adjutators in their army, and old soldiers, whom Cromwell was accustomed to treat with great familiarity; so that Robins had no hesitation to ask Captain Pearson, "Whether he meant to execute the commands of the General, even to the letter?"

Pearson shook his head with an air of doubt, but added, "There was no choice left."

"Be assured," said the old man, "that if thou dost this folly, thou wilt cause Israel to sin, and that the General will not be pleased with your service. Thou knowest, and none better than thou, that Oliver, although he be like unto David the son of Jesse, in faith, and wisdom, and courage, yet there are times when the evil spirit cometh upon him as it did upon Saul, and he uttereth commands which he will not thank any one for executing."

Pearson was too good a politician to assent directly to a proposition which he could not deny — he only shook his head once more, and said that it was easy for those to talk who were not responsible, but the soldier's duty was to obey his orders, and not to judge of them.

"Very righteous truth," said Merciful Strickalthrow, a grim old Scotchman; "I marvel where our brother Zerubbabel caught up this softness of heart?"

"Why, I do but wish," said Zerubbabel, "that four or five human creatures may draw the breath of God's air for a few hours more; there can be small harm done by delaying the execution — and the General will have some time for reflection."

"Ay," said Captain Pearson, "but I in my service must be more pointedly obsequious, than thou in thy plainness art bound to be, friend Zerubbabel."

"Then shall the coarse frieze cassock of the private soldier help the golden gaberdine of the captain to bear out the blast," said Zerubbabel. "Ay, indeed, I can show you warrant why we be aidful to each other in doing acts of kindness and long-suffering, seeing the best of us are poor sinful creatures, who might suffer, being called to a brief accounting."

"Of a verity you surprise me, brother Zerubbabel," said Strickalthrow; "that thou, being an old and experienced soldier, whose head hath grown grey in battle, shouldst give such advice to a young officer. Is not the General's commission to take away the wicked from the land, and to root out the Amalekite, and the Jebusite, and the Perizzite, and the Hittite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite? and are not these men justly to be compared to the five kings, who took shelter in

the cave of Makedah, who were delivered into the hands of Joshua the son of Nun? and he caused his captains and his soldiers to come near and tread on their necks — and then he smote them, and he slew them, and then he hanged them on five trees, even till evening — And thou, Gilbert Pearson by name, be not withheld from the duty which is appointed to thee, but do even as has been commanded by him who is raised up to judge and to deliver Israel; for it is written, ‘cursed is he who holdeth back his sword from the slaughter.’”

Thus wrangled the two military theologians, while Pearson, much more solicitous to anticipate the wishes of Oliver than to know the will of Heaven, listened to them with great indecision and perplexity.

Chapter the Thirty-Sixth.

*But let us now, like soldiers on the watch,
Put the soul's armour on, alike prepared
For all a soldier's warfare brings.*

JOANNA BAILLIE.

The reader will recollect, that when Rochecliffe and Joceline were made prisoners, the party which escorted them had two other captives in their train, Colonel Everard, namely, and the Rev. Nehemiah Holdenough. When Cromwell had obtained entrance into Woodstock, and commenced his search after the fugitive Prince, the prisoners were placed in what had been an old guardroom, and which was by its strength well calculated to serve for a prison, and a guard was placed over them by Pearson. No light was allowed, save that of a glimmering fire of charcoal. The prisoners remained separated from each other, Colonel Everard conversing with Nehemiah Holdenough, at a distance from Dr. Rochecliffe, Sir Henry Lee, and Joceline. The party was soon after augmented by Wildrake, who was brought down to the Lodge, and thrust in with so little ceremony, that, his arms being bound, he had very nearly fallen on his nose in the middle of the prison.

“I thank you, my good friend,” he said, looking back to the door, which they who had pushed him in were securing — “*Point de ceremonie* — no apology for tumbling, so we light in good company. — Save ye, save ye, gentlemen all — What, á la mort, and nothing stirring to keep the spirits up, and make a night on’t? — the last we shall have, I take it; for a make ¹⁰to a million, but we trine to the rubbing cheat [Footnote: Hang on the gallows] tomorrow. — Patron — noble patron, how goes it? This was but a scurvy trick of Noll so far as you were concerned: as for me, why I might have deserved something of the kind at his hand.”

“Prithee, Wildrake, sit down,” said Everard; “thou art drunk — disturb us not.”

“Drunk? I drunk?” cried Wildrake, “I have been splicing the mainbrace, as Jack says at Wapping — have been tasting Noll’s brandy in a bumper to the King’s health, and another to his Excellency’s confusion, and another to the d — n of Parliament — and it may be one or two more, but all to devilish good toasts. But I’m not drunk.”

“Prithee, friend, be not profane,” said Nehemiah Holdenough.

“What, my little Presbyterian Parson, my slender Mass-John? thou shalt say amen to this world instantly” — said Wildrake; “I have had a weary time in’t for one. — Ha, noble Sir Henry, I kiss your hand — I tell thee, knight, the point of my Toledo was near Cromwell’s heart last night, as ever a button on the breast of his doublet. Rat him, he wears secret armour. — He a soldier! Had it not been for a cursed steel shirt, I would have spitted him like a lark. — Ha, Doctor Rochecliffe! — thou knowest I can wield my weapon.”

“Yes,” replied the Doctor, “and you know I can use mine.”

“I prithee be quiet, Master Wildrake,” said Sir Henry.

“Nay, good knight,” answered Wildrake, “be somewhat more cordial with a comrade in distress. This is a different scene from the Brentford storming-party. The jade Fortune has been a very step-mother to me. I will sing you a song I made on my own ill-luck.”

“At this moment, Captain Wildrake, we are not in a fitting mood for singing,” said Sir Henry, civilly and gravely.

“Nay, it will aid your devotions — Egad, it sounds like a penitential psalm.

‘When I was a young lad,

My fortune was bad,

If ere I do well ’tis a wonder.

I spent all my means

Amid sharpers and queans;

Then I got a commission to plunder.

I have stockings ’tis true,

But the devil a shoe,

I am forced to wear boots in all weather,

Be d — d the hoot sole,

Curse on the spur-roll.

Confounded be the upper-leather.” ¹¹

The door opened as Wildrake finished this stanza at the top of his voice, and in rushed a sentinel, who, greeting him by the title of a “blasphemous bellowing bull of Bashan,” bestowed a severe blow, with his ramrod, on the shoulders of the songster, whose bonds permitted him no means of returning the compliment.

“Your humble servant again, sir,” said Wildrake, shrugging his shoulders — “sorry I have no means of showing my gratitude. I am bound over to keep the peace, like Captain Bobadil — Ha, knight, did you hear my bones clatter? that blow came twankingly off — the fellow might inflict the bastinado, were it in presence of the Grand Seigneur — he has no taste for music, knight — is no way moved by the ‘concord of sweet sounds.’ I will warrant him fit for treason, stratagem, and spoil — Eh? — all down in the mouth — well — I’ll go to sleep to-night on a bench, as I’ve done many a night, and I will be ready to be hanged decently in the morning, which never happened to me before in all my life —

When I was a young lad,

My fortune was bad —’

Pshaw! This is not the tune it goes to.” Here he fell fast asleep, and sooner or later all his companions in misfortune followed his example.

The benches intended for the repose of the soldiers of the guard, afforded the prisoners convenience enough to lie down, though their slumbers, it may be believed, were neither sound nor undisturbed. But when daylight was but a little while broken, the explosion of gunpowder which took place, and the subsequent fall of the turret to which the mine was applied, would have awakened the Seven Sleepers, or Morpheus himself. The smoke, penetrating through the windows, left them at no loss for the cause of the din.

“There went my gunpowder,” said Rochecliffe, “which has, I trust, blown up as many rebel villains as it might have been the means of destroying otherwise in a fair field. It must have caught fire by chance.”

“By chance? — No,” said Sir Henry; “depend on it, my bold Albert has fired the train, and that in yonder blast Cromwell was flying towards the heaven whose battlements he will never reach — Ah, my brave boy! and perhaps thou art thyself sacrificed, like a youthful Samson among the rebellious Philistines. — But I will not be long behind thee, Albert.”

Everard hastened to the door, hoping to obtain from the guard, to whom his name and rank might be known, some explanation of the noise, which seemed to announce some dreadful catastrophe.

But Nehemiah Holdenough, whose rest had been broken by the trumpet which gave signal for the explosion, appeared in the very acme of horror — “It is the trumpet of the Archangel!” he cried — “it is the crushing of this world of elements — it is the summons to the Judgment-seat! The dead are obeying the call — they are with us — they are amongst us — they arise in their bodily frames — they come to summon us!”

As he spoke his eyes were riveted upon Dr. Rochecliffe, who stood directly opposite to him. In rising hastily, the cap which he commonly wore, according to a custom then usual both among clergymen and gownmen of a civil profession, had escaped from his head, and carried with it the large silk patch which he probably wore for the purpose of disguise; for the cheek which was disclosed was unscarred, and the eye as good as that which was usually uncovered. Colonel Everard returning from the door, endeavoured in vain to make Master Holdenough comprehend what he learned from the guard without, that the explosion had involved only the death of one of Cromwell's soldiers. The Presbyterian divine continued to stare wildly at him of the Episcopal persuasion. But Dr. Rochecliffe heard and understood the news brought by Colonel Everard, and, relieved from the instant anxiety which had kept him stationary, he advanced towards the retiring Calvinist, extending his hand in the most friendly manner.

"Avoid thee — Avoid thee!" said Holdenough, "the living may not join hands with the dead."

"But I," said Rochecliffe, "am as much alive as you are."

"Thou alive! — thou! Joseph Albany, whom my own eyes saw precipitated from the battlements of Clidesthrow Castle?"

"Ay," answered the Doctor, "but you did not see me swim ashore on a marsh covered with sedges — *fugit ad salices* — after a manner which I will explain to you another time."

Holdenough touched his hand with doubt and uncertainty. "Thou art indeed warm and alive," he said, "and yet after so many blows, and a fall so tremendous — thou canst not be *my* Joseph Albany."

"I am Joseph Albany Rochecliffe," said the Doctor, "become so in virtue of my mother's little estate, which fines and confiscations have made an end of."

"And is it so indeed?" said Holdenough, "and have I recovered mine old chum?"

"Even so," replied Rochecliffe, "by the same token I appeared to you in the Mirror Chamber — Thou wert so bold, Nehemiah, that our whole scheme would have been shipwrecked, had I not appeared to thee in the shape of a departed friend. Yet, believe me, it went against my heart to do it."

"Ah, fie on thee, fie on thee," said Holdenough, throwing himself into his arms, and clasping him to his bosom, "thou wert ever a naughty wag. How couldst thou play me such a trick? — Ah, Albany, dost thou remember Dr. Purefoy and Caius College?"

"Marry, do I," said the Doctor, thrusting his arm through the Presbyterian divine's, and guiding him to a seat apart from the other prisoners, who witnessed this scene with much surprise. "Remember Caius College?" said Rochecliffe; "ay, and the good ale we drank, and our parties to mother Huffcap's."

"Vanity of vanities," said Holdenough, smiling kindly at the same time, and still holding his recovered friend's arm enclosed and hand-locked in his.

"But the breaking the Principal's orchard, so cleanly done," said the Doctor; "it was the first plot I ever framed, and much work I had to prevail on thee to go into it."

"Oh, name not that iniquity," said Nehemiah, "since I may well say, as the pious Master Baxter, that these boyish offences have had their punishment in later years, inasmuch as that inordinate appetite for fruit hath produced stomachic affections under which I yet labour."

"True, true, dear Nehemiah," said Rochecliffe, "but care not for them — a dram of brandy will correct it all. Mr. Baxter was," he was about to say "an ass," but checked himself, and only filled up the sentence with "a good man, I dare say, but over scrupulous."

So they sat down together the best of friends, and for half an hour talked with mutual delight over old college stories. By degrees they got on the politics of the day; and though then they unclasped their hands, and there occurred between them such expressions as, "Nay, my dear brother," and, "there I must needs differ," and, "on this point I crave leave to think," yet a hue and cry against the Independents and other sectarists being started, they followed like brethren in full hollo, and it was hard to guess which was most forward. Unhappily, in the course of this amicable intercourse, something was mentioned about the bishopric of Titus, which at once involved them in the doctrinal question of Church Government. Then, alas! the floodgates were opened, and they showered on each other Greek and Hebrew texts, while their eyes kindled, their cheeks glowed, their hands became clenched, and they looked more like fierce polemics about to rend each other's eyes out, than Christian divines.

Roger Wildrake, by making himself an auditor of the debate, contrived to augment its violence. He took, of course, a most decided part in a question, the merits of which were totally unknown to him. Somewhat overawed by Holdenough's ready oratory and learning, the cavalier watched with a face of anxiety the countenance of Dr. Rochecliffe; but when he saw the proud eye and steady bearing of the Episcopal champion, and heard him answer Greek with Greek, and Hebrew with Hebrew, Wildrake backed his arguments as he closed them, with a stout rap upon the bench, and an exulting laugh in the face of the antagonist. It was with some difficulty that Sir Henry and Colonel Everard, having at length and reluctantly interfered, prevailed on the two alienated friends to adjourn their dispute, removing at the same time to a distance, and regarding each other with looks in which old friendship appeared to have totally given way to mutual animosity.

But while they sat lowering on each other, and longing to renew a contest in which each claimed the victory, Pearson entered the prison, and in a low and troubled voice, desired the persons whom it contained to prepare for instant death.

Sir Henry Lee received the doom with the stern composure which he had hitherto displayed. Colonel Everard attempted the interposition of a strong and resentful appeal to the Parliament, against the judgment of the court-martial and the General. But Pearson declined to receive or transmit any such remonstrance, and with a dejected look and mien of melancholy presage, renewed his exhortation to them to prepare for the hour of noon, and withdrew from the prison.

The operation of this intelligence on the two clerical disputants was more remarkable. They gazed for a moment on each other with eyes in which repentant kindness and a feeling of generous shame quenched every lingering feeling of resentment, and joined in the mutual exclamation — "My brother — my brother, I have sinned, I have sinned in offending thee!" they rushed into each other's arms, shed tears as they demanded each other's forgiveness, and, like two warriors, who sacrifice a personal quarrel to discharge their duty against the common enemy, they recalled nobler ideas of their sacred character, and assuming the part which best became them on an occasion so melancholy, began to exhort those around them to meet the doom that had been announced, with the firmness and dignity which Christianity alone can give.

Chapter the Thirty-Seventh.

*Most gracious prince, good Cannyng cried,
Leave vengeance to our God,
And lay the iron rule aside,
Be thine the olive rod.*

BALLAD OF SIR CHARLES BAWDIN.

The hour appointed for execution had been long past, and it was about five in the evening when the Protector summoned Pearson to his presence. He went with fear and reluctance, uncertain how he might be received. After remaining about a quarter of an hour, the aide-de-camp returned to Victor Lee's parlour, where he found the old soldier, Zerubbabel Robins, in attendance for his return.

"How is Oliver?" said the old man, anxiously.

"Why, well," answered Pearson, "and hath asked no questions of the execution, but many concerning the reports we have been able to make regarding the flight of the young Man, and is much moved at thinking he must now be beyond pursuit. Also I gave him certain papers belonging to the malignant Doctor Rochecliffe."

"Then will I venture upon him," said the adjutor; "so give me a napkin that I may look like a sewer, and fetch up the food which I directed should be in readiness."

Two troopers attended accordingly with a ration of beef, such as was distributed to the private soldiers, and dressed after their fashion — a pewter pot of ale, a trencher with salt, black pepper, and a loaf of ammunition bread. "Come with me," he said to Pearson, "and fear not — Noll loves an innocent jest." He boldly entered the General's sleeping apartment, and said aloud, "Arise, thou that art called to be a judge in Israel — let there be no more folding of the hands to sleep. Lo, I come as a sign to thee; wherefore arise, eat, drink, and let thy heart be glad within thee; for thou shalt eat with joy the food of him that labourereth in the trenches, seeing that since thou wert commander over the host, the poor sentinel hath had such provisions as I have now placed for thine own refreshment."

"Truly, brother Zerubbabel," said Cromwell, accustomed to such acts of enthusiasm among his followers, "we would wish that it were so; neither is it our desire to sleep soft, nor feed more highly than the meanest that ranks under our banners. Verily, thou hast chosen well for my refreshment, and the smell of the food is savoury in my nostrils."

He arose from the bed, on which he had lain down half dressed, and wrapping his cloak around him, sat down by the bedside, and partook heartily of the plain food which was prepared for him. While he was eating, Cromwell commanded Pearson to finish his report — "You need not desist for the presence of a worthy soldier, whose spirit is as my spirit."

"Nay, but," interrupted Robins, "you are to know that Gilbert Pearson hath not fully executed thy commands, touching a part of those malignants, all of whom should have died at noon."

"What execution — what malignants?" said Cromwell, laying down his knife and fork.

"Those in the prison here at Woodstock," answered Zerubbabel, "whom your Excellency commanded should be executed at noon, as taken in the fact of rebellion against the Commonwealth."

"Wretch!" said Cromwell, starting up and addressing Pearson, "thou hast not touched Mark Everard, in whom there was no guilt, for he was deceived by him who passed between us — neither hast thou put forth thy hand on the pragmatic Presbyterian minister, to have all those of their classes cry sacrilege, and alienate them from us for ever?"

"If your Excellency wish them to live, they live — their life and death are in the power of a word," said Pearson.

"Enfranchise them; I must gain the Presbyterian interest over to us if I can."

"Rochecliffe, the arch-plotter," said Pearson, "I thought to have executed, but" —

"Barbarous man," said Cromwell, "alike ungrateful and impolitic — wouldst thou have destroyed our decoy-duck? This doctor is but like a well, a shallow one indeed, but something deeper than the springs which discharge their secret tribute into his keeping; then come I with a pump, and suck it all up to the open air. Enlarge him, and let him have money if he wants it. I know his haunts; he can go nowhere but our eye will be upon him. — But you look at each other darkly, as if you had more to say than you durst. I trust you have not done to death Sir Henry Lee?"

"No. Yet the man," replied Pearson, "is a confirmed malignant, and" —

"Ay, but he is also a noble relic of the ancient English Gentleman," said the General. "I would I knew how to win the favour of that race. But we, Pearson, whose royal robes are the armour which we wear on our bodies, and whose leading staves are our sceptres, are too newly set up to draw the respect of the proud malignants, who cannot brook to submit to less than royal lineage. Yet what can they see in the longest kingly line in Europe, save that it runs back to a successful soldier? I grudge that one man should be honoured and followed, because he is the descendant of a victorious commander, while less honour and allegiance is paid to another, who, in personal qualities, and in success, might emulate the founder of his rival's dynasty. Well, Sir Henry Lee lives, and shall live for me. His son, indeed, hath deserved the death which he has doubtless sustained."

"My lord," stammered Pearson, "since your Excellency has found I am right in suspending your order in so many instances, I trust you will not blame me in this also — I thought it best to await more special orders."

"Thou art in a mighty merciful humour this morning, Pearson," said Cromwell, not entirely satisfied.

"If your Excellency please, the halter is ready, and so is the provost-marshal."

"Nay, if such a bloody fellow as thou hast spared him, it would ill become me to destroy him," said the General. "But then, here is among Rochecliffe's papers the engagement of twenty desperadoes to take us off — some example ought to be made."

"My lord," said Zerubbabel, "consider now how often this young man, Albert Lee, hath been near you, nay, probably, quite close to your Excellency, in these dark passages which he knew, and we did not. Had he been of an assassin's nature, it would have cost him but a pistol-shot, and the light of Israel was extinguished. Nay, in the unavoidable confusion which must have ensued, the sentinels quitting their posts, he might have had a fair chance of escape."

"Enough Zerubbabel; he lives," said the General. "He shall remain in custody for some time, however, and be then banished from England. The other two are safe, of course; for you would not dream of considering such paltry fellows as fit victims for my revenge."

"One fellow, the under-keeper, called Joliffe, deserves death, however," said Pearson, "since he has frankly admitted that he slew honest Joseph Tomkins."

"He deserves a reward for saving us a labour," said Cromwell; "that Tomkins was a most double-hearted villain. I have found evidence among these papers here, that if we had lost the fight at Worcester, we should have had reason to regret that we had ever trusted Master Tomkins — it was only our success which anticipated his treachery — write us down debtor, not creditor, to Joceline, an you call him so, and to his quarter-staff."

"There remains the sacrilegious and graceless cavalier who attempted your Excellency's life last night," said Pearson.

"Nay," said the General, "that were stooping too low for revenge. His sword had no more power than had he thrust with a tobacco-pipe. Eagles stoop not at mallards, or wild-drakes either."

"Yet, sir," said Pearson, "the fellow should be punished as a libeller. The quantity of foul and pestilential abuse which we found in his pockets makes me loth he should go altogether free — Please to look at them, sir."

"A most vile hand," said Oliver, as he looked at a sheet or two of our friend Wildrake's poetical miscellanies — "The very handwriting seems to be drunk, and the very poetry not sober — What have we here?"

'When I was a young lad,

My fortune was bad —

If e'er I do well, 'tis a wonder' —

Why, what trash is this? — and then again —

'Now a plague on the poll

Of old politic Noll!

We will drink till we bring

In triumph back the King.'

In truth, if it could be done that way, this poet would be a stout champion. Give the poor knave five pieces, Pearson, and bid him go sell his ballads. If he come within twenty miles of our person, though, we will have him flogged till the blood runs down to his heels."

"There remains only one sentenced person," said Pearson, "a noble wolf-hound, finer than any your Excellency saw in Ireland. He belongs to the old knight Sir Henry Lee. Should your Excellency not desire to keep the fine creature yourself, might I presume to beg that I might have leave?"

"No, Pearson," said Cromwell; "the old man, so faithful himself, shall not be deprived of his faithful dog — I would I had any creature, were it but a dog, that followed me because it loved me, not for what it could make of me."

"Your Excellency is unjust to your faithful soldiers," said Zerubbabel, bluntly, "who follow you like dogs, fight for you like dogs, and have the grave of a dog on the spot where they happen to fall."

"How now, old grumbler," said the General, "what means this change of note?"

"Corporal Humgudgeon's remains are left to moulder under the ruins of yonder tower, and Tomkins is thrust into a hole in a thicket like a beast."

"True, true," said Cromwell, "they shall be removed to the churchyard, and every soldier shall attend with cockades of sea-green and blue ribbon — Every one of the non-commissioned officers and adjutators shall have a mourning-scarf; we ourselves will lead the procession, and there shall be a proper dole of wine, burnt brandy, and rosemary. See that it is done, Pearson. After the funeral, Woodstock shall be dismantled and destroyed, that its recesses may not again afford shelter to rebels and malignants."

The commands of the General were punctually obeyed, and when the other prisoners were dismissed, Albert Lee remained for some time in custody. He went abroad after his liberation, entered in King Charles's Guards, where he was promoted by that monarch. But his fate, as we shall see hereafter, only allowed him a short though bright career.

We return to the liberation of the other prisoners from Woodstock. The two divines, completely reconciled to each other, retreated arm in arm to the parsonage-house, formerly the residence of Dr. Rochecliffe, but which he now visited as the guest of his successor, Nehemiah Holdenough. The Presbyterian had no sooner installed his friend under his roof, than he urged upon him an offer to partake it, and the income annexed to it, as his own. Dr. Rochecliffe was much affected, but wisely rejected the generous offer, considering the difference of their tenets on Church government, which each entertained as religiously as his creed. Another debate, though a light one, on the subject of the office of Bishops in the Primitive Church, confirmed him in his resolution. They parted the next day, and their friendship remained undisturbed by controversy till Mr. Holdenough's death, in 1658; a harmony which might be in some degree owing to their never meeting again after their imprisonment. Dr. Rochecliffe was restored to his living after the Restoration, and ascended from thence to high clerical preferment.

The inferior personages of the grand jail-delivery at Woodstock Lodge, easily found themselves temporary accommodations in the town among old acquaintance; but no one ventured to entertain the old knight, understood to be so much under the displeasure of the ruling powers; and even the innkeeper of the George, who had been one of his tenants, scarce dared to admit him to the common privileges of a traveller, who has food and lodging for his money. Everard attended him unrequested, unpermitted, but also unforbidden. The heart of the old man had been turned once more towards him when he learned how he had behaved at the memorable rencontre at the King's Oak, and saw that he was an object of the enmity, rather than the favour, of Cromwell. But there was another secret feeling which tended to reconcile him to his nephew — the consciousness that Everard shared with him the deep anxiety which he experienced on account of his daughter, who had not yet returned from her doubtful and perilous expedition. He felt that he himself would perhaps be unable to discover where Alice had taken refuge during the late events, or to obtain her deliverance if she was taken into custody. He wished Everard to offer him his service in making a search for her, but shame prevented his preferring the request; and Everard, who could not suspect the altered state of his uncle's mind, was afraid to make the proposal of assistance, or even to name the name of Alice.

The sun had already set — they sat looking each other in the face in silence, when the trampling of horses was heard — there was knocking at the door — there was a light step on the stair, and Alice, the subject of their anxiety, stood before them. She threw herself joyfully into her father's arms, who glanced his eye needfully round the room, as he said in a whisper, "Is all safe?"

"Safe and out of danger, as I trust," replied Alice — "I have a token for you."

Her eye then rested on Everard — she blushed, was embarrassed, and silent.

"You need not fear your Presbyterian cousin," said the knight, with a good-humoured smile, "he has himself proved a confessor at least for loyalty, and ran the risk of being a martyr."

She pulled from her bosom the royal rescript, written on a small and soiled piece of paper, and tied round with a worsted thread instead of a seal. Such as it was, Sir Henry ere he opened it pressed the little packet with oriental veneration to his lips, to his heart, to his forehead; and it was not before a tear had dropt on it that he found courage to open and read the billet. It was in these words:—

"LOYAL OUR MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND, AND OUR TRUSTY SUBJECT,

"It having become known to us that a purpose of marriage has been entertained betwixt Mrs. Alice Lee, your only daughter, and Markham Everard, Esq. of Eversly Chase, her kinsman, and by affiancy your nephew: And being assured that this match would be highly agreeable to you, had it not been for certain respects to our service, which induced you to refuse your consent thereto — We do therefore acquaint you, that, far from our affairs suffering by such an alliance, we do exhort, and so far as we may, require you to consent to the same, as you would wish to do us good pleasure, and greatly to advance our affairs. Leaving to you, nevertheless, as becometh a Christian King, the full exercise of your own discretion concerning other obstacles to such an alliance, which may exist, independent of those connected with our service. Witness our hand, together with our thankful recollections of your good services to our late Royal Father as well as ourselves, C. R."

Long and steadily did Sir Henry gaze on the letter, so that it might almost seem as if he were getting it by heart. He then placed it carefully in his pocket-book, and asked Alice the account of her adventures the preceding night. They were briefly told. Their midnight walk through the Chase had been speedily and safely accomplished. Nor had the King once made the slightest relapse into the naughty Louis Kernequoy. When she had seen Charles and his attendant set off, she had taken some repose in the cottage where they parted. With the morning came news that Woodstock was occupied by soldiers, so that return thither might have led to danger, suspicion, and enquiry. Alice, therefore, did not attempt it, but went to a house in the neighbourhood, inhabited by a lady of established loyalty, whose husband had been major of Sir Henry Lee's regiment, and had fallen at the battle of Naseby. Mrs. Aylmer was a sensible woman, and indeed the necessities of the singular times had sharpened every one's faculties for stratagem and intrigue. She sent a faithful servant to scout about the mansion at Woodstock, who no sooner saw the prisoners dismissed and in safety, and ascertained the knight's destination for the evening, than he carried the news to his mistress, and by her orders attended Alice on horseback to join her father.

There was seldom, perhaps, an evening meal made in such absolute silence as by this embarrassed party, each occupied with their own thoughts, and at a loss how to fathom those of the others. At length the hour came when Alice felt herself at liberty to retire to repose after a day so fatiguing. Everard handed her to the door of her apartment, and was then himself about to take leave, when, to his surprise, his uncle asked him to return, pointed to a chair, and giving him the King's letter to read, fixed his looks on him steadily during the perusal; determined that if he could discover aught short of the utmost delight in the reading, the commands of the King himself should be disobeyed, rather than Alice should be sacrificed to one who received not her hand as the greatest blessing earth had to bestow. But the features of Everard indicated joyful hope, even beyond what the father could have anticipated, yet mingled with surprise; and when he raised his eye to the knight's with timidity and doubt, a smile was on Sir Henry's countenance as he broke silence. "The King," he said, "had he no other subject in England, should dispose at will of those of the house of Lee. But methinks the family of Everard have not been so devoted of late to the crown as to comply with a mandate, inviting its heir to marry the daughter of a beggar."

"The daughter of Sir Henry Lee," said Everard, kneeling to his uncle, and perforce kissing his hand, "would grace the house of a duke."

"The girl is well enough," said the knight proudly; "for myself, my poverty shall neither shame nor encroach on my friends. Some few pieces I have by Doctor Rochecliffe's kindness, and Joceline and I will strike out something."

"Nay, my dear uncle, you are richer than you think for," said Everard. "That part of your estate, which my father redeemed for payment of a moderate composition, is still your own, and held by trustees in your name, myself being one of them. You are only our debtor for an advance of monies, for which, if it will content you, we will count with you like usurers. My father is incapable of profiting by making a bargain on his own account for the estate of a distressed friend; and all this you would have learned long since, but that you would not — I mean, time did not serve for explanation — I mean"—

"You mean I was too hot to hear reason, Mark, and I believe it is very true. But I think we understand each other *now*. To-morrow I go with my family to Kingston, where is an old house I may still call mine. Come hither at thy leisure, Mark — or thy best speed, as thou wilt — but come with thy father's consent."

"With my father in person," said Everard, "if you will permit."

"Be that," answered the knight, "as he and you will — I think Joceline will scarce shut the door in thy face, or Bevis growl as he did after poor Louis Kernequoy. — Nay, no more raptures, but good-night, Mark, good-night; and if thou art not tired with the fatigue of yesterday — why, if you appear here at seven in the morning, I think we must bear with your company on the Kingston road."

Once more Everard pressed the knight's hand, caressed Bevis, who received his kindness graciously, and went home to dreams of happiness, which were realized, as far as this motley world permits, within a few months afterwards.

Chapter the Thirty-Eighth.

*My life was of a piece.
Spent in your service — dying at your feet.*

DON SEBASTIAN.

Years rush by us like the wind. We see not whence the eddy comes, nor whitherward it is tending, and we seem ourselves to witness their flight without a sense that we are changed; and yet Time is beguiling man of his strength, as the winds rob the woods of their foliage.

After the marriage of Alice and Markham Everard, the old knight resided near them, in an ancient manor-house, belonging to the redeemed portion of his estate, where Joceline and Phoebe, now man and wife, with one or two domestics, regulated the affairs of his household. When he tired of Shakspeare and solitude, he was ever a welcome guest at his son-in-law's, where he went the more frequently that Markham had given up all concern in public affairs, disapproving of the forcible dismissal of the Parliament, and submitting to Cromwell's subsequent domination, rather as that which was the lesser evil, than as to a government which he regarded as legal. Cromwell seemed ever willing to show himself his friend; but Everard, resenting highly the proposal to deliver up the King, which he considered as an insult to his honour, never answered such advances, and became, on the contrary, of the opinion, which was now generally prevalent in the nation, that a settled government could not be obtained without the recall of the banished family. There is no doubt that the personal kindness which he had received from Charles, rendered him the more readily disposed to such a measure. He was peremptory, however, in declining all engagements during Oliver's life, whose power he considered as too firmly fixed to be shaken by any plots which could be formed against it.

Meantime, Wildrake continued to be Everard's protected dependent as before, though sometimes the connexion tended not a little to his inconvenience. That respectable person, indeed, while he remained stationary in his patron's house, or that of the old knight, discharged many little duties in the family, and won Alice's heart by his attention to the children, teaching the boys, of whom they had three, to ride, fence, toss the pike, and many similar exercises; and, above all, filling up a great blank in her father's existence, with whom he played at chess and backgammon, or read Shakspeare, or was clerk to prayers when any sequestered divine ventured to read the service of the Church. Or he found game for him while the old gentleman continued to go a-sporting; and, especially he talked over the storming of Brentford, and the battles of Edgehill, Banbury, Roundwaydown, and others, themes which the aged cavalier delighted in, but which he could not so well enter upon with Colonel Everard, who had gained his laurels in the Parliament service.

The assistance which he received from Wildrake's society became more necessary, after Sir Henry was deprived of his gallant and only son, who was slain in the fatal battle of Dunkirk, where, unhappily, English colours were displayed on both the contending sides, the French being then allied with Oliver, who sent to their aid a body of auxiliaries, and the troops of the banished King fighting in behalf of the Spaniards. Sir Henry received the melancholy news like an old man, that is, with more external composure than could have been anticipated. He dwelt for weeks and months on the lines forwarded by the indefatigable Dr. Rocheciffe, superscribed in small letters, C. R., and subscribed Louis Kerneguy, in which the writer conjured him to endure this inestimable loss with the greater firmness, that he had still left one son, (intimating himself,) who would always regard him as a father.

But in spite of this balsam, sorrow, acting imperceptibly, and sucking the blood like a vampire, seemed gradually drying up the springs of life; and, without any formed illness, or outward complaint, the old man's strength and vigour gradually abated, and the ministry of Wildrake proved daily more indispensable.

It was not, however, always to be had. The cavalier was one of those happy persons whom a strong constitution, an unreflecting mind, and exuberant spirits, enable to play through their whole lives the part of a school-boy — happy for the moment, and careless of consequences.

Once or twice every year, when he had collected a few pieces, the Cavaliero Wildrake made a start to London, where, as he described it, he went on the ramble, drank as much wine as he could come by, and led *askeldering* life, to use his own phrase, among roystering cavaliers like himself, till by some rash speech or wild action, he got into the Marshalsea, the Fleet, or some other prison, from which he was to be delivered at the expense of interest, money, and sometimes a little reputation.

At length Cromwell died, his son resigned the government, and the various changes which followed induced Everard, as well as many others, to adopt more active measures in the King's behalf. Everard even remitted considerable sums for his service, but with the utmost caution, and corresponding with no intermediate agent, but with the Chancellor himself, to whom he communicated much useful information upon public affairs. With all his prudence he was very nearly engaged in the ineffectual rising of Booth and Middleton in the west, and with great difficulty escaped from the fatal consequences of that ill-timed attempt. After this, although the estate of the kingdom was trebly unsettled, yet no card seemed to turn up favourable to the royal cause, until the movement of General Monk from Scotland. Even then, it was when at the point of complete success, that the fortunes of Charles seemed at a lower ebb than ever, especially when intelligence had arrived at the little Court which he then kept in Brussels, that Monk, on arriving in London, had put himself under the orders of the Parliament.

It was at this time, and in the evening, while the King, Buckingham, Wilmot, and some other gallants of his wandering Court, were engaged in a convivial party, that the Chancellor (Clarendon) suddenly craved audience, and, entering with less ceremony than he would have done at another time, announced extraordinary news. For the messenger, he said, he could say nothing, saving that he appeared to have drunk much, and slept little; but that he had brought a sure token of credence from a man for whose faith he would venture his life. The King demanded to see the messenger himself.

A man entered, with something the manners of a gentleman, and more those of a rakebelly debauchee — his eyes swelled and inflamed — his gait disordered and stumbling, partly through lack of sleep, partly through the means he had taken to support his fatigue. He staggered without ceremony to the head of the table, seized the King's hand, which he mumbled like a piece of gingerbread; while Charles, who began to recollect him from his mode of salutation, was not very much pleased that their meeting should have taken place before so many witnesses.

"I bring good news," said the uncouth messenger, "glorious news! — the King shall enjoy his own again! — My feet are beautiful on the mountains. Gad, I have lived with Presbyterians till I have caught their language — but we are all one man's children now — all your Majesty's poor babes. The Rump is all ruined in London — Bonfires flaming, music playing, rumps roasting, healths drinking, London in a blaze of light from the Strand to Rotherhithe — tankards clattering!"

"We can guess at that," said the Duke of Buckingham.

"My old friend, Mark Everard, sent me off with the news; I'm a villain if I've slept since. Your Majesty recollects me, I am sure. Your Majesty remembers, sa — sa — at the King's Oak, at Woodstock? —

'O, we'll dance, and sing, and play,

For 'twill be a joyous day

When the King shall enjoy his own again."

"Master Wildrake, I remember you well," said the King. "I trust the good news is certain?"

"Certain! your Majesty; did I not hear the bells? — did I not see the bonfires? — did I not drink your Majesty's health so often, that my legs would scarce carry me to the wharf? It is as certain as that I am poor Roger Wildrake of Squattlesea-mere, Lincoln."

The Duke of Buckingham here whispered to the King, "I have always suspected your Majesty kept odd company during the escape from Worcester, but this seems a rare sample."

"Why, pretty much like yourself, and other company I have kept here so many years — as stout a heart, as empty a head," said Charles — "as much lace, though somewhat tarnished, as much brass on the brow, and nearly as much copper in the pocket."

"I would your Majesty would intrust this messenger of good news with me, to get the truth out of him," said Buckingham.

"Thank your Grace," replied the King; "but he has a will as well as yourself, and such seldom agree. My Lord Chancellor hath wisdom, and to that we must trust ourselves. — Master Wildrake, you will go with my Lord Chancellor, who will bring us a report of your tidings; meantime, I assure you that you shall be no loser for being the first messenger of good news." So saying, he gave a signal to the Chancellor to take away Wildrake, whom he judged, in his present humour, to be not unlikely to communicate some former passages at Woodstock which might rather entertain than edify the wits of his court.

Corroboration of the joyful intelligence soon arrived, and Wildrake was presented with a handsome gratuity and small pension, which, by the King's special desire, had no duty whatever attached to it.

Shortly afterwards, all England was engaged in chorusing his favourite ditty —

"Oh, the twenty-ninth of May,
It was a glorious day,
When the King did enjoy his own again."

On that memorable day, the King prepared to make his progress from Rochester to London, with a reception on the part of his subjects so unanimously cordial, as made him say gaily, it must have been his own fault to stay so long away from a country where his arrival gave so much joy. On horseback, betwixt his brothers, the Dukes of York and Gloucester, the Restored Monarch trode slowly over roads strewn with flowers — by conduits running wine, under triumphal arches, and through streets hung with tapestry. There were citizens in various bands, some arrayed in coats of black velvet, with gold chains; some in military suits of cloth of gold, or cloth of silver, followed by all those craftsmen who, having hooted the father from Whitehall, had now come to shout the son into possession of his ancestral place. On his progress through Blackheath, he passed that army which, so long formidable to England herself, as well as to Europe, had been the means of restoring the Monarchy which their own hands had destroyed. As the King passed the last files of this formidable host, he came to an open part of the heath, where many persons of quality, with others of inferior rank, had stationed themselves to gratulate him as he passed towards the capital.

There was one group, however, which attracted peculiar attention from those around, on account of the respect shown to the party by the soldiers who kept the ground, and who, whether Cavaliers or Roundheads, seemed to contest emulously which should contribute most to their accommodation; for both the elder and younger gentlemen of the party had been distinguished in the Civil War.

It was a family group, of which the principal figure was an old man seated in a chair, having a complacent smile on his face, and a tear swelling to his eye, as he saw the banners wave on in interminable succession, and heard the multitude shouting the long silenced acclamation, "God save King Charles." His cheek was ashy pale, and his long beard bleached like the thistle down; his blue eye was cloudless, yet it was obvious that its vision was failing. His motions were feeble, and he spoke little, except when he answered the prattle of his grandchildren, or asked a question of his daughter, who sat beside him, matured in matronly beauty, or of Colonel Everard who stood behind. There, too, the stout yeoman, Joceline Joliffe, still in his silvan dress, leaned, like a second Benaiah, on the quarter-staff that had done the King good service in its day, and his wife, a buxom matron as she had been a pretty maiden, laughed at her own consequence; and ever and anon joined her shrill notes to the stentorian halloo which her husband added to the general acclamation.

These fine boys and two pretty girls prattled around their grandfather, who made them such answers as suited their age, and repeatedly passed his withered hand over the fair locks of the little darlings, while Alice, assisted by Wildrake, (blazing in a splendid dress, and his eyes washed with only a single cup of canary,) took off the children's attention from time to time, lest they should weary their grandfather. We must not omit one other remarkable figure in the group — a gigantic dog, which bore the signs of being at the extremity of canine life, being perhaps fifteen or sixteen years old. But though exhibiting the ruin only of his former appearance, his eyes dim, his joints stiff, his head slouched down, and his gallant carriage and graceful motions exchanged for a stiff, rheumatic, hobbling gait, the noble hound had lost none of his instinctive fondness for his master. To lie by Sir Henry's feet in the summer or by the fire in winter, to raise his head to look on him, to lick his withered hand or his shrivelled cheek from time to time, seemed now all that Bevis lived for.

Three or four livery servants attended to protect this group from the thronging multitude, but it needed not. The high respectability and unpretending simplicity of their appearance gave them, even in the eyes of the coarsest of the people, an air of patriarchal dignity, which commanded general regard; and they sat upon the bank which they had chosen for their station by the way-side, as undisturbed as if they had been in their own park.

And now the distant clarions announced the Royal Presence. Onward came pursuivant and trumpet — onward came plumes and cloth of gold, and waving standards displayed, and swords gleaming to the sun; and at length, heading a group of the noblest in England, and supported by his royal brothers on either side, onward came King Charles. He had already halted more than once, in kindness perhaps as well as policy, to exchange a word with persons whom he recognized among the spectators, and the shouts of the bystanders applauded a courtesy which seemed so well timed. But when he had gazed an instant on the party we have described, it was impossible, if even Alice had been too much changed to be recognized, not instantly to know Bevis and his venerable master. The Monarch sprung from his horse, and walked instantly up to the old knight, amid thundering acclamations which rose from the multitudes around, when they saw Charles with his own hand oppose the feeble attempts of the old man to rise to do his homage. Gently replacing him on his seat — "Bless," he said, "father — bless your son, who has returned in safety, as you blessed him when he departed in danger."

"May God bless — and preserve" — muttered the old man, overcome by his feelings; and the King, to give him a few moments' repose, turned to Alice — "And you," he said, "my fair guide, how have you been employed since our perilous night-walk? But I need not ask," glancing around — "in the service of King and Kingdom, bringing up subjects, as loyal as their ancestors. — A fair lineage, by my faith, and a beautiful sight, to the eye of an English King! — Colonel Everard, we shall see you, I trust, at Whitehall?" Here he nodded to Wildrake. "And thou, Joceline, thou canst hold thy quarter-staff with one hand, sure? — Thrust forward the other palm."

Looking down in sheer bashfulness, Joceline, like a bull about to push, extended to the King, over his lady's shoulder, a hand as broad and hard as a wooden trencher, which the King filled with gold coins. "Buy a handful for my friend Phoebe with some of these," said Charles, "she too has been doing her duty to Old England."

The King then turned once more to the knight, who seemed making an effort to speak. He took his aged hand in both his own, and stooped his head towards him to catch his accents, while the old man, detaining him with the other hand, said something faltering, of which Charles could only catch the quotation —

"Unthread the rude eye of rebellion,
And welcome home again discarded faith."

Extricating himself, therefore, as gently as possible, from a scene which began to grow painfully embarrassing, the good-natured King said, speaking with unusual distinctness to insure the old man's comprehending him, "This is something too public a place for all we have to say. But if you come not soon to see King Charles at Whitehall, he will send down Louis Kerneguy to visit you, that you may see how rational that mischievous lad is become since his travels."

So saying, he once more pressed affectionately the old man's hand, bowed to Alice and all around, and withdrew; Sir Henry Lee listening with a smile, which showed he comprehended the gracious tendency of what had been said. The old man leaned back on his seat, and muttered the *Nunc dimittas*.

"Excuse me for having made you wait, my lords," said the King, as he mounted his horse; "indeed, had it not been for these good folks, you might have waited for me long enough to little purpose. — Move on, sirs."

The array moved on accordingly; the sound of trumpets and drums again rose amid the acclamations, which had been silent while the King stopped; while the effect of the whole procession resuming its motion, was so splendidly dazzling, that even Alice's anxiety about for her father's health was for a moment suspended, while her eye followed the long line of varied brilliancy that proceeded over the heath. When she looked again at Sir Henry, she was startled to see that his cheek, which had gained some colour during his conversation with the King, had relapsed into earthly paleness; that his eyes were closed, and opened not again; and that his features expressed, amid their quietude, a rigidity which is not that of sleep. They ran to his assistance, but it was too late. The light that burned so low in the socket, had leaped up, and expired in one exhilarating flash.

The rest must be conceived. I have only to add that his faithful dog did not survive him many days; and that the image of Bevis lies carved at his master's feet, on the tomb which was erected to the memory of Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley. ¹²

BOOK XVI
PEVERIL OF THE PEAK
CHAPTER I

*When civil dudgeon first grew high,
And men fell out, they knew not why;
When foul words, jealousies, and fears,
Set folk together by the ears—
—BUTLER.*

William, the Conqueror of England, was, or supposed himself to be, the father of a certain William Peveril, who attended him to the battle of Hastings, and there distinguished himself. The liberal-minded monarch, who assumed in his charters the veritable title of Gulielmus Bastardus, was not likely to let his son's illegitimacy be any bar to the course of his royal favour, when the laws of England were issued from the mouth of the Norman victor, and the lands of the Saxons were at his unlimited disposal. William Peveril obtained a liberal grant of property and lordships in Derbyshire, and became the erecter of that Gothic fortress, which, hanging over the mouth of the Devil's Cavern, so well known to tourists, gives the name of Castleton to the adjacent village.

From this feudal Baron, who chose his nest upon the principles on which an eagle selects her eyry, and built it in such a fashion as if he had intended it, as an Irishman said of the Martello towers, for the sole purpose of puzzling posterity, there was, or conceived themselves to be, descended (for their pedigree was rather hypothetical) an opulent family of knightly rank, in the same county of Derby. The great fief of Castleton, with its adjacent wastes and forests, and all the wonders which they contain, had been forfeited in King John's stormy days, by one William Peveril, and had been granted anew to the Lord Ferrers of that day. Yet this William's descendants, though no longer possessed of what they alleged to have been their original property, were long distinguished by the proud title of Peverils of the Peak, which served to mark their high descent and lofty pretensions.

In Charles the Second's time, the representative of this ancient family was Sir Geoffrey Peveril, a man who had many of the ordinary attributes of an old-fashioned country gentleman, and very few individual traits to distinguish him from the general portrait of that worthy class of mankind. He was proud of small advantages, angry at small disappointments, incapable of forming any resolution or opinion abstracted from his own prejudices—he was proud of his birth, lavish in his housekeeping, convivial with those kindred and acquaintances, who would allow his superiority in rank—contentious and quarrelsome with all that crossed his pretensions—kind to the poor, except when they plundered his game—a Royalist in his political opinions, and one who detested alike a Roundhead, a poacher, and a Presbyterian. In religion Sir Geoffrey was a high-churchman, of so exalted a strain that many thought he still nourished in private the Roman Catholic tenets, which his family had only renounced in his father's time, and that he had a dispensation for conforming in outward observances to the Protestant faith. There was at least such a scandal amongst the Puritans, and the influence which Sir Geoffrey Peveril certainly appeared to possess amongst the Catholic gentlemen of Derbyshire and Cheshire, seemed to give countenance to the rumour.

Such was Sir Geoffrey, who might have passed to his grave without further distinction than a brass-plate in the chancel, had he not lived in times which forced the most inactive spirits into exertion, as a tempest influences the sluggish waters of the deadest mere. When the Civil Wars broke out, Peveril of the Peak, proud from pedigree, and brave by constitution, raised a regiment for the King, and showed upon several occasions more capacity for command than men had heretofore given him credit for.

Even in the midst of the civil turmoil, he fell in love with, and married, a beautiful and amiable young lady of the noble house of Stanley; and from that time had the more merit in his loyalty, as it divorced him from her society, unless at very brief intervals, when his duty permitted an occasional visit to his home. Scorning to be allured from his military duty by domestic inducements, Peveril of the Peak fought on for several rough years of civil war, and performed his part with sufficient gallantry, until his regiment was surprised and cut to pieces by Poyntz, Cromwell's enterprising and successful general of cavalry. The defeated Cavalier escaped from the field of battle, and, like a true descendant of William the Conqueror, disdaining submission, threw himself into his own castellated mansion, which was attacked and defended in a siege of that irregular kind which caused the destruction of so many baronial residences during the course of those unhappy wars. Martindale Castle, after having suffered severely from the cannon which Cromwell himself brought against it, was at length surrendered when in the last extremity. Sir Geoffrey himself became a prisoner, and while his liberty was only restored upon a promise of remaining a peaceful subject to the Commonwealth in future, his former delinquencies, as they were termed by the ruling party, were severely punished by fine and sequestration.

But neither his forced promise, nor the fear of farther unpleasant consequences to his person or property, could prevent Peveril of the Peak from joining the gallant Earl of Derby the night before the fatal engagement in Wiggan Lane, where the Earl's forces were dispersed. Sir Geoffrey having had his share in that action, escaped with the relics of the Royalists after the defeat, to join Charles II. He witnessed also the final defeat of Worcester, where he was a second time made prisoner; and as, in the opinion of Cromwell and the language of the times, he was regarded as an obstinate malignant, he was in great danger of having shared with the Earl of Derby his execution at Bolton-le-Moor, having partaken with him the dangers of two actions. But Sir Geoffrey's life was preserved by the interest of a friend, who possessed influence in the councils of Oliver.—This was a Mr. Bridgenorth, a gentleman of middling quality, whose father had been successful in some commercial adventure during the peaceful reign of James I.; and who had bequeathed his son a considerable sum of money, in addition to the moderate patrimony which he inherited from his father.

The substantial, though small-sized, brick building of Moultrassie Hall, was but two miles distant from Martindale Castle, and the young Bridgenorth attended the same school with the heir of the Peverils. A sort of companionship, if not intimacy, took place betwixt them, which continued during their youthful sports—the rather that Bridgenorth, though he did not at heart admit Sir Geoffrey's claims of superiority to the extent which the other's vanity would have exacted, paid deference in a reasonable degree to the representative of a family so much more ancient and important than his own, without conceiving that he in any respect degraded himself by doing so.

Mr. Bridgenorth did not, however, carry his complaisance so far as to embrace Sir Geoffrey's side during the Civil War. On the contrary, as an active Justice of the Peace, he rendered much assistance in arraying the militia in the cause of the Parliament, and for some time held a military commission in that service. This was partly owing to his religious principles, for he was a zealous Presbyterian, partly to his political ideas, which, without being absolutely democratical, favoured the popular side of the great national question. Besides, he was a moneyed man, and to a certain extent had a shrewd eye to his worldly interest. He understood how to improve the opportunities which civil war afforded, of advancing his fortune, by a dexterous use of his capital; and he was not at a loss to perceive that these were likely to be obtained in joining the Parliament; while the King's cause, as it was managed, held out nothing to the wealthy but a course of exaction and compulsory loans. For these reasons, Bridgenorth became a decided Roundhead, and all friendly communication betwixt his neighbour and him was abruptly broken asunder. This was done with the less acrimony, that, during the Civil War, Sir Geoffrey was almost constantly in the field, following the vacillating and unhappy fortunes of his master; while Major Bridgenorth, who soon renounced active military service, resided chiefly in London, and only occasionally visited the Hall.

Upon these visits, it was with great pleasure he received the intelligence, that Lady Peveril had shown much kindness to Mrs. Bridgenorth, and had actually given her and her family shelter in Martindale Castle, when Moultrassie Hall was threatened with pillage by a body of Prince Rupert's ill-disciplined Cavaliers. This acquaintance had been matured by frequent walks together, which the vicinity of their places of residence suffered the Lady Peveril to have with Mrs. Bridgenorth, who deemed herself much honoured in being thus admitted into the society of so distinguished a lady. Major Bridgenorth heard of this growing intimacy with great pleasure, and he determined to repay the obligation, as far as he could without much hurt to himself, by interfering with all his influence, in behalf of her unfortunate husband. It was chiefly owing to Major Bridgenorth's mediation, that Sir Geoffrey's life was saved after the battle of Worcester. He obtained him permission to compound for his estate on easier terms than many who had been less obstinate in malignancy; and, finally, when, in order to raise the money to the composition, the Knight was obliged to sell a considerable portion of his patrimony, Major Bridgenorth became the purchaser, and that at a larger price than

had been paid to any Cavalier under such circumstances, by a member of the Committee for Sequestrations. It is true, the prudent committeeman did not, by any means, lose sight of his own interest in the transaction, for the price was, after all, very moderate, and the property lay adjacent to Moultrassie Hall, the value of which was at least trebled by the acquisition. But then it was also true, that the unfortunate owner must have submitted to much worse conditions, had the committeeman used, as others did, the full advantages which his situation gave him; and Bridgenorth took credit to himself, and received it from others, for having, on this occasion, fairly sacrificed his interest to his liberality.

Sir Geoffrey Peveril was of the same opinion, and the rather that Mr. Bridgenorth seemed to bear his exaltation with great moderation, and was disposed to show him personally the same deference in his present sunshine of prosperity, which he had exhibited formerly in their early acquaintance. It is but justice to Major Bridgenorth to observe, that in this conduct he paid respect as much to the misfortunes as to the pretensions of his far-descended neighbour, and that, with the frank generosity of a blunt Englishman, he conceded points of ceremony, about which he himself was indifferent, merely because he saw that his doing so gave pleasure to Sir Geoffrey.

Peveril of the Peak did justice to his neighbour's delicacy, in consideration of which he forgot many things. He forgot that Major Bridgenorth was already in possession of a fair third of his estate, and had various pecuniary claims affecting the remainder, to the extent of one-third more. He endeavoured even to forget, what it was still more difficult not to remember, the altered situation in which they and their mansions now stood to each other.

Before the Civil War, the superb battlements and turrets of Martindale Castle looked down on the red brick-built Hall, as it stole out from the green plantations, just as an oak in Martindale Chase would have looked beside one of the stunted and formal young beech-trees with which Bridgenorth had graced his avenue; but after the siege which we have commemorated, the enlarged and augmented Hall was as much predominant in the landscape over the shattered and blackened ruins of the Castle, of which only one wing was left habitable, as the youthful beech, in all its vigour of shoot and bud, would appear to the same aged oak stripped of its boughs, and rifted by lightning, one-half laid in shivers on the ground, and the other remaining a blackened and ungraceful trunk, rent and splintered, and without either life or leaves. Sir Geoffrey could not but feel, that the situation and prospects were exchanged as disadvantageously for himself as the appearance of their mansions; and that though the authority of the man in office under the Parliament, the sequestrator, and the committeeman, had been only exerted for the protection of the Cavalier and the malignant, they would have been as effectual if applied to procure his utter ruin; and that he was become a client, while his neighbour was elevated into a patron.

There were two considerations, besides the necessity of the case and the constant advice of his lady, which enabled Peveril of the Peak to endure, with some patience, this state of degradation. The first was, that the politics of Major Bridgenorth began, on many points, to assimilate themselves to his own. As a Presbyterian, he was not an utter enemy to monarchy, and had been considerably shocked at the unexpected trial and execution of the King; as a civilian and a man of property, he feared the domination of the military; and though he wished not to see Charles restored by force of arms, yet he arrived at the conclusion, that to bring back the heir of the royal family on such terms of composition as might ensure the protection of those popular immunities and privileges for which the Long Parliament had at first contended, would be the surest and most desirable termination to the mutations in state affairs which had agitated Britain. Indeed, the Major's ideas on this point approached so nearly those of his neighbour, that he had well-nigh suffered Sir Geoffrey, who had a finger in almost all the conspiracies of the Royalists, to involve him in the unfortunate rising of Penruddock and Groves, in the west, in which many of the Presbyterian interest, as well as the Cavalier party, were engaged. And though his habitual prudence eventually kept him out of this and other dangers, Major Bridgenorth was considered during the last years of Cromwell's domination, and the interregnum which succeeded, as a disaffected person to the Commonwealth, and a favourer of Charles Stewart. But besides this approximation to the same political opinions, another bond of intimacy united the families of the Castle and the Hall. Major Bridgenorth, fortunate, and eminently so, in all his worldly transactions, was visited by severe and reiterated misfortunes in his family, and became, in this particular, an object of compassion to his poorer and more decayed neighbour. Betwixt the breaking out of the Civil War and the Restoration, he lost successively a family of no less than six children, apparently through a delicacy of constitution, which cut off the little prattlers at the early age when they most wind themselves round the heart of the parents.

In the beginning of the year 1658, Major Bridgenorth was childless; ere it ended, he had a daughter, indeed, but her birth was purchased by the death of an affectionate wife, whose constitution had been exhausted by maternal grief, and by the anxious and harrowing reflection, that from her the children they had lost derived that delicacy of health, which proved unable to undergo the tear and wear of existence. The same voice which told Bridgenorth that he was the father of a living child (it was the friendly voice of Lady Peveril), communicated to him the melancholy intelligence that he was no longer a husband. The feelings of Major Bridgenorth were strong and deep, rather than hasty and vehement; and his grief assumed the form of a sullen stupor, from which neither the friendly remonstrances of Sir Geoffrey, who did not fail to be with his neighbour at this distressing conjuncture, even though he knew he must meet the Presbyterian pastor, nor the ghastly exhortations of this latter person, were able to rouse the unfortunate widower.

At length Lady Peveril, with the ready invention of a female sharpened by the sight of distress and the feelings of sympathy, tried on the sufferer one of those experiments by which grief is often awakened from despondency into tears. She placed in Bridgenorth's arms the infant whose birth had cost him so dear, and conjured him to remember that his Alice was not yet dead, since she survived in the helpless child she had left to his paternal care.

"Take her away—take her away!" said the unhappy man, and they were the first words he had spoken; "let me not look on her—it is but another blossom that has bloomed to fade, and the tree that bore it will never flourish more!"

He almost threw the child into Lady Peveril's arms, placed his hands before his face, and wept aloud. Lady Peveril did not say "be comforted," but she ventured to promise that the blossom should ripen to fruit.

"Never, never!" said Bridgenorth; "take the unhappy child away, and let me only know when I shall wear black for her—Wear black!" he exclaimed, interrupting himself, "what other colour shall I wear during the remainder of my life?"

"I will take the child for a season," said Lady Peveril, "since the sight of her is so painful to you; and the little Alice shall share the nursery of our Julian, until it shall be pleasure and not pain for you to look on her."

"That hour will never come," said the unhappy father; "her doom is written—she will follow the rest—God's will be done.—Lady, I thank you—I trust her to your care; and I thank God that my eye shall not see her dying agonies."

Without detaining the reader's attention longer on this painful theme, it is enough to say that the Lady Peveril did undertake the duties of a mother to the little orphan; and perhaps it was owing, in a great measure, to her judicious treatment of the infant, that its feeble hold of life was preserved, since the glimmering spark might probably have been altogether smothered, had it, like the Major's former children, undergone the over-care and over-nursing of a mother rendered nervously cautious and anxious by so many successive losses. The lady was the more ready to undertake this charge, that she herself had lost two infant children; and that she attributed the preservation of the third, now a fine healthy child of three years old, to Julian's being subjected to rather a different course of diet and treatment than was then generally practised. She resolved to follow the same regiment with the little orphan, which she had observed in the case of her own boy; and it was equally successful. By a more sparing use of medicine, by a bolder admission of fresh air, by a firm, yet cautious attention to encourage rather than to supersede the exertions of nature, the puny infant, under the care of an excellent nurse, gradually improved in strength and in liveliness.

Sir Geoffrey, like most men of his frank and good-natured disposition, was naturally fond of children, and so much compassionated the sorrows of his neighbour, that he entirely forgot his being a Presbyterian, until it became necessary that the infant should be christened by a teacher of that persuasion.

This was a trying case—the father seemed incapable of giving direction; and that the threshold of Martindale Castle should be violated by the heretical step of a dissenting clergyman, was matter of horror to its orthodox owner. He had seen the famous Hugh Peters, with a Bible in one hand and a pistol in the other, ride in triumph through the court-door when Martindale was surrendered; and the bitterness of that hour had entered like iron into his soul. Yet such was Lady Peveril's influence over the prejudices of her husband, that he was induced to connive at the ceremony taking place in a remote garden house, which was not properly within the precincts of the Castle-wall. The lady even dared to be present while the ceremony was performed by the Reverend Master Solsgrace, who had once

preached a sermon of three hours' length before the House of Commons, upon a thanksgiving occasion after the relief of Exeter. Sir Geoffrey Peveril took care to be absent the whole day from the Castle, and it was only from the great interest which he took in the washing, perfuming, and as it were purification of the summer-house, that it could have been guessed he knew anything of what had taken place in it.

But, whatever prejudices the good Knight might entertain against his neighbour's form of religion, they did not in any way influence his feelings towards him as a sufferer under severe affliction. The mode in which he showed his sympathy was rather singular, but exactly suited the character of both, and the terms on which they stood with each other.

Morning after morning the good Baronet made Moultrassie Hall the termination of his walk or ride, and said a single word of kindness as he passed. Sometimes he entered the old parlour where the proprietor sat in solitary wretchedness and despondency; but more frequently (for Sir Geoffrey did not pretend to great talents of conversation), he paused on the terrace, and stopping or halting his horse by the latticed window, said aloud to the melancholy inmate, "How is it with you, Master Bridgenorth?" (the Knight would never acknowledge his neighbour's military rank of Major); "I just looked in to bid you keep a good heart, man, and to tell you that Julian is well, and little Alice is well, and all are well at Martindale Castle."

A deep sigh, sometimes coupled with "I thank you, Sir Geoffrey; my grateful duty waits on Lady Peveril," was generally Bridgenorth's only answer. But the news was received on the one part with the kindness which was designed upon the other; it gradually became less painful and more interesting; the lattice window was never closed, nor was the leathern easy-chair which stood next to it ever empty, when the usual hour of the Baronet's momentary visit approached. At length the expectation of that passing minute became the pivot upon which the thoughts of poor Bridgenorth turned during all the rest of the day. Most men have known the influence of such brief but ruling moments at some period of their lives. The moment when a lover passes the window of his mistress—the moment when the epicure hears the dinner-bell,—is that into which is crowded the whole interest of the day; the hours which precede it are spent in anticipation; the hours which follow, in reflection on what has passed; and fancy dwelling on each brief circumstance, gives to seconds the duration of minutes, to minutes that of hours. Thus seated in his lonely chair, Bridgenorth could catch at a distance the stately step of Sir Geoffrey, or the heavy tramp of his war-horse, Black Hastings, which had borne him in many an action; he could hear the hum of "The King shall enjoy his own again," or the habitual whistle of "Cuckolds and Roundheads," die unto reverential silence, as the Knight approached the mansion of affliction; and then came the strong hale voice of the huntsman soldier with its usual greeting.

By degrees the communication became something more protracted, as Major Bridgenorth's grief, like all human feelings, lost its overwhelming violence, and permitted him to attend, in some degree, to what passed around him, to discharge various duties which pressed upon him, and to give a share of attention to the situation of the country, distracted as it was by the contending factions, whose strife only terminated in the Restoration. Still, however, though slowly recovering from the effects of the shock which he had sustained, Major Bridgenorth felt himself as yet unable to make up his mind to the effort necessary to see his infant; and though separated by so short a distance from the being in whose existence he was more interested than in anything the world afforded, he only made himself acquainted with the windows of the apartment where little Alice was lodged, and was often observed to watch them from the terrace, as they brightened in the evening under the influence of the setting sun. In truth, though a strong-minded man in most respects, he was unable to lay aside the gloomy impression that this remaining pledge of affection was soon to be conveyed to that grave which had already devoured all besides that was dear to him; and he awaited in miserable suspense the moment when he should hear that symptoms of the fatal malady had begun to show themselves.

The voice of Peveril continued to be that of a comforter until the month of April 1660, when it suddenly assumed a new and different tone. "The King shall enjoy his own again," far from ceasing, as the hasty tread of Black Hastings came up the avenue, bore burden to the clatter of his hoofs on the paved courtyard, as Sir Geoffrey sprang from his great war-saddle, now once more garnished with pistols of two feet in length, and, armed with steel-cap, back and breast, and a truncheon in his hand, he rushed into the apartment of the astonished Major, with his eyes sparkling, and his cheek inflamed, while he called out, "Up! up, neighbour! No time now to mope in the chimney-corner! Where is your buff-coat and broadsword, man? Take the true side once in your life, and mend past mistakes. The King is all lenity, man—all royal nature and mercy. I will get your full pardon."

"What means all this?" said Bridgenorth—"Is all well with you—all well at Martindale Castle, Sir Geoffrey?"

"Well as you could wish them, Alice, and Julian, and all. But I have news worth twenty of that—Monk has declared at London against those stinking scoundrels the Rump. Fairfax is up in Yorkshire—for the King—for the King, man! Churchmen, Presbyterians, and all, are in buff and bandoleer for King Charles. I have a letter from Fairfax to secure Derby and Chesterfield with all the men I can make. D—n him, fine that I should take orders from him! But never mind that—all are friends now, and you and I, good neighbour, will charge abreast, as good neighbours should. See there! read—read—read—and then boot and saddle in an instant.

'Hey for cavaliers—ho for cavaliers,

Pray for cavaliers,

Dub-a-dub, dub-a-dub,

Have at old Beelzebub,

Oliver shakes in his bier!'"

After thundering forth this elegant effusion of loyal enthusiasm, the sturdy Cavalier's heart became too full. He threw himself on a seat, and exclaiming, "Did ever I think to live to see this happy day!" he wept, to his own surprise, as much as to that of Bridgenorth.

Upon considering the crisis in which the country was placed, it appeared to Major Bridgenorth, as it had done to Fairfax, and other leaders of the Presbyterian party, that their frank embracing of the royal interest was the wisest and most patriotic measure which they could adopt in the circumstances, when all ranks and classes of men were seeking refuge from the uncertainty and varied oppression attending the repeated contests between the factions of Westminster Hall and of Wallingford House. Accordingly he joined with Sir Geoffrey, with less enthusiasm indeed, but with equal sincerity, taking such measures as seemed proper to secure their part of the country on the King's behalf, which was done as effectually and peaceably as in other parts of England. The neighbours were both at Chesterfield, when news arrived that the King had landed in England; and Sir Geoffrey instantly announced his purpose of waiting upon his Majesty, even before his return to the Castle of Martindale.

"Who knows, neighbour," he said, "whether Sir Geoffrey Peveril will ever return to Martindale? Titles must be going amongst them yonder, and I have deserved something among the rest.—Lord Peveril would sound well—or stay, Earl of Martindale—no, not of Martindale—Earl of the Peak.—Meanwhile, trust your affairs to me—I will see you secured—I would you had been no Presbyterian, neighbour—a knighthood,—I mean a knight-bachelor, not a knight-baronet,—would have served your turn well."

"I leave these things to my betters, Sir Geoffrey," said the Major, "and desire nothing so earnestly as to find all well at Martindale when I return."

"You will—you will find them all well," said the Baronet; "Julian, Alice, Lady Peveril, and all of them—Bear my commendations to them, and kiss them all, neighbour, Lady Peveril and all—you may kiss a Countess when I come back; all will go well with you now you are turned honest man."

"I always meant to be so, Sir Geoffrey," said Bridgenorth calmly.

"Well, well, well—no offence meant," said the Knight, "all is well now—so you to Moultrassie Hall, and I to Whitehall. Said I well, aha! So ho, mine host, a stoup of Canary to the King's health ere we get to horse—I forgot, neighbour—you drink no healths."

"I wish the King's health as sincerely as if I drank a gallon to it," replied the Major; "and I wish you, Sir Geoffrey, all success on your journey, and a safe return."

CHAPTER II

Why, then, we will have bellowing of beeves,

Broaching of barrels, brandishing of spigots;

*Blood shall flow freely, but it shall be gore
Of herds and flocks, and venison and poultry,
Join'd to the brave heart's-blood of John-a-Barleycorn!*
—OLD PLAY.

Whatever rewards Charles might have condescended to bestow in acknowledgement of the sufferings and loyalty of Peveril of the Peak, he had none in his disposal equal to the pleasure which Providence had reserved for Bridgenorth on his return to Derbyshire. The exertion to which he had been summoned, had had the usual effect of restoring to a certain extent the activity and energy of his character, and he felt it would be unbecoming to relapse into the state of lethargic melancholy from which it had roused him. Time also had its usual effect in mitigating the subjects of his regret; and when he had passed one day at the Hall in regretting that he could not expect the indirect news of his daughter's health, which Sir Geoffrey used to communicate in his almost daily call, he reflected that it would be in every respect becoming that he should pay a personal visit at Martindale Castle, carry thither the remembrances of the Knight to his lady, assure her of his health, and satisfy himself respecting that of his daughter. He armed himself for the worst—he called to recollection the thin cheeks, faded eye, wasted hand, pallid lip, which had marked the decaying health of all his former infants.

"I shall see," he said, "these signs of mortality once more—I shall once more see a beloved being to whom I have given birth, gliding to the grave which ought to enclose me long before her. No matter—it is unmanly so long to shrink from that which must be—God's will be done!"

He went accordingly, on the subsequent morning, to Martindale Castle, and gave the lady the welcome assurances of her husband's safety, and of his hopes of preferment.

"For the first, may Almighty God be praised!" said the Lady Peveril; "and be the other as our gracious and restored Sovereign may will it. We are great enough for our means, and have means sufficient for contentment, though not for splendour. And now I see, good Master Bridgenorth, the folly of putting faith in idle presentiments of evil. So often had Sir Geoffrey's repeated attempts in favour of the Stewarts led him into new misfortunes, that when, the other morning, I saw him once more dressed in his fatal armour, and heard the sound of his trumpet, which had been so long silent, it seemed to me as if I saw his shroud, and heard his death-knell. I say this to you, good neighbour, the rather because I fear your own mind has been harassed with anticipations of impending calamity, which it may please God to avert in your case as it has done in mine; and here comes a sight which bears good assurance of it."

The door of the apartment opened as she spoke, and two lovely children entered. The eldest, Julian Peveril, a fine boy betwixt four and five years old, led in his hand, with an air of dignified support and attention, a little girl of eighteen months, who rolled and tottered along, keeping herself with difficulty upright by the assistance of her elder, stronger, and masculine companion.

Bridgenorth cast a hasty and fearful glance upon the countenance of his daughter, and, even in that glimpse, perceived, with exquisite delight, that his fears were unfounded. He caught her in his arms, pressed her to his heart, and the child, though at first alarmed at the vehemence of his caresses, presently, as if prompted by Nature, smiled in reply to them. Again he held her at some distance from him, and examined her more attentively; he satisfied himself that the complexion of the young cherub he had in his arms was not the hectic tinge of disease, but the clear hue of ruddy health; and that though her little frame was slight, it was firm and springy.

"I did not think that it could have been thus," he said, looking to Lady Peveril, who had sat observing the scene with great pleasure; "but praise be to God in the first instance, and next, thanks to you, madam, who have been His instrument."

"Julian must lose his playfellow now, I suppose?" said the lady; "but the Hall is not distant, and I will see my little charge often. Dame Martha, the housekeeper at Moultrassie, has sense, and is careful. I will tell her the rules I have observed with little Alice, and——"

"God forbid my girl should ever come to Moultrassie," said Major Bridgenorth hastily; "it has been the grave of her race. The air of the low grounds suited them not—or there is perhaps a fate connected with the mansion. I will seek for her some other place of abode."

"That you shall not, under your favour be it spoken, Major Bridgenorth," answered the lady. "If you do so, we must suppose that you are undervaluing my qualities as a nurse. If she goes not to her father's house, she shall not quit mine. I will keep the little lady as a pledge of her safety and my own skill; and since you are afraid of the damp of the low grounds, I hope you will come here frequently to visit her."

This was a proposal which went to the heart of Major Bridgenorth. It was precisely the point which he would have given worlds to arrive at, but which he saw no chance of attaining.

It is too well known, that those whose families are long pursued by such a fatal disease as existed in his, become, it may be said, superstitious respecting its fatal effects, and ascribe to place, circumstance, and individual care, much more perhaps than these can in any case contribute to avert the fatality of constitutional distemper. Lady Peveril was aware that this was peculiarly the impression of her neighbour; that the depression of his spirits, the excess of his care, the feverishness of his apprehensions, the restraint and gloom of the solitude in which he dwelt, were really calculated to produce the evil which most of all he dreaded. She pitied him, she felt for him, she was grateful for former protection received at his hands—she had become interested in the child itself. What female fails to feel such interest in the helpless creature she has tended? And to sum the whole up, the dame had a share of human vanity; and being a sort of Lady Bountiful in her way (for the character was not then confined to the old and the foolish), she was proud of the skill by which she had averted the probable attacks of hereditary malady, so inveterate in the family of Bridgenorth. It needed not, perhaps, in other cases, that so many reasons should be assigned for an act of neighbourly humanity; but civil war had so lately torn the country asunder, and broken all the usual ties of vicinage and good neighbourhood, that it was unusual to see them preserved among persons of different political opinions.

Major Bridgenorth himself felt this; and while the tear of joy in his eye showed how gladly he would accept Lady Peveril's proposal, he could not help stating the obvious inconveniences attendant upon her scheme, though it was in the tone of one who would gladly hear them overruled. "Madam," he said, "your kindness makes me the happiest and most thankful of men; but can it be consistent with your own convenience? Sir Geoffrey has his opinions on many points, which have differed, and probably do still differ, from mine. He is high-born, and I of middling parentage only. He uses the Church Service, and I the Catechism of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster——"

"I hope you will find prescribed in neither of them," said the Lady Peveril, "that I may not be a mother to your motherless child. I trust, Master Bridgenorth, the joyful Restoration of his Majesty, a work wrought by the direct hand of Providence, may be the means of closing and healing all civil and religious dissensions among us, and that, instead of showing the superior purity of our faith, by persecuting those who think otherwise from ourselves on doctrinal points, we shall endeavour to show its real Christian tendency, by emulating each other in actions of good-will towards man, as the best way of showing our love to God."

"Your ladyship speaks what your own kind heart dictates," answered Bridgenorth, who had his own share of the narrow-mindedness of the time; "and sure am I, that if all who call themselves loyalists and Cavaliers, thought like you—and like my friend Sir Geoffrey"—(this he added after a moment's pause, being perhaps rather complimentary than sincere)—"we, who thought it our duty in time past to take arms for freedom of conscience, and against arbitrary power, might now sit down in peace and contentment. But I wot not how it may fall. You have sharp and hot spirits amongst you; I will not say our power was always moderately used, and revenge is sweet to the race of fallen Adam."

"Come, Master Bridgenorth," said the Lady Peveril gaily, "those evil omens do but point out conclusions, which, unless they were so anticipated, are most unlikely to come to pass. You know what Shakespeare says—

*'To fly the boar before the boar pursues,
Were to incense the boar to follow us,
And make pursuit when he did mean no chase.'*

"But I crave your pardon—it is so long since we have met, that I forgot you love no play-books."

"With reverence to your ladyship," said Bridgenorth, "I were much to blame did I need the idle words of a Warwickshire stroller, to teach me my grateful duty to your ladyship on this occasion, which appoints me to be directed by you in all things which my conscience will permit."

"Since you permit me such influence, then," replied the Lady Peveril, "I shall be moderate in exercising it, in order that I may, in my domination at least, give you a favourable impression of the new order of things. So, if you will be a subject of mine for one day, neighbour, I am going, at my lord and husband's command, to issue out my warrants to invite the whole neighbourhood to a solemn feast at the Castle, on Thursday next; and I not only pray you to be personally present yourself, but to prevail on your worthy pastor, and such neighbours and friends, high and low, as may think in your own way, to meet with the rest of the neighbourhood, to rejoice on this joyful occasion of the King's Restoration, and thereby to show that we are to be henceforward a united people."

The parliamentary Major was considerably embarrassed by this proposal. He looked upward, and downward, and around, cast his eye first to the oak-carved ceiling, and anon fixed it upon the floor; then threw it around the room till it lighted on his child, the sight of whom suggested another and a better train of reflections than ceiling and floor had been able to supply.

"Madam," he said, "I have long been a stranger to festivity, perhaps from constitutional melancholy, perhaps from the depression which is natural to a desolate and deprived man, in whose ear mirth is marred, like a pleasant air when performed on a mistuned instrument. But though neither my thoughts nor temperament are Jovial or Mercurial, it becomes me to be grateful to Heaven for the good He has sent me by the means of your ladyship. David, the man after God's own heart, did wash and eat bread when his beloved child was removed—mine is restored to me, and shall I not show gratitude under a blessing, when he showed resignation under an affliction? Madam, I will wait on your gracious invitation with acceptance; and such of my friends with whom I may possess influence, and whose presence your ladyship may desire, shall accompany me to the festivity, that our Israel may be as one people."

Having spoken these words with an aspect which belonged more to a martyr than to a guest bidden to a festival, and having kissed, and solemnly blessed his little girl, Major Bridgenorth took his departure for Moultrassie Hall.

CHAPTER III

*Here's neither want of appetite nor mouths;
Pray Heaven we be not scant of meat or mirth!*
—OLD PLAY.

Even upon ordinary occasions, and where means were ample, a great entertainment in those days was not such a sinecure as in modern times, when the lady who presides has but to intimate to her menials the day and hour when she wills it to take place. At that simple period, the lady was expected to enter deeply into the arrangement and provision of the whole affair; and from a little gallery, which communicated with her own private apartment, and looked down upon the kitchen, her shrill voice was to be heard, from time to time, like that of the warning spirit in a tempest, rising above the clash of pots and stewpans—the creaking spits—the clattering of marrowbones and cleavers—the scolding of cooks—and all the other various kinds of din which form an accompaniment to dressing a large dinner.

But all this toil and anxiety was more than doubled in the case of the approaching feast at Martindale Castle, where the presiding Genius of the festivity was scarce provided with adequate means to carry her hospitable purpose into effect. The tyrannical conduct of husbands, in such cases, is universal; and I scarce know one householder of my acquaintance who has not, on some ill-omened and most inconvenient season, announced suddenly to his innocent helpmate, that he had invited

*"Some odious Major Rock,
To drop in at six o'clock."*

to the great discomposure of the lady, and the discredit, perhaps, of her domestic arrangements.

Peveril of the Peak was still more thoughtless; for he had directed his lady to invite the whole honest men of the neighbourhood to make good cheer at Martindale Castle, in honour of the blessed Restoration of his most sacred Majesty, without precisely explaining where the provisions were to come from. The deer-park had lain waste ever since the siege; the dovecot could do little to furnish forth such an entertainment; the fishponds, it is true, were well provided (which the neighbouring Presbyterians noted as a suspicious circumstance); and game was to be had for the shooting, upon the extensive heaths and hills of Derbyshire. But these were but the secondary parts of a banquet; and the house-steward and bailiff, Lady Peveril's only coadjutors and counsellors, could not agree how the butcher-meat—the most substantial part, or, as it were, the main body of the entertainment—was to be supplied. The house-steward threatened the sacrifice of a fine yoke of young bullocks, which the bailiff, who pleaded the necessity of their agricultural services, tenaciously resisted; and Lady Peveril's good and dutiful nature did not prevent her from making some impatient reflections on the want of consideration of her absent Knight, who had thus thoughtlessly placed her in so embarrassing a situation.

These reflections were scarcely just, if a man is only responsible for such resolutions as he adopts when he is fully master of himself. Sir Geoffrey's loyalty, like that of many persons in his situation, had, by dint of hopes and fears, victories and defeats, struggles and sufferings, all arising out of the same moving cause, and turning, as it were, on the same pivot, acquired the character of an intense and enthusiastic passion; and the singular and surprising change of fortune, by which his highest wishes were not only gratified, but far exceeded, occasioned for some time a kind of intoxication of loyal rapture which seemed to pervade the whole kingdom. Sir Geoffrey had seen Charles and his brothers, and had been received by the merry monarch with that graceful, and at the same time frank urbanity, by which he conciliated all who approached him; the Knight's services and merits had been fully acknowledged, and recompense had been hinted at, if not expressly promised. Was it for Peveril of the Peak, in the jubilee of his spirits, to consider how his wife was to find beef and mutton to feast his neighbours?

Luckily, however, for the embarrassed lady, there existed some one who had composure of mind sufficient to foresee this difficulty. Just as she had made up her mind, very reluctantly, to become debtor to Major Bridgenorth for the sum necessary to carry her husband's commands into effect, and whilst she was bitterly regretting this departure from the strictness of her usual economy, the steward, who, by-the-bye, had not been absolutely sober since the news of the King's landing at Dover, burst into the apartment, snapping his fingers, and showing more marks of delight than was quite consistent with the dignity of my lady's large parlour.

"What means this, Whitaker?" said the lady, somewhat peevishly; for she was interrupted in the commencement of a letter to her neighbour on the unpleasant business of the proposed loan,—*"Is it to be always thus with you?—Are you dreaming?"*

"A vision of good omen, I trust," said the steward, with a triumphant flourish of the hand; *"far better than Pharaoh's, though, like his, it be of fat kine."*

"I prithee be plain, man," said the lady, "or fetch some one who can speak to purpose."

"Why, odds-my-life, madam," said the steward, "mine errand can speak for itself. Do you not hear them low? Do you not hear them bleat? A yoke of fat oxen, and half a score prime wethers. The Castle is victualled for this bout, let them storm when they will; and Gatherill may have his d—d mains ploughed to the boot."

The lady, without farther questioning her elated domestic, rose and went to the window, where she certainly beheld the oxen and sheep which had given rise to Whitaker's exultation. *"Whence come they?"* said she, in some surprise.

"Let them construe that who can," answered Whitaker; *"the fellow who drove them was a west-country man, and only said they came from a friend to help to furnish out your ladyship's entertainment; the man would not stay to drink—I am sorry he would not stay to drink—I crave your ladyship's pardon for not keeping him by the ears to drink—it was not my fault."*

"That I'll be sworn it was not," said the lady.

"Nay, madam, by G—, I assure you it was not," said the zealous steward; "for, rather than the Castle should lose credit, I drank his health myself in double ale, though I had had my morning draught already. I tell you the naked truth, my lady, by G—!"

"It was no great compulsion, I suppose," said the lady; "but, Whitaker, suppose you should show your joy on such occasions, by drinking and swearing a little less, rather than a little more, would it not be as well, think you?"

"I crave your ladyship's pardon," said Whitaker, with much reverence; "I hope I know my place. I am your ladyship's poor servant; and I know it does not become me to drink and swear like your ladyship—that is, like his honour, Sir Geoffrey, I would say. But I pray you, if I am not to drink and swear after my degree, how are men to know Peveril of the Peak's steward,—and I may say butler too, since I have had the keys of the cellar ever since old Spigots was shot dead on the northwest turret, with a black jack in his hand,—I say, how is an old Cavalier like me to be known from those cuckoldly Roundheads that do nothing but fast and pray, if we are not to drink and swear according to our degree?"

The lady was silent, for she well knew speech availed nothing; and, after a moment's pause, proceeded to intimate to the steward that she would have the persons, whose names were marked in a written paper, which she delivered to him, invited to the approaching banquet.

Whitaker, instead of receiving the list with the mute acquiescence of a modern Major Domo, carried it into the recess of one of the windows, and, adjusting his spectacles, began to read it to himself. The first names, being those of distinguished Cavalier families in the neighbourhood, he muttered over in a tone of approbation—paused and pshawed at that of Bridgenorth—yet acquiesced, with the observation, "But he is a good neighbour, so it may pass for once." But when he read the name and surname of Nehemiah Solsgrace, the Presbyterian parson, Whitaker's patience altogether forsook him; and he declared he would as soon throw himself into Eldon-hole,[*] as consent that the intrusive old puritan howlet, who had usurped the pulpit of a sound orthodox divine, should ever darken the gates of Martindale Castle by any message or mediation of his.

[*] *A chasm in the earth supposed to be unfathomable, one of the wonders of the Peak.*

"The false crop-eared hypocrites," cried he, with a hearty oath, "have had their turn of the good weather. The sun is on our side of the hedge now, and we will pay off old scores, as sure as my name is Richard Whitaker."

"You presume on your long services, Whitaker, and on your master's absence, or you had not dared to use me thus," said the lady.

The unwonted agitation of her voice attracted the attention of the refractory steward, notwithstanding his present state of elevation; but he no sooner saw that her eye glistened, and her cheek reddened, than his obstinacy was at once subdued.

"A murrain on me," he said, "but I have made my lady angry in good earnest! and that is an unwonted sight for to see.—I crave your pardon, my lady! It was not poor Dick Whitaker disputed your honourable commands, but only that second draught of double ale. We have put a double stroke of malt to it, as your ladyship well knows, ever since the happy Restoration. To be sure I hate a fanatic as I do the cloven foot of Satan; but then your honourable ladyship hath a right to invite Satan himself, cloven foot and all, to Martindale Castle; and to send me to hell's gate with a billet of invitation—and so your will shall be done."

The invitations were sent round accordingly, in all due form; and one of the bullocks was sent down to be roasted whole at the market-place of a little village called Martindale-Moultrassie, which stood considerably to the eastward both of the Castle and Hall, from which it took its double name, at about an equal distance from both; so that, suppose a line drawn from the one manor-house to the other, to be the base of a triangle, the village would have occupied the salient angle. As the said village, since the late transference of a part of Peveril's property, belonged to Sir Geoffrey and to Bridgenorth in nearly equal portions, the lady judged it not proper to dispute the right of the latter to add some hogsheads of beer to the popular festivity.

In the meanwhile, she could not but suspect the Major of being the unknown friend who had relieved her from the dilemma arising from the want of provisions; and she esteemed herself happy when a visit from him, on the day preceding the proposed entertainment, gave her, as she thought, an opportunity of expressing her gratitude.

CHAPTER IV

*No, sir—I will not pledge—I'm one of those
Who think good wine needs neither bush nor preface
To make it welcome. If you doubt my word,
Fill the quart-cup, and see if I will choke on't.*

—OLD PLAY.

There was a serious gravity of expression in the disclamation with which Major Bridgenorth replied to the thanks tendered to him by Lady Peveril, for the supply of provisions which had reached her Castle so opportunely. He seemed first not to be aware what she alluded to; and, when she explained the circumstance, he protested so seriously that he had no share in the benefit conferred, that Lady Peveril was compelled to believe him, the rather that, being a man of plain downright character, affecting no refined delicacy of sentiment, and practising almost a quaker-like sincerity of expression, it would have been much contrary to his general character to have made such a disavowal, unless it were founded in truth.

"My present visit to you, madam," said he, "had indeed some reference to the festivity of to-morrow." Lady Peveril listened, but as her visitor seemed to find some difficulty in expressing himself, she was compelled to ask an explanation. "Madam," said the Major, "you are not perhaps entirely ignorant that the more tender-conscienced among us have scruples at certain practices, so general amongst your people at times of rejoicing, that you may be said to insist upon them as articles of faith, or at least greatly to resent their omission."

"I trust, Master Bridgenorth," said the Lady Peveril, not fully comprehending the drift of his discourse, "that we shall, as your entertainers, carefully avoid all allusions or reproaches founded on past misunderstanding."

"We would expect no less, madam, from your candour and courtesy," said Bridgenorth; "but I perceive you do not fully understand me. To be plain, then, I allude to the fashion of drinking healths, and pledging each other in draughts of strong liquor, which most among us consider as a superfluous and sinful provoking of each other to debauchery, and the excessive use of strong drink; and which, besides, if derived, as learned divines have supposed, from the custom of the blinded Pagans, who made libations and invoked idols when they drank, may be justly said to have something in it heathenish, and allied to demon-worship."

The lady had already hastily considered all the topics which were likely to introduce discord into the proposed festivity; but this very ridiculous, yet fatal discrepancy, betwixt the manners of the parties on convivial occasions, had entirely escaped her. She endeavoured to soothe the objecting party, whose brows were knit like one who had fixed an opinion by which he was determined to abide.

"I grant," she said, "my good neighbour, that this custom is at least idle, and may be prejudicial if it leads to excess in the use of liquor, which is apt enough to take place without such conversation. But I think, when it hath not this consequence, it is a thing indifferent, affords a unanimous mode of expressing our good wishes to our friends, and our loyal duty to our sovereign; and, without meaning to put any force upon the inclination of those who believe otherwise, I cannot see how I can deny my guests and friends the privilege of drinking a health to the King, or to my husband, after the old English fashion."

"My lady," said the Major, "if the age of fashion were to command it, Popery is one of the oldest English fashions that I have heard of; but it is our happiness that we are not benighted like our fathers, and therefore we must act according to the light that is in us, and not after their darkness. I had myself the honour to attend the Lord-Keeper Whitelocke, when, at the table of the Chamberlain of the kingdom of Sweden, he did positively refuse to pledge the health of his Queen, Christina, thereby giving great offence, and putting in peril the whole purpose of that voyage; which it is not to be thought so wise a man would have done, but that he held such compliance a thing not merely indifferent, but rather sinful and damnable."

"With all respect to Whitelocke," said the Lady Peveril, "I continue of my own opinion, though, Heaven knows, I am no friend to riot or wassail. I would fain accommodate myself to your scruples, and will discourage all other pledges; but surely those of the King and of Peveril of the Peak may be permitted?"

"I dare not," answered Bridgenorth, "lay even the ninety-ninth part of a grain of incense upon an altar erected to Satan."

"How, sir!" said the lady; "do you bring Satan into comparison with our master King Charles, and with my noble lord and husband?"

"Pardon me, madam," answered Bridgenorth, "I have no such thoughts—indeed they would ill become me. I do wish the King's health and Sir Geoffrey's devoutly, and I will pray for both. But I see not what good it should do their health if I should prejudice my own by quaffing pledges out of quart flagons."

"Since we cannot agree upon this matter," said Lady Peveril, "we must find some resource by which to offend those of neither party. Suppose you winked at our friends drinking these pledges, and we should connive at your sitting still?"

But neither would this composition satisfy Bridgenorth, who was of opinion, as he expressed himself, that it would be holding a candle to Beelzebub. In fact, his temper, naturally stubborn, was at present rendered much more so by a previous conference with his preacher, who, though a very good man in the main, was particularly and illiberally tenacious of the petty distinctions which his sect adopted; and while he thought with considerable apprehension on the accession of power which Popery, Prelacy, and Peveril of the Peak, were like to acquire by the late Revolution, became naturally anxious to put his flock on their guard, and prevent their being kidnapped by the wolf. He disliked extremely that Major Bridgenorth, indisputably the head of the Presbyterian interest in that neighbourhood, should have given his only daughter to be, as he termed it, nursed by a Canaanitish woman; and he told him plainly that he liked not this going to feast in the high places with the uncircumcised in heart, and looked on the whole conviviality only as a making-merry in the house of Tirzah.

Upon receiving this rebuke from his pastor, Bridgenorth began to suspect he might have been partly wrong in the readiness which, in his first ardour of gratitude, he had shown to enter into intimate intercourse with the Castle of Martindale; but he was too proud to avow this to the preacher, and it was not till after a considerable debate betwixt them, that it was mutually agreed their presence at the entertainment should depend upon the condition, that no healths or pledges should be given in their presence. Bridgenorth, therefore, as the delegate and representative of his party, was bound to stand firm against all entreaty, and the lady became greatly embarrassed. She now regretted sincerely that her well-intended invitation had ever been given, for she foresaw that its rejection was to awaken all former subjects of quarrel, and perhaps to lead to new violences amongst people who had not many years since been engaged in civil war. To yield up the disputed point to the Presbyterians, would have been to offend the Cavalier party, and Sir Geoffrey in particular, in the most mortal degree; for they made it as firm a point of honour to give healths, and compel others to pledge them, as the Puritans made it a deep article of religion to refuse both. At length the lady changed the discourse, introduced that of Major Bridgenorth's child, caused it to be sent for, and put into his arms. The mother's stratagem took effect; for, though the parliamentary major stood firm, the father, as in the case of the Governor of Tilbury, was softened, and he agreed that his friends should accept a compromise. This was, that the major himself, the reverend divine, and such of their friends as held strict Puritan tenets, should form a separate party in the Large Parlour, while the Hall should be occupied by the jovial Cavaliers; and that each party should regulate their potations after their own conscience, or after their own fashion.

Major Bridgenorth himself seemed greatly relieved after this important matter had been settled. He had held it matter of conscience to be stubborn in maintaining his own opinion, but was heartily glad when he escaped from the apparently inevitable necessity of affronting Lady Peveril by the refusal of her invitation. He remained longer than usual, and spoke and smiled more than was his custom. His first care on his return was to announce to the clergyman and his congregation the compromise which he had made, and this not as a matter for deliberation, but one upon which he had already resolved; and such was his authority among them, that though the preacher longed to pronounce a separation of the parties, and to exclaim—"To your tents, O Israel!" he did not see the chance of being seconded by so many, as would make it worth while to disturb the unanimous acquiescence in their delegate's proposal.

Nevertheless, each party being put upon the alert by the consequences of Major Bridgenorth's embassy, so many points of doubt and delicate discussion were started in succession, that the Lady Peveril, the only person, perhaps, who was desirous of achieving an effectual reconciliation between them, incurred, in reward for her good intentions, the censure of both factions, and had much reason to regret her well-meant project of bringing the Capulets and Montagues of Derbyshire together on the same occasion of public festivity.

As it was now settled that the guests were to form two different parties, it became not only a subject of dispute betwixt themselves, which should be first admitted within the Castle of Martindale, but matter of serious apprehension to Lady Peveril and Major Bridgenorth, lest, if they were to approach by the same avenue and entrance, a quarrel might take place betwixt them, and proceed to extremities, even before they reached the place of entertainment. The lady believed she had discovered an admirable expedient for preventing the possibility of such interference, by directing that the Cavaliers should be admitted by the principal entrance, while the Roundheads should enter the Castle through a great breach which had been made in the course of the siege, and across which there had been made a sort of by-path to drive the cattle down to their pasture in the wood. By this contrivance the Lady Peveril imagined she had altogether avoided the various risks which might occur from two such parties encountering each other, and disputing for precedence. Several other circumstances of less importance were adjusted at the same time, and apparently so much to the satisfaction of the Presbyterian teacher, that, in a long lecture on the subject of the Marriage Garment, he was at the pains to explain to his hearers, that outward apparel was not alone meant by that scriptural expression, but also a suitable frame of mind for enjoyment of peaceful festivity; and therefore he exhorted the brethren, that whatever might be the errors of the poor blinded malignants, with whom they were in some sort to eat and drink upon the morrow they ought not on this occasion to show any evil will against them, lest they should therein become troublers of the peace of Israel. Honest Doctor Dummerar, the elected Episcopal Vicar of Martindale *cum* Moultrassie, preached to the Cavaliers on the same subject. He had served the cure before the breaking out of the rebellion, and was in high favour with Sir Geoffrey, not merely on account of his sound orthodoxy and deep learning, but his exquisite skill in playing at bowls, and his facetious conversation over a pipe and tankard of October. For these latter accomplishments, the Doctor had the honour to be recorded by old Century White amongst the roll of lewd, incompetent, profligate clergymen of the Church of England, whom he denounced to God and man, on account chiefly of the heinous sin of playing at games of skill and chance, and of occasionally joining in the social meetings of their parishioners. When the King's party began to lose ground, Doctor Dummerar left his vicarage, and, betaking himself to the camp, showed upon several occasions, when acting as chaplain to Sir Geoffrey Peveril's regiment, that his portly bodily presence included a stout and masculine heart. When all was lost, and he himself, with most other loyal divines, was deprived of his living, he made such shift as he could; now lurking in the garrets of old friends in the University, who shared with him, and such as him, the slender means of livelihood which the evil times had left them; and now lying hid in the houses of the oppressed and sequestered gentry, who respected at once his character and sufferings. When the Restoration took place, Doctor Dummerar emerged from some one of his hiding-places, and hied him to Martindale Castle, to enjoy the triumph inseparable from this happy change.

His appearance at the Castle in his full clerical dress, and the warm reception which he received from the neighbouring gentry, added not a little to the alarm which was gradually extending itself through the party which were so lately the uppermost. It is true, Doctor Dummerar framed (honest worthy man) no extravagant views of elevation or preferment; but the probability of his being replaced in the living, from which he had been expelled under very flimsy pretences, inferred a severe blow to the Presbyterian divine, who could not be considered otherwise than as an intruder. The interest of the two preachers, therefore, as well as the sentiments of their flocks, were at direct variance; and here was another fatal objection in the way of Lady Peveril's scheme of a general and comprehensive healing ordinance.

Nevertheless, as we have already hinted, Doctor Dummerar behaved as handsomely upon the occasion as the Presbyterian incumbent had done. It is true, that in a sermon which he preached in the Castle hall to several of the most distinguished Cavalier families, besides a world of boys from the village, who went to see the novel circumstance of a parson in a cassock and surplice, he went at great length into the foulness of the various crimes committed by the rebellious party during the late evil times, and greatly magnified the merciful and peaceful nature of the honourable Lady of the Manor, who condescended to look upon, or receive into her house in the way of friendship and hospitality, men holding the principles which had led to the murder of the King—the slaying and despoiling his loyal subjects—and the plundering and breaking down of the Church of God. But then he wiped all this handsomely up again, with the observation, that since it was the

will of their gracious and newly-restored Sovereign, and the pleasure of the worshipful Lady Peveril, that this contumacious and rebellious race should be, for a time, forborne by their faithful subjects, it would be highly proper that all the loyal liegemen should, for the present, eschew subjects of dissension or quarrel with these sons of Shimei; which lesson of patience he enforced by the comfortable assurance, that they could not long abstain from their old rebellious practices; in which case, the Royalists would stand exculpated before God and man, in extirpating them from the face of the earth.

The close observers of the remarkable passages of the times from which we draw the events of our history, have left it upon record, that these two several sermons, much contrary, doubtless, to the intention of the worthy divines by whom they were delivered, had a greater effect in exasperating, than in composing, the disputes betwixt the two factions. Under such evil auspices, and with corresponding forebodings on the mind of Lady Peveril, the day of festivity at length arrived.

By different routes, and forming each a sort of procession, as if the adherents of each party were desirous of exhibiting its strength and numbers, the two several factions approached Martindale Castle; and so distinct did they appear in dress, aspect, and manners, that it seemed as if the revellers of a bridal party, and the sad attendants upon a funeral solemnity, were moving towards the same point from different quarters.

The puritanical party was by far the fewer in numbers, for which two excellent reasons might be given. In the first place, they had enjoyed power for several years, and, of course, became unpopular among the common people, never at any time attached to those, who, being in the immediate possession of authority, are often obliged to employ it in controlling their humours. Besides, the country people of England had, and still have, an animated attachment to field sports, and a natural unrestrained joviality of disposition, which rendered them impatient under the severe discipline of the fanatical preachers; while they were not less naturally discontented with the military despotism of Cromwell's Major-Generals. Secondly, the people were fickle as usual, and the return of the King had novelty in it, and was therefore popular. The side of the Puritans was also deserted at this period by a numerous class of more thinking and prudential persons, who never forsook them till they became unfortunate. These sagacious personages were called in that age the Waiters upon Providence, and deemed it a high delinquency towards Heaven if they afforded countenance to any cause longer than it was favoured by fortune.

But, though thus forsaken by the fickle and the selfish, a solemn enthusiasm, a stern and determined depth of principle, a confidence in the sincerity of their own motives, and the manly English pride which inclined them to cling to their former opinions, like the traveller in the fable to his cloak, the more strongly that the tempest blew around them, detained in the ranks of the Puritans many, who, if no longer formidable from numbers, were still so from their character. They consisted chiefly of the middling gentry, with others whom industry or successful speculations in commerce or in mining had raised into eminence—the persons who feel most umbrage from the overshadowing aristocracy, and are usually the most vehement in defence of what they hold to be their rights. Their dress was in general studiously simple and unostentatious, or only remarkable by the contradictory affectation of extreme simplicity or carelessness. The dark colour of their cloaks, varying from absolute black to what was called sad-coloured—their steeple-crowned hats, with their broad shadowy brims—their long swords, suspended by a simple strap around the loins, without shoulder-belt, sword-knot, plate, buckles, or any of the other decorations with which the Cavaliers loved to adorn their trusty rapiers,—the shortness of their hair, which made their ears appear of disproportioned size,—above all, the stern and gloomy gravity of their looks, announced their belonging to that class of enthusiasts, who, resolute and undismayed, had cast down the former fabric of government, and who now regarded with somewhat more than suspicion, that which had been so unexpectedly substituted in its stead. There was gloom in their countenances; but it was not that of dejection, far less of despair. They looked like veterans after a defeat, which may have checked their career and wounded their pride, but has left their courage undiminished.

The melancholy, now become habitual, which overcast Major Bridgenorth's countenance, well qualified him to act as the chief of the group who now advanced from the village. When they reached the point by which they were first to turn aside into the wood which surrounded the Castle, they felt a momentary impression of degradation, as if they were yielding the high road to their old and oft-defeated enemies the Cavaliers. When they began to ascend the winding path, which had been the daily passage of the cattle, the opening of the wooded glade gave them a view of the Castle ditch, half choked with the rubbish of the breach, and of the breach itself, which was made at the angle of a large square flanking-tower, one-half of which had been battered into ruins, while the other fragment remained in a state strangely shattered and precarious, and seemed to be tottering above the huge aperture in the wall. A stern still smile was exchanged among the Puritans, as the sight reminded them of the victories of former days. Holdfast Clegg, a millwright of Derby, who had been himself active at the siege, pointed to the breach, and said, with a grim smile to Mr. Solsgrace, "I little thought, that when my own hand helped to level the cannon which Oliver pointed against yon tower, we should have been obliged to climb like foxes up the very walls which we won by our bow and by our spear. Methought these malignants had then enough of shutting their gates and making high their horn against us."

"Be patient, my brother," said Solsgrace; "be patient, and let not thy soul be disquieted. We enter not this high place dishonourably, seeing we ascend by the gate which the Lord opened to the godly."

The words of the pastor were like a spark to gunpowder. The countenances of the mournful retinue suddenly expanded, and, accepting what had fallen from him as an omen and a light from heaven how they were to interpret their present situation, they uplifted, with one consent, one of the triumphant songs in which the Israelites celebrated the victories which had been vouchsafed to them over the heathen inhabitants of the Promised Land:—

*"Let God arise, and then His foes
Shall turn themselves to flight,
His enemies for fear shall run,
And scatter out of sight;*

*And as wax melts before the fire,
And wind blows smoke away,
So in the presence of the Lord,
The wicked shall decay.*

*God's army twenty thousand is,
Of angels bright and strong,
The Lord also in Sinai
Is present them among.*

*Thou didst, O Lord, ascend on high,
And captive led'st them all,
Who, in times past, Thy chosen flock
In bondage did enthral."*

These sounds of devotional triumph reached the joyous band of the Cavaliers, who, decked in whatever pomp their repeated misfortunes and impoverishment had left them, were moving towards the same point, though by a different road, and were filling the principal avenue to the Castle, with tiptoe mirth and revelry. The two parties were strongly contrasted; for, during that period of civil dissension, the manners of the different factions distinguished them as completely as separate uniforms might have done. If the Puritan was affectedly plain in his dress, and ridiculously precise in his manners, the Cavalier often carried his love of ornament into tawdry finery, and his contempt of hypocrisy into licentious profligacy. Gay gallant fellows, young and old, thronged together towards the ancient Castle, with general and joyous manifestation of those spirits, which, as they had been buoyant enough to support their owners during the worst of times, as they termed

Oliver's usurpation, were now so inflated as to transport them nearly beyond the reach of sober reason. Feathers waved, lace glittered, spears jingled, steeds caracoled; and here and there a petronel, or pistol, was fired off by some one, who found his own natural talents for making a noise inadequate to the dignity of the occasion. Boys—for, as we said before, the rabble were with the uppermost party, as usual—halloo'd and whooped, "Down with the Rump," and "Fie upon Oliver!" Musical instruments, of as many different fashions as were then in use, played all at once, and without any regard to each other's tune; and the glee of the occasion, while it reconciled the pride of the high-born of the party to fraternise with the general rout, derived an additional zest from the conscious triumph, that their exultation was heard by their neighbours, the crestfallen Roundheads.

When the loud and sonorous swell of the psalm-tune, multiplied by all the echoes of the cliffs and ruinous halls, came full upon their ear, as if to warn them how little they were to reckon upon the depression of their adversaries, at first it was answered with a scornful laugh, raised to as much height as the scoffers' lungs would permit, in order that it might carry to the psalmodists the contempt of their auditors; but this was a forced exertion of party spleen. There is something in melancholy feelings more natural to an imperfect and suffering state than in those of gaiety, and when they are brought into collision, the former seldom fail to triumph. If a funeral-train and wedding-procession were to meet unexpectedly, it will readily be allowed that the mirth of the last would be speedily merged in the gloom of the others. But the Cavaliers, moreover, had sympathies of a different kind. The psalm-tune, which now came rolling on their ear, had been heard too often, and upon too many occasions had preceded victory gained over the malignants, to permit them, even in their triumph, to hear it without emotion. There was a sort of pause, of which the party themselves seemed rather ashamed, until the silence was broken by the stout old knight, Sir Jasper Cranbourne, whose gallantry was so universally acknowledged, that he could afford, if we may use such an expression, to confess emotions, which men whose courage was in any respect liable to suspicion, would have thought it imprudent to acknowledge.

"Adad," said the old Knight, "may I never taste claret again, if that is not the very tune with which the prick-eared villains began their onset at Wiggan Lane, where they trowled us down like so many ninepins! Faith, neighbours, to say truth, and shame the devil, I did not like the sound of it above half."

"If I thought the round-headed rogues did it in scorn of us," said Dick Wildblood of the Dale, "I would cudgel their psalmody out of their peasantly throats with this very truncheon;" a motion which, being seconded by old Roger Raine, the drunken tapster of the Peveril Arms in the village, might have brought on a general battle, but that Sir Jasper forbade the feud.

"We'll have no ranting, Dick," said the old Knight to the young Franklin; "adad, man, we'll have none, for three reasons: first, because it would be ungentle to Lady Peveril; then, because it is against the King's peace; and, lastly, Dick, because if we did set on the psalm-singing knaves, thou mightest come by the worst, my boy, as has chanced to thee before."

"Who, !! Sir Jasper?" answered Dick—"I come by the worst!—I'll be d—d if it ever happened but in that accursed lane, where we had no more flank, front, or rear, than if we had been so many herrings in a barrel."

"That was the reason, I fancy," answered Sir Jasper, "that you, to mend the matter, scrambled into the hedge, and stuck there, horse and man, till I beat thee through it with my leading-staff; and then, instead of charging to the front, you went right-about, and away as fast as your feet would carry you."

This reminiscence produced a laugh at Dick's expense, who was known, or at least suspected, to have more tongue in his head than mettle in his bosom. And this sort of rallying on the part of the Knight having fortunately abated the resentment which had begun to awaken in the breasts of the royalist cavalcade, farther cause for offence was removed, by the sudden ceasing of the sounds which they had been disposed to interpret into those of premeditated insult.

This was owing to the arrival of the Puritans at the bottom of the large and wide breach, which had been formerly made in the wall of the Castle by their victorious cannon. The sight of its gaping heaps of rubbish, and disjointed masses of building, up which slowly winded a narrow and steep path, such as is made amongst ancient ruins by the rare passage of those who occasionally visit them, was calculated, when contrasted with the grey and solid massiveness of the towers and curtains which yet stood uninjured, to remind them of their victory over the stronghold of their enemies, and how they had bound nobles and princes with fetters of iron.

But feelings more suitable to the purpose of their visit to Martindale Castle, were awakened in the bosoms even of these stern sectaries, when the Lady of the Castle, still in the very prime of beauty and of womanhood, appeared at the top of the breach with her principal female attendants, to receive her guests with the honour and courtesy becoming her invitation. She had laid aside the black dress which had been her sole attire for several years, and was arrayed with a splendour not unbecoming her high descent and quality. Jewels, indeed, she had none; but her long and dark hair was surmounted with a chaplet made of oak leaves, interspersed with lilies; the former being the emblem of the King's preservation in the Royal Oak, and the latter of his happy Restoration. What rendered her presence still more interesting to those who looked on her, was the presence of the two children whom she held in either hand; one of whom was well known to them all to be the child of their leader, Major Bridgenorth, who had been restored to life and health by the almost maternal care of the Lady Peveril.

If even the inferior persons of the party felt the healing influence of her presence, thus accompanied, poor Bridgenorth was almost overwhelmed with it. The strictness of his cast and manners permitted him not to sink on his knee, and kiss the hand which held his little orphan; but the deepness of his obeisance—the faltering tremor of his voice—and the glistening of his eye, showed a grateful respect for the lady whom he addressed, deeper and more reverential than could have been expressed even by Persian prostration. A few courteous and mild words, expressive of the pleasure she found in once more seeing her neighbours as her friends—a few kind inquiries, addressed to the principal individuals among her guests, concerning their families and connections, completed her triumph over angry thoughts and dangerous recollections, and disposed men's bosoms to sympathise with the purposes of the meeting.

Even Solsgrace himself, although imagining himself bound by his office and duty to watch over and counteract the wiles of the "Amalekitish woman," did not escape the sympathetic infection; being so much struck with the marks of peace and good-will exhibited by Lady Peveril, that he immediately raised the psalm—

"O what a happy thing it is,

And joyful, for to see

Brethren to dwell together in

Friendship and unity!"

Accepting this salutation as a mark of courtesy repaid, the Lady Peveril marshalled in person this party of her guests to the apartment, where ample good cheer was provided for them; and had even the patience to remain while Master Nehemiah Solsgrace pronounced a benediction of portentous length, as an introduction to the banquet. Her presence was in some measure a restraint on the worthy divine, whose prolusion lasted the longer, and was the more intricate and embarrassed, that he felt himself debarred from rounding it off by his usual alliterative petition for deliverance from Popery, Prelacy, and Peveril of the Peak, which had become so habitual to him, that, after various attempts to conclude with some other form of words, he found himself at last obliged to pronounce the first words of his usual *formula* aloud, and mutter the rest in such a manner as not to be intelligible even by those who stood nearest to him.

The minister's silence was followed by all the various sounds which announce the onset of a hungry company on a well-furnished table; and at the same time gave the lady an opportunity to leave the apartment, and look to the accommodation of her other company. She felt, indeed, that it was high time to do so; and that the royalist guests might be disposed to misapprehend, or even to resent, the prior attentions which she had thought it prudent to offer to the Puritans.

These apprehensions were not altogether ill-founded. It was in vain that the steward had displayed the royal standard, with its proud motto of *Tandem Triumphans*, on one of the great towers which flanked the main entrance of the Castle; while, from the other, floated the banner of Peveril of the Peak, under which many of those who now approached had fought during all the vicissitudes of civil war. It was in vain he repeated his clamorous "Welcome, noble Cavaliers! welcome, generous gentlemen!" There was a slight murmur amongst them, that their welcome ought to have come from the mouth of the Colonel's lady—not from that of a menial. Sir Jasper Cranbourne, who had sense as well as spirit and courage, and who was aware of his fair cousin's motives, having been indeed consulted by her upon all the arrangements which she had adopted, saw matters were in such a state that no time ought to be lost in conducting the guests to the banqueting apartment, where a fortunate diversion from all these topics of rising discontent might be made, at the expense of the good cheer of all sorts, which the lady's care had so liberally provided.

The stratagem of the old soldier succeeded in its utmost extent. He assumed the great oaken-chair usually occupied by the steward at his audits; and Dr. Dummerar having pronounced a brief Latin benediction (which was not the less esteemed by the hearers that none of them understood it), Sir Jasper exhorted the company to wet their appetites to the dinner by a brimming cup to his Majesty's health, filled as high and as deep as their goblets would permit. In a moment all was bustle, with the clank of wine-cups and of flagons. In another moment the guests were on their feet like so many statues, all hushed as death, but with eyes glancing with expectation, and hands outstretched, which displayed their loyal brimmers. The voice of Sir Jasper, clear, sonorous, and emphatic, as the sound of his war-trumpet, announced the health of the restored Monarch, hastily echoed back by the assemblage, impatient to render it due homage. Another brief pause was filled by the draining of their cups, and the mustering breath to join in a shout so loud, that not only the rafters of the old hall trembled while they echoed it back, but the garlands of oaken boughs and flowers with which they were decorated, waved wildly, and rustled as if agitated by a sudden whirlwind. This rite observed, the company proceeded to assail the good cheer with which the table groaned, animated as they were to the attack both by mirth and melody, for they were attended by all the minstrels of the district, who, like the Episcopal clergy, had been put to silence during the reign of the self-entitled saints of the Commonwealth. The social occupation of good eating and drinking, the exchange of pledges betwixt old neighbours who had been fellow-soldiers in the moment of resistance—fellow-sufferers in the time of depression and subjugation, and were now partners in the same general subject of congratulation, soon wiped from their memory the trifling cause of complaint, which in the minds of some had darkened the festivity of the day; so that when the Lady Peveril walked into the hall, accompanied as before with the children and her female attendants, she was welcomed with the acclamations due to the mistress of the banquet and of the Castle—the dame of the noble Knight, who had led most of them to battle with an undaunted and persevering valour, which was worthy of better success. Her address to them was brief and matronly, yet spoken with so much feeling as found its way to every bosom. She apologised for the lateness of her personal welcome, by reminding them that there were then present in Martindale Castle that day, persons whom recent happy events had converted from enemies into friends, but on whom the latter character was so recently imposed, that she dared not neglect with them any point of ceremonial. But those whom she now addressed, were the best, the dearest the most faithful friends of her husband's house, to whom and to their valour Peveril had not only owed those successes, which had given them and him fame during the late unhappy times, but to whose courage she in particular had owed the preservation of their leader's life, even when it could not avert defeat. A word or two of heartfelt authority, completed all which she had boldness to add, and, bowing gracefully round her, she lifted a cup to her lips as if to welcome her guests.

There still remained, and especially amongst the old Cavaliers of the period, some glimmering of that spirit which inspired Froissart, when he declares that a knight hath double courage at need, when animated by the looks and words of a beautiful and virtuous woman. It was not until the reign which was commencing at the moment we are treating of, that the unbounded licence of the age, introducing a general course of profligacy, degraded the female sex into mere servants of pleasure, and, in so doing, deprived society of that noble tone of feeling towards the sex, which, considered as a spur to "raise the clear spirit," is superior to every other impulse, save those of religion and of patriotism. The beams of the ancient hall of Martindale Castle instantly rang with a shout louder and shriller than that at which they had so lately trembled, and the names of the Knight of the Peak and his lady were proclaimed amid waving of caps and hats, and universal wishes for their health and happiness.

Under these auspices the Lady Peveril glided from the hall, and left free space for the revelry of the evening.

That of the Cavaliers may be easily conceived, since it had the usual accompaniments of singing, jesting, quaffing of healths, and playing of tunes, which have in almost every age and quarter of the world been the accompaniments of festive cheer. The enjoyments of the Puritans were of a different and less noisy character. They neither sung, jested, heard music, nor drank healths; and yet they seemed not the less, in their own phrase, to enjoy the creature-comforts, which the frailty of humanity rendered grateful to their outward man. Old Whitaker even protested, that, though much the smaller party in point of numbers, they discussed nearly as much sack and claret as his own more jovial associates. But those who considered the steward's prejudices, were inclined to think, that, in order to produce such a result, he must have thrown in his own by-drinkings—no inconsiderable item—to the sum total of the Presbyterian potations.

Without adopting such a partial and scandalous report, we shall only say, that on this occasion, as on most others, the rareness of indulgence promoted the sense of enjoyment, and that those who made abstinence, or at least moderation, a point of religious principle, enjoyed their social meeting the better that such opportunities rarely presented themselves. If they did not actually drink each other's healths, they at least showed, by looking and nodding to each other as they raised their glasses, that they all were sharing the same festive gratification of the appetite, and felt it enhanced, because it was at the same time enjoyed by their friends and neighbours. Religion, as it was the principal topic of their thoughts, became also the chief subject of their conversation, and as they sat together in small separate knots, they discussed doctrinal and metaphysical points of belief, balanced the merits of various preachers, compared the creeds of contending sects, and fortified by scriptural quotations those which they favoured. Some contests arose in the course of these debates, which might have proceeded farther than was seemly, but for the cautious interference of Major Bridgenorth. He suppressed also, in the very bud, a dispute betwixt Gaffer Hodgeson of Charnelycot and the Reverend Mr. Solsgrace, upon the tender subject of lay-preaching and lay-ministering; nor did he think it altogether prudent or decent to indulge the wishes of some of the warmer enthusiasts of the party, who felt disposed to make the rest partakers of their gifts in extemporaneous prayer and exposition. These were absurdities that belonged to the time, which, however, the Major had sense enough to perceive were unfitted, whether the offspring of hypocrisy or enthusiasm, for the present time and place.

The Major was also instrumental in breaking up the party at an early and decorous hour, so that they left the Castle long before their rivals, the Cavaliers, had reached the springtide of their merriment; an arrangement which afforded the greatest satisfaction to the lady, who dreaded the consequences which might not improbably have taken place, had both parties met at the same period and point of retreat.

It was near midnight ere the greater part of the Cavaliers, meaning such as were able to effect their departure without assistance, withdrew to the village of Martindale Moultrassie, with the benefit of the broad moon to prevent the chance of accidents. Their shouts, and the burden of their roaring chorus of—

"The King shall enjoy his own again!"

were heard with no small pleasure by the lady, heartily glad that the riot of the day was over without the occurrence of any displeasing accident. The rejoicing was not, however, entirely ended; for the elevated Cavaliers, finding some of the villagers still on foot around a bonfire on the street, struck merrily in with them—sent to Roger Raine of the Peveril Arms, the loyal publican whom we have already mentioned, for two tubs of merry stingo (as it was termed), and lent their own powerful assistance at the *dusting* it off to the health of the King and the loyal General Monk. Their shouts for a long time disturbed, and even alarmed, the little village; but no enthusiasm is able to withstand for ever the natural consequences of late hours, and potations pottle-deep. The tumult of the exulting Royalists at last sunk into silence, and the moon and the owl were left in undisturbed sovereignty over the old tower of the village church, which, rising white above a circle of knotty oaks, was tenanted by the bird, and silvered by the planet.

CHAPTER V

*'Twas when they raised, 'mid sap and siege,
The banners of their rightful liege,
At their she-captain's call,
Who, miracle of womankind!
Lent mettle to the meanest hind
That mann'd her castle wall.*

—WILLIAM S. ROSE.

On the morning succeeding the feast, the Lady Peveril, fatigued with the exertions and the apprehensions of the former day, kept her apartment for two or three hours later than her own active habits, and the matutinal custom of the time, rendered usual. Meanwhile, Mistress Ellesmere, a person of great trust in the family, and who assumed much authority in her mistress's absence, laid her orders upon Deborah, the governante, immediately to carry the children to their airing in the park, and not to let any one enter the gilded chamber, which was usually their sporting-place. Deborah, who often rebelled, and sometimes successfully, against the deputed authority of Ellesmere, privately resolved that it was about to rain, and that the gilded chamber was a more suitable place for the children's exercise than the wet grass of the park on a raw morning.

But a woman's brain is sometimes as inconstant as a popular assembly; and presently after she had voted the morning was like to be rainy, and that the gilded chamber was the fittest play-room for the children, Mistress Deborah came to the somewhat inconsistent resolution, that the park was the fittest place for her own morning walk. It is certain, that during the unrestrained joviality of the preceding evening, she had danced till midnight with Lance Outram the park-keeper; but how far the seeing him just pass the window in his woodland trim, with a feather in his hat, and a crossbow under his arm, influenced the discrepancy of the opinions Mistress Deborah formed concerning the weather, we are far from presuming to guess. It is enough for us, that, so soon as Mistress Ellesmere's back was turned, Mistress Deborah carried the children into the gilded chamber, not without a strict charge (for we must do her justice) to Master Julian to take care of his little wife, Mistress Alice; and then, having taken so satisfactory a precaution, she herself glided into the park by the glass-door of the still-room, which was nearly opposite to the great breach.

The gilded chamber in which the children were, by this arrangement, left to amuse themselves, without better guardianship than what Julian's manhood afforded, was a large apartment, hung with stamped Spanish leather, curiously gilded, representing, in a manner now obsolete, but far from unpleasing, a series of tilts and combats betwixt the Saracens of Grenada, and the Spaniards under the command of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, during that memorable siege, which was terminated by the overthrow of the last fragments of the Moorish empire in Spain.

The little Julian was careering about the room for the amusement of his infant friend, as well as his own, mimicking with a reed the menacing attitude of the Abencerrages and Zegris engaged in the Eastern sport of hurling the JERID, or javelin; and at times sitting down beside her, and caressing her into silence and good humour, when the petulant or timid child chose to become tired of remaining an inactive spectator of his boisterous sport; when, on a sudden, he observed one of the panelled compartments of the leather hangings slide apart, so as to show a fair hand, with its fingers resting upon its edge, prepared, it would seem, to push it still farther back. Julian was much surprised, and somewhat frightened, at what he witnessed, for the tales of the nursery had strongly impressed on his mind the terrors of the invisible world. Yet, naturally bold and high-spirited, the little champion placed himself beside his defenceless sister, continuing to brandish his weapon in her defence, as boldly as he had himself been an Abencerrage of Grenada.

The panel, on which his eye was fixed, gradually continued to slide back, and display more and more the form to which the hand appertained, until, in the dark aperture which was disclosed, the children saw the figure of a lady in a mourning dress, past the meridian of life, but whose countenance still retained traces of great beauty, although the predominant character both of her features and person was an air of almost royal dignity. After pausing a moment on the threshold of the portal which she had thus unexpectedly disclosed, and looking with some surprise at the children, whom she had not probably observed while engaged with the management of the panel, the stranger stepped into the apartment, and the panel, upon a touch of a spring, closed behind her so suddenly, that Julian almost doubted it had ever been open, and began to apprehend that the whole apparition had been a delusion.

The stately lady, however, advanced to him, and said, "Are not you the little Peveril?"

"Yes," said the boy, reddening, not altogether without a juvenile feeling of that rule of chivalry which forbade any one to disown his name, whatever danger might be annexed to the avowal of it.

"Then," said the stately stranger, "go to your mother's room, and tell her to come instantly to speak with me."

"I wo't," said the little Julian.

"How?" said the lady,— "so young and so disobedient?—but you do but follow the fashion of the time. Why will you not go, my pretty boy, when I ask it of you as a favour?"

"I would go, madam," said the boy, "but"—and he stopped short, still drawing back as the lady advanced on him, but still holding by the hand Alice Bridgenorth, who, too young to understand the nature of the dialogue, clung, trembling, to her companion.

The stranger saw his embarrassment, smiled, and remained standing fast, while she asked the child once more, "What are you afraid of, my brave boy—and why should you not go to your mother on my errand?"

"Because," answered Julian firmly, "if I go, little Alice must stay alone with you."

"You are a gallant fellow," said the lady, "and will not disgrace your blood, which never left the weak without protection."

The boy understood her not, and still gazed with anxious apprehension, first on her who addressed him, and then upon his little companion, whose eyes, with the vacant glance of infancy, wandered from the figure of the lady to that of her companion and protector, and at length, infected by a portion of the fear which the latter's magnanimous efforts could not entirely conceal, she flew into Julian's arms, and, clinging to him, greatly augmented his alarm, and by screaming aloud, rendered it very difficult for him to avoid the sympathetic fear which impelled him to do the same.

There was something in the manner and bearing of this unexpected inmate which might justify awe at least, if not fear, when joined to the singular and mysterious mode in which she had made her appearance. Her dress was not remarkable, being the hood and female riding attire of the time, such as was worn by the inferior class of gentlewomen; but her black hair was very long, and, several locks having escaped from under her hood, hung down dishevelled on her neck and shoulders. Her eyes were deep black, keen, and piercing, and her features had something of a foreign expression. When she spoke, her language was marked by a slight foreign accent, although, in construction, it was pure English. Her slightest tone and gesture had the air of one accustomed to command and to be obeyed; the recollection of which probably suggested to Julian the apology he afterwards made for being frightened, that he took the stranger for an "enchanted queen."

While the stranger lady and the children thus confronted each other, two persons entered almost at the same instant, but from different doors, whose haste showed that they had been alarmed by the screams of the latter.

The first was Major Bridgenorth, whose ears had been alarmed with the cries of his child, as he entered the hall, which corresponded with what was called the gilded chamber. His intention had been to remain in the more public apartment, until the Lady Peveril should make her appearance, with the good-natured purpose of assuring her that the preceding day of tumult had passed in every respect agreeably to his friends, and without any of those alarming consequences which might have been apprehended from a collision betwixt the parties. But when it is considered how severely he had been agitated by apprehensions for his child's safety and health, too well justified by the fate of those who had preceded her, it will not be thought surprising that the infantine screams of Alice induced him to break through the barriers of form, and intrude farther into the interior of the house than a sense of strict propriety might have warranted.

He burst into the gilded chamber, therefore, by a side-door and narrow passage, which communicated betwixt that apartment and the hall, and, snatching the child up in his arms, endeavoured, by a thousand caresses, to stifle the screams which burst yet more violently from the little girl, on beholding herself in the arms of one to whose voice and manner she was, but for one brief interview, an entire stranger.

Of course, Alice's shrieks were redoubled, and seconded by those of Julian Peveril, who, on the appearance of this second intruder, was frightened into resignation of every more manly idea of rescue than that which consisted in invoking assistance at the very top of his lungs.

Alarmed by this noise, which in half a minute became very clamorous, Lady Peveril, with whose apartment the gilded chamber was connected by a private door of communication opening into her wardrobe, entered on the scene. The instant she appeared, the little Alice, extricating herself from the grasp of her father, ran towards *her* protectress, and when she had once taken hold of her skirts, not only became silent, but turned her large blue eyes, in which the tears were still glistening, with a look of wonder rather than alarm, towards the strange lady. Julian manfully brandished his reed, a weapon which he had never parted with during the whole alarm, and stood prepared to assist his mother if there should be danger in the encounter betwixt her and the stranger.

In fact, it might have puzzled an older person to account for the sudden and confused pause which the Lady Peveril made, as she gazed on her unexpected guest, as if dubious whether she did, or did not recognise, in her still beautiful though wasted and emaciated features, a countenance which she had known well under far different circumstances.

The stranger seemed to understand the cause of hesitation, for she said in that heart-thrilling voice which was peculiarly her own—

"Time and misfortune have changed me much, Margaret—that every mirror tells me—yet methinks, Margaret Stanley might still have known Charlotte de la Tremouille."

The Lady Peveril was little in the custom of giving way to sudden emotion, but in the present case she threw herself on her knees in a rapture of mingled joy and grief, and, half embracing those of the stranger, exclaimed, in broken language—

"My kind, my noble benefactress—the princely Countess of Derby—the royal queen in Man—could I doubt your voice, your features, for a moment—Oh, forgive, forgive me!"

The Countess raised the suppliant kinswoman of her husband's house, with all the grace of one accustomed from early birth to receive homage and to grant protection. She kissed the Lady Peveril's forehead, and passed her hand in a caressing manner over her face as she said—

"You too are changed, my fair cousin, but it is a change becomes you, from a pretty and timid maiden to a sage and comely matron. But my own memory, which I once held a good one, has failed me strangely, if this gentleman be Sir Geoffrey Peveril."

"A kind and good neighbour only, madam," said Lady Peveril; "Sir Geoffrey is at Court."

"I understood so much," said the Countess of Derby, "when I arrived here last night."

"How, madam!" said Lady Peveril—"Did you arrive at Martindale Castle—at the house of Margaret Stanley, where you have such right to command, and did not announce your presence to her?"

"Oh, I know you are a dutiful subject, Margaret," answered the Countess, "though it be in these days a rare character—but it was our pleasure," she added, with a smile, "to travel incognito—and finding you engaged in general hospitality, we desired not to disturb you with our royal presence."

"But how and where were you lodged, madam?" said Lady Peveril; "or why should you have kept secret a visit which would, if made, have augmented tenfold the happiness of every true heart that rejoiced here yesterday?"

"My lodging was well cared for by Ellesmere—your Ellesmere now, as she was formerly mine—she has acted as quartermaster ere now, you know, and on a broader scale; you must excuse her—she had my positive order to lodge me in the most secret part of your Castle"—(here she pointed to the sliding panel)—"she obeyed orders in that, and I suppose also in sending you now hither."

"Indeed I have not yet seen her," said the lady, "and therefore was totally ignorant of a visit so joyful, so surprising."

"And I," said the Countess, "was equally surprised to find none but these beautiful children in the apartment where I thought I heard you moving. Our Ellesmere has become silly—your good-nature has spoiled her—she has forgotten the discipline she learned under me."

"I saw her run through the wood," said the Lady Peveril, after a moment's recollection, "undoubtedly to seek the person who has charge of the children, in order to remove them."

"Your own darlings, I doubt not," said the Countess, looking at the children. "Margaret, Providence has blessed you."

"That is my son," said the Lady Peveril, pointing to Julian, who stood devouring their discourse with greedy ear; "the little girl—I may call mine too." Major Bridgenorth, who had in the meantime again taken up his infant, and was engaged in caressing it, set it down as the Countess of Derby spoke, sighed deeply, and walked towards the oriel window. He was well aware that the ordinary rules of courtesy would have rendered it proper that he should withdraw entirely, or at least offer to do so; but he was not a man of ceremonious politeness, and he had a particular interest in the subjects on which the Countess's discourse was likely to turn, which induced him to dispense with ceremony. The ladies seemed indeed scarce to notice his presence. The Countess had now assumed a chair, and motioned to the Lady Peveril to sit upon a stool which was placed by her side. "We will have old times once more, though there are here no roaring of rebel guns to drive you to take refuge at my side, and almost in my pocket."

"I have a gun, madam," said little Julian, "and the park-keeper is to teach me how to fire it next year."

"I will list you for my soldier, then," said the Countess.

"Ladies have no soldiers," said the boy, looking wistfully at her.

"He has the true masculine contempt of our frail sex, I see," said the Countess; "it is born with the insolent varlets of mankind, and shows itself so soon as they are out of their long clothes.—Did Ellesmere never tell you of Latham House and Charlotte of Derby, my little master?"

"A thousand thousand times," said the boy, colouring; "and how the Queen of Man defended it six weeks against three thousand Roundheads, under Rogue Harrison the butcher."

"It was your mother defended Latham House," said the Countess, "not I, my little soldier—Hadst thou been there, thou hadst been the best captain of the three."

"Do not say so, madam," said the boy, "for mamma would not touch a gun for all the universe."

"Not I, indeed, Julian," said his mother; "there I was for certain, but as useless a part of the garrison——"

"You forget," said the Countess, "you nursed our hospital, and made lint for the soldiers' wounds."

"But did not papa come to help you?" said Julian.

"Papa came at last," said the Countess, "and so did Prince Rupert—but not, I think, till they were both heartily wished for.—Do you remember that morning, Margaret, when the round-headed knaves, that kept us pent up so long, retreated without bag or baggage, at the first glance of the Prince's standards appearing on the hill—and how you took every high-crested captain you saw for Peveril of the Peak, that had been your partner three months before at the Queen's mask? Nay, never blush for the thought of it—it was an honest affection—and though it was the music of trumpets that accompanied you both to the old chapel, which was almost entirely ruined by the enemy's bullets; and though Prince Rupert, when he gave you away at the altar, was clad in buff and bandoleer, with pistols in his belt, yet I trust these warlike signs were no type of future discord?"

"Heaven has been kind to me," said the Lady Peveril, "in blessing me with an affectionate husband."

"And in preserving him to you," said the Countess, with a deep sigh; "while mine, alas! sealed with his blood his devotion to his king[*]—Oh, had he lived to see this day!"

[*] *The Earl of Derby and King in Man was beheaded at Bolton-on-the-Moors, after having been made prisoner in a previous skirmish in Wigan Lane.*

"Alas! alas! that he was not permitted!" answered Lady Peveril; "how had that brave and noble Earl rejoiced in the unhoped-for redemption of our captivity!"

The Countess looked on Lady Peveril with an air of surprise.

"Thou hast not then heard, cousin, how it stands with our house?—How indeed had my noble lord wondered, had he been told that the very monarch for whom he had laid down his noble life on the scaffold at Bolton-le-Moor, should make it his first act of restored monarchy to complete the destruction of our property, already well-nigh ruined in the royal cause, and to persecute me his widow!"

"You astonish me, madam!" said the Lady Peveril. "It cannot be, that you—that you, the wife of the gallant, the faithful, the murdered Earl—you, Countess of Derby, and Queen in Man—you, who took on you even the character of a soldier, and seemed a man when so many men proved women—that you should sustain evil from the event which has fulfilled—exceeded—the hopes of every faithful subject—it cannot be!"

"Thou art as simple, I see, in this world's knowledge as ever, my fair cousin," answered the Countess. "This restoration, which has given others security, has placed me in danger—this change which relieved other Royalists, scarce less zealous, I presume to think, than I—has sent me here a fugitive, and in concealment, to beg shelter and assistance from you, fair cousin."

"From me," answered the Lady Peveril—"from me, whose youth your kindness sheltered—from the wife of Peveril, your gallant Lord's companion in arms—you have a right to command everything; but, alas! that you should need such assistance as I can render—forgive me, but it seems like some ill-omened vision of the night—I listen to your words as if I hoped to be relieved from their painful import by awaking."

"It is indeed a dream—a vision," said the Countess of Derby; "but it needs no seer to read it—the explanation hath been long since given—Put not your faith in princes. I can soon remove your surprise.—This gentleman, your friend, is doubtless *honest*?"

The Lady Peveril well knew that the Cavaliers, like other factions, usurped to themselves the exclusive denomination of the *honest* party, and she felt some difficulty in explaining that her visitor was not honest in that sense of the word.

"Had we not better retire, madam?" she said to the Countess, rising, as if in order to attend her. But the Countess retained her seat.

"It was but a question of habit," she said; "the gentleman's principles are nothing to me, for what I have to tell you is widely blazed, and I care not who hears my share of it. You remember—you must have heard, for I think Margaret Stanley would not be indifferent to my fate—that after my husband's murder at Bolton, I took up the standard which he never dropped until his death, and displayed it with my own hand in our Sovereignty of Man."

"I did indeed hear so, madam," said the Lady Peveril; "and that you had bidden a bold defiance to the rebel government, even after all other parts of Britain had submitted to them. My husband, Sir Geoffrey, designed at one time to have gone to your assistance with some few followers; but we learned that the island was rendered to the Parliament party, and that you, dearest lady, were thrown into prison."

"But you heard not," said the Countess, "how that disaster befell me.—Margaret, I would have held out that island against the knaves as long as the sea continued to flow around it. Till the shoals which surround it had become safe anchorage—till its precipices had melted beneath the sunshine—till of all its strong abodes and castles not one stone remained upon another,—would I have defended against these villainous hypocritical rebels, my dear husband's hereditary dominion. The little kingdom of Man should have been yielded only when not an arm was left to wield a sword, not a finger to draw a trigger in its defence. But treachery did what force could never have done. When we had foiled various attempts upon the island by open force—treason accomplished what Blake and Lawson, with their floating castles, had found too hazardous an enterprise—a base rebel, whom we had nursed in our own bosoms, betrayed us to the enemy. This wretch was named Christian——"

Major Bridgenorth started and turned towards the speaker, but instantly seemed to recollect himself, and again averted his face. The Countess proceeded, without noticing the interruption, which, however, rather surprised Lady Peveril, who was acquainted with her neighbour's general habits of indifference and apathy, and therefore the more surprised at his testifying such sudden symptoms of interest. She would once again have moved the Countess to retire to another apartment, but Lady Derby proceeded with too much vehemence to endure interruption.

"This Christian," she said, "had eaten of my lord his sovereign's bread, and drunk of his cup, even from childhood—for his fathers had been faithful servants to the House of Man and Derby. He himself had fought bravely by my husband's side, and enjoyed all his confidence; and when my princely Earl was martyred by the rebels, he recommended to me, amongst other instructions communicated in the last message I received from him, to continue my confidence in Christian's fidelity. I obeyed, although I never loved the man. He was cold and phlegmatic, and utterly devoid of that sacred fire which is the incentive to noble deeds, suspected, too, of leaning to the cold metaphysics of Calvinistic subtlety. But he was brave, wise, and experienced, and, as the event proved, possessed but too much interest with the islanders. When these rude people saw themselves without hope of relief, and pressed by a blockade, which brought want and disease into their island, they began to fall off from the faith which they had hitherto shown."

"What!" said the Lady Peveril, "could they forget what was due to the widow of their benefactor—she who had shared with the generous Derby the task of bettering their condition?"

"Do not blame them," said the Countess; "the rude herd acted but according to their kind—in present distress they forgot former benefits, and, nursed in their earthen hovels, with spirits suited to their dwellings, they were incapable of feeling the glory which is attached to constancy in suffering. But that Christian should have headed their revolt—that he, born a gentleman, and bred under my murdered Derby's own care in all that was chivalrous and noble—that *he* should have forgot a hundred benefits—why do I talk of benefits?—that he should have forgotten that kindly intercourse which binds man to man far more than the reciprocity of obligation—that he should have headed the ruffians who broke suddenly into my apartment—immured me with my infants in one of my own castles, and assumed or usurped the tyranny of the island—that this should have been done by William Christian, my vassal, my servant, my friend, was a deed of ungrateful treachery, which even this age of treason will scarcely parallel!"

"And you were then imprisoned," said the Lady Peveril, "and in your own sovereignty?"

"For more than seven years I have endured strict captivity," said the Countess. "I was indeed offered my liberty, and even some means of support, if I would have consented to leave the island, and pledge my word that I would not endeavour to repossess my son in his father's rights. But they little knew the princely house from which I spring—and as little the royal house of Stanley which I uphold, who hoped to humble Charlotte of Tremouille into so base a composition. I would rather have starved in the darkest and lowest vault of Rushin Castle, than have consented to aught which might diminish in one hair's-breadth the right of my son over his father's sovereignty!"

"And could not your firmness, in a case where hope seemed lost, induce them to be generous and dismiss you without conditions?"

"They knew me better than thou dost, wench," answered the Countess; "once at liberty, I had not been long without the means of disturbing their usurpation, and Christian would have as soon engaged a lioness to combat with, as have given me the slightest power of returning to the struggle with him. But time had liberty and revenge in store—I had still friends and partisans in the island, though they were compelled to give way to the storm. Even among the islanders at large, most had been disappointed in the effects which they expected from the change of power. They were loaded with exactions by their new masters, their privileges were abridged, and their immunities abolished, under the pretext of reducing them to the same condition with the other subjects of the pretended republic. When the news arrived of the changes which were current in Britain, these sentiments were privately communicated to me. Calcott and others acted with great zeal and fidelity; and a rising, effected as suddenly and effectually as that which had made me a captive, placed me at liberty and in possession of the sovereignty of Man, as Regent for my son, the youthful Earl of Derby. Do you think I enjoyed that sovereignty long without doing justice on that traitor Christian?"

"How, madam," said Lady Peveril, who, though she knew the high and ambitious spirit of the Countess, scarce anticipated the extremities to which it was capable of hurrying her—"have you imprisoned Christian?"

"Ay, wench—in that sure prison which felon never breaks from," answered the Countess.

Bridgenorth, who had insensibly approached them, and was listening with an agony of interest which he was unable any longer to suppress, broke in with the stern exclamation—

"Lady, I trust you have not dared——"

The Countess interrupted him in her turn.

"I know not who you are who question—and you know not me when you speak to me of that which I dare, or dare not do. But you seem interested in the fate of this Christian, and you shall hear it.—I was no sooner placed in possession of my rightful power, than I ordered the Dempster of the island to hold upon the traitor a High Court of Justice, with all the formalities of the isle, as prescribed in its oldest records. The Court was held in the open air, before the Dempster and the Keys of the island, assembled under the vaulted cope of heaven, and seated on the terrace of the Zonwald Hill, where of old Druid and Scald held their courts of judgment. The criminal was heard at length in his own defence, which amounted to little more than those specious allegations of public consideration, which are ever used to colour the ugly front of treason. He was fully convicted of his crime, and he received the doom of a traitor."

"But which, I trust, is not yet executed?" said Lady Peveril, not without an involuntary shudder.

"You are a fool, Margaret," said the Countess sharply; "think you I delayed such an act of justice, until some wretched intrigues of the new English Court might have prompted their interference? No, wench—he passed from the judgment-seat to the place of execution, with no farther delay than might be necessary for his soul's sake. He was shot to death by a file of musketeers in the common place of execution called Hango Hill."

Bridgenorth clasped his hands together, wrung them, and groaned bitterly.

"As you seem interested for this criminal," added the Countess, addressing Bridgenorth, "I do him but justice in repeating to you, that his death was firm and manly, becoming the general tenor of his life, which, but for that gross act of traitorous ingratitude, had been fair and honourable. But what of that? The hypocrite is a saint, and the false traitor a man of honour, till opportunity, that faithful touchstone, proves their metal to be base."

"It is false, woman—it is false!" said Bridgenorth, no longer suppressing his indignation.

"What means this bearing, Master Bridgenorth?" said Lady Peveril, much surprised. "What is this Christian to you, that you should insult the Countess of Derby under my roof?"

"Speak not to me of countesses and of ceremonies," said Bridgenorth; "grief and anger leave me no leisure for idle observances to humour the vanity of overgrown children.—O Christian—worthy, well worthy, of the name thou didst bear! My friend—my brother—the brother of my blessed Alice—the only friend of my desolate estate! art thou then cruelly murdered by a female fury, who, but for thee, had deservedly paid with her own blood that of God's saints, which she, as well as her tyrant husband, had spilled like water!—Yes, cruel murderess!" he continued, addressing the Countess, "he whom thou hast butchered in thy insane vengeance, sacrificed for many a year the dictates of his own conscience to the interest of thy family, and did not desert it till thy frantic zeal for royalty had well-nigh brought to utter perdition the little community in which he was born. Even in confining thee, he acted but as the friends of the madman, who bind him with iron for his own preservation; and for thee, as I can bear witness, he was the only barrier between thee and the wrath of the Commons of England; and but for his earnest remonstrances, thou hadst suffered the penalty of thy malignancy, even like the wicked wife of Ahab."

"Master Bridgenorth," said the Lady Peveril, "I will allow for your impatience upon hearing these unpleasing tidings; but there is neither use nor propriety in farther urging this question. If in your grief you forget other restraints, I pray you to remember that the Countess is my guest and kinswoman, and is under such protection as I can afford her. I beseech you, in simple courtesy, to withdraw, as what must needs be the best and most becoming course in these trying circumstances."

"Nay, let him remain," said the Countess, regarding him with composure, not unmingled with triumph; "I would not have it otherwise; I would not that my revenge should be summed up in the stinted gratification which Christian's death hath afforded. This man's rude and clamorous grief only proves that the retribution I have dealt has been more widely felt than by the wretched sufferer himself. I would I knew that it had but made sore as many rebel hearts, as there were loyal breasts afflicted by the death of my princely Derby!"

"So please you, madam," said Lady Peveril, "since Master Bridgenorth hath not the manners to leave us upon my request, we will, if your ladyship lists, leave him, and retire to my apartment.—Farewell, Master Bridgenorth; we will meet hereafter on better terms."

"Pardon me, madam," said the Major, who had been striding hastily through the room, but now stood fast, and drew himself up, as one who has taken a resolution;—"to yourself I have nothing to say but what is respectful; but to this woman I must speak as a magistrate. She has confessed a murder in my presence—the murder too of my brother-in-law—as a man, and as a magistrate, I cannot permit her to pass from hence, excepting under such custody as may prevent her farther flight. She has already confessed that she is a fugitive, and in search of a place of concealment, until she should be able to escape into foreign parts.—Charlotte, Countess of Derby, I attach thee of the crime of which thou hast but now made thy boast."

"I shall not obey your arrest," said the Countess composedly; "I was born to give, but not to receive such orders. What have your English laws to do with my acts of justice and of government, within my son's hereditary kingdom? Am I not Queen in Man, as well as Countess of Derby? A feudatory Sovereign indeed; but yet independent so long as my dues of homage are duly discharged. What right can you assert over me?"

"That given by the precepts of Scripture," answered Bridgenorth—"Whoso spilleth man's blood, by man shall his blood be spilled.' Think not the barbarous privileges of ancient feudal customs will avail to screen you from the punishment due for an Englishman murdered upon pretexts inconsistent with the act of indemnity."

"Master Bridgenorth," said the Lady Peveril, "if by fair terms you desist not from your present purpose, I tell you that I neither dare, nor will, permit any violence against this honourable lady within the walls of my husband's castle."

"You will find yourself unable to prevent me from executing my duty, madam," said Bridgenorth, whose native obstinacy now came in aid of his grief and desire of revenge; "I am a magistrate, and act by authority."

"I know not that," said Lady Peveril. "That you *were* a magistrate, Master Bridgenorth, under the late usurping powers, I know well; but till I hear of your having a commission in the name of the King, I now hesitate to obey you as such."

"I shall stand on small ceremony," said Bridgenorth. "Were I no magistrate, every man has title to arrest for murder against the terms of the indemnities held out by the King's proclamations, and I will make my point good."

"What indemnities? What proclamations?" said the Countess of Derby indignantly. "Charles Stuart may, if he pleases (and it doth seem to please him), consort with those whose hands have been red with the blood, and blackened with the plunder, of his father and of his loyal subjects. He may forgive them if he will, and count their deeds good service. What has that to do with this Christian's offence against me and mine? Born a Mankesman—bred and nursed in the island—he broke the laws under which he lived, and died for the breach of them, after the fair trial which they allowed.—Methinks, Margaret, we have enough of this peevish and foolish magistrate—I attend you to your apartment."

Major Bridgenorth placed himself betwixt them and the door, in a manner which showed him determined to interrupt their passage; when the Lady Peveril, who thought she already showed more deference to him in this matter than her husband was likely to approve of, raised her voice, and called loudly on her steward, Whitaker. That alert person, who had heard high talking, and a female voice with which he was unacquainted, had remained for several minutes stationed in the anteroom, much afflicted with the anxiety of his own curiosity. Of course he entered in an instant.

"Let three of the men instantly take arms," said the lady; "bring them into the anteroom, and wait my farther orders."

CHAPTER VI

*You shall have no worse prison than my chamber,
Nor jailer than myself.*

—THE CAPTAIN.

The command which Lady Peveril laid on her domestics to arm themselves, was so unlike the usual gentle acquiescence of her manners, that Major Bridgenorth was astonished. "How mean you, madam?" said he; "I thought myself under a friendly roof."

"And you are so, Master Bridgenorth," said the Lady Peveril, without departing from the natural calmness of her voice and manner; "but it is a roof which must not be violated by the outrage of one friend against another."

"It is well, madam," said Bridgenorth, turning to the door of the apartment. "The worthy Master Solsgrace has already foretold, that the time was returned when high houses and proud names should be once more an excuse for the crimes of those who inhabit the one and bear the other. I believed him not, but now see he is wiser than I. Yet think not I will endure this tamely. The blood of my brother—of the friend of my bosom—shall not long call from the altar, 'How long, O Lord, how long!' If there is one spark of justice left in this unhappy England, that proud woman and I shall meet where she can have no partial friend to protect her."

So saying, he was about to leave the apartment, when Lady Peveril said, "You depart not from this place, Master Bridgenorth, unless you give me your word to renounce all purpose against the noble Countess's liberty upon the present occasion."

"I would sooner," answered he, "subscribe to my own dishonour, madam, written down in express words, than to any such composition. If any man offers to interrupt me, his blood be on his own head!" As Major Bridgenorth spoke, Whitaker threw open the door, and showed that, with the alertness of an old soldier, who was not displeased to see things tend once more towards a state of warfare, he had got with him four stout fellows in the Knight of the Peak's livery, well armed with swords and carabines, buff-coats, and pistols at their girdles.

"I will see," said Major Bridgenorth, "if any of these men be so desperate as to stop me, a freeborn Englishman, and a magistrate in the discharge of my duty."

So saying, he advanced upon Whitaker and his armed assistants, with his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Do not be so desperate, Master Bridgenorth," exclaimed Lady Peveril; and added, in the same moment, "Lay hold upon, and disarm him, Whitaker; but do him no injury."

Her commands were obeyed. Bridgenorth, though a man of moral resolution, was not one of those who undertook to cope in person with odds of a description so formidable. He half drew his sword, and offered such show of resistance as made it necessary to secure him by actual force; but then yielded up his weapon, and declared that, submitting to force which one man was unable to resist, he made those who commanded, and who employed it, responsible for assailing his liberty without a legal warrant.

"Never mind a warrant on a pinch, Master Bridgenorth," said old Whitaker; "sure enough you have often acted upon a worse yourself. My lady's word is as good as a warrant, sure, as Old Noll's commission; and you bore that many a day, Master Bridgenorth, and, moreover, you laid me in the stocks for drinking the King's health, Master Bridgenorth, and never cared a farthing about the laws of England."

"Hold your saucy tongue, Whitaker," said the Lady Peveril; "and do you, Master Bridgenorth, not take it to heart that you are detained prisoner for a few hours, until the Countess of Derby can have nothing to fear from your pursuit. I could easily send an escort with her that might bid defiance to any force you could muster; but I wish, Heaven knows, to bury the remembrance of old civil dissensions, not to awaken new. Once more, will you think better of it—assume your sword again, and forget whom you have now seen at Martindale Castle?"

"Never," said Bridgenorth. "The crime of this cruel woman will be the last of human injuries which I can forget. The last thought of earthly kind which will leave me, will be the desire that justice shall be done on her."

"If such be your sentiments," said Lady Peveril, "though they are more allied to revenge than to justice, I must provide for my friend's safety, by putting restraint upon your person. In this room you will be supplied with every necessary of life, and every convenience; and a message shall relieve your domestics of the anxiety which your absence from the Hall is not unlikely to occasion. When a few hours, at most two days, are over, I will myself relieve you from confinement, and demand your pardon for now acting as your obstinacy compels me to do."

The Major made no answer, but that he was in her hands, and must submit to her pleasure; and then turned sullenly to the window, as if desirous to be rid of their presence.

The Countess and the Lady Peveril left the apartment arm in arm; and the lady issued forth her directions to Whitaker concerning the mode in which she was desirous that Bridgenorth should be guarded and treated during his temporary confinement; at the same time explaining to him, that the safety of the Countess of Derby required that he should be closely watched.

In all proposals for the prisoner's security, such as the regular relief of guards, and the like, Whitaker joyfully acquiesced, and undertook, body for body, that he should be detained in captivity for the necessary period. But the old steward was not half so docile when it came to be considered how the captive's bedding and table should be supplied; and he thought Lady Peveril displayed a very undue degree of attention to her prisoner's comforts. "I warrant," he said, "that the cuckoldly Roundhead ate enough of our fat beef yesterday to serve him for a month; and a little fasting will do his health good. Marry, for drink, he shall have plenty of cold water to cool his hot liver, which I will be bound is still hissing with the strong liquors of yesterday. And as for bedding, there are the fine dry board—more wholesome than the wet straw I lay upon when I was in the stocks, I trow."

"Whitaker," said the lady peremptorily, "I desire you to provide Master Bridgenorth's bedding and food in the way I have signified to you; and to behave yourself towards him in all civility."

"Lack-a-day! yes, my lady," said Whitaker; "you shall have all your directions punctually obeyed; but as an old servant, I cannot but speak my mind."

The ladies retired after this conference with the steward in the antechamber, and were soon seated in another apartment, which was peculiarly dedicated to the use of the mistress of the mansion—having, on the one side, access to the family bedroom; and, on the other, to the still-room which communicated with the garden. There was also a small door which, ascending a few steps, led to that balcony, already mentioned, that overhung the kitchen; and the same passage, by a separate door, admitted to the principal gallery in the chapel; so that the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Castle were placed almost at once within the reach of the same regulating and directing eye.[*]

[*] *This peculiar collocation of apartments may be seen at Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, once a seat of the Vernons, where, in the lady's pew in the chapel, there is a sort of scuttle, which opens into the kitchen, so that the good lady could ever and anon, without much interruption of her religious duties, give an eye that the roast-meat was not permitted to burn, and that the turn-broche did his duty.*

In the tapestried room, from which issued these various sally-ports, the Countess and Lady Peveril were speedily seated; and the former, smiling upon the latter, said, as she took her hand, "Two things have happened to-day, which might have surprised me, if anything ought to surprise me in such times:—the first is, that yonder roundheaded fellow should have dared to use such insolence in the house of Peveril of the Peak. If your husband is yet the same honest and downright Cavalier whom I once knew, and had chanced to be at home, he would have thrown the knave out of window. But what I wonder at still more, Margaret, is your generalship. I hardly thought you had courage sufficient to have taken such decided measures, after keeping on terms with the man so long. When he spoke of justices and warrants, you looked so overawed that I thought I felt the clutch of the parish-beadles on my shoulder, to drag me to prison as a vagrant."

"We owe Master Bridgenorth some deference, my dearest lady," answered the Lady Peveril; "he has served us often and kindly, in these late times; but neither he, nor any one else, shall insult the Countess of Derby in the house of Margaret Stanley."

"Thou art become a perfect heroine, Margaret," replied the Countess.

"Two sieges, and alarms innumerable," said Lady Peveril, "may have taught me presence of mind. My courage is, I believe, as slender as ever."

"Presence of mind is courage," answered the Countess. "Real valour consists not in being insensible to danger, but in being prompt to confront and disarm it;—and we may have present occasion for all that we possess," she added, with some slight emotion, "for I hear the trampling of horses' steps on the pavement of the court."

In one moment, the boy Julian, breathless with joy, came flying into the room, to say that papa was returned, with Lamington and Sam Brewer; and that he was himself to ride Black Hastings to the stable. In the second the tramp of the honest Knight's heavy jack-boots was heard, as, in his haste to see his lady, he ascended the staircase by two steps at a time. He burst into the room; his manly countenance and disordered dress showing marks that he had been riding fast; and without looking to any one else, caught his good lady in his arms, and kissed her a dozen of times.—Blushing, and with some difficulty, Lady Peveril extricated herself from Sir Geoffrey's arms; and in a voice of bashful and gentle rebuke, bid him, for shame, observe who was in the room.

"One," said the Countess, advancing to him, "who is right glad to see that Sir Geoffrey Peveril, though turned courtier and favourite, still values the treasure which she had some share in bestowing upon him. You cannot have forgot the raising of the leaguer of Latham House!"

"The noble Countess of Derby!" said Sir Geoffrey, doffing his plumed hat with an air of deep deference, and kissing with much reverence the hand which she held out to him; "I am as glad to see your ladyship in my poor house, as I would be to hear that they had found a vein of lead in the Brown Tor. I rode hard, in the hope of being your escort through the country. I feared you might have fallen into bad hands, hearing there was a knave sent out with a warrant from the Council."

"When heard you so? and from whom?"

"It was from Cholmondley of Vale Royal," said Sir Geoffrey; "he is come down to make provision for your safety through Cheshire; and I promised to bring you there in safety. Prince Rupert, Ormond, and other friends, do not doubt the matter will be driven to a fine; but they say the Chancellor, and Harry Bennet, and some others of the over-sea counsellors, are furious at what they call a breach of the King's proclamation. Hang them, say I!—They left us to bear all the beating; and now they are incensed that we should wish to clear scores with those who rode us like nightmares!"

"What did they talk of for my chastisement?" said the Countess.

"I wot not," said Sir Geoffrey; "some friends, as I said, from our kind Cheshire, and others, tried to bring it to a fine; but some, again, spoke of nothing but the Tower, and a long imprisonment."

"I have suffered imprisonment long enough for King Charles's sake," said the Countess; "and have no mind to undergo it at his hand. Besides, if I am removed from the personal superintendence of my son's dominions in Man, I know not what new usurpation may be attempted there. I must be obliged to you, cousin, to contrive that I may get in security to Vale Royal, and from thence I know I shall be guarded safely to Liverpool."

"You may rely on my guidance and protection, noble lady," answered her host, "though you had come here at midnight, and with the rogue's head in your apron, like Judith in the Holy Apocrypha, which I joy to hear once more read in churches."

"Do the gentry resort much to the Court?" said the lady.

"Ay, madam," replied Sir Geoffrey; "and according to our saying, when miners do begin to bore in these parts, it is *for the grace of God, and what they there may find*."

"Meet the old Cavaliers with much countenance?" continued the Countess.

"Faith, madam, to speak truth," replied the Knight, "the King hath so gracious a manner, that it makes every man's hopes blossom, though we have seen but few that have ripened into fruit."

"You have not, yourself, my cousin," answered the Countess, "had room to complain of ingratitude, I trust? Few have less deserved it at the King's hand."

Sir Geoffrey was unwilling, like most prudent persons, to own the existence of expectations which had proved fallacious, yet had too little art in his character to conceal his disappointment entirely. "Who, I, madam?" he said; "Alas! what should a poor country knight expect from the King, besides the pleasure of seeing him in Whitehall once more, and enjoying his own again? And his Majesty was very gracious when I was presented, and spoke to me of Worcester, and of my horse, Black Hastings—he had forgot his name, though—faith, and mine, too, I believe, had not Prince Rupert whispered it to him. And I saw some old friends, such as his Grace of Ormond, Sir Marmaduke Langdale, Sir Philip Musgrave, and so forth; and had a jolly rouse or two, to the tune of old times."

"I should have thought so many wounds received—so many dangers risked—such considerable losses—merited something more than a few smooth words," said the Countess.

"Nay, my lady, there were other friends of mine who had the same thought," answered Peveril. "Some were of opinion that the loss of so many hundred acres of fair land was worth some reward of honour at least; and there were who thought my descent from William the Conqueror—craving your ladyship's pardon for boasting it in your presence—would not have become a higher rank or title worse than the pedigree of some who have been promoted. But what said the witty Duke of Buckingham, forsooth? (whose grandsire was a Leistershire Knight—rather poorer, and scarcely so well-born as myself)—Why, he said, that if all of my degree who deserved well of the King in the late times were to be made peers, the House of Lords must meet upon Salisbury Plain!"

"And that bad jest passed for a good argument!" said the Countess; "and well it might, where good arguments pass for bad jests. But here comes one I must be acquainted with."

This was little Julian, who now re-entered the hall, leading his little sister, as if he had brought her to bear witness to the boastful tale which he told his father, of his having manfully ridden Black Hastings to the stable-yard, alone in the saddle; and that Saunders though he walked by the horse's head, did not once put his hand upon the rein, and Brewer, though he stood beside him, scarce held him by the knee. The father kissed the boy heartily; and the Countess, calling him to her so soon as Sir Geoffrey had set him down, kissed his forehead also, and then surveyed all his features with a keen and penetrating eye.

"He is a true Peveril," said she, "mixed as he should be with some touch of the Stanley. Cousin, you must grant me my boon, and when I am safely established, and have my present affair arranged, you must let me have this little Julian of yours some time hence, to be nurtured in my house, held as my page, and the playfellow of the little Derby. I trust in Heaven, they will be such friends as their fathers have been, and may God send them more fortunate times!"

"Marry, and I thank you for the proposal with all my heart, madam," said the Knight. "There are so many noble houses decayed, and so many more in which the exercise and discipline for the training of noble youths is given up and neglected, that I have often feared I must have kept Gil to be young master at home; and I have had too little nurture myself to teach him much, and so he would have been a mere hunting hawking knight of Derbyshire. But in your ladyship's household, and with the noble young Earl, he will have all, and more than all, the education which I could desire."

"There shall be no distinction betwixt them, cousin," said the Countess; "Margaret Stanley's son shall be as much the object of care to me as my own, since you are kindly disposed to entrust him to my charge.—You look pale, Margaret," she continued, "and the tear stands in your eye? Do not be so foolish, my love—what I ask is better than you can desire for your boy; for the house of my father, the Duke de la Tremouille, was the most famous school of chivalry in France; nor have I degenerated from him, or suffered any relaxation in that noble discipline which trained young gentlemen to do honour to their race. You can promise your Julian no such advantages, if you train him up a mere home-bred youth."

"I acknowledge the importance of the favour, madam," said Lady Peveril, "and must acquiesce in what your ladyship honours us by proposing, and Sir Geoffrey approves of; but Julian is an only child, and——"

"An only son," said the Countess, "but surely not an only child. You pay too high deference to our masters, the male sex, if you allow Julian to engross all your affection, and spare none for this beautiful girl."

So saying, she set down Julian, and, taking Alice Bridgenorth on her lap, began to caress her; and there was, notwithstanding her masculine character, something so sweet in the tone of her voice and in the cast of her features, that the child immediately smiled, and replied to her marks of fondness. This mistake embarrassed Lady Peveril exceedingly. Knowing the blunt impetuosity of her husband's character, his devotion to the memory of the deceased Earl of Derby, and his corresponding veneration for his widow, she was alarmed for the consequences of his hearing the conduct of Bridgenorth that morning, and was particularly desirous that he should not learn it save from herself in private, and after due preparation. But the Countess's error led to a more precipitate disclosure.

"That pretty girl, madam," answered Sir Geoffrey, "is none of ours—I wish she were. She belongs to a neighbour hard by—a good man, and, to say truth, a good neighbour—though he was carried off from his allegiance in the late times by a d—d Presbyterian scoundrel, who calls himself a parson, and whom I hope to fetch down from his perch presently, with a wannon to him! He has been cock of the roost long enough.—There are rods in pickle to switch the Geneva cloak with, I can tell the sour-faced rogues that much. But this child is the daughter of Bridgenorth—neighbour Bridgenorth, of Moultrassie Hall."

"Bridgenorth?" said the Countess; "I thought I had known all the honourable names in Derbyshire—I remember nothing of Bridgenorth.—But stay—was there not a sequestrator and committeeman of that name? Sure, it cannot be he?"

Peveril took some shame to himself, as he replied, "It is the very man whom your ladyship means, and you may conceive the reluctance with which I submitted to receive good offices from one of his kidney; but had I not done so, I should have scarce known how to find a roof to cover Dame Margaret's head."

The Countess, as he spoke, raised the child gently from her lap, and placed it upon the carpet, though little Alice showed a disinclination to the change of place, which the lady of Derby and Man would certainly have indulged in a child of patrician descent and loyal parentage.

"I blame you not," she said; "no one knows what temptation will bring us down to. Yet I *did* think Peveril of the Peak would have resided in its deepest cavern, sooner than owed an obligation to a regicide."

"Nay, madam," answered the Knight, "my neighbour is bad enough, but not so bad as you would make him; he is but a Presbyterian—that I must confess—but not an Independent."

"A variety of the same monster," said the Countess, "who hallooed while the others hunted, and bound the victim whom the Independents massacred. Betwixt such sects I prefer the Independents. They are at least bold, bare-faced, merciless villains, have more of the tiger in them, and less of the crocodile. I have no doubt it was that worthy gentleman who took it upon him this morning——"

She stopped short, for she saw Lady Peveril was vexed and embarrassed.

"I am," she said, "the most luckless of beings. I have said something, I know not what, to distress you, Margaret—Mystery is a bad thing, and betwixt us there should be none."

"There is none, madam," said Lady Peveril, something impatiently; "I waited but an opportunity to tell my husband what had happened—Sir Geoffrey, Master Bridgenorth was unfortunately here when the Lady Derby and I met; and he thought it part of his duty to speak of——"

"To speak of what?" said the Knight, bending his brows. "You were ever something too fond, dame, of giving way to the usurpation of such people."

"I only mean," said Lady Peveril, "that as the person—he to whom Lord Derby's story related—was the brother of his late lady, he threatened—but I cannot think that he was serious."

"Threaten?—threaten the Lady of Derby and Man in my house!—the widow of my friend—the noble Charlotte of Latham House!—by Heaven, the prick-eared slave shall answer it! How comes it that my knaves threw him not out of the window?"

"Alas! Sir Geoffrey, you forget how much we owe him," said the lady.

"Owe him!" said the Knight, still more indignant; for in his singleness of apprehension he conceived that his wife alluded to pecuniary obligations,—*"if I do owe him some money, hath he not security for it? and must he have the right, over and above, to domineer and play the magistrate in Martindale Castle?—Where is he?—what have you made of him? I will—I must speak with him."*

"Be patient, Sir Geoffrey," said the Countess, who now discerned the cause of her kinswoman's apprehension; "and be assured I did not need your chivalry to defend me against this discourteous faitour, as *Morte d'Arthur* would have called him. I promise you my kinswoman hath fully righted my wrong; and I am so pleased to owe my deliverance entirely to her gallantry, that I charge and command you, as a true knight, not to mingle in the adventure of another."

Lady Peveril, who knew her husband's blunt and impatient temper, and perceived that he was becoming angry, now took up the story, and plainly and simply pointed out the cause of Master Bridgenorth's interference.

"I am sorry for it," said the Knight; "I thought he had more sense; and that this happy change might have done some good upon him. But you should have told me this instantly—It consists not with my honour that he should be kept prisoner in this house, as if I feared anything he could do to annoy the noble Countess, while she is under my roof, or within twenty miles of this Castle."

So saying, and bowing to the Countess, he went straight to the gilded chamber, leaving Lady Peveril in great anxiety for the event of an angry meeting between a temper hasty as that of her husband, and stubborn like that of Bridgenorth. Her apprehensions were, however, unnecessary; for the meeting was not fated to take place.

When Sir Geoffrey Peveril, having dismissed Whitaker and his sentinels, entered the gilded chamber, in which he expected to find his captive, the prisoner had escaped, and it was easy to see in what manner. The sliding panel had, in the hurry of the moment, escaped the memory of Lady Peveril, and of Whitaker, the only persons who knew anything of it. It was probable that a chink had remained open, sufficient to indicate its existence to Bridgenorth; who withdrawing it altogether, had found his way into the secret apartment with which it communicated, and from thence to the postern of the Castle by another secret passage, which had been formed in the thickness of the wall, as is not uncommon in ancient mansions; the lords of which were liable to so many mutations of fortune, that they usually contrived to secure some lurking place and secret mode of retreat from their fortresses. That Bridgenorth had discovered and availed himself of this secret mode of retreat was evident; because the private doors communicating with the postern and the sliding panel in the gilded chamber were both left open.

Sir Geoffrey returned to the ladies with looks of perplexity. While he deemed Bridgenorth within his reach, he was apprehensive of nothing he could do; for he felt himself his superior in personal strength, and in that species of courage which induces a man to rush, without hesitation, upon personal danger. But when at a distance, he had been for many years accustomed to consider Bridgenorth's power and influence as something formidable; and notwithstanding the late change of affairs, his ideas so naturally reverted to his neighbour as a powerful friend or dangerous enemy, that he felt more apprehension on the Countess's score, than he was willing to acknowledge even to himself. The Countess observed his downcast and anxious brow, and requested to know if her stay there was likely to involve him in any trouble, or in any danger.

"The trouble should be welcome," said Sir Geoffrey, "and more welcome the danger, which should come on such an account. My plan was, that your ladyship should have honoured Martindale with a few days' residence, which might have been kept private until the search after you was ended. Had I seen this fellow Bridgenorth, I have no doubt I could have compelled him to act discreetly; but he is now at liberty, and will keep out of my reach; and, what is worse, he has the secret of the priest's chamber."

Here the Knight paused, and seemed much embarrassed.

"You can, then, neither conceal nor protect me?" said the Countess.

"Pardon, my honoured lady," answered the Knight, "and let me say out my say. The plain truth is, that this man hath many friends among the Presbyterians here, who are more numerous than I would wish them; and if he falls in with the pursuivant fellow who carries the warrant of the Privy Council, it is likely he will back him with force sufficient to try to execute it. And I doubt whether any of our friends can be summoned together in haste, sufficient to resist such a power as they are like to bring together."

"Nor would I wish any friends to take arms, in my name, against the King's warrant, Sir Geoffrey," said the Countess.

"Nay, for that matter," replied the Knight, "an his Majesty will grant warrants against his best friends, he must look to have them resisted. But the best I can think of in this emergence is—though the proposal be something inhospitable—that your ladyship should take presently to horse, if your fatigue will permit. I will mount also, with some brisk fellows, who will lodge you safe at Vale Royal, though the Sheriff stopped the way with a whole *posse comitatus*."

The Countess of Derby willingly acquiesced in this proposal. She had enjoyed a night's sound repose in the private chamber, to which Ellesmere had guided her on the preceding evening, and was quite ready to resume her route, or flight—"she scarce knew," she said, "which of the two she should term it."

Lady Peveril wept at the necessity which seemed to hurry her earliest friend and protectress from under her roof, at the instant when the clouds of adversity were gathering around her; but she saw no alternative equally safe. Nay, however strong her attachment to Lady Derby, she could not but be more readily reconciled to her hasty departure, when she considered the inconvenience, and even danger, in which her presence, at such a time, and in such circumstances, was likely to involve a man so bold and hot-tempered as her husband Sir Geoffrey.

While Lady Peveril, therefore, made every arrangement which time permitted and circumstances required, for the Countess prosecuting her journey, her husband, whose spirits always rose with the prospect of action, issued his orders to Whitaker to get together a few stout fellows, with back and breast pieces, and steel-caps. "There are the two lackeys, and Outram and Saunders, besides the other groom fellow, and Roger Raine, and his son; but bid Roger not come drunk again;—thysself, young Dick of the Dale and his servant, and a file or two of the tenants,—we shall be enough for any force they can make. All these are fellows that will strike hard, and ask no question why—their hands are ever readier than their tongues, and their mouths are more made for drinking than speaking."

Whitaker, apprised of the necessity of the case, asked if he should not warn Sir Jasper Cranbourne.

"Not a word to him, as you live," said the Knight; "this may be an outlawry, as they call it, for what I know; and therefore I will bring no lands or tenements into peril, saving mine own. Sir Jasper hath had a troublesome time of it for many a year. By my will, he shall sit quiet for the rest of's days."

CHAPTER VII

Fang.—A rescue! a rescue!

Mrs. Quickly.—Good people, bring a rescue or two.

—Henry IV. Part I.

The followers of Peveril were so well accustomed to the sound of "Boot and Saddle," that they were soon mounted and in order; and in all the form, and with some of the dignity of danger, proceeded to escort the Countess of Derby through the hilly and desert tract of country which connects the frontier of the shire with the neighbouring county of Cheshire. The cavalcade moved with considerable precaution, which they had been taught by the discipline of the Civil Wars. One wary and well-mounted trooper rode about two hundred yards in advance; followed, at about half that distance, by two more, with their carabines advanced, as if ready for action. About one hundred yards behind the advance, came the main body; where the Countess of Derby, mounted on Lady Peveril's ambling palfrey (for her own had been exhausted by the journey from London to Martindale Castle), accompanied by one groom, of approved fidelity, and one waiting-maid, was attended and guarded by the Knight of the Peak, and three files of good and practised horsemen. In the rear came Whitaker, with Lance Outram, as men of especial trust, to whom the covering the retreat was confided. They rode, as the Spanish proverb expresses it, "with the beard on the shoulder," looking around, that is, from time to time, and using every precaution to have the speediest knowledge of any pursuit which might take place.

But, however wise in discipline, Peveril and his followers were somewhat remiss in civil policy. The Knight had communicated to Whitaker, though without any apparent necessity, the precise nature of their present expedition; and Whitaker was equally communicative to his comrade Lance, the keeper. "It is strange enough, Master Whitaker," said the latter, when he had heard the case, "and I wish you, being a wise man, would expound it;—why, when we have been wishing for the King—and praying for the King—and fighting for the King—and dying for the King, for these twenty years, the first thing we find to do on his return, is to get into harness to resist his warrant?"

"Pooh! you silly fellow," said Whitaker, "that is all you know of the true bottom of our quarrel! Why, man, we fought for the King's person against his warrant, all along from the very beginning; for I remember the rogues' proclamations, and so forth, always ran in the name of the King and Parliament."

"Ay! was it even so?" replied Lance. "Nay, then, if they begin the old game so soon again, and send out warrants in the King's name against his loyal subjects, well fare our stout Knight, say I, who is ready to take them down in their stocking-soles. And if Bridgenorth takes the chase after us, I shall not be sorry to have a knock at him for one."

"Why, the man, bating he is a pestilent Roundhead and Puritan," said Whitaker, "is no bad neighbour. What has he done to thee, man?"

"He has poached on the manor," answered the keeper.

"The devil he has!" replied Whitaker. "Thou must be jesting, Lance. Bridgenorth is neither hunter nor hawk; he hath not so much of honesty in him."

"Ay, but he runs after game you little think of, with his sour, melancholy face, that would scare babes and curdle milk," answered Lance.

"Thou canst not mean the wenches?" said Whitaker; "why, he hath been melancholy mad with moping for the death of his wife. Thou knowest our lady took the child, for fear he should strangle it for putting him in mind of its mother, in some of his tantrums. Under her favour, and among friends, there are many poor Cavaliers' children, that care would be better bestowed upon—But to thy tale."

"Why, thus it runs," said Lance. "I think you may have noticed, Master Whitaker, that a certain Mistress Deborah hath manifested a certain favour for a certain person in a certain household."

"For thyself, to wit," answered Whitaker; "Lance Outram, thou art the vainest coxcomb——"

"Coxcomb?" said Lance; "why, 'twas but last night the whole family saw her, as one would say, fling herself at my head."

"I would she had been a brickbat then, to have broken it, for thy impertinence and conceit," said the steward.

"Well, but do but hearken. The next morning—that is, this very blessed morning—I thought of going to lodge a buck in the park, judging a bit of venison might be wanted in the larder, after yesterday's wassail; and, as I passed under the nursery window, I did but just look up to see what madam governante was about; and so I saw her, through the casement, whip on her hood and scarf as soon as she had a glimpse of me. Immediately after I saw the still-room door open, and made sure she was coming through the garden, and so over the breach and down to the park; and so, thought I, 'Aha, Mistress Deb, if you are so ready to dance after my pipe and tabor, I will give you a couranto before you shall come up with me.' And so I went down Ivy-tod Dingle, where the copse is tangled, and the ground swampy, and round by Haxley-bottom, thinking all the while she was following, and laughing in my sleeve at the round I was giving her."

"You deserved to be ducked for it," said Whitaker, "for a weather-headed puppy; but what is all this Jack-a-lantern story to Bridgenorth?"

"Why, it was all along of he, man," continued Lance, "that is, of Bridgenorth, that she did not follow me—Gad, I first walked slow, and then stopped, and then turned back a little, and then began to wonder what she had made of herself, and to think I had borne myself something like a jackass in the matter."

"That I deny," said Whitaker, "never jackass but would have borne him better—but go on."

"Why, turning my face towards the Castle, I went back as if I had my nose bleeding, when just by the Copely thorn, which stands, you know, a flight-short from the postern-gate, I saw Madam Deb in close conference with the enemy."

"What enemy?" said the steward.

"What enemy! why, who but Bridgenorth? They kept out of sight, and among the copse; but, thought I, it is hard if I cannot stalk you, that have stalked so many bucks. If so, I had better give my shafts to be pudding pins. So I cast round the thicket, to watch their waters; and may I never bend crossbow again, if I did not see him give her gold, and squeeze her by the hand!"

"And was that all you saw pass between them?" said the steward.

"Faith, and it was enough to dismount me from my hobby," said Lance. "What! when I thought I had the prettiest girl in the Castle dancing after my whistle, to find that she gave me the bag to hold, and was smuggling in a corner with a rich old Puritan!"

"Credit me, Lance, it is not as thou thinkest," said Whitaker. "Bridgenorth cares not for these amorous toys, and thou thinkest of nothing else. But it is fitting our Knight should know that he has met with Deborah in secret, and given her gold; for never Puritan gave gold yet, but it was earnest for some devil's work done, or to be done."

"Nay, but," said Lance, "I would not be such a dog-bolt as to go and betray the girl to our master. She hath a right to follow her fancy, as the dame said who kissed her cow—only I do not much approve her choice, that is all. He cannot be six years short of fifty; and a verjuice countenance, under the penthouse of a slouched beaver, and bag of meagre dried bones, swaddled up in a black cloak, is no such temptation, methinks."

"I tell you once more," said Whitaker, "you are mistaken; and that there neither is, nor can be, any matter of love between them, but only some intrigue, concerning, perhaps, this same noble Countess of Derby. I tell thee, it behoves my master to know it, and I will presently tell it to him."

So saying, and in spite of all the remonstrances which Lance continued to make on behalf of Mistress Deborah, the steward rode up to the main body of their little party, and mentioned to the Knight, and the Countess of Derby, what he had just heard from the keeper, adding at the same time his own suspicions, that Master Bridgenorth of Moultrassie Hall was desirous to keep up some system of espial in the Castle of Martindale, either in order to secure his menaced vengeance on the Countess of Derby, as authoress of his brother-in-law's death, or for some unknown, but probably sinister purpose.

The Knight of the Peak was filled with high resentment at Whitaker's communication. According to his prejudices, those of the opposite faction were supposed to make up by wit and intrigue what they wanted in open force; and he now hastily conceived that his neighbour, whose prudence he always respected, and sometimes even dreaded, was maintaining for his private purposes, a clandestine correspondence with a member of his family. If this was for the betrayal of his noble guest, it argued at once treachery and presumption; or, viewing the whole as Lance had done, a criminal intrigue with a woman so near the person of Lady Peveril, was in itself, he deemed, a piece of sovereign impertinence and disrespect on the part of such a person as Bridgenorth, against whom Sir Geoffrey's anger was kindled accordingly.

Whitaker had scarce regained his post in the rear, when he again quitted it, and galloped to the main body with more speed than before, with the displeasing tidings that they were pursued by half a score of horseman, and better.

"Ride on briskly to Hartley-nick," said the Knight, "and there, with God to help, we will bide the knaves.—Countess of Derby—one word and a short one—Farewell!—you must ride forward with Whitaker and another careful fellow, and let me alone to see that no one treads on your skirts."

"I will abide with you and stand them," said the Countess; "you know of old, I fear not to look on man's work."

"You *must* ride on, madam," said the Knight, "for the sake of the young Earl, and the rest of my noble friends' family. There is no manly work which can be worth your looking upon; it is but child's play that these fellows bring with them."

As she yielded a reluctant consent to continue her flight, they reached the bottom of Hartley-nick, a pass very steep and craggy, and where the road, or rather path, which had hitherto passed over more open ground, became pent up and confined betwixt copsewood on the one side, and, on the other, the precipitous bank of a mountain stream.

The Countess of Derby, after an affectionate adieu to Sir Geoffrey, and having requested him to convey her kind commendations to her little page-elect and his mother, proceeded up the pass at a round pace, and with her attendants and escort, was soon out of sight. Immediately after she had disappeared, the pursuers came up with Sir Geoffrey Peveril, who had divided and drawn up his party so as completely to occupy the road at three different points.

The opposite party was led, as Sir Geoffrey had expected, by Major Bridgenorth. At his side was a person in black, with a silver greyhound on his arm; and he was followed by about eight or ten inhabitants of the village of Martindale Moultrassie, two or three of whom were officers of the peace, and others were personally known to Sir Geoffrey as favourites of the subverted government.

As the party rode briskly up, Sir Geoffrey called to them to halt; and as they continued advancing, he ordered his own people to present their pistols and carabines; and after assuming that menacing attitude, he repeated, with a voice of thunder, "Halt, or we fire!"

The other party halted accordingly, and Major Bridgenorth advanced, as if to parley.

"Why, how now, neighbour," said Sir Geoffrey, as if he had at that moment recognised him for the first time,—"*what makes you ride so sharp this morning? Are you not afraid to harm your horse, or spoil your spurs?*"

"Sir Geoffrey," said the Major, "I have not time for jesting—I'm on the King's affairs."

"Are you sure it is not upon Old Noll's, neighbour? You used to hold his the better errand," said the Knight, with a smile which gave occasion to a horse-laugh among his followers.

"Show him your warrant," said Bridgenorth to the man in black formerly mentioned, who was a pursuivant. Then taking the warrant from the officer, he gave it to Sir Geoffrey—"To this, at least, you will pay regard."

"The same regard which you would have paid to it a month back or so," said the Knight, tearing the warrant to shreds.—"*What a plague do you stare at? Do you think you have a monopoly of rebellion, and that we have not a right to show a trick of disobedience in our turn?*"

"Make way, Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Bridgenorth, "or you will compel me to do that I may be sorry for. I am in this matter the avenger of the blood of one of the Lord's saints, and I will follow the chase while Heaven grants me an arm to make my way."

"You shall make no way here but at your peril," said Sir Geoffrey; "this is my ground—I have been harassed enough for these twenty years by saints, as you call yourselves. I tell you, master, you shall neither violate the security of my house, nor pursue my friends over the grounds, nor tamper, as you have done, amongst my servants, with impunity. I have had you in respect for certain kind doings, which I will not either forget or deny, and you will find it difficult to make me draw a sword or bend a pistol against you; but offer any hostile movement, or presume to advance a foot, and I will make sure of you presently. And for those rascals, who come hither to annoy a noble lady on my bounds, unless you draw them off, I will presently send some of them to the devil before their time."

"Make room at your proper peril," said Major Bridgenorth; and he put his right hand on his holster-pistol. Sir Geoffrey closed with him instantly, seized him by the collar, and spurred Black Hastings, checking him at the same time, so that the horse made a courbette, and brought the full weight of his chest against the counter of the other. A ready soldier might, in Bridgenorth's situation, have rid himself of his adversary with a bullet. But Bridgenorth's courage, notwithstanding his having served some time with the Parliament army, was rather of a civil than a military character; and he was inferior to his adversary, not only in strength and horsemanship, but also and especially in the daring and decisive resolution which made Sir Geoffrey thrust himself readily into personal contest. While, therefore, they tugged and grappled together upon terms which bore such little accordance with their long acquaintance and close neighbourhood, it was no wonder that Bridgenorth should be unhorsed with much violence. While Sir Geoffrey sprung from the saddle, the party of Bridgenorth advanced to rescue their leader, and that of the Knight to oppose them. Swords were unsheathed, and pistols presented; but Sir Geoffrey, with the voice of a herald, commanded both parties to stand back, and to keep the peace.

The pursuivant took the hint, and easily found a reason for not prosecuting a dangerous duty. "The warrant," he said, "was destroyed. They that did it must be answerable to the Council; for his part, he could proceed no farther without his commission."

"Well said, and like a peaceable fellow!" said Sir Geoffrey.—"*Let him have refreshment at the Castle—his nag is sorely out of condition.—Come, neighbour Bridgenorth, get up, man—I trust you have had no hurt in this mad affray? I was loath to lay hand on you, man, till you plucked out your petronel.*"

As he spoke thus, he aided the Major to rise. The pursuivant, meanwhile, drew aside; and with him the constable and head-borough, who were not without some tacit suspicion, that though Peveril was interrupting the direct course of law in this matter, yet he was likely to have his offence considered by favourable judges; and therefore it might be as much for their interest and safety to give way as to oppose him. But the rest of the party, friends of Bridgenorth, and of his principles, kept their ground notwithstanding this defection, and seemed, from their looks, sternly determined to rule their conduct by that of their leader, whatever it might be. But it was evident that Bridgenorth did not intend to renew the struggle. He shook himself rather roughly free from the hands of Sir Geoffrey Peveril; but it was not to draw his sword. On the contrary, he mounted his horse with a sullen and dejected air; and, making a sign to his followers, turned back the same road which he had come. Sir Geoffrey looked after him for some minutes. "Now, there goes a man," said he, "who would have been a right honest fellow had he not been a Presbyterian. But there is no heartiness about them—they can never forgive a fair fall upon the sod—they bear malice, and that I hate as I do a black cloak, or a Geneva skull-cap, and a pair of long ears rising on each side on't, like two chimneys at the gable ends of a thatched cottage. They are as sly as the devil to boot; and, therefore, Lance Outram, take two with you, and keep after them, that they may not turn our flank, and get on the track of the Countess again after all."

"I had as soon they should course my lady's white tame doe," answered Lance, in the spirit of his calling. He proceeded to execute his master's orders by dogging Major Bridgenorth at a distance, and observing his course from such heights as commanded the country. But it was soon evident that no manoeuvre was intended, and that the Major was taking the direct road homeward. When this was ascertained, Sir Geoffrey dismissed most of his followers; and retaining only his own domestics, rode hastily forward to overtake the Countess.

It is only necessary to say farther, that he completed his purpose of escorting the Countess of Derby to Vale Royal, without meeting any further hindrance by the way. The lord of the mansion readily undertook to conduct the high-minded lady to Liverpool, and the task of seeing her safely embarked for her son's hereditary dominions, where there was no doubt of her remaining in personal safety until the accusation against her for breach of the Royal Indemnity, by the execution of Christian, could be brought to some compromise.

For a length of time this was no easy matter. Clarendon, then at the head of Charles's administration, considered her rash action, though dictated by motives which the human breast must, in some respects, sympathise with, as calculated to shake the restored tranquillity of England, by exciting the doubts and jealousies of those who had to apprehend the consequences of what is called, in our own time, a *reaction*. At the same time, the high services of this distinguished family—the merits of the Countess herself—the memory of her gallant husband—and the very peculiar circumstances of jurisdiction which took the case out of all common rules, pleaded strongly in her favour; and the death of Christian was at length only punished by the imposition of a heavy fine, amounting, we believe, to many thousand pounds; which was levied, with great difficulty, out of the shattered estates of the young Earl of Derby.

CHAPTER VIII

My native land, good night!
—BYRON.

Lady Peveril remained in no small anxiety for several hours after her husband and the Countess had departed from Martindale Castle; more especially when she learned that Major Bridgenorth, concerning whose motions she made private inquiry, had taken horse with a party, and was gone to the westward in the same direction with Sir Geoffrey.

At length her immediate uneasiness in regard to the safety of her husband and the Countess was removed, by the arrival of Whitaker, with her husband's commendations, and an account of the scuffle betwixt himself and Major Bridgenorth.

Lady Peveril shuddered to see how nearly they had approached to renewal of the scenes of civil discord; and while she was thankful to Heaven for her husband's immediate preservation, she could not help feeling both regret and apprehension for the consequences of his quarrel with Major Bridgenorth. They had now lost an old friend, who had showed himself such under those circumstances of adversity by which friendship is most severely tried; and she could not disguise from herself that Bridgenorth, thus irritated, might be a troublesome, if not a dangerous enemy. His rights as a creditor, he had hitherto used with gentleness; but if he should employ rigour, Lady Peveril, whose attention to domestic economy had made her much better acquainted with her husband's affairs than he was himself, foresaw considerable inconvenience from the measures which the law put in his power. She comforted herself with the recollection, however, that she had still a strong hold on Bridgenorth, through his paternal affection, and from the fixed opinion which he had hitherto manifested, that his daughter's health could only flourish while under her charge. But any expectations of reconciliation which Lady Peveril might probably have founded on this circumstance, were frustrated by an incident which took place in the course of the following morning.

The governante, Mistress Deborah, who has been already mentioned, went forth, as usual, with the children, to take their morning exercise in the Park, attended by Rachael, a girl who acted occasionally as her assistant in attending upon them. But not as usual did she return. It was near the hour of breakfast, when Ellesmere, with an unwonted degree of primness in her mouth and manner, came to acquaint her lady that Mistress Deborah had not thought proper to come back from the Park, though the breakfast hour approached so near.

"She will come, then, presently," said Lady Peveril with indifference.

Ellesmere gave a short and doubtful cough, and then proceeded to say, that Rachael had been sent home with little Master Julian, and that Mistress Deborah had been pleased to say, she would walk on with Miss Bridgenorth as far as Moultrassie Holt; which was a point at which the property of the Major, as matters now stood, bounded that of Sir Geoffrey Peveril.

"Is the wench turned silly," exclaimed the lady, something angrily, "that she does not obey my orders, and return at regular hours?"

"She may be turning silly," said Ellesmere mysteriously; "or she may be turning too sly; and I think it were as well your ladyship looked to it."

"Looked to what, Ellesmere?" said the lady impatiently. "You are strangely oracular this morning. If you know anything to the prejudice of this young woman, I pray you speak it out."

"I prejudice!" said Ellesmere; "I scorn to prejudice man, woman, or child, in the way of a fellow-servant; only I wish your ladyship to look about you, and use your own eyes—that is all."

"You bid me use my own eyes, Ellesmere; but I suspect," answered the lady, "you would be better pleased were I contented to see through your spectacles. I charge you—and you know I will be obeyed—I charge you to tell me what you know or suspect about this girl, Deborah Debbitch."

"I see through spectacles!" exclaimed the indignant Abigail; "your ladyship will pardon me in that, for I never use them, unless a pair that belonged to my poor mother, which I put on when your ladyship wants your pinners curiously wrought. No woman above sixteen ever did white-seam without barnacles. And then as to suspecting, I suspect nothing; for as your ladyship hath taken Mistress Deborah Debbitch from under my hand, to be sure it is neither bread nor butter of mine. Only" (here she began to speak with her lips shut, so as scarce to permit a sound to issue, and mincing her words as if she pinched off the ends of them before she suffered them to escape),—"only, madam, if Mistress Deborah goes so often of a morning to Moultrassie Holt, why, I should not be surprised if she should never find the way back again."

"Once more, what do you mean, Ellesmere? You were wont to have some sense—let me know distinctly what the matter is."

"Only, madam," pursued the Abigail, "that since Bridgenorth came back from Chesterfield, and saw you at the Castle Hall, Mistress Deborah has been pleased to carry the children every morning to that place; and it has so happened that she has often met the Major, as they call him, there in his walks; for he can walk about now like other folks; and I warrant you she hath not been the worse of the meeting—one way at least, for she hath bought a new hood might serve yourself, madam; but whether she hath had anything in hand besides a piece of money, no doubt your ladyship is best judge."

Lady Peveril, who readily adopted the more good-natured construction of the governante's motives, could not help laughing at the idea of a man of Bridgenorth's precise appearance, strict principles, and reserved habits, being suspected of a design of gallantry; and readily concluded, that Mistress Deborah had found her advantage in gratifying his parental affection by a frequent sight of his daughter during the few days which intervened betwixt his first seeing little Alice at the Castle, and the events which had followed. But she was somewhat surprised, when, an hour after the usual breakfast hour, during which neither the child nor Mistress Deborah appeared, Major Bridgenorth's only man-servant arrived at the Castle on horseback, dressed as for a journey; and having delivered a letter addressed to herself, and another to Mistress Ellesmere, rode away without waiting any answer.

There would have been nothing remarkable in this, had any other person been concerned; but Major Bridgenorth was so very quiet and orderly in all his proceedings—so little liable to act hastily or by impulse, that the least appearance of bustle where he was concerned, excited surprise and curiosity.

Lady Peveril broke her letter hastily open, and found that it contained the following lines:—

*"For the Hands of the Honourable and Honoured Lady Peveril—
These:*

*"Madam—Please it your Ladyship,—I write more to excuse myself to
your ladyship, than to accuse either you or others, in respect
that I am sensible it becomes our frail nature better to confess
our own imperfections, than to complain of those of others.
Neither do I mean to speak of past times, particularly in respect
of your worthy ladyship, being sensible that if I have served you
in that period when our Israel might be called triumphant, you*

have more than requited me, in giving to my arms a child, redeemed, as it were, from the vale of the shadow of death. And therefore, as I heartily forgive to your ladyship the unkind and violent measure which you dealt to me at our last meeting (seeing that the woman who was the cause of strife is accounted one of your kindred people), I do entreat you, in like manner, to pardon my enticing away from your service the young woman called Deborah Debbitch, whose direction, is, it may be, indispensable to the health of my dearest child. I had purposed, madam, with your gracious permission, that Alice should have remained at Martindale Castle, under your kind charge, until she could so far discern betwixt good and evil, that it should be matter of conscience to teach her the way in which she should go. For it is not unknown to your ladyship, and in no way do I speak it reproachfully, but rather sorrowfully, that a person so excellently gifted as yourself—I mean touching natural qualities—has not yet received that true light, which is a lamp to the paths, but are contented to stumble in darkness, and among the graves of dead men. It has been my prayer in the watches of the night, that your ladyship should cease from the doctrine which causeth to err; but I grieve to say, that our candlestick being about to be removed, the land will most likely be involved in deeper darkness than ever; and the return of the King, to which I and many looked forward as a manifestation of divine favour, seems to prove little else than a permitted triumph of the Prince of the Air, who setteth about to restore his Vanity-fair of bishops, deans, and such like, extruding the peaceful ministers of the word, whose labours have proved faithful to many hungry souls. So, hearing from a sure hand, that commission has gone forth to restore these dumb dogs, the followers of Laud and of Williams, who were cast forth by the late Parliament, and that an Act of Conformity, or rather of deformity, of worship, was to be expected, it is my purpose to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek some corner where I may dwell in peace, and enjoy liberty of conscience. For who would abide in the Sanctuary, after the carved work thereof is broken down, and when it hath been made a place for owls, and satyrs of the wilderness?—And herein I blame myself, madam, that I went in the singleness of my heart too readily into that carousing in the house of feasting, wherein my love of union, and my desire to show respect to your ladyship, were made a snare to me. But I trust it will be an atonement, that I am now about to absent myself from the place of my birth, and the house of my fathers, as well as from the place which holdeth the dust of those pledges of my affection. I have also to remember, that in this land my honour (after the worldly estimation) hath been abated, and my utility circumscribed, by your husband, Sir Geoffrey Peveril; and that without any chance of my obtaining reparation at his hand, whereby I may say the hand of a kinsman was lifted up against my credit and my life. These things are bitter to the taste of the old Adam; wherefore to prevent farther bickerings, and, it may be, bloodshed, it is better that I leave this land for a time. The affairs which remain to be settled between Sir Geoffrey and myself, I shall place in the hand of the righteous Master Joachim Win-the-Fight, an attorney in Chester, who will arrange them with such attention to Sir Geoffrey's convenience, as justice, and the due exercise of the law, will permit; for, as I trust I shall have grace to resist the temptation to make the weapons of carnal warfare the instruments of my revenge, so I scorn to effect it through the means of Mammon. Wishing, madam, that the Lord may grant you every blessing, and, in especial, that which is over all others, namely, the true knowledge of His way, I remain, your devoted servant to command, RALPH BRIDGENORTH.

"Written at Moultrassie Hall, this tenth
day of July, 1660."

So soon as Lady Peveril had perused this long and singular homily, in which it seemed to her that her neighbour showed more spirit of religious fanaticism than she could have supposed him possessed of, she looked up and beheld Ellesmere,—with a countenance in which mortification, and an affected air of contempt, seemed to struggle together,—who, tired with watching the expression of her mistress's countenance, applied for confirmation of her suspicions in plain terms.

"I suppose, madam," said the waiting-woman, "the fanatic fool intends to marry the wench? They say he goes to shift the country. Truly it's time, indeed; for, besides that the whole neighbourhood would laugh him to scorn, I should not be surprised if Lance Outram, the keeper, gave him a buck's head to bear; for that is all in the way of his office."

"There is no great occasion for your spite at present, Ellesmere," replied her lady. "My letter says nothing of marriage; but it would appear that Master Bridgenorth, being to leave this country, has engaged Deborah to take care of his child; and I am sure I am heartily glad of it, for the infant's sake."

"And I am glad of it for my own," said Ellesmere; "and, indeed, for the sake of the whole house.—And your ladyship thinks she is not like to be married to him? Troth, I could never see how he should be such an idiot; but perhaps she is going to do worse; for she speaks here of coming to high preferment, and that scarce comes by honest servitude nowadays; then she writes me about sending her things, as if I were mistress of the wardrobe to her ladyship—ay, and recommends Master Julian to the care of my age and experience, forsooth, as if she needed to recommend the dear little jewel to me; and then, to speak of my age—But I will bundle away her rags to the Hall, with a witness!"

"Do it with all civility," said the lady, "and let Whitaker send her the wages for which she has served, and a broad-piece over and above; for though a light-headed young woman, she was kind to the children."

"I know who is kind to their servants, madam, and would spoil the best ever pinned a gown."

"I spoiled a good one, Ellesmere, when I spoiled thee," said the lady; "but tell Mistress Deborah to kiss the little Alice for me, and to offer my good wishes to Major Bridgenorth, for his temporal and future happiness."

She permitted no observation or reply, but dismissed her attendant, without entering into farther particulars.

When Ellesmere had withdrawn, Lady Peveril began to reflect, with much feeling of compassion, on the letter of Major Bridgenorth; a person in whom there were certainly many excellent qualities, but whom a series of domestic misfortunes, and the increasing gloom of a sincere, yet stern feeling of devotion, rendered lonely and unhappy; and she had more than one anxious thought for the happiness of the little Alice, brought up, as she was likely to be, under such a father. Still the removal of Bridgenorth was, on the whole, a desirable event; for while he remained at the Hall, it was but too likely that some accidental collision with Sir Geoffrey might give rise to a rencontre betwixt them, more fatal than the last had been.

In the meanwhile, she could not help expressing to Doctor Dummerar her surprise and sorrow, that all which she had done and attempted, to establish peace and unanimity betwixt the contending factions, had been perversely fated to turn out the very reverse of what she had aimed at.

"But for my unhappy invitation," she said, "Bridgenorth would not have been at the Castle on the morning which succeeded the feast, would not have seen the Countess, and would not have incurred the resentment and opposition of my husband. And but for the King's return, an event which was so anxiously expected as the termination of all our calamities, neither the noble lady nor ourselves had been engaged in this new path of difficulty and danger."

"Honoured madam," said Doctor Dummerar, "were the affairs of this world to be guided implicitly by human wisdom, or were they uniformly to fall out according to the conjectures of human foresight, events would no longer be under the domination of that time and chance, which happen unto all men, since we should, in the one case, work out our own purposes to a certainty, by our own skill, and in the other, regulate our conduct according to the views of unerring prescience. But man is, while in this vale of tears, like an uninstruced bowler, so to speak, who thinks to attain the jack, by delivering his bowl straight forward upon it, being ignorant that there is a concealed bias within the spheroid, which will make it, in all probability, swerve away, and lose the cast."

Having spoken this with a sententious air, the Doctor took his shovel-shaped hat, and went down to the Castle green, to conclude a match of bowls with Whitaker, which had probably suggested this notable illustration of the uncertain course of human events.

Two days afterwards, Sir Geoffrey arrived. He had waited at Vale Royal till he heard of the Countess's being safely embarked for Man, and then had posted homeward to his Castle and Dame Margaret. On his way, he learned from some of his attendants, the mode in which his lady had conducted the entertainment which she had given to the neighbourhood at his order; and notwithstanding the great deference he usually showed in cases where Lady Peveril was concerned, he heard of her liberality towards the Presbyterian party with great indignation.

"I could have admitted Bridgenorth," he said, "for he always bore him in neighbourly and kindly fashion till this last career—I could have endured him, so he would have drunk the King's health, like a true man—but to bring that snuffling scoundrel Solsgrace, with all his beggarly, long-eared congregation, to hold a conventicle in my father's house—to let them domineer it as they listed—why, I would not have permitted them such liberty, when they held their head the highest! They never, in the worst of times, found any way into Martindale Castle but what Noll's cannon made for them; and that they should come and cant there, when good King Charles is returned—By my hand, Dame Margaret shall hear of it!"

But, notwithstanding these ireful resolutions, resentment altogether subsided in the honest Knight's breast, when he saw the fair features of his lady lightened with affectionate joy at his return in safety. As he took her in his arms and kissed her, he forgave her ere he mentioned her offence.

"Thou hast played the knave with me, Meg," he said, shaking his head, and smiling at the same time, "and thou knowest in what manner; but I think thou art true church-woman, and didst only act from silly womanish fancy of keeping fair with these roguish Roundheads. But let me have no more of this. I had rather Martindale Castle were again rent by their bullets, than receive any of the knaves in the way of friendship—I always except Ralph Bridgenorth of the Hall, if he should come to his senses again."

Lady Peveril was here under the necessity of explaining what she had heard of Master Bridgenorth—the disappearance of the governante with his daughter, and placed Bridgenorth's letter in his hand. Sir Geoffrey shook his head at first, and then laughed extremely at the idea that there was some little love-intrigue between Bridgenorth and Mistress Deborah.

"It is the true end of a dissenter," he said, "to marry his own maid-servant, or some other person's. Deborah is a good likely wench, and on the merrier side of thirty, as I should think."

"Nay, nay," said the Lady Peveril, "you are as uncharitable as Ellesmere—I believe it but to be affection to his child."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" answered the Knight, "women are eternally thinking of children; but among men, dame, many one carresses the infant that he may kiss the child's maid; and where's the wonder or the harm either, if Bridgenorth should marry the wench? Her father is a substantial yeoman; his family has had the same farm since Bosworthfield—as good a pedigree as that of the great-grandson of a Chesterfield brewer, I trow. But let us hear what he says for himself—I shall spell it out if there is any roguery in the letter about love and liking, though it might escape your innocence, Dame Margaret."

The Knight of the Peak began to peruse the letter accordingly, but was much embarrassed by the peculiar language in which it was couched. "What he means by moving of candlesticks, and breaking down of carved work in the church, I cannot guess; unless he means to bring back the large silver candlesticks which my grandsire gave to be placed on the altar at Martindale Moultrassie; and which his crop-eared friends, like sacrilegious villains as they are, stole and melted down. And in like manner, the only breaking I know of, was when they pulled down the rails of the communion table (for which some of their fingers are hot enough by this time), and when the brass ornaments were torn down from Peveril monuments; and that was breaking and removing with a vengeance. However, dame, the upshot is, that poor Bridgenorth is going to leave the neighbourhood. I am truly sorry for it, though I never saw him oftener than once a day, and never spoke to him above two words. But I see how it is—that little shake by the shoulder sticks in his stomach; and yet, Meg, I did but lift him out of the saddle as I might have lifted thee into it, Margaret—I was careful not to hurt him; and I did not think him so tender in point of honour as to mind such a thing much; but I see plainly where his sore lies; and I warrant you I will manage that he stays at the Hall, and that you get back Julian's little companion. Faith, I am sorry myself at the thought of losing the baby, and of having to choose another ride when it is not hunting weather, than round by the Hall, with a word at the window."

"I should be very glad, Sir Geoffrey," said the Lady Peveril, "that you could come to a reconciliation with this worthy man, for such I must hold Master Bridgenorth to be."

"But for his dissenting principles, as good a neighbour as ever lived," said Sir Geoffrey.

"But I scarce see," continued the lady, "any possibility of bringing about a conclusion so desirable."

"Tush, dame," answered the Knight, "thou knowest little of such matters. I know the foot he halts upon, and you shall see him go as sound as ever."

Lady Peveril had, from her sincere affection and sound sense, as good a right to claim the full confidence of her husband, as any woman in Derbyshire; and, upon this occasion, to confess the truth, she had more anxiety to know his purpose than her sense of their mutual and separate duties permitted her in general to

entertain. She could not imagine what mode of reconciliation with his neighbour, Sir Geoffrey (no very acute judge of mankind or their peculiarities) could have devised, which might not be disclosed to her; and she felt some secret anxiety lest the means resorted to might be so ill chosen as to render the breach rather wider. But Sir Geoffrey would give no opening for farther inquiry. He had been long enough colonel of a regiment abroad, to value himself on the right of absolute command at home; and to all the hints which his lady's ingenuity could devise and throw out, he only answered, "Patience, Dame Margaret, patience. This is no case for thy handling. Thou shalt know enough on't by-and-by, dame.—Go, look to Julian. Will the boy never have done crying for lack of that little sprout of a Roundhead? But we will have little Alice back with us in two or three days, and all will be well again."

As the good Knight spoke these words, a post winded his horn in the court, and a large packet was brought in, addressed to the worshipful Sir Geoffrey Peveril, Justice of the Peace, and so forth; for he had been placed in authority as soon as the King's Restoration was put upon a settled basis. Upon opening the packet, which he did with no small feeling of importance, he found that it contained the warrant which he had solicited for replacing Doctor Dummerar in the parish, from which he had been forcibly ejected during the usurpation.

Few incidents could have given more delight to Sir Geoffrey. He could forgive a stout able-bodied sectary or nonconformist, who enforced his doctrines in the field by downright blows on the casques and cuirasses of himself and other Cavaliers. But he remembered with most vindictive accuracy, the triumphant entrance of Hugh Peters through the breach of his Castle; and for his sake, without nicely distinguishing betwixt sects or their teachers, he held all who mounted a pulpit without warrant from the Church of England—perhaps he might also in private except that of Rome—to be disturbers of the public tranquillity—seducers of the congregation from their lawful preachers—instigators of the late Civil War—and men well disposed to risk the fate of a new one.

Then, on the other hand, besides gratifying his dislike to Solsgrace, he saw much satisfaction in the task of replacing his old friend and associate in sport and in danger, the worthy Doctor Dummerar, in his legitimate rights and in the ease and comforts of his vicarage. He communicated the contents of the packet, with great triumph, to the lady, who now perceived the sense of the mysterious paragraph in Major Bridgenorth's letter, concerning the removal of the candlestick, and the extinction of light and doctrine in the land. She pointed this out to Sir Geoffrey, and endeavoured to persuade him that a door was now opened to reconciliation with his neighbour, by executing the commission which he had received in an easy and moderate manner, after due delay, and with all respect to the feelings both of Solsgrace and his congregation, which circumstances admitted of. This, the lady argued, would be doing no injury whatever to Doctor Dummerar;—nay, might be the means of reconciling many to his ministry, who might otherwise be disgusted with it for ever, by the premature expulsion of a favourite preacher.

There was much wisdom, as well as moderation, in this advice; and, at another time, Sir Geoffrey would have sense enough to have adopted it. But who can act composedly or prudently in the hour of triumph? The ejection of Mr. Solsgrace was so hastily executed, as to give it some appearance of persecution; though, more justly considered, it was the restoring of his predecessor to his legal rights. Solsgrace himself seemed to be desirous to make his sufferings as manifest as possible. He held out to the last; and on the Sabbath after he had received intimation of his ejection, attempted to make his way to the pulpit, as usual, supported by Master Bridgenorth's attorney, Win-the-Fight, and a few zealous followers.

Just as their party came into the churchyard on the one side, Doctor Dummerar, dressed in full pontificals, in a sort of triumphal procession accompanied by Peveril of the Peak, Sir Jasper Cranbourne, and other Cavaliers of distinction, entered at the other.

To prevent an actual struggle in the church, the parish officers were sent to prevent the farther approach of the Presbyterian minister; which was effected without farther damage than a broken head, inflicted by Roger Raine, the drunken innkeeper of the Peveril Arms, upon the Presbyterian attorney of Chesterfield.

Unsubdued in spirit, though compelled to retreat by superior force, the undaunted Mr. Solsgrace retired to the vicarage; where under some legal pretext which had been started by Mr. Win-the-Fight (in that day unaptly named), he attempted to maintain himself—bolted gates—barred windows—and, as report said (though falsely), made provision of fire-arms to resist the officers. A scene of clamour and scandal accordingly took place, which being reported to Sir Geoffrey, he came in person, with some of his attendants carrying arms—forced the outer-gate and inner-doors of the house; and proceeding to the study, found no other garrison save the Presbyterian parson, with the attorney, who gave up possession of the premises, after making protestation against the violence that had been used.

The rabble of the village being by this time all in motion, Sir Geoffrey, both in prudence and good-nature, saw the propriety of escorting his prisoners, for so they might be termed, safely through the tumult; and accordingly conveyed them in person, through much noise and clamour, as far as the avenue of Moultrassie Hall, which they chose for the place of their retreat.

But the absence of Sir Geoffrey gave the rein to some disorders, which, if present, he would assuredly have restrained. Some of the minister's books were torn and flung about as treasonable and seditious trash, by the zealous parish-officers or their assistants. A quantity of his ale was drunk up in healths to the King and Peveril of the Peak. And, finally, the boys, who bore the ex-parson no good-will for his tyrannical interference with their games at skittles, foot-ball, and so forth, and, moreover, remembered the unmerciful length of his sermons, dressed up an effigy with his Geneva gown and band, and his steeple-crowned hat, which they paraded through the village, and burned on the spot whilom occupied by a stately Maypole, which Solsgrace had formerly hewed down with his own reverend hands.

Sir Geoffrey was vexed at all this and sent to Mr. Solsgrace, offering satisfaction for the goods which he had lost; but the Calvinistical divine replied, "From a thread to a shoe-latchet, I will not take anything that is thine. Let the shame of the work of thy hands abide with thee."

Considerable scandal, indeed, arose against Sir Geoffrey Peveril as having proceeded with indecent severity and haste upon this occasion; and rumour took care to make the usual additions to the reality. It was currently reported, that the desperate Cavalier, Peveril of the Peak, had fallen on a Presbyterian congregation, while engaged in the peaceable exercise of religion, with a band of armed men—had slain some, desperately wounded many more, and finally pursued the preacher to his vicarage which he burned to the ground. Some alleged the clergyman had perished in the flames; and the most mitigated report bore, that he had only been able to escape by disposing his gown, cap, and band, near a window, in such a manner as to deceive them with the idea of his person being still surrounded by flames, while he himself fled by the back part of the house. And although few people believed in the extent of the atrocities thus imputed to our honest Cavalier, yet still enough of obloquy attached to him to infer very serious consequences, as the reader will learn at a future period of our history.

CHAPTER IX

Bessus.—'Tis a challenge, sir, is it not?

Gentleman.—'Tis an inviting to the field.

—King and No King.

For a day or two after this forcible expulsion from the vicarage, Mr. Solsgrace continued his residence at Moultrassie Hall, where the natural melancholy attendant on his situation added to the gloom of the owner of the mansion. In the morning, the ejected divine made excursions to different families in the neighbourhood, to whom his ministry had been acceptable in the days of his prosperity, and from whose grateful recollections of that period he now found sympathy and consolation. He did not require to be consoled with, because he was deprived of an easy and competent maintenance, and thrust out upon the common of life, after he had reason to suppose he would be no longer liable to such mutations of fortune. The piety of Mr. Solsgrace was sincere; and if he had many of the uncharitable prejudices against other sects, which polemical controversy had generated, and the Civil War brought to a head, he had also that deep sense of duty, by which enthusiasm is so often dignified, and held his very life little, if called upon to lay it down in attestation of the doctrines in which he believed. But he was soon to prepare for leaving the district which Heaven, he conceived, had assigned to him as his corner of the vineyard; he was to abandon his flock to the wolf—was to forsake those with whom he had held sweet counsel in religious communion—was to leave the recently converted to relapse into false doctrines, and forsake the wavering, whom his continued cares might have directed into the right path,—these were of themselves deep causes of sorrow, and were aggravated, doubtless,

by those natural feelings with which all men, especially those whose duties or habits have confined them to a limited circle, regard the separation from wonted scenes, and their accustomed haunts of solitary musing, or social intercourse.

There was, indeed, a plan of placing Mr. Solsgrace at the head of a nonconforming congregation in his present parish, which his followers would have readily consented to endow with a sufficient revenue. But although the act for universal conformity was not yet passed, such a measure was understood to be impending, and there existed a general opinion among the Presbyterians, that in no hands was it likely to be more strictly enforced, than in those of Peveril of the Peak. Solsgrace himself considered not only his personal danger as being considerable,—for, assuming perhaps more consequence than was actually attached to him or his productions, he conceived the honest Knight to be his mortal and determined enemy,—but he also conceived that he should serve the cause of his Church by absenting himself from Derbyshire.

"Less known pastors," he said, "though perhaps more worthy of the name, may be permitted to assemble the scattered flocks in caverns or in secret wilds, and to them shall the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim be better than the vintage of Abiezer. But I, that have so often carried the banner forth against the mighty—I, whose tongue hath testified, morning and evening, like the watchman upon the tower, against Popery, Prelacy, and the tyrant of the Peak—for me to abide here, were but to bring the sword of bloody vengeance amongst you, that the shepherd might be smitten, and the sheep scattered. The shedders of blood have already assailed me, even within that ground which they themselves call consecrated; and yourselves have seen the scalp of the righteous broken, as he defended my cause. Therefore, I will put on my sandals, and gird my loins, and depart to a far country, and there do as my duty shall call upon me, whether it be to act or to suffer—to bear testimony at the stake or in the pulpit."

Such were the sentiments which Mr. Solsgrace expressed to his desponding friends, and which he expatiated upon at more length with Major Bridgenorth; not failing, with friendly zeal, to rebuke the haste which the latter had shown to thrust out the hand of fellowship to the Amalekite woman, whereby he reminded him, "He had been rendered her slave and bondsman for a season, like Samson, betrayed by Delilah, and might have remained longer in the house of Dagon, had not Heaven pointed to him a way out of the snare. Also, it sprung originally from the Major's going up to feast in the high place of Baal, that he who was the champion of the truth was stricken down, and put to shame by the enemy, even in the presence of the host."

These oburgations seeming to give some offence to Major Bridgenorth, who liked, no better than any other man, to hear of his own mishaps, and at the same time to have them imputed to his own misconduct, the worthy divine proceeded to take shame to himself for his own sinful compliance in that matter; for to the vengeance justly due for that unhappy dinner at Martindale Castle (which was, he said, a crying of peace when there was no peace, and a dwelling in the tents of sin), he imputed his ejection from his living, with the destruction of some of his most pithy and highly prized volumes of divinity, with the loss of his cap, gown, and band, and a double hogshead of choice Derby ale.

The mind of Major Bridgenorth was strongly tinged with devotional feeling, which his late misfortunes had rendered more deep and solemn; and it is therefore no wonder, that, when he heard these arguments urged again and again, by a pastor whom he so much respected, and who was now a confessor in the cause of their joint faith, he began to look back with disapproval on his own conduct, and to suspect that he had permitted himself to be seduced by gratitude towards Lady Peveril, and by her special arguments in favour of a mutual and tolerating liberality of sentiments, into an action which had a tendency to compromise his religious and political principles.

One morning, as Major Bridgenorth had wearied himself with several details respecting the arrangement of his affairs, he was reposing in the leathern easy-chair, beside the latticed window, a posture which, by natural association, recalled to him the memory of former times, and the feelings with which he was wont to expect the recurring visit of Sir Geoffrey, who brought him news of his child's welfare,—“Surely,” he said, thinking, as it were, aloud, “there was no sin in the kindness with which I then regarded that man.”

Solsgrace, who was in the apartment, and guessed what passed through his friend's mind, acquainted as he was with every point of his history, replied—“When God caused Elijah to be fed by ravens, while hiding at the brook Cherith, we hear not of his fondling the unclean birds, whom, contrary to their ravening nature, a miracle compelled to minister to him.”

“It may be so,” answered Bridgenorth, “yet the flap of their wings must have been gracious in the ear of the famished prophet, like the tread of his horse in mine. The ravens, doubtless, resumed their nature when the season was passed, and even so it has fared with him.—Hark!” he exclaimed, starting, “I hear his horse's hoof tramp even now.”

It was seldom that the echoes of that silent house and courtyard were awakened by the trampling of horses, but such was now the case.

Both Bridgenorth and Solsgrace were surprised at the sound, and even disposed to anticipate some farther oppression on the part of the government, when the Major's old servant introduced, with little ceremony (for his manners were nearly as plain as his master's), a tall gentleman on the farther side of middle life, whose vest and cloak, long hair, slouched hat and drooping feather, announced him as a Cavalier. He bowed formally, but courteously, to both gentlemen, and said, that he was “Sir Jasper Cranbourne, charged with an especial message to Master Ralph Bridgenorth of Moultrassie Hall, by his honourable friend Sir Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak, and that he requested to know whether Master Bridgenorth would be pleased to receive his acquittal of commission here or elsewhere.”

“Anything which Sir Geoffrey Peveril can have to say to me,” said Major Bridgenorth, “may be told instantly, and before my friend, from whom I have no secrets.”

“The presence of any other friend were, instead of being objectionable, the thing in the world most to be desired,” said Sir Jasper, after a moment's hesitation, and looking at Mr. Solsgrace; “but this gentleman seems to be a sort of clergyman.”

“I am not conscious of any secrets,” answered Bridgenorth, “nor do I desire to have any, in which a clergyman is unfitting confidant.”

“At your pleasure,” replied Sir Jasper. “The confidence, for aught I know, may be well enough chosen, for your divines (always under your favour) have proved no enemies to such matters as I am to treat with you upon.”

“Proceed, sir,” answered Mr. Bridgenorth gravely; “and I pray you to be seated, unless it is rather your pleasure to stand.”

“I must, in the first place, deliver myself of my small commission,” answered Sir Jasper, drawing himself up; “and it will be after I have seen the reception thereof, that I shall know whether I am, or am not, to sit down at Moultrassie Hall.—Sir Geoffrey Peveril, Master Bridgenorth, hath carefully considered with himself the unhappy circumstances which at present separate you as neighbours. And he remembers many passages in former times—I speak his very words—which incline him to do all that can possibly consist with his honour, to wipe out unkindness between you; and for this desirable object, he is willing to condescend in a degree, which, as you could not have expected, it will no doubt give you great pleasure to learn.”

“Allow me to say, Sir Jasper,” said Bridgenorth, “that this is unnecessary. I have made no complaints of Sir Geoffrey—I have required no submission from him—I am about to leave this country; and what affairs we may have together, can be as well settled by others as by ourselves.”

“In a word,” said the divine, “the worthy Major Bridgenorth hath had enough of trafficking with the ungodly, and will no longer, on any terms, consort with them.”

“Gentleman both,” said Sir Jasper, with imperturbable politeness, bowing, “you greatly mistake the tenor of my commission, which you will do as well to hear out, before making any reply to it.—I think, Master Bridgenorth, you cannot but remember your letter to the Lady Peveril, of which I have here a rough copy, in which you complain of the hard measure which you have received at Sir Geoffrey's hand, and, in particular, when he pulled you from your horse at or near Hartley-nick. Now, Sir Geoffrey thinks so well of you, as to believe, that, were it not for the wide difference betwixt his descent and rank and your own, you would have sought to bring this matter to a gentleman-like arbitrament, as the only mode whereby your stain may be honourably wiped away. Wherefore, in this slight note, he gives you, in his generosity, the offer of what you, in your modesty (for to nothing else does he impute your acquiescence), have declined to demand of him. And withal, I bring you the measure of his weapon; and when you have accepted the cartel which I now offer you, I shall be ready to settle the time, place, and other circumstances of your meeting.”

“And I,” said Solsgrace, with a solemn voice, “should the Author of Evil tempt my friend to accept of so bloodthirsty a proposal, would be the first to pronounce against him sentence of the greater excommunication.”

"It is not you whom I address, reverend sir," replied the envoy; "your interest, not unnaturally, may determine you to be more anxious about your patron's life than about his honour. I must know, from himself, to which *he* is disposed to give the preference."

So saying, and with a graceful bow, he again tendered the challenge to Major Bridgenorth. There was obviously a struggle in that gentleman's bosom, between the suggestions of human honour and those of religious principle; but the latter prevailed. He calmly waived receiving the paper which Sir Jasper offered to him, and spoke to the following purpose:—"It may not be known to you, Sir Jasper, that since the general pouring out of Christian light upon this kingdom, many solid men have been led to doubt whether the shedding human blood by the hand of a fellow-creature be in *any* respect justifiable. And although this rule appears to me to be scarcely applicable to our state in this stage of trial, seeing that such non-resistance, if general, would surrender our civil and religious rights into the hands of whatsoever daring tyrants might usurp the same; yet I am, and have been, inclined to limit the use of carnal arms to the case of necessary self-defence, whether such regards our own person, or the protection of our country against invasion; or of our rights of property, and the freedom of our laws and of our conscience, against usurping power. And as I have never shown myself unwilling to draw my sword in any of the latter causes, so you shall excuse my suffering it now to remain in the scabbard, when, having sustained a grievous injury, the man who inflicted it summons me to combat, either upon an idle punctilio, or, as is more likely, in mere bravado."

"I have heard you with patience," said Sir Jasper; "and now, Master Bridgenorth, take it not amiss, if I beseech you to bethink yourself better on this matter. I vow to Heaven, sir, that your honour lies a-bleeding; and that in condescending to afford you this fair meeting, and thereby giving you some chance to stop its wounds, Sir Geoffrey has been moved by a tender sense of your condition, and an earnest wish to redeem your dishonour. And it will be but the crossing of your blade with his honoured sword for the space of some few minutes, and you will either live or die a noble and honoured gentleman. Besides, that the Knight's exquisite skill of fence may enable him, as his good-nature will incline him, to disarm you with some flesh wound, little to the damage of your person, and greatly to the benefit of your reputation."

"The tender mercies of the wicked," said Master Solsgrace emphatically, by way of commenting on this speech, which Sir Jasper had uttered very pathetically, "are cruel."

"I pray to have no farther interruption from your reverence," said Sir Jasper; "especially as I think this affair very little concerns you; and I entreat that you permit me to discharge myself regularly of my commission from my worthy friend."

So saying, he took his sheathed rapier from his belt, and passing the point through the silk thread which secured the letter, he once more, and literally at sword point, gracefully tendered it to Major Bridgenorth who again waved it aside, though colouring deeply at the same time, as if he was putting a marked constraint upon himself—drew back, and made Sir Jasper Cranbourne a deep bow.

"Since it is to be thus," said Sir Jasper, "I must myself do violence to the seal of Sir Geoffrey's letter, and read it to you, that I may fully acquit myself of the charge entrusted to me, and make you, Master Bridgenorth, equally aware of the generous intentions of Sir Geoffrey on your behalf."

"If," said Major Bridgenorth, "the contents of the letter be to no other purpose than you have intimated, methinks farther ceremony is unnecessary on this occasion, as I have already taken my course."

"Nevertheless," said Sir Jasper, breaking open the letter, "it is fitting that I read to you the letter of my worshipful friend." And he read accordingly as follows:—

*"For the worthy hands of Ralph Bridgenorth, Esquire, of
Moultrassie Hall—These:*

*"By the honoured conveyance of the Worshipful Sir Jasper
Cranbourne, Knight, of Long-Mallington.*

"Master Bridgenorth,—We have been given to understand by your letter to our loving wife, Dame Margaret Peveril, that you hold hard construction of certain passages betwixt you and I, of a late date, as if your honour should have been, in some sort, prejudiced by what then took place. And although you have not thought it fit to have direct recourse to me, to request such satisfaction as is due from one gentleman of condition to another, yet I am fully minded that this proceeds only from modesty, arising out of the distinction of our degree, and from no lack of that courage which you have heretofore displayed, I would I could say in a good cause. Wherefore I am purposed to give you, by my friend, Sir Jasper Cranbourne, a meeting, for the sake of doing that which doubtless you entirely long for. Sir Jasper will deliver you the length of my weapon, and appoint circumstances and an hour for our meeting; which, whether early or late—on foot or horseback—with rapier or backsword—I refer to yourself, with all the other privileges of a challenged person; only desiring, that if you decline to match my weapon, you will send me forthwith the length and breadth of your own. And nothing doubting that the issue of this meeting must needs be to end, in one way or other, all unkindness betwixt two near neighbours,—I remain, your humble servant to command,

"Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak."

*"Given from my poor house of Martindale Castle, this same ____ of
____, sixteen hundred and sixty."*

"Bear back my respects to Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Major Bridgenorth. "According to his light, his meaning may be fair towards me; but tell him that our quarrel had its rise in his own wilful aggression towards me; and that though I wish to be in charity with all mankind, I am not so wedded to his friendship as to break the laws of God, and run the risk of suffering or committing murder, in order to regain it. And for you, sir, methinks your advanced years and past misfortunes might teach you the folly of coming on such idle errands."

"I shall do your message, Master Ralph Bridgenorth," said Sir Jasper; "and shall then endeavour to forget your name, as a sound unfit to be pronounced, or even remembered, by a man of honour. In the meanwhile, in return for your uncivil advice, be pleased to accept of mine; namely, that as your religion prevents your giving a gentleman satisfaction, it ought to make you very cautious of offering him provocation."

So saying, and with a look of haughty scorn, first at the Major, and then at the divine, the envoy of Sir Geoffrey put his hat on his head, replaced his rapier in its belt, and left the apartment. In a few minutes afterwards, the tread of his horse died away at a considerable distance.

Bridgenorth had held his hand upon his brow ever since his departure, and a tear of anger and shame was on his face as he raised it when the sound was heard no more. "He carries this answer to Martindale Castle," he said. "Men will hereafter think of me as a whipped, beaten, dishonourable fellow, whom every one may baffle and insult at their pleasure. It is well I am leaving the house of my father."

Master Solsgrace approached his friend with much sympathy, and grasped him by the hand. "Noble brother," he said, with unwonted kindness of manner, "though a man of peace, I can judge what this sacrifice hath cost to thy manly spirit. But God will not have from us an imperfect obedience. We must not, like Ananias and Sapphira, reserve behind some darling lust, some favourite sin, while we pretend to make sacrifice of our worldly affections. What avails it to say that we have but secreted a little matter, if the slightest remnant of the accursed thing remain hidden in our tent? Would it be a defence in thy prayers to say, I have not murdered this man for the lucre of gain, like a robber—nor for the acquisition of power, like a tyrant,—nor for the gratification of revenge, like a darkened savage; but because the imperious voice of worldly honour said, 'Go forth—kill or be killed—is it not I that have sent thee?' Bethink thee, my worthy friend, how thou couldst frame such a vindication in thy prayers; and if thou art forced to tremble at the blasphemy of such an excuse, remember in thy prayers the thanks due to Heaven, which enabled thee to resist the strong temptation."

"Reverend and dear friend," answered Bridgenorth, "I feel that you speak the truth. Bitterer, indeed, and harder, to the old Adam, is the text which ordains him to suffer shame, than that which bids him to do valiantly for the truth. But happy am I that my path through the wilderness of this world will, for some space at least, be along with one, whose zeal and friendship are so active to support me when I am fainting in the way."

While the inhabitants of Moultrassie Hall thus communicated together upon the purport of Sir Jasper Cranbourne's visit, that worthy knight greatly excited the surprise of Sir Geoffrey Peveril, by reporting the manner in which his embassy had been received.

"I took him for a man of other metal," said Sir Geoffrey;—"nay, I would have sworn it, had any one asked my testimony. But there is no making a silken purse out of a sow's ear. I have done a folly for him that I will never do for another: and that is, to think a Presbyterian would fight without his preacher's permission. Give them a two hours' sermon, and let them howl a psalm to a tune that is worse than the cries of a flogged hound, and the villains will lay on like threshers; but for a calm, cool, gentleman-like turn upon the sod, hand to hand, in a neighbourly way, they have not honour enough to undertake it. But enough of our crop-eared cur of a neighbour.—Sir Jasper, you will tarry with us to dine, and see how Dame Margaret's kitchen smokes; and after dinner I will show you a long-winged falcon fly. She is not mine, but the Countess's, who brought her from London on her fist almost the whole way, for all the haste she was in, and left her with me to keep the perch for a season."

This match was soon arranged, and Dame Margaret overheard the good Knight's resentment mutter itself off, with those feelings with which we listen to the last growling of the thunderstorm; which, as the black cloud sinks beneath the hill, at once assures us that there has been danger, and that the peril is over. She could not, indeed, but marvel in her own mind at the singular path of reconciliation with his neighbour which her husband had, with so much confidence, and in the actual sincerity of his goodwill to Mr. Bridgenorth, attempted to open; and she blessed God internally that it had not terminated in bloodshed. But these reflections she locked carefully within her own bosom, well knowing that they referred to subjects in which the Knight of the Peak would neither permit his sagacity to be called in question, nor his will to be controlled.

The progress of the history hath hitherto been slow; but after this period so little matter worth of mark occurred at Martindale, that we must hurry over hastily the transactions of several years.

CHAPTER X

*Cleopatra.—Give me to drink mandragora,
That I may sleep away this gap of time.*

—Antony and Cleopatra.

There passed, as we hinted at the conclusion of the last chapter, four or five years after the period we have dilated upon; the events of which scarcely require to be discussed, so far as our present purpose is concerned, in as many lines. The Knight and his Lady continued to reside at their Castle—she, with prudence and with patience, endeavouring to repair the damages which the Civil Wars had inflicted upon their fortune; and murmuring a little when her plans of economy were interrupted by the liberal hospitality, which was her husband's principal expense, and to which he was attached, not only from his own English heartiness of disposition, but from ideas of maintaining the dignity of his ancestry—no less remarkable, according to the tradition of their buttery, kitchen, and cellar, for the fat beeves which they roasted, and the mighty ale which they brewed, than for their extensive estates, and the number of their retainers.

The world, however, upon the whole, went happily and easily with the worthy couple. Sir Geoffrey's debt to his neighbour Bridgenorth continued, it is true, unabated; but he was the only creditor upon the Martindale estate—all others being paid off. It would have been most desirable that this encumbrance also should be cleared, and it was the great object of Dame Margaret's economy to effect the discharge; for although interest was regularly settled with Master Win-the-Fight, the Chesterfield attorney, yet the principal sum, which was a large one, might be called for at an inconvenient time. The man, too, was gloomy, important, and mysterious, and always seemed as if he was thinking upon his broken head in the churchyard of Martindale-cum-Moultrassie.

Dame Margaret sometimes transacted the necessary business with him in person; and when he came to the Castle on these occasions, she thought she saw a malicious and disobliging expression in his manner and countenance. Yet his actual conduct was not only fair, but liberal; for indulgence was given, in the way of delay of payment, whenever circumstances rendered it necessary to the debtor to require it. It seemed to Lady Peveril that the agent, in such cases, was acting under the strict orders of his absent employer, concerning whose welfare she could not help feeling a certain anxiety.

Shortly after the failure of the singular negotiation for attaining peace by combat, which Peveril had attempted to open with Major Bridgenorth, that gentleman left his seat of Moultrassie Hall in the care of his old housekeeper, and departed, no one knew whither, having in company with him his daughter Alice and Mrs. Deborah Debbitch, now formally installed in all the duties of a governante; to these was added the Reverend Master Solsgrace. For some time public rumour persisted in asserting, that Major Bridgenorth had only retreated to a distant part of the country for a season, to achieve his supposed purpose of marrying Mrs. Deborah, and of letting the news be cold, and the laugh of the neighbourhood be ended, ere he brought her down as mistress of Moultrassie Hall. This rumour died away; and it was then affirmed, that he had removed to foreign parts, to ensure the continuance of health in so delicate a constitution as that of little Alice. But when the Major's dread of Popery was remembered, together with the still deeper antipathies of worthy Master Nehemiah Solsgrace, it was resolved unanimously, that nothing less than what they might deem a fair chance of converting the Pope would have induced the parties to trust themselves within Catholic dominions. The most prevailing opinion was, that they had gone to New England, the refuge then of many whom too intimate concern with the affairs of the late times, or the desire of enjoying uncontrolled freedom of conscience, had induced to emigrate from Britain.

Lady Peveril could not help entertaining a vague idea, that Bridgenorth was not so distant. The extreme order in which everything was maintained at Moultrassie Hall, seemed—no disparagement to the care of Dame Dickens the housekeeper, and the other persons engaged—to argue, that the master's eye was not so very far off, but that its occasional inspection might be apprehended. It is true, that neither the domestics nor the attorney answered any questions respecting the residence of Master Bridgenorth; but there was an air of mystery about them when interrogated, that seemed to argue more than met the ear.

About five years after Master Bridgenorth had left the country, a singular incident took place. Sir Geoffrey was absent at the Chesterfield races, and Lady Peveril, who was in the habit of walking around every part of the neighbourhood unattended, or only accompanied by Ellesmere, or her little boy, had gone down one evening upon a charitable errand to a solitary hut, whose inhabitant lay sick of a fever, which was supposed to be infectious. Lady Peveril never allowed apprehensions of this kind to stop "devoted charitable deeds;" but she did not choose to expose either her son or her attendant to the risk which she herself, in some confidence that she knew precautions for escaping the danger, did not hesitate to incur.

Lady Peveril had set out at a late hour in the evening, and the way proved longer than she expected—several circumstances also occurred to detain her at the hut of her patient. It was a broad autumn moonlight, when she prepared to return homeward through the broken glades and upland which divided her from the Castle. This she considered as a matter of very little importance, in so quiet and sequestered a country, where the road lay chiefly through her own domains, especially as she had a lad about fifteen years old, the son of her patient, to escort her on the way. The distance was better than two miles, but might be considerably abridged by passing through an avenue belonging to the estate of Moultrassie Hall, which she had avoided as she came, not from the ridiculous rumours which pronounced it to be haunted, but because her husband was much displeased when any attempt was made to render the walks of the Castle and Hall common to the inhabitants of both. The good lady, in consideration, perhaps, of extensive latitude allowed to her in the more important concerns of the family, made a point of never interfering with her husband's whims or prejudices; and it is a compromise which we would heartily recommend to all managing matrons of our acquaintance; for it is surprising how much real power will be cheerfully resigned to the fair sex, for the pleasure of being allowed to ride one's hobby in peace and quiet.

Upon the present occasion, however, although the Dobby's Walk[*] was within the inhabited domains of the Hall, the Lady Peveril determined to avail herself of it, for the purpose of shortening her road home, and she directed her steps accordingly. But when the peasant-boy, her companion, who had hitherto followed her, whistling cheerily, with a hedge-bill in his hand, and his hat on one side, perceived that she turned to the stile which entered to the Dobby's Walk, he showed symptoms of great fear, and at length coming to the lady's side, petitioned her, in a whimpering tone,—“Don't ye now—don't ye now, my lady, don't ye go yonder.” [*] Dobby, an old English name for goblin.

Lady Peveril, observing that his teeth chattered in his head, and that his whole person exhibited great signs of terror, began to recollect the report, that the first Squire of Moultrassie, the brewer of Chesterfield, who had brought the estate, and then died of melancholy for lack of something to do (and, as was said, not without suspicions of suicide), was supposed to walk in this sequestered avenue, accompanied by a large headless mastiff, which, when he was alive, was a particular favourite of the ex-brewer. To have expected any protection from her escort, in the condition to which superstitious fear had reduced him, would have been truly a hopeless trust; and Lady Peveril, who was not apprehensive of any danger, thought there would be great cruelty in dragging the cowardly boy into a scene which he regarded with so much apprehension. She gave him, therefore, a silver piece, and permitted him to return. The latter boon seemed even more acceptable than the first; for ere she could return the purse into her pocket, she heard the wooden clogs of her bold convoy in full retreat, by the way from whence they came.

Smiling within herself at the fear she esteemed so ludicrous, Lady Peveril ascended the stile, and was soon hidden from the broad light of the moonbeams, by the numerous and entangled boughs of the huge elms, which, meeting from either side, totally overarched the old avenue. The scene was calculated to excite solemn thoughts; and the distant glimmer of a light from one of the numerous casements in the front of Moultrassie Hall, which lay at some distance, was calculated to make them even melancholy. She thought of the fate of that family—of the deceased Mrs. Bridgenorth, with whom she had often walked in this very avenue, and who, though a woman of no high parts or accomplishments, had always testified the deepest respect, and the most earnest gratitude, for such notice as she had shown to her. She thought of her blighted hopes—her premature death—the despair of her self-banished husband—the uncertain fate of their orphan child, for whom she felt, even at this distance of time, some touch of a mother's affection.

Upon such sad subjects her thoughts were turned, when, just as she attained the middle of the avenue, the imperfect and checkered light which found its way through the silvan archway, showed her something which resembled the figure of a man. Lady Peveril paused a moment, but instantly advanced;—her bosom, perhaps, gave one startled throb, as a debt to the superstitious belief of the times, but she instantly repelled the thought of supernatural appearances. From those that were merely mortal, she had nothing to fear. A marauder on the game was the worst character whom she was likely to encounter; and he would be sure to hide himself from her observation. She advanced, accordingly, steadily; and, as she did so, had the satisfaction to observe that the figure, as she expected, gave place to her, and glided away amongst the trees on the left-hand side of the avenue. As she passed the spot on which the form had been so lately visible, and bethought herself that this wanderer of the night might, nay must, be in her vicinity, her resolution could not prevent her mending her pace, and that with so little precaution, that, stumbling over the limb of a tree, which, twisted off by a late tempest, still lay in the avenue, she fell, and, as she fell, screamed aloud. A strong hand in a moment afterwards added to her fears by assisting her to rise, and a voice, to whose accents she was not a stranger, though they had been long unheard, said, “Is it not you, Lady Peveril?”

“It is I,” said she, commanding her astonishment and fear; “and if my ear deceive me not, I speak to Master Bridgenorth.”

“I was that man,” said he, “while oppression left me a name.”

He spoke nothing more, but continued to walk beside her for a minute or two in silence. She felt her situation embarrassing; and to divest it of that feeling, as well as out of real interest in the question, she asked him, “How her god-daughter Alice now was?”

“Of god-daughter, madam,” answered Major Bridgenorth, “I know nothing; that being one of the names which have been introduced, to the corruption and pollution of God's ordinances. The infant who owed to your ladyship (so called) her escape from disease and death, is a healthy and thriving girl, as I am given to understand by those in whose charge she is lodged, for I have not lately seen her. And it is even the recollection of these passages, which in a manner impelled me, alarmed also by your fall, to offer myself to you at this time and mode, which in other respects is no way consistent with my present safety.”

“With your safety, Master Bridgenorth?” said the Lady Peveril; “surely, I could never have thought that it was in danger!”

“You have some news, then, yet to learn, madam,” said Major Bridgenorth; “but you will hear in the course of tomorrow, reasons why I dare not appear openly in the neighbourhood of my own property, and wherefore there is small judgment in committing the knowledge of my present residence to any one connected with Martindale Castle.”

“Master Bridgenorth,” said the lady, “you were in former times prudent and cautious—I hope you have been misled by no hasty impression—by no rash scheme—I hope—”

“Pardon my interrupting you, madam,” said Bridgenorth. “I have indeed been changed—ay, my very heart within me hath been changed. In the times to which your ladyship (so called) thinks proper to refer, I was a man of this world—bestowing on it all my thoughts—all my actions, save formal observances—little deeming what was the duty of a Christian man, and how far his self-denial ought to extend—even unto his giving all as if he gave nothing. Hence I thought chiefly on carnal things—on the adding of field to field, and wealth to wealth—of balancing between party and party—securing a friend here, without losing a friend there—But Heaven smote me for my apostasy, the rather that I abused the name of religion, as a self-seeker, and a most blinded and carnal will-worshipper—But I thank Him who hath at length brought me out of Egypt.”

In our day—although we have many instances of enthusiasm among us—we might still suspect one who avowed it thus suddenly and broadly of hypocrisy, or of insanity; but according to the fashion of the times, such opinions as those which Bridgenorth expressed were openly pleaded, as the ruling motives of men's actions. The sagacious Vane—the brave and skilful Harrison—were men who acted avowedly under the influence of such. Lady Peveril, therefore, was more grieved than surprised at the language she heard Major Bridgenorth use, and reasonably concluded that the society and circumstances in which he might lately have been engaged, had blown into a flame the spark of eccentricity which always smouldered in his bosom. This was the more probable, considering that he was melancholy by constitution and descent—that he had been unfortunate in several particulars—and that no passion is more easily nursed by indulgence, than the species of enthusiasm of which he now showed tokens. She therefore answered him by calmly hoping, “That the expression of his sentiments had not involved him in suspicion or in danger.”

“In suspicion, madam?” answered the Major;—“for I cannot forbear giving to you, such is the strength of habit, one of those idle titles by which we poor potsherds are wont, in our pride, to denominate each other—I walk not only in suspicion, but in that degree of danger, that, were your husband to meet me at this instant—me, a native Englishman, treading on my own lands—I have no doubt he would do his best to offer me to the Moloch of Roman superstition, who now rages abroad for victims among God's people.”

"You surprise me by your language, Major Bridgenorth," said the lady, who now felt rather anxious to be relieved from his company, and with that purpose walked on somewhat hastily. He mended his pace, however, and kept close by her side.

"Know you not," said he, "that Satan hath come down upon earth with great wrath, because his time is short? The next heir to the crown is an avowed Papist; and who dare assert, save sycophants and time-servers, that he who wears it is not equally ready to stoop to Rome, were he not kept in awe by a few noble spirits in the Commons' House? You believe not this—yet in my solitary and midnight walks, when I thought on your kindness to the dead and to the living, it was my prayer that I might have the means granted to warn you—and lo! Heaven hath heard me."

"What I was while in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, it signifies not to recall," answered he. "I was then like to Gallio, who cared for none of these things. I doted on creature comforts—I clung to worldly honour and repute—my thoughts were earthward—or those I turned to Heaven were cold, formal, pharisaical meditations—I brought nothing to the altar save straw and stubble. Heaven saw need to chastise me in love—I was stript of all I clung to on earth—my worldly honour was torn from me—I went forth an exile from the home of my fathers, a deprived and desolate man—a baffled, and beaten, and dishonoured man. But who shall find out the ways of Providence? Such were the means by which I was chosen forth as a champion for the truth—holding my life as nothing, if thereby that may be advanced. But this was not what I wished to speak of. Thou hast saved the earthly life of my child—let me save the eternal welfare of yours."

Lady Peveril was silent. They were now approaching the point where the avenue terminated in a communication with a public road, or rather pathway, running through an unenclosed common field; this the lady had to prosecute for a little way, until a turn of the path gave her admittance into the Park of Martindale. She now felt sincerely anxious to be in the open moonshine, and avoided reply to Bridgenorth that she might make the more haste. But as they reached the junction of the avenue and the public road, he laid his hand on her arm, and commanded rather than requested her to stop. She obeyed. He pointed to a huge oak, of the largest size, which grew on the summit of a knoll in the open ground which terminated the avenue, and was exactly so placed as to serve for a termination to the vista. The moonshine without the avenue was so strong, that, amidst the flood of light which it poured on the venerable tree, they could easily discover, from the shattered state of the boughs on one side, that it had suffered damage from lightning. "Remember you," he said, "when we last looked together on that tree? I had ridden from London, and brought with me a protection from the committee for your husband; and as I passed the spot—here on this spot where we now stand, you stood with my lost Alice—two—the last two of my beloved infants gambolled before you. I leaped from my horse—to her I was a husband—to those a father—to you a welcome and revered protector—What am I now to any one?" He pressed his hand on his brow, and groaned in agony of spirit.

It was not in the Lady Peveril's nature to hear sorrow without an attempt at consolation. "Master Bridgenorth," she said, "I blame no man's creed, while I believe and follow my own; and I rejoice that in yours you have sought consolation for temporal afflictions. But does not every Christian creed teach us alike, that affliction should soften our heart?"

"Ay, woman," said Bridgenorth sternly, "as the lightning which shattered yonder oak hath softened its trunk. No; the seared wood is the fitter for the use of the workmen—the hardened and the dried-up heart is that which can best bear the task imposed by these dismal times. God and man will no longer endure the unbridled profligacy of the dissolute—the scoffing of the profane—the contempt of the divine laws—the infraction of human rights. The times demand righters and avengers, and there will be no want of them."

"I deny not the existence of much evil," said Lady Peveril, compelling herself to answer, and beginning at the same time to walk forward; "and from hearsay, though not, I thank Heaven, from observation, I am convinced of the wild debauchery of the times. But let us trust it may be corrected without such violent remedies as you hint at. Surely the ruin of a second civil war—though I trust your thoughts go not that dreadful length—were at best a desperate alternative."

"Sharp, but sure," replied Bridgenorth. "The blood of the Paschal lamb chased away the destroying angel—the sacrifices offered on the threshing-floor of Araunah, stayed the pestilence. Fire and sword are severe remedies, but they pure and purify."

"Alas! Major Bridgenorth," said the lady, "wise and moderate in your youth, can you have adopted in your advanced life the thoughts and language of those whom you yourself beheld drive themselves and the nation to the brink of ruin?"

"I know not what I then was—you know not what I now am," he replied, and suddenly broke off; for they even then came forth into the open light, and it seemed as if, feeling himself under the lady's eye, he was disposed to soften his tone and his language.

At the first distinct view which she had of his person, she was aware that he was armed with a short sword, a poniard, and pistols at his belt—precautions very unusual for a man who formerly had seldom, and only on days of ceremony, carried a walking rapier, though such was the habitual and constant practice of gentlemen of his station in life. There seemed also something of more stern determination than usual in his air, which indeed had always been rather sullen than affable; and ere she could repress the sentiment, she could not help saying, "Master Bridgenorth, you are indeed changed."

"You see but the outward man," he replied; "the change within is yet deeper. But it was not of myself that I desired to talk—I have already said, that as you have preserved my child from the darkness of the grave, I would willingly preserve yours from that more utter darkness, which, I fear, hath involved the path and walks of his father."

"I must not hear this of Sir Geoffrey," said the Lady Peveril; "I must bid you farewell for the present; and when we again meet at a more suitable time, I will at least listen to your advice concerning Julian, although I should not perhaps incline to it."

"That more suitable time may never come," replied Bridgenorth. "Time wanes, eternity draws nigh. Harken! it is said to be your purpose to send the young Julian to be bred up in yonder bloody island, under the hand of your kinswoman, that cruel murderess, by whom was done to death a man more worthy of vital existence than any that she can boast among her vaunted ancestry. These are current tidings—Are they true?"

"I do not blame you, Master Bridgenorth, for thinking harshly of my cousin of Derby," said Lady Peveril; "nor do I altogether vindicate the rash action of which she hath been guilty. Nevertheless, in her habitation, it is my husband's opinion and my own, that Julian may be trained in the studies and accomplishments becoming his rank, along with the young Earl of Derby."

"Under the curse of God, and the blessing of the Pope of Rome," said Bridgenorth. "You, lady, so quick-sighted in matters of earthly prudence, are you blind to the gigantic pace at which Rome is moving to regain this country, once the richest gem in her usurped tiara? The old are seduced by gold—the youth by pleasure—the weak by flattery—cowards by fear—and the courageous by ambition. A thousand baits for each taste, and each bait concealing the same deadly hook."

"I am well aware, Master Bridgenorth," said Lady Peveril, "that my kinswoman is a Catholic;[*] but her son is educated in the Church of England's principles, agreeably to the command of her deceased husband."

[] I have elsewhere noticed that this is a deviation from the truth Charlotte, Countess of Derby, was a Huguenot.*

"Is it likely," answered Bridgenorth, "that she, who fears not shedding the blood of the righteous, whether on the field or scaffold, will regard the sanction of her promise when her religion bids her break it? Or, if she does, what shall your son be the better, if he remain in the mire of his father? What are your Episcopal tenets but mere Popery? save that ye have chosen a temporal tyrant for your Pope, and substitute a mangled mass in English for that which your predecessors pronounced in Latin.—But why speak I of these things to one who hath ears, indeed, and eyes, yet cannot see, listen to, or understand what is alone worthy to be heard, seen, and known? Pity that what hath been wrought so fair and exquisite in form and disposition, should be yet blind, deaf, and ignorant, like the things which perish!"

"We shall not agree on these subjects, Master Bridgenorth," said the lady, anxious still to escape from this strange conference, though scarce knowing what to apprehend; "once more, I must bid you farewell."

"Stay yet an instant," he said, again laying his hand on her arm; "I would stop you if I saw you rushing on the brink of an actual precipice—let me prevent you from a danger still greater. How shall I work upon your unbelieving mind? Shall I tell you that the debt of bloodshed yet remains a debt to be paid by the bloody house of Derby? And wilt thou send thy son to be among those from whom it shall be exacted?"

"You wish to alarm me in vain, Master Bridgenorth," answered the lady; "what penalty can be exacted from the Countess, for an action, which I have already called a rash one, has been long since levied."

"You deceive yourself," retorted he sternly. "Think you a paltry sum of money, given to be wasted on the debaucheries of Charles, can atone for the death of such a man as Christian—a man precious alike to heaven and to earth? Not on such terms is the blood of the righteous to be poured forth! Every hour's delay is numbered down as adding interest to the grievous debt, which will one day be required from that blood-thirsty woman."

At this moment the distant tread of horses was heard on the road on which they held this singular dialogue. Bridgenorth listened a moment, and then said, "Forget that you have seen me—name not my name to your nearest or dearest—lock my counsel in your breast—profit by it, and it shall be well with you."

So saying, he turned from her, and plunging through a gap in the fence, regained the cover of his own wood, along which the path still led.

The noise of horses advancing at full trot now came nearer; and Lady Peveril was aware of several riders, whose forms rose indistinctly on the summit of the rising ground behind her. She became also visible to them; and one or two of the foremost made towards her at increased speed, challenging her as they advanced with the cry of "Stand! Who goes there?" The foremost who came up, however, exclaimed, "Mercy on us, if it be not my lady!" and Lady Peveril, at the same moment, recognised one of her own servants. Her husband rode up immediately afterwards, with, "How now, Dame Margaret? What makes you abroad so far from home and at an hour so late?"

Lady Peveril mentioned her visit at the cottage, but did not think it necessary to say aught of having seen Major Bridgenorth; afraid, it may be, that her husband might be displeased with that incident.

"Charity is a fine thing and a fair," answered Sir Geoffrey; "but I must tell you, you do ill, dame, to wander about the country like a quacksalver, at the call of every old woman who has a colic-fit; and at this time of night especially, and when the land is so unsettled besides."

"I am sorry to hear that it so," said the lady. "I had heard no such news."

"News?" repeated Sir Geoffrey, "why, here has a new plot broken out among the Roundheads, worse than Venner's by a butt's length;[*] and who should be so deep in it as our old neighbour Bridgenorth? There is search for him everywhere; and I promise you if he is found, he is like to pay old scores."

[*] *The celebrated insurrection of the Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchy men in London, in the year 1661.*

"Then I am sure, I trust he will not be found," said Lady Peveril.

"Do you so?" replied Sir Geoffrey. "Now I, on my part hope that he will; and it shall not be my fault if he be not; for which effect I will presently ride down to Moultrassie, and make strict search, according to my duty; there shall neither rebel nor traitor earth so near Martindale Castle, that I will assure them. And you, my lady, be pleased for once to dispense with a pillion, and get up, as you have done before, behind Saunders, who shall convey you safe home."

The Lady obeyed in silence; indeed she did not dare to trust her voice in an attempt to reply, so much was she disconcerted with the intelligence she had just heard.

She rode behind the groom to the Castle, where she awaited in great anxiety the return of her husband. He came back at length; but to her great relief, without any prisoner. He then explained more fully than his haste had before permitted, that an express had come down to Chesterfield, with news from Court of a proposed insurrection amongst the old Commonwealth men, especially those who had served in the army; and that Bridgenorth, said to be lurking in Derbyshire, was one of the principal conspirators.

After some time, this report of a conspiracy seemed to die away like many others of that period. The warrants were recalled, but nothing more was seen or heard of Major Bridgenorth; although it is probable he might safely enough have shown himself as openly as many did who lay under the same circumstances of suspicion.

About this time also, Lady Peveril, with many tears, took a temporary leave of her son Julian, who was sent, as had long been intended, for the purpose of sharing the education of the young Earl of Derby. Although the boding words of Bridgenorth sometimes occurred to Lady Peveril's mind, she did not suffer them to weigh with her in opposition to the advantages which the patronage of the Countess of Derby secured to her son.

The plan seemed to be in every respect successful; and when, from time to time, Julian visited the house of his father, Lady Peveril had the satisfaction to see him, on every occasion, improved in person and in manner, as well as ardent in the pursuit of more solid acquirements. In process of time he became a gallant and accomplished youth, and travelled for some time upon the continent with the young Earl. This was the more especially necessary for the enlarging of their acquaintance with the world; because the Countess had never appeared in London, or at the Court of King Charles, since her flight to the Isle of Man in 1660; but had resided in solitary and aristocratic state, alternately on her estates in England and in that island.

This had given to the education of both the young men, otherwise as excellent as the best teachers could render it, something of a narrow and restricted character; but though the disposition of the young Earl was lighter and more volatile than that of Julian, both the one and the other had profited, in a considerable degree, by the opportunities afforded them. It was Lady Derby's strict injunction to her son, now returning from the continent, that he should not appear at the Court of Charles. But having been for some time of age, he did not think it absolutely necessary to obey her in this particular; and had remained for some time in London, partaking the pleasures of the gay Court there, with all the ardour of a young man bred up in comparative seclusion.

In order to reconcile the Countess to this transgression of her authority (for he continued to entertain for her the profound respect in which he had been educated), Lord Derby agreed to make a long sojourn with her in her favourite island, which he abandoned almost entirely to her management.

Julian Peveril had spent at Martindale Castle a good deal of the time which his friend had bestowed in London; and at the period to which, passing over many years, our story has arrived, as it were, *per saltum*, they were both living as the Countess's guests, in the Castle of Rushin, in the venerable kingdom of Man.

CHAPTER XI

Mona—long hid from those who roam the main.

—COLLINS.

The Isle of Man, in the middle of the seventeenth century, was very different, as a place of residence, from what it is now. Men had not then discovered its merit as a place of occasional refuge from the storms of life, and the society to be there met with was of a very uniform tenor. There were no smart fellows, whom fortune had tumbled from the seat of their barouches—no plucked pigeons or winged rooks—no disappointed speculators—no ruined miners—in short, no one worth talking to. The society of the island was limited to the natives themselves, and a few merchants, who lived by contraband trade. The amusements were rare and monotonous, and the mercurial young Earl was soon heartily tired of his dominions. The islanders, also, become too wise for happiness, had lost relish for the harmless and somewhat childish sports in which their simple ancestors had indulged themselves. May was no longer ushered in by the imaginary contest between the Queen of returning winter and advancing spring; the listeners no longer sympathised with the lively music of the followers of the one, or the discordant sounds with which the other asserted a more noisy claim to attention. Christmas, too, closed, and the steeples no longer jangled forth a dissonant peal. The wren, to seek for which used to be the sport dedicated to the holytide, was left unpursued and unslain. Party spirit had come among these simple people, and destroyed their good humour, while it left them their ignorance. Even the races, a sport generally interesting to people of all ranks, were no longer performed, because they were no longer interesting. The gentlemen were divided by feuds hitherto unknown, and each seemed to hold it scorn to be pleased with the same diversions that amused those of the opposite faction. The hearts of both parties revolted from the recollection of former days, when all was peace among them, when the Earl of Derby, now slaughtered, used to bestow the prize, and Christian, since so vindictively executed, started horses to add to the amusement.

Julian was seated in the deep recess which led to a latticed window of the old Castle; and, with his arms crossed, and an air of profound contemplation, was surveying the long perspective of ocean, which rolled its successive waves up to the foot of the rock on which the ancient pile is founded. The Earl was suffering under the infliction of ennui—now looking into a volume of Homer—now whistling—now swinging on his chair—now traversing the room—till, at length, his attention became swallowed up in admiration of the tranquillity of his companion.

"King of Men!" he said, repeating the favourite epithet by which Homer describes Agamemnon,—"*I trust, for the old Greek's sake, he had a merrier office than being King of Man—Most philosophical Julian, will nothing rouse thee—not even a bad pun on my own royal dignity?*"

"I wish you would be a little more the King in Man," said Julian, starting from his reverie, "and then you would find more amusement in your dominions."

"What! dethrone that royal Semiramis my mother," said the young lord, "who has as much pleasure in playing Queen as if she were a real Sovereign?—I wonder you can give me such counsel."

"Your mother, as you well know, my dear Derby, would be delighted, did you take any interest in the affairs of the island."

"Ay, truly, she would permit me to be King; but she would choose to remain Viceroy over me. Why, she would only gain a subject the more, by my converting my spare time, which is so very valuable to me, to the cares of royalty. No, no, Julian, she thinks it power, to direct all the affairs of these poor Manxmen; and, thinking it power, she finds it pleasure. I shall not interfere, unless she hold a high court of justice again. I cannot afford to pay another fine to my brother, King Charles—But I forget—this is a sore point with you."

"With the Countess, at least," replied Julian; "and I wonder you will speak of it."

"Why, I bear no malice against the poor man's memory any more than yourself, though I have not the same reasons for holding it in veneration," replied the Earl of Derby; "and yet I have some respect for it too. I remember their bringing him out to die—It was the first holiday I ever had in my life, and I heartily wish it had been on some other account."

"I would rather hear you speak of anything else, my lord," said Julian.

"Why, there it goes," answered the Earl; "whenever I talk of anything that puts you on your mettle, and warms your blood, that runs as cold as a merman's—to use a simile of this happy island—hey pass! you press me to change the subject.—Well, what shall we talk of?—O Julian, if you had not gone down to earth yourself among the castles and caverns of Derbyshire, we should have had enough of delicious topics—the play-houses, Julian—Both the King's house and the Duke's—Louis's establishment is a jest to them;—and the Ring in the Park, which beats the Corso at Naples—and the beauties, who beat the whole world!"

"I am very willing to hear you speak on the subject, my lord," answered Julian; "the less I have seen of London world myself, the more I am likely to be amused by your account of it."

"Ay, my friend—but where to begin?—with the wit of Buckingham, and Sedley, and Etherege, or with the grace of Harry Jermyn—the courtesy of the Duke of Monmouth, or with the loveliness of La Belle Hamilton—of the Duchess of Richmond—of Lady —, the person of Roxalana, the smart humour of Mrs. Nelly—"

"Or what say you to the bewitching sorceries of Lady Cynthia?" demanded his companion.

"Faith, I would have kept these to myself," said the Earl, "to follow your prudent example. But since you ask me, I fairly own I cannot tell what to say of them; only I think of them twenty times as often as all the beauties I have spoken of. And yet she is neither the twentieth part so beautiful as the plainest of these Court beauties, nor so witty as the dullest I have named, nor so modish—that is the great matter—as the most obscure. I cannot tell what makes me dote on her, except that she is a capricious as her whole sex put together."

"That I should think a small recommendation," answered his companion.

"Small, do you term it," replied the Earl, "and write yourself a brother of the angle? Why, which like you best? to pull a dead strain on a miserable gudgeon, which you draw ashore by main force, as the fellows here tow in their fishing-boats—or a lively salmon, that makes your rod crack, and your line whistle—plays you ten thousand mischievous pranks—wearies your heart out with hopes and fears—and is only laid panting on the bank, after you have shown the most unmatchable display of skill, patience, and dexterity?—But I see you have a mind to go on angling after your own old fashion. Off laced coat, and on brown jerkin;—lively colours scare fish in the sober waters of the Isle of Man;—faith, in London you will catch few, unless the bait glistens a little. But you *are* going?—Well, good luck to you. I will take to the barge;—the sea and wind are less inconstant than the tide you have embarked on."

"You have learned to say all these smart things in London, my lord," answered Julian; "but we shall have you a penitent for them, if Lady Cynthia be of my mind. Adieu, and pleasure till we meet."

The young men parted accordingly; and while the Earl betook him to his pleasure voyage, Julian, as his friend had prophesied, assumed the dress of one who means to amuse himself with angling. The hat and feather were exchanged for a cap of grey cloth; the deeply-laced cloak and doublet for a simple jacket of the same colour, with hose conforming; and finally, with rod in hand, and pannier at his back, mounted upon a handsome Manx pony, young Peveril rode briskly over the country which divided him from one of those beautiful streams that descend to the sea from the Kirk-Merlagh mountains.

Having reached the spot where he meant to commence his day's sport, Julian let his little steed graze, which, accustomed to the situation, followed him like a dog; and now and then, when tired of picking herbage in the valley through which the stream wended, came near her master's side, and, as if she had been a curious amateur of the sport, gazed on the trouts as Julian brought them struggling to the shore. But Fairy's master showed, on that day, little of the patience of a real angler, and took no heed to old Isaac Walton's recommendation, to fish the streams inch by inch. He chose, indeed, with an angler's eye, the most promising casts, which the stream broke sparkling over a stone, affording the wonted shelter to a trout; or where, gliding away from a rippling current to a still eddy it streamed under the projecting bank, or dashed from the pool of some low cascade. By this judicious selection of spots whereon to employ his art, the sportsman's basket was soon sufficiently heavy, to show that his occupation was not a mere pretext; and so soon as this was the case, he walked briskly up the glen, only making a cast from time to time, in case of his being observed from any of the neighbouring heights.

It was a little green and rocky valley through which the brook strayed, very lonely, although the slight track of an unformed road showed that it was occasionally traversed, and that it was not altogether void of inhabitants. As Peveril advanced still farther, the right bank reached to some distance from the stream, leaving a piece of meadow ground, the lower part of which, being close to the brook, was entirely covered with rich herbage, being possibly occasionally irrigated by its overflow. The higher part of the level ground afforded a stance for an old house, of singular structure, with a terraced garden, and a cultivated field or two beside it. In former times, a Danish or Norwegian fastness had stood here, called the Black Fort, from the colour of a huge healthy hill, which, rising behind the building, appeared to be the boundary of the valley, and to afford the source of the brook. But the original structure had been long demolished, as, indeed, it probably only consisted of dry stones, and its materials had been applied to the construction of the present mansion—the work of some churchman during the sixteenth century, as was evident from the huge stone-work of its windows, which scarce left room for light to pass through, as well as from two or three heavy buttresses, which projected from the front of the house, and exhibited on their surface little niches for images. These had been carefully destroyed, and pots of flowers were placed in the niches in their stead, besides their being ornamented by creeping plants of various kinds, fancifully twined around them. The garden was also in good order; and though the spot was extremely solitary, there was about it altogether an air of comfort, accommodation, and even elegance, by no means generally characteristic of the habitations of the island at the time.

With much circumspection, Julian Peveril approached the low Gothic porch, which defended the entrance of the mansion from the tempests incident to its situation, and was, like the buttresses, overrun with ivy and other creeping plants. An iron ring, contrived so as when drawn up and down to rattle against the bar of notched iron through which it was suspended, served the purpose of a knocker; and to this he applied himself, though with the greatest precaution.

He received no answer for some time, and indeed it seemed as if the house was totally uninhabited; when, at length, his impatience getting the upper hand, he tried to open the door, and, as it was only upon the latch, very easily succeeded. He passed through a little low-arched hall, the upper end of which was occupied by a staircase, and turning to the left, opened the door of a summer parlour, wainscoted with black oak, and very simply furnished with chairs and tables of the

same materials; the former cushioned with the leather. The apartment was gloomy—one of those stone-shafted windows which we have mentioned, with its small latticed panes, and thick garland of foliage, admitting but an imperfect light.

Over the chimneypiece (which was of the same massive materials with the panelling of the apartment) was the only ornament of the room; a painting, namely, representing an officer in the military dress of the Civil Wars. It was a green jerkin, then the national and peculiar wear of the Manxmen; his short band which hung down on the cuirass—the orange-coloured scarf, but, above all, the shortness of his close-cut hair, showing evidently to which of the great parties he had belonged. His right hand rested on the hilt of his sword; and in the left he held a small Bible, bearing the inscription, "*In hoc signo.*" The countenance was of a light complexion, with fair and almost effeminate blue eyes, and an oval form of face—one of those physiognomies, to which, though not otherwise unpleasing, we naturally attach the idea of melancholy and of misfortune.[*] Apparently it was well known to Julian Peveril; for after having looked at it for a long time, he could not forbear muttering aloud, "What would I give that that man had never been born, or that he still lived!"

[*] *I am told that a portrait of the unfortunate William Christian is still preserved in the family of Waterson of Ballnabow of Kirk Church, Rushin. William Dhône is dressed in a green coat without collar or cape, after the fashion of those puritanic times, with the head in a close cropt wig, resembling the bishop's peruke of the present day. The countenance is youthful and well-looking, very unlike the expression of foreboding melancholy. I have so far taken advantage of this criticism, as to bring my ideal portrait in the present edition, nearer to the complexion at least of the fair-haired William Dhône.*

"How now—how is this?" said a female, who entered the room as he uttered this reflection. "*You* here, Master Peveril, in spite of all the warnings you have had! You here in the possession of folk's house when they are abroad, and talking to yourself, as I shall warrant!"

"Yes, Mistress Deborah," said Peveril, "I am here once more, as you see, against every prohibition, and in defiance of all danger.—Where is Alice?"

"Where you will never see her, Master Julian—you may satisfy yourself of that," answered Mistress Deborah, for it was that respectable governante; and sinking down at the same time upon one of the large leathern chairs, she began to fan herself with her handkerchief, and complain of the heat in a most ladylike fashion. In fact, Mistress Debbitch, while her exterior intimated a considerable change of condition for the better, and her countenance showed the less favourable effects of the twenty years which had passed over her head, was in mind and manners very much what she had been when she battled the opinions of Madam Ellesmere at Martindale Castle. In a word, she was self-willed, obstinate, and coquettish as ever, otherwise no ill-disposed person. Her present appearance was that of a woman of the better rank. From the sobriety of the fashion of her dress, and the uniformity of its colours, it was plain she belonged to some sect which condemned superfluous gaiety in attire; but no rules, not those of a nunnery or of a quaker's society, can prevent a little coquetry in that particular, where a woman is desirous of being supposed to retain some claim to personal attention. All Mistress Deborah's garments were so arranged as might best set off a good-looking woman, whose countenance indicated ease and good cheer—who called herself five-and-thirty, and was well entitled, if she had a mind, to call herself twelve or fifteen years older.

Julian was under the necessity of enduring all her tiresome and fantastic airs, and awaiting with patience till she had "prinked herself and pinned herself"—flung her hoods back, and drawn them forward—snuffed at a little bottle of essences—closed her eyes like a dying fowl—turned them up like duck in a thunderstorm; when at length, having exhausted her round of *minauderies*, she condescended to open the conversation.

"These walks will be the death of me," she said, "and all on your account, Master Julian Peveril; for if Dame Christian should learn that you have chosen to make your visits to her niece, I promise you Mistress Alice would be soon obliged to find other quarters, and so should I."

"Come now, Mistress Deborah, be good-humoured," said Julian; "consider, was not all this intimacy of ours of your own making? Did you not make yourself known to me the very first time I strolled up this glen with my fishing-rod, and tell me that you were my former keeper, and that Alice had been my little playfellow? And what could there be more natural, than that I should come back and see two such agreeable persons as often as I could?"

"Yes," said Dame Deborah; "but I did not bid you fall in love with us, though, or propose such a matter as marriage either to Alice or myself."

"To do you justice, you never did, Deborah," answered the youth; "but what of that? Such things will come out before one is aware. I am sure you must have heard such proposals fifty times when you least expected them."

"Fie, fie, fie, Master Julian Peveril," said the governante; "I would have you to know that I have always so behaved myself, that the best of the land would have thought twice of it, and have very well considered both what he was going to say, and how he was going to say it, before he came out with such proposals to me."

"True, true, Mistress Deborah," continued Julian; "but all the world hath not your discretion. Then Alice Bridgenorth is a child—a mere child; and one always asks a baby to be one's little wife, you know. Come, I know you will forgive me. Thou wert ever the best-natured, kindest woman in the world; and you know you have said twenty times we were made for each other."

"Oh no, Master Julian Peveril; no, no, no!" ejaculated Deborah. "I may indeed have said your estates were born to be united; and to be sure it is natural for me, that come of the old stock of the yeomanry of Peveril of the Peak's estate, to wish that it was all within the ring fence again; which sure enough it might be, were you to marry Alice Bridgenorth. But then there is the knight your father, and my lady your mother; and there is her father, that is half crazy with his religion; and her aunt that wears eternal black program for that unlucky Colonel Christian; and there is the Countess of Derby, that would serve us all with the same sauce if we were thinking of anything that would displease her. And besides all that, you have broke your word with Mistress Alice, and everything is over between you; and I am of opinion it is quite right it should be all over. And perhaps it may be, Master Julian, that I should have thought so a long time ago, before a child like Alice put it into my head; but I am so good-natured."

No flatterer like a lover, who wishes to carry his point.

"You are the best-natured, kindest creature in the world, Deborah.—But you have never seen the ring I bought for you at Paris. Nay, I will put it on your finger myself;—what! your foster-son, whom you loved so well, and took such care of?"

He easily succeeded in putting a pretty ring of gold, with a humorous affectation of gallantry, on the fat finger of Mistress Deborah Debbitch. Hers was a soul of a kind often to be met with, both among the lower and higher vulgar, who, without being, on a broad scale, accessible to bribes or corruption, are nevertheless much attached to perquisites, and considerably biassed in their line of duty, though perhaps insensibly, by the love of petty observances, petty presents, and trivial compliments. Mistress Debbitch turned the ring round, and round, and round, and at length said, in a whisper, "Well, Master Julian Peveril, it signifies nothing denying anything to such a young gentleman as you, for young gentlemen are always so obstinate! and so I may as well tell you, that Mistress Alice walked back from the Kirk-Truagh along with me, just now, and entered the house at the same time with myself."

"Why did you not tell me so before?" said Julian, starting up; "where—where is she?"

"You had better ask why I tell you so *now*, Master Julian," said Dame Deborah; "for, I promise you, it is against her express commands; and I would not have told you, had you not looked so pitiful;—but as for seeing you, that she will not—and she is in her own bedroom, with a good oak door shut and bolted upon her—that is one comfort.—And so, as for any breach of trust on my part—I promise you the little saucy minx gives it no less name—it is quite impossible."

"Do not say so, Deborah—only go—only try—tell her to hear me—tell her I have a hundred excuses for disobeying her commands—tell her I have no doubt to get over all obstacles at Martindale Castle."

"Nay, I tell you it is all in vain," replied the Dame. "When I saw your cap and rod lying in the hall, I did but say, 'There he is again,' and she ran up the stairs like a young deer; and I heard key turned, and bolt shot, ere I could say a single word to stop her—I marvel you heard her not."

"It was because I am, as I ever was, an owl—a dreaming fool, who let all those golden minutes pass, which my luckless life holds out to me so rarely.—Well—tell her I go—go for ever—go where she will hear no more of me—where no one shall hear more of me!"

"Oh, the Father!" said the dame, "hear how he talks!—What will become of Sir Geoffrey, and your mother, and of me, and of the Countess, if you were to go so far as you talk of? And what would become of poor Alice too? for I will be sworn she likes you better than she says, and I know she used to sit and look the way that you used to come up the stream, and now and then ask me if the morning were good for fishing. And all the while you were on the continent, as they call it, she scarcely smiled once, unless it was when she got two beautiful long letters about foreign parts."

"Friendship, Dame Deborah—only friendship—cold and calm remembrance of one who, by your kind permission, stole in on your solitude now and then, with news from the living world without—Once, indeed, I thought—but it is all over—farewell."

So saying, he covered his face with one hand, and extended the other, in the act of bidding adieu to Dame Debbitch, whose kind heart became unable to withstand the sight of his affliction.

"Now, do not be in such haste," she said; "I will go up again, and tell her how it stands with you, and bring her down, if it is in woman's power to do it."

And so saying, she left the apartment, and ran upstairs.

Julian Peveril, meanwhile, paced the apartment in great agitation, waiting the success of Deborah's intercession; and she remained long enough absent to give us time to explain, in a short retrospect, the circumstances which had led to his present situation.

CHAPTER XII

*Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth!*
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The celebrated passage which we have prefixed to this chapter has, like most observations of the same author, its foundation in real experience. The period at which love is formed for the first time, and felt most strongly, is seldom that at which there is much prospect of its being brought to a happy issue. The state of artificial society opposes many complicated obstructions to early marriages; and the chance is very great, that such obstacles prove insurmountable. In fine, there are few men who do not look back in secret to some period of their youth, at which a sincere and early affection was repulsed, or betrayed, or become abortive from opposing circumstances. It is these little passages of secret history, which leave a tinge of romance in every bosom, scarce permitting us, even in the most busy or the most advanced period of life, to listen with total indifference to a tale of true love.

Julian Peveril had so fixed his affections, as to insure the fullest share of that opposition which early attachments are so apt to encounter. Yet nothing so natural as that he should have done so. In early youth, Dame Debbitch had accidentally met with the son of her first patroness, and who had himself been her earliest charge, fishing in the little brook already noticed, which watered the valley in which she resided with Alice Bridgenorth. The dame's curiosity easily discovered who he was; and besides the interest which persons in her condition usually take in the young people who have been under their charge, she was delighted with the opportunity to talk about former times—about Martindale Castle, and friends there—about Sir Geoffrey and his good lady—and, now and then, about Lance Outram the park-keeper.

The mere pleasure of gratifying her inquiries, would scarce have had power enough to induce Julian to repeat his visits to the lonely glen; but Deborah had a companion—a lovely girl—bred in solitude, and in the quiet and unpretending tastes which solitude encourages—spirited, also, and inquisitive, and listening, with laughing cheek, and an eager eye, to every tale which the young angler brought from the town and castle.

The visits of Julian to the Black Fort were only occasional—so far Dame Deborah showed common-sense—which was, perhaps, inspired by the apprehension of losing her place, in case of discovery. She had, indeed, great confidence in the strong and rooted belief—amounting almost to superstition—which Major Bridgenorth entertained, that his daughter's continued health could only be insured by her continuing under the charge of one who had acquired Lady Peveril's supposed skill in treating those subject to such ailments. This belief Dame Deborah had improved to the utmost of her simple cunning,—always speaking in something of an oracular tone, upon the subject of her charge's health, and hinting at certain mysterious rules necessary to maintain it in the present favourable state. She had availed herself of this artifice, to procure for herself and Alice a separate establishment at the Black Fort; for it was originally Major Bridgenorth's resolution, that his daughter and her governante should remain under the same roof with the sister-in-law of his deceased wife, the widow of the unfortunate Colonel Christian. But this lady was broken down with premature age, brought on by sorrow; and, in a short visit which Major Bridgenorth made to the island, he was easily prevailed on to consider her house at Kirk-Truagh, as a very cheerless residence for his daughter. Dame Deborah, who longed for domestic independence, was careful to increase this impression by alarming her patron's fears on account of Alice's health. The mansion of Kirk-Truagh stood, she said, much exposed to the Scottish winds, which could not but be cold, as they came from a country where, as she was assured, there was ice and snow at midsummer. In short, she prevailed, and was put into full possession of the Black Fort, a house which, as well as Kirk-Truagh, belonged formerly to Christian, and now to his widow.

Still, however, it was enjoined on the governante and her charge, to visit Kirk-Truagh from time to time, and to consider themselves as under the management and guardianship of Mistress Christian—a state of subjection, the sense of which Deborah endeavoured to lessen, by assuming as much freedom of conduct as she possibly dared, under the influence, doubtless, of the same feelings of independence, which induced her, at Martindale Hall, to spurn the advice of Mistress Ellesmere.

It was this generous disposition to defy control which induced her to procure for Alice, secretly, some means of education, which the stern genius of puritanism would have proscribed. She ventured to have her charge taught music—nay, even dancing; and the picture of the stern Colonel Christian trembled on the wainscot where it was suspended, while the sylph-like form of Alice, and the substantial person of Dame Deborah, executed French *chaussées* and *borrées*, to the sound of a small kit, which screamed under the bow of Monsieur De Pigal, half smuggler, half dancing-master. This abomination reached the ears of the Colonel's widow, and by her was communicated to Bridgenorth, whose sudden appearance in the island showed the importance he attached to the communication. Had she been faithless to her own cause, that had been the latest hour of Mrs. Deborah's administration. But she retreated into her stronghold.

"Dancing," she said, "was exercise, regulated and timed by music; and it stood to reason, that it must be the best of all exercise for a delicate person, especially as it could be taken within doors, and in all states of the weather."

Bridgenorth listened, with a clouded and thoughtful brow, when, in exemplification of her doctrine, Mistress Deborah, who was no contemptible performer on the viol, began to jangle Sellenger's Round, and desired Alice to dance an old English measure to the tune. As the half-bashful, half-smiling girl, about fourteen—for such was her age—moved gracefully to the music, the father's eye unavoidably followed the light spring of her step, and marked with joy the rising colour in her cheek. When the dance was over, he folded her in his arms, smoothed her somewhat disordered locks with a father's affectionate hand, smiled, kissed her brow, and took his leave, without one single word farther interdicting the exercise of dancing. He did not himself communicate the result of his visit at the Black Fort to Mrs. Christian, but she was not long of learning it, by the triumph of Dame Deborah on her next visit.

"It is well," said the stern old lady; "my brother Bridgenorth hath permitted you to make a Herodias of Alice, and teach her dancing. You have only now to find her a partner for life—I shall neither meddle nor make more in their affairs."

In fact, the triumph of Dame Deborah, or rather of Dame Nature, on this occasion, had more important effects than the former had ventured to anticipate; for Mrs. Christian, though she received with all formality the formal visits of the governante and her charge, seemed thenceforth so pettish with the issue of her

remonstrance, upon the enormity of her niece dancing to a little fiddle, that she appeared to give up interference in her affairs, and left Dame Debbitch and Alice to manage both education and housekeeping—in which she had hitherto greatly concerned herself—much after their own pleasure.

It was in this independent state that they lived, when Julian first visited their habitation; and he was the rather encouraged to do so by Dame Deborah, that she believed him to be one of the last persons in the world with whom Mistress Christian would have desired her niece to be acquainted—the happy spirit of contradiction superseding, with Dame Deborah, on this, as on other occasions, all consideration of the fitness of things. She did not act altogether without precaution neither. She was aware she had to guard not only against any reviving interest or curiosity on the part of Mistress Christian, but against the sudden arrival of Major Bridgenorth, who never failed once in the year to make his appearance at the Black Fort when least expected, and to remain there for a few days. Dame Debbitch, therefore, exacted of Julian, that his visits should be few and far between; that he should condescend to pass for a relation of her own, in the eyes of two ignorant Manx girls and a lad, who formed her establishment; and that he should always appear in his angler's dress made of the simple *Loughtan*, or buff-coloured wool of the island, which is not subjected to dyeing. By these cautions, she thought his intimacy at the Black Fort would be entirely unnoticed, or considered as immaterial, while, in the meantime, it furnished much amusement to her charge and herself.

This was accordingly the case during the earlier part of their intercourse, while Julian was a lad, and Alice a girl two or three years younger. But as the lad shot up to youth, and the girl to womanhood, even Dame Deborah Debbitch's judgment saw danger in their continued intimacy. She took an opportunity to communicate to Julian who Miss Bridgenorth actually was, and the peculiar circumstances which placed discord between their fathers. He heard the story of their quarrel with interest and surprise, for he had only resided occasionally at Martindale Castle, and the subject of Bridgenorth's quarrel with his father had never been mentioned in his presence. His imagination caught fire at the sparks afforded by this singular story; and, far from complying with the prudent remonstrance of Dame Deborah, and gradually estranging himself from the Black Fort and its fair inmate, he frankly declared, he considered his intimacy there, so casually commenced, as intimating the will of Heaven, that Alice and he were designed for each other, in spite of every obstacle which passion or prejudice could raise up betwixt them. They had been companions in infancy; and a little exertion of memory enabled him to recall his childish grief for the unexpected and sudden disappearance of his little companion, whom he was destined again to meet with in the early bloom of opening beauty, in a country which was foreign to them both.

Dame Deborah was confounded at the consequences of her communication, which had thus blown into a flame the passion which she hoped it would have either prevented or extinguished. She had not the sort of head which resists the masculine and energetic remonstrances of passionate attachment, whether addressed to her on her own account, or on behalf of another. She lamented, and wondered, and ended her feeble opposition, by weeping, and sympathising, and consenting to allow the continuance of Julian's visits, provided he should only address himself to Alice as a friend; to gain the world, she would consent to nothing more. She was not, however, so simple, but that she also had her forebodings of the designs of Providence on this youthful couple; for certainly they could not be more formed to be united than the good estates of Martindale and Moultrassie.

Then came a long sequence of reflections. Martindale Castle wanted but some repairs to be almost equal to Chatsworth. The Hall might be allowed to go to ruin; or, what would be better, when Sir Geoffrey's time came (for the good knight had seen service, and must be breaking now), the Hall would be a good dowery-house, to which my lady and Ellesmere might retreat; while (empress of the still-room, and queen of the pantry) Mistress Deborah Debbitch should reign housekeeper at the Castle, and extend, perhaps, the crown-matrimonial to Lance Outram, provided he was not become too old, too fat, or too fond of ale.

Such were the soothing visions under the influence of which the dame connived at an attachment, which lulled also to pleasing dreams, though of a character so different, her charge and her visitant.

The visits of the young angler became more and more frequent; and the embarrassed Deborah, though foreseeing all the dangers of discovery, and the additional risk of an explanation betwixt Alice and Julian, which must necessarily render their relative situation so much more delicate, felt completely overborne by the enthusiasm of the young lover, and was compelled to let matters take their course.

The departure of Julian for the continent interrupted the course of his intimacy at the Black Fort, and while it relieved the elder of its inmates from much internal apprehension, spread an air of languor and dejection over the countenance of the younger, which, at Bridgenorth's next visit to the Isle of Man, renewed all his terrors for his daughter's constitutional malady.

Deborah promised faithfully she should look better the next morning, and she kept her word. She had retained in her possession for some time a letter which Julian had, by some private conveyance, sent to her charge, for his youthful friend. Deborah had dreaded the consequences of delivering it as a billet-doux, but, as in the case of the dance, she thought there could be no harm in administering it as a remedy.

It had complete effect; and next day the cheeks of the maiden had a tinge of the rose, which so much delighted her father, that, as he mounted his horse, he flung his purse into Deborah's hand, with the desire she should spare nothing that could make herself and his daughter happy, and the assurance that she had his full confidence.

This expression of liberality and confidence from a man of Major Bridgenorth's reserved and cautious disposition, gave full plumage to Mistress Deborah's hopes; and emboldened her not only to deliver another letter of Julian's to the young lady, but to encourage more boldly and freely than formerly the intercourse of the lovers when Peveril returned from abroad.

At length, in spite of all Julian's precaution, the young Earl became suspicious of his frequent solitary fishing parties; and he himself, now better acquainted with the world than formerly, became aware that his repeated visits and solitary walks with a person so young and beautiful as Alice, might not only betray prematurely the secret of his attachment, but be of essential prejudice to her who was its object.

Under the influence of this conviction, he abstained, for an unusual period, from visiting the Black Fort. But when he next indulged himself with spending an hour in the place where he would gladly have abode for ever, the altered manner of Alice—the tone in which she seemed to upbraid his neglect, penetrated his heart, and deprived him of that power of self-command, which he had hitherto exercised in their interviews. It required but a few energetic words to explain to Alice at once his feelings, and to make her sensible of the real nature of her own. She wept plentifully, but her tears were not all of bitterness. She sat passively still, and without reply, while he explained to her, with many an interjection, the circumstances which had placed discord between their families; for hitherto, all that she had known was, that Master Peveril, belonging to the household of the great Countess or Lady of Man, must observe some precautions in visiting a relative of the unhappy Colonel Christian. But, when Julian concluded his tale with the warmest protestations of eternal love, "My poor father!" she burst forth, "and was this to be the end of all thy precautions?—This, that the son of him that disgraced and banished thee, should hold such language to your daughter?"

"You err, Alice, you err," cried Julian eagerly. "That I hold this language—that the son of Peveril addresses thus the daughter of your father—that he thus kneels to you for forgiveness of injuries which passed when we were both infants, shows the will of Heaven, that in our affection should be quenched the discord of our parents. What else could lead those who parted infants on the hills of Derbyshire, to meet thus in the valleys of Man?"

Alice, however new such a scene, and, above all, her own emotions, might be, was highly endowed with that exquisite delicacy which is imprinted in the female heart, to give warning of the slightest approach to impropriety in a situation like hers.

"Rise, rise, Master Peveril," she said; "do not do yourself and me this injustice—we have done both wrong—very wrong; but my fault was done in ignorance. O God! my poor father, who needs comfort so much—is it for me to add to his misfortunes? Rise!" she added more firmly; "if you retain this unbecoming posture any longer, I will leave the room and you shall never see me more."

The commanding tone of Alice overawed the impetuosity of her lover, who took in silence a seat removed to some distance from hers, and was again about to speak. "Julian," said she in a milder tone, "you have spoken enough, and more than enough. Would you had left me in the pleasing dream in which I could have listened to you for ever! but the hour of waking is arrived." Peveril waited the prosecution of her speech as a criminal while he waits his doom; for he was sufficiently sensible that an answer, delivered not certainly without emotion, but with firmness and resolution, was not to be interrupted. "We have done wrong," she repeated, "very wrong; and if we now separate for ever, the pain we may feel will be but a just penalty for our error. We should never have met: meeting, we should part as soon as possible. Our farther intercourse can but double our pain at parting. Farewell, Julian; and forget we ever have seen each other!"

"Forget!" said Julian; "never, never. To *you*, it is easy to speak the word—to think the thought. To *me*, an approach to either can only be by utter destruction. Why should you doubt that the feud of our fathers, like so many of which we have heard, might be appeased by our friendship? You are my only friend. I am the only one whom Heaven has assigned to you. Why should we separate for the fault of others, which befell when we were but children?"

"You speak in vain, Julian," said Alice; "I pity you—perhaps I pity myself—indeed, I should pity myself, perhaps, the most of the two; for you will go forth to new scenes and new faces, and will soon forget me; but, I, remaining in this solitude, how shall I forget?—that, however, is not now the question—I can bear my lot, and it commands us to part."

"Hear me yet a moment," said Peveril; "this evil is not, cannot be remediless. I will go to my father,—I will use the intercession of my mother, to whom he can refuse nothing—I will gain their consent—they have no other child—and they must consent, or lose him for ever. Say, Alice, if I come to you with my parents' consent to my suit, will you again say, with that tone so touching and so sad, yet so incredibly determined—Julian, we must part?" Alice was silent. "Cruel girl, will you not even deign to answer me?" said her lover.

"I would refer you to my father," said Alice, blushing and casting her eyes down; but instantly raising them again, she repeated, in a firmer and a sadder tone, "Yes, Julian, I would refer you to my father; and you would find that your pilot, Hope, had deceived you; and that you had but escaped the quicksands to fall upon the rocks."

"I would that could be tried!" said Julian. "Methinks I could persuade your father that in ordinary eyes our alliance is not undesirable. My family have fortune, rank, long descent—all that fathers look for when they bestow a daughter's hand."

"All this would avail you nothing," said Alice. "The spirit of my father is bent upon the things of another world; and if he listened to hear you out, it would be but to tell you that he spurned your offers."

"You know not—you know not, Alice," said Julian. "Fire can soften iron—thy father's heart cannot be so hard, or his prejudices so strong, but I shall find some means to melt him. Forbid me not—Oh, forbid me not at least the experiment!"

"I can but advise," said Alice; "I can forbid you nothing; for, to forbid, implies power to command obedience. But if you will be wise, and listen to me—Here, and on this spot, we part for ever!"

"Not so, by Heaven!" said Julian, whose bold and sanguine temper scarce saw difficulty in attaining aught which he desired. "We now part, indeed, but it is that I may return armed with my parents' consent. They desire that I should marry—in their last letters they pressed it more openly—they shall have their desire; and such a bride as I will present to them has not graced their house since the Conqueror gave it origin. Farewell, Alice! Farewell, for a brief space!"

She replied, "Farewell, Julian! Farewell for ever!"

Julian, within a week of this interview, was at Martindale Castle, with the view of communicating his purpose. But the task which seems easy at a distance, proves as difficult, upon a nearer approach, as the fording of a river, which from afar appeared only a brook. There lacked not opportunities of entering upon the subject; for in the first ride which he took with his father, the Knight resumed the subject of his son's marriage, and liberally left the lady to his choice; but under the strict proviso, that she was of a loyal and an honourable family;—if she had fortune, it was good and well, or rather, it was better than well; but if she was poor, why, "there is still some picking," said Sir Geoffrey, "on the bones of the old estate; and Dame Margaret and I will be content with the less, that you young folks may have your share of it. I am turned frugal already, Julian. You see what a north-country shambling bit of a Galloway nag I ride upon—a different beast, I wot, from my own old Black Hastings, who had but one fault, and that was his wish to turn down Moultrassie avenue."

"Was that so great a fault?" said Julian, affecting indifference, while his heart was trembling, as it seemed to him, almost in his very throat.

"It used to remind me of that base, dishonourable Presbyterian fellow, Bridgenorth," said Sir Geoffrey; "and I would as lief think of a toad:—they say he has turned Independent, to accomplish the full degree of rascality.—I tell you, Gill, I turned off the cow-boy, for gathering nuts in his woods—I would hang a dog that would so much as kill a hare there.—But what is the matter with you? You look pale."

Julian made some indifferent answer, but too well understood, from the language and tone which his father used, that his prejudices against Alice's father were both deep and envenomed, as those of country gentlemen often become, who, having little to do or think of, are but too apt to spend their time in nursing and cherishing petty causes of wrath against their next neighbours.

In the course of the same day, he mentioned the Bridgenorth to his mother, as if in a casual manner. But the Lady Peveril instantly conjured him never to mention the name, especially in his father's presence.

"Was that Major Bridgenorth, of whom I have heard the name mentioned," said Julian, "so very bad a neighbour?"

"I do not say so," said Lady Peveril; "nay, we were more than once obliged to him, in the former unhappy times; but your father and he took some passages so ill at each other's hands, that the least allusion to him disturbs Sir Geoffrey's temper, in a manner quite unusual, and which, now that his health is somewhat impaired, is sometimes alarming to me. For Heaven's sake, then, my dear Julian, avoid upon all occasions the slightest allusion to Moultrassie, or any of its inhabitants."

This warning was so seriously given, that Julian himself saw that mentioning his secret purpose would be the sure way to render it abortive, and therefore he returned disconsolate to the Isle.

Peveril had the boldness, however, to make the best he could of what had happened, by requesting an interview with Alice, in order to inform her what had passed betwixt his parents and him on her account. It was with great difficulty that this boon was obtained; and Alice Bridgenorth showed no slight degree of displeasure, when she discovered, after much circumlocution, and many efforts to give an air of importance to what he had to communicate, that all amounted but to this, that Lady Peveril continued to retain a favourable opinion of her father, Major Bridgenorth, which Julian would fain have represented as an omen of their future more perfect reconciliation.

"I did not think you would thus have trifled with me, Master Peveril," said Alice, assuming an air of dignity; "but I will take care to avoid such intrusion in future—I request you will not again visit the Black Fort; and I entreat of you, good Mistress Debbitch, that you will no longer either encourage or permit this gentleman's visits, as the result of such persecution will be to compel me to appeal to my aunt and father for another place of residence, and perhaps also for another and more prudent companion."

This last hint struck Mistress Deborah with so much terror, that she joined her ward in requiring and demanding Julian's instant absence, and he was obliged to comply with their request. But the courage of a youthful lover is not easily subdued; and Julian, after having gone through the usual round of trying to forget his ungrateful mistress, and entertaining his passion with augmented violence, ended by the visit to the Black Fort, the beginning of which we narrated in the last chapter.

We then left him anxious for, yet almost fearful of, an interview with Alice, which he prevailed upon Deborah to solicit; and such was the tumult of his mind, that, while he traversed the parlour, it seemed to him that the dark melancholy eyes of the slaughtered Christian's portrait followed him wherever he went, with the fixed, chill, and ominous glance, which announced to the enemy of his race mishap and misfortune.

The door of the apartment opened at length, and these visions were dissipated.

CHAPTER XIII

Parents have flinty hearts! No tears can move them.

—OTWAY.

When Alice Bridgenorth at length entered the parlour where her anxious lover had so long expected her, it was with a slow step, and a composed manner. Her dress was arranged with an accurate attention to form, which at once enhanced the appearance of its puritanic simplicity, and struck Julian as a bad omen; for although the time bestowed upon the toilet may, in many cases, intimate the wish to appear advantageously at such an interview, yet a ceremonious arrangement of attire is very much allied with formality, and a preconceived determination to treat a lover with cold politeness.

The sad-coloured gown—the pinched and plaited cap, which carefully obscured the profusion of long dark-brown hair—the small ruff, and the long sleeves, would have appeared to great disadvantage on a shape less graceful than Alice Bridgenorth's; but an exquisite form, though not, as yet, sufficiently rounded in the outlines to produce the perfection of female beauty, was able to sustain and give grace even to this unbecoming dress. Her countenance, fair and delicate, with eyes of hazel, and a brow of alabaster, had, notwithstanding, less regular beauty than her form, and might have been justly subjected to criticism. There was, however, a life and spirit in her gaiety, and a depth of sentiment in her gravity, which made Alice, in conversation with the very few persons with whom she associated, so fascinating in her manners and expression, whether of language or countenance—so touching, also, in her simplicity and purity of thought, that brighter beauties might have been overlooked in her company. It was no wonder, therefore, that an ardent character like Julian, influenced by these charms, as well as by the secrecy and mystery attending his intercourse with Alice, should prefer the recluse of the Black Fort to all others with whom he had become acquainted in general society.

His heart beat high as she came into the apartment, and it was almost without an attempt to speak that his profound obeisance acknowledged her entrance.

"This is a mockery, Master Peveril," said Alice, with an effort to speak firmly, which yet was disconcerted by a slightly tremulous inflection of voice—"a mockery, and a cruel one. You come to this lone place, inhabited only by two women, too simple to command your absence—too weak to enforce it—you come, in spite of my earnest request—to the neglect of your own time—to the prejudice, I may fear, of my character—you abuse the influence you possess over the simple person to whom I am entrusted—All this you do, and think to make up by low reverences and constrained courtesy! Is this honourable, or is it fair?—Is it," she added, after a moment's hesitation—"is it kind?"

The tremulous accent fell especially on the last word she uttered, and it was spoken in a low tone of gentle reproach, which went to Julian's heart.

"If," said he, "there was a mode by which, at the peril of my life, Alice, I could show my regard—my respect—my devoted tenderness—the danger would be dearer to me than ever was pleasure."

"You have said such things often," said Alice, "and they are such as I ought not to hear, and do not desire to hear. I have no tasks to impose on you—no enemies to be destroyed—no need or desire of protection—no wish, Heaven knows, to expose you to danger—it is your visits here alone to which danger attaches. You have but to rule your own wilful temper—to turn your thoughts and your cares elsewhere, and I can have nothing to ask—nothing to wish for. Use your own reason—consider the injury you do yourself—the injustice you do us—and let me, once more, in fair terms, entreat you to absent yourself from this place—till—till——"

She paused, and Julian eagerly interrupted her.—"Till when, Alice?—till when?—impose on me any length of absence which your severity can inflict, short of a final separation—Say, Begone for years, but return when these years are over; and, slow and wearily as they must pass away, still the thought that they must at length have their period, will enable me to live through them. Let me, then, conjure thee, Alice, to name a date—to fix a term—to say till *when!*"

"Till you can bear to think of me only as a friend and sister."

"That is a sentence of eternal banishment indeed!" said Julian; "it is seeming, no doubt, to fix a term of exile, but attaching to it an impossible condition."

"And why impossible, Julian?" said Alice, in a tone of persuasion; "were we not happier ere you threw the mask from your own countenance, and tore the veil from my foolish eyes? Did we not meet with joy, spend our time happily, and part cheerily, because we transgressed no duty, and incurred no self-reproach? Bring back that state of happy ignorance, and you shall have no reason to call me unkind. But while you form schemes which I know to be visionary, and use language of such violence and passion, you shall excuse me if I now, and once for all, declare, that since Deborah shows herself unfit for the trust reposed in her, and must needs expose me to persecutions of this nature, I will write to my father, that he may fix me another place of residence; and in the meanwhile I will take shelter with my aunt at Kirk-Truagh."

"Hear me, unpyting girl," said Peveril, "hear me, and you shall see how devoted I am to obedience, in all that I can do to oblige you! You say you were happy when we spoke not on such topics—well—at all expense of my own suppressed feelings, that happy period shall return. I will meet you—walk with you—read with you—but only as a brother would with his sister, or a friend with his friend; the thoughts I may nourish, be they of hope or of despair, my tongue shall not give birth to, and therefore I cannot offend; Deborah shall be ever by your side, and her presence shall prevent my even hinting at what might displease you—only do not make a crime to me of those thoughts which are the dearest part of my existence; for believe me it were better and kinder to rob me of existence itself."

"This is the mere ecstasy of passion, Julian," answered Alice Bridgenorth; "that which is unpleasant, our selfish and stubborn will represents as impossible. I have no confidence in the plan you propose—no confidence in your resolution, and less than none in the protection of Deborah. Till you can renounce, honestly and explicitly, the wishes you have lately expressed, we must be strangers;—and could you renounce them even at this moment, it were better that we should part for a long time; and, for Heaven's sake, let it be as soon as possible—perhaps it is even now too late to prevent some unpleasant accident—I thought I heard a noise."

"It was Deborah," answered Julian. "Be not afraid, Alice; we are secure against surprise."

"I know not," said Alice, "what you mean by such security—I have nothing to hide. I sought not this interview; on the contrary, averted it as long as I could—and am now most desirous to break it off."

"And wherefore, Alice, since you say it must be our last? Why should you shake the sand which is passing so fast? the very executioner hurries not the prayers of the wretches upon the scaffold.—And see you not—I will argue as coldly as you can desire—see you not that you are breaking your own word, and recalling the hope which yourself held out to me?"

"What hope have I suggested? What word have I given, Julian?" answered Alice. "You yourself build wild hopes in the air, and accuse me of destroying what had never any earthly foundation. Spare yourself, Julian—spare me—and in mercy to us both depart, and return not again till you can be more reasonable."

"Reasonable?" replied Julian; "it is you, Alice, who will deprive me altogether of reason. Did you not say, that if our parents could be brought to consent to our union, you would no longer oppose my suit?"

"No—no—no," said Alice eagerly, and blushing deeply,—"*I* did not say so, Julian—it was your own wild imagination which put construction on my silence and my confusion."

"You do *not* say so, then?" answered Julian; "and if all other obstacles were removed, I should find one in the cold flinty bosom of her who repays the most devoted and sincere affection with contempt and dislike?—Is that," he added, in a deep tone of feeling—"is that what Alice Bridgenorth says to Julian Peveril?"

"Indeed—indeed, Julian," said the almost weeping girl, "I do not say so—I say nothing, and I ought not to say anything concerning what I might do, in a state of things which can never take place. Indeed, Julian, you ought not thus to press me. Unprotected as I am—wishing you well—very well—why should you urge me to say or do what would lessen me in my own eyes? to own affection for one from whom fate has separated me for ever? It is ungenerous—it is cruel—it is seeking a momentary and selfish gratification to yourself, at the expense of every feeling which I ought to entertain."

"You have said enough, Alice," said Julian, with sparkling eyes; "you have said enough in deprecating my urgency, and I will press you no farther. But you overrate the impediments which lie betwixt us—they must and shall give way."

"So you said before," answered Alice, "and with what probability, your own account may show. You dared not to mention the subject to your own father—how should you venture to mention it to mine?"

"That I will soon enable you to decide upon. Major Bridgenorth, by my mother's account, is a worthy and an estimable man. I will remind him, that to my mother's care he owes the dearest treasure and comfort of his life; and I will ask him if it is a just retribution to make that mother childless. Let me but know where to find him, Alice, and you shall soon hear if I have feared to plead my cause with him."

"Alas!" answered Alice, "you well know my uncertainty as to my dear father's residence. How often has it been my earnest request to him that he would let me share his solitary abode, or his obscure wanderings! But the short and infrequent visits which he makes to this house are all that he permits me of his society. Something I might surely do, however little, to alleviate the melancholy by which he is oppressed."

"Something we might both do," said Peveril. "How willingly would I aid you in so pleasing a task! All old griefs should be forgotten—all old friendships revived. My father's prejudices are those of an Englishman—strong, indeed, but not insurmountable by reason. Tell me, then, where Major Bridgenorth is, and leave the rest to me; or let me but know by what address your letters reach him, and I will forthwith essay to discover his dwelling."

"Do not attempt it, I charge you," said Alice. "He is already a man of sorrows; and what would he think were I capable of entertaining a suit so likely to add to them? Besides, I could not tell you, if I would, where he is now to be found. My letters reach him from time to time, by means of my aunt Christian; but of his address I am entirely ignorant."

"Then, by Heaven," answered Julian, "I will watch his arrival in this island, and in this house; and ere he has locked thee in his arms, he shall answer to me on the subject of my suit."

"Then demand that answer now," said a voice from without the door, which was at the same time slowly opened—"Demand that answer now, for here stands Ralph Bridgenorth."

As he spoke, he entered the apartment with his usual slow and sedate step—raised his flapp'd and steeple-crowned hat from his brows, and, standing in the midst of the room, eyed alternately his daughter and Julian Peveril with a fixed and penetrating glance.

"Father!" said Alice, utterly astonished, and terrified besides, by his sudden appearance at such a conjuncture,—*"Father, I am not to blame."*

"Of that anon, Alice," said Bridgenorth; "meantime retire to your apartment—I have that to say to this youth which will not endure your presence."

"Indeed—indeed, father," said Alice, alarmed at what she supposed these words indicated, "Julian is as little to be blamed as I! It was chance, it was fortune, which caused our meeting together." Then suddenly rushing forward, she threw her arms around her father, saying, "Oh, do him no injury—he meant no wrong! Father, you were wont to be a man of reason and religious peace."

"And wherefore should I not be so now, Alice?" said Bridgenorth, raising his daughter from the ground, on which she had almost sunk in the earnestness of her supplication. "Dost thou know aught, maiden, which should inflame my anger against this young man, more than reason or religion may bridle? Go—go to thy chamber. Compose thine own passions—learn to rule these—and leave it to me to deal with this stubborn young man."

Alice arose, and, with her eyes fixed on the ground, retired slowly from the apartment. Julian followed her steps with his eyes till the last wave of her garment was visible at the closing door; then turned his looks to Major Bridgenorth, and then sunk them on the ground. The Major continued to regard him in profound silence; his looks were melancholy and even austere; but there was nothing which indicated either agitation or keen resentment. He motioned to Julian to take a seat, and assumed one himself. After which he opened the conversation in the following manner:—

"You seemed but now, young gentleman, anxious to learn where I was to be found. Such I at least conjectured, from the few expressions which I chanced to overhear; for I made bold, though it may be contrary to the code of modern courtesy, to listen a moment or two, in order to gather upon what subject so young a man as you entertained so young a woman as Alice, in a private interview."

"I trust, sir," said Julian, rallying spirits in what he felt to be a case of extremity, "you have heard nothing on my part which has given offence to a gentleman, whom, though unknown, I am bound to respect so highly."

"On the contrary," said Bridgenorth, with the same formal gravity, "I am pleased to find that your business is, or appears to be, with me, rather than with my daughter. I only think you had done better to have entrusted it to me in the first instance, as my sole concern."

The utmost sharpness of attention which Julian applied, could not discover if Bridgenorth spoke seriously or ironically to the above purpose. He was, however, quick-witted beyond his experience, and was internally determined to endeavour to discover something of the character and the temper of him with whom he spoke. For that purpose, regulating his reply in the same tone with Bridgenorth's observation, he said, that not having the advantage to know his place of residence, he had applied for information to his daughter.

"Who is now known to you for the first time?" said Bridgenorth. "Am I so to understand you?"

"By no means," answered Julian, looking down; "I have been known to your daughter for many years; and what I wished to say, respects both her happiness and my own."

"I must understand you," said Bridgenorth, "even as carnal men understand each other on the matters of this world. You are attached to my daughter by the cords of love; I have long known this."

"You, Master Bridgenorth?" exclaimed Peveril—"You have long known it?"

"Yes, young man. Think you, that as the father of an only child, I could have suffered Alice Bridgenorth—the only living pledge of her who is now an angel in heaven—to have remained in this seclusion without the surest knowledge of all her material actions? I have, in person, seen more, both of her and of you, than you could be aware of; and when absent in the body, I had the means of maintaining the same superintendence. Young man, they say that such love as you entertain for my daughter teaches much subtilty; but believe not that it can overreach the affection which a widowed father bears to an only child."

"If," said Julian, his heart beating thick and joyfully, "if you have known this intercourse so long, may I not hope that it has not met your disapprobation?"

The Major paused for an instant, and then answered, "In some respects, certainly not. Had it done so—had there seemed aught on your side, or on my daughter's, to have rendered your visits here dangerous to her, or displeasing to me, she had not been long the inhabitant of this solitude, or of this island. But be not so hasty as to presume, that all which you may desire in this matter can be either easily or speedily accomplished."

"I foresee, indeed, difficulties," answered Julian; "but with your kind acquiescence, they are such as I trust to remove. My father is generous—my mother is candid and liberal. They loved you once; I trust they will love you again. I will be the mediator betwixt you—peace and harmony shall once more inhabit our neighbourhood, and——"

Bridgenorth interrupted him with a grim smile; for such it seemed, as it passed over a face of deep melancholy. "My daughter well said, but short while past, that you were a dreamer of dreams—an architect of plans and hopes fantastic as the visions of the night. It is a great thing you ask of me;—the hand of my only child—the sum of my worldly substance, though that is but dross in comparison. You ask the key of the only fountain from which I may yet hope to drink one pleasant draught; you ask to be the sole and absolute keeper of my earthly happiness—and what have you offered, or what have you to offer in return, for the surrender you require of me?"

"I am but too sensible," said Peveril, abashed at his own hasty conclusions, "how difficult it may be."

"Nay, but interrupt me not," replied Bridgenorth, "till I show you the amount of what you offer me in exchange for a boon, which, whatever may be its intrinsic value, is earnestly desired by you, and comprehends all that is valuable on earth which I have it in my power to bestow. You may have heard that in the late times I was the antagonist of your father's principles and his profane faction, but not the enemy of his person."

"I have ever heard," replied Julian, "much the contrary; and it was but now that I reminded you that you had been his friend."

"Ay. When he was in affliction and I in prosperity, I was neither unwilling, nor altogether unable, to show myself such. Well, the tables are turned—the times are changed. A peaceful and unoffending man might have expected from a neighbour, now powerful in his turn, such protection, when walking in the paths of the law, as all men, subjects of the same realm, have a right to expect even from perfect strangers. What chances? I pursue, with the warrant of the King and law, a murderess, bearing on her hand the blood of my near connection, and I had, in such a case, a right to call on every liege subject to render assistance to the

execution. My late friendly neighbour, bound, as a man and a magistrate, to give ready assistance to a legal action—bound, as a grateful and obliged friend, to respect my rights and my person—thrusts himself betwixt me—me, the avenger of blood—and my lawful captive; beats me to the earth, at once endangering my life, and, in mere human eyes, sully mine honour; and under his protection, the Midianitish woman reaches, like a sea-eagle, the nest which she hath made in the wave-surrounded rocks, and remains there till gold, duly administered at Court, wipes out all memory of her crime, and baffles the vengeance due to the memory of the best and bravest of men.—But," he added, apostrophising the portrait of Christian, "thou art not yet forgotten, my fair-haired William! The vengeance which dogs thy murderess is slow,—but it is sure!"

There was a pause of some moments, which Julian Peveril, willing to hear to what conclusion Major Bridgenorth was finally to arrive, did not care to interrupt. Accordingly, in a few minutes, the latter proceeded.—"These things," he said, "I recall not in bitterness, so far as they are personal to me—I recall them not in spite of heart, though they have been the means of banishing me from my place of residence, where my fathers dwelt, and where my earthly comforts lie interred. But the public cause sets further strife betwixt your father and me. Who so active as he to execute the fatal edict of black St. Bartholomew's day, when so many hundreds of gospel-preachers were expelled from house and home—from hearth and altar—from church and parish, to make room for belly-gods and thieves? Who, when a devoted few of the Lord's people were united to lift the fallen standard, and once more advance the good cause, was the readiest to break their purpose—to search for, persecute, and apprehend them? Whose breath did I feel warm on my neck—whose naked sword was thrust within a foot of my body, whilst I lurked darkling, like a thief in concealment, in the house of my fathers?—It was Geoffrey Peveril's—it was your father's!—What can you answer to all this, or how can you reconcile it with your present wishes?"

"These things I point out to you, Julian, that I may show you how impossible, in the eyes of a merely worldly man, would be the union which you are desirous of. But Heaven hath at times opened a door, where man beholds no means of issue. Julian, your mother, for one to whom the truth is unknown, is, after the fashion of the world, one of the best, and one of the wisest of women; and Providence, which gave her so fair a form, and tenanted that form with a mind as pure as the original frailty of our vile nature will permit, means not, I trust, that she shall continue to the end to be a vessel of wrath and perdition. Of your father I say nothing—he is what the times and example of others, and the counsels of his lordly priest, have made him; and of him, once more, I say nothing, save that I have power over him, which ere now he might have felt, but that there is one within his chambers, who might have suffered in his suffering. Nor do I wish to root up your ancient family. If I prize not your boast of family honours and pedigree, I would not willingly destroy them; more than I would pull down a moss-grown tower, or hew to the ground an ancient oak, save for the straightening of the common path, and advantage of the public. I have, therefore, no resentment against the humbled House of Peveril—nay, I have regard to it in its depression."

He here made a second pause, as if he expected Julian to say something. But notwithstanding the ardour with which the young man had pressed his suit, he was too much trained in ideas of the importance of his family, and in the better habit of respect for his parents, to hear, without displeasure, some part of Bridgenorth's discourse.

"The House of Peveril," he replied, "was never humbled."

"Had you said the sons of that House had never been *humble*," answered Bridgenorth, "you would have come nearer the truth.—Are *you* not humbled? Live you not here, the lackey of a haughty woman, the play-companion of an empty youth? If you leave this Isle, and go to the Court of England, see what regard will there be paid to the old pedigree that deduces your descent from kings and conquerors. A scurril or obscene jest, an impudent carriage, a laced cloak, a handful of gold, and the readiness to wager it on a card, or a die, will better advance you at the Court of Charles, than your father's ancient name, and slavish devotion of blood and fortune to the cause of *his* father."

"That is, indeed, but too probable," said Peveril; "but the Court shall be no element of mine. I will live like my fathers, among my people, care for their comforts, decide their differences——"

"Build Maypoles, and dance around them," said Bridgenorth, with another of those grim smiles which passed over his features like the light of a sexton's torch, as it glares and is reflected by the window of the church, when he comes from locking a funeral vault. "No, Julian, these are not times in which, by the dreaming drudgery of a country magistrate, and the petty cares of a country proprietor, a man can serve his unhappy country. There are mighty designs afloat, and men are called to make their choice betwixt God and Baal. The ancient superstition—the abomination of our fathers—is raising its head, and flinging abroad its snares, under the protection of the princes of the earth; but she raises not her head unmarked or unwatched; the true English hearts are as thousands, which wait but a signal to arise as one man, and show the kings of the earth that they have combined in vain! We will cast their cords from us—the cup of their abominations we will not taste."

"You speak in darkness, Master Bridgenorth," said Peveril. "Knowing so much of me, you may, perhaps, also be aware, that I at least have seen too much of the delusions of Rome, to desire that they should be propagated at home."

"Else, wherefore do I speak to thee friendly and so free?" said Bridgenorth. "Do I not know, with what readiness of early wit you baffled the wily attempts of the woman's priest, to seduce thee from the Protestant faith? Do I not know, how thou wast beset when abroad, and that thou didst both hold thine own faith, and secure the wavering belief of thy friend? Said I not, this was done like the son of Margaret Peveril? Said I not, he holdeth, as yet, but the dead letter—but the seed which is sown shall one day sprout and quicken?—Enough, however, of this. For to-day this is thy habitation. I will see in thee neither the servant of the daughter of Eshbaal, nor the son of him who pursued my life, and blemished my honours; but thou shalt be to me, for this day, as the child of her, without whom my house had been extinct."

So saying, he stretched out his thin, bony hand, and grasped that of Julian Peveril; but there was such a look of mourning in his welcome, that whatever delight the youth anticipated, spending so long a time in the neighbourhood of Alice Bridgenorth, perhaps in her society, or however strongly he felt the prudence of conciliating her father's good-will, he could not help feeling as if his heart was chilled in his company.

CHAPTER XIV

*This day at least is friendship's—on the morrow
Let strife come an she will.*

—OTWAY.

Deborah Debbitch, summoned by her master, now made her appearance, with her handkerchief at her eyes, and an appearance of great mental trouble. "It was not my fault, Major Bridgenorth," she said; "how could I help it? like will to like—the boy would come—the girl would see him."

"Peace, foolish woman," said Bridgenorth, "and hear what I have got to say."

"I know what your honour has to say well enough," said Deborah. "Service, I wot, is no inheritance nowadays—some are wiser than other some—if I had not been wheedled away from Martindale, I might have had a house of mine own by this time."

"Peace, idiot!" said Bridgenorth; but so intent was Deborah on her vindication, that he could but thrust the interjection, as it were edgewise, between her exclamations, which followed as thick as is usual in cases, where folks endeavour to avert deserved censure by a clamorous justification ere the charge be brought.

"No wonder she was cheated," she said, "out of sight of her own interest, when it was to wait on pretty Miss Alice. All your honour's gold should never have tempted me, but that I knew she was but a dead castaway, poor innocent, if she were taken away from my lady or me.—And so this is the end on't!—up early, and down late—and this is all my thanks!—But your honour had better take care what you do—she has the short cough yet sometimes—and should take physic, spring and fall."

"Peace, chattering fool!" said her master, so soon as her failing breath gave him an opportunity to strike in, "thinkest thou I knew not of this young gentleman's visits to the Black Fort, and that, if they had displeased me, I would not have known how to stop them?"

"Did I know that your honour knew of his visits!" exclaimed Deborah, in a triumphant tone,—for, like most of her condition, she never sought farther for her defence than a lie, however inconsistent and improbable—"Did I know that your honour knew of it!—Why, how should I have permitted his visits else? I wonder what your honour takes me for! Had I not been sure it was the thing in this world that your honour most desired would I have presumed to lend it a hand forward? I trust I know my duty better. Hear if I ever asked another youngster into the house, save himself—for I knew your honour was wise, and quarrels cannot last for ever, and love begins where hatred ends; and, to be sure, they love as if they were born one for the other—and then, the estates of Moultrassie and Martindale suit each other like sheath and knife."

"Parrot of a woman, hold your tongue!" said Bridgenorth, his patience almost completely exhausted; "or, if you will prate, let it be to your playfellows in the kitchen, and bid them get ready some dinner presently, for Master Peveril is far from home."

"That I will, and with all my heart," said Deborah; "and if there are a pair of fatter fowls in Man than shall clap their wings on the table presently, your honour shall call me goose as well as parrot." She then left the apartment.

"It is to such a woman as that," said Bridgenorth, looking after her significantly, "that you conceived me to have abandoned the charge of my only child! But enough of this subject—we will walk abroad, if you will, while she is engaged in a province fitter for her understanding."

So saying, he left the house, accompanied by Julian Peveril, and they were soon walking side by side, as if they had been old acquaintances.

It may have happened to many of our readers, as it has done to ourselves, to be thrown by accident into society with some individual whose claims to what is called a *serious* character stand considerably higher than our own, and with whom, therefore, we have conceived ourselves likely to spend our time in a very stiff and constrained manner; while, on the other hand, our destined companion may have apprehended some disgust from the supposed levity and thoughtless gaiety of a disposition that when we, with that urbanity and good-humour which is our principal characteristic, have accommodated ourself to our companion, by throwing as much seriousness into our conversation as our habits will admit, he, on the other hand, moved by our liberal example, hath divested his manners of part of their austerity; and our conversation has, in consequence, been of that pleasant texture, betwixt the useful and agreeable, which best resembles "the fairy-web of night and day," usually called in prose the twilight. It is probable both parties may, on such occasions, have been the better for their encounter, even if it went no farther than to establish for the time a community of feeling between men, who, separated more perhaps by temper than by principle, are too apt to charge each other with profane frivolity on the one hand, or fanaticism on the other.

It fared thus in Peveril's walk with Bridgenorth, and in the conversation which he held with him.

Carefully avoiding the subject on which he had already spoken, Major Bridgenorth turned his conversation chiefly on foreign travel, and on the wonders he had seen in distant countries, and which he appeared to have marked with a curious and observant eye. This discourse made the time fly light away; for although the anecdotes and observations thus communicated were all tinged with the serious and almost gloomy spirit of the narrator, they yet contained traits of interest and of wonder, such as are usually interesting to a youthful ear, and were particularly so to Julian, who had, in his disposition, some cast of the romantic and adventurous.

It appeared that Bridgenorth knew the south of France, and could tell many stories of the French Huguenots, who already began to sustain those vexations which a few years afterwards were summed up by the revocation of the Edict of Nantz. He had even been in Hungary, for he spoke as from personal knowledge of the character of several of the heads of the great Protestant insurrection, which at this time had taken place under the celebrated Tekeli; and laid down solid reasons why they were entitled to make common cause with the Great Turk, rather than submit to the Pope of Rome. He talked also of Savoy, where those of the reformed religion still suffered a cruel persecution; and he mentioned with a swelling spirit, the protection which Oliver had afforded to the oppressed Protestant Churches; "therein showing himself," he added, "more fit to wield the supreme power, than those who, claiming it by right of inheritance, use it only for their own vain and voluptuous pursuits."

"I did not expect," said Peveril modestly, "to have heard Oliver's panegyric from you, Master Bridgenorth."

"I do not panegyrisé him," answered Bridgenorth; "I speak but truth of that extraordinary man, now being dead, whom, when alive, I feared not to withstand to his face. It is the fault of the present unhappy King, if he make us look back with regret to the days when the nation was respected abroad, and when devotion and sobriety were practised at home.—But I mean not to vex your spirit by controversy. You have lived amongst those who find it more easy and more pleasant to be the pensioners of France than her controllers—to spend the money which she doles out to themselves, than to check the tyranny with which she oppresses our poor brethren of the religion. When the scales shall fall from thine eyes, all this thou shalt see; and seeing, shalt learn to detest and despise it."

By this time they had completed their walk, and were returned to the Black Fort, by a different path from that which had led them up the valley. The exercise and the general tone of conversation had removed, in some degree, the shyness and embarrassment which Peveril originally felt in Bridgenorth's presence and which the tenor of his first remarks had rather increased than diminished. Deborah's promised banquet was soon on the board; and in simplicity as well as neatness and good order, answered the character she had claimed for it. In one respect alone, there seemed some inconsistency, perhaps a little affectation. Most of the dishes were of silver, and the plates were of the same metal; instead of the trenchers and pewter which Peveril had usually seen employed on similar occasions at the Black Fort.

Presently, with the feeling of one who walks in a pleasant dream from which he fears to awake, and whose delight is mingled with wonder and with uncertainty, Julian Peveril found himself seated between Alice Bridgenorth and her father—the being he most loved on earth, and the person whom he had ever considered as the great obstacle to their intercourse. The confusion of his mind was such, that he could scarcely reply to the importunate civilities of Dame Deborah; who, seated with them at table in her quality of governante, now dispensed the good things which had been prepared under her own eye.

As for Alice she seemed to have found a resolution to play the mute; for she answered not, excepting briefly, to the questions of Dame Debbitch; nay, even when her father, which happened once or twice, attempted to bring her forward in the conversation, she made no further reply than respect for him rendered absolutely necessary.

Upon Bridgenorth himself, then, devolved the task of entertaining the company; and contrary to his ordinary habits, he did not seem to shrink from it. His discourse was not only easy, but almost cheerful, though ever and anon crossed by some expressions indicative of natural and habitual melancholy, or prophetic of future misfortune and woe. Flashes of enthusiasm, too, shot along his conversation, gleaming like the sheet-lightening of an autumn eve, which throws a strong, though momentary illumination, across the sober twilight, and all the surrounding objects, which, touched by it, assume a wilder and more striking character. In general, however, Bridgenorth's remarks were plain and sensible; and as he aimed at no graces of language, any ornament which they received arose out of the interest with which they were impressed on his hearers. For example, when Deborah, in the pride and vulgarity of her heart, called Julian's attention to the plate from which they had been eating, Bridgenorth seemed to think an apology necessary for such superfluous expense.

"It was a symptom," he said, "of approaching danger, when such men, as were not usually influenced by the vanities of life employed much money in ornaments composed of the precious metals. It was a sign that the merchant could not obtain a profit for the capital, which, for the sake of security, he invested in this inert form. It was a proof that the noblemen or gentlemen feared the rapacity of power, when they put their wealth into forms the most portable and the most capable of being hidden; and it showed the uncertainty of credit, when a man of judgment preferred the actual possession of a mass of silver to the convenience of a goldsmith's or a banker's receipt. While a shadow of liberty remained," he said, "domestic rights were last invaded; and, therefore, men disposed upon their cupboards and tables the wealth which in these places would remain longest, though not perhaps finally, sacred from the grasp of a tyrannical government. But let there be a demand for capital to support a profitable commerce, and the mass is at once consigned to the furnace, and, ceasing to be a vain and cumbrous ornament of the banquet, becomes a potent and active agent for furthering the prosperity of the country."

"In war, too," said Peveril, "plate has been found a ready resource."

"But too much so," answered Bridgenorth. "In the late times, the plate of the nobles and gentry, with that of the colleges, and the sale of the crown-jewels, enabled the King to make his unhappy stand, which prevented matters returning to a state of peace and good order, until the sword had attained an undue superiority both over King and Parliament."

He looked at Julian as he spoke, much as he who proves a horse offers some object suddenly to his eyes, then watches to see if he starts or blenches from it. But Julian's thoughts were too much bent on other topics to manifest any alarm. His answer referred to a previous part of Bridgenorth's discourse, and was not returned till after a brief pause. "War, then," he said, "war, the grand impoverisher, is also a creator of wealth which it wastes and devours?"

"Yes," replied Bridgenorth, "even as the sluice brings into action the sleeping waters of the lake, which it finally drains. Necessity invents arts and discovers means; and what necessity is sterner than that of civil war? Therefore, even war is not in itself unmixed evil, being the creator of impulses and energies which could not otherwise have existed in society."

"Men should go to war, then," said Peveril, "that they may send their silver plate to the mint, and eat from pewter dishes and wooden plates?"

"Not so, my son," said Bridgenorth. Then checking himself as he observed the deep crimson in Julian's cheek and brow, he added, "I crave your pardon for such familiarity; but I meant not to limit what I said even now to such trifling consequences, although it may be something salutary to tear men from their pomps and luxuries, and teach those to be Romans who would otherwise be Sybarites. But I would say, that times of public danger, as they call into circulation the miser's hoard and the proud man's bullion, and so add to the circulating wealth of the country, do also call into action many a brave and noble spirit, which would otherwise lie torpid, give no example to the living, and bequeath no name to future ages. Society knows not, and cannot know, the mental treasures which slumber in her bosom, till necessity and opportunity call forth the statesman and the soldier from the shades of lowly life to the parts they are designed by Providence to perform, and the stations which nature had qualified them to hold. So rose Oliver—so rose Milton—so rose many another name which cannot be forgotten—even as the tempest summons forth and displays the address of the mariner."

"You speak," said Peveril, "as if national calamity might be, in some sort, an advantage."

"And if it were not so," replied Bridgenorth, "it had not existed in this state of trial, where all temporal evil is alleviated by something good in its progress or result, and where all that is good is close coupled with that which is in itself evil."

"It must be a noble sight," said Julian, "to behold the slumbering energies of a great mind awakened into energy, and to see it assume the authority which is its due over spirits more meanly endowed."

"I once witnessed," said Bridgenorth, "something to the same effect; and as the tale is brief, I will tell it you, if you will:—Amongst my wanderings, the Transatlantic settlements have not escaped me; more especially the country of New England, into which our native land has shaken from her lap, as a drunkard flings from him his treasures, so much that is precious in the eyes of God and of His children. There thousands of our best and most godly men—such whose righteousness might come of cities—are content to be the inhabitants of the desert, rather encountering the unenlightened savages, than stooping to extinguish, under the oppression practised in Britain, the light that is within their own minds. There I remained for a time, during the wars which the colony maintained with Philip, a great Indian Chief, or Sachem, as they were called, who seemed a messenger sent from Satan to buffet them. His cruelty was great—his dissimulation profound; and the skill and promptitude with which he maintained a destructive and desultory warfare, inflicted many dreadful calamities on the settlement. I was, by chance, at a small village in the woods, more than thirty miles from Boston, and in its situation exceedingly lonely, and surrounded with thickets. Nevertheless, there was no idea of any danger from the Indians at that time, for men trusted to the protection of a considerable body of troops who had taken the field for protection of the frontiers, and who lay, or were supposed to lie, betwixt the hamlet and the enemy's country. But they had to do with a foe, whom the devil himself had inspired at once with cunning and cruelty. It was on a Sabbath morning, when we had assembled to take sweet counsel together in the Lord's house. Our temple was but constructed of wooden logs; but when shall the chant of trained hirelings, or the sounding of tin and brass tubes amid the aisles of a minster, arise so sweetly to Heaven, as did the psalm in which we united at once our voices and our hearts! An excellent worthy, who now sleeps in the Lord, Nehemia Solsgrace, long the companion of my pilgrimage, had just begun to wrestle in prayer, when a woman, with disordered looks and dishevelled hair, entered our chapel in a distracted manner, screaming incessantly, 'The Indians! The Indians!'—In that land no man dares separate himself from his means of defence; and whether in the city or in the field, in the ploughed land or the forest, men keep beside them their weapons, as did the Jews at the rebuilding of the Temple. So we sallied forth with our guns and pikes, and heard the whoop of these incarnate devils, already in possession of a part of the town, and exercising their cruelty on the few whom weighty causes or indisposition had withheld from public worship; and it was remarked as a judgment, that, upon that bloody Sabbath, Adrian Hanson, a Dutchman, a man well enough disposed towards man, but whose mind was altogether given to worldly gain, was shot and scalped as he was summing his weekly gains in his warehouse. In fine, there was much damage done; and although our arrival and entrance into combat did in some sort put them back, yet being surprised and confused, and having no appointed leader of our band, the devilish enemy shot hard at us and had some advantage. It was pitiful to hear the screams of women and children amid the report of guns and the whistling of bullets, mixed with the ferocious yells of these savages, which they term their war-whoop. Several houses in the upper part of the village were soon on fire; and the roaring of the flames, and crackling of the great beams as they blazed, added to the horrible confusion; while the smoke which the wind drove against us gave farther advantage to the enemy, who fought as it were, invisible, and under cover, whilst we fell fast by their unerring fire. In this state of confusion, and while we were about to adopt the desperate project of evacuating the village, and, placing the women and children in the centre, of attempting a retreat to the nearest settlement, it pleased Heaven to send us unexpected assistance. A tall man, of a reverend appearance, whom no one of us had ever seen before, suddenly was in the midst of us, as we hastily agitated the resolution of retreating. His garments were of the skin of the elk, and he wore sword and carried gun; I never saw anything more august than his features, overshadowed by locks of grey hair, which mingled with a long beard of the same colour. 'Men and brethren,' he said, in a voice like that which turns back the flight, 'why sink your hearts? and why are you thus disquieted? Fear ye that the God we serve will give you up to yonder heathen dogs? Follow me, and you shall see this day that there is a captain in Israel!' He uttered a few brief but distinct orders, in a tone of one who was unaccustomed to command; and such was the influence of his appearance, his mien, his language, and his presence of mind, that he was implicitly obeyed by men who had never seen him until that moment. We were hastily divided, by his orders, into two bodies; one of which maintained the defence of the village with more courage than ever, convinced that the Unknown was sent by God to our rescue. At his command they assumed the best and most sheltered positions for exchanging their deadly fire with the Indians; while, under cover of the smoke, the stranger sallied from the town, at the head of the other division of the New England men, and, fetching a circuit, attacked the Red Warriors in the rear. The surprise, as is usual amongst savages, had complete effect; for they doubted not that they were assailed in their turn, and placed betwixt two hostile parties by the return of a detachment from the provincial army. The heathens fled in confusion, abandoning the half-won village, and leaving behind them such a number of their warriors, that the tribe hath never recovered its loss. Never shall I forget the figure of our venerable leader, when our men, and not they only, but the women and children of the village, rescued from the tomahawk and scalping-knife, stood crowded around him, yet scarce venturing to approach his person, and more minded, perhaps, to worship him as a descended angel, than to thank him as a fellow-mortal. 'Not unto me be the glory,' he said; 'I am but an implement, frail as yourselves, in the hand of Him who is strong to deliver. Bring me a cup of water, that I may allay my parched throat, ere I essay the task of offering thanks where they are most due.' I was nearest to him as he spoke, and I gave into his hand the water he requested. At that moment we exchanged glances, and it seemed to me that I recognised a noble friend whom I had long since deemed in glory; but he gave me no time to speak, had speech been prudent. Sinking on his knees, and signing us to obey him, he poured forth a strong and energetic thanksgiving for the turning back of the battle, which, pronounced with a voice loud and clear as a war-trumpet, thrilled through the joints and marrow of the hearers. I have heard many an act of devotion in my life, had Heaven vouchsafed me grace to profit by them; but such a prayer as this, uttered amid the dead and the dying, with a rich tone of mingled triumph and adoration, was beyond them all—it was like the song of the inspired prophetess who dwelt beneath the palm-tree between Ramah and Bethel. He was silent; and for a brief space we remained with our faces bent to the earth—no man daring to lift his head. At length we looked up, but our deliverer was no longer amongst us; nor was he ever again seen in the land which he had rescued."

Here Bridgenorth, who had told this singular story with an eloquence and vivacity of detail very contrary to the usual dryness of his conversation, paused for an instant, and then resumed—"Thou seest, young man, that men of valour and of discretion are called forth to command in circumstances of national exigence, though their very existence is unknown in the land which they are predestined to deliver."

"But what thought the people of the mysterious stranger?" said Julian, who had listened with eagerness, for the story was of a kind interesting to the youthful and the brave.

"Many things," answered Bridgenorth, "and, as usual, little to the purpose. The prevailing opinion was, notwithstanding his own disclamation, that the stranger was really a supernatural being; others believed him an inspired champion, transported in the body from some distant climate, to show us the way to safety; others, again, concluded that he was a recluse, who, either from motives of piety, or other cogent reasons, had become a dweller in the wilderness, and shunned the face of man."

"And, if I may presume to ask," said Julian, "to which of these opinions were you disposed to adhere?"

"The last suited best with the transient though close view with which I had perused the stranger's features," replied Bridgenorth; "for although I dispute not that it may please Heaven, on high occasions, even to raise one from the dead in defence of his country, yet I doubted not then, as I doubt not now, that I looked on the living form of one, who had indeed powerful reasons to conceal him in the cleft of the rock."

"Are these reasons a secret?" said Julian Peveril.

"Not properly a secret," replied Bridgenorth; "for I fear not thy betraying what I might tell thee in private discourse; and besides, wert thou so base, the prey lies too distant for any hunters to whom thou couldst point out its traces. But the name of this worthy will sound harsh in thy ear, on account of one action of his life—being his accession to a great measure, which made the extreme isles of the earth to tremble. Have you never heard of Richard Whalley?"

"Of the regicide?" exclaimed Peveril, starting.

"Call his act what thou wilt," said Bridgenorth; "he was not less the rescuer of that devoted village, that, with other leading spirits of the age, he sat in the judgment-seat when Charles Stewart was arraigned at the bar, and subscribed the sentence that went forth upon him."

"I have ever heard," said Julian, in an altered voice, and colouring deeply, "that you, Master Bridgenorth, with other Presbyterians, were totally averse to that detestable crime, and were ready to have made joint-cause with the Cavaliers in preventing so horrible a parricide."

"If it were so," said Bridgenorth, "we have been richly rewarded by his successor."

"Rewarded!" exclaimed Julian; "does the distinction of good and evil, and our obligation to do the one and forbear the other, depend on the reward which may attach to our actions?"

"God forbid," answered Bridgenorth; "yet those who view the havoc which this house of Stewart have made in the Church and State—the tyranny which they exercise over men's persons and consciences—may well doubt whether it be lawful to use weapons in their defence. Yet you hear me not praise, or even vindicate the death of the King, though so far deserved, as he was false to his oath as a Prince and Magistrate. I only tell you what you desired to know, that Richard Whalley, one of the late King's judges, was he of whom I have just been speaking. I knew his lofty brow, though time had made it balder and higher; his grey eye retained all its lustre; and though the grizzled beard covered the lower part of his face, it prevented me not from recognising him. The scent was hot after him for his blood; but by the assistance of those friends whom Heaven had raised up for his preservation, he was concealed carefully, and emerged only to do the will of Providence in the matter of that battle. Perhaps his voice may be heard in the field once more, should England need one of her noblest hearts."

"Now, God forbid!" said Julian.

"Amen," returned Bridgenorth. "May God avert civil war, and pardon those whose madness would bring it on us!"

There was a long pause, during which Julian, who had scarce lifted his eyes towards Alice, stole a glance in that direction, and was struck by the deep cast of melancholy which had stolen over features, to which a cheerful, if not gay expression, was most natural. So soon as she caught his eye, she remarked, and, as Julian thought, with significance, that the shadows were lengthening, and evening coming on.

He heard; and although satisfied that she hinted at his departure, he could not, upon the instant, find resolution to break the spell which detained him. The language which Bridgenorth held was not only new and alarming, but so contrary to the maxims in which he was brought up, that, as a son of Sir Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak, he would, in another case, have thought himself called upon to dispute its conclusions, even at the sword's point. But Bridgenorth's opinions were delivered with so much calmness—seemed so much the result of conviction—that they excited in Julian rather a spirit of wonder, than of angry controversy. There was a character of sober decision, and sedate melancholy, in all that he said, which, even had he not been the father of Alice (and perhaps Julian was not himself aware how much he was influenced by that circumstance), would have rendered it difficult to take personal offence. His language and sentiments were of that quiet, yet decided kind, upon which it is difficult either to fix controversy, or quarrel, although it be impossible to acquiesce in the conclusions to which they lead.

While Julian remained, as if spell-bound to his chair, scarce more surprised at the company in which he found himself, than at the opinions to which he was listening, another circumstance reminded him that the proper time of his stay at Black Fort had been expended. Little Fairy, the Manx pony, which, well accustomed to the vicinity of Black Fort, used to feed near the house while her master made his visits there, began to find his present stay rather too long. She had been the gift of the Countess to Julian, whilst a youth, and came of a high-spirited mountain breed, remarkable alike for hardiness, for longevity, and for a degree of sagacity approaching to that of the dog. Fairy showed the latter quality, by the way in which she chose to express her impatience to be moving homewards. At least such seemed the purpose of the shrill neigh with which she startled the female inmates of the parlour, who, the moment afterwards, could not forbear smiling to see the nose of the pony advanced through the opened casement.

"Fairy reminds me," said Julian, looking to Alice, and rising, "that the term of my stay here is exhausted."

"Speak with me yet one moment," said Bridgenorth, withdrawing him into a Gothic recess of the old-fashioned apartment, and speaking so low that he could not be overheard by Alice and her governess, who, in the meantime, caressed, and fed with fragments of bread the intruder Fairy.

"You have not, after all," said Bridgenorth, "told me the cause of your coming hither." He stopped, as if to enjoy his embarrassment, and then added, "And indeed it were most unnecessary that you should do so. I have not so far forgotten the days of my youth, or those affections which bind poor frail humanity but too much to the things of this world. Will you find no words to ask of me the great boon which you seek, and which, peradventure, you would not have hesitated to have made your own, without my knowledge, and against my consent?—Nay, never vindicate thyself, but mark me farther. The patriarch bought his beloved by fourteen years' hard service to her father Laban, and they seemed to him but as a few days. But he that would wed my daughter must serve, in comparison, but a few days; though in matters of such mighty import, that they shall seem as the service of many years. Reply not to me now, but go, and peace be with you."

He retired so quickly, after speaking, that Peveril had literally not an instant to reply. He cast his eyes around the apartment, but Deborah and her charge had also disappeared. His gaze rested for a moment on the portrait of Christian, and his imagination suggested that his dark features were illuminated by a smile of haughty triumph. He stared, and looked more attentively—it was but the effect of the evening beam, which touched the picture at the instant. The effect was gone, and there remained but the fixed, grave, inflexible features of the republican soldier.

Julian left the apartment as one who walks in a dream; he mounted Fairy, and, agitated by a variety of thoughts, which he was unable to reduce to order, he returned to Castle Rushin before the night sat down.

Here he found all in movement. The Countess, with her son, had, upon some news received, or resolution formed, during his absence, removed, with a principal part of their family, to the yet stronger Castle of Holm-Peel, about eight miles' distance across the island; and which had been suffered to fall into a much more dilapidated condition than that of Castletown, so far as it could be considered as a place of residence. But as a fortress, Holm-Peel was stronger than Castletown; nay, unless assailed regularly, was almost impregnable; and was always held by a garrison belonging to the Lords of Man. Here Peveril arrived at nightfall. He was told in the fishing-village, that the night-bell of the Castle had been rung earlier than usual, and the watch set with circumstances of unusual and jealous repetition.

Resolving, therefore, not to disturb the garrison by entering at that late hour, he obtained an indifferent lodging in the town for the night, and determined to go to the Castle early on the succeeding morning. He was not sorry thus to gain a few hours of solitude, to think over the agitating events of the preceding day.

CHAPTER XV

—What seem'd its head,
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
—PARADISE LOST.

Sodor, or Holm-Peel, so is named the castle to which our Julian directed his course early on the following morning, is one of those extraordinary monuments of antiquity with which this singular and interesting island abounds. It occupies the whole of a high rocky peninsula, or rather an island, for it is surrounded by the sea at high-water, and scarcely accessible even when the tide is out, although a stone causeway, of great solidity, erected for the express purpose, connects the island with the mainland. The whole space is surrounded by double walls of great strength and thickness; and the access to the interior, at the time which we treat of, was only by two flights of steep and narrow steps, divided from each other by a strong tower and guard-house; under the former of which, there is an entrance-arch. The open space within the walls extends to two acres, and contains many objects worthy of antiquarian curiosity. There were besides the castle itself, two cathedral churches, dedicated, the earlier to St. Patrick, the latter to St. Germain; besides two smaller churches; all of which had become, even in that day, more or less ruinous. Their decayed walls, exhibiting the rude and massive architecture of the most remote period, were composed of a ragged grey-stone, which formed a singular contrast with the bright red freestone of which the window-cases, corner-stones, arches, and other ornamental parts of the building, were composed.

Besides these four ruinous churches, the space of ground enclosed by the massive exterior walls of Holm-Peel exhibited many other vestiges of the olden time. There was a square mound of earth, facing, with its angles to the points of the compass, one of those motes, as they were called, on which, in ancient times, the northern tribes elected or recognised their chiefs, and held their solemn popular assemblies, or *comitia*. There was also one of those singular towers, so common in Ireland as to have proved the favourite theme of her antiquaries; but of which the real use and meaning seems yet to be hidden in the mist of ages. This of Holm-Peel had been converted to the purpose of a watch-tower. There were, besides, Runic monuments, of which legends could not be deciphered; and later inscriptions to the memory of champions, of whom the names only were preserved from oblivion. But tradition and superstitious eld, still most busy where real history is silent, had filled up the long blank of accurate information with tales of Sea-kings and Pirates, Hebridean Chiefs and Norwegian Resolutes, who had formerly warred against, and in defence of, this famous castle. Superstition, too, had her tales of fairies, ghosts, and spectres—her legions of saints and demons, of fairies and of familiar spirits, which in no corner of the British empire are told and received with more absolute credulity than in the Isle of Man.

Amidst all these ruins of an older time arose the Castle itself,—now ruinous—but in Charles II.'s reign well garrisoned, and, in a military point of view, kept in complete order. It was a venerable and very ancient building, containing several apartments of sufficient size and height to be termed noble. But in the surrender of the island by Christian, the furniture had been, in a great measure, plundered or destroyed by the republican soldiers; so that, as we have before hinted, its present state was ill adapted for the residence of the noble proprietor. Yet it had been often the abode, not only of the Lords of Man, but of those state prisoners whom the Kings of Britain sometimes committed to their charge.

In this Castle of Holm-Peel the great king-maker, Richard, Earl of Warwick, was confined, during one period of his eventful life, to ruminate at leisure on his farther schemes of ambition. And here, too, Eleanor, the haughty wife of the good Duke of Gloucester, pined out in seclusion the last days of her banishment. The sentinels pretended that her discontented spectre was often visible at night, traversing the battlements of the external walls, or standing motionless beside a particular solitary turret of one of the watch-towers with which they are flanked; but dissolving into air at cock-crow, or when the bell tolled from the yet remaining tower of St. Germain's church.

Such was Holm-Peel, as records inform us, till towards the end of the seventeenth century.

It was in one of the lofty but almost unfurnished apartments of this ancient Castle that Julian Peveril found his friend the Earl of Derby, who had that moment sat down to a breakfast composed of various sorts of fish. "Welcome, most imperial Julian," he said; "welcome to our royal fortress; in which, as yet, we are not like to be starved with hunger, though well-nigh dead for cold."

Julian answered by inquiring the meaning of this sudden movement.

"Upon my word," replied the Earl, "you know nearly as much of it as I do. My mother has told me nothing about it; supposing I believe, that I shall at length be tempted to inquire; but she will find herself much mistaken. I shall give her credit for full wisdom in her proceedings, rather than put her to the trouble to render a reason, though no woman can render one better."

"Come, come; this is affectation, my good friend," said Julian. "You should inquire into these matters a little more curiously."

"To what purpose?" said the Earl. "To hear old stories about the Tinwald laws, and the contending rights of the lords and the clergy, and all the rest of that Celtic barbarism, which, like Burgesse's thorough-paced doctrine enters at one ear, paces through, and goes out at the other?"

"Come, my lord," said Julian, "you are not so indifferent as you would represent yourself—you are dying of curiosity to know what this hurry is about; only you think it the courtly humour to appear careless about your own affairs."

"Why, what should it be about," said the young Earl "unless some factious dispute between our Majesty's minister, Governor Nowel, and our vassals? or perhaps some dispute betwixt our Majesty and the ecclesiastical jurisdictions? for all which our Majesty cares as little as any king in Christendom."

"I rather suppose there is intelligence from England," said Julian. "I heard last night in Peel-town, that Greenhalgh is come over with unpleasant news."

"He brought me nothing that was pleasant, I wot well," said the Earl. "I expected something from St. Evremond or Hamilton—some new plays by Dryden or Lee, and some waggery or lampoons from the Rose Coffee-house; and the fellow has brought me nothing but a parcel of tracts about Protestants and Papists, and a folio play-book, one of the conceptions, as she calls them, of that old mad-woman the Duchess of Newcastle."

"Hush, my lord, for Heaven's sake," said Peveril; "here comes the Countess; and you know she takes fire at the least slight to her ancient friend."

"Let her read her ancient friend's works herself, then," said the Earl, "and think her as wise as she can; but I would not give one of Waller's songs, or Denham's satires, for a whole cart-load of her Grace's trash.—But here comes our mother with care on her brow."

The Countess of Derby entered the apartment accordingly, holding in her hand a number of papers. Her dress was a mourning habit, with a deep train of black velvet, which was borne by a little favourite attendant, a deaf and dumb girl, whom, in compassion to her misfortune, the Countess had educated about her person for some years. Upon this unfortunate being, with the touch of romance which marked many of her proceedings, Lady Derby had conferred the name of Fenella, after some ancient princess of the island. The Countess herself was not much changed since we last presented her to our readers. Age had rendered her step more slow, but not less majestic; and while it traced some wrinkles on her brow, had failed to quench the sedate fire of her dark eye. The young men rose to receive her with the formal reverence which they knew she loved, and were greeted by her with equal kindness.

"Cousin Peveril," she said (for so she always called Julian, in respect of his mother being a kinswoman of her husband), "you were ill abroad last night, when we much needed your counsel."

Julian answered with a blush which he could not prevent, "That he had followed his sport among the mountains too far—had returned late—and finding her ladyship was removed from Castletown, had instantly followed the family hither; but as the night-bell was rung, and the watch set, he had deemed it more respectful to lodge for the night in the town."

"It is well," said the Countess; "and, to do you justice, Julian, you are seldom a truant neglecter of appointed hours, though, like the rest of the youth of this age, you sometimes suffer your sports to consume too much of time that should be spent otherwise. But for your friend Philip, he is an avowed contemner of good order, and seems to find pleasure in wasting time, even when he does not enjoy it."

"I have been enjoying my time just now at least," said the Earl, rising from table, and picking his teeth carelessly. "These fresh mullets are delicious, and so is the Lachrymæ Christi. I pray you to sit down to breakfast, Julian, and partake the goods my royal foresight has provided. Never was King of Man nearer being left to the mercy of the execrable brandy of his dominions. Old Griffiths would never, in the midst of our speedy retreat of last night, have had sense enough to secure a few flasks, had I not given him a hint on that important subject. But presence of mind amid danger and tumult, is a jewel I have always possessed."

"I wish, then, Philip, you would exert it to better purpose," said the Countess, half smiling, half displeased; for she doated upon her son with all a mother's fondness, even when she was most angry with him for being deficient in the peculiar and chivalrous disposition which had distinguished his father, and which was so analogous to her own romantic and high-minded character. "Lend me your signet," she added with a sigh; "for it were, I fear, vain to ask you to read over these despatches from England, and execute the warrants which I have thought necessary to prepare in consequence."

"My signet you shall command with all my heart, madam," said Earl Philip; "but spare me the revision of what you are much more capable to decide upon. I am, you know, a most complete *Roi fainéant*, and never once interfered with my *Maire de palais* in her proceedings."

The Countess made signs to her little train-bearer, who immediately went to seek for wax and a light, with which she presently returned.

In the meanwhile the Countess continued, addressing Peveril. "Philip does himself less than justice. When you were absent, Julian (for if you had been here I would have given you the credit of prompting your friend), he had a spirited controversy with the Bishop, for an attempt to enforce spiritual censures against a poor wretch, by confining her in the vault under the chapel."[*]

[*] *Beneath the only one of the four churches in Castle Rushin, which is or was kept a little in repair, is a prison or dungeon, for ecclesiastical offenders. "This," says Waldron, "is certainly one of the most dreadful places that imagination can form; the sea runs under it through the hollows of the rock with such a continual roar, that you would think it were every moment breaking in upon you, and over it are the vaults for burying the dead. The stairs descending to this place of terrors are not above thirty, but so steep and narrow, that they are very difficult to go down, a child of eight or nine years not being able to pass them but sideways."*—WALDRON'S Description of the Isle of Man, in his Works, p. 105, folio.

"Do not think better of me than I deserve," said the Earl to Peveril; "my mother has omitted to tell you the culprit was pretty Peggy of Ramsey, and her crime what in Cupid's courts would have been called a peccadillo."

"Do not make yourself worse than you are," replied Peveril, who observed the Countess's cheek redden,—"you know you would have done as much for the oldest and poorest cripple in the island. Why, the vault is under the burial-ground of the chapel, and, for aught I know, under the ocean itself, such a roaring do the waves make in its vicinity. I think no one could remain there long, and retain his reason."

"It is an infernal hole," answered the Earl, "and I will have it built up one day—that is full certain.—But hold—hold—for God's sake, madam—what are you going to do?—Look at the seal before you put it to the warrant—you will see it is a choice antique cameo Cupid, riding on a flying fish—I had it for twenty zechins, from Signor Furabosco at Rome—a most curious matter for an antiquary, but which will add little faith to a Manx warrant."

"My signet—my signet—Oh! you mean that with the three monstrous legs, which I supposed was devised as the most preposterous device, to represent our most absurd Majesty of Man.—The signet—I have not seen it since I gave it to Gibbon, my monkey, to play with.—He did whine for it most piteously—I hope he has not gemmed the green breast of ocean with my symbol of sovereignty!"

"Now, by Heaven," said the Countess, trembling, and colouring deeply with anger, "it was your father's signet! the last pledge which he sent, with his love to me, and his blessing to thee, the night before they murdered him at Bolton!"

"Mother, dearest mother," said the Earl, startled out of his apathy, and taking her hand, which he kissed tenderly, "I did but jest—the signet is safe—Peveril knows that it is so.—Go fetch it, Julian, for Heaven's sake—here are my keys—it is in the left-hand drawer of my travelling cabinet—Nay, mother, forgive me—it was but a *mauvaise plaisanterie*; only an ill-imagined jest, ungracious, and in bad taste, I allow—but only one of Philip's follies. Look at me, dearest mother, and forgive me."

The Countess turned her eyes towards him, from which the tears were fast falling.

"Philip," she said, "you try me too unkindly, and too severely. If times are changed, as I have heard you allege—if the dignity of rank, and the high feelings of honour and duty, are now drowned in giddy jests and trifling pursuits, let *me* at least, who live secluded from all others, die without perceiving the change which has happened, and, above all, without perceiving it in mine own son. Let me not learn the general prevalence of this levity, which laughs at every sense of dignity or duty, through your personal disrespect—Let me not think that when I die——"

"Speak nothing of it, mother," said the Earl, interrupting her affectionately. "It is true, I cannot promise to be all my father and his fathers were; for we wear silk vests for their steel coats, and feathered beavers for their crested helmets. But believe me, though to be an absolute Palmerin of England is not in my nature, no son ever loved a mother more dearly, or would do more to oblige her. And that you may own this, I will forthwith not only seal the warrants, to the great endangerment of my precious fingers, but also read the same from end to end, as well as the despatches thereunto appertaining."

A mother is easily appeased, even when most offended; and it was with an expanding heart that the Countess saw her son's very handsome features, while reading these papers, settle into an expression of deep seriousness, such as they seldom wore. It seemed to her as if the family likeness to his gallant but unfortunate father increased, when the expression of their countenances became similar in gravity. The Earl had no sooner perused the despatches, which he did with great attention, than he rose and said, "Julian, come with me."

The Countess looked surprised. "I was wont to share your father's counsels, my son," she said; "but do not think that I wish to intrude myself upon yours. I am too well pleased to see you assume the power and the duty of thinking for yourself, which is what I have so long urged you to do. Nevertheless, my experience, who have been so long administrator of your authority in Man, might not, I think, be superfluous to the matter in hand."

"Hold me excused, dearest mother," said the Earl gravely. "The interference was none of my seeking; had you taken your own course, without consulting me, it had been well; but since I have entered on the affair—and it appears sufficiently important—I must transact it to the best of my own ability."

"Go, then, my son," said the Countess, "and may Heaven enlighten thee with its counsel, since thou wilt have none of mine.—I trust that you, Master Peveril, will remind him of what is fit for his own honour; and that only a coward abandons his rights, and only a fool trusts his enemies."

The Earl answered not, but, taking Peveril by the arm, led him up a winding stair to his own apartment, and from thence into a projecting turret, where, amidst the roar of waves and sea-mews' clang, he held with him the following conversation:—

"Peveril, it is well I looked into these warrants. My mother queens it at such a rate as may cost me not only my crown, which I care little for, but perhaps my head, which, though others may think little of, I would feel it an inconvenience to be deprived of."

"What on earth is the matter?" said Peveril, with considerable anxiety.

"It seems," said the Earl of Derby, "that old England who takes a frolicsome brain-fever once every two or three years, for the benefit of her doctors, and the purification of the torpid lethargy brought on by peace and prosperity, is now gone stark staring mad on the subject of a real or supposed Popish plot. I read one programme on the subject, by a fellow called Oates, and thought it the most absurd foolery I ever perused. But that cunning fellow Shaftesbury, and some others amongst the great ones, having taken it up, and are driving on at such a rate as makes harness crack, and horses smoke for it. The King, who has sworn never to kiss the pillow his father went to sleep on, temporises, and gives way to the current; the Duke of York, suspected and hated on account of his religion, is about to be driven to the continent; several principal Catholic nobles are in the Tower already; and the nation, like a bull at Tutbury-running, is persecuted with so many inflammatory rumours and pestilent pamphlets, that she has cocked her tail, flung up her heels, taken the bit betwixt her teeth and is as furiously unmanageable as in the year 1642."

"All this you must have known already," said Peveril; "I wonder you told me not of news so important."

"It would have taken long to tell," said the Earl; "moreover, I desired to have you *solus*; thirdly, I was about to speak when my mother entered; and, to conclude, it was no business of mine. But these despatches of my politic mother's private correspondent put a new face on the whole matter; for it seems some of the informers—a trade which, having become a thriving one, is now pursued by many—have dared to glance at the Countess herself as an agent in this same plot—ay, and have found those that are willing enough to believe their report."

"On mine honour," said Peveril, "you both take it with great coolness. I think the Countess the more composed of the two; for, except her movement hither, she exhibited no mark of alarm, and, moreover, seemed no way more anxious to communicate the matter to your lordship than decency rendered necessary."

"My good mother," said the Earl, "loves power, though it has cost her dear. I wish I could truly say that my neglect of business is entirely assumed in order to leave it in her hands, but that better motive combines with natural indolence. But she seems to have feared I should not think exactly like her in this emergency, and she was right in supposing so."

"How comes the emergency upon you?" said Julian; "and what form does the danger assume?"

"Marry, thus it is," said the Earl: "I need not bid you remember the affair of Colonel Christian. That man, besides his widow, who is possessed of large property—Dame Christian of Kirk Truagh, whom you have often heard of, and perhaps seen—left a brother called Edward Christian, whom you never saw at all. Now this brother—but I dare say you know all about it."

"Not I, on my honour," said Peveril; "you know the Countess seldom or never alludes to the subject."

"Why," replied the Earl, "I believe in her heart she is something ashamed of that gallant act of royalty and supreme jurisdiction, the consequences of which maimed my estate so cruelly.—Well, cousin, this same Edward Christian was one of the dempsters at the time, and, naturally enough, was unwilling to concur in the sentence which adjudged his *ainé* to be shot like a dog. My mother, who was then in high force, and not to be controlled by any one, would have served the dempster with the same sauce with which she dressed his brother, had he not been wise enough to fly from the island. Since that time, the thing has slept on all hands; and though we knew that Dempster Christian made occasionally secret visits to his friends in the island, along with two or three other Puritans of the same stamp, and particularly a prick-eared rogue, called Bridgenorth, brother-in-law to the deceased, yet my mother, thank Heaven, has hitherto had the sense to connive at them, though, for some reason or other, she holds this Bridgenorth in especial disfavour."

"And why," said Peveril, forcing himself to speak, in order to conceal the very unpleasant surprise which he felt, "why does the Countess now depart from so prudent a line of conduct?"

"You must know the case is now different. The rogues are not satisfied with toleration—they would have supremacy. They have found friends in the present heat of the popular mind. My mother's name, and especially that of her confessor, Aldrick the Jesuit, have been mentioned in this beautiful maze of a plot, which if any such at all exists, she knows as little of as you or I. However, she is a Catholic, and that is enough; and I have little doubt, that if the fellows could seize on our scrap of a kingdom here, and cut all our throats, they would have the thanks of the present House of Commons, as willingly as old Christian had those of the Rump, for a similar service."

"From whence did you receive all this information?" said Peveril, again speaking, though by the same effort which a man makes who talks in his sleep.

"Aldrick has seen the Duke of York in secret, and his Royal Highness, who wept while he confessed his want of power to protect his friends—and it is no trifle will wring tears from him—told him to send us information that we should look to our safety, for that Dempster Christian and Bridgenorth were in the island, with secret and severe orders; that they had formed a considerable party there, and were likely to be owned and protected in anything they might undertake against us. The people of Ramsey and Castletown are unluckily discontented about some new regulation of the imposts; and to tell you the truth, though I thought yesterday's sudden remove a whim of my mother's, I am almost satisfied they would have blockaded us in Rushin Castle, where we could not have held out for lack of provisions. Here we are better supplied, and, as we are on our guard, it is likely the intended rising will not take place."

"And what is to be done in this emergency?" said Peveril.

"That is the very question, my gentle coz," answered the Earl. "My mother sees but one way of going to work, and that is by royal authority. Here are the warrants she had prepared, to search for, take, and apprehend the bodies of Edward Christian and Robert—no, Ralph Bridgenorth, and bring them to instant trial. No doubt, she would soon have had them in the Castle court, with a dozen of the old matchlocks levelled against them—that is her way of solving all sudden difficulties."

"But in which, I trust, you do not acquiesce, my lord," answered Peveril, whose thoughts instantly reverted to Alice, if they could ever be said to be absent from her.

"Truly I acquiesce in no such matter," said the Earl. "William Christian's death cost me a fair half of my inheritance. I have no fancy to fall under the displeasure of my royal brother, King Charles, for a new escapade of the same kind. But how to pacify my mother, I know not. I wish the insurrection would take place, and then, as we are better provided than they can be, we might knock the knaves on the head; and yet, since they began the fray, we should keep the law on our side."

"Were it not better," said Peveril, "if by any means these men could be induced to quit the island?"

"Surely," replied the Earl; "but that will be no easy matter—they are stubborn on principle, and empty threats will not move them. This stormblast in London is wind in their sails, and they will run their length, you may depend on it. I have sent orders, however, to clap up the Manxmen upon whose assistance they depended, and if I can find the two worthies themselves, here are sloops enough in the harbour—I will take the freedom to send them on a pretty distant voyage, and I hope matters will be settled before they return to give an account of it."

At this moment a soldier belonging to the garrison approached the two young men, with many bows and tokens of respect. "How now, friend?" said the Earl to him. "Leave off thy courtesies, and tell thy business."

The man, who was a native islander, answered in Manx, that he had a letter for his honour, Master Julian Peveril. Julian snatched the billet hastily, and asked whence it came.

"It was delivered to him by a young woman," the soldier replied, "who had given him a piece of money to deliver it into Master Peveril's own hand."

"Thou art a lucky fellow, Julian," said the Earl. "With that grave brow of thine, and thy character for sobriety and early wisdom, you set the girls a-wooing, without waiting till they are asked; whilst I, their drudge and vassal, waste both language and leisure, without getting a kind word or look, far less a billet-doux."

This the young Earl said with a smile of conscious triumph, as in fact he valued himself not a little upon the interest which he supposed himself to possess with the fair sex.

Meanwhile the letter impressed on Peveril a different train of thoughts from what his companion apprehended. It was in Alice's hand, and contained these few words:—

"I fear what I am going to do is wrong; but I must see you. Meet me at noon at Goddard Crovan's Stone, with as much secrecy as you

may."

The letter was signed only with the initials A. B.; but Julian had no difficulty in recognising the handwriting, which he had often seen, and which was remarkably beautiful. He stood suspended, for he saw the difficulty and impropriety of withdrawing himself from the Countess and his friend at this moment of impending danger; and yet, to neglect this invitation was not to be thought of. He paused in the utmost perplexity.

"Shall I read your riddle?" said the Earl. "Go where love calls you—I will make an excuse to my mother—only, most grave anchorite, be hereafter more indulgent to the failings of others than you have been hitherto, and blaspheme not the power of the little deity."

"Nay, but, Cousin Derby—" said Peveril, and stopped short, for he really knew not what to say. Secured himself by a virtuous passion from the contagious influence of the time, he had seen with regret his noble kinsman mingle more in its irregularities than he approved of, and had sometimes played the part of a monitor. Circumstances seemed at present to give the Earl a right of retaliation. He kept his eye fixed on his friend, as if he waited till he should complete his sentence, and at length exclaimed, "What! cousin, quiteà-la-mort! Oh, most judicious Julian! Oh, most precise Peveril! have you bestowed so much wisdom on me that you have none left for yourself? Come, be frank—tell me name and place—or say but the colour of the eyes of the most emphatic she—or do but let me have the pleasure to hear thee say, 'I love!'—confess one touch of human frailty—conjugate the verb *amo*, and I will be a gentle schoolmaster, and you shall have, as father Richards used to say, when we were under his ferule, '*licentia exeundi*.'"

"Enjoy your pleasant humour at my expense, my lord," said Peveril; "I fairly will confess thus much, that I would fain, if it consisted with my honour and your safety, have two hours at my own disposal; the more especially as the manner in which I shall employ them may much concern the safety of the island."

"Very likely, I dare say," answered the Earl, still laughing. "No doubt you are summoned out by some Lady Politic Wouldbe of the isle, to talk over some of the breast-laws: but never mind—go, and go speedily, that you may return as quickly as possible. I expect no immediate explosion of this grand conspiracy. When the rogues see us on our guard, they will be cautious how they break out. Only, once more make haste."

Peveril thought this last advice was not to be neglected; and, glad to extricate himself from the raillery of his cousin, walked down towards the gate of the Castle, meaning to cross over to the village, and there take horse at the Earl's stables, for the place of rendezvous.

CHAPTER XVI

Acasto.—Can she not speak?

Oswald.—If speech be only in accented sounds,

Framed by the tongue and lips, the maiden's dumb;

But if by quick and apprehensive look,

By motion, sign, and glance, to give each meaning,

Express as clothed in language, be term'd speech,

She hath that wondrous faculty; for her eyes,

Like the bright stars of heaven, can hold discourse,

Though it be mute and soundless.

—OLD PLAY.

At the head of the first flight of steps which descended towards the difficult and well-defended entrance of the Castle of Holm-Peel, Peveril was met and stopped by the Countess's train-bearer. This little creature—for she was of the least and slightest size of womankind—was exquisitely well formed in all her limbs, which the dress she usually wore (a green silk tunic, of a peculiar form) set off to the best advantage. Her face was darker than the usual hue of Europeans; and the profusion of long and silken hair, which, when she undid the braids in which she commonly wore it, fell down almost to her ankles, was also rather a foreign attribute. Her countenance resembled a most beautiful miniature; and there was a quickness, decision, and fire, in Fenella's look, and especially in her eyes, which was probably rendered yet more alert and acute, because, through the imperfection of her other organs, it was only by sight that she could obtain information of what passed around her.

The pretty mute was mistress of many little accomplishments, which the Countess had caused to be taught to her in compassion for her forlorn situation, and which she learned with the most surprising quickness. Thus, for example, she was exquisite in the use of the needle, and so ready and ingenious a draughtswoman, that, like the ancient Mexicans, she sometimes made a hasty sketch with her pencil the means of conveying her ideas, either by direct or emblematical representation. Above all, in the art of ornamental writing, much studied at that period, Fenella was so great a proficient, as to rival the fame of Messrs. Snow, Shelley, and other masters of the pen, whose copybooks, preserved in the libraries of the curious, still show the artists smiling on the frontispiece in all the honours of flowing gowns and full-bottomed wigs, to the eternal glory of caligraphy.

The little maiden had, besides these accomplishments, much ready wit and acuteness of intellect. With Lady Derby, and with the two young gentlemen, she was a great favourite, and used much freedom in conversing with them, by means of a system of signs which had been gradually established amongst them, and which served all ordinary purposes of communication.

But, though happy in the indulgence and favour of her mistress, from whom indeed she was seldom separate, Fenella was by no means a favourite with the rest of the household. In fact, it seemed that her temper, exasperated perhaps by a sense of her misfortune, was by no means equal to her abilities. She was very haughty in her demeanour, even towards the upper domestics, who in that establishment were of a much higher rank and better birth than in the families of the nobility in general. These often complained, not only of her pride and reserve, but of her high and irascible temper and vindictive disposition. Her passionate propensity had been indeed idly encouraged by the young men, and particularly by the Earl, who sometimes amused himself with teasing her, that he might enjoy the various singular motions and murmurs by which she expressed her resentment. Towards him, these were of course only petulant and whimsical indications of pettish anger. But when she was angry with others of inferior degree—before whom she did not control herself—the expression of her passion, unable to display itself in language, had something even frightful, so singular were the tones, contortions, and gestures, to which she had recourse. The lower domestics, to whom she was liberal almost beyond her apparent means, observed her with much deference and respect, but much more from fear than from any real attachment; for the caprices of her temper displayed themselves even in her gifts; and those who most frequently shared her bounty, seemed by no means assured of the benevolence of the motives which dictated her liberality.

All these peculiarities led to a conclusion consonant with Manx superstition. Devout believers in all the legends of fairies so dear to the Celtic tribes, the Manx people held it for certainty that the elves were in the habit of carrying off mortal children before baptism, and leaving in the cradle of the new born babe one of their own brood, which was almost always imperfect in some one or other of the organs proper to humanity. Such a being they conceived Fenella to be; and the smallness of her size, her dark complexion, her long locks of silken hair, the singularity of her manners and tones, as well as the caprices of her temper, were to their thinking all attributes of the irritable, fickle, and dangerous race from which they supposed her to be sprung. And it seemed, that although no jest appeared to offend her more than when Lord Derby called her in sport the Elfin Queen, or otherwise alluded to her supposed connection with "the pigmy folk," yet still her perpetually affecting to wear the colour of green, proper to the fairies, as well as some other peculiarities, seemed voluntarily assumed by her, in order to countenance the superstition, perhaps because it gave her more authority among the lower orders.

Many were the tales circulated respecting the Countess's *Elf*, as Fenella was currently called in the island; and the malcontents of the stricter persuasion were convinced, that no one but a Papist and a malignant would have kept near her person a creature of such doubtful origin. They conceived that Fenella's deafness and dumbness were only towards those of this world, and that she had been heard talking, and singing, and laughing most elvishly, with the invisibles of her own

race. They alleged, also, that she had a *Double*, a sort of apparition resembling her, which slept in the Countess's ante-room, or bore her train, or wrought in her cabinet, while the real Fenella joined the song of the mermaids on the moonlight sands, or the dance of the fairies in the haunted valley of Glenmoy, or on the heights of Snawfell and Barool. The sentinels, too, would have sworn they had seen the little maiden trip past them in their solitary night walks, without their having it in their power to challenge her, any more than if they had been as mute as herself. To all this mass of absurdities the better informed paid no more attention than to the usual idle exaggerations of the vulgar, which so frequently connect that which is unusual with what is supernatural.

Such, in form and habits, was the little female, who, holding in her hand a small old-fashioned ebony rod, which might have passed for a divining wand, confronted Julian on the top of the flight of steps which led down the rock from the Castle court. We ought to observe, that as Julian's manner to the unfortunate girl had been always gentle, and free from those teasing jests in which his gay friend indulged, with less regard to the peculiarity of her situation and feelings; so Fenella, on her part, had usually shown much greater deference to him than to any of the household, her mistress, the Countess, always excepted.

On the present occasion, planting herself in the very midst of the narrow descent, so as to make it impossible for Peveril to pass by her, she proceeded to put him to the question by a series of gestures, which we will endeavour to describe. She commenced by extending her hand slightly, accompanied with the sharp inquisitive look which served her as a note of interrogation. This was meant as an inquiry whether he was going to a distance. Julian, in reply, extended his arm more than half, to intimate that the distance was considerable. Fenella looked grave, shook her head, and pointed to the Countess's window, which was visible from the spot where they stood. Peveril smiled, and nodded, to intimate there was no danger in quitting her mistress for a short space. The little maiden next touched an eagle's feather which she wore in her hair, a sign which she usually employed to designate the Earl, and then looked inquisitively at Julian once more, as if to say, "Goes he with you?" Peveril shook his head, and, somewhat wearied by these interrogatories, smiled, and made an effort to pass. Fenella frowned, struck the end of her ebony rod perpendicularly on the ground, and again shook her head, as if opposing his departure. But finding that Julian persevered in his purpose, she suddenly assumed another and milder mood, held him by the skirt of his cloak with one hand, and raised the other in an imploring attitude, whilst every feature of her lively countenance was composed into the like expression of supplication; and the fire of the large dark eyes, which seemed in general so keen and piercing as almost to over-animate the little sphere to which they belonged, seemed quenched, for the moment, in the large drops which hung on her long eyelashes, but without falling.

Julian Peveril was far from being void of sympathy towards the poor girl, whose motives in opposing his departure appeared to be her affectionate apprehension for her mistress's safety. He endeavoured to reassure by smiles, and, at the same time, by such signs as he could devise, to intimate that there was no danger, and that he would return presently; and having succeeded in extricating his cloak from her grasp, and in passing her on the stair, he began to descend the steps as speedily as he could, in order to avoid farther importunity.

But with activity much greater than his, the dumb maiden hastened to intercept him, and succeeded by throwing herself, at the imminent risk of life and limb, a second time into the pass which he was descending, so as to interrupt his purpose. In order to achieve this, she was obliged to let herself drop a considerable height from the wall of a small flanking battery, where two patereroes were placed to scour the pass, in case any enemy could have mounted so high. Julian had scarce time to shudder at her purpose, as he beheld her about to spring from the parapet, ere, like a thing of gossamer, she stood light and uninjured on the rocky platform below. He endeavoured, by the gravity of his look and gesture, to make her understand how much he blamed her rashness; but the reproof, though obviously quite intelligible, was entirely thrown away. A hasty wave of her hand intimated how she contemned the danger and the remonstrance; while, at the same time, she instantly resumed, with more eagerness than before, the earnest and impressive gestures by which she endeavoured to detain him in the fortress. Julian was somewhat staggered by her pertinacity. "Is it possible," he thought, "that any danger can approach the Countess, of which this poor maiden has, by the extreme acuteness of her observation, obtained knowledge which has escaped others?"

He signed to Fenella hastily to give him the tablets and the pencil which she usually carried with her, and wrote on them the question, "Is there danger near to your mistress, that you thus stop me?"

"There is danger around the Countess," was the answer instantly written down; "but there is much more in your own purpose."

"How?—what?—what know you of my purpose?" said Julian, forgetting, in his surprise, that the party he addressed had neither ear to comprehend, nor voice to reply to uttered language. She had regained her book in the meantime, and sketched, with a rapid pencil, on one of the leaves, a scene which she showed to Julian. To his infinite surprise he recognised Goddard Crovan's Stone, a remarkable monument, of which she had given the outline with sufficient accuracy; together with a male and female figure, which, though only indicated by a few slight touches of the pencil, bore yet, he thought, some resemblance to himself and Alice Bridgenorth.

When he had gazed on the sketch for an instant with surprise, Fenella took the book from his hand, laid her finger upon the drawing, and slowly and sternly shook her head, with a frown which seemed to prohibit the meeting which was there represented. Julian, however, though disconcerted, was in no shape disposed to submit to the authority of his mistress. By whatever means she, who so seldom stirred from the Countess's apartment, had become acquainted with a secret which he thought entirely his own, he esteemed it the more necessary to keep the appointed rendezvous, that he might learn from Alice, if possible, how the secret had transpired. He had also formed the intention of seeking out Bridgenorth; entertaining an idea that a person so reasonable and calm as he had shown himself in their late conference, might be persuaded, when he understood that the Countess was aware of his intrigues, to put an end to her danger and his own, by withdrawing from the island. And could he succeed in this point, he should at once, he thought, render a material benefit to the father of his beloved Alice—remove the Earl from his state of anxiety—save the Countess from a second time putting her feudal jurisdiction in opposition to that of the Crown of England—and secure quiet possession of the island to her and her family.

With this scheme of mediation on his mind, Peveril determined to rid himself of the opposition of Fenella to his departure, with less ceremony than he had hitherto observed towards her; and suddenly lifting up the damsel in his arms before she was aware of his purpose, he turned about, set her down on the steps above him, and began to descend the pass himself as speedily as possible. It was then that the dumb maiden gave full course to the vehemence of her disposition; and clapping her hands repeatedly, expressed her displeasure in sound, or rather a shriek, so extremely dissonant, that it resembled more the cry of a wild creature, than anything which could have been uttered by female organs. Peveril was so astounded at the scream as it rung through the living rocks, that he could not help stopping and looking back in alarm, to satisfy himself that she had not sustained some injury. He saw her, however, perfectly safe, though her face seemed inflamed and distorted with passion. She stamped at him with her foot, shook her clenched hand, and turning her back upon him, without further adieu, ran up the rude steps as lightly as a kid could have tripped up that rugged ascent, and paused for a moment at the summit of the first flight.

Julian could feel nothing but wonder and compassion for the impotent passion of a being so unfortunately circumstanced, cut off, as it were, from the rest of mankind, and incapable of receiving in childhood that moral discipline which teaches us mastery of our wayward passions, ere yet they have attained their meridian strength and violence. He waved his hand to her, in token of amicable farewell; but she only replied by once more menacing him with her little hand clenched; and then ascending the rocky staircase with almost preternatural speed, was soon out of sight.

Julian, on his part, gave no farther consideration to her conduct or its motives, but hastening to the village on the mainland, where the stables of the Castle were situated, he again took his palfrey from the stall, and was soon mounted and on his way to the appointed place of rendezvous, much marvelling, as he ambled forward with speed far greater than was promised by the diminutive size of the animal he was mounted on, what could have happened to produce so great a change in Alice's conduct towards him, that in place of enjoining his absence as usual, or recommending his departure from the island, she should now voluntarily invite him to a meeting. Under impression of the various doubts which succeeded each other in his imagination, he sometimes pressed Fairy's sides with his legs; sometimes laid his holly rod lightly on her neck; sometimes incited her by his voice, for the mettled animal needed neither whip nor spur, and achieved the distance betwixt the Castle of Holm-Peel and the stone at Goddard Crovan, at the rate of twelve miles within the hour.

The monumental stone, designed to commemorate some feat of an ancient King of Man, which had been long forgotten, was erected on the side of a narrow lonely valley, or rather glen, secluded from observation by the steepness of its banks, upon a projection of which stood the tall, shapeless, solitary rock, frowning, like a shrouded giant, over the brawling of the small rivulet which watered the ravine.

CHAPTER XVII

*This a love-meeting? See the maiden mourns,
And the sad suitor bends his looks on earth.
There's more hath pass'd between them than belongs
To Love's sweet sorrows.*

—OLD PLAY.

As he approached the monument of Goddard Crovan, Julian cast many an anxious glance to see whether any object visible beside the huge grey stone should apprise him, whether he was anticipated, at the appointed place of rendezvous, by her who had named it. Nor was it long before the flutter of a mantle, which the breeze slightly waved, and the motion necessary to replace it upon the wearer's shoulders, made him aware that Alice had already reached their place of meeting. One instant set the palfrey at liberty, with slackened girths and loosened reins, to pick its own way through the dell at will; another placed Julian Peveril by the side of Alice Bridgenorth.

That Alice should extend her hand to her lover, as with the ardour of a young greyhound he bounded over the obstacles of the rugged path, was as natural as that Julian, seizing on the hand so kindly stretched out, should devour it with kisses, and, for a moment or two, without reprehension; while the other hand, which should have aided in the liberation of its fellow, served to hide the blushes of the fair owner. But Alice, young as she was, and attached to Julian by such long habits of kindly intimacy, still knew well how to subdue the tendency of her own treacherous affections.

"This is not right," she said, extricating her hand from Julian's grasp, "this is not right, Julian. If I have been too rash in admitting such a meeting as the present, it is not you that should make me sensible of my folly."

Julian Peveril's mind had been early illuminated with that touch of romantic fire which deprives passion of selfishness, and confers on it the high and refined tone of generous and disinterested devotion. He let go the hand of Alice with as much respect as he could have paid to that of a princess; and when she seated herself upon a rocky fragment, over which nature had stretched a cushion of moss and lichen, interspersed with wild flowers, backed with a bush of copsewood, he took his place beside her, indeed, but at such distance as to intimate the duty of an attendant, who was there only to hear and to obey. Alice Bridgenorth became more assured as she observed the power which she possessed over her lover; and the self-command which Peveril exhibited, which other damsels in her situation might have judged inconsistent with intensity of passion, she appreciated more justly, as a proof of his respectful and disinterested sincerity. She recovered, in addressing him, the tone of confidence which rather belonged to the scenes of their early acquaintance, than to those which had passed betwixt them since Peveril had disclosed his affection, and thereby had brought restraint upon their intercourse.

"Julian," she said, "your visit of yesterday—your most ill-timed visit, has distressed me much. It has misled my father—it has endangered you. At all risks, I resolved that you should know this, and blame me not if I have taken a bold and imprudent step in desiring this solitary interview, since you are aware how little poor Deborah is to be trusted."

"Can you fear misconstruction from me, Alice?" replied Peveril warmly; "from me, whom you have thus highly favoured—thus deeply obliged?"

"Cease your protestations, Julian," answered the maiden; "they do but make me the more sensible that I have acted over boldly. But I did for the best.—I could not see you whom I have known so long—you, who say you regard me with partiality——"

"Say that I regard you with partiality!" interrupted Peveril in his turn. "Ah, Alice, with a cold and doubtful phrase you have used to express the most devoted, the most sincere affection!"

"Well, then," said Alice sadly, "we will not quarrel about words; but do not again interrupt me.—I could not, I say, see you, who, I believe, regard me with sincere though vain and fruitless attachment, rush blindfold into a snare, deceived and seduced by those very feelings towards me."

"I understand you not, Alice," said Peveril; "nor can I see any danger to which I am at present exposed. The sentiments which your father has expressed towards me, are of a nature irreconcilable with hostile purposes. If he is not offended with the bold wishes I may have formed,—and his whole behaviour shows the contrary,—I know not a man on earth from whom I have less cause to apprehend any danger or ill-will."

"My father," said Alice, "means well by his country, and well by you; yet I sometimes fear he may rather injure than serve his good cause; and still more do I dread, that in attempting to engage you as an auxiliary, he may forget those ties which ought to bind you, and I am sure which will bind you, to a different line of conduct from his own."

"You lead me into still deeper darkness, Alice," answered Peveril. "That your father's especial line of politics differs widely from mine, I know well; but how many instances have occurred, even during the bloody scenes of civil warfare, of good and worthy men laying the prejudice of party affections aside, and regarding each other with respect, and even with friendly attachment, without being false to principle on either side?"

"It may be so," said Alice; "but such is not the league which my father desires to form with you, and that to which he hopes your misplaced partiality towards his daughter may afford a motive for your forming with him."

"And what is it," said Peveril, "which I would refuse, with such a prospect before me?"

"Treachery and dishonour!" replied Alice; "whatever would render you unworthy of the poor boon at which you aim—ay, were it more worthless than I confess it to be."

"Would your father," said Peveril, as he unwillingly received the impression which Alice designed to convey,— "would he, whose views of duty are so strict and severe—would he wish to involve me in aught, to which such harsh epithets as treachery and dishonour can be applied with the lightest shadow of truth?"

"Do not mistake me, Julian," replied the maiden; "my father is incapable of requesting aught of you that is not to his thinking just and honourable; nay, he conceives that he only claims from you a debt, which is due as a creature to the Creator, and as a man to your fellow-men."

"So guarded, where can be the danger of our intercourse?" replied Julian. "If he be resolved to require, and I determined to accede to, nothing save what flows from conviction, what have I to fear, Alice? And how is my intercourse with your father dangerous? Believe not so; his speech has already made impression on me in some particulars, and he listened with candour and patience to the objections which I made occasionally. You do Master Bridgenorth less than justice in confounding him with the unreasonable bigots in policy and religion, who can listen to no argument but what favours their own prepossessions."

"Julian," replied Alice; "it is you who misjudge my father's powers, and his purpose with respect to you, and who overrate your own powers of resistance. I am but a girl, but I have been taught by circumstances to think for myself, and to consider the character of those around me. My father's views in ecclesiastical and civil policy are as dear to him as the life which he cherishes only to advance them. They have been, with little alteration, his companions through life. They brought him at one period into prosperity, and when they suited not the times, he suffered for having held them. They have become not only a part, but the very dearest part, of his existence. If he shows them not to you at first, in the flexible strength which they have acquired over his mind, do not believe that they are the less powerful. He who desires to make converts, must begin by degrees. But that he should sacrifice to an inexperienced young man, whose ruling motive he will term a childish passion, any part of those treasured principles which he has maintained through good repute and bad repute—Oh, do not dream of such an impossibility! If you meet at all, you must be the wax, he the seal—you must receive, he must bestow, an absolute impression."

"That," said Peveril, "were unreasonable. I will frankly avow to you, Alice, that I am not a sworn bigot to the opinions entertained by my father, much as I respect his person. I could wish that our Cavaliers, or whatsoever they are pleased to call themselves, would have some more charity towards those who differ from them in Church and State. But to hope that I would surrender the principles in which I have lived, were to suppose me capable of deserting my benefactress, and breaking the hearts of my parents."

"Even so I judged of you," answered Alice; "and therefore I asked this interview, to conjure that you will break off all intercourse with our family—return to your parents—or, what will be much safer, visit the continent once more, and abide till God send better days to England, for these are black with many a storm."

"And can you bid me go, Alice?" said the young man, taking her unresisting hand; "can you bid me go, and yet own an interest in my fate?—Can you bid me, for fear of dangers, which, as a man, as a gentleman, and a loyal one, I am bound to show my face to, meanly abandon my parents, my friends, my country—suffer the existence of evils which I might aid to prevent—forego the prospect of doing such little good as might be in my power—fall from an active and honourable station, into the condition of a fugitive and time-server—Can you bid me do all this, Alice? Can you bid me do all this, and, in the same breath, bid farewell for ever to you and happiness?—It is impossible—I cannot surrender at once my love and my honour."

"There is no remedy," said Alice, but she could not suppress a sigh while she said so—"there is no remedy—none whatever. What we might have been to each other, placed in more favourable circumstances, it avails not to think of now; and, circumstanced as we are, with open war about to break out betwixt our parents and friends, we can be but well-wishers—cold and distant well-wishers, who must part on this spot, and at this hour, never meet again."

"No, by Heaven!" said Peveril, animated at the same time by his own feelings, and by the sight of the emotions which his companion in vain endeavoured to suppress,—*"No, by Heaven!"* he exclaimed, "we part not—Alice, we part not. If I am to leave my native land, you shall be my companion in my exile. What have you to lose?—Whom have you to abandon?—Your father?—The good old cause, as it is termed, is dearer to him than a thousand daughters; and setting him aside, what tie is there between you and this barren isle—between my Alice and any spot of the British dominions, where her Julian does not sit by her?"

"O Julian," answered the maiden, "why make my duty more painful by visionary projects, which you ought not to name, or I to listen to? Your parents—my father—it cannot be!"

"Fear not for my parents, Alice," replied Julian, and pressing close to his companion's side, he ventured to throw his arm around her; "they love me, and they will soon learn to love, in Alice, the only being on earth who could have rendered their son happy. And for your own father, when State and Church intrigues allow him to bestow a thought upon you, will he not think that your happiness, your security, is better cared for when you are my wife, than were you to continue under the mercenary charge of yonder foolish woman? What could his pride desire better for you, than the establishment which will one day be mine? Come then, Alice, and since you condemn me to banishment—since you deny me a share in those stirring achievements which are about to agitate England—come! do you—for you only can—do you reconcile me to exile and inaction, and give happiness to one, who, for your sake, is willing to resign honour."

"It cannot—it cannot be," said Alice, faltering as she uttered her negative. "And yet," she said, "how many in my place—left alone and unprotected, as I am—But I must not—I must not—for your sake, Julian, I must not."

"Say not for my sake you must not, Alice," said Peveril eagerly; "this is adding insult to cruelty. If you will do aught for my sake, you will say yes; or you will suffer this dear head to drop on my shoulder—the slightest sign—the moving of an eyelid, shall signify consent. All shall be prepared within an hour; within another the priest shall unite us; and within a third, we leave the isle behind us, and seek our fortunes on the continent." But while he spoke, in joyful anticipation of the consent which he implored, Alice found means to collect together her resolution, which, staggered by the eagerness of her lover, the impulse of her own affections, and the singularity of her situation,—seeming, in her case, to justify what would have been most blamable in another,—had more than half abandoned her.

The result of a moment's deliberation was fatal to Julian's proposal. She extricated herself from the arm which had pressed her to his side—arose, and repelling his attempts to approach or detain her, said, with a simplicity not unmingled with dignity, "Julian, I always knew I risked much in inviting you to this meeting; but I did not guess that I could have been so cruel to both to you and to myself, as to suffer you to discover what you have to-day seen too plainly—that I love you better than you love me. But since you do know it, I will show you that Alice's love is disinterested—She will not bring an ignoble name into your ancient house. If hereafter, in your line, there should arise some who may think the claims of the hierarchy too exorbitant, the powers of the crown too extensive, men shall not say these ideas were derived from Alice Bridgenorth, their whig granddame."

"Can you speak thus, Alice?" said her lover. "Can you use such expressions? and are you not sensible that they show plainly it is your own pride, not regard for me, that makes you resist the happiness of both?"

"Not so, Julian; not so," answered Alice, with tears in her eyes; "it is the command of duty to us both—of duty, which we cannot transgress, without risking our happiness here and hereafter. Think what I, the cause of all, should feel, when your father frowns, your mother weeps, your noble friends stand aloof, and you, even you yourself, shall have made the painful discovery, that you have incurred the contempt and resentment of all to satisfy a boyish passion; and that the poor beauty, once sufficient to mislead you, is gradually declining under the influence of grief and vexation. This I will not risk. I see distinctly it is best we should here break off and part; and I thank God, who gives me light enough to perceive, and strength enough to withstand, your folly as well as my own. Farewell, then, Julian; but first take the solemn advice which I called you hither to impart to you:—Shun my father—you cannot walk in his paths, and be true to gratitude and to honour. What he doth from pure and honourable motives, you cannot aid him in, except upon the suggestion of a silly and interested passion, at variance with all the engagements you have formed at coming into life."

"Once more, Alice," answered Julian, "I understand you not. If a course of action is good, it needs no vindication from the actor's motives—if bad, it can derive none."

"You cannot blind me with your sophistry, Julian," replied Alice Bridgenorth, "any more than you can overpower me with your passion. Had the patriarch destined his son to death upon any less ground than faith and humble obedience to a divine commandment, he had meditated a murder and not a sacrifice. In our late bloody and lamentable wars, how many drew swords on either side, from the purest and most honourable motives? How many from the culpable suggestions of ambition, self-seeking, and love of plunder? Yet while they marched in the same ranks, and spurred their horses at the same trumpet-sound, the memory of the former is dear to us as patriots or loyalists—that of those who acted on mean or unworthy promptings, is either execrated or forgotten. Once more, I warn you, avoid my father—leave this island, which will be soon agitated by strange incidents—while you stay, be on your guard—distrust everything—be jealous of every one, even of those to whom it may seem almost impossible, from circumstances, to attach a shadow of suspicion—trust not the very stones of the most secret apartment in Holm-Peel, for that which hath wings shall carry the matter."

Here Alice broke off suddenly, and with a faint shriek; for, stepping from behind the stunted copse which had concealed him, her father stood unexpectedly before them.

The reader cannot have forgotten that this was the second time in which the stolen interviews of the lovers had been interrupted by the unexpected apparition of Major Bridgenorth. On this second occasion his countenance exhibited anger mixed with solemnity, like that of the spirit to a ghost-seer, whom he upbraids with having neglected a charge imposed at their first meeting. Even his anger, however, produced no more violent emotion than a cold sternness of manner in his speech and action. "I thank you, Alice," he said to his daughter, "for the pains you have taken to traverse my designs towards this young man, and towards yourself. I thank you for the hints you have thrown out before my appearance, the suddenness of which alone has prevented you from carrying your confidence to a pitch which would have placed my life and that of others at the discretion of a boy, who, when the cause of God and his country is laid before him, has not leisure to think of them, so much is he occupied with such a baby-face as thine." Alice, pale as death, continued motionless, with her eyes fixed on the ground, without attempting the slightest reply to the ironical reproaches of her father.

"And you," continued Major Bridgenorth, turning from his daughter to her lover,—“you sir, have well repaid the liberal confidence which I placed in you with so little reserve. You I have to thank also for some lessons, which may teach me to rest satisfied with the churl's blood which nature has poured into my veins, and with the rude nurture which my father allotted to me.”

"I understand you not, sir," replied Julian Peveril, who, feeling the necessity of saying something, could not, at the moment, find anything more fitting to say.

"Yes, sir, I thank you," said Major Bridgenorth, in the same cold sarcastic tone, "for having shown me that breach of hospitality, infringement of good faith, and such like peccadilloes, are not utterly foreign to the mind and conduct of the heir of a knightly house of twenty descents. It is a great lesson to me, sir: for hitherto I had thought with the vulgar, that gentle manners went with gentle blood. But perhaps courtesy is too chivalrous a quality to be wasted in intercourse with a round-headed fanatic like myself."

"Major Bridgenorth," said Julian, "whatever has happened in this interview which may have displeased you, has been the result of feelings suddenly and strongly animated by the crisis of the moment—nothing was premeditated."

"Not even your meeting, I suppose?" replied Bridgenorth, in the same cold tone. "You, sir, wandered hither from Holm-Peel—my daughter strolled forth from the Black Fort; and chance, doubtless, assigned you a meeting by the stone of Goddard Crovan?—Young man, disgrace yourself by no more apologies—they are worse than useless.—And you, maiden, who, in your fear of losing your lover, could verge on betraying what might have cost a father his life—begone to your home. I will talk with you at more leisure, and teach you practically those duties which you seem to have forgotten."

"On my honour, sir," said Julian, "your daughter is guiltless of all that can offend you; she resisted every offer which the headstrong violence of my passion urged me to press upon her."

"And, in brief," said Bridgenorth, "I am not to believe that you met in this remote place of rendezvous by Alice's special appointment?"

Peveril knew not what to reply, and Bridgenorth again signed with his hand to his daughter to withdraw.

"I obey you, father," said Alice, who had by this time recovered from the extremity of her surprise,—“I obey you; but Heaven is my witness that you do me more than injustice in suspecting me capable of betraying your secrets, even had it been necessary to save my own life or that of Julian. That you are walking in a dangerous path I well know; but you do it with your eyes open, and are actuated by motives of which you can estimate the worth and value. My sole wish was, that this young man should not enter blindfold on the same perils; and I had a right to warn him, since the feelings by which he is hoodwinked had a direct reference to me."

"Tis well, minion," said Bridgenorth, "you have spoken your say. Retire, and let me complete the conference which you have so considerably commenced."

"I go, sir," said Alice.—“Julian, to you my last words are, and I would speak them with my last breath—Farewell, and caution!"

She turned from them, disappeared among the underwood, and was seen no more.

"A true specimen of womankind," said her father, looking after her, "who would give the cause of nations up, rather than endanger a hair of her lover's head.—You, Master Peveril, doubtless, hold her opinion, that the best love is a safe love!"

"Were danger alone in my way," said Peveril, much surprised at the softened tone in which Bridgenorth made this observation, "there are few things which I would not face to—to—deserve your good opinion."

"Or rather to win my daughter's hand," said Bridgenorth. "Well, young man, one thing has pleased me in your conduct, though of much I have my reasons to complain—one thing *has* pleased me. You have surmounted that bounding wall of aristocratical pride, in which your father, and, I suppose, his fathers, remained imprisoned, as in the precincts of a feudal fortress—you have leaped over this barrier, and shown yourself not unwilling to ally yourself with a family whom your father spurns as low-born and ignoble."

However favourable this speech sounded towards success in his suit, it so broadly stated the consequences of that success so far as his parents were concerned, that Julian felt it in the last degree difficult to reply. At length, perceiving that Major Bridgenorth seemed resolved quietly to await his answer, he mustered up courage to say, "The feelings which I entertain towards your daughter, Master Bridgenorth, are of a nature to supersede many other considerations, to which in any other case, I should feel it my duty to give the most reverential attention. I will not disguise from you, that my father's prejudices against such a match would be very strong; but I devoutly believe they would disappear when he came to know the merit of Alice Bridgenorth, and to be sensible that she only could make his son happy."

"In the meanwhile, you are desirous to complete the union which you propose without the knowledge of your parents, and take the chance of their being hereafter reconciled to it? So I understand, from the proposal which you made but lately to my daughter."

The turns of human nature, and of human passion, are so irregular and uncertain, that although Julian had but a few minutes before urged to Alice a private marriage, and an elopement to the continent, as a measure upon which the whole happiness of his life depended, the proposal seemed not to him half so delightful when stated by the calm, cold, dictatorial accents of her father. It sounded no longer like the dictates of ardent passion, throwing all other considerations aside, but as a distinct surrender of the dignity of his house to one who seemed to consider their relative situation as the triumph of Bridgenorth over Peveril. He was mute for a moment, in the vain attempt to shape his answer so as at once to intimate acquiescence in what Bridgenorth stated, and a vindication of his own regard for his parents, and for the honour of his house.

This delay gave rise to suspicion, and Bridgenorth's eye gleamed, and his lip quivered while he gave vent to it. "Hark ye, young man—deal openly with me in this matter, if you would not have me think you the execrable villain who would have seduced an unhappy girl, under promises which he never designed to fulfil. Let me but suspect this, and you shall see, on the spot, how far your pride and your pedigree will preserve you against the just vengeance of a father."

"You do me wrong," said Peveril—"you do me infinite wrong, Major Bridgenorth, I am incapable of the infamy which you allude to. The proposal I made to your daughter was as sincere as ever was offered by man to woman. I only hesitated, because you think it necessary to examine me so very closely; and to possess yourself of all my purposes and sentiments, in their fullest extent, without explaining to me the tendency of your own."

"Your proposal, then, shapes itself thus," said Bridgenorth:—"You are willing to lead my only child into exile from her native country, to give her a claim to kindness and protection from your family, which you know will be disregarded, on condition I consent to bestow her hand on you, with a fortune sufficient to have matched your ancestors, when they had most reason to boast of their wealth. This, young man, seems no equal bargain. And yet," he continued, after a momentary pause, "so little do I value the goods of this world, that it might not be utterly beyond thy power to reconcile me to the match which you have proposed to me, however unequal it may appear."

"Show me but the means which can propitiate your favour, Major Bridgenorth," said Peveril,—“for I will not doubt that they will be consistent with my honour and duty—and you shall soon see how eagerly I will obey your directions, or submit to your conditions."

"They are summed in few words," answered Bridgenorth. "Be an honest man, and the friend of your country."

"No one has ever doubted," replied Peveril, "that I am both."

"Pardon me," replied the Major; "no one has, as yet, seen you show yourself either. Interrupt me not—I question not your will to be both; but you have hitherto neither had the light nor the opportunity necessary for the display of your principles, or the service of your country. You have lived when an apathy of mind, succeeding to the agitations of the Civil War, had made men indifferent to state affairs, and more willing to cultivate their own ease, than to stand in the gap when the Lord was pleading with Israel. But we are Englishmen; and with us such unnatural lethargy cannot continue long. Already, many of those who most desired the return of Charles Stewart, regard him as a King whom Heaven, importuned by our entreaties, gave to us in His anger. His unlimited licence—and example so readily followed by the young and the gay around him—has disgusted the minds of all sober and thinking men. I had not now held conference with you in this intimate fashion, were I not aware that you, Master Julian, were free from such stain of the times. Heaven, that rendered the King's course of license fruitful, had denied issue to his bed of wedlock; and in the gloomy and stern character of his bigoted successor, we already see what sort of monarch shall succeed to the crown of England. This is a critical period, at which it necessarily becomes the duty of all men to step forward, each in his degree, and aid in rescuing the country

which gave us birth." Peveril remembered the warning which he had received from Alice, and bent his eyes on the ground, without returning any reply. "How is it, young man," continued Bridgenorth, after a pause—"so young as thou art, and bound by no ties of kindred profligacy with the enemies of your country, you can be already hardened to the claims she may form on you at this crisis?"

"It were easy to answer you generally, Major Bridgenorth," replied Peveril—"It were easy to say that my country cannot make a claim on me which I will not promptly answer at the risk of lands and life. But in dealing thus generally, we should but deceive each other. What is the nature of this call? By whom is it to be sounded? And what are to be the results? for I think you have already seen enough of the evils of civil war, to be wary of again awakening its terrors in a peaceful and happy country."

"They that are drenched with poisonous narcotics," said the Major, "must be awakened by their physicians, though it were with the sound of the trumpet. Better that men should die bravely, with their arms in their hands, like free-born Englishmen, than that they should slide into the bloodless but dishonoured grave which slavery opens for its vassals—But it is not of war that I was about to speak," he added, assuming a milder tone. "The evils of which England now complains, are such as can be remedied by the wholesome administration of her own laws, even in the state in which they are still suffered to exist. Have these laws not a right to the support of every individual who lives under them? Have they not a right to yours?"

As he seemed to pause for an answer, Peveril replied, "I have to learn, Major Bridgenorth, how the laws of England have become so far weakened as to require such support as mine. When that is made plain to me, no man will more willingly discharge the duty of a faithful liegeman to the law as well as the King. But the laws of England are under the guardianship of upright and learned judges, and of a gracious monarch."

"And of a House of Commons," interrupted Bridgenorth, "no longer doting upon restored monarchy, but awakened, as with a peal of thunder, to the perilous state of our religion, and of our freedom. I appeal to your own conscience, Julian Peveril, whether this awakening hath not been in time, since you yourself know, and none better than you, the secret but rapid strides which Rome has made to erect her Dagon of idolatry within our Protestant land."

Here Julian seeing, or thinking he saw, the drift of Bridgenorth's suspicions, hastened to exculpate himself from the thought of favouring the Roman Catholic religion. "It is true," he said, "I have been educated in a family where that faith is professed by one honoured individual, and that I have since travelled in Popish countries; but even for these very reasons I have seen Popery too closely to be friendly to its tenets. The bigotry of the laymen—the persevering arts of the priesthood—the perpetual intrigue for the extension of the forms without the spirit of religion—the usurpation of that Church over the consciences of men—and her impious pretensions to infallibility, are as inconsistent to my mind as they can seem to yours, with common-sense, rational liberty, freedom of conscience, and pure religion."

"Spoken like the son of your excellent mother," said Bridgenorth, grasping his hand; "for whose sake I have consented to endure so much from your house unrequited, even when the means of requital were in my own hand."

"It was indeed from the instructions of that excellent parent," said Peveril, "that I was enabled, in my early youth, to resist and repel the insidious attacks made upon my religious faith by the Catholic priests into whose company I was necessarily thrown. Like her, I trust to live and die in the faith of the reformed Church of England."

"The Church of England!" said Bridgenorth, dropping his young friend's hand, but presently resuming it—"Alas! that Church, as now constituted, usurps scarcely less than Rome herself upon men's consciences and liberties; yet, out of the weakness of this half-reformed Church, may God be pleased to work out deliverance to England, and praise to Himself. I must not forget, that one whose services have been in the cause incalculable, wears the garb of an English priest, and hath had Episcopal ordination. It is not for us to challenge the instrument, so that our escape is achieved from the net of the fowler. Enough, that I find thee not as yet enlightened with the purer doctrine, but prepared to profit by it when the spark shall reach thee. Enough, in especial, that I find thee willing to uplift thy testimony to cry aloud and spare not, against the errors and arts of the Church of Rome. But remember, what thou hast now said, thou wilt soon be called upon to justify, in a manner the most solemn—the most awful."

"What I have said," replied Julian Peveril, "being the unbiassed sentiments of my heart, shall, upon no proper occasion, want the support of my open avowal; and I think it strange you should doubt me so far."

"I doubt thee not, my young friend," said Bridgenorth; "and I trust to see that name rank high amongst those by whom the prey shall be rent from the mighty. At present, thy prejudices occupy thy mind like the strong keeper of the house mentioned in Scripture. But there shall come a stronger than he, and make forcible entry, displaying on the battlements that sign of faith in which alone there is found salvation.—Watch, hope, and pray, that the hour may come."

There was a pause in the conversation, which was first broken by Peveril. "You have spoken to me in riddles, Major Bridgenorth; and I have asked you for no explanation. Listen to a caution on my part, given with the most sincere good-will. Take a hint from me, and believe it, though it is darkly expressed. You are here—at least are believed to be here—on an errand dangerous to the Lord of the island. That danger will be retorted on yourself, if you make Man long your place of residence. Be warned, and depart in time."

"And leave my daughter to the guardianship of Julian Peveril! Runs not your counsel so, young man?" answered Bridgenorth. "Trust my safety, Julian, to my own prudence. I have been accustomed to guide myself through worse dangers than now environ me. But I thank you for your caution, which I am willing to believe was at least partly disinterested."

"We do not, then, part in anger?" said Peveril.

"Not in anger, my son," said Bridgenorth, "but in love and strong affection. For my daughter, thou must forbear every thought of seeing her, save through me. I accept not thy suit, neither do I reject it; only this I intimate to you, that he who would be my son, must first show himself the true and loving child of his oppressed and deluded country. Farewell; do not answer me now, thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and it may be that strife (which I desire not) should fall between us. Thou shalt hear of me sooner than thou thinkest for."

He shook Peveril heartily by the hand, and again bid him farewell, leaving him under the confused and mingled impression of pleasure, doubt, and wonder. Not a little surprised to find himself so far in the good graces of Alice's father, that his suit was even favoured with a sort of negative encouragement, he could not help suspecting, as well from the language of the daughter as of the father, that Bridgenorth was desirous, as the price of his favour, that he should adopt some line of conduct inconsistent with the principles in which he had been educated.

"You need not fear, Alice," he said in his heart; "not even your hand would I purchase by aught which resembled unworthy or truckling compliance with tenets which my heart disowns; and well I know, were I mean enough to do so, even the authority of thy father were insufficient to compel thee to the ratification of so mean a bargain. But let me hope better things. Bridgenorth, though strong-minded and sagacious, is haunted by the fears of Popery, which are the bugbears of his sect. My residence in the family of the Countess of Derby is more than enough to inspire him with suspicions of my faith, from which, thank Heaven, I can vindicate myself with truth and a good conscience."

So thinking, he again adjusted the girths of his palfrey, replaced the bit which he had slipped out of its mouth, that it might feed at liberty, and mounting, pursued his way back to the Castle of Holm-Peel, where he could not help fearing that something extraordinary might have happened in his absence.

But the old pile soon rose before him, serene, and sternly still, amid the sleeping ocean. The banner, which indicated that the Lord of Man held residence within its ruinous precincts, hung motionless by the ensign-staff. The sentinels walked to and fro on their posts, and hummed or whistled their Manx airs. Leaving his faithful companion, Fairy, in the village as before, Julian entered the Castle, and found all within in the same state of quietness and good order which external appearances had announced.

*Now rede me, rede me, brother dear,
Throughout Merry England,
Where will I find a messenger,
Betwixt us two to send.*

—BALLAD OF KING ESTMERE.

Julian's first encounter, after re-entering the Castle, was with its young Lord, who received him with his usual kindness and lightness of humour.

"Thrice welcome, Sir Knight of Dames," said the Earl; "here you rove gallantly, and at free will, through our dominions, fulfilling of appointments, and achieving amorous adventures; while we are condemned to sit in our royal halls, as dull and as immovable as if our Majesty was carved on the stern of some Manx smuggling dogger, and christened the King Arthur of Ramsey."

"Nay, in that case you would take the sea," said Julian, "and so enjoy travel and adventure enough."

"Oh, but suppose me wind-bound, or detained in harbour by a revenue pink, or ashore, if you like it, and lying high and dry upon the sand. Imagine the royal image in the dullest of all predicaments, and you have not equalled mine."

"I am happy to hear, at least, that you have had no disagreeable employment," said Julian; "the morning's alarm has blown over, I suppose?"

"In faith it has, Julian; and our close inquiries cannot find any cause for the apprehended insurrection. That Bridgenorth is in the island seems certain; but private affairs of consequence are alleged as the cause of his visit; and I am not desirous to have him arrested unless I could prove some malpractices against him and his companions. In fact, it would seem we had taken the alarm too soon. My mother speaks of consulting you on the subject, Julian; and I will not anticipate her solemn communication. It will be partly apologetical, I suppose; for we begin to think our retreat rather unroyal, and that, like the wicked, we have fled when no man pursued. This idea afflicts my mother, who, as a Queen-Dowager, a Queen-Regent, a heroine, and a woman in general, would be extremely mortified to think that her precipitate retreat hither had exposed her to the ridicule of the islanders; and she is disconcerted and out of humour accordingly. In the meanwhile, my sole amusement has been the grimaces and fantastic gestures of that ape Fenella, who is more out of humour, and more absurd, in consequence, than you ever saw her. Morris says, it is because you pushed her downstairs, Julian—how is that?"

"Nay, Morris has misreported me," answered Julian; "I did but lift her *up* stairs to be rid of her importunity; for she chose, in her way, to contest my going abroad in such an obstinate manner, that I had no other mode of getting rid of her."

"She must have supposed your departure, at a moment so critical, was dangerous to the state of our garrison," answered the Earl; "it shows how dearly she esteems my mother's safety, how highly she rates your prowess. But, thank Heaven, there sounds the dinner-bell. I would the philosophers, who find a sin and waste of time in good cheer, could devise us any pastime half so agreeable."

The meal which the young Earl had thus longed for, as a means of consuming a portion of the time which hung heavy on his hands, was soon over; as soon, at least, as the habitual and stately formality of the Countess's household permitted. She herself, accompanied by her gentlewomen and attendants, retired early after the tables were drawn; and the young gentlemen were left to their own company. Wine had, for the moment, no charms for either; for the Earl was out of spirits from ennui, and impatience of his monotonous and solitary course of life; and the events of the day had given Peveril too much matter for reflection, to permit his starting amusing or interesting topics of conversation. After having passed the flask in silence betwixt them once or twice, they withdrew each to a separate embrasure of the windows of the dining apartment, which, such was the extreme thickness of the wall, were deep enough to afford a solitary recess, separated, as it were, from the chamber itself. In one of these sat the Earl of Derby, busied in looking over some of the new publications which had been forwarded from London; and at intervals confessing how little power or interest these had for him, by yawning fearfully as he looked out on the solitary expanse of waters, which, save from the flight of a flock of sea-gulls, or a solitary cormorant, offered so little of variety to engage his attention.

Peveril, on his part, held a pamphlet also in his hand, without giving, or affecting to give it, even his occasional attention. His whole soul turned upon the interview which he had had that day with Alice Bridgenorth, and with her father; while he in vain endeavoured to form any hypothesis which could explain to him why the daughter, to whom he had no reason to think himself indifferent, should have been so suddenly desirous of their eternal separation, while her father, whose opposition he so much dreaded, seemed to be at least tolerant of his addresses. He could only suppose, in explanation, that Major Bridgenorth had some plan in prospect, which it was in his own power to farther or to impede; while, from the demeanour, and indeed the language, of Alice, he had but too much reason to apprehend that her father's favour could only be conciliated by something, on his own part, approaching to dereliction of principle. But by no conjecture which he could form, could he make the least guess concerning the nature of that compliance, of which Bridgenorth seemed desirous. He could not imagine, notwithstanding Alice had spoken of treachery, that her father would dare to propose to him uniting in any plan by which the safety of the Countess, or the security of her little kingdom of Man, was to be endangered. This carried such indelible disgrace in the front, that he could not suppose the scheme proposed to him by any who was not prepared to defend with his sword, upon the spot, so flagrant an insult offered to his honour. And such a proceeding was totally inconsistent with the conduct of Major Bridgenorth in every other respect, besides his being too calm and cold-blooded to permit of his putting a mortal affront upon the son of his old neighbour, to whose mother he confessed so much of obligation.

While Peveril in vain endeavoured to extract something like a probable theory out of the hints thrown out by the father and by the daughter—not without the additional and lover-like labour of endeavouring to reconcile his passion to his honour and conscience—he felt something gently pull him by the cloak. He unclasped his arms, which, in meditation, had been folded on his bosom; and withdrawing his eyes from the vacant prospect of sea-coast and sea which they perused, without much consciousness upon what they rested, he beheld beside him the little dumb maiden, the elfin Fenella. She was seated on a low cushion or stool, with which she had nestled close to Peveril's side, and had remained there for a short space of time, expecting, no doubt, he would become conscious of her presence; until, tired of remaining unnoticed, she at length solicited his attention in the manner which we have described. Startled out of his reverie by this intimation of her presence, he looked down, and could not, without interest, behold this singular and helpless being.

Her hair was unloosened, and streamed over her shoulders in such length, that much of it lay upon the ground, and in such quantity, that it formed a dark veil, or shadow, not only around her face, but over her whole slender and minute form. From the profusion of her tresses looked forth her small and dark, but well-formed features, together with the large and brilliant black eyes; and her whole countenance was composed into the imploring look of one who is doubtful of the reception she is about to meet with from a valued friend, while she confesses a fault, pleads an apology, or solicits a reconciliation. In short, the whole face was so much alive with expression, that Julian, though her aspect was so familiar to him, could hardly persuade himself but that her countenance was entirely new. The wild, fantastic, elvish vivacity of the features, seemed totally vanished, and had given place to a sorrowful, tender, and pathetic cast of countenance, aided by the expression of the large dark eyes, which, as they were turned up towards Julian, glistened with moisture, that, nevertheless, did not overflow the eyelids.

Conceiving that her unwonted manner arose from a recollection of the dispute which had taken place betwixt them in the morning, Peveril was anxious to restore the little maiden's gaiety, by making her sensible that there dwelt on his mind no displeasing recollection of their quarrel. He smiled kindly, and shook her hand in one of his; while, with the familiarity of one who had known her from childhood, he stroked down her long dark tresses with the other. She stooped her head, as if ashamed, and, at the same time, gratified with his caresses—and he was thus induced to continue them, until, under the veil of her rich and abundant locks, he suddenly felt his other hand, which she still held in hers, slightly touched with her lips, and, at the same time, moistened with a tear.

At once, and for the first time in his life, the danger of being misinterpreted in his familiarity with a creature to whom the usual modes of explanation were a blank, occurred to Julian's mind; and, hastily withdrawing his hand, and changing his posture, he asked her, by a sign which custom had rendered familiar, whether she brought any message to him from the Countess. She started up, and arranged herself in her seat with the rapidity of lightning; and, at the same moment, with one turn of her hand, braided her length of locks into a natural head-dress of the most beautiful kind. There was, indeed, when she looked up, a blush still visible on her dark features; but their melancholy and languid expression had given place to that of wild and restless vivacity, which was most common to them. Her eyes

gleamed with more than their wonted fire, and her glances were more piercingly wild and unsettled than usual. To Julian's inquiry, she answered, by laying her hand on her heart—a motion by which she always indicated the Countess—and rising, and taking the direction of her apartment, she made a sign to Julian to follow her.

The distance was not great betwixt the dining apartment and that to which Peveril now followed his mute guide; yet, in going thither, he had time enough to suffer cruelly from the sudden suspicion, that this unhappy girl had misinterpreted the uniform kindness with which he had treated her, and hence come to regard him with feelings more tender than those which belong to friendship. The misery which such a passion was likely to occasion to a creature in her helpless situation, and actuated by such lively feelings, was great enough to make him refuse credit to the suspicion which pressed itself upon his mind; while, at the same time, he formed the internal resolution so to conduct himself towards Fenella, as to check such misplaced sentiments, if indeed she unhappily entertained them towards him.

When they reached the Countess's apartment, they found her with writing implements, and many sealed letters before her. She received Julian with her usual kindness; and having caused him to be seated, beckoned to the mute to resume her needle. In an instant Fenella was seated at an embroidering-frame; where, but for the movement of her dexterous fingers, she might have seemed a statue, so little did she move from her work either head or eye. As her infirmity rendered her presence no bar to the most confidential conversation, the Countess proceeded to address Peveril as if they had been literally alone together.

"Julian," she said, "I am not now about to complain to you of the sentiments and conduct of Derby. He is your friend—he is my son. He has kindness of heart and vivacity of talent; and yet——"

"Dearest lady," said Peveril, "why will you distress yourself with fixing your eye on deficiencies which arise rather from a change of times and manners, than any degeneracy of my noble friend? Let him be once engaged in his duty, whether in peace or war, and let me pay the penalty if he acquits not himself becoming his high station."

"Ay," replied the Countess; "but when will the call of duty prove superior to that of the most idle or trivial indulgence which can serve to drive over the lazy hour? His father was of another mould; and how often was it my lot to entreat that he would spare, from the rigid discharge of those duties which his high station imposed, the relaxation absolutely necessary to recruit his health and his spirits!"

"Still, my dearest lady," said Peveril, "you must allow, that the duties to which the times summoned your late honoured lord, were of a more stirring, as well as a more peremptory cast, than those which await your son."

"I know not that," said the Countess. "The wheel appears to be again revolving; and the present period is not unlikely to bring back such scenes as my young years witnessed.—Well, be it so; they will not find Charlotte de la Tremouille broken in spirit, though depressed by years. It was even on this subject I would speak with you, my young friend. Since our first early acquaintance—when I saw your gallant behaviour as I issued forth to your childish eye, like an apparition, from my place of concealment in your father's castle—it has pleased me to think you a true son of Stanley and Peveril. I trust your nurture in this family has been ever suited to the esteem in which I hold you.—Nay, I desire no thanks.—I have to require of you, in return, a piece of service, not perhaps entirely safe to yourself, but which, as times are circumstanced, no person is so well able to render to my house."

"You have been ever my good and noble lady," answered Peveril, "as well as my kind, and I may say maternal, protectress. You have a right to command the blood of Stanley in the veins of every one—You have a thousand rights to command it in mine."[*]

[*] *The reader cannot have forgotten that the Earl of Derby was head*

of the great house of Stanley.

"My advices from England," said the Countess, "resemble more the dreams of a sick man, than the regular information which I might have expected from such correspondents as mine;—their expressions are like those of men who walk in their sleep, and speak by snatches of what passes in their dreams. It is said, a plot, real or fictitious, has been detected among the Catholics, which has spread far wider and more uncontrollable terror than that of the fifth of November. Its outlines seem utterly incredible, and are only supported by the evidence of wretches, the meanest and most worthless in the creation; yet it is received by the credulous people of England with the most undoubting belief."

"This is a singular delusion, to rise without some real ground," answered Julian.

"I am no bigot, cousin, though a Catholic," replied the Countess. "I have long feared that the well-meant zeal of our priests for increasing converts, would draw on them the suspicion of the English nation. These efforts have been renewed with double energy since the Duke of York conformed to the Catholic faith; and the same event has doubled the hate and jealousy of the Protestants. So far, I fear, there may be just cause of suspicion, that the Duke is a better Catholic than an Englishman, and that bigotry has involved him, as avarice, or the needy greed of a prodigal, has engaged his brother, in relations with France, whereof England may have too much reason to complain. But the gross, thick, and palpable fabrications of conspiracy and murder, blood and fire—the imaginary armies—the intended massacres—form a collection of falsehoods, that one would have thought indigestible, even by the coarse appetite of the vulgar for the marvellous and horrible; but which are, nevertheless, received as truth by both Houses of Parliament, and questioned by no one who is desirous to escape the odious appellation of friend to the bloody Papists, and favourer of their infernal schemes of cruelty."

"But what say those who are most likely to be affected by these wild reports?" said Julian. "What say the English Catholics themselves?—a numerous and wealthy body, comprising so many noble names?"

"Their hearts are dead within them," said the Countess. "They are like sheep penned up in the shambles, that the butcher may take his choice among them. In the obscure and brief communications which I have had by a secure hand, they do but anticipate their own utter ruin, and ours—so general is the depression, so universal the despair."

"But the King," said Peveril,—"the King and the Protestant Royalists—what say they to this growing tempest?"

"Charles," replied the Countess, "with his usual selfish prudence, truckles to the storm; and will let cord and axe do their work on the most innocent men in his dominions, rather than lose an hour of pleasure in attempting their rescue. And, for the Royalists, either they have caught the general delirium which has seized on Protestants in general, or they stand aloof and neutral, afraid to show any interest in the unhappy Catholics, lest they be judged altogether such as themselves, and abettors of the fearful conspiracy in which they are alleged to be engaged. In fact, I cannot blame them. It is hard to expect that mere compassion for a persecuted sect—or, what is yet more rare, an abstract love of justice—should be powerful enough to engage men to expose themselves to the awakened fury of a whole people; for, in the present state of general agitation, whoever disbelieves the least tittle of the enormous improbabilities which have been accumulated by these wretched reformers, is instantly hunted down, as one who would smother the discovery of the Plot. It is indeed an awful tempest; and, remote as we lie from its sphere, we must expect soon to feel its effects."

"Lord Derby already told me something of this," said Julian; "and that there were agents in this island whose object was to excite insurrection."

"Yes," answered the Countess, and her eye flashed fire as she spoke; "and had my advice been listened to, they had been apprehended in the very fact; and so dealt with, as to be a warning to all others how they sought this independent principality on such an errand. But my son, who is generally so culpably negligent of his own affairs, was pleased to assume the management of them upon this crisis."

"I am happy to learn, madam," answered Peveril, "that the measures of precaution which my kinsman has adopted, have had the complete effect of disconcerting the conspiracy."

"For the present, Julian; but they should have been such as would have made the boldest tremble to think of such infringement of our rights in future. But Derby's present plan is fraught with greater danger; and yet there is something in it of gallantry, which has my sympathy."

"What is it, madam?" inquired Julian anxiously; "and in what can I aid it, or avert its dangers?"

"He purposes," said the Countess, "instantly to set forth for London. He is, he says, not merely the feudal chief of a small island, but one of the noble Peers of England, who must not remain in the security of an obscure and distant castle, when his name, or that of his mother, is slandered before his Prince and people. He will take his place, he says, in the House of Lords, and publicly demand justice for the insult thrown on his house, by perjured and interested witnesses."

"It is a generous resolution, and worthy of my friend," said Julian Peveril. "I will go with him and share his fate, be it what it may."

"Alas, foolish boy!" answered the Countess, "as well may you ask a hungry lion to feel compassion, as a prejudiced and furious people to do justice. They are like the madman at the height of frenzy, who murders without compunction his best and dearest friend; and only wonders and wails over his own cruelty, when he is recovered from his delirium."

"Pardon me, dearest lady," said Julian, "this cannot be. The noble and generous people of England cannot be thus strangely misled. Whatever prepossessions may be current among the more vulgar, the House of Legislature cannot be deeply infected by them—they will remember their own dignity."

"Alas! cousin," answered the Countess, "when did Englishmen, even of the highest degree, remember anything, when hurried away by the violence of party feeling? Even those who have too much sense to believe in the incredible fictions which gull the multitude, will beware how they expose them, if their own political party can gain a momentary advantage by their being accredited. It is amongst such, too, that your kinsman has found friends and associates. Neglecting the old friends of his house, as too grave and formal companions for the humour of the times, his intercourse has been with the versatile Shaftesbury—the mercurial Buckingham—men who would not hesitate to sacrifice to the popular Moloch of the day, whatsoever or whomsoever, whose ruin could propitiate the deity.—Forgive a mother's tears, kinsman; but I see the scaffold at Bolton again erected. If Derby goes to London while these bloodhounds are in full cry, obnoxious as he is, and I have made him by my religious faith, and my conduct in this island, he dies his father's death. And yet upon what other course to resolve!—"

"Let me go to London, madam," said Peveril, much moved by the distress of his patroness; "your ladyship was wont to rely something on my judgment. I will act for the best—will communicate with those whom you point out to me, and only with them; and I trust soon to send you information that this delusion, however strong it may now be, is in the course of passing away; at the worst, I can apprise you of the danger, should it menace the Earl or yourself; and may be able also to point out the means by which it may be eluded."

The Countess listened with a countenance in which the anxiety of maternal affection, which prompted her to embrace Peveril's generous offer, struggled with her native disinterested and generous disposition. "Think what you ask of me, Julian," she replied with a sigh. "Would you have me expose the life of my friend's son to those perils to which I refuse my own?—No, never!"

"Nay, but madam," replied Julian, "I do not run the same risk—my person is not known in London—my situation, though not obscure in my own country, is too little known to be noticed in that huge assemblage of all that is noble and wealthy. No whisper, I presume, however indirect, has connected my name with the alleged conspiracy. I am a Protestant, above all; and can be accused of no intercourse, direct or indirect, with the Church of Rome. My connections also lie amongst those, who, if they do not, or cannot, befriend me, cannot, at least, be dangerous to me. In a word, I run no danger where the Earl might incur great peril."

"Alas!" said the Countess of Derby, "all this generous reasoning may be true; but it could only be listened to by a widowed mother. Selfish as I am, I cannot but reflect that my kinswoman has, in all events, the support of an affectionate husband—such is the interested reasoning to which we are not ashamed to subject our better feelings."

"Do not call it so, madam," answered Peveril; "think of me as the younger brother of my kinsman. You have ever done by me the duties of a mother; and have a right to my filial service, were it at a risk ten times greater than a journey to London, to inquire into the temper of the times. I will instantly go and announce my departure to the Earl."

"Stay, Julian," said the Countess; "if you must make this journey in our behalf,—and, alas! I have not generosity enough to refuse your noble proffer,—you must go alone, and without communication with Derby. I know him well; his lightness of mind is free from selfish baseness; and for the world, would he not suffer you to leave Man without his company. And if he went with you, your noble and disinterested kindness would be of no avail—you would but share his ruin, as the swimmer who attempts to save a drowning man is involved in his fate, if he permit the sufferer to grapple with him."

"It shall be as you please, madam," said Peveril. "I am ready to depart upon half-an-hour's notice."

"This night, then," said the Countess, after a moment's pause—"this night I will arrange the most secret means of carrying your generous project into effect; for I would not excite that prejudice against you, which will instantly arise, were it known you had so lately left this island, and its Popish lady. You will do well, perhaps, to use a feigned name in London."

"Pardon me, madam," said Julian; "I will do nothing that can draw on me unnecessary attention; but to bear a feigned name, or affect any disguise beyond living with extreme privacy, would, I think, be unwise as well as unworthy; and what, if challenged, I might find some difficulty in assigning a reason for, consistent with perfect fairness of intentions."

"I believe you are right," answered the Countess, after a moment's consideration; and then added, "You propose, doubtless, to pass through Derbyshire, and visit Martindale Castle?"

"I should wish it, madam, certainly," replied Peveril, "did time permit, and circumstances render it advisable."

"Of that," said the Countess, "you must yourself judge. Despatch is, doubtless, desirable; on the other hand, arriving from your own family-seat, you will be less an object of doubt and suspicion, than if you posted up from hence, without even visiting your parents. You must be guided in this,—in all,—by your own prudence. Go, my dearest son—for to me you should be dear as a son—go, and prepare for your journey. I will get ready some despatches, and a supply of money—Nay, do not object. Am I not your mother; and are you not discharging a son's duty? Dispute not my right of defraying your expenses. Nor is this all; for, as I must trust your zeal and prudence to act in our behalf when occasion shall demand, I will furnish you with effectual recommendations to our friends and kindred, entreating and enjoining them to render whatever aid you may require, either for your own protection, or the advancement of what you may propose in our favour."

Peveril made no farther opposition to an arrangement, which in truth the moderate state of his own finances rendered almost indispensable, unless with his father's assistance; and the Countess put into his hand bills of exchange to the amount of two hundred pounds, upon a merchant in the city. She then dismissed Julian for the space of an hour; after which, she said, she must again require his presence.

The preparations for his journey were not of a nature to divert the thoughts which speedily pressed on him. He found that half-an-hour's conversation had once more completely changed his immediate prospects and plans for the future. He had offered to the Countess of Derby a service, which her uniform kindness had well deserved at his hand; but, by her accepting it, he was upon the point of being separated from Alice Bridgenorth, at a time when she was become dearer to him than ever, by her avowal of mutual passion. Her image rose before him, such as he had that day pressed her to his bosom—her voice was in his ear, and seemed to ask whether he could desert her in the crisis which everything seemed to announce as impending. But Julian Peveril, his youth considered, was strict in judging his duty, and severely resolved in executing it. He trusted not his imagination to pursue the vision which presented itself; but resolutely seizing his pen, wrote to Alice the following letter, explaining his situation, as far as justice to the Countess permitted him to do so:—

"I leave you, dearest Alice," thus ran the letter.—"I leave you; and though, in doing so, I but obey the command you have laid on me, yet I can claim little merit for my compliance, since, without additional and most forcible reasons in aid of your orders, I fear I should have been unable to comply with them. But family affairs of importance compel me to absent myself from this island, for, I fear, more than one week. My thoughts, hopes, and wishes will be on the moment that shall restore me to the Black Fort, and its lovely valley. Let me hope that yours will sometimes rest on the

lonely exile, whom nothing could render such, but the command of honour and duty. Do not fear that I mean to involve you in a private correspondence, and let not your father fear it. I could not love you so much, but for the openness and candour of your nature; and I would not that you concealed from Major Bridgenorth one syllable of what I now avow. Respecting other matters, he himself cannot desire the welfare of our common country with more zeal than I do. Differences may occur concerning the mode in which that is to be obtained; but, in the principle, I am convinced there can be only one mind between us; nor can I refuse to listen to his experience and wisdom, even where they may ultimately fail to convince me. Farewell—Alice, farewell! Much might be added to that melancholy word, but nothing that could express the bitterness with which it is written. Yet I could transcribe it again and again, rather than conclude the last communication which I can have with you for some time. My sole comfort is, that my stay will scarce be so long as to permit you to forget one who never can forget you."

He held the paper in his hand for a minute after he had folded, but before he had sealed it, while he hurriedly debated in his own mind whether he had not expressed himself towards Major Bridgenorth in so conciliating a manner as might excite hopes of proselytism, which his conscience told him he could not realise with honour. Yet, on the other hand, he had no right, from what Bridgenorth had said, to conclude that their principles were diametrically irreconcilable; for though the son of a high Cavalier, and educated in the family of the Countess of Derby, he was himself, upon principle, an enemy of prerogative, and a friend to the liberty of the subject. And with such considerations, he silenced all internal objections on the point of honour; although his conscience secretly whispered that these conciliatory expressions towards the father were chiefly dictated by the fear, that during his absence Major Bridgenorth might be tempted to change the residence of his daughter, and perhaps to convey her altogether out of his reach.

Having sealed his letter, Julian called his servant, and directed him to carry it under cover of one addressed to Mrs. Debbitch, to a house in the town of Rushin, where packets and messages intended for the family at Black Fort were usually deposited; and for that purpose to take horse immediately. He thus got rid of an attendant, who might have been in some degree a spy on his motions. He then exchanged the dress he usually wore for one more suited to travelling; and, having put a change or two of linen into a small cloak-bag, selected as arms a strong double-edged sword and an excellent pair of pistols, which last he carefully loaded with double bullets. Thus appointed, and with twenty pieces in his purse, and the bills we have mentioned secured in a private pocket-book, he was in readiness to depart as soon as he should receive the Countess's commands.

The buoyant spirit of youth and hope, which had, for a moment, been chilled by the painful and dubious circumstances in which he was placed, as well as the deprivation which he was about to undergo, now revived in full vigour. Fancy, turning from more painful anticipations, suggested to him that he was now entering upon life, at a crisis when resolution and talents were almost certain to make the fortune of their possessor. How could he make a more honourable entry on the bustling scene, than sent by, and acting in behalf of, one of the noblest houses in England; and should he perform what his charge might render incumbent with the resolution and the prudence necessary to secure success, how many occurrences might take place to render his mediation necessary to Bridgenorth; and thus enable him, on the most equal and honourable terms, to establish a claim to his gratitude and to his daughter's hand.

Whilst he was dwelling on such pleasing, though imaginary prospects, he could not help exclaiming aloud—"Yes, Alice, I will win thee nobly!" The words had scarce escaped his lips, when he heard at the door of his apartment, which the servant had left ajar, a sound like a deep sigh, which was instantly succeeded by a gentle tap—"Come in," replied Julian, somewhat ashamed of his exclamation, and not a little afraid that it had been caught up by some eavesdropper—"Come in," he again repeated; but his command was not obeyed; on the contrary, the knock was repeated somewhat louder. He opened the door, and Fenella stood before him.

With eyes that seemed red with recent tears, and with a look of the deepest dejection, the little mute, first touching her bosom, and beckoning with her finger, made to him the usual sign that the Countess desired to see him—then turned, as if to usher him to her apartment. As he followed her through the long gloomy vaulted passages which afforded communication betwixt the various apartments of the castle, he could not but observe that her usual light trip was exchanged for a tardy and mournful step, which she accompanied with low inarticulate moaning (which she was probably the less able to suppress, because she could not judge how far it was audible), and also with wringing of the hands, and other marks of extreme affliction.

At this moment a thought came across Peveril's mind, which, in spite of his better reason, made him shudder involuntarily. As a Peaksman, and a long resident in the Isle of Man, he was well acquainted with many a superstitious legend, and particularly with a belief, which attached to the powerful family of the Stanleys, for their peculiar demon, a Banshie, or female spirit, who was wont to shriek "foreboding evil times;" and who was generally seen weeping and bemoaning herself before the death of any person of distinction belonging to the family. For an instant, Julian could scarcely divest himself of the belief that the wailing, jibbering form, which glided before him, with a lamp in her hand, was a genius of his mother's race, come to announce to him as an analogous reflection, that if the suspicion which had crossed his mind concerning Fenella was a just one, her ill-fated attachment to him, like that of the prophetic spirit to his family, could bode nothing but disaster, and lamentation, and woe.

CHAPTER XIX

*Now, hoist the anchor, mates—and let the sails
Give their broad bosom to the buxom wind,
Like lass that woos a lover.*

—ANONYMOUS.

The presence of the Countess dispelled the superstitious feeling, which, for an instant, had encroached on Julian's imagination, and compelled him to give attention to the matters of ordinary life. "Here are your credentials," she said, giving him a small packet, carefully packed up in a sealskin cover; "you had better not open them till you come to London. You must not be surprised to find that there are one or two addressed to men of my own persuasion. These, for all our sakes, you will observe caution in delivering."

"I go your messenger, madam," said Peveril; "and whatever you desire me to charge myself with, of that I undertake the care. Yet allow me to doubt whether an intercourse with Catholics will at this moment forward the purposes of my mission."

"You have caught the general suspicion of this wicked sect already," said the Countess, smiling, "and are the fitter to go amongst Englishmen in their present mood. But, my cautious friend, these letters are so addressed, and the persons to whom they are addressed so disguised, that you will run no danger in conversing with them. Without their aid, indeed, you will not be able to obtain the accurate information you go in search of. None can tell so exactly how the wind sets, as the pilot whose vessel is exposed to the storm. Besides, though you Protestants deny our priesthood the harmlessness of the dove, you are ready

enough to allow us a full share of the wisdom of the serpent; in plain terms, their means of information are extensive, and they are not deficient in the power of applying it. I therefore wish you to have the benefit of their intelligence and advice, if possible."

"Whatever you impose upon me as a part of my duty, madam, rely on its being discharged punctually," answered Peveril. "And, now, as there is little use in deferring the execution of a purpose when once fixed, let me know your ladyship's wishes concerning my departure."

"It must be sudden and secret," said the Countess; "the island is full of spies; and I would not wish that any of them should have notice that an envoy of mine was about to leave Man for London. Can you be ready to go on board to-morrow?"

"To-night—this instant if you will," said Julian,— "my little preparations are complete."

"Be ready, then, in your chamber, at two hours after midnight. I will send one to summon you, for our secret must be communicated, for the present, to as few as possible. A foreign sloop is engaged to carry you over; then make the best of your way to London, by Martindale Castle, or otherwise, as you find most advisable. When it is necessary to announce your absence, I will say you are gone to see your parents. But stay—your journey will be on horseback, of course, from Whitehaven. You have bills of exchange, it is true; but are you provided with ready money to furnish yourself with a good horse?"

"I am sufficiently rich, madam," answered Julian; "and good nags are plenty in Cumberland. There are those among them who know how to come by them good and cheap."

"Trust not to that," said the Countess. "Here is what will purchase for you the best horse on the Borders.—Can you be simple enough to refuse it?" she added, as she pressed on him a heavy purse, which he saw himself obliged to accept.

"A good horse, Julian," continued the Countess, "and a good sword, next to a good heart and head, are the accomplishments of a cavalier."

"I kiss your hands, then, madam," said Peveril, "and humbly beg you to believe, that whatever may fail in my present undertaking, my purpose to serve you, my noble kinswoman and benefactress, can at least never swerve or falter."

"I know it, my son, I know it; and may God forgive me if my anxiety for your friend has sent you on dangers which should have been his! Go—go—May saints and angels bless you! Fenella shall acquaint him that you sup in your own apartment. So indeed will I; for to-night I should be unable to face my son's looks. Little will he thank me for sending you on his errand; and there will be many to ask, whether it was like the Lady of Latham to trust her friend's son on the danger which should have been braved by her own. But oh! Julian, I am now a forlorn widow, whom sorrow has made selfish!"

"Tush, madam," answered Peveril; "it is more unlike the Lady of Latham to anticipate dangers which may not exist at all, and to which, if they do indeed occur, I am less obnoxious than my noble kinsman. Farewell!—All blessings attend you, madam. Commend me to Derby, and make him my excuses. I shall expect a summons at two hours after midnight."

They took an affectionate leave of each other; the more affectionate, indeed, on the part of the Countess, that she could not entirely reconcile her generous mind to exposing Peveril to danger on her son's behalf; and Julian betook himself to his solitary apartment.

His servant soon afterwards brought him wine and refreshments; to which, notwithstanding the various matters he had to occupy his mind, he contrived to do reasonable justice. But when this needful occupation was finished, his thoughts began to stream in upon him like a troubled tide—at once recalling the past, and anticipating the future. It was in vain that he wrapped himself in his riding cloak, and, lying down on his bed, endeavoured to compose himself to sleep. The uncertainty of the prospect before him—the doubt how Bridgenorth might dispose of his daughter during his absence—the fear that the Major himself might fall into the power of the vindictive Countess, besides a numerous train of vague and half-formed apprehensions, agitated his blood, and rendered slumber impossible. Alternately to recline in the old oaken easy-chair, and listen to the dashing of the waves under the windows, mingled, as the sound was, with the scream of the sea-birds; or traverse the apartment with long and slow steps, pausing occasionally to look out on the sea, slumbering under the influence of a full moon, which tipped each wave with silver—such were the only pastimes he could invent, until midnight had passed for one hour; the next was wasted in anxious expectation of the summons of departure.

At length it arrived—a tap at his door was followed by a low murmur, which made him suspect that the Countess had again employed her mute attendant as the most secure minister of her pleasure on this occasion. He felt something like impropriety in this selection; and it was with a feeling of impatience alien to the natural generosity of his temper, that, when he opened the door, he beheld the dumb maiden standing before him. The lamp which he held in his hand showed his features distinctly, and probably made Fenella aware of the expression which animated them. She cast her large dark eyes mournfully on the ground; and, without again looking him in the face, made him a signal to follow her. He delayed no longer than was necessary to secure his pistols in his belt, wrap his cloak closer around him, and take his small portmanteau under his arm. Thus accoutred, he followed her out of the Keep, or inhabited part of the Castle, by a series of obscure passages leading to a postern gate, which she unlocked with a key, selected from a bundle which she carried at her girdle.

They now stood in the castle-yard, in the open moonlight, which glimmered white and ghastly on the variety of strange and ruinous objects to which we have formerly alluded, and which gave the scene rather the appearance of some ancient cemetery, than of the interior of a fortification. The round and elevated tower—the ancient mount, with its quadrangular sides facing the ruinous edifices which once boasted the name of Cathedral—seemed of yet more antique and anomalous form, when seen by the pale light which now displayed them. To one of these churches Fenella took the direct course, and was followed by Julian; although he at once divined, and was superstitious enough to dislike, the path which she was about to adopt. It was by a secret passage through this church that in former times the guard-room of the garrison, situated at the lower and external defences, communicated with the Keep of the Castle; and through this passage were the keys of the Castle every night carried to the Governor's apartment, so soon as the gates were locked, and the watch set. The custom was given up in James the First's time, and the passage abandoned, on account of the well-known legend of the *Mauthe Dog*—a fiend, or demon, in the shape of a large, shaggy, black mastiff, by which the church was said to be haunted. It was devoutly believed, that in former times this spectre became so familiar with mankind, as to appear nightly in the guard-room, issuing from the passage which we have mentioned at night, and retiring to it at daybreak. The soldiers became partly familiarised to its presence; yet not so much so as to use any licence of language while the apparition was visible; until one fellow, rendered daring by intoxication, swore he would know whether it was dog or devil, and, with his drawn sword, followed the spectre when it retreated by the usual passage. The man returned in a few minutes, sobered by terror, his mouth gaping, and his hair standing on end, under which horror he died; but, unhappily for the lovers of the marvellous, altogether unable to disclose the horrors which he had seen. Under the evil repute arising from this tale of wonder, the guard-room was abandoned, and a new one constructed. In like manner, the guards after that period held another and more circuitous communication with the Governor or Seneschal of the Castle; and that which lay through the ruinous church was entirely abandoned.

In defiance of the legendary terrors which tradition had attached to the original communication, Fenella, followed by Peveril, now boldly traversed the ruinous vaults through which it lay—sometimes only guided over heaps of ruins by the precarious light of the lamp borne by the dumb maiden—sometimes having the advantage of a gleam of moonlight, darting into the dreary abyss through the shafted windows, or through breaches made by time. As the path was by no means a straight one, Peveril could not but admire the intimate acquaintance with the mazes which his singular companion displayed, as well as the boldness with which she traversed them. He himself was not so utterly void of the prejudices of the times, but that he contemplated, with some apprehension, the possibility of their intruding on the lair of the phantom hound, of which he had heard so often; and in every remote sight of the breeze among the ruins, he thought he heard him baying at the mortal footsteps which disturbed his gloomy realm. No such terrors, however, interrupted their journey; and in the course of a few minutes, they attained the deserted and now ruinous guard-house. The broken walls of the little edifice served to conceal them from the sentinels, one of whom was keeping a drowsy watch at the lower gate of the Castle; whilst another, seated on the stone steps which communicated with the parapet of the bounding and exterior wall, was slumbering, in full security, with his musket peacefully grounded by his side. Fenella made a sign to Peveril to move with silence and caution, and then showed him, to his surprise, from the window of the deserted guard-room, a boat, for it was now high water, with four rowers, lurking under the cliff on which the castle was built; and made him farther sensible that he was to have access to it by a ladder of considerable height placed at the window of the ruin.

Julian was both displeased and alarmed by the security and carelessness of the sentinels, who had suffered such preparations to be made without observation or alarm given; and he hesitated whether he should not call the officer of the guard, upbraid him with negligence, and show him how easily Holm-Peel, in spite of its natural strength, and although reported impregnable, might be surprised by a few resolute men. Fenella seemed to guess his thoughts with that extreme acuteness of observation which her deprivations had occasioned her acquiring. She laid one hand on his arm, and a finger of the other on her own lips, as if to enjoin forbearance; and Julian, knowing that she acted by the direct authority of the Countess, obeyed her accordingly; but with the internal resolution to lose no time in communicating his sentiments to the Earl, concerning the danger to which the Castle was exposed on this point.

In the meantime, he descended the ladder with some precaution, for the steps were unequal, broken, wet, and slippery; and having placed himself in the stern of the boat, made a signal to the men to push off, and turned to take farewell of his guide. To his utter astonishment, Fenella rather slid down, than descended regularly, the perilous ladder, and, the boat being already pushed off, made a spring from the last step of it with incredible agility, and seated herself beside Peveril, ere he could express either remonstrance or surprise. He commanded the men once more to pull in to the precarious landing-place; and throwing into his countenance a part of the displeasure which he really felt, endeavoured to make her comprehend the necessity of returning to her mistress. Fenella folded her arms, and looked at him with a haughty smile, which completely expressed the determination of her purpose. Peveril was extremely embarrassed; he was afraid of offending the Countess, and interfering with her plan, by giving alarm, which otherwise he was much tempted to have done. On Fenella, it was evident, no species of argument which he could employ was likely to make the least impression; and the question remained, how, if she went on with him, he was to rid himself of so singular and inconvenient a companion, and provide, at the same time, sufficiently for her personal security.

The boatmen brought the matter to a decision; for, after lying on their oars for a minute, and whispering among themselves in Low Dutch or German, they began to pull stoutly, and were soon at some distance from the Castle. The possibility of the sentinels sending a musket-ball, or even a cannon-shot, after them, was one of the contingencies which gave Peveril momentary anxiety; but they left the fortress, as they must have approached it, unnoticed, or at least unchallenged—a carelessness on the part of the garrison, which, notwithstanding that the oars were muffled, and that the men spoke little, and in whispers, argued, in Peveril's opinion, great negligence on the part of the sentinels. When they were a little way from the Castle, the men began to row briskly towards a small vessel which lay at some distance. Peveril had, in the meantime, leisure to remark, that the boatmen spoke to each other doubtfully, and bent anxious looks on Fenella, as if uncertain whether they had acted properly in bringing her off.

After about a quarter of an hour's rowing, they reached the little sloop, where Peveril was received by the skipper, or captain, on the quarter-deck, with an offer of spirits or refreshments. A word or two among the seamen withdrew the captain from his hospitable cares, and he flew to the ship's side, apparently to prevent Fenella from entering the vessel. The men and he talked eagerly in Dutch, looking anxiously at Fenella as they spoke together; and Peveril hoped the result would be, that the poor woman should be sent ashore again. But she baffled whatever opposition could be offered to her; and when the accommodation-ladder, as it is called, was withdrawn, she snatched the end of a rope, and climbed on board with the dexterity of a sailor, leaving them no means of preventing her entrance, save by actual violence, to which apparently they did not choose to have recourse. Once on deck, she took the captain by the sleeve, and led him to the head of the vessel, where they seemed to hold intercourse in a manner intelligible to both.

Peveril soon forgot the presence of the mute, as he began to muse upon his own situation, and the probability that he was separated for some considerable time from the object of his affections. "Constancy," he repeated to himself,—"Constancy." And, as if in coincidence with the theme of his reflections, he fixed his eyes on the polar star, which that night twinkled with more than ordinary brilliancy. Emblem of pure passion and steady purpose—the thoughts which arose as he viewed its clear and unchanging light, were disinterested and noble. To seek his country's welfare, and secure the blessings of domestic peace—to discharge a bold and perilous duty to his friend and patron—to regard his passion for Alice Bridgenorth, as the loadstar which was to guide him to noble deeds—were the resolutions which thronged upon his mind, and which exalted his spirits to that state of romantic melancholy, which perhaps is ill exchanged even for feelings of joyful rapture.

He was recalled from those contemplations by something which nestled itself softly and closely to his side—a woman's sigh sounded so near him, as to disturb his reverie; and as he turned his head, he saw Fenella seated beside him, with her eyes fixed on the same star which had just occupied his own. His first emotion was that of displeasure; but it was impossible to persevere in it towards a being so helpless in many respects, so interesting in others; whose large dark eyes were filled with dew, which glistened in the moonlight; and the source of whose emotions seemed to be in a partiality which might well claim indulgence, at least from him who was the object of it. At the same time, Julian resolved to seize the present opportunity, for such expostulations with Fenella on the strangeness of her conduct, as the poor maiden might be able to comprehend. He took her hand with great kindness, but at the same time with much gravity, pointed to the boat, and to the Castle, whose towers and extended walls were now scarce visible in the distance; and thus intimated to her the necessity of her return to Holm-Peel. She looked down, and shook her head, as if negating his proposal with obstinate decision. Julian renewed his expostulation by look and gesture—pointed to his own heart, to intimate the Countess—and bent his brows, to show the displeasure which she must entertain. To all which the maiden only answered by her tears.

At length, as if driven to explanation by his continued remonstrances, she suddenly seized him by the arm, to arrest his attention—cast her eye hastily around, as if to see whether she was watched by any one—then drew the other hand, edge-wise, across her slender throat—pointed to the boat, and to the Castle, and nodded.

On this series of signs, Peveril could put no interpretation, excepting that he was menaced with some personal danger, from which Fenella seemed to conceive that her presence was a protection. Whatever was her meaning, her purpose seemed unalterably adopted; at least it was plain he had no power to shake it. He must therefore wait till the end of their short voyage, to disembarass himself of his companion; and, in the meanwhile, acting on the idea of her having harboured a misplaced attachment to him, he thought he should best consult her interest, and his own character, in keeping at as great a distance from her as circumstances admitted. With this purpose, he made the sign she used for going to sleep, by leaning his head on his palm; and having thus recommended to her to go to rest, he himself desired to be conducted to his berth.

The captain readily showed him a hammock, in the after-cabin, into which he threw himself, to seek that repose which the exercise and agitation of the preceding day, as well as the lateness of the hour, made him now feel desirable. Sleep, deep and heavy, sunk down on him in a few minutes, but it did not endure long. In his sleep he was disturbed by female cries; and at length, as he thought, distinctly heard the voice of Alice Bridgenorth call on his name.

He awoke, and starting up to quit his bed, became sensible, from the motion of the vessel, and the swinging of the hammock, that his dream had deceived him. He was still startled by its extreme vivacity and liveliness. "Julian Peveril, help! Julian Peveril!" The sounds still rung in his ears—the accents were those of Alice—and he could scarce persuade himself that his imagination had deceived him. Could she be in the same vessel? The thought was not altogether inconsistent with her father's character, and the intrigues in which he was engaged; but then, if so, to what peril was she exposed, that she invoked his name so loudly?

Determined to make instant inquiry, he jumped out of his hammock, half-dressed as he was, and stumbling about the little cabin, which was as dark as pitch, at length, with considerable difficulty, reached the door. The door, however, he was altogether unable to open; and was obliged to call loudly to the watch upon deck. The skipper, or captain, as he was called, being the only person aboard who could speak English, answered to the summons, and replied to Peveril's demand, what noise that was?—that a boat was going off with the young woman—that she whimpered a little as she left the vessel—and "dat vaas all."

His dream was thus fully explained. Fancy had caught up the inarticulate and vehement cries with which Fenella was wont to express resistance or displeasure—had coined them into language, and given them the accents of Alice Bridgenorth. Our imagination plays wilder tricks with us almost every night.

The captain now undid the door, and appeared with a lantern; without the aid of which Peveril could scarce have regained his couch, where he now slumbered secure and sound, until day was far advanced, and the invitation of the captain called him up to breakfast.

CHAPTER XX

*Now, what is this that haunts me like my shadow,
Frisking and mumming like an elf in moonlight!*
—BEN JONSON.

Peveril found the master of the vessel rather less rude than those in his station of life usually are, and received from him full satisfaction concerning the fate of Fenella, upon whom the captain bestowed a hearty curse, for obliging him to lay-to until he had sent his boat ashore, and had her back again.

"I hope," said Peveril, "no violence was necessary to reconcile her to go ashore? I trust she offered no foolish resistance?"

"Resist! mein Gott," said the captain, "she did resist like a troop of horse—she did cry, you might hear her at Whitehaven—she did go up the rigging like a cat up a chimney; but dat vas ein trick of her old trade."

"What trade do you mean?" said Peveril.

"Oh," said the seaman, "I vas know more about her than you, Meinheer. I vas know that she vas a little, very little girl, and prentice to one seiltanzer, when my lady yonder had the good luck to buy her."

"A seiltanzer!" said Peveril; "what do you mean by that?"

"I mean a rope-danzer, a mountebank, a Hans pickel-harring. I vas know Adrian Brackel vell—he sell de powders dat empty men's stomach, and fill him's own purse. Not know Adrian Brackel, mein Gott! I have smoked many a pound of tabak with him."

Peveril now remembered that Fenella had been brought into the family when he and the young Earl were in England, and while the Countess was absent on an expedition to the continent. Where the Countess found her, she never communicated to the young men; but only intimated, that she had received her out of compassion, in order to relieve her from a situation of extreme distress.

He hinted so much to the communicative seaman, who replied, "that for distress he knew nocht's on't; only, that Adrian Brackel beat her when she would not dance on the rope, and starved her when she did, to prevent her growth." The bargain between the countess and the mountebank, he said, he had made himself; because the Countess had hired his brig upon her expedition to the continent. None else knew where she came from. The Countess had seen her on a public stage at Ostend—compassionated her helpless situation, and the severe treatment she received—and had employed him to purchase the poor creature from her master, and charged him with silence towards all her retinue.—"And so I do keep silence," continued the faithful confidant, "van I am in the havens of Man; but when I am on the broad seas, den my tongue is mine own, you know. Die foolish beoples in the island, they say she is a wechsel-balg—what you call a fairy-elf changeling. My faith, they do not never have seen ein wechsel-balg; for I saw one myself at Cologne, and it was twice as big as yonder girl, and did break the poor people, with eating them up, like de great big cuckoo in the sparrow's nest; but this Venella eat no more than other girls—it was no wechsel-balg in the world."

By a different train of reasoning, Julian had arrived at the same conclusion; in which, therefore, he heartily acquiesced. During the seaman's prosing, he was reflecting within himself, how much of the singular flexibility of her limbs and movements the unfortunate girl must have derived from the discipline and instructions of Adrian Brackel; and also how far the germs of her wilful and capricious passions might have been sown during her wandering and adventurous childhood. Aristocratic, also, as his education had been, these anecdotes respecting Fenella's original situation and education, rather increased his pleasure of having shaken off her company; and yet he still felt desirous to know any farther particulars which the seaman could communicate on the same subject. But he had already told all he knew. Of her parents he knew nothing, except that "her father must have been a damned hundsfoot, and a schelm, for selling his own flesh and blood to Adrian Brackel;" for by such a transaction had the mountebank become possessed of his pupil.

This conversation tended to remove any passing doubts which might have crept on Peveril's mind concerning the fidelity of the master of the vessel, who appeared from thence to have been a former acquaintance of the Countess, and to have enjoyed some share of her confidence. The threatening motion used by Fenella, he no longer considered as worthy of any notice, excepting as a new mark of the irritability of her temper.

He amused himself with walking the deck, and musing on his past and future prospects, until his attention was forcibly arrested by the wind, which began to rise in gusts from the north-west, in a manner so unfavourable to the course they intended to hold, that the master, after many efforts to beat against it, declared his bark, which was by no means an excellent sea-boat, was unequal to making Whitehaven; and that he was compelled to make a fair wind of it, and run for Liverpool. To this course Peveril did not object. It saved him some land journey, in case he visited his father's castle; and the Countess's commission would be discharged as effectually the one way as the other.

The vessel was put, accordingly, before the wind, and ran with great steadiness and velocity. The captain, notwithstanding, pleading some nautical hazards, chose to lie off, and did not attempt the mouth of the Mersey until morning, when Peveril had at length the satisfaction of being landed upon the quay of Liverpool, which even then showed symptoms of the commercial prosperity that has since been carried to such a height.

The master, who was well acquainted with the port, pointed out to Julian a decent place of entertainment, chiefly frequented by seafaring people; for, although he had been in the town formerly, he did not think it proper to go anywhere at present where he might have been unnecessarily recognised. Here he took leave of the seaman, after pressing upon him with difficulty a small present for his crew. As for his passage, the captain declined any recompense whatever; and they parted upon the most civil terms.

The inn to which he was recommended was full of strangers, seamen, and mercantile people, all intent upon their own affairs, and discussing them with noise and eagerness, peculiar to the business of a thriving seaport. But although the general clamour of the public room, in which the guests mixed with each other, related chiefly to their own commercial dealings, there was a general theme mingling with them, which was alike common and interesting to all; so that, amidst disputes about freight, tonnage, demurrage, and such like, were heard the emphatic sounds of "Deep, damnable, accursed plot,"—"Bloody Papist villains,"—"The King in danger—the gallows too good for them," and so forth.

The fermentation excited in London had plainly reached even this remote seaport, and was received by the inhabitants with the peculiar stormy energy which invests men in their situation with the character of the winds and waves with which they are chiefly conversant. The commercial and nautical interests of England were indeed particularly anti-Catholic; although it is not, perhaps, easy to give any distinct reason why they should be so, since theological disputes in general could scarce be considered as interesting to them. But zeal, amongst the lower orders at least, is often in an inverse ratio to knowledge; and sailors were not probably the less earnest and devoted Protestants, that they did not understand the controversy between the Churches. As for the merchants, they were almost necessarily inimical to the gentry of Lancashire and Cheshire; many of whom still retained the faith of Rome, which was rendered ten times more odious to the men of commerce, as the badge of their haughty aristocratic neighbours.

From the little which Peveril heard of the sentiments of the people of Liverpool, he imagined he should act most prudently in leaving the place as soon as possible, and before any suspicion should arise of his having any connection with the party which appeared to have become so obnoxious.

In order to accomplish his journey, it was first necessary that he should purchase a horse; and for this purpose he resolved to have recourse to the stables of a dealer well known at the time, and who dwelt in the outskirts of the place; and having obtained directions to his dwelling, he went thither to provide himself.

Joe Bridlesley's stables exhibited a large choice of good horses; for that trade was in former days more active than at present. It was an ordinary thing for a stranger to buy a horse for the purpose of a single journey, and to sell him, as well as he could, when he had reached the point of his destination; and hence there was a constant demand, and a corresponding supply; upon both of which, Bridlesley, and those of his trade, contrived, doubtless, to make handsome profits.

Julian, who was no despicable horse-jockey, selected for his purpose a strong well-made horse, about sixteen hands high, and had him led into the yard, to see whether the paces corresponded with his appearance. As these also gave perfect satisfaction to the customer, it remained only to settle the price with Bridlesley; who of course swore his customer had pitched upon the best horse ever darkened the stable-door, since he had dealt that way; that no such horses were to be had nowadays, for that the mares were dead that foaled them; and having named a corresponding price, the usual haggling commenced betwixt the seller and purchaser, for adjustment of what the French dealers call *le prix juste*.

The reader, if he be at all acquainted with this sort of traffic, well knows it is generally a keen encounter of wits, and attracts the notice of all the idlers within hearing, who are usually very ready to offer their opinions, or their evidence. Amongst these, upon the present occasion, was a thin man, rather less than the ordinary size, and meanly dressed; but whose interference was in a confident tone, and such as showed himself master of the subject on which he spoke. The price of the horse being settled to about fifteen pounds, which was very high for the period, that of the saddle and bridle had next to be adjusted, and the thin mean-looking person before-mentioned, found nearly as much to say on this subject as on the other. As his remarks had a conciliating and obliging tendency towards the stranger, Peveril concluded he was one of those idle persons, who, unable or unwilling to supply themselves with the means of indulgence at their own cost, do not scruple to deserve them at the hands of others, by a little officious complaisance; and considering that he might acquire some useful information from such a person, was just about to offer him the courtesy of a morning draught, when he observed he had suddenly left the yard. He had scarce remarked this circumstance, before a party of customers entered the place, whose haughty assumption of importance claimed the instant attention of Bridlesley, and all his militia of grooms and stable-boys.

"Three good horses," said the leader of the party, a tall bulky man, whose breath was drawn full and high, under a consciousness of fat, and of importance—"three good and able-bodied horses, for the service of the Commons of England."

Bridlesley said he had some horses which might serve the Speaker himself at need; but that, to speak Christian truth, he had just sold the best in his stable to that gentleman present, who, doubtless, would give up the bargain if the horse was needed for the service of the State.

"You speak well, friend," said the important personage; and advancing to Julian, demanded, in a very haughty tone, the surrender of the purchase which he had just made.

Peveril, with some difficulty, subdued the strong desire which he felt to return a round refusal to so unreasonable a request, but fortunately, recollecting that the situation in which he at present stood, required, on his part, much circumspection, he replied simply, that upon showing him any warrant to seize upon horses for the public service, he must of course submit to resign his purchase.

The man, with an air of extreme dignity, pulled from his pocket, and thrust into Peveril's hand, a warrant, subscribed by the Speaker of the House of Commons, empowering Charles Topham, their officer of the Black Rod, to pursue and seize upon the persons of certain individuals named in the warrant; and of all other persons who are, or should be, accused by competent witnesses, of being accessory to, or favourers of, the hellish and damnable Popish Plot, at present carried on within the bowels of the kingdom; and charging all men, as they loved their allegiance, to render the said Charles Topham their readiest and most effective assistance, in execution of the duty entrusted to his care.

On perusing a document of such weighty import, Julian had no hesitation to give up his horse to this formidable functionary; whom somebody compared to a lion, which, as the House of Commons was pleased to maintain such an animal, they were under the necessity of providing for by frequent commitments; until "*Take him, Topham*," became a proverb, and a formidable one, in the mouth of the public.

The acquiescence of Peveril procured him some grace in the sight of the emissary; who, before selecting two horses for his attendants, gave permission to the stranger to purchase a grey horse, much inferior, indeed, to that which he had resigned, both in form and in action, but very little lower in price, as Mr. Bridlesley, immediately on learning the demand for horses upon the part of the Commons of England, had passed a private resolution in his own mind, augmenting the price of his whole stud, by an imposition of at least twenty per cent., *ad valorem*.

Peveril adjusted and paid the price with much less argument than on the former occasion; for, to be plain with the reader, he had noticed in the warrant of Mr. Topham, the name of his father, Sir Geoffrey Peveril of Martindale Castle, engrossed at full length, as one of those subjected to arrest by that officer.

When aware of this material fact, it became Julian's business to leave Liverpool directly, and carry the alarm to Derbyshire, if, indeed, Mr. Topham had not already executed his charge in that county, which he thought unlikely, as it was probable they would commence by securing those who lived nearest to the seaports. A word or two which he overheard strengthened his hopes.

"And hark ye, friend," said Mr. Topham; "you will have the horses at the door of Mr. Shortell, the mercer, in two hours, as we shall refresh ourselves there with a cool tankard, and learn what folks live in the neighbourhood that may be concerned in my way. And you will please to have that saddle padded, for I am told the Derbyshire roads are rough.—And you, Captain Dangerfield, and Master Everett, you must put on your Protestant spectacles, and show me where there is the shadow of a priest, or of a priest's favourite; for I am come down with a broom in my cap to sweep this north country of such like cattle."

One of the persons he thus addressed, who wore the garb of a broken-down citizen, only answered, "Ay, truly, Master Topham, it is time to purge the garner."

The other, who had a formidable pair of whiskers, a red nose, and a tarnished laced coat, together with a hat of Pistol's dimensions, was more loquacious. "I take it on my damnation," said this zealous Protestant witness, "that I will discover the marks of the beast on every one of them betwixt sixteen and seventy, as plainly as if they had crossed themselves with ink, instead of holy water. Since we have a King willing to do justice, and a House of Commons to uphold prosecutions, why, damn me, the cause must not stand still for lack of evidence."

"Stick to that, noble captain," answered the officer; "but, prithee, reserve thy oaths for the court of justice; it is but sheer waste to throw them away, as you do in your ordinary conversation."

"Fear you nothing, Master Topham," answered Dangerfield; "it is right to keep a man's gifts in use; and were I altogether to renounce oaths in my private discourse, how should I know how to use one when I needed it? But you hear me use none of your Papist abjurations. I swear not by the mass, or before George, or by anything that belongs to idolatry; but such downright oaths as may serve a poor Protestant gentleman, who would fain serve Heaven and the King."

"Bravely spoken, most noble Festus," said his yoke-fellow. "But do not suppose, that although I am not in the habit of garnishing my words with oaths out of season, I shall be wanting, when called upon, to declare the height and the depth, the width and the length, of this hellish plot against the King and the Protestant faith."

Dizzy, and almost sick, with listening to the undisguised brutality of these fellows, Peveril, having with difficulty prevailed on Bridlesley to settle his purchase, at length led forth his grey steed; but was scarce out of the yard, when he heard the following alarming conversation pass, of which he seemed himself the object.

"Who is that youth?" said the slow soft voice of the more precise of the two witnesses. "Methinks I have seen him somewhere before. Is he from these parts?"

"Not that I know of," said Bridlesley; who, like all the other inhabitants of England at the time, answered the interrogatories of these fellows with the deference which is paid in Spain to the questions of an inquisitor. "A stranger—entirely a stranger—never saw him before—a wild young colt, I warrant him; and knows a horse's mouth as well as I do."

"I begin to bethink me I saw such a face as his at the Jesuits' consult, in the White Horse Tavern," answered Everett.

"And I think I recollect," said Captain Dangerfield—

"Come, come, master and captain," said the authoritative voice of Topham, "we will have none of your recollections at present. We all know what these are likely to end in. But I will have you know, you are not to run till the leash is slipped. The young man is a well-looking lad, and gave up his horse handsomely for the service of the House of Commons. He knows how to behave himself to his betters, I warrant you; and I scarce think he has enough in his purse to pay the fees."

This speech concluded the dialogue, which Peveril, finding himself so much concerned in the issue, thought it best to hear to an end. Now, when it ceased, to get out of the town unobserved, and take the nearest way to his father's castle, seemed his wisest plan. He had settled his reckoning at the inn, and brought with him to Bridlesley's the small portmanteau which contained his few necessities, so that he had no occasion to return thither. He resolved, therefore, to ride some miles before he stopped, even for the purpose of feeding his horse; and being pretty well acquainted with the country, he hoped to be able to push forward to Martindale Castle sooner than the worshipful Master Topham; whose saddle was, in the first place, to be padded, and who, when mounted, would, in all probability, ride with the precaution of those who require such security against the effects of a hard trot.

Under the influence of these feelings, Julian pushed for Warrington, a place with which he was well acquainted; but, without halting in the town, he crossed the Mersey, by the bridge built by an ancestor of his friend the Earl of Derby, and continued his route towards Dishley, on the borders of Derbyshire. He might have

reached this latter village easily, had his horse been fitter for a forced march; but in the course of the journey, he had occasion, more than once, to curse the official dignity of the person who had robbed him of his better steed, while taking the best direction he could through a country with which he was only generally acquainted.

At length, near Altringham, a halt became unavoidable; and Peveril had only to look for some quiet and sequestered place of refreshment. This presented itself, in the form of a small cluster of cottages; the best of which united the characters of an alehouse and a mill, where the sign of the Cat (the landlord's faithful ally in defence of his meal-sacks), booted as high as Grimalkin in the fairy tale, and playing on the fiddle for the more grace, announced that John Whitecraft united the two honest occupations of landlord and miller; and, doubtless, took toll from the public in both capacities.

Such a place promised a traveller, who journeyed incognito, safer, if not better accommodation, than he was like to meet with in more frequented inns; and at the door of the Cat and Fiddle, Julian halted accordingly.

CHAPTER XXI

*In these distracted times, when each man dreads
The bloody stratagems of busy hands.*

—OTWAY.

At the door of the Cat and Fiddle, Julian received the usual attention paid to the customers of an inferior house of entertainment. His horse was carried by a ragged lad, who acted as hostler, into a paltry stable; where, however, the nag was tolerably supplied with food and litter.

Having seen the animal on which his comfort, perhaps his safety, depended, properly provided for, Peveril entered the kitchen, which indeed was also the parlour and hall of the little hostelry, to try what refreshment he could obtain for himself. Much to his satisfaction, he found there was only one guest in the house besides himself; but he was less pleased when he found that he must either go without dinner, or share with that single guest the only provisions which chanced to be in the house, namely, a dish of trouts and eels, which their host, the miller, had brought in from his mill-stream.

At the particular request of Julian, the landlady undertook to add a substantial dish of eggs and bacon, which perhaps she would not have undertaken for, had not the sharp eye of Peveril discovered the flitch hanging in its smoky retreat, when, as its presence could not be denied, the hostess was compelled to bring it forward as a part of her supplies.

She was a buxom dame about thirty, whose comely and cheerful countenance did honour to the choice of the jolly miller, her loving mate; and was now stationed under the shade of an old-fashioned huge projecting chimney, within which it was her province to "work i' the fire," and provide for the wearied wayfaring man, the good things which were to send him rejoicing on his course. Although, at first, the honest woman seemed little disposed to give herself much additional trouble on Julian's account, yet the good looks, handsome figure, and easy civility of her new guest, soon bespoke the principal part of her attention; and while busy in his service, she regarded him, from time to time, with looks, where something like pity mingled with complacency. The rich smoke of the rasher, and the eggs with which it was flanked, already spread itself through the apartment; and the hissing of these savoury viands bore chorus to the simmering of the pan, in which the fish were undergoing a slower decoction. The table was covered with a clean huck-aback napkin, and all was in preparation for the meal, which Julian began to expect with a good deal of impatience, when the companion, who was destined to share it with him, entered the apartment.

At the first glance Julian recognised, to his surprise, the same indifferently dressed, thin-looking person, who, during the first bargain which he had made with Bridlesley, had officiously interfered with his advice and opinion. Displeased at having the company of any stranger forced upon him, Peveril was still less satisfied to find one who might make some claim of acquaintance with him, however slender, since the circumstances in which he stood compelled him to be as reserved as possible. He therefore turned his back upon his destined messmate, and pretended to amuse himself by looking out of the window, determined to avoid all intercourse until it should be inevitably forced upon him.

In the meanwhile, the other stranger went straight up to the landlady, where she toiled on household cares intent, and demanded of her, what she meant by preparing bacon and eggs, when he had positively charged her to get nothing ready but the fish.

The good woman, important as every cook in the discharge of her duty, deigned not for some time so much as to acknowledge that she heard the reproof of her guest; and when she did so, it was only to repel it in a magisterial and authoritative tone.—"If he did not like bacon—(bacon from their own hutch, well fed on pease and bran)—if he did not like bacon and eggs—(new-laid eggs, which she had brought in from the hen-roost with her own hands)—why so put case—it was the worse for his honour, and the better for those who did."

"The better for those who like them?" answered the guest; "that is as much as to say I am to have a companion, good woman."

"Do not good woman me, sir," replied the miller's wife, "till I call you good man; and, I promise you, many would scruple to do that to one who does not love eggs and bacon of a Friday."

"Nay, my good lady," said her guest, "do not fix any misconstruction upon me—I dare say the eggs and the bacon are excellent; only they are rather a dish too heavy for my stomach."

"Ay, or your conscience perhaps, sir," answered the hostess. "And now, I bethink me, you must needs have your fish fried with oil, instead of the good drippings I was going to put to them. I would I could spell the meaning of all this now; but I warrant John Bigstaff, the constable, could conjure something out of it."

There was a pause here; but Julian, somewhat alarmed at the tone which the conversation assumed, became interested in watching the dumb show which succeeded. By bringing his head a little towards the left, but without turning round, or quitting the projecting latticed window where he had taken his station, he could observe that the stranger, secured, as he seemed to think himself, from observation, had sidled close up to the landlady, and, as he conceived, had put a piece of money into her hand. The altered tone of the miller's moiety corresponded very much with this supposition.

"Nay, indeed, and forsooth," she said, "her house was Liberty Hall; and so should every publican's be. What was it to her what gentlefolks ate or drank, providing they paid for it honestly? There were many honest gentlemen, whose stomachs could not abide bacon, grease, or dripping, especially on a Friday; and what was that to her, or any one in her line, so gentlefolks paid honestly for the trouble? Only, she would say, that her bacon and eggs could not be mended betwixt this and Liverpool, and that she would live and die upon."

"I shall hardly dispute it," said the stranger; and turning towards Julian, he added, "I wish this gentleman, who I suppose is my trencher-companion, much joy of the dainties which I cannot assist him in consuming."

"I assure you, sir," answered Peveril, who now felt himself compelled to turn about, and reply with civility, "that it was with difficulty I could prevail on my landlady to add my cover to yours, though she seems now such a zealot for the consumption of eggs and bacon."

"I am zealous for nothing," said the landlady, "save that men would eat their victuals, and pay their score; and if there be enough in one dish to serve two guests, I see little purpose in dressing them two; however, they are ready now, and done to a nicety.—Here, Alice! Alice!"

The sound of that well-known name made Julian start; but the Alice who replied to the call ill resembled the vision which his imagination connected with the accents, being a dowdy slipshod wench, the drudge of the low inn which afforded him shelter. She assisted her mistress in putting on the table the dishes which the latter had prepared; and a foaming jug of home-brewed ale being placed betwixt them, was warranted by Dame Whitecraft as excellent; "for," said she, "we know by practice that too much water drowns the miller, and we spare it on our malt as we would in our mill-dam."

"I drink to your health in it, dame," said the elder stranger; "and a cup of thanks for these excellent fish; and to the drowning of all unkindness between us."

"I thank you, sir," said the dame, "and wish you the like; but I dare not pledge you, for our Gaffer says that ale is brewed too strong for women; so I only drink a glass of canary at a time with a gossip, or any gentleman guest that is so minded."

"You shall drink one with me, then, dame," said Peveril, "so you will let me have a flagon."

"That you shall, sir, and as good as ever was broached; but I must to the mill, to get the key from the Goodman."

So saying, and tucking her clean gown through the pocket-holes, that her steps might be the more alert, and her dress escape dust, off she tripped to the mill, which lay close adjoining.

"A dainty dame, and dangerous, is the miller's wife," said the stranger, looking at Peveril. "Is not that old Chaucer's phrase?"

"I—I believe so," said Peveril, not much read in Chaucer, who was then even more neglected than at present; and much surprised at a literary quotation from one of the mean appearance exhibited by the person before him.

"Yes," answered the stranger, "I see that you, like other young gentlemen of the time, are better acquainted with Cowley and Waller, than with the 'well of English undefiled.' I cannot help differing. There are touches of nature about the old bard of Woodstock, that, to me, are worth all the turns of laborious wit in Cowley, and all the ornate and artificial simplicity of his courtly competitor. The description, for instance, of his country coquette—

*"Wincing she was, as is a wanton colt,
Sweet as a flower, and upright as a bolt."*

Then, again, for pathos, where will you mend the dying scene of Arcite?

'Alas, my heart's queen! alas, my wife!

Giver at once, and ender of my life.

What is this world?—What axen men to have?

Now with his love—now in his cold grave

Alone, withouten other company.'

But I tire you, sir; and do injustice to the poet, whom I remember but by halves."

"On the contrary, sir," replied Peveril, "you make him more intelligible to me in your recitation, than I have found him when I have tried to peruse him myself."

"You were only frightened by the antiquated spelling, and 'the letters black,'" said his companion. "It is many a scholar's case, who mistakes a nut, which he could crack with a little exertion, for a bullet, which he must needs break his teeth on; but yours are better employed.—Shall I offer you some of this fish?"

"Not so, sir," replied Julian, willing to show himself a man of reading in his turn; "I hold with old Caius, and profess to fear judgment, to fight where I cannot choose, and to eat no fish."

The stranger cast a startled look around him at this observation, which Julian had thrown out, on purpose to ascertain, if possible, the quality of his companion, whose present language was so different from the character he had assumed at Bridlesley's. His countenance, too, although the features were of an ordinary, not to say mean cast, had that character of intelligence which education gives to the most homely face; and his manners were so easy and disengaged, as plainly showed a complete acquaintance with society, as well as the habit of mingling with it in the higher stages. The alarm which he had evidently shown at Peveril's answer, was but momentary; for he almost instantly replied, with a smile, "I promise you, sir, that you are in no dangerous company; for notwithstanding my fish dinner, I am much disposed to trifle with some of your savoury mess, if you will indulge me so far."

Peveril accordingly reinforced the stranger's trencher with what remained of the bacon and eggs, and saw him swallow a mouthful or two with apparent relish; but presently after began to dally with his knife and fork, like one whose appetite was satiated; and then took a long draught of the black jack, and handed his platter to the large mastiff dog, who, attracted by the smell of the dinner, had sat down before him for some time, licking his chops, and following with his eye every morsel which the guest raised to his head.

"Here, my poor fellow," said he, "thou hast had no fish, and needest this supernumerary trencher-load more than I do. I cannot withstand thy mute supplication any longer."

The dog answered these courtesies by a civil shake of the tail, while he gobbled up what was assigned him by the stranger's benevolence, in the greater haste, that he heard his mistress's voice at the door.

"Here is the canary, gentlemen," said the landlady; "and the Goodman has set off the mill, to come to wait on you himself. He always does so, when company drink wine."

"That he may come in for the host's, that is, for the lion's share," said the stranger, looking at Peveril.

"The shot is mine," said Julian; "and if mine host will share it, I will willingly bestow another quart on him, and on you, sir. I never break old customs."

These sounds caught the ear of Gaffer Whitecraft, who had entered the room, a strapping specimen of his robust trade, prepared to play the civil, or the surly host, as his company should be acceptable or otherwise. At Julian's invitation, he doffed his dusty bonnet—brushed from his sleeve the looser particles of his professional dust—and sitting down on the end of a bench, about a yard from the table, filled a glass of canary, and drank to his guests, and "especially to this noble gentleman," indicating Peveril, who had ordered the canary.

Julian returned the courtesy by drinking his health, and asking what news were about in the country?

"Nought, sir, I hears on nought, except this Plot, as they call it, that they are pursuing the Papishers about; but it brings water to my mill, as the saying is. Between expresses hurrying hither and thither, and guards and prisoners riding to and again, and the custom of the neighbours, that come to speak over the news of an evening, nightly, I may say, instead of once a week, why, the spigot is in use, gentlemen, and your land thrives; and then I, serving as constable, and being a known Protestant, I have tapped, I may venture to say, it may be ten stands of ale extraordinary, besides a reasonable sale of wine for a country corner. Heaven make us thankful, and keep all good Protestants from Plot and Popery."

"I can easily conceive, my friend," said Julian, "that curiosity is a passion which runs naturally to the alehouse; and that anger, and jealousy, and fear, are all of them thirsty passions, and great consumers of home-brewed. But I am a perfect stranger in these parts; and I would willingly learn, from a sensible man like you, a little of this same Plot, of which men speak so much, and appear to know so little."

"Learn a little of it?—Why, it is the most horrible—the most damnable, bloodthirsty beast of a Plot—But hold, hold, my good master; I hope, in the first place, you believe there is a Plot; for, otherwise, the Justice must have a word with you, as sure as my name is John Whitecraft."

"It shall not need," said Peveril; "for I assure you, mine host, I believe in the Plot as freely and fully as a man can believe in anything he cannot understand."

"God forbid that anybody should pretend to understand it," said the implicit constable; "for his worship the Justice says it is a mile beyond him; and he be as deep as most of them. But men may believe, though they do not understand; and that is what the Romanists say themselves. But this I am sure of, it makes a rare stirring time for justices, and witnesses, and constables.—So here's to your health again, gentlemen, in a cup of neat canary."

"Come, come, John Whitecraft," said the wife, "do not you demean yourself by naming witnesses along with justices and constables. All the world knows how they come by their money."

"Ay, but all the world knows that they *do* come by it, dame; and that is a great comfort. They rustle in their canonical silks, and swagger in their buff and scarlet, who but they?—Ay, ay, the cursed fox thrives—and not so cursed neither. Is there not Doctor Titus Oates, the saviour of the nation—does he not live at Whitehall, and eat off plate, and have a pension of thousands a year, for what I know? and is he not to be Bishop of Litchfield, so soon as Dr. Doddrum dies?"

"Then I hope Dr. Doddrum's reverence will live these twenty years; and I dare say I am the first that ever wished such a wish," said the hostess. "I do not understand these doings, not I; and if a hundred Jesuits came to hold a consult at my house, as they did at the White Horse Tavern, I should think it quite out of the line of business to bear witness against them, provided they drank well, and paid their score."

"Very true, dame," said her elder guest; "that is what I call keeping a good publican conscience; and so I will pay my score presently, and be jogging on my way."

Peveril, on his part, also demanded a reckoning, and discharged it so liberally, that the miller flourished his hat as he bowed, and the hostess courtesied down to the ground.

The horses of both guests were brought forth; and they mounted, in order to depart in company. The host and hostess stood in the doorway, to see them depart. The landlord proffered a stirrup-cup to the elder guest, while the landlady offered Peveril a glass from her own peculiar bottle. For this purpose, she mounted on the horse-block, with flask and glass in hand; so that it was easy for the departing guest, although on horse-back, to return the courtesy in the most approved manner, namely, by throwing his arm over his landlady's shoulder, and saluting her at parting.

Dame Whitecraft did not decline this familiarity; for there is no room for traversing upon a horse-block, and the hands which might have served her for resistance, were occupied with glass and bottle—matters too precious to be thrown away in such a struggle. Apparently, however, she had something else in her head; for as, after a brief affectation of reluctance, she permitted Peveril's face to approach hers, she whispered in his ear, "Beware of trepans!"—an awful intimation, which, in those days of distrust, suspicion, and treachery, was as effectual in interdicting free and social intercourse, as the advertisement of "man-traps and spring-guns," to protect an orchard. Pressing her hand, in intimation that he comprehended her hint, she shook his warmly in return, and bade God speed him. There was a cloud on John Whitecraft's brow; nor did his final farewell sound half so cordial as that which had been spoken within doors. But then Peveril reflected, that the same guest is not always equally acceptable to landlord and landlady; and unconscious of having done anything to excite the miller's displeasure, he pursued his journey without thinking farther of the matter.

Julian was a little surprised, and not altogether pleased, to find that his new acquaintance held the same road with him. He had many reasons for wishing to travel alone; and the hostess's caution still rung in his ears. If this man, possessed of so much shrewdness as his countenance and conversation intimated, versatile, as he had occasion to remark, and disguised beneath his condition, should prove, as was likely, to be a concealed Jesuit or seminary-priest, travelling upon their great task of the conversion of England, and rooting out of the Northern heresy,—a more dangerous companion, for a person in his own circumstances, could hardly be imagined; since keeping society with him might seem to authorise whatever reports had been spread concerning the attachment of his family to the Catholic cause. At the same time, it was very difficult, without actual rudeness, to shake off the company of one who seemed so determined, whether spoken to or not, to remain alongside of him.

Peveril tried the experiment of riding slow; but his companion, determined not to drop him, slackened his pace, so as to keep close by him. Julian then spurred his horse to a full trot; and was soon satisfied, that the stranger, notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance, was so much better mounted than himself, as to render vain any thought of outriding him. He pulled up his horse to a more reasonable pace, therefore, in a sort of despair. Upon his doing so, his companion, who had been hitherto silent, observed, that Peveril was not so well qualified to try speed upon the road, as he would have been had he abode by his first bargain of horse-flesh that morning.

Peveril assented dryly, but observed, that the animal would serve his immediate purpose, though he feared it would render him indifferent company for a person better mounted.

"By no means," answered his civil companion; "I am one of those who have travelled so much, as to be accustomed to make my journey at any rate of motion which may be most agreeable to my company."

Peveril made no reply to this polite intimation, being too sincere to tender the thanks which, in courtesy, were the proper answer.—A second pause ensued, which was broken by Julian asking the stranger whether their roads were likely to lie long together in the same direction.

"I cannot tell," said the stranger, smiling, "unless I knew which way you were travelling."

"I am uncertain how far I shall go to-night," said Julian, willingly misunderstanding the purport of the reply.

"And so am I," replied the stranger; "but though my horse goes better than yours, I think it will be wise to spare him; and in case our road continues to lie the same way, we are likely to sup, as we have dined together."

Julian made no answer whatever to this round intimation, but continued to ride on, turning, in his own mind, whether it would not be wisest to come to a distinct understanding with his pertinacious attendant, and to explain, in so many words, that it was his pleasure to travel alone. But, besides that the sort of acquaintance which they had formed during dinner, rendered him unwilling to be directly uncivil towards a person of gentleman-like manners, he had also to consider that he might very possibly be mistaken in this man's character and purpose; in which case, the cynically refusing the society of a sound Protestant, would afford as pregnant matter of suspicion, as travelling in company with a disguised Jesuit.

After brief reflection, therefore, he resolved to endure the encumbrance of the stranger's society, until a fair opportunity should occur to rid himself of it; and, in the meantime, to act with as much caution as he possibly could, in any communication that might take place between them; for Dame Whitecraft's parting caution still rang anxiously in his ears, and the consequences of his own arrest upon suspicion, must deprive him of every opportunity of serving his father, or the countess, or Major Bridgenorth, upon whose interest, also, he had promised himself to keep an eye.

While he revolved these things in his mind, they had journeyed several miles without speaking; and now entered upon a more waste country, and worse roads, than they had hitherto found, being, in fact, approaching the more hilly district of Derbyshire. In travelling on a very stony and uneven lane, Julian's horse repeatedly stumbled; and, had he not been supported by the rider's judicious use of the bridle, must at length certainly have fallen under him.

"These are times which crave wary riding, sir," said his companion; "and by your seat in the saddle, and your hand on the rein, you seem to understand it to be so."

"I have been long a horseman, sir," answered Peveril.

"And long a traveller, too, sir, I should suppose; since by the great caution you observe, you seem to think the human tongue requires a curb, as well as the horse's jaws."

"Wiser men than I have been of opinion," answered Peveril, "that it were a part of prudence to be silent, when men have little or nothing to say."

"I cannot approve of their opinion," answered the stranger. "All knowledge is gained by communication, either with the dead, through books, or, more pleasingly, through the conversation of the living. The *deaf and dumb*, alone, are excluded from improvement; and surely their situation is not so enviable that we should imitate them."

At this illustration, which awakened a startling echo in Peveril's bosom, the young man looked hard at his companion; but in the composed countenance, and calm blue eye, he read no consciousness of a farther meaning than the words immediately and directly implied. He paused a moment, and then answered, "You seem to be a person, sir, of shrewd apprehension; and I should have thought it might have occurred to you, that in the present suspicious times, men may, without censure, avoid communication with strangers. You know not me; and to me you are totally unknown. There is not room for much discourse between us, without trespassing on the general topics of the day, which carry in them seeds of quarrel between friends, much more betwixt strangers. At any other time, the society of an intelligent companion would have been most acceptable upon my solitary ride; but at present——"

"At present!" said the other, interrupting him. "You are like the old Romans, who held that *hostis* meant both a stranger and an enemy. I will therefore be no longer a stranger. My name is Ganlesse—by profession I am a Roman Catholic priest—I am travelling here in dread of my life—and I am very glad to have you for a companion."

"I thank you for the information with all my heart," said Peveril; "and to avail myself of it to the uttermost, I must beg you to ride forward, or lag behind, or take a side-path, at your own pleasure; for as I am no Catholic, and travel upon business of high concernment, I am exposed both to risk and delay, and even to danger, by keeping such suspicious company. And so, Master Ganlesse, keep your own pace, and I will keep the contrary; for I beg leave to forbear your company."

As Peveril spoke thus, he pulled up his horse, and made a full stop.

The stranger burst out a-laughing. "What!" he said, "you forbear my company for a trifle of danger? Saint Anthony! How the warm blood of the Cavaliers is chilled in the young men of the present day! This young gallant, now, has a father, I warrant, who has endured as many adventures for hunting priests, as a knight-errant for distressed damsels."

"This raillery avails nothing, sir," said Peveril. "I must request you will keep your own way."

"My way is yours," said the pertinacious Master Ganlesse, as he called himself; "and we will both travel the safer, that we journey in company. I have the receipt of fern-seed, man, and walk invisible. Besides, you would not have me quit you in this lane, where there is no turn to right or left?"

Peveril moved on, desirous to avoid open violence—for which the indifferent tone of the traveller, indeed, afforded no apt pretext—yet highly disliking his company, and determined to take the first opportunity to rid himself of it.

The stranger proceeded at the same pace with him, keeping cautiously on his bridle hand, as if to secure that advantage in case of a struggle. But his language did not intimate the least apprehension. "You do me wrong," he said to Peveril, "and you equally wrong yourself. You are uncertain where to lodge to-night—trust to my guidance. Here is an ancient hall, within four miles, with an old knightly Pantaloone for its lord—an all-be-ruffed Dame Barbara for the lady gay—a Jesuit, in a butler's habit, to say grace—an old tale of Edgehill and Worster fights to relish a cold venison pasty, and a flask of claret mantled with cobwebs—a bed for you in the priest's hiding-hole—and, for aught I know, pretty Mistress Betty, the dairy-maid, to make it ready."

"This has no charms for me, sir," said Peveril, who, in spite of himself, could not but be amused with the ready sketch which the stranger gave of many an old mansion in Cheshire and Derbyshire, where the owners retained the ancient faith of Rome.

"Well, I see I cannot charm you in this way," continued his companion; "I must strike another key. I am no longer Ganlesse, the seminary priest, but (changing his tone, and snuffing in the nose) Simon Canter, a poor preacher of the Word, who travels this way to call sinners to repentance; and to strengthen, and to edify, and to fructify among the scattered remnant who hold fast the truth.—What say you to this, sir?"

"I admire your versatility, sir, and could be entertained with it at another time. At present sincerity is more in request."

"Sincerity!" said the stranger;—"a child's whistle, with but two notes in it—yea, yea, and nay, nay. Why, man, the very Quakers have renounced it, and have got in its stead a gallant recorder, called Hypocrisy, that is somewhat like Sincerity in form, but of much greater compass, and combines the whole gamut. Come, be ruled—be a disciple of Simon Canter for the evening, and we will leave the old tumble-down castle of the knight aforesaid, on the left hand, for a new brick-built mansion, erected by an eminent salt-boiler from Namptwich, who expects the said Simon to make a strong spiritual pickle for the preservation of a soul somewhat corrupted by the evil communications of this wicked world. What say you? He has two daughters—brighter eyes never beamed under a pinched hood; and for myself, I think there is more fire in those who live only to love and to devotion, than in your court beauties, whose hearts are running on twenty follies besides. You know not the pleasure of being conscience-keeper to a pretty precisian, who in one breath repeats her foibles, and in the next confesses her passion. Perhaps, though, you may have known such in your day? Come, sir, it grows too dark to see your blushes; but I am sure they are burning on your cheek."

"You take great freedom, sir," said Peveril, as they now approached the end of the lane, where it opened on a broad common; "and you seem rather to count more on my forbearance, than you have room to do with safety. We are now nearly free of the lane which has made us companions for this late half hour. To avoid your farther company, I will take the turn to the left, upon that common; and if you follow me, it shall be at your peril. Observe, I am well armed; and you will fight at odds."

"Not at odds," returned the provoking stranger, "while I have my brown jennet, with which I can ride round and round you at pleasure; and this text, of a handful in length (showing a pistol which he drew from his bosom), which discharges very convincing doctrine on the pressure of a forefinger, and is apt to equalise all odds, as you call them, of youth and strength. Let there be no strife between us, however—the moor lies before us—choose your path on it—I take the other."

"I wish you good night, sir," said Peveril to the stranger. "I ask your forgiveness, if I have misconstrued you in anything; but the times are perilous, and a man's life may depend on the society in which he travels."

"True," said the stranger; "but in your case, the danger is already undergone, and you should seek to counteract it. You have travelled in my company long enough to devise a handsome branch of the Popish Plot. How will you look, when you see come forth, in comely folio form, The Narrative of Simon Canter, otherwise called Richard Ganlesse, concerning the horrid Popish Conspiracy for the Murder of the King, and Massacre of all Protestants, as given on oath to the Honourable House of Commons; setting forth, how far Julian Peveril, younger of Martindale Castle, is concerned in carrying on the same——"

"How, sir? What mean you?" said Peveril, much startled.

"Nay, sir," replied his companion, "do not interrupt my title-page. Now that Oates and Bedloe have drawn the great prizes, the subordinate discoverers get little but by the sale of their Narrative; and Janeway, Newman, Simmons, and every bookseller of them, will tell you that the title is half the narrative. Mine shall therefore set forth the various schemes you have communicated to me, of landing ten thousand soldiers from the Isle of Man upon the coast of Lancashire; and marching into Wales, to join the ten thousand pilgrims who are to be shipped from Spain; and so completing the destruction of the Protestant religion, and of the devoted city of London. Truly, I think such a Narrative, well spiced with a few horrors, and published *cum privilegio parlamenti*, might, though the market be somewhat overstocked, be still worth some twenty or thirty pieces."

"You seem to know me, sir," said Peveril; "and if so, I think I may fairly ask you your purpose in thus bearing me company, and the meaning of all this rhapsody. If it be mere banter, I can endure it within proper limit; although it is uncivil on the part of a stranger. If you have any farther purpose, speak it out; I am not to be trifled with."

"Good, now," said the stranger, laughing, "into what an unprofitable chafe you have put yourself! An Italian *fuoruscito*, when he desires a parley with you, takes aim from behind a wall, with his long gun, and prefaces his conference with *Posso tirare*. So does your man-of-war fire a gun across the bows of a Hansmogan Indiaman, just to bring her to; and so do I show Master Julian Peveril, that, if I were one of the honourable society of witnesses and informers, with whom his imagination has associated me for these two hours past, he is as much within my danger now, as what he is ever likely to be." Then, suddenly changing his tone to serious, which was in general ironical, he added, "Young man, when the pestilence is diffused through the air of a city, it is in vain men would avoid the disease, by seeking solitude, and shunning the company of their fellow-sufferers."

"In what, then, consists their safety?" said Peveril, willing to ascertain, if possible, the drift of his companion's purpose.

"In following the counsels of wise physicians;" such was the stranger's answer.

"And as such," said Peveril, "you offer me your advice?"

"Pardon me, young man," said the stranger haughtily, "I see no reason I should do so.—I am not," he added, in his former tone, "your fee'd physician—I offer no advice—I only say it would be wise that you sought it."

"And from whom, or where, can I obtain it?" said Peveril. "I wander in this country like one in a dream; so much a few months have changed it. Men who formerly occupied themselves with their own affairs, are now swallowed up in matters of state policy; and those tremble under the apprehension of some strange and sudden convulsion of empire, who were formerly only occupied by the fear of going to bed supperless. And to sum up the matter, I meet a stranger apparently well acquainted with my name and concerns, who first attaches himself to me, whether I will or no; and then refuses me an explanation of his business, while he menaces me with the strangest accusations."

"Had I meant such infamy," said the stranger, "believe me, I had not given you the thread of my intrigue. But be wise, and come one with me. There is, hard by, a small inn, where, if you can take a stranger's warrant for it, we shall sleep in perfect security."

"Yet, you yourself," said Peveril, "but now were anxious to avoid observation; and in that case, how can you protect me?"

"Pshaw! I did but silence that tattling landlady, in the way in which such people are most readily hushed; and for Topham, and his brace of night owls, they must hawk at other and lesser game than I should prove."

Peveril could not help admiring the easy and confident indifference with which the stranger seemed to assume a superiority to all the circumstances of danger around him; and after hastily considering the matter with himself, came to the resolution to keep company with him for this night at least; and to learn, if possible, who he really was, and to what party in the estate he was attached. The boldness and freedom of his talk seemed almost inconsistent with his following the perilous, though at that time the gainful trade of an informer. No doubt, such persons assumed every appearance which could insinuate them into the confidence of their destined victims; but Julian thought he discovered in this man's manner, a wild and reckless frankness, which he could not but connect with the idea of

sincerity in the present case. He therefore answered, after a moment's recollection, "I embrace your proposal, sir; although, by doing so, I am reposing a sudden, and perhaps an unwary, confidence."

"And what am I, then, reposing in you?" said the stranger. "Is not our confidence mutual?"

"No; much the contrary. I know nothing of you whatever—you have named me; and, knowing me to be Julian Peveril, know you may travel with me in perfect security."

"The devil I do!" answered his companion. "I travel in the same security as with a lighted petard, which I may expect to explode every moment. Are you not the son of Peveril of the Peak, with whose name Prelacy and Popery are so closely allied, that no old woman of either sex in Derbyshire concludes her prayer without a petition to be freed from all three? And do you not come from the Popish Countess of Derby, bringing, for aught I know, a whole army of Manxmen in your pocket, with full complement of arms, ammunition, baggage, and a train of field artillery?"

"It is not very likely I should be so poorly mounted," said Julian, laughing, "if I had such a weight to carry. But lead on, sir. I see I must wait for your confidence, till you think proper to confer it; for you are already so well acquainted with my affairs, that I have nothing to offer you in exchange for it."

"*Allons*, then," said his companion; "give your horse the spur, and raise the curb rein, lest he measure the ground with his nose instead of his paces. We are not now more than a furlong or two from the place of entertainment."

They mended their pace accordingly, and soon arrived at the small solitary inn which the traveller had mentioned. When its light began to twinkle before them, the stranger, as if recollecting something he had forgotten, "By the way, you must have a name to pass by; for it may be ill travelling under your own, as the fellow who keeps this house is an old Cromwellian. What will you call yourself?—My name is—for the present—Ganlesse."

"There is no occasion to assume a name at all," answered Julian. "I do not incline to use a borrowed one, especially as I may meet with some one who knows my own."

"I will call you Julian, then," said Master Ganlesse; "for Peveril will smell, in the nostrils of mine host, of idolatry, conspiracy, Smithfield faggots, fish on Fridays, the murder of Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, and the fire of purgatory."

As he spoke thus, they alighted under the great broad-branched oak tree, that served to canopy the ale-bench, which, at an earlier hour, had groaned under the weight of a frequent conclave of rustic politicians. Ganlesse, as he dismounted, whistled in a particularly shrill note, and was answered from within the house.

CHAPTER XXII

*He was a fellow in a peasant's garb;
Yet one could censure you a woodcock's carving.
Like any courtier at the ordinary.*

—THE ORDINARY.

The person who appeared at the door of the little inn to receive Ganlesse, as we mentioned in our last chapter, sung, as he came forward, this scrap of an old ballad,—

*"Good even to you, Diccon;
And how have you sped;
Bring you the bonny bride
To banquet and bed?"*

To which Ganlesse answered, in the same tone and tune,—

*"Content thee, kind Robin;
He need little care,
Who brings home a fat buck
Instead of a hare."*

"You have missed your blow, then?" said the other, in reply.

"I tell you I have not," answered Ganlesse; "but you will think of nought but your own thriving occupation—May the plague that belongs to it stick to it! though it hath been the making of thee."

"A man must live, Diccon Ganlesse," said the other.

"Well, well," said Ganlesse, "bid my friend welcome, for my sake. Hast thou got any supper?"

"Reeking like a sacrifice—Chaubert has done his best. That fellow is a treasure! give him a farthing candle, and he will cook a good supper out of it.—Come in, sir. My friend's friend is welcome, as we say in my country."

"We must have our horses looked to first," said Peveril, who began to be considerably uncertain about the character of his companions—"that done, I am for you."

Ganlesse gave a second whistle; a groom appeared, who took charge of both their horses, and they themselves entered the inn.

The ordinary room of a poor inn seemed to have undergone some alterations, to render it fit for company of a higher description. There were a beaufet, a couch, and one or two other pieces of furniture, of a style inconsistent with the appearance of the place. The tablecloth, which was already laid, was of the finest damask; and the spoons, forks, &c., were of silver. Peveril looked at this apparatus with some surprise; and again turning his eyes attentively upon his travelling companion, Ganlesse, he could not help discovering (by the aid of imagination, perhaps), that though insignificant in person, plain in features, and dressed like one in indigence, there lurked still about his person and manners, that indefinable ease of manner which belongs only to men of birth and quality, or to those who are in the constant habit of frequenting the best company. His companion, whom he called Will Smith, although tall and rather good-looking, besides being much better dressed, had not, nevertheless, exactly the same ease of demeanour; and was obliged to make up for the want, by an additional proportion of assurance. Who these two persons could be, Peveril could not attempt even to form a guess. There was nothing for it but to watch their manner and conversation.

After speaking a moment in whispers, Smith said to his companion, "We must go look after our nags for ten minutes, and allow Chaubert to do his office."

"Will not he appear, and minister before us, then?" said Ganlesse.

"What! he?—he shift a trencher—he hand a cup?—No, you forget whom you speak of. Such an order were enough to make him fall on his own sword—he is already on the borders of despair, because no craw-fish are to be had."

"Alack-a day!" replied Ganlesse. "Heaven forbid I should add to such a calamity! To stable, then, and see we how our steeds eat their provender, while ours is getting ready."

They adjourned to the stable accordingly, which, though a poor one, had been hastily supplied with whatever was necessary for the accommodation of four excellent horses; one of which, that from which Ganlesse was just dismounted, the groom we have mentioned was cleaning and dressing by the light of a huge wax-candle.

"I am still so far Catholic," said Ganlesse, laughing, as he saw that Peveril noticed this piece of extravagance. "My horse is my saint, and I dedicate a candle to him."

"Without asking so great a favour for mine, which I see standing behind yonder old hen-coop," replied Peveril, "I will at least relieve him of his saddle and bridle."

"Leave him to the lad of the inn," said Smith; "he is not worthy of any other person's handling; and I promise you, if you slip a single buckle, you will so flavour of that stable duty, that you might as well eat roast-beef as ragouts, for any relish you will have of them."

"I love roast-beef as well as ragouts, at any time," said Peveril, adjusting himself to a task which every young man should know how to perform when need is; "and my horse, though it be but a sorry jade, will champ better on hay and corn, than on an iron bit."

While he was unsaddling his horse, and shaking down some litter for the poor wearied animal, he heard Smith observe to Ganlesse,—*"By my faith, Dick, thou hast fallen into poor Slender's blunder; missed Anne Page, and brought us a great lubberly post-master's boy."*

"Hush, he will hear thee," answered Ganlesse; "there are reasons for all things—it is well as it is. But, prithee, tell thy fellow to help the youngster."

"What!" replied Smith, "d'ye think I am mad?—Ask Tom Beacon—Tom of Newmarket—Tom of ten thousand, to touch such a four-legged brute as that?—Why, he would turn me away on the spot—discard me, i'faith. It was all he would do to take in hand your own, my good friend; and if you consider him not the better, you are like to stand groom to him yourself to-morrow."

"Well, Will," answered Ganlesse, "I will say that for thee, thou hast a set of the most useless, scoundrelly, insolent vermin about thee, that ever ate up a poor gentleman's revenues."

"Useless? I deny it," replied Smith. "Every one of my fellows does something or other so exquisitely, that it were sin to make him do anything else—it is your jacks-of-all-trades who are masters of none.—But hark to Chaubert's signal. The coxcomb is twangling it on the lute, to the tune of *Eveillez-vous, belle endormie*.—Come, Master What d'ye call (addressing Peveril),—get ye some water, and wash this filthy witness from your hand, as Betterton says in the play; for Chaubert's cookery is like Friar Bacon's Head—time is—time was—time will soon be no more."

So saying, and scarce allowing Julian time to dip his hands in a bucket, and dry them on a horse-cloth, he hurried him from the stable back to the supper-chamber.

Here all was prepared for their meal, with an epicurean delicacy, which rather belonged to the saloon of a palace, than the cabin in which it was displayed. Four dishes of silver, with covers of the same metal, smoked on the table; and three seats were placed for the company. Beside the lower end of the board, was a small side-table, to answer the purpose of what is now called a dumb waiter; on which several flasks reared their tall, stately, and swan-like crests, above glasses and rummers. Clean covers were also placed within reach; and a small travelling-case of morocco, hooped with silver, displayed a number of bottles, containing the most approved sauces that culinary ingenuity had then invented.

Smith, who occupied the lower seat, and seemed to act as president of the feast, motioned the two travellers to take their places and begin. "I would not stay a grace-time," he said, "to save a whole nation from perdition. We could bring no chauffettes with any convenience; and even Chaubert is nothing, unless his dishes are tasted in the very moment of projection. Come, uncover, and let us see what he has done for us.—Hum!—ha!—ay—squab-pigeons—wildfowl—young chickens—venison cutlets—and a space in the centre, wet, alas! by a gentle tear from Chaubert's eye, where should have been the *soupe aux écrevisses*. The zeal of that poor fellow is ill repaid by his paltry ten louis per month."

"A mere trifle," said Ganlesse; "but, like yourself, Will, he serves a generous master."

The repast now commenced; and Julian, though he had seen his young friend the Earl of Derby, and other gallants, affect a considerable degree of interest and skill in the science of the kitchen, and was not himself either an enemy or a stranger to the pleasures of a good table, found that, on the present occasion, he was a mere novice. Both his companions, but Smith in especial, seemed to consider that they were now engaged in the only true business of life; and weighed all its minutiae with a proportional degree of accuracy. To carve the morsel in the most delicate manner—and to apportion the proper seasoning with the accuracy of the chemist,—to be aware, exactly, of the order in which one dish should succeed another, and to do plentiful justice to all—was a minuteness of science to which Julian had hitherto been a stranger. Smith accordingly treated him as a mere novice in epicurism, cautioning him to eat his soup before the bouilli, and to forget the Manx custom of bolting the boiled meat before the broth, as if Cutlar MacCulloch and all his whingers were at the door. Peveril took the hint in good part, and the entertainment proceeded with animation.

At length Ganlesse paused, and declared the supper exquisite. "But, my friend Smith," he added, "are your wines curious? When you brought all that trash of plates and trumpery into Derbyshire, I hope you did not leave us at the mercy of the strong ale of the shire, as thick and muddy as the squires who drink it?"

"Did I not know that *you* were to meet me, Dick Ganlesse?" answered their host. "And can you suspect me of such an omission? It is true, you must make champagne and claret serve, for my burgundy would not bear travelling. But if you have a fancy for sherry, or Vin de Cahors, I have a notion Chaubert and Tom Beacon have brought some for their own drinking."

"Perhaps the gentlemen would not care to impart," said Ganlesse.

"Oh, fie!—anything in the way of civility," replied Smith. "They are, in truth, the best-natured lads alive, when treated respectfully; so that if you would prefer——"

"By no means," said Ganlesse—"a glass of champagne will serve in a scarcity of better."

"The cork shall start obsequious to my thumb."

said Smith; and as he spoke, he untwisted the wire, and the cork struck the roof of the cabin. Each guest took a large rummer glass of the sparkling beverage, which Peveril had judgment and experience enough to pronounce exquisite.

"Give me your hand, sir," said Smith; "it is the first word of sense you have spoken this evening."

"Wisdom, sir," replied Peveril, "is like the best ware in the pedlar's pack, which he never produces till he knows his customer."

"Sharp as mustard," returned the *bon vivant*; "but be wise, most noble pedlar, and take another rummer of this same flask, which you see I have held in an oblique position for your service—not permitting it to retrograde to the perpendicular. Nay, take it off before the bubble bursts on the rim, and the zest is gone."

"You do me honour, sir," said Peveril, taking the second glass. "I wish you a better office than that of my cup-bearer."

"You cannot wish Will Smith one more congenial to his nature," said Ganlesse. "Others have a selfish delight in the objects of sense, Will thrives, and is happy by imparting them to his friends."

"Better help men to pleasures than to pains, Master Ganlesse," answered Smith, somewhat angrily.

"Nay, wrath thee not, Will," said Ganlesse; "and speak no words in haste, lest you may have cause to repent at leisure. Do I blame thy social concern for the pleasures of others? Why, man, thou dost therein most philosophically multiply thine own. A man has but one throat, and can but eat, with his best efforts, some five or six times a day; but thou dinest with every friend that cuts a capon, and art quaffing wine in other men's gullets, from morning to night—*et sic de cæteris*."

"Friend Ganlesse," returned Smith, "I prithee beware—thou knowest I can cut gullets as well as tickle them."

"Ay, Will," answered Ganlesse carelessly; "I think I have seen thee wave thy whinyard at the throat of a Hogan-Mogan—a Netherlandish weasand, which expanded only on thy natural and mortal objects of aversion,—Dutch cheese, rye-bread, pickled herring, onion, and Geneva."

"For pity's sake, forbear the description!" said Smith; "thy words overpower the perfumes, and flavour the apartment like a dish of salmagundi!"

"But for an epiglottis like mine," continued Ganlesse, "down which the most delicate morsels are washed by such claret as thou art now pouring out, thou couldst not, in thy bitterest mood, wish a worse fate than to be necklaced somewhat tight by a pair of white arms."

"By a tenpenny cord," answered Smith; "but not till you were dead; that thereafter you be presently embowelled, you being yet alive; that your head be then severed from your body, and your body divided into quarters, to be disposed of at his Majesty's pleasure.—How like you that, Master Richard Ganlesse?"

"E'en as you like the thoughts of dining on bran-bread and milk-porridge—an extremity which you trust never to be reduced to. But all this shall not prevent me from pledging you in a cup of sound claret."

As the claret circulated, the glee of the company increased; and Smith placing the dishes which had been made use of upon the side-table, stamped with his foot on the floor, and the table sinking down a trap, again rose, loaded with olives, sliced neat's tongue, caviare, and other provocatives for the circulation of the bottle.

"Why, Will," said Ganlesse, "thou art a more complete mechanist than I suspected; thou hast brought thy scene-shifting inventions to Derbyshire in marvellously short time."

"A rope and pulleys can be easily come by," answered Will; "and with a saw and a plane, I can manage that business in half a day. I love the knack of clean and secret conveyance—thou knowest it was the foundation of my fortunes."

"It may be the wreck of them too, Will," replied his friend.

"True, Diccon," answered Will; "but, *dum vivimus, vivamus*,—that is my motto; and therewith I present you a brimmer to the health of the fair lady you wot of."

"Let it come, Will," replied his friend; and the flask circulated briskly from hand to hand.

Julian did not think it prudent to seem a check on their festivity, as he hoped in its progress something might occur to enable him to judge of the character and purposes of his companions. But he watched them in vain. Their conversation was animated and lively, and often bore reference to the literature of the period, in which the elder seemed particularly well skilled. They also talked freely of the Court, and of that numerous class of gallants who were then described as "men of wit and pleasure about town;" and to which it seemed probable they themselves appertained.

At length the universal topic of the Popish Plot was started; upon which Ganlesse and Smith seemed to entertain the most opposite opinions. Ganlesse, if he did not maintain the authority of Oates in its utmost extent, contended, that at least it was confirmed in a great measure by the murder of Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, and the letters written by Coleman to the confessor of the French King.

With much more noise, and less power of reasoning, Will Smith hesitated not to ridicule and run down the whole discovery, as one of the wildest and most causeless alarms which had ever been sounded in the ears of a credulous public. "I shall never forget," he said, "Sir Godfrey's most original funeral. Two bouncing parsons, well armed with sword and pistol, mounted the pulpit, to secure the third fellow who preached from being murdered in the face of the congregation. Three parsons in one pulpit—three suns in one hemisphere—no wonder men stood aghast at such a prodigy."

"What then, Will," answered his companion, "you are one of those who think the good knight murdered himself, in order to give credit to the Plot?"

"By my faith, not I," said the other; "but some true blue Protestant might do the job for him, in order to give the thing a better colour.—I will be judged by our silent friend, whether that be not the most feasible solution of the whole."

"I pray you, pardon me, gentlemen," said Julian; "I am but just landed in England, and am a stranger to the particular circumstances which have thrown the nation into such a ferment. It would be the highest degree of assurance in me to give my opinion betwixt gentlemen who argue the matter so ably; besides, to say truth, I confess weariness—your wine is more potent than I expected, or I have drunk more of it than I meant to do."

"Nay, if an hour's nap will refresh you," said the elder of the strangers, "make no ceremony with us. Your bed—all we can offer as such—is that old-fashioned Dutch-built sofa, as the last new phrase calls it. We shall be early stirrers tomorrow morning."

"And that we may be so," said Smith, "I propose that we do sit up all this night—I hate lying rough, and detest a pallet-bed. So have at another flask, and the newest lampoon to help it out—

'Now a plague of their votes

Upon Papists and Plots,

And be d—d Doctor Oates.

Tol de rol.'"

"Nay, but our Puritanic host," said Ganlesse.

"I have him in my pocket, man—his eyes, ears, nose, and tongue," answered his boon companion, "are all in my possession."

"In that case, when you give him back his eyes and nose, I pray you keep his ears and tongue," answered Ganlesse. "Seeing and smelling are organs sufficient for such a knave—to hear and tell are things he should have no manner of pretensions to."

"I grant you it were well done," answered Smith; "but it were a robbing of the hangman and the pillory; and I am an honest fellow, who would give Dun[*] and the devil his due. So,

'All joy to great Cæsar,

Long life, love, and pleasure;

May the King live for ever,

'Tis no matter for us, boys.'"

[*] *Dun was the hangman of the day at Tyburn. He was successor of Gregory Brunden, who was by many believed to be the same who dropped the axe upon Charles I., though others were suspected of being the actual regicide.*

While this Bacchanalian scene proceeded, Julian had wrapt himself closely in his cloak, and stretched himself on the couch which they had shown him. He looked towards the table he had left—the tapers seemed to become hazy and dim as he gazed—he heard the sound of voices, but they ceased to convey any impression to his understanding; and in a few minutes, he was faster asleep than he had ever been in the whole course of his life.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Gordon then his bugle blew,

And said, awa, awa;

The House of Rhodes is all on flame,

I hauld it time to ga'.

—OLD BALLAD.

When Julian awaked the next morning, all was still and vacant in the apartment. The rising sun, which shone through the half-closed shutters, showed some relics of the last night's banquet, which his confused and throbbing head assured him had been carried into a debauch.

Without being much of a boon companion, Julian, like other young men of the time, was not in the habit of shunning wine, which was then used in considerable quantities; and he could not help being surprised, that the few cups he had drunk over night had produced on his frame the effects of excess. He rose up, adjusted his dress, and sought in the apartment for water to perform his morning ablutions, but without success. Wine there was on the table; and beside it one stool stood, and another lay, as if thrown down in the heedless riot of the evening. "Surely," he thought to himself, "the wine must have been very powerful, which rendered me insensible to the noise my companions must have made ere they finished their carouse."

With momentary suspicion he examined his weapons, and the packet which he had received from the Countess, and kept in a secret pocket of his upper coat, bound close about his person. All was safe; and the very operation reminded him of the duties which lay before him. He left the apartment where they had supped, and went into another, wretched enough, where, in a truckle-bed, were stretched two bodies, covered with a rug, the heads belonging to which were amicably deposited upon the same truss of hay. The one was the black shock-head of the groom; the other, graced with a long thrum nightcap, showed a grizzled pate, and a grave caricatured countenance, which the hook-nose and lantern-jaws proclaimed to belong to the Gallic minister of good cheer, whose praises he had heard sung forth on the preceding evening. These worthies seemed to have slumbered in the arms of Bacchus as well as of Morpheus, for there were broken flasks on the floor; and their deep snoring alone showed that they were alive.

Bent upon resuming his journey, as duty and expedience alike dictated, Julian next descended the trap-stair, and essayed a door at the bottom of the steps. It was fastened within. He called—no answer was returned. It must be, he thought, the apartment of the revellers, now probably sleeping as soundly as their dependants

still slumbered, and as he himself had done a few minutes before. Should he awake them?—To what purpose? They were men with whom accident had involved him against his own will; and situated as he was, he thought it wise to take the earliest opportunity of breaking off from society which was suspicious, and might be perilous. Ruminating thus, he essayed another door, which admitted him to a bedroom, where lay another harmonious slumberer. The mean utensils, pewter measures, empty cans and casks, with which this room was lumbered, proclaimed it that of the host, who slept surrounded by his professional implements of hospitality and stock-in-trade.

This discovery relieved Peveril from some delicate embarrassment which he had formerly entertained. He put upon the table a piece of money, sufficient, as he judged, to pay his share of the preceding night's reckoning; not caring to be indebted for his entertainment to the strangers, whom he was leaving without the formality of an adieu.

His conscience cleared of this gentleman-like scruple, Peveril proceeded with a light heart, though somewhat a dizzy head, to the stable, which he easily recognised among a few other paltry outhouses. His horse, refreshed with rest, and perhaps not unmindful of his services the evening before, neighed as his master entered the stable; and Peveril accepted the sound as an omen of a prosperous journey. He paid the augury with a sieveful of corn; and, while his palfrey profited by his attention, walked into the fresh air to cool his heated blood, and consider what course he should pursue in order to reach the Castle of Martindale before sunset. His acquaintance with the country in general gave him confidence that he could not have greatly deviated from the nearest road; and with his horse in good condition, he conceived he might easily reach Martindale before nightfall.

Having adjusted his route in his mind, he returned into the stable to prepare his steed for the journey, and soon led him into the ruinous courtyard of the inn, bridled, saddled, and ready to be mounted. But as Peveril's hand was upon the mane, and his left foot in the stirrup, a hand touched his cloak, and the voice of Ganlesse said, "What, Master Peveril, is this your foreign breeding? or have you learned in France to take French leave of your friends?"

Julian started like a guilty thing, although a moment's reflection assured him that he was neither wrong nor in danger. "I cared not to disturb you," he said, "although I did come as far as the door of your chamber. I supposed your friend and you might require, after our last night's revel, rather sleep than ceremony. I left my own bed, though a rough one, with more reluctance than usual; and as my occasions oblige me to be an early traveller, I thought it best to depart without leave-taking. I have left a token for mine host on the table of his apartment."

"It was unnecessary," said Ganlesse; "the rascal is already overpaid.—But are you not rather premature in your purpose of departing? My mind tells me that Master Julian Peveril had better proceed with me to London, than turn aside for any purpose whatever. You may see already that I am no ordinary person, but a master-spirit of the time. For the cuckoo I travel with, and whom I indulge in his prodigal follies, he also has his uses. But you are a different cast; and I not only would serve you, but even wish you, to be my own."

Julian gazed on this singular person when he spoke. We have already said his figure was mean and slight, with very ordinary and unmarked features, unless we were to distinguish the lightnings of a keen grey eye, which corresponded in its careless and prideful glance, with the haughty superiority which the stranger assumed in his conversation. It was not till after a momentary pause that Julian replied, "Can you wonder, sir, that in my circumstances—if they are indeed known to you so well as they seem—I should decline unnecessary confidence on the affairs of moment which have called me hither, or refuse the company of a stranger, who assigns no reason for desiring mine?"

"Be it as you list, young man," answered Ganlesse; "only remember hereafter, you had a fair offer—it is not every one to whom I would have made it. If we should meet hereafter, on other, and on worse terms, impute it to yourself and not to me."

"I understand not your threat," answered Peveril, "If a threat be indeed implied. I have done no evil—I feel no apprehension—and I cannot, in common sense, conceive why I should suffer for refusing my confidence to a stranger, who seems to require that I should submit me blindfold to his guidance."

"Farewell, then, Sir Julian of the Peak,—that may soon be," said the stranger, removing the hand which he had as yet left carelessly on the horse's bridle.

"How mean you by that phrase?" said Julian; "and why apply such a title to me?"

The stranger smiled, and only answered, "Here our conference ends. The way is before you. You will find it longer and rougher than that by which I would have guided you."

So saying, Ganlesse turned his back and walked toward the house. On the threshold he turned about once more, and seeing that Peveril had not yet moved from the spot, he again smiled and beckoned to him; but Julian, recalled by that sign to recollection, spurred his horse and set forward on his journey.

It was not long ere his local acquaintance with the country enabled him to regain the road to Martindale, from which he had diverged on the preceding evening for about two miles. But the roads, or rather the paths, of this wild country, so much satirised by their native poet, Cotton, were so complicated in some places, so difficult to be traced in others, and so unfit for hasty travelling in almost all, that in spite of Julian's utmost exertions, and though he made no longer delay upon the journey than was necessary to bait his horse at a small hamlet through which he passed at noon, it was nightfall ere he reached an eminence, from which, an hour sooner, the battlements of Martindale Castle would have been visible; and where, when they were hid in night, their situation was indicated by a light constantly maintained in a lofty tower, called the Warder's Turret; and which domestic beacon had acquired, through all the neighbourhood, the name of Peveril's Polestar.

This was regularly kindled at curfew toll, and supplied with as much wood and charcoal as maintained the light till sunrise; and at no period was the ceremonial omitted, saving during the space intervening between the death of a Lord of the Castle and his interment. When this last event had taken place, the nightly beacon was rekindled with some ceremony, and continued till fate called the successor to sleep with his fathers. It is not known from which circumstance the practice of maintaining this light originally sprung. Tradition spoke of it doubtfully. Some thought it was the signal of general hospitality, which, in ancient times, guided the wandering knight, or the weary pilgrim, to rest and refreshment. Others spoke of it as a "love-lighted watchfire," by which the provident anxiety of a former lady of Martindale guided her husband homeward through the terrors of a midnight storm. The less favourable construction of unfriendly neighbours of the dissenting persuasion, ascribed the origin and continuance of this practice to the assuming pride of the family of Peveril, who thereby chose to intimate their ancient *suzeraineté* over the whole country, in the manner of the admiral who carries the lantern in the poop, for the guidance of the fleet. And in the former times, our old friend, Master Solsgrace, dealt from the pulpit many a hard hit against Sir Geoffrey, as he that had raised his horn, and set up his candlestick on high. Certain it is, that all the Peverils, from father to son, had been especially attentive to the maintenance of this custom, as something intimately connected with the dignity of their family; and in the hands of Sir Geoffrey, the observance was not likely to be omitted.

Accordingly, the polar-star of Peveril had continued to beam more or less brightly during all the vicissitudes of the Civil War; and glimmered, however faintly, during the subsequent period of Sir Geoffrey's depression. But he was often heard to say, and sometimes to swear, that while there was a perch of woodland left to the estate, the old beacon-grate should not lack replenishing. All this his son Julian well knew; and therefore it was with no ordinary feelings of surprise and anxiety, that, looking in the direction of the Castle, he perceived that the light was not visible. He halted—rubbed his eyes—shifted his position—and endeavoured, in vain, to persuade himself that he had mistaken the point from which the polar-star of his house was visible, or that some newly intervening obstacle, the growth of a plantation, perhaps, or the erection of some building, intercepted the light of the beacon. But a moment's reflection assured him, that from the high and free situation which Martindale Castle bore in reference to the surrounding country, this could not have taken place; and the inference necessarily forced itself upon his mind, that Sir Geoffrey, his father, was either deceased, or that the family must have been disturbed by some strange calamity, under the pressure of which, their wonted custom and solemn usage had been neglected.

Under the influence of undefinable apprehension, young Peveril now struck the spurs into his jaded steed, and forcing him down the broken and steep path, at a pace which set safety at defiance, he arrived at the village of Martindale-Moultrassie, eagerly desirous to ascertain the cause of this ominous eclipse. The street, through which his tired horse paced slow and reluctantly, was now deserted and empty; and scarcely a candle twinkled from a casement, except from the latticed window of the little inn, called the Peveril Arms, from which a broad light shone, and several voices were heard in rude festivity.

Before the door of this inn, the jaded palfrey, guided by the instinct or experience which makes a hackney well acquainted with the outside of a house of entertainment, made so sudden and determined a pause, that, notwithstanding his haste, the rider thought it best to dismount, expecting to be readily supplied

with a fresh horse by Roger Raine, the landlord, the ancient dependant of his family. He also wished to relive his anxiety, by inquiring concerning the state of things at the Castle, when he was surprised to hear, bursting from the taproom of the loyal old host, a well-known song of the Commonwealth time, which some puritanical wag had written in reprehension of the Cavaliers, and their dissolute courses, and in which his father came in for a lash of the satirist.

*"Ye thought in the world there was no power to tame ye,
So you tippled and drabb'd till the saints overcame ye;
'Forsooth,' and 'Ne'er stir,' sir, have vanquish'd 'G— d—n me,'
Which nobody can deny.*

*There was bluff old Sir Geoffrey loved brandy and mum well,
And to see a beer-glass turned over the thumb well;
But he fled like the wind, before Fairfax and Cromwell,
Which nobody can deny."*

Some strange revolution, Julian was aware, must have taken place, both in the village and in the Castle, ere these sounds of unseemly insult could have been poured forth in the very inn which was decorated with the armorial bearings of his family; and not knowing how far it might be advisable to intrude on these unfriendly revellers, without the power of repelling or chastising their insolence, he led his horse to a back-door, which as he recollected, communicated with the landlord's apartment, having determined to make private inquiry of him concerning the state of matters at the Castle. He knocked repeatedly, and as often called on Roger Raine with an earnest but stifled voice. At length a female voice replied by the usual inquiry, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Dame Raine—I, Julian Peveril—tell your husband to come to me presently."

"Alack, and a well-a-day, Master Julian, if it be really you—you are to know my poor goodman has gone where he can come to no one; but, doubtless, we shall all go to him, as Matthew Chamberlain says."

"He is dead, then?" said Julian. "I am extremely sorry——"

"Dead six months and more, Master Julian; and let me tell you, it is a long time for a lone woman, as Matt Chamberlain says."

"Well, do you or your chamberlain undo the door. I want a fresh horse; and I want to know how things are at the Castle."

"The Castle—lack-a-day!—Chamberlain—Matthew Chamberlain—I say, Matt!"

Matt Chamberlain apparently was at no great distance, for he presently answered her call; and Peveril, as he stood close to the door, could hear them whispering to each other, and distinguish in a great measure what they said. And here it may be noticed, that Dame Raine, accustomed to submit to the authority of old Roger, who vindicated as well the husband's domestic prerogative, as that of the monarch in the state, had, when left a buxom widow, been so far incommoded by the exercise of her newly acquired independence, that she had recourse, upon all occasions, to the advice of Matt Chamberlain; and as Matt began no longer to go slipshod, and in a red nightcap, but wore Spanish shoes, and a high-crowned beaver (at least of a Sunday), and moreover was called Master Matthew by his fellow-servants, the neighbours in the village argued a speedy change of the name of the sign-post; nay, perhaps, of the very sign itself, for Matthew was a bit of a Puritan, and no friend to Peveril of the Peak.

"Now counsel me, an you be a man, Matt Chamberlain," said Widow Raine; "for never stir, if here be not Master Julian's own self, and he wants a horse, and what not, and all as if things were as they wont to be."

"Why, dame, an ye will walk by my counsel," said the Chamberlain, "e'en shake him off—let him be jogging while his boots are green. This is no world for folks to scald their fingers in other folks' broth."

"And that is well spoken, truly," answered Dame Raine; "but then look you, Matt, we have eaten their bread, and, as my poor goodman used to say——"

"Nay, nay, dame, they that walk by the counsel of the dead, shall have none of the living; and so you may do as you list; but if you will walk by mine, drop latch, and draw bolt, and bid him seek quarters farther—that is my counsel."

"I desire nothing of you, sirrah," said Peveril, "save but to know how Sir Geoffrey and his lady do?"

"Lack-a-day!—lack-a-day!" in a tone of sympathy, was the only answer he received from the landlady; and the conversation betwixt her and her chamberlain was resumed, but in a tone too low to be overheard.

At length Matt Chamberlain spoke aloud, and with a tone of authority: "We undo no doors at this time of night, for it is against the Justices' orders, and might cost us our licence; and for the Castle, the road up to it lies before you, and I think you know it as well as we do."

"And I know you," said Peveril, remounting his wearied horse, "for an ungrateful churl, whom, on the first opportunity, I will assuredly cudgel to a mummy."

To this menace Matthew made no reply, and Peveril presently heard him leave the apartment, after a few earnest words betwixt him and his mistress.

Impatient at this delay, and at the evil omen implied in these people's conversation and deportment, Peveril, after some vain spurring of his horse, which positively refused to move a step farther, dismounted once more, and was about to pursue his journey on foot, notwithstanding the extreme disadvantage under which the high riding-boots of the period laid those who attempted to walk with such encumbrances, when he was stopped by a gentle call from the window.

Her counsellor was no sooner gone, than the good-nature and habitual veneration of the dame for the house of Peveril, and perhaps some fear for her counsellor's bones, induced her to open the casement, and cry, but in a low and timid tone, "Hist! hist! Master Julian—be you gone?"

"Not yet, dame," said Julian; "though it seems my stay is unwelcome."

"Nay, but good young master, it is because men counsel so differently; for here was my poor old Roger Raine would have thought the chimney corner too cold for you; and here is Matt Chamberlain thinks the cold courtyard is warm enough."

"Never mind that, dame," said Julian; "do but only tell me what has happened at Martindale Castle? I see the beacon is extinguished."

"Is it in troth?—ay, like enough—then good Sir Geoffrey has gone to heaven with my old Roger Raine!"

"Sacred Heaven!" exclaimed Peveril; "when was my father taken ill?"

"Never as I knows of," said the dame; "but, about three hours since, arrived a party at the Castle, with buff-coats and bandoleers, and one of the Parliament's folks, like in Oliver's time. My old Roger Raine would have shut the gates of the inn against them, but he is in the churchyard, and Matt says it is against law; and so they came in and refreshed men and horses, and sent for Master Bridgenorth, that is at Moultrassie Hall even now; and so they went up to the Castle, and there was a fray, it is like, as the old Knight was no man to take napping, as poor Roger Raine used to say. Always the officers had the best on't; and reason there is, since they had the law of their side, as our Matthew says. But since the pole-star of the Castle is out, as your honour says, why, doubtless, the old gentleman is dead."

"Gracious Heaven!—Dear dame, for love or gold, let me have a horse to make for the Castle!"

"The Castle?" said the dame; "the Roundheads, as my poor Roger called them, will kill you as they have killed your father! Better creep into the woodhouse, and I will send Bett with a blanket and some supper—Or stay—my old Dobbin stands in the little stable beside the hencoop—e'en take him, and make the best of your way out of the country, for there is no safety here for you. Hear what songs some of them are singing at the tap!—so take Dobbin, and do not forget to leave your own horse instead."

Peveril waited to hear no farther, only, that just as he turned to go off to the stable, the compassionate female was heard to exclaim—"O Lord! what will Matthew Chamberlain say!" but instantly added, "Let him say what he will, I may dispose of what's my own."

With the haste of a double-fee'd hostler did Julian exchange the equipments of his jaded brute with poor Dobbin, who stood quietly tugging at his rackful of hay, without dreaming of the business which was that night destined for him. Notwithstanding the darkness of the place, Julian succeeded marvellous quickly in preparing for his journey; and leaving his own horse to find its way to Dobbin's rack by instinct, he leaped upon his new acquisition, and spurred him sharply

against the hill, which rises steeply from the village to the Castle. Dobbin, little accustomed to such exertions, snorted, panted, and trotted as briskly as he could, until at length he brought his rider before the entrance-gate of his father's ancient seat.

The moon was now rising, but the portal was hidden from its beams, being situated, as we have mentioned elsewhere, in a deep recess betwixt two large flanking towers. Peveril dismounted, turned his horse loose, and advanced to the gate, which, contrary to his expectation, he found open. He entered the large courtyard; and could then perceive that lights yet twinkled in the lower part of the building, although he had not before observed them, owing to the height of the outward walls. The main door, or great hall-gate, as it was called, was, since the partially decayed state of the family, seldom opened, save on occasions of particular ceremony. A smaller postern door served the purpose of ordinary entrance; and to that Julian now repaired. This also was open—a circumstance which would of itself have alarmed him, had he not already had so many causes for apprehension. His heart sunk within him as he turned to the left, through a small outward hall, towards the great parlour, which the family usually occupied as a sitting apartment; and his alarm became still greater, when, on a nearer approach, he heard proceeding from thence the murmur of several voices. He threw the door of the apartment wide; and the sight which was thus displayed, warranted all the evil bodings which he had entertained.

In front of him stood the old Knight, whose arms were strongly secured, over the elbows, by a leathern belt drawn tight round them, and made fast behind; two ruffianly-looking men, apparently his guards, had hold of his doublet. The scabbard-less sword which lay on the floor, and the empty sheath which hung by Sir Geoffrey's side, showed the stout old Cavalier had not been reduced to this state of bondage without an attempt at resistance. Two or three persons, having their backs turned towards Julian, sat round a table, and appeared engaged in writing—the voices which he had heard were theirs, as they murmured to each other. Lady Peveril—the emblem of death, so pallid was her countenance—stood at the distance of a yard or two from her husband, upon whom her eyes were fixed with an intenseness of gaze, like that of one who looks her last on the object which she loves the best. She was the first to perceive Julian; and she exclaimed, "Merciful Heaven!—my son!—the misery of our house is complete!"

"My son!" echoed Sir Geoffrey, starting from the sullen state of dejection, and swearing a deep oath—"thou art come in the right time, Julian. Strike me one good blow—cleave me that traitorous thief from the crown to the briske! and that done, I care not what comes next."

The sight of his father's situation made the son forget the inequality of the contest which he was about to provoke.

"Villains," he said, "unhand him!" and rushing on the guards with his drawn sword, compelled them to let go Sir Geoffrey, and stand on their own defence.

Sir Geoffrey, thus far liberated, shouted to his lady. "Undo the belt, dame, and we will have three good blows for it yet—they must fight well that beat both father and son."

But one of those men who had started up from the writing-table when the fray commenced, prevented Lady Peveril from rendering her husband this assistance; while another easily mastered the hampered Knight, though not without receiving several severe kicks from his heavy boots—his condition permitting him no other mode of defence. A third, who saw that Julian, young, active, and animated with the fury of a son who fights for his parents, was compelling the two guards to give ground, seized on his collar, and attempted to master his sword. Suddenly dropping that weapon, and snatching one of his pistols, Julian fired it at the head of the person by whom he was thus assailed. He did not drop, but, staggering back as if he had received a severe blow, showed Peveril, as he sunk into a chair, the features of old Bridgenorth, blackened with the explosion, which had even set fire to a part of his grey hair. A cry of astonishment escaped from Julian; and in the alarm and horror of the moment, he was easily secured and disarmed by those with whom he had been at first engaged.

"Heed it not, Julian," said Sir Geoffrey; "heed it not, my brave boy—that shot has balanced all accounts!—but how—what the devil—he lives!—Was your pistol loaded with chaff? or has the foul fiend given him proof against lead?"

There was some reason for Sir Geoffrey's surprise, since, as he spoke, Major Bridgenorth collected himself—sat up in the chair as one who recovers from a stunning blow—then rose, and wiping with his handkerchief the marks of the explosion from his face, he approached Julian, and said, in the same cold unaltered tone in which he usually expressed himself, "Young man, you have reason to bless God, who has this day saved you from the commission of a great crime."

"Bless the devil, ye crop-eared knave!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey; "for nothing less than the father of all fanatics saved your brains from being blown about like the rinsings of Beelzebub's porridge pot!"

"Sir Geoffrey," said Major Bridgenorth, "I have already told you, that with you I will hold no argument; for to you I am not accountable for any of my actions."

"Master Bridgenorth," said the lady, making a strong effort to speak, and to speak with calmness, "whatever revenge your Christian state of conscience may permit you to take on my husband—I—I, who have some right to experience compassion at your hand, for most sincerely did I compassionate you when the hand of Heaven was heavy on you—I implore you not to involve my son in our common ruin!—Let the destruction of the father and mother, with the ruin of our ancient house, satisfy your resentment for any wrong which you have ever received at my husband's hand."

"Hold your peace, housewife," said the Knight, "you speak like a fool, and meddle with what concerns you not.—Wrong at *my* hand? The cowardly knave has ever had but even too much right. Had I cudgelled the cur soundly when he first bayed at me, the cowardly mongrel had been now crouching at my feet, instead of flying at my throat. But if I get through this action, as I have got through worse weather, I will pay off old scores, as far as tough crab-tree and cold iron will bear me out."

"Sir Geoffrey," replied Bridgenorth, "if the birth you boast of has made you blind to better principles, it might have at least taught you civility. What do you complain of? I am a magistrate; and I execute a warrant, addressed to me by the first authority in that state. I am a creditor also of yours; and law arms me with powers to recover my own property from the hands of an improvident debtor."

"You a magistrate!" said the Knight; "much such a magistrate as Noll was a monarch. Your heart is up, I warrant, because you have the King's pardon; and are replaced on the bench, forsooth, to persecute the poor Papist. There was never turmoil in the state, but knaves had their vantage by it—never pot boiled, but the scum was cast uppermost."

"For God's sake, my dearest husband," said Lady Peveril, "cease this wild talk! It can but incense Master Bridgenorth, who might otherwise consider, that in common charity——"

"Incense him!" said Sir Geoffrey, impatiently interrupting her; "God's-death, madam, you will drive me mad! Have you lived so long in this world, and yet expect consideration and charity from an old starved wolf like that? And if he had it, do you think that I, or you, madam, as my wife, are subjects for his charity?—Julian, my poor fellow, I am sorry thou hast come so unluckily, since thy petronel was not better loaded—but thy credit is lost for ever as a marksman."

This angry colloquy passed so rapidly on all sides, that Julian, scarce recovered from the extremity of astonishment with which he was overwhelmed at finding himself suddenly plunged into a situation of such extremity, had no time to consider in what way he could most effectually act for the succour of his parents. To speak to Bridgenorth fair seemed the more prudent course; but to this his pride could hardly stoop; yet he forced himself to say, with as much calmness as he could assume,

"Master Bridgenorth, since you act as a magistrate, I desire to be treated according to the laws of England; and demand to know of what we are accused, and by whose authority we are arrested?"

"Here is another howlet for ye!" exclaimed the impetuous old Knight; "his mother speaks to a Puritan of charity; and thou must talk of law to a round-headed rebel, with a wannion to you! What warrant hath he, think ye, beyond the Parliament's or the devil's?"

"Who speaks of the Parliament?" said a person entering, whom Peveril recognised as the official person whom he had before seen at the horse-dealer's, and who now bustled in with all the conscious dignity of plenary authority,—"*Who* talks of the Parliament?" he exclaimed. "I promise you, enough has been found in this house to convict twenty plotters—Here be arms, and that good store. Bring them in, Captain."

"The very same," exclaimed the Captain, approaching, "which I mention in my printed Narrative of Information, lodged before the Honourable House of Commons; they were commissioned from old Vander Huys of Rotterdam, by orders of Don John of Austria, for the service of the Jesuits."

"Now, by this light," said Sir Geoffrey, "they are the pikes, musketoons, and pistols, that have been hidden in the garret ever since Naseby fight!"

"And here," said the Captain's yoke-fellow, Everett, "are proper priest's trappings—antiphoners, and missals, and copes, I warrant you—ay, and proper pictures, too, for Papists to mutter and bow over."

"Now plague on thy snuffling whine," said Sir Geoffrey; "here is a rascal will swear my grandmother's old farthingale to be priest's vestments, and the story book of Owlenspiegel a Popish missal!"

"But how's this, Master Bridgenorth?" said Topham, addressing the magistrate; "your honour has been as busy as we have; and you have caught another knave while we recovered these toys."

"I think, sir," said Julian, "if you look into your warrant, which, if I mistake not, names the persons whom you are directed to arrest, you will find you have not title to apprehend me."

"Sir," said the officer, puffing with importance, "I do not know who you are; but I would you were the best man in England, that I might teach you the respect due to the warrant of the House. Sir, there steps not the man within the British seas, but I will arrest him on authority of this bit of parchment; and I do arrest you accordingly.—What do you accuse him of, gentlemen?"

Dangerfield swaggered forward, and peeping under Julian's hat, "Stop my vital breath," he exclaimed, "but I have seen you before, my friend, an I could but think where; but my memory is not worth a bean, since I have been obliged to use it so much of late, in the behalf of the poor state. But I do know the fellow; and I have seen him amongst the Papists—, I'll take that on my assured damnation."

"Why, Captain Dangerfield," said the Captain's smoother, but more dangerous associate,— "verily, it is the same youth whom we saw at the horse-merchant's yesterday; and we had matter against him then, only Master Topham did not desire us to bring it out."

"Ye may bring out what ye will against him now," said Topham, "for he hath blasphemed the warrant of the House. I think ye said ye saw him somewhere."

"Ay, verily," said Everett, "I have seen him amongst the seminary pupils at Saint Omer's—he was who but he with the regents there."

"Nay, Master Everett, collect yourself," said Topham; "for as I think, you said you saw him at a consult of the Jesuits in London."

"It was I said so, Master Topham," said the undaunted Dangerfield; "and mine is the tongue that will swear it."

"Good Master Topham," said Bridgenorth, "you may suspend farther inquiry at present, as it doth but fatigue and perplex the memory of the King's witnesses."

"You are wrong, Master Bridgenorth—clearly wrong. It doth but keep them in wind—only breathes them like greyhounds before a coursing match."

"Be it so," said Bridgenorth, with his usual indifference of manner; "but at present this youth must stand committed upon a warrant, which I will presently sign, of having assaulted me while in discharge of my duty as a magistrate, for the rescue of a person legally attached. Did you not hear the report of a pistol?"

"I will swear to it," said Everett.

"And I," said Dangerfield. "While we were making search in the cellar, I heard something very like a pistol-shot; but I conceived it to be the drawing of a long-corked bottle of sack, to see whether there were any Popish relics in the inside on't."

"A pistol-shot!" exclaimed Topham; "here might have been a second Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey's matter.—Oh, thou real spawn of the red old dragon! for he too would have resisted the House's warrant, had we not taken him something at unawares.—Master Bridgenorth, you are a judicious magistrate, and a worthy servant of the state—I would we had many such sound Protestant justices. Shall I have this young fellow away with his parents—what think you?—or will you keep him for re-examination?"

"Master Bridgenorth," said Lady Peveril, in spite of her husband's efforts to interrupt her, "for God's sake, if ever you knew what it was to love one of the many children you have lost, or her who is now left to you, do not pursue your vengeance to the blood of my poor boy! I will forgive you all the rest—all the distress you have wrought—all the yet greater misery with which you threaten us; but do not be extreme with one who never can have offended you! Believe, that if your ears are shut against the cry of a despairing mother, those which are open to the complaint of all who sorrow, will hear my petition and your answer!"

The agony of mind and of voice with which Lady Peveril uttered these words, seemed to thrill through all present, though most of them were but too much inured to such scenes. Every one was silent, when, ceasing to speak, she fixed on Bridgenorth her eyes, glistening with tears, with the eager anxiety of one whose life or death seemed to depend upon the answer to be returned. Even Bridgenorth's inflexibility seemed to be shaken; and his voice was tremulous, as he answered, "Madam, I would to God I had the present means of relieving your great distress, otherwise than by recommending to you a reliance upon Providence; and that you take heed to your spirit, that it murmur not under this crook in your lot. For me, I am but as a rod in the hand of the strong man, which smites not of itself, but because it is wielded by the arm of him who holds the same."

"Even as I and my black rod are guided by the Commons of England," said Master Topham, who seemed marvellously pleased with the illustration.

Julian now thought it time to say something in his own behalf; and he endeavoured to temper it with as much composure as it was possible for him to assume.

"Master Bridgenorth," he said, "I neither dispute your authority, nor this gentleman's warrant——"

"You do not?" said Topham. "Oh, ho, master youngster, I thought we should bring you to your senses presently!"

"Then, if you so will it, Master Topham," said Bridgenorth, "thus it shall be. You shall set out with early day, taking you, towards London, the persons of Sir Geoffrey and Lady Peveril; and that they may travel according to their quality, you will allow them their coach, sufficiently guarded."

"I will travel with them myself," said Topham; "for these rough Derbyshire roads are no easy riding; and my very eyes are weary with looking on these bleak hills. In the coach I can sleep as sound as if I were in the House, and Master Bodderbrains on his legs."

"It will become you so to take your ease, Master Topham," answered Bridgenorth. "For this youth, I will take him under my charge, and bring him up myself."

"I may not be answerable for that, worthy Master Bridgenorth," said Topham, "since he comes within the warrant of the House."

"Nay, but," said Bridgenorth, "he is only under custody for an assault, with the purpose of a rescue; and I counsel you against meddling with him, unless you have stronger guard. Sir Geoffrey is now old and broken, but this young fellow is in the flower of his youth, and hath at his beck all the debauched young Cavaliers of the neighbourhood—You will scarce cross the country without a rescue."

Topham eyed Julian wistfully, as a spider may be supposed to look upon a stray wasp which has got into his web, and which he longs to secure, though he fears the consequences of attempting him.

Julian himself replied, "I know not if this separation be well or ill meant on your part, Master Bridgenorth; but on mine, I am only desirous to share the fate of my parents; and therefore I will give my word of honour to attempt neither rescue nor escape, on condition you do not separate me from them."

"Do not say so, Julian," said his mother; "abide with Master Bridgenorth—my mind tells me he cannot mean so ill by us as his rough conduct would now lead us to infer."

"And I," said Sir Geoffrey, "know, that between the doors of my father's house and the gates of hell, there steps not such a villain on the ground! And if I wish my hands ever to be unbound again, it is because I hope for one downright blow at a grey head, that has hatched more treason than the whole Long Parliament."

"Away with thee," said the zealous officer; "is Parliament a word for so foul a mouth as thine?—Gentlemen," he added, turning to Everett and Dangerfield, "you will bear witness to this."

"To his having reviled the House of Commons—by G—d, that I will!" said Dangerfield; "I will take it on my damnation."

"And verily," said Everett, "as he spoke of Parliament generally, he hath contemned the House of Lords also."

"Why, ye poor insignificant wretches," said Sir Geoffrey, "whose very life is a lie—and whose bread is perjury—would you pervert my innocent words almost as soon as they have quitted my lips? I tell you the country is well weary of you; and should Englishmen come to their senses, the jail, the pillory, the whipping-post, and the gibbet, will be too good preferment for such base blood-suckers.—And now, Master Bridgenorth, you and they may do your worst; for I will not open my mouth to utter a single word while I am in the company of such knaves."

"Perhaps, Sir Geoffrey," answered Bridgenorth, "you would better have consulted your own safety in adopting that resolution a little sooner—the tongue is a little member, but it causes much strife.—You, Master Julian, will please to follow me, and without remonstrance or resistance; for you must be aware that I have the means of compelling."

Julian was, indeed, but too sensible, that he had no other course but that of submission to superior force; but ere he left the apartment, he kneeled down to receive his father's blessing, which the old man bestowed not without a tear in his eye, and in the emphatic words, "God bless thee, my boy; and keep thee good and true to Church and King, whatever wind shall bring foul weather!"

His mother was only able to pass her hand over his head, and to implore him, in a low tone of voice, not to be rash or violent in any attempt to render them assistance. "We are innocent," she said, "my son—we are innocent—and we are in God's hands. Be the thought our best comfort and protection."

Bridgenorth now signed to Julian to follow him, which he did, accompanied, or rather conducted, by the two guards who had first disarmed him. When they had passed from the apartment, and were at the door of the outward hall, Bridgenorth asked Julian whether he should consider him as under parole; in which case, he said, he would dispense with all other security but his own promise.

Peveril, who could not help hoping somewhat from the favourable and unresentful manner in which he was treated by one whose life he had so recently attempted, replied, without hesitation, that he would give his parole for twenty-four hours, neither to attempt to escape by force nor by flight.

"It is wisely said," replied Bridgenorth; "for though you might cause bloodshed, be assured that your utmost efforts could do no service to your parents.—Horses there—horses to the courtyard!"

The trampling of horses was soon heard; and in obedience to Bridgenorth's signal, and in compliance with his promise, Julian mounted one which was presented to him, and prepared to leave the house of his fathers, in which his parents were now prisoners, and to go, he knew not whither, under the custody of one known to be the ancient enemy of his family. He was rather surprised at observing, that Bridgenorth and he were about to travel without any other attendants.

When they were mounted, and as they rode slowly towards the outer gate of the courtyard, Bridgenorth said to him, "it is not every one who would thus unreservedly commit his safety by travelling at night, and unaided, with the hot-brained youth who so lately attempted his life."

"Master Bridgenorth," said Julian, "I might tell you truly, that I knew you not at the time when I directed my weapon against you; but I must also add, that the cause in which I used it, might have rendered me, even had I known you, a slight respecter of your person. At present, I do know you; and have neither malice against your person, nor the liberty of a parent to fight for. Besides, you have my word; and when was a Peveril known to break it?"

"Ay," replied his companion, "a Peveril—a Peveril of the Peak!—a name which has long sounded like a war-trumpet in the land; but which has now perhaps sounded its last loud note. Look back, young man, on the darksome turrets of your father's house, which uplift themselves above the sons of their people. Think upon your father, a captive—yourself in some sort a fugitive—your light quenched—your glory abased—your estate wrecked and impoverished. Think that Providence has subjected the destinies of the race of Peveril to one, whom, in their aristocratic pride, they held as a plebeian upstart. Think of this; and when you again boast of your ancestry, remember, that he who raiseth the lowly can also abase the high in heart."

Julian did indeed gaze for an instant, with a swelling heart, upon the dimly seen turrets of his paternal mansion, on which poured the moonlight, mixed with long shadows of the towers and trees. But while he sadly acknowledged the truth of Bridgenorth's observation, he felt indignant at his ill-timed triumph. "If fortune had followed worth," he said, "the Castle of Martindale, and the name of Peveril, had afforded no room for their enemy's vainglorious boast. But those who have stood high on Fortune's wheel, must abide by the consequence of its revolutions. This much I will at least say for my father's house, that it has not stood unhonoured; nor will it fall—if it is to fall—unlamented. Forbear, then, if you are indeed the Christian you call yourself, to exult in the misfortunes of others, or to confide in your own prosperity. If the light of our house be now quenched, God can rekindle it in His own good time."

Peveril broke off in extreme surprise; for as he spake the last words, the bright red beams of the family beacon began again to glimmer from its wonted watch-tower, checkering the pale moonbeam with a ruddier glow. Bridgenorth also gazed on this unexpected illumination with surprise, and not, as it seemed, without disquietude. "Young man," he resumed, "it can scarcely be but that Heaven intends to work great things by your hand, so singularly has that augury followed on your words."

So saying, he put his horse once more in motion; and looking back, from time to time, as if to assure himself that the beacon of the Castle was actually rekindled, he led the way through the well-known paths and alleys, to his own house of Moultrassie, followed by Peveril, who although sensible that the light might be altogether accidental, could not but receive as a good omen an event so intimately connected with the traditions and usages of his family.

They alighted at the hall-door, which was hastily opened by a female; and while the deep tone of Bridgenorth called on the groom to take their horses, the well-known voice of his daughter Alice was heard to exclaim in thanksgiving to God, who had restored her father in safety.

CHAPTER XXIV

*We meet, as men see phantoms in a dream,
Which glide, and sigh, and sign, and move their lips,
But make no sound; or, if they utter voice,
'Tis but a low and undistinguish'd moaning,
Which has nor word nor sense of utter'd sound.*

—THE CHIEFTAIN.

We said, at the conclusion of the last chapter, that a female form appeared at the door of Moultrassie Hall; and that the well-known accents of Alice Bridgenorth were heard to hail the return of her father, from what she naturally dreaded as a perilous visit to the Castle of Martindale.

Julian, who followed his conductor with a throbbing heart into the lighted hall, was therefore prepared to see her whom he best loved, with her arms thrown around her father. The instant she had quitted his paternal embrace, she was aware of the unexpected guest who had returned in his company. A deep blush, rapidly succeeded by a deadly paleness, and again by a slighter suffusion, showed plainly to her lover that his sudden appearance was anything but indifferent to her. He bowed profoundly—a courtesy which she returned with equal formality, but did not venture to approach more nearly, feeling at once the delicacy of his own situation and of hers.

Major Bridgenorth turned his cold, fixed, grey, melancholy glance, first on the one of them and then on the other. "Some," he said gravely, "would, in my case, have avoided this meeting; but I have confidence in you both, although you are young, and beset with the snares incidental to your age. There are those within who should not know that ye have been acquainted. Wherefore, be wise, and be as strangers to each other."

Julian and Alice exchanged glances as her father turned from them, and lifting a lamp which stood in the entrance-hall, led the way to the interior apartment. There was little of consolation in this exchange of looks; for the sadness of Alice's glance was mingled with fear, and that of Julian clouded by an anxious sense of doubt. The look also was but momentary; for Alice, springing to her father, took the light out of his hand, and stepping before him, acted as the usher of both into the large oaken parlour, which has been already mentioned as the apartment in which Bridgenorth had spent the hours of dejection which followed the death of his consort and family. It was now lighted up as for the reception of company; and five or six persons sat in it, in the plain, black, stiff dress, which was affected by the formal Puritans of the time, in evidence of their contempt of the manners of the luxurious Court of Charles the Second; amongst whom, excess of extravagance in apparel, like excess of every other kind, was highly fashionable.

Julian at first glanced his eyes but slightly along the range of grave and severe faces which composed this society—men sincere, perhaps, in their pretensions to a superior purity of conduct and morals, but in whom that high praise was somewhat chastened by an affected austerity in dress and manners, allied to those

Pharisees of old, who made broad their phylacteries, and would be seen of man to fast, and to discharge with rigid punctuality the observances of the law. Their dress was almost uniformly a black cloak and doublet, cut straight and close, and undecorated with lace or embroidery of any kind, black Flemish breeches and hose, square-toed shoes, with large roses made of serge ribbon. Two or three had large loose boots of calf-leather, and almost every one was begirt with a long rapier, which was suspended by leathern thongs, to a plain belt of buff, or of black leather. One or two of the elder guests, whose hair had been thinned by time, had their heads covered with a skull-cap of black silk or velvet, which, being drawn down betwixt the ears and the skull, and permitting no hair to escape, occasioned the former to project in the ungraceful manner which may be remarked in old pictures, and which procured for the Puritans the term of "prickeared Roundheads," so unceremoniously applied to them by their contemporaries.

These worthies were ranged against the wall, each in his ancient high-backed, long-legged chair; neither looking towards, nor apparently discoursing with each other; but plunged in their own reflections, or awaiting, like an assembly of Quakers, the quickening power of divine inspiration.

Major Bridgenorth glided along this formal society with noiseless step, and a composed severity of manner, resembling their own. He paused before each in succession, and apparently communicated, as he passed, the transactions of the evening, and the circumstances under which the heir of Martindale Castle was now a guest at Moultrassie Hall. Each seemed to stir at his brief detail, like a range of statues in an enchanted hall, starting into something like life, as a talisman is applied to them successively. Most of them, as they heard the narrative of their host, cast upon Julian a look of curiosity, blended with haughty scorn and the consciousness of spiritual superiority; though, in one or two instances, the milder influences of compassion were sufficiently visible.—Peveril would have undergone this gantlet of eyes with more impatience, had not his own been for the time engaged in following the motions of Alice, who glided through the apartment; and only speaking very briefly, and in whispers, to one or two of the company who addressed her, took her place beside a treble-hooded old lady, the only female of the party, and addressed herself to her in such earnest conversation, as might dispense with her raising her head, or looking at any others in the company.

Her father put a question, to which she was obliged to return an answer—"Where was Mistress Debbitch?"

"She has gone out," Alice replied, "early after sunset, to visit some old acquaintances in the neighbourhood, and she was not yet returned."

Major Bridgenorth made a gesture indicative of displeasure; and, not content with that, expressed his determined resolution that Dame Deborah should no longer remain a member of his family. "I will have those," he said aloud, and without regarding the presence of his guests, "and those only, around me, who know to keep within the sober and modest bounds of a Christian family. Who pretends to more freedom, must go out from among us, as not being of us."

A deep and emphatic humming noise, which was at that time the mode in which the Puritans signified their applause, as well of the doctrines expressed by a favourite divine in the pulpit, as of those delivered in private society, ratified the approbation of the assessors, and seemed to secure the dismissal of the unfortunate governante, who stood thus detected of having strayed out of bounds. Even Peveril, although he had reaped considerable advantages, in his early acquaintance with Alice, from the mercenary and gossiping disposition of her governess, could not hear of her dismissal without approbation, so much was he desirous, that, in the hour of difficulty which might soon approach, Alice might have the benefit of countenance and advice from one of her own sex of better manners, and less suspicious probity, than Mistress Debbitch.

Almost immediately after this communication had taken place, a servant in mourning showed his thin, pinched, and wrinkled visage in the apartment, announcing, with a voice more like a passing bell than the herald of a banquet, that refreshments were provided in an adjoining apartment. Gravely leading the way, with his daughter on one side, and the puritanical female whom we have distinguished on the other, Bridgenorth himself ushered his company, who followed, with little attention to order or ceremony, into the eating-room, where a substantial supper was provided.

In this manner, Peveril, although entitled according to ordinary ceremonial, to some degree of precedence—a matter at that time considered of much importance, although now little regarded—was left among the last of those who quitted the parlour; and might indeed have brought up the rear of all, had not one of the company, who was himself late in the retreat, bowed and resigned to Julian the rank in the company which had been usurped by others.

This act of politeness naturally induced Julian to examine the features of the person who had offered him this civility; and he started to observe, under the pinched velvet cap, and above the short band-strings, the countenance of Ganlesse, as he called himself—his companion on the preceding evening. He looked again and again, especially when all were placed at the supper board, and when, consequently, he had frequent opportunities of observing this person fixedly without any breach of good manners. At first he wavered in his belief, and was much inclined to doubt the reality of his recollection; for the difference of dress was such as to effect a considerable change of appearance; and the countenance itself, far from exhibiting anything marked or memorable, was one of those ordinary visages which we see almost without remarking them, and which leave our memory so soon as the object is withdrawn from our eyes. But the impression upon his mind returned, and became stronger, until it induced him to watch with peculiar attention the manners of the individual who had thus attracted his notice.

During the time of a very prolonged grace before meat, which was delivered by one of the company—who, from his Geneva band and serge doublet, presided, as Julian supposed, over some dissenting congregation—he noticed that this man kept the same demure and severe cast of countenance usually affected by the Puritans, and which rather caricatured the reverence unquestionably due upon such occasions. His eyes were turned upward, and his huge penthouse hat, with a high crown and broad brim, held in both hands before him, rose and fell with the cadences of the speaker's voice; thus marking time, as it were, to the periods of the benediction. Yet when the slight bustle took place which attends the adjusting of chairs, &c., as men sit down to table, Julian's eye encountered that of the stranger; and as their looks met, there glanced from those of the latter an expression of satirical humour and scorn, which seemed to intimate internal ridicule of the gravity of his present demeanour.

Julian again sought to fix his eye, in order to ascertain that he had not mistaken the tendency of this transient expression, but the stranger did not allow him another opportunity. He might have been discovered by the tone of his voice; but the individual in question spoke little, and in whispers, which was indeed the fashion of the whole company, whose demeanour at table resembled that of mourners at a funeral feast.

The entertainment itself was coarse, though plentiful; and must, according to Julian's opinion, be distasteful to one so exquisitely skilled in good cheer, and so capable of enjoying, critically and scientifically, the genial preparations of his companion Smith, as Ganlesse had shown himself on the preceding evening. Accordingly, upon close observation, he remarked that the food which he took upon his plate remained there unconsumed; and that his actual supper consisted only of a crust of bread, with a glass of wine.

The repast was hurried over with the haste of those who think it shame, if not sin, to make mere animal enjoyments the means of consuming time, or of receiving pleasure; and when men wiped their mouths and moustaches, Julian remarked that the object of his curiosity used a handkerchief of the finest cambric—an article rather inconsistent with the exterior plainness, not to say coarseness, of his appearance. He used also several of the more minute refinements, then only observed at tables of the higher rank; and Julian thought he could discern, at every turn, something of courtly manners and gestures, under the precise and rustic simplicity of the character which he had assumed.[*]

[*] *A Scottish gentleman in hiding, as it was emphatically termed,*

for some concern in a Jacobite insurrection or plot, was

discovered among a number of ordinary persons, by the use of his

toothpick.

But if this were indeed that same Ganlesse with whom Julian had met on the preceding evening, and who had boasted the facility with which he could assume any character which he pleased to represent for the time, what could be the purpose of this present disguise? He was, if his own words could be credited, a person of some importance, who dared to defy the danger of those officers and informers, before whom all ranks at that time trembled; nor was he likely, as Julian conceived, without some strong purpose, to subject himself to such a masquerade as the present, which could not be otherwise than irksome to one whose conversation proclaimed him of light life and free opinions. Was his appearance here for good or for evil? Did it respect his father's house, or his own person, or

the family of Bridgenorth? Was the real character of Ganlesse known to the master of the house, inflexible as he was in all which concerned morals as well as religion? If not, might not the machinations of a brain so subtle affect the peace and happiness of Alice Bridgenorth?

These were questions which no reflection could enable Peveril to answer. His eyes glanced from Alice to the stranger; and new fears, and undefined suspicions, in which the safety of that beloved and lovely girl was implicated, mingled with the deep anxiety which already occupied his mind, on account of his father and his father's house.

He was in this tumult of mind, when after a thanksgiving as long as the grace, the company arose from table, and were instantly summoned to the exercise of family worship. A train of domestics, grave, sad, and melancholy as their superiors, glided in to assist at this act of devotion, and ranged themselves at the lower end of the apartment. Most of these men were armed with long tucks, as the straight stabbing swords, much used by Cromwell's soldiery, were then called. Several had large pistols also; and the corselets or cuirasses of some were heard to clank, as they seated themselves to partake in this act of devotion. The ministry of him whom Julian had supposed a preacher was not used on this occasion. Major Bridgenorth himself read and expounded a chapter of Scripture, with much strength and manliness of expression, although so as not to escape the charge of fanaticism. The nineteenth chapter of Jeremiah was the portion of Scripture which he selected; in which, under the type of breaking a potter's vessel, the prophet presages the desolation of the Jews. The lecturer was not naturally eloquent; but a strong, deep, and sincere conviction of the truth of what he said supplied him with language of energy and fire, as he drew parallel between the abominations of the worship of Baal, and the corruptions of the Church of Rome—so favourite a topic with the Puritans of that period; and denounced against the Catholics, and those who favoured them, that hissing and desolation which the prophet directed against the city of Jerusalem. His hearers made a yet closer application than the lecturer himself suggested; and many a dark proud eye intimated, by a glance on Julian, that on his father's house were already, in some part, realised those dreadful maledictions.

The lecture finished, Bridgenorth summoned them to unite with him in prayer; and on a slight change of arrangements amongst the company, which took place as they were about to kneel down, Julian found his place next to the single-minded and beautiful object of his affection, as she knelt, in her loveliness, to adore her Creator. A short time was permitted for mental devotion; during which Peveril could hear her half-breathed petition for the promised blessings of peace on earth, and good-will towards the children of men.

The prayer which ensued was in a different tone. It was poured forth by the same person who had officiated as chaplain at the table; and was in the tone of a Boanerges, or Son of Thunder—a denouncer of crimes—an invoker of judgments—almost a prophet of evil and of destruction. The testimonies and the sins of the day were not forgotten—the mysterious murder of Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey was insisted upon—and thanks and praise were offered, that the very night on which they were assembled, had not seen another offering of a Protestant magistrate, to the bloodthirsty fury of revengeful Catholics.

Never had Julian found it more difficult, during an act of devotion, to maintain his mind in a frame befitting the posture and the occasion; and when he heard the speaker return thanks for the downfall and devastation of his family, he was strongly tempted to have started upon his feet, and charged him with offering a tribute, stained with falsehood and calumny, at the throne of truth itself. He resisted, however, an impulse which it would have been insanity to have yielded to, and his patience was not without its reward; for when his fair neighbour arose from her knees, the lengthened and prolonged prayer being at last concluded, he observed that her eyes were streaming with tears; and one glance with which she looked at him in that moment, showed more of affectionate interest for him in his fallen fortunes and precarious condition, than he had been able to obtain from her when his worldly estate seemed so much the more exalted of the two.

Cheered and fortified with the conviction that one bosom in the company, and that in which he most eagerly longed to secure an interest, sympathised with his distress, he felt strong to endure whatever was to follow, and shrunk not from the stern still smile with which, one by one, the meeting regarded him, as, gliding to their several places of repose, they indulged themselves at parting with a look of triumph on one whom they considered as their captive enemy.

Alice also passed by her lover, her eyes fixed on the ground, and answered his low obeisance without raising them. The room was now empty, but for Bridgenorth and his guest, or prisoner; for it is difficult to say in which capacity Peveril ought to regard himself. He took an old brazen lamp from the table, and, leading the way, said at the same time, "I must be the uncourtly chamberlain, who am to usher you to a place of repose, more rude, perhaps, than you have been accustomed to occupy."

Julian followed him, in silence, up an old-fashioned winding staircase, within a turret. At the landing-place on the top was a small apartment, where an ordinary pallet bed, two chairs, and a small stone table, were the only furniture. "Your bed," continued Bridgenorth, as if desirous to prolong their interview, "is not of the softest; but innocence sleeps as sound upon straw as on down."

"Sorrow, Major Bridgenorth, finds little rest on either," replied Julian. "Tell me, for you seem to await some question from me, what is to be the fate of my parents, and why you separate me from them?"

Bridgenorth, for answer, indicated with his finger the mark which his countenance still showed from the explosion of Julian's pistol.

"That," replied Julian, "is not the real cause of your proceedings against me. It cannot be, that you, who have been a soldier, and are a man, can be surprised or displeased by my interference in the defence of my father. Above all, you cannot, and I must needs say you do not, believe that I would have raised my hand against you personally, had there been a moment's time for recognition."

"I may grant all this," said Bridgenorth; "but what the better are you for my good opinion, or for the ease with which I can forgive you the injury which you aimed at me? You are in my custody as a magistrate, accused of abetting the foul, bloody, and heathenish plot, for the establishment of Popery, the murder of the King, and the general massacre of all true Protestants."

"And on what grounds, either of fact or suspicion, dare any one accuse me of such a crime?" said Julian. "I have hardly heard of the plot, save by the mouth of common rumour, which, while it speaks of nothing else, takes care to say nothing distinctly even on that subject."

"It may be enough for me to tell you," replied Bridgenorth, "and perhaps it is a word too much—that you are a discovered intriguer—a spied spy—who carries tokens and messages betwixt the Popish Countess of Derby and the Catholic party in London. You have not conducted your matters with such discretion, but that this is well known, and can be sufficiently proved. To this charge, which you are well aware you cannot deny, these men, Everett and Dangerfield, are not unwilling to add, from the recollection of your face, other passages, which will certainly cost you your life when you come before a Protestant jury."

"They lie like villains," said Peveril, "who hold me accessory to any plot either against the King, the nation, or the state of religion; and for the Countess, her loyalty has been too long, and too highly proved, to permit her being implicated in such injurious suspicions."

"What she has already done," said Bridgenorth, his face darkening as he spoke, "against the faithful champions of pure religion, hath sufficiently shown of what she is capable. She hath betaken herself to her rock, and sits, as she thinks, in security, like the eagle reposing after his bloody banquet. But the arrow of the fowler may yet reach her—the shaft is whetted—the bow is bended—and it will be soon seen whether Amalek or Israel shall prevail. But for thee, Julian Peveril—why should I conceal it from thee?—my heart yearns for thee as a woman's for her first-born. To thee I will give, at the expense of my own reputation—perhaps at the risk of personal suspicion—for who, in these days of doubt, shall be exempted from it—to thee, I say, I will give means of escape, which else were impossible to thee. The staircase of this turret descends to the gardens—the postern-gate is unlatched—on the right hand lie the stables, where you will find your own horse—take it, and make for Liverpool—I will give you credit with a friend under the name of Simon Simonson, one persecuted by the prelates; and he will expedite your passage from the kingdom."

"Major Bridgenorth," said Julian, "I will not deceive you. Were I to accept your offer of freedom, it would be to attend to a higher call than that of mere self-preservation. My father is in danger—my mother in sorrow—the voices of religion and nature call me to their side. I am their only child—their only hope—I will aid them, or perish with them!"

"Thou art mad," said Bridgenorth—"aid them thou canst not—perish with them thou mayst, and even accelerate their ruin; for, in addition to the charges with which thy unhappy father is loaded, it would be no slight aggravation, that while he meditated arming and calling together the Catholics and High Churchmen of Cheshire

and Derbyshire, his son should prove to be the confidential agent of the Countess of Derby, who aided her in making good her stronghold against the Protestant commissioners, and was despatched by her to open secret communication with the Popish interest in London."

"You have twice stated me as such an agent," said Peveril, resolved that his silence should not be construed into an admission of the charge, though he felt it was in some degree well founded—"What reason have you for such an allegation?"

"Will it suffice for a proof of my intimate acquaintance with your mystery," replied Bridgenorth, "if I should repeat to you the last words which the Countess used to you when you left the Castle of that Amalekitish woman? Thus she spoke: 'I am now a forlorn widow,' she said, 'whom sorrow has made selfish.'"

Peveril started, for these were the very words the Countess had used; but he instantly recovered himself, and replied, "Be your information of what nature it will, I deny, and I defy it, so far as it attaches aught like guilt to me. There lives not a man more innocent of a disloyal thought, or of a traitorous purpose. What I say for myself, I will, to the best of my knowledge, say and maintain on account of the noble Countess, to whom I am indebted for nurture."

"Perish, then, in thy obstinacy!" said Bridgenorth; and turning hastily from him, he left the room, and Julian heard him hasten down the narrow staircase, as if distrusting his own resolution.

With a heavy heart, yet with that confidence in an overruling Providence which never forsakes a good and brave man, Peveril betook himself to his lowly place of repose.

CHAPTER XXV

*The course of human life is changeful still,
As is the fickle wind and wandering rill;
Or, like the light dance which the wild-breeze weaves
Amidst the fated race of fallen leaves;
Which now its breath bears down, now tosses high,
Beats to the earth, or wafts to middle sky.
Such, and so varied, the precarious play
Of fate with man, frail tenant of a day!*

—ANONYMOUS.

Whilst, overcome with fatigue, and worn out by anxiety, Julian Peveril slumbered as a prisoner in the house of his hereditary enemy, Fortune was preparing his release by one of those sudden frolics with which she loves to confound the calculations and expectancies of humanity; and as she fixes on strange agents for such purposes, she condescended to employ on the present occasion, no less a personage than Mistress Deborah Debbitch.

Instigated, doubtless, by the pristine reminiscences of former times, no sooner had that most prudent and considerate dame found herself in the vicinity of the scenes of her earlier days, than she bethought herself of a visit to the ancient house-keeper of Martindale Castle, Dame Ellesmere by name, who, long retired from active service, resided at the keeper's lodge, in the west thicket, with her nephew, Lance Outram, subsisting upon the savings of her better days, and on a small pension allowed by Sir Geoffrey to her age and faithful services.

Now Dame Ellesmere and Mistress Deborah had not by any means been formerly on so friendly a footing, as this haste to visit her might be supposed to intimate. But years had taught Deborah to forget and forgive; or perhaps she had no special objection, under cover of a visit to Dame Ellesmere, to take the chance of seeing what changes time had made on her old admirer the keeper. Both inhabitants were in the cottage when, after having seen her master set forth on his expedition to the Castle, Mistress Debbitch, dressed in her very best gown, footed it through gutter, and over stile, and by pathway green, to knock at their door, and to lift the hatch at the hospitable invitation which bade her come in.

Dame Ellesmere's eyes were so often dim, that, even with the aid of spectacles, she failed to recognise, in the portly and mature personage who entered their cottage, the tight well-made lass, who, presuming on her good looks and flippant tongue, had so often provoked her by insubordination; and her former lover, the redoubted Lance, not being conscious that ale had given rotundity to his own figure, which was formerly so slight and active, and that brandy had transferred to his nose the colour which had once occupied his cheeks, was unable to discover that Deborah's French cap, composed of sarsenet and Brussels lace, shaded the features which had so often procured him a rebuke from Dr. Dummerar, for suffering his eyes, during the time of prayers, to wander to the maid-servants' bench.

In brief, the blushing visitor was compelled to make herself known; and when known, was received by aunt and nephew with the most sincere cordiality.

The home-brewed was produced; and, in lieu of more vulgar food, a few slices of venison presently hissed in the frying pan, giving strong room for inference that Lance Outram, in his capacity of keeper, neglected not his own cottage when he supplied the larder at the Castle. A modest sip of the excellent Derbyshire ale, and a taste of the highly-seasoned hash, soon placed Deborah entirely at home with her old acquaintance.

Having put all necessary questions, and received all suitable answers, respecting the state of the neighbourhood, and such of her own friends as continued to reside there, the conversation began rather to flag, until Deborah found the art of again re-newing its interest, by communicating to her friends the dismal intelligence that they must soon look for deadly bad news from the Castle; for that her present master, Major Bridgenorth, had been summoned, by some great people from London, to assist in taking her old master, Sir Geoffrey; and that all Master Bridgenorth's servants, and several other persons whom she named, friends and adherents of the same interest, had assembled a force to surprise the Castle; and that as Sir Geoffrey was now so old, and gouty withal, it could not be expected he should make the defence he was wont; and then he was known to be so stout-hearted, that it was not to be supposed that he would yield up without stroke of sword; and then if he was killed, as he was like to be, amongst them that liked never a bone of his body, and now had him at their mercy, why, in that case, she, Dame Deborah, would look upon Lady Peveril as little better than a dead woman; and undoubtedly there would be a general mourning through all that country, where they had such great kin; and silks were likely to rise on it, as Master Lutestring, the mercer of Chesterfield, was like to feel in his purse bottom. But for her part, let matters wag how they would, an if Master Julian Peveril was to come to his own, she could give as near a guess as e'er another who was likely to be Lady at Martindale.

The text of this lecture, or, in other words, the fact that Bridgenorth was gone with a party to attack Sir Geoffrey Peveril in his own Castle of Martindale, sounded so stunningly strange in the ears of those old retainers of his family, that they had no power either to attend to Mistress Deborah's inferences, or to interrupt the velocity of speech with which she poured them forth. And when at length she made a breathless pause, all that poor Dame Ellesmere could reply, was the emphatic question, "Bridgenorth brave Peveril of the Peak!—Is the woman mad?"

"Come, come, dame," said Deborah, "woman me no more than I woman you. I have not been called Mistress at the head of the table for so many years, to be woman'd here by you. And for the news, it is as true as that you are sitting there in a white hood, who will wear a black one ere long."

"Lance Outram," said the old woman, "make out, if thou be'st a man, and listen about if aught stirs up at the Castle."

"If there should," said Outram, "I am even too long here;" and he caught up his crossbow, and one or two arrows, and rushed out of the cottage.

"Well-a-day!" said Mistress Deborah, "see if my news have not frightened away Lance Outram too, whom they used to say nothing could start. But do not take on so, dame; for I dare say if the Castle and the lands pass to my new master, Major Bridgenorth, as it is like they will—for I have heard that he has powerful debts over the estate—you shall have my good word with him, and I promise you he is no bad man; something precise about preaching and praying, and about the dress which one should wear, which, I must own, beseems not a gentleman, as, to be sure, every woman knows best what becomes her. But for you, dame, that wear a prayer-book at your girdle, with your housewife-case, and never change the fashion of your white hood, I dare say he will not grudge you the little matter you need, and are not able to win."

"Out, sordid jade!" exclaimed Dame Ellesmere, her very flesh quivering betwixt apprehension and anger, "and hold your peace this instant, or I will find those that shall flay the very hide from thee with dog-whips. Hast thou ate thy noble master's bread, not only to betray his trust, and fly from his service, but wouldst thou come here, like an ill-omened bird as thou art, to triumph over his downfall?"

"Nay, dame," said Deborah, over whom the violence of the old woman had obtained a certain predominance; "it is not I that say it—only the warrant of the Parliament folks."

"I thought we had done with their warrants ever since the blessed twenty-ninth of May," said the old housekeeper of Martindale Castle; "but this I tell thee, sweetheart, that I have seen such warrants crammed, at the sword's point, down the throats of them that brought them; and so shall this be, if there is one true man left to drink of the Dove."

As she spoke, Lance Outram re-entered the cottage. "Naunt," he said in dismay, "I doubt it is true what she says. The beacon tower is as black as my belt. No Pole-star of Peveril. What does that betoken?"

"Death, ruin, and captivity," exclaimed old Ellesmere. "Make for the Castle, thou knave. Thrust in thy great body. Strike for the house that bred thee and fed thee; and if thou art buried under the ruins, thou diest a man's death."

"Nay, naunt, I shall not be slack," answered Outram. "But here come folks that I warrant can tell us more on't."

One or two of the female servants, who had fled from the Castle during the alarm, now rushed in with various reports of the case; but all agreeing that a body of armed men were in possession of the Castle, and that Major Bridgenorth had taken young Master Julian prisoner, and conveyed him down to Moultrassie Hall, with his feet tied under the belly of the nag—a shameful sight to be seen—and he so well born and so handsome.

Lance scratched his head; and though feeling the duty incumbent upon him as a faithful servant, which was indeed specially dinned into him by the cries and exclamations of his aunt, he seemed not a little dubious how to conduct himself. "I would to God, naunt," he said at last, "that old Whitaker were alive now, with his long stories about Marston Moor and Edge Hill, that made us all yawn our jaws off their hinges, in spite of broiled rashers and double beer! When a man is missed, he is moaned, as they say; and I would rather than a broad piece he had been here to have sorted this matter, for it is clean out of my way as a woodsman, that have no skill of war. But dang it, if old Sir Geoffrey go to the wall without a knock for it!—Here you, Nell!"—(speaking to one of the fugitive maidens from the Castle)—"but, no—you have not the heart of a cat, and are afraid of your own shadow by moonlight—But, Cis, you are a stout-hearted wench, and know a buck from a bullfinch. Hark thee, Cis, as you would wish to be married, get up to the Castle again, and get thee in—thou best knowest where—for thou hast oft gotten out of postern to a dance or junketing, to my knowledge—Get thee back to the Castle, as ye hope to be married—See my lady—they cannot hinder thee of that—my lady has a head worth twenty of ours—If I am to gather force, light up the beacon for a signal; and spare not a tar barrel on't. Thou mayst do it safe enough. I warrant the Roundheads busy with drink and plunder.—And, hark thee, say to my lady I am gone down to the miners' houses at Bonadventure. The rogues were mutinying for their wages but yesterday; they will be all ready for good or bad. Let her send orders down to me; or do you come yourself, your legs are long enough."

"Whether they are or not, Master Lance (and you know nothing of the matter), they shall do your errand to-night, for love of the old knight and his lady."

So Cisly Sellok, a kind of Derbyshire Camilla, who had won the smock at the foot-race at Ashbourne, sprung forward towards the Castle with a speed which few could have equalled.

"There goes a mettled wench," said Lance; "and now, naunt, give me the old broadsword—it is above the bed-head—and my wood-knife; and I shall do well enough."

"And what is to become of me?" bleated the unfortunate Mistress Deborah Debbitch.

"You must remain here with my aunt, Mistress Deb; and, for old acquaintance' sake, she will take care no harm befalls you; but take heed how you attempt to break bounds."

So saying, and pondering in his own mind the task which he had undertaken, the hardy forester strode down the moonlight glade, scarcely hearing the blessings and cautions which Dame Ellesmere kept showering after him. His thoughts were not altogether warlike. "What a tight ankle the jade hath!—she trips it like a doe in summer over dew. Well, but here are the huts—Let us to this gear.—Are ye all asleep, you dammers, sinkers, and drift-drivers? turn out, ye subterranean badgers. Here is your master, Sir Geoffrey, dead, for aught ye know or care. Do not you see the beacon is unlit, and you sit there like so many asses?"

"Why," answered one of the miners, who now began to come out of their huts—

"An he be dead,

He will eat no more bread."

"And you are like to eat none neither," said Lance; "for the works will be presently stopped, and all of you turned off."

"Well, and what of it, Master Lance? As good play for nought as work for nought. Here is four weeks we have scarce seen the colour of Sir Geoffrey's coin; and you ask us to care whether he be dead or in life? For you, that goes about, trotting upon your horse, and doing for work what all men do for pleasure, it may be well enough; but it is another matter to be leaving God's light, and burrowing all day and night in darkness, like a toad in a hole—that's not to be done for nought, I trow; and if Sir Geoffrey is dead, his soul will suffer for't; and if he's alive, we'll have him in the Barmoot Court."

"Hark ye, gaffer," said Lance, "and take notice, my mates, all of you," for a considerable number of these rude and subterranean people had now assembled to hear the discussion—"Has Sir Geoffrey, think you, ever put a penny in his pouch out of this same Bonadventure mine?"

"I cannot say as I think he has," answered old Ditchley, the party who maintained the controversy.

"Answer on your conscience, though it be but a leaden one. Do not you know that he hath lost a good penny?"

"Why, I believe he may," said Gaffer Ditchley. "What then!—lose to-day, win to-morrow—the miner must eat in the meantime."

"True; but what will you eat when Master Bridgenorth gets the land, that will not hear of a mine being wrought on his own ground? Will he work on at dead loss, think ye?" demanded trusty Lance.

"Bridgenorth?—he of Moultrassie Hall, that stopped the great Felicity Work, on which his father laid out, some say, ten thousand pounds, and never got in a penny? Why, what has he to do with Sir Geoffrey's property down here at Bonadventure? It was never his, I trow."

"Nay, what do I know?" answered Lance, who saw the impression he had made. "Law and debt will give him half Derbyshire, I think, unless you stand by old Sir Geoffrey."

"But if Sir Geoffrey be dead," said Ditchley cautiously, "what good will our standing by do to him?"

"I did not say he was dead, but only as bad as dead; in the hands of the Roundheads—a prisoner up yonder, at his own Castle," said Lance; "and will have his head cut off, like the good Earl of Derby's at Bolton-le-Moors."

"Nay, then, comrades," said Gaffer Ditchley, "an it be as Master Lance says, I think we should bear a hand for stout old Sir Geoffrey, against a low-born mean-spirited fellow like Bridgenorth, who shut up a shaft had cost thousands, without getting a penny profit on't. So hurra for Sir Geoffrey, and down with the Rump! But hold ye a blink—hold"—(and the waving of his hand stopped the commencing cheer)—"Hark ye, Master Lance, it must be all over, for the beacon is as black as night; and you know yourself that marks the Lord's death."

"It will kindle again in an instant," said Lance; internally adding, "I pray to God it may!—It will kindle in an instant—lack of fuel, and the confusion of the family."

"Ay, like enow, like enow," said Ditchley; "but I winna budge till I see it blazing."

"Why then, there a-goes!" said Lance. "Thank thee, Cis—thank thee, my good wench.—Believe your own eyes, my lads, if you will not believe me; and now hurra for Peveril of the Peak—the King and his friends—and down with Rumps and Roundheads!"

The sudden rekindling of the beacon had all the effect which Lance could have desired upon the minds of his rude and ignorant hearers, who, in their superstitious humour, had strongly associated the Polar-star of Peveril with the fortunes of the family. Once moved, according to the national character of their countrymen,

they soon became enthusiastic; and Lance found himself at the head of thirty stout fellows and upwards, armed with their pick-axes, and ready to execute whatever task he should impose on them.

Trusting to enter the Castle by the postern, which had served to accommodate himself and other domestics upon an emergency, his only anxiety was to keep his march silent; and he earnestly recommended to his followers to reserve their shouts for the moment of the attack. They had not advanced far on their road to the Castle, when Cisly Sellok met them so breathless with haste, that the poor girl was obliged to throw herself into Master Lance's arms.

"Stand up, my mettled wench," said he, giving her a sly kiss at the same time, "and let us know what is going on up at the Castle."

"My lady bids you, as you would serve God and your master, not to come up to the Castle, which can but make bloodshed; for she says Sir Geoffrey is lawfully in hand, and that he must bide the issue; and that he is innocent of what he is charged with, and is going up to speak for himself before King and Council, and she goes up with him. And besides, they have found out the postern, the Roundhead rogues; for two of them saw me when I went out of door, and chased me; but I showed them a fair pair of heels."

"As ever dashed dew from the cowslip," said Lance. "But what the foul fiend is to be done? for if they have secured the postern, I know not how the dickens we can get in."

"All is fastened with bolt and staple, and guarded with gun and pistol, at the Castle," quoth Cisly; "and so sharp are they, that they nigh caught me coming with my lady's message, as I told you. But my lady says, if you could deliver her son, Master Julian, from Bridgenorth, that she would hold it good service."

"What!" said Lance, "is young master at the Castle? I taught him to shoot his first shaft. But how to get in!"

"He was at the Castle in the midst of the ruffle, but old Bridgenorth has carried him down prisoner to the hall," answered Cisly. "There was never faith nor courtesy in an old Puritan who never had pipe and tabor in his house since it was built."

"Or who stopped a promising mine," said Ditchley, "to save a few thousand pounds, when he might have made himself as rich as Lord of Chatsworth, and fed a hundred good fellows all the whilst."

"Why, then," said Lance, "since you are all of a mind, we will go draw the cover for the old badger; and I promise you that the Hall is not like one of your real houses of quality where the walls are as thick as whinstone-dikes, but foolish brick-work, that your pick-axes will work through as if it were cheese. Huzza once more for Peveril of the Peak! down with Bridgenorth, and all upstart cuckoldly Roundheads!"

Having indulged the throats of his followers with one buxom huzza, Lance commanded them to cease their clamours, and proceeded to conduct them, by such paths as seemed the least likely to be watched, to the courtyard of Moultrassie Hall. On the road they were joined by several stout yeoman farmers, either followers of the Peveril family, or friends to the High Church and Cavalier party; most of whom, alarmed by the news which began to fly fast through the neighbourhood, were armed with sword and pistol.

Lance Outram halted his party, at the distance, as he himself described it, of a flight-shot from the house, and advanced, alone, and in silence, to reconnoitre; and having previously commanded Ditchley and his subterranean allies to come to his assistance whenever he should whistle, he crept cautiously forward, and soon found that those whom he came to surprise, true to the discipline which had gained their party such decided superiority during the Civil War, had posted a sentinel, who paced through the courtyard, piously chanting a psalm-tune, while his arms, crossed on his bosom, supported a gun of formidable length.

"Now, a true solder," said Lance Outram to himself, "would put a stop to thy snivelling ditty, by making a broad arrow quiver in your heart, and no great alarm given. But, dang it, I have not the right spirit for a soldier—I cannot fight a man till my blood's up; and for shooting him from behind a wall it is cruelly like to stalking a deer. I'll e'en face him, and try what to make of him."

With this doughty resolution, and taking no farther care to conceal himself, he entered the courtyard boldly, and was making forward to the front door of the hall, as a matter of course. But the old Cromwellian, who was on guard, had not so learned his duty. "Who goes there?—Stand, friend—stand; or, verily, I will shoot thee to death!" were challenges which followed each other quick, the last being enforced by the levelling and presenting the said long-barrelled gun with which he was armed.

"Why, what a murrain!" answered Lance. "Is it your fashion to go a-shooting at this time o' night? Why, this is but a time for bat-fowling."

"Nay, but hark thee, friend," said the experienced sentinel, "I am none of those who do this work negligently. Thou canst not snare me with thy crafty speech, though thou wouldst make it to sound simple in mine ear. Of a verity I will shoot, unless thou tell thy name and business."

"Name!" said Lance; "why, what a dickens should it be but Robin Round—honest Robin of Redham; and for business, an you must needs know, I come on a message from some Parliament man, up yonder at the Castle, with letters for worshipful Master Bridgenorth of Moultrassie Hall; and this be the place, as I think; though why ye be marching up and down at his door, like the sign of a Red Man, with your old firelock there, I cannot so well guess."

"Give me the letters, my friend," said the sentinel, to whom this explanation seemed very natural and probable, "and I will cause them forthwith to be delivered into his worship's own hand."

Rummaging in his pockets, as if to pull out the letters which never existed, Master Lance approached within the sentinel's piece, and, before he was aware, suddenly seized him by the collar, whistled sharp and shrill, and exerting his skill as a wrestler, for which he had been distinguished in his youth, he stretched his antagonist on his back—the musket for which they struggled going off in the fall.

The miners rushed into the courtyard at Lance's signal; and hopeless any longer of prosecuting his design in silence, Lance commanded two of them to secure the prisoner, and the rest to cheer loudly, and attack the door of the house. Instantly the courtyard of the mansion rang with the cry of "Peveril of the Peak for ever!" with all the abuse which the Royalists had invented to cast upon the Roundheads, during so many years of contention; and at the same time, while some assailed the door with their mining implements, others directed their attack against the angle, where a kind of porch joined to the main front of the building; and there, in some degree protected by the projection of the wall, and of a balcony which overhung the porch, wrought in more security, as well as with more effect, than the others; for the doors being of oak, thickly studded with nails, offered a more effectual resistance to violence than the brick-work.

The noise of this hubbub on the outside, soon excited wild alarm and tumult within. Lights flew from window to window, and voices were heard demanding the cause of the attack; to which the party cries of those who were in the courtyard afforded a sufficient, or at least the only answer, which was vouchsafed. At length the window of a projecting staircase opened, and the voice of Bridgenorth himself demanded authoritatively what the tumult meant, and commanded the rioters to desist, upon their own proper and immediate peril.

"We want our young master, you canting old thief," was the reply; "and if we have him not instantly, the topmost stone of your house shall lie as low as the foundation."

"We shall try that presently," said Bridgenorth; "for if there is another blow struck against the walls of my peaceful house, I will fire my carbine among you, and your blood be upon your own head. I have a score of friends, well armed with musket and pistol, to defend my house; and we have both the means and heart, with Heaven's assistance, to repay any violence you can offer."

"Master Bridgenorth," replied Lance, who, though no soldier, was sportsman enough to comprehend the advantage which those under cover, and using firearms, must necessarily have over his party, exposed to their aim, in a great measure, and without means of answering their fire,—"Master Bridgenorth, let us crave parley with you, and fair conditions. We desire to do you no evil, but will have back our young master; it is enough that you have got our old one and his lady. It is foul chasing to kill hart, hind, and fawn; and we will give you some light on the subject in an instant."

This speech was followed by a great crash amongst the lower windows of the house, according to a new species of attack which had been suggested by some of the assailants.

"I would take the honest fellow's word, and let young Peveril go," said one of the garrison, who, carelessly yawning, approached on the inside of the post at which Bridgenorth had stationed himself.

"Are you mad?" said Bridgenorth; "or do you think me poor enough in spirit to give up the advantages I now possess over the family of Peveril, for the awe of a parcel of boors, whom the first discharge will scatter like chaff before the whirlwind?"

"Nay," answered the speaker, who was the same individual that had struck Julian by his resemblance to the man who called himself Ganlesse, "I love a dire revenge, but we shall buy it somewhat too dear if these rascals set the house on fire, as they are like to do, while you are parleying from the window. They have thrown torches or firebrands into the hall; and it is all our friends can do to keep the flame from catching the wainscoting, which is old and dry."

"Now, may Heaven judge thee for thy lightness of spirit," answered Bridgenorth; "one would think mischief was so properly thy element, that to thee it was indifferent whether friend or foe was the sufferer."

So saying, he ran hastily downstairs towards the hall, into which, through broken casements, and betwixt the iron bars, which prevented human entrance, the assailants had thrust lighted straw, sufficient to excite much smoke and some fire, and to throw the defenders of the house into great confusion; insomuch, that of several shots fired hastily from the windows, little or no damage followed to the besiegers, who, getting warm on the onset, answered the hostile charges with loud shouts of "Peveril for ever!" and had already made a practicable breach through the brick-wall of the tenement, through which Lance, Ditchley, and several of the most adventurous among their followers, made their way into the hall.

The complete capture of the house remained, however, as far off as ever. The defenders mixed with much coolness and skill that solemn and deep spirit of enthusiasm which sets life at less than nothing, in comparison to real or supposed duty. From the half-open doors which led into the hall, they maintained a fire which began to grow fatal. One miner was shot dead; three or four were wounded; and Lance scarce knew whether he should draw his forces from the house, and leave it a prey to the flames, or, making a desperate attack on the posts occupied by the defenders, try to obtain unmolested possession of the place. At this moment, his course of conduct was determined by an unexpected occurrence, of which it is necessary to trace the cause.

Julian Peveril had been, like other inhabitants of Moultrassie Hall on that momentous night, awakened by the report of the sentinel's musket, followed by the shouts of his father's vassals and followers; of which he collected enough to guess that Bridgenorth's house was attacked with a view to his liberation. Very doubtful of the issue of such an attempt, dizzy with the slumber from which he had been so suddenly awakened, and confounded with the rapid succession of events to which he had been lately a witness, he speedily put on a part of his clothes, and hastened to the window of his apartment. From this he could see nothing to relieve his anxiety, for it looked towards a quarter different from that on which the attack was made. He attempted his door; it was locked on the outside; and his perplexity and anxiety became extreme, when suddenly the lock was turned, and in an underdress, hastily assumed in the moment of alarm, her hair streaming on her shoulders, her eyes gleaming betwixt fear and resolution, Alice Bridgenorth rushed into his apartment, and seized his hand with the fervent exclamation, "Julian, save my father!"

The light which she bore in her hand served to show those features which could rarely have been viewed by any one without emotion, but which bore an expression irresistible to a lover.

"Alice," he said, "what means this? What is the danger? Where is your father?"

"Do not stay to question," she answered; "but if you would save him, follow me!"

At the same time she led the way, with great speed, half-way down the turret stair case which led to his room, thence turning through a side door, along a long gallery, to a larger and wider stair, at the bottom of which stood her father, surrounded by four or five of his friends, scarce discernible through the smoke of the fire which began to take hold in the hall, as well as that which arose from the repeated discharge of their own firearms.

Julian saw there was not a moment to be lost, if he meant to be a successful mediator. He rushed through Bridgenorth's party ere they were aware of his approach, and throwing himself amongst the assailants who occupied the hall in considerable numbers, he assured them of his personal safety, and conjured them to depart.

"Not without a few more slices at the Rump, master," answered Lance. "I am principally glad to see you safe and well; but here is Joe Rimegap shot as dead as a buck in season, and more of us are hurt; and we'll have revenge, and roast the Puritans like apples for lambswool!"

"Then you shall roast me along with them," said Julian; "for I vow to God, I will not leave the hall, being bound by parole of honour to abide with Major Bridgenorth till lawfully dismissed."

"Now out on you, an you were ten times a Peveril!" said Ditchley; "to give so many honest fellows loss and labour on your behalf, and to show them no kinder countenance.—I say, beat up the fire, and burn all together!"

"Nay, nay; but peace, my masters, and hearken to reason," said Julian; "we are all here in evil condition, and you will only make it worse by contention. Do you help to put out this same fire, which will else cost us all dear. Keep yourselves under arms. Let Master Bridgenorth and me settle some grounds of accommodation, and I trust all will be favourably made up on both sides; and if not, you shall have my consent and countenance to fight it out; and come on it what will, I will never forget this night's good service."

He then drew Ditchley and Lance Outram aside, while the rest stood suspended at his appearance and words, and expressing the utmost thanks and gratitude for what they had already done, urged them, as the greatest favour which they could do towards him and his father's house, to permit him to negotiate the terms of his emancipation from thralldom; at the same time forcing on Ditchley five or six gold pieces, that the brave lads of Bonadventure might drink his health; whilst to Lance he expressed the warmest sense of his active kindness, but protested he could only consider it as good service to his house, if he was allowed to manage the matter after his own fashion.

"Why," answered Lance, "I am well out on it, Master Julian; for it is matter beyond my mastery. All that I stand to is, that I will see you safe out of this same Moultrassie Hall; for our old Naunt Ellesmere will else give me but cold comfort when I come home. Truth is, I began unwillingly; but when I saw the poor fellow Joe shot beside me, why, I thought we should have some amends. But I put it all in your Honour's hands."

During this colloquy both parties had been amicably employed in extinguishing the fire, which might otherwise have been fatal to all. It required a general effort to get it under; and both parties agreed on the necessary labour, with as much unanimity, as if the water they brought in leathern buckets from the well to throw upon the fire, had some effect in slaking their mutual hostility.

CHAPTER XXVI

*Necessity—thou best of peacemakers,
As well as surest prompter of invention—
Help us to composition!*

—ANONYMOUS.

While the fire continued, the two parties laboured in active union, like the jarring factions of the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem, when compelled to unite in resisting an assault of the besiegers. But when the last bucket of water had hissed on the few embers that continued to glimmer—when the sense of mutual hostility, hitherto suspended by a feeling of common danger, was in its turn rekindled—the parties, mingled as they had hitherto been in one common exertion, drew off from each other, and began to arrange themselves at opposite sides of the hall, and handle their weapons, as if for a renewal of the fight.

Bridgenorth interrupted any farther progress of this menaced hostility. "Julian Peveril," he said, "thou art free to walk thine own path, since thou wilt not walk with me that road which is more safe, as well as more honourable. But if you do by my counsel, you will get soon beyond the British seas."

"Ralph Bridgenorth," said one of his friends, "this is but evil and feeble conduct on thine own part. Wilt thou withhold thy hand from the battle, to defend, from these sons of Belial, the captive of thy bow and of thy spear? Surely we are enow to deal with them in the security of the old serpent, until we essay whether the Lord will not give us victory therein."

A hum of stern assent followed; and had not Ganlesse now interfered, the combat would probably have been renewed. He took the advocate for war apart into one of the window recesses, and apparently satisfied his objections; for as he returned to his companions, he said to them, "Our friend hath so well argued this matter, that, verily, since he is of the same mind with the worthy Major Bridgenorth, I think the youth may be set at liberty."

As no farther objection was offered, it only remained with Julian to thank and reward those who had been active in his assistance. Having first obtained from Bridgenorth a promise of indemnity to them for the riot they had committed, a few kind words conveyed his sense of their services; and some broad pieces, thrust into the hand of Lance Outram, furnished the means for affording them a holiday. They would have remained to protect him, but, fearful of farther disorder, and relying entirely on the good faith of Major Bridgenorth, he dismissed them all except Lance, whom he detained to attend upon him for a few minutes, till he should depart from Moultrassie. But ere leaving the Hall, he could not repress his desire to speak with Bridgenorth in secret; and advancing towards him, he expressed such a desire.

Tacitly granting what was asked of him, Bridgenorth led the way to a small summer saloon adjoining to the Hall, where, with his usual gravity and indifference of manner, he seemed to await in silence what Peveril had to communicate.

Julian found it difficult, where so little opening was afforded him, to find a tone in which to open the subjects he had at heart, that should be at once dignified and conciliating. "Major Bridgenorth," he said at length, "you have been a son, and an affectionate one—You may conceive my present anxiety—My father!—What has been designed for him?"

"What the law will," answered Bridgenorth. "Had he walked by the counsels which I procured to be given to him, he might have dwelt safely in the house of his ancestors. His fate is now beyond my control—far beyond yours. It must be with him as his country decide."

"And my mother?" said Peveril.

"Will consult, as she has ever done, her own duty; and create her own happiness by doing so," replied Bridgenorth. "Believe, my designs towards your family are better than they may seem through the mist which adversity has spread around your house. I may triumph as a man; but as a man I must also remember, in my hour, that mine enemies have had theirs.—Have you aught else to say?" he added, after a momentary pause. "You have rejected once, yea, and again, the hand I stretched out to you. Methinks little more remains between us."

These words, which seemed to cut short farther discussion, were calmly spoken; so that though they appeared to discourage farther question, they could not interrupt that which still trembled on Julian's tongue. He made a step or two towards the door; then suddenly returned. "Your daughter?" he said—"Major Bridgenorth—I should ask—I *do* ask forgiveness for mentioning her name—but may I not inquire after her?—May I not express my wishes for her future happiness?"

"Your interest in her is but too flattering," said Bridgenorth; "but you have already chosen your part; and you must be, in future, strangers to each other. I may have wished it otherwise, but the hour of grace is passed, during which your compliance with my advice might—I will speak it plainly—have led to your union. For her happiness—if such a word belongs to mortal pilgrimage—I shall care for it sufficiently. She leaves this place to-day, under the guardianship of a sure friend."

"Not of—?" exclaimed Peveril, and stopped short; for he felt he had no right to pronounce the name which came to his lips.

"Why do you pause?" said Bridgenorth; "a sudden thought is often a wise, almost always an honest one. With whom did you suppose I meant to entrust my child, that the idea called forth so anxious an expression?"

"Again I should ask your forgiveness," said Julian, "for meddling where I have little right to interfere. But I saw a face here that is known to me—the person calls himself Ganlesse—Is it with him that you mean to entrust your daughter?"

"Even to the person who call himself Ganlesse," said Bridgenorth, without expressing either anger or surprise.

"And do you know to whom you commit a charge so precious to all who know her, and so dear to yourself?" said Julian.

"Do *you* know, who ask me the question?" answered Bridgenorth.

"I own I do not," answered Julian; "but I have seen him in a character so different from that he now wears, that I feel it my duty to warn you, how you entrust the charge of your child to one who can alternately play the profligate or the hypocrite, as it suits his own interest or humour."

Bridgenorth smiled contemptuously. "I might be angry," he said, "with the officious zeal which supposes that its green conceptions can instruct my grey hairs; but, good Julian, I do but only ask from you the liberal construction, that I, who have had much converse with mankind, know with whom I trust what is dearest to me. He of whom thou speakest hath one visage to his friends, though he may have others to the world, living amongst those before whom honest features should be concealed under a grotesque vizard; even as in the sinful sports of the day, called maskings and mummeries, where the wise, if he show himself at all, must be contented to play the apish and fantastic fool."

"I would only pray your wisdom to beware," said Julian, "of one, who, as he has a vizard for others, may also have one which can disguise his real features from you yourself."

"This is being over careful, young man," replied Bridgenorth, more shortly than he had hitherto spoken; "if you would walk by my counsel, you will attend to your own affairs, which, credit me, deserve all your care, and leave others to the management of theirs."

This was too plain to be misunderstood; and Peveril was compelled to take his leave of Bridgenorth, and of Moultrassie Hall, without farther parley or explanation. The reader may imagine how oft he looked back, and tried to guess, amongst the lights which continued to twinkle in various parts of the building, which sparkle it was that gleamed from the bower of Alice. When the road turned into another direction, he sunk into deep reverie, from which he was at length roused by the voice of Lance, who demanded where he intended to quarter for the night. He was unprepared to answer the question, but the honest keeper himself prompted a solution of the problem, by requesting that he would occupy a spare bed in the Lodge; to which Julian willingly agreed. The rest of the inhabitants had retired to rest when they entered; but Dame Ellesmere, apprised by a messenger of her nephew's hospitable intent, had everything in the best readiness she could, for the son of her ancient patron. Peveril betook himself to rest; and, notwithstanding so many subjects of anxiety, slept soundly till the morning was far advanced.

His slumbers were first broken by Lance, who had been long up, and already active in his service. He informed him, that his horse, arms, and small cloak-bag had been sent from the Castle by one of Major Bridgenorth's servants, who brought a letter, discharging from the Major's service the unfortunate Deborah Debbitch, and prohibiting her return to the Hall. The officer of the House of Commons, escorted by a strong guard, had left Martindale Castle that morning early, travelling in Sir Geoffrey's carriage—his lady being also permitted to attend on him. To this he had to add, that the property at the Castle was taken possession of by Master Win-the-fight, the attorney, from Chesterfield, with other officers of law, in name of Major Bridgenorth, a large creditor of the unfortunate knight.

Having told these Job's tidings, Lance paused; and, after a moment's hesitation, declared he was resolved to quit the country, and go up to London along with his young master. Julian argued the point with him; and insisted he had better stay to take charge of his aunt, in case she should be disturbed by these strangers. Lance replied, "She would have one with her, who would protect her well enough; for there was wherewithal to buy protection amongst them. But for himself, he was resolved to follow Master Julian to the death."

Julian heartily thanked him for his love.

"Nay, it is not altogether out of love neither," said Lance, "though I am as loving as another; but it is, as it were, partly out of fear, lest I be called over the coals for last night's matter; for as for the miners, they will never trouble them, as the creatures only act after their kind."

"I will write in your behalf to Major Bridgenorth, who is bound to afford you protection, if you have such fear," said Julian.

"Nay, for that matter, it is not altogether fear, more than altogether love," answered the enigmatical keeper, "although it hath a tasting of both in it. And, to speak plain truth, thus it is—Dame Debbitch and Naunt Ellesmere have resolved to set up their horses together, and have made up all their quarrels. And of all ghosts in

the world, the worst is, when an old true-love comes back to haunt a poor fellow like me. Mistress Deborah, though distressed enow for the loss of her place, has been already speaking of a broken sixpence, or some such token, as if a man could remember such things for so many years, even if she had not gone over seas, like woodcock, in the meanwhile."

Julian could scarce forbear laughing. "I thought you too much of a man, Lance, to fear a woman marrying you whether you would or no."

"It has been many an honest man's luck, for all that," said Lance; "and a woman in the very house has so many deuced opportunities. And then there would be two upon one; for Naunt, though high enough when any of *your* folks are concerned, hath some look to the main chance; and it seems Mistress Deb is as rich as a Jew."

"And you, Lance," said Julian, "have no mind to marry for cake and pudding."

"No, truly, master," answered Lance, "unless I knew of what dough they were baked. How the devil do I know how the jade came by so much? And then if she speaks of tokens and love-passages, let her be the same tight lass I broke the sixpence with, and I will be the same true lad to her. But I never heard of true love lasting ten years; and hers, if it lives at all, must be nearer twenty."

"Well, then, Lance," said Julian, "since you are resolved on the thing, we will go to London together; where, if I cannot retain you in my service, and if my father recovers not these misfortunes, I will endeavour to promote you elsewhere."

"Nay, nay," said Lance, "I trust to be back to bonny Martindale before it is long, and to keep the greenwood, as I have been wont to do; for, as to Dame Debbitch, when they have not me for their common butt, Naunt and she will soon bend bows on each other. So here comes old Dame Ellesmere with your breakfast. I will but give some directions about the deer to Rough Ralph, my helper, and saddle my forest pony, and your honour's horse, which is no prime one, and we will be ready to trot."

Julian was not sorry for this addition to his establishment; for Lance had shown himself, on the preceding evening, a shrewd and bold fellow, and attached to his master. He therefore set himself to reconcile his aunt to parting with her nephew for some time. Her unlimited devotion for "the family," readily induced the old lady to acquiesce in his proposal, though not without a gentle sigh over the ruins of a castle in the air, which was founded on the well-saved purse of Mistress Deborah Debbitch. "At any rate," she thought, "it was as well that Lance should be out of the way of that bold, long-legged, beggarly trollop, Cis Sellok." But to poor Deb herself, the expatriation of Lance, whom she had looked to as a sailor to a port under his lee, for which he can run, if weather becomes foul, was a second severe blow, following close on her dismissal from the profitable service of Major Bridgenorth.

Julian visited the disconsolate damsel, in hopes of gaining some light upon Bridgenorth's projects regarding his daughter—the character of this Ganlesse—and other matters, with which her residence in the family might have made her acquainted; but he found her by far too much troubled in mind to afford him the least information. The name of Ganlesse she did not seem to recollect—that of Alice rendered her hysterical—that of Bridgenorth, furious. She numbered up the various services she had rendered in the family—and denounced the plague of swartness to the linen—of leanness to the poultry—of dearth and dishonour to the housekeeping—and of lingering sickness and early death to Alice;—all which evils, she averred, had only been kept off by her continued, watchful, and incessant cares.—Then again turning to the subject of the fugitive Lance, she expressed such a total contempt of that mean-spirited fellow, in a tone between laughing and crying, as satisfied Julian it was not a topic likely to act as a sedative; and that, therefore, unless he made a longer stay than the urgent state of his affairs permitted, he was not likely to find Mistress Deborah in such a state of composure as might enable him to obtain from her any rational or useful information.

Lance, who good-naturedly took upon himself the whole burden of Dame Debbitch's mental alienation, or "taking on," as such fits of *passio hysterica* are usually termed in the country, had too much feeling to present himself before the victim of her own sensibility, and of his obduracy. He therefore intimated to Julian, by his assistant Ralph, that the horses stood saddled behind the Lodge, and that all was ready for their departure.

Julian took the hint, and they were soon mounted, and clearing the road, at a rapid trot, in the direction of London; but not by the most usual route. Julian calculated that the carriage in which his father was transported would travel slowly; and it was his purpose, if possible, to get to London before it should arrive there, in order to have time to consult, with the friends of his family, what measures should be taken in his father's behalf.

In this manner they advanced a day's journey towards London; at the conclusion of which, Julian found his resting-place in a small inn upon the road. No one came, at the first call, to attend upon the guests and their horses, although the house was well lighted up; and there was a prodigious chattering in the kitchen, such as can only be produced by a French cook when his mystery is in the very moment of projection. It instantly occurred to Julian—so rare was the ministry of these Gallic artists at that time—that the clamour he heard must necessarily be produced by the Sieur Chaubert, on whose *plats* he had lately feasted, along with Smith and Ganlesse.

One, or both of these, were therefore probably in the little inn; and if so, he might have some opportunity to discover their real purpose and character. How to avail himself of such a meeting he knew not; but chance favoured him more than he could have expected.

"I can scarce receive you, gentlefolks," said the landlord, who at length appeared at the door; "here be a sort of quality in my house to-night, whom less than all will not satisfy; nor all neither, for that matter."

"We are but plain fellows, landlord," said Julian; "we are bound for Moseley-market, and can get no farther to-night. Any hole will serve us, no matter what."

"Why," said the honest host, "if that be the case, I must e'en put one of you behind the bar, though the gentlemen have desired to be private; the other must take heart of grace and help me at the tap."

"The tap for me," said Lance, without waiting his master's decision. "It is an element which I could live and die in."

"The bar, then, for me," said Peveril; and stepping back, whispered to Lance to exchange cloaks with him, desirous, if possible, to avoid being recognised.

The exchange was made in an instant; and presently afterwards the landlord brought a light; and as he guided Julian into his hostelry, cautioned him to sit quiet in the place where he should stow him; and if he was discovered, to say that he was one of the house, and leave him to make it good. "You will hear what the gallants say," he added; "but I think thou wilt carry away but little on it; for when it is not French, it is Court gibberish; and that is as hard to construe."

The bar, into which our hero was inducted on these conditions, seemed formed, with respect to the public room, upon the principle of a citadel, intended to observe and bridle a rebellious capital. Here sat the host on the Saturday evenings, screened from the observation of his guests, yet with the power of observing both their wants and their behaviour, and also that of overhearing their conversation—a practice which he was much addicted to, being one of that numerous class of philanthropists, to whom their neighbours' business is of as much consequence, or rather more, than their own.

Here he planted his new guest, with a repeated caution not to disturb the gentlemen by speech or motion; and a promise that he should be speedily accommodated with a cold buttock of beef, and a tankard of home-brewed. And here he left him with no other light than that which glimmered from the well-illuminated apartment within, through a sort of shuttle which accommodated the landlord with a view into it.

This situation, inconvenient enough in itself, was, on the present occasion, precisely what Julian would have selected. He wrapped himself in the weather-beaten cloak of Lance Outram, which had been stained, by age and weather, into a thousand variations from its original Lincoln green; and with as little noise as he could, set himself to observe the two inmates, who had engrossed to themselves the whole of the apartment, which was usually open to the public. They sat by a table well covered with such costly rarities, as could only have been procured by much forecast, and prepared by the exquisite Mons. Chaubert; to which both seemed to do much justice.

Julian had little difficulty in ascertaining, that one of the travellers was, as he had anticipated, the master of the said Chaubert, or, as he was called by Ganlesse, Smith; the other, who faced him, he had never seen before. This last was dressed like a gallant of the first order. His periwig, indeed, as he travelled on horseback, did not much exceed in size the bar-wig of a modern lawyer; but then the essence which he shook from it with every motion, impregnated a whole apartment, which was usually only perfumed by that vulgar herb, tobacco. His riding-coat was laced in the newest and most courtly style; and Grammont himself might have envied the embroidery of his waistcoat, and the peculiar cut of his breeches, which buttoned above the knee, permitting the shape of a very handsome

leg to be completely seen. This, by the proprietor thereof, had been stretched out upon a stool, and he contemplated its proportions, from time to time, with infinite satisfaction.

The conversation between these worthies was so interesting, that we propose to assign to it another chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII

—*This is some creature of the elements,
Most like your sea-gull. He can wheel and whistle
His screaming song, e'en when the storm is loudest—
Take for his sheeted couch the restless foam
Of the wild wave-crest—slumber in the calm,
And daily with the storm. Yet 'tis a gull,
An arrant gull, with all this.*

—THE CHAMPION.

"And here is to thee," said the fashionable gallant whom we have described, "honest Tom; and a cup of welcome to thee out of Looby-land. Why, thou hast been so long in the country, that thou hast got a bumpkinly clod-compelling sort of look thyself. That greasy doublet fits thee as if it were thy reserved Sunday's apparel; and the points seem as if they were stay-laces bought for thy true-love Marjory. I marvel thou canst still relish a ragout. Methinks now, to a stomach bound in such a jacket, eggs and bacon were a diet more conforming."

"Rally away, my good lord, while wit lasts," answered his companion; "yours is not the sort of ammunition which will bear much expenditure. Or rather, tell me news from Court, since we have met so opportunely."

"You would have asked me these an hour ago," said the lord, "had not your very soul been under Chaubert's covered dishes. You remembered King's affairs will keep cool, and *entre-mets* must be eaten hot."

"Not so, my lord; I only kept common talk whilst that eavesdropping rascal of a landlord was in the room; so that, now the coast is clear once more, I pray you for news from Court."

"The Plot is nonsuited," answered the courtier—"Sir George Wakeman acquitted—the witnesses discredited by the jury—Scroggs, who ranted on one side, is now ranting on t'other."

"Rat the Plot, Wakeman, witnesses, Papists, and Protestants, all together! Do you think I care for such trash as that?—Till the Plot comes up the Palace backstair, and gets possession of old Rowley's own imagination, I care not a farthing who believes or disbelieves. I hang by him will bear me out."

"Well, then," said the lord, "the next news is Rochester's disgrace."

"Disgraced!—How, and for what? The morning I came off he stood as fair as any one."

"That's over—the epitaph[*] has broken his neck—and now he may write one for his own Court favour, for it is dead and buried."

[*] *The epitaph alluded to is the celebrated epigram made by Rochester on Charles II. It was composed at the King's request, who nevertheless resented its poignancy.*

The lines are well known:—

*"Here lies our sovereign lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on,
Who never said a foolish thing,
And never did a wise one."*

"The epitaph!" exclaimed Tom; "why, I was by when it was made; and it passed for an excellent good jest with him whom it was made upon."

"Ay, so it did amongst ourselves," answered his companion; "but it got abroad, and had a run like a mill-race. It was in every coffee-house, and in half the diurnals. Grammont translated it into French too; and there is no laughing at so sharp a jest, when it is dinned into your ears on all sides. So disgraced is the author; and but for his Grace of Buckingham, the Court would be as dull as my Lord Chancellor's wig."

"Or as the head it covers.—Well, my lord, the fewer at Court, there is the more room for those that can bustle there. But there are two mainstrings of Shaftesbury's fiddle broken—the Popish Plot fallen into discredit—and Rochester disgraced. Changeful times—but here is to the little man who shall mend them."

"I apprehend you," replied his lordship; "and meet your health with my love. Trust me, my lord loves you, and longs for you.—Nay, I have done you reason.—By your leave, the cup is with me. Here is to his buxom Grace of Bucks."

"As blithe a peer," said Smith, "as ever turned night to day. Nay, it shall be an overflowing bumper, an you will; and I will drink it *super naculum*.—And how stands the great Madam?"[*]

[*] *The Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II.'s favourite mistress; very unpopular at the time of the Popish Plot, as well from her religion as her country, being a Frenchwoman and a Catholic.*

"Stoutly against all change," answered the lord—"Little Anthony[*] can make nought of her."

[*] *Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, the politician and intriguer of the period.*

"Then he shall bring her influence to nought. Hark in thine ear. Thou knowest—" (Here he whispered so low that Julian could not catch the sound.)

"Know him?" answered the other—"Know Ned of the Island?—To be sure I do."

"He is the man that shall knot the great fiddle-strings that have snapped. Say I told you so; and thereupon I give thee his health."

"And thereupon I pledge thee," said the young nobleman, "which on any other argument I were loath to do—thinking of Ned as somewhat the cut of a villain."

"Granted, man—granted," said the other,—"a very thorough-paced rascal; but able, my lord, able and necessary; and, in this plan, indispensable.—Pshaw!—This champagne turns stronger as it gets older, I think."

"Hark, mine honest fellow," said the courtier; "I would thou wouldst give me some item of all this mystery. Thou hast it, I know; for whom do men entrust but trusty Chiffinch?"

"It is your pleasure to say so, my lord," answered Smith (whom we shall hereafter call by his real name of Chiffinch) with such drunken gravity, for his speech had become a little altered by his copious libations in the course of the evening,—"*few men know more, or say less, than I do; and it well becomes my station. Conticuere omnes*, as the grammar hath it—all men should learn to hold their tongue."

"Except with a friend, Tom—except with a friend. Thou wilt never be such a dogbolt as to refuse a hint to a friend? Come, you get too wise and statesman-like for your office.—The ligatures of thy most peasantly jacket there are like to burst with thy secret. Come, undo a button, man; it is for the health of thy constitution—Let out a reef; and let thy chosen friend know what is meditating. Thou knowest I am as true as thyself to little Anthony, if he can but get uppermost."

"If, thou lordly infidel!" said Chiffinch—"talk'st thou to me of *ifs*?—There is neither *if* nor *and* in the matter. The great Madam shall be pulled a peg down—the great Plot screwed a peg or two up. Thou knowest Ned?—Honest Ned had a brother's death to revenge."

"I have heard so," said the nobleman; "and that his persevering resentment of that injury was one of the few points which seemed to be a sort of heathenish virtue in him."

"Well," continued Chiffinch, "in manoeuvring to bring about this revenge, which he hath laboured at many a day, he hath discovered a treasure."

"What!—In the Isle of Man?" said his companion.

"Assure yourself of it.—She is a creature so lovely, that she needs but be seen to put down every one of the favourites, from Portsmouth and Cleveland down to that threepenny baggage, Mistress Nelly."

"By my word, Chiffinch," said my lord, "that is a reinforcement after the fashion of thine own best tactics. But bethink thee, man! To make such a conquest, there wants more than a cherry-cheek and a bright eye—there must be wit—wit, man, and manners, and a little sense besides, to keep influence when it is gotten."

"Pshaw! will you tell me what goes to this vocation?" said Chiffinch. "Here, pledge me her health in a brimmer.—Nay, you shall do it on knees, too.—Never such a triumphant beauty was seen—I went to church on purpose, for the first time these ten years—Yet I lie, it was not to church neither—it was to chapel."

"To chapel!—What the devil, is she a Puritan?" exclaimed the other courtier.

"To be sure she is. Do you think I would be accessory to bringing a Papist into favour in these times, when, as my good Lord said in the House, there should not be a Popish manservant, nor a Popish maid-servant, not so much as dog or cat, left to bark or mew about the King!"[*]

[*] Such was the extravagance of Shaftesbury's eloquence.

"But consider, Chiffie, the dislikelihood of her pleasing," said the noble courtier.—"What! old Rowley, with his wit, and love of wit—his wildness, and love of wildness—he form a league with a silly, scrupulous, unidea'd Puritan!—Not if she were Venus."

"Thou knowest nought of the matter," answered Chiffinch. "I tell thee, the fine contrast between the seeming saint and falling sinner will give zest to the old gentleman's inclination. If I do not know him, who does?—Her health, my lord, on your bare knee, as you would live to be of the bedchamber."

"I pledge you most devoutly," answered his friend. "But you have not told me how the acquaintance is to be made; for you cannot, I think, carry her to Whitehall."

"Aha, my dear lord, you would have the whole secret! but that I cannot afford—I can spare a friend a peep at my ends, but no one must look on the means by which they are achieved."—So saying, he shook his drunken head most wisely.

The villainous design which this discourse implied, and which his heart told him was designed against Alice Bridgenorth, stirred Julian so extremely, that he involuntarily shifted his posture, and laid his hand on his sword hilt.

Chiffinch heard a rustling, and broke off, exclaiming, "Hark!—Zounds, something moved—I trust I have told the tale to no ears but thine."

"I will cut off any which have drunk in but a syllable of thy words," said the nobleman; and raising a candle, he took a hasty survey of the apartment. Seeing nothing that could incur his menaced resentment, he replaced the light and continued:—"Well, suppose the Belle Louise de Querouaille[*] shoots from her high station in the firmament, how will you rear up the downfallen Plot again—for without that same Plot, think of it as thou wilt, we have no change of hands—and matters remain as they were, with a Protestant courtesan instead of a Papist—Little Anthony can but little speed without that Plot of his—I believe, in my conscience, he begot it himself."[+]

[*] *Charles's principal mistress en titre. She was created Duchess of Portsmouth.*

[+] *Shaftesbury himself is supposed to have said that he knew not who was the inventor of the Plot, but that he himself had all the advantage of the discovery.*

"Whoever begot it," said Chiffinch, "he hath adopted it; and a thriving babe it has been to him. Well, then, though it lies out of my way, I will play Saint Peter again—up with t'other key, and unlock t'other mystery."

"Now thou speakest like a good fellow; and I will, with my own hands, unwire this fresh flask, to begin a brimmer to the success of thy achievement."

"Well, then," continued the communicative Chiffinch, "thou knowest that they have long had a nibbling at the old Countess of Derby.—So Ned was sent down—he owes her an old accompt, thou knowest—with private instructions to possess himself of the island, if he could, by help of some of his old friends. He hath ever kept up spies upon her; and happy man was he, to think his hour of vengeance was come so nigh. But he missed his blow; and the old girl being placed on her guard, was soon in a condition to make Ned smoke for it. Out of the island he came with little advantage for having entered it; when, by some means—for the devil, I think, stands ever his friend—he obtained information concerning a messenger, whom her old Majesty of Man had sent to London to make party in her behalf. Ned stuck himself to this fellow—a raw, half-bred lad, son of an old blundering Cavalier of the old stamp, down in Derbyshire—and so managed the swain, that he brought him to the place where I was waiting, in anxious expectation of the pretty one I told you of. By Saint Anthony, for I will swear by no meaner oath, I stared when I saw this great lout—not that the fellow is so ill-looking neither—I stared like—like—good now, help me to a simile."

"Like Saint Anthony's pig, an it were sleek," said the young lord; "your eyes, Chiffie, have the very blink of one. But what hath all this to do with the Plot? Hold, I have had wine enough."

"You shall not balk me," said Chiffinch; and a jingling was heard, as if he were filling his comrade's glass with a very unsteady hand. "Hey—What the devil is the matter?—I used to carry my glass steady—very steady."

"Well, but this stranger?"

"Why, he swept at game and ragout as he would at spring beef or summer mutton. Never saw so unnurtured a cub—Knew no more what he ate than an infidel—I warned him by my gods when I saw Chaubert's *chef-d'oeuvres* glutted down so indifferent a throat. We took the freedom to spice his goblet a little, and ease him of his packet of letters; and the fool went on his way the next morning with a budget artificially filled with grey paper. Ned would have kept him, in hopes to have made a witness of him, but the boy was not of that mettle."

"How will you prove your letters?" said the courtier.

"La you there, my lord," said Chiffinch; "one may see with half an eye, for all your laced doublet, that you have been of the family of Furnival's, before your brother's death sent you to Court. How prove the letters?—Why, we have but let the sparrow fly with a string round his foot.—We have him again so soon as we list."

"Why, thou art turned a very Machiavel, Chiffinch," said his friend. "But how if the youth proved restive?—I have heard these Peak men have hot heads and hard hands."

"Trouble not yourself—that was cared for, my lord," said Chiffinch—"his pistols might bark, but they could not bite."

"Most exquisite Chiffinch, thou art turned micher as well as padder—Canst both rob a man and kidnap him!"

"Micher and padder—what terms be these?" said Chiffinch. "Methinks these are sounds to lug out upon. You will have me angry to the degree of falling foul—robber and kidnapper!"

"You mistake verb for noun-substantive," replied his lordship; "I said *rob* and *kidnap*—a man may do either once and away without being professional."

"But not without spilling a little foolish noble blood, or some such red-coloured gear," said Chiffinch, starting up.

"Oh yes," said his lordship; "all this may be without these dire consequences, and as you will find to-morrow, when you return to England; for at present you are in the land of Champagne, Chiffie; and that you may continue so, I drink thee this parting cup to line thy nightcap."

"I do not refuse your pledge," said Chiffinch; "but I drink to thee in dudgeon and in hostility—It is cup of wrath, and a gage of battle. To-morrow, by dawn, I will have thee at point of fox, wert thou the last of the Savilles.—What the devil! think you I fear you because you are a lord?"

"Not so, Chiffinch," answered his companion. "I know thou fearest nothing but beans and bacon, washed down with bumpkin-like beer.—Adieu, sweet Chiffinch—to bed—Chiffinch—to bed."

So saying, he lifted a candle, and left the apartment. And Chiffinch, whom the last draught had nearly overpowered, had just strength enough left to do the same, muttering, as he staggered out, "Yes, he shall answer it.—Dawn of day? D—n me—It is come already—Yonder's the dawn—No, d—n me, 'tis the fire glancing on the cursed red lattice—It is the smell of the brandy in this cursed room—It could not be the wine—Well, old Rowley shall send me no more errands to the country again—Steady, steady."

So saying, he reeled out of the apartment, leaving Peveril to think over the extraordinary conversation he had just heard.

The name of Chiffinch, the well-known minister of Charles's pleasures, was nearly allied to the part which he seemed about to play in the present intrigue; but that Christian, whom he had always supposed a Puritan as strict as his brother-in-law, Bridgenorth, should be associated with him in a plot so infamous, seemed alike unnatural and monstrous. The near relationship might blind Bridgenorth, and warrant him in confiding his daughter to such a man's charge; but what a wretch he must be, that could coolly meditate such an ignominious abuse of his trust! In doubt whether he could credit for a moment the tale which Chiffinch had revealed, he hastily examined his packet, and found that the sealskin case in which it had been wrapt up, now only contained an equal quantity of waste paper. If he had wanted farther confirmation, the failure of the shot which he fired at Bridgenorth, and of which the wadding only struck him, showed that his arms had been tampered with. He examined the pistol which still remained charged, and found that the ball had been drawn. "May I perish," said he to himself, "amid these villainous intrigues, but thou shalt be more surely loaded, and to better purpose! The contents of these papers may undo my benefactress—their having been found on me, may ruin my father—that I have been the bearer of them, may cost, in these fiery times, my own life—that I care least for—they form a branch of the scheme laid against the honour and happiness of a creature so innocent, that it is almost sin to think of her within the neighbourhood of such infamous knaves. I will recover the letters at all risks—But how?—that is to be thought on.—Lance is stout and trusty; and when a bold deed is once resolved upon, there never yet lacked the means of executing it."

His host now entered, with an apology for his long absence; and after providing Peveril with some refreshments, invited him to accept, for his night-quarters, the accommodation of a remote hayloft, which he was to share with his comrade; professing, at the same time, he could hardly have afforded them this courtesy, but out of deference to the exquisite talents of Lance Outram, as assistant at the tap; where, indeed, it seems probable that he, as well as the admiring landlord, did that evening contrive to drink nearly as much liquor as they drew.

But Lance was a seasoned vessel, on whom liquor made no lasting impression; so that when Peveril awaked that trusty follower at dawn, he found him cool enough to comprehend and enter into the design which he expressed, of recovering the letters which had been abstracted from his person.

Having considered the whole matter with much attention, Lance shrugged, grinned, and scratched his head; and at length manfully expressed his resolution.

"Well, my naunt speaks truth in her old saw——

*'He that serves Peveril maunna be slack,
Neither for weather, nor yet for wrack.'*

And then again, my good dame was wont to say, that whenever Peveril was in a broil, Outram was in a stew; so I will never bear a base mind, but even hold a part with you as my fathers have done with yours, for four generations, whatever more."

"Spoken like a most gallant Outram," said Julian; "and were we but rid of that puppy lord and his retinue, we two could easily deal with the other three."

"Two Londoners and a Frenchman?" said Lance,—"I would take them in mine own hand. And as for my Lord Saville, as they call him, I heard word last night that he and all his men of gilded gingerbread—that looked at an honest fellow like me, as if they were the ore and I the dross—are all to be off this morning to some races, or such-like junketings, about Tutbury. It was that brought him down here, where he met this other civet-cat by accident."

In truth, even as Lance spoke, a trampling was heard of horses in the yard; and from the hatch of their hayloft they beheld Lord Saville's attendants mustered, and ready to set out as soon as he could make his appearance.

"So ho, Master Jeremy," said one of the fellows, to a sort of principal attendant, who just came out of the house, "methinks the wine has proved a sleeping cup to my lord this morning."

"No," answered Jeremy, "he hath been up before light writing letters for London; and to punish thy irreverence, thou, Jonathan, shalt be the man to ride back with them."

"And so to miss the race?" said Jonathan sulkily; "I thank you for this good turn, good Master Jeremy; and hang me if I forget it."

Farther discussion was cut short by the appearance of the young nobleman, who, as he came out of the inn, said to Jeremy, "These be the letters. Let one of the knaves ride to London for life and death, and deliver them as directed; and the rest of them get to horse and follow me."

Jeremy gave Jonathan the packet with a malicious smile; and the disappointed groom turned his horse's head sullenly towards London, while Lord Saville, and the rest of his retinue, rode briskly off in an opposite direction, pursued by the benedictions of the host and his family, who stood bowing and courtesying at the door, in gratitude, doubtless, for the receipt of an unconscionable reckoning.

It was full three hours after their departure, that Chiffinch lounged into the room in which they had supped, in a brocade nightgown, and green velvet cap, turned up with the most costly Brussels lace. He seemed but half awake; and it was with drowsy voice that he called for a cup of cold small beer. His manner and appearance were those of a man who had wrestled hard with Bacchus on the preceding evening, and had scarce recovered the effects of his contest with the jolly god. Lance, instructed by his master to watch the motions of the courtier, officiously attended with the cooling beverage he called for, pleading, as an excuse to the landlord, his wish to see a Londoner in his morning-gown and cap.

No sooner had Chiffinch taken his morning draught, than he inquired after Lord Saville.

"His lordship was mounted and away by peep of dawn," was Lance's reply.

"What the devil!" exclaimed Chiffinch; "why, this is scarce civil.—What! off for the races with his whole retinue?"

"All but one," replied Lance, "whom his lordship sent back to London with letters."

"To London with letters!" said Chiffinch. "Why, I am for London, and could have saved his express a labour.—But stop—hold—I begin to recollect—d——n, can I have blabbed?—I have—I have—I remember it all now—I have blabbed; and to the very weasel of the Court, who sucks the yelk out of every man's secret. Furies and fire—that my afternoons should ruin my mornings thus!—I must turn boon companion and good fellow in my cups—and have my confidences and my quarrels—my friends and my enemies, with a plague to me, as if any one could do a man much good or harm but his own self. His messenger must be stopped, though—I will put a spoke in his wheel.—Hark ye, drawer-fellow—call my groom hither—call Tom Beacon."

Lance obeyed; but failed not, when he had introduced the domestic, to remain in the apartment, in order to hear what should pass betwixt him and his master.

"Hark ye, Tom," said Chiffinch, "here are five pieces for you."

"What's to be done now, I trow?" said Tom, without even the ceremony of returning thanks, which he was probably well aware would not be received even in part payment of the debt he was incurring.

"Mount your fleet nag, Tom—ride like the devil—overtake the groom whom Lord Saville despatched to London this morning—lame his horse—break his bones—fill him as drunk as the Baltic sea; or do whatever may best and most effectively stop his journey.—Why does the lout stand there without answering me? Dost understand me?"

"Why, ay, Master Chiffinch," said Tom; "and so I am thinking doth this honest man here, who need not have heard quite so much of your counsel, an it had been your will."

"I am bewitched this morning," said Chiffinch to himself, "or else the champagne runs in my head still. My brain has become the very lowlands of Holland—a gill-cup would inundate it—Hark thee, fellow," he added, addressing Lance, "keep my counsel—there is a wager betwixt Lord Saville and me, which of us shall first

have a letter in London. Here is to drink my health, and bring luck on my side. Say nothing of it; but help Tom to his nag.—Tom, ere thou startest come for thy credentials—I will give thee a letter to the Duke of Bucks, that may be evidence thou wert first in town."

Tom Beacon ducked and exited; and Lance, after having made some show of helping him to horse, ran back to tell his master the joyful intelligence, that a lucky accident had abated Chiffinch's party to their own number.

Peveril immediately ordered his horses to be got ready; and, so soon as Tom Beacon was despatched towards London, on a rapid trot, had the satisfaction to observe Chiffinch, with his favourite Chaubert, mount to pursue the same journey, though at a more moderate rate. He permitted them to attain such a distance, that they might be dogged without suspicion; then paid his reckoning, mounted his horse, and followed, keeping his men carefully in view, until he should come to a place proper for the enterprise which he meditated.

It had been Peveril's intention, that when they came to some solitary part of the road, they should gradually mend their pace, until they overtook Chaubert—that Lance Outram should then drop behind, in order to assail the man of spits and stoves, while he himself, spurring onwards, should grapple with Chiffinch. But this scheme presupposed that the master and servant should travel in the usual manner—the latter riding a few yards behind the former. Whereas, such and so interesting were the subjects of discussion betwixt Chiffinch and the French cook, that, without heeding the rules of etiquette, they rode on together, amicably abreast, carrying on a conversation on the mysteries of the table, which the ancient Comus, or a modern gastronome, might have listened to with pleasure. It was therefore necessary to venture on them both at once.

For this purpose, when they saw a long tract of road before them, unvaried by the least appearance of man, beast, or human habitation, they began to mend their pace, that they might come up to Chiffinch, without giving him any alarm, by a sudden and suspicious increase of haste. In this manner they lessened the distance which separated them till they were within about twenty yards, when Peveril, afraid that Chiffinch might recognise him at a nearer approach, and so trust to his horse's heels, made Lance the signal to charge.

At the sudden increase of their speed, and the noise with which it was necessarily attended, Chiffinch looked around, but had time to do no more, for Lance, who had pricked his pony (which was much more speedy than Julian's horse) into full gallop, pushed, without ceremony, betwixt the courtier and his attendant; and ere Chaubert had time for more than one exclamation, he upset both horse and Frenchman,—*morbleu!* thrilling from his tongue as he rolled on the ground amongst the various articles of his occupation, which, escaping from the budget in which he bore them, lay tumbled upon the highway in strange disorder; while Lance, springing from his palfrey, commanded his foeman to be still, under no less a penalty than that of death, if he attempted to rise.

Before Chiffinch could avenge his trusty follower's downfall, his own bridle was seized by Julian, who presented a pistol with the other hand, and commanded him to stand or die.

Chiffinch, though effeminate, was no coward. He stood still as commanded, and said, with firmness, "Rogue, you have taken me at surprise. If you are highwaymen, there is my purse. Do us no bodily harm, and spare the budget of spices and sauces."

"Look you, Master Chiffinch," said Peveril, "this is no time for dallying. I am no highwayman, but a man of honour. Give me back that packet which you stole from me the other night; or, by all that is good, I will send a brace of balls through you, and search for it at leisure."

"What night?—What packet?" answered Chiffinch, confused; yet willing to protract the time for the chance of assistance, or to put Peveril off his guard. "I know nothing of what you mean. If you are a man of honour, let me draw my sword, and I will do you right, as a gentleman should do to another."

"Dishonourable rascal!" said Peveril, "you escape not in this manner. You plundered me when you had me at odds; and I am not the fool to let my advantage escape, now that my turn is come. Yield up the packet; and then, if you will, I will fight you on equal terms. But first," he reiterated, "yield up the packet, or I will instantly send you where the tenor of your life will be hard to answer for."

The tone of Peveril's voice, the fierceness of his eye, and the manner in which he held the loaded weapon, within a hand's-breadth of Chiffinch's head, convinced the last there was neither room for compromise, nor time for trifling. He thrust his hand into a side pocket of his cloak, and with visible reluctance, produced those papers and despatches with which Julian had been entrusted by the Countess of Derby.

"They are five in number," said Julian; "and you have given me only four. Your life depends on full restitution."

"It escaped from my hand," said Chiffinch, producing the missing document—"There it is. Now, sir, your pleasure is fulfilled, unless," he added sulkily, "you design either murder or farther robbery."

"Base wretch!" said Peveril, withdrawing his pistol, yet keeping a watchful eye on Chiffinch's motions, "thou art unworthy any honest man's sword; and yet, if you dare draw your own, as you proposed but now, I am willing to give you a chance upon fair equality of terms."

"Equality!" said Chiffinch sneeringly; "yes, a proper equality—sword and pistol against single rapier, and two men upon one, for Chaubert is no fighter. No sir; I shall seek amends upon some more fitting occasion, and with more equal weapons."

"By backbiting, or by poison, base pander!" said Julian; "these are thy means of vengeance. But mark me—I know your vile purpose respecting a lady who is too worthy that her name should be uttered in such a worthless ear. Thou hast done me one injury, and thou see'st I have repaid it. But prosecute this farther villainy, and be assured I will put thee to death like a foul reptile, whose very slaver is fatal to humanity. Rely upon this, as if Machiavel had sworn it; for so surely as you keep your purpose, so surely will I prosecute my revenge.—Follow me, Lance, and leave him to think on what I have told him."

Lance had, after the first shock, sustained a very easy part in this recontre; for all he had to do, was to point the butt of his whip, in the manner of a gun, at the intimidated Frenchman, who, lying on his back, and gazing at random on the skies, had as little the power or purpose of resistance, as any pig which had ever come under his own slaughter-knife.

Summoned by his master from the easy duty of guarding such an unresisting prisoner, Lance remounted his horse, and they both rode off, leaving their discomfited antagonists to console themselves for their misadventure as they best could. But consolation was hard to come by in the circumstances. The French artist had to lament the dispersion of his spices, and the destruction of his magazine of sauces—an enchanter despoiled of his magic wand and talisman, could scarce have been in more desperate extremity. Chiffinch had to mourn the downfall of his intrigue, and its premature discovery. "To this fellow, at least," he thought, "I can have bragged none—here my evil genius alone has betrayed me. With this infernal discovery, which may cost me so dear on all hands, champagne had nought to do. If there be a flask left unbroken, I will drink it after dinner, and try if it may not even yet suggest some scheme of redemption and of revenge."

With this manly resolution, he prosecuted his journey to London.

CHAPTER XXVIII

*A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinions—always in the wrong—
Was everything by starts, but nothing long;
Who, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then, all for women, painting, fiddling, drinking;
Besides a thousand freaks that died in thinking.
—DRYDEN.*

We must now transport the reader to the magnificent hotel in —Street, inhabited at this time by the celebrated George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, whom Dryden has doomed to a painful immortality by the few lines which we have prefixed to this chapter. Amid the gay and licentious of the laughing Court of Charles, the Duke was the most licentious and most gay; yet, while expending a princely fortune, a strong constitution, and excellent talents, in pursuit of frivolous pleasures, he nevertheless nourished deeper and more extensive designs; in which he only failed from want of that fixed purpose and regulated perseverance essential to all important enterprises, but particularly in politics.

It was long past noon; and the usual hour of the Duke's levee—if anything could be termed usual where all was irregular—had been long past. His hall was filled with lackeys and footmen, in the most splendid liveries; the interior apartments, with the gentlemen and pages of his household, arrayed as persons of the first quality, and, in that respect, rather exceeding than falling short of the Duke in personal splendour. But his antechamber, in particular, might be compared to a gathering of eagles to the slaughter, were not the simile too dignified to express that vile race, who, by a hundred devices all tending to one common end, live upon the wants of needy greatness, or administer to the pleasures of summer-teeming luxury, or stimulate the wild wishes of lavish and wasteful extravagance, by devising new modes and fresh motives of profusion. There stood the projector, with his mysterious brow, promising unbounded wealth to whomsoever might choose to furnish the small preliminary sum necessary to change egg-shells into the *greatarcanum*. There was Captain Seagull, undertaker for a foreign settlement, with the map under his arm of Indian or American kingdoms, beautiful as the primitive Eden, waiting the bold occupants, for whom a generous patron should equip two brigantines and a fly-boat. Thither came, fast and frequent, the gamblers, in their different forms and calling. This, light, young, gay in appearance, the thoughtless youth of wit and pleasure—the pigeon rather than the rook—but at heart the same sly, shrewd, cold-blooded calculator, as yonder old hard-featured professor of the same science, whose eyes are grown dim with watching of the dice at midnight; and whose fingers are even now assisting his mental computation of chances and of odds. The fine arts, too—I would it were otherwise—have their professors amongst this sordid train. The poor poet, half ashamed, in spite of habit, of the part which he is about to perform, and abashed by consciousness at once of his base motive and his shabby black coat, lurks in yonder corner for the favourable moment to offer his dedication. Much better attired, the architect presents his splendid vision of front and wings, and designs a palace, the expense of which may transfer his employer to a jail. But uppermost of all, the favourite musician, or singer, who waits on my lord to receive, in solid gold, the value of the dulcet sounds which solaced the banquet of the preceding evening.

Such, and many such like, were the morning attendants of the Duke of Buckingham—all genuine descendants of the daughter of the horse-leech, whose cry is "Give, give."

But the levee of his Grace contained other and very different characters; and was indeed as various as his own opinions and pursuits. Besides many of the young nobility and wealthy gentry of England, who made his Grace the glass at which they dressed themselves for the day, and who learned from him how to travel, with the newest and best grace, the general Road to Ruin; there were others of a graver character—discarded statesmen, political spies, opposition orators, servile tools of administration, men who met not elsewhere, but who regarded the Duke's mansion as a sort of neutral ground; sure, that if he was not of their opinion to-day, this very circumstance rendered it most likely he should think with them to-morrow. The Puritans themselves did not shun intercourse with a man whose talents must have rendered him formidable, even if they had not been united with high rank and an immense fortune. Several grave personages, with black suits, short cloaks, and band-strings of a formal cut, were mingled, as we see their portraits in a gallery of paintings, among the gallants who ruffled in silk and embroidery. It is true, they escaped the scandal of being thought intimates of the Duke, by their business being supposed to refer to money matters. Whether these grave and professing citizens mixed politics with money lending, was not known; but it had been long observed, that the Jews, who in general confine themselves to the latter department, had become for some time faithful attendants at the Duke's levee.

It was high-tide in the antechamber, and had been so for more than an hour, ere the Duke's gentleman-in-ordinary ventured into his bedchamber, carefully darkened, so as to make midnight at noonday, to know his Grace's pleasure. His soft and serene whisper, in which he asked whether it were his Grace's pleasure to rise, was briefly and sharply answered by the counter questions, "Who waits?—What's o'clock?"

"It is Jerningham, your Grace," said the attendant. "It is one, afternoon; and your Grace appointed some of the people without at eleven."

"Who are they?—What do they want?"

"A message from Whitehall, your Grace."

"Pshaw! it will keep cold. Those who make all others wait, will be the better of waiting in their turn. Were I to be guilty of ill-breeding, it should rather be to a king than a beggar."

"The gentlemen from the city."

"I am tired of them—tired of their all cant, and no religion—all Protestantism, and no charity. Tell them to go to Shaftesbury—to Aldersgate Street with them—that's the best market for their wares."

"Jockey, my lord, from Newmarket."

"Let him ride to the devil—he has horse of mine, and spurs of his own. Any more?"

"The whole antechamber is full, my lord—knights and squires, doctors and dicers."

"The dicers, with their doctors[*] in their pockets, I presume."

[*] *Doctor, a cant name for false dice.*

"Counts, captains, and clergymen."

"You are alliterative, Jerningham," said the Duke; "and that is a proof you are poetical. Hand me my writing things."

Getting half out of bed—thrusting one arm into a brocade nightgown, deeply furred with sables, and one foot into a velvet slipper, while the other pressed in primitive nudity the rich carpet—his Grace, without thinking farther on the assembly without, began to pen a few lines of a satirical poem; then suddenly stopped—threw the pen into the chimney—exclaimed that the humour was past—and asked his attendant if there were any letters. Jerningham produced a huge packet.

"What the devil!" said his Grace, "do you think I will read all these? I am like Clarence, who asked a cup of wine, and was soused into a butt of sack. I mean, is there anything which presses?"

"This letter, your Grace," said Jerningham, "concerning the Yorkshire mortgage."

"Did I not bid thee carry it to old Gatheral, my steward?"

"I did, my lord," answered the other; "but Gatheral says there are difficulties."

"Let the usurers foreclose, then—there is no difficulty in that; and out of a hundred manors I shall scarce miss one," answered the Duke. "And hark ye, bring me my chocolate."

"Nay, my lord, Gatheral does not say it is impossible—only difficult."

"And what is the use of him, if he cannot make it easy? But you are all born to make difficulties," replied the Duke.

"Nay, if your Grace approves the terms in this schedule, and pleases to sign it, Gatheral will undertake for the matter," answered Jerningham.

"And could you not have said so at first, you blockhead?" said the Duke, signing the paper without looking at the contents—"What other letters? And remember, I must be plagued with no more business."

"Billets-doux, my lord—five or six of them. This left at the porter's lodge by a vizard mask."

"Pshaw!" answered the Duke, tossing them over, while his attendant assisted in dressing him—"an acquaintance of a quarter's standing."

"This given to one of the pages by my Lady —'s waiting-woman."

"Plague on it—a Jeremiade on the subject of perjury and treachery, and not a single new line to the old tune," said the Duke, glancing over the billet. "Here is the old cant—*cruel man—broken vows—Heaven's just revenge*. Why, the woman is thinking of murder—not of love. No one should pretend to write upon so threadbare a topic without having at least some novelty of expression. *The despairing Araminta*—Lie there, fair desperate. And this—how comes it?"

"Flung into the window of the hall, by a fellow who ran off at full speed," answered Jerningham.

"This is a better text," said the Duke; "and yet it is an old one too—three weeks old at least—The little Countess with the jealous lord—I should not care a farthing for her, save for that same jealous lord—Plague on't, and he's gone down to the country—*this evening—in silence and safety—written with a quill pulled from the wing of Cupid*—Your ladyship has left him pen-feathers enough to fly away with—better clipped his wings when you had caught him, my lady—And so confident of her Buckingham's faith,—I hate confidence in a young person. She must be taught better—I will not go."

"You Grace will not be so cruel!" said Jerningham.

"Thou art a compassionate fellow, Jerningham; but conceit must be punished."

"But if your lordship should resume your fancy for her?"

"Why, then, you must swear the billet-doux miscarried," answered the Duke. "And stay, a thought strikes me—it shall miscarry in great style. Hark ye—Is—what is the fellow's name—the poet—is he yonder?"

"There are six gentlemen, sir, who, from the reams of paper in their pocket, and the threadbare seams at their elbows, appear to wear the livery of the Muses."

"Poetical once more, Jerningham. He, I mean, who wrote the last lampoon," said the Duke.

"To whom your Grace said you owed five pieces and a beating!" replied Jerningham.

"The money for his satire, and the cudgel for his praise—Good—find him—give him the five pieces, and thrust the Countess's billet-doux—Hold—take Araminta's and the rest of them—thrust them all into his portfolio—All will come out at the Wit's Coffee-house; and if the promulgator be not cudgelled into all the colours of the rainbow, there is no spite in woman, no faith in crabtree, or pith in heart of oak—Araminta's wrath alone would overburden one pair of mortal shoulders."

"But, my Lord Duke," said his attendant, "this Settle[*] is so dull a rascal, that nothing he can write will take."

[*] *Elkana Settle, the unworthy scribbler whom the envy of Rochester and others tried to raise to public estimation, as a rival to Dryden; a circumstance which has been the means of elevating him to a very painful species of immortality.*

"Then as we have given him steel to head the arrow," said the Duke, "we will give him wings to waft it with—wood, he has enough of his own to make a shaft or bolt of. Hand me my own unfinished lampoon—give it to him with the letters—let him make what he can of them all."

"My Lord Duke—I crave pardon—but your Grace's style will be discovered; and though the ladies' names are not at the letters, yet they will be traced."

"I would have it so, you blockhead. Have you lived with me so long, and cannot discover that the éclat of an intrigue is, with me, worth all the rest of it?"

"But the danger, my Lord Duke?" replied Jerningham. "There are husbands, brothers, friends, whose revenge may be awakened."

"And beaten to sleep again," said Buckingham haughtily. "I have Black Will and his cudgel for plebeian grumblers; and those of quality I can deal with myself. I lack breathing and exercise of late."

"But yet your Grace——"

"Hold your peace, fool! I tell you that your poor dwarfish spirit cannot measure the scope of mine. I tell thee I would have the course of my life a torrent—I am weary of easy achievements, and wish for obstacles, that I can sweep before my irresistible course."

Another gentleman now entered the apartment. "I humbly crave your Grace's pardon," he said; "but Master Christian is so importunate for admission instantly, that I am obliged to take your Grace's pleasure."

"Tell him to call three hours hence. Damn his politic pate, that would make all men dance after his pipe!"

"I thank thee for the compliment, my Lord Duke," said Christian, entering the apartment in somewhat a more courtly garb, but with the same unpretending and undistinguished mien, and in the same placid and indifferent manner with which he had accosted Julian Peveril upon different occasions during his journey to London. "It is precisely my present object to pipe to you; and you may dance to your own profit, if you will."

"On my word, Master Christian," said the Duke haughtily, "the affair should be weighty, that removes ceremony so entirely from betwixt us. If it relates to the subject of our last conversation, I must request our interview be postponed to some farther opportunity. I am engaged in an affair of some weight." Then turning his back on Christian, he went on with his conversation with Jerningham. "Find the person you wot of, and give him the papers; and hark ye, give him this gold to pay for the shaft of his arrow—the steel-head and peacock's wing we have already provided."

"This is all well, my lord," said Christian calmly, and taking his seat at the same time in an easy-chair at some distance; "but your Grace's levity is no match for my equanimity. It is necessary I should speak with you; and I will await your Grace's leisure in the apartment."

"Very well, sir," said the Duke peevishly; "if an evil is to be undergone, the sooner it is over the better—I can take measures to prevent its being renewed. So let me hear your errand without farther delay."

"I will wait till your Grace's toilette is completed," said Christian, with the indifferent tone which was natural to him. "What I have to say must be between ourselves."

"Begone, Jerningham; and remain without till I call. Leave my doublet on the couch.—How now, I have worn this cloth of silver a hundred times."

"Only twice, if it please your Grace," replied Jerningham.

"As well twenty times—keep it for yourself, or give it to my valet, if you are too proud of your gentility."

"Your Grace has made better men than me wear your cast clothes," said Jerningham submissively.

"Thou art sharp, Jerningham," said the Duke—"in one sense I have, and I may again. So now, that pearl-coloured will do with the ribbon and George. Get away with thee.—And now that he is gone, Master Christian, may I once more crave your pleasure?"

"My Lord Duke," said Christian, "you are a worshipper of difficulties in state affairs, as in love matters."

"I trust you have been no eavesdropper, Master Christian," replied the Duke; "it scarce argues the respect due to me, or to my roof."

"I know not what you mean, my lord," replied Christian.

"Nay, I care not if the whole world heard what I said but now to Jerningham. But to the matter," replied the Duke of Buckingham.

"Your Grace is so much occupied with conquests over the fair and over the witty, that you have perhaps forgotten what a stake you have in the little Island of Man."

"Not a whit, Master Christian. I remember well enough that my roundheaded father-in-law, Fairfax, had the island from the Long Parliament; and was ass enough to quit hold of it at the Restoration, when, if he had closed his clutches, and held fast, like a true bird of prey, as he should have done, he might have kept it for him and his. It had been a rare thing to have had a little kingdom—made laws of my own—had my Chamberlain with his white staff—I would have taught Jerningham, in half a day, to look as wise, walk as stiffly, and speak as silly, as Harry Bennet."

"You might have done this, and more, if it had pleased your Grace."

"Ay, and if it had pleased my Grace, thou, Ned Christian, shouldst have been the Jack Ketch of my dominions."

"I your Jack Ketch, my lord?" said Christian, more in a tone of surprise than of displeasure.

"Why, ay; thou hast been perpetually intriguing against the life of yonder poor old woman. It were a kingdom to thee to gratify thy spleen with thy own hands."

"I only seek justice against the Countess," said Christian.

"And the end of justice is always a gibbet," said the Duke.

"Be it so," answered Christian. "Well, the Countess is in the Plot."

"The devil confound the Plot, as I believe he first invented it!" said the Duke of Buckingham; "I have heard of nothing else for months. If one must go to hell, I would it were by some new road, and in gentlemen's company. I should not like to travel with Oates, Bedloe, and the rest of that famous cloud of witnesses."

"Your Grace is then resolved to forego all the advantages which may arise? If the House of Derby fall under forfeiture, the grant to Fairfax, now worthily represented by your Duchess, revives, and you become the Lord and Sovereign of Man."

"In right of a woman," said the Duke; "but, in troth, my godly dame owes me some advantage for having lived the first year of our marriage with her and old Black Tom, her grim, fighting, puritanic father. A man might as well have married the Devil's daughter, and set up housekeeping with his father-in-law."[*]

[*] *Mary, daughter of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, was wedded to the Duke of*

Buckingham, whose versatility made him capable of rendering himself for a time as agreeable to his father-in-law, though a rigid Presbyterian, as to the gay Charles II.

"I understand you are willing, then, to join your interest for a heave at the House of Derby, my Lord Duke?"

"As they are unlawfully possessed of my wife's kingdom, they certainly can expect no favour at my hand. But thou knowest there is an interest at Whitehall predominant over mine."

"That is only by your Grace's sufferance," said Christian.

"No, no; I tell thee a hundred times, no," said the Duke, rousing himself to anger at the recollection. "I tell thee that base courtesan, the Duchess of Portsmouth, hath impudently set herself to thwart and contradict me; and Charles has given me both cloudy looks and hard words before the Court. I would he could but guess what is the offence between her and me! I would he knew but that! But I will have her plumes picked, or my name is not Villiers. A worthless French fille-de-joie to brave me thus!—Christian, thou art right; there is no passion so spirit-stirring as revenge. I will patronise the Plot, if it be but to spite her, and make it impossible for the King to uphold her."

As the Duke spoke, he gradually wrought himself into a passion, and traversed the apartment with as much vehemence as if the only object he had on earth was to deprive the Duchess of her power and favour with the King. Christian smiled internally to see him approach the state of mind in which he was most easily worked upon, and judiciously kept silence, until the Duke called out to him, in a pet, "Well, Sir Oracle, you that have laid so many schemes to supplant this she-wolf of Gaul, where are all your contrivances now?—Where is the exquisite beauty who was to catch the Sovereign's eye at the first glance?—Chiffinch, hath he seen her?—and what does he say, that exquisite critic in beauty and blank-mange, women and wine?"

"He has *seen* and approves, but has not yet heard her; and her speech answers to all the rest. We came here yesterday; and to-day I intend to introduce Chiffinch to her, the instant he arrives from the country; and I expect him every hour. I am but afraid of the damsel's peevish virtue, for she hath been brought up after the fashion of our grandmothers—our mothers had better sense."

"What! so fair, so young, so quick-witted, and so difficult?" said the Duke. "By your leave, you shall introduce me as well as Chiffinch."

"That your Grace may cure her of her intractable modesty?" said Christian.

"Why," replied the Duke, "it will but teach her to stand in her own light. Kings do not love to court and sue; they should have their game run down for them."

"Under your Grace's favour," said Christian, "this cannot be—*Non omnibus dormio*—Your Grace knows the classic allusion. If this maiden become a Prince's favourite, rank gilds the shame and the sin. But to any under Majesty, she must not vail topsail."

"Why, thou suspicious fool, I was but in jest," said the Duke. "Do you think I would interfere to spoil a plan so much to my own advantage as that which you have laid before me?"

Christian smiled and shook his head. "My lord," he said, "I know your Grace as well, or better, perhaps, than you know yourself. To spoil a well-concerted intrigue by some cross stroke of your own, would give you more pleasure, than to bring it to a successful termination according to the plans of others. But Shaftesbury, and all concerned, have determined that our scheme shall at least have fair play. We reckon, therefore, on your help; and—forgive me when I say so—we will not permit ourselves to be impeded by your levity and fickleness of purpose."

"Who?—I light and fickle of purpose?" said the Duke. "You see me here as resolved as any of you, to dispossess the mistress, and to carry on the plot; these are the only two things I live for in this world. No one can play the man of business like me, when I please, to the very filing and labelling of my letters. I am regular as a scrivener."

"You have Chiffinch's letter from the country; he told me he had written to you about some passages betwixt him and the young Lord Saville."

"He did so—he did so," said the Duke, looking among his letters; "but I see not his letter just now—I scarcely noted the contents—I was busy when it came—but I have it safely."

"You should have acted on it," answered Christian. "The fool suffered himself to be choused out of his secret, and prayed you to see that my lord's messenger got not to the Duchess with some despatches which he sent up from Derbyshire, betraying our mystery."

The Duke was now alarmed, and rang the bell hastily. Jerningham appeared. "Where is the letter I had from Master Chiffinch some hours since?"

"If it be not amongst those your Grace has before you, I know nothing of it," said Jerningham. "I saw none such arrive."

"You lie, you rascal," said Buckingham; "have you a right to remember better than I do?"

"If your Grace will forgive me reminding you, you have scarce opened a letter this week," said his gentleman.

"Did you ever hear such a provoking rascal?" said the Duke. "He might be a witness in the Plot. He has knocked my character for regularity entirely on the head with his damned counter-evidence."

"Your Grace's talent and capacity will at least remain unimpeached," said Christian; "and it is those that must serve yourself and your friends. If I might advise, you will hasten to Court, and lay some foundation for the impression we wish to make. If your Grace can take the first word, and throw out a hint to crossbite Saville, it will be well. But above all, keep the King's ear employed, which no one can do so well as you. Leave Chiffinch to fill his heart with a proper object. Another thing is, there is a blockhead of an old Cavalier, who must needs be a bustler in the Countess of Derby's behalf—he is fast in hold, with the whole tribe of witnesses at his haunches."

"Nay, then, take him, Topham."

"Topham has taken him already, my lord," said Christian; "and there is, besides, a young gallant, a son of the said Knight, who was bred in the household of the Countess of Derby, and who has brought letters from her to the Provincial of the Jesuits, and others in London."

"What are their names?" said the Duke dryly.

"Sir Geoffrey Peveril of Martindale Castle, in Derbyshire, and his son Julian."

"What! Peveril of the Peak?" said the Duke,—"a stout old Cavalier as ever swore an oath.—A Worcester-man, too—and, in truth, a man of all work, when blows were going. I will not consent to his ruin, Christian. These fellows must be flogged of such false scents—flogged in every sense, they must, and will be, when the nation comes to its eyesight again."

"It is of more than the last importance, in the meantime, to the furtherance of our plan," said Christian, "that your Grace should stand for a space between them and the King's favour. The youth hath influence with the maiden, which we should find scarce favourable to our views; besides, her father holds him as high as he can any one who is no such puritanic fool as himself."

"Well, most Christian Christian," said the Duke, "I have heard your commands at length. I will endeavour to stop the earths under the throne, that neither the lord, knight, nor squire in question, shall find it possible to burrow there. For the fair one, I must leave Chiffinch and you to manage her introduction to her high destinies, since I am not to be trusted. Adieu, most Christian Christian."

He fixed his eyes on him, and then exclaimed, as he shut the door of the apartment,—"Most profligate and damnable villain! And what provokes me most of all, is the knave's composed insolence. Your Grace will do this—and your Grace will condescend to do that—A pretty puppet I should be, to play the second part, or rather the third, in such a scheme! No, they shall all walk according to my purpose, or I will cross them. I will find this girl out in spite of them, and judge if their

scheme is likely to be successful. If so, she shall be mine—mine entirely, before she becomes the King's; and I will command her who is to guide Charles.—Jerningham" (his gentleman entered), "cause Christian to be dogged where-ever he goes, for the next four-and-twenty hours, and find out where he visits a female newly come to town.—You smile, you knave?"

"I did but suspect a fresh rival to Araminta and the little Countess," said Jerningham.

"Away to your business, knave," said the Duke, "and let me think of mine.—To subdue a Puritan in Esse—a King's favourite in Posse—the very muster of western beauties—that is point first. The impudence of this Manx mongrel to be corrected—the pride of Madame la Duchesse to be pulled down—and important state intrigue to be farthered, or baffled, as circumstances render most to my own honour and glory—I wished for business but now, and I have got enough of it. But Buckingham will keep his own steerage-way through shoal and through weather."

CHAPTER XXIX

—Mark you this, Bassanio—

The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose.

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

After leaving the proud mansion of the Duke of Buckingham, Christian, full of the deep and treacherous schemes which he meditated, hastened to the city, where, in a decent inn, kept by a person of his own persuasion, he had been unexpectedly summoned to meet with Ralph Bridgenorth of Moultrassie. He was not disappointed—the Major had arrived that morning, and anxiously expected him. The usual gloom of his countenance was darkened into a yet deeper shade of anxiety, which was scarcely relieved, even while, in answer to his inquiry after his daughter, Christian gave the most favourable account of her health and spirits, naturally and unaffectedly intermingled with such praises of her beauty and her disposition, as were likely to be most grateful to a father's ear.

But Christian had too much cunning to expatiate on this theme, however soothing. He stopped short exactly at the point where, as an affectionate relative, he might be supposed to have said enough. "The lady," he said, "with whom he had placed Alice, was delighted with her aspect and manners, and undertook to be responsible for her health and happiness. He had not, he said, deserved so little confidence at the hand of his brother, Bridgenorth, as that the Major should, contrary to his purpose, and to the plan which they had adjusted together, have hurried up from the country, as if his own presence were necessary for Alice's protection."

"Brother Christian," said Bridgenorth in reply, "I must see my child—I must see this person with whom she is entrusted."

"To what purpose?" answered Christian. "Have you not often confessed that the over excess of the carnal affection which you have entertained for your daughter, hath been a snare to you?—Have you not, more than once, been on the point of resigning those great designs which should place righteousness as a counsellor beside the throne, because you desired to gratify your daughter's girlish passion for this descendant of your old persecutor—this Julian Peveril?"

"I own it," said Bridgenorth; "and worlds would I have given, and would yet give, to clasp that youth to my bosom, and call him my son. The spirit of his mother looks from his eye, and his stately step is as that of his father, when he daily spoke comfort to me in my distress, and said, 'The child liveth.'"

"But the youth walks," said Christian, "after his own lights, and mistakes the meteor of the marsh for the Polar star. Ralph Bridgenorth, I will speak to thee in friendly sincerity. Thou must not think to serve both the good cause and Baal. Obey, if thou wilt, thine own carnal affections, summon this Julian Peveril to thy house, and let him wed thy daughter—But mark the reception she will meet with from the proud old knight, whose spirit is now, even now, as little broken with his chains, as after the sword of the Saints had prevailed at Worcester. Thou wilt see thy daughter spurned from his feet like an outcast."

"Christian," said Bridgenorth, interrupting him, "thou dost urge me hard; but thou dost it in love, my brother, and I forgive thee—Alice shall never be spurned.—But this friend of thine—this lady—thou art my child's uncle; and after me, thou art next to her in love and affection—Still, thou art not her father—hast not her father's fears. Art thou sure of the character of this woman to whom my child is entrusted?"

"Am I sure of my own?—Am I sure that my name is Christian—yours Bridgenorth?—Is it a thing I am likely to be insecure in?—Have I not dwelt for many years in this city?—Do I not know this Court?—And am I likely to be imposed upon? For I will not think you can fear my imposing upon you."

"Thou art my brother," said Bridgenorth—"the blood and bone of my departed Saint—and I am determined that I will trust thee in this matter."

"Thou dost well," said Christian; "and who knows what reward may be in store for thee?—I cannot look upon Alice, but it is strongly borne in on my mind, that there will be work for a creature so excellent beyond ordinary women. Courageous Judith freed Bethulia by her valour, and the comely features of Esther made her a safeguard and a defence to her people in the land of captivity, when she found favour in the sight of King Ahasuerus."

"Be it with her as Heaven wills," said Bridgenorth; "and now tell me what progress there is in the great work."

"The people are weary of the iniquity of this Court," said Christian; "and if this man will continue to reign, it must be by calling to his councils men of another stamp. The alarm excited by the damnable practices of the Papists has called up men's souls, and awakened their eyes to the dangers of their state.—He himself—for he will give up brother and wife to save himself—is not averse to a change of measures; and though we cannot at first see the Court purged as with a winnowing fan, yet there will be enough of the good to control the bad—enough of the sober party to compel the grant of that universal toleration, for which we have sighed so long, as a maiden for her beloved. Time and opportunity will lead the way to more thorough reformation; and that will be done without stroke of sword, which our friends failed to establish on a sure foundation, even when their victorious blades were in their hands."

"May God grant it!" said Bridgenorth; "for I fear me I should scruple to do aught which should once more unsheath the civil sword; but welcome all that comes in a peaceful and parliamentary way."

"Ay," said Christian, "and which will bring with it the bitter amends, which our enemies have so long merited at our hands. How long hath our brother's blood cried for vengeance from the altar!—Now shall that cruel Frenchwoman find that neither lapse of years, nor her powerful friends, nor the name of Stanley, nor the Sovereignty of Man, shall stop the stern course of the pursuer of blood. Her name shall be struck from the noble, and her heritage shall another take."

"Nay, but, brother Christian," said Bridgenorth, "art thou not over eager in pursuing this thing?—It is thy duty as a Christian to forgive thine enemies."

"Ay, but not the enemies of Heaven—not those who shed the blood of the saints," said Christian, his eyes kindling that vehement and fiery expression which at times gave to his uninteresting countenance the only character of passion which it ever exhibited. "No, Bridgenorth," he continued, "I esteem this purpose of revenge holy—I account it a propitiatory sacrifice for what may have been evil in my life. I have submitted to be spurned by the haughty—I have humbled myself to be as a servant; but in my breast was the proud thought, I who do this—do it that I may avenge my brother's blood."

"Still, my brother," said Bridgenorth, "although I participate thy purpose, and have aided thee against this Moabitish woman, I cannot but think thy revenge is more after the law of Moses than after the law of love."

"This comes well from thee, Ralph Bridgenorth," answered Christian; "from thee, who has just smiled over the downfall of thine own enemy."

"If you mean Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Bridgenorth, "I smile not on his ruin. It is well he is abased; but if it lies with me, I may humble his pride, but will never ruin his house."

"You know your purpose best," said Christian; "and I do justice, brother Bridgenorth, to the purity of your principles; but men who see with but worldly eyes, would discern little purpose of mercy in the strict magistrate and severe creditor—and such have you been to Peveril."

"And, brother Christian," said Bridgenorth, his colour rising as he spoke, "neither do I doubt your purpose, nor deny the surprising address with which you have procured such perfect information concerning the purposes of yonder woman of Ammon. But it is free to me to think, that in your intercourse with the Court, and with courtiers, you may, in your carnal and worldly policy, sink the value of those spiritual gifts, for which you were once so much celebrated among the brethren."

"Do not apprehend it," said Christian, recovering his temper, which had been a little ruffled by the previous discussion. "Let us but work together as heretofore; and I trust each of us shall be found doing the work of a faithful servant to that good old cause for which we have heretofore drawn the sword."

So saying, he took his hat, and bidding Bridgenorth farewell, declared his intention of returning in the evening.

"Fare thee well!" said Bridgenorth; "to that cause wilt thou find me ever a true and devoted adherent. I will act by that counsel of thine, and will not even ask thee—though it may grieve my heart as a parent—with whom, or where, thou hast entrusted my child. I will try to cut off, and cast from me, even my right hand, and my right eye; but for thee, Christian, if thou dost deal otherwise than prudently and honestly in this matter, it is what God and man will require at thy hand."

"Fear not me," said Christian hastily, and left the place, agitated by reflections of no pleasant kind.

"I ought to have persuaded him to return," he said, as he stepped out into the street. "Even his hovering in this neighbourhood may spoil the plan on which depends the rise of my fortunes—ay, and of his child's. Will men say I have ruined her, when I shall have raised her to the dazzling height of the Duchess of Portsmouth, and perhaps made her a mother to a long line of princes? Chiffinch hath vouched for opportunity; and the voluptuary's fortune depends upon his gratifying the taste of his master for variety. If she makes an impression, it must be a deep one; and once seated in his affections, I fear not her being supplanted.—What will her father say? Will he, like a prudent man, put his shame in his pocket, because it is well gilded? or will he think it fitting to make a display of moral wrath and parental frenzy? I fear the latter—He has ever kept too strict a course to admit his conniving at such licence. But what will his anger avail?—I need not be seen in the matter—those who are will care little for the resentment of a country Puritan. And after all, what I am labouring to bring about is best for himself, the wench, and above all, for me, Edward Christian."

With such base opiates did this unhappy wretch stifle his own conscience, while anticipating the disgrace of his friend's family, and the ruin of a near relative, committed in confidence to his charge. The character of this man was of no common description; nor was it by an ordinary road that he had arrived at the present climax of unfeeling and infamous selfishness.

Edward Christian, as the reader is aware, was the brother of that William Christian, who was the principal instrument in delivering up the Isle of Man to the Republic, and who became the victim of the Countess of Derby's revenge on that account. Both had been educated as Puritans, but William was a soldier, which somewhat modified the strictness of his religious opinions; Edward, a civilian, seemed to entertain these principles in the utmost rigour. But it was only seeming. The exactness of deportment, which procured him great honour and influence among the *sober party*, as they were wont to term themselves, covered a voluptuous disposition, the gratification of which was sweet to him as stolen waters, and pleasant as bread eaten in secret. While, therefore, his seeming godliness brought him worldly gain, his secret pleasures compensated for his outward austerity; until the Restoration, and the Countess's violent proceedings against his brother interrupted the course of both. He then fled from his native island, burning with the desire of revenging his brother's death—the only passion foreign to his own gratification which he was ever known to cherish, and which was also, at least, partly selfish, since it concerned the restoration of his own fortunes.

He found easy access to Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who, in right of his Duchess, claimed such of the Derby estate as had been bestowed by the Parliament on his celebrated father-in-law, Lord Fairfax. His influence at the Court of Charles, where a jest was a better plea than a long claim of faithful service, was so successfully exerted, as to contribute greatly to the depression of that loyal and ill-rewarded family. But Buckingham was incapable, even for his own interest, of pursuing the steady course which Christian suggested to him; and his vacillation probably saved the remnant of the large estates of the Earl of Derby.

Meantime, Christian was too useful a follower to be dismissed. From Buckingham, and others of that stamp, he did not affect to conceal the laxity of his morals; but towards the numerous and powerful party to which he belonged, he was able to disguise them by a seeming gravity of exterior, which he never laid aside. Indeed, so wide and absolute was then the distinction betwixt the Court and the city, that a man might have for some time played two several parts, as in two different spheres, without its being discovered in the one that he exhibited himself in a different light in the other. Besides, when a man of talent shows himself an able and useful partisan, his party will continue to protect and accredit him, in spite of conduct the most contradictory to their own principles. Some facts are, in such cases, denied—some are glossed over—and party zeal is permitted to cover at least as many defects as ever doth charity.

Edward Christian had often need of the partial indulgence of his friends; but he experienced it, for he was eminently useful. Buckingham, and other courtiers of the same class, however dissolute in their lives, were desirous of keeping some connection with the Dissenting or Puritanic party, as it was termed; thereby to strengthen themselves against their opponents at Court. In such intrigues, Christian was a notable agent; and at one time had nearly procured an absolute union between a class which professed the most rigid principles of religion and morality, and the latitudinarian courtiers, who set all principle at defiance.

Amidst the vicissitudes of a life of intrigue, during which Buckingham's ambitious schemes, and his own, repeatedly sent him across the Atlantic, it was Edward Christian's boast that he never lost sight of his principal object,—revenge on the Countess of Derby. He maintained a close and intimate correspondence with his native island, so as to be perfectly informed of whatever took place there; and he stimulated, on every favourable opportunity, the cupidity of Buckingham to possess himself of this petty kingdom, by procuring the forfeiture of its present Lord. It was not difficult to keep his patron's wild wishes alive on this topic, for his own mercurial imagination attached particular charms to the idea of becoming a sort of sovereign even in this little island; and he was, like Catiline, as covetous of the property of others, as he was profuse of his own.

But it was not until the pretended discovery of the Papist Plot that the schemes of Christian could be brought to ripen; and then, so odious were the Catholics in the eyes of the credulous people of England, that, upon the accusation of the most infamous of mankind, common informers, the scourings of jails, and the refuse of the whipping-post, the most atrocious charges against persons of the highest rank and fairest character were readily received and credited.

This was a period which Christian did not fail to improve. He drew close his intimacy with Bridgenorth, which had indeed never been interrupted, and readily engaged him in his schemes, which, in the eyes of his brother-in-law, were alike honourable and patriotic. But, while he flattered Bridgenorth with the achieving a complete reformation in the state—checking the profligacy of the Court—relieving the consciences of the Dissenters from the pressures of the penal laws—amending, in fine, the crying grievances of the time—while he showed him also, in prospect, revenge upon the Countess of Derby, and a humbling dispensation on the house of Peveril, from whom Bridgenorth had suffered such indignity, Christian did not neglect, in the meanwhile, to consider how he could best benefit himself by the confidence reposed in him by his unsuspecting relation.

The extreme beauty of Alice Bridgenorth—the great wealth which time and economy had accumulated on her father—pointed her out as a most desirable match to repair the wasted fortunes of some of the followers of the Court; and he flattered himself that he could conduct such a negotiation so as to be in a high degree conducive to his own advantage. He found there would be little difficulty in prevailing on Major Bridgenorth to entrust him with the guardianship of his daughter. That unfortunate gentleman had accustomed himself, from the very period of her birth, to regard the presence of his child as a worldly indulgence too great to be allowed to him; and Christian had little trouble in convincing him that the strong inclination which he felt to bestow her on Julian Peveril, provided he could be brought over to his own political opinions, was a blameable compromise with his more severe principles. Late circumstances had taught him the incapacity and unfitness of Dame Debbitch for the sole charge of so dear a pledge; and he readily and thankfully embraced the kind offer of her maternal uncle, Christian, to place Alice under the protection of a lady of rank in London, whilst he himself was to be engaged in the scenes of bustle and blood, which, in common with all good Protestants, he expected was speedily to take place on a general rising of the Papists, unless prevented by the active and energetic measures of the good people of England. He even confessed his fears, that his partial regard for Alice's happiness might enervate his efforts in behalf of his country; and Christian had little trouble in eliciting from him a promise, that he would forbear to inquire after her for some time.

Thus certain of being the temporary guardian of his niece for a space long enough, he flattered himself, for the execution of his purpose, Christian endeavoured to pave the way by consulting Chiffinch, whose known skill in Court policy qualified him best as an adviser on this occasion. But this worthy person, being, in fact, a purveyor for his Majesty's pleasures, and on that account high in his good graces, thought it fell within the line of his duty to suggest another scheme than that on which Christian consulted him. A woman of such exquisite beauty as Alice was described, he deemed more worthy to be a partaker of the affections of the merry Monarch, whose taste in female beauty was so exquisite, than to be made the wife of some worn-out prodigal of quality. And then, doing perfect justice to his own

character, he felt it would not be one whit impaired, while his fortune would be, in every respect, greatly amended, if, after sharing the short reign of the Gwyns, the Davises, the Robertses, and so forth, Alice Bridgenorth should retire from the state of a royal favourite, into the humble condition of Mrs. Chiffinch.

After cautiously sounding Christian, and finding that the near prospect of interest to himself effectually prevented his starting at this iniquitous scheme, Chiffinch detailed it to him fully, carefully keeping the final termination out of sight, and talking of the favour to be acquired by the fair Alice as no passing caprice, but the commencement of a reign as long and absolute as that of the Duchess of Portsmouth, of whose avarice and domineering temper Charles was now understood to be much tired, though the force of habit rendered him unequal to free himself of her yoke.

Thus chalked out, the scene prepared was no longer the intrigue of a Court pander, and a villainous resolution for the ruin of an innocent girl, but became a state intrigue, for the removal of an obnoxious favourite, and the subsequent change of the King's sentiments upon various material points, in which he was at present influenced by the Duchess of Portsmouth. In this light it was exhibited to the Duke of Buckingham, who, either to sustain his character for daring gallantry, or in order to gratify some capricious fancy, had at one time made love to the reigning favourite, and experienced a repulse which he had never forgiven.

But one scheme was too little to occupy the active and enterprising spirit of the Duke. An appendix of the Popish Plot was easily so contrived as to involve the Countess of Derby, who, from character and religion, was precisely the person whom the credulous part of the public were inclined to suppose the likely accomplice of such a conspiracy. Christian and Bridgenorth undertook the perilous commission of attacking her even in her own little kingdom of Man, and had commissions for this purpose, which were only to be produced in case of their scheme taking effect.

It miscarried, as the reader is aware, from the Countess's alert preparations for defence; and neither Christian nor Bridgenorth held it sound policy to practise openly, even under parliamentary authority, against a lady so little liable to hesitate upon the measures most likely to secure her feudal sovereignty; wisely considering that even the omnipotence, as it has been somewhat too largely styled, of Parliament, might fail to relieve them from the personal consequences of a failure.

On the continent of Britain, however, no opposition was to be feared; and so well was Christian acquainted with all the motions in the interior of the Countess's little court, or household, that Peveril would have been arrested the instant he set foot on shore, but for the gale of wind which obliged the vessel, in which he was a passenger, to run for Liverpool. Here Christian, under the name of Ganlesse, unexpectedly met with him, and preserved him from the fangs of the well-breathed witnesses of the Plot, with the purpose of securing his despatches, or, if necessary, his person also, in such a manner as to place him at his own discretion—a narrow and perilous game, which he thought it better, however, to undertake, than to permit these subordinate agents, who were always ready to mutiny against all in league with them, to obtain the credit which they must have done by the seizure of the Countess of Derby's despatches. It was, besides, essential to Buckingham's schemes that these should not pass into the hands of a public officer like Topham, who, however pompous and stupid, was upright and well-intentioned, until they had undergone the revisal of a private committee, where something might have probably been suppressed, even supposing that nothing had been added. In short, Christian, in carrying on his own separate and peculiar intrigue, by the agency of the Great Popish Plot, as it was called, acted just like an engineer, who derives the principle of motion which turns his machinery, by means of a steam-engine, or large water-wheel, constructed to drive a separate and larger engine. Accordingly, he was determined that, while he took all the advantage he could from their supposed discoveries, no one should be admitted to tamper or interfere with his own plans of profit and revenge.

Chiffinch, who, desirous of satisfying himself with his own eyes of that excellent beauty which had been so highly extolled, had gone down to Derbyshire on purpose, was infinitely delighted, when, during the course of a two hours' sermon at the dissenting chapel in Liverpool, which afforded him ample leisure for a deliberate survey, he arrived at the conclusion that he had never seen a form or face more captivating. His eyes having confirmed what was told him, he hurried back to the little inn which formed their place of rendezvous, and there awaited Christian and his niece, with a degree of confidence in the success of their project which he had not before entertained; and with an apparatus of luxury, calculated, as he thought, to make a favourable impression on the mind of a rustic girl. He was somewhat surprised, when, instead of Alice Bridgenorth, to whom he expected that night to have been introduced, he found that Christian was accompanied by Julian Peveril. It was indeed a severe disappointment, for he had prevailed on his own indolence to venture this far from the Court, in order that he might judge, with his own paramount taste, whether Alice was really the prodigy which her uncle's praises had bespoken her, and, as such, a victim worthy of the fate to which she was destined.

A few words betwixt the worthy confederates determined them on the plan of stripping Peveril of the Countess's despatches; Chiffinch absolutely refusing to take any share in arresting him, as a matter of which his Master's approbation might be very uncertain.

Christian had also his own reasons for abstaining from so decisive a step. It was by no means likely to be agreeable to Bridgenorth, whom it was necessary to keep in good humour;—it was not necessary, for the Countess's despatches were of far more importance than the person of Julian. Lastly, it was superfluous in this respect also, that Julian was on the road to his father's castle, where it was likely he would be seized, as a matter of course, along with the other suspicious persons who fell under Topham's warrant, and the denunciations of his infamous companions. He, therefore, far from using any violence to Peveril, assumed towards him such a friendly tone, as might seem to warn him against receiving damage from others, and vindicate himself from having any share in depriving him of his charge. This last manoeuvre was achieved by an infusion of a strong narcotic into Julian's wine; under the influence of which he slumbered so soundly, that the confederates were easily able to accomplish their inhospitable purpose.

The events of the succeeding days are already known to the reader. Chiffinch set forward to return to London, with the packet, which it was desirable should be in Buckingham's hands as soon as possible; while Christian went to Moultrassie, to receive Alice from her father, and convey her safely to London—his accomplice agreeing to defer his curiosity to see more of her until they should have arrived in that city.

Before parting with Bridgenorth, Christian had exerted his utmost address to prevail on him to remain at Moultrassie; he had even overstepped the bounds of prudence, and, by his urgency, awakened some suspicions of an indefinite nature, which he found it difficult to allay. Bridgenorth, therefore, followed his brother-in-law to London; and the reader has already been made acquainted with the arts which Christian used to prevent his farther interference with the destinies of his daughter, or the unhallowed schemes of her ill-chosen guardian. Still Christian, as he strode along the street in profound reflection, saw that his undertaking was attended with a thousand perils; and the drops stood like beads on his brow when he thought of the presumptuous levity and fickle temper of Buckingham—the frivolity and intemperance of Chiffinch—the suspicions of the melancholy and bigoted, yet sagacious and honest Bridgenorth. "Had I," he thought, "but tools fitted, each to their portion of the work, how easily could I heave asunder and disjoint the strength that opposes me! But with these frail and insufficient implements, I am in daily, hourly, momentary danger, that one lever or other gives way, and that the whole ruin recoils on my own head. And yet, were it not for those failings I complain of, how were it possible for me to have acquired that power over them all which constitutes them my passive tools, even when they seem most to exert their own free will? Yes, the bigots have some right when they affirm that all is for the best."

It may seem strange, that, amidst the various subjects of Christian's apprehension, he was never visited by any long or permanent doubt that the virtue of his niece might prove the shoal on which his voyage should be wrecked. But he was an arrant rogue, as well as a hardened libertine; and, in both characters, a professed disbeliever in the virtue of the fair sex.

CHAPTER XXX

*As for John Dryden's Charles, I own that King
Was never any very mighty thing;
And yet he was a devilish honest fellow—
Enjoy'd his friend and bottle, and got mellow.*

London, the grand central point of intrigues of every description, had now attracted within its dark and shadowy region the greater number of the personages whom we have had occasion to mention.

Julian Peveril, amongst others of the *dramatis personæ*, had arrived, and taken up his abode in a remote inn in the suburbs. His business, he conceived, was to remain incognito until he should have communicated in private with the friends who were most likely to lend assistance to his parents, as well as to his patroness, in their present situation of doubt and danger. Amongst these, the most powerful was the Duke of Ormond, whose faithful services, high rank, and acknowledged worth and virtue, still preserved an ascendancy in that very Court, where, in general, he was regarded as out of favour. Indeed, so much consciousness did Charles display in his demeanour towards that celebrated noble, and servant of his father, that Buckingham once took the freedom to ask the King whether the Duke of Ormond had lost his Majesty's favour, or his Majesty the Duke's? since, whenever they chanced to meet, the King appeared the more embarrassed of the two. But it was not Peveril's good fortune to obtain the advice or countenance of this distinguished person. His Grace of Ormond was not at that time in London.

The letter, about the delivery of which the Countess had seemed most anxious after that to the Duke of Ormond, was addressed to Captain Barstow (a Jesuit, whose real name was Fenwicke), to be found, or at least to be heard of, in the house of one Martin Christal in the Savoy. To this place hastened Peveril, upon learning the absence of the Duke of Ormond. He was not ignorant of the danger which he personally incurred, by thus becoming a medium of communication betwixt a Popish priest and a suspected Catholic. But when he undertook the perilous commission of his patroness, he had done so frankly, and with the unreserved resolution of serving her in the manner in which she most desired her affairs to be conducted. Yet he could not forbear some secret apprehension, when he felt himself engaged in the labyrinth of passages and galleries, which led to different obscure sets of apartments in the ancient building termed the Savoy.

This antiquated and almost ruinous pile occupied a part of the site of the public offices in the Strand, commonly called Somerset House. The Savoy had been formerly a palace, and took its name from an Earl of Savoy, by whom it was founded. It had been the habitation of John of Gaunt, and various persons of distinction—had become a convent, an hospital, and finally, in Charles II.'s time, a waste of dilapidated buildings and ruinous apartments, inhabited chiefly by those who had some connection with, or dependence upon, the neighbouring palace of Somerset House, which, more fortunate than the Savoy, had still retained its royal title, and was the abode of a part of the Court, and occasionally of the King himself, who had apartments there.

It was not without several inquiries, and more than one mistake, that, at the end of a long and dusky passage, composed of boards so wasted by time that they threatened to give way under his feet, Julian at length found the name of Martin Christal, broker and appraiser, upon a shattered door. He was about to knock, when some one pulled his cloak; and looking round, to his great astonishment, which indeed almost amounted to fear, he saw the little mute damsel, who had accompanied him for a part of the way on his voyage from the Isle of Man.

"Fenella!" he exclaimed, forgetting that she could neither hear nor reply,—"*Fenella!* Can this be you?"

Fenella, assuming the air of warning and authority, which she had heretofore endeavoured to adopt towards him, interposed betwixt Julian and the door at which he was about to knock—pointed with her finger towards it in a prohibiting manner, and at the same time bent her brows, and shook her head sternly.

After a moment's consideration, Julian could place but one interpretation upon Fenella's appearance and conduct, and that was, by supposing her lady had come up to London, and had despatched this mute attendant, as a confidential person, to apprise him of some change of her intended operations, which might render the delivery of her letters to Barstow, *alias* Fenwicke, superfluous, or perhaps dangerous. He made signs to Fenella, demanding to know whether she had any commission from the Countess. She nodded. "Had she any letter?" he continued, by the same mode of inquiry. She shook her head impatiently, and, walking hastily along the passage, made a signal to him to follow. He did so, having little doubt that he was about to be conducted into the Countess's presence; but his surprise, at first excited by Fenella's appearance, was increased by the rapidity and ease with which she seemed to track the dusky and decayed mazes of the dilapidated Savoy, equal to that with which he had seen her formerly lead the way through the gloomy vaults of Castle Rushin, in the Isle of Man.

When he recollected, however, that Fenella had accompanied the Countess on a long visit to London, it appeared not improbable that she might then have acquired this local knowledge which seemed so accurate. Many foreigners, dependent on Queen or Queen Dowager, had apartments in the Savoy. Many Catholic priests also found refuge in its recesses, under various disguises, and in defiance of the severity of the laws against Popery. What was more likely than that the Countess of Derby, a Catholic and a Frenchwoman, should have had secret commissions amongst such people; and that the execution of such should be entrusted, at least occasionally, to Fenella?

Thus reflecting, Julian continued to follow her light and active footsteps as she glided from the Strand to Spring-Garden, and thence into the Park.

It was still early in the morning, and the Mall was untenanted, save by a few walkers, who frequented these shades for the wholesome purposes of air and exercise. Splendour, gaiety, and display, did not come forth, at that period, until noon was approaching. All readers have heard that the whole space where the Horse Guards are now built, made, in the time of Charles II., a part of St. James's Park; and that the old building, now called the Treasury, was a part of the ancient Palace of Whitehall, which was thus immediately connected with the Park. The canal had been constructed, by the celebrated Le Notre, for the purpose of draining the Park; and it communicated with the Thames by a decoy, stocked with a quantity of the rarer waterfowl. It was towards this decoy that Fenella bent her way with unabated speed; and they were approaching a group of two or three gentlemen, who sauntered by its banks, when, on looking closely at him who appeared to be the chief of the party, Julian felt his heart beat uncommonly thick, as if conscious of approaching some one of the highest consequence.

The person whom he looked upon was past the middle age of life, of a dark complexion, corresponding with the long, black, full-bottomed periwig, which he wore instead of his own hair. His dress was plain black velvet, with a diamond star, however, on his cloak, which hung carelessly over one shoulder. His features, strongly lined, even to harshness, had yet an expression of dignified good-humour; he was well and strongly built, walked upright and yet easily, and had upon the whole the air of a person of the highest consideration. He kept rather in advance of his companions, but turned and spoke to them, from time to time, with much affability, and probably with some liveliness, judging by the smiles, and sometimes the scarce restrained laughter, by which some of his sallies were received by his attendants. They also wore only morning dresses; but their looks and manner were those of men of rank, in presence of one in station still more elevated. They shared the attention of their principal in common with seven or eight little black curly-haired spaniels, or rather, as they are now called, cockers, which attended their master as closely, and perhaps with as deep sentiments of attachment, as the bipeds of the group; and whose gambols, which seemed to afford him much amusement, he sometimes checked, and sometimes encouraged. In addition to this pastime, a lackey, or groom, was also in attendance, with one or two little baskets and bags, from which the gentleman we have described took, from time to time, a handful of seeds, and amused himself with throwing them to the waterfowl.

This the King's favourite occupation, together with his remarkable countenance, and the deportment of the rest of the company towards him, satisfied Julian Peveril that he was approaching, perhaps indecorously, near the person of Charles Stewart, the second of that unhappy name.

While he hesitated to follow his dumb guide any nearer, and felt the embarrassment of being unable to communicate to her his repugnance to further intrusion, a person in the royal retinue touched a light and lively air on the flageolet, at a signal from the King, who desired to have some tune repeated which had struck him in the theatre on the preceding evening. While the good-natured monarch marked time with his foot, and with the motion of his hand, Fenella continued to approach him, and threw into her manner the appearance of one who was attracted, as it were in spite of herself, by the sounds of the instrument.

Anxious to know how this was to end, and astonished to see the dumb girl imitate so accurately the manner of one who actually heard the musical notes, Peveril also drew near, though at somewhat greater distance.

The King looked good-humouredly at both, as if he admitted their musical enthusiasm as an excuse for their intrusion; but his eyes became riveted on Fenella, whose face and appearance, although rather singular than beautiful, had something in them wild, fantastic, and, as being so, even captivating, to an eye which had been gratified perhaps to satiety with the ordinary forms of female beauty. She did not appear to notice how closely she was observed; but, as if acting under

an irresistible impulse, derived from the sounds to which she seemed to listen, she undid the bodkin round which her long tresses were winded, and flinging them suddenly over her slender person, as if using them as a natural veil, she began to dance, with infinite grace and agility, to the tune which the flageolet played. Peveril lost almost his sense of the King's presence, when he observed with what wonderful grace and agility Fenella kept time to notes, which could only be known to her by the motions of the musician's fingers. He had heard, indeed, among other prodigies, of a person in Fenella's unhappy situation acquiring, by some unaccountable and mysterious tact, the power of acting as an instrumental musician, nay, becoming so accurate a performer as to be capable of leading a musical band; and he also heard of deaf and dumb persons dancing with sufficient accuracy, by observing the motions of their partner. But Fenella's performance seemed more wonderful than either, since the musician was guided by his written notes, and the dancer by the motions of the others; whereas Fenella had no intimation, save what she seemed to gather, with infinite accuracy, by observing the motion of the artist's fingers on his small instrument.

As for the King, who was ignorant of the particular circumstances which rendered Fenella's performance almost marvellous, he was contented, at her first commencement, to authorise what seemed to him the frolic of this singular-looking damsel, by a good-natured smile, but when he perceived the exquisite truth and justice, as well as the wonderful combination of grace and agility, with which she executed to this favourite air a dance which was perfectly new to him, Charles turned his mere acquiescence into something like enthusiastic applause. He bore time to her motions with the movement of his foot—applauded with head and with hand—and seemed, like herself, carried away by the enthusiasm of the gestic art.

After a rapid yet graceful succession of *entrechats*, Fenella introduced a slow movement, which terminated the dance; then dropping a profound courtesy, she continued to stand motionless before the King, her arms folded on her bosom, her head stooped, and her eyes cast down, after the manner of an Oriental slave; while through the misty veil of her shadowy locks, it might be observed, that the colour which exercise had called to her cheeks was dying fast away, and resigning them to their native dusky hue.

"By my honour," exclaimed the King, "she is like a fairy who trips it in moonlight. There must be more of air and fire than of earth in her composition. It is well poor Nelly Gwyn saw her not, or she would have died of grief and envy. Come, gentlemen, which of you contrived this pretty piece of morning pastime?"

The courtiers looked at each other, but none of them felt authorised to claim the merit of a service so agreeable.

"We must ask the quick-eyed nymph herself then," said the King; and, looking at Fenella, he added, "Tell us, my pretty one, to whom we owe the pleasure of seeing you?—I suspect the Duke of Buckingham; for this is exactly a *tour de son métier*."

Fenella, on observing that the King addressed her, bowed low, and shook her head, in signal that she did not understand what he said. "Oddsfish, that is true," said the King; "she must perforce be a foreigner—her complexion and agility speak it. France or Italy has had the moulding of those elastic limbs, dark cheek, and eye of fire." He then put to her in French, and again in Italian, the question, "By whom she had been sent hither?"

At the second repetition, Fenella threw back her veiling tresses, so as to show the melancholy which sat on her brow; while she sadly shook her head, and intimated by imperfect muttering, but of the softest and most plaintive kind, her organic deficiency.

"Is it possible Nature can have made such a fault?" said Charles. "Can she have left so curious a piece as thou art without the melody of voice, whilst she has made thee so exquisitely sensible to the beauty of sound?—Stay: what means this? and what young fellow are you bringing up there? Oh, the master of the show, I suppose.—Friend," he added, addressing himself to Peveril, who, on the signal of Fenella, stepped forward almost instinctively, and kneeled down, "we thank thee for the pleasure of this morning.—My Lord Marquis, you rooked me at piquet last night; for which disloyal deed thou shalt now atone, by giving a couple of pieces to this honest youth, and five to the girl."

As the nobleman drew out his purse and came forward to perform the King's generous commission, Julian felt some embarrassment ere he was able to explain, that he had not title to be benefited by the young person's performance, and that his Majesty had mistaken his character.

"And who art thou, then, my friend?" said Charles; "but, above all, and particularly, who is this dancing nymph, whom thou standest waiting on like an attendant fawn?"

"The young person is a retainer of the Countess-Dowager of Derby, so please your Majesty," said Peveril, in a low tone of voice; "and I am——"

"Hold, hold," said the King; "this is a dance to another tune, and not fit for a place so public. Hark thee, friend; do thou and the young woman follow Empson where he will conduct thee.—Empson, carry them—hark in thy ear."

"May it please your Majesty, I ought to say," said Peveril, "that I am guiltless of any purpose of intrusion——"

"Now a plague on him who can take no hint," said the King, cutting short his apology. "Oddsfish, man, there are times when civility is the greatest impertinence in the world. Do thou follow Empson, and amuse thyself for a half-hour's space with the fairy's company, till we shall send for you."

Charles spoke this not without casting an anxious eye around, and in a tone which intimated apprehension of being overheard. Julian could only bow obedience, and follow Empson, who was the same person that played so rarely on the flageolet.

When they were out of sight of the King and his party, the musician wished to enter into conversation with his companions, and addressed himself first to Fenella with a broad compliment of, "By the mass, ye dance rarely—ne'er a slut on the boards shows such a shank! I would be content to play to you till my throat were as dry as my whistle. Come, be a little free—old Rowley will not quit the Park till nine. I will carry you to Spring-Garden, and bestow sweet-cakes and a quart of Rhenish on both of you; and we'll be cameradoes,—What the devil? no answer?—How's this, brother?—Is this neat wench of yours deaf or dumb or both? I should laugh at that, and she trip it so well to the flageolet."

To rid himself of this fellow's discourse, Peveril answered him in French, that he was a foreigner, and spoke no English; glad to escape, though at the expense of a fiction, from the additional embarrassment of a fool, who was likely to ask more questions than his own wisdom might have enabled him to answer.

"*Étranger*—that means stranger," muttered their guide; "more French dogs and jades come to lick the good English butter of our bread, or perhaps an Italian puppet-show. Well if it were not that they have a mortal enmity to the whole *gamut*, this were enough to make any honest fellow turn Puritan. But if I am to play to her at the Duchess's, I'll be d—d but I put her out in the tune, just to teach her to have the impudence to come to England, and to speak no English."

Having muttered to himself this truly British resolution, the musician walked briskly on towards a large house near the bottom of St. James's Street, and entered the court, by a grated door from the Park, of which the mansion commanded an extensive prospect.

Peveril finding himself in front of a handsome portico, under which opened a stately pair of folding-doors, was about to ascend the steps that led to the main entrance, when his guide seized him by the arm, exclaiming. "Hold, Mounseer! What! you'll lose nothing, I see, for want of courage; but you must keep the back way, for all your fine doublet. Here it is not, knock, and it shall be opened; but may be instead, knock and you shall be knocked."

Suffering himself to be guided by Empson, Julian deviated from the principal door, to one which opened, with less ostentation, in an angle of the courtyard. On a modest tap from the flute-player, admittance was afforded him and his companions by a footman, who conducted them through a variety of stone passages, to a very handsome summer parlour, where a lady, or something resembling one, dressed in a style of extra elegance, was trifling with a play-book while she finished her chocolate. It would not be easy to describe her, but by weighing her natural good qualities against the affectations which counterbalanced them. She would have been handsome, but for rouge and *minauderie*—would have been civil, but for overstrained airs of patronage and condescension—would have had an agreeable voice, had she spoken in her natural tone—and fine eyes, had she not made such desperate hard use of them. She could only spoil a pretty ankle by too liberal display; but her shape, though she could not yet be thirty years old, had the embon-point which might have suited better with ten years more advanced. She pointed Empson to a seat with the air of a Duchess, and asked him, languidly, how he did this age, that she had not seen him? and what folks these were he had brought with him?

"Foreigners, madam; d—d foreigners," answered Empson; "starving beggars, that our old friend has picked up in the Park this morning—the wench dances, and the fellow plays on the Jew's trump, I believe. On my life, madam, I begin to be ashamed of old Rowley; I must discard him, unless he keeps better company in future."

"Fie, Empson," said the lady; "consider it is our duty to countenance him, and keep him afloat; and indeed I always make a principle of it. Hark ye, he comes not hither this morning?"

"He will be here," answered Empson, "in the walking of a minuet."

"My God!" exclaimed the lady, with unaffected alarm; and starting up with utter neglect of her usual and graceful languor, she tripped as swiftly as a milk-maid into an adjoining apartment, where they heard presently a few words of eager and animated discussion.

"Something to be put out of the way, I suppose," said Empson. "Well for madam I gave her the hint. There he goes, the happy swain."

Julian was so situated, that he could, from the same casement through which Empson was peeping, observe a man in a laced roquelaure, and carrying his rapier under his arm, glide from the door by which he had himself entered, and out of the court, keeping as much as possible under the shade of the buildings.

The lady re-entered at this moment, and observing how Empson's eyes were directed, said with a slight appearance of hurry, "A gentleman of the Duchess of Portsmouth's with a billet; and so tiresomely pressing for an answer, that I was obliged to write without my diamond pen. I have daubed my fingers, I dare say," she added, looking at a very pretty hand, and presently after dipping her fingers in a little silver vase of rose-water. "But that little exotic monster of yours, Empson, I hope she really understands no English?—On my life she coloured.—Is she such a rare dancer?—I must see her dance, and hear him play on the Jew's harp."

"Dance!" replied Empson; "she danced well enough when I played to her. I can make anything dance. Old Counsellor Clubfoot danced when he had a fit of the gout; you have seen no such *pas seul* in the theatre. I would engage to make the Archbishop of Canterbury dance the hays like a Frenchman. There is nothing in dancing; it all lies in the music. Rowley does not know that now. He saw this poor wench dance; and thought so much on't, when it was all along of me. I would have defied her to sit still. And Rowley gives her the credit of it, and five pieces to boot; and I have only two for my morning's work!"

"True, Master Empson," said the lady; "but you are of the family, though in a lower station; and you ought to consider——"

"By G—, madam," answered Empson, "all I consider is, that I play the best flageolet in England; and that they can no more supply my place, if they were to discard me, than they could fill Thames from Fleet-Ditch."

"Well, Master Empson, I do not dispute but you are a man of talents," replied the lady; "still, I say, mind the main chance—you please the ear to-day—another has the advantage of you to-morrow."

"Never, mistress, while ears have the heavenly power of distinguishing one note from another."

"Heavenly power, say you, Master Empson?" said the lady.

"Ay, madam, heavenly; for some very neat verses which we had at our festival say,

'What know we of the blest above,

But that they sing and that they love?'

It is Master Waller wrote them, as I think; who, upon my word, ought to be encouraged."

"And so should you, my dear Empson," said the dame, yawning, "were it only for the honour you do to your own profession. But in the meantime, will you ask these people to have some refreshment?—and will you take some yourself?—the chocolate is that which the Ambassador Portuguese fellow brought over to the Queen."

"If it be genuine," said the musician.

"How, sir?" said the fair one, half rising from her pile of cushions—"Not genuine, and in this house!—Let me understand you, Master Empson—I think, when I first saw you, you scarce knew chocolate from coffee."

"By G—, madam," answered the flageolet-player, "you are perfectly right. And how can I show better how much I have profited by your ladyship's excellent cheer, except by being critical?"

"You stand excused, Master Empson," said the *petite maitresse*, sinking gently back on the downy couch, from which a momentary irritation had startled her—"I think the chocolate will please you, though scarce equal to what we had from the Spanish resident Mendoza.—But we must offer these strange people something. Will you ask them if they would have coffee and chocolate, or cold wild-fowl, fruit, and wine? They must be treated, so as to show them where they are, since here they are."

"Unquestionably, madam," said Empson; "but I have just at this instant forgot the French for chocolate, hot bread, coffee, game, and drinkables."

"It is odd," said the lady; "and I have forgot my French and Italian at the same moment. But it signifies little—I will order the things to be brought, and they will remember the names of them themselves."

Empson laughed loudly at this jest, and pawned his soul that the cold sirloin which entered immediately after, was the best emblem of roast-beef all the world over. Plentiful refreshments were offered to all the party, of which both Fenella and Peveril partook.

In the meanwhile, the flageolet-player drew closer to the side of the lady of the mansion—their intimacy was cemented, and their spirits set afloat, by a glass of liqueur, which gave them additional confidence in discussing the characters, as well of the superior attendants of the Court, as of the inferior rank, to which they themselves might be supposed to belong.

The lady, indeed, during this conversation, frequently exerted her complete and absolute superiority over Master Empson; in which that musical gentleman humbly acquiesced whenever the circumstance was recalled to his attention, whether in the way of blunt contradiction, sarcastic insinuation, downright assumption of higher importance, or in any of the other various modes by which such superiority is usually asserted and maintained. But the lady's obvious love of scandal was the lure which very soon brought her again down from the dignified part which for a moment she assumed, and placed her once more on a gossiping level with her companion.

Their conversation was too trivial, and too much allied to petty Court intrigues, with which he was totally unacquainted, to be in the least interesting to Julian. As it continued for more than an hour, he soon ceased to pay the least attention to a discourse consisting of nicknames, patchwork, and innuendo; and employed himself in reflecting on his own complicated affairs, and the probable issue of his approaching audience with the King, which had been brought about by so singular an agent, and by means so unexpected. He often looked to his guide, Fenella; and observed that she was, for the greater part of the time, drowned in deep and abstracted meditation. But three or four times—and it was when the assumed airs and affected importance of the musician and their hostess rose to the most extravagant excess—he observed that Fenella dealt askance on them some of those bitter and almost blighting elfin looks, which in the Isle of Man were held to imply contemptuous execration. There was something in all her manner so extraordinary, joined to her sudden appearance, and her demeanour in the King's presence, so oddly, yet so well contrived to procure him a private audience—which he might, by graver means, have sought in vain—that it almost justified the idea, though he smiled at it internally, that the little mute agent was aided in her machinations by the kindred imps, to whom, according to Manx superstition, her genealogy was to be traced.

Another idea sometimes occurred to Julian, though he rejected the question, as being equally wild with those doubts which referred Fenella to a race different from that of mortals—"Was she really afflicted with those organical imperfections which had always seemed to sever her from humanity?—If not, what could be the motives of so young a creature practising so dreadful a penance for such an unremitted term of years? And how formidable must be the strength of mind which could condemn itself to so terrific a sacrifice—How deep and strong the purpose for which it was undertaken!"

But a brief recollection of past events enabled him to dismiss this conjecture as altogether wild and visionary. He had but to call to memory the various stratagems practised by his light-hearted companion, the young Earl of Derby, upon this forlorn girl—the conversations held in her presence, in which the character of a creature so irritable and sensitive upon all occasions, was freely, and sometimes satirically discussed, without her expressing the least acquaintance with what was going forward, to convince him that so deep a deception could never have been practised for so many years, by a being of a turn of mind so peculiarly jealous and irascible.

He renounced, therefore, the idea, and turned his thoughts to his own affairs, and his approaching interview with his Sovereign; in which meditation we propose to leave him, until we briefly review the changes which had taken place in the situation of Alice Bridgenorth.

CHAPTER XXXI

*I fear the devil worst when gown and cassock,
Or, in the lack of them, old Calvin's cloak,
Conceals his cloven hoof.*

—ANONYMOUS.

Julian Peveril had scarce set sail for Whitehaven, when Alice Bridgenorth and her governante, at the hasty command of her father, were embarked with equal speed and secrecy on board of a bark bound for Liverpool. Christian accompanied them on their voyage, as the friend to whose guardianship Alice was to be consigned during any future separation from her father, and whose amusing conversation, joined to his pleasing though cold manners, as well as his near relationship, induced Alice, in her forlorn situation, to consider her fate as fortunate in having such a guardian.

At Liverpool, as the reader already knows, Christian took the first overt step in the villainy which he had contrived against the innocent girl, by exposing her at a meeting-house to the unhallowed gaze of Chiffinch, in order to convince him she was possessed of such uncommon beauty as might well deserve the infamous promotion to which they meditated to raise her.

Highly satisfied with her personal appearance, Chiffinch was no less so with the sense and delicacy of her conversation, when he met her in company with her uncle afterwards in London. The simplicity, and at the same time the spirit of her remarks, made him regard her as his scientific attendant the cook might have done a newly invented sauce, sufficiently *piquante* in its qualities to awaken the jaded appetite of a cloyed and gorged epicure. She was, he said and swore, the very corner-stone on which, with proper management, and with his instruction, a few honest fellows might build a Court fortune.

That the necessary introduction might take place, the confederates judged fit she should be put under the charge of an experienced lady, whom some called Mistress Chiffinch, and others Chiffinch's mistress—one of those obliging creatures who are willing to discharge all the duties of a wife, without the inconvenient and indissoluble ceremony.

It was one, and not perhaps the least prejudicial consequence of the license of that ill-governed time, that the bounds betwixt virtue and vice were so far smoothed down and levelled, that the frail wife, or the tender friend who was no wife, did not necessarily lose their place in society; but, on the contrary, if they moved in the higher circles, were permitted and encouraged to mingle with women whose rank was certain, and whose reputation was untainted.

A regular *liaison*, like that of Chiffinch and his fair one, inferred little scandal; and such was his influence, as prime minister of his master's pleasures, that, as Charles himself expressed it, the lady whom we introduced to our readers in the last chapter, had obtained a brevet commission to rank as a married woman. And to do the gentle dame justice, no wife could have been more attentive to forward his plans, or more liberal in disposing of his income.

She inhabited a set of apartments called Chiffinch's—the scene of many an intrigue, both of love and politics; and where Charles often held his private parties for the evening, when, as frequently happened, the ill-humour of the Duchess of Portsmouth, his reigning Sultana, prevented his supping with her. The hold which such an arrangement gave a man like Chiffinch, used as he well knew how to use it, made him of too much consequence to be slighted even by the first persons in the state, unless they stood aloof from all manner of politics and Court intrigue.

In the charge of Mistress Chiffinch, and of him whose name she bore, Edward Christian placed the daughter of his sister, and of his confiding friend, calmly contemplating her ruin as an event certain to follow; and hoping to ground upon it his own chance of a more assured fortune, than a life spent in intrigue had hitherto been able to procure for him.

The innocent Alice, without being able to discover what was wrong either in the scenes of unusual luxury with which she was surrounded, or in the manners of her hostess, which, both from nature and policy, were kind and caressing—felt nevertheless an instinctive apprehension that all was not right—a feeling in the human mind, allied, perhaps, to that sense of danger which animals exhibit when placed in the vicinity of the natural enemies of their race, and which makes birds cower when the hawk is in the air, and beasts tremble when the tiger is abroad in the desert. There was a heaviness at her heart which she could not dispel; and the few hours which she had already spent at Chiffinch's were like those passed in prison by one unconscious of the cause or event of his captivity. It was the third morning after her arrival in London, that the scene took place which we now recur to.

The impertinence and vulgarity of Empson, which was permitted to him as an unrivalled performer upon his instrument, were exhausting themselves at the expense of all other musical professors, and Mrs. Chiffinch was listening with careless indifference, when some one was heard speaking loudly, and with animation, in the inner apartment.

"Oh, gemini and gilliflower water!" exclaimed the damsel, startled out of her fine airs into her natural vulgarity of exclamation, and running to the door of communication—"if he has not come back again after all!—and if old Rowley——"

A tap at the farther and opposite door here arrested her attention—she quitted the handle of that which she was about to open as speedily as if it had burnt her fingers, and, moving back towards her couch, asked, "Who is there?"

"Old Rowley himself, madam," said the King, entering the apartment with his usual air of easy composure.

"O crimini!—your Majesty!—I thought——"

"That I was out of hearing, doubtless," said the King; "and spoke of me as folk speak of absent friends. Make no apology. I think I have heard ladies say of their lace, that a rent is better than a darn.—Nay, be seated.—Where is Chiffinch?"

"He is down at York House, your Majesty," said the dame, recovering, though with no small difficulty, the calm affectation of her usual demeanour. "Shall I send your Majesty's commands?"

"I will wait his return," said the King.—"Permit me to taste your chocolate."

"There is some fresh frothed in the office," said the lady; and using a little silver call, or whistle, a black boy, superbly dressed, like an Oriental page, with gold bracelets on his naked arms, and a gold collar around his equally bare neck, attended with the favourite beverage of the morning, in an apparatus of the richest china.

While he sipped his cup of chocolate, the King looked round the apartment, and observing Fenella, Peveril, and the musician, who remained standing beside a large Indian screen, he continued, addressing Mistress Chiffinch, though with polite indifference, "I sent you the fiddles this morning—or rather the flute—Empson, and a fairy elf whom I met in the Park, who dances divinely. She has brought us the very newest saraband from the Court of Queen Mab, and I sent her here, that you may see it at leisure."

"Your Majesty does me by far too much honour," said Chiffinch, her eyes properly cast down, and her accents minced into becoming humility.

"Nay, little Chiffinch," answered the King, in a tone of as contemptuous familiarity as was consistent with his good-breeding, "it was not altogether for thine own private ear, though quite deserving of all sweet sounds; but I thought Nelly had been with thee this morning."

"I can send Bajazet for her, your Majesty," answered the lady.

"Nay, I will not trouble your little heathen sultan to go so far. Still it strikes me that Chiffinch said you had company—some country cousin, or such a matter—Is there not such a person?"

"There is a young person from the country," said Mistress Chiffinch, striving to conceal a considerable portion of embarrassment; "but she is unprepared for such an honour as to be admitted into your Majesty's presence, and——"

"And therefore the fitter to receive it, Chiffinch. There is nothing in nature so beautiful as the first blush of a little rustic between joy and fear, and wonder and curiosity. It is the down on the peach—pity it decays so soon!—the fruit remains, but the first high colouring and exquisite flavour are gone.—Never put up thy lip for the matter, Chiffinch, for it is as I tell you; so pray let us have *la belle cousine*."

Mistress Chiffinch, more embarrassed than ever, again advanced towards the door of communication, which she had been in the act of opening when his Majesty entered. But just as she coughed pretty loudly, perhaps as a signal to some one within, voices were again heard in a raised tone of altercation—the door was flung open, and Alice rushed out of the inner apartment, followed to the door of it by the enterprising Duke of Buckingham, who stood fixed with astonishment on finding his pursuit of the flying fair one had hurried him into the presence of the King.

Alice Bridgenorth appeared too much transported with anger to permit her to pay attention to the rank or character of the company into which she had thus suddenly entered. "I remain no longer here, madam," she said to Mrs. Chiffinch, in a tone of uncontrollable resolution; "I leave instantly a house where I am exposed to company which I detest, and to solicitations which I despise."

The dismayed Mrs. Chiffinch could only implore her, in broken whispers, to be silent; adding, while she pointed to Charles, who stood with his eyes fixed rather on his audacious courtier than on the game which he pursued, "The King—the King!"

"If I am in the King's presence," said Alice aloud, and in the same torrent of passionate feeling, while her eye sparkled through tears of resentment and insulted modesty, "it is the better—it is his Majesty's duty to protect me; and on his protection I throw myself."

These words, which were spoken aloud, and boldly, at once recalled Julian to himself, who had hitherto stood, as it were, bewildered. He approached Alice, and, whispering in her ear that she had beside her one who would defend her with his life, implored her to trust to his guardianship in this emergency.

Clinging to his arm in all the ecstasy of gratitude and joy, the spirit which had so lately invigorated Alice in her own defence, gave way in a flood of tears, when she saw herself supported by him whom perhaps she most wished to recognise as her protector. She permitted Peveril gently to draw her back towards the screen before which he had been standing; where, holding by his arm, but at the same time endeavouring to conceal herself behind him, they waited the conclusion of a scene so singular.

The King seemed at first so much surprised at the unexpected apparition of the Duke of Buckingham, as to pay little or no attention to Alice, who had been the means of thus unceremoniously introducing his Grace into the presence at a most unsuitable moment. In that intriguing Court, it had not been the first time that the Duke had ventured to enter the lists of gallantry in rivalry of his Sovereign, which made the present insult the more intolerable. His purpose of lying concealed in those private apartments was explained by the exclamations of Alice; and Charles, notwithstanding the placidity of his disposition, and his habitual guard over his passions, resented the attempt to seduce his destined mistress, as an Eastern Sultan would have done the insolence of a vizier, who anticipated his intended purchases of captive beauty in the slave-market. The swarthy features of Charles reddened, and the strong lines on his dark visage seemed to become inflated, as he said, in a voice which faltered with passion, "Buckingham, you dared not have thus insulted your equal! To your master you may securely offer any affront, since his rank glues his sword to the scabbard."

The haughty Duke did not brook this taunt unanswered. "My sword," he said, with emphasis, "was never in the scabbard, when your Majesty's service required it should be unsheathed."

"Your Grace means, when its service was required for its master's interest," said the King; "for you could only gain the coronet of a Duke by fighting for the royal crown. But it is over—I have treated you as a friend—a companion—almost an equal—you have repaid me with insolence and ingratitude."

"Sire," answered the Duke firmly, but respectfully, "I am unhappy in your displeasure; yet thus far fortunate, that while your words can confer honour, they cannot impair or take it away.—It is hard," he added, lowering his voice, so as only to be heard by the King,— "It is hard that the squall of a peevish wench should cancel the services of so many years!"

"It is harder," said the King, in the same subdued tone, which both preserved through the rest of the conversation, "that a wench's bright eyes can make a nobleman forget the decencies due to his Sovereign's privacy."

"May I presume to ask your Majesty what decencies are those?" said the Duke.

Charles bit his lip to keep himself from smiling. "Buckingham," he said, "this is a foolish business; and we must not forget (as we have nearly done), that we have an audience to witness this scene, and should walk the stage with dignity. I will show you your fault in private."

"It is enough that your Majesty has been displeased, and that I have unhappily been the occasion," said the Duke, kneeling; "although quite ignorant of any purpose beyond a few words of gallantry; and I sue thus low for your Majesty's pardon."

So saying, he kneeled gracefully down. "Thou hast it, George," said the placable Prince. "I believe thou wilt be sooner tired of offending than I of forgiving."

"Long may your Majesty live to give the offence, with which it is your royal pleasure at present to charge my innocence," said the Duke.

"What mean you by that, my lord?" said Charles, the angry shade returning to his brow for a moment.

"My Liege," replied the Duke, "you are too honourable to deny your custom of shooting with Cupid's bird-bolts in other men's warrens. You have ta'en the royal right of free-forestry over every man's park. It is hard that you should be so much displeased at hearing a chance arrow whizz near your own pales."

"No more on't," said the King; "but let us see where the dove has harboured."

"The Helen has found a Paris while we were quarrelling," replied the Duke.

"Rather an Orpheus," said the King; "and what is worse, one that is already provided with a Eurydice—She is clinging to the fiddler."

"It is mere fright," said Buckingham, "like Rochester's, when he crept into the bass-viol to hide himself from Sir Dermot O'Cleaver."

"We must make the people show their talents," said the King, "and stop their mouths with money and civility, or we shall have this foolish encounter over half the town."

The King then approached Julian, and desired him to take his instrument, and cause his female companion to perform a saraband.

"I had already the honour to inform your Majesty," said Julian, "that I cannot contribute to your pleasure in the way you command me; and that this young person is——"

"A retainer of the Lady Powis," said the King, upon whose mind things not connected with his pleasures made a very slight impression. "Poor lady, she is in trouble about the lords in the Tower."

"Pardon me, sir," said Julian, "she is a dependant of the Countess of Derby."

"True, true," answered Charles; "it is indeed of Lady Derby, who hath also her own distresses in these times. Do you know who taught the young person to dance? Some of her steps mightily resemble Le Jeune's of Paris."

"I presume she was taught abroad, sir," said Julian; "for myself, I am charged with some weighty business by the Countess, which I would willingly communicate to your Majesty."

"We will send you to our Secretary of State," said the King. "But this dancing envoy will oblige us once more, will she not?—Empson, now that I remember, it was to your pipe that she danced—Strike up, man, and put mettle into her feet."

Empson began to play a well-known measure; and, as he had threatened, made more than one false note, until the King, whose ear was very accurate, rebuked him with, "Sirrah, art thou drunk at this early hour, or must thou too be playing thy slippery tricks with me? Thou thinkest thou art born to beat time, but I will have time beat into thee."

The hint was sufficient, and Empson took good care so to perform his air as to merit his high and deserved reputation. But on Fenella it made not the slightest impression. She rather leant than stood against the wall of the apartment; her countenance as pale as death, her arms and hands hanging down as if stiffened, and her existence only testified by the sobs which agitated her bosom, and the tears which flowed from her half-closed eyes.

"A plague on it," said the King, "some evil spirit is abroad this morning; and the wenches are all bewitched, I think. Cheer up, my girl. What, in the devil's name, has changed thee at once from a Nymph to a Niobe? If thou standest there longer thou wilt grow to the very marble wall—Or—oddsfish, George, have you been bird-bolting in this quarter also?"

Ere Buckingham could answer to this charge, Julian again kneeled down to the King, and prayed to be heard, were it only for five minutes. "The young woman," he said, "had been long in attendance of the Countess of Derby. She was bereaved of the faculties of speech and hearing."

"Oddsfish, man, and dances so well?" said the King. "Nay, all Gresham College shall never make me believe that."

"I would have thought it equally impossible, but for what I to-day witnessed," said Julian; "but only permit me, sir, to deliver the petition of my lady the Countess."

"And who art thou thyself, man?" said the Sovereign; "for though everything which wears bodice and breast-knot has a right to speak to a King, and be answered, I know not that they have a title to audience through an envoy extraordinary."

"I am Julian Peveril of Derbyshire," answered the supplicant, "the son of Sir Geoffrey Peveril of Martindale Castle, who——"

"Body of me—the old Worcester man?" said the King. "Oddsfish, I remember him well—some harm has happened to him, I think—Is he not dead, or very sick at least?"

"Ill at ease, and it please your Majesty, but not ill in health. He has been imprisoned on account of an alleged accession to this Plot."

"Look you there," said the King; "I knew he was in trouble; and yet how to help the stout old Knight, I can hardly tell. I can scarce escape suspicion of the Plot myself, though the principal object of it is to take away my own life. Were I to stir to save a plotter, I should certainly be brought in as an accessory.—Buckingham, thou hast some interest with those who built this fine state engine, or at least who have driven it on—be good-natured for once, though it is scarcely thy wont, and interfere to shelter our old Worcester friend, Sir Godfrey. You have not forgot him?"

"No, sir," answered the Duke; "for I never heard the name."

"It is Sir Geoffrey his Majesty would say," said Julian.

"And if his Majesty *did* say Sir Geoffrey, Master Peveril, I cannot see of what use I can be to your father," replied the Duke coldly. "He is accused of a heavy crime; and a British subject so accused, can have no shelter either from prince or peer, but must stand to the award and deliverance of God and his country."

"Now, Heaven forgive thee thy hypocrisy, George," said the King hastily. "I would rather hear the devil preach religion than thee teach patriotism. Thou knowest as well as I, that the nation is in a scarlet fever for fear of the poor Catholics, who are not two men to five hundred; and that the public mind is so harassed with new narrations of conspiracy, and fresh horrors every day, that people have as little real sense of what is just or unjust as men who talk in their sleep of what is sense or nonsense. I have borne, and borne with it—I have seen blood flow on the scaffold, fearing to thwart the nation in its fury—and I pray to God that I or mine be not called on to answer for it. I will no longer swim with the torrent, which honour and conscience call upon me to stem—I will act the part of a Sovereign, and save my people from doing injustice, even in their own despite."

Charles walked hastily up and down the room as he expressed these unwonted sentiments, with energy equally unwonted. After a momentary pause, the Duke answered him gravely, "Spoken like a Royal King, sir, but—pardon me—not like a King of England."

Charles paused, as the Duke spoke, beside a window which looked full on Whitehall, and his eye was involuntarily attracted by the fatal window of the Banqueting House out of which his unhappy father was conducted to execution. Charles was naturally, or, more purposely, constitutionally brave; but a life of pleasure, together with the habit of governing his course rather by what was expedient than by what was right, rendered him unapt to dare the same scene of danger or of martyrdom, which had closed his father's life and reign; and the thought came over his half-formed resolution, like the rain upon a kindling beacon. In another man, his perplexity would have seemed almost ludicrous; but Charles would not lose, even under these circumstances, the dignity and grace, which were as natural to him as his indifference and good humour. "Our Council must decide in this matter," he said, looking to the Duke; "and be assured, young man," he added, addressing Julian, "your father shall not want an intercessor in his King, so far as the laws will permit my interference in his behalf."

Julian was about to retire, when Fenella, with a marked look, put into his hand a slip of paper, on which she had hastily written, "The packet—give him the packet." After a moment's hesitation, during which he reflected that Fenella was the organ of the Countess's pleasure, Julian resolved to obey. "Permit me, then, Sir," he said, "to place in your royal hands this packet, entrusted to me by the Countess of Derby. The letters have already been once taken from me; and I have little hope that I can now deliver them as they are addressed. I place them, therefore, in your royal hands, certain that they will evince the innocence of the writer."

The King shook his head as he took the packet reluctantly. "It is no safe office you have undertaken, young man. A messenger has sometimes his throat cut for the sake of his despatches—But give them to me; and, Chiffinch, give me wax and a taper." He employed himself in folding the Countess's packet in another envelope. "Buckingham," he said, "you are evidence that I do not read them till the Council shall see them."

Buckingham approached, and offered his services in folding the parcel, but Charles rejected his assistance; and having finished his task, he sealed the packet with his own signet-ring. The Duke bit his lip and retired.

"And now, young man," said the King, "your errand is sped, so far as it can at present be forwarded."

Julian bowed deeply, as to take leave at these words, which he rightly interpreted as a signal for his departure. Alice Bridgenorth still clung to his arm, and motioned to withdraw along with him. The King and Buckingham looked at each other in conscious astonishment, and yet not without a desire to smile, so strange did it seem to them that a prize, for which, an instant before, they had been mutually contending, should thus glide out of their grasp, or rather be borne off by a third and very inferior competitor.

"Mistress Chiffinch," said the King, with a hesitation which he could not disguise, "I hope your fair charge is not about to leave you?"

"Certainly not, your Majesty," answered Chiffinch. "Alice, my love—you mistake—that opposite door leads to your apartments."

"Pardon me, madam," answered Alice; "I have indeed mistaken my road, but it was when I came hither."

"The errant damosel," said Buckingham, looking at Charles with as much intelligence as etiquette permitted him to throw into his eye, and then turning it towards Alice, as she still held by Julian's arm, "is resolved not to mistake her road a second time. She has chosen a sufficient guide."

"And yet stories tell that such guides have led maidens astray," said the King.

Alice blushed deeply, but instantly recovered her composure so soon as she saw that her liberty was likely to depend upon the immediate exercise of resolution. She quitted, from a sense of insulted delicacy, the arm of Julian, to which she had hitherto clung; but as she spoke, she continued to retain a slight grasp of his cloak. "I have indeed mistaken my way," she repeated still addressing Mrs. Chiffinch, "but it was when I crossed this threshold. The usage to which I have been exposed in your house has determined me to quit it instantly."

"I will not permit that, my young mistress," answered Mrs. Chiffinch, "until your uncle, who placed you under my care, shall relieve me of the charge of you."

"I will answer for my conduct, both to my uncle, and, what is of more importance, to my father," said Alice. "You must permit me to depart, madam; I am free-born, and you have no right to detain me."

"Pardon me, my young madam," said Mistress Chiffinch, "I have a right, and I will maintain it too."

"I will know that before quitting this presence," said Alice firmly; and, advancing a step or two, she dropped on her knee before the King. "Your Majesty," said she, "if indeed I kneel before King Charles, is the father of your subjects."

"Of a good many of them," said the Duke of Buckingham apart.

"I demand protection of you, in the name of God, and of the oath your Majesty swore when you placed on your head the crown of this kingdom!"

"You have my protection," said the King, a little confused by an appeal so unexpected and so solemn. "Do but remain quiet with this lady, with whom your parents have placed you; neither Buckingham nor any one else shall intrude on you."

"His Majesty," added Buckingham, in the same tone, and speaking from the restless and mischief-making spirit of contradiction, which he never could restrain, even when indulging it was most contrary, not only to propriety, but to his own interest,— "His Majesty will protect you, fair lady, from all intrusion save what must not be termed such."

Alice darted a keen look on the Duke, as if to read his meaning; another on Charles, to know whether she had guessed it rightly. There was a guilty confession on the King's brow, which confirmed Alice's determination to depart. "Your Majesty will forgive me," she said; "it is not here that I can enjoy the advantage of your royal protection. I am resolved to leave this house. If I am detained, it must be by violence, which I trust no one dare offer to me in your Majesty's presence. This gentleman, whom I have long known, will conduct me to my friends."

"We make but an indifferent figure in this scene, methinks," said the King, addressing the Duke of Buckingham, and speaking in a whisper; "but she must go—I neither will, nor dare, stop her from returning to her father."

"And if she does," swore the Duke internally, "I would, as Sir Andrew Smith saith, I might never touch fair lady's hand." And stepping back, he spoke a few words with Empson the musician, who left the apartment, for a few minutes, and presently returned.

The King seemed irresolute concerning the part he should act under circumstances so peculiar. To be foiled in a gallant intrigue, was to subject himself to the ridicule of his gay court; to persist in it by any means which approached to constraint, would have been tyrannical; and, what perhaps he might judge as severe an imputation, it would have been unbecoming a gentleman. "Upon my honour, young lady," he said, with an emphasis, "you have nothing to fear in this house. But it is improper, for your own sake, that you should leave it in this abrupt manner. If you will have the goodness to wait but a quarter of an hour, Mistress Chiffinch's coach will be placed at your command, to transport you where you will. Spare yourself the ridicule, and me the pain of seeing you leave the house of one of my servants, as if you were escaping from a prison."

The King spoke in good-natured sincerity, and Alice was inclined for an instant to listen to his advice; but recollecting that she had to search for her father and uncle, or, failing them, for some suitable place of secure residence, it rushed on her mind that the attendants of Mistress Chiffinch were not likely to prove trusty guides or assistants in such a purpose. Firmly and respectfully she announced her purpose of instant departure. She needed no other escort, she said, than what this gentleman, Master Julian Peveril, who was well known to her father, would willingly afford her; nor did she need that farther than until she had reached her father's residence.

"Farewell, then, lady, a God's name!" said the King; "I am sorry so much beauty should be wedded to so many shrewish suspicions.—For you, Master Peveril, I should have thought you had enough to do with your own affairs without interfering with the humours of the fair sex. The duty of conducting all strayed damsels into the right path is, as matters go in this good city, rather too weighty an undertaking for your youth and inexperience."

Julian, eager to conduct Alice from a place of which he began fully to appreciate the perils, answered nothing to this taunt, but bowing reverently, led her from the apartment. Her sudden appearance, and the animated scene which followed, had entirely absorbed, for the moment, the recollection of his father and of the Countess of Derby; and while the dumb attendant of the latter remained in the room, a silent, and, as it were, stunned spectator of all that had happened, Peveril had become, in the predominating interest of Alice's critical situation, totally forgetful of her presence. But no sooner had he left the room, without noticing or attending to her, than Fenella, starting, as from a trance, drew herself up, and looked wildly around, like one waking from a dream, as if to assure herself that her companion was gone, and gone without paying the slightest attention to her. She folded her hands together, and cast her eyes upwards, with an expression of such agony as explained to Charles (as he thought) what painful ideas were passing in her mind. "This Peveril is a perfect pattern of successful perfidy, carrying off this Queen of the Amazons, but he has left us, I think, a disconsolate Ariadne in her place.—But weep not, my princess of pretty movements," he said, addressing himself to Fenella; "if we cannot call in Bacchus to console you, we will commit you to the care of Empson, who shall drink with *Liber Pater* for a thousand pounds, and I will say done first."

As the King spoke these words, Fenella rushed past him with her wonted rapidity of step, and, with much less courtesy than was due to the royal presence, hurried downstairs, and out of the house, without attempting to open any communication with the Monarch. He saw her abrupt departure with more surprise than displeasure; and presently afterwards, bursting into a fit of laughter, he said to the Duke, "Oddsfish, George, this young spark might teach the best of us how to manage the wenches. I have had my own experience, but I could never yet contrive either to win or lose them with so little ceremony."

"Experience, sir," replied the duke, "cannot be acquired without years."

"True, George; and you would, I suppose, insinuate," said Charles, "that the gallant who acquires it, loses as much in youth as he gains in art? I defy your insinuation, George. You cannot overreach your master, old as you think him, either in love or politics. You have not the secret *plumer la poule sans la faire crier*, witness this morning's work. I will give you odds at all games—ay, and at the Mall too, if thou darest accept my challenge.—Chiffinch, what for dost thou convulse thy pretty throat and face with sobbing and hatching tears, which seem rather unwilling to make their appearance!"

"It is for fear," whined Chiffinch, "that your Majesty should think—that you should expect——"

"That I should expect gratitude from a courtier, or faith from a woman?" answered the King, patting her at the same time under the chin, to make her raise her face—"Tush! chicken, I am not so superfluous."

"There it is now," said Chiffinch, continuing to sob the more bitterly, as she felt herself unable to produce any tears; "I see your Majesty is determined to lay all the blame on me, when I am innocent as an unborn babe—I will be judged by his Grace."

"No doubt, no doubt, Chiffie," said the King. "His Grace and you will be excellent judges in each other's cause, and as good witnesses in each other's favour. But to investigate the matter impartially, we must examine our evidence apart.—My Lord Duke, we meet at the Mall at noon, if your Grace dare accept my challenge." His Grace of Buckingham bowed, and retired.

CHAPTER XXXII

*But when the bully with assuming pace,
Cocks his broad hat, edged round with tarnish'd lace,
Yield not the way—defy his strutting pride,
And thrust him to the muddy kennel's side,
Yet rather bear the shower and toils of mud,
Than in the doubtful quarrel risk thy blood.*

—GAY'S TRIVIA.

Julian Peveril, half-leading, half-supporting, Alice Bridgenorth, had reached the middle of Saint Jame's Street ere the doubt occurred to him which way they should bend their course. He then asked Alice whither he should conduct her, and learned, to his surprise and embarrassment, that, far from knowing where her father was to be found, she had no certain knowledge that he was in London, and only hoped that he had arrived, from the expressions which he had used at parting. She mentioned her uncle Christian's address, but it was with doubt and hesitation, arising from the hands in which he had already placed her; and her reluctance to go again under his protection was strongly confirmed by her youthful guide, when a few words had established to his conviction the identity of Ganlesse and Christian.—What then was to be done?

"Alice," said Julian, after a moment's reflection, "you must seek your earliest and best friend—I mean my mother. She has now no castle in which to receive you—she has but a miserable lodging, so near the jail in which my father is confined, that it seems almost a cell of the same prison. I have not seen her since my

coming hither; but thus much have I learned by inquiry. We will now go to her apartment; such as it is, I know she will share it with one so innocent and so unprotected as you are."

"Gracious Heaven!" said the poor girl, "am I then so totally deserted, that I must throw myself on the mercy of her who, of all the world, has most reason to spurn me from her?—Julian, can you advise me to this?—Is there none else who will afford me a few hours' refuge, till I can hear from my father?—No other protectress but her whose ruin has, I fear, been accelerated by—Julian, I dare not appear before your mother! she must hate me for my family, and despise me for my meanness. To be a second time cast on her protection, when the first has been so evil repaid—Julian, I dare not go with you."

"She has never ceased to love you, Alice," said her conductor, whose steps she continued to attend, even while declaring her resolution not to go with him, "she never felt anything but kindness towards you, nay, towards your father; for though his dealings with us have been harsh, she can allow much for the provocation which he has received. Believe me, with her you will be safe as with a mother—perhaps it may be the means of reconciling the divisions by which we have suffered so much."

"Might God grant it!" said Alice. "Yet how shall I face your mother? And will she be able to protect me against these powerful men—against my uncle Christian? Alas, that I must call him my worst enemy!"

"She has the ascendancy which honour hath over infamy, and virtue over vice," said Julian; "and to no human power but your father's will she resign you, if you consent to choose her for your protectress. Come, then, with me, Alice; and——"

Julian was interrupted by some one, who, laying an unceremonious hold of his cloak, pulled it with so much force as compelled him to stop and lay his hand on his sword. He turned at the same time, and, when he turned, beheld Fenella. The cheek of the mute glowed like fire; her eyes sparkled, and her lips were forcibly drawn together, as if she had difficulty to repress those wild screams which usually attended her agonies of passion, and which, uttered in the open street, must instantly have collected a crowd. As it was, her appearance was so singular, and her emotion so evident, that men gazed as they came on, and looked back after they had passed, at the singular vivacity of her gestures; while, holding Peveril's cloak with one hand, she made with the other the most eager and imperious signs that he should leave Alice Bridgenorth and follow her. She touched the plume in her bonnet to remind him of the Earl—pointed to her heart, to imitate the Countess—raised her closed hand, as if to command him in their name—and next moment folded both, as if to supplicate him in her own; while pointing to Alice with an expression at once of angry and scornful derision, she waved her hand repeatedly and disdainfully, to intimate that Peveril ought to cast her off, as something undeserving his protection.

Frightened, she knew not why, at these wild gestures, Alice clung closer to Julian's arm than she had at first dared to do; and this mark of confidence in his protection seemed to increase the passion of Fenella.

Julian was dreadfully embarrassed; his situation was sufficiently precarious, even before Fenella's ungovernable passions threatened to ruin the only plan which he had been able to suggest. What she wanted with him—how far the fate of the Earl and Countess might depend on his following her, he could not even conjecture; but be the call how peremptory soever, he resolved not to comply with it until he had seen Alice placed in safety. In the meantime, he determined not to lose sight of Fenella; and disregarding her repeated, disdainful, and impetuous rejection of the hand which he offered her, he at length seemed so far to have soothed her, that she seized upon his right arm, and, as if despairing of his following *her* path, appeared reconciled to attend him on that which he himself should choose.

Thus, with a youthful female clinging to each arm, and both remarkably calculated to attract the public eye, though from very different reasons, Julian resolved to make the shortest road to the water-side, and there to take boat for Blackfriars, as the nearest point of landing to Newgate, where he concluded that Lance had already announced his arrival in London to Sir Geoffrey, then inhabiting that dismal region, and to his lady, who, so far as the jailer's rigour permitted, shared and softened his imprisonment.

Julian's embarrassment in passing Charing Cross and Northumberland House was so great as to excite the attention of the passengers; for he had to compose his steps so as to moderate the unequal and rapid pace of Fenella to the timid and faint progress of his left-hand companion; and while it would have been needless to address himself to the former, who could not comprehend him, he dared not speak himself to Alice, for fear of awakening into frenzy the jealousy, or at least the impatience of Fenella.

Many passengers looked at them with wonder, and some with smiles; but Julian remarked that there were two who never lost sight of them, and to whom his situation, and the demeanour of his companions, seemed to afford matter of undisguised merriment. These were young men, such as may be seen in the same precincts in the present day, allowing for the difference in the fashion of their apparel. They abounded in periwig, and fluttered with many hundred yards of ribbon, disposed in bow-knots upon their sleeves, their breeches, and their waistcoats, in the very extremity of the existing mode. A quantity of lace and embroidery made their habits rather fine than tasteful. In a word, they were dressed in that caricature of the fashion, which sometimes denotes a harebrained man of quality who has a mind to be distinguished as a fop of the first order, but is much more frequently in the disguise of those who desire to be esteemed men of rank on account of their dress, having no other pretension to the distinction.

These two gallants passed Peveril more than once, linked arm in arm, then sauntered, so as to oblige him to pass them in turn, laughing and whispering during these manoeuvres—staring broadly at Peveril and his female companions—and affording them, as they came into contact, none of those facilities of giving place which are required on such occasions by the ordinary rules of the pavé.

Peveril did not immediately observe their impertinence; but when it was too gross to escape his notice, his gall began to arise; and, in addition to all the other embarrassments of his situation, he had to combat the longing desire which he felt to cudgel handsomely the two coxcombs who seemed thus determined on insulting him. Patience and sufferance were indeed strongly imposed on him by circumstances; but at length it became scarcely possible to observe their dictates any longer.

When, for the third time, Julian found himself obliged, with his companions, to pass this troublesome brace of fops, they kept walking close behind him, speaking so loud as to be heard, and in a tone of perfect indifference whether he listened to them or not.

"This is bumpkin's best luck," said the taller of the two (who was indeed a man of remarkable size, alluding to the plainness of Peveril's dress, which was scarce fit for the streets of London)—"Two such fine wenches, and under guard of a grey frock and an oaken riding-rod!"

"Nay, Puritan's luck rather, and more than enough of it," said his companion. "You may read Puritan in his pace and in his patience."

"Right as a pint bumper, Tom," said his friend—"Isschar is an ass that stoopeth between two burdens."

"I have a mind to ease long-eared Laurence of one of his encumbrances," said the shorter fellow. "That black-eyed sparkler looks as if she had a mind to run away from him."

"Ay," answered the taller, "and the blue-eyed trembler looks as if she would fall behind into my loving arms."

At these words, Alice, holding still closer by Peveril's arm than formerly, mended her pace almost to running, in order to escape from men whose language was so alarming; and Fenella walked hastily forward in the same manner, having perhaps caught, from the men's gestures and demeanour, that apprehension which Alice had taken from their language.

Fearful of the consequences of a fray in the streets, which must necessarily separate him from these unprotected females, Peveril endeavoured to compound betwixt the prudence necessary for their protection and his own rising resentment; and as this troublesome pair of attendants endeavoured again to pass them close to Hungerford Stairs, he said to them with constrained calmness, "Gentlemen, I owe you something for the attention you have bestowed on the affairs of a stranger. If you have any pretension to the name I have given you, you will tell me where you are to be found."

"And with what purpose," said the taller of the two sneeringly, "does your most rustic gravity, or your most grave rusticity, require of us such information?"

So saying, they both faced about, in such a manner as to make it impossible for Julian to advance any farther.

"Make for the stairs, Alice," he said; "I will be with you in an instant." Then freeing himself with difficulty from the grasp of his companions, he cast his cloak hastily round his left arm, and said, sternly, to his opponents, "Will you give me your names, sirs; or will you be pleased to make way?"

"Not till we know for whom we are to give place," said one of them.

"For one who will else teach you what you want—good manners," said Peveril, and advanced as if to push between them.

They separated, but one of them stretched forth his foot before Peveril, as if he meant to trip him. The blood of his ancestors was already boiling within him; he struck the man on the face with the oaken rod which he had just sneered at, and throwing it from him, instantly unsheathed his sword. Both the others drew, and pushed at once; but he caught the point of the one rapier in his cloak, and parried the other thrust with his own weapon. He must have been less lucky in the second close, but a cry arose among the watermen, of "Shame, shame! two upon one!"

"They are men of the Duke of Buckingham's," said one fellow—"there's no safe meddling with them."

"They may be the devil's men, if they will," said an ancient Triton, flourishing his stretch; "but I say fair play, and old England for ever; and, I say, knock the gold-laced puppies down, unless they will fight turn about with grey jerkin, like honest fellows. One down—t'other come on."

The lower orders of London have in all times been remarkable for the delight which they have taken in club-law, or fist-law; and for the equity and impartiality with which they see it administered. The noble science of defence was then so generally known, that a bout at single rapier excited at that time as much interest and as little wonder as a boxing-match in our own days. The bystanders experienced in such affrays, presently formed a ring, within which Peveril and the taller and more forward of his antagonists were soon engaged in close combat with their swords, whilst the other, overawed by the spectators, was prevented from interfering.

"Well done the tall fellow!"—"Well thrust, long-legs!"—"Huzza for two ells and a quarter!" were the sounds with which the fray was at first cheered; for Peveril's opponent not only showed great activity and skill in fence, but had also a decided advantage, from the anxiety with which Julian looked out for Alice Bridgenorth; the care for whose safety diverted him in the beginning of the onset from that which he ought to have exclusively bestowed on the defence of his own life. A slight flesh-wound in the side at once punished, and warned him of, his inadvertence; when, turning his whole thoughts on the business in which he was engaged, and animated with anger against his impertinent intruder, the rencontre speedily began to assume another face, amidst cries of "Well done, grey jerkin!"—"Try the metal of his gold doublet!"—"Finely thrust!"—"Curiously parried!"—"There went another eyelet-hole to his brodered jerkin!"—"Fairly pinked, by G—d!" In applause, accompanying a successful and conclusive lunge, by which Peveril ran his gigantic antagonist through the body. He looked at his prostrate foe for a moment; then, recovering himself, called loudly to know what had become of the lady.

"Never mind the lady, if you be wise," said one of the watermen; "the constable will be here in an instant. I'll give your honour a cast across the water in a moment. It may be as much as your neck's worth. Shall only charge a Jacobus."

"You be d—d!" said one of his rivals in profession, "as your father was before you; for a Jacobus, I'll set the gentleman into Alsatia, where neither bailiff nor constable dare trespass."

"The lady, you scoundrels, the lady!" exclaimed Peveril—"Where is the lady?"

"I'll carry your honour where you shall have enough of ladies, if that be your want," said the old Triton; and as he spoke, the clamour amongst the watermen was renewed, each hoping to cut his own profit out of the emergency of Julian's situation.

"A sculler will be least suspected, your honour," said one fellow.

"A pair of oars will carry you through the water like a wild-duck," said another.

"But you have got never a tilt, brother," said a third. "Now I can put the gentleman as snug as if he were under hatches."

In the midst of the oaths and clamour attending this aquatic controversy for his custom, Peveril at length made them understand that he would bestow a Jacobus, not on him whose boat was first oars, but on whomsoever should inform him of the fate of the lady.

"Of which lady?" said a sharp fellow: "for, to my thought, there was a pair of them."

"Of both, of both," answered Peveril; "but first, of the fair-haired lady?"

"Ay, ay, that was she that shrieked so when gold-jacket's companion handed her into No. 20."

"Who—what—who dared to hand her?" exclaimed Peveril.

"Nay, master, you have heard enough of my tale without a fee," said the waterman.

"Sordid rascal!" said Peveril, giving him a gold piece, "speak out, or I'll run my sword through you!"

"For the matter of that, master," answered the fellow, "not while I can handle this trunnion—but a bargain's a bargain; and so I'll tell you, for your gold piece, that the comrade of the fellow forced one of your wenches, her with the fair hair, will she, nill she, into Tickling Tom's wherry; and they are far enough up Thames by this time, with wind and tide."

"Sacred Heaven, and I stand here!" exclaimed Julian.

"Why, that is because your honour will not take a boat."

"You are right, my friend—a boat—a boat instantly!"

"Follow me, then, squire.—Here, Tom, bear a hand—the gentleman is our fare."

A volley of water language was exchanged betwixt the successful candidate for Peveril's custom and his disappointed brethren, which concluded by the ancient Triton's bellowing out, in a tone above them all, "that the gentleman was in a fair way to make a voyage to the isle of gulls, for that sly Jack was only bantering him—No. 20 had rowed for York Buildings."

"To the isle of gallows," cried another; "for here comes one who will mar his trip up Thames, and carry him down to Execution Dock."

In fact, as he spoke the word, a constable, with three or four of his assistants, armed with the old-fashioned brown bills, which were still used for arming those guardians of the peace, cut off our hero's farther progress to the water's edge, by arresting him in the King's name. To attempt resistance would have been madness, as he was surrounded on all sides; so Peveril was disarmed, and carried before the nearest Justice of the Peace, for examination and committal.

The legal sage before whom Julian was taken was a man very honest in his intentions, very bounded in his talents, and rather timid in his disposition. Before the general alarm given to England, and to the city of London in particular, by the notable discovery of the Popish Plot, Master Maulstatute had taken serene and undisturbed pride and pleasure in the discharge of his duties as a Justice of the Peace, with the exercise of all its honorary privileges and awful authority. But the murder of Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey had made a strong, nay, an indelible impression on his mind; and he walked the Courts of Themis with fear and trembling after that memorable and melancholy event.

Having a high idea of his official importance, and rather an exalted notion of his personal consequence, his honour saw nothing from that time but cords and daggers before his eyes, and never stepped out of his own house, which he fortified, and in some measure garrisoned, with half-a-dozen tall watchmen and constables, without seeing himself watched by a Papist in disguise, with a drawn sword under his cloak. It was even whispered, that, in the agonies of his fears, the worshipful Master Maulstatute mistook the kitchen-wench with a tinderbox, for a Jesuit with a pistol; but if any one dared to laugh at such an error, he would have done well to conceal his mirth, lest he fell under the heavy inculcation of being a banterer and stifler of the Plot—a crime almost as deep as that of being himself a plotter. In fact, the fears of the honest Justice, however ridiculously exorbitant, were kept so much in countenance by the outcry of the day, and the general nervous fever, which afflicted every good Protestant, that Master Maulstatute was accounted the bolder man and the better magistrate, while, under the terror of the air-drawn dagger which fancy placed continually before his eyes, he continued to dole forth Justice in the recesses of his private chamber, nay, occasionally to attend Quarter-Sessions, when the hall was guarded by a sufficient body of the militia. Such was the wight, at whose door, well chained and doubly bolted, the constable who had Julian in custody now gave his important and well-known knock.

Notwithstanding this official signal, the party was not admitted until the clerk, who acted the part of high-warder, had reconnoitred them through a grated wicket; for who could say whether the Papists might not have made themselves master of Master Constable's sign, and have prepared a pseudo watch to burst in and murder the Justice, under pretence of bringing in a criminal before him?—Less hopeful projects had figured in the Narrative of the Popish Plot.

All being found right, the key was turned, the bolts were drawn, and the chain unhooked, so as to permit entrance to the constable, the prisoner, and the assistants; and the door was then suddenly shut against the witnesses, who, as less trustworthy persons, were requested (through the wicket) to remain in the yard, until they should be called in their respective turns.

Had Julian been inclined for mirth, as was far from being the case, he must have smiled at the incongruity of the clerk's apparel, who had belted over his black buckram suit a buff baldric, sustaining a broadsword, and a pair of huge horse-pistols; and, instead of the low flat hat, which, coming in place of the city cap, completed the dress of a scrivener, had placed on his greasy locks a rusted steel-cap, which had seen Marston-Moor; across which projected his well-used quill, in the guise of a plume—the shape of the morion not admitting of its being stuck, as usual, behind his ear.

This whimsical figure conducted the constable, his assistants, and the prisoner, into the low hall, where his principal dealt forth justice; who presented an appearance still more singular than that of his dependant.

Sundry good Protestants, who thought so highly of themselves as to suppose they were worthy to be distinguished as objects of Catholic cruelty, had taken to defensive arms on the occasion. But it was quickly found that a breast-plate and back-plate of proof, fastened together with iron clasps, was no convenient enclosure for a man who meant to eat venison and custard; and that a buff-coat or shirt of mail was scarcely more accommodating to the exertions necessary on such active occasions. Besides, there were other objections, as the alarming and menacing aspects which such warlike habiliments gave to the Exchange, and other places, where merchants most do congregate; and excoriations were bitterly complained of by many, who, not belonging to the artillery company, or trained bands, had no experience in bearing defensive armour.

To obviate these objections, and, at the same time, to secure the persons of all true Protestant citizens against open force or privy assassinations on the part of the Papists, some ingenious artist, belonging, we may presume, to the worshipful Mercers' Company, had contrived a species of armour, of which neither the horse-armory in the Tower, nor Gwynnap's Gothic Hall, no, nor Dr. Meyrick's invaluable collection of ancient arms, has preserved any specimen. It was called silk-armour, being composed of a doublet and breeches of quilted silk, so closely stitched, and of such thickness, as to be proof against either bullet or steel; while a thick bonnet of the same materials, with ear-flaps attached to it, and on the whole, much resembling a nightcap, completed the equipment and ascertained the security of the wearer from the head to the knee.

Master Maulstatute, among other worthy citizens, had adopted this singular panoply, which had the advantage of being soft, and warm, and flexible, as well as safe. And he now sat in his judicial elbow-chair—a short, rotund figure, hung round, as it were, with cushions, for such was the appearance of the quilted garments; and with a nose protruded from under the silken casque, the size of which, together with the unwieldiness of the whole figure, gave his worship no indifferent resemblance to the sign of the Hog in Armour, which was considerably improved by the defensive garment being of dusty orange colour, not altogether unlike the hue of those half-wild swine which are to be found in the forest of Hampshire.

Secure in these invulnerable envelopments, his worship had rested content, although severed from his own death-doing weapons, of rapier, poniard, and pistols, which were placed nevertheless, at no great distance from his chair. One offensive implement, indeed, he thought it prudent to keep on the table beside his huge Coke upon Lyttleton. This was a sort of pocket flail, consisting of a piece of strong ash, about eighteen inches long, to which was attached a swinging club of *lignum-vitæ*, nearly twice as long as the handle, but jointed so as to be easily folded up. This instrument, which bore at that time the singular name of the Protestant flail, might be concealed under the coat, until circumstances demanded its public appearance. A better precaution against surprise than his arms, whether offensive or defensive, was a strong iron grating, which, crossing the room in front of the justice's table, and communicating by a grated door, which was usually kept locked, effectually separated the accused party from his judge.

Justice Maulstatute, such as we have described him, chose to hear the accusation of the witnesses before calling on Peveril for his defence. The detail of the affray was briefly given by the bystanders, and seemed deeply to touch the spirit of the examiner. He shook his silken casque emphatically, when he understood that, after some language betwixt the parties, which the witnesses did not quite understand, the young man in custody struck the first blow, and drew his sword before the wounded party had unsheathed his weapon. Again he shook his crested head yet more solemnly, when the result of the conflict was known; and yet again, when one of the witnesses declared, that, to the best of his knowledge, the sufferer in the fray was a gentleman belonging to the household of his Grace the Duke of Buckingham.

"A worthy peer," quoth the armed magistrate—"a true Protestant, and a friend to his country. Mercy on us, to what a height of audacity hath this age arisen! We see well, and could, were we as blind as a mole, out of what quiver this shaft hath been drawn."

He then put on his spectacles, and having desired Julian to be brought forward, he glared upon him awfully with those glazen eyes, from under the shade of his quilted turban.

"So young," he said, "and so hardened—lack-a-day!—and a Papist, I'll warrant."

Peveril had time enough to recollect the necessity of his being at large, if he could possibly obtain his freedom, and interposed here a civil contradiction of his worship's gracious supposition. "He was no Catholic," he said, "but an unworthy member of the Church of England."

"Perhaps but a lukewarm Protestant, notwithstanding," said the sage Justice; "there are those amongst us who ride tantivy to Rome, and have already made out half the journey—ahem!"

Peveril disowned his being any such.

"And who art thou, then?" said the Justice; "for, friend, to tell you plainly, I like not your visage—ahem!"

These short and emphatic coughs were accompanied each by a succinct nod, intimating the perfect conviction of the speaker that he had made the best, the wisest, and the most acute observation, of which the premises admitted.

Julian, irritated by the whole circumstances of his detention, answered the Justice's interrogation in rather a lofty tone. "My name is Julian Peveril!"

"Now, Heaven be around us!" said the terrified Justice—"the son of that black-hearted Papist and traitor, Sir Geoffrey Peveril, now in hands, and on the verge of trial!"

"How, sir!" exclaimed Julian, forgetting his situation, and, stepping forward to the grating, with a violence which made the bars clatter, he so startled the appalled Justice, that, snatching his Protestant flail, Master Maulstatute aimed a blow at his prisoner, to repel what he apprehended was a premeditated attack. But whether it was owing to the Justice's hurry of mind, or inexperience in managing the weapon, he not only missed his aim, but brought the swinging part of the machine round his own skull, with such a severe counter-buff, as completely to try the efficacy of his cushioned helmet, and, in spite of its defence, to convey a stunning sensation, which he rather hastily imputed to the consequence of a blow received from Peveril.

His assistants did not directly confirm the opinion which the Justice had so unwarrantably adopted; but all with one voice agreed that, but for their own active and instantaneous interference, there was no knowing what mischief might have been done by a person so dangerous as the prisoner. The general opinion that he meant to proceed in the matter of his own rescue, *par voie du fait*, was indeed so deeply impressed on all present, that Julian saw it would be in vain to offer any defence, especially being but too conscious that the alarming and probably the fatal consequences of his rencontre with the bully, rendered his commitment inevitable. He contented himself with asking into what prison he was to be thrown; and when the formidable word Newgate was returned as full answer, he had at least the satisfaction to reflect, that, stern and dangerous as was the shelter of that roof, he should at least enjoy it in company with his father; and that, by some means or other, they might perhaps obtain the satisfaction of a melancholy meeting, under the circumstances of mutual calamity, which seemed impending over their house.

Assuming the virtue of more patience than he actually possessed, Julian gave the magistrate (to whom all the mildness of his demeanour could not, however, reconcile him), the direction to the house where he lodged, together with a request that his servant, Lance Outram, might be permitted to send him his money and wearing apparel; adding, that all which might be in his possession, either of arms or writings,—the former amounting to a pair of travelling pistols, and the last to a few memoranda of little consequence, he willingly consented to place at the disposal of the magistrate. It was in that moment that he entertained, with sincere satisfaction, the comforting reflection, that the important papers of Lady Derby were already in the possession of the sovereign.

The Justice promised attention to his requests; but reminded him, with great dignity, that his present complacent and submissive behaviour ought, for his own sake, to have been adopted from the beginning, instead of disturbing the presence of magistracy with such atrocious marks of the malignant, rebellious, and murderous spirit of Popery, as he had at first exhibited. "Yet," he said, "as he was a goodly young man, and of honourable quality, he would not suffer him to be dragged through the streets as a felon, but had ordered a coach for his accommodation."

His honour, Master Maulstatute, uttered the word "coach" with the importance of one who, as Dr. Johnson saith of later date, is conscious of the dignity of putting horses to his chariot. The worshipful Master Maulstatute did not, however on this occasion, do Julian the honour of yoking to his huge family caroché the two "frampal jades" (to use the term of the period), which were wont to drag that ark to the meeting house of pure and precious Master Howlaglass, on a Thursday's evening for lecture, and on a Sunday for a four-hours' sermon. He had recourse to a leathern convenience, then more rare, but just introduced, with every prospect of the great facility which has since been afforded by hackney coaches, to all manner of communication, honest and dishonest, legal and illegal. Our friend Julian, hitherto much more accustomed to the saddle than to any other conveyance, soon found himself in a hackney carriage, with the constable and two assistants for his companions, armed up to the teeth—the port of destination being, as they had already intimated, the ancient fortress of Newgate.

CHAPTER XXXIII

*'Tis the black ban-dog of our jail—Pray look on him,
But at a wary distance—rouse him not—
He bays not till he worries.*

—THE BLACK DOG OF NEWGATE.

The coach stopped before those tremendous gates, which resemble those of Tartarus, save only that they rather more frequently permit safe and honourable egress; although at the price of the same anxiety and labour with which Hercules, and one or two of the demi-gods, extricated themselves from the Hell of the ancient mythology, and sometimes, it is said, by the assistance of the golden boughs.

Julian stepped out of the vehicle, carefully supported on either side by his companions, and also by one or two turnkeys, whom the first summons of the deep bell at the gate had called to their assistance. That attention, it may be guessed, was not bestowed lest he should make a false step, so much as for fear of his attempting an escape, of which he had no intentions. A few pretences and straggling boys of the neighbouring market, which derived considerable advantage from increase of custom, in consequence of the numerous committals on account of the Popish Plot, and who therefore were zealous of Protestants, saluted him on his descent with jubilee shouts of "Whoop, Papist! whoop, Papist! D——n to the Pope, and all his adherents!"

Under such auspices, Peveril was ushered in beneath that gloomy gateway, where so many bid adieu on their entrance at once to honour and to life. The dark and dismal arch under which he soon found himself opened upon a large courtyard, where a number of debtors were employed in playing at handball, pitch-and-toss, hustle-cap, and other games, for which relaxations the rigour of their creditors afforded them full leisure, while it debarred them the means of pursuing the honest labour by which they might have redeemed their affairs, and maintained their starving and beggared families.

But with this careless and desperate group Julian was not to be numbered, being led, or rather forced, by his conductors, into a low arched door, which, carefully secured by bolts and bars, opened for his reception on one side of the archway, and closed, with all its fastenings, the moment after his hasty entrance. He was then conducted along two or three gloomy passages, which, where they intersected each other, were guarded by as many strong wickets, one of iron gates, and the others of stout oak, clinched with plates, and studded with nails of the same metal. He was not allowed to pause until he found himself hurried into a little round vaulted room, which several of these passages opened into, and which seemed, with respect to the labyrinth through part of which he had passed, to resemble the central point of a spider's web, in which the main lines of that reptile's curious maze are always found to terminate.

The resemblance did not end here; for in this small vaulted apartment, the walls of which were hung round with musketoons, pistols, cutlasses, and other weapons, as well as with many sets of fetters and irons of different construction, all disposed in great order, and ready for employment, a person sat, who might not unaptly be compared to a huge bloated and bottled spider, placed there to secure the prey which had fallen into his toils.

This official had originally been a very strong and square-built man, of large size, but was now so overgrown, from overfeeding, perhaps, and want of exercise, as to bear the same resemblance to his former self which a stall-fed ox still retains to a wild bull. The look of no man is so inauspicious as a fat man, upon whose features ill-nature has marked an habitual stamp. He seems to have reversed the old proverb of "laugh and be fat," and to have thriven under the influence of the worst affections of the mind. Passionate we can allow a jolly mortal to be; but it seems unnatural to his goodly case to be sulky and brutal. Now this man's features, surly and tallow-coloured; his limbs, swelled and disproportioned; his huge paunch and unwieldy carcass, suggested the idea, that, having once found his way into this central recess, he had there fattened, like the weasel in the fable, and fed largely and foully, until he had become incapable of retreating through any of the narrow paths that terminated at his cell; and was thus compelled to remain, like a toad under the cold stone, fattening amid the squalid airs of the dungeons by which he was surrounded, which would have proved pestiferous to any other than such a congenial inhabitant. Huge iron-clasped books lay before this ominous specimen of pinguity—the records of the realm of misery, in which office he officiated as prime minister; and had Peveril come thither as an unconcerned visitor, his heart would have sunk within him at considering the mass of human wretchedness which must needs be registered in these fatal volumes. But his own distresses sat too heavy on his mind to permit any general reflections of this nature.

The constable and this bulky official whispered together, after the former had delivered to the latter the warrant of Julian's commitment. The word *whispered* is not quite accurate, for their communication was carried on less by words than by looks and expressive signs; by which, in all such situations, men learn to supply the use of language, and to add mystery to what is in itself sufficiently terrible to the captive. The only words which could be heard were those of the Warden, or, as he was called then, the Captain of the Jail, "Another bird to the cage——?"

"Who will whistle 'Pretty Pope of Rome,' with any starling in your Knight's ward," answered the constable, with a facetious air, checked, however, by the due respect to the supreme presence in which he stood.

The Grim Feature relaxed into something like a smile as he heard the officer's observation; but instantly composing himself into the stern solemnity which for an instant had been disturbed, he looked fiercely at his new guest, and pronounced with an awful and emphatic, yet rather an under-voice, the single and impressive word, "*Garnish!*"

Julian Peveril replied with assumed composure; for he had heard of the customs of such places, and was resolved to comply with them, so as if possible to obtain the favour of seeing his father, which he shrewdly guessed must depend on his gratifying the avarice of the keeper. "I am quite ready," he said, "to accede to the customs of the place in which I unhappily find myself. You have but to name your demands, and I will satisfy them."

So saying, he drew out his purse, thinking himself at the same time fortunate that he had retained about him a considerable sum of gold. The Captain remarked its width, depth, its extension, and depression, with an involuntary smile, which had scarce contorted his hanging under-lip, and the wiry and greasy moustache which thatched the upper, when it was checked by the recollection that there were regulations which set bounds to his rapacity, and prevented him from pouncing on his prey like a kite, and swooping it all off at once.

This chilling reflection produced the following sullen reply to Peveril:—"There were sundry rates. Gentlemen must choose for themselves. He asked nothing but his fees. But civility," he muttered, "must be paid for."

"And shall, if I can have it for payment," said Peveril; "but the price, my good sir, the price?"

He spoke with some degree of scorn, which he was the less anxious to repress, that he saw, even in this jail, his purse gave him an indirect but powerful influence over his jailer.

The Captain seemed to feel the same; for, as he spoke, he plucked from his head, almost involuntarily, a sort of scalded fur-cap, which served it for covering. But his fingers revolting from so unusual an act of complaisance, began to indemnify themselves by scratching his grizzly shock-head, as he muttered, in a tone resembling the softened growling of a mastiff when he has ceased to bay the intruder who shows no fear of him,—*"There are different rates. There is the Little Ease, for common fees of the crown—rather dark, and the common sewer runs below it; and some gentlemen object to the company, who are chiefly padders and michers. Then the Master's side—the garnish came to one piece—and none lay stowed there but who were in for murder at the least."*

"Name your highest price, sir, and take it," was Julian's concise reply.

"Three pieces for the Knight's ward," answered the governor of this terrestrial Tartarus.

"Take five, and place me with Sir Geoffrey," was again Julian's answer, throwing down the money upon the desk before him.

"Sir Geoffrey?—Hum!—ay, Sir Geoffrey," said the jailer, as if meditating what he ought to do. "Well, many a man has paid money to see Sir Geoffrey—Scarce so much as you have, though. But then you are like to see the last of him.—Ha, ha ha!"

These broken muttered exclamations, which terminated somewhat like the joyous growl of a tiger over his meal, Julian could not comprehend; and only replied to by repeating his request to be placed in the same cell with Sir Geoffrey.

"Ay, master," said the jailer, "never fear; I'll keep word with you, as you seem to know something of what belongs to your station and mine. And hark ye, Jem Clink will fetch you the darbies."

"Derby!" interrupted Julian,—*"Has the Earl or Countess——"*

"Earl or Countess!—Ha, ha, ha!" again laughed, or rather growled, the warden. "What is your head running on? You are a high fellow belike! but all is one here. The darbies are the fetlocks—the fast-keepers, my boy—the bail for good behaviour, my darling; and if you are not the more conforming, I can add you a steel nightcap, and a curious bosom-friend, to keep you warm of a winter night. But don't be disheartened; you have behaved genteel; and you shall not be put upon. And as for this here matter, ten to one it will turn out chance-medley, or manslaughter, at the worst on it; and then it is but a singed thumb instead of a twisted neck—always if there be no Papistry about it, for then I warrant nothing.—Take the gentleman's worship away, Clink."

A turnkey, who was one of the party that had ushered Peveril into the presence of this Cerberus, now conveyed him out in silence; and, under his guidance, the prisoner was carried through a second labyrinth of passages with cells opening on each side, to that which was destined for his reception.

On the road through this sad region, the turnkey more than once ejaculated, "Why, the gentleman must be stark-mad! Could have had the best crown cell to himself for less than half the garnish, and must pay double to pig in with Sir Geoffrey! Ha, ha!—Is Sir Geoffrey akin to you, if any one may make free to ask?"

"I am his son," answered Peveril sternly, in hopes to impose some curb on the fellow's impertinence; but the man only laughed louder than before.

"His son!—Why, that's best of all—Why, you are a strapping youth—five feet ten, if you be an inch—and Sir Geoffrey's son!—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Truce with your impertinence," said Julian. "My situation gives you no title to insult me!"

"No more I do," said the turnkey, smothering his mirth at the recollection, perhaps, that the prisoner's purse was not exhausted. "I only laughed because you said you were Sir Geoffrey's son. But no matter—'tis a wise child that knows his own father. And here is Sir Geoffrey's cell; so you and he may settle the fatherhood between you."

So saying, he ushered his prisoner into a cell, or rather a strong room of the better order, in which there were four chairs, a truckle-bed, and one or two other articles of furniture.

Julian looked eagerly around for his father; but to his surprise the room appeared totally empty. He turned with anger on the turnkey, and charged him with misleading him; but the fellow answered, "No, no, master; I have kept faith with you. Your father, if you call him so, is only tappiced in some corner. A small hole will hide him; but I'll rouse him out presently for you.—Here, hoicks!—Turn out, Sir Geoffrey!—Here is—Ha, ha, ha!—your son—or your wife's son—for I think you have but little share in him—come to wait on you."

Peveril knew not how to resent the man's insolence; and indeed his anxiety, and apprehension of some strange mistake, mingled with, and in some degree neutralised his anger. He looked again and again, around and around the room; until at length he became aware of something rolled up in a dark corner, which rather resembled a small bundle of crimson cloth than any living creature. At the vociferation of the turnkey, however, the object seemed to acquire life and motion, uncoiled itself in some degree, and, after an effort or two, gained an erect posture; still covered from top to toe with the crimson drapery in which it was at first wrapped. Julian, at the first glance, imagined from the size that he saw a child of five years old; but a shrill and peculiar tone of voice soon assured him of his mistake.

"Warder," said this unearthly sound, "what is the meaning of this disturbance? Have you more insults to heap on the head of one who hath ever been the butt of fortune's malice? But I have a soul that can wrestle with all my misfortunes; it is as large as any of your bodies."

"Nay, Sir Geoffrey, if this be the way you welcome your own son!" said the turnkey; "but you quality folks know your own ways best."

"My son!" exclaimed the little figure. "Audacious——"

"Here is some strange mistake," said Peveril, in the same breath. "I sought Sir Geoffrey——"

"And you have him before you, young man," said the pigmy tenant of the cell, with an air of dignity; at the same time casting on the floor his crimson cloak, and standing before them in his full dignity of three feet six inches of height. "I who was the favoured servant of three successive Sovereigns of the Crown of England, am now the tenant of this dungeon, and the sport of its brutal keepers. I am Sir Geoffrey Hudson."

Julian, though he had never before seen this important personage, had no difficulty in recognising, from description, the celebrated dwarf of Henrietta Maria, who had survived the dangers of civil war and private quarrel—the murder of his royal master, Charles I., and the exile of his widow—to fall upon evil tongues and evil days, amidst the unsparing accusations connected with the Popish Plot. He bowed to the unhappy old man, and hastened to explain to him, and to the turnkey, that it was Sir Geoffrey Peveril, of Martindale Castle in Derbyshire whose prison he desired to share.

"You should have said that before you parted with the gold-dust, my master," answered the turnkey; "for t'other Sir Geoffrey, that is the big, tall, grey-haired man, was sent to the Tower last night; and the Captain will think he has kept his word well enow with you, by lodging you with this here Sir Geoffrey Hudson, who is the better show of the two."

"I pray you go to your master," said Peveril; "explain the mistake; and say to him I beg to be sent to the Tower."

"The Tower!—Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed the fellow. "The Tower is for lords and knights, and not for squires of low degree—for high treason, and not for ruffing on the streets with rapier and dagger; and there must go a secretary's warrant to send you there."

"At least, let me not be a burden on this gentleman," said Julian. "There can be no use in quartering us together, since we are not even acquainted. Go tell your master of the mistake."

"Why, so I should," said Clink, still grinning, "if I were not sure that he knew it already. You paid to be sent to Sir Geoffrey, and he sent you to Sir Geoffrey. You are so put down in the register, and he will blot it for no man. Come, come, be comfortable, and you shall have light and easy irons—that's all I can do for you."

Resistance and expostulation being out of the question, Peveril submitted to have a light pair of fetters secured on his ankles, which allowed him, nevertheless, the power of traversing the apartment.

During this operation, he reflected that the jailer, who had taken the advantage of the equivoque betwixt the two Sir Geoffreys, must have acted as his assistant had hinted, and cheated him from malice prepense, since the warrant of committal described him as the son of Sir Geoffrey Peveril. It was therefore in vain, as well as degrading, to make farther application to such a man on the subject. Julian determined to submit to his fate, as what could not be averted by any effort of his own.

Even the turnkey was moved in some degree by his youth, good mien, and the patience with which, after the first effervescence of disappointment, the new prisoner resigned himself to his situation. "You seem a brave young gentleman," he said; "and shall at least have a good dinner, and as good a pallet to sleep on, as is within the walls of Newgate.—And, Master Sir Geoffrey, you ought to make much of him, since you do not like tall fellows; for I can tell you that Master Peveril is in for pinking long Jack Jenkins, that was the Master of Defence—as tall a man as in London, always excepting the King's Porter, Master Evans, that carried you about in his pocket, Sir Geoffrey, as all the world heard tell."

"Begone, fellow!" answered the dwarf. "Fellow, I scorn you!"

The turnkey sneered, withdrew, and locked the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXXIV

*Degenerate youth, and not of Tydeus' kind,
Whose little body lodged a mighty mind.*

—ILIAS.

Left quiet at least, if not alone, for the first time after the events of this troubled and varied day, Julian threw himself on an old oaken seat, beside the embers of a sea-coal fire, and began to muse on the miserable situation of anxiety and danger in which he was placed; where, whether he contemplated the interests of his love, his family affections, or his friendships, all seemed such a prospect as that of a sailor who looks upon breakers on every hand, from the deck of a vessel which no longer obeys the helm.

As Peveril sat sunk in despondency, his companion in misfortune drew a chair to the opposite side of the chimney-corner, and began to gaze at him with a sort of solemn earnestness, which at length compelled him, though almost in spite of himself, to pay some attention to the singular figure who seemed so much engrossed with contemplating him.

Geoffrey Hudson (we drop occasionally the title of knighthood, which the King had bestowed on him in a frolic, but which might introduce some confusion into our history), although a dwarf of the least possible size, had nothing positively ugly in his countenance, or actually distorted in his limbs. His head, hands, and feet were indeed large, and disproportioned to the height of his body, and his body itself much thicker than was consistent with symmetry, but in a degree which was rather ludicrous than disagreeable to look upon. His countenance, in particular, had he been a little taller, would have been accounted, in youth, handsome, and now, in age, striking and expressive; it was but the uncommon disproportion betwixt the head and the trunk which made the features seem whimsical and bizarre—an effect which was considerably increased by the dwarf's moustaches, which it was his pleasure to wear so large, that they almost twisted back amongst, and mingled with, his grizzled hair.

The dress of this singular wight announced that he was not entirely free from the unhappy taste which frequently induces those whom nature has marked by personal deformity, to distinguish, and at the same time to render themselves ridiculous, by the use of showy colours, and garments fantastically and extraordinarily fashioned. But poor Geoffrey Hudson's laces, embroideries, and the rest of his finery, were sorely worn and tarnished by the time which he had spent in jail, under the vague and malicious accusation that he was somehow or other an accomplice in this all-involving, all-devouring whirlpool of a Popish conspiracy—an impeachment which, if pronounced by a mouth the foulest and most malicious, was at that time sufficiently predominant to sully the fairest reputation. It will presently appear, that in the poor man's manner of thinking, and tone of conversation, there was something analogous to his absurd fashion of apparel; for, as in the latter, good stuff and valuable decorations were rendered ludicrous by the fantastic fashion in which they were made up; so, such glimmerings of good sense and honourable feeling as the little man often evinced, were made ridiculous by a restless desire to assume certain airs of importance, and a great jealousy of being despised, on account of the peculiarity of his outward form.

After the fellow-prisoners had looked at each other for some time in silence, the dwarf, conscious of his dignity as first owner of their joint apartment, thought it necessary to do the honours of it to the new-comer. "Sir," he said, modifying the alternate harsh and squeaking tones of his voice into accents as harmonious as they could attain, "I understand you to be the son of my worthy namesake, and ancient acquaintance, the stout Sir Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak. I promise you, I have seen your father where blows have been going more plenty than gold pieces; and for a tall heavy man, who lacked, as we martialists thought, some of the lightness and activity of our more slightly made Cavaliers, he performed his duty as a man might desire. I am happy to see you, his son; and, though by a mistake, I am glad we are to share this comfortless cabin together."

Julian bowed, and thanked his courtesy; and Geoffrey Hudson, having broken the ice, preceded to question him without further ceremony. "You are no courtier, I presume, young gentleman?"

Julian replied in the negative.

"I thought so," continued the dwarf; "for although I have now no official duty at Court, the region in which my early years were spent, and where I once held a considerable office, yet I still, when I had my liberty, visited the Presence from time to time, as in duty bound for former service; and am wont, from old habit, to take some note of the courtly gallants, those choice spirits of the age, among whom I was once enrolled. You are, not to compliment you, a marked figure, Master Peveril—though something of the tallest, as was your father's case; I think, I could scarce have seen you anywhere without remembering you."

Peveril thought he might, with great justice, have returned the compliment, but contented himself with saying, "he had scarce seen the British Court."

"Tis pity," said Hudson; "a gallant can hardly be formed without frequenting it. But you have been perhaps in a rougher school; you have served, doubtless?"

"My Maker, I hope," said Julian.

"Fie on it, you mistake. I meant," said Hudson, "*à la François*,—you have served in the army?"

"No. I have not yet had that honour," said Julian.

"What! neither courtier nor soldier, Master Peveril?" said the important little man: "your father is to blame. By cock and pie he is, Master Peveril! How shall a man be known, or distinguished, unless by his bearing in peace and war? I tell you, sir, that at Newberry, where I charged with my troop abreast with Prince Rupert, and when, as you may have heard, we were both beaten off by those cuckoldly hinds the Trained Bands of London,—we did what men could; and I think it was a matter of three or four minutes after most of our gentlemen had been driven off, that his Highness and I continued to cut at their long pikes with our swords; and I think might have broken in, but that I had a tall, long-legged brute of a horse, and my sword was somewhat short,—in fine, at last we were obliged to make volte-face, and then, as I was going to say, the fellows were so glad to get rid of us, that they set up a great jubilee cry of 'There goes Prince Robin and Cock Robin!'—Ay, ay, every scoundrel among them knew me well. But those days are over.—And where were you educated, young gentleman?"

Peveril named the household of the Countess of Derby.

"A most honourable lady, upon my word as a gentleman," said Hudson.—"I knew the noble Countess well when I was about the person of my royal mistress, Henrietta Maria. She was then the very muster of all that was noble, loyal, and lovely. She was, indeed, one of the fifteen fair ones of the Court, whom I permitted to call me Piccolomini—a foolish jest on my somewhat diminutive figure, which always distinguished me from ordinary beings, even when I was young—I have now lost much stature by stooping; but, always the ladies had their jest at me.—Perhaps, young man, I had my own amends of some of them somewhere, and somehow or other—I say nothing if I had or no; far less do I insinuate disrespect to the noble Countess. She was daughter of the Duc de la Tremouille, or, more

correctly, des Thouars. But certainly to serve the ladies, and condescend to their humours, even when somewhat too free, or too fantastic, is the true decorum of gentle blood."

Depressed as his spirits were, Peveril could scarce forbear smiling when he looked at the pigmy creature, who told these stories with infinite complacency, and appeared disposed to proclaim, as his own herald, that he had been a very model of valour and gallantry, though love and arms seemed to be pursuits totally irreconcilable to his shrivelled, weather-beaten countenance, and wasted limbs. Julian was, however, so careful to avoid giving his companion pain, that he endeavoured to humour him, by saying, that, "unquestionably, one bred up like Sir Geoffrey Hudson, in court and camps, knew exactly when to suffer personal freedoms, and when to control them."

The little Knight, with great vivacity, though with some difficulty, began to drag his seat from the side of the fire opposite to that where Julian was seated, and at length succeeded in bringing it near him, in token of increasing cordiality.

"You say well, Master Peveril," said the dwarf; "and I have given proofs both of bearing and forbearing. Yes, sir, there was not that thing which my most royal mistress, Henrietta Maria, could have required of me, that I would not have complied with, sir; I was her sworn servant, both in war and in festival, in battle and pageant, sir. At her Majesty's particular request, I once condescended to become—ladies, you know, have strange fancies—to become the tenant, for a time, of the interior of a pie."

"Of a pie?" said Julian, somewhat amazed.

"Yes, sir, of a pie. I hope you find nothing risible in my complaisance?" replied his companion, something jealously.

"Not I, sir," said Peveril; "I have other matters than laughter in my head at present."

"So had I," said the dwarfish champion, "when I found myself imprisoned in a huge platter, of no ordinary dimensions you may be assured, since I could lie at length in it, and when I was entombed, as it were, in walls of standing crust, and a huge cover of pastry, the whole constituting a sort of sarcophagus, of size enough to have recorded the epitaph of a general officer or an archbishop on the lid. Sir, notwithstanding the conveniences which were made to give me air, it was more like being buried alive than aught else which I could think of."

"I conceive it, sir," said Julian.

"Moreover, sir," continued the dwarf, "there were few in the secret, which was contrived for the Queen's divertisement; for advancing of which I would have crept into a filbert nut, had it been possible; and few, as I said, being private in the scheme, there was a risk of accidents. I doubted, while in my darksome abode, whether some awkward attendant might not have let me fall, as I have seen happen to a venison pasty; or whether some hungry guest might not anticipate the moment of my resurrection, by sticking his knife into my upper crust. And though I had my weapons about me, young man, as has been my custom in every case of peril, yet, if such a rash person had plunged deep into the bowels of the supposed pasty, my sword and dagger could barely have served me to avenge, assuredly not to prevent, either of these catastrophes."

"Certainly I do so understand it," said Julian, who began, however, to feel that the company of little Hudson, talkative as he showed himself, was likely rather to aggravate than to alleviate the inconveniences of a prison.

"Nay," continued the little man, enlarging on his former topic, "I had other subjects of apprehension; for it pleased my Lord of Buckingham, his Grace's father who now bears the title, in his plenitude of Court favour, to command the pasty to be carried down to the office, and committed anew to the oven, alleging preposterously that it was better to be eaten warm than cold."

"And did this, sir, not disturb your equanimity?" said Julian.

"My young friend," said Geoffrey Hudson, "I cannot deny it.—Nature will claim her rights from the best and boldest of us.—I thought of Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace; and I waxed warm with apprehension.—But, I thank Heaven, I also thought of my sworn duty to my royal mistress; and was thereby obliged and enabled to resist all temptations to make myself prematurely known. Nevertheless, the Duke—if of malice, may Heaven forgive him—followed down into the office himself, and urged the master-cook very hard that the pasty should be heated, were it but for five minutes. But the master-cook, being privy to the very different intentions of my royal mistress, did most manfully resist the order; and I was again reconveyed in safety to the royal table."

"And in due time liberated from your confinement, I doubt not?" said Peveril.

"Yes, sir; that happy, and I may say, glorious moment, at length arrived," continued the dwarf. "The upper crust was removed—I started up to the sound of trumpet and clarion, like the soul of a warrior when the last summons shall sound—or rather (if that simile be over audacious), like a spell-bound champion relieved from his enchanted state. It was then that, with my buckler on my arm, and my trusty Bilboa in my hand, I executed a sort of warlike dance, in which my skill and agility then rendered me pre-eminent, displaying, at the same time my postures, both of defence and offence, in a manner so totally inimitable, that I was almost deafened with the applause of all around me, and half-drowned by the scented waters with which the ladies of the Court deluged me from their casting bottles. I had amends of his Grace of Buckingham also; for as I tripped a hasty morris hither and thither upon the dining-table, now offering my blade, now recovering it, I made a blow at his nose—a sort of *estramaçon*—the dexterity of which consists in coming mighty near to the object you seem to aim at, yet not attaining it. You may have seen a barber make such a flourish with his razor. I promise you his Grace sprung back a half-yard at least. He was pleased to threaten to brain me with a chicken-bone, as he disdainfully expressed it; but the King said, 'George, you have but a Rowland for an Oliver.' And so I tripped on, showing a bold heedlessness of his displeasure, which few dared to have done at that time, albeit countenanced to the utmost like me by the smiles of the brave and the fair. But, well-a-day! sir, youth, its fashions, its follies, its frolics, and all its pomp and pride, are as idle and transitory as the crackling of thorns under a pot."

"The flower that is cast into the oven were a better simile," thought Peveril. "Good God, that a man should live to regret not being young enough to be still treated as baked meat, and served up in a pie!"

His companion, whose tongue had for many days been as closely imprisoned as his person, seemed resolved to indemnify his loquacity, by continuing to indulge it on the present occasion at his companion's expense. He proceeded, therefore, in a solemn tone, to moralise on the adventure which he had narrated.

"Young men will no doubt think one to be envied," he said, "who was thus enabled to be the darling and admiration of the Court"—(Julian internally stood self-exculpated from the suspicion)—"and yet it is better to possess fewer means of distinction, and remain free from the backbiting, the slander, and the odium, which are always the share of Court favour. Men who had no other cause, cast reflections upon me because my size varied somewhat from the common proportion; and jests were sometimes unthinkingly passed upon me by those I was bound to, who did not in that case, peradventure, sufficiently consider that the wren is made by the same hand which formed the bustard, and that the diamond, though small in size, out-values ten thousand-fold the rude granite. Nevertheless, they proceeded in the vein of humour; and as I could not in duty or gratitude retort upon nobles and princes, I was compelled to cast about in my mind how to vindicate my honour towards those, who, being in the same rank with myself, as servants and courtiers, nevertheless bore themselves towards me as if they were of a superior class in the rank of honour, as well as in the accidental circumstance of stature. And as a lesson to my own pride, and that of others, it so happened, that the pageant which I have but just narrated—which I justly reckon the most honourable moment of my life, excepting perhaps my distinguished share in the battle of Roundway-down—became the cause of a most tragic event, in which I acknowledge the greatest misfortune of my existence."

The dwarf here paused, fetched a sigh, big at once with regret, and with the importance becoming the subject of a tragic history; then proceeded as follows:—

"You would have thought in your simplicity, young gentleman, that the pretty pageant I have mentioned could only have been quoted to my advantage, as a rare masking frolic, prettily devised, and not less deftly executed; and yet the malice of the courtiers, who maligned and envied me, made them strain their wit, and exhaust their ingenuity, in putting false and ridiculous constructions upon it. In short, my ears were so much offended with allusions to pies, puff-paste, ovens, and the like, that I was compelled to prohibit such subject of mirth, under penalty of my instant and severe displeasure. But it happ'd there was then a gallant about the Court, a man of good quality, son to a knight baronet, and in high esteem with the best in that sphere, also a familiar friend of mine own, from whom, therefore, I had no reason to expect any of that species of gibing which I had intimated my purpose to treat as offensive. Howbeit, it pleased the Honourable Mr. Crofts, so was this youth called and designed, one night, at the Groom Porter's being full of wine and waggery, to introduce this threadbare subject, and to say something

concerning a goose-pie, which I could not but consider as levelled at me. Nevertheless, I did but calmly and solidly pray him to choose a different subject; failing which, I let him know I should be sudden in my resentment. Notwithstanding, he continued in the same tone, and even aggravated the offence, by speaking of a tomtit, and other unnecessary and obnoxious comparisons; whereupon I was compelled to send him a cartel, and we met accordingly. Now, as I really loved the youth, it was my intention only to correct him by a flesh wound or two; and I would willingly that he had named the sword for his weapon. Nevertheless, he made pistols his election; and being on horseback, he produced by way of his own weapon, a foolish engine, which children are wont, in their roguery, to use for spouting water; a—a—in short, I forget the name."

"A squirt, doubtless," said Peveril, who began to recollect having heard something of this adventure.

"You are right," said the dwarf; "you have indeed the name of the little engine, of which I have had experience in passing the yards at Westminster.—Well, sir, this token of slight regard compelled me to give the gentleman such language, as soon rendered it necessary for him to make more serious arms. We fought on horseback—breaking ground, and advancing by signal; and, as I never miss aim, I had the misadventure to kill the Honourable Master Crofts at the first shot. I would not wish my worst foe the pain which I felt, when I saw him reel on his saddle, and so fall down to the earth!—and, when I perceived that the life-blood was pouring fast, I could not but wish to Heaven that it had been my own instead of his. Thus fell youth, hopes, and bravery, a sacrifice to a silly and thoughtless jest; yet, alas! wherein had I choice, seeing that honour is, as it were, the very breath in our nostrils; and that in no sense can we be said to live, if we permit ourselves to be deprived of it?"

The tone of feeling in which the dwarfish hero concluded his story, gave Julian a better opinion of his heart, and even of his understanding, than he had been able to form of one who gloried in having, upon a grand occasion, formed the contents of a pasty. He was indeed enabled to conjecture that the little champion was seduced into such exhibitions, by the necessity attached to his condition, by his own vanity, and by the flattery bestowed on him by those who sought pleasure in practical jokes. The fate of the unlucky Master Crofts, however, as well as various exploits of this diminutive person during the Civil Wars, in which he actually, and with great gallantry, commanded a troop of horse, rendered most men cautious of openly rallying him; which was indeed the less necessary, as, when left alone, he seldom failed voluntarily to show himself on the ludicrous side.

At one hour after noon, the turnkey, true to his word, supplied the prisoners with a very tolerable dinner and a flask of well-flavoured though light claret; which the old man, who was something of a bon-vivant, regretted to observe, was nearly as diminutive as himself. The evening also passed away, but not without continued symptoms of garrulity on the part of Geoffrey Hudson.

It is true these were of a graver character than he had hitherto exhibited, for when the flask was empty, he repeated a long Latin prayer. But the religious act in which he had been engaged, only gave his discourse a more serious turn than belonged to his former themes, of war, lady's love, and courtly splendour.

The little Knight harangued, at first on polemical points of divinity, and diverged from this thorny path, into the neighbouring and twilight walk of mysticism. He talked of secret warnings—of the predictions of sad-eyed prophets—of the visits of monitory spirits, and the Rosicrucian secrets of the Cabala; all which topics he treated of with such apparent conviction, nay, with so many appeals to personal experience, that one would have supposed him a member of the fraternity of gnomes, or fairies, whom he resembled so much in point of size.

In short, he persevered for a stricken hour in such a torrent of unnecessary tattle, as determined Peveril, at all events, to endeavour to procure a separate lodging. Having repeated his evening prayers in Latin, as formerly (for the old gentleman was a Catholic, which was the sole cause of his falling under suspicion), he set off on a new score, as they were undressing, and continued to prattle until he had fairly talked both himself and his companion to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXV

Of airy tongues that syllable men's names.

—COMUS.

Julian had fallen asleep, with his brain rather filled with his own sad reflections, than with the mystical lore of the little Knight; and yet it seemed as if in his visions the latter had been more present to his mind than the former.

He dreamed of gliding spirits, gibbering phantoms, bloody hands, which, dimly seen by twilight, seemed to beckon him forward like errant-knight on sad adventure bound. More than once he started from his sleep, so lively was the influence of these visions on his imagination; and he always awaked under the impression that some one stood by his bedside. The chillness of his ankles, the weight and clatter of the fetters, as he turned himself on his pallet, reminded him on these occasions where he was, and under what circumstances. The extremity to which he saw all that was dear to him at present reduced, struck a deeper cold on his heart than the iron upon his limbs; nor could he compose himself again to rest without a mental prayer to Heaven for protection. But when he had been for a third time awakened from repose by these thick-stirring fancies, his distress of mind vented itself in speech, and he was unable to suppress the almost despairing ejaculation, "God have mercy upon us!"

"Amen!" answered a voice as sweet and "soft as honey dew," which sounded as if the words were spoken close by his bedside.

The natural inference was, that Geoffrey Hudson, his companion in calamity, had echoed the prayer which was so proper to the situation of both. But the tone of voice was so different from the harsh and dissonant sounds of the dwarf's enunciation, that Peveril was impressed with the certainty it could not proceed from Hudson. He was struck with involuntary terror, for which he could give no sufficient reason; and it was not without an effort that he was able to utter the question, "Sir Geoffrey, did you speak?"

No answer was returned. He repeated the question louder; and the same silver-toned voice, which had formerly said "*Amen*" to his prayers, answered to his interrogatory, "Your companion will not awake while I am here."

"And who are you?—What seek you?—How came you into this place?" said Peveril, huddling, eagerly, question upon question.

"I am a wretched being, but one who loves you well.—I come for your good.—Concern yourself no farther."

It now rushed on Julian's mind that he had heard of persons possessed of the wonderful talent of counterfeiting sounds to such accuracy, that they could impose on their hearers the belief, that they proceeded from a point of the apartment entirely opposite to that which the real speaker occupied. Persuaded that he had now gained the depth of the mystery, he replied, "This trifling, Sir Geoffrey, is unseasonable. Say what you have to say in your own voice and manner. These apish pleasantries do not become midnight in a Newgate dungeon."

"But the being who speaks with you," answered the voice, "is fitted for the darkest hour, and the most melancholy haunts."

Impatient of suspense, and determined to satisfy his curiosity, Julian jumped at once from his pallet, hoping to secure the speaker, whose voice indicated he was so near. But he altogether failed in his attempt, and grasped nothing save thin air.

For a turn or two, Peveril shuffled at random about the room, with his arms extended; and then at last recollected, that with the impediment of his shackles, and the noise which necessarily accompanied his motions, and announced where he was, it would be impossible for him to lay hands on any one who might be disposed to keep out of his reach. He therefore endeavoured to return to his bed; but, in groping for his way, lighted first on that of his fellow-prisoner. The little captive slept deep and heavy, as was evinced from his breathing; and upon listening a moment, Julian became again certain, either that his companion was the most artful of ventriloquists and of dissemblers, or that there was actually within the precincts of that guarded chamber, some third being, whose very presence there seemed to intimate that it belonged not to the ordinary line of humanity.

Julian was no ready believer in the supernatural; but that age was very far from being so incredulous concerning ghostly occurrences as our own; and it was no way derogatory to his good sense, that he shared the prejudices of his time. His hair began to bristle, and the moisture to stand on his brow, as he called on his companion to awake, for Heaven's sake.

The dwarf answered—but he spoke without awaking.—"The day may dawn and be d—d. Tell the master of the horse I will not go to the hunting, unless I have the little black jennet."

"I tell you," said Julian, "there is some one in the apartment. Have you not a tinder-box to strike a light?"

"I care not how slight my horse be," replied the slumberer, pursuing his own train of ideas, which, doubtless, carried him back to the green woods of Windsor, and the royal deer-hunts which he had witnessed there. "I am not overweight—I will not ride that great Holstein brute, that I must climb up to by a ladder, and then sit on his back like a pin-cushion on an elephant."

Julian at length put his hand to the sleeper's shoulder, and shook him, so as to awake him from his dream; when, after two or three snorts and groans, the dwarf asked peevishly, what the devil ailed him?

"The devil himself, for what I know," said Peveril, "is at this very moment in the room here beside us."

The dwarf on this information started up, crossed himself, and began to hammer a flint and steel with all despatch, until he had lighted a little piece of candle, which he said was consecrated to Saint Bridget, and as powerful as the herb called *fuga dæmonum*, or the liver of the fish burnt by Tobit in the house of Raguel, for chasing all goblins, and evil or dubious spirits, from the place of its radiance; "if, indeed," as the dwarf carefully guarded his proposition, "they existed anywhere, save in the imagination of his fellow-prisoner."

Accordingly, the apartment was no sooner enlightened by this holy candle's end, than Julian began to doubt the evidence of his own ears; for not only was there no one in the room save Sir Geoffrey Hudson and himself, but all the fastenings of the door were so secure, that it seemed impossible that they could have been opened and again fixed, without a great deal of noise, which, on the last occasion at least, could not possibly have escaped his ears, seeing that he must have been on his feet, and employed in searching the chamber, when the unknown, if an earthly being, was in the act of retreating from it.

Julian gazed for a moment with great earnestness, and no little perplexity, first on the bolted door, then on the grated window; and began to accuse his own imagination of having played him an unpleasant trick. He answered little to the questions of Hudson, and returning to his bed, heard, in silence, a long studied oration on the merits of Saint Bridget, which comprehended the greater part of her long-winded legend, and concluded with the assurance, that, from all accounts preserved of her, that holy saint was the least of all possible women, except those of the pigmy kind.

By the time the dwarf had ceased to speak, Julian's desire of sleep had returned; and after a few glances around the apartment, which was still illuminated by the expiring beams of the holy taper, his eyes were again closed in forgetfulness, and his repose was not again disturbed in the course of that night.

Morning dawns on Newgate, as well as on the freest mountain-turf which Welshman or wild-goat ever trode; but in so different a fashion, that the very beams of heaven's precious sun, when they penetrate into the recesses of the prison-house, have the air of being committed to jail. Still, with the light of day around him, Peveril easily persuaded himself of the vanity of his preceding night's visions; and smiled when he reflected that fancies, similar to those to which his ear was often exposed in the Isle of Man, had been able to arrange themselves in a manner so impressive, when he heard them from the mouth of so singular a character as Hudson, and in the solitude of a prison.

Before Julian had awaked, the dwarf had already quitted his bed, and was seated in the chimney-corner of the apartment, where, with his own hands, he had arranged a morsel of fire, partly attending to the simmering of a small pot, which he had placed on the flame, partly occupied with a huge folio volume which lay on the table before him, and seemed well-nigh as tall and bulky as himself. He was wrapped up in the dusky crimson cloak already mentioned, which served him for a morning-gown, as well as a mantle against the cold, and which corresponded with a large montero-cap, that enveloped his head. The singularity of his features, and of the eyes, armed with spectacles, which were now cast on the subject of his studies, now directed towards his little cauldron, would have tempted Rembrandt to exhibit him on canvas, either in the character of an alchymist, or of a necromancer, engaged in some strange experiment, under the direction of one of the huge manuals which treat of the theory of these mystic arts.

The attention of the dwarf was bent, however, upon a more domestic object. He was only preparing soup, of no unsavoury quality, for breakfast, which he invited Peveril to partake with him. "I am an old soldier," he said, "and, I must add, an old prisoner; and understand how to shift for myself better than you can do, young man.—Confusion to the scoundrel Clink, he has put the spice-box out of my reach!—Will you hand it me from the mantelpiece?—I will teach you, as the French have it, *faire la cuisine*; and then, if you please, we will divide, like brethren, the labours of our prison house."

Julian readily assented to the little man's friendly proposal, without interposing any doubt as to his continuing an inmate of the same cell. Truth is, that although, upon the whole, he was inclined to regard the whispering voice of the preceding evening as the impression of his own excited fancy, he felt, nevertheless, curiosity to see how a second night was to pass over in the same cell; and the tone of the invisible intruder, which at midnight had been heard by him with terror, now excited, on recollection, a gentle and not displeasing species of agitation—the combined effect of awe, and of awakened curiosity.

Days of captivity have little to mark them as they glide away. That which followed the night which we have described afforded no circumstance of note. The dwarf imparted to his youthful companion a volume similar to that which formed his own studies, and which proved to be a tome of one of Scuderi's now forgotten romances, of which Geoffrey Hudson was a great admirer, and which were then very fashionable both at the French and English Courts; although they contrive to unite in their immense folios all the improbabilities and absurdities of the old romances of chivalry, without that tone of imagination which pervades them, and all the metaphysical absurdities which Cowley and the poets of the age had heaped upon the passion of love, like so many load of small coal upon a slender fire, which it smothers instead of aiding.

But Julian had no alternative, saving only to muse over the sorrows of Artamenes and Mandane, or on the complicated distresses of his own situation; and in these disagreeable diversions, the morning crept through as it could.

Noon first, and thereafter nightfall, were successively marked by a brief visit from their stern turnkey, who, with noiseless step and sullen demeanour, did in silence the necessary offices about the meals of the prisoners, exchanging with them as few words as an official in the Spanish Inquisition might have permitted himself upon a similar occasion. With the same taciturn gravity, very different from the laughing humour into which he had been surprised on a former occasion, he struck their fetters with a small hammer, to ascertain, by the sound thus produced, whether they had been tampered with by file or otherwise. He next mounted on a table, to make the same experiment on the window-grating.

Julian's heart throbbed; for might not one of those grates have been so tampered with as to give entrance to the nocturnal visitant? But they returned to the experienced ear of Master Clink, when he struck them in turn with the hammer, a clear and ringing sound, which assured him of their security.

"It would be difficult for any one to get in through these defences," said Julian, giving vent in words to his own feelings.

"Few wish that," answered the surly groom, misconstruing what was passing in Peveril's mind; "and let me tell you, master, folks will find it quite as difficult to get out." He retired, and night came on.

The dwarf, who took upon himself for the day the whole duties of the apartment, trundled about the room, making a most important clatter as he extinguished their fire, and put aside various matters which had been in use in the course of the day, talking to himself all the while in a tone of no little consequence, occasionally grounded on the dexterity with which an old soldier could turn his hand to anything. Then came the repetition of his accustomed prayers; but his disposition to converse did not, as on the former occasion, revive after his devotions. On the contrary, long before Julian had closed an eye, the heavy breathing from Sir Geoffrey Hudson's pallet declared that the dwarf was already in the arms of Morpheus.

Amid the total darkness of the apartment, and with a longing desire, and at the same time no small fear, for the recurrence of the mysterious address of the preceding evening, Julian lay long awake without his thoughts receiving any interruption save when the clock told the passing hour from the neighbouring steeple of St. Sepulchre. At length he sunk into slumber; but had not slept to his judgment above an hour, when he was roused by the sound which his waking ear had so long expected in vain.

"Can you sleep?—Will you sleep?—Dare you sleep?" were the questions impressed on his ear, in the same clear, soft, and melodious voice, which had addressed him on the preceding night.

"Who is it asks me the question?" answered Julian. "But be the questioner good or evil, I reply that I am a guiltless prisoner; and that innocence may wish and dare to sleep soundly."

"Ask no questions of me," said the voice; "neither attempt to discover who speaks to you; and be assured that folly alone can sleep, with fraud around and danger before him."

"Can you, who tell me of dangers, counsel me how to combat or how to avoid them?" said Julian.

"My power is limited," said the voice; "yet something I can do, as the glow-worm can show a precipice. But you must confide in me."

"Confidence must beget confidence," answered Julian. "I cannot repose trust in I know not what or whom."

"Speak not so loud," replied the voice, sinking almost into a whisper.

"Last night you said my companion would not awake," said Julian.

"To-night I warrant not that he shall sleep," said the voice. And as it spoke, the hoarse, snatching, discordant tones of the dwarf were heard, demanding of Julian why he talked in his sleep—wherefore he did not rest himself, and let other people rest—and, finally, whether his visions of last night were returned upon him again?

"Say yes," said the voice in a whisper, so low, yet so distinct, that Julian almost doubted whether it was not an echo of his own thought.—"Say but yes—and I part to return no more!"

In desperate circumstances men look to strange and unusual remedies; and although unable to calculate the chances of advantage which this singular communication opened to him, Julian did not feel inclined to let them at once escape from him. He answered the dwarf, that he had been troubled by an alarming dream.

"I could have sworn it, from the sound of your voice," said Hudson. "It is strange, now, that you overgrown men never possess the extreme firmness of nerves proper to us who are cast in a more compact mould. My own voice retains its masculine sounds on all occasions. Dr. Cockerel was of opinion, that there was the same allowance of nerve and sinew to men of every size, and that nature spun the stock out thinner or stronger, according to the extent of surface which they were to cover. Hence, the least creatures are oftentimes the strongest. Place a beetle under a tall candlestick, and the insect will move it by its efforts to get out; which is, in point of comparative strength, as if one of us should shake his Majesty's prison of Newgate by similar struggles. Cats also, and weasels, are creatures of greater exertion or endurance than dogs or sheep. And in general, you may remark, that little men dance better, and are more unwearied under exertion of every kind, than those to whom their own weight must necessarily be burdensome. I respect you, Master Peveril, because I am told you have killed one of those gigantic fellows, who go about swaggering as if their souls were taller than ours, because their noses are nearer to the clouds by a cubit or two. But do not value yourself on this as anything very unusual. I would have you to know it hath been always thus; and that, in the history of all ages, the clean, tight, dapper little fellow, hath proved an overmatch for his bulky antagonist. I need only instance out of Holy Writ, the celebrated downfall of Goliath, and of another lubbard, who had more fingers to his hand, and more inches to his stature, than ought to belong to an honest man, and who was slain by a nephew of good King David; and of many others whom I do not remember; nevertheless they were all Philistines of gigantic stature. In the classics, also, you have Tydeus, and other tight, compact heroes, whose diminutive bodies were the abode of large minds. And indeed you may observe, in sacred as well as profane history, that your giants are ever heretics and blasphemers, robbers and oppressors, outragers of the female sex, and scoffers at regular authority. Such were Gog and Magog, whom our authentic chronicles vouch to have been slain near to Plymouth, by the good little Knight Corineus, who gave name to Cornwall. Ascaparte also was subdued by Bevis, and Colbrand by Guy, as Southampton and Warwick can testify. Like unto these was the giant Hoel, slain in Bretagne by King Arthur. And if Ryence, King of North Wales, who was done to death by the same worthy champion of Christendom, be not actually termed a giant, it is plain he was little better, since he required twenty-four kings' beards, which were then worn full and long, to fur his gown; whereby computing each beard at eighteen inches (and you cannot allow less for a beard-royal), and supposing only the front of the gown trimmed therewith, as we use ermine; and that the back was mounted and lined, instead of cat-skins and squirrels' fur, with the beards of earls and dukes, and other inferior dignitaries—may amount to—But I will work the question to-morrow."

Nothing is more soporific to any (save a philosopher or moneyed man) than the operation of figures; and when in bed, the effect is irresistible. Sir Geoffrey fell asleep in the act of calculating King Ryence's height, from the supposed length of his mantle. Indeed, had he not stumbled on this abstruse subject of calculation, there is no guessing how long he might have held forth upon the superiority of men of little stature, which was so great a favourite with him, that, numerous as such narratives are, the dwarf had collected almost all the instances of their victories over giants, which history or romance afforded.

No sooner had unequivocal signs of the dwarf's sound slumbers reached Julian's ears, than he began to listen eagerly for the renewal of that mysterious communication which was at once interesting and awful. Even whilst Hudson was speaking, he had, instead of bestowing his attention upon his eulogy on persons of low statue, kept his ears on watchful guard to mark if possible, the lightest sounds of any sort which might occur in the apartment; so that he thought it scarce possible that even a fly should have left it without its motion being overheard. If, therefore, his invisible monitor was indeed a creature of this world—an opinion which Julian's sound sense rendered him unwilling to renounce—that being could not have left the apartment; and he waited impatiently for a renewal of their communication. He was disappointed; not the slightest sound reached his ear; and the nocturnal visitor, if still in the room, appeared determined on silence.

It was in vain that Peveril coughed, hemmed, and gave other symptoms of being awake; at length, such became his impatience, that he resolved, at any risk, to speak first, in hopes of renewing the communication betwixt them. "Whoever thou art," he said, in a voice loud enough to be heard by a waking person, but not so high as to disturb his sleeping companion—"Whoever, or whatever thou art, thou hast shown some interest in the fate of such a castaway as Julian Peveril, speak once more, I conjure thee; and be your communication for good or evil, believe me, I am equally prepared to abide the issue."

No answer of any kind was returned to this invocation; nor did the least sound intimate the presence of the being to whom it was so solemnly addressed.

"I speak in vain," said Julian; "and perhaps I am but invoking that which is insensible of human feeling, or which takes a malign pleasure in human suffering."

There was a gentle and half-broken sigh from a corner of the apartment, which, answering to this exclamation, seemed to contradict the imputation which it conveyed.

Julian, naturally courageous, and familiarised by this time to his situation, raised himself in bed, and stretched out his arm, to repeat his adjuration, when the voice, as if alarmed at his action and energy, whispered, in a tone more hurried than that which it had hitherto used, "Be still—move not—or I am mute for ever!"

"It is then a mortal being who is present with me," was the natural inference of Julian, "and one who is probably afraid of being detected; I have then some power over my visitor, though I must be cautious how I use it.—If your intents are friendly," he proceeded, "there was never a time in which I lacked friends more, or would be more grateful for kindness. The fate of all who are dear to me is weighed in the balance, and with worlds would I buy the tidings of their safety."

"I have said my power is limited," replied the voice. "You I may be able to preserve—the fate of your friends is beyond my control."

"Let me at least know it," said Julian; "and, be it as it may, I will not shun to share it."

"For whom would you inquire?" said the soft, sweet voice, not without a tremulousness of accent, as if the question was put with diffident reluctance.

"My parents," said Julian, after a moment's hesitation; "how fare they?—What will be their fate?"

"They fare as the fort under which the enemy has dug a deadly mine. The work may have cost the labour of years, such were the impediments to the engineers; but Time brings opportunity upon its wings."

"And what will be the event?" said Peveril.

"Can I read the future," answered the voice, "save by comparison with past?—Who has been hunted on these stern and unmitigable accusations, but has been at last brought to bay? Did high and noble birth, honoured age, and approved benevolence, save the unfortunate Lord Stafford? Did learning, capacity of intrigue, or high Court favour, redeem Coleman, although the confidential servant of the heir presumptive of the Crown of England?—Did subtilty and genius, and exertions of a numerous sect, save Fenwicke, or Whitbread, or any other of the accused priests?—Were Groves, Pickering, or the other humble wretches who have suffered, safe in their obscurity? There is no condition in life, no degree of talent, no form of principle, which affords protection against an accusation, which levels

conditions, confounds characters, renders men's virtues their sins, and rates them as dangerous in proportion as they have influence, though attained in the noblest manner, and used for the best purposes. Call such a one but an accessory to the Plot—let him be mouthed in the evidence of Oates or Dugdale—and the blindest shall foresee the issue of their trial."

"Prophet of Evil!" said Julian, "my father has a shield invulnerable to protect him. He is innocent."

"Let him plead his innocence at the bar of Heaven," said the voice; "it will serve him little where Scroggs presides."

"Still I fear not," said Julian, counterfeiting more confidence than he really possessed; "my father's cause will be pleaded before twelve Englishmen."

"Better before twelve wild beasts," answered the Invisible, "than before Englishmen, influenced with party prejudice, passion, and epidemic terror of an imaginary danger. They are bold in guilt in proportion to the number amongst whom the crime is divided."

"Ill-omened speaker," said Julian, "thine is indeed a voice fitted only to sound with the midnight bell, and the screeching owl. Yet speak again. Tell me, if thou canst"—(He would have said of Alice Bridgenorth, but the word would not leave his tongue)—"Tell me," he said, "if the noble house of Derby——"

"Let them keep their rock like the sea-fowl in the tempest; and it may so fall out," answered the voice, "that their rock may be a safe refuge. But there is blood on their ermine; and revenge has dogged them for many a year, like a bloodhound that hath been distanced in the morning chase, but may yet grapple the quarry ere the sun shall set. At present, however, they are safe.—Am I now to speak farther on your own affairs, which involve little short of your life and honour?"

"There is," said Julian, "one, from whom I was violently parted yesterday; if I knew but of her safety, I were little anxious for my own."

"One!" returned the voice, "only *one* from whom you were parted yesterday?"

"But in parting from whom," said Julian, "I felt separated from all happiness which the world can give me."

"You mean Alice Bridgenorth," said the Invisible, with some bitterness of accent; "but her you will never see more. Your own life and hers depend on your forgetting each other."

"I cannot purchase my own life at that price," replied Julian.

"Then DIE in your obstinacy," returned the Invisible; nor to all the entreaties which he used was he able obtain another word in the course of that remarkable night.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A short hough'd man, but full of pride.

—ALLAN RAMSAY.

The blood of Julian Peveril was so much fevered by the state in which his invisible visitor left him, that he was unable, for a length of time, to find repose. He swore to himself, that he would discover and expose the nocturnal demon which stole on his hours of rest, only to add gall to bitterness, and to pour poison into those wounds which already smarted so severely. There was nothing which his power extended to, that, in his rage, he did not threaten. He proposed a closer and a more rigorous survey of his cell, so that he might discover the mode by which his tormentor entered, were it as unnoticeable as an auger-hole. If his diligence should prove unavailing, he determined to inform the jailers, to whom it could not be indifferent to know, that their prison was open to such intrusions. He proposed to himself, to discover from their looks whether they were already privy to these visits; and if so, to denounce them to the magistrates, to the judges, to the House of Commons, was the least that his resentment proposed. Sleep surprised his worn-out frame in the midst of his projects of discovery and vengeance, and, as frequently happens, the light of the ensuing day proved favourable to calmer resolutions.

He now reflected that he had no ground to consider the motives of his visitor as positively malevolent, although he had afforded him little encouragement to hope for assistance on the points he had most at heart. Towards himself, there had been expressed a decided feeling, both of sympathy and interest; if through means of these he could acquire his liberty, he might, when possessed of freedom, turn it to the benefit of those for whom he was more interested than for his own welfare. "I have behaved like a fool," he said; "I ought to have temporised with this singular being, learned the motives of its interference, and availed myself of its succour, provided I could do so without any dishonourable conditions. It would have been always time enough to reject such when they should have been proposed to me."

So saying, he was forming projects for regulating his intercourse with the stranger more prudently, in case their communication should be renewed, when his meditations were interrupted by the peremptory summons of Sir Geoffrey Hudson, that he would, in his turn, be pleased to perform those domestic duties of their common habitation, which the dwarf had yesterday taken upon himself.

There was no resisting a request so reasonable, and Peveril accordingly rose and betook himself to the arrangement of their prison, while Sir Hudson, perched upon a stool from which his legs did not by half-way reach the ground, sat in a posture of elegant languor, twangling upon an old broken-winded guitar, and singing songs in Spanish, Moorish, and Lingua Franca, most detestably out of tune. He failed not, at the conclusion of each ditty, to favour Julian with some account of what he had sung, either in the way of translation, or historical anecdote, or as the lay was connected with some peculiar part of his own eventful history, in the course of which the poor little man had chanced to have been taken by a Saltee rover, and carried captive into Morocco.

This part of his life Hudson used to make the era of many strange adventures; and, if he could himself be believed, he had made wild work among the affections of the Emperor's seraglio. But, although few were in a situation to cross-examine him on gallantries and intrigues of which the scene was so remote, the officers of the garrison of Tangier had a report current amongst them, that the only use to which the tyrannical Moors could convert a slave of such slender corporeal strength, was to employ him to lie a-bed all day and hatch turkey's eggs. The least allusion to this rumour used to drive him well-nigh frantic, and the fatal termination of his duel with young Crofts, which began in wanton mirth, and ended in bloodshed, made men more coy than they had formerly been, of making the fiery little hero the subject of their railery.

While Peveril did the drudgery of the apartment, the dwarf remained much at his ease, carolling in the manner we have described; but when he beheld Julian attempting the task of the cook, Sir Geoffrey Hudson sprang from the stool on which he sat *en Signor*, at the risk of breaking both his guitar and his neck, exclaiming, "That he would rather prepare breakfast every morning betwixt this and the day of judgment, than commit a task of such consequence to an inexperienced bungler like his companion."

The young man gladly resigned his task to the splenetic little Knight, and only smiled at his resentment when he added, that, to be but a mortal of middle stature, Julian was as stupid as a giant. Leaving the dwarf to prepare the meal after his own pleasure, Peveril employed himself in measuring the room with his eyes on every side, and in endeavouring to discover some private entrance, such as might admit his midnight visitant, and perhaps could be employed in case of need for effecting his own escape. The floor next engaged a scrutiny equally minute, but more successful.

Close by his own pallet, and dropped in such a manner that he must have seen it sooner but for the hurry with which he obeyed the summons of the impatient dwarf, lay a slip of paper, sealed, and directed with the initial letters, J.P., which seemed to ascertain that it was addressed to himself. He took the opportunity of opening it while the soup was in the very moment of projection, and the full attention of his companion was occupied by what he, in common with wiser and taller men, considered as one of the principal occupations of life; so that, without incurring his observation or awaking his curiosity, Julian had the opportunity to read as follows:—

"Rash and infatuated as you are, there is one who would forfeit much to stand betwixt you and your fate. You are to-morrow to be removed to the Tower, where your life cannot be assured for a single day; for, during the few hours you have been in London, you have provoked a resentment which is not easily slaked. There is

but one chance for you,—renounce A.B.—think no more of her. If that be impossible, think of her but as one whom you can never see again. If your heart can resolve to give up an attachment which it should never have entertained, and which it would be madness to cherish longer, make your acquiescence in this condition known by putting on your hat a white band, or white feather, or knot of ribbon of the same colour, whichever you may most easily come by. A boat will, in that case, run, as if by accident, on board of that which is to convey you to the Tower. Do you in the confusion jump overboard, and swim to the Southwark side of the Thames. Friends will attend there to secure your escape, and you will find yourself with one who will rather lose character and life, than that a hair of your head should fall to the ground; but who, if you reject the warning, can only think of you as of the fool who perishes in his folly. May Heaven guide you to a sound judgment of your condition! So prays one who would be your friend, if you pleased,

"UNKNOWN."

The Tower!—it was a word of terror, even more so than a civil prison; for how many passages to death did that dark structure present! The severe executions which it had witnessed in preceding reigns, were not perhaps more numerous than the secret murders which had taken place within its walls; yet Peveril did not a moment hesitate on the part which he had to perform. "I will share my father's fate," he said; "I thought but of him when they brought me hither; I will think of nothing else when they convey me to yonder still more dreadful place of confinement; it is his, and it is but meet that it should be his son's.—And thou, Alice Bridgenorth, the day that I renounce thee, may I be held alike a traitor and a dastard!—Go, false adviser, and share the fate of seducers and heretical teachers!" He could not help uttering this last expression aloud, as he threw the billet into the fire, with a vehemence which made the dwarf start with surprise. "What say you of burning heretics, young man?" he exclaimed; "by my faith, your zeal must be warmer than mine, if you talk on such a subject when the heretics are the prevailing number. May I measure six feet without my shoes, but the heretics would have the best of it if we came to that work. Beware of such words."

"Too late to beware of words spoken and heard," said the turnkey, who, opening the door with unusual precautions to avoid noise, had stolen unperceived into the room; "However, Master Peveril has behaved like a gentlemen, and I am no tale-bearer, on condition he will consider I have had trouble in his matters."

Julian had no alternative but to take the fellow's hint and administer a bribe, with which Master Clink was so well satisfied, that he exclaimed, "It went to his heart to take leave of such a kind-natured gentleman, and that he could have turned the key on him for twenty years with pleasure. But the best friends must part."

"I am to be removed, then?" said Julian.

"Ay, truly, master, the warrant is come from the Council."

"To convey me to the Tower."

"Whew!" exclaimed the officer of the law—"who the devil told you that? But since you do know it, there is no harm to say ay. So make yourself ready to move immediately; and first, hold out your dew-beaters till I take off the darbies."

"Is that usual?" said Peveril, stretching out his feet as the fellow directed, while his fetters were unlocked.

"Why, ay, master, these fetters belong to the keeper; they are not a-going to send them to the Lieutenant, I trow. No, no, the warders must bring their own gear with them; they get none here, I promise them. Nevertheless, if your honour hath a fancy to go in fetters, as thinking it may move compassion of your case——"

"I have no intention to make my case seem worse than it is," said Julian; whilst at the same time it crossed his mind that his anonymous correspondent must be well acquainted both with his own personal habits, since the letter proposed a plan of escape which could only be executed by a bold swimmer, and with the fashions of prison, since it was foreseen that he would not be ironed on his passage to the Tower. The turnkey's next speech made him carry conjecture still farther.

"There is nothing in life I would not do for so brave a guest," said Clink; "I would nab one of my wife's ribbons for you, if your honour had the fancy to mount the white flag in your beaver."

"To what good purpose?" said Julian, shortly connecting, as was natural, the man's proposed civility with the advice given and the signal prescribed in the letter.

"Nay, to no good purpose I know of," said the turnkey; "only it is the fashion to seem white and harmless—a sort of token of not-guiltiness, as I may say, which folks desire to show the world, whether they be truly guilty or not; but I cannot say that guiltiness or not-guiltiness argufies much, saving they be words in the verdict."

"Strange," thought Peveril, although the man seemed to speak quite naturally, and without any double meaning, "strange that all should apparently combine to realise the plan of escape, could I but give my consent to it! And had I not better consent? Whoever does so much for me must wish me well, and a well-wisher would never enforce the unjust conditions on which I am required to consent to my liberation."

But this misgiving of his resolution was but for a moment. He speedily recollected, that whoever aided him in escaping, must be necessarily exposed to great risk, and had a right to name the stipulation on which he was willing to incur it. He also recollected that falsehood is equally base, whether expressed in words or in dumb show; and that he should lie as flatly by using the signal agreed upon in evidence of his renouncing Alice Bridgenorth, as he would in direct terms if he made such renunciation without the purpose of abiding by it.

"If you would oblige me," he said to the turnkey, "let me have a piece of black silk or crape for the purpose you mention."

"Of crape!" said the fellow; "what should that signify? Why, the bien morts, who bing out to tour at you,[*] will think you a chimney-sweeper on Mayday."

[*] *The smart girls, who turn out to look at you.*

"It will show my settled sorrow," said Julian, "as well as my determined resolution."

"As you will, sir," answered the fellow; "I'll provide you with a black rag of some kind or other. So, now; let us be moving."

Julian intimated his readiness to attend him, and proceeded to bid farewell to his late companion, the stout Geoffrey Hudson. The parting was not without emotion on both sides, more particularly on that of the poor little man, who had taken a particular liking to the companion of whom he was now about to be deprived. "Fare ye well," he said, "my young friend," taking Julian's hand in both his own uplifted palms, in which action he somewhat resembled the attitude of a sailor pulling a rope overhead,— "Many in my situation would think himself wronged, as a soldier and servant of the king's chamber, in seeing you removed to a more honourable prison than that which I am limited unto. But, I thank God, I grudge you not the Tower, nor the rocks of Scilly, nor even Carisbrooke Castle, though the latter was graced with the captivity of my blessed and martyred master. Go where you will, I wish you all the distinction of an honourable prison-house, and a safe and speedy deliverance in God's own time. For myself, my race is near a close, and that because I fall martyr to the over-tenderness of my own heart. There is a circumstance, good Master Julian Peveril, which should have been yours, had Providence permitted our farther intimacy, but it fits not the present hour. Go, then, my friend, and bear witness in life and death, that Geoffrey Hudson scorns the insults and persecutions of fortune, as he would despise, and has often despised, the mischievous pranks of an overgrown schoolboy."

So saying, he turned away, and hid his face with his little handkerchief, while Julian felt towards him that tragi-comic sensation which makes us pity the object which excites it, not the less that we are somewhat inclined to laugh amid our sympathy. The jailer made him a signal, which Peveril obeyed, leaving the dwarf to disconsolate solitude.

As Julian followed the keeper through the various windings of his penal labyrinth, the man observed, that "he was a rum fellow, that little Sir Geoffrey, and, for gallantry, a perfect Cock of Bantam, for as old as he was. There was a certain gay wench," he said, "that had hooked him; but what she could make of him, save she carried him to Smithfield, and took money for him, as for a motion of puppets, it was," he said, "hard to gather."

Encouraged by this opening, Julian asked if his attendant knew why his prison was changed. "To teach you to become a King's post without commission," answered the fellow.

He stopped in his tattle as they approached that formidable central point, in which lay couched on his leathern elbow-chair the fat commander of the fortress, stationed apparently for ever in the midst of his citadel, as the huge Boa is sometimes said to lie stretched as a guard upon the subterranean treasures of Eastern Rajas. This overgrown man of authority eyed Julian wistfully and sullenly, as the miser the guinea which he must part with, or the hungry mastiff the food which is carried to another kennel. He growled to himself as he turned the leaves of his ominous register, in order to make the necessary entry respecting the removal of his prisoner. "To the Tower—to the Tower—ay, ay, all must to the Tower—that's the fashion of it—free Britons to a military prison, as if we had neither bolts nor chains here!—I hope Parliament will have it up, this Towering work, that's all.—Well, the youngster will take no good by the change, and that is one comfort." Having finished at once his official act of registration, and his soliloquy, he made a signal to his assistants to remove Julian, who was led along the same stern passages which he had traversed upon his entrance, to the gate of the prison, whence a coach, escorted by two officers of justice, conveyed him to the water-side.

A boat here waited him, with four warders of the Tower, to whose custody he was formally resigned by his late attendants. Clank, however, the turnkey, with whom he was more especially acquainted, did not take leave of him without furnishing him with the piece of black crape which he requested. Peveril fixed it on his hat amid the whispers of his new guardians. "The gentleman is in a hurry to go into mourning," said one; "mayhap he had better wait till he has cause."

"Perhaps others may wear mourning for him, ere he can mourn for any one," answered another of these functionaries.

Yet notwithstanding the tenor of these whispers, their behaviour to their prisoner was more respectful than he had experienced from his former keepers, and might be termed a sullen civility. The ordinary officers of the law were in general rude, as having to do with felons of every description; whereas these men were only employed with persons accused of state crimes—men who were from birth and circumstances usually entitled to expect, and able to reward, decent usage.

The change of keepers passed unnoticed by Julian, as did the gay and busy scene presented by the broad and beautiful river on which he was now launched. A hundred boats shot past them, bearing parties intent on business, or on pleasure. Julian only viewed them with the stern hope, that whoever had endeavoured to bribe him from his fidelity by the hope of freedom, might see, from the colour of the badge which he had assumed, how determined he was to resist the temptation presented to him.

It was about high-water, and a stout wherry came up the river, with sail and oar, so directly upon that in which Julian was embarked, that it seemed as if likely to run her aboard. "Get your carabines ready," cried the principal warder to his assistants. "What the devil can these scoundrels mean?"

But the crew in the other boat seemed to have perceived their error, for they suddenly altered their course, and struck off into the middle stream, while a torrent of mutual abuse was exchanged betwixt them and the boat whose course they had threatened to impede.

"The Unknown has kept his faith," said Julian to himself; "I too have kept mine."

It even seemed to him, as the boats neared each other, that he heard, from the other wherry, something like a stifled scream or groan; and when the momentary bustle was over, he asked the warder who sat next him, what boat that was.

"Men-of-war's-men, on a frolic, I suppose," answered the warder. "I know no one else would be so impudent as run foul of the King's boat; for I am sure the fellow put the helm up on purpose. But mayhap you, sir, know more of the matter than I do."

This insinuation effectually prevented Julian from putting farther questions, and he remained silent until the boat came under the dusky bastions of the Tower. The tide carried them up under a dark and lowering arch, closed at the upper end by the well-known Traitor's gate,[*] formed like a wicket of huge intersecting bars of wood, through which might be seen a dim and imperfect view of soldiers and warders upon duty, and of the steep ascending causeway which leads up from the river into the interior of the fortress. By this gate,—and it is the well-known circumstance which assigned its name,—those accused of state crimes were usually committed to the Tower. The Thames afforded a secret and silent mode of conveyance for transporting thither such whose fallen fortunes might move the commiseration, or whose popular qualities might excite the sympathy, of the public; and even where no cause for especial secrecy existed, the peace of the city was undisturbed by the tumult attending the passage of the prisoner and his guards through the most frequented streets.

[*] See note, "*Fortunes of Nigel*."

Yet this custom, however recommended by state policy, must have often struck chill upon the heart of the criminal, who thus, stolen, as it were, out of society, reached the place of his confinement, without encountering even one glance of compassion on the road; and as, from under the dusky arch, he landed on those flinty steps, worn by many a footstep anxious as his own, against which the tide lapped fitfully with small successive waves, and hence looked forward to the steep ascent into a Gothic state prison, and backward to such part of the river as the low-brow'd vault suffered to become visible, he must often have felt that he was leaving daylight, hope, and life itself, behind him.

While the warder's challenge was made and answered, Peveril endeavoured to obtain information from his conductors where he was likely to be confined; but the answer was brief and general—"Where the Lieutenant should direct."

"Could he not be permitted to share the imprisonment of his father, Sir Geoffrey Peveril?" He forgot not, on this occasion, to add the surname of his house.

The warder, an old man of respectable appearance, stared, as if at the extravagance of the demand, and said bluntly, "It is impossible."

"At least," said Peveril, "show me where my father is confined, that I may look upon the walls which separate us."

"Young gentleman," said the senior warder, shaking his grey head, "I am sorry for you; but asking questions will do you no service. In this place we know nothing of fathers and sons."

Yet chance seemed, in a few minutes afterwards, to offer Peveril that satisfaction which the rigour of his keepers was disposed to deny to him. As he was conveyed up the steep passage which leads under what is called the Wakefield Tower, a female voice, in a tone wherein grief and joy were indescribably mixed, exclaimed, "My son!—My dear son!"

Even those who guarded Julian seemed softened by a tone of such acute feeling. They slackened their pace. They almost paused to permit him to look up towards the casement from which the sounds of maternal agony proceeded; but the aperture was so narrow, and so closely grated, that nothing was visible save a white female hand, which grasped one of those rusty barricadoes, as if for supporting the person within, while another streamed a white handkerchief, and then let it fall. The casement was instantly deserted.

"Give it me," said Julian to the officer who lifted the handkerchief; "it is perhaps a mother's last gift."

The old warder lifted the napkin, and looked at it with the jealous minuteness of one who is accustomed to detect secret correspondence in the most trifling acts of intercourse.

"There may be writing on it with invisible ink," said one of his comrades.

"It is wetted, but I think it is only with tears," answered the senior. "I cannot keep it from the poor young gentleman."

"Ah, Master Coleby," said his comrade, in a gentle tone of reproach, "you would have been wearing a better coat than a yeoman's to-day, had it not been for your tender heart."

"It signifies little," said old Coleby, "while my heart is true to my King, what I feel in discharging my duty, or what coat keeps my old bosom from the cold weather."

Peveril, meanwhile, folded in his breast the token of his mother's affection which chance had favoured him with; and when placed in the small and solitary chamber which he was told to consider as his own during his residence in the Tower, he was soothed even to weeping by this trifling circumstance, which he could not help considering as an omen, that his unfortunate house was not entirely deserted by Providence. But the thoughts and occurrences of a prison are too uniform for a narrative, and we must now convey our readers into a more bustling scene.

CHAPTER XXXVII

*Henceforth 'tis done—Fortune and I are friends;
And I must live, for Buckingham commends.*

—POPE.

The spacious mansion of the Duke of Buckingham, with the demesne belonging to it, originally bore the name of York House and occupied a large portion of the ground adjacent to the Savoy.

This had been laid out by the munificence of his father, the favourite of Charles the First, in a most splendid manner, so as almost to rival Whitehall itself. But during the increasing rage for building new streets, and the creating of almost an additional town, in order to connect London and Westminster, this ground had become of very great value; and the second Duke of Buckingham, who was at once fond of scheming, and needy of money, had agreed to a plan laid before him by some adventurous architect, for converting the extensive grounds around his palace into those streets, lanes, and courts, which still perpetuate his name and titles; though those who live in Buckingham Street, Duke Street, Villiers Street, or in Of-alley (for even that connecting particle is locally commemorated), probably think seldom of the memory of the witty, eccentric, and licentious George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, whose titles are preserved in the names of their residence and its neighbourhood.

This building-plan the Duke had entered upon with all the eagerness which he usually attached to novelty. His gardens were destroyed—his pavilions levelled—his splendid stables demolished—the whole pomp of his suburban demesne laid waste, cumbered with ruins, and intersected with the foundations of new buildings and cellars, and the process of levelling different lines for the intended streets. But the undertaking, although it proved afterwards both lucrative and successful, met with a check at the outset, partly from want of the necessary funds, partly from the impatient and mercurial temper of the Duke, which soon carried him off in pursuit of some more new object. So that, though much was demolished, very little, in comparison, was reared up in the stead, and nothing was completed. The principal part of the ducal mansion still remained uninjured; but the demesne in which it stood bore a strange analogy to the irregular mind of its noble owner. Here stood a beautiful group of exotic trees and shrubs, the remnant of the garden, amid yawning common-sewers, and heaps of rubbish. In one place an old tower threatened to fall upon the spectator; and in another he ran the risk of being swallowed up by a modern vault. Grandeur of conception could be discovered in the undertaking, but was almost everywhere marred by poverty or negligence of execution. In short, the whole place was the true emblem of an understanding and talents run to waste, and become more dangerous than advantageous to society, by the want of steady principle, and the improvidence of the possessor.

There were men who took a different view of the Duke's purpose in permitting his mansion to be thus surrounded, and his demesne occupied by modern buildings which were incomplete, and ancient which were but half demolished. They alleged, that, engaged as he was in so many mysteries of love and of politics, and having the character of the most daring and dangerous intriguer of his time, his Grace found it convenient to surround himself with this ruinous arena, into which officers of justice could not penetrate without some difficulty and hazard; and which might afford, upon occasion, a safe and secret shelter for such tools as were fit for desperate enterprises, and a private and unobserved mode of access to those whom he might have any special reason for receiving in secret.

Leaving Peveril in the Tower, we must once more convey our readers to the Levee of the Duke, who, on the morning of Julian's transference to that fortress, thus addressed his minister-in-chief, and principal attendant: "I have been so pleased with your conduct in this matter, Jerminham, that if Old Nick were to arise in our presence, and offer me his best imp as a familiar in thy room, I would hold it but a poor compliment."

"A legion of imps," said Jerminham, bowing, "could not have been more busy than I in your Grace's service; but if your Grace will permit me to say so, your whole plan was well-nigh marred by your not returning home till last night, or rather this morning."

"And why, I pray you, sage Master Jerminham," said his Grace, "should I have returned home an instant sooner than my pleasure and convenience served?"

"Nay, my Lord Duke," replied the attendant, "I know not; only, when you sent us word by Empson, in Chiffinch's apartment, to command us to make sure of the girl at any rate, and at all risks, you said you would be here so soon as you could get freed of the King."

"Freed of the King, you rascal! What sort of phrase is that?" demanded the Duke.

"It was Empson who used it, my lord, as coming from your Grace."

"There is much very fit for my Grace to say, that misbecomes such mouths as Empson's or yours to repeat," answered the Duke haughtily, but instantly resumed his tone of familiarity, for his humour was as capricious as his pursuits. "But I know what thou wouldst have; first, your wisdom would know what became of me since thou hadst my commands at Chiffinch's; and next, your valour would fain sound another flourish of trumpets on thine own most artificial retreat, leaving thy comrade in the hands of the Philistines."

"May it please your Grace," said Jerminham, "I did but retreat for the preservation of the baggage."

"What! do you play at crambo with me?" said the Duke. "I would have you to know that the common parish fool should be whipt, were he to attempt to pass pun or quodlibet as a genuine jest, even amongst ticket-porters and hackney chairmen."

"And yet I have heard your Grace indulge in the *jeu de mots*," answered the attendant.

"Sirrah Jerminham," answered the patron, "discard thy memory, or keep it under correction, else it will hamper thy rise in the world. Thou mayst perchance have seen me also have a fancy to play at trap-ball, or to kiss a serving wench, or to guzzle ale and eat toasted cheese in a portly whimsy; but is it fitting thou shouldst remember such follies? No more on't.—Hark you; how came the long lubberly fool, Jenkins, being a master of the noble science of defence, to suffer himself to be run through the body so simply by a rustic swain like this same Peveril?"

"Please your Grace, this same Corydon is no such novice. I saw the onset; and, except in one hand, I never saw a sword managed with such life, grace, and facility."

"Ay, indeed?" said the Duke, taking his own sheathed rapier in his hand, "I could not have thought that. I am somewhat rusted, and have need of breathing. Peveril is a name of note. As well go to the Barns-elms, or behind Montagu House, with him as with another. His father a rumoured plotter, too. The public would have noted it in me as becoming a zealous Protestant. Needful I do something to maintain my good name in the city, to atone for non-attendance on prayer and preaching. But your Laertes is fast in the Fleet; and I suppose his blundering blockhead of an antagonist is dead or dying."

"Recovering, my lord, on the contrary," replied Jerminham; "the blade fortunately avoided his vitals."

"D—n his vitals!" answered the Duke. "Tell him to postpone his recovery, or I will put him to death in earnest."

"I will caution his surgeon," said Jerminham, "which will answer equally well."

"Do so; and tell him he had better be on his own deathbed as cure his patient till I send him notice.—That young fellow must be let loose again at no rate."

"There is little danger," said the attendant. "I hear some of the witnesses have got their net flung over him on account of some matters down in the north; and that he is to be translated to the Tower for that, and for some letters of the Countess of Derby, as rumour goes."

"To the Tower let him go, and get out as he can," replied the Duke; "and when you hear he is fast there, let the fencing fellow recover as fast as the surgeon and he can mutually settle it."

The Duke, having said this, took two or three turns in the apartment, and appeared to be in deep thought. His attendant waited the issue of his meditations with patience, being well aware that such moods, during which his mind was strongly directed in one point, were never of so long duration with his patron as to prove a severe burden to his own patience.

Accordingly, after the silence of seven or eight minutes, the Duke broke through it, taking from the toilette a large silk purse, which seemed full of gold. "Jerningham," he said, "thou art a faithful fellow, and it would be sin not to cherish thee. I beat the King at Mall on his bold defiance. The honour is enough for me; and thou, my boy, shalt have the winnings."

Jerningham pocketed the purse with due acknowledgements.

"Jerningham," his Grace continued, "I know you blame me for changing my plans too often; and on my soul I have heard you so learned on the subject, that I have become of your opinion, and have been vexed at myself for two or three hours together, for not sticking as constantly to one object, as doubtless I shall, when age (touching his forehead) shall make this same weathercock too rusty to turn with the changing breeze. But as yet, while I have spirit and action, let it whirl like the vane at the mast-head, which teaches the pilot how to steer his course; and when I shift mine, think I am bound to follow Fortune, and not to control her."

"I can understand nothing from all this, please your Grace," replied Jerningham, "save that you have been pleased to change some purposed measures, and think that you have profited by doing so."

"You shall judge yourself," replied the Duke. "I have seen the Duchess of Portsmouth.—You start. It is true, by Heaven! I have seen her, and from sworn enemies we have become sworn friends. The treaty between such high and mighty powers had some weighty articles; besides, I had a French negotiator to deal with; so that you will allow a few hours' absence was but a necessary interval to make up our matters of diplomacy."

"Your Grace astonishes me," said Jerningham. "Christian's plan of supplanting the great lady is then entirely abandoned? I thought you had but desired to have the fair successor here, in order to carry it on under your own management."

"I forgot what I meant at the time," said the Duke; "unless that I was resolved she should not jilt me as she did the good-natured man of royalty; and so I am still determined, since you put me in mind of the fair Dowsabelle. But I had a contrite note from the Duchess while we were at the Mall. I went to see her, and found her a perfect Niobe.—On my soul, in spite of red eyes and swelled features, and dishevelled hair, there are, after all, Jerningham, some women who do, as the poets say, look lovely in affliction. Out came the cause; and with such humility, such penitence, such throwing herself on my mercy (she the proudest devil, too, in the whole Court), that I must have had heart of steel to resist it all. In short, Chiffinch in a drunken fit had played the babbler, and let young Saville into our intrigue. Saville plays the rogue, and informs the Duchess by a messenger, who luckily came a little late into the market. She learned, too, being a very devil for intelligence, that there had been some jarring between the master and me about this new Phillis; and that I was most likely to catch the bird,—as any one may see who looks on us both. It must have been Empson who fluted all this into her Grace's ear; and thinking she saw how her ladyship and I could hunt in couples, she entreats me to break Christian's scheme, and keep the wench out of the King's sight, especially if she were such a rare piece of perfection as fame has reported her."

"And your Grace has promised her your hand to uphold the influence which you have so often threatened to ruin?" said Jerningham.

"Ay, Jerningham; my turn was as much served when she seemed to own herself in my power, and cry me mercy.—And observe, it is all one to me by which ladder I climb into the King's cabinet. That of Portsmouth is ready fixed—better ascend by it than fling it down to put up another—I hate all unnecessary trouble."

"And Christian?" said Jerningham.

"May go to the devil for a self-conceited ass. One pleasure of this twist of intrigue is, to revenge me of that villain, who thought himself so essential, that, by Heaven! he forced himself on my privacy, and lectured me like a schoolboy. Hang the cold-blooded hypocritical vermin! If he mutters, I will have his nose slit as wide as Coventry's.[*]—Hark ye, is the Colonel come?"

"I expect him every moment, your Grace."

[*] *The ill-usage of Sir John Coventry by some of the Life Guardsmen, in revenge of something said in Parliament concerning the King's theatrical amours, gave rise to what was called Coventry's Act, against cutting and maiming the person.*

"Send him up when he arrives," said the Duke.—"Why do you stand looking at me? What would you have?"

"Your Grace's direction respecting the young lady," said Jerningham.

"Odd zooks," said the Duke, "I had totally forgotten her.—Is she very tearful?—Exceedingly afflicted?"

"She does not take on so violently as I have seen some do," said Jerningham; "but for a strong, firm, concentrated indignation, I have seen none to match her."

"Well, we will permit her to cool. I will not face the affliction of a second fair one immediately. I am tired of snivelling, and swelled eyes, and blubbered cheeks for some time; and, moreover, must husband my powers of consolation. Begone, and send the Colonel."

"Will your Grace permit me one other question?" demanded his confidant.

"Ask what thou wilt, Jerningham, and then begone."

"Your Grace has determined to give up Christian," said the attendant. "May I ask what becomes of the kingdom of Man?"

"Forgotten, as I have a Christian soul!" said the Duke; "as much forgotten as if I had never nourished that scheme of royal ambition.—D—n it, we must knit up the ravelled skein of that intrigue.—Yet it is but a miserable rock, not worth the trouble I have been bestowing on it; and for a kingdom—it has a sound indeed; but, in reality, I might as well stick a cock-chicken's feather into my hat, and call it a plume. Besides, now I think upon it, it would scarce be honourable to sweep that petty royalty out of Derby's possession. I won a thousand pieces of the young Earl when he was last here, and suffered him to hang about me at Court. I question if the whole revenue of his kingdom is worth twice as much. Easily I could win it of him, were he here, with less trouble than it would cost me to carry on these troublesome intrigues of Christian's."

"If I may be permitted to say so, please your Grace," answered Jerningham, "although your Grace is perhaps somewhat liable to change your mind, no man in England can afford better reasons for doing so."

"I think so myself, Jerningham," said the Duke; "and it may be it is one reason for my changing. One likes to vindicate his own conduct, and to find out fine reasons for doing what one has a mind to.—And now, once again, begone. Or, hark ye—hark ye—I shall need some loose gold. You may leave the purse I gave you; and I will give you an order for as much, and two years' interest, on old Jacob Doublefee."

"As your Grace pleases," said Jerningham, his whole stock of complaisance scarcely able to conceal his mortification at exchanging for a distant order, of a kind which of late had not been very regularly honoured, the sunny contents of the purse which had actually been in his pocket. Secretly, but solemnly did he make a vow, that two years' interest alone should not be the compensation for this involuntary exchange in the form of his remuneration.

As the discontented dependant left the apartment, he met, at the head of the grand staircase, Christian himself, who, exercising the freedom of an ancient friend of the house, was making his way, unannounced, to the Duke's dressing apartment. Jerningham, conjecturing that his visit at this crisis would be anything but well timed, or well taken, endeavoured to avert his purpose by asserting that the Duke was indisposed, and in his bedchamber; and this he said so loud that his master might hear him, and, if he pleased, realise the apology which he offered in his name, by retreating into the bedroom as his last sanctuary, and drawing the bolt against intrusion.

But, far from adopting a stratagem to which he had had recourse on former occasions, in order to avoid those who came upon him, though at an appointed hour, and upon business of importance, Buckingham called, in a loud voice, from his dressing apartment, commanding his chamberlain instantly to introduce his good friend Master Christian, and censuring him for hesitating for an instant to do so.

"Now," thought Jerningham within himself, "if Christian knew the Duke as well as I do, he would sooner stand the leap of a lion, like the London 'prentice bold, than venture on my master at this moment, who is even now in a humour nearly as dangerous as the animal." He then ushered Christian into his master's presence, taking care to post himself within earshot of the door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

*"Speak not of niceness, when there's chance of wreck,"
The captain said, as ladies writhed their neck
To see the dying dolphin flap the deck:
"If we go down, on us these gentry sup;
We dine upon them, if we haul them up.
Wise men applaud us when we eat the eaters,
As the devil laughs when keen folks cheat the cheaters."
—THE SEA VOYAGE.*

There was nothing in Duke's manner towards Christian which could have conveyed to that latter personage, experienced as he was in the worst possible ways of the world, that Buckingham would, at that particular moment, rather have seen the devil than himself; unless it was that Buckingham's reception of him, being rather extraordinarily courteous towards so old an acquaintance, might have excited some degree of suspicion.

Having escaped with some difficulty from the vague region of general compliments, which bears the same relation to that of business that Milton informs us the *Limbo Patrum* has to the sensible and material earth, Christian asked his Grace of Buckingham, with the same blunt plainness with which he usually veiled a very deep and artificial character, whether he had lately seen Chiffinch or his helpmate?

"Neither of them lately," answered Buckingham. "Have not you waited on them yourself?—I thought you would have been more anxious about the great scheme."

"I have called once and again," said Christian, "but I can gain no access to the sight of that important couple. I begin to be afraid they are paltering with me."

"Which, by the welkin and its stars, you would not be slow in avenging, Master Christian. I know your puritanical principles on that point well," said the Duke.

"Revenge may be well said to be sweet, when so many grave and wise men are ready to exchange for it all the sugar-plums which pleasures offer to the poor sinful people of the world, besides the reversion of those which they talk of expecting in the way of *post obit*."

"You may jest, my lord," said Christian, "but still——"

"But still you will be revenged on Chiffinch, and his little commodious companion. And yet the task may be difficult—Chiffinch has so many ways of obliging his master—his little woman is such a convenient pretty sort of a screen, and has such winning little ways of her own, that, in faith, in your case, I would not meddle with them. What is this refusing their door, man? We all do it to our best friends now and then, as well as to duns and dull company."

"If your Grace is in a humour of rambling thus wildly in your talk," said Christian, "you know my old faculty of patience—I can wait till it be your pleasure to talk more seriously."

"Seriously!" said his Grace—"Wherefore not?—I only wait to know what your serious business may be."

"In a word, my lord, from Chiffinch's refusal to see me, and some vain calls which I have made at your Grace's mansion, I am afraid either that our plan has miscarried, or that there is some intention to exclude me from the farther conduct of the matter." Christian pronounced these words with considerable emphasis.

"That were folly as well as treachery," returned the Duke, "to exclude from the spoil the very engineer who conducted the attack. But hark ye, Christian—I am sorry to tell bad news without preparation; but as you insist on knowing the worst, and are not ashamed to suspect your best friends, out it must come—Your niece left Chiffinch's house the morning before yesterday."

Christian staggered, as if he had received a severe blow; and the blood ran to his face in such a current of passion, that the Duke concluded he was struck with an apoplexy. But, exerting the extraordinary command which he could maintain under the most trying circumstances, he said, with a voice, the composure of which had an unnatural contrast with the alteration of his countenance, "Am I to conclude, that in leaving the protection of the roof in which I placed her, the girl has found shelter under that of your Grace?"

"Sir," replied Buckingham gravely, "the supposition does my gallantry more credit than it deserves."

"Oh, my Lord Duke," answered Christian, "I am not one whom you can impose on by this species of courtly jargon. I know of what your Grace is capable; and that to gratify the caprice of a moment you would not hesitate to disappoint even the schemes at which you yourself have laboured most busily.—Suppose this jest played off. Take your laugh at those simple precautions by which I intended to protect your Grace's interest, as well as that of others. Let us know the extent of your frolic, and consider how far its consequences can be repaired."

"On my word, Christian," said the Duke, laughing, "you are the most obliging of uncles and of guardians. Let your niece pass through as many adventures as Boccaccio's bride of the King of Garba, you care not. Pure or soiled, she will still make the footstool of your fortune."

An Indian proverb says, that the dart of contempt will even pierce through the shell of the tortoise; but this is more peculiarly the case when conscience tells the subject of the sarcasm that it is justly merited. Christian, stung with Buckingham's reproach, at once assumed a haughty and threatening mien, totally inconsistent with that in which sufferance seemed to be as much his badge as that of Shylock. "You are a foul-mouthed and most unworthy lord," he said; "and as such I will proclaim you, unless you make reparation for the injury you have done me."

"And what," said the Duke of Buckingham, "shall I proclaim *you*, that can give you the least title to notice from such as I am? What name shall I bestow on the little transaction which has given rise to such unexpected misunderstanding?"

Christian was silent, either from rage or from mental conviction.

"Come, come, Christian," said the Duke, smiling, "we know too much of each other to make a quarrel safe. Hate each other we may—circumvent each other—it is the way of Courts—but proclaim!—a fico for the phrase."

"I used it not," said Christian, "till your Grace drove me to extremity. You know, my lord, I have fought both at home and abroad; and you should not rashly think that I will endure any indignity which blood can wipe away."

"On the contrary," said the Duke, with the same civil and sneering manner, "I can confidently assert, that the life of half a score of your friends would seem very light to you, Christian, if their existence interfered, I do not say with your character, as being a thing of much less consequence, but with any advantage which their existence might intercept. Fie upon it, man, we have known each other long. I never thought you a coward; and am only glad to see I could strike a few sparkles of heat out of your cold and constant disposition. I will now, if you please, tell you at once the fate of the young lady, in which I pray you to believe that I am truly interested."

"I hear you, my Lord Duke," said Christian. "The curl of your upper lip, and your eyebrow, does not escape me. Your Grace knows the French proverb, 'He laughs best who laughs last.' But I hear you."

"Thank Heaven you do," said Buckingham; "for your case requires haste, I promise you, and involves no laughing matter. Well then, hear a simple truth, on which (if it became me to offer any pledge for what I assert to be such) I could pledge life, fortune, and honour. It was the morning before last, when meeting with the King at Chiffinch's unexpectedly—in fact I had looked in to fool an hour away, and to learn how your scheme advanced—I saw a singular scene. Your niece terrified little Chiffinch—the hen Chiffinch, I mean—bid the King defiance to his teeth, and walked out of the presence triumphantly, under the guardianship of a young fellow of little mark or likelihood, excepting a tolerable personal presence, and the advantage of a most unconquerable impudence. Egad, I can hardly help

laughing to think how the King and I were both baffled; for I will not deny, that I had tried to trifle for a moment with the fair Indamora. But, egad, the young fellow swooped her off from under our noses, like my own Drawcansir clearing off the banquet from the two Kings of Brentford. There was a dignity in the gallant's swaggering retreat which I must try to teach Mohun;[*] it will suit his part admirably."

[*] *Then a noted actor.*

"This is incomprehensible, my Lord Duke," said Christian, who by this time had recovered all his usual coolness; "you cannot expect me to believe this. Who dared be so bold as to carry off my niece in such a manner, and from so august a presence? And with whom, a stranger as he must have been, would she, wise and cautious as I know her, have consented to depart in such a manner?—My lord, I cannot believe this."

"One of your priests, my most devoted Christian," replied the Duke, "would only answer, Die, infidel, in thine unbelief; but I am only a poor worldling sinner, and I will add what mite of information I can. The young fellow's name, as I am given to understand, is Julian, son of Sir Geoffrey, whom men call Peveril of the Peak."

"Peveril of the Devil, who hath his cavern there!" said Christian warmly; "for I know that gallant, and believe him capable of anything bold and desperate. But how could he intrude himself into the royal presence? Either Hell aids him, or Heaven looks nearer into mortal dealings than I have yet believed. If so, may God forgive us, who deemed he thought not on us at all!"

"Amen, most Christian Christian," replied the Duke. "I am glad to see thou hast yet some touch of grace that leads thee to augur so. But Empson, the hen Chiffinch, and half-a-dozen more, saw the swain's entrance and departure. Please examine these witnesses with your own wisdom, if you think your time may not be better employed in tracing the fugitives. I believe he gained entrance as one of some dancing or masking party. Rowley, you know, is accessible to all who will come forth to make him sport. So in stole this termagant tearing gallant, like Samson among the Philistines, to pull down our fine scheme about our ears."

"I believe you, my lord," said Christian; "I cannot but believe you; and I forgive you, since it is your nature, for making sport of what is ruin and destruction. But which way did they take?"

"To Derbyshire, I should presume, to seek her father," said the Duke. "She spoke of going into paternal protection, instead of yours, Master Christian. Something had chanced at Chiffinch's, to give her cause to suspect that you had not altogether provided for his daughter in the manner which her father was likely to approve of."

"Now, Heaven be praised," said Christian, "she knows not her father is come to London! and they must be gone down either to Martindale Castle, or to Moultrassie Hall; in either case they are in my power—I must follow them close. I will return instantly to Derbyshire—I am undone if she meet her father until these errors are amended. Adieu, my lord. I forgive the part which I fear your Grace must have had in baulking our enterprise—it is no time for mutual reproaches."

"You speak truth, Master Christian," said the Duke, "and I wish you all success. Can I help you with men, or horses, or money?"

"I thank your Grace," said Christian, and hastily left the apartment.

The Duke watched his descending footsteps on the staircase, until they could be heard no longer, and then exclaimed to Jerningham, who entered, "*Victoria! victoria! magna est veritas et prævalebit!*"—Had I told the villain a word of a lie, he is so familiar with all the regions of falsehood—his whole life has been such an absolute imposture, that I had stood detected in an instant; but I told him truth, and that was the only means of deceiving him. Victoria! my dear Jerningham, I am prouder of cheating Christian, than I should have been of circumventing a minister of state."

"Your Grace holds his wisdom very high," said the attendant.

"His cunning, at least, I do, which, in Court affairs, often takes the weather-gage of wisdom,—as in Yarmouth Roads a herring-buss will baffle a frigate. He shall not return to London if I can help it, until all these intrigues are over."

As his Grace spoke, the Colonel, after whom he had repeatedly made inquiry, was announced by a gentleman of his household. "He met not Christian, did he?" said the Duke hastily.

"No, my lord," returned the domestic, "the Colonel came by the old garden staircase."

"I judged as much," replied the Duke; "'tis an owl that will not take wing in daylight, when there is a thicket left to skulk under. Here he comes from threading lane, vault, and ruinous alley, very near ominous a creature as the fowl of ill augury which he resembles."

The Colonel, to whom no other appellation seemed to be given, than that which belonged to his military station, now entered the apartment. He was tall, strongly built, and past the middle period of life, and his countenance, but for the heavy cloud which dwelt upon it, might have been pronounced a handsome one. While the Duke spoke to him, either from humility or some other cause, his large serious eye was cast down upon the ground; but he raised it when he answered, with a keen look of earnest observation. His dress was very plain, and more allied to that of the Puritans than of the Cavaliers of the time; a shadowy black hat, like the Spanish sombrero; a large black mantle or cloak, and a long rapier, gave him something the air of a Castilione, to which his gravity and stiffness of demeanour added considerable strength.

"Well, Colonel," said the Duke, "we have been long strangers—how have matters gone with you?"

"As with other men of action in quiet times," answered the colonel, "or as a good war-caper[*] that lies high and dry in a muddy creek, till seams and planks are rent and riven."

[*] *A privateer.*

"Well, Colonel," said the Duke, "I have used your valour before now, and I may again; so that I shall speedily see that the vessel is careened, and undergoes a thorough repair."

"I conjecture, then," said the Colonel, "that your Grace has some voyage in hand?"

"No, but there is one which I want to interrupt," replied the Duke.

"Tis but another stave of the same tune.—Well, my lord, I listen," answered the stranger.

"Nay," said the Duke, "it is but a trifling matter after all.—You know Ned Christian?"

"Ay, surely, my lord," replied the Colonel, "we have been long known to each other."

"He is about to go down to Derbyshire to seek a certain niece of his, whom he will scarcely find there. Now, I trust to your tried friendship to interrupt his return to London. Go with him, or meet him, cajole him, or assail him, or do what thou wilt with him—only keep him from London for a fortnight at least, and then I care little how soon he comes."

"For by that time, I suppose," replied the Colonel, "any one may find the wench that thinks her worth the looking for."

"Thou mayst think her worth the looking for thyself, Colonel," rejoined the Duke; "I promise you she hath many a thousand stitched to her petticoat; such a wife would save thee from skeldering on the public."

"My lord, I sell my blood and my sword, but not my honour," answered the man sullenly; "if I marry, my bed may be a poor, but it shall be an honest one."

"Then thy wife will be the only honest matter in thy possession, Colonel—at least since I have known you," replied the Duke.

"Why, truly, your Grace may speak your pleasure on that point. It is chiefly your business which I have done of late; and if it were less strictly honest than I could have wished, the employer was to blame as well as the agent. But for marrying a cast-off mistress, the man (saving your Grace, to whom I am bound) lives not who dares propose it to me."

The Duke laughed loudly. "Why, this is mine Ancient Pistol's vein," he replied.

—"*Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become,*

And by my side wear steel?—then Lucifer take all!"

"My breeding is too plain to understand ends of playhouse verse, my lord," said the Colonel suddenly. "Has your Grace no other service to command me?"

"None—only I am told you have published a Narrative concerning the Plot."

"What should ail me, my lord?" said the Colonel; "I hope I am a witness as competent as any that has yet appeared?"

"Truly, I think so to the full," said the Duke; "and it would have been hard, when so much profitable mischief was going, if so excellent a Protestant as yourself had not come in for a share."

"I came to take your Grace's commands, not to be the object of your wit," said the Colonel.

"Gallantly spoken, most resolute and most immaculate Colonel! As you are to be on full pay in my service for a month to come, I pray your acceptance of this purse, for contingents and equipments, and you shall have my instructions from time to time."

"They shall be punctually obeyed, my lord," said the Colonel; "I know the duty of a subaltern officer. I wish your Grace a good morning."

So saying, he pocketed the purse, without either affecting hesitation, or expressing gratitude, but merely as a part of a transaction in the regular way of business, and stalked from the apartment with the same sullen gravity which marked his entrance. "Now, there goes a scoundrel after my own heart," said the Duke; "a robber from his cradle, a murderer since he could hold a knife, a profound hypocrite in religion, and a worse and deeper hypocrite in honour,—would sell his soul to the devil to accomplish any villainy, and would cut the throat of his brother, did he dare to give the villainy he had so acted its right name.—Now, why stand you amazed, good Master Jerningham, and look on me as you would on some monster of Ind, when you had paid your shilling to see it, and were staring out your pennyworth with your eyes as round as a pair of spectacles? Wink, man, and save them, and then let thy tongue untie the mystery."

"On my word, my Lord Duke," answered Jerningham, "since I am compelled to speak, I can only say, that the longer I live with your Grace, I am the more at a loss to fathom your motives of action. Others lay plans, either to attain profit or pleasure by their execution; but your Grace's delight is to counteract your own schemes, when in the very act of performance; like a child—forgive me—that breaks its favourite toy, or a man who should set fire to the house he has half built."

"And why not, if he wanted to warm his hands at the blaze?" said the Duke.

"Ay, my lord," replied his dependent; "but what if, in doing so, he should burn his fingers?—My lord, it is one of your noblest qualities, that you will sometimes listen to the truth without taking offence; but were it otherwise, I could not, at this moment, help speaking out at every risk."

"Well, say on, I can bear it," said the Duke, throwing himself into an easy-chair, and using his toothpick with graceful indifference and equanimity; "I love to hear what such potsherds as thou art, think of the proceeding of us who are of the pure porcelain clay of the earth."

"In the name of Heaven, my lord, let me then ask you," said Jerningham, "what merit you claim, or what advantage you expect, from having embroiled everything in which you are concerned to a degree which equals the chaos of the blind old Roundhead's poem which your Grace is so fond of? To begin with the King. In spite of good-humour, he will be incensed at your repeated rivalry."

"His Majesty defied me to it."

"You have lost all hopes of the Isle, by quarrelling with Christian."

"I have ceased to care a farthing about it," replied the Duke.

"In Christian himself, whom you have insulted, and to whose family you intend dishonour, you have lost a sagacious, artful, and cool-headed instrument and adherent," said the monitor.

"Poor Jerningham!" answered the Duke; "Christian would say as much for thee, I doubt not, wert thou discarded tomorrow. It is the common error of such tools as you and he to think themselves indispensable. As to his family, what was never honourable cannot be dishonoured by any connection with my house."

"I say nothing of Chiffinch," said Jerningham, "offended as he will be when he learns why, and by whom, his scheme has been ruined, and the lady spirited away—He and his wife, I say nothing of them."

"You need not," said the Duke; "for were they even fit persons to speak to me about, the Duchess of Portsmouth has bargained for their disgrace."

"Then this bloodhound of a Colonel, as he calls himself, your Grace cannot even lay *him* on a quest which is to do you service, but you must do him such indignity at the same time, as he will not fail to remember, and be sure to fly at your throat should he ever have an opportunity of turning on you."

"I will take care he has none," said the Duke; "and yours, Jerningham, is a low-lived apprehension. Beat your spaniel heartily if you would have him under command. Ever let your agents see you know what they are, and prize them accordingly. A rogue, who must needs be treated as a man of honour, is apt to get above his work. Enough, therefore, of your advice and censure, Jerningham; we differ in every particular. Were we both engineers, you would spend your life in watching some old woman's wheel, which spins flax by the ounce; I must be in the midst of the most varied and counteracting machinery, regulating checks and counter-checks, balancing weights, proving springs and wheels, directing and controlling a hundred combined powers."

"And your fortune, in the meanwhile?" said Jerningham; "pardon this last hint, my lord."

"My fortune," said the Duke, "is too vast to be hurt by a petty wound; and I have, as thou knowest, a thousand salves in store for the scratches and scars which it sometimes receives in greasing my machinery."

"Your Grace does not mean Dr. Wilderhead's powder of projection?"

"Pshaw! he is a quacksalver, and mountebank, and beggar."

"Or Solicitor Drowndland's plan for draining the fens?"

"He is a cheat,—*videlicet*, an attorney."

"Or the Laird of Lackpelf's sale of Highland woods?"

"He is a Scotsman," said the Duke,—"*videlicet*, both cheat and beggar."

"These streets here, upon the site of your noble mansion-house?" said Jerningham.

"The architect's a bite, and the plan's a bubble. I am sick of the sight of this rubbish, and I will soon replace our old alcoves, alleys, and flower-pots by an Italian garden and a new palace."

"That, my lord, would be to waste, not to improve your fortune," said his domestic.

"Clodpate, and muddy spirit that thou art, thou hast forgot the most hopeful scheme of all—the South Sea Fisheries—their stock is up 50 per cent. already. Post down to the Alley, and tell old Mansses to buy £20,000 for me.—Forgive me, Plutus, I forgot to lay my sacrifice on thy shrine, and yet expected thy favours!—Fly post-haste, Jerningham—for thy life, for thy life, for thy life!"[*]

[*] *Stock-jobbing, as it is called, that is, dealing in shares of monopolies, patent, and joint-stock companies of every description, was at least as common in Charles II.'s time as our own; and as the exercise of ingenuity in this way promised a road to wealth without the necessity of industry, it was then much pursued by dissolute courtiers.*

With hands and eyes uplifted, Jerningham left the apartment; and the Duke, without thinking a moment farther on old or new intrigues—on the friendship he had formed, or the enmity he had provoked—on the beauty whom he had carried off from her natural protectors, as well as from her lover—or on the monarch against whom he had placed himself in rivalry,—sat down to calculate chances with all the zeal of Demoivre, tired of the drudgery in half-an-hour, and refused to see the zealous agent whom he had employed in the city, because he was busily engaged in writing a new lampoon.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Ah! changeful head, and fickle heart!
—PROGRESS OF DISCONTENT.

No event is more ordinary in narratives of this nature, than the abduction of the female on whose fate the interest is supposed to turn; but that of Alice Bridgenorth was thus far particular, that she was spirited away by the Duke of Buckingham, more in contradiction than in the rivalry of passion; and that, as he made his first addresses to her at Chiffinch's, rather in the spirit of rivalry to this Sovereign, than from any strong impression which her beauty had made on his affections, so he had formed the sudden plan of spiriting her away by means of his dependents, rather to perplex Christian, the King, Chiffinch, and all concerned, than because he had any particular desire for her society at his own mansion. Indeed, so far was this from being the case, that his Grace was rather surprised than delighted with the success of the enterprise which had made her an inmate there, although it is probable he might have thrown himself into an uncontrollable passion, had he learned its miscarriage instead of its success.

Twenty-four hours had passed over since he had returned to his own roof, before, notwithstanding sundry hints from Jerningham, he could even determine on the exertion necessary to pay his fair captive a visit; and then it was with the internal reluctance of one who can only be stirred from indolence by novelty.

"I wonder what made me plague myself about this wench," said he, "and doom myself to encounter all the hysterical rhapsodies of a country Phillis, with her head stuffed with her grandmother's lessons about virtue and the Bible-book, when the finest and best-bred women in town may be had upon more easy terms. It is a pity one cannot mount the victor's car of triumph without having a victory to boast of; yet, faith, it is what most of our modern gallants do, though it would not become Buckingham.—Well, I must see her," he concluded, "though it were but to rid the house of her. The Portsmouth will not hear of her being set at liberty near Charles, so much is she afraid of a new fair seducing the old sinner from his allegiance. So how the girl is to be disposed of—for I shall have little fancy to keep her here, and she is too wealthy to be sent down to Cliefden as a housekeeper—is a matter to be thought on."

He then called for such a dress as might set off his natural good mien—a compliment which he considered as due to his own merit; for as to anything farther, he went to pay his respects to his fair prisoner with almost as little zeal in the cause, as a gallant to fight a duel in which he has no warmer interest than the maintenance of his reputation as man of honour.

The set of apartments consecrated to the use of those favourites who occasionally made Buckingham's mansion their place of abode, and who were, so far as liberty was concerned, often required to observe the regulations of a convent, were separated from the rest of the Duke's extensive mansion. He lived in the age when what was called gallantry warranted the most atrocious actions of deceit and violence; as may be best illustrated by the catastrophe of an unfortunate actress, whose beauty attracted the attention of the last De Vere, Earl of Oxford. While her virtue defied his seductions, he ruined her under colour of a mock marriage, and was rewarded for a success which occasioned the death of his victim, by the general applause of the men of wit and gallantry who filled the drawing-room of Charles.

Buckingham had made provision in the interior of his ducal mansion for exploits of a similar nature; and the set of apartments which he now visited were alternately used to confine the reluctant, and to accommodate the willing.

Being now destined for the former purpose, the key was delivered to the Duke by a hooded and spectacled old lady, who sat reading a devout book in the outer hall which divided these apartments (usually called the Nunnery) from the rest of the house. This experienced dowager acted as mistress of the ceremonies on such occasions, and was the trusty depositary of more intrigues than were known to any dozen of her worshipful calling besides.

"As sweet a linnet," she said, as she undid the outward door, "as ever sung in a cage."

"I was afraid she might have been more for moping than for singing, Dowlas," said the Duke.

"Till yesterday she was so, please your Grace," answered Dowlas; "or, to speak sooth, till early this morning, we heard of nothing but Lachrymæ. But the air of your noble Grace's house is favourable to singing-birds; and to-day matters have been a-much mended."

"Tis sudden, dame," said the Duke; "and 'tis something strange, considering that I have never visited her, that the pretty trembler should have been so soon reconciled to her fate."

"Ah, your Grace has such magic, that it communicates itself to your very walls; as wholesome Scripture says, Exodus, first and seventh, 'It cleaveth to the walls and the doorposts.'"

"You are too partial, Dame Dowlas," said the Duke of Buckingham.

"Not a word but truth," said the dame; "and I wish I may be an outcast from the fold of the lambs, but I think this damsel's very frame has changed since she was under your Grace's roof. Methinks she hath a lighter form, a finer step, a more displayed ankle—I cannot tell, but I think there is a change. But, lack-a-day, your Grace knows I am as old as I am trusty, and that my eyes wax something uncertain."

"Especially when you wash them with a cup of canary, Dame Dowlas," answered the Duke, who was aware that temperance was not amongst the cardinal virtues which were most familiar to the old lady's practice.

"Was it canary, your Grace said?—Was it indeed with canary, that your Grace should have supposed me to have washed my eyes?" said the offended matron. "I am sorry that your Grace should know me no better."

"I crave your pardon, dame," said the Duke, shaking aside, fastidiously, the grasp which, in the earnestness of her exculpation, Madam Dowlas had clutched upon his sleeve. "I crave your pardon. Your nearer approach has convinced me of my erroneous imputation—I should have said nantz—not canary."

So saying, he walked forward into the inner apartments, which were fitted up with an air of voluptuous magnificence.

"The dame said true, however," said the proud deviser and proprietor of the splendid mansion—"A country Phillis might well reconcile herself to such a prison as this, even without a skilful bird-fancier to touch a bird-call. But I wonder where she can be, this rural Phidele. Is it possible she can have retreated, like a despairing commandant, into her bedchamber, the very citadel of the place, without even an attempt to defend the outworks?"

As he made this reflection, he passed through an antechamber and little eating parlour, exquisitely furnished, and hung with excellent paintings of the Venetian school.

Beyond these lay a withdrawing-room, fitted up in a style of still more studied elegance. The windows were darkened with painted glass, of such a deep and rich colour, as made the midday beams, which found their way into the apartment, imitate the rich colours of sunset; and, in the celebrated expression of the poet, "taught light to counterfeit a gloom."

Buckingham's feelings and taste had been too much, and too often, and too readily gratified, to permit him, in the general case, to be easily accessible, even to those pleasures which it had been the business of his life to pursue. The hackneyed voluptuary is like the jaded epicure, the mere listlessness of whose appetite becomes at length a sufficient penalty for having made it the principal object of his enjoyment and cultivation. Yet novelty has always some charms, and uncertainty has more.

The doubt how he was to be received—the change of mood which his prisoner was said to have evinced—the curiosity to know how such a creature as Alice Bridgenorth had been described, was likely to bear herself under the circumstances in which she was so unexpectedly placed, had upon Buckingham the effect of exciting unusual interest. On his own part, he had none of those feelings of anxiety with which a man, even of the most vulgar mind, comes to the presence of the female whom he wishes to please, far less the more refined sentiments of love, respect, desire, and awe, with which the more refined lover approaches the beloved object. He had been, to use an expressive French phrase, too completely *blasé* even from his earliest youth, to permit him now to experience the animal eagerness of the one, far less the more sentimental pleasure of the other. It is no small aggravation of this jaded and uncomfortable state of mind, that the voluptuary cannot renounce the pursuits with which he is satiated, but must continue, for his character's sake, or from the mere force of habit, to take all the toil, fatigue, and danger of the chase, while he has so little real interest in the termination.

Buckingham, therefore, felt it due to his reputation as a successful hero of intrigue, to pay his addresses to Alice Bridgenorth with dissembled eagerness; and, as he opened the door of the inner apartment, he paused to consider, whether the tone of gallantry, or that of passion, was fittest to use on the occasion. This delay enabled him to hear a few notes of a lute touched with exquisite skill, and accompanied by the still sweeter strains of a female voice, which, without executing any complete melody, seemed to sport itself in rivalry of the silver sound of the instrument.

"A creature so well educated," said the Duke, "with the sense she is said to possess, would, rustic as she is, laugh at the assumed rants of Oroondates. It is the vein of Dorimont—once, Buckingham, thine own—that must here do the feat, besides that the part is easier."

So thinking, he entered the room with that easy grace which characterised the gay courtiers among whom he flourished, and approached the fair tenant, whom he found seated near a table covered with books and music, and having on her left hand the large half-open casement, dim with stained glass, admitting only a doubtful light into this lordly retiring-room, which, hung with the richest tapestry of the Gobelines, and ornamented with piles of china and splendid mirrors, seemed like a bower built for a prince to receive his bride.

The splendid dress of the inmate corresponded with the taste of the apartment which she occupied and partook of the Oriental costume which the much-admired Roxalana had brought into fashion. A slender foot and ankle, which escaped from the wide trowser of richly ornamented and embroidered blue satin, was the only part of her person distinctly seen; the rest was enveloped, from head to foot, in a long veil of silver gauze, which, like a feathery and light mist on a beautiful landscape, suffered you to perceive that what it concealed was rarely lovely, yet induced the imagination even to enhance the charms it shaded. Such part of the dress as could be discovered was, like the veil and the trowsers, in the Oriental taste; a rich turban, and splendid caftan, were rather indicated than distinguished through the folds of the former. The whole attire argued at least coquetry on the part of the fair one, who must have expected, from her situation, a visitor of some pretension; and induced Buckingham to smile internally at Christian's account of the extreme simplicity and purity of his niece.

He approached the lady *en cavalier*, and addressed her with the air of being conscious, while he acknowledged his offences, that his condescending to do so formed a sufficient apology for them. "Fair Mistress Alice," he said, "I am sensible how deeply I ought to sue for pardon for the mistaken zeal of my servants, who, seeing you deserted and exposed without protection during an unlucky affray, took it upon them to bring you under the roof of one who would expose his life rather than suffer you to sustain a moment's anxiety. Was it my fault that those around me should have judged it necessary to interfere for your preservation; or that, aware of the interest I must take in you, they have detained you till I could myself, in personal attendance, receive your commands?"

"That attendance has not been speedily rendered, my lord," answered the lady. "I have been a prisoner for two days—neglected, and left to the charge of menials."

"How say you, lady?—Neglected!" exclaimed the Duke. "By Heaven, if the best in my household has failed in his duty, I will discard him on the instant!"

"I complain of no lack of courtesy from your servants, my lord," she replied; "but methinks it had been but complaisant in the Duke himself to explain to me earlier wherefore he has had the boldness to detain me as a state prisoner."

"And can the divine Alice doubt," said Buckingham, "that, had time and space, those cruel enemies to the flight of passion, given permission, the instant in which you crossed your vassal's threshold had seen its devoted master at your feet, who hath thought, since he saw you, of nothing but the charms which that fatal morning placed before him at Chiffinch's?"

"I understand, then, my lord," said the lady, "that you have been absent, and have had no part in the restraint which has been exercised upon me?"

"Absent on the King's command, lady, and employed in the discharge of his duty," answered Buckingham without hesitation. "What could I do?—The moment you left Chiffinch's, his Majesty commanded me to the saddle in such haste, that I had no time to change my satin buskins for riding-boots. [*] If my absence has occasioned you a moment of inconvenience, blame the inconsiderate zeal of those who, seeing me depart from London, half distracted at my separation from you, were willing to contribute their unmannered, though well-meant exertions, to preserve their master from despair, by retaining the fair Alice within his reach. To whom, indeed, could they have restored you? He whom you selected as your champion is in prison, or fled—your father absent from town—your uncle in the north. To Chiffinch's house you had expressed your well-founded aversion; and what fitter asylum remained than that of your devoted slave, where you must ever reign a queen?"

[] This case is not without precedent. Among the jealousies and fears expressed by the Long Parliament, they insisted much upon an agent for the King departing for the continent so abruptly, that he had not time to change his court dress—white buskins, to wit, and black silk pantaloons—for an equipment more suitable to travel with.*

"An imprisoned one," said the lady. "I desire not royalty."

"Alas! how wilfully you misconstrue me!" said the Duke, kneeling on one knee; "and what right can you have to complain of a few hours' gentle restraint—you, who destine so many to hopeless captivity? Be merciful for once, and withdraw that envious veil; for the divinities are ever most cruel when they deliver their oracles from such clouded recesses. Suffer at least my rash hand——"

"I will save your Grace that unworthy trouble," said the lady haughtily; and rising up, she flung back over her shoulders the veil which shrouded her, saying, at the same time, "Look on me, my Lord Duke, and see if these be indeed the charms which have made on your Grace an impression so powerful."

Buckingham did look; and the effect produced on him by surprise was so strong, that he rose hastily from his knee, and remained for a few seconds as if he had been petrified. The figure that stood before him had neither the height nor the rich shape of Alice Bridgenorth; and, though perfectly well made, was so slightly formed, as to seem almost infantine. Her dress was three or four short vests of embroidered satin, disposed one over the other, of different colours, or rather different shades of similar colours; for strong contrast was carefully avoided. These opened in front, so as to show part of the throat and neck, partially obscured by an inner covering of the finest lace; over the uppermost vest was worn a sort of mantle, or coat of rich fur. A small but magnificent turban was carelessly placed on her head, from under which flowed a profusion of coal-black tresses, which Cleopatra might have envied. The taste and splendour of the Eastern dress corresponded with the complexion of the lady's face, which was brunette, of a shade so dark as might almost have served an Indian.

Amidst a set of features, in which rapid and keen expression made amends for the want of regular beauty, the essential points of eyes as bright as diamonds, and teeth as white as pearls, did not escape the Duke of Buckingham, a professed connoisseur in female charms. In a word, the fanciful and singular female who thus unexpectedly produced herself before him, had one of those faces which are never seen without making an impression; which, when removed, are long after remembered; and for which, in our idleness, we are tempted to invent a hundred histories, that we may please our fancy by supposing the features under the influence of different kinds of emotion. Every one must have in recollection countenances of this kind, which, from a captivating and stimulating originality of expression, abide longer in the memory, and are more seductive to the imagination, than ever regular beauty.

"My Lord Duke," said the lady, "it seems the lifting of my veil has done the work of magic upon your Grace. Alas, for the captive princess, whose nod was to command a vassal so costly as your Grace! She runs, methinks, no slight chance of being turned out of doors, like a second Cinderella, to seek her fortune among lackeys and lightermen."

"I am astonished!" said the Duke. "That villain, Jerningham—I will have the scoundrel's blood!"

"Nay, never abuse Jerningham for the matter," said the Unknown; "but lament your own unhappy engagements. While you, my Lord Duke, were posting northward, in white satin buskins, to toil in the King's affairs, the right and lawful princess sat weeping in sables in the uncheered solitude to which your absence condemned her. Two days she was disconsolate in vain; on the third came an African enchantress to change the scene for her, and the person for your Grace. Methinks, my lord, this adventure will tell but ill, when some faithful squire shall recount or record the gallant adventures of the second Duke of Buckingham."

"Fairly bit and bantered to boot," said the Duke—"the monkey has a turn for satire, too, by all that is *piquante*.—Hark ye, fair Princess, how dared you adventure on such a trick as you have been accomplice to?"

"Dare, my lord," answered the stranger; "put the question to others, not to one who fears nothing."

"By my faith, I believe so; for thy front is bronzed by nature.—Hark ye, once more, mistress—What is your name and condition?"

"My condition I have told you—I am a Mauritanian sorceress by profession, and my name is Zarah," replied the Eastern maiden.

"But methinks that face, shape, and eyes"—said the Duke—"when didst thou pass for a dancing fairy?—Some such imp thou wert not many days since."

"My sister you may have seen—my twin sister; but not me, my lord," answered Zarah.

"Indeed," said the Duke, "that duplicate of thine, if it was not thy very self, was possessed with a dumb spirit, as thou with a talking one. I am still in the mind that you are the same; and that Satan, always so powerful with your sex, had art enough on our former meeting, to make thee hold thy tongue."

"Believe what you will of it, my lord," replied Zarah, "it cannot change the truth.—And now, my lord, I bid you farewell. Have you any commands to Mauritania?"

"Tarry a little, my Princess," said the Duke; "and remember, that you have voluntarily entered yourself as pledge for another; and are justly subjected to any penalty which it is my pleasure to exact. None must brave Buckingham with impunity."

"I am in no hurry to depart, if your Grace hath any commands for me."

"What! are you neither afraid of my resentment, nor of my love, fair Zarah?" said the Duke.

"Of neither, by this glove," answered the lady. "Your resentment must be a pretty passion indeed, if it could stoop to such a helpless object as I am; and for your love—good lack! good lack!"

"And why good lack with such a tone of contempt, lady?" said the Duke, piqued in spite of himself. "Think you Buckingham cannot love, or has never been beloved in return?"

"He may have thought himself beloved," said the maiden; "but by what slight creatures!—things whose heads could be rendered giddy by a playhouse rant—whose brains were only filled with red-heeled shoes and satin buskins—and who run altogether mad on the argument of a George and a star."

"And are there no such frail fair ones in your climate, most scornful Princess?" said the Duke.

"There are," said the lady; "but men rate them as parrots and monkeys—things without either sense or soul, head or heart. The nearness we bear to the sun has purified, while it strengthens, our passions. The icicles of your frozen climate shall as soon hammer hot bars into ploughshares, as shall the foppery and folly of your pretended gallantry make an instant's impression on a breast like mine."

"You speak like one who knows what passion is," said the Duke. "Sit down, fair lady, and grieve not that I detain you. Who can consent to part with a tongue of so much melody, or an eye of such expressive eloquence!—You have known then what it is to love?"

"I know—no matter if by experience, or through the report of others—but I do know, that to love, as I would love, would be to yield not an iota to avarice, not one inch to vanity, not to sacrifice the slightest feeling to interest or to ambition; but to give up all to fidelity of heart and reciprocal affection."

"And how many women, think you, are capable of feeling such disinterested passion?"

"More, by thousands, than there are men who merit it," answered Zarah. "Alas! how often do you see the female, pale, and wretched, and degraded, still following with patient constancy the footsteps of some predominating tyrant, and submitting to all his injustice with the endurance of a faithful and misused spaniel, which prizes a look from his master, though the surliest groom that ever disgraced humanity, more than all the pleasure which the world besides can furnish him? Think what such would be to one who merited and repaid her devotion."

"Perhaps the very reverse," said the Duke; "and for your simile, I can see little resemblance. I cannot charge my spaniel with any perfidy; but for my mistresses—to confess truth, I must always be in a cursed hurry if I would have the credit of changing them before they leave me."

"And they serve you but rightly, my lord," answered the lady; "for what are you?—Nay, frown not; for you must hear the truth for once. Nature has done its part, and made a fair outside, and courtly education hath added its share. You are noble, it is the accident of birth—handsome, it is the caprice of Nature—generous, because to give is more easy than to refuse—well-apparelled, it is to the credit of your tailor—well-natured in the main, because you have youth and health—brave, because to be otherwise were to be degraded—and witty, because you cannot help it."

The Duke darted a glance on one of the large mirrors. "Noble, and handsome, and court-like, generous, well-attired, good-humoured, brave, and witty!—You allow me more, madam, than I have the slightest pretension to, and surely enough to make my way, at some point at least, to female favour."

"I have neither allowed you a heart nor a head," said Zarah calmly.—"Nay, never redden as if you would fly at me. I say not but nature may have given you both; but folly has confounded the one, and selfishness perverted the other. The man whom I call deserving the name is one whose thoughts and exertions are for others, rather than himself,—whose high purpose is adopted on just principles, and never abandoned while heaven or earth affords means of accomplishing it. He is one who will neither seek an indirect advantage by a specious road, nor take an evil path to gain a real good purpose. Such a man were one for whom a woman's heart should beat constant while he breathes, and break when he dies."

She spoke with so much energy that the water sparkled in her eyes, and her cheek coloured with the vehemence of her feelings.

"You speak," said the Duke, "as if you had yourself a heart which could pay the full tribute to the merit which you describe so warmly."

"And have I not?" said she, laying her hand on her bosom. "Here beats one that would bear me out in what I have said, whether in life or in death."

"Were it in my power," said the Duke, who began to get farther interested in his visitor than he could at first have thought possible—"Were it in my power to deserve such faithful attachment, methinks it should be my care to requite it."

"Your wealth, your titles, your reputation as a gallant—all you possess, were too little to merit such sincere affection."

"Come, fair lady," said the Duke, a good deal piqued, "do not be quite so disdainful. Bethink you, that if your love be as pure as coined gold, still a poor fellow like myself may offer you an equivalent in silver—The quantity of my affection must make up for its quality."

"But I am not carrying my affection to market, my lord; and therefore I need none of the base coin you offer in change for it."

"How do I know that, my fairest?" said the Duke. "This is the realm of Paphos—You have invaded it, with what purpose you best know; but I think with none consistent with your present assumption of cruelty. Come, come—eyes that are so intelligent can laugh with delight, as well as gleam with scorn and anger. You are here a waif on Cupid's manor, and I must seize on you in name of the deity."

"Do not think of touching me, my lord," said the lady. "Approach me not, if you would hope to learn the purpose of my being here. Your Grace may suppose yourself a Solomon if you please, but I am no travelling princess, come from distant climes, either to flatter your pride, or wonder at your glory."

"A defiance, by Jupiter!" said the Duke.

"You mistake the signal," said the 'dark ladye'; "I came not here without taking sufficient precautions for my retreat."

"You mouth it bravely," said the Duke; "but never fortress so boasted its resources but the garrison had some thoughts of surrender. Thus I open the first parallel."

They had been hitherto divided from each other by a long narrow table, which, placed in the recess of the large casement we have mentioned, had formed a sort of barrier on the lady's side, against the adventurous gallant. The Duke went hastily to remove it as he spoke; but, attentive to all his motions, his visitor instantly darted through the half-open window. Buckingham uttered a cry of horror and surprise, having no doubt, at first, that she had precipitated herself from a height of at least fourteen feet; for so far the window was distant from the ground. But when he sprung to the spot, he perceived, to his astonishment, that she had effected her descent with equal agility and safety.

The outside of this stately mansion was decorated with a quantity of carving, in the mixed state, betwixt the Gothic and Grecian styles, which marks the age of Elizabeth and her successor; and though the feat seemed a surprising one, the projections of these ornaments were sufficient to afford footing to a creature so light and active, even in her hasty descent.

Inflamed alike by mortification and curiosity, Buckingham at first entertained some thought of following her by the same dangerous route, and had actually got upon the sill of the window for that purpose; and was contemplating what might be his next safe movement, when, from a neighbouring thicket of shrubs, amongst which his visitor had disappeared, he heard her chant a verse of a comic song, then much in fashion, concerning a despairing lover who had recourse to a precipice—

*"But when he came near,
Beholding how steep*

*The sides did appear,
And the bottom how deep;
Though his suit was rejected,
He sadly reflected,
That a lover forsaken
A new love may get;
But a neck that's once broken
Can never be set."*

The Duke could not help laughing, though much against his will, at the resemblance which the verses bore to his own absurd situation, and, stepping back into the apartment, desisted from an attempt which might have proved dangerous as well as ridiculous. He called his attendants, and contented himself with watching the little thicket, unwilling to think that a female, who had thrown herself in a great measure into his way, meant absolutely to mortify him by a retreat.

That question was determined in an instant. A form, wrapped in a mantle, with a slouched hat and shadowy plume, issued from the bushes, and was lost in a moment amongst the ruins of ancient and of modern buildings, with which, as we have already stated, the demesne formerly termed York House, was now encumbered in all directions.

The Duke's servants, who had obeyed his impatient summons, were hastily directed to search for this tantalising siren in every direction. Their master, in the meantime, eager and vehement in every new pursuit, but especially when his vanity was piqued, encouraged their diligence by bribes, and threats, and commands. All was in vain. They found nothing of the Mauritanian Princess, as she called herself, but the turban and the veil; both of which she had left in the thicket, together with her satin slippers; which articles, doubtless, she had thrown aside as she exchanged them for others less remarkable.

Finding all his search in vain, the Duke of Buckingham, after the example of spoiled children of all ages and stations, gave a loose to the frantic vehemence of passion; and fiercely he swore vengeance on his late visitor, whom he termed by a thousand opprobrious epithets, of which the elegant phrase "Jilt" was most frequently repeated.

Even Jerningham, who knew the depths and the shallows of his master's mood, and was bold to fathom them at almost every state of his passions, kept out of his way on the present occasion; and, cabined with the pious old housekeeper, declared to her, over a bottle of ratafia, that, in his apprehension, if his Grace did not learn to put some control on his temper, chains, darkness, straw, and Bedlam, would be the final doom of the gifted and admired Duke of Buckingham.

CHAPTER XL

*—Contentious fierce,
Ardent, and dire, spring from no petty cause.
—ALBION.*

The quarrels between man and wife are proverbial; but let not these honest folks think that connections of a less permanent nature are free from similar jars. The frolic of the Duke of Buckingham, and the subsequent escape of Alice Bridgenorth, had kindled fierce dissension in Chiffinch's family, when, on his arrival in town, he learned these two stunning events: "I tell you," he said to his obliging helpmate, who seemed but little moved by all that he could say on the subject, "that your d—d carelessness has ruined the work of years."

"I think it is the twentieth time you have said so," replied the dame; "and without such frequent assurance, I was quite ready to believe that a very trifling matter would upset any scheme of yours, however long thought of."

"How on earth could you have the folly to let the Duke into the house when you expected the King?" said the irritated courtier.

"Lord, Chiffinch," answered the lady, "ought not you to ask the porter rather than me, that sort of question?—I was putting on my cap to receive his Majesty."

"With the address of a madge-howlet," said Chiffinch, "and in the meanwhile you gave the cat the cream to keep."

"Indeed, Chiffinch," said the lady, "these jaunts to the country do render you excessively vulgar! there is a brutality about your very boots! nay, your muslin ruffles, being somewhat soiled, give to your knuckles a sort of rural rusticity, as I may call it."

"It were a good deed," muttered Chiffinch, "to make both boots and knuckles bang the folly and affectation out of thee." Then speaking aloud, he added, like a man who would fain break off an argument, by extorting from his adversary a confession that he has reason on his side, "I am sure, Kate, you must be sensible that our all depends on his Majesty's pleasure."

"Leave that to me," said she; "I know how to pleasure his Majesty better than you can teach me. Do you think his Majesty is booby enough to cry like a schoolboy because his sparrow has flown away? His Majesty has better taste. I am surprised at you, Chiffinch," she added, drawing herself up, "who were once thought to know the points of a fine woman, that you should have made such a roaring about this country wench. Why, she has not even the country quality of being plump as a barn-door fowl, but is more like a Dunstable lark, that one must crack bones and all if you would make a mouthful of it. What signifies whence she came, or where she goes? There will be those behind that are much more worthy of his Majesty's condescending attention, even when the Duchess of Portsmouth takes the frumps."

"You mean your neighbour, Mistress Nelly," said her worthy helpmate; "but Kate, her date is out. Wit she has, let her keep herself warm with it in worse company, for the cant of a gang of strollers is not language for a prince's chamber."[*]

[*] *In Evelyn's Memoirs is the following curious passage respecting Nell Gwyn, who is hinted at in the text:—"I walked with him [King Charles II.] through Saint James Park to the garden, where I both saw and heard a very familiar discourse between... [the King] and Mrs. Nelly, as they called her, an intimate comedian, she looking out of her garden on a terrace at the top of the wall, and [the King] standing on the green walk under it. I was heartily sorry at this scene."*—EVELYN'S Memoirs, vol. i. p. 413.

"It is no matter what I mean, or whom I mean," said Mrs. Chiffinch; "but I tell you, Tom Chiffinch, that you will find your master quite consoled for loss of the piece of prudish puritanism that you would need saddle him with; as if the good man were not plagued enough with them in Parliament, but you must, forsooth, bring them into his very bedchamber."

"Well, Kate," said Chiffinch, "if a man were to speak all the sense of the seven wise masters, a woman would find nonsense enough to overwhelm him with; so I shall say no more, but that I would to Heaven I may find the King in no worse humour than you describe him. I am commanded to attend him down the river to the Tower to-day, where he is to make some survey of arms and stores. They are clever fellows who contrive to keep Rowley from engaging in business, for, by my word, he has a turn for it."

"I warrant you," said Chiffinch the female, nodding, but rather to her own figure, reflected from a mirror, than to her politic husband,—*"I warrant you we will find means of occupying him that will sufficiently fill up his time."*

"On my honour, Kate," said the male Chiffinch, "I find you strangely altered, and, to speak truth, grown most extremely opinionative. I shall be happy if you have good reason for your confidence."

The dame smiled superciliously, but deigned no other answer, unless this were one,—“I shall order a boat to go upon the Thames to-day with the royal party.”

“Take care what you do, Kate; there are none dare presume so far but women of the first rank. Duchess of Bolton—of Buckingham—of——”

“Who cares for a list of names? why may not I be as forward as the greatest B. amongst your string of them?”

“Nay, faith, thou mayest match the greatest B. in Court already,” answered Chiffinch; “so e’en take thy own course of it. But do not let Chaubert forget to get some collation ready, and a *souper au petit couvert*, in case it should be commanded for the evening.”

“Ay, there your boasted knowledge of Court matters begins and ends.—Chiffinch, Chaubert, and Company;—dissolve that partnership, and you break Tom Chiffinch for a courtier.”

“Amen, Kate,” replied Chiffinch; “and let me tell you it is as safe to rely on another person’s fingers as on our own wit. But I must give orders for the water.—If you will take the pinnace, there are the cloth-of-gold cushions in the chapel may serve to cover the benches for the day. They are never wanted where they lie, so you may make free with them too.”

Madam Chiffinch accordingly mingled with the flotilla which attended the King on his voyage down the Thames, amongst whom was the Queen, attended by some of the principal ladies of the Court. The little plump Cleopatra, dressed to as much advantage as her taste could devise, and seated upon her embroidered cushions like Venus in her shell, neglected nothing that effrontery and minauderie could perform to draw upon herself some portion of the King’s observation; but Charles was not in the vein, and did not even pay her the slightest passing attention of any kind, until her boatmen having ventured to approach nearer to the Queen’s barge than etiquette permitted, received a peremptory order to back their oars, and fall out of the royal procession. Madam Chiffinch cried for spite, and transgressed Solomon’s warning, by cursing the King in her heart; but had no better course than to return to Westminster, and direct Chaubert’s preparations for the evening.

In the meantime the royal barge paused at the Tower; and, accompanied by a laughing train of ladies and of courtiers, the gay Monarch made the echoes of the old prison-towers ring with the unwonted sounds of mirth and revelry. As they ascended from the river-side to the centre of the building, where the fine old keep of William the Conqueror, called the White Tower, predominates over the exterior defences, Heaven only knows how many gallant jests, good or bad, were run on the comparison of his Majesty’s state-prison to that of Cupid, and what killing similes were drawn between the ladies’ eyes and the guns of the fortress, which, spoken with a fashionable congée, and listened to with a smile from a fair lady, formed the fine conversations of the day.

This gay swarm of flutterers did not, however, attend close on the King’s person, though they had accompanied him upon his party on the river. Charles, who often formed manly and sensible resolutions, though he was too easily diverted from them by indolence or pleasure, had some desire to make himself personally acquainted with the state of the military stores, arms, &c. of which the Tower was then, as now, the magazine; and, although he had brought with him the usual number of his courtiers, only three or four attended him on the scrutiny which he intended. Whilst, therefore, the rest of the train amused themselves as they might in other parts of the Tower, the King, accompanied by the Dukes of Buckingham, Ormond, and one or two others, walked through the well-known hall, in which is preserved the most splendid magazine of arms in the world, and which, though far from exhibiting its present extraordinary state of perfection, was even then an arsenal worthy of the great nation to which it belonged.

The Duke of Ormond, well known for his services during the Great Civil War, was, as we have elsewhere noticed, at present rather on cold terms with his Sovereign, who nevertheless asked his advice on many occasions, and who required it on the present amongst others, when it was not a little feared that the Parliament, in their zeal for the Protestant religion, might desire to take the magazines of arms and ammunition under their own exclusive orders. While Charles sadly hinted at such a termination of the popular jealousies of the period, and discussed with Ormond the means of resisting, or evading it, Buckingham, falling a little behind, amused himself with ridiculing the antiquated appearance and embarrassed demeanour of the old warder who attended on the occasion, and who chanced to be the very same who escorted Julian Peveril to his present place of confinement. The Duke prosecuted his raillery with the greater activity, that he found the old man, though restrained by the place and presence, was rather upon the whole testy, and disposed to afford what sportsmen call *play* to his persecutor. The various pieces of ancient armour, with which the wall was covered, afforded the principal source of the Duke’s wit, as he insisted upon knowing from the old man, who, he said, could best remember matters from the days of King Arthur downwards at the least, the history of the different warlike weapons, and anecdotes of the battles in which they had been wielded. The old man obviously suffered, when he was obliged, by repeated questions, to tell the legends (often sufficiently absurd) which the tradition of the place had assigned to particular relics. Far from flourishing his partisan, and augmenting the emphasis of his voice, as was and is the prevailing fashion of these warlike Ciceroni, it was scarcely possible to extort from him a single word concerning those topics on which their information is usually overflowing.

“Do you know, my friend,” said the Duke to him at last, “I begin to change my mind respecting you. I supposed you must have served as a Yeoman of the Guard since bluff King Henry’s time, and expected to hear something from you about the Field of the Cloth of Gold,—and I thought of asking you the colour of Anne Bullen’s breastknot, which cost the Pope three kingdoms; but I am afraid you are but a novice in such recollections of love and chivalry. Art sure thou didst not creep into thy warlike office from some dark shop in Tower-Hamlets, and that thou hast not converted an unlawful measuring-yard into that glorious halberd?—I warrant thou canst not even tell you whom this piece of antique panoply pertained to?”

The Duke pointed at random to a cuirass which hung amongst others, but was rather remarkable from being better cleansed.

“I should know that piece of iron,” said the warder bluntly, yet with some change in his voice; “for I have known a man within side of it who would not have endured half the impertinence I have heard spoken to-day.”

The tone of the old man, as well as the words, attracted the attention of Charles and the Duke of Ormond, who were only two steps before the speaker. They both stopped, and turned round; the former saying at the same time,—“how now, sirrah!—what answers are these?—What man do you speak of?”

“Of one who is none now,” said the warder, “whatever he may have been.”

“The old man surely speaks of himself,” said the Duke of Ormond, closely examining the countenance of the warder, which he in vain endeavoured to turn away.

“I am sure I remember these features—Are not you my old friend, Major Coleby?”

“I wish your Grace’s memory had been less accurate,” said the old man, colouring deeply, and fixing his eyes on the ground.

The King was greatly shocked.—“Good God!” he said, “the gallant Major Coleby, who joined us with his four sons and a hundred and fifty men at Warrington!—And is this all we could do for an old Worcester friend?”

The tears rushed thick into the old man’s eyes as he said in broken accents, “Never mind me, sire; I am well enough here—a worn-out soldier rusting among old armour. Where one old Cavalier is better, there are twenty worse.—I am sorry your Majesty should know anything of it, since it grieves you.”

With that kindness, which was a redeeming point of his character, Charles, while the old man was speaking, took the partisan from him with his own hand, and put it into that of Buckingham, saying, “What Coleby’s hand has borne, can disgrace neither yours nor mine,—and you owe him this atonement. Time has been with him, that, for less provocation, he would have laid it about your ears.”

The Duke bowed deeply, but coloured with resentment, and took an immediate opportunity to place the weapon carelessly against a pile of arms. The King did not observe a contemptuous motion, which, perhaps, would not have pleased him, being at the moment occupied with the veteran, whom he exhorted to lean upon him, as he conveyed him to a seat, permitting no other person to assist him. “Rest there,” he said, “my brave old friend; and Charles Stewart must be poor indeed, if you wear that dress an hour longer.—You look very pale, my good Coleby, to have had so much colour a few minutes since. Be not vexed at what Buckingham says; no one minds his folly.—You look worse and worse. Come, come, you are too much hurried by this meeting. Sit still—do not rise—do not attempt to kneel. I command you to repose yourself till I have made the round of these apartments.”

The old Cavalier stooped his head in token of acquiescence in the command of his Sovereign, but he raised it not again. The tumultuous agitation of the moment had been too much for spirits which had been long in a state of depression, and health which was much decayed. When the King and his attendants, after half-an-hour’s absence, returned to the spot where they had left the veteran, they found him dead, and already cold, in the attitude of one who has fallen easily asleep.

The King was dreadfully shocked; and it was with a low and faltering voice that he directed the body, in due time, to be honourably buried in the chapel of the Tower.[*] He was then silent, until he attained the steps in front of the arsenal, where the party in attendance upon his person began to assemble at his approach, along with some other persons of respectable appearance, whom curiosity had attracted.

[*] *A story of this nature is current in the legends of the Tower. The affecting circumstances are, I believe, recorded in one of the little manuals which are put into the hands of visitors, but are not to be found in the later editions.*

"This is dreadful," said the King. "We must find some means of relieving the distresses, and rewarding the fidelity of our suffering followers, or posterity will cry fie upon our memory."

"Your Majesty has had often such plans agitated in your Council," said Buckingham.

"True, George," said the King. "I can safely say it is not my fault. I have thought of it for years."

"It cannot be too well considered," said Buckingham; "besides, every year makes the task of relief easier."

"True," said the Duke of Ormond, "by diminishing the number of sufferers. Here is poor old Coleby will no longer be a burden to the Crown."

"You are too severe, my Lord of Ormond," said the King, "and should respect the feelings you trespass on. You cannot suppose that we would have permitted this poor man to hold such a situation, had we known of the circumstances?"

"For God's sake, then, sire," said the Duke of Ormond, "turn your eyes, which have just rested on the corpse of one old friend, upon the distresses of others. Here is the valiant old Sir Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak, who fought through the whole war, wherever blows were going, and was the last man, I believe, in England, who laid down his arms—Here is his son, of whom I have the highest accounts, as a gallant of spirit, accomplishments, and courage—Here is the unfortunate House of Derby—for pity's sake, interfere in behalf of these victims, whom the folds of this hydra-plot have entangled, in order to crush them to death—rebuke the fiends that are seeking to devour their lives, and disappoint the harpies that are gaping for their property. This very day seven-night the unfortunate family, father and son, are to be brought upon trial for crimes of which they are as guiltless, I boldly pronounce, as any who stand in this presence. For God's sake, sire, let us hope that, should the prejudices of the people condemn them, as it has done others, you will at last step in between the blood-hunters and their prey."

The King looked, as he really was, exceedingly perplexed.

Buckingham, between whom and Ormond there existed a constant and almost mortal quarrel, interfered to effect a diversion in Charles's favour. "Your Majesty's royal benevolence," he said, "needs never want exercise, while the Duke of Ormond is near your person. He has his sleeve cut in the old and ample fashion, that he may always have store of ruined cavaliers stowed in it to produce at demand, rare old raw-boned boys, with Malmsey noses, bald heads, spindle shanks, and merciless histories of Edgehill and Naseby."

"My sleeve is, I dare say, of an antique cut," said Ormond, looking full at the Duke; "but I pin neither bravo's nor ruffians upon it, my Lord of Buckingham, as I see fastened to coats of the new mode."

"That is a little too sharp for our presence, my lord," said the King.

"Not if I make my words good," said Ormond.—"My Lord of Buckingham, will you name the man you spoke to as you left the boat?"

"I spoke to no one," said the Duke hastily—"nay, I mistake, I remember a fellow whispered in my ear, that one, who I thought had left London was still lingering in town. A person whom I had business with."

"Was yon the messenger?" said Ormond, singling out from the crowd who stood in the court-yard a tall dark-looking man, muffled in a large cloak, wearing a broad shadowy black beaver hat, with a long sword of the Spanish fashion—the very Colonel, in short, whom Buckingham had despatched in quest of Christian, with the intention of detaining him in the country.

When Buckingham's eyes had followed the direction of Ormond's finger, he could not help blushing so deeply as to attract the King's attention.

"What new frolic is this, George?" he said. "Gentlemen, bring that fellow forward. On my life, a truculent-looking caitiff—Hark ye, friend, who are you? If an honest man, Nature has forgot to label it upon your countenance.—Does none here know him?"

*'With every symptom of a knave complete,
If he be honest, he's a devilish cheat.'*

"He is well known to many, sire," replied Ormond; "and that he walks in this area with his neck safe, and his limbs unshackled, is an instance, amongst many, that we live under the sway of the most merciful Prince of Europe."

"Oddsfish! who is the man, my Lord Duke?" said the King. "Your Grace talks mysteries—Buckingham blushes—and the rogue himself is dumb."

"That honest gentleman, please your Majesty," replied the Duke of Ormond, "whose modesty makes him mute, though it cannot make him blush, is the notorious Colonel Blood, as he calls himself, whose attempt to possess himself of your Majesty's royal crown took place at no very distant date, in this very Tower of London."

"That exploit is not easily forgotten," said the King; "but that the fellow lives, shows your Grace's clemency as well as mine."

"I cannot deny that I was in his hands, sire," said Ormond, "and had certainly been murdered by him, had he chosen to take my life on the spot, instead of destining me—I thank him for the honour—to be hanged at Tyburn. I had certainly been sped, if he had thought me worth knife or pistol, or anything short of the cord.—Look at him sire! If the rascal dared, he would say at this moment, like Caliban in the play, 'Ho, ho, I would I had done it!'"

"Why, oddsfish!" answered the King, "he hath a villainous sneer, my lord, which seems to say as much; but, my Lord Duke, we have pardoned him, and so has your Grace."

"It would ill have become me," said the Duke of Ormond, "to have been severe in prosecuting an attempt on my poor life, when your Majesty was pleased to remit his more outrageous and insolent attempt upon your royal crown. But I must conceive it as a piece of supreme insolence on the part of this bloodthirsty bully, by whomsoever he may be now backed, to appear in the Tower, which was the theatre of one of his villainies, or before me, who was well-nigh the victim of another."

"It shall be amended in future," said the King.—"Hark ye, sirrah Blood, if you again presume to thrust yourself in the way you have done but now, I will have the hangman's knife and your knavish ears made acquainted."

Blood bowed, and with a coolness of impudence which did his nerves great honour, he said he had only come to the Tower accidentally, to communicate with a particular friend on business of importance. "My Lord Duke of Buckingham," he said, "knew he had no other intentions."

"Get you gone, you scoundrelly cut-throat," said the Duke, as much impatient of Colonel Blood's claim of acquaintance, as a town-rake of the low and blackguard companions of his midnight rambles, when they accost him in daylight amidst better company; "if you dare to quote my name again, I will have you thrown into the Thames."

Blood, thus repulsed, turned round with the most insolent composure, and walked away down from the parade, all men looking at him, as at some strange and monstrous prodigy, so much was he renowned for daring and desperate villainy. Some even followed him, to have a better survey of the notorious Colonel Blood, like the smaller tribe of birds which keep fluttering round an owl when he appears in the light of the sun. But as, in the latter case, these thoughtless flutterers are careful to keep out of reach of the beak and claws of the bird of Minerva, so none of those who followed and gazed on Blood as something ominous, cared to bandy looks with him, or to endure and return the lowering and deadly glances, which he shot from time to time on those who pressed nearest to him. He stalked on in this manner, like a daunted, yet sullen wolf, afraid to stop, yet unwilling to fly, until he reached the Traitor's Gate, and getting on board a sculler which waited for him, he disappeared from their eyes.

Charles would fain have obliterated all recollection of his appearance, by the observation, "It were a shame that such a reprobate scoundrel should be the subject of discord between two noblemen of distinction;" and he recommended to the Dukes of Buckingham and Ormond to join hands, and forget a misunderstanding which rose on so unworthy a subject.

Buckingham answered carelessly, "That the Duke of Ormond's honoured white hairs were a sufficient apology for his making the first overtures to a reconciliation," and he held out his hand accordingly. But Ormond only bowed in return, and said, "The King had no cause to expect that the Court would be disturbed by his personal resentments, since time would not yield him back twenty years, nor the grave restore his gallant son Ossory. As to the ruffian who had intruded himself there, he was obliged to him, since, by showing that his Majesty's clemency extended even to the very worst of criminals, he strengthened his hopes of obtaining the King's favour for such of his innocent friends as were now in prison, and in danger, from the odious charges brought against them on the score of the Popish Plot."

The King made no other answer to this insinuation, than by directing that the company should embark for their return to Whitehall; and thus took leave of the officers of the Tower who were in attendance, with one of those well-turned compliments to their discharge of duty, which no man knew better how to express; and issued at the same time strict and anxious orders for protection and defence of the important fortress confided to them, and all which it contained.

Before he parted with Ormond on their arrival at Whitehall, he turned round to him, as one who has made up his resolution, and said, "Be satisfied, my Lord Duke—our friends' case shall be looked to."

In the same evening the Attorney-General, and North, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, had orders with all secrecy, to meet his Majesty that evening on especial matters of state, at the apartments of Chiffinch, the centre of all affairs, whether of gallantry or business.

CHAPTER XLI

*Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass;
Erect thyself, thou monumental brass,
High as the serpent of thy metal made,
While nations stand secure beneath thy shade.*

—ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL.

The morning which Charles had spent in visiting the Tower, had been very differently employed by those unhappy individuals, whom their bad fate, and the singular temper of the times, had made the innocent tenants of that state prison, and who had received official notice that they were to stand their trial in the Court of Queen's Bench at Westminster, on the seventh succeeding day. The stout old Cavalier at first only railed at the officer for spoiling his breakfast with the news, but evinced great feeling when he was told that Julian was to be put under the same indictment.

We intend to dwell only very generally on the nature of their trial, which corresponded, in the outline, with almost all those which took place during the prevalence of the Popish Plot. That is, one or two infamous and perjured evidences, whose profession of common informers had become frightfully lucrative, made oath to the prisoners having expressed themselves interested in the great confederacy of the Catholics. A number of others brought forward facts or suspicions, affecting the character of the parties as honest Protestants and good subjects; and betwixt the direct and presumptive evidence, enough was usually extracted for justifying, to a corrupted court and perjured jury, the fatal verdict of Guilty.

The fury of the people had, however, now begun to pass away, exhausted even by its own violence. The English nation differ from all others, indeed even from those of the sister kingdoms, in being very easily sated with punishment, even when they suppose it most merited. Other nations are like the tamed tiger, which, when once its native appetite for slaughter is indulged in one instance, rushes on in promiscuous ravages. But the English public have always rather resembled what is told of the sleuth-dog, which, eager, fierce, and clamorous in pursuit of his prey, desists from it so soon as blood is sprinkled upon his path.

Men's minds were now beginning to cool—the character of the witnesses was more closely sifted—their testimonies did not in all cases tally—and a wholesome suspicion began to be entertained of men, who would never say they had made a full discovery of all they knew, but avowedly reserved some points of evidence to bear on future trials.

The King also, who had lain passive during the first burst of popular fury, was now beginning to bestir himself, which produced a marked effect on the conduct of the Crown Counsel, and even the Judges. Sir George Wakeman had been acquitted in spite of Oates's direct testimony; and public attention was strongly excited concerning the event of the next trial; which chanced to be that of the Peverils, father and son, with whom, I know not from what concatenation, little Hudson the dwarf was placed at the bar of the Court of King's Bench.

It was a piteous sight to behold a father and son, who had been so long separated, meet under circumstances so melancholy; and many tears were shed, when the majestic old man—for such he was, though now broken with years—folded his son to his bosom, with a mixture of joy, affection, and a bitter anticipation of the event of the impending trial. There was a feeling in the Court that for a moment overcame every prejudice and party feeling. Many spectators shed tears; and there was even a low moaning, as of those who weep aloud.

Such as felt themselves sufficiently at ease to remark the conduct of poor little Geoffrey Hudson, who was scarcely observed amid the preponderating interest created by his companions in misfortune, could not but notice a strong degree of mortification on the part of that diminutive gentleman. He had soothed his great mind by the thoughts of playing the character which he was called on to sustain, in a manner which should be long remembered in that place; and on his entrance, had saluted the numerous spectators, as well as the Court, with a cavalier air, which he meant should express grace, high-breeding, perfect coolness, with a noble disregard to the issue of their proceedings. But his little person was so obscured and jostled aside, on the meeting of the father and son, who had been brought in different boats from the Tower, and placed at the bar at the same moment, that his distress and his dignity were alike thrown into the background, and attracted neither sympathy nor admiration.

The dwarf's wisest way to attract attention would have been to remain quiet, when so remarkable an exterior would certainly have received in its turn the share of public notice which he so eagerly coveted. But when did personal vanity listen to the suggestions of prudence?—Our impatient friend scrambled, with some difficulty, on the top of the bench intended for his seat; and there, "paining himself to stand a-tiptoe," like Chaucer's gallant Sir Chaunciclere, he challenged the notice of the audience as he stood bowing and claiming acquaintance of his namesake Sir Geoffrey the larger, with whose shoulders, notwithstanding his elevated situation, he was scarcely yet upon a level.

The taller Knight, whose mind was occupied in a very different manner, took no notice of these advances upon the dwarf's part, but sat down with the determination rather to die on the spot than evince any symptoms of weakness before Roundheads and Presbyterians; under which obnoxious epithets, being too old-fashioned to find out party designations of newer date, he comprehended all persons concerned in his present trouble.

By Sir Geoffrey the larger's change of position, his face was thus brought on a level with that of Sir Geoffrey the less, who had an opportunity of pulling him by the cloak. He of Martindale Castle, rather mechanically than consciously, turned his head towards the large wrinkled visage, which, struggling between an assumed air of easy importance, and an anxious desire to be noticed, was grimacing within a yard of him. But neither the singular physiognomy, the nods and smiles of greeting and recognition into which it was wreathed, nor the strange little form by which it was supported, had at that moment the power of exciting any recollections in the old Knight's mind; and having stared for a moment at the poor little man, his bulky namesake turned away his head without farther notice.

Julian Peveril, the dwarf's more recent acquaintance, had, even amid his own anxious feelings, room for sympathy with those of his little fellow-sufferer. As soon as he discovered that he was at the same terrible bar with himself, although he could not conceive how their causes came to be conjoined, he acknowledged him by a hearty shake of the hand, which the old man returned with affected dignity and real gratitude. "Worthy youth," he said, "thy presence is restorative, like the

nepenthe of Homer even in this syncope of our mutual fate. I am concerned to see that your father hath not the same alacrity of soul as that of ours, which are lodged within smaller compass; and that he hath forgotten an ancient comrade and fellow-soldier, who now stands beside him to perform, perhaps, their last campaign."

Julian briefly replied, that his father had much to occupy him. But the little man—who, to do him justice, cared no more (in his own phrase) for imminent danger or death, than he did for the puncture of a flea's proboscis—did not so easily renounce the secret object of his ambition, which was to acquire the notice of the large and lofty Sir Geoffrey Peveril, who, being at least three inches taller than his son, was in so far possessed of that superior excellence, which the poor dwarf, in his secret soul, valued before all other distinctions, although in his conversation, he was constantly depreciating it. "Good comrade and namesake," he proceeded, stretching out his hand, so as to again to reach the elder Peveril's cloak, "I forgive your want of reminiscence, seeing it is long since I saw you at Naseby, fighting as if you had as many arms as the fabled Briareus."

The Knight of Martindale, who had again turned his head towards the little man, and had listened, as if endeavouring to make something out of his discourse, here interrupted him with a peevish, "Pshaw!"

"Pshaw!" repeated Sir Geoffrey the less; "*Pshaw* is an expression of slight esteem,—nay, of contempt,—in all languages; and were this a befitting place——"

But the Judges had now taken their places, the criers called silence, and the stern voice of the Lord Chief Justice (the notorious Scroggs) demanded what the officers meant by permitting the accused to communicate together in open court.

It may here be observed, that this celebrated personage was, upon the present occasion, at a great loss how to proceed. A calm, dignified, judicial demeanour, was at no time the characteristic of his official conduct. He always ranted and roared either on the one side or the other; and of late, he had been much unsettled which side to take, being totally incapable of anything resembling impartiality. At the first trials for the Plot, when the whole stream of popularity ran against the accused, no one had been so loud as Scroggs; to attempt to the character of Oates or Bedloe, or any other leading witnesses, he treated as a crime more heinous than it would have been to blaspheme the Gospel on which they had been sworn—it was a stifling of the Plot, or discrediting of the King's witnesses—a crime not greatly, if at all, short of high treason against the King himself.

But, of late, a new light had begun to glimmer upon the understanding of this interpreter of the laws. Sagacious in the signs of the times, he began to see that the tide was turning; and that Court favour at least, and probably popular opinion also, were likely, in a short time, to declare against the witnesses, and in favour of the accused.

The opinion which Scroggs had hitherto entertained of the high respect in which Shaftesbury, the patron of the Plot, was held by Charles, had been definitely shaken by a whisper from his brother North to the following effect: "His Lordship has no more interest at Court than your footman."

This notice, from a sure hand, and received but that morning, had put the Judge to a sore dilemma; for, however indifferent to actual consistency, he was most anxious to save appearances. He could not but recollect how violent he had been on former occasions in favour of these prosecutions; and being sensible at the same time that the credit of the witnesses, though shaken in the opinion of the more judicious, was, amongst the bulk of the people out of doors, as strong as ever, he had a difficult part to play. His conduct, therefore, during the whole trial, resembled the appearance of a vessel about to go upon another tack, when her sails are shivering in the wind, ere they have yet caught the impulse which is to send her forth in a new direction. In a word, he was so uncertain which side it was his interest to favour, that he might be said on that occasion to have come nearer a state of total impartiality than he was ever capable of attaining, whether before or afterwards. This was shown by his bullying now the accused, and now the witnesses, like a mastiff too much irritated to lie still without baying, but uncertain whom he shall first bite.

The indictment was then read; and Sir Geoffrey Peveril heard, with some composure, the first part of it, which stated him to have placed his son in the household of the Countess of Derby, a recusant Papist, for the purpose of aiding the horrible and bloodthirsty Popish Plot—with having had arms and ammunition concealed in his house—and with receiving a blank commission from the Lord Stafford, who had suffered death on account of the Plot. But when the charge went on to state that he had communicated for the same purpose with Geoffrey Hudson, sometimes called Sir Geoffrey Hudson, now, or formerly in the domestic service of the Queen Dowager, he looked at his companion as if he suddenly recalled him to remembrance, and broke out impatiently, "These lies are too gross to require a moment's consideration. I might have had enough of intercourse, though in nothing but what was loyal and innocent, with my noble kinsman, the late Lord Stafford—I will call him so in spite of his misfortunes—and with my wife's relation, the Honourable Countess of Derby. But what likelihood can there be that I should have colleagueed with a decrepit buffoon, with whom I never had an instant's communication, save once at an Easter feast, when I whistled a hornpipe, as he danced on a trencher to amuse the company?"

The rage of the poor dwarf brought tears in his eyes, while, with an affected laugh, he said, that instead of those juvenile and festive passages, Sir Geoffrey Peveril might have remembered his charging along with him at Wiggan Lane.

"On my word," said Sir Geoffrey, after a moment's recollection, "I will do you justice, Master Hudson—I believe you were there—I think I heard you did good service. But you will allow you might have been near one without his seeing you."

A sort of titter ran through the Court at the simplicity of the larger Sir Geoffrey's testimony, which the dwarf endeavoured to control, by standing on his tiptoes, and looking fiercely around, as if to admonish the laughers that they indulged their mirth at their own peril. But perceiving that this only excited farther scorn, he composed himself into a semblance of careless contempt, observing, with a smile, that no one feared the glance of a chained lion; a magnificent simile, which rather increased than diminished the mirth of those who heard it.

Against Julian Peveril there failed not to be charged the aggravated fact, that he had been bearer of letters between the Countess of Derby and other Papists and priests, engaged in the universal treasonable conspiracy of the Catholics; and the attack of the house at Moultrassie Hall,—with his skirmish with Chiffinch, and his assault, as it was termed, on the person of John Jenkins, servant to the Duke of Buckingham, were all narrated at length, as so many open and overt acts of treasonable import. To this charge Peveril contented himself with pleading—Not Guilty.

His little companion was not satisfied with so simple a plea; for when he heard it read, as a part of the charge applying to him, that he had received from an agent of the Plot a blank commission as Colonel of a regiment of grenadiers, he replied, in wrath and scorn, that if Goliath of Gath had come to him with such a proposal, and proffered him the command of the whole sons of Anak in a body, he should never have had occasion or opportunity to repeat the temptation to another. "I would have slain him," said the little man of loyalty, "even where he stood."

The charge was stated anew by the Counsel for the Crown; and forth came the notorious Doctor Oates, rustling in the full silken canonicals of priesthood, for it was a time when he affected no small dignity of exterior decoration and deportment.

This singular man, who, aided by the obscure intrigues of the Catholics themselves, and the fortuitous circumstance of Godfrey's murder, had been able to cram down the public throat such a mass of absurdity as his evidence amounts to, had no other talent for imposture than an impudence which set conviction and shame alike at defiance. A man of sense or reflection, by trying to give his plot an appearance of more probability, would most likely have failed, as wise men often to do in addressing the multitude, from not daring to calculate upon the prodigious extent of their credulity, especially where the figments presented to them involve the fearful and the terrible.

Oates was by nature choleric; and the credit he had acquired made him insolent and conceited. Even his exterior was portentous. A fleece of white periwig showed a most uncouth visage, of great length, having the mouth, as the organ by use of which he was to rise to eminence, placed in the very centre of the countenance, and exhibiting to the astonished spectator as much chin below as there was nose and brow above the aperture. His pronunciation, too, was after a conceited fashion of his own, in which he accented the vowels in a manner altogether peculiar to himself.

This notorious personage, such as we have described him, stood forth on the present trial, and delivered his astonishing testimony concerning the existence of a Catholic Plot for the subversion of the government and murder of the King, in the same general outline in which it may be found in every English history. But as the doctor always had in reserve some special piece of evidence affecting those immediately on trial, he was pleased, on the present occasion, deeply to

inculpate the Countess of Derby. "He had seen," as he said, "that honourable lady when he was at the Jesuits' College at Saint Omer's. She had sent for him to an inn, or *auberge*, as it was there termed—the sign of the Golden Lamb; and had ordered him to breakfast in the same room with her ladyship; and afterwards told him, that, knowing he was trusted by the Fathers of the Society, she was determined that he should have a share of her secrets also; and therewithal, that she drew from her bosom a broad sharp-pointed knife, such as butchers kill sheep with, and demanded of him what he thought of it for *the purpose*; and when he, the witness, said for what purpose she rapt him on the fingers with her fan, called him a dull fellow, and said it was designed to kill the King with." Here Sir Geoffrey Peveril could no longer refrain his indignation and surprise. "Mercy of Heaven!" he said, "did ever one hear of ladies of quality carrying butchering knives about them, and telling every scurvy companion she meant to kill the King with them?—Gentleman of the Jury, do but think if this is reasonable—though, if the villain could prove by any honest evidence, that my Lady of Derby ever let such a scum as himself come to speech of her, I would believe all he can say."

"Sir Geoffrey," said the Judge, "rest you quiet—You must not fly out—passion helps you not here—the Doctor must be suffered to proceed."

Doctor Oates went on to state how the lady complained of the wrongs the House of Derby had sustained from the King and the oppression of her religion, and boasted of the schemes of the Jesuits and seminary priests; and how they would be farthered by her noble kinsman of the House of Stanley. He finally averred that both the Countess and the Fathers of the seminary abroad, founded much upon the talents and courage of Sir Geoffrey Peveril and his son—the latter of whom was a member of her family. Of Hudson, he only recollected of having heard one of the Fathers say, that although but a dwarf in stature, he would prove a giant in the cause of the Church.

When he had ended his evidence, there was a pause, until the Judge, as if the thought had suddenly occurred to him, demanded of Dr. Oates, whether he had ever mentioned the names of the Countess of Derby in any of the previous informations which he had lodged before the Privy Council, and elsewhere, upon this affair.

Oates seemed rather surprised at the question, and coloured with anger, as he answered, in his peculiar mode of pronunciation, "Whoy, no, maay laard."

"And pray, Doctor," said the Judge, "how came so great a revealer of mysteries as you have lately proved, to have suffered so material a circumstance as the accession of this powerful family to the Plot to have remained undiscovered?"

"Maay laard," said Oates, with much effrontery, "aye do not come here to have my evidence questioned as touching the *Plaat*."

"I do not question your evidence, Doctor," said Scroggs, for the time was not arrived that he dared treat him roughly; "nor do I doubt the existence of the *Plaat*, since it is your pleasure to swear to it. I would only have you, for your own sake, and the satisfaction of all good Protestants, to explain why you have kept back such a weighty point of information from the King and country."

"Maay laard," said Oates, "I will tell you a pretty fable."

"I hope," answered the Judge, "it may be the first and last which you shall tell in this place."

"Maay laard," continued Oates, "there was once a faux, who having to carry a goose over a frazen river, and being afraid the aice would not bear him and his booty, did caarry aaver a staane, my laard, in the first instance, to prove the strength of the aice."

"So your former evidence was but the stone, and now, for the first time, you have brought us the goose?" said Sir William Scroggs; "to tell us this, Doctor, is to make geese of the Court and Jury."

"I desoire your laardship's honest construction," said Oates, who saw the current changing against him, but was determined to pay the score with effrontery. "All men knaw at what coast and praice I have given my evidence, which has been always, under Gaad, the means of awakening this poor naation to the dangerous state in which it staunds. Many here knaw that I have been obliged to faartify my ladging at Whitehall against the bloody Papists. It was not to be thought that I should have brought all the story out at aance. I think your wisdome would have advised me otherwise."[*]

[*] *It was on such terms that Dr. Oates was pleased to claim the extraordinary privilege of dealing out the information which he chose to communicate to a court of justice. The only sense in which his story of the fox, stone, and goose could be applicable, is by supposing that he was determined to ascertain the extent of his countrymen's credulity before supplying it with a full meal.*

"Nay, Doctor," said the Judge, "it is not for me to direct you in this affair; and it is for the Jury to believe you or not; and as for myself, I sit here to do justice to both—the Jury have heard your answer to my question."

Doctor Oates retired from the witness-box reddening like a turkey-cock, as one totally unused to have such accounts questioned as he chose to lay before the courts of justice; and there was, perhaps, for the first time, amongst the counsel and solicitors, as well as the templars and students of law there present, a murmur, distinct and audible, unfavourable to the character of the great father of the Popish Plot.

Everett and Dangerfield, with whom the reader is already acquainted, were then called in succession to sustain the accusation. They were subordinate informers—a sort of under-spur-leathers, as the cant term went—who followed the path of Oates, with all deference to his superior genius and invention, and made their own fictions chime in and harmonise with his, as well as their talents could devise. But as their evidence had at no time received the full credence into which the impudence of Oates had cajoled the public, so they now began to fall into discredit rather more hastily than their prototype, as the super-added turrets of an ill-constructed building are naturally the first to give way.

It was in vain that Everett, with the precision of a hypocrite, and Dangerfield, with the audacity of a bully, narrated, with added circumstances of suspicion and criminality, their meeting with Julian Peveril in Liverpool, and again at Martindale Castle. It was in vain they described the arms and accoutrements which they pretended to have discovered in old Sir Geoffrey's possession; and that they gave a most dreadful account of the escape of the younger Peveril from Moultrassie Hall, by means of an armed force.

The Jury listened coldly, and it was visible that they were but little moved by the accusation; especially as the Judge, always professing his belief in the Plot, and his zeal for the Protestant religion, was ever and anon reminding them that presumptions were no proofs—that hearsay was no evidence—that those who made a trade of discovery were likely to aid their researches by invention—and that without doubting the guilt of the unfortunate persons at the bar, he would gladly hear some evidence brought against them of a different nature. "Here we are told of a riot, and an escape achieved by the younger Peveril, at the house of a grave and worthy magistrate, known, I think, to most of us. Why, Master Attorney, bring ye not Master Bridgenorth himself to prove the fact, or all his household, if it be necessary?—A rising in arms is an affair over public to be left on the hearsay tale of these two men—though Heaven forbid that I should suppose they speak one word more than they believe! They are the witnesses for the King—and, what is equally dear to us, the Protestant religion—and witnesses against a most foul and heathenish Plot. On the other hand, here is a worshipful old knight, for such I must suppose him to be, since he has bled often in battle for the King,—such, I must say, I suppose him to be, until he is proved otherwise. And here is his son, a hopeful young gentleman—we must see that they have right, Master Attorney."

"Unquestionably, my lord," answered the Attorney. "God forbid else! But we will make out these matters against these unhappy gentlemen in a manner more close, if your lordship will permit us to bring in our evidence."

"Go on, Master Attorney," said the Judge, throwing himself back in his seat. "Heaven forbid I hinder proving the King's accusation! I only say, what you know as well as I, that *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*."

"We shall then call Master Bridgenorth, as your lordship advised, who I think is in waiting."

"No!" answered a voice from the crowd, apparently that of a female; "he is too wise and too honest to be here."

The voice was distinct as that of Lady Fairfax, when she expressed herself to a similar effect on the trial of Charles the First; but the researches which were made on the present occasion to discover the speaker were unsuccessful.

After the slight confusion occasioned by this circumstance was abated, the Attorney, who had been talking aside with the conductors of the prosecution, said, "Whoever favoured us with that information, my lord, had good reason for what they said. Master Bridgenorth has become, I am told, suddenly invisible since this morning."

"Look you there now, Master Attorney," said the Judge—"This comes of not keeping the crown witnesses together and in readiness—I am sure I cannot help the consequences."

"Nor I either, my lord," said the Attorney pettishly. "I could have proved by this worshipful gentleman, Master Justice Bridgenorth, the ancient friendship betwixt this party, Sir Geoffrey Peveril, and the Countess of Derby, of whose doings and intentions Dr. Oates has given such a deliberate evidence. I could have proved his having sheltered her in his Castle against a process of law, and rescued her, by force of arms, from this very Justice Bridgenorth, not without actual violence. Moreover, I could have proved against young Peveril the whole affray charged upon him by the same worshipful evidence."

Here the Judge stuck his thumbs into his girdle, which was a favourite attitude of his on such occasions, and exclaimed, "Pshaw, pshaw, Master Attorney!—Tell me not that you *could* have proved that, or that, or this—Prove what you will, but let it be through the mouths of your evidence. Men are not to be licked out of their lives by the rough side of a lawyer's tongue."

"Nor is a foul Plot to be smothered," said the Attorney, "for all the haste your lordship is in. I cannot call Master Chiffinch neither, as he is employed on the King's especial affairs, as I am this instant certiorated from the Court at Whitehall."

"Produce the papers, then, Master Attorney, of which this young man is said to be the bearer," said the Judge.

"They are before the Privy Council, my lord."

"Then why do you found on them here?" said the Judge—"This is something like trifling with the Court."

"Since your lordship gives it that name," said the Attorney, sitting down in a huff, "you may manage the cause as you will."

"If you do not bring more evidence, I pray you to charge the Jury," said the Judge.

"I shall not take the trouble to do so," said the Crown Counsel. "I see plainly how the matter is to go."

"Nay, but be better advised," said Scroggs. "Consider, your case is but half proved respecting the two Peverils, and doth not pinch on the little man at all, saving that Doctor Oates said that he was in a certain case to prove a giant, which seems no very probable Popish miracle."

This sally occasioned a laugh in the Court, which the Attorney-General seemed to take in great dudgeon.

"Master Attorney," said Oates, who always interfered in the management of these law-suits, "this is a plain an absolute giving away of the cause—I must needs say it, a mere stoifling of the Plaat."

"Then the devil who bred it may blow wind into it again, if he lists," answered the Attorney-General; and, flinging down his brief, he left the Court, as if in a huff with all who were concerned in the affair.

The Judge having obtained silence,—for a murmur arose in the Court when the Counsel for the prosecution threw up his brief,—began to charge the Jury, balancing, as he had done throughout the whole day, the different opinions by which he seemed alternately swayed. He protested on his salvation that he had no more doubt of the existence of the horrid and damnable conspiracy called the Popish Plot, than he had of the treachery of Judas Iscariot; and that he considered Oates as the instrument under Providence of preserving the nation from all the miseries of his Majesty's assassination, and of a second Saint Bartholomew, acted in the streets of London. But then he stated it was the candid construction of the law of England, that the worse the crime, the more strong should be the evidence. Here was the case of accessories tried, whilst their principal—for such he should call the Countess of Derby—was unconvicted and at large; and for Doctor Oates, he had but spoke of matters which personally applied to that noble lady, whose words, if she used such in passion, touching aid which she expected in some treasonable matters from these Peverils, and from her kinsmen, or her son's kinsmen, of the House of Stanley, may have been but a burst of female resentment—*dulcis Amarylidis ira*, as the poet hath it. Who knoweth but Doctor Oates did mistake—he being a gentleman of a comely countenance and easy demeanour—this same rap with the fan as a chastisement for lack of courage in the Catholic cause, when, peradventure, it was otherwise meant, as Popish ladies will put, it is said, such neophytes and youthful candidates for orders, to many severe trials. "I speak these things jocularly," said the Judge, "having no wish to stain the reputation either of the Honourable Countess or the Reverend Doctor; only I think the bearing between them may have related to something short of high treason. As for what the Attorney-General hath set forth of rescues and force, and I wot not what, sure I am, that in a civil country, when such things happen such things may be proved; and that you and I, gentlemen, are not to take them for granted gratuitously. Touching this other prisoner, this *Galfridus minimus*, he must needs say," he continued, "he could not discover even a shadow of suspicion against him. Was it to be thought so abortive a creature would thrust himself into depths of policy, far less into stratagems of war? They had but to look at him to conclude the contrary—the creature was, from his age, fitter for the grave than a conspiracy—and by his size and appearance, for the inside of a raree-show, than the mysteries of a plot."

The dwarf here broke in upon the Judge by force of screaming, to assure him that he had been, simple as he sat there, engaged in seven plots in Cromwell's time; and, as he proudly added, with some of the tallest men of England. The matchless look and air with which Sir Geoffrey made this vaunt, set all a-laughing, and increased the ridicule with which the whole trial began to be received; so that it was amidst shaking sides and watery eyes that a general verdict of Not Guilty was pronounced, and the prisoners dismissed from the bar.

But a warmer sentiment awakened among those who saw the father and son throw themselves into each other's arms, and, after a hearty embrace, extend their hands to their poor little companion in peril, who, like a dog, when present at a similar scene, had at last succeeded, by stretching himself up to them and whimpering at the same time, to secure to himself a portion of their sympathy and gratulation.

Such was the singular termination of this trial. Charles himself was desirous to have taken considerable credit with the Duke of Ormond for the evasion of the law, which had been thus effected by his private connivance; and was both surprised and mortified at the coldness with which his Grace replied, that he was rejoiced at the poor gentleman's safety, but would rather have had the King redeem them like a prince, by his royal prerogative of mercy, than that his Judge should convey them out of the power of the law, like a juggler with his cups and balls.

CHAPTER XLII

—On fair ground
I could beat forty of them!

—CORIOLANUS.

It doubtless occurred to many that were present at the trial we have described, that it was managed in a singular manner, and that the quarrel, which had the appearance of having taken place between the Court and the Crown Counsel, might proceed from some private understanding betwixt them, the object of which was the miscarriage of the accusation. Yet though such underhand dealing was much suspected, the greater part of the audience, being well educated and intelligent, had already suspected the bubble of the Popish Plot, and were glad to see that accusations, founded on what had already cost so much blood, could be evaded in any way. But the crowd, who waited in the Court of Requests, and in the hall, and without doors, viewed in a very different light the combination, as they interpreted it, between the Judge and the Attorney-General, for the escape of the prisoners.

Oates, whom less provocation than he had that day received often induced to behave like one frantic with passion, threw himself amongst the crowd, and repeated till he was hoarse, "Theay are stoifling the Plaat!—they are straangling the Plaat!—My Laard Justice and Maaster Attarney are in league to secure the escape of the plaaters and Paapists!"

"It is the device of the Papist whore of Portsmouth," said one.

"Of old Rowley himself," said another.

"If he could be murdered by himself, why hang those that would hinder it!" exclaimed a third.

"He should be tried," said a fourth, "for conspiring his own death, and hanged *in terrorem*."

In the meanwhile, Sir Geoffrey, his son, and their little companion, left the hall, intending to go to Lady Peveril's lodgings, which had been removed to Fleet Street. She had been relieved from considerable inconvenience, as Sir Geoffrey gave Julian hastily to understand, by an angel, in the shape of a young friend, and she now expected them doubtless with impatience. Humanity, and some indistinct idea of having unintentionally hurt the feelings of the poor dwarf, induced the honest Cavalier to ask this unprotected being to go with them. "He knew Lady Peveril's lodgings were but small," he said; "but it would be strange, if there was not some cupboard large enough to accommodate the little gentleman."

The dwarf registered this well-meant remark in his mind, to be the subject of a proper explanation, along with the unhappy reminiscence of the trencher-hornpipe, whenever time should permit an argument of such nicety.

And thus they sallied from the hall, attracting general observation, both from the circumstances in which they had stood so lately, and from their resemblance, as a wag of the Inner Temple expressed it, to the three degrees of comparison, Large, Lesser, Least. But they had not passed far along the street, when Julian perceived that more malevolent passions than mere curiosity began to actuate the crowd which followed, and, as it were, dogged their motions.

"There go the Papist cut-throats, tantivy for Rome!" said one fellow.

"Tantivy to Whitehall, you mean!" said another.

"Ah! the bloodthirsty villains!" cried a woman: "Shame, one of them should be suffered to live, after poor Sir Edmondsbury's cruel murder."

"Out upon the mealy-mouthed Jury, that turned out the bloodhounds on an innocent town!" cried a fourth.

In short, the tumult thickened, and the word began to pass among the more desperate, "Lambe them, lads; lambe them!"—a cant phrase of the time, derived from the fate of Dr. Lambe, an astrologer and quack, who was knocked on the head by the rabble in Charles the First's time.

Julian began to be much alarmed at these symptoms of violence, and regretted that they had not gone down to the city by water. It was now too late to think of that mode of retreating, and he therefore requested his father in a whisper, to walk steadily forward towards Charing Cross, taking no notice of the insults which might be cast upon them, while the steadiness of their pace and appearance might prevent the rabble from resorting to actual violence. The execution of this prudent resolution was prevented after they had passed the palace, by the hasty disposition of the elder Sir Geoffrey, and the no less choleric temper of Galfridus Minimus, who had a soul which spurned all odds, as well of numbers as of size.

"Now a murrain take the knaves, with their hollowing and whooping," said the large knight; "by this day, if I could but light on a weapon, I would cudgel reason and loyalty into some of their carcasses!"

"And I also," said the dwarf, who was toiling to keep up with the longer strides of his companions, and therefore spoke in a very phthisical tone.—"I also will cudgel the plebeian knaves beyond measure—he!—hem!"

Among the crowd who thronged around them, impeded, and did all but assault them, was a mischievous shoemaker's apprentice, who, hearing this unlucky vaunt of the valorous dwarf, repaid it by flapping him on the head with a boot which he was carrying home to the owner, so as to knock the little gentleman's hat over his eyes. The dwarf, thus rendered unable to discover the urchin that had given him the offence, flew with instinctive ambition against the biggest fellow in the crowd, who received the onset with a kick on the stomach, which made the poor little champion reel back to his companions. They were now assaulted on all sides; but fortune complying with the wish of Sir Geoffrey the larger, ordained that the scuffle should happen near the booth of a cutler, from amongst whose wares, as they stood exposed to the public, Sir Geoffrey Peveril snatched a broadsword, which he brandished with the formidable address of one who had for many a day been in the familiar practice of using such a weapon. Julian, while at the same time he called loudly for a peace-officer, and reminded the assailants that they were attacking inoffensive passengers, saw nothing better for it than to imitate his father's example, and seized also one of the weapons thus opportunely offered.

When they displayed these demonstrations of defence, the rush which the rabble at first made towards them was so great as to throw down the unfortunate dwarf, who would have been trampled to death in the scuffle, had not his stout old namesake cleared the rascal crowd from about him with a few flourishes of his weapon, and seizing on the fallen champion, put him out of danger (except from missiles), by suddenly placing him on the bulk-head, that is to say, the flat wooden roof of the cutler's projecting booth. From the rusty ironware, which was displayed there, the dwarf instantly snatched an old rapier and target, and covering himself with the one, stood making passes with the other, at the faces and eyes of the people in the street; so much delighted with his post of vantage, that he called loudly to his friends who were skirmishing with the riotous on more equal terms as to position, to lose no time in putting themselves under his protection. But far from being in a situation to need his assistance, the father and son might easily have extricated themselves from the rabble by their own exertions, could they have thought of leaving the mannikin in the forlorn situation, in which, to every eye but his own, he stood like a diminutive puppet, tricked out with sword and target as a fencing-master's sign.

Stones and sticks began now to fly very thick, and the crowd, notwithstanding the exertions of the Peverils to disperse them with as little harm as possible, seemed determined on mischief, when some gentlemen who had been at the trial, understanding that the prisoners who had been just acquitted were in danger of being murdered by the populace, drew their swords, and made forward to effect their rescue, which was completed by a small party of the King's Life Guards, who had been despatched from their ordinary post of alarm, upon intelligence of what was passing. When this unexpected reinforcement arrived, the old jolly Knight at once recognised, amidst the cries of those who then entered upon action, some of the sounds which had animated his more active years.

"Where be these cuckoldly Roundheads," cried some.—"Down with the sneaking knaves!" cried others.—"The King and his friends, and the devil a one else!" exclaimed a third set, with more oaths and d—n me's, than, in the present more correct age, it is necessary to commit to paper.

The old soldier, pricking up his ears like an ancient hunter at the cry of the hounds, would gladly have scoured the Strand, with the charitable purpose, now he saw himself so well supported, of knocking the London knaves, who had insulted him, into twiggen bottles; but he was withheld by the prudence of Julian, who, though himself extremely irritated by the unprovoked ill-usage which they had received, saw himself in a situation in which it was necessary to exercise more caution than vengeance. He prayed and pressed his father to seek some temporary place of retreat from the fury of the populace, while that prudent measure was yet in their power. The subaltern officer, who commanded the party of the Life Guards, exhorted the old Cavalier eagerly to the same sage counsel, using, as a spice of compulsion, the name of the King; while Julian strongly urged that of his mother. The old Knight looked at his blade, crimsoned with cross-cuts and slashes which he had given to the most forward of the assailants, with the eye of one not half sufficed.

"I would I had pinked one of the knaves at least—but I know not how it was, when I looked on their broad round English faces, I shunned to use my point, and only sliced the rogues a little."

"But the King's pleasure," said the officer, "is, that no tumult be prosecuted."

"My mother," said Julian, "will die with fright, if the rumour of this scuffle reaches her ere we see her."

"Ay, ay," said the Knight, "the King's Majesty and my good dame—well, their pleasure be done, that's all I can say—Kings and ladies must be obeyed. But which way to retreat, since retreat we must?"

Julian would have been at some loss to advise what course to take, for everybody in the vicinity had shut up their shops, and chained their doors, upon observing the confusion become so formidable. The poor cutler, however, with whose goods they made so free, offered them an asylum on the part of his landlord, whose house served as a rest for his shop, and only intimated gently, he hoped the gentleman would consider him for the use of his weapons.

Julian was hastily revolving whether they ought, in prudence, to accept this man's invitation, aware, by experience, how many trepans, as they were then termed, were used betwixt two contending factions, each too inveterate to be very scrupulous of the character of fair play to an enemy, when the dwarf, exerting his cracked voice to the uttermost, and shrieking like an exhausted herald, from the exalted station which he still occupied on the bulk-head, exhorted them to accept the offer of the worthy man of the mansion. "He himself," he said, as he reposed himself after the glorious conquest in which he had some share, "had been

favoured with a beatific vision, too splendid to be described to common and mere mortal ears, but which had commanded him, in a voice to which his heart had bounded as to a trumpet sound, to take refuge with the worthy person of the house, and cause his friends to do so."

"Vision!" said the Knight of the Peak,—"sound of a trumpet!—the little man is stark mad."

But the cutler, in great haste, intimated to them that their little friend had received an intimation from a gentlewoman of his acquaintance, who spoke to him from the window, while he stood on the bulk-head, that they would find a safe retreat in his landlord's; and desiring them to attend to two or three deep though distant huzzas, made them aware that the rabble were up still, and would soon be upon them with renewed violence, and increased numbers.

The father and son, therefore, hastily thanked the officer and his party, as well as the other gentlemen who had volunteered in their assistance, lifted little Sir Geoffrey Hudson from the conspicuous post which he had so creditably occupied during the skirmish, and followed the footsteps of the tenant of the booth, who conducted them down a blind alley and through one or two courts, in case, as he said, any one might have watched where they burrowed, and so into a back-door. This entrance admitted them to a staircase carefully hung with straw mats to exclude damp, from the upper step of which they entered upon a tolerably large withdrawing-room, hung with coarse green serge edged with gilded leather, which the poorer or more economical citizens at that time use instead of tapestry or wainscoting.

Here the poor cutler received from Julian such a gratuity for the loan of the swords, that he generously abandoned the property to the gentlemen who had used them so well; "the rather," he said, "that he saw, by the way they handed their weapons, that they were men of mettle, and tall fellows."

Here the dwarf smiled on him courteously, and bowed, thrusting at the same time, his hand into his pocket, which however, he withdrew carelessly probably because he found he had not the means of making the small donation which he had meditated.

The cutler proceeded to say, as he bowed and was about to withdraw, that he saw there would be merry days yet in Old England, and that Bilboa blades would fetch as good a price as ever. "I remember," he said, "gentlemen, though I was then but a 'prentice, the demand for weapons in the years forty-one and forty-two; sword blades were more in request than toothpicks, and Old Ironsides, my master, took more for rascally Provant rapiers, than I dare ask nowadays for a Toledo. But, to be sure, a man's life then rested on the blade he carried; the Cavaliers and Roundheads fought every day at the gates of Whitehall, as it is like, gentlemen, by your good example, they may do again, when I shall be enabled to leave my pitiful booth, and open a shop of better quality. I hope you will recommend me, gentlemen, to your friends. I am always provided with ware which a gentleman may risk his life on."

"Thank you, good friend," said Julian, "I prithee begone. I trust we shall need thy ware no more for some time at least."

The cutler retired, while the dwarf hollowed after him downstairs, that he would call on him soon, and equip himself with a longer blade, and one more proper for action; although, he said, the little weapon he had did well enough for a walking-sword, or in a skirmish with such *canaille* as they had been engaged with.

The cutler returned at this summons, and agreed to pleasure the little man with a weapon more suitable to his magnanimity; then, as if the thought had suddenly occurred to him, he said, "But, gentlemen, it will be wild work to walk with your naked swords through the Strand, and it can scarce fail to raise the rabble again. If you please, while you repose yourselves here, I can fit the blades with sheaths."

The proposal seemed so reasonable, that Julian and his father gave up their weapons to the friendly cutler, an example which the dwarf followed, after a moment's hesitation, not caring, as he magnificently expressed it, to part so soon with the trusty friend which fortune had but the moment before restored to his hand. The man retired with the weapons under his arm; and, in shutting the door behind him, they heard him turn the key.

"Did you hear that?" said Sir Geoffrey to his son—"and we are disarmed!"

Julian, without reply, examined the door, which was fast secured; and then looked at the casements, which were at a storey's height from the ground, and grated besides with iron. "I cannot think," he said, after a moment's pause, "that the fellow means to trepan us; and, in any event, I trust we should have no difficulty in forcing the door, or otherwise making escape. But, before resorting to such violent measures, I think it is better to give the rabble leisure to disperse, by waiting this man's return with our weapons within a reasonable time, when, if he does not appear, I trust we shall find little difficulty in extricating ourselves." As he spoke thus, the hangings were pulled aside, and from a small door which was concealed behind them, Major Bridgenorth entered the room.

CHAPTER XLIII

*He came amongst them like a new raised spirit
To speak of dreadful judgments that impend,
And of the wrath to come.*

—THE REFORMER.

The astonishment of Julian at the unexpected apparition of Bridgenorth, was instantly succeeded by apprehension of his father's violence, which he had every reason to believe would break forth against one, whom he himself could not but reverence on account of his own merits, as well as because he was the father of Alice. The appearance of Bridgenorth was not however, such as to awaken resentment. His countenance was calm, his step slow and composed, his eye not without the indication of some deep-seated anxiety, but without any expression either of anger or of triumph. "You are welcome," he said, "Sir Geoffrey Peveril, to the shelter and hospitality of this house; as welcome as you would have been in other days, when we called each other neighbours and friends."

"Odzooks," said the old Cavalier; "and had I known it was thy house, man, I would sooner had my heart's blood run down the kennel, than my foot should have crossed your threshold—in the way of seeking safety, that is."

"I forgive your inveteracy," said Major Bridgenorth, "on account of your prejudices."

"Keep your forgiveness," answered the Cavalier, "until you are pardoned yourself. By Saint George I have sworn, if ever I got my heels out of yon rascally prison, whither I was sent much through your means, Master Bridgenorth,—that you should pay the reckoning for my bad lodging.—I will strike no man in his own house; but if you will cause the fellow to bring back my weapon, and take a turn in that blind court there below, along with me, you shall soon see what chance a traitor hath with a true man, and a kennel-blooded Puritan with Peveril of the Peak."

Bridgenorth smiled with much composure. "When I was younger and more warm-blooded," he replied, "I refused your challenge, Sir Geoffrey; it is not likely I should now accept it, when each is within a stride of the grave. I have not spared, and will not spare, my blood, when my country wants it."

"That is when there is any chance of treason against the King," said Sir Geoffrey.

"Nay, my father," said Julian, "let us hear Master Bridgenorth! We have been sheltered in his house; and although we now see him in London, we should remember that he did not appear against us this day, when perhaps his evidence might have given a fatal turn to our situation."

"You are right, young man," said Bridgenorth; "and it should be some pledge of my sincere goodwill, that I was this day absent from Westminster, when a few words from my mouth had ended the long line of Peveril of the Peak: it needed but ten minutes to walk to Westminster Hall, to have ensured your condemnation. But could I have done this, knowing, as I now know, that to thee, Julian Peveril, I owe the extrication of my daughter—of my dearest Alice—the memory of her departed mother—from the snares which hell and profligacy had opened around her?"

"She is, I trust safe," said Peveril eagerly, and almost forgetting his father's presence; "she is, I trust, safe, and in your own wardship?"

"Not in mine," said the dejected father; "but in that of one in whose protection, next to that of Heaven, I can most fully confide."

"Are you sure—are you very sure of that?" repeated Julian eagerly. "I found her under the charge of one to whom she had been trusted, and who yet——"

"And who yet was the basest of women," answered Bridgenorth; "but he who selected her for the charge was deceived in her character."

"Say rather you were deceived in his; remember that when we parted in Moultrassie, I warned you of that Ganlesse—that——"

"I know your meaning," said Bridgenorth; "nor did you err in describing him as a worldly-wise man. But he has atoned for his error by recovering Alice from the dangers into which she has plunged when separated from you; and besides, I have not thought meet again to entrust him with the charge that is dearest to me."

"I thank God your eyes are thus far opened!" said Julian.

"This day will open them wide, or close them for ever," answered Bridgenorth.

During this dialogue, which the speakers hurried through without attending to the others who were present, Sir Geoffrey listened with surprise and eagerness, endeavouring to catch something which should render their conversation intelligible; but as he totally failed in gaining any such key to their meaning, he broke in with,—"**Sblood and thunder**, Julian, what unprofitable gossip is this? What hast thou to do with this fellow, more than to bastinado him, if you should think it worth while to beat so old a rogue?"

"My dearest father," said Julian, "you know not this gentleman—I am certain you do him injustice. My own obligations to him are many; and I am sure when you come to know them——"

"I hope I shall die ere that moment come," said Sir Geoffrey; and continued with increasing violence, "I hope in the mercy of Heaven, that I shall be in the grave of my ancestors, ere I learn that my son—my only son—the last hope of my ancient house—the last remnant of the name of Peveril—hath consented to receive obligations from the man on earth I am most bound to hate, were I not still more bound to contemn him!—**Degenerate dog-whelp!**" he repeated with great vehemence, "you colour without replying! Speak, and disown such disgrace; or, by the God of my fathers——"

The dwarf suddenly stepped forward and called out, "**Forbear!**" with a voice at once so discordant and commanding, that it sounded supernatural. "Man of sin and pride," he said, "forbear; and call not the name of a holy God to witness thine unhallowed resentments."

The rebuke so boldly and decidedly given, and the moral enthusiasm with which he spoke, gave the despised dwarf an ascendancy for the moment over the fiery spirit of his gigantic namesake. Sir Geoffrey Peveril eyed him for an instant askance and shyly, as he might have done a supernatural apparition, and then muttered, "What knowest thou of my cause of wrath?"

"Nothing," said the dwarf;—"nothing but this—that no cause can warrant the oath thou wert about to swear. Ungrateful man! thou wert to-day rescued from the devouring wrath of the wicked, by a marvellous conjunction of circumstances—Is this a day, thinkest thou, on which to indulge thine own hasty resentments?"

"I stand rebuked," said Sir Geoffrey, "and by a singular monitor—the grasshopper, as the prayer-book saith, hath become a burden to me.—Julian, I will speak to thee of these matters hereafter;—and for you, Master Bridgenorth, I desire to have no farther communication with you, either in peace or in anger. Our time passes fast, and I would fain return to my family. Cause our weapons to be restored; unbar the doors, and let us part without farther altercation, which can but disturb and aggravate our spirits."

"Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Bridgenorth, "I have no desire to vex your spirit or my own; but, for thus soon dismissing you, that may hardly be, it being a course inconsistent with the work which I have on hand."

"How, sir! Do you mean that we should abide here, whether with or against our inclinations?" said the dwarf. "Were it not that I am laid under charge to remain here, by one who hath the best right to command this poor microcosm, I would show thee that bolts and bars are unavailing restraints on such as I am."

"Truly," said Sir Geoffrey, "I think, upon an emergency, the little man might make his escape through the keyhole."

Bridgenorth's face was moved into something like a smile at the swaggering speech of the pigmy hero, and the contemptuous commentary of Sir Geoffrey Peveril; but such an expression never dwelt on his features for two seconds together, and he replied in these words:—"Gentlemen, each and all of you must be fain to content yourselves. Believe me, no hurt is intended towards you; on the contrary, your remaining here will be a means of securing your safety, which would be otherwise deeply endangered. It will be your own fault if a hair of your head is hurt. But the stronger force is on my side; and, whatever harm you may meet with should you attempt to break forth by violence, the blame must rest with yourselves. If you will not believe me, I will permit Master Julian Peveril to accompany me, where he shall see that I am provided fully with the means of repressing violence."

"**Treason!—treason!**" exclaimed the old Knight—"Treason against God and King Charles!—Oh, for one half-hour of the broadsword which I parted with like an ass!"

"Hold, my father, I conjure you!" said Julian. "I will go with Master Bridgenorth, since he requests it. I will satisfy myself whether there be danger, and of what nature. It is possible I may prevail on him to desist from some desperate measure, if such be indeed in agitation. Should it be necessary, fear not that your son will behave as he ought to do."

"Do your pleasure, Julian," said his father; "I will confide in thee. But if you betray my confidence, a father's curse shall cleave to you."

Bridgenorth now motioned to Peveril to follow him, and they passed through the small door by which he entered.

The passage led to a vestibule or anteroom, in which several other doors and passages seemed to centre. Through one of these Julian was conducted by Bridgenorth, walking with silence and precaution, in obedience to a signal made by his guide to that effect. As they advanced, he heard sounds, like those of the human voice, engaged in urgent and emphatic declamation. With slow and light steps Bridgenorth conducted him through a door which terminated this passage; and as he entered a little gallery, having a curtain in front, the sound of the preacher's voice—for such it now seemed—became distinct and audible.

Julian now doubted not that he was in one of those conventicles, which, though contrary to the existing laws, still continued to be regularly held in different parts of London and the suburbs. Many of these, as frequented by persons of moderate political principles, though dissenters from the Church for conscience' sake, were connived at by the prudence or timidity of the government. But some of them, in which assembled the fiercer and more exalted sects of Independents, Anabaptists, Fifth-Monarchy men, and other sectaries, whose stern enthusiasm had contributed so greatly to effect the overthrow of the late King's throne, were sought after, suppressed, and dispersed, whenever they could be discovered.

Julian was soon satisfied that the meeting into which he was thus secretly introduced was one of the latter class; and, to judge by the violence of the preacher, of the most desperate character. He was still more effectually convinced of this, when, at a sign from Bridgenorth, he cautiously unclosed a part of the curtain which hung before the gallery, and thus, unseen himself, looked down on the audience, and obtained a view of the preacher.

About two hundred persons were assembled beneath, in an area filled up with benches, as if for the exercise of worship; and they were all of the male sex, and well armed with pikes and muskets, as well as swords and pistols. Most of them had the appearance of veteran soldiers, now past the middle of life, yet retaining such an appearance of strength as might well supply the loss of youthful agility. They stood, or sat, in various attitudes of stern attention; and, resting on their spears and muskets, kept their eyes firmly fixed on the preacher, who ended the violence of his declamation by displaying from the pulpit a banner, on which was represented a lion, with the motto, "*Vicit Leo ex tribu Judæ.*"

The torrent of mystical yet animating eloquence of the preacher—an old grey-haired man, whom zeal seemed to supply with the powers of voice and action, of which years had deprived him—was suited to the taste of his audience, but could not be transferred to these pages without scandal and impropriety. He menaced the rulers of England with all the judgments denounced on those of Moab and Assyria—he called upon the saints to be strong, to be up and doing; and promised those miracles which, in the campaigns of Joshua, and his successors, the valiant Judges of Israel, supplied all odds against the Amorites, Midianites, and Philistines. He sounded trumpets, opened vials, broke seals, and denounced approaching judgments under all the mystical signs of the Apocalypse. The end of the world was announced, accompanied with all its preliminary terrors.

Julian, with deep anxiety, soon heard enough to make him aware that the meeting was likely to terminate in open insurrection, like that of the Fifth-Monarchy men, under Venner, at an earlier period of Charles's reign; and he was not a little concerned at the probability of Bridgenorth being implicated in so criminal and desperate an undertaking. If he had retained any doubts of the issue of the meeting, they must have been removed when the preacher called on his hearers to renounce all expectation which had hitherto been entertained of safety to the nation, from the execution of the ordinary laws of the land. This, he said, was at best but a carnal seeking after earthly aid—a going down to Egypt for help, which the jealousy of their Divine Leader would resent as a fleeing to another rock, and a

different banner, from that which was this day displayed over them.—And here he solemnly swung the bannered lion over their heads, as the only sign under which they ought to seek for life and safety. He then proceeded to insist, that recourse to ordinary justice was vain as well as sinful.

"The event of that day at Westminster," he said, "might teach them that the man at Whitehall was even as the man his father;" and closed a long tirade against the vices of the Court, with assurance "that Tophet was ordained of old—for the King it was made hot."

As the preacher entered on a description of the approaching theocracy, which he dared to prophesy, Bridgenorth, who appeared for a time to have forgotten the presence of Julian, whilst with stern and fixed attention he drunk in the words of the preacher, seemed suddenly to collect himself, and, taking Julian by the hand, led him out of the gallery, of which he carefully closed the door, into an apartment at no great distance.

When they arrived there, he anticipated the expostulations of Julian, by asking him, in a tone of severe triumph, whether these men he had seen were likely to do their work negligently, or whether it would not be perilous to attempt to force their way from a house, when all the avenues were guarded by such as he had now seen—men of war from their childhood upwards.

"In the name of Heaven," said Julian, without replying to Bridgenorth's question, "for what desperate purpose have you assembled so many desperate men? I am well aware that your sentiments of religion are peculiar; but beware how you deceive yourself—No views of religion can sanction rebellion and murder; and such are the natural and necessary consequences of the doctrine we have just heard poured into the ears of fanatical and violent enthusiasts."

"My son," said Bridgenorth calmly, "in the days of my non-age, I thought as you do. I deemed it sufficient to pay my tithes of cummin and aniseed—my poor petty moral observances of the old law; and I thought I was heaping up precious things, when they were in value no more than the husks of the swine-trough. Praised be Heaven, the scales are fallen from mine eyes; and after forty years' wandering in the desert of Sinai, I am at length arrived in the Land of Promise—My corrupt human nature has left me—I have cast my slough, and can now with some conscience put my hand to the plough, certain that there is no weakness left in me where-through I may look back. The furrows," he added, bending his brows, while a gloomy fire filled his large eyes, "must be drawn long and deep, and watered by the blood of the mighty."

There was a change in Bridgenorth's tone and manner, when he used these singular expressions, which convinced Julian that his mind, which had wavered for so many years between his natural good sense and the insane enthusiasm of the time, had finally given way to the latter; and, sensible of the danger in which the unhappy man himself, the innocent and beautiful Alice, and his own father, were likely to be placed—to say nothing of the general risk of the community by a sudden insurrection, he at the same time felt that there was no chance of reasoning effectually with one, who would oppose spiritual conviction to all arguments which reason could urge against his wild schemes. To touch his feeling seemed a more probable resource; and Julian therefore conjured Bridgenorth to think how much his daughter's honour and safety were concerned in his abstaining from the dangerous course which he meditated. "If you fall," he said, "must she not pass under the power and guardianship of her uncle, whom you allow to have shown himself capable of the grossest mistake in the choice of her female protectress; and whom I believe, upon good grounds, to have made that infamous choice with his eyes open?"

"Young man," answered Bridgenorth, "you make me feel like the poor bird, around whose wing some wanton boy has fixed a line, to pull the struggling wretch to earth at his pleasure. Know, since thou wilt play this cruel part, and drag me down from higher contemplations, that she with whom Alice is placed, and who hath in future full power to guide her motions, and decide her fate, despite of Christian and every one else, is—I will not tell thee who she is—Enough—no one—thou least of all, needs to fear for her safety."

At this moment a side-door opened, and Christian himself came into the apartment. He started and coloured when he saw Julian Peveril; then turning to Bridgenorth with an assumed air of indifference, asked, "Is Saul among the prophets?—Is a Peveril among the saints?"

"No, brother," replied Bridgenorth, "his time is not come more than thine own—thou art too deep in the ambitious intrigues of manhood, and he in the giddy passions of youth, to hear the still calm voice—You will both hear it, as I trust and pray."

"Master Ganlesse, or Christian, or by whatever name you are called," said Julian, "by whatever reasons you guide yourself in this most perilous matter, *you* at least are not influenced by any idea of an immediate divine command for commencing hostilities against the state. Leaving, therefore, for the present, whatever subjects of discussion may be between us, I implore you, as a man of shrewdness and sense, to join with me in dissuading Master Bridgenorth from the fatal enterprise which he now meditates."

"Young gentleman," said Christian, with great composure, "when we met in the west, I was willing to have made a friend of you, but you rejected the overture. You might, however, even then have seen enough of me to be assured, that I am not likely to rush too rashly on any desperate undertaking. As to this which lies before us, my brother Bridgenorth brings to it the simplicity, though not the harmlessness of the dove, and I the subtlety of the serpent. He hath the leading of saints who are moved by the spirit; and I can add to their efforts a powerful body, who have for their instigators the world, the devil, and the flesh."

"And can you," said Julian, looking at Bridgenorth, "accede to such an unworthy union?"

"I unite not with them," said Bridgenorth; "but I may not, without guilt, reject the aid which Providence sends to assist His servants. We are ourselves few, though determined—Those whose swords come to help the cutting down of the harvest, must be welcome—When their work is wrought, they will be converted or scattered.—Have you been at York Place, brother, with that unstable epicure? We must have his last resolution, and that within an hour."

Christian looked at Julian, as if his presence prevented him from returning an answer; upon which Bridgenorth arose, and taking the young man by the arm, led him out of the apartment, into that in which they had left his father; assuring him by the way, that determined and vigilant guards were placed in every different quarter by which escape could be effected, and that he would do well to persuade his father to remain a quiet prisoner for a few hours.

Julian returned him no answer, and Bridgenorth presently retired, leaving him alone with his father and Hudson. To their questions he could only briefly reply, that he feared they were trepanned, since they were in the house with at least two hundred fanatics, completely armed, and apparently prepared for desperate enterprise. Their own want of arms precluded the possibility of open violence; and however unpleasant it might be to remain in such a condition, it seemed difficult, from the strength of the fastenings at doors and windows, to attempt any secret escape without instantaneous detection.

The valiant dwarf alone nursed hopes, with which he in vain endeavoured to inspire his companions in affliction. "The fair one, whose eyes," he said, "were like the twin stars of Leda"—for the little man was a great admirer of lofty language—"had not invited him, the most devoted, and, it might be, not the least favoured of her servants, into this place as a harbour, in order that he might therein suffer shipwreck; and he generously assured his friends, that in his safety they also should be safe."

Sir Geoffrey, little cheered by this intimation, expressed his despair at not being able to get the length of Whitehall, where he trusted to find as many jolly Cavaliers as would help him to stifle the whole nest of wasps in their hive; while Julian was of opinion that the best service he could now render Bridgenorth, would be timeously to disclose his plot, and, if possible, to send him at the same time warning to save his person.

But we must leave them to meditate over their plans at leisure; no one of which, as they all depended on their previous escape from confinement, seemed in any great chance of being executed.

CHAPTER XLIV

*And some for safety took the dreadful leap;
Some for the voice of Heaven seem'd calling on them;
Some for advancement, or for lucre's sake—
I leap'd in frolic.*

—THE DREAM.

After a private conversation with Bridgenorth, Christian hastened to the Duke of Buckingham's hotel, taking at the same time such a route as to avoid meeting with any acquaintance. He was ushered into the apartment of the Duke, whom he found cracking and eating filberts, with a flask of excellent white wine at his elbow.

"Christian," said his Grace, "come help me to laugh—I have bit Sir Charles Sedley—flung him for a thousand, by the gods!"

"I am glad at your luck, my Lord Duke," replied Christian; "but I am come here on serious business."

"Serious?—why, I shall hardly be serious in my life again—ha, ha, ha!—and for luck, it was no such thing—sheer wit, and excellent contrivance; and but that I don't care to affront Fortune, like the old Greek general, I might tell her to her face—In this thou hadst no share. You have heard, Ned Christian, that Mother Cresswell is dead?"

"Yes, I did hear that the devil hath got his due," answered Christian.

"Well," said the Duke, "you are ungrateful; for I know you have been obliged to her, as well as others. Before George, a most benevolent and helpful old lady; and that she might not sleep in an unblest grave, I betted—do you mark me—with Sedley, that I would write her funeral sermon; that it should be every word in praise of her life and conversation, that it should be all true, and yet that the diocesan should be unable to lay his thumb on Quodling, my little chaplain, who should preach it."

"I perfectly see the difficulty, my lord," said Christian, who well knew that if he wished to secure attention from this volatile nobleman, he must first suffer, nay, encourage him, to exhaust the topic, whatever it might be, that had got temporary possession of his pineal gland.

"Why," said the Duke, "I had caused my little Quodling to go through his oration thus—'That whatever evil reports had passed current during the lifetime of the worthy matron whom they had restored to dust that day, malice herself could not deny that she was born well, married well, lived well, and died well; since she was born in Shadwell, married to Cresswell, lived in Camberwell, and died in Bridewell.' Here ended the oration, and with it Sedley's ambitious hopes of overreaching Buckingham—ha, ha, ha!—And now, Master Christian, what are your commands for me to-day?"

"First, to thank your Grace for being so attentive as to send so formidable a person as Colonel Blood, to wait upon your poor friend and servant. Faith, he took such an interest in my leaving town, that he wanted to compel me to do it at point of fox, so I was obliged to spill a little of his malapert blood. Your Grace's swordsmen have had ill luck of late; and it is hard, since you always choose the best hands, and such scrupleless knaves too."

"Come now, Christian," said the Duke, "do not thus exult over me; a great man, if I may so call myself, is never greater than amid miscarriage. I only played this little trick on you, Christian, to impress on you a wholesome idea of the interest I take in your motions. The scoundrel's having dared to draw upon you, is a thing not to be forgiven.—What! injure my old friend Christian?"

"And why not," said Christian coolly, "if your old friend was so stubborn as not to go out of town, like a good boy, when your Grace required him to do so, for the civil purpose of entertaining his niece in his absence?"

"How—what!—how do you mean by *my* entertaining your niece, Master Christian?" said the Duke. "She was a personage far beyond my poor attentions, being destined, if I recollect aright, to something like royal favour."

"It was her fate, however, to be the guest of your Grace's convent for a brace of days, or so. Marry, my lord, the father confessor was not at home, and—for convents have been scaled of late—returned not till the bird was flown."

"Christian, thou art an old reynard—I see there is no doubling with thee. It was thou, then, that stole away my pretty prize, but left me something so much prettier in my mind, that, had it not made itself wings to fly away with, I would have placed it in a cage of gold. Never be downcast, man; I forgive thee—I forgive thee."

"Your Grace is of a most merciful disposition, especially considering it is I who have had the wrong; and sages have said, that he who doth the injury is less apt to forgive than he who only sustains it."

"True, true, Christian," said the Duke, "which, as you say, is something quite new, and places my clemency in a striking point of view. Well, then, thou forgiven man, when shall I see my Mauritanian Princess again?"

"Wherever I am certain that a quibble, and a carwhitchit, for a play or a sermon, will not banish her from your Grace's memory."

"Not all the wit of South, or of Etherege," said Buckingham hastily, "to say nothing of my own, shall in future make me oblivious of what I owe the Morisco Princess."

"Yet, to leave the fair lady out of thought for a little while—a very little while," said Christian, "since I swear that in due time your Grace shall see her, and know in her the most extraordinary woman that the age has produced—to leave her, I say out of sight for a little while, has your Grace had late notice of your Duchess's health?"

"Health," said the Duke. "Umph—no—nothing particular. She has been ill—but——"

"She is no longer so," subjoined Christian; "she died in Yorkshire forty-eight hours since."

"Thou must deal with the devil," said the Duke.

"It would ill become one of my name to do so," replied Christian. "But in the brief interval, since your Grace hath known of an event which hath not yet reached the public ear, you have, I believe, made proposals to the King for the hand of the Lady Anne, second daughter of the Duke of York, and your Grace's proposals have been rejected."

"Fiends and firebrands, villain!" said the Duke, starting up and seizing Christian by the collar; "who hath told thee that?"

"Take your hand from my cloak, my Lord Duke, and I may answer you," said Christian. "I have a scurvy touch of old puritanical humour about me. I abide not the imposition of hands—take off your grasp from my cloak, or I will find means to make you unloose it."

The Duke, who had kept his right hand on his dagger-hilt while he held Christian's collar with his left, unloosed it as he spoke, but slowly, and as one who rather suspends than abandons the execution of some hasty impulse; while Christian, adjusting his cloak with perfect composure, said, "Soh—my cloak being at liberty, we speak on equal terms. I come not to insult your Grace, but to offer you vengeance for the insult you have received."

"Vengeance!" said the Duke—"It is the dearest proffer man can present to me in my present mood. I hunger for vengeance—thirst for vengeance—could die to ensure vengeance!—'Sdeath!" he continued, walking up and down the large apartment with the most unrestrained and violent agitation; "I have chased this repulse out of my brain with ten thousand trifles, because I thought no one knew it. But it is known, and to thee, the very common-sewer of Court-secrets—the honour of Villiers is in thy keeping, Ned Christian! Speak, thou man of wiles and of intrigue—on whom dost thou promise the vengeance? Speak! and if thy answers meet my desires, I will make a bargain with thee as willingly as with thy master, Satan himself."

"I will not be," said Christian, "so unreasonable in my terms as stories tell of the old apostate; I will offer your Grace, as he might do, temporal prosperity and revenge, which is his frequent recruiting money, but I leave it to yourself to provide, as you may be pleased, for your future salvation."

The Duke, gazing upon him fixedly and sadly, replied, "I would to God, Christian, that I could read what purpose of damnable villainy thou hast to propose to me in thy countenance, without the necessity of thy using words!"

"Your Grace can but try a guess," said Christian, calmly smiling.

"No," replied the Duke, after gazing at him again for the space of a minute; "thou art so deeply dyed a hypocrite, that thy mean features, and clear grey eye, are as likely to conceal treason, as any petty scheme of theft or larceny more corresponding to your degree."

"Treason, my lord!" echoed Christian; "you may have guessed more nearly than you were aware of. I honour your Grace's penetration."

"Treason?" echoed the Duke. "Who dare name such a crime to me?"

"If a name startles your Grace, you may call it vengeance—vengeance on the cabal of councillors, who have ever countermined you, in spite of your wit and your interest with the King.—Vengeance on Arlington, Ormond—on Charles himself."

"No, by Heaven," said the Duke, resuming his disordered walk through the apartment—"Vengeance on these rats of the Privy Council,—come at it as you will. But the King!—never—never. I have provoked him a hundred times, where he has stirred me once. I have crossed his path in state intrigue—rivalled him in love—had the advantage in both,—and, d—n it, he has forgiven me! If treason would put me in his throne, I have no apology for it—it were worse than bestial ingratitude."

"Nobly spoken, my lord," said Christian; "and consistent alike with the obligations under which your Grace lies to Charles Stewart, and the sense you have ever shown of them.—But it signifies not. If your Grace patronise not our enterprise, there is Shaftesbury—there is Monmouth——"

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed the Duke, even more vehemently agitated than before, "think you that you shall carry on with others an enterprise which I have refused?—No, by every heathen and every Christian god!—Hark ye, Christian, I will arrest you on the spot—I will, by gods and devils, and carry you to unravel your plot at Whitehall."

"Where the first words I speak," answered the imperturbable Christian, "will be to inform the Privy Council in what place they may find certain letters, wherewith your Grace has honoured your poor vassal, containing, as I think, particulars which his Majesty will read with more surprise than pleasure."

"Sdeath, villain!" said the Duke, once more laying his hand on his poniard-hilt, "thou hast me again at advantage. I know not why I forbear to poniard you where you stand!"

"I might fall, my Lord Duke," said Christian, slightly colouring, and putting his right hand into his bosom, "though not, I think, unavenged—for I have not put my person into this peril altogether without means of defence. I might fall, but, alas! your Grace's correspondence is in hands, which, by that very act, would be rendered sufficiently active in handing them to the King and the Privy Council. What say you to the Moorish Princess, my Lord Duke? What if I have left her executrix of my will, with certain instructions how to proceed if I return not unharmed from York Place? Oh, my lord, though my head is in the wolf's mouth, I was not goose enough to place it there without settling how many carabines should be fired on the wolf, so soon as my dying cackle was heard.—Pshaw, my Lord Duke! you deal with a man of sense and courage, yet you speak to him as a child and a coward."

The Duke threw himself into a chair, fixed his eyes on the ground, and spoke without raising them. "I am about to call Jerningham," he said; "but fear nothing—it is only for a draught of wine—That stuff on the table may be a vehicle of filberts, and walnuts, but not for such communications as yours.—Bring me champagne," he said to the attendant who answered to his summons.

The domestic returned, and brought a flask of champagne, with two large silver cups. One of them he filled for Buckingham, who, contrary to the usual etiquette, was always served first at home, and then offered the other to Christian, who declined to receive it.

The Duke drank off the large goblet which was presented to him, and for a moment covered his forehead with the palm of his hand; then instantly withdrew it, and said, "Christian, speak your errand plainly. We know each other. If my reputation be in some degree in your hands, you are well aware that your life is in mine. Sit down," he said, taking a pistol from his bosom and laying it on the table—"Sit down, and let me hear your proposal."

"My lord," said Christian, smiling, "I shall produce no such ultimate argument on my part, though possibly, in time of need, I may not be found destitute of them. But my defence is in the situation of things, and in the composed view which, doubtless, your Majesty will take of them."

"Majesty!" repeated the Duke—"My good friend Christian, you have kept company with the Puritans so long, that you confuse the ordinary titles of the Court."

"I know not how to apologise," said Christian, "unless your Grace will suppose that I spoke by prophecy."

"Such as the devil delivered to Macbeth," said the Duke—again paced the chamber, and again seated himself, and said, "Be plain, Christian—speak out at once, and manfully, what is it you intend?"

"I," said Christian—"What should I do?—I can do nothing in such a matter; but I thought it right that your Grace should know that the godly of this city"—(he spoke the word with a kind of ironical grin)—"are impatient of inactivity, and must needs be up and doing. My brother Bridgenorth is at the head of all old Weiver's congregation; for you must know, that, after floundering from one faith to another, he hath now got beyond ordinances, and is become a Fifth-Monarchy man. He has nigh two hundred of Weiver's people, fully equipped, and ready to fall on; and, with slight aid from your Grace's people, they must carry Whitehall, and make prisoners of all within it."

"Rascal!" said the Duke, "and is it to a Peer of England you make this communication?"

"Nay," answered Christian, "I admit it would be extreme folly in your Grace to appear until all is over. But let me give Blood and the others a hint on your part. There are the four Germans also—right Knipperdolings and Anabaptists—will be specially useful. You are wise, my lord, and know the value of a corps of domestic gladiators, as well as did Octavius, Lepidus, and Anthony, when, by such family forces, they divided the world by indenture tripartite."

"Stay, stay," said the Duke. "Even if these bloodhounds were to join with you—not that I would permit it without the most positive assurances for the King's personal safety—but say the villains were to join, what hope have you of carrying the Court?"

"Bully Tom Armstrong, [*] my lord, hath promised his interest with the Life Guards. Then there are my Lord Shaftesbury's brisk boys in the city—thirty thousand on the holding up a finger."

[] Thomas, or Sir Thomas Armstrong, a person who had distinguished himself in youth by duels and drunken exploits. He was particularly connected with the Duke of Monmouth, and was said to be concerned in the Rye-House Plot, for which he suffered capital punishment, 20th June 1684.*

"Let him hold up both hands, and if he count a hundred for each finger," said the Duke, "it will be more than I expect. You have not spoken to him?"

"Surely not till your Grace's pleasure was known. But, if he is not applied to, there is the Dutch train, Hans Snorehout's congregation, in the Strand—there are the French Protestants in Piccadilly—there are the family of Levi in Lewkenor's Lane—the Muggletonians in Thames Street——"

"Ah, faugh!—Out upon them—out upon them!—How the knaves will stink of cheese and tobacco when they come upon action!—they will drown all the perfumes in Whitehall. Spare me the detail; and let me know, my dearest Ned, the sum total of thy most odoriferous forces."

"Fifteen hundred men, well armed," said Christian, "besides the rabble that will rise to a certainty—they have already nearly torn to pieces the prisoners who were this day acquitted on account of the Plot."

"All, then, I understand.—And now, hark ye, most Christian Christian," said he, wheeling his chair full in front of that on which his agent was seated, "you have told me many things to-day—Shall I be equally communicative? Shall I show you that my accuracy of information matches yours? Shall I tell you, in a word, why you have at once resolved to push every one, from the Puritan to the free-thinker, upon a general attack of the Palace of Whitehall, without allowing me, a peer of the realm, time either to pause upon or to prepare for a step so desperate? Shall I tell you why you would lead or drive, seduce or compel me, into countenancing your measures?"

"My lord, if you please to form a guess," said Christian, "I will answer with all sincerity, if you have assigned the right cause."

"The Countess of Derby is this day arrived, and attends the Court this evening, with hopes of the kindest reception. She may be surprised amid the *mêlée*?—Ha! said I not right, Master Christian? You, who pretend to offer me revenge, know yourself its exquisite sweetness."

"I would not presume," said Christian, half smiling, "to offer your Grace a dish without acting as your taster as well as purveyor."

"That's honestly said," said the Duke. "Away then, my friend. Give Blood this ring—he knows it, and knows how to obey him who bears it. Let him assemble my gladiators, as thou dost most wittily term my *coup jarrets*. The old scheme of the German music may be resorted to, for I think thou hast the instruments ready. But take notice, I know nothing on't; and Rowley's person must be safe—I will hang and burn on all hands if a hair of his black periwig[*] be but singed.—Then what is to follow—a Lord Protector of the realm—or stay—Cromwell has made the word somewhat slovenly and unpopular—a Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom?—The patriots who take it on themselves to avenge the injustice done to the country, and to remove evil counsellors from before the King's throne, that it may be henceforward established in righteousness—so I think the rubric runs—cannot fail to make a fitting choice."

[*] Charles, to suit his dark complexion, always wore a black peruke.

He used to say of the players, that if they wished to represent a villain on the stage, "Oddsfish, they always clapp'd on him a black periwig, whereas the greatest rogue in England [meaning, probably, Dr. Oates] wears a white one."—See CIBBER's Apology.

"They cannot, my Lord Duke," said Christian, "since there is but one man in the three kingdoms on whom that choice can possibly fall."

"I thank you Christian," said his Grace; "and I trust you. Away, and make all ready. Be assured your services shall not be forgot. We will have you near to us."

"My Lord Duke," said Christian, "you bind me doubly to you. But remember that as your Grace is spared any obnoxious proceedings which may befall in the way of military execution, or otherwise, so it will be advisable that you hold yourself in preparation, upon a moment's notice, to put yourself at the head of a band of honourable friends and allies, and come presently to the palace, where you will be received by the victors as a commander, and by the vanquished as a preserver."

"I conceive you—I conceive you. I will be in prompt readiness," said the Duke.

"Ay, my lord," continued Christian; "and for Heaven's sake, let none of those toys, which are the very Delilahs of your imagination, come across your Grace this evening, and interfere with the execution of this sublime scheme."

"Why, Christian, dost think me mad?" was his Grace's emphatic reply. "It is you who linger, when all should be ordered for a deed so daring. Go then.—But hark ye, Ned; ere you go, tell me when I shall again see yonder thing of fire and air—yon Eastern Peri, that glides into apartments by the keyhole, and leaves them through the casement—yon black-eyed houri of the Mahometan paradise—when, I say, shall I see her once more?"

"When your Grace has the truncheon of Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom," said Christian, and left the apartment.

Buckingham stood fixed in contemplation for a moment after he was gone. "Should I have done this?" he said, arguing the matter with himself; "or had I the choice rather of doing aught else? Should I not hasten to the Court, and make Charles aware of the treason which besets him? I will, by Heaven?—Here, Jerningham, my coach, with the despatch of light!—I will throw myself at his feet, and tell him of all the follies which I have dreamed of with this Christian.—And then he will laugh at me, and spurn me.—No, I have kneeled to him to-day already, and my repulse was nothing gentle. To be spurned once in the sun's daily round is enough for Buckingham."

Having made this reflection, he seated himself, and began hastily to mark down the young nobles and gentlemen of quality, and others, their very ignoble companions, who he supposed might be likely to assume him for their leader in any popular disturbance. He had nearly completed it, when Jerningham entered, to say the coach would be ready in an instant, and to bring his master's sword, hat, and cloak.

"Let the coachman draw off," said the Duke, "but be in readiness. And send to the gentlemen thou wilt find named in this list; say I am but ill at ease, and wish their company to a light collation. Let instant expedition be made, and care not for expense; you will find most of them at the Club House in Fuller's Rents."[*]

[*] The place of meeting of the Green Ribbon Club. "Their place of meeting," says Roger North, "was in a sort of Carrefour at Chancery Lane, in a centre of business and company most proper for such anglers of fools. The house was double balconied in front, as may yet be seen, for the clubbers to issue forth in fresco, with hats and no perukes, pipes in their mouths, merry faces, and dilated throats for vocal encouragement of the canaglia below on usual and unusual occasions."

The preparations for festivity were speedily made, and the intended guests, most of them persons who were at leisure for any call that promised pleasure, though sometimes more deaf to those of duty, began speedily to assemble. There were many youths of the highest rank, and with them, as is usual in those circles, many of a different class, whom talents, or impudence, or wit, or a turn for gambling, had reared up into companions for the great and the gay. The Duke of Buckingham was a general patron of persons of this description; and a numerous attendance took place on the present occasion.

The festivity was pursued with the usual appliances of wine, music, and games of hazard; with which, however, there mingled in that period much more wit, and a good deal more gross profligacy of conversation, than the talents of the present generation can supply, or their taste would permit.

The Duke himself proved the complete command which he possessed over his versatile character, by maintaining the frolic, the laugh, and the jest, while his ear caught up, and with eagerness, the most distant sounds, as intimating the commencement of Christian's revolutionary project. Such sounds were heard from time to time, and from time to time they died away, without any of those consequences which Buckingham expected.

At length, and when it was late in the evening, Jerningham announced Master Chiffinch from the Court; and that worthy personage followed the annunciation.

"Strange things have happened, my Lord Duke," he said; "your presence at Court is instantly required by his Majesty."

"You alarm me," said Buckingham, standing up. "I hope nothing has happened—I hope there is nothing wrong—I hope his Majesty is well?"

"Perfectly well," said Chiffinch; "and desirous to see your Grace without a moment's delay."

"This is sudden," said the Duke. "You see I have had merry fellows about me, and am scarce in case to appear, Chiffinch."

"Your Grace seems to be in very handsome plight," said Chiffinch; "and you know his Majesty is gracious enough to make allowances."

"True," said the Duke, not a little anxious in his mind, touching the cause of this unexpected summons—"True—his Majesty is most gracious—I will order my coach."

"Mine is below," replied the royal messenger; "it will save time, if your Grace will condescend to use it."

Forced from every evasion, Buckingham took a goblet from the table, and requested his friends to remain at his palace so long as they could find the means of amusement there. He expected, he said, to return almost immediately; if not, he would take farewell of them with his usual toast, "May all of us that are not hanged in the interval, meet together again here on the first Monday of next month."

This standing toast of the Duke bore reference to the character of several of his guests; but he did not drink it on the present occasion without some anticipation concerning his own fate, in case Christian had betrayed him. He hastily made some addition to his dress, and attended Chiffinch in the chariot to Whitehall.

CHAPTER XLV

High feasting was there there—the gilded roofs
Rung to the wassail-health—the dancer's step
Sprung to the chord responsive—the gay gamester
To fate's disposal flung his heap of gold,
And laugh'd alike when it increased or lessen'd:
Such virtue hath court-air to teach us patience
Which schoolmen preach in vain.

—WHY COME YE NOT TO COURT?

Upon the afternoon of this eventful day, Charles held his Court in the Queen's apartments, which were opened at a particular hour to invited guests of a certain lower degree, but accessible without restriction to the higher classes of nobility who had from birth, and to the courtiers who held by office the privilege of the *entrée*.

It was one part of Charles's character, which unquestionably rendered him personally popular, and postponed to a subsequent reign the precipitation of his family from the throne, that he banished from his Court many of the formal restrictions with which it was in other reigns surrounded. He was conscious of the good-natured grace of his manners, and trusted to it, often not in vain, to remove evil impressions arising from actions, which he was sensible could not be justified on the grounds of liberal or national policy.

In the daytime the King was commonly seen in the public walks alone, or only attended by one or two persons; and his answer to the remonstrance of his brother, on the risk of thus exposing his person, is well known:—"Believe me, James," he said, "no one will murder *me*, to make *you* King."

In the same manner, Charles's evenings, unless such as were destined to more secret pleasures, were frequently spent amongst all who had any pretence to approach a courtly circle; and thus it was upon the night which we are treating of. Queen Catherine, reconciled or humbled to her fate, had long ceased to express any feelings of jealousy, nay, seemed so absolutely dead to such a passion, that she received at her drawing-room, without scruple, and even with encouragement, the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Cleveland, and others, who enjoyed, though in a less avowed character, the credit of having been royal favourites. Constraint of every kind was banished from a circle so composed, and which was frequented at the same time, if not by the wisest, at least by the wittiest courtiers, who ever assembled round a monarch, and who, as many of them had shared the wants, and shifts, and frolics of his exile, had then acquired a sort of prescriptive licence, which the good-natured prince, when he attained his period of prosperity, could hardly have restrained had it suited his temper to do so. This, however, was the least of Charles's thoughts. His manners were such as secured him from indelicate obtrusion; and he sought no other protection from over-familiarity, than what these and his ready wit afforded him.

On the present occasion, he was peculiarly disposed to enjoy the scene of pleasure which had been prepared. The singular death of Major Coleby, which, taking place in his own presence, had proclaimed, with the voice of a passing bell, the ungrateful neglect of the Prince for whom he had sacrificed everything, had given Charles much pain. But, in his own opinion at least, he had completely atoned for this negligence by the trouble which he had taken for Sir Geoffrey Peveril and his son, whose liberation he looked upon not only as an excellent good deed in itself, but, in spite of the grave rebuke of Ormond, as achieved in a very pardonable manner, considering the difficulties with which he was surrounded. He even felt a degree of satisfaction on receiving intelligence from the city that there had been disturbances in the streets, and that some of the more violent fanatics had betaken themselves to their meeting-houses, upon sudden summons, to inquire, as their preachers phrased it, into the causes of Heaven's wrath, and into the backsliding of the Court, lawyers, and jury, by whom the false and bloody favourers of the Popish Plot were screened and cloaked from deserved punishment.

The King, we repeat, seemed to hear these accounts with pleasure, even when he was reminded of the dangerous and susceptible character of those with whom such suspicions originated. "Will any one now assert," he said, with self-complacency, "that I am so utterly negligent of the interest of friends?—You see the peril in which I place myself, and even the risk to which I have exposed the public peace, to rescue a man whom I have scarce seen for twenty years, and then only in his buff-coat and bandoleers, with other Train-Band officers who kissed hands upon the Restoration. They say Kings have long hands—I think they have as much occasion for long memories, since they are expected to watch over and reward every man in England, who hath but shown his goodwill by crying 'God save the King!'"

"Nay, the rogues are even more unreasonable still," said Sedley; "for every knave of them thinks himself entitled to your Majesty's protection in a good cause, whether he has cried God save the King or no."

The King smiled, and turned to another part of the stately hall, where everything was assembled which could, according to the taste of the age, make the time glide pleasantly away.

In one place, a group of the young nobility, and of the ladies of the Court, listened to the reader's acquaintance Empson, who was accompanying with his unrivalled breathings on the flute, a young siren, who, while her bosom palpitated with pride and with fear, warbled to the courtly and august presence the beautiful air beginning—

*"Young I am, and yet unskill'd,
How to make a lover yield," &c.*

She performed her task in a manner so corresponding with the strains of the amatory poet, and the voluptuous air with which the words had been invested by the celebrated Purcel, that the men crowded around in ecstasies, while most of the ladies thought it proper either to look extremely indifferent to the words she sung, or to withdraw from the circle as quietly as possible. To the song succeeded a concerto, performed by a select band of most admirable musicians, which the King, whose taste was indisputable, had himself selected.

At other tables in the apartment, the elder courtiers worshipped Fortune, at the various fashionable games of ombre, quadrille, hazard, and the like; while heaps of gold which lay before the players, augmented or dwindled with every turn of a card or cast of a die. Many a year's rent of fair estates was ventured upon the main or the odds; which, spent in the old deserted manor-house, had repaired the ravages of Cromwell upon its walls, and replaced the sources of good housekeeping and hospitality, that, exhausted in the last age by fine and sequestration, were now in a fair way of being annihilated by careless prodigality. Elsewhere, under cover of observing the gamester, or listening to the music, the gallantries of that all-licensed age were practised among the gay and fair, closely watched the whilst by the ugly or the old, who promised themselves at least the pleasure of observing, and it may be that of proclaiming, intrigues in which they could not be sharers. From one table to another glided the merry Monarch, exchanging now a glance with a Court beauty, now a jest with a Court wit, now beating time to the music, and anon losing or winning a few pieces of gold on the chance of the game to which he stood nearest;—the most amiable of voluptuaries—the gayest and best-natured of companions—the man that would, of all others, have best sustained his character, had life been a continued banquet, and its only end to enjoy the passing hour, and send it away as pleasantly as might be.

But Kings are least of all exempted from the ordinary lot of humanity; and Seged of Ethiopia is, amongst monarchs, no solitary example of the vanity of reckoning on a day or an hour of undisturbed serenity. An attendant on the Court announced suddenly to their Majesties that a lady, who would only announce herself as a Peeress of England, desired to be admitted into the presence.

The Queen said, hastily, it was *impossible*. No peeress, without announcing her title, was entitled to the privilege of her rank.

"I could be sworn," said a nobleman in attendance, "that it is some whim of the Duchess of Newcastle."

The attendant who brought the message, said that he did indeed believe it to be the Duchess, both from the singularity of the message, and that the lady spoke with somewhat a foreign accent.

"In the name of madness, then," said the King, "let us admit her. Her Grace is an entire raree-show in her own person—a universal masquerade—indeed a sort of private Bedlam-hospital, her whole ideas being like so many patients crazed upon the subjects of love and literature, who act nothing in their vagaries, save Minerva, Venus, and the nine Muses."

"Your Majesty's pleasure must always supersede mine," said the Queen. "I only hope I shall not be expected to entertain so fantastic a personage. The last time she came to Court, Isabella"—(she spoke to one of her Portuguese ladies of honour)—"you had not returned from our lovely Lisbon!—her Grace had the assurance to assume a right to bring a train-bearer into my apartment; and when this was not allowed, what then, think you, she did?—even caused her train to be made so long, that three mortal yards of satin and silver remained in the antechamber, supported by four wenches, while the other end was attached to her Grace's person, as she paid her duty at the upper end of the presence-room. Full thirty yards of the most beautiful silk did her Grace's madness employ in this manner."

"And most beautiful damsels they were who bore this portentous train," said the King—"a train never equalled save by that of the great comet in sixty-six. Sedley and Etherege told us wonders of them; for it is one advantage of this new fashion brought up by the Duchess, that a matron may be totally unconscious of the coquetry of her train and its attendants."

"Am I to understand, then, your Majesty's pleasure is, that the lady is to be admitted?" said the usher.

"Certainly," said the King; "that is, if the incognita be really entitled to the honour.—It may be as well to inquire her title—there are more madwomen abroad than the Duchess of Newcastle. I will walk into the anteroom myself, and receive your answer."

But ere Charles had reached the lower end of the apartment in his progress to the anteroom, the usher surprised the assembly by announcing a name which had not for many a year been heard in these courtly halls—"the Countess of Derby!"

Stately and tall, and still, at an advanced period of life, having a person unbroken by years, the noble lady advanced towards her Sovereign, with a step resembling that with which she might have met an equal. There was indeed nothing in her manner that indicated either haughtiness or assumption unbecoming that presence; but her consciousness of wrongs, sustained from the administration of Charles, and of the superiority of the injured party over those from whom, or in whose name, the injury had been offered, gave her look dignity, and her step firmness. She was dressed in widow's weeds, of the same fashion which were worn at the time her husband was brought to the scaffold; and which, in the thirty years subsequent to that event, she had never permitted her tirewoman to alter. The surprise was no pleasing one to the King; and cursing in his heart the rashness which had allowed the lady entrance on the gay scene in which they were engaged, he saw at the same time the necessity of receiving her in a manner suitable to his own character, and her rank in the British Court. He approached her with an air of welcome, into which he threw all his natural grace, while he began, "*Chère Comtesse de Derby, puissante Reine de Man, notre très auguste soeur—*"

"Speak English, sire, if I may presume to ask such a favour," said the Countess. "I am a Peeress of this nation—mother to one English Earl, and widow, alas, to another! In England I have spent my brief days of happiness, my long years of widowhood and sorrow. France and its language are but to me the dreams of an uninteresting childhood. I know no tongue save that of my husband and my son. Permit me, as the widow and mother of Derby, thus to render my homage."

She would have kneeled, but the King gracefully prevented her, and, saluting her cheek, according to the form, led her towards the Queen, and himself performed the ceremony of introduction. "Your Majesty," he said, "must be informed that the Countess has imposed a restriction on French—the language of gallantry and compliment. I trust your Majesty will, though a foreigner, like herself, find enough of honest English to assure the Countess of Derby with what pleasure we see her at Court, after the absence of so many years."

"I will endeavour to do so, at least," said the Queen, on whom the appearance of the Countess of Derby made a more favourable impression than that of many strangers, whom, at the King's request, she was in the habit of receiving with courtesy.

Charles himself again spoke. "To any other lady of the same rank I might put the question, why she was so long absent from the circle? I fear I can only ask the Countess of Derby, what fortunate cause produces the pleasure of seeing her here?"

"No fortunate cause, my liege, though one most strong and urgent."

The King augured nothing agreeable from this commencement; and in truth, from the Countess's first entrance, he had anticipated some unpleasant explanation, which he therefore hastened to parry, having first composed his features into an expression of sympathy and interest.

"If," said he, "the cause is of a nature in which we can render assistance, we cannot expect your ladyship should enter upon it at the present time; but a memorial addressed to our secretary, or, if it is more satisfactory, to ourselves directly, will receive our immediate, and I trust I need not add, our favourable construction."

The Countess bowed with some state, and answered, "My business, sire, is indeed important; but so brief, that it need not for more than a few minutes withdraw your ear from what is more pleasing;—yet it is so urgent, that I am afraid to postpone it even for a moment."

"This is unusual," said Charles. "But you, Countess of Derby, are an unwonted guest, and must command my time. Does the matter require my private ear?"

"For my part," said the Countess, "the whole Court might listen; but you Majesty may prefer hearing me in the presence of one or two of your counsellors."

"Ormond," said the King, looking around, "attend us for an instant—and do you, Arlington, do the same."

The King led the way into an adjoining cabinet, and, seating himself, requested the Countess would also take a chair. "It needs not, sire," she replied; then pausing for a moment, as if to collect her spirits, she proceeded with firmness.

"Your Majesty well said that no light cause had drawn me from my lonely habitation. I came not hither when the property of my son—that property which descended to him from a father who died for your Majesty's rights—was conjured away from him under pretext of justice, that it might first feed the avarice of the rebel Fairfax, and then supply the prodigality of his son-in-law, Buckingham."

"These are over harsh terms, lady," said the King. "A legal penalty was, as we remember, incurred by an act of irregular violence—so our courts and our laws term it, though personally I have no objection to call it, with you, an honourable revenge. But admit it were such, in prosecution of the laws of honour, bitter legal consequences are often necessarily incurred."

"I come not to argue for my son's wasted and forfeited inheritance, sire," said the Countess; "I only take credit for my patience, under that afflicting dispensation. I now come to redeem the honour of the House of Derby, more dear to me than all the treasures and lands which ever belonged to it."

"And by whom is the honour of the House of Derby impeached?" said the King; "for on my word you bring me the first news of it."

"Has there one Narrative, as these wild fictions are termed, been printed with regard to the Popish Plot—this pretended Plot as I will call it—in which the honour of our house has not been touched and tainted? And are there not two noble gentlemen, father and son, allies of the House of Stanley, about to be placed in jeopardy of their lives, on account of matters in which we are the parties first impeached?"

The King looked around, and smiled to Arlington and Ormond. "The Countess's courage, methinks, shames ours. What lips dared have called the immaculate Plot *pretended*, or the Narrative of the witnesses, our preservers from Popish knives, a wild fiction?—But, madam," he said, "though I admire the generosity of your interference in behalf of the two Peverils, I must acquaint you, that your interference is unnecessary—they are this morning acquitted."

"Now may God be praised!" said the Countess, folding her hands. "I have scarce slept since I heard the news of their impeachment; and have arrived here to surrender myself to your Majesty's justice, or to the prejudices of the nation, in hopes, by so doing, I might at least save the lives of my noble and generous friends, enveloped in suspicion only, or chiefly, by their connection with us.—Are they indeed acquitted?"

"They are, by my honour," said the King. "I marvel you heard it not."

"I arrived but last night, and remained in the strictest seclusion," said the Countess, "afraid to make any inquiries that might occasion discovery ere I saw your Majesty."

"And now that we *have* met," said the King, taking her hand kindly—"a meeting which gives me the greatest pleasure—may I recommend to you speedily to return to your royal island with as little *éclat* as you came thither? The world, my dear Countess, has changed since we were young. Men fought in the Civil War with good swords and muskets; but now we fight with indictments and oaths, and such like legal weapons. You are no adept in such warfare; and though I am well aware you know how to hold out a castle, I doubt much if you have the art to parry off an impeachment. This Plot has come upon us like a land storm—there is no steering the vessel in the teeth of the tempest—we must run for the nearest haven, and happy if we can reach one."

"This is cowardice, my liege," said the Countess—"Forgive the word!—it is but a woman who speaks it. Call your noble friends around you, and make a stand like your royal father. There is but one right and one wrong—one honourable and forward course; and all others which deviate are oblique and unworthy."

"Your language, my venerated friend," said Ormond, who saw the necessity of interfering betwixt the dignity of the actual Sovereign and the freedom of the Countess, who was generally accustomed to receive, not to pay observance,—"*your language is strong and decided, but it applies not to the times. It might occasion a renewal of the Civil War, and of all its miseries, but could hardly be attended with the effects you sanguinely anticipate.*"

"You are too rash, my Lady Countess," said Arlington, "not only to rush upon this danger yourself, but to desire to involve his Majesty. Let me say plainly, that, in this jealous time, you have done but ill to exchange the security of Castle Rushin for the chance of a lodging in the Tower of London."

"And were I to kiss the block there," said the Countess, "as did my husband at Bolton-on-the-Moors, I would do so willingly, rather than forsake a friend!—and one, too, whom, as in the case of the younger Peveril, I have thrust upon danger."

"But have I not assured you that both of the Peverils, elder and younger, are freed from peril?" said the King; "and, my dear Countess, what can else tempt you to thrust *yourself* on danger, from which, doubtless, you expect to be relieved by my intervention? Methinks a lady of your judgment should not voluntarily throw herself into a river, merely that her friends might have the risk and merit of dragging her out."

The Countess reiterated her intention to claim a fair trial.—The two counsellors again pressed their advice that she should withdraw, though under the charge of absconding from justice, and remain in her own feudal kingdom.

The King, seeing no termination to the debate, gently reminded the Countess that her Majesty would be jealous if he detained her ladyship longer, and offered her his hand to conduct her back to the company. This she was under the necessity of accepting, and returned accordingly to the apartments of state, where an event occurred immediately afterwards, which must be transferred to the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLVI

*Here stand I tight and trim,
Quick of eye, though little of limb;
He who denieth the word I have spoken,
Betwixt him and me shall lances be broken.*

—LAY OF THE LITTLE JOHN DE SAINTRE.

When Charles had reconducted the Countess of Derby into the presence-chamber, before he parted with her, he entreated her, in a whisper, to be governed by good counsel, and to regard her own safety; and then turned easily from her, as if to distribute his attentions equally among the other guests.

These were a good deal circumscribed at the instant, by the arrival of a party of five or six musicians; one of whom, a German, under the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham, was particularly renowned for his performance on the violoncello, but had been detained in inactivity in the antechamber by the non-arrival of his instrument, which had now at length made its appearance.

The domestic who placed it before the owner, shrouded as it was within its wooden case, seemed heartily glad to be rid of his load, and lingered for a moment, as if interested in discovering what sort of instrument was to be produced that could weigh so heavily. His curiosity was satisfied, and in a most extraordinary manner; for, while the musician was fumbling with the key, the case being for his greater convenience placed upright against the wall, the case and instrument itself at once flew open, and out started the dwarf, Geoffrey Hudson,—at sight of whose unearthly appearance, thus suddenly introduced, the ladies shrieked, and ran backwards; the gentlemen started, and the poor German, on seeing the portentous delivery of his fiddle-case, tumbled on the floor in an agony, supposing, it might be, that his instrument was metamorphosed into the strange figure which supplied its place. So soon, however, as he recovered, he glided out of the apartment, and was followed by most of his companions.

"Hudson!" said the King—"My little old friend, I am not sorry to see you; though Buckingham, who I suppose is the purveyor of this jest, hath served us up but a stale one."

"Will your Majesty honour me with one moment's attention?" said Hudson.

"Assuredly, my good friend," said the King. "Old acquaintances are springing up in every quarter to-night; and our leisure can hardly be better employed than in listening to them.—It was an idle trick of Buckingham," he added, in a whisper to Ormond, "to send the poor thing hither, especially as he was to-day tried for the affair of the plot. At any rate he comes not to ask protection from us, having had the rare fortune to come off *Plot-free*. He is but fishing, I suppose, for some little present or pension."

The little man, precise in Court etiquette, yet impatient of the King's delaying to attend to him, stood in the midst of the floor, most valorously pawing and prancing, like a Scots pony assuming the airs of a war-horse, waving meanwhile his little hat with the tarnished feather, and bowing from time to time, as if impatient to be heard.

"Speak on, then, my friend," said Charles; "if thou hast some poetical address penned for thee, out with it, that thou mayst have time to repose these flourishing little limbs of thine."

"No poetical speech have I, most mighty Sovereign," answered the dwarf; "but, in plain and most loyal prose, I do accuse, before this company, the once noble Duke of Buckingham of high treason!"

"Well spoken, and manfully—Get on, man," said the King, who never doubted that this was the introduction to something burlesque or witty, not conceiving that the charge was made in solemn earnest.

A great laugh took place among such courtiers as heard, and among many who did not hear, what was uttered by the dwarf; the former entertained by the extravagant emphasis and gesticulation of the little champion, and the others laughing not the less loud that they laughed for example's sake, and upon trust.

"What matter is there for all this mirth?" said he, very indignantly—"Is it fit subject for laughing, that I, Geoffrey Hudson, Knight, do, before King and nobles, impeach George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, of high treason?"

"No subject of mirth, certainly," said Charles, composing his features; "but great matter of wonder.—Come, cease this mouthing, and prancing, and mummary.—If there be a jest, come out with it, man; and if not, even get thee to the beaffet, and drink a cup of wine to refresh thee after thy close lodging."

"I tell you, my liege," said Hudson impatiently, yet in a whisper, intended only to be audible by the King, "that if you spend overmuch time in trifling, you will be convinced by dire experience of Buckingham's treason. I tell you,—I asseverate to your Majesty,—two hundred armed fanatics will be here within the hour, to surprise the guards."

"Stand back, ladies," said the King, "or you may hear more than you will care to listen to. My Lord of Buckingham's jests are not always, you know, quite fitted for female ears; besides, we want a few words in private with our little friend. You, my Lord of Ormond—you, Arlington" (and he named one or two others), "may remain with us."

The gay crowd bore back, and dispersed through the apartment—the men to conjecture what the end of this mummary, as they supposed it, was likely to prove; and what jest, as Sedley said, the bass-fiddle had been brought to bed of—and the ladies to admire and criticise the antique dress, and richly embroidered ruff and hood of the Countess of Derby, to whom the Queen was showing particular attention.

"And now, in the name of Heaven, and amongst friends," said the King to the dwarf, "what means all this?"

"Treason, my lord the King!—Treason to his Majesty of England!—When I was chambered in yonder instrument, my lord, the High-Dutch fellows who bore me, carried me into a certain chapel, to see, as they said to each other, that all was ready. Sire, I went where bass-fiddle never went before, even into a conventicle of Fifth-Monarchists; and when they brought me away, the preacher was concluding his sermon, and was within a 'Now to apply' of setting off like the bell-wether at the head of his flock, to surprise your Majesty in your royal Court! I heard him through the sound-holes of my instrument, when the fellow set me down for a moment to profit by this precious doctrine."

"It would be singular," said Lord Arlington, "were there some reality at the bottom of this buffoonery; for we know these wild men have been consulting together to-day, and five conventicles have held a solemn fast."

"Nay," said the King, "if that be the case, they are certainly determined on some villainy."

"Might I advise," said the Duke of Ormond, "I would summon the Duke of Buckingham to this presence. His connections with the fanatics are well known, though he affects to conceal them."

"You would not, my lord, do his Grace the injustice to treat him as a criminal on such a charge as this?" said the King. "However," he added, after a moment's consideration, "Buckingham is accessible to every sort of temptation, from the flightiness of his genius. I should not be surprised if he nourished hopes of an aspiring kind—I think we had some proof of it lately.—Hark ye, Chiffinch; go to him instantly, and bring him here on any fair pretext thou canst devise. I would fain save him from what lawyers call an overt act. The Court would be dull as a dead horse were Buckingham to miscarry."

"Will not your Majesty order the Horse Guards to turn out?" said young Selby, who was present, and an officer.

"No, Selby," said the King, "I like not horse-play. But let them be prepared; and let the High Bailiff collect his civil officers, and command the Sheriffs to summon their worshipful attendants from javelin-men to hangmen, and have them in readiness, in case of any sudden tumult—double the sentinels on the doors of the palace—and see no strangers get in."

"Or out," said the Duke of Ormond. "Where are the foreign fellows who brought in the dwarf?"

They were sought for, but they were not to be found. They had retreated, leaving their instruments—a circumstance which seemed to bear hard on the Duke of Buckingham, their patron.

Hasty preparations were made to provide resistance to any effort of despair which the supposed conspirators might be driven to; and in the meanwhile, the King, withdrawing with Arlington, Ormond, and a few other counsellors, into the cabinet where the Countess of Derby had had her audience, resumed the examination of the little discoverer. His declaration, though singular, was quite coherent; the strain of romance intermingled with it, being in fact a part of his character, which often gained him the fate of being laughed at, when he would otherwise have been pitied, or even esteemed.

He commenced with a flourish about his sufferings for the Plot, which the impatience of Ormond would have cut short, had not the King reminded his Grace, that a top, when it is not flogged, must needs go down of itself at the end of a definite time, while the application of the whip may keep it up for hours.

Geoffrey Hudson was, therefore, allowed to exhaust himself on the subject of his prison-house, which he informed the King was not without a beam of light—an emanation of loveliness—a mortal angel—quick of step and beautiful of eye, who had more than once visited his confinement with words of cheering and comfort.

"By my faith," said the King, "they fare better in Newgate than I was aware of. Who would have thought of the little gentleman being solaced with female society in such a place?"

"I pray your Majesty," said the dwarf, after the manner of a solemn protest, "to understand nothing amiss. My devotion to this fair creature is rather like what we poor Catholics pay to the blessed saints, than mixed with any grosser quality. Indeed, she seems rather a sylphid of the Rosicrucian system, than aught more carnal; being sligher, lighter, and less than the females of common life, who have something of that coarseness of make which is doubtless derived from the sinful and gigantic race of the antediluvians."

"Well, say on, man," quoth Charles. "Didst thou not discover this sylph to be a mere mortal wench after all?"

"Who?—I, my liege?—Oh, fie!"

"Nay, little gentleman, do not be so particularly scandalised," said the King; "I promise you I suspect you of no audacity of gallantry."

"Time wears fast," said the Duke of Ormond impatiently, and looking at his watch. "Chiffinch hath been gone ten minutes, and ten minutes will bring him back."

"True," said Charles gravely. "Come to the point, Hudson; and tell us what this female has to do with your coming hither in this extraordinary manner."

"Everything, my lord," said little Hudson. "I saw her twice during my confinement in Newgate, and, in my thought, she is the very angel who guards my life and welfare; for, after my acquittal, as I walked towards the city with two tall gentlemen, who had been in trouble along with me, and just while we stood to our defence against a rascally mob, and just as I had taken possession of an elevated situation, to have some vantage against the great odds of numbers, I heard a heavenly voice sound, as it were, from a window behind me, counselling me to take refuge in a certain house; to which measure I readily persuaded my gallant friends the Peverils, who have always shown themselves willing to be counselled by me."

"Showing therein their wisdom at once and modesty," said the King. "But what chanced next? Be brief—be like thyself, man."

"For a time, sire," said the dwarf, "it seemed as if I were not the principal object of attention. First, the younger Peveril was withdrawn from us by a gentleman of venerable appearance, though something smacking of a Puritan, having boots of neat's leather, and wearing his weapon without a sword-knot. When Master Julian returned, he informed us, for the first time, that we were in the power of a body of armed fanatics who were, as the poet says, prompt for direful act. And your Majesty will remark, that both father and son were in some measure desperate, and disregardful from that moment of the assurances which I gave them, that the star which I was bound to worship, would, in her own time, shine forth in signal of our safety. May it please your Majesty, in answer to my hilarious exhortations to confidence, the father did but say *tush*, and the son *pshaw*, which showed how men's prudence and manners are disturbed by affliction. Nevertheless, these two gentlemen, the Peverils, forming a strong opinion of the necessity there was to break forth, were it only to convey a knowledge of these dangerous passages to your Majesty, commenced an assault on the door of the apartment, I also assisting with the strength which Heaven hath given, and some threescore years have left me. We could not, as it unhappily proved, manage our attempt so silently, but that our guards overheard us, and, entering in numbers, separated us from each other, and compelled my companions, at point of pike and poniard, to go to some other and more distant apartment, thus separating our fair society. I was again enclosed in the now solitary chamber, and I will own that I felt a certain depression of soul. But when bale is at highest, as the poet singeth, boot is at nighest, for a door of hope was suddenly opened——"

"In the name of God, my liege," said the Duke of Ormond, "let this poor creature's story be translated into the language of common sense by some of the scribblers of romances about Court, and we may be able to make meaning of it."

Geoffrey Hudson looked with a frowning countenance of reproof upon the impatient old Irish nobleman, and said, with a very dignified air, "That one Duke upon a poor gentleman's hand was enough at a time, and that, but for his present engagement and dependency with the Duke of Buckingham, he would have endured no such terms from the Duke of Ormond."

"Abate your valour, and diminish your choler, at our request, most puissant Sir Geoffrey Hudson," said the King; "and forgive the Duke of Ormond for my sake; but at all events go on with your story."

Geoffrey Hudson laid his hand on his bosom, and bowed in proud and dignified submission to his Sovereign; then waved his forgiveness gracefully to Ormond, accompanied with a horrible grin, which he designed for a smile of gracious forgiveness and conciliation. "Under the Duke's favour, then," he proceeded, "when I said a door of hope was opened to me, I meant a door behind the tapestry, from whence issued that fair vision—yet not so fair as lustrously dark, like the beauty of a continental night, where the cloudless azure sky shrouds us in a veil more lovely than that of day!—but I note your Majesty's impatience;—enough. I followed my beautiful guide into an apartment, where there lay, strangely intermingled, warlike arms and musical instruments. Amongst these I saw my own late place of temporary obscurity—a violoncello. To my astonishment, she turned around the instrument, and opening it behind the pressure of a spring, showed that it was filled with pistols, daggers, and ammunition made up in bandoleers. 'These,' she said, 'are this night destined to surprise the Court of the unwary Charles'—your Majesty must pardon my using her own words; 'but if thou darest go in their stead, thou mayst be the saviour of king and kingdoms; if thou art afraid, keep secret, I will myself try the adventure.' Now may Heaven forbid, that Geoffrey Hudson were craven enough, said I, to let thee run such a risk! You know not—you cannot know, what belongs to such ambuscades and concealments—I am accustomed to them—have lurked in the pocket of a giant, and have formed the contents of a pasty. 'Get in then,' she said, 'and lose no time.' Nevertheless, while I prepared to obey, I will not deny that some cold apprehensions came over my hot valour, and I confessed to her, if it might be so, I would rather find my way to the palace on my own feet. But she would not listen to me, saying hastily, 'I would be intercepted, or refused admittance, and that I must embrace the means she offered me of introduction into the presence, and when there, tell the King to be on his guard—little more is necessary; for once the scheme is known, it becomes desperate.' Rashly and boldly, I bid adieu to the daylight which was then fading away."

She withdrew the contents of the instrument destined for my concealment, and having put them behind the chimney-board, introduced me in their room. As she clasped me in, I implored her to warn the men who were to be entrusted with me, to take heed and keep the neck of the violoncello uppermost; but ere I had completed my request, I found I was left alone, and in darkness. Presently, two or three fellows entered, whom, by their language, which I in some sort understood, I perceived to be Germans, and under the influence of the Duke of Buckingham. I heard them receive from the leader a charge how they were to deport themselves, when they should assume the concealed arms—and—for I will do the Duke no wrong—I understood their orders were precise, not only to spare the person of the King, but also those of the courtiers, and to protect all who might be in the presence against an irruption of the fanatics. In other respects, they had charge to disarm the Gentlemen-pensioners in the guard-room, and, in fine, to obtain the command of the Court."

The King looked disconcerted and thoughtful at this communication, and bade Lord Arlington see that Selby quietly made search into the contents of the other cases which had been brought as containing musical instruments. He then signed to the dwarf to proceed in his story, asking him again and again, and very solemnly, whether he was sure that he heard the Duke's name mentioned, as commanding or approving this action.

The dwarf answered in the affirmative.

"This," said the King, "is carrying the frolic somewhat far."

The dwarf proceeded to state, that he was carried after his metamorphosis into the chapel, where he heard the preacher seemingly about the close of his harangue, the tenor of which he also mentioned. Words, he said, could not express the agony which he felt when he found that his bearer, in placing the instrument in a corner, was about to invert its position, in which case, he said, human frailty might have proved too great for love, for loyalty, for true obedience, nay, for the fear of death, which was like to ensue on discovery; and he concluded, that he greatly doubted he could not have stood on his head for many minutes without screaming aloud.

"I could not have blamed you," said the King; "placed in such a posture in the royal oak, I must needs have roared myself.—Is this all you have to tell us of this strange conspiracy?" Sir Geoffrey Hudson replied in the affirmative, and the King presently subjoined—"Go, my little friend, your services shall not be forgotten. Since thou hast crept into the bowels of a fiddle for our service, we are bound, in duty and conscience, to find you a more roomy dwelling in future."

"It was a violoncello, if your Majesty is pleased to remember," said the little jealous man, "not a common fiddle; though, for your Majesty's service, I would have crept even into a kit."

"Whatever of that nature could have been performed by any subject of ours, thou wouldst have enacted in our behalf—of that we hold ourselves certain. Withdraw for a little; and hark ye, for the present, beware what you say about this matter. Let your appearance be considered—do you mark me—as a frolic of the Duke of Buckingham; and not a word of conspiracy."

"Were it not better to put him under some restraint, sire?" said the Duke of Ormond, when Hudson had left the room.

"It is unnecessary," said the King. "I remember the little wretch of old. Fortune, to make him the model of absurdity, has closed a most lofty soul within that little miserable carcass. For wielding his sword and keeping his word, he is a perfect Don Quixote in decimo-octavo. He shall be taken care of.—But, oddsfish, my lords, is not this freak of Buckingham too villainous and ungrateful?"

"He had not had the means of being so, had your Majesty," said the Duke of Ormond, "been less lenient on other occasions."

"My lord, my lord," said Charles hastily—"your lordship is Buckingham's known enemy—we will take other and more impartial counsel—Arlington, what think you of all this?"

"May it please your Majesty," said Arlington, "I think the thing is absolutely impossible, unless the Duke has had some quarrel with your Majesty, of which we know nothing. His Grace is very flighty, doubtless, but this seems actual insanity."

"Why, faith," said the King, "some words passed betwixt us this morning—his Duchess it seems is dead—and to lose no time, his Grace had cast his eyes about for means of repairing the loss, and had the assurance to ask our consent to woo my niece Lady Anne."

"Which your Majesty of course rejected?" said the statesman.

"And not without rebuking his assurance," added the King.

"In private, sire, or before any witnesses?" said the Duke of Ormond.

"Before no one," said the King,—"excepting, indeed, little Chiffinch; and he, you know, is no one."

"*Hinc illæ lachrymæ*," said Ormond. "I know his Grace well. While the rebuke of his aspiring petulance was a matter betwixt your Majesty and him, he might have let it pass by; but a check before a fellow from whom it was likely enough to travel through the Court, was a matter to be revenged."

Here Selby came hastily from the other room, to say, that his Grace of Buckingham had just entered the presence-chamber.

The King rose. "Let a boat be in readiness, with a party of the yeomen," said he. "It may be necessary to attach him of treason, and send him to the Tower."

"Should not a Secretary of State's warrant be prepared?" said Ormond.

"No, my Lord Duke," said the King sharply. "I still hope that the necessity may be avoided."

CHAPTER XLV

High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.

—RICHARD III.

Before giving the reader an account of the meeting betwixt Buckingham and his injured Sovereign, we may mention a trifling circumstance or two which took place betwixt his Grace and Chiffinch, in the short drive betwixt York Place and Whitehall.

In the outset, the Duke endeavoured to learn from the courtier the special cause of his being summoned so hastily to the Court. Chiffinch answered, cautiously, that he believed there were some gambols going forward, at which the King desired the Duke's presence.

This did not quite satisfy Buckingham, for, conscious of his own rash purpose, he could not but apprehend discovery. After a moment's silence, "Chiffinch," he said abruptly, "did you mention to any one what the King said to me this morning touching the Lady Anne?"

"My Lord Duke," said Chiffinch, hesitantly, "surely my duty to the King—my respect to your Grace——"

"You mentioned it to no one, then?" said the Duke sternly.

"To no one," replied Chiffinch faintly, for he was intimidated by the Duke's increasing severity of manner.

"Ye lie, like a scoundrel!" said the Duke—"You told Christian!"

"Your Grace," said Chiffinch—"your Grace—your Grace ought to remember that I told you Christian's secret; that the Countess of Derby was come up."

"And you think the one point of treachery may balance for the other? But no. I must have a better atonement. Be assured I will blow your brains out, ere you leave this carriage, unless you tell me the truth of this message from Court."

As Chiffinch hesitated what reply to make, a man, who, by the blaze of the torches, then always borne, as well by the lackeys who hung behind the carriage, as by the footmen who ran by the side, might easily see who sat in the coach, approached, and sung in a deep manly voice, the burden of an old French song on the battle of Marignan, in which is imitated the German French of the defeated Swiss.

"Tout est verlore

La tintelore,

Tout est verlore

Bei Got."

"I am betrayed," said the Duke, who instantly conceived that this chorus, expressing "all is lost," was sung by one of his faithful agents, as a hint to him that their machinations were discovered.

He attempted to throw himself from the carriage, but Chiffinch held him with a firm, though respectful grasp. "Do not destroy yourself, my lord," he said, in a tone of deep humility—"there are soldiers and officers of the peace around the carriage, to enforce your Grace's coming to Whitehall, and to prevent your escape. To attempt it would be to confess guilt; and I advise you strongly against that—the King is your friend—be your own."

The Duke, after a moment's consideration, said sullenly, "I believe you are right. Why should I fly, when I am guilty of nothing but sending some fireworks to entertain the Court, instead of a concert of music?"

"And the dwarf, who came so unexpectedly out of the bass-viol——"

"Was a masking device of my own, Chiffinch," said the Duke, though the circumstance was then first known to him. "Chiffinch, you will bind me for ever, if you will permit me to have a minute's conversation with Christian."

"With Christian, my lord?—Where could you find him?—You are aware we must go straight to the Court."

"True," said the Duke, "but I think I cannot miss finding him; and you, Master Chiffinch, are no officer, and have no warrant either to detain me prisoner, or prevent my speaking to whom I please."

Chiffinch replied, "My Lord Duke, your genius is so great, and your escapes so numerous, that it will be from no wish of my own if I am forced to hurt a man so skilful and so popular."

"Nay, then, there is life in it yet," said the Duke, and whistled; when, from beside the little cutler's booth, with which the reader is acquainted, appeared, suddenly, Master Christian, and was in a moment at the side of the coach. "*Ganz ist verloren*," said the Duke.

"I know it," said Christian; "and all our godly friends are dispersed upon the news. Luckily the Colonel and these German rascals gave a hint. All is safe—You go to Court—Hark ye, I will follow."

"You, Christian? that would be more friendly than wise."

"Why, what is there against me?" said Christian. "I am innocent as the child unborn—so is your Grace. There is but one creature who can bear witness to our guilt; but I trust to bring her on the stage in our favour—besides, if I were not, I should presently be sent for."

"The familiar of whom I have heard you speak, I warrant?"

"Hark in your ear again."

"I understand," said the Duke, "and will delay Master Chiffinch,—for he, you must know, is my conductor,—no longer.—Well, Chiffinch, let them drive on.—*Vogue la Galère*!" he exclaimed, as the carriage went onward; "I have sailed through worse perils than this yet."

"It is not for me to judge," said Chiffinch; "your Grace is a bold commander; and Christian hath the cunning of the devil for a pilot; but—However, I remain your Grace's poor friend, and will heartily rejoice in your extrication."

"Give me a proof of your friendship," said the Duke. "Tell me what you know of Christian's familiar, as he calls her."

"I believe it to be the same dancing wench who came with Empson to my house on the morning that Mistress Alice made her escape from us. But you have seen her, my lord?"

"I?" said the Duke; "when did I see her?"

"She was employed by Christian, I believe, to set his niece at liberty, when he found himself obliged to gratify his fanatical brother-in-law, by restoring his child; besides being prompted by a private desire, as I think, of bantering your Grace."

"Umph! I suspected so much. I will repay it," said the Duke. "But first to get out of this dilemma.—That little Numidian witch, then, was his familiar; and she joined in the plot to tantalise me?—But here we reach Whitehall.—Now, Chiffinch, be no worse than thy word, and—now, Buckingham, be thyself!"

But ere we follow Buckingham into the presence, where he had so difficult a part to sustain, it may not be amiss to follow Christian after his brief conversation with him. On re-entering the house, which he did by a circuitous passage, leading from a distant alley, and through several courts, Christian hastened to a low matted apartment, in which Bridgenorth sat alone, reading the Bible by the light of a small brazen lamp, with the utmost serenity of countenance.

"Have you dismissed the Peverils?" said Christian hastily.

"I have," said the Major.

"And upon what pledge—that they will not carry information against you to Whitehall?"

"They gave me their promise voluntarily, when I showed them our armed friends were dismissed. To-morrow, I believe, it is their purpose to lodge informations."

"And why not to-night, I pray you?" said Christian.

"Because they allow us that time for escape."

"Why, then, do you not avail yourself of it? Wherefore are you here?" said Christian.

"Nay, rather, why do *you* not fly?" said Bridgenorth. "Of a surety, you are as deeply engaged as I."

"Brother Bridgenorth, I am the fox, who knows a hundred modes of deceiving the hounds; you are the deer, whose sole resource is in hasty flight. Therefore lose no time—begone to the country—or rather, Zedekiah Fish's vessel, the *Good Hope*, lies in the river, bound for Massachusetts—take the wings of the morning, and begone—she can fall down to Gravesend with the tide."

"And leave to thee, brother Christian," said Bridgenorth, "the charge of my fortune and my daughter? No, brother; my opinion of your good faith must be re-established ere I again trust thee."

"Go thy ways, then, for a suspicious fool," said Christian, suppressing his strong desire to use language more offensive; "or rather stay where thou art, and take thy chance of the gallows!"

"It is appointed to all men to die once," said Bridgenorth; "my life hath been a living death. My fairest boughs have been stripped by the axe of the forester—that which survives must, if it shall blossom, be grafted elsewhere, and at a distance from my aged trunk. The sooner, then, the root feels the axe, the stroke is more welcome. I had been pleased, indeed, had I been called to bringing yonder licentious Court to a purer character, and relieving the yoke of the suffering people of God. That youth too—son to that precious woman, to whom I owe the last tie that feebly links my wearied spirit to humanity—could I have travailed with *him* in the good cause!—But that, with all my other hopes is broken for ever; and since I am not worthy to be an instrument in so great a work, I have little desire to abide longer in this vale of sorrow."

"Farewell, then, desponding fool!" said Christian, unable, with all his calmness, any longer to suppress his contempt for the resigned and hopeless predestinarian.

"That fate should have clogged me with such confederates!" he muttered, as he left the apartment—"this bigoted fool is now nearly irreclaimable—I must to Zarah; for she, or no one, must carry us through these straits. If I can but soothe her sullen temper, and excite her vanity to action,—betwixt her address, the King's partiality for the Duke, Buckingham's matchless effrontery, and my own hand upon the helm, we may yet weather the tempest that darkens around us. But what we do must be hastily done."

In another apartment he found the person he sought—the same who visited the Duke of Buckingham's harem, and, having relieved Alice Bridgenorth from her confinement there, had occupied her place as has been already narrated, or rather intimated. She was now much more plainly attired than when she had tantalised the Duke with her presence; but her dress had still something of the Oriental character, which corresponded with the dark complexion and quick eye of the wearer. She had the kerchief at her eyes as Christian entered the apartment, but suddenly withdrew it, and, flashing on him a glance of scorn and indignation, asked him what he meant by intruding where his company was alike unsought for and undesired.

"A proper question," said Christian, "from a slave to her master!"

"Rather, say, a proper question, and of all questions the most proper, from a mistress to her slave! Know you not, that from the hour in which you discovered your ineffable baseness, you have made me mistress of your lot? While you seemed but a demon of vengeance, you commanded terror, and to good purpose; but such a foul fiend as thou hast of late shown thyself—such a very worthless, base trickster of the devil—such a sordid grovelling imp of perdition, can gain nothing but scorn from a soul like mine."

"Gallantly mouthed," said Christian, "and with good emphasis."

"Yes," answered Zarah, "I can speak—sometimes—I can also be mute; and that no one knows better than thou."

"Thou art a spoiled child, Zarah, and dost but abuse the indulgence I entertain for your freakish humour," replied Christian; "thy wits have been disturbed since ever you landed in England, and all for the sake of one who cares for thee no more than for the most worthless object who walks the streets, amongst whom he left you to engage in a brawl for one he loved better."

"It is no matter," said Zarah, obviously repressing very bitter emotion; "it signifies not that he loves another better; there is none—no, none—that ever did, or can, love him so well."

"I pity you, Zarah!" said Christian, with some scorn.

"I deserve your pity," she replied, "were your pity worth my accepting. Whom have I to thank for my wretchedness but you?—You bred me up in thirst of vengeance, ere I knew that good and evil were anything better than names;—to gain your applause, and to gratify the vanity you had excited, I have for years undergone a penance, from which a thousand would have shrunk."

"A thousand, Zarah!" answered Christian; "ay, a hundred thousand, and a million to boot; the creature is not on earth, being mere mortal woman, that would have undergone the thirtieth part of thy self-denial."

"I believe it," said Zarah, drawing up her slight but elegant figure; "I believe it—I have gone through a trial that few indeed could have sustained. I have renounced the dear intercourse of my kind; compelled my tongue only to utter, like that of a spy, the knowledge which my ear had only collected as a base eavesdropper. This I have done for years—for years—and all for the sake of your private applause—and the hope of vengeance on a woman, who, if she did ill in murdering my father, has been bitterly repaid by nourishing a serpent in her bosom, that had the tooth, but not the deafened ear, of the adder."

"Well—well—well," reiterated Christian; "and had you not your reward in my approbation—in the consequences of your own unequalled dexterity—by which, superior to anything of thy sex that history has ever known, you endured what woman never before endured, insolence without notice, admiration without answer, and sarcasm without reply?"

"Not without reply!" said Zarah fiercely. "Gave not Nature to my feelings a course of expression more impressive than words? and did not those tremble at my shrieks, who would have little minded my entreaties or my complaints? And my proud lady, who sauced her charities with the taunts she thought I heard not—she was justly paid by the passing her dearest and most secret concerns into the hands of her mortal enemy; and the vain Earl—yet he was a thing as insignificant as the plume that nodded in his cap;—and the maidens and ladies who taunted me—I had, or can easily have, my revenge upon them. But there is *one*," she added, looking upward, "who never taunted me; one whose generous feelings could treat the poor dumb girl even as his sister; who never spoke word of her but was to excuse or defend—and you tell me I must not love him, and that it is madness to love him!—I *will* be mad then, for I will love till the latest breath of my life!"

"Think but an instant, silly girl—silly but in one respect, since in all others thou mayest brave the world of women. Think what I have proposed to thee, for the loss of this hopeless affection, a career so brilliant!—Think only that it rests with thyself to be the wife—the wedded wife—of the princely Buckingham! With my talents—with thy wit and beauty—with his passionate love of these attributes—a short space might rank you among England's princesses.—Be but guided by me—he is now at deadly pass—needs every assistance to retrieve his fortunes—above all, that which we alone can render him. Put yourself under my conduct, and not fate itself shall prevent your wearing a Duchess's coronet."

"A coronet of thistle-down, entwined with thistle-leaves," said Zarah.—"I know not a slighter thing than your Buckingham! I saw him at your request—saw him when, as a man, he should have shown himself generous and noble—I stood the proof at your desire, for I laugh at those dangers from which the poor blushing wailers of my sex shrink and withdraw themselves. What did I find him?—a poor wavering voluptuary—his nearest attempt to passion like the fire on a wretched stubble-field, that may singe, indeed, or smoke, but can neither warm nor devour. Christian! were his coronet at my feet this moment, I would sooner take up a crown of gilded gingerbread, than extend my hand to raise it."

"You are mad, Zarah—with all your taste and talent, you are utterly mad! But let Buckingham pass—Do you owe *me* nothing on this emergency?—Nothing to one who rescued you from the cruelty of your owner, the posture-master, to place you in ease and affluence?"

"Christian," she replied, "I owe you much. Had I not felt I did so, I would, as I have been often tempted to do, have denounced thee to the fierce Countess, who would have gibbeted you on her feudal walls of Castle Rushin, and bid your family seek redress from the eagles, that would long since have thatched their nest with your hair, and fed their young ospreys with your flesh."

"I am truly glad you have had so much forbearance for me," answered Christian.

"I have it, in truth and in sincerity," replied Zarah—"Not for your benefits to me—such as they were, they were every one interested, and conferred from the most selfish considerations. I have overpaid them a thousand times by the devotion to your will, which I have displayed at the greatest personal risk. But till of late I respected your powers of mind—your inimitable command of passion—the force of intellect which I have ever seen you exercise over all others, from the bigot Bridgenorth to the debauched Buckingham—in that, indeed, I have recognised my master."

"And those powers," said Christian, "are unlimited as ever; and with thy assistance, thou shalt see the strongest meshes that the laws of civil society ever wove to limit the natural dignity of man, broke asunder like a spider's web."

She paused and answered, "While a noble motive fired thee—ay, a noble motive, though irregular—for I was born to gaze on the sun which the pale daughters of Europe shrink from—I could serve thee—I could have followed, while revenge or ambition had guided thee—but love of *wealth*, and by what means acquired!—What sympathy can I hold with that?—Wouldst thou not have pandered to the lust of the King, though the object was thine own orphan niece?—You smile?—Smile again when I ask you whether you meant not my own prostitution, when you charged me to remain in the house of that wretched Buckingham?—Smile at that question, and by Heaven, I stab you to the heart!" And she thrust her hand into her bosom, and partly showed the hilt of a small poniard.

"And if I smile," said Christian, "it is but in scorn of so odious an accusation. Girl, I will not tell thee the reason, but there exists not on earth the living thing over whose safety and honour I would keep watch as over thine. Buckingham's wife, indeed, I wished thee; and through thy own beauty and thy wit, I doubted not to bring the match to pass."

"Vain flatterer," said Zarah, yet seeming soothed even by the flattery which she scoffed at, "you would persuade me that it was honourable love which you expected the Duke was to have offered me. How durst you urge a gross a deception, to which time, place, and circumstance gave the lie?—How dare you now again mention it, when you well know, that at the time you mention, the Duchess was still in life?"

"In life, but on her deathbed," said Christian; "and for time, place, and circumstance, had your virtue, my Zarah, depended on these, how couldst thou have been the creature thou art? I knew thee all-sufficient to bid him defiance—else—for thou art dearer to me than thou thinkest—I had not risked thee to win the Duke of Buckingham; ay, and the kingdom of England to boot. So now, wilt thou be ruled and go on with me?"

Zarah, or Fenella, for our readers must have been long aware of the identity of these two personages, cast down her eyes, and was silent for a long time.

"Christian," she said at last, in a solemn voice, "if my ideas of right and of wrong be wild and incoherent, I owe it, first, to the wild fever which my native sun communicated to my veins; next, to my childhood, trained amidst the shifts, tricks, and feats of jugglers and mountebanks; and then, to a youth of fraud and deception, through the course thou didst prescribe me, in which I might, indeed, hear everything, but communicate with no one. The last cause of my wild errors, if such they are, originates, O Christian, with you alone; by whose intrigues I was placed with yonder lady, and who taught me, that to revenge my father's death, was my first great duty on earth, and that I was bound by nature to hate and injure her by whom I was fed and fostered, though as she would have fed and

caressed a dog, or any other mute animal. I also think—for I will deal fairly with you—that you had not so easily detected your niece, in the child whose surprising agility was making yonder brutal mountebank's fortune; nor so readily induced him to part with his bond-slave, had you not, for your own purposes, placed me under his charge, and reserved the privilege of claiming me when you pleased. I could not, under any other tuition, have identified myself with the personage of a mute, which it has been your desire that I should perform through life."

"You do me injustice, Zarah," said Christian—"I found you capable of the avenging of your father's death—I consecrated you to it, as I consecrated my own life and hopes; and you held the duty sacred, till these mad feeling towards a youth who loves your cousin——"

"Who—loves—my—cousin," repeated Zarah (for we will continue to call her by her real name) slowly, and as if the words dropped unconsciously from her lips. "Well—be it so!—Man of many wiles, I will follow thy course for a little, a very little farther; but take heed—tease me not with remonstrances against the treasure of my secret thoughts—I mean my most hopeless affection to Julian Peveril—and bring me not as an assistant to any snare which you may design to cast around him. You and your Duke shall rue the hour most bitterly, in which you provoke me. You may suppose you have me in your power; but remember, the snakes of my burning climate are never so fatal as when you grasp them."

"I care not for these Peverils," said Christian—"I care not for their fate a poor straw, unless where it bears on that of the destined woman, whose hands are red in your father's blood. Believe me, I can divide her fate and theirs. I will explain to you how. And for the Duke, he may pass among men of the town for wit, and among soldiers for valour, among courtiers for manners and for form; and why, with his high rank and immense fortune, you should throw away an opportunity, which, as I could now improve it——"

"Speak not of it," said Zarah, "if thou wouldst have our truce—remember it is no peace—if, I say, thou wouldst have our truce grow to be an hour old!"

"This, then," said Christian, with a last effort to work upon the vanity of this singular being, "is she who pretended such superiority to human passion, that she could walk indifferently and unmoved through the halls of the prosperous, and the prison cells of the captive, unknowing and unknown, sympathising neither with the pleasures of the one, nor the woes of the other, but advancing with sure, though silent steps, her own plans, in despite and regardless of either!"

"My own plans!" said Zarah—"Thy plans, Christian—thy plans of extorting from the surprised prisoners, means whereby to convict them—thine own plans, formed with those more powerful than thyself, to sound men's secrets, and, by using them as a matter of accusation, to keep up the great delusion of the nation."

"Such access was indeed given you as my agent," said Christian, "and for advancing a great national change. But how did you use it?—to advance your insane passion."

"Insane!" said Zarah—"Had he been less than insane whom I addressed, he and I had ere now been far from the toils which you have pitched for us both. I had means prepared for everything; and ere this, the shores of Britain had been lost to our sight for ever."

"The dwarf, too," said Christian—"Was it worthy of you to delude that poor creature with flattering visions—lull him asleep with drugs! Was *that* my doing?"

"He was my destined tool," said Zarah haughtily. "I remembered your lessons too well not to use him as such. Yet scorn him not too much. I tell you, that yon very miserable dwarf, whom I made my sport in the prison—yon wretched abortion of nature, I would select for a husband, ere I would marry your Buckingham;—the vain and imbecile pigmy has yet the warm heart and noble feelings, that a man should hold his highest honour."

"In God's name, then, take your own way," said Christian; "and, for my sake, let never man hereafter limit a woman in the use of her tongue, since he must make it amply up to her, in allowing her the privilege of her own will. Who would have thought it? But the colt has slipped the bridle, and I must needs follow, since I cannot guide her."

Our narrative returns to the Court of King Charles at Whitehall.

CHAPTER XLVIII

—But oh!

*What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop; thou cruel,
Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature!
Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
That knew'st the very bottom of my soul,
That almost mightst have coined me into gold,
Wouldst thou have practised on me for thy use?*

—HENRY V.

At no period of his life, not even when that life was in imminent danger, did the constitutional gaiety of Charles seem more overclouded, than when waiting for the return of Chiffinch with the Duke of Buckingham. His mind revolted at the idea, that the person to whom he had been so particularly indulgent, and whom he had selected as the friend of his lighter hours and amusements, should prove capable of having tampered with a plot apparently directed against his liberty and life. He more than once examined the dwarf anew, but could extract nothing more than his first narrative contained. The apparition of the female to him in the cell of Newgate, he described in such fanciful and romantic colours, that the King could not help thinking the poor man's head a little turned; and, as nothing was found in the kettledrum, and other musical instruments brought for the use of the Duke's band of foreigners, he nourished some slight hope that the whole plan might be either a mere jest, or that the idea of an actual conspiracy was founded in mistake.

The persons who had been despatched to watch the motions of Mr. Weiver's congregation, brought back word that they had quietly dispersed. It was known, at the same time, that they had met in arms, but this augured no particular design of aggression, at a time when all true Protestants conceived themselves in danger of immediate massacre; when the fathers of the city had repeatedly called out the Train-Bands, and alarmed the citizens of London, under the idea of an instant insurrection of the Catholics; and when, to sum the whole up, in the emphatic words of an alderman of the day, there was a general belief that they would all waken some unhappy morning with their throats cut. Who was to do these dire deeds, it was more difficult to suppose; but all admitted the possibility that they might be achieved, since one Justice of the Peace was already murdered. There was, therefore, no inference of hostile intentions against the State, to be decidedly derived from a congregation of Protestants *par excellence*, military from old associations, bringing their arms with them to a place of worship, in the midst of a panic so universal.

Neither did the violent language of the minister, supposing that to be proved, absolutely infer meditated violence. The favourite parables of the preachers, and the metaphors and ornaments which they selected, were at all times of a military cast; and the taking the kingdom of heaven by storm, a strong and beautiful metaphor, when used generally as in Scripture, was detailed in their sermons in all the technical language of the attack and defence of a fortified place. The danger, in short, whatever might have been its actual degree, had disappeared as suddenly as a bubble upon the water, when broken by a casual touch, and had left as little trace behind it. It became, therefore, matter of much doubt, whether it had ever actually existed.

While various reports were making from without, and while their tenor was discussed by the King, and such nobles and statesmen as he thought proper to consult on the occasion, a gradual sadness and anxiety mingled with, and finally silenced, the mirth of the evening. All became sensible that something unusual was going forward; and the unwonted distance which Charles maintained from his guests, while it added greatly to the dulness that began to predominate in the presence-chamber, gave intimation that something unusual was labouring in the King's mind.

Thus play was neglected—the music was silent, or played without being heard—gallants ceased to make compliments, and ladies to expect them; and a sort of apprehensive curiosity pervaded the circle. Each asked the others why they were grave; and no answer was returned, any more than could have been rendered by a herd of cattle instinctively disturbed by the approach of a thunderstorm.

To add to the general apprehension, it began to be whispered, that one or two of the guests, who were desirous of leaving the palace, had been informed no one could be permitted to retire until the general hour of dismissal. And these, gliding back into the hall, communicated in whispers that the sentinels at the gates were doubled, and that there was a troop of the Horse Guards drawn up in the court—circumstances so unusual, as to excite the most anxious curiosity.

Such was the state of the Court, when wheels were heard without, and the bustle which took place denoted the arrival of some person of consequence.

"Here comes Chiffinch," said the King, "with his prey in his clutch."

It was indeed the Duke of Buckingham; nor did he approach the royal presence without emotion. On entering the court, the flambeaux which were borne around the carriage gleamed on the scarlet coats, laced hats, and drawn broadswords of the Horse Guards—a sight unusual, and calculated to strike terror into a conscience which was none of the clearest.

The Duke alighted from the carriage, and only said to the officer, whom he saw upon duty, "You are late under arms to-night, Captain Carleton."

"Such are our orders, sir," answered Carleton, with military brevity; and then commanded the four dismounted sentinels at the under gate to make way for the Duke of Buckingham. His Grace had no sooner entered, than he heard behind him the command, "Move close up, sentinels—closer yet to the gate." And he felt as if all chance of rescue were excluded by the sound.

As he advanced up the grand staircase, there were other symptoms of alarm and precaution. The Yeomen of the Guard were mustered in unusual numbers, and carried carabines instead of their halberds; and the Gentlemen-pensioners, with their partisans, appeared also in proportional force. In short, all that sort of defence which the royal household possesses within itself, seemed, for some hasty and urgent reason, to have been placed under arms, and upon duty.

Buckingham ascended the royal staircase with an eye attentive to these preparations, and a step steady and slow, as if he counted each step on which he trode.

"Who," he asked himself, "shall ensure Christian's fidelity? Let him but stand fast, and we are secure. Otherwise——"

As he shaped the alternative, he entered the presence-chamber.

The King stood in the midst of the apartment, surrounded by the personages with whom he had been consulting. The rest of the brilliant assembly, scattered into groups, looked on at some distance. All were silent when Buckingham entered, in hopes of receiving some explanation of the mysteries of the evening. All bent forward, though etiquette forbade them to advance, to catch, if possible, something of what was about to pass betwixt the King and his intriguing statesman. At the same time, those counsellors who stood around Charles, drew back on either side, so as to permit the Duke to pay his respects to his Majesty in the usual form. He went through the ceremonial with his accustomed grace, but was received by Charles with much unwonted gravity.

"We have waited for you some time, my Lord Duke. It is long since Chiffinch left us, to request your attendance here. I see you are elaborately dressed. Your toilette was needless on the present occasion."

"Needless to the splendour of your Majesty's Court," said the Duke, "but not needless on my part. This chanced to be Black Monday at York Place, and my club of *Pendables* were in full glee when your Majesty's summons arrived. I could not be in the company of Ogle, Maniduc, Dawson, and so forth, but what I must needs make some preparation, and some ablution, ere entering the circle here."

"I trust the purification will be complete," said the King, without any tendency to the smile which always softened features, that, ungilded by its influence, were dark, harsh, and even severe. "We wished to ask your Grace concerning the import of a sort of musical mask which you designed us here, but which miscarried, as we are given to understand."

"It must have been a great miscarriage indeed," said the Duke, "since your Majesty looks so serious on it. I thought to have done your Majesty pleasure (as I have seen you condescend to be pleased with such passages), by sending the contents of that bass-viol; but I fear the jest has been unacceptable—I fear the fireworks may have done mischief."

"Not the mischief they were designed for, perhaps," said the King gravely; "you see, my lord, we are all alive, and unsinged."

"Long may your Majesty remain so," said the Duke; "yet I see there is something misconstrued on my part—it must be a matter unpardonable, however little intended, since it hath displeased so indulgent a master."

"Too indulgent a master, indeed, Buckingham," replied the King; "and the fruit of my indulgence has been to change loyal men into traitors."

"May it please your Majesty, I cannot understand this," said the Duke.

"Follow us, my lord," answered Charles, "and we will endeavour to explain our meaning."

Attended by the same lords who stood around him, and followed by the Duke of Buckingham, on whom all eyes were fixed, Charles retired into the same cabinet which had been the scene of repeated consultations in the course of the evening. There, leaning with his arms crossed on the back of an easy-chair, Charles proceeded to interrogate the suspected nobleman.

"Let us be plain with each other. Speak out, Buckingham. What, in one word, was to have been the regale intended for us this evening?"

"A petty mask, my lord. I had destined a little dancing-girl to come out of that instrument, who, I thought, would have performed to your Majesty's liking—a few Chinese fireworks there were, thinking the entertainment was to have taken place in the marble hall, might, I hoped, have been discharged with good effect, and without the slightest alarm, at the first appearance of my little sorceress, and were designed to have masked, as it were, her entrance upon the stage. I hope there have been no perukes singed—no ladies frightened—no hopes of noble descent interrupted by my ill-fancied jest."

"We have seen no such fireworks, my lord; and your female dancer, of whom we now hear for the first time, came forth in the form of our old acquaintance Geoffrey Hudson, whose dancing days are surely ended."

"Your Majesty surprises me! I beseech you, let Christian be sent for—Edward Christian—he will be found lodging in a large old house near Sharper the cutler's, in the Strand. As I live by bread, sire, I trusted him with the arrangement of this matter, as indeed the dancing-girl was his property. If he has done aught to dishonour my concert, or disparage my character, he shall die under the baton."

"It is singular," said the King, "and I have often observed it, that this fellow Christian bears the blame of all men's enormities—he performs the part which, in a great family, is usually assigned to that mischief-doing personage, Nobody. When Chiffinch blunders, he always quotes Christian. When Sheffield writes a lampoon, I am sure to hear of Christian having corrected, or copied, or dispersed it—he is the *ame damnée* of every one about my Court—the scapegoat, who is to carry away all their iniquities; and he will have a cruel load to bear into the wilderness. But for Buckingham's sins, in particular, he is the regular and uniform sponsor; and I am convinced his Grace expects Christian should suffer every penalty he has incurred, in this world or the next."

"Not so," with the deepest reverence replied the Duke. "I have no hope of being either hanged or damned by proxy; but it is clear some one hath tampered with and altered my device. If I am accused of aught, let me at least hear the charge, and see my accuser."

"That is but fair," said the King. "Bring our little friend from behind the chimney-board. [Hudson being accordingly produced, he continued.] There stands the Duke of Buckingham. Repeat before him the tale you told us. Let him hear what were those contents of the bass-viol which were removed that you might enter it. Be not afraid of any one, but speak the truth boldly."

"May it please your Majesty," said Hudson, "fear is a thing unknown to me."

"His body has no room to hold such a passion; or there is too little of it to be worth fearing for," said Buckingham.—"But let him speak."

Ere Hudson had completed his tale, Buckingham interrupted him by exclaiming, "Is it possible that I can be suspected by your Majesty on the word of this pitiful variety of the baboon tribe?"

"Villain-Lord, I appeal thee to the combat!" said the little man, highly offended at the appellation thus bestowed on him.

"La you there now!" said the Duke—"The little animal is quite crazed, and defies a man who need ask no other weapon than a corking-pin to run him through the lungs, and whose single kick could hoist him from Dover to Calais without yacht or wherry. And what can you expect from an idiot, who is *engoué* of a common rope-dancing girl, that capered on a pack-thread at Ghent in Flanders, unless they were to club their talents to set up a booth at Bartholomew Fair?—Is it not plain, that supposing the little animal is not malicious, as indeed his whole kind bear a general and most cankered malice against those who have the ordinary

proportions of humanity—Grant, I say, that this were not a malicious falsehood of his, why, what does it amount to?—That he has mistaken squibs and Chinese crackers for arms! He says not he himself touched or handled them; and judging by the sight alone, I question if the infirm old creature, when any whim or preconception hath possession of his noddle, can distinguish betwixt a blunderbuss and a black-pudding."

The horrible clamour which the dwarf made so soon as he heard this disparagement of his military skill—the haste with which he blundered out a detail of this warlike experiences—and the absurd grimaces which he made in order to enforce his story, provoked not only the risibility of Charles, but even of the statesmen around him, and added absurdity to the motley complexion of the scene. The King terminated this dispute, by commanding the dwarf to withdraw.

A more regular discussion of his evidence was then resumed, and Ormond was the first who pointed out, that it went farther than had been noticed, since the little man had mentioned a certain extraordinary and treasonable conversation held by the Duke's dependents, by whom he had been conveyed to the palace.

"I am sure not to lack my lord of Ormond's good word," said the Duke scornfully; "but I defy him alike, and all my other enemies, and shall find it easy to show that this alleged conspiracy, if any grounds for it at all exist, in a mere sham-plot, got up to turn the odium justly attached to the Papists upon the Protestants. Here is a half-hanged creature, who, on the very day he escapes from the gallows, which many believe was his most deserved destiny, comes to take away the reputation of a Protestant Peer—and on what?—on the treasonable conversation of three or four German fiddlers, heard through the sound-holes of a violoncello, and that, too, when the creature was incased in it, and mounted on a man's shoulders! The urchin, too, in repeating their language, shows he understands German as little as my horse does; and if he did rightly hear, truly comprehend, and accurately report what they said, still, is my honour to be touched by the language held by such persons as these are, with whom I have never communicated, otherwise than men of my rank do with those of their calling and capacity?—Pardon me, sire, if I presume to say, that the profound statesmen who endeavoured to stifle the Popish conspiracy by the pretended Meal-tub Plot, will take little more credit by their figments about fiddles and concertos."

The assistant counsellors looked at each other; and Charles turned on his heel, and walked through the room with long steps.

At this period the Peverils, father and son, were announced to have reached the palace, and were ordered into the royal presence.

These gentlemen had received the royal mandate at a moment of great interest. After being dismissed from their confinement by the elder Bridgenorth, in the manner and upon the terms which the reader must have gathered from the conversation of the latter with Christian, they reached the lodgings of Lady Peveril, who awaited them with joy, mingled with terror and uncertainty. The news of the acquittal had reached her by the exertions of the faithful Lance Outram, but her mind had been since harassed by the long delay of their appearance, and rumours of disturbances which had taken place in Fleet Street and in the Strand.

When the first rapturous meeting was over, Lady Peveril, with an anxious look towards her son, as if recommending caution, said she was now about to present to him the daughter of an old friend, whom he had *never* (there was an emphasis on the word) seen before. "This young lady," she continued, "was the only child of Colonel Mitford, in North Wales, who had sent her to remain under her guardianship for an interval, finding himself unequal to attempt the task of her education."

"Ay, ay," said Sir Geoffrey, "Dick Mitford must be old now—beyond the threescore and ten, I think. He was no chicken, though a cock of the game, when he joined the Marquis of Hertford at Namptwich with two hundred wild Welshmen.—Before George, Julian, I love that girl as if she was my own flesh and blood! Lady Peveril would never have got through this work without her; and Dick Mitford sent me a thousand pieces, too, in excellent time, when there was scarce a cross to keep the devil from dancing in our pockets, much more for these law-doings. I used it without scruple, for there is wood ready to be cut at Martindale when we get down there, and Dick Mitford knows I would have done the like for him. Strange that he should have been the only one of my friends to reflect I might want a few pieces."

Whilst Sir Geoffrey thus run on, the meeting betwixt Alice and Julian Peveril was accomplished, without any particular notice on his side, except to say, "Kiss her, Julian—kiss her. What the devil! is that the way you learned to accost a lady at the Isle of Man, as if her lips were a red-hot horseshoe?—And do not you be offended, my pretty one; Julian is naturally bashful, and has been bred by an old lady, but you will find him, by-and-by, as gallant as thou hast found me, my princess.—And now, Dame Peveril, to dinner, to dinner! the old fox must have his belly-timber, though the hounds have been after him the whole day."

Lance, whose joyous congratulations were next to be undergone, had the consideration to cut them short, in order to provide a plain but hearty meal from the next cook's shop, at which Julian sat, like one enchanted, betwixt his mistress and his mother. He easily conceived that the last was the confidential friend to whom Bridgenorth had finally committed the charge of his daughter, and his only anxiety now was, to anticipate the confusion that was likely to arise when her real parentage was made known to his father. Wisely, however, he suffered not these anticipations to interfere with the delight of his present situation, in the course of which many slight but delightful tokens of recognition were exchanged, without censure, under the eye of Lady Peveril, under cover of the boisterous mirth of the old Baronet, who spoke for two, ate for four, and drank wine for half-a-dozen. His progress in the latter exercise might have proceeded rather too far, had he not been interrupted by a gentleman bearing the King's orders, that he should instantly attend upon the presence at Whitehall, and bring his son along with him.

Lady Peveril was alarmed, and Alice grew pale with sympathetic anxiety; but the old Knight, who never saw more than what lay straight before him, set it down to the King's hasty anxiety to congratulate him on his escape; an interest on his Majesty's part which he considered by no means extravagant, conscious that it was reciprocal on his own side. It came upon him, indeed, with the more joyful surprise that he had received a previous hint, ere he left the court of justice, that it would be prudent in him to go down to Martindale before presenting himself at Court—a restriction which he supposed as repugnant to his Majesty's feelings as it was to his own.

While he consulted with Lance Outram about cleaning his buff-belt and sword-hilt, as well as time admitted, Lady Peveril had the means to give Julian more distinct information, that Alice was under her protection by her father's authority, and with his consent to their union, if it could be accomplished. She added that it was her determination to employ the mediation of the Countess of Derby, to overcome the obstacles which might be foreseen on the part of Sir Geoffrey.

CHAPTER XLIX

*In the King's name,
Let fall your swords and daggers!
—CRITIC.*

When the father and son entered the cabinet of audience, it was easily visible that Sir Geoffrey had obeyed the summons as he would have done the trumpet's call to horse; and his dishevelled grey locks and half-arranged dress, though they showed zeal and haste, such as he would have used when Charles I. called him to attend a council of war, seemed rather indecorous in a pacific drawing-room. He paused at the door of the cabinet, but when the King called on him to advance, came hastily forward, with every feeling of his earlier and later life afloat, and contending in his memory, threw himself on his knees before the King, seized his hand, and, without even an effort to speak, wept aloud. Charles, who generally felt deeply so long as an impressive object was before his eyes, indulged for a moment the old man's rapture.—"My good Sir Geoffrey," he said, "you have had some hard measure; we owe you amends, and will find time to pay our debt."

"No suffering—no debt," said the old man; "I cared not what the rogues said of me—I knew they could never get twelve honest fellows to believe a word of their most damnable lies. I did long to beat them when they called me traitor to your Majesty—that I confess—But to have such an early opportunity of paying my duty to your Majesty, overpays it all. The villains would have persuaded me I ought not to come to Court—aha!"

The Duke of Ormond perceived that the King coloured much; for in truth it was from the Court that the private intimation had been given to Sir Geoffrey to go down to the country, without appearing at Whitehall; and he, moreover, suspected that the jolly old Knight had not risen from his dinner altogether dry-lipped, after the fatigues of a day so agitating.—"My old friend," he whispered, "you forget that your son is to be presented—permit me to have that honour."

"I crave your Grace's pardon humbly," said Sir Geoffrey, "but it is an honour I design for myself, as I apprehend no one can so utterly surrender and deliver him up to his Majesty's service as the father that begot him is entitled to do.—Julian, come forward, and kneel.—Here he is, please your Majesty—Julian Peveril—a chip

of the old block—as stout, though scarce so tall a tree, as the old trunk, when at the freshest. Take him to you, sir, for a faithful servant, *à pendre*, as the French say; if he fears fire or steel, axe or gallows, in your Majesty's service, I renounce him—he is no son of mine—I disown him, and he may go to the Isle of Man, the Isle of Dogs, or the Isle of Devils, for what I care."

Charles winked to Ormond, and having, with his wonted courtesy, expressed his thorough conviction that Julian would imitate the loyalty of his ancestors, and especially of his father, added, that he believed his Grace of Ormond had something to communicate which was of consequence to his service. Sir Geoffrey made his military reverence at this hint, and marched off in the rear of the Duke, who proceeded to inquire of him concerning the events of the day. Charles, in the meanwhile, having in the first place, ascertained that the son was not in the same genial condition with the father, demanded and received from him a precise account of all the proceedings subsequent to the trial.

Julian, with the plainness and precision which such a subject demanded, when treated in such a presence, narrated all that happened down to the entrance of Bridgenorth; and his Majesty was so much pleased with his manner, that he congratulated Arlington on their having gained the evidence of at least one man of sense to these dark and mysterious events. But when Bridgenorth was brought upon the scene, Julian hesitated to bestow a name upon him; and although he mentioned the chapel which he had seen filled with men in arms, and the violent language of the preacher, he added, with earnestness, that notwithstanding all this, the men departed without coming to any extremity, and had all left the place before his father and he were set at liberty.

"And you retired quietly to your dinner in Fleet Street, young man," said the King severely, "without giving a magistrate notice of the dangerous meeting which was held in the vicinity of our palace, and who did not conceal their intention of proceeding to extremities?"

Peveril blushed, and was silent. The King frowned, and stepped aside to communicate with Ormond, who reported that the father seemed to have known nothing of the matter.

"And the son, I am sorry to say," said the King, "seems more unwilling to speak the truth than I should have expected. We have all variety of evidence in this singular investigation—a mad witness like the dwarf, a drunken witness like the father, and now a dumb witness.—Young man," he continued, addressing Julian, "your behaviour is less frank than I expected from your father's son. I must know who this person is with whom you held such familiar intercourse—you know him, I presume?"

Julian acknowledged that he did, but, kneeling on one knee, entreated his Majesty's forgiveness for concealing his name; "he had been freed," he said, "from his confinement, on promising to that effect."

"That was a promise made, by your own account, under compulsion," answered the King, "and I cannot authorise your keeping it; it is your duty to speak the truth—if you are afraid of Buckingham, the Duke shall withdraw."

"I have no reason to fear the Duke of Buckingham," said Peveril; "that I had an affair with one of his household, was the man's own fault and not mine."

"Oddsfish!" said the King, "the light begins to break in on me—I thought I remembered thy physiognomy. Wert thou not the very fellow whom I met at Chiffinch's yonder morning?—The matter escaped me since; but now I recollect thou saidst then, that thou wert the son of that jolly old three-bottle Baronet yonder."

"It is true," said Julian, "that I met your Majesty at Master Chiffinch's, and I am afraid had the misfortune to displease you; but——"

"No more of that, young man—no more of that—But I recollect you had with you that beautiful dancing siren.—Buckingham, I will hold you gold to silver, that she was the intended tenant of that bass-fiddle?"

"Your Majesty has rightly guessed it," said the Duke; "and I suspect she has put a trick upon me, by substituting the dwarf in her place; for Christian thinks——"

"Damn Christian!" said the King hastily—"I wish they would bring him hither, that universal referee."—And as the wish was uttered, Christian's arrival was announced. "Let him attend," said the King: "But hark—a thought strikes me.—Here, Master Peveril—yonder dancing maiden that introduced you to us by the singular agility of her performance, is she not, by your account, a dependent of the Countess of Derby?"

"I have known her such for years," answered Julian.

"Then will we call the Countess hither," said the King: "It is fit we should learn who this little fairy really is; and if she be now so absolutely at the beck of Buckingham, and this Master Christian of his—why I think it would be but charity to let her ladyship know so much, since I question if she will wish, in that case, to retain her in her service. Besides," he continued, speaking apart, "this Julian, to whom suspicion attaches in these matters from his obstinate silence, is also of the Countess's household. We will sift this matter to the bottom, and do justice to all."

The Countess of Derby, hastily summoned, entered the royal closet at one door, just as Christian and Zarah, or Fenella, were ushered in by the other. The old Knight of Martindale, who had ere this returned to the presence, was scarce controlled, even by the signs which she made, so much was he desirous of greeting his old friend; but as Ormond laid a kind restraining hand upon his arm, he was prevailed on to sit still.

The Countess, after a deep reverence to the King, acknowledged the rest of the nobility present by a slighter reverence, smiled to Julian Peveril, and looked with surprise at the unexpected apparition of Fenella. Buckingham bit his lip, for he saw the introduction of Lady Derby was likely to confuse and embroil every preparation which he had arranged for his defence; and he stole a glance at Christian, whose eye, when fixed on the Countess, assumed the deadly sharpness which sparkles in the adder's, while his cheek grew almost black under the influence of strong emotion.

"Is there any one in this presence whom your ladyship recognises," said the King graciously, "besides your old friends of Ormond and Arlington?"

"I see, my liege, two worthy friends of my husband's house," replied the Countess; "Sir Geoffrey Peveril and his son—the latter a distinguished member of my son's household."

"Any one else?" continued the King.

"An unfortunate female of my family, who disappeared from the Island of Man at the same time when Julian Peveril left it upon business of importance. She was thought to have fallen from the cliff into the sea."

"Had your ladyship any reason to suspect—pardon me," said the King, "for putting such a question—any improper intimacy between Master Peveril and this same female attendant?"

"My liege," said the Countess, colouring indignantly, "my household is of reputation."

"Nay, my lady, be not angry," said the King; "I did but ask—such things will befall in the best regulated families."

"Not in mine, sire," said the Countess. "Besides that, in common pride and in common honesty, Julian Peveril is incapable of intriguing with an unhappy creature, removed by her misfortune almost beyond the limits of humanity."

Zarah looked at her, and compressed her lips, as if to keep in the words that would fain break from them.

"I know how it is," said the King—"What your ladyship says may be true in the main, yet men's tastes have strange vagaries. This girl is lost in Man as soon as the youth leaves it, and is found in Saint Jame's Park, bouncing and dancing like a fairy, so soon as he appears in London."

"Impossible!" said the Countess; "she cannot dance."

"I believe," said the King, "she can do more feats than your ladyship either suspects or would approve of."

The Countess drew up, and was indignantly silent.

The King proceeded—"No sooner is Peveril in Newgate, than, by the account of the venerable little gentleman, this merry maiden is even there also for company. Now, without inquiring how she got in, I think charitably that she had better taste than to come there on the dwarf's account.—Ah ha! I think Master Julian is touched in conscience!"

Julian did indeed start as the King spoke, for it reminded him of the midnight visit in his cell.

The King looked fixedly at him, and then proceeded—"Well, gentlemen, Peveril is carried to his trial, and is no sooner at liberty, than we find him in the house where the Duke of Buckingham was arranging what he calls a musical mask.—Egad, I hold it next to certain, that this wench put the change on his Grace, and

popt the poor dwarf into the bass-viol, reserving her own more precious hours to be spent with Master Julian Peveril.—Think you not so, Sir Christian, you, the universal referee? Is there any truth in this conjecture?"

Christian stole a glance at Zarah, and read that in her eye which embarrassed him. "He did not know," he said; "he had indeed engaged this unrivalled performer to take the proposed part in the mask; and she was to have come forth in the midst of a shower of lambent fire, very artificially prepared with perfumes, to overcome the smell of the powder; but he knew not why—excepting that she was wilful and capricious, like all great geniuses—she had certainly spoiled the concert by cramming in that more bulky dwarf."

"I should like," said the King, "to see this little maiden stand forth, and bear witness, in such manner as she can express herself, on this mysterious matter. Can any one here understand her mode of communication?"

Christian said, he knew something of it since he had become acquainted with her in London. The Countess spoke not till the King asked her, and then owned dryly, that she had necessarily some habitual means of intercourse with one who had been immediately about her person for so many years.

"I should think," said Charles, "that this same Master Peveril has the more direct key to her language, after all we have heard."

The King looked first at Peveril, who blushed like a maiden at the inference which the King's remark implied, and then suddenly turned his eyes on the supposed mute, on whose cheek a faint colour was dying away. A moment afterwards, at a signal from the Countess, Fenella, or Zarah, stepped forward, and having kissed her lady's hand, stood with her arms folded on her breast, with a humble air, as different from that which she wore in the harem of the Duke of Buckingham, as that of a Magdalene from a Judith. Yet this was the least show of her talent of versatility, for so well did she play the part of the dumb girl, that Buckingham, sharp as his discernment was, remained undecided whether the creature which stood before him could possibly be the same with her, who had, in a different dress, made such an impression on his imagination, or indeed was the imperfect creature she now represented. She had at once all that could mark the imperfection of hearing, and all that could show the wonderful address by which nature so often makes up of the deficiency. There was the lip that trembles not at any sound—the seeming insensibility to the conversation that passed around; while, on the other hand, was the quick and vivid glance; that seemed anxious to devour the meaning of those sounds, which she could gather no otherwise than by the motion of the lips.

Examined after her own fashion, Zarah confirmed the tale of Christian in all its points, and admitted that she had deranged the project laid for a mask, by placing the dwarf in her own stead; the cause of her doing so she declined to assign, and the Countess pressed her no farther.

"Everything tells to exculpate my Lord of Buckingham," said Charles, "from so absurd an accusation: the dwarf's testimony is too fantastic, that of the two Peverils does not in the least affect the Duke; that of the dumb damsel completely contradicts the possibility of his guilt. Methinks, my lords, we should acquaint him that he stands acquitted of a complaint, too ridiculous to have been subjected to a more serious scrutiny than we have hastily made upon this occasion."

Arlington bowed in acquiescence, but Ormond spoke plainly.—"I should suffer, sire, in the opinion of the Duke of Buckingham, brilliant as his talents are known to be, should I say that I am satisfied in my own mind on this occasion. But I subscribe to the spirit of the times; and I agree it would be highly dangerous, on such accusations as we have been able to collect, to impeach the character of a zealous Protestant like his Grace—Had he been a Catholic, under such circumstances of suspicion, the Tower had been too good a prison for him."

Buckingham bowed to the Duke of Ormond, with a meaning which even his triumph could not disguise.—"*Tu me la pagherai!*" he muttered, in a tone of deep and abiding resentment; but the stout old Irishman, who had long since braved his utmost wrath, cared little for this expression of his displeasure.

The King then, signing to the other nobles to pass into the public apartments, stopped Buckingham as he was about to follow them; and when they were alone, asked, with a significant tone, which brought all the blood in the Duke's veins into his countenance, "When was it, George, that your useful friend Colonel Blood became a musician?—You are silent," he said; "do not deny the charge, for yonder villain, once seen, is remembered for ever. Down, down on your knees, George, and acknowledge that you have abused my easy temper.—Seek for no apology—none will serve your turn. I saw the man myself, among your Germans as you call them; and you know what I must needs believe from such a circumstance."

"Believe that I have been guilty—most guilty, my liege and King," said the Duke, conscience-stricken, and kneeling down;—"believe that I was misguided—that I was mad—Believe anything but that I was capable of harming, or being accessory to harm, your person."

"I do not believe it," said the King; "I think of you, Villiers, as the companion of my dangers and my exile, and am so far from supposing you mean worse than you say, that I am convinced you acknowledge more than ever you meant to attempt."

"By all that is sacred," said the Duke, still kneeling, "had I not been involved to the extent of life and fortune with the villain Christian——"

"Nay, if you bring Christian on the stage again," said the King, smiling, "it is time for me to withdraw. Come, Villiers, rise—I forgive thee, and only recommend one act of penance—the curse you yourself bestowed on the dog who bit you—marriage, and retirement to your country-seat."

The Duke rose abashed, and followed the King into the circle, which Charles entered, leaning on the shoulder of his repentant peer; to whom he showed so much countenance, as led the most acute observers present, to doubt the possibility of there existing any real cause for the surmises to the Duke's prejudice.

The Countess of Derby had in the meanwhile consulted with the Duke of Ormond, with the Peverils, and with her other friends; and, by their unanimous advice, though with considerable difficulty, became satisfied, that to have thus shown herself at Court, was sufficient to vindicate the honour of her house; and that it was her wisest course, after having done so, to retire to her insular dominions, without farther provoking the resentment of a powerful faction. She took farewell of the King in form, and demanded his permission to carry back with her the helpless creature who had so strangely escaped from her protection, into a world where her condition rendered her so subject to every species of misfortune.

"Will your ladyship forgive me?" said Charles. "I have studied your sex long—I am mistaken if your little maiden is not as capable of caring for herself as any of us."

"Impossible!" said the Countess.

"Possible, and most true," whispered the King. "I will instantly convince you of the fact, though the experiment is too delicate to be made by any but your ladyship. Yonder she stands, looking as if she heard no more than the marble pillar against which she leans. Now, if Lady Derby will contrive either to place her hand near the region of the damsel's heart, or at least on her arm, so that she can feel the sensation of the blood when the pulse increases, then do you, my Lord of Ormond, beckon Julian Peveril out of sight—I will show you in a moment that it can stir at sounds spoken."

The Countess, much surprised, afraid of some embarrassing pleasantry on the part of Charles, yet unable to repress her curiosity, placed herself near Fenella, as she called her little mute; and, while making signs to her, contrived to place her hand on her wrist.

At this moment the King, passing near them, said, "This is a horrid deed—the villain Christian has stabbed young Peveril!"

The mute evidence of the pulse, which bounded as if a cannon had been discharged close by the poor girl's ear, was accompanied by such a loud scream of agony, as distressed, while it startled, the good-natured monarch himself. "I did but jest," he said; "Julian is well, my pretty maiden. I only used the wand of a certain blind deity, called Cupid, to bring a deaf and dumb vassal of his to the exercise of her faculties."

"I am betrayed!" she said, with her eyes fixed on the ground—"I am betrayed!—and it is fit that she, whose life has been spent in practising treason on others, should be caught in her own snare. But where is my tutor in iniquity?—where is Christian, who taught me to play the part of spy on this unsuspecting lady, until I had well-nigh delivered her into his bloody hands?"

"This," said the King, "craves more secret examination. Let all leave the apartment who are not immediately connected with these proceedings, and let this Christian be again brought before us.—Wretched man," he continued, addressing Christian, "what wiles are these you have practised, and by what extraordinary means?"

"She has betrayed me, then!" said Christian—"Betrayed me to bonds and death, merely for an idle passion, which can never be successful!—But know, Zarah," he added, addressing her sternly, "when my life is forfeited through thy evidence, the daughter has murdered the father!"

The unfortunate girl stared on him in astonishment. "You said," at length she stammered forth, "that I was the daughter of your slaughtered brother?"

"That was partly to reconcile thee to the part thou wert to play in my destined drama of vengeance—partly to hide what men call the infamy of thy birth. But *my* daughter thou art! and from the eastern clime, in which thy mother was born, you derive that fierce torrent of passion which I laboured to train to my purposes, but which, turned into another channel, has become the cause of your father's destruction.—My destiny is the Tower, I suppose?" He spoke these words with great composure, and scarce seemed to regard the agonies of his daughter, who, throwing herself at his feet, sobbed and wept most bitterly.

"This must not be," said the King, moved with compassion at this scene of misery. "If you consent, Christian, to leave this country, there is a vessel in the river bound for New England—Go, carry your dark intrigues to other lands."

"I might dispute the sentence," said Christian boldly; "and if I submit to it, it is a matter of my own choice.—One half-hour had made me even with that proud woman, but fortune hath cast the balance against me.—Rise, Zarah, Fenella no more! Tell the Lady of Derby, that, if the daughter of Edward Christian, the niece of her murdered victim, served her as a menial, it was but for the purpose of vengeance—miserably, miserably frustrated!—Thou seest thy folly now—thou wouldst follow yonder ungrateful stripling—thou wouldst forsake all other thoughts to gain his slightest notice; and now thou art a forlorn outcast, ridiculed and insulted by those on whose necks you might have trod, had you governed yourself with more wisdom!—But come, thou art still my daughter—there are other skies than that which canopies Britain."

"Stop him," said the King; "we must know by what means this maiden found access to those confined in our prisons."

"I refer your Majesty to your most Protestant jailer, and to the most Protestant Peers, who, in order to obtain perfect knowledge of the depth of the Popish Plot, have contrived these ingenious apertures for visiting them in their cells by night or day. His Grace of Buckingham can assist your Majesty, if you are inclined to make the inquiry."[*]

[] It was said that very unfair means were used to compel the prisoners, committed on account of the Popish Plot, to make disclosures, and that several of them were privately put to the torture.*

"Christian," said the Duke, "thou art the most barefaced villain who ever breathed."

"Of a commoner, I may," answered Christian, and led his daughter out of the presence.

"See after him, Selby," said the King; "lose not sight of him till the ship sail; if he dare return to Britain, it shall be at his peril. Would to God we had as good riddance of others as dangerous! And I would also," he added, after a moment's pause, "that all our political intrigues and feverish alarms could terminate as harmlessly as now. Here is a plot without a drop of blood; and all the elements of a romance, without its conclusion. Here we have a wandering island princess (I pray my Lady of Derby's pardon), a dwarf, a Moorish sorceress, an impenitent rogue, and a repentant man of rank, and yet all ends without either hanging or marriage."

"Not altogether without the latter," said the Countess, who had an opportunity, during the evening, of much private conversation with Julian Peveril. "There is a certain Major Bridgenorth, who, since your Majesty relinquishes farther inquiry into these proceedings, which he had otherwise intended to abide, designs, as we are informed, to leave England for ever. Now, this Bridgenorth, by dint of law, hath acquired strong possession over the domains of Peveril, which he is desirous to restore to the ancient owners, with much fair land besides, conditionally, that our young Julian will receive them as the dowry of his only child and heir."

"By my faith," said the King, "she must be a foul-favoured wench, indeed, if Julian requires to be pressed to accept her on such fair conditions."

"They love each other like lovers of the last age," said the Countess; "but the stout old Knight likes not the round-headed alliance."

"Our royal recommendation shall put that to rights," said the King; "Sir Geoffrey Peveril has not suffered hardship so often at our command, that he will refuse our recommendation when it comes to make him amends for all his losses." It may be supposed the King did not speak without being fully aware of the unlimited ascendancy which he possessed over the old Tory; for within four weeks afterwards, the bells of Martindale-Moultrassie were ringing for the union of the families, from whose estates it takes its compound name, and the beacon-light of the Castle blazed high over hill and dale, and summoned all to rejoice who were within twenty miles of its gleam.

BOOK XVII
OLD MORTALITY
PART I

CHAPTER I
Preliminary

*Why seeks he with unwearied toil
Through death's dim walks to urge his way,
Reclaim his long-asserted spoil,
And lead oblivion into day?*

Langhorne.

"Most readers," says the Manuscript of Mr Pattieson, "must have witnessed with delight the joyous burst which attends the dismissing of a village-school on a fine summer evening. The buoyant spirit of childhood, repressed with so much difficulty during the tedious hours of discipline, may then be seen to explode, as it were, in shout, and song, and frolic, as the little urchins join in groups on their play-ground, and arrange their matches of sport for the evening. But there is one individual who partakes of the relief afforded by the moment of dismissal, whose feelings are not so obvious to the eye of the spectator, or so apt to receive his sympathy. I mean the teacher himself, who, stunned with the hum, and suffocated with the closeness of his school-room, has spent the whole day (himself against a host) in controlling petulance, exciting indifference to action, striving to enlighten stupidity, and labouring to soften obstinacy; and whose very powers of intellect have been confounded by hearing the same dull lesson repeated a hundred times by rote, and only varied by the various blunders of the reciters. Even the flowers of classic genius, with which his solitary fancy is most gratified, have been rendered degraded, in his imagination, by their connexion with tears, with errors, and with punishment; so that the Eclogues of Virgil and Odes of Horace are each inseparably allied in association with the sullen figure and monotonous recitation of some blubbing school-boy. If to these mental distresses are added a delicate frame of body, and a mind ambitious of some higher distinction than that of being the tyrant of childhood, the reader may have some slight conception of the relief which a solitary walk, in the cool of a fine summer evening, affords to the head which has ached, and the nerves which have been shattered, for so many hours, in plying the irksome task of public instruction.

"To me these evening strolls have been the happiest hours of an unhappy life; and if any gentle reader shall hereafter find pleasure in perusing these lucubrations, I am not unwilling he should know, that the plan of them has been usually traced in those moments, when relief from toil and clamour, combined with the quiet scenery around me, has disposed my mind to the task of composition.

"My chief haunt, in these hours of golden leisure, is the banks of the small stream, which, winding through a 'lone vale of green bracken,' passes in front of the village school-house of Gandercleugh. For the first quarter of a mile, perhaps, I may be disturbed from my meditations, in order to return the scrape, or doffed bonnet, of such stragglers among my pupils as fish for trouts or minnows in the little brook, or seek rushes and wild-flowers by its margin. But, beyond the space I have mentioned, the juvenile anglers do not, after sunset, voluntarily extend their excursions. The cause is, that farther up the narrow valley, and in a recess which seems scooped out of the side of the steep heathy bank, there is a deserted burial-ground, which the little cowards are fearful of approaching in the twilight. To me, however, the place has an inexpressible charm. It has been long the favourite termination of my walks, and, if my kind patron forgets not his promise, will (and probably at no very distant day) be my final resting-place after my mortal pilgrimage. [Note: Note, by Mr Jedediah Cleishbotham.—That I kept my plight in this melancholy matter with my deceased and lamented friend, appeareth from a handsome headstone, erected at my proper charges in this spot, bearing the name and calling of Peter Pattieson, with the date of his nativity and sepulture; together also with a testimony of his merits, attested by myself, as his superior and patron.—J. C.]

"It is a spot which possesses all the solemnity of feeling attached to a burial-ground, without exciting those of a more displeasing description. Having been very little used for many years, the few hillocks which rise above the level plain are covered with the same short velvet turf. The monuments, of which there are not above seven or eight, are half sunk in the ground, and overgrown with moss. No newly-erected tomb disturbs the sober serenity of our reflections by reminding us of recent calamity, and no rank-springing grass forces upon our imagination the recollection, that it owes its dark luxuriance to the foul and festering remnants of mortality which ferment beneath. The daisy which sprinkles the sod, and the harebell which hangs over it, derive their pure nourishment from the dew of heaven, and their growth impresses us with no degrading or disgusting recollections. Death has indeed been here, and its traces are before us; but they are softened and deprived of their horror by our distance from the period when they have been first impressed. Those who sleep beneath are only connected with us by the reflection, that they have once been what we now are, and that, as their relics are now identified with their mother earth, ours shall, at some future period, undergo the same transformation.

"Yet, although the moss has been collected on the most modern of these humble tombs during four generations of mankind, the memory of some of those who sleep beneath them is still held in reverent remembrance. It is true, that, upon the largest, and, to an antiquary, the most interesting monument of the group, which bears the effigies of a doughty knight in his hood of mail, with his shield hanging on his breast, the armorial bearings are defaced by time, and a few worn-out letters may be read at the pleasure of the decipherer, Dns. Johan—de Hamel,—or Johan—de Lamel—And it is also true, that of another tomb, richly sculptured with an ornamental cross, mitre, and pastoral staff, tradition can only aver, that a certain nameless bishop lies interred there. But upon other two stones which lie beside, may still be read in rude prose, and ruder rhyme, the history of those who sleep beneath them. They belong, we are assured by the epitaph, to the class of persecuted Presbyterians who afforded a melancholy subject for history in the times of Charles II. and his successor. [Note: James, Seventh King of Scotland of that name, and Second according to the numeration of the Kings of England.—J. C.] In returning from the battle of Pentland Hills, a party of the insurgents had been attacked in this glen by a small detachment of the King's troops, and three or four either killed in the skirmish, or shot after being made prisoners, as rebels taken with arms in their hands. The peasantry continued to attach to the tombs of those victims of prelacy an honour which they do not render to more splendid mausoleums; and, when they point them out to their sons, and narrate the fate of the sufferers, usually conclude, by exhorting them to be ready, should times call for it, to resist to the death in the cause of civil and religious liberty, like their brave forefathers.

"Although I am far from venerating the peculiar tenets asserted by those who call themselves the followers of those men, and whose intolerance and narrow-minded bigotry are at least as conspicuous as their devotional zeal, yet it is without depreciating the memory of those sufferers, many of whom united the independent sentiments of a Hampden with the suffering zeal of a Hooper or Latimer. On the other hand, it would be unjust to forget, that many even of those who had been most active in crushing what they conceived the rebellious and seditious spirit of those unhappy wanderers, displayed themselves, when called upon to suffer for their political and religious opinions, the same daring and devoted zeal, tintured, in their case, with chivalrous loyalty, as in the former with republican enthusiasm. It has often been remarked of the Scottish character, that the stubbornness with which it is moulded shows most to advantage in adversity, when it seems akin to the native sycamore of their hills, which scorns to be biassed in its mode of growth even by the influence of the prevailing wind, but, shooting its branches with equal boldness in every direction, shows no weather-side to the storm, and may be broken, but can never be bended. It must be understood that I speak of my countrymen as they fall under my own observation. When in foreign countries, I have been informed that they are more docile. But it is time to return from this digression.

"One summer evening, as in a stroll, such as I have described, I approached this deserted mansion of the dead, I was somewhat surprised to hear sounds distinct from those which usually soothe its solitude, the gentle chiding, namely, of the brook, and the sighing of the wind in the boughs of three gigantic ash-trees, which mark the cemetery. The clink of a hammer was, on this occasion, distinctly heard; and I entertained some alarm that a march-dike, long meditated by the two proprietors whose estates were divided by my favourite brook, was about to be drawn up the glen, in order to substitute its rectilinear deformity for the graceful winding of the natural boundary. [Note: I deem it fitting that the reader should be apprised that this liminary boundary between the conterminous heritable property

of his honour the Laird of Gandercleugh, and his honour the Laird of Gusedub, was to have been in fashion an agger, or rather murus of uncemented granite, called by the vulgar a drystone dyke, surmounted, or coped, *cespite viridi*, i.e. with a sodturf. Truly their honours fell into discord concerning two roods of marshy ground, near the cove called the Bedra's Beild; and the controversy, having some years bygone been removed from before the judges of the land, (with whom it abode long,) even unto the Great City of London and the Assembly of the Nobles therein, is, as I may say, adhuc in pendente.—J. C.] As I approached, I was agreeably undeceived. An old man was seated upon the monument of the slaughtered presbyterians, and busily employed in deepening, with his chisel, the letters of the inscription, which, announcing, in scriptural language, the promised blessings of futurity to be the lot of the slain, anathematized the murderers with corresponding violence. A blue bonnet of unusual dimensions covered the grey hairs of the pious workman. His dress was a large old-fashioned coat of the coarse cloth called hoddingrey, usually worn by the elder peasants, with waistcoat and breeches of the same; and the whole suit, though still in decent repair, had obviously seen a train of long service. Strong clouded shoes, studded with hobnails, and gramochoes or leggins, made of thick black cloth, completed his equipment. Beside him, fed among the graves a pony, the companion of his journey, whose extreme whiteness, as well as its projecting bones and hollow eyes, indicated its antiquity. It was harnessed in the most simple manner, with a pair of branks, a hair tether, or halter, and a sunk, or cushion of straw, instead of bridle and saddle. A canvass pouch hung around the neck of the animal, for the purpose, probably, of containing the rider's tools, and any thing else he might have occasion to carry with him. Although I had never seen the old man before, yet from the singularity of his employment, and the style of his equipage, I had no difficulty in recognising a religious itinerant whom I had often heard talked of, and who was known in various parts of Scotland by the title of Old Mortality.

"Where this man was born, or what was his real name, I have never been able to learn; nor are the motives which made him desert his home, and adopt the erratic mode of life which he pursued, known to me except very generally. According to the belief of most people, he was a native of either the county of Dumfries or Galloway, and lineally descended from some of those champions of the Covenant, whose deeds and sufferings were his favourite theme. He is said to have held, at one period of his life, a small moorland farm; but, whether from pecuniary losses, or domestic misfortune, he had long renounced that and every other gainful calling. In the language of Scripture, he left his house, his home, and his kindred, and wandered about until the day of his death, a period of nearly thirty years.

"During this long pilgrimage, the pious enthusiast regulated his circuit so as annually to visit the graves of the unfortunate Covenanters, who suffered by the sword, or by the executioner, during the reigns of the two last monarchs of the Stewart line. These are most numerous in the western districts of Ayr, Galloway, and Dumfries; but they are also to be found in other parts of Scotland, wherever the fugitives had fought, or fallen, or suffered by military or civil execution. Their tombs are often apart from all human habitation, in the remote moors and wilds to which the wanderers had fled for concealment. But wherever they existed, Old Mortality was sure to visit them when his annual round brought them within his reach. In the most lonely recesses of the mountains, the moor-fowl shooter has been often surprised to find him busied in cleaning the moss from the grey stones, renewing with his chisel the half-defaced inscriptions, and repairing the emblems of death with which these simple monuments are usually adorned. Motives of the most sincere, though fanciful devotion, induced the old man to dedicate so many years of existence to perform this tribute to the memory of the deceased warriors of the church. He considered himself as fulfilling a sacred duty, while renewing to the eyes of posterity the decaying emblems of the zeal and sufferings of their forefathers, and thereby trimming, as it were, the beacon-light, which was to warn future generations to defend their religion even unto blood.

"In all his wanderings, the old pilgrim never seemed to need, or was known to accept, pecuniary assistance. It is true, his wants were very few; for wherever he went, he found ready quarters in the house of some Cameronian of his own sect, or of some other religious person. The hospitality which was reverentially paid to him he always acknowledged, by repairing the gravestones (if there existed any) belonging to the family or ancestors of his host. As the wanderer was usually to be seen bent on this pious task within the precincts of some country churchyard, or reclined on the solitary tombstone among the heath, disturbing the plover and the black-cock with the clink of his chisel and mallet, with his old white pony grazing by his side, he acquired, from his converse among the dead, the popular appellation of Old Mortality.

"The character of such a man could have in it little connexion even with innocent gaiety. Yet, among those of his own religious persuasion, he is reported to have been cheerful. The descendants of persecutors, or those whom he supposed guilty of entertaining similar tenets, and the scoffers at religion by whom he was sometimes assailed, he usually termed the generation of vipers. Conversing with others, he was grave and sententious, not without a cast of severity. But he is said never to have been observed to give way to violent passion, excepting upon one occasion, when a mischievous truant-boy defaced with a stone the nose of a cherub's face, which the old man was engaged in retouching. I am in general a sparer of the rod, notwithstanding the maxim of Solomon, for which school-boys have little reason to thank his memory; but on this occasion I deemed it proper to show that I did not hate the child.—But I must return to the circumstances attending my first interview with this interesting enthusiast.

"In accosting Old Mortality, I did not fail to pay respect to his years and his principles, beginning my address by a respectful apology for interrupting his labours. The old man intermitted the operation of the chisel, took off his spectacles and wiped them, then, replacing them on his nose, acknowledged my courtesy by a suitable return. Encouraged by his affability, I intruded upon him some questions concerning the sufferers on whose monument he was now employed. To talk of the exploits of the Covenanters was the delight, as to repair their monuments was the business, of his life. He was profuse in the communication of all the minute information which he had collected concerning them, their wars, and their wanderings. One would almost have supposed he must have been their contemporary, and have actually beheld the passages which he related, so much had he identified his feelings and opinions with theirs, and so much had his narratives the circumstantiality of an eye-witness.

"'We,' he said, in a tone of exultation,—'we are the only true whigs. Carnal men have assumed that triumphant appellation, following him whose kingdom is of this world. Which of them would sit six hours on a wet hill-side to hear a godly sermon? I trow an hour o't wad staw them. They are ne'er a hair better than them that shamena to take upon themselves the persecuting name of bludethirsty Tories. Self-seekers all of them, strivers after wealth, power, and worldly ambition, and forgetters alike of what has been dree'd and done by the mighty men who stood in the gap in the great day of wrath. Nae wonder they dread the accomplishment of what was spoken by the mouth of the worthy Mr Peden, (that precious servant of the Lord, none of whose words fell to the ground,) that the French monzies [Note: Probably monsieurs. It would seem that this was spoken during the apprehensions of invason from France.—Publishers.] sall rise as fast in the glens of Ayr, and the kenns of Galloway, as ever the Highlandmen did in 1677. And now they are gripping to the bow and to the spear, when they suld be mourning for a sinfu' land and a broken covenant.'

"Soothing the old man by letting his peculiar opinions pass without contradiction, and anxious to prolong conversation with so singular a character, I prevailed upon him to accept that hospitality, which Mr Cleishbotham is always willing to extend to those who need it. In our way to the schoolmaster's house, we called at the Wallace Inn, where I was pretty certain I should find my patron about that hour of the evening. After a courteous interchange of civilities, Old Mortality was, with difficulty, prevailed upon to join his host in a single glass of liquor, and that on condition that he should be permitted to name the pledge, which he prefaced with a grace of about five minutes, and then, with bonnet doffed and eyes uplifted, drank to the memory of those heroes of the Kirk who had first uplifted her banner upon the mountains. As no persuasion could prevail on him to extend his conviviality to a second cup, my patron accompanied him home, and accommodated him in the Prophet's Chamber, as it is his pleasure to call the closet which holds a spare bed, and which is frequently a place of retreat for the poor traveller. [Note: He might have added, and for the rich also; since, I laud my stars, the great of the earth have also taken harbourage in my poor domicile. And, during the service of my hand-maiden, Dorothy, who was buxom and comely of aspect, his Honour the Laird of Smackawa, in his peregrinations to and from the metropolis, was wont to prefer my Prophet's Chamber even to the sanded chamber of dais in the Wallace Inn, and to bestow a mutchkin, as he would jocosely say, to obtain the freedom of the house, but, in reality, to assure himself of my company during the evening.—J. C.]

"The next day I took leave of Old Mortality, who seemed affected by the unusual attention with which I had cultivated his acquaintance and listened to his conversation. After he had mounted, not without difficulty, the old white pony, he took me by the hand and said, 'The blessing of our Master be with you, young man! My hours are like the ears of the latter harvest, and your days are yet in the spring; and yet you may be gathered into the garner of mortality before me, for

the sickle of death cuts down the green as oft as the ripe, and there is a colour in your cheek, that, like the bud of the rose, serveth oft to hide the worm of corruption. Wherefore labour as one who knoweth not when his master calleth. And if it be my lot to return to this village after ye are gane hame to your ain place, these auld withered hands will frame a stane of memorial, that your name may not perish from among the people.'

"I thanked Old Mortality for his kind intentions in my behalf, and heaved a sigh, not, I think, of regret so much as of resignation, to think of the chance that I might soon require his good offices. But though, in all human probability, he did not err in supposing that my span of life may be abridged in youth, he had over-estimated the period of his own pilgrimage on earth. It is now some years since he has been missed in all his usual haunts, while moss, lichen, and deer-hair, are fast covering those stones, to cleanse which had been the business of his life. About the beginning of this century he closed his mortal toils, being found on the highway near Lockerby, in Dumfries-shire, exhausted and just expiring. The old white pony, the companion of all his wanderings, was standing by the side of his dying master. There was found about his person a sum of money sufficient for his decent interment, which serves to show that his death was in no ways hastened by violence or by want. The common people still regard his memory with great respect; and many are of opinion, that the stones which he repaired will not again require the assistance of the chisel. They even assert, that on the tombs where the manner of the martyrs' murder is recorded, their names have remained indelibly legible since the death of Old Mortality, while those of the persecutors, sculptured on the same monuments, have been entirely defaced. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a fond imagination, and that, since the time of the pious pilgrim, the monuments which were the objects of his care are hastening, like all earthly memorials, into ruin or decay.

"My readers will of course understand, that in embodying into one compressed narrative many of the anecdotes which I had the advantage of deriving from Old Mortality, I have been far from adopting either his style, his opinions, or even his facts, so far as they appear to have been distorted by party prejudice. I have endeavoured to correct or verify them from the most authentic sources of tradition, afforded by the representatives of either party.

"On the part of the Presbyterians, I have consulted such moorland farmers from the western districts, as, by the kindness of their landlords, or otherwise, have been able, during the late general change of property, to retain possession of the grazings on which their grandsires fed their flocks and herds. I must own, that of late days, I have found this a limited source of information. I have, therefore, called in the supplementary aid of those modest itinerants, whom the scrupulous civility of our ancestors denominated travelling merchants, but whom, of late, accommodating ourselves in this as in more material particulars, to the feelings and sentiments of our more wealthy neighbours, we have learned to call packmen or pedlars. To country weavers travelling in hopes to get rid of their winter web, but more especially to tailors, who, from their sedentary profession, and the necessity, in our country, of exercising it by temporary residence in the families by whom they are employed, may be considered as possessing a complete register of rural traditions, I have been indebted for many illustrations of the narratives of Old Mortality, much in the taste and spirit of the original.

"I had more difficulty in finding materials for correcting the tone of partiality which evidently pervaded those stores of traditional learning, in order that I might be enabled to present an unbiassed picture of the manners of that unhappy period, and, at the same time, to do justice to the merits of both parties. But I have been enabled to qualify the narratives of Old Mortality and his Cameronian friends, by the reports of more than one descendant of ancient and honourable families, who, themselves decayed into the humble vale of life, yet look proudly back on the period when their ancestors fought and fell in behalf of the exiled house of Stewart. I may even boast right reverend authority on the same score; for more than one nonjuring bishop, whose authority and income were upon as apostolical a scale as the greatest abominator of Episcopacy could well desire, have deigned, while partaking of the humble cheer of the Wallace Inn, to furnish me with information corrective of the facts which I learned from others. There are also here and there a laird or two, who, though they shrug their shoulders, profess no great shame in their fathers having served in the persecuting squadrons of Earls and Claverhouse. From the gamekeepers of these gentlemen, an office the most apt of any other to become hereditary in such families, I have also contrived to collect much valuable information.

"Upon the whole, I can hardly fear, that, at this time, in describing the operation which their opposite principles produced upon the good and bad men of both parties, I can be suspected of meaning insult or injustice to either. If recollection of former injuries, extra-loyalty, and contempt and hatred of their adversaries, produced rigour and tyranny in the one party, it will hardly be denied, on the other hand, that, if the zeal for God's house did not eat up the conventiclers, it devoured at least, to imitate the phrase of Dryden, no small portion of their loyalty, sober sense, and good breeding. We may safely hope, that the souls of the brave and sincere on either side have long looked down with surprise and pity upon the ill-appreciated motives which caused their mutual hatred and hostility, while in this valley of darkness, blood, and tears. Peace to their memory! Let us think of them as the heroine of our only Scottish tragedy entreats her lord to think of her departed sire:—

*'O rake not up the ashes of our fathers!
Implacable resentment was their crime,
And grievous has the expiation been.'"*

CHAPTER II.

*Summon an hundred horse, by break of day,
To wait our pleasure at the castle gates.
Douglas.*

Under the reign of the last Stewarts, there was an anxious wish on the part of government to counteract, by every means in their power, the strict or puritanical spirit which had been the chief characteristic of the republican government, and to revive those feudal institutions which united the vassal to the liege lord, and both to the crown. Frequent musters and assemblies of the people, both for military exercise and for sports and pastimes, were appointed by authority. The interference, in the latter case, was impolitic, to say the least; for, as usual on such occasions, the consciences which were at first only scrupulous, became confirmed in their opinions, instead of giving way to the terrors of authority; and the youth of both sexes, to whom the pipe and tabor in England, or the bagpipe in Scotland, would have been in themselves an irresistible temptation, were enabled to set them at defiance, from the proud consciousness that they were, at the same time, resisting an act of council. To compel men to dance and be merry by authority, has rarely succeeded even on board of slave-ships, where it was formerly sometimes attempted by way of inducing the wretched captives to agitate their limbs and restore the circulation, during the few minutes they were permitted to enjoy the fresh air upon deck. The rigour of the strict Calvinists increased, in proportion to the wishes of the government that it should be relaxed. A judaical observance of the Sabbath—a supercilious condemnation of all manly pastimes and harmless recreations, as well as of the profane custom of promiscuous dancing, that is, of men and women dancing together in the same party (for I believe they admitted that the exercise might be inoffensive if practised by the parties separately)—distinguishing those who professed a more than ordinary share of sanctity, they discouraged, as far as lay in their power, even the ancient wappen-schaws, as they were termed, when the feudal array of the county was called out, and each crown-vassal was required to appear with such muster of men and armour as he was bound to make by his fief, and that under high statutory penalties. The Covenanters were the more jealous of those assemblies, as the lord lieutenants and sheriffs under whom they were held had instructions from the government to spare no pains which might render them agreeable to the young men who were thus summoned together, upon whom the military exercise of the morning, and the sports which usually closed the evening, might naturally be supposed to have a seductive effect.

The preachers and proselytes of the more rigid presbyterians laboured, therefore, by caution, remonstrance, and authority, to diminish the attendance upon these summonses, conscious that in doing so, they lessened not only the apparent, but the actual strength of the government, by impeding the extension of that esprit de corps which soon unites young men who are in the habit of meeting together for manly sport, or military exercise. They, therefore, exerted themselves earnestly to prevent attendance on these occasions by those who could find any possible excuse for absence, and were especially severe upon such of their

hearers as mere curiosity led to be spectators, or love of exercise to be partakers, of the array and the sports which took place. Such of the gentry as acceded to these doctrines were not always, however, in a situation to be ruled by them. The commands of the law were imperative; and the privy council, who administered the executive power in Scotland, were severe in enforcing the statutory penalties against the crown-vassals who did not appear at the periodical wappen-schaw. The landholders were compelled, therefore, to send their sons, tenants, and vassals to the rendezvous, to the number of horses, men, and spears, at which they were rated; and it frequently happened, that notwithstanding the strict charge of their elders, to return as soon as the formal inspection was over, the young men-at-arms were unable to resist the temptation of sharing in the sports which succeeded the muster, or to avoid listening to the prayers read in the churches on these occasions, and thus, in the opinion of their repining parents, meddling with the accursed thing which is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The sheriff of the county of Lanark was holding the wappen-schaw of a wild district, called the Upper Ward of Clydesdale, on a haugh or level plain, near to a royal borough, the name of which is no way essential to my story, on the morning of the 5th of May, 1679, when our narrative commences. When the musters had been made, and duly reported, the young men, as was usual, were to mix in various sports, of which the chief was to shoot at the popinjay, an ancient game formerly practised with archery, but at this period with fire-arms.

[Note: Festival of the Popinjay. The Festival of the Popinjay is still, I believe, practised at Maybole, in Ayrshire. The following passage in the history of the Somerville family, suggested the scenes in the text. The author of that curious manuscript thus celebrates his father's demeanour at such an assembly.

"Having now passed his infancie, in the tenth year of his age, he was by his grandfather putt to the grammar school, ther being then att the toune of Delsarf a very able master that taught the grammar, and fitted boyes for the colledge. Dureing his educating in this place, they had then a custome every year to solemnize the first Sunday of May with danceing about a May-pole, fyreing of pieces, and all manner of ravelling then in use. Ther being at that tyme feu or noe merchants in this pettie village, to furnish necessaries for the schollars sports, this youth resolves to provide himself elsewhere, so that he may appear with the bravest. In order to this, by break of day he ryses and goes to Hamiltoune, and there bestowes all the money that for a long tyme before he had gotten from his freinds, or had otherwayes purchased, upon ribbones of diverse coloures, a new hatt and gloves. But in nothing he bestowed his money more liberallie than upon gunpowder, a great quantitie whereof he buyes for his owne use, and to supplie the wantes of his comerades; thus furnished with these commodities, but ane empty purse, he returns to Delsarf by seven a clock, (haveing travelled that Sabbath morning above eight myles,) puttes on his cloathes and new hatt, flying with ribbones of all culloures; and in this equipage, with his little phizie (fusee) upon his shoulder, he marches to the church yaird, where the May-pole was sett up, and the solemnitie of that day was to be kept. There first at the foot-ball he equalled any one that played; but in handleing his piece, in chargeing and dischargeing, he was so ready, and shott so near the marke, that he farre surpassed all his fellow schollars, and became a teacher of that art to them before the thretteenth year of his oune age. And really, I have often admired his dexterity in this, both at the exercizeing of his soulders, and when for recreatione. I have gone to the gunning with him when I was but a stripeling myself; and albeit that passetyme was the exercize I delighted most in, yet could I never attaine to any perfectione comparable to him. This dayes sport being over, he had the applause of all the spectatores, the kyndnesse of his fellow-condisciples, and the favour of the whole inhabitants of that little village."]

This was the figure of a bird, decked with party-coloured feathers, so as to resemble a popinjay or parrot. It was suspended to a pole, and served for a mark, at which the competitors discharged their fusees and carabines in rotation, at the distance of sixty or seventy paces. He whose ball brought down the mark, held the proud title of Captain of the Popinjay for the remainder of the day, and was usually escorted in triumph to the most reputable change-house in the neighbourhood, where the evening was closed with conviviality, conducted under his auspices, and, if he was able to sustain it, at his expense.

It will, of course, be supposed, that the ladies of the country assembled to witness this gallant strife, those excepted who held the stricter tenets of puritanism, and would therefore have deemed it criminal to afford countenance to the profane gambols of the malignants. Landaus, barouches, or tilburies, there were none in those simple days. The lord lieutenant of the county (a personage of ducal rank) alone pretended to the magnificence of a wheel-carriage, a thing covered with tarnished gilding and sculpture, in shape like the vulgar picture of Noah's ark, dragged by eight long-tailed Flanders mares, bearing eight insides and six outsides. The insides were their graces in person, two maids of honour, two children, a chaplain stuffed into a sort of lateral recess, formed by a projection at the door of the vehicle, and called, from its appearance, the boot, and an equerry to his Grace ensconced in the corresponding convenience on the opposite side. A coachman and three postilions, who wore short swords, and tie-wigs with three tails, had blunderbusses slung behind them, and pistols at their saddle-bow, conducted the equipage. On the foot-board, behind this moving mansion-house, stood, or rather hung, in triple file, six lacqueys in rich liveries, armed up to the teeth. The rest of the gentry, men and women, old and young, were on horseback followed by their servants; but the company, for the reasons already assigned, was rather select than numerous.

Near to the enormous leathern vehicle which we have attempted to describe, vindicating her title to precedence over the untitled gentry of the country, might be seen the sober palfrey of Lady Margaret Bellenden, bearing the erect and primitive form of Lady Margaret herself, decked in those widow's weeds which the good lady had never laid aside, since the execution of her husband for his adherence to Montrose.

Her grand-daughter, and only earthly care, the fair-haired Edith, who was generally allowed to be the prettiest lass in the Upper Ward, appeared beside her aged relative like Spring placed close to Winter. Her black Spanish jennet, which she managed with much grace, her gay riding-dress, and laced side-saddle, had been anxiously prepared to set her forth to the best advantage. But the clustering profusion of ringlets, which, escaping from under her cap, were only confined by a

green ribbon from wantoning over her shoulders; her cast of features, soft and feminine, yet not without a certain expression of playful archness, which redeemed their sweetness from the charge of insipidity, sometimes brought against blondes and blue-eyed beauties,—these attracted more admiration from the western youth than either the splendour of her equipments or the figure of her palfrey.

The attendance of these distinguished ladies was rather inferior to their birth and fashion in those times, as it consisted only of two servants on horseback. The truth was, that the good old lady had been obliged to make all her domestic servants turn out to complete the quota which her barony ought to furnish for the muster, and in which she would not for the universe have been found deficient. The old steward, who, in steel cap and jack-boots, led forth her array, had, as he said, sweated blood and water in his efforts to overcome the scruples and evasions of the moorland farmers, who ought to have furnished men, horse, and harness, on these occasions. At last, their dispute came near to an open declaration of hostilities, the incensed episcopalian bestowing on the recusants the whole thunders of the commination, and receiving from them, in return, the denunciations of a Calvinistic excommunication. What was to be done? To punish the refractory tenants would have been easy enough. The privy council would readily have imposed fines, and sent a troop of horse to collect them. But this would have been calling the huntsman and hounds into the garden to kill the hare.

"For," said Harrison to himself, "the carles have little eneugh gear at ony rate, and if I call in the red-coats and take away what little they have, how is my worshipful lady to get her rents paid at Candlemas, which is but a difficult matter to bring round even in the best of times?"

So he armed the fowler, and falconer, the footman, and the ploughman, at the home farm, with an old drunken cavaliering butler, who had served with the late Sir Richard under Montrose, and stunned the family nightly with his exploits at Kilsythe and Tippermoor, and who was the only man in the party that had the smallest zeal for the work in hand. In this manner, and by recruiting one or two latitudinarian poachers and black-fishers, Mr Harrison completed the quota of men which fell to the share of Lady Margaret Bellenden, as life-rentrix of the barony of Tillietudlem and others. But when the steward, on the morning of the eventful day, had mustered his *troupe dore* before the iron gate of the tower, the mother of Cuddie Headrigg the ploughman appeared, loaded with the jackboots, buff coat, and other accoutrements which had been issued forth for the service of the day, and laid them before the steward; demurely assuring him, that "whether it were the colic, or a qualm of conscience, she couldna tak upon her to decide, but sure it was, Cuddie had been in sair straits a' night, and she couldna say he was muckle better this morning. The finger of Heaven," she said, "was in it, and her bairn should gang on nae sic errands." Pains, penalties, and threats of dismissal, were denounced in vain; the mother was obstinate, and Cuddie, who underwent a domiciliary visitation for the purpose of verifying his state of body, could, or would, answer only by deep groans. Mause, who had been an ancient domestic in the family, was a sort of favourite with Lady Margaret, and presumed accordingly. Lady Margaret had herself set forth, and her authority could not be appealed to. In this dilemma, the good genius of the old butler suggested an expedient.

"He had seen mony a braw callant, far less than Guse Gibbie, fight brawly under Montrose. What for no tak Guse Gibbie?"

This was a half-witted lad, of very small stature, who had a kind of charge of the poultry under the old henwife; for in a Scottish family of that day there was a wonderful substitution of labour. This urchin being sent for from the stubble-field, was hastily muffled in the buff coat, and girded rather to than with the sword of a full-grown man, his little legs plunged into jack-boots, and a steel cap put upon his head, which seemed, from its size, as if it had been intended to extinguish him. Thus accoutred, he was hoisted, at his own earnest request, upon the quietest horse of the party; and, prompted and supported by old Gudyill the butler, as his front file, he passed muster tolerably enough; the sheriff not caring to examine too closely the recruits of so well-affected a person as Lady Margaret Bellenden.

To the above cause it was owing that the personal retinue of Lady Margaret, on this eventful day, amounted only to two lacqueys, with which diminished train she would, on any other occasion, have been much ashamed to appear in public. But, for the cause of royalty, she was ready at any time to have made the most unreserved personal sacrifices. She had lost her husband and two promising sons in the civil wars of that unhappy period; but she had received her reward, for, on his route through the west of Scotland to meet Cromwell in the unfortunate field of Worcester, Charles the Second had actually breakfasted at the Tower of Tillietudlem; an incident which formed, from that moment, an important era in the life of Lady Margaret, who seldom afterwards partook of that meal, either at home or abroad, without detailing the whole circumstances of the royal visit, not forgetting the salutation which his majesty conferred on each side of her face, though she sometimes omitted to notice that he bestowed the same favour on two buxom serving-wenchs who appeared at her back, elevated for the day into the capacity of waiting gentlewomen.

These instances of royal favour were decisive; and if Lady Margaret had not been a confirmed royalist already, from sense of high birth, influence of education, and hatred to the opposite party, through whom she had suffered such domestic calamity, the having given a breakfast to majesty, and received the royal salute in return, were honours enough of themselves to unite her exclusively to the fortunes of the Stewarts. These were now, in all appearance, triumphant; but Lady Margaret's zeal had adhered to them through the worst of times, and was ready to sustain the same severities of fortune should their scale once more kick the beam. At present she enjoyed, in full extent, the military display of the force which stood ready to support the crown, and stifled, as well as she could, the mortification she felt at the unworthy desertion of her own retainers.

Many civilities passed between her ladyship and the representatives of sundry ancient loyal families who were upon the ground, by whom she was held in high reverence; and not a young man of rank passed by them in the course of the muster, but he carried his body more erect in the saddle, and threw his horse upon its haunches, to display his own horsemanship and the perfect biting of his steed to the best advantage in the eyes of Miss Edith Bellenden. But the young cavaliers, distinguished by high descent and undoubted loyalty, attracted no more attention from Edith than the laws of courtesy peremptorily demanded; and she turned an indifferent ear to the compliments with which she was addressed, most of which were little the worse for the wear, though borrowed for the nonce from the laborious and long-winded romances of Calprenede and Scuderi, the mirrors in which the youth of that age delighted to dress themselves, ere Folly had thrown her ballast overboard, and cut down her vessels of the first-rate, such as the romances of Cyrus, Cleopatra, and others, into small craft, drawing as little water, or, to speak more plainly, consuming as little time as the little cockboat in which the gentle reader has deigned to embark. It was, however, the decree of fate that Miss Bellenden should not continue to evince the same equanimity till the conclusion of the day.

CHAPTER III.

*Horseman and horse confess'd the bitter pang,
And arms and warrior fell with heavy clang.
Pleasures of Hope.*

When the military evolutions had been gone through tolerably well, allowing for the awkwardness of men and of horses, a loud shout announced that the competitors were about to step forth for the game of the popinjay already described. The mast, or pole, having a yard extended across it, from which the mark was displayed, was raised amid the acclamations of the assembly; and even those who had eyed the evolutions of the feudal militia with a sort of malignant and sarcastic sneer, from disinclination to the royal cause in which they were professedly embodied, could not refrain from taking considerable interest in the strife which was now approaching. They crowded towards the goal, and criticized the appearance of each competitor, as they advanced in succession, discharged their pieces at the mark, and had their good or bad address rewarded by the laughter or applause of the spectators. But when a slender young man, dressed with great simplicity, yet not without a certain air of pretension to elegance and gentility, approached the station with his fusee in his hand, his dark-green cloak thrown back over his shoulder, his laced ruff and feathered cap indicating a superior rank to the vulgar, there was a murmur of interest among the spectators, whether altogether favourable to the young adventurer, it was difficult to discover.

"Ewhow, sirs, to see his father's son at the like o' thae fearless follies!" was the ejaculation of the elder and more rigid puritans, whose curiosity had so far overcome their bigotry as to bring them to the play-ground. But the generality viewed the strife less morosely, and were contented to wish success to the son of a deceased presbyterian leader, without strictly examining the propriety of his being a competitor for the prize.

Their wishes were gratified. At the first discharge of his piece the green adventurer struck the popinjay, being the first palpable hit of the day, though several balls had passed very near the mark. A loud shout of applause ensued. But the success was not decisive, it being necessary that each who followed should have his chance, and that those who succeeded in hitting the mark, should renew the strife among themselves, till one displayed a decided superiority over the others. Two only of those who followed in order succeeded in hitting the popinjay. The first was a young man of low rank, heavily built, and who kept his face muffled in his grey cloak; the second a gallant young cavalier, remarkable for a handsome exterior, sedulously decorated for the day. He had been since the muster in close attendance on Lady Margaret and Miss Bellenden, and had left them with an air of indifference, when Lady Margaret had asked whether there was no young man of family and loyal principles who would dispute the prize with the two lads who had been successful. In half a minute, young Lord Evandale threw himself from his horse, borrowed a gun from a servant, and, as we have already noticed, hit the mark. Great was the interest excited by the renewal of the contest between the three candidates who had been hitherto successful. The state equipage of the Duke was, with some difficulty, put in motion, and approached more near to the scene of action. The riders, both male and female, turned their horses' heads in the same direction, and all eyes were bent upon the issue of the trial of skill.

It was the etiquette in the second contest, that the competitors should take their turn of firing after drawing lots. The first fell upon the young plebeian, who, as he took his stand, half-uncloaked his rustic countenance, and said to the gallant in green, "Ye see, Mr Henry, if it were any other day, I could have wished to miss for your sake; but Jenny Dennison is looking at us, so I must do my best."

He took his aim, and his bullet whistled past the mark so nearly, that the pendulous object at which it was directed was seen to shiver. Still, however, he had not hit it, and, with a downcast look, he withdrew himself from further competition, and hastened to disappear from the assembly, as if fearful of being recognised. The green chasseur next advanced, and his ball a second time struck the popinjay. All shouted; and from the outskirts of the assembly arose a cry of, "The good old cause for ever!"

While the dignitaries bent their brows at these exulting shouts of the disaffected, the young Lord Evandale advanced again to the hazard, and again was successful. The shouts and congratulations of the well-affected and aristocratical part of the audience attended his success, but still a subsequent trial of skill remained.

The green marksman, as if determined to bring the affair to a decision, took his horse from a person who held him, having previously looked carefully to the security of his girths and the fitting of his saddle, vaulted on his back, and motioning with his hand for the bystanders to make way, set spurs, passed the place from which he was to fire at a gallop, and, as he passed, threw up the reins, turned sideways upon his saddle, discharged his carbine, and brought down the popinjay. Lord Evandale imitated his example, although many around him said it was an innovation on the established practice, which he was not obliged to follow. But his skill was not so perfect, or his horse was not so well trained. The animal swerved at the moment his master fired, and the ball missed the popinjay. Those who had been surprised by the address of the green marksman were now equally pleased by his courtesy. He disclaimed all merit from the last shot, and proposed to his antagonist that it should not be counted as a hit, and that they should renew the contest on foot.

"I would prefer horseback, if I had a horse as well bitted, and, probably, as well broken to the exercise, as yours," said the young Lord, addressing his antagonist.

"Will you do me the honour to use him for the next trial, on condition you will lend me yours?" said the young gentleman.

Lord Evandale was ashamed to accept this courtesy, as conscious how much it would diminish the value of victory; and yet, unable to suppress his wish to redeem his reputation as a marksman, he added, "that although he renounced all pretensions to the honour of the day," (which he said somewhat scornfully.)

"yet, if the victor had no particular objection, he would willingly embrace his obliging offer, and change horses with him, for the purpose of trying a shot for love."

As he said so, he looked boldly towards Miss Bellenden, and tradition says, that the eyes of the young tirailleur travelled, though more covertly, in the same direction. The young Lord's last trial was as unsuccessful as the former, and it was with difficulty that he preserved the tone of scornful indifference which he had hitherto assumed. But, conscious of the ridicule which attaches itself to the resentment of a losing party, he returned to his antagonist the horse on which he had made his last unsuccessful attempt, and received back his own; giving, at the same time, thanks to his competitor, who, he said, had re-established his favourite horse in his good opinion, for he had been in great danger of transferring to the poor nag the blame of an inferiority, which every one, as well as himself, must now be satisfied remained with the rider. Having made this speech in a tone in which mortification assumed the veil of indifference, he mounted his horse and rode off the ground.

As is the usual way of the world, the applause and attention even of those whose wishes had favoured Lord Evandale, were, upon his decisive discomfiture, transferred to his triumphant rival.

"Who is he? what is his name?" ran from mouth to mouth among the gentry who were present, to few of whom he was personally known. His style and title having soon transpired, and being within that class whom a great man might notice without derogation, four of the Duke's friends, with the obedient start which poor Malvolio ascribes to his imaginary retinue, made out to lead the victor to his presence. As they conducted him in triumph through the crowd of spectators, and stunned him at the same time with their compliments on his success, he chanced to pass, or rather to be led, immediately in front of Lady Margaret and her granddaughter. The Captain of the popinjay and Miss Bellenden coloured like crimson, as the latter returned, with embarrassed courtesy, the low inclination which the victor made, even to the saddle-bow, in passing her.

"Do you know that young person?" said Lady Margaret.

"I—I—have seen him, madam, at my uncle's, and—and elsewhere occasionally," stammered Miss Edith Bellenden.

"I hear them say around me," said Lady Margaret, "that the young spark is the nephew of old Milnwood."

"The son of the late Colonel Morton of Milnwood, who commanded a regiment of horse with great courage at Dunbar and Inverkeithing," said a gentleman who sat on horseback beside Lady Margaret.

"Ay, and who, before that, fought for the Covenanters both at Marston-Moor and Philiphaugh," said Lady Margaret, sighing as she pronounced the last fatal words, which her husband's death gave her such sad reason to remember.

"Your ladyship's memory is just," said the gentleman, smiling, "but it were well all that were forgot now."

"He ought to remember it, Gilbertsleugh," returned Lady Margaret, "and dispense with intruding himself into the company of those to whom his name must bring unpleasant recollections."

"You forget, my dear lady," said her nomenclator, "that the young gentleman comes here to discharge suit and service in name of his uncle. I would every estate in the country sent out as pretty a fellow."

"His uncle, as well as his umquhile father, is a roundhead, I presume," said Lady Margaret.

"He is an old miser," said Gilbertsleugh, "with whom a broad piece would at any time weigh down political opinions, and, therefore, although probably somewhat against the grain, he sends the young gentleman to attend the muster to save pecuniary pains and penalties. As for the rest, I suppose the youngster is happy enough to escape here for a day from the dulness of the old house at Milnwood, where he sees nobody but his hypochondriac uncle and the favourite housekeeper."

"Do you know how many men and horse the lands of Milnwood are rated at?" said the old lady, continuing her enquiry.

"Two horsemen with complete harness," answered Gilbertsleugh.

"Our land," said Lady Margaret, drawing herself up with dignity, "has always furnished to the muster eight men, cousin Gilbertsleugh, and often a voluntary aid of thrice the number. I remember his sacred Majesty King Charles, when he took his disjunct at Tillietudlem, was particular in enquiring"—"I see the Duke's carriage in motion," said Gilbertsleugh, partaking at the moment an alarm common to all Lady Margaret's friends, when she touched upon the topic of the royal visit at the family mansion,—"*I see the Duke's carriage in motion; I presume your ladyship will take your right of rank in leaving the field. May I be permitted to convoy your ladyship and Miss Bellenden home?—Parties of the wild whigs have been abroad, and are said to insult and disarm the well-affected who travel in small numbers.*"

"We thank you, cousin Gilbertsleugh," said Lady Margaret; "but as we shall have the escort of my own people, I trust we have less need than others to be troublesome to our friends. Will you have the goodness to order Harrison to bring up our people somewhat more briskly; he rides them towards us as if he were leading a funeral procession."

The gentleman in attendance communicated his lady's orders to the trusty steward.

Honest Harrison had his own reasons for doubting the prudence of this command; but, once issued and received, there was a necessity for obeying it. He set off, therefore, at a hand-gallop, followed by the butler, in such a military attitude as became one who had served under Montrose, and with a look of defiance, rendered sterner and fiercer by the inspiring fumes of a gill of brandy, which he had snatched a moment to bolt to the king's health, and confusion to the Covenant, during the intervals of military duty. Unhappily this potent refreshment wiped away from the tablets of his memory the necessity of paying some attention to the distresses and difficulties of his rear-file, Goose Gibbie. No sooner had the horses struck a canter, than Gibbie's jack-boots, which the poor boy's legs were incapable of steadying, began to play alternately against the horse's flanks, and, being armed with long-rowelled spurs, overcame the patience of the animal, which bounced and plunged, while poor Gibbie's entreaties for aid never reached the ears of the too heedless butler, being drowned partly in the concave of the steel cap in which his head was immersed, and partly in the martial tune of the Gallant Grames, which Mr Gudyill whistled with all his power of lungs.

The upshot was, that the steed speedily took the matter into his own hands, and having gambolled hither and thither to the great amusement of all spectators, set off at full speed towards the huge family-coach already described. Gibbie's pike, escaping from its sling, had fallen to a level direction across his hands, which, I grieve to say, were seeking dishonourable safety in as strong a grasp of the mane as their muscles could manage. His casque, too, had slipped completely over his face, so that he saw as little in front as he did in rear. Indeed, if he could, it would have availed him little in the circumstances; for his horse, as if in league with the disaffected, ran full tilt towards the solemn equipage of the Duke, which the projecting lance threatened to perforate from window to window, at the risk of transfixing as many in its passage as the celebrated thrust of Orlando, which, according to the Italian epic poet, broached as many Moors as a Frenchman spits frogs.

On beholding the bent of this misdirected career, a panic shout of mingled terror and wrath was set up by the whole equipage, insides and outsides, at once, which had the happy effect of averting the threatened misfortune. The capricious horse of Goose Gibbie was terrified by the noise, and stumbling as he turned short round, kicked and plunged violently as soon as he recovered. The jack-boots, the original cause of the disaster, maintaining the reputation they had acquired when worn by better cavaliers, answered every plunge by a fresh prick of the spurs, and, by their ponderous weight, kept their place in the stirrups. Not so Goose Gibbie, who was fairly spurned out of those wide and ponderous greaves, and precipitated over the horse's head, to the infinite amusement of all the spectators. His lance and helmet had forsaken him in his fall, and, for the completion of his disgrace, Lady Margaret Bellenden, not perfectly aware that it was one of her warriors who was furnishing so much entertainment, came up in time to see her diminutive man-at-arms stripped of his lion's hide,—of the buff-coat, that is, in which he was muffled.

As she had not been made acquainted with this metamorphosis, and could not even guess its cause, her surprise and resentment were extreme, nor were they much modified by the excuses and explanations of her steward and butler. She made a hasty retreat homeward, extremely indignant at the shouts and laughter of the company, and much disposed to vent her displeasure on the refractory agriculturist whose place Goose Gibbie had so unhappily supplied. The greater part of the gentry now dispersed, the whimsical misfortune which had befallen the gens d'armes of Tillietudlem furnishing them with huge entertainment on their road homeward. The horsemen also, in little parties, as their road lay together, diverged from the place of rendezvous, excepting such as, having tried their dexterity at the popinjay, were, by ancient custom, obliged to partake of a grace-cup with their captain before their departure.

CHAPTER IV.

*At fairs he play'd before the spearmen,
And gaily graithed in their gear then,
Steel bonnets, pikes, and swords shone clear then
As ony bead; Now wha sall play before sic weir men,
Since Habbie's dead!*

Elegy on Habbie Simpson.

The cavalcade of horsemen on their road to the little borough-town were preceded by Niel Blane, the town-piper, mounted on his white galloway, armed with his dirk and broadsword, and bearing a chanter streaming with as many ribbons as would deck out six country belles for a fair or preaching. Niel, a clean, tight, well-timbered, long-winded fellow, had gained the official situation of town-piper of—by his merit, with all the emoluments thereof; namely, the Piper's Croft, as it is still called, a field of about an acre in extent, five merks, and a new livery-coat of the town's colours, yearly; some hopes of a dollar upon the day of the election of magistrates, providing the provost were able and willing to afford such a gratuity; and the privilege of paying, at all the respectable houses in the neighbourhood, an annual visit at spring-time, to rejoice their hearts with his music, to comfort his own with their ale and brandy, and to beg from each a modicum of seed-corn.

In addition to these inestimable advantages, Niel's personal, or professional, accomplishments won the heart of a jolly widow, who then kept the principal change-house in the borough. Her former husband having been a strict presbyterian, of such note that he usually went among his sect by the name of Gaius the publican, many of the more rigid were scandalized by the profession of the successor whom his relict had chosen for a second helpmate. As the browst (or brewing) of the Howff retained, nevertheless, its unrivalled reputation, most of the old customers continued to give it a preference. The character of the new landlord, indeed, was of that accommodating kind, which enabled him, by close attention to the helm, to keep his little vessel pretty steady amid the contending tides of faction. He was a good-humoured, shrewd, selfish sort of fellow, indifferent alike to the disputes about church and state, and only anxious to secure the good-will of customers of every description. But his character, as well as the state of the country, will be best understood by giving the reader an account of the instructions which he issued to his daughter, a girl about eighteen, whom he was initiating in those cares which had been faithfully discharged by his wife, until about six months before our story commences, when the honest woman had been carried to the kirkyard.

"Jenny," said Niel Blane, as the girl assisted to disencumber him of his bagpipes, "this is the first day that ye are to take the place of your worthy mother in attending to the public; a douce woman she was, civil to the customers, and had a good name wi' Whig and Tory, baith up the street and down the street. It will be hard for you to fill her place, especially on sic a thrang day as this; but Heaven's will maun be obeyed.—Jenny, whatever Milnwood ca's for, be sure he maun hae't, for he's the Captain o' the Popinjay, and auld customs maun be supported; if he canna pay the lawing himsell, as I ken he's keepit unco short by the head, I'll find a way to shame it out o' his uncle.—The curate is playing at dice wi' Cornet Grahame. Be eident and civil to them baith—clergy and captains can gie an unco deal o' fash in thae times, where they take an ill-will.—The dragoons will be crying for ale, and they wunna want it, and maunna want it—they are unruly chields, but they pay ane some gate or other. I gat the humle-cow, that's the best in the byre, frae black Frank Inglis and Sergeant Bothwell, for ten pund Scots, and they drank out the price at ae downsitting."

"But, father," interrupted Jenny, "they say the twa reiving loons drave the cow frae the gudewife o' Bell's-moor, just because she gaed to hear a field-preaching ae Sabbath afternoon."

"Whisht! ye silly tawpie," said her father, "we have naething to do how they come by the bestial they sell—be that atween them and their consciences.—Aweel—Take notice, Jenny, of that dour, stour-looking carle that sits by the cheek o' the ingle, and turns his back on a' men. He looks like ane o' the hill-folk, for I saw him start a wee when he saw the red-coats, and I jalouse he wad hae liked to hae ridden by, but his horse (it's a gude gelding) was ower sair travailed; he behoved to stop whether he wad or no. Serve him cannily, Jenny, and wi' little din, and dinna bring the sodgers on him by speering ony questions at him; but let na him hae a

room to himsell, they wad say we were hiding him.—For yoursell, Jenny, ye'll be civil to a' the folk, and take nae heed o' ony nonsense and daffing the young lads may say t'ye. Folk in the hostler line maun put up wi' muckle. Your mither, rest her saul, could pit up wi' as muckle as maist women—but aff hands is fair play; and if ony body be uncivil ye may gie me a cry—Aweel,—when the malt begins to get aboon the meal, they'll begin to speak about government in kirk and state, and then, Jenny, they are like to quarrel—let them be doing—anger's a drouthy passion, and the mair they dispute, the mair ale they'll drink; but ye were best serve them wi' a pint o' the sma' browst, it will heat them less, and they'll never ken the difference."

"But, father," said Jenny, "if they come to lounder ilk ither, as they did last time, suldna I cry on you?"

"At no hand, Jenny; the redder gets aye the warst lick in the fray. If the sodgers draw their swords, ye'll cry on the corporal and the guard. If the country folk tak the tangs and poker, ye'll cry on the bailie and town-officers. But in nae event cry on me, for I am wearied wi' doudling the bag o' wind a' day, and I am gaun to eat my dinner quietly in the spence.—And, now I think on't, the Laird of Lickitup (that's him that was the laird) was speering for sma' drink and a saut herring—gie him a pu' be the sleeve, and round into his lug I wad be blithe o' his company to dine wi' me; he was a gude customer anes in a day, and wants naething but means to be a gude ane again—he likes drink as weel as e'er he did. And if ye ken ony puir body o' our acquaintance that's blate for want o' siller, and has far to gang hame, ye needna stick to gie them a waught o' drink and a bannock—we'll ne'er miss't, and it looks creditable in a house like ours. And now, hinny, gang awa', and serve the folk, but first bring me my dinner, and twa chappins o' yill and the mutchkin stoup o' brandy."

Having thus devolved his whole cares on Jenny as prime minister, Niel Blane and the ci-devant laird, once his patron, but now glad to be his trencher-companion, sate down to enjoy themselves for the remainder of the evening, remote from the bustle of the public room.

All in Jenny's department was in full activity. The knights of the popinjay received and requited the hospitable entertainment of their captain, who, though he spared the cup himself, took care it should go round with due celerity among the rest, who might not have otherwise deemed themselves handsomely treated. Their numbers melted away by degrees, and were at length diminished to four or five, who began to talk of breaking up their party. At another table, at some distance, sat two of the dragoons, whom Niel Blane had mentioned, a sergeant and a private in the celebrated John Grahame of Claverhouse's regiment of Life-Guards. Even the non-commissioned officers and privates in these corps were not considered as ordinary mercenaries, but rather approached to the rank of the French mousquetaires, being regarded in the light of cadets, who performed the duties of rank-and-file with the prospect of obtaining commissions in case of distinguishing themselves.

Many young men of good families were to be found in the ranks, a circumstance which added to the pride and self-consequence of these troops. A remarkable instance of this occurred in the person of the non-commissioned officer in question. His real name was Francis Stewart, but he was universally known by the appellation of Bothwell, being lineally descended from the last earl of that name; not the infamous lover of the unfortunate Queen Mary, but Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, whose turbulence and repeated conspiracies embarrassed the early part of James Sixth's reign, and who at length died in exile in great poverty. The son of this Earl had sued to Charles I. for the restitution of part of his father's forfeited estates, but the grasp of the nobles to whom they had been allotted was too tenacious to be unclenched. The breaking out of the civil wars utterly ruined him, by intercepting a small pension which Charles I. had allowed him, and he died in the utmost indigence. His son, after having served as a soldier abroad and in Britain, and passed through several vicissitudes of fortune, was fain to content himself with the situation of a non-commissioned officer in the Life-Guards, although lineally descended from the royal family, the father of the forfeited Earl of Bothwell having been a natural son of James VI.

[Note: Sergeant Bothwell. The history of the restless and ambitious Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, makes a considerable figure in the reign of James VI. of Scotland, and First of England. After being repeatedly pardoned for acts of treason, he was at length obliged to retire abroad, where he died in great misery. Great part of his forfeited estate was bestowed on Walter Scott, first Lord of Buccleuch, and on the first Earl of Roxburghe.

Francis Stewart, son of the forfeited Earl, obtained from the favour of Charles I. a decret-arbitral, appointing the two noblemen, grantees of his father's estate, to restore the same, or make some compensation for retaining it. The barony of Crichton, with its beautiful castle, was surrendered by the curators of Francis, Earl of Buccleuch, but he retained the far more extensive property in Liddesdale. James Stewart also, as appears from writings in the author's possession, made an advantageous composition with the Earl of Roxburghe. "But," says the satirical Scotstarvet, "male parta pejus dilabuntur;" for he never brooked them, (enjoyed them,) nor was any thing the richer, since they accrued to his creditors, and are now in the possession of Dr Seaton. His eldest son Francis became a trooper in the late war; as for the other brother John, who was Abbot of Coldingham, he also disposed all that estate, and now has nothing, but lives on the charity of his friends. "The Staggering State of the Scots Statesmen for One Hundred Years," by Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet. Edinburgh, 1754. P. 154.

Francis Stewart, who had been a trooper during the great Civil War, seems to have received no preferment, after the Restoration, suited to his high birth, though, in fact, third cousin to Charles II. Captain Crichton, the friend of Dean Swift, who published his Memoirs, found him a private gentleman in the King's Life-Guards. At the same time this was no degrading condition; for Fountainhall records a duel fought between a Life-Guardsman and an officer in the militia, because the latter had taken upon him to assume superior rank as an officer, to a gentleman private in the Life-Guards. The Life-Guards man was killed in the rencontre, and his antagonist was executed for murder.

The character of Bothwell, except in relation to the name, is entirely ideal.]

Great personal strength, and dexterity in the use of his arms, as well as the remarkable circumstances of his descent, had recommended this man to the attention of his officers. But he partook in a great degree of the licentiousness and oppressive disposition, which the habit of acting as agents for government in levying fines, exacting free quarters, and otherwise oppressing the Presbyterian recusants, had rendered too general among these soldiers. They were so much accustomed to such missions, that they conceived themselves at liberty to commit all manner of license with impunity, as if totally exempted from all law and authority, excepting the command of their officers. On such occasions Bothwell was usually the most forward.

It is probable that Bothwell and his companions would not so long have remained quiet, but for respect to the presence of their Cornet, who commanded the small party quartered in the borough, and who was engaged in a game at dice with the curate of the place. But both of these being suddenly called from their amusement to speak with the chief magistrate upon some urgent business, Bothwell was not long of evincing his contempt for the rest of the company.

"Is it not a strange thing, Halliday," he said to his comrade, "to see a set of bumpkins sit carousing here this whole evening, without having drank the king's health?"

"They have drank the king's health," said Halliday. "I heard that green kail-worm of a lad name his majesty's health."

"Did he?" said Bothwell. "Then, Tom, we'll have them drink the Archbishop of St Andrew's health, and do it on their knees too."

"So we will, by G—," said Halliday; "and he that refuses it, we'll have him to the guard-house, and teach him to ride the colt foaled of an acorn, with a brace of carabines at each foot to keep him steady."

"Right, Tom," continued Bothwell; "and, to do all things in order, I'll begin with that sulky blue-bonnet in the ingle-nook."

He rose accordingly, and taking his sheathed broadsword under his arm to support the insolence which he meditated, placed himself in front of the stranger noticed by Niel Blane, in his admonitions to his daughter, as being, in all probability, one of the hill-folk, or refractory presbyterians.

"I make so bold as to request of your precision, beloved," said the trooper, in a tone of affected solemnity, and assuming the snuffle of a country preacher, "that you will arise from your seat, beloved, and, having bent your hams until your knees do rest upon the floor, beloved, that you will turn over this measure (called by the profane a gill) of the comfortable creature, which the carnal denominate brandy, to the health and glorification of his Grace the Archbishop of St Andrews, the worthy primate of all Scotland."

All waited for the stranger's answer.—His features, austere even to ferocity, with a cast of eye, which, without being actually oblique, approached nearly to a squint, and which gave a very sinister expression to his countenance, joined to a frame, square, strong, and muscular, though something under the middle size, seemed to announce a man unlikely to understand rude jesting, or to receive insults with impunity.

"And what is the consequence," said he, "if I should not be disposed to comply with your uncivil request?"

"The consequence thereof, beloved," said Bothwell, in the same tone of railery, "will be, firstly, that I will tweak thy proboscis or nose. Secondly, beloved, that I will administer my fist to thy distorted visual optics; and will conclude, beloved, with a practical application of the flat of my sword to the shoulders of the recusant."

"Is it even so?" said the stranger; "then give me the cup," and, taking it in his hand, he said, with a peculiar expression of voice and manner, "The Archbishop of St Andrews, and the place he now worthily holds;—may each prelate in Scotland soon be as the Right Reverend James Sharpe!"

"He has taken the test," said Halliday, exultingly.

"But with a qualification," said Bothwell; "I don't understand what the devil the crop-eared whig means."

"Come, gentlemen," said Morton, who became impatient of their insolence, "we are here met as good subjects, and on a merry occasion; and we have a right to expect we shall not be troubled with this sort of discussion."

Bothwell was about to make a surly answer, but Halliday reminded him in a whisper, that there were strict injunctions that the soldiers should give no offence to the men who were sent out to the musters agreeably to the council's orders. So, after honouring Morton with a broad and fierce stare, he said, "Well, Mr Popinjay, I shall not disturb your reign; I reckon it will be out by twelve at night.—Is it not an odd thing, Halliday," he continued, addressing his companion, "that they should make such a fuss about cracking off their birding-pieces at a mark which any woman or boy could hit at a day's practice? If Captain Popinjay now, or any of his troop, would try a bout, either with the broadsword, backsword, single rapier, or rapier and dagger, for a gold noble, the first-drawn blood, there would be some soul in it,—or, zounds, would the bumpkins but wrestle, or pitch the bar, or putt the stone, or throw the axle-tree, if (touching the end of Morton's sword scornfully with his toe) they carry things about them that they are afraid to draw."

Morton's patience and prudence now gave way entirely, and he was about to make a very angry answer to Bothwell's insolent observations, when the stranger stepped forward.

"This is my quarrel," he said, "and in the name of the good cause, I will see it out myself.—Hark thee, friend," (to Bothwell,) "wilt thou wrestle a fall with me?"

"With my whole spirit, beloved," answered Bothwell; "yea I will strive with thee, to the downfall of one or both."

"Then, as my trust is in Him that can help," retorted his antagonist, "I will forthwith make thee an example to all such railing Rabshakehs!"

With that he dropped his coarse grey horseman's coat from his shoulders, and, extending his strong brawny arms with a look of determined resolution, he offered himself to the contest. The soldier was nothing abashed by the muscular frame, broad chest, square shoulders, and hardy look of his antagonist, but, whistling with great composure, unbuckled his belt, and laid aside his military coat. The company stood round them, anxious for the event.

In the first struggle the trooper seemed to have some advantage, and also in the second, though neither could be considered as decisive. But it was plain he had put his whole strength too suddenly forth, against an antagonist possessed of great endurance, skill, vigour, and length of wind. In the third close, the countryman lifted his opponent fairly from the floor, and hurled him to the ground with such violence, that he lay for an instant stunned and motionless. His comrade Halliday immediately drew his sword; "You have killed my sergeant," he exclaimed to the victorious wrestler, "and by all that is sacred you shall answer it!"

"Stand back!" cried Morton and his companions, "it was all fair play; your comrade sought a fall, and he has got it."

"That is true enough," said Bothwell, as he slowly rose; "put up your bilbo, Tom. I did not think there was a crop-ear of them all could have laid the best cap and feather in the King's Life-Guards on the floor of a rascally change-house.—Hark ye, friend, give me your hand." The stranger held out his hand. "I promise you," said Bothwell, squeezing his hand very hard, "that the time will come when we shall meet again, and try this game over in a more earnest manner."

"And I'll promise you," said the stranger, returning the grasp with equal firmness, "that when we next meet, I will lay your head as low as it lay even now, when you shall lack the power to lift it up again."

"Well, beloved," answered Bothwell, "if thou be'st a whig, thou art a stout and a brave one, and so good even to thee—Hadst best take thy nag before the Cornet makes the round; for, I promise thee, he has stay'd less suspicious-looking persons."

The stranger seemed to think that the hint was not to be neglected; he flung down his reckoning, and going into the stable, saddled and brought out a powerful black horse, now recruited by rest and forage, and turning to Morton, observed, "I ride towards Milnwood, which I hear is your home; will you give me the advantage and protection of your company?"

"Certainly," said Morton; although there was something of gloomy and relentless severity in the man's manner from which his mind recoiled. His companions, after a courteous good-night, broke up and went off in different directions, some keeping them company for about a mile, until they dropped off one by one, and the travellers were left alone.

The company had not long left the Howff, as Blane's public-house was called, when the trumpets and kettle-drums sounded. The troopers got under arms in the market-place at this unexpected summons, while, with faces of anxiety and earnestness, Cornet Grahame, a kinsman of Claverhouse, and the Provost of the borough, followed by half-a-dozen soldiers, and town-officers with halberds, entered the apartment of Niel Blane.

"Guard the doors!" were the first words which the Cornet spoke; "let no man leave the house.—So, Bothwell, how comes this? Did you not hear them sound boot and saddle?"

"He was just going to quarters, sir," said his comrade; "he has had a bad fall."

"In a fray, I suppose?" said Grahame. "If you neglect duty in this way, your royal blood will hardly protect you."

"How have I neglected duty?" said Bothwell, sulkily.

"You should have been at quarters, Sergeant Bothwell," replied the officer; "you have lost a golden opportunity. Here are news come that the Archbishop of St Andrews has been strangely and foully assassinated by a body of the rebel whigs, who pursued and stopped his carriage on Magus-Muir, near the town of St Andrews, dragged him out, and dispatched him with their swords and daggers." [Note: The general account of this act of assassination is to be found in all histories of the period. A more particular narrative may be found in the words of one of the actors, James Russell, in the Appendix to Kirkton's History of the Church of Scotland, published by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esquire. 4to, Edinburgh, 1817.]

All stood aghast at the intelligence.

"Here are their descriptions," continued the Cornet, pulling out a proclamation, "the reward of a thousand merks is on each of their heads."

"The test, the test, and the qualification!" said Bothwell to Halliday; "I know the meaning now—Zounds, that we should not have stopt him! Go saddle our horses, Halliday.—Was there one of the men, Cornet, very stout and square-made, double-chested, thin in the flanks, hawk-nosed?"

"Stay, stay," said Cornet Grahame, "let me look at the paper.—Hackston of Rathillet, tall, thin, black-haired."

"That is not my man," said Bothwell.

"John Balfour, called Burley, aquiline nose, red-haired, five feet eight inches in height"—"It is he—it is the very man!" said Bothwell,—"skellies fearfully with one eye?"

"Right," continued Grahame, "rode a strong black horse, taken from the primate at the time of the murder."

"The very man," exclaimed Bothwell, "and the very horse! he was in this room not a quarter of an hour since."

A few hasty enquiries tended still more to confirm the opinion, that the reserved and stern stranger was Balfour of Burley, the actual commander of the band of assassins, who, in the fury of misguided zeal, had murdered the primate, whom they accidentally met, as they were searching for another person against whom they bore enmity. [Note: One Carmichael, sheriff-depute in Fife, who had been active in enforcing the penal measures against non-conformists. He was on the moors hunting, but receiving accidental information that a party was out in quest of him, he returned home, and escaped the fate designed for him, which befell his patron the Archbishop.] In their excited imagination the casual rencounter had the appearance of a providential interference, and they put to death the archbishop, with circumstances of great and cold-blooded cruelty, under the belief, that the Lord, as they expressed it, had delivered him into their hands.

[Note: Murderers of Archbishop Sharpe. The leader of this party was David Hackston, of Rathillet, a gentleman of ancient birth and good estate. He had been profligate in his younger days, but having been led from curiosity to attend the conventicles of the nonconforming clergy, he adopted their principles in the fullest extent. It appears, that Hackston had some personal quarrel with Archbishop Sharpe, which induced him to decline the command of the party when the slaughter was determined upon, fearing his acceptance might be ascribed to motives of personal enmity. He felt himself free in conscience, however, to be present; and when the archbishop, dragged from his carriage, crawled towards him on his knees for protection, he replied coldly, "Sir, I will never lay a finger on you." It is remarkable that Hackston, as well as a shepherd who was also present, but passive, on the occasion, were the only two of the party of assassins who suffered death by the hands of the executioner.]

On Hackston refusing the command, it was by universal suffrage conferred on John Balfour of Kinloch, called Burley, who was Hackston's brother-in-law. He is described "as a little man, squint-eyed, and of a very fierce aspect."—"He was," adds the same author, "by some reckoned none of the most religious; yet he was always reckoned zealous and honest-hearted, courageous in every enterprise, and a brave soldier, seldom any escaping that came into his hands. He was the principal actor in killing that arch-traitor to the Lord and his church, James Sharpe." See Scottish Worthies. 8vo. Leith, 1816. Page 522.]

"Horse, horse, and pursue, my lads!" exclaimed Cornet Grahame; "the murdering dog's head is worth its weight in gold."

CHAPTER V.

*Arouse thee, youth!—it is no human call—
God's church is leaguer'd—haste to man the wall;
Haste where the Redcross banners wave on high,
Signal of honour'd death, or victory!
James Duff.*

Morton and his companion had attained some distance from the town before either of them addressed the other. There was something, as we have observed, repulsive in the manner of the stranger, which prevented Morton from opening the conversation, and he himself seemed to have no desire to talk, until, on a sudden, he abruptly demanded, "What has your father's son to do with such profane mummeries as I find you this day engaged in?"

"I do my duty as a subject, and pursue my harmless recreations according to my own pleasure," replied Morton, somewhat offended.

"Is it your duty, think you, or that of any Christian young man, to bear arms in their cause who have poured out the blood of God's saints in the wilderness as if it had been water? or is it a lawful recreation to waste time in shooting at a bunch of feathers, and close your evening with winebibbing in public-houses and market-towns, when He that is mighty is come into the land with his fan in his hand, to purge the wheat from the chaff?"

"I suppose from your style of conversation," said Morton, "that you are one of those who have thought proper to stand out against the government. I must remind you that you are unnecessarily using dangerous language in the presence of a mere stranger, and that the times do not render it safe for me to listen to it."

"Thou canst not help it, Henry Morton," said his companion; "thy Master has his uses for thee, and when he calls, thou must obey. Well wot I thou hast not heard the call of a true preacher, or thou hadst ere now been what thou wilt assuredly one day become."

"We are of the presbyterian persuasion, like yourself," said Morton; for his uncle's family attended the ministry of one of those numerous presbyterian clergymen, who, complying with certain regulations, were licensed to preach without interruption from the government. This indulgence, as it was called, made a great schism among the presbyterians, and those who accepted of it were severely censured by the more rigid sectaries, who refused the proffered terms. The stranger, therefore, answered with great disdain to Morton's profession of faith.

"That is but an equivocation—a poor equivocation. Ye listen on the Sabbath to a cold, worldly, time-serving discourse, from one who forgets his high commission so much as to hold his apostleship by the favour of the courtiers and the false prelates, and ye call that hearing the word! Of all the baits with which the devil has fished for souls in these days of blood and darkness, that Black Indulgence has been the most destructive. An awful dispensation it has been, a smiting of the shepherd and a scattering of the sheep upon the mountains—an uplifting of one Christian banner against another, and a fighting of the wars of darkness with the swords of the children of light!"

"My uncle," said Morton, "is of opinion, that we enjoy a reasonable freedom of conscience under the indulged clergymen, and I must necessarily be guided by his sentiments respecting the choice of a place of worship for his family."

"Your uncle," said the horseman, "is one of those to whom the least lamb in his own folds at Milnwood is dearer than the whole Christian flock. He is one that could willingly bend down to the golden-calf of Bethel, and would have fished for the dust thereof when it was ground to powder and cast upon the waters. Thy father was a man of another stamp."

"My father," replied Morton, "was indeed a brave and gallant man. And you may have heard, sir, that he fought for that royal family in whose name I was this day carrying arms."

"Ay; and had he lived to see these days, he would have cursed the hour he ever drew sword in their cause. But more of this hereafter—I promise thee full surely that thy hour will come, and then the words thou hast now heard will stick in thy bosom like barbed arrows. My road lies there."

He pointed towards a pass leading up into a wild extent of dreary and desolate hills; but as he was about to turn his horse's head into the rugged path, which led from the high-road in that direction, an old woman wrapped in a red cloak, who was sitting by the cross-way, arose, and approaching him, said, in a mysterious tone of voice, "If ye be of our ain folk, gangna up the pass the night for your lives. There is a lion in the path, that is there. The curate of Brotherstane and ten soldiers hae beset the pass, to hae the lives of ony of our puir wanderers that venture that gate to join wi' Hamilton and Dingwall."

"Have the persecuted folk drawn to any head among themselves?" demanded the stranger.

"About sixty or seventy horse and foot," said the old dame; "but, ewhow! they are puirly armed, and warse fended wi' victual."

"God will help his own," said the horseman. "Which way shall I take to join them?"

"It's a mere impossibility this night," said the woman, "the troopers keep sae strict a guard; and they say there's strange news come frae the east, that makes them rage in their cruelty mair fierce than ever—Ye maun take shelter somegate for the night before ye get to the muirs, and keep yoursell in hiding till the grey o' the morning, and then you may find your way through the Drake Moss. When I heard the awfu' threatenings o' the oppressors, I e'en took my cloak about me, and sate down by the wayside, to warn ony of our puir scattered remnant that chanced to come this gate, before they fell into the nets of the spoilers."

"Have you a house near this?" said the stranger; "and can you give me hiding there?"

"I have," said the old woman, "a hut by the way-side, it may be a mile from hence; but four men of Belial, called dragoons, are lodged therein, to spoil my household goods at their pleasure, because I will not wait upon the thowless, thriftless, fissenless ministry of that carnal man, John Halftext, the curate."

"Good night, good woman, and thanks for thy counsel," said the stranger, as he rode away.

"The blessings of the promise upon you," returned the old dame; "may He keep you that can keep you."

"Amen!" said the traveller; "for where to hide my head this night, mortal skill cannot direct me."

"I am very sorry for your distress," said Morton; "and had I a house or place of shelter that could be called my own, I almost think I would risk the utmost rigour of the law rather than leave you in such a strait. But my uncle is so alarmed at the pains and penalties denounced by the laws against such as comfort, receive, or consort with intercommuned persons, that he has strictly forbidden all of us to hold any intercourse with them."

"It is no less than I expected," said the stranger; "nevertheless, I might be received without his knowledge;—a barn, a hay-loft, a cart-shed,—any place where I could stretch me down, would be to my habits like a tabernacle of silver set about with planks of cedar."

"I assure you," said Morton, much embarrassed, "that I have not the means of receiving you at Milnwood without my uncle's consent and knowledge; nor, if I could do so, would I think myself justifiable in engaging him unconsciously in danger, which, most of all others, he fears and deprecates."

"Well," said the traveller, "I have but one word to say. Did you ever hear your father mention John Balfour of Burley?"

"His ancient friend and comrade, who saved his life, with almost the loss of his own, in the battle of Longmarston-Moor?—Often, very often."

"I am that Balfour," said his companion. "Yonder stands thy uncle's house; I see the light among the trees. The avenger of blood is behind me, and my death certain unless I have refuge there. Now, make thy choice, young man; to shrink from the side of thy father's friend, like a thief in the night, and to leave him exposed to the bloody death from which he rescued thy father, or to expose thine uncle's wordly goods to such peril, as, in this perverse generation, attends those who give a morsel of bread or a draught of cold water to a Christian man, when perishing for lack of refreshment!"

A thousand recollections thronged on the mind of Morton at once. His father, whose memory he idolized, had often enlarged upon his obligations to this man, and regretted, that, after having been long comrades, they had parted in some unkindness at the time when the kingdom of Scotland was divided into Resolutioners and Protesters; the former of whom adhered to Charles II. after his father's death upon the scaffold, while the Protesters inclined rather to a union with the triumphant republicans. The stern fanaticism of Burley had attached him to this latter party, and the comrades had parted in displeasure, never, as it happened, to meet again. These circumstances the deceased Colonel Morton had often mentioned to his son, and always with an expression of deep regret, that he had never, in any manner, been enabled to repay the assistance, which, on more than one occasion, he had received from Burley.

To hasten Morton's decision, the night-wind, as it swept along, brought from a distance the sullen sound of a kettle-drum, which, seeming to approach nearer, intimated that a body of horse were upon their march towards them.

"It must be Claverhouse, with the rest of his regiment. What can have occasioned this night-march? If you go on, you fall into their hands—if you turn back towards the borough-town, you are in no less danger from Cornet Grahame's party.—The path to the hill is beset. I must shelter you at Milnwood, or expose you to instant death;—but the punishment of the law shall fall upon myself, as in justice it should, not upon my uncle.—Follow me."

Burley, who had awaited his resolution with great composure, now followed him in silence.

The house of Milnwood, built by the father of the present proprietor, was a decent mansion, suitable to the size of the estate, but, since the accession of this owner, it had been suffered to go considerably into disrepair. At some little distance from the house stood the court of offices. Here Morton paused.

"I must leave you here for a little while," he whispered, "until I can provide a bed for you in the house."

"I care little for such delicacy," said Burley; "for thirty years this head has rested oftener on the turf, or on the next grey stone, than upon either wool or down. A draught of ale, a morsel of bread, to say my prayers, and to stretch me upon dry hay, were to me as good as a painted chamber and a prince's table."

It occurred to Morton at the same moment, that to attempt to introduce the fugitive within the house, would materially increase the danger of detection. Accordingly, having struck a light with implements left in the stable for that purpose, and having fastened up their horses, he assigned Burley, for his place of repose, a wooden bed, placed in a loft half-full of hay, which an out-of-door domestic had occupied until dismissed by his uncle in one of those fits of parsimony which became more rigid from day to day. In this untenanted loft Morton left his companion, with a caution so to shade his light that no reflection might be seen from the window, and a promise that he would presently return with such refreshments as he might be able to procure at that late hour. This last, indeed, was a subject on which he felt by no means confident, for the power of obtaining even the most ordinary provisions depended entirely upon the humour in which he

might happen to find his uncle's sole confidant, the old housekeeper. If she chanced to be a-bed, which was very likely, or out of humour, which was not less so, Morton well knew the case to be at least problematical.

Cursing in his heart the sordid parsimony which pervaded every part of his uncle's establishment, he gave the usual gentle knock at the bolted door, by which he was accustomed to seek admittance, when accident had detained him abroad beyond the early and established hours of rest at the house of Milnwood. It was a sort of hesitating tap, which carried an acknowledgment of transgression in its very sound, and seemed rather to solicit than command attention. After it had been repeated again and again, the housekeeper, grumbling betwixt her teeth as she rose from the chimney corner in the hall, and wrapping her checked handkerchief round her head to secure her from the cold air, paced across the stone-passage, and repeated a careful "Wha's there at this time o' night?" more than once before she undid the bolts and bars, and cautiously opened the door.

"This is a fine time o' night, Mr Henry," said the old dame, with the tyrannic insolence of a spoilt and favourite domestic;—"a braw time o' night and a bonny, to disturb a peaceful house in, and to keep quiet folk out o' their beds waiting for you. Your uncle's been in his maist three hours syne, and Robin's ill o' the rheumatize, and he's to his bed too, and sae I had to sit up for ye mysell, for as sair a hoast as I hae."

Here she coughed once or twice, in further evidence of the egregious inconvenience which she had sustained.

"Much obliged to you, Alison, and many kind thanks."

"Hegh, sirs, sae fair-fashioned as we are! Mony folk ca' me Mistress Wilson, and Milnwood himsell is the only ane about this town thinks o' ca'ing me Alison, and indeed he as often says Mrs Alison as any other thing."

"Well, then, Mistress Alison," said Morton, "I really am sorry to have kept you up waiting till I came in."

"And now that you are come in, Mr Henry," said the cross old woman, "what for do you no tak up your candle and gang to your bed? and mind ye dinna let the candle sweal as ye gang along the wainscot parlour, and haud a' the house scouring to get out the grease again."

"But, Alison, I really must have something to eat, and a draught of ale, before I go to bed."

"Eat?—and ale, Mr Henry?—My certie, ye're ill to serve! Do ye think we havena heard o' your grand popinjay wark yonder, and how ye bleezed away as muckle pouter as wad hae shot a' the wild-fowl that we'll want atween and Candlemas—and then ganging majoring to the piper's Howff wi' a' the idle loons in the country, and sitting there birling, at your poor uncle's cost, nae doubt, wi' a' the scaff and raff o' the water-side, till sun-down, and then coming hame and crying for ale, as if ye were maister and mair!"

Extremely vexed, yet anxious, on account of his guest, to procure refreshments if possible, Morton suppressed his resentment, and good-humouredly assured Mrs Wilson, that he was really both hungry and thirsty; "and as for the shooting at the popinjay, I have heard you say you have been there yourself, Mrs Wilson—I wish you had come to look at us."

"Ah, Maister Henry," said the old dame, "I wish ye binna beginning to learn the way of blawing in a woman's lug wi' a' your whilly-wha's!—Aweel, sae ye dinna practise them but on auld wives like me, the less matter. But tak heed o' the young queans, lad.—Popinjay—ye think yoursell a braw fellow enow; and troth!" (surveying him with the candle,) "there's nae fault to find wi' the outside, if the inside be conforming. But I mind, when I was a gilpy of a lassock, seeing the Duke, that was him that lost his head at London—folk said it wasna a very gude ane, but it was aye a sair loss to him, puir gentleman—Aweel, he wan the popinjay, for few cared to win it ower his Grace's head—weel, he had a comely presence, and when a' the gentles mounted to show their capers, his Grace was as near to me as I am to you; and he said to me, 'Tak tent o' yoursell, my bonny lassie, (these were his very words,) for my horse is not very chancy.'—And now, as ye say ye had sae little to eat or drink, I'll let you see that I havena been sae unmindfu' o' you; for I dinna think it's safe for young folk to gang to their bed on an empty stomach."

To do Mrs Wilson justice, her nocturnal harangues upon such occasions not unfrequently terminated with this sage apophthegm, which always prefaced the producing of some provision a little better than ordinary, such as she now placed before him. In fact, the principal object of her maundering was to display her consequence and love of power; for Mrs Wilson was not, at the bottom, an illtempered woman, and certainly loved her old and young master (both of whom she tormented extremely) better than any one else in the world. She now eyed Mr Henry, as she called him, with great complacency, as he partook of her good cheer.

"Muckle gude may it do ye, my bonny man. I trow ye dinna get sic a skirl-in-the-pan as that at Niel Blane's. His wife was a canny body, and could dress things very weel for ane in her line o' business, but no like a gentleman's housekeeper, to be sure. But I doubt the daughter's a silly thing—an unco cockernony she had busked on her head at the kirk last Sunday. I am doubting that there will be news o' a' thae braws. But my auld een's drawing thegither—dinna hurry yoursell, my bonny man, tak mind about the putting out the candle, and there's a horn of ale, and a glass of clow-gillie-flower water; I dinna gie ilka body that; I keep it for a pain I hae whiles in my ain stomach, and it's better for your young blood than brandy. Sae, gude-night to ye, Mr Henry, and see that ye tak gude care o' the candle."

Morton promised to attend punctually to her caution, and requested her not to be alarmed if she heard the door opened, as she knew he must again, as usual, look to his horse, and arrange him for the night. Mrs Wilson then retreated, and Morton, folding up his provisions, was about to hasten to his guest, when the nodding head of the old housekeeper was again thrust in at the door, with an admonition, to remember to take an account of his ways before he laid himself down to rest, and to pray for protection during the hours of darkness.

Such were the manners of a certain class of domestics, once common in Scotland, and perhaps still to be found in some old manor-houses in its remote counties. They were fixtures in the family they belonged to; and as they never conceived the possibility of such a thing as dismissal to be within the chances of their lives, they were, of course, sincerely attached to every member of it. [Note: A masculine retainer of this kind, having offended his master extremely, was commanded to leave his service instantly. "In troth and that will I not," answered the domestic; "if your honour disna ken when ye hae a gude servant, I ken when I hae a gude master, and go away I will not." On another occasion of the same nature, the master said, "John, you and I shall never sleep under the same roof again;" to which John replied, with much, "Whare the deil can your honour be ganging?"] On the other hand, when spoiled by the indulgence or indolence of their superiors, they were very apt to become ill-tempered, self-sufficient, and tyrannical; so much so, that a mistress or master would sometimes almost have wished to exchange their crossgrained fidelity for the smooth and accommodating duplicity of a modern menial.

CHAPTER VI.

*Yea, this man's brow, like to a tragic leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.
Shakspeare.*

Being at length rid of the housekeeper's presence, Morton made a collection of what he had reserved from the provisions set before him, and prepared to carry them to his concealed guest. He did not think it necessary to take a light, being perfectly acquainted with every turn of the road; and it was lucky he did not do so, for he had hardly stepped beyond the threshold ere a heavy trampling of horses announced, that the body of cavalry, whose kettle-drums [Note: Regimental music is never played at night. But who can assure us that such was not the custom in Charles the Second's time? Till I am well informed on this point, the kettle-drums shall clash on, as adding something to the picturesque effect of the night march.] they had before heard, were in the act of passing along the high-road which winds round the foot of the bank on which the house of Milnwood was placed. He heard the commanding officer distinctly give the word halt. A pause of silence followed, interrupted only by the occasional neighing or pawing of an impatient charger.

"Whose house is this?" said a voice, in a tone of authority and command.

"Milnwood, if it like your honour," was the reply.

"Is the owner well affected?" said the enquirer.

"He complies with the orders of government, and frequents an indulged minister," was the response.

"Hum! ay! indulged? a mere mask for treason, very impolitically allowed to those who are too great cowards to wear their principles barefaced.— Had we not better send up a party and search the house, in case some of the bloody villains concerned in this heathenish butchery may be concealed in it?"

Ere Morton could recover from the alarm into which this proposal had thrown him, a third speaker rejoined, "I cannot think it at all necessary; Milnwood is an infirm, hypochondriac old man, who never meddles with politics, and loves his moneybags and bonds better than any thing else in the world. His nephew, I hear, was at the wappenschaw to-day, and gained the popinjay, which does not look like a fanatic. I should think they are all gone to bed long since, and an alarm at this time of night might kill the poor old man."

"Well," rejoined the leader, "if that be so, to search the house would be lost time, of which we have but little to throw away. Gentlemen of the Life-Guards, forward—March!"

A few notes on the trumpet, mingled with the occasional boom of the kettle-drum, to mark the cadence, joined with the tramp of hoofs and the clash of arms, announced that the troop had resumed its march. The moon broke out as the leading files of the column attained a hill up which the road winded, and showed indistinctly the glittering of the steel-caps; and the dark figures of the horses and riders might be imperfectly traced through the gloom. They continued to advance up the hill, and sweep over the top of it in such long succession, as intimated a considerable numerical force.

When the last of them had disappeared, young Morton resumed his purpose of visiting his guest. Upon entering the place of refuge, he found him seated on his humble couch with a pocket Bible open in his hand, which he seemed to study with intense meditation. His broadsword, which he had unsheathed in the first alarm at the arrival of the dragoons, lay naked across his knees, and the little taper that stood beside him upon the old chest, which served the purpose of a table, threw a partial and imperfect light upon those stern and harsh features, in which ferocity was rendered more solemn and dignified by a wild cast of tragic enthusiasm. His brow was that of one in whom some strong o'ermastering principle has overwhelmed all other passions and feelings, like the swell of a high spring-tide, when the usual cliffs and breakers vanish from the eye, and their existence is only indicated by the chasing foam of the waves that burst and wheel over them. He raised his head, after Morton had contemplated him for about a minute.

"I perceive," said Morton, looking at his sword, "that you heard the horsemen ride by; their passage delayed me for some minutes."

"I scarcely heeded them," said Balfour; "my hour is not yet come. That I shall one day fall into their hands, and be honourably associated with the saints whom they have slaughtered, I am full well aware. And I would, young man, that the hour were come; it should be as welcome to me as ever wedding to bridegroom. But if my Master has more work for me on earth, I must not do his labour grudgingly."

"Eat and refresh yourself," said Morton; "tomorrow your safety requires you should leave this place, in order to gain the hills, so soon as you can see to distinguish the track through the morasses."

"Young man," returned Balfour, "you are already weary of me, and would be yet more so, perchance, did you know the task upon which I have been lately put. And I wonder not that it should be so, for there are times when I am weary of myself. Think you not it is a sore trial for flesh and blood, to be called upon to execute the righteous judgments of Heaven while we are yet in the body, and continue to retain that blinded sense and sympathy for carnal suffering, which makes our own flesh thrill when we strike a gash upon the body of another? And think you, that when some prime tyrant has been removed from his place, that the instruments of his punishment can at all times look back on their share in his downfall with firm and unshaken nerves? Must they not sometimes even question the truth of that inspiration which they have felt and acted under? Must they not sometimes doubt the origin of that strong impulse with which their prayers for heavenly direction under difficulties have been inwardly answered and confirmed, and confuse, in their disturbed apprehensions, the responses of Truth itself with some strong delusion of the enemy?"

"These are subjects, Mr Balfour, on which I am ill qualified to converse with you," answered Morton; "but I own I should strongly doubt the origin of any inspiration which seemed to dictate a line of conduct contrary to those feelings of natural humanity, which Heaven has assigned to us as the general law of our conduct."

Balfour seemed somewhat disturbed, and drew himself hastily up, but immediately composed himself, and answered coolly, "It is natural you should think so; you are yet in the dungeon-house of the law, a pit darker than that into which Jeremiah was plunged, even the dungeon of Malcaiah the son of Hamelmelech, where there was no water but mire. Yet is the seal of the covenant upon your forehead, and the son of the righteous, who resisted to blood where the banner was spread on the mountains, shall not be utterly lost, as one of the children of darkness. Trow ye, that in this day of bitterness and calamity, nothing is required at our hands but to keep the moral law as far as our carnal frailty will permit? Think ye our conquests must be only over our corrupt and evil affections and passions? No; we are called upon, when we have girded up our loins, to run the race boldly, and when we have drawn the sword, we are enjoined to smite the ungodly, though he be our neighbour, and the man of power and cruelty, though he were of our own kindred, and the friend of our own bosom."

"These are the sentiments," said Morton, "that your enemies impute to you, and which palliate, if they do not vindicate, the cruel measures which the council have directed against you. They affirm, that you pretend to derive your rule of action from what you call an inward light, rejecting the restraints of legal magistracy, of national law, and even of common humanity, when in opposition to what you call the spirit within you."

"They do us wrong," answered the Covenanter; "it is they, perjured as they are, who have rejected all law, both divine and civil, and who now persecute us for adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant between God and the kingdom of Scotland, to which all of them, save a few popish malignants, have sworn in former days, and which they now burn in the market-places, and tread under foot in derision. When this Charles Stewart returned to these kingdoms, did the malignants bring him back? They had tried it with strong hand, but they failed, I trow. Could James Grahame of Montrose, and his Highland caterans, have put him again in the place of his father? I think their heads on the Westport told another tale for many a long day. It was the workers of the glorious work—the reformers of the beauty of the tabernacle, that called him again to the high place from which his father fell. And what has been our reward? In the words of the prophet, 'We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble—The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land and all that is in it.'"

"Mr Balfour," answered Morton, "I neither undertake to subscribe to or refute your complaints against the government. I have endeavoured to repay a debt due to the comrade of my father, by giving you shelter in your distress, but you will excuse me from engaging myself either in your cause, or in controversy. I will leave you to repose, and heartily wish it were in my power to render your condition more comfortable."

"But I shall see you, I trust, in the morning, ere I depart?—I am not a man whose bowels yearn after kindred and friends of this world. When I put my hand to the plough, I entered into a covenant with my worldly affections that I should not look back on the things I left behind me. Yet the son of mine ancient comrade is to me as mine own, and I cannot behold him without the deep and firm belief, that I shall one day see him gird on his sword in the dear and precious cause for which his father fought and bled."

With a promise on Morton's part that he would call the refugee when it was time for him to pursue his journey, they parted for the night.

Morton retired to a few hours' rest; but his imagination, disturbed by the events of the day, did not permit him to enjoy sound repose. There was a blended vision of horror before him, in which his new friend seemed to be a principal actor. The fair form of Edith Bellenden also mingled in his dream, weeping, and with dishevelled hair, and appearing to call on him for comfort and assistance, which he had not in his power to render. He awoke from these unrefreshing slumbers with a feverish impulse, and a heart which foreboded disaster. There was already a tinge of dazzling lustre on the verge of the distant hills, and the dawn was abroad in all the freshness of a summer morning.

"I have slept too long," he exclaimed to himself, "and must now hasten to forward the journey of this unfortunate fugitive."

He dressed himself as fast as possible, opened the door of the house with as little noise as he could, and hastened to the place of refuge occupied by the Covenanter. Morton entered on tiptoe, for the determined tone and manner, as well as the unusual language and sentiments of this singular individual, had struck him with a sensation approaching to awe. Balfour was still asleep. A ray of light streamed on his uncurtained couch, and showed to Morton the working of his

harsh features, which seemed agitated by some strong internal cause of disturbance. He had not undressed. Both his arms were above the bed-cover, the right hand strongly clenched, and occasionally making that abortive attempt to strike which usually attends dreams of violence; the left was extended, and agitated, from time to time, by a movement as if repulsing some one. The perspiration stood on his brow, "like bubbles in a late disturbed stream," and these marks of emotion were accompanied with broken words which escaped from him at intervals—"Thou art taken, Judas—thou art taken—Cling not to my knees—cling not to my knees—hew him down!—A priest? Ay, a priest of Baal, to be bound and slain, even at the brook Kishon.—Fire arms will not prevail against him—Strike—thrust with the cold iron—put him out of pain—put him out of pain, were it but for the sake of his grey hairs."

Much alarmed at the import of these expressions, which seemed to burst from him even in sleep with the stern energy accompanying the perpetration of some act of violence, Morton shook his guest by the shoulder in order to awake him. The first words he uttered were, "Bear me where ye will, I will avouch the deed!"

His glance around having then fully awakened him, he at once assumed all the stern and gloomy composure of his ordinary manner, and throwing himself on his knees, before speaking to Morton, poured forth an ejaculatory prayer for the suffering Church of Scotland, entreating that the blood of her murdered saints and martyrs might be precious in the sight of Heaven, and that the shield of the Almighty might be spread over the scattered remnant, who, for His name's sake, were abiders in the wilderness. Vengeance—speedy and ample vengeance on the oppressors, was the concluding petition of his devotions, which he expressed aloud in strong and emphatic language, rendered more impressive by the Orientalism of Scripture.

When he had finished his prayer he arose, and, taking Morton by the arm, they descended together to the stable, where the Wanderer (to give Burley a title which was often conferred on his sect) began to make his horse ready to pursue his journey. When the animal was saddled and bridled, Burley requested Morton to walk with him a gun-shot into the wood, and direct him to the right road for gaining the moors. Morton readily complied, and they walked for some time in silence under the shade of some fine old trees, pursuing a sort of natural path, which, after passing through woodland for about half a mile, led into the bare and wild country which extends to the foot of the hills.

There was little conversation between them, until at length Burley suddenly asked Morton, "Whether the words he had spoken over-night had borne fruit in his mind?"

Morton answered, "That he remained of the same opinion which he had formerly held, and was determined, at least as far and as long as possible, to unite the duties of a good Christian with those of a peaceful subject."

"In other words," replied Burley, "you are desirous to serve both God and Mammon—to be one day professing the truth with your lips, and the next day in arms, at the command of carnal and tyrannic authority, to shed the blood of those who for the truth have forsaken all things? Think ye," he continued, "to touch pitch and remain undefiled? to mix in the ranks of malignants, papists, papa-prelatists, latitudinarians, and scoffers; to partake of their sports, which are like the meat offered unto idols; to hold intercourse, perchance, with their daughters, as the sons of God with the daughters of men in the world before the flood—Think you, I say, to do all these things, and yet remain free from pollution? I say unto you, that all communication with the enemies of the Church is the accursed thing which God hateth! Touch not—taste not—handle not! And grieve not, young man, as if you alone were called upon to subdue your carnal affections, and renounce the pleasures which are a snare to your feet—I say to you, that the Son of David hath denounced no better lot on the whole generation of mankind."

He then mounted his horse, and, turning to Morton, repeated the text of Scripture, "An heavy yoke was ordained for the sons of Adam from the day they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things; from him who is clothed in blue silk and weareth a crown, even to him who weareth simple linen,—wrath, envy, trouble, and quietness, rigour, strife, and fear of death in the time of rest."

Having uttered these words he set his horse in motion, and soon disappeared among the boughs of the forest.

"Farewell, stern enthusiast," said Morton, looking after him; "in some moods of my mind, how dangerous would be the society of such a companion! If I am unmoved by his zeal for abstract doctrines of faith, or rather for a peculiar mode of worship, (such was the purport of his reflections,) can I be a man, and a Scotchman, and look with indifference on that persecution which has made wise men mad? Was not the cause of freedom, civil and religious, that for which my father fought; and shall I do well to remain inactive, or to take the part of an oppressive government, if there should appear any rational prospect of redressing the insufferable wrongs to which my miserable countrymen are subjected?—And yet, who shall warrant me that these people, rendered wild by persecution, would not, in the hour of victory, be as cruel and as intolerant as those by whom they are now hunted down? What degree of moderation, or of mercy, can be expected from this Burley, so distinguished as one of their principal champions, and who seems even now to be reeking from some recent deed of violence, and to feel stings of remorse, which even his enthusiasm cannot altogether stifle? I am weary of seeing nothing but violence and fury around me—now assuming the mask of lawful authority, now taking that of religious zeal. I am sick of my country—of myself—of my dependent situation—of my repressed feelings—of these woods—of that river—of that house—of all but—Edith, and she can never be mine! Why should I haunt her walks?—Why encourage my own delusion, and perhaps hers?—She can never be mine. Her grandmother's pride—the opposite principles of our families—my wretched state of dependence—a poor miserable slave, for I have not even the wages of a servant—all circumstances give the lie to the vain hope that we can ever be united. Why then protract a delusion so painful?

"But I am no slave," he said aloud, and drawing himself up to his full stature—"no slave, in one respect, surely. I can change my abode—my father's sword is mine, and Europe lies open before me, as before him and hundreds besides of my countrymen, who have filled it with the fame of their exploits. Perhaps some lucky chance may raise me to a rank with our Ruthvens, our Lesleys, our Monroes, the chosen leaders of the famous Protestant champion, Gustavus Adolphus, or, if not, a soldier's life or a soldier's grave."

When he had formed this determination, he found himself near the door of his uncle's house, and resolved to lose no time in making him acquainted with it.

"Another glance of Edith's eye, another walk by Edith's side, and my resolution would melt away. I will take an irrevocable step, therefore, and then see her for the last time."

In this mood he entered the wainscotted parlour, in which his uncle was already placed at his morning's refreshment, a huge plate of oatmeal porridge, with a corresponding allowance of butter-milk. The favourite housekeeper was in attendance, half standing, half resting on the back of a chair, in a posture betwixt freedom and respect. The old gentleman had been remarkably tall in his earlier days, an advantage which he now lost by stooping to such a degree, that at a meeting, where there was some dispute concerning the sort of arch which should be thrown over a considerable brook, a facetious neighbour proposed to offer Milnwood a handsome sum for his curved backbone, alleging that he would sell any thing that belonged to him. Splay feet of unusual size, long thin hands, garnished with nails which seldom felt the steel, a wrinkled and puckered visage, the length of which corresponded with that of his person, together with a pair of little sharp bargain-making grey eyes, that seemed eternally looking out for their advantage, completed the highly unpromising exterior of Mr Morton of Milnwood. As it would have been very injudicious to have lodged a liberal or benevolent disposition in such an unworthy cabinet, nature had suited his person with a mind exactly in conformity with it, that is to say, mean, selfish, and covetous.

When this amiable personage was aware of the presence of his nephew, he hastened, before addressing him, to swallow the spoonful of porridge which he was in the act of conveying to his mouth, and, as it chanced to be scalding hot, the pain occasioned by its descent down his throat and into his stomach, inflamed the ill-humour with which he was already prepared to meet his kinsman.

"The deil take them that made them!" was his first ejaculation, apostrophizing his mess of porridge.

"They're gude parritch enugh," said Mrs Wilson, "if ye wad but take time to sup them. I made them mysell; but if folk winna hae patience, they should get their thrapples causewayed."

"Haud your peace, Alison! I was speaking to my nevoy.—How is this, sir? And what sort o' scampering gates are these o' going on? Ye were not at hame last night till near midnight."

"Thereabouts, sir, I believe," answered Morton, in an indifferent tone.

"Thereabouts, sir?—What sort of an answer is that, sir? Why came ye na hame when other folk left the grund?"

"I suppose you know the reason very well, sir," said Morton; "I had the fortune to be the best marksman of the day, and remained, as is usual, to give some little entertainment to the other young men."

"The deevil ye did, sir! And ye come to tell me that to my face? You pretend to gie entertainments, that canna come by a dinner except by sorning on a carefu' man like me? But if ye put me to charges, I'se work it out o'ye. I seena why ye shouldna haud the pleugh, now that the pleughman has left us; it wad set ye better than wearing thae green duds, and wasting your siller on powther and lead; it wad put ye in an honest calling, and wad keep ye in bread without being behadden to ony ane."

"I am very ambitious of learning such a calling, sir, but I don't understand driving the plough."

"And what for no? It's easier than your gunning and archery that ye like sae weel. Auld Davie is ca'ing it e'en now, and ye may be goadsman for the first twa or three days, and tak tent ye dinna o'erdrive the owsen, and then ye will be fit to gang between the stilts. Ye'll ne'er learn younger, I'll be your caution. Haggie-holm is heavy land, and Davie is ower auld to keep the coulter down now."

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, sir, but I have formed a scheme for myself, which will have the same effect of relieving you of the burden and charge attending my company."

"Ay? Indeed? a scheme o' yours? that must be a denty ane!" said the uncle, with a very peculiar sneer; "let's hear about it, lad."

"It is said in two words, sir. I intend to leave this country, and serve abroad, as my father did before these unhappy troubles broke out at home. His name will not be so entirely forgotten in the countries where he served, but that it will procure his son at least the opportunity of trying his fortune as a soldier."

"Gude be gracious to us!" exclaimed the housekeeper; "our young Mr Harry gang abroad? na, na! eh, na! that maun never be."

Milnwood, entertaining no thought or purpose of parting with his nephew, who was, moreover, very useful to him in many respects, was thunderstruck at this abrupt declaration of independence from a person whose deference to him had hitherto been unlimited. He recovered himself, however, immediately.

"And wha do you think is to give you the means, young man, for such a wild-goose chase? Not I, I am sure. I can hardly support you at hame. And ye wad be marrying, I'se warrant, as your father did afore ye, too, and sending your uncle hame a pack o' weans to be fighting and skirling through the house in my auld days, and to take wing and flee aff like yoursell, whenever they were asked to serve a turn about the town?"

"I have no thoughts of ever marrying," answered Henry.

"Hear till him now!" said the housekeeper. "It's a shame to hear a douce young lad speak in that way, since a' the world kens that they maun either marry or do waur."

"Haud your peace, Alison," said her master; "and you, Harry," (he added more mildly,) "put this nonsense out o' your head—this comes o' letting ye gang a-sodgering for a day—mind ye hae nae siller, lad, for ony sic nonsense plans."

"I beg your pardon, sir, my wants shall be very few; and would you please to give me the gold chain, which the Margrave gave to my father after the battle of Lutzen"—"Mercy on us! the gowd chain?" exclaimed his uncle.

"The chain of gowd!" re-echoed the housekeeper, both aghast with astonishment at the audacity of the proposal.

—"I will keep a few links," continued the young man, "to remind me of him by whom it was won, and the place where he won it," continued Morton; "the rest shall furnish me the means of following the same career in which my father obtained that mark of distinction."

"Mercifu' powers!" exclaimed the governante, "my master wears it every Sunday!"

"Sunday and Saturday," added old Milnwood, "whenever I put on my black velvet coat; and Wylie Mactrickit is partly of opinion it's a kind of heir-loom, that rather belongs to the head of the house than to the immediate descendant. It has three thousand links; I have counted them a thousand times. It's worth three hundred pounds sterling."

"That is more than I want, sir; if you choose to give me the third part of the money, and five links of the chain, it will amply serve my purpose, and the rest will be some slight atonement for the expense and trouble I have put you to."

"The laddie's in a creel!" exclaimed his uncle. "O, sirs, what will become o' the rigs o' Milnwood when I am dead and gane! He would fling the crown of Scotland awa, if he had it."

"Hout, sir," said the old housekeeper, "I maun e'en say it's partly your ain faut. Ye maunna curb his head ower sair in neither; and, to be sure, since he has gane doun to the Howff, ye maun just e'en pay the lawing."

"If it be not abune twa dollars, Alison," said the old gentleman, very reluctantly.

"I'll settle it myself wi' Niel Blane, the first time I gang down to the clachan," said Alison, "cheaper than your honour or Mr Harry can do;" and then whispered to Henry, "Dinna vex him onymair; I'll pay the lave out o' the butter siller, and nae mair words about it." Then proceeding aloud, "And ye maunna speak o' the young gentleman hauding the pleugh; there's puir distressed whigs enow about the country will be glad to do that for a bite and a soup—it sets them far better than the like o' him."

"And then we'll hae the dragoons on us," said Milnwood, "for comforting and entertaining intercommuned rebels; a bonny strait ye wad put us in!— But take your breakfast, Harry, and then lay by your new green coat, and put on your Raploch grey; it's a mair mensfu' and thrifty dress, and a mair seemly sight, than thae dangling slops and ribbands."

Morton left the room, perceiving plainly that he had at present no chance of gaining his purpose, and, perhaps, not altogether displeased at the obstacles which seemed to present themselves to his leaving the neighbourhood of Tillietudlem. The housekeeper followed him into the next room, patting him on the back, and bidding him "be a gude bairn, and pit by his braw things."

"And I'll loop doun your hat, and lay by the band and ribband," said the officious dame; "and ye maun never, at no hand, speak o' leaving the land, or of selling the gowd chain, for your uncle has an unco pleasure in looking on you, and in counting the links of the chainzie; and ye ken auld folk canna last for ever; sae the chain, and the lands, and a' will be your ain ae day; and ye may marry ony leddy in the country-side ye like, and keep a braw house at Milnwood, for there's enow o' means; and is not that worth waiting for, my dow?"

There was something in the latter part of the prognostic which sounded so agreeably in the ears of Morton, that he shook the old dame cordially by the hand, and assured her he was much obliged by her good advice, and would weigh it carefully before he proceeded to act upon his former resolution.

CHAPTER VII.

From seventeen years till now, almost fourscore,

Here lived I, but now live here no more.

At seventeen years many their fortunes seek,

But at fourscore it is too late a week.

As You Like it.

We must conduct our readers to the Tower of Tillietudlem, to which Lady Margaret Bellenden had returned, in romantic phrase, malecontent and full of heaviness, at the unexpected, and, as she deemed it, indelible affront, which had been brought upon her dignity by the public miscarriage of Goose Gibbie. That unfortunate man-at-arms was forthwith commanded to drive his feathered charge to the most remote parts of the common moor, and on no account to awaken the grief or resentment of his lady, by appearing in her presence while the sense of the affront was yet recent.

The next proceeding of Lady Margaret was to hold a solemn court of justice, to which Harrison and the butler were admitted, partly on the footing of witnesses, partly as assessors, to enquire into the recusancy of Cuddie Headrigg the ploughman, and the abetment which he had received from his mother—these being regarded as the original causes of the disaster which had befallen the chivalry of Tillietudlem. The charge being fully made out and substantiated, Lady Margaret resolved to reprimand the culprits in person, and, if she found them impenitent, to extend the censure into a sentence of expulsion from the barony. Miss Bellenden alone ventured to say any thing in behalf of the accused, but her countenance did not profit them as it might have done on any other occasion. For so soon as Edith had heard it ascertained that the unfortunate cavalier had not suffered in his person, his disaster had affected her with an irresistible disposition to laugh, which, in spite of Lady Margaret's indignation, or rather irritated, as usual, by restraint, had broke out repeatedly on her return homeward, until her grandmother, in no shape imposed upon by the several fictitious causes which the young lady assigned for her ill-timed risibility, upbraided her in very bitter terms with being insensible to the honour of her family. Miss Bellenden's intercession, therefore, had, on this occasion, little or no chance to be listened to.

As if to evince the rigour of her disposition, Lady Margaret, on this solemn occasion, exchanged the ivory-headed cane with which she commonly walked, for an immense gold-headed staff which had belonged to her father, the deceased Earl of Torwood, and which, like a sort of mace of office, she only made use of on occasions of special solemnity. Supported by this awful baton of command, Lady Margaret Bellenden entered the cottage of the delinquents.

There was an air of consciousness about old Mause, as she rose from her wicker chair in the chimney-nook, not with the cordial alertness of visage which used, on other occasions, to express the honour she felt in the visit of her lady, but with a certain solemnity and embarrassment, like an accused party on his first appearance in presence of his judge, before whom he is, nevertheless, determined to assert his innocence. Her arms were folded, her mouth primmed into an expression of respect, mingled with obstinacy, her whole mind apparently bent up to the solemn interview. With her best curtsy to the ground, and a mute motion of reverence, Mause pointed to the chair, which, on former occasions, Lady Margaret (for the good lady was somewhat of a gossip) had deigned to occupy for half an hour sometimes at a time, hearing the news of the county and of the borough. But at present her mistress was far too indignant for such condescension. She rejected the mute invitation with a haughty wave of her hand, and drawing herself up as she spoke, she uttered the following interrogatory in a tone calculated to overwhelm the culprit.

"Is it true, Mause, as I am informed by Harrison, Gudyill, and others of my people, that you hae taen it upon you, contrary to the faith you owe to God and the king, and to me, your natural lady and mistress, to keep back your son frae the wappen-schaw, held by the order of the sheriff, and to return his armour and abulygements at a moment when it was impossible to find a suitable delegate in his stead, whereby the barony of Tullietudlem, baith in the person of its mistress and indwellers, has incurred sic a disgrace and dishonour as hasna befa'en the family since the days of Malcolm Canmore?"

Mause's habitual respect for her mistress was extreme; she hesitated, and one or two short coughs expressed the difficulty she had in defending herself.

"I am sure—my leddy—hem, hem!—I am sure I am sorry—very sorry that ony cause of displeasure should hae occurred—but my son's illness"—"Dinna tell me of your son's illness, Mause! Had he been sincerely unweel, ye would hae been at the Tower by daylight to get something that wad do him gude; there are few ailments that I havena medical recipes for, and that ye ken fu' weel."

"O ay, my leddy! I am sure ye hae wrought wonderful cures; the last thing ye sent Cuddie, when he had the batts, e'en wrought like a charm."

"Why, then, woman, did ye not apply to me, if there was only real need?—but there was none, ye fause-hearted vassal that ye are!"

"Your leddyship never ca'd me sic a word as that before. Ohon! that I suld live to be ca'd sae," she continued, bursting into tears, "and me a born servant o' the house o' Tillietudlem! I am sure they belie baith Cuddie and me sair, if they said he wadna fight ower the boots in blude for your leddyship and Miss Edith, and the auld Tower—ay suld he, and I would rather see him buried beneath it, than he suld gie way—but thir ridings and wappenschawings, my leddy, I hae nae broo o' them ava. I can find nae warrant for them whatsoever."

"Nae warrant for them?" cried the high-born dame. "Do ye na ken, woman, that ye are bound to be liege vassals in all hunting, hosting, watching, and warding, when lawfully summoned thereto in my name? Your service is not gratuitous. I trow ye hae land for it.—Ye're kindly tenants; hae a cot-house, a kale-yard, and a cow's grass on the common.—Few hae been brought farther ben, and ye grudge your son suld gie me a day's service in the field?"

"Na, my leddy—na, my leddy, it's no that," exclaimed Mause, greatly embarrassed, "but ane canna serve twa maisters; and, if the truth maun e'en come out, there's Ane abune whase commands I maun obey before your leddyship's. I am sure I would put neither king's nor kaisar's, nor ony earthly creature's, afore them."

"How mean ye by that, ye auld fule woman?—D'ye think that I order ony thing against conscience?"

"I dinna pretend to say that, my leddy, in regard o' your leddyship's conscience, which has been brought up, as it were, wi' prelatie principles; but ilka ane maun walk by the light o' their ain; and mine," said Mause, waxing bolder as the conference became animated, "tells me that I suld leave a'—cot, kale-yard, and cow's grass—and suffer a', rather than that I or mine should put on harness in an unlawfu' cause,"

"Unlawfu'!" exclaimed her mistress; "the cause to which you are called by your lawful leddy and mistress—by the command of the king—by the writ of the privy council—by the order of the lordlieutenant—by the warrant of the sheriff?"

"Ay, my leddy, nae doubt; but no to displeasure your leddyship, ye'll mind that there was ance a king in Scripture they ca'd Nebuchadnezzar, and he set up a golden image in the plain o' Dura, as it might be in the haugh yonder by the water-side, where the array were warned to meet yesterday; and the princes, and the governors, and the captains, and the judges themsells, forby the treasurers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, were warned to the dedication thereof, and commanded to fall down and worship at the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music."

"And what o' a' this, ye fule wife? Or what had Nebuchadnezzar to do with the wappen-schaw of the Upper Ward of Clydesdale?"

"Only just thus far, my leddy," continued Mause, firmly, "that prelatie is like the great golden image in the plain of Dura, and that as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were borne out in refusing to bow down and worship, so neither shall Cuddy Headrigg, your leddyship's poor pleughman, at least wi' his auld mither's consent, make murgeons or Jenny-flecons, as they ca' them, in the house of the prelates and curates, nor gird him wi' armour to fight in their cause, either at the sound of kettle-drums, organs, bagpipes, or ony other kind of music whatever."

Lady Margaret Bellenden heard this exposition of Scripture with the greatest possible indignation, as well as surprise.

"I see which way the wind blows," she exclaimed, after a pause of astonishment; "the evil spirit of the year sixteen hundred and forty-twa is at wark again as merrily as ever, and ilka auld wife in the chimley-neuck will be for knitting doctrine wi' doctors o' divinity and the godly fathers o' the church."

"If your leddyship means the bishops and curates, I'm sure they hae been but stepfathers to the Kirk o' Scotland. And, since your leddyship is pleased to speak o' parting wi' us, I am free to tell you a piece o' my mind in another article. Your leddyship and the steward hae been pleased to propose that my son Cuddie suld work in the barn wi' a new-fangled machine [Note: Probably something similar to the barn-fanners now used for winnowing corn, which were not, however, used in their present shape until about 1730. They were objected to by the more rigid sectaries on their first introduction, upon such reasoning as that of honest Mause in the text.] for digging the corn frae the chaff, thus impiously thwarting the will of Divine Providence, by raising wind for your leddyship's ain particular use by human art, instead of soliciting it by prayer, or waiting patiently for whatever dispensation of wind Providence was pleased to send upon the sheeling-hill. Now, my leddy"—"The woman would drive ony reasonable being daft!" said Lady Margaret; then resuming her tone of authority and indifference, she concluded, "Weel, Mause, I'll just end where I sud hae begun—ye're ower learned and ower godly for me to dispute wi'; sae I have just this to say,—either Cuddie must attend musters when he's lawfully warned by the ground officer, or the sooner he and you flit and quit my bounds the better; there's nae scarcity o' auld wives or ploughmen; but, if there were, I had rather that the rigs of Tillietudlem bare naething but windle-straes and sandy lavrocks [Note: Bent-grass and sand-larks.] than that they were ploughed by rebels to the king."

"Aweel, my leddy," said Mause, "I was born here, and thought to die where my father died; and your leddyship has been a kind mistress, I'll ne'er deny that, and I'll se ne'er cease to pray for you, and for Miss Edith, and that ye may be brought to see the error of your ways. But still"—"The error of my ways!" interrupted Lady Margaret, much incensed—"The error of my ways, ye uncivil woman?"

"Ou, ay, my leddy, we are blinded that live in this valley of tears and darkness, and hae a' ower mony errors, grit folks as weel as sma'—but, as I said, my puir bennison will rest wi' you and yours wherever I am. I will be wae to hear o' your affliction, and blithe to hear o' your prosperity, temporal and spiritual. But I canna prefer the commands of an earthly mistress to those of a heavenly master, and sae I am e'en ready to suffer for righteousness' sake."

"It is very well," said Lady Margaret, turning her back in great displeasure; "ye ken my will, Mause, in the matter. I'll hae nae whiggery in the barony of Tillietudlem—the next thing wad be to set up a conventicle in my very withdrawing room."

Having said this, she departed, with an air of great dignity; and Mause, giving way to feelings which she had suppressed during the interview,—for she, like her mistress, had her own feeling of pride,—now lifted up her voice and wept aloud.

Cuddie, whose malady, real or pretended, still detained him in bed, lay perdu during all this conference, snugly ensconced within his boarded bedstead, and terrified to death lest Lady Margaret, whom he held in hereditary reverence, should have detected his presence, and bestowed on him personally some of those bitter reproaches with which she loaded his mother. But as soon as he thought her ladyship fairly out of hearing, he bounced up in his nest.

"The foul fa' ye, that I suld say sae," he cried out to his mother, "for a lang-tongued clavering wife, as my father, honest man, aye ca'd ye! Couldna ye let the leddy alane wi' your whiggery? And I was e'en as great a gomeral to let ye persuade me to lie up here amang the blankets like a hurcheon, instead o' gaun to the wappen-schaw like other folk. Odd, but I put a trick on ye, for I was out at the window-bole when your auld back was turned, and awa down by to hae a baff at the popinjay, and I shot within twa on't. I cheated the leddy for your clavers, but I wasna gaun to cheat my joe. But she may marry whae she likes now, for I'm clean dung ower. This is a waur dirdum than we got frae Mr Gudyill when ye garr'd me refuse to eat the plum-porridge on Yule-eve, as if it were ony matter to God or man whether a pleughman had suppit on minched pies or sour sowens."

"O, whisht, my bairn, whisht," replied Mause; "thou kensna about thae things—It was forbidden meat, things dedicated to set days and holidays, which are inhibited to the use of protestant Christians."

"And now," continued her son, "ye hae brought the leddy hersell on our hands!—An I could but hae gotten some decent claes in, I wad hae spanged out o' bed, and tauld her I wad ride where she liked, night or day, an she wad but leave us the free house and the yaird, that grew the best early kale in the haill country, and the cow's grass."

"O wow! my winsome bairn, Cuddie," continued the old dame, "murmur not at the dispensation; never grudge suffering in the gude cause."

"But what ken I if the cause is gude or no, mither," rejoined Cuddie, "for a' ye bleeze out sae muckle doctrine about it? It's clean beyond my comprehension a'thegither. I see nae sae muckle difference atween the twa ways o't as a' the folk pretend. It's very true the curates read aye the same words ower again; and if they be right words, what for no? A gude tale's no the waur o' being twice tauld, I trow; and a body has aye the better chance to understand it. Every body's no sae gleg at the uptake as ye are yoursell, mither."

"O, my dear Cuddie, this is the sairest distress of a'," said the anxious mother—"O, how aften have I shown ye the difference between a pure evangelical doctrine, and ane that's corrupt wi' human inventions? O, my bairn, if no for your ain saul's sake, yet for my grey hairs"—"Weel, mither," said Cuddie, interrupting her, "what need ye mak sae muckle din about it? I hae aye dune whate'er ye bade me, and gaed to kirk whare'er ye likit on the Sundays, and fended weel for ye in the ilka days besides. And that's what vexes me mair than a' the rest, when I think how I am to fend for ye now in thae brickle times. I am no clear if I can pleugh ony place but the Mains and Mucklewhame, at least I never tried ony other grund, and it wadna come natural to me. And nae neighbouring heritors will daur to take us, after being turned aff thae bounds for non-enormity."

"Non-conformity, hinnie," sighed Mause, "is the name that thae warldly men gie us."

"Weel, aweel—we'll hae to gang to a far country, maybe twall or fifteen miles aff. I could be a dragoon, nae doubt, for I can ride and play wi' the broadsword a bit, but ye wad be roaring about your blessing and your grey hairs." (Here Mause's exclamations became extreme.) "Weel, weel, I but spoke o't; besides, ye're ower auld to be sitting cocked up on a baggage-waggon wi' Eppie Dumblane, the corporal's wife. Sae what's to come o' us I canna weel see—I doubt I'll hae to tak the hills wi' the wild whigs, as they ca' them, and then it will be my lo to be shot down like a mawkin at some dikeside, or to be sent to heaven wi' a Saint Johnstone's tippit about my hause."

"O, my bonnie Cuddie," said the zealous Mause, "forbear sic carnal, self-seeking language, whilk is just a misdoubting o' Providence—I have not seen the son of the righteous begging his bread, sae says the text; and your father was a douce honest man, though somewhat warldly in his dealings, and cumbered about earthly things, e'en like yoursell, my jo!"

"Aweel," said Cuddie, after a little consideration, "I see but ae gate for't, and that's a cauld coal to blaw at, mither. Howsomever, mither, ye hae some guess o' a wee bit kindness that's atween Miss Edith and young Mr Henry Morton, that suld be ca'd young Milnwood, and that I hae whiles carried a bit book, or maybe a bit letter, quietly atween them, and made believe never to ken wha it cam frae, though I kend brawly. There's whiles convenience in a body looking a wee stupid—and I have aften seen them walking at e'en on the little path by Dinglewood-burn; but naebody ever kend a word about it frae Cuddie; I ken I'm gay thick in the head, but I'm as honest as our auld fore-hand ox, puir fallow, that I'll ne'er work ony mair—I hope they'll be as kind to him that come ahint me as I hae been.—But, as I was saying, we'll awa down to Milnwood and tell Mr Harry our distress They want a pleughman, and the grund's no unlike our ain—I am sure Mr Harry will stand my part, for he's a kind-hearted gentleman.—I'll get but little penny-fee, for his uncle, auld Nippie Milnwood, has as close a grip as the deil himsell. But we'll, aye win a bit bread, and a drap kale, and a fire-side and theeking ower our heads, and that's a' we'll want for a season.—Sae get up, mither, and sort your things to gang away; for since sae it is that gang we maun, I wad like ill to wait till Mr Harrison and auld Gudyill cam to pu' us out by the lug and the horn."

CHAPTER VIII.

The devil a puritan, or any thing else he is, but a time-server.

Twelfth Night.

It was evening when Mr Henry Morton perceived an old woman, wrapped in her tartan plaid, supported by a stout, stupid-looking fellow, in hoddin-grey, approach the house of Milnwood. Old Mause made her courtesy, but Cuddie took the lead in addressing Morton. Indeed, he had previously stipulated with his mother that he was to manage matters his own way; for though he readily allowed his general inferiority of understanding, and filially submitted to the guidance of his mother on most ordinary occasions, yet he said, "For getting a service, or getting forward in the warld, he could somegate gar the wee pickle sense he had gang muckle farther than hers, though she could crack like ony minister o' them a'."

Accordingly, he thus opened the conversation with young Morton: "A braw night this for the rye, your honour; the west park will be breering bravely this e'en."

"I do not doubt it, Cuddie; but what can have brought your mother—this is your mother, is it not?" (Cuddie nodded.) "What can have brought your mother and you down the water so late?"

"Troth, stir, just what gars the auld wives trot—neshessity, stir—I'm seeking for service, stir."

"For service, Cuddie, and at this time of the year? how comes that?"

Mause could forbear no longer. Proud alike of her cause and her sufferings, she commenced with an affected humility of tone, "It has pleased Heaven, an it like your honour, to distinguish us by a visitation"—"Deil's in the wife and nae gude!" whispered Cuddie to his mother, "an ye come out wi' your whiggery, they'll no daur open a door to us through the haill country!" Then aloud and addressing Morton, "My mother's auld, stir, and she has rather forgotten hersell in speaking to my leddy, that canna weel bide to be contradickit, (as I ken nae-body likes it if they could help themsells,) especially by her ain folk,—and Mr Harrison the steward, and Gudyill the butler, they're no very fond o' us, and it's ill sitting at Rome and striving wi' the Pope; sae I thought it best to flit before ill came to waur—and here's a wee bit line to your honour frae a friend will maybe say some mair about it."

Morton took the billet, and crimsoning up to the ears, between joy and surprise, read these words: "If you can serve these poor helpless people, you will oblige E. B."

It was a few instants before he could attain composure enough to ask, "And what is your object, Cuddie? and how can I be of use to you?"

"Wark, stir, wark, and a service, is my object—a bit beild for my mither and mysel—we hae gude plenishing o' our ain, if we had the cast o' a cart to bring it down—and milk and meal, and greens enow, for I'm gay gleg at meal-time, and sae is my mither, lang may it be sae—And, for the penny-fee and a' that, I'll just leave it to the laird and you. I ken ye'll no see a poor lad wranged, if ye can help it."

Morton shook his head. "For the meat and lodging, Cuddie, I think I can promise something; but the penny-fee will be a hard chapter, I doubt."

"I'll tak my chance o't, stir," replied the candidate for service, "rather than gang down about Hamilton, or ony sic far country."

"Well; step into the kitchen, Cuddie, and I'll do what I can for you."

The negotiation was not without difficulties. Morton had first to bring over the housekeeper, who made a thousand objections, as usual, in order to have the pleasure of being besought and entreated; but, when she was gained over, it was comparatively easy to induce old Milnwood to accept of a servant, whose wages were to be in his own option. An outhouse was, therefore, assigned to Mause and her son for their habitation, and it was settled that they were for the time to be admitted to eat of the frugal fare provided for the family, until their own establishment should be completed. As for Morton, he exhausted his own very slender stock of money in order to make Cuddie such a present, under the name of arles, as might show his sense of the value of the recommendation delivered to him.

"And now we're settled ance mair," said: Cuddie to his mother, "and if we're no sae bien and comfortable as we were up yonder, yet life's life ony gate, and we're wi' decent kirk-ganging folk o' your ain persuasion, mither; there will be nae quarrelling about that."

"Of my persuasion, hinnie!" said the too-enlightened Mause; "wae's me for thy blindness and theirs. O, Cuddie, they are but in the court of the Gentiles, and will ne'er win farther ben, I doubt; they are but little better than the prelatists themsels. They wait on the ministry of that blinded man, Peter Poundtext, ance a precious teacher of the Word, but now a backsliding pastor, that has, for the sake of stipend and family maintenance, forsaken the strict path, and gane astray after the black Indulgence. O, my son, had ye but profited by the gospel doctrines ye hae heard in the Glen of Bengonnar, frae the dear Richard Rumbleberry, that sweet youth, who suffered martyrdom in the Grassmarket, afore Candlemas! Didna ye hear him say, that Erastianism was as bad as Prelacy, and that the Indulgence was as bad as Erastianism?"

"Heard ever ony body the like o' this!" interrupted Cuddie; "we'll be driven out o' house and ha' again afore we ken where to turn oursells. Weej, mither, I hae just ae word mair—An I hear ony mair o' your din—afore folk, that is, for I dinna mind your clavers mysell, they aye set me sleeping—but if I hear ony mair din afore folk, as I was saying, about Poundtexts and Rumbleberries, and doctrines and malignants, I'se e'en turn a single sodger mysell, or maybe a sergeant or a captain, if ye plague me the mair, and let Rumbleberry and you gang to the deil thegither. I ne'er gat ony gude by his doctrine, as ye ca't, but a sour fit o' the batts wi' sitting among the wat moss-hags for four hours at a yoking, and the leddy cured me wi' some hickery-pickery; mair by token, an she had kend how I came by the disorder, she wadna hae been in sic a hurry to mend it."

Although groaning in spirit over the obdurate and impenitent state, as she thought it, of her son Cuddie, Mause durst neither urge him farther on the topic, nor altogether neglect the warning he had given her. She knew the disposition of her deceased helpmate, whom this surviving pledge of their union greatly resembled, and remembered, that although submitting implicitly in most things to her boast of superior acuteness, he used on certain occasions, when driven to extremity, to be seized with fits of obstinacy, which neither remonstrance, flattery, nor threats, were capable of overpowering. Trembling, therefore, at the very possibility of Cuddie's fulfilling his threat, she put a guard over her tongue, and even when Poundtext was commended in her presence, as an able and fructifying preacher, she had the good sense to suppress the contradiction which thrilled upon her tongue, and to express her sentiments no otherwise than by deep groans, which the hearers charitably construed to flow from a vivid recollection of the more pathetic parts of his homilies. How long she could have repressed her feelings it is difficult to say. An unexpected accident relieved her from the necessity.

The Laird of Milnwood kept up all old fashions which were connected with economy. It was, therefore, still the custom in his house, as it had been universal in Scotland about fifty years before, that the domestics, after having placed the dinner on the table, sate down at the lower end of the board, and partook of the share which was assigned to them, in company with their masters. On the day, therefore, after Cuddie's arrival, being the third from the opening of this narrative, old Robin, who was butler, valet-de-chambre, footman, gardener, and what not, in the house of Milnwood, placed on the table an immense charger of broth, thickened with oatmeal and colewort, in which ocean of liquid was indistinctly discovered, by close observers, two or three short ribs of lean mutton sailing to and fro. Two huge baskets, one of bread made of barley and pease, and one of oat-cakes, flanked this standing dish. A large boiled salmon would now-a-days have indicated more liberal house-keeping; but at that period salmon was caught in such plenty in the considerable rivers in Scotland, that instead of being accounted a delicacy, it was generally applied to feed the servants, who are said sometimes to have stipulated that they should not be required to eat a food so luscious and surfeiting in its quality above five times a-week. The large black jack, filled with very small beer of Milnwood's own brewing, was allowed to the company at discretion, as were the bannocks, cakes, and broth; but the mutton was reserved for the heads of the family, Mrs Wilson included: and a measure of ale, somewhat deserving the name, was set apart in a silver tankard for their exclusive use. A huge kebbock, (a cheese, that is, made with ewemilk mixed with cow's milk,) and a jar of salt butter, were in common to the company.

To enjoy this exquisite cheer, was placed, at the head of the table, the old Laird himself, with his nephew on the one side, and the favourite housekeeper on the other. At a long interval, and beneath the salt of course, sate old Robin, a meagre, half-starved serving-man, rendered cross and cripple by rheumatism, and a dirty drab of a housemaid, whom use had rendered callous to the daily exertions which her temper underwent at the hands of her master and Mrs Wilson. A barnman, a white-headed cow-herd boy, with Cuddie the new ploughman and his mother, completed the party. The other labourers belonging to the property resided in their own houses, happy at least in this, that if their cheer was not more delicate than that which we have described, they could eat their fill, unwatched by the sharp, envious grey eyes of Milnwood, which seemed to measure the quantity that each of his dependents swallowed, as closely as if their glances attended each mouthful in its progress from the lips to the stomach. This close inspection was unfavourable to Cuddie, who sustained much prejudice in his new master's opinion, by the silent celerity with which he caused the victuals to disappear before him. And ever and anon Milnwood turned his eyes from the huge feeder to cast indignant glances upon his nephew, whose repugnance to rustic labour was the principal cause of his needing a ploughman, and who had been the direct means of his hiring this very cormorant.

"Pay thee wages, quotha?" said Milnwood to himself,—"Thou wilt eat in a week the value of mair than thou canst work for in a month."

These disagreeable ruminations were interrupted by a loud knocking at the outer-gate. It was a universal custom in Scotland, that, when the family was at dinner, the outer-gate of the courtyard, if there was one, and if not, the door of the house itself, was always shut and locked, and only guests of importance, or persons upon urgent business, sought or received admittance at that time.

[Note: Locking the Door during Dinner. The custom of keeping the door of a house or chateau locked during the time of dinner, probably arose from the family being anciently assembled in the hall at that meal, and liable to surprise. But it was in many instances continued as a point of high etiquette, of which the following is an example:

A considerable landed proprietor in Dumfries-shire, being a bachelor, without near relations, and determined to make his will, resolved previously to visit his two nearest kinsmen, and decide

which should be his heir, according to the degree of kindness with which he should be received. Like a good clansman, he first visited his own chief, a baronet in rank, descendant and representative of one of the oldest families in Scotland. Unhappily the dinner-bell had rung, and the door of the castle had been locked before his arrival. The visitor in vain announced his name and requested admittance; but his chief adhered to the ancient etiquette, and would on no account suffer the doors to be unbarred. Irritated at this cold reception, the old Laird rode on to Sanquhar Castle, then the residence of the Duke of Queensberry, who no sooner heard his name, than, knowing well he had a will to make, the drawbridge dropped, and the gates flew open—the table was covered anew—his grace's bachelor and intestate kinsman was received with the utmost attention and respect; and it is scarcely necessary to add, that upon his death some years after, the visitor's considerable landed property went to augment the domains of the Ducal House of Queensberry. This happened about the end of the seventeenth century.]

The family of Milnwood were therefore surprised, and, in the unsettled state of the times, something alarmed, at the earnest and repeated knocking with which the gate was now assailed. Mrs Wilson ran in person to the door, and, having reconnoitred those who were so clamorous for admittance, through some secret aperture with which most Scottish door-ways were furnished for the express purpose, she returned wringing her hands in great dismay, exclaiming, "The red-coats! the red-coats!"

"Robin—Ploughman—what ca' they ye?—Barnsman—Nevoy Harry—open the door, open the door!" exclaimed old Milnwood, snatching up and slipping into his pocket the two or three silver spoons with which the upper end of the table was garnished, those beneath the salt being of goodly horn. "Speak them fair, sirs—Lord love ye, speak them fair—they winna bide thraving—we're a' harried—we're a' harried!"

While the servants admitted the troopers, whose oaths and threats already indicated resentment at the delay they had been put to, Cuddie took the opportunity to whisper to his mother, "Now, ye daft auld carline, mak yoursell deaf—ye hae made us a' deaf ere now—and let me speak for ye. I wad like ill to get my neck raxed for an auld wife's clashes, though ye be our mither."

"O, hinny, ay; I'se be silent or thou sall come to ill," was the corresponding whisper of Mause "but bethink ye, my dear, them that deny the Word, the Word will deny"—Her admonition was cut short by the entrance of the Life-Guardsmen, a party of four troopers, commanded by Bothwell.

In they tramped, making a tremendous clatter upon the stone-floor with the iron-shod heels of their large jack-boots, and the clash and clang of their long, heavy, basket-hilted broadswords. Milnwood and his housekeeper trembled, from well-grounded apprehensions of the system of exaction and plunder carried on during these domiciliary visits. Henry Morton was discomposed with more special cause, for he remembered that he stood answerable to the laws for having harboured Burley. The widow Mause Headrigg, between fear for her son's life and an overstrained and enthusiastic zeal, which reproached her for consenting even tacitly to belie her religious sentiments, was in a strange quandary. The other servants quaked for they knew not well what. Cuddie alone, with the look of supreme indifference and stupidity which a Scottish peasant can at times assume as a mask for considerable shrewdness and craft, continued to swallow large spoonfuls of his broth, to command which he had drawn within his sphere the large vessel that contained it, and helped himself, amid the confusion, to a sevenfold portion.

"What is your pleasure here, gentlemen?" said Milnwood, humbling himself before the satellites of power.

"We come in behalf of the king," answered Bothwell; "why the devil did you keep us so long standing at the door?"

"We were at dinner," answered Milnwood, "and the door was locked, as is usual in landward towns [Note: The Scots retain the use of the word town in its comprehensive Saxon meaning, as a place of habitation. A mansion or a farm house, though solitary, is called the town. A landward town is a dwelling situated in the country.] in this country. I am sure, gentlemen, if I had kend ony servants of our gude king had stood at the door—But wad ye please to drink some ale—or some brandy—or a cup of canary sack, or claret wine?" making a pause between each offer as long as a stingy bidder at an auction, who is loath to advance his offer for a favourite lot.

"Claret for me," said one fellow.

"I like ale better," said another, "provided it is right juice of John Barleycorn."

"Better never was malted," said Milnwood; "I can hardly say sae muckle for the claret. It's thin and cauld, gentlemen."

"Brandy will cure that," said a third fellow; "a glass of brandy to three glasses of wine prevents the curmurring in the stomach."

"Brandy, ale, sack, and claret?—we'll try them all," said Bothwell, "and stick to that which is best. There's good sense in that, if the damn'dest whig in Scotland had said it."

Hastily, yet with a reluctant quiver of his muscles, Milnwood lugged out two ponderous keys, and delivered them to the governante.

"The housekeeper," said Bothwell, taking a seat, and throwing himself upon it, "is neither so young nor so handsome as to tempt a man to follow her to the gauntrees, and devil a one here is there worth sending in her place.—What's this?—meat?" (searching with a fork among the broth, and fishing up a cutlet of mutton)—"I think I could eat a bit—why, it's as tough as if the devil's dam had hatched it."

"If there is any thing better in the house, sir," said Milnwood, alarmed at these symptoms of disapprobation—"No, no," said Bothwell, "it's not worth while, I must proceed to business.—You attend Poundtext, the presbyterian parson, I understand, Mr Morton?"

Mr Morton hastened to slide in a confession and apology.

"By the indulgence of his gracious majesty and the government, for I wad do nothing out of law—I hae nae objection whatever to the establishment of a moderate episcopacy, but only that I am a country-bred man, and the ministers are a hamelier kind of folk, and I can follow their doctrine better; and, with reverence, sir, it's a mair frugal establishment for the country."

"Well, I care nothing about that," said Bothwell; "they are indulged, and there's an end of it; but, for my part, if I were to give the law, never a crop-ear'd cur of the whole pack should bark in a Scotch pulpit. However, I am to obey commands.—There comes the liquor; put it down, my good old lady."

He decanted about one-half of a quart bottle of claret into a wooden quaigh or bicker, and took it off at a draught.

"You did your good wine injustice, my friend;—it's better than your brandy, though that's good too. Will you pledge me to the king's health?"

"With pleasure," said Milnwood, "in ale,—but I never drink claret, and keep only a very little for some honoured friends."

"Like me, I suppose," said Bothwell; and then, pushing the bottle to Henry, he said, "Here, young man, pledge you the king's health."

Henry filled a moderate glass in silence, regardless of the hints and pushes of his uncle, which seemed to indicate that he ought to have followed his example, in preferring beer to wine.

"Well," said Bothwell, "have ye all drank the toast?—What is that old wife about? Give her a glass of brandy, she shall drink the king's health, by"—"If your honour pleases," said Cuddie, with great stolidity of aspect, "this is my mither, stir; and she's as deaf as Corra-linn; we canna mak her hear day nor door; but if your honour pleases, I am ready to drink the king's health for her in as many glasses of brandy as ye think neshessary."

"I dare swear you are," answered Bothwell; "you look like a fellow that would stick to brandy—help thyself, man; all's free where'er I come.—Tom, help the maid to a comfortable cup, though she's but a dirty jilt neither. Fill round once more—Here's to our noble commander, Colonel Graham of Claverhouse!—What the devil is the old woman groaning for? She looks as very a whig as ever sate on a hill-side—Do you renounce the Covenant, good woman?"

"Whilk Covenant is your honour meaning? Is it the Covenant of Works, or the Covenant of Grace?" said Cuddie, interposing.

"Any covenant; all covenants that ever were hatched," answered the trooper.

"Mither," cried Cuddie, affecting to speak as to a deaf person, "the gentleman wants to ken if ye will renounce the Covenant of Works?"

"With all my heart, Cuddie," said Mause, "and pray that my feet may be delivered from the snare thereof."

"Come," said Bothwell, "the old dame has come more frankly off than I expected. Another cup round, and then we'll proceed to business.—You have all heard, I suppose, of the horrid and barbarous murder committed upon the person of the Archbishop of St Andrews, by ten or eleven armed fanatics?"

All started and looked at each other; at length Milnwood himself answered, "They had heard of some such misfortune, but were in hopes it had not been true."

"There is the relation published by government, old gentleman; what do you think of it?"

"Think, sir? Wh—wh—whatever the council please to think of it," stammered Milnwood.

"I desire to have your opinion more explicitly, my friend," said the dragoon, authoritatively.

Milnwood's eyes hastily glanced through the paper to pick out the strongest expressions of censure with which it abounded, in gleaning which he was greatly aided by their being printed in italics.

"I think it a—bloody and execrable—murder and parricide—devised by hellish and implacable cruelty—utterly abominable, and a scandal to the land."

"Well said, old gentleman!" said the querist—"Here's to thee, and I wish you joy of your good principles. You owe me a cup of thanks for having taught you them; nay, thou shalt pledge me in thine own sack—sour ale sits ill upon a loyal stomach.—Now comes your turn, young man; what think you of the matter in hand?"

"I should have little objection to answer you," said Henry, "if I knew what right you had to put the question."

"The Lord preserve us!" said the old housekeeper, "to ask the like o' that at a trooper, when a' folk ken they do whatever they like through the haill country wi' man and woman, beast and body."

The old gentleman exclaimed, in the same horror at his nephew's audacity, "Hold your peace, sir, or answer the gentleman discreetly. Do you mean to affront the king's authority in the person of a sergeant of the Life-Guards?"

"Silence, all of you!" exclaimed Bothwell, striking his hand fiercely on the table—"Silence, every one of you, and hear me!—You ask me for my right to examine you, sir (to Henry); my cockade and my broadsword are my commission, and a better one than ever Old Nol gave to his roundheads; and if you want to know more about it, you may look at the act of council empowering his majesty's officers and soldiers to search for, examine, and apprehend suspicious persons; and, therefore, once more, I ask you your opinion of the death of Archbishop Sharpe—it's a new touch-stone we have got for trying people's metal."

Henry had, by this time, reflected upon the useless risk to which he would expose the family by resisting the tyrannical power which was delegated to such rude hands; he therefore read the narrative over, and replied, composedly, "I have no hesitation to say, that the perpetrators of this assassination have committed, in my opinion, a rash and wicked action, which I regret the more, as I foresee it will be made the cause of proceedings against many who are both innocent of the deed, and as far from approving it as myself."

While Henry thus expressed himself, Bothwell, who bent his eyes keenly upon him, seemed suddenly to recollect his features.

"Aha! my friend Captain Popinjay, I think I have seen you before, and in very suspicious company."

"I saw you once," answered Henry, "in the public-house of the town of—."

"And with whom did you leave that public-house, youngster?—Was it not with John Balfour of Burley, one of the murderers of the Archbishop?"

"I did leave the house with the person you have named," answered Henry, "I scorn to deny it; but, so far from knowing him to be a murderer of the primate, I did not even know at the time that such a crime had been committed."

"Lord have mercy on me, I am ruined!—utterly ruined and undone!" exclaimed Milnwood. "That callant's tongue will rin the head aff his ain shoulders, and waste my gudes to the very grey cloak on my back!"

"But you knew Burley," continued Bothwell, still addressing Henry, and regardless of his uncle's interruption, "to be an intercommuned rebel and traitor, and you knew the prohibition to deal with such persons. You knew, that, as a loyal subject, you were prohibited to reset, supply, or intercommune with this attainted traitor, to correspond with him by word, writ, or message, or to supply him with meat, drink, house, harbour, or victual, under the highest pains—you knew all this, and yet you broke the law." (Henry was silent.) "Where did you part from him?" continued Bothwell; "was it in the highway, or did you give him harbourage in this very house?"

"In this house!" said his uncle; "he dared not for his neck bring ony traitor into a house of mine."

"Dare he deny that he did so?" said Bothwell.

"As you charge it to me as a crime," said Henry, "you will excuse my saying any thing that will criminate myself."

"O, the lands of Milnwood!—the bonny lands of Milnwood, that have been in the name of Morton twa hundred years!" exclaimed his uncle; "they are barking and fleeing, outfield and infield, haugh and holme!"

"No, sir," said Henry, "you shall not suffer on my account.—I own," he continued, addressing Bothwell, "I did give this man a night's lodging, as to an old military comrade of my father. But it was not only without my uncle's knowledge, but contrary to his express general orders. I trust, if my evidence is considered as good against myself, it will have some weight in proving my uncle's innocence."

"Come, young man," said the soldier, in a somewhat milder tone, "you're a smart spark enough, and I am sorry for you; and your uncle here is a fine old Trojan, kinder, I see, to his guests than himself, for he gives us wine and drinks his own thin ale—tell me all you know about this Burley, what he said when you parted from him, where he went, and where he is likely now to be found; and, d—n it, I'll wink as hard on your share of the business as my duty will permit. There's a thousand merks on the murdering whigamore's head, an I could but light on it—Come, out with it—where did you part with him?"

"You will excuse my answering that question, sir," said Morton; "the same cogent reasons which induced me to afford him hospitality at considerable risk to myself and my friends, would command me to respect his secret, if, indeed, he had trusted me with any."

"So you refuse to give me an answer?" said Bothwell.

"I have none to give," returned Henry.

"Perhaps I could teach you to find one, by tying a piece of lighted match betwixt your fingers," answered Bothwell.

"O, for pity's sake, sir," said old Alison apart to her master, "gie them siller—it's siller they're seeking—they'll murder Mr Henry, and yoursell next!"

Milnwood groaned in perplexity and bitterness of spirit, and, with a tone as if he was giving up the ghost, exclaimed, "If twenty p—p—punds would make up this unhappy matter!"—"My master," insinuated Alison to the sergeant, "would gie twenty puns sterling!"—"Punds Scotch, ye b—h!" interrupted Milnwood; for the agony of his avarice overcame alike his puritanic precision and the habitual respect he entertained for his housekeeper.

"Punds sterling," insisted the housekeeper, "if ye wad hae the gudeness to look ower the lad's misconduct; he's that dour ye might tear him to pieces, and ye wad ne'er get a word out o' him; and it wad do ye little gude, I'm sure, to burn his bonny fingerends."

"Why," said Bothwell, hesitating, "I don't know—most of my cloth would have the money, and take off the prisoner too; but I bear a conscience, and if your master will stand to your offer, and enter into a bond to produce his nephew, and if all in the house will take the test-oath, I do not know but"—"O ay, ay, sir," cried Mrs Wilson, "ony test, ony oaths ye please!" And then aside to her master, "Haste ye away, sir, and get the siller, or they will burn the house about our lugs."

Old Milnwood cast a rueful look upon his adviser, and moved off, like a piece of Dutch clockwork, to set at liberty his imprisoned angels in this dire emergency. Meanwhile, Sergeant Bothwell began to put the test-oath with such a degree of solemn reverence as might have been expected, being just about the same which is used to this day in his majesty's custom-house.

"You—what's your name, woman?"

"Alison Wilson, sir."

"You, Alison Wilson, solemnly swear, certify, and declare, that you judge it unlawful for subjects, under pretext of reformation, or any other pretext whatsoever, to enter into Leagues and Covenants"—Here the ceremony was interrupted by a strife between Cuddie and his mother, which, long conducted in whispers, now became audible.

"Oh, whisht, mither, whisht! they're upon a communing—Oh! whisht, and they'll agree weel eneuch e'enow."

"I will not whisht, Cuddie," replied his mother, "I will uplift my voice and spare not—I will confound the man of sin, even the scarlet man, and through my voice shall Mr Henry be freed from the net of the fowler."

"She has her leg ower the harrows now," said Cuddie, "stop her wha can—I see her cocked up behind a dragoon on her way to the Tolbooth—I find my ain legs tied below a horse's belly—Ay—she has just mustered up her sermon, and there—wi' that grane—out it comes, and we are a'ruined, horse and foot!"

"And div ye think to come here," said Mause, her withered hand shaking in concert with her keen, though wrinkled visage, animated by zealous wrath, and emancipated, by the very mention of the test, from the restraints of her own prudence, and Cuddie's admonition—"Div ye think to come here, wi' your soul-killing, saint-seducing, conscience-confounding oaths, and tests, and bands—your snares, and your traps, and your gins?—Surely it is in vain that a net is spread in the sight of any bird."

"Eh! what, good dame?" said the soldier. "Here's a whig miracle, egad! the old wife has got both her ears and tongue, and we are like to be driven deaf in our turn.—Go to, hold your peace, and remember whom you talk to, you old idiot."

"Whae do I talk to! Eh, sirs, ower weel may the sorrowing land ken what ye are. Malignant adherents ye are to the prelates, foul props to a feeble and filthy cause, bloody beasts of prey, and burdens to the earth."

"Upon my soul," said Bothwell, astonished as a mastiff-dog might be should a hen-partridge fly at him in defence of her young, "this is the finest language I ever heard! Can't you give us some more of it?"

"Gie ye some mair o't?" said Mause, clearing her voice with a preliminary cough, "I will take up my testimony against you ance and again.—Philistines ye are, and Edomites—leopards are ye, and foxes—evening wolves, that gnaw not the bones till the morrow—wicked dogs, that compass about the chosen—thrusting kine, and pushing bulls of Bashan—piercing serpents ye are, and allied baith in name and nature with the great Red Dragon; Revelations, twalfth chapter, third and fourth verses."

Here the old lady stopped, apparently much more from lack of breath than of matter.

"Curse the old hag!" said one of the dragoons, "gag her, and take her to head-quarters."

"For shame, Andrews," said Bothwell, "remember the good lady belongs to the fair sex, and uses only the privilege of her tongue.—But, hark ye, good woman, every bull of Bashan and Red Dragon will not be so civil as I am, or be contented to leave you to the charge of the constable and ducking-stool. In the meantime I must necessarily carry off this young man to head-quarters. I cannot answer to my commanding-officer to leave him in a house where I have heard so much treason and fanaticism."

"Se now, mither, what ye hae dune," whispered Cuddie, "there's the Philistines, as ye ca' them, are gaun to whirry awa' Mr Henry, and a' wi' your nash-gab, deil be on't!"

"Haud yere tongue, ye cowardly loon," said the mother, "and layna the wyte on me; if you and thae thowless gluttons, that are sitting staring like cows bursting on clover, wad testify wi' your hands as I have testified wi' my tongue, they should never harle the precious young lad awa' to captivity."

While this dialogue passed, the soldiers had already bound and secured their prisoner. Milnwood returned at this instant, and, alarmed at the preparations he beheld, hastened to proffer to Bothwell, though with many a grievous groan, the purse of gold which he had been obliged to rummage out as ransom for his nephew. The trooper took the purse with an air of indifference, weighed it in his hand, chucked it up into the air, and caught it as it fell, then shook his head, and said, "There's many a merry night in this nest of yellow boys, but d—n me if I dare venture for them—that old woman has spoken too loud, and before all the men too.—Hark ye, old gentleman," to Milnwood, "I must take your nephew to head-quarters, so I cannot, in conscience, keep more than is my due as civility-money," then opening the purse, he gave a gold piece to each of the soldiers, and took three to himself. "Now," said he, "you have the comfort to know that your kinsman, young Captain Popinjay, will be carefully looked after and civilly used; and the rest of the money I return to you."

Milnwood eagerly extended his hand.

"Only you know," said Bothwell, still playing with the purse, "that every landholder is answerable for the conformity and loyalty of his household, and that these fellows of mine are not obliged to be silent on the subject of the fine sermon we have had from that old puritan in the tartan plaid there; and I presume you are aware that the consequences of delation will be a heavy fine before the council."

"Good sergeant,—worthy captain!" exclaimed the terrified miser, "I am sure there is no person in my house, to my knowledge, would give cause of offence."

"Nay," answered Bothwell, "you shall hear her give her testimony, as she calls it, herself.—You fellow," (to Cuddie,) "stand back, and let your mother speak her mind. I see she's primed and loaded again since her first discharge."

"Lord! noble sir," said Cuddie, "an auld wife's tongue's but a feckless matter to mak sic a fash about. Neither my father nor me ever minded muckle what our mither said."

"Hold your peace, my lad, while you are well," said Bothwell; "I promise you I think you are slyer than you would like to be supposed.—Come, good dame, you see your master will not believe that you can give us so bright a testimony."

Mause's zeal did not require this spur to set her again on full career.

"Woe to the compliers and carnal self-seekers," she said, "that daub over and drown their consciences by complying with wicked exactions, and giving mammon of unrighteousness to the sons of Belial, that it may make their peace with them! It is a sinful compliance, a base confederacy with the Enemy. It is the evil that Menahem did in the sight of the Lord, when he gave a thousand talents to Pul, King of Assyria, that his hand might be with him; Second Kings, feifteen chapter, nineteen verse. It is the evil deed of Ahab, when he sent money to Tiglath-Peleser; see the saame Second Kings, saxteen and aught. And if it was accounted a backsliding even in godly Hezekiah, that he complied with Sennacherib, giving him money, and offering to bear that which was put upon him, (see the saame Second Kings, aughteen chapter, fourteen and feifteen verses,) even so it is with them that in this contumacious and backsliding generation pays localities and fees, and cess and fines, to greedy and unrighteous publicans, and extortions and stipends to hireling curates, (dumb dogs which bark not, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber,) and gives gifts to be helps and hires to our oppressors and destroyers. They are all like the casters of a lot with them—like the preparing of a table for the troop, and the furnishing a drink-offering to the number."

"There's a fine sound of doctrine for you, Mr Morton! How like you that?" said Bothwell; "or how do you think the Council will like it? I think we can carry the greatest part of it in our heads without a kylevine pen and a pair of tablets, such as you bring to conventicles. She denies paying cess, I think, Andrews?"

"Yes, by G—," said Andrews; "and she swore it was a sin to give a trooper a pot of ale, or ask him to sit down to a table."

"You hear," said Bothwell, addressing Milnwood; "but it's your own affair;" and he proffered back the purse with its diminished contents, with an air of indifference.

Milnwood, whose head seemed stunned by the accumulation of his misfortunes, extended his hand mechanically to take the purse.

"Are ye mad?" said his housekeeper, in a whisper; "tell them to keep it;—they will keep it either by fair means or foul, and it's our only chance to make them quiet."

"I canna do it, Alie—I canna do it," said Milnwood, in the bitterness of his heart. "I canna part wi' the siller I hae counted sae often ower, to thae blackguards."

"Then I maun do it mysell, Milnwood," said the housekeeper, "or see a' gang wrang thegither.—My master, sir," she said, addressing Bothwell, "canna think o' taking back ony thing at the hand of an honourable gentleman like you; he implores ye to pit up the sillar, and be as kind to his nephew as ye can, and be favourable in reporting our dispositions to government, and let us tak nae wrang for the daft speeches of an auld jaud," (here she turned fiercely upon Mause, to indulge herself for the effort which it cost her to assume a mild demeanour to the soldiers,) "a daft auld whig randy, that ne'er was in the house (foul fa' her) till yesterday afternoon, and that sall ne'er cross the door-stane again anes I had her out o't."

"Ay, ay," whispered Cuddie to his parent, "e'en sae! I kend we wad be put to our travels again whene'er ye suld get three words spoken to an end. I was sure that wad be the upshot o't, mither."

"Whisht, my bairn," said she, "and dinna murmur at the cross—cross their door-stane! weel I wot I'll ne'er cross their door-stane. There's nae mark on their threshold for a signal that the destroying angel should pass by. They'll get a back-cast o' his hand yet, that think sae muckle o' the creature and sae little o' the Creator—sae muckle o' warld's gear and sae little o' a broken covenant—sae muckle about thae wheen pieces o' yellow muck, and sae little about the pure gold o' the Scripture—sae muckle about their ain friend and kinsman, and sae little about the elect, that are tried wi' hornings, harassings, huntings, searchings, chasings, catchings, imprisonments, torturings, banishments, headings, hangings, dismemberings, and quarterings quick, forby the hundreds forced from their ain habitations to the deserts, mountains, muirs, mosses, moss-flows, and peat-hags, there to hear the word like bread eaten in secret."

"She's at the Covenant now, sergeant, shall we not have her away?" said one of the soldiers.

"You be d—d!" said Bothwell, aside to him; "cannot you see she's better where she is, so long as there is a respectable, sponisible, money-broking heritor, like Mr Morton of Milnwood, who has the means of atoning her trespasses? Let the old mother fly to raise another brood, she's too tough to be made any thing of herself—Here," he cried, "one other round to Milnwood and his roof-tree, and to our next merry meeting with him!—which I think will not be far distant, if he keeps such a fanatical family."

He then ordered the party to take their horses, and pressed the best in Milnwood's stable into the king's service to carry the prisoner. Mrs Wilson, with weeping eyes, made up a small parcel of necessities for Henry's compelled journey, and as she bustled about, took an opportunity, unseen by the party, to slip into his hand a small sum of money. Bothwell and his troopers, in other respects, kept their promise, and were civil. They did not bind their prisoner, but contented themselves with leading his horse between a file of men. They then mounted, and marched off with much mirth and laughter among themselves, leaving the Milnwood family in great confusion. The old Laird himself, overpowered by the loss of his nephew, and the unavailing outlay of twenty pounds sterling, did nothing the whole evening but rock himself backwards and forwards in his great leathern easy-chair, repeating the same lamentation, of "Ruined on a' sides, ruined on a' sides—harried and undone—harried and undone—body and gudes, body and gudes!"

Mrs Alison Wilson's grief was partly indulged and partly relieved by the torrent of invectives with which she accompanied Mause and Cuddie's expulsion from Milnwood.

"Ill luck be in the graning corse o' thee! the prettiest lad in Clydesdale this day maun be a sufferer, and a' for you and your daft whiggery!"

"Gae wa'," replied Mause; "I trow ye are yet in the bonds of sin, and in the gall of iniquity, to grudge your bonniest and best in the cause of Him that gave ye a' ye hae—I promise I hae dune as muckle for Mr Harry as I wad do for my ain; for if Cuddie was found worthy to bear testimony in the Grassmarket"—"And there's gude hope o't," said Alison, "unless you and he change your courses."

"—And if," continued Mause, disregarding the interruption, "the bloody Doege and the flattering Ziphites were to seek to ensnare me with a proffer of his remission upon sinful compliances, I wad persevere, natheless, in lifting my testimony against popery, prelacy, antinomianism, erastianism, lapsarianism, sublapsarianism, and the sins and snares of the times—I wad cry as a woman in labour against the black Indulgence, that has been a stumbling-block to professors—I wad uplift my voice as a powerful preacher."

"Hout tout, mither," cried Cuddie, interfering and dragging her off forcibly, "dinna deave the gentlewoman wi' your testimony! ye hae preached eneugh for sax days. Ye preached us out o' our canny free-house and gude kale-yard, and out o' this new city o' refuge afore our hinder end was weel hafted in it; and ye hae preached Mr Harry awa to the prison; and ye hae preached twenty pundts out o' the Laird's pocket that he likes as ill to quit wi'; and sae ye may haud sae for ae wee while, without preaching me up a ladder and down a tow. Sae, come awa, come awa; the family hae had eneugh o' your testimony to mind it for ae while."

So saying he dragged off Mause, the words, "Testimony—Covenant—malignants—indulgence," still thrilling upon her tongue, to make preparations for instantly renewing their travels in quest of an asylum.

"Ill-fard, crazy, crack-brained gowk, that she is!" exclaimed the housekeeper, as she saw them depart, "to set up to be sae muckle better than ither folk, the auld besom, and to bring sae muckle distress on a douce quiet family! If it hadna been that I am mair than half a gentlewoman by my station, I wad hae tried my ten nails in the wizen'd hide o' her!"

CHAPTER IX.

*I am a son of Mars who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.*

Burns.

"Don't be too much cast down," said Sergeant Bothwell to his prisoner as they journeyed on towards the head-quarters; "you are a smart pretty lad, and well connected; the worst that will happen will be strapping up for it, and that is many an honest fellow's lot. I tell you fairly your life's within the compass of the law, unless you make submission, and get off by a round fine upon your uncle's estate; he can well afford it."

"That vexes me more than the rest," said Henry. "He parts with his money with regret; and, as he had no concern whatever with my having given this person shelter for a night, I wish to Heaven, if I escape a capital punishment, that the penalty may be of a kind I could bear in my own person."

"Why, perhaps," said Bothwell, "they will propose to you to go into one of the Scotch regiments that are serving abroad. It's no bad line of service; if your friends are active, and there are any knocks going, you may soon get a commission."

"I am by no means sure," answered Morton, "that such a sentence is not the best thing that can happen to me."

"Why, then, you are no real whig after all?" said the sergeant.

"I have hitherto meddled with no party in the state," said Henry, "but have remained quietly at home; and sometimes I have had serious thoughts of joining one of our foreign regiments."

"Have you?" replied Bothwell; "why, I honour you for it; I have served in the Scotch French guards myself many a long day; it's the place for learning discipline, d—n me. They never mind what you do when you are off duty; but miss you the roll-call, and see how they'll arrange you—D—n me, if old Captain Montgomery didn't make me mount guard upon the arsenal in my steel-back and breast, plate-sleeves and head-piece, for six hours at once, under so burning a sun, that gad I was baked like a turtle at Port Royale. I swore never to miss answering to Francis Stewart again, though I should leave my hand of cards upon the drum-head—Ah! discipline is a capital thing."

"In other respects you liked the service?" said Morton,

"Par excellence," said Bothwell; "women, wine, and wassail, all to be had for little but the asking; and if you find it in your conscience to let a fat priest think he has some chance to convert you, gad he'll help you to these comforts himself, just to gain a little ground in your good affection. Where will you find a crop-eared whig parson will be so civil?"

"Why, nowhere, I agree with you," said Henry; "but what was your chief duty?"

"To guard the king's person," said Bothwell, "to look after the safety of Louis le Grand, my boy, and now and then to take a turn among the Huguenots (protestants, that is.) And there we had fine scope; it brought my hand pretty well in for the service in this country. But, come, as you are to be a bon camarado, as the Spaniards say, I must put you in cash with some of your old uncle's broad-pieces. This is cutter's law; we must not see a pretty fellow want, if we have cash ourselves."

Thus speaking, he pulled out his purse, took out some of the contents, and offered them to Henry without counting them. Young Morton declined the favour; and, not judging it prudent to acquaint the sergeant, notwithstanding his apparent generosity, that he was actually in possession of some money, he assured him he should have no difficulty in getting a supply from his uncle.

"Well," said Bothwell, "in that case these yellow rascals must serve to ballast my purse a little longer. I always make it a rule never to quit the tavern (unless ordered on duty) while my purse is so weighty that I can chuck it over the signpost. [Note: A Highland laird, whose peculiarities live still in the recollection of his countrymen, used to regulate his residence at Edinburgh in the following manner: Every day he visited the Water-gate, as it is called, of the Canongate, over which is extended a wooden arch. Specie being then the general currency, he threw his purse over the gate, and as long as it was heavy enough to be thrown over, he continued his round of pleasure in the metropolis; when it was too light, he thought it time to retire to the Highlands. Query—How often would he have repeated this experiment at Temple Bar?] When it is so light that the wind blows it back, then, boot and saddle,—we must fall on some way of replenishing.—But what tower is that before us, rising so high upon the steep bank, out of the woods that surround it on every side?"

"It is the tower of Tillietudlem," said one of the soldiers. "Old Lady Margaret Bellenden lives there. She's one of the best affected women in the country, and one that's a soldier's friend. When I was hurt by one of the d—d whig dogs that shot at me from behind a fauld-dike, I lay a month there, and would stand such another wound to be in as good quarters again."

"If that be the case," said Bothwell, "I will pay my respects to her as we pass, and request some refreshment for men and horses; I am as thirsty already as if I had drunk nothing at Milnwood. But it is a good thing in these times," he continued, addressing himself to Henry, "that the King's soldier cannot pass a house without getting a refreshment. In such houses as Tillie—what d'ye call it? you are served for love; in the houses of the avowed fanatics you help yourself by force; and among the moderate presbyterians and other suspicious persons, you are well treated from fear; so your thirst is always quenched on some terms or other."

"And you purpose," said Henry, anxiously, "to go upon that errand up to the tower yonder?"

"To be sure I do," answered Bothwell. "How should I be able to report favourably to my officers of the worthy lady's sound principles, unless I know the taste of her sack, for sack she will produce—that I take for granted; it is the favourite consoler of your old dowager of quality, as small claret is the potation of your country laird."

"Then, for heaven's sake," said Henry, "if you are determined to go there, do not mention my name, or expose me to a family that I am acquainted with. Let me be muffled up for the time in one of your soldier's cloaks, and only mention me generally as a prisoner under your charge."

"With all my heart," said Bothwell; "I promised to use you civilly, and I scorn to break my word.—Here, Andrews, wrap a cloak round the prisoner, and do not mention his name, nor where we caught him, unless you would have a trot on a horse of wood."

[Note: Wooden Mare. The punishment of riding the wooden mare was, in the days of Charles and long after, one of the various and cruel modes of enforcing military discipline. In front of the old guard-house in the High Street of Edinburgh, a large horse of this kind was placed, on which now and then, in the more ancient times, a veteran might be seen mounted, with a firelock tied to each foot, atoning for some small offence.

There is a singular work, entitled Memoirs of Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, (son of Queen Anne,) from his birth to his ninth year, in which Jenkin Lewis, an honest Welshman in attendance on the royal infant's person, is pleased to record that his Royal Highness laughed, cried, crow'd, and said Gig and Dy, very like a babe of plebeian descent. He had also a premature taste for the discipline as well as the show of war, and had a corps of twenty-two boys, arrayed with paper caps and wooden swords. For the maintenance of discipline in this juvenile corps, a wooden horse was established in the Presence-chamber, and was sometimes employed in the punishment of offences not strictly military. Hughes, the Duke's tailor, having made him a suit of clothes which were too tight, was appointed, in an order of the day issued by the young prince, to be placed on this penal steed. The man of remnants, by dint of supplication and mediation, escaped from the penance, which was likely to equal the inconveniences of his brother artist's equestrian trip to Brentford. But an attendant named Weatherly, who had presumed to bring the young Prince a toy, (after he had discarded the use of them,) was actually mounted on the wooden horse without a saddle, with his face to the tail, while he was plied by four servants of the household with syringes and squirts, till he had a thorough wetting. "He was a waggish fellow," says Lewis, "and would not lose any thing for the joke's sake when he was putting his tricks upon others, so he was obliged to submit cheerfully to what was inflicted upon him, being at our mercy to play him off well, which we did accordingly." Amid much such nonsense, Lewis's book shows that this poor child, the heir of the British monarchy, who died when he was eleven years old, was, in truth, of promising parts, and of a good disposition. The volume, which rarely occurs, is an octavo, published in 1789, the editor being Dr Philip Hayes of Oxford.]

They were at this moment at an arched gateway, battlemented and flanked with turrets, one whereof was totally ruinous, excepting the lower story, which served as a cow-house to the peasant, whose family inhabited the turret that remained entire. The gate had been broken down by Monk's soldiers during the civil war, and had never been replaced, therefore presented no obstacle to Bothwell and his party. The avenue, very steep and narrow, and causewayed with large round stones, ascended the side of the precipitous bank in an oblique and zigzag course, now showing now hiding a view of the tower and its exterior bulwarks, which seemed to rise almost perpendicularly above their heads. The fragments of Gothic defences which it exhibited were upon such a scale of strength, as induced Bothwell to exclaim, "It's well this place is in honest and loyal hands. Egad, if the enemy had it, a dozen of old whigamore wives with their distaffs might keep it against a troop of dragoons, at least if they had half the spunk of the old girl we left at Milnwood. Upon my life," he continued, as they came in front of the large double tower and its surrounding defences and flankers, "it is a superb place, founded, says the worn inscription over the gate—unless the remnant of my Latin has given me the slip—by Sir Ralph de Bellenden in 1350—a respectable antiquity. I must greet the old lady with due honour, though it should put me to the labour of recalling some of the compliments that I used to dabble in when I was wont to keep that sort of company."

As he thus communed with himself, the butler, who had reconnoitred the soldiers from an arrowslit in the wall, announced to his lady, that a commanded party of dragoons, or, as he thought, Life-Guardsmen, waited at the gate with a prisoner under their charge.

"I am certain," said Gudyill, "and positive, that the sixth man is a prisoner; for his horse is led, and the two dragoons that are before have their carabines out of their budgets, and rested upon their thighs. It was aye the way we guarded prisoners in the days of the great Marquis."

"King's soldiers?" said the lady; "probably in want of refreshment. Go, Gudyill, make them welcome, and let them be accommodated with what provision and forage the Tower can afford.—And stay, tell my gentlewoman to bring my black scarf and manteau. I will go down myself to receive them; one cannot show the King's Life-Guards too much respect in times when they are doing so much for royal authority. And d'ye hear, Gudyill, let Jenny Dennison slip on her pearlins to walk before my niece and me, and the three women to walk behind; and bid my niece attend me instantly."

Fully accoutred, and attended according to her directions, Lady Margaret now sailed out into the court-yard of her tower with great courtesy and dignity. Sergeant Bothwell saluted the grave and reverend lady of the manor with an assurance which had something of the light and careless address of the dissipated men of fashion in Charles the Second's time, and did not at all savour of the awkward or rude manners of a non-commissioned officer of dragoons. His language, as well as his manners, seemed also to be refined for the time and occasion; though the truth was, that, in the fluctuations of an adventurous and profligate life, Bothwell had sometimes kept company much better suited to his ancestry than to his present situation of life. To the lady's request to know whether she could be of service to them, he answered, with a suitable bow, "That as they had to march some miles farther that night, they would be much accommodated by permission to rest their horses for an hour before continuing their journey."

"With the greatest pleasure," answered Lady Margaret; "and I trust that my people will see that neither horse nor men want suitable refreshment."

"We are well aware, madam," continued Bothwell, "that such has always been the reception, within the walls of Tillietudlem, of those who served the King."

"We have studied to discharge our duty faithfully and loyally on all occasions, sir," answered Lady Margaret, pleased with the compliment, "both to our monarchs and to their followers, particularly to their faithful soldiers. It is not long ago, and it probably has not escaped the recollection of his sacred majesty, now on the throne, since he himself honoured my poor house with his presence and breakfasted in a room in this castle, Mr Sergeant, which my waiting-gentlewoman shall show you; we still call it the King's room."

Bothwell had by this time dismounted his party, and committed the horses to the charge of one file, and the prisoner to that of another; so that he himself was at liberty to continue the conversation which the lady had so condescendingly opened.

"Since the King, my master, had the honour to experience your hospitality, I cannot wonder that it is extended to those that serve him, and whose principal merit is doing it with fidelity. And yet I have a nearer relation to his majesty than this coarse red coat would seem to indicate."

"Indeed, sir? Probably," said Lady Margaret, "you have belonged to his household?"

"Not exactly, madam, to his household, but rather to his house; a connexion through which I may claim kindred with most of the best families in Scotland, not, I believe, exclusive of that of Tillietudlem."

"Sir?" said the old lady, drawing herself up with dignity at hearing what she conceived an impertinent jest, "I do not understand you."

"It's but a foolish subject for one in my situation to talk of, madam," answered the trooper; "but you must have heard of the history and misfortunes of my grandfather Francis Stewart, to whom James I., his cousin-german, gave the title of Bothwell, as my comrades give me the nickname. It was not in the long run more advantageous to him than it is to me."

"Indeed?" said Lady Margaret, with much sympathy and surprise; "I have indeed always understood that the grandson of the last Earl was in necessitous circumstances, but I should never have expected to see him so low in the service. With such connexions, what ill fortune could have reduced you?"—

"Nothing much out of the ordinary course, I believe, madam," said Bothwell, interrupting and anticipating the question. "I have had my moments of good luck like my neighbours—have drunk my bottle with Rochester, thrown a merry main with Buckingham, and fought at Tangiers side by side with Sheffield. But my luck never lasted; I could not make useful friends out of my jolly companions—Perhaps I was not sufficiently aware," he continued, with some bitterness, "how much the descendant of the Scottish Stewarts was honoured by being admitted into the convivialities of Wilmot and Villiers."

"But your Scottish friends, Mr Stewart, your relations here, so numerous and so powerful?"

"Why, ay, my lady," replied the sergeant, "I believe some of them might have made me their gamekeeper, for I am a tolerable shot—some of them would have entertained me as their bravo, for I can use my sword well—and here and there was one, who, when better company was not to be had, would have made me his companion, since I can drink my three bottles of wine.—But I don't know how it is—between service and service among my kinsmen, I prefer that of my cousin Charles as the most creditable of them all, although the pay is but poor, and the livery far from splendid."

"It is a shame, it is a burning scandal!" said Lady Margaret. "Why do you not apply to his most sacred majesty? he cannot but be surprised to hear that a scion of his august family"—

"I beg your pardon, madam," interrupted the sergeant, "I am but a blunt soldier, and I trust you will excuse me when I say, his most sacred majesty is more busy in grafting scions of his own, than with nourishing those which were planted by his grandfather's grandfather."

"Well, Mr Stewart," said Lady Margaret, "one thing you must promise me—remain at Tillietudlem to-night; to-morrow I expect your commanding-officer, the gallant Claverhouse, to whom king and country are so much obliged for his exertions against those who would turn the world upside down. I will speak to him on the subject of your speedy promotion; and I am certain he feels too much, both what is due to the blood which is in your veins, and to the request of a lady so highly distinguished as myself by his most sacred majesty, not to make better provision for you than you have yet received."

"I am much obliged to your ladyship, and I certainly will remain her with my prisoner, since you request it, especially as it will be the earliest way of presenting him to Colonel Grahame, and obtaining his ultimate orders about the young spark."

"Who is your prisoner, pray you?" said Lady Margaret.

"A young fellow of rather the better class in this neighbourhood, who has been so incautious as to give countenance to one of the murderers of the primate, and to facilitate the dog's escape."

"O, fie upon him!" said Lady Margaret; "I am but too apt to forgive the injuries I have received at the hands of these rogues, though some of them, Mr Stewart, are of a kind not like to be forgotten; but those who would abet the perpetrators of so cruel and deliberate a homicide on a single man, an old man, and a man of the Archbishop's sacred profession—O fie upon him! If you wish to make him secure, with little trouble to your people, I will cause Harrison, or Gudyill, look for the key of our pit, or principal dungeon. It has not been open since the week after the victory of Kilsythe, when my poor Sir Arthur Bellenden put twenty whigs into it; but it is not more than two stories beneath ground, so it cannot be unwholesome, especially as I rather believe there is somewhere an opening to the outer air."

"I beg your pardon, madam," answered the sergeant; "I daresay the dungeon is a most admirable one; but I have promised to be civil to the lad, and I will take care he is watched, so as to render escape impossible. I'll set those to look after him shall keep him as fast as if his legs were in the boots, or his fingers in the thumbikins."

"Well, Mr Stewart," rejoined the lady, "you best know your own duty. I heartily wish you good evening, and commit you to the care of my steward, Harrison. I would ask you to keep ourselves company, but a—a—a—"

"O, madam, it requires no apology; I am sensible the coarse red coat of King Charles II. does and ought to annihilate the privileges of the red blood of King James V."

"Not with me, I do assure you, Mr Stewart; you do me injustice if you think so. I will speak to your officer to-morrow; and I trust you shall soon find yourself in a rank where there shall be no anomalies to be reconciled."

"I believe, madam," said Bothwell, "your goodness will find itself deceived; but I am obliged to you for your intention, and, at all events, I will have a merry night with Mr Harrison."

Lady Margaret took a ceremonious leave, with all the respect which she owed to royal blood, even when flowing in the veins of a sergeant of the Life-Guards; again assuring Mr Stewart, that whatever was in the Tower of Tillietudlem was heartily at his service and that of his attendants.

Sergeant Bothwell did not fail to take the lady at her word, and readily forgot the height from which his family had descended, in a joyous carousal, during which Mr Harrison exerted himself to produce the best wine in the cellar, and to excite his guest to be merry by that seducing example, which, in matters of conviviality, goes farther than precept. Old Gudyill associated himself with a party so much to his taste, pretty much as Davy, in the Second Part of Henry the Fourth, mingles in the revels of his master, Justice Shallow. He ran down to the cellar at the risk of breaking his neck, to ransack some private catacomb, known, as he boasted, only to himself, and which never either had, or should, during his superintendence, render forth a bottle of its contents to any one but a real king's friend.

"When the Duke dined here," said the butler, seating himself at a distance from the table, being somewhat overawed by Bothwell's genealogy, but yet hitching his seat half a yard nearer at every clause of his speech, "my leddy was importunate to have a bottle of that Burgundy,"—(here he advanced his seat a little,)—"but I dinna ken how it was, Mr Stewart, I misdoubted him. I jaloused him, sir, no to be the friend to government he pretends: the family are not to lippen to. That auld Duke James lost his heart before he lost his head; and the Worcester man was but wersh parritch, neither gude to fry, boil, nor sup cauld." (With this witty observation, he completed his first parallel, and commenced a zigzag after the manner of an experienced engineer, in order to continue his approaches to the table.) "Sae, sir, the faster my leddy cried 'Burgundy to his Grace—the auld Burgundy—the choice Burgundy—the Burgundy that came ower in the thirty-nine'—the mair did I say to mysell, Deil a drap gangs down his hause unless I was mair sensible o' his principles; sack and claret may serve him. Na, na, gentlemen, as lang as I hae the trust o'butler in this house o'Tillietudlem, I'll tak it upon me to see that nae disloyal or doubtfu' person is the better o' our binns. But when I can find a true friend to the king and his cause, and a moderate episcopacy; when I find a man, as I say, that will stand by church and crown as I did mysell in my master's life, and all through Montrose's time, I think there's naething in the cellar ower gude to be spared on him."

By this time he had completed a lodgment in the body of the place, or, in other words, advanced his seat close to the table.

"And now, Mr Francis Stewart of Bothwell, I have the honour to drink your gude health, and a commission t'ye, and much luck may ye have in raking this country clear o'whigs and roundheads, fanatics and Covenanters."

Bothwell, who, it may well be believed, had long ceased to be very scrupulous in point of society, which he regulated more by his convenience and station in life than his ancestry, readily answered the butler's pledge, acknowledging, at the same time, the excellence of the wine; and Mr Gudyill, thus adopted a regular member of the company, continued to furnish them with the means of mirth until an early hour in the next morning.

CHAPTER X.

*Did I but purpose to embark with thee
On the smooth surface of a summer sea,
And would forsake the skiff and make the shore
When the winds whistle and the tempests roar?
Prior.*

While Lady Margaret held, with the high-descended sergeant of dragoons, the conference which we have detailed in the preceding pages, her grand-daughter, partaking in a less degree her ladyship's enthusiasm for all who were sprung of the blood-royal, did not honour Sergeant Bothwell with more attention than a single glance, which showed her a tall powerful person, and a set of hardy weather-beaten features, to which pride and dissipation had given an air where discontent mingled with the reckless gaiety of desperation. The other soldiers offered still less to detach her consideration; but from the prisoner, muffled and disguised as he was, she found it impossible to withdraw her eyes. Yet she blamed herself for indulging a curiosity which seemed obviously to give pain to him who was its object.

"I wish," she said to Jenny Dennison, who was the immediate attendant on her person, "I wish we knew who that poor fellow is."

"I was just thinking sae mysell, Miss Edith," said the waiting woman, "but it canna be Cuddie Headrigg, because he's taller and no sae stout."

"Yet," continued Miss Bellenden, "it may be some poor neighbour, for whom we might have cause to interest ourselves."

"I can sune learn wha he is," said the enterprising Jenny, "if the sodgers were anes settled and at leisure, for I ken ane o' them very weel—the best-looking and the youngest o' them."

"I think you know all the idle young fellows about the country," answered her mistress.

"Na, Miss Edith, I am no sae free o' my acquaintance as that," answered the fille-de-chambre. "To be sure, folk canna help kenning the folk by head-mark that they see aye glowering and looking at them at kirk and market; but I ken few lads to speak to unless it be them o' the family, and the three Steinsons, and Tam Rand, and the young miller, and the five Howisons in Nethersheils, and lang Tam Gilry, and"—

"Pray cut short a list of exceptions which threatens to be a long one, and tell me how you come to know this young soldier," said Miss Bellenden.

"Lord, Miss Edith, it's Tam Halliday, Trooper Tam, as they ca' him, that was wounded by the hill-folk at the conventicle at Outer-side Muir, and lay here while he was under cure. I can ask him ony thing, and Tam will no refuse to answer me, I'll be caution for him."

"Try, then," said Miss Edith, "if you can find an opportunity to ask him the name of his prisoner, and come to my room and tell me what he says."

Jenny Dennison proceeded on her errand, but soon returned with such a face of surprise and dismay as evinced a deep interest in the fate of the prisoner.

"What is the matter?" said Edith, anxiously; "does it prove to be Cuddie, after all, poor fellow?"

"Cuddie, Miss Edith? Na! na! it's nae Cuddie," blubbered out the faithful fille-de-chambre, sensible of the pain which her news were about to inflict on her young mistress. "O dear, Miss Edith, it's young Milnwood himsell!"

"Young Milnwood!" exclaimed Edith, aghast in her turn; "it is impossible—totally impossible!—His uncle attends the clergyman indulged by law, and has no connexion whatever with the refractory people; and he himself has never interfered in this unhappy dissension; he must be totally innocent, unless he has been standing up for some invaded right."

"O, my dear Miss Edith," said her attendant, "these are not days to ask what's right or what's wrang; if he were as innocent as the new-born infant, they would find some way of making him guilty, if they liked; but Tam Halliday says it will touch his life, for he has been resetting ane o' the Fife gentlemen that killed that auld carle of an Archbishop."

"His life!" exclaimed Edith, starting hastily up, and speaking with a hurried and tremulous accent,— "they cannot—they shall not—I will speak for him—they shall not hurt him!"

"O, my dear young leddy, think on your grandmother; think on the danger and the difficulty," added Jenny; "for he's kept under close confinement till Claverhouse comes up in the morning, and if he doesna gie him full satisfaction, Tam Halliday says there will be brief wark wi' him—Kneel down—mak ready—present—fire—just as they did wi' auld deaf John Macbriar, that never understood a single question they pat till him, and sae lost his life for lack o' hearing."

"Jenny," said the young lady, "if he should die, I will die with him; there is no time to talk of danger or difficulty—I will put on a plaid, and slip down with you to the place where they have kept him—I will throw myself at the feet of the sentinel, and entreat him, as he has a soul to be saved"—

"Eh, guide us!" interrupted the maid, "our young leddy at the feet o' Trooper Tam, and speaking to him about his soul, when the puir chield hardly kens whether he has ane or no, unless that he whiles swears by it—that will never do; but what maun be maun be, and I'll never desert a true-love cause—And sae, if ye maun see young Milnwood, though I ken nae gude it will do, but to make baith your hearts the saier, I'll e'en tak the risk o't, and try to manage Tam Halliday; but ye maun let me hae my ain gate and no speak ae word—he's keeping guard o'er Milnwood in the easter round of the tower."

"Go, go, fetch me a plaid," said Edith. "Let me but see him, and I will find some remedy for his danger—Haste ye, Jenny, as ever ye hope to have good at my hands."

Jenny hastened, and soon returned with a plaid, in which Edith muffled herself so as completely to screen her face, and in part to disguise her person. This was a mode of arranging the plaid very common among the ladies of that century, and the earlier part of the succeeding one; so much so, indeed, that the venerable sages of the Kirk, conceiving that the mode gave tempting facilities for intrigue, directed more than one act of Assembly against this use of the mantle. But fashion, as usual, proved too strong for authority, and while plaids continued to be worn, women of all ranks occasionally employed them as a sort of muffler or veil. [Note: Concealment of an individual, while in public or promiscuous society, was then very common. In England, where no plaids were worn, the ladies used vizard masks for the same purpose, and the gallants drew the skirts of their cloaks over the right shoulder, so as to cover part of the face. This is repeatedly alluded to in Pepys's Diary.] Her face and figure thus concealed, Edith, holding by her attendant's arm, hastened with trembling steps to the place of Morton's confinement.

This was a small study or closet, in one of the turrets, opening upon a gallery in which the sentinel was pacing to and fro; for Sergeant Bothwell, scrupulous in observing his word, and perhaps touched with some compassion for the prisoner's youth and genteel demeanour, had waved the indignity of putting his guard into the same apartment with him. Halliday, therefore, with his carabine on his arm, walked up and down the gallery, occasionally solacing himself with a draught of ale, a huge flagon of which stood upon the table at one end of the apartment, and at other times humming the lively Scottish air,

"Between Saint Johnstone and Bonny Dundee, I'll gar ye be fain to follow me."

Jenny Dennison cautioned her mistress once more to let her take her own way.

"I can manage the trooper weel enOUGH," she said, "for as rough as he is—I ken their nature weel; but ye maunna say a single word."

She accordingly opened the door of the gallery just as the sentinel had turned his back from it, and taking up the tune which he hummed, she sung in a coquettish tone of rustic raiillery,

"If I were to follow a poor sodger lad, My friends wad be angry, my minnie be mad; A laird, or a lord, they were fitter for me, Sae I'll never be fain to follow thee."—

"A fair challenge, by Jove," cried the sentinel, turning round, "and from two at once; but it's not easy to bang the soldier with his bandoleers;" then taking up the song where the damsel had stopt,

"To follow me ye weel may be glad, A share of my supper, a share of my bed, To the sound of the drum to range fearless and free, I'll gar ye be fain to follow me."—

"Come, my pretty lass, and kiss me for my song."

"I should not have thought of that, Mr Halliday," answered Jenny, with a look and tone expressing just the necessary degree of contempt at the proposal, "and, I'se assure ye, ye'll hae but little o' my company unless ye show gentler havings—It wasna to hear that sort o'nonsense that brought me here wi' my friend, and ye should think shame o' yoursell, 'at should ye."

"Umph! and what sort of nonsense did bring you here then, Mrs Dennison?"

"My kinswoman has some particular business with your prisoner, young Mr Harry Morton, and I am come wi' her to speak till him."

"The devil you are!" answered the sentinel; "and pray, Mrs Dennison, how do your kinswoman and you propose to get in? You are rather too plump to whisk through a keyhole, and opening the door is a thing not to be spoke of."

"It's no a thing to be spoken o', but a thing to be dune," replied the persevering damsel.

"We'll see about that, my bonny Jenny," and the soldier resumed his march, humming, as he walked to and fro along the gallery,

"Keek into the draw-well, Janet, Janet, Then ye'll see your bonny sell, My joe Janet."

"So ye're no thinking to let us in, Mr Halliday? Weel, weel; gude e'en to you—ye hae seen the last o' me, and o' this bonny die too," said Jenny, holding between her finger and thumb a splendid silver dollar.

"Give him gold, give him gold," whispered the agitated young lady.

"Silver's e'en ower gude for the like o' him," replied Jenny, "that disna care for the blink o' a bonny lassie's ee—and what's waur, he wad think there was something mair in't than a kinswoman o' mine. My certy! siller's no sae plenty wi' us, let alane gowd." Having addressed this advice aside to her mistress, she raised her voice, and said, "My cousin winna stay ony langer, Mr Halliday; sae, if ye please, gude e'en t'ye."

"Halt a bit, halt a bit," said the trooper; "rein up and parley, Jenny. If I let your kinswoman in to speak to my prisoner, you must stay here and keep me company till she come out again, and then we'll all be well pleased you know."

"The fiend be in my feet then," said Jenny; "d'ye think my kinswoman and me are gaun to lose our gude name wi' cracking clavers wi' the like o' you or your prisoner either, without somebody by to see fair play? Hegh, hegh, sirs, to see sic a difference between folk's promises and performance! Ye were aye willing to slight puir Cuddie; but an I had asked him to oblige me in a thing, though it had been to cost his hanging, he wadna hae stude twice about it."

"D—n Cuddie!" retorted the dragoon, "he'll be hanged in good earnest, I hope. I saw him today at Milnwood with his old puritanical b—of a mother, and if I had thought I was to have had him cast in my dish, I would have brought him up at my horse's tail—we had law enough to bear us out."

"Very weel, very weel—See if Cuddie winna hae a lang shot at you ane o' thae days, if ye gar him tak the muir wi' sae mony honest folk. He can hit a mark brawly; he was third at the popinjay; and he's as true of his promise as of ee and hand, though he disna mak sic a phrase about it as some acquaintance o' yours—But it's a' ane to me—Come, cousin, we'll awa'."

"Stay, Jenny; d—n me, if I hang fire more than another when I have said a thing," said the soldier, in a hesitating tone. "Where is the sergeant?"

"Drinking and driving ower," quoth Jenny, "wi' the Steward and John Gudyill."

"So, so—he's safe enough—and where are my comrades?" asked Halliday.

"Birling the brown bowl wi' the fowler and the falconer, and some o' the serving folk."

"Have they plenty of ale?"

"Sax gallons, as gude as e'er was masked," said the maid.

"Well, then, my pretty Jenny," said the relenting sentinel, "they are fast till the hour of relieving guard, and perhaps something later; and so, if you will promise to come alone the next time"—"Maybe I will, and maybe I winna," said Jenny; "but if ye get the dollar, ye'll like that just as weel."

"I'll be d—n'd if I do," said Halliday, taking the money, howeve; "but it's always something for my risk; for, if Claverhouse hears what I have done, he will build me a horse as high as the Tower of Tillietudlem. But every one in the regiment takes what they can come by; I am sure Bothwell and his blood-royal shows us a good

example. And if I were trusting to you, you little jilting devil, I should lose both pains and powder; whereas this fellow," looking at the piece, "will be good as far as he goes. So, come, there is the door open for you; do not stay groaning and praying with the young whig now, but be ready, when I call at the door, to start, as if they were sounding 'Horse and away.'"

So speaking, Halliday unlocked the door of the closet, admitted Jenny and her pretended kinswoman, locked it behind them, and hastily reassumed the indifferent measured step and time-killing whistle of a sentinel upon his regular duty.

The door, which slowly opened, discovered Morton with both arms reclined upon a table, and his head resting upon them in a posture of deep dejection. He raised his face as the door opened, and, perceiving the female figures which it admitted, started up in great surprise. Edith, as if modesty had quelled the courage which despair had bestowed, stood about a yard from the door without having either the power to speak or to advance. All the plans of aid, relief, or comfort, which she had proposed to lay before her lover, seemed at once to have vanished from her recollection, and left only a painful chaos of ideas, with which was mingled a fear that she had degraded herself in the eyes of Morton by a step which might appear precipitate and unfeminine. She hung motionless and almost powerless upon the arm of her attendant, who in vain endeavoured to reassure and inspire her with courage, by whispering, "We are in now, madam, and we maun mak the best o' our time; for, doubtless, the corporal or the sergeant will gang the rounds, and it wad be a pity to hae the poor lad Halliday punished for his civility."

Morton, in the meantime, was timidly advancing, suspecting the truth; for what other female in the house, excepting Edith herself, was likely to take an interest in his misfortunes? and yet afraid, owing to the doubtful twilight and the muffled dress, of making some mistake which might be prejudicial to the object of his affections. Jenny, whose ready wit and forward manners well qualified her for such an office, hastened to break the ice.

"Mr Morton, Miss Edith's very sorry for your present situation, and"—

It was needless to say more; he was at her side, almost at her feet, pressing her unresisting hands, and loading her with a profusion of thanks and gratitude which would be hardly intelligible from the mere broken words, unless we could describe the tone, the gesture, the impassioned and hurried indications of deep and tumultuous feeling, with which they were accompanied.

For two or three minutes, Edith stood as motionless as the statue of a saint which receives the adoration of a worshipper; and when she recovered herself sufficiently to withdraw her hands from Henry's grasp, she could at first only faintly articulate, "I have taken a strange step, Mr Morton—a step," she continued with more coherence, as her ideas arranged themselves in consequence of a strong effort, "that perhaps may expose me to censure in your eyes—But I have long permitted you to use the language of friendship—perhaps I might say more—too long to leave you when the world seems to have left you. How, or why, is this imprisonment? what can be done? can my uncle, who thinks so highly of you—can your own kinsman, Milnwood, be of no use? are there no means? and what is likely to be the event?"

"Be what it will," answered Henry, contriving to make himself master of the hand that had escaped from him, but which was now again abandoned to his clasp, "be what it will, it is to me from this moment the most welcome incident of a weary life. To you, dearest Edith—forgive me, I should have said Miss Bellenden, but misfortune claims strange privileges—to you I have owed the few happy moments which have gilded a gloomy existence; and if I am now to lay it down, the recollection of this honour will be my happiness in the last hour of suffering."

"But is it even thus, Mr Morton?" said Miss Bellenden. "Have you, who used to mix so little in these unhappy feuds, become so suddenly and deeply implicated, that nothing short of"—

She paused, unable to bring out the word which should have come next.

"Nothing short of my life, you would say?" replied Morton, in a calm, but melancholy tone; "I believe that will be entirely in the bosoms of my judges. My guards spoke of a possibility of exchanging the penalty for entry into foreign service. I thought I could have embraced the alternative; and yet, Miss Bellenden, since I have seen you once more, I feel that exile would be more galling than death."

"And is it then true," said Edith, "that you have been so desperately rash as to entertain communication with any of those cruel wretches who assassinated the primate?"

"I knew not even that such a crime had been committed," replied Morton, "when I gave unhappily a night's lodging and concealment to one of those rash and cruel men, the ancient friend and comrade of my father. But my ignorance will avail me little; for who, Miss Bellenden, save you, will believe it? And, what is worse, I am at least uncertain whether, even if I had known the crime, I could have brought my mind, under all the circumstances, to refuse a temporary refuge to the fugitive."

"And by whom," said Edith, anxiously, "or under what authority, will the investigation of your conduct take place?"

"Under that of Colonel Grahame of Claverhouse, I am given to understand," said Morton; "one of the military commission, to whom it has pleased our king, our privy council, and our parliament, that used to be more tenacious of our liberties, to commit the sole charge of our goods and of our lives."

"To Claverhouse?" said Edith, faintly; "merciful Heaven, you are lost ere you are tried! He wrote to my grandmother that he was to be here to-morrow morning, on his road to the head of the county, where some desperate men, animated by the presence of two or three of the actors in the primate's murder, are said to have assembled for the purpose of making a stand against the government. His expressions made me shudder, even when I could not guess that—that—a friend"—

"Do not be too much alarmed on my account, my dearest Edith," said Henry, as he supported her in his arms; "Claverhouse, though stern and relentless, is, by all accounts, brave, fair, and honourable. I am a soldier's son, and will plead my cause like a soldier. He will perhaps listen more favourably to a blunt and unvarnished defence than a truckling and time-serving judge might do. And, indeed, in a time when justice is, in all its branches, so completely corrupted, I would rather lose my life by open military violence, than be conjured out of it by the hocus-pocus of some arbitrary lawyer, who lends the knowledge he has of the statutes made for our protection, to wrest them to our destruction."

"You are lost—you are lost, if you are to plead your cause with Claverhouse!" sighed Edith; "root and branchwork is the mildest of his expressions. The unhappy primate was his intimate friend and early patron. 'No excuse, no subterfuge,' said his letter, 'shall save either those connected with the deed, or such as have given them countenance and shelter, from the ample and bitter penalty of the law, until I shall have taken as many lives in vengeance of this atrocious murder, as the old man had grey hairs upon his venerable head.' There is neither ruth nor favour to be found with him."

Jenny Dennison, who had hitherto remained silent, now ventured, in the extremity of distress which the lovers felt, but for which they were unable to devise a remedy, to offer her own advice.

"Wi' your leddyship's pardon, Miss Edith, and young Mr Morton's, we maunna waste time. Let Milnwood take my plaid and gown; I'll slip them aff in the dark corner, if he'll promise no to look about, and he may walk past Tam Halliday, who is half blind with his ale, and I can tell him a canny way to get out o' the Tower, and your leddyship will gang quietly to your ain room, and I'll row mysell in his grey cloak, and pit on his hat, and play the prisoner till the coast's clear, and then I'll cry in Tam Halliday, and gar him let me out."

"Let you out?" said Morton; "they'll make your life answer it."

"Ne'er a bit," replied Jenny; "Tam daurna tell he let ony body in, for his ain sake; and I'll gar him find some other gate to account for the escape."

"Will you, by G—?" said the sentinel, suddenly opening the door of the apartment; "if I am half blind, I am not deaf, and you should not plan an escape quite so loud, if you expect to go through with it. Come, come, Mrs Janet—march, troop—quick time—trot, d—n me!—And you, madam kinswoman,—I won't ask your real name, though you were going to play me so rascally a trick,—but I must make a clear garrison; so beat a retreat, unless you would have me turn out the guard."

"I hope," said Morton, very anxiously, "you will not mention this circumstance, my good friend, and trust to my honour to acknowledge your civility in keeping the secret. If you overheard our conversation, you must have observed that we did not accept of, or enter into, the hasty proposal made by this good-natured girl."

"Oh, devilish good-natured, to be sure," said Halliday. "As for the rest, I guess how it is, and I scorn to bear malice, or tell tales, as much as another; but no thanks to that little jilting devil, Jenny Dennison, who deserves a tight skelping for trying to lead an honest lad into a scrape, just because he was so silly as to like her good-for-little chit face."

Jenny had no better means of justification than the last apology to which her sex trust, and usually not in vain; she pressed her handkerchief to her face, sobbed with great vehemence, and either wept, or managed, as Halliday might have said, to go through the motions wonderfully well.

"And now," continued the soldier, somewhat mollified, "if you have any thing to say, say it in two minutes, and let me see your backs turned; for if Bothwell take it into his drunken head to make the rounds half an hour too soon, it will be a black business to us all."

"Farewell, Edith," whispered Morton, assuming a firmness he was far from possessing; "do not remain here—leave me to my fate—it cannot be beyond endurance since you are interested in it.—Good night, good night!—Do not remain here till you are discovered."

Thus saying, he resigned her to her attendant, by whom she was quietly led and partly supported out of the apartment.

"Every one has his taste, to be sure," said Halliday; "but d—n me if I would have vexed so sweet a girl as that is, for all the whigs that ever swore the Covenant."

When Edith had regained her apartment, she gave way to a burst of grief which alarmed Jenny Dennison, who hastened to administer such scraps of consolation as occurred to her.

"Dinna vex yourself sae muckle, Miss Edith," said that faithful attendant; "wha kens what may happen to help young Milnwood? He's a brave lad, and a bonny, and a gentleman of a good fortune, and they winna string the like o' him up as they do the puir whig bodies that they catch in the muirs, like straps o' onions; maybe his uncle will bring him aff, or maybe your ain grand-uncle will speak a gude word for him—he's weel acquent wi' a' the red-coat gentlemen."

"You are right, Jenny! you are right," said Edith, recovering herself from the stupor into which she had sunk; "this is no time for despair, but for exertion. You must find some one to ride this very night to my uncle's with a letter."

"To Charnwood, madam? It's unco late, and it's sax miles an' a bittock down the water; I doubt if we can find man and horse the night, mair especially as they hae mounted a sentinel before the gate. Puir Cuddie! he's gane, puir fallow, that wad hae dune aught in the warld I bade him, and ne'er asked a reason—an' I've had nae time to draw up wi' the new plough-lad yet; forby that, they say he's gaun to be married to Meg Murdieson, illfaur'd cuttie as she is."

"You must find some one to go, Jenny; life and death depend upon it."

"I wad gang mysell, my leddy, for I could creep out at the window o' the pantry, and speel down by the auld yew-tree weel eneugh—I hae played that trick ere now. But the road's unco wild, and sae mony red-coats about, forby the whigs, that are no muckle better (the young lads o' them) if they meet a fraim body their lane in the muirs. I wadna stand for the walk—I can walk ten miles by moonlight weel eneugh."

"Is there no one you can think of, that, for money or favour, would serve me so far?" asked Edith, in great anxiety.

"I dinna ken," said Jenny, after a moment's consideration, "unless it be Guse Gibbie; and he'll maybe no ken the way, though it's no sae difficult to hit, if he keep the horse-road, and mind the turn at the Cappercleugh, and dinna drown himself in the Whomlekirm-pule, or fa' ower the scaur at the Deil's Loaning, or miss ony o' the kittle steps at the Pass o' Walkwary, or be carried to the hills by the whigs, or be taen to the tolbooth by the red-coats."

"All ventures must be run," said Edith, cutting short the list of chances against Goose Gibbie's safe arrival at the end of his pilgrimage; "all risks must be run, unless you can find a better messenger.—Go, bid the boy get ready, and get him out of the Tower as secretly as you can. If he meets any one, let him say he is carrying a letter to Major Bellenden of Charnwood, but without mentioning any names."

"I understand, madam," said Jenny Dennison; "I warrant the callant will do weel eneugh, and Tib the hen-wife will tak care o' the geese for a word o' my mouth; and I'll tell Gibbie your leddyship will mak his peace wi' Lady Margaret, and we'll gie him a dollar."

"Two, if he does his errand well," said Edith.

Jenny departed to rouse Goose Gibbie out of his slumbers, to which he was usually consigned at sundown, or shortly after, he keeping the hours of the birds under his charge. During her absence, Edith took her writing materials, and prepared against her return the following letter, superscribed, For the hands of Major Bellenden of Charnwood, my much honoured uncle, These: "My dear Uncle—This will serve to inform you I am desirous to know how your gout is, as we did not see you at the wappen-schaw, which made both my grandmother and myself very uneasy. And if it will permit you to travel, we shall be happy to see you at our poor house to-morrow at the hour of breakfast, as Colonel Grahame of Claverhouse is to pass this way on his march, and we would willingly have your assistance to receive and entertain a military man of such distinction, who, probably, will not be much delighted with the company of women. Also, my dear uncle, I pray you to let Mrs Carefor't, your housekeeper, send me my double-trimmed paduasoy with the hanging sleeves, which she will find in the third drawer of the walnut press in the green room, which you are so kind as to call mine. Also, my dear uncle, I pray you to send me the second volume of the Grand Cyrus, as I have only read as far as the imprisonment of Philidaspes upon the seven hundredth and thirty-third page; but, above all, I entreat you to come to us to-morrow before eight of the clock, which, as your pacing nag is so good, you may well do without rising before your usual hour. So, praying to God to preserve your health, I rest your dutiful and loving niece,

"Edith Bellenden.

"Postscriptum. A party of soldiers have last night brought your friend, young Mr Henry Morton of Milnwood, hither as a prisoner. I conclude you will be sorry for the young gentleman, and, therefore, let you know this, in case you may think of speaking to Colonel Grahame in his behalf. I have not mentioned his name to my grandmother, knowing her prejudice against the family."

This epistle being duly sealed and delivered to Jenny, that faithful confidant hastened to put the same in the charge of Goose Gibbie, whom she found in readiness to start from the castle. She then gave him various instructions touching the road, which she apprehended he was likely to mistake, not having travelled it above five or six times, and possessing only the same slender proportion of memory as of judgment. Lastly, she smuggled him out of the garrison through the pantry window into the branchy yew-tree which grew close beside it, and had the satisfaction to see him reach the bottom in safety, and take the right turn at the commencement of his journey. She then returned to persuade her young mistress to go to bed, and to lull her to rest, if possible, with assurances of Gibbie's success in his embassy, only qualified by a passing regret that the trusty Cuddie, with whom the commission might have been more safely reposed, was no longer within reach of serving her.

More fortunate as a messenger than as a cavalier, it was Gibbie's good hap rather than his good management, which, after he had gone astray not oftener than nine times, and given his garments a taste of the variation of each bog, brook, and slough, between Tillietudlem and Charnwood, placed him about daybreak before the gate of Major Bellenden's mansion, having completed a walk of ten miles (for the bittock, as usual, amounted to four) in little more than the same number of hours.

CHAPTER XI.

*At last comes the troop, by the word of command
Drawn up in our court, where the Captain cries,
Stand!*

Swift

Major Bellenden's ancient valet, Gideon Pike as he adjusted his master's clothes by his bedside, preparatory to the worthy veteran's toilet, acquainted him, as an apology for disturbing him an hour earlier than his usual time of rising, that there was an express from Tillietudlem.

"From Tillietudlem?" said the old gentleman, rising hastily in his bed, and sitting bolt upright,—"Open the shutters, Pike—I hope my sister-in-law is well—furl up the bed-curtain.—What have we all here?" (glancing at Edith's note.) "The gout? why, she knows I have not had a fit since Candlemas.—The wappen-schaw? I told her a month since I was not to be there.—Paduasoy and hanging sleeves? why, hang the gipsy herself!—Grand Cyrus and Philipdastus?—Philip Devil!—is the

wench gone crazy all at once? was it worth while to send an express and wake me at five in the morning for all this trash?—But what says her postscriptum?—Mercy on us!" he exclaimed on perusing it,—"Pike, saddle old Kilsythe instantly, and another horse for yourself."

"I hope nae ill news frae the Tower, sir?" said Pike, astonished at his master's sudden emotion.

"Yes—no—yes—that is, I must meet Claverhouse there on some express business; so boot and saddle, Pike, as fast as you can.—O, Lord! what times are these!—the poor lad—my old cronie's son!—and the silly wench sticks it into her postscriptum, as she calls it, at the tail of all this trumpery about old gowns and new romances!"

In a few minutes the good old officer was fully equipped; and having mounted upon his arm-gaunt charger as soberly as Mark Antony himself could have done, he paced forth his way to the Tower of Tillietudlem.

On the road he formed the prudent resolution to say nothing to the old lady (whose dislike to presbyterians of all kinds he knew to be inveterate) of the quality and rank of the prisoner detained within her walls, but to try his own influence with Claverhouse to obtain Morton's liberation.

"Being so loyal as he is, he must do something for so old a cavalier as I am," said the veteran to himself; "and if he is so good a soldier as the world speaks of, why, he will be glad to serve an old soldier's son. I never knew a real soldier that was not a frank-hearted, honest fellow; and I think the execution of the laws (though it's a pity they find it necessary to make them so severe) may be a thousand times better intrusted with them than with peddling lawyers and thick-skulled country gentlemen."

Such were the ruminations of Major Miles Bellenden, which were terminated by John Gudyill (not more than half-drunk) taking hold of his bridle, and assisting him to dismount in the roughpaved court of Tillietudlem.

"Why, John," said the veteran, "what devil of a discipline is this you have been keeping? You have been reading Geneva print this morning already."

"I have been reading the Litany," said John, shaking his head with a look of drunken gravity, and having only caught one word of the Major's address to him; "life is short, sir; we are flowers of the field, sir—hiccup—and lilies of the valley."

"Flowers and lilies? Why, man, such carles as thou and I can hardly be called better than old hemlocks, decayed nettles, or withered rag-weed; but I suppose you think that we are still worth watering."

"I am an old soldier, sir, I thank Heaven—hiccup"—

"An old skinker, you mean, John. But come, never mind, show me the way to your mistress, old lad."

John Gudyill led the way to the stone hall, where Lady Margaret was fidgeting about, superintending, arranging, and re-forming the preparations made for the reception of the celebrated Claverhouse, whom one party honoured and extolled as a hero, and another execrated as a bloodthirsty oppressor.

"Did I not tell you," said Lady Margaret to her principal female attendant—"did I not tell you, Mysie, that it was my especial pleasure on this occasion to have every thing in the precise order wherein it was upon that famous morning when his most sacred majesty partook of his disjune at Tillietudlem?"

"Doubtless, such were your leddyship's commands, and to the best of my remembrance"—was Mysie answering, when her ladyship broke in with, "Then wherefore is the venison pasty placed on the left side of the throne, and the stoup of claret upon the right, when ye may right weel remember, Mysie, that his most sacred majesty with his ain hand shifted the pasty to the same side with the flagon, and said they were too good friends to be parted?"

"I mind that weel, madam," said Mysie; "and if I had forgot, I have heard your leddyship often speak about that grand morning sin' syne; but I thought every thing was to be placed just as it was when his majesty, God bless him, came into this room, looking mair like an angel than a man, if he hadna been sae black-a-vised."

"Then ye thought nonsense, Mysie; for in whatever way his most sacred majesty ordered the position of the trenchers and flagons, that, as weel as his royal pleasure in greater matters, should be a law to his subjects, and shall ever be to those of the house of Tillietudlem."

"Weel, madam," said Mysie, making the alterations required, "it's easy mending the error; but if every thing is just to be as his majesty left it, there should be an unco hole in the venison pasty."

At this moment the door opened.

"Who is that, John Gudyill?" exclaimed the old lady. "I can speak to no one just now.—Is it you, my dear brother?" she continued, in some surprise, as the Major entered; "this is a right early visit."

"Not more early than welcome, I hope," replied Major Bellenden, as he saluted the widow of his deceased brother; "but I heard by a note which Edith sent to Charnwood about some of her equipage and books, that you were to have Claver'se here this morning, so I thought, like an old firelock as I am, that I should like to have a chat with this rising soldier. I caused Pike saddle Kilsythe, and here we both are."

"And most kindly welcome you are," said the old lady; "it is just what I should have prayed you to do, if I had thought there was time. You see I am busy in preparation. All is to be in the same order as when"—"The king breakfasted at Tillietudlem," said the Major, who, like all Lady Margaret's friends, dreaded the commencement of that narrative, and was desirous to cut it short,—"I remember it well; you know I was waiting on his majesty."

"You were, brother," said Lady Margaret; "and perhaps you can help me to remember the order of the entertainment."

"Nay, good sooth," said the Major, "the damnable dinner that Noll gave us at Worcester a few days afterwards drove all your good cheer out of my memory.—But how's this?—you have even the great Turkey-leather elbow-chair, with the tapestry cushions, placed in state."

"The throne, brother, if you please," said Lady Margaret, gravely.

"Well, the throne be it, then," continued the Major. "Is that to be Claver'se's post in the attack upon the pasty?"

"No, brother," said the lady; "as these cushions have been once honoured by accommodating the person of our most sacred Monarch, they shall never, please Heaven, during my life-time, be pressed by any less dignified weight."

"You should not then," said the old soldier, "put them in the way of an honest old cavalier, who has ridden ten miles before breakfast; for, to confess the truth, they look very inviting. But where is Edith?"

"On the battlements of the warder's turret," answered the old lady, "looking out for the approach of our guests."

"Why, I'll go there too; and so should you, Lady Margaret, as soon as you have your line of battle properly formed in the hall here. It's a pretty thing, I can tell you, to see a regiment of horse upon the march."

Thus speaking, he offered his arm with an air of old-fashioned gallantry, which Lady Margaret accepted with such a courtesy of acknowledgment as ladies were wont to make in Holyroodhouse before the year 1642, which, for one while, drove both courtesies and courts out of fashion.

Upon the bartizan of the turret, to which they ascended by many a winding passage and uncouth staircase, they found Edith, not in the attitude of a young lady who watches with fluttering curiosity the approach of a smart regiment of dragoons, but pale, downcast, and evincing, by her countenance, that sleep had not, during the preceding night, been the companion of her pillow. The good old veteran was hurt at her appearance, which, in the hurry of preparation, her grandmother had omitted to notice.

"What is come over you, you silly girl?" he said; "why, you look like an officer's wife when she opens the News-letter after an action, and expects to find her husband among the killed and wounded. But I know the reason—you will persist in reading these nonsensical romances, day and night, and whimpering for distresses that never existed. Why, how the devil can you believe that Artamines, or what d'ye call him, fought singlehanded with a whole battalion? One to three is as great odds as ever fought and won, and I never knew any body that cared to take that, except old Corporal Raddlebanes. But these d—d books put all pretty men's actions out of countenance. I daresay you would think very little of Raddlebanes, if he were alongside of Artamines.—I would have the fellows that write such nonsense brought to the picquet for leasing-making."

[Note: Romances of the Seventeenth Century. As few, in the present age, are acquainted with the ponderous folios to which the age of Louis XIV. gave rise, we need only say, that they combine the

dulness of the metaphysical courtship with all the improbabilities of the ancient Romance of Chivalry. Their character will be most easily learned from Boileau's Dramatic Satire, or Mrs Lennox's Female Quixote.]

Lady Margaret, herself somewhat attached to the perusal of romances, took up the cudgels. "Monsieur Scuderi," she said, "is a soldier, brother; and, as I have heard, a complete one, and so is the Sieur d'Urfe."

"More shame for them; they should have known better what they were writing about. For my part, I have not read a book these twenty years except my Bible, The Whole Duty of Man, and, of late days, Turner's Pallas Armata, or Treatise on the Ordering of the Pike Exercise, and I don't like his discipline much neither.

[Note: Sir James Turner. Sir James Turner was a soldier of fortune, bred in the civil wars. He was intrusted with a commission to levy the fines imposed by the Privy Council for non-conformity, in the district of Dumfries and Galloway. In this capacity he vexed the country so much by his exactions, that the people rose and made him prisoner, and then proceeded in arms towards Mid-Lothian, where they were defeated at Pentland Hills, in 1666. Besides his treatise on the Military Art, Sir James Turner wrote several other works; the most curious of which is his Memoirs of his own Life and Times, which has just been printed, under the charge of the Bannatyne Club.]

He wants to draw up the cavalry in front of a stand of pikes, instead of being upon the wings. Sure am I, if we had done so at Kilsyth, instead of having our handful of horse on the flanks, the first discharge would have sent them back among our Highlanders.—But I hear the kettle-drums."

All heads were now bent from the battlements of the turret, which commanded a distant prospect down the vale of the river. The Tower of Tillietudlem stood, or perhaps yet stands, upon the angle of a very precipitous bank, formed by the junction of a considerable brook with the Clyde.

[Note: The Castle of Tillietudlem is imaginary; but the ruins of Craignethan Castle, situated on the Nethan, about three miles from its junction with the Clyde, have something of the character of the description in the text].

There was a narrow bridge of one steep arch, across the brook near its mouth, over which, and along the foot of the high and broken bank, winded the public road; and the fortalice, thus commanding both bridge and pass, had been, in times of war, a post of considerable importance, the possession of which was necessary to secure the communication of the upper and wilder districts of the country with those beneath, where the valley expands, and is more capable of cultivation. The view downwards is of a grand woodland character; but the level ground and gentle slopes near the river form cultivated fields of an irregular shape, interspersed with hedgerow-trees and copses, the enclosures seeming to have been individually cleared out of the forest which surrounds them, and which occupies, in unbroken masses, the steeper declivities and more distant banks. The stream, in colour a clear and sparkling brown, like the hue of the Cairngorm pebbles, rushes through this romantic region in bold sweeps and curves, partly visible and partly concealed by the trees which clothe its banks. With a providence unknown in other parts of Scotland, the peasants have, in most places, planted orchards around their cottages, and the general blossom of the apple-trees at this season of the year gave all the lower part of the view the appearance of a flower-garden.

Looking up the river, the character of the scene was varied considerably for the worse. A hilly, waste, and uncultivated country approached close to the banks; the trees were few, and limited to the neighbourhood of the stream, and the rude moors swelled at a little distance into shapeless and heavy hills, which were again surmounted in their turn by a range of lofty mountains, dimly seen on the horizon. Thus the tower commanded two prospects, the one richly cultivated and highly adorned, the other exhibiting the monotonous and dreary character of a wild and inhospitable moorland.

The eyes of the spectators on the present occasion were attracted to the downward view, not alone by its superior beauty, but because the distant sounds of military music began to be heard from the public high-road which winded up the vale, and announced the approach of the expected body of cavalry. Their glimmering ranks were shortly afterwards seen in the distance, appearing and disappearing as the trees and the windings of the road permitted them to be visible, and distinguished chiefly by the flashes of light which their arms occasionally reflected against the sun. The train was long and imposing, for there were about two hundred and fifty horse upon the march, and the glancing of the swords and waving of their banners, joined to the clang of their trumpets and kettle-drums, had at once a lively and awful effect upon the imagination. As they advanced still nearer and nearer, they could distinctly see the files of those chosen troops following each other in long succession, completely equipped and superbly mounted.

"It's a sight that makes me thirty years younger," said the old cavalier; "and yet I do not much like the service that these poor fellows are to be engaged in. Although I had my share of the civil war, I cannot say I had ever so much real pleasure in that sort of service as when I was employed on the Continent, and we were hacking at fellows with foreign faces and outlandish dialect. It's a hard thing to hear a hamely Scotch tongue cry quarter, and be obliged to cut him down just the same as if he called out *misricorde*.—So, there they come through the Netherwood haugh; upon my word, fine-looking fellows, and capitally mounted.—He that is galloping from the rear of the column must be Claver'se himself;—ay, he gets into the front as they cross the bridge, and now they will be with us in less than five minutes."

At the bridge beneath the tower the cavalry divided, and the greater part, moving up the left bank of the brook and crossing at a ford a little above, took the road of the Grange, as it was called, a large set of farm-offices belonging to the Tower, where Lady Margaret had ordered preparation to be made for their reception and suitable entertainment. The officers alone, with their colours and an escort to guard them, were seen to take the steep road up to the gate of the Tower, appearing by intervals as they gained the ascent, and again hidden by projections of the bank and of the huge old trees with which it is covered. When they emerged from this narrow path, they found themselves in front of the old Tower, the gates of which were hospitably open for their reception. Lady Margaret, with Edith and her brother-in-law, having hastily descended from their post of observation, appeared to meet and to welcome their guests, with a retinue of domestics in as good order as the orgies of the preceding evening permitted. The gallant young cornet (a relation as well as namesake of Claverhouse, with whom the reader has been already made acquainted) lowered the standard amid the fanfare of the trumpets, in homage to the rank of Lady Margaret and the charms of her grand-daughter, and the old walls echoed to the flourish of the instruments, and the stamp and neigh of the chargers.

[Note: John Grahame of Claverhouse. This remarkable person united the seemingly inconsistent qualities of courage and cruelty, a disinterested and devoted loyalty to his prince, with a disregard of the rights of his fellow-subjects. He was the unscrupulous agent of the Scottish Privy Council in executing the merciless severities of the government in Scotland during the reigns of Charles II. and James II.; but he redeemed his character by the zeal with which he asserted the cause of the latter monarch after the Revolution, the military skill with which he supported it at the battle of Killiecrankie, and by his own death in the arms of victory.]

It is said by tradition, that he was very desirous to see, and be introduced to, a certain Lady Elphinstoun, who had reached the advanced age of one hundred years and upwards. The noble matron, being a staunch whig, was rather unwilling to receive Claver'se, (as he was called from his title,) but at length consented. After the usual compliments, the officer observed to the lady, that having lived so much beyond the usual term of humanity, she must in her time have seen many strange changes. "Hout na, sir," said Lady Elphinstoun, "the world is just to end with me as it began. When I was entering life, there was ane Knox deaving us a' wi' his clavers, and now I am ganging out, there is ane Claver'se deaving us a' wi' his knocks."

Clavers signifying, in common parlance, idle chat, the double pun does credit to the ingenuity of a lady of a hundred years old.]

Claverhouse himself alighted from a black horse, the most beautiful perhaps in Scotland. He had not a single white hair upon his whole body, a circumstance which, joined to his spirit and fleetness, and to his being so frequently employed in pursuit of the presbyterian recusants, caused an opinion to prevail among them, that the steed had been presented to his rider by the great Enemy of Mankind, in order to assist him in persecuting the fugitive wanderers. When Claverhouse had paid his respects to the ladies with military politeness, had apologized for the trouble to which he was putting Lady Margaret's family, and had received the corresponding assurances that she could not think any thing an inconvenience which brought within the walls of Tillietudlem so distinguished a soldier, and so loyal a servant of his sacred majesty; when, in short, all forms of hospitable and polite ritual had been duly complied with, the Colonel requested permission to receive the report of Bothwell, who was now in attendance, and with whom he spoke apart for a few minutes. Major Bellenden took that opportunity to say to his niece, without the hearing of her grandmother, "What a trifling foolish girl you are, Edith, to send me by express a letter crammed with nonsense about books and gowns, and to slide the only thing I cared a marvedie about into the postscript!" "I did not know," said Edith, hesitating very much, "whether it would be quite—quite proper for me to"—"I know what you would say—whether it would be right to take any interest in a presbyterian. But I knew this lad's father well. He was a brave soldier; and, if he was once wrong, he was once right too. I must commend your caution, Edith, for having said nothing of this young gentleman's affair to your grandmother—you may rely on it I shall not—I will take an opportunity to speak to Claver'se. Come, my love, they are going to breakfast. Let us follow them."

CHAPTER XII.

Their breakfast so warm to be sure they did eat,
A custom in travellers mighty discreet.
Prior.

The breakfast of Lady Margaret Bellenden no more resembled a modern dejune, than the great stone-hall at Tillietudlem could brook comparison with a modern drawing-room. No tea, no coffee, no variety of rolls, but solid and substantial viands,—the priestly ham, the knightly sirloin, the noble baron of beef, the princely venison pasty; while silver flagons, saved with difficulty from the claws of the Covenanters, now mantled, some with ale, some with mead, and some with generous wine of various qualities and descriptions. The appetites of the guests were in correspondence to the magnificence and solidity of the preparation—no piddling—no boy's-play, but that steady and persevering exercise of the jaws which is best learned by early morning hours, and by occasional hard commons. Lady Margaret beheld with delight the cates which she had provided descending with such alacrity into the persons of her honoured guests, and had little occasion to exercise, with respect to any of the company saving Claverhouse himself, the compulsory urgency of pressing to eat, to which, as to the *peine forte et dure*, the ladies of that period were in the custom of subjecting their guests.

But the leader himself, more anxious to pay courtesy to Miss Bellenden, next whom he was placed, than to gratify his appetite, appeared somewhat negligent of the good cheer set before him. Edith heard, without reply, many courtly speeches addressed to her, in a tone of voice of that happy modulation which could alike melt in the low tones of interesting conversation, and rise amid the din of battle, "loud as a trumpet with a silver sound." The sense that she was in the presence of the dreadful chief upon whose fiat the fate of Henry Morton must depend—the recollection of the terror and awe which were attached to the very name of the commander, deprived her for some time, not only of the courage to answer, but even of the power of looking upon him. But when, emboldened by the soothing tones of his voice, she lifted her eyes to frame some reply, the person on whom she looked bore, in his appearance at least, none of the terrible attributes in which her apprehensions had arrayed him.

Graham of Claverhouse was in the prime of life, rather low of stature, and slightly, though elegantly, formed; his gesture, language, and manners, were those of one whose life had been spent among the noble and the gay. His features exhibited even feminine regularity. An oval face, a straight and well-formed nose, dark hazel eyes, a complexion just sufficiently tinged with brown to save it from the charge of effeminacy, a short upper lip, curved upward like that of a Grecian statue, and slightly shaded by small mustachios of light brown, joined to a profusion of long curled locks of the same colour, which fell down on each side of his face, contributed to form such a countenance as limners love to paint and ladies to look upon.

The severity of his character, as well as the higher attributes of undaunted and enterprising valour which even his enemies were compelled to admit, lay concealed under an exterior which seemed adapted to the court or the saloon rather than to the field. The same gentleness and gaiety of expression which reigned in his features seemed to inspire his actions and gestures; and, on the whole, he was generally esteemed, at first sight, rather qualified to be the votary of pleasure than of ambition. But under this soft exterior was hidden a spirit unbounded in daring and in aspiring, yet cautious and prudent as that of Machiavel himself. Profound in politics, and embued, of course, with that disregard for individual rights which its intrigues usually generate, this leader was cool and collected in danger, fierce and ardent in pursuing success, careless of facing death himself, and ruthless in inflicting it upon others. Such are the characters formed in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities, perverted by party spirit, and inflamed by habitual opposition, are too often combined with vices and excesses which deprive them at once of their merit and of their lustre.

In endeavouring to reply to the polite trifles with which Claverhouse accosted her, Edith showed so much confusion, that her grandmother thought it necessary to come to her relief.

"Edith Bellenden," said the old lady, "has, from my retired mode of living, seen so little of those of her own sphere, that truly she can hardly frame her speech to suitable answers. A soldier is so rare a sight with us, Colonel Grahame, that unless it be my young Lord Evandale, we have hardly had an opportunity of receiving a gentleman in uniform. And, now I talk of that excellent young nobleman, may I enquire if I was not to have had the honour of seeing him this morning with the regiment?"

"Lord Evandale, madam, was on his march with us," answered the leader, "but I was obliged to detach him with a small party to disperse a conventicle of those troublesome scoundrels, who have had the impudence to assemble within five miles of my head-quarters."

"Indeed!" said the old lady; "that is a height of presumption to which I would have thought no rebellious fanatics would have ventured to aspire. But these are strange times! There is an evil spirit in the land, Colonel Grahame, that excites the vassals of persons of rank to rebel against the very house that holds and feeds them. There was one of my able-bodied men the other day who plainly refused to attend the wappen-schaw at my bidding. Is there no law for such recusancy, Colonel Grahame?"

"I think I could find one," said Claverhouse, with great composure, "if your ladyship will inform me of the name and residence of the culprit."

"His name," said Lady Margaret, "is Cuthbert Headrigg; I can say nothing of his domicile, for ye may weel believe, Colonel Grahame, he did not dwell long in Tillietudlem, but was speedily expelled for his contumacy. I wish the lad no severe bodily injury; but incarceration, or even a few stripes, would be a good example in this neighbourhood. His mother, under whose influence I doubt he acted, is an ancient domestic of this family, which makes me incline to mercy; although," continued the old lady, looking towards the pictures of her husband and her sons, with which the wall was hung, and heaving, at the same time, a deep sigh, "I, Colonel Grahame, have in my ain person but little right to compassionate that stubborn and rebellious generation. They have made me a childless widow, and, but for the protection of our sacred sovereign and his gallant soldiers, they would soon deprive me of lands and goods, of hearth and altar. Seven of my tenants, whose joint rent-mail may mount to wellnigh a hundred merks, have already refused to pay either cess or rent, and had the assurance to tell my steward that they would acknowledge neither king nor landlord but who should have taken the Covenant."

"I will take a course with them—that is, with your ladyship's permission," answered Claverhouse; "it would ill become me to neglect the support of lawful authority when it is lodged in such worthy hands as those of Lady Margaret Bellenden. But I must needs say this country grows worse and worse daily, and reduces me to the necessity of taking measures with the recusants that are much more consonant with my duty than with my inclinations. And, speaking of this, I must not forget that I have to thank your ladyship for the hospitality you have been pleased to extend to a party of mine who have brought in a prisoner, charged with having resetted [Note: Resettled, i.e. received or harboured.] the murdering villain, Balfour of Burley."

"The house of Tillietudlem," answered the lady, "hath ever been open to the servants of his majesty, and I hope that the stones of it will no longer rest on each other when it surceases to be as much at their command as at ours. And this reminds me, Colonel Grahame, that the gentleman who commands the party can hardly be said to be in his proper place in the army, considering whose blood flows in his veins; and if I might flatter myself that any thing would be granted to my request, I would presume to entreat that he might be promoted on some favourable opportunity."

"Your ladyship means Sergeant Francis Stewart, whom we call Bothwell?" said Claverhouse, smiling. "The truth is, he is a little too rough in the country, and has not been uniformly so amenable to discipline as the rules of the service require. But to instruct me how to oblige Lady Margaret Bellenden, is to lay down the law to me.—Bothwell," he continued, addressing the sergeant, who just then appeared at the door, "go kiss Lady Margaret Bellenden's hand, who interests herself in your promotion, and you shall have a commission the first vacancy."

Bothwell went through the salutation in the manner prescribed, but not without evident marks of haughty reluctance, and, when he had done so, said aloud, "To kiss a lady's hand can never disgrace a gentleman; but I would not kiss a man's, save the king's, to be made a general."

"You hear him," said Claverhouse, smiling, "there's the rock he splits upon; he cannot forget his pedigree."

"I know, my noble colonel," said Bothwell, in the same tone, "that you will not forget your promise; and then, perhaps, you may permit Cornet Stewart to have some recollection of his grandfather, though the Sergeant must forget him."

"Enough of this, sir," said Claverhouse, in the tone of command which was familiar to him; "and let me know what you came to report to me just now."

"My Lord Evandale and his party have halted on the high-road with some prisoners," said Bothwell.

"My Lord Evandale?" said Lady Margaret. "Surely, Colonel Grahame, you will permit him to honour me with his society, and to take his poor disjune here, especially considering, that even his most sacred Majesty did not pass the Tower of Tillietudlem without halting to partake of some refreshment."

As this was the third time in the course of the conversation that Lady Margaret had adverted to this distinguished event, Colonel Grahame, as speedily as politeness would permit, took advantage of the first pause to interrupt the farther progress of the narrative, by saying, "We are already too numerous a party of guests; but as I know what Lord Evandale will suffer (looking towards Edith) if deprived of the pleasure which we enjoy, I will run the risk of overburdening your ladyship's hospitality.—Bothwell, let Lord Evandale know that Lady Margaret Bellenden requests the honour of his company."

"And let Harrison take care," added Lady Margaret, "that the people and their horses are suitably seen to."

Edith's heart sprung to her lips during this conversation; for it instantly occurred to her, that, through her influence over Lord Evandale, she might find some means of releasing Morton from his present state of danger, in case her uncle's intercession with Claverhouse should prove ineffectual. At any other time she would have been much averse to exert this influence; for, however inexperienced in the world, her native delicacy taught her the advantage which a beautiful young woman gives to a young man when she permits him to lay her under an obligation. And she would have been the farther disinclined to request any favour of Lord Evandale, because the voice of the gossips in Clydesdale had, for reasons hereafter to be made known, assigned him to her as a suitor, and because she could not disguise from herself that very little encouragement was necessary to realize conjectures which had hitherto no foundation. This was the more to be dreaded, that, in the case of Lord Evandale's making a formal declaration, he had every chance of being supported by the influence of Lady Margaret and her other friends, and that she would have nothing to oppose to their solicitations and authority, except a predilection, to avow which she knew would be equally dangerous and unavailing. She determined, therefore, to wait the issue of her uncle's intercession, and, should it fail, which she conjectured she should soon learn, either from the looks or language of the open-hearted veteran, she would then, as a last effort, make use in Morton's favour of her interest with Lord Evandale. Her mind did not long remain in suspense on the subject of her uncle's application.

Major Bellenden, who had done the honours of the table, laughing and chatting with the military guests who were at that end of the board, was now, by the conclusion of the repast, at liberty to leave his station, and accordingly took an opportunity to approach Claverhouse, requesting from his niece, at the same time, the honour of a particular introduction. As his name and character were well known, the two military men met with expressions of mutual regard; and Edith, with a beating heart, saw her aged relative withdraw from the company, together with his new acquaintance, into a recess formed by one of the arched windows of the hall. She watched their conference with eyes almost dazzled by the eagerness of suspense, and, with observation rendered more acute by the internal agony of her mind, could guess, from the pantomimic gestures which accompanied the conversation, the progress and fate of the intercession in behalf of Henry Morton. The first expression of the countenance of Claverhouse betokened that open and willing courtesy, which, ere it requires to know the nature of the favour asked, seems to say, how happy the party will be to confer an obligation on the suppliant. But as the conversation proceeded, the brow of that officer became darker and more severe, and his features, though still retaining the expression of the most perfect politeness, assumed, at least to Edith's terrified imagination, a harsh and inexorable character. His lip was now compressed as if with impatience; now curled slightly upward, as if in civil contempt of the arguments urged by Major Bellenden. The language of her uncle, as far as expressed in his manner, appeared to be that of earnest intercession, urged with all the affectionate simplicity of his character, as well as with the weight which his age and reputation entitled him to use. But it seemed to have little impression upon Colonel Grahame, who soon changed his posture, as if about to cut short the Major's importunity, and to break up their conference with a courtly expression of regret, calculated to accompany a positive refusal of the request solicited. This movement brought them so near Edith, that she could distinctly hear Claverhouse say, "It cannot be, Major Bellenden; lenity, in his case, is altogether beyond the bounds of my commission, though in any thing else I am heartily desirous to oblige you.—And here comes Evandale with news, as I think.—What tidings do you bring us, Evandale?" he continued, addressing the young lord, who now entered in complete uniform, but with his dress disordered, and his boots spattered, as if by riding hard.

"Unpleasant news, sir," was his reply. "A large body of whigs are in arms among the hills, and have broken out into actual rebellion. They have publicly burnt the Act of Supremacy, that which established episcopacy, that for observing the martyrdom of Charles I., and some others, and have declared their intention to remain together in arms for furthering the covenanted work of reformation."

This unexpected intelligence struck a sudden and painful surprise into the minds of all who heard it, excepting Claverhouse.

"Unpleasant news call you them?" replied Colonel Grahame, his dark eyes flashing fire, "they are the best I have heard these six months. Now that the scoundrels are drawn into a body, we will make short work with them. When the adder crawls into daylight," he added, striking the heel of his boot upon the floor, as if in the act of crushing a noxious reptile, "I can trample him to death; he is only safe when he remains lurking in his den or morass.—Where are these knaves?" he continued, addressing Lord Evandale.

"About ten miles off among the mountains, at a place called Loudon-hill," was the young nobleman's reply. "I dispersed the conventicle against which you sent me, and made prisoner an old trumpeter of rebellion,—an intercommuned minister, that is to say,—who was in the act of exhorting his hearers to rise and be doing in the good cause, as well as one or two of his hearers who seemed to be particularly insolent; and from some country people and scouts I learned what I now tell you."

"What may be their strength?" asked his commander.

"Probably a thousand men, but accounts differ widely."

"Then," said Claverhouse, "it is time for us to be up and be doing also—Bothwell, bid them sound to horse."

Bothwell, who, like the war-horse of scripture, snuffed the battle afar off, hastened to give orders to six negroes, in white dresses richly laced, and having massive silver collars and armlets. These sable functionaries acted as trumpeters, and speedily made the castle and the woods around it ring with their summons.

"Must you then leave us?" said Lady Margaret, her heart sinking under recollection of former unhappy times; "had ye not better send to learn the force of the rebels?—O, how many a fair face hae I heard these fearfu' sounds call away frae the Tower of Tillietudlem, that my auld een were ne'er to see return to it!"

"It is impossible for me to stop," said Claverhouse; "there are rogues enough in this country to make the rebels five times their strength, if they are not checked at once."

"Many," said Evandale, "are flocking to them already, and they give out that they expect a strong body of the indulged presbyterians, headed by young Milnwood, as they call him, the son of the famous old roundhead, Colonel Silas Morton."

This speech produced a very different effect upon the hearers. Edith almost sunk from her seat with terror, while Claverhouse darted a glance of sarcastic triumph at Major Bellenden, which seemed to imply—"You see what are the principles of the young man you are pleading for."

"It's a lie—it's a d—d lie of these rascally fanatics," said the Major hastily. "I will answer for Henry Morton as I would for my own son. He is a lad of as good church-principles as any gentleman in the Life-Guards. I mean no offence to any one. He has gone to church service with me fifty times, and I never heard him miss one of the responses in my life. Edith Bellenden can bear witness to it as well as I. He always read on the same Prayer-book with her, and could look out the lessons as well as the curate himself. Call him up; let him be heard for himself."

"There can be no harm in that," said Claverhouse, "whether he be innocent or guilty.—Major Allan," he said, turning to the officer next in command, "take a guide, and lead the regiment forward to Loudon-hill by the best and shortest road. Move steadily, and do not let the men blow the horses; Lord Evandale and I will overtake you in a quarter of an hour. Leave Bothwell with a party to bring up the prisoners."

Allan bowed, and left the apartment, with all the officers, excepting Claverhouse and the young nobleman. In a few minutes the sound of the military music and the clashing of hoofs announced that the horsemen were leaving the castle. The sounds were presently heard only at intervals, and soon died away entirely.

While Claverhouse endeavoured to soothe the terrors of Lady Margaret, and to reconcile the veteran Major to his opinion of Morton, Evandale, getting the better of that conscious shyness which renders an ingenuous youth diffident in approaching the object of his affections, drew near to Miss Bellenden, and accosted her in a tone of mingled respect and interest.

"We are to leave you," he said, taking her hand, which he pressed with much emotion—"to leave you for a scene which is not without its dangers. Farewell, dear Miss Bellenden;—let me say for the first, and perhaps the last time, dear Edith! We part in circumstances so singular as may excuse some solemnity in bidding farewell to one, whom I have known so long, and whom I—respect so highly."

The manner differing from the words, seemed to express a feeling much deeper and more agitating than was conveyed in the phrase he made use of. It was not in woman to be utterly insensible to his modest and deep-felt expression of tenderness. Although borne down by the misfortunes and imminent danger of the man she loved, Edith was touched by the hopeless and reverential passion of the gallant youth, who now took leave of her to rush into dangers of no ordinary description.

"I hope—I sincerely trust," she said, "there is no danger. I hope there is no occasion for this solemn ceremonial—that these hasty insurgents will be dispersed rather by fear than force, and that Lord Evandale will speedily return to be what he must always be, the dear and valued friend of all in this castle."

"Of all," he repeated, with a melancholy emphasis upon the word. "But be it so—whatever is near you is dear and valued to me, and I value their approbation accordingly. Of our success I am not sanguine. Our numbers are so few, that I dare not hope for so speedy, so bloodless, or so safe an end of this unhappy disturbance. These men are enthusiastic, resolute, and desperate, and have leaders not altogether unskilled in military matters. I cannot help thinking that the impetuosity of our Colonel is hurrying us against them rather prematurely. But there are few that have less reason to shun danger than I have."

Edith had now the opportunity she wished to bespeak the young nobleman's intercession and protection for Henry Morton, and it seemed the only remaining channel of interest by which he could be rescued from impending destruction. Yet she felt at that moment as if, in doing so, she was abusing the partiality and confidence of the lover, whose heart was as open before her, as if his tongue had made an express declaration. Could she with honour engage Lord Evandale in the service of a rival? or could she with prudence make him any request, or lay herself under any obligation to him, without affording ground for hopes which she could never realize? But the moment was too urgent for hesitation, or even for those explanations with which her request might otherwise have been qualified.

"I will but dispose of this young fellow," said Claverhouse, from the other side of the hall, "and then, Lord Evandale—I am sorry to interrupt again your conversation—but then we must mount.—Bothwell, why do not you bring up the prisoner? and, hark ye, let two files load their carabines."

In these words, Edith conceived she heard the death-warrant of her lover. She instantly broke through the restraint which had hitherto kept her silent.

"My Lord Evandale," she said, "this young gentleman is a particular friend of my uncle's—your interest must be great with your colonel—let me request your intercession in his favour—it will confer on my uncle a lasting obligation."

"You overrate my interest, Miss Bellenden," said Lord Evandale; "I have been often unsuccessful in such applications, when I have made them on the mere score of humanity."

"Yet try once again for my uncle's sake."

"And why not for your own?" said Lord Evandale. "Will you not allow me to think I am obliging you personally in this matter?—Are you so diffident of an old friend that you will not allow him even the satisfaction of thinking that he is gratifying your wishes?"

"Surely—surely," replied Edith; "you will oblige me infinitely—I am interested in the young gentleman on my uncle's account—Lose no time, for God's sake!"

She became bolder and more urgent in her entreaties, for she heard the steps of the soldiers who were entering with their prisoner.

"By heaven! then," said Evandale, "he shall not die, if I should die in his place!—But will not you," he said, resuming the hand, which in the hurry of her spirits she had not courage to withdraw, "will not you grant me one suit, in return for my zeal in your service?"

"Any thing you can ask, my Lord Evandale, that sisterly affection can give."

"And is this all," he continued, "all you can grant to my affection living, or my memory when dead?"

"Do not speak thus, my lord," said Edith, "you distress me, and do injustice to yourself. There is no friend I esteem more highly, or to whom I would more readily grant every mark of regard—providing—But"—A deep sigh made her turn her head suddenly, ere she had well uttered the last word; and, as she hesitated how to frame the exception with which she meant to close the sentence, she became instantly aware she had been overheard by Morton, who, heavily ironed and guarded by soldiers, was now passing behind her in order to be presented to Claverhouse. As their eyes met each other, the sad and reproachful expression of Morton's glance seemed to imply that he had partially heard, and altogether misinterpreted, the conversation which had just passed. There wanted but this to complete Edith's distress and confusion. Her blood, which rushed to her brow, made a sudden revulsion to her heart, and left her as pale as death. This change did not escape the attention of Evandale, whose quick glance easily discovered that there was between the prisoner and the object of his own attachment, some singular and uncommon connexion. He resigned the hand of Miss Bellenden, again surveyed the prisoner with more attention, again looked at Edith, and plainly observed the confusion which she could no longer conceal.

"This," he said, after a moment's gloomy silence, "is, I believe, the young gentleman who gained the prize at the shooting match."

"I am not sure," hesitated Edith—"yet—I rather think not," scarce knowing what she replied.

"It is he," said Evandale, decidedly; "I know him well. A victor," he continued, somewhat haughtily, "ought to have interested a fair spectator more deeply."

He then turned from Edith, and advancing towards the table at which Claverhouse now placed himself, stood at a little distance, resting on his sheathed broadsword, a silent, but not an unconcerned, spectator of that which passed.

CHAPTER XIII.

*O, my Lord, beware of jealousy!
Othello.*

To explain the deep effect which the few broken passages of the conversation we have detailed made upon the unfortunate prisoner by whom they were overheard, it is necessary to say something of his previous state of mind, and of the origin of his acquaintance with Edith.

Henry Morton was one of those gifted characters, which possess a force of talent unsuspected by the owner himself. He had inherited from his father an undaunted courage, and a firm and uncompromising detestation of oppression, whether in politics or religion. But his enthusiasm was unsullied by fanatic zeal, and unleavened by the sourness of the puritanical spirit. From these his mind had been freed, partly by the active exertions of his own excellent understanding, partly by frequent and long visits at Major Bellenden's, where he had an opportunity of meeting with many guests whose conversation taught him, that goodness and worth were not limited to those of any single form of religious observance.

The base parsimony of his uncle had thrown many obstacles in the way of his education; but he had so far improved the opportunities which offered themselves, that his instructors as well as his friends were surprised at his progress under such disadvantages. Still, however, the current of his soul was frozen by a sense of dependence, of poverty, above all, of an imperfect and limited education. These feelings impressed him with a diffidence and reserve which effectually concealed from all but very intimate friends, the extent of talent and the firmness of character, which we have stated him to be possessed of. The circumstances of the times had added to this reserve an air of indecision and of indifference; for, being attached to neither of the factions which divided the kingdom, he passed for dull, insensible, and uninfluenced by the feeling of religion or of patriotism. No conclusion, however, could be more unjust; and the reasons of the neutrality which he had hitherto professed had root in very different and most praiseworthy motives. He had formed few congenial ties with those who were the objects of persecution, and was disgusted alike by their narrow-minded and selfish party-spirit, their gloomy fanaticism, their abhorrent condemnation of all elegant studies or innocent exercises, and the envenomed rancour of their political hatred. But his mind was still more revolted by the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of the government, the misrule, license, and brutality of the soldiery, the executions on the scaffold, the slaughters in the open field, the free quarters and exactions imposed by military law, which placed the lives and fortunes of a free people on a level with Asiatic slaves. Condemning, therefore, each party as its excesses fell under his eyes, disgusted with the sight of evils which he had no means of alleviating, and hearing alternate complaints and exultations with which he could not sympathize, he would long ere this have left Scotland, had it not been for his attachment to Edith Bellenden.

The earlier meetings of these young people had been at Charnwood, when Major Bellenden, who was as free from suspicion on such occasions as Uncle Toby himself, had encouraged their keeping each other constant company, without entertaining any apprehension of the natural consequences. Love, as usual in such cases, borrowed the name of friendship, used her language, and claimed her privileges. When Edith Bellenden was recalled to her mother's castle, it was astonishing by what singular and recurring accidents she often met young Morton in her sequestered walks, especially considering the distance of their places of abode. Yet it somehow happened that she never expressed the surprise which the frequency of these rencontres ought naturally to have excited, and that their intercourse assumed gradually a more delicate character, and their meetings began to wear the air of appointments. Books, drawings, letters, were exchanged between them, and every trifling commission, given or executed, gave rise to a new correspondence. Love indeed was not yet mentioned between them by name, but each knew the situation of their own bosom, and could not but guess at that of the other. Unable to desist from an intercourse which possessed such charms for both, yet trembling for its too probable consequences, it had been continued without specific explanation until now, when fate appeared to have taken the conclusion into its own hands.

It followed, as a consequence of this state of things, as well as of the diffidence of Morton's disposition at this period, that his confidence in Edith's return of his affection had its occasional cold fits. Her situations was in every respect so superior to his own, her worth so eminent, her accomplishments so many, her face so beautiful, and her manners so bewitching, that he could not but entertain fears that some suitor more favoured than himself by fortune, and more acceptable to Edith's family than he durst hope to be, might step in between him and the object of his affections. Common rumour had raised up such a rival in Lord Evandale, whom birth, fortune, connexions, and political principles, as well as his frequent visits at Tillietudlem, and his attendance upon Lady Bellenden and her niece at all public places, naturally pointed out as a candidate for her favour. It frequently and inevitably happened, that engagements to which Lord Evandale was a party, interfered with the meeting of the lovers, and Henry could not but mark that Edith either studiously avoided speaking of the young nobleman, or did so with obvious reserve and hesitation.

These symptoms, which, in fact, arose from the delicacy of her own feelings towards Morton himself, were misconstrued by his diffident temper, and the jealousy which they excited was fermented by the occasional observations of Jenny Dennison. This true-bred serving-damsel was, in her own person, a complete country coquette, and when she had no opportunity of teasing her own lovers, used to take some occasional opportunity to torment her young lady's. This arose from no ill-will to Henry Morton, who, both on her mistress's account and his own handsome form and countenance, stood high in her esteem. But then Lord Evandale was also handsome; he was liberal far beyond what Morton's means could afford, and he was a lord, moreover, and, if Miss Edith Bellenden should accept his hand, she would become a baron's lady, and, what was more, little Jenny Dennison, whom the awful housekeeper at Tillietudlem huffed about at her pleasure, would be then Mrs Dennison, Lady Evandale's own woman, or perhaps her ladyship's lady-in-waiting. The impartiality of Jenny Dennison, therefore, did not, like that of Mrs Quickly, extend to a wish that both the handsome suitors could wed her young lady; for it must be owned that the scale of her regard was depressed in favour of Lord Evandale, and her wishes in his favour took many shapes extremely tormenting to Morton; being now expressed as a friendly caution, now as an article of intelligence, and anon as a merry jest, but always tending to confirm the idea, that, sooner or later, his romantic intercourse with her young mistress must have a close, and that Edith Bellenden would, in spite of summer walks beneath the greenwood tree, exchange of verses, of drawings, and of books, end in becoming Lady Evandale.

These hints coincided so exactly with the very point of his own suspicions and fears, that Morton was not long of feeling that jealousy which every one has felt who has truly loved, but to which those are most liable whose love is crossed by the want of friends' consent, or some other envious impediment of fortune. Edith

herself, unwittingly, and in the generosity of her own frank nature, contributed to the error into which her lover was in danger of falling. Their conversation once chanced to turn upon some late excesses committed by the soldiery on an occasion when it was said (inaccurately however) that the party was commanded by Lord Evandale. Edith, as true in friendship as in love, was somewhat hurt at the severe strictures which escaped from Morton on this occasion, and which, perhaps, were not the less strongly expressed on account of their supposed rivalry. She entered into Lord Evandale's defence with such spirit as hurt Morton to the very soul, and afforded no small delight to Jenny Dennison, the usual companion of their walks. Edith perceived her error, and endeavoured to remedy it; but the impression was not so easily erased, and it had no small effect in inducing her lover to form that resolution of going abroad, which was disappointed in the manner we have already mentioned.

The visit which he received from Edith during his confinement, the deep and devoted interest which she had expressed in his fate, ought of themselves to have dispelled his suspicions; yet, ingenious in tormenting himself, even this he thought might be imputed to anxious friendship, or, at most, to a temporary partiality, which would probably soon give way to circumstances, the entreaties of her friends, the authority of Lady Margaret, and the assiduities of Lord Evandale.

"And to what do I owe it," he said, "that I cannot stand up like a man, and plead my interest in her ere I am thus cheated out of it?—to what, but to the all-pervading and accursed tyranny, which afflicts at once our bodies, souls, estates, and affections! And is it to one of the pensioned cut-throats of this oppressive government that I must yield my pretensions to Edith Bellenden?—I will not, by Heaven!—It is a just punishment on me for being dead to public wrongs, that they have visited me with their injuries in a point where they can be least brooked or borne."

As these stormy resolutions boiled in his bosom, and while he ran over the various kinds of insult and injury which he had sustained in his own cause and in that of his country, Bothwell entered the tower, followed by two dragoons, one of whom carried handcuffs.

"You must follow me, young man," said he, "but first we must put you in trim."

"In trim!" said Morton. "What do you mean?"

"Why, we must put on these rough bracelets. I durst not—nay, d—n it, I durst do any thing—but I would not for three hours' plunder of a stormed town bring a whip before my Colonel without his being ironed. Come, come, young man, don't look sulky about it."

He advanced to put on the irons; but, seizing the oaken-seat upon which he had rested, Morton threatened to dash out the brains of the first who should approach him.

"I could manage you in a moment, my youngster," said Bothwell, "but I had rather you would strike sail quietly."

Here indeed he spoke the truth, not from either fear or reluctance to adopt force, but because he dreaded the consequences of a noisy scuffle, through which it might probably be discovered that he had, contrary to express orders, suffered his prisoner to pass the night without being properly secured.

"You had better be prudent," he continued, in a tone which he meant to be conciliatory, "and don't spoil your own sport. They say here in the castle that Lady Margaret's niece is immediately to marry our young Captain, Lord Evandale. I saw them close together in the hall yonder, and I heard her ask him to intercede for your pardon. She looked so devilish handsome and kind upon him, that on my soul—But what the devil's the matter with you?—You are as pale as a sheet—Will you have some brandy?"

"Miss Bellenden ask my life of Lord Evandale?" said the prisoner, faintly.

"Ay, ay; there's no friend like the women—their interest carries all in court and camp.—Come, you are reasonable now—Ay, I thought you would come round."

Here he employed himself in putting on the fetters, against which, Morton, thunderstruck by this intelligence, no longer offered the least resistance.

"My life begged of him, and by her!—ay—ay—put on the irons—my limbs shall not refuse to bear what has entered into my very soul—My life begged by Edith, and begged of Evandale!"

"Ay, and he has power to grant it too," said Bothwell—"He can do more with the Colonel than any man in the regiment."

And as he spoke, he and his party led their prisoner towards the hall. In passing behind the seat of Edith, the unfortunate prisoner heard enough, as he conceived, of the broken expressions which passed between Edith and Lord Evandale, to confirm all that the soldier had told him. That moment made a singular and instantaneous revolution in his character. The depth of despair to which his love and fortunes were reduced, the peril in which his life appeared to stand, the transference of Edith's affections, her intercession in his favour, which rendered her fickleness yet more galling, seemed to destroy every feeling for which he had hitherto lived, but, at the same time, awakened those which had hitherto been smothered by passions more gentle though more selfish. Desperate himself, he determined to support the rights of his country, insulted in his person. His character was for the moment as effectually changed as the appearance of a villa, which, from being the abode of domestic quiet and happiness, is, by the sudden intrusion of an armed force, converted into a formidable post of defence.

We have already said that he cast upon Edith one glance in which reproach was mingled with sorrow, as if to bid her farewell for ever; his next motion was to walk firmly to the table at which Colonel Grahame was seated.

"By what right is it, sir," said he firmly, and without waiting till he was questioned,— "By what right is it that these soldiers have dragged me from my family, and put fetters on the limbs of a free man?"

"By my commands," answered Claverhouse; "and I now lay my commands on you to be silent and hear my questions."

"I will not," replied Morton, in a determined tone, while his boldness seemed to electrify all around him. "I will know whether I am in lawful custody, and before a civil magistrate, ere the charter of my country shall be forfeited in my person."

"A pretty springald this, upon my honour!" said Claverhouse.

"Are you mad?" said Major Bellenden to his young friend. "For God's sake, Henry Morton," he continued, in a tone between rebuke and entreaty, "remember you are speaking to one of his majesty's officers high in the service."

"It is for that very reason, sir," returned Henry, firmly, "that I desire to know what right he has to detain me without a legal warrant. Were he a civil officer of the law I should know my duty was submission."

"Your friend, here," said Claverhouse to the veteran, coolly, "is one of those scrupulous gentlemen, who, like the madman in the play, will not tie his cravat without the warrant of Mr Justice Overdo; but I will let him see, before we part, that my shoulder-knot is as legal a badge of authority as the mace of the Justiciary. So, waving this discussion, you will be pleased, young man, to tell me directly when you saw Balfour of Burley."

"As I know no right you have to ask such a question," replied Morton, "I decline replying to it."

"You confessed to my sergeant," said Claverhouse, "that you saw and entertained him, knowing him to be an intercommuned traitor; why are you not so frank with me?"

"Because," replied the prisoner, "I presume you are, from education, taught to understand the rights upon which you seem disposed to trample; and I am willing you should be aware there are yet Scotsmen who can assert the liberties of Scotland."

"And these supposed rights you would vindicate with your sword, I presume?" said Colonel Grahame.

"Were I armed as you are, and we were alone upon a hill-side, you should not ask me the question twice."

"It is quite enough," answered Claverhouse, calmly; "your language corresponds with all I have heard of you;—but you are the son of a soldier, though a rebellious one, and you shall not die the death of a dog; I will save you that indignity."

"Die in what manner I may," replied Morton, "I will die like the son of a brave man; and the ignominy you mention shall remain with those who shed innocent blood."

"Make your peace, then, with Heaven, in five minutes' space.—Bothwell, lead him down to the court-yard, and draw up your party."

The appalling nature of this conversation, and of its result, struck the silence of horror into all but the speakers. But now those who stood round broke forth into clamour and expostulation. Old Lady Margaret, who, with all the prejudices of rank and party, had not laid aside the feelings of her sex, was loud in her intercession.

"O, Colonel Grahame," she exclaimed, "spare his young blood! Leave him to the law—do not repay my hospitality by shedding men's blood on the threshold of my doors!"

"Colonel Grahame," said Major Bellenden, "you must answer this violence. Don't think, though I am old and feckless, that my friend's son shall be murdered before my eyes with impunity. I can find friends that shall make you answer it."

"Be satisfied, Major Bellenden, I will answer it," replied Claverhouse, totally unmoved; "and you, madam, might spare me the pain the resisting this passionate intercession for a traitor, when you consider the noble blood your own house has lost by such as he is."

"Colonel Grahame," answered the lady, her aged frame trembling with anxiety, "I leave vengeance to God, who calls it his own. The shedding of this young man's blood will not call back the lives that were dear to me; and how can it comfort me to think that there has maybe been another widowed mother made childless, like myself, by a deed done at my very door-stane!"

"This is stark madness," said Claverhouse; "I must do my duty to church and state. Here are a thousand villains hard by in open rebellion, and you ask me to pardon a young fanatic who is enough of himself to set a whole kingdom in a blaze! It cannot be—Remove him, Bothwell."

She who was most interested in this dreadful decision, had twice strove to speak, but her voice had totally failed her; her mind refused to suggest words, and her tongue to utter them. She now sprung up and attempted to rush forward, but her strength gave way, and she would have fallen flat upon the pavement had she not been caught by her attendant.

"Help!" cried Jenny,— "Help, for God's sake! my young lady is dying."

At this exclamation, Evandale, who, during the preceding part of the scene, had stood motionless, leaning upon his sword, now stepped forward, and said to his commanding-officer, "Colonel Grahame, before proceeding in this matter, will you speak a word with me in private?"

Claverhouse looked surprised, but instantly rose and withdrew with the young nobleman into a recess, where the following brief dialogue passed between them:

"I think I need not remind you, Colonel, that when our family interest was of service to you last year in that affair in the privy-council, you considered yourself as laid under some obligation to us?"

"Certainly, my dear Evandale," answered Claverhouse, "I am not a man who forgets such debts; you will delight me by showing how I can evince my gratitude."

"I will hold the debt cancelled," said Lord Evandale, "if you will spare this young man's life."

"Evandale," replied Grahame, in great surprise, "you are mad—absolutely mad—what interest can you have in this young spawn of an old roundhead?—His father was positively the most dangerous man in all Scotland, cool, resolute, solidly, and inflexible in his cursed principles. His son seems his very model; you cannot conceive the mischief he may do. I know mankind, Evandale—were he an insignificant, fanatical, country booby, do you think I would have refused such a trifle as his life to Lady Margaret and this family? But this is a lad of fire, zeal, and education—and these knaves want but such a leader to direct their blind enthusiastic hardness. I mention this, not as refusing your request, but to make you fully aware of the possible consequences—I will never evade a promise, or refuse to return an obligation—if you ask his life, he shall have it."

"Keep him close prisoner," answered Evandale, "but do not be surprised if I persist in requesting you will not put him to death. I have most urgent reasons for what I ask."

"Be it so then," replied Grahame;—"but, young man, should you wish in your future life to rise to eminence in the service of your king and country, let it be your first task to subject to the public interest, and to the discharge of your duty, your private passions, affections, and feelings. These are not times to sacrifice to the dotage of greybeards, or the tears of silly women, the measures of salutary severity which the dangers around compel us to adopt. And remember, that if I now yield this point, in compliance with your urgency, my present concession must exempt me from future solicitations of the same nature."

He then stepped forward to the table, and bent his eyes keenly on Morton, as if to observe what effect the pause of awful suspense between death and life, which seemed to freeze the bystanders with horror, would produce upon the prisoner himself. Morton maintained a degree of firmness, which nothing but a mind that had nothing left upon earth to love or to hope, could have supported at such a crisis.

"You see him?" said Claverhouse, in a half whisper to Lord Evandale; "he is tottering on the verge between time and eternity, a situation more appalling than the most hideous certainty; yet his is the only cheek unblenched, the only eye that is calm, the only heart that keeps its usual time, the only nerves that are not quivering. Look at him well, Evandale—If that man shall ever come to head an army of rebels, you will have much to answer for on account of this morning's work." He then said aloud, "Young man, your life is for the present safe, through the intercession of your friends—Remove him, Bothwell, and let him be properly guarded, and brought along with the other prisoners."

"If my life," said Morton, stung with the idea that he owed his respite to the intercession of a favoured rival, "if my life be granted at Lord Evandale's request"—

"Take the prisoner away, Bothwell," said Colonel Grahame, interrupting him; "I have neither time to make nor to hear fine speeches."

Bothwell forced off Morton, saying, as he conducted him into the court-yard, "Have you three lives in your pocket, besides the one in your body, my lad, that you can afford to let your tongue run away with them at this rate? Come, come, I'll take care to keep you out of the Colonel's way; for, egad, you will not be five minutes with him before the next tree or the next ditch will be the word. So, come along to your companions in bondage."

Thus speaking, the sergeant, who, in his rude manner, did not altogether want sympathy for a gallant young man, hurried Morton down to the courtyard, where three other prisoners, (two men and a woman,) who had been taken by Lord Evandale, remained under an escort of dragoons.

Meantime, Claverhouse took his leave of Lady Margaret. But it was difficult for the good lady to forgive his neglect of her intercession.

"I have thought till now," she said, "that the Tower of Tillietudlem might have been a place of succour to those that are ready to perish, even if they werena sae deserving as they should have been—but I see auld fruit has little savour—our suffering and our services have been of an ancient date."

"They are never to be forgotten by me, let me assure your ladyship," said Claverhouse. "Nothing but what seemed my sacred duty could make me hesitate to grant a favour requested by you and the Major. Come, my good lady, let me hear you say you have forgiven me, and, as I return to-night, I will bring a drove of two hundred whigs with me, and pardon fifty head of them for your sake."

"I shall be happy to hear of your success, Colonel," said Major Bellenden; "but take an old soldier's advice, and spare blood when battle's over,—and once more let me request to enter bail for young Morton."

"We will settle that when I return," said Claverhouse. "Meanwhile, be assured his life shall be safe."

During this conversation, Evandale looked anxiously around for Edith; but the precaution of Jenny Dennison had occasioned her mistress being transported to her own apartment.

Slowly and heavily he obeyed the impatient summons of Claverhouse, who, after taking a courteous leave of Lady Margaret and the Major, had hastened to the court-yard. The prisoners with their guard were already on their march, and the officers with their escort mounted and followed. All pressed forward to overtake the main body, as it was supposed they would come in sight of the enemy in little more than two hours.

CHAPTER XIV.

*My hounds may a' rin masterless,
My hawks may fly frae tree to tree,
My lord may grip my vassal lands,
For there again maun I never be!
Old Ballad.*

We left Morton, along with three companions in captivity, travelling in the custody of a small body of soldiers, who formed the rear-guard of the column under the command of Claverhouse, and were immediately under the charge of Sergeant Bothwell. Their route lay towards the hills in which the insurgent presbyterians were reported to be in arms. They had not prosecuted their march a quarter of a mile ere Claverhouse and Evandale galloped past them, followed by their orderly-men, in order to take their proper places in the column which preceded them. No sooner were they past than Bothwell halted the body which he commanded, and disencumbered Morton of his irons.

"King's blood must keep word," said the dragoon. "I promised you should be civilly treated as far as rested with me.—Here, Corporal Inglis, let this gentleman ride alongside of the other young fellow who is prisoner; and you may permit them to converse together at their pleasure, under their breath, but take care they are guarded by two files with loaded carabines. If they attempt an escape, blow their brains out.—You cannot call that using you uncivilly," he continued, addressing himself to Morton, "it's the rules of war, you know.—And, Inglis, couple up the parson and the old woman, they are fittest company for each other, d—n me; a single file may guard them well enough. If they speak a word of cant or fanatical nonsense, let them have a strapping with a shoulder-belt. There's some hope of choking a silenced parson; if he is not allowed to hold forth, his own treason will burst him."

Having made this arrangement, Bothwell placed himself at the head of the party, and Inglis, with six dragoons, brought up the rear. The whole then set forward at a trot, with the purpose of overtaking the main body of the regiment.

Morton, overwhelmed with a complication of feelings, was totally indifferent to the various arrangements made for his secure custody, and even to the relief afforded him by his release from the fetters. He experienced that blank and waste of the heart which follows the hurricane of passion, and, no longer supported by the pride and conscious rectitude which dictated his answers to Claverhouse, he surveyed with deep dejection the glades through which he travelled, each turning of which had something to remind him of past happiness and disappointed love. The eminence which they now ascended was that from which he used first and last to behold the ancient tower when approaching or retiring from it; and, it is needless to add, that there he was wont to pause, and gaze with a lover's delight on the battlements, which, rising at a distance out of the lofty wood, indicated the dwelling of her, whom he either hoped soon to meet or had recently parted from. Instinctively he turned his head back to take a last look of a scene formerly so dear to him, and no less instinctively he heaved a deep sigh. It was echoed by a loud groan from his companion in misfortune, whose eyes, moved, perchance, by similar reflections, had taken the same direction. This indication of sympathy, on the part of the captive, was uttered in a tone more coarse than sentimental; it was, however, the expression of a grieved spirit, and so far corresponded with the sigh of Morton. In turning their heads their eyes met, and Morton recognised the stolid countenance of Cuddie Headrigg, bearing a rueful expression, in which sorrow for his own lot was mixed with sympathy for the situation of his companion.

"Heh, sirs!" was the expression of the ci-devant ploughman of the mains of Tillietudlem; "it's an unco thing that decent folk should be harled through the country this gate, as if they were a warld's wonder."

"I am sorry to see you here, Cuddie," said Morton, who, even in his own distress, did not lose feeling for that of others.

"And sae am I, Mr Henry," answered Cuddie, "baith for mysell and you; but neither of our sorrows will do muckle gude that I can see. To be sure, for me," continued the captive agriculturist, relieving his heart by talking, though he well knew it was to little purpose,— "to be sure, for my part, I hae nae right to be here ava', for I never did nor said a word against either king or curate; but my mither, puir body, couldna haud the auld tongue o' her, and we maun baith pay for't, it's like."

"Your mother is their prisoner likewise?" said Morton, hardly knowing what he said.

"In troth is she, riding ahint ye there like a bride, wi' that auld carle o' a minister that they ca' Gabriel Kettledrummle—Deil that he had been in the inside of a drum or a kettle either, for my share o' him! Ye see, we were nae sooner chased out o' the doors o' Milnwood, and your uncle and the housekeeper banging them to and barring them ahint us, as if we had had the plague on our bodies, that I says to my mother, What are we to do neist? for every hole and bore in the country will be steekit against us, now that ye hae affronted my auld leddy, and gar't the troopers tak up young Milnwood. Sae she says to me, Binna cast down, but gird yoursell up to the great task o' the day, and gie your testimony like a man upon the mount o' the Covenant."

"And so I suppose you went to a conventicle?" said Morton.

"Ye sall hear," continued Cuddie.—"Aweel, I kendna muckle better what to do, sae I e'en gaed wi' her to an auld daft carline like hersell, and we got some water-broo and bannocks; and mony a weary grace they said, and mony a psalm they sang, or they wad let me win to, for I was amaist famished wi' vexation. Aweel, they had me up in the grey o' the morning, and I behaved to whig awa wi' them, reason or nane, to a great gathering o' their folk at the Miry-sikes; and there this chield, Gabriel Kettledrummle, was blasting awa to them on the hill-side, about lifting up their testimony, nae doubt, and ganging down to the battle of Roman Gilead, or some sic place. Eh, Mr Henry! but the carle gae them a screed o' doctrine! Ye might hae heard him a mile down the wind—He routed like a cow in a fremd loaning.—Weel, thinks I, there's nae place in this country they ca' Roman Gilead—it will be some gate in the west muirlands; and or we win there I'll see to slip awa wi' this mither o' mine, for I winna rin my neck into a tether for ony Kettledrummle in the country side—Aweel," continued Cuddie, relieving himself by detailing his misfortunes, without being scrupulous concerning the degree of attention which his companion bestowed on his narrative, "just as I was wearying for the tail of the preaching, cam word that the dragoons were upon us.—Some ran, and some cried, Stand! and some cried, Down wi' the Philistines!—I was at my mither to get her awa sting and ling or the red-coats cam up, but I might as weel hae tried to drive our auld fore-a-hand ox without the goad—deil a step wad she budge.—Weel, after a', the cleugh we were in was strait, and the mist cam thick, and there was good hope the dragoons wad hae missed us if we could hae held our tongues; but, as if auld Kettledrummle himsell hadna made din eneugh to waken the very dead, they behaved a' to skirl up a psalm that ye wad hae heard as far as Lanrick!—Aweel, to mak a lang tale short, up cam my young Lord Evandale, skelping as fast as his horse could trot, and twenty red-coats at his back. Twa or three chields wad needs fight, wi' the pistol and the whinger in the tae hand, and the Bible in the tother, and they got their crouns weel cloured; but there wasna muckle skaith dune, for Evandale aye cried to scatter us, but to spare life."

"And did you not resist?" said Morton, who probably felt, that, at that moment, he himself would have encountered Lord Evandale on much slighter grounds.

"Na, truly," answered Cuddie, "I keepit aye before the auld woman, and cried for mercy to life and limb; but twa o' the red-coats cam up, and ane o' them was gaun to strike my mither wi' the side o' his broadsword—So I got up my kebbie at them, and said I wad gie them as gude. Weel, they turned on me, and clinked at me wi' their swords, and I garr'd my hand keep my head as weel as I could till Lord Evandale came up, and then I cried out I was a servant at Tillietudlem—ye ken yoursell he was aye judged to hae a look after the young leddy—and he bade me fling down my kent, and sae me and my mither yielded oursell prisoners. I'm thinking we wad hae been letten slip awa, but Kettledrummle was taen near us—for Andrew Wilson's naig that he was riding on had been a dragoon lang syne, and the saier Kettledrummle spurred to win awa, the readier the dour beast ran to the dragoons when he saw them draw up.—Aweel, when my mother and him forgathered, they set till the sodgers, and I think they gae them their kale through the reek! Bastards o' the hure o' Babylon was the best words in their wame. Sae then the kiln was in a bleeze again, and they brought us a' three on wi' them to mak us an example, as they ca't."

"It is most infamous and intolerable oppression!" said Morton, half speaking to himself; "here is a poor peaceable fellow, whose only motive for joining the conventicle was a sense of filial piety, and he is chained up like a thief or murderer, and likely to die the death of one, but without the privilege of a formal trial, which our laws indulge to the worst malefactor! Even to witness such tyranny, and still more to suffer under it, is enough to make the blood of the tamest slave boil within him."

"To be sure," said Cuddie, hearing, and partly understanding, what had broken from Morton in resentment of his injuries, "it is no right to speak evil o' dignities—my auld leddy aye said that, as nae doubt she had a gude right to do, being in a place o' dignity hersell; and troth I listened to her very patiently, for she aye ordered a dram, or a sowp kale, or something to us, after she had gien us a hearing on our duties. But deil a dram, or kale, or ony thing else—no sae muckle as a cup o' cauld water—do thae lords at Edinburgh gie us; and yet they are heading and hanging amang us, and trailing us after thae blackguard troopers, and taking our goods and gear as if we were outlaws. I canna say I tak it kind at their hands."

"It would be very strange if you did," answered Morton, with suppressed emotion.

"And what I like warst o' a'," continued poor Cuddie, "is thae ranting red-coats coming amang the lasses, and taking awa our joes. I had a sair heart o' my ain when I passed the Mains down at Tillietudlem this morning about parritch-time, and saw the reek comin' out at my ain lum-head, and kend there was some ither body than my auld mither sitting by the ingle-side. But I think my heart was e'en sairer, when I saw that hellicat trooper, Tam Halliday, kissing Jenny Dennison afore my face. I wonder women can hae the impudence to do sic things; but they are a' for the red-coats. Whiles I hae thought o' being a trooper mysell, when I thought naething else wad gae down wi' Jenny—and yet I'll no blame her ower muckle neither, for maybe it was a' for my sake that she loot Tam touzle her tap-knots that gate."

"For your sake?" said Morton, unable to refrain from taking some interest in a story which seemed to bear a singular coincidence with his own.

"E'en sae, Milnwood," replied Cuddie; "for the puir quean gat leave to come near me wi' speaking the loun fair, (d—n him, that I suld say sae!) and sae she bade me God speed, and she wanted to stap siller into my hand;—I'se warrant it was the tae half o' her fee and bountith, for she wared the ither half on pinners and pearlings to gang to see us shoot yon day at the popinjay."

"And did you take it, Cuddie?" said Morton.

"Troth did I no, Milnwood; I was sic a fule as to fling it back to her—my heart was ower grit to be behadden to her, when I had seen that loon slavering and kissing at her. But I was a great fule for my pains; it wad hae dune my mither and me some gude, and she'll ware't a' on duds and nonsense."

There was here a deep and long pause. Cuddie was probably engaged in regretting the rejection of his mistress's bounty, and Henry Morton in considering from what motives, or upon what conditions, Miss Bellenden had succeeded in procuring the interference of Lord Evandale in his favour.

Was it not possible, suggested his awakening hopes, that he had construed her influence over Lord Evandale hastily and unjustly? Ought he to censure her severely, if, submitting to dissimulation for his sake, she had permitted the young nobleman to entertain hopes which she had no intention to realize? Or what if she had appealed to the generosity which Lord Evandale was supposed to possess, and had engaged his honour to protect the person of a favoured rival?

Still, however, the words which he had overheard recurred ever and anon to his remembrance, with a pang which resembled the sting of an adder.

"Nothing that she could refuse him!—was it possible to make a more unlimited declaration of predilection? The language of affection has not, within the limits of maidenly delicacy, a stronger expression. She is lost to me wholly, and for ever; and nothing remains for me now, but vengeance for my own wrongs, and for those which are hourly inflicted on my country."

Apparently, Cuddie, though with less refinement, was following out a similar train of ideas; for he suddenly asked Morton in a low whisper—"Wad there be ony ill in getting out o' thae chields' hands an ane could compass it?"

"None in the world," said Morton; "and if an opportunity occurs of doing so, depend on it I for one will not let it slip."

"I'm blythe to hear ye say sae," answered Cuddie. "I'm but a puir silly fallow, but I canna think there wad be muckle ill in breaking out by strength o' hand, if ye could mak it ony thing feasible. I am the lad that will ne'er fear to lay on, if it were come to that; but our auld leddy wad hae ca'd that a resisting o' the king's authority."

"I will resist any authority on earth," said Morton, "that invades tyrannically my chartered rights as a freeman; and I am determined I will not be unjustly dragged to a jail, or perhaps a gibbet, if I can possibly make my escape from these men either by address or force."

"Weel, that's just my mind too, aye supposing we hae a feasible opportunity o' breaking loose. But then ye speak o' a charter; now these are things that only belang to the like o' you that are a gentleman, and it mightna bear me through that am but a husbandman."

"The charter that I speak of," said Morton, "is common to the meanest Scotchman. It is that freedom from stripes and bondage which was claimed, as you may read in Scripture, by the Apostle Paul himself, and which every man who is free-born is called upon to defend, for his own sake and that of his countrymen."

"Hegh, sirs!" replied Cuddie, "it wad hae been lang or my Ledy Margaret, or my mither either, wad hae fund out sic a wiselike doctrine in the Bible! The tane was aye graning about giving tribute to Caesar, and the tither is as daft wi' her whiggery. I hae been clean spoilt, just wi' listening to twa blethering auld wives; but if I could get a gentleman that wad let me tak on to be his servant, I am confident I wad be a clean contrary creature; and I hope your honour will think on what I am saying, if ye were ance fairly delivered out o' this house of bondage, and just take me to be your ain wally-de-shamble."

"My valet, Cuddie?" answered Morton; "alas! that would be sorry preferment, even if we were at liberty."

"I ken what ye're thinking—that because I am landward-bred, I wad be bringing ye to disgrace afore folk; but ye maun ken I'm gay gleg at the uptak; there was never ony thing dune wi' hand but I learned gay readily, 'septing reading, writing, and ciphering; but there's no the like o' me at the fit-ba', and I can play wi' the broadsword as weel as Corporal Inglis there. I hae broken his head or now, for as massy as he's riding ahint us.—And then ye'll no be gaun to stay in this country?"—said he, stopping and interrupting himself.

"Probably not," replied Morton.

"Weel, I carena a boddle. Ye see I wad get my mither bestowed wi' her auld graning tittie, auntie Meg, in the Gallowgate o' Glasgow, and then I trust they wad neither burn her for a witch, or let her fail for fau't o' fude, or hang her up for an auld whig wife; for the provost, they say, is very regardfu' o' sic puir bodies. And then you and me wad gang and pouss our fortunes, like the folk i' the daft auld tales about Jock the Giant-killer and Valentine and Orson; and we wad come back to merry Scotland, as the sang says, and I wad tak to the stilts again, and turn sic furs on the bonny rigs o' Milnwood holms, that it wad be worth a pint but to look at them."

"I fear," said Morton, "there is very little chance, my good friend Cuddie, of our getting back to our old occupation."

"Hout, stir—hout, stir," replied Cuddie, "it's aye gude to keep up a hardy heart—as broken a ship's come to land.—But what's that I hear? never stir, if my auld mither isna at the preaching again! I ken the sough o' her texts, that sound just like the wind blowing through the spence; and there's Kettledrummy setting to wark, too—Lordsake, if the sodgers anes get angry, they'll murder them baith, and us for company!"

Their farther conversation was in fact interrupted by a blatant noise which rose behind them, in which the voice of the preacher emitted, in unison with that of the old woman, tones like the grumble of a bassoon combined with the screaming of a cracked fiddle. At first, the aged pair of sufferers had been contented to condole with each other in smothered expressions of complaint and indignation; but the sense of their injuries became more pungently aggravated as they communicated with each other, and they became at length unable to suppress their ire.

"Woe, woe, and a threefold woe unto you, ye bloody and violent persecutors!" exclaimed the Reverend Gabriel Kettledrummy—"Woe, and threefold woe unto you, even to the breaking of seals, the blowing of trumpets, and the pouring forth of vials!"

"Ay—ay—a black cast to a' their ill-fa'ur'd faces, and the outside o' the loof to them at the last day!" echoed the shrill counter-tenor of Mause, falling in like the second part of a catch.

"I tell you," continued the divine, "that your rankings and your ridings—your neighings and your prancings—your bloody, barbarous, and inhuman cruelties—your benumbing, deadening, and debauching the conscience of poor creatures by oaths, soul-damning and self-contradictory, have arisen from earth to Heaven like a foul and hideous outcry of perjury for hastening the wrath to come—hugh! hugh! hugh!"

"And I say," cried Mause, in the same tune, and nearly at the same time, "that wi' this auld breath o' mine, and it's sair taen down wi' the asthmatics and this rough trot"—

"Deil gin they would gallop," said Cuddie, "wad it but gar her haud her tongue!"

"—Wi' this auld and brief breath," continued Mause, "will I testify against the backslidings, defections, defalcations, and declinings of the land—against the grievances and the causes of wrath!"

"Peace, I pr'ythee—Peace, good woman," said the preacher, who had just recovered from a violent fit of coughing, and found his own anathema borne down by Mause's better wind; "peace, and take not the word out of the mouth of a servant of the altar.—I say, I uplift my voice and tell you, that before the play is played out—ay, before this very sun gaes down, ye sall learn that neither a desperate Judas, like your prelate Sharpe that's gane to his place; nor a sanctuary-breaking

Holofernes, like bloody-minded Claverhouse; nor an ambitious Diotrefes, like the lad Evandale; nor a covetous and world-following Demas, like him they ca' Sergeant Bothwell, that makes every wife's plack and her meal-ark his ain; neither your carabines, nor your pistols, nor your broadswords, nor your horses, nor your saddles, bridles, surcingles, nose-bags, nor martingales, shall resist the arrows that are whetted and the bow that is bent against you!"

"That shall they never, I trow," echoed Mause; "castaways are they ilk ane o' them—besoms of destruction, fit only to be flung into the fire when they have sweepit the filth out o' the Temple—whips of small cords, knotted for the chastisement of those wha like their worldly gudes and gear better than the Cross or the Covenant, but when that wark's done, only meet to mak latches to the deil's brogues."

"Fiend hae me," said Cuddie, addressing himself to Morton, "if I dinna think our mither preaches as weel as the minister!—But it's a sair pity o' his hoast, for it aye comes on just when he's at the best o't, and that lang routing he made air this morning, is sair again him too—Deil an I care if he wad roar her dumb, and then he wad hae't a' to answer for himself—It's lucky the road's rough, and the troopers are no taking muckle tent to what they say, wi' the rattling o' the horse's feet; but an we were anes on saft grund, we'll hear news o' a' this."

Cuddie's conjecture were but too true. The words of the prisoners had not been much attended to while drowned by the clang of horses' hoofs on a rough and stony road; but they now entered upon the moorlands, where the testimony of the two zealous captives lacked this saving accompaniment. And, accordingly, no sooner had their steeds begun to tread heath and green sward, and Gabriel Kettledrummle had again raised his voice with, "Also I uplift my voice like that of a pelican in the wilderness"—

"And I mine," had issued from Mause, "like a sparrow on the house-tops"—

When "Hollo, ho!" cried the corporal from the rear; "rein up your tongues, the devil blister them, or I'll clap a martingale on them."

"I will not peace at the commands of the profane," said Gabriel.

"Nor I neither," said Mause, "for the bidding of no earthly potsherd, though it be painted as red as a brick from the Tower of Babel, and ca' itsell a corporal."

"Halliday," cried the corporal, "hast got never a gag about thee, man?—We must stop their mouths before they talk us all dead."

Ere any answer could be made, or any measure taken in consequence of the corporal's motion, a dragoon galloped towards Sergeant Bothwell, who was considerably a-head of the party he commanded. On hearing the orders which he brought, Bothwell instantly rode back to the head of his party, ordered them to close their files, to mend their pace, and to move with silence and precaution, as they would soon be in presence of the enemy.

CHAPTER XV.

*Quantum in nobis, we've thought good
To save the expense of Christian blood,
And try if we, by mediation
Of treaty, and accommodation,
Can end the quarrel, and compose
This bloody duel without blows.*

Butler.

The increased pace of the party of horsemen soon took away from their zealous captives the breath, if not the inclination, necessary for holding forth. They had now for more than a mile got free of the woodlands, whose broken glades had, for some time, accompanied them after they had left the woods of Tillietudlem. A few birches and oaks still feathered the narrow ravines, or occupied in dwarf-clusters the hollow plains of the moor. But these were gradually disappearing; and a wide and waste country lay before them, swelling into bare hills of dark heath, intersected by deep gullies; being the passages by which torrents forced their course in winter, and during summer the disproportioned channels for diminutive rivulets that winded their puny way among heaps of stones and gravel, the effects and tokens of their winter fury;—like so many spendthrifts dwindled down by the consequences of former excesses and extravagance. This desolate region seemed to extend farther than the eye could reach, without grandeur, without even the dignity of mountain wildness, yet striking, from the huge proportion which it seemed to bear to such more favoured spots of the country as were adapted to cultivation, and fitted for the support of man; and thereby impressing irresistibly the mind of the spectator with a sense of the omnipotence of nature, and the comparative inefficacy of the boasted means of amelioration which man is capable of opposing to the disadvantages of climate and soil.

It is a remarkable effect of such extensive wastes, that they impose an idea of solitude even upon those who travel through them in considerable numbers; so much is the imagination affected by the disproportion between the desert around and the party who are traversing it. Thus the members of a caravan of a thousand souls may feel, in the deserts of Africa or Arabia, a sense of loneliness unknown to the individual traveller, whose solitary course is through a thriving and cultivated country.

It was not, therefore, without a peculiar feeling of emotion, that Morton beheld, at the distance of about half a mile, the body of the cavalry to which his escort belonged, creeping up a steep and winding path which ascended from the more level moor into the hills. Their numbers, which appeared formidable when they crowded through narrow roads, and seemed multiplied by appearing partially, and at different points, among the trees, were now apparently diminished by being exposed at once to view, and in a landscape whose extent bore such immense proportion to the columns of horses and men, which, showing more like a drove of black cattle than a body of soldiers, crawled slowly along the face of the hill, their force and their numbers seeming trifling and contemptible.

"Surely," said Morton to himself, "a handful of resolute men may defend any defile in these mountains against such a small force as this is, providing that their bravery is equal to their enthusiasm."

While he made these reflections, the rapid movement of the horsemen who guarded him, soon traversed the space which divided them from their companions; and ere the front of Claverhouse's column had gained the brow of the hill which they had been seen ascending, Bothwell, with his rearguard and prisoners, had united himself, or nearly so, with the main body led by his commander. The extreme difficulty of the road, which was in some places steep, and in others boggy, retarded the progress of the column, especially in the rear; for the passage of the main body, in many instances, poached up the swamps through which they passed, and rendered them so deep, that the last of their followers were forced to leave the beaten path, and find safer passage where they could.

On these occasions, the distresses of the Reverend Gabriel Kettledrummle and of Mause Headrigg, were considerably augmented, as the brutal troopers, by whom they were guarded, compelled them, at all risks which such inexperienced riders were likely to incur, to leap their horses over drains and gullies, or to push them through morasses and swamps.

"Through the help of the Lord I have luppen ower a wall," cried poor Mause, as her horse was, by her rude attendants, brought up to leap the turf enclosure of a deserted fold, in which feat her curch flew off, leaving her grey hairs uncovered.

"I am sunk in deep mire where there is no standing—I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me," exclaimed Kettledrummle, as the charger on which he was mounted plunged up to the saddle-girths in a well-head, as the springs are called which supply the marshes, the sable streams beneath spouting over the face and person of the captive preacher.

These exclamations excited shouts of laughter among their military attendants; but events soon occurred which rendered them all sufficiently serious.

The leading files of the regiment had nearly attained the brow of the steep hill we have mentioned, when two or three horsemen, speedily discovered to be a part of their own advanced guard, who had acted as a patrol, appeared returning at full gallop, their horses much blown, and the men apparently in a disordered flight. They were followed upon the spur by five or six riders, well armed with sword and pistol, who halted upon the top of the hill, on observing the approach of the Life-Guards. One or two who had carabines dismounted, and, taking a leisurely and deliberate aim at the foremost rank of the regiment, discharged their pieces, by

which two troopers were wounded, one severely. They then mounted their horses, and disappeared over the ridge of the hill, retreating with so much coolness as evidently showed, that, on the one hand, they were undismayed by the approach of so considerable a force as was moving against them, and conscious, on the other, that they were supported by numbers sufficient for their protection. This incident occasioned a halt through the whole body of cavalry; and while Claverhouse himself received the report of his advanced guard, which had been thus driven back upon the main body, Lord Evandale advanced to the top of the ridge over which the enemy's horsemen had retired, and Major Allan, Cornet Grahame, and the other officers, employed themselves in extricating the regiment from the broken ground, and drawing them up on the side of the hill in two lines, the one to support the other.

The word was then given to advance; and in a few minutes the first lines stood on the brow and commanded the prospect on the other side. The second line closed upon them, and also the rear-guard with the prisoners; so that Morton and his companions in captivity could, in like manner, see the form of opposition which was now offered to the farther progress of their captors.

The brow of the hill, on which the royal Life-Guards were now drawn up, sloped downwards (on the side opposite to that which they had ascended) with a gentle declivity, for more than a quarter of a mile, and presented ground, which, though unequal in some places, was not altogether unfavourable for the manoeuvres of cavalry, until near the bottom, when the slope terminated in a marshy level, traversed through its whole length by what seemed either a natural gully, or a deep artificial drain, the sides of which were broken by springs, trenches filled with water, out of which peats and turf had been dug, and here and there by some straggling thickets of alders which loved the moistness so well, that they continued to live as bushes, although too much dwarfed by the sour soil and the stagnant bog-water to ascend into trees. Beyond this ditch, or gully, the ground arose into a second heathy swell, or rather hill, near to the foot of which, and' as if with the object of defending the broken ground and ditch that covered their front, the body of insurgents appeared to be drawn up with the purpose of abiding battle.

Their infantry was divided into three lines. The first, tolerably provided with fire-arms, were advanced almost close to the verge of the bog, so that their fire must necessarily annoy the royal cavalry as they descended the opposite hill, the whole front of which was exposed, and would probably be yet more fatal if they attempted to cross the morass. Behind this first line was a body of pikemen, designed for their support in case the dragoons should force the passage of the marsh. In their rear was their third line, consisting of countrymen armed with scythes set straight on poles, hay-forks, spits, clubs, goads, fish-spears, and such other rustic implements as hasty resentment had converted into instruments of war. On each flank of the infantry, but a little backward from the bog, as if to allow themselves dry and sound ground whereon to act in case their enemies should force the pass, there was drawn up a small body of cavalry, who were, in general, but indifferently armed, and worse mounted, but full of zeal for the cause, being chiefly either landholders of small property, or farmers of the better class, whose means enabled them to serve on horseback. A few of those who had been engaged in driving back the advanced guard of the royalists, might now be seen returning slowly towards their own squadrons. These were the only individuals of the insurgent army which seemed to be in motion. All the others stood firm and motionless, as the grey stones that lay scattered on the heath around them.

The total number of the insurgents might amount to about a thousand men; but of these there were scarce a hundred cavalry, nor were the half of them even tolerably armed. The strength of their position, however, the sense of their having taken a desperate step, the superiority of their numbers, but, above all, the ardour of their enthusiasm, were the means on which their leaders reckoned, for supplying the want of arms, equipage, and military discipline.

On the side of the hill that rose above the array of battle which they had adopted, were seen the women and even the children, whom zeal, opposed to persecution, had driven into the wilderness. They seemed stationed there to be spectators of the engagement, by which their own fate, as well as that of their parents, husbands, and sons, was to be decided. Like the females of the ancient German tribes, the shrill cries which they raised, when they beheld the glittering ranks of their enemy appear on the brow of the opposing eminence, acted as an incentive to their relatives to fight to the last in defence of that which was dearest to them. Such exhortations seemed to have their full and emphatic effect; for a wild halloo, which went from rank to rank on the appearance of the soldiers, intimated the resolution of the insurgents to fight to the uttermost.

As the horsemen halted their lines on the ridge of the hill, their trumpets and kettle-drums sounded a bold and warlike flourish of menace and defiance, that rang along the waste like the shrill summons of a destroying angel. The wanderers, in answer, united their voices, and sent forth, in solemn modulation, the two first verses of the seventy-sixth Psalm, according to the metrical version of the Scottish Kirk:

*"In Judah's land God is well known,
His name's in Israel great:
In Salem is his tabernacle,
In Zion is his seat.
There arrows of the bow he brake,
The shield, the sword, the war.
More glorious thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far."*

A shout, or rather a solemn acclamation, attended the close of the stanza; and after a dead pause, the second verse was resumed by the insurgents, who applied the destruction of the Assyrians as prophetic of the issue of their own impending contest:—

*"Those that were stout of heart are spoil'd,
They slept their sleep outright;
And none of those their hands did find,
That were the men of might."*

*When thy rebuke, O Jacob's God,
Had forth against them past,
Their horses and their chariots both
Were in a deep sleep cast."*

There was another acclamation, which was followed by the most profound silence.

While these solemn sounds, accented by a thousand voices, were prolonged amongst the waste hills, Claverhouse looked with great attention on the ground, and on the order of battle which the wanderers had adopted, and in which they determined to await the assault.

"The churls," he said, "must have some old soldiers with them; it was no rustic that made choice of that ground."

"Burley is said to be with them for certain," answered Lord Evandale, "and also Hackston of Rathillet, Paton of Meadowhead, Cleland, and some other men of military skill."

"I judged as much," said Claverhouse, "from the style in which these detached horsemen leapt their horses over the ditch, as they returned to their position. It was easy to see that there were a few roundheaded troopers amongst them, the true spawn of the old Covenant. We must manage this matter warily as well as boldly. Evandale, let the officers come to this knoll."

He moved to a small moss-grown cairn, probably the resting-place of some Celtic chief of other times, and the call of "Officers to the front," soon brought them around their commander.

"I do not call you around me, gentlemen," said Claverhouse, "in the formal capacity of a council of war, for I will never turn over on others the responsibility which my rank imposes on myself. I only want the benefit of your opinions, reserving to myself, as most men do when they ask advice, the liberty of following my own.—What say you, Cornet Grahame? Shall we attack these fellows who are bellowing yonder? You are youngest and hottest, and therefore will speak first whether I will or no."

"Then," said Cornet Grahame, "while I have the honour to carry the standard of the Life-Guards, it shall never, with my will, retreat before rebels. I say, charge, in God's name and the King's!"

"And what say you, Allan?" continued Claverhouse, "for Evandale is so modest, we shall never get him to speak till you have said what you have to say."

"These fellows," said Major Allan, an old cavalier officer of experience, "are three or four to one—I should not mind that much upon a fair field, but they are posted in a very formidable strength, and show no inclination to quit it. I therefore think, with deference to Cornet Grahame's opinion, that we should draw back to Tillietudlem, occupy the pass between the hills and the open country, and send for reinforcements to my Lord Ross, who is lying at Glasgow with a regiment of infantry. In this way we should cut them off from the Strath of Clyde, and either compel them to come out of their stronghold, and give us battle on fair terms, or, if they remain here, we will attack them so soon as our infantry has joined us, and enabled us to act with effect among these ditches, bogs, and quagmires."

"Pshaw!" said the young Cornet, "what signifies strong ground, when it is only held by a crew of canting, psalm-singing old women?"

"A man may fight never the worse," retorted Major Allan, "for honouring both his Bible and Psalter. These fellows will prove as stubborn as steel; I know them of old."

"Their nasal psalmody," said the Cornet, "reminds our Major of the race of Dunbar."

"Had you been at that race, young man," retorted Allan, "you would have wanted nothing to remind you of it for the longest day you have to live."

"Hush, hush, gentlemen," said Claverhouse, "these are untimely repartees.—I should like your advice well, Major Allan, had our rascally patrols (whom I will see duly punished) brought us timely notice of the enemy's numbers and position. But having once presented ourselves before them in line, the retreat of the Life-Guards would argue gross timidity, and be the general signal for insurrection throughout the west. In which case, so far from obtaining any assistance from my Lord Ross, I promise you I should have great apprehensions of his being cut off before we can join him, or he us. A retreat would have quite the same fatal effect upon the king's cause as the loss of a battle—and as to the difference of risk or of safety it might make with respect to ourselves, that, I am sure, no gentleman thinks a moment about. There must be some gorges or passes in the morass through which we can force our way; and, were we once on firm ground, I trust there is no man in the Life-Guards who supposes our squadrons, though so weak in numbers, are unable to trample into dust twice the number of these unpractised clowns.—What say you, my Lord Evandale?"

"I humbly think," said Lord Evandale, "that, go the day how it will, it must be a bloody one; and that we shall lose many brave fellows, and probably be obliged to slaughter a great number of these misguided men, who, after all, are Scotchmen and subjects of King Charles as well as we are."

"Rebels! rebels! and undeserving the name either of Scotchmen or of subjects," said Claverhouse; "but come, my lord, what does your opinion point at?"

"To enter into a treaty with these ignorant and misled men," said the young nobleman.

"A treaty! and with rebels having arms in their hands? Never while I live," answered his commander.

"At least send a trumpet and flag of truce, summoning them to lay down their weapons and disperse," said Lord Evandale, "upon promise of a free pardon—I have always heard, that had that been done before the battle of Pentland hills, much blood might have been saved."

"Well," said Claverhouse, "and who the devil do you think would carry a summons to these headstrong and desperate fanatics? They acknowledge no laws of war. Their leaders, who have been all most active in the murder of the Archbishop of St Andrews, fight with a rope round their necks, and are likely to kill the messenger, were it but to dip their followers in loyal blood, and to make them as desperate of pardon as themselves."

"I will go myself," said Evandale, "if you will permit me. I have often risked my blood to spill that of others, let me do so now in order to save human lives."

"You shall not go on such an errand, my lord," said Claverhouse; "your rank and situation render your safety of too much consequence to the country in an age when good principles are so rare.—Here's my brother's son Dick Grahame, who fears shot or steel as little as if the devil had given him armour of proof against it, as the fanatics say he has given to his uncle."

[Note: Cornet Grahame. There was actually a young cornet of the Life-Guards named Grahame, and probably some relation of Claverhouse, slain in the skirmish of Drumclog. In the old ballad on the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, Claverhouse is said to have continued the slaughter of the fugitives in revenge of this gentleman's death.]

"Haud up your hand," then Monmouth said; "Gie quarters to these men for me;" But bloody Claver'se swore an oath, His kinsman's death avenged should be.

The body of this young man was found shockingly mangled after the battle, his eyes pulled out, and his features so much defaced, that it was impossible to recognise him. The Tory writers say that this was done by the Whigs; because, finding the name Grahame wrought in the young gentleman's neckcloth, they took the corpse for that of Claver'se himself. The Whig authorities give a different account, from tradition, of the cause of Cornet Grahame's body being thus mangled. He had, say they, refused his own dog any food on the morning of the battle, affirming, with an oath, that he should have no breakfast but upon the flesh of the Whigs. The ravenous animal, it is said, flew at his master as soon as he fell, and lacerated his face and throat.

These two stories are presented to the reader, leaving it to him to judge whether it is most likely that a party of persecuted and insurgent fanatics should mangle a body supposed to be that of their chief enemy, in the same manner as several persons present at Drumclog had shortly before treated the person of Archbishop Sharpe; or that a domestic dog should, for want of a single breakfast, become so ferocious as to feed on his own master, selecting his body from scores that were lying around, equally accessible to his ravenous appetite.]

He shall take a flag of truce and a trumpet, and ride down to the edge of the morass to summon them to lay down their arms and disperse."

"With all my soul, Colonel," answered the Cornet; "and I'll tie my cravat on a pike to serve for a white flag—the rascals never saw such a pennon of Flanders lace in their lives before."

"Colonel Grahame," said Evandale, while the young officer prepared for his expedition, "this young gentleman is your nephew and your apparent heir; for God's sake, permit me to go. It was my counsel, and I ought to stand the risk."

"Were he my only son," said Claverhouse, "this is no cause and no time to spare him. I hope my private affections will never interfere with my public duty. If Dick Grahame falls, the loss is chiefly mine; were your lordship to die, the King and country would be the sufferers.—Come, gentlemen, each to his post. If our summons is unfavourably received, we will instantly attack; and, as the old Scottish blazon has it, God shaw the right!"

CHAPTER XVI.

*With many a stout thwack and many a bang,
Hard crab-tree and old iron rang.
Hudibras.*

Cornet Richard Grahame descended the hill, bearing in his hand the extempore flag of truce, and making his managed horse keep time by bounds and curvets to the tune which he whistled. The trumpeter followed. Five or six horsemen, having something the appearance of officers, detached themselves from each flank of the Presbyterian army, and, meeting in the centre, approached the ditch which divided the hollow as near as the morass would permit. Towards this group, but keeping the opposite side of the swamp, Cornet Grahame directed his horse, his motions being now the conspicuous object of attention to both armies; and, without disparagement to the courage of either, it is probable there was a general wish on both sides that this embassy might save the risks and bloodshed of the impending conflict.

When he had arrived right opposite to those, who, by their advancing to receive his message, seemed to take upon themselves as the leaders of the enemy, Cornet Grahame commanded his trumpeter to sound a parley. The insurgents having no instrument of martial music wherewith to make the appropriate reply, one of their number called out with a loud, strong voice, demanding to know why he approached their leaguer.

"To summon you in the King's name, and in that of Colonel John Grahame of Claverhouse, specially commissioned by the right honourable Privy Council of Scotland," answered the Cornet, "to lay down your arms, and dismiss the followers whom ye have led into rebellion, contrary to the laws of God, of the King, and of the country."

"Return to them that sent thee," said the insurgent leader, "and tell them that we are this day in arms for a broken Covenant and a persecuted Kirk; tell them that we renounce the licentious and perjured Charles Stewart, whom you call king, even as he renounced the Covenant, after having once and again sworn to prosecute to the utmost of his power all the ends thereof, really, constantly, and sincerely, all the days of his life, having no enemies but the enemies of the Covenant, and no friends but its friends. Whereas, far from keeping the oath he had called God and angels to witness, his first step, after his incoming into these kingdoms, was the fearful grasping at the prerogative of the Almighty, by that hideous Act of Supremacy, together with his expulsing, without summons, libel, or process of law, hundreds of famous faithful preachers, thereby wringing the bread of life out of the mouth of hungry, poor creatures, and forcibly cramming their throats with the lifeless, saltless, foisonless, lukewarm drammock of the fourteen false prelates, and their sycophantic, formal, carnal, scandalous creature-curates."

"I did not come to hear you preach," answered the officer, "but to know, in one word, if you will disperse yourselves, on condition of a free pardon to all but the murderers of the late Archbishop of St Andrews; or whether you will abide the attack of his majesty's forces, which will instantly advance upon you."

"In one word, then," answered the spokesman, "we are here with our swords on our thighs, as men that watch in the night. We will take one part and portion together, as brethren in righteousness. Whosoever assails us in our good cause, his blood be on his own head. So return to them that sent thee, and God give them and thee a sight of the evil of your ways!"

"Is not your name," said the Cornet, who began to recollect having seen the person whom he was now speaking with, "John Balfour of Burley?"

"And if it be," said the spokesman, "hast thou aught to say against it?"

"Only," said the Cornet, "that, as you are excluded from pardon in the name of the King and of my commanding officer, it is to these country people, and not to you, that I offer it; and it is not with you, or such as you, that I am sent to treat."

"Thou art a young soldier, friend," said Burley, "and scant well learned in thy trade, or thou wouldst know that the bearer of a flag of truce cannot treat with the army but through their officers; and that if he presume to do otherwise, he forfeits his safe conduct."

While speaking these words, Burley unslung his carbine, and held it in readiness.

"I am not to be intimidated from the discharge of my duty by the menaces of a murderer," said Cornet Grahame.—"Hear me, good people; I proclaim, in the name of the King and of my commanding officer, full and free pardon to all, excepting"—

"I give thee fair warning," said Burley, presenting his piece.

"A free pardon to all," continued the young officer, still addressing the body of the insurgents—"to all but"—

"Then the Lord grant grace to thy soul—amen!" said Burley.

With these words he fired, and Cornet Richard Grahame dropped from his horse. The shot was mortal. The unfortunate young gentleman had only strength to turn himself on the ground and mutter forth, "My poor mother!" when life forsook him in the effort. His startled horse fled back to the regiment at the gallop, as did his scarce less affrighted attendant.

"What have you done?" said one of Balfour's brother officers.

"My duty," said Balfour, firmly. "Is it not written, Thou shalt be zealous even to slaying? Let those, who dare, now venture to speak of truce or pardon!"

Claverhouse saw his nephew fall. He turned his eye on Evandale, while a transitory glance of indescribable emotion disturbed, for a second's space, the serenity of his features, and briefly said, "You see the event."

"I will avenge him, or die!" exclaimed Evandale; and, putting his horse into motion, rode furiously down the hill, followed by his own troop, and that of the deceased Cornet, which broke down without orders; and, each striving to be the foremost to revenge their young officer, their ranks soon fell into confusion. These forces formed the first line of the royalists. It was in vain that Claverhouse exclaimed, "Halt! halt! this rashness will undo us." It was all that he could accomplish, by galloping along the second line, entreating, commanding, and even menacing the men with his sword, that he could restrain them from following an example so contagious.

"Allan," he said, as soon as he had rendered the men in some degree more steady, "lead them slowly down the hill to support Lord Evandale, who is about to need it very much.—Bothwell, thou art a cool and a daring fellow"—

"Ay," muttered Bothwell, "you can remember that in a moment like this."

"Lead ten file up the hollow to the right," continued his commanding officer, "and try every means to get through the bog; then form and charge the rebels in flank and rear, while they are engaged with us in front."

Bothwell made a signal of intelligence and obedience, and moved off with his party at a rapid pace.

Meantime, the disaster which Claverhouse had apprehended, did not fail to take place. The troopers, who, with Lord Evandale, had rushed down upon the enemy, soon found their disorderly career interrupted by the impracticable character of the ground. Some stuck fast in the morass as they attempted to struggle through, some recoiled from the attempt and remained on the brink, others dispersed to seek a more favourable place to pass the swamp. In the midst of this confusion, the first line of the enemy, of which the foremost rank knelt, the second stooped, and the third stood upright, poured in a close and destructive fire that emptied at least a score of saddles, and increased tenfold the disorder into which the horsemen had fallen. Lord Evandale, in the meantime, at the head of a very few well-mounted men, had been able to clear the ditch, but was no sooner across than he was charged by the left body of the enemy's cavalry, who, encouraged by the

small number of opponents that had made their way through the broken ground, set upon them with the utmost fury, crying, "Woe, woe to the uncircumcised Philistines! down with Dagon and all his adherents!"

The young nobleman fought like a lion; but most of his followers were killed, and he himself could not have escaped the same fate but for a heavy fire of carabines, which Claverhouse, who had now advanced with the second line near to the ditch, poured so effectually upon the enemy, that both horse and foot for a moment began to shrink, and Lord Evandale, disengaged from his unequal combat, and finding himself nearly alone, took the opportunity to effect his retreat through the morass. But notwithstanding the loss they had sustained by Claverhouse's first fire, the insurgents became soon aware that the advantage of numbers and of position were so decidedly theirs, that, if they could but persist in making a brief but resolute defence, the Life-Guards must necessarily be defeated. Their leaders flew through their ranks, exhorting them to stand firm, and pointing out how efficacious their fire must be where both men and horse were exposed to it; for the troopers, according to custom, fired without having dismounted. Claverhouse, more than once, when he perceived his best men dropping by a fire which they could not effectually return, made desperate efforts to pass the bog at various points, and renew the battle on firm ground and fiercer terms. But the close fire of the insurgents, joined to the natural difficulties of the pass, foiled his attempts in every point.

"We must retreat," he said to Evandale, "unless Bothwell can effect a diversion in our favour. In the meantime, draw the men out of fire, and leave skirmishers behind these patches of alderbushes to keep the enemy in check."

These directions being accomplished, the appearance of Bothwell with his party was earnestly expected. But Bothwell had his own disadvantages to struggle with. His detour to the right had not escaped the penetrating observation of Burley, who made a corresponding movement with the left wing of the mounted insurgents, so that when Bothwell, after riding a considerable way up the valley, found a place at which the bog could be passed, though with some difficulty, he perceived he was still in front of a superior enemy. His daring character was in no degree checked by this unexpected opposition.

"Follow me, my lads!" he called to his men; "never let it be said that we turned our backs before these canting roundheads!"

With that, as if inspired by the spirit of his ancestors, he shouted, "Bothwell! Bothwell!" and throwing himself into the morass, he struggled through it at the head of his party, and attacked that of Burley with such fury, that he drove them back above a pistol-shot, killing three men with his own hand. Burley, perceiving the consequences of a defeat on this point, and that his men, though more numerous, were unequal to the regulars in using their arms and managing their horses, threw himself across Bothwell's way, and attacked him hand to hand. Each of the combatants was considered as the champion of his respective party, and a result ensued more usual in romance than in real story. Their followers, on either side, instantly paused, and looked on as if the fate of the day were to be decided by the event of the combat between these two redoubted swordsmen. The combatants themselves seemed of the same opinion; for, after two or three eager cuts and pushes had been exchanged, they paused, as if by joint consent, to recover the breath which preceding exertions had exhausted, and to prepare for a duel in which each seemed conscious he had met his match.

"You are the murdering villain, Burley," said Bothwell, gripping his sword firmly, and setting his teeth close—"you escaped me once, but"—(he swore an oath too tremendous to be written down)—"thy head is worth its weight of silver, and it shall go home at my saddle-bow, or my saddle shall go home empty for me."

"Yes," replied Burley, with stern and gloomy deliberation, "I am that John Balfour, who promised to lay thy head where thou shouldst never lift it again; and God do so unto me, and more also, if I do not redeem my word!"

"Then a bed of heather, or a thousand merks!" said Bothwell, striking at Burley with his full force.

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" answered Balfour, as he parried and returned the blow.

There have seldom met two combatants more equally matched in strength of body, skill in the management of their weapons and horses, determined courage, and unrelenting hostility. After exchanging many desperate blows, each receiving and inflicting several wounds, though of no great consequence, they grappled together as if with the desperate impatience of mortal hate, and Bothwell, seizing his enemy by the shoulder-belt, while the grasp of Balfour was upon his own collar, they came headlong to the ground. The companions of Burley hastened to his assistance, but were repelled by the dragoons, and the battle became again general. But nothing could withdraw the attention of the combatants from each other, or induce them to unclothe the deadly clasp in which they rolled together on the ground, tearing, struggling, and foaming, with the inveteracy of thorough-bred bull-dogs.

Several horses passed over them in the melee without their quitting hold of each other, until the sword-arm of Bothwell was broken by the kick of a charger. He then relinquished his grasp with a deep and suppressed groan, and both combatants started to their feet. Bothwell's right hand dropped helpless by his side, but his left gripped to the place where his dagger hung; it had escaped from the sheath in the struggle,—and, with a look of mingled rage and despair, he stood totally defenceless, as Balfour, with a laugh of savage joy, flourished his sword aloft, and then passed it through his adversary's body. Bothwell received the thrust without falling—it had only grazed on his ribs. He attempted no farther defence, but, looking at Burley with a grin of deadly hatred, exclaimed—"Base peasant churl, thou hast spilt the blood of a line of kings!"

"Die, wretch!—die!" said Balfour, redoubling the thrust with better aim; and, setting his foot on Bothwell's body as he fell, he a third time transfixed him with his sword.—"Die, bloodthirsty dog! die as thou hast lived!—die, like the beasts that perish—hoping nothing—believing nothing—"

"And fearing nothing!" said Bothwell, collecting the last effort of respiration to utter these desperate words, and expiring as soon as they were spoken.

To catch a stray horse by the bridle, throw himself upon it, and rush to the assistance of his followers, was, with Burley, the affair of a moment. And as the fall of Bothwell had given to the insurgents all the courage of which it had deprived his comrades, the issue of this partial contest did not remain long undecided. Several soldiers were slain, the rest driven back over the morass and dispersed, and the victorious Burley, with his party, crossed it in their turn, to direct against Claverhouse the very manoeuvre which he had instructed Bothwell to execute. He now put his troop in order, with the view of attacking the right wing of the royalists; and, sending news of his success to the main body, exhorted them, in the name of Heaven, to cross the marsh, and work out the glorious work of the Lord by a general attack upon the enemy.

Meanwhile, Claverhouse, who had in some degree remedied the confusion occasioned by the first irregular and unsuccessful attack, and reduced the combat in front to a distant skirmish with firearms, chiefly maintained by some dismounted troopers whom he had posted behind the cover of the shrub-by copses of alders, which in some places covered the edge of the morass, and whose close, cool, and well-aimed fire greatly annoyed the enemy, and concealed their own deficiency of numbers,—Claverhouse, while he maintained the contest in this manner, still expecting that a diversion by Bothwell and his party might facilitate a general attack, was accosted by one of the dragoons, whose bloody face and jaded horse bore witness he was come from hard service.

"What is the matter, Halliday?" said Claverhouse, for he knew every man in his regiment by name—"Where is Bothwell?"

"Bothwell is down," replied Halliday, "and many a pretty fellow with him."

"Then the king," said Claverhouse, with his usual composure, "has lost a stout soldier.—The enemy have passed the marsh, I suppose?"

"With a strong body of horse, commanded by the devil incarnate that killed Bothwell," answered the terrified soldier.

"Hush! hush!" said Claverhouse, putting his finger on his lips, "not a word to any one but me.—Lord Evandale, we must retreat. The fates will have it so. Draw together the men that are dispersed in the skirmishing work. Let Allan form the regiment, and do you two retreat up the hill in two bodies, each halting alternately as the other falls back. I'll keep the rogues in check with the rear-guard, making a stand and facing from time to time. They will be over the ditch presently, for I see their whole line in motion and preparing to cross; therefore lose no time."

"Where is Bothwell with his party?" said Lord Evandale, astonished at the coolness of his commander.

"Fairly disposed of," said Claverhouse, in his ear—"the king has lost a servant, and the devil has got one. But away to business, Evandale—ply your spurs and get the men together. Allan and you must keep them steady. This retreating is new work for us all; but our turn will come round another day."

Evandale and Allan betook themselves to their task; but ere they had arranged the regiment for the purpose of retreating in two alternate bodies, a considerable number of the enemy had crossed the marsh. Claverhouse, who had retained immediately around his person a few of his most active and tried men, charged

those who had crossed in person, while they were yet disordered by the broken ground. Some they killed, others they repulsed into the morass, and checked the whole so as to enable the main body, now greatly diminished, as well as disheartened by the loss they had sustained, to commence their retreat up the hill. But the enemy's van being soon reinforced and supported, compelled Claverhouse to follow his troops. Never did man, however, better maintain the character of a soldier than he did that day. Conspicuous by his black horse and white feather, he was first in the repeated charges which he made at every favourable opportunity, to arrest the progress of the pursuers, and to cover the retreat of his regiment. The object of aim to every one, he seemed as if he were impassive to their shot. The superstitious fanatics, who looked upon him as a man gifted by the Evil Spirit with supernatural means of defence, averred that they saw the bullets recoil from his jack-boots and buff-coat like hailstones from a rock of granite, as he galloped to and fro amid the storm of the battle. Many a whig that day loaded his musket with a dollar cut into slugs, in order that a silver bullet (such was their belief) might bring down the persecutor of the holy kirk, on whom lead had no power.

"Try him with the cold steel," was the cry at every renewed charge—"powder is wasted on him. Ye might as weel shoot at the Auld Enemy himsell."

[Note: Proof against Shot given by Satan. The belief of the Covenanters that their principal enemies, and Claverhouse in particular, had obtained from the Devil a charm which rendered them proof against leaden bullets, led them to pervert even the circumstances of his death. Howie of Lochgoin, after giving some account of the battle of Killcrankie, adds:

"The battle was very bloody, and by Mackay's third fire, Claverhouse fell, of whom historians give little account; but it has been said for certain, that his own waiting-servant, taking a resolution to rid the world of this truculent bloody monster, and knowing he had proof of lead, shot him with a silver button he had before taken off his own coat for that purpose. However, he fell, and with him Popery, and King James's interest in Scotland."—God's Judgment on Persecutors, p. xxxix.

Original note.—"Perhaps some may think this anent proof of a shot a paradox, and be ready to object here, as formerly, concerning Bishop Sharpe and Dalziel—"How can the Devil have or give a power to save life?" Without entering upon the thing in its reality, I shall only observe, 1st, That it is neither in his power, or of his nature, to be a saviour of men's lives; he is called Apollyon the destroyer. 2d, That even in this case he is said only to give enchantment against one kind of metal, and this does not save life: for the lead would not take Sharpe or Claverhouse's lives, yet steel and silver would do it; and for Dalziel, though he died not on the field, he did not escape the arrows of the Almighty."—Ibidem.]

But though this was loudly shouted, yet the awe on the insurgents' minds was such, that they gave way before Claverhouse as before a supernatural being, and few men ventured to cross swords with him. Still, however, he was fighting in retreat, and with all the disadvantages attending that movement. The soldiers behind him, as they beheld the increasing number of enemies who poured over the morass, became unsteady; and, at every successive movement, Major Allan and Lord Evandale found it more and more difficult to bring them to halt and form line regularly, while, on the other hand, their motions in the act of retreating became, by degrees, much more rapid than was consistent with good order. As the retiring soldiers approached nearer to the top of the ridge, from which in so luckless an hour they had descended, the panic began to increase. Every one became impatient to place the brow of the hill between him and the continued fire of the pursuers; nor could any individual think it reasonable that he should be the last in the retreat, and thus sacrifice his own safety for that of others. In this mood, several troopers set spurs to their horses and fled outright, and the others became so unsteady in their movements and formations, that their officers every moment feared they would follow the same example.

Amid this scene of blood and confusion, the trampling of the horses, the groans of the wounded, the continued fire of the enemy, which fell in a succession of unintermitted musketry, while loud shouts accompanied each bullet which the fall of a trooper showed to have been successfully aimed—amid all the terrors and disorders of such a scene, and when it was dubious how soon they might be totally deserted by their dispirited soldiery, Evandale could not forbear remarking the composure of his commanding officer. Not at Lady Margaret's breakfast-table that morning did his eye appear more lively, or his demeanour more composed. He had closed up to Evandale for the purpose of giving some orders, and picking out a few men to reinforce his rear-guard.

"If this bout lasts five minutes longer," he said, in a whisper, "our rogues will leave you, my lord, old Allan, and myself, the honour of fighting this battle with our own hands. I must do something to disperse the musketeers who annoy them so hard, or we shall be all shamed. Don't attempt to succour me if you see me go down, but keep at the head of your men; get off as you can, in God's name, and tell the king and the council I died in my duty!"

So saying, and commanding about twenty stout men to follow him, he gave, with this small body, a charge so desperate and unexpected, that he drove the foremost of the pursuers back to some distance. In the confusion of the assault he singled out Burley, and, desirous to strike terror into his followers, he dealt him so severe a blow on the head, as cut through his steel head-piece, and threw him from his horse, stunned for the moment, though unwounded. A wonderful thing it was afterwards thought, that one so powerful as Balfour should have sunk under the blow of a man, to appearance so slightly made as Claverhouse; and the vulgar, of course, set down to supernatural aid the effect of that energy, which a determined spirit can give to a feeble arm. Claverhouse had, in this last charge, however, involved himself too deeply among the insurgents, and was fairly surrounded.

Lord Evandale saw the danger of his commander, his body of dragoons being then halted, while that commanded by Allan was in the act of retreating. Regardless of Claverhouse's disinterested command to the contrary, he ordered the party which he headed to charge down hill and extricate their Colonel. Some advanced with him—most halted and stood uncertain—many ran away. With those who followed Evandale, he disengaged Claverhouse. His assistance just came in time, for a rustic had wounded his horse in a most ghastly manner by the blow of a scythe, and was about to repeat the stroke when Lord Evandale cut him down. As they got out of the press, they looked round them. Allan's division had ridden clear over the hill, that officer's authority having proved altogether unequal to halt them. Evandale's troop was scattered and in total confusion.

"What is to be done, Colonel?" said Lord Evandale.

"We are the last men in the field, I think," said Claverhouse; "and when men fight as long as they can, there is no shame in flying. Hector himself would say, 'Devil take the hindmost,' when there are but twenty against a thousand.—Save yourselves, my lads, and rally as soon as you can.—Come, my lord, we must e'en ride for it."

So saying, he put spurs to his wounded horse; and the generous animal, as if conscious that the life of his rider depended on his exertions, pressed forward with speed, unabated either by pain or loss of blood.

[Note: Claverhouse's Charger. It appears, from the letter of Claverhouse afterwards quoted, that the horse on which he rode at Drumclog was not black, but sorrel. The author has been misled as to the colour by the many extraordinary traditions current in Scotland concerning Claverhouse's famous black charger, which was generally believed to have been a gift to its rider from the Author of Evil, who is said to have performed the Caesarean operation upon its dam. This horse was so fleet, and its rider so expert, that they are said to have outstripped and coted, or turned, a hare upon the Bran-Law, near the head of Moffat Water, where the descent is so precipitous, that no merely earthly horse could keep its feet, or merely mortal rider could keep the saddle.

There is a curious passage in the testimony of John Dick, one of the suffering Presbyterians, in which the author, by describing each of the persecutors by their predominant qualities or passions, shows how little their best-loved attributes would avail them in the great day of judgment. When he introduces Claverhouse, it is to reproach him with his passion for horses in general, and for that steed in particular, which was killed at Drumclog, in the manner described in the text:

"As for that bloodthirsty wretch, Claverhouse, how thinks he to shelter himself that day? Is it possible the pitiful thing can be so mad as to think to secure himself by the fleetness of his horse, (a creature he has so much respect for, that he regarded more the loss of his horse at Drumclog, than all the men that fell there, and sure there fell prettier men on either side than himself?) No, sure—could he fall upon a chemist that could extract the spirit out of all the horses in the world, and infuse them into his one, though he were on that horse never so well mounted, he need not dream of escaping."—The Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland, as it was left in write by that truly pious and eminently faithful, and now glorified Martyr, Mr John Dick. To which is added, his last Speech and Behaviour on the Scaffold, on 5th March, 1684, which day he sealed this testimony. 57 pp. 4to. No year or place of publication.

The reader may perhaps receive some farther information on the subject of Cornet Grahame's death and the flight of Claverhouse, from the following Latin lines, a part of a poem entitled, *Bellum Bothuellianum*, by Andrew Guild, which exists in manuscript in the Advocates' Library.]

A few officers and soldiers followed him, but in a very irregular and tumultuary manner. The flight of Claverhouse was the signal for all the stragglers, who yet offered desultory resistance, to fly as fast as they could, and yield up the field of battle to the victorious insurgents.

CHAPTER XVII.

But see! through the fast-flashing lightnings of war,
What steed to the desert flies frantic and far?

Campbell.

During the severe skirmish of which we have given the details, Morton, together with Cuddie and his mother, and the Reverend Gabriel Kettledrummle, remained on the brow of the hill, near to the small cairn, or barrow, beside which Claverhouse had held his preliminary council of war, so that they had a commanding view of the action which took place in the bottom. They were guarded by Corporal Inglis and four soldiers, who, as may readily be supposed, were much more intent on watching the fluctuating fortunes of the battle, than in attending to what passed among their prisoners.

"If you lads stand to their tackle," said Cuddie, "we'll hae some chance o' getting our necks out o' the brecham again; but I misdoubt them—they hae little skeel o' arms."

"Much is not necessary, Cuddie," answered Morton; "they have a strong position, and weapons in their hands, and are more than three times the number of their assailants. If they cannot fight for their freedom now, they and theirs deserve to lose it for ever."

"O, sirs," exclaimed Mause, "here's a goodly spectacle indeed! My spirit is like that of the blessed Elihu, it burns within me—my bowels are as wine which lacketh vent—they are ready to burst like new bottles. O, that He may look after His ain people in this day of judgment and deliverance!—And now, what ailest thou, precious Mr Gabriel Kettledrummle? I say, what ailest thou, that wert a Nazarite purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than sulphur," (meaning, perhaps, sapphires,)—"I say, what ails thee now, that thou art blacker than a coal, that thy beauty is departed, and thy loveliness withered like a dry potsherd? Surely it is time to be up and be doing, to cry loudly and to spare not, and to wrestle for the puir lads that are yonder testifying with their ain blude and that of their enemies."

This expostulation implied a reproach on Mr Kettledrummle, who, though an absolute Boanerges, or son of thunder, in the pulpit, when the enemy were afar, and indeed sufficiently contumacious, as we have seen, when in their power, had been struck dumb by the firing, shouts, and shrieks, which now arose from the valley, and—as many an honest man might have been, in a situation where he could neither fight nor fly—was too much dismayed to take so favourable an opportunity to preach the terrors of presbytery, as the courageous Mause had expected at his hand, or even to pray for the successful event of the battle. His presence of mind was not, however, entirely lost, any more than his jealous respect for his reputation as a pure and powerful preacher of the word.

"Hold your peace, woman!" he said, "and do not perturb my inward meditations and the wrestlings wherewith I wrestle.—But of a verity the shooting of the foemen doth begin to increase! peradventure, some pellet may attain unto us even here. Lo! I will ensconce me behind the cairn, as behind a strong wall of defence."

"He's but a coward body after a'," said Cuddie, who was himself by no means deficient in that sort of courage which consists in insensibility to danger; "he's but a daidling coward body. He'll never fill Rumbleberry's bonnet.—Odd! Rumbleberry fought and flyted like a fleeing dragon. It was a great pity, puir man, he couldna

cheat the woodie. But they say he gaed singing and rejoicing till't, just as I wad gang to a bicker o' brose, supposing me hungry, as I stand a gude chance to be.—Eh, sirs! yon's an awfu' sight, and yet ane canna keep their een aff frae it!"

Accordingly, strong curiosity on the part of Morton and Cuddie, together with the heated enthusiasm of old Mause, detained them on the spot from which they could best hear and see the issue of the action, leaving to Kettledrummy to occupy alone his place of security. The vicissitudes of combat, which we have already described, were witnessed by our spectators from the top of the eminence, but without their being able positively to determine to what they tended. That the presbyterians defended themselves stoutly was evident from the heavy smoke, which, illumined by frequent flashes of fire, now eddied along the valley, and hid the contending parties in its sulphureous shade. On the other hand, the continued firing from the nearer side of the morass indicated that the enemy persevered in their attack, that the affair was fiercely disputed, and that every thing was to be apprehended from a continued contest in which undisciplined rustics had to repel the assaults of regular troops, so completely officered and armed.

At length horses, whose caparisons showed that they belonged to the Life-Guards, began to fly masterless out of the confusion. Dismounted soldiers next appeared, forsaking the conflict, and straggling over the side of the hill, in order to escape from the scene of action. As the numbers of these fugitives increased, the fate of the day seemed no longer doubtful. A large body was then seen emerging from the smoke, forming irregularly on the hill-side, and with difficulty kept stationary by their officers, until Evandale's corps also appeared in full retreat. The result of the conflict was then apparent, and the joy of the prisoners was corresponding to their approaching deliverance.

"They hae dune the job for anes," said Cuddie, "an they ne'er do't again."

"They flee!—they flee!" exclaimed Mause, in ecstasy. "O, the truculent tyrants! they are riding now as they never rode before. O, the false Egyptians—the proud Assyrians—the Philistines—the Moabites—the Edomites—the Ishmaelites!—The Lord has brought sharp swords upon them, to make them food for the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the field. See how the clouds roll, and the fire flashes ahint them, and goes forth before the chosen of the Covenant, e'en like the pillar o' cloud and the pillar o' flame that led the people of Israel out o' the land of Egypt! This is indeed a day of deliverance to the righteous, a day of pouring out of wrath to the persecutors and the ungodly!"

"Lord save us, mither," said Cuddie, "haud the clavering tongue o' ye, and lie down ahint the cairn, like Kettledrummy, honest man! The whigamore bullets ken unco little discretion, and will just as sune knock out the harns o' a psalm-singing auld wife as a swearing dragoon."

"Fear naething for me, Cuddie," said the old dame, transported to ecstasy by the success of her party; "fear naething for me! I will stand, like Deborah, on the tap o' the cairn, and tak up my sang o' reproach against these men of Harosheth of the Gentiles, whose horse-hoofs are broken by their prancing."

The enthusiastic old woman would, in fact, have accomplished her purpose, of mounting on the cairn, and becoming, as she said, a sign and a banner to the people, had not Cuddie, with more filial tenderness than respect, detained her by such force as his shackled arms would permit him to exert.

"Eh, sirs!" he said, having accomplished this task, "look out yonder, Milnwood; saw ye ever mortal fight like the deevil Claver'se?—Yonder he's been thrice doun amang them, and thrice cam free aff.—But I think we'll soon be free ourselfs, Milnwood. Inglis and his troopers look ower their shouthers very often, as if they liked the road ahint them better than the road afore."

Cuddie was not mistaken; for, when the main tide of fugitives passed at a little distance from the spot where they were stationed, the corporal and his party fired their carabines at random upon the advancing insurgents, and, abandoning all charge of their prisoners, joined the retreat of their comrades. Morton and the old woman, whose hands were at liberty, lost no time in undoing the bonds of Cuddie and of the clergyman, both of whom had been secured by a cord tied round their arms above the elbows. By the time this was accomplished, the rear-guard of the dragoons, which still preserved some order, passed beneath the hillock or rising ground which was surmounted by the cairn already repeatedly mentioned. They exhibited all the hurry and confusion incident to a forced retreat, but still continued in a body. Claverhouse led the van, his naked sword deeply dyed with blood, as were his face and clothes. His horse was all covered with gore, and now reeled with weakness. Lord Evandale, in not much better plight, brought up the rear, still exhorting the soldiers to keep together and fear nothing. Several of the men were wounded, and one or two dropped from their horses as they surmounted the hill.

Mause's zeal broke forth once more at this spectacle, while she stood on the heath with her head uncovered, and her grey hairs streaming in the wind, no bad representation of a superannuated bacchante, or Thessalian witch in the agonies of incantation. She soon discovered Claverhouse at the head of the fugitive party, and exclaimed with bitter irony, "Tarry, tarry, ye wha were aye sae blithe to be at the meetings of the saints, and wad ride every muir in Scotland to find a conventicle! Wilt thou not tarry, now thou hast found ane? Wilt thou not stay for one word mair? Wilt thou na bide the afternoon preaching?—Wae betide ye!" she said, suddenly changing her tone, "and cut the houghs of the creature whase fleetness ye trust in!—Sheugh—sheugh!—awa wi'ye, that hae spilled sae muckle blude, and now wad save your ain—awa wi'ye for a railing Rabshakeh, a cursing Shimei, a bloodthirsty Doeg!—The swords drawn now that winna be lang o' o'ertaking ye, ride as fast as ye will."

Claverhouse, it may be easily supposed, was too busy to attend to her reproaches, but hastened over the hill, anxious to get the remnant of his men out of gunshot, in hopes of again collecting the fugitives round his standard. But as the rear of his followers rode over the ridge, a shot struck Lord Evandale's horse, which instantly sunk down dead beneath him. Two of the whig horsemen, who were the foremost in the pursuit, hastened up with the purpose of killing him, for hitherto there had been no quarter given. Morton, on the other hand, rushed forward to save his life, if possible, in order at once to indulge his natural generosity, and to requite the obligation which Lord Evandale had conferred on him that morning, and under which circumstances had made him wince so acutely. Just as he had assisted Evandale, who was much wounded, to extricate himself from his dying horse, and to gain his feet, the two horsemen came up, and one of them exclaiming, "Have at the red-coated tyrant!" made a blow at the young nobleman, which Morton parried with difficulty, exclaiming to the rider, who was no other than Burley himself, "Give quarter to this gentleman, for my sake—for the sake," he added, observing that Burley did not immediately recognise him, "of Henry Morton, who so lately sheltered you."

"Henry Morton?" replied Burley, wiping his bloody brow with his bloodier hand; "did I not say that the son of Silas Morton would come forth out of the land of bondage, nor be long an indweller in the tents of Ham? Thou art a brand snatched out of the burning—But for this booted apostle of prelacy, he shall die the death!—We must smite them hip and thigh, even from the rising to the going down of the sun. It is our commission to slay them like Amalek, and utterly destroy all they have, and spare neither man nor woman, infant nor suckling; therefore, hinder me not," he continued, endeavouring again to cut down Lord Evandale, "for this work must not be wrought negligently."

"You must not, and you shall not, slay him, more especially while incapable of defence," said Morton, planting himself before Lord Evandale so as to intercept any blow that should be aimed at him; "I owed my life to him this morning—my life, which was endangered solely by my having sheltered you; and to shed his blood when he can offer no effectual resistance, were not only a cruelty abhorrent to God and man, but detestable ingratitude both to him and to me."

Burley paused.—"Thou art yet," he said, "in the court of the Gentiles, and I compassionate thy human blindness and frailty. Strong meat is not fit for babes, nor the mighty and grinding dispensation under which I draw my sword, for those whose hearts are yet dwelling in huts of clay, whose footsteps are tangled in the mesh of mortal sympathies, and who clothe themselves in the righteousness that is as filthy rags. But to gain a soul to the truth is better than to send one to Tophet; therefore I give quarter to this youth, providing the grant is confirmed by the general council of God's army, whom he hath this day blessed with so signal a deliverance.—Thou art unarmed—Abide my return here. I must yet pursue these sinners, the Amalekites, and destroy them till they be utterly consumed from the face of the land, even from Havilah unto Shur."

So saying, he set spurs to his horse, and continued to pursue the chase.

"Cuddie," said Morton, "for God's sake catch a horse as quickly as you can. I will not trust Lord Evandale's life with these obdurate men.—You are wounded, my lord.—Are you able to continue your retreat?" he continued, addressing himself to his prisoner, who, half-stunned by the fall, was but beginning to recover himself.

"I think so," replied Lord Evandale. "But is it possible?—Do I owe my life to Mr Morton?"

"My interference would have been the same from common humanity," replied Morton; "to your lordship it was a sacred debt of gratitude."

Cuddie at this instant returned with a horse.

"God-sake, munt—munt, and ride like a fleeing hawk, my lord," said the good-natured fellow, "for ne'er be in me, if they arena killing every ane o' the wounded and prisoners!"

Lord Evandale mounted the horse, while Cuddie officiously held the stirrup.

"Stand off, good fellow, thy courtesy may cost thy life.—Mr Morton," he continued, addressing Henry, "this makes us more than even—rely on it, I will never forget your generosity—Farewell."

He turned his horse, and rode swiftly away in the direction which seemed least exposed to pursuit.

Lord Evandale had just rode off, when several of the insurgents, who were in the front of the pursuit, came up, denouncing vengeance on Henry Morton and Cuddie for having aided the escape of a Philistine, as they called the young nobleman.

"What wad ye hae had us to do?" cried Cuddie. "Had we aught to stop a man wi' that had twa pistols and a sword? Sudna ye hae come faster up yoursells, instead of flyting at huz?"

This excuse would hardly have passed current; but Kettledrummle, who now awoke from his trance of terror, and was known to, and revered by, most of the wanderers, together with Mause, who possessed their appropriate language as well as the preacher himself, proved active and effectual intercessors.

"Touch them not, harm them not," exclaimed Kettledrummle, in his very best double-bass tones; "this is the son of the famous Silas Morton, by whom the Lord wrought great things in this land at the breaking forth of the reformation from prelacy, when there was a plentiful pouring forth of the Word and a renewing of the Covenant; a hero and champion of those blessed days, when there was power and efficacy, and convincing and converting of sinners, and heart-exercises, and fellowships of saints, and a plentiful flowing forth of the spices of the garden of Eden."

"And this is my son Cuddie," exclaimed Mause, in her turn, "the son of his father, Judden Headrigg, wha was a douce honest man, and of me, Mause Middlemas, an unworthy professor and follower of the pure gospel, and ane o' your ain folk. Is it not written, 'Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites?' Numbers, fourth and aughteenth—O! sirs! dinna be standing here prattling wi' honest folk, when ye suld be following forth your victory with which Providence has blessed ye."

This party having passed on, they were immediately beset by another, to whom it was necessary to give the same explanation. Kettledrummle, whose fear was much dissipated since the firing had ceased, again took upon him to be intercessor, and grown bold, as he felt his good word necessary for the protection of his late fellow-captives, he laid claim to no small share of the merit of the victory, appealing to Morton and Cuddie, whether the tide of battle had not turned while he prayed on the Mount of Jehovah-Nissi, like Moses, that Israel might prevail over Amalek; but granting them, at the same time, the credit of holding up his hands when they waxed heavy, as those of the prophet were supported by Aaron and Hur. It seems probable that Kettledrummle allotted this part in the success to his companions in adversity, lest they should be tempted to disclose his carnal self-seeking and falling away, in regarding too closely his own personal safety. These strong testimonies in favour of the liberated captives quickly flew abroad, with many exaggerations, among the victorious army. The reports on the subject were various; but it was universally agreed, that young Morton of Milnwood, the son of the stout soldier of the Covenant, Silas Morton, together with the precious Gabriel Kettledrummle, and a singular devout Christian woman, whom many thought as good as himself at extracting a doctrine or an use, whether of terror or consolation, had arrived to support the good old cause, with a reinforcement of a hundred well-armed men from the Middle Ward.

[Note: Skirmish at Drumclog. This affair, the only one in which

Claverhouse was defeated, or the insurgent Cameronians successful, was fought pretty much in the manner mentioned in the text. The Royalists lost about thirty or forty men. The commander of the Presbyterian, or rather Covenanting party, was Mr Robert Hamilton, of the honourable House of Preston, brother of Sir William Hamilton, to whose title and estate he afterwards succeeded; but, according to his biographer, Howie of Lochgoin, he never took possession of either, as he could not do so without acknowledging the right of King William (an uncovenanted monarch) to the crown. Hamilton had been bred by Bishop Burnet, while the latter lived at Glasgow; his brother, Sir Thomas, having married a sister of that historian. "He was then," says the Bishop, "a lively, hopeful young man; but getting into that company, and into their notions, he became a crack-brained enthusiast."

Several well-meaning persons have been much scandalized at the manner in which the victors are said to have conducted themselves towards the prisoners at Drumclog. But the principle of these poor fanatics, (I mean the high-flying, or Cameronian party,) was to obtain not merely toleration for their church, but the same supremacy which Presbytery had acquired in Scotland after the treaty of Rippon, betwixt Charles I. and his Scottish subjects, in 1640.

The fact is, that they conceived themselves a chosen people, sent forth to extirpate the heathen, like the Jews of old, and under a similar charge to show no quarter.

The historian of the Insurrection of Bothwell makes the following explicit avowal of the principles on which their General acted:—

"Mr Hamilton discovered a great deal of bravery and valour, both in the conflict with, and pursuit of, the enemy; but when he and some other were pursuing the enemy, others flew too greedily upon the spoil, small as it was, instead of pursuing the victory; and some, without Mr Hamilton's knowledge, and directly contrary to his express command, gave five of those bloody enemies quarter, and then let them go; this greatly grieved Mr Hamilton when he saw some of Babel's brats spared, after that the Lord had delivered them into their hands, that they might dash them against the stones. Psalm cxxxvii., 9. In his own account of this, he reckons the sparing of

these enemies, and letting them go, to be among their first steppings aside, for which he feared that the Lord would not honour them to do much more for him; and says, that he was neither for taking favours from, nor giving favours to, the Lord's enemies." See A true and impartial Account of the persecuted Presbyterians in Scotland, their being in arms, and defeat at Bothwell Brigg, in 1679, by William Wilson, late Schoolmaster in the parish of Douglas. The reader who would authenticate the quotation, must not consult any other edition than that of 1697; for somehow or other the publisher of the last edition has omitted this remarkable part of the narrative.

Sir Robert Hamilton himself felt neither remorse nor shame for having put to death one of the prisoners after the battle with his own hand, which appears to have been a charge against him, by some whose fanaticism was less exalted than his own.

"As for that accusation they bring against me of killing that poor man (as they call him) at Drumclog, I may easily guess that my accusers can be no other but some of the house of Saul or Shimei, or some such risen again to espouse that poor gentleman (Saul) his quarrel against honest Samuel, for his offering to kill that poor man Agag, after the king's giving him quarter. But I, being to command that day, gave out the word that no quarter should be given; and returning from pursuing Claverhouse, one or two of these fellows were standing in the midst of a company of our friends, and some were debating for quarter, others against it. None could blame me to decide the controversy, and I bless the Lord for it to this day. There were five more that without my knowledge got quarter, who were brought to me after we were a mile from the place as having got quarter, which I reckoned among the first steppings aside; and seeing that spirit amongst us at that time, I then told it to some that were with me, (to my best remembrance, it was honest old John Nisbet,) that I feared the Lord would not honour us to do much more for him. I shall only say this,—I desire to bless his holy name, that since ever he helped me to set my face to his work, I never had, nor would take, a favour from enemies, either on right or left hand, and desired to give as few."

The preceding passage is extracted from a long vindication of his own conduct, sent by Sir Robert Hamilton, 7th December, 1685, addressed to the anti-Popish, anti-Prelatic, anti-Erastian, anti-sectarian true Presbyterian remnant of the Church of Scotland; and the substance is to be found in the work or collection, called, "Faithful Contendings Displayed, collected and transcribed by John Howie."

As the skirmish of Drumclog has been of late the subject of some enquiry, the reader may be curious to see Claverhouse's own account of the affair, in a letter to the Earl of Linlithgow, written immediately after the action. This gazette, as it may be called, occurs in the volume called Dundee's Letters, printed by Mr Smythe of Methven, as a contribution to the Bannatyne Club. The original is in the library of the Duke of Buckingham. Claverhouse, it may be observed, spells like a chambermaid.

"FOR THE EARLE OF LINLITHGOW. [COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF KING CHARLES II.'s FORCES IN SCOTLAND.]

"Glasgow, Jun. the 1, 1679.

"My Lord,—Upon Saturday's night, when my Lord Rosse came into this place, I marched out, and because of the insolency that had been done tue nights before at Ruglen, I went thither and inquired for the names. So soon as I got them, I sent our partys to sease on them, and found not only three of those rogues, but also ane intercomend minister called King. We had them at Strevan about six in the morning yesterday, and resolving to convey them to this, I thought that we might make a little tour to see if we could fall upon a conventicle; which we did, little to our advantage; for when we came in sight of them, we found them drawn up in batell, upon a most advantageous ground, to which there was no coming but through

mosses and lakes. They wer not preaching, and had got away all there women and shildring. They consisted of four battaillons of foot, and all well armed with fusils and pitchforks, and three squadrons of horse. We sent both partys to skirmish, they of foot and we of dragoons; they run for it, and sent down a battaillon of foot against them; we sent threescore of dragoons, who made them run again shamfully; but in end they percaiving that we had the better of them in skirmish, they resolved a generall engadgment, and imediately advanced with there foot, the horse folowing; they came throught the lotche; the greatest body of all made up against my troupe; we kepted our fyre till they wer within ten pace of us: they recaived our fyr, and advanced to shok; the first they gave us broght down the Coronet Mr Crafford and Captain Bleith, besides that with a pitchfork they made such an openeing in my rone horse's belly, that his guts hung out half an elle, and yet he caryed me af an myl; which so discouraged our men, that they sustained not the shok, but fell into disorder. There horse took the occasion of this, and purseued us so hotly that we had no tym to rayly. I saved the standarts, but lost on the place about aight or ten men, besides wounded; but he dragoons lost many mor. They ar not com esily af on the other side, for I sawe severall of them fall befor we cam to the shok. I mad the best retraite the confusion of our people would suffer, and I am now laying with my Lord Rosse. The toun of Streven drew up as we was making our retrait, and thought of a pass to cut us off, but we took courage and fell to them, made them run, leaving a dousain on the place. What these rogues will dou yet I know not, but the contry was flocking to them from all hands. This may be counted the begining of the rebellion, in my opinion.

"I am, my lord,

"Your lordship's most humble servant,

"J. Grahame.

"My lord, I am so wearied, and so sleepy, that I have wryton this very confusedly."]

CHAPTER IIXX

When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
Was beat with fist instead of a stick.
Hudibras.

In the meantime, the insurgent cavalry returned from the pursuit, jaded and worn out with their unwonted efforts, and the infantry assembled on the ground which they had won, fatigued with toil and hunger. Their success, however, was a cordial to every bosom, and seemed even to serve in the stead of food and refreshment. It was, indeed, much more brilliant than they durst have ventured to anticipate; for, with no great loss on their part, they had totally routed a regiment of picked men, commanded by the first officer in Scotland, and one whose very name had long been a terror to them. Their success seemed even to have upon their spirits the effect of a sudden and violent surprise, so much had their taking up arms been a measure of desperation rather than of hope. Their meeting was also casual, and they had hastily arranged themselves under such commanders as were remarkable for zeal and courage, without much respect to any other qualities. It followed, from this state of disorganization, that the whole army appeared at once to resolve itself into a general committee for considering what steps were to be taken in consequence of their success, and no opinion could be started so wild that it had not some favourers and advocates. Some proposed they should march to Glasgow, some to Hamilton, some to Edinburgh, some to London. Some were for sending a deputation of their number to London to convert Charles II. to a sense of the error of his ways; and others, less charitable, proposed either to call a new successor to the crown, or to declare Scotland a free republic. A free parliament of the nation, and a free assembly of the Kirk, were the objects of the more sensible and moderate of the party. In the meanwhile, a clamour arose among the soldiers for bread and other necessities, and while all complained of hardship and hunger, none took the necessary measures to procure supplies. In short, the camp of the Covenanters, even in the very moment of success, seemed about to dissolve like a rope of sand, from want of the original principles of combination and union.

Burley, who had now returned from the pursuit, found his followers in this distracted state. With the ready talent of one accustomed to encounter exigences, he proposed, that one hundred of the freshest men should be drawn out for duty—that a small number of those who had hitherto acted as leaders, should constitute a committee of direction until officers should be regularly chosen—and that, to crown the victory, Gabriel Kettledrummle should be called upon to improve the providential success which they had obtained, by a word in season addressed to the army. He reckoned very much, and not without reason, on this last expedient, as a means of engaging the attention of the bulk of the insurgents, while he himself, and two or three of their leaders, held a private council of war, undisturbed by the discordant opinions, or senseless clamour, of the general body.

Kettledrummle more than answered the expectations of Burley. Two mortal hours did he preach at a breathing; and certainly no lungs, or doctrine, excepting his own, could have kept up, for so long a time, the attention of men in such precarious circumstances. But he possessed in perfection a sort of rude and familiar eloquence peculiar to the preachers of that period, which, though it would have been fastidiously rejected by an audience which possessed any portion of taste, was a cake of the right leaven for the palates of those whom he now addressed. His text was from the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

"And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

The discourse which he pronounced upon this subject was divided into fifteen heads, each of which was garnished with seven uses of application, two of consolation, two of terror, two declaring the causes of backsliding and of wrath, and one announcing the promised and expected deliverance. The first part of his text he applied to his own deliverance and that of his companions; and took occasion to speak a few words in praise of young Milnwood, of whom, as of a

champion of the Covenant, he augured great things. The second part he applied to the punishments which were about to fall upon the persecuting government. At times he was familiar and colloquial; now he was loud, energetic, and boisterous;—some parts of his discourse might be called sublime, and others sunk below burlesque. Occasionally he vindicated with great animation the right of every freeman to worship God according to his own conscience; and presently he charged the guilt and misery of the people on the awful negligence of their rulers, who had not only failed to establish presbytery as the national religion, but had tolerated sectaries of various descriptions, Papists, Prelatists, Erastians, assuming the name of Presbyterians, Independents, Socinians, and Quakers: all of whom Kettledrummle proposed, by one sweeping act, to expel from the land, and thus re-edify in its integrity the beauty of the sanctuary. He next handled very pithily the doctrine of defensive arms and of resistance to Charles II., observing, that, instead of a nursing father to the Kirk, that monarch had been a nursing father to none but his own bastards. He went at some length through the life and conversation of that joyous prince, few parts of which, it must be owned, were qualified to stand the rough handling of so uncourtly an orator, who conferred on him the hard names of Jeroboam, Omri, Ahab, Shallum, Pekah, and every other evil monarch recorded in the Chronicles, and concluded with a round application of the Scripture, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the King it is provided: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

Kettledrummle had no sooner ended his sermon, and descended from the huge rock which had served him for a pulpit, than his post was occupied by a pastor of a very different description. The reverend Gabriel was advanced in years, somewhat corpulent, with a loud voice, a square face, and a set of stupid and unanimated features, in which the body seemed more to predominate over the spirit than was seemly in a sound divine. The youth who succeeded him in exhorting this extraordinary convocation, Ephraim Macbriar by name, was hardly twenty years old; yet his thin features already indicated, that a constitution, naturally hectic, was worn out by vigils, by fasts, by the rigour of imprisonment, and the fatigues incident to a fugitive life. Young as he was, he had been twice imprisoned for several months, and suffered many severities, which gave him great influence with those of his own sect. He threw his faded eyes over the multitude and over the scene of battle; and a light of triumph arose in his glance, his pale yet striking features were coloured with a transient and hectic blush of joy. He folded his hands, raised his face to heaven, and seemed lost in mental prayer and thanksgiving ere he addressed the people. When he spoke, his faint and broken voice seemed at first inadequate to express his conceptions. But the deep silence of the assembly, the eagerness with which the ear gathered every word, as the famished Israelites collected the heavenly manna, had a corresponding effect upon the preacher himself. His words became more distinct, his manner more earnest and energetic; it seemed as if religious zeal was triumphing over bodily weakness and infirmity. His natural eloquence was not altogether untainted with the coarseness of his sect; and yet, by the influence of a good natural taste, it was freed from the grosser and more ludicrous errors of his contemporaries; and the language of Scripture, which, in their mouths, was sometimes degraded by misapplication, gave, in Macbriar's exhortation, a rich and solemn effect, like that which is produced by the beams of the sun streaming through the storied representation of saints and martyrs on the Gothic window of some ancient cathedral.

He painted the desolation of the church, during the late period of her distresses, in the most affecting colours. He described her, like Hagar watching the waning life of her infant amid the fountainless desert; like Judah, under her palm-tree, mourning for the devastation of her temple; like Rachel, weeping for her children and refusing comfort. But he chiefly rose into rough sublimity when addressing the men yet reeking from battle. He called on them to remember the great things which God had done for them, and to persevere in the career which their victory had opened.

"Your garments are dyed—but not with the juice of the wine-press; your swords are filled with blood," he exclaimed, "but not with the blood of goats or lambs; the dust of the desert on which ye stand is made fat with gore, but not with the blood of bullocks, for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. These were not the firstlings of the flock, the small cattle of burnt-offerings, whose bodies lie like dung on the ploughed field of the husbandman; this is not the savour of myrrh, of frankincense, or of sweet herbs, that is steaming in your nostrils; but these bloody trunks are the carcasses of those who held the bow and the lance, who were cruel and would show no mercy, whose voice roared like the sea, who rode upon horses, every man in array as if to battle—they are the carcasses even of the mighty men of war that came against Jacob in the day of his deliverance, and the smoke is that of the devouring fires that have consumed them. And those wild hills that surround you are not a sanctuary planked with cedar and plated with silver; nor are ye ministering priests at the altar, with censers and with torches; but ye hold in your hands the sword, and the bow, and the weapons of death. And yet verily, I say unto you, that not when the ancient Temple was in its first glory was there offered sacrifice more acceptable than that which you have this day presented, giving to the slaughter the tyrant and the oppressor, with the rocks for your altars, and the sky for your vaulted sanctuary, and your own good swords for the instruments of sacrifice. Leave not, therefore, the plough in the furrow—turn not back from the path in which you have entered like the famous worthies of old, whom God raised up for the glorifying of his name and the deliverance of his afflicted people—halt not in the race you are running, lest the latter end should be worse than the beginning. Wherefore, set up a standard in the land; blow a trumpet upon the mountains; let not the shepherd tarry by his sheepfold, or the seedsman continue in the ploughed field; but make the watch strong, sharpen the arrows, burnish the shields, name ye the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens; call the footmen like the rushing of winds, and cause the horsemen to come up like the sound of many waters; for the passages of the destroyers are stopped, their rods are burned, and the face of their men of battle hath been turned to flight. Heaven has been with you, and has broken the bow of the mighty; then let every man's heart be as the heart of the valiant Maccabeus, every man's hand as the hand of the mighty Sampson, every man's sword as that of Gideon, which turned not back from the slaughter; for the banner of Reformation is spread abroad on the mountains in its first loveliness, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

"Well is he this day that shall barter his house for a helmet, and sell his garment for a sword, and cast in his lot with the children of the Covenant, even to the fulfilling of the promise; and woe, woe unto him who, for carnal ends and self-seeking, shall withhold himself from the great work, for the curse shall abide with him, even the bitter curse of Meroz, because he came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Up, then, and be doing; the blood of martyrs, reeking upon scaffolds, is crying for vengeance; the bones of saints, which lie whitening in the highways, are pleading for retribution; the groans of innocent captives from desolate isles of the sea, and from the dungeons of the tyrants' high places, cry for deliverance; the prayers of persecuted Christians, sheltering themselves in dens and deserts from the sword of their persecutors, famished with hunger, starving with cold, lacking fire, food, shelter, and clothing, because they serve God rather than man—all are with you, pleading, watching, knocking, storming the gates of heaven in your behalf. Heaven itself shall fight for you, as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Then whoso will deserve immortal fame in this world, and eternal happiness in that which is to come, let them enter into God's service, and take arles at the hand of his servant,—a blessing, namely, upon him and his household, and his children, to the ninth generation, even the blessing of the promise, for ever and ever! Amen."

The eloquence of the preacher was rewarded by the deep hum of stern approbation which resounded through the armed assemblage at the conclusion of an exhortation, so well suited to that which they had done, and that which remained for them to do. The wounded forgot their pain, the faint and hungry their fatigues and privations, as they listened to doctrines which elevated them alike above the wants and calamities of the world, and identified their cause with that of the Deity. Many crowded around the preacher, as he descended from the eminence on which he stood, and, clasping him with hands on which the gore was not yet hardened, pledged their sacred vow that they would play the part of Heaven's true soldiers. Exhausted by his own enthusiasm, and by the animated fervour which he had exerted in his discourse, the preacher could only reply, in broken accents,—"God bless you, my brethren—it is his cause.—Stand strongly up and play the men—the worst that can befall us is but a brief and bloody passage to heaven."

Balfour, and the other leaders, had not lost the time which was employed in these spiritual exercises. Watch-fires were lighted, sentinels were posted, and arrangements were made to refresh the army with such provisions as had been hastily collected from the nearest farm-houses and villages. The present necessity thus provided for, they turned their thoughts to the future. They had dispatched parties to spread the news of their victory, and to obtain, either by force or favour, supplies of what they stood most in need of. In this they had succeeded beyond their hopes, having at one village seized a small magazine of provisions, forage, and ammunition, which had been provided for the royal forces. This success not only gave them relief at the time, but such hopes for the future, that whereas

formerly some of their number had begun to slacken in their zeal, they now unanimously resolved to abide together in arms, and commit themselves and their cause to the event of war.

And whatever may be thought of the extravagance or narrow-minded bigotry of many of their tenets, it is impossible to deny the praise of devoted courage to a few hundred peasants, who, without leaders, without money, without magazines, without any fixed plan of action, and almost without arms, borne out only by their innate zeal, and a detestation of the oppression of their rulers, ventured to declare open war against an established government, supported by a regular army and the whole force of three kingdoms.

CHAPTER XIX.

Why, then, say an old man can do somewhat.

Henry IV. Part II.

We must now return to the tower of Tillietudlem, which the march of the Life-Guards, on the morning of this eventful day, had left to silence and anxiety. The assurances of Lord Evandale had not succeeded in quelling the apprehensions of Edith. She knew him generous, and faithful to his word; but it seemed too plain that he suspected the object of her intercession to be a successful rival; and was it not expecting from him an effort above human nature, to suppose that he was to watch over Morton's safety, and rescue him from all the dangers to which his state of imprisonment, and the suspicions which he had incurred, must repeatedly expose him? She therefore resigned herself to the most heart-rending apprehensions, without admitting, and indeed almost without listening to, the multifarious grounds of consolation which Jenny Dennison brought forward, one after another, like a skilful general who charges with the several divisions of his troops in regular succession.

First, Jenny was morally positive that young Milnwood would come to no harm—then, if he did, there was consolation in the reflection, that Lord Evandale was the better and more appropriate match of the two—then, there was every chance of a battle, in which the said Lord Evandale might be killed, and there wad be nae mair fash about that job—then, if the whigs gat the better, Milnwood and Cuddie might come to the Castle, and carry off the beloved of their hearts by the strong hand.

"For I forgot to tell ye, madam," continued the damsel, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "that puir Cuddie's in the hands of the Philistines as weel as young Milnwood, and he was brought here a prisoner this morning, and I was fain to speak Tam Halliday fair, and fleech him to let me near the puir creature; but Cuddie wasna sae thankfu' as he needed till hae been neither," she added, and at the same time changed her tone, and briskly withdrew the handkerchief from her face; "so I will ne'er waste my een wi' greeting about the matter. There wad be aye enow o' young men left, if they were to hang the tae half o' them."

The other inhabitants of the Castle were also in a state of dissatisfaction and anxiety. Lady Margaret thought that Colonel Grahame, in commanding an execution at the door of her house, and refusing to grant a reprieve at her request, had fallen short of the deference due to her rank, and had even encroached on her seigniorial rights.

"The Colonel," she said, "ought to have remembered, brother, that the barony of Tillietudlem has the baronial privilege of pit and gallows; and therefore, if the lad was to be executed on my estate, (which I consider as an unhandsome thing, seeing it is in the possession of females, to whom such tragedies cannot be acceptable,) he ought, at common law, to have been delivered up to my bailie, and justified at his sight."

"Martial law, sister," answered Major Bellenden, "supersedes every other. But I must own I think Colonel Grahame rather deficient in attention to you; and I am not over and above pre-eminently flattered by his granting to young Evandale (I suppose because he is a lord, and has interest with the privy-council) a request which he refused to so old a servant of the king as I am. But so long as the poor young fellow's life is saved, I can comfort myself with the fag-end of a ditty as old as myself." And therewithal, he hummed a stanza:

'And what though winter will pinch severe
Through locks of grey and a cloak that's old?
Yet keep up thy heart, bold cavalier,
For a cup of sack shall fence the cold.'

"I must be your guest here to-day, sister. I wish to hear the issue of this gathering on Loudon-hill, though I cannot conceive their standing a body of horse appointed like our guests this morning.—Woe's me, the time has been that I would have liked ill to have sate in biggit wa's waiting for the news of a skirmish to be fought within ten miles of me! But, as the old song goes,

For time will rust the brightest blade,
And years will break the strongest bow;
Was ever wight so starkly made,
But time and years would overthrow?"

"We are well pleased you will stay, brother," said Lady Margaret; "I will take my old privilege to look after my household, whom this collation has thrown into some disorder, although it is uncivil to leave you alone."

"O, I hate ceremony as I hate a stumbling horse," replied the Major. "Besides, your person would be with me, and your mind with the cold meat and reversionary pasties.—Where is Edith?"

"Gone to her room a little evil-disposed, I am informed, and laid down in her bed for a gliff," said her grandmother; "as soon as she wakes, she shall take some drops."

"Pooh! pooh! she's only sick of the soldiers," answered Major Bellenden. "She's not accustomed to see one acquaintance led out to be shot, and another marching off to actual service, with some chance of not finding his way back again. She would soon be used to it, if the civil war were to break out again."

"God forbid, brother!" said Lady Margaret.

"Ay, Heaven forbid, as you say—and, in the meantime, I'll take a hit at trick-track with Harrison."

"He has ridden out, sir," said Gudyill, "to try if he can hear any tidings of the battle."

"D—n the battle," said the Major; "it puts this family as much out of order as if there had never been such a thing in the country before—and yet there was such a place as Kilsythe, John."

"Ay, and as Tippermuir, your honour," replied Gudyill, "where I was his honour my late master's rear-rank man."

"And Alford, John," pursued the Major, "where I commanded the horse; and Innerlochy, where I was the Great Marquis's aid-de-camp; and Auld Earn, and Brig o' Dee."

"And Philiphaugh, your honour," said John.

"Umph!" replied the Major; "the less, John, we say about that matter, the better."

However, being once fairly embarked on the subject of Montrose's campaigns, the Major and John Gudyill carried on the war so stoutly, as for a considerable time to keep at bay the formidable enemy called Time, with whom retired veterans, during the quiet close of a bustling life, usually wage an unceasing hostility.

It has been frequently remarked, that the tidings of important events fly with a celerity almost beyond the power of credibility, and that reports, correct in the general point, though inaccurate in details, precede the certain intelligence, as if carried by the birds of the air. Such rumours anticipate the reality, not unlike to the "shadows of coming events," which occupy the imagination of the Highland Seer. Harrison, in his ride, encountered some such report concerning the event of the battle, and turned his horse back to Tillietudlem in great dismay. He made it his first business to seek out the Major, and interrupted him in the midst of a prolix account of the siege and storm of Dundee, with the ejaculation, "Heaven send, Major, that we do not see a siege of Tillietudlem before we are many days older!"

"How is that, Harrison?—what the devil do you mean?" exclaimed the astonished veteran.

"Troth, sir, there is strong and increasing belief that Claver'se is clean broken, some say killed; that the soldiers are all dispersed, and that the rebels are hastening this way, threatening death and devastation to a' that will not take the Covenant."

"I will never believe that," said the Major, starting on his feet—"I will never believe that the Life-Guards would retreat before rebels;—and yet why need I say that," he continued, checking himself, "when I have seen such sights myself?—Send out Pike, and one or two of the servants, for intelligence, and let all the men in the Castle and in the village that can be trusted take up arms. This old tower may hold them play a bit, if it were but victualled and garrisoned, and it commands the pass between the high and low countries.—It's lucky I chanced to be here.—Go, muster men, Harrison.—You, Gudyill, look what provisions you have, or can get brought in, and be ready, if the news be confirmed, to knock down as many bullocks as you have salt for.—The well never goes dry.—There are some old-fashioned guns on the battlements; if we had but ammunition, we should do well enough."

"The soldiers left some casks of ammunition at the Grange this morning, to bide their return," said Harrison.

"Hasten, then," said the Major, "and bring it into the Castle, with every pike, sword, pistol, or gun, that is within our reach; don't leave so much as a bodkin—Lucky that I was here!—I will speak to my sister instantly."

Lady Margaret Bellenden was astounded at intelligence so unexpected and so alarming. It had seemed to her that the imposing force which had that morning left her walls, was sufficient to have routed all the disaffected in Scotland, if collected in a body; and now her first reflection was upon the inadequacy of their own means of resistance, to an army strong enough to have defeated Claverhouse and such select troops. "Woe's me! woe's me!" said she; "what will all that we can do avail us, brother?—What will resistance do but bring sure destruction on the house, and on the bairn Edith! for, God knows, I thinkna on my ain auld life."

"Come, sister," said the Major, "you must not be cast down; the place is strong, the rebels ignorant and ill-provided: my brother's house shall not be made a den of thieves and rebels while old Miles Bellenden is in it. My hand is weaker than it was, but I thank my old grey hairs that I have some knowledge of war yet. Here comes Pike with intelligence.—What news, Pike? Another Philiphaugh job, eh?"

"Ay, ay," said Pike, composedly; "a total scattering.—I thought this morning little gude would come of their newfangled gate of slinging their carabines."

"Whom did you see?—Who gave you the news?" asked the Major.

"O, mair than half-a-dozen dragoon fellows that are a' on the spur whilk to get first to Hamilton. They'll win the race, I warrant them, win the battle wha like."

"Continue your preparations, Harrison," said the alert veteran; "get your ammunition in, and the cattle killed. Send down to the borough-town for what meal you can gather. We must not lose an instant.—Had not Edith and you, sister, better return to Charnwood, while we have the means of sending you there?"

"No, brother," said Lady Margaret, looking very pale, but speaking with the greatest composure; "since the auld house is to be held out, I will take my chance in it. I have fled twice from it in my days, and I have aye found it desolate of its bravest and its bonniest when I returned; sae that I will e'en abide now, and end my pilgrimage in it."

"It may, on the whole, be the safest course both for Edith and you," said the Major; "for the whigs will rise all the way between this and Glasgow, and make your travelling there, or your dwelling at Charnwood, very unsafe."

"So be it then," said Lady Margaret; "and, dear brother, as the nearest blood-relation of my deceased husband, I deliver to you, by this symbol,"—(here she gave into his hand the venerable goldheaded staff of the deceased Earl of Torwood,)—"the keeping and government and seneschalship of my Tower of Tillietudlem, and the appurtenances thereof, with full power to kill, slay, and damage those who shall assail the same, as freely as I might do myself. And I trust you will so defend it, as becomes a house in which his most sacred majesty has not disdained"—

"Pshaw! sister," interrupted the Major, "we have no time to speak about the king and his breakfast just now."

And, hastily leaving the room, he hurried, with all the alertness of a young man of twenty-five, to examine the state of his garrison, and superintend the measures which were necessary for defending the place.

The Tower of Tillietudlem, having very thick walls, and very narrow windows, having also a very strong court-yard wall, with flanking turrets on the only accessible side, and rising on the other from the very verge of a precipice, was fully capable of defence against any thing but a train of heavy artillery.

Famine or escalade was what the garrison had chiefly to fear. For artillery, the top of the Tower was mounted with some antiquated wall-pieces, and small cannons, which bore the old-fashioned names of culverins, sakers, demi-sakers, falcons, and falconets. These, the Major, with the assistance of John Gudyill, caused to be scaled and loaded, and pointed them so as to command the road over the brow of the opposite hill by which the rebels must advance, causing, at the same time, two or three trees to be cut down, which would have impeded the effect of the artillery when it should be necessary to use it. With the trunks of these trees, and other materials, he directed barricades to be constructed upon the winding avenue which rose to the Tower along the high-road, taking care that each should command the other. The large gate of the court-yard he barricadoed yet more strongly, leaving only a wicket open for the convenience of passage. What he had most to apprehend, was the slenderness of his garrison; for all the efforts of the steward were unable to get more than nine men under arms, himself and Gudyill included, so much more popular was the cause of the insurgents than that of the government Major Bellenden, and his trusty servant Pike, made the garrison eleven in number, of whom one-half were old men. The round dozen might indeed have been made up, would Lady Margaret have consented that Goose Gibbie should again take up arms. But she recoiled from the proposal, when moved by Gudyill, with such abhorrent recollection of the former achievements of that luckless cavalier, that she declared she would rather the Castle were lost than that he were to be enrolled in the defence of it. With eleven men, however, himself included, Major Bellenden determined to hold out the place to the uttermost.

The arrangements for defence were not made without the degree of fracas incidental to such occasions. Women shrieked, cattle bellowed, dogs howled, men ran to and fro, cursing and swearing without intermission, the lumbering of the old guns backwards and forwards shook the battlements, the court resounded with the hasty gallop of messengers who went and returned upon errands of importance, and the din of warlike preparation was mingled with the sound of female laments. Such a Babel of discord might have awakened the slumbers of the very dead, and, therefore, was not long ere it dispelled the abstracted reveries of Edith Bellenden. She sent out Jenny to bring her the cause of the tumult which shook the castle to its very basis; but Jenny, once engaged in the bustling tide, found so much to ask and to hear, that she forgot the state of anxious uncertainty in which she had left her young mistress. Having no pigeon to dismiss in pursuit of information when her raven messenger had failed to return with it, Edith was compelled to venture in quest of it out of the ark of her own chamber into the deluge of confusion which overflowed the rest of the Castle. Six voices speaking at once, informed her, in reply to her first enquiry, that Claver'se and all his men were killed, and that ten thousand whigs were marching to besiege the castle, headed by John Balfour of Burley, young Milnwood, and Cuddie Headrigg. This strange association of persons seemed to infer the falsehood of the whole story, and yet the general bustle in the Castle intimated that danger was certainly apprehended.

"Where is Lady Margaret?" was Edith's second question.

"In her oratory," was the reply: a cell adjoining to the chapel, in which the good old lady was wont to spend the greater part of the days destined by the rules of the Episcopal Church to devotional observances, as also the anniversaries of those on which she had lost her husband and her children, and, finally, those hours, in which a deeper and more solemn address to Heaven was called for, by national or domestic calamity.

"Where, then," said Edith, much alarmed, "is Major Bellenden?"

"On the battlements of the Tower, madam, pointing the cannon," was the reply.

To the battlements, therefore, she made her way, impeded by a thousand obstacles, and found the old gentleman in the midst of his natural military element, commanding, rebuking, encouraging, instructing, and exercising all the numerous duties of a good governor.

"In the name of God, what is the matter, uncle?" exclaimed Edith.

"The matter, my love?" answered the Major coolly, as, with spectacles on his nose, he examined the position of a gun—"The matter? Why,—raise her breech a thought more, John Gudyill—the matter? Why, Claver'se is routed, my dear, and the whigs are coming down upon us in force, that's all the matter."

"Gracious powers!" said Edith, whose eye at that instant caught a glance of the road which ran up the river, "and yonder they come!"

"Yonder? where?" said the veteran; and, his eyes taking the same direction, he beheld a large body of horsemen coming down the path. "Stand to your guns, my lads!" was the first exclamation; "we'll make them pay toll as they pass the heugh.—But stay, stay, these are certainly the Life-Guards."

"O no, uncle, no," replied Edith; "see how disorderly they ride, and how ill they keep their ranks; these cannot be the fine soldiers who left us this morning."

"Ah, my dear girl!" answered the Major, "you do not know the difference between men before a battle and after a defeat; but the Life-Guards it is, for I see the red and blue and the King's colours. I am glad they have brought them off, however."

His opinion was confirmed as the troopers approached nearer, and finally halted on the road beneath the Tower; while their commanding officer, leaving them to breathe and refresh their horses, hastily rode up the hill.

"It is Claverhouse, sure enough," said the Major; "I am glad he has escaped, but he has lost his famous black horse. Let Lady Margaret know, John Gudyill; order some refreshments; get oats for the soldiers' horses; and let us to the hall, Edith, to meet him. I surmise we shall hear but indifferent news."

CHAPTER XX

With careless gesture, mind unmoved,
On rade he north the plain,
His seem in thrang of fiercest strife,
When winner aye the same.

Hardyknote.

Colonel Grahame of Claverhouse met the family, assembled in the hall of the Tower, with the same serenity and the same courtesy which had graced his manners in the morning. He had even had the composure to rectify in part the derangement of his dress, to wash the signs of battle from his face and hands, and did not appear more disordered in his exterior than if returned from a morning ride.

"I am grieved, Colonel Grahame," said the reverend old lady, the tears trickling down her face, "deeply grieved."

"And I am grieved, my dear Lady Margaret," replied Claverhouse, "that this misfortune may render your remaining at Tillietudlem dangerous for you, especially considering your recent hospitality to the King's troops, and your well-known loyalty. And I came here chiefly to request Miss Bellenden and you to accept my escort (if you will not scorn that of a poor runaway) to Glasgow, from whence I will see you safely sent either to Edinburgh or to Dunbarton Castle, as you shall think best."

"I am much obliged to you, Colonel Grahame," replied Lady Margaret; "but my brother, Major Bellenden, has taken on him the responsibility of holding out this house against the rebels; and, please God, they shall never drive Margaret Bellenden from her ain hearth-stane while there's a brave man that says he can defend it."

"And will Major Bellenden undertake this?" said Claverhouse hastily, a joyful light glancing from his dark eye as he turned it on the veteran,— "Yet why should I question it? it is of a piece with the rest of his life.—But have you the means, Major?"

"All, but men and provisions, with which we are ill supplied," answered the Major.

"As for men," said Claverhouse, "I will leave you a dozen or twenty fellows who will make good a breach against the devil. It will be of the utmost service, if you can defend the place but a week, and by that time you must surely be relieved."

"I will make it good for that space, Colonel," replied the Major, "with twenty-five good men and store of ammunition, if we should gnaw the soles of our shoes for hunger; but I trust we shall get in provisions from the country."

"And, Colonel Grahame, if I might presume a request," said Lady Margaret, "I would entreat that Sergeant Francis Stewart might command the auxiliaries whom you are so good as to add to the garrison of our people; it may serve to legitimate his promotion, and I have a prejudice in favour of his noble birth."

"The sergeant's wars are ended, madam," said Grahame, in an unaltered tone, "and he now needs no promotion that an earthly master can give."

"Pardon me," said Major Bellenden, taking Claverhouse by the arm, and turning him away from the ladies, "but I am anxious for my friends; I fear you have other and more important loss. I observe another officer carries your nephew's standard."

"You are right, Major Bellenden," answered Claverhouse firmly; "my nephew is no more. He has died in his duty, as became him."

"Great God!" exclaimed the Major, "how unhappy!—the handsome, gallant, high-spirited youth!"

"He was indeed all you say," answered Claverhouse; "poor Richard was to me as an eldest son, the apple of my eye, and my destined heir; but he died in his duty, and I—I—Major Bellenden"—(he wrung the Major's hand hard as he spoke)—"I live to avenge him."

"Colonel Grahame," said the affectionate veteran, his eyes filling with tears, "I am glad to see you bear this misfortune with such fortitude."

"I am not a selfish man," replied Claverhouse, "though the world will tell you otherwise; I am not selfish either in my hopes or fears, my joys or sorrows. I have not been severe for myself, or grasping for myself, or ambitious for myself. The service of my master and the good of the country are what I have tried to aim at. I may, perhaps, have driven severity into cruelty, but I acted for the best; and now I will not yield to my own feelings a deeper sympathy than I have given to those of others."

"I am astonished at your fortitude under all the unpleasant circumstances of this affair," pursued the Major.

"Yes," replied Claverhouse, "my enemies in the council will lay this misfortune to my charge—I despise their accusations. They will calumniate me to my sovereign—I can repel their charge. The public enemy will exult in my flight—I shall find a time to show them that they exult too early. This youth that has fallen stood betwixt a grasping kinsman and my inheritance, for you know that my marriage-bed is barren; yet, peace be with him! the country can better spare him than your friend Lord Evandale, who, after behaving very gallantly, has, I fear, also fallen."

"What a fatal day!" ejaculated the Major. "I heard a report of this, but it was again contradicted; it was added, that the poor young nobleman's impetuosity had occasioned the loss of this unhappy field."

"Not so, Major," said Grahame; "let the living officers bear the blame, if there be any; and let the laurels flourish untarnished on the grave of the fallen. I do not, however, speak of Lord Evandale's death as certain; but killed, or prisoner, I fear he must be. Yet he was extricated from the tumult the last time we spoke together. We were then on the point of leaving the field with a rear-guard of scarce twenty men; the rest of the regiment were almost dispersed."

"They have rallied again soon," said the Major, looking from the window on the dragoons, who were feeding their horses and refreshing themselves beside the brook.

"Yes," answered Claverhouse, "my blackguards had little temptation either to desert, or to straggle farther than they were driven by their first panic. There is small friendship and scant courtesy between them and the boors of this country; every village they pass is likely to rise on them, and so the scoundrels are driven back to their colours by a wholesome terror of spits, pike-staves, hay-forks, and broomsticks.—But now let us talk about your plans and wants, and the means of corresponding with you. To tell you the truth, I doubt being able to make a long stand at Glasgow, even when I have joined my Lord Ross; for this transient and accidental success of the fanatics will raise the devil through all the western counties."

They then discussed Major Bellenden's means of defence, and settled a plan of correspondence, in case a general insurrection took place, as was to be expected. Claverhouse renewed his offer to escort the ladies to a place of safety; but, all things considered, Major Bellenden thought they would be in equal safety at Tillietudlem.

The Colonel then took a polite leave of Lady Margaret and Miss Bellenden, assuring them, that, though he was reluctantly obliged to leave them for the present in dangerous circumstances, yet his earliest means should be turned to the redemption of his character as a good knight and true, and that they might speedily rely on hearing from or seeing him.

Full of doubt and apprehension, Lady Margaret was little able to reply to a speech so much in unison with her usual expressions and feelings, but contented herself with bidding Claverhouse farewell, and thanking him for the succours which he had promised to leave them. Edith longed to enquire the fate of Henry Morton, but could find no pretext for doing so, and could only hope that it had made a subject of some part of the long private communication which her uncle had held with Claverhouse. On this subject, however, she was disappointed; for the old cavalier was so deeply immersed in the duties of his own office, that he had

scarce said a single word to Claverhouse, excepting upon military matters, and most probably would have been equally forgetful, had the fate of his own son, instead of his friend's, lain in the balance.

Claverhouse now descended the bank on which the castle is founded, in order to put his troops again in motion, and Major Bellenden accompanied him to receive the detachment who were to be left in the tower.

"I shall leave Inglis with you," said Claverhouse, "for, as I am situated, I cannot spare an officer of rank; it is all we can do, by our joint efforts, to keep the men together. But should any of our missing officers make their appearance, I authorize you to detain them; for my fellows can with difficulty be subjected to any other authority."

His troops being now drawn up, he picked out sixteen men by name, and committed them to the command of Corporal Inglis, whom he promoted to the rank of sergeant on the spot.

"And hark ye, gentlemen," was his concluding harangue, "I leave you to defend the house of a lady, and under the command of her brother, Major Bellenden, a faithful servant to the king. You are to behave bravely, soberly, regularly, and obediently, and each of you shall be handsomely rewarded on my return to relieve the garrison. In case of mutiny, cowardice, neglect of duty, or the slightest excess in the family, the provost-marshal and cord—you know I keep my word for good and evil."

He touched his hat as he bade them farewell, and shook hands cordially with Major Bellenden.

"Adieu," he said, "my stout-hearted old friend! Good luck be with you, and better times to us both."

The horsemen whom he commanded had been once more reduced to tolerable order by the exertions of Major Allan; and, though shorn of their splendour, and with their gilding all besmirched, made a much more regular and military appearance on leaving, for the second time, the tower of Tillietudlem, than when they returned to it after their rout.

Major Bellenden, now left to his own resources sent out several videttes, both to obtain supplies of provisions, and especially of meal, and to get knowledge of the motions of the enemy. All the news he could collect on the second subject tended to prove that the insurgents meant to remain on the field of battle for that night. But they, also, had abroad their detachments and advanced guards to collect supplies, and great was the doubt and distress of those who received contrary orders, in the name of the King and in that of the Kirk; the one commanding them to send provisions to victual the Castle of Tillietudlem, and the other enjoining them to forward supplies to the camp of the godly professors of true religion, now in arms for the cause of covenanted reformation, presently pitched at Drumclog, nigh to Loudon-hill. Each summons closed with a denunciation of fire and sword if it was neglected; for neither party could confide so far in the loyalty or zeal of those whom they addressed, as to hope they would part with their property upon other terms. So that the poor people knew not what hand to turn themselves to; and, to say truth, there were some who turned themselves to more than one.

"Thir kittle times will drive the wisest o' us daft," said Niel Blane, the prudent host of the Howff; "but I'se aye keep a calm sough.—Jenny, what meal is in the ginel?"

"Four bows o' aitmeal, twa bows o' bear, and twa bows o' pease," was Jenny's reply.

"Aweel, hinny," continued Niel Blane, sighing deeply, "let Bauldy drive the pease and bear meal to the camp at Drumclog—he's a whig, and was the auld gudewife's pleughman—the mashlum bannocks will suit their muirland stamachs weel. He maun say it's the last unce o' meal in the house, or, if he scruples to tell a lie, (as it's no likely he will when it's for the gude o' the house,) he may wait till Duncan Glen, the auld drucken trooper, drives up the aitmeal to Tillietudlem, wi' my dutifu' service to my Leddy and the Major, and I haena as muckle left as will mak my parritch; and if Duncan manage right, I'll gie him a tass o' whisky shall mak the blue low come out at his mouth."

"And what are we to eat ousells then, father," asked Jenny, "when we hae sent awa the haill meal in the ark and the ginel?"

"We maun gar wheat-flour serve us for a blink," said Niel, in a tone of resignation; "it's no that ill food, though far frae being sae hearty or kindly to a Scotchman's stamach as the curney aitmeal is; the Englishers live amaist upon't; but, to be sure, the pock-puddings ken nae better."

While the prudent and peaceful endeavoured, like Niel Blane, to make fair weather with both parties, those who had more public (or party) spirit began to take arms on all sides. The royalists in the country were not numerous, but were respectable from their fortune and influence, being chiefly landed proprietors of ancient descent, who, with their brothers, cousins, and dependents to the ninth generation, as well as their domestic servants, formed a sort of militia, capable of defending their own peel-houses against detached bodies of the insurgents, of resisting their demand of supplies, and intercepting those which were sent to the presbyterian camp by others. The news that the Tower of Tillietudlem was to be defended against the insurgents, afforded great courage and support to these feudal volunteers, who considered it as a stronghold to which they might retreat, in case it should become impossible for them to maintain the desultory war they were now about to wage.

On the other hand, the towns, the villages, the farm-houses, the properties of small heritors, sent forth numerous recruits to the presbyterian interest. These men had been the principal sufferers during the oppression of the time. Their minds were fretted, soured, and driven to desperation, by the various exactions and cruelties to which they had been subjected; and, although by no means united among themselves, either concerning the purpose of this formidable insurrection, or the means by which that purpose was to be obtained, most of them considered it as a door opened by Providence to obtain the liberty of conscience of which they had been long deprived, and to shake themselves free of a tyranny, directed both against body and soul. Numbers of these men, therefore, took up arms; and, in the phrase of their time and party, prepared to cast in their lot with the victors of Loudon-hill.

CHAPTER XXI

Ananias. I do not like the man: He is a heathen,
And speaks the language of Canaan truly.

Tribulation. You must await his calling, and the coming
Of the good spirit. You did ill to upbraid him.

The Alchemist.

We return to Henry Morton, whom we left on the field of battle. He was eating, by one of the watch-fires, his portion of the provisions which had been distributed to the army, and musing deeply on the path which he was next to pursue, when Burley suddenly came up to him, accompanied by the young minister, whose exhortation after the victory had produced such a powerful effect.

"Henry Morton," said Balfour abruptly, "the council of the army of the Covenant, confiding that the son of Silas Morton can never prove a lukewarm Laodicean, or an indifferent Gallio, in this great day, have nominated you to be a captain of their host, with the right of a vote in their council, and all authority fitting for an officer who is to command Christian men."

"Mr Balfour," replied Morton, without hesitation, "I feel this mark of confidence, and it is not surprising that a natural sense of the injuries of my country, not to mention those I have sustained in my own person, should make me sufficiently willing to draw my sword for liberty and freedom of conscience. But I will own to you, that I must be better satisfied concerning the principles on which you bottom your cause ere I can agree to take a command amongst you."

"And can you doubt of our principles," answered Burley, "since we have stated them to be the reformation both of church and state, the rebuilding of the decayed sanctuary, the gathering of the dispersed saints, and the destruction of the man of sin?"

"I will own frankly, Mr Balfour," replied Morton, "much of this sort of language, which, I observe, is so powerful with others, is entirely lost on me. It is proper you should be aware of this before we commune further together." (The young clergyman here groaned deeply.) "I distress you, sir," said Morton; "but, perhaps, it is because you will not hear me out. I revere the Scriptures as deeply as you or any Christian can do. I look into them with humble hope of extracting a rule of

conduct and a law of salvation. But I expect to find this by an examination of their general tenor, and of the spirit which they uniformly breathe, and not by wresting particular passages from their context, or by the application of Scriptural phrases to circumstances and events with which they have often very slender relation." The young divine seemed shocked and thunderstruck with this declaration, and was about to remonstrate.

"Hush, Ephraim!" said Burley, "remember he is but as a babe in swaddling clothes.—Listen to me, Morton. I will speak to thee in the worldly language of that carnal reason, which is, for the present, thy blind and imperfect guide. What is the object for which thou art content to draw thy sword? Is it not that the church and state should be reformed by the free voice of a free parliament, with such laws as shall hereafter prevent the executive government from spilling the blood, torturing and imprisoning the persons, exhausting the estates, and trampling upon the consciences of men, at their own wicked pleasure?"

"Most certainly," said Morton; "such I esteem legitimate causes of warfare, and for such I will fight while I can wield a sword."

"Nay, but," said Macbriar, "ye handle this matter too tenderly; nor will my conscience permit me to fard or daub over the causes of divine wrath."

"Peace, Ephraim Macbriar!" again interrupted Burley.

"I will not peace," said the young man. "Is it not the cause of my Master who hath sent me? Is it not a profane and Erastian destroying of his authority, usurpation of his power, denial of his name, to place either King or Parliament in his place as the master and governor of his household, the adulterous husband of his spouse?"

"You speak well," said Burley, dragging him aside, "but not wisely; your own ears have heard this night in council how this scattered remnant are broken and divided, and would ye now make a veil of separation between them? Would ye build a wall with unslaked mortar?—if a fox go up, it will breach it."

"I know," said the young clergyman, in reply, "that thou art faithful, honest, and zealous, even unto slaying; but, believe me, this worldly craft, this temporizing with sin and with infirmity, is in itself a falling away; and I fear me Heaven will not honour us to do much more for His glory, when we seek to carnal cunning and to a fleshly arm. The sanctified end must be wrought by sanctified means."

"I tell thee," answered Balfour, "thy zeal is too rigid in this matter; we cannot yet do without the help of the Laodiceans and the Erastians; we must endure for a space the indulged in the midst of the council—the sons of Zeruiah are yet too strong for us."

"I tell thee I like it not," said Macbriar; "God can work deliverance by a few as well as by a multitude. The host of the faithful that was broken upon Pentland-hills, paid but the fitting penalty of acknowledging the carnal interest of that tyrant and oppressor, Charles Stewart."

"Well, then," said Balfour, "thou knowest the healing resolution that the council have adopted,—to make a comprehending declaration, that may suit the tender consciences of all who groan under the yoke of our present oppressors. Return to the council if thou wilt, and get them to recall it, and send forth one upon narrower grounds. But abide not here to hinder my gaining over this youth, whom my soul travails for; his name alone will call forth hundreds to our banners."

"Do as thou wilt, then," said Macbriar; "but I will not assist to mislead the youth, nor bring him into jeopardy of life, unless upon such grounds as will ensure his eternal reward."

The more artful Balfour then dismissed the impatient preacher, and returned to his proselyte.

That we may be enabled to dispense with detailing at length the arguments by which he urged Morton to join the insurgents, we shall take this opportunity to give a brief sketch of the person by whom they were used, and the motives which he had for interesting himself so deeply in the conversion of young Morton to his cause.

John Balfour of Kinloch, or Burley, for he is designated both ways in the histories and proclamations of that melancholy period, was a gentleman of some fortune, and of good family, in the county of Fife, and had been a soldier from his youth upwards. In the younger part of his life he had been wild and licentious, but had early laid aside open profligacy, and embraced the strictest tenets of Calvinism. Unfortunately, habits of excess and intemperance were more easily rooted out of his dark, saturnine, and enterprising spirit, than the vices of revenge and ambition, which continued, notwithstanding his religious professions, to exercise no small sway over his mind. Daring in design, precipitate and violent in execution, and going to the very extremity of the most rigid recusancy, it was his ambition to place himself at the head of the presbyterian interest.

To attain this eminence among the whigs, he had been active in attending their conventicles, and more than once had commanded them when they appeared in arms, and beaten off the forces sent to disperse them. At length, the gratification of his own fierce enthusiasm, joined, as some say, with motives of private revenge, placed him at the head of that party who assassinated the Primate of Scotland, as the author of the sufferings of the presbyterians. The violent measures adopted by government to revenge this deed, not on the perpetrators only, but on the whole professors of the religion to which they belonged, together with long previous sufferings, without any prospect of deliverance, except by force of arms, occasioned the insurrection, which, as we have already seen, commenced by the defeat of Claverhouse in the bloody skirmish of Loudon-hill.

But Burley, notwithstanding the share he had in the victory, was far from finding himself at the summit which his ambition aimed at. This was partly owing to the various opinions entertained among the insurgents concerning the murder of Archbishop Sharpe. The more violent among them did, indeed, approve of this act as a deed of justice, executed upon a persecutor of God's church through the immediate inspiration of the Deity; but the greater part of the presbyterians disowned the deed as a crime highly culpable, although they admitted, that the Archbishop's punishment had by no means exceeded his deserts. The insurgents differed in another main point, which has been already touched upon. The more warm and extravagant fanatics condemned, as guilty of a pusillanimous abandonment of the rights of the church, those preachers and congregations who were contented, in any manner, to exercise their religion through the permission of the ruling government. This, they said, was absolute Erastianism, or subjection of the church of God to the regulations of an earthly government, and therefore but one degree better than prelacy or popery.—Again, the more moderate party were content to allow the king's title to the throne, and in secular affairs to acknowledge his authority, so long as it was exercised with due regard to the liberties of the subject, and in conformity to the laws of the realm. But the tenets of the wilder sect, called, from their leader Richard Cameron, by the name of Cameronians, went the length of disowning the reigning monarch, and every one of his successors, who should not acknowledge the Solemn League and Covenant. The seeds of disunion were, therefore, thickly sown in this ill-fated party; and Balfour, however enthusiastic, and however much attached to the most violent of those tenets which we have noticed, saw nothing but ruin to the general cause, if they were insisted on during this crisis, when unity was of so much consequence. Hence he disapproved, as we have seen, of the honest, downright, and ardent zeal of Macbriar, and was extremely desirous to receive the assistance of the moderate party of presbyterians in the immediate overthrow of the government, with the hope of being hereafter able to dictate to them what should be substituted in its place.

He was, on this account, particularly anxious to secure the accession of Henry Morton to the cause of the insurgents. The memory of his father was generally esteemed among the presbyterians; and as few persons of any decent quality had joined the insurgents, this young man's family and prospects were such as almost ensured his being chosen a leader. Through Morton's means, as being the son of his ancient comrade, Burley conceived he might exercise some influence over the more liberal part of the army, and ultimately, perhaps, ingratiate himself so far with them, as to be chosen commander-in-chief, which was the mark at which his ambition aimed. He had, therefore, without waiting till any other person took up the subject, exalted to the council the talents and disposition of Morton, and easily obtained his elevation to the painful rank of a leader in this disunited and undisciplined army.

The arguments by which Balfour pressed Morton to accept of this dangerous promotion, as soon as he had gotten rid of his less wary and uncompromising companion, Macbriar, were sufficiently artful and urgent. He did not affect either to deny or to disguise that the sentiments which he himself entertained concerning church government, went as far as those of the preacher who had just left them; but he argued, that when the affairs of the nation were at such a desperate crisis, minute difference of opinion should not prevent those who, in general, wished well to their oppressed country, from drawing their swords in its behalf. Many of the subjects of division, as, for example, that concerning the Indulgence itself, arose, he observed, out of circumstances which would cease to exist, provided their attempt to free the country should be successful, seeing that the presbytery, being in that case triumphant, would need to make no such compromise with the government, and, consequently, with the abolition of the Indulgence all discussion of its legality would be at once ended. He insisted much and strongly upon the necessity of taking advantage of this favourable crisis, upon the certainty of their being joined by the force of the whole western shires, and

upon the gross guilt which those would incur, who, seeing the distress of the country, and the increasing tyranny with which it was governed, should, from fear or indifference, withhold their active aid from the good cause.

Morton wanted not these arguments to induce him to join in any insurrection, which might appear to have a feasible prospect of freedom to the country. He doubted, indeed, greatly, whether the present attempt was likely to be supported by the strength sufficient to ensure success, or by the wisdom and liberality of spirit necessary to make a good use of the advantages that might be gained. Upon the whole, however, considering the wrongs he had personally endured, and those which he had seen daily inflicted on his fellow-subjects; meditating also upon the precarious and dangerous situation in which he already stood with relation to the government, he conceived himself, in every point of view, called upon to join the body of presbyterians already in arms.

But while he expressed to Burley his acquiescence in the vote which had named him a leader among the insurgents, and a member of their council of war, it was not without a qualification.

"I am willing," he said, "to contribute every thing within my limited power to effect the emancipation of my country. But do not mistake me. I disapprove, in the utmost degree, of the action in which this rising seems to have originated; and no arguments should induce me to join it, if it is to be carried on by such measures as that with which it has commenced."

Burley's blood rushed to his face, giving a ruddy and dark glow to his swarthy brow.

"You mean," he said, in a voice which he designed should not betray any emotion—"You mean the death of James Sharpe?"

"Frankly," answered Morton, "such is my meaning."

"You imagine, then," said Burley, "that the Almighty, in times of difficulty, does not raise up instruments to deliver his church from her oppressors? You are of opinion that the justice of an execution consists, not in the extent of the sufferer's crime, or in his having merited punishment, or in the wholesome and salutary effect which that example is likely to produce upon other evil-doers, but hold that it rests solely in the robe of the judge, the height of the bench, and the voice of the doomster? Is not just punishment justly inflicted, whether on the scaffold or the moor? And where constituted judges, from cowardice, or from having cast in their lot with transgressors, suffer them not only to pass at liberty through the land, but to sit in the high places, and dye their garments in the blood of the saints, is it not well done in any brave spirits who shall draw their private swords in the public cause?"

"I have no wish to judge this individual action," replied Morton, "further than is necessary to make you fully aware of my principles. I therefore repeat, that the case you have supposed does not satisfy my judgment. That the Almighty, in his mysterious providence, may bring a bloody man to an end deservedly bloody, does not vindicate those who, without authority of any kind, take upon themselves to be the instruments of execution, and presume to call them the executors of divine vengeance."

"And were we not so?" said Burley, in a tone of fierce enthusiasm. "Were not we—was not every one who owned the interest of the Covenanted Church of Scotland, bound by that covenant to cut off the Judas who had sold the cause of God for fifty thousand merks a-year? Had we met him by the way as he came down from London, and there smitten him with the edge of the sword, we had done but the duty of men faithful to our cause, and to our oaths recorded in heaven. Was not the execution itself a proof of our warrant? Did not the Lord deliver him into our hands, when we looked out but for one of his inferior tools of persecution? Did we not pray to be resolved how we should act, and was it not borne in on our hearts as if it had been written on them with the point of a diamond, 'Ye shall surely take him and slay him?'—Was not the tragedy full half an hour in acting ere the sacrifice was completed, and that in an open heath, and within the patrols of their garrisons—and yet who interrupted the great work?—What dog so much as bayed us during the pursuit, the taking, the slaying, and the dispersing? Then, who will say—who dare say, that a mightier arm than ours was not herein revealed?"

"You deceive yourself, Mr Balfour," said Morton; "such circumstances of facility of execution and escape have often attended the commission of the most enormous crimes.—But it is not mine to judge you. I have not forgotten that the way was opened to the former liberation of Scotland by an act of violence which no man can justify,—the slaughter of Cumming by the hand of Robert Bruce; and, therefore, condemning this action, as I do and must, I am not unwilling to suppose that you may have motives vindicating it in your own eyes, though not in mine, or in those of sober reason. I only now mention it, because I desire you to understand, that I join a cause supported by men engaged in open war, which it is proposed to carry on according to the rules of civilized nations, without, in any respect, approving of the act of violence which gave immediate rise to it."

Balfour bit his lip, and with difficulty suppressed a violent answer. He perceived, with disappointment, that, upon points of principle, his young brother-in-arms possessed a clearness of judgment, and a firmness of mind, which afforded but little hope of his being able to exert that degree of influence over him which he had expected to possess. After a moment's pause, however, he said, with coolness, "My conduct is open to men and angels. The deed was not done in a corner; I am here in arms to avow it, and care not where, or by whom, I am called on to do so; whether in the council, the field of battle, the place of execution, or the day of the last great trial. I will not now discuss it further with one who is yet on the other side of the veil. But if you will cast in your lot with us as a brother, come with me to the council, who are still sitting, to arrange the future march of the army, and the means of improving our victory."

Morton arose and followed him in silence; not greatly delighted with his associate, and better satisfied with the general justice of the cause which he had espoused, than either with the measures or the motives of many of those who were embarked in it.

PART II

CHAPTER I.

*And look how many Grecian tents do stand
Hollow upon this plain—so many hollow factions.
Troilus and Cressida.*

In a hollow of the hill, about a quarter of a mile from the field of battle, was a shepherd's hut; a miserable cottage, which, as the only enclosed spot within a moderate distance, the leaders of the presbyterian army had chosen for their council-house. Towards this spot Burley guided Morton, who was surprised, as he approached it, at the multifarious confusion of sounds which issued from its precincts. The calm and anxious gravity which it might be supposed would have presided in councils held on such important subjects, and at a period so critical, seemed to have given place to discord wild, and loud uproar, which fell on the ear of their new ally as an evil augury of their future measures. As they approached the door, they found it open indeed, but choked up with the bodies and heads of countrymen, who, though no members of the council, felt no scruple in intruding themselves upon deliberations in which they were so deeply interested. By expostulation, by threats, and even by some degree of violence, Burley, the sternness of whose character maintained a sort of superiority over these disorderly forces, compelled the intruders to retire, and, introducing Morton into the cottage, secured the door behind them against impertinent curiosity. At a less agitating moment, the young man might have been entertained with the singular scene of which he now found himself an auditor and a spectator.

The precincts of the gloomy and ruinous hut were enlightened partly by some furze which blazed on the hearth, the smoke whereof, having no legal vent, eddied around, and formed over the heads of the assembled council a clouded canopy, as opaque as their metaphysical theology, through which, like stars through mist, were dimly seen to twinkle a few blinking candles, or rather rushes dipped in tallow, the property of the poor owner of the cottage, which were stuck to the walls by patches of wet clay. This broken and dusky light showed many a countenance elated with spiritual pride, or rendered dark by fierce enthusiasm; and some whose anxious, wandering, and uncertain looks, showed they felt themselves rashly embarked in a cause which they had neither courage nor conduct to bring to a good issue, yet knew not how to abandon, for very shame. They were, indeed, a doubtful and disunited body. The most active of their number were those concerned with Burley in the death of the Primate, four or five of whom had found their way to Loudon-hill, together with other men of the same relentless and uncompromising zeal, who had, in various ways, given desperate and unpardonable offence to the government.

With them were mingled their preachers, men who had spurned at the indulgence offered by government, and preferred assembling their flocks in the wilderness, to worshipping in temples built by human hands, if their doing the latter should be construed to admit any right on the part of their rulers to interfere with the

supremacy of the Kirk. The other class of counsellors were such gentlemen of small fortune, and substantial farmers, as a sense of intolerable oppression had induced to take arms and join the insurgents. These also had their clergymen with them, and such divines, having many of them taken advantage of the indulgence, were prepared to resist the measures of their more violent brethren, who proposed a declaration in which they should give testimony against the warrants and instructions for indulgence as sinful and unlawful acts. This delicate question had been passed over in silence in the first draught of the manifestos which they intended to publish, of the reasons of their gathering in arms; but it had been stirred anew during Balfour's absence, and, to his great vexation, he now found that both parties had opened upon it in full cry, Macbriar, Kettledrummle, and other teachers of the wanderers, being at the very spring-tide of polemical discussion with Peter Poundtext, the indulged pastor of Milnwood's parish, who, it seems, had e'en girded himself with a broadsword, but, ere he was called upon to fight for the good cause of presbytery in the field, was manfully defending his own dogmata in the council. It was the din of this conflict, maintained chiefly between Poundtext and Kettledrummle, together with the clamour of their adherents, which had saluted Morton's ears upon approaching the cottage. Indeed, as both the divines were men well gifted with words and lungs, and each fierce, ardent, and intolerant in defence of his own doctrine, prompt in the recollection of texts wherewith they battered each other without mercy, and deeply impressed with the importance of the subject of discussion, the noise of the debate betwixt them fell little short of that which might have attended an actual bodily conflict.

Burley, scandalized at the disunion implied in this virulent strife of tongues, interposed between the disputants, and, by some general remarks on the unseasonableness of discord, a soothing address to the vanity of each party, and the exertion of the authority which his services in that day's victory entitled him to assume, at length succeeded in prevailing upon them to adjourn farther discussion of the controversy. But although Kettledrummle and Poundtext were thus for the time silenced, they continued to eye each other like two dogs, who, having been separated by the authority of their masters while fighting, have retreated, each beneath the chair of his owner, still watching each other's motions, and indicating, by occasional growls, by the erected bristles of the back and ears, and by the red glance of the eye, that their discord is unappeased, and that they only wait the first opportunity afforded by any general movement or commotion in the company, to fly once more at each other's throats.

Balfour took advantage of the momentary pause to present to the council Mr Henry Morton of Milnwood, as one touched with a sense of the evils of the times, and willing to peril goods and life in the precious cause for which his father, the renowned Silas Morton, had given in his time a soul-stirring testimony. Morton was instantly received with the right hand of fellowship by his ancient pastor, Poundtext, and by those among the insurgents who supported the more moderate principles. The others muttered something about Erastianism, and reminded each other in whispers, that Silas Morton, once a stout and worthy servant of the Covenant, had been a backslider in the day when the resolutioners had led the way in owning the authority of Charles Stewart, thereby making a gap whereat the present tyrant was afterwards brought in, to the oppression both of Kirk and country. They added, however, that, on this great day of calling, they would not refuse society with any who should put hand to the plough; and so Morton was installed in his office of leader and counsellor, if not with the full approbation of his colleagues, at least without any formal or avowed dissent. They proceeded, on Burley's motion, to divide among themselves the command of the men who had assembled, and whose numbers were daily increasing. In this partition, the insurgents of Poundtext's parish and congregation were naturally placed under the command of Morton; an arrangement mutually agreeable to both parties, as he was recommended to their confidence, as well by his personal qualities as his having been born among them.

When this task was accomplished, it became necessary to determine what use was to be made of their victory. Morton's heart throbbed high when he heard the Tower of Tillietudlem named as one of the most important positions to be seized upon. It commanded, as we have often noticed, the pass between the more wild and the more fertile country, and must furnish, it was plausibly urged, a stronghold and place of rendezvous to the cavaliers and malignants of the district, supposing the insurgents were to march onward and leave it uninvested. This measure was particularly urged as necessary by Poundtext and those of his immediate followers, whose habitations and families might be exposed to great severities, if this strong place were permitted to remain in possession of the royalists.

"I opine," said Poundtext,—for, like the other divines of the period, he had no hesitation in offering his advice upon military matters of which he was profoundly ignorant,—“I opine, that we should take in and raze that stronghold of the woman Lady Margaret Bellenden, even though we should build a fort and raise a mount against it; for the race is a rebellious and a bloody race, and their hand has been heavy on the children of the Covenant, both in the former and the latter times. Their hook hath been in our noses, and their bridle betwixt our jaws.”

"What are their means and men of defence?" said Burley. "The place is strong; but I cannot conceive that two women can make it good against a host."

"There is also," said Poundtext, "Harrison the steward, and John Gudyill, even the lady's chief butler, who boasteth himself a man of war from his youth upward, and who spread the banner against the good cause with that man of Belial, James Grahame of Montrose."

"Pshaw!" returned Burley, scornfully, "a butler!"

"Also, there is that ancient malignant," replied Poundtext, "Miles Bellenden of Charnwood, whose hands have been dipped in the blood of the saints."

"If that," said Burley, "be Miles Bellenden, the brother of Sir Arthur, he is one whose sword will not turn back from battle; but he must now be stricken in years."

"There was word in the country as I rode along," said another of the council, "that so soon as they heard of the victory which has been given to us, they caused shut the gates of the tower, and called in men, and collected ammunition. They were ever a fierce and a malignant house."

"We will not, with my consent," said Burley, "engage in a siege which may consume time. We must rush forward, and follow our advantage by occupying Glasgow; for I do not fear that the troops we have this day beaten, even with the assistance of my Lord Ross's regiment, will judge it safe to await our coming."

"Howbeit," said Poundtext, "we may display a banner before the Tower, and blow a trumpet, and summon them to come forth. It may be that they will give over the place into our mercy, though they be a rebellious people. And we will summon the women to come forth of their stronghold, that is, Lady Margaret Bellenden and her grand-daughter, and Jenny Dennison, which is a girl of an ensnaring eye, and the other maids, and we will give them a safe conduct, and send them in peace to the city, even to the town of Edinburgh. But John Gudyill, and Hugh Harrison, and Miles Bellenden, we will restrain with fetters of iron, even as they, in times bypast, have done to the martyred saints."

"Who talks of safe conduct and of peace?" said a shrill, broken, and overstrained voice, from the crowd.

"Peace, brother Habakkuk," said Macbriar, in a soothing tone, to the speaker.

"I will not hold my peace," reiterated the strange and unnatural voice; "is this a time to speak of peace, when the earth quakes, and the mountains are rent, and the rivers are changed into blood, and the two-edged sword is drawn from the sheath to drink gore as if it were water, and devour flesh as the fire devours dry stubble?"

While he spoke thus, the orator struggled forward to the inner part of the circle, and presented to Morton's wondering eyes a figure worthy of such a voice and such language. The rags of a dress which had once been black, added to the tattered fragments of a shepherd's plaid, composed a covering scarce fit for the purposes of decency, much less for those of warmth or comfort. A long beard, as white as snow, hung down on his breast, and mingled with bushy, uncombed, grizzled hair, which hung in elf-locks around his wild and staring visage. The features seemed to be extenuated by penury and famine, until they hardly retained the likeness of a human aspect. The eyes, grey, wild, and wandering, evidently betokened a bewildered imagination. He held in his hand a rusty sword, clotted with blood, as were his long lean hands, which were garnished at the extremity with nails like eagle's claws.

"In the name of Heaven! who is he?" said Morton, in a whisper to Poundtext, surprised, shocked, and even startled, at this ghastly apparition, which looked more like the resurrection of some cannibal priest, or druid red from his human sacrifice, than like an earthly mortal.

"It is Habakkuk Mucklewraith," answered Poundtext, in the same tone, "whom the enemy have long detained in captivity in forts and castles, until his understanding hath departed from him, and, as I fear, an evil demon hath possessed him. Nevertheless, our violent brethren will have it, that he speaketh of the spirit, and that they fructify by his pouring forth."

Here he was interrupted by Mucklewrath, who cried in a voice that made the very beams of the roof quiver—"Who talks of peace and safe conduct? who speaks of mercy to the bloody house of the malignants? I say take the infants and dash them against the stones; take the daughters and the mothers of the house and hurl them from the battlements of their trust, that the dogs may fatten on their blood as they did on that of Jezabel, the spouse of Ahab, and that their carcasses may be dung to the face of the field even in the portion of their fathers!"

"He speaks right," said more than one sullen voice from behind; "we will be honoured with little service in the great cause, if we already make fair weather with Heaven's enemies."

"This is utter abomination and daring impiety," said Morton, unable to contain his indignation.

"What blessing can you expect in a cause, in which you listen to the mingled ravings of madness and atrocity?"

"Hush, young man!" said Kettledrummy, "and reserve thy censure for that for which thou canst render a reason. It is not for thee to judge into what vessels the spirit may be poured."

"We judge of the tree by the fruit," said Poundtext, "and allow not that to be of divine inspiration that contradicts the divine laws."

"You forget, brother Poundtext," said Macbriar, "that these are the latter days, when signs and wonders shall be multiplied."

Poundtext stood forward to reply; but, ere he could articulate a word, the insane preacher broke in with a scream that drowned all competition.

"Who talks of signs and wonders? Am not I Habakkuk Mucklewrath, whose name is changed to Magor-Missabib, because I am made a terror unto myself and unto all that are around me?—I heard it—When did I hear it?—Was it not in the Tower of the Bass, that overhange the wide wild sea?—And it howled in the winds, and it roared in the billows, and it screamed, and it whistled, and it clanged, with the screams and the clang and the whistle of the sea-birds, as they floated, and flew, and dropped, and dived, on the bosom of the waters. I saw it—Where did I see it?—Was it not from the high peaks of Dunbarton, when I looked westward upon the fertile land, and northward on the wild Highland hills; when the clouds gathered and the tempest came, and the lightnings of heaven flashed in sheets as wide as the banners of an host?—What did I see?—Dead corpses and wounded horses, the rushing together of battle, and garments rolled in blood.—What heard I?—The voice that cried, Slay, slay—smite—slay utterly—let not your eye have pity! slay utterly, old and young, the maiden, the child, and the woman whose head is grey—Defile the house and fill the courts with the slain!"

"We receive the command," exclaimed more than one of the company. "Six days he hath not spoken nor broken bread, and now his tongue is unloosed:—We receive the command; as he hath said, so will we do."

Astonished, disgusted, and horror-struck, at what he had seen and heard, Morton turned away from the circle and left the cottage. He was followed by Burley, who had his eye on his motions.

"Whither are you going?" said the latter, taking him by the arm.

"Any where,—I care not whither; but here I will abide no longer."

"Art thou so soon weary, young man?" answered Burley. "Thy hand is but now put to the plough, and wouldst thou already abandon it? Is this thy adherence to the cause of thy father?"

"No cause," replied Morton, indignantly—"no cause can prosper, so conducted. One party declares for the ravings of a bloodthirsty madman; another leader is an old scholastic pedant; a third"—he stopped, and his companion continued the sentence—"Is a desperate homicide, thou wouldst say, like John Balfour of Burley?—I can bear thy misconstruction without resentment. Thou dost not consider, that it is not men of sober and self-seeking minds, who arise in these days of wrath to execute judgment and to accomplish deliverance. Hadst thou but seen the armies of England, during her Parliament of 1640, whose ranks were filled with sectaries and enthusiasts, wilder than the anabaptists of Munster, thou wouldst have had more cause to marvel; and yet these men were unconquered on the field, and their hands wrought marvellous things for the liberties of the land."

"But their affairs," replied Morton, "were wisely conducted, and the violence of their zeal expended itself in their exhortations and sermons, without bringing divisions into their counsels, or cruelty into their conduct. I have often heard my father say so, and protest, that he wondered at nothing so much as the contrast between the extravagance of their religious tenets, and the wisdom and moderation with which they conducted their civil and military affairs. But our councils seem all one wild chaos of confusion."

"Thou must have patience, Henry Morton," answered Balfour; "thou must not leave the cause of thy religion and country either for one wild word, or one extravagant action. Hear me. I have already persuaded the wiser of our friends, that the counsellors are too numerous, and that we cannot expect that the Midianites shall, by so large a number, be delivered into our hands. They have hearkened to my voice, and our assemblies will be shortly reduced within such a number as can consult and act together; and in them thou shalt have a free voice, as well as in ordering our affairs of war, and protecting those to whom mercy should be shown—Art thou now satisfied?"

"It will give me pleasure, doubtless," answered Morton, "to be the means of softening the horrors of civil war; and I will not leave the post I have taken, unless I see measures adopted at which my conscience revolts. But to no bloody executions after quarter asked, or slaughter without trial, will I lend countenance or sanction; and you may depend on my opposing them, with both heart and hand, as constantly and resolutely, if attempted by our own followers, as when they are the work of the enemy."

Balfour waved his hand impatiently.

"Thou wilt find," he said, "that the stubborn and hard-hearted generation with whom we deal, must be chastised with scorpions ere their hearts be humbled, and ere they accept the punishment of their iniquity. The word is gone forth against them, 'I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my Covenant.' But what is done shall be done gravely, and with discretion, like that of the worthy James Melvin, who executed judgment on the tyrant and oppressor, Cardinal Beaton."

"I own to you," replied Morton, "that I feel still more abhorrent at cold-blooded and premeditated cruelty, than at that which is practised in the heat of zeal and resentment."

"Thou art yet but a youth," replied Balfour, "and hast not learned how light in the balance are a few drops of blood in comparison to the weight and importance of this great national testimony. But be not afraid; thyself shall vote and judge in these matters; it may be we shall see little cause to strive together anent them."

With this concession Morton was compelled to be satisfied for the present; and Burley left him, advising him to lie down and get some rest, as the host would probably move in the morning.

"And you," answered Morton, "do not you go to rest also?"

"No," said Burley; "my eyes must not yet know slumber. This is no work to be done lightly; I have yet to perfect the choosing of the committee of leaders, and I will call you by times in the morning to be present at their consultation."

He turned away, and left Morton to his repose.

The place in which he found himself was not ill adapted for the purpose, being a sheltered nook, beneath a large rock, well protected from the prevailing wind. A quantity of moss with which the ground was overspread, made a couch soft enough for one who had suffered so much hardship and anxiety. Morton wrapped himself in the horse-man's cloak which he had still retained, stretched himself on the ground, and had not long indulged in melancholy reflections on the state of the country, and upon his own condition, ere he was relieved from them by deep and sound slumber.

The rest of the army slept on the ground, dispersed in groups, which chose their beds on the fields as they could best find shelter and convenience. A few of the principal leaders held wakeful conference with Burley on the state of their affairs, and some watchmen were appointed who kept themselves on the alert by chanting psalms, or listening to the exercises of the more gifted of their number.

CHAPTER II.

Got with much ease—now merrily to horse.

Henry IV. Part I.

With the first peep of day Henry awoke, and found the faithful Cuddie standing beside him with a portmanteau in his hand.

"I hae been just putting your honour's things in readiness again ye were waking," said Cuddie, "as is my duty, seeing ye hae been sae gude as to tak me into your service."

"I take you into my service, Cuddie?" said Morton, "you must be dreaming."

"Na, na, stir," answered Cuddie; "didna I say when I was tied on the horse yonder, that if ever ye gat loose I would be your servant, and ye didna say no? and if that isna hiring, I kenna what is. Ye gae me nae arles, indeed, but ye had gien me eneugh before at Milnwood."

"Well, Cuddie, if you insist on taking the chance of my unprosperous fortunes"—

"Ou ay, I'se warrant us a' prosper weel eneugh," answered Cuddie, cheeringly, "an anes my auld mither was weel putten up. I hae begun the campaigning trade at an end that is easy eneugh to learn."

"Pillaging, I suppose?" said Morton, "for how else could you come by that portmanteau?"

"I wotna if it's pillaging, or how ye ca't," said Cuddie, "but it comes natural to a body, and it's a profitable trade. Our folk had tirl'd the dead dragoons as bare as bawbees before we were loose amais.—But when I saw the Whigs a' weel yokit by the lugs to Kettledrummle and the other chield, I set off at the lang trot on my ain errand and your honour's. Sae I took up the syke a wee bit, away to the right, where I saw the marks o'mony a horsefoot, and sure eneugh I cam to a place where there had been some clean leatherin', and a' the puir chields were lying there buskit wi' their claes just as they had put them on that morning—naebody had found out that pose o' carcages—and wha suld be in the midst thereof (as my mither says) but our auld acquaintance, Sergeant Bothwell?"

"Ay, has that man fallen?" said Morton.

"Troth has he," answered Cuddie; "and his een were open and his brow bent, and his teeth clenched thegither, like the jaws of a trap for founmarts when the spring's doun—I was amais feared to look at him; however, I thought to hae turn about wi' him, and sae I e'en ripped his pouches, as he had dune mony an honest man's; and here's your ain siller again (or your uncle's, which is the same) that he got at Milnwood that unlucky night that made us a' sodgers thegither."

"There can be no harm, Cuddie," said Morton, "in making use of this money, since we know how he came by it; but you must divide with me."

"Bide a wee, bide a wee," said Cuddie. "Weel, and there's a bit ring he had hinging in a black ribbon doun on his breast. I am thinking it has been a love-token, puir fallow—there's naebody sae rough but they hae aye a kind heart to the lasses—and there's a book wi'a wheen papers, and I got twa or three odd things, that I'll keep to mysell, forby."

"Upon my word, you have made a very successful foray for a beginner," said his new master.

"Haena I e'en now?" said Cuddie, with great exultation. "I tauld ye I wasna that dooms stupid, if it cam to lifting things.—And forby, I hae gotten twa gude horse. A feckless loon of a Straven weaver, that has left his loom and his bein house to sit skirling on a cauld hill-side, had caught twa dragoon naigs, and he could neither gar them hup nor wind, sae he took a gowd noble for them baith—I suld hae tried him wi' half the siller, but it's an unco ill place to get change in—Ye'll find the siller's missing out o' Bothwell's purse."

"You have made a most excellent and useful purchase, Cuddie; but what is that portmanteau?"

"The pockmantle?" answered Cuddie, "it was Lord Evandale's yesterday, and it's yours the day. I fand it ahint the bush o' broom yonder—ilka dog has its day—Ye ken what the auld sang says,

'Take turn about, mither, quo' Tam o' the Linn.'

"And, speaking o' that, I maun gang and see about my mither, puir auld body, if your honour hasna ony immediate commands."

"But, Cuddie," said Morton, "I really cannot take these things from you without some recompense."

"Hout fie, stir," answered Cuddie, "ye suld aye be taking,—for recompense, ye may think about that some other time—I hae seen gay weel to mysell wi' some things that fit me better. What could I do wi' Lord Evandale's braw claes? Sergeant Bothwell's will serve me weel eneugh."

Not being able to prevail on the self-constituted and disinterested follower to accept of any thing for himself out of these warlike spoils, Morton resolved to take the first opportunity of returning Lord Evandale's property, supposing him yet to be alive; and, in the meanwhile, did not hesitate to avail himself of Cuddie's prize, so far as to appropriate some changes of linen and other trifling articles amongst those of more value which the portmanteau contained.

He then hastily looked over the papers which were found in Bothwell's pocket-book. These were of a miscellaneous description. The roll of his troop, with the names of those absent on furlough, memorandums of tavern-bills, and lists of delinquents who might be made subjects of fine and persecution, first presented themselves, along with a copy of a warrant from the Privy Council to arrest certain persons of distinction therein named. In another pocket of the book were one or two commissions which Bothwell had held at different times, and certificates of his services abroad, in which his courage and military talents were highly praised. But the most remarkable paper was an accurate account of his genealogy, with reference to many documents for establishment of its authenticity; subjoined was a list of the ample possessions of the forfeited Earls of Bothwell, and a particular account of the proportions in which King James VI. had bestowed them on the courtiers and nobility by whose descendants they were at present actually possessed; beneath this list was written, in red letters, in the hand of the deceased, Haud Immemor, F. S. E. B. the initials probably intimating Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell. To these documents, which strongly painted the character and feelings of their deceased proprietor, were added some which showed him in a light greatly different from that in which we have hitherto presented him to the reader.

In a secret pocket of the book, which Morton did not discover without some trouble, were one or two letters, written in a beautiful female hand. They were dated about twenty years back, bore no address, and were subscribed only by initials. Without having time to peruse them accurately, Morton perceived that they contained the elegant yet fond expressions of female affection directed towards an object whose jealousy they endeavoured to soothe, and of whose hasty, suspicious, and impatient temper, the writer seemed gently to complain. The ink of these manuscripts had faded by time, and, notwithstanding the great care which had obviously been taken for their preservation, they were in one or two places chafed so as to be illegible.

"It matters not," these words were written on the envelope of that which had suffered most, "I have them by heart."

With these letters was a lock of hair wrapped in a copy of verses, written obviously with a feeling, which atoned, in Morton's opinion, for the roughness of the poetry, and the conceits with which it abounded, according to the taste of the period:

Thy hue, dear pledge, is pure and bright, As in that well-remember'd night, When first thy mystic braid was wove, And first my Agnes whisper'd love. Since then, how often hast thou press'd The torrid zone of this wild breast, Whose wrath and hate have sworn to dwell With the first sin which peopled hell; A breast whose blood's a troubled ocean, Each throb the earthquake's wild commotion!—O, if such clime thou canst endure, Yet keep thy hue unstain'd and pure, What conquest o'er each erring thought Of that fierce realm had Agnes wrought! I had not wander'd wild and wide, With such an angel for my guide; Nor heaven nor earth could then reprove me, If she had lived, and lived to love me. Not then this world's wild joys had been To me one savage hunting-scene, My sole delight the headlong race, And frantic hurry of the chase, To start, pursue, and bring to bay, Rush in, drag down, and rend my prey, Then from the carcass turn away; Mine ireful mood had sweetness tamed, And soothed each wound which pride inflamed;—Yes, God and man might now approve me, If thou hadst lived, and lived to love me!

As he finished reading these lines, Morton could not forbear reflecting with compassion on the fate of this singular and most unhappy being, who, it appeared, while in the lowest state of degradation, and almost of contempt, had his recollections continually fixed on the high station to which his birth seemed to entitle him;

and, while plunged in gross licentiousness, was in secret looking back with bitter remorse to the period of his youth, during which he had nourished a virtuous, though unfortunate attachment.

"Alas! what are we," said Morton, "that our best and most praiseworthy feelings can be thus debased and depraved—that honourable pride can sink into haughty and desperate indifference for general opinion, and the sorrow of blighted affection inhabit the same bosom which license, revenge, and rapine, have chosen for their citadel? But it is the same throughout; the liberal principles of one man sink into cold and unfeeling indifference, the religious zeal of another hurries him into frantic and savage enthusiasm. Our resolutions, our passions, are like the waves of the sea, and, without the aid of Him who formed the human breast, we cannot say to its tides, 'Thus far shall ye come, and no farther.'"

While he thus moralized, he raised his eyes, and observed that Burley stood before him.

"Already awake?" said that leader—"It is well, and shows zeal to tread the path before you.—What papers are these?" he continued.

Morton gave him some brief account of Cuddie's successful marauding party, and handed him the pocket-book of Bothwell, with its contents. The Cameronian leader looked with some attention on such of the papers as related to military affairs, or public business; but when he came to the verses, he threw them from him with contempt.

"I little thought," he said, "when, by the blessing of God, I passed my sword three times through the body of that arch tool of cruelty and persecution, that a character so desperate and so dangerous could have stooped to an art as trifling as it is profane. But I see that Satan can blend the most different qualities in his well-beloved and chosen agents, and that the same hand which can wield a club or a slaughter-weapon against the godly in the valley of destruction, can touch a tinkling lute, or a gittern, to soothe the ears of the dancing daughters of perdition in their Vanity Fair."

"Your ideas of duty, then," said Morton, "exclude love of the fine arts, which have been supposed in general to purify and to elevate the mind?"

"To me, young man," answered Burley, "and to those who think as I do, the pleasures of this world, under whatever name disguised, are vanity, as its grandeur and power are a snare. We have but one object on earth, and that is to build up the temple of the Lord."

"I have heard my father observe," replied Morton, "that many who assumed power in the name of Heaven, were as severe in its exercise, and as unwilling to part with it, as if they had been solely moved by the motives of worldly ambition—But of this another time. Have you succeeded in obtaining a committee of the council to be nominated?"

"I have," answered Burley. "The number is limited to six, of which you are one, and I come to call you to their deliberations."

Morton accompanied him to a sequestered grassplot, where their colleagues awaited them. In this delegation of authority, the two principal factions which divided the tumultuary army had each taken care to send three of their own number. On the part of the Cameronians, were Burley, Macbriar, and Kettledrummle; and on that of the moderate party, Poundtext, Henry Morton, and a small proprietor, called the Laird of Langcale. Thus the two parties were equally balanced by their representatives in the committee of management, although it seemed likely that those of the most violent opinions were, as is usual in such cases, to possess and exert the greater degree of energy. Their debate, however, was conducted more like men of this world than could have been expected from their conduct on the preceding evening. After maturely considering their means and situation, and the probable increase of their numbers, they agreed that they would keep their position for that day, in order to refresh their men, and give time to reinforcements to join them, and that, on the next morning, they would direct their march towards Tillietudlem, and summon that stronghold, as they expressed it, of malignancy. If it was not surrendered to their summons, they resolved to try the effect of a brisk assault; and, should that miscarry, it was settled that they should leave a part of their number to blockade the place, and reduce it, if possible, by famine, while their main body should march forward to drive Claverhouse and Lord Ross from the town of Glasgow. Such was the determination of the council of management; and thus Morton's first enterprise in active life was likely to be the attack of a castle belonging to the parent of his mistress, and defended by her relative, Major Bellenden, to whom he personally owed many obligations! He felt fully the embarrassment of his situation, yet consoled himself with the reflection, that his newly-acquired power in the insurgent army would give him, at all events, the means of extending to the inmates of Tillietudlem a protection which no other circumstance could have afforded them; and he was not without hope that he might be able to mediate such an accommodation betwixt them and the presbyterian army, as should secure them a safe neutrality during the war which was about to ensue.

CHAPTER III.

*There came a knight from the field of slain,
His steed was drench'd in blood and rain.*

Finlay.

We must now return to the fortress of Tillietudlem and its inhabitants. The morning, being the first after the battle of Loudon-hill, had dawned upon its battlements, and the defenders had already resumed the labours by which they proposed to render the place tenable, when the watchman, who was placed in a high turret, called the Warder's Tower, gave the signal that a horseman was approaching. As he came nearer, his dress indicated an officer of the Life-Guards; and the slowness of his horse's pace, as well as the manner in which the rider stooped on the saddle-bow, plainly showed that he was sick or wounded. The wicket was instantly opened to receive him, and Lord Evandale rode into the court-yard, so reduced by loss of blood, that he was unable to dismount without assistance. As he entered the hall, leaning upon a servant, the ladies shrieked with surprise and terror; for, pale as death, stained with blood, his regimentals soiled and torn, and his hair matted and disordered, he resembled rather a spectre than a human being. But their next exclamation was that of joy at his escape.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Lady Margaret, "that you are here, and have escaped the hands of the bloodthirsty murderers who have cut off so many of the king's loyal servants!"

"Thank God!" added Edith, "that you are here and in safety! We have dreaded the worst. But you are wounded, and I fear we have little the means of assisting you."

"My wounds are only sword-cuts," answered the young nobleman, as he reposed himself on a seat; "the pain is not worth mentioning, and I should not even feel exhausted but for the loss of blood. But it was not my purpose to bring my weakness to add to your danger and distress, but to relieve them, if possible. What can I do for you?—Permit me," he added, addressing Lady Margaret—"permit me to think and act as your son, my dear madam—as your brother, Edith!"

He pronounced the last part of the sentence with some emphasis, as if he feared that the apprehension of his pretensions as a suitor might render his proffered services unacceptable to Miss Bellenden. She was not insensible to his delicacy, but there was no time for exchange of sentiments.

"We are preparing for our defence," said the old lady with great dignity; "my brother has taken charge of our garrison, and, by the grace of God, we will give the rebels such a reception as they deserve."

"How gladly," said Evandale, "would I share in the defence of the Castle! But in my present state, I should be but a burden to you, nay, something worse; for, the knowledge that an officer of the Life-Guards was in the Castle would be sufficient to make these rogues more desperately earnest to possess themselves of it. If they find it defended only by the family, they may possibly march on to Glasgow rather than hazard an assault."

"And can you think so meanly of us, my lord," said Edith, with the generous burst of feeling which woman so often evinces, and which becomes her so well, her voice faltering through eagerness, and her brow colouring with the noble warmth which dictated her language—"Can you think so meanly of your friends, as that they would permit such considerations to interfere with their sheltering and protecting you at a moment when you are unable to defend yourself, and when the whole country is filled with the enemy? Is there a cottage in Scotland whose owners would permit a valued friend to leave it in such circumstances? And can you think we will allow you to go from a castle which we hold to be strong enough for our own defence?"

"Lord Evandale need never think of it," said Lady Margaret. "I will dress his wounds myself; it is all an old wife is fit for in war time; but to quit the Castle of Tillietudlem when the sword of the enemy is drawn to slay him,—the meanest trooper that ever wore the king's coat on his back should not do so, much less my young Lord Evandale.—Ours is not a house that ought to brook such dishonour. The tower of Tillietudlem has been too much distinguished by the visit of his most sacred"—

Here she was interrupted by the entrance of the Major.

"We have taken a prisoner, my dear uncle," said Edith—"a wounded prisoner, and he wants to escape from us. You must help us to keep him by force."

"Lord Evandale!" exclaimed the veteran. "I am as much pleased as when I got my first commission. Claverhouse reported you were killed, or missing at least."

"I should have been slain, but for a friend of yours," said Lord Evandale, speaking with some emotion, and bending his eyes on the ground, as if he wished to avoid seeing the impression that what he was about to say would make upon Miss Bellenden. "I was unhorsed and defenceless, and the sword raised to dispatch me, when young Mr Morton, the prisoner for whom you interested yourself yesterday morning, interposed in the most generous manner, preserved my life, and furnished me with the means of escaping."

As he ended the sentence, a painful curiosity overcame his first resolution; he raised his eyes to Edith's face, and imagined he could read in the glow of her cheek and the sparkle of her eye, joy at hearing of her lover's safety and freedom, and triumph at his not having been left last in the race of generosity. Such, indeed, were her feelings; but they were also mingled with admiration of the ready frankness with which Lord Evandale had hastened to bear witness to the merit of a favoured rival, and to acknowledge an obligation which, in all probability, he would rather have owed to any other individual in the world.

Major Bellenden, who would never have observed the emotions of either party, even had they been much more markedly expressed, contented himself with saying, "Since Henry Morton has influence with these rascals, I am glad he has so exerted it; but I hope he will get clear of them as soon as he can. Indeed, I cannot doubt it. I know his principles, and that he detests their cant and hypocrisy. I have heard him laugh a thousand times at the pedantry of that old presbyterian scoundrel, Poundtext, who, after enjoying the indulgence of the government for so many years, has now, upon the very first ruffle, shown himself in his own proper colours, and set off, with three parts of his cropeared congregation, to join the host of the fanatics.—But how did you escape after leaving the field, my lord?"

"I rode for my life, as a recreant knight must," answered Lord Evandale, smiling. "I took the route where I thought I had least chance of meeting with any of the enemy, and I found shelter for several hours—you will hardly guess where."

"At Castle Bracklan, perhaps," said Lady Margaret, "or in the house of some other loyal gentleman?"

"No, madam. I was repulsed, under one mean pretext or another, from more than one house of that description, for fear of the enemy following my traces; but I found refuge in the cottage of a poor widow, whose husband had been shot within these three months by a party of our corps, and whose two sons are at this very moment with the insurgents."

"Indeed?" said Lady Margaret Bellenden; "and was a fanatic woman capable of such generosity?—but she disapproved, I suppose, of the tenets of her family?"

"Far from it, madam," continued the young nobleman; "she was in principle a rigid recusant, but she saw my danger and distress, considered me as a fellow-creature, and forgot that I was a cavalier and a soldier. She bound my wounds, and permitted me to rest upon her bed, concealed me from a party of the insurgents who were seeking for stragglers, supplied me with food, and did not suffer me to leave my place of refuge until she had learned that I had every chance of getting to this tower without danger."

"It was nobly done," said Miss Bellenden; "and I trust you will have an opportunity of rewarding her generosity."

"I am running up an arrear of obligation on all sides, Miss Bellenden, during these unfortunate occurrences," replied Lord Evandale; "but when I can attain the means of showing my gratitude, the will shall not be wanting."

All now joined in pressing Lord Evandale to relinquish his intention of leaving the Castle; but the argument of Major Bellenden proved the most effectual.

"Your presence in the Castle will be most useful, if not absolutely necessary, my lord, in order to maintain, by your authority, proper discipline among the fellows whom Claverhouse has left in garrison here, and who do not prove to be of the most orderly description of inmates; and, indeed, we have the Colonel's authority, for that very purpose, to detain any officer of his regiment who might pass this way."

"That," said Lord Evandale, "is an unanswerable argument, since it shows me that my residence here may be useful, even in my present disabled state."

"For your wounds, my lord," said the Major, "if my sister, Lady Bellenden, will undertake to give battle to any feverish symptom, if such should appear, I will answer that my old campaigner, Gideon Pike, shall dress a flesh-wound with any of the incorporation of Barber-Surgeons. He had enough of practice in Montrose's time, for we had few regularly-bred army surgeons, as you may well suppose.—You agree to stay with us, then?"

"My reasons for leaving the Castle," said Lord Evandale, glancing a look towards Edith, "though they evidently seemed weighty, must needs give way to those which infer the power of serving you. May I presume, Major, to enquire into the means and plan of defence which you have prepared? or can I attend you to examine the works?"

It did not escape Miss Bellenden, that Lord Evandale seemed much exhausted both in body and mind. "I think, sir," she said, addressing the Major, "that since Lord Evandale condescends to become an officer of our garrison, you should begin by rendering him amenable to your authority, and ordering him to his apartment, that he may take some refreshment ere he enters on military discussions."

"Edith is right," said the old lady; "you must go instantly to bed, my lord, and take some febrifuge, which I will prepare with my own hand; and my lady-in-waiting, Mistress Martha Weddell, shall make some friar's chicken, or something very light. I would not advise wine.—John Gudyill, let the housekeeper make ready the chamber of dais. Lord Evandale must lie down instantly. Pike will take off the dressings, and examine the state of the wounds."

"These are melancholy preparations, madam," said Lord Evandale, as he returned thanks to Lady Margaret, and was about to leave the hall,—"but I must submit to your ladyship's directions; and I trust that your skill will soon make me a more able defender of your castle than I am at present. You must render my body serviceable as soon as you can, for you have no use for my head while you have Major Bellenden."

With these words he left the apartment.

"An excellent young man, and a modest," said the Major.

"None of that conceit," said Lady Margaret, "that often makes young folk suppose they know better how their complaints should be treated than people that have had experience."

"And so generous and handsome a young nobleman," said Jenny Dennison, who had entered during the latter part of this conversation, and was now left alone with her mistress in the hall, the Major returning to his military cares, and Lady Margaret to her medical preparations.

Edith only answered these encomiums with a sigh; but, although silent, she felt and knew better than any one how much they were merited by the person on whom they were bestowed. Jenny, however, failed not to follow up her blow.

"After a', it's true that my lady says—there's nae trusting a presbyterian; they are a' faithless man-sworn louns. Whae wad hae thought that young Milnwood and Cuddie Headrigg wad hae taen on wi' thae rebel blackguards?"

"What do you mean by such improbable nonsense, Jenny?" said her young mistress, very much displeased.

"I ken it's no pleasing for you to hear, madam," answered Jenny hardily; "and it's as little pleasant for me to tell; but as gude ye suld ken a' about it sune as syne, for the haill Castle's ringing wi't."

"Ringing with what, Jenny? Have you a mind to drive me mad?" answered Edith, impatiently.

"Just that Henry Morton of Milnwood is out wi' the rebels, and ane o' their chief leaders."

"It is a falsehood!" said Edith—"a most base calumny! and you are very bold to dare to repeat it to me. Henry Morton is incapable of such treachery to his king and country—such cruelty to me—to—to all the innocent and defenceless victims, I mean, who must suffer in a civil war—I tell you he is utterly incapable of it, in every sense."

"Dear! dear! Miss Edith," replied Jenny, still constant to her text, "they maun be better acquainted wi' young men than I am, or ever wish to be, that can tell preceesely what they're capable or no capable o'. But there has been Trooper Tam, and another chield, out in bonnets and grey plaids, like countrymen, to recon—reconnoitre—I think John Gudyill ca'd it; and they hae been among the rebels, and brought back word that they had seen young Milnwood mounted on ane o' the dragoon horses that was taen at Loudon-hill, armed wi' swords and pistols, like wha but him, and hand and glove wi' the foremost o' them, and dreeling and commanding the men; and Cuddie at the heels o' him, in ane o' Sergeant Bothwell's laced waistcoats, and a cockit hat with a bab o' blue ribbands at it for the auld cause o' the Covenant, (but Cuddie aye liked a blue ribband,) and a ruffled sark, like ony lord o' the land—it sets the like o' him, indeed!"

"Jenny," said her young mistress hastily, "it is impossible these men's report can be true; my uncle has heard nothing of it at this instant."

"Because Tam Halliday," answered the handmaiden, "came in just five minutes after Lord Evandale; and when he heard his lordship was in the Castle, he swore (the profane loon!) he would be d—d ere he would make the report, as he ca'd it, of his news to Major Bellenden, since there was an officer of his ain regiment in the garrison. Sae he wad have said naething till Lord Evandale wakened the next morning; only he tauld me about it," (here Jenny looked a little down,) "just to vex me about Cuddie."

"Poh, you silly girl," said Edith, assuming some courage, "it is all a trick of that fellow to tease you."

"Na, madam, it canna be that, for John Gudyill took the other dragoon (he's an auld hard-favoured man, I wotna his name) into the cellar, and gae him a tass o' brandy to get the news out o' him, and he said just the same as Tam Halliday, word for word; and Mr Gudyill was in sic a rage, that he tauld it a' ower again to us, and says the haill rebellion is owing to the nonsense o' my Leddy and the Major, and Lord Evandale, that begged off young Milnwood and Cuddie yesterday morning, for that, if they had suffered, the country wad hae been quiet—and troth I am muckle o' that opinion mysell."

This last commentary Jenny added to her tale, in resentment of her mistress's extreme and obstinate incredulity. She was instantly alarmed, however, by the effect which her news produced upon her young lady, an effect rendered doubly violent by the High-church principles and prejudices in which Miss Bellenden had been educated. Her complexion became as pale as a corpse, her respiration so difficult that it was on the point of altogether failing her, and her limbs so incapable of supporting her, that she sunk, rather than sat, down upon one of the seats in the hall, and seemed on the eve of fainting. Jenny tried cold water, burnt feathers, cutting of laces, and all other remedies usual in hysterical cases, but without any immediate effect.

"God forgie me! what hae I done?" said the repentant fille-de-chambre. "I wish my tongue had been cuttit out!—Wha wad hae thought o' her taking on that way, and a' for a young lad?—O, Miss Edith—dear Miss Edith, haud your heart up about it, it's maybe no true for a' that I hae said—O, I wish my mouth had been blistered! A' body tells me my tongue will do me a mischief some day. What if my Leddy comes? or the Major?—and she's sitting in the throne, too, that naebody has sate in since that weary morning the King was here!—O, what will I do! O, what will become o' us!"

While Jenny Dennison thus lamented herself and her mistress, Edith slowly returned from the paroxysm into which she had been thrown by this unexpected intelligence.

"If he had been unfortunate," she said, "I never would have deserted him. I never did so, even when there was danger and disgrace in pleading his cause. If he had died, I would have mourned him—if he had been unfaithful, I would have forgiven him; but a rebel to his King,—a traitor to his country,—the associate and colleague of cut-throats and common stabbers,—the persecutor of all that is noble,—the professed and blasphemous enemy of all that is sacred,—I will tear him from my heart, if my life-blood should ebb in the effort!"

She wiped her eyes, and rose hastily from the great chair, (or throne, as Lady Margaret used to call it,) while the terrified damsel hastened to shake up the cushion, and efface the appearance of any one having occupied that sacred seat; although King Charles himself, considering the youth and beauty as well as the affliction of the momentary usurper of his hallowed chair, would probably have thought very little of the profanation. She then hastened officiously to press her support on Edith, as she paced the hall apparently in deep meditation.

"Tak my arm, madam; better just tak my arm; sorrow maun hae its vent, and doubtless"—

"No, Jenny," said Edith, with firmness; "you have seen my weakness, and you shall see my strength."

"But ye leaned on me the other morning. Miss Edith, when ye were sae sair grieved."

"Misplaced and erring affection may require support, Jenny—duty can support itself; yet I will do nothing rashly. I will be aware of the reasons of his conduct—and then—cast him off for ever," was the firm and determined answer of her young lady.

Overawed by a manner of which she could neither conceive the motive, nor estimate the merit, Jenny muttered between her teeth, "Odd, when the first flight's ower, Miss Edith taks it as easy as I do, and muckle easier, and I'm sure I ne'er cared half sae muckle about Cuddie Headrigg as she did about young Milnwood. Forby that, it's maybe as weel to hae a friend on baith sides; for, if the whigs suld come to tak the Castle, as it's like they may, when there's sae little victual, and the dragoons wasting what's o't, ou, in that case, Milnwood and Cuddie wad hae the upper hand, and their freendship wad be worth siller—I was thinking sae this morning or I heard the news."

With this consolatory reflection the damsel went about her usual occupations, leaving her mistress to school her mind as she best might, for eradicating the sentiments which she had hitherto entertained towards Henry Morton.

CHAPTER IV.

Once more into the breach—dear friends, once more!

Henry V.

On the evening of this day, all the information which they could procure led them to expect, that the insurgent army would be with early dawn on their march against Tillietudlem. Lord Evandale's wounds had been examined by Pike, who reported them in a very promising state. They were numerous, but none of any consequence; and the loss of blood, as much perhaps as the boasted specific of Lady Margaret, had prevented any tendency to fever; so that, notwithstanding he felt some pain and great weakness, the patient maintained that he was able to creep about with the assistance of a stick. In these circumstances he refused to be confined to his apartment, both that he might encourage the soldiers by his presence, and suggest any necessary addition to the plan of defence, which the Major might be supposed to have arranged upon something of an antiquated fashion of warfare. Lord Evandale was well qualified to give advice on such subjects, having served, during his early youth, both in France and in the Low Countries. There was little or no occasion, however, for altering the preparations already made; and, excepting on the article of provisions, there seemed no reason to fear for the defence of so strong a place against such assailants as those by whom it was threatened.

With the peep of day, Lord Evandale and Major Bellenden were on the battlements again, viewing and re-viewing the state of their preparations, and anxiously expecting the approach of the enemy. I ought to observe, that the report of the spies had now been regularly made and received; but the Major treated the report that Morton was in arms against the government with the most scornful incredulity.

"I know the lad better," was the only reply he deigned to make; "the fellows have not dared to venture near enough, and have been deceived by some fanciful resemblance, or have picked up some story."

"I differ from you, Major," answered Lord Evandale; "I think you will see that young gentleman at the head of the insurgents; and, though I shall be heartily sorry for it, I shall not be greatly surprised."

"You are as bad as Claverhouse," said the Major, "who contended yesterday morning down my very throat, that this young fellow, who is as high-spirited and gentleman-like a boy as I have ever known, wanted but an opportunity to place himself at the head of the rebels."

"And considering the usage which he has received, and the suspicions under which he lies," said Lord Evandale, "what other course is open to him? For my own part, I should hardly know whether he deserved most blame or pity."

"Blame, my lord?—Pity!" echoed the Major, astonished at hearing such sentiments; "he would deserve to be hanged, that's all; and, were he my own son, I should see him strung up with pleasure—Blame, indeed! But your lordship cannot think as you are pleased to speak?"

"I give you my honour, Major Bellenden, that I have been for some time of opinion, that our politicians and prelates have driven matters to a painful extremity in this country, and have alienated, by violence of various kinds, not only the lower classes, but all those in the upper ranks, whom strong party-feeling, or a desire of court-interest, does not attach to their standard."

"I am no politician," answered the Major, "and I do not understand nice distinctions. My sword is the King's, and when he commands, I draw it in his cause."

"I trust," replied the young lord, "you will not find me more backward than yourself, though I heartily wish that the enemy were foreigners. It is, however, no time to debate that matter, for yonder they come, and we must defend ourselves as well as we can."

As Lord Evandale spoke, the van of the insurgents began to make their appearance on the road which crossed the top of the hill, and thence descended opposite to the Tower. They did not, however, move downwards, as if aware that, in doing so, their columns would be exposed to the fire of the artillery of the place. But their numbers, which at first seemed few, appeared presently so to deepen and concentrate themselves, that, judging of the masses which occupied the road behind the hill from the closeness of the front which they presented on the top of it, their force appeared very considerable. There was a pause of anxiety on both sides; and, while the unsteady ranks of the Covenanters were agitated, as if by pressure behind, or uncertainty as to their next movement, their arms, picturesque from their variety, glanced in the morning sun, whose beams were reflected from a grove of pikes, muskets, halberds, and battle-axes. The armed mass occupied, for a few minutes, this fluctuating position, until three or four horsemen, who seemed to be leaders, advanced from the front, and occupied the height a little nearer to the Castle. John Gudyill, who was not without some skill as an artilleryman, brought a gun to bear on this detached group.

"I'll flee the falcon,"—(so the small cannon was called,)—"I'll flee the falcon whene'er your honour gies command; my certie, she'll ruffle their feathers for them!"

The Major looked at Lord Evandale.

"Stay a moment," said the young nobleman, "they send us a flag of truce."

In fact, one of the horsemen at that moment dismounted, and, displaying a white cloth on a pike, moved forward towards the Tower, while the Major and Lord Evandale, descending from the battlement of the main fortress, advanced to meet him as far as the barricade, judging it unwise to admit him within the precincts which they designed to defend. At the same time that the ambassador set forth, the group of horsemen, as if they had anticipated the preparations of John Gudyill for their annoyance, withdrew from the advanced station which they had occupied, and fell back to the main body.

The envoy of the Covenanters, to judge by his mien and manner, seemed fully imbued with that spiritual pride which distinguished his sect. His features were drawn up to a contemptuous primness, and his half-shut eyes seemed to scorn to look upon the terrestrial objects around, while, at every solemn stride, his toes were pointed outwards with an air that appeared to despise the ground on which they trode. Lord Evandale could not suppress a smile at this singular figure.

"Did you ever," said he to Major Bellenden, "see such an absurd automaton? One would swear it moves upon springs—Can it speak, think you?"

"O, ay," said the Major; "that seems to be one of my old acquaintance, a genuine puritan of the right pharisaical leaven.—Stay—he coughs and hems; he is about to summon the Castle with the but-end of a sermon, instead of a parley on the trumpet."

The veteran, who in his day had had many an opportunity to become acquainted with the manners of these religionists, was not far mistaken in his conjecture; only that, instead of a prose exordium, the Laird of Langcale—for it was no less a personage—uplifted, with a Stentorian voice, a verse of the twenty-fourth Psalm:

"Ye gates lift up your heads! ye doors, Doors that do last for aye, Be lifted up"—

"I told you so," said the Major to Evandale, and then presented himself at the entrance of the barricade, demanding to know for what purpose or intent he made that doleful noise, like a hog in a high wind, beneath the gates of the Castle.

"I come," replied the ambassador, in a high and shrill voice, and without any of the usual salutations or deferences,—"*I come from the godly army of the Solemn League and Covenant, to speak with two carnal malignants, William Maxwell, called Lord Evandale, and Miles Bellenden of Charnwood.*"

"And what have you to say to Miles Bellenden and Lord Evandale?" answered the Major.

"Are you the parties?" said the Laird of Langcale, in the same sharp, conceited, disrespectful tone of voice.

"Even so, for fault of better," said the Major.

"Then there is the public summons," said the envoy, putting a paper into Lord Evandale's hand, "and there is a private letter for Miles Bellenden from a godly youth, who is honoured with leading a part of our host. Read them quickly, and God give you grace to fructify by the contents, though it is muckle to be doubted."

The summons ran thus: "We, the named and constituted leaders of the gentlemen, ministers, and others, presently in arms for the cause of liberty and true religion, do warn and summon William Lord Evandale and Miles Bellenden of Charnwood, and others presently in arms, and keeping garrison in the Tower of Tillietudlem, to surrender the said Tower upon fair conditions of quarter, and license to depart with bag and baggage, otherwise to suffer such extremity of fire and sword as belong by the laws of war to those who hold out an untenable post. And so may God defend his own good cause!"

This summons was signed by John Balfour of Burley, as quarter-master general of the army of the Covenant, for himself, and in name of the other leaders.

The letter to Major Bellenden was from Henry Morton. It was couched in the following language:

"I have taken a step, my venerable friend, which, among many painful consequences, will, I am afraid, incur your very decided disapprobation. But I have taken my resolution in honour and good faith, and with the full approval of my own conscience. I can no longer submit to have my own rights and those of my fellow-subjects trampled upon, our freedom violated, our persons insulted, and our blood spilt, without just cause or legal trial. Providence, through the violence of the oppressors themselves, seems now to have opened a way of deliverance from this intolerable tyranny, and I do not hold him deserving of the name and rights of a freeman, who, thinking as I do, shall withhold his arm from the cause of his country. But God, who knows my heart, be my witness, that I do not share the angry or violent passions of the oppressed and harassed sufferers with whom I am now acting. My most earnest and anxious desire is, to see this unnatural war brought to a speedy end, by the union of the good, wise, and moderate of all parties, and a peace restored, which, without injury to the King's constitutional rights, may substitute the authority of equal laws to that of military violence, and, permitting to all men to worship God according to their own consciences, may subdue fanatical enthusiasm by reason and mildness, instead of driving it to frenzy by persecution and intolerance.

"With these sentiments, you may conceive with what pain I appear in arms before the house of your venerable relative, which we understand you propose to hold out against us. Permit me to press upon you the assurance, that such a measure will only lead to the effusion of blood—that, if repulsed in the assault, we are yet strong enough to invest the place, and reduce it by hunger, being aware of your indifferent preparations to sustain a protracted siege. It would grieve me to the heart to think what would be the sufferings in such a case, and upon whom they would chiefly fall.

"Do not suppose, my respected friend, that I would propose to you any terms which could compromise the high and honourable character which you have so deservedly won, and so long borne. If the regular soldiers (to whom I will ensure a safe retreat) are dismissed from the place, I trust no more will be required than your parole to remain neuter during this unhappy contest; and I will take care that Lady Margaret's property, as well as yours, shall be duly respected, and no garrison intruded upon you. I could say much in favour of this proposal; but I fear, as I must

in the present instance appear criminal in your eyes, good arguments would lose their influence when coming from an unwelcome quarter. I will, therefore, break off with assuring you, that whatever your sentiments may be hereafter towards me, my sense of gratitude to you can never be diminished or erased; and it would be the happiest moment of my life that should give me more effectual means than mere words to assure you of it. Therefore, although in the first moment of resentment you may reject the proposal I make to you, let not that prevent you from resuming the topic, if future events should render it more acceptable; for whenever, or howsoever, I can be of service to you, it will always afford the greatest satisfaction to

"Henry Morton."

Having read this long letter with the most marked indignation, Major Bellenden put it into the hands of Lord Evandale.

"I would not have believed this," he said, "of Henry Morton, if half mankind had sworn it! The ungrateful, rebellious traitor! rebellious in cold blood, and without even the pretext of enthusiasm, that warms the liver of such a crack-brained fop as our friend the envoy there. But I should have remembered he was a presbyterian—I ought to have been aware that I was nursing a wolf-cub, whose diabolical nature would make him tear and snatch at me on the first opportunity. Were Saint Paul on earth again, and a presbyterian, he would be a rebel in three months—it is in the very blood of them."

"Well," said Lord Evandale, "I will be the last to recommend surrender; but, if our provisions fail, and we receive no relief from Edinburgh or Glasgow, I think we ought to avail ourselves of this opening, to get the ladies, at least, safe out of the Castle."

"They will endure all, ere they would accept the protection of such a smooth-tongued hypocrite," answered the Major indignantly; "I would renounce them for relatives were it otherwise. But let us dismiss the worthy ambassador.—My friend," he said, turning to Langcale, "tell your leaders, and the mob they have gathered yonder, that, if they have not a particular opinion of the hardness of their own skulls, I would advise them to beware how they knock them against these old walls. And let them send no more flags of truce, or we will hang up the messenger in retaliation of the murder of Cornet Grahame."

With this answer the ambassador returned to those by whom he had been sent. He had no sooner reached the main body than a murmur was heard amongst the multitude, and there was raised in front of their ranks an ample red flag, the borders of which were edged with blue. As the signal of war and defiance spread out its large folds upon the morning wind, the ancient banner of Lady Margaret's family, together with the royal ensign, were immediately hoisted on the walls of the Tower, and at the same time, a round of artillery was discharged against the foremost ranks of the insurgents, by which they sustained some loss. Their leaders instantly withdrew them to the shelter of the brow of the hill.

"I think," said John Gudyill, while he busied himself in re-charging his guns, "they hae fund the falcon's neb a bit ower hard for them—It's no for nought that the hawk whistles."

But as he uttered these words, the ridge was once more crowded with the ranks of the enemy. A general discharge of their fire-arms was directed against the defenders upon the battlements. Under cover of the smoke, a column of picked men rushed down the road with determined courage, and, sustaining with firmness a heavy fire from the garrison, they forced their way, in spite of opposition, to the first barricade by which the avenue was defended. They were led on by Balfour in person, who displayed courage equal to his enthusiasm; and, in spite of every opposition, forced the barricade, killing and wounding several of the defenders, and compelling the rest to retreat to their second position. The precautions, however, of Major Bellenden rendered this success unavailing; for no sooner were the Covenanters in possession of the post, than a close and destructive fire was poured into it from the Castle, and from those stations which commanded it in the rear. Having no means of protecting themselves from this fire, or of returning it with effect against men who were under cover of their barricades and defences, the Covenanters were obliged to retreat; but not until they had, with their axes, destroyed the stockade, so as to render it impossible for the defenders to re-occupy it. Balfour was the last man that retired. He even remained for a short space almost alone, with an axe in his hand, labouring like a pioneer amid the storm of balls, many of which were specially aimed against him. The retreat of the party he commanded was not effected without heavy loss, and served as a severe lesson concerning the local advantages possessed by the garrison.

The next attack of the Covenanters was made with more caution. A strong party of marksmen, (many of them competitors at the game of the popinjay,) under the command of Henry Morton, glided through the woods where they afforded them the best shelter, and, avoiding the open road, endeavoured, by forcing their way through the bushes and trees, and up the rocks which surrounded it on either side, to gain a position, from which, without being exposed in an intolerable degree, they might annoy the flank of the second barricade, while it was menaced in front by a second attack from Burley. The besieged saw the danger of this movement, and endeavoured to impede the approach of the marksmen, by firing upon them at every point where they showed themselves. The assailants, on the other hand, displayed great coolness, spirit, and judgment, in the manner in which they approached the defences. This was, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the steady and adroit manner in which they were conducted by their youthful leader, who showed as much skill in protecting his own followers as spirit in annoying the enemy.

He repeatedly enjoined his marksmen to direct their aim chiefly upon the red-coats, and to save the others engaged in the defence of the Castle; and, above all, to spare the life of the old Major, whose anxiety made him more than once expose himself in a manner, that, without such generosity on the part of the enemy, might have proved fatal. A dropping fire of musketry now glanced from every part of the precipitous mount on which the Castle was founded. From bush to bush—from crag to crag—from tree to tree, the marksmen continued to advance, availing themselves of branches and roots to assist their ascent, and contending at once with the disadvantages of the ground and the fire of the enemy. At length they got so high on the ascent, that several of them possessed an opportunity of firing into the barricade against the defenders, who then lay exposed to their aim, and Burley, profiting by the confusion of the moment, moved forward to the attack in front. His onset was made with the same desperation and fury as before, and met with less resistance, the defenders being alarmed at the progress which the sharpshooters had made in turning the flank of their position. Determined to improve his advantage, Burley, with his axe in his hand, pursued the party whom he had dislodged even to the third and last barricade, and entered it along with them.

"Kill, kill—down with the enemies of God and his people!—No quarter—The Castle is ours!" were the cries by which he animated his friends; the most undaunted of whom followed him close, whilst the others, with axes, spades, and other implements, threw up earth, cut down trees, hastily labouring to establish such a defensive cover in the rear of the second barricade as might enable them to retain possession of it, in case the Castle was not carried by this coup-de-main.

Lord Evandale could no longer restrain his impatience. He charged with a few soldiers who had been kept in reserve in the court-yard of the Castle; and, although his arm was in a sling, encouraged them, by voice and gesture, to assist their companions who were engaged with Burley. The combat now assumed an air of desperation. The narrow road was crowded with the followers of Burley, who pressed forward to support their companions. The soldiers, animated by the voice and presence of Lord Evandale, fought with fury, their small numbers being in some measure compensated by their greater skill, and by their possessing the upper ground, which they defended desperately with pikes and halberds, as well as with the but of the carabines and their broadswords. Those within the Castle endeavoured to assist their companions, whenever they could so level their guns as to fire upon the enemy without endangering their friends. The sharpshooters, dispersed around, were firing incessantly on each object that was exposed upon the battlement. The Castle was enveloped with smoke, and the rocks rang to the cries of the combatants. In the midst of this scene of confusion, a singular accident had nearly given the besiegers possession of the fortress.

Cuddie Headrigg, who had advanced among the marksmen, being well acquainted with every rock and bush in the vicinity of the Castle, where he had so often gathered nuts with Jenny Dennison, was enabled, by such local knowledge, to advance farther, and with less danger, than most of his companions, excepting some three or four who had followed him close. Now Cuddie, though a brave enough fellow upon the whole, was by no means fond of danger, either for its own

sake, or for that of the glory which attends it. In his advance, therefore, he had not, as the phrase goes, taken the bull by the horns, or advanced in front of the enemy's fire. On the contrary, he had edged gradually away from the scene of action, and, turning his line of ascent rather to the left, had pursued it until it brought him under a front of the Castle different from that before which the parties were engaged, and to which the defenders had given no attention, trusting to the steepness of the precipice. There was, however, on this point, a certain window belonging to a certain pantry, and communicating with a certain yew-tree, which grew out of a steep cleft of the rock, being the very pass through which Goose Gibbie was smuggled out of the Castle in order to carry Edith's express to Charnwood, and which had probably, in its day, been used for other contraband purposes. Cuddie, resting upon the butt of his gun, and looking up at this window, observed to one of his companions,—“There's a place I ken weel; mony a time I hae helped Jenny Dennison out o' the winnock, forby creeping in whiles myself to get some daffin, at e'en after the pleugh was loosed.”

“And what's to hinder us to creep in just now?” said the other, who was a smart enterprising young fellow.

“There's no muckle to hinder us, an that were a',” answered Cuddie; “but what were we to do neist?”

“We'll take the Castle,” cried the other; “here are five or six o' us, and a' the sodgers are engaged at the gate.”

“Come awa wi' you, then,” said Cuddie; “but mind, deil a finger ye maun lay on Lady Margaret, or Miss Edith, or the auld Major, or, aboon a', on Jenny Dennison, or ony body but the sodgers—cut and quarter amang them as ye like, I carena.”

“Ay, ay,” said the other, “let us once in, and we will make our ain terms with them a'.”

Gingerly, and as if treading upon eggs, Cuddie began to ascend the well-known pass, not very willingly; for, besides that he was something apprehensive of the reception he might meet with in the inside, his conscience insisted that he was making but a shabby requital for Lady Margaret's former favours and protection. He got up, however, into the yew-tree, followed by his companions, one after another. The window was small, and had been secured by stanchions of iron; but these had been long worn away by time, or forced out by the domestics to possess a free passage for their own occasional convenience. Entrance was therefore easy, providing there was no one in the pantry, a point which Cuddie endeavoured to discover before he made the final and perilous step. While his companions, therefore, were urging and threatening him behind, and he was hesitating and stretching his neck to look into the apartment, his head became visible to Jenny Dennison, who had ensconced herself in said pantry as the safest place in which to wait the issue of the assault. So soon as this object of terror caught her eye, she set up a hysteric scream, flew to the adjacent kitchen, and, in the desperate agony of fear, seized on a pot of kailbrose which she herself had hung on the fire before the combat began, having promised to Tam Halliday to prepare his breakfast for him. Thus burdened, she returned to the window of the pantry, and still exclaiming, “Murder! murder!—we are a' harried and ravished—the Castle's taen—tak it amang ye!” she discharged the whole scalding contents of the pot, accompanied with a dismal yell, upon the person of the unfortunate Cuddie. However welcome the mess might have been, if Cuddie and it had become acquainted in a regular manner, the effects, as administered by Jenny, would probably have cured him of soldiering for ever, had he been looking upwards when it was thrown upon him. But, fortunately for our man of war, he had taken the alarm upon Jenny's first scream, and was in the act of looking down, expostulating with his comrades, who impeded the retreat which he was anxious to commence; so that the steel cap and buff coat which formerly belonged to Sergeant Bothwell, being garments of an excellent endurance, protected his person against the greater part of the scalding brose. Enough, however, reached him to annoy him severely, so that in the pain and surprise he jumped hastily out of the tree, oversetting his followers, to the manifest danger of their limbs, and, without listening to arguments, entreaties, or authority, made the best of his way by the most safe road to the main body of the army whereunto he belonged, and could neither by threats nor persuasion be prevailed upon to return to the attack.

As for Jenny, when she had thus conferred upon one admirer's outward man the viands which her fair hands had so lately been in the act of preparing for the stomach of another, she continued her song of alarm, running a screaming division upon all those crimes, which the lawyers call the four pleas of the crown, namely, murder, fire, rape, and robbery. These hideous exclamations gave so much alarm, and created such confusion within the Castle, that Major Bellenden and Lord Evandale judged it best to draw off from the conflict without the gates, and, abandoning to the enemy all the exterior defences of the avenue, confine themselves to the Castle itself, for fear of its being surprised on some unguarded point. Their retreat was unmolested; for the panic of Cuddie and his companions had occasioned nearly as much confusion on the side of the besiegers, as the screams of Jenny had caused to the defenders.

There was no attempt on either side to renew the action that day. The insurgents had suffered most severely; and, from the difficulty which they had experienced in carrying the barricaded positions without the precincts of the Castle, they could have but little hope of storming the place itself. On the other hand, the situation of the besieged was dispiriting and gloomy. In the skirmishing they had lost two or three men, and had several wounded; and though their loss was in proportion greatly less than that of the enemy, who had left twenty men dead on the place, yet their small number could much worse spare it, while the desperate attacks of the opposite party plainly showed how serious the leaders were in the purpose of reducing the place, and how well seconded by the zeal of their followers. But, especially, the garrison had to fear for hunger, in case blockade should be resorted to as the means of reducing them. The Major's directions had been imperfectly obeyed in regard to laying in provisions; and the dragoons, in spite of all warning and authority, were likely to be wasteful in using them. It was, therefore, with a heavy heart, that Major Bellenden gave directions for guarding the window through which the Castle had so nearly been surprised, as well as all others which offered the most remote facility for such an enterprise.

CHAPTER V.

The King hath drawn

The special head of all the land together.

Henry IV. Part II.

The leaders of the presbyterian army had a serious consultation upon the evening of the day in which they had made the attack on Tillietudlem. They could not but observe that their followers were disheartened by the loss which they had sustained, and which, as usual in such cases, had fallen upon the bravest and most forward. It was to be feared, that if they were suffered to exhaust their zeal and efforts in an object so secondary as the capture of this petty fort, their numbers would melt away by degrees, and they would lose all the advantages arising out of the present unprepared state of the government. Moved by these arguments, it was agreed that the main body of the army should march against Glasgow, and dislodge the soldiers who were lying in that town. The council nominated Henry Morton, with others, to this last service, and appointed Burley to the command of a chosen body of five hundred men, who were to remain behind, for the purpose of blockading the Tower of Tillietudlem. Morton testified the greatest repugnance to this arrangement.

“He had the strongest personal motives,” he said, “for desiring to remain near Tillietudlem; and if the management of the siege were committed to him, he had little doubt but that he would bring it to such an accommodation, as, without being rigorous to the besieged, would fully answer the purpose of the besiegers.”

Burley readily guessed the cause of his young colleague's reluctance to move with the army; for, interested as he was in appreciating the characters with whom he had to deal, he had contrived, through the simplicity of Cuddie, and the enthusiasm of old Mause, to get much information concerning Morton's relations with the family of Tillietudlem. He therefore took the advantage of Poundtext's arising to speak to business, as he said, for some short space of time, (which Burley rightly interpreted to mean an hour at the very least), and seized that moment to withdraw Morton from the hearing of their colleagues, and to hold the following argument with him:

“Thou art unwise, Henry Morton, to desire to sacrifice this holy cause to thy friendship for an uncircumcised Philistine, or thy lust for a Moabitish woman.”

“I neither understand your meaning, Mr Balfour, nor relish your allusions,” replied Morton, indignantly; “and I know no reason you have to bring so gross a charge, or to use such uncivil language.”

"Confess, however, the truth," said Balfour, "and own that there are those within yon dark Tower, over whom thou wouldst rather be watching like a mother over her little ones, than thou wouldst bear the banner of the Church of Scotland over the necks of her enemies."

"If you mean, that I would willingly terminate this war without any bloody victory, and that I am more anxious to do this than to acquire any personal fame or power, you may be," replied Morton, "perfectly right."

"And not wholly wrong," answered Burley, "in deeming that thou wouldst not exclude from so general a pacification thy friends in the garrison of Tillietudlem."

"Certainly," replied Morton; "I am too much obliged to Major Bellenden not to wish to be of service to him, as far as the interest of the cause I have espoused will permit. I never made a secret of my regard for him."

"I am aware of that," said Burley; "but, if thou hadst concealed it, I should, nevertheless, have found out thy riddle. Now, hearken to my words. This Miles Bellenden hath means to subsist his garrison for a month."

"This is not the case," answered Morton; "we know his stores are hardly equal to a week's consumption."

"Ay, but," continued Burley, "I have since had proof, of the strongest nature, that such a report was spread in the garrison by that wily and grey-headed malignant, partly to prevail on the soldiers to submit to a diminution of their daily food, partly to detain us before the walls of his fortress until the sword should be whetted to smite and destroy us."

"And why was not the evidence of this laid before the council of war?" said Morton.

"To what purpose?" said Balfour. "Why need we undeceive Kettledrummy, Macbriar, Poundtext, and Langcale, upon such a point? Thyself must own, that whatever is told to them escapes to the host out of the mouth of the preachers at their next holding-forth. They are already discouraged by the thoughts of lying before the fort a week. What would be the consequence were they ordered to prepare for the leaguer of a month?"

"But why conceal it, then, from me? or why tell it me now? and, above all, what proofs have you got of the fact?" continued Morton.

"There are many proofs," replied Burley; and he put into his hands a number of requisitions sent forth by Major Bellenden, with receipts on the back to various proprietors, for cattle, corn, meal, to such an amount, that the sum total seemed to exclude the possibility of the garrison being soon distressed for provisions. But Burley did not inform Morton of a fact which he himself knew full well, namely, that most of these provisions never reached the garrison, owing to the rapacity of the dragoons sent to collect them, who readily sold to one man what they took from another, and abused the Major's press for stores, pretty much as Sir John Falstaff did that of the King for men.

"And now," continued Balfour, observing that he had made the desired impression, "I have only to say, that I concealed this from thee no longer than it was concealed from myself, for I have only received these papers this morning; and I tell it unto thee now, that thou mayest go on thy way rejoicing, and work the great work willingly at Glasgow, being assured that no evil can befall thy friends in the malignant party, since their fort is abundantly victualled, and I possess not numbers sufficient to do more against them than to prevent their sallying forth."

"And why," continued Morton, who felt an inexpressible reluctance to acquiesce in Balfour's reasoning—"why not permit me to remain in the command of this smaller party, and march forward yourself to Glasgow? It is the more honourable charge."

"And therefore, young man," answered Burley, "have I laboured that it should be committed to the son of Silas Morton. I am waxing old, and this grey head has had enough of honour where it could be gathered by danger. I speak not of the frothy bubble which men call earthly fame, but the honour belonging to him that doth not the work negligently. But thy career is yet to run. Thou hast to vindicate the high trust which has been bestowed on thee through my assurance that it was dearly well-merited. At Loudon-hill thou wert a captive, and at the last assault it was thy part to fight under cover, whilst I led the more open and dangerous attack; and, shouldst thou now remain before these walls when there is active service elsewhere, trust me, that men will say, that the son of Silas Morton hath fallen away from the paths of his father."

Stung by this last observation, to which, as a gentleman and soldier, he could offer no suitable reply, Morton hastily acquiesced in the proposed arrangement. Yet he was unable to divest himself of certain feelings of distrust which he involuntarily attached to the quarter from which he received this information.

"Mr Balfour," he said, "let us distinctly understand each other. You have thought it worth your while to bestow particular attention upon my private affairs and personal attachments; be so good as to understand, that I am as constant to them as to my political principles. It is possible, that, during my absence, you may possess the power of soothing or of wounding those feelings. Be assured, that whatever may be the consequences to the issue of our present adventure, my eternal gratitude, or my persevering resentment, will attend the line of conduct you may adopt on such an occasion; and, however young and inexperienced I am, I have no doubt of finding friends to assist me in expressing my sentiments in either case."

"If there be a threat implied in that denunciation," replied Burley, coldly and haughtily, "it had better have been spared. I know how to value the regard of my friends, and despise, from my soul, the threats of my enemies. But I will not take occasion of offence. Whatever happens here in your absence shall be managed with as much deference to your wishes, as the duty I owe to a higher power can possibly permit."

With this qualified promise Morton was obliged to rest satisfied.

"Our defeat will relieve the garrison," said he, internally, "ere they can be reduced to surrender at discretion; and, in case of victory, I already see, from the numbers of the moderate party, that I shall have a voice as powerful as Burley's in determining the use which shall be made of it."

He therefore followed Balfour to the council, where they found Kettledrummy adding to his lastly a few words of practical application. When these were expended, Morton testified his willingness to accompany the main body of the army, which was destined to drive the regular troops from Glasgow. His companions in command were named, and the whole received a strengthening exhortation from the preachers who were present. Next morning, at break of day, the insurgent army broke up from their encampment, and marched towards Glasgow.

It is not our intention to detail at length incidents which may be found in the history of the period. It is sufficient to say, that Claverhouse and Lord Ross, learning the superior force which was directed against them, intrenched, or rather barricaded themselves, in the centre of the city, where the town-house and old jail were situated, with the determination to stand the assault of the insurgents rather than to abandon the capital of the west of Scotland. The presbyterians made their attack in two bodies, one of which penetrated into the city in the line of the College and Cathedral Church, while the other marched up the Gallowgate, or principal access from the south-east. Both divisions were led by men of resolution, and behaved with great spirit. But the advantages of military skill and situation were too great for their undisciplined valour.

Ross and Claverhouse had carefully disposed parties of their soldiers in houses, at the heads of the streets, and in the entrances of closes, as they are called, or lanes, besides those who were intrenched behind breast-works which reached across the streets. The assailants found their ranks thinned by a fire from invisible opponents, which they had no means of returning with effect. It was in vain that Morton and other leaders exposed their persons with the utmost gallantry, and endeavoured to bring their antagonists to a close action; their followers shrunk from them in every direction. And yet, though Henry Morton was one of the very last to retire, and exerted himself in bringing up the rear, maintaining order in the retreat, and checking every attempt which the enemy made to improve the advantage they had gained by the repulse, he had still the mortification to hear many of those in his ranks muttering to each other, that "this came of trusting to latitudinarian boys; and that, had honest, faithful Burley led the attack, as he did that of the barricades of Tillietudlem, the issue would have been as different as might be."

It was with burning resentment that Morton heard these reflections thrown out by the very men who had soonest exhibited signs of discouragement. The unjust reproach, however, had the effect of firing his emulation, and making him sensible that, engaged as he was in a perilous cause, it was absolutely necessary that he should conquer or die.

"I have no retreat," he said to himself. "All shall allow—even Major Bellenden—even Edith—that in courage, at least, the rebel Morton was not inferior to his father."

The condition of the army after the repulse was so undisciplined, and in such disorganization, that the leaders thought it prudent to draw off some miles from the city to gain time for reducing them once more into such order as they were capable of adopting. Recruits, in the meanwhile, came fast in, more moved by the extreme hardships of their own condition, and encouraged by the advantage obtained at Loudon-hill, than deterred by the last unfortunate enterprise. Many of these attached themselves particularly to Morton's division. He had, however, the mortification to see that his unpopularity among the more intolerant part of the Covenanters increased rapidly. The prudence beyond his years, which he exhibited in improving the discipline and arrangement of his followers, they termed a trusting in the arm of flesh, and his avowed tolerance for those of religious sentiments and observances different from his own, obtained him, most unjustly, the nickname of Gallio, who cared for none of those things. What was worse than these misconceptions, the mob of the insurgents, always loudest in applause of those who push political or religious opinions to extremity, and disgusted with such as endeavour to reduce them to the yoke of discipline, preferred avowedly the more zealous leaders, in whose ranks enthusiasm in the cause supplied the want of good order and military subjection, to the restraints which Morton endeavoured to bring them under. In short, while bearing the principal burden of command, (for his colleagues willingly relinquished in his favour every thing that was troublesome and obnoxious in the office of general,) Morton found himself without that authority, which alone could render his regulations effectual. [Note: These feuds, which tore to pieces the little army of insurgents, turned merely on the point whether the king's interest or royal authority was to be owned or not, and whether the party in arms were to be contented with a free exercise of their own religion, or insist upon the re-establishment of Presbytery in its supreme authority, and with full power to predominate over all other forms of worship. The few country gentlemen who joined the insurrection, with the most sensible part of the clergy, thought it best to limit their demands to what it might be possible to attain. But the party who urged these moderate views were termed by the more zealous bigots, the Erastian party, men, namely, who were willing to place the church under the influence of the civil government, and therefore they accounted them, "a snare upon Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." See the Life of Sir Robert Hamilton in the Scottish Worthies, and his account of the Battle of Bothwell-bridge, passim.]

Yet, notwithstanding these obstacles, he had, during the course of a few days, laboured so hard to introduce some degree of discipline into the army, that he thought he might hazard a second attack upon Glasgow with every prospect of success.

It cannot be doubted that Morton's anxiety to measure himself with Colonel Grahame of Claverhouse, at whose hands he had sustained such injury, had its share in giving motive to his uncommon exertions. But Claverhouse disappointed his hopes; for, satisfied with having the advantage in repulsing the first attack upon Glasgow, he determined that he would not, with the handful of troops under his command, await a second assault from the insurgents, with more numerous and better disciplined forces than had supported their first enterprise. He therefore evacuated the place, and marched at the head of his troops towards Edinburgh. The insurgents of course entered Glasgow without resistance, and without Morton having the opportunity, which he so deeply coveted, of again encountering Claverhouse personally. But, although he had not an opportunity of wiping away the disgrace which had befallen his division of the army of the Covenant, the retreat of Claverhouse, and the possession of Glasgow, tended greatly to animate the insurgent army, and to increase its numbers. The necessity of appointing new officers, of organizing new regiments and squadrons, of making them acquainted with at least the most necessary points of military discipline, were labours, which, by universal consent, seemed to be devolved upon Henry Morton, and which he the more readily undertook, because his father had made him acquainted with the theory of the military art, and because he plainly saw, that, unless he took this ungracious but absolutely necessary labour, it was vain to expect any other to engage in it.

In the meanwhile, fortune appeared to favour the enterprise of the insurgents more than the most sanguine durst have expected. The Privy Council of Scotland, astonished at the extent of resistance which their arbitrary measures had provoked, seemed stupified with terror, and incapable of taking active steps to subdue the resentment which these measures had excited. There were but very few troops in Scotland, and these they drew towards Edinburgh, as if to form an army for protection of the metropolis. The feudal array of the crown vassals in the various counties, was ordered to take the field, and render to the King the military service due for their fiefs. But the summons was very slackly obeyed. The quarrel was not generally popular among the gentry; and even those who were not unwilling themselves to have taken arms, were deterred by the repugnance of their wives, mothers, and sisters, to their engaging in such a cause.

Meanwhile, the inadequacy of the Scottish government to provide for their own defence, or to put down a rebellion of which the commencement seemed so trifling, excited at the English court doubts at once of their capacity, and of the prudence of the severities they had exerted against the oppressed presbyterians. It was, therefore, resolved to nominate to the command of the army of Scotland, the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, who had by marriage a great interest, large estate, and a numerous following, as it was called, in the southern parts of that kingdom. The military skill which he had displayed on different occasions abroad, was supposed more than adequate to subdue the insurgents in the field; while it was expected that his mild temper, and the favourable disposition which he showed to presbyterians in general, might soften men's minds, and tend to reconcile them to the government. The Duke was, therefore, invested with a commission, containing high powers for settling the distracted affairs of Scotland, and dispatched from London with strong succours to take the principal military command in that country.

CHAPTER VI

*I am bound to Bothwell-hill,
Where I maun either do or die.
Old Ballad.*

There was now a pause in the military movements on both sides. The government seemed contented to prevent the rebels advancing towards the capital, while the insurgents were intent upon augmenting and strengthening their forces. For this purpose, they established a sort of encampment in the park belonging to the ducal residence at Hamilton, a central situation for receiving their recruits, and where they were secured from any sudden attack, by having the Clyde, a deep and rapid river, in front of their position, which is only passable by a long and narrow bridge, near the castle and village of Bothwell.

Morton remained here for about a fortnight after the attack on Glasgow, actively engaged in his military duties. He had received more than one communication from Burley, but they only stated, in general, that the Castle of Tillietudlem continued to hold out. Impatient of suspense upon this most interesting subject, he at length intimated to his colleagues in command his desire, or rather his intention,—for he saw no reason why he should not assume a license which was taken by every one else in this disorderly army,—to go to Milnwood for a day or two to arrange some private affairs of consequence. The proposal was by no means approved of; for the military council of the insurgents were sufficiently sensible of the value of his services to fear to lose them, and felt somewhat conscious of their own inability to supply his place. They could not, however, pretend to dictate to him laws more rigid than they submitted to themselves, and he was suffered to depart on his journey without any direct objection being stated. The Reverend Mr Poundtext took the same opportunity to pay a visit to his own residence in the neighbourhood of Milnwood, and favoured Morton with his company on the journey. As the country was chiefly friendly to their cause, and in possession of their detached parties, excepting here and there the stronghold of some old cavaliering Baron, they travelled without any other attendant than the faithful Cuddie.

It was near sunset when they reached Milnwood, where Poundtext bid adieu to his companions, and travelled forward alone to his own manse, which was situated half a mile's march beyond Tillietudlem. When Morton was left alone to his own reflections, with what a complication of feelings did he review the woods, banks, and fields, that had been familiar to him! His character, as well as his habits, thoughts, and occupations, had been entirely changed within the space of little more than a fortnight, and twenty days seemed to have done upon him the work of as many years. A mild, romantic, gentle-tempered youth, bred up in dependence, and stooping patiently to the control of a sordid and tyrannical relation, had suddenly, by the rod of oppression and the spur of injured feeling, been compelled to stand forth a leader of armed men, was earnestly engaged in affairs of a public nature, had friends to animate and enemies to contend with, and felt his individual fate bound up in that of a national insurrection and revolution. It seemed as if he had at once experienced a transition from the romantic dreams of youth to the

labours and cares of active manhood. All that had formerly interested him was obliterated from his memory, excepting only his attachment to Edith; and even his love seemed to have assumed a character more manly and disinterested, as it had become mingled and contrasted with other duties and feelings. As he revolved the particulars of this sudden change, the circumstances in which it originated, and the possible consequences of his present career, the thrill of natural anxiety which passed along his mind was immediately banished by a glow of generous and high-spirited confidence.

"I shall fall young," he said, "if fall I must, my motives misconstrued, and my actions condemned, by those whose approbation is dearest to me. But the sword of liberty and patriotism is in my hand, and I will neither fall meanly nor unavenged. They may expose my body, and gibbet my limbs; but other days will come, when the sentence of infamy will recoil against those who may pronounce it. And that Heaven, whose name is so often profaned during this unnatural war, will bear witness to the purity of the motives by which I have been guided."

Upon approaching Milnwood, Henry's knock upon the gate no longer intimidated the conscious timidity of a stripling who has been out of bounds, but the confidence of a man in full possession of his own rights, and master of his own actions,—bold, free, and decided. The door was cautiously opened by his old acquaintance, Mrs Alison Wilson, who started back when she saw the steel cap and nodding plume of the martial visitor.

"Where is my uncle, Alison?" said Morton, smiling at her alarm.

"Lordsake, Mr Harry! is this you?" returned the old lady. "In troth, ye garr'd my heart loup to my very mouth—But it canna be your ainsell, for ye look taller and mair manly-like than ye used to do."

"It is, however, my own self," said Henry, sighing and smiling at the same time; "I believe this dress may make me look taller, and these times, Ailie, make men out of boys."

"Sad times indeed!" echoed the old woman; "and O that you suld be endangered wi'them! but wha can help it?—ye were ill eneugh guided, and, as I tell your uncle, if ye tread on a worm it will turn."

"You were always my advocate, Ailie," said he, and the housekeeper no longer resented the familiar epithet, "and would let no one blame me but yourself, I am aware of that,—Where is my uncle?"

"In Edinburgh," replied Alison; "the honest man thought it was best to gang and sit by the chimley when the reek rase—a vex'd man he's been and a feared—but ye ken the Laird as weel as I do."

"I hope he has suffered nothing in health?" said Henry.

"Naething to speak of," answered the housekeeper, "nor in gudes neither—we fended as weel as we could; and, though the troopers of Tillietudlem took the red cow and auld Hackie, (ye'll mind them weel;) yet they sauld us a gude bargain o' four they were driving to the Castle."

"Sold you a bargain?" said Morton; "how do you mean?"

"Ou, they cam out to gather marts for the garrison," answered the housekeeper; "but they just fell to their auld trade, and rade through the country couping and selling a' that they gat, like sae many west-country drovers. My certie, Major Bellenden was laird o' the least share o' what they lifted, though it was taen in his name."

"Then," said Morton, hastily, "the garrison must be straitened for provisions?"

"Stressed eneugh," replied Ailie—"there's little doubt o' that."

A light instantly glanced on Morton's mind.

"Burley must have deceived me—craft as well as cruelty is permitted by his creed." Such was his inward thought; he said aloud, "I cannot stay, Mrs Wilson, I must go forward directly."

"But, oh! bide to eat a mouthfu'," entreated the affectionate housekeeper, "and I'll mak it ready for you as I used to do afore thae sad days," "It is impossible," answered Morton.—"Cuddie, get our horses ready."

"They're just eating their corn," answered the attendant.

"Cuddie!" exclaimed Ailie; "what garr'd ye bring that ill-faur'd, unlucky loon along wi' ye?—It was him and his randie mother began a' the mischief in this house."

"Tut, tut," replied Cuddie, "ye should forget and forgie, mistress. Mither's in Glasgow wi' her tittie, and sall plague ye nae mair; and I'm the Captain's wallie now, and I keep him tighter in thack and rape than ever ye did;—saw ye him ever sae weel put on as he is now?"

"In troth and that's true," said the old housekeeper, looking with great complacency at her young master, whose mien she thought much improved by his dress.

"I'm sure ye ne'er had a laced cravat like that when ye were at Milnwood; that's nane o' my sewing."

"Na, na, mistress," replied Cuddie, "that's a cast o' my hand—that's ane o' Lord Evandale's brows."

"Lord Evandale?" answered the old lady, "that's him that the whigs are gaun to hang the morn, as I hear say."

"The whigs about to hang Lord Evandale?" said Morton, in the greatest surprise.

"Ay, troth are they," said the housekeeper. "Yesterday night he made a sally, as they ca't, (my mother's name was Sally—I wonder they gie Christian folk's names to sic unchristian doings,)—but he made an outbreak to get provisions, and his men were driven back and he was taen, 'an' the whig Captain Balfour garr'd set up a gallows, and swore, (or said upon his conscience, for they winna swear,) that if the garrison was not gien ower the morn by daybreak, he would hing up the young lord, poor thing, as high as Haman.—These are sair times!—but folk canna help them—sae do ye sit down and tak bread and cheese until better meat's made ready. Ye suldna hae kend a word about it, an I had thought it was to spoil your dinner, hinny."

"Fed, or unfed," exclaimed Morton, "saddle the horses instantly, Cuddie. We must not rest until we get before the Castle."

And, resisting all Ailie's entreaties, they instantly resumed their journey.

Morton failed not to halt at the dwelling of Poundtext, and summon him to attend him to the camp. That honest divine had just resumed for an instant his pacific habits, and was perusing an ancient theological treatise, with a pipe in his mouth, and a small jug of ale beside him, to assist his digestion of the argument. It was with bitter ill-will that he relinquished these comforts (which he called his studies) in order to recommence a hard ride upon a high-trotting horse. However, when he knew the matter in hand, he gave up, with a deep groan, the prospect of spending a quiet evening in his own little parlour; for he entirely agreed with Morton, that whatever interest Burley might have in rendering the breach between the presbyterians and the government irreconcilable, by putting the young nobleman to death, it was by no means that of the moderate party to permit such an act of atrocity. And it is but doing justice to Mr Poundtext to add, that, like most of his own persuasion, he was decidedly adverse to any such acts of unnecessary violence; besides, that his own present feelings induced him to listen with much complacency to the probability held out by Morton, of Lord Evandale's becoming a mediator for the establishment of peace upon fair and moderate terms. With this similarity of views, they hastened their journey, and arrived about eleven o'clock at night at a small hamlet adjacent to the Castle at Tillietudlem, where Burley had established his head-quarters.

They were challenged by the sentinel, who made his melancholy walk at the entrance of the hamlet, and admitted upon declaring their names and authority in the army. Another soldier kept watch before a house, which they conjectured to be the place of Lord Evandale's confinement, for a gibbet of such great height as to be visible from the battlements of the Castle, was erected before it, in melancholy confirmation of the truth of Mrs Wilson's report. [Note: The Cameronians had suffered persecution, but it was without learning mercy. We are informed by Captain Crichton, that they had set up in their camp a huge gibbet, or gallows, having many hooks upon it, with a coil of new ropes lying beside it, for the execution of such royalists as they might make prisoners. Guild, in his *Bellum Bothuellianum*, describes this machine particularly.] Morton instantly demanded to speak with Burley, and was directed to his quarters. They found him reading the Scriptures, with his arms lying beside him, as if ready for any sudden alarm. He started upon the entrance of his colleagues in office.

"What has brought ye hither?" said Burley, hastily. "Is there bad news from the army?"

"No," replied Morton; "but we understand that there are measures adopted here in which the safety of the army is deeply concerned—Lord Evandale is your prisoner?"

"The Lord," replied Burley, "hath delivered him into our hands."

"And you will avail yourself of that advantage, granted you by Heaven, to dishonour our cause in the eyes of all the world, by putting a prisoner to an ignominious death?"

"If the house of Tillietudlem be not surrendered by daybreak," replied Burley, "God do so to me and more also, if he shall not die that death to which his leader and patron, John Grahame of Claverhouse, hath put so many of God's saints."

"We are in arms," replied Morton, "to put down such cruelties, and not to imitate them, far less to avenge upon the innocent the acts of the guilty. By what law can you justify the atrocity you would commit?"

"If thou art ignorant of it," replied Burley, "thy companion is well aware of the law which gave the men of Jericho to the sword of Joshua, the son of Nun."

"But we," answered the divine, "live under a better dispensation, which instructeth us to return good for evil, and to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us."

"That is to say," said Burley, "that thou wilt join thy grey hairs to his green youth to controvert me in this matter?"

"We are," rejoined Poundtext, "two of those to whom, jointly with thyself, authority is delegated over this host, and we will not permit thee to hurt a hair of the prisoner's head. It may please God to make him a means of healing these unhappy breaches in our Israel."

"I judged it would come to this," answered Burley, "when such as thou wert called into the council of the elders."

"Such as I?" answered Poundtext,—"And who am I, that you should name me with such scorn?—Have I not kept the flock of this sheep-fold from the wolves for thirty years? Ay, even while thou, John Balfour, wert fighting in the ranks of uncircumcision, a Philistine of hardened brow and bloody hand—Who am I, say'st thou?"

"I will tell thee what thou art, since thou wouldst so fain know," said Burley. "Thou art one of those, who would reap where thou hast not sowed, and divide the spoil while others fight the battle—thou art one of those that follow the gospel for the loaves and for the fishes—that love their own manse better than the Church of God, and that would rather draw their stipends under prelatists or heathens, than be a partaker with those noble spirits who have cast all behind them for the sake of the Covenant."

"And I will tell thee, John Balfour," returned Poundtext, deservedly incensed, "I will tell thee what thou art. Thou art one of those, for whose bloody and merciless disposition a reproach is flung upon the whole church of this suffering kingdom, and for whose violence and blood-guiltiness, it is to be feared, this fair attempt to recover our civil and religious rights will never be honoured by Providence with the desired success."

"Gentlemen," said Morton, "cease this irritating and unavailing recrimination; and do you, Mr Balfour, inform us, whether it is your purpose to oppose the liberation of Lord Evandale, which appears to us a profitable measure in the present position of our affairs?"

"You are here," answered Burley, "as two voices against one; but you will not refuse to tarry until the united council shall decide upon this matter?"

"This," said Morton, "we would not decline, if we could trust the hands in whom we are to leave the prisoner.—But you know well," he added, looking sternly at Burley, "that you have already deceived me in this matter."

"Go to," said Burley, disdainfully,—"thou art an idle inconsiderate boy, who, for the black eyebrows of a silly girl, would barter thy own faith and honour, and the cause of God and of thy country."

"Mr Balfour," said Morton, laying his hand on his sword, "this language requires satisfaction."

"And thou shalt have it, stripling, when and where thou darest," said Burley; "I plight thee my good word on it."

Poundtext, in his turn, interfered to remind them of the madness of quarrelling, and effected with difficulty a sort of sullen reconciliation.

"Concerning the prisoner," said Burley, "deal with him as ye think fit. I wash my hands free from all consequences. He is my prisoner, made by my sword and spear, while you, Mr Morton, were playing the adjutant at drills and parades, and you, Mr Poundtext, were warping the Scriptures into Erastianism. Take him unto you, nevertheless, and dispose of him as ye think meet.—Dingwall," he continued, calling a sort of aid-de-camp, who slept in the next apartment, "let the guard posted on the malignant Evandale give up their post to those whom Captain Morton shall appoint to relieve them.—The prisoner," he said, again addressing Poundtext and Morton, "is now at your disposal, gentlemen. But remember, that for all these things there will one day come a term of heavy accounting."

So saying, he turned abruptly into an inner apartment, without bidding them good evening. His two visitors, after a moment's consideration, agreed it would be prudent to ensure the prisoner's personal safety, by placing over him an additional guard, chosen from their own parishioners. A band of them happened to be stationed in the hamlet, having been attached, for the time, to Burley's command, in order that the men might be gratified by remaining as long as possible near to their own homes. They were, in general, smart, active young fellows, and were usually called by their companions, the Marksmen of Milnwood. By Morton's desire, four of these lads readily undertook the task of sentinels, and he left with them Headrigg, on whose fidelity he could depend, with instructions to call him, if any thing remarkable happened.

This arrangement being made, Morton and his colleague took possession, for the night, of such quarters as the over-crowded and miserable hamlet could afford them. They did not, however, separate for repose till they had drawn up a memorial of the grievances of the moderate presbyterians, which was summed up with a request of free toleration for their religion in future, and that they should be permitted to attend gospel ordinances as dispensed by their own clergymen, without oppression or molestation. Their petition proceeded to require that a free parliament should be called for settling the affairs of church and state, and for redressing the injuries sustained by the subject; and that all those who either now were, or had been, in arms, for obtaining these ends, should be indemnified. Morton could not but strongly hope that these terms, which comprehended all that was wanted, or wished for, by the moderate party among the insurgents, might, when thus cleared of the violence of fanaticism, find advocates even among the royalists, as claiming only the ordinary rights of Scottish freemen.

He had the more confidence of a favourable reception, that the Duke of Monmouth, to whom Charles had intrusted the charge of subduing this rebellion, was a man of gentle, moderate, and accessible disposition, well known to be favourable to the presbyterians, and invested by the king with full powers to take measures for quieting the disturbances in Scotland. It seemed to Morton, that all that was necessary for influencing him in their favour was to find a fit and sufficiently respectable channel of communication, and such seemed to be opened through the medium of Lord Evandale. He resolved, therefore, to visit the prisoner early in the morning, in order to sound his dispositions to undertake the task of mediator; but an accident happened which led him to anticipate his purpose.

CHAPTER VII.

Gie ower your house, lady, he said,—

Gie ower your house to me.

Edom of Gordon.

Morton had finished the revisal and the making out of a fair copy of the paper on which he and Poundtext had agreed to rest as a full statement of the grievances of their party, and the conditions on which the greater part of the insurgents would be contented to lay down their arms; and he was about to betake himself to repose, when there was a knocking at the door of his apartment.

"Enter," said Morton; and the round bullethead of Cuddie Headrigg was thrust into the room. "Come in," said Morton, "and tell me what you want. Is there any alarm?"

"Na, stir; but I hae brought ane to speak wi' you."

"Who is that, Cuddie?" enquired Morton.

"Ane o' your auld acquaintance," said Cuddie; and, opening the door more fully, he half led, half dragged in a woman, whose face was muffled in her plaid.—"Come, come, ye needna be sae bashfu' before auld acquaintance, Jenny," said Cuddie, pulling down the veil, and discovering to his master the well-remembered countenance of Jenny Dennison. "Tell his honour, now—there's a braw lass—tell him what ye were wanting to say to Lord Evandale, mistress."

"What was I wanting to say," answered Jenny, "to his honour himsell the other morning, when I visited him in captivity, ye muckle hash?—D'ye think that folk dinna want to see their friends in adversity, ye dour crowdy-eater?"

This reply was made with Jenny's usual volubility; but her voice quivered, her cheek was thin and pale, the tears stood in her eyes, her hand trembled, her manner was fluttered, and her whole presence bore marks of recent suffering and privation, as well as nervous and hysterical agitation.

"What is the matter, Jenny?" said Morton, kindly. "You know how much I owe you in many respects, and can hardly make a request that I will not grant, if in my power."

"Many thanks, Milnwood," said the weeping damsel; "but ye were aye a kind gentleman, though folk say ye hae become sair changed now."

"What do they say of me?" answered Morton.

"A' body says," replied Jenny, "that you and the whigs hae made a vow to ding King Charles aff the throne, and that neither he, nor his posteriors from generation to generation, shall sit upon it ony mair; and John Gudyill threeps ye're to gie a' the church organs to the pipers, and burn the Book o' Common-prayer by the hands of the common hangman, in revenge of the Covenant that was burnt when the king cam hame."

"My friends at Tillietudlem judge too hastily and too ill of me," answered Morton. "I wish to have free exercise of my own religion, without insulting any other; and as to your family, I only desire an opportunity to show them I have the same friendship and kindness as ever."

"Bless your kind heart for saying sae," said Jenny, bursting into a flood of tears; "and they never needed kindness or friendship mair, for they are famished for lack o' food."

"Good God!" replied Morton, "I have heard of scarcity, but not of famine! It is possible?—Have the ladies and the Major"—

"They hae suffered like the lave o' us," replied Jenny; "for they shared every bit and sup wi' the whole folk in the Castle—I'm sure my poor een see fifty colours wi' faintness, and my head's sae dizzy wi' the mirligoes that I canna stand my lane."

The thinness of the poor girl's cheek, and the sharpness of her features, bore witness to the truth of what she said. Morton was greatly shocked.

"Sit down," he said, "for God's sake!" forcing her into the only chair the apartment afforded, while he himself strode up and down the room in horror and impatience. "I knew not of this," he exclaimed in broken ejaculations,—"I could not know of it.—Cold-blooded, iron-hearted fanatic—deceitful villain!—Cuddie, fetch refreshments—food—wine, if possible—whatever you can find."

"Whisky is gude enough for her," muttered Cuddie; "ane wadna hae thought that gude meal was sae scant among them, when the quean threw sae muckle gude kail-brose scalding het about my lugs."

Faint and miserable as Jenny seemed to be, she could not hear the allusion to her exploit during the storm of the Castle, without bursting into a laugh which weakness soon converted into a hysterical giggle. Confounded at her state, and reflecting with horror on the distress which must have been in the Castle, Morton repeated his commands to Headrigg in a peremptory manner; and when he had departed, endeavoured to soothe his visitor.

"You come, I suppose, by the orders of your mistress, to visit Lord Evandale?—Tell me what she desires; her orders shall be my law."

Jenny appeared to reflect a moment, and then said, "Your honour is sae auld a friend, I must needs trust to you, and tell the truth."

"Be assured, Jenny," said Morton, observing that she hesitated, "that you will best serve your mistress by dealing sincerely with me."

"Weel, then, ye maun ken we're starving, as I said before, and have been mair days than ane; and the Major has sworn that he expects relief daily, and that he will not gie ower the house to the enemy till we have eaten up his auld boots,—and they are unco thick in the soles, as ye may weel mind, forby being teugh in the upper-leather. The dragoons, again, they think they will be forced to gie up at last, and they canna bide hunger weel, after the life they led at free quarters for this while bypast; and since Lord Evandale's taen, there's nae guiding them; and Inglis says he'll gie up the garrison to the whigs, and the Major and the leddies into the bargain, if they will but let the troopers gang free themselfs."

"Scoundrels!" said Morton; "why do they not make terms for all in the Castle?"

"They are fear'd for denial o' quarter to themselfs, having dune sae muckle mischief through the country; and Burley has hanged ane or twa o' them already—sae they want to draw their ain necks out o' the collar at hazard o' honest folk's."

"And you were sent," continued Morton, "to carry to Lord Evandale the unpleasant news of the men's mutiny?"

"Just e'en sae," said Jenny; "Tam Halliday took the rue, and tauld me a' about it, and gat me out o' the Castle to tell Lord Evandale, if possibly I could win at him."

"But how can he help you?" said Morton; "he is a prisoner."

"Well-a-day, ay," answered the afflicted damsel; "but maybe he could mak fair terms for us—or, maybe, he could gie us some good advice—or, maybe, he might send his orders to the dragoons to be civil—or"—

"Or, maybe," said Morton, "you were to try if it were possible to set him at liberty?"

"If it were sae," answered Jenny with spirit, "it wadna be the first time I hae done my best to serve a friend in captivity."

"True, Jenny," replied Morton, "I were most ungrateful to forget it. But here comes Cuddie with refreshments—I will go and do your errand to Lord Evandale, while you take some food and wine."

"It willna be amiss ye should ken," said Cuddie to his master, "that this Jenny—this Mrs Dennison, was trying to cuittle favour wi' Tam Rand, the miller's man, to win into Lord Evandale's room without ony body kennin'. She wasna thinking, the gipsy, that I was at her elbow."

"An unco fright ye gae me when ye cam ahint and took a grip o' me," said Jenny, giving him a sly twitch with her finger and her thumb—"if ye hadna been an auld acquaintance, ye daft gomeril"—

Cuddie, somewhat relenting, grinned a smile on his artful mistress, while Morton wrapped himself up in his cloak, took his sword under his arm, and went straight to the place of the young nobleman's confinement. He asked the sentinels if any thing extraordinary had occurred.

"Nothing worth notice," they said, "excepting the lass that Cuddie took up, and two couriers that Captain Balfour had dispatched, one to the Reverend Ephraim Macbriar, another to Kettledrummle," both of whom were beating the drum ecclesiastic in different towns between the position of Burley and the head-quarters of the main army near Hamilton.

"The purpose, I presume," said Morton, with an affectation of indifference, "was to call them hither."

"So I understand," answered the sentinel, who had spoke with the messengers.

He is summoning a triumphant majority of the council, thought Morton to himself, for the purpose of sanctioning whatever action of atrocity he may determine upon, and thwarting opposition by authority. I must be speedy, or I shall lose my opportunity.

When he entered the place of Lord Evandale's confinement, he found him ironed, and reclining on a flock bed in the wretched garret of a miserable cottage. He was either in a slumber, or in deep meditation, when Morton entered, and turned on him, when aroused, a countenance so much reduced by loss of blood, want of sleep, and scarcity of food, that no one could have recognised in it the gallant soldier who had behaved with so much spirit at the skirmish of Loudon-hill. He displayed some surprise at the sudden entrance of Morton.

"I am sorry to see you thus, my lord," said that youthful leader.

"I have heard you are an admirer of poetry," answered the prisoner; "in that case, Mr Morton, you may remember these lines,—

*'Stone walls do not a prison make,
Or iron bars a cage;
A free and quiet mind can take*

These for a hermitage.'

But, were my imprisonment less endurable, I am given to expect to-morrow a total enfranchisement."

"By death?" said Morton.

"Surely," answered Lord Evandale; "I have no other prospect. Your comrade, Burley, has already dipped his hand in the blood of men whose meanness of rank and obscurity of extraction might have saved them. I cannot boast such a shield from his vengeance, and I expect to meet its extremity."

"But Major Bellenden," said Morton, "may surrender, in order to preserve your life."

"Never, while there is one man to defend the battlement, and that man has one crust to eat. I know his gallant resolution, and grieved should I be if he changed it for my sake."

Morton hastened to acquaint him with the mutiny among the dragoons, and their resolution to surrender the Castle, and put the ladies of the family, as well as the Major, into the hands of the enemy. Lord Evandale seemed at first surprised, and something incredulous, but immediately afterwards deeply affected.

"What is to be done?" he said—"How is this misfortune to be averted?"

"Hear me, my lord," said Morton. "I believe you may not be unwilling to bear the olive branch between our master the King, and that part of his subjects which is now in arms, not from choice, but necessity."

"You construe me but justly," said Lord Evandale; "but to what does this tend?"

"Permit me, my lord"—continued Morton. "I will set you at liberty upon parole; nay, you may return to the Castle, and shall have a safe conduct for the ladies, the Major, and all who leave it, on condition of its instant surrender. In contributing to bring this about you will only submit to circumstances; for, with a mutiny in the garrison, and without provisions, it will be found impossible to defend the place twenty-four hours longer. Those, therefore, who refuse to accompany your lordship, must take their fate. You and your followers shall have a free pass to Edinburgh, or where-ever the Duke of Monmouth may be. In return for your liberty, we hope that you will recommend to the notice of his Grace, as Lieutenant-General of Scotland, this humble petition and remonstrance, containing the grievances which have occasioned this insurrection, a redress of which being granted, I will answer with my head, that the great body of the insurgents will lay down their arms."

Lord Evandale read over the paper with attention.

"Mr Morton," he said, "in my simple judgment, I see little objection that can be made to the measure here recommended; nay, farther, I believe, in many respects, they may meet the private sentiments of the Duke of Monmouth: and yet, to deal frankly with you, I have no hopes of their being granted, unless, in the first place, you were to lay down your arms."

"The doing so," answered Morton, "would be virtually conceding that we had no right to take them up; and that, for one, I will never agree to."

"Perhaps it is hardly to be expected you should," said Lord Evandale; "and yet on that point I am certain the negotiations will be wrecked. I am willing, however, having frankly told you my opinion, to do all in my power to bring about a reconciliation."

"It is all we can wish or expect," replied Morton; "the issue is in God's hands, who disposes the hearts of princes.—You accept, then, the safe conduct?"

"Certainly," answered Lord Evandale; "and if I do not enlarge upon the obligation incurred by your having saved my life a second time, believe that I do not feel it the less."

"And the garrison of Tillietudlem?" said Morton.

"Shall be withdrawn as you propose," answered the young nobleman. "I am sensible the Major will be unable to bring the mutineers to reason; and I tremble to think of the consequences, should the ladies and the brave old man be delivered up to this bloodthirsty ruffian, Burley."

"You are in that case free," said Morton. "Prepare to mount on horseback; a few men whom I can trust shall attend you till you are in safety from our parties."

Leaving Lord Evandale in great surprise and joy at this unexpected deliverance, Morton hastened to get a few chosen men under arms and on horseback, each rider holding the rein of a spare horse. Jenny, who, while she partook of her refreshment, had contrived to make up her breach with Cuddie, rode on the left hand of that valiant cavalier. The tramp of their horses was soon heard under the window of Lord Evandale's prison. Two men, whom he did not know, entered the apartment, disencumbered him of his fetters, and, conducting him down stairs, mounted him in the centre of the detachment. They set out at a round trot towards Tillietudlem.

The moonlight was giving way to the dawn when they approached that ancient fortress, and its dark massive tower had just received the first pale colouring of the morning. The party halted at the Tower barrier, not venturing to approach nearer for fear of the fire of the place. Lord Evandale alone rode up to the gate, followed at a distance by Jenny Dennison. As they approached the gate, there was heard to arise in the court-yard a tumult, which accorded ill with the quiet serenity of a summer dawn. Cries and oaths were heard, a pistol-shot or two were discharged, and every thing announced that the mutiny had broken out. At this crisis Lord Evandale arrived at the gate where Halliday was sentinel. On hearing Lord Evandale's voice, he instantly and gladly admitted him, and that nobleman arrived among the mutinous troopers like a man dropped from the clouds. They were in the act of putting their design into execution, of seizing the place into their own hands, and were about to disarm and overpower Major Bellenden and Harrison, and others of the Castle, who were offering the best resistance in their power.

The appearance of Lord Evandale changed the scene. He seized Inglis by the collar, and, upbraiding him with his villainy, ordered two of his comrades to seize and bind him, assuring the others, that their only chance of impunity consisted in instant submission. He then ordered the men into their ranks. They obeyed. He commanded them to ground their arms. They hesitated; but the instinct of discipline, joined to their persuasion that the authority of their officer, so boldly exerted, must be supported by some forces without the gate, induced them to submit.

"Take away those arms," said Lord Evandale to the people of the Castle; "they shall not be restored until these men know better the use for which they are intrusted with them.—And now," he continued, addressing the mutineers, "begone!—Make the best use of your time, and of a truce of three hours, which the enemy are contented to allow you. Take the road to Edinburgh, and meet me at the House-of-Muir. I need not bid you beware of committing violence by the way; you will not, in your present condition, provoke resentment for your own sakes. Let your punctuality show that you mean to atone for this morning's business."

The disarmed soldiers shrunk in silence from the presence of their officer, and, leaving the Castle, took the road to the place of rendezvous, making such haste as was inspired by the fear of meeting with some detached party of the insurgents, whom their present defenceless condition, and their former violence, might inspire with thoughts of revenge. Inglis, whom Evandale destined for punishment, remained in custody. Halliday was praised for his conduct, and assured of succeeding to the rank of the culprit. These arrangements being hastily made, Lord Evandale accosted the Major, before whose eyes the scene had seemed to pass like the change of a dream.

"My dear Major, we must give up the place."

"Is it even so?" said Major Bellenden. "I was in hopes you had brought reinforcements and supplies."

"Not a man—not a pound of meal," answered Lord Evandale.

"Yet I am blithe to see you," returned the honest Major; "we were informed yesterday that these psalm-singing rascals had a plot on your life, and I had mustered the scoundrelly dragoons ten minutes ago in order to beat up Burley's quarters and get you out of limbo, when the dog Inglis, instead of obeying me, broke out into open mutiny.—But what is to be done now?"

"I have, myself, no choice," said Lord Evandale; "I am a prisoner, released on parole, and bound for Edinburgh. You and the ladies must take the same route. I have, by the favour of a friend, a safe conduct and horses for you and your retinue—for God's sake make haste—you cannot propose to hold out with seven or eight men, and without provisions—Enough has been done for honour, and enough to render the defence of the highest consequence to government. More were needless, as well as desperate. The English troops are arrived at Edinburgh, and will speedily move upon Hamilton. The possession of Tillietudlem by the rebels will be but temporary."

"If you think so, my lord," said the veteran, with a reluctant sigh,—*"I know you only advise what is honourable—if, then, you really think the case inevitable, I must submit; for the mutiny of these scoundrels would render it impossible to man the walls.—Gudyill, let the women call up their mistresses, and all be ready to march—But if I could believe that my remaining in these old walls, till I was starved to a mummy, could do the King's cause the least service, old Miles Bellenden would not leave them while there was a spark of life in his body!"*

The ladies, already alarmed by the mutiny, now heard the determination of the Major, in which they readily acquiesced, though not without some groans and sighs on the part of Lady Margaret, which referred, as usual, to the *dejeune*; of his Most Sacred Majesty in the halls which were now to be abandoned to rebels. Hasty preparations were made for evacuating the Castle; and long ere the dawn was distinct enough for discovering objects with precision, the ladies, with Major Bellenden, Harrison, Gudyill, and the other domestics, were mounted on the led horses, and others which had been provided in the neighbourhood, and proceeded towards the north, still escorted by four of the insurgent horsemen. The rest of the party who had accompanied Lord Evandale from the hamlet, took possession of the deserted Castle, carefully forbearing all outrage or acts of plunder. And when the sun arose, the scarlet and blue colours of the Scottish Covenant floated from the Keep of Tillietudlem.

CHAPTER VIII.

*And, to my breast, a bodkin in her hand
Were worth a thousand daggers.*

Marlow.

The cavalcade which left the Castle of Tillietudlem, halted for a few minutes at the small town of Bothwell, after passing the outposts of the insurgents, to take some slight refreshments which their attendants had provided, and which were really necessary to persons who had suffered considerably by want of proper nourishment. They then pressed forward upon the road towards Edinburgh, amid the lights of dawn which were now rising on the horizon. It might have been expected, during the course of the journey, that Lord Evandale would have been frequently by the side of Miss Edith Bellenden. Yet, after his first salutations had been exchanged, and every precaution solicitously adopted which could serve for her accommodation, he rode in the van of the party with Major Bellenden, and seemed to abandon the charge of immediate attendance upon his lovely niece to one of the insurgent cavaliers, whose dark military cloak, with the large flapped hat and feather, which drooped over his face, concealed at once his figure and his features. They rode side by side in silence for more than two miles, when the stranger addressed Miss Bellenden in a tremulous and suppressed voice.

"Miss Bellenden," he said, "must have friends wherever she is known; even among those whose conduct she now disapproves. Is there any thing that such can do to show their respect for her, and their regret for her sufferings?"

"Let them learn for their own sakes," replied Edith, "to venerate the laws, and to spare innocent blood. Let them return to their allegiance, and I can forgive them all that I have suffered, were it ten times more."

"You think it impossible, then," rejoined the cavalier, "for any one to serve in our ranks, having the weal of his country sincerely at heart, and conceiving himself in the discharge of a patriotic duty?"

"It might be imprudent, while so absolutely in your power," replied Miss Bellenden, "to answer that question."

"Not in the present instance, I plight you the word of a soldier," replied the horseman.

"I have been taught candour from my birth," said Edith; "and, if I am to speak at all, I must utter my real sentiments. God only can judge the heart—men must estimate intentions by actions. Treason, murder by the sword and by gibbet, the oppression of a private family such as ours, who were only in arms for the defence of the established government, and of our own property, are actions which must needs sully all that have accession to them, by whatever specious terms they may be gilded over."

"The guilt of civil war," rejoined the horseman—"the miseries which it brings in its train, lie at the door of those who provoked it by illegal oppression, rather than of such as are driven to arms in order to assert their natural rights as freemen."

"That is assuming the question," replied Edith, "which ought to be proved. Each party contends that they are right in point of principle, and therefore the guilt must lie with them who first drew the sword; as, in an affray, law holds those to be the criminals who are the first to have recourse to violence."

"Alas!" said the horseman, "were our vindication to rest there, how easy would it be to show that we have suffered with a patience which almost seemed beyond the power of humanity, ere we were driven by oppression into open resistance!—But I perceive," he continued, sighing deeply, "that it is vain to plead before Miss Bellenden a cause which she has already prejudged, perhaps as much from her dislike of the persons as of the principles of those engaged in it."

"Pardon me," answered Edith; "I have stated with freedom my opinion of the principles of the insurgents; of their persons I know nothing—excepting in one solitary instance."

"And that instance," said the horseman, "has influenced your opinion of the whole body?"

"Far from it," said Edith; "he is—at least I once thought him—one in whose scale few were fit to be weighed—he is—or he seemed—one of early talent, high faith, pure morality, and warm affections. Can I approve of a rebellion which has made such a man, formed to ornament, to enlighten, and to defend his country, the companion of gloomy and ignorant fanatics, or canting hypocrites,—the leader of brutal clowns,—the brother-in-arms to banditti and highway murderers?—Should you meet such an one in your camp, tell him that Edith Bellenden has wept more over his fallen character, blighted prospects, and dishonoured name, than over the distresses of her own house,—and that she has better endured that famine which has wasted her cheek and dimmed her eye, than the pang of heart which attended the reflection by and through whom these calamities were inflicted."

As she thus spoke, she turned upon her companion a countenance, whose faded cheek attested the reality of her sufferings, even while it glowed with the temporary animation which accompanied her language. The horseman was not insensible to the appeal; he raised his hand to his brow with the sudden motion of one who feels a pang shoot along his brain, passed it hastily over his face, and then pulled the shadowing hat still deeper on his forehead. The movement, and the feelings which it excited, did not escape Edith, nor did she remark them without emotion.

"And yet," she said, "should the person of whom I speak seem to you too deeply affected by the hard opinion of—of—an early friend, say to him, that sincere repentance is next to innocence;—that, though fallen from a height not easily recovered, and the author of much mischief, because gilded by his example, he may still atone in some measure for the evil he has done."

"And in what manner?" asked the cavalier, in the same suppressed, and almost choked voice.

"By lending his efforts to restore the blessings of peace to his distracted countrymen, and to induce the deluded rebels to lay down their arms. By saving their blood, he may atone for that which has been already spilt;—and he that shall be most active in accomplishing this great end, will best deserve the thanks of this age, and an honoured remembrance in the next."

"And in such a peace," said her companion, with a firm voice, "Miss Bellenden would not wish, I think, that the interests of the people were sacrificed unreservedly to those of the crown?"

"I am but a girl," was the young lady's reply; "and I scarce can speak on the subject without presumption. But, since I have gone so far, I will fairly add, I would wish to see a peace which should give rest to all parties, and secure the subjects from military rapine, which I detest as much as I do the means now adopted to resist it."

"Miss Bellenden," answered Henry Morton, raising his face, and speaking in his natural tone, "the person who has lost such a highly-valued place in your esteem, has yet too much spirit to plead his cause as a criminal; and, conscious that he can no longer claim a friend's interest in your bosom, he would be silent under

your hard censure, were it not that he can refer to the honoured testimony of Lord Evandale, that his earnest wishes and most active exertions are, even now, directed to the accomplishment of such a peace as the most loyal cannot censure."

He bowed with dignity to Miss Bellenden, who, though her language intimated that she well knew to whom she had been speaking, probably had not expected that he would justify himself with so much animation. She returned his salute, confused and in silence. Morton then rode forward to the head of the party.

"Henry Morton!" exclaimed Major Bellenden, surprised at the sudden apparition.

"The same," answered Morton; "who is sorry that he labours under the harsh construction of Major Bellenden and his family. He commits to my Lord Evandale," he continued, turning towards the young nobleman, and bowing to him, "the charge of undeceiving his friends, both regarding the particulars of his conduct and the purity of his motives. Farewell, Major Bellenden—All happiness attend you and yours—May we meet again in happier and better times!"

"Believe me," said Lord Evandale, "your confidence, Mr Morton, is not misplaced; I will endeavour to repay the great services I have received from you by doing my best to place your character on its proper footing with Major Bellenden, and all whose esteem you value."

"I expected no less from your generosity, my lord," said Morton.

He then called his followers, and rode off along the heath in the direction of Hamilton, their feathers waving and their steel caps glancing in the beams of the rising sun. Cuddie Headrigg alone remained an instant behind his companions to take an affectionate farewell of Jenny Dennison, who had contrived, during this short morning's ride, to re-establish her influence over his susceptible bosom. A straggling tree or two obscured, rather than concealed, their *tete-a-tete*, as they halted their horses to bid adieu.

"Fare ye weel, Jenny," said Cuddie, with a loud exertion of his lungs, intended perhaps to be a sigh, but rather resembling the intonation of a groan,—"*Ye'll think o' puir Cuddie sometimes—an honest lad that lo'es ye, Jenny; ye'll think o' him now and then?*"

"Whiles—at brose-time," answered the malicious damsel, unable either to suppress the repartee, or the arch smile which attended it.

Cuddie took his revenge as rustic lovers are wont, and as Jenny probably expected,—caught his mistress round the neck, kissed her cheeks and lips heartily, and then turned his horse and trotted after his master.

"Deil's in the fallow," said Jenny, wiping her lips and adjusting her head-dress, "he has twice the spunk o' Tam Halliday, after a'.—Coming, my leddy, coming—Lord have a care o' us, I trust the auld leddy didna see us!"

"Jenny," said Lady Margaret, as the damsel came up, "was not that young man who commanded the party the same that was captain of the popinjay, and who was afterwards prisoner at Tillietudlem on the morning Claverhouse came there?"

Jenny, happy that the query had no reference to her own little matters, looked at her young mistress, to discover, if possible, whether it was her cue to speak truth or not. Not being able to catch any hint to guide her, she followed her instinct as a lady's maid, and lied.

"I dinna believe it was him, my leddy," said Jenny, as confidently as if she had been saying her catechism; "he was a little black man, that."

"You must have been blind, Jenny," said the Major: "Henry Morton is tall and fair, and that youth is the very man."

"I had ither thing ado than be looking at him," said Jenny, tossing her head; "he may be as fair as a farthing candle, for me."

"Is it not," said Lady Margaret, "a blessed escape which we have made, out of the hands of so desperate and bloodthirsty a fanatic?"

"You are deceived, madam," said Lord Evandale; "Mr Morton merits such a title from no one, but least from us. That I am now alive, and that you are now on your safe retreat to your friends, instead of being prisoners to a real fanatical homicide, is solely and entirely owing to the prompt, active, and energetic humanity of this young gentleman."

He then went into a particular narrative of the events with which the reader is acquainted, dwelling upon the merits of Morton, and expatiating on the risk at which he had rendered them these important services, as if he had been a brother instead of a rival.

"I were worse than ungrateful," he said, "were I silent on the merits of the man who has twice saved my life."

"I would willingly think well of Henry Morton, my lord," replied Major Bellenden; "and I own he has behaved handsomely to your lordship and to us; but I cannot have the same allowances which it pleases your lordship to entertain for his present courses."

"You are to consider," replied Lord Evandale, "that he has been partly forced upon them by necessity; and I must add, that his principles, though differing in some degree from my own, are such as ought to command respect. Claverhouse, whose knowledge of men is not to be disputed, spoke justly of him as to his extraordinary qualities, but with prejudice, and harshly, concerning his principles and motives."

"You have not been long in learning all his extraordinary qualities, my lord," answered Major Bellenden. "I, who have known him from boyhood, could, before this affair, have said much of his good principles and good-nature; but as to his high talents"—

"They were probably hidden, Major," replied the generous Lord Evandale, "even from himself, until circumstances called them forth; and, if I have detected them, it was only because our intercourse and conversation turned on momentous and important subjects. He is now labouring to bring this rebellion to an end, and the terms he has proposed are so moderate, that they shall not want my hearty recommendation."

"And have you hopes," said Lady Margaret, "to accomplish a scheme so comprehensive?"

"I should have, madam, were every whig as moderate as Morton, and every loyalist as disinterested as Major Bellenden. But such is the fanaticism and violent irritation of both parties, that I fear nothing will end this civil war save the edge of the sword."

It may be readily supposed, that Edith listened with the deepest interest to this conversation. While she regretted that she had expressed herself harshly and hastily to her lover, she felt a conscious and proud satisfaction that his character was, even in the judgment of his noble-minded rival, such as her own affection had once spoke it.

"Civil feuds and domestic prejudices," she said, "may render it necessary for me to tear his remembrance from my heart; but it is not small relief to know assuredly, that it is worthy of the place it has so long retained there."

While Edith was thus retracting her unjust resentment, her lover arrived at the camp of the insurgents, near Hamilton, which he found in considerable confusion. Certain advices had arrived that the royal army, having been recruited from England by a large detachment of the King's Guards, were about to take the field. Fame magnified their numbers and their high state of equipment and discipline, and spread abroad other circumstances, which dismayed the courage of the insurgents. What favour they might have expected from Monmouth, was likely to be intercepted by the influence of those associated with him in command. His lieutenant-general was the celebrated General Thomas Dalzell, who, having practised the art of war in the then barbarous country of Russia, was as much feared for his cruelty and indifference to human life and human sufferings, as respected for his steady loyalty and undaunted valour. This man was second in command to Monmouth, and the horse were commanded by Claverhouse, burning with desire to revenge the death of his nephew, and his defeat at Drumclog. To these accounts was added the most formidable and terrific description of the train of artillery and the cavalry force with which the royal army took the field.

[Note: Royal Army at Bothwell Bridge. A Cameronian muse was awakened from slumber on this doleful occasion, and gave the following account of the muster of the royal forces, in poetry nearly as melancholy as the subject:—

*They marched east through Lithgow-town
For to enlarge their forces;
And sent for all the north-country
To come, both foot and horses.*

*Montrose did come and Athole both,
And with them many more;
And all the Highland Amorites
That had been there before.*

*The Lowdian Mallisha—Lothian Militia they
Came with their coats of blew;
Five hundred men from London came,
Claid in a reddish hue.*

*When they were assembled one and all,
A full brigade were they;
Like to a pack of hellish hounds,
Roreing after their prey.*

*When they were all provided well,
In armour and amonition,
Then thither wester did they come,
Most cruel of intention.*

*The royalists celebrated their victory in stanzas of equal merit.
Specimens of both may be found in the curious collection of Fugitive
Scottish Poetry, principally of the Seventeenth Century, printed for
the Messrs Laing, Edinburgh.]*

Large bodies, composed of the Highland clans, having in language, religion, and manners, no connexion with the insurgents, had been summoned to join the royal army under their various chieftains; and these Amorites, or Philistines, as the insurgents termed them, came like eagles to the slaughter. In fact, every person who could ride or run at the King's command, was summoned to arms, apparently with the purpose of forfeiting and fining such men of property whom their principles might deter from joining the royal standard, though prudence prevented them from joining that of the insurgent Presbyterians. In short, every rumour tended to increase the apprehension among the insurgents, that the King's vengeance had only been delayed in order that it might fall more certain and more heavy.

Morton endeavoured to fortify the minds of the common people by pointing out the probable exaggeration of these reports, and by reminding them of the strength of their own situation, with an unfordable river in front, only passable by a long and narrow bridge. He called to their remembrance their victory over Claverhouse when their numbers were few, and then much worse disciplined and appointed for battle than now; showed them that the ground on which they lay afforded, by its undulation, and the thickets which intersected it, considerable protection against artillery, and even against cavalry, if stoutly defended; and that their safety, in fact, depended on their own spirit and resolution.

But while Morton thus endeavoured to keep up the courage of the army at large, he availed himself of those discouraging rumours to endeavour to impress on the minds of the leaders the necessity of proposing to the government moderate terms of accommodation, while they were still formidable as commanding an unbroken and numerous army. He pointed out to them, that, in the present humour of their followers, it could hardly be expected that they would engage, with advantage, the well-appointed and regular force of the Duke of Monmouth; and that if they chanced, as was most likely, to be defeated and dispersed, the insurrection in which they had engaged, so far from being useful to the country, would be rendered the apology for oppressing it more severely.

Pressed by these arguments, and feeling it equally dangerous to remain together, or to dismiss their forces, most of the leaders readily agreed, that if such terms could be obtained as had been transmitted to the Duke of Monmouth by the hands of Lord Evandale, the purpose for which they had taken up arms would be, in a great measure, accomplished. They then entered into similar resolutions, and agreed to guarantee the petition and remonstrance which had been drawn up by Morton. On the contrary, there were still several leaders, and those men whose influence with the people exceeded that of persons of more apparent consequence, who regarded every proposal of treaty which did not proceed on the basis of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1640, as utterly null and void, impious, and unchristian. These men diffused their feelings among the multitude, who had little foresight, and nothing to lose, and persuaded many that the timid counsellors who recommended peace upon terms short of the dethronement of the royal family, and the declared independence of the church with respect to the state, were cowardly labourers, who were about to withdraw their hands from the plough, and despicable trimmers, who sought only a specious pretext for deserting their brethren in arms. These contradictory opinions were fiercely argued in each tent of the insurgent army, or rather in the huts or cabins which served in the place of tents. Violence in language often led to open quarrels and blows, and the divisions into which the army of sufferers was rent served as too plain a presage of their future fate.

CHAPTER IX.

*The curse of growing factions and divisions
Still vex your councils!
Venice Preserved.*

The prudence of Morton found sufficient occupation in stemming the furious current of these contending parties, when, two days after his return to Hamilton, he was visited by his friend and colleague, the Reverend Mr Poundtext, flying, as he presently found, from the face of John Balfour of Burley, whom he left not a little incensed at the share he had taken in the liberation of Lord Evandale. When the worthy divine had somewhat recruited his spirits, after the hurry and fatigue of his journey, he proceeded to give Morton an account of what had passed in the vicinity of Tillietudlem after the memorable morning of his departure.

The night march of Morton had been accomplished with such dexterity, and the men were so faithful to their trust, that Burley received no intelligence of what had happened until the morning was far advanced. His first enquiry was, whether Macbriar and Kettledrummle had arrived, agreeably to the summons which he had dispatched at midnight. Macbriar had come, and Kettledrummle, though a heavy traveller, might, he was informed, be instantly expected. Burley then dispatched a messenger to Morton's quarters to summon him to an immediate council. The messenger returned with news that he had left the place. Poundtext was next summoned; but he thinking, as he said himself, that it was ill dealing with fractious folk, had withdrawn to his own quiet manse, preferring a dark ride, though he had been on horseback the whole preceding day, to a renewal in the morning of a controversy with Burley, whose ferocity overawed him when unsupported by the firmness of Morton. Burley's next enquiries were directed after Lord Evandale; and great was his rage when he learned that he had been conveyed away over night by a party of the marksmen of Milnwood, under the immediate command of Henry Morton himself.

"The villain!" exclaimed Burley, addressing himself to Macbriar; "the base, mean-spirited traitor, to curry favour for himself with the government, hath set at liberty the prisoner taken by my own right hand, through means of whom, I have little doubt, the possession of the place of strength which hath wrought us such trouble, might now have been in our hands!"

"But is it not in our hands?" said Macbriar, looking up towards the Keep of the Castle; "and are not these the colours of the Covenant that float over its walls?"

"A stratagem—a mere trick," said Burley, "an insult over our disappointment, intended to aggravate and embitter our spirits."

He was interrupted by the arrival of one of Morton's followers, sent to report to him the evacuation of the place, and its occupation by the insurgent forces. Burley was rather driven to fury than reconciled by the news of this success.

"I have watched," he said—"I have fought—I have plotted—I have striven for the reduction of this place—I have forborne to seek head enterprises of higher command and of higher honour—I have narrowed their outgoings, and cut off the springs, and broken the staff of bread within their walls; and when the men were about to yield themselves to my hand, that their sons might be bondsmen, and their daughters a laughing-stock to our whole camp, cometh this youth, without a beard on his chin, and takes it on him to thrust his sickle into the harvest, and to rend the prey from the spoiler! Surely the labourer is worthy of his hire, and the city, with its captives, should be given to him that wins it?"

"Nay," said Macbriar, who was surprised at the degree of agitation which Balfour displayed, "chafe not thyself because of the ungodly. Heaven will use its own instruments; and who knows but this youth"—

"Hush! hush!" said Burley; "do not discredit thine own better judgment. It was thou that first badest me beware of this painted sepulchre—this lacquered piece of copper, that passed current with me for gold. It fares ill, even with the elect, when they neglect the guidance of such pious pastors as thou. But our carnal affections will mislead us—this ungrateful boy's father was mine ancient friend. They must be as earnest in their struggles as thou, Ephraim Macbriar, that would shake themselves clear of the clogs and chains of humanity."

This compliment touched the preacher in the most sensible part; and Burley deemed, therefore, he should find little difficulty in moulding his opinions to the support of his own views, more especially as they agreed exactly in their high-strained opinions of church government.

"Let us instantly," he said, "go up to the Tower; there is that among the records in yonder fortress, which, well used as I can use it, shall be worth to us a valiant leader and an hundred horsemen."

"But will such be the fitting aids of the children of the Covenant?" said the preacher. "We have already among us too many who hunger after lands, and silver and gold, rather than after the Word; it is not by such that our deliverance shall be wrought out."

"Thou errest," said Burley; "we must work by means, and these worldly men shall be our instruments. At all events, the Moabitish woman shall be despoiled of her inheritance, and neither the malignant Evandale, nor the erastian Morton, shall possess yonder castle and lands, though they may seek in marriage the daughter thereof."

So saying, he led the way to Tillietudlem, where he seized upon the plate and other valuables for the use of the army, ransacked the charter-room, and other receptacles for family papers, and treated with contempt the remonstrances of those who reminded him, that the terms granted to the garrison had guaranteed respect to private property.

Burley and Macbriar, having established themselves in their new acquisition, were joined by Kettledrummy in the course of the day, and also by the Laird of Langcale, whom that active divine had contrived to seduce, as Poundtext termed it, from the pure light in which he had been brought up. Thus united, they sent to the said Poundtext an invitation, or rather a summons, to attend a council at Tillietudlem. He remembered, however, that the door had an iron grate, and the Keep a dungeon, and resolved not to trust himself with his incensed colleagues. He therefore retreated, or rather fled, to Hamilton, with the tidings, that Burley, Macbriar, and Kettledrummy, were coming to Hamilton as soon as they could collect a body of Cameronians sufficient to overawe the rest of the army.

"And ye see," concluded Poundtext, with a deep sigh, "that they will then possess a majority in the council; for Langcale, though he has always passed for one of the honest and rational party, cannot be suitably or preceesely termed either fish, or flesh, or gude red-herring—whoever has the stronger party has Langcale."

Thus concluded the heavy narrative of honest Poundtext, who sighed deeply, as he considered the danger in which he was placed betwixt unreasonable adversaries amongst themselves and the common enemy from without. Morton exhorted him to patience, temper, and composure; informed him of the good hope he had of negotiating for peace and indemnity through means of Lord Evandale, and made out to him a very fair prospect that he should again return to his own parchment-bound Calvin, his evening pipe of tobacco, and his noggin of inspiring ale, providing always he would afford his effectual support and concurrence to the measures which he, Morton, had taken for a general pacification.

[Note: Moderate Presbyterians. The author does not, by any means, desire that Poundtext should be regarded as a just representation of the moderate presbyterians, among whom were many ministers whose courage was equal to their good sense and sound views of religion. Were he to write the tale anew, he would probably endeavour to give the character a higher turn. It is certain, however, that the Cameronians imputed to their opponents in opinion concerning the Indulgence, or others of their strained and fanatical notions, a disposition not only to seek their own safety, but to enjoy themselves. Hamilton speaks of three clergymen of this description as follows:—

"They pretended great zeal against the Indulgence; but alas! that was all their practice, otherwise being but very gross, which I shall but hint at in short. When great Cameron and those with him were taking many a cold blast and storm in the fields and among the cot-houses in Scotland, these three had for the most part their residence in Glasgow, where they found good quarter and a full table, which I doubt not but some bestowed upon them from real affection to the Lord's cause; and when these three were together, their greatest work was who should make the finest and sharpest roundel, and breathe the quickest jests upon one another, and to tell what valiant acts they were to do, and who could laugh loudest and most heartily among them; and when at any time they came out to the country, whatever other things they had, they were careful each of them to have a great flask of brandy with them, which was very heavy to some, particularly to Mr Cameron, Mr Cargill, and Henry Hall—I shall name no more."—Faithful Contendings, p. 198.]

Thus backed and comforted, Poundtext resolved magnanimously to await the coming of the Cameronians to the general rendezvous.

Burley and his confederates had drawn together a considerable body of these sectaries, amounting to a hundred horse and about fifteen hundred foot, clouded and severe in aspect, morose and jealous in communication, haughty of heart, and confident, as men who believed that the pale of salvation was open for them exclusively; while all other Christians, however slight were the shades of difference of doctrine from their own, were in fact little better than outcasts or reprobates. These men entered the presbyterian camp, rather as dubious and suspicious allies, or possibly antagonists, than as men who were heartily embarked in the same cause, and exposed to the same dangers, with their more moderate brethren in arms. Burley made no private visits to his colleagues, and held no communication with them on the subject of the public affairs, otherwise than by sending a dry invitation to them to attend a meeting of the general council for that evening. On the arrival of Morton and Poundtext at the place of assembly, they found their brethren already seated. Slight greeting passed between them, and it was easy to see that no amicable conference was intended by those who convoked the council. The first question was put by Macbriar, the sharp eagerness of whose zeal urged him to the van on all occasions. He desired to know by whose authority the malignant, called Lord Evandale, had been freed from the doom of death, justly denounced against him.

"By my authority and Mr Morton's," replied Poundtext; who, besides being anxious to give his companion a good opinion of his courage, confided heartily in his support, and, moreover, had much less fear of encountering one of his own profession, and who confined himself to the weapons of theological controversy, in which Poundtext feared no man, than of entering into debate with the stern homicide Balfour.

"And who, brother," said Kettledrummy, "who gave you authority to interpose in such a high matter?"

"The tenor of our commission," answered Poundtext, "gives us authority to bind and to loose. If Lord Evandale was justly doomed to die by the voice of one of our number, he was of a surety lawfully redeemed from death by the warrant of two of us."

"Go to, go to," said Burley; "we know your motives; it was to send that silkworm—that gilded trinket—that embroidered trifle of a lord, to bear terms of peace to the tyrant."

"It was so," replied Morton, who saw his companion begin to flinch before the fierce eye of Balfour—"it was so; and what then?—Are we to plunge the nation in endless war, in order to pursue schemes which are equally wild, wicked, and unattainable?"

"Hear him!" said Balfour; "he blasphemeth."

"It is false," said Morton; "they blaspheme who pretend to expect miracles, and neglect the use of the human means with which Providence has blessed them. I repeat it—Our avowed object is the re-establishment of peace on fair and honourable terms of security to our religion and our liberty. We disclaim any desire to tyrannize over those of others."

The debate would now have run higher than ever, but they were interrupted by intelligence that the Duke of Monmouth had commenced his march towards the west, and was already advanced half way from Edinburgh. This news silenced their divisions for the moment, and it was agreed that the next day should be held as a fast of general humiliation for the sins of the land; that the Reverend Mr Poundtext should preach to the army in the morning, and Kettledrummy in the afternoon; that neither should touch upon any topics of schism or of division, but animate the soldiers to resist to the blood, like brethren in a good cause. This healing overture having been agreed to, the moderate party ventured upon another proposal, confiding that it would have the support of Langcale, who looked extremely blank at the news which they had just received, and might be supposed reconverted to moderate measures. It was to be presumed, they said, that since the King had not intrusted the command of his forces upon the present occasion to any of their active oppressors, but, on the contrary, had employed a nobleman distinguished by gentleness of temper, and a disposition favourable to their cause, there must be some better intention entertained towards them than they had yet experienced. They contended, that it was not only prudent but necessary to ascertain, from a communication with the Duke of Monmouth, whether he was not charged with some secret instructions in their favour. This could only be learned by dispatching an envoy to his army.

"And who will undertake the task?" said Burley, evading a proposal too reasonable to be openly resisted—"Who will go up to their camp, knowing that John Grahame of Claverhouse hath sworn to hang up whomsoever we shall dispatch towards them, in revenge of the death of the young man his nephew?"

"Let that be no obstacle," said Morton; "I will with pleasure encounter any risk attached to the bearer of your errand."

"Let him go," said Balfour, apart to Macbriar; "our councils will be well rid of his presence."

The motion, therefore, received no contradiction even from those who were expected to have been most active in opposing it; and it was agreed that Henry Morton should go to the camp of the Duke of Monmouth, in order to discover upon what terms the insurgents would be admitted to treat with him. As soon as his errand was made known, several of the more moderate party joined in requesting him to make terms upon the footing of the petition intrusted to Lord Evandale's hands; for the approach of the King's army spread a general trepidation, by no means allayed by the high tone assumed by the Cameronians, which had so little to support it, excepting their own headlong zeal. With these instructions, and with Cuddie as his attendant, Morton set forth towards the royal camp, at all the risks which attend those who assume the office of mediator during the heat of civil discord.

Morton had not proceeded six or seven miles, before he perceived that he was on the point of falling in with the van of the royal forces; and, as he ascended a height, saw all the roads in the neighbourhood occupied by armed men marching in great order towards Bothwell-muir, an open common, on which they proposed to encamp for that evening, at the distance of scarcely two miles from the Clyde, on the farther side of which river the army of the insurgents was encamped. He gave himself up to the first advanced-guard of cavalry which he met, as bearer of a flag of truce, and communicated his desire to obtain access to the Duke of Monmouth. The non-commissioned officer who commanded the party made his report to his superior, and he again to another in still higher command, and both immediately rode to the spot where Morton was detained.

"You are but losing your time, my friend, and risking your life," said one of them, addressing Morton; "the Duke of Monmouth will receive no terms from traitors with arms in their hands, and your cruelties have been such as to authorize retaliation of every kind. Better trot your nag back and save his mettle to-day, that he may save your life to-morrow."

"I cannot think," said Morton, "that even if the Duke of Monmouth should consider us as criminals, he would condemn so large a body of his fellow-subjects without even hearing what they have to plead for themselves. On my part I fear nothing. I am conscious of having consented to, or authorized, no cruelty, and the fear of suffering innocently for the crimes of others shall not deter me from executing my commission."

The two officers looked at each other.

"I have an idea," said the younger, "that this is the young man of whom Lord Evandale spoke."

"Is my Lord Evandale in the army?" said Morton.

"He is not," replied the officer; "we left him at Edinburgh, too much indisposed to take the field.—Your name, sir, I presume, is Henry Morton?"

"It is, sir," answered Morton.

"We will not oppose your seeing the Duke, sir," said the officer, with more civility of manner; "but you may assure yourself it will be to no purpose; for, were his Grace disposed to favour your people, others are joined in commission with him who will hardly consent to his doing so."

"I shall be sorry to find it thus," said Morton; "but my duty requires that I should persevere in my desire to have an interview with him."

"Lumley," said the superior officer, "let the Duke know of Mr Morton's arrival, and remind his Grace that this is the person of whom Lord Evandale spoke so highly."

The officer returned with a message that the General could not see Mr Morton that evening, but would receive him by times in the ensuing morning. He was detained in a neighbouring cottage all night, but treated with civility, and every thing provided for his accommodation. Early on the next morning the officer he had first seen came to conduct him to his audience.

The army was drawn out, and in the act of forming column for march, or attack. The Duke was in the centre, nearly a mile from the place where Morton had passed the night. In riding towards the General, he had an opportunity of estimating the force which had been assembled for the suppression of the hasty and ill-concerted insurrection. There were three or four regiments of English, the flower of Charles's army—there were the Scottish Life-Guards, burning with desire to

revenge their late defeat—other Scottish regiments of regulars were also assembled, and a large body of cavalry, consisting partly of gentlemen-volunteers, partly of the tenants of the crown who did military duty for their fiefs. Morton also observed several strong parties of Highlanders drawn from the points nearest to the Lowland frontiers, a people, as already mentioned, particularly obnoxious to the western whigs, and who hated and despised them in the same proportion. These were assembled under their chiefs, and made part of this formidable array. A complete train of field-artillery accompanied these troops; and the whole had an air so imposing, that it seemed nothing short of an actual miracle could prevent the ill-equipped, ill-modelled, and tumultuary army of the insurgents from being utterly destroyed. The officer who accompanied Morton endeavoured to gather from his looks the feelings with which this splendid and awful parade of military force had impressed him. But, true to the cause he had espoused, he laboured successfully to prevent the anxiety which he felt from appearing in his countenance, and looked around him on the warlike display as on a sight which he expected, and to which he was indifferent.

"You see the entertainment prepared for you," said the officers.

"If I had no appetite for it," replied Morton, "I should not have been accompanying you at this moment. But I shall be better pleased with a more peaceful regale, for the sake of all parties."

As they spoke thus, they approached the commander-in-chief, who, surrounded by several officers, was seated upon a knoll commanding an extensive prospect of the distant country, and from which could be easily discovered the windings of the majestic Clyde, and the distant camp of the insurgents on the opposite bank. The officers of the royal army appeared to be surveying the ground, with the purpose of directing an immediate attack. When Captain Lumley, the officer who accompanied Morton, had whispered in Monmouth's ear his name and errand, the Duke made a signal for all around him to retire, excepting only two general officers of distinction. While they spoke together in whispers for a few minutes before Morton was permitted to advance, he had time to study the appearance of the persons with whom he was to treat.

It was impossible for any one to look upon the Duke of Monmouth without being captivated by his personal graces and accomplishments, of which the great High-Priest of all the Nine afterwards recorded—

"Whate'er he did was done with so much ease, In him alone 'twas natural to please; His motions all accompanied with grace, And Paradise was open'd in his face." Yet to a strict observer, the manly beauty of Monmouth's face was occasionally rendered less striking by an air of vacillation and uncertainty, which seemed to imply hesitation and doubt at moments when decisive resolution was most necessary.

Beside him stood Claverhouse, whom we have already fully described, and another general officer whose appearance was singularly striking. His dress was of the antique fashion of Charles the First's time, and composed of shamoy leather, curiously slashed, and covered with antique lace and garniture. His boots and spurs might be referred to the same distant period. He wore a breastplate, over which descended a grey beard of venerable length, which he cherished as a mark of mourning for Charles the First, having never shaved since that monarch was brought to the scaffold. His head was uncovered, and almost perfectly bald. His high and wrinkled forehead, piercing grey eyes, and marked features, evinced age unbroken by infirmity, and stern resolution unsoftened by humanity. Such is the outline, however feebly expressed, of the celebrated General Thomas Dalzell,

[Note: Usually called Tom Dalzell. In Crichton's Memoirs, edited by Swift, where a particular account of this remarkable person's dress and habits is given, he is said never to have worn boots. The following account of his rencounter with John Paton of Meadowhead, showed, that in action at least he wore pretty stout ones, unless the reader be inclined to believe in the truth of his having a charm, which made him proof against lead.]

"Dalzell," says Paton's biographer, "advanced the whole left wing of his army on Colonel Wallace's right. Here Captain Paton behaved with great courage and gallantry. Dalzell, knowing him in the former wars, advanced upon him himself, thinking to take him prisoner. Upon his approach, each presented his pistol. On their first discharge, Captain Paton, perceiving his pistol ball to hop upon Dalzell's boots, and knowing what was the cause, (he having proof,) put his hand in his pocket for some small pieces of silver he had there for the purpose, and put one of them into his other pistol. But Dalzell, having his eye upon him in the meanwhile, retired behind his own man, who by that means was slain."

a man more feared and hated by the whigs than even Claverhouse himself, and who executed the same violences against them out of a detestation of their persons, or perhaps an innate severity of temper, which Grahame only resorted to on political accounts, as the best means of intimidating the followers of presbytery, and of destroying that sect entirely.

The presence of these two generals, one of whom he knew by person, and the other by description, seemed to Morton decisive of the fate of his embassy. But, notwithstanding his youth and inexperience, and the unfavourable reception which his proposals seemed likely to meet with, he advanced boldly towards them upon receiving a signal to that purpose, determined that the cause of his country, and of those with whom he had taken up arms, should suffer nothing from being intrusted to him. Monmouth received him with the graceful courtesy which attended even his slightest actions; Dalzell regarded him with a stern, gloomy, and impatient frown; and Claverhouse, with a sarcastic smile and inclination of his head, seemed to claim him as an old acquaintance.

"You come, sir, from these unfortunate people, now assembled in arms," said the Duke of Monmouth, "and your name, I believe, is Morton; will you favour us with the pupport of your errand?"

"It is contained, my lord," answered Morton, "in a paper, termed a Remonstrance and Supplication, which my Lord Evandale has placed, I presume, in your Grace's hands?"

"He has done so, sir," answered the Duke; "and I understand, from Lord Evandale, that Mr Morton has behaved in these unhappy matters with much temperance and generosity, for which I have to request his acceptance of my thanks."

Here Morton observed Dalzell shake his head indignantly, and whisper something into Claverhouse's ear, who smiled in return, and elevated his eyebrows, but in a degree so slight as scarce to be perceptible. The Duke, taking the petition from his pocket, proceeded, obviously struggling between the native gentleness of his own disposition, and perhaps his conviction that the petitioners demanded no more than their rights, and the desire, on the other hand, of enforcing the king's authority, and complying with the sterner opinions of the colleagues in office, who had been assigned for the purpose of controlling as well as advising him.

"There are, Mr Morton, in this paper, proposals, as to the abstract propriety of which I must now waive delivering any opinion. Some of them appear to me reasonable and just; and, although I have no express instructions from the King upon the subject, yet I assure you, Mr Morton, and I pledge my honour, that I will interpose in your behalf, and use my utmost influence to procure you satisfaction from his Majesty. But you must distinctly understand, that I can only treat with supplicants, not with rebels; and, as a preliminary to every act of favour on my side, I must insist upon your followers laying down their arms and dispersing themselves."

"To do so, my Lord Duke," replied Morton, undauntedly, "were to acknowledge ourselves the rebels that our enemies term us. Our swords are drawn for recovery of a birthright wrested from us; your Grace's moderation and good sense has admitted the general justice of our demand,—a demand which would never have

been listened to had it not been accompanied with the sound of the trumpet. We cannot, therefore, and dare not, lay down our arms, even on your Grace's assurance of indemnity, unless it were accompanied with some reasonable prospect of the redress of the wrongs which we complain of."

"Mr Morton," replied the Duke, "you are young, but you must have seen enough of the world to perceive, that requests, by no means dangerous or unreasonable in themselves, may become so by the way in which they are pressed and supported."

"We may reply, my lord," answered Morton, "that this disagreeable mode has not been resorted to until all others have failed."

"Mr Morton," said the Duke, "I must break this conference short. We are in readiness to commence the attack; yet I will suspend it for an hour, until you can communicate my answer to the insurgents. If they please to disperse their followers, lay down their arms, and send a peaceful deputation to me, I will consider myself bound in honour to do all I can to procure redress of their grievances; if not, let them stand on their guard and expect the consequences.—I think, gentlemen," he added, turning to his two colleagues, "this is the utmost length to which I can stretch my instructions in favour of these misguided persons?"

"By my faith," answered Dalzell, suddenly, "and it is a length to which my poor judgment durst not have stretched them, considering I had both the King and my conscience to answer to! But, doubtless, your Grace knows more of the King's private mind than we, who have only the letter of our instructions to look to."

Monmouth blushed deeply. "You hear," he said, addressing Morton, "General Dalzell blames me for the length which I am disposed to go in your favour."

"General Dalzell's sentiments, my lord," replied Morton, "are such as we expected from him; your Grace's such as we were prepared to hope you might please to entertain. Indeed I cannot help adding, that, in the case of the absolute submission upon which you are pleased to insist, it might still remain something less than doubtful how far, with such counsellors around the King, even your Grace's intercession might procure us effectual relief. But I will communicate to our leaders your Grace's answer to our supplication; and, since we cannot obtain peace, we must bid war welcome as well as we may."

"Good morning, sir," said the Duke; "I suspend the movements of attack for one hour, and for one hour only. If you have an answer to return within that space of time, I will receive it here, and earnestly entreat it may be such as to save the effusion of blood."

At this moment another smile of deep meaning passed between Dalzell and Claverhouse. The Duke observed it, and repeated his words with great dignity.

"Yes, gentlemen, I said I trusted the answer might be such as would save the effusion of blood. I hope the sentiment neither needs your scorn, nor incurs your displeasure."

Dalzell returned the Duke's frown with a stern glance, but made no answer. Claverhouse, his lip just curled with an ironical smile, bowed, and said, "It was not for him to judge the propriety of his Grace's sentiments."

The Duke made a signal to Morton to withdraw. He obeyed; and, accompanied by his former escort, rode slowly through the army to return to the camp of the non-conformists. As he passed the fine corps of Life-Guards, he found Claverhouse was already at their head. That officer no sooner saw Morton, than he advanced and addressed him with perfect politeness of manner.

"I think this is not the first time I have seen Mr Morton of Milnwood?"

"It is not Colonel Grahame's fault," said Morton, smiling sternly, "that he or any one else should be now incommoded by my presence."

"Allow me at least to say," replied Claverhouse, "that Mr Morton's present situation authorizes the opinion I have entertained of him, and that my proceedings at our last meeting only squared to my duty."

"To reconcile your actions to your duty, and your duty to your conscience, is your business, Colonel Grahame, not mine," said Morton, justly offended at being thus, in a manner, required to approve of the sentence under which he had so nearly suffered.

"Nay, but stay an instant," said Claverhouse; "Evandale insists that I have some wrongs to acquit myself of in your instance. I trust I shall always make some difference between a high-minded gentleman, who, though misguided, acts upon generous principles, and the crazy fanatical clowns yonder, with the bloodthirsty assassins who head them. Therefore, if they do not disperse upon your return, let me pray you instantly come over to our army and surrender yourself, for, be assured, they cannot stand our assault for half an hour. If you will be ruled and do this, be sure to enquire for me. Monmouth, strange as it may seem, cannot protect you—Dalzell will not—I both can and will; and I have promised to Evandale to do so if you will give me an opportunity."

"I should owe Lord Evandale my thanks," answered Morton, coldly, "did not his scheme imply an opinion that I might be prevailed on to desert those with whom I am engaged. For you, Colonel Grahame, if you will honour me with a different species of satisfaction, it is probable, that, in an hour's time, you will find me at the west end of Bothwell Bridge with my sword in my hand."

"I shall be happy to meet you there," said Claverhouse, "but still more so should you think better on my first proposal."

They then saluted and parted.

"That is a pretty lad, Lumley," said Claverhouse, addressing himself to the other officer; "but he is a lost man—his blood be upon his head."

So saying, he addressed himself to the task of preparation for instant battle.

CHAPTER X.

*But, hark! the tent has changed its voice,
There's peace and rest nae langer.
Burns.*

*The Lowdian Mallisha they
Came with their coats of blew;
Five hundred men from London came,
Claid in a reddish hue.
Bothwell Lines.*

When Morton had left the well-ordered outposts of the regular army, and arrived at those which were maintained by his own party, he could not but be peculiarly sensible of the difference of discipline, and entertain a proportional degree of fear for the consequences. The same discords which agitated the counsels of the insurgents, raged even among their meanest followers; and their picquets and patrols were more interested and occupied in disputing the true occasion and causes of wrath, and defining the limits of Erastian heresy, than in looking out for and observing the motions of their enemies, though within hearing of the royal drums and trumpets.

There was a guard, however, of the insurgent army, posted at the long and narrow bridge of Bothwell, over which the enemy must necessarily advance to the attack; but, like the others, they were divided and disheartened; and, entertaining the idea that they were posted on a desperate service, they even meditated withdrawing themselves to the main body. This would have been utter ruin; for, on the defence or loss of this pass the fortune of the day was most likely to depend. All beyond the bridge was a plain open field, excepting a few thickets of no great depth, and, consequently, was ground on which the undisciplined forces of the insurgents, deficient as they were in cavalry, and totally unprovided with artillery, were altogether unlikely to withstand the shock of regular troops.

Morton, therefore, viewed the pass carefully, and formed the hope, that by occupying two or three houses on the left bank of the river, with the copse and thickets of alders and hazels that lined its side, and by blockading the passage itself, and shutting the gates of a portal, which, according to the old fashion, was built on the central arch of the bridge of Bothwell, it might be easily defended against a very superior force. He issued directions accordingly, and commanded the parapets of the bridge, on the farther side of the portal, to be thrown down, that they might afford no protection to the enemy when they should attempt the passage. Morton then conjured the party at this important post to be watchful and upon their guard, and promised them a speedy and strong reinforcement. He

caused them to advance videttes beyond the river to watch the progress of the enemy, which outposts he directed should be withdrawn to the left bank as soon as they approached; finally, he charged them to send regular information to the main body of all that they should observe. Men under arms, and in a situation of danger, are usually sufficiently alert in appreciating the merit of their officers. Morton's intelligence and activity gained the confidence of these men, and with better hope and heart than before, they began to fortify their position in the manner he recommended, and saw him depart with three loud cheers.

Morton now galloped hastily towards the main body of the insurgents, but was surprised and shocked at the scene of confusion and clamour which it exhibited, at the moment when good order and concord were of such essential consequence. Instead of being drawn up in line of battle, and listening to the commands of their officers, they were crowding together in a confused mass, that rolled and agitated itself like the waves of the sea, while a thousand tongues spoke, or rather vociferated, and not a single ear was found to listen. Scandalized at a scene so extraordinary, Morton endeavoured to make his way through the press to learn, and, if possible, to remove, the cause of this so untimely disorder. While he is thus engaged, we shall make the reader acquainted with that which he was some time in discovering.

The insurgents had proceeded to hold their day of humiliation, which, agreeably to the practice of the puritans during the earlier civil war, they considered as the most effectual mode of solving all difficulties, and waiving all discussions. It was usual to name an ordinary week-day for this purpose, but on this occasion the Sabbath itself was adopted, owing to the pressure of the time and the vicinity of the enemy. A temporary pulpit, or tent, was erected in the middle of the encampment; which, according to the fixed arrangement, was first to be occupied by the Reverend Peter Poundtext, to whom the post of honour was assigned, as the eldest clergyman present. But as the worthy divine, with slow and stately steps, was advancing towards the rostrum which had been prepared for him, he was prevented by the unexpected apparition of Habakkuk Mucklewrath, the insane preacher, whose appearance had so much startled Morton at the first council of the insurgents after their victory at Loudon-hill. It is not known whether he was acting under the influence and instigation of the Cameronians, or whether he was merely compelled by his own agitated imagination, and the temptation of a vacant pulpit before him, to seize the opportunity of exhorting so respectable a congregation. It is only certain that he took occasion by the forelock, sprung into the pulpit, cast his eyes wildly round him, and, undismayed by the murmurs of many of the audience, opened the Bible, read forth as his text from the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, "Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known;" and then rushed at once into the midst of his subject.

The harangue of Mucklewrath was as wild and extravagant as his intrusion was unauthorized and untimely; but it was provokingly coherent, in so far as it turned entirely upon the very subjects of discord, of which it had been agreed to adjourn the consideration until some more suitable opportunity. Not a single topic did he omit which had offence in it; and, after charging the moderate party with heresy, with crouching to tyranny, with seeking to be at peace with God's enemies, he applied to Morton, by name, the charge that he had been one of those men of Belial, who, in the words of his text, had gone out from amongst them, to withdraw the inhabitants of his city, and to go astray after false gods. To him, and all who followed him, or approved of his conduct, Mucklewrath denounced fury and vengeance, and exhorted those who would hold themselves pure and undefiled to come up from the midst of them.

"Fear not," he said, "because of the neighing of horses, or the glittering of breastplates. Seek not aid of the Egyptians, because of the enemy, though they may be numerous as locusts, and fierce as dragons. Their trust is not as our trust, nor their rock as our rock; how else shall a thousand fly before one, and two put ten thousand to the flight! I dreamed it in the visions of the night, and the voice said, 'Habakkuk, take thy fan and purge the wheat from the chaff, that they be not both consumed with the fire of indignation and the lightning of fury.' Wherefore, I say, take this Henry Morton—this wretched Achan, who hath brought the accursed thing among ye, and made himself brethren in the camp of the enemy—take him and stone him with stones, and thereafter burn him with fire, that the wrath may depart from the children of the Covenant. He hath not taken a Babylonish garment, but he hath sold the garment of righteousness to the woman of Babylon—he hath not taken two hundred shekels of fine silver, but he hath bartered the truth, which is more precious than shekels of silver or wedges of gold."

At this furious charge, brought so unexpectedly against one of their most active commanders, the audience broke out into open tumult, some demanding that there should instantly be a new election of officers, into which office none should hereafter be admitted who had, in their phrase, touched of that which was accursed, or temporized more or less with the heresies and corruptions of the times. While such was the demand of the Cameronians, they vociferated loudly, that those who were not with them were against them,—that it was no time to relinquish the substantial part of the covenanted testimony of the Church, if they expected a blessing on their arms and their cause; and that, in their eyes, a lukewarm Presbyterian was little better than a Prelatist, an Anti-Covenanter, and a Nullifidian.

The parties accused repelled the charge of criminal compliance and defection from the truth with scorn and indignation, and charged their accusers with breach of faith, as well as with wrong-headed and extravagant zeal in introducing such divisions into an army, the joint strength of which could not, by the most sanguine, be judged more than sufficient to face their enemies. Poundtext, and one or two others, made some faint efforts to stem the increasing fury of the factious, exclaiming to those of the other party, in the words of the Patriarch,—“Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between thy herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we be brethren.” No pacific overture could possibly obtain audience. It was in vain that even Burley himself, when he saw the dissension proceed to such ruinous lengths, exerted his stern and deep voice, commanding silence and obedience to discipline. The spirit of insubordination had gone forth, and it seemed as if the exhortation of Habakkuk Mucklewrath had communicated a part of his frenzy to all who heard him. The wiser, or more timid part of the assembly, were already withdrawing themselves from the field, and giving up their cause as lost. Others were moderating a harmonious call, as they somewhat improperly termed it, to new officers, and dismissing those formerly chosen, and that with a tumult and clamour worthy of the deficiency of good sense and good order implied in the whole transaction. It was at this moment when Morton arrived in the field and joined the army, in total confusion, and on the point of dissolving itself. His arrival occasioned loud exclamations of applause on the one side, and of imprecation on the other.

"What means this ruinous disorder at such a moment?" he exclaimed to Burley, who, exhausted with his vain exertions to restore order, was now leaning on his sword, and regarding the confusion with an eye of resolute despair.

"It means," he replied, "that God has delivered us into the hands of our enemies."

"Not so," answered Morton, with a voice and gesture which compelled many to listen; "it is not God who deserts us, it is we who desert him, and dishonour ourselves by disgracing and betraying the cause of freedom and religion.—Hear me," he exclaimed, springing to the pulpit which Mucklewrath had been compelled to evacuate by actual exhaustion—"I bring from the enemy an offer to treat, if you incline to lay down your arms. I can assure you the means of making an honourable defence, if you are of more manly tempers. The time flies fast on. Let us resolve either for peace or war; and let it not be said of us in future days, that six thousand Scottish men in arms had neither courage to stand their ground and fight it out, nor prudence to treat for peace, nor even the coward's wisdom to retreat in good time and with safety. What signifies quarrelling on minute points of church-discipline, when the whole edifice is threatened with total destruction? O, remember, my brethren, that the last and worst evil which God brought upon the people whom he had once chosen—the last and worst punishment of their blindness and hardness of heart, was the bloody dissensions which rent asunder their city, even when the enemy were thundering at its gates!"

Some of the audience testified their feeling of this exhortation, by loud exclamations of applause; others by hooting, and exclaiming—"To your tents, O Israel!"

Morton, who beheld the columns of the enemy already beginning to appear on the right bank, and directing their march upon the bridge, raised his voice to its utmost pitch, and, pointing at the same time with his hand, exclaimed,—“Silence your senseless clamours, yonder is the enemy! On maintaining the bridge against him depend our lives, as well as our hope to reclaim our laws and liberties.—There shall at least one Scottishman die in their defence.—Let any one who loves his country follow me!”

The multitude had turned their heads in the direction to which he pointed. The sight of the glittering files of the English Foot-Guards, supported by several squadrons of horse, of the cannon which the artillerymen were busily engaged in planting against the bridge, of the plaided clans who seemed to search for a ford, and of the long succession of troops which were destined to support the attack, silenced at once their clamorous uproar, and struck them with as much consternation as if it were an unexpected apparition, and not the very thing which they ought to have been looking out for. They gazed on each other, and on their

leaders, with looks resembling those that indicate the weakness of a patient when exhausted by a fit of frenzy. Yet when Morton, springing from the rostrum, directed his steps towards the bridge, he was followed by about an hundred of the young men who were particularly attached to his command.

Burley turned to Macbriar—"Ephraim," he said, "it is Providence points us the way, through the worldly wisdom of this latitudinarian youth.—He that loves the light, let him follow Burley!"

"Tarry," replied Macbriar; "it is not by Henry Morton, or such as he, that our goings-out and our comings-in are to be meted; therefore tarry with us. I fear treachery to the host from this nullifidian Achan—Thou shalt not go with him. Thou art our chariots and our horsemen."

"Hinder me not," replied Burley; "he hath well said that all is lost, if the enemy win the bridge—therefore let me not. Shall the children of this generation be called wiser or braver than the children of the sanctuary?—Array yourselves under your leaders—let us not lack supplies of men and ammunition; and accursed be he who turneth back from the work on this great day!"

Having thus spoken, he hastily marched towards the bridge, and was followed by about two hundred of the most gallant and zealous of his party. There was a deep and disheartened pause when Morton and Burley departed. The commanders availed themselves of it to display their lines in some sort of order, and exhorted those who were most exposed to throw themselves upon their faces to avoid the cannonade which they might presently expect. The insurgents ceased to resist or to remonstrate; but the awe which had silenced their discords had dismayed their courage. They suffered themselves to be formed into ranks with the docility of a flock of sheep, but without possessing, for the time, more resolution or energy; for they experienced a sinking of the heart, imposed by the sudden and imminent approach of the danger which they had neglected to provide against while it was yet distant. They were, however, drawn out with some regularity; and as they still possessed the appearance of an army, their leaders had only to hope that some favourable circumstance would restore their spirits and courage.

Kettledrums, Pountext, Macbriar, and other preachers, busied themselves in their ranks, and prevailed on them to raise a psalm. But the superstitious among them observed, as an ill omen, that their song of praise and triumph sunk into "a quaver of consternation," and resembled rather a penitentiary stave sung on the scaffold of a condemned criminal, than the bold strain which had resounded along the wild heath of Loudon-hill, in anticipation of that day's victory. The melancholy melody soon received a rough accompaniment; the royal soldiers shouted, the Highlanders yelled, the cannon began to fire on one side, and the musketry on both, and the bridge of Bothwell, with the banks adjacent, were involved in wreaths of smoke.

CHAPTER XI.

*As e'er ye saw the rain doun fa',
Or yet the arrow from the bow,
Sae our Scots lads fell even doun,
And they lay slain on every knowe.
Old Ballad.*

Ere Morton or Burley had reached the post to be defended, the enemy had commenced an attack upon it with great spirit. The two regiments of Foot-Guards, formed into a close column, rushed forward to the river; one corps, deploying along the right bank, commenced a galling fire on the defenders of the pass, while the other pressed on to occupy the bridge. The insurgents sustained the attack with great constancy and courage; and while part of their number returned the fire across the river, the rest maintained a discharge of musketry upon the further end of the bridge itself, and every avenue by which the soldiers endeavoured to approach it. The latter suffered severely, but still gained ground, and the head of their column was already upon the bridge, when the arrival of Morton changed the scene; and his marksmen, commencing upon the pass a fire as well aimed as it was sustained and regular, compelled the assailants to retire with much loss. They were a second time brought up to the charge, and a second time repulsed with still greater loss, as Burley had now brought his party into action. The fire was continued with the utmost vehemence on both sides, and the issue of the action seemed very dubious.

Monmouth, mounted on a superb white charger, might be discovered on the top of the right bank of the river, urging, entreating, and animating the exertions of his soldiers. By his orders, the cannon, which had hitherto been employed in annoying the distant main body of the presbyterians, were now turned upon the defenders of the bridge. But these tremendous engines, being wrought much more slowly than in modern times, did not produce the effect of annoying or terrifying the enemy to the extent proposed. The insurgents, sheltered by copsewood along the bank of the river, or stationed in the houses already mentioned, fought under cover, while the royalists, owing to the precautions of Morton, were entirely exposed. The defence was so protracted and obstinate, that the royal generals began to fear it might be ultimately successful. While Monmouth threw himself from his horse, and, rallying the Foot-Guards, brought them on to another close and desperate attack, he was warmly seconded by Dalzell, who, putting himself at the head of a body of Lennox-Highlanders, rushed forward with their tremendous war-cry of Loch-sloy.

[Note: This was the slogan or war-cry of the MacFarlanes, taken from a lake near the head of Loch Lomond, in the centre of their ancient possessions on the western banks of that beautiful inland sea.]

The ammunition of the defenders of the bridge began to fail at this important crisis; messages, commanding and imploring succours and supplies, were in vain dispatched, one after the other, to the main body of the presbyterian army, which remained inactively drawn up on the open fields in the rear. Fear, consternation, and misrule, had gone abroad among them, and while the post on which their safety depended required to be instantly and powerfully reinforced, there remained none either to command or to obey.

As the fire of the defenders of the bridge began to slacken, that of the assailants increased, and in its turn became more fatal. Animated by the example and exhortations of their generals, they obtained a footing upon the bridge itself, and began to remove the obstacles by which it was blockaded. The portal-gate was broke open, the beams, trunks of trees, and other materials of the barricade, pulled down and thrown into the river. This was not accomplished without opposition. Morton and Burley fought in the very front of their followers, and encouraged them with their pikes, halberds, and partisans, to encounter the bayonets of the Guards, and the broadswords of the Highlanders. But those behind the leaders began to shrink from the unequal combat, and fly singly, or in parties of two or three, towards the main body, until the remainder were, by the mere weight of the hostile column as much as by their weapons, fairly forced from the bridge. The passage being now open, the enemy began to pour over. But the bridge was long and narrow, which rendered the manoeuvre slow as well as dangerous; and those who first passed had still to force the houses, from the windows of which the Covenanters continued to fire. Burley and Morton were near each other at this critical moment.

"There is yet time," said the former, "to bring down horse to attack them, ere they can get into order; and, with the aid of God, we may thus regain the bridge—hasten thou to bring them down, while I make the defence good with this old and wearied body."

Morton saw the importance of the advice, and, throwing himself on the horse which cuddie held in readiness for him behind the thicket, galloped towards a body of cavalry which chanced to be composed entirely of Cameronians. Ere he could speak his errand, or utter his orders, he was saluted by the execrations of the whole body.

"He flies!" they exclaimed—"the cowardly traitor flies like a hart from the hunters, and hath left valiant Burley in the midst of the slaughter!"

"I do not fly," said Morton. "I come to lead you to the attack. Advance boldly, and we shall yet do well."

"Follow him not!—Follow him not!"—such were the tumultuous exclamations which resounded from the ranks;—"he hath sold you to the sword of the enemy!"

And while Morton argued, entreated, and commanded in vain, the moment was lost in which the advance might have been useful; and the outlet from the bridge, with all its defences, being in complete possession of the enemy, Burley and his remaining followers were driven back upon the main body, to whom the spectacle of their hurried and harassed retreat was far from restoring the confidence which they so much wanted.

In the meanwhile, the forces of the King crossed the bridge at their leisure, and, securing the pass, formed in line of battle; while Claverhouse, who, like a hawk perched on a rock, and eyeing the time to pounce on its prey, had watched the event of the action from the opposite bank, now passed the bridge at the head of his cavalry, at full trot, and, leading them in squadrons through the intervals and round the flanks of the royal infantry, formed them in line on the moor, and led them to the charge, advancing in front with one large body, while other two divisions threatened the flanks of the Covenanters. Their devoted army was now in that situation when the slightest demonstration towards an attack was certain to inspire panic. Their broken spirits and disheartened courage were unable to endure the charge of the cavalry, attended with all its terrible accompaniments of sight and sound;—the rush of the horses at full speed, the shaking of the earth under their feet, the glancing of the swords, the waving of the plumes, and the fierce shouts of the cavaliers. The front ranks hardly attempted one ill-directed and disorderly fire, and their rear were broken and flying in confusion ere the charge had been completed; and in less than five minutes the horsemen were mixed with them, cutting and hewing without mercy. The voice of Claverhouse was heard, even above the din of conflict, exclaiming to his soldiers—"Kill, kill—no quarter—think on Richard Grahame!" The dragoons, many of whom had shared the disgrace of Loudon-hill, required no exhortations to vengeance as easy as it was complete. Their swords drank deep of slaughter among the unresisting fugitives. Screams for quarter were only answered by the shouts with which the pursuers accompanied their blows, and the whole field presented one general scene of confused slaughter, flight, and pursuit.

About twelve hundred of the insurgents who remained in a body a little apart from the rest, and out of the line of the charge of cavalry, threw down their arms and surrendered at discretion, upon the approach of the Duke of Monmouth at the head of the infantry. That mild-tempered nobleman instantly allowed them the quarter which they prayed for; and, galloping about through the field, exerted himself as much to stop the slaughter as he had done to obtain the victory. While busied in this humane task he met with General Dalzell, who was encouraging the fierce Highlanders and royal volunteers to show their zeal for King and country, by quenching the flame of the rebellion with the blood of the rebels.

"Sheathe your sword, I command you, General!" exclaimed the Duke, "and sound the retreat. Enough of blood has been shed; give quarter to the King's misguided subjects."

"I obey your Grace," said the old man, wiping his bloody sword and returning it to the scabbard; "but I warn you, at the same time, that enough has not been done to intimidate these desperate rebels. Has not your Grace heard that Basil Olifant has collected several gentlemen and men of substance in the west, and is in the act of marching to join them?"

"Basil Olifant?" said the Duke; "who, or what is he?"

"The next male heir to the last Earl of Torwood. He is disaffected to government from his claim to the estate being set aside in favour of Lady Margaret Bellenden; and I suppose the hope of getting the inheritance has set him in motion."

"Be his motives what they will," replied Monmouth, "he must soon disperse his followers, for this army is too much broken to rally again. Therefore, once more, I command that the pursuit be stopped."

"It is your Grace's province to command, and to be responsible for your commands," answered Dalzell, as he gave reluctant orders for checking the pursuit.

But the fiery and vindictive Grahame was already far out of hearing of the signal of retreat, and continued with his cavalry an unwearied and bloody pursuit, breaking, dispersing, and cutting to pieces all the insurgents whom they could come up with.

Burley and Morton were both hurried off the field by the confused tide of fugitives. They made some attempt to defend the streets of the town of Hamilton; but, while labouring to induce the fliers to face about and stand to their weapons. Burley received a bullet which broke his sword-arm.

"May the hand be withered that shot the shot!" he exclaimed, as the sword which he was waving over his head fell powerless to his side. "I can fight no longer."

[Note: This incident, and Burley's exclamation, are taken from the records.]

Then turning his horse's head, he retreated out of the confusion. Morton also now saw that the continuing his unavailing efforts to rally the fliers could only end in his own death or captivity, and, followed by the faithful Cuddie, he extricated himself from the press, and, being well mounted, leaped his horse over one or two enclosures, and got into the open country.

From the first hill which they gained in their flight, they looked back, and beheld the whole country covered with their fugitive companions, and with the pursuing dragoons, whose wild shouts and halloo, as they did execution on the groups whom they overtook, mingled with the groans and screams of their victims, rose shrilly up the hill.

"It is impossible they can ever make head again," said Morton.

"The head's taen aff them, as clean as I wad bite it aff a sybo!" rejoined Cuddie. "Eh, Lord! see how the broadswords are flashing! war's a fearsome thing. They'll be cunning that catches me at this wark again.—But, for God's sake, sir, let us mak for some strength!"

Morton saw the necessity of following the advice of his trusty squire. They resumed a rapid pace, and continued it without intermission, directing their course towards the wild and mountainous country, where they thought it likely some part of the fugitives might draw together, for the sake either of making defence, or of obtaining terms.

CHAPTER XII.

They require

Of Heaven the hearts of lions, breath of tigers,

Yea and the fierceness too.

Fletcher.

Evening had fallen; and, for the last two hours, they had seen none of their ill-fated companions, when Morton and his faithful attendant gained the moorland, and approached a large and solitary farmhouse, situated in the entrance of a wild glen, far remote from any other habitation.

"Our horses," said Morton, "will carry us no farther without rest or food, and we must try to obtain them here, if possible."

So speaking, he led the way to the house. The place had every appearance of being inhabited. There was smoke issuing from the chimney in a considerable volume, and the marks of recent hoofs were visible around the door. They could even hear the murmuring of human voices within the house. But all the lower windows were closely secured; and when they knocked at the door, no answer was returned. After vainly calling and entreating admittance, they withdrew to the stable, or shed, in order to accommodate their horses, ere they used farther means of gaining admission. In this place they found ten or twelve horses, whose state of fatigue, as well as the military yet disordered appearance of their saddles and accoutrements, plainly indicated that their owners were fugitive insurgents in their own circumstances.

"This meeting bodes luck," said Cuddie; "and they hae walth o' beef, that's ae thing certain, for here's a raw hide that has been about the hurdies o' a stot not half an hour syne—it's warm yet."

Encouraged by these appearances, they returned again to the house, and, announcing themselves as men in the same predicament with the inmates, clamoured loudly for admittance.

"Whoever ye be," answered a stern voice from the window, after a long and obdurate silence, "disturb not those who mourn for the desolation and captivity of the land, and search out the causes of wrath and of defection, that the stumbling-blocks may be removed over which we have stumbled."

"They are wild western whigs," said Cuddie, in a whisper to his master, "I ken by their language. Fiend hae me, if I like to venture on them!"

Morton, however, again called to the party within, and insisted on admittance; but, finding his entreaties still disregarded, he opened one of the lower windows, and pushing asunder the shutters, which were but slightly secured, stepped into the large kitchen from which the voice had issued. Cuddie followed him, muttering betwixt his teeth, as he put his head within the window, "That he hoped there was nae scalding brose on the fire;" and master and servant both found themselves in the company of ten or twelve armed men, seated around the fire, on which refreshments were preparing, and busied apparently in their devotions.

In the gloomy countenances, illuminated by the fire-light, Morton had no difficulty in recognising several of those zealots who had most distinguished themselves by their intemperate opposition to all moderate measures, together with their noted pastor, the fanatical Ephraim Macbriar, and the maniac, Habakkuk Mucklewraith. The Cameronians neither stirred tongue nor hand to welcome their brethren in misfortune, but continued to listen to the low murmured exercise of Macbriar, as he prayed that the Almighty would lift up his hand from his people, and not make an end in the day of his anger. That they were conscious of the presence of the intruders only appeared from the sullen and indignant glances which they shot at them, from time to time, as their eyes encountered.

Morton, finding into what unfriendly society he had unwittingly intruded, began to think of retreating; but, on turning his head, observed with some alarm, that two strong men had silently placed themselves beside the window, through which they had entered. One of these ominous sentinels whispered to Cuddie, "Son of that precious woman, Mause Headrigg, do not cast thy lot farther with this child of treachery and perdition—Pass on thy way, and tarry not, for the avenger of blood is behind thee."

With this he pointed to the window, out of which Cuddie jumped without hesitation; for the intimation he had received plainly implied the personal danger he would otherwise incur.

"Winnocks are no lucky wi' me," was his first reflection when he was in the open air; his next was upon the probable fate of his master. "They'll kill him, the murdering loons, and think they're doing a gude turn! but I'll tak the back road for Hamilton, and see if I canna get some o' our ain folk to bring help in time of needcessity."

So saying, Cuddie hastened to the stable, and taking the best horse he could find instead of his own tired animal, he galloped off in the direction he proposed.

The noise of his horse's tread alarmed for an instant the devotion of the fanatics. As it died in the distance, Macbriar brought his exercise to a conclusion, and his audience raised themselves from the stooping posture, and lowering downward look, with which they had listened to it, and all fixed their eyes sternly on Henry Morton.

"You bend strange countenances on me, gentlemen," said he, addressing them. "I am totally ignorant in what manner I can have deserved them."

"Out upon thee! out upon thee!" exclaimed Mucklewraith, starting up: "the word that thou hast spurned shall become a rock to crush and to bruise thee; the spear which thou wouldst have broken shall pierce thy side; we have prayed, and wrestled, and petitioned for an offering to atone the sins of the congregation, and lo! the very head of the offence is delivered into our hand. He hath burst in like a thief through the window; he is a ram caught in the thicket, whose blood shall be a drink-offering to redeem vengeance from the church, and the place shall from henceforth be called Jehovah-Jireh, for the sacrifice is provided. Up then, and bind the victim with cords to the horns of the altar!"

There was a movement among the party; and deeply did Morton regret at that moment the incautious haste with which he had ventured into their company. He was armed only with his sword, for he had left his pistols at the bow of his saddle; and, as the whigs were all provided with fire-arms, there was little or no chance of escaping from them by resistance. The interposition, however, of Macbriar protected him for the moment.

"Tarry yet a while, brethren—let us not use the sword rashly, lest the load of innocent blood lie heavy on us.—Come," he said, addressing himself to Morton, "we will reckon with thee ere we avenge the cause thou hast betrayed.—Hast thou not," he continued, "made thy face as hard as flint against the truth in all the assemblies of the host?"

"He has—he has," murmured the deep voices of the assistants.

"He hath ever urged peace with the malignants," said one.

"And pleaded for the dark and dismal guilt of the Indulgence," said another.

"And would have surrendered the host into the hands of Monmouth," echoed a third; "and was the first to desert the honest and manly Burley, while he yet resisted at the pass. I saw him on the moor, with his horse bloody with spurring, long ere the firing had ceased at the bridge."

"Gentlemen," said Morton, "if you mean to bear me down by clamour, and take my life without hearing me, it is perhaps a thing in your power; but you will sin before God and man by the commission of such a murder."

"I say, hear the youth," said Macbriar; "for Heaven knows our bowels have yearned for him, that he might be brought to see the truth, and exert his gifts in its defence. But he is blinded by his carnal knowledge, and has spurned the light when it blazed before him."

Silence being obtained, Morton proceeded to assert the good faith which he had displayed in the treaty with Monmouth, and the active part he had borne in the subsequent action.

"I may not, gentlemen," he said, "be fully able to go the lengths you desire, in assigning to those of my own religion the means of tyrannizing over others; but none shall go farther in asserting our own lawful freedom. And I must needs aver, that had others been of my mind in counsel, or disposed to stand by my side in battle, we should this evening, instead of being a defeated and discordant remnant, have sheathed our weapons in an useful and honourable peace, or brandished them triumphantly after a decisive victory."

"He hath spoken the word," said one of the assembly—"he hath avowed his carnal self-seeking and Erastianism; let him die the death!"

"Peace yet again," said Macbriar, "for I will try him further.—Was it not by thy means that the malignant Evandale twice escaped from death and captivity? Was it not through thee that Miles Bellenden and his garrison of cut-throats were saved from the edge of the sword?"

"I am proud to say, that you have spoken the truth in both instances," replied Morton.

"Lo! you see," said Macbriar, "again hath his mouth spoken it.—And didst thou not do this for the sake of a Midianitish woman, one of the spawn of prelacy, a toy with which the arch-enemy's trap is baited? Didst thou not do all this for the sake of Edith Bellenden?"

"You are incapable," answered Morton, boldly, "of appreciating my feelings towards that young lady; but all that I have done I would have done had she never existed."

"Thou art a hardy rebel to the truth," said another dark-brow'd man; "and didst thou not so act, that, by conveying away the aged woman, Margaret Bellenden, and her grand-daughter, thou mightest thwart the wise and godly project of John Balfour of Burley for bringing forth to battle Basil Olifant, who had agreed to take the field if he were insured possession of these women's worldly endowments?"

"I never heard of such a scheme," said Morton, "and therefore I could not thwart it.—But does your religion permit you to take such uncreditable and immoral modes of recruiting?"

"Peace," said Macbriar, somewhat disconcerted; "it is not for thee to instruct tender professors, or to construe Covenant obligations. For the rest, you have acknowledged enough of sin and sorrowful defection, to draw down defeat on a host, were it as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. And it is our judgment, that we are not free to let you pass from us safe and in life, since Providence hath given you into our hands at the moment that we prayed with godly Joshua, saying, 'What shall we say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?'—Then camest thou, delivered to us as it were by lot, that thou mightest sustain the punishment of one that hath wrought folly in Israel. Therefore, mark my words. This is the Sabbath, and our hand shall not be on thee to spill thy blood upon this day; but, when the twelfth hour shall strike, it is a token that thy time on earth hath run! Wherefore improve thy span, for it flitteth fast away.—Seize on the prisoner, brethren, and take his weapon."

The command was so unexpectedly given, and so suddenly executed by those of the party who had gradually closed behind and around Morton, that he was overpowered, disarmed, and a horse-girth passed round his arms, before he could offer any effectual resistance. When this was accomplished, a dead and stern

silence took place. The fanatics ranged themselves around a large oaken table, placing Morton amongst them bound and helpless, in such a manner as to be opposite to the clock which was to strike his knell. Food was placed before them, of which they offered their intended victim a share; but, it will readily be believed, he had little appetite. When this was removed, the party resumed their devotions. Macbriar, whose fierce zeal did not perhaps exclude some feelings of doubt and compunction, began to expostulate in prayer, as if to wring from the Deity a signal that the bloody sacrifice they proposed was an acceptable service. The eyes and ears of his hearers were anxiously strained, as if to gain some sight or sound which might be converted or wrested into a type of approbation, and ever and anon dark looks were turned on the dial-plate of the time-piece, to watch its progress towards the moment of execution.

Morton's eye frequently took the same course, with the sad reflection, that there appeared no possibility of his life being expanded beyond the narrow segment which the index had yet to travel on the circle until it arrived at the fatal hour. Faith in his religion, with a constant unyielding principle of honour, and the sense of conscious innocence, enabled him to pass through this dreadful interval with less agitation than he himself could have expected, had the situation been prophesied to him. Yet there was a want of that eager and animating sense of right which supported him in similar circumstances, when in the power of Claverhouse. Then he was conscious, that, amid the spectators, were many who were lamenting his condition, and some who applauded his conduct. But now, among these pale-eyed and ferocious zealots, whose hardened brows were soon to be bent, not merely with indifference, but with triumph, upon his execution,—without a friend to speak a kindly word, or give a look either of sympathy or encouragement,—awaiting till the sword destined to slay him crept out of the scabbard gradually, and as it were by strawbreadths, and condemned to drink the bitterness of death drop by drop,—it is no wonder that his feelings were less composed than they had been on any former occasion of danger. His destined executioners, as he gazed around them, seemed to alter their forms and features, like spectres in a feverish dream; their figures became larger, and their faces more disturbed; and, as an excited imagination predominated over the realities which his eyes received, he could have thought himself surrounded rather by a band of demons than of human beings; the walls seemed to drop with blood, and the light tick of the clock thrilled on his ear with such loud, painful distinctness, as if each sound were the prick of a bodkin inflicted on the naked nerve of the organ.

It was with pain that he felt his mind wavering, while on the brink between this and the future world. He made a strong effort to compose himself to devotional exercises, and unequal, during that fearful strife of nature, to arrange his own thoughts into suitable expressions, he had, instinctively, recourse to the petition for deliverance and for composure of spirit which is to be found in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. Macbriar, whose family were of that persuasion, instantly recognised the words, which the unfortunate prisoner pronounced half aloud.

"There lacked but this," he said, his pale cheek kindling with resentment, "to root out my carnal reluctance to see his blood spilt. He is a prelatist, who has sought the camp under the disguise of an Erastian, and all, and more than all, that has been said of him must needs be verity. His blood be on his head, the deceiver!—let him go down to Tophet, with the ill-mumbled mass which he calls a prayer-book, in his right hand!"

"I take up my song against him!" exclaimed the maniac. "As the sun went back on the dial ten degrees for intimating the recovery of holy Hezekiah, so shall it now go forward, that the wicked may be taken away from among the people, and the Covenant established in its purity."

He sprang to a chair with an attitude of frenzy, in order to anticipate the fatal moment by putting the index forward; and several of the party began to make ready their slaughter-weapons for immediate execution, when Mucklewraith's hand was arrested by one of his companions.

"Hist!" he said—"I hear a distant noise."

"It is the rushing of the brook over the pebbles," said one.

"It is the sough of the wind among the bracken," said another.

"It is the galloping of horse," said Morton to himself, his sense of hearing rendered acute by the dreadful situation in which he stood; "God grant they may come as my deliverers!"

The noise approached rapidly, and became more and more distinct.

"It is horse," cried Macbriar. "Look out and descry who they are."

"The enemy are upon us!" cried one who had opened the window, in obedience to his order.

A thick trampling and loud voices were heard immediately round the house. Some rose to resist, and some to escape; the doors and windows were forced at once, and the red coats of the troopers appeared in the apartment.

"Have at the bloody rebels!—Remember Cornet Grahame!" was shouted on every side.

The lights were struck down, but the dubious glare of the fire enabled them to continue the fray. Several pistol-shots were fired; the whig who stood next to Morton received a shot as he was rising, stumbled against the prisoner, whom he bore down with his weight, and lay stretched above him a dying man. This accident probably saved Morton from the damage he might otherwise have received in so close a struggle, where fire-arms were discharged and sword-blows given for upwards of five minutes.

"Is the prisoner safe?" exclaimed the well-known voice of Claverhouse; "look about for him, and dispatch the whig dog who is groaning there."

Both orders were executed. The groans of the wounded man were silenced by a thrust with a rapier, and Morton, disencumbered of his weight, was speedily raised and in the arms of the faithful Cuddie, who blubbered for joy when he found that the blood with which his master was covered had not flowed from his own veins. A whisper in Morton's ear, while his trusty follower relieved him from his bonds, explained the secret of the very timely appearance of the soldiers.

"I fell into Claverhouse's party when I was seeking for some o' our ain folk to help ye out o' the hands of the whigs, sae being between the deil and the deep sea, I e'en thought it best to bring him on wi' me, for he'll be wearied wi' felling folk the night, and the morn's a new day, and Lord Evandale awes ye a day in ha'arst; and Monmouth gies quarter, the dragons tell me, for the asking. Sae haud up your heart, an' I'se warrant we'll do a' weel eneugh yet."

[Note: NOTE TO CHAPTER XII. The principal incident of the foregoing Chapter was suggested by an occurrence of a similar kind, told me by a gentleman, now deceased, who held an important situation in the Excise, to which he had been raised by active and resolute exertions in an inferior department. When employed as a supervisor on the coast of Galloway, at a time when the immunities of the Isle of Man rendered smuggling almost universal in that district, this gentleman had the fortune to offend highly several of the leaders in the contraband trade, by his zeal in serving the revenue.

This rendered his situation a dangerous one, and, on more than one occasion, placed his life in jeopardy. At one time in particular, as he was riding after sunset on a summer evening, he came suddenly upon a gang of the most desperate smugglers in that part of the country. They surrounded him, without violence, but in such a manner as to show that it would be resorted to if he offered resistance,

and gave him to understand he must spend the evening with them, since they had met so happily. The officer did not attempt opposition, but only asked leave to send a country lad to tell his wife and family that he should be detained later than he expected. As he had to charge the boy with this message in the presence of the smugglers, he could find no hope of deliverance from it, save what might arise from the sharpness of the lad's observation, and the natural anxiety and affection of his wife. But if his errand should be delivered and received literally, as he was conscious the smugglers expected, it was likely that it might, by suspending alarm about his absence from home, postpone all search after him till it might be useless. Making a merit of necessity, therefore, he instructed and dispatched his messenger, and went with the contraband traders, with seeming willingness, to one of their ordinary haunts. He sat down at table with them, and they began to drink and indulge themselves in gross jokes, while, like Mirabel in the "Inconstant," their prisoner had the heavy task of receiving their insolence as wit, answering their insults with good-humour, and withholding from them the opportunity which they sought of engaging him in a quarrel, that they might have a pretence for misusing him. He succeeded for some time, but soon became satisfied it was their purpose to murder him out-right, or else to beat him in such a manner as scarce to leave him with life. A regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath evening, which still oddly subsisted among these ferocious men, amidst their habitual violation of divine and social law, prevented their commencing their intended cruelty until the Sabbath should be terminated. They were sitting around their anxious prisoner, muttering to each other words of terrible import, and watching the index of a clock, which was shortly to strike the hour at which, in their apprehension, murder would become lawful, when their intended victim heard a distant rustling like the wind among withered leaves. It came nearer, and resembled the sound of a brook in flood chafing within its banks; it came nearer yet, and was plainly distinguished as the galloping of a party of horse. The absence of her husband, and the account given by the boy of the suspicious appearance of those with whom he had remained, had induced Mrs.—to apply to the neighbouring town for a party of dragoons, who thus providentially arrived in time to save him from extreme violence, if not from actual destruction.]

CHAPTER XIII.

*Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.*

Anonymous.

When the desperate affray had ceased, Claverhouse commanded his soldiers to remove the dead bodies, to refresh themselves and their horses, and prepare for passing the night at the farm-house, and for marching early in the ensuing morning. He then turned his attention to Morton, and there was politeness, and even kindness, in the manner in which he addressed him.

"You would have saved yourself risk from both sides, Mr Morton, if you had honoured my counsel yesterday morning with some attention; but I respect your motives. You are a prisoner-of-war at the disposal of the king and council, but you shall be treated with no incivility; and I will be satisfied with your parole that you will not attempt an escape."

When Morton had passed his word to that effect, Claverhouse bowed civilly, and, turning away from him, called for his sergeant-major.

"How many prisoners, Halliday, and how many killed?"

"Three killed in the house, sir, two cut down in the court, and one in the garden—six in all; four prisoners."

"Armed or unarmed?" said Claverhouse.

"Three of them armed to the teeth," answered Halliday; "one without arms—he seems to be a preacher."

"Ay—the trumpeter to the long-ear'd rout, I suppose," replied Claverhouse, glancing slightly round upon his victims, "I will talk with him tomorrow. Take the other three down to the yard, draw out two files, and fire upon them; and, d'ye hear, make a memorandum in the orderly book of three rebels taken in arms and shot, with the date and name of the place—Drumshinnel, I think, they call it.—Look after the preacher till to-morrow; as he was not armed, he must undergo a short examination. Or better, perhaps, take him before the Privy Council; I think they should relieve me of a share of this disgusting drudgery.—Let Mr Morton be civilly used, and see that the men look well after their horses; and let my groom wash Wild-blood's shoulder with some vinegar, the saddle has touched him a little."

All these various orders,—for life and death, the securing of his prisoners, and the washing his charger's shoulder,—were given in the same unmoved and equable voice, of which no accent or tone intimated that the speaker considered one direction as of more importance than another.

The Cameronians, so lately about to be the willing agents of a bloody execution, were now themselves to undergo it. They seemed prepared alike for either extremity, nor did any of them show the least sign of fear, when ordered to leave the room for the purpose of meeting instant death. Their severe enthusiasm sustained them in that dreadful moment, and they departed with a firm look and in silence, excepting that one of them, as he left the apartment, looked Claverhouse full in the face, and pronounced, with a stern and steady voice,—*"Mischief shall haunt the violent man!"* to which Grahame only answered by a smile of contempt.

They had no sooner left the room than Claverhouse applied himself to some food, which one or two of his party had hastily provided, and invited Morton to follow his example, observing, it had been a busy day for them both. Morton declined eating; for the sudden change of circumstances—the transition from the verge of the grave to a prospect of life, had occasioned a dizzy revulsion in his whole system. But the same confused sensation was accompanied by a burning thirst, and he expressed his wish to drink.

"I will pledge you, with all my heart," said Claverhouse; "for here is a black jack full of ale, and good it must be, if there be good in the country, for the whigs never miss to find it out.—My service to you, Mr Morton," he said, filling one horn of ale for himself, and handing another to his prisoner.

Morton raised it to his head, and was just about to drink, when the discharge of carabines beneath the window, followed by a deep and hollow groan, repeated twice or thrice, and more faint at each interval, announced the fate of the three men who had just left them. Morton shuddered, and set down the untasted cup.

"You are but young in these matters, Mr Morton," said Claverhouse, after he had very composedly finished his draught; "and I do not think the worse of you as a young soldier for appearing to feel them acutely. But habit, duty, and necessity, reconcile men to every thing."

"I trust," said Morton, "they will never reconcile me to such scenes as these."

"You would hardly believe," said Claverhouse in reply, "that, in the beginning of my military career, I had as much aversion to seeing blood spilt as ever man felt; it seemed to me to be wrung from my own heart; and yet, if you trust one of those whig fellows, he will tell you I drink a warm cup of it every morning before I breakfast. [Note: The author is uncertain whether this was ever said of Claverhouse. But it was currently reported of Sir Robert Grierson of Lagg, another of the persecutors, that a cup of wine placed in his hand turned to clotted blood.] But in truth, Mr Morton, why should we care so much for death, light upon us or around us whenever it may? Men die daily—not a bell tolls the hour but it is the death-note of some one or other; and why hesitate to shorten the span of others, or take over-anxious care to prolong our own? It is all a lottery—when the hour of midnight came, you were to die—it has struck, you are alive and safe, and the lot has fallen on those fellows who were to murder you. It is not the expiring pang that is worth thinking of in an event that must happen one day, and may befall us on any given moment—it is the memory which the soldier leaves behind him, like the long train of light that follows the sunken sun—that is all which is worth caring for, which distinguishes the death of the brave or the ignoble. When I think of death, Mr Morton, as a thing worth thinking of, it is in the hope of pressing one day some well-fought and hard-won field of battle, and dying with the shout of victory in my ear—that would be worth dying for, and more, it would be worth having lived for!"

At the moment when Grahame delivered these sentiments, his eye glancing with the martial enthusiasm which formed such a prominent feature in his character, a gory figure, which seemed to rise out of the floor of the apartment, stood upright before him, and presented the wild person and hideous features of the maniac so often mentioned. His face, where it was not covered with blood-streaks, was ghastly pale, for the hand of death was on him. He bent upon Claverhouse eyes, in which the grey light of insanity still twinkled, though just about to flit for ever, and exclaimed, with his usual wildness of ejaculation, "Wilt thou trust in thy bow and in thy spear, in thy steed and in thy banner? And shall not God visit thee for innocent blood?—Wilt thou glory in thy wisdom, and in thy courage, and in thy might? And shall not the Lord judge thee?—Behold the princes, for whom thou hast sold thy soul to the destroyer, shall be removed from their place, and banished to other lands, and their names shall be a desolation, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a curse. And thou, who hast partaken of the wine-cup of fury, and hast been drunken and mad because thereof, the wish of thy heart shall be granted to thy loss, and the hope of thine own pride shall destroy thee. I summon thee, John Grahame, to appear before the tribunal of God, to answer for this innocent blood, and the seas besides which thou hast shed."

He drew his right hand across his bleeding face, and held it up to heaven as he uttered these words, which he spoke very loud, and then added more faintly, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge the blood of thy saints!"

As he uttered the last word, he fell backwards without an attempt to save himself, and was a dead man ere his head touched the floor.

Morton was much shocked at this extraordinary scene, and the prophecy of the dying man, which tallied so strangely with the wish which Claverhouse had just expressed; and he often thought of it afterwards when that wish seemed to be accomplished. Two of the dragoons who were in the apartment, hardened as they were, and accustomed to such scenes, showed great consternation at the sudden apparition, the event, and the words which preceded it. Claverhouse alone was unmoved. At the first instant of Mucklewrath's appearance, he had put his hand to his pistol, but on seeing the situation of the wounded wretch, he immediately withdrew it, and listened with great composure to his dying exclamation.

When he dropped, Claverhouse asked, in an unconcerned tone of voice—"How came the fellow here?—Speak, you staring fool!" he added, addressing the nearest dragoon, "unless you would have me think you such a poltroon as to fear a dying man."

The dragoon crossed himself, and replied with a faltering voice,—"That the dead fellow had escaped their notice when they removed the other bodies, as he chanced to have fallen where a cloak or two had been flung aside, and covered him."

"Take him away now, then, you gaping idiot, and see that he does not bite you, to put an old proverb to shame.—This is a new incident, Mr. Morton, that dead men should rise and push us from our stools. I must see that my blackguards grind their swords sharper; they used not to do their work so slovenly.—But we have had a busy day; they are tired, and their blades blunted with their bloody work; and I suppose you, Mr Morton, as well as I, are well disposed for a few hours' repose."

So saying, he yawned, and taking a candle which a soldier had placed ready, saluted Morton courteously, and walked to the apartment which had been prepared for him.

Morton was also accommodated, for the evening, with a separate room. Being left alone, his first occupation was the returning thanks to Heaven for redeeming him from danger, even through the instrumentality of those who seemed his most dangerous enemies; he also prayed sincerely for the Divine assistance in guiding his course through times which held out so many dangers and so many errors. And having thus poured out his spirit in prayer before the Great Being who gave it, he betook himself to the repose which he so much required.

CHAPTER XIV.

*The charge is prepared, the lawyers are met,
The judges all ranged—a terrible show!
Beggar's Opera.*

So deep was the slumber which succeeded the agitation and embarrassment of the preceding day, that Morton hardly knew where he was when it was broken by the tramp of horses, the hoarse voice of men, and the wild sound of the trumpets blowing the *reveille*. The sergeant-major immediately afterwards came to summon him, which he did in a very respectful manner, saying the General (for Claverhouse now held that rank) hoped for the pleasure of his company upon the road. In some situations an intimation is a command, and Morton considered that the present occasion was one of these. He waited upon Claverhouse as speedily as he could, found his own horse saddled for his use, and Cuddie in attendance. Both were deprived of their fire-arms, though they seemed, otherwise, rather to make part of the troop than of the prisoners; and Morton was permitted to retain his sword, the wearing which was, in those days, the distinguishing mark of a gentleman. Claverhouse seemed also to take pleasure in riding beside him, in conversing with him, and in confounding his ideas when he attempted to appreciate his real character. The gentleness and urbanity of that officer's general manners, the high and chivalrous sentiments of military devotion which he occasionally expressed, his deep and accurate insight into the human bosom, demanded at once the approbation and the wonder of those who conversed with him; while, on the other hand, his cold indifference to military violence and cruelty seemed altogether inconsistent with the social, and even admirable qualities which he displayed. Morton could not help, in his heart, contrasting him with Balfour of Burley; and so deeply did the idea impress him, that he dropped a hint of it as they rode together at some distance from the troop.

"You are right," said Claverhouse, with a smile; "you are very right—we are both fanatics; but there is some distinction between the fanaticism of honour and that of dark and sullen superstition."

"Yet you both shed blood without mercy or remorse," said Morton, who could not suppress his feelings.

"Surely," said Claverhouse, with the same composure; "but of what kind?—There is a difference, I trust, between the blood of learned and reverend prelates and scholars, of gallant soldiers and noble gentlemen, and the red puddle that stagnates in the veins of psalm-singing mechanics, crackbrained demagogues, and sullen boors;—some distinction, in short, between spilling a flask of generous wine, and dashing down a can full of base muddy ale?"

"Your distinction is too nice for my comprehension," replied Morton. "God gives every spark of life—that of the peasant as well as of the prince; and those who destroy his work recklessly or causelessly, must answer in either case. What right, for example, have I to General Grahame's protection now, more than when I first met him?"

"And narrowly escaped the consequences, you would say?" answered Claverhouse—"why, I will answer you frankly. Then I thought I had to do with the son of an old roundheaded rebel, and the nephew of a sordid presbyterian laird; now I know your points better, and there is that about you which I respect in an enemy as much as I like in a friend. I have learned a good deal concerning you since our first meeting, and I trust that you have found that my construction of the information has not been unfavourable to you."

"But yet," said Morton—

"But yet," interrupted Grahame, taking up the word, "you would say you were the same when I first met you that you are now? True; but then, how could I know that? though, by the by, even my reluctance to suspend your execution may show you how high your abilities stood in my estimation."

"Do you expect, General," said Morton, "that I ought to be particularly grateful for such a mark of your esteem?"

"Poh! poh! you are critical," returned Claverhouse. "I tell you I thought you a different sort of person. Did you ever read Froissart?"

"No," was Morton's answer.

"I have half a mind," said Claverhouse, "to contrive you should have six months' imprisonment in order to procure you that pleasure. His chapters inspire me with more enthusiasm than even poetry itself. And the noble canon, with what true chivalrous feeling he confines his beautiful expressions of sorrow to the death of the gallant and high-bred knight, of whom it was a pity to see the fall, such was his loyalty to his king, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards his enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love!—Ah, benedicite! how he will mourn over the fall of such a pearl of knighthood, be it on the side he happens to favour, or on the other. But, truly, for sweeping from the face of the earth some few hundreds of villain churls, who are born but to plough it, the high-born and inquisitive historian has marvellous little sympathy,—as little, or less, perhaps, than John Grahame of Claverhouse."

"There is one ploughman in your possession, General, for whom," said Morton, "in despite of the contempt in which you hold a profession which some philosophers have considered as useful as that of a soldier, I would humbly request your favour."

"You mean," said Claverhouse, looking at a memorandum book, "one Hatherick—Hedderick—or—or—Headrigg. Ay, Cuthbert, or Cuddie Headrigg—here I have him. O, never fear him, if he will be but tractable. The ladies of Tillietudlem made interest with me on his account some time ago. He is to marry their waiting-maid, I think. He will be allowed to slip off easy, unless his obstinacy spoils his good fortune."

"He has no ambition to be a martyr, I believe," said Morton.

"'Tis the better for him," said Claverhouse. "But, besides, although the fellow had more to answer for, I should stand his friend, for the sake of the blundering gallantry which threw him into the midst of our ranks last night, when seeking assistance for you. I never desert any man who trusts me with such implicit confidence. But, to deal sincerely with you, he has been long in our eye.—Here, Halliday; bring me up the black book."

The sergeant, having committed to his commander this ominous record of the disaffected, which was arranged in alphabetical order, Claverhouse, turning over the leaves as he rode on, began to read names as they occurred.

"Gumblegumption, a minister, aged 50, indulged, close, sly, and so forth—Pooh! pooh!—He—He—I have him here—Heathercat; outlawed—a preacher—a zealous Cameronian—keeps a conventicle among the Campsie hills—Tush!—O, here is Headrigg—Cuthbert; his mother a bitter puritan—himself a simple fellow—like to be forward in action, but of no genius for plots—more for the hand than the head, and might be drawn to the right side, but for his attachment to"—(Here Claverhouse looked at Morton, and then shut the book and changed his tone.) "Faithful and true are words never thrown away upon me, Mr Morton. You may depend on the young man's safety."

"Does it not revolt a mind like yours," said Morton, "to follow a system which is to be supported by such minute enquiries after obscure individuals?"

"You do not suppose we take the trouble?" said the General, haughtily. "The curates, for their own sakes, willingly collect all these materials for their own regulation in each parish; they know best the black sheep of the flock. I have had your picture for three years."

"Indeed?" replied Morton. "Will you favour me by imparting it?"

"Willingly," said Claverhouse; "it can signify little, for you cannot avenge yourself on the curate, as you will probably leave Scotland for some time."

This was spoken in an indifferent tone. Morton felt an involuntary shudder at hearing words which implied a banishment from his native land; but ere he answered, Claverhouse proceeded to read, "Henry Morton, son of Silas Morton, Colonel of horse for the Scottish Parliament, nephew and apparent heir of Morton of Milnwood—imperfectly educated, but with spirit beyond his years—excellent at all exercises—indifferent to forms of religion, but seems to incline to the presbyterian—has high-flown and dangerous notions about liberty of thought and speech, and hovers between a latitudinarian and an enthusiast. Much admired and followed by the youth of his own age—modest, quiet, and unassuming in manner, but in his heart peculiarly bold and intractable. He is—Here follow three red crosses, Mr Morton, which signify triply dangerous. You see how important a person you are.—But what does this fellow want?"

A horseman rode up as he spoke, and gave a letter. Claverhouse glanced it over, laughed scornfully, bade him tell his master to send his prisoners to Edinburgh, for there was no answer; and, as the man turned back, said contemptuously to Morton—"Here is an ally of yours deserted from you, or rather, I should say, an ally of your good friend Burley—Hear how he sets forth—'Dear Sir,' (I wonder when we were such intimates,) 'may it please your Excellency to accept my humble congratulations on the victory'—hum—hum—'blessed his Majesty's army. I pray you to understand I have my people under arms to take and intercept all fugitives, and have already several prisoners,' and so forth. Subscribed Basil Olifant—You know the fellow by name, I suppose?"

"A relative of Lady Margaret Bellenden," replied Morton, "is he not?"

"Ay," replied Grahame, "and heir-male of her father's family, though a distant one, and moreover a suitor to the fair Edith, though discarded as an unworthy one; but, above all, a devoted admirer of the estate of Tillietudlem, and all thereunto belonging."

"He takes an ill mode of recommending himself," said Morton, suppressing his feelings, "to the family at Tillietudlem, by corresponding with our unhappy party."

"O, this precious Basil will turn cat in pan with any man!" replied Claverhouse. "He was displeased with the government, because they would not overturn in his favour a settlement of the late Earl of Torwood, by which his lordship gave his own estate to his own daughter; he was displeased with Lady Margaret, because she avowed no desire for his alliance, and with the pretty Edith, because she did not like his tall ungainly person. So he held a close correspondence with Burley, and raised his followers with the purpose of helping him, providing always he needed no help, that is, if you had beat us yesterday. And now the rascal pretends he was all the while proposing the King's service, and, for aught I know, the council will receive his pretext for current coin, for he knows how to make friends among them—and a dozen scores of poor vagabond fanatics will be shot, or hanged, while this cunning scoundrel lies hid under the double cloak of loyalty, well-lined with the fox-fur of hypocrisy."

With conversation on this and other matters they beguiled the way, Claverhouse all the while speaking with great frankness to Morton, and treating him rather as a friend and companion than as a prisoner; so that, however uncertain of his fate, the hours he passed in the company of this remarkable man were so much lightened by the varied play of his imagination, and the depth of his knowledge of human nature, that since the period of his becoming a prisoner of war, which relieved him at once from the cares of his doubtful and dangerous station among the insurgents, and from the consequences of their suspicious resentment, his

hours flowed on less anxiously than at any time since his having commenced actor in public life. He was now, with respect to his fortune, like a rider who has flung his reins on the horse's neck, and, while he abandoned himself to circumstances, was at least relieved from the task of attempting to direct them. In this mood he journeyed on, the number of his companions being continually augmented by detached parties of horse who came in from every quarter of the country, bringing with them, for the most part, the unfortunate persons who had fallen into their power. At length they approached Edinburgh.

"Our council," said Claverhouse, "being resolved, I suppose, to testify by their present exultation the extent of their former terror, have decreed a kind of triumphal entry to us victors and our captives; but as I do not quite approve the taste of it, I am willing to avoid my own part in the show, and, at the same time, to save you from yours."

So saying, he gave up the command of the forces to Allan, (now a Lieutenant-colonel,) and, turning his horse into a by-lane, rode into the city privately, accompanied by Morton and two or three servants. When Claverhouse arrived at the quarters which he usually occupied in the Canongate, he assigned to his prisoner a small apartment, with an intimation, that his parole confined him to it for the present.

After about a quarter of an hour spent in solitary musing on the strange vicissitudes of his late life, the attention of Morton was summoned to the window by a great noise in the street beneath. Trumpets, drums, and kettle-drums, contended in noise with the shouts of a numerous rabble, and apprised him that the royal cavalry were passing in the triumphal attitude which Claverhouse had mentioned. The magistrates of the city, attended by their guard of halberds, had met the victors with their welcome at the gate of the city, and now preceded them as a part of the procession. The next object was two heads borne upon pikes; and before each bloody head were carried the hands of the dismembered sufferers, which were, by the brutal mockery of those who bore them, often approached towards each other as if in the attitude of exhortation or prayer. These bloody trophies belonged to two preachers who had fallen at Bothwell Bridge. After them came a cart led by the executioner's assistant, in which were placed Macbriar, and other two prisoners, who seemed of the same profession. They were bareheaded, and strongly bound, yet looked around them with an air rather of triumph than dismay, and appeared in no respect moved either by the fate of their companions, of which the bloody evidences were carried before them, or by dread of their own approaching execution, which these preliminaries so plainly indicated.

Behind these prisoners, thus held up to public infamy and derision, came a body of horse, brandishing their broadswords, and filling the wide street with acclamations, which were answered by the tumultuous outcries and shouts of the rabble, who, in every considerable town, are too happy in being permitted to huzza for any thing whatever which calls them together. In the rear of these troopers came the main body of the prisoners, at the head of whom were some of their leaders, who were treated with every circumstance of inventive mockery and insult. Several were placed on horseback with their faces to the animal's tail; others were chained to long bars of iron, which they were obliged to support in their hands, like the galleyslaves in Spain when travelling to the port where they are to be put on shipboard. The heads of others who had fallen were borne in triumph before the survivors, some on pikes and halberds, some in sacks, bearing the names of the slaughtered persons labelled on the outside. Such were the objects who headed the ghastly procession, who seemed as effectually doomed to death as if they wore the sanbenitos of the condemned heretics in an auto-da-fe. [Note: David Hackston of Rathillet, who was wounded and made prisoner in the skirmish of Air's-Moss, in which the celebrated Cameron fell, was, on entering Edinburgh, "by order of the Council, received by the Magistrates at the Watergate, and set on a horse's bare back with his face to the tail, and the other three laid on a goad of iron, and carried up the street, Mr Cameron's head being on a halberd before them."]

Behind them came on the nameless crowd to the number of several hundreds, some retaining under their misfortunes a sense of confidence in the cause for which they suffered captivity, and were about to give a still more bloody testimony; others seemed pale, dispirited, dejected, questioning in their own minds their prudence in espousing a cause which Providence seemed to have disowned, and looking about for some avenue through which they might escape from the consequences of their rashness. Others there were who seemed incapable of forming an opinion on the subject, or of entertaining either hope, confidence, or fear, but who, foaming with thirst and fatigue, stumbled along like over-driven oxen, lost to every thing but their present sense of wretchedness, and without having any distinct idea whether they were led to the shambles or to the pasture. These unfortunate men were guarded on each hand by troopers, and behind them came the main body of the cavalry, whose military music resounded back from the high houses on each side of the street, and mingled with their own songs of jubilee and triumph, and the wild shouts of the rabble.

Morton felt himself heart-sick while he gazed on the dismal spectacle, and recognised in the bloody heads, and still more miserable and agonized features of the living sufferers, faces which had been familiar to him during the brief insurrection. He sunk down in a chair in a bewildered and stupified state, from which he was awakened by the voice of Cuddie.

"Lord forgie us, sir!" said the poor fellow, his teeth chattering like a pair of nut-crackers, his hair erect like boar's bristles, and his face as pale as that of a corpse—

"Lord forgie us, sir! we maun instantly gang before the Council!—O Lord, what made them send for a puir bodie like me, sae mony braw lords and gentles!—and there's my mither come on the lang tramp frae Glasgow to see to gar me testify, as she ca's it, that is to say, confess and be hanged; but deil tak me if they mak sic a guse o' Cuddie, if I can do better. But here's Claverhouse himself—the Lord preserve and forgie us, I say anes mair!"

"You must immediately attend the Council Mr Morton," said Claverhouse, who entered while Cuddie spoke, "and your servant must go with you. You need be under no apprehension for the consequences to yourself personally. But I warn you that you will see something that will give you much pain, and from which I would willingly have saved you, if I had possessed the power. My carriage waits us—shall we go?"

It will be readily supposed that Morton did not venture to dispute this invitation, however unpleasant. He rose and accompanied Claverhouse.

"I must apprise you," said the latter, as he led the way down stairs, "that you will get off cheap; and so will your servant, provided he can keep his tongue quiet."

Cuddie caught these last words to his exceeding joy.

"Deil a fear o' me," said he, "an my mither disna pit her finger in the pie."

At that moment his shoulder was seized by old Mause, who had contrived to thrust herself forward into the lobby of the apartment.

"O, hinny, hinny!" said she to Cuddie, hanging upon his neck, "glad and proud, and sorry and humbled am I, a'in ane and the same instant, to see my bairn ganging to testify for the truth gloriously with his mouth in council, as he did with his weapon in the field!"

"Whisht, whisht, mither!" cried Cuddie impatiently. "Odd, ye daft wife, is this a time to speak o' thae things? I tell ye I'll testify naething either ae gate or another. I hae spoken to Mr Poundtext, and I'll tak the declaration, or whate'er they ca'it, and we're a' to win free off if we do that—he's gotten life for himsell and a' his folk, and that's a minister for my siller; I like nane o' your sermons that end in a psalm at the Grassmarket." [Note: Then the place of public execution.]

"O, Cuddie, man, laith wad I be they suld hurt ye," said old Mause, divided grievously between the safety of her son's soul and that of his body; "but mind, my bonny bairn, ye hae battled for the faith, and dinna let the dread o' losing creature-comforts withdraw ye frae the gude fight."

"Hout tout, mither," replied Cuddie, "I hae fought e'en ower muckle already, and, to speak plain, I'm wearied o' the trade. I hae swaggered wi' a' thae arms, and muskets, and pistols, buffcoats, and bandoliers, lang eneugh, and I like the pleughpaidie a hantle better. I ken naething suld gar a man fight, (that's to say, when he's no angry,) by and out-taken the dread o' being hanged or killed if he turns back."

"But, my dear Cuddie," continued the persevering Mause, "your bridal garment—Oh, hinny, dinna sully the marriage garment!"

"Awa, awa, mither," replied Cuddie; "dinna ye see the folks waiting for me?—Never fear me—I ken how to turn this far better than ye do—for ye're bleezing awa about marriage, and the job is how we are to win by hanging."

So saying, he extricated himself out of his mother's embraces, and requested the soldiers who took him in charge to conduct him to the place of examination without delay. He had been already preceded by Claverhouse and Morton.

My native land, good night!
Lord Byron.

The Privy Council of Scotland, in whom the practice since the union of the crowns vested great judicial powers, as well as the general superintendence of the executive department, was met in the ancient dark Gothic room, adjoining to the House of Parliament in Edinburgh, when General Grahame entered and took his place amongst the members at the council table.

"You have brought us a leash of game to-day, General," said a nobleman of high place amongst them. "Here is a craven to confess—a cock of the game to stand at bay—and what shall I call the third, General?"

"Without further metaphor, I will entreat your Grace to call him a person in whom I am specially interested," replied Claverhouse.

"And a whig into the bargain?" said the nobleman, lolling out a tongue which was at all times too big for his mouth, and accommodating his coarse features to a sneer, to which they seemed to be familiar.

"Yes, please your Grace, a whig; as your Grace was in 1641," replied Claverhouse, with his usual appearance of imperturbable civility.

"He has you there, I think, my Lord Duke," said one of the Privy Councillors.

"Ay, ay," returned the Duke, laughing, "there's no speaking to him since Drumclog—but come, bring in the prisoners—and do you, Mr Clerk, read the record."

The clerk read forth a bond, in which General Grahame of Claverhouse and Lord Evandale entered themselves securities, that Henry Morton, younger of Milnwood, should go abroad and remain in foreign parts, until his Majesty's pleasure was further known, in respect of the said Henry Morton's accession to the late rebellion, and that under penalty of life and limb to the said Henry Morton, and of ten thousand marks to each of his securities.

"Do you accept of the King's mercy upon these terms, Mr Morton?" said the Duke of Lauderdale, who presided in the Council.

"I have no other choice, my lord," replied Morton.

"Then subscribe your name in the record."

Morton did so without reply, conscious that, in the circumstances of his case, it was impossible for him to have escaped more easily. Macbriar, who was at the same instant brought to the foot of the council-table, bound upon a chair, for his weakness prevented him from standing, beheld Morton in the act of what he accounted apostasy.

"He hath summed his defection by owning the carnal power of the tyrant!" he exclaimed, with a deep groan—"A fallen star!—a fallen star!"

"Hold your peace, sir," said the Duke, "and keep your ain breath to cool your ain porridge—ye'll find them scalding hot, I promise you.—Call in the other fellow, who has some common sense. One sheep will leap the ditch when another goes first."

Cuddie was introduced unbound, but under the guard of two halberdiers, and placed beside Macbriar at the foot of the table. The poor fellow cast a piteous look around him, in which were mingled awe for the great men in whose presence he stood, and compassion for his fellow-sufferers, with no small fear of the personal consequences which impended over himself. He made his clownish obeisances with a double portion of reverence, and then awaited the opening of the awful scene.

"Were you at the battle of Bothwell Brigg?" was the first question which was thundered in his ears.

Cuddie meditated a denial, but had sense enough, upon reflection, to discover that the truth would be too strong for him; so he replied, with true Caledonian indirectness of response, "I'll no say but it may be possible that I might hae been there."

"Answer directly, you knave—yes, or no?—You know you were there."

"It's no for me to contradict your Lordship's Grace's honour," said Cuddie.

"Once more, sir, were you there?—yes, or no?" said the Duke, impatiently.

"Dear stir," again replied Cuddie, "how can ane mind preceesely where they hae been a' the days o' their life?"

"Speak out, you scoundrel," said General Dalzell, "or I'll dash your teeth out with my dudgeonhaft!—Do you think we can stand here all day to be turning and dodging with you, like greyhounds after a hare?" [Note: The General is said to have struck one of the captive whigs, when under examination, with the hilt of his sabre, so that the blood gushed out. The provocation for this unmanly violence was, that the prisoner had called the fierce veteran "a Muscovy beast, who used to roast men." Dalzell had been long in the Russian service, which in those days was no school of humanity.]

"Aweel, then," said Cuddie, "since naething else will please ye, write down that I cannot deny but I was there."

"Well, sir," said the Duke, "and do you think that the rising upon that occasion was rebellion or not?"

"I'm no just free to gie my opinion, stir," said the cautious captive, "on what might cost my neck; but I doubt it will be very little better."

"Better than what?"

"Just than rebellion, as your honour ca's it," replied Cuddie.

"Well, sir, that's speaking to the purpose," replied his Grace. "And are you content to accept of the King's pardon for your guilt as a rebel, and to keep the church, and pray for the King?"

"Blithely, stir," answered the unscrupulous Cuddie; "and drink his health into the bargain, when the ale's gude."

"Egad," said the Duke, "this is a hearty cock.—What brought you into such a scrape, mine honest friend?"

"Just ill example, stir," replied the prisoner, "and a daft auld jaud of a mither, wi' reverence to your Grace's honour."

"Why, God-a-mercy, my friend," replied the Duke, "take care of bad advice another time; I think you are not likely to commit treason on your own score.—Make out his free pardon, and bring forward the rogue in the chair."

Macbriar was then moved forward to the post of examination.

"Were you at the battle of Bothwell Bridge?" was, in like manner, demanded of him.

"I was," answered the prisoner, in a bold and resolute tone.

"Were you armed?"

"I was not—I went in my calling as a preacher of God's word, to encourage them that drew the sword in His cause."

"In other words, to aid and abet the rebels?" said the Duke.

"Thou hast spoken it," replied the prisoner.

"Well, then," continued the interrogator, "let us know if you saw John Balfour of Burley among the party?—I presume you know him?"

"I bless God that I do know him," replied Macbriar; "he is a zealous and a sincere Christian."

"And when and where did you last see this pious personage?" was the query which immediately followed.

"I am here to answer for myself," said Macbriar, in the same dauntless manner, "and not to endanger others."

"We shall know," said Dalzell, "how to make you find your tongue."

"If you can make him fancy himself in a conventicle," answered Lauderdale, "he will find it without you.—Come, laddie, speak while the play is good—you're too young to bear the burden will be laid on you else."

"I defy you," retorted Macbriar. "This has not been the first of my imprisonments or of my sufferings; and, young as I may be, I have lived long enough to know how to die when I am called upon."

"Ay, but there are some things which must go before an easy death, if you continue obstinate," said Lauderdale, and rung a small silver bell which was placed before him on the table.

A dark crimson curtain, which covered a sort of niche, or Gothic recess in the wall, rose at the signal, and displayed the public executioner, a tall, grim, and hideous man, having an oaken table before him, on which lay thumb-screws, and an iron case, called the Scottish boot, used in those tyrannical days to torture accused persons. Morton, who was unprepared for this ghastly apparition, started when the curtain arose, but Macbriar's nerves were more firm. He gazed upon the horrible apparatus with much composure; and if a touch of nature called the blood from his cheek for a second, resolution sent it back to his brow with greater energy.

"Do you know who that man is?" said Lauderdale, in a low, stern voice, almost sinking into a whisper.

"He is, I suppose," replied Macbriar, "the infamous executioner of your bloodthirsty commands upon the persons of God's people. He and you are equally beneath my regard; and, I bless God, I no more fear what he can inflict than what you can command. Flesh and blood may shrink under the sufferings you can doom me to, and poor frail nature may shed tears, or send forth cries; but I trust my soul is anchored firmly on the rock of ages."

"Do your duty," said the Duke to the executioner.

The fellow advanced, and asked, with a harsh and discordant voice, upon which of the prisoner's limbs he should first employ his engine.

"Let him choose for himself," said the Duke; "I should like to oblige him in any thing that is reasonable."

"Since you leave it to me," said the prisoner, stretching forth his right leg, "take the best—I willingly bestow it in the cause for which I suffer." [Note: This was the reply actually made by James Mitchell when subjected to the torture of the boot, for an attempt to assassinate Archbishop Sharpe.]

The executioner, with the help of his assistants, enclosed the leg and knee within the tight iron boot, or case, and then placing a wedge of the same metal between the knee and the edge of the machine, took a mallet in his hand, and stood waiting for farther orders. A well-dressed man, by profession a surgeon, placed himself by the other side of the prisoner's chair, bared the prisoner's arm, and applied his thumb to the pulse in order to regulate the torture according to the strength of the patient. When these preparations were made, the President of the Council repeated with the same stern voice the question, "When and where did you last see John Balfour of Burley?"

The prisoner, instead of replying to him, turned his eyes to heaven as if imploring Divine strength, and muttered a few words, of which the last were distinctly audible, "Thou hast said thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power!"

The Duke of Lauderdale glanced his eye around the council as if to collect their suffrages, and, judging from their mute signs, gave on his own part a nod to the executioner, whose mallet instantly descended on the wedge, and, forcing it between the knee and the iron boot, occasioned the most exquisite pain, as was evident from the flush which instantly took place on the brow and on the cheeks of the sufferer. The fellow then again raised his weapon, and stood prepared to give a second blow.

"Will you yet say," repeated the Duke of Lauderdale, "where and when you last parted from Balfour of Burley?"

"You have my answer," said the sufferer resolutely, and the second blow fell. The third and fourth succeeded; but at the fifth, when a larger wedge had been introduced, the prisoner set up a scream of agony.

Morton, whose blood boiled within him at witnessing such cruelty, could bear no longer, and, although unarmed and himself in great danger, was springing forward, when Claverhouse, who observed his emotion, withheld him by force, laying one hand on his arm and the other on his mouth, while he whispered, "For God's sake, think where you are!"

This movement, fortunately for him, was observed by no other of the councillors, whose attention was engaged with the dreadful scene before them.

"He is gone," said the surgeon—"he has fainted, my Lords, and human nature can endure no more."

"Release him," said the Duke; and added, turning to Dalzell, "He will make an old proverb good, for he'll scarce ride to-day, though he has had his boots on. I suppose we must finish with him?"

"Ay, dispatch his sentence, and have done with him; we have plenty of drudgery behind."

Strong waters and essences were busily employed to recall the senses of the unfortunate captive; and, when his first faint gasps intimated a return of sensation, the Duke pronounced sentence of death upon him, as a traitor taken in the act of open rebellion, and adjudged him to be carried from the bar to the common place of execution, and there hanged by the neck; his head and hands to be stricken off after death, and disposed of according to the pleasure of the Council, [Note: The pleasure of the Council respecting the relics of their victims was often as savage as the rest of their conduct. The heads of the preachers were frequently exposed on pikes between their two hands, the palms displayed as in the attitude of prayer. When the celebrated Richard Cameron's head was exposed in this manner, a spectator bore testimony to it as that of one who lived praying and preaching, and died praying and fighting.] and all and sundry his movable goods and gear escheat and inbrought to his Majesty's use.

"Doomster," he continued, "repeat the sentence to the prisoner."

The office of Doomster was in those days, and till a much later period, held by the executioner in commendam, with his ordinary functions. [Note: See a note on the subject of this office in the Heart of Mid-Lothian.] The duty consisted in reciting to the unhappy criminal the sentence of the law as pronounced by the judge, which acquired an additional and horrid emphasis from the recollection, that the hateful personage by whom it was uttered was to be the agent of the cruelties he denounced. Macbriar had scarce understood the purport of the words as first pronounced by the Lord President of the Council; but he was sufficiently recovered to listen and to reply to the sentence when uttered by the harsh and odious voice of the ruffian who was to execute it, and at the last awful words, "And this I pronounce for doom," he answered boldly—"My Lords, I thank you for the only favour I looked for, or would accept at your hands, namely, that you have sent the crushed and maimed carcass, which has this day sustained your cruelty, to this hasty end. It were indeed little to me whether I perish on the gallows or in the prison-house; but if death, following close on what I have this day suffered, had found me in my cell of darkness and bondage, many might have lost the sight how a Christian man can suffer in the good cause. For the rest, I forgive you, my Lords, for what you have appointed and I have sustained—And why should I not?—Ye send me to a happy exchange—to the company of angels and the spirits of the just, for that of frail dust and ashes—Ye send me from darkness into day—from mortality to immortality—and, in a word, from earth to heaven!—If the thanks, therefore, and pardon of a dying man can do you good, take them at my hand, and may your last moments be as happy as mine!"

As he spoke thus, with a countenance radiant with joy and triumph, he was withdrawn by those who had brought him into the apartment, and executed within half an hour, dying with the same enthusiastic firmness which his whole life had evinced.

The Council broke up, and Morton found himself again in the carriage with General Grahame.

"Marvellous firmness and gallantry!" said Morton, as he reflected upon Macbriar's conduct; "what a pity it is that with such self-devotion and heroism should have been mingled the fiercer features of his sect!"

"You mean," said Claverhouse, "his resolution to condemn you to death?—To that he would have reconciled himself by a single text; for example, 'And Phinehas arose and executed judgment,' or something to the same purpose.—But wot ye where you are now bound, Mr Morton?"

"We are on the road to Leith, I observe," answered Morton. "Can I not be permitted to see my friends ere I leave my native land?"

"Your uncle," replied Grahame, "has been spoken to, and declines visiting you. The good gentleman is terrified, and not without some reason, that the crime of your treason may extend itself over his lands and tenements—he sends you, however, his blessing, and a small sum of money. Lord Evandale continues extremely indisposed. Major Bellenden is at Tillietudlem putting matters in order. The scoundrels have made great havoc there with Lady Margaret's muniments of antiquity, and have desecrated and destroyed what the good lady called the Throne of his most Sacred Majesty. Is there any one else whom you would wish to see?"

Morton sighed deeply as he answered, "No—it would avail nothing.—But my preparations,—small as they are, some must be necessary."

"They are all ready for you," said the General. "Lord Evandale has anticipated all you wish. Here is a packet from him with letters of recommendation for the court of the Stadtholder Prince of Orange, to which I have added one or two. I made my first campaigns under him, and first saw fire at the battle of Seneff. [Note:

August 1674. Claverhouse greatly distinguished himself in this action, and was made Captain.] There are also bills of exchange for your immediate wants, and more will be sent when you require it."

Morton heard all this and received the parcel with an astounded and confused look, so sudden was the execution of the sentence of banishment.

"And my servant?" he said.

"He shall be taken care of, and replaced, if it be practicable, in the service of Lady Margaret Bellenden; I think he will hardly neglect the parade of the feudal retainers, or go a-whipping a second time.—But here we are upon the quay, and the boat waits you."

It was even as Claverhouse said. A boat waited for Captain Morton, with the trunks and baggage belonging to his rank. Claverhouse shook him by the hand, and wished him good fortune, and a happy return to Scotland in quieter times.

"I shall never forget," he said, "the gallantry of your behaviour to my friend Evandale, in circumstances when many men would have sought to rid him out of their way."

Another friendly pressure, and they parted. As Morton descended the pier to get into the boat, a hand placed in his a letter folded up in very small space. He looked round. The person who gave it seemed much muffled up; he pressed his finger upon his lip, and then disappeared among the crowd. The incident awakened Morton's curiosity; and when he found himself on board of a vessel bound for Rotterdam, and saw all his companions of the voyage busy making their own arrangements, he took an opportunity to open the billet thus mysteriously thrust upon him. It ran thus:—"Thy courage on the fatal day when Israel fled before his enemies, hath, in some measure, atoned for thy unhappy owning of the Erastian interest. These are not days for Ephraim to strive with Israel. —I know thy heart is with the daughter of the stranger. But turn from that folly; for in exile, and in flight, and even in death itself, shall my hand be heavy against that bloody and malignant house, and Providence hath given me the means of meting unto them with their own measure of ruin and confiscation. The resistance of their stronghold was the main cause of our being scattered at Bothwell Bridge, and I have bound it upon my soul to visit it upon them. Wherefore, think of her no more, but join with our brethren in banishment, whose hearts are still towards this miserable land to save and to relieve her. There is an honest remnant in Holland whose eyes are looking out for deliverance. Join thyself unto them like the true son of the stout and worthy Silas Morton, and thou wilt have good acceptance among them for his sake and for thine own working. Shouldst thou be found worthy again to labour in the vineyard, thou wilt at all times hear of my in-comings and out-goings, by enquiring after Quintin Mackell of Irongray, at the house of that singular Christian woman, Bessie Maclure, near to the place called the Howff, where Niel Blane entertaineth guests. So much from him who hopes to hear again from thee in brotherhood, resisting unto blood, and striving against sin. Meanwhile, possess thyself in patience. Keep thy sword girded, and thy lamp burning, as one that wakes in the night; for He who shall judge the Mount of Esau, and shall make false professors as straw, and malignants as stubble, will come in the fourth watch with garments dyed in blood, and the house of Jacob shall be for spoil, and the house of Joseph for fire. I am he that hath written it, whose hand hath been on the mighty in the waste field."

This extraordinary letter was subscribed J. B. of B.; but the signature of these initials was not necessary for pointing out to Morton that it could come from no other than Burley. It gave him new occasion to admire the indomitable spirit of this man, who, with art equal to his courage and obstinacy, was even now endeavouring to re-establish the web of conspiracy which had been so lately torn to pieces. But he felt no sort of desire, in the present moment, to sustain a correspondence which must be perilous, or to renew an association, which, in so many ways, had been nearly fatal to him. The threats which Burley held out against the family of Bellenden, he considered as a mere expression of his spleen on account of their defence of Tillietudlem; and nothing seemed less likely than that, at the very moment of their party being victorious, their fugitive and distressed adversary could exercise the least influence over their fortunes.

Morton, however, hesitated for an instant, whether he should not send the Major or Lord Evandale intimation of Burley's threats. Upon consideration, he thought he could not do so without betraying his confidential correspondence; for to warn them of his menaces would have served little purpose, unless he had given them a clew to prevent them, by apprehending his person; while, by doing so, he deemed he should commit an ungenerous breach of trust to remedy an evil which seemed almost imaginary. Upon mature consideration, therefore, he tore the letter, having first made a memorandum of the name and place where the writer was to be heard of, and threw the fragments into the sea.

While Morton was thus employed the vessel was unmoored, and the white sails swelled out before a favourable north-west wind. The ship leaned her side to the gale, and went roaring through the waves, leaving a long and rippling furrow to track her course. The city and port from which he had sailed became undistinguishable in the distance; the hills by which they were surrounded melted finally into the blue sky, and Morton was separated for several years from the land of his nativity.

CHAPTER XVI.

Whom does time gallop withal?

As You Like It.

It is fortunate for tale-tellers that they are not tied down like theatrical writers to the unities of time and place, but may conduct their personages to Athens and Thebes at their pleasure, and bring them back at their convenience. Time, to use Rosalind's simile, has hitherto paced with the hero of our tale; for betwixt Morton's first appearance as a competitor for the popinjay and his final departure for Holland hardly two months elapsed. Years, however, glided away ere we find it possible to resume the thread of our narrative, and Time must be held to have galloped over the interval. Craving, therefore, the privilege of my cast, I entreat the reader's attention to the continuation of the narrative, as it starts from a new era, being the year immediately subsequent to the British Revolution.

Scotland had just begun to repose from the convulsion occasioned by a change of dynasty, and, through the prudent tolerance of King William, had narrowly escaped the horrors of a protracted civil war. Agriculture began to revive, and men, whose minds had been disturbed by the violent political convulsions, and the general change of government in Church and State, had begun to recover their ordinary temper, and to give the usual attention to their own private affairs, in lieu of discussing those of the public. The Highlanders alone resisted the newly established order of things, and were in arms in a considerable body under the Viscount of Dundee, whom our readers have hitherto known by the name of Grahame of Claverhouse. But the usual state of the Highlands was so unruly that their being more or less disturbed was not supposed greatly to affect the general tranquillity of the country, so long as their disorders were confined within their own frontiers. In the Lowlands, the Jacobites, now the undermost party, had ceased to expect any immediate advantage by open resistance, and were, in their turn, driven to hold private meetings, and form associations for mutual defence, which the government termed treason, while they cried out persecution.

The triumphant Whigs, while they re-established Presbytery as the national religion, and assigned to the General Assemblies of the Kirk their natural influence, were very far from going the lengths which the Cameronians and more extravagant portion of the nonconformists under Charles and James loudly demanded. They would listen to no proposal for re-establishing the Solemn League and Covenant; and those who had expected to find in King William a zealous Covenanted Monarch, were grievously disappointed when he intimated, with the phlegm peculiar to his country, his intention to tolerate all forms of religion which were consistent with the safety of the State. The principles of indulgence thus espoused and gloried in by the Government gave great offence to the more violent party, who condemned them as diametrically contrary to Scripture,—for which narrow-spirited doctrine they cited various texts, all, as it may well be supposed, detached from their context, and most of them derived from the charges given to the Jews in the Old Testament dispensation to extirpate idolaters out of the Promised Land. They also murmured highly against the influence assumed by secular persons in exercising the rights of patronage, which they termed a rape upon the chastity of the Church. They censured and condemned as Erastian many of the measures by which Government after the Revolution showed an inclination to interfere with the management of the Church, and they positively refused to take the oath of allegiance to King William and Queen Mary until they should, on their part, have sworn to the Solemn League—and Covenant, the Magna Charta, as they termed it, of the Presbyterian Church.

This party, therefore, remained grumbling and dissatisfied, and made repeated declarations against defections and causes of wrath, which, had they been prosecuted as in the two former reigns, would have led to the same consequence of open rebellion. But as the murmurers were allowed to hold their meetings uninterrupted, and to testify as much as they pleased against Socinianism, Erastianism, and all the compliances and defections of the time, their zeal, unfanned by persecution, died gradually away, their numbers became diminished, and they sunk into the scattered remnant of serious, scrupulous, and harmless enthusiasts, of whom Old Mortality, whose legends have afforded the groundwork of my tale, may be taken as no bad representative. But in the years which immediately succeeded the Revolution, the Cameronians continued a sect strong in numbers and vehement in their political opinions, whom Government wished to discourage, while they prudently temporised with them. These men formed one violent party in the State; and the Episcopalian and Jacobite interest, notwithstanding their ancient and national animosity, yet repeatedly endeavoured to intrigue among them, and avail themselves of their discontents, to obtain their assistance in recalling the Stewart family. The Revolutionary Government in the mean while, was supported by the great bulk of the Lowland interest, who were chiefly disposed to a moderate Presbytery, and formed in a great measure the party who in the former oppressive reigns were stigmatized by the Cameronians for having exercised that form of worship under the declaration of Indulgence issued by Charles II. Such was the state of parties in Scotland immediately subsequent to the Revolution.

It was on a delightful summer evening that a stranger, well mounted, and having the appearance of a military man of rank, rode down a winding descent which terminated in view of the romantic ruins of Bothwell Castle and the river Clyde, which winds so beautifully between rocks and woods to sweep around the towers formerly built by Aymer de Valence. Bothwell Bridge was at a little distance, and also in sight. The opposite field, once the scene of slaughter and conflict, now lay as placid and quiet as the surface of a summer lake. The trees and bushes, which grew around in romantic variety of shade, were hardly seen to stir under the influence of the evening breeze. The very murmur of the river seemed to soften itself into unison with the stillness of the scene around.

The path through which the traveller descended was occasionally shaded by detached trees of great size, and elsewhere by the hedges and boughs of flourishing orchards, now laden with summer fruits.

The nearest object of consequence was a farmhouse, or, it might be, the abode of a small proprietor, situated on the side of a sunny bank which was covered by apple and pear trees. At the foot of the path which led up to this modest mansion was a small cottage, pretty much in the situation of a porter's lodge, though obviously not designed for such a purpose. The hut seemed comfortable, and more neatly arranged than is usual in Scotland. It had its little garden, where some fruit-trees and bushes were mingled with kitchen herbs; a cow and six sheep fed in a paddock hard by; the cock strutted and crowed, and summoned his family around him before the door; a heap of brushwood and turf, neatly made up, indicated that the winter fuel was provided; and the thin blue smoke which ascended from the straw-bound chimney, and winded slowly out from among the green trees, showed that the evening meal was in the act of being made ready. To complete the little scene of rural peace and comfort, a girl of about five years old was fetching water in a pitcher from a beautiful fountain of the purest transparency, which bubbled up at the root of a decayed old oak-tree about twenty yards from the end of the cottage.

The stranger reined up his horse and called to the little nymph, desiring to know the way to Fairy Knowe. The child set down her water-pitcher, hardly understanding what was said to her, put her fair flaxen hair apart on her brows, and opened her round blue eyes with the wondering "What's your wull?" which is usually a peasant's first answer, if it can be called one, to all questions whatever.

"I wish to know the way to Fairy Knowe."

"Mammie, mammie," exclaimed the little rustic, running towards the door of the hut, "come out and speak to the gentleman."

Her mother appeared,—a handsome young country-woman, to whose features, originally sly and espiegle in expression, matrimony had given that decent matronly air which peculiarly marks the peasant's wife of Scotland. She had an infant in one arm, and with the other she smoothed down her apron, to which hung a chubby child of two years old. The elder girl, whom the traveller had first seen, fell back behind her mother as soon as she appeared, and kept that station, occasionally peeping out to look at the stranger.

"What was your pleasure, sir?" said the woman, with an air of respectful breeding not quite common in her rank of life, but without anything resembling forwardness.

The stranger looked at her with great earnestness for a moment, and then replied, "I am seeking a place called Fairy Knowe, and a man called Cuthbert Headrigg. You can probably direct me to him?"

"It's my gudeman, sir," said the young woman, with a smile of welcome. "Will you alight, sir, and come into our puir dwelling?—Cuddie, Cuddie,"—a white-headed rogue of four years appeared at the door of the hut—"rin awa, my bonny man, and tell your father a gentleman wants him. Or, stay,—Jenny, ye'll hae mair sense: rin ye awa and tell him; he's down at the Four-acres Park.—Winna ye light down and bide a blink, sir? Or would ye take a mouthfu' o' bread and cheese, or a drink o' ale, till our gudeman comes. It's gude ale, though I shouldna say sae that brews it; but ploughmanlads work hard, and maun hae something to keep their hearts abune by ordinar, sae I aye pit a gude gowpin o' maut to the browst."

As the stranger declined her courteous offers, Cuddie, the reader's old acquaintance, made his appearance in person. His countenance still presented the same mixture of apparent dulness with occasional sparkles, which indicated the craft so often found in the clouted shoe. He looked on the rider as on one whom he never had before seen, and, like his daughter and wife, opened the conversation with the regular query, "What's your wull wi' me, sir?"

"I have a curiosity to ask some questions about this country," said the traveller, "and I was directed to you as an intelligent man who can answer them."

"Nae doubt, sir," said Cuddie, after a moment's hesitation. "But I would first like to ken what sort of questions they are. I hae had sae mony questions speered at me in my day, and in sic queer ways, that if ye kend a', ye wadna wonder at my jalousing a' thing about them. My mother gar 'd me learn the Single Carritch, whilk was a great vex; then I behoved to learn about my godfathers and godmothers to please the auld leddy; and whiles I jumbled them thegither and pleased nane o' them; and when I cam to man's yestate, cam another kind o' questioning in fashion that I liked waur than Effectual Calling; and the 'did promise and vow' of the tape were yokit to the end o' the tother. Sae ye see, sir, I aye like to hear questions asked befor I answer them."

"You have nothing to apprehend from mine, my good friend; they only relate to the state of the country."

"Country?" replied Cuddie; "ou, the country's weel enough, an it werena that dour deevil, Claver'se (they ca' him Dundee now), that's stirring about yet in the Highlands, they say, wi' a' the Donalds and Duncans and Dugalds, that ever wore bottomless breeks, driving about wi' him, to set things asteer again, now we hae gotten them a' reasonably weel settled. But Mackay will pit him down, there's little doubt o' that; he'll gie him his fairing, I'll be caution for it."

"What makes you so positive of that, my friend?" asked the horseman.

"I heard it wi' my ain lugs," answered Cuddie, "foretauld to him by a man that had been three hours stane dead, and came back to this earth again just to tell him his mind. It was at a place they ca' Drumshinnel."

"Indeed?" said the stranger. "I can hardly believe you, my friend."

"Ye might ask my mither, then, if she were in life," said Cuddie; "it was her explained it a' to me, for I thought the man had only been wounded. At ony rate, he spake of the casting out of the Stewarts by their very names, and the vengeance that was brewing for Claver'se and his dragoons. They ca'd the man Habakkuk Mucklewraith; his brain was a wee ajee, but he was a braw preacher for a' that."

"You seem," said the stranger, "to live in a rich and peaceful country."

"It's no to compleen o', sir, an we get the crap weel in," quoth Cuddie; "but if ye had seen the blude rinnin' as fast on the tap o' that brigg yonder as ever the water ran below it, ye wadna hae thought it sae bonnie a spectacle."

"You mean the battle some years since? I was waiting upon Monmouth that morning, my good friend, and did see some part of the action," said the stranger.

"Then ye saw a bonny stour," said Cuddie, "that sail serve me for fighting a' the days o' my life. I judged ye wad be a trooper, by your red scarlet lace-coat and your looped hat."

"And which side were you upon, my friend?" continued the inquisitive stranger.

"Aha, lad?" retorted Cuddie, with a knowing look, or what he designed for such,— "there 's nae use in telling that, unless I kend wha was asking me."

"I commend your prudence, but it is unnecessary; I know you acted on that occasion as servant to Henry Morton."

"Ay!" said Cuddie, in surprise, "how came ye by that secret? No that I need care a bodee about it, for the sun's on our side o' the hedge now. I wish my master were living to get a blink o't."

"And what became of him?" said the rider.

"He was lost in the vessel gaun to that weary Holland,—clean lost; and a' body perished, and my poor master amang them. Neither man nor mouse was ever heard o' mair." Then Cuddie uttered a groan.

"You had some regard for him, then?" continued the stranger.

"How could I help it? His face was made of a fiddle, as they say, for a' body that looked on him liked him. And a braw soldier he was. Oh, an ye had but seen him down at the brigg there, fleeing about like a fleeing dragon to gar folk fight that had unto little will till 't! There was he and that sour Whigamore they ca'd Burley: if twa men could hae won a field, we wadna hae gotten our skins paid that day."

"You mention Burley: do you know if he yet lives?"

"I kenna muckle about him. Folk say he was abroad, and our sufferers wad hold no communion wi' him, because o' his having murdered the archbishop. Sae he cam hame ten times dourer than ever, and broke aff wi' mony o' the Presbyterians; and at this last coming of the Prince of Orange he could get nae countenance nor command for fear of his deevilish temper, and he hasna been heard of since; only some folk say that pride and anger hae driven him clean wud."

"And—and," said the traveller, after considerable hesitation,— "do you know anything of Lord Evandale?"

"Div I ken onything o' Lord Evandale? Div I no? Is not my young leddy up by yonder at the house, that's as gude as married to him?"

"And are they not married, then?" said the rider, hastily.

"No, only what they ca' betrothed,—me and my wife were witnesses. It's no mony months bypast; it was a lang courtship,—few folk kend the reason by Jenny and myself. But will ye no light down? I downa bide to see ye sitting up there, and the clouds are casting up thick in the west ower Glasgow-ward, and maist skeily folk think that bodes rain."

In fact, a deep black cloud had already surmounted the setting sun; a few large drops of rain fell, and the murmurs of distant thunder were heard.

"The deil's in this man," said Cuddie to himself; "I wish he would either light aff or ride on, that he may quarter himself in Hamilton or the shower begin."

But the rider sate motionless on his horse for two or three moments after his last question, like one exhausted by some uncommon effort. At length, recovering himself as if with a sudden and painful effort, he asked Cuddie "if Lady Margaret Bellenden still lived."

"She does," replied Cuddie, "but in a very sma' way. They hae been a sad changed family since thae rough times began; they hae suffered eneugh first and last,—and to lose the auld Tower and a' the bonny barony and the holms that I hae pleughed sae often, and the Mains, and my kale-yard, that I suld hae gotten back again, and a' for naething, as 'a body may say, but just the want o' some bits of sheep-skin that were lost in the confusion of the taking of Tillietudlem."

"I have heard something of this," said the stranger, deepening his voice and averting his head. "I have some interest in the family, and would willingly help them if I could. Can you give me a bed in your house to-night, my friend?"

"It's but a corner of a place, sir," said Cuddie, "but we'se try, rather than ye suld ride on in the rain and thunner; for, to be free wi' ye, sir, I think ye seem no that ower weel."

"I am liable to a dizziness," said the stranger, "but it will soon wear off."

"I ken we can gie ye a decent supper, sir," said Cuddie; "and we'll see about a bed as weel as we can. We wad be laith a stranger suld lack what we have, though we are jimpily provided for in beds rather; for Jenny has sae mony bairns (God bless them and her) that troth I maun speak to Lord Evandale to gie us a bit eik, or outshot o' some sort, to the onstead."

"I shall be easily accommodated," said the stranger, as he entered the house.

"And ye may rely on your naig being weel sorted," said Cuddie; "I ken weel what belongs to suppering a horse, and this is a very gude ane." Cuddie took the horse to the little cow-house, and called to his wife to attend in the mean while to the stranger's accommodation. The officer entered, and threw himself on a settle at some distance from the fire, and carefully turning his back to the little lattice window. Jenny, or Mrs. Headrigg, if the reader pleases, requested him to lay aside the cloak, belt, and flapped hat which he wore upon his journey, but he excused himself under pretence of feeling cold, and, to divert the time till Cuddie's return, he entered into some chat with the children, carefully avoiding, during the interval, the inquisitive glances of his landlady.

CHAPTER XVII.

*What tragic tears bedim the eye!
What deaths we suffer ere we die!
Our broken friendships we deplore,
And loves of youth that are no more.*

LOGAN.

Cuddie soon returned, assuring the stranger, with a cheerful voice, "that the horse was properly suppered up, and that the gudewife should make a bed up for him at the house, mair purpose-like and comfortable than the like o' them could gie him."

"Are the family at the house?" said the stranger, with an interrupted and broken voice.

"No, stir, they're awa wi' a' the servants,—they keep only twa nowadays, and my gudewife there has the keys and the charge, though she's no a fee'd servant. She has been born and bred in the family, and has a' trust and management. If they were there, we behovedna to take sic freedom without their order; but when they are awa, they will be weel pleased we serve a stranger gentleman. Miss Bellenden wad help a' the haill warld, an her power were as gude as her will; and her grandmother, Leddy Margaret, has an unto respect for the gentry, and she's no ill to the poor bodies neither.—And now, wife, what for are ye no getting forrit wi' the sowens?"

"Never mind, lad," rejoined Jenny, "ye sall hae them in gude time; I ken weel that ye like your brose het."

Cuddie fidgeted and laughed with a peculiar expression of intelligence at this repartee, which was followed by a dialogue of little consequence betwixt his wife and him, in which the stranger took no share. At length he suddenly interrupted them by the question: "Can you tell me when Lord Evandale's marriage takes place?"

"Very soon, we expect," answered Jenny, before it was possible for her husband to reply; "it wad hae been ower afore now, but for the death o' auld Major Bellenden."

"The excellent old man!" said the stranger; "I heard at Edinburgh he was no more. Was he long ill?"

"He couldna be said to haud up his head after his brother's wife and his niece were turned out o' their ain house; and he had himself sair borrowing siller to stand the law,—but it was in the latter end o' King James's days; and Basil Olifant, who claimed the estate, turned a papist to please the managers, and then naething was to be refused him. Sae the law gaed again the leddies at last, after they had fought a weary sort o' years about it; and, as I said before, the major ne'er held up his head again. And then cam the pitting awa o' the Stewart line; and, though he had but little reason to like them, he couldna brook that, and it clean broke the heart o' him; and creditors cam to Charnwood and cleaned out a' that was there,—he was never rich, the gude auld man, for he dow'd na see onybody want."

"He was indeed," said the stranger, with a faltering voice, "an admirable man,—that is, I have heard that he was so. So the ladies were left without fortune, as well as without a protector?"

"They will neither want the tane nor the tother while Lord Evandale lives," said Jenny; "he has been a true friend in their griefs. E'en to the house they live in is his lordship's; and never man, as my auld gudemother used to say, since the days of the Patriarch Jacob, served sae lang and sae sair for a wife as gude Lord Evandale has dune."

"And why," said the stranger, with a voice that quivered with emotion, "why was he not sooner rewarded by the object of his attachment?"

"There was the lawsuit to be ended," said Jenny readily, "forby many other family arrangements."

"Na, but," said Cuddie, "there was another reason forby; for the young leddy—"

"Whisht, hand your tongue, and sup your sowens," said his wife; "I see the gentleman's far frae weel, and downa eat our coarse supper. I wad kill him a chicken in an instant."

"There is no occasion," said the stranger; "I shall want only a glass of water, and to be left alone."

"You'll gie yourself the trouble then to follow me," said Jenny, lighting a small lantern, "and I'll show you the way."

Cuddie also proffered his assistance; but his wife reminded him, "That the bairns would be left to fight thegither, and coup ane anither into the fire," so that he remained to take charge of the menage. His wife led the way up a little winding path, which, after threading some thickets of sweetbrier and honeysuckle, conducted to the back-door of a small garden. Jenny undid the latch, and they passed through an old-fashioned flower-garden, with its clipped yew hedges and formal parterres, to a glass-sashed door, which she opened with a master-key, and lighting a candle, which she placed upon a small work-table, asked pardon for leaving him there for a few minutes, until she prepared his apartment. She did not exceed five minutes in these preparations; but when she returned, was startled to find that the stranger had sunk forward with his head upon the table, in what she at first apprehended to be a swoon. As she advanced to him, however, she could discover by his short-drawn sobs that it was a paroxysm of mental agony. She prudently drew back until he raised his head, and then showing herself, without seeming to have observed his agitation, informed him that his bed was prepared. The stranger gazed at her a moment, as if to collect the sense of her words. She repeated them; and only bending his head, as an indication that he understood her, he entered the apartment, the door of which she pointed out to him. It was a small bedchamber, used, as she informed him, by Lord Evandale when a guest at Fairy Knowe, connecting, on one side, with a little china-cabinet which opened to the garden, and on the other, with a saloon, from which it was only separated by a thin wainscot partition. Having wished the stranger better health and good rest, Jenny descended as speedily as she could to her own mansion.

"Oh, Cuddie!" she exclaimed to her helpmate as she entered, "I doubt we're ruined folk!"

"How can that be? What's the matter wi' ye?" returned the imperturbed Cuddie, who was one of those persons who do not easily take alarm at anything.

"Wha d' ye think yon gentleman is? Oh that ever ye suld hae asked him to light here!" exclaimed Jenny.

"Why, wha the muckle deil d'ye say he is? There's nae law against harbouring and intercommunicating now," said Cuddie; "sae, Whig or Tory, what need we care wha he be?"

"Ay, but it's ane will ding Lord Evandale's marriage ajee yet, if it 's no the better looked to," said Jenny; "it's Miss Edith's first joe, your ain auld maister, Cuddie."

"The deil, woman!" exclaimed Cuddie, starting up, "Crow ye that I am blind? I wad hae kend Mr. Harry Morton amang a hunder."

"Ay, but, Cuddie lad," replied Jenny, "though ye are no blind, ye are no sae notice-taking as I am."

"Weel, what for needs ye cast that up to me just now; or what did ye see about the man that was like our Maister Harry?"

"I will tell ye," said Jenny. "I jaloused his keeping his face frae us, and speaking wi' a madelike voice, sae I e'en tried him wi' some tales o lang syne; and when I spake o' the brose, ye ken, he didna just laugh,—he's ower grave for that nowadays, but he gae a gledge wi' his ee that I kend he took up what I said. And a' his distress is about Miss Edith's marriage; and I ne'er saw a man mair taen down wi' true love in my days,—I might say man or woman, only I mind how ill Miss Edith was when she first gat word that him and you (ye muckle graceless loon) were coming against Tillietudlem wi' the rebels.—But what's the matter wi' the man now?"

"What's the matter wi' me indeed!" said Cuddie, who was again hastily putting on some of the garments he had stripped himself of; "am I no gaun up this instant to see my maister?"

"Atweel, Cuddie, ye are gaun nae sic gate," said Jenny, coolly and resolutely.

"The deil's in the wife!" said Cuddie. "D'ye think I am to be John Tamson's man, and maistered by women a' the days o' my life?"

"And whase man wad ye be? And wha wad ye hae to maister ye but me, Cuddie, lad?" answered Jenny. "I'll gar ye comprehend in the making of a hay-band. Naeboddy kens that this young gentleman is living but ourself; and frae that he keeps himsell up sae close, I am judging that he's purposing, if he fand Miss Edith either married, or just gaun to be married, he wad just slide awa easy, and gie them nae mair trouble. But if Miss Edith kend that he was living, and if she were standing before the very minister wi' Lord Evandale when it was tauld to her, I'se warrant she wad say No when she suld say Yes."

"Weel," replied Cuddie, "and what's my business wi' that? If Miss Edith likes her auld joe better than her new ane, what for suld she no be free to change her mind like other folk? Ye ken, Jenny, Halliday aye threeps he had a promise frae yourself."

"Halliday's a liar, and ye're naething but a gomeril to hearken till him, Cuddie. And then for this leddy's choice, lack-a-day! ye may be sure a' the gowd Mr. Morton has is on the outside o' his coat; and how can he keep Leddy Margaret and the young leddy?"

"Isna there Milnwood?" said Cuddie. "Nae doubt the auld laird left his housekeeper the liferent, as he heard nought o' his nephew; but it's but speaking the auld wife fair, and they may a' live brawly thegither, Leddy Margaret and a'."

"Rout tout, lad," replied Jenny; "ye ken them little to think leddies o' their rank wad set up house wi' auld Ailie Wilson, when they're maist ower proud to take favours frae Lord Evandale himsell. Na, na, they maun follow the camp, if she tak Morton."

"That wad sort ill wi' the auld leddy, to be sure," said Cuddie; "she wad hardly win ower a lang day in the baggage-wain."

"Then sic a flyting as there wad be between them, a' about Whig and Tory," continued Jenny.

"To be sure," said Cuddie, "the auld leddy 's unto kittle in thae points."

"And then, Cuddie," continued his helpmate, who had reserved her strongest argument to the last, "if this marriage wi' Lord Evandale is broken off, what comes o' our ain bit free house, and the kale-yard, and the cow's grass? I trow that baith us and thae bonny bairns will be turned on the wide world!"

Here Jenny began to whimper; Cuddie writhed himself this way and that way, the very picture of indecision. At length he broke out, "Weel, woman, canna ye tell us what we suld do, without a' this din about it?"

"Just do naething at a'," said Jenny. "Never seem to ken anything about this gentleman, and for your life say a word that he suld hae been here, or up at the house! An I had kend, I wad hae gien him my ain bed, and sleepit in the byre or he had gane up by; but it canna be helpit now. The neist thing's to get him cannily awa the morn, and I judge he'll be in nae hurry to come back again."

"My puir maister!" said Cuddie; "and maun I no speak to him, then?"

"For your life, no," said Jenny. "Ye're no obliged to ken him; and I wadna hae tauld ye, only I feared ye wad ken him in the morning."

"Aweel," said Cuddie, sighing heavily, "I 'se awa to plough the outfield then; for if I am no to speak to him, I wad rather be out o' the gate."

"Very right, my dear hinny," replied Jenny. "Naeboddy has better sense than you when ye crack a bit wi' me ower your affairs; but ye suld ne'er do anything aff hand out o' your ain head."

"Ane wad think it's true," quoth Cuddie; "for I hae aye had some carline or quean or another to gar me gang their gate instead o' my ain. There was first my mither," he continued, as he undressed and tumbled himself into bed; "then there was Leddy Margaret didna let me ca' my soul my ain; then my mither and her quarrelled, and pu'ed me twa ways at anes, as if ilk ane had an end o' me, like Punch and the Deevil rugging about the Baker at the fair; and now I hae gotten a wife," he murmured in continuation, as he stowed the blankets around his person, "and she's like to tak the guiding o' me a' thegither."

"And amna I the best guide ye ever had in a' your life?" said Jenny, as she closed the conversation by assuming her place beside her husband and extinguishing the candle.

Leaving this couple to their repose, we have next to inform the reader that, early on the next morning, two ladies on horseback, attended by their servants, arrived at the house of Fairy Knowe, whom, to Jenny's utter confusion, she instantly recognised as Miss Bellenden and Lady Emily Hamilton, a sister of Lord Evandale.

"Had I no better gang to the house to put things to rights?" said Jenny, confounded with this unexpected apparition.

"We want nothing but the pass-key," said Miss Bellenden; "Gudyill will open the windows of the little parlour."

"The little parlour's locked, and the lock's, spoiled," answered Jenny, who recollected the local sympathy between that apartment and the bedchamber of her guest.

"In the red parlour, then," said Miss Bellenden, and rode up to the front of the house, but by an approach different from that through which Morton had been conducted.

"All will be out," thought Jenny, "unless I can get him smuggled out of the house the back way."

So saying, she sped up the bank in great tribulation and uncertainty.

"I had better hae said at ante there was a stranger there," was her next natural reflection. "But then they wad hae been for asking him to breakfast. Oh, safe us! what will I do?—And there's Gudyill walking in the garden too!" she exclaimed internally on approaching the wicket; "and I daurna gang in the back way till he's aff the coast. Oh, sirs! what will become of us?"

In this state of perplexity she approached the cidevant butler, with the purpose of decoying him out of the garden. But John Gudyill's temper was not improved by his decline in rank and increase in years. Like many peevish people, too, he seemed to have an intuitive perception as to what was most likely to tease those whom he conversed with; and, on the present occasion, all Jenny's efforts to remove him from the garden served only to root him in it as fast as if he had been one of the shrubs.

Unluckily, also, he had commenced florist during his residence at Fairy Knowe; and, leaving all other things to the charge of Lady Emily's servant, his first care was dedicated to the flowers, which he had taken under his special protection, and which he propped, dug, and watered, prosing all the while upon their respective merits to poor Jenny, who stood by him trembling and almost crying with anxiety, fear, and impatience.

Fate seemed determined to win a match against Jenny this unfortunate morning. As soon as the ladies entered the house, they observed that the door of the little parlour—the very apartment out of which she was desirous of excluding them on account of its contiguity to the room in which Morton slept—was not only unlocked, but absolutely ajar. Miss Bellenden was too much engaged with her own immediate subjects of reflection to take much notice of the circumstance, but, desiring the servant to open the window-shutters, walked into the room along with her friend.

"He is not yet come," she said. "What can your brother possibly mean? Why express so anxious a wish that we should meet him here? And why not come to Castle Dinnan, as he proposed? I own, my dear Emily, that, even engaged as we are to each other, and with the sanction of your presence, I do not feel that I have done quite right in indulging him."

"Evandale was never capricious," answered his sister; "I am sure he will satisfy us with his reasons, and if he does not, I will help you to scold him."

"What I chiefly fear," said Edith, "is his having engaged in some of the plots of this fluctuating and unhappy time. I know his heart is with that dreadful Claverhouse and his army, and I believe he would have joined them ere now but for my uncle's death, which gave him so much additional trouble on our account. How singular that one so rational and so deeply sensible of the errors of the exiled family should be ready to risk all for their restoration!"

"What can I say?" answered Lady Emily,—"it is a point of honour with Evandale. Our family have always been loyal; he served long in the Guards; the Viscount of Dundee was his commander and his friend for years; he is looked on with an evil eye by many of his own relations, who set down his inactivity to the score of want of spirit. You must be aware, my dear Edith, how often family connections and early predilections influence our actions more than abstract arguments. But I trust Evandale will continue quiet,—though, to tell you truth, I believe you are the only one who can keep him so."

"And how is it in my power?" said Miss Bellenden.

"You can furnish him with the Scriptural apology for not going forth with the host,—'he has married a wife, and therefore cannot come.'"

"I have promised," said Edith, in a faint voice; "but I trust I shall not be urged on the score of time."

"Nay," said Lady Emily, "I will leave Evandale (and here he comes) to plead his own cause."

"Stay, stay, for God's sake!" said Edith, endeavouring to detain her.

"Not I, not I," said the young lady, making her escape; "the third person makes a silly figure on such occasions. When you want me for breakfast, I will be found in the willow-walk by the river."

As she tripped out of the room, Lord Evandale entered. "Good-morrow, Brother, and good-by till breakfast-time," said the lively young lady; "I trust you will give Miss Bellenden some good reasons for disturbing her rest so early in the morning."

And so saying, she left them together, without waiting a reply.

"And now, my lord," said Edith, "may I desire to know the meaning of your singular request to meet you here at so early an hour?"

She was about to add that she hardly felt herself excusable in having complied with it; but upon looking at the person whom she addressed, she was struck dumb by the singular and agitated expression of his countenance, and interrupted herself to exclaim, "For God's sake, what is the matter?"

"His Majesty's faithful subjects have gained a great and most decisive victory near Blair of Athole; but, alas! my gallant friend Lord Dundee—"

"Has fallen?" said Edith, anticipating the rest of his tidings.

"True, most true: he has fallen in the arms of victory, and not a man remains of talents and influence sufficient to fill up his loss in King James's service. This, Edith, is no time for temporizing with our duty. I have given directions to raise my followers, and I must take leave of you this evening."

"Do not think of it, my lord," answered Edith; "your life is—essential to your friends,—do not throw it away in an adventure so rash. What can your single arm, and the few tenants or servants who might follow you, do against the force of almost all Scotland, the Highland clans only excepted?"

"Listen to me, Edith," said Lord Evandale. "I am not so rash as you may suppose me, nor are my present motives of such light importance as to affect only those personally dependent on myself. The Life Guards, with whom I served so long, although new-modelled and new-officered by the Prince of Orange, retain a predilection for the cause of their rightful master; and"—and here he whispered as if he feared even the walls of the apartment had ears—"when my foot is known to be in the stirrup, two regiments of cavalry have sworn to renounce the usurper's service, and fight under my orders. They delayed only till Dundee should descend into the Lowlands; but since he is no more, which of his successors dare take that decisive step, unless encouraged by the troops declaring themselves! Meantime, the zeal of the soldiers will die away. I must bring them to a decision while their hearts are glowing with the victory their old leader has obtained, and burning to avenge his untimely death."

"And will you, on the faith of such men as you know these soldiers to be," said Edith, "take a part of such dreadful moment?"

"I will," said Lord Evandale,—"I must; my honour and loyalty are both pledged for it."

"And all for the sake," continued Miss Bellenden, "of a prince whose measures, while he was on the throne, no one could condemn more than Lord Evandale?"

"Most true," replied Lord Evandale; "and as I resented, even during the plenitude of his power, his innovations on Church and State, like a freeborn subject, I am determined I will assert his real rights, when he is in adversity, like a loyal one. Let courtiers and sycophants flatter power and desert misfortune; I will neither do the one nor the other."

"And if you are determined to act what my feeble judgment must still term rashly, why give yourself the pain of this untimely meeting?"

"Were it not enough to answer," said Lord Evandale, "that, ere rushing on battle, I wished to bid adieu to my betrothed bride? Surely it is judging coldly of my feelings, and showing too plainly the indifference of your own, to question my motive for a request so natural."

"But why in this place, my lord," said Edith; "and why with such peculiar circumstances of mystery?"

"Because," he replied, putting a letter into her hand, "I have yet another request, which I dare hardly proffer, even when prefaced by these credentials."

In haste and terror, Edith glanced over the letter, which was from her grandmother.

"My dearest childe," such was its tenor in style and spelling, "I never more deeply regretted the reumatism, which disqualified me from riding on horseback, than at this present writing, when I would most have wished to be where this paper will soon be, that is at Fairy Knowe, with my poor dear Willie's only child. But it is the will of God I should not be with her, which I conclude to be the case, as much for the pain I now suffer, as because it hath now not given way either to cammornile poultices or to decoction of wild mustard, wherewith I have often relieved others. Therefore, I must tell you, by writing instead of word of mouth, that, as my young Lord Evandale is called to the present campaign, both by his honour and his duty, he hath earnestly solicited me that the bonds of holy matrimony be knitted before his departure to the wars between you and him, in implement of the indenture formerly entered into for that effect, whereuntill, as I see no reasonable objection, so I trust that you, who have been always a good and obedient childe, will not devise any which has less than reason. It is true that the contrax of our house have heretofore been celebrated in a manner more befitting our Rank, and not in private, and with few witnesses, as a thing done in a corner. But it has been Heaven's own free will, as well as those of the kingdom where we live, to take away from us our estate, and from the King his throne. Yet I trust He will yet restore the rightful heir to the throne, and turn his heart to the true Protestant Episcopal faith, which I have the better right to expect to see even with my old eyes, as I have beheld the royal family when they were struggling as sorely with masterful usurpers and rebels as they are now; that is to say, when his most sacred Majesty, Charles the Second of happy memory, honoured our poor house of Tillietudlem by taking his disjune therein," etc., etc., etc.

We will not abuse the reader's patience by quoting more of Lady Margaret's prolix epistle. Suffice it to say that it closed by laying her commands on her grandchild to consent to the solemnization of her marriage without loss of time.

"I never thought till this instant," said Edith, dropping the letter from her hand, "that Lord Evandale would have acted ungenerously."

"Ungenerously, Edith!" replied her lover. "And how can you apply such a term to my desire to call you mine, ere I part from you, perhaps for ever?"

"Lord Evandale ought to have remembered," said Edith, "that when his perseverance, and, I must add, a due sense of his merit and of the obligations we owed him, wrung from me a slow consent that I would one day comply with his wishes, I made it my condition that I should not be pressed to a hasty accomplishment of my promise; and now he avails himself of his interest with my only remaining relative to hurry me with precipitate and even indelicate importunity. There is more selfishness than generosity, my lord, in such eager and urgent solicitation."

Lord Evandale, evidently much hurt, took two or three turns through the apartment ere he replied to this accusation; at length he spoke: "I should have escaped this painful charge, durst I at once have mentioned to Miss Bellenden my principal reason for urging this request. It is one which she will probably despise on her own account, but which ought to weigh with her for the sake of Lady Margaret. My death in battle must give my whole estate to my heirs of entail; my forfeiture as a traitor, by the usurping Government, may vest it in the Prince of Orange or some Dutch favourite. In either case, my venerable friend and betrothed bride must remain unprotected and in poverty. Vested with the rights and provisions of Lady Evandale, Edith will find, in the power of supporting her aged parent, some consolation for having condescended to share the titles and fortunes of one who does not pretend to be worthy of her."

Edith was struck dumb by an argument which she had not expected, and was compelled to acknowledge that Lord Evandale's suit was urged with delicacy as well as with consideration.

"And yet," she said, "such is the waywardness with which my heart reverts to former times that I cannot," she burst into tears, "suppress a degree of ominous reluctance at fulfilling my engagement upon such a brief summons."

"We have already fully considered this painful subject," said Lord Evandale; "and I hoped, my dear Edith, your own inquiries, as well as mine, had fully convinced you that these regrets were fruitless."

"Fruitless indeed!" said Edith, with a deep sigh, which, as if by an unexpected echo, was repeated from the adjoining apartment. Miss Bellenden started at the sound, and scarcely composed herself upon Lord Evandale's assurances that she had heard but the echo of her own respiration.

"It sounded strangely distinct," she said, "and almost ominous; but my feelings are so harassed that the slightest trifle agitates them."

Lord Evandale eagerly attempted to soothe her alarm, and reconcile her to a measure which, however hasty, appeared to him the only means by which he could secure her independence. He urged his claim in virtue of the contract, her grandmother's wish and command, the propriety of insuring her comfort and independence, and touched lightly on his own long attachment, which he had evinced by so many and such various services. These Edith felt the more, the less they were insisted upon; and at length, as she had nothing to oppose to his ardour, excepting a causeless reluctance which she herself was ashamed to oppose against so much generosity, she was compelled to rest upon the impossibility of having the ceremony performed upon such hasty notice, at such a time and place. But for all this Lord Evandale was prepared, and he explained, with joyful alacrity, that the former chaplain of his regiment was in attendance at the Lodge with a faithful domestic, once a non-commissioned officer in the same corps; that his sister was also possessed of the secret; and that Headrigg and his wife might be added to the list of witnesses, if agreeable to Miss Bellenden. As to the place, he had chosen it on very purpose. The marriage was to remain a secret, since Lord Evandale was to depart in disguise very soon after it was solemnized,—a circumstance which, had their union been public, must have drawn upon him the attention of the Government, as being altogether unaccountable, unless from his being engaged in some dangerous design. Having hastily urged these motives and explained his arrangements, he ran, without waiting for an answer, to summon his sister to attend his bride, while he went in search of the other persons whose presence was necessary. When Lady Emily arrived, she found her friend in an agony of tears, of which she was at some loss to comprehend the reason, being one of those damsels who think there is nothing either wonderful or terrible in matrimony, and joining with most who knew him in thinking that it could not be rendered peculiarly alarming by Lord Evandale being the bridegroom. Influenced by these feelings, she exhausted in succession all the usual arguments for courage, and all the expressions of sympathy and condolence ordinarily employed on such occasions. But when Lady Emily beheld her future sister-in-law deaf to all those ordinary topics of consolation; when she beheld tears follow fast and without intermission down cheeks as pale as marble; when she felt that the hand

which she pressed in order to enforce her arguments turned cold within her grasp, and lay, like that of a corpse, insensible and unresponsive to her caresses, her feelings of sympathy gave way to those of hurt pride and pettish displeasure.

"I must own," she said, "that I am something at a loss to understand all this, Miss Bellenden. Months have passed since you agreed to marry my brother, and you have postponed the fulfilment of your engagement from one period to another, as if you had to avoid some dishonourable or highly disagreeable connection. I think I can answer for Lord Evandale that he will seek no woman's hand against her inclination; and, though his sister, I may boldly say that he does not need to urge any lady further than her inclinations carry her. You will forgive me, Miss Bellenden; but your present distress augurs ill for my brother's future happiness, and I must needs say that he does not merit all these expressions of dislike and dolour, and that they seem an odd return for an attachment which he has manifested so long, and in so many ways."

"You are right, Lady Emily," said Edith, drying her eyes and endeavouring to resume her natural manner, though still betrayed by her faltering voice and the paleness of her cheeks,—“you are quite right; Lord Evandale merits such usage from no one, least of all from her whom he has honoured with his regard. But if I have given way, for the last time, to a sudden and irresistible burst of feeling, it is my consolation, Lady Emily, that your brother knows the cause, that I have hid nothing from him, and that he at least is not apprehensive of finding in Edith Bellenden a wife undeserving of his affection. But still you are right, and I merit your censure for indulging for a moment fruitless regret and painful remembrances. It shall be so no longer; my lot is cast with Evandale, and with him I am resolved to bear it. Nothing shall in future occur to excite his complaints or the resentment of his relations; no idle recollections of other days shall intervene to prevent the zealous and affectionate discharge of my duty; no vain illusions recall the memory of other days—”

As she spoke these words, she slowly raised her eyes, which had before been hidden by her hand, to the latticed window of her apartment, which was partly open, uttered a dismal shriek, and fainted. Lady Emily turned her eyes in the same direction, but saw only the shadow of a man, which seemed to disappear from the window, and, terrified more by the state of Edith than by the apparition she had herself witnessed, she uttered shriek upon shriek for assistance. Her brother soon arrived, with the chaplain and Jenny Dennison; but strong and vigorous remedies were necessary ere they could recall Miss Bellenden to sense and motion. Even then her language was wild and incoherent.

"Press me no farther," she said to Lord Evandale,—“it cannot be; Heaven and earth, the living and the dead, have leagued themselves against this ill-omened union. Take all I can give,—my sisterly regard, my devoted friendship. I will love you as a sister and serve you as a bondswoman, but never speak to me more of marriage."

The astonishment of Lord Evandale may easily be conceived. "Emily," he said to his sister, "this is your doing. I was accursed when I thought of bringing you here; some of your confounded folly has driven her mad!"

"On my word, Brother," answered Lady Emily, "you're sufficient to drive all the women in Scotland mad. Because your mistress seems much disposed to jilt you, you quarrel with your sister, who has been arguing in your cause, and had brought her to a quiet hearing, when, all of a sudden, a man looked in at a window, whom her crazed sensibility mistook either for you or some one else, and has treated us gratis with an excellent tragic scene."

"What man? What window?" said Lord Evandale, in impatient displeasure. "Miss Bellenden is incapable of trifling with me; and yet what else could have—"

"Hush! hush!" said Jenny, whose interest lay particularly in shifting further inquiry; "for Heaven's sake, my lord, speak low, for my lady begins to recover."

Edith was no sooner somewhat restored to herself than she begged, in a feeble voice, to be left alone with Lord Evandale. All retreated,—Jenny with her usual air of officious simplicity, Lady Emily and the chaplain with that of awakened curiosity. No sooner had they left the apartment than Edith beckoned Lord Evandale to sit beside her on the couch; her next motion was to take his hand, in spite of his surprised resistance, to her lips; her last was to sink from her seat and to clasp his knees. "Forgive me, my lord!" she exclaimed, "forgive me! I must deal most untruly by you, and break a solemn engagement. You have my friendship, my highest regard, my most sincere gratitude; you have more,—you have my word and my faith; but—oh, forgive me, for the fault is not mine—you have not my love, and I cannot marry you without a sin!"

"You dream, my dearest Edith!" said Evandale, perplexed in the utmost degree, "you let your imagination beguile you; this is but some delusion of an over-sensitive mind. The person whom you preferred to me has been long in a better world, where your unavailing regret cannot follow him, or, if it could, would only diminish his happiness."

"You are mistaken, Lord Evandale," said Edith, solemnly; "I am not a sleep-walker or a madwoman. No, I could not have believed from any one what I have seen. But, having seen him, I must believe mine own eyes."

"Seen him,—seen whom?" asked Lord Evandale, in great anxiety.

"Henry Morton," replied Edith, uttering these two words as if they were her last, and very nearly fainting when she had done so.

"Miss Bellenden," said Lord Evandale, "you treat me like a fool or a child. If you repent your engagement to me," he continued, indignantly, "I am not a man to enforce it against your inclination; but deal with me as a man, and forbear this trifling."

He was about to go on, when he perceived, from her quivering eye and pallid cheek, that nothing less than imposture was intended, and that by whatever means her imagination had been so impressed, it was really disturbed by unaffected awe and terror. He changed his tone, and exerted all his eloquence in endeavouring to soothe and extract from her the secret cause of such terror.

"I saw him!" she repeated,—“I saw Henry Morton stand at that window, and look into the apartment at the moment I was on the point of abjuring him for ever. His face was darker, thinner, and paler than it was wont to be; his dress was a horseman's cloak, and hat looped down over his face; his expression was like that he wore on that dreadful morning when he was examined by Claverhouse at Tillietudlem. Ask your sister, ask Lady Emily, if she did not see him as well as I. I know what has called him up,—he came to upbraid me, that, while my heart was with him in the deep and dead sea, I was about to give my hand to another. My lord, it is ended between you and me; be the consequences what they will, she cannot marry whose union disturbs the repose of the dead."

"Good Heaven!" said Evandale, as he paced the room, half mad himself with surprise and vexation, "her fine understanding must be totally overthrown, and that by the effort which she has made to comply with my ill-timed, though well-meant, request. Without rest and attention her health is ruined for ever."

At this moment the door opened, and Halliday, who had been Lord Evandale's principal personal attendant since they both left the Guards on the Revolution, stumbled into the room with a countenance as pale and ghastly as terror could paint it.

"What is the matter next, Halliday?" cried his master, starting up. "Any discovery of the—"

He had just recollection sufficient to stop short in the midst of the dangerous sentence.

"No, sir," said Halliday, "it is not that, nor anything like that; but I have seen a ghost!"

"A ghost, you eternal idiot!" said Lord Evandale, forced altogether out of his patience. "Has all mankind sworn to go mad in order to drive me so? What ghost, you simpleton?"

"The ghost of Henry Morton, the Whig captain at Bothwell Bridge," replied Halliday. "He passed by me like a fire-flaught when I was in the garden!"

"This is midsummer madness," said Lord Evandale, "or there is some strange villainy afloat. Jenny, attend your lady to her chamber, while I endeavour to find a clue to all this."

But Lord Evandale's inquiries were in vain. Jenny, who might have given (had she chosen) a very satisfactory explanation, had an interest to leave the matter in darkness; and interest was a matter which now weighed principally with Jenny, since the possession of an active and affectionate husband in her own proper right had altogether allayed her spirit of coquetry. She had made the best use of the first moments of confusion hastily to remove all traces of any one having slept in the apartment adjoining to the parlour, and even to erase the mark of footsteps beneath the window, through which she conjectured Morton's face had been seen, while attempting, ere he left the garden, to gain one look at her whom he had so long loved, and was now on the point of losing for ever. That he had passed Halliday in the garden was equally clear; and she learned from her elder boy, whom she had employed to have the stranger's horse saddled and ready for his

departure, that he had rushed into the stable, thrown the child a broad gold piece, and, mounting his horse, had ridden with fearful rapidity down towards the Clyde. The secret was, therefore, in their own family, and Jenny was resolved it should remain so.

"For, to be sure," she said, "although her lady and Halliday kens Mr. Morton by broad daylight, that was nae reason I suld own to kenning him in the gloaming and by candlelight, and him keeping his face frae Cuddie and me a' the time."

So she stood resolutely upon the negative when examined by Lord Evandale. As for Halliday, he could only say that as he entered the garden-door, the supposed apparition met him, walking swiftly, and with a visage on which anger and grief appeared to be contending.

"He knew him well," he said, "having been repeatedly guard upon him, and obliged to write down his marks of stature and visage in case of escape. And there were few faces like Mr. Morton's." But what should make him haunt the country where he was neither hanged nor shot, he, the said Halliday, did not pretend to conceive.

Lady Emily confessed she had seen the face of a man at the window, but her evidence went no farther. John Gudyill deponed *nil novit in causa*. He had left his gardening to get his morning dram just at the time when the apparition had taken place. Lady Emily's servant was waiting orders in the kitchen, and there was not another being within a quarter of a mile of the house.

Lord Evandale returned perplexed and dissatisfied in the highest degree at beholding a plan which he thought necessary not less for the protection of Edith in contingent circumstances, than for the assurance of his own happiness, and which he had brought so very near perfection, thus broken off without any apparent or rational cause. His knowledge of Edith's character set her beyond the suspicion of covering any capricious change of determination by a pretended vision. But he would have set the apparition down to the influence of an overstrained imagination, agitated by the circumstances in which she had so suddenly been placed, had it not been for the coinciding testimony of Halliday, who had no reason for thinking of Morton more than any other person, and knew nothing of Miss Bellenden's vision when he promulgated his own. On the other hand, it seemed in the highest degree improbable that Morton, so long and so vainly sought after, and who was, with such good reason, supposed to be lost when the "Vryheid" of Rotterdam went down with crew and passengers, should be alive and lurking in this country, where there was no longer any reason why he should not openly show himself, since the present Government favoured his party in politics. When Lord Evandale reluctantly brought himself to communicate these doubts to the chaplain, in order to obtain his opinion, he could only obtain a long lecture on demonology, in which, after quoting Delrio and Burthoog and De L'Ancre on the subject of apparitions, together with sundry civilians and common lawyers on the nature of testimony, the learned gentleman expressed his definite and determined opinion to be, either that there had been an actual apparition of the deceased Henry Morton's spirit, the possibility of which he was, as a divine and a philosopher, neither fully prepared to admit or to deny; or else that the said Henry Morton, being still in *rerum natura*, had appeared in his proper person that morning; or, finally, that some strong *deceptio visus*, or striking similitude of person, had deceived the eyes of Miss Bellenden and of Thomas Halliday. Which of these was the most probable hypothesis, the doctor declined to pronounce, but expressed himself ready to die in the opinion that one or other of them had occasioned that morning's disturbance.

Lord Evandale soon had additional cause for distressful anxiety. Miss Bellenden was declared to be dangerously ill.

"I will not leave this place," he exclaimed, "till she is pronounced to be in safety. I neither can nor ought to do so; for whatever may have been the immediate occasion of her illness, I gave the first cause for it by my unhappy solicitation."

He established himself, therefore, as a guest in the family, which the presence of his sister, as well as of Lady Margaret Bellenden (who, in despite of her rheumatism, caused herself to be transported thither when she heard of her granddaughter's illness), rendered a step equally natural and delicate. And thus he anxiously awaited until, without injury to her health, Edith could sustain a final explanation ere his departure on his expedition.

"She shall never," said the generous young man, "look on her engagement with me as the means of fettering her to a union, the idea of which seems almost to unhinge her understanding."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shades!

Ah, fields beloved in vain!

Where once my careless childhood strayed,

A stranger yet to pain.

Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.

It is not by corporal wants and infirmities only that men of the most distinguished talents are levelled, during their lifetime, with the common mass of mankind. There are periods of mental agitation when the firmest of mortals must be ranked with the weakest of his brethren, and when, in paying the general tax of humanity, his distresses are even aggravated by feeling that he transgresses, in the indulgence of his grief, the rules of religion and philosophy by which he endeavours in general to regulate his passions and his actions. It was during such a paroxysm that the unfortunate Morton left Fairy Knowe. To know that his long-loved and still-beloved Edith, whose image had filled his mind for so many years, was on the point of marriage to his early rival, who had laid claim to her heart by so many services as hardly left her a title to refuse his addresses, bitter as the intelligence was, yet came not as an unexpected blow.

During his residence abroad he had once written to Edith. It was to bid her farewell for ever, and to conjure her to forget him. He had requested her not to answer his letter; yet he half hoped, for many a day, that she might transgress his injunction. The letter never reached her to whom it was addressed, and Morton, ignorant of its miscarriage, could only conclude himself laid aside and forgotten, according to his own self-denying request. All that he had heard of their mutual relations since his return to Scotland prepared him to expect that he could only look upon Miss Bellenden as the betrothed bride of Lord Evandale; and even if freed from the burden of obligation to the latter, it would still have been inconsistent with Morton's generosity of disposition to disturb their arrangements, by attempting the assertion of a claim proscribed by absence, never sanctioned by the consent of friends, and barred by a thousand circumstances of difficulty. Why then did he seek the cottage which their broken fortunes had now rendered the retreat of Lady Margaret Bellenden and her granddaughter? He yielded, we are under the necessity of acknowledging, to the impulse of an inconsistent wish which many might have felt in his situation.

Accident apprised him, while travelling towards his native district, that the ladies, near whose mansion he must necessarily pass, were absent; and learning that Cuddie and his wife acted as their principal domestics, he could not resist pausing at their cottage to learn, if possible, the real progress which Lord Evandale had made in the affections of Miss Bellen den—alas! no longer his Edith. This rash experiment ended as we have related, and he parted from the house of Fairy Knowe, conscious that he was still beloved by Edith, yet compelled, by faith and honour, to relinquish her for ever. With what feelings he must have listened to the dialogue between Lord Evandale and Edith, the greater part of which he involuntarily overheard, the reader must conceive, for we dare not attempt to describe them. An hundred times he was tempted to burst upon their interview, or to exclaim aloud, "Edith, I yet live!" and as often the recollection of her plighted troth, and of the debt of gratitude which he owed Lord Evandale (to whose influence with Claverhouse he justly ascribed his escape from torture and from death), withheld him from a rashness which might indeed have involved all in further distress, but gave little prospect of forwarding his own happiness. He repressed forcibly these selfish emotions, though with an agony which thrilled his every nerve.

"No, Edith!" was his internal oath, "never will I add a thorn to thy pillow. That which Heaven has ordained, let it be; and let me not add, by my selfish sorrows, one atom's weight to the burden thou hast to bear. I was dead to thee when thy resolution was adopted; and never, never shalt thou know that Henry Morton still lives!"

As he formed this resolution, diffident of his own power to keep it, and seeking that firmness in flight which was every moment shaken by his continuing within hearing of Edith's voice, he hastily rushed from his apartment by the little closet and the sashed door which led to the garden.

But firmly as he thought his resolution was fixed, he could not leave the spot where the last tones of a voice so beloved still vibrated on his ear, without endeavouring to avail himself of the opportunity which the parlour window afforded to steal one last glance at the lovely speaker. It was in this attempt, made while Edith seemed to have her eyes unalterably bent upon the ground, that Morton's presence was detected by her raising them suddenly. So soon as her wild scream made this known to the unfortunate object of a passion so constant, and which seemed so ill-fated, he hurried from the place as if pursued by the furies. He passed Halliday in the garden without recognising or even being sensible that he had seen him, threw himself on his horse, and, by a sort of instinct rather than recollection, took the first by-road in preference to the public route to Hamilton.

In all probability this prevented Lord Evandale from learning that he was actually in existence; for the news that the Highlanders had obtained a decisive victory at Killiecrankie had occasioned an accurate look-out to be kept, by order of the Government, on all the passes, for fear of some commotion among the Lowland Jacobites. They did not omit to post sentinels on Bothwell Bridge; and as these men had not seen any traveller pass westward in that direction, and as, besides, their comrades stationed in the village of Bothwell were equally positive that none had gone eastward, the apparition, in the existence of which Edith and Halliday were equally positive, became yet more mysterious in the judgment of Lord Evandale, who was finally inclined to settle in the belief that the heated and disturbed imagination of Edith had summoned up the phantom she stated herself to have seen, and that Halliday had, in some unaccountable manner, been infected by the same superstition. Meanwhile, the by-path which Morton pursued, with all the speed which his vigorous horse could exert, brought him in a very few seconds to the brink of the Clyde, at a spot marked with the feet of horses, who were conducted to it as a watering-place. The steed, urged as he was to the gallop, did not pause a single instant, but, throwing himself into the river, was soon beyond his depth. The plunge which the animal made as his feet quitted the ground, with the feeling that the cold water rose above his swordbelt, were the first incidents which recalled Morton, whose movements had been hitherto mechanical, to the necessity of taking measures for preserving himself and the noble animal which he bestrode. A perfect master of all manly exercises, the management of a horse in water was as familiar to him as when upon a meadow. He directed the animal's course somewhat down the stream towards a low plain, or holm, which seemed to promise an easy egress from the river. In the first and second attempt to get on shore, the horse was frustrated by the nature of the ground, and nearly fell backwards on his rider. The instinct of self-preservation seldom fails, even in the most desperate circumstances, to recall the human mind to some degree of equipoise, unless when altogether distracted by terror, and Morton was obliged to the danger in which he was placed for complete recovery of his self-possession. A third attempt, at a spot more carefully and judiciously selected, succeeded better than the former, and placed the horse and his rider in safety upon the farther and left-hand bank of the Clyde.

"But whither," said Morton, in the bitterness of his heart, "am I now to direct my course? or rather, what does it signify to which point of the compass a wretch so forlorn betakes himself? I would to God, could the wish be without a sin, that these dark waters had flowed over me, and drowned my recollection of that which was, and that which is!" The sense of impatience, which the disturbed state of his feelings had occasioned, scarcely had vented itself in these violent expressions, ere he was struck with shame at having given way to such a paroxysm. He remembered how signally the life which he now held so lightly in the bitterness of his disappointment had been preserved through the almost incessant perils which had beset him since he entered upon his public career.

"I am a fool!" he said, "and worse than a fool, to set light by that existence which Heaven has so often preserved in the most marvellous manner. Something there yet remains for me in this world, were it only to bear my sorrows like a man, and to aid those who need my assistance. What have I seen, what have I heard, but the very conclusion of that which I knew was to happen? They"—he durst not utter their names even in soliloquy—"they are embarrassed and in difficulties. She is stripped of her inheritance, and he seems rushing on some dangerous career, with which, but for the low voice in which he spoke, I might have become acquainted. Are there no means to aid or to warn them?"

As he pondered upon this topic, forcibly withdrawing his mind from his own disappointment, and compelling his attention to the affairs of Edith and her betrothed husband, the letter of Burley, long forgotten, suddenly rushed on his memory, like a ray of light darting through a mist. "Their ruin must have been his work," was his internal conclusion. "If it can be repaired, it must be through his means, or by information obtained from him. I will search him out. Stern, crafty, and enthusiastic as he is, my plain and downright rectitude of purpose has more than once prevailed with him. I will seek him out, at least; and who knows what influence the information I may acquire from him may have on the fortunes of those whom I shall never see more, and who will probably never learn that I am now suppressing my own grief, to add, if possible, to their happiness."

Animated by these hopes, though the foundation was but slight, he sought the nearest way to the high-road; and as all the tracks through the valley were known to him since he hunted through them in youth, he had no other difficulty than that of surmounting one or two enclosures, ere he found himself on the road to the small burgh where the feast of the popinjay had been celebrated. He journeyed in a state of mind sad indeed and dejected, yet relieved from its earlier and more intolerable state of anguish; for virtuous resolution and manly disinterestedness seldom fail to restore tranquillity even where they cannot create happiness. He turned his thoughts with strong effort upon the means of discovering Burley, and the chance there was of extracting from him any knowledge which he might possess favourable to her in whose cause he interested himself; and at length formed the resolution of guiding himself by the circumstances in which he might discover the object of his quest, trusting that, from Cuddie's account of a schism betwixt Burley and his brethren of the Presbyterian persuasion, he might find him less rancorously disposed against Miss Bellenden, and inclined to exert the power which he asserted himself to possess over her fortunes, more favourably than heretofore.

Noontide had passed away when our traveller found himself in the neighbourhood of his deceased uncle's habitation of Milnwood. It rose among glades and groves that were chequered with a thousand early recollections of joy and sorrow, and made upon Morton that mournful impression, soft and affecting, yet, withal, soothing, which the sensitive mind usually receives from a return to the haunts of childhood and early youth, after having experienced the vicissitudes and tempests of public life. A strong desire came upon him to visit the house itself. "Old Alison," he thought, "will not know me, more than the honest couple whom I saw yesterday. I may indulge my curiosity, and proceed on my journey, without her having any knowledge of my existence. I think they said my uncle had bequeathed to her my family mansion,—well, be it so. I have enough to sorrow for, to enable me to dispense with lamenting such a disappointment as that; and yet methinks he has chosen an odd successor in my grumbling old dame, to a line of respectable, if not distinguished, ancestry. Let it be as it may, I will visit the old mansion at least once more."

The house of Milnwood, even in its best days, had nothing cheerful about it; but its gloom appeared to be doubled under the auspices of the old housekeeper. Everything, indeed, was in repair; there were no slates deficient upon the steep grey roof, and no panes broken in the narrow windows. But the grass in the courtyard looked as if the foot of man had not been there for years; the doors were carefully locked, and that which admitted to the hall seemed to have been shut for a length of time, since the spiders had fairly drawn their webs over the door-way and the staples. Living sight or sound there was none, until, after much knocking, Morton heard the little window, through which it was usual to reconnoitre visitors, open with much caution. The face of Alison, puckered with some score of wrinkles in addition to those with which it was furrowed when Morton left Scotland, now presented itself, enveloped in a *toy*, from under the protection of which some of her grey tresses had escaped in a manner more picturesque than beautiful, while her shrill, tremulous voice demanded the cause of the knocking. "I wish to speak an instant with one Alison Wilson, who resides here," said Henry.

"She's no at hame the day," answered Mrs. Wilson, *in propria persona*, the state of whose headdress, perhaps, inspired her with this direct mode of denying herself; "and ye are but a mislear'd person to speer for her in sic a manner. Ye might hae had an M under your belt for Mistress Wilson of Milnwood."

"I beg pardon," said Morton, internally smiling at finding in old Ailie the same jealousy of disrespect which she used to exhibit upon former occasions,—"*I beg pardon; I am but a stranger in this country, and have been so long abroad that I have almost forgotten my own language.*" "*Did ye come frae foreign parts?*" said Ailie; "then maybe ye may hae heard of a young gentleman of this country that they ca' Henry Morton?"

"I have heard," said Morton, "of such a name in Germany."

"Then bide a wee bit where ye are, friend; or stay,—gang round by the back o' the house, and ye'll find a laigh door; it's on the latch, for it's never barred till sunset. Ye 'll open 't,—and tak care ye dinna fa' ower the tub, for the entry's dark,—and then ye'll turn to the right, and then ye'll hand straught forward, and then

ye'll turn to the right again, and ye 'll tak heed o' the cellarstairs, and then ye 'll be at the door o' the little kitchen,—it's a' the kitchen that's at Milnwood now,—and I'll come down t'ye, and whate'er ye wad say to Mistress Wilson ye may very safely tell it to me."

A stranger might have had some difficulty, notwithstanding the minuteness of the directions supplied by Ailie, to pilot himself in safety through the dark labyrinth of passages that led from the back-door to the little kitchen; but Henry was too well acquainted with the navigation of these straits to experience danger, either from the Scylla which lurked on one side in shape of a bucking tub, or the Charybdis which yawned on the other in the profundity of a winding cellar-stair. His only impediment arose from the snarling and vehement barking of a small cocking spaniel, once his own property, but which, unlike to the faithful Argus, saw his master return from his wanderings without any symptom of recognition.

"The little dogs and all!" said Morton to himself, on being disowned by his former favourite. "I am so changed that no breathing creature that I have known and loved will now acknowledge me!"

At this moment he had reached the kitchen; and soon after, the tread of Alison's high heels, and the pat of the crutch-handled cane which served at once to prop and to guide her footsteps, were heard upon the stairs,—an annunciation which continued for some time ere she fairly reached the kitchen.

Morton had, therefore, time to survey the slender preparations for housekeeping which were now sufficient in the house of his ancestors. The fire, though coals are plenty in that neighbourhood, was husbanded with the closest attention to economy of fuel, and the small pipkin, in which was preparing the dinner of the old woman and her maid-of-all-work, a girl of twelve years old, intimated, by its thin and watery vapour, that Ailie had not mended her cheer with her improved fortune. When she entered, the head, which nodded with self-importance; the features, in which an irritable peevishness, acquired by habit and indulgence, strove with a temper naturally affectionate and good-natured; the coif; the apron; the blue-checked gown,—were all those of old Ailie; but laced pinnners, hastily put on to meet the stranger, with some other trifling articles of decoration, marked the difference between Mrs. Wilson, life-rentrix of Milnwood, and the housekeeper of the late proprietor.

"What were ye pleased to want wi' Mrs. Wilson, sir? I am Mrs. Wilson," was her first address; for the five minutes time which she had gained for the business of the toilet entitled her, she conceived, to assume the full merit of her illustrious name, and shine forth on her guest in unchastened splendour. Morton's sensations, confounded between the past and present, fairly confused him so much that he would have had difficulty in answering her, even if he had known well what to say. But as he had not determined what character he was to adopt while concealing that which was properly his own, he had an additional reason for remaining silent. Mrs. Wilson, in perplexity, and with some apprehension, repeated her question.

"What were ye pleased to want wi' me, sir? Ye said ye kend Mr. Harry Morton?"

"Pardon me, madam," answered Henry, "it was of one Silas Morton I spoke." The old woman's countenance fell.

"It was his father, then, ye kent o', the brother o' the late Milnwood? Ye canna mind him abroad, I wad think,—he was come hame afore ye were born. I thought ye had brought me news of poor Maister Harry."

"It was from my father I learned to know Colonel Morton," said Henry; "of the son I know little or nothing,—rumour says he died abroad on his passage to Holland."

"That's ower like to be true," said the old woman with a sigh, "and mony a tear it's cost my auld een. His uncle, poor gentleman, just sough'd awa wi' it in his mouth. He had been gieing me preceezee directions anent the bread and the wine and the brandy at his burial, and how often it was to be handed round the company (for, dead or alive, he was a prudent, frugal, painstaking man), and then he said, said he, 'Ailie,' (he aye ca'd me Ailie; we were auld acquaintance), 'Ailie, take ye care and haud the gear weel thegither; for the name of Morton of Milnwood 's gane out like the last sough of an auld sang.' And sae he fell out o' ae dwam into another, and ne'er spak a word mair, unless it were something we cou'dna mak out, about a dipped candle being gude enOUGH to see to dee wi'. He cou'd ne'er bide to see a moulded ane, and there was ane, by ill luck, on the table."

While Mrs. Wilson was thus detailing the last moments of the old miser, Morton was pressingly engaged in diverting the assiduous curiosity of the dog, which, recovered from his first surprise, and combining former recollections, had, after much snuffing and examination, begun a course of capering and jumping upon the stranger which threatened every instant to betray him. At length, in the urgency of his impatience, Morton could not forbear exclaiming, in a tone of hasty impatience, "Down, Elphin! down, sir!"

"Ye ken our dog's name," said the old lady, struck with great and sudden surprise,—"ye ken our dog's name, and it's no a common ane. And the creature kens you too," she continued, in a more agitated and shriller tone,—"God guide us! it's my ain bairn!"

So saying, the poor old woman threw herself around Morton's neck, cling to him, kissed him as if he had been actually her child, and wept for joy. There was no parrying the discovery, if he could have had the heart to attempt any further disguise. He returned the embrace with the most grateful warmth, and answered,—

"I do indeed live, dear Ailie, to thank you for all your kindness, past and present, and to rejoice that there is at least one friend to welcome me to my native country."

"Friends!" exclaimed Ailie, "ye'll hae mony friends,—ye 'll hae mony friends; for ye will hae gear, hinny,—ye will hae gear. Heaven mak ye a gude guide o't! But eh, sirs!" she continued, pushing him back from her with her trembling hand and shrivelled arm, and gazing in his face as if to read, at more convenient distance, the ravages which sorrow rather than time had made on his face,—"Eh, sirs! ye're sair altered, hinny; your face is turned pale, and your een are sunken, and your bonny red-and-white cheeks are turned a' dark and sun-burnt. Oh, weary on the wars! mony 's the comely face they destroy.—And when cam ye here, hinny? And where hae ye been? And what hae ye been doing? And what for did ye na write to us? And how cam ye to pass yoursell for dead? And what for did ye come creepin' to your ain house as if ye had been an unto body, to gie poor auld Ailie sic a start?" she concluded, smiling through her tears. It was some time ere Morton could overcome his own emotion so as to give the kind old woman the information which we shall communicate to our readers in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

*Aumerle that was,
But that is gone for being Richard's friend;
And, madam, you must call him Rutland now.
Richard II.*

The scene of explanation was hastily removed from the little kitchen to Mrs. Wilson's own matted room,—the very same which she had occupied as housekeeper, and which she continued to retain. "It was," she said, "better secured against sifting winds than the hall, which she had found dangerous to her rheumatisms, and it was more fitting for her use than the late Milnwood's apartment, honest man, which gave her sad thoughts;" and as for the great oak parlour, it was never opened but to be aired, washed, and dusted, according to the invariable practice of the family, unless upon their most solemn festivals. In the matted room, therefore, they were settled, surrounded by pickle-pots and conserves of all kinds, which the ci-devant housekeeper continued to compound, out of mere habit, although neither she herself, nor any one else, ever partook of the comfits which she so regularly prepared.

Morton, adapting his narrative to the comprehension of his auditor, informed her briefly of the wreck of the vessel and the loss of all hands, excepting two or three common seamen who had early secured the skiff, and were just putting off from the vessel when he leaped from the deck into their boat, and unexpectedly, as well as contrary to their inclination, made himself partner of their voyage and of their safety. Landed at Flushing, he was fortunate enough to meet with an old officer who had been in service with his father. By his advice, he shunned going immediately to the Hague, but forwarded his letters to the court of the Stadtholder. "Our prince," said the veteran, "must as yet keep terms with his father-in-law and with your King Charles; and to approach him in the character of a Scottish malecontent would render it imprudent for him to distinguish you by his favour. Wait, therefore, his orders, without forcing yourself on his notice; observe the

strictest prudence and retirement; assume for the present a different name; shun the company of the British exiles; and, depend upon it, you will not repent your prudence."

The old friend of Silas Morton argued justly. After a considerable time had elapsed, the Prince of Orange, in a progress through the United States, came to the town where Morton, impatient at his situation and the incognito which he was obliged to observe, still continued, nevertheless, to be a resident. He had an hour of private interview assigned, in which the prince expressed himself highly pleased with his intelligence, his prudence, and the liberal view which he seemed to take of the factions of his native country, their motives and their purposes.

"I would gladly," said William, "attach you to my own person; but that cannot be without giving offence in England. But I will do as much for you, as well out of respect for the sentiments you have expressed, as for the recommendations you have brought me. Here is a commission in a Swiss regiment at present in garrison in a distant province, where you will meet few or none of your countrymen. Continue to be Captain Melville, and let the name of Morton sleep till better days."

"Thus began my fortune," continued Morton; "and my services have, on various occasions, been distinguished by his Royal Highness, until the moment that brought him to Britain as our political deliverer. His commands must excuse my silence to my few friends in Scotland; and I wonder not at the report of my death, considering the wreck of the vessel, and that I found no occasion to use the letters of exchange with which I was furnished by the liberality of some of them,—a circumstance which must have confirmed the belief that I had perished."

"But, dear hinny," asked Mrs. Wilson, "did ye find nae Scotch body at the Prince of Oranger's court that kend ye? I wad hae thought Morton o' Milnwood was kend a' through the country."

"I was purposely engaged in distant service," said Morton, "until a period when few, without as deep and kind a motive of interest as yours, Ailie, would have known the stripling Morton in Major-General Melville."

"Malville was your mother's name," said Mrs. Wilson; "but Morton sounds far bonnier in my auld lugs. And when ye tak up the lairdship, ye maun tak the auld name and designation again."

"I am like to be in no haste to do either the one or the other, Ailie, for I have some reasons for the present to conceal my being alive from every one but you; and as for the lairdship of Milnwood, it is in as good hands."

"As gude hands, hinny!" re-echoed Ailie; "I'm hopefu' ye are no meaning mine? The rents and the lands are but a sair fash to me. And I'm ower failed to tak a helpmate, though Wylie Mactrickit the writer was very pressing, and spak very civilly; but I 'm ower auld a cat to draw that strae before me. He canna whilliwaw me as he's dune mony a ane. And then I thought aye ye wad come back, and I wad get my pickle meal and my soup milk, and keep a' things right about ye as I used to do in your puir uncle's time, and it wad be just pleasure eneugh for me to see ye thrive and guide the gear canny. Ye'll hae learned that in Holland, I'se warrant, for they're thrifty folk there, as I hear tell.—But ye'll be for keeping rather a mair house than puir auld Milnwood that's gave; and, indeed, I would approve o' your eating butchermeat maybe as often as three times a-week,—it keeps the wind out o' the stamack."

"We will talk of all this another time," said Morton, surprised at the generosity upon a large scale which mingled in Ailie's thoughts and actions with habitual and sordid parsimony, and at the odd contrast between her love of saving and indifference to self-acquisition. "You must know," he continued, "that I am in this country only for a few days on some special business of importance to the Government, and therefore, Ailie, not a word of having seen me. At some other time I will acquaint you fully with my motives and intentions."

"E'en be it sae, my jo," replied Ailie, "I can keep a secret like my neighbours; and weel auld Milnwood kend it, honest man, for he tauld me where he keepit his gear, and that's what maist folk like to hae as private as possibly may be.—But come awa wi' me, hinny, till I show ye the oak-parlour how grandly it's keepit, just as if ye had been expected haine every day,—I loot naeboddy sort it but my ain hands. It was a kind o' divertisement to me, though whiles the tear wan into my ee, and I said to mysell, What needs I fash wi' grates and carpets and cushions and the muckle brass candlesticks ony mair? for they'll ne'er come hame that aught it rightfully."

With these words she hauled him away to this sanctum sanctorum, the scrubbing and cleaning whereof was her daily employment, as its high state of good order constituted the very pride of her heart. Morton, as he followed her into the room, underwent a rebuke for not "dighting his shune," which showed that Ailie had not relinquished her habits of authority. On entering the oak-parlour he could not but recollect the feelings of solemn awe with which, when a boy, he had been affected at his occasional and rare admission to an apartment which he then supposed had not its equal save in the halls of princes. It may be readily supposed that the worked-worsted chairs, with their short ebony legs and long upright backs, had lost much of their influence over his mind; that the large brass andirons seemed diminished in splendour; that the green worsted tapestry appeared no masterpiece of the Arras loom; and that the room looked, on the whole, dark, gloomy, and disconsolate. Yet there were two objects, "The counterfeit presentment of two brothers," which, dissimilar as those described by Hamlet, affected his mind with a variety of sensations. One full-length portrait represented his father in complete armour, with a countenance indicating his masculine and determined character; and the other set forth his uncle, in velvet and brocade, looking as if he were ashamed of his own finery, though entirely indebted for it to the liberality of the painter.

"It was an idle fancy," Ailie said, "to dress the honest auld man in thae expensive fal-lalls that he ne'er wore in his life, instead o' his douce Raploch grey, and his band wi' the narrow edging."

In private, Morton could not help being much of her opinion; for anything approaching to the dress of a gentleman sate as ill on the ungainly person of his relative as an open or generous expression would have done on his mean and money-making features. He now extricated himself from Ailie to visit some of his haunts in the neighbouring wood, while her own hands made an addition to the dinner she was preparing,—an incident no otherwise remarkable than as it cost the life of a fowl, which, for any event of less importance than the arrival of Henry Morton, might have cackled on to a good old age ere Ailie could have been guilty of the extravagance of killing and dressing it. The meal was seasoned by talk of old times and by the plans which Ailie laid out for futurity, in which she assigned her young master all the prudential habits of her old one, and planned out the dexterity with which she was to exercise her duty as governante. Morton let the old woman enjoy her day-dreams and castle-building during moments of such pleasure, and deferred till some fitter occasion the communication of his purpose again to return and spend his life upon the Continent.

His next care was to lay aside his military dress, which he considered likely to render more difficult his researches after Burley. He exchanged it—for a grey doublet and cloak, formerly his usual attire at Milnwood, and which Mrs. Wilson produced from a chest of walnut-tree, wherein she had laid them aside, without forgetting carefully to brush and air them from time to time. Morton retained his sword and fire-arms, without which few persons travelled in those unsettled times. When he appeared in his new attire, Mrs. Wilson was first thankful "that they fitted him sae decently, since, though he was nae fatter, yet he looked mair manly than when he was taen frae Milnwood."

Next she enlarged on the advantage of saving old clothes to be what she called "beet-masters to the new," and was far advanced in the history of a velvet cloak belonging to the late Milnwood, which had first been converted to a velvet doublet, and then into a pair of breeches, and appeared each time as good as new, when Morton interrupted her account of its transmigration to bid her good-by.

He gave, indeed, a sufficient shock to her feelings, by expressing the necessity he was under of proceeding on his journey that evening.

"And where are ye gaun? And what wad ye do that for? And whar wad ye sleep but in your ain house, after ye hae been sae mony years frae hame?"

"I feel all the unkindness of it, Ailie, but it must be so; and that was the reason that I attempted to conceal myself from you, as I suspected you would not let me part from you so easily."

"But whar are ye gaun, then?" said Ailie, once more. "Saw e'er mortal een the like o' you, just to come ae moment, and flee awa like an arrow out of a bow the neist?"

"I must go down," replied Morton, "to Niel Blane the Piper's Howff; he can give me a bed, I suppose?"

"A bed? I'se warrant can he," replied Ailie, "and gar ye pay weel for 't into the bargain. Laddie, I daresay ye hae lost your wits in thae foreign parts, to gang and gie siller for a supper and a bed, and might hae baith for naething, and thanks t' ye for accepting them."

"I assure you, Ailie," said Morton, desirous to silence her remonstrances, "that this is a business of great importance, in which I may be a great gainer, and cannot possibly be a loser."

"I dinna see how that can be, if ye begin by gieing maybe the feck o' twal shillings Scots for your supper; but young folks are aye venturesome, and think to get siller that way. My puir auld master took a surer gate, and never parted wi' it when he had anes gotten 't."

Persevering in his desperate resolution, Morton took leave of Ailie, and mounted his horse to proceed to the little town, after exacting a solemn promise that she would conceal his return until she again saw or heard from him.

"I am not very extravagant," was his natural reflection, as he trotted slowly towards the town; "but were Ailie and I to set up house together, as she proposes, I think my profusion would break the good old creature's heart before a week were out."

CHAPTER XX.

Where's the jolly host

You told me of? 'T has been my custom ever

To parley with mine host.

Lover's Progress.

Morton reached the borough town without meeting with any remarkable adventure, and alighted at the little inn. It had occurred to him more than once, while upon his journey, that his resumption of the dress which he had worn while a youth, although favourable to his views in other respects, might render it more difficult for him to remain incognito. But a few years of campaigns and wandering had so changed his appearance that he had great confidence that in the grown man, whose brows exhibited the traces of resolution and considerate thought, none would recognise the raw and bashful stripling who won the game of the popinjay. The only chance was that here and there some Whig, whom he had led to battle, might remember the Captain of the Milnwood Marksmen; but the risk, if there was any, could not be guarded against.

The Howff seemed full and frequented as if possessed of all its old celebrity. The person and demeanour of Niel Blane, more fat and less civil than of yore, intimated that he had increased as well in purse as in corpulence; for in Scotland a landlord's complaisance for his guests decreases in exact proportion to his rise in the world. His daughter had acquired the air of a dexterous barmaid, undisturbed by the circumstances of love and war, so apt to perplex her in the exercise of her vocation. Both showed Morton the degree of attention which could have been expected by a stranger travelling without attendants, at a time when they were particularly the badges of distinction. He took upon himself exactly the character his appearance presented, went to the stable and saw his horse accommodated, then returned to the house, and seating himself in the public room (for to request one to himself would, in those days, have been thought an overweening degree of conceit), he found himself in the very apartment in which he had some years before celebrated his victory at the game of the popinjay,—a jocular preferment which led to so many serious consequences.

He felt himself, as may well be supposed, a much changed man since that festivity; and yet, to look around him, the groups assembled in the Howff seemed not dissimilar to those which the same scene had formerly presented. Two or three burghers husbanded their "dribbles o' brandy;" two or three dragoons lounged over their muddy ale, and cursed the inactive times that allowed them no better cheer. Their cornet did not, indeed, play at backgammon with the curate in his cassock, but he drank a little modicum of *aqua mirabilis* with the grey-cloaked Presbyterian minister. The scene was another, and yet the same, differing only in persons, but corresponding in general character.

Let the tide of the world wax or wane as it will, Morton thought as he looked around him, enough will be found to fill the places which chance renders vacant; and in the usual occupations and amusements of life, human beings will succeed each other as leaves upon the same tree, with the same individual difference and the same general resemblance.

After pausing a few minutes, Morton, whose experience had taught him the readiest mode of securing attention, ordered a pint of claret; and as the smiling landlord appeared with the pewter measure foaming fresh from the tap (for bottling wine was not then in fashion), he asked him to sit down and take a share of the good cheer. This invitation was peculiarly acceptable to Niel Blane, who, if he did not positively expect it from every guest not provided with better company, yet received it from many, and was not a whit abashed or surprised at the summons. He sat down, along with his guest, in a secluded nook near the chimney; and while he received encouragement to drink by far the greater share of the liquor before them, he entered at length, as a part of his expected functions, upon the news of the country,—the births, deaths, and marriages; the change of property; the downfall of old families, and the rise of new. But politics, now the fertile source of eloquence, mine host did not care to mingle in his theme; and it was only in answer to a question of Morton that he replied, with an air of indifference, "Um! ay! we aye hae sodgers amang us, mair or less. There's a wheen German horse down at Glasgow yonder; they ca' their commander Wittybody, or some sic name, though he's as grave and grewsome an auld Dutchman as e'er I saw."

"Wittenbold, perhaps?" said Morton,—"an old man, with grey hair and short black moustaches; speaks seldom?"

"And smokes for ever," replied Niel Blane. "I see your honour kens the man. He may be a very gude man too, for aught I see,—that is, considering he is a sodger and a Dutchman; but if he were ten generals, and as mony Wittybodies, he has nae skill in the pipes; he gar'd me stop in the middle of Torphichen's Rant,—the best piece o' music that ever bag gae wind to."

"But these fellows," said Morton, glancing his eye towards the soldiers "that were in the apartment, are not of his corps?"

"Na, na, these are Scotch dragoons," said mine host,—"our ain auld caterpillars; these were Claver'se's lads a while syne, and wad be again, maybe, if he had the lang ten in his hand."

"Is there not a report of his death?" inquired Morton.

"Troth is there," said the landlord; "your honour is right,—there is sic a fleeing rumour; but, in my puir opinion, it's lang or the deil die. I wad hae the folks here look to themselfs. If he makes an outbreak, he'll be down frae the Hielands or I could drink this glass,—and whare are they then? A' thae hell-rakers o' dragoons wad be at his whistle in a moment. Nae doubt they're Willie's men e'en now, as they were James's a while syne; and reason good,—they fight for their pay; what else hae they to fight for? They hae neither lands nor houses, I trow. There's ae gude thing o' the change, or the Revolution, as they ca' it,—folks may speak out afore thae birkies now, and nae fear o' being hauled awa to the guard-house, or having the thumikins screwed on your finger-ends, just as I wad drive the screw through a cork."

There was a little pause, when Morton, feeling confident in the progress he had made in mine host's familiarity, asked, though with the hesitation proper to one who puts a question on the answer to which rests something of importance, "Whether Blane knew a woman in that neighbourhood called Elizabeth Maclure?"

"Whether I ken Bessie Maclure?" answered the landlord, with a landlord's laugh,—"*How can I but ken my ain wife's (haly be her rest!)*—my ain wife's first gudeman's sister, Bessie Maclure? An honest wife she is, but sair she's been trysted wi' misfortunes,—the loss o' twa decent lads o' sons, in the time o' the persecution, as they ca' it nowadays; and doucely and decently she has borne her burden, blaming nane and condemning nane. If there's an honest woman in the world, it's Bessie Maclure. And to lose her twa sons, as I was saying, and to hae dragoons clinked down on her for a month bypast,—for, be Whig or Tory uppermost, they aye quarter thae loons on victuallers,—to lose, as I was saying—"

"This woman keeps an inn, then?" interrupted Morton.

"A public, in a puir way," replied Blane, looking round at his own superior accommodations,— "a sour browst o' sma' ale that she sells to folk that are over drouthy wi' travel to be nice; but naething to ca' a stirring trade or a thriving changehouse."

"Can you get me a guide there?" said Morton.

"Your honour will rest here a' the night? Ye'll hardly get accommodation at Bessie's," said Niel, whose regard for his deceased wife's relative by no means extended to sending company from his own house to hers.

"There is a friend," answered Morton, "whom I am to meet with there, and I only called here to take a stirrup-cup and inquire the way."

"Your honour had better," answered the landlord, with the perseverance of his calling, "send some ane to warn your friend to come on here."

"I tell you, landlord," answered Morton, impatiently, "that will not serve my purpose; I must go straight to this woman Maclure's house, and I desire you to find me a guide."

"Aweel, sir, ye'll choose for yoursell, to be sure," said Niel Blane, somewhat disconcerted; "but deil a guide ye'll need if ye gae doun the water for twa mile or sae, as gin ye were bound for Milnwoodhouse, and then tak the first broken disjasked-looking road that makes for the hills,—ye'll ken 't by a broken ash-tree that stands at the side o' a burn just where the roads meet; and then travel out the path,—ye canna miss Widow Maclure's public, for deil another house or hauld is on the road for ten lang Scots miles, and that's worth twenty English. I am sorry your honour would think o' gaun out o' my house the night. But my wife's gude-sister is a decent woman, and it's no lost that a friend gets."

Morton accordingly paid his reckoning and departed. The sunset of the summer day placed him at the ash-tree, where the path led up towards the moors.

"Here," he said to himself, "my misfortunes commenced; for just here, when Burley and I were about to separate on the first night we ever met, he was alarmed by the intelligence that the passes were secured by soldiers lying in wait for him. Beneath that very ash sate the old woman who apprised him of his danger. How strange that my whole fortunes should have become inseparably interwoven with that man's, without anything more on my part than the discharge of an ordinary duty of humanity! Would to Heaven it were possible I could find my humble quiet and tranquillity of mind upon the spot where I lost them!"

Thus arranging his reflections betwixt speech and thought, he turned his horse's head up the path.

Evening lowered around him as he advanced up the narrow dell which had once been a wood, but was now a ravine divested of trees, unless where a few, from their inaccessible situation on the edge of precipitous banks, or clinging among rocks and huge stones, defied the invasion of men and of cattle, like the scattered tribes of a conquered country, driven to take refuge in the barren strength of its mountains. These too, wasted and decayed, seemed rather to exist than to flourish, and only served to indicate what the landscape had once been. But the stream brawled down among them in all its freshness and vivacity, giving the life and animation which a mountain rivulet alone can confer on the barest and most savage scenes, and which the inhabitants of such a country miss when gazing even upon the tranquil winding of a majestic stream through plains of fertility, and beside palaces of splendour. The track of the road followed the course of the brook, which was now visible, and now only to be distinguished by its brawling heard among the stones or in the clefts of the rock that occasionally interrupted its course.

"Murmurer that thou art," said Morton, in the enthusiasm of his reverie, "why chafe with the rocks that stop thy course for a moment? There is a sea to receive thee in its bosom; and there is an eternity for man when his fretful and hasty course through the vale of time shall be ceased and over. What thy petty fuming is to the deep and vast billows of a shoreless ocean, are our cares, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows to the objects which must occupy us through the awful and boundless succession of ages!"

Thus moralizing, our traveller passed on till the dell opened, and the banks, receding from the brook, left a little green vale, exhibiting a croft, or small field, on which some corn was growing, and a cottage, whose walls were not above five feet high, and whose thatched roof, green with moisture, age, houseleek, and grass, had in some places suffered damage from the encroachment of two cows, whose appetite this appearance of verdure had diverted from their more legitimate pasture. An ill-spelt and worse-written inscription intimated to the traveller that he might here find refreshment for man and horse,—no unacceptable intimation, rude as the hut appeared to be, considering the wild path he had trod in approaching it, and the high and waste mountains which rose in desolate dignity behind this humble asylum.

It must indeed have been, thought Morton, in some such spot as this that Burley was likely to find a congenial confidant.

As he approached, he observed the good dame of the house herself, seated by the door; she had hitherto been concealed from him by a huge alder-bush.

"Good evening, Mother," said the traveller. "Your name is Mistress Maclure?"

"Elizabeth Maclure, sir, a poor widow," was the reply.

"Can you lodge a stranger for a night?"

"I can, sir, if he will be pleased with the widow's cake and the widow's cruse."

"I have been a soldier, good dame," answered Morton, "and nothing can come amiss to me in the way of entertainment."

"A sodger, sir?" said the old woman, with a sigh,— "God send ye a better trade!"

"It is believed to be an honourable profession, my good dame; I hope you do not think the worse of me for having belonged to it?"

"I judge no one, sir," replied the woman, "and your voice sounds like that of a civil gentleman; but I hae witnessed sae muckle ill wi' sodgering in this puir land that I am e'en content that I can see nae mair o't wi' these sightless organs."

As she spoke thus, Morton observed that she was blind.

"Shall I not be troublesome to you, my good dame?" said he, compassionately; "your infirmity seems ill calculated for your profession."

"Na, sir," answered the old woman, "I can gang about the house readily eneugh; and I hae a bit lassie to help me, and the dragoon lads will look after your horse when they come hame frae their patrol, for a sma' matter; they are civiller now than lang syne."

Upon these assurances, Morton alighted.

"Peggy, my bonny bird," continued the hostess, addressing a little girl of twelve years old, who had by this time appeared, "tak the gentleman's horse to the stable, and slack his girths, and tak aff the bridle, and shake down a lock o' hay before him, till the dragoons come back.—Come this way, sir," she continued; "ye'll find my house clean, though it's a puir ane."

Morton followed her into the cottage accordingly.

CHAPTER XXI.

*Then out and spake the auld mother,
And fast her tears did fa
"Ye wadna be warn'd, my son Johnie,
Frae the hunting to bide awa!"
Old Ballad.*

When he entered the cottage, Morton perceived that the old hostess had spoken truth. The inside of the hut belied its outward appearance, and was neat, and even comfortable, especially the inner apartment, in which the hostess informed her guest that he was to sup and sleep. Refreshments were placed before him such as the little inn afforded; and though he had small occasion for them, he accepted the offer, as the means of maintaining some discourse with the landlady. Notwithstanding her blindness, she was assiduous in her attendance, and seemed, by a sort of instinct, to find her way to what she wanted.

"Have you no one but this pretty little girl to assist you in waiting on your guests?" was the natural question.

"None, sir," replied his old hostess; "I dwell alone, like the widow of Zarephath. Few guests come to this puir place, and I haena custom eneugh to hire servants. I had anes twa fine sons that lookit after a' thing. —But God gives and takes away,—His name be praised!" she continued, turning her clouded eyes towards Heaven.—"I was anes better off, that is, waridly speaking, even since I lost them; but that was before this last change."

"Indeed!" said Morton; "and yet you are a Presbyterian, my good mother?"

"I am, sir; praised be the light that showed me the right way," replied the landlady.

"Then I should have thought," continued the guest, "the Revolution would have brought you nothing but good."

"If," said the old woman, "it has brought the land gude, and freedom of worship to tender consciences, it's little matter what it has brought to a puir blind worm like me."

"Still," replied Morton, "I cannot see how it could possibly injure you."

"It's a lang story, sir," answered his hostess, with a sigh. "But ae night, sax weeks or thereby afore Bothwell Brigg, a young gentleman stopped at this puir cottage, stiff and bloody with wounds, pale and dune out wi' riding, and his horse sae weary he couldna drag ae foot after the other, and his foes were close ahint him, and he was ane o' our enemies. What could I do, sir? You that's a sodger will think me but a silly auld wife; but I fed him, and relieved him, and keepit him hidden till the pursuit was ower."

"And who," said Morton, "dares disapprove of your having done so?"

"I kenna," answered the blind woman; "I gat ill-will about it amang some o' our ain folk. They said I should hae been to him what Jael was to Sisera. But weel I wot I had nae divine command to shed blood, and to save it was baith like a woman and a Christian. And then they said I wanted natural affection, to relieve ane that belonged to the band that murdered my twa sons."

"That murdered your two sons?"

"Ay, sir; though maybe ye'll gie their deaths another name. The tane fell wi' sword in hand, fighting for a broken national Covenant; the tother,—oh, they took him and shot him dead on the green before his mother's face! My auld een dazzled when the shots were looten off, and, to my thought, they waxed weaker and weaker ever since that weary day; and sorrow, and heart-break, and tears that would not be dried, might help on the disorder. But, alas! betraying Lord Evandale's young blood to his enemies' sword wad ne'er hae brought my Ninian and Johnie alive again."

"Lord Evandale?" said Morton, in surprise. "Was it Lord Evandale whose life you saved?"

"In troth, even his," she replied. "And kind he was to me after, and gae me a cow and calf, malt, meal, and siller, and nane durst steer me when he was in power. But we live on an outside bit of Tillietudlem land, and the estate was sair plea'd between Leddy Margaret Bellenden and the present laird, Basil Olifant, and Lord Evandale backed the auld leddy for love o' her daughter Miss Edith, as the country said, ane o' the best and bonniest lassies in Scotland. But they behaved to gie way, and Basil gat the Castle and land, and on the back o' that came the Revolution, and wha to turn coat faster than the laird? for he said he had been a true Whig a' the time, and turned papist only for fashion's sake. And then he got favour, and Lord Evandale's head was under water; for he was ower proud and manfu' to bend to every blast o' wind, though mony a ane may ken as weel as me that be his ain principles as they might, he was nae ill friend to our folk when he could protect us, and far kinder than Basil Olifant, that aye keepit the cobble head down the stream. But he was set by and ill looked on, and his word ne'er asked; and then Basil, wha's a revengefu' man, set himself to vex him in a' shapes, and especially by oppressing and despoiling the auld blind widow, Bessie Maclure, that saved Lord Evandale's life, and that he was sae kind to. But he's mistaen if that's his end; for it will be lang or Lord Evandale hears a word frae me about the selling my kye for rent or e'er it was due, or the putting the dragoons on me when the country's quiet, or onything else that will vex him,—I can bear my ain burden patiently, and world's loss is the least part o't."

Astonished and interested at this picture of patient, grateful, and high-minded resignation, Morton could not help bestowing an execration upon the poor-spirited rascal who had taken such a dastardly course of vengeance.

"Dinna curse him, sir," said the old woman; "I have heard a good man say that a curse was like a stone flung up to the heavens, and maist like to return on the head that sent it. But if ye ken Lord Evandale, bid him look to himsell, for I hear strange words pass atween the sodgers that are lying here, and his name is often mentioned; and the tane o' them has been twice up at Tillietudlem. He's a kind of favourite wi' the laird, though he was in former times ane o' the maist cruel oppressors ever rade through a country (out-taken Sergeant Bothwell),—they ca' him Inglis."

"I have the deepest interest in Lord Evandale's safety," said Morton, "and you may depend on my finding some mode to apprise him of these suspicious circumstances. And, in return, my good friend, will you indulge me with another question? Do you know onything of Quintin Mackell of Irongray?"

"Do I know whom?" echoed the blind woman, in a tone of great surprise and alarm.

"Quintin Mackell of Irongray," repeated Morton. "Is there onything so alarming in the sound of that name?"

"Na, na," answered the woman, with hesitation; "but to hear him asked after by a stranger and a sodger,—Gude protect us, what mischief is to come next!"

"None by my means, I assure you," said Morton; "the subject of my inquiry has nothing to fear from me if, as I suppose, this Quintin Mackell is the same with John Bal——."

"Do not mention his name," said the widow, pressing his lips with her fingers. "I see you have his secret and his pass-word, and I'll be free wi' you. But, for God's sake, speak loud and low. In the name of Heaven, I trust ye seek him not to his hurt! Ye said ye were a sodger?"

"I said truly; but one he has nothing to fear from. I commanded a party at Bothwell Bridge."

"Indeed?" said the woman. "And verily there is something in your voice I can trust. Ye speak prompt and readily, and like an honest man."

"I trust I am so," said Morton.

"But nae displeasure to you, sir, in thae waefu' times," continued Mrs. Maclure, "the hand of brother is against brother, and he fears as mickle almaist frae this Government as e'er he did frae the auld persecutors."

"Indeed?" said Morton, in a tone of inquiry; "I was not aware of that. But I am only just now returned from abroad."

"I'll tell ye," said the blind woman, first assuming an attitude of listening that showed how effectually her powers of collecting intelligence had been transferred from the eye to the ear; for, instead of casting a glance of circumspection around, she stooped her face, and turned her head slowly around, in such a manner as to insure that there was not the slightest sound stirring in the neighbourhood, and then continued,—"I'll tell ye. Ye ken how he has laboured to raise up again the Covenant, burned, broken, and buried in the hard hearts and selfish devices of this stubborn people. Now, when he went to Holland, far from the countenance and thanks of the great, and the comfortable fellowship of the godly, both whilk he was in right to expect, the Prince of Orange wad show him no favour, and the ministers no godly communion. This was hard to bide for ane that had suffered and done mickle,—ower mickle, it may be; but why suld I be a judge? He came back to me and to the auld place o' refuge that had often received him in his distresses, mair especially before the great day of victory at Drumclog, for I sail ne'er forget how he was bending hither of a' nights in the year on that e'ening after the play when young Milnwood wan the popinjay; but I warned him off for that time."

"What!" exclaimed Morton, "it was you that sat in your red cloak by the high-road, and told him there was a lion in the path?"

"In the name of Heaven! wha are ye?" said the old woman, breaking off her narrative in astonishment. "But be wha ye may," she continued, resuming it with tranquillity, "ye can ken naething waur o' me than that I hae been willing to save the life o' friend and foe."

"I know no ill of you, Mrs. Maclure, and I mean no ill by you; I only wished to show you that I know so much of this person's affairs that I might be safely intrusted with the rest. Proceed, if you please, in your narrative."

"There is a strange command in your voice," said the blind woman, "though its tones are sweet. I have little mair to say. The Stewarts hae been dethroned, and William and Mary reign in their stead; but nae mair word of the Covenant than if it were a dead letter. They hae taen the indulged clergy, and an Erastian General Assembly of the ante pure and triumphant Kirk of Scotland, even into their very arms and bosoms. Our faithfu' champions o' the testimony agree e'en waur wi' this than wi' the open tyranny and apostasy of the persecuting times, for souls are hardened and deadened, and the mouths of fasting multitudes are crammed wi'

fizenless bran instead of the sweet word in season; and mony an hungry, starving creature, when he sits down on a Sunday forenoon to get something that might warm him to the great work, has a dry clatter o' morality driven about his lugs, and—"

"In short," said Morton, desirous to stop a discussion which the good old woman, as enthusiastically attached to her religious profession as to the duties of humanity, might probably have indulged longer,—“In short, you are not disposed to acquiesce in this new government, and Burley is of the same opinion?"

"Many of our brethren, sir, are of belief we fought for the Covenant, and fasted and prayed and suffered for that grand national league, and now we are like neither to see nor hear tell of that which we suffered and fought and fasted and prayed for. And anes it was thought something might be made by bringing back the auld family on a new bargain and a new bottom, as, after a', when King James went awa, I understand the great quarrel of the English against him was in behalf of seven unhallowed prelates; and sae, though ae part of our people were free to join wi' the present model, and levied an armed regiment under the Yerl of Angus, yet our honest friend, and others that stude up for purity of doctrine and freedom of conscience, were determined to hear the breath o' the Jacobites before they took part again them, fearing to fa' to the ground like a wall built with unslaked mortar, or from sitting between twa stools."

"They chose an odd quarter," said Morton, "from which to expect freedom of conscience and purity of doctrine."

"Oh, dear sir!" said the landlady, "the natural day-spring rises in the east, but the spiritual dayspring may rise in the north, for what we blinded mortals ken."

"And Burley went to the north to seek it?" replied the guest.

"Truly ay, sir; and he saw Claver'se himsell, that they ca' Dundee now."

"What!" exclaimed Morton, in amazement; "I would have sworn that meeting would have been the last of one of their lives."

"Na, na, sir; in troubled times, as I understand," said Mrs. Maclure, "there's sudden changes,—Montgomery and Ferguson and mony ane mair that were King James's greatest faes are on his side now. Claver'se spake our friend fair, and sent him to consult with Lord Evandale. But then there was a break-off, for Lord Evandale wadna look at, hear, or speak wi' him; and now he's anes wud and aye waur, and roars for revenge again Lord Evandale, and will hear nought of anything but burn and slay. And oh, thae starts o' passion! they unsettle his mind, and gie the Enemy sair advantages."

"The enemy?" said Morton; "What enemy?"

"What enemy? Are ye acquainted familiarly wi' John Balfour o' Burley, and dinna ken that he has had sair and frequent combats to sustain against the Evil One? Did ye ever see him alone but the Bible was in his hand, and the drawn sword on his knee? Did ye never sleep in the same room wi' him, and hear him strive in his dreams with the delusions of Satan? Oh, ye ken little o' him if ye have seen him only in fair daylight; for nae man can put the face upon his doleful visits and strifes that he can do. I hae seen him, after sic a strife of agony, tremble that an infant might hae held him, while the hair on his brow was drapping as fast as ever my puir thatched roof did in a heavy rain." As she spoke, Morton began to recollect the appearance of Burley during his sleep in the hay-loft at Milnwood, the report of Cuddie that his senses had become impaired, and some whispers current among the Cameronians, who boasted frequently of Burley's soul-exercises and his strifes with the foul fiend,—which several circumstances led him to conclude that this man himself was a victim to those delusions, though his mind, naturally acute and forcible, not only disguised his superstition from those in whose opinion it might have discredited his judgment, but by exerting such a force as is said to be proper to those afflicted with epilepsy, could postpone the fits which it occasioned until he was either freed from superintendence, or surrounded by such as held him more highly on account of these visitations. It was natural to suppose, and could easily be inferred from the narrative of Mrs. Maclure, that disappointed ambition, wrecked hopes, and the downfall of the party which he had served with such desperate fidelity, were likely to aggravate enthusiasm into temporary insanity. It was, indeed, no uncommon circumstance in those singular times that men like Sir Harry Vane, Harrison, Overton, and others, themselves slaves to the wildest and most enthusiastic dreams, could, when mingling with the world, conduct themselves not only with good sense in difficulties, and courage in dangers, but with the most acute sagacity and determined valour. The subsequent part of Mrs. Maclure's information confirmed Morton in these impressions.

"In the grey of the morning," she said, "my little Peggy sail show ye the gate to him before the sodgers are up. But ye maun let his hour of danger, as he ca's it, be ower, afore ye venture on him in his place of refuge. Peggy will tell ye when to venture in. She kens his ways weel, for whiles she carries him some little helps that he canna do without to sustain life."

"And in what retreat, then," said Morton, "has this unfortunate person found refuge?"

"An awsome place," answered the blind woman, "as ever living creature took refuge in; they ca it the Black Linn of Linklater. It's a doleful place, but he loves it abune a' others, because he has sae often been in safe hiding there; and it's my belief he prefers it to a tapestried chamber and a down bed. But ye'll see 't. I hae seen it mysell mony a day syne. I was a daft hempie lassie then, and little thought what was to come o't.—Wad ye choose ony thing, sir, ere ye betake yourself to your rest, for ye maun stir wi' the first dawn o' the grey light?"

"Nothing more, my good mother," said Morton; and they parted for the evening.

Morton recommended himself to Heaven, threw himself on the bed, heard, between sleeping and waking, the trampling of the dragoon horses at the riders' return from their patrol, and then slept soundly after such painful agitation.

CHAPTER XXII.

The darksome cave they enter, where they found

The accursed man low sitting on the ground,

Musing full sadly in his sullen mind.

SPENSER.

As the morning began to appear on the mountains, a gentle knock was heard at the door of the humble apartment in which Morton slept, and a girlish treble voice asked him, from without, "If he wad please gang to the Linn or the folk raise?"

He arose upon the invitation, and, dressing himself hastily, went forth and joined his little guide. The mountain maid tript lightly before him, through the grey haze, over hill and moor. It was a wild and varied walk, unmarked by any regular or distinguishable track, and keeping, upon the whole, the direction of the ascent of the brook, though without tracing its windings. The landscape, as they advanced, became waster and more wild, until nothing but heath and rock encumbered the side of the valley.

"Is the place still distant?" said Morton. "Nearly a mile off," answered the girl. "We'll be there belive."

"And do you often go this wild journey, my little maid?"

"When grannie sends me wi' milk and meal to the Linn," answered the child.

"And are you not afraid to travel so wild a road alone?"

"Hout na, sir," replied the guide; "nae living creature wad touch sic a bit thing as I am, and grannie says we need never fear anything else when we are doing a gude turn."

"Strong in innocence as in triple mail!" said Morton to himself, and followed her steps in silence.

They soon came to a decayed thicket, where brambles and thorns supplied the room of the oak and birches of which it had once consisted. Here the guide turned short off the open heath, and, by a sheep-track, conducted Morton to the brook. A hoarse and sullen roar had in part prepared him for the scene which presented itself, yet it was not to be viewed without surprise and even terror. When he emerged from the devious path which conducted him through the thicket, he found himself placed on a ledge of flat rock projecting over one side of a chasm not less than a hundred feet deep, where the dark mountain-stream made a decided and rapid shoot over the precipice, and was swallowed up by a deep, black, yawning gulf. The eye in vain strove to see the bottom of the fall; it could catch but one sheet of foaming uproar and sheer descent, until the view was obstructed by the proecting crags which enclosed the bottom of the waterfall, and hid from sight the

dark pool which received its tortured waters; far beneath, at the distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile, the eye caught the winding of the stream as it emerged into a more open course. But, for that distance, they were lost to sight as much as if a cavern had been arched over them; and indeed the steep and projecting ledges of rock through which they wound their way in darkness were very nearly closing and over-roofing their course.

While Morton gazed at this scene of tumult, which seemed, by the surrounding thickets and the clefts into which the waters descended, to seek to hide itself from every eye, his little attendant as she stood beside him on the platform of rock which commanded the best view of the fall, pulled him by the sleeve, and said, in a tone which he could not hear without stooping his ear near the speaker, "Hear till him! Eh! hear till him!"

Morton listened more attentively; and out of the very abyss into which the brook fell, and amidst the tumultuary sounds of the cataract, thought he could distinguish shouts, screams, and even articulate words, as if the tortured demon of the stream had been mingling his complaints with the roar of his broken waters.

"This is the way," said the little girl; "follow me, gin ye please, sir, but tak tent to your feet;" and, with the daring agility which custom had rendered easy, she vanished from the platform on which she stood, and, by notches and slight projections in the rock, scrambled down its face into the chasm which it overhung. Steady, bold, and active, Morton hesitated not to follow her; but the necessary attention to secure his hold and footing in a descent where both foot and hand were needful for security, prevented him from looking around him, till, having descended nigh twenty feet, and being sixty or seventy above the pool which received the fall, his guide made a pause, and he again found himself by her side in a situation that appeared equally romantic and precarious. They were nearly opposite to the waterfall, and in point of level situated at about one-quarter's depth from the point of the cliff over which it thundered, and three-fourths of the height above the dark, deep, and restless pool which received its fall. Both these tremendous points—the first shoot, namely, of the yet unbroken stream, and the deep and sombre abyss into which it was emptied—were full before him, as well as the whole continuous stream of billowy froth, which, dashing from the one, was eddying and boiling in the other. They were so near this grand phenomenon that they were covered with its spray, and well-nigh deafened by the incessant roar. But crossing in the very front of the fall, and at scarce three yards distance from the cataract, an old oak-tree, flung across the chasm in a manner that seemed accidental, formed a bridge of fearfully narrow dimensions and uncertain footing. The upper end of the tree rested on the platform on which they stood; the lower or uprooted extremity extended behind a projection on the opposite side, and was secured, Morton's eye could not discover where. From behind the same projection glimmered a strong red light, which, glancing in the waves of the falling water, and tinging them partially with crimson, had a strange preternatural and sinister effect when contrasted with the beams of the rising sun, which glanced on the first broken waves of the fall, though even its meridian splendour could not gain the third of its full depth. When he had looked around him for a moment, the girl again pulled his sleeve, and, pointing to the oak and the projecting point beyond it (for hearing speech was now out of the question), indicated that there lay his farther passage.

Morton gazed at her with surprise; for although he well knew that the persecuted Presbyterians had in the preceding reigns sought refuge among dells and thickets, caves and cataracts, in spots the most extraordinary and secluded; although he had heard of the champions of the Covenant, who had long abidden beside Dobs-lien on the wild heights of Polmoodie, and others who had been concealed in the yet more terrific cavern called Creehope-linn, in the parish of Closeburn,—yet his imagination had never exactly figured out the horrors of such a residence, and he was surprised how the strange and romantic scene which he now saw had remained concealed from him, while a curious investigator of such natural phenomena. But he readily conceived that, lying in a remote and wild district, and being destined as a place of concealment to the persecuted preachers and professors of nonconformity, the secret of its existence was carefully preserved by the few shepherds to whom it might be known. As, breaking from these meditations, he began to consider how he should traverse the doubtful and terrific bridge, which, skirted by the cascade, and rendered wet and slippery by its constant drizzle, traversed the chasm above sixty feet from the bottom of the fall, his guide, as if to give him courage, tript over and back without the least hesitation. Envyng for a moment the little bare feet which caught a safer hold of the rugged side of the oak than he could pretend to with his heavy boots, Morton nevertheless resolved to attempt the passage, and, fixing his eye firm on a stationary object on the other side, without allowing his head to become giddy, or his attention to be distracted by the flash, the foam, and the roar of the waters around him, he strode steadily and safely along the uncertain bridge, and reached the mouth of a small cavern on the farther side of the torrent. Here he paused; for a light, proceeding from a fire of red-hot charcoal, permitted him to see the interior of the cave, and enabled him to contemplate the appearance of its inhabitant, by whom he himself could not be so readily distinguished, being concealed by the shadow of the rock. What he observed would by no means have encouraged a less determined man to proceed with the task which he had undertaken.

Burley, only altered from what he had been formerly by the addition of a grisly beard, stood in the midst of the cave, with his clasped Bible in one hand, and his drawn sword in the other. His figure, dimly ruddied by the light of the red charcoal, seemed that of a fiend in the lurid atmosphere of Pandemonium, and his gestures and words, as far as they could be heard, seemed equally violent and irregular. All alone, and in a place of almost unapproachable seclusion, his demeanour was that of a man who strives for life and death with a mortal enemy. "Ha! ha!—there—there!" he exclaimed, accompanying each word with a thrust, urged with his whole force against the impassible and empty air, "Did I not tell thee so?—I have resisted, and thou fleest from me!—Coward as thou art, come in all thy terrors; come with mine own evil deeds, which render thee most terrible of all,—there is enough betwixt the boards of this book to rescue me!—What mutterest thou of grey hairs? It was well done to slay him,—the more ripe the corn, the readier for the sickle.— Art gone? Art gone?—I have ever known thee but a coward—ha! ha! ha!"

With these wild exclamations he sunk the point of his sword, and remained standing still in the same posture, like a maniac whose fit is over.

"The dangerous time is by now," said the little girl who had followed; "it seldom lasts beyond the time that the sun's ower the hill; ye may gang in and speak wi' him now. I'll wait for you at the other side of the linn; he canna bide to see twa folk at anes."

Slowly and cautiously, and keeping constantly upon his guard, Morton presented himself to the view of his old associate in command.

"What! comest thou again when thine hour is over?" was his first exclamation; and flourishing his sword aloft, his countenance assumed an expression in which ghastly terror seemed mingled with the rage of a demoniac.

"I am come, Mr. Balfour," said Morton, in a steady and composed tone, "to renew an acquaintance which has been broken off since the fight of Bothwell Bridge."

As soon as Burley became aware that Morton was before him in person,—an idea which he caught with marvellous celerity,—he at once exerted that mastership over his heated and enthusiastic imagination, the power of enforcing which was a most striking part of his extraordinary character. He sunk his sword-point at once, and as he stole it composedly into the scabbard, he muttered something of the damp and cold which sent an old soldier to his fencing exercise, to prevent his blood from chilling. This done, he proceeded in the cold, determined manner which was peculiar to his ordinary discourse:—

"Thou hast tarried long, Henry Morton, and hast not come to the vintage before the twelfth hour has struck. Art thou yet willing to take the right hand of fellowship, and be one with those who look not to thrones or dynasties, but to the rule of Scripture, for their directions?"

"I am surprised," said Morton, evading the direct answer to his question, "that you should have known me after so many years."

"The features of those who ought to act with me are engraved on my heart," answered Burley; "and few but Silas Morton's son durst have followed me into this my castle of retreat. Seest thou that drawbridge of Nature's own construction?" he added, pointing to the prostrate oak-tree,—"one spurn of my foot, and it is overwhelmed in the abyss below, bidding foeman on the farther side stand at defiance, and leaving enemies on this at the mercy of one who never yet met his equal in single fight."

"Of such defences," said Morton, "I should have thought you would now have had little need."

"Little need?" said Burley impatiently. "What little need, when incarnate fiends are combined against me on earth, and Sathan himself—But it matters not," added he, checking himself. "Enough that I like my place of refuge, my cave of Adullam, and would not change its rude ribs of limestone rock for the fair chambers of the castle of the earls of Torwood, with their broad bounds and barony. Thou, unless the foolish fever-fit be over, mayst think differently."

"It was of those very possessions I came to speak," said Morton; "and I doubt not to find Mr. Balfour the same rational and reflecting person which I knew him to be in times when zeal disunited brethren."

"Ay?" said Burley; "indeed? Is such truly your hope? Wilt thou express it more plainly?"

"In a word, then," said Morton, "you have exercised, by means at which I can guess, a secret, but most prejudicial, influence over the fortunes of Lady Margaret Bellenden and her granddaughter, and in favour of that base, oppressive apostate, Basil Olifant, whom the law, deceived by thy operations, has placed in possession of their lawful property."

"Sayest thou?" said Balfour.

"I do say so," replied Morton; "and face to face you will not deny what you have vouched by your handwriting."

"And suppose I deny it not," said Balfour; "and suppose that thy—eloquence were found equal to persuade me to retrace the steps I have taken on matured resolve,—what will be thy meed? Dost thou still hope to possess the fair-haired girl, with her wide and rich inheritance?"

"I have no such hope," answered Morton, calmly.

"And for whom, then, hast thou ventured to do this great thing,—to seek to rend the prey from the valiant, to bring forth food from the den of the lion, and to extract sweetness from the maw of the devourer? For whose sake hast thou undertaken to read this riddle, more hard than Samson's?"

"For Lord Evandale's and that of his bride," replied Morton, firmly. "Think better of mankind, Mr. Balfour, and believe there are some who are willing to sacrifice their happiness to that of others."

"Then, as my soul liveth," replied Balfour, "thou art, to wear beard and back a horse and draw a sword, the tamest and most gall-less puppet that ever sustained injury unavenged. What! thou wouldst help that accursed Evandale to the arms of the woman that thou lovest; thou wouldst endow them with wealth and with heritages, and thou think'st that there lives another man, offended even more deeply than thou, yet equally cold-livered and mean-spirited, crawling upon the face of the earth, and hast dared to suppose that one other to be John Balfour?"

"For my own feelings," said Morton, composedly, "I am answerable to none but Heaven; to you, Mr. Balfour, I should suppose it of little consequence whether Basil Olifant or Lord Evandale possess these estates."

"Thou art deceived," said Burley; "both are indeed in outer darkness, and strangers to the light, as he whose eyes have never been opened to the day. But this Basil Olifant is a Nabal, a Demas, a base churl whose wealth and power are at the disposal of him who can threaten to deprive him of them. He became a professor because he was deprived of these lands of Tillietudlem; he turned a papist to obtain possession of them; he called himself an Erastian, that he might not again lose them; and he will become what I list while I have in my power the document that may deprive him of them. These lands are a bit between his jaws and a hook in his nostrils, and the rein and the line are in my hands to guide them as I think meet; and his they shall therefore be, unless I had assurance of bestowing them on a sure and sincere friend. But Lord Evandale is a malignant, of heart like flint, and brow like adamant; the goods of the world fall on him like leaves on the frost-bound earth, and unmoved he will see them whirled off by the first wind. The heathen virtues of such as he are more dangerous to us than the sordid cupidity of those who, governed by their interest, must follow where it leads, and who, therefore, themselves the slaves of avarice, may be compelled to work in the vineyard, were it but to earn the wages of sin."

"This might have been all well some years since," replied Morton, "and I could understand your argument, although I could never acquiesce in its justice. But at this crisis it seems useless to you to persevere in keeping up an influence which can no longer be directed to an useful purpose. The land has peace, liberty, and freedom of conscience,—and what would you more?"

"More!" exclaimed Burley, again unsheathing his sword, with a vivacity which nearly made Morton start. "Look at the notches upon that weapon they are three in number, are they not?"

"It seems so," answered Morton; "but what of that?"

"The fragment of steel that parted from this first gap rested on the skull of the perjured traitor who first introduced Episcopacy into Scotland; this second notch was made in the rib-bone of an impious villain, the boldest and best soldier that upheld the prelatial cause at Drumclog; this third was broken on the steel head-piece of the captain who defended the Chapel of Holyrood when the people rose at the Revolution. I cleft him to the teeth, through steel and bone. It has done great deeds, this little weapon, and each of these blows was a deliverance to the Church. This sword," he said, again sheathing it, "has yet more to do,—to weed out this base and pestilential heresy of Erastianism; to vindicate the true liberty of the Kirk in her purity; to restore the Covenant in its glory,—then let it moulder and rust beside the bones of its master."

"You have neither men nor means, Mr. Balfour, to disturb the Government as now settled," argued Morton; "the people are in general satisfied, excepting only the gentlemen of the Jacobite interest; and surely you would not join with those who would only use you for their own purposes?"

"It is they," answered Burley, "that should serve ours. I went to the camp of the malignant Claver'se, as the future King of Israel sought the land of the Philistines; I arranged with him a rising; and but for the villain Evandale, the Erastians ere now had been driven from the West.—I could slay him," he added, with a vindictive scowl, "were he grasping the horns of the altar!" He then proceeded in a calmer tone: "If thou, son of mine ancient comrade, were suitor for thyself to this Edith Bellenden, and wert willing to put thy hand to the great work with zeal equal to thy courage, think not I would prefer the friendship of Basil Olifant to thine; thou shouldst then have the means that this document [he produced a parchment] affords to place her in possession of the lands of her fathers. This have I longed to say to thee ever since I saw thee fight the good fight so strongly at the fatal Bridge. The maiden loved thee, and thou her."

Morton replied firmly, "I will not dissemble with you, Mr. Balfour, even to gain a good end. I came in hopes to persuade you to do a deed of justice to others, not to gain any selfish end of my own. I have failed; I grieve for your sake more than for the loss which others will sustain by your injustice."

"You refuse my proffer, then?" said Burley, with kindling eyes.

"I do," said Morton. "Would you be really, as you are desirous to be thought, a man of honour and conscience, you would, regardless of all other considerations, restore that parchment to Lord Evandale, to be used for the advantage of the lawful heir."

"Sooner shall it perish!" said Balfour; and, casting the deed into the heap of red charcoal beside him, pressed it down with the heel of his boot.

While it smoked, shrivelled, and crackled in the flames, Morton sprung forward to snatch it, and Burley catching hold of him, a struggle ensued. Both were strong men; but although Morton was much the more active and younger of the two, yet Balfour was the most powerful, and effectually prevented him from rescuing the deed until it was fairly reduced to a cinder. They then quitted hold of each other, and the enthusiast, rendered fiercer by the contest, glared on Morton with an eye expressive of frantic revenge.

"Thou hast my secret," he exclaimed; "thou must be mine, or die!"

"I condemn your threats," said Morton; "I pity you, and leave you." But as he turned to retire, Burley stepped before him, pushed the oak-trunk from its resting place, and as it fell thundering and crashing into the abyss beneath, drew his sword, and cried out, with a voice that rivalled the roar of the cataract and the thunder of the falling oak, "Now thou art at bay! Fight,—yield, or die!" and standing in the mouth of the cavern, he flourished his naked sword.

"I will not fight with the man that preserved my father's life," said Morton. "I have not yet learned to say the words, 'I yield;' and my life I will rescue as I best can."

So speaking, and ere Balfour was aware of his purpose, he sprung past him, and exerting that youthful agility of which he possessed an uncommon share, leaped clear across the fearful chasm which divided the mouth of the cave from the projecting rock on the opposite side, and stood there safe and free from his incensed enemy. He immediately ascended the ravine, and, as he turned, saw Burley stand for an instant aghast with astonishment, and then, with the frenzy of disappointed rage, rush into the interior of his cavern.

It was not difficult for him to perceive that this unhappy man's mind had been so long agitated by desperate schemes and sudden disappointments that it had lost its equipoise, and that there was now in his conduct a shade of lunacy, not the less striking, from the vigour and craft with which he pursued his wild designs. Morton soon joined his guide, who had been terrified by the fall of the oak. This he represented as accidental; and she assured him, in return, that the inhabitant of the cave would experience no inconvenience from it, being always provided with materials to construct another bridge.

The adventures of the morning were not yet ended. As they approached the hut, the little girl made an exclamation of surprise at seeing her grandmother groping her way towards them, at a greater distance from her home than she could have been supposed capable of travelling.

"Oh, sir, sir!" said the old woman, when she heard them approach, "gin e'er ye loved Lord Evandale, help now, or never! God be praised that left my hearing when he took my poor eyesight! Come this way,—this way. And oh, tread lightly. Peggy, hinny, gang saddle the gentleman's horse, and lead him cannily ahint the thorny shaw, and bide him there."

She conducted him to a small window, through which, himself unobserved, he could see two dragoons seated at their morning draught of ale, and conversing earnestly together.

"The more I think of it," said the one, "the less I like it, Inglis; Evandale was a good officer and the soldier's friend; and though we were punished for the mutiny at Tillietudlem, yet, by —, Frank, you must own we deserved it."

"D—n seize me if I forgive him for it, though!" replied the other; "and I think I can sit in his skirts now."

"Why, man, you should forget and forgive. Better take the start with him along with the rest, and join the ranting Highlanders. We have all eat King James's bread." "Thou art an ass; the start, as you call it, will never happen,—the day's put off. Halliday's seen a ghost, or Miss Bellenden's fallen sick of the pip, or some blasted nonsense or another; the thing will never keep two days longer, and the first bird that sings out will get the reward."

"That's true too," answered his comrade; "and will this fellow—this Basil Olifant—pay handsomely?"

"Like a prince, man," said Inglis. "Evandale is the man on earth whom he hates worst, and he fears him, besides, about some law business; and were he once rubbed out of the way, all, he thinks, will be his own."

"But shall we have warrants and force enough?" said the other fellow. "Few people here will stir against my lord, and we may find him with some of our own fellows at his back."

"Thou'rt a cowardly fool, Dick," returned Inglis; "he is living quietly down at Fairy Knowe to avoid suspicion. Olifant is a magistrate, and will have some of his own people that he can trust along with him. There are us two, and the laird says he can get a desperate fighting Whig fellow, called Quintin Mackell, that has an old grudge at Evandale."

"Well, well, you are my officer, you know," said the private, with true military conscience, "and if anything is wrong—"

"I'll take the blame," said Inglis. "Come, another pot of ale, and let us to Tillietudlem.—Here, blind Bess!—Why, where the devil has the old hag crept to?"

"Delay them as long as you can," whispered Morton, as he thrust his purse into the hostess's hand; "all depends on gaining time."

Then, walking swiftly to the place where the girl held his horse ready, "To Fairy Knowe? No; alone I could not protect them. I must instantly to Glasgow. Wittenbold, the commandant there, will readily give me the support of a troop, and procure me the countenance of the civil power. I must drop a caution as I pass.—Come, Moorkopf," he said, addressing his horse as he mounted him, "this day must try your breath and speed."

CHAPTER XXIII.

*Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,
Though less and less of Emily he saw;
So, speechless for a little space he lay,
Then grasp'd the hand he held, and sigh'd his soul away.
Palamon and Acite.*

The indisposition of Edith confined her to bed during the eventful day on which she had received such an unexpected shock from the sudden apparition of Morton. Next morning, however, she was reported to be so much better that Lord Evandale resumed his purpose of leaving Fairy Knowe. At a late hour in the forenoon Lady Emily entered the apartment of Edith with a peculiar gravity of manner. Having received and paid the compliments of the day, she observed it would be a sad one for her, though it would relieve Miss Bellenden of an encumbrance: "My brother leaves us today, Miss Bellenden."

"Leaves us!" exclaimed Edith, in surprise; "for his own house, I trust?"

"I have reason to think he meditates a more distant journey," answered Lady Emily; "he has little to detain him in this country."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Edith, "why was I born to become the wreck of all that is manly and noble! What can be done to stop him from running headlong on ruin? I will come down instantly.—Say that I implore he will not depart until I speak with him."

"It will be in vain, Miss Bellenden; but I will execute your commission;" and she left the room as formally as she had entered it, and informed her brother Miss Bellenden was so much recovered as to propose coming downstairs ere he went away.

"I suppose," she added pettishly, "the prospect of being speedily released from our company has wrought a cure on her shattered nerves."

"Sister," said Lord Evandale, "you are unjust, if not envious."

"Unjust I maybe, Evandale, but I should not have dreamt," glancing her eye at a mirror, "of being thought envious without better cause. But let us go to the old lady; she is making a feast in the other room which might have dined all your troop when you had one."

Lord Evandale accompanied her in silence to the parlour, for he knew it was in vain to contend with her prepossessions and offended pride. They found the table covered with refreshments, arranged under the careful inspection of Lady Margaret.

"Ye could hardly weel be said to breakfast this morning, my Lord Evandale, and ye maun e'en partake of a small collation before ye ride, such as this poor house, whose inmates are so much indebted to you, can provide in their present circumstances. For my ain part, I like to see young folk take some refection before they ride out upon their sports or their affairs, and I said as much to his most sacred Majesty when he breakfasted at Tillietudlem in the year of grace sixteen hundred and fifty-one; and his most sacred Majesty was pleased to reply, drinking to my health at the same time in a flagon of Rhenish wine, 'Lady Margaret, ye speak like a Highland oracle.' These were his Majesty's very words; so that your lordship may judge whether I have not good authority to press young folk to partake of their vivers."

It may be well supposed that much of the good lady's speech failed Lord Evandale's ears, which were then employed in listening for the light step of Edith. His absence of mind on this occasion, however natural, cost him very dear. While Lady Margaret was playing the kind hostess,—a part she delighted and excelled in,—she was interrupted by John Gudyill, who, in the natural phrase for announcing an inferior to the mistress of a family, said, "There was ane wanting to speak to her leddyship."

"Ane! what ane? Has he nae name? Ye speak as if I kept a shop, and was to come at everybody's whistle."

"Yes, he has a name," answered John, "but your leddyship likes ill to hear't."

"What is it, you fool?"

"It's Calf-Gibbie, my leddy," said John, in a tone rather above the pitch of decorous respect, on which he occasionally trespassed, confiding in his merit as an ancient servant of the family and a faithful follower of their humble fortunes,— "It's Calf-Gibbie, an your leddyship will hae't, that keeps Edie Henshaw's kye down yonder at the Brigg-end,—that's him that was Guse-Gibbie at Tillietudlem, and gaed to the wappinshaw, and that—"

"Hold your peace, John," said the old lady, rising in dignity; "you are very insolent to think I wad speak wi' a person like that. Let him tell his business to you or Mrs. Headrigg."

"He'll no hear o' that, my leddy; he says them that sent him bade him gie the thing to your leddyship's ain hand direct, or to Lord Evandale's, he wots na whilk. But, to say the truth, he's far frae fresh, and he's but an idiot an he were."

"Then turn him out," said Lady Margaret, "and tell him to come back to-morrow when he is sober. I suppose he comes to crave some benevolence, as an ancient follower o' the house."

"Like enugh, my leddy, for he's a' in rags, poor creature."

Gudyill made another attempt to get at Gibbie's commission, which was indeed of the last importance, being a few lines from Morton to Lord Evandale, acquainting him with the danger in which he stood from the practices of Olifant, and exhorting him either to instant flight, or else to come to Glasgow and surrender himself, where he could assure him of protection. This billet, hastily written, he intrusted to Gibbie, whom he saw feeding his herd beside the bridge, and backed with a couple of dollars his desire that it might instantly be delivered into the hand to which it was addressed.

But it was decreed that Goose-Gibbie's intermediation, whether as an emissary or as a man-at-arms, should be unfortunate to the family of Tillietudlem. He unluckily tarried so long at the ale-house to prove if his employer's coin was good that, when he appeared at Fairy Knowe, the little sense which nature had given him was effectually drowned in ale and brandy; and instead of asking for Lord Evandale, he demanded to speak with Lady Margaret, whose name was more familiar to his ear. Being refused admittance to her presence, he staggered away with the letter undelivered, perversely faithful to Morton's instructions in the only point in which it would have been well had he departed from them. A few minutes after he was gone, Edith entered the apartment. Lord Evandale and she met with mutual embarrassment, which Lady Margaret, who only knew in general that their union had been postponed by her granddaughter's indisposition, set down to the bashfulness of a bride and bridegroom, and, to place them at ease, began to talk to Lady Emily on indifferent topics. At this moment Edith, with a countenance as pale as death, muttered, rather than whispered, to Lord Evandale a request to speak with him. He offered his arm, and supported her into the small ante-room, which, as we have noticed before, opened from the parlour. He placed her in a chair, and, taking one himself, awaited the opening of the conversation.

"I am distressed, my lord," were the first words she was able to articulate, and those with difficulty; "I scarce know what I would say, nor how to speak it."

"If I have any share in occasioning your uneasiness," said Lord Evandale, mildly, "you will soon, Edith, be released from it."

"You are determined then, my lord," she replied, "to run this desperate course with desperate men, in spite of your own better reason, in spite of your friends' entreaties, in spite of the almost inevitable ruin which yawns before you?"

"Forgive me, Miss Bellenden; even your solicitude on my account must not detain me when my honour calls. My horses stand ready saddled, my servants are prepared, the signal for rising will be given so soon as I reach Kilsyth. If it is my fate that calls me, I will not shun meeting it. It will be something," he said, taking her hand, "to die deserving your compassion, since I cannot gain your love."

"Oh, my lord, remain!" said Edith, in a tone which went to his heart; "time may explain the strange circumstance which has shocked me so much; my agitated nerves may recover their tranquillity. Oh, do not rush on death and ruin! remain to be our prop and stay, and hope everything from time!"

"It is too late, Edith," answered Lord Evandale; "and I were most ungenerous could I practise on the warmth and kindness of your feelings towards me. I know you cannot love me; nervous distress, so strong as to conjure up the appearance of the dead or absent, indicates a predilection too powerful to give way to friendship and gratitude alone. But were it otherwise, the die is now cast."

As he spoke thus, Cuddie burst into the room, terror and haste in his countenance. "Oh, my lord, hide yourself! they hae beset the outlets o' the house," was his first exclamation.

"They? Who?" said Lord Evandale.

"A party of horse, headed by Basil Olifant," answered Cuddie.

"Oh, hide yourself, my lord!" echoed Edith, in an agony of terror.

"I will not, by Heaven!" answered Lord Evandale. "What right has the villain to assail me or stop my passage? I will make my way, were he backed by a regiment; tell Halliday and Hunter to get out the horses.— And now, farewell, Edith!" He clasped her in his arms, and kissed her tenderly; then, bursting from his sister, who, with Lady Margaret, endeavoured to detain him, rushed out and mounted his horse.

All was in confusion; the women shrieked and hurried in consternation to the front windows of the house, from which they could see a small party of horsemen, of whom two only seemed soldiers. They were on the open ground before Cuddie's cottage, at the bottom of the descent from the house, and showed caution in approaching it, as if uncertain of the strength within.

"He may escape, he may escape!" said Edith; "oh, would he but take the by-road!"

But Lord Evandale, determined to face a danger which his high spirit undervalued, commanded his servants to follow him, and rode composedly down the avenue. Old Gudyill ran to arm himself, and Cuddie snatched down a gun which was kept for the protection of the house, and, although on foot, followed Lord Evandale. It was in vain his wife, who had hurried up on the alarm, hung by his skirts, threatening him with death by the sword or halter for meddling with other folk's matters.

"Hand your peace, ye b——," said Cuddie; "and that's braid Scotch, or I wotna what is. Is it ither folk's matters to see Lord Evandale murdered before my face?" and down the avenue he marched. But considering on the way that he composed the whole infantry, as John Gudyill had not appeared, he took his vantage ground behind the hedge, hammered his flint, cocked his piece, and, taking a long aim at Laird Basil, as he was called, stood prompt for action.

As soon as Lord Evandale appeared, Olifant's party spread themselves a little, as if preparing to enclose him. Their leader stood fast, supported by three men, two of whom were dragoons, the third in dress and appearance a countryman, all well armed. But the strong figure, stern features, and resolved manner of the third attendant made him seem the most formidable of the party; and whoever had before seen him could have no difficulty in recognising Balfour of Burley.

"Follow me," said Lord Evandale to his servants, "and if we are forcibly opposed, do as I do." He advanced at a hand gallop towards Olifant, and was in the act of demanding why he had thus beset the road, when Olifant called out, "Shoot the traitor!" and the whole four fired their carabines upon the unfortunate nobleman. He reeled in the saddle, advanced his hand to the holster, and drew a pistol, but, unable to discharge it, fell from his horse mortally wounded. His servants had presented their carabines. Hunter fired at random; but Halliday, who was an intrepid fellow, took aim at Inglis, and shot him dead on the spot. At the same instant a shot from behind the hedge still more effectually avenged Lord Evandale, for the ball took place in the very midst of Basil Olifant's forehead, and stretched him lifeless on the ground. His followers, astonished at the execution done in so short a time, seemed rather disposed to stand inactive, when Burley, whose blood was up with the contest, exclaimed, "Down with the Midianites!" and attacked Halliday sword in hand. At this instant the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and a party of horse, rapidly advancing on the road from Glasgow, appeared on the fatal field. They were foreign dragoons, led by the Dutch commandant Wittenbold, accompanied by Morton and a civil magistrate.

A hasty call to surrender, in the name of God and King William, was obeyed by all except Burley, who turned his horse and attempted to escape. Several soldiers pursued him by command of their officer, but, being well mounted, only the two headmost seemed likely to gain on him. He turned deliberately twice, and discharging first one of his pistols, and then the other, rid himself of the one pursuer by mortally wounding him, and of the other by shooting his horse, and then continued his flight to Bothwell Bridge, where, for his misfortune, he found the gates shut and guarded. Turning from thence, he made for a place where the river seemed passable, and plunged into the stream, the bullets from the pistols and carabines of his pursuers whizzing around him. Two balls took effect when he was past the middle of the stream, and he felt himself dangerously wounded. He reined his horse round in the midst of the river, and returned towards the bank he had left, waving his hand, as if with the purpose of intimating that he surrendered. The troopers ceased firing at him accordingly, and awaited his return, two of them riding a little way into the river to seize and disarm him. But it presently appeared that his purpose was revenge, not safety. As he approached the two soldiers, he collected his remaining strength, and discharged a blow on the head of one, which tumbled him from his horse. The other dragoon, a strong, muscular man, had in the mean while laid hands on him. Burley, in requital, grasped his throat, as a dying tiger seizes his prey, and both, losing the saddle in the struggle, came headlong into the river, and were swept down the stream. Their course might be traced by the blood which bubbled up to the surface. They were twice seen to rise, the Dutchman striving to swim, and Burley clinging to him in a manner that showed his desire that both should perish. Their corpses were taken out about a

quarter of a mile down the river. As Balfour's grasp could not have been unclenched without cutting off his hands, both were thrown into a hasty grave, still marked by a rude stone and a ruder epitaph.

Gentle reader, I did request of mine honest friend Peter Proudfoot, travelling merchant, known to many of this land for his faithful and just dealings, as well in muslins and cambrics as in small wares, to procure me on his next peregrinations to that vicinage, a copy of the Epitaphion alluded to. And, according to his report, which I see no ground to discredit, it runneth thus:—

*Here lyes ane saint to prelates surly,
Being John Balfour, sometime of Burley,
Who stirred up to vengeance take,
For Solemn League and Cov'nant's sake,
Upon the Magus-Moor in Fife,
Did tak James Sharpe the apostate's life;
By Dutchman's hands was hacked and shot,
Then drowned in Clyde near this saam spot.*

While the soul of this stern enthusiast flitted to its account, that of the brave and generous Lord Evandale was also released. Morton had flung himself from his horse upon perceiving his situation, to render his dying friend all the aid in his power. He knew him, for he pressed his hand, and, being unable to speak, intimated by signs his wish to be conveyed to the house. This was done with all the care possible, and he was soon surrounded by his lamenting friends. But the clamorous grief of Lady Emily was far exceeded in intensity by the silent agony of Edith. Unconscious even of the presence of Morton, she hung over the dying man; nor was she aware that Fate, who was removing one faithful lover, had restored another as if from the grave, until Lord Evandale, taking their hands in his, pressed them both affectionately, united them together, raised his face as if to pray for a blessing on them, and sunk back and expired in the next moment.

BOOK IIXX
THE PIRATE
Chapter 1

*The storm had ceased its wintry roar,
Hoarse dash the billows of the sea;
But who on Thule's desert shore,
Cries, Have I burnt my harp for thee?*

MACNIEL.

That long, narrow, and irregular island, usually called the mainland of Zetland, because it is by far the largest of that Archipelago, terminates, as is well known to the mariners who navigate the stormy seas which surround the Thule of the ancients, in a cliff of immense height, entitled Sumburgh-Head, which presents its bare scalp and naked sides to the weight of a tremendous surge, forming the extreme point of the isle to the south-east. This lofty promontory is constantly exposed to the current of a strong and furious tide, which, setting in betwixt the Orkney and Zetland Islands, and running with force only inferior to that of the Pentland Frith, takes its name from the headland we have mentioned, and is called the Roost of Sumburgh; *roost* being the phrase assigned in those isles to currents of this description.

On the land side, the promontory is covered with short grass, and slopes steeply down to a little isthmus, upon which the sea has encroached in creeks, which, advancing from either side of the island, gradually work their way forward, and seem as if in a short time they would form a junction, and altogether insulate Sumburgh-Head, when what is now a cape, will become a lonely mountain islet, severed from the mainland, of which it is at present the terminating extremity.

Man, however, had in former days considered this as a remote or unlikely event; for a Norwegian chief of other times, or, as other accounts said, and as the name of Jarlshof seemed to imply, an ancient Earl of the Orkneys had selected this neck of land as the place for establishing a mansion-house. It has been long entirely deserted, and the vestiges only can be discerned with difficulty; for the loose sand, borne on the tempestuous gales of those stormy regions, has overblown, and almost buried, the ruins of the buildings; but in the end of the seventeenth century, a part of the Earl's mansion was still entire and habitable. It was a rude building of rough stone, with nothing about it to gratify the eye, or to excite the imagination; a large old-fashioned narrow house, with a very steep roof, covered with flags composed of grey sandstone, would perhaps convey the best idea of the place to a modern reader. The windows were few, very small in size, and distributed up and down the building with utter contempt of regularity. Against the main structure had rested, in former times, certain smaller co-partments of the mansion-house, containing offices, or subordinate apartments, necessary for the accommodation of the Earl's retainers and menials. But these had become ruinous; and the rafters had been taken down for fire-wood, or for other purposes; the walls had given way in many places; and, to complete the devastation, the sand had already drifted amongst the ruins, and filled up what had been once the chambers they contained, to the depth of two or three feet.

Amid this desolation, the inhabitants of Jarlshof had contrived, by constant labour and attention, to keep in order a few roods of land, which had been enclosed as a garden, and which, sheltered by the walls of the house itself, from the relentless sea-blast, produced such vegetables as the climate could bring forth, or rather as the sea-gale would permit to grow; for these islands experience even less of the rigour of cold than is encountered on the mainland of Scotland; but, unsheltered by a wall of some sort or other, it is scarce possible to raise even the most ordinary culinary vegetables; and as for shrubs or trees, they are entirely out of the question, such is the force of the sweeping sea-blast.

At a short distance from the mansion, and near to the sea-beach, just where the creek forms a sort of imperfect harbour, in which lay three or four fishing-boats, there were a few most wretched cottages for the inhabitants and tenants of the township of Jarlshof, who held the whole district of the landlord upon such terms as were in those days usually granted to persons of this description, and which, of course, were hard enough. The landlord himself resided upon an estate which he possessed in a more eligible situation, in a different part of the island, and seldom visited his possessions at Sumburgh-Head. He was an honest, plain Zetland gentleman, somewhat passionate, the necessary result of being surrounded by dependents; and somewhat over-convivial in his habits, the consequence, perhaps, of having too much time at his disposal; but frank-tempered and generous to his people, and kind and hospitable to strangers. He was descended also of an old and noble Norwegian family; a circumstance which rendered him dearer to the lower orders, most of whom are of the same race; while the lairds, or proprietors, are generally of Scottish extraction, who, at that early period, were still considered as strangers and intruders. Magnus Troil, who deduced his descent from the very Earl who was supposed to have founded Jarlshof, was peculiarly of this opinion.

The present inhabitants of Jarlshof had experienced, on several occasions, the kindness and good will of the proprietor of the territory. When Mr. Mertoun — such was the name of the present inhabitant of the old mansion — first arrived in Zetland, some years before the story commences, he had been received at the house of Mr. Troil with that warm and cordial hospitality for which the islands are distinguished. No one asked him whence he came, where he was going, what was his purpose in visiting so remote a corner of the empire, or what was likely to be the term of his stay. He arrived a perfect stranger, yet was instantly overpowered by a succession of invitations; and in each house which he visited, he found a home as long as he chose to accept it, and lived as one of the family, unnoticed and unnoticing, until he thought proper to remove to some other dwelling. This apparent indifference to the rank, character, and qualities of their guest, did not arise from apathy on the part of his kind hosts, for the islanders had their full share of natural curiosity; but their delicacy deemed it would be an infringement upon the laws of hospitality, to ask questions which their guest might have found it difficult or unpleasing to answer; and instead of endeavouring, as is usual in other countries, to wring out of Mr. Mertoun such communications as he might find it agreeable to withhold, the considerate Zetlanders contented themselves with eagerly gathering up such scraps of information as could be collected in the course of conversation.

But the rock in an Arabian desert is not more reluctant to afford water, than Mr. Basil Mertoun was niggard in imparting his confidence, even incidentally; and certainly the politeness of the gentry of Thule was never put to a more severe test than when they felt that good-breeding enjoined them to abstain from enquiring into the situation of so mysterious a personage.

All that was actually known of him was easily summed up. Mr. Mertoun had come to Lerwick, then rising into some importance, but not yet acknowledged as the principal town of the island, in a Dutch vessel, accompanied only by his son, a handsome boy of about fourteen years old. His own age might exceed forty. The Dutch skipper introduced him to some of the very good friends with whom he used to barter gin and gingerbread for little Zetland bullocks, smoked geese, and stockings of lambs-wool; and although Meinheer could only say, that "Meinheer Mertoun hab bay his bassage like one gentlemans, and hab given a Kreitz-dollar beside to the crew," this introduction served to establish the Dutchman's passenger in a respectable circle of acquaintances, which gradually enlarged, as it appeared that the stranger was a man of considerable acquirements.

This discovery was made almost *per force*; for Mertoun was as unwilling to speak upon general subjects, as upon his own affairs. But he was sometimes led into discussions, which showed, as it were in spite of himself, the scholar and the man of the world; and, at other times, as if in requital of the hospitality which he experienced, he seemed to compel himself, against his fixed nature, to enter into the society of those around him, especially when it assumed the grave, melancholy, or satirical cast, which best suited the temper of his own mind. Upon such occasions, the Zetlanders were universally of opinion that he must have had an excellent education, neglected only in one striking particular, namely, that Mr. Mertoun scarce knew the stem of a ship from the stern; and in the management of a boat, a cow could not be more ignorant. It seemed astonishing such gross ignorance of the most necessary art of life (in the Zetland Isles at least) should subsist along with his accomplishments in other respects; but so it was.

Unless called forth in the manner we have mentioned, the habits of Basil Mertoun were retired and gloomy. From loud mirth he instantly fled; and even the moderated cheerfulness of a friendly party, had the invariable effect of throwing him into deeper dejection than even his usual demeanour indicated.

Women are always particularly desirous of investigating mystery, and of alleviating melancholy, especially when these circumstances are united in a handsome man about the prime of life. It is possible, therefore, that amongst the fair-haired and blue-eyed daughters of Thule, this mysterious and pensive stranger might

have found some one to take upon herself the task of consolation, had he shown any willingness to accept such kindly offices; but, far from doing so, he seemed even to shun the presence of the sex, to which in our distresses, whether of mind or body, we generally apply for pity and comfort.

To these peculiarities Mr. Mertoun added another, which was particularly disagreeable to his host and principal patron, Magnus Troil. This magnate of Zetland, descended by the father's side, as we have already said, from an ancient Norwegian family, by the marriage of its representative with a Danish lady, held the devout opinion that a cup of Geneva or Nantz was specific against all cares and afflictions whatever. These were remedies to which Mr. Mertoun never applied; his drink was water, and water alone, and no persuasion or entreaties could induce him to taste any stronger beverage than was afforded by the pure spring. Now this Magnus Troil could not tolerate; it was a defiance to the ancient northern laws of conviviality, which, for his own part, he had so rigidly observed, that although he was wont to assert that he had never in his life gone to bed drunk, (that is, in his own sense of the word,) it would have been impossible to prove that he had ever resigned himself to slumber in a state of actual and absolute sobriety. It may be therefore asked, What did this stranger bring into society to compensate the displeasure given by his austere and abstemious habits? He had, in the first place, that manner and self-importance which mark a person of some consequence: and although it was conjectured that he could not be rich, yet it was certainly known by his expenditure that neither was he absolutely poor. He had, besides, some powers of conversation, when, as we have already hinted, he chose to exert them, and his misanthropy or aversion to the business and intercourse of ordinary life, was often expressed in an antithetical manner, which passed for wit, when better was not to be had. Above all, Mr. Mertoun's secret seemed impenetrable, and his presence had all the interest of a riddle, which men love to read over and over, because they cannot find out the meaning of it.

Notwithstanding these recommendations, Mertoun differed in so many material points from his host, that after he had been for some time a guest at his principal residence, Magnus Troil was agreeably surprised when, one evening after they had sat two hours in absolute silence, drinking brandy and water — that is, Magnus drinking the alcohol, and Mertoun the element — the guest asked his host's permission to occupy, as his tenant, this deserted mansion of Jarlshof, at the extremity of the territory called Dunrossness, and situated just beneath Sumburgh-Head. "I shall be handsomely rid of him," quoth Magnus to himself, "and his kill-joy visage will never again stop the bottle in its round. His departure will ruin me in lemons, however, for his mere look was quite sufficient to sour a whole ocean of punch."

Yet the kind-hearted Zetlander generously and disinterestedly remonstrated with Mr. Mertoun on the solitude and inconveniences to which he was about to subject himself. "There were scarcely," he said, "even the most necessary articles of furniture in the old house — there was no society within many miles — for provisions, the principal article of food would be sour sillocks, and his only company gulls and gannets."

"My good friend," replied Mertoun, "if you could have named a circumstance which would render the residence more eligible to me than any other, it is that there would be neither human luxury nor human society near the place of my retreat; a shelter from the weather for my own head, and for the boy's, is all I seek for. So name your rent, Mr. Troil, and let me be your tenant at Jarlshof."

"Rent?" answered the Zetlander; "why, no great rent for an old house which no one has lived in since my mother's time — God rest her! — and as for shelter, the old walls are thick enough, and will bear many a bang yet. But, Heaven love you, Mr. Mertoun, think what you are purposing. For one of us to live at Jarlshof, were a wild scheme enough; but you, who are from another country, whether English, Scotch, or Irish, no one can tell" —

"Nor does it greatly matter," said Mertoun, somewhat abruptly.

"Not a herring's scale," answered the Laird; "only that I like you the better for being no Scot, as I trust you are not one. Hither they have come like the clack-geese — every chamberlain has brought over a flock of his own name, and his own hatching, for what I know, and here they roost for ever — catch them returning to their own barren Highlands or Lowlands, when once they have tasted our Zetland beef, and seen our bonny voes and lochs. No, sir," (here Magnus proceeded with great animation, sipping from time to time the half-diluted spirit, which at the same time animated his resentment against the intruders, and enabled him to endure the mortifying reflection which it suggested.)—"No, sir, the ancient days and the genuine manners of these Islands are no more; for our ancient possessors — our Patersons, our Feas, our Schlagbrenners, our Thorbiorns, have given place to Giffords, Scotts, Mouats, men whose names bespeak them or their ancestors strangers to the soil which we the Troils have inhabited long before the days of Turf-Einar, who first taught these Isles the mystery of burning peat for fuel, and who has been handed down to a grateful posterity by a name which records the discovery."

This was a subject upon which the potentate of Jarlshof was usually very diffuse, and Mertoun saw him enter upon it with pleasure, because he knew he should not be called upon to contribute any aid to the conversation, and might therefore indulge his own saturnine humour while the Norwegian Zetlander declaimed on the change of times and inhabitants. But just as Magnus had arrived at the melancholy conclusion, "how probable it was, that in another century scarce a *merk*— scarce even an *ure* of land, would be in the possession of the Norse inhabitants, the true Udallers⁷ of Zetland," he recollected the circumstances of his guest, and stopped suddenly short. "I do not say all this," he added, interrupting himself, "as if I were unwilling that you should settle on my estate, Mr. Mertoun — But for Jarlshof — the place is a wild one — Come from where you will, I warrant you will say, like other travellers, you came from a better climate than ours, for so say you all. And yet you think of a retreat, which the very natives run away from. Will you not take your glass?"—(This was to be considered as interjectional.)—"then here's to you."

"My good sir," answered Mertoun, "I am indifferent to climate; if there is but air enough to fill my lungs, I care not if it be the breath of Arabia or of Lapland."

"Air enough you may have," answered Magnus, "no lack of that — somewhat damp, strangers allege it to be, but we know a corrective for that — Here's to you, Mr. Mertoun — You must learn to *do so*, and to smoke a pipe; and then, as you say, you will find the air of Zetland equal to that of Arabia. But have you seen Jarlshof?"

The stranger intimated that he had not.

"Then," replied Magnus, "you have no idea of your undertaking. If you think it a comfortable roadstead like this, with the house situated on the side of an inland voe,⁸ that brings the herrings up to your door, you are mistaken, my heart. At Jarlshof you will see nought but the wild waves tumbling on the bare rocks, and the Roost of Sumburgh herring at the rate of fifteen knots an-hour."

"I shall see nothing at least of the current of human passions," replied Mertoun.

"You will hear nothing but the clanging and screaming of scarts, sheer-waters, and seagulls, from daybreak till sunset."

"I will compound, my friend," replied the stranger, "so that I do not hear the chattering of women's tongues."

"Ah," said the Norman, "that is because you hear just now my little Minna and Brenda singing in the garden with your Mordaunt. Now, I would rather listen to their little voices, than the skylark which I once heard in Caithness, or the nightingale that I have read of. — What will the girls do for want of their playmate Mordaunt?"

"They will shift for themselves," answered Mertoun; "younger or elder they will find playmates or dupes. — But the question is, Mr. Troil, will you let to me, as your tenant, this old mansion of Jarlshof?"

"Gladly, since you make it your option to live in a spot so desolate."

"And as for the rent?" continued Mertoun.

"The rent?" replied Magnus; "hum — why, you must have the bit of *plantie cruive*,⁹ which they once called a garden, and a right in the *scathold*, and a sixpenny merk of land, that the tenants may fish for you; — eight *lispunds*¹⁰ of butter, and eight shillings sterling yearly, is not too much?"

Mr. Mertoun agreed to terms so moderate, and from thenceforward resided chiefly at the solitary mansion which we have described in the beginning of this chapter, conforming not only without complaint, but, as it seemed, with a sullen pleasure, to all the privations which so wild and desolate a situation necessarily imposed on its inhabitant.

Chapter 2.

*'Tis not alone the scene — the man, Anselmo,
The man finds sympathies in these wild wastes,
And roughly tumbling seas, which fairer views*

The few inhabitants of the township of Jarlshof had at first heard with alarm, that a person of rank superior to their own was come to reside in the ruinous tenement, which they still called the Castle. In those days (for the present times are greatly altered for the better) the presence of a superior, in such a situation, was almost certain to be attended with additional burdens and exactions, for which, under one pretext or another, feudal customs furnished a thousand apologies. By each of these, a part of the tenants' hard-won and precarious profits was diverted for the use of their powerful neighbour and superior, the tacksman, as he was called. But the sub-tenants speedily found that no oppression of this kind was to be apprehended at the hands of Basil Mertoun. His own means, whether large or small, were at least fully adequate to his expenses, which, so far as regarded his habits of life, were of the most frugal description. The luxuries of a few books, and some philosophical instruments, with which he was supplied from London as occasion offered, seemed to indicate a degree of wealth unusual in those islands; but, on the other hand, the table and the accommodations at Jarlshof, did not exceed what was maintained by a Zetland proprietor of the most inferior description.

The tenants of the hamlet troubled themselves very little about the quality of their superior, as soon as they found that their situation was rather to be mended than rendered worse by his presence; and, once relieved from the apprehension of his tyrannizing over them, they laid their heads together to make the most of him by various petty tricks of overcharge and extortion, which for a while the stranger submitted to with the most philosophic indifference. An incident, however, occurred, which put his character in a new light, and effectually checked all future efforts at extravagant imposition.

A dispute arose in the kitchen of the Castle betwixt an old governante, who acted as housekeeper to Mr. Mertoun, and Sweyn Erickson, as good a Zetlander as ever rowed a boat to the *haaf* fishing;¹¹ which dispute, as is usual in such cases, was maintained with such increasing heat and vociferation as to reach the ears of the master, (as he was called,) who, secluded in a solitary turret, was deeply employed in examining the contents of a new package of books from London, which, after long expectation, had found its way to Hull, from thence by a whaling vessel to Lerwick, and so to Jarlshof. With more than the usual thrill of indignation which indolent people always feel when roused into action on some unpleasant occasion, Mertoun descended to the scene of contest, and so suddenly, peremptorily, and strictly, enquired into the cause of dispute, that the parties, notwithstanding every evasion which they attempted, became unable to disguise from him, that their difference respected the several interests to which the honest governante, and no less honest fisherman, were respectively entitled, in an overcharge of about one hundred per cent on a bargain of rock-cod, purchased by the former from the latter, for the use of the family at Jarlshof.

When this was fairly ascertained and confessed, Mr. Mertoun stood looking upon the culprits with eyes in which the utmost scorn seemed to contend with awakening passion. "Hark you, ye old hag," said he at length to the housekeeper, "avoid my house this instant! and know that I dismiss you, not for being a liar, a thief, and an ungrateful quean — for these are qualities as proper to you as your name of woman — but for daring, in my house, to scold above your breath. — And for you, you rascal, who suppose you may cheat a stranger as you would *flinch*¹² a whale, know that I am well acquainted with the rights which, by delegation from your master, Magnus Troil, I can exercise over you, if I will. Provoke me to a certain pitch, and you shall learn, to your cost, I can break your rest as easily as you can interrupt my leisure. I know the meaning of *scat*, and *wattle*, and *hawkhen*, and *hagalef*,^(b) and every other exaction, by which your lords, in ancient and modern days, have wrung your withers; nor is there one of you that shall not rue the day that you could not be content with robbing me of my money, but must also break in on my leisure with your atrocious northern clamour, that rivals in discord the screaming of a flight of Arctic gulls."

Nothing better occurred to Sweyn, in answer to this objurgation, than the preferring a humble request that his honour would be pleased to keep the cod-fish without payment, and say no more about the matter; but by this time Mr. Mertoun had worked up his passions into an ungovernable rage, and with one hand he threw the money at the fisherman's head, while with the other he pelted him out of the apartment with his own fish, which he finally flung out of doors after him.

There was so much of appalling and tyrannic fury in the stranger's manner on this occasion, that Sweyn neither stopped to collect the money nor take back his commodity, but fled at a precipitate rate to the small hamlet, to tell his comrades that if they provoked Master Mertoun any farther, he would turn an absolute Pate Stewart¹³ on their hand, and head and hang without either judgment or mercy.

Hither also came the discarded housekeeper, to consult with her neighbours and kindred (for she too was a native of the village) what she should do to regain the desirable situation from which she had been so suddenly expelled. The old Ranzellaar of the village, who had the voice most potential in the deliberations of the township, after hearing what had happened, pronounced that Sweyn Erickson had gone too far in raising the market upon Mr. Mertoun; and that whatever pretext the tacksman might assume for thus giving way to his anger, the real grievance must have been the charging the rock cod-fish at a penny instead of a half-penny a-pound; he therefore exhorted all the community never to raise their exactions in future beyond the proportion of threepence upon the shilling, at which rate their master at the Castle could not reasonably be expected to grumble, since, as he was disposed to do them no harm, it was reasonable to think that, in a moderate way, he had no objection to do them good. "And three upon twelve," said the experienced Ranzellaar, "is a decent and moderate profit, and will bring with it God's blessing and Saint Ronald's."

Proceeding upon the tariff thus judiciously recommended to them, the inhabitants of Jarlshof cheated Mertoun in future only to the moderate extent of twenty-five per cent; a rate to which all nabobs, army-contractors, speculators in the funds, and others, whom recent and rapid success has enabled to settle in the country upon a great scale, ought to submit, as very reasonable treatment at the hand of their rustic neighbours. Mertoun at least seemed of that opinion, for he gave himself no farther trouble upon the subject of his household expenses.

The conscript fathers of Jarlshof, having settled their own matters, took next under their consideration the case of Swertha, the banished matron who had been expelled from the Castle, whom, as an experienced and useful ally, they were highly desirous to restore to her office of housekeeper, should that be found possible. But as their wisdom here failed them, Swertha, in despair, had recourse to the good offices of Mordaunt Mertoun, with whom she had acquired some favour by her knowledge in old Norwegian ballads, and dismal tales concerning the Trows or Drows, (the dwarfs of the Scalds,) with whom superstitious eld had peopled many a lonely cavern and brown dale in Dunrossness, as in every other district of Zetland. "Swertha," said the youth, "I can do but little for you, but you may do something for yourself. My father's passion resembles the fury of those ancient champions, those Berserkars, you sing songs about."

"Ay, ay, fish of my heart," replied the old woman, with a pathetic whine; "the Berserkars(c) were champions who lived before the blessed days of Saint Olave, and who used to run like madmen on swords, and spears, and harpoons, and muskets, and snap them all into pieces, as a finner¹⁴ would go through a herring-net, and then, when the fury went off, they were as weak and unstable as water."¹⁵

"That's the very thing, Swertha," said Mordaunt. "Now, my father never likes to think of his passion after it is over, and is so much of a Berserker, that, let him be desperate as he will to-day, he will not care about it to-morrow. Therefore, he has not filled up your place in the household at the Castle, and not a mouthful of warm food has been dressed there since you went away, and not a morsel of bread baked, but we have lived just upon whatever cold thing came to hand. Now, Swertha, I will be your warrant, that if you go boldly up to the Castle, and enter upon the discharge of your duties as usual, you will never hear a single word from him."

Swertha hesitated at first to obey this bold counsel. She said, "to her thinking, Mr. Mertoun, when he was angry, looked more like a fiend than any Berserker of them all; that the fire flashed from his eyes, and the foam flew from his lips; and that it would be a plain tempting of Providence to put herself again in such a venture."

But, on the encouragement which she received from the son, she determined at length once more to face the parent; and, dressing herself in her ordinary household attire, for so Mordaunt particularly recommended, she slipped into the Castle, and presently resuming the various and numerous occupations which devolved on her, seemed as deeply engaged in household cares as if she had never been out of office.

The first day of her return to her duty, Swertha made no appearance in presence of her master, but trusted that after his three days' diet on cold meat, a hot dish, dressed with the best of her simple skill, might introduce her favourably to his recollection. When Mordaunt had reported that his father had taken no notice of this change of diet, and when she herself observed that in passing and repassing him occasionally, her appearance produced no effect upon her singular master, she

began to imagine that the whole affair had escaped Mr. Mertoun's memory, and was active in her duty as usual. Neither was she convinced of the contrary until one day, when, happening somewhat to elevate her tone in a dispute with the other maid-servant, her master, who at that time passed the place of contest, eyed her with a strong glance, and pronounced the single word, *Remember!* in a tone which taught Swertha the government of her tongue for many weeks after.

If Mertoun was whimsical in his mode of governing his household, he seemed no less so in his plan of educating his son. He showed the youth but few symptoms of parental affection; yet, in his ordinary state of mind, the improvement of Mordaunt's education seemed to be the utmost object of his life. He had both books and information sufficient to discharge the task of tutor in the ordinary branches of knowledge; and in this capacity was regular, calm, and strict, not to say severe, in exacting from his pupil the attention necessary for his profiting. But in the perusal of history, to which their attention was frequently turned, as well as in the study of classic authors, there often occurred facts or sentiments which produced an instant effect upon Mertoun's mind, and brought on him suddenly what Swertha, Sweyn, and even Mordaunt, came to distinguish by the name of his dark hour. He was aware, in the usual case, of its approach, and retreated to an inner apartment, into which he never permitted even Mordaunt to enter. Here he would abide in seclusion for days, and even weeks, only coming out at uncertain times, to take such food as they had taken care to leave within his reach, which he used in wonderfully small quantities. At other times, and especially during the winter solstice, when almost every person spends the gloomy time within doors in feasting and merriment, this unhappy man would wrap himself in a dark-coloured sea-cloak, and wander out along the stormy beach, or upon the desolate heath, indulging his own gloomy and wayward reveries under the inclement sky, the rather that he was then most sure to wander unencountered and unobserved.

As Mordaunt grew older, he learned to note the particular signs which preceded these fits of gloomy despondency, and to direct such precautions as might ensure his unfortunate parent from ill-timed interruption, (which had always the effect of driving him to fury,) while, at the same time, full provision was made for his subsistence. Mordaunt perceived that at such periods the melancholy fit of his father was greatly prolonged, if he chanced to present himself to his eyes while the dark hour was upon him. Out of respect, therefore, to his parent, as well as to indulge the love of active exercise and of amusement natural to his period of life, Mordaunt used often to absent himself altogether from the mansion of Jarlishof, and even from the district, secure that his father, if the dark hour passed away in his absence, would be little inclined to enquire how his son had disposed of his leisure, so that he was sure he had not watched his own weak moments; that being the subject on which he entertained the utmost jealousy.

At such times, therefore, all the sources of amusement which the country afforded, were open to the younger Mertoun, who, in these intervals of his education, had an opportunity to give full scope to the energies of a bold, active, and daring character. He was often engaged with the youth of the hamlet in those desperate sports, to which the "dreadful trade of the samphire-gatherer" is like a walk upon level ground — often joined those midnight excursions upon the face of the giddy cliffs, to secure the eggs or the young of the sea-fowl; and in these daring adventures displayed an address, presence of mind, and activity, which, in one so young, and not a native of the country, astonished the oldest fowlers.¹⁶

At other times, Mordaunt accompanied Sweyn and other fishermen in their long and perilous expeditions to the distant and deep sea, learning under their direction the management of the boat, in which they equal, or exceed, perhaps, any natives of the British empire. This exercise had charms for Mordaunt, independently of the fishing alone.

At this time, the old Norwegian sagas were much remembered, and often rehearsed, by the fishermen, who still preserved among themselves the ancient Norse tongue, which was the speech of their forefathers. In the dark romance of those Scandinavian tales, lay much that was captivating to a youthful ear; and the classic fables of antiquity were rivalled at least, if not excelled, in Mordaunt's opinion, by the strange legends of Berserkars, of Sea-kings, of dwarfs, giants, and sorcerers, which he heard from the native Zetlanders. Often the scenes around him were assigned as the localities of the wild poems, which, half recited, half chanted by voices as hoarse, if not so loud, as the waves over which they floated, pointed out the very bay on which they sailed as the scene of a bloody sea-fight; the scarce-seen heap of stones that bristled over the projecting cape, as the dun, or castle, of some potent earl or noted pirate; the distant and solitary grey stone on the lonely moor, as marking the grave of a hero; the wild cavern, up which the sea rolled in heavy, broad, and unbroken billows, as the dwelling of some noted sorceress.¹⁷

The ocean also had its mysteries, the effect of which was aided by the dim twilight, through which it was imperfectly seen for more than half the year. Its bottomless depths and secret caves contained, according to the account of Sweyn and others, skilled in legendary lore, such wonders as modern navigators reject with disdain. In the quiet moonlight bay, where the waves came rippling to the shore, upon a bed of smooth sand intermingled with shells, the mermaid was still seen to glide along the waters, and, mingling her voice with the sighing breeze, was often heard to sing of subterranean wonders, or to chant prophecies of future events. The kraken, that hugest of living things, was still supposed to cumber the recesses of the Northern Ocean; and often, when some fog-bank covered the sea at a distance, the eye of the experienced boatman saw the horns of the monstrous leviathan welking and waving amidst the wreaths of mist, and bore away with all press of oar and sail, lest the sudden suction, occasioned by the sinking of the monstrous mass to the bottom, should drag within the grasp of its multifarious feelers his own frail skiff. The sea-snake was also known, which, arising out of the depths of ocean, stretches to the skies his enormous neck, covered with a mane like that of a war-horse, and with its broad glittering eyes, raised mast-head high, looks out, as it seems, for plunder or for victims.

Many prodigious stories of these marine monsters, and of many others less known, were then universally received among the Zetlanders, whose descendants have not as yet by any means abandoned faith in them.¹⁸

Such legends are, indeed, everywhere current amongst the vulgar; but the imagination is far more powerfully affected by them on the deep and dangerous seas of the north, amidst precipices and headlands, many hundred feet in height — amid perilous straits, and currents, and eddies — long sunken reefs of rock, over which the vivid ocean foams and boils — dark caverns, to whose extremities neither man nor skiff has ever ventured — lonely, and often uninhabited isles — and occasionally the ruins of ancient northern fastnesses, dimly seen by the feeble light of the Arctic winter. To Mordaunt, who had much of romance in his disposition, these superstitions formed a pleasing and interesting exercise of the imagination, while, half doubting, half inclined to believe, he listened to the tales chanted concerning these wonders of nature, and creatures of credulous belief, told in the rude but energetic language of the ancient Scalds.

But there wanted not softer and lighter amusement, that might seem better suited to Mordaunt's age, than the wild tales and rude exercises which we have already mentioned. The season of winter, when, from the shortness of the daylight, labour becomes impossible, is in Zetland the time of revel, feasting, and merriment. Whatever the fisherman has been able to acquire during summer, was expended, and often wasted, in maintaining the mirth and hospitality of his hearth during this period; while the landholders and gentlemen of the island gave double loose to their convivial and hospitable dispositions, thronged their houses with guests, and drove away the rigour of the season with jest, glee, and song, the dance, and the wine-cup.

Amid the revels of this merry, though rigorous season, no youth added more spirit to the dance, or glee to the revel, than the young stranger, Mordaunt Mertoun. When his father's state of mind permitted, or indeed required, his absence, he wandered from house to house a welcome guest wherever he came, and lent his willing voice to the song, and his foot to the dance. A boat, or, if the weather, as was often the case, permitted not that convenience, one of the numerous ponies, which, straying in hordes about the extensive moors, may be said to be at any man's command who can catch them, conveyed him from the mansion of one hospitable Zetlander to that of another. None excelled him in performing the warlike sword-dance, a species of amusement which had been derived from the habits of the ancient Norsemen. He could play upon the *gve*, and upon the common violin, the melancholy and pathetic tunes peculiar to the country; and with great spirit and execution could relieve their monotony with the livelier airs of the North of Scotland. When a party set forth as maskers, or, as they are called in Scotland, *guizards*, to visit some neighbouring Laird, or rich Udaller, it augured well of the expedition if Mordaunt Mertoun could be prevailed upon to undertake the office of *skudler*, or leader of the band. Upon these occasions, full of fun and frolic, he led his retinue from house to house, bringing mirth where he went, and leaving regret when he departed. Mordaunt became thus generally known and beloved as generally, through most of the houses composing the patriarchal community of the Main Isle; but his visits were most frequently and most willingly paid at the mansion of his father's landlord and protector, Magnus Troil.

It was not entirely the hearty and sincere welcome of the worthy old Magnate, nor the sense that he was in effect his father's patron, which occasioned these frequent visits. The hand of welcome was indeed received as eagerly as it was sincerely given, while the ancient Udaller, raising himself in his huge chair, whereof

the inside was lined with well-dressed sealskins, and the outside composed of massive oak, carved by the rude graving-tool of some Hamburg carpenter, shouted forth his welcome in a tone, which might, in ancient times, have hailed the return of *loul*, the highest festival of the Goths. There was metal yet more attractive, and younger hearts, whose welcome, if less loud, was as sincere as that of the jolly Udaller. But this is matter which ought not to be discussed at the conclusion of a chapter.

Chapter 3.

*"O, Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lasses;
They biggit a house on yon burn-brae,
And theekit it ower wi' rashes.
Fair Bessy Bell I looed yestreen,
And thought I ne'er could alter;
But Mary Gray's twa pawky een
Have garr'd my fancy falter."*(D)

SCOTS SONG.

We have already mentioned Minna and Brenda, the daughters of Magnus Troil. Their mother had been dead for many years, and they were now two beautiful girls, the eldest only eighteen, which might be a year or two younger than Mordaunt Mertoun, the second about seventeen. — They were the joy of their father's heart, and the light of his old eyes; and although indulged to a degree which might have endangered his comfort and their own, they repaid his affection with a love, into which even blind indulgence had not introduced slight regard, or feminine caprice. The difference of their tempers and of their complexions was singularly striking, although combined, as is usual, with a certain degree of family resemblance.

The mother of these maidens had been a Scottish lady from the Highlands of Sutherland, the orphan of a noble chief, who, driven from his own country during the feuds of the seventeenth century, had found shelter in those peaceful islands, which, amidst poverty and seclusion, were thus far happy, that they remained unvexed by discord, and unstained by civil broil. The father (his name was Saint Clair) pined for his native glen, his feudal tower, his clansmen, and his fallen authority, and died not long after his arrival in Zetland. The beauty of his orphan daughter, despite her Scottish lineage, melted the stout heart of Magnus Troil. He sued and was listened to, and she became his bride; but dying in the fifth year of their union, left him to mourn his brief period of domestic happiness.

From her mother, Minna inherited the stately form and dark eyes, the raven locks and finely-pencilled brows, which showed she was, on one side at least, a stranger to the blood of Thule. Her cheek —

"O call it fair, not pale!"

was so slightly and delicately tinged with the rose, that many thought the lily had an undue proportion in her complexion. But in that predominance of the paler flower, there was nothing sickly or languid; it was the true natural colour of health, and corresponded in a peculiar degree with features, which seemed calculated to express a contemplative and high-minded character. When Minna Troil heard a tale of woe or of injustice, it was then her blood rushed to her cheeks, and showed plainly how warm it beat, notwithstanding the generally serious, composed, and retiring disposition, which her countenance and demeanour seemed to exhibit. If strangers sometimes conceived that these fine features were clouded by melancholy, for which her age and situation could scarce have given occasion, they were soon satisfied, upon further acquaintance, that the placid, mild quietude of her disposition, and the mental energy of a character which was but little interested in ordinary and trivial occurrences, was the real cause of her gravity; and most men, when they knew that her melancholy had no ground in real sorrow, and was only the aspiration of a soul bent on more important objects than those by which she was surrounded, might have wished her whatever could add to her happiness, but could scarce have desired that, graceful as she was in her natural and unaffected seriousness, she should change that deportment for one more gay. In short, notwithstanding our wish to have avoided that hackneyed simile of an angel, we cannot avoid saying there was something in the serious beauty of her aspect, in the measured, yet graceful ease of her motions, in the music of her voice, and the serene purity of her eye, that seemed as if Minna Troil belonged naturally to some higher and better sphere, and was only the chance visitant of a world that was not worthy of her.

The scarcely less beautiful, equally lovely, and equally innocent Brenda, was of a complexion as differing from her sister, as they differed in character, taste, and expression. Her profuse locks were of that paly brown which receives from the passing sunbeam a tinge of gold, but darkens again when the ray has passed from it. Her eye, her mouth, the beautiful row of teeth, which in her innocent vivacity were frequently disclosed; the fresh, yet not too bright glow of a healthy complexion, tinging a skin like the drifted snow, spoke her genuine Scandinavian descent. A fairy form, less tall than that of Minna, but still more finely moulded into symmetry — a careless, and almost childish lightness of step — an eye that seemed to look on every object with pleasure, from a natural and serene cheerfulness of disposition, attracted even more general admiration than the charms of her sister, though perhaps that which Minna did excite might be of a more intense as well as more reverential character.

The dispositions of these lovely sisters were not less different than their complexions. In the kindly affections, neither could be said to excel the other, so much were they attached to their father and to each other. But the cheerfulness of Brenda mixed itself with the every-day business of life, and seemed inexhaustible in its profusion. The less buoyant spirit of her sister appeared to bring to society a contented wish to be interested and pleased with what was going forward, but was rather placidly carried along with the stream of mirth and pleasure, than disposed to aid its progress by any efforts of her own. She endured mirth, rather than enjoyed it; and the pleasures in which she most delighted, were those of a graver and more solitary cast. The knowledge which is derived from books was beyond her reach. Zetland afforded few opportunities, in those days, of studying the lessons, bequeathed

"By dead men to their kind;"

and Magnus Troil, such as we have described him, was not a person within whose mansion the means of such knowledge were to be acquired. But the book of nature was before Minna, that noblest of volumes, where we are ever called to wonder and to admire, even when we cannot understand. The plants of those wild regions, the shells on the shores, and the long list of feathered clans which haunt their cliffs and eyries, were as well known to Minna Troil as to the most experienced fowlers. Her powers of observation were wonderful, and little interrupted by other tones of feeling. The information which she acquired by habits of patient attention, was indelibly riveted in a naturally powerful memory. She had also a high feeling for the solitary and melancholy grandeur of the scenes in which she was placed. The ocean, in all its varied forms of sublimity and terror — the tremendous cliffs that resound to the ceaseless roar of the billows, and the clang of the sea-fowl, had for Minna a charm in almost every state in which the changing seasons exhibited them. With the enthusiastic feelings proper to the romantic race from which her mother descended, the love of natural objects was to her a passion capable not only of occupying, but at times of agitating, her mind. Scenes upon which her sister looked with a sense of transient awe or emotion, which vanished on her return from witnessing them, continued long to fill Minna's imagination, not only in solitude, and in the silence of the night, but in the hours of society. So that sometimes when she sat like a beautiful statue, a present member of the domestic circle, her thoughts were far absent, wandering on the wild sea-shore, and among the yet wilder mountains of her native isles. And yet, when recalled to conversation, and mingling in it with interest, there were few to whom her friends were more indebted for enhancing its enjoyments; and although something in her manners claimed deference (notwithstanding her early youth) as well as affection, even her gay, lovely, and amiable sister was not more generally beloved than the more retired and pensive Minna.

Indeed, the two lovely sisters were not only the delight of their friends, but the pride of those islands, where the inhabitants of a certain rank were blended, by the remoteness of their situation and the general hospitality of their habits, into one friendly community. A wandering poet and parcel-musician, who, after going through various fortunes, had returned to end his days as he could in his native islands, had celebrated the daughters of Magnus in a poem, which he entitled Night and Day; and in his description of Minna, might almost be thought to have anticipated, though only in a rude outline, the exquisite lines of Lord Byron —

"She walks in beauty, like the night

Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect, and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

Their father loved the maidens both so well, that it might be difficult to say which he loved best; saving that, perchance, he liked his graver damsel better in the walk without doors, and his merry maiden better by the fireside; that he more desired the society of Minna when he was sad, and that of Brenda when he was mirthful; and, what was nearly the same thing, preferred Minna before noon, and Brenda after the glass had circulated in the evening.

But it was still more extraordinary, that the affections of Mordaunt Mertoun seemed to hover with the same impartiality as those of their father betwixt the two lovely sisters. From his boyhood, as we have noticed, he had been a frequent inmate of the residence of Magnus at Burgh-Westra, although it lay nearly twenty miles distant from Jarlishof. The impassable character of the country betwixt these places, extending over hills covered with loose and quaking bog, and frequently intersected by the creeks or arms of the sea, which indent the island on either side, as well as by fresh-water streams and lakes, rendered the journey difficult, and even dangerous, in the dark season; yet, as soon as the state of his father's mind warned him to absent himself, Mordaunt, at every risk, and under every difficulty, was pretty sure to be found the next day at Burgh-Westra, having achieved his journey in less time than would have been employed perhaps by the most active native.

He was of course set down as a wooer of one of the daughters of Magnus, by the public of Zetland; and when the old Udaller's great partiality to the youth was considered, nobody doubted that he might aspire to the hand of either of those distinguished beauties, with as large a share of islets, rocky moorland, and shore-fishings, as might be the fitting portion of a favoured child, and with the presumptive prospect of possessing half the domains of the ancient house of Troil, when their present owner should be no more. This seemed all a reasonable speculation, and, in theory at least, better constructed than many that are current through the world as unquestionable facts. But, alas! all that sharpness of observation which could be applied to the conduct of the parties, failed to determine the main point, to which of the young persons, namely, the attentions of Mordaunt were peculiarly devoted. He seemed, in general, to treat them as an affectionate and attached brother might have treated two sisters, so equally dear to him that a breath would have turned the scale of affection. Or if at any time, which often happened, the one maiden appeared the more especial object of his attention, it seemed only to be because circumstances called her peculiar talents and disposition into more particular and immediate exercise.

Both the sisters were accomplished in the simple music of the north, and Mordaunt, who was their assistant, and sometimes their preceptor, when they were practising this delightful art, might be now seen assisting Minna in the acquisition of those wild, solemn, and simple airs, to which scalds and harpers sung of old the deeds of heroes, and presently found equally active in teaching Brenda the more lively and complicated music, which their father's affection caused to be brought from the English or Scottish capital for the use of his daughters. And while conversing with them, Mordaunt, who mingled a strain of deep and ardent enthusiasm with the gay and ungovernable spirits of youth, was equally ready to enter into the wild and poetical visions of Minna, or into the lively and often humorous chat of her gayer sister. In short, so little did he seem to attach himself to either damsel exclusively, that he was sometimes heard to say, that Minna never looked so lovely, as when her lighthearted sister had induced her, for the time, to forget her habitual gravity; or Brenda so interesting, as when she sat listening, a subdued and affected partaker of the deep pathos of her sister Minna.

The public of the mainland were, therefore, to use the hunter's phrase, at fault in their farther conclusions, and could but determine, after long vacillating betwixt the maidens, that the young man was positively to marry one of them, but which of the two could only be determined when his approaching manhood, or the interference of stout old Magnus, the father, should teach Master Mordaunt Mertoun to know his own mind. "It was a pretty thing, indeed," they usually concluded, "that he, no native born, and possessed of no visible means of subsistence that is known to any one, should presume to hesitate, or affect to have the power of selection and choice, betwixt the two most distinguished beauties of Zetland. If they were Magnus Troil, they would soon be at the bottom of the matter"—and so forth. All which remarks were only whispered, for the hasty disposition of the Udaller had too much of the old Norse fire about it to render it safe for any one to become an unauthorized intermeddler with his family affairs; and thus stood the relation of Mordaunt Mertoun to the family of Mr. Troil of Burgh-Westra, when the following incidents took place.

Chapter 4.

*This is no pilgrim's morning — yon grey mist
Lies upon hill, and dale, and field, and forest,
Like the dun wimple of a new-made widow;
And, by my faith, although my heart be soft,
I'd rather hear that widow weep and sigh,
And tell the virtues of the dear departed,
Than, when the tempest sends his voice abroad,
Be subject to its fury.*

THE DOUBLE NUPTIALS.

The spring was far advanced, when, after a week spent in sport and festivity at Burgh-Westra, Mordaunt Mertoun bade adieu to the family, pleading the necessity of his return to Jarlishof. The proposal was combated by the maidens, and more decidedly by Magnus himself: He saw no occasion whatever for Mordaunt returning to Jarlishof. If his father desired to see him, which, by the way, Magnus did not believe, Mr. Mertoun had only to throw himself into the stern of Sweyn's boat, or betake himself to a pony, if he liked a land journey better, and he would see not only his son, but twenty folk besides, who would be most happy to find that he had not lost the use of his tongue entirely during his long solitude; "although I must own," added the worthy Udaller, "that when he lived among us, nobody ever made less use of it."

Mordaunt acquiesced both in what respected his father's taciturnity, and his dislike to general society; but suggested, at the same time, that the first circumstance rendered his own immediate return more necessary, as he was the usual channel of communication betwixt his father and others; and that the second corroborated the same necessity, since Mr. Mertoun's having no other society whatever seemed a weighty reason why his son's should be restored to him without loss of time. As to his father's coming to Burgh-Westra, "they might as well," he said, "expect to see Sumburgh Cape come thither."

"And that would be a cumbrous guest," said Magnus. "But you will stop for our dinner to-day? There are the families of Muness, Quendale, Thorslivoe, and I know not who else, are expected; and, besides the thirty that were in house this blessed night, we shall have as many more as chamber and bower, and barn and boat-house, can furnish with beds, or with barley-straw — and you will leave all this behind you!"

"And the blithe dance at night," added Brenda, in a tone betwixt reproach and vexation; "and the young men from the Isle of Paba that are to dance the sword-dance, whom shall we find to match them, for the honour of the Main?"

"There is many a merry dancer on the mainland, Brenda," replied Mordaunt, "even if I should never rise on tiptoe again. And where good dancers are found, Brenda Troil will always find the best partner. I must trip it to-night through the Wastes of Dunrossness."

"Do not say so, Mordaunt," said Minna, who, during this conversation, had been looking from the window something anxiously; "go not, to-day at least, through the Wastes of Dunrossness."

"And why not to-day, Minna," said Mordaunt, laughing, "any more than to-morrow?"

"O, the morning mist lies heavy upon yonder chain of isles, nor has it permitted us since daybreak even a single glimpse of Fitful-head, the lofty cape that concludes yon splendid range of mountains. The fowl are winging their way to the shore, and the shelldrake seems, through the mist, as large as the scart.¹⁹ See, the very sheerwaters and bonxies are making to the cliffs for shelter."

"And they will ride out a gale against a king's frigate," said her father; "there is foul weather when they cut and run."

"Stay, then, with us," said Minna to her friend; "the storm will be dreadful, yet it will be grand to see it from Burgh-Westra, if we have no friend exposed to its fury. See, the air is close and sultry, though the season is yet so early, and the day so calm, that not a windlestraw moves on the heath. Stay with us, Mordaunt; the storm which these signs announce will be a dreadful one."

"I must be gone the sooner," was the conclusion of Mordaunt, who could not deny the signs, which had not escaped his own quick observation. "If the storm be too fierce, I will abide for the night at Stourburgh."

"What!" said Magnus; "will you leave us for the new chamberlain's new Scotch tacksman, who is to teach all us Zetland savages new ways? Take your own gate, my lad, if that is the song you sing."

"Nay," said Mordaunt; "I had only some curiosity to see the new implements he has brought."

"Ay, ay, ferlies make fools fain. I would like to know if his new plough will bear against a Zetland rock?" answered Magnus.

"I must not pass Stourburgh on the journey," said the youth, deferring to his patron's prejudice against innovation, "if this boding weather bring on tempest; but if it only break in rain, as is most probable, I am not likely to be melted in the wetting."

"It will not soften into rain alone," said Minna; "see how much heavier the clouds fall every moment, and see these weather-gaws that streak the lead-coloured mass with partial gleams of faded red and purple."

"I see them all," said Mordaunt; "but they only tell me I have no time to tarry here. Adieu, Minna; I will send you the eagle's feathers, if an eagle can be found on Fair-isle or Foulah. And fare thee well, my pretty Brenda, and keep a thought for me, should the Paba men dance ever so well."

"Take care of yourself, since go you will," said both sisters, together.

Old Magnus scolded them formally for supposing there was any danger to an active young fellow from a spring gale, whether by sea or land; yet ended by giving his own caution also to Mordaunt, advising him seriously to delay his journey, or at least to stop at Stourburgh. "For," said he, "second thoughts are best; and as this Scottishman's howf lies right under your lee, why, take any port in a storm. But do not be assured to find the door on latch, let the storm blow ever so hard; there are such matters as bolts and bars in Scotland,^[e] though, thanks to Saint Ronald, they are unknown here, save that great lock on the old Castle of Scalloway, that all men run to see — may be they make part of this man's improvements. But go, Mordaunt, since go you will. You should drink a stirrup-cup now, were you three years older, but boys should never drink, excepting after dinner; I will drink it for you, that good customs may not be broken, or bad luck come of it. Here is your bonally, my lad." And so saying, he quaffed a rummer glass of brandy with as much impunity as if it had been spring-water. Thus regretted and cautioned on all hands, Mordaunt took leave of the hospitable household, and looking back at the comforts with which it was surrounded, and the dense smoke that rolled upwards from its chimneys, he first recollected the guestless and solitary desolation of Jarlshof, then compared with the sullen and moody melancholy of his father's temper the warm kindness of those whom he was leaving, and could not refrain from a sigh at the thoughts which forced themselves on his imagination.

The signs of the tempest did not dishonour the predictions of Minna. Mordaunt had not advanced three hours on his journey, before the wind, which had been so deadly still in the morning, began at first to wail and sigh, as if bemoaning beforehand the evils which it might perpetrate in its fury, like a madman in the gloomy state of dejection which precedes his fit of violence; then gradually increasing, the gale howled, raged, and roared, with the full fury of a northern storm. It was accompanied by showers of rain mixed with hail, that dashed with the most unrelenting rage against the hills and rocks with which the traveller was surrounded, distracting his attention, in spite of his utmost exertions, and rendering it very difficult for him to keep the direction of his journey in a country where there is neither road, nor even the slightest track to direct the steps of the wanderer, and where he is often interrupted by brooks as well as large pools of water, lakes, and lagoons. All these inland waters were now lashed into sheets of tumbling foam, much of which, carried off by the fury of the whirlwind, was mingled with the gale, and transported far from the waves of which it had lately made a part; while the salt relish of the drift which was pelted against his face, showed Mordaunt that the spray of the more distant ocean, disturbed to frenzy by the storm, was mingled with that of the inland lakes and streams.

Amidst this hideous combustion of the elements, Mordaunt Mertoun struggled forward as one to whom such elemental war was familiar, and who regarded the exertions which it required to withstand its fury, but as a mark of resolution and manhood. He felt even, as happens usually to those who endure great hardships, that the exertion necessary to subdue them, is in itself a kind of elevating triumph. To see and distinguish his path when the cattle were driven from the hill, and the very fowls from the firmament, was but the stronger proof of his own superiority. "They shall not hear of me at Burgh-Westra," said he to himself, "as they heard of old doited Ringan Ewenson's boat, that foundered betwixt roadstead and key. I am more of a cragsman than to mind fire or water, wave by sea, or quagmire by land." Thus he struggled on, buffeting with the storm, supplying the want of the usual signs by which travellers directed their progress, (for rock, mountain, and headland, were shrouded in mist and darkness,) by the instinctive sagacity with which long acquaintance with these wilds had taught him to mark every minute object, which could serve in such circumstances to regulate his course. Thus, we repeat, he struggled onward, occasionally standing still, or even lying down, when the gust was most impetuous; making way against it when it was somewhat lulled, by a rapid and bold advance even in its very current; or, when this was impossible, by a movement resembling that of a vessel working to windward by short tacks, but never yielding one inch of the way which he had fought so hard to gain.

Yet, notwithstanding Mordaunt's experience and resolution, his situation was sufficiently uncomfortable, and even precarious; not because his sailor's jacket and trowsers, the common dress of young men through these isles when on a journey, were thoroughly wet, for that might have taken place within the same brief time, in any ordinary day, in this watery climate; but the real danger was, that, notwithstanding his utmost exertions, he made very slow way through brooks that were sending their waters all abroad, through morasses drowned in double deluges of moisture, which rendered all the ordinary passes more than usually dangerous, and repeatedly obliged the traveller to perform a considerable circuit, which in the usual case was unnecessary. Thus repeatedly baffled, notwithstanding his youth and strength, Mordaunt, after maintaining a dogged conflict with wind, rain, and the fatigue of a prolonged journey, was truly happy, when, not without having been more than once mistaken in his road, he at length found himself within sight of the house of Stourburgh, or Harfra; for the names were indifferently given to the residence of Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley, who was the chosen missionary of the Chamberlain of Orkney and Zetland, a speculative person, who designed, through the medium of Triptolemus, to introduce into the *Ultima Thule* of the Romans, a spirit of improvement, which at that early period was scarce known to exist in Scotland itself.

At length, and with much difficulty, Mordaunt reached the house of this worthy agriculturist, the only refuge from the relentless storm which he could hope to meet with for several miles; and going straight to the door, with the most undoubting confidence of instant admission, he was not a little surprised to find it not merely latched, which the weather might excuse, but even bolted, a thing which, as Magnus Troil has already intimated, was almost unknown in the Archipelago. To knock, to call, and finally to batter the door with staff and stones, were the natural resources of the youth, who was rendered alike impatient by the pelting of the storm, and by encountering such most unexpected and unusual obstacles to instant admission. As he was suffered, however, for many minutes to exhaust his impatience in noise and clamour, without receiving any reply, we will employ them in informing the reader who Triptolemus Yellowley was, and how he came by a name so singular.

Old Jasper Yellowley, the father of Triptolemus, (though born at the foot of Roseberry-Topping,) had been *come over* by a certain noble Scottish Earl, who, proving too far north for canny Yorkshire, had persuaded him to accept of a farm in the Mearns, where, it is unnecessary to add, he found matters very different from what he had expected. It was in vain that the stout farmer set manfully to work, to counterbalance, by superior skill, the inconveniences arising from a cold soil and a weeping climate. These might have been probably overcome; but his neighbourhood to the Grampians exposed him eternally to that species of

visitation from the plaided gentry, who dwelt within their skirts, which made young Norval a warrior and a hero, but only converted Jasper Yellowley into a poor man. This was, indeed, balanced in some sort by the impression which his ruddy cheek and robust form had the fortune to make upon Miss Barbara Clinkscale, daughter to the umquhile, and sister to the then existing, Clinkscale of that ilk.

This was thought a horrid and unnatural union in the neighbourhood, considering that the house of Clinkscale had at least as great a share of Scottish pride as of Scottish parsimony, and was amply endowed with both. But Miss Babie had her handsome fortune of two thousand marks at her own disposal, was a woman of spirit who had been *major* and *sui juris*, (as the writer who drew the contract assured her,) for full twenty years; so she set consequences and commentaries alike at defiance, and wedded the hearty Yorkshire yeoman. Her brother and her more wealthy kinsmen drew off in disgust, and almost disowned their degraded relative. But the house of Clinkscale was allied (like every other family in Scotland at the time) to a set of relations who were not so nice — tenth and sixteenth cousins, who not only acknowledged their kinswoman Babie after her marriage with Yellowley but even condescended to eat beans and bacon (though the latter was then the abomination of the Scotch as much as of the Jews) with her husband, and would willingly have cemented the friendship by borrowing a little cash from him, had not his good lady (who understood trap as well as any woman in the Mearns) put a negative on this advance to intimacy. Indeed she knew how to make young Deilbelicket,^(f) old Dougald Baresword, the Laird of Bandybrawl, and others, pay for the hospitality which she did not think proper to deny them, by rendering them useful in her negotiations with the lighthanded lads beyond the Cairn, who, finding their late object of plunder was now allied to “kend folks, and owned by them at kirk and market,” became satisfied, on a moderate yearly composition, to desist from their depredations.

This eminent success reconciled Jasper to the dominion which his wife began to assume over him; and which was much confirmed by her proving to be — let me see — what is the prettiest mode of expressing it? — in the family way. On this occasion, Mrs. Yellowley had a remarkable dream, as is the usual practice of teeming mothers previous to the birth of an illustrious offspring. She “was a-dreamed,” as her husband expressed it, that she was safely delivered of a plough, drawn by three yoke of Angus-shire oxen; and being a mighty investigator into such portents, she sat herself down with her gossips, to consider what the thing might mean. Honest Jasper ventured, with much hesitation, to intimate his own opinion, that the vision had reference rather to things past than things future, and might have been occasioned by his wife’s nerves having been a little startled by meeting in the loan above the house his own great plough with the six oxen, which were the pride of his heart. But the goodcummers²⁰ raised such a hue and cry against this exposition, that Jasper was fain to put his fingers in his ears, and to run out of the apartment.

“Hear to him,” said an old whigamore carline — “hear to him, wi’ his owsen, that are as an idol to him, even as the calf of Bethel! Na, na — it’s nae pleugh of the flesh that the bonny lad-bairn — for a lad it sall be — sall e’er striddle between the stilts o’ — it’s the pleugh of the spirit — and I trust mysell to see him wag the head o’ him in a pu’pit; or, what’s better, on a hill-side.”

“Now the deil’s in your whiggery,” said the old Lady Glenprosing; “wad ye hae our cummer’s bonny lad-bairn wag the head aff his shouthers like your godly Mess James Guthrie,^(g) that ye hald such a clavering about? — Na, na, he sall walk a mair siccar path, and be a dainty curate — and say he should live to be a bishop, what the waur wad he be?”

The gauntlet thus fairly flung down by one sibyl, was caught up by another, and the controversy between presbytery and episcopacy raged, roared, or rather screamed, a round of cinnamon-water serving only like oil to the flame, till Jasper entered with the plough-staff; and by the awe of his presence, and the shame of misbehaving “before the stranger man,” imposed some conditions of silence upon the disputants.

I do not know whether it was impatience to give to the light a being destined to such high and doubtful fates, or whether poor Dame Yellowley was rather frightened at the hurly-burly which had taken place in her presence, but she was taken suddenly ill; and, contrary to the formula in such cases used and provided, was soon reported to be “a good deal worse than was to be expected.” She took the opportunity (having still all her wits about her) to extract from her sympathetic husband two promises; first, that he would christen the child, whose birth was like to cost her so dear, by a name indicative of the vision with which she had been favoured; and next, that he would educate him for the ministry. The canny Yorkshireman, thinking she had a good title at present to dictate in such matters, subscribed to all she required. A man-child was accordingly born under these conditions, but the state of the mother did not permit her for many days to enquire how far they had been complied with. When she was in some degree convalescent, she was informed, that as it was thought fit the child should be immediately christened, it had received the name of Triptolemus; the Curate, who was a man of some classical skill, conceiving that this epithet contained a handsome and classical allusion to the visionary plough, with its triple yoke of oxen. Mrs. Yellowley was not much delighted with the manner in which her request had been complied with; but grumbling being to as little purpose as in the celebrated case of Tristram Shandy, she e’en sat down contented with the heathenish name, and endeavoured to counteract the effects it might produce upon the taste and feelings of the nominee, by such an education as might put him above the slightest thought of sacks, coulter, stilts, mould-boards, or any thing connected with the servile drudgery of the plough.

Jasper, sage Yorkshireman, smiled slyly in his sleeve, conceiving that young Trippie was likely to prove a chip of the old block, and would rather take after the jolly Yorkshire yeoman, than the gentle but somewhat *aigreblood* of the house of Clinkscale. He remarked, with suppressed glee, that the tune which best answered the purpose of a lullaby was the “Ploughman’s Whistle,” and the first words the infant learned to stammer were the names of the oxen; moreover, that the “bern” preferred home-brewed ale to Scotch twopenny, and never quitted hold of the tankard with so much reluctance as when there had been, by some manoeuvre of Jasper’s own device, a double straik of malt allowed to the brewing, above that which was sanctioned by the most liberal recipe, of which his dame’s household thrift admitted. Besides this, when no other means could be fallen upon to divert an occasional fit of squalling, his father observed that Trip could be always silenced by jingling a bridle at his ear. From all which symptoms he used to swear in private, that the boy would prove true Yorkshire, and mother and mother’s kin would have small share of him.

Meanwhile, and within a year after the birth of Triptolemus, Mrs. Yellowley bore a daughter, named after herself Barbara, who, even in earliest infancy, exhibited the pinched nose and thin lips by which the Clinkscale family were distinguished amongst the inhabitants of the Mearns; and as her childhood advanced, the readiness with which she seized, and the tenacity wherewith she detained, the playthings of Triptolemus, besides a desire to bite, pinch, and scratch, on slight, or no provocation, were all considered by attentive observers as proofs, that Miss Babie would prove “her mother over again.” Malicious people did not stick to say, that the acrimony of the Clinkscale blood had not, on this occasion, been cooled and sweetened by that of Old England; that young Deilbelicket was much about the house, and they could not but think it odd that Mrs. Yellowley, who, as the whole world knew, gave nothing for nothing, should be so uncommonly attentive to heap the trencher, and to fill the caup, of an idle blackguard ne’er-do-weel. But when folk had once looked upon the austere and awfully virtuous countenance of Mrs. Yellowley, they did full justice to her propriety of conduct, and Deilbelicket’s delicacy of taste.

Meantime young Triptolemus, having received such instructions as the Curate could give him, (for though Dame Yellowley adhered to the persecuted remnant, her jolly husband, edified by the black gown and prayer-book, still conformed to the church as by law established,) was, in due process of time, sent to Saint Andrews to prosecute his studies. He went, it is true; but with an eye turned back with sad remembrances on his father’s plough, his father’s pancakes, and his father’s ale, for which the small-beer of the college, commonly there termed “thorough-go-nimble,” furnished a poor substitute. Yet he advanced in his learning, being found, however, to show a particular favour to such authors of antiquity as had made the improvement of the soil the object of their researches. He endured the *Bucolics* of Virgil — the *Georgics* he had by heart — but the *Æneid* he could not away with; and he was particularly severe upon the celebrated line expressing a charge of cavalry, because, as he understood the word *putrem*,²¹ he opined that the combatants, in their inconsiderate ardour, galloped over a new-manured ploughed field. Cato, the Roman Censor was his favourite among classical heroes and philosophers, not on account of the strictness of his morals, but because of his treatise, *de Re Rustica*. He had ever in his mouth the phrase of Cicero, *Jam neminem antepones Catoni*. He thought well of Palladius, and of Terentius Varro, but Columella was his pocket-companion. To these ancient worthies, he added the more modern Tusser, Hartlib, and other writers on rural economics, not forgetting the lucubrations of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, and such of the better-informed Philomaths, who, instead of loading their almanacks with vain predictions of political events, pretended to see what seeds would grow and what would not, and direct the attention of their readers to that course of cultivation from which the production of good crops may be safely predicted; modest sages, in fine, who, careless of the rise and downfall of empires, content themselves

with pointing out the fit seasons to reap and sow, with a fair guess at the weather which each month will be likely to present; as, for example, that if Heaven pleases, we shall have snow in January, and the author will stake his reputation that July proves, on the whole, a month of sunshine. Now, although the Rector of Saint Leonard's was greatly pleased, in general, with the quiet, laborious, and studious bent of Triptolemus Yellowley, and deemed him, in so far, worthy of a name of four syllables having a Latin termination, yet he relished not, by any means, his exclusive attention to his favourite authors. It savoured of the earth, he said, if not of something worse, to have a man's mind always grovelling in mould, stercorated or unstercorated; and he pointed out, but in vain, history, and poetry, and divinity, as more elevating subjects of occupation. Triptolemus Yellowley was obstinate in his own course: Of the battle of Pharsalia, he thought not as it affected the freedom of the world, but dwelt on the rich crop which the Emathian fields were likely to produce the next season. In vernacular poetry, Triptolemus could scarce be prevailed upon to read a single couplet, excepting old Tusser, as aforesaid, whose Hundred Points of Good Husbandry he had got by heart; and excepting also Piers Ploughman's Vision, which, charmed with the title, he bought with avidity from a packman, but after reading the two first pages, flung it into the fire as an impudent and misnamed political libel. As to divinity, he summed that matter up by reminding his instructors, that to labour the earth and win his bread with the toil of his body and sweat of his brow, was the lot imposed upon fallen man; and, for his part, he was resolved to discharge, to the best of his abilities, a task so obviously necessary to existence, leaving others to speculate as much as they would, upon the more recondite mysteries of theology.

With a spirit so much narrowed and limited to the concerns of rural life, it may be doubted whether the proficiency of Triptolemus in learning, or the use he was like to make of his acquisitions, would have much gratified the ambitious hope of his affectionate mother. It is true, he expressed no reluctance to embrace the profession of a clergyman, which suited well enough with the habitual personal indolence which sometimes attaches to speculative dispositions. He had views, to speak plainly, (I wish they were peculiar to himself,) of cultivating the *glebe* six days in the week, preaching on the seventh with due regularity, and dining with some fat franklin or country laird, with whom he could smoke a pipe and drink a tankard after dinner, and mix in secret conference on the exhaustless subject, *Quid faciat lætas segetes*.

Now, this plan, besides that it indicated nothing of what was then called the root of the matter, implied necessarily the possession of a manse; and the possession of a manse inferred compliance with the doctrines of prelacy, and other enormities of the time. There was some question how far manse and glebe, stipend, both victual and money, might have outbalanced the good lady's predisposition towards Presbytery; but her zeal was not put to so severe a trial. She died before her son had completed his studies, leaving her afflicted spouse just as disconsolate as was to be expected. The first act of old Jasper's undivided administration was to recall his son from Saint Andrews, in order to obtain his assistance in his domestic labours. And here it might have been supposed that our Triptolemus, summoned to carry into practice what he had so fondly studied in theory, must have been, to use a simile which *he* would have thought lively, like a cow entering upon a clover park. Alas, mistaken thoughts, and deceitful hopes of mankind!

A laughing philosopher, the Democritus of our day, once, in a moral lecture, compared human life to a table pierced with a number of holes, each of which has a pin made exactly to fit it, but which pins being stuck in hastily, and without selection, chance leads inevitably to the most awkward mistakes. "For how often do we see," the orator pathetically concluded — "how often, I say, do we see the round man stuck into the three-cornered hole!" This new illustration of the vagaries of fortune set every one present into convulsions of laughter, excepting one fat alderman, who seemed to make the case his own, and insisted that it was no jesting matter. To take up the simile, however, which is an excellent one, it is plain that Triptolemus Yellowley had been shaken out of the bag at least a hundred years too soon. If he had come on the stage in our own time, that is, if he had flourished at any time within these thirty or forty years, he could not have missed to have held the office of vice-president of some eminent agricultural society, and to have transacted all the business thereof under the auspices of some noble duke or lord, who, as the matter might happen, either knew, or did not know, the difference betwixt a horse and a cart, and a cart-horse. He could not have missed such preferment, for he was exceedingly learned in all those particulars, which, being of no consequence in actual practice, go, of course, a great way to constitute the character of a connoisseur in any art, and especially in agriculture. But, alas! Triptolemus Yellowley had, as we already have hinted, come into the world at least a century too soon; for, instead of sitting in an arm-chair, with a hammer in his hand, and a bumper of port before him, giving forth the toast — "To breeding, in all its branches," his father planted him betwixt the stils of a plough, and invited him to guide the oxen, on whose beauties he would, in our day, have descanted, and whose rumps he would not have goaded, but have carved. Old Jasper complained, that although no one talked so well of common and several, wheat and rape, fallow and lea, as his learned son, (whom he always called Tolimus,) yet, "dang it," added the Seneca, "nought thrives wi' un — nought thrives wi' un!" It was still worse, when Jasper, becoming frail and ancient, was obliged, as happened in the course of a few years, gradually to yield up the reins of government to the academical neophyte.

As if Nature had meant him a spite, he had got one of the *dourest* and most intractable farms in the Mearns, to try conclusions withal, a place which seemed to yield every thing but what the agriculturist wanted; for there were plenty of thistles, which indicates dry land; and store of fern, which is said to intimate deep land; and nettles, which show where lime hath been applied; and deep furrows in the most unlikely spots, which intimated that it had been cultivated in former days by the Peghts, as popular tradition bore. There was also enough of stones to keep the ground warm, according to the creed of some farmers, and great abundance of springs to render it cool and sappy, according to the theory of others. It was in vain that, acting alternately on these opinions, poor Triptolemus endeavoured to avail himself of the supposed capabilities of the soil. No kind of butter that might be churned could be made to stick upon his own bread, any more than on that of poor Tusser, whose Hundred Points of Good Husbandry, so useful to others of his day, were never to himself worth as many pennies.²²

In fact, excepting an hundred acres of infield, to which old Jasper had early seen the necessity of limiting his labours, there was not a corner of the farm fit for any thing but to break plough-graith, and kill cattle. And then, as for the part which was really tilled with some profit, the expense of the farming establishment of Triptolemus, and his disposition to experiment, soon got rid of any good arising from the cultivation of it. "The carles and the cart-avers," he confessed, with a sigh, speaking of his farm-servants and horses, "make it all, and the carles and cart-avers eat it all;" a conclusion which might sum up the year-book of many a gentleman farmer.

Matters would have soon been brought to a close with Triptolemus in the present day. He would have got a bank-credit, manoeuvred with wind-bills, dashed out upon a large scale, and soon have seen his crop and stock sequestered by the Sheriff; but in those days a man could not ruin himself so easily. The whole Scottish tenantry stood upon the same level flat of poverty, so that it was extremely difficult to find any vantage ground, by climbing up to which a man might have an opportunity of actually breaking his neck with some eclat. They were pretty much in the situation of people, who, being totally without credit, may indeed suffer from indigence, but cannot possibly become bankrupt. Besides, notwithstanding the failure of Triptolemus's projects, there was to be balanced against the expenditure which they occasioned, all the savings which the extreme economy of his sister Barbara could effect; and in truth her exertions were wonderful. She might have realized, if any one could, the idea of the learned philosopher, who pronounced that sleeping was a fancy, and eating but a habit, and who appeared to the world to have renounced both, until it was unhappily discovered that he had an intrigue with the cook-maid of the family, who indemnified him for his privations by giving him private entrée to the pantry, and to a share of her own couch. But no such deceptions were practised by Barbara Yellowley. She was up early, and down late, and seemed, to her over-watched and over-tasked maidens, to be as *wakerife* as the cat herself. Then, for eating, it appeared that the air was a banquet to her, and she would fain have made it so to her retinue. Her brother, who, besides being lazy in his person, was somewhat luxurious in his appetite, would willingly now and then have tasted a mouthful of animal food, were it but to know how his sheep were fed off; but a proposal to eat a child could not have startled Mistress Barbara more; and, being of a compliant and easy disposition, Triptolemus reconciled himself to the necessity of a perpetual Lent, too happy when he could get a scrap of butter to his oaten cake, or (as they lived on the banks of the Esk) escape the daily necessity of eating salmon, whether in or out of season, six days out of the seven.

But although Mrs. Barbara brought faithfully to the joint stock all savings which her awful powers of economy accomplished to scrape together, and although the dower of their mother was by degrees expended, or nearly so, in aiding them upon extreme occasions, the term at length approached when it seemed impossible that they could sustain the conflict any longer against the evil star of Triptolemus, as he called it himself, or the natural result of his absurd speculations, as it was

termed by others. Luckily at this sad crisis, a god jumped down to their relief out of a machine. In plain English, the noble lord, who owned their farm, arrived at his mansion-house in their neighbourhood, with his coach and six and his running footmen, in the full splendour of the seventeenth century.

This person of quality was the son of the nobleman who had brought the ancient Jasper into the country from Yorkshire, and he was, like his father, a fanciful and scheming man.²³ He had schemed well for himself, however, amid the mutations of the time, having obtained, for a certain period of years, the administration of the remote islands of Orkney and Zetland, for payment of a certain rent, with the right of making the most of whatever was the property or revenue of the crown in these districts, under the title of Lord Chamberlain. Now, his lordship had become possessed with a notion, in itself a very true one, that much might be done to render this grant available, by improving the culture of the crown lands, both in Orkney and Zetland; and then having some acquaintance with our friend Triptolemus, he thought (rather less happily) that he might prove a person capable of furthering his schemes. He sent for him to the great Hallhouse, and was so much edified by the way in which our friend laid down the law upon every given subject relating to rural economy, that he lost no time in securing the co-operation of so valuable an assistant, the first step being to release him from his present unprofitable farm.

The terms were arranged much to the mind of Triptolemus, who had already been taught, by many years' experience, a dark sort of notion, that without undervaluing or doubting for a moment his own skill, it would be quite as well that almost all the trouble and risk should be at the expense of his employer. Indeed, the hopes of advantage which he held out to his patron were so considerable, that the Lord Chamberlain dropped every idea of admitting his dependent into any share of the expected profits; for, rude as the arts of agriculture were in Scotland, they were far superior to those known and practised in the regions of Thule, and Triptolemus Yellowley conceived himself to be possessed of a degree of insight into these mysteries, far superior to what was possessed or practised even in the Mearns. The improvement, therefore, which was to be expected, would bear a double proportion, and the Lord Chamberlain was to reap all the profit, deducting a handsome salary for his steward Yellowley, together with the accommodation of a house and domestic farm, for the support of his family. Joy seized the heart of Mistress Barbara, at hearing this happy termination of what threatened to be so very bad an affair as the lease of Cauldaces.

"If we cannot," she said, "provide for our own house, when all is coming in, and nothing going out, surely we must be worse than infidels!"

Triptolemus was a busy man for some time, huffing and puffing, and eating and drinking in every changehouse, while he ordered and collected together proper implements of agriculture, to be used by the natives of these devoted islands, whose destinies were menaced with this formidable change. Singular tools these would seem, if presented before a modern agricultural society; but every thing is relative, nor could the heavy cartload of timber, called the old Scots plough, seem less strange to a Scottish farmer of this present day, than the corslets and casques of the soldiers of Cortes might seem to a regiment of our own army. Yet the latter conquered Mexico, and undoubtedly the former would have been a splendid improvement on the state of agriculture in Thule.

We have never been able to learn why Triptolemus preferred fixing his residence in Zetland, to becoming an inhabitant of the Orkneys. Perhaps he thought the inhabitants of the latter Archipelago the more simple and docile of the two kindred tribes; or perhaps he considered the situation of the house and farm he himself was to occupy, (which was indeed a tolerable one,) as preferable to that which he had it in his power to have obtained upon Pomona (so the main island of the Orkneys is entitled). At Harfra, or, as it was sometimes called, Stourburgh, from the remains of a Pictish fort, which was almost close to the mansion-house, the factor settled himself, in the plenitude of his authority; determined to honour the name he bore by his exertions, in precept and example, to civilize the Zetlanders, and improve their very confined knowledge in the primary arts of human life.

Chapter 5.

The wind blew keen frae north and east;

It blew upon the floor.

Quo' our goodman to our goodwife,

"Get up and bar the door."

"My hand is in my housewife-skep,

Goodman, as ye may see;

If it shouldna be barr'd this hundred years,

It's no be barr'd for me!"

OLD SONG.

We can only hope that the gentle reader has not found the latter part of the last chapter extremely tedious; but, at any rate, his impatience will scarce equal that of young Mordaunt Mertoun, who, while the lightning came flash after flash, while the wind, veering and shifting from point to point, blew with all the fury of a hurricane, and while the rain was dashed against him in deluges, stood hammering, calling, and roaring at the door of the old Place of Harfra, impatient for admittance, and at a loss to conceive any position of existing circumstances, which could occasion the exclusion of a stranger, especially during such horrible weather. At length, finding his noise and vociferation were equally in vain, he fell back so far from the front of the house, as was necessary to enable him to reconnoitre the chimneys; and amidst "storm and shade," could discover, to the increase of his dismay, that though noon, then the dinner hour of these islands, was now nearly arrived, there was no smoke proceeding from the tunnels of the vents to give any note of preparation within.

Mordaunt's wrathful impatience was now changed into sympathy and alarm; for, so long accustomed to the exuberant hospitality of the Zetland islands, he was immediately induced to suppose some strange and unaccountable disaster had befallen the family; and forthwith set himself to discover some place at which he could make forcible entry, in order to ascertain the situation of the inmates, as much as to obtain shelter from the still increasing storm. His present anxiety was, however, as much thrown away as his late clamorous importunities for admittance had been. Triptolemus and his sister had heard the whole alarm without, and had already had a sharp dispute on the propriety of opening the door.

Mrs. Baby, as we have described her, was no willing renderer of the rites of hospitality. In their farm of Cauldaces, in the Mearns, she had been the dread and abhorrence of all gaberlunzie men, and travelling packmen, gipsies, long remembered beggars, and so forth; nor was there one of them so wily, as she used to boast, as could ever say they had heard the clink of her sneck. In Zetland, where the new settlers were yet strangers to the extreme honesty and simplicity of all classes, suspicion and fear joined with frugality in her desire to exclude all wandering guests of uncertain character; and the second of these motives had its effect on Triptolemus himself, who, though neither suspicious nor penurious, knew good people were scarce, good farmers scarcer, and had a reasonable share of that wisdom which looks towards self-preservation as the first law of nature. These hints may serve as a commentary on the following dialogue which took place betwixt the brother and sister.

"Now, good be gracious to us," said Triptolemus, as he sat thumbing his old school-copy of Virgil, "here is a pure day, for the bear seed! — Well spoke the wise Mantuan — *ventis surgentibus* — and then the groans of the mountains, and the long-resounding shores — but where's the woods, Baby? tell me, I say, where we shall find the *nemorum murmur*, sister Baby, in these new seats of ours?"

"What's your foolish will?" said Baby, popping her head from out of a dark recess in the kitchen, where she was busy about some nameless deed of housewifery. Her brother, who had addressed himself to her more from habit than intention, no sooner saw her bleak red nose, keen grey eyes, with the sharp features thereunto conforming, shaded by the flaps of the loose *toy* which depended on each side of her eager face, than he bethought himself that his query was likely to find little acceptance from her, and therefore stood another volley before he would resume the topic.

"I say, Mr. Yellowley," said sister Baby, coming into the middle of the room, "what for are ye crying on me, and me in the midst of my housewifeskep?"

"Nay, for nothing at all, Baby," answered Triptolemus, "saving that I was saying to myself, that here we had the sea, and the wind, and the rain, sufficient enough, but where's the wood? where's the wood, Baby, answer me that?"

"The wood?" replied Baby — "Were I no to take better care of the wood than you, brother, there would soon be no more wood about the town than the barber's block that's on your own shoulders, Triptolemus. If ye be thinking of the wreck-wood that the callants brought in yesterday, there was six ounces of it gaed to boil

your parritch this morning; though, I trow, a carefu' man wad have ta'en drammock, if breakfast he behoved to have, rather than waste baith meltith and fuel in the same morning."

"That is to say, Baby," replied Triptolemus, who was somewhat of a dry joker in his way, "that when we have fire we are not to have food, and when we have food we are not to have fire, these being too great blessings to enjoy both in the same day! Good luck, you do not propose we should starve with cold and starve with hunger *unico contextu*. But, to tell you the truth, I could never away with raw oatmeal, slockened with water, in all my life. Call it drammock, or crowdie, or just what ye list, my vivers must thole fire and water."

"The mair gowk you," said Baby; "can ye not make your brose on the Sunday, and sup them cauld on the Monday, since ye're sae dainty? Mony is the fairer face than yours that has licked the lip after such a cogfu'."

"Mercy on us, sister!" said Triptolemus; "at this rate, it's a finished field with me — I must unyoke the pleugh, and lie down to wait for the dead-thraw. Here is that in this house wad hold all Zetland in meal for a twelvemonth, and ye grudge a cogfu' of warm parritch to me, that has sic a charge!"

"Whisht — haud your silly claverin tongue!" said Baby, looking round with apprehension — "ye are a wise man to speak of what is in the house, and a fitting man to have the charge of it! — Hark, as I live by bread, I hear a tapping at the outer yett!"

"Go and open it then, Baby," said her brother, glad at any thing that promised to interrupt the dispute.

"Go and open it, said he!" echoed Baby, half angry, half frightened, and half triumphant at the superiority of her understanding over that of her brother — "Go and open it, said he, indeed! — is it to lend robbers a chance to take all that is in the house?"

"Robbers!" echoed Triptolemus, in his turn; "there are no more robbers in this country than there are lambs at Yule. I tell you, as I have told you an hundred times, there are no Highlandmen to harry us here. This is a land of quiet and honesty. *O fortunati nimium!*"

"And what good is Saint Rinian to do ye, Tolimus?" said his sister, mistaking the quotation for a Catholic invocation. "Besides, if there be no Highlandmen, there may be as bad. I saw sax or seven as ill-looking chields gang past the Place yesterday, as ever came frae beyont Clochna-ben; ill-fa'ed tools they had in their hands, whaaling knives they ca'ed them, but they looked as like dirks and whingers as ae bit airn can look like anither. There is nae honest men carry siccan tools."

Here the knocking and shouts of Mordaunt were very audible betwixt every swell of the horrible blast which was careering without. The brother and sister looked at each other in real perplexity and fear. "If they have heard of the siller," said Baby, her very nose changing with terror from red to blue, "we are but gane folk!"

"Who speaks now, when they should hold their tongue?" said Triptolemus. "Go to the shot-window instantly, and see how many there are of them, while I load the old Spanish-barrelled duck-gun — go as if you were stepping on new-laid eggs."

Baby crept to the window, and reported that she saw only "one young chield, clattering and roaring as gin he were daft. How many there might be out of sight, she could not say."

"Out of sight! — nonsense," said Triptolemus, laying aside the ramrod with which he was loading the piece, with a trembling hand. "I will warrant them out of sight and hearing both — this is some poor fellow caught in the tempest, wants the shelter of our roof, and a little refreshment. Open the door, Baby, it's a Christian deed."

"But is it a Christian deed of him to come in at the window, then?" said Baby, setting up a most doleful shriek, as Mordaunt Mertoun, who had forced open one of the windows, leaped down into the apartment, dripping with water like a river god. Triptolemus, in great tribulation, presented the gun which he had not yet loaded, while the intruder exclaimed, "Hold, hold — what the devil mean you by keeping your doors bolted in weather like this, and levelling your gun at folk's heads as you would at a sealgh's?"

"And who are you, friend, and what want you?" said Triptolemus, lowering the butt of his gun to the floor as he spoke, and so recovering his arms.

"What do I want!" said Mordaunt; "I want every thing — I want meat, drink, and fire, a bed for the night, and a sheltie for to-morrow morning to carry me to Jarlishof."

"And ye said there were nae caterans or sorners here?" said Baby to the agriculturist, reproachfully. "Heard ye ever a breekless loon frae Lochaber tell his mind and his errand mair deftly? — Come, come, friend," she added, addressing herself to Mordaunt, "put up your pipes and gang your gate; this is the house of his lordship's factor, and no place of reset for thiggers or sorners."

Mordaunt laughed in her face at the simplicity of the request. "Leave built walls," he said, "and in such a tempest as this? What take you me for? — a gannet or a scart do you think I am, that your clapping your hands and skirling at me like a madwoman, should drive me from the shelter into the storm?"

"And so you propose, young man," said Triptolemus, gravely, "to stay in my house, *volens nolens* — that is, whether we will or no?"

"Will!" said Mordaunt; "what right have you to will any thing about it? Do you not hear the thunder? Do you not hear the rain? Do you not see the lightning? And do you not know this is the only house within I wot not how many miles? Come, my good master and dame, this may be Scottish jesting, but it sounds strange in Zetland ears. You have let out the fire, too, and my teeth are dancing a jig in my head with cold; but I'll soon put that to rights."

He seized the fire-tongs, raked together the embers upon the hearth, broke up into life the gathering-peat, which the hostess had calculated should have preserved the seeds of fire, without giving them forth, for many hours; then casting his eye round, saw in a corner the stock of drift-wood, which Mistress Baby had served forth by ounces, and transferred two or three logs of it at once to the hearth, which, conscious of such unwonted supply, began to transmit to the chimney such a smoke as had not issued from the Place of Harfra for many a day.

While their uninvited guest was thus making himself at home, Baby kept edging and jogging the factor to turn out the intruder. But for this undertaking, Triptolemus Yellowley felt neither courage nor zeal, nor did circumstances seem at all to warrant the favourable conclusion of any fray into which he might enter with the young stranger. The sinewy limbs and graceful form of Mordaunt Mertoun were seen to great advantage in his simple sea-dress; and with his dark sparkling eye, finely formed head, animated features, close curled dark hair, and bold, free looks, the stranger formed a very strong contrast with the host on whom he had intruded himself. Triptolemus was a short, clumsy, duck-legged disciple of Ceres, whose bottle-nose, turned up and handsomely coppered at the extremity, seemed to intimate something of an occasional treaty with Bacchus. It was like to be no equal mellay betwixt persons of such unequal form and strength; and the difference betwixt twenty and fifty years was nothing in favour of the weaker party. Besides, the factor was an honest good-natured fellow at bottom, and being soon satisfied that his guest had no other views than those of obtaining refuge from the storm, it would, despite his sister's instigations, have been his last act to deny a boon so reasonable and necessary to a youth whose exterior was so prepossessing. He stood, therefore, considering how he could most gracefully glide into the character of the hospitable landlord, out of that of the churlish defender of his domestic castle, against an unauthorized intrusion, when Baby, who had stood appalled at the extreme familiarity of the stranger's address and demeanour, now spoke up for herself.

"My troth, lad," said she to Mordaunt, "ye are no blate, to light on at that rate, and the best of wood, too — nane of your sharney peats, but good aik timber, nae less maun serve ye!"

"You come lightly by it, dame," said Mordaunt, carelessly; "and you should not grudge to the fire what the sea gives you for nothing. These good ribs of oak did their last duty upon earth and ocean, when they could hold no longer together under the brave hearts that manned the bark."

"And that's true, too," said the old woman, softening — "this maun be awsome weather by sea. Sit down and warm ye, since the sticks are a-low."

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, "it is a pleasure to see siccan a bonny bleeze. I havena seen the like o't since I left Cauldacres."

"And shallna see the like o't again in a hurry," said Baby, "unless the house take fire, or there suld be a coal-heugh found out."

"And wherefore should not there be a coal-heugh found out?" said the factor, triumphantly — "I say, wherefore should not a coal-heugh be found out in Zetland as well as in Fife, now that the Chamberlain has a far-sighted and discreet man upon the spot to make the necessary perquisitions? They are baith fishing-stations, I trow?"

"I tell you what it is, Tolemus Yellowley," answered his sister, who had practical reasons to fear her brother's opening upon any false scent, "if you promise my Lord sae many of these bonnie-wallies, we'll no be weel hafted here before we are found out and set a-trotting again. If ane was to speak to ye about a gold mine, I ken weel wha would promise he suld have Portugal pieces clinking in his pouch before the year gaed by."

"And why suld I not?" said Triptolemus — "maybe your head does not know there is a land in Orkney called Ophir, or something very like it; and wherefore might not Solomon, the wise King of the Jews, have sent thither his ships and his servants for four hundred and fifty talents? I trow he knew best where to go or send, and I hope you believe in your Bible, Baby?"

Baby was silenced by an appeal to Scripture, however *mal à propos*, and only answered by an inarticulate *humph* of incredulity or scorn, while her brother went on addressing Mordaunt. — "Yes, you shall all of you see what a change shall coin introduce, even into such an unpropitious country as yours. Ye have not heard of copper, I warrant, nor of iron-stone, in these islands, neither?" Mordaunt said he had heard there was copper near the Cliffs of Konigsburgh. "Ay, and a copper scum is found on the Loch of Swana, too, young man. But the youngest of you, doubtless, thinks himself a match for such as I am!"

Baby, who during all this while had been closely and accurately reconnoitring the youth's person, now interposed in a manner by her brother totally unexpected. "Ye had mair need, Mr. Yellowley, to give the young man some dry clothes, and to see about getting something for him to eat, than to sit there bleezing away with your lang tales, as if the weather were not windy enow without your help; and maybe the lad would drink some *bland*, or sic-like, if ye had the grace to ask him."

While Triptolemus looked astonished at such a proposal, considering the quarter it came from, Mordaunt answered, he "should be very glad to have dry clothes, but begged to be excused from drinking until he had eaten somewhat."

Triptolemus accordingly conducted him into another apartment, and accommodating him with a change of dress, left him to his arrangements, while he himself returned to the kitchen, much puzzled to account for his sister's unusual fit of hospitality. "She must be *fey*,"²⁴ he said, "and in that case has not long to live, and though I fall heir to her tocher-good, I am sorry for it; for she has held the house-gear well together — drawn the girth over tight it may be now and then, but the saddle sits the better."

When Triptolemus returned to the kitchen, he found his suspicions confirmed; for his sister was in the desperate act of consigning to the pot a smoked goose, which, with others of the same tribe, had long hung in the large chimney, muttering to herself at the same time — "It maun be eaten sune or syne, and what for no by the *puir callant*?"

"What is this of it, sister?" said Triptolemus. "You have on the girdle and the pot at ance. What day is this wi' you?"

"E'en such a day as the Israelites had beside the flesh-pots of Egypt, billie Triptolemus; but ye little ken wha ye have in your house this blessed day."

"Troth, and little do I ken," said Triptolemus, "as little as I would ken the naig I never saw before. I would take the lad for a jagger,"²⁵ but he has rather ower good havings, and he has no pack."

"Ye ken as little as ane of your ain bits o' nowt, man," retorted sister Baby; "if ye ken na him, do ye ken Tronda Dronsdaughter?"

"Tronda Dronsdaughter!" echoed Triptolemus — "how should I but ken her, when I pay her twal pennies Scots by the day, for working in the house here? I trow she works as if the things burned her fingers. I had better give a Scots lass a groat of English siller."

"And that's the maist sensible word ye have said this blessed morning. — Weel, but Tronda kens this lad weel, and she has often spoke to me about him. They call his father the Silent Man of Sumburgh, and they say he's uncanny."

"Hout, hout — nonsense, nonsense — they are aye at sic trash as that," said the brother, "when you want a day's wark out of them — they have stepped ower the tangs, or they have met an uncanny body, or they have turned about the boat against the sun, and then there's nought to be done that day."

"Weel, weel, brother, ye are so wise," said Baby, "because ye knapped Latin at Saint Andrews; and can your lair tell me, then, what the lad has round his halse?"

"A Barcelona napkin, as wet as a dishclout, and I have just lent him one of my own overlays," said Triptolemus.

"A Barcelona napkin!" said Baby, elevating her voice, and then suddenly lowering it, as from apprehension of being overheard — "I say a gold chain!"

"A gold chain!" said Triptolemus.

"In troth is it, hinny; and how like you that? The folk say here, as Tronda tells me, that the King of the Drows gave it to his father, the Silent Man of Sumburgh."

"I wish you would speak sense, or be the silent woman," said Triptolemus. "The upshot of it all is, then, that this lad is the rich stranger's son, and that you are giving him the goose you were to keep till Michaelmas!"

"Troth, brother, we maun do something for God's sake, and to make friends; and the lad," added Baby, (for even she was not altogether above the prejudices of her sex in favour of outward form,) "the lad has a fair face of his ain."

"Ye would have let mony a fair face," said Triptolemus, "pass the door pining, if it had not been for the gold chain."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," replied Barbara; "ye wadna have me waste our substance on every thigger or sornor that has the luck to come by the door in a wet day? But this lad has a fair and a wide name in the country, and Tronda says he is to be married to a daughter of the rich Udaller, Magnus Troil, and the marriage-day is to be fixed whenever he makes choice (set him up) between the twa lasses; and so it wad be as much as our good name is worth, and our quiet forby, to let him sit unserved, although he does come unsent for."

"The best reason in life," said Triptolemus, "for letting a man into a house is, that you dare not bid him go by. However, since there is a man of quality amongst them, I will let him know whom he has to do with, in my person." Then advancing to the door, he exclaimed, "*Heus tibi, Dave!*"

"*Adsum*," answered the youth, entering the apartment.

"Hem!" said the erudite Triptolemus, "not altogether deficient in his humanities, I see. I will try him further. — Canst thou aught of husbandry, young gentleman?"

"Troth, sir, not I," answered Mordaunt; "I have been trained to plough upon the sea, and to reap upon the crag."

"Plough the sea!" said Triptolemus; "that's a furrow requires small harrowing; and for your harvest on the crag, I suppose you mean theses *scowries*, or whatever you call them. It is a sort of ingathering which the Ranzelman should stop by the law; nothing more likely to break an honest man's bones. I profess I cannot see the pleasure men propose by dangling in a rope's-end betwixt earth and heaven. In my case, I had as lief the other end of the rope were fastened to the gibbet; I should be sure of not falling, at least."

"Now, I would only advise you to try it," replied Mordaunt. "Trust me, the world has few grander sensations than when one is perched in midair between a high-browed cliff and a roaring ocean, the rope by which you are sustained seeming scarce stronger than a silken thread, and the stone on which you have one foot steadied, affording such a breadth as the kittywake might rest upon — to feel and know all this, with the full confidence that your own agility of limb, and strength of head, can bring you as safe off as if you had the wing of the goshawk — this is indeed being almost independent of the earth you tread on!"

Triptolemus stared at this enthusiastic description of an amusement which had so few charms for him; and his sister, looking at the glancing eye and elevated bearing of the young adventurer, answered, by ejaculating, "My certie, lad, but ye are a brave chield!"

"A brave chield?" returned Yellowley — "I say a brave goose, to be flichtering and fleeing in the wind when he might abide upon *terra firma*! But come, here's a goose that is more to the purpose, when once it is well boiled. Get us trenchers and salt, Baby — but in truth it will prove salt enough — a tasty morsel it is; but I think the Zetlanders be the only folk in the world that think of running such risks to catch geese, and then boiling them when they have done."

"To be sure," replied his sister, (it was the only word they had agreed in that day,) "it would be an unco thing to bid ony gudewife in Angus or a' the Mearns boil a goose, while there was sic things as spits in the world. — But wha's this neist!" she added, looking towards the entrance with great indignation. "My certie, open doors, and dogs come in — and wha opened the door to him?"

"I did, to be sure," replied Mordaunt; "you would not have a poor devil stand beating your deaf door-cheeks in weather like this? — Here goes something, though, to help the fire," he added, drawing out the sliding bar of oak with which the door had been secured, and throwing it on the hearth, whence it was snatched by Dame Baby in great wrath, she exclaiming at the same time —

"It's sea-borne timber, as there's little else here, and he dings it about as if it were a fir-clog! — And who be you, an it please you?" she added, turning to the stranger — "a very hallanshaker loon, as ever crossed my twa een!"

"I am a jagger, if it like your ladyship," replied the uninvited guest, a stout vulgar, little man, who had indeed the humble appearance of a pedlar, called *jagger* in these islands — "never travelled in a waur day, or was more willing to get to harbourage. — Heaven be praised for fire and house-room!"

So saying, he drew a stool to the fire, and sat down without further ceremony. Dame Baby stared "wild as grey gosshawk," and was meditating how to express her indignation in something warmer than words, for which the boiling pot seemed to offer a convenient hint, when an old half-starved serving-woman — the Tronda already mentioned — the sharer of Barbara's domestic cares, who had been as yet in some remote corner of the mansion, now hobbled into the room, and broke out into exclamations which indicated some new cause of alarm.

"O master!" and "O mistress!" were the only sounds she could for some time articulate, and then followed them up with, "The best in the house — the best in the house — set a' on the board, and a' will be little aneugh — There is auld Norna of Fitful-head, the most fearful woman in all the isles!"

"Where can she have been wandering?" said Mordaunt, not without some apparent sympathy with the surprise, if not with the alarm, of the old domestic; "but it is needless to ask — the worse the weather, the more likely is she to be a traveller."

"What new tramper is this?" echoed the distracted Baby, whom the quick succession of guests had driven wellnigh crazy with vexation. "I'll soon settle her wandering, I sall warrant, if my brother has but the saul of a man in him, or if there be a pair of joughs at Scalloway!"

"The iron was never forged on stithy that would hauld her," said the old maid-servant. "She comes — she comes — God's sake speak her fair and canny, or we will have a ravelled hasp on the yarn-windles!"

As she spoke, a woman, tall enough almost to touch the top of the door with her cap, stepped into the room, signing the cross as she entered, and pronouncing, with a solemn voice, "The blessing of God and Saint Ronald on the open door, and their broad malison and mine upon close-handed churls!"

"And wha are ye, that are sae bauld wi' your blessing and banning in other folk's houses? What kind of country is this, that folk cannot sit quiet for an hour, and serve Heaven, and keep their bit gear tgether, without gangrel men and women coming thiggling and sorning ane after another, like a string of wild-geese?"

This speech, the understanding reader will easily saddle on Mistress Baby, and what effects it might have produced on the last stranger, can only be matter of conjecture; for the old servant and Mordaunt applied themselves at once to the party addressed, in order to deprecate her resentment; the former speaking to her some words of Norse, in a tone of intercession, and Mordaunt saying in English, "They are strangers, Norna, and know not your name or qualities; they are unacquainted, too, with the ways of this country, and therefore we must hold them excused for their lack of hospitality."

"I lack no hospitality, young man," said Triptolemus, "*miseris succurrere disco*— the goose that was destined to roost in the chimney till Michaelmas, is boiling in the pot for you; but if we had twenty geese, I see we are like to find mouths to eat them every feather — this must be amended."

"What must be amended, sordid slave?" said the stranger Norna, turning at once upon him with an emphasis that made him start — "*What* must be amended? Bring hither, if thou wilt, thy new-fangled coulthers, spades, and harrows, alter the implements of our fathers from the ploughshare to the mouse-trap; but know thou art in the land that was won of old by the flaxen-haired Kempions of the North, and leave us their hospitality at least, to show we come of what was once noble and generous. I say to you beware — while Norna looks forth at the measureless waters, from the crest of Fitful-head, something is yet left that resembles power of defence. If the men of Thule have ceased to be champions, and to spread the banquet for the raven, the women have not forgotten the arts that lifted them of yore into queens and prophetesses."

The woman who pronounced this singular tirade, was as striking in appearance as extravagantly lofty in her pretensions and in her language. She might well have represented on the stage, so far as features, voice, and stature, were concerned, the Bonduca or Boadicea of the Britons, or the sage Velleda, Aurinia, or any other fated Pythoness, who ever led to battle a tribe of the ancient Goths. Her features were high and well formed, and would have been handsome, but for the ravages of time and the effects of exposure to the severe weather of her country. Age, and perhaps sorrow, had quenched, in some degree, the fire of a dark-blue eye, whose hue almost approached to black, and had sprinkled snow on such parts of her tresses as had escaped from under her cap, and were dishevelled by the rigour of the storm. Her upper garment, which dropped with water, was of a coarse dark-coloured stuff, called wadmaal, then much used in the Zetland islands, as also in Iceland and Norway. But as she threw this cloak back from her shoulders, a short jacket, of dark-blue velvet, stamped with figures, became visible, and the vest, which corresponded to it, was of crimson colour, and embroidered with tarnished silver. Her girdle was plated with silver ornaments, cut into the shape of planetary signs — her blue apron was embroidered with similar devices, and covered a petticoat of crimson cloth. Strong thick enduring shoes, of the half-dressed leather of the country, were tied with straps like those of the Roman buskins, over her scarlet stockings. She wore in her belt an ambiguous-looking weapon, which might pass for a sacrificing knife, or dagger, as the imagination of the spectator chose to assign to the wearer the character of a priestess or of a sorceress. In her hand she held a staff, squared on all sides, and engraved with Runic characters and figures, forming one of those portable and perpetual calendars which were used among the ancient natives of Scandinavia, and which, to a superstitious eye, might have passed for a divining rod.

Such were the appearance, features, and attire, of Norna of the Fitful-head, upon whom many of the inhabitants of the island looked with observance, many with fear, and almost all with a sort of veneration. Less pregnant circumstances of suspicion would, in any other part of Scotland, have exposed her to the investigation of those cruel inquisitors, who were then often invested with the delegated authority of the Privy Council, for the purpose of persecuting, torturing, and finally consigning to the flames, those who were accused of witchcraft or sorcery. But superstitions of this nature pass through two stages ere they become entirely obsolete. Those supposed to be possessed of supernatural powers, are venerated in the earlier stages of society. As religion and knowledge increase, they are first held in hatred and horror, and are finally regarded as impostors. Scotland was in the second state — the fear of witchcraft was great, and the hatred against those suspected of it intense. Zetland was as yet a little world by itself, where, among the lower and ruder classes, so much of the ancient northern superstition remained, as cherished the original veneration for those affecting supernatural knowledge, and power over the elements, which made a constituent part of the ancient Scandinavian creed. At least if the natives of Thule admitted that one class of magicians performed their feats by their alliance with Satan, they devoutly believed that others dealt with spirits of a different and less odious class — the ancient Dwarfs, called, in Zetland, Trows, or Drows, the modern fairies, and so forth.

Among those who were supposed to be in league with disembodied spirits, this Norna, descended from, and representative of, a family, which had long pretended to such gifts, was so eminent, that the name assigned to her, which signifies one of those fatal sisters who weave the web of human fate, had been conferred in honour of her supernatural powers. The name by which she had been actually christened was carefully concealed by herself and her parents; for to its discovery they superstitiously annexed some fatal consequences. In those times, the doubt only occurred, whether her supposed powers were acquired by lawful means. In our days, it would have been questioned whether she was an impostor, or whether her imagination was so deeply impressed with the mysteries of her supposed art, that she might be in some degree a believer in her own pretensions to supernatural knowledge. Certain it is, that she performed her part with such undoubting confidence, and such striking dignity of look and action, and evinced, at the same time, such strength of language, and energy of purpose, that it would have been difficult for the greatest sceptic to have doubted the reality of her enthusiasm, though he might smile at the pretensions to which it gave rise.

Chapter 6.

— *If, by your art, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.*

TEMPEST.

The storm had somewhat relaxed its rigour just before the entrance of Norna, otherwise she must have found it impossible to travel during the extremity of its fury. But she had hardly added herself so unexpectedly to the party whom chance had assembled at the dwelling of Triptolemus Yellowley, when the tempest suddenly resumed its former vehemence, and raged around the building with a fury which made the inmates insensible to any thing except the risk that the old mansion was about to fall above their heads.

Mistress Baby gave vent to her fears in loud exclamations of "The Lord guide us — this is surely the last day — what kind of a country of guisards and gyre-carlines is this! — and you, ye fool carle," she added, turning on her brother, (for all her passions had a touch of acidity in them,) "to quit the bonny Mearns land to come here, where there is naething but sturdy beggars and gaberlunzies within ane's house, and Heaven's anger on the outside on't!"

"I tell you, sister Baby," answered the insulted agriculturist, "that all shall be reformed and amended — excepting," he added, betwixt his teeth, "the scalding humours of an ill-natured jaud, that can add bitterness to the very storm!"

The old domestic and the pedlar meanwhile exhausted themselves in entreaties to Norna, of which, as they were couched in the Norse language, the master of the house understood nothing.

She listened to them with a haughty and unmoved air, and replied at length aloud, and in English — "I will not. What if this house be strewed in ruins before morning — where would be the world's want in the crazed projector, and the niggardly pinch-commons, by which it is inhabited? They will needs come to reform Zetland customs, let them try how they like a Zetland storm. — You that would not perish, quit this house!"

The pedlar seized on his little knapsack, and began hastily to brace it on his back; the old maid-servant cast her cloak about her shoulders, and both seemed to be in the act of leaving the house as fast as they could.

Triptolemus Yellowley, somewhat commoved by these appearances, asked Mordaunt, with a voice which faltered with apprehension, whether he thought there was any, that is, so very much danger?

"I cannot tell," answered the youth, "I have scarce ever seen such a storm. Norna can tell us better than any one when it will abate; for no one in these islands can judge of the weather like her."

"And is that all thou thinkest Norna can do?" said the sibyl; "thou shalt know her powers are not bounded within such a narrow space. Hear me, Mordaunt, youth of a foreign land, but of a friendly heart — Dost thou quit this doomed mansion with those who now prepare to leave it?"

"I do not — I will not, Norna," replied Mordaunt; "I know not your motive for desiring me to remove, and I will not leave, upon these dark threats, the house in which I have been kindly received in such a tempest as this. If the owners are unaccustomed to our practice of unlimited hospitality, I am the more obliged to them that they have relaxed their usages, and opened their doors in my behalf."

"He is a brave lad," said Mistress Baby, whose superstitious feelings had been daunted by the threats of the supposed sorceress, and who, amidst her eager, narrow, and repining disposition, had, like all who possess marked character, some sparks of higher feeling, which made her sympathize with generous sentiments, though she thought it too expensive to entertain them at her own cost — "He is a brave lad," she again repeated, "and worthy of ten geese, if I had them to boil for him, or roast either. I'll warrant him a gentleman's son, and no churl's blood."

"Hear me, young Mordaunt," said Norna, "and depart from this house. Fate has high views on you — you shall not remain in this hovel to be crushed amid its worthless ruins, with the relics of its more worthless inhabitants, whose life is as little to the world as the vegetation of the house-leek, which now grows on their thatch, and which shall soon be crushed amongst their mangled limbs."

"I — I will go forth," said Yellowley, who, despite of his bearing himself scholarly and wisely, was beginning to be terrified for the issue of the adventure; for the house was old, and the walls rocked formidably to the blast.

"To what purpose?" said his sister. "I trust the Prince of the power of the air has not yet such-like power over those that are made in God's image, that a good house should fall about our heads, because a randy quean" (here she darted a fierce glance at the Pythoness) "should boast us with her glamour, as if we were sae mony dogs to crouch at her bidding!"

"I was only wanting," said Triptolemus, ashamed of his motion, "to look at the bear-braird, which must be sair laid wi' this tempest; but if this honest woman like to bide wi' us, I think it were best to let us a' sit down canny thegither, till it's working weather again."

"Honest woman!" echoed Baby — "Foul warlock thief! — Aroint ye, ye limmer!" she added, addressing Norna directly; "out of an honest house, or, shame fa' me, but I'll take the bittle²⁶ to you!"

Norna cast on her a look of supreme contempt; then, stepping to the window, seemed engaged in deep contemplation of the heavens, while the old maid-servant, Tronda, drawing close to her mistress, implored, for the sake of all that was dear to man or woman, "Do not provoke Norna of Fitful-head! You have no sic woman on the mainland of Scotland — she can ride on one of these clouds as easily as man ever rode on a sheltie."

"I shall live to see her ride on the reek of a fat tar-barrel," said Mistress Baby; "and that will be a fit pacing palfrey for her."

Again Norna regarded the enraged Mrs. Baby Yellowley with a look of that unutterable scorn which her haughty features could so well express, and moving to the window which looked to the north-west, from which quarter the gale seemed at present to blow, she stood for some time with her arms crossed, looking out upon the leaden-coloured sky, obscured as it was by the thick drift, which, coming on in successive gusts of tempest, left ever and anon sad and dreary intervals of expectation betwixt the dying and the reviving blast.

Norna regarded this war of the elements as one to whom their strife was familiar; yet the stern serenity of her features had in it a cast of awe, and at the same time of authority, as the cabalist may be supposed to look upon the spirit he has evoked, and which, though he knows how to subject him to his spell, bears still an aspect appalling to flesh and blood. The attendants stood by in different attitudes, expressive of their various feelings. Mordaunt, though not indifferent to the risk in which they stood, was more curious than alarmed. He had heard of Norna's alleged power over the elements, and now expected an opportunity of judging for himself of its reality. Triptolemus Yellowley was confounded at what seemed to be far beyond the bounds of his philosophy; and, if the truth must be spoken, the worthy agriculturist was greatly more frightened than inquisitive. His sister was not in the least curious on the subject; but it was difficult to say whether anger or fear predominated in her sharp eyes and thin compressed lips. The pedlar and old Tronda, confident that the house would never fall while the redoubted Norna was beneath its roof, held themselves ready for a start the instant she should take her departure.

Having looked on the sky for some time in a fixed attitude, and with the most profound silence, Norna at once, yet with a slow and elevated gesture, extended her staff of black oak towards that part of the heavens from which the blast came hardest, and in the midst of its fury chanted a Norwegian invocation, still preserved in the Island of Uist, under the name of the Song of the Reimkennar, though some call it the Song of the Tempest. The following is a free translation, it being impossible to render literally many of the elliptical and metaphorical terms of expression, peculiar to the ancient Northern poetry:—

1.

"Stern eagle of the far north-west,
Thou that bearest in thy grasp the thunderbolt,
Thou whose rushing pinions stir ocean to madness,
Thou the destroyer of herds, thou the scatterer of navies,
Thou the breaker down of towers,
Amidst the scream of thy rage,
Amidst the rushing of thy onward wings,
Though thy scream be loud as the cry of a perishing nation,
Though the rushing of thy wings be like the roar of ten thousand waves,
Yet hear, in thine ire and thy haste,
Hear thou the voice of the Reim-kennar.

2.

"Thou hast met the pine-trees of Drontheim,
Their dark-green heads lie prostrate beside their uprooted stems;

Thou hast met the rider of the ocean,
The tall, the strong bark of the fearless rover,
And she has struck to thee the topsail
That she had not veiled to a royal armada;
Thou hast met the tower that hears its crest among the clouds,
The battled massive tower of the Jarl of former days,
And the cope-stone of the turret
Is lying upon its hospitable hearth;
But thou too shalt stoop, proud compeller of clouds,
When thou hearest the voice of the Reim-kennar.

3.

"There are verses that can stop the stag in the forest,
Ay, and when the dark-coloured dog is opening on his track;
There are verses can make the wild hawk pause on the wing,
Like the falcon that wears the hood and the jesses,
And who knows the shrill whistle of the fowler.
Thou who canst mock at the scream of the drowning mariner,
And the crash of the ravaged forest,
And the groan of the overwhelmed crowds,
When the church hath fallen in the moment of prayer,
There are sounds which thou also must list,
When they are chanted by the voice of the Reim-kennar.

4.

"Enough of woe hast thou wrought on the ocean,
The widows wring their hands on the beach;
Enough of woe hast thou wrought on the land,
The husbandman folds his arms in despair;
Cease thou the waving of thy pinions,
Let the ocean repose in her dark strength;
Cease thou the flashing of thine eye.
Let the thunderbolt sleep in the armoury of Odin;
Be thou still at my bidding, viewless racer of the north-western heaven,
Sleep thou at the voice of Norna the Reim-kennar!"

We have said that Mordaunt was naturally fond of romantic poetry and romantic situation; it is not therefore surprising that he listened with interest to the wild address thus uttered to the wildest wind of the compass, in a tone of such dauntless enthusiasm. But though he had heard so much of the Runic rhyme and of the northern spell, in the country where he had so long dwelt, he was not on this occasion so credulous as to believe that the tempest, which had raged so lately, and which was now beginning to decline, was subdued before the charmed verse of Norna. Certain it was, that the blast seemed passing away, and the apprehended danger was already over; but it was not improbable that this issue had been for some time foreseen by the Pythoness, through signs of the weather imperceptible to those who had not dwelt long in the country, or had not bestowed on the meteorological phenomena the attention of a strict and close observer. Of Norna's experience he had no doubt, and that went a far way to explain what seemed supernatural in her demeanour. Yet still the noble countenance, half-shaded by dishevelled tresses, the air of majesty with which, in a tone of menace as well as of command, she addressed the viewless spirit of the tempest, gave him a strong inclination to believe in the ascendancy of the occult arts over the powers of nature; for, if a woman ever moved on earth to whom such authority over the ordinary laws of the universe could belong, Norna of Fitful-head, judging from bearing, figure, and face, was born to that high destiny.

The rest of the company were less slow in receiving conviction. To Tronda and the jagger none was necessary; they had long believed in the full extent of Norna's authority over the elements. But Triptolemus and his sister gazed at each other with wondering and alarmed looks, especially when the wind began perceptibly to decline, as was remarkably visible during the pauses which Norna made betwixt the strophes of her incantation. A long silence followed the last verse, until Norna resumed her chant, but with a changed and more soothing modulation of voice and tune.

"Eagle of the far north-western waters,
Thou hast heard the voice of the Reim-kennar,
Thou hast closed thy wide sails at her bidding,
And folded them in peace by thy side.
My blessing be on thy retiring path!
When thou stoapest from thy place on high,
Soft be thy slumbers in the caverns of the unknown ocean,
Rest till destiny shall again awaken thee;
Eagle of the north-west, thou hast heard the voice of the Reim-kennar!"

"A pretty sang that would be to keep the corn from shaking in har'st," whispered the agriculturist to his sister; "we must speak her fair, Baby — she will maybe part with the secret for a hundred pund Scots."

"An hundred fules' heads!" replied Baby — "bid her five merks of ready siller. I never knew a witch in my life but she was as poor as Job."

Norna turned towards them as if she had guessed their thoughts; it may be that she did so. She passed them with a look of the most sovereign contempt, and walking to the table on which the preparations for Mrs. Barbara's frugal meal were already disposed, she filled a small wooden quaigh from an earthen pitcher which contained bland, a subacid liquor made out of the serous part of the milk. She broke a single morsel from a barley-cake, and having eaten and drunk, returned towards the churlish hosts. "I give you no thanks," she said, "for my refreshment, for you bid me not welcome to it; and thanks bestowed on a churl are like the dew of heaven on the cliffs of Foulah, where it finds nought that can be refreshed by its influences. I give you no thanks," she said again, but drawing from her pocket a leathern purse that seemed large and heavy, she added, "I pay you with what you will value more than the gratitude of the whole inhabitants of Hialtland. Say not that Norna of Fitful-head hath eaten of your bread and drunk of your cup, and left you sorrowing for the charge to which she hath put your house." So saying, she laid on the table a small piece of antique gold coin, bearing the rude and half-defaced effigies of some ancient northern king.

Triptolemus and his sister exclaimed against this liberality with vehemence; the first protesting that he kept no public, and the other exclaiming, "Is the carline mad? Heard ye ever of ony of the gentle house of Clinkscale that gave meat for siller?"

"Or for love either?" muttered her brother; "haud to that, tittie."

"What are ye whittie-whattieing about, ye gowk?" said his gentle sister, who suspected the tenor of his murmurs; "gie the ladie back her bonnie-die there, and be blithe to be sae rid on't — it will be a sclate-stane the morn, if not something worse."

The honest factor lifted the money to return it, yet could not help being struck when he saw the impression, and his hand trembled as he handed it to his sister.

"Yes," said the Pythoness again, as if she read the thoughts of the astonished pair, "you have seen that coin before — beware how you use it! It thrives not with the sordid or the mean-souled — it was won with honourable danger, and must be expended with honourable liberality. The treasure which lies under a cold hearth will one day, like the hidden talent, bear witness against its avaricious possessors."

This last obscure intimation seemed to raise the alarm and the wonder of Mrs. Baby and her brother to the uttermost. The latter tried to stammer out something like an invitation to Norna to tarry with them all night, or at least to take share of the "dinner," so he at first called it; but looking at the company, and remembering the limited contents of the pot, he corrected the phrase, and hoped she would take some part of the "snack, which would be on the table ere a man could loose a plough."

"I eat not here — I sleep not here," replied Norna — "nay, I relieve you not only of my own presence, but I will dismiss your unwelcome guests. — Mordaunt," she added, addressing young Mertoun, "the dark fit is past, and your father looks for you this evening."

"Do you return in that direction?" said Mordaunt. "I will but eat a morsel, and give you my aid, good mother, on the road. The brooks must be out, and the journey perilous."

"Our roads lie different," answered the Sibyl, "and Norna needs not mortal arm to aid her on the way. I am summoned far to the east, by those who know well how to smooth my passage. — For thee, Bryce Snailsfoot," she continued, speaking to the pedlar, "speed thee on to Sumburgh — the Roost will afford thee a gallant harvest, and worthy the gathering in. Much goodly ware will ere now be seeking a new owner, and the careful skipper will sleep still enough in the deep haaf, and care not that bale and chest are dashing against the shores."

"Na, na, good mother," answered Snailsfoot, "I desire no man's life for my private advantage, and am just grateful for the blessing of Providence on my sma' trade. But doubtless one man's loss is another's gain; and as these storms destroy a' thing on land, it is but fair they suld send us something by sea. Sae, taking the freedom, like yoursell, mother, to borrow a lump of barley-bread, and a draught of bland, I will bid good-day, and thank you, to this good gentleman and lady, and e'en go on my way to Jarlshof, as you advise."

"Ay," replied the Pythoness, "where the slaughter is, the eagles will be gathered; and where the wreck is on the shore, the jagger is as busy to purchase spoil as the shark to gorge upon the dead."

This rebuke, if it was intended for such, seemed above the comprehension of the travelling merchant, who, bent upon gain, assumed the knapsack and ellwand, and asked Mordaunt, with the familiarity permitted in a wild country, whether he would not take company along with him?

"I wait to eat some dinner with Mr. Yellowley and Mrs. Baby," answered the youth, "and will set forward in half an hour."

"Then I'll just take my piece in my hand," said the pedlar. Accordingly he muttered a benediction, and, without more ceremony, helped himself to what, in Mrs. Baby's covetous eyes, appeared to be two-thirds of the bread, took a long pull at the jug of bland, seized on a handful of the small fish called sillocks, which the domestic was just placing on the board, and left the room without farther ceremony.

"My certie," said the despoiled Mrs. Baby, "there is the chapman's drouth²⁷ and his hunger baith, as folk say! If the laws against vagrants be executed this gate — It's no that I wad shut the door against decent folk," she said, looking to Mordaunt, "more especially in such judgment-weather. But I see the goose is dished, poor thing."

This she spoke in a tone of affection for the smoked goose, which, though it had long been an inanimate inhabitant of her chimney, was far more interesting to Mrs. Baby in that state, than when it screamed amongst the clouds. Mordaunt laughed and took his seat, then turned to look for Norna; but she had glided from the apartment during the discussion with the pedlar.

"I am glad she is gane, the dour carline," said Mrs. Baby, "though she has left that piece of gowd to be an everlasting shame to us."

"Whisht, mistress, for the love of heaven!" said Tronda Dronsdaughter; "wha kens where she may be this moment? — we are no sure but she may hear us, though we cannot see her."

Mistress Baby cast a startled eye around, and instantly recovering herself, for she was naturally courageous as well as violent, said, "I bade her aroint before, and I bid her aroint again, whether she sees me or hears me, or whether she's ower the cairn and awa. — And you, ye silly sumph," she said to poor Yellowley, "what do ye stand glowering there for? — *You* a Saunt Andrew's student! — *you* studied lair and Latin humanities, as ye ca' them, and daunted wi' the clavers of an auld randie wife! Say your best college grace, man, and witch, or nae witch, we'll eat our dinner, and defy her. And for the value of the gowden piece, it shall never be said I pouched her siller. I will gie it to some poor body — that is, I will test²⁸ upon it at my death, and keep it for a purse-penny till that day comes, and that's no using it in the way of spending siller. Say your best college grace, man, and let us eat and drink in the meantime."

"Ye had muckle better say an *oraamus* to Saint Ronald, and fling a saxpence ower your left shoulther, master," said Tronda.²⁹

"That ye may pick it up, ye jaud," said the implacable Mistress Baby; "it will be lang or ye win the worth of it ony other gate. — Sit down, Triptolemus, and mindna the words of a daft wife."

"Daft or wise," replied Yellowley, very much disconcerted, "she kens more than I would wish she kend. It was awfu' to see sic a wind fa' at the voice of flesh and blood like oursell — and then yon about the hearth-stane — I cannot but think" —

"If ye cannot but think," said Mrs. Baby, very sharply, "at least ye can haud your tongue?"

The agriculturist made no reply, but sate down to their scanty meal, and did the honours of it with unusual heartiness to his new guest, the first of the intruders who had arrived, and the last who left them. The sillocks speedily disappeared, and the smoked goose, with its appendages, took wing so effectually, that Tronda, to whom the polishing of the bones had been destined, found the task accomplished, or nearly so, to her hand. After dinner, the host produced his bottle of brandy; but Mordaunt, whose general habits were as abstinent almost as those of his father, laid a very light tax upon this unusual exertion of hospitality.

During the meal, they learned so much of young Mordaunt, and of his father, that even Baby resisted his wish to reassume his wet garments, and pressed him (at the risk of an expensive supper being added to the charges of the day) to tarry with them till the next morning. But what Norna had said excited the youth's wish to reach home, nor, however far the hospitality of Stourburgh was extended in his behalf, did the house present any particular temptations to induce him to remain there longer. He therefore accepted the loan of the factor's clothes, promising to return them, and send for his own; and took a civil leave of his host and Mistress Baby, the latter of whom, however affected by the loss of her goose, could not but think the cost well bestowed (since it was to be expended at all) upon so handsome and cheerful a youth.

Chapter 7.

*She does no work by halves, yon raving ocean;
Engulfing those she strangles, her wild womb
Affords the mariners whom she hath dealt on,
Their death at once, and sepulchre.*

OLD PLAY.

There were ten "lang Scots miles" betwixt Stourburgh and Jarlshof; and though the pedestrian did not number all the impediments which crossed Tam o' Shanter's path — for in a country where there are neither hedges nor stone enclosures, there can be neither "slaps nor stiles," — yet the number and nature of the "mosses and waters" which he had to cross in his peregrination, was fully sufficient to balance the account, and to render his journey as toilsome and dangerous as Tam o' Shanter's celebrated retreat from Ayr. Neither witch nor warlock crossed Mordaunt's path, however. The length of the day was already considerable, and he arrived safe at Jarlshof by eleven o'clock at night. All was still and dark round the mansion, and it was not till he had whistled twice or thrice beneath Swertha's window, that she replied to the signal.

At the first sound, Swertha fell into an agreeable dream of a young whale-fisher, who some forty years before used to make such a signal beneath the window of her hut; at the second, she waked to remember that Johnnie Fea had slept sound among the frozen waves of Greenland for this many a year, and that she was Mr. Mertoun's governante at Jarlishof; at the third, she arose and opened the window.

"Whae is that," she demanded, "at sic an hour of the night?"

"It is I," said the youth.

"And what for comena ye in? The door's on the latch, and there is a gathering peat on the kitchen fire, and a spunk beside it — ye can light your ain candle."

"All well," replied Mordaunt; "but I want to know how my father is?"

"Just in his ordinary, gude gentleman — asking for you, Maister Mordaunt; ye are ower far and ower late in your walks, young gentleman."

"Then the dark hour has passed, Swertha?"

"In troth has it, Maister Mordaunt," answered the governante; "and your father is very reasonably good-natured for him, poor gentleman. I spake to him twice yesterday without his speaking first; and the first time he answered me as civil as you could do, and the neist time he bade me no plague him; and then, thought I, three times were aye canny, so I spake to him again for luck's-sake, and he called me a chattering old devil; but it was quite and clean in a civil sort of way."

"Enough, enough, Swertha," answered Mordaunt; "and now get up, and find me something to eat, for I have dined but poorly."

"Then you have been at the new folk's at Stourburgh; for there is no another house in a' the Isles but they wad hae gi'en ye the best share of the best they had. Saw ye aught of Norma of the Fitful-head? She went to Stourburgh this morning, and returned to the town at night."

"Returned! — then she is here? How could she travel three leagues and better in so short a time?"

"Wha kens how she travels?" replied Swertha; "but I heard her tell the Ranzelman wi' my ain lugs, that she intended that day to have gone on to Burgh-Westra, to speak with Minna Troil, but she had seen that at Stourburgh, (indeed she said at Harfra, for she never calls it by the other name of Stourburgh,) that sent her back to our town. But gang your ways round, and ye shall have plenty of supper — ours is nae toom pantry, and still less a locked ane, though my master be a stranger, and no just that tight in the upper rigging, as the Ranzelman says."

Mordaunt walked round to the kitchen accordingly, where Swertha's care speedily accommodated him with a plentiful, though coarse meal, which indemnified him for the scanty hospitality he had experienced at Stourburgh.

In the morning, some feelings of fatigue made young Mertoun later than usual in leaving his bed; so that, contrary to what was the ordinary case, he found his father in the apartment where they eat, and which served them indeed for every common purpose, save that of a bedchamber or of a kitchen. The son greeted the father in mute reverence, and waited until he should address him.

"You were absent yesterday, Mordaunt?" said his father. Mordaunt's absence had lasted a week and more; but he had often observed that his father never seemed to notice how time passed during the period when he was affected with his sullen vapours. He assented to what the elder Mr. Mertoun had said.

"And you were at Burgh-Westra, as I think?" continued his father.

"Yes, sir," replied Mordaunt.

The elder Mertoun was then silent for some time, and paced the floor in deep silence, with an air of sombre reflection, which seemed as if he were about to relapse into his moody fit. Suddenly turning to his son, however, he observed, in the tone of a query, "Magnus Troil has two daughters — they must be now young women; they are thought handsome, of course?"

"Very generally, sir," answered Mordaunt, rather surprised to hear his father making any enquiries about the individuals of a sex which he usually thought so light of, a surprise which was much increased by the next question, put as abruptly as the former.

"Which think you the handsomest?"

"I, sir?" replied his son with some wonder, but without embarrassment — "I really am no judge — I never considered which was absolutely the handsomest. They are both very pretty young women."

"You evade my question, Mordaunt; perhaps I have some very particular reason for my wish to be acquainted with your taste in this matter. I am not used to waste words for no purpose. I ask you again, which of Magnus Troil's daughters you think most handsome?"

"Really, sir," replied Mordaunt — "but you only jest in asking me such a question."

"Young man," replied Mertoun, with eyes which began to roll and sparkle with impatience, "I *never* jest. I desire an answer to my question."

"Then, upon my word, sir," said Mordaunt, "it is not in my power to form a judgment betwixt the young ladies — they are both very pretty, but by no means like each other. Minna is dark-haired, and more grave than her sister — more serious, but by no means either dull or sullen."

"Um," replied his father; "you have been gravely brought up, and this Minna, I suppose, pleases you most?"

"No, sir, really I can give her no preference over her sister Brenda, who is as gay as a lamb in a spring morning — less tall than her sister, but so well formed, and so excellent a dancer" —

"That she is best qualified to amuse the young man, who has a dull home and a moody father?" said Mr. Mertoun.

Nothing in his father's conduct had ever surprised Mordaunt so much as the obstinacy with which he seemed to pursue a theme so foreign to his general train of thought, and habits of conversation; but he contented himself with answering once more, "that both the young ladies were highly admirable, but he had never thought of them with the wish to do either injustice, by ranking her lower than her sister — that others would probably decide between them, as they happened to be partial to a grave or a gay disposition, or to a dark or fair complexion; but that he could see no excellent quality in the one that was not balanced by something equally captivating in the other."

It is possible that even the coolness with which Mordaunt made this explanation might not have satisfied his father concerning the subject of investigation; but Swertha at this moment entered with breakfast, and the youth, notwithstanding his late supper, engaged in that meal with an air which satisfied Mertoun that he held it matter of more grave importance than the conversation which they had just had, and that he had nothing more to say upon the subject explanatory of the answers he had already given. He shaded his brow with his hand, and looked long fixedly upon the young man as he was busied with his morning meal. There was neither abstraction nor a sense of being observed in any of his motions; all was frank, natural, and open.

"He is fancy-free," muttered Mertoun to himself — "so young, so lively, and so imaginative, so handsome and so attractive in face and person, strange, that at his age, and in his circumstances, he should have avoided the meshes which catch all the world beside!"

When the breakfast was over, the elder Mertoun, instead of proposing, as usual, that his son, who awaited his commands, should betake himself to one branch or other of his studies, assumed his hat and staff, and desired that Mordaunt should accompany him to the top of the cliff, called Sumburgh-head, and from thence look out upon the state of the ocean, agitated as it must still be by the tempest of the preceding day. Mordaunt was at the age when young men willingly exchange sedentary pursuits for active exercise, and started up with alacrity to comply with his father's desire; and in the course of a few minutes they were mounting together the hill, which, ascending from the land side in a long, steep, and grassy slope, sinks at once from the summit to the sea in an abrupt and tremendous precipice.

The day was delightful; there was just so much motion in the air as to disturb the little fleecy clouds which were scattered on the horizon, and by floating them occasionally over the sun, to chequer the landscape with that variety of light and shade which often gives to a bare and unenclosed scene, for the time at least, a species of charm approaching to the varieties of a cultivated and planted country. A thousand flitting hues of light and shade played over the expanse of wild moor, rocks, and inlets, which, as they climbed higher and higher, spread in wide and wider circuit around them.

The elder Mertoun often paused and looked round upon the scene, and for some time his son supposed that he halted to enjoy its beauties; but as they ascended still higher up the hill, he remarked his shortened breath and his uncertain and toilsome step, and became assured, with some feelings of alarm, that his father's strength was, for the moment, exhausted, and that he found the ascent more toilsome and fatiguing than usual. To draw close to his side, and offer him in silence

the assistance of his arm, was an act of youthful deference to advanced age, as well as of filial reverence; and Mertoun seemed at first so to receive it, for he took in silence the advantage of the aid thus afforded him.

It was but for two or three minutes, however, that the father availed himself of his son's support. They had not ascended fifty yards farther, ere he pushed Mordaunt suddenly, if not rudely, from him; and, as if stung into exertion by some sudden recollection, began to mount the acclivity with such long and quick steps, that Mordaunt, in his turn, was obliged to exert himself to keep pace with him. He knew his father's peculiarity of disposition; he was aware from many slight circumstances, that he loved him not even while he took much pains with his education, and while he seemed to be the sole object of his care upon earth. But the conviction had never been more strongly or more powerfully forced upon him than by the hasty churlishness with which Mertoun rejected from a son that assistance, which most elderly men are willing to receive from youths with whom they are but slightly connected, as a tribute which it is alike graceful to yield and pleasing to receive. Mertoun, however, did not seem to perceive the effect which his unkindness had produced upon his son's feelings. He paused upon a sort of level terrace which they had now attained, and addressed his son with an indifferent tone, which seemed in some degree affected.

"Since you have so few inducements, Mordaunt, to remain in these wild islands, I suppose you sometimes wish to look a little more abroad into the world?"

"By my word, sir," replied Mordaunt, "I cannot say I ever have a thought on such a subject."

"And why not, young man?" demanded his father; "it were but natural, I think, at your age. At your age, the fair and varied breadth of Britain could not gratify me, much less the compass of a sea-girdled peat-moss."

"I have never thought of leaving Zetland, sir," replied the son. "I am happy here, and have friends. You yourself, sir, would miss me, unless indeed"——

"Why, thou wouldst not persuade me," said his father, somewhat hastily, "that you stay here, or desire to stay here, for the love of me?"

"Why should I not, sir?" answered Mordaunt, mildly; "it is my duty, and I hope I have hitherto performed it."

"O ay," repeated Mertoun, in the same tone—"your duty—your duty. So it is the duty of the dog to follow the groom that feeds him."

"And does he not do so, sir?" said Mordaunt.

"Ay," said his father, turning his head aside: "but he fawns only on those who caress him."

"I hope, sir," replied Mordaunt, "I have not been found deficient?"

"Say no more on't—say no more on't," said Mertoun, abruptly, "we have both done enough by each other—we must soon part—Let that be our comfort—if our separation should require comfort."

"I shall be ready to obey your wishes," said Mordaunt, not altogether displeased at what promised him an opportunity of looking farther abroad into the world. "I presume it will be your pleasure that I commence my travels with a season at the whale-fishing."

"Whale-fishing!" replied Mertoun; "that were a mode indeed of seeing the world! but thou speakest but as thou hast learned. Enough of this for the present. Tell me where you had shelter from the storm yesterday?"

"At Stourburgh, the house of the new factor from Scotland."

"A pedantic, fantastic, visionary schemer," said Mertoun—"and whom saw you there?"

"His sister, sir," replied Mordaunt, "and old Norna of the Fitful-head."

"What! the mistress of the potent spell," answered Mertoun, with a sneer—"she who can change the wind by pulling her curch on one side, as King Erick used to do by turning his cap? The dame journeys far from home—how fares she? Does she get rich by selling favourable winds to those who are port-bound?"³⁰

"I really do not know, sir," said Mordaunt, whom certain recollections prevented from freely entering into his father's humour.

"You think the matter too serious to be jested with, or perhaps esteem her merchandise too light to be cared after," continued Mertoun, in the same sarcastic tone, which was the nearest approach he ever made to cheerfulness; "but consider it more deeply. Every thing in the universe is bought and sold, and why not wind, if the merchant can find purchasers? The earth is rented, from its surface down to its most central mines;—the fire, and the means of feeding it, are currently bought and sold;—the wretches that sweep the boisterous ocean with their nets, pay ransom for the privilege of being drowned in it. What title has the air to be exempted from the universal course of traffic? All above the earth, under the earth, and around the earth, has its price, its sellers, and its purchasers. In many countries the priests will sell you a portion of heaven—in all countries men are willing to buy, in exchange for health, wealth, and peace of conscience, a full allowance of hell. Why should not Norna pursue her traffic?"

"Nay, I know no reason against it," replied Mordaunt; "only I wish she would part with the commodity in smaller quantities. Yesterday she was a wholesale dealer—whoever treated with her had too good a pennyworth."

"It is even so," said his father, pausing on the verge of the wild promontory which they had attained, where the huge precipice sinks abruptly down on the wide and tempestuous ocean, "and the effects are still visible."

The face of that lofty cape is composed of the soft and crumbling stone called sand-flag, which gradually becomes decomposed, and yields to the action of the atmosphere, and is split into large masses, that hang loose upon the verge of the precipice, and, detached from it by the violence of the tempests, often descend with great fury into the vexed abyss which lashes the foot of the rock. Numbers of these huge fragments lie strewed beneath the rocks from which they have fallen, and amongst these the tide foams and rages with a fury peculiar to those latitudes.

At the period when Mertoun and his son looked from the verge of the precipice, the wide sea still heaved and swelled with the agitation of yesterday's storm, which had been far too violent in its effects on the ocean to subside speedily. The tide therefore poured on the headland with a fury deafening to the ear, and dizzying to the eye, threatening instant destruction to whatever might be at the time involved in its current. The sight of Nature, in her magnificence, or in her beauty, or in her terrors, has at all times an overpowering interest, which even habit cannot greatly weaken; and both father and son sat themselves down on the cliff to look out upon that unbounded war of waters, which rolled in their wrath to the foot of the precipice.

At once Mordaunt, whose eyes were sharper, and probably his attention more alert, than that of his father, started up, and exclaimed, "God in Heaven! there is a vessel in the Roost!"

Mertoun looked to the north-westward, and an object was visible amid the rolling tide. "She shows no sail," he observed; and immediately added, after looking at the object through his spy-glass, "She is dismayed, and lies a sheer hulk upon the water."

"And is drifting on the Sumburgh-head," exclaimed Mordaunt, struck with horror, "without the slightest means of weathering the cape!"

"She makes no effort," answered his father; "she is probably deserted by her crew."

"And in such a day as yesterday," replied Mordaunt, "when no open boat could live were she manned with the best men ever handled an oar—all must have perished."

"It is most probable," said his father, with stern composure; "and one day, sooner or later, all must have perished. What signifies whether the fowler, whom nothing escapes, caught them up at one swoop from yonder shattered deck, or whether he clutched them individually, as chance gave them to his grasp? What signifies it?—the deck, the battlefield, are scarce more fatal to us than our table and our bed; and we are saved from the one, merely to drag out a heartless and wearisome existence, till we perish at the other. Would the hour were come—that hour which reason would teach us to wish for, were it not that nature has implanted the fear of it so strongly within us! You wonder at such a reflection, because life is yet new to you. Ere you have attained my age, it will be the familiar companion of your thoughts."

"Surely, sir," replied Mordaunt, "such distaste to life is not the necessary consequence of advanced age?"

"To all who have sense to estimate that which it is really worth," said Mertoun. "Those who, like Magnus Troil, possess so much of the animal impulses about them, as to derive pleasure from sensual gratification, may perhaps, like the animals, feel pleasure in mere existence."

Mordaunt liked neither the doctrine nor the example. He thought a man who discharged his duties towards others as well as the good old Udaller, had a better right to have the sun shine fair on his setting, than that which he might derive from mere insensibility. But he let the subject drop; for to dispute with his father, had always the effect of irritating him; and again he adverted to the condition of the wreck.

The hulk, for it was little better, was now in the very midst of the current, and drifting at a great rate towards the foot of the precipice, upon whose verge they were placed. Yet it was a long while ere they had a distinct view of the object which they had at first seen as a black speck amongst the waters, and then, at a nearer distance, like a whale, which now scarce shows its back-fin above the waves, now throws to view its large black side. Now, however, they could more distinctly observe the appearance of the ship, for the huge swelling waves which bore her forward to the shore, heaved her alternately high upon the surface, and then plunged her into the trough or furrow of the sea. She seemed a vessel of two or three hundred tons, fitted up for defence, for they could see her port-holes. She had been dismayed probably in the gale of the preceding day, and lay water-logged on the waves, a prey to their violence. It appeared certain, that the crew, finding themselves unable either to direct the vessel's course, or to relieve her by pumping, had taken to their boats, and left her to her fate. All apprehensions were therefore unnecessary, so far as the immediate loss of human lives was concerned; and yet it was not without a feeling of breathless awe that Mordaunt and his father beheld the vessel — that rare masterpiece by which human genius aspires to surmount the waves, and contend with the winds, upon the point of falling a prey to them.

Onward she came, the large black hulk seeming larger at every fathom's length. She came nearer, until she bestrode the summit of one tremendous billow, which rolled on with her unbroken, till the wave and its burden were precipitated against the rock, and then the triumph of the elements over the work of human hands was at once completed. One wave, we have said, made the wrecked vessel completely manifest in her whole bulk, as it raised her, and bore her onward against the face of the precipice. But when that wave receded from the foot of the rock, the ship had ceased to exist; and the retiring billow only bore back a quantity of beams, planks, casks, and similar objects, which swept out to the offing, to be brought in again by the next wave, and again precipitated upon the face of the rock. It was at this moment that Mordaunt conceived he saw a man floating on a plank or water-cask, which, drifting away from the main current, seemed about to go ashore upon a small spot of sand, where the water was shallow, and the waves broke more smoothly. To see the danger, and to exclaim, "He lives, and may yet be saved!" was the first impulse of the fearless Mordaunt. The next was, after one rapid glance at the front of the cliff, to precipitate himself — such seemed the rapidity of his movement — from the verge, and to commence, by means of slight fissures, projections, and crevices in the rock, a descent, which, to a spectator, appeared little else than an act of absolute insanity.

"Stop, I command you, rash boy!" said his father; "the attempt is death. Stop, and take the safer path to the left." But Mordaunt was already completely engaged in his perilous enterprise.

"Why should I prevent him?" said his father, checking his anxiety with the stern and unfeeling philosophy whose principles he had adopted. "Should he die now, full of generous and high feeling, eager in the cause of humanity, happy in the exertion of his own conscious activity, and youthful strength — should he die now, will he not escape misanthropy, and remorse, and age, and the consciousness of decaying powers, both of body and mind? — I will not look upon it however — I will not — I cannot behold his young light so suddenly quenched."

He turned from the precipice accordingly, and hastening to the left for more than a quarter of a mile, he proceeded towards a *riva*, or cleft in the rock, containing a path, called Erick's Steps, neither safe, indeed, nor easy, but the only one by which the inhabitants of Jarlishof were wont, for any purpose, to seek access to the foot of the precipice.

But long ere Mertoun had reached even the upper end of the pass, his adventurous and active son had accomplished his more desperate enterprise. He had been in vain turned aside from the direct line of descent, by the intervention of difficulties which he had not seen from above — his route became only more circuitous, but could not be interrupted. More than once, large fragments to which he was about to intrust his weight, gave way before him, and thundered down into the tormented ocean; and in one or two instances, such detached pieces of rock rushed after him, as if to bear him headlong in their course. A courageous heart, a steady eye, a tenacious hand, and a firm foot, carried him through his desperate attempt; and in the space of seven minutes, he stood at the bottom of the cliff, from the verge of which he had achieved his perilous descent.

The place which he now occupied was the small projecting spot of stones, sand, and gravel, that extended a little way into the sea, which on the right hand lashed the very bottom of the precipice, and on the left, was scarce divided from it by a small wave-worn portion of beach that extended as far as the foot of the rent in the rocks called Erick's Steps, by which Mordaunt's father proposed to descend.

When the vessel split and went to pieces, all was swallowed up in the ocean, which had, after the first shock, been seen to float upon the waves, excepting only a few pieces of wreck, casks, chests, and the like, which a strong eddy, formed by the reflux of the waves, had landed, or at least grounded, upon the shallow where Mordaunt now stood. Amongst these, his eager eye discovered the object that had at first engaged his attention, and which now, seen at nigher distance, proved to be in truth a man, and in a most precarious state. His arms were still wrapt with a close and convulsive grasp round the plank to which he had clung in the moment of the shock, but sense and the power of motion were fled; and, from the situation in which the plank lay, partly grounded upon the beach, partly floating in the sea, there was every chance that it might be again washed off shore, in which case death was inevitable. Just as he had made himself aware of these circumstances, Mordaunt beheld a huge wave advancing, and hastened to interpose his aid ere it burst, aware that the reflux might probably sweep away the sufferer.

He rushed into the surf, and fastened on the body, with the same tenacity, though under a different impulse, with that wherewith the hound seizes his prey. The strength of the retiring wave proved even greater than he had expected, and it was not without a struggle for his own life, as well as for that of the stranger, that Mordaunt resisted being swept off with the receding billow, when, though an adroit swimmer, the strength of the tide must either have dashed him against the rocks, or hurried him out to sea. He stood his ground, however, and ere another such billow had returned, he drew up, upon the small slip of dry sand, both the body of the stranger, and the plank to which he continued firmly attached. But how to save and to recall the means of ebbing life and strength, and how to remove into a place of greater safety the sufferer, who was incapable of giving any assistance towards his own preservation, were questions which Mordaunt asked himself eagerly, but in vain.

He looked to the summit of the cliff on which he had left his father, and shouted to him for his assistance; but his eye could not distinguish his form, and his voice was only answered by the scream of the sea-birds. He gazed again on the sufferer. A dress richly laced, according to the fashion of the times, fine linen, and rings upon his fingers, evinced he was a man of superior rank; and his features showed youth and comeliness, notwithstanding they were pallid and disfigured. He still breathed, but so feebly, that his respiration was almost imperceptible, and life seemed to keep such slight hold of his frame, that there was every reason to fear it would become altogether extinguished, unless it were speedily reinforced. To loosen the handkerchief from his neck, to raise him with his face towards the breeze, to support him with his arms, was all that Mordaunt could do for his assistance, whilst he anxiously looked for some one who might lend his aid in dragging the unfortunate to a more safe situation.

At this moment he beheld a man advancing slowly and cautiously along the beach. He was in hopes, at first, it was his father, but instantly recollected that he had not had time to come round by the circuitous descent, to which he must necessarily have recourse, and besides, he saw that the man who approached him was shorter in stature.

As he came nearer, Mordaunt was at no loss to recognise the pedlar whom the day before he had met with at Harfra, and who was known to him before upon many occasions. He shouted as loud as he could, "Bryce, hollo! Bryce, come hither!" But the merchant, intent upon picking up some of the spoils of the wreck, and upon dragging them out of reach of the tide, paid for some time little attention to his shouts.

When he did at length approach Mordaunt, it was not to lend him his aid, but to remonstrate with him on his rashness in undertaking the charitable office. "Are you mad?" said he; "you that have lived *sae lang* in Zetland, to risk the saving of a drowning man? Wot ye not, if you bring him to life again, he will be sure to do you

some capital injury?²¹— Come, Master Mordaunt, bear a hand to what's mair to the purpose. Help me to get ane or twa of these kists ashore before any body else comes, and we shall share, like good Christians, what God sends us, and be thankful."

Mordaunt was indeed no stranger to this inhuman superstition, current at a former period among the lower orders of the Zetlanders, and the more generally adopted, perhaps, that it served as an apology for refusing assistance to the unfortunate victims of shipwreck, while they made plunder of their goods. At any rate, the opinion, that to save a drowning man was to run the risk of future injury from him, formed a strange contradiction in the character of these islanders; who, hospitable, generous, and disinterested, on all other occasions, were sometimes, nevertheless, induced by this superstition, to refuse their aid in those mortal emergencies, which were so common upon their rocky and stormy coasts. We are happy to add, that the exhortation and example of the proprietors have eradicated even the traces of this inhuman belief, of which there might be some observed within the memory of those now alive. It is strange that the minds of men should have ever been hardened towards those involved in a distress to which they themselves were so constantly exposed; but perhaps the frequent sight and consciousness of such danger tends to blunt the feelings to its consequences, whether affecting ourselves or others.

Bryce was remarkably tenacious of this ancient belief; the more so, perhaps, that the mounting of his pack depended less upon the warehouses of Lerwick or Kirkwall, than on the consequences of such a north-western gale as that of the day preceding; for which (being a man who, in his own way, professed great devotion) he seldom failed to express his grateful thanks to Heaven. It was indeed said of him, that if he had spent the same time in assisting the wrecked seamen, which he had employed in rifling their bales and boxes, he would have saved many lives, and lost much linen. He paid no sort of attention to the repeated entreaties of Mordaunt, although he was now upon the same slip of sand with him. It was well known to Bryce as a place on which the eddy was likely to land such spoils as the ocean disgorged; and to improve the favourable moment, he occupied himself exclusively in securing and appropriating whatever seemed most portable and of greatest value. At length Mordaunt saw the honest pedlar fix his views upon a strong sea-chest, framed of some Indian wood, well secured by brass plates, and seeming to be of a foreign construction. The stout lock resisted all Bryce's efforts to open it, until, with great composure, he plucked from his pocket a very neat hammer and chisel, and began forcing the hinges.

Incensed beyond patience at his assurance, Mordaunt caught up a wooden stretcher which lay near him, and laying his charge softly on the sand, approached Bryce with a menacing gesture, and exclaimed, "You cold-blooded, inhuman rascal! either get up instantly and lend me your assistance to recover this man, and bear him out of danger from the surf, or I will not only beat you to a mummy on the spot, but inform Magnus Troil of your thievery, that he may have you flogged till your bones are bare, and then banish you from the Mainland!"

The lid of the chest had just sprung open as this rough address saluted Bryce's ears, and the inside presented a tempting view of wearing apparel for sea and land; shirts, plain and with lace ruffles, a silver compass, a silver-hilted sword, and other valuable articles, which the pedlar well knew to be such as stir in the trade. He was half-disposed to start up, draw the sword, which was a cut-and-thrust, and "darraign bataille," as Spenser says, rather than quit his prize, or brook interruption. Being, though short, a stout square-made personage, and not much past the prime of life, having besides the better weapon, he might have given Mordaunt more trouble than his benevolent knight-errantry deserved.

Already, as with vehemence he repeated his injunctions that Bryce should forbear his plunder, and come to the assistance of the dying man, the pedlar retorted with a voice of defiance, "Dinna swear, sir; dinna swear, sir — I will endure no swearing in my presence; and if you lay a finger on me, that am taking the lawful spoil of the Egyptians, I will give ye a lesson ye shall remember from this day to Yule!"

Mordaunt would speedily have put the pedlar's courage to the test, but a voice behind him suddenly said, "Forbear!" It was the voice of Norna of the Fitful-head, who, during the heat of their altercation, had approached them unobserved. "Forbear!" she repeated; "and, Bryce, do thou render Mordaunt the assistance he requires. It shall avail thee more, and it is I who say the word, than all that you could earn to-day besides."

"It is se'enteen hundred linen," said the pedlar, giving a tweak to one of the shirts, in that knowing manner with which matrons and judges ascertain the texture of the loom; — "it's se'enteen hundred linen, and as strong as an it were dowlas. Nevertheless, mother, your bidding is to be done; and I would have done Mr. Mordaunt's bidding too," he added, relaxing from his note of defiance into the deferential whining tone with which he cajoled his customers, "if he hadna made use of profane oaths, which made my very flesh grow, and caused me, in some sort, to forget myself." He then took a flask from his pocket, and approached the shipwrecked man. "It's the best of brandy," he said; "and if that doesna cure him, I ken nought that will." So saying, he took a preliminary gulp himself, as if to show the quality of the liquor, and was about to put it to the man's mouth, when, suddenly withholding his hand, he looked at Norna — "You ensure me against all risk of evil from him, if I am to render him my help? — Ye ken yourself what folk say, mother."

For all other answer, Norna took the bottle from the pedlar's hand, and began to chafe the temples and throat of the shipwrecked man; directing Mordaunt how to hold his head, so as to afford him the means of disgorging the sea-water which he had swallowed during his immersion.

The pedlar looked on inactive for a moment, and then said, "To be sure, there is not the same risk in helping him, now he is out of the water, and lying high and dry on the beach; and, to be sure, the principal danger is to those that first touch him; and, to be sure, it is a world's pity to see how these rings are pinching the poor creature's swalled fingers — they make his hand as blue as a partan's back before boiling." So saying, he seized one of the man's cold hands, which had just, by a tremulous motion, indicated the return of life, and began his charitable work of removing the rings, which seemed to be of some value.

"As you love your life, forbear," said Norna, sternly, "or I will lay that on you which shall spoil your travels through the isles."

"Now, for mercy's sake, mother, say nae mair about it," said the pedlar, "and I'll e'en do your pleasure in your ain way! I *did* feel a rheumatize in my back-spauld yestreen; and it wad be a sair thing for the like of me to be debarred my quiet walk round the country, in the way of trade — making the honest penny, and helping myself with what Providence sends on our coasts."

"Peace, then," said the woman — "Peace, as thou wouldst not rue it; and take this man on thy broad shoulders. His life is of value, and you will be rewarded."

"I had muckle need," said the pedlar, pensively looking at the lidless chest, and the other matters which strewed the sand; "for he has come between me and as much muckle speakerie as wad hae made a man of me for the rest of my life; and now it maun lie here till the next tide sweep it a' doun the Roost, after them that aught it yesterday morning."

"Fear not," said Norna, "it will come to man's use. See, there come carrion-crows, of scent as keen as thine own."

She spoke truly; for several of the people from the hamlet of Jarlshof were now hastening along the beach, to have their share in the spoil. The pedlar beheld them approach with a deep groan. "Ay, ay," he said, "the folk of Jarlshof, they will make clean wark; they are kend for that far and wide; they winna leave the value of a rotten ratlin; and what's waur, there isna ane o' them has mense or sense enough to give thanks for the mercies when they have gotten them. There is the auld Ranzelman, Neil Ronaldson, that canna walk a mile to hear the minister, but he will hirple ten if he hears of a ship embayed."

Norna, however, seemed to possess over him so complete an ascendancy, that he no longer hesitated to take the man, who now gave strong symptoms of reviving existence, upon his shoulders; and, assisted by Mordaunt, trudged along the sea-beach with his burden, without farther remonstrance. Ere he was borne off, the stranger pointed to the chest, and attempted to mutter something, to which Norna replied, "Enough. It shall be secured."

Advancing towards the passage called Erick's Steps, by which they were to ascend the cliffs, they met the people from Jarlshof hastening in the opposite direction. Man and woman, as they passed, reverently made room for Norna, and saluted her — not without an expression of fear upon some of their faces. She passed them a few paces, and then turning back, called aloud to the Ranzelman, who (though the practice was more common than legal) was attending the rest of the hamlet upon this plundering expedition. "Neil Ronaldson," she said, "mark my words. There stands yonder a chest, from which the lid has been just prized off. Look it be brought down to your own house at Jarlshof, just as it now is. Beware of moving or touching the slightest article. He were better in his grave that so much as looks at the contents. I speak not for nought, nor in aught will I be disobeyed."

"Your pleasure shall be done, mother," said Ronaldson. "I warrant we will not break bulk, since sic is your bidding."

Far behind the rest of the villagers, followed an old woman, talking to herself, and cursing her own decrepitude, which kept her the last of the party, yet pressing forward with all her might to get her share of the spoil.

When they met her, Mordaunt was astonished to recognise his father's old housekeeper. "How now," he said, "Swertha, what make you so far from home?" "Just e'en daikering out to look after my auld master and your honour," replied Swertha, who felt like a criminal caught in the manner; for on more occasions than one, Mr. Mertoun had intimated his high disapprobation of such excursions as she was at present engaged in. But Mordaunt was too much engaged with his own thoughts to take much notice of her delinquency. "Have you seen my father?" he said. "And that I have," replied Swertha — "The gude gentleman was ganging to hirsell himsell down Erick's Steps, whilk would have been the ending of him, that is in no way a cragsman. Sae I e'en gat him wiled away hame — and I was just seeking you that you may gang after him to the hall-house, for to my thought he is far frae weel."

"My father unwell?" said Mordaunt, remembering the faintness he had exhibited at the commencement of that morning's walk.

"Far frae weel — far frae weel," groaned out Swertha, with a piteous shake of the head — "white o' the gills — white o' the gills — and him to think of coming down the rival!"

"Return home, Mordaunt," said Norna, who was listening to what had passed. "I will see all that is necessary done for this man's relief, and you will find him at the Ranzelman's, when you list to enquire. You cannot help him more than you already have done."

Mordaunt felt this was true, and, commanding Swertha to follow him instantly, betook himself to the path homeward.

Swertha hobbled reluctantly after her young master in the same direction, until she lost sight of him on his entering the cleft of the rock; then instantly turned about, muttering to herself, "Haste home, in good sooth? — haste home, and lose the best chance of getting a new rokelay and overlay that I have had these ten years? by my certie, na — It's seldom sic rich godsend comes on our shore — no since the Jenny and James came ashore in King Charlie's time."

So saying, she mended her pace as well as she could, and, a willing mind making amends for frail limbs, posted on with wonderful dispatch to put in for her share of the spoil. She soon reached the beach, where the Ranzelman, stuffing his own pouches all the while, was exhorting the rest to part things fair, and be neighbourly, and to give to the auld and helpless a share of what was going, which, he charitably remarked, would bring a blessing on the shore, and send them "mair wrecks ere winter."³²

Chapter 8.

*He was a lovely youth, I guess;
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay,
Upon the tropic sea.*

WORDSWORTH.

The light foot of Mordaunt Mertoun was not long of bearing him to Jarlishof. He entered the house hastily, for what he himself had observed that morning, corresponded in some degree with the ideas which Swertha's tale was calculated to excite. He found his father, however, in the inner apartment, reposing himself after his fatigue; and his first question satisfied him that the good dame had practised a little imposition to get rid of them both.

"Where is this dying man, whom you have so wisely ventured your own neck to relieve?" said the elder Mertoun to the younger.

"Norna, sir," replied Mordaunt, "has taken him under her charge; she understands such matters."

"And is quack as well as witch?" said the elder Mertoun. "With all my heart — it is a trouble saved. But I hasted home, on Swertha's hint, to look out for lint and bandages; for her speech was of broken bones."

Mordaunt kept silence, well knowing his father would not persevere in his enquiries upon such a matter, and not willing either to prejudice the old governante, or to excite his father to one of those excesses of passion into which he was apt to burst, when, contrary to his wont, he thought proper to correct the conduct of his domestic.

It was late in the day ere old Swertha returned from her expedition, heartily fatigued, and bearing with her a bundle of some bulk, containing, it would seem, her share of the spoil. Mordaunt instantly sought her out, to charge her with the deceits she had practised on both his father and himself; but the accused matron lacked not her reply.

"By her troth," she said, "she thought it was time to bid Mr. Mertoun gang hame and get bandages, when she had seen, with her ain twa een, Mordaunt ganging down the cliff like a wild-cat — it was to be thought broken bones would be the end, and lucky if bandages wad do any good; — and, by her troth, she might weel tell Mordaunt his father was purily, and him looking sae white in the gills, (whilk, she wad die upon it, was the very word she used,) and it was a thing that couldna be denied by man at this very moment."

"But, Swertha," said Mordaunt, as soon as her clamorous defence gave him time to speak in reply, "how came you, that should have been busy with your housewifery and your spinning, to be out this morning at Erick's Steps, in order to take all this unnecessary care of my father and me? — And what is in that bundle, Swertha? for I fear, Swertha, you have been transgressing the law, and have been out upon the wrecking system."

"Fair fa' your sonsy face, and the blessing of Saint Ronald upon you!" said Swertha, in a tone betwixt coaxing and jesting; "would you keep a puir body frae mending hersell, and sae muckle gear lying on the loose sand for the lifting? — Hout, Maister Mordaunt, a ship ashore is a sight to wile the minister out of his very pu'pit in the middle of his preaching, muckle mair a puir auld ignorant wife frae her rock and her tow. And little did I get for my day's wark — just some rags o' cambric things, and a bit or twa of coarse claith, and sic like — the strong and the hearty get a' thing in this world."

"Yes, Swertha," replied Mordaunt, "and that is rather hard, as you must have your share of punishment in this world and the next, for robbing the poor mariners."

"Hout, callant, wha wad punish an auld wife like me for a wheen duds? — Folk speak muckle black ill of Earl Patrick; but he was a freend to the shore, and made wise laws against ony body helping vessels that were like to gang on the breakers."³³ — And the mariners, I have heard Bryce Jagger say, lose their right frae the time keel touches sand; and, moreover, they are dead and gane, poor souls — dead and gane, and care little about warld's wealth now — Nay, nae mair than the great Jarls and Sea-kings, in the Norse days, did about the treasures that they buried in the tombs and sepulchres auld langsyne. Did I ever tell you the sang, Maister Mordaunt, how Olaf Tryguarson garr'd hide five gold crowns in the same grave with him?"

"No, Swertha," said Mordaunt, who took pleasure in tormenting the cunning old plunderer — "you never told me that; but I tell you, that the stranger whom Norna has taken down to the town, will be well enough to-morrow, to ask where you have hidden the goods that you have stolen from the wreck."

"But wha will tell him a word about it, hinnie?" said Swertha, looking slyly up in her young master's face — "The mair by token, since I maun tell ye, that I have a bonny remnant of silk amang the lave, that will make a dainty waistcoat to yoursell, the first merry-making ye gang to."

Mordaunt could no longer forbear laughing at the cunning with which the old dame proposed to bribe off his evidence by imparting a portion of her plunder; and, desiring her to get ready what provision she had made for dinner, he returned to his father, whom he found still sitting in the same place, and nearly in the same posture, in which he had left him.

When their hasty and frugal meal was finished, Mordaunt announced to his father his purpose of going down to the town, or hamlet, to look after the shipwrecked sailor.

The elder Mertoun assented with a nod.

"He must be ill accommodated there, sir," added his son — a hint which only produced another nod of assent. "He seemed, from his appearance," pursued Mordaunt, "to be of very good rank — and admitting these poor people do their best to receive him, in his present weak state, yet" —

"I know what you would say," said his father, interrupting him; "we, you think, ought to do something towards assisting him. Go to him, then — if he lacks money, let him name the sum, and he shall have it; but, for lodging the stranger here, and holding intercourse with him, I neither can, nor will do so. I have retired to this

farthest extremity of the British isles, to avoid new friends, and new faces, and none such shall intrude on me either their happiness or their misery. When you have known the world half a score of years longer, your early friends will have given you reason to remember them, and to avoid new ones for the rest of your life. Go then — why do you stop? — rid the country of the man — let me see no one about me but those vulgar countenances, the extent and character of whose petty knavery I know, and can submit to, as to an evil too trifling to cause irritation.” He then threw his purse to his son, and signed to him to depart with all speed.

Mordaunt was not long before he reached the village. In the dark abode of Neil Ronaldson, the Ranzelman, he found the stranger seated by the peat-fire, upon the very chest which had excited the cupidity of the devout Bryce Snailsfoot, the pedlar. The Ranzelman himself was absent, dividing, with all due impartiality, the spoils of the wrecked vessel amongst the natives of the community; listening to and redressing their complaints of inequality; and (if the matter in hand had not been, from beginning to end, utterly unjust and indefensible) discharging the part of a wise and prudent magistrate, in all the details. For at this time, and probably until a much later period, the lower orders of the islanders entertained an opinion, common to barbarians also in the same situation, that whatever was cast on their shores, became their indisputable property.

Margery Bimbister, the worthy spouse of the Ranzelman, was in the charge of the house, and introduced Mordaunt to her guest, saying, with no great ceremony, “This is the young tacksman — You will maybe tell him your name, though you will not tell it to us. If it had not been for his four quarters, it’s but little you would have said to any body, sae lang as life lasted.”

The stranger arose, and shook Mordaunt by the hand; observing, he understood that he had been the means of saving his life and his chest. “The rest of the property,” he said, “is, I see, walking the plank; for they are as busy as the devil in a gale of wind.”

“And what was the use of your seamanship, then,” said Margery, “that you couldna keep off the Sumburgh-head? It would have been lang ere Sumburgh-head had come to you.”

“Leave us for a moment, good Margery Bimbister,” said Mordaunt; “I wish to have some private conversation with this gentleman.”

“Gentleman!” said Margery, with an emphasis; “not but the man is well enough to look at,” she added, again surveying him, “but I doubt if there is muckle of the gentleman about him.”

Mordaunt looked at the stranger, and was of a different opinion. He was rather above the middle size, and formed handsomely as well as strongly. Mordaunt’s intercourse with society was not extensive; but he thought his new acquaintance, to a bold sunburnt handsome countenance, which seemed to have faced various climates, added the frank and open manners of a sailor. He answered cheerfully the enquiries which Mordaunt made after his health; and maintained that one night’s rest would relieve him from all the effects of the disaster he had sustained. But he spoke with bitterness of the avarice and curiosity of the Ranzelman and his spouse.

“That chattering old woman,” said the stranger, “has persecuted me the whole day for the name of the ship. I think she might be contented with the share she has had of it. I was the principal owner of the vessel that was lost yonder, and they have left me nothing but my wearing apparel. Is there no magistrate, or justice of the peace, in this wild country, that would lend a hand to help one when he is among the breakers?”

Mordaunt mentioned Magnus Troil, the principal proprietor, as well as the Fowd, or provincial judge, of the district, as the person from whom he was most likely to obtain redress; and regretted that his own youth, and his father’s situation as a retired stranger, should put it out of their power to afford him the protection he required.

“Nay, for your part, you have done enough,” said the sailor; “but if I had five out of the forty brave fellows that are fishes’ food by this time, the devil a man would I ask to do me the right that I could do for myself!”

“Forty hands!” said Mordaunt; “you were well manned for the size of the ship.”

“Not so well as we needed to be. We mounted ten guns, besides chasers; but our cruise on the main had thinned us of men, and lumbered us up with goods. Six of our guns were in ballast — Hands! if I had had enough of hands, we would never have miscarried so infernally. The people were knocked up with working the pumps, and so took to their boats, and left me with the vessel, to sink or swim. But the dogs had their pay, and I can afford to pardon them — The boat swamped in the current — all were lost — and here am I.”

“You had come north about then, from the West Indies?” said Mordaunt.

“Ay, ay, the vessel was the Good Hope of Bristol, a letter of marque. She had fine luck down on the Spanish main, both with commerce and privateering, but the luck’s ended with her now. My name is Clement Cleveland, captain, and part owner, as I said before — I am a Bristol man born — my father was well known on the Tollsell — old Clem Cleveland of the College-green.”

Mordaunt had no right to enquire farther, and yet it seemed to him as if his own mind was but half satisfied. There was an affectation of bluntness, a sort of defiance, in the manner of the stranger, for which circumstances afforded no occasion. Captain Cleveland had suffered injustice from the islanders, but from Mordaunt he had only received kindness and protection; yet he seemed as if he involved all the neighbourhood in the wrongs he complained of. Mordaunt looked down and was silent, doubting whether it would be better to take his leave, or to proceed farther in his offers of assistance. Cleveland seemed to guess at his thoughts, for he immediately added, in a conciliating manner — “I am a plain man, Master Mertoun, for that I understand is your name; and I am a ruined man to boot, and that does not mend one’s good manners. But you have done a kind and friendly part by me, and it may be I think as much of it as if I thanked you more. And so before I leave this place, I’ll give you my fowlingpiece; she will put a hundred swan-shot through a Dutchman’s cap at eighty paces — she will carry ball too — I have hit a wild bull within a hundred-and-fifty yards — but I have two pieces that are as good, or better, so you may keep this for my sake.”

“That would be to take my share of the wreck,” answered Mordaunt, laughing.

“No such matter,” said Cleveland, undoing a case which contained several guns and pistols — “you see I have saved my private arm-chest, as well as my clothes — that the tall old woman in the dark rigging managed for me. And, between ourselves, it is worth all I have lost; for,” he added, lowering his voice, and looking round, “when I speak of being ruined in the hearing of these landsharks, I do not mean ruined stock and block. No, here is something will do more than shoot sea-fowl.” So saying, he pulled out a great ammunition-pouch marked swan-shot, and showed Mordaunt, hastily, that it was full of Spanish pistoles and Portagues (as the broad Portugal pieces were then called.) “No, no,” he added, with a smile, “I have ballast enough to trim the vessel again; and now, will you take the piece?”

“Since you are willing to give it me,” said Mordaunt, laughing, “with all my heart. I was just going to ask you in my father’s name,” he added, showing his purse, “whether you wanted any of that same ballast.”

“Thanks, but you see I am provided — take my old acquaintance, and may she serve you as well as she has served me; but you will never make so good a voyage with her. You can shoot, I suppose?”

“Tolerably well,” said Mordaunt, admiring the piece, which was a beautiful Spanish-barrelled gun, inlaid with gold, small in the bore, and of unusual length, such as is chiefly used for shooting sea-fowl, and for ball-practice.

“With slugs,” continued the donor, “never gun shot closer; and with single ball, you may kill a seal two hundred yards at sea from the top of the highest peak of this iron-bound coast of yours. But I tell you again, that the old rattler will never do you the service she has done me.”

“I shall not use her so dexterously, perhaps,” said Mordaunt.

“Umph! — perhaps not,” replied Cleveland; “but that is not the question. What say you to shooting the man at the wheel, just as we run aboard of a Spaniard? So the Don was taken aback, and we laid him athwart the hawse, and carried her cutlass in hand; and worth the while she was — stout brigantine — El Santo Francisco — bound for Porto Bello, with gold and negroes. That little bit of lead was worth twenty thousand pistoles.”

“I have shot at no such game as yet,” said Mordaunt.

“Well, all in good time; we cannot weigh till the tide makes. But you are a tight, handsome, active young man. What is to ail you to take a trip after some of this stuff?” laying his hand on the bag of gold.

"My father talks of my travelling soon," replied Mordaunt, who, born to hold men-of-wars-men in great respect, felt flattered by this invitation from one who appeared a thorough-bred seaman.

"I respect him for the thought," said the Captain; "and I will visit him before I weigh anchor. I have a consort off these islands, and be cursed to her. She'll find me out somewhere, though she parted company in the bit of a squall, unless she is gone to Davy Jones too. — Well, she was better found than we, and not so deep loaded — she must have weathered it. We'll have a hammock slung for you aboard, and make a sailor and a man of you in the same trip."

"I should like it well enough," said Mordaunt, who eagerly longed to see more of the world than his lonely situation had hitherto permitted; "but then my father must decide."

"Your father? pooh!" said Captain Cleveland; — "but you are very right," he added, checking himself; "Gad, I have lived so long at sea, that I cannot imagine any body has a right to think except the captain and the master. But you are very right. I will go up to the old gentleman this instant, and speak to him myself. He lives in that handsome, modern-looking building, I suppose, that I see a quarter of a mile off?"

"In that old half-ruined house," said Mordaunt, "he does indeed live; but he will see no visitors."

"Then you must drive the point yourself, for I can't stay in this latitude. Since your father is no magistrate, I must go to see this same Magnus — how call you him? — who is not justice of peace, but something else that will do the turn as well. These fellows have got two or three things that I must and will have back — let them keep the rest and be d — d to them. Will you give me a letter to him, just by way of commission?"

"It is scarce needful," said Mordaunt. "It is enough that you are shipwrecked, and need his help; — but yet I may as well furnish you with a letter of introduction."

"There," said the sailor, producing a writing-case from his chest, "are your writing-tools. — Meantime, since bulk has been broken, I will nail down the hatches, and make sure of the cargo."

While Mordaunt, accordingly, was engaged in writing to Magnus Troil a letter, setting forth the circumstances in which Captain Cleveland had been thrown upon their coast, the Captain, having first selected and laid aside some wearing apparel and necessities enough to fill a knapsack, took in hand hammer and nails, employed himself in securing the lid of his sea-chest, by fastening it down in a workmanlike manner, and then added the corroborating security of a cord, twisted and knotted with nautical dexterity. "I leave this in your charge," he said, "all except this," showing the bag of gold, "and these," pointing to a cutlass and pistols, "which may prevent all further risk of my parting company with my Portugueses."

"You will find no occasion for weapons in this country, Captain Cleveland," replied Mordaunt; "a child might travel with a purse of gold from Sumburgh-head to the Scaw of Unst, and no soul would injure him."

"And that's pretty boldly said, young gentleman, considering what is going on without doors at this moment."

"O," replied Mordaunt, a little confused, "what comes on land with the tide, they reckon their lawful property. One would think they had studied under Sir Arthegal, who pronounces —

'For equal right in equal things doth stand,
And what the mighty sea hath once possess'd,
And plucked quite from all possessors' hands,
Or else by wrecks that wretches have distress'd,
He may dispose, by his resistless might,
As things at random left, to whom he list.'"

"I shall think the better of plays and ballads as long as I live, for these very words," said Captain Cleveland; "and yet I have loved them well enough in my day. But this is good doctrine, and more men than one may trim their sails to such a breeze. What the sea sends is ours, that's sure enough. However, in case that your good folks should think the land as well as the sea may present them with waifs and strays, I will make bold to take my cutlass and pistols. — Will you cause my chest to be secured in your own house till you hear from me, and use your influence to procure me a guide to show me the way, and to carry my kit?"

"Will you go by sea or land?" said Mordaunt, in reply.

"By sea!" exclaimed Cleveland. "What — in one of these cockleshells, and a cracked cockleshell, to boot? No, no — land, land, unless I knew my crew, my vessel, and my voyage."

They parted accordingly, Captain Cleveland being supplied with a guide to conduct him to Burgh-Westra, and his chest being carefully removed to the mansion-house at Jarlshof.

Chapter 9.

*This is a gentle trader, and a prudent.
He's no Autolycus, to blear your eye,
With quips of worldly gauds and gamesomeness;
But seasons all his glittering merchandise
With wholesome doctrines, suited to the use,
As men sauce goose with sage and rosemary.*

OLD PLAY.

On the subsequent morning, Mordaunt, in answer to his father's enquiries, began to give him some account of the shipwrecked mariner, whom he had rescued from the waves. But he had not proceeded far in recapitulating the particulars which Cleveland had communicated, when Mr. Mertoun's looks became disturbed — he arose hastily, and, after pacing twice or thrice across the room, he retired into the inner chamber, to which he usually confined himself, while under the influence of his mental malady. In the evening he re-appeared, without any traces of his disorder; but it may be easily supposed that his son avoided recurring to the subject which had affected him.

Mordaunt Mertoun was thus left without assistance, to form at his leisure his own opinion respecting the new acquaintance which the sea had sent him; and, upon the whole, he was himself surprised to find the result less favourable to the stranger than he could well account for. There seemed to Mordaunt to be a sort of repelling influence about the man. True, he was a handsome man, of a frank and prepossessing manner, but there was an assumption of superiority about him, which Mordaunt did not quite so much like. Although he was so keen a sportsman as to be delighted with his acquisition of the Spanish-barrelled gun, and accordingly mounted and dismounted it with great interest, paying the utmost attention to the most minute parts about the lock and ornaments, yet he was, upon the whole, inclined to have some scruples about the mode in which he had acquired it.

"I should not have accepted it," he thought; "perhaps Captain Cleveland might give it me as a sort of payment for the trifling service I did him; and yet it would have been churlish to refuse it in the way it was offered. I wish he had looked more like a man whom one would have chosen to be obliged to."

But a successful day's shooting reconciled him to his gun, and he became assured, like most young sportsmen in similar circumstances, that all other pieces were but pop-guns in comparison. But then, to be doomed to shoot gulls and seals, when there were Frenchmen and Spaniards to be come at — when there were ships to be boarded, and steersmen to be marked off, seemed but a dull and contemptible destiny. His father had mentioned his leaving these islands, and no other mode of occupation occurred to his inexperience, save that of the sea, with which he had been conversant from his infancy. His ambition had formerly aimed no higher than at sharing the fatigues and dangers of a Greenland fishing expedition; for it was in that scene that the Zetlanders laid most of their perilous adventures. But war was again raging, the history of Sir Francis Drake, Captain Morgan, and other bold adventurers, an account of whose exploits he had purchased from Bryce Snailsfoot, had made much impression on his mind, and the offer of Captain Cleveland to take him to sea, frequently recurred to him, although the pleasure of such a project was somewhat damped by a doubt, whether, in the long run, he should not find many objections to his proposed commander. Thus much he already saw, that he was opinionative, and might probably prove arbitrary; and that, since even his kindness was mingled with an

assumption of superiority, his occasional displeasure might contain a great deal more of that disagreeable ingredient than could be palatable to those who sailed under him. And yet, after counting all risks, could his father's consent be obtained, with what pleasure, he thought, would he embark in quest of new scenes and strange adventures, in which he proposed to himself to achieve such deeds as should be the theme of many a tale to the lovely sisters of Burgh-Westra — tales at which Minna should weep, and Brenda should smile, and both should marvel! And this was to be the reward of his labours and his dangers; for the hearth of Magnus Troil had a magnetic influence over his thoughts, and however they might traverse amid his day-dreams, it was the point where they finally settled.

There were times when Mordaunt thought of mentioning to his father the conversation he had held with Captain Cleveland, and the seaman's proposal to him; but the very short and general account which he had given of that person's history, upon the morning after his departure from the hamlet, had produced a sinister effect on Mr. Mertoun's mind, and discouraged him from speaking farther on any subject connected with it. It would be time enough, he thought, to mention Captain Cleveland's proposal, when his consort should arrive, and when he should repeat his offer in a more formal manner; and these he supposed events likely very soon to happen.

But days grew to weeks, and weeks were numbered into months, and he heard nothing from Cleveland; and only learned by an occasional visit from Bryce Snailsfoot, that the Captain was residing at Burgh-Westra, as one of the family. Mordaunt was somewhat surprised at this, although the unlimited hospitality of the islands, which Magnus Troil, both from fortune and disposition, carried to the utmost extent, made it almost a matter of course that he should remain in the family until he disposed of himself otherwise. Still it seemed strange he had not gone to some of the northern isles to enquire after his consort; or that he did not rather choose to make Lerwick his residence, where fishing vessels often brought news from the coasts and ports of Scotland and Holland. Again, why did he not send for the chest he had deposited at Jarlishof? and still farther, Mordaunt thought it would have been but polite if the stranger had sent him some sort of message in token of remembrance.

These subjects of reflection were connected with another still more unpleasant, and more difficult to account for. Until the arrival of this person, scarce a week had passed without bringing him some kind greeting, or token of recollection, from Burgh-Westra; and pretences were scarce ever wanting for maintaining a constant intercourse. Minna wanted the words of a Norse ballad; or desired to have, for her various collections, feathers, or eggs, or shells, or specimens of the rarer sea-weeds; or Brenda sent a riddle to be resolved, or a song to be learned; or the honest old Udaller — in a rude manuscript, which might have passed for an ancient Runic inscription — sent his hearty greetings to his good young friend, with a present of something to make good cheer, and an earnest request he would come to Burgh-Westra as soon, and stay there as long, as possible. These kindly tokens of remembrance were often sent by special message; besides which, there was never a passenger or a traveller, who crossed from the one mansion to the other, who did not bring to Mordaunt some friendly greeting from the Udaller and his family. Of late, this intercourse had become more and more infrequent; and no messenger from Burgh-Westra had visited Jarlishof for several weeks. Mordaunt both observed and felt this alteration, and it dwelt on his mind, while he questioned Bryce as closely as pride and prudence would permit, to ascertain, if possible, the cause of the change. Yet he endeavoured to assume an indifferent air while he asked the jagger whether there were no news in the country.

"Great news," the jagger replied; "and a gay mony of them. That crackbrained carle, the new factor, is for making a change in the *bismars* and the *lispunds*; ³⁴ and our worthy Fowd, Magnus Troil, has sworn, that, sooner than change them for the still-yard, or aught else, he'll fling Factor Yellowley from Brassa-craig."

"Is that all?" said Mordaunt, very little interested.

"All? and enugh, I think," replied the pedlar. "How are folks to buy and sell, if the weights are changed on them?"

"Very true," replied Mordaunt; "but have you heard of no strange vessels on the coast?"

"Six Dutch doggers off Brassa; and, as I hear, a high-quartered galliot thing, with a gaff mainsail, lying in Scalloway Bay. She will be from Norway."

"No ships of war, or sloops?"

"None," replied the pedlar, "since the Kite Tender sailed with the impress men. If it was His will, and our men were out of her, I wish the deep sea had her!"

"Were there no news at Burgh-Westra? — Were the family all well?"

"A' weel, and weel to do — out-taken, it may be, something ower muckle daffing and laughing — dancing ilk night, they say, wi' the stranger captain that's living there — him that was ashore on Sumburgh-head the tother day — less daffing served him then."

"Daffing! dancing every night!" said Mordaunt, not particularly well satisfied — "Whom does Captain Cleveland dance with?"

"Ony body he likes, I fancy," said the jagger; "at ony rate, he gars a' body yonder dance after his fiddle. But I ken little about it, for I am no free in conscience to look upon thae flinging fancies. Folk should mind that life is made but of rotten yarn."

"I fancy that it is to keep them in mind of that wholesome truth, that you deal in such tender wares, Bryce," replied Mordaunt, dissatisfied as well with the tenor of the reply, as with the affected scruples of the respondent.

"That's as muckle as to say, that I suld hae minded you was a flinger and a fiddler yoursell, Maister Mordaunt; but I am an auld man, and maun unburden my conscience. But ye will be for the dance, I sall warrant, that's to be at Burgh-Westra, on John's Even, (*Saunt* John's, as the blinded creatures ca' him,) and nae doubt ye will be for some warldly braws — hose, waistcoats, or sic like? I hae pieces frae Flanders." — With that he placed his movable warehouse on the table, and began to unlock it.

"Dance!" repeated Mordaunt — "Dance on St. John's Even? — Were you desired to bid me to it, Bryce?"

"Na — but ye ken weel enugh ye wad be welcome, bidden or no bidden. This captain — how ca' ye him? — is to be skudler, as they ca't — the first of the gang, like."

"The devil take him!" said Mordaunt, in impatient surprise.

"A' in gude time," replied the jagger; "hurry no man's cattle — the devil will hae his due, I warrant ye, or it winna be for lack of seeking. But it's true I'm telling you, for a' ye stare like a wild-cat; and this same captain — I watna his name — bought ane of the very waistcoats that I am ganging to show ye — purple, wi' a gowd binding, and bonnily broidered; and I have a piece for you, the neighbour of it, wi' a green grund; and if ye mean to streek yoursell up beside him, ye maun e'en buy it, for it's gowd that glances in the lasses' een now-a-days. See — look till't," he added, displaying the pattern in various points of view; "look till *it* through the light, and till the light through *it* — *wi'* the grain, and *against* the grain — it shows ony gate — cam frae Antwerp a' the gate — four dollars is the price; and yon captain was sae weel pleased that he flang down a twenty shilling Jacobus, and bade me keep the change and be d — d! — poor silly profane creature, I pity him."

Without enquiring whether the pedlar bestowed his compassion on the worldly imprudence or the religious deficiencies of Captain Cleveland, Mordaunt turned from him, folded his arms, and paced the apartment, muttering to himself, "Not asked — A stranger to be king of the feast!" — Words which he repeated so earnestly, that Bryce caught a part of their import.

"As for asking, I am almaist bauld to say, that ye will be asked, Maister Mordaunt."

"Did they mention my name, then?" said Mordaunt.

"I canna preceesely say that," said Bryce Snailsfoot; — "but ye needna turn away your head sae sourly, like a sealgh when he leaves the shore; for, do you see, I heard distinctly that a' the revellers about are to be there; and is't to be thought they would leave out you, an auld kend freend, and the lightest foot at sic frolics (Heaven send you a better praise in His ain gude time!) that ever flang at a fiddle-squeak, between this and Unst? Sae I consider ye altogether the same as invited — and ye had best provide yourself wi' a waistcoat, for brave and brisk will every man be that's there — the Lord pity them!"

He thus continued to follow with his green glazen eyes the motions of young Mordaunt Mertoun, who was pacing the room in a very pensive manner, which the jagger probably misinterpreted, as he thought, like Claudio, that if a man is sad, it must needs be because he lacks money. Bryce, therefore, after another pause, thus accosted him. "Ye needna be sad about the matter, Maister Mordaunt; for although I got the just price of the article from the captain-man, yet I maun deal freendly wi' you, as a kend freend and customer, and bring the price, as they say, within your purse-mouth — or it's the same to me to let it lie ower till Martinmas, or e'en to Candlemas. I am decent in the warld, Maister Mordaunt — forbid that I should hurry ony body, far mair a freend that has paid me siller afore now. Or I

wad be content to swap the garment for the value in feathers or sea-otters' skins, or any kind of peltrie — nane kens better than yoursell how to come by sic ware — and I am sure I hae furnished you wi' the primest o' powder. I dinna ken if I tell'd ye it was out o' the kist of Captain Plunket, that perished on the Scaw of Unst, wi' the armed brig Mary, sax years syne. He was a prime fowler himself, and luck it was that the kist came ashore dry. I sell that to nane but gude marksmen. And so, I was saying, if ye had ony wares ye liked to coup³⁵ for the waistcoat, I wad be ready to trock wi' you, for assuredly ye will be wanted at Burgh-Westra, on Saint John's Even; and ye wadna like to look waur than the Captain — that wadna be setting."

"I will be there at least, whether wanted or not," said Mordaunt, stopping short in his walk, and taking the waistcoat-piece hastily out of the pedlar's hand; "and, as you say, will not disgrace them."

"Haud a care — haud a care, Maister Mordaunt," exclaimed the pedlar; "ye handle it as it were a bale of coarse wadmaal — ye'll fray't to bits — ye might weel say my ware is tender — and ye'll mind the price is four dollars — Sall I put ye in my book for it?"

"No," said Mordaunt, hastily; and, taking out his purse, he flung down the money.

"Grace to ye to wear the garment," said the joyous pedlar, "and to me to guide the siller; and protect us from earthly vanities, and earthly covetousness; and send you the white linen raiment, whilk is mair to be desired than the muslins, and cambrics, and lawns, and silks of this world; and send me the talents which avail more than much fine Spanish gold, or Dutch dollars either — and — but God guide the callant, what for is he wrapping the silk up that gate, like a wisp of hay?"

At this moment, old Swertha the housekeeper entered, to whom, as if eager to get rid of the subject, Mordaunt threw his purchase, with something like careless disdain; and, telling her to put it aside, snatched his gun, which stood in the corner, threw his shooting accoutrements about him, and, without noticing Bryce's attempt to enter into conversation upon the "braw seal-skin, as saft as doe-leather," which made the sling and cover of his fowlingpiece, he left the apartment abruptly.

The jagger, with those green, goggling, and gain-descrying kind of optics, which we have already described, continued gazing for an instant after the customer, who treated his wares with such irreverence.

Swertha also looked after him with some surprise. "The callant's in a creel," quoth she.

"In a creel!" echoed the pedlar; "he will be as wowf as ever his father was. To guide in that gate a bargain that cost him four dollars! — very, very Fifish, as the east-country fisher-folk say."

"Four dollars for that green rag!" said Swertha, catching at the words which the jagger had unwarily suffered to escape — "that was a bargain indeed! I wonder whether he is the greater fule, or you the mair rogue, Bryce Snailsfoot."

"I didna say it cost him preceesely four dollars," said Snailsfoot; "but if it had, the lad's siller's his ain, I hope; and he is auld enough to make his ain bargains. Mair by token the gudes are weel worth the money, and mair."

"Mair by token," said Swertha, coolly, "I will see what his father thinks about it."

"Ye'll no be sae ill-natured, Mrs. Swertha," said the jagger; "that will be but cauld thanks for the bonny owerlay that I hae brought you a' the way frae Lerwick."

"And a bonny price ye'll be setting on't," said Swertha; "for that's the gate your good deeds end."

"Ye sall hae the fixing of the price yoursell; or it may lie ower till ye're buying something for the house, or for your master, and it can make a' ae count."

"Troth, and that's true, Bryce Snailsfoot, I am thinking we'll want some napery sune — for it's no to be thought we can spin, and the like, as if there was a mistress in the house; and sae we make nane at hame."

"And that's what I ca' walking by the word," said the jagger. "'Go unto those that buy and sell;' there's muckle profit in that text."

"There is a pleasure in dealing wi' a discreet man, that can make profit of ony thing," said Swertha; "and now that I take another look at that daft callant's waistcoat piece, I think it is honestly worth four dollars."

Chapter 10.

I have possessed the regulation of the weather and the distribution of the seasons. The sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by my direction; the clouds, at my command, have poured forth their waters.

RASSELAS.

Any sudden cause for anxious and mortifying reflection, which, in advanced age, occasions sullen and pensive inactivity, stimulates youth to eager and active exertion; as if, like the hurt deer, they endeavoured to drown the pain of the shaft by the rapidity of motion. When Mordaunt caught up his gun, and rushed out of the house of Jarlshof, he walked on with great activity over waste and wild, without any determined purpose, except that of escaping, if possible, from the smart of his own irritation. His pride was effectually mortified by the report of the jagger, which coincided exactly with some doubts he had been led to entertain, by the long and unkind silence of his friends at Burgh-Westra.

If the fortunes of Cæsar had doomed him, as the poet suggests, to have been

"But the best wrestler on the green,"

it is nevertheless to be presumed, that a foil from a rival, in that rustic exercise, would have mortified him as much as a defeat from a competitor, when he was struggling for the empery of the world. And even so Mordaunt Mertoun, degraded in his own eyes from the height which he had occupied as the chief amongst the youth of the island, felt vexed and irritated, as well as humbled. The two beautiful sisters, also, whose smiles all were so desirous of acquiring, with whom he had lived on terms of such familiar affection, that, with the same ease and innocence, there was unconsciously mixed a shade of deeper though undefined tenderness than characterises fraternal love — they also seemed to have forgotten him. He could not be ignorant, that, in the universal opinion of all Dunrossness, nay, of the whole Mainland, he might have had every chance of being the favoured lover of either; and now at once, and without any failure on his part, he was become so little to them, that he had lost even the consequence of an ordinary acquaintance. The old Udaller, too, whose hearty and sincere character should have made him more constant in his friendships, seemed to have been as fickle as his daughters, and poor Mordaunt had at once lost the smiles of the fair, and the favour of the powerful. These were uncomfortable reflections, and he doubled his pace, that he might outstrip them if possible.

Without exactly reflecting upon the route which he pursued, Mordaunt walked briskly on through a country where neither hedge, wall, nor enclosure of any kind, interrupts the steps of the wanderer, until he reached a very solitary spot, where, embosomed among steep heathy hills, which sunk suddenly down on the verge of the water, lay one of those small fresh-water lakes which are common in the Zetland isles, whose outlets form the sources of the small brooks and rivulets by which the country is watered, and serve to drive the little mills which manufacture their grain.

It was a mild summer day; the beams of the sun, as is not uncommon in Zetland, were moderated and shaded by a silvery haze, which filled the atmosphere, and destroying the strong contrast of light and shade, gave even to noon the sober livery of the evening twilight. The little lake, not three-quarters of a mile in circuit, lay in profound quiet; its surface undimpled, save when one of the numerous water-fowl, which glided on its surface, dived for an instant under it. The depth of the water gave the whole that cerulean tint of bluish green, which occasioned its being called the Green Loch; and at present, it formed so perfect a mirror to the bleak hills by which it was surrounded, and which lay reflected on its bosom, that it was difficult to distinguish the water from the land; nay, in the shadowy uncertainty occasioned by the thin haze, a stranger could scarce have been sensible that a sheet of water lay before him. A scene of more complete solitude, having all its peculiarities heightened by the extreme serenity of the weather, the quiet grey composed tone of the atmosphere, and the perfect silence of the elements, could hardly be imagined. The very aquatic birds, who frequented the spot in great numbers, forbore their usual flight and screams, and floated in profound tranquillity upon the silent water.

Without taking any determined aim — without having any determined purpose — without almost thinking what he was about, Mordaunt presented his fowlingpiece, and fired across the lake. The large swan shot dimpled its surface like a partial shower of hail — the hills took up the noise of the report, and repeated it again, and again, and again, to all their echoes; the water-fowl took to wing in eddying and confused wheel, answering the echoes with a thousand varying screams, from the deep note of the swabie, or swartback, to the querulous cry of the tirrorack and kittiewake.

Mordaunt looked for a moment on the clamorous crowd with a feeling of resentment, which he felt disposed at the moment to apply to all nature, and all her objects, animate or inanimate, however little concerned with the cause of his internal mortification.

"Ay, ay," he said, "wheel, dive, scream, and clamour as you will, and all because you have seen a strange sight, and heard an unusual sound. There is many a one like you in this round world. But you, at least, shall learn," he added, as he reloaded his gun, "that strange sights and strange sounds, ay, and strange acquaintances to boot, have sometimes a little shade of danger connected with them. — But why should I wreak my own vexation on these harmless sea-gulls?" he subjoined, after a moment's pause; "they have nothing to do with the friends that have forgotten me. — I loved them all so well — and to be so soon given up for the first stranger whom chance threw on the coast!"

As he stood resting upon his gun, and abandoning his mind to the course of these unpleasant reflections, his meditations were unexpectedly interrupted by some one touching his shoulder. He looked around, and saw Norna of the Fitful-head, wrapped in her dark and ample mantle. She had seen him from the brow of the hill, and had descended to the lake, through a small ravine which concealed her, until she came with noiseless step so close to him that he turned round at her touch.

Mordaunt Mertoun was by nature neither timorous nor credulous, and a course of reading more extensive than usual had, in some degree, fortified his mind against the attacks of superstition; but he would have been an actual prodigy, if, living in Zetland in the end of the seventeenth century, he had possessed the philosophy which did not exist in Scotland generally, until at least two generations later. He doubted in his own mind the extent, nay, the very existence, of Norna's supernatural attributes, which was a high flight of incredulity in the country where they were universally received; but still his incredulity went no farther than doubts. She was unquestionably an extraordinary woman, gifted with an energy above others, acting upon motives peculiar to herself, and apparently independent of mere earthly considerations. Impressed with these ideas, which he had imbibed from his youth, it was not without something like alarm, that he beheld this mysterious female standing on a sudden so close beside him, and looking upon him with such sad and severe eyes, as those with which the Fatal Virgins, who, according to northern mythology, were called the *Valkyriur*, or "Choosers of the Slain," were supposed to regard the young champions whom they selected to share the banquet of Odin.

It was, indeed, reckoned unlucky, to say the least, to meet with Norna suddenly alone, and in a place remote from witnesses; and she was supposed, on such occasions, to have been usually a prophetess of evil, as well as an omen of misfortune, to those who had such a rencontre. There were few or none of the islanders, however familiarized with her occasional appearance in society, that would not have trembled to meet her on the solitary banks of the Green Loch.

"I bring you no evil, Mordaunt Mertoun," she said, reading perhaps something of this superstitious feeling in the looks of the young man. "Evil from me you never felt, and never will."

"Nor do I fear any," said Mordaunt, exerting himself to throw aside an apprehension which he felt to be unmanly. "Why should I, mother? You have been ever my friend."

"Yet, Mordaunt, thou art not of our region; but to none of Zetland blood, no, not even to those who sit around the hearth-stone of Magnus Troil, the noble descendants of the ancient Jarls of Orkney, am I more a well-wisher, than I am to thee, thou kind and brave-hearted boy. When I hung around thy neck that gifted chain, which all in our isles know was wrought by no earthly artist, but by the Drows,³⁶ in the secret recesses of their caverns, thou wert then but fifteen years old; yet thy foot had been on the Maiden-skerrie of Northmaven, known before but to the webbed sole of the swartback, and thy skiff had been in the deepest cavern of Brinnastir, where the *haaf-fish*³⁷ had before slumbered in dark obscurity. Therefore I gave thee that noble gift; and well thou knowest, that since that day, every eye in these isles has looked on thee as a son, or as a brother, endowed beyond other youths, and the favoured of those whose hour of power is when the night meets with the day."

"Alas! mother," said Mordaunt, "your kind gift may have given me favour, but it has not been able to keep it for me, or I have not been able to keep it for myself. — What matters it? I shall learn to set as little by others as they do by me. My father says that I shall soon leave these islands, and therefore, Mother Norna, I will return to you your fairy gift, that it may bring more lasting luck to some other than it has done to me."

"Despise not the gift of the nameless race," said Norna, frowning; then suddenly changing her tone of displeasure to that of mournful solemnity, she added — "Despise them not, but, O Mordaunt, court them not! Sit down on that grey stone — thou art the son of my adoption, and I will doff, as far as I may, those attributes that sever me from the common mass of humanity, and speak with you as a parent with a child."

There was a tremulous tone of grief which mingled with the loftiness of her language and carriage, and was calculated to excite sympathy, as well as to attract attention. Mordaunt sat down on the rock which she pointed out, a fragment which, with many others that lay scattered around, had been torn by some winter storm from the precipice at the foot of which it lay, upon the very verge of the water. Norna took her own seat on a stone at about three feet distance, adjusted her mantle so that little more than her forehead, her eyes, and a single lock of her grey hair, were seen from beneath the shade of her dark wadmaal cloak, and then proceeded in a tone in which the imaginary consequence and importance so often assumed by lunacy, seemed to contend against the deep workings of some extraordinary and deeply-rooted mental affliction.

"I was not always," she said, "that which I now am. I was not always the wise, the powerful, the commanding, before whom the young stand abashed, and the old uncover their grey heads. There was a time when my appearance did not silence mirth, when I sympathized with human passion, and had my own share in human joy or sorrow. It was a time of helplessness — it was a time of folly — it was a time of idle and unfruitful laughter — it was a time of causeless and senseless tears; — and yet, with its follies, and its sorrows, and its weaknesses, what would Norna of Fitful-head give to be again the unmarked and happy maiden that she was in her early days! Hear me, Mordaunt, and bear with me; for you hear me utter complaints which have never sounded in mortal ears, and which in mortal ears shall never sound again. I will be what I ought," she continued, starting up and extending her lean and withered arm, "the queen and protectress of these wild and neglected isles — I will be her whose foot the wave wets not, save by her permission; ay, even though its rage be at its wildest madness — whose robe the whirlwind respects, when it rends the house-rigging from the roof-tree. Bear me witness, Mordaunt Mertoun — you heard my words at Harfra — you saw the tempest sink before them — Speak, bear me witness!"

To have contradicted her in this strain of high-toned enthusiasm, would have been cruel and unavailing, even had Mordaunt been more decidedly convinced than he was, that an insane woman, not one of supernatural power, stood before him.

"I heard you sing," he replied, "and I saw the tempest abate."

"Abate?" exclaimed Norna, striking the ground impatiently with her staff of black oak; "thou speakest it but half — it sunk at once — sunk in shorter space than the child that is hushed to silence by the nurse. — Enough, you know my power — but you know not — mortal man knows not, and never shall know, the price which I paid to attain it. No, Mordaunt, never for the widest sway that the ancient Norsemen boasted, when their banners waved victorious from Bergen to Palestine — never, for all that the round world contains, do thou barter thy peace of mind for such greatness as Norna's." She resumed her seat upon the rock, drew the mantle over her face, rested her head upon her hands, and by the convulsive motion which agitated her bosom, appeared to be weeping bitterly.

"Good Norna," said Mordaunt, and paused, scarce knowing what to say that might console the unhappy woman — "Good Norna," he again resumed, "if there be aught in your mind that troubles it, were you not best to go to the worthy minister at Dunrossness? Men say you have not for many years been in a Christian congregation — that cannot be well, or right. You are yourself well known as a healer of bodily disease; but when the mind is sick, we should draw to the Physician of our souls."

Norna had raised her person slowly from the stooping posture in which she sat; but at length she started up on her feet, threw back her mantle, extended her arm, and while her lip foamed, and her eye sparkled, exclaimed in a tone resembling a scream — "Me did you speak — me did you bid seek out a priest! — would you kill the good man with horror? — Me in a Christian congregation! — Would you have the roof to fall on the sackless assembly, and mingle their blood with their worship? I — I seek to the good Physician! — Would you have the fiend claim his prey openly before God and man?"

The extreme agitation of the unhappy speaker naturally led Mordaunt to the conclusion, which was generally adopted and accredited in that superstitious country and period. "Wretched woman," he said, "if indeed thou hast leagued thyself with the Powers of Evil, why should you not seek even yet for repentance? But do as thou wilt, I cannot, dare not, as a Christian, abide longer with you; and take again your gift," he said, offering back the chain. "Good can never come of it, if indeed evil hath not come already."

"Be still and hear me, thou foolish boy," said Norna, calmly, as if she had been restored to reason by the alarm and horror which she perceived in Mordaunt's countenance; — "hear me, I say. I am not of those who have leagued themselves with the Enemy of Mankind, or derive skill or power from his ministry. And although the unearthly powers *were* propitiated by a sacrifice which human tongue can never utter, yet, God knows, my guilt in that offering was no more than that of the blind man who falls from the precipice which he could neither see nor shun. O, leave me not — shun me not — in this hour of weakness! Remain with me till the temptation be passed, or I will plunge myself into that lake, and rid myself at once of my power and my wretchedness!"

Mordaunt, who had always looked up to this singular woman with a sort of affection, occasioned no doubt by the early kindness and distinction which she had shown to him, was readily induced to reassume his seat, and listen to what she had further to say, in hopes that she would gradually overcome the violence of her agitation. It was not long ere she seemed to have gained the victory her companion expected, for she addressed him in her usual steady and authoritative manner.

"It was not of myself, Mordaunt, that I purposed to speak, when I beheld you from the summit of yonder grey rock, and came down the path to meet with you. My fortunes are fixed beyond change, be it for weal or for woe. For myself I have ceased to feel much; but for those whom she loves, Norna of the Fitful-head has still those feelings which link her to her kind. Mark me. There is an eagle, the noblest that builds in these airy precipices, and into that eagle's nest there has crept an adder — wilt thou lend thy aid to crush the reptile, and to save the noble brood of the lord of the north sky?"

"You must speak more plainly, Norna," said Mordaunt, "if you would have me understand or answer you. I am no guesser of riddles."

"In plain language, then, you know well the family of Burgh-Westra — the lovely daughters of the generous old Udaller, Magnus Troil — Minna and Brenda, I mean? You know them, and you love them?"

"I have known them, mother," replied Mordaunt, "and I have loved them — none knows it better than yourself."

"To know them once," said Norna, emphatically, "is to know them always. To love them once, is to love them for ever."

"To have loved them once, is to wish them well for ever," replied the youth; "but it is nothing more. To be plain with you, Norna, the family at Burgh-Westra have of late totally neglected me. But show me the means of serving them, I will convince you how much I have remembered old kindness, how little I resent late coldness."

"It is well spoken, and I will put your purpose to the proof," replied Norna. "Magnus Troil has taken a serpent into his bosom — his lovely daughters are delivered up to the machinations of a villain."

"You mean the stranger, Cleveland?" said Mordaunt.

"The stranger who so calls himself," replied Norna — "the same whom we found flung ashore, like a waste heap of sea-weed, at the foot of the Sumburgh-cape. I felt that within me, that would have prompted me to let him lie till the tide floated him off, as it had floated him on shore. I repent me I gave not way to it."

"But," said Mordaunt, "I cannot repent that I did my duty as a Christian man. And what right have I to wish otherwise? If Minna, Brenda, Magnus, and the rest, like that stranger better than me, I have no title to be offended; nay, I might well be laughed at for bringing myself into comparison."

"It is well, and I trust they merit thy unselfish friendship."

"But I cannot perceive," said Mordaunt, "in what you can propose that I should serve them. I have but just learned by Bryce the jagger, that this Captain Cleveland is all in all with the ladies at Burgh-Westra, and with the Udaller himself. I would like ill to intrude myself where I am not welcome, or to place my home-bred merit in comparison with Captain Cleveland's. He can tell them of battles, when I can only speak of birds' nests — can speak of shooting Frenchmen, when I can only tell of shooting seals — he wears gay clothes, and bears a brave countenance; I am plainly dressed, and plainly nurtured. Such gay gallants as he can noose the hearts of those he lives with, as the fowler nooses the guillemot with his rod and line."

"You do wrong to yourself," replied Norna, "wrong to yourself, and greater wrong to Minna and Brenda. And trust not the reports of Bryce — he is like the greedy chaffer-whale, that will change his course and dive for the most petty coin which a fisher can cast at him. Certain it is, that if you have been lessened in the opinion of Magnus Troil, that sordid fellow hath had some share in it. But let him count his vantage, for my eye is upon him."

"And why, mother," said Mordaunt, "do you not tell to Magnus what you have told to me?"

"Because," replied Norna, "they who wax wise in their own conceit must be taught a bitter lesson by experience. It was but yesterday that I spoke with Magnus, and what was his reply? — 'Good Norna, you grow old.' And this was spoken by one bounden to me by so many and such close ties — by the descendant of the ancient Norse earls — this was from Magnus Troil to me; and it was said in behalf of one, whom the sea flung forth as wreck-weed! Since he despises the counsel of the aged, he shall be taught by that of the young; and well that he is not left to his own folly. Go, therefore, to Burgh-Westra, as usual, upon the Baptist's festival."

"I have had no invitation," said Mordaunt; "I am not wanted, not wished for, not thought of — perhaps I shall not be acknowledged if I go thither; and yet, mother, to confess the truth, thither I had thought to go."

"It was a good thought, and to be cherished," replied Norna; "we seek our friends when they are sick in health, why not when they are sick in mind, and surfeited with prosperity? Do not fail to go — it may be, we shall meet there. Meanwhile our roads lie different. Farewell, and speak not of this meeting."

They parted, and Mordaunt remained standing by the lake, with his eyes fixed on Norna, until her tall dark form became invisible among the windings of the valley down which she wandered, and Mordaunt returned to his father's mansion, determined to follow counsel which coincided so well with his own wishes.

Chapter 11.

— All your ancient customs,
And long-descended usages, I'll change.
Ye shall not eat, nor drink, nor speak, nor move,
Think, look, or walk, as ye were wont to do.
Even your marriage-beds shall know mutation;
The bride shall have the stock, the groom the wall;
For all old practice will I turn and change,
And call it reformation — marry will I!

'TIS EVEN THAT WE'RE AT ODDS.

The festal day approached, and still no invitation arrived for that guest, without whom, but a little space since, no feast could have been held in the island; while, on the other hand, such reports as reached them on every side spoke highly of the favour which Captain Cleveland enjoyed in the good graces of the old Udaller of Burgh-Westra. Swertha and the Ranzelman shook their heads at these mutations, and reminded Mordaunt, by many a half-hint and innuendo, that he had incurred this eclipse by being so imprudently active to secure the safety of the stranger, when he lay at the mercy of the next wave beneath the cliffs of Sumburgh-head. "It is best to let saut water take its gate," said Swertha; "luck never came of crossing it."

"In troth," said the Ranzelman, "they are wise folks that let wave and withy haud their ain — luck never came of a half-drowned man, or a half-hanged ane either. Who was't shot Will Paterson off the Noss? — the Dutchman that he saved from sinking, I trow. To fling a drowning man a plank or a tow, may be the part of a Christian; but I say, keep hands aff him, if ye wad live and thrive free frae his danger."

"Ye are a wise man, Ranzelman, and a worthy," echoed Swertha, with a groan, "and ken how and when to help a neighbour, as well as ony man that ever drew a net."

"In troth, I have seen length of days," answered the Ranzelman, "and I have heard what the auld folk said to each other anent sic matters; and nae man in Zetland shall go farther than I will in any Christian service to a man on firm land; but if he cry 'Help!' out of the saut waves, that's another story."

"And yet, to think of this lad Cleveland standing in our Maister Mordaunt's light," said Swertha, "and with Magnus Troil, that thought him the flower of the island but on Whitsunday last, and Magnus, too, that's both held (when he's fresh, honest man) the wisest and wealthiest of Zetland!"

"He canna win by it," said the Ranzelman, with a look of the deepest sagacity. "There's whiles, Swertha, that the wisest of us (as I am sure I humbly confess mysell not to be) may be little better than gulls, and can no more win by doing deeds of folly than I can step over Sumburgh-head. It has been my own case once or twice in my life. But we shall see soon what ill is to come of all this, for good there cannot come."

And Swertha answered, with the same tone of prophetic wisdom, "Na, na, gude can never come on it, and that is ower truly said."

These doleful predictions, repeated from time to time, had some effect upon Mordaunt. He did not indeed suppose, that the charitable action of relieving a drowning man had subjected him, as a necessary and fatal consequence, to the unpleasant circumstances in which he was placed; yet he felt as if a sort of spell were drawn around him, of which he neither understood the nature nor the extent; — that some power, in short, beyond his own control, was acting upon his destiny, and, as it seemed, with no friendly influence. His curiosity, as well as his anxiety, was highly excited, and he continued determined, at all events, to make his appearance at the approaching festival, when he was impressed with the belief that something uncommon was necessarily to take place, which should determine his future views and prospects in life.

As the elder Mertoun was at this time in his ordinary state of health, it became necessary that his son should intimate to him his intended visit to Burgh-Westra. He did so; and his father desired to know the especial reason of his going thither at this particular time.

"It is a time of merry-making," replied the youth, "and all the country are assembled."

"And you are doubtless impatient to add another fool to the number. — Go — but beware how you walk in the path which you are about to tread — a fall from the cliffs of Foulah were not more fatal."

"May I ask the reason of your caution, sir?" replied Mordaunt, breaking through the reserve which ordinarily subsisted betwixt him and his singular parent.

"Magnus Troil," said the elder Mertoun, "has two daughters — you are of the age when men look upon such gauds with eyes of affection, that they may afterwards learn to curse the day that first opened their eyes upon heaven! I bid you beware of them; for, as sure as that death and sin came into the world by woman, so sure are their soft words, and softer looks, the utter destruction and ruin of all who put faith in them."

Mordaunt had sometimes observed his father's marked dislike to the female sex, but had never before heard him give vent to it in terms so determined and precise. He replied, that the daughters of Magnus Troil were no more to him than any other females in the islands; "they were even of less importance," he said, "for they had broken off their friendship with him, without assigning any cause."

"And you go to seek the renewal of it?" answered his father. "Silly moth, that hast once escaped the taper without singeing thy wings, are you not contented with the safe obscurity of these wilds, but must hasten back to the flame, which is sure at length to consume thee? But why should I waste arguments in deterring thee from thy inevitable fate? — Go where thy destiny calls thee."

On the succeeding day, which was the eve of the great festival, Mordaunt set forth on his road to Burgh-Westra, pondering alternately on the injunctions of Norna — on the ominous words of his father — on the inauspicious auguries of Swertha and the Ranzelman of Jarlshof — and not without experiencing that gloom with which so many concurring circumstances of ill omen combined to oppress his mind.

"It bodes me but a cold reception at Burgh-Westra," said he; "but my stay shall be the shorter. I will but find out whether they have been deceived by this seafaring stranger, or whether they have acted out of pure caprice of temper, and love of change of company. If the first be the case, I will vindicate my character, and let Captain Cleveland look to himself; — if the latter, why, then, good-night to Burgh-Westra and all its inmates."

As he mentally meditated this last alternative, hurt pride, and a return of fondness for those to whom he supposed he was bidding farewell for ever, brought a tear into his eye, which he dashed off hastily and indignantly, as, mending his pace, he continued on his journey.

The weather being now serene and undisturbed, Mordaunt made his way with an ease that formed a striking contrast to the difficulties which he had encountered when he last travelled the same route; yet there was a less pleasing subject for comparison, within his own mind.

"My breast," he said to himself, "was then against the wind, but my heart within was serene and happy. I would I had now the same careless feelings, were they to be bought by battling with the severest storm that ever blew across these lonely hills!"

With such thoughts, he arrived about noon at Harfra, the habitation, as the reader may remember, of the ingenious Mr. Yellowley. Our traveller had, upon the present occasion, taken care to be quite independent of the niggardly hospitality of this mansion, which was now become infamous on that account through the whole island, by bringing with him, in his small knapsack, such provisions as might have sufficed for a longer journey. In courtesy, however, or rather, perhaps, to get rid of his own disquieting thoughts, Mordaunt did not fail to call at the mansion, which he found in singular commotion. Triptolemus himself, invested with a pair of large jack-boots, went clattering up and down stairs, screaming out questions to his sister and his serving-woman Tronda, who replied with shriller and more complicated screeches. At length, Mrs. Baby herself made her appearance, her venerable person endued with what was then called a joseph, an ample garment, which had once been green, but now, betwixt stains and patches, had become like the vesture of the patriarch whose name it bore — a garment of divers colours. A steeple-crowned hat, the purchase of some long-past moment, in which vanity had got the better of avarice, with a feather which had stood as much wind and rain as if it had been part of a seamew's wing, made up her equipment, save that in her hand she held a silver-mounted whip of antique fashion. This attire, as well as an air of determined bustle in the gait and appearance of Mrs. Barbara Yellowley, seemed to bespeak that she was prepared to take a journey, and cared not, as the saying goes, who knew that such was her determination.

She was the first that observed Mordaunt on his arrival, and she greeted him with a degree of mingled emotion. "Be good to us!" she exclaimed, "if here is not the canty callant that wears yon thing about his neck, and that snapped up our goose as light as if it had been a sandie-lavrock!" The admiration of the gold chain, which had formerly made so deep an impression on her mind, was marked in the first part of her speech, the recollection of the untimely fate of the smoked goose was commemorated in the second clause. "I will lay the burden of my life," she instantly added, "that he is ganging our gate."

"I am bound for Burgh-Westra, Mrs. Yellowley," said Mordaunt.

"And blithe will we be of your company," she added — "it's early day to eat; but if you liked a barley scone and a drink of bland — naetheless, it is ill travelling on a full stomach, besides quelling your appetite for the feast that is biding you this day; for all sort of prodigality there will doubtless be."

Mordaunt produced his own stores, and, explaining that he did not love to be burdensome to them on this second occasion, invited them to partake of the provisions he had to offer. Poor Triptolemus, who seldom saw half so good a dinner as his guest's luncheon, threw himself upon the good cheer, like Sancho on the scum of Camacho's kettle, and even the lady herself could not resist the temptation, though she gave way to it with more moderation, and with something like a sense of shame. "She had let the fire out," she said, "for it was a pity wasting fuel in so cold a country, and so she had not thought of getting any thing ready, as they were to set out so soon; and so she could not but say, that the young gentleman's *snacket* looked very good; and besides, she had some curiosity to see whether the folks in that country cured their beef in the same way they did in the north of Scotland." Under which combined considerations, Dame Baby made a hearty experiment on the refreshments which thus unexpectedly presented themselves.

When their extemporary repast was finished, the factor became solicitous to take the road; and now Mordaunt discovered, that the alacrity with which he had been received by Mistress Baby was not altogether disinterested. Neither she nor the learned Triptolemus felt much disposed to commit themselves to the wilds of Zetland, without the assistance of a guide; and although they could have commanded the aid of one of their own labouring folks, yet the cautious agriculturist

observed, that it would be losing at least one day's work; and his sister multiplied his apprehensions by echoing back, "One day's work? — ye may weel say twenty — for, set ane of their noses within the smell of a kail-pot, and their lugs within the sound of a fiddle, and whistle them back if ye can!"

Now the fortunate arrival of Mordaunt, in the very nick of time, not to mention the good cheer which he brought with him, made him as welcome as any one could possibly be to a threshold, which, on all ordinary occasions, abhorred the passage of a guest; nor was Mr. Yellowley altogether insensible of the pleasure he promised himself in detailing his plans of improvement to his young companion, and enjoying what his fate seldom assigned him — the company of a patient and admiring listener.

As the factor and his sister were to prosecute their journey on horseback, it only remained to mount their guide and companion; a thing easily accomplished, where there are such numbers of shaggy, long-backed, short-legged ponies, running wild upon the extensive moors, which are the common pasturage for the cattle of every township, where shelties, geese, swine, goats, sheep, and little Zetland cows, are turned out promiscuously, and often in numbers which can obtain but precarious subsistence from the niggard vegetation. There is, indeed, a right of individual property in all these animals, which are branded or tattooed by each owner with his own peculiar mark; but when any passenger has occasional use for a pony, he never scruples to lay hold of the first which he can catch, puts on a halter, and, having rode him as far as he finds convenient, turns the animal loose to find his way back again as he best can — a matter in which the ponies are sufficiently sagacious.

Although this general exercise of property was one of the enormities which in due time the factor intended to abolish, yet, like a wise man, he scrupled not, in the meantime, to avail himself of so general a practice, which, he condescended to allow, was particularly convenient for those who (as chanced to be his own present case) had no ponies of their own on which their neighbours could retaliate. Three shelties, therefore, were procured from the hill — little shagged animals, more resembling wild bears than any thing of the horse tribe, yet possessed of no small degree of strength and spirit, and able to endure as much fatigue and indifferent usage as any creatures in the world.

Two of these horses were already provided and fully accoutred for the journey. One of them, destined to bear the fair person of Mistress Baby, was decorated with a huge side-saddle of venerable antiquity — a mass, as it were, of cushion and padding, from which depended, on all sides, a housing of ancient tapestry, which, having been originally intended for a horse of ordinary size, covered up the diminutive palfrey over which it was spread, from the ears to the tail, and from the shoulder to the fetlock, leaving nothing visible but its head, which looked fiercely out from these enfoldments, like the heraldic representation of a lion looking out of a bush. Mordaunt gallantly lifted up the fair Mistress Yellowley, and at the expense of very slight exertion, placed her upon the summit of her mountainous saddle. It is probable, that, on feeling herself thus squired and attended upon, and experiencing the long unwonted consciousness that she was attired in her best array, some thoughts dawned upon Mistress Baby's mind, which checkered, for an instant, those habitual ideas about thrift, that formed the daily and all-engrossing occupation of her soul. She glanced her eye upon her faded Joseph, and on the long housings of her saddle, as she observed, with a smile, to Mordaunt, that "travelling was a pleasant thing in fine weather and agreeable company, if," she added, glancing a look at a place where the embroidery was somewhat frayed and tattered, "it was not sae wasteful to ane's horse-furniture."

Meanwhile, her brother stepped stoutly to his steed; and as he chose, notwithstanding the serenity of the weather, to throw a long red cloak over his other garments, his pony was even more completely enveloped in drapery than that of his sister. It happened, moreover, to be an animal of an high and contumacious spirit, bouncing and curvetting occasionally under the weight of Triptolemus, with a vivacity which, notwithstanding his Yorkshire descent, rather deranged him in the saddle; gambols which, as the palfrey itself was not visible, except upon the strictest inspection, had, at a little distance, an effect as if they were the voluntary movements of the cloaked cavalier, without the assistance of any other legs than those with which nature had provided him; and, to any who had viewed Triptolemus under such a persuasion, the gravity, and even distress, announced in his countenance, must have made a ridiculous contrast to the vivacious caprioles with which he piaffed along the moor.

Mordaunt kept up with this worthy couple, mounted, according to the simplicity of the time and country, on the first and readiest pony which they had been able to press into the service, with no other accoutrement of any kind than the halter which served to guide him; while Mr. Yellowley, seeing with pleasure his guide thus readily provided with a steed, privately resolved, that this rude custom of helping travellers to horses, without leave of the proprietor, should not be abated in Zetland, until he came to possess a herd of ponies belonging in property to himself, and exposed to suffer in the way of retaliation.

But to other uses or abuses of the country, Triptolemus Yellowley showed himself less tolerant. Long and wearisome were the discourses he held with Mordaunt, or (to speak much more correctly) the harangues which he inflicted upon him, concerning the changes which his own advent in these isles was about to occasion. Unskilled as he was in the modern arts by which an estate may be improved to such a high degree that it shall altogether slip through the proprietor's fingers, Triptolemus had at least the zeal, if not the knowledge, of a whole agricultural society in his own person; nor was he surpassed by any who has followed him, in that noble spirit which scorns to balance profit against outlay, but holds the glory of effecting a great change on the face of the land, to be, like virtue, in a great degree its own reward.

No part of the wild and mountainous region over which Mordaunt guided him, but what suggested to his active imagination some scheme of improvement and alteration. He would make a road through yon scarce passable glen, where at present nothing but the sure-footed creatures on which they were mounted could tread with any safety. He would substitute better houses for the skeoes, or sheds built of dry stones, in which the inhabitants cured or manufactured their fish — they should brew good ale instead of bland — they should plant forests where tree never grew, and find mines of treasure where a Danish skilling was accounted a coin of a most respectable denomination. All these mutations, with many others, did the worthy factor resolve upon, speaking at the same time with the utmost confidence of the countenance and assistance which he was to receive from the higher classes, and especially from Magnus Troil.

"I will impart some of my ideas to the poor man," he said, "before we are both many hours older; and you will mark how grateful he will be to the instructor who brings him knowledge, which is better than wealth."

"I would not have you build too strongly on that," said Mordaunt, by way of caution; "Magnus Troil's boat is kittle to trim — he likes his own ways, and his country-ways, and you will as soon teach your sheltie to dive like a sealgh, as bring Magnus to take a Scottish fashion in the place of a Norse one; and yet, if he is steady to his old customs, he may perhaps be as changeable as another in his old friendships."

"*Heus, tu inepte!*" said the scholar of Saint Andrews, "steady or unsteady, what can it matter? — am not I here in point of trust, and in point of power? and shall a Fowd, by which barbarous appellation this Magnus Troil still calls himself, presume to measure judgment and weigh reasons with me, who represent the full dignity of the Chamberlain of the islands of Orkney and Zetland?"

"Still," said Mordaunt, "I would advise you not to advance too rashly upon his prejudices. Magnus Troil, from the hour of his birth to this day, never saw a greater man than himself, and it is difficult to bridle an old horse for the first time. Besides, he has at no time in his life been a patient listener to long explanations, so it is possible that he may quarrel with your purposed reformation, before you can convince him of its advantages."

"How mean you, young man?" said the factor. "Is there one who dwells in these islands, who is so wretchedly blind as not to be sensible of their deplorable defects? Can a man," he added, rising into enthusiasm as he spoke, "or even a beast, look at that thing there, which they have the impudence to call a corn-mill,³⁸ without trembling to think that corn should be intrusted to such a miserable molendinary? The wretches are obliged to have at least fifty in each parish, each trundling away upon its paltry mill-stone, under the thatch of a roof no bigger than a bee-skep, instead of a noble and seemly baron's mill, of which you would hear the clack through the haill country, and that casts the meal through the mill-eye by forpits at a time!"

"Ay, ay, brother," said his sister, "that's spoken like your wise sell. The mair cost the mair honour — that's your word ever mair. Can it no creep into your wise head, man, that ilka body grinds their ain nievefu' of meal in this country, without plaguing themsells about barons' mills, and thirls, and sucken, and the like trade? How mony a time have I heard you bell-the-cat with auld Edie Netherstane, the miller at Grindleburn, and wi' his very knave too, about in-town and out-town multures — lock, gowpen, and knaveship,⁽¹⁾ and a' the lave o't; and now naething less will serve you than to bring in the very same fashery on a wheen puir bodies, that big ilk ane a mill for themselves, sic as it is?"

"Dinna tell me of gowpen and knaveship!" exclaimed the indignant agriculturist; "better pay the half of the grist to the miller, to have the rest grund in a Christian manner, than put good grain into a bairn's whirligig. Look at it for a moment, Baby — Bide still, ye cursed imp!" This interjection was applied to his pony, which began to be extremely impatient, while its rider interrupted his journey, to point out all the weak points of the Zetland mill — "Look at it, I say — it's just one degree better than a hand-quern — it has neither wheel nor trindle — neither cog nor happer — Bide still, there's a canny beast — it canna grind a bickerfu' of meal in a quarter of an hour, and that will be mair like a mash for horse than a meltith for man's use — Wherefore — Bide still, I say — wherefore — wherefore — The deil's in the beast, and nae good, I think!"

As he uttered the last words, the shelly, which had pranced and curvetted for some time with much impatience, at length got its head betwixt its legs, and at once canted its rider into the little rivulet, which served to drive the depreciated engine he was surveying; then emancipating itself from the folds of the cloak, fled back towards its own wilderness, neighing in scorn, and flinging out its heels at every five yards.

Laughing heartily at his disaster, Mordaunt helped the old man to arise; while his sister sarcastically congratulated him on having fallen rather into the shallows of a Zetland rivulet than the depths of a Scottish mill-pond. Disdaining to reply to this sarcasm, Triptolemus, so soon as he had recovered his legs, shaken his ears, and found that the folds of his cloak had saved him from being much wet in the scanty streamlet, exclaimed aloud, "I will have cussers from Lanarkshire — brood mares from Ayrshire — I will not have one of these cursed abortions left on the islands, to break honest folk's necks — I say, Baby, I will rid the land of them."

"Ye had better wring your ain cloak, Triptolemus," answered Baby.

Mordaunt meanwhile was employed in catching another pony, from a herd which strayed at some distance; and, having made a halter out of twisted rushes, he seated the dismayed agriculturist in safety upon a more quiet, though less active steed, than that which he had at first bestrode.

But Mr. Yellowley's fall had operated as a considerable sedative upon his spirits, and, for the full space of five miles' travel, he said scarce a word, leaving full course to the melancholy aspirations and lamentations which his sister Baby bestowed on the old bridle, which the pony had carried off in its flight, and which, she observed, after having lasted for eighteen years come Martinmas, might now be considered as a castaway thing. Finding she had thus the field to herself, the old lady launched forth into a lecture upon economy, according to her own idea of that virtue, which seemed to include a system of privations, which, though observed with the sole purpose of saving money, might, if undertaken upon other principles, have ranked high in the history of a religious ascetic.

She was but little interrupted by Mordaunt, who, conscious he was now on the eve of approaching Burgh-Westra, employed himself rather in the task of anticipating the nature of the reception he was about to meet with there from two beautiful young women, than with the prosing of an old one, however wisely she might prove that small-beer was more wholesome than strong ale, and that if her brother had bruised his ankle bone in his tumble, cumfrey and butter was better to bring him round again, than all the doctor's drugs in the world.

But now the dreary moorlands, over which their path had hitherto lain, were exchanged for a more pleasant prospect, opening on a salt-water lake, or arm of the sea, which ran up far inland, and was surrounded by flat and fertile ground, producing crops better than the experienced eye of Triptolemus Yellowley had as yet witnessed in Zetland. In the midst of this Goshen stood the mansion of Burgh-Westra, screened from the north and east by a ridge of heathy hills which lay behind it, and commanding an interesting prospect of the lake and its parent ocean, as well as the islands, and more distant mountains. From the mansion itself, as well as from almost every cottage in the adjacent hamlet, arose such a rich cloud of vapoury smoke, as showed, that the preparations for the festival were not confined to the principal residence of Magnus himself, but extended through the whole vicinage.

"My certie," said Mrs. Baby Yellowley, "ane wad think the haill town was on fire! The very hill-side smells of their wastefulness, and a hungry heart wad scarce seek better kitchen²² to a barley scone, than just to waft it in the reek that's rising out of yon lums."

Chapter 12.

— Thou hast described

A hot friend cooling. Ever note, Lucilius,

When love begins to sicken and decay,

It useth an enforced ceremony.

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

If the smell which was wafted from the chimneys of Burgh-Westra up to the barren hills by which the mansion was surrounded, could, as Mistress Barbara opined, have refreshed the hungry, the noise which proceeded from thence might have given hearing to the deaf. It was a medley of all sounds, and all connected with jollity and kind welcome. Nor were the sights associated with them less animating.

Troops of friends were seen in the act of arriving — their dispersed ponies flying to the moors in every direction, to recover their own pastures in the best way they could; — such, as we have already said, being the usual mode of discharging the cavalry which had been levied for a day's service. At a small but commodious harbour, connected with the house and hamlet, those visitors were landing from their boats, who, living in distant islands, and along the coast, had preferred making their journey by sea. Mordaunt and his companions might see each party pausing frequently to greet each other, and strolling on successively to the house, whose ever open gate received them alternately in such numbers, that it seemed the extent of the mansion, though suited to the opulence and hospitality of the owner, was scarce, on this occasion, sufficient for the guests.

Among the confused sounds of mirth and welcome which arose at the entrance of each new company, Mordaunt thought he could distinguish the loud laugh and hearty salutation of the Sire of the mansion, and began to feel more deeply than before, the anxious doubt, whether that cordial reception, which was distributed so freely to all others, would be on this occasion extended to him. As they came on, they heard the voluntary scrapings and bravura effusions of the gallant fiddlers, who impatiently flung already from their bows those sounds with which they were to animate the evening. The clamour of the cook's assistants, and the loud scolding tones of the cook himself, were also to be heard — sounds of dissonance at any other time, but which, subdued with others, and by certain happy associations, form no disagreeable part of the full chorus which always precedes a rural feast.

Meanwhile, the guests advanced, each full of their own thoughts. Mordaunt's we have already noticed. Baby was wrapt up in the melancholy grief and surprise excited by the positive conviction, that so much victuals had been cooked at once as were necessary to feed all the mouths which were clamouring around her — an enormity of expense, which, though she was no way concerned in bearing it, affected her nerves, as the beholding a massacre would touch those of the most indifferent spectator, however well assured of his own personal safety. She sickened, in short, at the sight of so much extravagance, like Abyssinian Bruce, when he saw the luckless minstrels of Gondar hacked to pieces by the order of Ras Michael. As for her brother, they being now arrived where the rude and antique instruments of Zetland agriculture lay scattered in the usual confusion of a Scottish barn-yard, his thoughts were at once engrossed in the deficiencies of the one-stilted plough — of the *twiscar*, with which they dig peats — of the sledges, on which they transport commodities — of all and every thing, in short, in which the usages of the islands differed from those of the mainland of Scotland. The sight of these imperfect instruments stirred the blood of Triptolemus Yellowley, as that of the bold warrior rises at seeing the arms and insignia of the enemy he is about to combat; and, faithful to his high emprise, he thought less of the hunger which his journey had occasioned, although about to be satisfied by such a dinner as rarely fell to his lot, than upon the task which he had undertaken, of civilizing the manners, and improving the cultivation, of Zetland.

"*Jacta est alea*," he muttered to himself; "this very day shall prove whether the Zetlanders are worthy of our labours, or whether their minds are as incapable of cultivation as their peat-mosses. Yet let us be cautious, and watch the soft time of speech. I feel, by my own experience, that it were best to let the body, in its present state, take the place of the mind. A mouthful of that same roast-beef, which smells so delicately, will form an apt introduction to my grand plan for improving the breed of stock."

By this time the visitors had reached the low but ample front of Magnus Troil's residence, which seemed of various dates, with large and ill-imagined additions, hastily adapted to the original building, as the increasing estate, or enlarged family, of successive proprietors, appeared to each to demand. Beneath a low, broad,

and large porch, supported by two huge carved posts, once the head-ornaments of vessels which had found shipwreck upon the coast, stood Magnus himself, intent on the hospitable toil of receiving and welcoming the numerous guests who successively approached. His strong portly figure was well adapted to the dress which he wore — a blue coat of an antique cut, lined with scarlet, and laced and looped with gold down the seams and button-holes, and along the ample cuffs. Strong and masculine features, rendered ruddy and brown by frequent exposure to severe weather — a quantity of most venerable silver hair, which fell in unshorn profusion from under his gold-laced hat, and was carelessly tied with a ribbon behind, expressed at once his advanced age, his hasty, yet well-conditioned temper, and his robust constitution. As our travellers approached him, a shade of displeasure seemed to cross his brow, and to interrupt for an instant the honest and hearty burst of hilarity with which he had been in the act of greeting all prior arrivals. When he approached Triptolemus Yellowley, he drew himself up, so as to mix, as it were, some share of the stately importance of the opulent Udaller with the welcome afforded by the frank and hospitable landlord.

"You are welcome, Mr. Yellowley," was his address to the factor; "you are welcome to Westra — the wind has blown you on a rough coast, and we that are the natives must be kind to you as we can. This, I believe, is your sister — Mistress Barbara Yellowley, permit me the honour of a neighbourly salute." — And so saying, with a daring and self-devoted courtesy, which would find no equal in our degenerate days, he actually ventured to salute the withered cheek of the spinster, who relaxed so much of her usual peevishness of expression, as to receive the courtesy with something which approached to a smile. He then looked full at Mordaunt Mertoun, and without offering his hand, said, in a tone somewhat broken by suppressed agitation, "You too are welcome, Master Mordaunt."

"Did I not think so," said Mordaunt, naturally offended by the coldness of his host's manner, "I had not been here — and it is not yet too late to turn back."

"Young man," replied Magnus, "you know better than most, that from these doors no man can turn, without an offence to their owner. I pray you, disturb not my guests by your ill-timed scruples. When Magnus Troil says welcome, all are welcome who are within hearing of his voice, and it is an indifferent loud one. — Walk on, my worthy guests, and let us see what cheer my lasses can make you within doors."

So saying, and taking care to make his manner so general to the whole party, that Mordaunt should not be able to appropriate any particular portion of the welcome to himself, nor yet to complain of being excluded from all share in it, the Udaller ushered the guests into his house, where two large outer rooms, which, on the present occasion, served the purpose of a modern saloon, were already crowded with guests of every description.

The furniture was sufficiently simple, and had a character peculiar to the situation of those stormy islands. Magnus Troil was, indeed, like most of the higher class of Zetland proprietors, a friend to the distressed traveller, whether by sea or land, and had repeatedly exerted his whole authority in protecting the property and persons of shipwrecked mariners; yet so frequent were wrecks upon that tremendous coast, and so many unappropriated articles were constantly flung ashore, that the interior of the house bore sufficient witness to the ravages of the ocean, and to the exercise of those rights which the lawyers term *Flotsome and Jetsome*. The chairs, which were arranged around the walls, were such as are used in cabins, and many of them were of foreign construction; the mirrors and cabinets, which were placed against the walls for ornament or convenience, had, it was plain from their form, been constructed for ship-board, and one or two of the latter were of strange and unknown wood. Even the partition which separated the two apartments, seemed constructed out of the bulkhead of some large vessel, clumsily adapted to the service which it at present performed, by the labour of some native joiner. To a stranger, these evident marks and tokens of human misery might, at the first glance, form a contrast with the scene of mirth with which they were now associated; but the association was so familiar to the natives, that it did not for a moment interrupt the course of their glee.

To the younger part of these revellers the presence of Mordaunt was like a fresh charm of enjoyment. All came around him to marvel at his absence, and all, by their repeated enquiries, plainly showed that they conceived it had been entirely voluntary on his side. The youth felt that this general acceptance relieved his anxiety on one painful point. Whatever prejudice the family of Burgh-Westra might have adopted respecting him, it must be of a private nature; and at least he had not the additional pain of finding that he was depreciated in the eyes of society at large; and his vindication, when he found opportunity to make one, would not require to be extended beyond the circle of a single family. This was consoling; though his heart still throbbed with anxiety at the thought of meeting with his estranged, but still beloved friends. Laying the excuse of his absence on his father's state of health, he made his way through the various groups of friends and guests, each of whom seemed willing to detain him as long as possible, and having, by presenting them to one or two families of consequence, got rid of his travelling companions, who at first stuck fast as burs, he reached at length the door of a small apartment, which, opening from one of the large exterior rooms we have mentioned, Minna and Brenda had been permitted to fit up after their own taste, and to call their peculiar property.

Mordaunt had contributed no small share of the invention and mechanical execution employed in fitting up this favourite apartment, and in disposing its ornaments. It was, indeed, during his last residence at Burgh-Westra, as free to his entrance and occupation, as to its proper mistresses. But now, so much were times altered, that he remained with his finger on the latch, uncertain whether he should take the freedom to draw it, until Brenda's voice pronounced the words, "Come in, then," in the tone of one who is interrupted by an unwelcome disturber, who is to be heard and dispatched with all the speed possible.

At this signal Mertoun entered the fanciful cabinet of the sisters, which by the addition of many ornaments, including some articles of considerable value, had been fitted up for the approaching festival. The daughters of Magnus, at the moment of Mordaunt's entrance, were seated in deep consultation with the stranger Cleveland, and with a little slight-made old man, whose eye retained all the vivacity of spirit, which had supported him under the thousand vicissitudes of a changeful and precarious life, and which, accompanying him in his old age, rendered his grey hairs less awfully reverend perhaps, but not less beloved, than would a more grave and less imaginative expression of countenance and character. There was even a penetrating shrewdness mingled in the look of curiosity, with which, as he stepped for an instant aside, he seemed to watch the meeting of Mordaunt with the two lovely sisters.

The reception the youth met with resembled, in general character, that which he had experienced from Magnus himself; but the maidens could not so well cover their sense of the change of circumstances under which they met. Both blushed, as, rising, and without extending the hand, far less offering the cheek, as the fashion of the times permitted, and almost exacted, they paid to Mordaunt the salutation due to an ordinary acquaintance. But the blush of the elder was one of those transient evidences of flitting emotion, that vanish as fast as the passing thought which excites them. In an instant she stood before the youth calm and cold, returning, with guarded and cautious courtesy, the usual civilities, which, with a faltering voice, Mordaunt endeavoured to present to her. The emotion of Brenda bore, externally at least, a deeper and more agitating character. Her blush extended over every part of her beautiful skin which her dress permitted to be visible, including her slender neck, and the upper region of a finely formed bosom. Neither did she even attempt to reply to what share of his confused compliment Mordaunt addressed to her in particular, but regarded him with eyes, in which displeasure was evidently mingled with feelings of regret, and recollections of former times. Mordaunt felt, as it were, assured upon the instant, that the regard of Minna was extinguished, but that it might be yet possible to recover that of the milder Brenda; and such is the waywardness of human fancy, that though he had never hitherto made any distinct difference betwixt these two beautiful and interesting girls, the favour of her, which seemed most absolutely withdrawn, became at the moment the most interesting in his eyes.

He was disturbed in these hasty reflections by Cleveland, who advanced, with military frankness, to pay his compliments to his preserver, having only delayed long enough to permit the exchange of the ordinary salutation betwixt the visitor and the ladies of the family. He made his approach with so good a grace, that it was impossible for Mordaunt, although he dated his loss of favour at Burgh-Westra from this stranger's appearance on the coast, and domestication in the family, to do less than return his advances as courtesy demanded, accept his thanks with an appearance of satisfaction, and hope that his time had past pleasantly since their last meeting.

Cleveland was about to answer, when he was anticipated by the little old man, formerly noticed, who now thrusting himself forward, and seizing Mordaunt's hand, kissed him on the forehead; and then at the same time echoed and answered his question — "How passes time at Burgh-Westra? Was it you that asked it, my prince of the cliff and of the scaur? How should it pass, but with all the wings that beauty and joy can add to help its flight!"

"And wit and song, too, my good old friend," said Mordaunt, half-serious, half-jesting, as he shook the old man cordially by the hand. — "These cannot be wanting, where Claud Halcro comes!"

"Jeer me not, Mordaunt, my good lad," replied the old man; "When your foot is as slow as mine, your wit frozen, and your song out of tune" —

"How can you belie yourself, my good master?" answered Mordaunt, who was not unwilling to avail himself of his old friend's peculiarities to introduce something like conversation, break the awkwardness of this singular meeting, and gain time for observation, ere requiring an explanation of the change of conduct which the family seemed to have adopted towards him. "Say not so," he continued. "Time, my old friend, lays his hand lightly on the bard. Have I not heard you say, the poet partakes the immortality of his song? and surely the great English poet, you used to tell us of, was elder than yourself when he pulled the bow-oar among all the wits of London."

This alluded to a story which was, as the French term it, *Halcro'scheval de bataille*, and any allusion to which was certain at once to place him in the saddle, and to push his hobby-horse into full career.

His laughing eye kindled with a sort of enthusiasm, which the ordinary folk of this world might have called crazed, while he dashed into the subject which he best loved to talk upon. "Alas, alas, my dear Mordaunt Mertoun — silver is silver, and waxes not dim by use — and pewter is pewter, and grows the longer the duller. It is not for poor Claud Halcro to name himself in the same twelvemonth with the immortal John Dryden. True it is, as I may have told you before, that I have seen that great man, nay I have been in the Wits' Coffeehouse, as it was then called, and had once a pinch out of his own very snuff-box. I must have told you all how it happened, but here is Captain Cleveland who never heard it. — I lodged, you must know, in Russel Street — I question not but you know Russel Street, Covent Garden, Captain Cleveland?"

"I should know its latitude pretty well, Mr. Halcro," said the Captain, smiling; "but I believe you mentioned the circumstance yesterday, and besides we have the day's duty in hand — you must play us this song which we are to study."

"It will not serve the turn now," said Halcro, "we must think of something that will take in our dear Mordaunt, the first voice in the island, whether for a part or solo. I will never be he will touch a string to you, unless Mordaunt Mertoun is to help us out. — What say you, my fairest Night? — what think you, my sweet Dawn of Day?" he added, addressing the young women, upon whom, as we have said elsewhere, he had long before bestowed these allegorical names.

"Mr. Mordaunt Mertoun," said Minna, "has come too late to be of our band on this occasion — it is our misfortune, but it cannot be helped."

"How? what?" said Halcro, hastily — "too late — and you have practised together all your lives? take my word, my bonny lasses, that old tunes are sweetest, and old friends surest. Mr. Cleveland has a fine bass, that must be allowed; but I would have you trust for the first effect to one of the twenty fine airs you can sing where Mordaunt's tenor joins so well with your own witchery — here is my lovely Day approves of the change in her heart."

"You were never in your life more mistaken, father Halcro," said Brenda, her cheeks again reddening, more with displeasure, it seemed, than with shame.

"Nay, but how is this?" said the old man, pausing, and looking at them alternately. "What have we got here? — a cloudy night and a red morning? — that betokens rough weather. — What means all this, young women? — where lies the offence? — In me, I fear; for the blame is always laid upon the oldest when young folk like you go by the ears."

"The blame is not with you, father Halcro," said Minna, rising, and taking her sister by the arm, "if indeed there be blame anywhere."

"I should fear then, Minna," said Mordaunt, endeavouring to soften his tone into one of indifferent pleasantry, "that the new comer has brought the offence along with him."

"When no offence is taken," replied Minna, with her usual gravity, "it matters not by whom such may have been offered."

"Is it possible, Minna!" exclaimed Mordaunt, "and is it you who speak thus to me? — And you too, Brenda, can you too judge so hardly of me, yet without permitting me one moment of honest and frank explanation?"

"Those who should know best," answered Brenda, in a low but decisive tone of voice, "have told us their pleasure, and it must be done. — Sister, I think we have staid too long here, and shall be wanted elsewhere — Mr. Mertoun will excuse us on so busy a day."

The sisters linked their arms together. Halcro in vain endeavoured to stop them, making, at the same time, a theatrical gesture, and exclaiming,

"Now, Day and Night, but this is wondrous strange!"

Then turned to Mordaunt Mertoun, and added — "The girls are possessed with the spirit of mutability, showing, as our master Spenser well saith, that

'Among all living creatures, more or lesse,

Change still doth reign, and keep the greater sway.'

Captain Cleveland," he continued, "know you any thing that has happened to put these two juvenile Graces out of tune?"

"He will lose his reckoning," answered Cleveland, "that spends time in enquiring why the wind shifts a point, or why a woman changes her mind. Were I Mr. Mordaunt, I would not ask the proud wench another question on such a subject."

"It is a friendly advice, Captain Cleveland," replied Mordaunt, "and I will not hold it the less so that it has been given unasked. Allow me to enquire if you are yourself as indifferent to the opinion of your female friends, as it seems you would have me to be?"

"Who, I?" said the Captain, with an air of frank indifference, "I never thought twice upon such a subject. I never saw a woman worth thinking twice about after the anchor was a-peak — on shore it is another thing; and I will laugh, sing, dance, and make love, if they like it, with twenty girls, were they but half so pretty as those who have left us, and make them heartily welcome to change their course in the sound of a boatswain's whistle. It will be odds but I wear as fast as they can."

A patient is seldom pleased with that sort of consolation which is founded on holding light the malady of which he complains; and Mordaunt felt disposed to be offended with Captain Cleveland, both for taking notice of his embarrassment, and intruding upon him his own opinion; and he replied, therefore, somewhat sharply, "that Captain Cleveland's sentiments were only suited to such as had the art to become universal favourites wherever chance happened to throw them, and who could not lose in one place more than their merit was sure to gain for them in another."

This was spoken ironically; but there was, to confess the truth, a superior knowledge of the world, and a consciousness of external merit at least, about the man, which rendered his interference doubly disagreeable. As Sir Lucius O'Trigger says, there was an air of success about Captain Cleveland which was mighty provoking. Young, handsome, and well assured, his air of nautical bluntness sat naturally and easily upon him, and was perhaps particularly well fitted to the simple manners of the remote country in which he found himself; and where, even in the best families, a greater degree of refinement might have rendered his conversation rather less acceptable. He was contented, in the present instance, to smile good-humouredly at the obvious discontent of Mordaunt Mertoun, and replied, "You are angry with me, my good friend, but you cannot make me angry with you. The fair hands of all the pretty women I ever saw in my life would never have fished me up out of the Roost of Sumburgh. So, pray, do not quarrel with me; for here is Mr. Halcro witness that I have struck both jack and topsail, and should you fire a broadside into me, cannot return a single shot."

"Ay, ay," said Halcro, "you must be friends with Captain Cleveland, Mordaunt. Never quarrel with your friend, because a woman is whimsical. Why, man, if they kept one humour, how the devil could we make so many songs on them as we do? Even old Dryden himself, glorious old John, could have said little about a girl that was always of one mind — as well write verses upon a mill-pond. It is your tides and your roosts, and your currents and eddies, that come and go, and ebb and flow, (by Heaven! I run into rhyme when I so much as think upon them,) that smile one day, rage the next, flatter and devour, delight and ruin us, and so forth — it is these that give the real soul of poetry. Did you never hear my Adieu to the Lass of Northmaven — that was poor Bet Stimbister, whom I call Mary for the sound's sake, as I call myself Hacon after my great ancestor Hacon Goldemund, or Haco with the golden mouth, who came to the island with Harold Harfager, and was his chief Scald? — Well, but where was I? — O ay — poor Bet Stimbister, she (and partly some debt) was the cause of my leaving the isles of Hialtland, (better so called than Shetland, or Zetland even,) and taking to the broad world. I have had a tramp of it since that time — I have battled my way through the world, Captain, as a man of mold may, that has a light head, a light purse, and a heart as light as them both — fought my way, and paid my way — that is, either with money or wit — have seen kings changed and deposed as you would turn a tenant out of a scathold — knew all the wits of the age, and especially the glorious John Dryden — what man in the islands can say as much, barring lying? — I had a pinch out of his own snuff-box — I will tell you how I came by such promotion."

"But the song, Mr. Halcro," said Captain Cleveland.

"The song?" answered Halcro, seizing the Captain by the button — for he was too much accustomed to have his audience escape from him during recitation, not to put in practice all the usual means of prevention — "The song? Why I gave a copy of it, with fifteen others, to the immortal John. You shall hear it — you shall hear them all, if you will but stand still a moment; and you too, my dear boy, Mordaunt Mertoun, I have scarce heard a word from your mouth these six months, and now you are running away from me." So saying, he secured him with his other hand.

"Nay, now he has got us both in tow," said the seaman, "there is nothing for it but hearing him out, though he spins as tough a yarn as ever an old man-of-war's-man twisted on the watch at midnight."

"Nay, now, be silent, be silent, and let one of us speak at once," said the poet, imperatively; while Cleveland and Mordaunt, looking at each other with a ludicrous expression of resignation to their fate, waited in submission for the well-known and inevitable tale. "I will tell you all about it," continued Halcro. "I was knocked about the world like other young fellows, doing this, that, and t'other for a livelihood; for, thank God, I could turn my hand to any thing — but loving still the Muses as much as if the ungrateful jades had found me, like so many blockheads, in my own coach and six. However, I held out till my cousin, old Lawrence Linkletter, died, and left me the bit of an island yonder; although, by the way, Cultmalindie was as near to him as I was; but Lawrence loved wit, though he had little of his own. Well, he left me the wee bit island — it is as barren as Parnassus itself. What then? — I have a penny to spend, a penny to keep my purse, a penny to give to the poor — ay, and a bed and a bottle for a friend, as you shall know, boys, if you will go back with me when this merriment is over. — But where was I in my story?"

"Near port, I hope," answered Cleveland; but Halcro was too determined a narrator to be interrupted by the broadest hint.

"O ay," he resumed, with the self-satisfied air of one who has recovered the thread of a story, "I was in my old lodgings in Russel Street, with old Timothy Thimblethwaite, the Master Fashioner, then the best-known man about town. He made for all the wits, and for the dull boobies of fortune besides, and made the one pay for the other. He never denied a wit credit save in jest, or for the sake of getting a repartee; and he was in correspondence with all that was worth knowing about town. He had letters from Crowne, and Tate, and Prior, and Tom Brown, and all the famous fellows of the time, with such pellets of wit, that there was no reading them without laughing ready to die, and all ending with craving a further term for payment."

"I should have thought the tailor would have found that jest rather serious," said Mordaunt.

"Not a bit — not a bit," replied his eulogist, "Tim Thimblethwaite (he was a Cumberland-man by birth) had the soul of a prince — ay, and died with the fortune of one; for woe betide the custard-gorged alderman that came under Tim's goose, after he had got one of those letters — egad, he was sure to pay the kain! Why, Thimblethwaite was thought to be the original of little Tom Bibber, in glorious John's comedy of the Wild Gallant; and I know that he has trusted, ay, and lent John money to boot out of his own pocket, at a time when all his fine court friends blew cold enough. He trusted me too, and I have been two months on the score at a time for my upper room. To be sure, I was obliging in his way — not that I exactly could shape or sew, nor would that have been decorous for a gentleman of good descent; but I— eh, eh — I drew bills — summed up the books"——

"Carried home the clothes of the wits and aldermen, and got lodging for your labour?" interrupted Cleveland.

"No, no — damn it, no," replied Halcro; "no such thing — you put me out in my story — where was I?"

"Nay, the devil help you to the latitude," said the Captain, extricating his button from the gripe of the unmerciful bard's finger and thumb, "for I have no time to take an observation." So saying, he bolted from the room.

"A silly, ill-bred, conceited fool," said Halcro, looking after him; "with as little manners as wit in his empty coxcomb. I wonder what Magnus and these silly wenches can see in him — he tells such damnable long-winded stories, too, about his adventures and sea-fights — every second word a lie, I doubt not. Mordaunt, my dear boy, take example by that man — that is, take warning by him — never tell long stories about yourself. You are sometimes given to talk too much about your own exploits on crags and skerries, and the like, which only breaks conversation, and prevents other folk from being heard. Now I see you are impatient to hear out what I was saying — Stop, whereabouts was I?"

"I fear we must put it off, Mr. Halcro, until after dinner," said Mordaunt, who also meditated his escape, though desirous of effecting it with more delicacy towards his old acquaintance than Captain Cleveland had thought it necessary to use.

"Nay, my dear boy," said Halcro, seeing himself about to be utterly deserted, "do not you leave me too — never take so bad an example as to set light by old acquaintance, Mordaunt. I have wandered many a weary step in my day; but they were always lightened when I could get hold of the arm of an old friend like yourself."

So saying, he quitted the youth's coat, and sliding his hand gently under his arm, grappled him more effectually; to which Mordaunt submitted, a little moved by the poet's observation upon the unkindness of old acquaintances, under which he himself was an immediate sufferer. But when Halcro renewed his formidable question, "Whereabouts was I?" Mordaunt, preferring his poetry to his prose, reminded him of the song which he said he had written upon his first leaving Zetland — a song to which, indeed, the enquirer was no stranger, but which, as it must be new to the reader, we shall here insert as a favourable specimen of the poetical powers of this tuneful descendant of Haco the Golden-mouthed; for, in the opinion of many tolerable judges, he held a respectable rank among the inditers of madrigals of the period, and was as well qualified to give immortality to his Nancies of the hills or dales, as many a gentle sonneteer of wit and pleasure about town. He was something of a musician also, and on the present occasion seized upon a sort of lute, and, quitting his victim, prepared the instrument for an accompaniment, speaking all the while that he might lose no time.

"I learned the lute," he said, "from the same man who taught honest Shadwell — plump Tom, as they used to call him — somewhat roughly treated by the glorious John, you remember — Mordaunt, you remember —

'Methinks I see the new Arion sail,

The lute still trembling underneath thy nail;

At thy well sharpen'd thumb, from shore to shore,

The trebles squeak for fear, the basses roar.'

Come, I am indifferently in tune now — what was it to be? — ay, I remember — nay, The Lass of Northmaven is the ditty — poor Bet Stimbister! I have called her Mary in the verses. Betsy does well for an English song; but Mary is more natural here." So saying, after a short prelude, he sung, with a tolerable voice and some taste, the following verses:

MARY.

Farewell to Northmaven,

Grey Hillswicke, farewell!

To the calms of thy haven,

The storms on thy fell —

To each breeze that can vary

The mood of thy main,

And to thee, bonny Mary!

We meet not again.

Farewell the wild ferry,

Which Hacon could brave,

When the peaks of the Skerry

Were white in the wave.

There's a maid may look over

These wild waves in vain —
 For the skiff of her lover —
 He comes not again.
 The vows thou hast broke,
 On the wild currents fling them;
 On the quicksand and rock
 Let the mermaidens sing them.
 New sweetness they'll give her
 Bewildering strain;
 But there's one who will never
 Believe them again.
 O were there an island,
 Though ever so wild,
 Where woman could smile, and
 No man be beguiled —
 Too tempting a snare
 To poor mortals were given,
 And the hope would fix there,
 That should anchor on heaven!

"I see you are softened, my young friend," said Halcro, when he had finished his song; "so are most who hear that same ditty. Words and music both mine own; and, without saying much of the wit of it, there is a sort of eh — eh — simplicity and truth about it, which gets its way to most folk's heart. Even your father cannot resist it — and he has a heart as impenetrable to poetry and song as Apollo himself could draw an arrow against. But then he has had some ill luck in his time with the women-folk, as is plain from his owing them such a grudge — Ay, ay, there the charm lies — none of us but has felt the same sore in our day. But come, my dear boy, they are mustering in the hall, men and women both — plagues as they are, we should get on ill without them — but before we go, only mark the last turn —

'And the hope would fix there,'—
 that is, in the supposed island — a place which neither was nor will be —
 'That should anchor on heaven.'

Now you see, my good young man, there are here none of your heathenish rants, which Rochester, Etheridge, and these wild fellows, used to string together. A parson might sing the song, and his clerk bear the burden — but there is the confounded bell — we must go now — but never mind — we'll get into a quiet corner at night, and I'll tell you all about it."

Chapter 13.

*Full in the midst the polish'd table shines,
 And the bright goblets, rich with generous wines;
 Now each partakes the feast, the wine prepares,
 Portions the food, and each the portion shares;
 Nor till the rage of thirst and hunger ceased,
 To the high host approach'd the sagacious guest.*

ODYSSEY.

The hospitable profusion of Magnus Troil's board, the number of guests who feasted in the hall, the much greater number of retainers, attendants, humble friends, and domestics of every possible description, who revelled without, with the multitude of the still poorer, and less honoured assistants, who came from every hamlet or township within twenty miles round, to share the bounty of the munificent Udaller, were such as altogether astonished Triptolemus Yellowley, and made him internally doubt whether it would be prudent in him at this time, and amid the full glow of his hospitality, to propose to the host who presided over such a splendid banquet, a radical change in the whole customs and usages of his country.

True, the sagacious Triptolemus felt conscious that he possessed in his own person wisdom far superior to that of all the assembled feasters, to say nothing of the landlord, against whose prudence the very extent of his hospitality formed, in Yellowley's opinion, sufficient evidence. But yet the Amphitryon with whom one dines, holds, for the time at least, an influence over the minds of his most distinguished guests; and if the dinner be in good style and the wines of the right quality, it is humbling to see that neither art nor wisdom, scarce external rank itself, can assume their natural and wonted superiority over the distributor of these good things, until coffee has been brought in. Triptolemus felt the full weight of this temporary superiority, yet he was desirous to do something that might vindicate the vaunts he had made to his sister and his fellow-traveller, and he stole a look at them from time to time, to mark whether he was not sinking in their esteem from postponing his promised lecture on the enormities of Zetland.

But Mrs. Barbara was busily engaged in noting and registering the waste incurred in such an entertainment as she had probably never before looked upon, and in admiring the host's indifference to, and the guests' absolute negligence of, those rules of civility in which her youth had been brought up. The feasters desired to be helped from a dish which was unbroken, and might have figured at supper, with as much freedom as if it had undergone the ravages of half-a-dozen guests; and no one seemed to care — the landlord himself least of all — whether those dishes only were consumed, which, from their nature, were incapable of re-appearance, or whether the assault was extended to the substantial rounds of beef, pasties, and so forth, which, by the rules of good housewifery, were destined to stand two attacks, and which, therefore, according to Mrs. Barbara's ideas of politeness, ought not to have been annihilated by the guests upon the first onset, but spared, like Outis in the cave of Polyphemus, to be devoured the last. Lost in the meditations to which these breaches of convivial discipline gave rise, and in the contemplation of an ideal larder of cold meat which she could have saved out of the wreck of roast, boiled, and baked, sufficient to have supplied her cupboard for at least a twelvemonth, Mrs. Barbara cared very little whether or not her brother supported in its extent the character which he had calculated upon assuming. Mordaunt Mertoun also was conversant with far other thoughts, than those which regarded the proposed reformer of Zetland enormities. His seat was betwixt two blithe maidens of Thule, who, not taking scorn that he had upon other occasions given preference to the daughters of the Udaller, were glad of the chance which assigned to them the attentions of so distinguished a gallant, who, as being their squire at the feast, might in all probability become their partner in the subsequent dance. But, whilst rendering to his fair neighbours all the usual attentions which society required, Mordaunt kept up a covert, but accurate and close observation, upon his estranged friends, Minna and Brenda. The Udaller himself had a share of his attention; but in him he could remark nothing, except the usual tone of hearty and somewhat boisterous hospitality, with which he was accustomed to animate the banquet upon all such occasions of general festivity. But in the differing mien of the two maidens there was much more room for painful remark.

Captain Cleveland sat betwixt the sisters, was sedulous in his attentions to both, and Mordaunt was so placed, that he could observe all, and hear a great deal, of what passed between them. But Cleveland's peculiar regard seemed devoted to the elder sister. Of this the younger was perhaps conscious, for more than once her eye glanced towards Mordaunt, and, as he thought, with something in it which resembled regret for the interruption of their intercourse, and a sad remembrance of former and more friendly times; while Minna was exclusively engrossed by the attentions of her neighbour; and that it should be so, filled Mordaunt with surprise and resentment.

Minna, the serious, the prudent, the reserved, whose countenance and manners indicated so much elevation of character — Minna, the lover of solitude, and of those paths of knowledge in which men walk best without company — the enemy of light mirth, the friend of musing melancholy, and the frequenter of fountain-heads and pathless glens — she whose character seemed, in short, the very reverse of that which might be captivated by the bold, coarse, and daring gallantry of such a man as this Captain Cleveland, gave, nevertheless, her eye and ear to him, as he sat beside her at table, with an interest and a graciousness of attention, which, to Mordaunt, who well knew how to judge of her feelings by her manner, intimated a degree of the highest favour. He observed this, and his heart rose against the favourite by whom he had been thus superseded, as well as against Minna's indiscreet departure from her own character.

"What is there about the man," he said within himself, "more than the bold and daring assumption of importance which is derived from success in petty enterprises, and the exercise of petty despotism over a ship's crew? — His very language is more professional than is used by the superior officers of the British navy; and the wit which has excited so many smiles, seems to me such as Minna would not formerly have endured for an instant. Even Brenda seems less taken with his gallantry than Minna, whom it should have suited so little."

Mordaunt was doubly mistaken in these his angry speculations. In the first place, with an eye which was, in some respects, that of a rival, he criticised far too severely the manners and behaviour of Captain Cleveland. They were unpolished, certainly; which was of the less consequence in a country inhabited by so plain and simple a race as the ancient Zetlanders. On the other hand, there was an open, naval frankness in Cleveland's bearing — much natural shrewdness — some appropriate humour — an undoubting confidence in himself — and that enterprising hardihood of disposition, which, without any other recommendable quality, very often leads to success with the fair sex. But Mordaunt was farther mistaken, in supposing that Cleveland was likely to be disagreeable to Minna Troil, on account of the opposition of their characters in so many material particulars. Had his knowledge of the world been a little more extensive, he might have observed, that as unions are often formed betwixt couples differing in complexion and stature, they take place still more frequently betwixt persons totally differing in feelings, in taste, in pursuits, and in understanding; and it would not be saying, perhaps, too much, to aver, that two-thirds of the marriages around us have been contracted betwixt persons, who, judging *a priori*, we should have thought had scarce any charms for each other.

A moral and primary cause might be easily assigned for these anomalies, in the wise dispensations of Providence, that the general balance of wit, wisdom, and amiable qualities of all kinds, should be kept up through society at large. For, what a world were it, if the wise were to intermarry only with the wise, the learned with the learned, the amiable with the amiable, nay, even the handsome with the handsome? and, is it not evident, that the degraded castes of the foolish, the ignorant, the brutal, and the deformed, (comprehending, by the way, far the greater portion of mankind,) must, when condemned to exclusive intercourse with each other, become gradually as much brutalized in person and disposition as so many ourang-outangs? When, therefore, we see the "gentle joined to the rude," we may lament the fate of the suffering individual, but we must not the less admire the mysterious disposition of that wise Providence which thus balances the moral good and evil of life; — which secures for a family, unhappy in the dispositions of one parent, a share of better and sweeter blood, transmitted from the other, and preserves to the offspring the affectionate care and protection of at least one of those from whom it is naturally due. Without the frequent occurrence of such alliances and unions — mis-sorted as they seem at first sight — the world could not be that for which Eternal Wisdom has designed it — a place of mixed good and evil — a place of trial at once, and of suffering, where even the worst ills are checkered with something that renders them tolerable to humble and patient minds, and where the best blessings carry with them a necessary alloy of embittering depreciation.

When, indeed, we look a little closer on the causes of those unexpected and ill-suited attachments, we have occasion to acknowledge, that the means by which they are produced do not infer that complete departure from, or inconsistency with, the character of the parties, which we might expect when the result alone is contemplated. The wise purposes which Providence appears to have had in view, by permitting such intermixture of dispositions, tempers, and understandings, in the married state, are not accomplished by any mysterious impulse by which, in contradiction to the ordinary laws of nature, men or women are urged to an union with those whom the world see to be unsuitable to them. The freedom of will is permitted to us in the occurrences of ordinary life, as in our moral conduct; and in the former as well as the latter case, is often the means of misguiding those who possess it. Thus it usually happens, more especially to the enthusiastic and imaginative, that, having formed a picture of admiration in their own mind, they too often deceive themselves by some faint resemblance in some existing being, whom their fancy, as speedily as gratuitously, invests with all the attributes necessary to complete the *beau ideal* of mental perfection. No one, perhaps, even in the happiest marriage, with an object really beloved, ever discovered by experience all the qualities he expected to possess; but in far too many cases, he finds he has practised a much higher degree of mental deception, and has erected his airy castle of felicity upon some rainbow, which owed its very existence only to the peculiar state of the atmosphere.

Thus, Mordaunt, if better acquainted with life, and with the course of human things, would have been little surprised that such a man as Cleveland, handsome, bold, and animated — a man who had obviously lived in danger, and who spoke of it as sport, should have been invested, by a girl of Minna's fanciful disposition, with an extensive share of those qualities, which, in her active imagination, were held to fill up the accomplishments of a heroic character. The plain bluntness of his manner, if remote from courtesy, appeared at least as widely different from deceit; and, unfashioned as he seemed by forms, he had enough both of natural sense, and natural good-breeding, to support the delusion he had created, at least as far as externals were concerned. It is scarce necessary to add, that these observations apply exclusively to what are called love-matches; for when either party fix their attachment upon the substantial comforts of a rental, or a jointure, they cannot be disappointed in the acquisition, although they may be cruelly so in their over-estimation of the happiness it was to afford, or in having too slightly anticipated the disadvantages with which it was to be attended.

Having a certain partiality for the dark Beauty whom we have described, we have willingly dedicated this digression, in order to account for a line of conduct which we allow to seem absolutely unnatural in such a narrative as the present, though the most common event in ordinary life; namely, in Minna's appearing to have over-estimated the taste, talent, and ability of a handsome young man, who was dedicating to her his whole time and attention, and whose homage rendered her the envy of almost all the other young women of that numerous party. Perhaps, if our fair readers will take the trouble to consult their own bosoms, they will be disposed to allow, that the distinguished good taste exhibited by any individual, who, when his attentions would be agreeable to a whole circle of rivals, selects *one* as their individual object, entitles him, on the footing of reciprocity, if on no other, to a large share of that individual's favourable, and even partial, esteem. At any rate, if the character shall, after all, be deemed inconsistent and unnatural, it concerns not us, who record the facts as we find them, and pretend no privilege for bringing closer to nature those incidents which may seem to diverge from it; or for reducing to consistence that most inconsistent of all created things — the heart of a beautiful and admired female.

Necessity, which teaches all the liberal arts, can render us also adepts in dissimulation; and Mordaunt, though a novice, failed not to profit in her school. It was manifest, that, in order to observe the demeanour of those on whom his attention was fixed, he must needs put constraint on his own, and appear, at least, so much engaged with the damsels betwixt whom he sat, that Minna and Brenda should suppose him indifferent to what was passing around him. The ready cheerfulness of Maddie and Clara Groatsettars, who were esteemed considerable fortunes in the island, and were at this moment too happy in feeling themselves seated somewhat beyond the sphere of vigilance influenced by their aunt, the good old Lady Glowrowrum, met and requited the attempts which Mordaunt made to be lively and entertaining; and they were soon engaged in a gay conversation, to which, as usual on such occasions, the gentleman contributed wit, or what passes for such, and the ladies their prompt laughter and liberal applause. But, amidst this seeming mirth, Mordaunt failed not, from time to time, as covertly as he might, to observe the conduct of the two daughters of Magnus; and still it appeared as if the elder, wrapt up in the conversation of Cleveland, did not cast away a thought on the rest of the company; and as if Brenda, more openly as she conceived his attention withdrawn from her, looked with an expression both anxious and melancholy towards the group of which he himself formed a part. He was much moved by the diffidence, as well as the trouble, which her looks seemed to convey, and tacitly formed the resolution of seeking a more full explanation with her in the course of the evening. Norna, he remembered, had stated that these two amiable young women were in danger, the nature of which she left unexplained, but which he suspected to arise out of their mistaking the character of this daring and all-engrossing stranger; and he secretly resolved, that, if possible, he would be the means of detecting Cleveland, and of saving his early friends.

As he revolved these thoughts, his attention to the Miss Groatsettars gradually diminished, and perhaps he might altogether have forgotten the necessity of his appearing an uninterested spectator of what was passing, had not the signal been given for the ladies retiring from table. Minna, with a native grace, and somewhat of stateliness in her manner, bent her head to the company in general, with a kinder and more particular expression as her eye reached Cleveland. Brenda, with the blush which attended her slightest personal exertion when exposed to the eyes of others, hurried through the same departing salutation with an embarrassment which almost amounted to awkwardness, but which her youth and timidity rendered at once natural and interesting. Again Mordaunt thought that her eye distinguished him amidst the numerous company. For the first time he ventured to encounter and to return the glance; and the consciousness that he had done so doubled the glow of Brenda's countenance, while something resembling displeasure was blended with her emotion.

When the ladies had retired, the men betook themselves to the deep and serious drinking, which, according to the fashion of the times, preceded the evening exercise of the dance. Old Magnus himself, by precept and example, exhorted them "to make the best use of their time, since the ladies would soon summon them to shake their feet." At the same time giving the signal to a grey-headed domestic, who stood behind him in the dress of a Dantzic skipper, and who added to many other occupations that of butler, "Eric Scambester," he said, "has the good ship the Jolly Mariner of Canton, got her cargo on board?"

"Chokeful loaded," answered the Ganymede of Burgh-Westra, "with good Nantz, Jamaica sugar, Portugal lemons, not to mention nutmeg and toast, and water taken in from the Shellicoat spring."

Loud and long laughed the guests at this stated and regular jest betwixt the Udaller and his butler, which always served as a preface to the introduction of a punch-bowl of enormous size, the gift of the captain of one of the Honourable East India Company's vessels, which, bound from China homeward, had been driven north-about by stress of weather into Lerwick-bay, and had there contrived to get rid of part of the cargo, without very scrupulously reckoning for the King's duties.

Magnus Troil, having been a large customer, besides otherwise obliging Captain Coolie, had been remunerated, on the departure of the ship, with this splendid vehicle of conviviality, at the very sight of which, as old Eric Scambester bent under its weight, a murmur of applause ran through the company. The good old toasts dedicated to the prosperity of Zetland, were then honoured with flowing bumpers. "Death to the head that never wears hair!" was a sentiment quaffed to the success of the fishing, as proposed by the sonorous voice of the Udaller. Claud Halcro proposed with general applause, "The health of their worthy landmaster, the sweet sister meat-mistresses; health to man, death to fish, and growth to the produce of the ground." The same recurring sentiment was proposed more concisely by a whiteheaded compeer of Magnus Troil, in the words, "God open the mouth of the grey fish, and keep his hand about the corn!"⁴⁰

Full opportunity was afforded to all to honour these interesting toasts. Those nearest the capacious Mediterranean of punch, were accommodated by the Udaller with their portions, dispensed in huge rummer glasses by his own hospitable hand, whilst they who sat at a greater distance replenished their cups by means of a rich silver flagon, facetiously called the Pinnacle; which, filled occasionally at the bowl, served to dispense its liquid treasures to the more remote parts of the table, and occasioned many right merry jests on its frequent voyages. The commerce of the Zetlanders with foreign vessels, and homeward-bound West Indiamen, had early served to introduce among them the general use of the generous beverage, with which the Jolly Mariner of Canton was loaded; nor was there a man in the archipelago of Thule more skilled in combining its rich ingredients, than old Eric Scambester, who indeed was known far and wide through the isles by the name of the Punch-maker, after the fashion of the ancient Norwegians, who conferred on Rollo the Walker, and other heroes of their strain, epithets expressive of the feats of strength or dexterity in which they excelled all other men.

The good liquor was not slow in performing its office of exhilaration, and, as the revel advanced, some ancient Norse drinking-songs were sung with great effect by the guests, tending to show, that if, from want of exercise, the martial virtues of their ancestors had decayed among the Zetlanders, they could still actively and intensely enjoy so much of the pleasures of Valhalla as consisted in quaffing the oceans of mead and brown ale, which were promised by Odin to those who should share his Scandinavian paradise. At length, excited by the cup and song, the diffident grew bold, and the modest loquacious — all became desirous of talking, and none were willing to listen — each man mounted his own special hobby-horse, and began eagerly to call on his neighbours to witness his agility. Amongst others, the little bard, who had now got next to our friend Mordaunt Mertoun, evinced a positive determination to commence and conclude, in all its longitude and latitude, the story of his introduction to glorious John Dryden; and Triptolemus Yellowley, as his spirits arose, shaking off a feeling of involuntary awe, with which he was impressed by the opulence indicated in all he saw around him, as well as by the respect paid to Magnus Troil by the assembled guests, began to broach, to the astonished and somewhat offended Udaller, some of those projects for ameliorating the islands, which he had boasted of to his fellow-travellers upon their journey of the morning.

But the innovations which he suggested, and the reception which they met with at the hand of Magnus Troil, must be told in the next Chapter.

Chapter 14.

*We'll keep our customs — what is law itself,
But old establish'd custom? What religion,
(I mean, with one-half of the men that use it.)
Save the good use and wont that carries them
To worship how and where their fathers worshipp'd?
All things resolve in custom — we'll keep ours.*

OLD PLAY.

We left the company of Magnus Troil engaged in high wassail and revelry. Mordaunt, who, like his father, shunned the festive cup, did not partake in the cheerfulness which the ship diffused among the guests as they unloaded it, and the pinnace, as it circumnavigated the table. But, in low spirits as he seemed, he was the more meet prey for the story-telling Halcro, who had fixed upon him, as in a favourable state to play the part of listener, with something of the same instinct that directs the hooded crow to the sick sheep among the flock, which will most patiently suffer itself to be made a prey of. Joyfully did the poet avail himself of the advantages afforded by Mordaunt's absence of mind, and unwillingness to exert himself in measures of active defence. With the unfailing dexterity peculiar to prosers, he contrived to dribble out his tale to double its usual length, by the exercise of the privilege of unlimited digressions; so that the story, like a horse on the *grand pas*, seemed to be advancing with rapidity, while, in reality, it scarce was progressive at the rate of a yard in the quarter of an hour. At length, however, he had discussed, in all its various bearings and relations, the history of his friendly landlord, the master fashioner in Russel Street, including a short sketch of five of his relations, and anecdotes of three of his principal rivals, together with some general observations upon the dress and fashion of the period; and having marched thus far through the environs and outworks of his story, he arrived at the body of the place, for so the Wits' Coffeehouse might be termed. He paused on the threshold, however, to explain the nature of his landlord's right occasionally to intrude himself into this well-known temple of the Muses.

"It consisted," said Halcro, "in the two principal points, of bearing and forbearing; for my friend Thimblethwaite was a person of wit himself, and never quarrelled with any jest which the wags who frequented that house were flinging about, like squibs and crackers on a rejoicing night; and then, though some of the wits — ay, and I daresay the greater number, might have had some dealings with him in the way of trade, he never was the person to put any man of genius in unpleasant remembrance of such trifles. And though, my dear young Master Mordaunt, you may think this is but ordinary civility, because in this country it happens seldom that there is either much borrowing or lending, and because, praised be Heaven, there are neither bailiffs nor sheriff-officers to take a poor fellow by the neck, and because there are no prisons to put him into when they have done so, yet, let me tell you, that such a lamblike forbearance as that of my poor, dear, deceased landlord, Thimblethwaite, is truly uncommon within the London bills of mortality. I could tell you of such things that have happened even to myself, as well as others, with these cursed London tradesmen, as would make your hair stand on end. — But what the devil has put old Magnus into such note? he shouts as if he were trying his voice against a north-west gale of wind."

Loud indeed was the roar of the old Udaller, as, worn out of patience by the schemes of improvement which the factor was now undauntedly pressing upon his consideration, he answered him, (to use an Ossianic phrase,) like a wave upon a rock,

"Trees, Sir Factor — talk not to me of trees! I care not though there never be one on the island, tall enough to hang a coxcomb upon. We will have no trees but those that rise in our havens — the good trees that have yards for boughs, and standing-rigging for leaves."

"But touching the draining of the lake of Braebaster, whereof I spoke to you, Master Magnus Troil," said the persevering agriculturist, "whilk I opine would be of so much consequence, there are two ways — down the Linklater glen, or by the Scalmeister burn. Now, having taken the level of both"——

"There is a third way, Master Yellowley," answered the landlord.

"I profess I can see none," replied Triptolemus, with as much good faith as a joker could desire in the subject of his wit, "in respect that the hill called Braebaster on the south, and ane high bank on the north, of whilk I cannot carry the name rightly in my head"——

"Do not tell us of hills and banks, Master Yellowley — there is a third way of draining the loch, and it is the only way that shall be tried in my day. You say my Lord Chamberlain and I are the joint proprietors — so be it — let each of us start an equal proportion of brandy, lime-juice, and sugar, into the loch — a ship's cargo or two will do the job — let us assemble all the jolly Udallers of the country, and in twenty-four hours you shall see dry ground where the loch of Braebaster now is."

A loud laugh of applause, which for a time actually silenced Triptolemus, attended a jest so very well suited to time and place — a jolly toast was given — a merry song was sung — the ship unloaded her sweets — the pinnacle made its genial rounds — the duet betwixt Magnus and Triptolemus, which had attracted the attention of the whole company from its superior vehemence, now once more sunk, and merged into the general hum of the convivial table, and the poet Halcro again resumed his usurped possession of the ear of Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Whereabouts was I?" he said, with a tone which expressed to his weary listener more plainly than words could, how much of his desultory tale yet remained to be told. "O, I remember — we were just at the door of the Wits' Coffeehouse — it was set up by one"——

"Nay, but, my dear Master Halcro," said his hearer, somewhat impatiently, "I am desirous to hear of your meeting with Dryden."

"What, with glorious John? — true — ay — where was I? At the Wits' Coffeehouse — Well, in at the door we got — the waiters, and so forth, staring at me; for as to Thimblethwaite, honest fellow, his was a well-known face. — I can tell you a story about that"——

"Nay, but John Dryden?" said Mordaunt, in a tone which deprecated further digression.

"Ay, ay, glorious John — where was I? — Well, as we stood close by the bar, where one fellow sat grinding of coffee, and another putting up tobacco into penny parcels — a pipe and a dish cost just a penny — then and there it was that I had the first peep of him. One Dennis sat near him, who"——

"Nay, but John Dryden — what like was he?" demanded Mordaunt.

"Like a little fat old man, with his own grey hair, and in a full-trimmed black suit, that sat close as a glove. Honest Thimblethwaite let no one but himself shape for glorious John, and he had a slashing hand at a sleeve, I promise you — But there is no getting a mouthful of common sense spoken here — d — n that Scotchman, he and old Magnus are at it again!"

It was very true; and although the interruption did not resemble a thunder-clap, to which the former stentorian exclamation of the Udaller might have been likened, it was a close and clamorous dispute, maintained by question, answer, retort, and repartee, as closely huddled upon each other as the sounds which announce from a distance a close and sustained fire of musketry.

"Hear reason, sir?" said the Udaller; "we will hear reason, and speak reason too; and if reason fall short, you shall have rhyme to boot. — Ha, my little friend Halcro!"

Though cut off in the middle of his best story, (if that could be said to have a middle, which had neither beginning nor end,) the bard bristled up at the summons, like a corps of light infantry when ordered up to the support of the grenadiers, looked smart, slapped the table with his hand, and denoted his becoming readiness to back his hospitable landlord, as becomes a well-entertained guest. Triptolemus was a little daunted at this reinforcement of his adversary; he paused, like a cautious general, in the sweeping attack which he had commenced on the peculiar usages of Zetland, and spoke not again until the Udaller poked him with the insulting query, "Where is your reason now, Master Yellowley, that you were deafening me with a moment since?"

"Be but patient, worthy sir," replied the agriculturist; "what on earth can you or any other man say in defence of that thing you call a plough, in this blinded country? Why, even the savage Highlandmen, in Caithness and Sutherland, can make more work, and better, with their gascromh, or whatever they call it."

"But what ails you at it, sir?" said the Udaller; "let me hear your objections to it. It tills our land, and what would ye more?"

"It hath but one handle or stilt," replied Triptolemus.

"And who the devil," said the poet, aiming at something smart, "would wish to need a pair of stilts, if he can manage to walk with a single one?"

"Or tell me," said Magnus Troil, "how it were possible for Neil of Lupness, that lost one arm by his fall from the crag of Nekbreckan, to manage a plough with two handles?"

"The harness is of raw seal-skin," said Triptolemus.

"It will save dressed leather," answered Magnus Troil.

"It is drawn by four wretched bullocks," said the agriculturist, "that are yoked breast-fashion; and two women must follow this unhappy instrument, and complete the furrows with a couple of shovels."

"Drink about, Master Yellowley," said the Udaller; "and, as you say in Scotland, 'never fash your thumb.' Our cattle are too high-spirited to let one go before the other; our men are too gentle and well-nurtured to take the working-field without the women's company; our ploughs till our land — our land bears us barley; we brew our ale, eat our bread, and make strangers welcome to their share of it. Here's to you, Master Yellowley."

This was said in a tone meant to be decisive of the question; and, accordingly, Halcro whispered to Mordaunt, "That has settled the matter, and now we will get on with glorious John. — There he sat in his suit of full-trimmed black; two years due was the bill, as mine honest landlord afterwards told me — and such an eye in his head! — none of your burning, blighting, falcon eyes, which we poets are apt to make a rout about — but a soft, full, thoughtful, yet penetrating glance — never saw the like of it in my life, unless it were little Stephen Kleancogg's, the fiddler, at Papastow, who"——

"Nay, but John Dryden?" said Mordaunt, who, for want of better amusement, had begun to take a sort of pleasure in keeping the old gentleman to his narrative, as men herd in a restiff sheep, when they wish to catch him. He returned to his theme, with his usual phrase of "Ay, true — glorious John — Well, sir, he cast his eye, such as I have described it, on mine landlord, and 'Honest Tim,' said he, 'what hast thou got here?' and all the wits, and lords, and gentlemen, that used to crowd round him, like the wenches round a pedlar at a fair, they made way for us, and up we came to the fireside, where he had his own established chair — I have heard it was carried to the balcony in summer, but it was by the fireside when I saw it — so up came Tim Thimblethwaite, through the midst of them, as bold as a lion, and I followed with a small parcel under my arm, which I had taken up partly to oblige my landlord, as the shop porter was not in the way, and partly that I might be thought to have something to do there, for you are to think there was no admittance at the Wits' for strangers who had no business there. — I have heard that Sir Charles Sedley said a good thing about that"——

"Nay, but you forget glorious John," said Mordaunt.

"Ay, glorious you may well call him. They talk of their Blackmore, and Shadwell, and such like — not fit to tie the latchets of John's shoes — 'Well,' he said to my landlord, 'what have you got there?' and he, bowing, I warrant, lower than he would to a duke, said he had made bold to come and show him the stuff which Lady Elizabeth had chose for her nightgown. — 'And which of your geese is that, Tim, who has got it tucked under his wing?' — 'He is an Orkney goose, if it please you, Mr. Dryden,' said Tim, who had wit at will, 'and he hath brought you a copy of verses for your honour to look at.' — 'Is he amphibious?' said glorious John, taking the paper — and methought I could rather have faced a battery of cannon than the crackle it gave as it opened, though he did not speak in a way to dash one neither; — and then he looked at the verses, and he was pleased to say, in a very encouraging way indeed, with a sort of good-humoured smile on his face, and certainly for a fat elderly gentleman — for I would not compare it to Minna's smile, or Brenda's — he had the pleasantest smile I ever saw — 'Why, Tim,' he said, 'this goose of yours will prove a swan on your hands.' With that he smiled a little, and they all laughed, and none louder than those who stood too far off to hear the jest; for every one knew when he smiled there was something worth laughing at, and so took it upon trust; and the word passed through among the young

Templars, and the wits, and the smarts, and there was nothing but question on question who we were; and one French fellow was trying to tell them it was only Monsieur Tim Thimblethwaite; but he made such work with his Dumblerate and Timblerate, that I thought his explanation would have lasted”——

“As long as your own story,” thought Mordaunt; but the narrative was at length finally cut short, by the strong and decided voice of the Udaller.

“I will hear no more on it, Mr. Factor!” he exclaimed.

“At least let me say something about the breed of horses,” said Yellowley, in rather a cry-mercy tone of voice. “Your horses, my dear sir, resemble cats in size, and tigers in devilry!”

“For their size,” said Magnus, “they are the easier for us to get off and on them —[as Triptolemus experienced this morning, thought Mordaunt to himself]— and, as for their devilry, let no one mount them that cannot manage them.”

A twinge of self-conviction, on the part of the agriculturist, prevented him from reply. He darted a deprecatory glance at Mordaunt, as if for the purpose of imploring secrecy respecting his tumble; and the Udaller, who saw his advantage, although he was not aware of the cause, pursued it with the high and stern tone proper to one who had all his life been unaccustomed to meet with, and unapt to endure, opposition.

“By the blood of Saint Magnus the Martyr,” he said, “but you are a fine fellow, Master Factor Yellowley! You come to us from a strange land, understanding neither our laws, nor our manners, nor our language, and you propose to become governor of the country, and that we should all be your slaves!”

“My pupils, worthy sir, my pupils!” said Yellowley, “and that only for your own proper advantage.”

“We are too old to go to school,” said the Zetlander. “I tell you once more, we will sow and reap our grain as our fathers did — we will eat what God sends us, with our doors open to the stranger, even as theirs were open. If there is aught imperfect in our practice, we will amend it in time and season; but the blessed Baptist’s holyday was made for light hearts and quick heels. He that speaks a word more of reason, as you call it, or any thing that looks like it, shall swallow a pint of sea-water — he shall, by this hand! — and so fill up the good ship, the Jolly Mariner of Canton, once more, for the benefit of those that will stick by her; and let the rest have a fling with the fiddlers, who have been summoning us this hour. I will warrant every wench is on tiptoe by this time. Come, Mr. Yellowley, no unkindness, man — why, man, thou feelest the rolling of the Jolly Mariner still!”—(for, in truth, honest Triptolemus showed a little unsteadiness of motion, as he rose to attend his host)—“but never mind, we shall have thee find thy land-legs to reel it with yonder bonny belles. Come along, Triptolemus — let me grapple thee fast, lest thou *trip*, old Triptolemus — ha, ha, ha!”

So saying, the portly though weatherbeaten hulk of the Udaller sailed off like a man-of-war that had braved a hundred gales, having his guest in tow like a recent prize. The greater part of the revellers followed their leader with loud jubilee, although there were several stanch toppers, who, taking the option left them by the Udaller, remained behind to relieve the Jolly Mariner of a fresh cargo, amidst many a pledge to the health of their absent landlord, and to the prosperity of his roof-tree, with whatsoever other wishes of kindness could be devised, as an apology for another pint-bumper of noble punch.

The rest soon thronged the dancing-room, an apartment which partook of the simplicity of the time and of the country. Drawing-rooms and saloons were then unknown in Scotland, save in the houses of the nobility, and of course absolutely so in Zetland; but a long, low, anomalous store-room, sometimes used for the deposition of merchandise, sometimes for putting aside lumber, and a thousand other purposes, was well known to all the youth of Dunrossness, and of many a district besides, as the scene of the merry dance, which was sustained with so much glee when Magnus Troil gave his frequent feasts.

The first appearance of this ball-room might have shocked a fashionable party, assembled for the quadrille or the waltz. Low as we have stated the apartment to be, it was but imperfectly illuminated by lamps, candles, ship-lanterns, and a variety of other *candelabra*, which served to throw a dusky light upon the floor, and upon the heaps of merchandise and miscellaneous articles which were piled around; some of them stores for the winter; some, goods destined for exportation; some, the tribute of Neptune, paid at the expense of shipwrecked vessels, whose owners were unknown; some, articles of barter received by the proprietor, who, like most others at the period, was somewhat of a merchant as well as a landholder, in exchange for the fish, and other articles, the produce of his estate. All these, with the chests, boxes, casks, &c., which contained them, had been drawn aside, and piled one above the other, in order to give room for the dancers, who, light and lively as if they had occupied the most splendid saloon in the parish of St. James’s, executed their national dances with equal grace and activity.

The group of old men who looked on, bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a party of aged tritons, engaged in beholding the sports of the sea-nymphs; so hard a look had most of them acquired by contending with the elements, and so much did the shaggy hair and beards, which many of them cultivated after the ancient Norwegian fashion, give their heads the character of these supposed natives of the deep. The young people, on the other hand, were uncommonly handsome, tall, well-made, and shapely; the men with long fair hair, and, until broken by the weather, a fresh ruddy complexion, which, in the females, was softened into a bloom of infinite delicacy. Their natural good ear for music qualified them to second to the utmost the exertions of a band, whose strains were by no means contemptible; while the elders, who stood around or sat quiet upon the old sea-chests, which served for chairs, criticised the dancers, as they compared their execution with their own exertions in former days; or, warmed by the cup and flagon, which continued to circulate among them, snapped their fingers, and beat time with their feet to the music.

Mordaunt looked upon this scene of universal mirth with the painful recollection, that he, thrust aside from his pre-eminence, no longer exercised the important duties of chief of the dancers, or office of leader of the revels, which had been assigned to the stranger Cleveland. Anxious, however, to suppress the feelings of his own disappointment, which he felt it was neither wise to entertain nor manly to display, he approached his fair neighbours, to whom he had been so acceptable at table, with the purpose of inviting one of them to become his partner in the dance. But the awfully ancient old lady, even the Lady Glowrowrum, who had only tolerated the exuberance of her nieces’ mirth during the time of dinner, because her situation rendered it then impossible for her to interfere, was not disposed to permit the apprehended renewal of the intimacy implied in Mertoun’s invitation. She therefore took upon herself, in the name of her two nieces, who sat pouting beside her in displeased silence, to inform Mordaunt, after thanking him for his civility, that the hands of her nieces were engaged for that evening; and, as he continued to watch the party at a little distance, he had an opportunity of being convinced that the alleged engagement was a mere apology to get rid of him, when he saw the two good-humoured sisters join the dance, under the auspices of the next young men who asked their hands. Incensed at so marked a slight, and unwilling to expose himself to another, Mordaunt Mertoun drew back from the circle of dancers, shrouded himself amongst the mass of inferior persons who crowded into the bottom of the room as spectators, and there, concealed from the observation of others, digested his own mortification as well as he could — that is to say, very ill — and with all the philosophy of his age — that is to say, with none at all.

Chapter 15.

*A torch for me — let wantons, light of heart,
Tickle the useless rushes with their heels:
For I am proverb’d with a grandsire phrase —
I’ll be a candle-holder, and look on.*

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The youth, says the moralist Johnson, cares not for the boy’s hobbyhorse, nor the man for the youth’s mistress; and therefore the distress of Mordaunt Mertoun, when excluded from the merry dance, may seem trifling to many of my readers, who would, nevertheless, think they did well to be angry if deposed from their usual place in an assembly of a different kind. There lacked not amusement, however, for those whom the dance did not suit, or who were not happy enough to find partners to their liking. Halcro, now completely in his element, had assembled round him an audience, to whom he was declaiming his poetry with all the enthusiasm of glorious John himself, and receiving in return the usual degree of applause allowed to minstrels who recite their own rhymes — so long at least as the author is within hearing of the criticism. Halcro’s poetry might indeed have interested the antiquary as well as the admirer of the Muses, for several of his pieces were translations or imitations from the Scaldic sagas, which continued to be sung by the fishermen of those islands even until a very late period; insomuch, that when Gray’s poems first found their way to Orkney, the old people recognised at once, in the ode of the “Fatal Sisters,” the Runic rhymes which

had amused or terrified their infancy under the title of the “Magicians,” and which the fishers of North Ronaldshaw, and other remote isles, used still to sing when asked for a Norse ditty.⁴¹

Half listening, half lost in his own reflections, Mordaunt Mertoun stood near the door of the apartment, and in the outer ring of the little circle formed around old Halcro, while the bard chanted to a low, wild, monotonous air, varied only by the efforts of the singer to give interest and emphasis to particular passages, the following imitation of a Northern war-song:

THE SONG OF HAROLD HARFAGER.

The sun is rising dimly red,
The wind is wailing low and dread;
From his cliff the eagle sallies,
Leaves the wolf his darksome valleys;
In the midst the ravens hover,
Peep the wild-dogs from the cover,
Screaming, croaking, baying, yelling,
Each in his wild accents telling,
“Soon we feast on dead and dying,
Fair-hair’d Harold’s flag is flying.”
Many a crest in air is streaming,
Many a helmet darkly gleaming,
Many an arm the axe uprears,
Doom’d to hew the wood of spears.
All along the crowded ranks,
Horses neigh and armour clanks;
Chiefs are shouting, clarions ringing,
Louder still the bard is singing,
“Gather, footmen — gather, horsemen,
To the field, ye valiant Norsemen!
“Halt ye not for food or slumber,
View not vantage, count not number;
Jolly reapers, forward still;
Grow the crop on vale or hill,
Thick or scatter’d, stiff or lithe,
It shall down before the scythe.
Forward with your sickles bright,
Reap the harvest of the fight —
Onward, footmen — onward, horsemen,
To the charge, ye gallant Norsemen!
“Fatal Choosers of the Slaughter,
O’er you hovers Odin’s daughter;
Hear the voice she spreads before ye —
Victory, and wealth, and glory;
Or old Valhalla’s roaring hail,
Her ever-circling mead and ale,
Where for eternity unite
The joys of wassail and of fight.
Headlong forward, foot and horsemen,
Charge and fight, and die like Norsemen!”

“The poor unhappy blinded heathens!” said Triptolemus, with a sigh deep enough for a groan; “they speak of their eternal cups of ale, and I question if they kend how to manage a croft land of grain!”

“The cleverer fellows they, neighbour Yellowley,” answered the poet, “if they made ale without barley.”

“Barley! — alack-a-day!” replied the more accurate agriculturist, “who ever heard of barley in these parts? Bear, my dearest friend, bear is all they have, and wonderment it is to me that they ever see an awn of it. Ye scart the land with a bit thing ye ca’ a pleugh — ye might as weel give it a ritt with the teeth of a redding-kame. O, to see the sock, and the heel, and the sole-clout of a real steady Scottish pleugh, with a chield like a Samson between the stilts, laying a weight on them would keep down a mountain; twa stately owsen, and as many broad-breasted horse in the traces, going through soil and till, and leaving a fur in the ground would carry off water like a causeyed syver! They that have seen a sight like that, have seen something to crack about in another sort, than those unhappy auld-world stories of war and slaughter, of which the land has seen even but too mickle, for a’ your singing and souging awa in praise of such bloodthirsty doings, Master Claud Halcro.”

“It is a heresy,” said the animated little poet, bridling and drawing himself up, as if the whole defence of the Orcadian Archipelago rested on his single arm — “It is a heresy so much as to name one’s native country, if a man is not prepared when and how to defend himself — ay, and to annoy another. The time has been, that if we made not good ale and aquavitæ, we knew well enough where to find that which was ready made to our hand; but now the descendants of Sea-kings, and Champions, and Berserkars, are become as incapable of using their swords, as if they were so many women. Ye may praise them for a strong pull on an oar, or a sure foot on a skerry; but what else could glorious John himself say of ye, my good Hialtlanders, that any man would listen to?”

“Spoken like an angel, most noble poet,” said Cleveland, who, during an interval of the dance, stood near the party in which this conversation was held. “The old champions you talked to us about yesternight, were the men to make a harp ring — gallant fellows, that were friends to the sea, and enemies to all that sailed on it. Their ships, I suppose, were clumsy enough; but if it is true that they went upon the account as far as the Levant, I scarce believe that ever better fellows unloosed a topsail.”

“Ay,” replied Halcro, “there you spoke them right. In those days none could call their life and means of living their own, unless they dwelt twenty miles out of sight of the blue sea. Why, they had public prayers put up in every church in Europe, for deliverance from the ire of the Northmen. In France and England, ay, and in Scotland too, for as high as they hold their head now-a-days, there was not a bay or a haven, but it was freer to our forefathers than to the poor devils of natives; and now we cannot, forsooth, so much as grow our own barley without Scottish help” — (here he darted a sarcastic glance at the factor) — “I would I saw the time we were to measure arms with them again!”

“Spoken like a hero once more,” said Cleveland.

"Ah!" continued the little bard, "I would it were possible to see our barks, once the water-dragons of the world, swimming with the black raven standard waving at the topmast, and their decks glimmering with arms, instead of being heaped up with stockfish — winning with our fearless hands what the niggard soil denies — paying back all old scorn and modern injury — reaping where we never sowed, and felling what we never planted — living and laughing through the world, and smiling when we were summoned to quit it!"

So spoke Claud Halcro, in no serious, or at least most certainly in no sober mood, his brain (never the most stable) whizzing under the influence of fifty well-remembered sagas, besides five bumpers of usquebaugh and brandy; and Cleveland, between jest and earnest, clapped him on the shoulder, and again repeated, "Spoken like a hero!"

"Spoken like a fool, I think," said Magnus Troil, whose attention had been also attracted by the vehemence of the little bard — "where would you cruize upon, or against whom? — we are all subjects of one realm, I trow, and I would have you to remember, that your voyage may bring up at Execution-dock. — I like not the Scots — no offence, Mr. Yellowley — that is, I would like them well enough if they would stay quiet in their own land, and leave us at peace with our own people, and manners, and fashions; and if they would but abide there till I went to harry them like a mad old Berserker, I would leave them in peace till the day of judgment. With what the sea sends us, and the land lends us, as the proverb says, and a set of honest neighbourly folks to help us to consume it, so help me, Saint Magnus, as I think we are even but too happy!"

"I know what war is," said an old man, "and I would as soon sail through Sumburgh-roost in a cockle-shell, or in a worse loom, as I would venture there again."

"And, pray, what wars knew your valour?" said Halcro, who, though forbearing to contradict his landlord from a sense of respect, was not a whit inclined to abandon his argument to any meaner authority.

"I was pressed," answered the old Triton, "to serve under Montrose, when he came here about the sixteen hundred and fifty-one, and carried a sort of us off, will ye nill ye, to get our throats cut in the wilds of Strathnaver^{42(k)} — I shall never forget it — we had been hard put to it for victuals — what would I have given for a luncheon of Burgh-Westra beef — ay, or a mess of sour sillocks? — When our Highlandmen brought in a dainty drove of kyloes, much ceremony there was not, for we shot and felled, and flayed, and roasted, and broiled, as it came to every man's hand; till, just as our beards were at the greasiest, we heard — God preserve us — a tramp of horse, then two or three drapping shots — then came a full salvo — and then, when the officers were crying on us to stand, and maist of us looking which way we might run away, down they broke, horse and foot, with old John Urry, or Hurry,⁴³ or whatever they called him — he hurried us that day, and worried us to boot — and we began to fall as thick as the stots that we were felling five minutes before."

"And Montrose," said the soft voice of the graceful Minna; "what became of Montrose, or how looked he?"

"Like a lion with the hunters before him," answered the old gentleman; "but I looked not twice his way, for my own lay right over the hill."

"And so you left him?" said Minna, in a tone of the deepest contempt.

"It was no fault of mine, Mistress Minna," answered the old man, somewhat out of countenance; "but I was there with no choice of my own; and, besides, what good could I have done? — all the rest were running like sheep, and why should I have staid?"

"You might have died with him," said Minna.

"And lived with him to all eternity, in immortal verse!" added Claud Halcro.

"I thank you, Mistress Minna," replied the plain-dealing Zetlander; "and I thank you, my old friend Claud; — but I would rather drink both your healths in this good bicker of ale, like a living man as I am, than that you should be making songs in my honour, for having died forty or fifty years ago. But what signified it — run or fight, 'twas all one; — they took Montrose, poor fellow, for all his doughty deeds, and they took me that did no doughty deeds at all; and they hanged him, poor man, and as for me" —

"I trust in Heaven they flogged and pickled you," said Cleveland, worn out of patience with the dull narrative of the peaceful Zetlander's poltroonery, of which he seemed so wondrous little ashamed.

"Flog horses, and pickle beef," said Magnus; "Why, you have not the vanity to think, that, with all your quarterdeck airs, you will make poor old neighbour Haagen ashamed that he was not killed some scores of years since? You have looked on death yourself, my doughty young friend, but it was with the eyes of a young man who wishes to be thought of; but we are a peaceful people — peaceful, that is, as long as any one should be peaceful, and that is till some one has the impudence to wrong us, or our neighbours; and then, perhaps, they may not find our northern blood much cooler in our veins than was that of the old Scandinavians that gave us our names and lineage. — Get ye along, get ye along to the sword-dance,⁴⁴ that the strangers that are amongst us may see that our hands and our weapons are not altogether unacquainted even yet."

A dozen cutlasses, selected hastily from an old arm-chest, and whose rusted hue bespoke how seldom they left the sheath, armed the same number of young Zetlanders, with whom mingled six maidens, led by Minna Troil; and the minstrelsy instantly commenced a tune appropriate to the ancient Norwegian war-dance, the evolutions of which are perhaps still practised in those remote islands.

The first movement was graceful and majestic, the youths holding their swords erect, and without much gesture; but the tune, and the corresponding motions of the dancers, became gradually more and more rapid — they clashed their swords together, in measured time, with a spirit which gave the exercise a dangerous appearance in the eye of the spectator, though the firmness, justice, and accuracy, with which the dancers kept time with the stroke of their weapons, did, in truth, ensure its safety. The most singular part of the exhibition was the courage exhibited by the female performers, who now, surrounded by the swordsmen, seemed like the Sabine maidens in the hands of their Roman lovers; now, moving under the arch of steel which the young men had formed, by crossing their weapons over the heads of their fair partners, resembled the band of Amazons when they first joined in the Pyrrhic dance with the followers of Theseus. But by far the most striking and appropriate figure was that of Minna Troil, whom Halcro had long since entitled the Queen of Swords, and who, indeed, moved amidst the swordsmen with an air, which seemed to hold all the drawn blades as the proper accompaniments of her person, and the implements of her pleasure. And when the mazes of the dance became more intricate, when the close and continuous clash of the weapons made some of her companions shrink, and show signs of fear, her cheek, her lip, and her eye, seemed rather to announce, that, at the moment when the weapons flashed fastest, and rung sharpest around her, she was most completely self-possessed, and in her own element. Last of all, when the music had ceased, and she remained for an instant upon the floor by herself, as the rule of the dance required, the swordsmen and maidens, who departed from around her, seemed the guards and the train of some princess, who, dismissed by her signal, were leaving her for a time to solitude. Her own look and attitude, wrapped, as she probably was, in some vision of the imagination, corresponded admirably with the ideal dignity which the spectators ascribed to her; but, almost immediately recollecting herself, she blushed, as if conscious she had been, though but for an instant, the object of undivided attention, and gave her hand gracefully to Cleveland, who, though he had not joined in the dance, assumed the duty of conducting her to her seat.

As they passed, Mordaunt Mertoun might observe that Cleveland whispered into Minna's ear, and that her brief reply was accompanied with even more discomposure of countenance than she had manifested when encountering the gaze of the whole assembly. Mordaunt's suspicions were strongly awakened by what he observed, for he knew Minna's character well, and with what equanimity and indifference she was in the custom of receiving the usual compliments and gallantries with which her beauty and her situation rendered her sufficiently familiar.

"Can it be possible she really loves this stranger?" was the unpleasant thought that instantly shot across Mordaunt's mind; — "And if she does, what is my interest in the matter?" was the second; and which was quickly followed by the reflection, that though he claimed no interest at any time but as a friend, and though that interest was now withdrawn, he was still, in consideration of their former intimacy, entitled both to be sorry and angry at her for throwing away her affections on one he judged unworthy of her. In this process of reasoning, it is probable that a little mortified vanity, or some indescribable shade of selfish regret, might be endeavouring to assume the disguise of disinterested generosity; but there is so much of base alloy in our very best (unassisted) thoughts, that it is melancholy work to criticise too closely the motives of our most worthy actions; at least we would recommend to every one to let those of his neighbours pass current, however narrowly he may examine the purity of his own.

The sword-dance was succeeded by various other specimens of the same exercise, and by songs, to which the singers lent their whole soul, while the audience were sure, as occasion offered, to unite in some favourite chorus. It is upon such occasions that music, though of a simple and even rude character, finds its natural empire over the generous bosom, and produces that strong excitement which cannot be attained by the most learned compositions of the first masters, which are caviare to the common ear, although, doubtless, they afford a delight, exquisite in its kind, to those whose natural capacity and education have enabled them to comprehend and relish those difficult and complicated combinations of harmony.

It was about midnight when a knocking at the door of the mansion, with the sound of the *Gue* and the *Langspiel*, announced, by their tinkling chime, the arrival of fresh revellers, to whom, according to the hospitable custom of the country, the apartments were instantly thrown open.

Chapter 16.

——— *My mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.*

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The new-comers were, according to the frequent custom of such frolickers all over the world, disguised in a sort of masquing habits, and designed to represent the Tritons and Mermaids, with whom ancient tradition and popular belief have peopled the northern seas. The former, called by Zetlanders of that time, Shoupeltins, were represented by young men grotesquely habited, with false hair, and beards made of flax, and chaplets composed of sea-ware interwoven with shells, and other marine productions, with which also were decorated their light-blue or greenish mantles of wadmaal, repeatedly before-mentioned. They had fish-spears, and other emblems of their assumed quality, amongst which the classical taste of Claud Halcro, by whom the masque was arranged, had not forgotten the conch-shells, which were stoutly and hoarsely winded, from time to time, by one or two of the aquatic deities, to the great annoyance of all who stood near them.

The Nereids and Water-nymphs who attended on this occasion, displayed, as usual, a little more taste and ornament than was to be seen amongst their male attendants. Fantastic garments of green silk, and other materials of superior cost and fashion, had been contrived, so as to imitate their idea of the inhabitants of the waters, and, at the same time, to show the shape and features of the fair wearers to the best advantage. The bracelets and shells, which adorned the neck, arms, and ankles of the pretty Mermaidens, were, in some cases, intermixed with real pearls; and the appearance, upon the whole, was such as might have done no discredit to the court of Amphitrite, especially when the long bright locks, blue eyes, fair complexions, and pleasing features of the maidens of Thule, were taken into consideration. We do not indeed pretend to aver, that any of these seeming Mermaids had so accurately imitated the real siren, as commentators have supposed those attendant on Cleopatra did, who, adopting the fish's train of their original, were able, nevertheless, to make their "bends," or "ends," (said commentators cannot tell which,) "adornings."⁴⁵ Indeed, had they not left their extremities in their natural state, it would have been impossible for the Zetland sirens to have executed the very pretty dance, with which they rewarded the company for the ready admission which had been granted to them.

It was soon discovered that these masquers were no strangers, but a part of the guests, who, stealing out a little time before, had thus disguised themselves, in order to give variety to the mirth of the evening. The muse of Claud Halcro, always active on such occasions, had supplied them with an appropriate song, of which we may give the following specimen. The song was alternate betwixt a Nereid or Mermaid, and a Merman or Triton — the males and females on either part forming a semi-chorus, which accompanied and bore burden to the principal singer.

1.

MERMAID.

Fathoms deep beneath the wave,
Stringing beads of glistening pearl,
Singing the achievements brave
Of many an old Norwegian earl;
Dwelling where the tempest's raving
Falls as light upon our ear,
As the sigh of lover, craving
Pity from his lady dear,
Children of wild Thule, we,
From the deep caves of the sea,
As the lark springs from the lea,
Hither come, to share your glee.

2.

MERMAN.

From reining of the water-horse,
That bounded till the waves were foaming,
Watching the infant tempest's course,
Chasing the sea-snake in his roaming;
From winding charge-notes on the shell,
When the huge whale and sword-fish duel,
Or tolling shroudless seamen's knell,
When the winds and waves are cruel;
Children of wild Thule, we
Have plough'd such furrows on the sea
As the steer draws on the lea,
And hither we come to share your glee.

3.

MERMAIDS AND MERMEN.

We heard you in our twilight caves,
A hundred fathom deep below,
For notes of joy can pierce the waves,
That drown each sound of war and woe.
Those who dwell beneath the sea
Love the sons of Thule well;
Thus, to aid your mirth, bring we
Dance, and song, and sounding shell.
Children of dark Thule, know,
Those who dwell by haaf and voe,

Where your daring shallops row,
Come to share the festal show.

The final chorus was borne by the whole voices, excepting those carrying the conch-shells, who had been trained to blow them in a sort of rude accompaniment, which had a good effect. The poetry, as well as the performance of the masquers, received great applause from all who pretended to be judges of such matters; but above all, from Triptolemus Yellowley, who, his ear having caught the agricultural sounds of plough and furrow, and his brain being so well drenched that it could only construe the words in their most literal acceptation, declared roundly, and called Mordaunt to bear witness, that, though it was a shame to waste so much good lint as went to form the Tritons' beards and periwigs, the song contained the only words of common sense which he had heard all that long day.

But Mordaunt had no time to answer the appeal, being engaged in attending with the utmost vigilance to the motions of one of the female masquers, who had given him a private signal as they entered, which induced him, though uncertain who she might prove to be, to expect some communication from her of importance. The siren who had so boldly touched his arm, and had accompanied the gesture with an expression of eye which bespoke his attention, was disguised with a good deal more care than her sister-masquers, her mantle being loose, and wide enough to conceal her shape completely, and her face hidden beneath a silk mask. He observed that she gradually detached herself from the rest of the masquers, and at length placed herself, as if for the advantage of the air, near the door of a chamber which remained open, looked earnestly at him again, and then taking an opportunity, when the attention of the company was fixed upon the rest of her party, she left the apartment.

Mordaunt did not hesitate instantly to follow his mysterious guide, for such we may term the masquer, as she paused to let him see the direction she was about to take, and then walked swiftly towards the shore of the voe, or salt-water lake, now lying full before them, its small summer-waves glistening and rippling under the influence of a broad moonlight, which, added to the strong twilight of those regions during the summer solstice, left no reason to regret the absence of the sun, the path of whose setting was still visible on the waves of the west, while the horizon on the east side was already beginning to glimmer with the lights of dawn.

Mordaunt had therefore no difficulty in keeping sight of his disguised guide, as she tripped it over height and hollow to the sea-side, and, winding among the rocks, led the way to the spot where his own labours, during the time of his former intimacy at Burgh-Westra, had constructed a sheltered and solitary seat, where the daughters of Magnus were accustomed to spend, when the weather was suitable, a good deal of their time. Here, then, was to be the place of explanation; for the masquer stopped, and, after a moment's hesitation, sat down on the rustic settle. But, from the lips of whom was he to receive it? Norna had first occurred to him; but her tall figure and slow majestic step were entirely different from the size and gait of the more fairy-formed siren, who had preceded him with as light a trip as if she had been a real Nereid, who, having remained too late upon the shore, was, under the dread of Amphitrite's displeasure, hastening to regain her native element. Since it was not Norna, it could be only, he thought, Brenda, who thus singled him out; and when she had seated herself upon the bench, and taken the mask from her face, Brenda it accordingly proved to be. Mordaunt had certainly done nothing to make him dread her presence; and yet, such is the influence of bashfulness over the ingenuous youth of both sexes, that he experienced all the embarrassment of one who finds himself unexpectedly placed before a person who is justly offended with him. Brenda felt no less embarrassment; but as she had sought this interview, and was sensible it must be a brief one, she was compelled, in spite of herself, to begin the conversation.

"Mordaunt," she said, with a hesitating voice; then correcting herself, she proceeded — "You must be surprised, Mr. Mertoun, that I should have taken this uncommon freedom."

"It was not till this morning, Brenda," replied Mordaunt, "that any mark of friendship or intimacy from you or from your sister could have surprised me. I am far more astonished that you should shun me without reason for so many hours, than that you should now allow me an interview. In the name of Heaven, Brenda, in what have I offended you? or why are we on these unusual terms?"

"May it not be enough to say," replied Brenda, looking downward, "that it is my father's pleasure?"

"No, it is not enough," returned Mertoun. "Your father cannot have so suddenly altered his whole thoughts of me, and his whole actions towards me, without acting under the influence of some strong delusion. I ask you but to explain of what nature it is; for I will be contented to be lower in your esteem than the meanest hind in these islands, if I cannot show that his change of opinion is only grounded upon some infamous deception, or some extraordinary mistake."

"It may be so," said Brenda — "I hope it is so — that I do hope it is so, my desire to see you thus in private may well prove to you. But it is difficult — in short, it is impossible for me to explain to you the cause of my father's resentment. Norna has spoken with him concerning it boldly, and I fear they parted in displeasure; and you well know no light matter could cause that."

"I have observed," said Mordaunt, "that your father is most attentive to Norna's counsel, and more complaisant to her peculiarities than to those of others — this I have observed, though he is no willing believer in the supernatural qualities to which she lays claim."

"They are related distantly," answered Brenda, "and were friends in youth — nay, as I have heard, it was once supposed they would have been married; but Norna's peculiarities showed themselves immediately on her father's death, and there was an end of that matter, if ever there was any thing in it. But it is certain my father regards her with much interest; and it is, I fear, a sign how deeply his prejudices respecting you must be rooted, since they have in some degree quarrelled on your account."

"Now, blessings upon you, Brenda, that you have called them prejudices," said Mertoun, warmly and hastily — "a thousand blessings on you! You were ever gentle-hearted — you could not have maintained even the show of unkindness long."

"It was indeed but a show," said Brenda, softening gradually into the familiar tone in which they had conversed from infancy; "I could never think, Mordaunt — never, that is, seriously believe, that you could say aught unkind of Minna or of me."

"And who dares to say I have?" said Mordaunt, giving way to the natural impetuosity of his disposition — "Who dares to say that I have, and ventures at the same time to hope that I will suffer his tongue to remain in safety betwixt his jaws? By Saint Magnus the Martyr, I will feed the hawks with it!"

"Nay, now," said Brenda, "your anger only terrifies me, and will force me to leave you."

"Leave me," said he, "without telling me either the calumny, or the name of the villainous calumniator!"

"O, there are more than one," answered Brenda, "that have possessed my father with an opinion — which I cannot myself tell you — but there are more than one who say" —

"Were they hundreds, Brenda, I will do no less to them than I have said — Sacred Martyr! — to accuse me of speaking unkindly of those whom I most respected and valued under Heaven — I will back to the apartment this instant, and your father shall do me right before all the world."

"Do not go, for the love of Heaven!" said Brenda; "do not go, as you would not render me the most unhappy wretch in existence!"

"Tell me then, at least, if I guess aright," said Mordaunt, "when I name this Cleveland for one of those who have slandered me?"

"No, no," said Brenda, vehemently, "you run from one error into another more dangerous. You say you are my friend: — I am willing to be yours: — be but still for a moment, and hear what I have to say; — our interview has lasted but too long already, and every additional moment brings additional danger with it."

"Tell me, then," said Mertoun, much softened by the poor girl's extreme apprehension and distress, "what it is that you require of me; and believe me, it is impossible for you to ask aught that I will not do my very uttermost to comply with."

"Well, then — this Captain," said Brenda, "this Cleveland" —

"I knew it, by Heaven!" said Mordaunt; "my mind assured me that that fellow was, in one way or other, at the bottom of all this mischief and misunderstanding!"

"If you cannot be silent, and patient, for an instant," replied Brenda, "I must instantly quit you: what I meant to say had no relation to you, but to another — in one word, to my sister Minna. I have nothing to say concerning her dislike to you, but an anxious tale to tell concerning his attention to her."

"It is obvious, striking, and marked," said Mordaunt; "and, unless my eyes deceive me, it is received as welcome, if, indeed, it is not returned."

"That is the very cause of my fear," said Brenda. "I, too, was struck with the external appearance, frank manners, and romantic conversation of this man."

"His appearance!" said Mordaunt; "he is stout and well-featured enough, to be sure; but, as old Sinclair of Quendale said to the Spanish admiral, 'Farcie on his face! I have seen many a fairer hang on the Borough-moor.' — From his manners, he might be captain of a privateer; and by his conversation, the trumpeter to his own puppetshow; for he speaks of little else than his own exploits."

"You are mistaken," answered Brenda; "he speaks but too well on all that he has seen and learned; besides, he has really been in many distant countries, and in many gallant actions, and he can tell them with as much spirit as modesty. You would think you saw the flash and heard the report of the guns. And he has other tones of talking too — about the delightful trees and fruits of distant climates; and how the people wear no dress, through the whole year, half so warm as our summer gowns, and, indeed, put on little except cambric and muslin."

"Upon my word, Brenda, he does seem to understand the business of amusing young ladies," replied Mordaunt.

"He does, indeed," said Brenda, with great simplicity. "I assure you that, at first, I liked him better than Minna did; and yet, though she is so much cleverer than I am, I know more of the world than she does; for I have seen more of cities, having been once at Kirkwall; besides that I was thrice at Lerwick, when the Dutch ships were there, and so I should not be very easily deceived in people."

"And pray, Brenda," said Mertoun, "what was it that made you think less favourably of this young fellow, who seems to be so captivating?"

"Why," said Brenda, after a moment's reflection, "at first he was much livelier; and the stories he told were not quite so melancholy, or so terrible; and he laughed and danced more."

"And, perhaps, at that time, danced oftener with Brenda than with her sister?" added Mordaunt.

"No — I am not sure of that," said Brenda; "and yet, to speak plain, I could have no suspicion of him at all while he was attending quite equally to us both; for you know that then he could have been no more to us than yourself, Mordaunt Mertoun, or young Swaraster, or any other young man in the islands."

"But, why then," said Mordaunt, "should you not see him, with patience, become acquainted with your sister? — He is wealthy, or seems to be so at least. You say he is accomplished and pleasant; — what else would you desire in a lover for Minna?"

"Mordaunt, you forget who we are," said the maiden, assuming an air of consequence, which sat as gracefully upon her simplicity, as did the different tone in which she had spoken hitherto. "This is a little world of ours, this Zetland, inferior, perhaps, in soil and climate to other parts of the earth, at least so strangers say; but it is our own little world, and we, the daughters of Magnus Troil, hold a first rank in it. It would I think, little become us, who are descended from Sea-kings and Jarls, to throw ourselves away upon a stranger, who comes to our coast, like the eider-duck in spring, from we know not whence, and may leave it in autumn, to go we know not where."

"And who may yet entice a Zetland golden-eye to accompany his migration," said Mertoun.

"I will hear nothing light on such a subject," replied Brenda, indignantly; "Minna, like myself, is the daughter of Magnus Troil, the friend of strangers, but the Father of Hialtland. He gives them the hospitality they need; but let not the proudest of them think that they can, at their pleasure, ally with his house."

She said this in a tone of considerable warmth, which she instantly softened, as she added, "No, Mordaunt, do not suppose that Minna Troil is capable of so far forgetting what she owes to her father and her father's blood, as to think of marrying this Cleveland; but she may lend an ear to him so long as to destroy her future happiness. She has that sort of mind, into which some feelings sink deeply; — you remember how Ulla Storlson used to go, day by day, to the top of Vossdale-head, to look for her lover's ship that was never to return? When I think of her slow step, her pale cheek, her eye, that grew dimmer and dimmer, like the lamp that is half extinguished for lack of oil — when I remember the fluttered look, of something like hope, with which she ascended the cliff at morning, and the deep dead despair which sat on her forehead when she returned — when I think on all this, can you wonder that I fear for Minna, whose heart is formed to entertain, with such deep-rooted fidelity, any affection that may be implanted in it?"

"I do not wonder," said Mordaunt, eagerly sympathizing with the poor girl; for, besides the tremulous expression of her voice, the light could almost show him the tear which trembled in her eye, as she drew the picture to which her fancy had assimilated her sister — "I do not wonder that you should feel and fear whatever the purest affection can dictate; and if you can but point out to me in what I can serve your sisterly love, you shall find me as ready to venture my life, if necessary, as I have been to go out on the crag to get you the eggs of the guillemot; and, believe me, that whatever has been told to your father or yourself, of my entertaining the slightest thoughts of disrespect or unkindness, is as false as a fiend could devise."

"I believe it," said Brenda, giving him her hand; "I believe it, and my bosom is lighter, now I have renewed my confidence in so old a friend. How you can aid us, I know not; but it was by the advice, I may say by the commands, of Norna, that I have ventured to make this communication; and I almost wonder," she added, as she looked around her, "that I have had courage to carry me through it. At present you know all that I can tell you of the risk in which my sister stands. Look after this Cleveland — beware how you quarrel with him, since you must so surely come by the worst with an experienced soldier."

"I do not exactly understand," said the youth, "how that should so surely be. This I know, that with the good limbs and good heart that God hath given me, ay, and with a good cause to boot — I am little afraid of any quarrel which Cleveland can fix upon me."

"Then, if not for your own sake, for Minna's sake," said Brenda — "for my father's — for mine — for all our sakes, avoid any strife with him, but be contented to watch him, and, if possible, to discover who he is, and what are his intentions towards us. He has talked of going to Orkney, to enquire after the consort with whom he sailed; but day after day, and week after week passes, and he goes not; and while he keeps my father company over the bottle, and tells Minna romantic stories of foreign people, and distant wars, in wild and unknown regions, the time glides on, and the stranger, of whom we know nothing except that he is one, becomes gradually closer and more inseparably intimate in our society. — And now, farewell. Norna hopes to make your peace with my father, and entreats you not to leave Burgh-Westra to-morrow, however cold he and my sister may appear towards you. I too," she said, stretching her hand towards him, "must wear a face of cold friendship as towards an unwelcome visitor, but at heart we are still Brenda and Mordaunt. And now separate quickly, for we must not be seen together."

She stretched her hand to him, but withdrew it in some slight confusion, laughing and blushing, when, by a natural impulse, he was about to press it to his lips. He endeavoured for a moment to detain her, for the interview had for him a degree of fascination, which, as often as he had before been alone with Brenda, he had never experienced. But she extricated herself from him, and again signing an adieu, and pointing out to him a path different from that which she was herself about to take, tripped towards the house, and was soon hidden from his view by the acclivity.

Mordaunt stood gazing after her in a state of mind, to which, as yet, he had been a stranger. The dubious neutral ground between love and friendship may be long and safely trodden, until he who stands upon it is suddenly called upon to recognise the authority of the one or the other power; and then it most frequently happens, that the party who for years supposed himself only a friend, finds himself at once transformed into a lover. That such a change in Mordaunt's feelings should take place from this date, although he himself was unable exactly to distinguish its nature, was to be expected. He found himself at once received, with the most unsuspecting frankness, into the confidence of a beautiful and fascinating young woman, by whom he had, so short a time before, imagined himself despised and disliked; and, if any thing could make a change, in itself so surprising and so pleasing, yet more intoxicating, it was the guileless and open-hearted simplicity of Brenda, that cast an enchantment over every thing which she did or said. The scene, too, might have had its effect, though there was little occasion for its aid. But a fair face looks yet fairer under the light of the moon, and a sweet voice sounds yet sweeter among the whispering sounds of a summer night. Mordaunt, therefore, who had by this time returned to the house, was disposed to listen with unusual patience and complacency to the enthusiastic declamation pronounced upon moonlight by Claud Halcro, whose ecstasies had been awakened on the subject by a short turn in the open air, undertaken to qualify the vapours of the good liquor, which he had not spared during the festival.

"The sun, my boy," he said, "is every wretched labourer's day-lantern — it comes glaring yonder out of the east, to summon up a whole world to labour and to misery; whereas the merry moon lights all of us to mirth and to love."

"And to madness, or she is much belied," said Mordaunt, by way of saying something.

"Let it be so," answered Halcro, "so she does not turn us melancholy-mad. — My dear young friend, the folks of this painstaking world are far too anxious about possessing all their wits, or having them, as they say, about them. At least I know I have been often called half-witted, and I am sure I have gone through the world as well as if I had double the quantity. But stop — where was I? O, touching and concerning the moon — why, man, she is the very soul of love and poetry. I question if there was ever a true lover in existence who had not got at least as far as 'O thou,' in a sonnet in her praise."

"The moon," said the factor, who was now beginning to speak very thick, "ripens corn, at least the old folk said so — and she fills nuts also, whilk is of less matter — *sparge nuces, pueri*."

"A fine, a fine," said the Udaller, who was now in his altitudes; "the factor speaks Greek — by the bones of my holy namesake, Saint Magnus, he shall drink off the yawl full of punch, unless he gives us a song on the spot!"

"Too much water drowned the miller," answered Triptolemus. "My brain has more need of draining than of being drenched with more liquor."

"Sing, then," said the despotic landlord, "for no one shall speak any other language here, save honest Norse, jolly Dutch, or Danske, or broad Scots, at the least of it. So, Eric Scambester, produce the yawl, and fill it to the brim, as a charge for demurrage."

Ere the vessel could reach the agriculturist, he, seeing it under way, and steering towards him by short tacks, (for Scambester himself was by this time not over steady in his course,) made a desperate effort, and began to sing, or rather to croak forth, a Yorkshire harvest-home ballad, which his father used to sing when he was a little mellow, and which went to the tune of "Hey Dobbin, away with the waggon." The rueful aspect of the singer, and the desperately discordant tones of his voice, formed so delightful a contrast with the jollity of the words and tune, that honest Triptolemus afforded the same sort of amusement which a reveller might give, by appearing on a festival-day in the holiday-coat of his grandfather. The jest concluded the evening, for even the mighty and strong-headed Magnus himself had confessed the influence of the sleepy god. The guests went off as they best might, each to his separate crib and resting place, and in a short time the mansion, which was of late so noisy, was hushed into perfect silence.

Chapter 17.

*They man their boats, and all the young men arm,
With whatsoever might the monsters harm;
Pikes, halberds, spits, and darts, that wound afar,
The tools of peace, and implements of war.
Now was the time for vigorous lads to show
What love or honour could incite them to; —
A goodly theatre, where rocks are round
With reverend age and lovely lasses crown'd.*

BATTLE OF THE SUMMER ISLANDS.

The morning which succeeds such a feast as that of Magnus Troil, usually lacks a little of the zest which seasoned the revels of the preceding day, as the fashionable reader may have observed at a public breakfast during the race-week in a country town; for, in what is called the best society, these lingering moments are usually spent by the company, each apart in their own dressing-rooms. At Burgh-Westra, it will readily be believed, no such space for retirement was afforded; and the lasses, with their paler cheeks, the elder dames, with many a wink and yawn, were compelled to meet with their male companions (headaches and all) just three hours after they had parted from each other.

Eric Scambester had done all that man could do to supply the full means of diverting the ennui of the morning meal. The board groaned with rounds of hung beef, made after the fashion of Zetland — with pasties — with baked meats — with fish, dressed and cured in every possible manner; nay, with the foreign delicacies of tea, coffee, and chocolate; for, as we have already had occasion to remark, the situation of these islands made them early acquainted with various articles of foreign luxury, which were, as yet, but little known in Scotland, where, at a much later period than that we write of, one pound of green tea was dressed like cabbage, and another converted into a vegetable sauce for salt beef, by the ignorance of the good housewives to whom they had been sent as rare presents.

Besides these preparations, the table exhibited whatever mighty potions are resorted to by *bons vivans*, under the facetious name of a "hair of the dog that bit you." There was the potent Irish Usquebaugh — right Nantz — genuine Schiedamm — Aquavitæ from Caithness — and Golden Wasser from Hamburg; there was rum of formidable antiquity, and cordials from the Leeward Islands. After these details, it were needless to mention the stout home-brewed ale — the German mum, and Schwartz beer — and still more would it be beneath our dignity to dwell upon the innumerable sorts of pottage and flummery, together with the bland, and various preparations of milk, for those who preferred thinner potations.

No wonder that the sight of so much good cheer awakened the appetite and raised the spirits of the fatigued revellers. The young men began immediately to seek out their partners of the preceding evening, and to renew the small talk which had driven the night so merrily away; while Magnus, with his stout old Norse kindred, encouraged, by precept and example, those of elder days and graver mood, to a substantial flirtation with the good things before them. Still, however, there was a long period to be filled up before dinner; for the most protracted breakfast cannot well last above an hour; and it was to be feared that Claud Halcro meditated the occupation of this vacant morning with a formidable recitation of his own verses, besides telling, at its full length, the whole history of his introduction to glorious John Dryden. But fortune relieved the guests of Burgh-Westra from this threatened infliction, by sending them means of amusement peculiarly suited to their taste and habits.

Most of the guests were using their toothpicks, some were beginning to talk of what was to be done next, when, with haste in his step, fire in his eye, and a harpoon in his hand, Eric Scambester came to announce to the company, that there was a whale on shore, or nearly so, at the throat of the voe! Then you might have seen such a joyous, boisterous, and universal bustle, as only the love of sport, so deeply implanted in our nature, can possibly inspire. A set of country squires, about to beat for the first woodcocks of the season, were a comparison as petty, in respect to the glee, as in regard to the importance of the object; the battue, upon a strong cover in Ettrick Forest, for the destruction of the foxes;^[m] the insurrection of the sportsmen of the Lennox, when one of the Duke's deer gets out from Inch-Mirran; nay, the joyous rally of the fox-chase itself, with all its blithe accompaniments of hound and horn, fall infinitely short of the animation with which the gallant sons of Thule set off to encounter the monster, whom the sea had sent for their amusement at so opportune a conjuncture.

The multifarious stores of Burgh-Westra were rummaged hastily for all sorts of arms, which could be used on such an occasion. Harpoons, swords, pikes, and halberds, fell to the lot of some; others contented themselves with hay-forks, spits, and whatever else could be found, that was at once long and sharp. Thus hastily equipped, one division, under the command of Captain Cleveland, hastened to man the boats which lay in the little haven, while the rest of the party hurried by land to the scene of action.

Poor Triptolemus was interrupted in a plan, which he, too, had formed against the patience of the Zetlanders, and which was to have consisted in a lecture upon the agriculture, and the capabilities of the country, by this sudden hubbub, which put an end at once to Halcro's poetry, and to his no less formidable prose. It may be easily imagined, that he took very little interest in the sport which was so suddenly substituted for his lucubrations, and he would not even have deigned to have looked upon the active scene which was about to take place, had he not been stimulated thereunto by the exhortations of Mistress Baby. "Pit yoursell forward, man," said that provident person, "pit yoursell forward — wha kens whare a blessing may light? — they say that a' men share and share equals-aquals in the creature's ulzie, and a pint o't wad be worth siller, to light the cruise in the lang dark nights that they speak of. Pit yoursell forward, man — there's a graip to ye — faint heart never wan fair lady — wha kens but what, when it's fresh, it may eat weel enough, and spare butter?"

What zeal was added to Triptolemus's motions, by the prospect of eating fresh train-oil, instead of butter, we know not; but, as better might not be, he brandished the rural implement (a stable-fork) with which he was armed, and went down to wage battle with the whale.

The situation in which the enemy's ill fate had placed him, was particularly favourable to the enterprise of the islanders. A tide of unusual height had carried the animal over a large bar of sand, into the voe or creek in which he was now lying. So soon as he found the water ebbing, he became sensible of his danger, and

had made desperate efforts to get over the shallow water, where the waves broke on the bar; but hitherto he had rather injured than mended his condition, having got himself partly aground, and lying therefore particularly exposed to the meditated attack. At this moment the enemy came down upon him. The front ranks consisted of the young and hardy, armed in the miscellaneous manner we have described; while, to witness and animate their efforts, the young women, and the elderly persons of both sexes, took their place among the rocks, which overhung the scene of action.

As the boats had to double a little headland, ere they opened the mouth of the voe, those who came by land to the shores of the inlet, had time to make the necessary reconnoissances upon the force and situation of the enemy, on whom they were about to commence a simultaneous attack by land and sea.

This duty, the stout-hearted and experienced general, for so the Udaller might be termed, would intrust to no eyes but his own; and, indeed, his external appearance, and his sage conduct, rendered him alike qualified for the command which he enjoyed. His gold-laced hat was exchanged for a bearskin cap, his suit of blue broadcloth, with its scarlet lining, and loops, and frogs of bullion, had given place to a red flannel jacket, with buttons of black horn, over which he wore a seal-skin shirt curiously seamed and plaited on the bosom, such as are used by the Esquimaux, and sometimes by the Greenland whale-fishers. Sea-boots of a formidable size completed his dress, and in his hand he held a large whaling-knife, which he brandished, as if impatient to employ it in the operation of *flinching* the huge animal which lay before them — that is, the act of separating its flesh from its bones. Upon closer examination, however, he was obliged to confess, that the sport to which he had conducted his friends, however much it corresponded with the magnificent scale of his hospitality, was likely to be attended with its own peculiar dangers and difficulties.

The animal, upwards of sixty feet in length, was lying perfectly still, in a deep part of the voe into which it had weltered, and where it seemed to await the return of tide, of which it was probably assured by instinct. A council of experienced harpooners was instantly called, and it was agreed that an effort should be made to noose the tail of this torpid leviathan, by casting a cable around it, to be made fast by anchors to the shore, and thus to secure against his escape, in case the tide should make before they were able to dispatch him. Three boats were destined to this delicate piece of service, one of which the Udaller himself proposed to command, while Cleveland and Mertoun were to direct the two others. This being decided, they sat down on the strand, waiting with impatience until the naval part of the force should arrive in the voe. It was during this interval, that Triptolemus Yellowley, after measuring with his eyes the extraordinary size of the whale, observed, that in his poor mind, "A wain with six owsen, or with sixty owsen either, if they were the owsen of the country, could not drag siccan a huge creature from the water, where it was now lying, to the sea-beach."

Trifling as this remark may seem to the reader, it was connected with a subject which always fired the blood of the old Udaller, who, glancing upon Triptolemus a quick and stern look, asked him what the devil it signified, supposing a hundred oxen could not drag the whale upon the beach? Mr. Yellowley, though not much liking the tone with which the question was put, felt that his dignity and his profit compelled him to answer as follows:—"Nay, sir — you know yoursell, Master Magnus Troil, and every one knows that knows any thing, that whales of siccan size as may not be masterfully dragged on shore by the instrumentality of one wain with six owsen, are the right and property of the Admiral, who is at this time the same noble lord who is, moreover, Chamberlain of these isles."

"And I tell you, Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley," said the Udaller, "as I would tell your master if he were here, that every man who risks his life to bring that fish ashore, shall have an equal share and partition, according to our ancient and loveable Norse custom and wont; nay, if there is so much as a woman looking on, that will but touch the cable, she will be partner with us; ay, and more than all that, if she will but say there is a reason for it, we will assign a portion to the babe that is unborn."(n)

The strict principle of equity, which dictated this last arrangement, occasioned laughter among the men, and some slight confusion among the women. The factor, however, thought it shame to be so easily daunted. "*Suum cuique tribuito*," said he; "I will stand for my lord's right and my own."

"Will you?" replied Magnus; "then, by the Martyr's bones, you shall have no law of partition but that of God and Saint Olave, which we had before either factor, or treasurer, or chamberlain were heard of! — All shall share that lend a hand, and never a one else. So you, Master Factor, shall be busy as well as other folk, and think yourself lucky to share like other folk. Jump into that boat," (for the boats had by this time pulled round the headland,) "and you, my lads, make way for the factor in the stern-sheets — he shall be the first man this blessed day that shall strike the fish."

The loud authoritative voice, and the habit of absolute command inferred in the Udaller's whole manner, together with the conscious want of favourers and backers amongst the rest of the company, rendered it difficult for Triptolemus to evade compliance, although he was thus about to be placed in a situation equally novel and perilous. He was still, however, hesitating, and attempting an explanation, with a voice in which anger was qualified by fear, and both thinly disguised under an attempt to be jocular, and to represent the whole as a jest, when he heard the voice of Baby maundering in his ear — "Wad he lose his share of the ulzie, and the lang Zetland winter coming on, when the lightest day in December is not so clear as a moonless night in the Mearns?"

This domestic instigation, in addition to those of fear of the Udaller, and shame to seem less courageous than others, so inflamed the agriculturist's spirits, that he shook his *grai*p aloft, and entered the boat with the air of Neptune himself, carrying on high his trident.

The three boats destined for this perilous service, now approached the dark mass, which lay like an islet in the deepest part of the voe, and suffered them to approach without showing any sign of animation. Silently, and with such precaution as the extreme delicacy of the operation required, the intrepid adventurers, after the failure of their first attempt, and the expenditure of considerable time, succeeded in casting a cable around the body of the torpid monster, and in carrying the ends of it ashore, when an hundred hands were instantly employed in securing them. But ere this was accomplished, the tide began to make fast, and the Udaller informed his assistants, that either the fish must be killed, or at least greatly wounded, ere the depth of water on the bar was sufficient to float him; or that he was not unlikely to escape from their joint prowess.

"Wherefore," said he, "we must set to work, and the factor shall have the honour to make the first throw."

The valiant Triptolemus caught the word; and it is necessary to say that the patience of the whale, in suffering himself to be noosed without resistance, had abated his terrors, and very much lowered the creature in his opinion. He protested the fish had no more wit, and scarcely more activity, than a black snail; and, influenced by this undue contempt of the adversary, he waited neither for a further signal, nor a better weapon, nor a more suitable position, but, rising in his energy, hurled his *grai*p with all his force against the unfortunate monster. The boats had not yet retreated from him to the distance necessary to ensure safety, when this injudicious commencement of the war took place.

Magnus Troil, who had only jested with the factor, and had reserved the launching the first spear against the whale to some much more skilful hand, had just time to exclaim, "Mind yourselves, lads, or we are all swamped!" when the monster, roused at once from inactivity by the blow of the factor's missile, blew, with a noise resembling the explosion of a steam-engine, a huge shower of water into the air, and at the same time began to lash the waves with his tail in every direction. The boat in which Magnus presided received the shower of brine which the animal spouted aloft; and the adventurous Triptolemus, who had a full share of the immersion, was so much astonished and terrified by the consequences of his own valorous deed, that he tumbled backwards amongst the feet of the people, who, too busy to attend to him, were actively engaged in getting the boat into shoal water, out of the whale's reach. Here he lay for some minutes, trampled on by the feet of the boatmen, until they lay on their oars to bale, when the Udaller ordered them to pull to shore, and land this spare hand, who had commenced the fishing so inauspiciously.

While this was doing, the other boats had also pulled off to safer distance, and now, from these as well as from the shore, the unfortunate native of the deep was overwhelmed by all kinds of missiles — harpoons and spears flew against him on all sides — guns were fired, and each various means of annoyance plied which could excite him to exhaust his strength in useless rage. When the animal found that he was locked in by shallows on all sides, and became sensible, at the same time, of the strain of the cable on his body, the convulsive efforts which he made to escape, accompanied with sounds resembling deep and loud groans, would have moved the compassion of all but a practised whale-fisher. The repeated showers which he spouted into the air began now to be mingled with blood, and the waves which surrounded him assumed the same crimson appearance. Meantime the attempts of the assailants were redoubled; but Mordaunt Mertoun and Cleveland, in particular, exerted themselves to the uttermost, contending who should display most courage in approaching the monster, so tremendous in its agonies, and should inflict the most deep and deadly wounds upon its huge bulk.

The contest seemed at last pretty well over; for although the animal continued from time to time to make frantic exertions for liberty, yet its strength appeared so much exhausted, that, even with the assistance of the tide, which had now risen considerably, it was thought it could scarcely extricate itself.

Magnus gave the signal to venture nearer to the whale, calling out at the same time, "Close in, lads, he is not half so mad now — The Factor may look for a winter's oil for the two lamps at Harfra — Pull close in, lads."

Ere his orders could be obeyed, the other two boats had anticipated his purpose; and Mordaunt Mertoun, eager to distinguish himself above Cleveland, had, with the whole strength he possessed, plunged a half-pike into the body of the animal. But the leviathan, like a nation whose resources appear totally exhausted by previous losses and calamities, collected his whole remaining force for an effort, which proved at once desperate and successful. The wound, last received, had probably reached through his external defences of blubber, and attained some very sensitive part of the system; for he roared aloud, as he sent to the sky a mingled sheet of brine and blood, and snapping the strong cable like a twig, overset Mertoun's boat with a blow of his tail, shot himself, by a mighty effort, over the bar, upon which the tide had now risen considerably, and made out to sea, carrying with him a whole grove of the implements which had been planted in his body, and leaving behind him, on the waters, a dark red trace of his course.

"There goes to sea your cruise of oil, Master Yellowley," said Magnus, "and you must consume mutton suet, or go to bed in the dark."

"*Operam et oleum perdidit*," muttered Triptolemus; "but if they catch me whale-fishing again, I will consent that the fish shall swallow me as he did Jonah."

"But where is Mordaunt Mertoun all this while?" exclaimed Claud Halcro; and it was instantly perceived that the youth, who had been stunned when his boat was stove, was unable to swim to shore as the other sailors did, and now floated senseless upon the waves.

We have noticed the strange and inhuman prejudice, which rendered the Zetlanders of that period unwilling to assist those whom they saw in the act of drowning, though that is the calamity to which the islanders are most frequently exposed. Three men, however, soared above this superstition. The first was Claud Halcro, who threw himself from a small rock headlong into the waves, forgetting, as he himself afterwards stated, that he could not swim, and, if possessed of the harp of Arion, had no dolphins in attendance. The first plunge which the poet made in deep water, reminding him of these deficiencies, he was fain to cling to the rock from which he had dived, and was at length glad to regain the shore, at the expense of a ducking.

Magnus Troil, whose honest heart forgot his late coolness towards Mordaunt, when he saw the youth's danger, would instantly have brought him more effectual aid, but Eric Scambester held him fast.

"Hout, sir — hout," exclaimed that faithful attendant — "Captain Cleveland has a grip of Mr. Mordaunt — just let the two strangers help ilk other, and stand by the upshot. The light of the country is not to be quenched for the like of them. Bide still, sir, I say — Bredness Voe is not a bowl of punch, that a man can be fished out of like a toast with a long spoon."

This sage remonstrance would have been altogether lost upon Magnus, had he not observed that Cleveland had in fact jumped out of the boat, and swum to Mertoun's assistance, and was keeping him afloat till the boat came to the aid of both. As soon as the immediate danger which called so loudly for assistance was thus ended, the honest Udaller's desire to render aid terminated also; and recollecting the cause of offence which he had, or thought he had, against Mordaunt Mertoun, he shook off his butler's hold, and turning round scornfully from the beach, called Eric an old fool for supposing that he cared whether the young fellow sank or swam.

Still, however, amid his assumed indifference, Magnus could not help peeping over the heads of the circle, which, surrounding Mordaunt as soon as he was brought on shore, were charitably employed in endeavouring to recall him to life; and he was not able to attain the appearance of absolute unconcern, until the young man sat up on the beach, and showed plainly that the accident had been attended with no material consequences. It was then first that, cursing the assistants for not giving the lad a glass of brandy, he walked sullenly away, as if totally unconcerned in his fate.

The women, always accurate in observing the telltale emotions of each other, failed not to remark, that when the sisters of Burgh-Westra saw Mordaunt immersed in the waves, Minna grew as pale as death, while Brenda uttered successive shrieks of terror. But though there were some nods, winks, and hints that auld acquaintance were not easily forgot, it was, on the whole, candidly admitted, that less than such marks of interest could scarce have been expected, when they saw the companion of their early youth in the act of perishing before their eyes.

Whatever interest Mordaunt's condition excited while it seemed perilous, began to abate as he recovered himself; and when his senses were fully restored, only Claud Halcro, with two or three others, were standing by him. About ten paces off stood Cleveland — his hair and clothes dropping water, and his features wearing so peculiar an expression, as immediately to arrest the attention of Mordaunt. There was a suppressed smile on his cheek, and a look of pride in his eye, that implied liberation from a painful restraint, and something resembling gratified scorn. Claud Halcro hastened to intimate to Mordaunt, that he owed his life to Cleveland; and the youth, rising from the ground, and losing all other feelings in those of gratitude, stepped forward with his hand stretched out, to offer his warmest thanks to his preserver. But he stopped short in surprise, as Cleveland, retreating a pace or two, folded his arms on his breast, and declined to accept his proffered hand. He drew back in turn, and gazed with astonishment at the ungracious manner, and almost insulting look, with which Cleveland, who had formerly rather expressed a frank cordiality, or at least openness of bearing, now, after having thus rendered him a most important service, chose to receive his thanks.

"It is enough," said Cleveland, observing his surprise, "and it is unnecessary to say more about it. I have paid back my debt, and we are now equal."

"You are more than equal with me, Captain Cleveland," answered Mertoun, "because you endangered your life to do for me what I did for you without the slightest risk; — besides," he added, trying to give the discourse a more pleasant turn, "I have your rifle-gun to boot."

"Cowards only count danger for any point of the game," said Cleveland. "Danger has been my consort for life, and sailed with me on a thousand worse voyages; — and for rifles, I have enough of my own, and you may see, when you will, which can use them best."

There was something in the tone with which this was said, that struck Mordaunt strongly; it was miching malicho, as Hamlet says, and meant mischief. Cleveland saw his surprise, came close up to him, and spoke in a low tone of voice:—"Hark ye, my young brother. There is a custom among us gentlemen of fortune, that when we follow the same chase, and take the wind out of each other's sails, we think sixty yards of the sea-beach, and a brace of rifles, are no bad way of making our odds even."

"I do not understand you, Captain Cleveland," said Mordaunt.

"I do not suppose you do — I did not suppose you would," said the Captain; and, turning on his heel, with a smile that resembled a sneer, Mordaunt saw him mingle with the guests, and very soon beheld him at the side of Minna, who was talking to him with animated features, that seemed to thank him for his gallant and generous conduct.

"If it were not for Brenda," thought Mordaunt, "I almost wish he had left me in the voe, for no one seems to care whether I am alive or dead. — Two rifles and sixty yards of sea-beach — is that what he points at? — It may come — but not on the day he has saved my life with risk of his own."

While he was thus musing, Eric Scambester was whispering to Halcro, "If these two lads do not do each other a mischief, there is no faith in freits. Master Mordaunt saves Cleveland — well. — Cleveland, in requital, has turned all the sunshine of Burgh-Westra to his own side of the house; and think what it is to lose favour in such a house as this, where the punch-kettle is never allowed to cool! Well, now that Cleveland in his turn has been such a fool as to fish Mordaunt out of the voe, see if he does not give him sour sillocks for stock-fish."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" replied the poet, "that is all old women's fancies, my friend Eric; for what says glorious Dryden — sainted John —

'The yellow gall that in your bosom floats,
Engenders all these melancholy thoughts.'"

"Saint John, or Saint James either, may be mistaken in the matter," said Eric; "for I think neither of them lived in Zetland. I only say, that if there is faith in old saws, these two lads will do each other a mischief; and if they do, I trust it will light on Mordaunt Mertoun."

"And why, Eric Scambester," said Halcro, hastily and angrily, "should you wish ill to that poor young man, that is worth fifty of the other?"

"Let every one roose the ford as he finds it," replied Eric; "Master Mordaunt is all for wan water, like his old dog-fish of a father; now Captain Cleveland, d'ye see, takes his glass, like an honest fellow and a gentleman."

"Rightly reasoned, and in thine own division," said Halcro; and breaking off their conversation, took his way back to Burgh-Westra, to which the guests of Magnus were now returning, discussing as they went, with much animation, the various incidents of their attack upon the whale, and not a little scandalized that it should have baffled all their exertions.

"I hope Captain Donderdrecht of the Eintracht of Rotterdam will never hear of it," said Magnus; "he would swear, donner and blitzen, we were only fit to fish flounders."⁴⁶

Chapter 18.

*And helter-skelter have I rode to thee,
And tidings do I bring, and lucky joys,
And golden times, and happy news of price.*

ANCIENT PISTOL.

Fortune, who seems at times to bear a conscience, owed the hospitable Udaller some amends, and accordingly repaid to Burgh-Westra the disappointment occasioned by the unsuccessful whale-fishing, by sending thither, on the evening of the day in which that incident happened, no less a person than the jagger, or travelling merchant, as he styled himself, Bryce Snailsfoot, who arrived in great pomp, himself on one pony, and his pack of goods, swelled to nearly double its usual size, forming the burden of another, which was led by a bare-headed bare-legged boy.

As Bryce announced himself the bearer of important news, he was introduced to the dining apartment, where (for that primitive age was no respecter of persons) he was permitted to sit down at a side-table, and amply supplied with provisions and good liquor; while the attentive hospitality of Magnus permitted no questions to be put to him, until, his hunger and thirst appeased, he announced, with the sense of importance attached to distant travels, that he had just yesterday arrived at Lerwick from Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, and would have been here yesterday, but it blew hard off the Fitful-head.

"We had no wind here," said Magnus.

"There is somebody has not been sleeping, then," said the pedlar, "and her name begins with N; but Heaven is above all."

"But the news from Orkney, Bryce, instead of croaking about a capful of wind?"

"Such news," replied Bryce, "as has not been heard this thirty years — not since Cromwell's time."

"There is not another Revolution, is there?" said Halcro; "King James has not come back, as blithe as King Charlie did, has he?"

"It's news," replied the pedlar, "that are worth twenty kings, and kingdoms to boot of them; for what good did the evolutions ever do us? and I dare say we have seen a dozen, great and sma'."

"Are any Indiamen come north about?" said Magnus Troil.

"Ye are nearer the mark, Fowd," said the jagger; "but it is nae Indiaman, but a gallant armed vessel, chokeful of merchandise, that they part with so easy that a decent man like my sell can afford to give the country the best pennyworths you ever saw; and that you will say, when I open that pack, for I count to carry it back another sort lighter than when I brought it here."

"Ay, ay, Bryce," said the Udaller, "you must have had good bargains if you sell cheap; but what ship was it?"

"Cannot justly say — I spoke to nobody but the captain, who was a discreet man; but she had been down on the Spanish Main, for she has silks and satins, and tobacco, I warrant you, and wine, and no lack of sugar, and bonny-wallies baith of silver and gowd, and a bonnie dredging of gold dust into the bargain."

"What like was she?" said Cleveland, who seemed to give much attention.

"A stout ship," said the itinerant merchant, "schooner-rigged, sails like a dolphin, they say, carries twelve guns, and is pierced for twenty."

"Did you hear the captain's name?" said Cleveland, speaking rather lower than his usual tone.

"I just ca'd him the Captain," replied Bryce Snailsfoot; "for I make it a rule never to ask questions of them I deal with in the way of trade; for there is many an honest captain, begging your pardon, Captain Cleveland, that does not care to have his name tacked to his title; and as lang as we ken what bargains we are making, what signifies it wha we are making them wi', ye ken?"

"Bryce Snailsfoot is a cautious man," said the Udaller, laughing; "he knows a fool may ask more questions than a wise man cares to answer."

"I have dealt with the fair traders in my day," replied Snailsfoot, "and I ken nae use in blurting braid out with a man's name at every moment; but I will uphold this gentleman to be a gallant commander — ay, and a kind one too; for every one of his crew is as brave in apparel as himself nearly — the very foremast-men have their silken scarfs; I have seen many a lady wear a warse, and think hersell nae sma' drink — and for siller buttons, and buckles, and the lave of sic vanities, there is nae end of them."

"Idiots!" muttered Cleveland between his teeth; and then added, "I suppose they are often ashore, to show all their bravery to the lasses of Kirkwall?"

"Ne'er a bit of that are they. The Captain will scarce let them stir ashore without the boatswain go in the boat — as rough a tarpaulin as ever swabb'd a deck — and you may as weel catch a cat without her claws, as him without his cutlass and his double brace of pistols about him; every man stands as much in awe of him as of the commander himself."

"That must be Hawkins, or the devil," said Cleveland.

"Aweel, Captain," replied the jagger, "be he the tane or the tither, or a wee bit o' baith, mind it is you that give him these names, and not I."

"Why, Captain Cleveland," said the Udaller, "this may prove the very consort you spoke of."

"They must have had some good luck, then," said Cleveland, "to put them in better plight than when I left them. — Did they speak of having lost their consort, pedlar?"

"In troth did they," said Bryce; "that is, they said something about a partner that had gone down to Davie Jones in these seas."

"And did you tell them what you knew of her?" said the Udaller.

"And wha the deevil wad hae been the fule, then," said the pedlar, "that I suld say sae? When they kend what came of the ship, the next question wad have been about the cargo — and ye wad not have had me bring down an armed vessel on the coast, to harrie the poor folk about a wheen rags of duds that the sea flung upon their shores?"

"Besides, what might have been found in your own pack, you scoundrell!" said Magnus Troil; an observation which produced a loud laugh. The Udaller could not help joining in the hilarity which applauded his jest; but instantly composing his countenance, he said, in an unusually grave tone, "You may laugh, my friends; but this is a matter which brings both a curse and a shame on the country; and till we learn to regard the rights of them that suffer by the winds and waves, we shall deserve to be oppressed and hag-ridden, as we have been and are, by the superior strength of the strangers who rule us."

The company hung their heads at the rebuke of Magnus Troil. Perhaps some, even of the better class, might be conscience-struck on their own account; and all of them were sensible that the appetite for plunder, on the part of the tenants and inferiors, was not at all times restrained with sufficient strictness. But Cleveland made answer gaily, "If these honest fellows be my comrades, I will answer for them that they will never trouble the country about a parcel of chests, hammocks, and such trumpery, that the Roost may have washed ashore out of my poor sloop. What signifies to them whether the trash went to Bryce Snailsfoot, or to the bottom, or to the devil? So unbuckle thy pack, Bryce, and show the ladies thy cargo, and perhaps we may see something that will please them."

"It cannot be his consort," said Brenda, in a whisper to her sister; "he would have shown more joy at her appearance."

"It must be the vessel," answered Minna; "I saw his eye glisten at the thought of being again united to the partner of his dangers."

"Perhaps it glistened," said her sister, still apart, "at the thought of leaving Zetland; it is difficult to guess the thought of the heart from the glance of the eye."

"Judge not, at least, unkindly of a friend's thought," said Minna; "and then, Brenda, if you are mistaken, the fault rests not with you."

During this dialogue, Bryce Snailsfoot was busied in uncoiling the carefully arranged cordage of his pack, which amounted to six good yards of dressed seal-skin, curiously complicated and secured by all manner of knots and buckles. He was considerably interrupted in the task by the Udaller and others, who pressed him with questions respecting the stranger vessel.

"Were the officers often ashore? and how were they received by the people of Kirkwall?" said Magnus Troil.

"Excellently well," answered Bryce Snailsfoot; "and the Captain and one or two of his men had been at some of the vanities and dances which went forward in the town; but there had been some word about customs, or king's duties, or the like, and some of the higher folk, that took upon them as magistrates, or the like, had had words with the Captain, and he refused to satisfy them; and then it is like he was more coldly looked on, and he spoke of carrying the ship round to Stromness, or the Langhope, for she lay under the guns of the battery at Kirkwall. But he" (Bryce) "thought she wad bide at Kirkwall till the summer-fair was over, for all that."

"The Orkney gentry," said Magnus Troil, "are always in a hurry to draw the Scotch collar tighter round their own necks. Is it not enough that we must pay *scat* and *wattle*, which were all the public dues under our old Norse government; but must they come over us with king's dues and customs besides? It is the part of an honest man to resist these things. I have done so all my life, and will do so to the end of it."

There was a loud jubilee and shout of applause among the guests, who were (some of them at least) better pleased with Magnus Troil's latitudinarian principles with respect to the public revenue, (which were extremely natural to those living in so secluded a situation, and subjected to many additional exactions,) than they had been with the rigour of his judgment on the subject of wrecked goods. But Minna's inexperienced feelings carried her farther than her father, while she whispered to Brenda, not unheard by Cleveland, that the tame spirit of the Orcadians had missed every chance which late incidents had given them to emancipate these islands from the Scottish yoke.

"Why," she said, "should we not, under so many changes as late times have introduced, have seized the opportunity to shake off an allegiance which is not justly due from us, and to return to the protection of Denmark, our parent country? Why should we yet hesitate to do this, but that the gentry of Orkney have mixed families and friendship so much with our invaders, that they have become dead to the throb of the heroic Norse blood, which they derived from their ancestors?"

The latter part of this patriotic speech happened to reach the astonished ears of our friend Triptolemus, who, having a sincere devotion for the Protestant succession, and the Revolution as established, was surprised into the ejaculation, "As the old cock crows the young cock learns — hen I should say, mistress, and I crave your pardon if I say any thing amiss in either gender. But it is a happy country where the father declares against the king's customs, and the daughter against the king's crown! and, in my judgment, it can end in naething but trees and tows."

"Trees are scarce among us," said Magnus; "and for ropes, we need them for our rigging, and cannot spare them to be shirt-collars."

"And whoever," said the Captain, "takes umbrage at what this young lady says, had better keep his ears and tongue for a safer employment than such an adventure."

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, "it helps the matter much to speak truths, whilk are as unwelcome to a proud stomach as wet clover to a cow's, in a land where lads are ready to draw the whittle if a lassie but looks awry. But what manners are to be expected in a country where folk call a pleugh-sock a markal?"

"Hark ye, Master Yellowley," said the Captain, smiling, "I hope my manners are not among those abuses which you come hither to reform; any experiment on them may be dangerous."

"As well as difficult," said Triptolemus, dryly; "but fear nothing, Captain Cleveland, from my remonstrances. My labours regard the men and things of the earth, and not the men and things of the sea — you are not of my element."

"Let us be friends, then, old clod-compeller," said the Captain.

"Clod-compeller!" said the agriculturist, bethinking himself of the lore of his earlier days; "Clod-compeller *pro* cloud-compeller, Νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς(ο)—*Græcum est* — in which voyage came you by that phrase?"

"I have travelled books as well as seas in my day," said the Captain; "but my last voyages have been of a sort to make me forget my early cruizes through classic knowledge. — But come here, Bryce — hast cast off the lashing? — Come all hands, and let us see if he has aught in his cargo that is worth looking upon."

With a proud, and, at the same time, a wily smile, did the crafty pedlar display a collection of wares far superior to those which usually filled his packages, and, in particular, some stuffs and embroideries, of such beauty and curiosity, fringed, flowered, and worked, with such art and magnificence, upon foreign and arabesque patterns, that the sight might have dazzled a far more brilliant company than the simple race of Thule. All beheld and admired, while Mistress Baby Yellowley, holding up her hands, protested it was a sin even to look upon such extravagance, and worse than murder so much as to ask the price of them.

Others, however, were more courageous; and the prices demanded by the merchant, if they were not, as he himself declared, something just more than nothing — short only of an absolute free gift of his wares, were nevertheless so moderate, as to show that he himself must have made an easy acquisition of the goods, judging by the rate at which he offered to part with them. Accordingly, the cheapness of the articles created a rapid sale; for in Zetland, as well as elsewhere, wise folk buy more from the prudential desire to secure a good bargain, than from any real occasion for the purchase. The Lady Glowrowrum bought seven petticoats and twelve stomachers on this sole principle, and other matrons present rivalled her in this sagacious species of economy. The Udaller was also a considerable purchaser; but the principal customer for whatever could please the eye of beauty, was the gallant Captain Cleveland, who rummaged the jagger's stores in selecting presents for the ladies of the party, in which Minna and Brenda Troil were especially remembered.

"I fear," said Magnus Troil, "that the young women are to consider these pretty presents as keepsakes, and that all this liberality is only a sure sign we are soon to lose you?"

This question seemed to embarrass him to whom it was put.

"I scarce know," he said with some hesitation, "whether this vessel is my consort or no — I must take a trip to Kirkwall to make sure of that matter, and then I hope to return to Dunrossness to bid you all farewell."

"In that case," said the Udaller, after a moment's pause, "I think I may carry you thither. I should be at the Kirkwall fair, to settle with the merchants I have consigned my fish to, and I have often promised Minna and Brenda that they should see the fair. Perhaps also your consort, or these strangers, whoever they be, may have some merchandise that will suit me. I love to see my rigging-loft well stocked with goods, almost as much as to see it full of dancers. We will go to Orkney in my own brig, and I can offer you a hammock, if you will."

The offer seemed so acceptable to Cleveland, that, after pouring himself forth in thanks, he seemed determined to mark his joy by exhausting Bryce Snailsfoot's treasures in liberality to the company. The contents of a purse of gold were transferred to the jagger, with a facility and indifference on the part of its former owner which argued either the greatest profusion, or consciousness of superior and inexhaustible wealth; so that Baby whispered to her brother, that, "if he could afford to fling away money at this rate, the lad had made a better voyage in a broken ship, than all the skippers of Dundee had made in their haill anes for a twelvemonth past."

But the angry feeling in which she made this remark was much mollified, when Cleveland, whose object it seemed that evening to be, to buy golden opinions of all sorts of men, approached her with a garment somewhat resembling in shape the Scottish plaid, but woven of a sort of wool so soft, that it felt to the touch as if it were composed of eider-down. "This," he said, "was a part of a Spanish lady's dress, called a *mantilla*; as it would exactly fit the size of Mrs. Baby Yellowley, and was very well suited for the fogs of the climate of Zetland, he entreated her to wear it for his sake." The lady, with as much condescending sweetness as her countenance was able to express, not only consented to receive this mark of gallantry, but permitted the donor to arrange the mantilla upon her projecting and bony shoulder-blades, where, said Claud Halcro, "it hung, for all the world, as if it had been stretched betwixt a couple of cloak-pins."

While the Captain was performing this piece of courtesy, much to the entertainment of the company, which, it may be presumed, was his principal object from the beginning, Mordaunt Mertoun made purchase of a small golden chaplet, with the private intention of presenting it to Brenda, when he should find an opportunity. The price was fixed, and the article laid aside. Claud Halcro also showed some desire of possessing a silver box of antique shape, for depositing tobacco, which

he was in the habit of using in considerable quantity. But the bard seldom had current coin in promptitude, and, indeed, in his wandering way of life, had little occasion for any; and Bryce, on the other hand, his having been hitherto a ready-money trade, protested, that his very moderate profits upon such rare and choice articles, would not allow of his affording credit to the purchaser. Mordaunt gathered the import of this conversation from the mode in which they whispered together, while the bard seemed to advance a wishful finger towards the box in question, and the cautious pedlar detained it with the weight of his whole hand, as if he had been afraid it would literally make itself wings, and fly into Claud Halcro's pocket. Mordaunt Mertoun at this moment, desirous to gratify an old acquaintance, laid the price of the box on the table, and said he would not permit Master Halcro to purchase that box, as he had settled in his own mind to make him a present of it.

"I cannot think of robbing you, my dear young friend," said the poet; "but the truth is, that that same box does remind me strangely of glorious John's, out of which I had the honour to take a pinch at the Wits' Coffeehouse, for which I think more highly of my right-hand finger and thumb than any other part of my body; only you must allow me to pay you back the price when my Urkaster stock-fish come to market."

"Settle that as you like betwixt you," said the jagger, taking up Mordaunt's money; "the box is bought and sold."

"And how dare you sell over again," said Captain Cleveland, suddenly interfering, "what you already have sold to me?"

All were surprised at this interjection, which was hastily made, as Cleveland, having turned from Mistress Baby, had become suddenly, and, as it seemed, not without emotion, aware what articles Bryce Snailsfoot was now disposing of. To this short and fierce question, the jagger, afraid to contradict a customer of his description, answered only by stammering, that the "Lord knew he meant nae offence."

"How, sir! no offence!" said the seaman, "and dispose of my property?" extending his hand at the same time to the box and chaplet; "restore the young gentleman's money, and learn to keep your course on the meridian of honesty."

The jagger, confused and reluctant, pulled out his leathern pouch to repay to Mordaunt the money he had just deposited in it; but the youth was not to be so satisfied.

"The articles," he said, "were bought and sold — these were your own words, Bryce Snailsfoot, in Master Halcro's hearing; and I will suffer neither you nor any other to deprive me of my property."

"Your property, young man?" said Cleveland; "It is mine — I spoke to Bryce respecting them an instant before I turned from the table."

"I— I— I had not just heard distinctly," said Bryce, evidently unwilling to offend either party.

"Come, come," said the Udaller, "we will have no quarrelling about baubles; we shall be summoned presently to the rigging-loft,"— so he used to call the apartment used as a ball-room — "and we must all go in good-humour. The things shall remain with Bryce for to-night, and to-morrow I will myself settle whom they shall belong to."

The laws of the Udaller in his own house were absolute as those of the Medes. The two young men, regarding each other with looks of sullen displeasure, drew off in different directions.

It is seldom that the second day of a prolonged festival equals the first. The spirits, as well as the limbs, are jaded, and unequal to the renewed expenditure of animation and exertion; and the dance at Burgh-Westra was sustained with much less mirth than on the preceding evening. It was yet an hour from midnight, when even the reluctant Magnus Troil, after regretting the degeneracy of the times, and wishing he could transfuse into the modern Hialtlanders some of the vigour which still animated his own frame, found himself compelled to give the signal for general retreat.

Just as this took place, Halcro, leading Mordaunt Mertoun a little aside, said he had a message to him from Captain Cleveland.

"A message!" said Mordaunt, his heart beating somewhat thick as he spoke — "A challenge, I suppose?"

"A challenge!" repeated Halcro; "who ever heard of a challenge in our quiet islands? Do you think that I look like a carrier of challenges, and to you of all men living? — I am none of those fighting fools, as glorious John calls them; and it was not quite a message I had to deliver — only thus far — this Captain Cleveland, I find, hath set his heart upon having these articles you looked at."

"He shall not have them, I swear to you," replied Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Nay, but hear me," said Halcro; "it seems that, by the marks or arms that are upon them, he knows that they were formerly his property. Now, were you to give me the box, as you promised, I fairly tell you, I should give the man back his own."

"And Brenda might do the like," thought Mordaunt to himself, and instantly replied aloud, "I have thought better of it, my friend. Captain Cleveland shall have the toys he sets such store by, but it is on one sole condition."

"Nay, you will spoil all with your conditions," said Halcro; "for, as glorious John says, conditions are but" —

"Hear me, I say, with patience. — My condition is, that he keeps the toys in exchange for the rifle-gun I accepted from him, which will leave no obligation between us on either side."

"I see where you would be — this is Sebastian and Dorax all over. Well, you may let the jagger know he is to deliver the things to Cleveland — I think he is mad to have them — and I will let Cleveland know the conditions annexed, otherwise honest Bryce might come by two payments instead of one; and I believe his conscience would not choke upon it."

With these words, Halcro went to seek out Cleveland, while Mordaunt, observing Snailsfoot, who, as a sort of privileged person, had thrust himself into the crowd at the bottom of the dancing-room, went up to him, and gave him directions to deliver the disputed articles to Cleveland as soon as he had an opportunity.

"Ye are in the right, Maister Mordaunt," said the jagger; "ye are a prudent and a sensible lad — a calm answer turneth away wrath — and myself, I sall be willing to please you in ony trifling matters in my sma' way; for, between the Udaller of Burgh-Westra and Captain Cleveland, a man is, as it were, atween the deil and the deep sea; and it was like that the Udaller, in the end, would have taken your part in the dispute, for he is a man that loves justice."

"Which apparently you care very little about, Master Snailsfoot," said Mordaunt, "otherwise there could have been no dispute whatever, the right being so clearly on my side, if you had pleased to bear witness according to the dictates of truth."

"Maister Mordaunt," said the jagger, "I must own there was, as it were, a colouring or shadow of justice on your side; but then, the justice that I meddle with, is only justice in the way of trade, to have an ellwand of due length, if it be not something worn out with leaning on it in my lang and painful journeys, and to buy and sell by just weight and measure, twenty-four merks to the lispund; but I have nothing to do, to do justice betwixt man and man, like a Fowd or a Lawright-man at a lawting lang syne."

"No one asked you to do so, but only to give evidence according to your conscience," replied Mordaunt, not greatly pleased either with the part the jagger had acted during the dispute, or the construction which he seemed to put on his own motives for yielding up the point.

But Bryce Snailsfoot wanted not his answer; "My conscience," he said, "Maister Mordaunt, is as tender as ony man's in my degree; but she is something of a timorsome nature, cannot abide angry folk, and can never speak above her breath, when there is aught of a fray going forward. Indeed, she hath at all times a small and low voice."

"Which you are not much in the habit of listening to," said Mordaunt.

"There is that on your ain breast that proves the contrary," said Bryce, resolutely.

"In my breast?" said Mordaunt, somewhat angrily — "what know I of you?"

"I said *on* your breast, Maister Mordaunt, and not *in* it. I am sure nae eye that looks on that waistcoat upon your own gallant brisket, but will say, that the merchant who sold such a piece for four dollars had justice and conscience, and a kind heart to a customer to the boot of a' that; sae ye shouldna be sae thrawart wi' me for having spared the breath of my mouth in a fool's quarrel."

"I thrawart!" said Mordaunt; "pooh, you silly man! I have no quarrel with you."

"I am glad of it," said the travelling merchant; "I will quarrel with no man, with my will — least of all with an old customer; and if you will walk by my advice, you will quarrel nane with Captain Cleveland. He is like one of yon cutters and slashers that have come into Kirkwall, that think as little of slicing a man, as we do of flinching a whale — it's their trade to fight, and they live by it; and they have the advantage of the like of you, that only take it up at your own hand, and in the way of pastime, when you hae nothing better to do."

The company had now almost all dispersed; and Mordaunt, laughing at the jagger's caution, bade him good-night, and went to his own place of repose, which had been assigned to him by Eric Scambester, (who acted the part of chamberlain as well as butler,) in a small room, or rather closet, in one of the outhouses, furnished for the occasion with the hammock of a sailor.

Chapter 19.

*I pass like night from land to land,
I have strange power of speech;
So soon as e'er his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me,
To him my tale I teach.*

COLERIDGE'S RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

The daughters of Magnus Troil shared the same bed, in a chamber which had been that of their parents before the death of their mother. Magnus, who suffered grievously under that dispensation of Providence, had become disgusted with the apartment. The nuptial chamber was abandoned to the pledges of his bereaved affection, of whom the eldest was at that period only four years old, or thereabouts; and, having been their nursery in infancy, continued, though now tricked and adorned according to the best fashion of the islands, and the taste of the lovely sisters themselves, to be their sleeping-room, or, in the old Norse dialect, their bower.

It had been for many years the scene of the most intimate confidence, if that could be called confidence, where, in truth, there was nothing to be confided; where neither sister had a secret; and where every thought that had birth in the bosom of the one, was, without either hesitation or doubt, confided to the other as spontaneously as it had arisen. But, since Cleveland abode in the mansion of Burgh-Westra, each of the lovely sisters had entertained thoughts which are not lightly or easily communicated, unless she who listens to them has previously assured herself that the confidence will be kindly received. Minna had noticed what other and less interested observers had been unable to perceive, that Cleveland, namely, held a lower rank in Brenda's opinion than in her own; and Brenda, on her side, thought that Minna had hastily and unjustly joined in the prejudices which had been excited against Mordaunt Mertoun in the mind of their father. Each was sensible that she was no longer the same to her sister; and this conviction was a painful addition to other painful apprehensions which they supposed they had to struggle with. Their manner towards each other was, in outward appearances, and in all the little cares by which affection can be expressed, even more assiduously kind than before, as if both, conscious that their internal reserve was a breach of their sisterly union, strove to atone for it by double assiduity in those external marks of affection, which, at other times, when there was nothing to hide, might be omitted without inferring any consequences.

On the night referred to in particular, the sisters felt more especially the decay of the confidence which used to exist betwixt them. The proposed voyage to Kirkwall, and that at the time of the fair, when persons of every degree in these islands repair thither, either for business or amusement, was likely to be an important incident in lives usually so simple and uniform as theirs; and, a few months ago, Minna and Brenda would have been awake half the night, anticipating, in their talk with each other, all that was likely to happen on so momentous an occasion. But now the subject was just mentioned, and suffered to drop, as if the topic was likely to produce a difference betwixt them, or to call forth a more open display of their several opinions than either was willing to make to the other.

Yet such was their natural openness and gentleness of disposition, that each sister imputed to herself the fault that there was aught like estrangement existing between them; and when, having finished their devotions, and betaken themselves to their common couch, they folded each other in their arms, and exchanged a sisterly kiss, and a sisterly good-night, they seemed mutually to ask pardon, and to exchange forgiveness, although neither said a word of offence, either offered or received; and both were soon plunged in that light and yet profound repose, which is only enjoyed when sleep sinks down on the eyes of youth and innocence.

On the night to which the story relates, both sisters were visited by dreams, which, though varied by the moods and habits of the sleepers, bore yet a strange general resemblance to each other.

Minna dreamed that she was in one of the most lonely recesses of the beach, called Swartaster, where the incessant operation of the waves, indenting a calcareous rock, has formed a deep *halier*, which, in the language of the island, means a subterranean cavern, into which the tide ebbs and flows. Many of these run to an extraordinary and unascertained depth under ground, and are the secure retreat of cormorants and seals, which it is neither easy nor safe to pursue to their extreme recesses. Amongst these, this halier of Swartaster was accounted peculiarly inaccessible, and shunned both by fowlers and by seamen, on account of sharp angles and turnings in the cave itself, as well as the sunken rocks which rendered it very dangerous for skiffs or boats to advance far into it, especially if there was the usual swell of an island tide. From the dark-browed mouth of this cavern, it seemed to Minna, in her dream, that she beheld a mermaid issue, not in the classical dress of a Nereid, as in Claud Halcro's mask of the preceding evening, but with comb and glass in hand, according to popular belief, and lashing the waves with that long scaly train, which, in the traditions of the country, forms so frightful a contrast with the fair face, long tresses, and displayed bosom, of a human and earthly female, of surpassing beauty. She seemed to beckon to Minna, while her wild notes rang sadly in her ear, and denounced, in prophetic sounds, calamity and woe.

The vision of Brenda was of a different description, yet equally melancholy. She sat, as she thought, in her favourite bower, surrounded by her father and a party of his most beloved friends, amongst whom Mordaunt Mertoun was not forgotten. She was required to sing; and she strove to entertain them with a lively ditty, in which she was accounted eminently successful, and which she sung with such simple, yet natural humour, as seldom failed to produce shouts of laughter and applause, while all who could, or who could not sing, were irresistibly compelled to lend their voices to the chorus. But, on this occasion, it seemed as if her own voice refused all its usual duty, and as if, while she felt herself unable to express the words of the well-known air, it assumed, in her own despite, the deep tones and wild and melancholy notes of Norna of Fitful-head, for the purpose of chanting some wild Runic rhyme, resembling those sung by the heathen priests of old, when the victim (too often human) was bound to the fatal altar of Odin or of Thor.

At length the two sisters at once started from sleep, and, uttering a low scream of fear, clasped themselves in each other's arms. For their fancy had not altogether played them false; the sounds, which had suggested their dreams, were real, and sung within their apartment. They knew the voice well, indeed, and yet, knowing to whom it belonged, their surprise and fear were scarce the less, when they saw the well-known Norna of Fitful-head, seated by the chimney of the apartment, which, during the summer season, contained an iron lamp well trimmed, and, in winter, a fire of wood or of turf.

She was wrapped in her long and ample garment of wadmaal, and moved her body slowly to and fro over the pale flame of the lamp, as she sung lines to the following purport, in a slow, sad, and almost an unearthly accent:

"For leagues along the watery way,
Through gulf and stream my course has been;
The billows know my Runic lay,
And smooth their crests to silent green.
"The billows know my Runic lay —
The gulf grows smooth, the stream is still;
But human hearts, more wild than they,
Know but the rule of wayward will.
"One hour is mine, in all the year,

To tell my woes — and one alone;
When gleams this magic lamp, 'tis here —
When dies the mystic light, 'tis gone.
“Daughters of northern Magnus, hail!
The lamp is lit, the flame is clear —
To you I come to tell my tale,
Awake, arise, my tale to hear!”

Norna was well known to the daughters of Troil, but it was not without emotion, although varied by their respective dispositions, that they beheld her so unexpectedly, and at such an hour. Their opinions with respect to the supernatural attributes to which she pretended, were extremely different.

Minna, with an unusual intensity of imagination, although superior in talent to her sister, was more apt to listen to, and delight in, every tale of wonder, and was at all times more willing to admit impressions which gave her fancy scope and exercise, without minutely examining their reality. Brenda, on the other hand, had, in her gaiety, a slight propensity to satire, and was often tempted to laugh at the very circumstances upon which Minna founded her imaginative dreams; and, like all who love the ludicrous, she did not readily suffer herself to be imposed upon, or overawed, by pompous pretensions of any kind whatever. But, as her nerves were weaker and more irritable than those of her sister, she often paid involuntary homage, by her fears, to ideas which her reason disowned; and hence, Claud Halcro used to say, in reference to many of the traditionary superstitions around Burgh-Westra, that Minna believed them without trembling, and that Brenda trembled without believing them. In our own more enlightened days, there are few whose undoubting mind and native courage have not felt Minna's high wrought tone of enthusiasm; and perhaps still fewer, who have not, at one time or other, felt, like Brenda, their nerves confess the influence of terrors which their reason disowned and despised.

Under the power of such different feelings, Minna, when the first moment of surprise was over, prepared to spring from her bed, and go to greet Norna, who, she doubted not, had come on some errand fraught with fate; while Brenda, who only beheld in her a woman partially deranged in her understanding, and who yet, from the extravagance of her claims, regarded her as an undefined object of awe, or rather terror, detained her sister by an eager and terrified grasp, while she whispered in her ear an anxious entreaty that she would call for assistance. But the soul of Minna was too highly wrought up by the crisis at which her fate seemed to have arrived, to permit her to follow the dictates of her sister's fears; and, extricating herself from Brenda's hold, she hastily threw on a loose nightgown, and, stepping boldly across the apartment, while her heart throbbed rather with high excitement than with fear, she thus addressed her singular visitor:

“Norna, if your mission regards us, as your words seem to express, there is one of us, at least, who will receive its import with reverence, but without fear.”

“Norna, dear Norna,” said the tremulous voice of Brenda — who, feeling no safety in the bed after Minna quitted it, had followed her, as fugitives crowd into the rear of an advancing army, because they dare not remain behind, and who now stood half concealed by her sister, and holding fast by the skirts of her gown —

“Norna, dear Norna,” said she, “whatever you are to say, let it be to-morrow. I will call Euphane Fea, the housekeeper, and she will find you a bed for the night.”

“No bed for me!” said their nocturnal visitor; “no closing of the eyes for me! They have watched as shelf and stack appeared and disappeared betwixt Burgh-Westra and Orkney — they have seen the Man of Hoy sink into the sea, and the Peak of Hengcliff arise from it, and yet they have not tasted of slumber; nor must they slumber now till my task is ended. Sit down, then, Minna, and thou, silly trembler, sit down, while I trim my lamp — Don your clothes, for the tale is long, and ere 'tis done, ye will shiver with worse than cold.”

“For Heaven's sake, then, put it off till daylight, dear Norna!” said Brenda; “the dawn cannot be far distant; and if you are to tell us of any thing frightful, let it be by daylight, and not by the dim glimmer of that blue lamp!”

“Patience, fool!” said their uninvited guest. “Not by daylight should Norna tell a tale that might blot the sun out of heaven, and blight the hopes of the hundred boats that will leave this shore ere noon, to commence their deep-sea fishing — ay, and of the hundred families that will await their return. The demon, whom the sounds will not fail to awaken, must shake his dark wings over a shipless and a boatless sea, as he rushes from his mountain to drink the accents of horror he loves so well to listen to.”

“Have pity on Brenda's fears, good Norna,” said the elder sister, “and at least postpone this frightful communication to another place and hour.”

“Maiden, no!” replied Norna, sternly; “it must be told while that lamp yet burns. Mine is no daylight tale — by that lamp it must be told, which is framed out of the gibbet-irons of the cruel Lord of Wodensvoe, who murdered his brother; and has for its nourishment — but be that nameless — enough that its food never came either from the fish or from the fruit! — See, it waxes dim and dimmer, nor must my tale last longer than its flame endureth. Sit ye down there, while I sit here opposite to you, and place the lamp betwixt us; for within the sphere of its light the demon dares not venture.”

The sisters obeyed, Minna casting a slow awestruck, yet determined look all around, as if to see the Being, who, according to the doubtful words of Norna, hovered in their neighbourhood; while Brenda's fears were mingled with some share both of anger and of impatience. Norna paid no attention to either, but began her story in the following words:—

“Ye know, my daughters, that your blood is allied to mine, but in what degree ye know not; for there was early hostility betwixt your grandsire and him who had the misfortune to call me daughter. — Let me term him by his Christian name of Erland, for that which marks our relation I dare not bestow. Your grandsire Olave, was the brother of Erland. But when the wide Udal possessions of their father Rolfe Troil, the most rich and well estated of any who descended from the old Norse stock, were divided betwixt the brothers, the Fowd gave to Erland his father's lands in Orkney, and reserved for Olave those of Hialtland. Discord arose between the brethren; for Erland held that he was wronged; and when the Lawting,⁴⁷ with the Raddmen and Lawright-men, confirmed the division, he went in wrath to Orkney, cursing Hialtland and its inhabitants — cursing his brother and his blood.

“But the love of the rock and of the mountain still wrought on Erland's mind, and he fixed his dwelling not on the soft hills of Ophir, or the green plains of Gramesey, but in the wild and mountainous Isle of Hoy, whose summit rises to the sky like the cliffs of Foulah and of Feroe.⁴⁸ He knew — that unhappy Erland — whatever of legendary lore Scald and Bard had left behind them; and to teach me that knowledge, which was to cost us both so dear, was the chief occupation of his old age. I learned to visit each lonely barrow — each lofty cairn — to tell its appropriate tale, and to soothe with rhymes in his praise the spirit of the stern warrior who dwelt within. I knew where the sacrifices were made of yore to Thor and to Odin, on what stones the blood of the victims flowed — where stood the dark-browed priest — where the crested chiefs, who consulted the will of the idol — where the more distant crowd of inferior worshippers, who looked on in awe or in terror. The places most shunned by the timid peasants had no terrors for me; I dared walk in the fairy circle, and sleep by the magic spring.

“But, for my misfortune, I was chiefly fond to linger about the Dwarfie Stone, as it is called, a relic of antiquity, which strangers look on with curiosity, and the natives with awe. It is a huge fragment of rock, which lies in a broken and rude valley, full of stones and precipices, in the recesses of the Ward-hill of Hoy. The inside of the rock has two couches, hewn by no earthly hand, and having a small passage between them. The doorway is now open to the weather; but beside it lies a large stone, which, adapted to grooves still visible in the entrance, once had served to open and to close this extraordinary dwelling, which Trollid, a dwarf famous in the northern Sagas, is said to have framed for his own favourite residence. The lonely shepherd avoids the place; for at sunrise, high noon, or sunset, the misshapen form of the necromantic owner may sometimes still be seen sitting by the Dwarfie Stone.⁴⁹ I feared not the apparition, for, Minna, my heart was as bold, and my hand was as innocent, as yours. In my childish courage, I was even but too presumptuous, and the thirst after things unattainable led me, like our primitive mother, to desire increase of knowledge, even by prohibited means. I longed to possess the power of the Voluspæ and divining women of our ancient race; to wield, like them, command over the elements; and to summon the ghosts of deceased heroes from their caverns, that they might recite their daring deeds, and impart to me their hidden treasures. Often when watching by the Dwarfie Stone, with mine eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, which rises above that gloomy valley, I have distinguished, among the dark rocks, that wonderful carbuncle,⁵⁰(p) which gleams ruddy as a furnace to them who view it from beneath, but has ever become invisible to him whose daring foot has scaled the precipices from which it darts its splendour. My vain and youthful bosom burned to investigate these and

an hundred other mysteries, which the Sagas that I perused, or learned from Erland, rather indicated than explained; and in my daring mood, I called on the Lord of the Dwarfie Stone to aid me in attaining knowledge inaccessible to mere mortals.”

“And the evil spirit heard your summons?” said Minna, her blood curdling as she listened.

“Hush,” said Norna, lowering her voice, “vex him not with reproach — he is with us — he hears us even now.”

Brenda started from her seat. —“I will to Euphane Fea’s chamber,” she said, “and leave you, Minna and Norna, to finish your stories of hobgoblins and of dwarfs at your own leisure; I care not for them at any time, but I will not endure them at midnight, and by this pale lamplight.”

She was accordingly in the act of leaving the room, when her sister detained her.

“Is this the courage,” she said, “of her, that disbelieves whatever the history of our fathers tells us of supernatural prodigy? What Norna has to tell concerns the fate, perhaps, of our father and his house; — if I can listen to it, trusting that God and my innocence will protect me from all that is malignant, you, Brenda, who believe not in such influence, have surely no cause to tremble. Credit me, that for the guiltless there is no fear.”

“There may be no danger,” said Brenda, unable to suppress her natural turn for humour, “but, as the old jest book says, there is much fear. However, Minna, I will stay with you; — the rather,” she added, in a whisper, “that I am loath to leave you alone with this frightful woman, and that I have a dark staircase and long passage betwixt and Euphane Fea, else I would have her here ere I were five minutes older.”

“Call no one hither, maiden, upon peril of thy life,” said Norna, “and interrupt not my tale again; for it cannot and must not be told after that charmed light has ceased to burn.”

“And I thank heaven,” said Brenda to herself, “that the oil burns low in the cruize! I am sorely tempted to lend it a puff, but then Norna would be alone with us in the dark, and that would be worse.”

So saying, she submitted to her fate, and sat down, determined to listen with all the equanimity which she could command to the remaining part of Norna’s tale, which went on as follows:—

“It happened on a hot summer day, and just about the hour of noon,” continued Norna, “as I sat by the Dwarfie Stone, with my eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, whence the mysterious and ever-burning carbuncle shed its rays more brightly than usual, and repined in my heart at the restricted bounds of human knowledge, that at length I could not help exclaiming, in the words of an ancient Saga,

‘Dwellers of the mountain, rise,
Trolld the powerful, Haims the wise!
Ye who taught weak woman’s tongue
Words that sway the wise and strong —
Ye who taught weak woman’s hand
How to wield the magic wand,
And wake the gales on Foulah’s steep,
Or lull wild Sumburgh’s waves to sleep! —
Still are ye yet? — Not yours the power
Ye knew in Odin’s mightier hour.
What are ye now but empty names,
Powerful Trolld, sagacious Haims,
That, lightly spoken, lightly heard,
Float on the air like thistle’s beard?’

“I had scarce uttered these words,” proceeded Norna, “ere the sky, which had been till then unusually clear, grew so suddenly dark around me, that it seemed more like midnight than noon. A single flash of lightning showed me at once the desolate landscape of heath, morass, mountain, and precipice, which lay around; a single clap of thunder wakened all the echoes of the Ward-hill, which continued so long to repeat the sound, that it seemed some rock, rent by the thunderbolt from the summit, was rolling over cliff and precipice into the valley. Immediately after, fell a burst of rain so violent, that I was fain to shun its pelting, by creeping into the interior of the mysterious stone.

“I seated myself on the larger stone couch, which is cut at the farther end of the cavity, and, with my eyes fixed on the smaller bed, wearied myself with conjectures respecting the origin and purpose of my singular place of refuge. Had it been really the work of that powerful Trolld, to whom the poetry of the Scalds referred it? Or was it the tomb of some Scandinavian chief, interred with his arms and his wealth, perhaps also with his immolated wife, that what he loved best in life might not in death be divided from him? Or was it the abode of penance, chosen by some devoted anchorite of later days? Or the idle work of some wandering mechanic, whom chance, and whim, and leisure, had thrust upon such an undertaking? I tell you the thoughts that then floated through my brain, that ye may know that what ensued was not the vision of a prejudiced or prepossessed imagination, but an apparition, as certain as it was awful.

“Sleep had gradually crept on me, amidst my lucubrations, when I was startled from my slumbers by a second clap of thunder; and, when I awoke, I saw, through the dim light which the upper aperture admitted, the unshapely and indistinct form of Trolld the dwarf, seated opposite to me on the lesser couch, which his square and misshapen bulk seemed absolutely to fill up. I was startled, but not affrighted; for the blood of the ancient race of Lochlin was warm in my veins. He spoke; and his words were of Norse, so old, that few, save my father, or I myself, could have comprehended their import — such language as was spoken in these islands ere Olave planted the cross on the ruins of heathenism. His meaning was dark also and obscure, like that which the Pagan priests were wont to deliver, in the name of their idols, to the tribes that assembled at the *Helgafels*.⁵¹ This was the import —

‘A thousand winters dark have flown,
Since o’er the threshold of my Stone
A votaress pass’d, my power to own.

Visitor bold
Of the mansion of Trolld,
Maiden haughty of heart,
Who hast hither presumed —
Ungifted, undoom’d,
Thou shalt not depart;
The power thou dost covet
O’er tempest and wave,
Shall be thine, thou proud maiden,
By beach and by cave —
By stack⁵² and by skerry,⁵³ by noup⁵⁴ and by voe,⁵⁵
By air⁵⁶ and by wick,⁵⁷ and by helyer⁵⁸ and gio,⁵⁹
And by every wild shore which the northern winds know,
And the northern tides lave.
But though this shall be given thee, thou desperately brave,
I doom thee that never the gift thou shalt have,

Till thou reave thy life's giver
Of the gift which he gave.'

"I answered him in nearly the same strain; for the spirit of the ancient Scalds of our race was upon me, and, far from fearing the phantom, with whom I sat cooped within so narrow a space, I felt the impulse of that high courage which thrust the ancient Champions and Druidesses upon contests with the invisible world, when they thought that the earth no longer contained enemies worthy to be subdued by them. Therefore did I answer him thus:—

'Dark are thy words, and severe,
Thou dweller in the stone;
But trembling and fear
To her are unknown,
Who hath sought thee here,
In thy dwelling lone.
Come what comes soever,
The worst I can endure;
Life is but a short fever,
And Death is the cure.'

"The Demon scowled at me, as if at once incensed and overawed; and then coiling himself up in a thick and sulphureous vapour, he disappeared from his place. I did not, till that moment, feel the influence of fright, but then it seized me. I rushed into the open air, where the tempest had passed away, and all was pure and serene. After a moment's breathless pause, I hasted home, musing by the way on the words of the phantom, which I could not, as often happens, recall so distinctly to memory at the time, as I have been able to do since.

"It may seem strange that such an apparition should, in time, have glided from my mind, like a vision of the night — but so it was. I brought myself to believe it the work of fancy — I thought I had lived too much in solitude, and had given way too much to the feelings inspired by my favourite studies. I abandoned them for a time, and I mixed with the youth of my age. I was upon a visit at Kirkwall when I learned to know your father, whom business had brought thither. He easily found access to the relation with whom I lived, who was anxious to compose, if possible, the feud which divided our families. Your father, maidens, has been rather hardened than changed by years — he had the same manly form, the same old Norse frankness of manner and of heart, the same upright courage and honesty of disposition, with more of the gentle ingenuousness of youth, an eager desire to please, a willingness to be pleased, and a vivacity of spirits which survives not our early years. But though he was thus worthy of love, and though Erland wrote to me, authorizing his attachment, there was another — a stranger, Minna, a fatal stranger — full of arts unknown to us, and graces which to the plain manners of your father were unknown. Yes, he walked, indeed, among us like a being of another and of a superior race. — Ye look on me as if it were strange that I should have had attractions for such a lover; but I present nothing that can remind you that Norna of the Fitful-head was once admired and loved as Ulla Troil — the change betwixt the animated body and the corpse after disease, is scarce more awful and absolute than I have sustained, while I yet linger on earth. Look on me, maidens — look on me by this glimmering light — Can ye believe that these haggard and weather-wasted features — these eyes, which have been almost converted to stone, by looking upon sights of terror — these locks, that, mingled with grey, now stream out, the shattered pennons of a sinking vessel — that these, and she to whom they belong, could once be the objects of fond affection? — But the waning lamp sinks fast, and let it sink while I tell my infamy. — We loved in secret, we met in secret, till I gave the last proof of fatal and of guilty passion! — And now beam out, thou magic glimmer — shine out a little space, thou flame so powerful even in thy feebleness — bid him who hovers near us, keep his dark pinions aloof from the circle thou dost illuminate — live but a little till the worst be told, and then sink when thou wilt into darkness, as black as my guilt and sorrow!"

While she spoke thus, she drew together the remaining nutriment of the lamp, and trimmed its decaying flame; then again, with a hollow voice, and in broken sentences, pursued her narrative.

"I must waste little time in words. My love was discovered, but not my guilt. Erland came to Pomona in anger, and transported me to our solitary dwelling in Hoy. He commanded me to see my lover no more, and to receive Magnus, in whom he was willing to forgive the offences of his father, as my future husband. Alas, I no longer deserved his attachment — my only wish was to escape from my father's dwelling, to conceal my shame in my lover's arms. Let me do him justice — he was faithful — too, too faithful — his perfidy would have bereft me of my senses; but the fatal consequences of his fidelity have done me a tenfold injury."

She paused, and then resumed, with the wild tone of insanity, "It has made me the powerful and the despairing Sovereign of the Seas and Winds!"

She paused a second time after this wild exclamation, and resumed her narrative in a more composed manner.

"My lover came in secret to Hoy, to concert measures for my flight, and I agreed to meet him, that we might fix the time when his vessel should come into the Sound. I left the house at midnight."

Here she appeared to gasp with agony, and went on with her tale by broken and interrupted sentences. "I left the house at midnight — I had to pass my father's door, and I perceived it was open — I thought he watched us; and, that the sound of my steps might not break his slumbers, I closed the fatal door — a light and trivial action — but, God in Heaven! what were the consequences! — At morn, the room was full of suffocating vapour — my father was dead — dead through my act — dead through my disobedience — dead through my infamy! All that follows is mist and darkness — a choking, suffocating, stifling mist envelopes all that I said and did, all that was said and done, until I became assured that my doom was accomplished, and walked forth the calm and terrible being you now behold me — the Queen of the Elements — the sharer in the power of those beings to whom man and his passions give such sport as the tortures of the dog-fish afford the fisherman, when he pierces his eyes with thorns, and turns him once more into his native element, to traverse the waves in blindness and agony.⁶⁰ No, maidens, she whom you see before you is impassive to the follies of which your minds are the sport. I am she that have made the offering — I am she that bereaved the giver of the gift of life which he gave me — the dark saying has been interpreted by my deed, and I am taken from humanity, to be something pre-eminently powerful, pre-eminently wretched!"

As she spoke thus, the light, which had been long quivering, leaped high for an instant, and seemed about to expire, when Norna, interrupting herself, said hastily, "No more now — he comes — he comes — Enough that ye know me, and the right I have to advise and command you. — Approach now, proud Spirit! if thou wilt."

So saying, she extinguished the lamp, and passed out of the apartment with her usual loftiness of step, as Minna could observe from its measured cadence.

Chapter 20.

*Is all the counsel that we two have shared —
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us — O, and is all forgot?*

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

The attention of Minna was powerfully arrested by this tale of terror, which accorded with and explained many broken hints respecting Norna, which she had heard from her father and other near relations, and she was for a time so lost in surprise, not unmingled with horror, that she did not even attempt to speak to her sister Brenda. When, at length, she called her by her name, she received no answer, and, on touching her hand, she found it cold as ice. Alarmed to the uttermost, she threw open the lattice and the window-shutters, and admitted at once the free air and the pale glimmer of the hyperborean summer night. She then became sensible that her sister was in a swoon. All thoughts concerning Norna, her frightful tale, and her mysterious connexion with the invisible world, at once vanished

from Minna's thoughts, and she hastily ran to the apartment of the old housekeeper, to summon her aid, without reflecting for a moment what sights she might encounter in the long dark passages which she had to traverse.

The old woman hastened to Brenda's assistance, and instantly applied such remedies as her experience suggested; but the poor girl's nervous system had been so much agitated by the horrible tale she had just heard, that, when recovered from her swoon, her utmost endeavours to compose her mind could not prevent her falling into a hysterical fit of some duration. This also was subdued by the experience of old Euphane Fea, who was well versed in all the simple pharmacy used by the natives of Zetland, and who, after administering a composing draught, distilled from simples and wild flowers, at length saw her patient resigned to sleep. Minna stretched herself beside her sister, kissed her cheek, and courted slumber in her turn; but the more she invoked it, the farther it seemed to fly from her eyelids; and if at times she was disposed to sink into repose, the voice of the involuntary parricide seemed again to sound in her ears, and startled her into consciousness.

The early morning hour at which they were accustomed to rise, found the state of the sisters different from what might have been expected. A sound sleep had restored the spirit of Brenda's lightsome eye, and the rose on her laughing cheek; the transient indisposition of the preceding night having left as little trouble on her look, as the fantastic terrors of Norna's tale had been able to impress on her imagination. The looks of Minna, on the contrary, were melancholy, downcast, and apparently exhausted by watching and anxiety. They said at first little to each other, as if afraid of touching a subject so fraught with emotion as the scene of the preceding night. It was not until they had performed together their devotions, as usual, that Brenda, while lacing Minna's bodice, (for they rendered the services of the toilet to each other reciprocally,) became aware of the paleness of her sister's looks; and having ascertained, by a glance at the mirror, that her own did not wear the same dejection, she kissed Minna's cheek, and said affectionately, "Claud Halcro was right, my dearest sister, when his poetical folly gave us these names of Night and Day."

"And wherefore should you say so now?" said Minna.

"Because we each are bravest in the season that we take our name from: I was frightened wellnigh to death, by hearing those things last night, which you endured with courageous firmness; and now, when it is broad light, I can think of them with composure, while you look as pale as a spirit who is surprised by sunrise."

"You are lucky, Brenda," said her sister, gravely, "who can so soon forget such a tale of wonder and horror."

"The horror," said Brenda, "is never to be forgotten, unless one could hope that the unfortunate woman's excited imagination, which shows itself so active in conjuring up apparitions, may have fixed on her an imaginary crime."

"You believe nothing, then," said Minna, "of her interview at the Dwarfie Stone, that wondrous place, of which so many tales are told, and which, for so many centuries, has been revered as the work of a demon, and as his abode?"

"I believe," said Brenda, "that our unhappy relative is no impostor — and therefore I believe that she was at the Dwarfie Stone during a thunderstorm, that she sought shelter in it, and that, during a swoon, or during sleep perhaps, some dream visited her, concerned with the popular traditions with which she was so conversant; but I cannot easily believe more."

"And yet the event," said Minna, "corresponded to the dark intimations of the vision."

"Pardon me," said Brenda, "I rather think the dream would never have been put into shape, or perhaps remembered at all, but for the event. She told us herself she had nearly forgot the vision, till after her father's dreadful death — and who shall warrant how much of what she then supposed herself to remember was not the creation of her own fancy, disordered as it naturally was by the horrid accident? Had she really seen and conversed with a necromantic dwarf, she was likely to remember the conversation long enough — at least I am sure I should."

"Brenda," replied Minna, "you have heard the good minister of the Cross-Kirk say, that human wisdom was worse than folly, when it was applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension; and that, if we believed no more than we could understand, we should resist the evidence of our senses, which presented us, at every turn, circumstances as certain as they were unintelligible."

"You are too learned yourself, sister," answered Brenda, "to need the assistance of the good minister of Cross-Kirk; but I think his doctrine only related to the mysteries of our religion, which it is our duty to receive without investigation or doubt — but in things occurring in common life, as God has bestowed reason upon us, we cannot act wrong in employing it. But you, my dear Minna, have a warmer fancy than mine, and are willing to receive all those wonderful stories for truth, because you love to think of sorcerers, and dwarfs, and water-spirits, and would like much to have a little trow, or fairy, as the Scotch call them, with a green coat, and a pair of wings as brilliant as the hues of the starling's neck, specially to attend on you."

"It would spare you at least the trouble of lacing my bodice," said Minna, "and of lacing it wrong, too; for in the heat of your argument you have missed two eyelet-holes."

"That error shall be presently mended," said Brenda; "and then, as one of our friends might say, I will haul tight and belay — but you draw your breath so deeply, that it will be a difficult matter."

"I only sighed," said Minna, in some confusion, "to think how soon you can trifle with and ridicule the misfortunes of this extraordinary woman."

"I do not ridicule them, God knows!" replied Brenda, somewhat angrily; "it is you, Minna, who turn all I say in truth and kindness, to something harsh or wicked. I look on Norna as a woman of very extraordinary abilities, which are very often united with a strong cast of insanity; and I consider her as better skilled in the signs of the weather than any woman in Zetland. But that she has any power over the elements, I no more believe, than I do in the nursery stories of King Erick, who could make the wind blow from the point he set his cap to."

Minna, somewhat nettled with the obstinate incredulity of her sister, replied sharply, "And yet, Brenda, this woman — half-mad woman, and the veriest impostor — is the person by whom you choose to be advised in the matter next your own heart at this moment!"

"I do not know what you mean," said Brenda, colouring deeply, and shifting to get away from her sister. But as she was now undergoing the ceremony of being laced in her turn, her sister had the means of holding her fast by the silken string with which she was fastening the bodice, and, tapping her on the neck, which expressed, by its sudden writhe, and sudden change to a scarlet hue, as much pettish confusion as she had desired to provoke, she added, more mildly, "Is it not strange, Brenda, that, used as we have been by the stranger Mordaunt Mertoun, whose assurance has brought him uninvited to a house where his presence is so unacceptable, you should still look or think of him with favour? Surely, that you do so should be a proof to you, that there are such things as spells in the country, and that you yourself labour under them. It is not for nought that Mordaunt wears a chain of elfin gold — look to it, Brenda, and be wise in time."

"I have nothing to do with Mordaunt Mertoun," answered Brenda, hastily, "nor do I know or care what he or any other young man wears about his neck. I could see all the gold chains of all the bailies of Edinburgh, that Lady Glowrowrum speaks so much of, without falling in fancy with one of the wearers." And, having thus complied with the female rule of pleading not guilty in general to such an indictment, she immediately resumed, in a different tone, "But, to say the truth, Minna, I think you, and all of you, have judged far too hastily about this young friend of ours, who has been so long our most intimate companion. Mind, Mordaunt Mertoun is no more to me than he is to you — who best know how little difference he made betwixt us; and that, chain or no chain, he lived with us like a brother with two sisters; and yet you can turn him off at once, because a wandering seaman, of whom we know nothing, and a peddling jagger, whom we do know to be a thief, a cheat, and a liar, speak words and carry tales in his disfavour! I do not believe he ever said he could have his choice of either of us, and only waited to see which was to have Burgh-Westra and Bredness Voe — I do not believe he ever spoke such a word, or harboured such a thought, as that of making a choice between us."

"Perhaps," said Minna, coldly, "you may have had reason to know that his choice was already determined."

"I will not endure this!" said Brenda, giving way to her natural vivacity, and springing from between her sister's hands; then turning round and facing her, while her glowing cheek was rivalled in the deepness of its crimson, by as much of her neck and bosom as the upper part of the half-laced bodice permitted to be visible — "Even from you, Minna," she said, "I will not endure this! You know that all my life I have spoken the truth, and that I love the truth; and I tell you, that Mordaunt Mertoun never in his life made distinction betwixt you and me, until" —

Here some feeling of consciousness stopped her short, and her sister replied, with a smile, "Until *when*, Brenda? Methinks, your love of truth seems choked with the sentence you were bringing out."

"Until you ceased to do him the justice he deserves," said Brenda, firmly, "since I must speak out. I have little doubt that he will not long throw away his friendship on you, who hold it so lightly."

"Be it so," said Minna; "you are secure from my rivalry, either in his friendship or love. But bethink you better, Brenda — this is no scandal of Cleveland's — Cleveland is incapable of slander — no falsehood of Bryce Snailsfoot — not one of our friends or acquaintance but says it has been the common talk of the island, that the daughters of Magnus Troil were patiently awaiting the choice of the nameless and birthless stranger, Mordaunt Mertoun. Is it fitting that this should be said of us, the descendants of a Norwegian Jarl, and the daughters of the first Udaller in Zetland? or, would it be modest or maidenly to submit to it unresented, were we the meanest lasses that ever lifted a milk-pail?"

"The tongues of fools are no reproach," replied Brenda, warmly; "I will never quit my own thoughts of an innocent friend for the gossip of the island, which can put the worst meaning on the most innocent actions."

"Hear but what our friends say," repeated Minna; "hear but the Lady Glowrowrum; hear but Maddie and Clara Groatsetter."

"If I were to hear Lady Glowrowrum," said Brenda, steadily, "I should listen to the worst tongue in Zetland; and as for Maddie and Clara Groatsetter, they were both blithe enough to get Mordaunt to sit betwixt them at dinner the day before yesterday, as you might have observed yourself, but that your ear was better engaged."

"Your eyes, at least, have been but indifferently engaged, Brenda," retorted the elder sister, "since they were fixed on a young man, whom all the world but yourself believes to have talked of us with the most insolent presumption; and even if he be innocently charged, Lady Glowrowrum says it is unmaidenly and bold of you even to look in the direction where he sits, knowing it must confirm such reports."

"I will look which way I please," said Brenda, growing still warmer; "Lady Glowrowrum shall neither rule my thoughts, nor my words, nor my eyes. I hold Mordaunt Mertoun to be innocent — I will look at him as such — I will speak of him as such; and if I did not speak to him also, and behave to him as usual, it is in obedience to my father, and not for what Lady Glowrowrum, and all her nieces, had she twenty instead of two, could think, wink, nod, or tattle, about the matter that concerns them not."

"Alas! Brenda," answered Minna, with calmness, "this vivacity is more than is required for the defence of the character of a mere friend! — Beware — He who ruined Norna's peace for ever, was a stranger, admitted to her affections against the will of her family."

"He was a stranger," replied Brenda, with emphasis, "not only in birth, but in manners. She had not been bred up with him from her youth — she had not known the gentleness, the frankness, of his disposition, by an intimacy of many years. He was indeed a stranger, in character, temper, birth, manners, and morals — some wandering adventurer, perhaps, whom chance or tempest had thrown upon the islands, and who knew how to mask a false heart with a frank brow. My good sister, take home your own warning. There are other strangers at Burgh-Westra besides this poor Mordaunt Mertoun."

Minna seemed for a moment overwhelmed with the rapidity with which her sister retorted her suspicion and her caution. But her natural loftiness of disposition enabled her to reply with assumed composure.

"Were I to treat you, Brenda, with the want of confidence you show towards me, I might reply that Cleveland is no more to me than Mordaunt was; or than young Swartaster, or Lawrence Ericson, or any other favourite guest of my father's, now is. But I scorn to deceive you, or to disguise my thoughts. — I love Clement Cleveland."

"Do not say so, my dearest sister," said Brenda, abandoning at once the air of acrimony with which the conversation had been latterly conducted, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck, with looks, and with a tone, of the most earnest affection — "do not say so, I implore you! I will renounce Mordaunt Mertoun — I will swear never to speak to him again; but do not repeat that you love this Cleveland!"

"And why should I not repeat," said Minna, disengaging herself gently from her sister's grasp, "a sentiment in which I glory? The boldness, the strength and energy, of his character, to which command is natural, and fear unknown — these very properties, which alarm you for my happiness, are the qualities which ensure it. Remember, Brenda, that when your foot loved the calm smooth sea-beach of the summer sea, mine ever delighted in the summit of the precipice, when the waves are in fury."

"And it is even that which I dread," said Brenda; "it is even that adventurous disposition which now is urging you to the brink of a precipice more dangerous than ever was washed by a spring-tide. This man — do not frown, I will say no slander of him — but is he not, even in your own partial judgment, stern and overbearing? accustomed, as you say, to command; but, for that very reason, commanding where he has no right to do so, and leading whom it would most become him to follow? rushing on danger, rather for its own sake, than for any other object? And can you think of being yoked with a spirit so unsettled and stormy, whose life has hitherto been led in scenes of death and peril, and who, even while sitting by your side, cannot disguise his impatience again to engage in them? A lover, methinks, should love his mistress better than his own life; but yours, my dear Minna, loves her less than the pleasure of inflicting death on others."

"And it is even for that I love him," said Minna. "I am a daughter of the old dames of Norway, who could send their lovers to battle with a smile, and slay them, with their own hands, if they returned with dishonour. My lover must scorn the mockeries by which our degraded race strive for distinction, or must practise them only in sport, and in earnest of nobler dangers. No whale-striking, bird-nesting favourite for me; my lover must be a Sea-king, or what else modern times may give that draws near to that lofty character."

"Alas, my sister!" said Brenda, "it is now that I must in earnest begin to believe the force of spells and of charms. You remember the Spanish story which you took from me long since, because I said, in your admiration of the chivalry of the olden times of Scandinavia, you rivalled the extravagance of the hero. — Ah, Minna, your colour shows that your conscience checks you, and reminds you of the book I mean; — is it more wise, think you, to mistake a windmill for a giant, or the commander of a paltry corsair for a Kiempe, or a Vi-king?"

Minna did indeed colour with anger at this insinuation, of which, perhaps, she felt in some degree the truth.

"You have a right," she said, "to insult me, because you are possessed of my secret."

Brenda's soft heart could not resist this charge of unkindness; she adjured her sister to pardon her, and the natural gentleness of Minna's feelings could not resist her entreaties.

"We are unhappy," she said, as she dried her sister's tears, "that we cannot see with the same eyes — let us not make each other more so by mutual insult and unkindness. You have my secret — it will not, perhaps, long be one, for my father shall have the confidence to which he is entitled, so soon as certain circumstances will permit me to offer it. Meantime, I repeat, you have my secret, and I more than suspect that I have yours in exchange, though you refuse to own it."

"How, Minna!" said Brenda; "would you have me acknowledge for any one such feelings as you allude to, ere he has said the least word that could justify such a confession?"

"Surely not; but a hidden fire may be distinguished by heat as well as flame."

"You understand these signs, Minna," said Brenda, hanging down her head, and in vain endeavouring to suppress the temptation to repartee which her sister's remark offered; "but I can only say, that, if ever I love at all, it shall not be until I have been asked to do so once or twice at least, which has not yet chanced to me. But do not let us renew our quarrel, and rather let us think why Norna should have told us that horrible tale, and to what she expects it should lead."

"It must have been as a caution," replied Minna — "a caution which our situation, and, I will not deny it, which mine in particular, might seem to her to call for; — but I am alike strong in my own innocence, and in the honour of Cleveland."

Brenda would fain have replied, that she did not confide so absolutely in the latter security as in the first; but she was prudent, and, forbearing to awaken the former painful discussion, only replied, "It is strange that Norna should have said nothing more of her lover. Surely he could not desert her in the extremity of misery to which he had reduced her?"

"There may be agonies of distress," said Minna, after a pause, "in which the mind is so much jarred, that it ceases to be responsive even to the feelings which have most engrossed it; — her sorrow for her lover may have been swallowed up in horror and despair."

"Or he might have fled from the islands, in fear of our father's vengeance," replied Brenda.

"If for fear, or faintness of heart," said Minna, looking upwards, "he's capable of flying from the ruin that he'd occasioned, I trust he's long ere this sustained the punishment that Heaven reserves for the most base, dastardly of traitors, and cowards. — Come, sister, we're ere this expected at the breakfast board." They went thither, arm in arm, with much more of confidence than had lately subsisted between them; the little quarrel which had taken place having served the purpose of a *bourasque*, or sudden squall, which dispels mists and vapours, and leaves fair weather behind it. On their way to the breakfast apartment, they agreed that it was unnecessary, and might be imprudent, to communicate to their father the circumstance of the nocturnal visit, or to let him observe that they now knew more than formerly of the melancholy history of Norna.

PART II

Chapter 21

*But lost to me, for ever lost those joys,
Which reason scatters, and which time destroys.
No more the midnight fairy-train I view,
All in the merry moonlight tipping dew.
Even the last lingering fiction of the brain,
The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again.*

THE LIBRARY.

The moral bard, from whom we borrow the motto of this chapter, has touched a theme with which most readers have some feelings that vibrate unconsciously. Superstition, when not arrayed in her full horrors, but laying a gentle hand only on her suppliant's head, had charms which we fail not to regret, even in those stages of society from which her influence is wellnigh banished by the light of reason and general education. At least, in more ignorant periods, her system of ideal terrors had something in them interesting to minds which had few means of excitement. This is more especially true of those lighter modifications of superstitious feelings and practices which mingle in the amusements of the ruder ages, and are, like the auguries of Hallow-e'en in Scotland, considered partly as matter of merriment, partly as sad and prophetic earnest. And, with similar feelings, people even of tolerable education have, in our times, sought the cell of a fortune-teller, upon a frolic, as it is termed, and yet not always in a disposition absolutely sceptical towards the responses they receive.

When the sisters of Burgh-Westra arrived in the apartment destined for a breakfast, as ample as that which we have described on the preceding morning, and had undergone a jocular rebuke from the Udaller for their late attendance, they found the company, most of whom had already breakfasted, engaged in an ancient Norwegian custom, of the character which we have just described.

It seems to have been borrowed from those poems of the Scalds, in which champions and heroines are so often represented as seeking to know their destiny from some sorceress or prophetess, who, as in the legend called by Gray the Descent of Odin, awakens by the force of Runic rhyme the unwilling revealer of the doom of fate, and compels from her answers, often of dubious import, but which were then believed to express some shadow of the events of futurity.

An old sibyl, Euphane Fea, the housekeeper we have already mentioned, was installed in the recess of a large window, studiously darkened by bear-skins and other miscellaneous drapery, so as to give it something the appearance of a Laplander's hut, and accommodated, like a confessional chair, with an aperture, which permitted the person within to hear with ease whatever questions should be put, though not to see the querist. Here seated, the voluspa, or sibyl, was to listen to the rhythmical enquiries which should be made to her, and return an extemporaneous answer. The drapery was supposed to prevent her from seeing by what individuals she was consulted, and the intended or accidental reference which the answer given under such circumstances bore to the situation of the person by whom the question was asked, often furnished food for laughter, and sometimes, as it happened, for more serious reflection. The sibyl was usually chosen from her possessing the talent of improvisation in the Norse poetry; no unusual accomplishment, where the minds of many were stored with old verses, and where the rules of metrical composition are uncommonly simple. The questions were also put in verse; but as this power of extemporaneous composition, though common, could not be supposed universal, the medium of an interpreter might be used by any querist, which interpreter, holding the consulter of the oracle by the hand, and standing by the place from which the oracles were issued, had the task of rendering into verse the subject of enquiry.

On the present occasion, Claud Halcro was summoned, by the universal voice, to perform the part of interpreter; and, after shaking his head, and muttering some apology for decay of memory and poetical powers, contradicted at once by his own conscious smile of confidence and by the general shout of the company, the lighthearted old man came forward to play his part in the proposed entertainment.

But just as it was about to commence, the arrangement of parts was singularly altered. Norna of the Fitful-head, whom every one excepting the two sisters believed to be at the distance of many miles, suddenly, and without greeting, entered the apartment, walked majestically up to the bearskin tabernacle, and signed to the female who was there seated to abdicate her sanctuary. The old woman came forth, shaking her head, and looking like one overwhelmed with fear; nor, indeed, were there many in the company who saw with absolute composure the sudden appearance of a person, so well known and so generally dreaded as Norna.

She paused a moment at the entrance of the tent; and, as she raised the skin which formed the entrance, she looked up to the north, as if imploring from that quarter a strain of inspiration; then signing to the surprised guests that they might approach in succession the shrine in which she was about to install herself, she entered the tent, and was shrouded from their sight.

But this was a different sport from what the company had meditated, and to most of them seemed to present so much more of earnest than of game, that there was no alacrity shown to consult the oracle. The character and pretensions of Norna seemed, to almost all present, too serious for the part which she had assumed; the men whispered to each other, and the women, according to Claud Halcro, realized the description of glorious John Dryden —

"With horror shuddering, in a heap they ran."

The pause was interrupted by the loud manly voice of the Udaller. "Why does the game stand still, my masters? Are you afraid because my kinswoman is to play our voluspa? It is kindly done in her, to do for us what none in the isles can do so well; and we will not baulk our sport for it, but rather go on the merrier."

There was still a pause in the company, and Magnus Troil added, "It shall never be said that my kinswoman sat in her bower unhalsed, as if she were some of the old mountain-giantesses, and all from faint heart. I will speak first myself; but the rhyme comes worse from my tongue than when I was a score of years younger.

— Claud Halcro, you must stand by me."

Hand in hand they approached the shrine of the supposed sibyl, and after a moment's consultation together, Halcro thus expressed the query of his friend and patron. Now, the Udaller, like many persons of consequence in Zetland, who, as Sir Robert Sibbald has testified for them, had begun thus early to apply both to commerce and navigation, was concerned to some extent in the whale-fishery of the season, and the bard had been directed to put into his halting verse an enquiry concerning its success.

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother darksome, Mother dread —
Dweller on the Fitful-head,

Thou canst see what deeds are done
Under the never-setting sun.
Look through sleet, and look through frost,
Look to Greenland's caves and coast —
By the iceberg is a sail
Chasing of the swarthy whale;
Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Tell us, has the good ship sped?"

The jest seemed to turn to earnest, as all, bending their heads around, listened to the voice of Norna, who, without a moment's hesitation, answered from the recesses of the tent in which she was enclosed:—

NORNA.

"The thought of the aged is ever on gear —
On his fishing, his furrow, his flock, and his steer;
But thrive may his fishing, flock, furrow, and herd,
While the aged for anguish shall tear his grey beard."

There was a momentary pause, during which Triptolemus had time to whisper, "If ten witches and as many warlocks were to swear it, I will never believe that a decent man will either fash his beard or himself about any thing, so long as stock and crop goes as it should do."

But the voice from within the tent resumed its low monotonous tone of recitation, and, interrupting farther commentary, proceeded as follows:—

NORNA.

"The ship, well-laden as bark need be,
Lies deep in the furrow of the Iceland sea; —
The breeze for Zetland blows fair and soft,
And gaily the garland¹ is fluttering aloft:
Seven good fishes have spouted their last,
And their jaw-bones are hanging to yard and mast;²
Two are for Lerwick, and two for Kirkwall —
And three for Burgh-Westra, the choicest of all."

"Now the powers above look down and protect us!" said Bryce Snailsfoot; "for it is mair than woman's wit that has spaed out that ferly. I saw them at North Ronaldshaw, that had seen the good bark, the Olave of Lerwick, that our worthy patron has such a great share in that she may be called his own in a manner, and they had broomed³ the ship, and, as sure as there are stars in heaven, she answered them for seven fish, exact as Norna has telled us in her rhyme!"

"Umph — seven fish exactly? and you heard it at North Ronaldshaw?" said Captain Cleveland, "and I suppose told it as a good piece of news when you came hither?"

"It never crossed my tongue, Captain," answered the pedlar; "I have kend mony chapmen, travelling merchants, and such like, neglect their goods to carry clashes and clavers up and down, from one countryside to another; but that is no traffic of mine. I dinna believe I have mentioned the Olave's having made up her cargo to three folks since I crossed to Dunrossness."

"But if one of those three had spoken the news over again, and it is two to one that such a thing happened, the old lady prophesies upon velvet."

Such was the speech of Cleveland, addressed to Magnus Troil, and heard without any applause. The Udaller's respect for his country extended to its superstitions, and so did the interest which he took in his unfortunate kinswoman. If he never rendered a precise assent to her high supernatural pretensions, he was not at least desirous of hearing them disputed by others.

"Norna," he said, "his cousin," (an emphasis on the word,) "held no communication with Bryce Snailsfoot, or his acquaintances. He did not pretend to explain how she came by her information; but he had always remarked that Scotsmen, and indeed strangers in general, when they came to Zetland, were ready to find reasons for things which remained sufficiently obscure to those whose ancestors had dwelt there for ages."

Captain Cleveland took the hint, and bowed, without attempting to defend his own scepticism.

"And now forward, my brave hearts," said the Udaller; "and may all have as good tidings as I have! Three whales cannot but yield — let me think how many hogsheads"——

There was an obvious reluctance on the part of the guests to be the next in consulting the oracle of the tent.

"Gude news are welcome to some folks, if they came frae the deil himsell," said Mistress Baby Yellowley, addressing the Lady Glowrowrum — for a similarity of disposition in some respects had made a sort of intimacy betwixt them — "but I think, my leddy, that this has ower mickle of rank witchcraft in it to have the countenance of douce Christian folks like you and me, my leddy."

"There may be something in what you say, my dame," replied the good Lady Glowrowrum; "but we Hialtlanders are no just like other folks; and this woman, if she be a witch, being the Fowd's friend and near kinswoman, it will be ill taen if we haena our fortunes spaed like a' the rest of them; and sae my nieces may e'en step forward in their turn, and nae harm dune. They will hae time to repent, ye ken, in the course of nature, if there be ony thing wrang in it, Mistress Yellowley."

While others remained under similar uncertainty and apprehension, Halcro, who saw by the knitting of the old Udaller's brows, and by a certain impatient shuffle of his right foot, like the motion of a man who with difficulty refrains from stamping, that his patience began to wax rather thin, gallantly declared, that he himself would, in his own person, and not as a procurator for others, put the next query to the Pythoness. He paused a minute — collected his rhymes, and thus addressed her:

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
Thou hast conn'd full many a rhyme,
That lives upon the surge of time:
Tell me, shall my lays be sung,
Like Hacon's of the golden tongue,
Long after Halcro's dead and gone?
Or, shall Hialtland's minstrel own
One note to rival glorious John?"
The voice of the sibyl immediately replied, from her sanctuary,

NORNA.

"The infant loves the rattle's noise;
Age, double childhood, hath its toys;
But different far the descant rings,
As strikes a different hand the strings.

The Eagle mounts the polar sky —
The Imber-geese, unskill'd to fly,
Must be content to glide along,
Where seal and sea-dog list his song."

Halcro bit his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and then, instantly recovering his good-humour, and the ready, though slovenly power of extemporaneous composition, with which long habit had invested him, he gallantly rejoined,

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Be mine the Imber-geese to play,
And haunt lone cave and silent bay:—
The archer's aim so shall I shun —
So shall I 'scape the levell'd gun —
Content my verse's tuneless jingle,
With Thule's sounding tides to mingle,
While, to the ear of wandering wight,
Upon the distant headland's height,
Soften'd by murmur of the sea,
The rude sounds seem like harmony!"

As the little bard stepped back, with an alert gait, and satisfied air, general applause followed the spirited manner in which he had acquiesced in the doom which levelled him with an Imber-geese. But his resigned and courageous submission did not even yet encourage any other person to consult the redoubted Norna.

"The coward fools!" said the Udaller. "Are you too afraid, Captain Cleveland, to speak to an old woman? — Ask her any thing — ask her whether the twelve-gun sloop at Kirkwall be your consort or no."

Cleveland looked at Minna, and probably conceiving that she watched with anxiety his answer to her father's question, he collected himself, after a moment's hesitation.

"I never was afraid of man or woman. — Master Halcro, you have heard the question which our host desires me to ask — put it in my name, and in your own way — I pretend to as little skill in poetry as I do in witchcraft."

Halcro did not wait to be invited twice, but, grasping Captain Cleveland's hand in his, according to the form which the game prescribed, he put the query which the Udaller had dictated to the stranger, in the following words:—

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
A gallant bark from far abroad,
Saint Magnus hath her in his road,
With guns and firelocks not a few —
A silken and a scarlet crew,
Deep stored with precious merchandise,
Of gold, and goods of rare device —
What interest hath our comrade bold
In bark and crew, in goods and gold?"

There was a pause of unusual duration ere the oracle would return any answer; and when she replied, it was in a lower, though an equally decided tone, with that which she had hitherto employed:—

NORNA.

"Gold is ruddy, fair, and free,
Blood is crimson, and dark to see; —
I look'd out on Saint Magnus Bay,
And I saw a falcon that struck her prey —
A gobbet of flesh in her beak she bore,
And talons and singles are dripping with gore;
Let him that asks after them look on his hand,
And if there is blood on't, he's one of their band."

Cleveland smiled scornfully, and held out his hand — "Few men have been on the Spanish main as often as I have, without having had to do with the *Guarda Costas* once and again; but there never was aught like a stain on my hand that a wet towel would not wipe away."

The Udaller added his voice potential — "There is never peace with Spaniards beyond the Line — I have heard Captain Tragendeck and honest old Commodore Rummelaer say so an hundred times, and they have both been down in the Bay of Honduras, and all thereabouts. — I hate all Spaniards, since they came here and reft the Fair Isle men of their vivers in 1558.⁴ I have heard my grandfather speak of it; and there is an old Dutch history somewhere about the house, that shows what work they made in the Low Countries long since. There is neither mercy nor faith in them."

"True — true, my old friend," said Cleveland; "they are as jealous of their Indian possessions as an old man of his young bride; and if they can catch you at disadvantage, the mines for your life is the word — and so we fight them with our colours nailed to the mast."

"That is the way," shouted the Udaller; "the old British jack should never down! When I think of the wooden walls, I almost think myself an Englishman, only it would be becoming too like my Scottish neighbours; — but come, no offence to any here, gentlemen — all are friends, and all are welcome. — Come, Brenda, go on with the play — do you speak next, you have Norse rhymes enough, we all know."

"But none that suit the game we play at, father," said Brenda, drawing back.

"Nonsense!" said her father, pushing her onward, while Halcro seized on her reluctant hand; "never let mistimed modesty mar honest mirth — Speak for Brenda, Halcro — it is your trade to interpret maidens' thoughts."

The poet bowed to the beautiful young woman, with the devotion of a poet and the gallantry of a traveller, and having, in a whisper, reminded her that she was in no way responsible for the nonsense he was about to speak, he paused, looked upward, simpered as if he had caught a sudden idea, and at length set off in the following verses:

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread —
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
Well thou know'st it is thy task
To tell what beauty will not ask; —
Then steep thy words in wine and milk,

And weave a doom of gold and silk —
For we would know, shall Brenda prove
In love, and happy in her love?"
The prophetess replied almost immediately from behind her curtain:—

NORNA.

"Untouched by love, the maiden's breast
Is like the snow on Rona's crest,
High seated in the middle sky,
In bright and barren purity;
But by the sunbeam gently kiss'd,
Scarce by the gazing eye 'tis miss'd,
Ere down the lonely valley stealing,
Fresh grass and growth its course revealing,
It cheers the flock, revives the flower,
And decks some happy shepherd's bower."

"A comfortable doctrine, and most justly spoken," said the Udaller, seizing the blushing Brenda, as she was endeavouring to escape — "Never think shame for the matter, my girl. To be the mistress of some honest man's house, and the means of maintaining some old Norse name, making neighbours happy, the poor easy, and relieving strangers, is the most creditable lot a young woman can look to, and I heartily wish it to all here. — Come, who speaks next? — good husbands are going — Maddie Groatsetter — my pretty Clara, come and have your share."

The Lady Glowrowrum shook her head, and "could not," she said, "altogether approve" —

"Enough said — enough said," replied Magnus; "no compulsion; but the play shall go on till we are tired of it. Here, Minna — I have got you at command. Stand forth, my girl — there are plenty of things to be ashamed of besides old-fashioned and innocent pleasantry. — Come, I will speak for you myself — though I am not sure I can remember rhyme enough for it."

There was a slight colour which passed rapidly over Minna's face, but she instantly regained her composure, and stood erect by her father, as one superior to any little jest to which her situation might give rise.

Her father, after some rubbing of his brow, and other mechanical efforts to assist his memory, at length recovered verse sufficient to put the following query, though in less gallant strains than those of Halcro:—

MAGNUS TROIL.

"Mother, speak, and do not tarry,
Here's a maiden fain would marry.
Shall she marry, ay or not?
If she marry, what's her lot?"

A deep sigh was uttered within the tabernacle of the soothsayer, as if she compassionated the subject of the doom which she was obliged to pronounce. She then, as usual, returned her response:—

NORNA.

"Untouch'd by love, the maiden's breast
Is like the snow on Rona's crest;
So pure, so free from earthly dye,
It seems, whilst leaning on the sky,
Part of the heaven to which 'tis nigh;
But passion, like the wild March rain,
May soil the wreath with many a stain.
We gaze — the lovely vision's gone —
A torrent fills the bed of stone,
That, hurrying to destruction's shock,
Leaps headlong from the lofty rock."

The Udaller heard this reply with high resentment. "By the bones of the Martyr," he said, his bold visage becoming suddenly ruddy, "this is an abuse of courtesy! and, were it any but yourself that had classed my daughter's name and the word destruction together, they had better have left the word unspoken. But come forth of the tent, thou old galdragon,"²he added, with a smile — "I should have known that thou canst not long joy in any thing that smacks of mirth, God help thee!" His summons received no answer; and, after waiting a moment, he again addressed her — "Nay, never be sullen with me, kinswoman, though I did speak a hasty word — thou knowest I bear malice to no one, least of all to thee — so come forth, and let us shake hands. — Thou mightst have foretold the wreck of my ship and boats, or a bad herring-fishery, and I should have said never a word; but Minna or Brenda, you know, are things which touch me nearer. But come out, shake hands, and there let there be an end on't."

Norna returned no answer whatever to his repeated invocations, and the company began to look upon each other with some surprise, when the Udaller, raising the skin which covered the entrance of the tent, discovered that the interior was empty. The wonder was now general, and not unmixed with fear; for it seemed impossible that Norna could have, in any manner, escaped from the tabernacle in which she was enclosed, without having been discovered by the company. Gone, however, she was, and the Udaller, after a moment's consideration, dropt the skin-curtain again over the entrance of the tent.

"My friends," he said, with a cheerful countenance, "we have long known my kinswoman, and that her ways are not like those of the ordinary folks of this world. But she means well by Hialtland, and hath the love of a sister for me, and for my house; and no guest of mine needs either to fear evil, or to take offence, at her hand. I have little doubt she will be with us at dinner-time."

"Now, Heaven forbid!" said Mrs. Baby Yellowley — "for, my gude Leddy Glowrowrum, to tell your leddyship the truth, I likena cummers that can come and gae like a glance of the sun, or the whisk of a whirlwind."

"Speak lower, speak lower," said the Lady Glowrowrum, "and be thankful that yon carlin hasna ta'en the house-side away wi' her. The like of her have played warse pranks, and so has she herself, unless she is the sairer lied on."

Similar murmurs ran through the rest of the company, until the Udaller uplifted his stentorian and imperative voice to put them to silence, and invited, or rather commanded, the attendance of his guests to behold the boats set off for the *haaf* or deep-sea fishing.

"The wind has been high since sunrise," he said, "and had kept the boats in the bay; but now it was favourable, and they would sail immediately."

This sudden alteration of the weather occasioned sundry nods and winks amongst the guests, who were not indisposed to connect it with Norna's sudden disappearance; but without giving vent to observations which could not but be disagreeable to their host, they followed his stately step to the shore, as the herd of deer follows the leading stag, with all manner of respectful observance.^{6(a)7}

Chapter 22.

There was a laughing devil in his sneer,

*That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled — and Mercy sigh'd farewell.*

THE CORSAIR, CANTO I.

The ling or white fishery is the principal employment of the natives of Zetland, and was formerly that upon which the gentry chiefly depended for their income, and the poor for their subsistence. The fishing season is therefore, like the harvest of an agricultural country, the busiest and most important, as well as the most animating, period of the year.

The fishermen of each district assemble at particular stations, with their boats and crews, and erect upon the shore small huts, composed of shingle and covered with turf, for their temporary lodging, and skeos, or drying-houses, for the fish; so that the lonely beach at once assumes the appearance of an Indian town. The banks to which they repair for the Haaf fishing, are often many miles distant from the station where the fish is dried; so that they are always twenty or thirty hours absent, frequently longer; and under unfavourable circumstances of wind and tide, they remain at sea, with a very small stock of provisions, and in a boat of a construction which seems extremely slender, for two or three days, and are sometimes heard of no more. The departure of the fishers, therefore, on this occupation, has in it a character of danger and of suffering, which renders it dignified, and the anxiety of the females who remain on the beach, watching the departure of the lessening boat, or anxiously looking out for its return, gives pathos to the scene.⁸

The scene, therefore, was in busy and anxious animation, when the Udaller and his friends appeared on the beach. The various crews of about thirty boats, amounting each to from three to five or six men, were taking leave of their wives and female relatives, and jumping on board their long Norway skiffs, where their lines and tackle lay ready stowed. Magnus was not an idle spectator of the scene; he went from one place to another, enquiring into the state of their provisions for the voyage, and their preparations for the fishing — now and then, with a rough Dutch or Norse oath, abusing them for blockheads, for going to sea with their boats indifferently found, but always ending by ordering from his own stores a gallon of gin, a lispund of meal, or some similar essential addition to their sea-stores. The hardy sailors, on receiving such favours, expressed their thanks in the brief gruff manner which their landlord best approved; but the women were more clamorous in their gratitude, which Magnus was often obliged to silence by cursing all female tongues from Eve's downwards.

At length all were on board and ready, the sails were hoisted, the signal for departure given, the rowers began to pull, and all started from the shore, in strong emulation to get first to the fishing ground, and to have their lines set before the rest; an exploit to which no little consequence was attached by the boat's crew who should be happy enough to perform it.

While they were yet within hearing of the shore, they chanted an ancient Norse ditty, appropriate to the occasion, of which Claud Halcro had executed the following literal translation:—

"Farewell, merry maidens, to song, and to laugh,
For the brave lads of Westra are bound to the Haaf;
And we must have labour, and hunger, and pain,
Ere we dance with the maids of Dunrossness again.
"For now, in our trim boats of Norway deal,
We must dance on the waves, with the porpoise and seal;
The breeze it shall pipe, so it pipe not too high,
And the gull be our songstress whene'er she flits by.
"Sing on, my brave bird, while we follow, like thee,
By bank, shoal, and quicksand, the swarms of the sea;
And when twenty-score fishes are straining our line,
Sing louder, brave bird, for their spoils shall be thine.
"We'll sing while we bait, and we'll sing when we haul,
For the deeps of the Haaf have enough for us all:
There is torsk for the gentle, and skate for the carle,
And there's wealth for bold Magnus, the son of the earl.
"Huzza! my brave comrades, give way for the Haaf,
We shall sooner come back to the dance and the laugh;
For life without mirth is a lamp without oil;
Then, mirth and long life to the bold Magnus Troil!"

The rude words of the song were soon drowned in the ripple of the waves, but the tune continued long to mingle with the sound of wind and sea, and the boats were like so many black specks on the surface of the ocean, diminishing by degrees as they bore far and farther seaward; while the ear could distinguish touches of the human voice, almost drowned amid that of the elements.

The fishermen's wives looked their last after the parting sails, and were now departing slowly, with downcast and anxious looks, towards the huts in which they were to make arrangements for preparing and drying the fish, with which they hoped to see their husbands and friends return deeply laden. Here and there an old sibyl displayed the superior importance of her experience, by predicting, from the appearance of the atmosphere, that the wind would be fair or foul, while others recommended a vow to the Kirk of St. Ninian's for the safety of their men and boats, (an ancient Catholic superstition, not yet wholly abolished,) and others, but in a low and timorous tone, regretted to their companions, that Norna of Fitful-head had been suffered to depart in discontent that morning from Burgh-Westra, "and, of all days in the year, that they suld have contrived to give her displeasure on the first day of the white fishing!"

The gentry, guests of Magnus Troil, having whiled away as much time as could be so disposed of, in viewing the little armament set sail, and in conversing with the poor women who had seen their friends embark in it, began now to separate into various groups and parties, which strolled in different directions, as fancy led them, to enjoy what may be called the clair-obscur of a Zetland summer day, which, though without the brilliant sunshine that cheers other countries during the fine season, has a mild and pleasing character of its own, that softens while it saddens landscapes, which, in their own lonely, bare, and monotonous tone, have something in them stern as well as barren.

In one of the loneliest recesses of the coast, where a deep indenture of the rocks gave the tide access to the cavern, or, as it is called, the *Helyer*, of Swartaster, Minna Troil was walking with Captain Cleveland. They had probably chosen that walk, as being little liable to interruption from others; for, as the force of the tide rendered the place unfit either for fishing or sailing, so it was not the ordinary resort of walkers, on account of its being the supposed habitation of a Mermaid, a race which Norwegian superstition invests with magical, as well as mischievous qualities. Here, therefore, Minna wandered with her lover.

A small spot of milk-white sand, that stretched beneath one of the precipices which walled in the creek on either side, afforded them space for a dry, firm, and pleasant walk of about an hundred yards, terminated at one extremity by a dark stretch of the bay, which, scarce touched by the wind, seemed almost as smooth as glass, and which was seen from between two lofty rocks, the jaws of the creek, or indenture, that approached each other above, as if they wished to meet over the dark tide that separated them. The other end of their promenade was closed by a lofty and almost unscaleable precipice, the abode of hundreds of sea-fowl of different kinds, in the bottom of which the huge helyer, or sea-cave, itself yawned, as if for the purpose of swallowing up the advancing tide, which it seemed to receive into an abyss of immeasurable depth and extent. The entrance to this dismal cavern consisted not in a single arch, as usual, but was divided into two, by a huge pillar of natural rock, which, rising out of the sea, and extending to the top of the cavern, seemed to lend its support to the roof, and thus formed a double portal to the helyer, on which the fishermen and peasants had bestowed the rude name of the Devil's Nostrils. In this wild scene, lonely and undisturbed but by the

clang of the sea-fowl, Cleveland had already met with Minna Troil more than once; for with her it was a favourite walk, as the objects which it presented agreed peculiarly with the love of the wild, the melancholy, and the wonderful. But now the conversation in which she was earnestly engaged, was such as entirely to withdraw her attention, as well as that of her companion, from the scenery around them.

"You cannot deny it," she said; "you have given way to feelings respecting this young man, which indicate prejudice and violence — the prejudice unmerited, as far as you are concerned at least, and the violence equally imprudent and unjustifiable."

"I should have thought," replied Cleveland, "that the service I rendered him yesterday might have freed me from such a charge. I do not talk of my own risk, for I have lived in danger, and love it; it is not every one, however, would have ventured so near the furious animal to save one with whom they had no connexion."

"It is not every one, indeed, who could have saved him," answered Minna, gravely; "but every one who has courage and generosity would have attempted it. The giddy-brained Claud Halcro would have done as much as you, had his strength been equal to his courage — my father would have done as much, though having such just cause of resentment against the young man, for his vain and braggart abuse of our hospitality. Do not, therefore, boast of your exploit too much, my good friend, lest you should make me think that it required too great an effort. I know you love not Mordaunt Mertoun, though you exposed your own life to save his."

"Will you allow nothing, then," said Cleveland, "for the long misery I was made to endure from the common and prevailing report, that this beardless bird-hunter stood betwixt me and what I on earth coveted most — the affections of Minna Troil?"

He spoke in a tone at once impassioned and insinuating, and his whole language and manner seemed to express a grace and elegance, which formed the most striking contrast with the speech and gesture of the unpolished seaman, which he usually affected or exhibited. But his apology was unsatisfactory to Minna.

"You have known," she said, "perhaps too soon, and too well, how little you had to fear — if you indeed feared — that Mertoun, or any other, had interest with Minna Troil. — Nay, truce to thanks and protestations; I would accept it as the best proof of gratitude, that you would be reconciled with this youth, or at least avoid every quarrel with him."

"That we should be friends, Minna, is impossible," replied Cleveland; "even the love I bear you, the most powerful emotion that my heart ever knew, cannot work that miracle."

"And why, I pray you?" said Minna; "there have been no evil offences between you, but rather an exchange of mutual services; why can you not be friends? — I have many reasons to wish it."

"And can you, then, forget the slights which he has cast upon Brenda, and on yourself, and on your father's house?"

"I can forgive them all," said Minna; — "can you not say so much, who have in truth received no offence?"

Cleveland looked down, and paused for an instant; then raised his head, and replied, "I might easily deceive you, Minna, and promise you what my soul tells me is an impossibility; but I am forced to use too much deceit with others, and with you I will use none. I cannot be friend to this young man; — there is a natural dislike — an instinctive aversion — something like a principle of repulsion in our mutual nature, which makes us odious to each other. Ask himself — he will tell you he has the same antipathy against me. The obligation he conferred on me was a bridle to my resentment; but I was so galled by the restraint, that I could have gnawed the curb till my lips were bloody."

"You have worn what you are wont to call your iron mask so long, that your features," replied Minna, "retain the impression of its rigidity even when it is removed."

"You do me injustice, Minna," replied her lover, "and you are angry with me because I deal with you plainly and honestly. Plainly and honestly, however, will I say, that I cannot be Mertoun's friend, but it shall be his own fault, not mine, if I am ever his enemy. I seek not to injure him; but do not ask me to love him. And of this remain satisfied, that it would be vain even if I could do so; for as sure as I attempted any advances towards his confidence, so sure would I be to awaken his disgust and suspicion. Leave us to the exercise of our natural feelings, which, as they will unquestionably keep us as far separate as possible, are most likely to prevent any possible interference with each other. — Does this satisfy you?"

"It must," said Minna, "since you tell me there is no remedy. — And now tell me why you looked so grave when you heard of your consort's arrival — for that it is her I have no doubt — in the port of Kirkwall?"

"I fear," replied Cleveland, "the consequences of that vessel's arrival with her crew, as comprehending the ruin of my fondest hopes. I had made some progress in your father's favour, and, with time, might have made more, when hither come Hawkins and the rest to blight my prospects for ever. I told you on what terms we parted. I then commanded a vessel braver and better found than their own, with a crew who, at my slightest nod, would have faced fiends armed with their own fiery element; but I now stand alone, a single man, destitute of all means to overawe or to restrain them; and they will soon show so plainly the ungovernable license of their habits and dispositions, that ruin to themselves and to me will in all probability be the consequence."

"Do not fear it," said Minna; "my father can never be so unjust as to hold you liable for the offences of others."

"But what will Magnus Troil say to my own demerits, fair Minna?" said Cleveland, smiling.

"My father is a Zetlander, or rather a Norwegian," said Minna, "one of an oppressed race, who will not care whether you fought against the Spaniards, who are the tyrants of the New World, or against the Dutch and English, who have succeeded to their usurped dominions. His own ancestors supported and exercised the freedom of the seas in those gallant barks, whose pennons were the dread of all Europe."

"I fear, nevertheless," said Cleveland, "that the descendant of an ancient Sea-King will scarce acknowledge a fitting acquaintance in a modern rover. I have not disguised from you that I have reason to dread the English laws; and Magnus, though a great enemy to taxes, imposts, scat, wattle, and so forth, has no idea of latitude upon points of a more general character; — he would willingly reeve a rope to the yard-arm for the benefit of an unfortunate buccanier."

"Do not suppose so," said Minna; "he himself suffers too much oppression from the tyrannical laws of our proud neighbours of Scotland. I trust he will soon be able to rise in resistance against them. The enemy — such I will call them — are now divided amongst themselves, and every vessel from their coast brings intelligence of fresh commotions — the Highlands against the Lowlands — the Williamites against the Jacobites — the Whigs against the Tories, and, to sum the whole, the kingdom of England against that of Scotland. What is there, as Claud Halcro well hinted, to prevent our availing ourselves of the quarrels of these robbers, to assert the independence of which we are deprived?"

"To hoist the raven standard on the Castle of Scalloway," said Cleveland, in imitation of her tone and manner, "and proclaim your father Earl Magnus the First!"

"Earl Magnus the Seventh, if it please you," answered Minna; "for six of his ancestors have worn, or were entitled to wear, the coronet before him. — You laugh at my ardour — but what *is* there to prevent all this?"

"Nothing *will* prevent it," replied Cleveland, "because it will never be attempted — Any thing *might* prevent it, that is equal in strength to the long-boat of a British man-of-war."

"You treat us with scorn, sir," said Minna; "yet yourself should know what a few resolved men may perform."

"But they must be armed, Minna," replied Cleveland, "and willing to place their lives upon each desperate adventure. — Think not of such visions. Denmark has been cut down into a second-rate kingdom, incapable of exchanging a single broadside with England; Norway is a starving wilderness; and, in these islands, the love of independence has been suppressed by a long term of subjection, or shows itself but in a few muttered growls over the bowl and bottle. And, were your men as willing warriors as their ancestors, what could the unarmed crews of a few fishing-boats do against the British navy? — Think no more of it, sweet Minna — it is a dream, and I must term it so, though it makes your eye so bright, and your step so noble."

"It is indeed a dream!" said Minna, looking down, "and it ill becomes a daughter of Hialtlant to look or to move like a freewoman — Our eye should be on the ground, and our step slow and reluctant, as that of one who obeys a taskmaster."

"There are lands," said Cleveland, "in which the eye may look bright upon groves of the palm and the cocoa, and where the foot may move light as a galley under sail, over fields carpeted with flowers, and savannahs surrounded by aromatic thickets, and where subjection is unknown, except that of the brave to the bravest, and of all to the most beautiful."

Minna paused a moment ere she spoke, and then answered, "No, Cleveland. My own rude country has charms for me, even desolate as you think it, and depressed as it surely is, which no other land on earth can offer to me. I endeavour in vain to represent to myself those visions of trees, and of groves, which my eye never saw; but my imagination can conceive no sight in nature more sublime than these waves, when agitated by a storm, or more beautiful, than when they come, as they now do, rolling in calm tranquillity to the shore. Not the fairest scene in a foreign land — not the brightest sunbeam that ever shone upon the richest landscape, would win my thoughts for a moment from that lofty rock, misty hill, and wide-rolling ocean. Hialtland is the land of my deceased ancestors, and of my living father; and in Hialtland will I live and die."

"Then in Hialtland," answered Cleveland, "will I too live and die. I will not go to Kirkwall — I will not make my existence known to my comrades, from whom it were else hard for me to escape. Your father loves me, Minna; who knows whether long attention, anxious care, might not bring him to receive me into his family? Who would regard the length of a voyage that was certain to terminate in happiness?"

"Dream not of such an issue," said Minna; "it is impossible. While you live in my father's house — while you receive his assistance, and share his table, you will find him the generous friend, and the hearty host; but touch him on what concerns his name and family, and the frank-hearted Udaller will start up before you the haughty and proud descendant of a Norwegian Jarl. See you — a moment's suspicion has fallen on Mordaunt Mertoun, and he has banished from his favour the youth whom he so lately loved as a son. No one must ally with his house that is not of untainted northern descent."

"And mine may be so, for aught that is known to me upon the subject," said Cleveland.

"How!" said Minna; "have you any reason to believe yourself of Norse descent?"

"I have told you before," replied Cleveland, "that my family is totally unknown to me. I spent my earliest days upon a solitary plantation in the little island of Tortuga, under the charge of my father, then a different person from what he afterwards became. We were plundered by the Spaniards, and reduced to such extremity of poverty, that my father, in desperation, and in thirst of revenge, took up arms, and having become chief of a little band, who were in the same circumstances, became a buccanier, as it is called, and cruized against Spain, with various vicissitudes of good and bad fortune, until, while he interfered to check some violence of his companions, he fell by their hands — no uncommon fate among the captains of these rovers. But whence my father came, or what was the place of his birth, I know not, fair Minna, nor have I ever had a curious thought on the subject."

"He was a Briton, at least, your unfortunate father?" said Minna.

"I have no doubt of it," said Cleveland; "his name, which I have rendered too formidable to be openly spoken, is an English one; and his acquaintance with the English language, and even with English literature, together with the pains which he took, in better days, to teach me both, plainly spoke him to be an Englishman. If the rude bearing which I display towards others is not the genuine character of my mind and manners, it is to my father, Minna, that I owe any share of better thoughts and principles, which may render me worthy, in some small degree, of your notice and approbation. And yet it sometimes seems to me, that I have two different characters; for I cannot bring myself to believe, that I, who now walk this lone beach with the lovely Minna Troil, and am permitted to speak to her of the passion which I have cherished, have ever been the daring leader of the bold band whose name was as terrible as a tornado."

"You had not been permitted," said Minna, "to use that bold language towards the daughter of Magnus Troil, had you *not* been the brave and undaunted leader, who, with so small means, has made his name so formidable. My heart is like that of a maiden of the ancient days, and is to be won, not by fair words, but by gallant deeds."

"Alas! that heart," said Cleveland; "and what is it that I may do — what is it that man can do, to win in it the interest which I desire?"

"Rejoin your friends — pursue your fortunes — leave the rest to destiny," said Minna. "Should you return, the leader of a gallant fleet, who can tell what may befall?"

"And what shall assure me, that, when I return — if return I ever shall — I may not find Minna Troil a bride or a spouse? — No, Minna, I will not trust to destiny the only object worth attaining, which my stormy voyage in life has yet offered me."

"Hear me," said Minna. "I will bind myself to you, if you dare accept such an engagement, by the promise of Odin,² the most sacred of our northern rites which are yet practised among us, that I will never favour another, until you resign the pretensions which I have given to you. — Will that satisfy you? — for more I cannot — more I will not give."

"Then with that," said Cleveland, after a moment's pause, "I must perforce be satisfied; — but remember, it is yourself that throw me back upon a mode of life which the laws of Britain denounce as criminal, and which the violent passions of the daring men by whom it is pursued, have rendered infamous."

"But I," said Minna, "am superior to such prejudices. In warring with England, I see their laws in no other light than as if you were engaged with an enemy, who, in fulness of pride and power, has declared he will give his antagonist no quarter. A brave man will not fight the worse for this; — and, for the manners of your comrades, so that they do not infect your own, why should their evil report attach to you?"

Cleveland gazed at her as she spoke, with a degree of wondering admiration, in which, at the same time, there lurked a smile at her simplicity.

"I could not," he said, "have believed, that such high courage could have been found united with such ignorance of the world, as the world is now wielded. For my manners, they who best know me will readily allow, that I have done my best, at the risk of my popularity, and of my life itself, to mitigate the ferocity of my mates; but how can you teach humanity to men burning with vengeance against the world by whom they are proscribed, or teach them temperance and moderation in enjoying the pleasures which chance throws in their way, to vary a life which would be otherwise one constant scene of peril and hardship? — But this promise, Minna — this promise, which is all I am to receive in guerdon for my faithful attachment — let me at least lose no time in claiming that."

"It must not be rendered here, but in Kirkwall. — We must invoke, to witness the engagement, the Spirit which presides over the ancient Circle of Stennis. But perhaps you fear to name the ancient Father of the Slain too, the Severe, the Terrible?"

Cleveland smiled.

"Do me the justice to think, lovely Minna, that I am little subject to fear real causes of terror; and for those which are visionary, I have no sympathy whatever."

"You believe not in them, then?" said Minna, "and are so far better suited to be Brenda's lover than mine."

"I will believe," replied Cleveland, "in whatever you believe. The whole inhabitants of that Valhalla, about which you converse so much with that fiddling, rhyming fool, Claud Halcro — all these shall become living and existing things to my credulity. But, Minna, do not ask me to fear any of them."

"Fear! no — not to *fear* them, surely," replied the maiden; "for, not before Thor or Odin, when they approached in the fulness of their terrors, did the heroes of my dauntless race yield one foot in retreat. Nor do I own them as Deities — a better faith prevents so foul an error. But, in our own conception, they are powerful spirits for good or evil. And when you boast not to fear them, bethink you that you defy an enemy of a kind you have never yet encountered."

"Not in these northern latitudes," said the lover, with a smile, "where hitherto I have seen but angels; but I have faced, in my time, the demons of the Equinoctial Line, which we rovers suppose to be as powerful, and as malignant, as those of the North."

"Have you, then, witnessed those wonders that are beyond the visible world?" said Minna, with some degree of awe.

Cleveland composed his countenance, and replied — "A short while before my father's death, I came, though then very young, into the command of a sloop, manned with thirty as desperate fellows as ever handled a musket. We cruized for a long while with bad success, taking nothing but wretched small-craft, which were destined to catch turtle, or otherwise loaded with coarse and worthless trumpery. I had much ado to prevent my comrades from avenging upon the crews of those baubling shallops the disappointment which they had occasioned to us. At length, we grew desperate, and made a descent on a village, where we were told we should intercept the mules of a certain Spanish governor, laden with treasure. We succeeded in carrying the place; but while I endeavoured to save the inhabitants from the fury of my followers, the muleteers, with their precious cargo, escaped into the neighbouring woods. This filled up the measure of my unpopularity. My people, who had been long discontented, became openly mutinous. I was deposed from my command in solemn council, and condemned, as having too little luck and too much humanity for the profession I had undertaken, to be marooned,¹⁰ as the phrase goes, on one of those little sandy, bushy islets, which are called, in the West Indies, keys, and which are frequented only by turtle and by sea-fowl. Many of them are supposed to be haunted(b)— some by the

demons worshipped by the old inhabitants — some by Caciques and others, whom the Spaniards had put to death by torture, to compel them to discover their hidden treasures, and others by the various spectres in which sailors of all nations have implicit faith.¹¹ My place of banishment, called Coffin-key, about two leagues and a half to the south-east of Bermudas, was so infamous as the resort of these supernatural inhabitants, that I believe the wealth of Mexico would not have persuaded the bravest of the scoundrels who put me ashore there, to have spent an hour on the islet alone, even in broad daylight; and when they rowed off, they pulled for the sloop like men that dared not cast their eyes behind them. And there they left me, to subsist as I might, on a speck of unproductive sand, surrounded by the boundless Atlantic, and haunted, as they supposed, by malignant demons.”

“And what was the consequence?” said Minna, eagerly.

“I supported life,” said the adventurer, “at the expense of such sea-fowl, aptly called boobies, as were silly enough to let me approach so near as to knock them down with a stick; and by means of turtle-eggs, when these complaisant birds became better acquainted with the mischievous disposition of the human species, and more shy of course of my advances.”

“And the demons of whom you spoke?” — continued Minna.

“I had my secret apprehensions upon their account,” said Cleveland: “In open daylight, or in absolute darkness, I did not greatly apprehend their approach; but in the misty dawn of the morning, or when evening was about to fall, I saw, for the first week of my abode on the key, many a dim and undefined spectre, now resembling a Spaniard, with his capa wrapped around him, and his huge sombrero, as large as an umbrella, upon his head — now a Dutch sailor, with his rough cap and trunk-hose — and now an Indian Cacique, with his feathery crown and long lance of cane.”

“Did you not approach and address them?” said Minna.

“I always approached them,” replied the seaman; “but — I grieve to disappoint your expectations, my fair friend — whenever I drew near them, the phantom changed into a bush, or a piece of drift-wood, or a wreath of mist, or some such cause of deception, until at last I was taught by experience to cheat myself no longer with such visions, and continued a solitary inhabitant of Coffin-key, as little alarmed by visionary terrors, as I ever was in the great cabin of a stout vessel, with a score of companions around me.”

“You have cheated me into listening to a tale of nothing,” said Minna; “but how long did you continue on the island?”

“Four weeks of wretched existence,” said Cleveland, “when I was relieved by the crew of a vessel which came thither a-turtling. Yet my miserable seclusion was not entirely useless to me; for on that spot of barren sand I found, or rather forged, the iron mask, which has since been my chief security against treason, or mutiny of my followers. It was there I formed the resolution to seem no softer hearted, nor better instructed — no more humane, and no more scrupulous, than those with whom fortune had leagued me. I thought over my former story, and saw that seeming more brave, skilful, and enterprising than others, had gained me command and respect, and that seeming more gently nurtured, and more civilized than they, had made them envy and hate me as a being of another species. I bargained with myself, then, that since I could not lay aside my superiority of intellect and education, I would do my best to disguise, and to sink in the rude seaman, all appearance of better feeling and better accomplishments. I foresaw then what has since happened, that, under the appearance of daring obduracy, I should acquire such a habitual command over my followers, that I might use it for the insurance of discipline, and for relieving the distresses of the wretches who fell under our power. I saw, in short, that to attain authority, I must assume the external semblance, at least, of those over whom it was to be exercised. The tidings of my father’s fate, while it excited me to wrath and to revenge, confirmed the resolution I had adopted. He also had fallen a victim to his superiority of mind, morals, and manners, above those whom he commanded. They were wont to call him the Gentleman; and, unquestionably, they thought he waited some favourable opportunity to reconcile himself, perhaps at their expense, to those existing forms of society his habits seemed best to suit with, and, even therefore, they murdered him. Nature and justice alike called on me for revenge. I was soon at the head of a new body of the adventurers, who are so numerous in those islands. I sought not after those by whom I had been myself marooned, but after the wretches who had betrayed my father; and on them I took a revenge so severe, that it was of itself sufficient to stamp me with the character of that inexorable ferocity which I was desirous to be thought to possess, and which, perhaps, was gradually creeping on my natural disposition in actual earnest. My manner, speech, and conduct, seemed so totally changed, that those who formerly knew me were disposed to ascribe the alteration to my intercourse with the demons who haunted the sands of Coffin-key; nay, there were some superstitious enough to believe, that I had actually formed a league with them.”

“I tremble to hear the rest!” said Minna; “did you not become the monster of courage and cruelty whose character you assumed?”

“If I have escaped being so, it is to you, Minna,” replied Cleveland, “that the wonder must be ascribed. It is true, I have always endeavoured to distinguish myself rather by acts of adventurous valour, than by schemes of revenge or of plunder, and that at length I could save lives by a rude jest, and sometimes, by the excess of the measures which I myself proposed, could induce those under me to intercede in favour of prisoners; so that the seeming severity of my character has better served the cause of humanity, than had I appeared directly devoted to it.”

He ceased, and, as Minna replied not a word, both remained silent for a little space, when Cleveland again resumed the discourse:—

“You are silent,” he said, “Miss Troil, and I have injured myself in your opinion by the frankness with which I have laid my character before you. I may truly say that my natural disposition has been controlled, but not altered, by the untoward circumstances in which I am placed.”

“I am uncertain,” said Minna, after a moment’s consideration, “whether you had been thus candid, had you not known I should soon see your comrades, and discover, from their conversation and their manners, what you would otherwise gladly have concealed.”

“You do me injustice, Minna, cruel injustice. From the instant that you knew me to be a sailor of fortune, an adventurer, a buccanier, or, if you will have the broad word, a PIRATE, what had you to expect less than what I have told you?”

“You speak too truly,” said Minna — “all this I might have anticipated, and I know not how I should have expected it otherwise. But it seemed to me that a war on the cruel and superstitious Spaniards had in it something ennobling — something that refined the fierce employment to which you have just now given its true and dreaded name. I thought that the independent warriors of the Western Ocean, raised up, as it were, to punish the wrongs of so many murdered and plundered tribes must have had something of gallant elevation, like that of the Sons of the North, whose long galleys avenged on so many coasts the oppressions of degenerate Rome. This I thought, and this I dreamed — I grieve that I am awakened and undeceived. Yet I blame you not for the erring of my own fancy. — Farewell; we must now part.”

“Say at least,” said Cleveland, “that you do not hold me in horror for having told you the truth.”

“I must have time for reflection,” said Minna, “time to weigh what you have said, ere I can fully understand my own feelings. Thus much, however, I can say even now, that he who pursues the wicked purpose of plunder, by means of blood and cruelty, and who must veil his remains of natural remorse under an affectation of superior profligacy, is not, and cannot be, the lover whom Minna Troil expected to find in Cleveland; and if she still love him, it must be as a penitent, and not as a hero.”

So saying, she extricated herself from his grasp, (for he still endeavoured to detain her,) making an imperative sign to him to forbear from following her. — “She is gone,” said Cleveland, looking after her; “wild and fanciful as she is, I expected not this. — She startled not at the name of my perilous course of life, yet seems totally unprepared for the evil which must necessarily attend it; and so all the merit I have gained by my resemblance to a Norse Champion, or King of the Sea, is to be lost at once, because a gang of pirates do not prove to be a choir of saints. I would that Rackam, Hawkins, and the rest, had been at the bottom of the Race of Portland — I would the Pentland Frith had swept them to hell rather than to Orkney! I will not, however, quit the chase of this angel for all that these fiends can do. I will — I must to Orkney before the Udaller makes his voyage thither — our meeting might alarm even his blunt understanding, although, thank Heaven, in this wild country, men know the nature of our trade only by hearsay, through our honest friends the Dutch, who take care never to speak very ill of those they make money by. — Well, if fortune would but stand my friend with this beautiful enthusiast, I would pursue her wheel no farther at sea, but set myself down amongst these rocks, as happy as if they were so many groves of bananas and palmettoes.”

With these, and such thoughts, half rolling in his bosom, half expressed in indistinct hints and murmurs, the pirate Cleveland returned to the mansion of Burgh-Westra.

Chapter 23.

*There was shaking of hands, and sorrow of heart,
For the hour was approaching when merry folks must part;
So we call'd for our horses, and ask'd for our way,
While the jolly old landlord said, "Nothing's to pay."*

LILLIPUT, A POEM.

We do not dwell upon the festivities of the day, which had nothing in them to interest the reader particularly. The table groaned under the usual plenty, which was disposed of by the guests with the usual appetite — the bowl of punch was filled and emptied with the same celerity as usual — the men quaffed, and the women laughed — Claud Halcro rhymed, punned, and praised John Dryden — the Udaller bumpered and sung choruses — and the evening concluded, as usual, in the Rigging-loft, as it was Magnus Troil's pleasure to term the dancing apartment.

It was then and there that Cleveland, approaching Magnus, where he sat betwixt his two daughters, intimated his intention of going to Kirkwall in a small brig, which Bryce Snailsfoot, who had disposed of his goods with unprecedented celerity, had freighted thither, to procure a supply.

Magnus heard the sudden proposal of his guest with surprise, not unmingled with displeasure, and demanded sharply of Cleveland, how long it was since he had learned to prefer Bryce Snailsfoot's company to his own? Cleveland answered, with his usual bluntness of manner, that time and tide tarried for no one, and that he had his own particular reasons for making his trip to Kirkwall sooner than the Udaller proposed to set sail — that he hoped to meet with him and his daughters at the great fair which was now closely approaching, and might perhaps find it possible to return to Zetland along with them.

While he spoke this, Brenda kept her eye as much upon her sister as it was possible to do, without exciting general observation. She remarked, that Minna's pale cheek became yet paler while Cleveland spoke, and that she seemed, by compressing her lips, and slightly knitting her brows, to be in the act of repressing the effects of strong interior emotion. But she spoke not; and when Cleveland, having bidden adieu to the Udaller, approached to salute her, as was then the custom, she received his farewell without trusting herself to attempt a reply.

Brenda had her own trial approaching; for Mordaunt Mertoun, once so much loved by her father, was now in the act of making his cold parting from him, without receiving a single look of friendly regard. There was, indeed, sarcasm in the tone with which Magnus wished the youth a good journey, and recommended to him, if he met a bonny lass by the way, not to dream that she was in love, because she chanced to jest with him. Mertoun coloured at what he felt as an insult, though it was but half intelligible to him; but he remembered Brenda, and suppressed every feeling of resentment. He proceeded to take his leave of the sisters. Minna, whose heart was considerably softened towards him, received his farewell with some degree of interest; but Brenda's grief was so visible in the kindness of her manner, and the moisture which gathered in her eye, that it was noticed even by the Udaller, who exclaimed, half angrily, "Why, ay, lass, that may be right enough, for he was an old acquaintance; but mind! I have no will that he remain one."

Mertoun, who was slowly leaving the apartment, half overheard this disparaging observation, and half turned round to resent it. But his purpose failed him when he saw that Brenda had been obliged to have recourse to her handkerchief to hide her emotion, and the sense that it was excited by his departure, obliterated every thought of her father's unkindness. He retired — the other guests followed his example; and many of them, like Cleveland and himself, took their leave overnight, with the intention of commencing their homeward journey on the succeeding morning.

That night, the mutual sorrow of Minna and Brenda, if it could not wholly remove the reserve which had estranged the sisters from each other, at least melted all its frozen and unkindly symptoms. They wept in each other's arms; and though neither spoke, yet each became dearer to the other; because they felt that the grief which called forth these drops, had a source common to them both.

It is probable, that though Brenda's tears were most abundant, the grief of Minna was most deeply seated; for, long after the younger had sobbed herself asleep, like a child, upon her sister's bosom, Minna lay awake, watching the dubious twilight, while tear after tear slowly gathered in her eye, and found a current down her cheek, as soon as it became too heavy to be supported by her long black silken eyelashes. As she lay, bewildered among the sorrowful thoughts which supplied these tears, she was surprised to distinguish, beneath the window, the sounds of music. At first she supposed it was some freak of Claud Halcro, whose fantastic humour sometimes indulged itself in such serenades. But it was not the *guitar* of the old minstrel, but the guitar, that she heard; an instrument which none in the island knew how to touch except Cleveland, who had learned, in his intercourse with the South-American Spaniards, to play on it with superior execution. Perhaps it was in those climates also that he had learned the song, which, though he now sung it under the window of a maiden of Thule, had certainly never been composed for the native of a climate so northerly and so severe, since it spoke of productions of the earth and skies which are there unknown.

1.

"Love wakes and weeps
While Beauty sleeps:
O for Music's softest numbers,
To prompt a theme,
For Beauty's dream,
Soft as the pillow of her slumbers!

2.

"Through groves of palm
Sigh gales of balm,
Fire-flies on the air are wheeling;
While through the gloom
Comes soft perfume,
The distant beds of flowers revealing.

3.

"O wake and live,
No dream can give
A shadow'd bliss, the real excelling;
No longer sleep,
From lattice peep,
And list the tale that Love is telling!"

The voice of Cleveland was deep, rich, and manly, and accorded well with the Spanish air, to which the words, probably a translation from the same language, had been adapted. His invocation would not probably have been fruitless, could Minna have arisen without awaking her sister. But that was impossible; for Brenda, who, as we have already mentioned, had wept bitterly before she had sunk into repose, now lay with her face on her sister's neck, and one arm stretched around her, in the attitude of a child which has cried itself asleep in the arms of its nurse. It was impossible for Minna to extricate herself from her grasp without awaking her; and she could not, therefore, execute her hasty purpose, of donning her gown, and approaching the window to speak with Cleveland, who, she had no doubt, had resorted to this contrivance to procure an interview. The restraint was sufficiently provoking, for it was more than probable that her lover came to take his last farewell; but that Brenda, inimical as she seemed to be of late towards Cleveland, should awake and witness it, was a thought not to be endured.

There was a short pause, in which Minna endeavoured more than once, with as much gentleness as possible, to unclasp Brenda's arm from her neck; but whenever she attempted it, the slumberer muttered some little pettish sound, like a child disturbed in its sleep, which sufficiently showed that perseverance in the attempt would awaken her fully.

To her great vexation, therefore, Minna was compelled to remain still and silent; when her lover, as if determined upon gaining her ear by music of another strain, sung the following fragment of a sea-ditty:—

"Farewell! Farewell! the voice you hear,
Has left its last soft tone with you —
Its next must join the seaward cheer,
And shout among the shouting crew.
"The accents which I scarce could form
Beneath your frown's controlling check,
Must give the word, above the storm,
To cut the mast, and clear the wreck.
"The timid eye I dared not raise —
The hand that shook when press'd to thine,
Must point the guns upon the chase —
Must bid the deadly cutlass shine.
"To all I love, or hope, or fear —
Honour, or own, a long adieu!
To all that life has soft and dear,
Farewell! save memory of you!"^{12(c)}

He was again silent; and again she, to whom the serenade was addressed, strove in vain to arise without rousing her sister. It was impossible; and she had nothing before her but the unhappy thought that Cleveland was taking leave in his desolation, without a single glance, or a single word. He, too, whose temper was so fiery, yet who subjected his violent mood with such sedulous attention to her will — could she but have stolen a moment to say adieu — to caution him against new quarrels with Mertoun — to implore him to detach himself from such comrades as he had described — could she but have done this, who could say what effect such parting admonitions might have had upon his character — nay, upon the future events of his life?

Tantalized by such thoughts, Minna was about to make another and decisive effort, when she heard voices beneath the window, and thought she could distinguish that they were those of Cleveland and Mertoun, speaking in a sharp tone, which, at the same time, seemed cautiously suppressed, as if the speakers feared being overheard. Alarm now mingled with her former desire to rise from bed, and she accomplished at once the purpose which she had so often attempted in vain. Brenda's arm was unloosed from her sister's neck, without the sleeper receiving more alarm than provoked two or three unintelligible murmurs; while, with equal speed and silence, Minna put on some part of her dress, with the intention to steal to the window. But, ere she could accomplish this, the sound of the voices without was exchanged for that of blows and struggling, which terminated suddenly by a deep groan.

Terrified at this last signal of mischief, Minna sprung to the window, and endeavoured to open it, for the persons were so close under the walls of the house that she could not see them, save by putting her head out of the casement. The iron hasp was stiff and rusted, and, as generally happens, the haste with which she laboured to undo it only rendered the task more difficult. When it was accomplished, and Minna had eagerly thrust her body half out at the casement, those who had created the sounds which alarmed her were become invisible, excepting that she saw a shadow cross the moonlight, the substance of which must have been in the act of turning a corner, which concealed it from her sight. The shadow moved slowly, and seemed that of a man who supported another upon his shoulders; an indication which put the climax to Minna's agony of mind. The window was not above eight feet from the ground, and she hesitated not to throw herself from it hastily, and to pursue the object which had excited her terror.

But when she came to the corner of the buildings from which the shadow seemed to have been projected, she discovered nothing which could point out the way that the figure had gone; and, after a moment's consideration, became sensible that all attempts at pursuit would be alike wild and fruitless. Besides all the projections and recesses of the many-angled mansion, and its numerous offices — besides the various cellars, store-houses, stables, and so forth, which defied her solitary search, there was a range of low rocks, stretching down to the haven, and which were, in fact, a continuation of the ridge which formed its pier. These rocks had many indentures, hollows, and caverns, into any one of which the figure to which the shadow belonged might have retired with his fatal burden; for fatal, she feared, it was most likely to prove.

A moment's reflection, as we have said, convinced Minna of the folly of further pursuit. Her next thought was to alarm the family; but what tale had she to tell, and of whom was that tale to be told? — On the other hand, the wounded man — if indeed he were wounded — alas, if indeed he were not mortally wounded! — might not be past the reach of assistance; and, with this idea, she was about to raise her voice, when she was interrupted by that of Claud Halcro, who was returning apparently from the haven, and singing, in his manner, a scrap of an old Norse ditty, which might run thus in English:—

"And you shall deal the funeral dole;
Ay, deal it, mother mine,
To weary body, and to heavy soul,
The white bread and the wine.
"And you shall deal my horses of pride;
Ay, deal them, mother mine;
And you shall deal my lands so wide,
And deal my castles nine.
"But deal not vengeance for the deed,
And deal not for the crime;
The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's grace,
And the rest in God's own time."

The singular adaptation of these rhymes to the situation in which she found herself, seemed to Minna like a warning from Heaven. We are speaking of a land of omens and superstitions, and perhaps will scarce be understood by those whose limited imagination cannot conceive how strongly these operate upon the human mind during a certain progress of society. A line of Virgil, turned up casually, was received in the seventeenth century, and in the court of England,¹³ as an intimation of future events; and no wonder that a maiden of the distant and wild isles of Zetland should have considered as an injunction from Heaven, verses which happened to convey a sense analogous to her present situation.

"I will be silent," she muttered — "I will seal my lips —
'The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's grace,
And the rest in God's own time.'"

"Who speaks there?" said Claud Halcro, in some alarm; for he had not, in his travels in foreign parts, been able by any means to rid himself of his native superstitions. In the condition to which fear and horror had reduced her, Minna was at first unable to reply; and Halcro, fixing his eyes upon the female white

figure, which he saw indistinctly, (for she stood in the shadow of the house, and the morning was thick and misty,) began to conjure her in an ancient rhyme which occurred to him as suited for the occasion, and which had in its gibberish a wild and unearthly sound, which may be lost in the ensuing translation:—

“Saint Magnus control thee, that martyr of treason;
Saint Ronan rebuke thee, with rhyme and with reason;
By the mass of Saint Martin, the might of Saint Mary,
Be thou gone, or thy weird shall be worse if thou tarry!
If of good, go hence and hallow thee —
If of ill, let the earth swallow thee —
If thou’rt of air, let the grey mist fold thee —
If of earth, let the swart mine hold thee —
If a Pixie, seek thy ring —
If a Nixie, seek thy spring; —
If on middle earth thou’st been
Slave of sorrow, shame, and sin,
Hast eat the bread of toil and strife,
And dree’d the lot which men call life,
Begone to thy stone! for thy coffin is scant of thee,
The worm, thy playfellow, waits for the want of thee; —
Hence, houseless ghost! let the earth hide thee,
Till Michael shall blow the blast, see that there thou bide thee! —
Phantom, fly hence! take the Cross for a token,
Hence pass till Hallowmass! — my spell is spoken.”

“It is I, Halcro,” muttered Minna, in a tone so thin and low, that it might have passed for the faint reply of the conjured phantom.

“You! — you!” said Halcro, his tone of alarm changing to one of extreme surprise; “by this moonlight, which is waning, and so it is! — Who could have thought to find you, my most lovely Night, wandering abroad in your own element! — But you saw them, I reckon, as well as I? — bold enough in you to follow them, though.”

“Saw whom? — follow whom?” said Minna, hoping to gain some information on the subject of her fears and anxiety.

“The corpse-lights which danced at the haven,” replied Halcro; “they bode no good, I promise you — you wot well what the old rhyme says —

‘Where corpse-light
Dances bright,
Be it day or night,
Be it by light or dark,
There shall corpse lie stiff and stark.’

I went half as far as the haven to look after them, but they had vanished. I think I saw a boat put off, however — some one bound for the Haaf, I suppose. — I would we had good news of this fishing — there was Norna left us in anger — and then these corpse-lights! — Well, God help the while! I am an old man, and can but wish that all were well over. — But how now, my pretty Minna? tears in your eyes! — And now that I see you in the fair moonlight, barefooted, too, by Saint Magnus! — Were there no stockings of Zetland wool soft enough for these pretty feet and ankles, that glance so white in the moonbeam? — What, silent! — angry, perhaps,” he added, in a more serious tone, “at my nonsense? For shame, silly maiden! — Remember I am old enough to be your father, and have always loved you as my child.”

“I am not angry,” said Minna, constraining herself to speak — “but heard you nothing? — saw you nothing? — They must have passed you.”

“They?” said Claud Halcro; “what mean you by they? — is it the corpse-lights? — No, they did not pass by me, but I think they have passed by you, and blighted you with their influence, for you are as pale as a spectre. — Come, come, Minna,” he added, opening a side-door of the dwelling, “these moonlight walks are fitter for old poets than for young maidens — And so lightly clad as you are! Maiden, you should take care how you give yourself to the breezes of a Zetland night, for they bring more sleet than odours upon their wings. — But, maiden, go in; for, as glorious John says — or, as he does not say — for I cannot remember how his verse chimes — but, as I say myself, in a pretty poem, written when my muse was in her teens —

Menseful maiden ne’er should rise,
Till the first beam tinge the skies;
Silk-fringed eyelids still should close,
Till the sun has kiss’d the rose;
Maiden’s foot we should not view,
Mark’d with tiny print on dew,
Till the opening flowerets spread
Carpet meet for beauty’s tread —
Stay, what comes next? — let me see.”

When the spirit of recitation seized on Claud Halcro, he forgot time and place, and might have kept his companion in the cold air for half an hour, giving poetical reasons why she ought to have been in bed. But she interrupted him by the question, earnestly pronounced, yet in a voice which was scarcely articulate, holding Halcro, at the same time, with a trembling and convulsive grasp, as if to support herself from falling — “Saw you no one in the boat which put to sea but now?”

“Nonsense,” replied Halcro; “how could I see any one, when light and distance only enabled me to know that it was a boat, and not a grampus?”

“But there must have been some one in the boat?” repeated Minna, scarce conscious of what she said.

“Certainly,” answered the poet; “boats seldom work to windward of their own accord. — But come, this is all folly; and so, as the Queen says, in an old play, which was revived for the stage by rare Will D’Avenant, ‘To bed — to bed — to bed!’”

They separated, and Minna’s limbs conveyed her with difficulty, through several devious passages, to her own chamber, where she stretched herself cautiously beside her still sleeping sister, with a mind harassed with the most agonizing apprehensions. That she had heard Cleveland, she was positive — the tenor of the songs left her no doubt on that subject. If not equally certain that she had heard young Mertoun’s voice in hot quarrel with her lover, the impression to that effect was strong on her mind. The groan, with which the struggle seemed to terminate — the fearful indication from which it seemed that the conqueror had borne off the lifeless body of his victim — all tended to prove that some fatal event had concluded the contest. And which of the unhappy men had fallen? — which had met a bloody death? — which had achieved a fatal and a bloody victory? — These were questions to which the still small voice of interior conviction answered, that her lover Cleveland, from character, temper, and habits, was most likely to have been the survivor of the fray. She received from the reflection an involuntary consolation which she almost detested herself for admitting, when she recollected that it was at once darkened with her lover’s guilt, and embittered with the destruction of Brenda’s happiness for ever.

“Innocent, unhappy sister!” such were her reflections; “thou that art ten times better than I, because so unpretending — so unassuming in thine excellence! How is it possible that I should cease to feel a pang, which is only transferred from my bosom to thine?”

As these cruel thoughts crossed her mind, she could not refrain from straining her sister so close to her bosom, that, after a heavy sigh, Brenda awoke.

"Sister," she said, "is it you? — I dreamed I lay on one of those monuments which Claud Halcro described to us, where the effigy of the inhabitant beneath lies carved in stone upon the sepulchre. I dreamed such a marble form lay by my side, and that it suddenly acquired enough of life and animation to fold me to its cold, moist bosom — and it is yours, Minna, that is indeed so chilly. — You are ill, my dearest Minna! for God's sake, let me rise and call Euphane Fea. — What ails you? has Norna been here again?"

"Call no one hither," said Minna, detaining her; "nothing ails me for which any one has a remedy — nothing but apprehensions of evil worse than even Norna could prophesy. But God is above all, my dear Brenda; and let us pray to him to turn, as he only can, our evil into good."

They did jointly repeat their usual prayer for strength and protection from on high, and again composed themselves to sleep, suffering no word save "God bless you," to pass betwixt them, when their devotions were finished; thus scrupulously dedicating to Heaven their last waking words, if human frailty prevented them from commanding their last waking thoughts. Brenda slept first, and Minna, strongly resisting the dark and evil presentiments which again began to crowd themselves upon her imagination, was at last so fortunate as to slumber also.

The storm which Halcro had expected began about daybreak — a squall, heavy with wind and rain, such as is often felt, even during the finest part of the season, in these latitudes. At the whistle of the wind, and the clatter of the rain on the shingle-roofing of the fishers' huts, many a poor woman was awakened, and called on her children to hold up their little hands, and join in prayer for the safety of the dear husband and father, who was even then at the mercy of the disturbed elements. Around the house of Burgh-Westra, chimneys howled, and windows clashed. The props and rafters of the higher parts of the building, most of them formed out of wreck-wood, groaned and quivered, as fearing to be again dispersed by the tempest. But the daughters of Magnus Troil continued to sleep as softly and as sweetly as if the hand of Chantrey had formed them out of statuary-marble. The squall had passed away, and the sunbeams, dispersing the clouds which drifted to leeward, shone full through the lattice, when Minna first started from the profound sleep into which fatigue and mental exhaustion had lulled her, and, raising herself on her arm, began to recall events, which, after this interval of profound repose, seemed almost to resemble the baseless visions of the night. She almost doubted if what she recalled of horror, previous to her starting from her bed, was not indeed the fiction of a dream, suggested, perhaps, by some external sounds.

"I will see Claud Halcro instantly," she said; "he may know something of these strange noises, as he was stirring at the time."

With that she sprung from bed, but hardly stood upright on the floor, ere her sister exclaimed, "Gracious Heaven! Minna, what ails your foot — your ankle?"

She looked down, and saw with surprise, which amounted to agony, that both her feet, but particularly one of them, was stained with dark crimson, resembling the colour of dried blood.

Without attempting to answer Brenda, she rushed to the window, and cast a desperate look on the grass beneath, for there she knew she must have contracted the fatal stain. But the rain, which had fallen there in treble quantity, as well from the heavens, as from the eaves of the house, had washed away that guilty witness, if indeed such had ever existed. All was fresh and fair, and the blades of grass, overcharged and bent with rain-drops, glittered like diamonds in the bright morning sun.

While Minna stared upon the spangled verdure, with her full dark eyes fixed and enlarged to circles by the intensity of her terror, Brenda was hanging about her, and with many an eager enquiry, pressed to know whether or how she had hurt herself?

"A piece of glass cut through my shoe," said Minna, bethinking herself that some excuse was necessary to her sister; "I scarce felt it at the time."

"And yet see how it has bled," said her sister. "Sweet Minna," she added, approaching her with a wetted towel, "let me wipe the blood off — the hurt may be worse than you think of."

But as she approached, Minna, who saw no other way of preventing discovery that the blood with which she was stained had never flowed in her own veins, harshly and hastily repelled the proffered kindness. Poor Brenda, unconscious of any offence which she had given to her sister, drew back two or three paces on finding her service thus unkindly refused, and stood gazing at Minna with looks in which there was more of surprise and mortified affection than of resentment, but which had yet something also of natural displeasure.

"Sister," said she, "I thought we had agreed but last night, that, happen to us what might, we would at least love each other."

"Much may happen betwixt night and morning!" answered Minna, in words rather wrenched from her by her situation, than flowing forth the voluntary interpreters of her thoughts.

"Much may indeed have happened in a night so stormy," answered Brenda; "for see where the very wall around Euphane's plant-a-cruive has been blown down; but neither wind nor rain, nor aught else, can cool our affection, Minna."

"But that may chance," replied Minna, "which may convert it into"——

The rest of the sentence she muttered in a tone so indistinct, that it could not be apprehended; while, at the same time, she washed the blood-stains from her feet and left ankle. Brenda, who still remained looking on at some distance, endeavoured in vain to assume some tone which might re-establish kindness and confidence betwixt them.

"You were right," she said, "Minna, to suffer no one to help you to dress so simple a scratch — standing where I do, it is scarce visible."

"The most cruel wounds," replied Minna, "are those which make no outward show — Are you sure you see it at all?"

"O, yes!" replied Brenda, framing her answer as she thought would best please her sister; "I see a very slight scratch; nay, now you draw on the stocking, I can see nothing."

"You do indeed see nothing," answered Minna, somewhat wildly; "but the time will soon come that all — ay, all — will be seen and known."

So saying, she hastily completed her dress, and led the way to breakfast, where she assumed her place amongst the guests; but with a countenance so pale and haggard, and manners and speech so altered and so bewildered, that it excited the attention of the whole company, and the utmost anxiety on the part of her father Magnus Troil. Many and various were the conjectures of the guests, concerning a distemperature which seemed rather mental than corporeal. Some hinted that the maiden had been struck with an evil eye, and something they muttered about Norna of the Fitful-head; some talked of the departure of Captain Cleveland, and murmured, "it was a shame for a young lady to take on so after a landlouser, of whom no one knew any thing;" and this contemptuous epithet was in particular bestowed on the Captain by Mistress Baby Yellowley, while she was in the act of wrapping round her old skinny neck the very handsome overlayer (as she called it) wherewith the said Captain had presented her. The old Lady Glowrowrum had a system of her own, which she hinted to Mistress Yellowley, after thanking God that her own connexion with the Burgh-Westra family was by the lass's mother, who was a canny Scotswoman, like herself.

"For, as to these Troils, you see, Dame Yellowley, for as high as they hold their heads, they say that ken," (winking sagaciously,) "that there is a bee in their bonnet; — that Norna, as they call her, for it's not her right name neither, is at whiles far beside her right mind — and they that ken the cause, say the Fowd was some gate or other linked in with it, for he will never hear an ill word of her. But I was in Scotland then, or I might have kend the real cause, as weel as other folk. At ony rate there is a kind of wildness in the blood. Ye ken very weel daft folk dinna bide to be contradicted; and I'll say that for the Fowd — he likes to be contradicted as ill as ony man in Zetland. But it shall never be said that I said ony ill of the house that I am sae nearly connected wi'. Only ye will mind, dame, it is through the Sinclairs that we are akin, not through the Troils — and the Sinclairs are kend far and wide for a wise generation, dame. — But I see there is the stirrup-cup coming round."

"I wonder," said Mistress Baby to her brother, as soon as the Lady Glowrowrum turned from her, "what gars that muckle wife dame, dame, dame, that gate at me? She might ken the blude of the Clinkscales is as gude as ony Glowrowrum's amang them."

The guests, meanwhile, were fast taking their departure, scarcely noticed by Magnus, who was so much engrossed with Minna's indisposition, that, contrary to his hospitable wont, he suffered them to go away unsaluted. And thus concluded, amidst anxiety and illness, the festival of Saint John, as celebrated on that season at the house of Burgh-Westra; adding another caution to that of the Emperor of Ethiopia — with how little security man can reckon upon the days which he destines to happiness.

*But this sad evil which doth her infest,
Doth course of natural cause far exceed,
And housed is within her hollow breast,
That either seems some cursed witch's deed,
Or evill spright that in her doth such torment breed.*

FAIRY QUEEN, BOOK III., CANTO III.

The term had now elapsed, by several days, when Mordaunt Mertoun, as he had promised at his departure, should have returned to his father's abode at Jarlishof, but there were no tidings of his arrival. Such delay might, at another time, have excited little curiosity, and no anxiety; for old Swertha, who took upon her the office of thinking and conjecturing for the little household, would have concluded that he had remained behind the other guests upon some party of sport or pleasure. But she knew that Mordaunt had not been lately in favour with Magnus Troil; she knew that he proposed his stay at Burgh-Westra should be a short one, upon account of his father's health, to whom, notwithstanding the little encouragement which his filial piety received, he paid uniform attention. Swertha knew all this, and she became anxious. She watched the looks of her master, the elder Mertoun; but, wrapt in dark and stern uniformity of composure, his countenance, like the surface of a midnight lake, enabled no one to penetrate into what was beneath. His studies, his solitary meals, his lonely walks, succeeded each other in unvaried rotation, and seemed undisturbed by the least thought about Mordaunt's absence.

At length such reports reached Swertha's ear, from various quarters, that she became totally unable to conceal her anxiety, and resolved, at the risk of provoking her master into fury, or perhaps that of losing her place in his household, to force upon his notice the doubts which afflicted her own mind. Mordaunt's good-humour and goodly person must indeed have made no small impression on the withered and selfish heart of the poor old woman, to induce her to take a course so desperate, and from which her friend the Ranzelman endeavoured in vain to deter her. Still, however, conscious that a miscarriage in the matter, would, like the loss of Trinculo's bottle in the horse-pool, be attended not only with dishonour, but with infinite loss, she determined to proceed on her high emprise with as much caution as was consistent with the attempt.

We have already mentioned, that it seemed a part of the very nature of this reserved and unsocial being, at least since his retreat into the utter solitude of Jarlishof, to endure no one to start a subject of conversation, or to put any question to him, that did not arise out of urgent and pressing emergency. Swertha was sensible, therefore, that, in order to open the discourse favourably which she proposed to hold with her master, she must contrive that it should originate with himself.

To accomplish this purpose, while busied in preparing the table for Mr. Mertoun's simple and solitary dinner-meal, she formally adorned the table with two covers instead of one, and made all her other preparations as if he was to have a guest or companion at dinner.

The artifice succeeded; for Mertoun, on coming from his study, no sooner saw the table thus arranged, than he asked Swertha, who, waiting the effect of her stratagem as a fisher watches his ground-baits, was fiddling up and down the room, "Whether Mordaunt was returned from Burgh-Westra?"

This question was the cue for Swertha, and she answered in a voice of sorrowful anxiety, half real, half affected, "Na, na! — nae sic divot had dunted at their door. It wad be blithe news indeed, to ken that young Maister Mordaunt, puir dear bairn, were safe at hame."

"And if he be not at home, why should you lay a cover for him, you doting fool?" replied Mertoun, in a tone well calculated to stop the old woman's proceedings. But she replied, boldly, "that, indeed, somebody should take thought about Maister Mordaunt; a' that she could do was to have seat and plate ready for him when he came. But she thought the dear bairn had been ower lang awa; and, if she maun speak out, she had her ain fears when and whether he might ever come hame."

"Your fears!" said Mertoun, his eyes flashing as they usually did when his hour of ungovernable passion approached; "do you speak of your idle fears to me, who know that all of your sex, that is not fickleness, and folly, and self-conceit, and self-will, is a bundle of idiotical fears, vapours, and tremors? What are your fears to me, you foolish old hag?"

It is an admirable quality in womankind, that, when a breach of the laws of natural affection comes under their observation, the whole sex is in arms. Let a rumour arise in the street of a parent that has misused a child, or a child that has insulted a parent — I say nothing of the case of husband and wife, where the interest may be accounted for in sympathy — and all the women within hearing will take animated and decided part with the sufferer. Swertha, notwithstanding her greed and avarice, had her share of the generous feeling which does so much honour to her sex, and was, on this occasion, so much carried on by its impulse, that she confronted her master, and upbraided him with his hard-hearted indifference, with a boldness at which she herself was astonished.

"To be sure it wasna her that suld be fearing for her young maister, Maister Mordaunt, even although he was, as she might weel say, the very sea-calf of her heart; but ony other father, but his honour himsell, wad have had speerings made after the poor lad, and him gane this eight-days from Burgh-Westra, and naebody kend when or where he had gane. There wasna a bairn in the howff but was maining for him; for he made all their bits of boats with his knife; there wadna be a dry eye in the parish, if aught worse than weal should befall him — na, no ane, unless it might be his honour's ain."

Mertoun had been much struck, and even silenced, by the insolent volubility of his insurgent housekeeper; but, at the last sarcasm, he imposed on her silence in her turn with an audible voice, accompanied with one of the most terrific glances which his dark eye and stern features could express. But Swertha, who, as she afterwards acquainted the Ranzelman, was wonderfully supported during the whole scene, would not be controlled by the loud voice and ferocious look of her master, but proceeded in the same tone as before.

"His honour," she said, "had made an unco wark because a wheen bits of kists and duds, that naebody had use for, had been gathered on the beach by the poor bodies of the township; and here was the bravest lad in the country lost, and cast away, as it were, before his een, and nae are asking what was come o' him."

"What should come of him but good, you old fool," answered Mr. Mertoun, "as far, at least, as there can be good in any of the follies he spends his time in?"

This was spoken rather in a scornful than an angry tone, and Swertha, who had got into the spirit of the dialogue, was resolved not to let it drop, now that the fire of her opponent seemed to slacken.

"O ay, to be sure I am an auld fule — but if Maister Mordaunt should have settled down in the Roost, as mair than ae boat had been lost in that wearifu' squall the other morning — by good luck it was short as it was sharp, or naething could have lived in it — or if he were drowned in a loch coming hame on foot, or if he were killed by miss of footing on a craig — the haill island kend how venturesome he was — who," said Swertha, "will be the auld fule then?" And she added a pathetic ejaculation, that "God would protect the poor motherless bairn! for if he had had a mother, there would have been search made after him before now."

This last sarcasm affected Mertoun powerfully — his jaw quivered, his face grew pale, and he muttered to Swertha to go into his study, (where she was scarcely ever permitted to enter,) and fetch him a bottle which stood there.

"O ho!" quoth Swertha to herself, as she hastened on the commission, "my master knows where to find a cup of comfort to qualify his water with upon fitting occasions."

There was indeed a case of such bottles as were usually employed to hold strong waters, but the dust and cobwebs in which they were enveloped showed that they had not been touched for many years. With some difficulty Swertha extracted the cork of one of them, by the help of a fork — for corkscrew was there none at Jarlishof — and having ascertained by smell, and, in case of any mistake, by a moderate mouthful, that it contained wholesome Barbadoes-waters, she carried it into the room, where her master still continued to struggle with his faintness. She then began to pour a small quantity into the nearest cup that she could find, wisely judging, that, upon a person so much unaccustomed to the use of spirituous liquors, a little might produce a strong effect. But the patient signed to her impatiently to fill the cup, which might hold more than the third of an English pint measure, up to the very brim, and swallowed it down without hesitation.

"Now the saunts above have a care on us!" said Swertha; "he will be drunk as weel as mad, and wha is to guide him then, I wonder?"

But Mertoun's breath and colour returned, without the slightest symptom of intoxication; on the contrary, Swertha afterwards reported, that, "although she had always had a firm opinion in favour of a dram, yet she never saw one work such miracles — he spoke mair like a man of the middle world, than she had ever heard him since she had entered his service."

"Swertha," he said, "you are right in this matter, and I was wrong. — Go down to the Ranzelman directly, tell him to come and speak with me, without an instant's delay, and bring me special word what boats and people he can command; I will employ them all in the search, and they shall be plentifully rewarded."

Stimulated by the spur which maketh the old woman proverbially to trot, Swertha posted down to the hamlet, with all the speed of threescore, rejoicing that her sympathetic feelings were likely to achieve their own reward, having given rise to a quest which promised to be so lucrative, and in the profits whereof she was determined to have her share, shouting out as she went, and long before she got within hearing, the names of Niel Ronaldson, Sweyn Erickson, and the other friends and confederates who were interested in her mission. To say the truth, notwithstanding that the good dame really felt a deep interest in Mordaunt Mertoun, and was mentally troubled on account of his absence, perhaps few things would have disappointed her more than if he had at this moment started up in her path safe and sound, and rendered unnecessary, by his appearance, the expense and the bustle of searching after him.

Soon did Swertha accomplish her business in the village, and adjust with the senators of the township her own little share of per centage upon the profits likely to accrue on her mission; and speedily did she return to Jarlshof, with Niel Ronaldson by her side, schooling him to the best of her skill in all the peculiarities of her master.

"Aboon a' things," she said, "never make him wait for an answer; and speak loud and distinct, as if you were hailing a boat — for he downa bide to say the same thing twice over; and if he asks about distance, ye may make leagues for miles, for he kens naething about the face of the earth that he lives upon; and if he speak of siller, ye may ask dollars for shillings, for he minds them nae mair than slate-stanes."

Thus tutored, Niel Ronaldson was introduced into the presence of Mertoun, but was utterly confounded to find that he could not act upon the system of deception which had been projected. When he attempted, by some exaggeration of distance and peril, to enhance the hire of the boats, and of the men, (for the search was to be by sea and land,) he found himself at once cut short by Mertoun, who showed not only the most perfect knowledge of the country, but of distances, tides, currents, and all belonging to the navigation of those seas, although these were topics with which he had hitherto appeared to be totally unacquainted. The Ranzelman, therefore, trembled when they came to speak of the recompense to be afforded for their exertions in the search; for it was not more unlikely that Mertoun should be well informed of what was just and proper upon this head than upon others; and Niel remembered the storm of his fury, when, at an early period after he had settled at Jarlshof, he drove Swertha and Sweyn Erickson from his presence. As, however, he stood hesitating betwixt the opposite fears of asking too much or too little, Mertoun stopped his mouth, and ended his uncertainty, by promising him a recompense beyond what he dared have ventured to ask, with an additional gratuity, in case they returned with the pleasing intelligence that his son was safe.

When this great point was settled, Niel Ronaldson, like a man of conscience, began to consider earnestly the various places where search should be made after the young man; and having undertaken faithfully that the enquiry should be prosecuted at all the houses of the gentry, both in this and the neighbouring islands, he added, that, "after all, if his honour would not be angry, there was ane not far off, that, if any body dared speer her a question, and if she liked to answer it, could tell more about Maister Mordaunt than any body else could. — Ye will ken wha I mean, Swertha? Her that was down at the haven this morning." Thus he concluded, addressing himself with a mysterious look to the housekeeper, which she answered with a nod and a wink.

"How mean you?" said Mertoun; "speak out, short and open — whom do you speak of?"

"It is Norna of the Fitful-head," said Swertha, "that the Ranzelman is thinking about; for she has gone up to Saint Ringan's Kirk this morning on business of her own."

"And what can this person know of my son?" said Mertoun; "she is, I believe, a wandering madwoman, or impostor."

"If she wanders," said Swertha, "it is for nae lack of means at hame, and that is weel known — plenty of a' thing has she of her ain, forby that the Fowd himsell would let her want naething."

"But what is that to my son?" said Mertoun, impatiently.

"I dinna ken — she took unco pleasure in Maister Mordaunt from the time she first saw him, and mony a braw thing she gave him at ae time or another, forby the gowd chain that hangs about his bonny craig — folk say it is of fairy gold — I kenna what gold it is, but Bryce Snailsfoot says, that the value will mount to an hundred pounds English, and that is nae deaf nuts."

"Go, Ronaldson," said Mertoun, "or else send some one, to seek this woman out — if you think there be a chance of her knowing any thing of my son."

"She kens a' thing that happens in thae islands," said Niel Ronaldson, "muckle sooner than other folk, and that is Heaven's truth. But as to going to the kirk, or the kirkyard, to speer after her, there is not a man in Zetland will do it, for meed or for money — and that's Heaven's truth as weel as the other."

"Cowardly, superstitious fools!" said Mertoun. — "But give me my cloak, Swertha. — This woman has been at Burgh-Westra — she is related to Troil's family — she may know something of Mordaunt's absence, and its cause — I will seek her myself — She is at the Cross-kirk, you say?"

"No, not at the Cross-kirk, but at the auld Kirk of Saint Ringan's — it's a dowie bit, and far frae being canny; and if your honour," added Swertha, "wad walk by my rule, I wad wait until she came back, and no trouble her when she may be mair busied wi' the dead, for ony thing that we ken, than she is wi' the living. The like of her carena to have other folk's een on them when they are, gude sain us! doing their ain particular turns."

Mertoun made no answer, but throwing his cloak loosely around him, (for the day was misty, with passing showers,) and leaving the decayed mansion of Jarlshof, he walked at a pace much faster than was usual with him, taking the direction of the ruinous church, which stood, as he well knew, within three or four miles of his dwelling.

The Ranzelman and Swertha stood gazing after him in silence, until he was fairly out of ear-shot, when, looking seriously on each other, and shaking their sagacious heads in the same boding degree of vibration, they uttered their remarks in the same breath.

"Fools are aye fleet and fain," said Swertha.

"Fey folk run fast," added the Ranzelman; "and the thing that we are born to, we cannot win by. — I have known them that tried to stop folk that were fey. You have heard of Helen Emberson of Camsey, how she stopped all the boles and windows about the house, that her gudeman might not see daylight, and rise to the Haaf-fishing, because she feared foul weather; and how the boat he should have sailed in was lost in the Roost; and how she came back, rejoicing in her gudeman's safety — but ne'er may care, for there she found him drowned in his own masking-fat, within the wa's of his ain biggin; and moreover" —

But here Swertha reminded the Ranzelman that he must go down to the haven to get off the fishing-boats; "for both that my heart is sair for the bonny lad, and that I am fear'd he cast up of his ain accord before you are at sea; and, as I have often told ye, my master may lead, but he winna drive; and if ye do not his bidding, and get out to sea, the never a bodle of boat-hire will ye see."

"Weel, weel, good dame," said the Ranzelman, "we will launch as fast as we can; and by good luck, neither Clawson's boat, nor Peter Grot's, is out to the Haaf this morning, for a rabbit ran across the path as they were going on board, and they came back like wise men, kenning they wad be called to other wark this day. And a marvel it is to think, Swertha, how few real judicious men are left in this land. There is our great Udaller is weel eneugh when he is fresh, but he makes ower mony voyages in his ship and his yawl to be lang sae; and now, they say, his daughter, Mistress Minna, is sair out of sorts. — Then there is Norna kens muckle mair than other folk, but wise woman ye cannot call her. Our tacksman here, Maister Mertoun, his wit is sprung in the bowsprit, I doubt — his son is a daft gowk; and I ken few of consequence hereabouts — excepting always myself, and maybe you, Swertha — but what may, in some sense or other, be called fules."

"That may be, Niel Ronaldson," said the dame; "but if you do not hasten the faster to the shore, you will lose tide; and, as I said to my master some short time syne, wha will be the fule then?"

Chapter 25.

I do love these ancient ruins —

*We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history;
And, questionless, here, in this open court,
(Which now lies naked to the injuries
Of stormy weather,) some men lie interr'd,
Loved the Church so well, and gave so largely to it,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday; — but all things have their end —
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
Must have like death which we have.*

DUCHESS OF MALFY.

The ruinous church of Saint Ninian had, in its time, enjoyed great celebrity; for that mighty system of Roman superstition, which spread its roots over all Europe, had not failed to extend them even to this remote archipelago, and Zetland had, in the Catholic times, her saints, her shrines, and her relics, which, though little known elsewhere, attracted the homage, and commanded the observance, of the simple inhabitants of Thule. Their devotion to this church of Saint Ninian, or, as he was provincially termed, Saint Ringan, situated, as the edifice was, close to the sea-beach, and serving, in many points, as a landmark to their boats, was particularly obstinate, and was connected with so much superstitious ceremonial and credulity, that the reformed clergy thought it best, by an order of the Church Courts, to prohibit all spiritual service within its walls, as tending to foster the rooted faith of the simple and rude people around in saint-worship, and other erroneous doctrines of the Romish Church.

After the Church of Saint Ninian had been thus denounced as a seat of idolatry, and desecrated of course, the public worship was transferred to another church; and the roof, with its lead and its rafters, having been stripped from the little rude old Gothic building, it was left in the wilderness to the mercy of the elements. The fury of the uncontrolled winds, which howled along an exposed space, resembling that which we have described at Jarlshof, very soon choked up nave and aisle, and, on the north-west side, which was chiefly exposed to the wind, hid the outside walls more than half way up with mounds of drifted sand, over which the gable-ends of the building, with the little belfry, which was built above its eastern angle, arose in ragged and shattered nakedness of ruin.

Yet, deserted as it was, the Kirk of Saint Ringan still retained some semblance of the ancient homage formerly rendered there. The rude and ignorant fishermen of Dunrossness observed a practice, of which they themselves had wellnigh forgotten the origin, and from which the Protestant Clergy in vain endeavoured to deter them. When their boats were in extreme peril, it was common amongst them to propose to vow *anawmous*, as they termed it, that is, an alms, to Saint Ringan; and when the danger was over, they never failed to absolve themselves of their vow, by coming singly and secretly to the old church, and putting off their shoes and stockings at the entrance of the churchyard, walking thrice around the ruins, observing that they did so in the course of the sun. When the circuit was accomplished for the third time, the votary dropped his offering, usually a small silver coin, through the mullions of a lanceolated window, which opened into a side aisle, and then retired, avoiding carefully to look behind him till he was beyond the precincts which had once been hallowed ground; for it was believed that the skeleton of the saint received the offering in his bony hand, and showed his ghastly death's-head at the window into which it was thrown.

Indeed, the scene was rendered more appalling to weak and ignorant minds, because the same stormy and eddying winds, which, on the one side of the church, threatened to bury the ruins with sand, and had, in fact, heaped it up in huge quantities, so as almost to hide the side-wall with its buttresses, seemed in other places bent on uncovering the graves of those who had been laid to their long rest on the south-eastern quarter; and, after an unusually hard gale, the coffins, and sometimes the very corpses, of those who had been interred without the usual ceremonies, were discovered, in a ghastly manner, to the eyes of the living.

It was to this desolated place of worship that the elder Mertoun now proceeded, though without any of those religious or superstitious purposes with which the church of Saint Ringan was usually approached. He was totally without the superstitious fears of the country — nay, from the sequestered and sullen manner in which he lived, withdrawing himself from human society even when assembled for worship, it was the general opinion that he erred on the more fatal side, and believed rather too little than too much of that which the Church receives and enjoins to Christians.

As he entered the little bay, on the shore, and almost on the beach of which the ruins are situated, he could not help pausing for an instant, and becoming sensible that the scene, as calculated to operate on human feelings, had been selected with much judgment as the site of a religious house. In front lay the sea, into which two headlands, which formed the extremities of the bay, projected their gigantic causeways of dark and sable rocks, on the ledges of which the gulls, scouries, and other sea-fowl, appeared like flakes of snow; while, upon the lower ranges of the cliff, stood whole lines of cormorants, drawn up alongside of each other, like soldiers in their battle array, and other living thing was there none to see. The sea, although not in a tempestuous state, was disturbed enough to rush on these capes with a sound like distant thunder, and the billows, which rose in sheets of foam half way up these sable rocks, formed a contrast of colouring equally striking and awful.

Between the extremities, or capes, of these projecting headlands, there rolled, on the day when Mertoun visited the scene, a deep and dense aggregation of clouds, through which no human eye could penetrate, and which, bounding the vision, and excluding all view of the distant ocean, rendered it no unapt representation of the sea in the Vision of Mirza whose extent was concealed by vapours, and clouds, and storms. The ground rising steeply from the sea-beach, permitting no view into the interior of the country, appeared a scene of irretrievable barrenness, where scrubby and stunted heath, intermixed with the long bent, or coarse grass, which first covers sandy soils, were the only vegetables that could be seen. Upon a natural elevation, which rose above the beach in the very bottom of the bay, and receded a little from the sea, so as to be without reach of the waves, arose the half-buried ruin which we have already described, surrounded by a wasted, half-ruinous, and mouldering wall, which, breached in several places, served still to divide the precincts of the cemetery. The mariners who were driven by accident into this solitary bay, pretended that the church was occasionally observed to be full of lights, and, from that circumstance, were used to prophesy shipwrecks and deaths by sea.

As Mertoun approached near to the chapel, he adopted, insensibly, and perhaps without much premeditation, measures to avoid being himself seen, until he came close under the walls of the burial-ground, which he approached, as it chanced, on that side where the sand was blowing from the graves, in the manner we have described.

Here, looking through one of the gaps in the wall which time had made, he beheld the person whom he sought, occupied in a manner which assorted well with the ideas popularly entertained of her character, but which was otherwise sufficiently extraordinary.

She was employed beside a rude monument, on one side of which was represented the rough outline of a cavalier, or knight, on horseback, while, on the other, appeared a shield, with the armorial bearings so defaced as not to be intelligible; which escutcheon was suspended by one angle, contrary to the modern custom, which usually places them straight and upright. At the foot of this pillar was believed to repose, as Mertoun had formerly heard, the bones of Ribolt Troil, one of the remote ancestors of Magnus, and a man renowned for deeds of valorous emprise in the fifteenth century. From the grave of this warrior Norna of the Fitful-head seemed busied in shovelling the sand, an easy task where it was so light and loose; so that it seemed plain that she would shortly complete what the rude winds had begun, and make bare the bones which lay there interred. As she laboured, she muttered her magic song; for without the Runic rhyme no form of northern superstition was ever performed. We have perhaps preserved too many examples of these incantations; but we cannot help attempting to translate that which follows:—

“Champion, famed for warlike toil,
Art thou silent, Ribolt Troil?
Sand, and dust, and pebbly stones,
Are leaving bare thy giant bones.

Who dared touch the wild-bear's skin
Ye slumber'd on while life was in? —
A woman now, or babe, may come,
And cast the covering from thy tomb.
"Yet be not wrathful, Chief, nor blight
Mine eyes or ears with sound or sight!
I come not, with unhallow'd tread,
To wake the slumbers of the dead,
Or lay thy giant relics bare;
But what I seek thou well canst spare.
Be it to my hand allow'd
To shear a merk's weight from thy shroud;
Yet leave thee sheeted lead enough
To shield thy bones from weather rough.
"See, I draw my magic knife —
Never while thou wert in life
Laid'st thou still for sloth or fear,
When point and edge were glittering near;
See, the cerements now I sever —
Waken now, or sleep for ever!
Thou wilt not wake? the deed is done! —
The prize I sought is fairly won.
"Thanks, Ribolt, thanks — for this the sea
Shall smooth its ruffled crest for thee —
And while afar its billows foam,
Subside to peace near Ribolt's tomb.
Thanks, Ribolt, thanks — for this the might
Of wild winds raging at their height,
When to thy place of slumber nigh,
Shall soften to a lullaby.
"She, the dame of doubt and dread,
Norna of the Fitful-head,
Mighty in her own despite —
Miserable in her might;
In despair and frenzy great —
In her greatness desolate;
Wise, wickedest who lives,
Well can keep the word she gives."

While Norna chanted the first part of this rhyme, she completed the task of laying bare a part of the leaden coffin of the ancient warrior, and severed from it, with much caution and apparent awe, a portion of the metal. She then reverentially threw back the sand upon the coffin; and by the time she had finished her song, no trace remained that the secrets of the sepulchre had been violated.

Mertoun remained gazing on her from behind the churchyard wall during the whole ceremony, not from any impression of veneration for her or her employment, but because he conceived that to interrupt a madwoman in her act of madness, was not the best way to obtain from her such intelligence as she might have to impart. Meanwhile he had full time to consider her figure, although her face was obscured by her dishevelled hair, and by the hood of her dark mantle, which permitted no more to be visible than a Druidess would probably have exhibited at the celebration of her mystical rites. Mertoun had often heard of Norna before; nay, it is most probable that he might have seen her repeatedly, for she had been in the vicinity of Jarlishof more than once since his residence there. But the absurd stories which were in circulation respecting her, prevented his paying any attention to a person whom he regarded as either an impostor or a madwoman, or a compound of both. Yet, now that his attention was, by circumstances, involuntarily fixed upon her person and deportment, he could not help acknowledging to himself that she was either a complete enthusiast, or rehearsed her part so admirably, that no Pythoness of ancient times could have excelled her. The dignity and solemnity of her gesture — the sonorous, yet impressive tone of voice with which she addressed the departed spirit whose mortal relics she ventured to disturb, were such as failed not to make an impression upon him, careless and indifferent as he generally appeared to all that went on around him. But no sooner was her singular occupation terminated, than, entering the churchyard with some difficulty, by clambering over the disjointed ruins of the wall, he made Norna aware of his presence. Far from starting, or expressing the least surprise at his appearance in a place so solitary, she said, in a tone that seemed to intimate that he had been expected, "So — you have sought me at last?"

"And found you," replied Mertoun, judging he would best introduce the enquiries he had to make, by assuming a tone which corresponded to her own.

"Yes!" she replied, "found me you have, and in the place where all men must meet — amid the tabernacles of the dead."

"Here we must, indeed, meet at last," replied Mertoun, glancing his eyes on the desolate scene around, where headstones, half covered in sand, and others, from which the same wind had stripped the soil on which they rested, covered with inscriptions, and sculptured with the emblems of mortality, were the most conspicuous objects — "here, as in the house of death, all men must meet at length; and happy those that come soonest to the quiet haven."

"He that dares desire this haven," said Norna, "must have steered a steady course in the voyage of life. *I* dare not hope for such quiet harbour. Darest *thou* expect it? or has the course thou hast kept deserved it?"

"It matters not to my present purpose," replied Mertoun; "I have to ask you what tidings you know of my son Mordaunt Mertoun?"

"A father," replied the sibyl, "asks of a stranger what tidings she has of his son! How should I know aught of him? the cormorant says not to the mallard, where is my brood?"

"Lay aside this useless affectation of mystery," said Mertoun; "with the vulgar and ignorant it has its effect, but upon me it is thrown away. The people of Jarlishof have told me that you do know, or may know, something of Mordaunt Mertoun, who has not returned home after the festival of Saint John's, held in the house of your relative, Magnus Troil. Give me such information, if indeed ye have it to give; and it shall be recompensed, if the means of recompense are in my power."

"The wide round of earth," replied Norna, "holds nothing that I would call a recompense for the slightest word that I throw away upon a living ear. But for thy son, if thou wouldst see him in life, repair to the approaching Fair of Kirkwall, in Orkney."

"And wherefore thither?" said Mertoun; "I know he had no purpose in that direction."

"We drive on the stream of fate," answered Norna, "without oar or rudder. You had no purpose this morning of visiting the Kirk of Saint Ringan, yet you are here; — you had no purpose but a minute hence of being at Kirkwall, and yet you will go thither."

"Not unless the cause is more distinctly explained to me. I am no believer, dame, in those who assert your supernatural powers."

"You shall believe in them ere we part," said Norna. "As yet you know but little of me, nor shall you know more. But I know enough of you, and could convince you with one word that I do so."

"Convince me, then," said Mertoun; "for unless I am so convinced, there is little chance of my following your counsel."

"Mark, then," said Norna, "what I have to say on your son's score, else what I shall say to you on your own will banish every other thought from your memory. You shall go to the approaching Fair at Kirkwall; and, on the fifth day of the Fair, you shall walk, at the hour of noon, in the outer aisle of the Cathedral of Saint Magnus, and there you shall meet a person who will give you tidings of your son."

"You must speak more distinctly, dame," returned Mertoun, scornfully, "if you hope that I should follow your counsel. I have been fooled in my time by women, but never so grossly as you seem willing to gull me."

"Hearken, then!" said the old woman. "The word which I speak shall touch the nearest secret of thy life, and thrill thee through nerve and bone."

So saying, she whispered a word into Mertoun's ear, the effect of which seemed almost magical. He remained fixed and motionless with surprise, as, waving her arm slowly aloft, with an air of superiority and triumph, Norna glided from him, turned round a corner of the ruins, and was soon out of sight.

Mertoun offered not to follow, or to trace her. "We fly from our fate in vain!" he said, as he began to recover himself; and turning, he left behind him the desolate ruins with their cemetery. As he looked back from the very last point at which the church was visible, he saw the figure of Norna, muffled in her mantle, standing on the very summit of the ruined tower, and stretching out in the sea-breeze something which resembled a white pennon, or flag. A feeling of horror, similar to that excited by her last words, again thrilled through his bosom, and he hastened onwards with unwonted speed, until he had left the church of Saint Ninian, with its bay of sand, far behind him.

Upon his arrival at Jarlshof, the alteration in his countenance was so great, that Swertha conjectured he was about to fall into one of those fits of deep melancholy which she termed his dark hour.

"And what better could be expected," thought Swertha, "when he must needs go visit Norna of the Fitful-head, when she was in the haunted Kirk of Saint Ringan's?"

But without testifying any other symptoms of an alienated mind, than that of deep and sullen dejection, her master acquainted her with his intention to go to the Fair of Kirkwall — a thing so contrary to his usual habits, that the housekeeper wellnigh refused to credit her ears. Shortly after, he heard, with apparent indifference, the accounts returned by the different persons who had been sent out in quest of Mordaunt, by sea and land, who all of them returned without any tidings. The equanimity with which Mertoun heard the report of their bad success, convinced Swertha still more firmly, that, in his interview with Norna, that issue had been predicted to him by the sibyl whom he had consulted.

The township were yet more surprised, when their tacksman, Mr. Mertoun, as if on some sudden resolution, made preparations to visit Kirkwall during the Fair, although he had hitherto avoided sedulously all such places of public resort. Swertha puzzled herself a good deal, without being able to penetrate this mystery; and vexed herself still more concerning the fate of her young master. But her concern was much softened by the deposit of a sum of money, seeming, however moderate in itself, a treasure in her eyes, which her master put into her hands, acquainting her at the same time, that he had taken his passage for Kirkwall, in a small bark belonging to the proprietor of the island of Mousa.

Chapter 26.

*Nae langer she wept — her tears were a' spent —
Despair it was come, and she thought it content;
She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,
And she droop'd, like a lily broke down by the hail.*

CONTINUATION OF AULD ROBIN GRAY, ¹⁴(D)

The condition of Minna much resembled that of the village heroine in Lady Ann Lindsay's beautiful ballad. Her natural firmness of mind prevented her from sinking under the pressure of the horrible secret, which haunted her while awake, and was yet more tormenting during her broken and hurried slumbers. There is no grief so dreadful as that which we dare not communicate, and in which we can neither ask nor desire sympathy; and when to this is added the burden of a guilty mystery to an innocent bosom, there is little wonder that Minna's health should have sunk under the burden.

To the friends around, her habits and manners, nay, her temper, seemed altered to such an extraordinary degree, that it is no wonder that some should have ascribed the change to witchcraft, and some to incipient madness. She became unable to bear the solitude in which she formerly delighted to spend her time; yet when she hurried into society, it was without either joining in, or attending to, what passed. Generally she appeared wrapped in sad, and even sullen abstraction, until her attention was suddenly roused by some casual mention of the name of Cleveland, or of Mordaunt Mertoun, at which she started, with the horror of one who sees the lighted match applied to a charged mine, and expects to be instantly involved in the effects of the explosion. And when she observed that the discovery was not yet made, it was so far from being a consolation, that she almost wished the worst were known, rather than endure the continued agonies of suspense.

Her conduct towards her sister was so variable, yet uniformly so painful to the kind-hearted Brenda, that it seemed to all around, one of the strongest features of her malady. Sometimes Minna was impelled to seek her sister's company, as if by the consciousness that they were common sufferers by a misfortune of which she herself alone could grasp the extent; and then suddenly the feeling of the injury which Brenda had received through the supposed agency of Cleveland, made her unable to bear her presence, and still less to endure the consolation which her sister, mistaking the nature of her malady, vainly endeavoured to administer. Frequently, also, did it happen, that, while Brenda was imploring her sister to take comfort, she incautiously touched upon some subject which thrilled to the very centre of her soul; so that, unable to conceal her agony, Minna would rush hastily from the apartment. All these different moods, though they too much resembled, to one who knew not their real source, the caprices of unkind estrangement, Brenda endured with such prevailing and unruffled gentleness of disposition, that Minna was frequently moved to shed floods of tears upon her neck; and, perhaps, the moments in which she did so, though embittered by the recollection that her fatal secret concerned the destruction of Brenda's happiness as well as her own, were still, softened as they were by sisterly affection, the most endurable moments of this most miserable period of her life.

The effects of the alternations of moping melancholy, fearful agitation, and bursts of nervous feeling, were soon visible on the poor young woman's face and person. She became pale and emaciated; her eye lost the steady quiet look of happiness and innocence, and was alternately dim and wild, as she was acted upon by a general feeling of her own distressful condition, or by some quicker and more poignant sense of agony. Her very features seemed to change, and become sharp and eager, and her voice, which, in its ordinary tones, was low and placid, now sometimes sunk in indistinct mutterings, and sometimes was raised beyond the natural key, in hasty and abrupt exclamations. When in company with others, she was sullenly silent, and, when she ventured into solitude, was observed (for it was now thought very proper to watch her on such occasions) to speak much to herself.

The pharmacy of the islands was in vain resorted to by Minna's anxious father. Sages of both sexes, who knew the virtues of every herb which drinks the dew, and augmented those virtues by words of might, used while they prepared and applied the medicines, were attended with no benefit; and Magnus, in the utmost anxiety, was at last induced to have recourse to the advice of his kinswoman, Norna of the Fitful-head, although, owing to circumstances noticed in the course of the story, there was at this time some estrangement between them. His first application was in vain. Norna was then at her usual place of residence, upon the sea-coast, near the headland from which she usually took her designation; but, although Eric Scambester himself brought the message, she refused positively to see him, or to return any answer.

Magnus was angry at the slight put upon his messenger and message, but his anxiety on Minna's account, as well as the respect which he had for Norna's real misfortunes and imputed wisdom and power, prevented him from indulging, on the present occasion, his usual irritability of disposition. On the contrary, he

determined to make an application to his kinswoman in his own person. He kept his purpose, however, to himself, and only desired his daughters to be in readiness to attend him upon a visit to a relation whom he had not seen for some time, and directed them, at the same time, to carry some provisions along with them, as the journey was distant, and they might perhaps find their friend unprovided.

Unaccustomed to ask explanations of his pleasure, and hoping that exercise and the amusement of such an excursion might be of service to her sister, Brenda, upon whom all household and family charges now devolved, caused the necessary preparations to be made for the expedition; and, on the next morning, they were engaged in tracing the long and tedious course of beach and of moorland, which, only varied by occasional patches of oats and barley, where a little ground had been selected for cultivation, divided Burgh-Westra from the north-western extremity of the Mainland, (as the principal island is called,) which terminates in the cape called Fitful-head, as the south-western point ends in the cape of Sumburgh.

On they went, through wild and over wold, the Udaller bestriding a strong, square-made, well-barrelled palfrey, of Norwegian breed, somewhat taller, and yet as stout, as the ordinary ponies of the country; while Minna and Brenda, famed, amongst other accomplishments, for their horsemanship, rode two of those hardy animals, which, bred and reared with more pains than is usually bestowed, showed, both by the neatness of their form and their activity, that the race, so much and so carelessly neglected, is capable of being improved into beauty without losing any thing of its spirit or vigour. They were attended by two servants on horseback, and two on foot, secure that the last circumstance would be no delay to their journey, because a great part of the way was so rugged, or so marshy, that the horses could only move at a foot pace; and that, whenever they met with any considerable tract of hard and even ground, they had only to borrow from the nearest herd of ponies the use of a couple for the accommodation of these pedestrians.

The journey was a melancholy one, and little conversation passed, except when the Udaller, pressed by impatience and vexation, urged his pony to a quick pace, and again, recollecting Minna's weak state of health, slackened to a walk, and reiterated enquiries how she felt herself, and whether the fatigue was not too much for her. At noon the party halted, and partook of some refreshment, for which they had made ample provision, beside a pleasant spring, the pureness of whose waters, however, did not suit the Udaller's palate, until qualified by a liberal addition of right Nantz. After he had a second, yea and a third time, filled a large silver travelling-cup, embossed with a German Cupid smoking a pipe, and a German Bacchus emptying his flask down the throat of a bear, he began to become more talkative than vexation had permitted him to be during the early part of their journey, and thus addressed his daughters:—

"Well, children, we are within a league or two of Norna's dwelling, and we shall soon see how the old spell-mutterer will receive us."

Minna interrupted her father with a faint exclamation, while Brenda, surprised to a great degree, exclaimed, "Is it then to Norna that we are to make this visit? — Heaven forbid!"

"And wherefore should Heaven forbid?" said the Udaller, knitting his brows; "wherefore, I would gladly know, should Heaven forbid me to visit my kinswoman, whose skill may be of use to your sister, if any woman in Zetland, or man either, can be of service to her? — You are a fool, Brenda — your sister has more sense. — Cheer up, Minna! — thou wert ever wont to like her songs and stories, and used to hang about her neck, when little Brenda cried and ran from her like a Spanish merchantman from a Dutch caper."¹⁵

"I wish she may not frighten me as much to-day, father," replied Brenda, desirous of indulging Minna in her taciturnity, and at the same time to amuse her father by sustaining the conversation; "I have heard so much of her dwelling, that I am rather alarmed at the thought of going there uninvited."

"Thou art a fool," said Magnus, "to think that a visit from her kinsfolks can ever come amiss to a kind, hearty, Hialtland heart, like my cousin Norna's. — And, now I think on't, I will be sworn that is the reason why she would not receive Eric Scambester! — It is many a long day since I have seen her chimney smoke, and I have never carried you thither — She hath indeed some right to call me unkind. But I will tell her the truth — and that is, that though such be the fashion, I do not think it is fair or honest to eat up the substance of lone women-folks, as we do that of our brother Udallers, when we roll about from house to house in the winter season, until we gather like a snowball, and eat up all wherever we come."

"There is no fear of our putting Norna to any distress just now," replied Brenda, "for I have ample provision of every thing that we can possibly need — fish, and bacon, and salted mutton, and dried geese — more than we could eat in a week, besides enough of liquor for you, father."

"Right, right, my girl!" said the Udaller; "a well-found ship makes a merry voyage — so we shall only want the kindness of Norna's roof, and a little bedding for you; for, as to myself, my sea-cloak, and honest dry boards of Norway deal, suit me better than your eider-down cushions and mattresses. So that Norna will have the pleasure of seeing us without having a stiver's worth of trouble."

"I wish she may think it a pleasure, sir," replied Brenda.

"Why, what does the girl mean, in the name of the Martyr?" replied Magnus Troil; "dost thou think my kinswoman is a heathen, who will not rejoice to see her own flesh and blood? — I would I were as sure of a good year's fishing! — No, no! I only fear we may find her from home at present, for she is often a wanderer, and all with thinking over much on what can never be helped."

Minna sighed deeply as her father spoke, and the Udaller went on:—

"Dost thou sigh at that, my girl? — why, 'tis the fault of half the world — let it never be thine own, Minna."

Another suppressed sigh intimated that the caution came too late.

"I believe you are afraid of my cousin as well as Brenda is," said the Udaller, gazing on her pale countenance; "if so, speak the word, and we will return back again as if we had the wind on our quarter, and were running fifteen knots by the line."

"Do, for Heaven's sake, sister, let us return!" said Brenda, imploringly; "you know — you remember — you must be well aware that Norna can do nought to help you."

"It is but too true," said Minna, in a subdued voice; "but I know not — she may answer a question — a question that only the miserable dare ask of the miserable."

"Nay, my kinswoman is no miser," answered the Udaller, who only heard the beginning of the word; "a good income she has, both in Orkney and here, and many a fair lispund of butter is paid to her. But the poor have the best share of it, and shame fall the Zetlander who begrudges them; the rest she spends, I wot not how, in her journeys through the islands. But you will laugh to see her house, and Nick Strumpfer, whom she calls Pacolet — many folks think Nick is the devil; but he is flesh and blood, like any of us — his father lived in Græmsay — I shall be glad to see Nick again."

While the Udaller thus ran on, Brenda, who, in recompense for a less portion of imagination than her sister, was gifted with sound common sense, was debating with herself the probable effect of this visit on her sister's health. She came finally to the resolution of speaking with her father aside, upon the first occasion which their journey should afford. To him she determined to communicate the whole particulars of their nocturnal interview with Norna — to which, among other agitating causes, she attributed the depression of Minna's spirits — and then make himself the judge whether he ought to persist in his visit to a person so singular, and expose his daughter to all the shock which her nerves might possibly receive from the interview.

Just as she had arrived at this conclusion, her father, dashing the crumbs from his laced waistcoat with one hand, and receiving with the other a fourth cup of brandy and water, drank devoutly to the success of their voyage, and ordered all to be in readiness to set forward. Whilst they were saddling their ponies, Brenda, with some difficulty, contrived to make her father understand she wished to speak with him in private — no small surprise to the honest Udaller, who, though secret as the grave in the very few things where he considered secrecy as of importance, was so far from practising mystery in general, that his most important affairs were often discussed by him openly in presence of his whole family, servants included.

But far greater was his astonishment, when, remaining purposely with his daughter Brenda, a little in the wake, as he termed it, of the other riders, he heard the whole account of Norna's visit to Burgh-Westra, and of the communication with which she had then astounded his daughters. For a long time he could utter nothing but interjections, and ended with a thousand curses on his kinswoman's folly in telling his daughters such a history of horror.

"I have often heard," said the Udaller, "that she was quite mad, with all her wisdom, and all her knowledge of the seasons; and, by the bones of my namesake, the Martyr, I begin now to believe it most assuredly! I know no more how to steer than if I had lost my compass. Had I known this before we set out, I think I had remained at home; but now that we have come so far, and that Norna expects us"——

"Expects us, father!" said Brenda; "how can that be possible?"

"Why, that I know not — but she that can tell how the wind is to blow, can tell which way we are designing to ride. She must not be provoked; — perhaps she has done my family this ill for the words I had with her about that lad Mordaunt Mertoun, and if so, she can undo it again; — and so she shall, or I will know the cause wherefore. But I will try fair words first."

Finding it thus settled that they were to go forward, Brenda endeavoured next to learn from her father whether Norna's tale was founded in reality. He shook his head, groaned bitterly, and, in a few words, acknowledged that the whole, so far as concerned her intrigue with a stranger, and her father's death, of which she became the accidental and most innocent cause, was a matter of sad and indisputable truth. "For her infant," he said, "he could never, by any means, learn what became of it."

"Her infant!" exclaimed Brenda; "she spoke not a word of her infant!"

"Then I wish my tongue had been blistered," said the Udaller, "when I told you of it! — I see that, young and old, a man has no better chance of keeping a secret from you women, than an eel to keep himself in his hold when he is sniggled with a loop of horse-hair — sooner or later the fisher teazes him out of his hole, when he has once the noose round his neck."

"But the infant, my father," said Brenda, still insisting on the particulars of this extraordinary story, "what became of it?"

"Carried off, I fancy, by the blackguard Vaughan," answered the Udaller, with a gruff accent, which plainly betokened how weary he was of the subject.

"By Vaughan?" said Brenda, "the lover of poor Norna, doubtless! — what sort of man was he, father?"

"Why, much like other men, I fancy," answered the Udaller; "I never saw him in my life. — He kept company with the Scottish families at Kirkwall; and I with the good old Norse folk — Ah! if Norna had dwelt always amongst her own kin, and not kept company with her Scottish acquaintance, she would have known nothing of Vaughan, and things might have been otherwise — But then I should have known nothing of your blessed mother, Brenda — and that," he said, his large blue eyes shining with a tear, "would have saved me a short joy and a long sorrow."

"Norna could but ill have supplied my mother's place to you, father, as a companion and a friend — that is, judging from all I have heard," said Brenda, with some hesitation. But Magnus, softened by recollections of his beloved wife, answered her with more indulgence than she expected.

"I would have been content," he said, "to have wedded Norna at that time. It would have been the soldering of an old quarrel — the healing of an old sore. All our blood relations wished it, and, situated as I was, especially not having seen your blessed mother, I had little will to oppose their counsels. You must not judge of Norna or of me by such an appearance as we now present to you — She was young and beautiful, and I gamesome as a Highland buck, and little caring what haven I made for, having, as I thought, more than one under my lee. But Norna preferred this man Vaughan, and, as I told you before, it was, perhaps, the best kindness she could have done to me."

"Ah, poor kinswoman!" said Brenda. "But believe you, father, in the high powers which she claims — in the mysterious vision of the dwarf — in the"——

She was interrupted in these questions by Magnus, to whom they were obviously displeasing.

"I believe, Brenda," he said, "according to the belief of my forefathers — I pretend not to be a wiser man than they were in their time — and they all believed that, in cases of great worldly distress, Providence opened the eyes of the mind, and afforded the sufferers a vision of futurity. It was but a trimming of the boat, with reverence," — here he touched his hat reverentially; "and, after all the shifting of ballast, poor Norna is as heavily loaded in the bows as ever was an Orkneyman's yawl at the dog-fishing — she has more than affliction enough on board to balance whatever gifts she may have had in the midst of her calamity. They are as painful to her, poor soul, as a crown of thorns would be to her brows, though it were the badge of the empire of Denmark. And do not you, Brenda, seek to be wiser than your fathers. Your sister Minna, before she was so ill, had as much reverence for whatever was produced in Norse, as if it had been in the Pope's bull, which is all written in pure Latin."

"Poor Norna!" repeated Brenda; "and her child — was it never recovered?"

"What do I know of her child," said the Udaller, more gruffly than before, "except that she was very ill, both before and after the birth, though we kept her as merry as we could with pipe and harp, and so forth; — the child had come before its time into this bustling world, so it is likely it has been long dead. — But you know nothing of all these matters, Brenda; so get along for a foolish girl, and ask no more questions about what it does not become you to enquire into."

So saying, the Udaller gave his sturdy little palfrey the spur, and cantering forward over rough and smooth, while the pony's accuracy and firmness of step put all difficulties of the path at secure defiance, he placed himself soon by the side of the melancholy Minna, and permitted her sister to have no farther share in his conversation than as it was addressed to them jointly. She could but comfort herself with the hope, that, as Minna's disease appeared to have its seat in the imagination, the remedies recommended by Norna might have some chance of being effectual, since, in all probability, they would be addressed to the same faculty.

Their way had hitherto held chiefly over moss and moor, varied occasionally by the necessity of making a circuit around the heads of those long lagoons, called voes, which run up into and indent the country in such a manner, that, though the Mainland of Zetland may be thirty miles or more in length, there is, perhaps, no part of it which is more than three miles distant from the salt water. But they had now approached the north-western extremity of the isle, and travelled along the top of an immense ridge of rocks, which had for ages withstood the rage of the Northern Ocean, and of all the winds by which it is buffeted.

At length exclaimed Magnus to his daughters, "There is Norna's dwelling! — Look up, Minna, my love; for if this does not make you laugh, nothing will. — Saw you ever any thing but an osprey that would have made such a nest for herself as that is? — By my namesake's bones, there is not the like of it that living thing ever dwelt in, (having no wings and the use of reason,) unless it chanced to be the Frawa-Stack off Papa, where the King's daughter of Norway was shut up to keep her from her lovers — and all to little purpose, if the tale be true;¹⁶ for, maidens, I would have you to wot that it is hard to keep flax from the lowe."¹⁷

Chapter 27.

Thrice from the cavern's darksome womb

Her groaning voice arose;

And come, my daughter, fearless come,

And fearless tell thy woes!

MEIKLE.

The dwelling of Norna, though none but a native of Zetland, familiar, during his whole life, with every variety of rock-scenery, could have seen any thing ludicrous in this situation, was not unaptly compared by Magnus Troil to the eyry of the osprey, or sea-eagle. It was very small, and had been fabricated out of one of those dens which are called Burghs and Picts-houses in Zetland, and Duns on the mainland of Scotland and the Hebrides, and which seem to be the first effort at architecture — the connecting link betwixt a fox's hole in a cairn of loose stones, and an attempt to construct a human habitation out of the same materials, without the use of lime or cement of any kind — without any timber, so far as can be seen from their remains — without any knowledge of the arch or of the stair. Such as they are, however, the numerous remains of these dwellings — for there is one found on every headland, islet, or point of vantage, which could afford the inhabitants additional means of defence — tend to prove that the remote people by whom these Burghs were constructed, were a numerous race, and that the islands had then a much greater population, than, from other circumstances, we might have been led to anticipate.

The Burgh of which we at present speak had been altered and repaired at a later period, probably by some petty despot, or sea-rover, who, tempted by the security of the situation, which occupied the whole of a projecting point of rock, and was divided from the mainland by a rent or chasm of some depth, had built some additions to it in the rudest style of Gothic defensive architecture; — had plastered the inside with lime and clay, and broken out windows for the admission of light and air; and, finally, by roofing it over, and dividing it into stories, by means of beams of wreck-wood, had converted the whole into a tower, resembling a pyramidal dovecot, formed by a double wall, still containing within its thickness that set of circular galleries, or concentric rings, which is proper to all the forts of this primitive construction, and which seem to have constituted the only shelter which they were originally qualified to afford to their shivering inhabitants.¹⁸

This singular habitation, built out of the loose stones which lay scattered around, and exposed for ages to the vicissitudes of the elements, was as grey, weatherbeaten, and wasted, as the rock on which it was founded, and from which it could not easily be distinguished, so completely did it resemble in colour, and so little did it differ in regularity of shape, from a pinnacle or fragment of the cliff.

Minna's habitual indifference to all that of late had passed around her, was for a moment suspended by the sight of an abode, which, at another and happier period of her life, would have attracted at once her curiosity and her wonder. Even now she seemed to feel interest as she gazed upon this singular retreat, and recollected it was that of certain misery and probable insanity, connected, as its inhabitant asserted, and Minna's faith admitted, with power over the elements, and the capacity of intercourse with the invisible world.

"Our kinswoman," she muttered, "has chosen her dwelling well, with no more of earth than a sea-fowl might rest upon, and all around sightless tempests and raging waves. Despair and magical power could not have a fitter residence."

Brenda, on the other hand, shuddered when she looked on the dwelling to which they were advancing, by a difficult, dangerous, and precarious path, which sometimes, to her great terror, approached to the verge of the precipice; so that, Zetlander as she was, and confident as she had reason to be, in the steadiness and sagacity of the sure-footed pony, she could scarce suppress an inclination to giddiness, especially at one point, when, being foremost of the party, and turning a sharp angle of the rock, her feet, as they projected from the side of the pony, hung for an instant sheer over the ledge of the precipice, so that there was nothing save empty space betwixt the sole of her shoe and the white foam of the vexed ocean, which dashed, howled, and foamed, five hundred feet below. What would have driven a maiden of another country into delirium, gave her but a momentary uneasiness, which was instantly lost in the hope that the impression which the scene appeared to make on her sister's imagination might be favourable to her cure.

She could not help looking back to see how Minna should pass the point of peril, which she herself had just rounded; and could hear the strong voice of the Udaller, though to him such rough paths were familiar as the smooth sea-beach, call, in a tone of some anxiety, "Take heed, jarto,"¹⁹ as Minna, with an eager look, dropped her bridle, and stretched forward her arms, and even her body, over the precipice, in the attitude of the wild swan, when balancing itself, and spreading its broad pinions, it prepares to launch from the cliff upon the bosom of the winds. Brenda felt, at that instant, a pang of unutterable terror, which left a strong impression on her nerves, even when relieved, as it instantly was, by her sister recovering herself and sitting upright on her saddle, the opportunity and temptation (if she felt it) passing away, as the quiet steady animal which supported her rounded the projecting angle, and turned its patient and firm step from the verge of the precipice.

They now attained a more level and open space of ground, being the flat top of an isthmus of projecting rock, narrowing again towards a point where it was terminated by the chasm which separated the small peak, or *stack*, occupied by Norna's habitation, from the main ridge of cliff and precipice. This natural fosse, which seemed to have been the work of some convulsion of nature, was deep, dark, and irregular, narrower towards the bottom, which could not be distinctly seen, and widest at top, having the appearance as if that part of the cliff occupied by the building had been half rent away from the isthmus which it terminated — an idea favoured by the angle at which it seemed to recede from the land, and lean towards the sea, with the building which crowned it.

This angle of projection was so considerable, that it required recollection to dispel the idea that the rock, so much removed from the perpendicular, was about to precipitate itself seaward, with its old tower: and a timorous person would have been afraid to put foot upon it, lest an addition of weight, so inconsiderable as that of the human body, should hasten a catastrophe which seemed at every instant impending.

Without troubling himself about such fantasies, the Udaller rode towards the tower, and there dismounting along with his daughters, gave the ponies in charge to one of their domestics, with directions to disencumber them of their burdens, and turn them out for rest and refreshment upon the nearest heath. This done, they approached the gate, which seemed formerly to have been connected with the land by a rude drawbridge, some of the apparatus of which was still visible. But the rest had been long demolished, and was replaced by a stationary footbridge, formed of barrel-staves covered with turf, very narrow and ledgeless, and supported by a sort of arch, constructed out of the jaw-bones of the whale. Along this "brigg of dread" the Udaller stepped with his usual portly majesty of stride, which threatened its demolition and his own at the same time; his daughters trode more lightly and more safely after him, and the whole party stood before the low and rugged portal of Norna's habitation.

"If she should be abroad after all," said Magnus, as he plied the black oaken door with repeated blows; — "but if so, we will at least lie by a day for her return, and make Nick Strumpfer pay the demurrage in bland and brandy."

As he spoke, the door opened, and displayed, to the alarm of Brenda, and the surprise of Minna herself, a square-made dwarf, about four feet five inches high, with a head of most portentous size, and features correspondent — namely, a huge mouth, a tremendous nose, with large black nostrils, which seemed to have been slit upwards, blubber lips of an unconscionable size, and huge wall-eyes, with which he leared, sneered, grinned, and goggled on the Udaller as an old acquaintance, without uttering a single word. The young women could hardly persuade themselves that they did not see before their eyes the very demon Troll, who made such a distinguished figure in Norna's legend. Their father went on addressing this uncouth apparition in terms of such condescending friendship as the better sort apply to their inferiors, when they wish, for any immediate purpose, to conciliate or coax them — a tone, by the by, which generally contains, in its very familiarity, as much offence as the more direct assumption of distance and superiority.

"Ha, Nick! honest Nick!" said the Udaller, "here you are, lively and lovely as Saint Nicholas your namesake, when he is carved with an axe for the headpiece of a Dutch dogger. How dost thou do, Nick, or Pacolet, if you like that better? Nicholas, here are my two daughters, nearly as handsome as thyself thou seest."

Nick grinned, and did a clumsy obeisance by way of courtesy, but kept his broad misshapen person firmly placed in the doorway.

"Daughters," continued the Udaller, who seemed to have his reasons for speaking this Cerberus fair, at least according to his own notions of propitiation — "this is Nick Strumpfer, maidens, whom his mistress calls Pacolet, being a light-limbed dwarf, as you see, like him that wont to fly about, like a *Scourie*, on his wooden hobbyhorse, in the old storybook of Valentine and Orson, that you, Minna, used to read whilst you were a child. I assure you he can keep his mistress's counsel, and never told one of her secrets in his life — ha, ha, ha!"

The ugly dwarf grinned ten times wider than before, and showed the meaning of the Udaller's jest, by opening his immense jaws, and throwing back his head, so as to discover, that, in the immense cavity of his mouth, there only remained the small shrivelled remnant of a tongue, capable, perhaps, of assisting him in swallowing his food, but unequal to the formation of articulate sounds. Whether this organ had been curtailed by cruelty, or injured by disease, it was impossible to guess; but that the unfortunate being had not been originally dumb, was evident from his retaining the sense of hearing. Having made this horrible exhibition, he repaid the Udaller's mirth with a loud, horrid, and discordant laugh, which had something in it the more hideous that his mirth seemed to be excited by his own misery. The sisters looked on each other in silence and fear, and even the Udaller appeared disconcerted.

"And how now?" he proceeded, after a minute's pause. "When didst thou wash that throat of thine, that is about the width of the Pentland Frith, with a cup of brandy? Ha, Nick! I have that with me which is sound stuff, boy, ha!"

The dwarf bent his beetle-brows, shook his misshapen head, and made a quick sharp indication, throwing his right hand up to his shoulder with the thumb pointed backwards.

"What! my kinswoman," said the Udaller, comprehending the signal, "will be angry? Well, shalt have a flask to carouse when she is from home, old acquaintance; — lips and throats may swallow though they cannot speak."

Pacolet grinned a grim assent.

"And now," said the Udaller, "stand out of the way, Pacolet, and let me carry my daughters to see their kinswoman. By the bones of Saint Magnus, it shall be a good turn in thy way! — nay, never shake thy head, man; for if thy mistress be at home, see her we will."

The dwarf again intimated the impossibility of their being admitted, partly by signs, partly by mumbling some uncouth and most disagreeable sounds, and the Udaller's mood began to arise.

"Tittle tattle, man!" said he; "trouble not me with thy gibberish, but stand out of the way, and the blame, if there be any, shall rest with me."

So saying, Magnus Troil laid his sturdy hand upon the collar of the recusant dwarf's jacket of blue wadmaal, and, with a strong, but not a violent grasp, removed him from the doorway, pushed him gently aside, and entered, followed by his two daughters, whom a sense of apprehension, arising out of all which they saw and heard, kept very close to him. A crooked and dusky passage through which Magnus led the way, was dimly enlightened by a shot-hole, communicating with the interior of the building, and originally intended, doubtless, to command the entrance by a hagbut or culverin. As they approached nearer, for they walked slowly and with hesitation, the light, imperfect as it was, was suddenly obscured; and, on looking upward to discern the cause, Brenda was startled to observe the pale and obscurely-seen countenance of Norna gazing downward upon them, without speaking a word. There was nothing extraordinary in this, as the mistress of the mansion might be naturally enough looking out to see what guests were thus suddenly and unceremoniously intruding themselves on her presence. Still, however, the natural paleness of her features, exaggerated by the light in which they were at present exhibited — the immovable sternness of her look, which showed neither kindness nor courtesy of civil reception — her dead silence, and the singular appearance of every thing about her dwelling, augmented the dismay which Brenda had already conceived. Magnus Troil and Minna had walked slowly forward, without observing the apparition of their singular hostess.

Chapter 28.

*The witch then raised her wither'd arm,
And waved her wand on high,
And, while she spoke the mutter'd charm,
Dark lightning fill'd her eye.*

MEIKLE.

"This should be the stair," said the Udaller, blundering in the dark against some steps of irregular ascent — "This should be the stair, unless my memory greatly fail me; ay, and there she sits," he added, pausing at a half-open door, "with all her tackle about her as usual, and as busy, doubtless, as the devil in a gale of wind." As he made this irreverent comparison, he entered, followed by his daughters, the darkened apartment in which Norna was seated, amidst a confused collection of books of various languages, parchment scrolls, tablets and stones inscribed with the straight and angular characters of the Runic alphabet, and similar articles, which the vulgar might have connected with the exercise of the forbidden arts. There were also lying in the chamber, or hung over the rude and ill-contrived chimney, an old shirt of mail, with the headpiece, battle-axe, and lance, which had once belonged to it; and on a shelf were disposed, in great order, several of those curious stone-axes, formed of green granite, which are often found in those islands, where they are called thunderbolts by the common people, who usually preserve them as a charm of security against the effects of lightning. There was, moreover, to be seen amid the strange collection, a stone sacrificial knife, used perhaps for immolating human victims, and one or two of the brazen implements called Celts, the purpose of which has troubled the repose of so many antiquaries. A variety of other articles, some of which had neither name nor were capable of description, lay in confusion about the apartment; and in one corner, on a quantity of withered sea-weed, reposed what seemed, at first view, to be a large unshapely dog, but, when seen more closely, proved to be a tame seal, which it had been Norna's amusement to domesticate.

This uncouth favourite bristled up in its corner, upon the arrival of so many strangers, with an alertness similar to that which a terrestrial dog would have displayed on a similar occasion; but Norna remained motionless, seated behind a table of rough granite, propped up by misshapen feet of the same material, which, besides the old book with which she seemed to be busied, sustained a cake of the coarse unleavened bread, three parts oatmeal, and one the sawdust of fir, which is used by the poor peasants of Norway, beside which stood a jar of water.

Magnus Troil remained a minute in silence gazing upon his kinswoman, while the singularity of her mansion inspired Brenda with much fear, and changed, though but for a moment, the melancholy and abstracted mood of Minna, into a feeling of interest not unmixed with awe. The silence was interrupted by the Udaller, who, unwilling on the one hand to give his kinswoman offence, and desirous on the other to show that he was not daunted by a reception so singular, opened the conversation thus:—

"I give you good e'en, cousin Norna — my daughters and I have come far to see you."

Norna raised her eyes from her volume, looked full at her visitors, then let them quietly sit down on the leaf with which she seemed to be engaged.

"Nay, cousin," said Magnus, "take your own time — our business with you can wait your leisure. — See here, Minna, what a fair prospect here is of the cape, scarce a quarter of a mile off! you may see the billows breaking on it topmast high. Our kinswoman has got a pretty seal, too — Here, sealchie, my man, whew, whew!"

The seal took no further notice of the Udaller's advances to acquaintance, than by uttering a low growl.

"He is not so well trained," continued the Udaller, affecting an air of ease and unconcern, "as Peter MacRaw's, the old piper of Stornoway, who had a seal that flapped its tail to the tune of *Caberfae*, and acknowledged no other whatever.²⁰— Well, cousin," he concluded, observing that Norna closed her book, "are you going to give us a welcome at last, or must we go farther than our blood-relation's house to seek one, and that when the evening is wearing late apace?"

"Ye dull and hard-hearted generation, as deaf as the adder to the voice of the charmer," answered Norna, addressing them, "why come ye to me? You have slighted every warning I could give of the coming harm, and now that it hath come upon you, ye seek my counsel when it can avail you nothing."

"Look you, kinswoman," said the Udaller, with his usual frankness, and boldness of manner and accent, "I must needs tell you that your courtesy is something of the coarsest and the coldest. I cannot say that I ever saw an adder, in regard there are none in these parts; but touching my own thoughts of what such a thing may be, it cannot be termed a suitable comparison to me or to my daughters, and that I would have you to know. For old acquaintance, and certain other reasons, I do not leave your house upon the instant; but as I came hither in all kindness and civility, so I pray you to receive me with the like, otherwise we will depart, and leave shame on your inhospitable threshold."

"How," said Norna, "dare you use such bold language in the house of one from whom all men, from whom you yourself, come to solicit counsel and aid? They who speak to the Reimkennar, must lower their voice to her before whom winds and waves hush both blast and billow."

"Blast and billow may hush themselves if they will," replied the peremptory Udaller, "but that will not I. I speak in the house of my friend as in my own, and strike sail to none."

"And hope ye," said Norna, "by this rudeness to compel me to answer to your interrogatories?"

"Kinswoman," replied Magnus Troil, "I know not so much as you of the old Norse sagas; but this I know, that when kempies were wont, long since, to seek the habitations of the gall-dragons and spæe-women, they came with their axes on their shoulders, and their good swords drawn in their hands, and compelled the power whom they invoked to listen to and to answer them, ay were it Odin himself."

"Kinsman," said Norna, arising from her seat, and coming forward, "thou hast spoken well, and in good time for thyself and thy daughters; for hadst thou turned from my threshold without extorting an answer, morning's sun had never again shone upon you. The spirits who serve me are jealous, and will not be employed in aught that may benefit humanity, unless their service is commanded by the undaunted importunity of the brave and the free. And now speak, what wouldst thou have of me?"

"My daughter's health," replied Magnus, "which no remedies have been able to restore."

"Thy daughter's health?" answered Norna; "and what is the maiden's ailment?"

"The physician," said Troil, "must name the disease. All that I can tell thee of it is"——

"Be silent," said Norna, interrupting him, "I know all thou canst tell me, and more than thou thyself knowest. Sit down, all of you — and thou, maiden," she said, addressing Minna, "sit thou in that chair," pointing to the place she had just left, "once the seat of Giervada, at whose voice the stars hid their beams, and the moon herself grew pale."

Minna moved with slow and tremulous step towards the rude seat thus indicated to her. It was composed of stone, formed into some semblance of a chair by the rough and unskilful hand of some ancient Gothic artist.

Brenda, creeping as close as possible to her father, seated herself along with him upon a bench at some distance from Minna, and kept her eyes, with a mixture of fear, pity, and anxiety, closely fixed upon her. It would be difficult altogether to decipher the emotions by which this amiable and affectionate girl was agitated at the moment. Deficient in her sister's predominating quality of high imagination, and little credulous, of course, to the marvellous, she could not but entertain some vague and indefinite fears on her own account, concerning the nature of the scene which was soon to take place. But these were in a manner swallowed up in her apprehensions on the score of her sister, who, with a frame so much weakened, spirits so much exhausted, and a mind so susceptible of the impressions which all around her was calculated to excite, now sat pensively resigned to the agency of one, whose treatment might produce the most baneful effects upon such a subject.

Brenda gazed at Minna, who sat in that rude chair of dark stone, her finely formed shape and limbs making the strongest contrast with its ponderous and irregular angles, her cheek and lips as pale as clay, and her eyes turned upward, and lighted with the mixture of resignation and excited enthusiasm, which belonged to her disease and her character. The younger sister then looked on Norna, who muttered to herself in a low monotonous manner, as, gliding from one place to another, she collected different articles, which she placed one by one on the table. And lastly, Brenda looked anxiously to her father, to gather, if possible, from his countenance, whether he entertained any part of her own fears for the consequences of the scene which was to ensue, considering the state of Minna's health and spirits. But Magnus Troil seemed to have no such apprehensions; he viewed with stern composure Norna's preparations, and appeared to wait the event with the composure of one, who, confiding in the skill of a medical artist, sees him preparing to enter upon some important and painful operation, in the issue of which he is interested by friendship or by affection.

Norna, meanwhile, went onward with her preparations, until she had placed on the stone table a variety of miscellaneous articles, and among the rest, a small chafing-dish full of charcoal, a crucible, and a piece of thin sheet-lead. She then spoke aloud — "It is well that I was aware of your coming hither — ay, long before you yourself had resolved it — how should I else have been prepared for that which is now to be done? — Maiden," she continued, addressing Minna, "where lies thy pain?"

The patient answered, by pressing her hand to the left side of her bosom.

"Even so," replied Norna, "even so — 'tis the site of weal or woe. — And you, her father and her sister, think not this the idle speech of one who talks by guess — if I can tell thee ill, it may be that I shall be able to render that less severe, which may not, by any aid, be wholly amended. — The heart — ay, the heart — touch that, and the eye grows dim, the pulse fails, the wholesome stream of our blood is choked and troubled, our limbs decay like sapless sea-weed in a summer's sun; our better views of existence are past and gone; what remains is the dream of lost happiness, or the fear of inevitable evil. But the Reimkennar must to her work — well it is that I have prepared the means."

She threw off her long dark-coloured mantle, and stood before them in her short jacket of light-blue wadmaal, with its skirt of the same stuff, fancifully embroidered with black velvet, and bound at the waist with a chain or girdle of silver, formed into singular devices. Norna next undid the fillet which bound her grizzled hair, and shaking her head wildly, caused it to fall in dishevelled abundance over her face and around her shoulders, so as almost entirely to hide her features. She then placed a small crucible on the chafing-dish already mentioned — dropped a few drops from a vial on the charcoal below — pointed towards it her wrinkled forefinger, which she had previously moistened with liquid from another small bottle, and said with a deep voice, "Fire, do thy duty;" — and the words were no sooner spoken, than, probably by some chemical combination of which the spectators were not aware, the charcoal which was under the crucible became slowly ignited; while Norna, as if impatient of the delay, threw hastily back her disordered tresses, and, while her features reflected the sparkles and red light of the fire, and her eyes flashed from amongst her hair like those of a wild animal from its cover, blew fiercely till the whole was in an intense glow. She paused a moment from her toil, and muttering that the elemental spirit must be thanked, recited, in her usual monotonous, yet wild mode of chanting, the following verses:—

"Thou so needful, yet so dread,
With cloudy crest, and wing of red;
Thou, without whose genial breath
The North would sleep the sleep of death;
Who deign'st to warm the cottage hearth,
Yet hurl'st proud palaces to earth —
Brightest, keenest of the Powers,
Which form and rule this world of ours,
With my rhyme of Runic, I
Thank thee for thy agency."

She then severed a portion from the small mass of sheet-lead which lay upon the table, and, placing it in the crucible, subjected it to the action of the lighted charcoal, and, as it melted, she sung —

"Old Reimkennar, to thy art
Mother Hertha sends her part;
She, whose gracious bounty gives
Needful food for all that lives.
From the deep mine of the North,
Came the mystic metal forth,
Doom'd, amidst disjointed stones,
Long to cere a champion's bones,
Disinhumed my charms to aid —
Mother Earth, my thanks are paid."

She then poured out some water from the jar into a large cup, or goblet, and sung once more, as she slowly stirred it round with the end of her staff:—

"Girdle of our islands dear,
Element of Water, hear
Thou whose power can overwhelm
Broken mounds and ruin'd realm
On the lowly Belgian strand;
All thy fiercest rage can never
Of our soil a furlong sever
From our rock-defended land;
Play then gently thou thy part,
To assist old Norna's art."

She then, with a pair of pincers, removed the crucible from the chafing-dish, and poured the lead, now entirely melted, into the bowl of water, repeating at the same time —

"Elements, each other greeting,
Gifts and powers attend your meeting!"

The melted lead, spattering as it fell into the water, formed, of course, the usual combination of irregular forms which is familiar to all who in childhood have made the experiment, and from which, according to our childish fancy, we may have selected portions bearing some resemblance to domestic articles — the tools of mechanics, or the like. Norna seemed to busy herself in some such researches, for she examined the mass of lead with scrupulous attention, and detached it into different portions, without apparently being able to find a fragment in the form which she desired.

At length she again muttered, rather as speaking to herself than to her guests, "He, the Viewless, will not be omitted — he will have his tribute even in the work to which he gives nothing. — Stern compeller of the clouds, thou also shalt hear the voice of the Reimkennar."

Thus speaking, Norna once more threw the lead into the crucible, where, hissing and spattering as the wet metal touched the sides of the red-hot vessel, it was soon again reduced into a state of fusion. The sibyl meantime turned to a corner of the apartment, and opening suddenly a window which looked to the north-west, let in the fitful radiance of the sun, now lying almost level upon a great mass of red clouds, which, boding future tempest, occupied the edge of the horizon, and seemed to brood over the billows of the boundless sea. Turning to this quarter, from which a low hollow moaning breeze then blew, Norna addressed the Spirit of the Winds, in tones which seemed to resemble his own:—

"Thou, that over billows dark
Safely send'st the fisher's bark —
Giving him a path and motion
Through the wilderness of ocean;
Thou, that when the billows brave ye,
O'er the shelves canst drive the navy —
Did'st thou chafe as one neglected,
While thy brethren were respected?
To appease thee, see, I tear
This full grasp of grizzled hair;
Oft thy breath hath through it sung,
Softening to my magic tongue —
Now, 'tis thine to bid it fly
Through the wide expanse of sky,
'Mid the countless swarms to sail
Of wild-fowl wheeling on thy gale;
Take thy portion and rejoice —
Spirit, thou hast heard my voice!"

Norna accompanied these words with the action which they described, tearing a handful of hair with vehemence from her head, and strewing it upon the wind as she continued her recitation. She then shut the casement, and again involved the chamber in the dubious twilight, which best suited her character and occupation. The melted lead was once more emptied into the water, and the various whimsical conformations which it received from the operation were examined with great care by the sibyl, who at length seemed to intimate, by voice and gesture, that her spell had been successful. She selected from the fused metal a piece about the size of a small nut, bearing in shape a close resemblance to that of the human heart, and, approaching Minna, again spoke in song:—

"She who sits by haunted well,
Is subject to the Nixie's spell;
She who walks on lonely beach
To the Mermaid's charmed speech;
She who walks round ring of green,
Offends the peevish Fairy Queen;
And she who takes rest in the Dwarfie's cave,
A weary weird of woe shall have.

"By ring, by spring, by cave, by shore,
Minna Troil has braved all this and more:
And yet hath the root of her sorrow and ill
A source that's more deep and more mystical still."

Minna, whose attention had been latterly something disturbed by reflections on her own secret sorrow, now suddenly recalled it, and looked eagerly on Norna as if she expected to learn from her rhymes something of deep interest. The northern sibyl, meanwhile, proceeded to pierce the piece of lead, which bore the form of a heart, and to fix in it a piece of gold wire, by which it might be attached to a chain or necklace. She then proceeded in her rhyme —

"Thou art within a demon's hold,
More wise than Heims, more strong than Trollid;
No siren sings so sweet as he —
No fay springs lighter on the lea;
No elfin power hath half the art
To soothe, to move, to wring the heart —
Life-blood from the cheek to drain,
Drench the eye, and dry the vein.
Maiden, ere we farther go,
Dost thou note me, ay or no?"

Minna replied in the same rhythmical manner, which, in jest and earnest, was frequently used by the ancient Scandinavians —

"I mark thee, my mother, both word, look, and sign;
Speak on with the riddle — to read it be mine."

"Now, Heaven and every saint be praised!" said Magnus; "they are the first words to the purpose which she hath spoken these many days."

"And they are the last which she shall speak for many a month," said Norna, incensed at the interruption, "if you again break the progress of my spell. Turn your faces to the wall, and look not hitherward again, under penalty of my severe displeasure. You, Magnus Troil, from hard-hearted audacity of spirit, and you, Brenda, from wanton and idle disbelief in that which is beyond your bounded comprehension, are unworthy to look on this mystic work; and the glance of your eyes mingles with, and weakens, the spell; for the powers cannot brook distrust."

Unaccustomed to be addressed in a tone so peremptory, Magnus would have made some angry reply; but reflecting that the health of Minna was at stake, and considering that she who spoke was a woman of many sorrows, he suppressed his anger, bowed his head, shrugged his shoulders, assumed the prescribed posture, averting his head from the table, and turning towards the wall. Brenda did the same, on receiving a sign from her father, and both remained profoundly silent.

Norna then addressed Minna once more —

"Mark me! for the word I speak
Shall bring the colour to thy cheek.
This leaden heart, so light of cost,
The symbol of a treasure lost,
Thou shalt wear in hope and in peace,
That the cause of your sickness and sorrow may cease,
When crimson foot meets crimson hand
In the Martyrs' Aisle, and in Orkney-land."

Minna coloured deeply at the last couplet, intimating, as she failed not to interpret it, that Norna was completely acquainted with the secret cause of her sorrow. The same conviction led the maiden to hope in the favourable issue, which the sibyl seemed to prophesy; and not venturing to express her feelings in any manner more intelligible, she pressed Norna's withered hand with all the warmth of affection, first to her breast and then to her bosom, bedewing it at the same time with her tears.

With more of human feeling than she usually exhibited, Norna extricated her hand from the grasp of the poor girl, whose tears now flowed freely, and then, with more tenderness of manner than she had yet shown, she knotted the leaden heart to a chain of gold, and hung it around Minna's neck, singing, as she performed that last branch of the spell —

"Be patient, be patient, for Patience hath power
To ward us in danger, like mantle in shower;
A fairy gift you best may hold
In a chain of fairy gold;
The chain and the gift are each a true token,
That not without warrant old Norna has spoken;
But thy nearest and dearest must never behold them,
Till time shall accomplish the truths I have told them."

The verses being concluded, Norna carefully arranged the chain around her patient's neck so as to hide it in her bosom, and thus ended the spell — a spell which, at the moment I record these incidents, it is known, has been lately practised in Zetland, where any decline of health, without apparent cause, is imputed by the lower orders to a demon having stolen the heart from the body of the patient, and where the experiment of supplying the deprivation by a leaden one, prepared in the manner described, has been resorted to within these few years. In a metaphorical sense, the disease may be considered as a general one in all parts of the world; but, as this simple and original remedy is peculiar to the isles of Thule, it were unpardonable not to preserve it at length, in a narrative connected with Scottish antiquities.²¹

A second time Norna reminded her patient, that if she showed, or spoke of, the fairy gifts, their virtue would be lost — a belief so common as to be received into the superstitions of all nations. Lastly, unbuttoning the collar which she had just fastened, she showed her a link of the gold chain, which Minna instantly recognised as that formerly given by Norna to Mordaunt Mertoun. This seemed to intimate he was yet alive, and under Norna's protection; and she gazed on her with the most eager curiosity. But the sibyl imposed her finger on her lips in token of silence, and a second time involved the chain in those folds which modestly and closely veiled one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the kindest, bosoms in the world.

Norna then extinguished the lighted charcoal, and, as the water hissed upon the glowing embers, commanded Magnus and Brenda to look around, and behold her task accomplished.

Chapter 29.

*See yonder woman, whom our swains revere,
And dread in secret, while they take her counsel
When sweetheart shall be kind, or when cross dame shall die;
Where lurks the thief who stole the silver tankard,
And how the pestilent murrain may be cured. —
This sage adviser's mad, stark mad, my friend;
Yet, in her madness, hath the art and cunning
To wring fools' secrets from their inmost bosoms,
And pay enquirers with the coin they gave her.*

OLD PLAY.

It seemed as if Norna had indeed full right to claim the gratitude of the Udaller for the improved condition of his daughter's health. She once more threw open the window, and Minna, drying her eyes and advancing with affectionate confidence, threw herself on her father's neck, and asked his forgiveness for the trouble she had of late occasioned to him. It is unnecessary to add, that this was at once granted, with a full, though rough burst of parental tenderness, and as many close embraces as if his child had been just rescued from the jaws of death. When Magnus had dismissed Minna from his arms, to throw herself into those of her sister, and express to her, rather by kisses and tears than in words, the regret she entertained for her late wayward conduct, the Udaller thought proper, in the meantime, to pay his thanks to their hostess, whose skill had proved so efficacious. But scarce had he come out with, "Much respected kinswoman, I am but a plain old Norseman,"— when she interrupted him, by pressing her finger on her lips.

"There are those around us," she said, "who must hear no mortal voice, witness no sacrifice to mortal feelings — there are times when they mutiny even against me, their sovereign mistress, because I am still shrouded in the flesh of humanity. Fear, therefore, and be silent. I, whose deeds have raised me from the low-sheltered valley of life, where dwell its social wants and common charities; — I, who have bereft the Giver of the Gift which he gave, and stand alone on a cliff of immeasurable height, detached from earth, save from the small portion that supports my miserable tread — I alone am fit to cope with those sullen mates. Fear not, therefore, but yet be not too bold, and let this night to you be one of fasting and of prayer."

If the Udaller had not, before the commencement of the operation, been disposed to dispute the commands of the sibyl, it may be well believed he was less so now, that it had terminated to all appearance so fortunately. So he sat down in silence, and seized upon a volume which lay near him as a sort of desperate effort to divert ennui, for on no other occasion had Magnus been known to have recourse to a book for that purpose. It chanced to be a book much to his mind, being the well-known work of Olaus Magnus, upon the manners of the ancient Northern nations. The book is unluckily in the Latin language, and the Danske or Dutch were, either of them, much more familiar to the Udaller. But then it was the fine edition published in 1555, which contains representations of the war-chariots, fishing exploits, warlike exercises, and domestic employments of the Scandinavians, executed on copper-plates; and thus the information which the work refused to the understanding, was addressed to the eye, which, as is well known both to old and young, answers the purpose of amusement as well, if not better.

Meanwhile the two sisters, pressed as close to each other as two flowers on the same stalk, sat with their arms reciprocally passed over each other's shoulder, as if they feared some new and unforeseen cause of coldness was about to separate them, and interrupt the sister-like harmony which had been but just restored. Norna sat opposite to them, sometimes revolving the large parchment volume with which they had found her employed at their entrance, and sometimes gazing on the sisters with a fixed look, in which an interest of a kind unusually tender, seemed occasionally to disturb the stern and rigorous solemnity of her countenance. All was still and silent as death, and the subsiding emotions of Brenda had not yet permitted her to wonder whether the remaining hours of the

evening were to be passed in the same manner, when the scene of tranquillity was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the dwarf Pacolet, or, as the Udaller called him, Nicholas Strumpfer.

Norna darted an angry glance on the intruder, who seemed to deprecate her resentment by holding up his hands and uttering a babbling sound; then, instantly resorting to his usual mode of conversation, he expressed himself by a variety of signs made rapidly upon his fingers, and as rapidly answered by his mistress, so that the young women, who had never heard of such an art, and now saw it practised by two beings so singular, almost conceived their mutual intelligence the work of enchantment. When they had ceased their intercourse, Norna turned to Magnus Troil with much haughtiness, and said, "How, my kinsman? have you so far forgot yourself, as to bring earthly food into the house of the Reimkennar, and make preparations in the dwelling of Power and of Despair, for refection, and wassail, and revelry? — Speak not — answer not," she said; "the duration of the cure which was wrought even now, depends on your silence and obedience — bandy but a single look or word with me, and the latter condition of that maiden shall be worse than the first!"

This threat was an effectual charm upon the tongue of the Udaller, though he longed to indulge it in vindication of his conduct.

"Follow me, all of you," said Norna, striding to the door of the apartment, "and see that no one looks backwards — we leave not this apartment empty, though we, the children of mortality, be removed from it."

She went out, and the Udaller signed to his daughters to follow, and to obey her injunctions. The sibyl moved swifter than her guests down the rude descent, (such it might rather be termed, than a proper staircase,) which led to the lower apartment. Magnus and his daughters, when they entered the chamber, found their own attendants aghast at the presence and proceedings of Norna of the Fitful-head.

They had been previously employed in arranging the provisions which they had brought along with them, so as to present a comfortable cold meal, as soon as the appetite of the Udaller, which was as regular as the return of tide, should induce him to desire some refreshment; and now they stood staring in fear and surprise, while Norna, seizing upon one article after another, and well supported by the zealous activity of Pacolet, flung their whole preparations out of the rude aperture which served for a window, and over the cliff, from which the ancient Burgh arose, into the ocean, which raged and foamed beneath. *Vifda*, (dried beef,) hams, and pickled pork, flew after each other into empty space, smoked geese were restored to the air, and cured fish to the sea, their native elements indeed, but which they were no longer capable of traversing; and the devastation proceeded so rapidly, that the Udaller could scarce secure from the wreck his silver drinking cup; while the large leathern flask of brandy, which was destined to supply his favourite beverage, was sent to follow the rest of the supper, by the hands of Pacolet, who regarded, at the same time, the disappointed Udaller with a malicious grin, as if, notwithstanding his own natural taste for the liquor, he enjoyed the disappointment and surprise of Magnus Troil still more than he would have relished sharing his enjoyment.

The destruction of the brandy flask exhausted the patience of Magnus, who roared out, in a tone of no small displeasure, "Why, kinswoman, this is wasteful madness — where, and on what, would you have us sup?"

"Where you will," answered Norna, "and on what you will — but not in my dwelling, and not on the food with which you have profaned it. Vex my spirit no more, but begone every one of you! You have been here too long for my good, perhaps for your own."

"How, kinswoman," said Magnus, "would you make outcasts of us at this time of night, when even a Scotchman would not turn a stranger from the door? — Bethink you, dame, it is shame on our lineage for ever, if this squall of yours should force us to slip cables, and go to sea so scantily provided."

"Be silent, and depart," said Norna; "let it suffice you have got that for which you came. I have no harbourage for mortal guests, no provision to relieve human wants. There is beneath the cliff, a beach of the finest sand, a stream of water as pure as the well of Kildinguie, and the rocks bear dulse as wholesome as that of Guiodin; and well you wot, that the well of Kildinguie and the dulse of Guiodin will cure all maladies save Black Death."²²

"And well I wot," said the Udaller, "that I would eat corrupted sea-weeds like a starling, or salted seal's flesh like the men of Burraforth, or wilks, buckies, and lampits, like the poor sneaks of Stroma, rather than break wheat bread and drink red wine in a house where it is begrudged me. — And yet," he said, checking himself, "I am wrong, very wrong, my cousin, to speak thus to you, and I should rather thank you for what you have done, than upbraid you for following your own ways. But I see you are impatient — we will be all under way presently. — And you, ye knaves," addressing his servants, "that were in such hurry with your service before it was lacked, get out of doors with you presently, and manage to catch the ponies; for I see we must make for another harbour to-night, if we would not sleep with an empty stomach, and on a hard bed."

The domestics of Magnus, already sufficiently alarmed at the violence of Norna's conduct, scarce waited the imperious command of their master to evacuate her dwelling with all dispatch; and the Udaller, with a daughter on each arm, was in the act of following them, when Norna said emphatically, "Stop!" They obeyed, and again turned towards her. She held out her hand to Magnus, which the placable Udaller instantly folded in his own ample palm.

"Magnus," she said, "we part by necessity, but, I trust, not in anger?"

"Surely not, cousin," said the warm-hearted Udaller, wellnigh stammering in his hasty disclamation of all unkindness — "most assuredly not. I never bear ill-will to any one, much less to one of my own blood, and who has piloted me with her advice through many a rough tide, as I would pilot a boat betwixt Swona and Stroma, through all the waws, wells, and swelchies of the Pentland Frith."

"Enough," said Norna, "and now farewell, with such a blessing as I dare bestow — not a word more! — Maidens," she added, "draw near, and let me kiss your brows."

The sibyl was obeyed by Minna with awe, and by Brenda with fear; the one overmastered by the warmth of her imagination, the other by the natural timidity of her constitution. Norna then dismissed them, and in two minutes afterwards they found themselves beyond the bridge, and standing upon the rocky platform in front of the ancient Pictish Burgh, which it was the pleasure of this sequestered female to inhabit. The night, for it was now fallen, was unusually serene. A bright twilight, which glimmered far over the surface of the sea, supplied the brief absence of the summer's sun; and the waves seemed to sleep under its influence, so faint and slumberous was the sound with which one after another rolled on and burst against the foot of the cliff on which they stood. In front of them stood the rugged fortress, seeming, in the uniform greyness of the atmosphere, as aged, as shapeless, and as massive, as the rock on which it was founded. There was neither sight nor sound that indicated human habitation, save that from one rude shot-hole glimmered the flame of the feeble lamp by which the sibyl was probably pursuing her mystical and nocturnal studies, shooting upon the twilight, in which it was soon lost and confounded, a single line of tiny light; bearing the same proportion to that of the atmosphere, as the aged woman and her serf, the sole inhabitants of that desert, did to the solitude with which they were surrounded.

For several minutes, the party, thus suddenly and unexpectedly expelled from the shelter where they had reckoned upon spending the night, stood in silence, each wrapt in their own separate reflections. Minna, her thoughts fixed on the mystical consolation which she had received, in vain endeavoured to extract from the words of Norna a more distinct and intelligible meaning; and the Udaller had not yet recovered his surprise at the extrusion to which he had been thus whimsically subjected, under circumstances that prohibited him from resenting as an insult, treatment, which, in all other respects, was so shocking to the genial hospitality of his nature, that he still felt like one disposed to be angry, if he but knew how to set about it. Brenda was the first who brought matters to a point, by asking whither they were to go, and how they were to spend the night? The question, which was asked in a tone, that, amidst its simplicity, had something dolorous in it, entirely changed the train of her father's ideas; and the unexpected perplexity of their situation now striking him in a comic point of view, he laughed till his very eyes ran over, while every rock around him rang, and the sleeping sea-fowl were startled from their repose, by the loud, hearty explosions of his obstreperous hilarity.

The Udaller's daughters, eagerly representing to their father the risk of displeasing Norna by this unlimited indulgence of his mirth, united their efforts to drag him to a farther distance from her dwelling. Magnus, yielding to their strength, which, feeble as it was, his own fit of laughter rendered him incapable of resisting, suffered himself to be pulled to a considerable distance from the Burgh, and then escaping from their hands, and sitting down, or rather suffering himself to drop, upon a large stone which lay conveniently by the wayside, he again laughed so long and lustily, that his vexed and anxious daughters became afraid that there was something more than natural in these repeated convulsions.

At length his mirth exhausted both itself and the Udaller's strength. He groaned heavily, wiped his eyes, and said, not without feeling some desire to renew his obstreperous cachinnation, "Now, by the bones of Saint Magnus, my ancestor and namesake, one would imagine that being turned out of doors, at this time of night, was nothing short of an absolutely exquisite jest; for I have shaken my sides at it till they ache. There we sat, made snug for the night, and I made as sure of a good supper and a can as ever I had been of either — and here we are all taken aback! and then poor Brenda's doleful voice, and melancholy question, of 'What is to be done, and where are we to sleep?' In good faith, unless one of those knaves, who must needs torment the poor woman by their trencher-work before it was wanted, can make amends by telling us of some snug port under our lee, we have no other course for it but to steer through the twilight on the bearing of Burgh-Westra, and rough it out as well as we can by the way. I am sorry but for you, girls; for many a cruize have I been upon when we were on shorter allowance than we are like to have now. — I would I had but secured a morsel for you, and a drop for myself; and then there had been but little to complain of."

Both sisters hastened to assure the Udaller that they felt not the least occasion for food.

"Why, that is well," said Magnus: "and so being the case, I will not complain of my own appetite, though it is sharper than convenient. And the rascal, Nicholas Strumpfer — what a leer the villain gave me as he started the good Nantz into the salt-water! He grinned, the knave, like a seal on a skerry. — Had it not been for vexing my poor kinswoman Norna, I would have sent his misbegotten body, and misshapen jolterhead, after my bonny flask, as sure as Saint Magnus lies at Kirkwall!"

By this time the servants returned with the ponies, which they had very soon caught — these sensible animals finding nothing so captivating in the pastures where they had been suffered to stray, as inclined them to resist the invitation again to subject themselves to saddle and bridle. The prospects of the party were also considerably improved by learning that the contents of their sumpter-pony's burden had not been entirely exhausted — a small basket having fortunately escaped the rage of Norna and Pacolet, by the rapidity with which one of the servants had caught up and removed it. The same domestic, an alert and ready-witted fellow, had observed upon the beach, not above three miles distant from the Burgh, and about a quarter of a mile off their straight path, a deserted *Skio*, or fisherman's hut, and suggested that they should occupy it for the rest of the night, in order that the ponies might be refreshed, and the young ladies spend the night under cover from the raw evening air.

When we are delivered from great and serious dangers, our mood is, or ought to be, grave, in proportion to the peril we have escaped, and the gratitude due to protecting Providence. But few things raise the spirits more naturally, or more harmlessly, than when means of extrication from any of the lesser embarrassments of life are suddenly presented to us; and such was the case in the present instance. The Udaller, relieved from the apprehensions for his daughters suffering from fatigue, and himself from too much appetite and too little food, carolled Norse ditties, as he spurred Bergen through the twilight, with as much glee and gallantry as if the night-ride had been entirely a matter of his own free choice. Brenda lent her voice to some of his choruses, which were echoed in ruder notes by the servants, who, in that simple state of society, were not considered as guilty of any breach of respect by mingling their voices with the song. Minna, indeed, was as yet unequal to such an effort; but she compelled herself to assume some share in the general hilarity of the meeting; and, contrary to her conduct since the fatal morning which concluded the Festival of Saint John, she seemed to take her usual interest in what was going on around her, and answered with kindness and readiness the repeated enquiries concerning her health, with which the Udaller every now and then interrupted his carol. And thus they proceeded by night, a happier party by far than they had been when they traced the same route on the preceding morning, making light of the difficulties of the way, and promising themselves shelter and a comfortable night's rest in the deserted hut which they were now about to approach, and which they expected to find in a state of darkness and solitude.

But it was the lot of the Udaller that day to be deceived more than once in his calculations.

"And which way lies this cabin of yours, Laurie?" said the Udaller, addressing the intelligent domestic of whom we just spoke.

"Yonder it should be," said Laurence Scholey, "at the head of the voe — but, by my faith, if it be the place, there are folk there before us — God and Saint Ronan send that they be canny company!"

In truth there was a light in the deserted hut, strong enough to glimmer through every chink of the shingles and wreck-wood of which it was constructed, and to give the whole cabin the appearance of a smithy seen by night. The universal superstition of the Zetlanders seized upon Magnus and his escort.

"They are trows," said one voice.

"They are witches," murmured another.

"They are mermaids," muttered a third; "only hear their wild singing!"

All stopped; and, in effect, some notes of music were audible, which Brenda, with a voice that quivered a little, but yet had a turn of arch ridicule in its tone, pronounced to be the sound of a fiddle.

"Fiddle or fiend," said the Udaller, who, if he believed in such nightly apparitions as had struck terror into his retinue, certainly feared them not — "fiddle or fiend, may the devil fetch me if a witch cheats me out of supper to-night, for the second time!"

So saying, he dismounted, clenched his trusty truncheon in his hand, and advanced towards the hut, followed by Laurence alone; the rest of his retinue continuing stationary on the beach beside his daughters and the ponies.

Chapter 30.

*What ho, my jovial mates! come on! we'll frolic it
Like fairies frisking in the merry moonshine,
Seen by the curtal friar, who, from some christening
Or some blithe bridal, hies belated cell-ward —
He starts, and changes his bold bottle swagger
To churchman's pace professional, and, ransacking
His treacherous memory for some holy hymn,
Finds but the roundel of the midnight catch.*

OLD PLAY.

The stride of the Udaller relaxed nothing of its length or of its firmness as he approached the glimmering cabin, from which he now heard distinctly the sound of the fiddle. But, if still long and firm, his steps succeeded each other rather more slowly than usual; for, like a cautious, though a brave general, Magnus was willing to reconnoitre his enemy before assailing him. The trusty Laurence Scholey, who kept close behind his master, now whispered into his ear, "So help me, sir, as I believe that the ghaist, if ghaist it be, that plays so bravely on the fiddle, must be the ghaist of Maister Claud Halcro, or his wraith at least; for never was bow drawn across thairm which brought out the gude auld spring of 'Fair and Lucky,' so like his ain."

Magnus was himself much of the same opinion; for he knew the blithe minstrelsy of the spirited little old man, and hailed the hut with a hearty hilloah, which was immediately replied to by the cheery note of his ancient messmate, and Halcro himself presently made his appearance on the beach.

The Udaller now signed to his retinue to come up, while he asked his friend, after a kind greeting and much shaking of hands, "How the devil he came to sit there, playing old tunes in so desolate a place, like an owl whooping to the moon?"

"And tell me rather, Fowd," said Claud Halcro, "how you came to be within hearing of me? ay, by my word, and with your bonny daughters, too? — Jarto Minna and Jarto Brenda, I bid you welcome to these yellow sands — and there shake hands, as glorious John, or some other body, says, upon the same occasion. And how came you here like two fair swans, making day out of twilight, and turning all you step upon to silver?"

"You shall know all about them presently," answered Magnus; "but what messmates have you got in the hut with you? I think I hear some one speaking."

"None," replied Claud Halcro, "but that poor creature, the Factor, and my imp of a boy Giles. I — but come in — come in — here you will find us starving in comfort — not so much as a mouthful of sour sillocks to be had for love or money."

"That may be in a small part helped," said the Udaller; "for though the best of our supper is gone over the Fitful Craggs to the sealchies and the dog-fish, yet we have got something in the kit still. — Here, Laurie, bring up the *vifda*."

"*Jokul, jokul!*"²³ was Laurence's joyful answer; and he hastened for the basket.

"By the bicker of Saint Magnus,"²⁴ said Halcro, "and the burliest bishop that ever quaffed it for luck's sake, there is no finding your locker empty, Magnus! I believe sincerely that ere a friend wanted, you could, like old Luggie the warlock, fish up boiled and roasted out of the pool of Kibster."²⁵

"You are wrong there, Jarto Claud," said Magnus Troil, "for far from helping me to a supper, the foul fiend, I believe, has carried off great part of mine this blessed evening; but you are welcome to share and share of what is left." This was said while the party entered the hut.

Here, in a cabin which smelled strongly of dried fish, and whose sides and roof were jet-black with smoke, they found the unhappy Triptolemus Yellowley seated beside a fire made of dried sea-weed, mingled with some peats and wreck-wood; his sole companion a barefooted, yellow-haired Zetland boy, who acted occasionally as a kind of page to Claud Halcro, bearing his fiddle on his shoulder, saddling his pony, and rendering him similar duties of kindly observance. The disconsolate agriculturist, for such his visage betokened him, displayed little surprise, and less animation, at the arrival of the Udaller and his companions, until, after the party had drawn close to the fire, (a neighbourhood which the dampness of the night air rendered far from disagreeable,) the pannier was opened, and a tolerable supply of barley-bread and hung beef, besides a flask of brandy, (no doubt smaller than that which the relentless hand of Pacolet had emptied into the ocean,) gave assurances of a tolerable supper. Then, indeed, the worthy Factor grinned, chuckled, rubbed his hands, and enquired after all friends at Burgh-Westra.

When they had all partaken of this needful refreshment, the Udaller repeated his enquiries of Halcro, and more particularly of the Factor, how they came to be nestled in such a remote corner at such an hour of night.

"Maister Magnus Troil," said Triptolemus, when a second cup had given him spirits to tell his tale of woe, "I would not have you think that it is a little thing that disturbs me. I came of that grain that takes a sair wind to shake it. I have seen many a Martinmas and many a Whitsunday in my day, whilk are the times peculiarly grievous to those of my craft, and I could aye bide the bang; but I think I am like to be dung ower a'thegither in this damned country of yours — Gude forgie me for swearing — but evil communication corrupteth good manners."

"Now, Heaven guide us," said the Udaller, "what is the matter with the man? Why, man, if you will put your plough into new land, you must look to have it hank on a stone now and then — You must set us an example of patience, seeing you come here for our improvement."

"And the deil was in my feet when I did so," said the Factor; "I had better have set myself to improve the cairn on Clochnaben."

"But what is it, after all," said the Udaller, "that has befallen you? — what is it that you complain of?"

"Of every thing that has chanced to me since I landed on this island, which I believe was accursed at the very creation," said the agriculturist, "and assigned as a fitting station for sorners, thieves, whores, (I beg the ladies' pardon,) witches, bitches, and all evil spirits!"

"By my faith, a goodly catalogue!" said Magnus; "and there has been the day, that if I had heard you give out the half of it, I should have turned improver myself, and have tried to amend your manners with a cudgel."

"Bear with me," said the Factor, "Maister Fowd, or Maister Udaller, or whatever else they may call you, and as you are strong be pitiful, and consider the luckless lot of any inexperienced person who lights upon this earthly paradise of yours. He asks for drink, they bring him sour whey — no disparagement to your brandy, Fowd, which is excellent — You ask for meat, and they bring you sour sillocks that Satan might choke upon — You call your labourers together, and bid them work; it proves Saint Magnus's day, or Saint Ronan's day, or some infernal saint or other's — or else, perhaps, they have come out of bed with the wrong foot foremost, or they have seen an owl, or a rabbit has crossed their path, or they have dreamed of a roasted horse — in short, nothing is to be done — Give them a spade, and they work as if it burned their fingers; but set them to dancing, and see when they will tire of funking and flinging!"

"And why should they, poor bodies," said Claud Halcro, "as long as there are good fiddlers to play to them?"

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, shaking his head, "you are a proper person to uphold them in such a humour. Well, to proceed: — I till a piece of my best ground; down comes a sturdy beggar that wants a kailyard, or a plant-a-cruive, as you call it, and he claps down an enclosure in the middle of my bit shot of corn, as lightly as if he was baith laird and tenant; and gainsay him wha likes, there he dibbles in his kail-plants! I sit down to my sorrowful dinner, thinking to have peace and quietness there at least; when in comes one, two, three, four, or half-a-dozen of skelping long lads, from some foolery or anither, misca' me for barring my ain door against them, and eat up the best half of what my sister's providence — and she is not over bountiful — has allotted for my dinner! Then enters a witch, with an ellwand in her hand, and she raises the wind or lays it, whichever she likes, majors up and down my house as if she was mistress of it, and I am bounden to thank Heaven if she carries not the broadside of it away with her!"

"Still," said the Fowd, "this is no answer to my question — how the foul fiend I come to find you at moorings here?"

"Have patience, worthy sir," replied the afflicted Factor, "and listen to what I have to say, for I fancy it will be as well to tell you the whole matter. You must know, I once thought that I had gotten a small godsend, that might have made all these matters easier."

"How! a godsend! Do you mean a wreck, Master Factor?" exclaimed Magnus; "shame upon you, that should have set example to others!"

"It was no wreck," said the Factor; "but, if you must needs know, it chanced that as I raised an hearthstane in one of the old chambers at Stourburgh, (for my sister is minded that there is little use in mair fire-places about a house than one, and I wanted the stane to knock bear upon,) when, what should I light on but a horn full of old coins, silver the maist feck of them, but wi' a bit sprinkling of gold amang them too.²⁶ Weel, I thought this was a dainty windfa', and so thought Baby, and we were the mair willing to put up with a place where there were siccan braw nest-eggs — and we slade down the stane cannily over the horn, which seemed to me to be the very cornucopia, or horn of abundance; and for further security, Baby wad visit the room maybe twenty times in the day, and mysell at an orra time, to the boot of a' that."

"On my word, and a very pretty amusement," said Claud Halcro, "to look over a horn of one's own siller. I question if glorious John Dryden ever enjoyed such a pastime in his life — I am very sure I never did."

"Yes, but you forget, Jarto Claud," said the Udaller, "that the Factor was only counting over the money for my Lord the Chamberlain. As he is so keen for his Lordship's rights in whales and wrecks, he would not surely forget him in treasure-trove."

"A-hem! a-hem! a-he — he — hem!" ejaculated Triptolemus, seized at the moment with an awkward fit of coughing — "no doubt, my Lord's right in the matter would have been considered, being in the hand of one, though I say it, as just as can be found in Angus-shire, let alone the Mearns. But mark what happened of late! One day, as I went up to see that all was safe and snug, and just to count out the share that should have been his Lordship's — for surely the labourer, as one may call the finder, is worthy of his hire — nay, some learned men say, that when the finder, in point of trust and in point of power, representeth the *dominus*, or lord superior, he taketh the whole; but let that pass, as a kittle question in *apicibus juris*, as we wont to say at Saint Andrews — Well, sir and ladies, when I went to the upper chamber, what should I see but an ugsome, ill-shaped, and most uncouth dwarf, that wanted but hoofs and horns to have made an utter devil of him, counting over the very hornful of siller! I am no timorous man, Master Fowd, but, judging that I should proceed with caution in such a matter — for I had reason to believe that there was devilry in it — I accosted him in Latin, (whilk it is maist becoming to speak to aught whilk taketh upon it as a goblin,) and conjured him in *nomine*, and so forth, with such words as my poor learning could furnish of a suddenty, whilk, to say truth, were not so many, nor altogether so purely latineezed as might have been, had I not been few years at college, and many at the pleugh. Well, sirs, he started at first, as one that heareth that which he expects not; but presently recovering himself, he wawls on me with his grey een, like a wild-cat, and opens his mouth, whilk resembled the mouth of an oven, for the deil a tongue he had in it, that I could spy, and took upon his ugly self, altogether the air and bearing of a bull-dog, whilk I have seen loosed at a fair upon a mad staig;²⁷ whereupon I was something daunted, and withdrew myself to call upon sister Baby, who fears neither dog nor devil, when there is in question the little penny siller. And truly she raise to the fray as I hae seen the Lindsays and Ogilvies bristle up, when Donald MacDonnoch, or the like, made a start down frae the Highlands on the braes of Islay. But an auld useless carline, called Tronda Dronsdaughter, (they might call her Drone the sell of her, without farther addition,) flung

herself right in my sister's gate, and yelocked and skirled, that you would have thought her a whole generation of hounds; whereupon I judged it best to make ae yoking of it, and stop the pleugh until I got my sister's assistance. Whilk when I had done, and we mounted the stair to the apartment in which the said dwarf, devil, or other apparition, was to be seen, dwarf, horn, and siller, were as clean gane as if the cat had lickit the place where I saw them."

Here Triptolemus paused in his extraordinary narration, while the rest of the party looked upon each other in surprise, and the Udaller muttered to Claud Halcro — "By all tokens, this must have been either the devil or Nicholas Strumpfer; and if it were him, he is more of a goblin than e'er I gave him credit for, and shall be apt to rate him as such in future." Then, addressing the Factor, he enquired — "Saw ye nought how this dwarf of yours parted company?"

"As I shall answer it, no," replied Triptolemus, with a cautious look around him, as if daunted by the recollection; "neither I, nor Baby, who had her wits more about her, not having seen this unseemly vision, could perceive any way by whilk he made evasion. Only Tronda said she saw him flee forth of the window of the west roundel of the auld house, upon a dragon, as she averred. But, as the dragon is held a fabulous animal, I suld pronounce her averment to rest upon *deceptio visus*."

"But, may we not ask farther," said Brenda, stimulated by curiosity to know as much of her cousin Norna's family as was possible, "how all this operated upon Master Yellowley, so as to occasion his being in this place at so unseasonable an hour?"

"Seasonable it must be, Mistress Brenda, since it brought us into your sweet company," answered Claud Halcro, whose mercurial brain far outstripped the slow conceptions of the agriculturist, and who became impatient of being so long silent. "To say the truth, it was I, Mistress Brenda, who recommended to our friend the Factor, whose house I chanced to call at just after this mischance, (and where, by the way, owing doubtless to the hurry of their spirits, I was but poorly received,) to make a visit to our other friend at Fitful-head, well judging from certain points of the story, at which my other and more particular friend than either" (looking at Magnus) "may chance to form a guess, that they who break a head are the best to find a plaster. And as our friend the Factor scrupled travelling on horseback, in respect of some tumbles from our ponies" —

"Which are incarnate devils," said Triptolemus, aloud, muttering under his breath, "like every live thing that I have found in Zetland."

"Well, Fowd," continued Halcro, "I undertook to carry him to Fitful-head in my little boat, which Giles and I can manage as if it were an Admiral's barge full manned; and Master Triptolemus Yellowley will tell you how seaman-like I piloted him to the little haven, within a quarter of a mile of Norna's dwelling."

"I wish to Heaven you had brought me as safe back again," said the Factor.

"Why, to be sure," replied the minstrel, "I am, as glorious John says —

'A daring pilot in extremity,

Pleased with the danger when the waves go high,

I seek the storm — but, for a calm unfit,

Will steer too near the sands, to show my wit."

"I showed little wit in intrusting myself to your charge," said Triptolemus; "and you still less when you upset the boat at the throat of the voe, as you call it, when even the poor bairn, that was mair than half drowned, told you that you were carrying too much sail; and then ye wad fasten the rape to the bit stick on the boat-side, that ye might have time to play on the fiddle."

"What!" said the Udaller, "make fast the sheets to the thwart? a most unseasonable practice, Claud Halcro."

"And sae came of it," replied the agriculturist; "for the neist blast (and we are never lang without ane in these parts) whomled us as a gudewife would whomle a bowie, and ne'er a thing wad Maister Halcro save but his fiddle. The puir bairn swam out like a water-spaniel, and I swattered hard for my life, wi' the help of ane of the oars; and here we are, comfortless creatures, that, till a good wind blew you here, had naething to eat but a mouthful of Norway rusk, that has mair sawdust than rye-meal in it, and tastes liker turpentine than any thing else."

"I thought we heard you very merry," said Brenda, "as we came along the beach."

"Ye heard a fiddle, Mistress Brenda," said the Factor; "and maybe ye may think there can be nae dearth, miss, where that is skirling. But then it was Maister Claud Halcro's fiddle, whilk, I am apt to think, wad skirl at his father's deathbed, or at his ain, sae lang as his fingers could pinch the thairm. And it was nae sma' aggravation to my misfortune to have him bumming a' sorts of springs — Norse and Scots, Highland and Lawland, English and Italian, in my lug, as if nothing had happened that was amiss, and we all in such stress and perplexity."

"Why, I told you sorrow would never right the boat, Factor," said the thoughtless minstrel, "and I did my best to make you merry; if I failed, it was neither my fault nor my fiddle's. I have drawn the bow across it before glorious John Dryden himself."

"I will hear no stories about glorious John Dryden," answered the Udaller, who dreaded Halcro's narratives as much as Triptolemus did his music — "I will hear nought of him, but one story to every three bowls of punch — it is our old paction, you know. But tell me, instead, what said Norna to you about your errand?"

"Ay, there was anither fine upshot," said Master Yellowley. "She wadna look at us, or listen to us; only she bothered our acquaintance, Master Halcro here, who thought he could have sae much to say wi' her, with about a score of questions about your family and household estate, Master Magnus Troil; and when she had gotten a' she wanted out of him, I thought she wad hae dung him ower the craig, like an empty peacod."

"And for yourself?" said the Udaller.

"She wadna listen to my story, nor hear sae much as a word that I had to say," answered Triptolemus; "and sae much for them that seek to witches and familiar spirits!"

"You needed not to have had recourse to Norna's wisdom, Master Factor," said Minna, not unwilling, perhaps, to stop his railing against the friend who had so lately rendered her service; "the youngest child in Orkney could have told you, that fairy treasures, if they are not wisely employed for the good of others, as well as of those to whom they are imparted, do not dwell long with their possessors."

"Your humble servant to command, Mistress Minnie," said Triptolemus; "I thank ye for the hint — and I am blithe that you have gotten your wits — I beg pardon, I meant your health — into the barn-yard again. For the treasure, I neither used nor abused it — they that live in the house with my sister Baby wad find it hard to do either! — and as for speaking of it, whilk they say muckle offends them whom we in Scotland call Good Neighbours, and you call Drows, the face of the auld Norse kings on the coins themselves, might have spoken as much about it as ever I did."

"The Factor," said Claud Halcro, not unwilling to seize the opportunity of revenging himself on Triptolemus, for disgracing his seamanship and disparaging his music — "The Factor was so scrupulous, as to keep the thing quiet even from his master, the Lord Chamberlain; but, now that the matter has ta'en wind, he is likely to have to account to his master for that which is no longer in his possession; for the Lord Chamberlain will be in no hurry, I think, to believe the story of the dwarf. Neither do I think" (winking to the Udaller) "that Norna gave credit to a word of so odd a story; and I dare say that was the reason that she received us, I must needs say, in a very dry manner. I rather think she knew that Triptolemus, our friend here, had found some other hiding-hole for the money, and that the story of the goblin was all his own invention. For my part, I will never believe there was such a dwarf to be seen as the creature Master Yellowley describes, until I set my own eyes on him."

"Then you may do so at this moment," said the Factor; "for, by — —" (he muttered a deep asseveration as he sprung on his feet in great horror,) "there the creature is!"

All turned their eyes in the direction in which he pointed, and saw the hideous misshapen figure of Pacolet, with his eyes fixed and glaring at them through the smoke. He had stolen upon their conversation unperceived, until the Factor's eye lighted upon him in the manner we have described. There was something so ghastly in his sudden and unexpected appearance, that even the Udaller, to whom his form was familiar, could not help starting. Neither pleased with himself for having testified this degree of emotion, however slight, nor with the dwarf who had given cause to it, Magnus asked him sharply, what was his business there?

Pacolet replied by producing a letter, which he gave to the Udaller, uttering a sound resembling the word *Shogh*.²⁸

"That is the Highlandman's language," said the Udaller — "didst thou learn that, Nicholas, when you lost your own?"

Pacolet nodded, and signed to him to read his letter.

"That is no such easy matter by fire-light, my good friend," replied the Udaller; "but it may concern Minna, and we must try."

Brenda offered her assistance, but the Udaller answered, "No, no, my girl — Norna's letters must be read by those they are written to. Give the knave, Strumpfer, a drop of brandy the while, though he little deserves it at my hands, considering the grin with which he sent the good Nantz down the crag this morning, as if it had been as much ditch-water."

"Will you be this honest gentleman's cup-bearer — his Ganymede, friend Yellowley, or shall I?" said Claud Halcro aside to the Factor; while Magnus Troil, having carefully wiped his spectacles, which he produced from a large copper case, had disposed them on his nose, and was studying the epistle of Norna.

"I would not touch him, or go near him, for all the Carse of Gowrie," said the Factor, whose fears were by no means entirely removed, though he saw that the dwarf was received as a creature of flesh and blood by the rest of the company; "but I pray you to ask him what he has done with my horn of coins?"

The dwarf, who heard the question, threw back his head, and displayed his enormous throat, pointing to it with his finger.

"Nay, if he has swallowed them, there is no more to be said," replied the Factor; "only I hope he will thrive on them as a cow on wet clover. He is dame Norna's servant it's like — such man, such mistress! But if theft and witchcraft are to go unpunished in this land, my lord must find another factor; for I have been used to live in a country where men's worldly gear was keepit from infang and outfang thief, as well as their immortal souls from the claws of the deil and his cummers — sain and save us!"

The agriculturist was perhaps the less reserved in expressing his complaints, that the Udaller was for the present out of hearing, having drawn Claud Halcro apart into another corner of the hut.

"And tell me," said he, "friend Halcro, what errand took thee to Sumburgh, since I reckon it was scarce the mere pleasure of sailing in partnership with yonder barnacle?"

"In faith, Fowd," said the bard, "and if you will have the truth, I went to speak to Norna on your affairs."

"On my affairs?" replied the Udaller; "on what affairs of mine?"

"Just touching your daughter's health. I heard that Norna refused your message, and would not see Eric Scambester. Now, said I to myself, I have scarce joyed in meat, or drink, or music, or aught else, since Jarto Minna has been so ill; and I may say, literally as well as figuratively, that my day and night have been made sorrowful to me. In short, I thought I might have some more interest with old Norna than another, as scalds and wise women were always accounted something akin; and I undertook the journey with the hope to be of some use to my old friend and his lovely daughter."

"And it was most kindly done of you, good warm-hearted Claud," said the Udaller, shaking him warmly by the hand — "I ever said you showed the good old Norse heart amongst all thy fiddling and thy folly. — Tut, man, never wince for the matter, but be blithe that thy heart is better than thy head. Well — and I warrant you got no answer from Norna?"

"None to purpose," replied Claud Halcro; "but she held me close to question about Minna's illness, too — and I told her how I had met her abroad the other morning in no very good weather, and how her sister Brenda said she had hurt her foot; — in short, I told her all and every thing I knew."

"And something more besides, it would seem," said the Udaller; "for I, at least, never heard before that Minna had hurt herself."

"O, a scratch! a mere scratch!" said the old man; "but I was startled about it — terrified lest it had been the bite of a dog, or some hurt from a venomous thing. I told all to Norna, however."

"And what," answered the Udaller, "did she say, in the way of reply?"

"She bade me begone about my business, and told me that the issue would be known at the Kirkwall Fair; and said just the like to this noodle of a Factor — it was all that either of us got for our labour," said Halcro.

"That is strange," said Magnus. "My kinswoman writes me in this letter not to fail going thither with my daughters. This Fair runs strongly in her head; — one would think she intended to lead the market, and yet she has nothing to buy or to sell there that I know of. And so you came away as wise as you went, and swamped your boat at the mouth of the voe?"

"Why, how could I help it?" said the poet. "I had set the boy to steer, and as the flaw came suddenly off shore, I could not let go the tack and play on the fiddle at the same time. But it is all well enough — salt-water never harmed Zetlander, so as he could get out of it; and, as Heaven would have it, we were within man's depth of the shore, and chancing to find this skio, we should have done well enough, with shelter and fire, and are much better than well with your good cheer and good company. But it wears late, and Night and Day must be both as sleepy as old Midnight can make them. There is an inner crib here, where the fishers slept — somewhat fragrant with the smell of their fish, but that is wholesome. They shall bestow themselves there, with the help of what cloaks you have, and then we will have one cup of brandy, and one stave of glorious John, or some little trifle of my own, and so sleep as sound as cobblers."

"Two glasses of brandy, if you please," said the Udaller, "if our stores do not run dry; but not a single stave of glorious John, or of any one else to-night."

And this being arranged and executed agreeably to the peremptory pleasure of the Udaller, the whole party consigned themselves to slumber for the night, and on the next day departed for their several habitations, Claud Halcro having previously arranged with the Udaller that he would accompany him and his daughters on their proposed visit to Kirkwall.

Chapter 31.

"By this hand, thou think'st me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falstaff, for obduracy and persistency. Let the end try the man. . . . Albeit I could tell to thee, (as to one it pleases me, for fault of a better, to call my friend,) I could be sad, and sad indeed too."

HENRY IV., PART 2D.

We must now change the scene from Zetland to Orkney, and request our readers to accompany us to the ruins of an elegant, though ancient structure, called the Earl's Palace. There remains, though much dilapidated, still exist in the neighbourhood of the massive and venerable pile, which Norwegian devotion dedicated to Saint Magnus the Martyr, and, being contiguous to the Bishop's Palace, which is also ruinous, the place is impressive, as exhibiting vestiges of the mutations both in Church and State which have affected Orkney, as well as countries more exposed to such convulsions. Several parts of these ruinous buildings might be selected (under suitable modifications) as the model of a Gothic mansion, provided architects would be contented rather to imitate what is really beautiful in that species of building, than to make a medley of the caprices of the order, confounding the military, ecclesiastical, and domestic styles of all ages at random, with additional fantasies and combinations of their own device, "all formed out of the builder's brain."

The Earl's Palace forms three sides of an oblong square, and has, even in its ruins, the air of an elegant yet massive structure, uniting, as was usual in the residence of feudal princes, the character of a palace and of a castle. A great banqueting-hall, communicating with several large rounds, or projecting turret-rooms, and having at either end an immense chimney, testifies the ancient Northern hospitality of the Earls of Orkney, and communicates, almost in the modern fashion, with a gallery, or withdrawing-room, of corresponding dimensions, and having, like the hall, its projecting turrets. The lordly hall itself is lighted by a fine Gothic window of shafted stone at one end, and is entered by a spacious and elegant staircase, consisting of three flights of stone steps. The exterior ornaments and proportions of the ancient building are also very handsome; but, being totally unprotected, this remnant of the pomp and grandeur of Earls, who assumed the license as well as the dignity of petty sovereigns, is now fast crumbling to decay, and has suffered considerably since the date of our story.

With folded arms and downcast looks the pirate Cleveland was pacing slowly the ruined hall which we have just described; a place of retirement which he had probably chosen because it was distant from public resort. His dress was considerably altered from that which he usually wore in Zetland, and seemed a sort of uniform, richly laced, and exhibiting no small quantity of embroidery: a hat with a plume, and a small sword very handsomely mounted, then the constant companion of every one who assumed the rank of a gentleman, showed his pretensions to that character. But if his exterior was so far improved, it seemed to be otherwise with his health and spirits. He was pale, and had lost both the fire of his eye and the vivacity of his step, and his whole appearance indicated melancholy of mind, or suffering of body, or a combination of both evils.

As Cleveland thus paced these ancient ruins, a young man, of a light and slender form, whose showy dress seemed to have been studied with care, yet exhibited more extravagance than judgment or taste, whose manner was a janty affectation of the free and easy rake of the period, and the expression of whose countenance was lively, with a cast of effrontery, tripped up the staircase, entered the hall, and presented himself to Cleveland, who merely nodded to him, and pulling his hat deeper over his brows, resumed his solitary and discontented promenade.

The stranger adjusted his own hat, nodded in return, took snuff, with the air of a *petit maitre*, from a richly chased gold box, offered it to Cleveland as he passed, and being repulsed rather coldly, replaced the box in his pocket, folded his arms in his turn, and stood looking with fixed attention on his motions whose solitude he had interrupted. At length Cleveland stopped short, as if impatient of being longer the subject of his observation, and said abruptly, "Why can I not be left alone for half an hour, and what the devil is it that you want?"

"I am glad you spoke first," answered the stranger, carelessly; "I was determined to know whether you were Clement Cleveland, or Cleveland's ghost, and they say ghosts never take the first word, so I now set it down for yourself in life and limb; and here is a fine old hurly-house you have found out for an owl to hide himself in at mid-day, or a ghost to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon, as the divine Shakspeare says."

"Well, well," answered Cleveland, abruptly, "your jest is made, and now let us have your earnest."

"In earnest, then, Captain Cleveland," replied his companion, "I think you know me for your friend."

"I am content to suppose so," said Cleveland.

"It is more than supposition," replied the young man; "I have proved it — proved it both here and elsewhere."

"Well, well," answered Cleveland, "I admit you have been always a friendly fellow — and what then?"

"Well, well — and what then?" replied the other; "this is but a brief way of thanking folk. Look you, Captain, here is Benson, Barlowe, Dick Fletcher, and a few others of us who wished you well, have kept your old comrade Captain Goffe in these seas upon the look-out for you, when he and Hawkins, and the greater part of the ship's company, would fain have been down on the Spanish Main, and at the old trade."

"And I wish to God that you had all gone about your business," said Cleveland, "and left me to my fate."

"Which would have been to be informed against and hanged, Captain, the first time that any of these Dutch or English rascals, whom you have lightened of their cargoes, came to set their eyes upon you; and no place more likely to meet with seafaring men, than in these Islands. And here, to screen you from such a risk, we have been wasting our precious time, till folk are grown very peery; and when we have no more goods or money to spend amongst them, the fellows will be for grabbing the ship."

"Well, then, why do you not sail off without me?" said Cleveland — "there has been fair partition, and all have had their share — let all do as they like. I have lost my ship, and having been once a Captain, I will not go to sea under command of Goffe or any other man. Besides, you know well enough that both Hawkins and he bear me ill-will for keeping them from sinking the Spanish brig, with the poor devils of negroes on board."

"Why, what the foul fiend is the matter with thee?" said his companion; "are you Clement Cleveland, our own old true-hearted Clem of the Cleugh, and do you talk of being afraid of Hawkins and Goffe, and a score of such fellows, when you have myself, and Barlowe, and Dick Fletcher at your back? When was it we deserted you, either in council or in fight, that you should be afraid of our flinching now? And as for serving under Goffe, I hope it is no new thing for gentlemen of fortune who are going on the account, to change a Captain now and then? Let us alone for that — Captain you shall be; for death rock me asleep if I serve under that fellow Goffe, who is as very a bloodhound as ever sucked bitch! — No, no, I thank you — my Captain must have a little of the gentleman about him, howsoever. Besides, you know, it was you who first dipped my hands in the dirty water, and turned me from a stroller by land, to a rover by sea."

"Alas, poor Bunce!" said Cleveland, "you owe me little thanks for that service."

"That is as you take it," replied Bunce; "for my part, I see no harm in levying contributions on the public either one way or t'other. But I wish you would forget that name of Bunce, and call me Altamont, as I have often desired you to do. I hope a gentleman of the roving trade has as good a right to have an alias as a stroller, and I never stepped on the boards but what I was Altamont at the least."

"Well, then, Jack Altamont," replied Cleveland, "since Altamont is the word" —

"Yes, but, Captain, *Jack* is not the word, though Altamont be so. Jack Altamont? — why, 'tis a velvet coat with paper lace — Let it be Frederick, Captain; Frederick Altamont is all of a piece."

"Frederick be it, then, with all my heart," said Cleveland; "and pray tell me, which of your names will sound best at the head of the Last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words of John Bunce, *alias* Frederick Altamont, who was this morning hanged at Execution-dock, for the crime of Piracy upon the High Seas?"

"Faith, I cannot answer that question, without another can of grog, Captain; so if you will go down with me to Bet Haldane's on the quay, I will bestow some thought on the matter, with the help of a right pipe of Trinidad. We will have the gallon bowl filled with the best stuff you ever tasted, and I know some smart wenches who will help us to drain it. But you shake your head — you're not i' the vein? — Well, then, I will stay with you; for by this hand, Clem, you shift me not off. Only I will ferret you out of this burrow of old stones, and carry you into sunshine and fair air. — Where shall we go?"

"Where you will," said Cleveland, "so that you keep out of the way of our own rascals, and all others."

"Why, then," replied Bunce, "you and I will go up to the Hill of Whitford, which overlooks the town, and walk together as gravely and honestly as a pair of well-employed attorneys."

As they proceeded to leave the ruinous castle, Bunce, turning back to look at it, thus addressed his companion:

"Hark ye, Captain, dost thou know who last inhabited this old cockloft?"

"An Earl of the Orkneys, they say," replied Cleveland.

"And are you avised what death he died of?" said Bunce; "for I have heard that it was of a tight neck-collar — a hempen fever, or the like."

"The people here do say," replied Cleveland, "that his Lordship, some hundred years ago, had the mishap to become acquainted with the nature of a loop and a leap in the air."

"Why, la ye there now!" said Bunce; "there was some credit in being hanged in those days, and in such worshipful company. And what might his lordship have done to deserve such promotion?"

"Plundered the liege subjects, they say," replied Cleveland; "slain and wounded them, fired upon his Majesty's flag, and so forth."

"Near akin to a gentleman rover, then," said Bunce, making a theatrical bow towards the old building; "and, therefore, my most potent, grave, and reverend Signior Earl, I crave leave to call you my loving cousin, and bid you most heartily adieu. I leave you in the good company of rats and mice, and so forth, and I carry with me an honest gentleman, who, having of late had no more heart than a mouse, is now desirous to run away from his profession and friends like a rat, and would therefore be a most fitting denizen of your Earlship's palace."

"I would advise you not to speak so loud, my good friend Frederick Altamont, or John Bunce," said Cleveland; "when you were on the stage, you might safely rant as loud as you listed; but, in your present profession, of which you are so fond, every man speaks under correction of the yard-arm, and a running noose."

The comrades left the little town of Kirkwall in silence, and ascended the Hill of Whitford, which raises its brow of dark heath, uninterrupted by enclosures or cultivation of any kind, to the northward of the ancient Burgh of Saint Magnus. The plain at the foot of the hill was already occupied by numbers of persons who were engaged in making preparations for the Fair of Saint Olla, to be held upon the ensuing day, and which forms a general rendezvous to all the neighbouring islands of Orkney, and is even frequented by many persons from the more distant archipelago of Zetland. It is, in the words of the Proclamation, "a free Mercat and Fair, holden at the good Burgh of Kirkwall on the third of August, being Saint Olla's day," and continuing for an indefinite space thereafter, extending from three days to a week, and upwards. The fair is of great antiquity, and derives its name from Olaus, Olave, Ollaw, the celebrated Monarch of Norway, who, rather by the edge of his sword than any milder argument, introduced Christianity into those isles, and was respected as the patron of Kirkwall some time before he shared that honour with Saint Magnus the Martyr.

It was no part of Cleveland's purpose to mingle in the busy scene which was here going on; and, turning their route to the left, they soon ascended into undisturbed solitude, save where the grouse, more plentiful in Orkney, perhaps, than in any other part of the British dominions, rose in covey, and went off before them.²⁹ Having continued to ascend till they had wellnigh reached the summit of the conical hill, both turned round, as with one consent, to look at and admire the prospect beneath.

The lively bustle which extended between the foot of the hill and the town, gave life and variety to that part of the scene; then was seen the town itself, out of which arose, like a great mass, superior in proportion as it seemed to the whole burgh, the ancient Cathedral of Saint Magnus, of the heaviest order of Gothic architecture, but grand, solemn, and stately, the work of a distant age, and of a powerful hand. The quay, with the shipping, lent additional vivacity to the scene; and not only the whole beautiful bay, which lies betwixt the promontories of Inganess and Quanterness, at the bottom of which Kirkwall is situated, but all the sea, so far as visible, and in particular the whole strait betwixt the island of Shapinsha and that called Pomona, or the Mainland, was covered and enlivened by a variety of boats and small vessels, freighted from distant islands to convey passengers or merchandise to the Fair of Saint Olla.

Having attained the point by which this fair and busy prospect was most completely commanded, each of the strangers, in seaman fashion, had recourse to his spy-glass, to assist the naked eye in considering the bay of Kirkwall, and the numerous vessels by which it was traversed. But the attention of the two companions seemed to be arrested by different objects. That of Bunce, or Altamont, as he chose to call himself, was riveted to the armed sloop, where, conspicuous by her square rigging and length of beam, with the English jack and pennon, which they had the precaution to keep flying, she lay among the merchant vessels, as distinguished from them by the trim neatness of her appearance, as a trained soldier amongst a crowd of clowns.

"Yonder she lies," said Bunce; "I wish to God she was in the bay of Honduras — you Captain, on the quarter-deck, I your lieutenant, and Fletcher quarter-master, and fifty stout fellows under us — I should not wish to see these blasted heaths and rocks again for a while! — And Captain you shall soon be. The old brute Goffe gets drunk as a lord every day, swaggers, and shoots, and cuts, among the crew; and, besides, he has quarrelled with the people here so damnably, that they will scarce let water or provisions go on board of us, and we expect an open breach every day."

As Bunce received no answer, he turned short round on his companion, and, perceiving his attention otherwise engaged, exclaimed — "What the devil is the matter with you? or what can you see in all that trumpety small-craft, which is only loaded with stock-fish, and ling, and smoked geese, and tubs of butter that is worse than tallow? — the cargoes of the whole lumped together would not be worth the flash of a pistol. — No, no, give me such a chase as we might see from the mast-head off the island of Trinidad. Your Don, rolling as deep in the water as a grampus, deep-loaden with rum, sugar, and bales of tobacco, and all the rest ingots, moldores, and gold dust; then set all sail, clear the deck, stand to quarters, up with the Jolly Roger³⁰ — we near her — we make her out to be well manned and armed" —

"Twenty guns on her lower deck," said Cleveland.

"Forty, if you will," retorted Bunce, "and we have but ten mounted — never mind. The Don blazes away — never mind yet, my brave lads — run her alongside, and on board with you — to work, with your grenadoes, your cutlasses, pole-axes, and pistols — The Don cries *Misericordia*, and we share the cargo without *co licencio*, *Seignior!*"

"By my faith," said Cleveland, "thou takest so kindly to the trade, that all the world may see that no honest man was spoiled when you were made a pirate. But you shall not prevail on me to go farther in the devil's road with you; for you know yourself that what is got over his back is spent — you wot how. In a week, or a month at most, the rum and the sugar are out, the bales of tobacco have become smoke, the moldores, ingots, and gold dust, have got out of our hands, into those of the quiet, honest, conscientious folks, who dwell at Port Royal and elsewhere — wink hard on our trade as long as we have money, but not a jot beyond. Then we have cold looks, and it may be a hint is given to the Judge Marshal; for, when our pockets are worth nothing, our honest friends, rather than want, will make money upon our heads. Then comes a high gallows and a short halter, and so dies the Gentleman Rover. I tell thee, I will leave this trade; and, when I turn my glass from one of these barks and boats to another, there is not the worst of them which I would not row for life, rather than continue to be what I have been. These poor men make the sea a means of honest livelihood and friendly communication between shore and shore, for the mutual benefit of the inhabitants; but we have made it a road to the ruin of others, and to our own destruction here and in eternity. — I am determined to turn honest man, and use this life no longer!"

"And where will your honesty take up its abode, if it please you?" said Bunce. — "You have broken the laws of every nation, and the hand of the law will detect and crush you wherever you may take refuge. — Cleveland, I speak to you more seriously than I am wont to do. I have had my reflections, too; and they have been bad enough, though they lasted but a few minutes, to spoil me weeks of joviality. But here is the matter — what can we do but go on as we have done, unless we have a direct purpose of adorning the yard-arm?"

"We may claim the benefit of the proclamation to those of our sort who come in and surrender," said Cleveland.

"Umph!" answered his companion, dryly; "the date of that day of grace has been for some time over, and they may take the penalty or grant the pardon at their pleasure. Were I you, I would not put my neck in such a venture."

"Why, others have been admitted but lately to favour, and why should not I?" said Cleveland.

"Ay," replied his associate, "Harry Glasby and some others have been spared; but Glasby did what was called good service, in betraying his comrades, and retaking the Jolly Fortune; and that I think you would scorn, even to be revenged of the brute Goffe yonder."

"I would die a thousand times sooner," said Cleveland.

"I will be sworn for it," said Bunce; "and the others were forecastle fellows — petty larceny rogues, scarce worth the hemp it would have cost to hang them. But your name has stood too high amongst the gentlemen of fortune for you to get off so easily. You are the prime buck of the herd, and will be marked accordingly."

"And why so, I pray you?" said Cleveland; "you know well enough my aim, Jack."

"Frederick, if you please," said Bunce.

"The devil take you folly! — Prithee keep thy wit, and let us be grave for a moment."

"For a moment — be it so," said Bunce; "but I feel the spirit of Altamont coming fast upon me — I have been a grave man for ten minutes already."

"Be so then for a little longer," said Cleveland; "I know, Jack, that you really love me; and, since we have come thus far in this talk, I will trust you entirely. Now tell me, why should I be refused the benefit of this gracious proclamation? I have borne a rough outside, as thou knowest; but, in time of need, I can show the numbers of lives which I have been the means of saving, the property which I have restored to those who owned it, when, without my intercession, it would have been wantonly destroyed. In short, Bunce, I can show" —

"That you were as gentle a thief as Robin Hood himself," said Bunce; "and, for that reason, I, Fletcher, and the better sort among us, love you, as one who saves the character of us Gentlemen Rovers from utter reprobation. — Well, suppose your pardon made out, what are you to do next? — what class in society will receive you? — with whom will you associate? Old Drake, in Queen Bess's time, could plunder Peru and Mexico without a line of commission to show for it, and, blessed be her memory! he was knighted for it on his return. And there was Hal Morgan, the Welshman, nearer our time, in the days of merry King Charles, brought all his gettings home, had his estate and his country-house, and who but he? But that is all ended now — once a pirate, and an outcast for ever. The poor devil may go and live, shunned and despised by every one, in some obscure seaport, with such part of his guilty earnings as courtiers and clerks leave him — for pardons do not pass the seals for nothing; — and, when he takes his walk along the pier, if a stranger asks, who is the down-looking, swarthy, melancholy man, for whom all make way, as if he brought the plague in his person, the answer shall be, that is such a one, the pardoned pirate! — No honest man will speak to him, no woman of repute will give him her hand."

"Your picture is too highly coloured, Jack," said Cleveland, suddenly interrupting his friend; "there are women — there is one at least, that would be true to her lover, even if he were what you have described."

Bunce was silent for a space, and looked fixedly at his friend. "By my soul!" he said, at length, "I begin to think myself a conjurer. Unlikely as it all was, I could not help suspecting from the beginning that there was a girl in the case. Why, this is worse than Prince Volscius in love, ha! ha! ha!"

"Laugh as you will," said Cleveland, "it is true; — there is a maiden who is contented to love me, pirate as I am; and I will fairly own to you, Jack, that, though I have often at times detested our roving life, and myself for following it, yet I doubt if I could have found resolution to make the break which I have now resolved on, but for her sake."

"Why, then, God-a-mercy!" replied Bunce, "there is no speaking sense to a madman; and love in one of our trade, Captain, is little better than lunacy. The girl must be a rare creature, for a wise man to risk hanging for her. But, harkye, may she not be a little touched, as well as yourself? — and is it not sympathy that has done it? She cannot be one of our ordinary cockatrices, but a girl of conduct and character."

"Both are as undoubted as that she is the most beautiful and bewitching creature whom the eye ever opened upon," answered Cleveland.

"And she loves thee, knowing thee, most noble Captain, to be a commander among those gentlemen of fortune, whom the vulgar call pirates?"

"Even so — I am assured of it," said Cleveland.

"Why, then," answered Bunce, "she is either mad in good earnest, as I said before, or she does not know what a pirate is."

"You are right in the last point," replied Cleveland. "She has been bred in such remote simplicity, and utter ignorance of what is evil, that she compares our occupation with that of the old Norsemen, who swept sea and haven with their victorious galleys, established colonies, conquered countries, and took the name of Sea-Kings."

"And a better one it is than that of pirate, and comes much to the same purpose, I dare say," said Bunce. "But this must be a mettled wench! — why did you not bring her aboard? methinks it was pity to baulk her fancy."

"And do you think," said Cleveland, "that I could so utterly play the part of a fallen spirit as to avail myself of her enthusiastic error, and bring an angel of beauty and innocence acquainted with such a hell as exists on board of yonder infernal ship of ours? — I tell you, my friend, that, were all my former sins doubled in weight and in dye, such a villainy would have outglared and outweighed them all."

"Why, then, Captain Cleveland," said his confident, "methinks it was but a fool's part to come hither at all. The news must one day have gone abroad, that the celebrated pirate Captain Cleveland, with his good sloop the Revenge, had been lost on the Mainland of Zetland, and all hands perished; so you would have remained hid both from friend and enemy, and might have married your pretty Zetlander, and converted your sash and scarf into fishing-nets, and your cutlass into a harpoon, and swept the seas for fish instead of florins."

"And so I had determined," said the Captain; "but a Jagger, as they call them here, like a meddling, peddling thief as he is, brought down intelligence to Zetland of your lying here, and I was fain to set off, to see if you were the consort of whom I had told them, long before I thought of leaving the roving trade."

"Ay," said Bunce, "and so far you judged well. For, as you had heard of our being at Kirkwall, so we should have soon learned that you were at Zetland; and some of us for friendship, some for hatred, and some for fear of your playing Harry Glasby upon us, would have come down for the purpose of getting you into our company again."

"I suspected as much," said the Captain, "and therefore was fain to decline the courteous offer of a friend, who proposed to bring me here about this time. Besides, Jack, I recollected, that, as you say, my pardon will not pass the seals without money, my own was waxing low — no wonder, thou knowest I was never a churl of it — And so" —

"And so you came for your share of the cobs?" replied his friend — "It was wisely done; and we shared honourably — so far Goffe has acted up to articles, it must be allowed. But keep your purpose of leaving him close in your breast, for I dread his playing you some dog's trick or other; for he certainly thought himself sure of your share, and will hardly forgive your coming alive to disappoint him."

"I fear him not," said Cleveland, "and he knows that well. I would I were as well clear of the consequences of having been his comrade, as I hold myself to be of all those which may attend his ill-will. Another unhappy job I may be troubled with — I hurt a young fellow, who has been my plague for some time, in an unhappy brawl that chanced the morning I left Zetland."

"Is he dead?" asked Bunce: "It is a more serious question here, than it would be on the Grand Caimains or the Bahama Isles, where a brace or two of fellows may be shot in a morning, and no more heard of, or asked about them, than if they were so many wood-pigeons. But here it may be otherwise; so I hope you have not made your friend immortal."

"I hope not," said the Captain, "though my anger has been fatal to those who have given me less provocation. To say the truth, I was sorry for the lad notwithstanding, and especially as I was forced to leave him in mad keeping."

"In mad keeping?" said Bunce; "why, what means that?"

"You shall hear," replied his friend. "In the first place, you are to know, this young man came suddenly on me while I was trying to gain Minna's ear for a private interview before I set sail, that I might explain my purpose to her. Now, to be broken in on by the accursed rudeness of this young fellow at such a moment" —

"The interruption deserved death," said Bunce, "by all the laws of love and honour!"

"A truce with your ends of plays, Jack, and listen one moment. — The brisk youth thought proper to retort, when I commanded him to be gone. I am not, thou knowest, very patient, and enforced my commands with a blow, which he returned as roundly. We struggled, till I became desirous that we should part at any rate, which I could only effect by a stroke of my poniard, which, according to old use, I have, thou knowest, always about me. I had scarce done this when I repented; but there was no time to think of any thing save escape and concealment, for, if the house rose on me, I was lost; as the fiery old man, who is head of the family, would have done justice on me had I been his brother. I took the body hastily on my shoulders to carry it down to the sea-shore, with the purpose of throwing it into a *riva*, as they call them, or chasm of great depth, where it would have been long enough in being discovered. This done, I intended to jump into the boat which I had lying ready, and set sail for Kirkwall. But, as I was walking hastily towards the beach with my burden, the poor young fellow groaned, and so apprized me that the wound had not been instantly fatal. I was by this time well concealed amongst the rocks, and, far from desiring to complete my crime, I laid the young man on the ground, and was doing what I could to stanch the blood, when suddenly an old woman stood before me. She was a person whom I had frequently seen while in Zetland, and to whom they ascribe the character of a sorceress, or, as the negroes say, an Obi woman. She demanded the wounded man of me, and I was too much pressed for time to hesitate in complying with her request. More she was about to say to me, when we heard the voice of a silly old man, belonging to the family, singing at some distance. She then pressed her finger on her lip as a sign of secrecy, whistled very low, and a shapeless, deformed brute of a dwarf coming to her assistance, they carried the wounded man into one of the caverns with which the place abounds, and I got to my boat and to sea with all expedition. If that old hag be, as they say, connected with the King of the Air, she favoured me that morning with a turn of her calling; for not even the West Indian tornadoes, which we have weathered together, made a wilder racket than the squall that drove me so far out of our course, that, without a pocket-compass, which I chanced to have about me, I should never have recovered the Fair Isle, for which we run, and where I found a brig which brought me to this place. But, whether the old woman meant me weal or woe, here we came at length in safety from the sea, and here I remain in doubts and difficulties of more kinds than one."

"O, the devil take the Sumburgh-head," said Bunce, "or whatever they call the rock that you knocked our clever little Revenge against!"

"Do not say I knocked her on the rock," said Cleveland; "have I not told you fifty times, if the cowards had not taken to their boat, though I showed them the danger, and told them they would all be swamped, which happened the instant they cast off the painter, she would have been afloat at this moment? Had they stood by me and the ship, their lives would have been saved; had I gone with them, mine would have been lost; who can say which is for the best?"

"Well," replied his friend, "I know your case now, and can the better help and advise. I will be true to you, Clement, as the blade to the hilt; but I cannot think that you should leave us. As the old Scottish song says, 'Wae's my heart that we should sunder!' — But come, you will aboard with us to-day, at any rate?"

"I have no other place of refuge," said Cleveland, with a sigh.

He then once more ran his eyes over the bay, directing his spy-glass upon several of the vessels which traversed its surface, in hopes, doubtless, of discerning the vessel of Magnus Troil, and then followed his companion down the hill in silence.

*I strive like to the vessel in the tide-way,
Which, lacking favouring breeze, hath not the power
To stem the powerful current. — Even so,
Resolving daily to forsake my vices,
Habits, strong circumstance, renew'd temptation,
Sweep me to sea again. — O heavenly breath,
Fill thou my sails, and aid the feeble vessel,
Which ne'er can reach the blessed port without thee!*

'TIS ODDS WHEN EVENS MEET.

Cleveland, with his friend Bunce, descended the hill for a time in silence, until at length the latter renewed their conversation.

"You have taken this fellow's wound more on your conscience than you need, Captain — I have known you do more, and think less on't."

"Not on such slight provocation, Jack," replied Cleveland. "Besides, the lad saved my life; and, say that I requited him the favour, still we should not have met on such evil terms; but I trust that he may receive aid from that woman, who has certainly strange skill in simples."

"And over simpletons, Captain," said his friend, "in which class I must e'en put you down, if you think more on this subject. That you should be made a fool of by a young woman, why it is many an honest man's case; — but to puzzle your pate about the mummeries of an old one, is far too great a folly to indulge a friend in. Talk to me of your Minna, since you so call her, as much as you will; but you have no title to trouble your faithful squire-errant with your old mumping magician. And now here we are once more amongst the booths and tents, which these good folk are pitching — let us look, and see whether we may not find some fun and frolic amongst them. In merry England, now, you would have seen, on such an occasion, two or three bands of strollers, as many fire-eaters and conjurers, as many shows of wild beasts; but, amongst these grave folk, there is nothing but what savours of business and of commodity — no, not so much as a single squall from my merry gossip Punch and his rib Joan."

As Bunce thus spoke, Cleveland cast his eyes on some very gay clothes, which, with other articles, hung out upon one of the booths, that had a good deal more of ornament and exterior decoration than the rest. There was in front a small sign of canvass painted, announcing the variety of goods which the owner of the booth, Bryce Snailsfoot, had on sale, and the reasonable prices at which he proposed to offer them to the public. For the further gratification of the spectator, the sign bore on the opposite side an emblematic device, resembling our first parents in their vegetable garments, with this legend —

"Poor sinners whom the snake deceives,
Are fain to cover them with leaves.

Zetland hath no leaves, 'tis true,
Because that trees are none, or few;
But we have flax and taits of woo',
For linen cloth and wadmaal blue;
And we have many of foreign knacks
Of finer waft, than woo' or flax.

Ye gallant Lambmas lads,³¹ appear,
And bring your Lambmas sisters here;
Bryce Snailsfoot spares not cost or care,
To pleasure every gentle pair."

While Cleveland was perusing these goodly rhymes, which brought to his mind Claud Halcro, to whom, as the poet laureate of the island, ready with his talent alike in the service of the great and small, they probably owed their origin, the worthy proprietor of the booth, having cast his eye upon him, began with hasty and trembling hand to remove some of the garments, which, as the sale did not commence till the ensuing day, he had exposed either for the purpose of airing them, or to excite the admiration of the spectators.

"By my word, Captain," whispered Bunce to Cleveland, "you must have had that fellow under your clutches one day, and he remembers one gripe of your talons, and fears another. See how fast he is packing his wares out of sight, so soon as he set eyes on you!"

"His wares!" said Cleveland, on looking more attentively at his proceedings; "By Heaven, they are my clothes which I left in a chest at Jarlishof when the Revenge was lost there — Why, Bryce Snailsfoot, thou thief, dog, and villain, what means this? Have you not made enough of us by cheap buying and dear selling, that you have seized on my trunk and wearing apparel?"

Bryce Snailsfoot, who probably would otherwise not have been willing to see his friend the Captain, was now by the vivacity of his attack obliged to pay attention to him. He first whispered to his little foot-page, by whom, as we have already noticed, he was usually attended, "Run to the town-council-house, jarto, and tell the provost and bailies they maun send some of their officers speedily, for here is like to be wild wark in the fair."

So having said, and having seconded his commands by a push on the shoulder of his messenger, which sent him spinning out of the shop as fast as heels could carry him, Bryce Snailsfoot turned to his old acquaintance, and, with that amplification of words and exaggeration of manner, which in Scotland is called "making a phrase," he ejaculated — "The Lord be gude to us! the worthy Captain Cleveland, that we were all sae grieved about, returned to relieve our hearts again! Wat have my cheeks been for you," (here Bryce wiped his eyes,) "and blithe am I now to see you restored to your sorrowing friends!"

"My sorrowing friends, you rascal!" said Cleveland; "I will give you better cause for sorrow than ever you had on my account, if you do not tell me instantly where you stole all my clothes."

"Stole!" ejaculated Bryce, casting up his eyes; "now the Powers be gude to us! — the poor gentleman has lost his reason in that weary gale of wind."

"Why, you insolent rascal!" said Cleveland, grasping the cane which he carried, "do you think to bamboozle me with your impudence? As you would have a whole head on your shoulders, and your bones in a whole skin, one minute longer, tell me where the devil you stole my wearing apparel?"

Bryce Snailsfoot ejaculated once more a repetition of the word "Stole! Now Heaven be gude to us!" but at the same time, conscious that the Captain was likely to be sudden in execution, cast an anxious look to the town, to see the loitering aid of the civil power advance to his rescue.

"I insist on an instant answer," said the Captain, with upraised weapon, "or else I will beat you to a mummy, and throw out all your frippery upon the common!" Meanwhile, Master John Bunce, who considered the whole affair as an excellent good jest, and not the worse one that it made Cleveland very angry, seized hold of the Captain's arm, and, without any idea of ultimately preventing him from executing his threats, interfered just so much as was necessary to protract a discussion so amusing.

"Nay, let the honest man speak," he said, "messmate; he has as fine a cozening face as ever stood on a knavish pair of shoulders, and his are the true flourishes of eloquence, in the course of which men snip the cloth an inch too short. Now, I wish you to consider that you are both of a trade — he measures bales by the yard, and you by the sword — and so I will not have him chopped up till he has had a fair chase."

"You are a fool!" said Cleveland, endeavouring to shake his friend off. — "Let me go! for, by Heaven, I will be foul of him!"

"Hold him fast," said the pedlar, "good dear merry gentleman, hold him fast!"

"Then say something for yourself," said Bunce; "use your gob-box, man; patter away, or, by my soul, I will let him loose on you!"

"He says I stole these goods," said Bryce, who now saw himself run so close, that pleading to the charge became inevitable. "Now, how could I steal them, when they are mine by fair and lawful purchase?"

"Purchase! you beggarly vagrant!" said Cleveland; "from whom did you dare to buy my clothes? or who had the impudence to sell them?"

"Just that worthy professor Mrs. Swertha, the housekeeper at Jarlishof, who acted as your executor," said the pedlar; "and a grieved heart she had."

"And so she was resolved to make a heavy pocket of it, I suppose," said the Captain; "but how did she dare to sell the things left in her charge?"

"Why, she acted all for the best, good woman!" said the pedlar, anxious to protract the discussion until the arrival of succours; "and, if you will but hear reason, I am ready to account with you for the chest and all that it holds."

"Speak out, then, and let us have none of thy damnable evasions," said Captain Cleveland; "if you show ever so little purpose of being somewhat honest for once in thy life, I will not beat thee."

"Why, you see, noble Captain," said the pedlar — and then muttered to himself, "plague on Pate Paterson's cripple knee, they will be waiting for him, hirpling useless body!" then resumed aloud — "The country, you see, is in great perplexity — great perplexity, indeed — much perplexity, truly. There was your honour missing, that was loved by great and small — clean missing — nowhere to be heard of — a lost man — umquhile — dead — defunct!"

"You shall find me alive to your cost, you scoundrel!" said the irritated Captain.

"Weel, but take patience — ye will not hear a body speak," said the Jagger. — "Then there was the lad Mordaunt Mertoun" —

"Ha!" said the Captain, "what of him?"

"Cannot be heard of," said the pedlar; "clean and clear tint — a gone youth; — fallen, it is thought, from the craig into the sea — he was aye venturous. I have had dealings with him for furs and feathers, whilk he swapped against powder and shot, and the like; and now he has worn out from among us — clean retired — utterly vanished, like the last puff of an auld wife's tobacco pipe."

"But what is all this to the Captain's clothes, my dear friend?" said Bunce; "I must presently beat you myself unless you come to the point."

"Weel, weel — patience, patience," said Bryce, waving his hand; "you will get all time enough. Weel, there are two folks gane, as I said, forbye the distress at Burgh-Westra about Mistress Minna's sad ailment" —

"Bring not *her* into your buffoonery, sirrah," said Cleveland, in a tone of anger, not so loud, but far deeper and more concentrated than he had hitherto used; "for, if you name her with less than reverence, I will crop the ears out of your head, and make you swallow them on the spot!"

"He, he, he!" faintly laughed the Jagger; "that were a pleasant jest! you are pleased to be witty. But, to say naething of Burgh-Westra, there is the carle at Jarlishof, he that was the auld Mertoun, Mordaunt's father, whom men thought as fast bound to the place he dwelt in as the Sumburgh-head itself, naething maun serve him but he is lost as weel as the lave about whom I have spoken. And there's Magnus Troil (wi' favour be he named) taking horse; and there is pleasant Maister Claud Halcro taking boat, whilk he steers worst of any man in Zetland, his head running on rambling rhymes; and the Factor body is on the stir — the Scots Factor — him that is aye speaking of dikes and delving, and such unprofitable wark, which has naething of merchandise in it, and he is on the lang trot, too; so that ye might say, upon a manner, the tae half of the Mainland of Zetland is lost, and the other is running to and fro seeking it — awfu' times!"

Captain Cleveland had subdued his passion, and listened to this tirade of the worthy man of merchandise, with impatience indeed, yet not without the hope of hearing something that might concern him. But his companion was now become impatient in his turn:—"The clothes!" he exclaimed, "the clothes, the clothes, the clothes!" accompanying each repetition of the words with a flourish of his cane, the dexterity of which consisted in coming mighty near the Jagger's ears without actually touching them.

The Jagger, shrinking from each of these demonstrations, continued to exclaim, "Nay, sir — good sir — worthy sir — for the clothes — I found the worthy dame in great distress on account of her old maister, and on account of her young maister, and on account of worthy Captain Cleveland; and because of the distress of the worthy Fowd's family, and the trouble of the great Fowd himself — and because of the Factor, and in respect of Claud Halcro, and on other accounts and respects. Also we mingled our sorrows and our tears with a bottle, as the holy text hath it, and called in the Ranzelman to our council, a worthy man, Niel Ronaldson by name, who hath a good reputation."

Here another flourish of the cane came so very near that it partly touched his ear. The Jagger started back, and the truth, or that which he desired should be considered as such, bolted from him without more circumlocution; as a cork, after much unnecessary buzzing and fizzing, springs forth from a bottle of spruce beer.

"In brief, what the deil mair would you have of it? — the woman sold me the kist of clothes — they are mine by purchase, and that is what I will live and die upon."

"In other words," said Cleveland, "this greedy old hag had the impudence to sell what was none of hers; and you, honest Bryce Snailsfoot, had the assurance to be the purchaser?"

"Ou dear, Captain," said the conscientious pedlar, "what wad ye hae had twa poor folk to do? There was yoursell gane that aught the things, and Maister Mordaunt was gane that had them in keeping, and the things were but damply put up, where they were rotting with moth and mould, and" —

"And so this old thief sold them, and you bought them, I suppose, just to keep them from spoiling?" said Cleveland.

"Weel then," said the merchant, "I'm thinking, noble Captain, that wad be just the gate of it."

"Well then, hark ye, you impudent scoundrel," said the Captain. "I do not wish to dirty my fingers with you, or to make any disturbance in this place" —

"Good reason for that, Captain — aha!" said the Jagger, slyly.

"I will break your bones if you speak another word," replied Cleveland. "Take notice — I offer you fair terms — give me back the black leathern pocket-book with the lock upon it, and the purse with the doubloons, with some few of the clothes I want, and keep the rest in the devil's name!"

"Doubloons!!!" — exclaimed the Jagger, with an exaltation of voice intended to indicate the utmost extremity of surprise — "What do I ken of doubloons? my dealing was for doublets, and not for doubloons — If there were doubloons in the kist, doubtless Swertha will have them in safe keeping for your honour — the damp wouldna harm the gold, ye ken."

"Give me back my pocket-book and my goods, you rascally thief," said Cleveland, "or without a word more I will beat your brains out!"

The wily Jagger, casting eye around him, saw that succour was near, in the shape of a party of officers, six in number; for several rencontres with the crew of the pirate had taught the magistrates of Kirkwall to strengthen their police parties when these strangers were in question.

"Ye had better keep the *thief* to suit yoursell, honoured Captain," said the Jagger, emboldened by the approach of the civil power; "for wha kens how a' these fine goods and bonny-dies were come by?"

This was uttered with such provoking slyness of look and tone, that Cleveland made no further delay, but, seizing upon the Jagger by the collar, dragged him over his temporary counter, which was, with all the goods displayed thereon, overset in the scuffle; and, holding him with one hand, inflicted on him with the other a severe beating with his cane. All this was done so suddenly and with such energy, that Bryce Snailsfoot, though rather a stout man, was totally surprised by the vivacity of the attack, and made scarce any other effort at extricating himself than by roaring for assistance like a bull-calf. The "loitering aid" having at length come up, the officers made an effort to seize on Cleveland, and by their united exertions succeeded in compelling him to quit hold of the pedlar, in order to defend himself from their assault. This he did with infinite strength, resolution, and dexterity, being at the same time well seconded by his friend Jack Bunce, who had seen with glee the drubbing sustained by the pedlar, and now combated tightly to save his companion from the consequences. But, as there had been for some time a growing feud between the townspeople and the crew of the Rover, the former, provoked by the insolent deportment of the seamen, had resolved to stand by each other, and to aid the civil power upon such occasions of riot as should occur in future; and so many assistants came up to the rescue of the constables, that Cleveland, after fighting most manfully, was at length brought to the ground and made prisoner. His more fortunate companion had escaped by speed of foot, as soon as he saw that the day must needs be determined against them.

The proud heart of Cleveland, which, even in its perversion, had in its feelings something of original nobleness, was like to burst, when he felt himself borne down in this unworthy brawl — dragged into the town as a prisoner, and hurried through the streets towards the Council-house, where the magistrates of the burgh were then seated in council. The probability of imprisonment, with all its consequences, rushed also upon his mind, and he cursed an hundred times the folly which had not rather submitted to the pedlar's knavery, than involved him in so perilous an embarrassment.

But just as they approached the door of the Council-house, which is situated in the middle of the little town, the face of matters was suddenly changed by a new and unexpected incident.

Bunce, who had designed, by his precipitate retreat, to serve as well his friend as himself, had hied him to the haven, where the boat of the Rover was then lying, and called the cockswain and boat's crew to the assistance of Cleveland. They now appeared on the scene — fierce desperadoes, as became their calling, with features bronzed by the tropical sun under which they had pursued it. They rushed at once amongst the crowd, laying about them with their stretchers; and, forcing their way up to Cleveland, speedily delivered him from the hands of the officers, who were totally unprepared to resist an attack so furious and so sudden, and carried him off in triumph towards the quay — two or three of their number facing about from time to time to keep back the crowd, whose efforts to recover the prisoner were the less violent, that most of the seamen were armed with pistols and cutlasses, as well as with the less lethal weapons which alone they had as yet made use of.

They gained their boat in safety, and jumped into it, carrying along with them Cleveland, to whom circumstances seemed to offer no other refuge, and pushed off for their vessel, singing in chorus to their oars an old ditty, of which the natives of Kirkwall could only hear the first stanza:

"Robin Rover
Said to his crew,
'Up with the black flag,
Down with the blue! —
Fire on the main-top,
Fire on the bow,
Fire on the gun-deck,
Fire down below!'"

The wild chorus of their voices was heard long after the words ceased to be intelligible. — And thus was the pirate Cleveland again thrown almost involuntarily amongst those desperate associates, from whom he had so often resolved to detach himself.

Chapter 33.

*Parental love, my friend, has power o'er wisdom,
And is the charm, which, like the falconer's lure,
Can bring from heaven the highest soaring spirits. —
So, when famed Prosper doff'd his magic robe,
It was Miranda pluck'd it from his shoulders.*

OLD PLAY.

Our wandering narrative must now return to Mordaunt Mertoun. — We left him in the perilous condition of one who has received a severe wound, and we now find him in the condition of a convalescent — pale, indeed, and feeble from the loss of much blood, and the effects of a fever which had followed the injury, but so far fortunate, that the weapon, having glanced on the ribs, had only occasioned a great effusion of blood, without touching any vital part, and was now wellnigh healed; so efficacious were the vulnerary plants and salves with which it had been treated by the sage Norna of Fitful-head.

The matron and her patient now sat together in a dwelling in a remote island. He had been transported, during his illness, and ere he had perfect consciousness, first to her singular habitation near Fitful-head, and thence to her present abode, by one of the fishing-boats on the station of Burgh-Westra. For such was the command possessed by Norna over the superstitious character of her countrymen, that she never failed to find faithful agents to execute her commands, whatever these happened to be; and, as her orders were generally given under injunctions of the strictest secrecy, men reciprocally wondered at occurrences, which had in fact been produced by their own agency, and that of their neighbours, and in which, had they communicated freely with each other, no shadow of the marvellous would have remained.

Mordaunt was now seated by the fire, in an apartment indifferently well furnished, having a book in his hand, which he looked upon from time to time with signs of ennui and impatience; feelings which at length so far overcame him, that, flinging the volume on the table, he fixed his eyes on the fire, and assumed the attitude of one who is engaged in unpleasant meditation.

Norna, who sat opposite to him, and appeared busy in the composition of some drug or unguent, anxiously left her seat, and, approaching Mordaunt, felt his pulse, making at the same time the most affectionate enquiries whether he felt any sudden pain, and where it was seated. The manner in which Mordaunt replied to these earnest enquiries, although worded so as to express gratitude for her kindness, while he disclaimed any feeling of indisposition, did not seem to give satisfaction to the Pythoness.

"Ungrateful boy!" she said, "for whom I have done so much; you whom I have rescued, by my power and skill, from the very gates of death — are you already so weary of me, that you cannot refrain from showing how desirous you are to spend, at a distance from me, the very first intelligent days of the life which I have restored you?"

"You do me injustice, my kind preserver," replied Mordaunt; "I am not tired of your society; but I have duties which recall me to ordinary life."

"Duties!" repeated Norna; "and what duties can or ought to interfere with the gratitude which you owe to me? — Duties! Your thoughts are on the use of your gun, or on clambering among the rocks in quest of sea-fowl. For these exercises your strength doth not yet fit you; and yet these are the duties to which you are so anxious to return!"

"Not so, my good and kind mistress," said Mordaunt. — "To name one duty, out of many, which makes me seek to leave you, now that my strength permits, let me mention that of a son to his father."

"To your father!" said Norna, with a laugh that had something in it almost frantic. "O! you know not how we can, in these islands, at once cancel such duties! And, for your father," she added, proceeding more calmly, "what has he done for you, to deserve the regard and duty you speak of? — Is he not the same, who, as you have long since told me, left you for so many years poorly nourished among strangers, without enquiring whether you were alive or dead, and only sending, from time to time, supplies in such fashion, as men relieve the leprous wretch to whom they fling alms from a distance? And, in these later years, when he had made you the companion of his misery, he has been, by starts your pedagogue, by starts your tormentor, but never, Mordaunt, never your father."

"Something of truth there is in what you say," replied Mordaunt: "My father is not fond; but he is, and has ever been, effectively kind. Men have not their affections in their power; and it is a child's duty to be grateful for the benefits which he receives, even when coldly bestowed. My father has conferred instruction on me, and I am convinced he loves me. He is unfortunate; and, even if he loved me not" —

"And he does *not* love you," said Norna, hastily; "he never loved any thing, or any one, save himself. He is unfortunate, but well are his misfortunes deserved. — O Mordaunt, you have one parent only — one parent, who loves you as the drops of the heart-blood!"

"I know I have but one parent," replied Mordaunt; "my mother has been long dead. — But your words contradict each other."

"They do not — they do not," said Norna, in a paroxysm of the deepest feeling; "you have but one parent. Your unhappy mother is not dead — I would to God that she were! — but she is not dead. Thy mother is the only parent that loves thee; and I — I, Mordaunt," throwing herself on his neck, "am that most unhappy — yet most happy mother."

She closed him in a strict and convulsive embrace; and tears, the first, perhaps, which she had shed for many years, burst in torrents as she sobbed on his neck. Astonished at what he heard, felt, and saw — moved by the excess of her agitation, yet disposed to ascribe this burst of passion to insanity — Mordaunt vainly endeavoured to tranquillize the mind of this extraordinary person.

"Ungrateful boy!" she said, "who but a mother would have watched over thee as I have watched? From the instant I saw thy father, when he little thought by whom he was observed, a space now many years back, I knew him well; and, under his charge, I saw you, then a stripling — while Nature, speaking loud in my bosom, assured me, thou wert blood of my blood, and bone of my bone. Think how often you have wondered to see me, when least expected, in your places of pastime and resort! Think how often my eye has watched you on the giddy precipices, and muttered those charms which subdue the evil demons, who show themselves to the climber on the giddiest point of his path, and force him to quit his hold! Did I not hang around thy neck, in pledge of thy safety, that chain of gold, which an Elfin King gave to the founder of our race? Would I have given that dear gift to any but to the son of my bosom? — Mordaunt, my power has done that for thee that a mere mortal mother would dread to think of. I have conjured the Mermaid at midnight, that thy bark might be prosperous on the Haaf! I have hushed the winds, and navies have flapped their empty sails against the mast in inactivity, that you might safely indulge your sport upon the crags!" Mordaunt, perceiving that she was growing yet wilder in her talk, endeavoured to frame an answer which should be at once indulgent, soothing, and calculated to allay the rising warmth of her imagination.

"Dear Norna," he said, "I have indeed many reasons to call you mother, who have bestowed so many benefits upon me; and from me you shall ever receive the affection and duty of a child. But the chain you mentioned, it has vanished from my neck — I have not seen it since the ruffian stabbed me."

"Alas! and can you think of it at this moment?" said Norna, in a sorrowful accent. — "But be it so; — and know, it was I took it from thy neck, and tied it around the neck of her who is dearest to you; in token that the union betwixt you, which has been the only earthly wish which I have had the power to form, shall yet, even yet, be accomplished — ay, although hell should open to forbid the bans!"

"Alas!" said Mordaunt, with a sigh, "you remember not the difference betwixt our situation — her father is wealthy, and of ancient birth."

"Not more wealthy than will be the heir of Norna of Fitful-head," answered the Pythoness — "not of better or more ancient blood than that which flows in thy veins, derived from thy mother, the descendant of the same Jarls and Sea-Kings from whom Magnus boasts his origin. — Or dost thou think, like the pedant and fanatic strangers who have come amongst us, that thy blood is dishonoured because my union with thy father did not receive the sanction of a priest? — Know, that we were wedded after the ancient manner of the Norse — our hands were clasped within the circle of Odin,³² with such deep vows of eternal fidelity, as even the laws of these usurping Scots would have sanctioned as equivalent to a blessing before the altar. To the offspring of such a union, Magnus has nought to object. It was weak — it was criminal, on my part, but it conveyed no infamy to the birth of my son."

The composed and collected manner in which Norna argued these points began to impose upon Mordaunt an incipient belief in the truth of what she said; and, indeed, she added so many circumstances, satisfactorily and rationally connected with each other, as seemed to confute the notion that her story was altogether the delusion of that insanity which sometimes showed itself in her speech and actions. A thousand confused ideas rushed upon him, when he supposed it possible that the unhappy person before him might actually have a right to claim from him the respect and affection due to a parent from a son. He could only surmount them by turning his mind to a different, and scarce less interesting topic, resolving within himself to take time for farther enquiry and mature consideration, ere he either rejected or admitted the claim which Norna preferred upon his affection and duty. His benefactress, at least, she undoubtedly was, and he could not err in paying her, as such, the respect and attention due from a son to a mother; and so far, therefore, he might gratify Norna without otherwise standing committed.

"And do you then really think, my mother — since so you bid me term you," — said Mordaunt, "that the proud Magnus Troil may, by any inducement, be prevailed upon to relinquish the angry feelings which he has of late adopted towards me, and to permit my addresses to his daughter Brenda?"

"Brenda?" repeated Norna — "who talks of Brenda? — it was of Minna that I spoke to you."

"But it was of Brenda that I thought," replied Mordaunt, "of her that I now think, and of her alone that I will ever think."

"Impossible, my son!" replied Norna. "You cannot be so dull of heart, so poor of spirit, as to prefer the idle mirth and housewife simplicity of the younger sister, to the deep feeling and high mind of the noble-spirited Minna? Who would stoop to gather the lowly violet, that might have the rose for stretching out his hand?"

"Some think the lowliest flowers are the sweetest," replied Mordaunt, "and in that faith will I live and die."

"You dare not tell me so!" answered Norna, fiercely; then, instantly changing her tone, and taking his hand in the most affectionate manner, she proceeded:—"You must not — you will not tell me so, my dear son — you will not break a mother's heart in the very first hour in which she has embraced her child! — Nay, do not answer, but hear me. You must wed Minna — I have bound around her neck a fatal amulet, on which the happiness of both depends. The labours of my life have for years had this direction. Thus it must be, and not otherwise — Minna must be the bride of my son!"

"But is not Brenda equally near, equally dear to you?" replied Mordaunt.

"As near in blood," said Norna, "but not so dear, no not half so dear, in affection. Minna's mild, yet high and contemplative spirit, renders her a companion meet for one, whose ways, like mine, are beyond the ordinary paths of this world. Brenda is a thing of common and ordinary life, an idle laughter and scoffer, who would level art with ignorance, and reduce power to weakness, by disbelieving and turning into ridicule whatever is beyond the grasp of her own shallow intellect."

"She is, indeed," answered Mordaunt, "neither superstitious nor enthusiastic, and I love her the better for it. Remember also, my mother, that she returns my affection, and that Minna, if she loves any one, loves the stranger Cleveland."

"She does not — she dares not," answered Norna, "nor dares he pursue her farther. I told him, when first he came to Burgh-Westra, that I destined her for you."

"And to that rash annunciation," said Mordaunt, "I owe this man's persevering enmity — my wound, and wellnigh the loss of my life. See, my mother, to what point your intrigues have already conducted us, and, in Heaven's name, prosecute them no farther!"

It seemed as if this reproach struck Norna with the force, at once, and vivacity of lightning; for she struck her forehead with her hand, and seemed about to drop from her seat. Mordaunt, greatly shocked, hastened to catch her in his arms, and, though scarce knowing what to say, attempted to utter some incoherent expressions.

"Spare me, Heaven, spare me!" were the first words which she muttered; "do not let my crime be avenged by his means! — Yes, young man," she said, after a pause, "you have dared to tell what I dared not tell myself. You have pressed that upon me, which, if it be truth, I cannot believe, and yet continue to live!"

Mordaunt in vain endeavoured to interrupt her with protestations of his ignorance how he had offended or grieved her, and of his extreme regret that he had unintentionally done either. She proceeded, while her voice trembled wildly, with vehemence.

"Yes! you have touched on that dark suspicion which poisons the consciousness of my power — the sole boon which was given me in exchange for innocence and for peace of mind! Your voice joins that of the demon which, even while the elements confess me their mistress, whispers to me, 'Norna, this is but delusion — your power rests but in the idle belief of the ignorant, supported by a thousand petty artifices of your own.' — This is what Brenda says — this is what you would say; and false, scandalously false, as it is, there are rebellious thoughts in this wild brain of mine," (touching her forehead with her finger as she spoke,) "that, like an insurrection in an invaded country, arise to take part against their distressed sovereign. — Spare me, my son!" she continued in a voice of supplication, "spare me! — the sovereignty of which your words would deprive me, is no enviable exaltation. Few would covet to rule over gibbering ghosts, and howling winds, and raging currents. My throne is a cloud, my sceptre a meteor, my realm is only peopled with fantasies; but I must either cease to be, or continue to be the mightiest as well as the most miserable of beings!"³³

"Do not speak thus mournfully, my dear and unhappy benefactress," said Mordaunt, much affected; "I will think of your power whatever you would have me believe. But, for your own sake, view the matter otherwise. Turn your thoughts from such agitating and mystical studies — from such wild subjects of contemplation, into another and a better channel. Life will again have charms, and religion will have comforts, for you."

She listened to him with some composure, as if she weighed his counsel, and desired to be guided by it; but, as he ended, she shook her head and exclaimed — "It cannot be. I must remain the dreaded — the mystical — the Reimkennar — the controller of the elements, or I must be no more! I have no alternative, no middle station. My post must be high on yon lofty headland, where never stood human foot save mine — or I must sleep at the bottom of the unfathomable ocean, its white billows booming over my senseless corpse. The parricide shall never also be denounced as the impostor!"

"The parricide!" echoed Mordaunt, stepping back in horror.

"Yes, my son!" answered Norna, with a stern composure, even more frightful than her former impetuosity, "within these fatal walls my father met his death by my means. In yonder chamber was he found a livid and lifeless corpse. Beware of filial disobedience, for such are its fruits!"

So saying, she arose and left the apartment, where Mordaunt remained alone to meditate at leisure upon the extraordinary communication which he had received. He himself had been taught by his father a disbelief in the ordinary superstitions of Zetland; and he now saw that Norna, however ingenious in duping others, could not altogether impose on herself. This was a strong circumstance in favour of her sanity of intellect; but, on the other hand, her imputing to herself the guilt of parricide seemed so wild and improbable, as, in Mordaunt's opinion, to throw much doubt upon her other assertions.

He had leisure enough to make up his mind on these particulars, for no one approached the solitary dwelling, of which Norna, her dwarf, and he himself, were the sole inhabitants. The Hoy island in which it stood is rude, bold, and lofty, consisting entirely of three hills — or rather one huge mountain divided into three summits, with the chasms, rents, and valleys, which descend from its summit to the sea, while its crest, rising to great height, and shivered into rocks which seem almost inaccessible, intercepts the mists as they drive from the Atlantic, and, often obscured from the human eye, forms the dark and unmolested retreat of hawks, eagles, and other birds of prey.³⁴

The soil of the island is wet, mossy, cold, and unproductive, presenting a sterile and desolate appearance, excepting where the sides of small rivulets, or mountain ravines, are fringed with dwarf bushes of birch, hazel, and wild currant, some of them so tall as to be denominated trees, in that bleak and bare country.

But the view of the sea-beach, which was Mordaunt's favourite walk, when his convalescent state began to permit him to take exercise, had charms which compensated the wild appearance of the interior. A broad and beautiful sound, or strait, divides this lonely and mountainous island from Pomona, and in the centre of that sound lies, like a tablet composed of emerald, the beautiful and verdant little island of Græmsay. On the distant Mainland is seen the town or village of Stromness, the excellence of whose haven is generally evinced by a considerable number of shipping in the roadstead, and, from the bay growing narrower, and lessening as it recedes, runs inland into Pomona, where its tide fills the fine sheet of water called the Loch of Stennis.

On this beach Mordaunt was wont to wander for hours, with an eye not insensible to the beauties of the view, though his thoughts were agitated with the most embarrassing meditations on his own situation. He was resolved to leave the island as soon as the establishment of his health should permit him to travel; yet gratitude to Norna, of whom he was at least the adopted, if not the real son, would not allow him to depart without her permission, even if he could obtain means of conveyance, of which he saw little possibility. It was only by importunity that he extorted from his hostess a promise, that, if he would consent to regulate his motions according to her directions, she would herself convey him to the capital of the Orkney Islands, when the approaching Fair of Saint Olla should take place there.

Chapter 34.

*Hark to the insult loud, the bitter sneer,
The fierce threat answering to the brutal jeer;
Oaths fly like pistol-shots, and vengeful words
Clash with each other like conflicting swords —
The robber's quarrel by such sounds is shown,
And true men have some chance to gain their own.*

CAPTIVITY, A POEM.

When Cleveland, borne off in triumph from his assailants in Kirkwall, found himself once more on board the pirate-vessel, his arrival was hailed with hearty cheers by a considerable part of the crew, who rushed to shake hands with him, and offer their congratulations on his return; for the situation of a Buccanier Captain raised him very little above the level of the lowest of his crew, who, in all social intercourse, claimed the privilege of being his equal.

When his faction, for so these clamorous friends might be termed, had expressed their own greetings, they hurried Cleveland forward to the stern, where Goffe, their present commander, was seated on a gun, listening in a sullen and discontented mood to the shout which announced Cleveland's welcome. He was a man betwixt forty and fifty, rather under the middle size, but so very strongly made, that his crew used to compare him to a sixty-four cut down. Black-haired, bull-necked, and beetle-browed, his clumsy strength and ferocious countenance contrasted strongly with the manly figure and open countenance of Cleveland, in which even the practice of his atrocious profession had not been able to eradicate a natural grace of motion and generosity of expression. The two piratical Captains looked upon each other for some time in silence, while the partisans of each gathered around him. The elder part of the crew were the principal adherents of Goffe, while the young fellows, among whom Jack Bunce was a principal leader and agitator, were in general attached to Cleveland.

At length Goffe broke silence. — "You are welcome aboard, Captain Cleveland. — Smash my taffrail! I suppose you think yourself commodore yet! but that was over, by G — when you lost your ship, and be d — d!"

And here, once for all, we may take notice, that it was the gracious custom of this commander to mix his words and oaths in nearly equal proportions, which he was wont to call *shotting* his discourse. As we delight not, however, in the discharge of such artillery, we shall only indicate by a space like this ---- the places in which these expletives occurred; and thus, if the reader will pardon a very poor pun, we will reduce Captain Goffe's volley of sharp-shot into an explosion of blank cartridges. To his insinuations that he was come on board to assume the chief command, Cleveland replied, that he neither desired, nor would accept, any such promotion, but would only ask Captain Goffe for a cast of the boat, to put him ashore in one of the other islands, as he had no wish either to command Goffe, or to remain in a vessel under his orders.

"And why not under my orders, brother?" demanded Goffe, very austere; "—— — are you too good a man, —— — with your cheese-toaster and your jib there, —— to serve under my orders, and be d — d to you, where there are so many gentlemen that are elder and better seamen than yourself?"

"I wonder which of these capital seamen it was," said Cleveland, coolly, "that laid the ship under the fire of yon six-gun battery, that could blow her out of the water, if they had a mind, before you could either cut or slip? Elder and better sailors than I may like to serve under such a lubber, but I beg to be excused for my own share, Captain — that's all I have got to tell you."

"By G — I think you are both mad!" said Hawkins the boatswain — "a meeting with sword and pistol may be devilish good fun in its way, when no better is to be had; but who the devil that had common sense, amongst a set of gentlemen in our condition, would fall a quarrelling with each other, to let these duck-winged, web-footed islanders have a chance of knocking us all upon the head?"

"Well said, old Hawkins!" observed Derrick the quarter-master, who was an officer of very considerable importance among these rovers; "I say, if the two captains won't agree to live together quietly, and club both heart and head to defend the vessel, why, d — n me, depose them both, say I, and choose another in their stead!"

"Meaning yourself, I suppose, Master Quarter-Master!" said Jack Bunce; "but that cock won't fight. He that is to command gentlemen, should be a gentleman himself, I think; and I give my vote for Captain Cleveland, as spirited and as gentleman-like a man as ever daffed the world aside, and bid it pass!"

"What! *you* call yourself a gentleman, I warrant!" retorted Derrick; "why, —— your eyes! a tailor would make a better out of the worst suit of rags in your strolling wardrobe! — It is a shame for men of spirit to have such a Jack-a-dandy scarecrow on board!"

Jack Bunce was so incensed at these base comparisons, that without more ado, he laid his hand on his sword. The carpenter, however, and boatswain, interfered, the former brandishing his broad axe, and swearing he would put the skull of the first who should strike a blow past clouting, and the latter reminding them, that, by their articles, all quarrelling, striking, or more especially fighting, on board, was strictly prohibited; and that, if any gentleman had a quarrel to settle, they were to go ashore, and decide it with cutlass and pistol in presence of two of their messmates.

"I have no quarrel with any one, —— —!" said Goffe, sullenly; "Captain Cleveland has wandered about among the islands here, amusing himself, —— —! and we have wasted our time and property in waiting for him, when we might have been adding twenty or thirty thousand dollars to the stock-purse. However, if it pleases the rest of the gentlemen-adventurers, —— —! why, I shall not grumble about it."

"I propose," said the boatswain, "that there should be a general council called in the great cabin, according to our articles, that we may consider what course we are to hold in this matter."

A general assent followed the boatswain's proposal; for every one found his own account in these general councils, in which each of the rovers had a free vote. By far the greater part of the crew only valued this franchise, as it allowed them, upon such solemn occasions, an unlimited quantity of liquor — a right which they failed not to exercise to the uttermost, by way of aiding their deliberations. But a few amongst the adventurers, who united some degree of judgment with the daring and profligate character of their profession, were wont, at such periods, to limit themselves within the bounds of comparative sobriety, and by these, under the apparent form of a vote of the general council, all things of moment relating to the voyage and undertakings of the pirates were in fact determined. The rest of the crew, when they recovered from their intoxication, were easily persuaded that the resolution adopted had been the legitimate effort of the combined wisdom of the whole senate.

Upon the present occasion the debauch had proceeded until the greater part of the crew were, as usual, displaying inebriation in all its most brutal and disgraceful shapes — swearing empty and unmeaning oaths — venting the most horrid imprecations in the mere gaiety of their heart — singing songs, the ribaldry of which was only equalled by their profaneness; and, from the middle of this earthly hell, the two captains, together with one or two of their principal adherents, as also the carpenter and boatswain, who always took a lead on such occasions, had drawn together into a pandemonium, or privy council of their own, to consider what was to be done; for, as the boatswain metaphorically observed, they were in a narrow channel, and behoved to keep sounding the tide-way.

When they began their consultations, the friends of Goffe remarked, to their great displeasure, that he had not observed the wholesome rule to which we have just alluded; but that, in endeavouring to drown his mortification at the sudden appearance of Cleveland, and the reception he met with from the crew, the elder Captain had not been able to do so without overflowing his reason at the same time. His natural sullen taciturnity had prevented this from being observed until the council began its deliberations, when it proved impossible to hide it.

The first person who spoke was Cleveland, who said, that, so far from wishing the command of the vessel, he desired no favour at any one's hand, except to land him upon some island or holm at a distance from Kirkwall, and leave him to shift for himself.

The boatswain remonstrated strongly against this resolution. "The lads," he said, "all knew Cleveland, and could trust his seamanship, as well as his courage; besides, he never let the grog get quite uppermost, and was always in proper trim, either to sail the ship, or to fight the ship, whereby she was never without some one to keep her course when he was on board. — And as for the noble Captain Goffe," continued the mediator, "he is as stout a heart as ever broke biscuit, and that I will uphold him; but then, when he has his grog aboard — I speak to his face — he is so d — d funny with his cranks and his jests, that there is no living with him. You all remember how nigh he had run the ship on that cursed Horse of Copinsha, as they call it, just by way of frolic; and then you know how he fired off his pistol under the table, when we were at the great council, and shot Jack Jenkins in the knee, and cost the poor devil his leg, with his pleasantry."³⁵

"Jack Jenkins was not a chip the worse," said the carpenter; "I took the leg off with my saw as well as any loblolly-boy in the land could have done — heated my broad axe, and seared the stump — ay, by ——! and made a jury-leg that he shambles about with as well as ever he did — for Jack could never cut a feather."³⁶

"You are a clever fellow, carpenter," replied the boatswain, "a d — d clever fellow! but I had rather you tried your saw and red-hot axe upon the ship's knee-timbers than on mine, sink me! — But that here is not the case — The question is, if we shall part with Captain Cleveland here, who is a man of thought and action, whereby it is my belief it would be heaving the pilot overboard when the gale is blowing on a lee-shore. And, I must say, it is not the part of a true heart to leave his mates, who have been here waiting for him till they have missed stays. Our water is wellnigh out, and we have junketed till provisions are low with us. We cannot sail without provisions — we cannot get provisions without the good-will of the Kirkwall folks. If we remain here longer, the Halcyon frigate will be down upon us — she was seen off Peterhead two days since — and we shall hang up at the yard-arm to be sun-dried. Now, Captain Cleveland will get us out of the hobble, if any can. He can play the gentleman with these Kirkwall folks, and knows how to deal with them on fair terms, and foul, too, if there be occasion for it."

"And so you would turn honest Captain Goffe a-grazing, would ye?" said an old weatherbeaten pirate, who had but one eye; "what though he has his humours, and made my eye dowse the glim in his fancies and frolics, he is as honest a man as ever walked a quarter-deck, for all that; and d — n me but I stand by him so long as t'other lantern is lit!"

"Why, you would not hear me out," said Hawkins; "a man might as well talk to so many negers! — I tell you, I propose that Cleveland shall only be Captain from one, *post meridiem*, to five a. m., during which time Goffe is always drunk."

The Captain of whom he last spoke gave sufficient proof of the truth of his words, by uttering an inarticulate growl, and attempting to present a pistol at the mediator Hawkins.

"Why, look ye now!" said Derrick, "there is all the sense he has, to get drunk on council-day, like one of these poor silly fellows!"

"Ay," said Bunce, "drunk as Davy's sow, in the face of the field, the fray, and the senate!"

"But, nevertheless," continued Derrick, "it will never do to have two captains in the same day. I think week about might suit better — and let Cleveland take the first turn."

"There are as good here as any of them," said Hawkins; "howsomdever, I object nothing to Captain Cleveland, and I think he may help us into deep water as well as another."

"Ay," exclaimed Bunce, "and a better figure he will make at bringing these Kirkwallers to order than his sober predecessor! — So Captain Cleveland for ever!"

"Stop, gentlemen," said Cleveland, who had hitherto been silent; "I hope you will not choose me Captain without my own consent?"

"Ay, by the blue vault of heaven will we," said Bunce, "if it be *pro bono publico*!"

"But hear me, at least," said Cleveland — "I do consent to take command of the vessel, since you wish it, and because I see you will ill get out of the scrape without me."

"Why, then, I say, Cleveland for ever, again!" shouted Bunce.

"Be quiet, prithee, dear Bunce! — honest Altamont!" said Cleveland. — "I undertake the business on this condition; that, when I have got the ship cleared for her voyage, with provisions, and so forth, you will be content to restore Captain Goffe to the command, as I said before, and put me ashore somewhere, to shift for myself — You will then be sure it is impossible I can betray you, since I will remain with you to the last moment."

"Ay, and after the last moment, too, by the blue vault! or I mistake the matter," muttered Bunce to himself.

The matter was now put to the vote; and so confident were the crew in Cleveland's superior address and management, that the temporary deposition of Goffe found little resistance even among his own partisans, who reasonably enough observed, "he might at least have kept sober to look after his own business — E'en let him put it to rights again himself next morning, if he will."

But when the next morning came, the drunken part of the crew, being informed of the issue of the deliberations of the council, to which they were virtually held to have assented, showed such a superior sense of Cleveland's merits, that Goffe, sulky and malecontent as he was, judged it wisest for the present to suppress his feelings of resentment, until a safer opportunity for suffering them to explode, and to submit to the degradation which so frequently took place among a piratical crew.

Cleveland, on his part, resolved to take upon him, with spirit and without loss of time, the task of extricating his ship's company from their perilous situation. For this purpose, he ordered the boat, with the purpose of going ashore in person, carrying with him twelve of the stoutest and best men of the crew, all very handsomely appointed, (for the success of their nefarious profession had enabled the pirates to assume nearly as gay dresses as their officers,) and above all, each man being sufficiently armed with cutlass and pistols, and several having pole-axes and poniards.

Cleveland himself was gallantly attired in a blue coat, lined with crimson silk, and laced with gold very richly, crimson damask waistcoat and breeches, a velvet cap, richly embroidered, with a white feather, white silk stockings, and red-heeled shoes, which were the extremity of finery among the gallants of the day. He had a gold chain several times folded round his neck, which sustained a whistle of the same metal, the ensign of his authority. Above all, he wore a decoration peculiar to those daring depredators, who, besides one, or perhaps two brace of pistols at their belt, had usually two additional brace, of the finest mounting and workmanship, suspended over their shoulders in a sort of sling or scarf of crimson ribbon. The hilt and mounting of the Captain's sword corresponded in value to the rest of his appointments, and his natural good mien was so well adapted to the whole equipment, that, when he appeared on deck, he was received with a general shout by the crew, who, as in other popular societies, judged a great deal by the eye.

Cleveland took with him in the boat, amongst others, his predecessor in office, Goffe, who was also very richly dressed, but who, not having the advantage of such an exterior as Cleveland's, looked like a boorish clown in the dress of a courtier, or rather like a vulgar-faced footpad decked in the spoils of some one whom he has murdered, and whose claim to the property of his garments is rendered doubtful in the eyes of all who look upon him, by the mixture of awkwardness, remorse, cruelty, and insolence, which clouds his countenance. Cleveland probably chose to take Goffe ashore with him, to prevent his having any opportunity, during his absence, to debauch the crew from their allegiance. In this guise they left the ship, and, singing to their oars, while the water foamed higher at the chorus, soon reached the quay of Kirkwall.

The command of the vessel was in the meantime intrusted to Bunce, upon whose allegiance Cleveland knew that he might perfectly depend, and, in a private conversation with him of some length, he gave him directions how to act in such emergencies as might occur.

These arrangements being made, and Bunce having been repeatedly charged to stand upon his guard alike against the adherents of Goffe and any attempt from the shore, the boat put off. As she approached the harbour, Cleveland displayed a white flag, and could observe that their appearance seemed to occasion a good deal of bustle and alarm. People were seen running to and fro, and some of them appeared to be getting under arms. The battery was manned hastily, and the English colours displayed. These were alarming symptoms, the rather that Cleveland knew, that, though there were no artillerymen in Kirkwall, yet there were many sailors perfectly competent to the management of great guns, and willing enough to undertake such service in case of need.

Noting these hostile preparations with a heedful eye, but suffering nothing like doubt or anxiety to appear on his countenance, Cleveland ran the boat right for the quay, on which several people, armed with muskets, rifles, and fowlingpieces, and others with half-pikes and whaling-knives, were now assembled, as if to oppose his landing. Apparently, however, they had not positively determined what measures they were to pursue; for, when the boat reached the quay, those immediately opposite bore back, and suffered Cleveland and his party to leap ashore without hinderance. They immediately drew up on the quay, except two, who, as their Captain had commanded, remained in the boat, which they put off to a little distance; a manœuvre which, while it placed the boat (the only one belonging to the sloop) out of danger of being seized, indicated a sort of careless confidence in Cleveland and his party, which was calculated to intimidate their opponents.

The Kirkwallers, however, showed the old Northern blood, put a manly face upon the matter, and stood upon the quay, with their arms shouldered, directly opposite to the rovers, and blocking up against them the street which leads to the town.

Cleveland was the first who spoke, as the parties stood thus looking upon each other. —“How is this, gentlemen burghers?” he said; “are you Orkney folks turned Highlandmen, that you are all under arms so early this morning; or have you manned the quay to give me the honour of a salute, upon taking the command of my ship?”

The burghers looked on each other, and one of them replied to Cleveland —“We do not know who you are; it was that other man,” pointing to Goffe, “who used to come ashore as Captain.”

“That other gentleman is my mate, and commands in my absence,” said Cleveland; —“but what is that to the purpose? I wish to speak with your Lord Mayor, or whatever you call him.”

“The Provost is sitting in council with the Magistrates,” answered the spokesman.

“So much the better,” replied Cleveland. —“Where do their Worships meet?”

“In the Council-house,” answered the other.

“Then make way for us, gentlemen, if you please, for my people and I are going there.”

There was a whisper among the townspeople; but several were unresolved upon engaging in a desperate, and perhaps an unnecessary conflict, with desperate men; and the more determined citizens formed the hasty reflection that the strangers might be more easily mastered in the house, or perhaps in the narrow streets which they had to traverse, than when they stood drawn up and prepared for battle upon the quay. They suffered them, therefore, to proceed unmolested; and Cleveland, moving very slowly, keeping his people close together, suffering no one to press upon the flanks of his little detachment, and making four men, who constituted his rear-guard, turn round and face to the rear from time to time, rendered it, by his caution, a very dangerous task to make any attempt upon them.

In this manner they ascended the narrow street and reached the Council-house, where the Magistrates were actually sitting, as the citizen had informed Cleveland. Here the inhabitants began to press forward, with the purpose of mingling with the pirates, and availing themselves of the crowd in the narrow entrance, to secure as many as they could, without allowing them room for the free use of their weapons. But this also had Cleveland foreseen, and, ere entering the council-room, he caused the entrance to be cleared and secured, commanding four of his men to face down the street, and as many to confront the crowd who were thrusting each other from above. The burghers recoiled back from the ferocious, swarthy, and sunburnt countenances, as well as the levelled arms of these desperadoes, and Cleveland, with the rest of his party, entered the council-room, where the Magistrates were sitting in council, with very little attendance. These gentlemen were thus separated effectually from the citizens, who looked to them for orders, and were perhaps more completely at the mercy of Cleveland, than he, with his little handful of men, could be said to be at that of the multitude by whom they were surrounded.

The Magistrates seemed sensible of their danger; for they looked upon each other in some confusion, when Cleveland thus addressed them:—

“Good morrow, gentlemen — I hope there is no unkindness betwixt us. I am come to talk with you about getting supplies for my ship yonder in the roadstead — we cannot sail without them.”

“Your ship, sir?” said the Provost, who was a man of sense and spirit — “how do we know that you are her Captain?”

“Look at me,” said Cleveland, “and you will, I think, scarce ask the question again.”

The Magistrate looked at Kim, and accordingly did not think proper to pursue that part of the enquiry, but proceeded to say —“And if you are her Captain, whence comes she, and where is she bound for? You look too much like a man-of-war's man to be master of a trader, and we know that you do not belong to the British navy.”

“There are more men-of-war on the sea than sail under the British flag,” replied Cleveland; “but say that I were commander of a free-trader here, willing to exchange tobacco, brandy, gin, and such like, for cured fish and hides, why, I do not think I deserve so very bad usage from the merchants of Kirkwall as to deny me provisions for my money?”

“Look you, Captain,” said the Town-clerk, “it is not that we are so very strait-laced neither — for, when gentlemen of your cloth come this way, it is as weel, as I tauld the Provost, just to do as the collier did when he met the devil — and that is, to have naething to say to them, if they have naething to say to us; — and there is the gentleman,” pointing to Goffe, “that was Captain before you, and may be Captain after you,” — (“The cuckold speaks truth in that,” muttered Goffe,) — “he knows well how handsomely we entertained him, till he and his men took upon them to run through the town like hellicat devils. — I see one of them there! — that was the very fellow that stopped my servant-wench on the street, as she carried the lantern home before me, and insulted her before my face!”

“If it please your noble Mayorship's honour and glory,” said Derrick, the fellow at whom the Town-clerk pointed, “it was not I that brought to the bit of a tender that carried the lantern in the poop — it was quite a different sort of a person.”

“Who was it, then, sir?” said the Provost.

"Why, please your majesty's worship," said Derrick, making several sea bows, and describing as nearly as he could, the exterior of the worthy Magistrate himself, "he was an elderly gentleman — Dutch-built, round in the stern, with a white wig and a red nose — very like your majesty, I think;" then, turning to a comrade, he added, "Jack, don't you think the fellow that wanted to kiss the pretty girl with the lantern t'other night, was very like his worship?"

"By G — Tom Derrick," answered the party appealed to, "I believe it is the very man!"

"This is insolence which we can make you repent of, gentlemen!" said the Magistrate, justly irritated at their effrontery; "you have behaved in this town, as if you were in an Indian village at Madagascar. You yourself, Captain, if captain you be, were at the head of another riot, no longer since than yesterday. We will give you no provisions till we know better whom we are supplying. And do not think to bully us; when I shake this handkerchief out at the window, which is at my elbow, your ship goes to the bottom. Remember she lies under the guns of our battery."

"And how many of these guns are honeycombed, Mr. Mayor?" said Cleveland. He put the question by chance; but instantly perceived, from a sort of confusion which the Provost in vain endeavoured to hide, that the artillery of Kirkwall was not in the best order. "Come, come, Mr. Mayor," he said, "bullying will go down with us as little as with you. Your guns yonder will do more harm to the poor old sailors who are to work them than to our sloop; and if we bring a broadside to bear on the town, why, your wives' crockery will be in some danger. And then to talk to us of seamen being a little frolicsome ashore, why, when are they otherwise? You have the Greenland whalers playing the devil among you every now and then; and the very Dutchmen cut capers in the streets of Kirkwall, like porpoises before a gale of wind. I am told you are a man of sense, and I am sure you and I could settle this matter in the course of a five-minutes' palaver."

"Well, sir," said the Provost, "I will hear what you have to say, if you will walk this way."

Cleveland accordingly followed him into a small interior apartment, and, when there, addressed the Provost thus: "I will lay aside my pistols, sir, if you are afraid of them."

"D— n your pistols!" answered the Provost, "I have served the King, and fear the smell of powder as little as you do!"

"So much the better," said Cleveland, "for you will hear me the more coolly. — Now, sir, let us be what perhaps you suspect us, or let us be any thing else, what, in the name of Heaven, can you get by keeping us here, but blows and bloodshed? For which, believe me, we are much better provided than you can pretend to be. The point is a plain one — you are desirous to be rid of us — we are desirous to be gone. Let us have the means of departure, and we leave you instantly."

"Look ye, Captain," said the Provost, "I thirst for no man's blood. You are a pretty fellow, as there were many among the buccaniers in my time — but there is no harm in wishing you a better trade. You should have the stores and welcome, for your money, so you would make these seas clear of you. But then, here lies the rub. The Halcyon frigate is expected here in these parts immediately; when she hears of you she will be at you; for there is nothing the white lapelle loves better than a rover — you are seldom without a cargo of dollars. Well, he comes down, gets you under his stern" —

"Blows us into the air, if you please," said Cleveland.

"Nay, that must be as *you* please, Captain," said the Provost; "but then, what is to come of the good town of Kirkwall, that has been packing and peeling with the King's enemies? The burgh will be laid under a round fine, and it may be that the Provost may not come off so easily."

"Well, then," said Cleveland, "I see where your pinch lies. Now, suppose that I run round this island of yours, and get into the roadstead at Stromness? We could get what we want put on board there, without Kirkwall or the Provost seeming to have any hand in it; or, if it should be ever questioned, your want of force, and our superior strength, will make a sufficient apology."

"That may be," said the Provost; "but if I suffer you to leave your present station, and go elsewhere, I must have some security that you will not do harm to the country."

"And we," said Cleveland, "must have some security on our side, that you will not detain us, by dribbling out our time till the Halcyon is on the coast. Now, I am myself perfectly willing to continue on shore as a hostage, on the one side, provided you will give me your word not to betray me, and send some magistrate, or person of consequence, aboard the sloop, where his safety will be a guarantee for mine."

The Provost shook his head, and intimated it would be difficult to find a person willing to place himself as hostage in such a perilous condition; but said he would propose the arrangement to such of the council as were fit to be trusted with a matter of such weight.

Chapter 35.

"I left my poor plough to go ploughing the deep!"

DIBDIN.

When the Provost and Cleveland had returned into the public council-room, the former retired a second time with such of his brethren as he thought proper to advise with; and, while they were engaged in discussing Cleveland's proposal, refreshments were offered to him and his party. These the Captain permitted his people to partake of, but with the greatest precaution against surprisal, one party relieving the guard, whilst the others were at their food.

He himself, in the meanwhile, walked up and down the apartment, and conversed upon indifferent subjects with those present, like a person quite at his ease.

Amongst these individuals he saw, somewhat to his surprise, Triptolemus Yellowley, who, chancing to be at Kirkwall, had been summoned by the Magistrates, as representative, in a certain degree, of the Lord Chamberlain, to attend council on this occasion. Cleveland immediately renewed the acquaintance which he had formed with the agriculturist at Burgh-Westra, and asked him his present business in Orkney.

"Just to look after some of my little plans, Captain Cleveland. I am weary of fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus yonder, and I just cam ower to see how my orchard was thriving, whilk I had planted four or five miles from Kirkwall, it may be a year bygone, and how the bees were thriving, whereof I had imported nine skeps, for the improvement of the country, and for the turning of the heather-bloom into wax and honey."

"And they thrive, I hope?" said Cleveland, who, however little interested in the matter, sustained the conversation, as if to break the chilly and embarrassed silence which hung upon the company assembled.

"Thrive!" replied Triptolemus; "they thrive like every thing else in this country, and that is the backward way."

"Want of care, I suppose?" said Cleveland.

"The contrary, sir, quite and clean the contrary," replied the Factor; "they died of ower muckle care, like Lucky Christie's chickens. — I asked to see the skeps, and cunning and joyful did the fallow look who was to have taken care of them — 'Had there been ony body in charge but mysell,' he said, 'ye might have seen the skeps, or whatever you ca' them; but there wad hae been as mony solan-geese as flees in them, if it hadna been for my four quarters; for I watched them so closely, that I saw them a' creeping out at the little holes one sunny morning, and if I had not stopped the leak on the instant with a bit clay, the deil a bee, or flee, or whatever they are, would have been left in the skeps, as ye ca' them!' — In a word, sir, he had clagged up the hives, as if the puir things had had the pestilence, and my bees were as dead as if they had been smeaked — and so ends my hope, *generandi gloria mellis*, as Virgilius hath it."

"There is an end of your mead, then," replied Cleveland; "but what is your chance of cider? — How does the orchard thrive?"

"O Captain! this same Solomon of the Orcadian Ophir — I am sure no man need to send thither to fetch either talents of gold or talents of sense! — I say, this wise man had watered the young apple-trees, in his great tenderness, with hot water, and they are perished, root and branch! But what avails grieving? — And I wish you would tell me, instead, what is all the din that these good folks are making about pirates? and what for all these ill-looking men, that are armed like so many Highlandmen, assembled in the judgment-chamber? — for I am just come from the other side of the island, and I have heard nothing distinct about it. — And, now I look at you yoursell, Captain, I think you have mair of these foolish pistolets about you than should suffice an honest man in quiet times?"

"And so I think, too," said the pacific Triton, old Haagen, who had been an unwilling follower of the daring Montrose; "if you had been in the Glen of Edderachyllis, when we were sae sair worried by Sir John Worry" —

"You have forgot the whole matter, neighbour Haagen," said the Factor; "Sir John Urry was on your side, and was ta'en with Montrose; by the same token, he lost his head."

"Did he?" said the Triton. — "I believe you may be right; for he changed sides mair than anes, and wha kens whilk he died for? — But always he was there, and so was I; — a fight there was, and I never wish to see another!"

The entrance of the Provost here interrupted their desultory conversation. — "We have determined," he said, "Captain, that your ship shall go round to Stromness, or Scalpa-flow, to take in stores, in order that there may be no more quarrels between the Fair folks and your seamen. And as you wish to stay on shore to see the Fair, we intend to send a respectable gentleman on board your vessel to pilot her round the Mainland, as the navigation is but ticklish."

"Spoken like a quiet and sensible magistrate, Mr. Mayor," said Cleveland, "and no otherwise than as I expected. — And what gentleman is to honour our quarter-deck during my absence?"

"We have fixed that, too, Captain Cleveland," said the Provost; "you may be sure we were each more desirous than another to go upon so pleasant a voyage, and in such good company; but being Fair time, most of us have some affairs in hand — I myself, in respect of my office, cannot be well spared — the eldest Bailie's wife is lying-in — the Treasurer does not agree with the sea — two Bailies have the gout — the other two are absent from town — and the other fifteen members of council are all engaged on particular business."

"All that I can tell you, Mr. Mayor," said Cleveland, raising his voice, "is, that I expect" —

"A moment's patience, if you please, Captain," said the Provost, interrupting him — "So that we have come to the resolution that our worthy Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley, who is Factor to the Lord Chamberlain of these islands, shall, in respect of his official situation, be preferred to the honour and pleasure of accompanying you."

"Me!" said the astonished Triptolemus: "what the devil should I do going on your voyages? — my business is on dry land!"

"The gentlemen want a pilot," said the Provost, whispering to him, "and there is no eviting to give them one."

"Do they want to go bump on shore, then?" said the Factor — "how the devil should I pilot them, that never touched rudder in my life?"

"Hush! — hush! — be silent!" said the Provost; "if the people of this town heard ye say such a word, your utility, and respect, and rank, and every thing else, is clean gone! — No man is any thing with us island folks, unless he can hand, reef, and steer. — Besides, it is but a mere form; and we will send old Pate Sinclair to help you. You will have nothing to do but to eat, drink, and be merry all day."

"Eat and drink!" said the Factor, not able to comprehend exactly why this piece of duty was pressed upon him so hastily, and yet not very capable of resisting or extricating himself from the toils of the more knowing Provost — "Eat and drink? — that is all very well; but, to speak truth, the sea does not agree with me any more than with the Treasurer; and I have always a better appetite for eating and drinking ashore."

"Hush! hush! hush!" again said the Provost, in an under tone of earnest expostulation; "would you actually ruin your character out and out? — A Factor of the High Chamberlain of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland, and not like the sea! — you might as well say you are a Highlander, and do not like whisky!"

"You must settle it somehow, gentlemen," said Captain Cleveland; "it is time we were under weigh. — Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley, are we to be honoured with your company?"

"I am sure, Captain Cleveland," stammered the Factor, "I would have no objection to go anywhere with you — only" —

"He has no objection," said the Provost, catching at the first limb of the sentence, without awaiting the conclusion.

"He has no objection," cried the Treasurer.

"He has no objection," sung out the whole four Bailies together; and the fifteen Councillors, all catching up the same phrase of assent, repeated it in chorus, with the additions of — "good man" — "public-spirited" — "honourable gentleman" — "burgh eternally obliged" — "where will you find such a worthy Factor?" and so forth.

Astonished and confused at the praises with which he was overwhelmed on all sides, and in no shape understanding the nature of the transaction that was going forward, the astounded and overwhelmed agriculturist became incapable of resisting the part of the Kirkwall Curtius thus insidiously forced upon him, and was delivered up by Captain Cleveland to his party, with the strictest injunctions to treat him with honour and attention. Goffe and his companions began now to lead him off, amid the applauses of the whole meeting, after the manner in which the victim of ancient days was garlanded and greeted by shouts, when consigned to the priests, for the purpose of being led to the altar, and knocked on the head, a sacrifice for the commonweal. It was while they thus conducted, and in a manner forced him out of the Council-chamber, that poor Triptolemus, much alarmed at finding that Cleveland, in whom he had some confidence, was to remain behind the party, tried, when just going out at the door, the effect of one remonstrating bellow. — "Nay, but, Provost! — Captain! — Bailies! — Treasurer! Councillors! — if Captain Cleveland does not go aboard to protect me, it is nae bargain, and go I will not, unless I am trailed with cart-ropes!"

His protest was, however, drowned in the unanimous chorus of the Magistrates and Councillors, returning him thanks for his public spirit — wishing him a good voyage — and praying to Heaven for his happy and speedy return. Stunned and overwhelmed, and thinking, if he had any distinct thoughts at all, that remonstrance was vain, where friends and strangers seemed alike determined to carry the point against him, Triptolemus, without farther resistance, suffered himself to be conducted into the street, where the pirate's boat's-crew, assembling around him, began to move slowly towards the quay, many of the townsfolk following out of curiosity, but without any attempt at interference or annoyance; for the pacific compromise which the dexterity of the first Magistrate had achieved, was unanimously approved of as a much better settlement of the disputes betwixt them and the strangers, than might have been attained by the dubious issue of an appeal to arms.

Meanwhile, as they went slowly along, Triptolemus had time to study the appearance, countenance, and dress, of those into whose hands he had been thus delivered, and began to imagine that he read in their looks, not only the general expression of a desperate character, but some sinister intentions directed particularly towards himself. He was alarmed by the truculent looks of Goffe, in particular, who, holding his arm with a gripe which resembled in delicacy of touch the compression of a smith's vice, cast on him from the outer corner of his eye oblique glances, like those which the eagle throws upon the prey which she has clutched, ere yet she proceeds, as it is technically called, to plume it. At length Yellowley's fears got so far the better of his prudence, that he fairly asked his terrible conductor, in a sort of crying whisper, "Are you going to murder me, Captain, in the face of the laws baith of God and man?"

"Hold your peace, if you are wise," said Goffe, who had his own reasons for desiring to increase the panic of his captive; "we have not murdered a man these three months, and why should you put us in mind of it?"

"You are but joking, I hope, good worthy Captain!" replied Triptolemus. "This is worse than witches, dwarfs, dirking of whales, and copping of cobbles, put all together! — this is an away-ganging crop, with a vengeance! — What good, in Heaven's name, would murdering me do to you?"

"We might have some pleasure in it, at least," said Goffe. — "Look these fellows in the face, and see if you see one among them that would not rather kill a man than let it alone? — But we will speak more of that when you have first had a taste of the bilboes — unless, indeed, you come down with a handsome round handful of Chili boards³⁷ for your ransom."

"As I shall live by bread, Captain," answered the Factor, "that misbegotten dwarf has carried off the whole hornful of silver!"

"A cat-and-nine-tails will make you find it again," said Goffe, gruffly; "flogging and pickling is an excellent receipt to bring a man's wealth into his mind — twisting a bowstring round his skull till the eyes start a little, is a very good remembrancer too."

"Captain," replied Yellowley, stoutly, "I have no money — seldom can improvers have. We turn pasture to tillage, and barley into aits, and heather into greensward, and the poor *yarpha*, as the benighted creatures here call their peat-bogs, into baittle grass-land; but we seldom make any thing of it that comes back to our ain pouch. The carles and the cart-avers make it all, and the carles and the cart-avers eat it all, and the deil clink down with it!"

"Well, well," said Goffe, "if you be really a poor fellow, as you pretend, I'll stand your friend;" then, inclining his head so as to reach the ear of the Factor, who stood on tiptoe with anxiety, he said, "If you love your life, do not enter the boat with us."

"But how am I to get away from you, while you hold me so fast by the arm, that I could not get off if the whole year's crop of Scotland depended on it?"

"Hark ye, you gudgeon," said Goffe, "just when you come to the water's edge, and when the fellows are jumping in and taking their oars, slue yourself round suddenly to the larboard — I will let go your arm — and then cut and run for your life!"

Triptolemus did as he was desired, Goffe's willing hand relaxed the grasp as he had promised, the agriculturist trundled off like a football that has just received a strong impulse from the foot of one of the players, and, with celerity which surprised himself as well as all beholders, fled through the town of Kirkwall. Nay, such was the impetus of his retreat, that, as if the grasp of the pirate was still open to pounce upon him, he never stopped till he had traversed the whole town, and attained the open country on the other side. They who had seen him that day — his hat and wig lost in the sudden effort he had made to bolt forward, his cravat awry, and his waistcoat unbuttoned — and who had an opportunity of comparing his round spherical form and short legs with the portentous speed at which he scoured through the street, might well say, that if Fury ministers arms, Fear confers wings. His very mode of running seemed to be that peculiar to his fleecy care, for, like a ram in the midst of his race, he ever and anon encouraged himself by a great bouncing attempt at a leap, though there were no obstacles in his way. There was no pursuit after the agriculturist; and though a musket or two were presented, for the purpose of sending a leaden messenger after him, yet Goffe, turning peace-maker for once in his life, so exaggerated the dangers that would attend a breach of the truce with the people of Kirkwall, that he prevailed upon the boat's crew to forbear any active hostilities, and to pull off for their vessel with all dispatch.

The burghers, who regarded the escape of Triptolemus as a triumph on their side, gave the boat three cheers, by way of an insulting farewell; while the Magistrates, on the other hand, entertained great anxiety respecting the probable consequences of this breach of articles between them and the pirates; and, could they have seized upon the fugitive very privately, instead of complimenting him with a civic feast in honour of the agility which he displayed, it is likely they might have delivered the runaway hostage once more into the hands of his foemen. But it was impossible to set their face publicly to such an act of violence, and therefore they contented themselves with closely watching Cleveland, whom they determined to make responsible for any aggression which might be attempted by the pirates. Cleveland, on his part, easily conjectured that the motive which Goffe had for suffering the hostage to escape, was to leave him answerable for all consequences, and, relying more on the attachment and intelligence of his friend and adherent, Frederick Altamont, alias Jack Bunce, than on any thing else, expected the result with considerable anxiety, since the Magistrates, though they continued to treat him with civility, plainly intimated they would regulate his treatment by the behaviour of the crew, though he no longer commanded them.

It was not, however, without some reason that he reckoned on the devoted fidelity of Bunce; for no sooner did that trusty adherent receive from Goffe, and the boat's crew, the news of the escape of Triptolemus, than he immediately concluded it had been favoured by the late Captain, in order that, Cleveland being either put to death or consigned to hopeless imprisonment, Goffe might be called upon to resume the command of the vessel.

"But the drunken old boatswain shall miss his mark," said Bunce to his confederate Fletcher; "or else I am contented to quit the name of Altamont, and be called Jack Bunce, or Jack Duncie, if you like it better, to the end of the chapter."

Availing himself accordingly of a sort of nautical eloquence, which his enemies termed slack-jaw, Bunce set before the crew, in a most animated manner, the disgrace which they all sustained, by their Captain remaining, as he was pleased to term it, in the bilboes, without any hostage to answer for his safety; and succeeded so far, that, besides exciting a good deal of discontent against Goffe, he brought the crew to the resolution of seizing the first vessel of a tolerable appearance, and declaring that the ship, crew, and cargo, should be dealt with according to the usage which Cleveland should receive on shore. It was judged at the same time proper to try the faith of the Orcadians, by removing from the roadstead of Kirkwall, and going round to that of Stromness, where, according to the treaty betwixt Provost Torfe and Captain Cleveland, they were to virtual their sloop. They resolved, in the meantime, to intrust the command of the vessel to a council, consisting of Goffe, the boatswain, and Bunce himself, until Cleveland should be in a situation to resume his command.

These resolutions having been proposed and acceded to, they weighed anchor, and got their sloop under sail, without experiencing any opposition or annoyance from the battery, which relieved them of one important apprehension incidental to their situation.

Chapter 36.

*Clap on more sail, pursue, up with your fights,
Give fire — she is my prize, or ocean overwhelm them all!*

SHAKESPEARE.

A very handsome brig, which, with several other vessels, was the property of Magnus Troil, the great Zetland Udaller, had received on board that Magnate himself, his two lovely daughters, and the facetious Claud Halcro, who, for friendship's sake chiefly, and the love of beauty proper to his poetical calling, attended them on their journey from Zetland to the capital of Orkney, to which Norna had referred them, as the place where her mystical oracles should at length receive a satisfactory explanation.

They passed, at a distance, the tremendous cliffs of the lonely spot of earth called the Fair Isle, which, at an equal distance from either archipelago, lies in the sea which divides Orkney from Zetland; and at length, after some baffling winds, made the Start of Sanda. Off the headland so named, they became involved in a strong current, well known, by those who frequent these seas, as the Roost of the Start, which carried them considerably out of their course, and, joined to an adverse wind, forced them to keep on the east side of the island of Stronsa, and, finally compelled them to lie by for the night in Papa Sound, since the navigation in dark or thick weather, amongst so many low islands, is neither pleasant nor safe.

On the ensuing morning they resumed their voyage under more favourable auspices; and, coasting along the island of Stronsa, whose flat, verdant, and comparatively fertile shores, formed a strong contrast to the dun hills and dark cliffs of their own islands, they doubled the cape called the Lambhead, and stood away for Kirkwall.

They had scarce opened the beautiful bay betwixt Pomona and Shapinsha, and the sisters were admiring the massive church of Saint Magnus, as it was first seen to rise from amongst the inferior buildings of Kirkwall, when the eyes of Magnus, and of Claud Halcro, were attracted by an object which they thought more interesting. This was an armed sloop, with her sails set, which had just left the anchorage in the bay, and was running before the wind by which the brig of the Udaller was beating in.

"A tight thing that, by my ancestors' bones!" said the old Udaller; "but I cannot make out of what country, as she shows no colours. Spanish built, I should think her."

"Ay, ay," said Claud Halcro, "she has all the look of it. She runs before the wind that we must battle with, which is the wonted way of the world. As glorious John says —

'With roomy deck, and guns of mighty strength
Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow laves,
Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,
She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.'

Brenda could not help telling Halcro, when he had spouted this stanza with great enthusiasm, "that though the description was more like a first-rate than a sloop, yet the simile of the sea-wasp served but indifferently for either."

"A sea-wasp?" said Magnus, looking with some surprise, as the sloop, shifting her course, suddenly bore down on them: "Egad, I wish she may not show us presently that she has a sting!"

What the Udaller said in jest, was fulfilled in earnest; for, without hoisting colours, or hailing, two shots were discharged from the sloop, one of which ran dipping and dancing upon the water, just ahead of the Zetlander's bows, while the other went through his main-sail.

Magnus caught up a speaking-trumpet, and hailed the sloop, to demand what she was, and what was the meaning of this unprovoked aggression. He was only answered by the stern command — "Down top-sails instantly, and lay your main-sail to the mast — you shall see who we are presently."

There were no means within the reach of possibility by which obedience could be evaded, where it would instantly have been enforced by a broadside; and, with much fear on the part of the sisters and Claud Halcro, mixed with anger and astonishment on that of the Udaller, the brig lay-to to await the commands of the captors.

The sloop immediately lowered a boat, with six armed hands, commanded by Jack Bunce, which rowed directly for their prize. As they approached her, Claud Halcro whispered to the Udaller — “If what we hear of buccaniers be true, these men, with their silk scarfs and vests, have the very cut of them.”

“My daughters! my daughters!” muttered Magnus to himself, with such an agony as only a father could feel — “Go down below, and hide yourselves, girls, while I —”

He threw down his speaking-trumpet, and seized on a handspike, while his daughters, more afraid of the consequences of his fiery temper to himself than of any thing else, hung round him, and begged him to make no resistance. Claud Halcro united his entreaties, adding, “It were best pacify the fellows with fair words. They might,” he said, “be Dunkirkers, or insolent man-of-war’s men on a frolic.”

“No, no,” answered Magnus, “it is the sloop which the Jagger told us of. But I will take your advice — I will have patience for these girls’ sakes; yet” —

He had no time to conclude the sentence, for Bunce jumped on board with his party, and drawing his cutlass, struck it upon the companion-ladder, and declared the ship was theirs.

“By what warrant or authority do you stop us on the high seas?” said Magnus.

“Here are half a dozen of warrants,” said Bunce, showing the pistols which were hung round him, according to a pirate-fashion already mentioned, “choose which you like, old gentleman, and you shall have the perusal of it presently.”

“That is to say, you intend to rob us?” said Magnus. — “So be it — we have no means to help it — only be civil to the women, and take what you please from the vessel. There is not much, but I will and can make it worth more, if you use us well.”

“Civil to the women!” said Fletcher, who had also come on board with the gang — “when were we else than civil to them? ay, and kind to boot? — Look here, Jack Bunce! — what a trim-going little thing here is! — By G — she shall make a cruize with us, come of old Squaretoes what will!”

He seized upon the terrified Brenda with one hand, and insolently pulled back with the other the hood of the mantle in which she had muffled herself.

“Help, father! — help, Minna!” exclaimed the affrighted girl; unconscious, at the moment, that they were unable to render her assistance.

Magnus again uplifted the handspike, but Bunce stopped his hand. — “Avast, father!” he said, “or you will make a bad voyage of it presently — And you, Fletcher, let go the girl!”

“And, d — n me! why should I let her go?” said Fletcher.

“Because I command you, Dick,” said the other, “and because I’ll make it a quarrel else. — And now let me know, beauties, is there one of you bears that queer heathen name of Minna, for which I have a certain sort of regard?”

“Gallant sir!” said Halcro, “unquestionably it is because you have some poetry in your heart.”

“I have had enough of it in my mouth in my time,” answered Bunce; “but that day is by, old gentleman — however, I shall soon find out which of these girls is Minna. — Throw back your muffings from your faces, and don’t be afraid, my Lindamiras; no one here shall meddle with you to do you wrong. On my soul, two pretty wenches! — I wish I were at sea in an egg-shell, and a rock under my lee-bow, if I would wish a better leaguer-lass than the worst of them! — Hark you, my girls; which of you would like to swing in a rover’s hammock? — you should have gold for the gathering!”

The terrified maidens clung close together, and grew pale at the bold and familiar language of the desperate libertine.

“Nay, don’t be frightened,” said he; “no one shall serve under the noble Altamont but by her own free choice — there is no pressing amongst gentlemen of fortune. And do not look so shy upon me neither, as if I spoke of what you never thought of before. One of you, at least, has heard of Captain Cleveland, the Rover.”

Brenda grew still paler, but the blood mounted at once in Minna’s cheeks, on hearing the name of her lover thus unexpectedly introduced; for the scene was in itself so confounding, that the idea of the vessel’s being the consort of which Cleveland had spoken at Burgh-Westra, had occurred to no one save the Udaller.

“I see how it is,” said Bunce, with a familiar nod, “and I will hold my course accordingly. — You need not be afraid of any injury, father,” he added, addressing Magnus familiarly; “and though I have made many a pretty girl pay tribute in my time, yet yours shall go ashore without either wrong or ransom.”

“If you will assure me of that,” said Magnus; “you are as welcome to the brig and cargo, as ever I made man welcome to a can of punch.”

“And it is no bad thing that same can of punch,” said Bunce, “if we had any one here that could mix it well.”

“I will do it,” said Claud Halcro, “with any man that ever squeezed lemon — Eric Scambester, the punch-maker of Burgh-Westra, being alone excepted.”

“And you are within a grapnel’s length of him, too,” said the Udaller. — “Go down below, my girls,” he added, “and send up the rare old man, and the punch-bowl.”

“The punch-bowl!” said Fletcher; “I say, the bucket, d — n me! — Talk of bowls in the cabin of a paltry merchantman, but not to gentlemen-strollers — rovers, I would say,” correcting himself, as he observed that Bunce looked sour at the mistake.

“And I say, these two pretty girls shall stay on deck, and fill my can,” said Bunce; “I deserve some attendance, at least, for all my generosity.”

“And they shall fill mine, too,” said Fletcher — “they shall fill it to the brim! — and I will have a kiss for every drop they spill — broil me if I won’t!”

“Why, then, I tell you, you shan’t!” said Bunce; “for I’ll be d — d if any one shall kiss Minna but one, and that’s neither you nor I; and her other little bit of a consort shall ‘scape for company; — there are plenty of willing wenches in Orkney. — And so, now I think on it, these girls shall go down below, and bolt themselves into the cabin; and we shall have the punch up here on deck, *al fresco*, as the old gentleman proposes.”

“Why, Jack, I wish you knew your own mind,” said Fletcher; “I have been your messmate these two years, and I love you; and yet flay me like a wild bullock, if you have not as many humours as a monkey! — And what shall we have to make a little fun of, since you have sent the girls down below?”

“Why, we will have Master Punch-maker here,” answered Bunce, “to give us toasts, and sing us songs. — And, in the meantime, you there, stand by sheets and tacks, and get her under way! — and you, steersman, as you would keep your brains in your skull, keep her under the stern of the sloop. — If you attempt to play us any trick, I will scuttle your sconce as if it were an old calabash!”

The vessel was accordingly got under way, and moved slowly on in the wake of the sloop, which, as had been previously agreed upon, held her course, not to return to the Bay of Kirkwall, but for an excellent roadstead called Inganess Bay, formed by a promontory which extends to the eastward two or three miles from the Orcadian metropolis, and where the vessels might conveniently lie at anchor, while the rovers maintained any communication with the Magistrates which the new state of things seemed to require.

Meantime Claud Halcro had exerted his utmost talents in compounding a bucketful of punch for the use of the pirates, which they drank out of large cans; the ordinary seamen, as well as Bunce and Fletcher, who acted as officers, dipping them into the bucket with very little ceremony, as they came and went upon their duty. Magnus, who was particularly apprehensive that liquor might awaken the brutal passions of these desperadoes, was yet so much astonished at the quantities which he saw them drink, without producing any visible effect upon their reason, that he could not help expressing his surprise to Bunce himself, who, wild as he was, yet appeared by far the most civil and conversable of his party, and whom he was, perhaps, desirous to conciliate, by a compliment of which all boon toppers know the value.

“Bones of Saint Magnus!” said the Udaller, “I used to think I took off my can like a gentleman; but to see your men swallow, Captain, one would think their stomachs were as bottomless as the hole of Laifell in Foula, which I have sounded myself with a line of an hundred fathoms. By my soul, the Bicker of Saint Magnus were but a sip to them!”

“In our way of life, sir,” answered Bunce, “there is no stint till duty calls, or the puncheon is drunk out.”

“By my word, sir,” said Claud Halcro, “I believe there is not one of your people but could drink out the mickle bicker of Scarpa, which was always offered to the Bishop of Orkney brimful of the best bummock that ever was brewed.”³⁸

“If drinking could make them bishops,” said Bunce, “I should have a reverend crew of them; but as they have no other clerical qualities about them, I do not propose that they shall get drunk to-day; so we will cut our drink with a song.”

“And I’ll sing it, by —!” said or swore Dick Fletcher, and instantly struck up the old ditty —

“It was a ship, and a ship of fame,

Launch'd off the stocks, bound for the main,
With an hundred and fifty brisk young men,
All pick'd and chosen every one."

"I would sooner be keel-hauled than hear that song over again," said Bunce; "and confound your lantern jaws, you can squeeze nothing else out of them!"

"By — " said Fletcher, "I will sing my song, whether you like it or no;" and again he sung, with the doleful tone of a north-easter whistling through sheet and shrouds —

"Captain Glen was our captain's name;
A very gallant and brisk young man;
As bold a sailor as e'er went to sea,
And we were bound for High Barbary."

"I tell you again," said Bunce, "we will have none of your screech-owl music here; and I'll be d — d if you shall sit here and make that infernal noise!"

"Why, then, I'll tell you what," said Fletcher, getting up, "I'll sing when I walk about, and I hope there is no harm in that, Jack Bunce." And so, getting up from his seat, he began to walk up and down the sloop, croaking out his long and disastrous ballad.

"You see how I manage them," said Bunce, with a smile of self-applause — "allow that fellow two strides on his own way, and you make a mutineer of him for life. But I tie him strict up, and he follows me as kindly as a fowler's spaniel after he has got a good beating. — And now your toast and your song, sir," addressing Halcro; "or rather your song without your toast. I have got a toast for myself. Here is success to all roving blades, and confusion to all honest men!"

"I should be sorry to drink that toast, if I could help it," said Magnus Troil.

"What! you reckon yourself one of the honest folks, I warrant?" said Bunce. — "Tell me your trade, and I'll tell you what I think of it. As for the punch-maker here, I knew him at first glance to be a tailor, who has, therefore, no more pretensions to be honest, than he has not to be mangy. But you are some High-Dutch skipper, I warrant me, that tramples on the cross when he is in Japan, and denies his religion for a day's gain."

"No," replied the Udaller, "I am a gentleman of Zetland."

"O, what!" retorted the satirical Mr. Bunce, "you are come from the happy climate where gin is a groat a-bottle, and where there is daylight for ever?"

"At your service, Captain," said the Udaller, suppressing with much pain some disposition to resent these jests on his country, although under every risk, and at all disadvantage.

"At my service!" said Bunce — "Ay, if there was a rope stretched from the wreck to the beach, you would be at my service to cut the hawser, make *floatsome* and *jetsome* of ship and cargo, and well if you did not give me a rap on the head with the back of the cutty-axe; and you call yourself honest? But never mind — here goes the aforesaid toast — and do you sing me a song, Mr. Fashioner; and look it be as good as your punch."

Halcro, internally praying for the powers of a new Timotheus, to turn his strain and check his auditor's pride, as glorious John had it, began a heart-soothing ditty with the following lines:—

"Maidens fresh as fairest rose,
Listen to this lay of mine."

"I will hear nothing of maidens or roses," said Bunce; "it puts me in mind what sort of a cargo we have got on board; and, by — — I will be true to my messmate and my captain as long as I can! — And now I think on't, I'll have no more punch either — that last cup made innovation, and I am not to play Cassio to-night — and if I drink not, nobody else shall."

So saying, he manfully kicked over the bucket, which, notwithstanding the repeated applications made to it, was still half full, got up from his seat, shook himself a little to rights, as he expressed it, cocked his hat, and, walking the quarter-deck with an air of dignity, gave, by word and signal, the orders for bringing the ships to anchor, which were readily obeyed by both, Goffe being then, in all probability, past any rational state of interference.

The Udaller, in the meantime, condoled with Halcro on their situation. "It is bad enough," said the tough old Norseman; "for these are rank rogues — and yet, were it not for the girls, I should not fear them. That young vapouring fellow, who seems to command, is not such a born devil as he might have been."

"He has queer humours, though," said Halcro; "and I wish we were loose from him. To kick down a bucket half full of the best punch ever was made, and to cut me short in the sweetest song I ever wrote — I promise you, I do not know what he may do next — it is next door to madness."

Meanwhile, the ships being brought to anchor, the valiant Lieutenant Bunce called upon Fletcher, and, resuming his seat by his unwilling passengers, he told them they should see what message he was about to send to the wittols of Kirkwall, as they were something concerned in it. "It shall run in Dick's name," he said, "as well as in mine. I love to give the poor young fellow a little countenance now and then — don't I, Dick, you d — d stupid ass?"

"Why, yes, Jack Bunce," said Dick, "I can't say but as you do — only you are always bullocking one about something or other, too — but, howsomdever, d'ye see" —

"Enough said — belay your jaw, Dick," said Bunce, and proceeded to write his epistle, which, being read aloud, proved to be of the following tenor:

"For the Mayor and Aldermen of Kirkwall — Gentlemen, As, contrary to your good faith given, you have not sent us on board a hostage for the safety of our Captain, remaining on shore at your request, these come to tell you, we are not thus to be trifled with. We have already in our possession, a brig, with a family of distinction, its owners and passengers; and as you deal with our Captain, so will we deal with them in every respect. And as this is the first, so assure yourselves it shall not be the last damage which we will do to your town and trade, if you do not send on board our Captain, and supply us with stores according to treaty.

"Given on board the brig Mergoose of Burgh-Westra, lying in Inganess Bay. Witness our hands, commanders of the Fortune's Favourite, and gentlemen adventurers."

He then subscribed himself Frederick Altamont, and handed the letter to Fletcher, who read the said subscription with much difficulty; and, admiring the sound of it very much, swore he would have a new name himself, and the rather that Fletcher was the most crabbed word to spell and conster, he believed, in the whole dictionary. He subscribed himself accordingly, Timothy Tugmutton.

"Will you not add a few lines to the coxcombs?" said Bunce, addressing Magnus.

"Not I," returned the Udaller, stubborn in his ideas of right and wrong, even in so formidable an emergency. "The Magistrates of Kirkwall know their duty, and were I they" — But here the recollection that his daughters were at the mercy of these ruffians, blanked the bold visage of Magnus Troil, and checked the defiance which was just about to issue from his lips.

"D— n me," said Bunce, who easily conjectured what was passing in the mind of his prisoner — "that pause would have told well on the stage — it would have brought down pit, box, and gallery, egad, as Bayes has it."

"I will hear nothing of Bayes," said Claud Halcro, (himself a little elevated,) "it is an impudent satire on glorious John; but he tickled Buckingham off for it —

'In the first rank of these did Zimri stand;

A man so various" —

"Hold your peace!" said Bunce, drowning the voice of the admirer of Dryden in louder and more vehement asseveration, "the Rehearsal is the best farce ever was written — and I'll make him kiss the gunner's daughter that denies it. D— n me, I was the best Prince Prettyman ever walked the boards —

'Sometimes a fisher's son, sometimes a prince.'

But let us to business. — Hark ye, old gentleman," (to Magnus,) "you have a sort of sulkiness about you, for which some of my profession would cut your ears out of your head, and broil them for your dinner with red pepper. I have known Goffe do so to a poor devil, for looking sour and dangerous when he saw his sloop go to Davy Jones's locker with his only son on board. But I'm a spirit of another sort; and if you or the ladies are ill used, it shall be the Kirkwall people's fault, and not mine, and that's fair; and so you had better let them know your condition, and your circumstances, and so forth — and that's fair, too."

Magnus, thus exhorted, took up the pen, and attempted to write; but his high spirit so struggled with his paternal anxiety, that his hand refused its office. "I cannot help it," he said, after one or two illegible attempts to write — "I cannot form a letter, if all our lives depended upon it."

And he could not, with his utmost efforts, so suppress the convulsive emotions which he experienced, but that they agitated his whole frame. The willow which bends to the tempest, often escapes better than the oak which resists it; and so, in great calamities, it sometimes happens, that light and frivolous spirits recover their elasticity and presence of mind sooner than those of a loftier character. In the present case, Claud Halcro was fortunately able to perform the task which the deeper feelings of his friend and patron refused. He took the pen, and, in as few words as possible, explained the situation in which they were placed, and the cruel risks to which they were exposed, insinuating at the same time, as delicately as he could express it, that, to the magistrates of the country, the life and honour of its citizens should be a dearer object than even the apprehension or punishment of the guilty; taking care, however, to qualify the last expression as much as possible, for fear of giving umbrage to the pirates.

Bunce read over the letter, which fortunately met his approbation; and, on seeing the name of Claud Halcro at the bottom, he exclaimed, in great surprise, and with more energetic expressions of asseveration than we choose to record — "Why, you are the little fellow that played the fiddle to old Manager Gadabout's company, at Hogs Norton, the first season I came out there! I thought I knew your catchword of glorious John."

At another time this recognition might not have been very grateful to Halcro's minstrel pride; but, as matters stood with him, the discovery of a golden mine could not have made him more happy. He instantly remembered the very hopeful young performer who came out in Don Sebastian, and judiciously added, that the muse of glorious John had never received such excellent support during the time that he was first (he might have added, and only) violin to Mr. Gadabout's company.

"Why, yes," said Bunce, "I believe you are right — I think I might have shaken the scene as well as Booth or Betterton either. But I was destined to figure on other boards," (striking his foot upon the deck,) "and I believe I must stick by them, till I find no board at all to support me. But now, old acquaintance, I will do something for you — slue yourself this way a bit — I would have you solus." They leaned over the taffrail, while Bunce whispered with more seriousness than he usually showed, "I am sorry for this honest old heart of Norway pine — blight me if I am not — and for the daughters too — besides, I have my own reasons for befriending one of them. I can be a wild fellow with a willing lass of the game; but to such decent and innocent creatures — d — n me, I am Scipio at Numantia, and Alexander in the tent of Darius. You remember how I touch off Alexander?" (here he started into heroics.)

"Thus from the grave I rise to save my love;

All draw your swords, with wings of lightning move.

When I rush on, sure none will dare to stay —

'Tis beauty calls, and glory shows the way."

Claud Halcro failed not to bestow the necessary commendations on his declamation, declaring, that, in his opinion as an honest man, he had always thought Mr. Altamont's giving that speech far superior in tone and energy to Betterton.

Bunce, or Altamont, wrung his hand tenderly. "Ah, you flatter me, my dear friend," he said; "yet, why had not the public some of your judgment! — I should not then have been at this pass. Heaven knows, my dear Mr. Halcro — Heaven knows with what pleasure I could keep you on board with me, just that I might have one friend who loves as much to hear, as I do to recite, the choicest pieces of our finest dramatic authors. The most of us are beasts — and, for the Kirkwall hostage yonder, he uses me, egad, as I use Fletcher, I think, and huffs me the more, the more I do for him. But how delightful it would be in a tropic night, when the ship was hanging on the breeze, with a broad and steady sail, for me to rehearse Alexander, with you for my pit, box, and gallery! Nay, (for you are a follower of the muses, as I remember,) who knows but you and I might be the means of inspiring, like Orpheus and Eurydice, a pure taste into our companions, and softening their manners, while we excited their better feelings?"

This was spoken with so much unction, that Claud Halcro began to be afraid he had both made the actual punch over potent, and mixed too many bewitching ingredients in the cup of flattery which he had administered; and that, under the influence of both potions, the sentimental pirate might detain him by force, merely to realize the scenes which his imagination presented. The conjuncture was, however, too delicate to admit of any active effort, on Halcro's part, to redeem his blunder, and therefore he only returned the tender pressure of his friend's hand, and uttered the interjection "alas!" in as pathetic a tone as he could.

Bunce immediately resumed: "You are right, my friend, these are but vain visions of felicity, and it remains but for the unhappy Altamont to serve the friend to whom he is now to bid farewell. I have determined to put you and the two girls ashore, with Fletcher for your protection; and so call up the young women, and let them begone before the devil get aboard of me, or of some one else. You will carry my letter to the magistrates, and second it with your own eloquence, and assure them, that if they hurt but one hair of Cleveland's head, there will be the devil to pay, and no pitch hot."

Relieved at heart by this unexpected termination of Bunce's harangue, Halcro descended the companion ladder two steps at a time, and knocking at the cabin door, could scarce find intelligible language enough to say his errand. The sisters hearing, with unexpected joy, that they were to be set ashore, muffled themselves in their cloaks, and, when they learned that the boat was hoisted out, came hastily on deck, where they were apprized, for the first time, to their great horror, that their father was still to remain on board of the pirate.

"We will remain with him at every risk," said Minna — "we may be of some assistance to him, were it but for an instant — we will live and die with him!"

"We shall aid him more surely," said Brenda, who comprehended the nature of their situation better than Minna, "by interesting the people of Kirkwall to grant these gentlemen's demands."

"Spoken like an angel of sense and beauty," said Bunce; "and now away with you; for, d — n me, if this is not like having a lighted linstock in the powder-room — if you speak another word more, confound me if I know how I shall bring myself to part with you!"

"Go, in God's name, my daughters," said Magnus. "I am in God's hand; and when you are gone I shall care little for myself — and I shall think and say, as long as I live, that this good gentleman deserves a better trade. — Go — go — away with you!" — for they yet lingered in reluctance to leave him.

"Stay not to kiss," said Bunce, "for fear I be tempted to ask my share. Into the boat with you — yet stop an instant." He drew the three captives apart — "Fletcher," said he, "will answer for the rest of the fellows, and will see you safe off the sea-beach. But how to answer for Fletcher, I know not, except by trusting Mr. Halcro with this little guarantee."

He offered the minstrel a small double-barrelled pistol, which, he said, was loaded with a brace of balls. Minna observed Halcro's hand tremble as he stretched it out to take the weapon. "Give it to me, sir," she said, taking it from the outlaw; "and trust to me for defending my sister and myself."

"Bravo, bravo!" shouted Bunce. "There spoke a wench worthy of Cleveland, the King of Rovers!"

"Cleveland!" repeated Minna, "do you then know that Cleveland, whom you have twice named?"

"Know him! Is there a man alive," said Bunce, "that knows better than I do the best and stoutest fellow ever stepped betwixt stem and stern? When he is out of the bilboes, as please Heaven he shall soon be, I reckon to see you come on board of us, and reign the queen of every sea we sail over. — You have got the little guardian; I suppose you know how to use it? If Fletcher behaves ill to you, you need only draw up this piece of iron with your thumb, so — and if he persists, it is but crooking your pretty forefinger thus, and I shall lose the most dutiful messmate that ever man had — though, d — n the dog, he will deserve his death if he disobeys my orders. And now, into the boat — but stay, one kiss for Cleveland's sake."

Brenda, in deadly terror, endured his courtesy, but Minna, stepping back with disdain, offered her hand. Bunce laughed, but kissed, with a theatrical air, the fair hand which she extended as a ransom for her lips, and at length the sisters and Halcro were placed in the boat, which rowed off under Fletcher's command.

Bunce stood on the quarter-deck, soliloquizing after the manner of his original profession. "Were this told at Port-Royal now, or at the isle of Providence, or in the Petits Guaves, I wonder what they would say of me! Why, that I was a good-natured milksop — a Jack-a-lent — an ass. — Well, let them. I have done enough of bad to think about it; it is worth while doing one good action, if it were but for the rarity of the thing, and to put one in good humour with oneself." Then turning to Magnus Troil, he proceeded — "By — these are bona-robas, these daughters of yours! The eldest would make her fortune on the London boards. What a

dashing attitude the wench had with her, as she seized the pistol! — d — n me, that touch would have brought the house down! What a Roxalana the jade would have made!" (for, in his oratory, Bunce, like Sancho's gossip, Thomas Cecial, was apt to use the most energetic word which came to hand, without accurately considering its propriety.) "I would give my share of the next prize but to hear her spout —

'Away, begone, and give a whirlwind room,

Or I will blow you up like dust. — Avaunt!

Madness but meanly represents my rage.'

And then, again, that little, soft, shy, tearful trembler, for Statira, to hear her recite —

'He speaks the kindest words, and looks such things,

Vows with such passion, swears with so much grace,

That 'tis a kind of heaven to be deluded by him.'

What a play we might have run up! — I was a beast not to think of it before I sent them off — I to be Alexander — Claud Halcro, Lysimachus — this old gentleman might have made a Clytus, for a pinch. I was an idiot not to think of it!"

There was much in this effusion which might have displeased the Udaller; but, to speak truth, he paid no attention to it. His eye, and, finally, his spy-glass, were employed in watching the return of his daughters to the shore. He saw them land on the beach, and, accompanied by Halcro, and another man, (Fletcher, doubtless,) he saw them ascend the acclivity, and proceed upon the road to Kirkwall; and he could even distinguish that Minna, as if considering herself as the guardian of the party, walked a little aloof from the rest, on the watch, as it seemed, against surprise, and ready to act as occasion should require. At length, as the Udaller was just about to lose sight of them, he had the exquisite satisfaction to see the party halt, and the pirate leave them, after a space just long enough for a civil farewell, and proceed slowly back, on his return to the beach. Blessing the Great Being who had thus relieved him from the most agonizing fears which a father can feel, the worthy Udaller, from that instant, stood resigned to his own fate, whatever that might be.

Chapter 37.

Over the mountains and under the waves,

Over the fountains and under the graves,

Over floods that are deepest,

Which Neptune obey,

Over rocks that are steepest,

Love will find out the way.

OLD SONG.

The parting of Fletcher from Claud Halcro and the sisters of Burgh-Westra, on the spot where it took place, was partly occasioned by a small party of armed men being seen at a distance in the act of advancing from Kirkwall, an apparition hidden from the Udaller's spy-glass by the swell of the ground, but quite visible to the pirate, whom it determined to consult his own safety by a speedy return to his boat. He was just turning away, when Minna occasioned the short delay which her father had observed.

"Stop," she said; "I command you! — Tell your leader from me, that whatever the answer may be from Kirkwall, he shall carry his vessel, nevertheless, round to Stromness; and, being anchored there, let him send a boat ashore for Captain Cleveland when he shall see a smoke on the Bridge of Broisgar."

Fletcher had thought, like his messmate Bunce of asking a kiss, at least, for the trouble of escorting these beautiful young women; and perhaps, neither the terror of the approaching Kirkwall men, nor of Minna's weapon, might have prevented his being insolent. But the name of his Captain, and, still more, the unappalled, dignified, and commanding manner of Minna Troil, overawed him. He made a sea bow — promised to keep a sharp look-out, and, returning to his boat, went on board with his message.

As Halcro and the sisters advanced towards the party whom they saw on the Kirkwall road, and who, on their part, had halted as if to observe them, Brenda, relieved from the fears of Fletcher's presence, which had hitherto kept her silent, exclaimed, "Merciful Heaven! — Minna, in what hands have we left our dear father?"

"In the hands of brave men," said Minna, steadily — "I fear not for him."

"As brave as you please," said Claud Halcro, "but very dangerous rogues for all that. — I know that fellow Altamont, as he calls himself, though that is not his right name neither, as deboshed a dog as ever made a barn ring with blood and blank verse. He began with Barnwell, and every body thought he would end with the gallows, like the last scene in Venice Preserved."

"It matters not," said Minna — "the wilder the waves, the more powerful is the voice that rules them. The name alone of Cleveland ruled the mood of the fiercest amongst them."

"I am sorry for Cleveland," said Brenda, "if such are his companions — but I care little for him in comparison to my father."

"Reserve your compassion for those who need it," said Minna, "and fear nothing for our father. — God knows, every silver hair on his head is to me worth the treasure of an unsummed mine; but I know that he is safe while in yonder vessel, and I know that he will be soon safe on shore."

"I would I could see it," said Claud Halcro; "but I fear the Kirkwall people, supposing Cleveland to be such as I dread, will not dare to exchange him against the Udaller. The Scots have very severe laws against theft-boot, as they call it."

"But who are those on the road before us?" said Brenda; "and why do they halt there so jealously?"

"They are a patrol of the militia," answered Halcro. "Glorious John touches them off a little sharply — but then John was a Jacobite — (e)

'Mouths without hands, maintain'd at vast expense,

In peace a charge, in war a weak defence;

Stout once a-month, they march, a blustering band,

And ever, but in time of need, at hand.'

I fancy they halted just now, taking us, as they saw us on the brow of the hill, for a party of the sloop's men, and now they can distinguish that you wear petticoats, they are moving on again."

They came on accordingly, and proved to be, as Claud Halcro had suggested, a patrol sent out to watch the motions of the pirates, and to prevent their attempting descents to damage the country.

They heartily congratulated Claud Halcro, who was well known to more than one of them, upon his escape from captivity; and the commander of the party, while offering every assistance to the ladies, could not help condoling with them on the circumstances in which their father stood, hinting, though in a delicate and doubtful manner, the difficulties which might be in the way of his liberation.

When they arrived at Kirkwall, and obtained an audience of the Provost, and one or two of the Magistrates, these difficulties were more plainly insisted upon. —

"The Halcyon frigate is upon the coast," said the Provost; "she was seen off Duncansbay-head; and, though I have the deepest respect for Mr. Troil of Burgh-Westra, yet I shall be answerable to law if I release from prison the Captain of this suspicious vessel, on account of the safety of any individual who may be unhappily endangered by his detention. This man is now known to be the heart and soul of these buccaniers, and am I at liberty to send him aboard, that he may plunder the country, or perhaps go fight the King's ship? — for he has impudence enough for any thing."

"Courage enough for any thing, you mean, Mr. Provost," said Minna, unable to restrain her displeasure.

"Why, you may call it as you please, Miss Troil," said the worthy Magistrate; "but, in my opinion, that sort of courage which proposes to fight singly against two, is little better than a kind of practical impudence."

"But our father?" said Brenda, in a tone of the most earnest entreaty — "our father — the friend, I may say the father, of his country — to whom so many look for kindness, and so many for actual support — whose loss would be the extinction of a beacon in a storm — will you indeed weigh the risk which he runs, against such a trifling thing as letting an unfortunate man from prison, to seek his unhappy fate elsewhere?"

"Miss Brenda is right," said Claud Halcro; "I am for let-a-be for let-a-be, as the boys say; and never fash about a warrant of liberation, Provost, but just take a fool's counsel, and let the goodman of the jail forget to draw his bolt on the wicket, or leave a chink of a window open, or the like, and we shall be rid of the rover, and have the one best honest fellow in Orkney or Zetland on the lee-side of a bowl of punch with us in five hours."

The Provost replied in nearly the same terms as before, that he had the highest respect for Mr. Magnus Troil of Burgh-Westra, but that he could not suffer his consideration for any individual, however respectable, to interfere with the discharge of his duty.

Minna then addressed her sister in a tone of calm and sarcastic displeasure. — "You forget," she said, "Brenda, that you are talking of the safety of a poor insignificant Udaller of Zetland, to no less a person than the Chief Magistrate of the metropolis of Orkney — can you expect so great a person to condescend to such a trifling subject of consideration? It will be time enough for the Provost to think of complying with the terms sent to him — for comply with them at length he both must and will — when the Church of Saint Magnus is beat down about his ears."

"You may be angry with me, my pretty young lady," said the good-humoured Provost Torfe, "but I cannot be offended with you. The Church of Saint Magnus has stood many a day, and, I think, will outlive both you and me, much more yonder pack of unhangd dogs. And besides that your father is half an Orkneyman, and has both estate and friends among us, I would, I give you my word, do as much for a Zetlander in distress as I would for any one, excepting one of our own native Kirkwallers, who are doubtless to be preferred. And if you will take up your lodgings here with my wife and myself, we will endeavour to show you," continued he, "that you are as welcome in Kirkwall, as ever you could be in Lerwick or Scalloway."

Minna deigned no reply to this good-humoured invitation, but Brenda declined it in civil terms, pleading the necessity of taking up their abode with a wealthy widow of Kirkwall, a relation, who already expected them.

Halcro made another attempt to move the Provost, but found him inexorable. — "The Collector of the Customs had already threatened," he said, "to inform against him for entering into treaty, or, as he called it, packing and peeling with those strangers, even when it seemed the only means of preventing a bloody affray in the town; and, should he now forego the advantage afforded by the imprisonment of Cleveland and the escape of the Factor, he might incur something worse than censure." The burden of the whole was, "that he was sorry for the Udaller, he was sorry even for the lad Cleveland, who had some sparks of honour about him; but his duty was imperious, and must be obeyed." The Provost then precluded farther argument, by observing, that another affair from Zetland called for his immediate attention. A gentleman named Mertoun, residing at Jarlshof, had made complaint against Snailsfoot the Jagger, for having assisted a domestic of his in embezzling some valuable articles which had been deposited in his custody, and he was about to take examinations on the subject, and cause them to be restored to Mr. Mertoun, who was accountable for them to the right owner.

In all this information, there was nothing which seemed interesting to the sisters excepting the word Mertoun, which went like a dagger to the heart of Minna, when she recollected the circumstances under which Mordaunt Mertoun had disappeared, and which, with an emotion less painful, though still of a melancholy nature, called a faint blush into Brenda's cheek, and a slight degree of moisture into her eye. But it was soon evident that the Magistrate spoke not of Mordaunt, but of his father; and the daughters of Magnus, little interested in his detail, took leave of the Provost to go to their own lodgings.

When they arrived at their relation's, Minna made it her business to learn, by such enquiries as she could make without exciting suspicion, what was the situation of the unfortunate Cleveland, which she soon discovered to be exceedingly precarious. The Provost had not, indeed, committed him to close custody, as Claud Halcro had anticipated, recollecting, perhaps, the favourable circumstances under which he had surrendered himself, and loath, till the moment of the last necessity, altogether to break faith with him. But although left apparently at large, he was strictly watched by persons well armed and appointed for the purpose, who had directions to detain him by force, if he attempted to pass certain narrow precincts which were allotted to him. He was quartered in a strong room within what is called the King's Castle, and at night his chamber door was locked on the outside, and a sufficient guard mounted to prevent his escape. He therefore enjoyed only the degree of liberty which the cat, in her cruel sport, is sometimes pleased to permit to the mouse which she has clutched; and yet, such was the terror of the resources, the courage, and ferocity of the pirate Captain, that the Provost was blamed by the Collector, and many other sage citizens of Kirkwall, for permitting him to be at large upon any conditions.

It may be well believed, that, under such circumstances, Cleveland had no desire to seek any place of public resort, conscious that he was the object of a mixed feeling of curiosity and terror. His favourite place of exercise, therefore, was the external aisles of the Cathedral of Saint Magnus, of which the eastern end alone is fitted up for public worship. This solemn old edifice, having escaped the ravage which attended the first convulsions of the Reformation, still retains some appearance of episcopal dignity. This place of worship is separated by a screen from the nave and western limb of the cross, and the whole is preserved in a state of cleanliness and decency, which might be well proposed as an example to the proud piles of Westminster and St. Paul's.

It was in this exterior part of the Cathedral that Cleveland was permitted to walk, the rather that his guards, by watching the single open entrance, had the means, with very little inconvenience to themselves, of preventing any possible attempt at escape. The place itself was well suited to his melancholy circumstances. The lofty and vaulted roof rises upon ranges of Saxon pillars, of massive size, four of which, still larger than the rest, once supported the lofty spire, which, long since destroyed by accident, has been rebuilt upon a disproportioned and truncated plan. The light is admitted at the eastern end through a lofty, well-proportioned, and richly-ornamented Gothic window; and the pavement is covered with inscriptions, in different languages, distinguishing the graves of noble Orcadians, who have at different times been deposited within the sacred precincts.

Here walked Cleveland, musing over the events of a misspent life, which, it seemed probable, might be brought to a violent and shameful close, while he was yet in the prime of youth. — "With these dead," he said, looking on the pavement, "shall I soon be numbered — but no holy man will speak a blessing; no friendly hand register an inscription; no proud descendant sculpture armorial bearings over the grave of the pirate Cleveland. My whitening bones will swing in the gibbet-irons, on some wild beach or lonely cape, that will be esteemed fatal and accursed for my sake. The old mariner, as he passes the Sound, will shake his head, and tell of my name and actions, as a warning to his younger comrades. — But, Minna! Minna! — what will be thy thoughts when the news reaches thee? — Would to God the tidings were drowned in the deepest whirlpool betwixt Kirkwall and Burgh-Westra, ere they came to her ear! — and O! would to Heaven that we had never met, since we never can meet again!"

He lifted up his eyes as he spoke, and Minna Troil stood before him. Her face was pale, and her hair dishevelled; but her look was composed and firm, with its usual expression of high-minded melancholy. She was still shrouded in the large mantle which she had assumed on leaving the vessel. Cleveland's first emotion was astonishment; his next was joy, not unmixed with awe. He would have exclaimed — he would have thrown himself at her feet — but she imposed at once silence and composure on him, by raising her finger, and saying, in a low but commanding accent — "Be cautious — we are observed — there are men without — they let me enter with difficulty. I dare not remain long — they would think — they might believe — O, Cleveland! I have hazarded every thing to save you!"

"To save me? — Alas! poor Minna!" answered Cleveland, "to save me is impossible. — Enough that I have seen you once more, were it but to say, for ever farewell!"

"We must indeed say farewell," said Minna; "for fate, and your guilt, have divided us for ever. — Cleveland, I have seen your associates — need I tell you more — need I say, that I know now what a pirate is?"

"You have been in the ruffians' power!" said Cleveland, with a start of agony — "Did they presume?" —

"Cleveland," replied Minna, "they presumed nothing — your name was a spell over them. By the power of that spell over these ferocious banditti, and by that alone, I was reminded of the qualities I once thought my Cleveland's!"

"Yes," said Cleveland, proudly, "my name has and shall have power over them, when they are at the wildest; and, had they harmed you by one rude word, they should have found — Yet what do I rave about — I am a prisoner!"

"You shall be so no longer," said Minna — "Your safety — the safety of my dear father — all demand your instant freedom. I have formed a scheme for your liberty, which, boldly executed, cannot fail. The light is fading without — muffle yourself in my cloak, and you will easily pass the guards — I have given them the means of carousing, and they are deeply engaged. Haste to the Loch of Stennis, and hide yourself till day dawns; then make a smoke on the point, where the land, stretching into the lake on each side, divides it nearly in two at the Bridge of Broisgar. Your vessel, which lies not far distant, will send a boat ashore. — Do not hesitate an instant!"

"But you, Minna! — Should this wild scheme succeed," said Cleveland, "what is to become of you?"

"For my share in your escape," answered the maiden, "the honesty of my own intention will vindicate me in the sight of Heaven; and the safety of my father, whose fate depends on yours, will be my excuse to man."

In a few words, she gave him the history of their capture, and its consequences. Cleveland cast up his eyes and raised his hands to Heaven, in thankfulness for the escape of the sisters from his evil companions, and then hastily added — "But you are right, Minna; I must fly at all rates — for your father's sake I must fly. — Here, then, we part — yet not, I trust, for ever."

"For ever!" answered a voice, that sounded as from a sepulchral vault.

They started, looked around them, and then gazed on each other. It seemed as if the echoes of the building had returned Cleveland's last words, but the pronunciation was too emphatically accented.

"Yes, for ever!" said Norna of the Fitful-head, stepping forward from behind one of the massive Saxon pillars which support the roof of the Cathedral. "Here meet the crimson foot and the crimson hand. Well for both that the wound is healed whence that crimson was derived — well for both, but best, for him who shed it. — Here, then, you meet — and meet for the last time!"

"Not so," said Cleveland, as if about to take Minna's hand; "to separate me from Minna, while I have life, must be the work of herself alone."

"Away!" said Norna, stepping betwixt them — "away with such idle folly! — Nourish no vain dreams of future meetings — you part here, and you part for ever. The hawk pairs not with the dove; guilt matches not with innocence. — Minna Troil, you look for the last time on this bold and criminal man — Cleveland, you behold Minna for the last time!"

"And dream you," said Cleveland, indignantly, "that your mummery imposes on me, and that I am among the fools who see more than trick in your pretended art?"

"Forbear, Cleveland, forbear!" said Minna, her hereditary awe of Norna augmented by the circumstance of her sudden appearance. "O, forbear! — she is powerful — she is but too powerful. — And do you, O Norna, remember my father's safety is linked with Cleveland's."

"And it is well for Cleveland that I do remember it," replied the Pythoness — "and that, for the sake of one, I am here to aid both. You, with your childish purpose, of passing one of his bulk and stature under the disguise of a few paltry folds of wadmaal — what would your device have procured him but instant restraint with bolt and shackle? — I will save him — I will place him in security on board his bark. But let him renounce these shores for ever, and carry elsewhere the terrors of his sable flag, and his yet blacker name; for if the sun rises twice, and finds him still at anchor, his blood be on his own head. — Ay, look to each other — look the last look that I permit to frail affection — and say, if ye *can* say it, Farewell for ever!"

"Obey her," stammered Minna; "remonstrate not, but obey her."

Cleveland, grasping her hand, and kissing it ardently, said, but so low that she only could hear it, "Farewell, Minna, but *not* for ever."

"And now, maiden, begone," said Norna, "and leave the rest to the Reimkennar."

"One word more," said Minna, "and I obey you. Tell me but if I have caught aright your meaning — Is Mordaunt Mertoun safe and recovered?"

"Recovered, and safe," said Norna; "else woe to the hand that shed his blood!"

Minna slowly sought the door of the Cathedral, and turned back from time to time to look at the shadowy form of Norna, and the stately and military figure of Cleveland, as they stood together in the deepening gloom of the ancient Cathedral. When she looked back a second time they were in motion, and Cleveland followed the matron, as, with a slow and solemn step, she glided towards one of the side aisles. When Minna looked back a third time, their figures were no longer visible. She collected herself, and walked on to the eastern door by which she had entered, and listened for an instant to the guard, who talked together on the outside.

"The Zetland girl stays a long time with this pirate fellow," said one. "I wish they have not more to speak about than the ransom of her father."

"Ay, truly," answered another, "the wenches will have more sympathy with a handsome young pirate, than an old bed-ridden burgher."

Their discourse was here interrupted by her of whom they were speaking; and, as if taken in the manner, they pulled off their hats, made their awkward obeisances, and looked not a little embarrassed and confused.

Minna returned to the house where she lodged, much affected, yet, on the whole, pleased with the result of her expedition, which seemed to put her father out of danger, and assured her at once of the escape of Cleveland, and of the safety of young Mordaunt. She hastened to communicate both pieces of intelligence to Brenda, who joined her in thankfulness to Heaven, and was herself wellnigh persuaded to believe in Norna's supernatural pretensions, so much was she pleased with the manner in which they had been employed. Some time was spent in exchanging their mutual congratulations, and mingling tears of hope, mixed with apprehension; when, at a late hour in the evening, they were interrupted by Claud Halcro, who, full of a fidgeting sort of importance, not unmingled with fear, came to acquaint them, that the prisoner, Cleveland, had disappeared from the Cathedral, in which he had been permitted to walk, and that the Provost, having been informed that Minna was accessory to his flight, was coming, in a mighty quandary, to make enquiry into the circumstances.

When the worthy Magistrate arrived, Minna did not conceal from him her own wish that Cleveland should make his escape, as the only means which she saw of redeeming her father from imminent danger. But that she had any actual accession to his flight, she positively denied; and stated, "that she had parted from Cleveland in the Cathedral, more than two hours since, and then left him in company with a third person, whose name she did not conceive herself obliged to communicate."

"It is not needful, Miss Minna Troil," answered Provost Torfe; "for, although no person but this Captain Cleveland and yourself was seen to enter the Kirk of St. Magnus this day, we know well enough that your cousin, old Ulla Troil, whom you Zetlanders call Norna of Fitful-head, has been cruising up and down, upon sea and land, and air, for what I know, in boats and on ponies, and it may be on broomsticks; and here has been her dumb Drow, too, coming and going, and playing the spy on every one — and a good spy he is, for he can hear every thing, and tells nothing again, unless to his mistress. And we know, besides, that she can enter the Kirk when all the doors are fast, and has been seen there more than once, God save us from the Evil One! — and so, without farther questions asked, I conclude it was old Norna whom you left in the Kirk with this slashing blade — and, if so, they may catch them again that can. — I cannot but say, however, pretty Mistress Minna, that you Zetland folks seem to forget both law and gospel, when you use the help of witchcraft to fetch delinquents out of a legal prison; and the least that you, or your cousin, or your father, can do, is to use influence with this wild fellow to go away as soon as possible, without hurting the town or trade, and then there will be little harm in what has chanced; for, Heaven knows, I did not seek the poor lad's life, so I could get my hands free of him without blame; and far less did I wish, that, through his imprisonment, any harm should come to worthy Magnus Troil of Burgh-Westra."

"I see where the shoe pinches you, Mr. Provost," said Claud Halcro, "and I am sure I can answer for my friend Mr. Troil, as well as for myself, that we will say and do all in our power with this man, Captain Cleveland, to make him leave the coast directly."

"And I," said Minna, "am so convinced that what you recommend is best for all parties, that my sister and I will set off early to-morrow morning to the House of Stennis, if Mr. Halcro will give us his escort, to receive my father when he comes ashore, that we may acquaint him with your wish, and to use every influence to induce this unhappy man to leave the country."

Provost Torfe looked upon her with some surprise. "It is not every young woman," he said, "would wish to move eight miles nearer to a band of pirates."

"We run no risk," said Claud Halcro, interfering. "The House of Stennis is strong; and my cousin, whom it belongs to, has men and arms within it. The young ladies are as safe there as in Kirkwall; and much good may arise from an early communication between Magnus Troil and his daughters. And happy am I to see, that in your case, my good old friend — as glorious John says —

——'After much debate,

The man prevails above the magistrate."

The Provost smiled, nodded his head, and indicated, as far as he thought he could do so with decency, how happy he should be if the Fortune's Favourite, and her disorderly crew, would leave Orkney without further interference, or violence on either side. He could not authorize their being supplied from the shore, he said; but, either for fear or favour, they were certain to get provisions at Stromness. This pacific magistrate then took leave of Halcro and the two ladies, who proposed the next morning, to transfer their residence to the House of Stennis, situated upon the banks of the salt-water lake of the same name, and about four miles by water from the Road of Stromness, where the Rover's vessel was lying.

Chapter 38.

Fly, Fleance, fly! — Thou mayst escape.

MACBETH.

It was one branch of the various arts by which Norna endeavoured to maintain her pretensions to supernatural powers, that she made herself familiarly and practically acquainted with all the secret passes and recesses, whether natural or artificial, which she could hear of, whether by tradition or otherwise, and was, by such knowledge, often enabled to perform feats which were otherwise unaccountable. Thus, when she escaped from the tabernacle at Burgh-Westra, it was by a sliding board which covered a secret passage in the wall, known to none but herself and Magnus, who, she was well assured, would not betray her. The profusion, also, with which she lavished a considerable income, otherwise of no use to her, enabled her to procure the earliest intelligence respecting whatever she desired to know, and, at the same time, to secure all other assistance necessary to carry her plans into effect. Cleveland, upon the present occasion, had reason to admire both her sagacity and her resources.

Upon her applying a little forcible pressure, a door which was concealed under some rich wooden sculpture in the screen which divides the eastern aisle from the rest of the Cathedral, opened, and disclosed a dark narrow winding passage, into which she entered, telling Cleveland, in a whisper, to follow, and be sure he shut the door behind him. He obeyed, and followed her in darkness and silence, sometimes descending steps, of the number of which she always apprized him, sometimes ascending, and often turning at short angles. The air was more free than he could have expected, the passage being ventilated at different parts by unseen and ingeniously contrived spiracles, which communicated with the open air. At length their long course ended, by Norna drawing aside a sliding panel, which, opening behind a wooden, or box-bed, as it is called in Scotland, admitted them into an ancient, but very mean apartment, having a latticed window, and a groined roof. The furniture was much dilapidated; and its only ornaments were, on the one side of the wall, a garland of faded ribbons, such as are used to decorate whale-vessels; and, on the other, an escutcheon, bearing an Earl's arms and coronet, surrounded with the usual emblems of mortality. The mattock and spade, which lay in one corner, together with the appearance of an old man, who, in a rusty black coat, and slouched hat, sat reading by a table, announced that they were in the habitation of the church-beadle, or sexton, and in the presence of that respectable functionary.

When his attention was attracted by the noise of the sliding panel, he arose, and, testifying much respect, but no surprise, took his shadowy hat from his thin grey locks, and stood uncovered in the presence of Norna with an air of profound humility.

"Be faithful," said Norna to the old man, "and beware you show not any living mortal the secret path to the Sanctuary."

The old man bowed, in token of obedience and of thanks, for she put money in his hand as she spoke. With a faltering voice, he expressed his hope that she would remember his son, who was on the Greenland voyage, that he might return fortunate and safe, as he had done last year, when he brought back the garland, pointing to that upon the wall.

"My cauldron shall boil, and my rhyme shall be said, in his behalf," answered Norna. "Waits Pacolet without with the horses?"

The old Sexton assented, and the Pythoness, commanding Cleveland to follow her, went through a back door of the apartment into a small garden, corresponding, in its desolate appearance, to the habitation they had just quitted. The low and broken wall easily permitted them to pass into another and larger garden, though not much better kept, and a gate, which was upon the latch, let them into a long and winding lane, through which, Norna having whispered to her companion that it was the only dangerous place on their road, they walked with a hasty pace. It was now nearly dark, and the inhabitants of the poor dwellings, on either hand, had betaken themselves to their houses. They saw only one woman, who was looking from her door, but blessed herself, and retired into her house with precipitation, when she saw the tall figure of Norna stalk past her with long strides. The lane conducted them into the country, where the dumb dwarf waited with three horses, ensconced behind the wall of a deserted shed. On one of these Norna instantly seated herself, Cleveland mounted another, and, followed by Pacolet on the third, they moved sharply on through the darkness; the active and spirited animals on which they rode being of a breed rather taller than those reared in Zetland.

After more than an hour's smart riding, in which Norna acted as guide, they stopped before a hovel, so utterly desolate in appearance, that it resembled rather a cattle-shed than a cottage.

"Here you must remain till dawn, when your signal can be seen from your vessel," said Norna, consigning the horses to the care of Pacolet, and leading the way into the wretched hovel, which she presently illuminated by lighting the small iron lamp which she usually carried along with her. "It is a poor," she said, "but a safe place of refuge; for were we pursued hither, the earth would yawn and admit us into its recesses ere you were taken. For know, that this ground is sacred to the Gods of old Valhalla. — And now say, man of mischief and of blood, are you friend or foe to Norna, the sole priestess of these disowned deities?"

"How is it possible for me to be your enemy?" said Cleveland. — "Common gratitude" —

"Common gratitude," said Norna, interrupting him, "is a common word — and words are the common pay which fools accept at the hands of knaves; but Norna must be requited by actions — by sacrifices."

"Well, mother, name your request."

"That you never seek to see Minna Troil again, and that you leave this coast in twenty-four hours," answered Norna.

"It is impossible," said the outlaw; "I cannot be soon enough found in the sea-stores which the sloop must have."

"You can. I will take care you are fully supplied; and Caithness and the Hebrides are not far distant — you can depart if you will."

"And why should I," said Cleveland, "if I will not?"

"Because your stay endangers others," said Norna, "and will prove your own destruction. Hear me with attention. From the first moment I saw you lying senseless on the sand beneath the cliffs of Sumburgh, I read that in your countenance which linked you with me, and those who were dear to me; but whether for good or evil, was hidden from mine eyes. I aided in saving your life, in preserving your property. I aided in doing so, the very youth whom you have crossed in his dearest affections — crossed by tale-bearing and slander."

"I slander Mertoun!" exclaimed Cleveland. "By heaven, I scarce mentioned his name at Burgh-Westra, if it is that which you mean. The peddling fellow Bryce, meaning, I believe, to be my friend, because he found something could be made by me, did, I have since heard, carry tattle, or truth, I know not which, to the old man, which was confirmed by the report of the whole island. But, for me, I scarce thought of him as a rival; else, I had taken a more honourable way to rid myself of him."

"Was the point of your double-edged knife, directed to the bosom of an unarmed man, intended to carve out that more honourable way?" said Norna, sternly.

Cleveland was conscience-struck, and remained silent for an instant, ere he replied, "There, indeed, I was wrong; but he is, I thank Heaven, recovered, and welcome to an honourable satisfaction."

"Cleveland," said the Pythoness, "No! The fiend who employs you as his implement is powerful; but with me he shall not strive. You are of that temperament which the dark Influences desire as the tools of their agency; bold, haughty, and undaunted, unrestrained by principle, and having only in its room a wild sense of indomitable pride, which such men call honour. Such you are, and as such your course through life has been — onward and unrestrained, bloody and tempestuous. By me, however, it shall be controlled," she concluded, stretching out her staff, as if in the attitude of determined authority — "ay, even although the demon who presides over it should now arise in his terrors."

Cleveland laughed scornfully. "Good mother," he said, "reserve such language for the rude sailor that implores you to bestow him fair wind, or the poor fisherman that asks success to his nets and lines. I have been long inaccessible both to fear and to superstition. Call forth your demon, if you command one, and place him before me. The man that has spent years in company with incarnate devils, can scarce dread the presence of a disembodied fiend."

This was said with a careless and desperate bitterness of spirit, which proved too powerfully energetic even for the delusions of Norna's insanity; and it was with a hollow and tremulous voice that she asked Cleveland — "For what, then, do you hold me, if you deny the power I have bought so dearly?"

"You have wisdom, mother," said Cleveland; "at least you have art, and art is power. I hold you for one who knows how to steer upon the current of events, but I deny your power to change its course. Do not, therefore, waste words in quoting terrors for which I have no feeling, but tell me at once, wherefore you would have me depart?"

"Because I will have you see Minna no more," answered Norna — "Because Minna is the destined bride of him whom men call Mordaunt Mertoun — Because if you depart not within twenty-four hours, utter destruction awaits you. In these plain words there is no metaphysical delusion — Answer me as plainly."

"In as plain words, then," answered Cleveland, "I will *not* leave these islands — not, at least, till I have seen Minna Troil; and never shall your Mordaunt possess her while I live."

"Hear him!" said Norna — "hear a mortal man spurn at the means of prolonging his life! — hear a sinful — a most sinful being, refuse the time which fate yet affords for repentance, and for the salvation of an immortal soul! — Behold him how he stands erect, bold and confident in his youthful strength and courage! My eyes, unused to tears — even my eyes, which have so little cause to weep for him, are blinded with sorrow, to think what so fair a form will be ere the second sun set!"

"Mother," said Cleveland, firmly, yet with some touch of sorrow in his voice, "I in part understand your threats. You know more than we do of the course of the Halcyon — perhaps have the means (for I acknowledge you have shown wonderful skill of combination in such affairs) of directing her cruise our way. Be it so — I will not depart from my purpose for that risk. If the frigate comes hither, we have still our shoal water to trust to; and I think they will scarce cut us out with boats, as if we were a Spanish xebeck. I am therefore resolved I will hoist once more the flag under which I have cruised, avail ourselves of the thousand chances which have helped us in greater odds, and, at the worst, fight the vessel to the very last; and, when mortal man can do no more, it is but snapping a pistol in the powder-room, and, as we have lived, so will we die."

There was a dead pause as Cleveland ended; and it was broken by his resuming, in a softer tone — "You have heard my answer, mother; let us debate it no further, but part in peace. I would willingly leave you a remembrance, that you may not forget a poor fellow to whom your services have been useful, and who parts with you in no unkindness, however unfriendly you are to his dearest interests. — Nay, do not shun to accept such a trifle," he said, forcing upon Norna the little silver enchased box which had been once the subject of strife betwixt Mertoun and him; "it is not for the sake of the metal, which I know you value not, but simply as a memorial that you have met him of whom many a strange tale will hereafter be told in the seas which he has traversed."

"I accept your gift," said Norna, "in token that, if I have in aught been accessory to your fate, it was as the involuntary and grieving agent of other powers. Well did you say we direct not the current of the events which hurry us forward, and render our utmost efforts unavailing; even as the wells of Tuftiloe³⁹ can wheel the stoutest vessel round and round, in despite of either sail or steerage. — Pacolet!" she exclaimed, in a louder voice, "what, ho! Pacolet!"

A large stone, which lay at the side of the wall of the hovel, fell as she spoke, and to Cleveland's surprise, if not somewhat to his fear, the misshapen form of the dwarf was seen, like some overgrown reptile, extricating himself out of a subterranean passage, the entrance to which the stone had covered.

Norna, as if impressed by what Cleveland had said on the subject of her supernatural pretensions, was so far from endeavouring to avail herself of this opportunity to enforce them, that she hastened to explain the phenomenon he had witnessed.

"Such passages," she said, "to which the entrances are carefully concealed, are frequently found in these islands — the places of retreat of the ancient inhabitants, where they sought refuge from the rage of the Normans, the pirates of that day. It was that you might avail yourself of this, in case of need, that I brought you hither. Should you observe signs of pursuit, you may either lurk in the bowels of the earth until it has passed by, or escape, if you will, through the farther entrance near the lake, by which Pacolet entered but now. — And now farewell! Think on what I have said; for as sure as you now move and breathe a living man, so surely is your doom fixed and sealed, unless, within four-and-twenty hours, you have doubled the Burgh-head."

"Farewell, mother!" said Cleveland, as she departed, bending a look upon him, in which, as he could perceive by the lamp, sorrow was mingled with displeasure.

The interview, which thus concluded, left a strong effect even upon the mind of Cleveland, accustomed as he was to imminent dangers and to hair-breadth escapes. He in vain attempted to shake off the impression left by the words of Norna, which he felt the more powerful, because they were in a great measure divested of her wonted mystical tone, which he contemned. A thousand times he regretted that he had from time to time delayed the resolution, which he had long adopted, to quit his dreadful and dangerous trade; and as often he firmly determined, that, could he but see Minna Troil once more, were it but for a last farewell, he would leave the sloop, as soon as his comrades were extricated from their perilous situation, endeavour to obtain the benefit of the King's pardon, and distinguish himself, if possible, in some more honourable course of warfare.

This resolution, to which he again and again pledged himself, had at length a sedative effect on his mental perturbation, and, wrapt in his cloak, he enjoyed, for a time, that imperfect repose which exhausted nature demands as her tribute, even from those who are situated on the verge of the most imminent danger. But how far soever the guilty may satisfy his own mind, and stupify the feelings of remorse, by such a conditional repentance, we may well question whether it is not, in the sight of Heaven, rather a presumptuous aggravation, than an expiation of his sins.

When Cleveland awoke, the grey dawn was already mingling with the twilight of an Orcadian night. He found himself on the verge of a beautiful sheet of water, which, close by the place where he had rested, was nearly divided by two tongues of land that approach each other from the opposing sides of the lake, and are in some degree united by the Bridge of Broisgar, a long causeway, containing openings to permit the flow and reflux of the tide. Behind him, and fronting to the bridge, stood that remarkable semicircle of huge upright stones, which has no rival in Britain, excepting the inimitable monument at Stonehenge. These immense blocks of stone, all of them above twelve feet, and several being even fourteen or fifteen feet in height, stood around the pirate in the grey light of the dawning, like the phantom forms of antediluvian giants, who, shrouded in the habiliments of the dead, came to revisit, by this pale light, the earth which they had plagued by their oppression and polluted by their sins, till they brought down upon it the vengeance of long-suffering Heaven.⁴⁰

Cleveland was less interested by this singular monument of antiquity than by the distant view of Stromness, which he could as yet scarce discover. He lost no time in striking a light, by the assistance of one of his pistols, and some wet fern supplied him with fuel sufficient to make the appointed signal. It had been earnestly watched for on board the sloop; for Goffe's incapacity became daily more apparent; and even his most steady adherents agreed it would be best to submit to Cleveland's command till they got back to the West Indies.

Bunce, who came with the boat to bring off his favourite commander, danced, cursed, shouted, and spouted for joy, when he saw him once more at freedom. "They had already," he said, "made some progress in victualling the sloop, and they might have made more, but for that drunken old swab Goffe, who minded nothing but splicing the main-brace."

The boat's crew were inspired with the same enthusiasm, and rowed so hard, that, although the tide was against them, and the air or wind failed, they soon placed Cleveland once more on the quarter-deck of the vessel which it was his misfortune to command.

The first exercise of the Captain's power was to make known to Magnus Troil that he was at full freedom to depart — that he was willing to make him any compensation in his power, for the interruption of his voyage to Kirkwall; and that Captain Cleveland was desirous, if agreeable to Mr. Troil, to pay his respects to him on board his brig — thank him for former favours, and apologize for the circumstances attending his detention.

To Bunce, who, as the most civilized of the crew, Cleveland had intrusted this message, the old plain-dealing Udaller made the following answer: "Tell your Captain that I should be glad to think he had never stopped any one upon the high sea, save such as have suffered as little as I have. Say, too, that if we are to continue friends, we shall be most so at a distance; for I like the sound of his cannon-balls as little by sea, as he would like the whistle of a bullet by land from my rifle-gun. Say, in a word, that I am sorry I was mistaken in him, and that he would have done better to have reserved for the Spaniard the usage he is bestowing on his countrymen."

"And so that is your message, old Snapcholerick?" said Bunce — "Now, stap my vitals if I have not a mind to do your errand for you over the left shoulder, and teach you more respect for gentlemen of fortune! But I won't, and chiefly for the sake of your two pretty wenches, not to mention my old friend Claud Halcro, the very visage of whom brought back all the old days of scene-shifting and candle-snuffing. So good morrow to you, Gaffer Seal's-cap, and all is said that need pass between us."

No sooner did the boat put off with the pirates, who left the brig, and now returned to their own vessel, than Magnus, in order to avoid reposing unnecessary confidence in the honour of these gentlemen of fortune, as they called themselves, got his brig under way; and, the wind coming favourably round, and increasing as the sun rose, he crowded all sail for Scalpa-flow, intending there to disembark and go by land to Kirkwall, where he expected to meet his daughters and his friend Claud Halcro.

Chapter 39.

*Now, Emma, now the last reflection make,
What thou wouldst follow, what thou must forsake
By our ill-omen'd stars and adverse Heaven,
No middle object to thy choice is given.*

HENRY AND EMMA.

The sun was high in heaven; the boats were busily fetching off from the shore the promised supply of provisions and water, which, as many fishing skiffs were employed in the service, were got on board with unexpected speed, and stowed away by the crew of the sloop, with equal dispatch. All worked with good will; for all, save Cleveland himself, were weary of a coast, where every moment increased their danger, and where, which they esteemed a worse misfortune, there was no booty to be won. Bunce and Derrick took the immediate direction of this duty, while Cleveland, walking the deck alone, and in silence, only interfered from time to time, to give some order which circumstances required, and then relapsed into his own sad reflections.

There are two sorts of men whom situations of guilt, terror, and commotion, bring forward as prominent agents. The first are spirits so naturally moulded and fitted for deeds of horror, that they stalk forth from their lurking-places like actual demons, to work in their native element, as the hideous apparition of the Bearded Man came forth at Versailles, on the memorable 5th October, 1789, the delighted executioner of the victims delivered up to him by a bloodthirsty rabble. But Cleveland belonged to the second class of these unfortunate beings, who are involved in evil rather by the concurrence of external circumstances than by natural inclination, being, indeed, one in whom his first engaging in this lawless mode of life, as the follower of his father, nay, perhaps, even his pursuing it as his father's avenger, carried with it something of mitigation and apology; — one also who often considered his guilty situation with horror, and had made repeated, though ineffectual efforts, to escape from it.

Such thoughts of remorse were now rolling in his mind, and he may be forgiven, if recollections of Minna mingled with and aided them. He looked around, too, on his mates, and, profligate and hardened as he knew them to be, he could not think of their paying the penalty of his obstinacy. "We shall be ready to sail with the ebb tide," he said to himself — "why should I endanger these men, by detaining them till the hour of danger, predicted by that singular woman, shall arrive? Her intelligence, howsoever acquired, has been always strangely accurate; and her warning was as solemn as if a mother were to apprise an erring son of his crimes, and of his approaching punishment. Besides, what chance is there that I can again see Minna? She is at Kirkwall, doubtless, and to hold my course thither would be to steer right upon the rocks. No, I will not endanger these poor fellows — I will sail with the ebb tide. On the desolate Hebrides, or on the north-west coast of Ireland, I will leave the vessel, and return hither in some disguise — yet why should I return, since it will perhaps be only to see Minna the bride of Mordaunt? No — let the vessel sail with this ebb tide without me. I will abide and take my fate."

His meditations were here interrupted by Jack Bunce, who, hailing him noble Captain, said they were ready to sail when he pleased.

"When *you* please, Bunce; for I shall leave the command with you, and go ashore at Stromness," said Cleveland.

"You shall do no such matter, by Heaven!" answered Bunce. "The command with me, truly! and how the devil am I to get the crew to obey *me*? Why, even Dick Fletcher rides rusty on me now and then. You know well enough that, without you, we shall be all at each other's throats in half an hour; and, if you desert us, what a rope's end does it signify whether we are destroyed by the king's cruisers, or by each other? Come, come, noble Captain, there are black-eyed girls enough in the world, but where will you find so tight a sea-boat as the little Favourite here, manned as she is with a set of tearing lads,

'Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,

And rule it when 'tis wildest?"

"You are a precious fool, Jack Bunce," said Cleveland, half angry, and, in despite of himself, half diverted, by the false tones and exaggerated gesture of the stage-struck pirate.

"It may be so, noble Captain," answered Bunce, "and it may be that I have my comrades in my folly. Here are you, now, going to play All for Love, and the World well Lost, and yet you cannot bear a harmless bounce in blank verse — Well, I can talk prose for the matter, for I have news enough to tell — and strange news, too — ay, and stirring news to boot."

"Well, prithee deliver them (to speak thy own cant) like a man of this world."

"The Stromness fishers will accept nothing for their provisions and trouble," said Bunce — "there is a wonder for you!"

"And for what reason, I pray?" said Cleveland; "it is the first time I have ever heard of cash being refused at a seaport."

"True — they commonly lay the charges on as thick as if they were caulking. But here is the matter. The owner of the brig yonder, the father of your fair Imoinda, stands paymaster, by way of thanks for the civility with which we treated his daughters, and that we may not meet our due, as he calls it, on these shores."

"It is like the frank-hearted old Udaller!" said Cleveland; "but is he at Stromness? I thought he was to have crossed the island for Kirkwall."

"He did so purpose," said Bunce; "but more folks than King Duncan change the course of their voyage. He was no sooner ashore than he was met with by a meddling old witch of these parts, who has her finger in every man's pie, and by her counsel he changed his purpose of going to Kirkwall, and lies at anchor for the present in yonder white house, that you may see with your glass up the lake yonder. I am told the old woman clubbed also to pay for the sloop's stores. Why she should shell out the boards I cannot conceive an idea, except that she is said to be a witch, and may befriend us as so many devils."

"But who told you all this?" said Cleveland, without using his spy-glass, or seeming so much interested in the news as his comrade had expected.

"Why," replied Bunce, "I made a trip ashore this morning to the village, and had a can with an old acquaintance, who had been sent by Master Troil to look after matters, and I fished it all out of him, and more, too, than I am desirous of telling you, noble Captain."

"And who is your intelligencer?" said Cleveland; "has he got no name?"

"Why, he is an old, fiddling, foppish acquaintance of mine, called Halcro, if you must know," said Bunce.

"Halcro!" echoed Cleveland, his eyes sparkling with surprise — "Claud Halcro? — why, he went ashore at Inganess with Minna and her sister — Where are they?"

"Why, that is just what I did not want to tell you," replied the confidant — "yet hang me if I can help it, for I cannot baulk a fine situation. — That start had a fine effect — O ay, and the spy-glass is turned on the House of Stennis *now!* — Well, yonder they are, it must be confessed — indifferently well guarded, too. Some of the old witch's people are come over from that mountain of an island — Hoy, as they call it; and the old gentleman has got some fellows under arms himself. But what of all that, noble Captain! — give you but the word, and we snap up the wenches to-night — clap them under hatches — man the capstern by daybreak — up topsails — and sail with the morning tide."

"You sicken me with your villainy," said Cleveland, turning away from him.

"Umph! — villainy, and sicken you!" said Bunce — "Now, pray, what have I said but what has been done a thousand times by gentlemen of fortune like ourselves?"

"Mention it not again," said Cleveland; then took a turn along the deck, in deep meditation, and, coming back to Bunce, took him by the hand, and said, "Jack, I will see her once more."

"With all my heart," said Bunce, sullenly.

"Once more will I see her, and it may be to abjure at her feet this cursed trade, and expiate my offences" —

"At the gallows!" said Bunce, completing the sentence — "With all my heart! — confess and be hanged is a most reverend proverb."

"Nay — but, dear Jack!" said Cleveland.

"Dear Jack!" answered Bunce, in the same sullen tone — "a dear sight you have been to dear Jack. But hold your own course — I have done with caring for you for ever — I should but sicken you with my villainous counsels."

"Now, must I soothe this silly fellow as if he were a spoiled child," said Cleveland, speaking at Bunce, but not to him; "and yet he has sense enough, and bravery enough, too; and, one would think, kindness enough to know that men don't pick their words during a gale of wind."

"Why, that's true, Clement," said Bunce, "and there is my hand upon it — And, now I think upon't, you shall have your last interview, for it's out of my line to prevent a parting scene; and what signifies a tide — we can sail by to-morrow's ebb as well as by this."

Cleveland sighed, for Norna's prediction rushed on his mind; but the opportunity of a last meeting with Minna was too tempting to be resigned either for presentiment or prediction.

"I will go presently ashore to the place where they all are," said Bunce; "and the payment of these stores shall serve me for a pretext; and I will carry any letters or message from you to Minna with the dexterity of a valet de chambre."

"But they have armed men — you may be in danger," said Cleveland.

"Not a whit — not a whit," replied Bunce. "I protected the wenches when they were in my power; I warrant their father will neither wrong me, nor see me wronged."

"You say true," said Cleveland, "it is not in his nature. I will instantly write a note to Minna." And he ran down to the cabin for that purpose, where he wasted much paper, ere, with a trembling hand, and throbbing heart, he achieved such a letter as he hoped might prevail on Minna to permit him a farewell meeting on the succeeding morning.

His adherent, Bunce, in the meanwhile, sought out Fletcher, of whose support to second any motion whatever, he accounted himself perfectly sure; and, followed by this trusty satellite, he intruded himself on the awful presence of Hawkins the boatswain, and Derrick the quarter-master, who were regaling themselves with a can of rumbo, after the fatiguing duty of the day.

"Here comes he can tell us," said Derrick. — "So, Master Lieutenant, for so we must call you now, I think, let us have a peep into your counsels — When will the anchor be a-trip?"

"When it pleases heaven, Master Quarter-master," answered Bunce, "for I know no more than the stern-post."

"Why, d — n my buttons," said Derrick, "do we not weigh this tide?"

"Or to-morrow's tide, at farthest?" said the Boatswain — "Why, what have we been slaving the whole company for, to get all these stores aboard?"

"Gentlemen," said Bunce, "you are to know that Cupid has laid our Captain on board, carried the vessel, and nailed down his wits under hatches."

"What sort of play-stuff is all this?" said the Boatswain, gruffly. "If you have any thing to tell us, say it in a word, like a man."

"Howsomdever," said Fletcher, "I always think Jack Bunce speaks like a man, and acts like a man too — and so, d'ye see" —

"Hold your peace, dear Dick, best of bullybacks, be silent," said Bunce — "Gentlemen, in one word, the Captain is in love."

"Why, now, only think of that!" said the Boatswain; "not but that I have been in love as often as any man, when the ship was laid up."

"Well, but," continued Bunce, "Captain Cleveland is in love — Yes — Prince Volscius is in love; and, though that's the cue for laughing on the stage, it is no laughing matter here. He expects to meet the girl to-morrow, for the last time; and that, we all know, leads to another meeting, and another, and so on till the Halcyon is down on us, and then we may look for more kicks than halfpence."

"By —" said the Boatswain, with a sounding oath, "we'll have a mutiny, and not allow him to go ashore — eh, Derrick?"

"And the best way, too," said Derrick.

"What d'ye think of it, Jack Bunce?" said Fletcher, in whose ears this counsel sounded very sagely, but who still bent a wistful look upon his companion.

"Why, look ye, gentlemen," said Bunce, "I will mutiny none, and stap my vitals if any of you shall!"

"Why, then I won't, for one," said Fletcher; "but what are we to do, since howsomdever" —

"Stopper your jaw, Dick, will you?" said Bunce. — "Now, Boatswain, I am partly of your mind, that the Captain must be brought to reason by a little wholesome force. But you all know he has the spirit of a lion, and will do nothing unless he is allowed to hold on his own course. Well, I'll go ashore and make this appointment. The girl comes to the rendezvous in the morning, and the Captain goes ashore — we take a good boat's crew with us, to row against tide and current, and we will be ready at the signal, to jump ashore and bring off the Captain and the girl, whether they will or no. The pet-child will not quarrel with us, since we bring off his whirligig along with him; and if he is still fractious, why, we will weigh anchor without his orders, and let him come to his senses at leisure, and know his friends another time."

"Why, this has a face with it, Master Derrick," said Hawkins.

"Jack Bunce is always right," said Fletcher; "howsomdever, the Captain will shoot some of us, that is certain."

"Hold your jaw, Dick," said Bunce; "pray, who the devil cares, do you think, whether you are shot or hanged?"

"Why, it don't much argufy for the matter of that," replied Dick; "howsomdever" —

"Be quiet, I tell you," said his inexorable patron, "and hear me out. — We will take him at unawares, so that he shall neither have time to use cutlass nor pops; and I myself, for the dear love I bear him, will be the first to lay him on his back. There is a nice tight-going bit of a pinnace, that is a consort of this chase of the Captain's — if I have an opportunity, I'll snap her up on my own account."

"Yes, yes," said Derrick, "let you alone for keeping on the look-out for your own comforts."

"Faith, nay," said Bunce, "I only snatch at them when they come fairly in my way, or are purchased by dint of my own wit; and none of you could have fallen on such a plan as this. We shall have the Captain with us, head, hand, and heart and all, besides making a scene fit to finish a comedy. So I will go ashore to make the appointment, and do you possess some of the gentlemen who are still sober, and fit to be trusted, with the knowledge of our intentions."

Bunce, with his friend Fletcher, departed accordingly, and the two veteran pirates remained looking at each other in silence, until the Boatswain spoke at last. "Blow me, Derrick, if I like these two daffadandilly young fellows; they are not the true breed. Why, they are no more like the rovers I have known, than this sloop is to a first-rate. Why, there was old Sharpe that read prayers to his ship's company every Sunday, what would he have said to have heard it proposed to bring two wenches on board?"

"And what would tough old Black Beard have said," answered his companion, "if they had expected to keep them to themselves? They deserve to be made to walk the plank for their impudence; or to be tied back to back and set a-diving, and I care not how soon."

"Ay, but who is to command the ship, then?" said Hawkins.

"Why, what ails you at old Goffe?" answered Derrick.

"Why, he has sucked the monkey so long and so often," said the Boatswain, "that the best of him is buffed. He is little better than an old woman when he is sober, and he is roaring mad when he is drunk — we have had enough of Goffe."

"Why, then, what d'ye say to yourself, or to me, Boatswain?" demanded the Quarter-master. "I am content to toss up for it."

"Rot it, no," answered the Boatswain, after a moment's consideration; "if we were within reach of the trade-winds, we might either of us make a shift; but it will take all Cleveland's navigation to get us there; and so, I think, there is nothing like Bunce's project for the present. Hark, he calls for the boat — I must go on deck and have her lowered for his honour, d — n his eyes."

The boat was lowered accordingly, made its voyage up the lake with safety, and landed Bunce within a few hundred yards of the old mansion-house of Stennis. Upon arriving in front of the house, he found that hasty measures had been taken to put it in a state of defence, the lower windows being barricaded, with places left for use of musketry, and a ship-gun being placed so as to command the entrance, which was besides guarded by two sentinels. Bunce demanded admission at the gate, which was briefly and unceremoniously refused, with an exhortation to him, at the same time, to be gone about his business before worse came of it. As he continued, however, importunately to insist on seeing some one of the family, and stated his business to be of the most urgent nature, Claud Halcro at length appeared, and, with more peevishness than belonged to his usual manner, that admirer of glorious John expostulated with his old acquaintance upon his pertinacious folly.

"You are," he said, "like foolish moths fluttering about a candle, which is sure at last to consume you."

"And you," said Bunce, "are a set of stingless drones, whom we can smoke out of your defences at our pleasure, with half-a-dozen of hand-grenades."

"Smoke a fool's head!" said Halcro; "take my advice, and mind your own matters, or there will be those upon you will smoke you to purpose. Either begone, or tell me in two words what you want; for you are like to receive no welcome here save from a blunderbuss. We are men enough of ourselves; and here is young Mordaunt Mertoun come from Hoy, whom your Captain so nearly murdered."

"Tush, man," said Bunce, "he did but let out a little malapert blood."

"We want no such phlebotomy here," said Claud Halcro; "and, besides, your patient turns out to be nearer allied to us than either you or we thought of; so you may think how little welcome the Captain or any of his crew are like to be here."

"Well; but what if I bring money for the stores sent on board?"

"Keep it till it is asked of you," said Halcro. "There are two bad paymasters — he that pays too soon, and he that does not pay at all."

"Well, then, let me at least give our thanks to the donor," said Bunce.

"Keep them, too, till they are asked for," answered the poet.

"So this is all the welcome I have of you for old acquaintance' sake?" said Bunce.

"Why, what can I do for you, Master Altamont?" said Halcro, somewhat moved. — "If young Mordaunt had had his own will, he would have welcomed you with 'the red Burgundy, Number a thousand.' For God's sake begone, else the stage direction will be, Enter guard, and seize Altamont."

"I will not give you the trouble," said Bunce, "but will make my exit instantly. — Stay a moment — I had almost forgot that I have a slip of paper for the tallest of your girls there — Minna, ay, Minna is her name. It is a farewell from Captain Cleveland — you cannot refuse to give it her?"

"Ah, poor fellow!" said Halcro — "I comprehend — I comprehend — Farewell, fair Armida —

'Mid pikes and 'mid bullets, 'mid tempests and fire,

The danger is less than in hopeless desire!

Tell me but this — is there poetry in it?"

"Chokeful to the seal, with song, sonnet, and elegy," answered Bunce; "but let her have it cautiously and secretly."

"Tush, man! — teach me to deliver a billet-doux! — me, who have been in the Wits' Coffee-house, and have seen all the toasts of the Kit-Cat Club! — Minna shall have it, then, for old acquaintance' sake, Mr. Altamont, and for your Captain's sake, too, who has less of the core of devil about him than his trade requires. There can be no harm in a farewell letter."

"Farewell, then, old boy, for ever and a day!" said Bunce; and seizing the poet's hand, gave it so hearty a gripe, that he left him roaring, and shaking his fist, like a dog when a hot cinder has fallen on his foot.

Leaving the rover to return on board the vessel, we remain with the family of Magnus Troil, assembled at their kinsman's mansion of Stennis, where they maintained a constant and careful watch against surprise.

Mordaunt Mertoun had been received with much kindness by Magnus Troil, when he came to his assistance, with a small party of Norna's dependants, placed by her under his command. The Udaller was easily satisfied that the reports instilled into his ears by the Jagger, zealous to augment his favour towards his more profitable customer Cleveland, by diminishing that of Mertoun, were without foundation. They had, indeed, been confirmed by the good Lady Glowrowrum, and by common fame, both of whom were pleased to represent Mordaunt Mertoun as an arrogant pretender to the favour of the sisters of Burgh-Westra, who only hesitated, sultan-like, on whom he should bestow the handkerchief. But common fame, Magnus considered, was a common liar, and he was sometimes disposed (where scandal was concerned) to regard the good Lady Glowrowrum as rather an uncommon specimen of the same genus. He therefore received Mordaunt once more into full favour, listened with much surprise to the claim which Norna laid to the young man's duty, and with no less interest to her intention of surrendering to him the considerable property which she had inherited from her father. Nay, it is even probable that, though he gave no immediate answer to her hints concerning an union betwixt his eldest daughter and her heir, he might think such an alliance recommended, as well by the young man's personal merits, as by the chance it gave of reuniting the very large estate which had been divided betwixt his own father and that of Norna. At all events, the Udaller received his young friend with much kindness, and he and the proprietor of the mansion joined in intrusting to him, as the youngest and most active of the party, the charge of commanding the night-watch, and relieving the sentinels around the House of Stennis.

Chapter 40.

Of an outlawe, this is the lawe —

That men him take and bind,

Without pitie hang'd to be,

And waive with the wind.

THE BALLAD OF THE NUT BROWN MAID.

Mordaunt had caused the sentinels who had been on duty since midnight to be relieved ere the peep of day, and having given directions that the guard should be again changed at sunrise, he had retired to a small parlour, and, placing his arms beside him, was slumbering in an easy-chair, when he felt himself pulled by the watch-cloak in which he was enveloped.

"Is it sunrise," said he, "already?" as, starting up, he discovered the first beams lying level upon the horizon.

"Mordaunt!" said a voice, every note of which thrilled to his heart.

He turned his eyes on the speaker, and Brenda Troil, to his joyful astonishment, stood before him. As he was about to address her eagerly, he was checked by observing the signs of sorrow and discomposure in her pale cheeks, trembling lips, and brimful eyes.

"Mordaunt," she said, "you must do Minna and me a favour — you must allow us to leave the house quietly, and without alarming any one, in order to go as far as the Standing Stones of Stennis."

"What freak can this be, dearest Brenda?" said Mordaunt, much amazed at the request — "some Orcadian observance of superstition, perhaps; but the time is too dangerous, and my charge from your father too strict, that I should permit you to pass without his consent. Consider, dearest Brenda, I am a soldier on duty, and must obey orders."

"Mordaunt," said Brenda, "this is no jesting matter — Minna's reason, nay, Minna's life, depends on your giving us this permission."

"And for what purpose?" said Mordaunt; "let me at least know that."

"For a wild and a desperate purpose," replied Brenda — "It is that she may meet Cleveland."

"Cleveland!" said Mordaunt — "Should the villain come ashore, he shall be welcomed with a shower of rifle-balls. Let me within a hundred yards of him," he added, grasping his piece, "and all the mischief he has done me shall be balanced with an ounce bullet!"

"His death will drive Minna frantic," said Brenda; "and him who injures Minna, Brenda will never again look upon."

"This is madness — raving madness!" said Mordaunt — "Consider your honour — consider your duty."

"I can consider nothing but Minna's danger," said Brenda, breaking into a flood of tears; "her former illness was nothing to the state she has been in all night. She holds in her hand his letter, written in characters of fire, rather than of ink, imploring her to see him, for a last farewell, as she would save a mortal body, and an immortal soul; pledging himself for her safety; and declaring no power shall force him from the coast till he has seen her. — You *must* let us pass."

"It is impossible!" replied Mordaunt, in great perplexity — "This ruffian has imprecations enough, doubtless, at his fingers' ends — but what better pledge has he to offer? — I cannot permit Minna to go."

"I suppose," said Brenda, somewhat reproachfully, while she dried her tears, yet still continued sobbing, "that there is something in what Norna spoke of betwixt Minna and you; and that you are too jealous of this poor wretch, to allow him even to speak with her an instant before his departure."

"You are unjust," said Mordaunt, hurt, and yet somewhat flattered by her suspicions — "you are as unjust as you are imprudent. You know — you cannot but know — that Minna is chiefly dear to me as *your* sister. Tell me, Brenda — and tell me truly — if I aid you in this folly, have you no suspicion of the Pirate's faith!"

"No, none," said Brenda; "if I had any, do you think I would urge you thus? He is wild and unhappy, but I think we may in this trust him."

"Is the appointed place the Standing Stones, and the time daybreak?" again demanded Mordaunt.

"It is, and the time is come," said Brenda — "for Heaven's sake let us depart!"

"I will myself," said Mordaunt, "relieve the sentinel at the front door for a few minutes, and suffer you to pass. — You will not protract this interview, so full of danger?"

"We will not," said Brenda; "and you, on your part, will not avail yourself of this unhappy man's venturing hither, to harm or to seize him?"

"Rely on my honour," said Mordaunt — "He shall have no harm, unless he offers any."

"Then I go to call my sister," said Brenda, and quickly left the apartment.

Mordaunt considered the matter for an instant, and then going to the sentinel at the front door, he desired him to run instantly to the main-guard, and order the whole to turn out with their arms — to see the order obeyed, and to return when they were in readiness. Meantime, he himself, he said, would remain upon the post.

During the interval of the sentinel's absence, the front door was slowly opened, and Minna and Brenda appeared, muffled in their mantles. The former leaned on her sister, and kept her face bent on the ground, as one who felt ashamed of the step she was about to take. Brenda also passed her lover in silence, but threw back upon him a look of gratitude and affection, which doubled, if possible, his anxiety for their safety.

The sisters, in the meanwhile, passed out of sight of the house; when Minna, whose step, till that time, had been faint and feeble, began to erect her person, and to walk with a pace so firm and so swift, that Brenda, who had some difficulty to keep up with her, could not forbear remonstrating on the imprudence of hurrying her spirits, and exhausting her force, by such unnecessary haste.

"Fear not, my dearest sister," said Minna; "the spirit which I now feel will, and must, sustain me through the dreadful interview. I could not but move with a drooping head, and dejected pace, while I was in view of one who must necessarily deem me deserving of his pity, or his scorn. But you know, my dearest Brenda, and Mordaunt shall also know, that the love I bore to that unhappy man, was as pure as the rays of that sun, that is now reflected on the waves. And I dare attest that glorious sun, and yonder blue heaven, to bear me witness, that, but to urge him to change his unhappy course of life, I had not, for all the temptations this round world holds, ever consented to see him more."

As she spoke thus, in a tone which afforded much confidence to Brenda, the sisters attained the summit of a rising ground, whence they commanded a full view of the Orcadian Stonehenge, consisting of a huge circle and semicircle of the Standing Stones, as they are called, which already glimmered a greyish white in the rising sun, and projected far to the westward their long gigantic shadows. At another time, the scene would have operated powerfully on the imaginative mind of Minna, and interested the curiosity at least of her less sensitive sister. But, at this moment, neither was at leisure to receive the impressions which this stupendous monument of antiquity is so well calculated to impress on the feelings of those who behold it; for they saw, in the lower lake, beneath what is termed the Bridge of Broisgar, a boat well manned and armed, which had disembarked one of its crew, who advanced alone, and wrapped in a naval cloak, towards that monumental circle which they themselves were about to reach from another quarter.

"They are many, and they are armed," said the startled Brenda, in a whisper to her sister.

"It is for precaution's sake," answered Minna, "which, alas, their condition renders but too necessary. Fear no treachery from him — that, at least, is not his vice."

As she spoke, or shortly afterwards, she attained the centre of the circle, on which, in the midst of the tall erect pillars of rude stone that are raised around, lies one flat and prostrate, supported by short stone pillars, of which some relics are still visible, that had once served, perhaps, the purpose of an altar.

"Here," she said, "in heathen times (if we may believe legends, which have cost me but too dear) our ancestors offered sacrifices to heathen deities — and here will I, from my soul, renounce, abjure, and offer up to a better and a more merciful God than was known to them, the vain ideas with which my youthful imagination has been seduced."

She stood by the prostrate table of stone, and saw Cleveland advance towards her, with a timid pace, and a downcast look, as different from his usual character and bearing, as Minna's high air and lofty demeanour, and calm contemplative posture, were distant from those of the love-lorn and broken-hearted maiden, whose weight had almost borne down the support of her sister as she left the House of Stennis. If the belief of those is true, who assign these singular monuments exclusively to the Druids, Minna might have seemed the Haxa, or high priestess of the order, from whom some champion of the tribe expected inauguration. Or, if we hold the circles of Gothic and Scandinavian origin, she might have seemed a descended Vision of Freya, the spouse of the Thundering Deity, before whom some bold Sea-King or champion bent with an awe, which no mere mortal terror could have inflicted upon him. Brenda, overwhelmed with inexpressible fear and doubt, remained a pace or two behind, anxiously observing the motions of Cleveland, and attending to nothing around, save to him and to her sister.

Cleveland approached within two yards of Minna, and bent his head to the ground. There was a dead pause, until Minna said, in a firm but melancholy tone, "Unhappy man, why didst thou seek this aggravation of our woe? Depart in peace, and may Heaven direct thee to a better course than that which thy life has yet held!"

"Heaven will not aid me," said Cleveland, "excepting by your voice. I came hither rude and wild, scarce knowing that my trade, my desperate trade, was more criminal in the sight of man or of Heaven, than that of those privateers whom your law acknowledges. I was bred in it, and, but for the wishes you have encouraged me to form, I should have perhaps died in it, desperate and impenitent. O, do not throw me from you! let me do something to redeem what I have done amiss, and do not leave your own work half-finished!"

"Cleveland," said Minna, "I will not reproach you with abusing my inexperience, or with availing yourself of those delusions which the credulity of early youth had flung around me, and which led me to confound your fatal course of life with the deeds of our ancient heroes. Alas, when I saw your followers, that illusion was no more! — but I do not upbraid you with its having existed. Go, Cleveland; detach yourself from those miserable wretches with whom you are associated, and

believe me, that if Heaven yet grants you the means of distinguishing your name by one good or glorious action, there are eyes left in those lonely islands, that will weep as much for joy, as — as — they must now do for sorrow.”

“And is this all?” said Cleveland; “and may I not hope, that if I extricate myself from my present associates — if I can gain my pardon by being as bold in the right, as I have been too often in the wrong cause — if, after a term, I care not how long — but still a term which may have an end, I can boast of having redeemed my fame — may I not — may I not hope that Minna may forgive what my God and my country shall have pardoned?”

“Never, Cleveland, never!” said Minna, with the utmost firmness; “on this spot we part, and part for ever, and part without longer indulgence. Think of me as of one dead, if you continue as you now are; but if, which may Heaven grant, you change your fatal course, think of me then as one, whose morning and evening prayers will be for your happiness, though she has lost her own. — Farewell, Cleveland!”

He kneeled, overpowered by his own bitter feelings, to take the hand which she held out to him, and in that instant, his confidant Bunce, starting from behind one of the large upright pillars, his eyes wet with tears, exclaimed —

“Never saw such a parting scene on any stage! But I’ll be d — d if you make your exit as you expect!”

And so saying, ere Cleveland could employ either remonstrance or resistance, and indeed before he could get upon his feet, he easily secured him by pulling him down on his back, so that two or three of the boat’s crew seized him by the arms and legs, and began to hurry him towards the lake. Minna and Brenda shrieked, and attempted to fly; but Derrick snatched up the former with as much ease as a falcon pounces on a pigeon, while Bunce, with an oath or two which were intended to be of a consolatory nature, seized on Brenda; and the whole party, with two or three of the other pirates, who, stealing from the water-side, had accompanied them on the ambuscade, began hastily to run towards the boat, which was left in charge of two of their number. Their course, however, was unexpectedly interrupted, and their criminal purpose entirely frustrated.

When Mordaunt Mertoun had turned out his guard in arms, it was with the natural purpose of watching over the safety of the two sisters. They had accordingly closely observed the motions of the pirates, and when they saw so many of them leave the boat and steal towards the place of rendezvous assigned to Cleveland, they naturally suspected treachery, and by cover of an old hollow way or trench, which perhaps had anciently been connected with the monumental circle, they had thrown themselves unperceived between the pirates and their boat. At the cries of the sisters, they started up and placed themselves in the way of the ruffians, presenting their pieces, which, notwithstanding, they dared not fire, for fear of hurting the young ladies, secured as they were in the rude grasp of the marauders. Mordaunt, however, advanced with the speed of a wild deer on Bunce, who, loath to quit his prey, yet unable to defend himself otherwise, turned to this side and that alternately, exposing Brenda to the blows which Mordaunt offered at him. This defence, however, proved in vain against a youth, possessed of the lightest foot and most active hand ever known in Zetland, and after a feint or two, Mordaunt brought the pirate to the ground with a stroke from the butt of the carbine, which he dared not use otherwise. At the same time fire-arms were discharged on either side by those who were liable to no such cause of forbearance, and the pirates who had hold of Cleveland, dropped him, naturally enough, to provide for their own defence or retreat. But they only added to the numbers of their enemies; for Cleveland, perceiving Minna in the arms of Derrick, snatched her from the ruffian with one hand, and with the other shot him dead on the spot. Two or three more of the pirates fell or were taken, the rest fled to their boat, pushed off, then turned their broadside to the shore, and fired repeatedly on the Orcadian party, which they returned, with little injury on either side. Meanwhile Mordaunt, having first seen that the sisters were at liberty and in full flight towards the house, advanced on Cleveland with his cutlass drawn. The pirate presented a pistol, and calling out at the same time — “Mordaunt, I never missed my aim,” he fired into the air, and threw it into the lake; then drew his cutlass, brandished it round his head, and flung that also as far as his arm could send it, in the same direction. Yet such was the universal belief of his personal strength and resources, that Mordaunt still used precaution, as, advancing on Cleveland, he asked if he surrendered.

“I surrender to no man,” said the Pirate-captain; “but you may see I have thrown away my weapons.”

He was immediately seized by some of the Orcadians without his offering any resistance; but the instant interference of Mordaunt prevented his being roughly treated, or bound. The victors conducted him to a well-secured upper apartment in the House of Stennis, and placed a sentinel at the door. Bunce and Fletcher, both of whom had been stretched on the field during the skirmish, were lodged in the same chamber; and two prisoners, who appeared of lower rank, were confined in a vault belonging to the mansion.

Without pretending to describe the joy of Magnus Troil, who, when awakened by the noise and firing, found his daughters safe, and his enemy a prisoner, we shall only say, it was so great, that he forgot, for the time at least, to enquire what circumstances were those which had placed them in danger; that he hugged Mordaunt to his breast a thousand times, as their preserver; and swore as often by the bones of his sainted namesake, that if he had a thousand daughters, so tight a lad, and so true a friend, should have the choice of them, let Lady Glowrowrum say what she would.

A very different scene was passing in the prison-chamber of the unfortunate Cleveland and his associates. The Captain sat by the window, his eyes bent on the prospect of the sea which it presented, and was seemingly so intent on it, as to be insensible of the presence of the others. Jack Bunce stood meditating some ends of verse, in order to make his advances towards a reconciliation with Cleveland; for he began to be sensible, from the consequences, that the part he had played towards his Captain, however well intended, was neither lucky in its issue, nor likely to be well taken. His admirer and adherent Fletcher lay half asleep, as it seemed, on a truckle-bed in the room, without the least attempt to interfere in the conversation which ensued.

“Nay, but speak to me, Clement,” said the penitent Lieutenant, “if it be but to swear at me for my stupidity!”

“What! not an oath? — Nay, then the world goes hard,

If Clifford cannot spare his friends an oath.”

“I prithee peace, and be gone!” said Cleveland; “I have one bosom friend left yet, and you will make me bestow its contents on you, or on myself.”

“I have it!” said Bunce, “I have it!” and on he went in the vein of Jaffier —

“Then, by the hell I merit, I’ll not leave thee,

Till to thyself at least thou’rt reconciled,

However thy resentment deal with me!”

“I pray you once more to be silent,” said Cleveland — “Is it not enough that you have undone me with your treachery, but you must stun me with your silly buffoonery? — I would not have believed *you* would have lifted a finger against me, Jack, of any man or devil in yonder unhappy ship.”

“Who, I?” exclaimed Bunce, “I lift a finger against you! — and if I did, it was in pure love, and to make you the happiest fellow that ever trode a deck, with your mistress beside you, and fifty fine fellows at your command. Here is Dick Fletcher can bear witness I did all for the best, if he would but speak, instead of lolloping there like a Dutch dogger laid up to be careened. — Get up, Dick, and speak for me, won’t you?”

“Why, yes, Jack Bunce,” answered Fletcher, raising himself with difficulty, and speaking feebly, “I will if I can — and I always knew you spoke and did for the best — but howsomdever, d’ye see, it has turned out for the worst for me this time, for I am bleeding to death, I think.”

“You cannot be such an ass!” said Jack Bunce, springing to his assistance, as did Cleveland. But human aid came too late — he sunk back on the bed, and, turning on his face, expired without a groan.

“I always thought him a d — d fool,” said Bunce, as he wiped a tear from his eye, “but never such a consummate idiot as to hop the perch so sillily. I have lost the best follower” — and he again wiped his eye.

Cleveland looked on the dead body, the rugged features of which had remained unaltered by the death-pang — “A bull-dog,” he said, “of the true British breed, and, with a better counsellor, would have been a better man.”

“You may say that of some other folks, too, Captain, if you are minded to do them justice,” said Bunce.

“I may indeed, and especially of yourself,” said Cleveland, in reply.

“Why then, say, *Jack, I forgive you*,” said Bunce; “it’s but a short word, and soon spoken.”

"I forgive you from all my soul, Jack," said Cleveland, who had resumed his situation at the window; "and the rather that your folly is of little consequence — the morning is come that must bring ruin on us all."

"What! you are thinking of the old woman's prophecy you spoke of?" said Bunce.

"It will soon be accomplished," answered Cleveland. "Come hither; what do you take yon large square-rigged vessel for, that you see doubling the headland on the east, and opening the Bay of Stromness?"

"Why, I can't make her well out," said Bunce, "but yonder is old Goffe, takes her for a West Indiaman loaded with rum and sugar, I suppose, for d — n me if he does not slip cable, and stand out to her!"

"Instead of running into the shoal-water, which was his only safety," said Cleveland — "The fool! the dotard! the drivelling, drunken idiot! — he will get his flip hot enough; for yon is the Halcyon — See, she hoists her colours and fires a broadside! and there will soon be an end of the Fortune's Favourite! I only hope they will fight her to the last plank. The Boatswain used to be stanch enough, and so is Goffe, though an incarnate demon. — Now she shoots away, with all the sail she can spread, and that shows some sense."

"Up goes the Jolly Hodge, the old black flag, with the death's head and hour-glass, and that shows some spunk," added his comrade.

"The hour-glass is turned for us, Jack, for this bout — our sand is running fast. — Fire away yet, my roving lads! The deep sea or the blue sky, rather than a rope and a yard-arm!"

There was a moment of anxious and dead silence; the sloop, though hard pressed, maintaining still a running fight, and the frigate continuing in full chase, but scarce returning a shot. At length the vessels neared each other, so as to show that the man-of-war intended to board the sloop, instead of sinking her, probably to secure the plunder which might be in the pirate vessel.

"Now, Goffe — now, Boatswain!" exclaimed Cleveland, in an ecstasy of impatience, and as if they could have heard his commands, "stand by sheets and tacks — rake her with a broadside, when you are under her bows, then about ship, and go off on the other tack like a wild-goose. The sails shiver — the helm's a-lee — Ah! — deep-sea sink the lubbers! — they miss stays, and the frigate runs them aboard!"

Accordingly, the various manœuvres of the chase had brought them so near, that Cleveland, with his spy-glass, could see the man-of-war's-men boarding by the yards and bowsprit, in irresistible numbers, their naked cutlasses flashing in the sun, when, at that critical moment, both ships were enveloped in a cloud of thick black smoke, which suddenly arose on board the captured pirate.

"Exeunt omnes!" said Bunce, with clasped hands.

"There went the Fortune's Favourite, ship and crew!" said Cleveland, at the same instant.

But the smoke immediately clearing away, showed that the damage had only been partial, and that, from want of a sufficient quantity of powder, the pirates had failed in their desperate attempt to blow up their vessel with the Halcyon.

Shortly after the action was over, Captain Weatherport of the Halcyon sent an officer and a party of marines to the House of Stennis, to demand from the little garrison the pirate seamen who were their prisoners, and, in particular, Cleveland and Bunce, who acted as Captain and Lieutenant of the gang.

This was a demand which was not to be resisted, though Magnus Troil could have wished sincerely that the roof under which he lived had been allowed as an asylum at least to Cleveland. But the officer's orders were peremptory; and he added, it was Captain Weatherport's intention to land the other prisoners, and send the whole, with a sufficient escort, across the island to Kirkwall, in order to undergo an examination there before the civil authorities, previous to their being sent off to London for trial at the High Court of Admiralty. Magnus could therefore only intercede for good usage to Cleveland, and that he might not be stripped or plundered, which the officer, struck by his good mien, and compassionating his situation, readily promised. The honest Udaller would have said something in the way of comfort to Cleveland himself, but he could not find words to express it, and only shook his head.

"Old friend," said Cleveland, "you may have much to complain of — yet you pity instead of exulting over me — for the sake of you and yours, I will never harm human being more. Take this from me — my last hope, but my last temptation also" — he drew from his bosom a pocket-pistol, and gave it to Magnus Troil.

"Remember me to — But no — let every one forget me. — I am your prisoner, sir," said he to the officer.

"And I also," said poor Bunce; and putting on a theatrical countenance, he ranted, with no very perceptible faltering in his tone, the words of Pierre:

"Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour:

Keep off the rabble, that I may have room

To entertain my fate, and die with decency."

Chapter 41.

Joy, joy, in London now!

SOUTHEY.

The news of the capture of the Rover reached Kirkwall, about an hour before noon, and filled all men with wonder and with joy. Little business was that day done at the Fair, whilst people of all ages and occupations streamed from the place to see the prisoners as they were marched towards Kirkwall, and to triumph in the different appearance which they now bore, from that which they had formerly exhibited when ranting, swaggering, and bullying in the streets of that town. The bayonets of the marines were soon seen to glisten in the sun, and then came on the melancholy troop of captives, handcuffed two and two together. Their finery had been partly torn from them by their captors, partly hung in rags about them; many were wounded and covered with blood, many blackened and scorched with the explosion, by which a few of the most desperate had in vain striven to blow up the vessel. Most of them seemed sullen and impenitent, some were more becomingly affected with their condition, and a few braved it out, and sung the same ribald songs to which they had made the streets of Kirkwall ring when they were in their frolics.

The Boatswain and Goffe, coupled together, exhausted themselves in threats and imprecations against each other; the former charging Goffe with want of seamanship, and the latter alleging that the Boatswain had prevented him from firing the powder that was stowed forward, and so sending them all to the other world together. Last came Cleveland and Bunce, who were permitted to walk unshackled; the decent melancholy, yet resolved manner of the former, contrasting strongly with the stage strut and swagger which poor Jack thought it fitting to assume, in order to conceal some less dignified emotions. The former was looked upon with compassion, the latter with a mixture of scorn and pity; while most of the others inspired horror, and even fear, by their looks and their language.

There was one individual in Kirkwall, who was so far from hastening to see the sight which attracted all eyes, that he was not even aware of the event which agitated the town. This was the elder Mertoun, whose residence Kirkwall had been for two or three days, part of which had been spent in attending to some judicial proceedings, undertaken at the instance of the Procurator Fiscal, against that grave professor, Bryce Snailsfoot. In consequence of an inquisition into the proceedings of this worthy trader, Cleveland's chest, with his papers and other matters therein contained, had been restored to Mertoun, as the lawful custodian thereof, until the right owner should be in a situation to establish his right to them. Mertoun was at first desirous to throw back upon Justice the charge which she was disposed to intrust him with; but, on perusing one or two of the papers, he hastily changed his mind — in broken words, requested the Magistrate to let the chest be sent to his lodgings, and, hastening homeward, bolted himself into the room, to consider and digest the singular information which chance had thus conveyed to him, and which increased, in a tenfold degree, his impatience for an interview with the mysterious Norna of the Fitful-head.

It may be remembered that she had required of him, when they met in the Churchyard of Saint Ninian, to attend in the outer isle of the Cathedral of Saint Magnus, at the hour of noon, on the fifth day of the Fair of Saint Olla, there to meet a person by whom the fate of Mordaunt would be explained to him. — "It must be herself," he said; "and that I should see her at this moment is indispensable. How to find her sooner, I know not; and better lose a few hours even in this exigence, than offend her by a premature attempt to force myself on her presence."

Long, therefore, before noon — long before the town of Kirkwall was agitated by the news of the events on the other side of the island, the elder Mertoun was pacing the deserted aisle of the Cathedral, awaiting, with agonizing eagerness, the expected communication from Norna. The bell tolled twelve — no door opened

— no one was seen to enter the Cathedral; but the last sounds had not ceased to reverberate through the vaulted roof, when, gliding from one of the interior side-aisles, Norna stood before him. Mertoun, indifferent to the apparent mystery of her sudden approach, (with the secret of which the reader is acquainted,) went up to her at once, with the earnest ejaculation — “Ulla — Ulla Troil — aid me to save our unhappy boy!”

“To Ulla Troil,” said Norna, “I answer not — I gave that name to the winds, on the night that cost me a father!”

“Speak not of that night of horror,” said Mertoun; “we have need of our reason — let us not think on recollections which may destroy it; but aid me, if thou canst, to save our unfortunate child!”

“Vaughan,” answered Norna, “he is already saved — long since saved; think you a mother’s hand — and that of such a mother as I am — would await your crawling, tardy, ineffectual assistance? No, Vaughan — I make myself known to you, but to show my triumph over you — it is the only revenge which the powerful Norna permits herself to take for the wrongs of Ulla Troil.”

“Have you indeed saved him — saved him from the murderous crew?” said Mertoun, or Vaughan — “speak! — and speak truth! — I will believe every thing — all you would require me to assent to! — prove to me only he is escaped and safe!”

“Escaped and safe, by my means,” said Norna — “safe, and in assurance of an honoured and happy alliance. Yes, great unbeliever! — yes, wise and self-opinioned infidel! — these were the works of Norna! I knew you many a year since; but never had I made myself known to you, save with the triumphant consciousness of having controlled the destiny that threatened my son. All combined against him — planets which threatened drowning — combinations which menaced blood — but my skill was superior to all. — I arranged — I combined — I found means — I made them — each disaster has been averted; — and what infidel on earth, or stubborn demon beyond the bounds of earth, shall hereafter deny my power?”

The wild ecstasy with which she spoke, so much resembled triumphant insanity, that Mertoun answered — “Were your pretensions less lofty, and your speech more plain, I should be better assured of my son’s safety.”

“Doubt on, vain sceptic!” said Norna — “And yet know, that not only is our son safe, but vengeance is mine, though I sought it not — vengeance on the powerful implement of the darker Influences by whom my schemes were so often thwarted, and even the life of my son endangered. — Yes, take it as a guarantee of the truth of my speech, that Cleveland — the pirate Cleveland — even now enters Kirkwall as a prisoner, and will soon expiate with his life the having shed blood which is of kin to Norna’s.”

“Who didst thou say was prisoner?” exclaimed Mertoun, with a voice of thunder — “*Who*, woman, didst thou say should expiate his crimes with his life?”

“Cleveland — the pirate Cleveland!” answered Norna; “and by me, whose counsel he scorned, he has been permitted to meet his fate.”

“Thou most wretched of women!” said Mertoun, speaking from between his clenched teeth — “thou hast slain thy son, as well as thy father!”

“My son! — what son? — what mean you? — Mordaunt is your son — your only son!” exclaimed Norna — “is he not? — tell me quickly — is he not?”

“Mordaunt is indeed *my* son,” said Mertoun — “the laws, at least, gave him to me as such — But, O unhappy Ulla! Cleveland is your son as well as mine — blood of our blood, bone of our bone; and if you have given him to death, I will end my wretched life along with him!”

“Stay — hold — stop, Vaughan!” said Norna; “I am not yet overcome — prove but to me the truth of what you say, I would find help, if I should evoke hell! — But prove your words, else believe them I cannot.”

“*Thou* help! wretched, overweening woman! — in what have thy combinations and thy stratagems — the legerdmain of lunacy — the mere quackery of insanity — in what have these involved thee? — and yet I will speak to thee as reasonable — nay, I will admit thee as powerful — Hear, then, Ulla, the proofs which you demand, and find a remedy, if thou canst:—

“When I fled from Orkney,” he continued, after a pause — “it is now five-and-twenty years since — I bore with me the unhappy offspring to whom you had given light. It was sent to me by one of your kinswomen, with an account of your illness, which was soon followed by a generally received belief of your death. It avails not to tell in what misery I left Europe. I found refuge in Hispaniola, wherein a fair young Spaniard undertook the task of comforter. I married her — she became mother of the youth called Mordaunt Mertoun.”

“You married her!” said Norna, in a tone of deep reproach.

“I did, Ulla,” answered Mertoun; “but you were avenged. She proved faithless, and her infidelity left me in doubts whether the child she bore had a right to call me father — But I also was avenged.”

“You murdered her!” said Norna, with a dreadful shriek.

“I did that,” said Mertoun, without a more direct reply, “which made an instant flight from Hispaniola necessary. Your son I carried with me to Tortuga, where we had a small settlement. Mordaunt Vaughan, my son by marriage, about three or four years younger, was residing in Port-Royal, for the advantages of an English education. I resolved never to see him again, but I continued to support him. Our settlement was plundered by the Spaniards, when Clement was but fifteen — Want came to aid despair and a troubled conscience. I became a corsair, and involved Clement in the same desperate trade. His skill and bravery, though then a mere boy, gained him a separate command; and after a lapse of two or three years, while we were on different cruises, my crew rose on me, and left me for dead on the beach of one of the Bermudas. I recovered, however, and my first enquiries, after a tedious illness, were after Clement. He, I heard, had been also marooned by a rebellious crew, and put ashore on a desert islet, to perish with want — I believed he had so perished.”

“And what assures you that he did not?” said Ulla; “or how comes this Cleveland to be identified with Vaughan?”

“To change a name is common with such adventurers,” answered Mertoun, “and Clement had apparently found that of Vaughan had become too notorious — and this change, in his case, prevented me from hearing any tidings of him. It was then that remorse seized me, and that, detesting all nature, but especially the sex to which Louisa belonged, I resolved to do penance in the wild islands of Zetland for the rest of my life. To subject myself to fasts and to the scourge, was the advice of the holy Catholic priests, whom I consulted. But I devised a nobler penance — I determined to bring with me the unhappy boy Mordaunt, and to keep always before me the living memorial of my misery and my guilt. I have done so, and I have thought over both, till reason has often trembled on her throne. And now, to drive me to utter madness, my Clement — my own, my undoubted son, revives from the dead to be consigned to an infamous death, by the machinations of his own mother!”

“Away, away!” said Norna, with a laugh, when she had heard the story to an end, “this is a legend framed by the old corsair, to interest my aid in favour of a guilty comrade. How could I mistake Mordaunt for my son, their ages being so different?”

“The dark complexion and manly stature may have done much,” said Basil Mertoun; “strong imagination must have done the rest.”

“But, give me proofs — give me proofs that this Cleveland is my son, and, believe me, this sun shall sooner sink in the east, than they shall have power to harm a hair of his head.”

“These papers, these journals,” said Mertoun, offering the pocket-book.

“I cannot read them,” she said, after an effort, “my brain is dizzy.”

“Clement has also tokens which you may remember, but they must have become the booty of his captors. He had a silver box with a Runic inscription, with which in far other days you presented me — a golden chaplet.”

“A box!” said Norna, hastily; “Cleveland gave me one but a day since — I have never looked at it till now.”

Eagerly she pulled it out — eagerly examined the legend around the lid, and as eagerly exclaimed — “They may now indeed call me Reimkennar, for by this rhyme I know myself murderess of my son, as well as of my father!”

The conviction of the strong delusion under which she had laboured, was so overwhelming, that she sunk down at the foot of one of the pillars — Mertoun shouted for help, though in despair of receiving any; the sexton, however, entered, and, hopeless of all assistance from Norna, the distracted father rushed out, to learn, if possible, the fate of his son.

Captain Weatherport had, before this time, reached Kirkwall in person, and was received with great joy and thankfulness by the Magistrates, who had assembled in council for the purpose. The Provost, in particular, expressed himself delighted with the providential arrival of the Halcyon, at the very conjuncture when the Pirate could not escape her. The Captain looked a little surprised, and said — "For that, sir, you may thank the information you yourself supplied."

"That I supplied?" said the Provost, somewhat astonished.

"Yes, sir," answered Captain Weatherport, "I understand you to be George Torfe, Chief Magistrate of Kirkwall, who subscribes this letter."

The astonished Provost took the letter addressed to Captain Weatherport of the Halcyon, stating the arrival, force, &c., of the pirates' vessel; but adding, that they had heard of the Halcyon being on the coast, and that they were on their guard and ready to baffle her, by going among the shoals, and through the islands, and holms, where the frigate could not easily follow; and at the worst, they were desperate enough to propose running the sloop ashore and blowing her up, by which much booty and treasure would be lost to the captors. The letter, therefore, suggested, that the Halcyon should cruise betwixt Duncansbay Head and Cape Wrath, for two or three days, to relieve the pirates of the alarm her neighbourhood occasioned, and lull them into security, the more especially as the letter-writer knew it to be their intention, if the frigate left the coast, to go into Stromness Bay, and there put their guns ashore for some necessary repairs, or even for careening their vessel, if they could find means. The letter concluded by assuring Captain Weatherport, that, if he could bring his frigate into Stromness Bay on the morning of the 24th of August, he would have a good bargain of the pirates — if sooner, he was not unlikely to miss them.

"This letter is not of my writing or subscribing, Captain Weatherport," said the Provost; "nor would I have ventured to advise any delay in your coming hither."

The Captain was surprised in his turn. "All I know is, that it reached me when I was in the bay of Thurso, and that I gave the boat's crew that brought it five dollars for crossing the Pentland Frith in very rough weather. They had a dumb dwarf as cockswain, the ugliest urchin my eyes ever opened upon. I give you much credit for the accuracy of your intelligence, Mr. Provost."

"It is lucky as it is," said the Provost; "yet I question whether the writer of this letter would not rather that you had found the nest cold and the bird flown."

So saying, he handed the letter to Magnus Troil, who returned it with a smile, but without any observation, aware, doubtless, with the sagacious reader, that Norna had her own reasons for calculating with accuracy on the date of the Halcyon's arrival.

Without puzzling himself farther concerning a circumstance which seemed inexplicable, the Captain requested that the examinations might proceed; and Cleveland and Altamont, as he chose to be called, were brought up the first of the pirate crew, on the charge of having acted as Captain and Lieutenant. They had just commenced the examination, when, after some expostulation with the officers who kept the door, Basil Mertoun burst into the apartment and exclaimed, "Take the old victim for the young one! — I am Basil Vaughan, too well known on the windward station — take my life, and spare my son's!"

All were astonished, and none more than Magnus Troil, who hastily explained to the Magistrates and Captain Weatherport, that this gentleman had been living peaceably and honestly on the Mainland of Zetland for many years.

"In that case," said the Captain, "I wash my hands of the poor man, for he is safe, under two proclamations of mercy; and, by my soul, when I see them, the father and his offspring, hanging on each other's neck, I wish I could say as much for the son."

"But how is it — how can it be?" said the Provost; "we always called the old man Mertoun, and the young, Cleveland, and now it seems they are both named Vaughan."

"Vaughan," answered Magnus, "is a name which I have some reason to remember; and, from what I have lately heard from my cousin Norna, that old man has a right to bear it."

"And, I trust, the young man also," said the Captain, who had been looking over a memorandum. "Listen to me a moment," added he, addressing the younger Vaughan, whom we have hitherto called Cleveland. "Hark you, sir, your name is said to be Clement Vaughan — are you the same, who, then a mere boy, commanded a party of rovers, who, about eight or nine years ago, pillaged a Spanish village called Quempoa, on the Spanish Main, with the purpose of seizing some treasure?"

"It will avail me nothing to deny it," answered the prisoner.

"No," said Captain Weatherport, "but it may do you service to admit it. — Well, the muleteers escaped with the treasure, while you were engaged in protecting, at the hazard of your own life, the honour of two Spanish ladies against the brutality of your followers. Do you remember any thing of this?"

"I am sure I do," said Jack Bunce; "for our Captain here was marooned for his gallantry, and I narrowly escaped flogging and pickling for having taken his part."

"When these points are established," said Captain Weatherport, "Vaughan's life is safe — the women he saved were persons of quality, daughters to the governor of the province, and application was long since made, by the grateful Spaniard, to our government, for favour to be shown to their preserver. I had special orders about Clement Vaughan, when I had a commission for cruising upon the pirates, in the West Indies, six or seven years since. But Vaughan was gone then as a name amongst them; and I heard enough of Cleveland in his room. However, Captain, be you Cleveland or Vaughan, I think that, as the Quempoa hero, I can assure you a free pardon when you arrive in London."

Cleveland bowed, and the blood mounted to his face. Mertoun fell on his knees, and exhausted himself in thanksgiving to Heaven. They were removed, amidst the sympathizing sobs of the spectators.

"And now, good Master Lieutenant, what have you got to say for yourself?" said Captain Weatherport to the *ci-devant* Roscius.

"Why, little or nothing, please your honour; only that I wish your honour could find my name in that book of mercy you have in your hand; for I stood by Captain Clement Vaughan in that Quempoa business."

"You call yourself Frederick Altamont?" said Captain Weatherport. "I can see no such name here; one John Bounce, or Bunce, the lady put on her tablets."

"Why, that is me — that is I myself, Captain — I can prove it; and I am determined, though the sound be something plebeian, rather to live Jack Bunce, than to hang as Frederick Altamont."

"In that case," said the Captain, "I can give you some hopes as John Bunce."

"Thank your noble worship!" shouted Bunce; then changing his tone, he said, "Ah, since an alias has such virtue, poor Dick Fletcher might have come off as Timothy Tugmutton; but howsomdever, d'ye see, to use his own phrase" —

"Away with the Lieutenant," said the Captain, "and bring forward Goffe and the other fellows; there will be ropes reeved for some of them, I think." And this prediction promised to be amply fulfilled, so strong was the proof which was brought against them.

The Halcyon was accordingly ordered round to carry the whole prisoners to London, for which she set sail in the course of two days.

During the time that the unfortunate Cleveland remained at Kirkwall, he was treated with civility by the Captain of the Halcyon; and the kindness of his old acquaintance, Magnus Troil, who knew in secret how closely he was allied to his blood, pressed on him accommodations of every kind, more than he could be prevailed on to accept.

Norna, whose interest in the unhappy prisoner was still more deep, was at this time unable to express it. The sexton had found her lying on the pavement in a swoon, and when she recovered, her mind for the time had totally lost its equipoise, and it became necessary to place her under the restraint of watchful attendants.

Of the sisters of Burgh-Westra, Cleveland only heard that they remained ill, in consequence of the fright to which they had been subjected, until the evening before the Halcyon sailed, when he received, by a private conveyance, the following billet:

—"Farewell, Cleveland — we part for ever, and it is right that we should — Be virtuous and be happy. The delusions which a solitary education and limited acquaintance with the modern world had spread around me, are gone and dissipated for ever. But in you, I am sure, I have been thus far free from error — that you are one to whom good is naturally more attractive than evil, and whom only necessity, example, and habit, have forced into your late course of life. Think of

me as one who no longer exists, unless you should become as much the object of general praise, as now of general reproach; and then think of me as one who will rejoice in your reviving fame, though she must never see you more!"—

The note was signed M. T.; and Cleveland, with a deep emotion, which he testified even by tears, read it an hundred times over, and then clasped it to his bosom. Mordaunt Mertoun heard by letter from his father, but in a very different style. Basil bade him farewell for ever, and acquitted him henceforward of the duties of a son, as one on whom he, notwithstanding the exertions of many years, had found himself unable to bestow the affections of a parent. The letter informed him of a recess in the old house of Jarlshof, in which the writer had deposited a considerable quantity of specie and of treasure, which he desired Mordaunt to use as his own. "You need not fear," the letter bore, "either that you lay yourself under obligation to me, or that you are sharing the spoils of piracy. What is now given over to you, is almost entirely the property of your deceased mother, Louisa Gonzago, and is yours by every right. Let us forgive each other," was the conclusion, "as they who must meet no more."— And they never met more; for the elder Mertoun, against whom no charge was ever preferred, disappeared after the fate of Cleveland was determined, and was generally believed to have retired into a foreign convent.

The fate of Cleveland will be most briefly expressed in a letter which Minna received within two months after the Halcyon left Kirkwall. The family were then assembled at Burgh-Westra, and Mordaunt was a member of it for the time, the good Udaller thinking he could never sufficiently repay the activity which he had shown in the defence of his daughters. Norna, then beginning to recover from her temporary alienation of mind, was a guest in the family, and Minna, who was sedulous in her attention upon this unfortunate victim of mental delusion, was seated with her, watching each symptom of returning reason, when the letter we allude to was placed in her hands.

"Minna," it said — "dearest Minna! — farewell, and for ever! Believe me, I never meant you wrong — never. From the moment I came to know you, I resolved to detach myself from my hateful comrades, and had framed a thousand schemes, which have proved as vain as they deserved to be — for why, or how, should the fate of her that is so lovely, pure, and innocent, be involved with that of one so guilty? — Of these dreams I will speak no more. The stern reality of my situation is much milder than I either expected or deserved; and the little good I did has outweighed, in the minds of honourable and merciful judges, much that was evil and criminal. I have not only been exempted from the ignominious death to which several of my compeers are sentenced; but Captain Weatherport, about once more to sail for the Spanish Main, under the apprehension of an immediate war with that country, has generously solicited and obtained permission to employ me, and two or three more of my less guilty associates, in the same service — a measure recommended to himself by his own generous compassion, and to others by our knowledge of the coast, and of local circumstances, which, by whatever means acquired, we now hope to use for the service of our country. Minna, you will hear my name pronounced with honour, or you will never hear it again. If virtue can give happiness, I need not wish it to you, for it is yours already. — Farewell, Minna." Minna wept so bitterly over this letter, that it attracted the attention of the convalescent Norna. She snatched it from the hand of her kinswoman, and read it over at first with the confused air of one to whom it conveyed no intelligence — then with a dawn of recollection — then with a burst of mingled joy and grief, in which she dropped it from her hand. Minna snatched it up, and retired with her treasure to her own apartment.

From that time Norna appeared to assume a different character. Her dress was changed to one of a more simple and less imposing appearance. Her dwarf was dismissed, with ample provision for his future comfort. She showed no desire of resuming her erratic life; and directed her observatory, as it might be called, on Fitful-head, to be dismantled. She refused the name of Norna, and would only be addressed by her real appellation of Ulla Troil. But the most important change remained behind. Formerly, from the dreadful dictates of spiritual despair, arising out of the circumstances of her father's death, she seemed to have considered herself as an outcast from divine grace; besides, that, enveloped in the vain occult sciences which she pretended to practise, her study, like that of Chaucer's physician, had been "but little in the Bible." Now, the sacred volume was seldom laid aside; and, to the poor ignorant people who came as formerly to invoke her power over the elements, she only replied — "*The winds are in the hollow of His hand.*" — Her conversion was not, perhaps, altogether rational; for this, the state of a mind disordered by such a complication of horrid incidents, probably prevented. But it seemed to be sincere, and was certainly useful. She appeared deeply to repent of her former presumptuous attempts to interfere with the course of human events, superintended as they are by far higher powers, and expressed bitter compunction when such her former pretensions were in any manner recalled to her memory. She still showed a partiality to Mordaunt, though, perhaps, arising chiefly from habit; nor was it easy to know how much or how little she remembered of the complicated events in which she had been connected. When she died, which was about four years after the events we have commemorated, it was found that, at the special and earnest request of Minna Troil, she had conveyed her very considerable property to Brenda. A clause in her will specially directed, that all the books, implements of her laboratory, and other things connected with her former studies, should be committed to the flames.

About two years before Norna's death, Brenda was wedded to Mordaunt Mertoun. It was some time before old Magnus Troil, with all his affection for his daughter, and all his partiality for Mordaunt, was able frankly to reconcile himself to this match. But Mordaunt's accomplishments were peculiarly to the Udaller's taste, and the old man felt the impossibility of supplying his place in his family so absolutely, that at length his Norse blood gave way to the natural feeling of the heart, and he comforted his pride while he looked around him, and saw what he considered as the encroachments of the Scottish gentry upon THE COUNTRY, (so Zetland is fondly termed by its inhabitants,) that as well "his daughter married the son of an English pirate, as of a Scottish thief," in scornful allusion to the Highland and Border families, to whom Zetland owes many respectable landholders; but whose ancestors were generally esteemed more renowned for ancient family and high courage, than for accurately regarding the trifling distinctions of *meum* and *tuum*. The jovial old man lived to the extremity of human life, with the happy prospect of a numerous succession in the family of his younger daughter; and having his board cheered alternately by the minstrelsy of Claud Halcro, and enlightened by the lucubrations of Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley, who, laying aside his high pretensions, was, when he became better acquainted with the manners of the islanders, and remembered the various misadventures which had attended his premature attempts at reformation, an honest and useful representative of his principal, and never so happy as when he could escape from the spare commons of his sister Barbara, to the genial table of the Udaller. Barbara's temper also was much softened by the unexpected restoration of the horn of silver coins, (the property of Norna,) which she had concealed in the mansion of old Stourburgh, for achieving some of her mysterious plans, but which she now restored to those by whom it had been accidentally discovered, with an intimation, however, that it would again disappear unless a reasonable portion was expended on the sustenance of the family, a precaution to which Tronda Dronsdaughter (probably an agent of Norna's) owed her escape from a slow and wasting death by inanition.

Mordaunt and Brenda were as happy as our mortal condition permits us to be. They admired and loved each other — enjoyed easy circumstances — had duties to discharge which they did not neglect; and, clear in conscience as light of heart, laughed, sung, danced, daffed the world aside, and bid it pass.

But Minna — the high-minded and imaginative Minna — she, gifted with such depth of feeling and enthusiasm, yet doomed to see both blighted in early youth, because, with the inexperience of a disposition equally romantic and ignorant, she had built the fabric of her happiness on a quicksand instead of a rock — was she, could she be happy? Reader, shewas happy, for, whatever may be alleged to the contrary by the sceptic and the scorner, to each duty performed there is assigned a degree of mental peace and high consciousness of honourable exertion, corresponding to the difficulty of the task accomplished. That rest of the body which succeeds to hard and industrious toil, is not to be compared to the repose which the spirit enjoys under similar circumstances. Her resignation, however, and the constant attention which she paid to her father, her sister, the afflicted Norna, and to all who had claims on her, were neither Minna's sole nor her most precious source of comfort. Like Norna, but under a more regulated judgment, she learned to exchange the visions of wild enthusiasm which had exerted and misled her imagination, for a truer and purer connexion with the world beyond us, than could be learned from the sagas of heathen bards, or the visions of later rhymers. To this she owed the support by which she was enabled, after various accounts of the honourable and gallant conduct of Cleveland, to read with resignation, and even with a sense of comfort, mingled with sorrow, that he had at length fallen, leading the way in a gallant and honourable enterprise, which was successfully accomplished by those companions, to whom his determined bravery had opened the road. Bunce, his fantastic follower in good, as formerly in evil, transmitted an account to Minna of this melancholy event, in terms which showed, that though his head was weak, his heart had not been utterly corrupted by the lawless life which he had for some time led, or at least that it had been amended by the change; and that he himself had gained credit and promotion in the same action, seemed to be of little consequence to him, compared with the loss of his old captain and comrade.⁴¹ Minna read the intelligence, and thanked Heaven,

even while the eyes which she lifted up were streaming with tears, that the death of Cleveland had been in the bed of honour; nay, she even had the courage to add her gratitude, that he had been snatched from a situation of temptation ere circumstances had overcome his new-born virtue; and so strongly did this reflection operate, that her life, after the immediate pain of this event had passed away, seemed not only as resigned, but even more cheerful than before. Her thoughts, however, were detached from the world, and only visited it, with an interest like that which guardian spirits take for their charge, in behalf of those friends with whom she lived in love, or of the poor whom she could serve and comfort. Thus passed her life, enjoying from all who approached her, an affection enhanced by reverence; insomuch, that when her friends sorrowed for her death, which arrived at a late period of her existence, they were comforted by the fond reflection, that the humanity which she then laid down, was the only circumstance which had placed her, in the words of Scripture, “a little lower than the angels!”

BOOK XIX
THE BLACK DWARF
CHAPTER I.
PRELIMINARY.

Hast any philosophy in thee, Shepherd?—AS YOU LIKE IT.

It was a fine April morning (excepting that it had snowed hard the night before, and the ground remained covered with a dazzling mantle of six inches in depth) when two horsemen rode up to the Wallace Inn. The first was a strong, tall, powerful man, in a grey riding-coat, having a hat covered with waxcloth, a huge silver-mounted horsewhip, boots, and dreadnought overalls. He was mounted on a large strong brown mare, rough in coat, but well in condition, with a saddle of the yeomanry cut, and a double-bitted military bridle. The man who accompanied him was apparently his servant; he rode a shaggy little grey pony, had a blue bonnet on his head, and a large check napkin folded about his neck, wore a pair of long blue worsted hose instead of boots, had his gloveless hands much stained with tar, and observed an air of deference and respect towards his companion, but without any of those indications of precedence and punctilio which are preserved between the gentry and their domestics. On the contrary, the two travellers entered the court-yard abreast, and the concluding sentence of the conversation which had been carrying on betwixt them was a joint ejaculation, "Lord guide us, an this weather last, what will come o' the lambs!" The hint was sufficient for my Landlord, who, advancing to take the horse of the principal person, and holding him by the reins as he dismounted, while his ostler rendered the same service to the attendant, welcomed the stranger to Gandercleugh, and, in the same breath, enquired, "What news from the south hielands?"

"News?" said the farmer, "bad enough news, I think;—an we can carry through the yowes, it will be a' we can do; we maun e'en leave the lambs to the Black Dwarfs care."

"Ay, ay," subjoined the old shepherd (for such he was), shaking his head, "he'll be unco busy among the morts this season."

"The Black Dwarf!" said MY LEARNED FRIEND AND PATRON, Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham, "and what sort of a personage may he be?"

[We have, in this and other instances, printed in italics (CAPITALS in this text) some few words which the worthy editor, Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham, seems to have interpolated upon the text of his deceased friend, Mr. Pattieson. We must observe, once for all, that such liberties seem only to have been taken by the learned gentleman where his own character and conduct are concerned; and surely he must be the best judge of the style in which his own character and conduct should be treated of.]

"Hout awa, man," answered the farmer, "ye'll hae heard o' Canny Elshie the Black Dwarf, or I am muckle mistaen—A' the warld tells tales about him, but it's but daft nonsense after a'—I dinna believe a word o't frae beginning to end."

"Your father believed it unco stievely, though," said the old man, to whom the scepticism of his master gave obvious displeasure.

"Ay, very true, Bauldie, but that was in the time o' the blackfaces—they believed a hantle queer things in thae days, that naebody heeds since the lang sheep cam in."

"The mair's the pity, the mair's the pity," said the old man. "Your father, and sae I have aften tell'd ye, maister, wad hae been sair vexed to hae seen the auld peel-house wa's pu'd down to make park dykes; and the bonny broomy knowe, where he liked sae weel to sit at e'en, wi' his plaid about him, and look at the kye as they cam down the loaning, ill wad he hae liked to hae seen that braw sunny knowe a' riven out wi' the pleugh in the fashion it is at this day."

"Hout, Bauldie," replied the principal, "tak ye that dram the landlord's offering ye, and never fash your head about the changes o' the warld, sae lang as ye're blithe and bien yoursell."

"Wussing your health, sirs," said the shepherd; and having taken off his glass, and observed the whisky was the right thing, he continued, "It's no for the like o' us to be judging, to be sure; but it was a bonny knowe that broomy knowe, and an unco braw shelter for the lambs in a severe morning like this."

"Ay," said his patron, "but ye ken we maun hae turnips for the lang sheep, billie, and muckle hard wark to get them, baith wi' the pleugh and the howe; and that wad sort ill wi' sitting on the broomy knowe, and cracking about Black Dwarfs, and siccan clavers, as was the gate lang syne, when the short sheep were in the fashion."

"Aweel, aweel, maister," said the attendant, "short sheep had short rents, I'm thinking."

Here my WORTHY AND LEARNED patron again interposed, and observed, "that he could never perceive any material difference, in point of longitude, between one sheep and another."

This occasioned a loud hoarse laugh on the part of the farmer, and an astonished stare on the part of the shepherd.

"It's the woo', man,—it's the woo', and no the beasts themsells, that makes them be ca'd lang or short. I believe if ye were to measure their backs, the short sheep wad be rather the langer-bodied o' the twa; but it's the woo' that pays the rent in thae days, and it had muckle need."

"Odd, Bauldie says very true,—short sheep did make short rents—my father paid for our steading just threescore punds, and it stands me in three hundred, plack and bawbee.—And that's very true—I hae nae time to be standing here clavering—Landlord, get us our breakfast, and see an' get the yauds fed—I am for down to Christy Wilson's, to see if him and me can gree about the luckpenny I am to gie him for his year-auids. We had drank sax mutchkins to the making the bargain at St. Boswell's fair, and some gate we canna gree upon the particulars preceesely, for as muckle time as we took about it—I doubt we draw to a plea—But hear ye, neighbour," addressing my WORTHY AND LEARNED patron, "if ye want to hear onything about lang or short sheep, I will be back here to my kail against ane o'clock; or, if ye want ony auld-warld stories about the Black Dwarf, and sic-like, if ye'll ware a half mutchkin upon Bauldie there, he'll crack t'ye like a pen-gun. And I'se gie ye a mutchkin mysell, man, if I can settle weel wi' Christy Wilson."

The farmer returned at the hour appointed, and with him came Christy Wilson, their difference having been fortunately settled without an appeal to the gentlemen of the long robe. My LEARNED AND WORTHY patron failed not to attend, both on account of the refreshment promised to the mind and to the body, ALTHOUGH HE IS KNOWN TO PARTAKE OF THE LATTER IN A VERY MODERATE DEGREE; and the party, with which my Landlord was associated, continued to sit late in the evening, seasoning their liquor with many choice tales and songs. The last incident which I recollect, was my LEARNED AND WORTHY patron falling from his chair, just as he concluded a long lecture upon temperance, by reciting, from the "Gentle Shepherd," a couplet, which he RIGHT HAPPILY transferred from the vice of avarice to that of ebriety:

He that has just enough may soundly sleep,

The owercome only fashes folk to keep.

In the course of the evening the Black Dwarf had not been forgotten, and the old shepherd, Bauldie, told so many stories of him, that they excited a good deal of interest. It also appeared, though not till the third punch-bowl was emptied, that much of the farmer's scepticism on the subject was affected, as evincing a liberality of thinking, and a freedom from ancient prejudices, becoming a man who paid three hundred pounds a-year of rent, while, in fact, he had a lurking belief in the traditions of his forefathers. After my usual manner, I made farther enquiries of other persons connected with the wild and pastoral district in which the scene of the following narrative is placed, and I was fortunate enough to recover many links of the story, not generally known, and which account, at least in some degree, for the circumstances of exaggerated marvel with which superstition has attired it in the more vulgar traditions.

[The Black Dwarf, now almost forgotten, was once held a formidable personage by the dalesmen of the Border, where he got the blame of whatever mischief befell the sheep or cattle. "He was," says Dr. Leyden, who makes considerable use of him in the ballad called the Cowt of Keeldar, "a fairy of the most malignant order—the genuine Northern Duerger." The best and most authentic account of this dangerous and mysterious being occurs in a tale communicated to the author by that eminent antiquary, Richard Surtees, Esq. of Mainsforth, author of the HISTORY OF THE BISHOPRIC OF DURHAM.

According to this well-attested legend, two young Northumbrians were out on a shooting party, and had plunged deep among the mountainous moorlands which border on Cumberland. They stopped for refreshment in a little secluded dell by the side of a rivulet. There, after they had partaken of such food as they brought with them, one of the party fell asleep; the other, unwilling to disturb his friend's repose, stole silently out of the dell with the purpose of looking around him, when

he was astonished to find himself close to a being who seemed not to belong to this world, as he was the most hideous dwarf that the sun had ever shone on. His head was of full human size, forming a frightful contrast with his height, which was considerably under four feet. It was thatched with no other covering than long matted red hair, like that of the felt of a badger in consistence, and in colour a reddish brown, like the hue of the heather-blossom. His limbs seemed of great strength; nor was he otherwise deformed than from their undue proportion in thickness to his diminutive height. The terrified sportsman stood gazing on this horrible apparition, until, with an angry countenance, the being demanded by what right he intruded himself on those hills, and destroyed their harmless inhabitants. The perplexed stranger endeavoured to propitiate the incensed dwarf, by offering to surrender his game, as he would to an earthly Lord of the Manor. The proposal only redoubled the offence already taken by the dwarf, who alleged that he was the lord of those mountains, and the protector of the wild creatures who found a retreat in their solitary recesses; and that all spoils derived from their death, or misery, were abhorrent to him. The hunter humbled himself before the angry goblin, and by protestations of his ignorance, and of his resolution to abstain from such intrusion in future, at last succeeded in pacifying him. The gnome now became more communicative, and spoke of himself as belonging to a species of beings something between the angelic race and humanity. He added, moreover, which could hardly have been anticipated, that he had hopes of sharing in the redemption of the race of Adam. He pressed the sportsman to visit his dwelling, which he said was hard by, and plighted his faith for his safe return. But at this moment, the shout of the sportsman's companion was heard calling for his friend, and the dwarf, as if unwilling that more than one person should be cognisant of his presence, disappeared as the young man emerged from the dell to join his comrade.

It was the universal opinion of those most experienced in such matters, that if the shooter had accompanied the spirit, he would, notwithstanding the dwarf's fair pretences, have been either torn to pieces, or immured for years in the recesses of some fairy hill.

Such is the last and most authentic account of the apparition of the Black Dwarf.]

CHAPTER II.

Will none but Hearne the Hunter serve your turn?

—MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

In one of the most remote districts of the south of Scotland, where an ideal line, drawn along the tops of lofty and bleak mountains, separates that land from her sister kingdom, a young man, called Halbert, or Hobbie Elliot, a substantial farmer, who boasted his descent from old Martin Elliot of the Preakin-tower, noted in Border story and song, was on his return from deer-stalking. The deer, once so numerous among these solitary wastes, were now reduced to a very few herds, which, sheltering themselves in the most remote and inaccessible recesses, rendered the task of pursuing them equally toilsome and precarious. There were, however, found many youth of the country ardently attached to this sport, with all its dangers and fatigues. The sword had been sheathed upon the Borders for more than a hundred years, by the peaceful union of the crowns in the reign of James the First of Great Britain. Still the country retained traces of what it had been in former days; the inhabitants, their more peaceful avocations having been repeatedly interrupted by the civil wars of the preceding century, were scarce yet broken in to the habits of regular industry, sheep-farming had not been introduced upon any considerable scale, and the feeding of black cattle was the chief purpose to which the hills and valleys were applied. Near to the farmer's house, the tenant usually contrived to raise such a crop of oats or barley, as afforded meal for his family; and the whole of this slovenly and imperfect mode of cultivation left much time upon his own hands, and those of his domestics. This was usually employed by the young men in hunting and fishing; and the spirit of adventure, which formerly led to raids and forays in the same districts, was still to be discovered in the eagerness with which they pursued those rural sports.

The more high-spirited among the youth were, about the time that our narrative begins, expecting, rather with hope than apprehension, an opportunity of emulating their fathers in their military achievements, the recital of which formed the chief part of their amusement within doors. The passing of the Scottish act of security had given the alarm of England, as it seemed to point at a separation of the two British kingdoms, after the decease of Queen Anne, the reigning sovereign. Godolphin, then at the head of the English administration, foresaw that there was no other mode of avoiding the probable extremity of a civil war, but by carrying through an incorporating union. How that treaty was managed, and how little it seemed for some time to promise the beneficial results which have since taken place to such extent, may be learned from the history of the period. It is enough for our purpose to say, that all Scotland was indignant at the terms on which their legislature had surrendered their national independence. The general resentment led to the strangest leagues and to the wildest plans. The Cameronians were about to take arms for the restoration of the house of Stewart, whom they regarded, with justice, as their oppressors; and the intrigues of the period presented the strange picture of papists, prelatists, and presbyterians, caballing among themselves against the English government, out of a common feeling that their country had been treated with injustice. The fermentation was universal; and, as the population of Scotland had been generally trained to arms, under the act of security, they were not indifferently prepared for war, and waited but the declaration of some of the nobility to break out into open hostility. It was at this period of public confusion that our story opens.

The cleugh, or wild ravine, into which Hobbie Elliot had followed the game, was already far behind him, and he was considerably advanced on his return homeward, when the night began to close upon him. This would have been a circumstance of great indifference to the experienced sportsman, who could have walked blindfold over every inch of his native heaths, had it not happened near a spot, which, according to the traditions of the country, was in extremely bad fame, as haunted by supernatural appearances. To tales of this kind Hobbie had, from his childhood, lent an attentive ear; and as no part of the country afforded such a variety of legends, so no man was more deeply read in their fearful lore than Hobbie of the Heugh-foot; for so our gallant was called, to distinguish him from a round dozen of Elliots who bore the same Christian name. It cost him no efforts, therefore, to call to memory the terrific incidents connected with the extensive waste upon which he was now entering. In fact, they presented themselves with a readiness which he felt to be somewhat dismaying.

This dreary common was called Mucklestane-Moor, from a huge column of unhewn granite, which raised its massy head on a knell near the centre of the heath, perhaps to tell of the mighty dead who slept beneath, or to preserve the memory of some bloody skirmish. The real cause of its existence had, however, passed away; and tradition, which is as frequently an inventor of fiction as a preserver of truth, had supplied its place with a supplementary legend of her own, which now came full upon Hobbie's memory. The ground about the pillar was strewed, or rather encumbered, with many large fragments of stone of the same consistence with the column, which, from their appearance as they lay scattered on the waste, were popularly called the Grey Geese of Mucklestane-Moor. The legend accounted for this name and appearance by the catastrophe of a noted and most formidable witch who frequented these hills in former days, causing the ewes to KEB, and the kine to cast their calves, and performing all the feats of mischief ascribed to these evil beings. On this moor she used to hold her revels with her sister hags; and rings were still pointed out on which no grass nor heath ever grew, the turf being, as it were, calcined by the scorching hoofs of their diabolical partners.

Once upon a time this old hag is said to have crossed the moor, driving before her a flock of geese, which she proposed to sell to advantage at a neighbouring fair;—for it is well known that the fiend, however liberal in imparting his powers of doing mischief, ungenerously leaves his allies under the necessity of performing the meanest rustic labours for subsistence. The day was far advanced, and her chance of obtaining a good price depended on her being first at the market. But the geese, which had hitherto preceded her in a pretty orderly manner, when they came to this wide common, interspersed with marshes and pools of water, scattered in every direction, to plunge into the element in which they delighted. Incensed at the obstinacy with which they defied all her efforts to collect them, and not remembering the precise terms of the contract by which the fiend was bound to obey her commands for a certain space, the sorceress exclaimed, "Deevil, that neither I nor they ever stir from this spot more!" The words were hardly uttered, when, by a metamorphosis as sudden as any in Ovid, the hag and her refractory flock were converted into stone, the angel whom she served, being a strict formalist, grasping eagerly at an opportunity of completing the ruin of her body and soul by a literal obedience to her orders. It is said, that when she perceived and felt the transformation which was about to take place, she exclaimed to the

treacherous fiend, "Ah, thou false thief! lang hast thou promised me a grey gown, and now I am getting ane that will last for ever." The dimensions of the pillar, and of the stones, were often appealed to, as a proof of the superior stature and size of old women and geese in the days of other years, by those praisers of the past who held the comfortable opinion of the gradual degeneracy of mankind.

All particulars of this legend Hobbie called to mind as he passed along the moor. He also remembered, that, since the catastrophe had taken place, the scene of it had been avoided, at least after night-fall, by all human beings, as being the ordinary resort of kelpies, spunkies, and other demons, once the companions of the witch's diabolical revels, and now continuing to rendezvous upon the same spot, as if still in attendance on their transformed mistress. Hobbie's natural hardihood, however, manfully combated with these intrusive sensations of awe. He summoned to his side the brace of large greyhounds, who were the companions of his sports, and who were wont, in his own phrase, to fear neither dog nor devil; he looked at the priming of his piece, and, like the clown in Hallowe'en, whistled up the warlike ditty of Jock of the Side, as a general causes his drums be beat to inspirit the doubtful courage of his soldiers.

In this state of mind, he was very glad to hear a friendly voice shout in his rear, and propose to him a partner on the road. He slackened his pace, and was quickly joined by a youth well known to him, a gentleman of some fortune in that remote country, and who had been abroad on the same errand with himself. Young Earnscliff, "of that ilk," had lately come of age, and succeeded to a moderate fortune, a good deal dilapidated, from the share his family had taken in the disturbances of the period. They were much and generally respected in the country; a reputation which this young gentleman seemed likely to sustain, as he was well educated, and of excellent dispositions.

"Now, Earnscliff," exclaimed Hobbie, "I am glad to meet your honour ony gate, and company's blithe on a bare moor like this—it's an unco bogilly bit—Where hae ye been sporting?"

"Up the Carla Cleugh, Hobbie," answered Earnscliff, returning his greeting. "But will our dogs keep the peace, think you?"

"Deil a fear o' mine," said Hobbie, "they hae scarce a leg to stand on.—Odd! the deer's fled the country, I think! I have been as far as Inger-fell-foot, and deil a horn has Hobbie seen, excepting three red-wud raes, that never let me within shot of them, though I gaed a mile round to get up the wind to them, an' a'. Deil o' me wad care muckle, only I wanted some venison to our auld gude-dame. The carline, she sits in the neuk yonder, upbye, and cracks about the grand shooters and hunters lang syne—Odd, I think they hae killed a' the deer in the country, for my part."

"Well, Hobbie, I have shot a fat buck, and sent him to Earnscliff this morning—you shall have half of him for your grandmother."

"Mony thanks to ye, Mr. Patrick, ye're kend to a' the country for a kind heart. It will do the auld wife's heart gude—mair by token, when she kens it comes frae you—and maist of a' gin ye'll come up and take your share, for I reckon ye are lonesome now in the auld tower, and a' your folk at that weary Edinburgh. I wonder what they can find to do amang a wheen ranks o' stane-houses wi' slate on the tap o' them, that might live on their ain bonny green hills."

"My education and my sisters' has kept my mother much in Edinburgh for several years," said Earnscliff; "but I promise you I propose to make up for lost time."

"And ye'll rig out the auld tower a bit," said Hobbie, "and live hearty and neighbour-like wi' the auld family friends, as the Laird o' Earnscliff should? I can tell ye, my mother—my grandmother I mean—but, since we lost our ain mother, we ca' her sometimes the tane, and sometimes the tother—but, ony gate, she conceits hersell no that distant connected wi' you."

"Very true, Hobbie, and I will come to the Heugh-foot to dinner to-morrow with all my heart."

"Weel, that's kindly said! We are auld neighbours, an we were nae kin—and my gude-dame's fain to see you—she clavers about your father that was killed lang syne."

"Hush, hush, Hobbie—not a word about that—it's a story better forgotten."

"I dinna ken—if it had chanced amang our folk, we wad hae keepit in mind mony a day till we got some mends for't—but ye ken your ain ways best, you lairds—I have heard say that Ellieslaw's friend stickit your sire after the laird himsell had mastered his sword."

"Fie, fie, Hobbie; it was a foolish brawl, occasioned by wine and politics—many swords were drawn—it is impossible to say who struck the blow."

"At ony rate, auld Ellieslaw was aiding and abetting; and I am sure if ye were sae disposed as to take amends on him, naebody could say it was wrang, for your father's blood is beneath his nails—and besides there's naebody else left that was concerned to take amends upon, and he's a prelatist and a jacobite into the bargain—I can tell ye the country folk look for something atween ye."

"O for shame, Hobbie!" replied the young Laird; "you, that profess religion, to stir your friend up to break the law, and take vengeance at his own hand, and in such a bogilly bit too, where we know not what beings may be listening to us!"

"Hush, hush!" said Hobbie, drawing nearer to his companion, "I was nae thinking o' the like o' them—But I can guess a wee bit what keeps your hand up, Mr. Patrick; we a' ken it's no lack o' courage, but the twa grey een of a bonny lass, Miss Isabel Vere, that keeps you sae sober."

"I assure you, Hobbie," said his companion, rather angrily, "I assure you you are mistaken; and it is extremely wrong of you, either to think of, or to utter, such an idea; I have no idea of permitting freedoms to be carried so far as to connect my name with that of any young lady."

"Why, there now—there now!" retorted Elliot; "did I not say it was nae want o' spunk that made ye sae mim?—Weel, weel, I meant nae offence; but there's just ae thing ye may notice frae a friend. The auld Laird of Ellieslaw has the auld riding blood far hetter at his heart than ye hae—troth, he kens naething about thae newfangled notions o' peace and quietness—he's a' for the auld-warld doings o' lifting and laying on, and he has a wheen stout lads at his back too, and keeps them weel up in heart, and as fu' o' mischief as young colts. Where he gets the gear to do't nane can say; he lives high, and far abune his rents here; however, he pays his way—Sae, if there's ony out-break in the country, he's likely to break out wi' the first—and weel does he mind the auld quarrels between ye, I'm surmizing he'll be for a touch at the auld tower at Earnscliff."

"Well, Hobbie," answered the young gentleman, "if he should be so ill advised, I shall try to make the old tower good against him, as it has been made good by my betters against his betters many a day ago."

"Very right—very right—that's speaking like a man now," said the stout yeoman; "and, if sae should be that this be sae, if ye'll just gar your servant jow out the great bell in the tower, there's me, and my twa brothers, and little Davie of the Stenhouse, will be wi' you, wi' a' the power we can make, in the snapping of a flint."

"Many thanks, Hobbie," answered Earnscliff; "but I hope we shall have no war of so unnatural and unchristian a kind in our time."

"Hout, sir, hout," replied Elliot; "it wad be but a wee bit neighbour war, and Heaven and earth would make allowances for it in this uncultivated place—it's just the nature o' the folk and the land—we canna live quiet like Loudon folk—we haena sae muckle to do. It's impossible."

"Well, Hobbie," said the Laird, "for one who believes so deeply as you do in supernatural appearances, I must own you take Heaven in your own hand rather audaciously, considering where we are walking."

"What needs I care for the Mucklestane-Moor ony mair than ye do yoursell, Earnscliff?" said Hobbie, something offended; "to be sure, they do say there's a sort o' worricows and lang-nebbit things about the land, but what need I care for them? I hae a good conscience, and little to answer for, unless it be about a rant amang the lasses, or a splore at a fair, and that's no muckle to speak of. Though I say it mysell, I am as quiet a lad and as peaceable—"

"And Dick Turnbull's head that you broke, and Willie of Winton whom you shot at?" said his travelling companion.

"Hout, Earnscliff, ye keep a record of a' men's misdoings—Dick's head's healed again, and we're to fight out the quarrel at Jeddart, on the Rood-day, so that's like a thing settled in a peaceable way; and then I am friends wi' Willie again, puir chield—it was but twa or three hail draps after a'. I wad let onybody do the like o't to me for a pint o' brandy. But Willie's lowland bred, poor fallow, and soon frighted for himsell—And, for the worricows, were we to meet ane on this very bit—"

"As is not unlikely," said young Earnscliff, "for there stands your old witch, Hobbie."

"I say," continued Elliot, as if indignant at this hint—"I say, if the auld carline hersell was to get up out o' the grund just before us here, I would think nae mair—But, gude preserve us, Earnscliff; what can yon, be!"

CHAPTER III.

*Brown Dwarf, that o'er the moorland strays,
Thy name to Keeldar tell!
"The Brown Man of the Moor, that stays
Beneath the heather-bell."*—JOHN LEYDEN

The object which alarmed the young farmer in the middle of his valorous protestations, startled for a moment even his less prejudiced companion. The moon, which had arisen during their conversation, was, in the phrase of that country, wading or struggling with clouds, and shed only a doubtful and occasional light. By one of her beams, which streamed upon the great granite column to which they now approached, they discovered a form, apparently human, but of a size much less than ordinary, which moved slowly among the large grey stones, not like a person intending to journey onward, but with the slow, irregular, flitting movement of a being who hovers around some spot of melancholy recollection, uttering also, from time to time, a sort of indistinct muttering sound. This so much resembled his idea of the motions of an apparition, that Hobbie Elliot, making a dead pause, while his hair erected itself upon his scalp, whispered to his companion, "It's Auld Ailie herself! Shall I gie her a shot, in the name of God?"

"For Heaven's sake, no," said his companion, holding down the weapon which he was about to raise to the aim—"for Heaven's sake, no; it's some poor distracted creature."

"Ye're distracted yoursell, for thinking of going so near to her," said Elliot, holding his companion in his turn, as he prepared to advance. "We'll aye hae time to pit ower a bit prayer (an I could but mind ane) afore she comes this length—God! she's in nae hurry," continued he, growing bolder from his companion's confidence, and the little notice the apparition seemed to take of them. "She hirples like a hen on a het girdle. I redd ye, Earnscliff" (this he added in a gentle whisper), "let us take a cast about, as if to draw the wind on a buck—the bog is no abune knee-deep, and better a saft road as bad company." [The Scots use the epithet soft, IN MALAM PARTEM, in two cases, at least. A SOFT road is a road through quagmire and bogs; and SOFT weather signifies that which is very rainy.]

Earnscliff, however, in spite of his companion's resistance and remonstrances, continued to advance on the path they had originally pursued, and soon confronted the object of their investigation.

The height of the figure, which appeared even to decrease as they approached it, seemed to be under four feet, and its form, as far as the imperfect light afforded them the means of discerning, was very nearly as broad as long, or rather of a spherical shape, which could only be occasioned by some strange personal deformity. The young sportsman hailed this extraordinary appearance twice, without receiving any answer, or attending to the pinches by which his companion endeavoured to intimate that their best course was to walk on, without giving farther disturbance to a being of such singular and preternatural exterior. To the third repeated demand of "Who are you? What do you here at this hour of night?"—a voice replied, whose shrill, uncouth, and dissonant tones made Elliot step two paces back, and startled even his companion, "Pass on your way, and ask nought at them that ask nought at you."

"What do you do here so far from shelter? Are you benighted on your journey? Will you follow us home ('God forbid!' ejaculated Hobbie Elliot, involuntarily), and I will give you a lodging?"

"I would sooner lodge by mysell in the deepest of the Tarras-flow," again whispered Hobbie.

"Pass on your way," rejoined the figure, the harsh tones of his voice still more exalted by passion. "I want not your guidance—I want not your lodging—it is five years since my head was under a human roof, and I trust it was for the last time."

"He is mad," said Earnscliff.

"He has a look of auld Humphrey Ettercap, the tinkler, that perished in this very moss about five years syne," answered his superstitious companion; "but Humphrey wasna that awfu' big in the bouk."

"Pass on your way," reiterated the object of their curiosity, "the breath of your human bodies poisons the air around me—the sound of your human voices goes through my ears like sharp bodkins."

"Lord safe us!" whispered Hobbie, "that the dead should bear sie fearfu' ill-will to the living!—his saul maun be in a puir way, I'm jealous."

"Come, my friend," said Earnscliff, "you seem to suffer under some strong affliction; common humanity will not allow us to leave you here."

"Common humanity!" exclaimed the being, with a scornful laugh that sounded like a shriek, "where got ye that catch-word—that noose for woodcocks—that common disguise for man-traps—that bait which the wretched idiot who swallows, will soon find covers a hook with barbs ten times sharper than those you lay for the animals which you murder for your luxury!"

"I tell you, my friend," again replied Earnscliff, "you are incapable of judging of your own situation—you will perish in this wilderness, and we must, in compassion, force you along with us."

"I'll hae neither hand nor foot in't," said Hobbie; "let the ghaist take his ain way, for God's sake!"

"My blood be on my own head, if I perish here," said the figure; and, observing Earnscliff meditating to lay hold on him, he added, "And your blood be upon yours, if you touch but the skirt of my garments, to infect me with the taint of mortality!"

The moon shone more brightly as he spoke thus, and Earnscliff observed that he held out his right hand armed with some weapon of offence, which glittered in the cold ray like the blade of a long knife, or the barrel of a pistol. It would have been madness to persevere in his attempt upon a being thus armed, and holding such desperate language, especially as it was plain he would have little aid from his companion, who had fairly left him to settle matters with the apparition as he could, and had proceeded a few paces on his way homeward. Earnscliff, however, turned and followed Hobbie, after looking back towards the supposed maniac, who, as if raised to frenzy by the interview, roamed wildly around the great stone, exhausting his voice in shrieks and imprecations, that thrilled wildly along the waste heath.

The two sportsmen moved on some time in silence, until they were out of hearing of these uncouth sounds, which was not ere they had gained a considerable distance from the pillar that gave name to the moor. Each made his private comments on the scene they had witnessed, until Hobbie Elliot suddenly exclaimed, "Weel, I'll uphaud that yon ghaist, if it be a ghaist, has baith done and suffered muckle evil in the flesh, that gars him rampauge in that way after he is dead and gane."

"It seems to me the very madness of misanthropy," said Earnscliff, following his own current of thought.

"And ye didna think it was a spiritual creature, then?" asked Hobbie at his companion.

"Who, I?—No, surely."

"Weel, I am partly of the mind mysell that it may be a live thing—and yet I dinna ken, I wadna wish to see ony thing look liker a bogle."

"At any rate," said Earnscliff, "I will ride over to-morrow and see what has become of the unhappy being."

"In fair daylight?" queried the yeoman; "then, grace o' God, I'se be wi' ye. But here we are nearer to Heugh-foot than to your house by twa mile,—hadna ye better e'en gae hame wi' me, and we'll send the callant on the powny to tell them that you are wi' us, though I believe there's naeboddy at hame to wait for you but the servants and the cat."

"Have you then, friend Hobbie," said the young hunter; "and as I would not willingly have either the servants be anxious, or puss forfeit her supper, in my absence, I'll be obliged to you to send the boy as you propose."

"Aweel, that IS kind, I must say. And ye'll gae hame to Heugh-foot? They'll be right blithe to see you, that will they."

This affair settled, they walked briskly on a little farther, when, coming to the ridge of a pretty steep hill, Hobbie Elliot exclaimed, "Now, Earnscliff, I am aye glad when I come to this very bit—Ye see the light below, that's in the ha' window, where grannie, the gash auld carline, is sitting birling at her wheel—and ye see yon other light that's gaun whiddin' back and forrit through amang the windows? that's my cousin, Grace Armstrong,—she's twice as clever about the house as my sisters, and sae they say themsells, for they're good-natured lasses as ever trode on heather; but they confess themsells, and sae does grannie, that she has far maist action, and is the best goer about the toun, now that grannie is off the foot hersell.—My brothers, ane o' them's away to wait upon the chamberlain, and ane's at Moss-phadraig, that's our led farm—he can see after the stock just as weel as I can do."

"You are lucky, my good friend, in having so many valuable relations."

"Troth am I—Grace make me thankful, I'se never deny it.—But will ye tell me now, Earnscliff, you that have been at college, and the high-school of Edinburgh, and got a' sort o' lair where it was to be best gotten—will ye tell me—no that it's ony concern of mine in particular,—but I heard the priest of St. John's, and our minister, bargaining about it at the Winter fair, and troth they baith spak very weel—Now, the priest says it's unlawful to marry ane's cousin; but I cannot say I thought he brought out the Gospel authorities half sae weel as our minister—our minister is thought the best divine and the best preacher atween this and Edinburgh—Dinna ye think he was likely to be right?"

"Certainly marriage, by all protestant Christians, is held to be as free as God made it by the Levitical law; so, Hobbie, there can be no bar, legal or religious, betwixt you and Miss Armstrong."

"Hout awa' wi' your joking, Earnscliff," replied his companion,—“ye are angry aneugh yoursell if ane touches you a bit, man, on the sooth side of the jest—No that I was asking the question about Grace, for ye maun ken she's no my cousin-germain out and out, but the daughter of my uncle's wife by her first marriage, so she's nae kith nor kin to me—only a connexion like. But now we're at the Sheeling-hill—I'll fire off my gun, to let them ken I'm coming, that's aye my way; and if I hae a deer I gie them twa shots, ane for the deer and ane for mysell."

He fired off his piece accordingly, and the number of lights were seen to traverse the house, and even to gleam before it. Hobbie Elliot pointed out one of these to Earnscliff, which seemed to glide from the house towards some of the outhouses—"That's Grace hersell," said Hobbie. "She'll no meet me at the door, I'se warrant her—but she'll be awa', for a' that, to see if my hounds' supper be ready, poor beasts."

"Love me, love my dog," answered Earnscliff. "Ah, Hobbie, you are a lucky young fellow!"

This observation was uttered with something like a sigh, which apparently did not escape the ear of his companion.

"Hout, other folk may be as lucky as I am—O how I have seen Miss Isabel Vere's head turn after somebody when they passed ane another at the Carlisle races! Wha kens but things may come round in this world?"

Earnscliff muttered something like an answer; but whether in assent of the proposition, or rebuking the application of it, could not easily be discovered; and it seems probable that the speaker himself was willing his meaning should rest in doubt and obscurity. They had now descended the broad loaning, which, winding round the foot of the steep bank, or heugh, brought them in front of the thatched, but comfortable, farm-house, which was the dwelling of Hobbie Elliot and his family.

The doorway was thronged with joyful faces; but the appearance of a stranger blunted many a gibe which had been prepared on Hobbie's lack of success in the deer-stalking. There was a little bustle among three handsome young women, each endeavouring to devolve upon another the task of ushering the stranger into the apartment, while probably all were anxious to escape for the purpose of making some little personal arrangements, before presenting themselves to a young gentleman in a dishabille only intended for their brother.

Hobbie, in the meanwhile, bestowing some hearty and general abuse upon them all (for Grace was not of the party), snatched the candle from the hand of one of the rustic coquettes, as she stood playing pretty with it in her hand, and ushered his guest into the family parlour, or rather hall; for the place having been a house of defence in former times, the sitting apartment was a vaulted and paved room, damp and dismal enough compared with the lodgings of the yeomanry of our days, but which, when well lighted up with a large sparkling fire of turf and bog-wood, seemed to Earnscliff a most comfortable exchange for the darkness and bleak blast of the hill. Kindly and repeatedly was he welcomed by the venerable old dame, the mistress of the family, who, dressed in her coif and pinnars, her close and decent gown of homespun wool, but with a large gold necklace and ear-rings, looked, what she really was, the lady as well as the farmer's wife, while, seated in her chair of wicker, by the corner of the great chimney, she directed the evening occupations of the young women, and of two or three stout serving wenches, who sate plying their distaffs behind the backs of their young mistresses.

As soon as Earnscliff had been duly welcomed, and hasty orders issued for some addition to the evening meal, his grand-dame and sisters opened their battery upon Hobbie Elliot for his lack of success against the deer.

"Jenny needna have kept up her kitchen-fire for a' that Hobbie has brought hame," said one sister.

"Troth no, lass," said another; "the gathering peat, if it was weel blawn, wad dress a' our Hobbie's venison." [The gathering peat is the piece of turf left to treasure up the secret seeds of fire, without any generous consumption of fuel; in a word, to keep the fire alive.]

"Ay, or the low of the candle, if the wind wad let it hide steady," said a third; "if I were him, I would bring hame a black crow, rather than come back three times without a buck's horn to blaw on."

Hobbie turned from the one to the other, regarding them alternately with a frown on his brow, the augury of which was confuted by the good-humoured laugh on the lower part of his countenance. He then strove to propitiate them, by mentioning the intended present of his companion.

"In my young days," said the old lady, "a man wad hae been ashamed to come back frae the hill without a buck hanging on each side o' his horse, like a cadger carrying calves."

"I wish they had left some for us then, grannie," retorted Hobbie; "they've cleared the country o' them, thae auld friends o' yours, I'm thinking."

"We see other folk can find game, though you cannot, Hobbie," said the eldest sister, glancing a look at young Earnscliff.

"Weel, weel, woman, hasna every dog his day, begging Earnscliff's pardon for the auld saying—Mayna I hae his luck, and he mine, another time?—It's a braw thing for a man to be out a' day, and frightened—na, I winna say that neither but mistrysted wi' bogles in the hame-coming, an' then to hae to flyte wi' a wheen women that hae been doing naething a' the live-lang day, but whirling a bit stick, wi' a thread trailing at it, or boring at a clout."

"Frighted wi' bogles!" exclaimed the females, one and all,—for great was the regard then paid, and perhaps still paid, in these glens, to all such fantasies.

"I did not say frightened, now—I only said mis-set wi' the thing—And there was but ae bogle, neither—Earnscliff, ye saw it; as weel as I did?"

And he proceeded, without very much exaggeration, to detail, in his own way, the meeting they had with the mysterious being at Mucklestane-Moor, concluding, he could not conjecture what on earth it could be, unless it was either the Enemy himsell, or some of the auld Peghts that held the country lang syne.

"Auld Peght!" exclaimed the grand-dame; "na, na—bless thee frae scathe, my bairn, it's been nae Peght that—it's been the Brown Man of the Moors! O weary fa' thae evil days!—what can evil beings be coming for to distract a poor country, now it's peacefully settled, and living in love and law—O weary on him! he ne'er brought gude to these lands or the indwellers. My father aften tauld me he was seen in the year o' the bloody fight at Marston-Moor, and then again in Montrose's troubles, and again before the rout o' Dunbar, and, in my ain time, he was seen about the time o' Bothwell-Brigg, and they said the second-sighted Laird of Benarbuck had a communing wi' him some time afore Argyle's landing, but that I cannot speak to sae preceesely—it was far in the west.—O, bairns, he's never permitted but in an ill time, sae mind ilka ane o' ye to draw to Him that can help in the day of trouble."

Earnscliff now interposed, and expressed his firm conviction that the person they had seen was some poor maniac, and had no commission from the invisible world to announce either war or evil. But his opinion found a very cold audience, and all joined to deprecate his purpose of returning to the spot the next day.

"O, my bonny bairn," said the old dame (for, in the kindness of her heart, she extended her parental style to all in whom she was interested)—"You should beware mair than other folk—there's been a heavy breach made in your house wi' your father's bloodshed, and wi' law-pleas, and losses sinsyne;—and you are

the flower of the flock, and the lad that will build up the auld bigging again (if it be His will) to be an honour to the country, and a safeguard to those that dwell in it—you, before others, are called upon to put yourself in no rash adventures—for yours was aye ower venturesome a race, and muckle harm they have got by it."

"But I am sure, my good friend, you would not have me be afraid of going to an open moor in broad daylight?"

"I dinna ken," said the good old dame; "I wad never bid son or friend o' mine haud their hand back in a gude cause, whether it were a friend's or their ain—that should be by nae bidding of mine, or of ony body that's come of a gentle kindred—But it winna gang out of a grey head like mine, that to gang to seek for evil that's no fashing wi' you, is clean against law and Scripture."

Earnscliff resigned an argument which he saw no prospect of maintaining with good effect, and the entrance of supper broke off the conversation. Miss Grace had by this time made her appearance, and Hobbie, not without a conscious glance at Earnscliff, placed himself by her side. Mirth and lively conversation, in which the old lady of the house took the good-humoured share which so well becomes old age, restored to the cheeks of the damsels the roses which their brother's tale of the apparition had chased away, and they danced and sung for an hour after supper as if there were no such things as goblins in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind;

For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dog,

That I might love thee something.—TIMON OF ATHENS

On the following morning, after breakfast, Earnscliff took leave of his hospitable friends, promising to return in time to partake of the venison, which had arrived from his house. Hobbie, who apparently took leave of him at the door of his habitation, slunk out, however, and joined him at the top of the hill.

"Ye'll be gaun yonder, Mr. Patrick; feind o' me will mistryst you for a' my mother says. I thought it best to slip out quietly though, in case she should mislippen something of what we're gaun to do—we maunna vex her at nae rate—it was amaisht the last word my father said to me on his deathbed."

"By no means, Hobbie," said Earnscliff; "she well merits all your attention."

"Troth, for that matter, she would be as sair vexed amaisht for you as for me. But d'ye really think there's nae presumption in venturing back yonder?—We hae nae special commission, ye ken."

"If I thought as you do, Hobbie," said the young gentleman, "I would not perhaps enquire farther into this business; but as I am of opinion that preternatural visitations are either ceased altogether, or become very rare in our days, I am unwilling to leave a matter uninvestigated which may concern the life of a poor distracted being."

"Aweel, aweel, if ye really think that," answered Hobbie doubtfully—"And it's for certain the very fairies—I mean the very good neighbours themselves (for they say folk suldna ca' them fairies) that used to be seen on every green knowe at e'en, are no half sae often visible in our days. I canna depone to having ever seen ane mysell, but, I ance heard ane whistle ahint me in the moss, as like a whaup [Curlew] as ae thing could be like anither. And mony ane my father saw when he used to come hame frae the fairs at e'en, wi' a drap drink in his head, honest man."

Earnscliff was somewhat entertained with the gradual declension of superstition from one generation to another which was inferred in this last observation; and they continued to reason on such subjects, until they came in sight of the upright stone which gave name to the moor.

"As I shall answer," says Hobbie, "yonder's the creature creeping about yet!—But it's daylight, and you have your gun, and I brought out my bit whinger—I think we may venture on him."

"By all manner of means," said Earnscliff; "but, in the name of wonder, what can he be doing there?"

"Biggin a dry-stane dyke, I think, wi' the grey geese, as they ca' thae great loose stanes—Odd, that passes a' thing I e'er heard tell of!"

As they approached nearer, Earnscliff could not help agreeing with his companion. The figure they had seen the night before seemed slowly and toilsomely labouring to pile the large stones one upon another, as if to form a small enclosure. Materials lay around him in great plenty, but the labour of carrying on the work was immense, from the size of most of the stones; and it seemed astonishing that he should have succeeded in moving several which he had already arranged for the foundation of his edifice. He was struggling to move a fragment of great size when the two young men came up, and was so intent upon executing his purpose, that he did not perceive them till they were close upon him. In straining and heaving at the stone, in order to place it according to his wish, he displayed a degree of strength which seemed utterly inconsistent with his size and apparent deformity. Indeed, to judge from the difficulties he had already surmounted, he must have been of Herculean powers; for some of the stones he had succeeded in raising apparently required two men's strength to have moved them. Hobbie's suspicions began to revive, on seeing the preternatural strength he exerted.

"I am amaisht persuaded it's the ghaist of a stane-mason—see siccan band-statnes as he's laid i—An it be a man, after a', I wonder what he wad take by the rood to build a march dyke. There's ane sair wanted between Cringlehope and the Shaws.—Honest man" (raising his voice), "ye make good firm wark there?"

The being whom he addressed raised his eyes with a ghastly stare, and, getting up from his stooping posture, stood before them in all his native and hideous deformity. His head was of uncommon size, covered with a fell of shaggy hair, partly grizzled with age; his eyebrows, shaggy and prominent, overhung a pair of small dark, piercing eyes, set far back in their sockets, that rolled with a portentous wildness, indicative of a partial insanity. The rest of his features were of the coarse, rough-hewn stamp, with which a painter would equip a giant in romance; to which was added the wild, irregular, and peculiar expression, so often seen in the countenances of those whose persons are deformed. His body, thick and square, like that of a man of middle size, was mounted upon two large feet; but nature seemed to have forgotten the legs and the thighs, or they were so very short as to be hidden by the dress which he wore. His arms were long and brawny, furnished with two muscular hands, and, where uncovered in the eagerness of his labour, were shagged with coarse black hair. It seemed as if nature had originally intended the separate parts of his body to be the members of a giant, but had afterwards capriciously assigned them to the person of a dwarf, so ill did the length of his arms and the iron strength of his frame correspond with the shortness of his stature. His clothing was a sort of coarse brown tunic, like a monk's frock, girt round him with a belt of seal-skin. On his head he had a cap made of badger's skin, or some other rough fur, which added considerably to the grotesque effect of his whole appearance, and overshadowed features, whose habitual expression seemed that of sullen malignant misanthropy.

This remarkable Dwarf gazed on the two youths in silence, with a dogged and irritated look, until Earnscliff, willing to soothe him into better temper, observed, "You are hard tasked, my friend; allow us to assist you."

Elliot and he accordingly placed the stone, by their joint efforts, upon the rising wall. The Dwarf watched them with the eye of a taskmaster, and testified, by peevish gestures, his impatience at the time which they took in adjusting the stone. He pointed to another—they raised it also—to a third, to a fourth—they continued to humour him, though with some trouble, for he assigned them, as if intentionally, the heaviest fragments which lay near.

"And now, friend," said Elliot, as the unreasonable Dwarf indicated another stone larger than any they had moved, "Earnscliff may do as he likes; but be ye man or be ye waur, deil be in my fingers if I break my back wi' heaving thae stanes ony langer like a barrow-man, without getting sae muckle as thanks for my pains."

"Thanks!" exclaimed the Dwarf, with a motion expressive of the utmost contempt—"There—take them, and fatten upon them! Take them, and may they thrive with you as they have done with me—as they have done with every mortal worm that ever heard the word spoken by his fellow reptile! Hence—either labour or begone!"

"This is a fine reward we have, Earnscliff, for building a tabernacle for the devil, and prejudicing our ain souls into the bargain, for what we ken."

"Our presence," answered Earnscliff, "seems only to irritate his frenzy; we had better leave him, and send some one to provide him with food and necessities."

They did so. The servant dispatched for this purpose found the Dwarf still labouring at his wall, but could not extract a word from him. The lad, infected with the superstitions of the country, did not long persist in an attempt to intrude questions or advice on so singular a figure, but having placed the articles which he had brought for his use on a stone at some distance, he left them at the misanthrope's disposal.

The Dwarf proceeded in his labours, day after day, with an assiduity so incredible as to appear almost supernatural. In one day he often seemed to have done the work of two men, and his building soon assumed the appearance of the walls of a hut, which, though very small, and constructed only of stones and turf, without any mortar, exhibited, from the unusual size of the stones employed, an appearance of solidity very uncommon for a cottage of such narrow dimensions and rude construction. Earnscliff; attentive to his motions, no sooner perceived to what they tended, than he sent down a number of spars of wood suitable for forming the roof, which he caused to be left in the neighbourhood of the spot, resolving next day to send workmen to put them up. But his purpose was anticipated, for in the evening, during the night, and early in the morning, the Dwarf had laboured so hard, and with such ingenuity, that he had nearly completed the adjustment of the rafters. His next labour was to cut rushes and thatch his dwelling, a task which he performed with singular dexterity.

As he seemed averse to receive any aid beyond the occasional assistance of a passenger, materials suitable to his purpose, and tools, were supplied to him, in the use of which he proved to be skilful. He constructed the door and window of his cot, he adjusted a rude bedstead, and a few shelves, and appeared to become somewhat soothed in his temper as his accommodations increased.

His next task was to form a strong enclosure, and to cultivate the land within it to the best of his power; until, by transporting mould, and working up what was upon the spot, he formed a patch of garden-ground. It must be naturally supposed, that, as above hinted, this solitary being received assistance occasionally from such travellers as crossed the moor by chance, as well as from several who went from curiosity to visit his works. It was, indeed, impossible to see a human creature, so unfitted, at first sight, for hard labour, toiling with such unremitting assiduity, without stopping a few minutes to aid him in his task; and, as no one of his occasional assistants was acquainted with the degree of help which the Dwarf had received from others, the celerity of his progress lost none of its marvels in their eyes. The strong and compact appearance of the cottage, formed in so very short a space, and by such a being, and the superior skill which he displayed in mechanics, and in other arts, gave suspicion to the surrounding neighbours. They insisted, that, if he was not a phantom,—an opinion which was now abandoned, since he plainly appeared a being of blood and bone with themselves,—yet he must be in close league with the invisible world, and have chosen that sequestered spot to carry on his communication with them undisturbed. They insisted, though in a different sense from the philosopher's application of the phrase, that he was never less alone than when alone; and that from the heights which commanded the moor at a distance, passengers often discovered a person at work along with this dweller of the desert, who regularly disappeared as soon as they approached closer to the cottage. Such a figure was also occasionally seen sitting beside him at the door, walking with him in the moor, or assisting him in fetching water from his fountain. Earnscliff explained this phenomenon by supposing it to be the Dwarf's shadow.

"Deil a shadow has he," replied Hobbie Elliot, who was a strenuous defender of the general opinion; "he's ower far in wi' the Auld Ane to have a shadow. Besides," he argued more logically, "wha ever heard of a shadow that cam between a body and the sun? and this thing, be it what it will, is thinner and taller than the body himsell, and has been seen to come between him and the sun mair than anes or twice either."

These suspicions, which, in any other part of the country, might have been attended with investigations a little inconvenient to the supposed wizard, were here only productive of respect and awe. The recluse being seemed somewhat gratified by the marks of timid veneration with which an occasional passenger approached his dwelling, the look of startled surprise with which he surveyed his person and his premises, and the hurried step with which he pressed his retreat as he passed the awful spot. The boldest only stopped to gratify their curiosity by a hasty glance at the walls of his cottage and garden, and to apologize for it by a courteous salutation, which the inmate sometimes deigned to return by a word or a nod. Earnscliff often passed that way, and seldom without enquiring after the solitary inmate, who seemed now to have arranged his establishment for life.

It was impossible to engage him in any conversation on his own personal affairs; nor was he communicative or accessible in talking on any other subject whatever, although he seemed to have considerably relented in the extreme ferocity of his misanthropy, or rather to be less frequently visited with the fits of derangement of which this was a symptom. No argument could prevail upon him to accept anything beyond the simplest necessities, although much more was offered by Earnscliff out of charity, and by his more superstitious neighbours from other motives. The benefits of these last he repaid by advice, when consulted (as at length he slowly was) on their diseases, or those of their cattle. He often furnished them with medicines also, and seemed possessed, not only of such as were the produce of the country, but of foreign drugs. He gave these persons to understand, that his name was Elshender the Recluse; but his popular epithet soon came to be Canny Elshie, or the Wise Wight of Mucklestane-Moor. Some extended their queries beyond their bodily complaints, and requested advice upon other matters, which he delivered with an oracular shrewdness that greatly confirmed the opinion of his possessing preternatural skill. The querists usually left some offering upon a stone, at a distance from his dwelling; if it was money, or any article which did not suit him to accept, he either threw it away, or suffered it to remain where it was without making use of it. On all occasions his manners were rude and unsocial; and his words, in number, just sufficient to express his meaning as briefly as possible, and he shunned all communication that went a syllable beyond the matter in hand. When winter had passed away, and his garden began to afford him herbs and vegetables, he confined himself almost entirely to those articles of food. He accepted, notwithstanding, a pair of she-goats from Earnscliff, which fed on the moor, and supplied him with milk.

When Earnscliff found his gift had been received, he soon afterwards paid the hermit a visit. The old man was seated on a broad flat stone near his garden door, which was the seat of science he usually occupied when disposed to receive his patients or clients. The inside of his hut, and that of his garden, he kept as sacred from human intrusion as the natives of Otaheite do their Morai;—apparently he would have deemed it polluted by the step of any human being. When he shut himself up in his habitation, no entreaty could prevail upon him to make himself visible, or to give audience to any one whomsoever.

Earnscliff had been fishing in a small river at some distance. He had his rod in his hand, and his basket, filled with trout, at his shoulder. He sat down upon a stone nearly opposite to the Dwarf who, familiarized with his presence, took no farther notice of him than by elevating his huge mis-shapen head for the purpose of staring at him, and then again sinking it upon his bosom, as if in profound meditation. Earnscliff looked around him, and observed that the hermit had increased his accommodations by the construction of a shed for the reception of his goats.

"You labour hard, Elshie," he said, willing to lead this singular being into conversation.

"Labour," re-echoed the Dwarf, "is the mildest evil of a lot so miserable as that of mankind; better to labour like me, than sport like you."

"I cannot defend the humanity of our ordinary rural sports, Elshie, and yet—"

"And yet," interrupted the Dwarf, "they are better than your ordinary business; better to exercise idle and wanton cruelty on mute fishes than on your fellow-creatures. Yet why should I say so? Why should not the whole human herd butt, gore, and gorge upon each other, till all are extirpated but one huge and over-fed Behemoth, and he, when he had throttled and gnawed the bones of all his fellows—he, when his prey failed him, to be roaring whole days for lack of food, and, finally, to die, inch by inch, of famine—it were a consummation worthy of the race!"

"Your deeds are better, Elshie, than your words," answered Earnscliff, "you labour to preserve the race whom your misanthropy slanders."

"I do; but why?—Hearken. You are one on whom I look with the least loathing, and I care not, if, contrary to my wont, I waste a few words in compassion to your infatuated blindness. If I cannot send disease into families, and murrain among the herds, can I attain the same end so well as by prolonging the lives of those who can serve the purpose of destruction as effectually?—If Alice of Bower had died in winter, would young Ruthwin have been slain for her love the last spring?—Who thought of penning their cattle beneath the tower when the Red Reiver of Westburnflat was deemed to be on his death-bed?—My draughts, my skill, recovered him. And, now, who dare leave his herd upon the lea without a watch, or go to bed without unchaining the sleuth-hound?"

"I own," answered Earnscliff, "you did little good to society by the last of these cures. But, to balance the evil, there is my friend Hobbie, honest Hobbie of the Heugh-foot, your skill relieved him last winter in a fever that might have cost him his life."

"Thus think the children of clay in their ignorance," said the Dwarf, smiling maliciously, "and thus they speak in their folly. Have you marked the young cub of a wild cat that has been domesticated, how sportive, how playful, how gentle,—but trust him with your game, your lambs, your poultry, his inbred ferocity breaks forth; he gripes, tears, ravages, and devours."

"Such is the animal's instinct," answered Earnscliff; "but what has that to do with Hobbie?"

"It is his emblem—it is his picture," retorted the Recluse. "He is at present tame, quiet, and domesticated, for lack of opportunity to exercise his inborn propensities; but let the trumpet of war sound—let the young blood-hound snuff blood, he will be as ferocious as the wildest of his Border ancestors that ever fired a helpless peasant's abode. Can you deny, that even at present he often urges you to take bloody revenge for an injury received when you were a boy?"—Earnscliff started; the Recluse appeared not to observe his surprise, and proceeded—"The trumpet WILL blow, the young blood-hound WILL lap blood, and I will laugh and say, For this I have preserved thee!" He paused, and continued,— "Such are my cures;—their object, their purpose, perpetuating the mass of misery, and playing even in this desert my part in the general tragedy. Were YOU on your sick bed, I might, in compassion, send you a cup of poison."

"I am much obliged to you, Elshie, and certainly shall not fail to consult you, with so comfortable a hope from your assistance."

"Do not flatter yourself too far," replied the Hermit, "with the hope that I will positively yield to the frailty of pity. Why should I snatch a dupe, so well fitted to endure the miseries of life as you are, from the wretchedness which his own visions, and the villainy of the world, are preparing for him? Why should I play the compassionate Indian, and, knocking out the brains of the captive with my tomahawk, at once spoil the three days' amusement of my kindred tribe, at the very moment when the brands were lighted, the pincers heated, the cauldrons boiling, the knives sharpened, to tear, scorch, seethe, and scarify the intended victim?"

"A dreadful picture you present to me of life, Elshie; but I am not daunted by it," returned Earnscliff. "We are sent here, in one sense, to bear and to suffer; but, in another, to do and to enjoy. The active day has its evening of repose; even patient sufferance has its alleviations, where there is a consolatory sense of duty discharged."

"I spurn at the slavish and bestial doctrine," said the Dwarf, his eyes kindling with insane fury,— "I spurn at it, as worthy only of the beasts that perish; but I will waste no more words with you."

He rose hastily; but, ere he withdrew into the hut, he added, with great vehemence, "Yet, lest you still think my apparent benefits to mankind flow from the stupid and servile source, called love of our fellow-creatures, know, that were there a man who had annihilated my soul's dearest hope—who had torn my heart to mammoths, and seared my brain till it glowed like a volcano, and were that man's fortune and life in my power as completely as this frail potsherd" (he snatched up an earthen cup which stood beside him), "I would not dash him into atoms thus"—(he flung the vessel with fury against the wall),—"No!" (he spoke more composedly, but with the utmost bitterness), "I would pamper him with wealth and power to inflame his evil passions, and to fulfil his evil designs; he should lack no means of vice and villainy; he should be the centre of a whirlpool that itself should know neither rest nor peace, but boil with unceasing fury, while it wrecked every goodly ship that approached its limits! he should be an earthquake capable of shaking the very land in which he dwelt, and rendering all its inhabitants friendless, outcast, and miserable—as I am!"

The wretched being rushed into his hut as he uttered these last words, shutting the door with furious violence, and rapidly drawing two bolts, one after another, as if to exclude the intrusion of any one of that hated race, who had thus lashed his soul to frenzy. Earnscliff left the moor with mingled sensations of pity and horror, pondering what strange and melancholy cause could have reduced to so miserable a state of mind, a man whose language argued him to be of rank and education much superior to the vulgar. He was also surprised to see how much particular information a person who had lived in that country so short a time, and in so recluse a manner, had been able to collect respecting the dispositions and private affairs of the inhabitants.

"It is no wonder," he said to himself, "that with such extent of information, such a mode of life, so uncouth a figure, and sentiments so virulently misanthropic, this unfortunate should be regarded by the vulgar as in league with the Enemy of Mankind."

CHAPTER V.

*The bleakest rock upon the loneliest heath
Feels, in its barrenness, some touch of spring;
And, in the April dew, or beam of May,
Its moss and lichen freshen and revive;
And thus the heart, most sear'd to human pleasure,
Melts at the tear, joys in the smile, of woman.—BEAUMONT*

As the season advanced, the weather became more genial, and the Recluse was more frequently found occupying the broad flat stone in the front of his mansion. As he sat there one day, about the hour of noon, a party of gentlemen and ladies, well mounted, and numerous attended, swept across the heath at some distance from his dwelling. Dogs, hawks, and led-horses swelled the retinue, and the air resounded at intervals with the cheer of the hunters, and the sound of horns blown by the attendants. The Recluse was about to retire into his mansion at the sight of a train so joyous, when three young ladies, with their attendants, who had made a circuit, and detached themselves from their party, in order to gratify their curiosity by a sight of the Wise Wight of Mucklestone-Moor, came suddenly up, ere he could effect his purpose. The first shrieked, and put her hands before her eyes, at sight of an object so unusually deformed. The second, with a hysterical giggle, which she intended should disguise her terrors, asked the Recluse, whether he could tell their fortune. The third, who was best mounted, best dressed, and incomparably the best-looking of the three, advanced, as if to cover the incivility of her companions.

"We have lost the right path that leads through these morasses, and our party have gone forward without us," said the young lady. "Seeing you, father, at the door of your house, we have turned this way to—"

"Hush!" interrupted the Dwarf; "so young, and already so artful? You came—you know you came, to exult in the consciousness of your own youth, wealth, and beauty, by contrasting them with age, poverty, and deformity. It is a fit employment for the daughter of your father; but O how unlike the child of your mother!"

"Did you, then, know my parents, and do you know me?"

"Yes; this is the first time you have crossed my waking eyes, but I have seen you in my dreams."

"Your dreams?"

"Ay, Isabel Vere. What hast thou, or thine, to do with my waking thoughts?"

"Your waking thoughts, sir," said the second of Miss Vere's companions, with a sort of mock gravity, "are fixed, doubtless, upon wisdom; folly can only intrude on your sleeping moments."

"Over thine," retorted the Dwarf, more splenetically than became a philosopher or hermit, "folly exercises an unlimited empire, asleep or awake."

"Lord bless us!" said the lady, "he's a prophet, sure enough."

"As surely," continued the Recluse, "as thou art a woman.—A woman!—I should have said a lady—a fine lady. You asked me to tell your fortune—it is a simple one; an endless chase through life after follies not worth catching, and, when caught, successively thrown away—a chase, pursued from the days of tottering infancy to those of old age upon his crutches. Toys and merry-makings in childhood—love and its absurdities in youth—spadille and basto in age, shall succeed each other as objects of pursuit—flowers and butterflies in spring—butterflies and thistle-down in summer—withered leaves in autumn and winter—all pursued, all caught, all flung aside.—Stand apart; your fortune is said."

"All CAUGHT, however," retorted the laughing fair one, who was a cousin of Miss Vere's; "that's something, Nancy," she continued, turning to the timid damsel who had first approached the Dwarf; "will you ask your fortune?"

"Not for worlds," said she, drawing back; "I have heard enough of yours."

"Well, then," said Miss Ilderton, offering money to the Dwarf, "I'll pay for mine, as if it were spoken by an oracle to a princess."

"Truth," said the Soothsayer, "can neither be bought nor sold;" and he pushed back her proffered offering with morose disdain.

"Well, then," said the lady, "I'll keep my money, Mr. Elshender, to assist me in the chase I am to pursue."

"You will need it," replied the cynic; "without it, few pursue successfully, and fewer are themselves pursued.—Stop!" he said to Miss Vere, as her companions moved off, "With you I have more to say. You have what your companions would wish to have, or be thought to have,—beauty, wealth, station, accomplishments."

"Forgive my following my companions, father; I am proof both to flattery and fortune-telling."

"Stay," continued the Dwarf, with his hand on her horse's rein, "I am no common soothsayer, and I am no flatterer. All the advantages I have detailed, all and each of them have their corresponding evils—unsuccessful love, crossed affections, the gloom of a convent, or an odious alliance. I, who wish ill to all mankind, cannot wish more evil to you, so much is your course of life crossed by it."

"And if it be, father, let me enjoy the readiest solace of adversity while prosperity is in my power. You are old; you are poor; your habitation is far from human aid, were you ill, or in want; your situation, in many respects, exposes you to the suspicions of the vulgar, which are too apt to break out into actions of brutality. Let me think I have mended the lot of one human being! Accept of such assistance as I have power to offer; do this for my sake, if not for your own, that when these evils arise, which you prophesy perhaps too truly, I may not have to reflect, that the hours of my happier time have been passed altogether in vain."

The old man answered with a broken voice, and almost without addressing himself to the young lady,—

"Yes, 'tis thus thou shouldst think—'tis thus thou shouldst speak, if ever human speech and thought kept touch with each other! They do not—they do not—Alas! they cannot. And yet—wait here an instant—stir not till my return." He went to his little garden, and returned with a half-blown rose. "Thou hast made me shed a tear, the first which has wet my eyelids for many a year; for that good deed receive this token of gratitude. It is but a common rose; preserve it, however, and do not part with it. Come to me in your hour of adversity. Show me that rose, or but one leaf of it, were it withered as my heart is—if it should be in my fiercest and wildest movements of rage against a hateful world, still it will recall gentler thoughts to my bosom, and perhaps afford happier prospects to thine. But no message," he exclaimed, rising into his usual mood of misanthropy,— "no message—no go-between! Come thyself; and the heart and the doors that are shut against every other earthly being, shall open to thee and to thy sorrows. And now pass on."

He let go the bridle-rein, and the young lady rode on, after expressing her thanks to this singular being, as well as her surprise at the extraordinary nature of his address would permit, often turning back to look at the Dwarf, who still remained at the door of his habitation, and watched her progress over the moor towards her father's castle of Ellieslaw, until the brow of the hill hid the party from his sight.

The ladies, meantime, jested with Miss Vere on the strange interview they had just had with the far-famed wizard of the Moor. "Isabella has all the luck at home and abroad! Her hawk strikes down the black-cock; her eyes wound the gallant; no chance for her poor companions and kinswomen; even the conjuror cannot escape the force of her charms. You should, in compassion, cease to be such an engrosser, my dear Isabel, or at least set up shop, and sell off all the goods you do not mean to keep for your own use."

"You shall have them all," replied Miss Vere, "and the conjuror to boot, at a very easy rate."

"No! Nancy shall have the conjuror," said Miss Ilderton, "to supply deficiencies; she's not quite a witch herself, you know."

"Lord, sister," answered the younger Miss Ilderton, "what could I do with so frightful a monster? I kept my eyes shut, after once glancing at him; and, I protest, I thought I saw him still, though I winked as close as ever I could."

"That's a pity," said her sister; "ever while you live, Nancy, choose an admirer whose faults can be hid by winking at them.—Well, then, I must take him myself, I suppose, and put him into mamma's Japan cabinet, in order to show that Scotland can produce a specimen of mortal clay moulded into a form ten thousand times uglier than the imaginations of Canton and Peking, fertile as they are in monsters, have immortalized in porcelain."

"There is something," said Miss Vere, "so melancholy in the situation of this poor man, that I cannot enter into your mirth, Lucy, so readily as usual. If he has no resources, how is he to exist in this waste country, living, as he does, at such a distance from mankind? and if he has the means of securing occasional assistance, will not the very suspicion that he is possessed of them, expose him to plunder and assassination by some of our unsettled neighbours?"

"But you forget that they say he is a warlock," said Nancy Ilderton.

"And, if his magic diabolical should fail him," rejoined her sister, "I would have him trust to his magic natural, and thrust his enormous head, and most preternatural visage, out at his door or window, full in view of the assailants. The boldest robber that ever rode would hardly bide a second glance of him. Well, I wish I had the use of that Gorgon head of his for only one half hour."

"For what purpose, Lucy?" said Miss Vere.

"O! I would frighten out of the castle that dark, stiff, and stately Sir Frederick Langley, that is so great a favourite with your father, and so little a favourite of yours. I protest I shall be obliged to the Wizard as long as I live, if it were only for the half hour's relief from that man's company which we have gained by deviating from the party to visit Elshie."

"What would you say, then," said Miss Vere, in a low tone, so as not to be heard by the younger sister, who rode before them, the narrow path not admitting of their moving all three abreast,— "What would you say, my dearest Lucy, if it were proposed to you to endure his company for life?"

"Say? I would say, NO, NO, NO, three times, each louder than another, till they should hear me at Carlisle."

"And Sir Frederick would say then, nineteen nay-says are half a grant."

"That," replied Miss Lucy, "depends entirely on the manner in which the nay-says are said. Mine should have not one grain of concession in them, I promise you."

"But if your father," said Miss Vere, "were to say,—Thus do, or—"

"I would stand to the consequences of his OR, were he the most cruel father that ever was recorded in romance, to fill up the alternative."

"And what if he threatened you with a catholic aunt, an abbess, and a cloister?"

"Then," said Miss Ilderton, "I would threaten him with a protestant son-in-law, and be glad of an opportunity to disobey him for conscience' sake. And now that Nancy is out of hearing, let me really say, I think you would be excusable before God and man for resisting this preposterous match by every means in your power. A proud, dark, ambitious man; a caballer against the state; infamous for his avarice and severity; a bad son, a bad brother, unkind and ungenerous to all his relatives—Isabel, I would die rather than have him."

"Don't let my father hear you give me such advice," said Miss Vere, "or adieu, my dear Lucy, to Ellieslaw Castle."

"And adieu to Ellieslaw Castle, with all my heart," said her friend, "if I once saw you fairly out of it, and settled under some kinder protector than he whom nature has given you. O, if my poor father had been in his former health, how gladly would he have received and sheltered you, till this ridiculous and cruel persecution were blown over!"

"Would to God it had been so, my dear Lucy!" answered Isabella; "but I fear, that, in your father's weak state of health, he would be altogether unable to protect me against the means which would be immediately used for reclaiming the poor fugitive."

"I fear so indeed," replied Miss Ilderton; "but we will consider and devise something. Now that your father and his guests seem so deeply engaged in some mysterious plot, to judge from the passing and returning of messages, from the strange faces which appear and disappear without being announced by their names, from the collecting and cleaning of arms, and the anxious gloom and bustle which seem to agitate every male in the castle, it may not be impossible for us (always in case matters be driven to extremity) to shape out some little supplemental conspiracy of our own. I hope the gentlemen have not kept all the policy to themselves; and there is one associate that I would gladly admit to our counsel."

"Not Nancy?"

"O, no!" said Miss Ilderton; "Nancy, though an excellent good girl, and fondly attached to you, would make a dull conspirator—as dull as Renault and all the other subordinate plotters in VENICE PRESERVED. No; this is a Jaffier, or Pierre, if you like the character better; and yet though I know I shall please you, I am afraid to mention his name to you, lest I vex you at the same time. Can you not guess? Something about an eagle and a rock—it does not begin with eagle in English, but something very like it in Scotch."

"You cannot mean young Earnscliff, Lucy?" said Miss Vere, blushing deeply.

"And whom else should I mean," said Lucy. "Jaffiers and Pierres are very scarce in this country, I take it, though one could find Renaults and Bedamars enow."

"How call you talk so wildly, Lucy? Your plays and romances have positively turned your brain. You know, that, independent of my father's consent, without which I never will marry any one, and which, in the case you point at, would never be granted; independent, too, of our knowing nothing of young Earnscliff's inclinations, but by your own vivid conjectures and fancies—besides all this, there is the fatal brawl!"

"When his father was killed?" said Lucy. "But that was very long ago; and I hope we have outlived the time of bloody feud, when a quarrel was carried down between two families from father to son, like a Spanish game at chess, and a murder or two committed in every generation, just to keep the matter from going to sleep. We do with our quarrels nowadays as with our clothes; cut them out for ourselves, and wear them out in our own day, and should no more think of resenting our fathers' feuds, than of wearing their slashed doublets and trunk-hose."

"You treat this far too lightly, Lucy," answered Miss Vere.

"Not a bit, my dear Isabella," said Lucy. "Consider, your father, though present in the unhappy affray, is never supposed to have struck the fatal blow; besides, in former times, in case of mutual slaughter between clans, subsequent alliances were so far from being excluded, that the hand of a daughter or a sister was the most frequent gage of reconciliation. You laugh at my skill in romance; but, I assure you, should your history be written, like that of many a less distressed and less deserving heroine, the well-judging reader would set you down for the lady and the love of Earnscliff; from the very obstacle which you suppose so insurmountable."

"But these are not the days of romance, but of sad reality, for there stands the castle of Ellieslaw."

"And there stands Sir Frederick Langley at the gate, waiting to assist the ladies from their palfreys. I would as lief touch a toad; I will disappoint him, and take old Horsington the groom for my master of the horse."

So saying, the lively young lady switched her palfrey forward, and passing Sir Frederick with a familiar nod as he stood ready to take her horse's rein, she cantered on, and jumped into the arms of the old groom. Fain would Isabella have done the same had she dared; but her father stood near, displeasure already darkening on a countenance peculiarly qualified to express the harsher passions, and she was compelled to receive the unwelcome assiduities of her detested suitor.

CHAPTER VI.

*Let not us that are squires of the night's body be called
thieves of the day's booty; let us be Diana's foresters,
gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon.*

—HENRY THE FOURTH, PART I.

The Solitary had consumed the remainder of that day in which he had the interview with the young ladies, within the precincts of his garden. Evening again found him seated on his favourite stone. The sun setting red, and among seas of rolling clouds, threw a gloomy lustre over the moor, and gave a deeper purple to the broad outline of heathy mountains which surrounded this desolate spot. The Dwarf sate watching the clouds as they lowered above each other in masses of conglomerated vapours, and, as a strong lurid beam of the sinking luminary darted full on his solitary and uncouth figure, he might well have seemed the demon of the storm which was gathering, or some gnome summoned forth from the recesses of the earth by the subterranean signals of its approach. As he sate thus, with his dark eye turned towards the scowling and blackening heaven, a horseman rode rapidly up to him, and stopping, as if to let his horse breathe for an instant, made a sort of obeisance to the anchoress, with an air betwixt effrontery and embarrassment.

The figure of the rider was thin, tall, and slender, but remarkably athletic, bony, and sinewy; like one who had all his life followed those violent exercises which prevent the human form from increasing in bulk, while they harden and confirm by habit its muscular powers. His face, sharp-featured, sun-burnt, and freckled, had a sinister expression of violence, impudence, and cunning, each of which seemed alternately to predominate over the others. Sandy-coloured hair, and reddish eyebrows, from under which looked forth his sharp grey eyes, completed the inauspicious outline of the horseman's physiognomy. He had pistols in his holsters, and another pair peeped from his belt, though he had taken some pains to conceal them by buttoning his doublet. He wore a rusted steel head piece; a buff jacket of rather an antique cast; gloves, of which that for the right hand was covered with small scales of iron, like an ancient gauntlet; and a long broadsword completed his equipage.

"So," said the Dwarf, "rapine and murder once more on horseback."

"On horseback?" said the bandit; "ay, ay, Elshie, your leech-craft has set me on the bonny bay again."

"And all those promises of amendment which you made during your illness forgotten?" continued Elshender.

"All clear away, with the water-saps and panada," returned the unabashed convalescent. "Ye ken, Elshie, for they say ye are weel acquent wi' the gentleman,

"When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be,

When the devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

"Thou say'st true," said the Solitary; "as well divide a wolf from his appetite for carnage, or a raven from her scent of slaughter, as thee from thy accursed propensities."

"Why, what would you have me to do? It's born with me—lies in my very blude and bane. Why, man, the lads of Westburnflat, for ten lang descents, have been reivers and lifters. They have all drunk hard, lived high, taking deep revenge for light offence, and never wanted gear for the winning."

"Right; and thou art as thorough-bred a wolf," said the Dwarf, "as ever leapt a lamb-fold at night. On what hell's errand art thou bound now?"

"Can your skill not guess?"

"Thus far I know," said the Dwarf, "that thy purpose is bad, thy deed will be worse, and the issue worst of all."

"And you like me the better for it, Father Elshie, eh?" said Westburnflat; "you always said you did."

"I have cause to like all," answered the Solitary, "that are scourges to their fellow-creatures, and thou art a bloody one."

"No—I say not guilty to that—lever bluidy unless there's resistance, and that sets a man's bristles up, ye ken. And this is nae great matter, after a'; just to cut the comb of a young cock that has been crawling a little ower crouselly."

"Not young Earnscliff?" said the Solitary, with some emotion.

"No; not young Earnscliff—not young Earnscliff YET; but his time may come, if he will not take warning, and get him back to the burrow-town that he's fit for, and no keep skelping about here, destroying the few deer that are left in the country, and pretending to act as a magistrate, and writing letters to the great folk at Auld Reekie, about the disturbed state of the land. Let him take care o' himsell."

"Then it must be Hobbie of the Heugh-foot," said Elshie. "What harm has the lad done you?"

"Harm! nae great harm; but I hear he says I staid away from the Ba'spiel on Eastern's E'en, for fear of him; and it was only for fear of the Country Keeper, for there was a warrant against me. I'll stand Hobbie's feud, and a' his clan's. But it's not so much for that, as to gie him a lesson not to let his tongue gallop ower freely

about his betters. I trow he will hae lost the best pen-feather o' his wing before to-morrow morning.—Farewell, Elshie; there's some canny boys waiting for me down among the shaws, owerby; I will see you as I come back, and bring ye a blithe tale in return for your leech-craft."

Ere the Dwarf could collect himself to reply, the Reiver of Westburnflat set spurs to his horse. The animal, starting at one of the stones which lay scattered about, flew from the path. The rider exercised his spurs without moderation or mercy. The horse became furious, reared, kicked, plunged, and bolted like a deer, with all his four feet off the ground at once. It was in vain; the unrelenting rider sate as if he had been a part of the horse which he bestrode; and, after a short but furious contest, compelled the subdued animal to proceed upon the path at a rate which soon carried him out of sight of the Solitary.

"That villain," exclaimed the Dwarf,—"that cool-blooded, hardened, unrelenting ruffian,—that wretch, whose every thought is infected with crimes,—has thewes and sinews, limbs, strength, and activity enough, to compel a nobler animal than himself to carry him to the place where he is to perpetrate his wickedness; while I, had I the weakness to wish to put his wretched victim on his guard, and to save the helpless family, would see my good intentions frustrated by the decrepitude which chains me to the spot.—Why should I wish it were otherwise? What have my screech-owl voice, my hideous form, and my mis-shapen features, to do with the fairer workmanship of nature? Do not men receive even my benefits with shrinking horror and ill-suppressed disgust? And why should I interest myself in a race which accounts me a prodigy and an outcast, and which has treated me as such? No; by all the ingratitude which I have reaped—by all the wrongs which I have sustained—by my imprisonment, my stripes, my chains, I will wrestle down my feelings of rebellious humanity! I will not be the fool I have been, to swerve from my principles whenever there was an appeal, forsooth, to my feelings; as if I, towards whom none show sympathy, ought to have sympathy with any one. Let Destiny drive forth her scythed car through the overwhelmed and trembling mass of humanity! Shall I be the idiot to throw this decrepit form, this mis-shapen lump of mortality, under her wheels, that the Dwarf, the Wizard, the Hunchback, may save from destruction some fair form or some active frame, and all the world clap their hands at the exchange? No, never!—And yet this Elliot—this Hobbie, so young and gallant, so frank, so—I will think of it no longer. I cannot aid him if I would, and I am resolved—firmly resolved, that I would not aid him, if a wish were the pledge of his safety!"

Having thus ended his soliloquy, he retreated into his hut for shelter from the storm which was fast approaching, and now began to burst in large and heavy drops of rain. The last rays of the sun now disappeared entirely, and two or three claps of distant thunder followed each other at brief intervals, echoing and re-echoing among the range of heathy fells like the sound of a distant engagement.

CHAPTER VII.

Proud bird of the mountain, thy plume shall be torn!—

Return to thy dwelling; all lonely, return;

For the blackness of ashes shall mark where it stood,

And a wild mother scream o'er her famishing brood.—CAMPBELL.

The night continued sullen and stormy; but morning rose as if refreshed by the rains. Even the Mucklestane-Moor, with its broad bleak swells of barren grounds, interspersed with marshy pools of water, seemed to smile under the serene influence of the sky, just as good-humour can spread a certain inexpressible charm over the plainest human countenance. The heath was in its thickest and deepest bloom. The bees, which the Solitary had added to his rural establishment, were abroad and on the wing, and filled the air with the murmurs of their industry. As the old man crept out of his little hut, his two she-goats came to meet him, and licked his hands in gratitude for the vegetables with which he supplied them from his garden. "You, at least," he said—"you, at least, see no differences in form which can alter your feelings to a benefactor—to you, the finest shape that ever statuary moulded would be an object of indifference or of alarm, should it present itself instead of the mis-shapen trunk to whose services you are accustomed. While I was in the world, did I ever meet with such a return of gratitude? No; the domestic whom I had bred from infancy made mouths at me as he stood behind my chair; the friend whom I had supported with my fortune, and for whose sake I had even stained—(he stopped with a strong convulsive shudder), even he thought me more fit for the society of lunatics—for their disgraceful restraints—for their cruel privations, than for communication with the rest of humanity. Hubert alone—and Hubert too will one day abandon me. All are of a piece, one mass of wickedness, selfishness, and ingratitude—wretches, who sin even in their devotions; and of such hardness of heart, that they do not, without hypocrisy, even thank the Deity himself for his warm sun and pure air."

As he was plunged in these gloomy soliloquies, he heard the tramp of a horse on the other side of his enclosure, and a strong clear bass voice singing with the liveness inspired by a light heart,

Canny Hobbie Elliot, canny Hobbie now,

Canny Hobbie Elliot, I'se gang alang wi' you.

At the same moment, a large deer greyhound sprung over the hermit's fence. It is well known to the sportsmen in these wilds, that the appearance and scent of the goat so much resemble those of their usual objects of chase, that the best-broke greyhounds will sometimes fly upon them. The dog in question instantly pulled down and throttled one of the hermit's she-goats, while Hobbie Elliot, who came up, and jumped from his horse for the purpose, was unable to extricate the harmless animal from the fangs of his attendant until it was expiring. The Dwarf eyed, for a few moments, the convulsive starts of his dying favourite, until the poor goat stretched out her limbs with the twitches and shivering fit of the last agony. He then started into an access of frenzy, and unsheathing a long sharp knife, or dagger, which he wore under his coat, he was about to launch it at the dog, when Hobbie, perceiving his purpose, interposed, and caught hold of his hand, exclaiming, "Let a be the hound, man—let a be the hound!—Na, na, Killbuck maunna be guided that gate, neither."

The Dwarf turned his rage on the young farmer; and, by a sudden effort, far more powerful than Hobbie expected from such a person, freed his wrist from his grasp, and offered the dagger at his heart. All this was done in the twinkling of an eye, and the incensed Recluse might have completed his vengeance by plunging the weapon in Elliot's bosom, had he not been checked by an internal impulse which made him hurl the knife to a distance.

"No," he exclaimed, as he thus voluntarily deprived himself of the means of gratifying his rage; "not again—not again!"

Hobbie retreated a step or two in great surprise, discomposure, and disdain, at having been placed in such danger by an object apparently so contemptible.

"The deil's in the body for strength and bitterness!" were the first words that escaped him, which he followed up with an apology for the accident that had given rise to their disagreement. "I am no justifying Killbuck a'thegither neither, and I am sure it is as vexing to me as to you, Elshie, that the mischance should hae happened; but I'll send you twa goats and twa fat gimmers, man, to make a' straight again. A wise man like you shouldna bear malice against a poor dumb thing; ye see that a goat's like first-cousin to a deer, sae he acted but according to his nature after a'. Had it been a pet-lamb, there wad hae been mair to be said. Ye suld keep sheep, Elshie, and no goats, where there's sae mony deerhounds about—but I'll send ye baith."

"Wretch!" said the Hermit, "your cruelty has destroyed one of the only creatures in existence that would look on me with kindness!"

"Dear Elshie," answered Hobbie, "I'm wae ye suld hae cause to say sae; I'm sure it wasna wi' my will. And yet, it's true, I should hae minded your goats, and coupled up the dogs. I'm sure I would rather they had worried the primest wether in my faulds.—Come, man, forget and forgie. I'm e'en as vexed as ye can be—But I am a bridegroom, ye see, and that puts a' things out o' my head, I think. There's the marriage-dinner, or gude part o't, that my twa brithers are bringing on a sled round by the Riders' Slack, three goodly bucks as ever ran on Dallomlea, as the sang says; they couldna come the straight road for the saft grund. I wad send ye a bit venison, but ye wadna take it weel maybe, for Killbuck caught it."

During this long speech, in which the good-natured Borderer endeavoured to propitiate the offended Dwarf by every argument he could think of, he heard him with his eyes bent on the ground, as if in the deepest meditation, and at length broke forth—"Nature?—yes! it is indeed in the usual beaten path of Nature. The strong gripe and throttle the weak; the rich depress and despoil the needy; the happy (those who are idiots enough to think themselves happy) insult the misery and

diminish the consolation of the wretched.—Go hence, thou who hast contrived to give an additional pang to the most miserable of human beings—thou who hast deprived me of what I half considered as a source of comfort. Go hence, and enjoy the happiness prepared for thee at home!"

"Never stir," said Hobbie, "if I wadna take you wi' me, man, if ye wad but say it wad divert ye to be at the bridal on Monday. There will be a hundred strapping Elliots to ride the brouze—the like's no been seen sin' the days of auld Martin of the Preakin-tower—I wad send the sled for ye wi' a canny powny."

"Is it to me you propose once more to mix in the society of the common herd?" said the Recluse, with an air of deep disgust.

"Commons!" retorted Hobbie, "nae siccan commons neither; the Elliots hae been lang kend a gentle race."

"Hence! begone!" reiterated the Dwarf; "may the same evil luck attend thee that thou hast left behind with me! If I go not with you myself, see if you can escape what my attendants, Wrath and Misery, have brought to thy threshold before thee."

"I wish ye wadna speak that gate," said Hobbie. "Ye ken yoursell, Elshie, naebody judges you to be ower canny; now, I'll tell ye just ae word for a'—ye hae spoken as muckle as wussing ill to me and mine; now, if only mischance happen to Grace, which God forbid, or to myself; or to the poor dumb tyke; or if I be skaithed and injured in body, gudes, or gear, I'll no forget wha it is that it's owing to."

"Out, hind!" exclaimed the Dwarf; "home! home to your dwelling, and think on me when you find what has befallen there."

"Aweel, aweel," said Hobbie, mounting his horse, "it serves naething to strive wi' cripples,—they are aye cankered; but I'll just tell ye ae thing, neighbour, that if things be otherwise than weel wi' Grace Armstrong, I'se gie you a scouter if there be a tar-barrel in the five parishes."

So saying, he rode off; and Elshie, after looking at him with a scornful and indignant laugh, took spade and mattock, and occupied himself in digging a grave for his deceased favourite.

A low whistle, and the words, "Hisht, Elshie, hisht!" disturbed him in this melancholy occupation. He looked up, and the Red Reiver of Westburnflat was before him. Like Banquo's murderer, there was blood on his face, as well as upon the rowels of his spurs and the sides of his over-ridden horse.

"How now, ruffian!" demanded the Dwarf, "is thy job chared?"

"Ay, ay, doubt not that, Elshie," answered the freebooter; "When I ride, my foes may moan. They have had mair light than comfort at the Heugh-foot this morning; there's a toom byre and a wide, and a wail and a cry for the bonny bride."

"The bride?"

"Ay; Charlie Cheat-the-Woodie, as we ca' him, that's Charlie Foster of Tinning Beck, has promised to keep her in Cumberland till the blast blaw by. She saw me, and kend me in the splore, for the mask fell frae my face for a blink. I am thinking it wad concern my safety if she were to come back here, for there's mony o' the Elliots, and they band weel thegither for right or wrang. Now, what I chiefly come to ask your rede in, is how to make her sure?"

"Wouldst thou murder her, then?"

"Umph! no, no; that I would not do, if I could help it. But they say they can whiles get folk cannily away to the plantations from some of the outports, and something to boot for them that brings a bonny wench. They're wanted beyond seas thae female cattle, and they're no that scarce here. But I think o' doing better for this lassie. There's a leddy, that, unless she be a' the better bairn, is to be sent to foreign parts whether she will or no; now, I think of sending Grace to wait on her—she's a bonny lassie. Hobbie will hae a merry morning when he comes hame, and misses baith bride and gear."

"Ay; and do you not pity him?" said the Recluse.

"Wad he pity me were I gaeing up the Castle hill at Jeddart? [The place of execution at that ancient burgh, where many of Westburnflat's profession have made their final exit.] And yet I rue something for the bit lassie; but he'll get anither, and little skaith dune—ane is as gude as anither. And now, you that like to hear o' splores, heard ye ever o' a better ane than I hae had this morning?"

"Air, ocean, and fire," said the Dwarf, speaking to himself, "the earthquake, the tempest, the volcano, are all mild and moderate, compared to the wrath of man. And what is this fellow, but one more skilled than others in executing the end of his existence?—Hear me, felon, go again where I before sent thee."

"To the Steward?"

"Ay; and tell him, Elshender the Recluse commands him to give thee gold. But, hear me, let the maiden be discharged free and uninjured; return her to her friends, and let her swear not to discover thy villainy."

"Swear," said Westburnflat; "but what if she break her aith? Women are not famous for keeping their plight. A wise man like you should ken that.—And uninjured—wha kens what may happen were she to be left lang at Tinning-Beck? Charlie Cheat-the-Woodie is a rough customer. But if the gold could be made up to twenty pieces, I think I could ensure her being wi' her friends within the twenty-four hours."

The Dwarf took his tablets from his pocket, marked a line on them, and tore out the leaf. "There," he said, giving the robber the leaf—"But, mark me; thou knowest I am not to be fooled by thy treachery; if thou darest to disobey my directions, thy wretched life, be sure, shall answer it."

"I know," said the fellow, looking down, "that you have power on earth, however you came by it; you can do what nae other man can do, baith by physis and foresight; and the gold is shelled down when ye command, as fast as I have seen the ash-keys fall in a frosty morning in October. I will not disobey you."

"Begone, then, and relieve me of thy hateful presence."

The robber set spurs to his horse, and rode off without reply.

Hobbie Elliot had, in the meanwhile, pursued his journey rapidly, harassed by those oppressive and indistinct fears that all was not right, which men usually term a presentiment of misfortune. Ere he reached the top of the bank from which he could look down on his own habitation, he was met by his nurse, a person then of great consequence in all families in Scotland, whether of the higher or middling classes. The connexion between them and their foster-children was considered a tie far too dearly intimate to be broken; and it usually happened, in the course of years, that the nurse became a resident in the family of her foster-son, assisting in the domestic duties, and receiving all marks of attention and regard from the heads of the family. So soon as Hobbie recognised the figure of Annaple, in her red cloak and black hood, he could not help exclaiming to himself, "What ill luck can hae brought the auld nurse sae far frae hame, her that never stirs a gun-shot frae the door-stane for ordinar?—Hout, it will just be to get crane-berries, or whortle-berries, or some such stuff, out of the moss, to make the pies and tarts for the feast on Monday.—I cannot get the words of that cankered auld cripple deil's-buckie out o' my head—the least thing makes me dread some ill news.—O, Killbuck, man! were there nae deer and goats in the country besides, but ye behoved to gang and worry his creature, by a' other folk's?"

By this time Annaple, with a brow like a tragic volume, had hobbled towards him, and caught his horse by the bridle. The despair in her look was so evident as to deprive even him of the power of asking the cause. "O my bairn!" she cried, "gang na forward—gang na forward—it's a sight to kill onybody, let alane thee."

"In God's name, what's the matter?" said the astonished horseman, endeavouring to extricate his bridle from the grasp of the old woman; "for Heaven's sake, let me go and see what's the matter."

"Ohon! that I should have lived to see the day!—The steading's a' in a low, and the bonny stack-yard lying in the red ashes, and the gear a' driven away. But gang na forward; it wad break your young heart, hinny, to see what my auld een hae seen this morning."

"And who has dared to do this? let go my bridle, Annaple—where is my grandmother—my sisters?—Where is Grace Armstrong?—God!—the words of the warlock are knelling in my ears!"

He sprang from his horse to rid himself of Annaple's interruption, and, ascending the hill with great speed, soon came in view of the spectacle with which she had threatened him. It was indeed a heart-breaking sight. The habitation which he had left in its seclusion, beside the mountain-stream, surrounded with every evidence of rustic plenty, was now a wasted and blackened ruin. From amongst the shattered and sable walls the smoke continued to rise. The turf-stack, the barn-yard, the offices stocked with cattle, all the wealth of an upland cultivator of the period, of which poor Elliot possessed no common share, had been laid waste or carried off in a single night. He stood a moment motionless, and then exclaimed, "I am ruined—ruined to the ground!—But curse on the world's gear—Had it not been the week before the bridal—But I am nae babe, to sit down and greet about it. If I can but find Grace, and my grandmother, and my sisters weel, I

can go to the wars in Flanders, as my gude-sire did, under the Bellenden banner, wi' auld Buccleuch. At ony rate, I will keep up a heart, or they will lose theirs a'thegither."

Manfully strode Hobbie down the hill, resolved to suppress his own despair, and administer consolation which he did not feel. The neighbouring inhabitants of the dell, particularly those of his own name, had already assembled. The younger part were in arms and clamorous for revenge, although they knew not upon whom; the elder were taking measures for the relief of the distressed family. Annapple's cottage, which was situated down the brook, at some distance from the scene of mischief, had been hastily adapted for the temporary accommodation of the old lady and her daughters, with such articles as had been contributed by the neighbours, for very little was saved from the wreck.

"Are we to stand here a' day, sirs," exclaimed one tall young man, "and look at the burnt wa's of our kinsman's house? Every wreath of the reek is a blast of shame upon us! Let us to horse, and take the chase.—Who has the nearest bloodhound?"

"It's young Earnscliff," answered another; "and he's been on and away wi' six horse lang syne, to see if he can track them."

"Let us follow him then, and raise the country, and mak mair help as we ride, and then have at the Cumberland reivers! Take, burn, and slay—they that lie nearest us shall smart first."

"Whisht! haud your tongues, daft callants," said an old man, "ye dinna ken what ye speak about. What! wad ye raise war atween two pacificated countries?"

"And what signifies deaving us wi' tales about our fathers," retorted the young man, "if we're to sit and see our friends' houses burnt ower their heads, and no put out hand to revenge them? Our fathers did not do that, I trow?"

"I am no saying onything against revenging Hobbie's wrang, puir chield; but we maun take the law wi' us in thae days, Simon," answered the more prudent elder.

"And besides," said another old man, "I dinna believe there's ane now living that kens the lawful mode of following a fray across the Border. Tam o' Whittram kend a' about it; but he died in the hard winter."

"Ay," said a third, "he was at the great gathering, when they chased as far as Thirlwall; it was the year after the fight of Philiphaugh."

"Hout," exclaimed another of these discording counsellors, "there's nae great skill needed; just put a lighted peat on the end of a spear, or hayfork, or siclike, and blaw a horn, and cry the gathering-word, and then it's lawful to follow gear into England, and recover it by the strong hand, or to take gear frae some other Englishman, providing ye lift nae mair than's been lifted frae you. That's the auld Border law, made at Dundrennan, in the days of the Black Douglas, Deil ane need doubt it. It's as clear as the sun."

"Come away, then, lads," cried Simon, "get to your geldings, and we'll take auld Cuddie the muckle tasker wi' us; he kens the value o' the stock and plenishing that's been lost. Hobbie's stalls and stakes shall be fou again or night; and if we canna big up the auld house sae soon, we'se lay an English ane as low as Heugh-foot is—and that's fair play, a' the world ower."

This animating proposal was received with great applause by the younger part of the assemblage, when a whisper ran among them, "There's Hobbie himsell, puir fallow! we'll be guided by him."

The principal sufferer, having now reached the bottom of the hill, pushed on through the crowd, unable, from the tumultuous state of his feelings, to do more than receive and return the grasps of the friendly hands by which his neighbours and kinsmen mutely expressed their sympathy in his misfortune. While he pressed Simon of Hackburn's hand, his anxiety at length found words. "Thank ye, Simon—thank ye, neighbours—I ken what ye wad a' say. But where are they?—Where are—" He stopped, as if afraid even to name the objects of his enquiry; and with a similar feeling, his kinsmen, without reply, pointed to the hut, into which Hobbie precipitated himself with the desperate air of one who is resolved to know the worst at once. A general and powerful expression of sympathy accompanied him.

"Ah, puir fallow—puir Hobbie!"

"He'll learn the warst o't now!"

"But I trust Earnscliff will get some speerings o' the puir lassie."

Such were the exclamations of the group, who, having no acknowledged leader to direct their motions, passively awaited the return of the sufferer, and determined to be guided by his directions.

The meeting between Hobbie and his family was in the highest degree affecting. His sisters threw themselves upon him, and almost stifled him with their caresses, as if to prevent his looking round to distinguish the absence of one yet more beloved.

"God help thee, my son! He can help when worldly trust is a broken reed."—Such was the welcome of the matron to her unfortunate grandson. He looked eagerly round, holding two of his sisters by the hand, while the third hung about his neck—"I see you—I count you—my grandmother, Lillas, Jean, and Annot; but where is—" (he hesitated, and then continued, as if with an effort), "Where is Grace? Surely this is not a time to hide hersell frae me—there's nae time for daffing now."

"O, brother!" and "Our poor Grace!" was the only answer his questions could procure, till his grandmother rose up, and gently disengaged him from the weeping girls, led him to a seat, and with the affecting serenity which sincere piety, like oil sprinkled on the waves, can throw over the most acute feelings, she said, "My bairn, when thy grandfather was killed in the wars, and left me with six orphans around me, with scarce bread to eat, or a roof to cover us, I had strength,—not of mine own—but I had strength given me to say, The Lord's will be done!—My son, our peaceful house was last night broken into by moss-troopers, armed and masked; they have taken and destroyed all, and carried off our dear Grace. Pray for strength to say, His will be done!"

"Mother! mother! urge me not—I cannot—not now I am a sinful man, and of a hardened race. Masked armed—Grace carried off! Gie me my sword, and my father's knapsack—I will have vengeance, if I should go to the pit of darkness to seek it!"

"O my bairn, my bairn! be patient under the rod. Who knows when He may lift His hand off from us? Young Earnscliff, Heaven bless him, has taen the chase, with Davie of Stenhouse, and the first comers. I cried to let house and plenishing burn, and follow the reivers to recover Grace, and Earnscliff and his men were ower the Fell within three hours after the deed. God bless him! he's a real Earnscliff; he's his father's true son—a leal friend."

"A true friend indeed; God bless him!" exclaimed Hobbie; "let's on and away, and take the chase after him."

"O, my child, before you run on danger, let me hear you but say, HIS will be done!"

"Urge me not, mother—not now." He was rushing out, when, looking back, he observed his grandmother make a mute attitude of affliction. He returned hastily, threw himself into her arms, and said, "Yes, mother, I CAN say, HIS will be done, since it will comfort you."

"May He go forth—may He go forth with you, my dear bairn; and O, may He give you cause to say on your return, HIS name be praised!"

"Farewell, mother!—farewell, my dear sisters!" exclaimed Elliot, and rushed out of the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

Now horse and hattock, cried the Laird,—

Now horse and hattock, speedilie;

They that winna ride for Telfer's kye,

Let them never look in the face o' me.—Border Ballad.

"Horse! horse! and spear!" exclaimed Hobbie to his kinsmen. Many a ready foot was in the stirrup; and, while Elliot hastily collected arms and accoutrements, no easy matter in such a confusion, the glen resounded with the approbation of his younger friends.

"Ay, ay!" exclaimed Simon of Hackburn, "that's the gate to take it, Hobbie. Let women sit and greet at hame, men must do as they have been done by; it's the Scripture says't."

"Haud your tongue, sir," said one of the seniors, sternly; "dinna abuse the Word that gate, ye dinna ken what ye speak about."

"Hae ye ony tidings?—Hae ye ony speerings, Hobbie?—O, callants, dinna be ower hasty," said old Dick of the Dingle.

"What signifies preaching to us, e'enow?" said Simon; "if ye canna make help yoursell, dinna keep back them that can."

"Whisht, sir; wad ye take vengeance or ye ken wha has wrang'd ye?"

"D'ye think we dinna ken the road to England as weel as our fathers before us?—All evil comes out o' thereaway—it's an auld saying and a true; and we'll e'en away there, as if the devil was blawing us south."

"We'll follow the track o' Earnscliff's horses ower the waste," cried one Elliot.

"I'll prick them out through the blindest moor in the Border, an there had been a fair held there the day before," said Hugh, the blacksmith of Ringleburn, "for I aye shoe his horse wi' my ain hand."

"Lay on the deer-hounds," cried another "where are they?"

"Hout, man, the sun's been lang up, and the dew is aff the grund—the scent will never lie."

Hobbie instantly whistled on his hounds, which were roving about the ruins of their old habitation, and filling the air with their doleful howls.

"Now, Killbuck," said Hobbie, "try thy skill this day," and then, as if a light had suddenly broke on him,—*"that ill-faur'd goblin spak something o' this! He may ken mair o't, either by villains on earth, or devils below—I'll hae it frae him, if I should cut it out o' his mis-shapen bouk wi' my whinger."* He then hastily gave directions to his comrades: "Four o' ye, wi' Simon, haud right forward to Graeme's-gap. If they're English, they'll be for being back that way. The rest disperse by twosome and threesome through the waste, and meet me at the Trysting-pool. Tell my brothers, when they come up, to follow and meet us there. Poor lads, they will hae hearts weeligh as sair as mine; little think they what a sorrowful house they are bringing their venison to! I'll ride ower Mucklestane-Moor mysell."

"And if I were you," said Dick of the Dingle, "I would speak to Canny Elshie. He can tell you whatever betides in this land, if he's sae minded."

"He SHALL tell me," said Hobbie, who was busy putting his arms in order, "what he kens o' this night's job, or I shall right weel ken wherefore he does not."

"Ay, but speak him fair, my bonny man—speak him fair Hobbie; the like o' him will no bear thraving. They converse sae muckle wi' thae fractious ghaists and evil spirits, that it clean spoils their temper."

"Let me alane to guide him," answered Hobbie; "there's that in my breast this day, that would ower-maister a' the warlocks on earth, and a' the devils in hell."

And being now fully equipped, he threw himself on his horse, and spurred him at a rapid pace against the steep ascent.

Elliot speedily surmounted the hill, rode down the other side at the same rate, crossed a wood, and traversed a long glen, ere he at length regained Mucklestane-Moor. As he was obliged, in the course of his journey, to relax his speed in consideration of the labour which his horse might still have to undergo, he had time to consider maturely in what manner he should address the Dwarf, in order to extract from him the knowledge which he supposed him to be in possession of concerning the authors of his misfortunes. Hobbie, though blunt, plain of speech, and hot of disposition, like most of his countrymen, was by no means deficient in the shrewdness which is also their characteristic. He reflected, that from what he had observed on the memorable night when the Dwarf was first seen, and from the conduct of that mysterious being ever since, he was likely to be rendered even more obstinate in his sullenness by threats and violence.

"I'll speak him fair," he said, "as auld Dickon advised me. Though folk say he has a league wi' Satan, he canna be sic an incarnate devil as no to take some pity in a case like mine; and folk threep he'll whiles do good, charitable sort o' things. I'll keep my heart down as weel as I can, and stroke him wi' the hair; and if the warst come to the warst, it's but wringing the head o' him about at last."

In this disposition of accommodation he approached the hut of the Solitary.

The old man was not upon his seat of audience, nor could Hobbie perceive him in his garden, or enclosures.

"He's gotten into his very keep," said Hobbie, "maybe to be out o' the gate; but I'll pu' it down about his lugs, if I canna win at him otherwise."

Having thus communed with himself, he raised his voice, and invoked Elshie in a tone as supplicating as his conflicting feelings would permit. "Elshie, my gude friend!" No reply. "Elshie, canny Father Elshie!" The Dwarf remained mute. "Sorrow be in the crooked carcass of thee!" said the Borderer between his teeth; and then again attempting a soothing tone,—*"Good Father Elshie, a most miserable creature desires some counsel of your wisdom."*

"The better!" answered the shrill and discordant voice of the Dwarf through a very small window, resembling an arrow slit, which he had constructed near the door of his dwelling, and through which he could see any one who approached it, without the possibility of their looking in upon him.

"The better!" said Hobbie impatiently; "what is the better, Elshie? Do you not hear me tell you I am the most miserable wretch living?"

"And do you not hear me tell you it is so much the better! and did I not tell you this morning, when you thought yourself so happy, what an evening was coming upon you?"

"That ye did e'en," replied Hobbie, "and that gars me come to you for advice now; they that foresaw the trouble maun ken the cure."

"I know no cure for earthly trouble," returned the Dwarf "or, if I did, why should I help others, when none hath aided me? Have I not lost wealth, that would have bought all thy barren hills a hundred times over? rank, to which thine is as that of a peasant? society, where there was an interchange of all that was amiable—of all that was intellectual? Have I not lost all this? Am I not residing here, the veriest outcast on the face of Nature, in the most hideous and most solitary of her retreats, myself more hideous than all that is around me? And why should other worms complain to me when they are trodden on, since I am myself lying crushed and writhing under the chariot-wheel?"

"Ye may have lost all this," answered Hobbie, in the bitterness of emotion; "land and friends, goods and gear; ye may hae lost them a',—but ye ne'er can hae sae sair a heart as mine, for ye ne'er lost nae Grace Armstrong. And now my last hopes are gane, and I shall ne'er see her mair."

This he said in the tone of deepest emotion—and there followed a long pause, for the mention of his bride's name had overcome the more angry and irritable feelings of poor Hobbie. Ere he had again addressed the Solitary, the bony hand and long fingers of the latter, holding a large leathern bag, was thrust forth at the small window, and as it unclutched the burden, and let it drop with a clang upon the ground, his harsh voice again addressed Elliot.

"There—there lies a salve for every human ill; so, at least, each human wretch readily thinks.—Begone; return twice as wealthy as thou wert before yesterday, and torment me no more with questions, complaints, or thanks; they are alike odious to me."

"It is a' gowd, by Heaven!" said Elliot, having glanced at the contents; and then again addressing the Hermit, "Muckle obliged for your goodwill; and I wad blithely gie you a bond for some o' the siller, or a wadset ower the lands o' Wideopen. But I dinna ken, Elshie; to be free wi' you, I dinna like to use siller unless I kend it was decently come by; and maybe it might turn into slate-stanes, and cheat some poor man."

"Ignorant idiot!" retorted the Dwarf; "the trash is as genuine poison as ever was dug out of the bowels of the earth. Take it—use it, and may it thrive with you as it hath done with me!"

"But I tell you," said Elliot, "it wasna about the gear that I was consulting you,—it was a braw barn-yard, doubtless, and thirty head of finer cattle there werena on this side of the Catrail; but let the gear gang,—if ye could but gie me speerings o' puir Grace, I would be content to be your slave for life, in anything that didna touch my salvation. O, Elshie, speak, man, speak!"

"Well, then," answered the Dwarf, as if worn out by his importunity, "since thou hast not enough of woes of thine own, but must needs seek to burden thyself with those of a partner, seek her whom thou hast lost in the WEST."

"In the WEST? That's a wide word."

"It is the last," said the Dwarf, "which I design to utter;" and he drew the shutters of his window, leaving Hobbie to make the most of the hint he had given.

The west! the west!—thought Elliot; the country is pretty quiet down that way, unless it were Jock o' the Todholes; and he's ower auld now for the like o' thae jobs.—West!—By My life, it must be Westburnflat. "Elshie, just tell me one word. Am I right? Is it Westburnflat? If I am wrang, say sae. I wadna like to wyte an innocent neighbour wi' violence—No answer?—It must be the Red Reiver—I didna think he wad hae ventured on me, neither, and sae mony kin as there's o' us—I am thinking he'll hae some better backing than his Cumberland friends.—Fareweel to you, Elshie, and mony thanks—I downa be fashed wi' the siller e'en now, for I maun awa' to meet my friends at the Trysting-place—Sae, if ye carena to open the window, ye can fetch it in after I'm awa'."

Still there was no reply.

"He's deaf, or he's daft, or he's baith; but I hae nae time to stay to claver wi' him."

And off rode Hobbie Elliot towards the place of rendezvous which he had named to his friends.

Four or five riders were already gathered at the Trysting pool. They stood in close consultation together, while their horses were permitted to graze among the poplars which overhung the broad still pool. A more numerous party were seen coming from the southward. It proved to be Earnscliff and his party, who had followed the track of the cattle as far as the English border, but had halted on the information that a considerable force was drawn together under some of the Jacobite gentlemen in that district, and there were tidings of insurrection in different parts of Scotland. This took away from the act which had been perpetrated the appearance of private animosity, or love of plunder; and Earnscliff was now disposed to regard it as a symptom of civil war. The young gentleman greeted Hobbie with the most sincere sympathy, and informed him of the news he had received.

"Then, may I never stir frae the bit," said Elliot, "if auld Ellieslaw is not at the bottom o' the haill villainy! Ye see he's leagued wi' the Cumberland Catholics; and that agrees weel wi' what Elshie hinted about Westburnflat, for Ellieslaw aye protected him, and he will want to harry and disarm the country about his ain hand before he breaks out."

Some now remembered that the party of ruffians had been heard to say they were acting for James VIII., and were charged to disarm all rebels. Others had heard Westburnflat boast, in drinking parties, that Ellieslaw would soon be in arms for the Jacobite cause, and that he himself was to hold a command under him, and that they would be bad neighbours for young Earnscliff; and all that stood out for the established government. The result was a strong belief that Westburnflat had headed the party under Ellieslaw's orders; and they resolved to proceed instantly to the house of the former, and, if possible, to secure his person. They were by this time joined by so many of their dispersed friends, that their number amounted to upwards of twenty horsemen, well mounted, and tolerably, though variously, armed.

A brook, which issued from a narrow glen among the hills, entered, at Westburnflat, upon the open marshy level, which, expanding about half a mile in every direction, gives name to the spot. In this place the character of the stream becomes changed, and, from being a lively brisk-running mountain-torrent, it stagnates, like a blue swollen snake, in dull deep windings, through the swampy level. On the side of the stream, and nearly about the centre of the plain, arose the tower of Westburnflat, one of the few remaining strongholds formerly so numerous upon the Borders. The ground upon which it stood was gently elevated above the marsh for the space of about a hundred yards, affording an esplanade of dry turf, which extended itself in the immediate neighbourhood of the tower; but, beyond which, the surface presented to strangers was that of an impassable and dangerous bog. The owner of the tower and his inmates alone knew the winding and intricate paths, which, leading over ground that was comparatively sound, admitted visitors to his residence. But among the party which were assembled under Earnscliff's directions, there was more than one person qualified to act as a guide. For although the owner's character and habits of life were generally known, yet the laxity of feeling with respect to property prevented his being looked on with the abhorrence with which he must have been regarded in a more civilized country. He was considered, among his more peaceable neighbours, pretty much as a gambler, cock-fighter, or horse-jockey would be regarded at the present day; a person, of course, whose habits were to be condemned, and his society, in general, avoided, yet who could not be considered as marked with the indelible infamy attached to his profession, where laws have been habitually observed. And their indignation was awakened against him upon this occasion, not so much on account of the general nature of the transaction, which was just such as was to be expected from this marauder, as that the violence had been perpetrated upon a neighbour against whom he had no cause of quarrel,—against a friend of their own,—above all, against one of the name of Elliot, to which clan most of them belonged. It was not, therefore, wonderful, that there should be several in the band pretty well acquainted with the locality of his habitation, and capable of giving such directions and guidance as soon placed the whole party on the open space of firm ground in front of the Tower of Westburnflat.

CHAPTER IX.

*So spak the knight; the geaunt sed,
Lend forth with the the sely maid,
And mak me quile of the and sche;
For glaunsing ee, or brow so brent,
Or cheek with rose and lilye blent,
Me lists not ficht with the.—ROMANCE OF THE FALCON.*

The tower, before which the party now stood, was a small square building, of the most gloomy aspect. The walls were of great thickness, and the windows, or slits which served the purpose of windows, seemed rather calculated to afford the defenders the means of employing missile weapons, than for admitting air or light to the apartments within. A small battlement projected over the walls on every side, and afforded farther advantage of defence by its niched parapet, within which arose a steep roof, flagged with grey stones. A single turret at one angle, defended by a door studded with huge iron nails, rose above the battlement, and gave access to the roof from within, by the spiral staircase which it enclosed. It seemed to the party that their motions were watched by some one concealed within this turret; and they were confirmed in their belief when, through a narrow loophole, a female hand was seen to wave a handkerchief, as if by way of signal to them. Hobbie was almost out of his senses with joy and eagerness.

"It was Grace's hand and arm," he said; "I can swear to it amang a thousand. There is not the like of it on this side of the Lowdens—We'll have her out, lads, if we should carry off the Tower of Westburnflat stane by stane."

Earnscliff, though he doubted the possibility of recognising a fair maiden's hand at such a distance from the eye of the lover, would say nothing to damp his friend's animated hopes, and it was resolved to summon the garrison.

The shouts of the party, and the winding of one or two horns, at length brought to a loophole, which flanked the entrance, the haggard face of an old woman.

"That's the Reiver's mother," said one of the Elliots; "she's ten times waur than himsell, and is wyted for muckle of the ill he does about the country."

"Wha are ye? what d'ye want here?" were the queries of the respectable progenitor.

"We are seeking William Graeme of Westburnflat," said Earnscliff.

"He's no at hame," returned the old dame.

"When did he leave home?" pursued Earnscliff.

"I canna tell," said the portress.

"When will he return?" said Hobbie Elliot.

"I dinna ken naething about it," replied the inexorable guardian of the keep.

"Is there anybody within the tower with you?" again demanded Earnscliff.

"Naebody but mysell and baudrons," said the old woman.

"Then open the gate and admit us," said Earnscliff; "I am a justice of peace, and in search of the evidence of a felony."

"Deil be in their fingers that draws a bolt for ye," retorted the portress; "for mine shall never do it. Thinkna ye shame o' yoursells, to come here siccan a band o' ye, wi' your swords, and spears, and steel-caps, to frighten a lone widow woman?"

"Our information," said Earnscliff, "is positive; we are seeking goods which have been forcibly carried off, to a great amount."

"And a young woman, that's been cruelly made prisoner, that's worth mair than a' the gear, twice told," said Hobbie.

"And I warn you," continued Earnscliff, "that your only way to prove your son's innocence is to give us quiet admittance to search the house."

"And what will ye do, if I carena to thraw the keys, or draw the bolts, or open the grate to sic a clamjamfrie?" said the old dame, scoffingly.

"Force our way with the king's keys, and break the neck of every living soul we find in the house, if ye dinna gie it ower forthwith!" menaced the incensed Hobbie.

"Threatened folks live lang," said the hag, in the same tone of irony; "there's the iron grate—try your skeel on't, lads—it has kept out as gude men as you or now."

So saying, she laughed, and withdrew from the aperture through which she had held the parley.

The besiegers now opened a serious consultation. The immense thickness of the walls, and the small size of the windows, might, for a time, have even resisted cannon-shot. The entrance was secured, first, by a strong grated door, composed entirely of hammered iron, of such ponderous strength as seemed calculated to resist any force that could be brought against it. "Pinches or forehammers will never pick upon't," said Hugh, the blacksmith of Ringleburn; "ye might as weel batter at it wi' pipe-staples."

Within the doorway, and at the distance of nine feet, which was the solid thickness of the wall, there was a second door of oak, crossed, both breadth and lengthways, with clenched bars of iron, and studded full of broad-headed nails. Besides all these defences, they were by no means confident in the truth of the old dame's assertion, that she alone composed the garrison. The more knowing of the party had observed hoof-marks in the track by which they approached the tower, which seemed to indicate that several persons had very lately passed in that direction.

To all these difficulties was added their want of means for attacking the place. There was no hope of procuring ladders long enough to reach the battlements, and the windows, besides being very narrow, were secured with iron bars. Scaling was therefore out of the question; mining was still more so, for want of tools and gunpowder; neither were the besiegers provided with food, means of shelter, or other conveniences, which might have enabled them to convert the siege into a blockade; and there would, at any rate, have been a risk of relief from some of the marauder's comrades. Hobbie grinded and gnashed his teeth, as, walking round the fastness, he could devise no means of making a forcible entry. At length he suddenly exclaimed, "And what for no do as our fathers did lang syne?—Put hand to the wark, lads. Let us cut up bushes and briers, pile them before the door and set fire to them, and smoke that auld devil's dam as if she were to be reested for bacon."

All immediately closed with this proposal, and some went to work with swords and knives to cut down the alder and hawthorn bushes which grew by the side of the sluggish stream, many of which were sufficiently decayed and dried for their purpose, while others began to collect them in a large stack, properly disposed for burning, as close to the iron-grate as they could be piled. Fire was speedily obtained from one of their guns, and Hobbie was already advancing to the pile with a kindled brand, when the surly face of the robber, and the muzzle of a musketoon, were partially shown at a shot-hole which flanked the entrance. "Mony thanks to ye," he said, scoffingly, "for collecting sae muckle winter eilding for us; but if ye step a foot nearer it wi' that lunt, it's be the dearest step ye ever made in your days."

"We'll sune see that," said Hobbie, advancing fearlessly with the torch.

The marauder snapped his piece at him, which, fortunately for our honest friend, did not go off; while Earnscliff, firing at the same moment at the narrow aperture and slight mark afforded by the robber's face, grazed the side of his head with a bullet. He had apparently calculated upon his post affording him more security, for he no sooner felt the wound, though a very slight one, than he requested a parley, and demanded to know what they meant by attacking in this fashion a peaceable and honest man, and shedding his blood in that lawless manner?

"We want your prisoner," said Earnscliff, "to be delivered up to us in safety."

"And what concern have you with her?" replied the marauder.

"That," retorted Earnscliff, "you, who are detaining her by force, have no right to enquire."

"Aweel, I think I can gie a guess," said the robber. "Weel, sirs, I am laith to enter into deadly feud with you by spilling ony of your bluid, though Earnscliff hasna stopped to shed mine—and he can hit a mark to a groat's breadth—so, to prevent mair skaith, I am willing to deliver up the prisoner, since nae less will please you."

"And Hobbie's gear?" cried Simon of Hackburn. "D'ye think you're to be free to plunder the faulds and byres of a gentle Elliot, as if they were an auld wife's hens'-cavey?"

"As I live by bread," replied Willie of Westburnflat "As I live by bread, I have not a single cloot o' them! They're a' ower the march lang syne; there's no a horn o' them about the tower. But I'll see what o' them can be gotten back, and I'll take this day twa days to meet Hobbie at the Castleton wi' twa friends on ilka side, and see to make an agreement about a' the wrang he can wyte me wi'."

"Ay, ay," said Elliot, "that will do weel enough."—And then aside to his kinsman, "Murrain on the gear! Lordsake, man! say nought about them. Let us but get puir Grace out o' that auld hellicat's clutches."

"Will ye gie me your word, Earnscliff," said the marauder, who still lingered at the shot-hole, "your faith and troth, with hand and glove, that I am free to come and free to gae, with five minutes to open the grate, and five minutes to steak it and to draw the bolts? less winna do, for they want creishing sairly. Will ye do this?"

"You shall have full time," said Earnscliff; "I plight my faith and troth, my hand and my glove."

"Wait there a moment, then," said Westburnflat; "or hear ye, I wad rather ye wad fa' back a pistol-shot from the door. It's no that I mistrust your word, Earnscliff; but it's best to be sure."

O, friend, thought Hobbie to himself, as he drew back, an I had you but on Turner's-holm, [There is a level meadow, on the very margin of the two kingdoms, called Turner's-holm, just where the brook called Crissop joins the Liddel. It is said to have derived its name as being a place frequently assigned for tourneys, during the ancient Border times.] and naebody by but twa honest lads to see fair play, I wad make ye wish ye had broken your leg ere ye had touched beast or body that belanged to me!

"He has a white feather in his wing this same Westburnflat, after a'," said Simon of Hackburn, somewhat scandalized by his ready surrender.—"He'll ne'er fill his father's boots."

In the meanwhile, the inner door of the tower was opened, and the mother of the freebooter appeared in the space betwixt that and the outer grate. Willie himself was next seen, leading forth a female, and the old woman, carefully bolting the grate behind them, remained on the post as a sort of sentinel.

"Ony ane or twa o' ye come forward," said the outlaw, "and take her frae my hand hail and sound."

Hobbie advanced eagerly, to meet his betrothed bride. Earnscliff followed more slowly, to guard against treachery. Suddenly Hobbie slackened his pace in the deepest mortification, while that of Earnscliff was hastened by impatient surprise. It was not Grace Armstrong, but Miss Isabella Vere, whose liberation had been effected by their appearance before the tower.

"Where is Grace? where is Grace Armstrong?" exclaimed Hobbie, in the extremity of wrath and indignation.

"Not in my hands," answered Westburnflat; "ye may search the tower, if ye misdoubt me."

"You false villain, you shall account for her, or die on the spot," said Elliot, presenting his gun.

But his companions, who now came up, instantly disarmed him of his weapon, exclaiming, all at once, "Hand and glove! faith and troth! Haud a care, Hobbie we maun keep our faith wi' Westburnflat, were he the greatest rogue ever rode."

Thus protected, the outlaw recovered his audacity, which had been somewhat daunted by the menacing gesture of Elliot.

"I have kept my word, sirs," he said, "and I look to have nae wrang amang ye. If this is no the prisoner ye sought," he said, addressing Earnscliff, "ye'll render her back to me again. I am answerable for her to those that aught her."

"For God's sake, Mr. Earnscliff, protect me!" said Miss Vere, clinging to her deliverer; "do not you abandon one whom the whole world seems to have abandoned."

"Fear nothing," whispered Earnscliff, "I will protect you with my life." Then turning to Westburnflat, "Villain!" he said, "how dared you to insult this lady?"

"For that matter, Earnscliff," answered the freebooter, "I can answer to them that has better right to ask me than you have; but if you come with an armed force, and take her awa' from them that her friends lodged her wi', how will you answer THAT—But it's your ain affair—Nae single man can keep a tower against twenty—A' the men o' the Mearns downa do mair than they dow."

"He lies most falsely," said Isabella; "he carried me off by violence from my father."

"Maybe he only wanted ye to think sae, hinny," replied the robber; "but it's nae business o' mine, let it be as it may.—So ye winna resign her back to me?"

"Back to you, fellow? Surely no," answered Earnscliff; "I will protect Miss Vere, and escort her safely wherever she is pleased to be conveyed."

"Ay, ay, maybe you and her hae settled that already," said Willie of Westburnflat.

"And Grace?" interrupted Hobbie, shaking himself loose from the friends who had been preaching to him the sanctity of the safe-conduct, upon the faith of which the freebooter had ventured from his tower,—*"Where's Grace?"* and he rushed on the marauder, sword in hand.

Westburnflat, thus pressed, after calling out, "Godsake, Hobbie, hear me a gliff!" fairly turned his back and fled. His mother stood ready to open and shut the grate; but Hobbie struck at the freebooter as he entered with so much force, that the sword made a considerable cleft in the lintel of the vaulted door, which is still shown as a memorial of the superior strength of those who lived in the days of yore. Ere Hobbie could repeat the blow, the door was shut and secured, and he was compelled to retreat to his companions, who were now preparing to break up the siege of Westburnflat. They insisted upon his accompanying them in their return.

"Ye hae broken truce already," said old Dick of the Dingle; "an we takena the better care, ye'll play mair gowk's tricks, and make yoursell the laughing-stock of the hail country, besides having your friends charged with slaughter under trust. Bide till the meeting at Castleton, as ye hae greed; and if he disna make ye amends, then we'll hae it out o' his heart's blood. But let us gang reasonably to wark and keep our tryst, and I'll warrant we get back Grace, and the kye an' a'."

This cold-blooded reasoning went ill down with the unfortunate lover; but, as he could only obtain the assistance of his neighbours and kinsmen on their own terms, he was compelled to acquiesce in their notions of good faith and regular procedure.

Earnscliff now requested the assistance of a few of the party to convey Miss Vere to her father's castle of Ellieslaw, to which she was peremptory in desiring to be conducted. This was readily granted; and five or six young men agreed to attend him as an escort. Hobbie was not of the number. Almost heart-broken by the events of the day, and his final disappointment, he returned moodily home to take such measures as he could for the sustenance and protection of his family, and to arrange with his neighbours the farther steps which should be adopted for the recovery of Grace Armstrong. The rest of the party dispersed in different directions, as soon as they had crossed the morass. The outlaw and his mother watched them from the tower, until they entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

I left my ladye's bower last night—

It was clad in wreaths of snaw,—

I'll seek it when the sun is bright,

And sweet the roses blaw.—OLD BALLAD.

Incensed at what he deemed the coldness of his friends, in a cause which interested him so nearly, Hobbie had shaken himself free of their company, and was now on his solitary road homeward. "The fiend founder thee!" said he, as he spurred impatiently his over-fatigued and stumbling horse; "thou art like a' the rest o' them. Hae I not bred thee, and fed thee, and dressed thee wi' mine ain hand, and wouldst thou snapper now and break my neck at my utmost need? But thou'rt e'en like the lave—the farthest off o' them a' is my cousin ten times removed, and day or night I wad hae served them wi' my best blood; and now, I think they show mair regard to the common thief of Westburnflat than to their ain kinsman. But I should see the lights now in Heugh-foot—Wae's me!" he continued, recollecting himself, "there will neither coal nor candle-light shine in the Heugh-foot ony mair! An it werena for my mother and sisters, and poor Grace, I could find in my heart to put spurs to the beast, and loup ower the scaur into the water to make an end o't a'."—In this disconsolate mood he turned his horse's bridle towards the cottage in which his family had found refuge.

As he approached the door, he heard whispering and tittering amongst his sisters. "The deevil's in the women," said poor Hobbie; "they would nicker, and laugh, and giggle, if their best friend was lying a corp—and yet I am glad they can keep up their hearts sae weel, poor silly things; but the dirdum fa's on me, to be sure, and no on them."

While he thus meditated, he was engaged in fastening up his horse in a shed. "Thou maun do without horse-sheet and surcingle now, lad," he said, addressing the animal; "you and me hae had a downcome alike; we had better hae fa'en i, the deepest pool o' Tarras."

He was interrupted by the youngest of his sisters, who came running out, and, speaking in a constrained voice, as if to stifle some emotion, called out to him, "What are ye doing there, Hobbie, fiddling about the naig, and there's ane frae Cumberland been waiting here for ye this hour and mair? Haste ye in, man; I'll take off the saddle."

"Ane frae Cumberland!" exclaimed Elliot; and putting the bridle of his horse into the hand of his sister, he rushed into the cottage. "Where is he? where is he!" he exclaimed, glancing eagerly around, and seeing only females; "Did he bring news of Grace?"

"He doughtna bide an instant langer," said the elder sister, still with a suppressed laugh.

"Hout fie, bairns!" said the old lady, with something of a good-humoured reproof, "ye shouldna vex your billy Hobbie that way.—Look round, my bairn, and see if there isna ane here mair than ye left this morning."

Hobbie looked eagerly round. "There's you, and the three titties."

"There's four of us now, Hobbie, lad," said the youngest, who at this moment entered.

In an instant Hobbie had in his arms Grace Armstrong, who, with one of his sister's plaids around her, had passed unnoticed at his first entrance. "How dared you do this?" said Hobbie.

"It wasna my fault," said Grace, endeavouring to cover her face with her hands to hide at once her blushes, and escape the storm of hearty kisses with which her bridegroom punished her simple stratagem,—*"It wasna my fault, Hobbie; ye should kiss Jeanie and the rest o' them, for they hae the wyte o't."*

"And so I will," said Hobbie, and embraced and kissed his sisters and grandmother a hundred times, while the whole party half-laughed, half-cried, in the extremity of their joy. "I am the happiest man," said Hobbie, throwing himself down on a seat, almost exhausted,—*"I am the happiest man in the world!"*

"Then, O my dear bairn," said the good old dame, who lost no opportunity of teaching her lesson of religion at those moments when the heart was best open to receive it,—*"Then, O my son, give praise to Him that brings smiles out o' tears and joy out o' grief, as He brought light out o' darkness and the world out o' naething. Was it not my word, that if ye could say His will be done, ye might hae cause to say His name be praised?"*

"It was—it was your word, grannie; and I do praise Him for His mercy, and for leaving me a good parent when my ain were gane," said honest Hobbie, taking her hand, "that puts me in mind to think of Him, baith in happiness and distress."

There was a solemn pause of one or two minutes employed in the exercise of mental devotion, which expressed, in purity and sincerity, the gratitude of the affectionate family to that Providence who had unexpectedly restored to their embraces the friend whom they had lost.

Hobbie's first enquiries were concerning the adventures which Grace had undergone. They were told at length, but amounted in substance to this:—That she was awaked by the noise which the ruffians made in breaking into the house, and by the resistance made by one or two of the servants, which was soon overpowered; that, dressing herself hastily, she ran downstairs, and having seen, in the scuffle, Westburnflat's vizard drop off, imprudently named him by his name, and besought him for mercy; that the ruffian instantly stopped her mouth, dragged her from the house, and placed her on horseback, behind one of his associates.

"I'll break the accursed neck of him," said Hobbie, "if there werena another Graeme in the land but himsell!"

She proceeded to say, that she was carried southward along with the party, and the spoil which they drove before them, until they had crossed the Border. Suddenly a person, known to her as a kinsman of Westburnflat, came riding very fast after the marauders, and told their leader, that his cousin had learnt from a sure hand that no luck would come of it, unless the lass was restored to her friends. After some discussion, the chief of the party seemed to acquiesce. Grace was placed behind her new guardian, who pursued in silence, and with great speed, the least-frequented path to the Heugh-foot, and ere evening closed, set down the fatigued and terrified damsel within a quarter of a mile of the dwelling of her friends. Many and sincere were the congratulations which passed on all sides.

As these emotions subsided, less pleasing considerations began to intrude themselves.

"This is a miserable place for ye a'," said Hobbie, looking around him; "I can sleep weel eneugh mysell outby beside the naig, as I hae done mony a lang night on the hills; but how ye are to put yoursells up, I canna see! And what's waur, I canna mend it; and what's waur than a', the morn may come, and the day after that, without your being a bit better off."

"It was a cowardly cruel thing," said one of the sisters, looking round, "to harry a puir family to the bare wa's this gate."

"And leave us neither stirk nor stot," said the youngest brother, who now entered, "nor sheep nor lamb, nor aught that eats grass and corn."

"If they had ony quarrel wi' us," said Harry, the second brother, "were we na ready to have fought it out? And that we should have been a' frae hame, too,—ane and a' upon the hill—Odd, an we had been at hame, Will Graeme's stomach shouldna hae wanted its morning; but it's biding him, is it na, Hobbie?"

"Our neighbours hae taen a day at the Castleton to gree wi' him at the sight o' men," said Hobbie, mournfully; "they behoved to have it a' their ain gate, or there was nae help to be got at their hands."

"To gree wi' him!" exclaimed both his brothers at once, "after siccan an act of stouthrife as hasna been heard o' in the country since the auld riding days!"

"Very true, billies, and my blood was e'en boiling at it; but the sight o' Grace Armstrong has settled it brawly."

"But the stocking, Hobbie!" said John Elliot; "we're utterly ruined. Harry and I hae been to gather what was on the outby land, and there's scarce a clout left. I kenna how we're to carry on—We maun a' gang to the wars, I think. Westburnflat hasna the means, e'en if he had the will, to make up our loss; there's nae mends to be got out o' him, but what ye take out o' his banes. He hasna a four-footed creature but the vicious blood thing he rides on, and that's sair trash'd wi' his night wark. We are ruined stoop and roop."

Hobbie cast a mournful glance on Grace Armstrong, who returned it with a downcast look and a gentle sigh.

"Dinna be cast down, bairns," said the grandmother, "we hae gude friends that winna forsake us in adversity. There's Sir Thomas Kittleloof is my third cousin by the mother's side, and he has come by a hantle siller, and been made a knight-baronet into the bargain, for being ane o' the commissioners at the Union."

"He wadna gie a bodle to save us frae famishing," said Hobbie; "and, if he did, the bread that I bought wi't would stick in my throat, when I thought it was part of the price of puir auld Scotland's crown and independence."

"There's the Laird o' Dunder, ane o' the auldest families in Tiviotdale."

"He's in the tolbooth, mother—he's in the Heart of Mid-Louden for a thousand merk he borrowed from Saunders Wyliecoat the writer."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot, "can we no send him something, Hobbie?"

"Ye forget, grannie, ye forget we want help ourselfs," said Hobbie, somewhat peevishly.

"Troth did I, hinny," replied the good-natured lady, "just at the instant; it's sae natural to think on ane's blude relations before themselfs;—But there's young Earnscliff."

"He has ower little o' his ain; and siccan a name to keep up, it wad be a shame," said Hobbie, "to burden him wi' our distress. And I'll tell ye, grannie, it's needless to sit rhyming ower the style of a' your kith, kin, and allies, as if there was a charm in their braw names to do us good; the grandees hae forgotten us, and those of our ain degree hae just little enough to gang on wi' themselfs; ne'er a friend hae we that can, or will, help us to stock the farm again."

"Then, Hobbie, me maun trust in Him that can raise up friends and fortune out o' the bare moor, as they say."

Hobbie sprung upon his feet. "Ye are right, grannie!" he exclaimed; "ye are right. I do ken a friend on the bare moor, that baith can and will help us—The turns o' this day hae dung my head clean hirdie-girdie. I left as muckle gowd lying on Mucklestane-Moor this morning as would plenish the house and stock the Heugh-foot twice ower, and I am certain sure Elshie wadna grudge us the use of it."

"Elshie!" said his grandmother in astonishment; "what Elshie do you mean?"

"What Elshie should I mean, but Canny Elshie, the Wight o' Mucklestane," replied Hobbie.

"God forfend, my bairn, you should gang to fetch water out o' broken cisterns, or seek for relief frae them that deal wi' the Evil One! There was never luck in their gifts, nor grace in their paths. And the haill country kens that body Elshie's an unco man. O, if there was the law, and the douce quiet administration of justice, that makes a kingdom flourish in righteousness, the like o' them suldna be suffered to live! The wizard and the witch are the abomination and the evil thing in the land."

"Troth, mother," answered Hobbie, "ye may say what ye like, but I am in the mind that witches and warlocks havena half the power they had lang syne; at least, sure am I, that ae ill-deviser, like auld Ellieslaw, or ae ill-doer, like that d—d villain Westburnflat, is a greater plague and abomination in a country-side than a haill curnie o' the warst witches that ever capered on a broomstick, or played cantrips on Fastern's E'en. It wad hae been lang or Elshie had burnt down my house and barns, and I am determined to try if he will do aught to build them up again. He's weel kend a skilfu' man ower a' the country, as far as Brough under Stanmore."

"Bide a wee, my bairn; mind his benefits havena thriven wi' a'body. Jock Howden died o' the very same disorder Elshie pretended to cure him of, about the fa' o' the leaf; and though he helped Lambside's cow weel out o' the moor-ill, yet the loupin'-ill's been sairer amane; his sheep than ony season before. And then I have heard he uses sic words abusing human nature, that's like a fleeing in the face of Providence; and ye mind ye said yoursell, the first time ye ever saw him, that he was mair like a bogle than a living thing."

"Hout, mother," said Hobbie, "Elshie's no that bad a chield; he's a grewsome spectacle for a crooked disciple, to be sure, and a rough talker, but his bark is waur than his bite; sae, if I had anes something to eat, for I havena had a morsel ower my throat this day, I wad streek mysell down for twa or three hours aside the beast, and be on and awa' to Mucklestane wi' the first skreigh o' morning."

"And what for no the night, Hobbie," said Harry, "and I will ride wi' ye?"

"My naig is tired," said Hobbie.

"Ye may take mine, then," said John.

"But I am a wee thing wearied mysell."

"You wearied?" said Harry; "shame on ye! I have kend ye keep the saddle four-and-twenty hours thegither, and ne'er sic a word as weariness in your wame."

"The night's very dark," said Hobbie, rising and looking through the casement of the cottage; "and, to speak truth, and shame the deil, though Elshie's a real honest fallow, yet somegate I would rather take daylight wi' me when I gang to visit him."

This frank avowal put a stop to further argument; and Hobbie, having thus compromised matters between the rashness of his brother's counsel, and the timid cautions which he received from his grandmother, refreshed himself with such food as the cottage afforded; and, after a cordial salutation all round, retired to the shed, and stretched himself beside his trusty palfrey. His brothers shared between them some trusses of clean straw, disposed in the stall usually occupied by old Annaple's cow; and the females arranged themselves for repose as well as the accommodations of the cottage would permit.

With the first dawn of morning, Hobbie arose; and, having rubbed down and saddled his horse, he set forth to Mucklestane-Moor. He avoided the company of either of his brothers, from an idea that the Dwarf was most propitious to those who visited him alone.

"The creature," said he to himself, as he went along, "is no neighbourly; ae body at a time is fully mair than he weel can abide. I wonder if he's looked out o' the crib o' him to gather up the bag o' siller. If he hasna done that, it will hae been a braw windfa' for somebody, and I'll be finely flung.—Come, Tarras," said he to his horse, striking him at the same time with his spur, "make mair fit, man; we maun be first on the field if we can."

He was now on the heath, which began to be illuminated by the beams of the rising sun; the gentle declivity which he was descending presented him a distinct, though distant view, of the Dwarf's dwelling. The door opened, and Hobbie witnessed with his own eyes that phenomenon which he had frequently heard mentioned. Two human figures (if that of the Dwarf could be termed such) issued from the solitary abode of the Recluse, and stood as if in converse together in the open air. The taller form then stooped, as if taking something up which lay beside the door of the hut, then both moved forward a little way, and again halted, as in deep conference. All Hobbie's superstitious terrors revived on witnessing this spectacle. That the Dwarf would open his dwelling to a mortal guest, was as improbable as that any one would choose voluntarily to be his nocturnal visitor; and, under full conviction that he beheld a wizard holding intercourse with his familiar spirit, Hobbie pulled in at once his breath and his bridle, resolved not to incur the indignation of either by a hasty intrusion on their conference. They were probably aware of his approach, for he had not halted for a moment before the Dwarf returned to his cottage; and the taller figure who had accompanied him, glided round the enclosure of the garden, and seemed to disappear from the eyes of the admiring Hobbie.

"Saw ever mortal the like o' that!" said Elliot; "but my case is desperate, sae, if he were Beelzebub himself, I'se venture down the brae on him."

Yet, notwithstanding his assumed courage, he slackened his pace, when, nearly upon the very spot where he had last seen the tall figure, he discerned, as if lurking among the long heather, a small black rough-looking object, like a terrier dog.

"He has nae dog that ever I heard of," said Hobbie, "but mony a deil about his hand—lord forgie me for saying sic a word!—It keeps its grund, be what it like—I'm judging it's a badger; but whae kens what shapes thae bogies will take to fright a body? it will maybe start up like a lion or a crocodile when I come nearer. I'se e'en drive a stage at it, for if it change its shape when I'm ower near, Tarras will never stand it; and it will be ower muckle to hae him and the deil to fight wi' baith at ance."

He therefore cautiously threw a stone at the object, which continued motionless. "It's nae living thing, after a'," said Hobbie, approaching, "but the very bag o' siller he flung out o' the window yesterday! and that other queer lang creature has just brought it sae muckle farther on the way to me." He then advanced and lifted the heavy fur pouch, which was quite full of gold. "Mercy on us!" said Hobbie, whose heart fluttered between glee at the revival of his hopes and prospects in life, and suspicion of the purpose for which this assistance was afforded him—"Mercy on us! it's an awfu' thing to touch what has been sae lately in the claws of something no canny, I canna shake mysell loose o' the belief that there has been some jookery-paukery of Satan's in a' this; but I am determined to conduct mysell like an honest man and a good Christian, come o't what will."

He advanced accordingly to the cottage door, and having knocked repeatedly without receiving any answer, he at length elevated his voice and addressed the inmate of the hut. "Elshie! Father Elshie! I ken ye're within doors, and wauking, for I saw ye at the door-cheek as I cam ower the bent; will ye come out and speak just a gliff to ane that has mony thanks to gie ye?—It was a' true ye tell'd me about Westburnflat; but he's sent back Grace safe and skaithless, sae there's nae ill happened yet but what may be suffered or sustained;—Wad ye but come out a gliff, man, or but say ye're listening?—Aweel, since ye winna answer, I'se e'en proceed wi' my tale. Ye see I hae been thinking it wad be a sair thing on twa young folk, like Grace and me, to put aff our marriage for mony years till I was abroad and came back again wi' some gear; and they say folk maunna take booty in the wars as they did lang syne, and the queen's pay is a sma' matter; there's nae gathering gear on that—and then my grandame's auld—and my sisters wad sit peengin' at the ingle-side for want o' me to ding them about—and Earnscliff, or the neighbourhood, or maybe your ainsell, Elshie, might want some good turn that Hob Elliot could do ye—and it's a pity that the auld house o' the Heugh-foot should be wrecked a'thegither. Sae I was thinking—but deil hae me, that I should say sae," continued he, checking himself, "if I can bring mysell to ask a favour of ane that winna sae muckle as ware a word on me, to tell me if he hears me speaking till him."

"Say what thou wilt—do what thou wilt," answered the Dwarf from his cabin, "but begone, and leave me at peace."

"Weel, weel," replied Elliot, "since ye are willing to hear me, I'se make my tale short. Since ye are sae kind as to say ye are content to lend me as muckle siller as will stock and plenish the Heugh-foot, I am content, on my part, to accept the courtesy wi' mony kind thanks; and troth, I think it will be as safe in my hands as yours, if ye leave it flung about in that gate for the first loon body to lift, forbye the risk o' bad neighbours that can win through steekit doors and lockfast places, as I can tell to my cost. I say, since ye hae sae muckle consideration for me, I'se be blithe to accept your kindness; and my mother and me (she's a life-renter, and I am fiar, o' the lands o' Wideopen) would grant you a wadset, or an heritable bond, for the siller, and to pay the annual rent half-yearly; and Saunders Wyliecoat to draw the bond, and you to be at nae charge wi' the writings."

"Cut short thy jargon, and begone," said the Dwarf; "thy loquacious bull-headed honesty makes thee a more intolerable plague than the light-fingered courtier who would take a man's all without troubling him with either thanks, explanation, or apology. Hence, I say! thou art one of those tame slaves whose word is as good as their bond. Keep the money, principal and interest, until I demand it of thee."

"But," continued the pertinacious Borderer, "we are a' life-like and death-like, Elshie, and there really should be some black and white on this transaction. Sae just make me a minute, or missive, in ony form ye like, and I'se write it fair ower, and subscribe it before famous witnesses. Only, Elshie, I wad wuss ye to pit naething in't that may be prejudicial to my salvation; for I'll hae the minister to read it ower, and it wad only be exposing yoursell to nae purpose. And now I'm ganging awa', for ye'll be wearied o' my cracks, and I am wearied wi' cracking without an answer—and I'se bring ye a bit o' bride's-cake ane o' thae days, and maybe bring Grace to see you. Ye wad like to see Grace, man, for as dour as ye are—Eh, Lord I I wish he may be weel, that was a sair grane! or, maybe, he thought I was speaking of heavenly grace, and no of Grace Armstrong. Poor man, I am very doubtfu' o' his condition; but I am sure he is as kind to me as if I were his son, and a queer-looking father I wad hae had, if that had been e'en sae."

Hobbie now relieved his benefactor of his presence, and rode blithely home to display his treasure, and consult upon the means of repairing the damage which his fortune had sustained through the aggression of the Red Reiver of Westburnflat.

CHAPTER XI.

*Three ruffians seized me yester morn,
Alas! a maiden most forlorn;
They choked my cries with wicked might,
And bound me on a palfrey white:
As sure as Heaven shall pity me,
I cannot tell what men they be.—CHRISTABELLE.*

The course of our story must here revert a little, to detail the circumstances which had placed Miss Vere in the unpleasant situation from which she was unexpectedly, and indeed unintentionally liberated, by the appearance of Earnscliff and Elliot, with their friends and followers, before the Tower of Westburnflat.

On the morning preceding the night in which Hobbie's house was plundered and burnt, Miss Vere was requested by her father to accompany him in a walk through a distant part of the romantic grounds which lay round his castle of Ellieslaw. "To hear was to obey," in the true style of Oriental despotism; but Isabella trembled in silence while she followed her father through rough paths, now winding by the side of the river, now ascending the cliffs which serve for its banks. A single servant, selected perhaps for his stupidity, was the only person who attended them. From her father's silence, Isabella little doubted that he had chosen this distant and sequestered scene to resume the argument which they had so frequently maintained upon the subject of Sir Frederick's addresses, and that he was meditating in what manner he should most effectually impress upon her the necessity of receiving him as her suitor. But her fears seemed for some time to be unfounded. The only sentences which her father from time to time addressed to her, respected the beauties of the romantic landscape through which they strolled, and which varied its features at every step. To these observations, although they seemed to come from a heart occupied by more gloomy as well as more

important cares, Isabella endeavoured to answer in a manner as free and unconstrained as it was possible for her to assume, amid the involuntary apprehensions which crowded upon her imagination.

Sustaining with mutual difficulty a desultory conversation, they at length gained the centre of a small wood, composed of large oaks, intermingled with birches, mountain-ashes, hazel, holly, and a variety of underwood. The boughs of the tall trees met closely above, and the underwood filled up each interval between their trunks below. The spot on which they stood was rather more open; still, however, embowered under the natural arcade of tall trees, and darkened on the sides for a space around by a great and lively growth of copse-wood and bushes.

"And here, Isabella," said Mr. Vere, as he pursued the conversation, so often resumed, so often dropped, "here I would erect an altar to Friendship."

"To Friendship, sir!" said Miss Vere; "and why on this gloomy and sequestered spot, rather than elsewhere?"

"O, the propriety of the LOCALE is easily vindicated," replied her father, with a sneer. "You know, Miss Vere (for you, I am well aware, are a learned young lady), you know, that the Romans were not satisfied with embodying, for the purpose of worship, each useful quality and moral virtue to which they could give a name; but they, moreover, worshipped the same under each variety of titles and attributes which could give a distinct shade, or individual character, to the virtue in question. Now, for example, the Friendship to whom a temple should be here dedicated, is not Masculine Friendship, which abhors and despises duplicity, art, and disguise; but Female Friendship, which consists in little else than a mutual disposition on the part of the friends, as they call themselves, to abet each other in obscure fraud and petty intrigue."

"You are severe, sir," said Miss Vere.

"Only just," said her father; "a humble copier I am from nature, with the advantage of contemplating two such excellent studies as Lucy Ilderton and yourself."

"If I have been unfortunate enough to offend, sir, I can conscientiously excuse Miss Ilderton from being either my counsellor or confidante."

"Indeed! how came you, then," said Mr. Vere, "by the flippancy of speech, and pertness of argument, by which you have disgusted Sir Frederick, and given me of late such deep offence?"

"If my manner has been so unfortunate as to displease you, sir, it is impossible for me to apologize too deeply, or too sincerely; but I cannot confess the same contrition for having answered Sir Frederick flippantly when he pressed me rudely. Since he forgot I was a lady, it was time to show him that I am at least a woman."

"Reserve, then, your pertness for those who press you on the topic, Isabella," said her father coldly; "for my part, I am weary of the subject, and will never speak upon it again."

"God bless you, my dear father," said Isabella, seizing his reluctant hand "there is nothing you can impose on me, save the task of listening to this man's persecution, that I will call, or think, a hardship."

"You are very obliging, Miss Vere, when it happens to suit you to be dutiful," said her unrelenting father, forcing himself at the same time from the affectionate grasp of her hand; "but henceforward, child, I shall save myself the trouble of offering you unpleasant advice on any topic. You must look to yourself."

At this moment four ruffians rushed upon them. Mr. Vere and his servant drew their hangers, which it was the fashion of the time to wear, and attempted to defend themselves and protect Isabella. But while each of them was engaged by an antagonist, she was forced into the thicket by the two remaining villains, who placed her and themselves on horses which stood ready behind the copse-wood. They mounted at the same time, and, placing her between them, set off at a round gallop, holding the reins of her horse on each side. By many an obscure and winding path, over dale and down, through moss and moor, she was conveyed to the tower of Westburnflat, where she remained strictly watched, but not otherwise ill-treated, under the guardianship of the old woman, to whose son that retreat belonged. No entreaties could prevail upon the hag to give Miss Vere any information on the object of her being carried forcibly off, and confined in this secluded place. The arrival of Earnscliff, with a strong party of horsemen, before the tower, alarmed the robber. As he had already directed Grace Armstrong to be restored to her friends, it did not occur to him that this unwelcome visit was on her account; and seeing at the head of the party, Earnscliff, whose attachment to Miss Vere was whispered in the country, he doubted not that her liberation was the sole object of the attack upon his fastness. The dread of personal consequences compelled him to deliver up his prisoner in the manner we have already related.

At the moment the tramp of horses was heard which carried off the daughter of Ellieslaw, her father fell to the earth, and his servant, a stout young fellow, who was gaining ground on the ruffian with whom he had been engaged, left the combat to come to his master's assistance, little doubting that he had received a mortal wound. Both the villains immediately desisted from farther combat, and, retreating into the thicket, mounted their horses, and went off at full speed after their companions. Meantime, Dixon had the satisfaction to find Mr. Vere not only alive, but unwounded. He had overreached himself, and stumbled, it seemed, over the root of a tree, in making too eager a blow at his antagonist. The despair he felt at his daughter's disappearance, was, in Dixon's phrase, such as would have melted the heart of a whin stane, and he was so much exhausted by his feelings, and the vain researches which he made to discover the track of the ravishers, that a considerable time elapsed ere he reached home, and communicated the alarm to his domestics.

All his conduct and gestures were those of a desperate man.

"Speak not to me, Sir Frederick," he said impatiently; "You are no father—she was my child, an ungrateful one! I fear, but still my child—my only child. Where is Miss Ilderton? she must know something of this. It corresponds with what I was informed of her schemes. Go, Dixon, call Ratcliffe here Let him come without a minute's delay." The person he had named at this moment entered the room.

"I say, Dixon," continued Mr. Vere, in an altered tone, "let Mr. Ratcliffe know, I beg the favour of his company on particular business.—Ah! my dear sir," he proceeded, as if noticing him for the first time, "you are the very man whose advice can be of the utmost service to me in this cruel extremity."

"What has happened, Mr. Vere, to discompose you?" said Mr. Ratcliffe, gravely; and while the Laird of Ellieslaw details to him, with the most animated gestures of grief and indignation, the singular adventure of the morning, we shall take the opportunity to inform our readers of the relative circumstances in which these gentlemen stood to each other.

In early youth, Mr. Vere of Ellieslaw had been remarkable for a career of dissipation, which, in advanced life, he had exchanged for the no less destructive career of dark and turbulent ambition. In both cases, he had gratified the predominant passion without respect to the diminution of his private fortune, although, where such inducements were wanting, he was deemed close, avaricious, and grasping. His affairs being much embarrassed by his earlier extravagance, he went to England, where he was understood to have formed a very advantageous matrimonial connexion. He was many years absent from his family estate. Suddenly and unexpectedly he returned a widower, bringing with him his daughter, then a girl of about ten years old. From this moment his expense seemed unbounded, in the eyes of the simple inhabitants of his native mountains. It was supposed he must necessarily have plunged himself deeply in debt. Yet he continued to live in the same lavish expense, until some months before the commencement of our narrative, when the public opinion of his embarrassed circumstances was confirmed, by the residence of Mr. Ratcliffe at Ellieslaw Castle, who, by the tacit consent, though obviously to the great displeasure, of the lord of the mansion, seemed, from the moment of his arrival, to assume and exercise a predominant and unaccountable influence in the management of his private affairs.

Mr. Ratcliffe was a grave, steady, reserved man, in an advanced period of life. To those with whom he had occasion to speak upon business, he appeared uncommonly well versed in all its forms. With others he held little communication; but in any casual intercourse, or conversation, displayed the powers of an active and well-informed mind. For some time before taking up his final residence at the castle, he had been an occasional visitor there, and was at such times treated by Mr. Vere (contrary to his general practice towards those who were inferior to him in rank) with marked attention, and even deference. Yet his arrival always appeared to be an embarrassment to his host, and his departure a relief; so that, when he became a constant inmate of the family, it was impossible not to observe indications of the displeasure with which Mr. Vere regarded his presence. Indeed, their intercourse formed a singular mixture of confidence and constraint. Mr. Vere's most important affairs were regulated by Mr. Ratcliffe; and although he was none of those indulgent men of fortune, who, too indolent to manage their own business, are glad to devolve it upon another, yet, in many instances, he was observed to give up his own judgment, and submit to the contrary opinions which Mr. Ratcliffe did not hesitate distinctly to express.

Nothing seemed to vex Mr. Vere more than when strangers indicated any observation of the state of tutelage under which he appeared to labour. When it was noticed by Sir Frederick, or any of his intimates, he sometimes repelled their remarks haughtily and indignantly, and sometimes endeavoured to evade them, by saying, with a forced laugh, "That Ratcliffe knew his own importance, but that he was the most honest and skilful fellow in the world; and that it would be impossible for him to manage his English affairs without his advice and assistance." Such was the person who entered the room at the moment Mr. Vere was summoning him to his presence, and who now heard with surprise, mingled with obvious incredulity, the hasty narrative of what had befallen Isabella. Her father concluded, addressing Sir Frederick and the other gentlemen, who stood around in astonishment, "And now, my friends, you see the most unhappy father in Scotland. Lend me your assistance, gentlemen—give me your advice, Mr. Ratcliffe. I am incapable of acting, or thinking, under the unexpected violence of such a blow."

"Let us take our horses, call our attendants, and scour the country in pursuit of the villains," said Sir Frederick.

"Is there no one whom you can suspect," said Ratcliffe, gravely, "of having some motive for this strange crime? These are not the days of romance, when ladies are carried off merely for their beauty."

"I fear," said Mr. Vere, "I can too well account for this strange incident. Read this letter, which Miss Lucy Ilderton thought fit to address from my house of Ellieslaw to young Mr. Earnscliff; whom, of all men, I have a hereditary right to call my enemy. You see she writes to him as the confidant of a passion which he has the assurance to entertain for my daughter; tells him she serves his cause with her friend very ardently, but that he has a friend in the garrison who serves him yet more effectually. Look particularly at the pencilled passages, Mr. Ratcliffe, where this meddling girl recommends bold measures, with an assurance that his suit would be successful anywhere beyond the bounds of the barony of Ellieslaw."

"And you argue, from this romantic letter of a very romantic young lady, Mr. Vere," said Ratcliffe, "that young Earnscliff has carried off your daughter, and committed a very great and criminal act of violence, on no better advice and assurance than that of Miss Lucy Ilderton?"

"What else can I think?" said Ellieslaw.

"What else CAN you think?" said Sir Frederick; "or who else could have any motive for committing such a crime?"

"Were that the best mode of fixing the guilt," said Mr. Ratcliffe, calmly, "there might easily be pointed out persons to whom such actions are more congenial, and who have also sufficient motives of instigation. Supposing it were judged advisable to remove Miss Vere to some place in which constraint might be exercised upon her inclinations to a degree which cannot at present be attempted under the roof of Ellieslaw Castle—What says Sir Frederick Langley to that supposition?"

"I say," returned Sir Frederick, "that although Mr. Vere may choose to endure in Mr. Ratcliffe freedoms totally inconsistent with his situation in life, I will not permit such license of innuendo, by word or look, to be extended to me, with impunity."

"And I say," said young Mareschal of Mareschal-Wells, who was also a guest at the castle, "that you are all stark mad to be standing wrangling here, instead of going in pursuit of the ruffians."

"I have ordered off the domestics already in the track most likely to overtake them," said Mr. Vere "if you will favour me with your company, we will follow them, and assist in the search."

The efforts of the party were totally unsuccessful, probably because Ellieslaw directed the pursuit to proceed in the direction of Earnscliff Tower, under the supposition that the owner would prove to be the author of the violence, so that they followed a direction diametrically opposite to that in which the ruffians had actually proceeded. In the evening they returned, harassed and out of spirits. But other guests had, in the meanwhile, arrived at the castle; and, after the recent loss sustained by the owner had been related, wondered at, and lamented, the recollection of it was, for the present, drowned in the discussion of deep political intrigues, of which the crisis and explosion were momentarily looked for.

Several of the gentlemen who took part in this divan were Catholics, and all of them stanch Jacobites, whose hopes were at present at the highest pitch, as an invasion, in favour of the Pretender, was daily expected from France, which Scotland, between the defenceless state of its garrisons and fortified places, and the general disaffection of the inhabitants, was rather prepared to welcome than to resist. Ratcliffe, who neither sought to assist at their consultations on this subject, nor was invited to do so, had, in the meanwhile, retired to his own apartment. Miss Ilderton was sequestered from society in a sort of honourable confinement, "until," said Mr. Vere, "she should be safely conveyed home to her father's house," an opportunity for which occurred on the following day.

The domestics could not help thinking it remarkable how soon the loss of Miss Vere, and the strange manner in which it had happened, seemed to be forgotten by the other guests at the castle. They knew not, that those the most interested in her fate were well acquainted with the cause of her being carried off, and the place of her retreat; and that the others, in the anxious and doubtful moments which preceded the breaking forth of a conspiracy, were little accessible to any feelings but what arose immediately out of their own machinations.

CHAPTER XII.

Some one way, some another—Do you know

Where we may apprehend her?

The researches after Miss Vere were (for the sake of appearances, perhaps) resumed on the succeeding day, with similar bad success, and the party were returning towards Ellieslaw in the evening.

"It is singular," said Mareschal to Ratcliffe, "that four horsemen and a female prisoner should have passed through the country without leaving the slightest trace of their passage. One would think they had traversed the air, or sunk through the ground."

"Men may often," answered Ratcliffe, "arrive at the knowledge of that which is, from discovering that which is not. We have now scoured every road, path, and track leading from the castle, in all the various points of the compass, saving only that intricate and difficult pass which leads southward down the Westburn, and through the morasses."

"And why have we not examined that?" said Mareschal.

"O, Mr. Vere can best answer that question," replied his companion, dryly.

"Then I will ask it instantly," said Mareschal; and, addressing Mr. Vere, "I am informed, sir," said he, "there is a path we have not examined, leading by Westburnflat."

"O," said Sir Frederick, laughing, "we know the owner of Westburnflat well—a wild lad, that knows little difference between his neighbour's goods and his own; but, withal, very honest to his principles: he would disturb nothing belonging to Ellieslaw."

"Besides," said Mr. Vere, smiling mysteriously, "he had other tow on his distaff last night. Have you not heard young Elliot of the Heugh-foot has had his house burnt, and his cattle driven away, because he refused to give up his arms to some honest men that think of starting for the king?"

The company smiled upon each other, as at hearing of an exploit which favoured their own views.

"Yet, nevertheless," resumed Mareschal, "I think we ought to ride in this direction also, otherwise we shall certainly be blamed for our negligence."

No reasonable objection could be offered to this proposal, and the party turned their horses' heads towards Westburnflat.

They had not proceeded very far in that direction when the trampling of horses was heard, and a small body of riders were perceived advancing to meet them.

"There comes Earnscliff," said Mareschal; "I know his bright bay with the star in his front."

"And there is my daughter along with him," exclaimed Vere, furiously. "Who shall call my suspicions false or injurious now? Gentlemen—friends—lend me the assistance of your swords for the recovery of my child."

He unsheathed his weapon, and was imitated by Sir Frederick and several of the party, who prepared to charge those that were advancing towards them. But the greater part hesitated.

"They come to us in all peace and security," said Mareschal-Wells; "let us first hear what account they give us of this mysterious affair. If Miss Vere has sustained the slightest insult or injury from Earnscliff, I will be first to revenge her; but let us hear what they say."

"You do me wrong by your suspicions, Mareschal," continued Vere; "you are the last I would have expected to hear express them."

"You injure yourself, Ellieslaw, by your violence, though the cause may excuse it."

He then advanced a little before the rest, and called out, with a loud voice,—*"Stand, Mr. Earnscliff; or do you and Miss Vere advance alone to meet us. You are charged with having carried that lady off from her father's house; and we are here in arms to shed our best blood for her recovery, and for bringing to justice those who have injured her."*

"And who would do that more willingly than I, Mr. Mareschal?" said Earnscliff, haughtily,—*"than I, who had the satisfaction this morning to liberate her from the dungeon in which I found her confined, and who am now escorting her back to the Castle of Ellieslaw?"*

"Is this so, Miss Vere?" said Mareschal.

"It is," answered Isabella, eagerly,—*"it is so; for Heaven's sake sheathe your swords. I will swear by all that is sacred, that I was carried off by ruffians, whose persons and object were alike unknown to me, and am now restored to freedom by means of this gentleman's gallant interference."*

"By whom, and wherefore, could this have been done?" pursued Mareschal.—*"Had you no knowledge of the place to which you were conveyed?"—Earnscliff, where did you find this lady?"*

But ere either question could be answered, Ellieslaw advanced, and, returning his sword to the scabbard, cut short the conference.

"When I know," he said, "exactly how much I owe to Mr. Earnscliff, he may rely on suitable acknowledgments; meantime," taking the bridle of Miss Vere's horse, "thus far I thank him for replacing my daughter in the power of her natural guardian."

A sullen bend of the head was returned by Earnscliff with equal haughtiness; and Ellieslaw, turning back with his daughter upon the road to his own house, appeared engaged with her in a conference so earnest, that the rest of the company judged it improper to intrude by approaching them too nearly. In the meantime, Earnscliff, as he took leave of the other gentlemen belonging to Ellieslaw's party, said aloud, "Although I am unconscious of any circumstance in my conduct that can authorize such a suspicion, I cannot but observe, that Mr. Vere seems to believe that I have had some hand in the atrocious violence which has been offered to his daughter. I request you, gentlemen, to take notice of my explicit denial of a charge so dishonourable; and that, although I can pardon the bewildering feelings of a father in such a moment, yet, if any other gentleman," (he looked hard at Sir Frederick Langley) "thinks my word and that of Miss Vere, with the evidence of my friends who accompany me, too slight for my exculpation, I will be happy—most happy—to repel the charge, as becomes a man who counts his honour dearer than his life."

"And I'll be his second," said Simon of Hackburn, "and take up ony twa o' ye, gentle or semple, laird or loon; it's a' ane to Simon."

"Who is that rough-looking fellow?" said Sir Frederick Langley, "and what has he to do with the quarrels of gentlemen?"

"I'se be a lad frae the Hie Te'iot," said Simon, "and I'se quarrel wi' ony body I like, except the king, or the laird I live under."

"Come," said; Mareschal, "let us have no brawls.—Mr. Earnscliff; although we do not think alike in some things, I trust we may be opponents, even enemies, if fortune will have it so, without losing our respect for birth, fair-play, and each other. I believe you as innocent of this matter as I am myself; and I will pledge myself that my cousin Ellieslaw, as soon as the perplexity attending these sudden events has left his judgment to its free exercise, shall handsomely acknowledge the very important service you have this day rendered him."

"To have served your cousin is a sufficient reward in itself—Good evening, gentlemen," continued Earnscliff; "I see most of your party are already on their way to Ellieslaw."

Then saluting Mareschal with courtesy, and the rest of the party with indifference, Earnscliff turned his horse and rode towards the Heugh-foot, to concert measures with Hobbie Elliot for farther researches after his bride, of whose restoration to her friends he was still ignorant.

"There he goes," said Mareschal; "he is a fine, gallant young fellow, upon my soul; and yet I should like well to have a thrust with him on the green turf. I was reckoned at college nearly his equal with the foils, and I should like to try him at sharps."

"In my opinion," answered Sir Frederick Langley, "we have done very ill in having suffered him, and those men who are with him, to go off without taking away their arms; for the Whigs are very likely to draw to a head under such a sprightly young fellow as that."

"For shame, Sir Frederick!" exclaimed Mareschal; "do you think that Ellieslaw could, in honour, consent to any violence being offered to Earnscliff; when he entered his bounds only to bring back his daughter? or, if he were to be of your opinion, do you think that I, and the rest of these gentlemen, would disgrace ourselves by assisting in such a transaction? No, no, fair play and auld Scotland for ever! When the sword is drawn, I will be as ready to use it as any man; but while it is in the sheath, let us behave like gentlemen and neighbours."

Soon after this colloquy they reached the castle, when Ellieslaw, who had been arrived a few minutes before, met them in the court-yard.

"How is Miss Vere? and have you learned the cause of her being carried off?" asked Mareschal hastily.

"She is retired to her apartment greatly fatigued; and I cannot expect much light upon her adventure till her spirits are somewhat recruited," replied her father. "She and I were not the less obliged to you, Mareschal, and to my other friends, for their kind enquiries. But I must suppress the father's feelings for a while to give myself up to those of the patriot. You know this is the day fixed for our final decision—time presses—our friends are arriving, and I have opened house, not only for the gentry, but for the under spur-leathers whom we must necessarily employ. We have, therefore, little time to prepare to meet them.—Look over these lists, Marchie (an abbreviation by which Mareschal-Wells was known among his friends). Do you, Sir Frederick, read these letters from Lothian and the west—all is ripe for the sickle, and we have but to summon out the reapers."

"With all my heart," said Mareschal; "the more mischief the better sport."

Sir Frederick looked grave and disconcerted.

"Walk aside with me, my good friend," said Ellieslaw to the sombre baronet; "I have something for your private ear, with which I know you will be gratified."

They walked into the house, leaving Ratcliffe and Mareschal standing together in the court.

"And so," said Ratcliffe, "the gentlemen of your political persuasion think the downfall of this government so certain, that they disdain even to throw a decent disguise over the machinations of their party?"

"Faith, Mr. Ratcliffe," answered Mareschal, "the actions and sentiments YOUR friends may require to be veiled, but I am better pleased that ours can go barefaced."

"And is it possible," continued Ratcliffe, "that you, who, notwithstanding your thoughtlessness and heat of temper (I beg pardon, Mr. Mareschal, I am a plain man)—that you, who, notwithstanding these constitutional defects, possess natural good sense and acquired information, should be infatuated enough to embroil yourself in such desperate proceedings? How does your head feel when you are engaged in these dangerous conferences?"

"Not quite so secure on my shoulders," answered Mareschal, "as if I were talking of hunting and hawking. I am not of so indifferent a mould as my cousin Ellieslaw, who speaks treason as if it were a child's nursery rhymes, and loses and recovers that sweet girl, his daughter, with a good deal less emotion on both occasions, than would have affected me had I lost and recovered a greyhound puppy. My temper is not quite so inflexible, nor my hate against government so inveterate, as to blind me to the full danger of the attempt."

"Then why involve yourself in it?" said Ratcliffe.

"Why, I love this poor exiled king with all my heart; and my father was an old Killiecrankie man, and I long to see some amends on the Unionist courtiers, that have bought and sold old Scotland, whose crown has been so long independent."

"And for the sake of these shadows," said his monitor, "you are going to involve your country in war and yourself in trouble?"

"I involve? No!—but, trouble for trouble, I had rather it came to-morrow than a month hence. COME, I know it will; and, as your country folks say, better soon than syne—it will never find me younger—and as for hanging, as Sir John Falstaff says, I can become a gallows as well as another. You know the end of the old ballad;

*"Sae dauntonly, sae wantonly,
Sae rantingly gaed he,
He play'd a spring, and danced a round,
Beneath the gallows tree."*

"Mr. Mareschal, I am sorry for you," said his grave adviser.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Ratcliffe; but I would not have you judge of our enterprise by my way of vindicating it; there are wiser heads than mine at the work."

"Wiser heads than yours may lie as low," said Ratcliffe, in a warning tone.

"Perhaps so; but no lighter heart shall; and, to prevent it being made heavier by your remonstrances, I will bid you adieu, Mr. Ratcliffe, till dinner-time, when you shall see that my apprehensions have not spoiled my appetite."

CHAPTER XIII.

*To face the garment of rebellion
With some fine colour, that may please the eye
Of fickle changelings, and poor discontents,
Which gape and rub the elbow at the news
Of hurlyburly innovation.—HENRY THE FOURTH, PART II.*

There had been great preparations made at Ellieslaw Castle for the entertainment on this important day, when not only the gentlemen of note in the neighbourhood, attached to the Jacobite interest, were expected to rendezvous, but also many subordinate malecontents, whom difficulty of circumstances, love of change, resentment against England, or any of the numerous causes which inflamed men's passions at the time, rendered apt to join in perilous enterprise. The men of rank and substance were not many in number; for almost all the large proprietors stood aloof, and most of the smaller gentry and yeomanry were of the Presbyterian persuasion, and therefore, however displeased with the Union, unwilling to engage in a Jacobite conspiracy. But there were some gentlemen of property, who, either from early principle, from religious motives, or sharing the ambitious views of Ellieslaw, had given countenance to his scheme; and there were, also, some fiery young men, like Mareschal, desirous of signalizing themselves by engaging in a dangerous enterprise, by which they hoped to vindicate the independence of their country. The other members of the party were persons of inferior rank and desperate fortunes, who were now ready to rise in that part of the country, as they did afterwards in the year 1715, under Forster and Derwentwater, when a troop, commanded by a Border gentleman, named Douglas, consisted almost entirely of freebooters, among whom the notorious Luck-in-a-bag, as he was called, held a distinguished command. We think it necessary to mention these particulars, applicable solely to the province in which our scene lies; because, unquestionably, the Jacobite party, in the other parts of the kingdom, consisted of much more formidable, as well as much more respectable, materials.

One long table extended itself down the ample hall of Ellieslaw Castle, which was still left much in the state in which it had been one hundred years before, stretching, that is, in gloomy length, along the whole side of the castle, vaulted with ribbed arches of freestone, the groins of which sprung from projecting figures, that, carved into all the wild forms which the fantastic imagination of a Gothic architect could devise, grinned, frowned, and gnashed their tusks at the assembly below. Long narrow windows lighted the banqueting room on both sides, filled up with stained glass, through which the sun emitted a dusky and discoloured light. A banner, which tradition averred to have been taken from the English at the battle of Sark, waved over the chair in which Ellieslaw presided, as if to inflame the courage of the guests, by reminding them of ancient victories over their neighbours. He himself, a portly figure, dressed on this occasion with uncommon care, and with features, which, though of a stern and sinister expression, might well be termed handsome, looked the old feudal baron extremely well. Sir Frederick Langley was placed on his right hand, and Mr. Mareschal of Mareschal-Wells on his left. Some gentlemen of consideration, with their sons, brothers, and nephews, were seated at the upper end of the table, and among these Mr. Ratcliffe had his place. Beneath the salt-cellar (a massive piece of plate which occupied the midst of the table) sate the SINE NOMINE TURBA, men whose vanity was gratified by holding even this subordinate space at the social board, while the distinction observed in ranking them was a salve to the pride of their superiors. That the lower house was not very select must be admitted, since Willie Westburnflat was one of the party. The unabashed audacity of this fellow, in daring to present himself in the house of a gentleman, to whom he had just offered so flagrant an insult, can only be accounted for by supposing him conscious that his share in carrying off Miss Vere was a secret, safe in her possession and that of her father.

Before this numerous and miscellaneous party was placed a dinner, consisting, not indeed of the delicacies of the season, as the newspapers express it, but of viands, ample, solid, and sumptuous, under which the very board groaned. But the mirth was not in proportion to the good cheer. The lower end of the table were, for some time, chilled by constraint and respect on finding themselves members of so august an assembly; and those who were placed around it had those feelings of awe with which P. P., clerk of the parish, describes himself oppressed, when he first uplifted the psalm in presence of those persons of high worship, the wise Mr. Justice Freeman, the good Lady Jones, and the great Sir Thomas Truby. This ceremonious frost, however, soon gave way before the incentives to merriment, which were liberally supplied, and as liberally consumed by the guests of the lower description. They became talkative, loud, and even clamorous in their mirth.

But it was not in the power of wine or brandy to elevate the spirits of those who held the higher places at the banquet. They experienced the chilling revulsion of spirits which often takes place, when men are called upon to take a desperate resolution, after having placed themselves in circumstances where it is alike difficult to advance or to recede. The precipice looked deeper and more dangerous as they approached the brink, and each waited with an inward emotion of awe, expecting which of his confederates would set the example by plunging himself down. This inward sensation of fear and reluctance acted differently, according to the various habits and characters of the company. One looked grave; another looked silly; a third gazed with apprehension on the empty seats at the higher end of the table, designed for members of the conspiracy whose prudence had prevailed over their political zeal, and who had absented themselves from their consultations at this critical period; and some seemed to be reckoning up in their minds the comparative rank and prospects of those who were present and absent. Sir Frederick Langley was reserved, moody, and discontented. Ellieslaw himself made such forced efforts to raise the spirits of the company, as plainly marked the flagging of his own. Ratcliffe watched the scene with the composure of a vigilant but uninterested spectator. Mareschal alone, true to the thoughtless vivacity of his character, ate and drank, laughed and jested, and seemed even to find amusement in the embarrassment of the company.

"What has damped our noble courage this morning?" he exclaimed. "We seem to be met at a funeral, where the chief mourners must not speak above their breath, while the mutes and the saulies (looking to the lower end of the table) are carousing below. Ellieslaw, when will you LIFT? [To LIFT, meaning to lift the coffin, is the common expression for commencing a funeral.] where sleeps your spirit, man? and what has quelled the high hope of the Knight of Langley-dale?"

"You speak like a madman," said Ellieslaw; "do you not see how many are absent?"

"And what of that?" said Mareschal. "Did you not know before, that one-half of the world are better talkers than doers? For my part, I am much encouraged by seeing at least two-thirds of our friends true to the rendezvous, though I suspect one-half of these came to secure the dinner in case of the worst."

"There is no news from the coast which can amount to certainty of the King's arrival," said another of the company, in that tone of subdued and tremulous whisper which implies a failure of resolution.

"Not a line from the Earl of D—, nor a single gentleman from the southern side of the Border," said a third.

"Who is he that wishes for more men from England," exclaimed Mareschal, in a theatrical tone of affected heroism,

*"My cousin Ellieslaw? No, my fair cousin,
If we are doom'd to die—"*

"For God's sake," said Ellieslaw, "spare us your folly at present, Mareschal."

"Well, then," said his kinsman, "I'll bestow my wisdom upon you instead, such as it is. If we have gone forward like fools, do not let us go back like cowards. We have done enough to draw upon us both the suspicion and vengeance of the government; do not let us give up before we have done something to deserve it.—What, will no one speak? Then I'll leap the ditch the first." And, starting up, he filled a beer-glass to the brim with claret, and waving his hand, commanded all to follow his example, and to rise up from their seats. All obeyed the more qualified guests as if passively, the others with enthusiasm "Then, my friends, I give you the pledge of the day—The independence of Scotland, and the health of our lawful sovereign, King James the Eighth, now landed in Lothian, and, as I trust and believe, in full possession of his ancient capital!"

He quaffed off the wine, and threw the glass over his head.

"It should never," he said, "be profaned by a meaner toast."

All followed his example, and, amid the crash of glasses and the shouts of the company, pledged themselves to stand or fall with the principles and political interest which their toast expressed.

"You have leaped the ditch with a witness," said Ellieslaw, apart to Mareschal; "but I believe it is all for the best; at all events, we cannot now retreat from our undertaking. One man alone" (looking at Ratcliffe) "has refused the pledge; but of that by and by."

Then, rising up, he addressed the company in a style of inflammatory invective against the government and its measures, but especially the Union; a treaty, by means of which, he affirmed, Scotland had been at once cheated of her independence, her commerce, and her honour, and laid as a fettered slave at the foot of the rival against whom, through such a length of ages, through so many dangers, and by so much blood, she had honourably defended her rights. This was touching a theme which found a responsive chord in the bosom of every man present.

"Our commerce is destroyed," hollowed old John Rewcastle, a Jedburgh smuggler, from the lower end of the table.

"Our agriculture is ruined," said the Laird of Broken-girth-flow, a territory which, since the days of Adam, had borne nothing but ling and whortle-berries.

"Our religion is cut up, root and branch," said the pimple-nosed pastor of the Episcopal meeting-house at Kirkwhistle.

"We shall shortly neither dare shoot a deer nor kiss a wench, without a certificate from the presbytery and kirk-treasurer," said Mareschal-Wells.

"Or make a brandy jeroboam in a frosty morning, without license from a commissioner of excise," said the smuggler.

"Or ride over the fell in a moonless night," said Westburnflat, "without asking leave of young Earnscliff; or some Englied justice of the peace: thae were gude days on the Border when there was neither peace nor justice heard of."

"Let us remember our wrongs at Darien and Glencoe," continued Ellieslaw, "and take arms for the protection of our rights, our fortunes, our lives, and our families."

"Think upon genuine episcopal ordination, without which there can be no lawful clergy," said the divine.

"Think of the piracies committed on our East-Indian trade by Green and the English thieves," said William Willieson, half-owner and sole skipper of a brig that made four voyages annually between Cockpool and Whitehaven.

"Remember your liberties," rejoined Mareschal, who seemed to take a mischievous delight in precipitating the movements of the enthusiasm which he had excited, like a roguish boy, who, having lifted the sluice of a mill-dam, enjoys the clatter of the wheels which he has put in motion, without thinking of the mischief he may have occasioned. "Remember your liberties," he exclaimed; "confound cess, press, and presbytery, and the memory of old Willie that first brought them upon us!"

"Damn the gauger!" echoed old John Rewcastle; "I'll cleave him wi' my ain hand."

"And confound the country-keeper and the constable!" re-echoed Westburnflat; "I'll weize a brace of balls through them before morning."

"We are agreed, then," said Ellieslaw, when the shouts had somewhat subsided, "to bear this state of things no longer?"

"We are agreed to a man," answered his guests.

"Not literally so," said Mr. Ratcliffe; "for though I cannot hope to assuage the violent symptoms which seem so suddenly to have seized upon the company, yet I beg to observe, that so far as the opinion of a single member goes, I do not entirely coincide in the list of grievances which has been announced, and that I do utterly protest against the frantic measures which you seem disposed to adopt for removing them. I can easily suppose much of what has been spoken may have arisen out of the heat of the moment, or have been said perhaps in jest. But there are some jests of a nature very apt to transpire; and you ought to remember, gentlemen, that stone-walls have ears."

"Stone-walls may have ears," returned Ellieslaw, eyeing him with a look of triumphant malignity, "but domestic spies, Mr. Ratcliffe, will soon find themselves without any, if any such dares to continue his abode in a family where his coming was an unauthorized intrusion, where his conduct has been that of a presumptuous meddler, and from which his exit shall be that of a baffled knave, if he does not know how to take a hint."

"Mr. Vere," returned Ratcliffe, with calm contempt, "I am fully aware, that as soon as my presence becomes useless to you, which it must through the rash step you are about to adopt, it will immediately become unsafe to myself, as it has always been hateful to you. But I have one protection, and it is a strong one; for you would not willingly hear me detail before gentlemen, and men of honour, the singular circumstances in which our connexion took its rise. As to the rest, I rejoice at its conclusion; and as I think that Mr. Mareschal and some other gentlemen will guarantee the safety of my ears and of my throat (for which last I have more reason to be apprehensive) during the course of the night, I shall not leave your castle till to-morrow morning."

"Be it so, sir," replied Mr. Vere; "you are entirely safe from my resentment, because you are beneath it, and not because I am afraid of your disclosing my family secrets, although, for your own sake, I warn you to beware how you do so. Your agency and intermediation can be of little consequence to one who will win or lose all, as lawful right or unjust usurpation shall succeed in the struggle that is about to ensue. Farewell, sir."

Ratcliffe arose, and cast upon him a look, which Vere seemed to sustain with difficulty, and, bowing to those around him, left the room.

This conversation made an impression on many of the company, which Ellieslaw hastened to dispel, by entering upon the business of the day. Their hasty deliberations went to organize an immediate insurrection. Ellieslaw, Mareschal, and Sir Frederick Langley were chosen leaders, with powers to direct their farther measures. A place of rendezvous was appointed, at which all agreed to meet early on the ensuing day, with such followers and friends to the cause as each could collect around him. Several of the guests retired to make the necessary preparations; and Ellieslaw made a formal apology to the others, who, with Westburnflat and the old smuggler, continued to ply the bottle stanchly, for leaving the head of the table, as he must necessarily hold a separate and sober conference with the coadjutors whom they had associated with him in the command. The apology was the more readily accepted, as he prayed them, at the same time, to continue to amuse themselves with such refreshments as the cellars of the castle afforded. Shouts of applause followed their retreat; and the names of Vere, Langley, and, above all, of Mareschal, were thundered forth in chorus, and bathed with copious bumpers repeatedly, during the remainder of the evening.

When the principal conspirators had retired into a separate apartment, they gazed on each other for a minute with a sort of embarrassment, which, in Sir Frederick's dark features, amounted to an expression of discontented sullenness. Mareschal was the first to break the pause, saying, with a loud burst of laughter,—"Well! we are fairly embarked now, gentlemen—VOGUE LA GALERE!"

"We may thank you for the plunge," said Ellieslaw.

"Yes; but I don't know how far you will thank me," answered Mareschal, "when I show you this letter which I received just before we sat down. My servant told me it was delivered by a man he had never seen before, who went off at the gallop, after charging him to put it into my own hand."

Ellieslaw impatiently opened the letter, and read aloud—
EDINBURGH,—

HOND. SIR, Having obligations to your family, which shall be nameless, and learning that you are one of the company of, adventurers doing business for the house of James and Company, late merchants in London, now in Dunkirk, I think it right to send you this early and private information, that the vessels you expected have been driven off the coast, without having been able to break bulk, or to land any part of their cargo; and that the west-country partners have resolved to withdraw their name from the firm, as it must prove a losing concern. Having good hope you will avail yourself of this early information, to do what is needful for your own security, I rest your humble servant, NIHIL NAMELESS.

FOR RALPH MARESCHAL, OF MARESCHAL-WELLS —THESE WITH CARE AND SPEED.

Sir Frederick's jaw dropped, and his countenance blackened, as the letter was read, and Ellieslaw exclaimed,—“Why, this affects the very mainspring of our enterprise. If the French fleet, with the king on board, has been chased off by the English, as this d—d scrawl seems to intimate, where are we?”

“Just where we were this morning, I think,” said Mareschal, still laughing.

“Pardon me, and a truce to your ill-timed mirth, Mr. Mareschal; this morning we were not committed publicly, as we now stand committed by your own mad act, when you had a letter in your pocket apprizing you that our undertaking was desperate.”

“Ay, ay, I expected you would say so. But, in the first place, my friend Nihil Nameless and his letter may be all a flam; and, moreover, I would have you know that I am tired of a party that does nothing but form bold resolutions overnight, and sleep them away with their wine before morning. The government are now unprovided of men and ammunition; in a few weeks they will have enough of both: the country is now in a flame against them; in a few weeks, betwixt the effects of self-interest, of fear, and of lukewarm indifference, which are already so visible, this first fervour will be as cold as Christmas. So, as I was determined to go the vole, I have taken care you shall dip as deep as I; it signifies nothing plunging. You are fairly in the bog, and must struggle through.”

“You are mistaken with respect to one of us, Mr. Mareschal,” said Sir Frederick Langley; and, applying himself to the bell, he desired the person who entered to order his servants and horses instantly.

“You must not leave us, Sir Frederick,” said Ellieslaw; “if we have our musters to go over.”

“I will go to-night, Mr. Vere,” said Sir Frederick, “and write you my intentions in this matter when I am at home.”

“Ay,” said Mareschal, “and send them by a troop of horse from Carlisle to make us prisoners? Look ye, Sir Frederick, I for one will neither be deserted nor betrayed; and if you leave Ellieslaw Castle to-night, it shall be by passing over my dead body.”

“For shame! Mareschal,” said Mr. Vere, “how can you so hastily misinterpret our friend's intentions? I am sure Sir Frederick can only be jesting with us; for, were he not too honourable to dream of deserting the cause, he cannot but remember the full proofs we have of his accession to it, and his eager activity in advancing it. He cannot but be conscious, besides, that the first information will be readily received by government, and that if the question be, which can first lodge intelligence of the affair, we can easily save a few hours on him.”

“You should say you, and not we, when you talk of priorities in such a race of treachery; for my part, I won't enter my horse for such a plate,” said Mareschal; and added betwixt his teeth, “A pretty pair of fellows to trust a man's neck with!”

“I am not to be intimidated from doing what I think proper,” said Sir Frederick Langley; “and my first step shall be to leave Ellieslaw. I have no reason to keep faith with one” (looking at Vere) “who has kept none with me.”

“In what respect,” said Ellieslaw, silencing, with a motion of his hand, his impetuous kinsman—“how have I disappointed you, Sir Frederick?”

“In the nearest and most tender point—you have trifled with me concerning our proposed alliance, which you well knew was the gage of our political undertaking. This carrying off and this bringing back of Miss Vere,—the cold reception I have met with from her, and the excuses with which you cover it, I believe to be mere evasions, that you may yourself retain possession of the estates which are hers by right, and make me, in the meanwhile, a tool in your desperate enterprise, by holding out hopes and expectations which you are resolved never to realize.”

“Sir Frederick, I protest, by all that is sacred—”

“I will listen to no protestations; I have been cheated with them too long,” answered Sir Frederick.

“If you leave us,” said Ellieslaw, “you cannot but know both your ruin and ours is certain; all depends on our adhering together.”

“Leave me to take care of myself,” returned the knight; “but were what you say true, I would rather perish than be fooled any farther.”

“Can nothing—no surety convince you of my sincerity?” said Ellieslaw, anxiously; “this morning I should have repelled your unjust suspicions as an insult; but situated as we now are—”

“You feel yourself compelled to be sincere?” retorted Sir Frederick. “If you would have me think so, there is but one way to convince me of it—let your daughter bestow her hand on me this evening.”

“So soon?—impossible,” answered Vere; “think of her late alarm—of our present undertaking.”

“I will listen to nothing but to her consent, plighted at the altar. You have a chapel in the castle—Doctor Hobbler is present among the company—this proof of your good faith to-night, and we are again joined in heart and hand. If you refuse me when it is so much for your advantage to consent, how shall I trust you to-morrow, when I shall stand committed in your undertaking, and unable to retract?”

“And I am to understand, that, if you can be made my son-in-law to-night, our friendship is renewed?” said Ellieslaw.

“Most infallibly, and most inviolably,” replied Sir Frederick.

“Then,” said Vere, “though what you ask is premature, indelicate, and unjust towards my character, yet, Sir Frederick, give me your hand—my daughter shall be your wife.”

“This night?”

“This very night,” replied Ellieslaw, “before the clock strikes twelve.”

“With her own consent, I trust,” said Mareschal; “for I promise you both, gentlemen, I will not stand tamely by, and see any violence put on the will of my pretty kinswoman.”

“Another pest in this hot-headed fellow,” muttered Ellieslaw; and then aloud, “With her own consent? For what do you take me, Mareschal, that you should suppose your interference necessary to protect my daughter against her father? Depend upon it, she has no repugnance to Sir Frederick Langley.”

“Or rather to be called Lady Langley? faith, like enough—there are many women might be of her mind; and I beg your pardon, but these sudden demands and concessions alarmed me a little on her account.”

“It is only the suddenness of the proposal that embarrasses me,” said Ellieslaw; “but perhaps if she is found intractable, Sir Frederick will consider—”

“I will consider nothing, Mr. Vere—your daughter's hand to-night, or I depart, were it at midnight—there is my ultimatum.”

“I embrace it,” said Ellieslaw; “and I will leave you to talk upon our military preparations, while I go to prepare my daughter for so sudden a change of condition.”

So saying, he left the company.

CHAPTER XIV.

*He brings Earl Osmond to receive my vows.
O dreadful change! for Tancred, haughty Osmond.
—TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.*

Mr. Vere, whom long practice of dissimulation had enabled to model his very gait and footsteps to aid the purposes of deception, walked along the stone passage, and up the first flight of steps towards Miss Vere's apartment, with the alert, firm, and steady pace of one who is bound, indeed, upon important business, but who entertains no doubt he can terminate his affairs satisfactorily. But when out of hearing of the gentlemen whom he had left, his step became so slow and irresolute, as to correspond with his doubts and his fears. At length he paused in an antechamber to collect his ideas, and form his plan of argument, before approaching his daughter.

"In what more hopeless and inextricable dilemma was ever an unfortunate man involved!" Such was the tenor of his reflections.—"If we now fall to pieces by disunion, there can be little doubt that the government will take my life as the prime agitator of the insurrection. Or, grant I could stoop to save myself by a hasty submission, am I not, even in that case, utterly ruined? I have broken irreconcilably with Ratcliffe, and can have nothing to expect from that quarter but insult and persecution. I must wander forth an impoverished and dishonoured man, without even the means of sustaining life, far less wealth sufficient to counterbalance the infamy which my countrymen, both those whom I desert and those whom I join, will attach to the name of the political renegade. It is not to be thought of. And yet, what choice remains between this lot and the ignominious scaffold? Nothing can save me but reconciliation with these men; and, to accomplish this, I have promised to Langley that Isabella shall marry him ere midnight, and to Mareschal, that she shall do so without compulsion. I have but one remedy betwixt me and ruin—her consent to take a suitor whom she dislikes, upon such short notice as would disgust her, even were he a favoured lover—But I must trust to the romantic generosity of her disposition; and let me paint the necessity of her obedience ever so strongly, I cannot overcharge its reality."

Having finished this sad chain of reflections upon his perilous condition, he entered his daughter's apartment with every nerve bent up to the support of the argument which he was about to sustain. Though a deceitful and ambitious man, he was not so devoid of natural affection but that he was shocked at the part he was about to act, in practising on the feelings of a dutiful and affectionate child; but the recollections, that, if he succeeded, his daughter would only be trepanned into an advantageous match, and that, if he failed, he himself was a lost man, were quite sufficient to drown all scruples.

He found Miss Vere seated by the window of her dressing-room, her head reclining on her hand, and either sunk in slumber, or so deeply engaged in meditation, that she did not hear the noise he made at his entrance. He approached with his features composed to a deep expression of sorrow and sympathy, and, sitting down beside her, solicited her attention by quietly taking her hand, a motion which he did not fail to accompany with a deep sigh.

"My father!" said Isabella, with a sort of start, which expressed at least as much fear, as joy or affection.

"Yes, Isabella," said Vere, "your unhappy father, who comes now as a penitent to crave forgiveness of his daughter for an injury done to her in the excess of his affection, and then to take leave of her for ever."

"Sir? Offence to me take leave for ever? What does all this mean?" said Miss Vere.

"Yes, Isabella, I am serious. But first let me ask you, have you no suspicion that I may have been privy to the strange chance which befell you yesterday morning?"

"You, sir?" answered Isabella, stammering between a consciousness that he had guessed her thoughts justly, and the shame as well as fear which forbade her to acknowledge a suspicion so degrading and so unnatural.

"Yes!" he continued, "your hesitation confesses that you entertained such an opinion, and I have now the painful task of acknowledging that your suspicions have done me no injustice. But listen to my motives. In an evil hour I countenanced the addresses of Sir Frederick Langley, conceiving it impossible that you could have any permanent objections to a match where the advantages were, in most respects, on your side. In a worse, I entered with him into measures calculated to restore our banished monarch, and the independence of my country. He has taken advantage of my unguarded confidence, and now has my life at his disposal."

"Your life, sir?" said Isabella, faintly.

"Yes, Isabella," continued her father, "the life of him who gave life to you. So soon as I foresaw the excesses into which his headlong passion (for, to do him justice, I believe his unreasonable conduct arises from excess of attachment to you) was likely to hurry him, I endeavoured, by finding a plausible pretext for your absence for some weeks, to extricate myself from the dilemma in which I am placed. For this purpose I wished, in case your objections to the match continued insurmountable, to have sent you privately for a few months to the convent of your maternal aunt at Paris. By a series of mistakes you have been brought from the place of secrecy and security which I had destined for your temporary abode. Fate has baffled my last chance of escape, and I have only to give you my blessing, and send you from the castle with Mr. Ratcliffe, who now leaves it; my own fate will soon be decided."

"Good Heaven, sir! can this be possible?" exclaimed Isabella. "O, why was I freed from the restraint in which you placed me? or why did you not impart your pleasure to me?"

"Think an instant, Isabella. Would you have had me prejudice in your opinion the friend I was most desirous of serving, by communicating to you the injurious eagerness with which he pursued his object? Could I do so honourably, having promised to assist his suit?—But it is all over, I and Mareschal have made up our minds to die like men; it only remains to send you from hence under a safe escort."

"Great powers! and is there no remedy?" said the terrified young woman.

"None, my child," answered Vere, gently, "unless one which you would not advise your father to adopt—to be the first to betray his friends."

"O, no! no!" she answered, abhorrently yet hastily, as if to reject the temptation which the alternative presented to her. "But is there no other hope—through flight—through mediation—through supplication?—I will bend my knee to Sir Frederick!"

"It would be a fruitless degradation; he is determined on his course, and I am equally resolved to stand the hazard of my fate. On one condition only he will turn aside from his purpose, and that condition my lips shall never utter to you."

"Name it, I conjure you, my dear father!" exclaimed Isabella. "What CAN he ask that we ought not to grant, to prevent the hideous catastrophe with which you are threatened?"

"That, Isabella," said Vere, solemnly, "you shall never know, until your father's head has rolled on the bloody scaffold; then, indeed, you will learn there was one sacrifice by which he might have been saved."

"And why not speak it now?" said Isabella; "do you fear I would flinch from the sacrifice of fortune for your preservation? or would you bequeath me the bitter legacy of life-long remorse, so oft as I shall think that you perished, while there remained one mode of preventing the dreadful misfortune that overhangs you?"

"Then, my child," said Vere, "since you press me to name what I would a thousand times rather leave in silence, I must inform you that he will accept for ransom nothing but your hand in marriage, and that conferred before midnight this very evening!"

"This evening, sir?" said the young lady, struck with horror at the proposal—"and to such a man!—A man?—a monster, who could wish to win the daughter by threatening the life of the father—it is impossible!"

"You say right, my child," answered her father, "it is indeed impossible; nor have I either the right or the wish to exact such a sacrifice—It is the course of nature that the old should die and be forgot, and the young should live and be happy."

"My father die, and his child can save him!—but no—no—my dear father, pardon me, it is impossible; you only wish to guide me to your wishes. I know your object is what you think my happiness, and this dreadful tale is only told to influence my conduct and subdue my scruples."

"My daughter," replied Ellieslaw, in a tone where offended authority seemed to struggle with parental affection, "my child suspects me of inventing a false tale to work upon her feelings! Even this I must bear, and even from this unworthy suspicion I must descend to vindicate myself. You know the stainless honour of your cousin Mareschal—mark what I shall write to him, and judge from his answer, if the danger in which we stand is not real, and whether I have not used every means to avert it."

He sat down, wrote a few lines hastily, and handed them to Isabella, who, after repeated and painful efforts, cleared her eyes and head sufficiently to discern their purport.

"Dear cousin," said the billet, "I find my daughter, as I expected, in despair at the untimely and premature urgency of Sir Frederick Langley. She cannot even comprehend the peril in which we stand, or how much we are in his power—Use your influence with him, for Heaven's sake, to modify proposals, to the acceptance of which I cannot, and will not, urge my child against all her own feelings, as well as those of delicacy and propriety, and oblige your loving cousin,—R. V."

In the agitation of the moment, when her swimming eyes and dizzy brain could hardly comprehend the sense of what she looked upon, it is not surprising that Miss Vere should have omitted to remark that this letter seemed to rest her scruples rather upon the form and time of the proposed union, than on a rooted dislike to the suitor proposed to her. Mr. Vere rang the bell, and gave the letter to a servant to be delivered to Mr. Mareschal, and, rising from his chair, continued to traverse the apartment in silence and in great agitation until the answer was returned. He glanced it over, and wrung the hand of his daughter as he gave it to her. The tenor was as follows:—

"My dear kinsman, I have already urged the knight on the point you mention, and I find him as fixed as Cheviot. I am truly sorry my fair cousin should be pressed to give up any of her maidenly rights. Sir Frederick consents, however, to leave the castle with me the instant the ceremony is performed, and we will raise our followers and begin the fray. Thus there is great hope the bridegroom may be knocked on the head before he and the bride can meet again, so Bell has a fair chance to be Lady Langley A TRES BON MARCHE. For the rest, I can only say, that if she can make up her mind to the alliance at all—it is no time for mere maiden ceremony—my pretty cousin must needs consent to marry in haste, or we shall all repent at leisure, or rather have very little leisure to repent; which is all at present from him who rests your affectionate kinsman,—R. M."

"P.S.—Tell Isabella that I would rather cut the knight's throat after all, and end the dilemma that way, than see her constrained to marry him against her will."

When Isabella had read this letter, it dropped from her hand, and she would, at the same time, have fallen from her chair, had she not been supported by her father.

"My God, my child will die!" exclaimed Vere, the feelings of nature overcoming, even in HIS breast, the sentiments of selfish policy; "look up, Isabella—look up, my child—come what will, you shall not be the sacrifice—I will fall myself with the consciousness I leave you happy—My child may weep on my grave, but she shall not—not in this instance—reproach my memory." He called a servant.—"Go, bid Ratcliffe come hither directly."

During this interval, Miss Vere became deadly pale, clenched her hands, pressing the palms strongly together, closed her eyes, and drew her lips with strong compression, as if the severe constraint which she put upon her internal feelings extended even to her muscular organization. Then raising her head, and drawing in her breath strongly ere she spoke, she said, with firmness,—"Father, I consent to the marriage."

"You shall not—you shall not,—my child—my dear child—you shall not embrace certain misery to free me from uncertain danger."

So exclaimed Ellieslaw; and, strange and inconsistent beings that we are! he expressed the real though momentary feelings of his heart.

"Father," repeated Isabella, "I will consent to this marriage."

"No, my child, no—not now at least—we will humble ourselves to obtain delay from him; and yet, Isabella, could you overcome a dislike which has no real foundation, think, in other respects, what a match!—wealth—rank—importance."

"Father!" reiterated Isabella, "I have consented."

It seemed as if she had lost the power of saying anything else, or even of varying the phrase which, with such effort, she had compelled herself to utter.

"Heaven bless thee, my child!—Heaven bless thee!—And it WILL bless thee with riches, with pleasure, with power."

Miss Vere faintly entreated to be left by herself for the rest of the evening.

"But will you not receive Sir Frederick?" said her father, anxiously.

"I will meet him," she replied, "I will meet him—when I must, and where I must; but spare me now."

"Be it so, my dearest; you shall know no restraint that I can save you from. Do not think too hardly of Sir Frederick for this,—it is an excess of passion."

Isabella waved her hand impatiently.

"Forgive me, my child—I go—Heaven bless thee. At eleven—if you call me not before—at eleven I come to seek you."

When he left Isabella she dropped upon her knees—"Heaven aid me to support the resolution I have taken—Heaven only can—O, poor Earnscliff! who shall comfort him? and with what contempt will he pronounce her name, who listened to him to-day and gave herself to another at night! But let him despise me—better so than that he should know the truth—let him despise me; if it will but lessen his grief, I should feel comfort in the loss of his esteem."

She wept bitterly; attempting in vain, from time to time, to commence the prayer for which she had sunk on her knees, but unable to calm her spirits sufficiently for the exercise of devotion. As she remained in this agony of mind, the door of her apartment was slowly opened.

CHAPTER XV.

The darksome cave they enter, where they found

The woful man, low sitting on the ground,

Musing full sadly in his sullen mind.—FAERY QUEEN.

The intruder on Miss Vere's sorrows was Ratcliffe. Ellieslaw had, in the agitation of his mind, forgotten to countermand the order he had given to call him thither, so that he opened the door with the words, "You sent for me, Mr. Vere." Then looking around—"Miss Vere, alone! on the ground! and in tears!"

"Leave me—leave me, Mr. Ratcliffe," said the unhappy young lady.

"I must not leave you," said Ratcliffe; "I have been repeatedly requesting admittance to take my leave of you, and have been refused, until your father himself sent for me. Blame me not, if I am bold and intrusive; I have a duty to discharge which makes me so."

"I cannot listen to you—I cannot speak to you, Mr. Ratcliffe; take my best wishes, and for God's sake leave me."

"Tell me only," said Ratcliffe, "is it true that this monstrous match is to go forward, and this very night? I heard the servants proclaim it as I was on the great staircase—I heard the directions given to clear out the chapel."

"Spare me, Mr. Ratcliffe," replied the luckless bride; "and from the state in which you see me, judge of the cruelty of these questions."

"Married? to Sir Frederick Langley? and this night? It must not cannot—shall not be."

"It MUST be, Mr. Ratcliff, or my father is ruined."

"Ah! I understand," answered Ratcliffe; "and you have sacrificed yourself to save him who—But let the virtue of the child atone for the faults of the father it is no time to rake them up.—What CAN be done? Time presses—I know but one remedy—with four-and-twenty hours I might find many—Miss Vere, you must implore the protection of the only human being who has it in his power to control the course of events which threatens to hurry you before it."

"And what human being," answered Miss Vere, "has such power?"

"Start not when I name him," said Ratcliffe, coming near her, and speaking in a low but distinct voice. "It is he who is called Elshender the Recluse of Mucklestane-Moor."

"You are mad, Mr. Ratcliffe, or you mean to insult my misery by an ill-timed jest!"

"I am as much in my senses, young lady," answered her adviser, "as you are; and I am no idle jester, far less with misery, least of all with your misery. I swear to you that this being (who is other far than what he seems) actually possesses the means of redeeming you from this hateful union."

"And of insuring my father's safety?"

"Yes! even that," said Ratcliffe, "if you plead his cause with him—yet how to obtain admittance to the Recluse!"

"Fear not that," said Miss Vere, suddenly recollecting the incident of the rose; "I remember he desired me to call upon him for aid in my extremity, and gave me this flower as a token. Ere it faded away entirely, I would need, he said, his assistance: is it possible his words can have been aught but the ravings of insanity?"

"Doubt it not fear it not—but above all," said Ratcliffe, "let us lose no time—are you at liberty, and unwatched?"

"I believe so," said Isabella: "but what would you have me to do?"

"Leave the castle instantly," said Ratcliffe, "and throw yourself at the feet of this extraordinary man, who in circumstances that seem to argue the extremity of the most contemptible poverty, possesses yet an almost absolute influence over your fate.—Guests and servants are deep in their carouse—the leaders sitting in conclave on their treasonable schemes—my horse stands ready in the stable—I will saddle one for you, and meet you at the little garden-gate—O, let no doubt of my prudence or fidelity prevent your taking the only step in your power to escape the dreadful fate which must attend the wife of Sir Frederick Langley!"

"Mr. Ratcliffe," said Miss Vere, "you have always been esteemed a man of honour and probity, and a drowning wretch will always catch at the feeblest twig,—I will trust you—I will follow your advice—I will meet you at the garden-gate."

She bolted the outer-door of her apartment as soon as Mr. Ratcliffe left her, and descended to the garden by a separate stair of communication which opened to her dressing-room. On the way she felt inclined to retract the consent she had so hastily given to a plan so hopeless and extravagant. But as she passed in her descent a private door which entered into the chapel from the back-stair, she heard the voice of the female-servants as they were employed in the task of cleaning it.

"Married! and to sae bad a man—Ewhow, sirs! anything rather than that."

"They are right—they are right," said Miss Vere, "anything rather than that!"

She hurried to the garden. Mr. Ratcliffe was true to his appointment—the horses stood saddled at the garden-gate, and in a few minutes they were advancing rapidly towards the hut of the Solitary.

While the ground was favourable, the speed of their journey was such as to prevent much communication; but when a steep ascent compelled them to slacken their pace, a new cause of apprehension occurred to Miss Vere's mind.

"Mr. Ratcliffe," she said, pulling up her horse's bridle, "let us prosecute no farther a journey, which nothing but the extreme agitation of my mind can vindicate my having undertaken—I am well aware that this man passes among the vulgar as being possessed of supernatural powers, and carrying on an intercourse with beings of another world; but I would have you aware I am neither to be imposed on by such follies, nor, were I to believe in their existence, durst I, with my feelings of religion, apply to this being in my distress."

"I should have thought, Miss Vere," replied Ratcliffe, "my character and habits of thinking were so well known to you, that you might have held me exculpated from crediting in such absurdity."

"But in what other mode," said Isabella, "can a being, so miserable himself in appearance, possess the power of assisting me?"

"Miss Vere," said Ratcliffe, after a momentary pause, "I am bound by a solemn oath of secrecy—You must, without farther explanation, be satisfied with my pledged assurance, that he does possess the power, if you can inspire him with the will; and that, I doubt not, you will be able to do."

"Mr. Ratcliffe," said Miss Vere, "you may yourself be mistaken; you ask an unlimited degree of confidence from me."

"Recollect, Miss Vere," he replied, "that when, in your humanity, you asked me to interfere with your father in favour of Haswell and his ruined family—when you requested me to prevail on him to do a thing most abhorrent to his nature—to forgive an injury and remit a penalty—I stipulated that you should ask me no questions concerning the sources of my influence—You found no reason to distrust me then, do not distrust me now."

"But the extraordinary mode of life of this man," said Miss Vere; "his seclusion—his figure—the deepness of mis-anthropy which he is said to express in his language—Mr. Ratcliffe, what can I think of him if he really possesses the powers you ascribe to him?"

"This man, young lady, was bred a Catholic, a sect which affords a thousand instances of those who have retired from power and affluence to voluntary privations more strict even than his."

"But he avows no religious motive," replied Miss Vere.

"No," replied Ratcliffe; "disgust with the world has operated his retreat from it without assuming the veil of superstition. Thus far I may tell you—he was born to great wealth, which his parents designed should become greater by his union with a kinswoman, whom for that purpose they bred up in their own house. You have seen his figure; judge what the young lady must have thought of the lot to which she was destined—Yet, habituated to his appearance, she showed no reluctance, and the friends of—of the person whom I speak of, doubted not that the excess of his attachment, the various acquisitions of his mind, his many and amiable qualities, had overcome the natural horror which his destined bride must have entertained at an exterior so dreadfully inauspicious."

"And did they judge truly?" said Isabella.

"You shall hear. He, at least, was fully aware of his own deficiency; the sense of it haunted him like a phantom. 'I am,' was his own expression to me,—I mean to a man whom he trusted,—'I am, in spite of what you would say, a poor miserable outcast, fitter to have been smothered in the cradle than to have been brought up to scare the world in which I crawl.' The person whom he addressed in vain endeavoured to impress him with the indifference to external form which is the natural result of philosophy, or entreat him to recall the superiority of mental talents to the more attractive attributes that are merely personal. 'I hear you,' he would reply; 'but you speak the voice of cold-blooded stoicism, or, at least, of friendly partiality. But look at every book which we have read, those excepted of that abstract philosophy which feels no responsive voice in our natural feelings. Is not personal form, such as at least can be tolerated without horror and disgust, always represented as essential to our ideas of a friend, far more a lover? Is not such a mis-shapen monster as I am, excluded, by the very fiat of Nature, from her fairest enjoyments? What but my wealth prevents all—perhaps even Letitia, or you—from shunning me as something foreign to your nature, and more odious, by bearing that distorted resemblance to humanity which we observe in the animal tribes that are more hateful to man because they seem his caricature?"

"You repeat the sentiments of a madman," said Miss Vere.

"No," replied her conductor, "unless a morbid and excessive sensibility on such a subject can be termed insanity. Yet I will not deny that this governing feeling and apprehension carried the person who entertained it, to lengths which indicated a deranged imagination. He appeared to think that it was necessary for him, by exuberant, and not always well-chosen instances of liberality, and even profusion, to unite himself to the human race, from which he conceived himself naturally dis severed. The benefits which he bestowed, from a disposition naturally philanthropic in an uncommon degree, were exaggerated by the influence of the goading reflection, that more was necessary from him than from others,—lavishing his treasures as if to bribe mankind to receive him into their class. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the bounty which flowed from a source so capricious was often abused, and his confidence frequently betrayed. These disappointments, which occur to all, more or less, and most to such as confer benefits without just discrimination, his diseased fancy set down to the hatred and contempt excited by his personal deformity.—But I fatigue you, Miss Vere?"

"No, by no means; I—I could not prevent my attention from wandering an instant; pray proceed."

"He became at length," continued Ratcliffe, "the most ingenious self-tormentor of whom I have ever heard; the scoff of the rabble, and the sneer of the yet more brutal vulgar of his own rank, was to him agony and breaking on the wheel. He regarded the laugh of the common people whom he passed on the street, and the suppressed titter, or yet more offensive terror, of the young girls to whom he was introduced in company, as proofs of the true sense which the world entertained of him, as a prodigy unfit to be received among them on the usual terms of society, and as vindicating the wisdom of his purpose in withdrawing himself from among them. On the faith and sincerity of two persons alone, he seemed to rely implicitly—on that of his betrothed bride, and of a friend eminently gifted in personal accomplishments, who seemed, and indeed probably was, sincerely attached to him. He ought to have been so at least, for he was literally loaded with benefits by him whom you are now about to see. The parents of the subject of my story died within a short space of each other. Their death postponed the marriage, for which the day had been fixed. The lady did not seem greatly to mourn this delay,—perhaps that was not to have been expected; but she intimated no change of intention, when, after a decent interval, a second day was named for their union. The friend of whom I spoke was then a constant resident at the

Hall. In an evil hour, at the earnest request and entreaty of this friend, they joined a general party, where men of different political opinions were mingled, and where they drank deep. A quarrel ensued; the friend of the Recluse drew his sword with others, and was thrown down and disarmed by a more powerful antagonist. They fell in the struggle at the feet of the Recluse, who, maimed and truncated as his form appears, possesses, nevertheless, great strength, as well as violent passions. He caught up a sword, pierced the heart of his friend's antagonist, was tried, and his life, with difficulty, redeemed from justice at the expense of a year's close imprisonment, the punishment of manslaughter. The incident affected him most deeply, the more that the deceased was a man of excellent character, and had sustained gross insult and injury ere he drew his sword. I think, from that moment, I observed—I beg pardon—The fits of morbid sensibility which had tormented this unfortunate gentleman, were rendered henceforth more acute by remorse, which he, of all men, was least capable of having incurred, or of sustaining when it became his unhappy lot. His paroxysms of agony could not be concealed from the lady to whom he was betrothed; and it must be confessed they were of an alarming and fearful nature. He comforted himself, that, at the expiry of his imprisonment, he could form with his wife and friend a society, encircled by which he might dispense with more extensive communication with the world. He was deceived; before that term elapsed, his friend and his betrothed bride were man and wife. The effects of a shock so dreadful on an ardent temperament, a disposition already soured by bitter remorse, and loosened by the indulgence of a gloomy imagination from the rest of mankind, I cannot describe to you; it was as if the last cable at which the vessel rode had suddenly parted, and left her abandoned to all the wild fury of the tempest. He was placed under medical restraint. As a temporary measure this might have been justifiable; but his hard-hearted friend, who, in consequence of his marriage, was now his nearest ally, prolonged his confinement, in order to enjoy the management of his immense estates. There was one who owed his all to the sufferer, an humble friend, but grateful and faithful. By unceasing exertion, and repeated invocation of justice, he at length succeeded in obtaining his patron's freedom, and reinstatement in the management of his own property, to which was soon added that of his intended bride, who having died without male issue, her estates reverted to him, as heir of entail. But freedom and wealth were unable to restore the equipoise of his mind; to the former his grief made him indifferent—the latter only served him as far as it afforded him the means of indulging his strange and wayward fancy. He had renounced the Catholic religion, but perhaps some of its doctrines continued to influence a mind, over which remorse and misanthropy now assumed, in appearance, an unbounded authority. His life has since been that alternately of a pilgrim and a hermit, suffering the most severe privations, not indeed in ascetic devotion, but in abhorrence of mankind. Yet no man's words and actions have been at such a wide difference, nor has any hypocritical wretch ever been more ingenious in assigning good motives for his vile actions, than this unfortunate in reconciling to his abstract principles of misanthropy, a conduct which flows from his natural generosity and kindness of feeling."

"Still, Mr. Ratcliffe—still you describe the inconsistencies of a madman."

"By no means," replied Ratcliffe. "That the imagination of this gentleman is disordered, I will not pretend to dispute; I have already told you that it has sometimes broken out into paroxysms approaching to real mental alienation. But it is of his common state of mind that I speak; it is irregular, but not deranged; the shades are as gradual as those that divide the light of noonday from midnight. The courtier who ruins his fortune for the attainment of a title which can do him no good, or power of which he can make no suitable or creditable use, the miser who hoards his useless wealth, and the prodigal who squanders it, are all marked with a certain shade of insanity. To criminals who are guilty of enormities, when the temptation, to a sober mind, bears no proportion to the horror of the act, or the probability of detection and punishment, the same observation applies; and every violent passion, as well as anger, may be termed a short madness."

"This may be all good philosophy, Mr. Ratcliffe," answered Miss Vere; "but, excuse me, it by no means emboldens me to visit, at this late hour, a person whose extravagance of imagination you yourself can only palliate."

"Rather, then," said Ratcliffe, "receive my solemn assurances, that you do not incur the slightest danger. But what I have been hitherto afraid to mention for fear of alarming you is, that now when we are within sight of his retreat, for I can discover it through the twilight, I must go no farther with you; you must proceed alone."

"Alone?—I dare not."

"You must," continued Ratcliffe; "I will remain here and wait for you."

"You will not, then, stir from this place," said Miss Vere "yet the distance is so great, you could not hear me were I to cry for assistance."

"Fear nothing," said her guide; "or observe, at least, the utmost caution in stifling every expression of timidity. Remember that his predominant and most harassing apprehension arises from a consciousness of the hideousness of his appearance. Your path lies straight beside yon half-fallen willow; keep the left side of it; the marsh lies on the right. Farewell for a time. Remember the evil you are threatened with, and let it overcome at once your fears and scruples."

"Mr. Ratcliffe," said Isabella, "farewell; if you have deceived one so unfortunate as myself, you have for ever forfeited the fair character for probity and honour to which I have trusted."

"On my life—on my soul," continued Ratcliffe, raising his voice as the distance between them increased, "you are safe—perfectly safe."

CHAPTER XVI.

—'Twas time and griefs

That framed him thus: Time, with his fairer hand,

Offering the fortunes of his former days,

The former man may make him.—Bring us to him,

And chance it as it may.—OLD PLAY.

The sounds of Ratcliffe's voice had died on Isabella's ear; but as she frequently looked back, it was some encouragement to her to discern his form now darkening in the gloom. Ere, however, she went much farther, she lost the object in the increasing shade. The last glimmer of the twilight placed her before the hut of the Solitary. She twice extended her hand to the door, and twice she withdrew it; and when she did at length make the effort, the knock did not equal in violence the throb of her own bosom. Her next effort was louder; her third was reiterated, for the fear of not obtaining the protection from which Ratcliffe promised so much, began to overpower the terrors of his presence from whom she was to request it. At length, as she still received no answer, she repeatedly called upon the Dwarf by his assumed name, and requested him to answer and open to her.

"What miserable being is reduced," said the appalling voice of the Solitary, "to seek refuge here? Go hence; when the heath-fowl need shelter, they seek it not in the nest of the night-raven."

"I come to you, father," said Isabella, "in my hour of adversity, even as you yourself commanded, when you promised your heart and your door should be open to my distress; but I fear—"

"Ha!" said the Solitary, "then thou art Isabella Vere? Give me a token that thou art she."

"I have brought you back the rose which you gave me; it has not had time to fade ere the hard fate you foretold has come upon me!"

"And if thou hast thus redeemed thy pledge," said the Dwarf, "I will not forfeit mine. The heart and the door that are shut against every other earthly being, shall be open to thee and to thy sorrows."

She heard him move in his hut, and presently afterwards strike a light. One by one, bolt and bar were then withdrawn, the heart of Isabella throbbing higher as these obstacles to their meeting were successively removed. The door opened, and the Solitary stood before her, his uncouth form and features illuminated by the iron lamp which he held in his hand.

"Enter, daughter of affliction," he said,—"enter the house of misery."

She entered, and observed, with a precaution which increased her trepidation, that the Recluse's first act, after setting the lamp upon the table, was to replace the numerous bolts which secured the door of his hut. She shrunk as she heard the noise which accompanied this ominous operation, yet remembered Ratcliffe's

caution, and endeavoured to suppress all appearance of apprehension. The light of the lamp was weak and uncertain; but the Solitary, without taking immediate notice of Isabella, otherwise than by motioning her to sit down on a small settle beside the fireplace, made haste to kindle some dry furze, which presently cast a blaze through the cottage. Wooden shelves, which bore a few books, some bundles of dried herbs, and one or two wooden cups and platters, were on one side of the fire; on the other were placed some ordinary tools of field-labour, mingled with those used by mechanics. Where the bed should have been, there was a wooden frame, strewed with withered moss and rushes, the couch of the ascetic. The whole space of the cottage did not exceed ten feet by six within the walls; and its only furniture, besides what we have mentioned, was a table and two stools formed of rough deals.

Within these narrow precincts Isabella now found herself enclosed with a being, whose history had nothing to reassure her, and the fearful conformation of whose hideous countenance inspired an almost superstitious terror. He occupied the seat opposite to her, and dropping his huge and shaggy eyebrows over his piercing black eyes, gazed at her in silence, as if agitated by a variety of contending feelings. On the other side sate Isabella, pale as death, her long hair uncurled by the evening damps, and falling over her shoulders and breast, as the wet streamers droop from the mast when the storm has passed away, and left the vessel stranded on the beach. The Dwarf first broke the silence with the sudden, abrupt, and alarming question,—"Woman, what evil fate has brought thee hither?"

"My father's danger, and your own command," she replied faintly, but firmly.

"And you hope for aid from me?"

"If you can bestow it," she replied, still in the same tone of mild submission.

"And how should I possess that power?" continued the Dwarf, with a bitter sneer; "Is mine the form of a redresser of wrongs? Is this the castle in which one powerful enough to be sued to by a fair suppliant is likely to hold his residence? I but mocked thee, girl, when I said I would relieve thee."

"Then must I depart, and face my fate as I best may!"

"No!" said the Dwarf, rising and interposing between her and the door, and motioning to her sternly to resume her seat—"No! you leave me not in this way; we must have farther conference. Why should one being desire aid of another? Why should not each be sufficient to itself? Look round you—I, the most despised and most decrepit on Nature's common, have required sympathy and help from no one. These stones are of my own piling; these utensils I framed with my own hands; and with this"—and he laid his hand with a fierce smile on the long dagger which he always wore beneath his garment, and unsheathed it so far that the blade glimmered clear in the fire-light—"with this," he pursued, as he thrust the weapon back into the scabbard, "I can, if necessary, defend the vital spark enclosed in this poor trunk, against the fairest and strongest that shall threaten me with injury."

It was with difficulty Isabella refrained from screaming out aloud; but she DID refrain.

"This," continued the Recluse, "is the life of nature, solitary, self-sufficing, and independent. The wolf calls not the wolf to aid him in forming his den; and the vulture invites not another to assist her in striking down her prey."

"And when they are unable to procure themselves support," said Isabella, judiciously thinking that he would be most accessible to argument couched in his own metaphorical style, "what then is to befall them?"

"Let them starve, die, and be forgotten; it is the common lot of humanity."

"It is the lot of the wild tribes of nature," said Isabella, "but chiefly of those who are destined to support themselves by rapine, which brooks no partner; but it is not the law of nature in general; even the lower orders have confederacies for mutual defence. But mankind—the race would perish did they cease to aid each other.—From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid, have right to ask it of their fellow-mortals; no one who has the power of granting can refuse it without guilt."

"And in this simple hope, poor maiden," said the Solitary, "thou hast come into the desert, to seek one whose wish it were that the league thou hast spoken of were broken for ever, and that, in very truth, the whole race should perish? Wert thou not frightened?"

"Misery," said Isabella, firmly, "is superior to fear."

"Hast thou not heard it said in thy mortal world, that I have leagued myself with other powers, deformed to the eye and malevolent to the human race as myself? Hast thou not heard this—And dost thou seek my cell at midnight?"

"The Being I worship supports me against such idle fears," said Isabella; but the increasing agitation of her bosom belied the affected courage which her words expressed.

"Ho! ho!" said the Dwarf, "thou vauntest thyself a philosopher? Yet, shouldst thou not have thought of the danger of intrusting thyself, young and beautiful, in the power of one so spited against humanity, as to place his chief pleasure in defacing, destroying, and degrading her fairest works?"

Isabella, much alarmed, continued to answer with firmness, "Whatever injuries you may have sustained in the world, you are incapable of revenging them on one who never wronged you, nor, wilfully, any other."

"Ay, but, maiden," he continued, his dark eyes flashing with an expression of malignity which communicated itself to his wild and distorted features, "revenge is the hungry wolf, which asks only to tear flesh and lap blood. Think you the lamb's plea of innocence would be listened to by him?"

"Man!" said Isabella, rising, and expressing herself with much dignity, "I fear not the horrible ideas with which you would impress me. I cast them from me with disdain. Be you mortal or fiend, you would not offer injury to one who sought you as a suppliant in her utmost need. You would not—you durst not."

"Thou say'st truly, maiden," rejoined the Solitary; "I dare not—I would not. Begone to thy dwelling. Fear nothing with which they threaten thee. Thou hast asked my protection—thou shalt find it effectual."

"But, father, this very night I have consented to wed the man that I abhor, or I must put the seal to my father's ruin."

"This night?—at what hour?"

"Ere midnight."

"And twilight," said the Dwarf, "has already passed away. But fear nothing, there is ample time to protect thee."

"And my father?" continued Isabella, in a suppliant tone.

"Thy father," replied the Dwarf, "has been, and is, my most bitter enemy. But fear not; thy virtue shall save him. And now, begone; were I to keep thee longer by me, I might again fall into the stupid dreams concerning human worth from which I have been so fearfully awakened. But fear nothing—at the very foot of the altar I will redeem thee. Adieu, time presses, and I must act!"

He led her to the door of the hut, which he opened for her departure. She remounted her horse, which had been feeding in the outer enclosure, and pressed him forward by the light of the moon, which was now rising, to the spot where she had left Ratcliffe.

"Have you succeeded?" was his first eager question.

"I have obtained promises from him to whom you sent me; but how can he possibly accomplish them?"

"Thank God!" said Ratcliffe; "doubt not his power to fulfil his promise."

At this moment a shrill whistle was heard to resound along the heath.

"Hark!" said Ratcliffe, "he calls me—Miss Vere, return home, and leave unbolted the postern-door of the garden; to that which opens on the back-stairs I have a private key."

A second whistle was heard, yet more shrill and prolonged than the first.

"I come, I come," said Ratcliffe; and setting spurs to his horse, rode over the heath in the direction of the Recluse's hut. Miss Vere returned to the castle, the mettle of the animal on which she rode, and her own anxiety of mind, combining to accelerate her journey.

She obeyed Ratcliffe's directions, though without well apprehending their purpose, and leaving her horse at large in a paddock near the garden, hurried to her own apartment, which she reached without observation. She now unbolted her door, and rang her bell for lights. Her father appeared along with the servant who answered her summons.

"He had been twice," he said, "listening at her door during the two hours that had elapsed since he left her, and, not hearing her speak, had become apprehensive that she was taken ill."

"And now, my dear father," she said, "permit me to claim the promise you so kindly gave; let the last moments of freedom which I am to enjoy be mine without interruption; and protract to the last moment the respite which is allowed me."

"I will," said her father; "nor shall you be again interrupted. But this disordered dress—this dishevelled hair—do not let me find you thus when I call on you again; the sacrifice, to be beneficial, must be voluntary."

"Must it be so?" she replied; "then fear not, my father! the victim shall be adorned."

CHAPTER XVII.

This looks not like a nuptial.—MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

The chapel in the castle of Ellieslaw, destined to be the scene of this ill-omened union, was a building of much older date than the castle itself, though that claimed considerable antiquity. Before the wars between England and Scotland had become so common and of such long duration, that the buildings along both sides of the Border were chiefly dedicated to warlike purposes, there had been a small settlement of monks at Ellieslaw, a dependency, it is believed by antiquaries, on the rich Abbey of Jedburgh. Their possessions had long passed away under the changes introduced by war and mutual ravage. A feudal castle had arisen on the ruin of their cells, and their chapel was included in its precincts.

The edifice, in its round arches and massive pillars, the simplicity of which referred their date to what has been called the Saxon architecture, presented at all times a dark and sombre appearance, and had been frequently used as the cemetery of the family of the feudal lords, as well as formerly of the monastic brethren. But it looked doubly gloomy by the effect of the few and smoky torches which were used to enlighten it on the present occasion, and which, spreading a glare of yellow light in their immediate vicinity, were surrounded beyond by a red and purple halo reflected from their own smoke, and beyond that again by a zone of darkness which magnified the extent of the chapel, while it rendered it impossible for the eye to ascertain its limits. Some injudicious ornaments, adopted in haste for the occasion, rather added to the dreariness of the scene. Old fragments of tapestry, torn from the walls of other apartments, had been hastily and partially disposed around those of the chapel, and mingled inconsistently with scutcheons and funeral emblems of the dead, which they elsewhere exhibited. On each side of the stone altar was a monument, the appearance of which formed an equally strange contrast. On the one was the figure, in stone, of some grim hermit, or monk, who had died in the odour of sanctity; he was represented as recumbent, in his cowl and scapulaire, with his face turned upward as in the act of devotion, and his hands folded, from which his string of beads was dependent. On the other side was a tomb, in the Italian taste, composed of the most beautiful statuary marble, and accounted a model of modern art. It was erected to the memory of Isabella's mother, the late Mrs. Vere of Ellieslaw, who was represented as in a dying posture, while a weeping cherub, with eyes averted, seemed in the act of extinguishing a dying lamp as emblematic of her speedy dissolution. It was, indeed, a masterpiece of art, but misplaced in the rude vault to which it had been consigned. Many were surprised, and even scandalized, that Ellieslaw, not remarkable for attention to his lady while alive, should erect after her death such a costly mausoleum in affected sorrow; others cleared him from the imputation of hypocrisy, and averred that the monument had been constructed under the direction and at the sole expense of Mr. Ratcliffe.

Before these monuments the wedding guests were assembled. They were few in number; for many had left the castle to prepare for the ensuing political explosion, and Ellieslaw was, in the circumstances of the case, far from being desirous to extend invitations farther than to those near relations whose presence the custom of the country rendered indispensable. Next to the altar stood Sir Frederick Langley, dark, moody, and thoughtful, even beyond his wont, and near him, Mareschal, who was to play the part of bridesman, as it was called. The thoughtless humour of this young gentleman, on which he never deigned to place the least restraint, added to the cloud which overhung the brow of the bridegroom.

"The bride is not yet come out of her chamber," he whispered to Sir Frederick; "I trust that we must not have recourse to the violent expedients of the Romans which I read of at College. It would be hard upon my pretty cousin to be run away with twice in two days, though I know none better worth such a violent compliment."

Sir Frederick attempted to turn a deaf ear to this discourse, humming a tune, and looking another way, but Mareschal proceeded in the same wild manner.

"This delay is hard upon Dr. Hobbler, who was disturbed to accelerate preparations for this joyful event when he had successfully extracted the cork of his third bottle. I hope you will keep him free of the censure of his superiors, for I take it this is beyond canonical hours.—But here come Ellieslaw and my pretty cousin—prettier than ever, I think, were it not she seems so faint and so deadly pale—Hark ye, Sir Knight, if she says not YES with right good-will, it shall be no wedding, for all that has come and gone yet."

"No wedding, sir?" returned Sir Frederick, in a loud whisper, the tone of which indicated that his angry feelings were suppressed with difficulty.

"No—no marriage," replied Mareschal, "there's my hand and glove on't."

Sir Frederick Langley took his hand, and as he wrung it hard, said in a lower whisper, "Mareschal, you shall answer this," and then flung his hand from him.

"That I will readily do," said Mareschal, "for never word escaped my lips that my hand was not ready to guarantee.—So, speak up, my pretty cousin, and tell me if it be your free will and unbiassed resolution to accept of this gallant knight for your lord and husband; for if you have the tenth part of a scruple upon the subject, fall back, fall edge, he shall not have you."

"Are you mad, Mr. Mareschal?" said Ellieslaw, who, having been this young man's guardian during his minority, often employed a tone of authority to him. "Do you suppose I would drag my daughter to the foot of the altar, were it not her own choice?"

"Tut, Ellieslaw," retorted the young gentleman, "never tell me of the contrary; her eyes are full of tears, and her cheeks are whiter than her white dress. I must insist, in the name of common humanity, that the ceremony be adjourned till to-morrow."

"She shall tell you herself, thou incorrigible intermeddler in what concerns thee not, that it is her wish the ceremony should go on—Is it not, Isabella, my dear?"

"It is," said Isabella, half fainting—"since there is no help, either in God or man."

The first word alone was distinctly audible. Mareschal shrugged up his shoulders and stepped back. Ellieslaw led, or rather supported, his daughter to the altar. Sir Frederick moved forward and placed himself by her side. The clergyman opened his prayer-book, and looked to Mr. Vere for the signal to commence the service.

"Proceed," said the latter.

But a voice, as if issuing from the tomb of his deceased wife, called, in such loud and harsh accents as awakened every echo in the vaulted chapel, "Forbear!"

All were mute and motionless, till a distant rustle, and the clash of swords, or something resembling it, was heard from the remote apartments. It ceased almost instantly.

"What new device is this?" said Sir Frederick, fiercely, eyeing Ellieslaw and Mareschal with a glance of malignant suspicion.

"It can be but the frolic of some intemperate guest," said Ellieslaw, though greatly confounded; "we must make large allowances for the excess of this evening's festivity. Proceed with the service."

Before the clergyman could obey, the same prohibition which they had before heard, was repeated from the same spot. The female attendants screamed, and fled from the chapel; the gentlemen laid their hands on their swords. Ere the first moment of surprise had passed by, the Dwarf stepped from behind the monument, and placed himself full in front of Mr. Vere. The effect of so strange and hideous an apparition in such a place and in such circumstances, appalled all present, but seemed to annihilate the Laird of Ellieslaw, who, dropping his daughter's arm, staggered against the nearest pillar, and, clasping it with his hands as if for support, laid his brow against the column.

"Who is this fellow?" said Sir Frederick; "and what does he mean by this intrusion?"

"It is one who comes to tell you," said the Dwarf, with the peculiar acrimony which usually marked his manner, "that, in marrying that young lady, you wed neither the heiress of Ellieslaw, nor of Mauley Hall, nor of Polverton, nor of one furrow of land, unless she marries with MY consent; and to thee that consent shall never be given. Down—down on thy knees, and thank Heaven that thou art prevented from wedding qualities with which thou hast no concern—portionless truth, virtue, and innocence—thou, base ingrate," he continued, addressing himself to Ellieslaw, "what is thy wretched subterfuge now? Thou, who wouldst sell thy daughter to relieve thee from danger, as in famine thou wouldst have slain and devoured her to preserve thy own vile life!—Ay, hide thy face with thy hands; well mayst thou blush to look on him whose body thou didst consign to chains, his hand to guilt, and his soul to misery. Saved once more by the virtue of her who calls thee father, go hence, and may the pardon and benefits I confer on thee prove literal coals of fire, till thy brain is seared and scorched like mine!" Ellieslaw left the chapel with a gesture of mute despair.

"Follow him, Hubert Ratcliffe," said the Dwarf, "and inform him of his destiny. He will rejoice—for to breathe air and to handle gold is to him happiness."

"I understand nothing of all this," said Sir Frederick Langley; "but we are here a body of gentlemen in arms and authority for King James; and whether you really, sir, be that Sir Edward Mauley, who has been so long supposed dead in confinement, or whether you be an impostor assuming his name and title, we will use the freedom of detaining you, till your appearance here, at this moment, is better accounted for; we will have no spies among us—Seize on him, my friends."

But the domestics shrunk back in doubt and alarm. Sir Frederick himself stepped forward towards the Recluse, as if to lay hands on his person, when his progress was suddenly stopped by the glittering point of a partisan, which the sturdy hand of Hobbie Elliot presented against his bosom.

"I'll gar daylight shine through ye, if ye offer to steer him!" said the stout Borderer; "stand back, or I'll strike ye through! Naeboddy shall lay a finger on Elshie; he's a canny neighbourly man, aye ready to make a friend help; and, though ye may think him a lamiter, yet, grippie for grippie, friend, I'll wad a wether he'll make the bluid spin frae under your nails. He's a tough carle Elshie! he grips like a smith's vice."

"What has brought you here, Elliot?" said Mareschal; "who called on you for interference?"

"Troth, Mareschal-Wells," answered Hobbie, "I am just come here, wi' twenty or thretty mair o' us, in my ain name and the King's—or Queen's, ca' they her? and Canny Elshie's into the bargain, to keep the peace, and pay back some ill usage Ellieslaw has gien me. A bonny breakfast the loons gae me the ither morning, and him at the bottom on't; and trow ye I wasna ready to supper him up?—Ye needna lay your hands on your swords, gentlemen, the house is ours wi' little din; for the doors were open, and there had been ower muckle punch among your folk; we took their swords and pistols as easily as ye wad shiel pea-cods."

Mareschal rushed out, and immediately re-entered the chapel.

"By Heaven! it is true, Sir Frederick; the house is filled with armed men, and our drunken beasts are all disarmed. Draw, and let us fight our way."

"Binna rash—binna rash," exclaimed Hobbie; "hear me a bit, hear me a bit. We mean ye nae harm; but, as ye are in arms for King James, as ye ca' him, and the prelates, we thought it right to keep up the auld neighbour war, and stand up for the t'other ane and the Kirk; but we'll no hurt a hair o' your heads, if ye like to gang hame quietly. And it will be your best way, for there's sure news come frae Loudoun, that him they ca' Bang, or Byng, or what is't, has bang'd the French ships and the new king aff the coast however; sae ye had best bide content wi' auld Nanse for want of a better Queen."

Ratcliffe, who at this moment entered, confirmed these accounts so unfavourable to the Jacobite interest. Sir Frederick, almost instantly, and without taking leave of any one, left the castle, with such of his attendants as were able to follow him.

"And what will you do, Mr. Mareschal?" said Ratcliffe.

"Why, faith," answered he, smiling, "I hardly know; my spirit is too great, and my fortune too small, for me to follow the example of the doughty bridegroom. It is not in my nature, and it is hardly worth my while."

"Well, then, disperse your men, and remain quiet, and this will be overlooked, as there has been no overt act."

"Hout, ay," said Elliot, "just let byganes be byganes, and a' friends again; deil ane I bear malice at but Westburnflat, and I hae gien him baith a het skin and a cauld ane. I hadna changed three blows of the broadsword wi' him before he lap the window into the castle-moat, and swattered through it like a wild-duck. He's a clever fallow, indeed! maun kilt awa wi' ae bonny lass in the morning, and another at night, less wadna serve him! but if he disna kilt himsell out o' the country, I'll se kilt him wi' a tow, for the Castleton meeting's clean blawn ower; his friends will no countenance him."

During the general confusion, Isabella had thrown herself at the feet of her kinsman, Sir Edward Mauley, for so we must now call the Solitary, to express at once her gratitude, and to beseech forgiveness for her father. The eyes of all began to be fixed on them, as soon as their own agitation and the bustle of the attendants had somewhat abated. Miss Vere kneeled beside the tomb of her mother, to whose statue her features exhibited a marked resemblance. She held the hand of the Dwarf, which she kissed repeatedly and bathed with tears. He stood fixed and motionless, excepting that his eyes glanced alternately on the marble figure and the living suppliant. At length, the large drops which gathered on his eye-lashes compelled him to draw his hand across them.

"I thought," he said, "that tears and I had done; but we shed them at our birth, and their spring dries not until we are in our graves. But no melting of the heart shall dissolve my resolution. I part here, at once, and for ever, with all of which the memory" (looking to the tomb), "or the presence" (he pressed Isabella's hand), "is dear to me.—Speak not to me! attempt not to thwart my determination! it will avail nothing; you will hear of and see this lump of deformity no more. To you I shall be dead ere I am actually in my grave, and you will think of me as of a friend disencumbered from the toils and crimes of existence."

He kissed Isabella on the forehead, impressed another kiss on the brow of the statue by which she knelt, and left the chapel followed by Ratcliffe. Isabella, almost exhausted by the emotions of the day, was carried to her apartment by her women. Most of the other guests dispersed, after having separately endeavoured to impress on all who would listen to them their disapprobation of the plots formed against the government, or their regret for having engaged in them. Hobbie Elliot assumed the command of the castle for the night, and mounted a regular guard. He boasted not a little of the alacrity with which his friends and he had obeyed a hasty summons received from Elshie through the faithful Ratcliffe. And it was a lucky chance, he said, that on that very day they had got notice that Westburnflat did not intend to keep his tryste at Castleton, but to hold them at defiance; so that a considerable party had assembled at the Heugh-foot, with the intention of paying a visit to the robber's tower on the ensuing morning, and their course was easily directed to Ellieslaw Castle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

—Last scene of all,

To close this strange eventful history.—AS YOU LIKE IT.

On the next morning, Mr. Ratcliffe presented Miss Vere with a letter from her father, of which the following is the tenor:—

"MY DEAREST CHILD, The malice of a persecuting government will compel me, for my own safety, to retreat abroad, and to remain for some time in foreign parts. I do not ask you to accompany, or follow me; you will attend to my interest and your own more effectually by remaining where you are. It is unnecessary to enter into a minute detail concerning the causes of the strange events which yesterday took place. I think I have reason to complain of the usage I have received from Sir Edward Mauley, who is your nearest kinsman by the mother's side; but as he has declared you his heir, and is to put you in immediate possession of a large part of his fortune, I account it a full atonement. I am aware he has never forgiven the preference which your mother gave to my addresses, instead of complying with the terms of a sort of family compact, which absurdly and tyrannically destined her to wed her deformed relative. The shock was even sufficient to unsettle his wits (which, indeed, were never over-well arranged), and I had, as the husband of his nearest kinswoman and heir, the delicate task of taking care of his person and property, until he was reinstated in the management of the latter by those who, no doubt, thought they were doing him justice; although, if some parts of his subsequent conduct be examined, it will appear that he ought, for his own sake, to have been left under the influence of a mild and salutary restraint.

"In one particular, however, he showed a sense of the ties of blood, as well as of his own frailty; for while he sequestered himself closely from the world, under various names and disguises, and insisted on spreading a report of his own death (in which to gratify him I willingly acquiesced), he left at my disposal the rents of

a great proportion of his estates, and especially all those, which, having belonged to your mother, reverted to him as a male fief. In this he may have thought that he was acting with extreme generosity, while, in the opinion of all impartial men, he will only be considered as having fulfilled a natural obligation, seeing that, in justice, if not in strict law, you must be considered as the heir of your mother, and I as your legal administrator. Instead, therefore, of considering myself as loaded with obligations to Sir Edward on this account, I think I had reason to complain that these remittances were only doled out to me at the pleasure of Mr. Ratcliffe, who, moreover, exacted from me mortgages over my paternal estate of Ellieslaw for any sums which I required as an extra advance; and thus may be said to have insinuated himself into the absolute management and control of my property. Or, if all this seeming friendship was employed by Sir Edward for the purpose of obtaining a complete command of my affairs, and acquiring the power of ruining me at his pleasure, I feel myself, I must repeat, still less bound by the alleged obligation.

"About the autumn of last year, as I understand, either his own crazed imagination, or the accomplishment of some such scheme as I have hinted, brought him down to this country. His alleged motive, it seems, was a desire of seeing a monument which he had directed to be raised in the chapel over the tomb of your mother. Mr. Ratcliffe, who at this time had done me the honour to make my house his own, had the complaisance to introduce him secretly into the chapel. The consequence, as he informs me, was a frenzy of several hours, during which he fled into the neighbouring moors, in one of the wildest spots of which he chose, when he was somewhat recovered, to fix his mansion, and set up for a sort of country empiric, a character which, even in his best days, he was fond of assuming. It is remarkable, that, instead of informing me of these circumstances, that I might have had the relative of my late wife taken such care of as his calamitous condition required, Mr. Ratcliffe seems to have had such culpable indulgence for his irregular plans as to promise and even swear secrecy concerning them. He visited Sir Edward often, and assisted in the fantastic task he had taken upon him of constructing a hermitage. Nothing they appear to have dreaded more than a discovery of their intercourse.

"The ground was open in every direction around, and a small subterranean cave, probably sepulchral, which their researches had detected near the great granite pillar, served to conceal Ratcliffe, when any one approached his master. I think you will be of opinion, my love, that this secrecy must have had some strong motive. It is also remarkable, that while I thought my unhappy friend was residing among the Monks of La Trappe, he should have been actually living, for many months, in this bizarre disguise, within five miles of my house, and obtaining regular information of my most private movements, either by Ratcliffe, or through Westburnflat or others, whom he had the means to bribe to any extent. He makes it a crime against me that I endeavoured to establish your marriage with Sir Frederick. I acted for the best; but if Sir Edward Mauley thought otherwise, why did he not step manfully forward, express his own purpose of becoming a party to the settlements, and take that interest which he is entitled to claim in you as heir to his great property?

"Even now, though your rash and eccentric relation is somewhat tardy in announcing his purpose, I am far from opposing my authority against his wishes, although the person he desires you to regard as your future husband be young Earnscliff, the very last whom I should have thought likely to be acceptable to him, considering a certain fatal event. But I give my free and hearty consent, providing the settlements are drawn in such an irrevocable form as may secure my child from suffering by that state of dependence, and that sudden and causeless revocation of allowances, of which I have so much reason to complain. Of Sir Frederick Langley, I augur, you will hear no more. He is not likely to claim the hand of a dowerless maiden. I therefore commit you, my dear Isabella, to the wisdom of Providence and to your own prudence, begging you to lose no time in securing those advantages, which the fickleness of your kinsman has withdrawn from me to shower upon you.

"Mr. Ratcliffe mentioned Sir Edward's intention to settle a considerable sum upon me yearly, for my maintenance in foreign parts; but this my heart is too proud to accept from him. I told him I had a dear child, who, while in affluence herself, would never suffer me to be in poverty. I thought it right to intimate this to him pretty roundly, that whatever increase be settled upon you, it may be calculated so as to cover this necessary and natural encumbrance. I shall willingly settle upon you the castle and manor of Ellieslaw, to show my parental affection and disinterested zeal for promoting your settlement in life. The annual interest of debts charged on the estate somewhat exceeds the income, even after a reasonable rent has been put upon the mansion and mains. But as all the debts are in the person of Mr. Ratcliffe, as your kinsman's trustee, he will not be a troublesome creditor. And here I must make you aware, that though I have to complain of Mr. Ratcliffe's conduct to me personally, I, nevertheless, believe him a just and upright man, with whom you may safely consult on your affairs, not to mention that to cherish his good opinion will be the best way to retain that of your kinsman. Remember me to Marchie—I hope he will not be troubled on account of late matters. I will write more fully from the Continent. Meanwhile, I rest your loving father, RICHARD VERE."

The above letter throws the only additional light which we have been able to procure upon the earlier part of our story. It was Hobbie's opinion, and may be that of most of our readers, that the Recluse of Mucklestane-Moor had but a kind of a gleaming, or twilight understanding; and that he had neither very clear views as to what he himself wanted, nor was apt to pursue his ends by the clearest and most direct means; so that to seek the clew of his conduct, was likened, by Hobbie, to looking for a straight path through a common, over which are a hundred devious tracks, but not one distinct line of road.

When Isabella had perused the letter, her first enquiry was after her father. He had left the castle, she was informed, early in the morning, after a long interview with Mr. Ratcliffe, and was already far on his way to the next port, where he might expect to find shipping for the Continent.

"Where was Sir Edward Mauley?"

No one had seen the Dwarf since the eventful scene of the preceding evening.

"Odd, if anything has befa'en puir Elshie," said Hobbie Elliot, "I wad rather I were harried ower again."

He immediately rode to his dwelling, and the remaining she-goat came bleating to meet him, for her milking time was long past. The Solitary was nowhere to be seen; his door, contrary to wont, was open, his fire extinguished, and the whole hut was left in the state which it exhibited on Isabella's visit to him. It was pretty clear that the means of conveyance which had brought the Dwarf to Ellieslaw on the preceding evening, had removed him from it to some other place of abode. Hobbie returned disconsolate to the castle.

"I am doubting we hae lost Canny Elshie for gude an' a'."

"You have indeed," said Ratcliffe, producing a paper, which he put into Hobbie's hands; "but read that, and you will perceive you have been no loser by having known him."

It was a short deed of gift, by which "Sir Edward Mauley, otherwise called Elshender the Recluse, endowed Halbert or Hobbie Elliot, and Grace Armstrong, in full property, with a considerable sum borrowed by Elliot from him."

Hobbie's joy was mingled with feelings which brought tears down his rough cheeks.

"It's a queer thing," he said; "but I canna joy in the gear, unless I kend the puir body was happy that gave it me."

"Next to enjoying happiness ourselves," said Ratcliffe, "is the consciousness of having bestowed it on others. Had all my master's benefits been conferred like the present, what a different return would they have produced! But the indiscriminate profusion that would glut avarice, or supply prodigality, neither does good, nor is rewarded by gratitude. It is sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind."

"And that wad be a light har'st," said Hobbie; "but, wi' my young leddie's leave, I wad fain take down Eishie's skeps o' bees, and set them in Grace's bit flower yard at the Heugh-foot—they shall ne'er be smeeikit by ony o' huz. And the puir goat, she would be negleckit about a great toun like this; and she could feed bonnily on our lily lea by the burn side, and the hounds wad ken her in a day's time, and never fash her, and Grace wad milk her ilka morning wi' her ain hand, for Elshie's sake; for though he was thrawn and cankered in his converse, he likeit dumb creatures weel."

Hobbie's requests were readily granted, not without some wonder at the natural delicacy of feeling which pointed out to him this mode of displaying his gratitude. He was delighted when Ratcliffe informed him that his benefactor should not remain ignorant of the care which he took of his favourite.

"And mind be sure and tell him that grannie and the titties, and, abune a', Grace and mysell, are weel and thriving, and that it's a' his doing—that canna but please him, ane wad think."

And Elliot and the family at Heugh-foot were, and continued to be, as fortunate and happy as his undaunted honesty, tenderness, and gallantry so well merited.

All bar between the marriage of Earnscliff and Isabella was now removed, and the settlements which Ratcliffe produced on the part of Sir Edward Mauley, might have satisfied the cupidity of Ellieslaw himself. But Miss Vere and Ratcliffe thought it unnecessary to mention to Earnscliff that one great motive of Sir Edward, in thus loading the young pair with benefits, was to expiate his having, many years before, shed the blood of his father in a hasty brawl. If it be true, as Ratcliffe asserted, that the Dwarf's extreme misanthropy seemed to relax somewhat, under the consciousness of having diffused happiness among so many, the recollection of this circumstance might probably be one of his chief motives for refusing obstinately ever to witness their state of contentment.

Mareschal hunted, shot, and drank claret—tired of the country, went abroad, served three campaigns, came home, and married Lucy Ilderton.

Years fled over the heads of Earnscliff and his wife, and found and left them contented and happy. The scheming ambition of Sir Frederick Langley engaged him in the unfortunate insurrection of 1715. He was made prisoner at Preston, in Lancashire, with the Earl of Derwentwater, and others. His defence, and the dying speech which he made at his execution, may be found in the State Trials. Mr. Vere, supplied by his daughter with an ample income, continued to reside abroad, engaged deeply in the affair of Law's bank during the regency of the Duke of Orleans, and was at one time supposed to be immensely rich. But, on the bursting of that famous bubble, he was so much chagrined at being again reduced to a moderate annuity (although he saw thousands of his companions in misfortune absolutely starving), that vexation of mind brought on a paralytic stroke, of which he died, after lingering under its effects a few weeks.

Willie of Westburnflat fled from the wrath of Hobbie Elliot, as his betters did from the pursuit of the law. His patriotism urged him to serve his country abroad, while his reluctance to leave his native soil pressed him rather to remain in the beloved island, and collect purses, watches, and rings on the highroads at home. Fortunately for him, the first impulse prevailed, and he joined the army under Marlborough; obtained a commission to which he was recommended by his services in collecting cattle for the commissariat; returned home after many years, with some money (how come by Heaven only knows),—demolished the peel-house at Westburnflat, and built, in its stead, a high narrow ONSTEAD, of three stories, with a chimney at each end—drank brandy with the neighbours, whom, in his younger days, he had plundered—died in his bed, and is recorded upon his tombstone at Kirkwhistle (still extant), as having played all the parts of a brave soldier, a discreet neighbour, and a sincere Christian.

Mr. Ratcliffe resided usually with the family at Ellieslaw, but regularly every spring and autumn he absented himself for about a month. On the direction and purpose of his periodical journey he remained steadily silent; but it was well understood that he was then in attendance on his unfortunate patron. At length, on his return from one of these visits, his grave countenance, and deep mourning dress, announced to the Ellieslaw family that their benefactor was no more. Sir Edward's death made no addition to their fortune, for he had divested himself of his property during his lifetime, and chiefly in their favour. Ratcliffe, his sole confidant, died at a good old age, but without ever naming the place to which his master had finally retired, or the manner of his death, or the place of his burial. It was supposed that on all these particulars his patron had enjoined him strict secrecy.

The sudden disappearance of Elshie from his extraordinary hermitage corroborated the reports which the common people had spread concerning him. Many believed that, having ventured to enter a consecrated building, contrary to his paction with the Evil One, he had been bodily carried off while on his return to his cottage; but most are of opinion that he only disappeared for a season, and continues to be seen from time to time among the hills. And retaining, according to custom, a more vivid recollection of his wild and desperate language, than of the benevolent tendency of most of his actions, he is usually identified with the malignant demon called the Man of the Moors, whose feats were quoted by Mrs. Elliot to her grandsons; and, accordingly, is generally represented as bewitching the sheep, causing the ewes to KEB, that is, to cast their lambs, or seen loosening the impending wreath of snow to precipitate its weight on such as take shelter, during the storm, beneath the bank of a torrent, or under the shelter of a deep glen. In short, the evils most dreaded and deprecated by the inhabitants of that pastoral country, are ascribed to the agency of the BLACK DWARF.

BOOK XX
THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR
CHAPTER I

*By Caug and keel to win your bread,
Wi' whigmaleeries for them wha need,
Whilk is a gentle trade indeed
To carry the gaberlunzie on.*

Old Song.

FEW have been in my secret while I was compiling these narratives, nor is it probable that they will ever become public during the life of their author. Even were that event to happen, I am not ambitious of the honoured distinction, *digito monstrari*. I confess that, were it safe to cherish such dreams at all, I should more enjoy the thought of remaining behind the curtain unseen, like the ingenious manager of Punch and his wife Joan, and enjoying the astonishment and conjectures of my audience. Then might I, perchance, hear the productions of the obscure Peter Pattieson praised by the judicious and admired by the feeling, engrossing the young and attracting even the old; while the critic traced their fame up to some name of literary celebrity, and the question when, and by whom, these tales were written filled up the pause of conversation in a hundred circles and coteries. This I may never enjoy during my lifetime; but farther than this, I am certain, my vanity should never induce me to aspire.

I am too stubborn in habits, and too little polished in manners, to envy or aspire to the honours assigned to my literary contemporaries. I could not think a whit more highly of myself were I found worthy to "come in place as a lion" for a winter in the great metropolis. I could not rise, turn round, and show all my honours, from the shaggy mane to the tufted tail, "roar you an't were any nightingale," and so lie down again like a well-behaved beast of show, and all at the cheap and easy rate of a cup of coffee and a slice of bread and butter as thin as a wafer. And I could ill stomach the fulsome flattery with which the lady of the evening indulges her show-monsters on such occasions, as she crams her parrots with sugar-plums, in order to make them talk before company. I cannot be tempted to "come aloft" for these marks of distinction, and, like imprisoned Samson, I would rather remain—if such must be the alternative—all my life in the mill-house, grinding for my very bread, than be brought forth to make sport for the Philistine lords and ladies. This proceeds from no dislike, real or affected, to the aristocracy of these realms. But they have their place, and I have mine; and, like the iron and earthen vessels in the old fable, we can scarce come into collision without my being the sufferer in every sense. It may be otherwise with the sheets which I am now writing. These may be opened and laid aside at pleasure; by amusing themselves with the perusal, the great will excite no false hopes; by neglecting or condemning them, they will inflict no pain; and how seldom can they converse with those whose minds have toiled for their delight without doing either the one or the other.

In the better and wiser tone of feeling with Ovid only expresses in one line to retract in that which follows, I can address these quires—
Parve, nec invideo, sine me, liber, ibis in urbem.

Nor do I join the regret of the illustrious exile, that he himself could not in person accompany the volume, which he sent forth to the mart of literature, pleasure, and luxury. Were there not a hundred similar instances on record, the rate of my poor friend and school-fellow, Dick Tinto, would be sufficient to warn me against seeking happiness in the celebrity which attaches itself to a successful cultivator of the fine arts.

Dick Tinto, when he wrote himself artist, was wont to derive his origin from the ancient family of Tinto, of that ilk, in Lanarkshire, and occasionally hinted that he had somewhat derogated from his gentle blood in using the pencil for his principal means of support. But if Dick's pedigree was correct, some of his ancestors must have suffered a more heavy declension, since the good man his father executed the necessary, and, I trust, the honest, but certainly not very distinguished, employment of tailor in ordinary to the village of Langdirdum in the west. Under his humble roof was Richard born, and to his father's humble trade was Richard, greatly contrary to his inclination, early indentured. Old Mr. Tinto had, however, no reason to congratulate himself upon having compelled the youthful genius of his son to forsake its natural bent. He fared like the school-boy who attempts to stop with his finger the spout of a water cistern, while the stream, exasperated at this compression, escapes by a thousand uncalculated spurts, and wets him all over for his pains. Even so fared the senior Tinto, when his hopeful apprentice not only exhausted all the chalk in making sketches upon the shopboard, but even executed several caricatures of his father's best customers, who began loudly to murmur, that it was too hard to have their persons deformed by the vestments of the father, and to be at the same time turned into ridicule by the pencil of the son. This led to discredit and loss of practice, until the old tailor, yielding to destiny and to the entreaties of his son, permitted him to attempt his fortune in a line for which he was better qualified.

There was about this time, in the village of Langdirdum, a peripatetic brother of the brush, who exercised his vocation sub Jove frigido, the object of admiration of all the boys of the village, but especially to Dick Tinto. The age had not yet adopted, amongst other unworthy retrenchments, that iliberal measure of economy which, supplying by written characters the lack of symbolical representation, closes one open and easily accessible avenue of instruction and emolument against the students of the fine arts. It was not yet permitted to write upon the plastered doorway of an alehouse, or the suspended sign of an inn, "The Old Magpie," or "The Saracen's Head," substituting that cold description for the lively effigies of the plumed chatterer, or the turban'd frown of the terrific soldan. That early and more simple age considered alike the necessities of all ranks, and depicted the symbols of good cheer so as to be obvious to all capacities; well judging that a man who could not read a syllable might nevertheless love a pot of good ale as well as his better-educated neighbours, or even as the parson himself. Acting upon this liberal principle, publicans as yet hung forth the painted emblems of their calling, and sign-painters, if they seldom feasted, did not at least absolutely starve.

To a worthy of this decayed profession, as we have already intimated, Dick Tinto became an assistant; and thus, as is not unusual among heaven-born geniuses in this department of the fine arts, began to paint before he had any notion of drawing.

His talent for observing nature soon induced him to rectify the errors, and soar above the instructions, of his teacher. He particularly shone in painting horses, that being a favourite sign in the Scottish villages; and, in tracing his progress, it is beautiful to observe how by degrees he learned to shorten the backs and prolong the legs of these noble animals, until they came to look less like crocodiles, and more like nags. Detraction, which always pursues merit with strides proportioned to its advancement, has indeed alleged that Dick once upon a time painted a horse with five legs, instead of four. I might have rested his defence upon the license allowed to that branch of his profession, which, as it permits all sorts of singular and irregular combinations, may be allowed to extend itself so far as to bestow a limb supernumerary on a favourite subject. But the cause of a deceased friend is sacred; and I disdain to bottom it so superficially. I have visited the sign in question, which yet swings exalted in the village of Langdirdum; and I am ready to depone upon the oath that what has been idly mistaken or misrepresented as being the fifth leg of the horse, is, in fact, the tail of that quadruped, and, considered with reference to the posture in which he is delineated, forms a circumstance introduced and managed with great and successful, though daring, art. The nag being represented in a rampant or rearing posture, the tail, which is prolonged till it touches the ground, appears to form a point d'appui, and gives the firmness of a tripod to the figure, without which it would be difficult to conceive, placed as the feet are, how the courser could maintain his ground without tumbling backwards. This bold conception has fortunately fallen into the custody of one by whom it is duly valued; for, when Dick, in his more advanced state of proficiency, became dubious of the propriety of so daring a deviation to execute a picture of the publican himself in exchange for this juvenile production, the courteous offer was declined by his judicious employer, who had observed, it seems, that when his ale failed to do its duty in conciliating his guests, one glance at his sign was sure to put them in good humour.

It would be foreign to my present purpose to trace the steps by which Dick Tinto improved his touch, and corrected, by the rules of art, the luxuriance of a fervid imagination. The scales fell from his eyes on viewing the sketches of a contemporary, the Scottish Teniers, as Wilkie has been deservedly styled. He threw down the brush took up the crayons, and, amid hunger and toil, and suspense and uncertainty, pursued the path of his profession under better auspices than those of his original master. Still the first rude emanations of his genius, like the nursery rhymes of Pope, could these be recovered, will be dear to the companions of Dick

Tinto's youth. There is a tankard and gridiron painted over the door of an obscure change-house in the Back Wynd of Gandercleugh——But I feel I must tear myself from the subject, or dwell on it too long.

Amid his wants and struggles, Dick Tinto had recourse, like his brethren, to levying that tax upon the vanity of mankind which he could not extract from their taste and liberality——on a word, he painted portraits. It was in this more advanced state of proficiency, when Dick had soared above his original line of business, and highly disdained any allusion to it, that, after having been estranged for several years, we again met in the village of Gandercleugh, I holding my present situation, and Dick painting copies of the human face divine at a guinea per head. This was a small premium, yet, in the first burst of business, it more than sufficed for all Dick's moderate wants; so that he occupied an apartment at the Wallace Inn, cracked his jest with impunity even upon mine host himself, and lived in respect and observance with the chambermaid, hostler, and waiter.

Those halcyon days were too serene to last long. When his honour the Laird of Gandercleugh, with his wife and three daughters, the minister, the gauger, mine esteemed patron Mr. Jedediah Cleishbotham, and some round dozen of the feuars and farmers, had been consigned to immortality by Tinto's brush, custom began to slacken, and it was impossible to wring more than crowns and half-crowns from the hard hands of the peasants whose ambition led them to Dick's painting-room.

Still, though the horizon was overclouded, no storm for some time ensued. Mine host had Christian faith with a lodger who had been a good paymaster as long as he had the means. And from a portrait of our landlord himself, grouped with his wife and daughters, in the style of Rubens, which suddenly appeared in the best parlour, it was evident that Dick had found some mode of bartering art for the necessities of life.

Nothing, however, is more precarious than resources of this nature. It was observed that Dick became in his turn the whetstone of mine host's wit, without venturing either at defence or retaliation; that his easel was transferred to a garret-room, in which there was scarce space for it to stand upright; and that he no longer ventured to join the weekly club, of which he had been once the life and soul. In short, Dick Tinto's friends feared that he had acted like the animal called the sloth, which, heaving eaten up the last green leaf upon the tree where it has established itself, ends by tumbling down from the top, and dying of inanition. I ventured to hint this to Dick, recommended his transferring the exercise of his inestimable talent to some other sphere, and forsaking the common which he might be said to have eaten bare.

"There is an obstacle to my change of residence," said my friend, grasping my hand with a look of solemnity.

"A bill due to my landlord, I am afraid?" replied I, with heartfelt sympathy; "if any part of my slender means can assist in this emergence——"

"No, by the soul of Sir Joshua!" answered the generous youth, "I will never involve a friend in the consequences of my own misfortune. There is a mode by which I can regain my liberty; and to creep even through a common sewer is better than to remain in prison."

I did not perfectly understand what my friend meant. The muse of painting appeared to have failed him, and what other goddess he could invoke in his distress was a mystery to me. We parted, however, without further explanation, and I did not see him until three days after, when he summoned me to partake of the "foy" with which his landlord proposed to regale him ere his departure for Edinburgh.

I found Dick in high spirits, whistling while he buckled the small knapsack which contained his colours, brushes, pallets, and clean shirt. That he parted on the best terms with mine host was obvious from the cold beef set forth in the low parlour, flanked by two mugs of admirable brown stout; and I own my curiosity was excited concerning the means through which the face of my friend's affairs had been so suddenly improved. I did not suspect Dick of dealing with the devil, and by what earthly means he had extricated himself thus happily I was at a total loss to conjecture.

He perceived my curiosity, and took me by the hand. "My friend," he said, "fain would I conceal, even from you, the degradation to which it has been necessary to submit, in order to accomplish an honourable retreat from Gandercleugh. But what avails attempting to conceal that which must needs betray itself even by its superior excellence? All the village——all the parish——all the world——will soon discover to what poverty has reduced Richard Tinto."

A sudden thought here struck me. I had observed that our landlord wore, on that memorable morning, a pair of bran new velveteens instead of his ancient thicksets.

"What," said I, drawing my right hand, with the forefinger and thumb pressed together, nimbly from my right haunch to my left shoulder, "you have condescended to resume the paternal arts to which you were first bred——long stitches, ha, Dick?"

He repelled this unlucky conjecture with a frown and a pshaw, indicative of indignant contempt, and leading me into another room, showed me, resting against the wall, the majestic head of Sir William Wallace, grim as when severed from the trunk by the orders of the Edward.

The painting was executed on boards of a substantial thickness, and the top decorated with irons, for suspending the honoured effigy upon a signpost.

"There," he said, "my friend, stands the honour of Scotland, and my shame; yet not so——rather the shame of those who, instead of encouraging art in its proper sphere, reduce it to these unbecoming and unworthy extremities."

I endeavoured to smooth the ruffled feelings of my misused and indignant friend. I reminded him that he ought not, like the stag in the fable, to despise the quality which had extricated him from difficulties, in which his talents, as a portrait or landscape painter, had been found unavailing. Above all, I praised the execution, as well as conception, of his painting, and reminded him that, far from feeling dishonoured by so superb a specimen of his talents being exposed to the general view of the public, he ought rather to congratulate himself upon the augmentation of his celebrity to which its public exhibition must necessarily give rise.

"You are right, my friend——you are right," replied poor Dick, his eye kindling with enthusiasm; "why should I shun the name of an——an——(he hesitated for a phrase)——an out-of-doors artist? Hogarth has introduced himself in that character in one of his best engravings; Domenichino, or somebody else, in ancient times, Morland in our own, have exercised their talents in this manner. And wherefore limit to the rich and higher classes alone the delight which the exhibition of works of art is calculated to inspire into all classes? Statues are placed in the open air, why should Painting be more niggardly in displaying her masterpieces than her sister Sculpture? And yet, my friend, we must part suddenly; the carpenter is coming in an hour to put up the emblem; and truly, with all my philosophy, and your consulatory encouragement to boot, I would rather wish to leave Gandercleugh before that operation commences."

We partook of our genial host's parting banquet, and I escorted Dick on his walk to Edinburgh. We parted about a mile from the village, just as we heard the distant cheer of the boys which accompanied the mounting of the new symbol of the Wallace Head. Dick Tinto mended his pace to get out of hearing, so little had either early practice or recent philosophy reconciled him to the character of a sign-painter.

In Edinburgh, Dick's talents were discovered and appreciated, and he received dinners and hints from several distinguished judges of the fine arts. But these gentlemen dispensed their criticism more willingly than their cash, and Dick thought he needed cash more than criticism. He therefore sought London, the universal mart of talent, and where, as is usual in general marts of most descriptions, much more of each commodity is exposed to sale than can ever find purchasers.

Dick, who, in serious earnest, was supposed to have considerable natural talents for his profession, and whose vain and sanguine disposition never permitted him to doubt for a moment of ultimate success, threw himself headlong into the crowd which jostled and struggled for notice and preferment. He elbowed others, and was elbowed himself; and finally, by dint of intrepidity, fought his way into some notice, painted for the prize at the Institution, had pictures at the exhibition at Somerset House, and damned the hanging committee. But poor Dick was doomed to lose the field he fought so gallantly. In the fine arts, there is scarce an alternative betwixt distinguished success and absolute failure; and as Dick's zeal and industry were unable to ensure the first, he fell into the distresses which, in his condition, were the natural consequences of the latter alternative. He was for a time patronised by one or two of those judicious persons who make a virtue of being singular, and of pitching their own opinions against those of the world in matters of taste and criticism. But they soon tired of poor Tinto, and laid him down as a load, upon the principle on which a spoilt child throws away its plaything. Misery, I fear, took him up, and accompanied him to a premature grave, to which he was carried from an obscure lodging in Swallow Street, where he had been dunned by his landlady within doors, and watched by bailiffs without, until death came to his relief. A corner of the Morning Post noticed his death, generously adding, that his manner displayed considerable genius, though his style was rather sketchy; and referred to an advertisement, which announced that Mr. Varnish, a well-known printseller, had still on hand a very few drawings and paintings by

Richard Tinto, Esquire, which those of the nobility and gentry who might wish to complete their collections of modern art were invited to visit without delay. So ended Dick Tinto! a lamentable proof of the great truth, that in the fine arts mediocrity is not permitted, and that he who cannot ascend to the very top of the ladder will do well not to put his foot upon it at all.

The memory of Tinto is dear to me, from the recollection of the many conversations which we have had together, most of them turning upon my present task. He was delighted with my progress, and talked of an ornamented and illustrated edition, with heads, vignettes, and culs de lampe, all to be designed by his own patriotic and friendly pencil. He prevailed upon an old sergeant of invalids to sit to him in the character of Bothwell, the lifeguard's-man of Charles the Second, and the bellman of Gandercleugh in that of David Deans. But while he thus proposed to unite his own powers with mine for the illustration of these narratives, he mixed many a dose of salutary criticism with the panegyrics which my composition was at times so fortunate as to call forth.

"Your characters," he said, "my dear Pattieson, make too much use of the gob box; they patter too much (an elegant phraseology which Dick had learned while painting the scenes of an itinerant company of players); there is nothing in whole pages but mere chat and dialogue."

"The ancient philosopher," said I in reply, "was wont to say, 'Speak, that I may know thee'; and how is it possible for an author to introduce his personae dramatis to his readers in a more interesting and effectual manner than by the dialogue in which each is represented as supporting his own appropriate character?"

"It is a false conclusion," said Tinto; "I hate it, Peter, as I hate an unfilled can. I grant you, indeed, that speech is a faculty of some value in the intercourse of human affairs, and I will not even insist on the doctrine of that Pythagorean toper, who was of opinion that over a bottle speaking spoiled conversation. But I will not allow that a professor of the fine arts has occasion to embody the idea of his scene in language, in order to impress upon the reader its reality and its effect. On the contrary, I will be judged by most of your readers, Peter, should these tales ever become public, whether you have not given us a page of talk for every single idea which two words might have communicated, while the posture, and manner, and incident, accurately drawn, and brought out by appropriate colouring, would have preserved all that was worthy of preservation, and saved these everlasting 'said he's' and 'said she's,' with which it has been your pleasure to encumber your pages."

I replied, "That he confounded the operations of the pencil and the pen; that the serene and silent art, as painting has been called by one of our first living poets, necessarily appealed to the eye, because it had not the organs for addressing the ear; whereas poetry, or that species of composition which approached to it, lay under the necessity of doing absolutely the reverse, and addressed itself to the ear, for the purpose of exciting that interest which it could not attain through the medium of the eye."

Dick was not a whit staggered by my argument, which he contended was founded on misrepresentation. "Description," he said, "was to the author of a romance exactly what drawing and tinting were to a painter: words were his colours, and, if properly employed, they could not fail to place the scene which he wished to conjure up as effectually before the mind's eye as the tablet or canvas presents it to the bodily organ. The same rules," he contended, "applied to both, and an exuberance of dialogue, in the former case, was a verbose and laborious mode of composition which went to confound the proper art of fictitious narrative with that of the drama, a widely different species of composition, of which dialogue was the very essence, because all, excepting the language to be made use of, was presented to the eye by the dresses, and persons, and actions of the performers upon the stage. But as nothing," said Dick, "can be more dull than a long narrative written upon the plan of a drama, so where you have approached most near to that species of composition, by indulging in prolonged scenes of mere conversation, the course of your story has become chill and constrained, and you have lost the power of arresting the attention and exciting the imagination, in which upon other occasions you may be considered as having succeeded tolerably well."

I made my bow in requital of the compliment, which was probably thrown in by way of placebo, and expressed myself willing at least to make one trial of a more straightforward style of composition, in which my actors should do more, and say less, than in my former attempts of this kind. Dick gave me a patronising and approving nod, and observed that, finding me so docile, he would communicate, for the benefit of my muse, a subject which he had studied with a view to his own art.

"The story," he said, "was, by tradition, affirmed to be truth, although, as upwards of a hundred years had passed away since the events took place, some doubts upon the accuracy of all the particulars might be reasonably entertained."

When Dick Tinto had thus spoken, he rummaged his portfolio for the sketch from which he proposed one day to execute a picture of fourteen feet by eight. The sketch, which was cleverly executed, to use the appropriate phrase, represented an ancient hall, fitted up and furnished in what we now call the taste of Queen Elizabeth's age. The light, admitted from the upper part of a high casement, fell upon a female figure of exquisite beauty, who, in an attitude of speechless terror, appeared to watch the issue of a debate betwixt two other persons. The one was a young man, in the Vandykian dress common to the time of Charles I., who, with an air of indignant pride, testified by the manner in which he raised his head and extended his arm, seemed to be urging a claim of right, rather than of favour, to a lady whose age, and some resemblance in their features, pointed her out as the mother of the younger female, and who appeared to listen with a mixture of displeasure and impatience.

Tinto produced his sketch with an air of mysterious triumph, and gazed on it as a fond parent looks upon a hopeful child, while he anticipates the future figure he is to make in the world, and the height to which he will raise the honour of his family. He held it at arm's length from me—he held it closer—he placed it upon the top of a chest of drawers—closed the lower shutters of the casement, to adjust a downward and favourable light—fell back to the due distance, dragging me after him—shaded his face with his hand, as if to exclude all but the favourite object—and ended by spoiling a child's copy-book, which he rolled up so as to serve for the darkened tube of an amateur. I fancy my expressions of enthusiasm had not been in proportion to his own, for he presently exclaimed with vehemence: "Mr. Pattieson, I used to think you had an eye in your head."

I vindicated my claim to the usual allowance of visual organs.

"Yet, on my honour," said Dick, "I would swear you had been born blind, since you have failed at the first glance to discover the subject and meaning of that sketch. I do not mean to praise my own performance, I leave these arts to others; I am sensible of my deficiencies, conscious that my drawing and colouring may be improved by the time I intend to dedicate to the art. But the conception—the expression—the positions—these tell the story to every one who looks at the sketch; and if I can finish the picture without diminution of the original conception, the name of Tinto shall no more be smothered by the mists of envy and intrigue."

I replied: "That I admired the sketch exceedingly; but that to understand its full merit, I felt it absolutely necessary to be informed of the subject."

"That is the very thing I complain of," answered Tinto; "you have accustomed yourself so much to these creeping twilight details of yours, that you are become incapable of receiving that instant and vivid flash of conviction which darts on the mind from seeing the happy and expressive combinations of a single scene, and which gathers from the position, attitude, and countenance of the moment, not only the history of the past lives of the personages represented, and the nature of the business on which they are immediately engaged, but lifts even the veil of futurity, and affords a shrewd guess at their future fortunes."

"In that case," replied I, "Paining excels the ape of the renowned Gines de Passamonte, which only meddled with the past and the present; nay, she excels that very Nature who affords her subject; for I protest to you, Dick, that were I permitted to peep into that Elizabeth-chamber, and see the persons you have sketched conversing in flesh and blood, I should not be a jot nearer guessing the nature of their business than I am at this moment while looking at your sketch. Only generally, from the languishing look of the young lady, and the care you have taken to present a very handsome leg on the part of the gentleman, I presume there is some reference to a love affair between them."

"Do you really presume to form such a bold conjecture?" said Tinto. "And the indignant earnestness with which you see the man urge his suit, the unresisting and passive despair of the younger female, the stern air of inflexible determination in the elder woman, whose looks express at once consciousness that she is acting wrong and a firm determination to persist in the course she has adopted——"

"If her looks express all this, my dear Tinto," replied I, interrupting him, "your pencil rivals the dramatic art of Mr. Puff in *The Critic*, who crammed a whole complicated sentence into the expressive shake of Lord Burleigh's head."

"My good friend, Peter," replied Tinto, "I observe you are perfectly incorrigible; however, I have compassion on your dulness, and am unwilling you should be deprived of the pleasure of understanding my picture, and of gaining, at the same time, a subject for your own pen. You must know then, last summer, while I was taking sketches on the coast of East Lothian and Berwickshire, I was seduced into the mountains of Lammermoor by the account I received of some remains of antiquity in that district. Those with which I was most struck were the ruins of an ancient castle in which that Elizabeth-chamber, as you call it, once existed. I resided for two or three days at a farmhouse in the neighbourhood, where the aged goodwife was well acquainted with the history of the castle, and the events which had taken place in it. One of these was of a nature so interesting and singular, that my attention was divided between my wish to draw the old ruins in landscape, and to represent, in a history-piece, the singular events which have taken place in it. Here are my notes of the tale," said poor Dick, handing a parcel of loose scraps, partly scratched over with his pencil, partly with his pen, where outlines of caricatures, sketches of turrets, mills, old gables, and dovecots, disputed the ground with his written memoranda.

I proceeded, however, to decipher the substance of the manuscript as well as I could, and move it into the following Tale, in which, following in part, though not entirely, my friend Tinto's advice, I endeavoured to render my narrative rather descriptive than dramatic. My favourite propensity, however, has at times overcome me, and my persons, like many others in this talking world, speak now what then a great deal more than they act.

CHAPTER II.

*Well, lord, we have not got that which we have;
'Tis not enough our foes are this time fled,
Being opposites of such repairing nature.*

Henry VI. Part II.

IN the gorge of a pass or mountain glen, ascending from the fertile plains of East Lothian, there stood in former times an extensive castle, of which only the ruins are now visible. Its ancient proprietors were a race of powerful and warlike carons, who bore the same name with the castle itself, which was Ravenswood. Their line extended to a remote period of antiquity, and they had intermarried with the Douglasses, Humes, Swintons, Hays, and other families of power and distinction in the same country. Their history was frequently involved in that of Scotland itself, in whose annals their feats are recorded. The Castle of Ravenswood, occupying, and in some measure commanding, a pass betwixt Berwickshire, or the Merse, as the southeastern province of Scotland is termed, and the Lothians, was of importance both in times of foreign war and domestic discord. It was frequently besieged with ardour, and defended with obstinacy, and, of course, its owners played a conspicuous part in story. But their house had its revolutions, like all sublunary things: it became greatly declined from its splendour about the middle of the 17th century; and towards the period of the Revolution, the last proprietor of Ravenswood Castle saw himself compelled to part with the ancient family seat, and to remove himself to a lonely and sea-beaten tower, which, situated on the bleak shores between St. Abb's Head and the village of Eyemouth, looked out on the lonely and boisterous German Ocean. A black domain of wild pasture-land surrounded their new residence, and formed the remains of their property.

Lord Ravenswood, the heir of this ruined family, was far from bending his mind to his new condition of life. In the civil war of 1689 he had espoused the sinking side, and although he had escaped without the forfeiture of life or land, his blood had been attainted, and his title abolished. He was now called Lord Ravenswood only in courtesy.

This forfeited nobleman inherited the pride and turbulence, though not the fortune, of his house, and, as he imputed the final declension of his family to a particular individual, he honoured that person with his full portion of hatred. This was the very man who had now become, by purchase, proprietor of Ravenswood, and the domains of which the heir of the house now stood dispossessed. He was descended of a family much less ancient than that of Lord Ravenswood, and which had only risen to wealth and political importance during the great civil wars. He himself had been bred to the bar, and had held high offices in the state, maintaining through life the character of a skilful fisher in the troubled waters of a state divided by factions, and governed by delegated authority; and of one who contrived to amass considerable sums of money in a country where there was but little to be gathered, and who equally knew the value of wealth and the various means of augmenting it and using it as an engine of increasing his power and influence.

Thus qualified and gifted, he was a dangerous antagonist to the fierce and imprudent Ravenswood. Whether he had given him good cause for the enmity with which the Baron regarded him, was a point on which men spoke differently. Some said the quarrel arose merely from the vindictive spirit and envy of Lord Ravenswood, who could not patiently behold another, though by just and fair purchase, become the proprietor of the estate and castle of his forefathers. But the greater part of the public, prone to slander the wealthy in their absence as to flatter them in their presence, held a less charitable opinion. They said that the Lord Keeper (for to this height Sir William Ashton had ascended) had, previous to the final purchase of the estate of Ravenswood, been concerned in extensive pecuniary transactions with the former proprietor; and, rather intimating what was probable than affirming anything positively, they asked which party was likely to have the advantage in stating and enforcing the claims arising out of these complicated affairs, and more than hinted the advantages which the cool lawyer and able politician must necessarily possess over the hot, fiery, and imprudent character whom he had involved in legal toils and pecuniary snares.

The character of the times aggravated these suspicions. "In those days there was no king in Israel." Since the departure of James VI. to assume the richer and more powerful crown of England, there had existed in Scotland contending parties, formed among the aristocracy, by whom, as their intrigues at the court of St. James's chanced to prevail, the delegated powers of sovereignty were alternately swayed. The evils attending upon this system of government resembled those which afflict the tenants of an Irish estate, the property of an absentee. There was no supreme power, claiming and possessing a general interest with the community at large, to whom the oppressed might appeal from subordinate tyranny, either for justice or for mercy. Let a monarch be as indolent, as selfish, as much disposed to arbitrary power as he will, still, in a free country, his own interests are so clearly connected with those of the public at large, and the evil consequences to his own authority are so obvious and imminent when a different course is pursued, that common policy, as well as common feeling, point to the equal distribution of justice, and to the establishment of the throne in righteousness. Thus, even sovereigns remarkable for usurpation and tyranny have been found rigorous in the administration of justice among their subjects, in cases where their own power and passions were not compromised.

It is very different when the powers of sovereignty are delegated to the head of an aristocratic faction, rivalled and pressed closely in the race of ambition by an adverse leader. His brief and precarious enjoyment of power must be employed in rewarding his partizans, in extending his influence, in oppressing and crushing his adversaries. Even Abou Hassan, the most disinterested of all viceroys, forgot not, during his caliphate of one day, to send a *douceur* of one thousand pieces of gold to his own household; and the Scottish viceregents, raised to power by the strength of their faction, failed not to embrace the same means of rewarding them. The administration of justice, in particular, was infected by the most gross partiality. A case of importance scarcely occurred in which there was not some ground for bias or partiality on the part of the judges, who were so little able to withstand the temptation that the adage, "Show me the man, and I will show you the law," became as prevalent as it was scandalous. One corruption led the way to others still more gross and profligate. The judge who lent his sacred authority in one case to support a friend, and in another to crush an enemy, and whose decisions were founded on family connexions or political relations, could not be supposed inaccessible to direct personal motives; and the purse of the wealthy was too often believed to be thrown into the scale to weigh down the cause of the poor litigant. The subordinate officers of the law affected little scruple concerning bribery. Pieces of plate and bags of money were sent in presents to the king's counsel, to influence their conduct, and poured forth, says a contemporary writer, like billets of wood upon their floors, without even the decency of concealment. In such times, it was not over uncharitable to suppose that the statesman, practised in courts of law, and a powerful member of a triumphant cabal, might find and use means of advantage over his less skilful and less favoured adversary; and if it had been supposed that Sir William Ashton's conscience had been too delicate

to profit by these advantages, it was believed that his ambition and desire of extending his wealth and consequence found as strong a stimulus in the exhortations of his lady as the daring aim of Macbeth in the days of yore.

Lady Ashton was of a family more distinguished than that of her lord, an advantage which she did not fail to use to the uttermost, in maintaining and extending her husband's influence over others, and, unless she was greatly belied, her own over him. She had been beautiful, and was stately and majestic in her appearance. Endowed by nature with strong powers and violent passions, experience had taught her to employ the one, and to conceal, if not to moderate, the other. She was a severe and strict observer of the external forms, at least, of devotion; her hospitality was splendid, even to ostentation; her address and manners, agreeable to the pattern most valued in Scotland at the period, were grave, dignified, and severely regulated by the rules of etiquette. Her character had always been beyond the breath of slander. And yet, with all these qualities to excite respect, Lady Ashton was seldom mentioned in the terms of love or affection. Interest—the interest of her family, if not her own—seemed too obviously the motive of her actions; and where this is the case, the sharp-judging and malignant public are not easily imposed upon by outward show. It was seen and ascertained that, in her most graceful courtesies and compliments, Lady Ashton no more lost sight of her object than the falcon in his airy wheel turns his quick eyes from his destined quarry; and hence, something of doubt and suspicion qualified the feelings with which her equals received her attentions. With her inferiors these feelings were mingled with fear; an impression useful to her purposes, so far as it enforced ready compliance with her requests and implicit obedience to her commands, but detrimental, because it cannot exist with affection or regard.

Even her husband, it is said, upon whose fortunes her talents and address had produced such emphatic influence, regarded her with respectful awe rather than confiding attachment; and report said, there were times when he considered his grandeur as dearly purchased at the expense of domestic thralldom. Of this, however, much might be suspected, but little could be accurately known: Lady Ashton regarded the honour of her husband as her own, and was well aware how much that would suffer in the public eye should he appear a vassal to his wife. In all her arguments his opinion was quoted as infallible; his taste was appealed to, and his sentiments received, with the air of deference which a dutiful wife might seem to owe to a husband of Sir William Ashton's rank and character. But there was something under all this which rung false and hollow; and to those who watched this couple with close, and perhaps malicious, scrutiny it seemed evident that, in the haughtiness of a firmer character, higher birth, and more decided views of aggrandisement, the lady looked with some contempt on her husband, and that he regarded her with jealous fear, rather than with love or admiration.

Still, however, the leading and favourite interests of Sir William Ashton and his lady were the same, and they failed not to work in concert, although without cordiality, and to testify, in all exterior circumstances, that respect for each other which they were aware was necessary to secure that of the public.

Their union was crowned with several children, of whom three survived. One, the eldest son, was absent on his travels; the second, a girl of seventeen, and the third, a boy about three years younger, resided with their parents in Edinburgh during the sessions of the Scottish Parliament and Privy Council, at other times in the old Gothic castle of Ravenswood, to which the Lord Keeper had made large additions in the style of the 17th century.

Allan Lord Ravenswood, the late proprietor of that ancient mansion and the large estate annexed to it, continued for some time to wage ineffectual war with his successor concerning various points to which their former transactions had given rise, and which were successively determined in favour of the wealthy and powerful competitor, until death closed the litigation, by summoning Ravenswood to a higher bar. The thread of life, which had been long wasting, gave way during a fit of violent and impotent fury with which he was assailed on receiving the news of the loss of a cause, founded, perhaps, rather in equity than in law, the last which he had maintained against his powerful antagonist. His son witnessed his dying agonies, and heard the curses which he breathed against his adversary, as if they had conveyed to him a legacy of vengeance. Other circumstances happened to exasperate a passion which was, and had long been, a prevalent vice in the Scottish disposition.

It was a November morning, and the cliffs which overlooked the ocean were hung with thick and heavy mist, when the portals of the ancient and half-ruinous tower, in which Lord Ravenswood had spent the last and troubled years of his life, opened, that his mortal remains might pass forward to an abode yet more dreary and lonely. The pomp of attendance, to which the deceased had, in his latter years, been a stranger, was revived as he was about to be consigned to the realms of forgetfulness.

Banner after banner, with the various devices and coats of this ancient family and its connexions, followed each other in mournful procession from under the low-browed archway of the courtyard. The principal gentry of the country attended in the deepest mourning, and tempered the pace of their long train of horses to the solemn march befitting the occasion. Trumpets, with banners of crape attached to them, sent forth their long and melancholy notes to regulate the movements of the procession. An immense train of inferior mourners and menials closed the rear, which had not yet issued from the castle gate when the van had reached the chapel where the body was to be deposited.

Contrary to the custom, and even to the law, of the time, the body was met by a priest of the Scottish Episcopal communion, arrayed in his surplice, and prepared to read over the coffin of the deceased the funeral service of the church. Such had been the desire of Lord Ravenswood in his last illness, and it was readily complied with by the Tory gentlemen, or Cavaliers, as they affected to style themselves, in which faction most of his kinsmen were enrolled. The Presbyterian Church judicatory of the bounds, considering the ceremony as a braving insult upon their authority, had applied to the Lord Keeper, as the nearest privy councillor, for a warrant to prevent its being carried into effect; so that, when the clergyman had opened his prayer-book, an officer of the law, supported by some armed men, commanded him to be silent. An insult which fired the whole assembly with indignation was particularly and instantly resented by the only son of the deceased, Edgar, popularly called the Master of Ravenswood, a youth of about twenty years of age. He clapped his hand on his sword, and bidding the official person to desist at his peril from farther interruption, commanded the clergyman to proceed. The man attempted to enforce his commission; but as an hundred swords at once glittered in the air, he contented himself with protesting against the violence which had been offered to him in the execution of his duty, and stood aloof, a sullen and moody spectator of the ceremonial, muttering as one who should say: "You'll rue the day that clogs me with this answer."

The scene was worthy of an artist's pencil. Under the very arch of the house of death, the clergyman, affrighted at the scene, and trembling for his own safety, hastily and unwillingly rehearsed the solemn service of the church, and spoke "dust to dust and ashes to ashes," over ruined pride and decayed prosperity. Around stood the relations of the deceased, their countenances more in anger than in sorrow, and the drawn swords which they brandished forming a violent contrast with their deep mourning habits. In the countenance of the young man alone, resentment seemed for the moment overpowered by the deep agony with which he beheld his nearest, and almost his only, friend consigned to the tomb of his ancestry. A relative observed him turn deadly pale, when, all rites being now duly observed, it became the duty of the chief mourner to lower down into the charnel vault, where mouldering coffins showed their tattered velvet and decayed plating, the head of the corpse which was to be their partner in corruption. He stepped to the youth and offered his assistance, which, by a mute motion, Edgar Ravenswood rejected. Firmly, and without a tear, he performed that last duty. The stone was laid on the sepulchre, the door of the aisle was locked, and the youth took possession of its massive key.

As the crowd left the chapel, he paused on the steps which led to its Gothic chancel. "Gentlemen and friends," he said, "you have this day done no common duty to the body of your deceased kinsman. The rites of due observance, which, in other countries, are allowed as the due of the meanest Christian, would this day have been denied to the body of your relative—not certainly sprung of the meanest house in Scotland—had it not been assured to him by your courage. Others bury their dead in sorrow and tears, in silence and in reverence; our funeral rites are marred by the intrusion of bailiffs and ruffians, and our grief—the grief due to our departed friend—is chased from our cheeks by the glow of just indignation. But it is well that I know from what quiver this arrow has come forth. It was only he that dug the grave who could have the mean cruelty to disturb the obsequies; and Heaven do as much to me and more, if I requite not to this man and his house the ruin and disgrace he has brought on me and mine!"

A numerous part of the assembly applauded this speech, as the spirited expression of just resentment; but the more cool and judicious regretted that it had been uttered. The fortunes of the heir of Ravenswood were too low to brave the farther hostility which they imagined these open expressions of resentment must necessarily provoke. Their apprehensions, however, proved groundless, at least in the immediate consequences of this affair.

The mourners returned to the tower, there, according to a custom but recently abolished in Scotland, to carouse deep healths to the memory of the deceased, to make the house of sorrow ring with sounds of joviality and debauch, and to diminish, by the expense of a large and profuse entertainment, the limited revenues of the heir of him whose funeral they thus strangely honoured. It was the custom, however, and on the present occasion it was fully observed. The tables swam in wine, the populace feasted in the courtyard, the yeomen in the kitchen and buttery; and two years' rent of Ravenswood's remaining property hardly defrayed the charge of the funeral revel. The wine did its office on all but the Master of Ravenswood, a title which he still retained, though forfeiture had attached to that of his father. He, while passing around the cup which he himself did not taste, soon listened to a thousand exclamations against the Lord Keeper, and passionate protestations of attachment to himself, and to the honour of his house. He listened with dark and sullen brow to ebullitions which he considered justly as equally evanescent with the crimson bubbles on the brink of the goblet, or at least with the vapours which its contents excited in the brains of the revellers around him. When the last flask was emptied, they took their leave with deep protestations—to be forgotten on the morrow, if, indeed, those who made them should not think it necessary for their safety to make a more solemn retraction.

Accepting their adieu with an air of contempt which he could scarce conceal, Ravenswood at length beheld his ruinous habitation cleared of their confluence of riotous guests, and returned to the deserted hall, which now appeared doubly lonely from the cessation of that clamour to which it had so lately echoed. But its space was peopled by phantoms which the imagination of the young heir conjured up before him—the tarnished honour and degraded fortunes of his house, the destruction of his own hopes, and the triumph of that family by whom they had been ruined. To a mind naturally of a gloomy cast here was ample room for meditation, and the musings of young Ravenswood were deep and unwitnessed.

The peasant who shows the ruins of the tower, which still crown the beetling cliff and behold the war of the waves, though no more tenanted saved by the sea-mew and cormorant, even yet affirms that on this fatal night the Master of Ravenswood, by the bitter exclamations of his despair, evoked some evil fiend, under whose malignant influence the future tissue of incidents was woven. Alas! what fiend can suggest more desperate counsels than those adopted under the guidance of our own violent and unresisted passions?

CHAPTER III.

*Over Gods forebode, then said the King,
That thou shouldst shoot at me.*

William Bell, Clim 'o the Cleugh, etc.

On the morning after the funeral, the legal officer whose authority had been found insufficient to effect an interruption of the funeral solemnities of the late Lord Ravenswood, hastened to state before the Keeper the resistance which he had met with in the execution of his office.

The statesman was seated in a spacious library, once a banqueting-room in the old Castle of Ravenswood, as was evident from the armorial insignia still displayed on the carved roof, which was vaulted with Spanish chestnut, and on the stained glass of the casement, through which gleamed a dim yet rich light on the long rows of shelves, bending under the weight of legal commentators and monkish historians, whose ponderous volumes formed the chief and most valued contents of a Scottish historian [library] of the period. On the massive oaken table and reading-desk lay a confused mass of letters, petitions, and parchments; to toil amongst which was the pleasure at once and the plague of Sir William Ashton's life. His appearance was grave and even noble, well becoming one who held an high office in the state; and it was not save after long and intimate conversation with him upon topics of pressing and personal interest, that a stranger could have discovered something vacillating and uncertain in his resolutions; an infirmity of purpose, arising from a cautious and timid disposition, which, as he was conscious of its internal influence on his mind, he was, from pride as well as policy, most anxious to conceal from others. He listened with great apparent composure to an exaggerated account of the tumult which had taken place at the funeral, of the contempt thrown on his own authority and that of the church and state; nor did he seem moved even by the faithful report of the insulting and threatening language which had been uttered by young Ravenswood and others, and obviously directed against himself. He heard, also, what the man had been able to collect, in a very distorted and aggravated shape, of the toasts which had been drunk, and the menaces uttered, at the subsequent entertainment. In fine, he made careful notes of all these particulars, and of the names of the persons by whom, in case of need, an accusation, founded upon these violent proceedings, could be witnessed and made good, and dismissed his informer, secure that he was now master of the remaining fortune, and even of the personal liberty, of young Ravenswood.

When the door had closed upon the officer of the law, the Lord Keeper remained for a moment in deep meditation; then, starting from his seat, paced the apartment as one about to take a sudden and energetic resolution. "Young Ravenswood," he muttered, "is now mine—he is my own; he has placed himself in my hand, and he shall bend or break. I have not forgot the determined and dogged obstinacy with which his father fought every point to the last, resisted every effort at compromise, embroiled me in lawsuits, and attempted to assail my character when he could not otherwise impugn my rights. This boy he has left behind him—this Edgar—this hot-headed, hare-brained fool, has wrecked his vessel before she has cleared the harbor. I must see that he gains no advantage of some turning tide which may again float him off. These memoranda, properly stated to the privy council, cannot but be construed into an aggravated riot, in which the dignity both of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities stands committed. A heavy fine might be imposed; an order for committing him to Edinburgh or Blackness Castle seems not improper; even a charge of treason might be laid on many of these words and expressions, though God forbid I should prosecute the matter to that extent. No, I will not; I will not touch his life, even if it should be in my power; and yet, if he lives till a change of times, what follows? Restitution—perhaps revenge. I know Athole promised his interest to old Ravenswood, and here is his son already bandying and making a faction by his own contemptible influence. What a ready tool he would be for the use of those who are watching the downfall of our administration!"

While these thoughts were agitating the mind of the wily statesman, and while he was persuading himself that his own interest and safety, as well as those of his friends and party, depended on using the present advantage to the uttermost against young Ravenswood, the Lord Keeper sate down to his desk, and proceeded to draw up, for the information of the privy council, an account of the disorderly proceedings which, in contempt of his warrant, had taken place at the funeral of Lord Ravenswood. The names of most of the parties concerned, as well as the fact itself, would, he was well aware, sound odiously in the ears of his colleagues in administration, and most likely instigate them to make an example of young Ravenswood, at least, in terrorem.

It was a point of delicacy, however, to select such expressions as might infer the young man's culpability, without seeming directly to urge it, which, on the part of Sir William Ashton, his father's ancient antagonist, could not but appear odious and invidious. While he was in the act of composition, labouring to find words which might indicate Edgar Ravenswood to be the cause of the uproar, without specifically making such a charge, Sir William, in a pause of his task, chanced, in looking upward, to see the crest of the family for whose heir he was whetting the arrows and disposing the toils of the law carved upon one of the corbeilles from which the vaulted roof of the apartment sprung. It was a black bull's head, with the legend, "I bide my time"; and the occasion upon which it was adopted mingled itself singularly and impressively with the subject of his present reflections.

It was said by a constant tradition that a Malisius de Ravenswood had, in the 13th century, been deprived of his castle and lands by a powerful usurper, who had for a while enjoyed his spoils in quiet. At length, on the eve of a costly banquet, Ravenswood, who had watched his opportunity, introduced himself into the castle with a small band of faithful retainers. The serving of the expected feast was impatiently looked for by the guests, and clamorously demanded by the temporary master of the castle. Ravenswood, who had assumed the disguise of a sewer upon the occasion, answered, in a stern voice, "I bide my time"; and at the same moment a bull's head, the ancient symbol of death, was placed upon the table. The explosion of the conspiracy took place upon the signal, and the usurper and his followers were put to death. Perhaps there was something in this still known and often repeated story which came immediately home to the breast and conscience of the Lord Keeper; for, putting from him the paper on which he had begun his report, and carefully locking the memoranda which he had prepared

into a cabinet which stood beside him, he proceeded to walk abroad, as if for the purpose of collecting his ideas, and reflecting farther on the consequences of the step which he was about to take, ere yet they became inevitable.

In passing through a large Gothic ante-room, Sir William Ashton heard the sound of his daughter's lute. Music, when the performers are concealed, affects us with a pleasure mingled with surprise, and reminds us of the natural concert of birds among the leafy bowers. The statesman, though little accustomed to give way to emotions of this natural and simple class, was still a man and a father. He stopped, therefore, and listened, while the silver tones of Lucy Ashton's voice mingled with the accompaniment in an ancient air, to which some one had adapted the following words:

*"Look not thou on beauty's charming,
Sit thou still when kings are arming,
Taste not when the wine-cup glistens,
Speak not when the people listens,
Stop thine ear against the singer,
From the red gold keep thy finger,
Vacant heart, and hand, and eye,
Easy live and quiet die."*

The sounds ceased, and the Keeper entered his daughter's apartment.

The words she had chosen seemed particularly adapted to her character; for Lucy Ashton's exquisitely beautiful, yet somewhat girlish features were formed to express peace of mind, serenity, and indifference to the tinsel of wordly pleasure. Her locks, which were of shadowy gold, divided on a brow of exquisite whiteness, like a gleam of broken and pallid sunshine upon a hill of snow. The expression of the countenance was in the last degree gentle, soft, timid, and feminine, and seemed rather to shrink from the most casual look of a stranger than to court his admiration. Something there was of a Madonna cast, perhaps the result of delicate health, and of residence in a family where the dispositions of the inmates were fiercer, more active, and energetic than her own.

Yet her passiveness of disposition was by no means owing to an indifferent or unfeeling mind. Left to the impulse of her own taste and feelings, Lucy Ashton was peculiarly accessible to those of a romantic cast. Her secret delight was in the old legendary tales of ardent devotion and unalterable affection, chequered as they so often are with strange adventures and supernatural horrors. This was her favoured fairy realm, and here she erected her aerial palaces. But it was only in secret that she laboured at this delusive though delightful architecture. In her retired chamber, or in the woodland bower which she had chosen for her own, and called after her name, she was in fancy distributing the prizes at the tournament, or raining down influence from her eyes on the valiant combatants: or she was wandering in the wilderness with Una, under escort of the generous lion; or she was identifying herself with the simple yet noble-minded Miranda in the isle of wonder and enchantment.

But in her exterior relations to things of this world, Lucy willingly received the ruling impulse from those around her. The alternative was, in general, too indifferent to her to render resistance desirable, and she willingly found a motive for decision in the opinion of her friends which perhaps she might have sought for in vain in her own choice. Every reader must have observed in some family of his acquaintance some individual of a temper soft and yielding, who, mixed with stronger and more ardent minds, is borne along by the will of others, with as little power of opposition as the flower which is flung into a running stream. It usually happens that such a compliant and easy disposition, which resigns itself without murmur to the guidance of others, becomes the darling of those to whose inclinations its own seem to be offered, in ungrudging and ready sacrifice. This was eminently the case with Lucy Ashton. Her politic, wary, and wordly father felt for her an affection the strength of which sometimes surprised him into an unusual emotion. Her elder brother, who trode the path of ambition with a haughtier step than his father, had also more of human affection. A soldier, and in a dissolute age, he preferred his sister Lucy even to pleasure and to military preferment and distinction. Her younger brother, at an age when trifles chiefly occupied his mind, made her the confidante of all his pleasures and anxieties, his success in field-sports, and his quarrels with his tutor and instructors. To these details, however trivial, Lucy lent patient and not indifferent attention. They moved and interested Henry, and that was enough to secure her ear.

Her mother alone did not feel that distinguished and predominating affection with which the rest of the family cherished Lucy. She regarded what she termed her daughter's want of spirit as a decided mark that the more plebeian blood of her father predominated in Lucy's veins, and used to call her in derision her Lammermoor Shepherdess. To dislike so gentle and inoffensive a being was impossible; but Lady Ashton preferred her eldest son, on whom had descended a large portion of her own ambitious and undaunted disposition, to a daughter whose softness of temper seemed allied to feebleness of mind. Her eldest son was the more partially beloved by his mother because, contrary to the usual custom of Scottish families of distinction, he had been named after the head of the house.

"My Sholto," she said, "will support the untarnished honour of his maternal house, and elevate and support that of his father. Poor Lucy is unfit for courts or crowded halls. Some country laird must be her husband, rich enough to supply her with every comfort, without an effort on her own part, so that she may have nothing to shed a tear for but the tender apprehension lest he may break his neck in a foxchase. It was not so, however, that our house was raised, nor is it so that it can be fortified and augmented. The Lord Keeper's dignity is yet new; it must be borne as if we were used to its weight, worthy of it, and prompt to assert and maintain it. Before ancient authorities men bend from customary and hereditary deference; in our presence they will stand erect, unless they are compelled to prostrate themselves. A daughter fit for the sheepfold or the cloister is ill qualified to exact respect where it is yielded with reluctance; and since Heaven refused us a third boy, Lucy should have held a character fit to supply his place. The hour will be a happy one which disposes her hand in marriage to some one whose energy is greater than her own, or whose ambition is of as low an order."

So meditated a mother to whom the qualities of her children's hearts, as well as the prospect of their domestic happiness, seemed light in comparison to their rank and temporal greatness. But, like many a parent of hot and impatient character, she was mistaken in estimating the feelings of her daughter, who, under a semblance of extreme indifference, nourished the germ of those passions which sometimes spring up in one night, like the gourd of the prophet, and astonish the observer by their unexpected ardour and intensity. In fact, Lucy's sentiments seemed chill because nothing had occurred to interest or awaken them. Her life had hitherto flowed on in a uniform and gentle tenor, and happy for her had not its present smoothness of current resembled that of the stream as it glides downwards to the waterfall!

"So, Lucy," said her father, entering as her song was ended, "does your musical philosopher teach you to condemn the world before you know it? That is surely something premature. Or did you but speak according to the fashion of fair maidens, who are always to hold the pleasures of life in contempt till they are pressed upon them by the address of some gentle knight?"

Lucy blushed, disclaimed any inference respecting her own choice being drawn from her selection of a song, and readily laid aside her instrument at her father's request that she would attend him in his walk.

A large and well-wooded park, or rather chase, stretched along the hill behind the castle, which, occupying, as we have noticed, a pass ascending from the plain, seemed built in its very gorge to defend the forest ground which arose behind it in shaggy majesty. Into this romantic region the father and daughter proceeded, arm in arm, by a noble avenue overarched by embowering elms, beneath which groups of the fallow-deer were seen to stray in distant perspective. As they paced slowly on, admiring the different points of view, for which Sir William Ashton, notwithstanding the nature of his usual avocations, had considerable taste and feeling, they were overtaken by the forester, or park-keeper, who, intent on silvan sport, was proceeding with his crossbow over his arm, and a hound led in leash by his boy, into the interior of the wood.

"Going to shoot us a piece of venison, Norman?" said his master, as he returned the woodsman's salutation.

"Saul, your honour, and that I am. Will it please you to see the sport?"

"Oh no," said his lordship, after looking at his daughter, whose colour fled at the idea of seeing the deer shot, although, had her father expressed his wish that they should accompany Norman, it was probable she would not even have hinted her reluctance.

The forester shrugged his shoulders. "It was a disheartening thing," he said, "when none of the gentles came down to see the sport. He hoped Captain Sholto would be soon hame, or he might shut up his shop entirely; for Mr. Harry was kept sae close wi' his Latin nonsense that, though his will was very gude to be in the wood from morning till night, there would be a hopeful lad lost, and no making a man of him. It was not so, he had heard, in Lord Ravenswood's time: when a buck was to be killed, man and mother's son ran to see; and when the deer fell, the knife was always presented to the knight, and he never gave less than a dollar for the compliment. And there was Edgar Ravenswood—Master of Ravenswood that is now—when he goes up to the wood—there hasna been a better hunter since Tristrem's time—when Sir Edgar hauds out, down goes the deer, faith. But we hae lost a' sense of woodcraft on this side of the hill."

There was much in this harangue highly displeasing to the Lord Keeper's feelings; he could not help observing that his menial despised him almost avowedly for not possessing that taste for sport which in those times was deemed the natural and indispensable attribute of a real gentleman. But the master of the game is, in all country houses, a man of great importance, and entitled to use considerable freedom of speech. Sir William, therefore, only smiled and replied, "He had something else to think upon to-day than killing deer"; meantime, taking out his purse, he gave the ranger a dollar for his encouragement. The fellow received it as the waiter of a fashionable hotel receives double his proper fee from the hands of a country gentleman—that is, with a smile, in which pleasure at the gift is mingled with contempt for the ignorance of the donor. "Your honour is the bad paymaster," he said, "who pays before it is done. What would you do were I to miss the buck after you have paid me my wood-fee?"

"I suppose," said the Keeper, smiling, "you would hardly guess what I mean were I to tell you of a *condictio indebiti*?"

"Not I, on my saul. I guess it is some law phrase; but sue a beggar, and—your honour knows what follows. Well, but I will be just with you, and if bow and brach fail not, you shall have a piece of game two fingers fat on the brisket."

As he was about to go off, his master again called him, and asked, as if by accident, whether the Master of Ravenswood was actually so brave a man and so good a shooter as the world spoke him.

"Brave!—brave enough, I warrant you," answered Norman. "I was in the wood at Tynninghame when there was a sort of gallants hunting with my lord; on my saul, there was a buck turned to bay made us all stand back—a stout old Trojan of the first head, ten-tynd branches, and a brow as broad as e'er a bullock's. Egad, he dashed at the old lord, and there would have been inlake among the perrage, if the Master had not whipt roundly in, and hamstrung him with his cutlass. He was but sixteen then, bless his heart!"

"And is he as ready with the gun as with the couteau?" said Sir William.

"He'll strike this silver dollar out from between my finger and thumb at fourscore yards, and I'll hold it out for a gold merk; what more would ye have of eye, hand, lead, and gunpowder?" "Oh, no more to be wished, certainly," said the Lord Keeper; "but we keep you from your sport, Norman. Good morrow, good Norman."

And, humming his rustic roundelay, the yeoman went on his road, the sound of his rough voice gradually dying away as the distance betwixt them increased:

*"The monk must arise when the matins ring,
The abbot may sleep to their chime;
But the yeoman must start when the bugles sing
'Tis time, my hearts, 'tis time.*

*There's bucks and raes on Bilhope braes,
There's a herd on Shortwood Shaw;
But a lily-white doe in the garden goes,
She's fairly worth them a'."*

"Has this fellow," said the Lord Keeper, when the yeoman's song had died on the wind, "ever served the Ravenswood people, that he seems so much interested in them? I suppose you know, Lucy, for you make it a point of conscience to record the special history of every boor about the castle."

"I am not quite so faithful a chronicler, my dear father; but I believe that Norman once served here while a boy, and before he went to Ledington, whence you hired him. But if you want to know anything of the former family, Old Alice is the best authority."

"And what should I have to do with them, pray, Lucy," said her father, "or with their history or accomplishments?"

"Nay, I do not know, sir; only that you were asking questions of Norman about young Ravenswood."

"Pshaw, child!" replied her father, yet immediately added: "And who is Old Alice? I think you know all the old women in the country."

"To be sure I do, or how could I help the old creatures when they are in hard times? And as to Old Alice, she is the very empress of old women and queen of gossips, so far as legendary lore is concerned. She is blind, poor old soul, but when she speaks to you, you would think she has some way of looking into your very heart. I am sure I often cover my face, or turn it away, for it seems as if she saw one change colour, though she has been blind these twenty years. She is worth visiting, were it but to say you have seen a blind and paralytic old woman have so much acuteness of perception and dignity of manners. I assure you, she might be a countess from her language and behaviour. Come, you must go to see Alice; we are not a quarter of a mile from her cottage."

"All this, my dear," said the Lord Keeper, "is no answer to my question, who this woman is, and what is her connexion with the former proprietor's family?"

"Oh, it was somethign of a nouriceship, I believe; and she remained here, because her two grandsons were engaged in your service. But it was against her will, I fancy; for the poor old creature is always regretting the change of times and of property."

"I am much obliged to her," answered the Lord Keeper. "She and her folk eat my bread and drink my cup, and are lamenting all the while that they are not still under a family which never could do good, either to themselves or any one else!"

"Indeed," replied Lucy, "I am certain you do Old Alice injustice. She has nothing mercenary about her, and would not accept a penny in charity, if it were to save her from being starved. She is only talkative, like all old folk when you put them upon stories of their youth; and she speaks about the Ravenswood people, because she lived under them so many years. But I am sure she is grateful to you, sir, for your protection, and that she would rather speak to you than to any other person in the whole world beside. Do, sir, come and see Old Alice."

And with the freedom of an indulged daughter she dragged the Lord Keeper in the direction she desired.

CHAPTER IV.

*Through tops of the high trees she did descry
A little smoke, whose vapour, thin and light,
Reeking aloft, uprolled to the sky,
Which cheerful sign did send unto her sight,
That in the same did wonne some living wight.*

SPENSER.

LUCY acted as her father's guide, for he was too much engrossed with his political labours, or with society, to be perfectly acquainted with his own extensive domains, and, moreover, was generally an inhabitant of the city of Edinburgh; and she, on the other hand, had, with her mother, resided the whole summer in Ravenswood, and, partly from taste, partly from want of any other amusement, had, by her frequent rambles, learned to know each lane, alley, dingle, or bushy dell,

And every bosky bourne from side to side.

We have said that the Lord Keeper was not indifferent to the beauties of nature; and we add, in justice to him, that he felt them doubly when pointed out by the beautiful, simple, and interesting girl who, hanging on his arm with filial kindness, now called him to admire the size of some ancient oak, and now the unexpected turn where the path, developing its maze from glen or dingle, suddenly reached an eminence commanding an extensive view of the plains beneath them, and then gradually glided away from the prospect to lose itself among rocks and thickets, and guide to scenes of deeper seclusion.

It was when pausing on one of those points of extensive and commanding view that Lucy told her father they were close by the cottage of her blind protegee; and on turning from the little hill, a path which led around it, worn by the daily steps of the infirm inmate, brought them in sight of the hut, which, embosomed in a deep and obscure dell, seemed to have been so situated purposely to bear a correspondence with the darkened state of its inhabitant.

The cottage was situated immediately under a tall rock, which in some measure beetled over it, as if threatening to drop some detached fragment from its brow on the frail tenement beneath. The hut itself was constructed of turf and stones, and rudely roofed over with thatch, much of which was in a dilapidated condition. The thin blue smoke rose from it in a light column, and curled upward along the white face of the incumbent rock, giving the scene a tint of exquisite softness. In a small and rude garden, surrounded by straggling elder-bushes, which formed a sort of imperfect hedge, sat near to the beehives, by the produce of which she lived, that "woman old" whom Lucy had brought her father hither to visit.

Whatever there had been which was disastrous in her fortune, whatever there was miserable in her dwelling, it was easy to judge by the first glance that neither years, poverty, misfortune, nor infirmity had broken the spirit of this remarkable woman.

She occupied a turf seat, placed under a weeping birch of unusual magnitude and age, as Judah is represented sitting under her palm-tree, with an air at once of majesty and of dejection. Her figure was tall, commanding, and but little bent by the infirmities of old age. Her dress, though that of a peasant, was uncommonly clean, forming in that particular a strong contrast to most of her rank, and was disposed with an attention to neatness, and even to taste, equally unusual. But it was her expression of countenance which chiefly struck the spectator, and induced most persons to address her with a degree of deference and civility very inconsistent with the miserable state of her dwelling, and which, nevertheless, she received with that easy composure which showed she felt it to be her due. She had once been beautiful, but her beauty had been of a bold and masculine cast, such as does not survive the bloom of youth; yet her features continued to express strong sense, deep reflection, and a character of sober pride, which, as we have already said of her dress, appeared to argue a conscious superiority to those of her own rank. It scarce seemed possible that a face, deprived of the advantage of sight, could have expressed character so strongly; but her eyes, which were almost totally closed, did not, by the display of their sightless orbs, mar the countenance to which they could add nothing. She seemed in a ruminating posture, soothed, perhaps, by the murmurs of the busy tribe around her to abstraction, though not to slumber.

Lucy undid the latch of the little garden gate, and solicited the old woman's attention. "My father, Alice, is come to see you."

"He is welcome, Miss Ashton, and so are you," said the old woman, turning and inclining her head towards her visitors.

"This is a fine morning for your beehives, mother," said the Lord Keeper, who, struck with the outward appearance of Alice, was somewhat curious to know if her conversation would correspond with it.

"I believe so, my lord," she replied; "I feel the air breathe milder than of late."

"You do not," resumed the statesman, "take charge of these bees yourself, mother? How do you manage them?"

"By delegates, as kings do their subjects," resumed Alice; "and I am fortunate in a prime minister. Here, Babie."

She whistled on a small silver call which ung around her neck, and which at that time was sometimes used to summon domestics, and Babie, a girl of fifteen, made her appearance from the hut, not altogether so cleanly arrayed as she would probably have been had Alice had the use of her yeas, but with a greater air of neatness than was upon the whole to have been expected.

"Babie," said her mistress, "offer some bread and honey to the Lord Keeper and Miss Ashton; they will excuse your awkwardness if you use cleanliness and despatch."

Babie performed her mistress's command with the grace which was naturally to have been expected, moving to and fro with a lobster-like gesture, her feet and legs tending one way, while her head, turned in a different direction, was fixed in wonder upon the laird, who was more frequently heard of than seen by his tenants and dependants. The bread and honey, however, deposited on a plantain leaf, was offered and accepted in all due courtesy. The Lord Keeper, still retaining the place which he had occupied on the decayed trunk of a fallen tree, looked as if he wished to prolong the interview, but was at a loss how to introduce a suitable subject.

"You have been long a resident on this property?" he said, after a pause.

"It is now nearly sixty years since I first knew Ravenswood," answered the old dame, whose conversation, though perfectly civil and respectful, seemed cautiously limited to the unavoidable and necessary task of replying to Sir William.

"You are not, I should judge by your accent, of this country originally?" said the Lord Keeper, in continuation.

"No; I am by birth an Englishwoman." "Yet you seem attached to this country as if it were your own."

"It is here," replied the blind woman, "that I have drank the cup of joy and of sorrow which Heaven destined for me. I was here the wife of an upright and affectionate husband for more than twenty years; I was here the mother of six promising children; it was here that God deprived me of all these blessings; it was here they died, and yonder, by yon ruined chapel, they lie all buried. I had no country but theirs while they lived; I have none but theirs now they are no more."

"But your house," said the Lord Keeper, looking at it, "is miserably ruinous?"

"Do, my dear father," said Lucy, eagerly, yet bashfully, catching at the hint, "give orders to make it better; that is, if you think it proper."

"It will last my time, my dear Miss Lucy," said the blind woman; "I would not have my lord give himself the least trouble about it."

"But," said Lucy, "you once had a much better house, and were rich, and now in your old age to live in this hovel!"

"It is as good as I deserve, Miss Lucy; if my heart has not broke with what I have suffered, and seen others suffer, it must have been strong enough, adn the rest of this old frame has no right to call itself weaker."

"You have probably witnessed many changes," said the Lord Keeper; "but your experience must have taught you to expect them."

"It has taught me to endure them, my lord," was the reply.

"Yet you knew that they must needs arrive in the course of years?" said the statesman.

"Ay; as I knew that the stump, on or beside which you sit, once a tall and lofty tree, must needs one day fall by decay, or by the axe; yet I hoped my eyes might not witness the downfall of the tree which overshadowed my dwelling."

"Do not suppose," said the Lord Keeper, "that you will lose any interest with me for looking back with regret to the days when another family possessed my estates. You had reason, doubtless, to love them, and I respect your gratitude. I will order some repairs in your cottage, and I hope we shall live to be friends when we know each other better." "Those of my age," returned the dame, "make no new friends. I thank you for your bounty, it is well intended undoubtedly; but I have all I want, and I cannot accept more at your lordship's hand."

"Well, then," continued the Lord Keeper, "at least allow me to say, that I look upon you as a woman of sense and education beyond your appearance, and that I hope you will continue to reside on this property of mine rent-free for your life."

"I hope I shall," said the old dame, composedly; "I believe that was made an article in the sale of Ravenswood to your lordship, though such a trifling circumstance may have escaped your recollection."

"I remember—I recollect," said his lordship, somewhat confused. "I perceive you are too much attached to your old friends to accept any benefit from their successor."

"Far from it, my lord; I am grateful for the benefits which I decline, and I wish I could pay you for offering them, better than what I am now about to say." The Lord Keeper looked at her in some surprise, but said not a word. "My lord," she continued, in an impressive and solemn tone, "take care what you do; you are on the brink of a precipice."

"Indeed?" said the Lord Keeper, his mind reverting to the political circumstances of the country. "Has anything come to your knowledge—any plot or conspiracy?"

"No, my lord; those who traffic in such commodities do not call to their councils the old, blind, and infirm. My warning is of another kind. You have driven matters hard with the house of Ravenswood. Believe a true tale: they are a fierce house, and there is danger in dealing with men when they become desperate."

"Tush," answered the Keeper; "what has been between us has been the work of the law, not my doing; and to the law they must look, if they would impugn my proceedings."

"Ay, but they may think otherwise, and take the law into their own hand, when they fail of other means of redress."

"What mean you?" said the Lord Keeper. "Young Ravenswood would not have recourse to personal violence?"

"God forbid I should say so! I know nothing of the youth but what is honourable and open. Honourable and open, said I? I should have added, free, generous, noble. But he is still a Ravenswood, and may bide his time. Remember the fate of Sir George Lockhart."

The Lord Keeper started as she called to his recollection a tragedy so deep and so recent. The old woman proceeded: "Chiesley, who did the deed, was a relative of Lord Ravenswood. In the hall of Ravenswood, in my presence and in that of others, he avowed publicly his determination to do the cruelty which he afterwards committed. I could not keep silence, though to speak it ill became my station. 'You are devising a dreadful crime,' I said, 'for which you must reckon before the judgment seat.' Never shall I forget his look, as he replied, 'I must reckon then for many things, and will reckon for this also.' Therefore I may well say, beware of pressing a desperate man with the hand of authority. There is blood of Chiesley in the veins of Ravenswood, and one drop of it were enough to fire him in the circumstances in which he is placed. I say, beware of him."

The old dame had, either intentionally or by accident, harped aright the fear of the Lord Keeper. The desperate and dark resource of private assassination, so familiar to a Scottish baron in former times, had even in the present age been too frequently resorted to under the pressure of unusual temptation, or where the mind of the actor was prepared for such a crime. Sir William Ashton was aware of this; as also that young Ravenswood had received injuries sufficient to prompt him to that sort of revenge, which becomes a frequent though fearful consequence of the partial administration of justice. He endeavoured to disguise from Alice the nature of the apprehensions which he entertained; but so ineffectually, that a person even of less penetration than nature had endowed her with must necessarily have been aware that the subject lay near his bosom. His voice was changed in its accent as he replied to her, "That the Master of Ravenswood was a man of honour; and, were it otherwise, that the fate of Chiesley of Dalry was a sufficient warning to any one who should dare to assume the office of avenger of his own imaginary wrongs." And having hastily uttered these expressions, he rose and left the place without waiting for a reply.

CHAPTER V.

Is she a Capulet?

O dear account! my life is my foe's debt.

SHAKESPEARE

THE Lord Keeper walked for nearly a quarter of a mile in profound silence. His daughter, naturally timid, and bred up in those ideas of filial awe and implicit obedience which were inculcated upon the youth of that period, did not venture to interrupt his meditations.

"Why do you look so pale, Lucy?" said her father, turning suddenly round and breaking silence.

According to the ideas of the time, which did not permit a young woman to offer her sentiments on any subject of importance unless required to do so, Lucy was bound to appear ignorant of the meaning of all that had passed betwixt Alice and her father, and imputed the emotion he had observed to the fear of the wild cattle which grazed in that part of the extensive chase through which they were now walking.

Of these animals, the descendants of the savage herds which anciently roamed free in the Caledonian forests, it was formerly a point of state to preserve a few in the parks of the Scottish nobility. Specimens continued within the memory of man to be kept at least at three houses of distinction—Hamilton, namely, Drumlanrig, and Cumbernauld. They had degenerated from the ancient race in size and strength, if we are to judge from the accounts of old chronicles, and from the formidable remains frequently discovered in bogs and morasses when drained and laid open. The bull had lost the shaggy honours of his mane, and the race was small and light made, in colour a dingy white, or rather a pale yellow, with black horns and hoofs. They retained, however, in some measure, the ferocity of their ancestry, could not be domesticated on account of their antipathy to the human race, and were often dangerous if approached unguardedly, or wantonly disturbed. It was this last reason which has occasioned their being extirpated at the places we have mentioned, where probably they would otherwise have been retained as appropriate inhabitants of a Scottish woodland, and fit tenants for a baronial forest. A few, if I mistake not, are still preserved at Chillingham Castle, in Northumberland, the seat of the Earl of Tankerville.

It was to her finding herself in the vicinity of a group of three or four of these animals, that Lucy thought proper to impute those signs of fear which had arisen in her countenance for a different reason. For she had been familiarised with the appearance of the wil cattle during her walks in the chase; and it was not then, as it may be now, a necessary part of a young lady's demeanour to indulge in causeless tremors of the nerves. On the present occasion, however, she speedily found cause for real terror.

Lucy had scarcely replied to her father in the words we have mentioned, and he was just about to rebuke her supposed timidity, when a bull, stimulated either by the scarlet colour of Miss Ashton's mantle, or by one of those fits of capricious ferocity to which their dispositions are liable, detached himself suddenly from the group which was feeding at the upper extremity of a grassy glade, that seemed to lose itself among the crossing and entangled boughs. The animal approached the intruders on his pasture ground, at first slowly, pawing the ground with his hoof, bellowing from time to time, and tearing up the sand with his horns, as if to lash himself up to rage and violence.

The Lord Keeper, who observed the animal's demeanour, was aware that he was about to become mischievous, and, drawing his daughter's arm under his own, began to walk fast along the avenue, in hopes to get out of his sight and his reach. This was the most injudicious course he could have adopted, for, encouraged by the appearance of flight, the bull began to pursue them at full speed. Assailed by a danger so imminent, firmer courage than that of the Lord Keeper might have given way. But paternal tenderness, "love strong as death," sustained him. He continued to support and drag onward his daughter, until her fears altogether depriving her of the power of flight, she sunk down by his side; and when he could no longer assist her to escape, he turned round and placed himself betwixt her and the raging animal, which, advancing in full career, its brutal fury enhanced by the rapidity of the pursuit, was now within a few yards of them. The Lord Keeper had no weapons; his age and gravity dispensed even with the usual appendage of a walking sword—could such appendage have availed him anything.

It seemed inevitable that the father or daughter, or both, should have fallen victims to the impending danger, when a shot from the neighbouring thicket arrested the progress of the animal. He was so truly struck between the junction of the spine with the skull, that the wound, which in any other part of his body might scarce have impeded his career, proved instantly fatal. Stumbling forward with a hideous bellow, the progressive force of his previous motion, rather than any operation of his limbs, carried him up to within three yards of the astonished Lord Keeper, where he rolled on the ground, his limbs darkened with the black death-sweat, and quivering with the last convulsions of muscular motion.

Lucy lay senseless on the ground, insensible of the wonderful deliverance which she had experience. Her father was almost equally stupified, so rapid and unexpected had been the transition from the horrid death which seemed inevitable to perfect security. He gazed on the animal, terrible even in death, with a

species of mute and confused astonishment, which did not permit him distinctly to understand what had taken place; and so inaccurate was his consciousness of what had passed, that he might have supposed the bull had been arrested in its career by a thunderbolt, had he not observed among the branches of the thicket the figure of a man, with a short gun or musketoon in his hand.

This instantly recalled him to a sense of their situation: a glance at his daughter reminded him of the necessity of procuring her assistance. He called to the man, whom he concluded to be one of his foresters, to give immediate attention to Miss Ashton, while he himself hastened to call assistance. The huntsman approached them accordingly, and the Lord Keeper saw he was a stranger, but was too much agitated to make any farther remarks. In a few hurried words he directed the shooter, as stronger and more active than himself, to carry the young lady to a neighbouring fountain, while he went back to Alice's hut to procure more aid.

The man to whose timely interference they had been so much indebted did not seem inclined to leave his good work half finished. He raised Lucy from the ground in his arms, and conveying her through the glades of the forest by paths with which he seemed well acquainted, stopped not until he laid her in safety by the side of a plentiful and pellucid fountain, which had been once covered in, screened and decorated with architectural ornaments of a Gothic character. But now the vault which had covered it being broken down and riven, and the Gothic font ruined and demolished, the stream burst forth from the recess of the earth in open day, and winded its way among the broken sculpture and moss-grown stones which lay in confusion around its source.

Tradition, always busy, at least in Scotland, to grace with a legendary tale a spot in itself interesting, had ascribed a cause of peculiar veneration to this fountain. A beautiful young lady met one of the Lords of Ravenswood while hunting near this spot, and, like a second Egeria, had captivated the affections of the feudal Numa. They met frequently afterwards, and always at sunset, the charms of the nymph's mind completing the conquest which her beauty had begun, and the mystery of the intrigue adding zest to both. She always appeared and disappeared close by the fountain, with which, therefore, her lover judged she had some inexplicable connexion. She placed certain restrictions on their intercourse, which also savoured of mystery. They met only once a week—Friday was the appointed day—and she explained to the Lord of Ravenswood that they were under the necessity of separating so soon as the bell of a chapel, belonging to a hermitage in the adjoining wood, now long ruinous, should toll the hour of vespers. In the course of his confession, the Baron of Ravenswood entrusted the hermit with the secret of this singular amour, and Father Zachary drew the necessary and obvious consequence that his patron was enveloped in the toils of Satan, and in danger of destruction, both to body and soul. He urged these perils to the Baron with all the force of monkish rhetoric, and described, in the most frightful colours, the real character and person of the apparently lovely Naiad, whom he hesitated not to denounce as a limb of the kingdom of darkness. The lover listened with obstinate incredulity; and it was not until worn out by the obstinacy of the anchorite that he consented to put the state and condition of his mistress to a certain trial, and for that purpose acquiesced in Zachary's proposal that on their next interview the vespers bell should be rung half an hour later than usual. The hermit maintained and bucklered his opinion, by quotations from Malleus Malificarum, Sprengerus, Remigius, and other learned demonologists, that the Evil One, thus seduced to remain behind the appointed hour, would assume her true shape, and, having appeared to her terrified lover as a fiend of hell, would vanish from him in a flash of sulphurous lightning. Raymond of Ravenswood acquiesced in the experiment, not incurious concerning the issue, though confident it would disappoint the expectations of the hermit.

At the appointed hour the lovers met, and their interview was protracted beyond that at which they usually parted, by the delay of the priest to ring his usual curfew. No change took place upon the nymph's outward form; but as soon as the lengthening shadows made her aware that the usual hour of the vespers chime was passed, she tore herself from her lover's arms with a shriek of despair, bid him adieu for ever, and, plunging into the fountain, disappeared from his eyes. The bubbles occasioned by her descent were crimsoned with blood as they arose, leading the distracted Baron to infer that his ill-judged curiosity had occasioned the death of this interesting and mysterious being. The remorse which he felt, as well as the recollection of her charms, proved the penance of his future life, which he lost in the battle of Flodden not many months after. But, in memory of his Naiad, he had previously ornamented the fountain in which she appeared to reside, and secured its waters from profanation or pollution by the small vaulted building of which the fragments still remained scattered around it. From this period the house of Ravenswood was supposed to have dated its decay.

Such was the generally-received legend, which some, who would seem wiser than the vulgar, explained as obscurely intimating the fate of a beautiful maid of plebeian rank, the mistress of this Raymond, whom he slew in a fit of jealousy, and whose blood was mingled with the waters of the locked fountain, as it was commonly called. Others imagined that the tale had a more remote origin in the ancient heathen mythology. All, however, agreed that the spot was fatal to the Ravenswood family; and that to drink of the waters of the well, or even approach its brink, was as ominous to a descendant of that house as for a Grahame to wear green, a Bruce to kill a spider, or a St. Clair to cross the Ord on a Monday.

It was on this ominous spot that Lucy Ashton first drew breath after her long and almost deadly swoon. Beautiful and pale as the fabulous Naiad in the last agony of separation from her lover, she was seated so as to rest with her back against a part of the ruined wall, while her mantle, dripping with the water which her protector had used profusely to recall her senses, clung to her slender and beautifully proportioned form.

The first moment of recollection brought to her mind the danger which had overpowered her senses; the next called to remembrance that of her father. She looked around; he was nowhere to be seen. "My father, my father!" was all that she could ejaculate.

"Sir William is safe," answered the voice of a stranger—"perfectly safe, and will be with you instantly."

"Are you sure of that?" exclaimed Lucy. "The bull was close by us. Do not stop me: I must go to seek my father!"

And she rose with that purpose; but her strength was so much exhausted that, far from possessing the power to execute her purpose, she must have fallen against the stone on which she had leant, probably not without sustaining serious injury.

The stranger was so near to her that, without actually suffering her to fall, he could not avoid catching her in his arms, which, however, he did with a momentary reluctance, very unusual when youth interposes to prevent beauty from danger. It seemed as if her weight, slight as it was, proved too heavy for her young and athletic assistant, for, without feeling the temptation of detaining her in his arms even for a single instant, he again placed her on the stone from which she had risen, and retreating a few steps, repeated hastily "Sir William Ashton is perfectly safe and will be here instantly. Do not make yourself anxious on his account: Fate has singularly preserved him. You, madam, are exhausted, and must not think of rising until you have some assistance more suitable than mine."

Lucy, whose senses were by this time more effectually collected, was naturally led to look at the stranger with attention. There was nothing in his appearance which should have rendered him unwilling to offer his arm to a young lady who required support, or which could have induced her to refuse his assistance; and she could not help thinking, even in that moment, that he seemed cold and reluctant to offer it. A shooting-dress of dark cloth intimated the rank of the wearer, though concealed in part by a large and loose cloak of a dark brown colour. A montero cap and a black feather drooped over the wearer's brow, and partly concealed his features, which, so far as seen, were dark, regular, and full of majestic, though somewhat sullen, expression. Some secret sorrow, or the brooding spirit of some moody passion, had quenched the light and ingenuous vivacity of youth in a countenance singularly fitted to display both, and it was not easy to gaze on the stranger without a secret impression either of pity or awe, or at least of doubt and curiosity allied to both.

The impression which we have necessarily been long in describing, Lucy felt in the glance of a moment, and had no sooner encountered the keen black eyes of the stranger than her own were bent on the ground with a mixture of bashful embarrassment and fear. Yet there was a necessity to speak, or at last she thought so, and in a fluttered accent she began to mention her wonderful escape, in which she was sure that the stranger must, under Heaven, have been her father's protector and her own.

He seemed to shrink from her expressions of gratitude, while he replied abruptly, "I leave you, madam," the deep melody of his voice rendered powerful, but not harsh, by something like a severity of tone—"I leave you to the protection of those to whom it is possible you may have this day been a guardian angel."

Lucy was surprised at the ambiguity of his language, and, with a feeling of artless and unaffected gratitude, began to deprecate the idea of having intended to give her deliverer any offence, as if such a thing had been possible. "I have been unfortunate," she said, "in endeavouring to express my thanks—I am sure it must be

so, though I cannot recollect what I said; but would you but stay till my father—till the Lord Keeper comes; would you only permit him to pay you his thanks, and to inquire your name?"

"My name is unnecessary," answered the stranger; "your father—I would rather say Sir William Ashton—will learn it soon enough, for all the pleasure it is likely to afford him."

"You mistake him," said Lucy, earnestly; "he will be grateful for my sake and for his own. You do not know my father, or you are deceiving me with a story of his safety, when he has already fallen a victim to the fury of that animal."

When she had caught this idea, she started from the ground and endeavoured to press towards the avenue in which the accident had taken place, while the stranger, though he seemed to hesitate between the desire to assist and the wish to leave her, was obliged, in common humanity, to oppose her both by entreaty and action.

"On the word of a gentleman, madam, I tell you the truth; your father is in perfect safety; you will expose yourself to injury if you venture back where the herd of wild cattle grazed. If you will go"—for, having once adopted the idea that her father was still in danger, she pressed forward in spite of him—"if you WILL go, accept my arm, though I am not perhaps the person who can with most propriety offer you support."

But, without heeding this intimation, Lucy took him at his word. "Oh, if you be a man," she said—"if you be a gentleman, assist me to find my father! You shall not leave me—you must go with me; he is dying perhaps while we are talking here!"

Then, without listening to excuse or apology, and holding fast by the stranger's arm, though unconscious of anything save the support which it gave, and without which she could not have moved, mixed with a vague feeling of preventing his escape from her, she was urging, and almost dragging, him forward when Sir William Ashton came up, followed by the female attendant of blind Alice, and by two woodcutters, whom he had summoned from their occupation to his assistance. His joy at seeing his daughter safe overcame the surprise with which he would at another time have beheld her hanging as familiarly on the arm of a stranger as she might have done upon his own.

"Lucy, my dear Lucy, are you safe?—are you well?" were the only words that broke from him as he embraced her in ecstasy.

"I am well, sir, thank God! and still more that I see you so; but this gentleman," she said, quitting his arm and shrinking from him, "what must he think of me?" and her eloquent blood, flushing over neck and brow, spoke how much she was ashamed of the freedom with which she had craved, and even compelled, his assistance.

"This gentleman," said Sir William Ashton, "will, I trust, not regret the trouble we have given him, when I assure him of the gratitude of the Lord Keeper for the greatest service which one man ever rendered to another—for the life of my child—for my own life, which he has saved by his bravery and presence of mind. He will, I am sure, permit us to request—" "Request nothing of ME, my lord," said the stranger, in a stern and peremptory tone; "I am the Master of Ravenswood."

There was a dead pause of surprise, not unmixed with less pleasant feelings. The Master wrapt himself in his cloak, made a haughty inclination toward Lucy, muttering a few words of courtesy, as indistinctly heard as they seemed to be reluctantly uttered, and, turning from them, was immediately lost in the thicket.

"The Master of Ravenswood!" said the Lord Keeper, when he had recovered his momentary astonishment. "Hasten after him—stop him—beg him to speak to me for a single moment."

The two foresters accordingly set off in pursuit of the stranger. They speedily reappeared, and, in an embarrassed and awkward manner, said the gentleman would not return.

The Lord Keeper took one of the fellows aside, and questioned him more closely what the Master of Ravenswood had said.

"He just said he wadna come back," said the man, with the caution of a prudent Scotchman, who cared not to be the bearer of an unpleasant errand.

"He said something more, sir," said the Lord Keeper, "and I insist on knowing what it was."

"Why, then, my lord," said the man, looking down, "he said—But it wad be nae pleasure to your lordship to hear it, for I dare say the Master meant nae ill."

"That's none of your concern, sir; I desire to hear the very words."

"Weel, then," replied the man, "he said, 'Tell Sir William Ashton that the next time he and I forgather, he will nto be half sae blythe of our meeting as of our parting.'"

"Very well, sir," said the Lord Keeper, "I believe he alludes to a wager we have on our hawks; it is a matter of no consequence."

He turned to his daughter, who was by this time so much recovered as to be able to walk home. But the effect, which the various recollections connected with a scene so terrific made upon a mind which was susceptible in an extreme degree, was more permanent than the injury which her nerves had sustained. Visions of terror, both in sleep and in waking reveries, recalled to her the form of the furious animal, and the dreadful bellow with which he accompanied his career; and it was always the image of the Master of Ravenswood, with his native nobleness of countenance and form, that seemed to interpose betwixt her and assured death. It is, perhaps, at all times dangerous for a young person to suffer recollection to dwell repeatedly, and with too much complacency, on the same individual; but in Lucy's situation it was almost unavoidable. She had never happened to see a young man of mien and features so romantic and so striking as young Ravenswood; but had she seen an hundred his equals or his superiors in those particulars, no one else would have been linked to her heart by the strong associations of remembered danger and escape, of gratitude, wonder, and curiosity. I say curiosity, for it is likely that the singularly restrained and unaccommodating manners of the Master of Ravenswood, so much at variance with the natural expression of his features and grace of his deportment, as they excited wonder by the contrast, had their effect in riveting her attention to the recollections. She knew little of Ravenswood, or the disputes which had existed betwixt her father and his, and perhaps could in her gentleness of mind hardly have comprehended the angry and bitter passions which they had engendered. But she knew that he was come of noble stem; was poor, though descended from the noble and the wealthy; and she felt that she could sympathise with the feelings of a proud mind, which urged him to recoil from the proffered gratitude of the new proprietors of his father's house and domains. Would he have equally shunned their acknowledgments and avoided their intimacy, had her father's request been urged more mildly, less abruptly, and softened with the grace which women so well know how to throw into their manner, when they mean to mediate betwixt the headlong passions of the ruder sex? This was a perilous question to ask her own mind—perilous both in the idea and its consequences.

Lucy Ashton, in short, was involved in those mazes of the imagination which are most dangerous to the young and the sensitive. Time, it is true, absence, change of scene and new faces, might probably have destroyed the illusion in her instance, as it has done in many others; but her residence remained solitary, and her mind without those means of dissipating her pleasing visions. This solitude was chiefly owing to the absence of Lady Ashton, who was at this time in Edinburgh, watching the progress of some state-intrigue; the Lord Keeper only received society out of policy or ostentation, and was by nature rather reserved and unsociable; and thus no cavalier appeared to rival or to obscure the ideal picture of chivalrous excellence which Lucy had pictured to herself in the Master of Ravenswood.

While Lucy indulged in these dreams, she made frequent visits to old blind Alice, hoping it would be easy to lead her to talk on the subject which at present she had so imprudently admitted to occupy so large a portion of her thoughts. But Alice did not in this particular gratify her wishes and expectations. She spoke readily, and with pathetic feeling, concerning the family in general, but seemed to observe an especial and cautious silence on the subject of the present representative. The little she said of him was not altogether so favourable as Lucy had anticipated. She hinted that he was of a stern and unforgiving character, more ready to resent than to pardon injuries; and Lucy combined, with great alarm, the hints which she now dropped of these dangerous qualities with Alice's advice to her father, so emphatically given, "to beware of Ravenswood."

But that very Ravenswood, of whom such unjust suspicions had been entertained, had, almost immediately after they had been uttered, confuted them by saving at once her father's life and her own. Had he nourished such black revenge as Alice's dark hints seemed to indicate, no deed of active guilt was necessary to the full gratification of that evil passion. He needed but to have withheld for an instant his indispensable and effective assistance, and the object of his resentment must have perished, without any direct aggression on his part, by a death equally fearful and certain. She conceived, therefore, that some secret prejudice, or the

suspicious incident to age and misfortune, had led Alice to form conclusions injurious to the character, and irreconcilable both with the generous conduct and noble features, of the Master of Ravenswood. And in this belief Lucy reposed her hope, and went on weaving her enchanted web of fairy tissue, as beautiful and transient as the film of the gossamer when it is pearly with the morning dew and glimmering to the sun.

Her father, in the mean while, as well as the Master of Ravenswood, were making reflections, as frequent though more solid than those of Lucy, upon the singular event which had taken place. The Lord Keeper's first task, when he returned home, was to ascertain by medical advice that his daughter had sustained no injury from the dangerous and alarming situation in which she had been placed. Satisfied on this topic, he proceeded to revise the memoranda which he had taken down from the mouth of the person employed to interrupt the funeral service of the late Lord Ravenswood. Bred to casuistry, and well accustomed to practise the ambidexter ingenuity of the bar, it cost him little trouble to soften the features of the tumult which he had been at first so anxious to exaggerate. He preached to his colleagues of the privy council the necessity of using conciliatory measures with young men, whose blood and temper were hot, and their experience of life limited. He did not hesitate to attribute some censure to the conduct of the officer, as having been unnecessarily irritating.

These were the contents of his public despatches. The letters which he wrote to those private friends into whose management the matter was likely to fall were of a yet more favourable tenor. He represented that lenity in this case would be equally politic and popular, whereas, considering the high respect with which the rites of interment are regarded in Scotland, any severity exercised against the Master of Ravenswood for protecting those of his father from interruption, would be on all sides most unfavourably construed. And, finally, assuming the language of a generous and high-spirited man, he made it his particular request that this affair should be passed over without severe notice. He alluded with delicacy to the predicament in which he himself stood with young Ravenswood, as having succeeded in the long train of litigation by which the fortunes of that noble house had been so much reduced, and confessed it would be most peculiarly acceptable to his own feelings, could he find in some sort to counterbalance the disadvantages which he had occasioned the family, though only in the prosecution of his just and lawful rights. He therefore made it his particular and personal request that the matter should have no farther consequences, an insinuated a desire that he himself should have the merit of having put a stop to it by his favourable report and intercession. It was particularly remarkable that, contrary to his uniform practice, he made no special communication to Lady Ashton upon the subject of the tumult; and although he mentioned the alarm which Lucy had received from one of the wild cattle, yet he gave no detailed account of an incident so interesting and terrible.

There was much surprise among Sir William Ashton's political friends and colleagues on receiving letters of a tenor so unexpected. On comparing notes together, one smiled, one put up his eyebrows, a third nodded acquiescence in the general wonder, and a fourth asked if they were sure these were ALL the letters the Lord Keeper had written on the subject. "It runs strangely in my mind, my lords, that none of these advices contain the root of the matter."

But no secret letters of a contrary nature had been received, although the question seemed to imply the possibility of their existence.

"Well," said an old grey-headed statesman, who had contrived, by shifting and trimming, to maintain his post at the steerage through all the changes of course which the vessel had held for thirty years, "I thought Sir William would hae verified the auld Scottish saying, 'As soon comes the lamb's skin to market as the auld tup's'."

"We must please him after his own fashion," said another, "though it be an unlooked-for one."

"A wilful man maun hae his way," answered the old counsellor.

"The Keeper will rue this before year and day are out," said a third; "the Master of Ravenswood is the lad to wind him a pirl."

"Why, what would you do, my lords, with the poor young fellow?" said a noble Marquis present. "The Lord Keeper has got all his estates; he has not a cross to bless himself with."

On which the ancient Lord Turntipptet replied,

*"If he hasna gear to fine,
He ha shins to pine.*

"And that was our way before the Revolution: Lucitur cum persona, qui luere non potest cum crumena. Hegh, my lords, that's gude law Latin."

"I can see no motive," replied the Marquis, "that any noble lord can have for urging this matter farther; let the Lord Keeper have the power to deal in it as he pleases."

"Agree, agree—remit to the Lord Keeper, with any other person for fashion's sake—Lord Hirplehooly, who is bed-ridden—one to be a quorum. Make your entry in the minutes, Mr. Clerk. And now, my lords, there is that young scattergood the Laird of Bucklaw's fine to be disposed upon. I suppose it goes to my Lord Treasurer?"

"Shame be in my meal-poke, then," exclaimed the Lord Turntipptet, "and your hand aye in the nook of it! I had set that down for a bye-bit between meals for mysell."

"To use one of your favourite saws, my lord," replied the Marquis, "you are like the miller's dog, that licks his lips before the bag is untied: the man is not fined yet."

"But that costs but twa skarts of a pen," said Lord Turntipptet; "and surely there is nae noble lord that will presume to say that I, wha hae complied wi' a' compliances, taen all manner of tests, adjured all that was to be abjured, and sworn a' that was to be sworn, for these thirty years bye-past, sticking fast by my duty to the state through good report and bad report, shouldna hae something now and then to synd my mouth wi' after sic drouthy wark? Eh?"

"It would be very unreasonable indeed, my lord," replied the Marquis, "had we either thought that your lordship's drought was quenchable, or observed anything stick in your throat that required washing down."

And so we close the scene on the privy council of that period.

CHAPTER VI.

*For this are all these warriors come,
To hear an idle tale;
And o'er our death-accustom'd arms
Shall sily tears prevail?*

HENRY MACKENZIE.

ON the evening of the day when the Lord Keeper and his daughter were saved from such imminent peril, two strangers were seated in the most private apartment of a small obscure inn, or rather alehouse, called the Tod's Den [Hole], about three or four [five or six] miles from the Castle of Ravenswood and as far from the ruinous tower of Wolf's Crag, betwixt which two places it was situated.

One of these strangers was about forty years of age, tall, and thin in the flanks, with an aquiline nose, dark penetrating eyes, and a shrewd but sinister cast of countenance. The other was about fifteen years younger, short, stout, ruddy-faced, and red-haired, with an open, resolute, and cheerful eye, to which careless and fearless freedom and inward daring gave fire and expression, notwithstanding its light grey colour. A stoup of wine (for in those days it was served out from the cask in pewter flagons) was placed on the table, and each had his quaigh or bicker before him. But there was little appearance of conviviality. With folded arms, and looks of anxious expectation, they eyed each other in silence, each wrapt in his own thoughts, and holding no communication with his neighbour. At length the younger broke silence by exclaiming: "What the foul fiend can detain the Master so long? He must have miscarried in his enterprise. Why did you dissuade me from going with him?"

"One man is enough to right his own wrong," said the taller and older personage; "we venture our lives for him in coming thus far on such an errand."

"You are but a craven after all, Craigengelt," answered the younger, "and that's what many folk have thought you before now." "But what none has dared to tell me," said Craigengelt, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword; "and, but that I hold a hasty man no better than a fool, I would——" he paused for his companion's answer.

"WOULD you?" said the other, coolly; "and why do you not then?"

Craigengelt drew his cutlass an inch or two, and then returned it with violence into the scabbard—"Because there is a deeper stake to be played for than the lives of twenty hare-brained gowks like you."

"You are right there," said his companion, "for it if were not that these forfeitures, and that last fine that the old driveller Turntipet is gaping for, and which, I dare say, is laid on by this time, have fairly driven me out of house and home, I were a coxcomb and a cuckoo to boot to trust your fair promises of getting me a commission in the Irish brigade. What have I to do with the Irish brigade? I am a plain Scotchman, as my father was before me; and my grand-aunt, Lady Ginnington, cannot live for ever."

"Ay, Bucklaw," observed Craigengelt, "but she may live for many a long day; and for your father, he had land and living, kept himself close from wadsetters and money-lenders, paid each man his due, and lived on his own."

"And whose fault is it that I have not done so too?" said Bucklaw—"whose but the devil's and yours, and such-like as you, that have led me to the far end of a fair estate? And now I shall be obliged, I suppose, to shelter and shift about like yourself: live one week upon a line of secret intelligence from Saint Germain's; another upon a report of a rising in the Highlands; get my breakfast and morning draught of sack from old Jacobite ladies, and give them locks of my old wig for the Chevalier's hair; second my friend in his quarrel till he comes to the field, and then flinch from him lest so important a political agent should perish from the way. All this I must do for bread, besides calling myself a captain!"

"You think you are making a fine speech now," said Craigengelt, "and showing much wit at my expense. Is starving or hanging better than the life I am obliged to lead, because the present fortunes of the king cannot sufficiently support his envoys?" "Starving is honestest, Craigengelt, and hanging is like to be the end on't. But what you mean to make of this poor fellow Ravenswood, I know not. He has no money left, any more than I; his lands are all pawned and pledged, and the interest eats up the rents, and is not satisfied, and what do you hope to make by meddling in his affairs?"

"Content yourself, Bucklaw; I know my business," replied Craigengelt. "Besides that his name, and his father's services in 1689, will make such an acquisition sound well both at Versailles and Saint Germain's, you will also please be informed that the Master of Ravenswood is a very different kind of a young fellow from you. He has parts and address, as well as courage and talents, and will present himself abroad like a young man of head as well as heart, who knows something more than the speed of a horse or the flight of a hawk. I have lost credit of late, by bringing over no one that had sense to know more than how to unharbour a stag, or take and reclaim an eyas. The Master has education, sense, and penetration."

"And yet is not wise enough to escape the tricks of a kidnapper, Craigengelt?" replied the younger man. "But don't be angry; you know you will not fight, and so it is as well to leave your hilt in peace and quiet, and tell me in sober guise how you drew the Master into your confidence?"

"By flattering his love of vengeance, Bucklaw," answered Craigengelt. "He has always distrusted me; but I watched my time, and struck while his temper was red-hot with the sense of insult and of wrong. He goes now to expostulate, as he says, and perhaps thinks, with Sir William Ashton. I say, that if they meet, and the lawyer puts him to his defence, the Master will kill him; for he had that sparkle in his eye which never deceives you when you would read a man's purpose. At any rate, he will give him such a bullying as will be construed into an assault on a privy councillor; so there will be a total breach betwixt him and government. Scotland will be too hot for him; France will gain him; and we will all set sail together in the French brig 'L'Espoir,' which is hovering for us off Eyemouth."

"Content am I," said Bucklaw; "Scotland has little left that I care about; and if carrying the Master with us will get us a better reception in France, why, so be it, a God's name. I doubt our own merits will procure us slender preferment; and I trust he will send a ball through the Keeper's head before he joins us. One or two of these scoundrel statesmen should be shot once a year, just to keep the others on their good behaviour."

"That is very true," replied Craigengelt; "and it reminds me that I must go and see that our horses have been fed and are in readiness; for, should such deed be done, it will be no time for grass to grow beneath their heels." He proceeded as far as the door, then turned back with a look of earnestness, and said to Bucklaw: "Whatever should come of this business, I am sure you will do me the justice to remember that I said nothing to the Master which could imply my accession to any act of violence which he may take it into his head to commit."

"No, no, not a single word like accession," replied Bucklaw; "you know too well the risk belonging to these two terrible words, 'art and part.'" Then, as if to himself, he recited the following lines:

"The dial spoke not, but it made shrewd signs, And pointed full upon the stroke of murder.
 "What is that you are talking to yourself?" said Craigengelt, turning back with some anxiety.
 "Nothing, only two lines I have heard upon the stage," replied his companion.
 "Bucklaw," said Craigengelt, "I sometimes think you should have been a stage-player yourself; all is fancy and frolic with you."
"I have often thought so myself," said Bucklaw. "I believe it would be safer than acting with you in the Fatal Conspiracy. But away, play your own part, and look after the horses like a groom as you are. A play-actor—a stage-player!" he repeated to himself; "that would have deserved a stab, but that Craigengelt's a coward. And yet I should like the profession well enough. Stay, let me see; ay, I would come out in Alexander:

*Thus from the grave I rise to save my love,
 Draw all your swords, and quick as lightning move.
 When I rush on, sure none will dare to stay:
 'Tis love commands, and glory leads the way."*

As with a voice of thunder, and his hand upon his sword, Bucklaw repeated the ranting couplets of poor Lee, Craigengelt re-entered with a face of alarm.

"We are undone, Bucklaw! The Master's led horse has cast himself over his halter in the stable, and is dead lame. His hackney will be set up with the day's work, and now he has no fresh horse; he will never get off."

"Egad, there will be no moving with the speed of lightning this bout," said Bucklaw, drily. "But stay, you can give him yours."

"What! and be taken myself? I thank you for the proposal," said Craigengelt.

"Why," replied Bucklaw, "if the Lord Keeper should have met with a mischance, which for my part I cannot suppose, for the Master is not the lad to shoot an old and unarmed man—but IF there should have been a fray at the Castle, you are neither art nor part in it, you know, so have nothing to fear."

"True, true," answered the other, with embarrassment; "but consider my commission from Saint Germain's."

"Which many men think is a commission of your own making, noble Captain. Well, if you will not give him your horse, why, d—n it, he must have mine."

"Yours?" said Craigengelt.

"Ay, mine," repeated Bucklaw; "it shall never be said that I agreed to back a gentleman in a little affair of honour, and neither helped him on with it nor off from it."

"You will give him your horse? and have you considered the loss?"

"Loss! why, Grey Gilbert cost me twenty Jacobuses, that's true; but then his hackney is worth something, and his Black Moor is worth twice as much were he sound, and I know how to handle him. Take a fat sucking mastiff whelp, flay and bowel him, stuff the body full of black and grey snails, roast a reasonable time, and baste with oil of spikenard, saffron, cinnamon, and honey, anoint with the dripping, working it in——"

"Yes, Bucklaw; but in the mean while, before the sprain is cured, nay, before the whelp is roasted, you will be caught and hung. Depend on it, the chase will be hard after Ravenswood. I wish we had made our place of rendezvous nearer to the coast."

"On my faith, then," said Bucklaw, "I had best go off just now, and leave my horse for him. Stay—stay, he comes: I hear a horse's feet."

"Are you sure there is only one?" said Craigengelt. "I fear there is a chase; I think I hear three or four galloping together. I am sure I hear more horses than one."

"Pooh, pooh, it is the wench of the house clattering to the well in her pattens. By my faith, Captain, you should give up both your captainship and your secret service, for you are as easily scared as a wild goose. But here comes the Master alone, and looking as gloomy as a night in November."

The Master of Ravenswood entered the room accordingly, his cloak muffled around him, his arms folded, his looks stern, and at the same time dejected. He flung his cloak from him as he entered, threw himself upon a chair, and appeared sunk in a profound reverie.

"What has happened? What have you done?" was hastily demanded by Craigengelt and Bucklaw in the same moment.

"Nothing!" was the short and sullen answer.

"Nothing! and left us, determined to call the old villain to account for all the injuries that you, we, and the country have received at his hand? Have you seen him?"

"I have," replied the Master of Ravenswood.

"Seen him—and come away without settling scores which have been so long due?" said Bucklaw; "I would not have expected that at the hand of the Master of Ravenswood."

"No matter what you expected," replied Ravenswood; "it is not to you, sir, that I shall be disposed to render any reason for my conduct."

"Patience, Bucklaw," said Craigengelt, interrupting his companion, who seemed about to make an angry reply. "The Master has been interrupted in his purpose by some accident; but he must excuse the anxious curiosity of friends who are devoted to his cause like you and me."

"Friends, Captain Craigengelt!" retorted Ravenswood, haughtily; "I am ignorant what familiarity passed betwixt us to entitle you to use that expression. I think our friendship amounts to this, that we agreed to leave Scotland together so soon as I should have visited the alienated mansion of my fathers, and had an interview with its present possessor—I will not call him proprietor."

"Very true, Master," answered Bucklaw; "and as we thought you had in mind to do something to put your neck in jeopardy, Craigie and I very courteously agreed to tarry for you, although ours might run some risk in consequence. As to Craigie, indeed, it does not very much signify: he had gallows written on his brow in the hour of his birth; but I should not like to discredit my parentage by coming to such an end in another man's cause."

"Gentlemen," said the Master of Ravenswood, "I am sorry if I have occasioned you any inconvenience, but I must claim the right of judging what is best for my own affairs, without rendering explanations to any one. I have altered my mind, and do not design to leave the country this season."

"Not to leave the country, Master!" exclaimed Craigengelt. "Not to go over, after all the trouble and expense I have incurred—after all the risk of discovery, and the expense of freight and demurrage!"

"Sir," replied the Master of Ravenswood, "when I designed to leave this country in this haste, I made use of your obliging offer to procure me means of conveyance; but I do not recollect that I pledged myself to go off, if I found occasion to alter my mind. For your trouble on my account, I am sorry, and I thank you; your expense," he added, putting his hand into his pocket, "admits a more solid compensation: freight and demurrage are matters with which I am unacquainted, Captain Craigengelt, but take my purse and pay yourself according to your own conscience." And accordingly he tendered a purse with some gold in it to the so-called captain.

But here Bucklaw interposed in his turn. "Your fingers, Craigie, seem to itch for that same piece of green network," said he; "but I make my vow to God, that if they offer to close upon it, I will chop them off with my whinger. Since the Master has changed his mind, I suppose we need stay here no longer; but in the first place I beg leave to tell him——"

"Tell him anything you will," said Craigengelt, "if you will first allow me to state the inconveniences to which he will expose himself by quitting our society, to remind him of the obstacles to his remaining here, and of the difficulties attending his proper introduction at Versailles and Saint Germain without the countenance of those who have established useful connexions."

"Besides forfeiting the friendship," said Bucklaw, "of at least one man of spirit and honour."

"Gentlemen," said Ravenswood, "permit me once more to assure you that you have been pleased to attach to our temporary connexion more importance than I ever meant that it should have. When I repair to foreign courts, I shall not need the introduction of an intriguing adventurer, nor is it necessary for me to set value on the friendship of a hot-headed bully." With these words, and without waiting for an answer, he left the apartment, remounted his horse, and was heard to ride off.

"Mortbleu!" said Captain Craigengelt, "my recruit is lost!"

"Ay, Captain," said Bucklaw, "the salmon is off with hook and all. But I will after him, for I have had more of his insolence than I can well digest."

Craigengelt offered to accompany him; but Bucklaw replied: "No, no, Captain, keep you the check of the chimney-nook till I come back; it's good sleeping in a hail skin."

*Little kens the auld wife that sits by the fire,
How cauld the wind blows in hurle-burle swire."*

And singing as he went, he left the apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

*Now, Billy Berwick, keep good heart,
And of they talking let me be;
But if thou art a man, as I am sure thou art,
Come over the dike and fight with me.*

Old Ballad.

THE Master of Ravenswood had mounted the ambling hackney which he before rode, on finding the accident which had happened to his led horse, and, for the animal's ease, was proceeding at a slow pace from the Tod's Den towards his old tower of Wolf's Crag, when he heard the galloping of a horse behind him, and, looking back, perceived that he was pursued by young Bucklaw, who had been delayed a few minutes in the pursuit by the irresistible temptation of giving the hostler at the Tod's Den some recipe for treating the lame horse. This brief delay he had made up by hard galloping, and now overtook the Master where the road traversed a waste moor. "Halt, sir," cried Bucklaw; "I am no political agent—no Captain Craigengelt, whose life is too important to be hazarded in defence of his honour. I am Frank Hayston of Bucklaw, and no man injures me by word, deed, sign, or look, but he must render me an account of it."

"This is all very well, Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw," replied the Master of Ravenswood, in a tone the most calm and indifferent; "but I have no quarrel with you, and desire to have none. Our roads homeward, as well as our roads through life, lie in different directions; there is no occasion for us crossing each other."

"Is there not?" said Bucklaw, impetuously. "By Heaven! but I say that there is, though: you called us intriguing adventurers."

"Be correct in your recollection, Mr. Hayston; it was to your companion only I applied that epithet, and you know him to be no better."

"And what then? He was my companion for the time, and no man shall insult my companion, right or wrong, while he is in my company."

"Then, Mr. Hayston," replied Ravenswood, with the same composure, "you should choose your society better, or you are like to have much work in your capacity of their champion. Go home, sir; sleep, and have more reason in your wrath to-morrow."

"Not so, Master, you have mistaken your man; high airs and wise saws shall not carry it off thus. Besides, you termed me bully, and you shall retract the word before we part."

"Faith, scarcely," said Ravenswood, "unless you show me better reason for thinking myself mistaken than you are now producing."

"Then, Master," said Bucklaw, "though I should be sorry to offer it to a man of your quality, if you will not justify your incivility, or retract it, or name a place of meeting, you must here undergo the hard word and the hard blow."

"Neither will be necessary," said Ravenswood; "I am satisfied with what I have done to avoid an affair with you. If you are serious, this place will serve as well as another."

"Dismount then, and draw," said Bucklaw, setting him an example. "I always thought and said you were a pretty man; I should be sorry to report you otherwise."

"You shall have no reason, sir," said Ravenswood, alighting, and putting himself into a posture of defence.

Their swords crossed, and the combat commenced with great spirit on the part of Bucklaw, who was well accustomed to affairs of the kind, and distinguished by address and dexterity at his weapon. In the present case, however, he did not use his skill to advantage; for, having lost temper at the cool and contemptuous manner in which the Master of Ravenswood had long refused, and at length granted, him satisfaction, and urged by his impatience, he adopted the part of an assailant with inconsiderate eagerness. The Master, with equal skill, and much greater composure, remained chiefly on the defensive, and even declined to avail himself of one or two advantages afforded him by the eagerness of his adversary. At length, in a desperate lunge, which he followed with an attempt to close, Bucklaw's foot slipped, and he fell on the short grassy turf on which they were fighting. "Take your life, sir," said the Master of Ravenswood, "and mend it if you can."

"It would be but a cobbled piece of work, I fear," said Bucklaw, rising slowly and gathering up his sword, much less disconcerted with the issue of the combat than could have been expected from the impetuosity of his temper. "I thank you for my life, Master," he pursued. "There is my hand; I bear no ill-will to you, either for my bad luck or your better swordsmanship."

The Master looked steadily at him for an instant, then extended his hand to him. "Bucklaw," he said, "you are a generous fellow, and I have done you wrong. I heartily ask your pardon for the expression which offended you; it was hastily and incautiously uttered, and I am convinced it is totally misapplied."

"Are you indeed, Master?" said Bucklaw, his face resuming at once its natural expression of light-hearted carelessness and audacity; "that is more than I expected of you; for, Master, men say you are not ready to retract your opinion and your language."

"Not when I have well considered them," said the Master.

"Then you are a little wiser than I am, for I always give my friend satisfaction first, and explanation afterwards. If one of us falls, all accounts are settled; if not, men are never so ready for peace as after war. But what does that bawling brat of a boy want?" said Bucklaw. "I wish to Heaven he had come a few minutes sooner! and yet it must have been ended some time, and perhaps this way is as well as any other."

As he spoke, the boy he mentioned came up, cudgelling an ass, on which he was mounted, to the top of its speed, and sending, like one of Ossian's heroes, his voice before him: "Gentlemen—gentlemen, save yourselves! for the gudewife bade us tell ye there were folk in her house had taen Captain Craigengelt, and were seeking for Bucklaw, and that ye behoved to ride for it." "By my faith, and that's very true, my man" said Bucklaw; "and there's a silver sixpence for your news, and I would give any man twice as much would tell me which way I should ride."

"That will I, Bucklaw," said Ravenswood; "ride home to Wolf's Crag with me. There are places in the old tower where you might lie hid, were a thousand men to seek you."

"But that will bring you into trouble yourself, Master; and unless you be in the Jacobite scrape already, it is quite needless for me to drag you in."

"Not a whit; I have nothing to fear."

"Then I will ride with you blithely, for, to say the truth, I do not know the rendezvous that Craigie was to guide us to this night; and I am sure that, if he is taken, he will tell all the truth of me, and twenty lies of you, in order to save himself from the withie."

They mounted and rode off in company accordingly, striking off the ordinary road, and holding their way by wild moorish unfrequented paths, with which the gentlemen were well acquainted from the exercise of the chase, but through which others would have had much difficulty in tracing their course. They rode for some time in silence, making such haste as the condition of Ravenswood's horse permitted, until night having gradually closed around them, they discontinued their speed, both from the difficulty of discovering their path, and from the hope that they were beyond the reach of pursuit or observation.

"And now that we have drawn bridle a bit," said Bucklaw, "I would fain ask you a question, Master."

"Ask and welcome," said Ravenswood, "but forgive not answering it, unless I think proper."

"Well, it is simply this," answered his late antagonist "What, in the name of old Sathan, could make you, who stand so highly on your reputation, think for a moment of drawing up with such a rogue as Craigengelt, and such a scapegrace as folk call Bucklaw?"

"Simply, because I was desperate, and sought desperate associates."

"And what made you break off from us at the nearest?" again demanded Bucklaw.

"Because I had changed my mind," said the Master, "and renounced my enterprise, at least for the present. And now that I have answered your questions fairly and frankly, tell me what makes you associate with Craigengelt, so much beneath you both in birth and in spirit?"

"In plain terms," answered Bucklaw, "because I am a fool, who have gambled away my land in these times. My grand-aunt, Lady Girnington, has taen a new tack of life, I think, and I could only hope to get something by a change of government. Craigie was a sort of gambling acquaintance; he saw my condition, and, as the devil is always at one's elbow, told me fifty lies about his credentials from Versailles, and his interest at Saint Germain's, promised me a captain's commission at Paris, and I have been ass enough to put my thumb under his belt. I dare say, by this time, he has told a dozen pretty stories of me to the government. And this is what I have got by wine, women, and dice, cocks, dogs, and horses."

"Yes, Bucklaw," said the Master, "you have indeed nourished in your bosom the snakes that are now stinging you."

"That's home as well as true, Master," replied his companion; "but, by your leave, you have nursed in your bosom one great goodly snake that has swallowed all the rest, and is as sure to devour you as my half-dozen are to make a meal on all that's left of Bucklaw, which is but what lies between bonnet and boot-heel."

"I must not," answered the Master of Ravenswood, "challenge the freedom of speech in which I have set example. What, to speak without a metaphor, do you call this monstrous passion which you charge me with fostering?"

"Revenge, my good sir—revenge; which, if it be as gentle manlike a sin as wine and wassail, with their et coeteras, is equally unchristian, and not so bloodless. It is better breaking a park-pale to watch a doe or damsel than to shoot an old man."

"I deny the purpose," said the Master of Ravenswood. "On my soul, I had no such intention; I meant but to confront the oppressor ere I left my native land, and upbraid him with his tyranny and its consequences. I would have stated my wrongs so that they would have shaken his soul within him."

"Yes," answered Bucklaw, "and he would have collared you, and cried 'help,' and then you would have shaken the soul OUT of him, I suppose. Your very look and manner would have frightened the old man to death."

"Consider the provocation," answered Ravenswood—"consider the ruin and death procured and caused by his hard-hearted cruelty—an ancient house destroyed, an affectionate father murdered! Why, in our old Scottish days, he that sat quiet under such wrongs would have been held neither fit to back a friend nor face a foe."

"Well, Master, I am glad to see that the devil deals as cunningly with other folk as he deals with me; for whenever I am about to commit any folly, he persuades me it is the most necessary, gallant, gentlemanlike thing on earth, and I am up to saddlegirths in the bog before I see that the ground is soft. And you, Master, might have turned out a murd—a homicide, just out of pure respect for your father's memory."

"There is more sense in your language, Bucklaw," replied the Master, "than might have been expected from your conduct. It is too true, our vices steal upon us in forms outwardly as fair as those of the demons whom the superstitious represent as intriguing with the human race, and are not discovered in their native hideousness until we have clasped them in our arms."

"But we may throw them from us, though," said Bucklaw, "and that is what I shall think of doing one of these days—that is, when old Lady Ginnington dies."

"Did you ever hear the expression of the English divine?" said Ravenswood—"Hell is paved with good intentions,"—as much as to say, they are more often formed than executed."

"Well," replied Bucklaw, "but I will begin this blessed night, and have determined not to drink above one quart of wine, unless your claret be of extraordinary quality."

"You will find little to tempt you at Wolf's Crag," said the Master. "I know not that I can promise you more than the shelter of my roof; all, and more than all, our stock of wine and provisions was exhausted at the late occasion."

"Long may it be ere provision is needed for the like purpose," answered Bucklaw; "but you should not drink up the last flask at a dirge; there is ill luck in that."

"There is ill luck, I think, in whatever belongs to me," said Ravenswood. "But yonder is Wolf's Crag, and whatever it still contains is at your service."

The roar of the sea had long announced their approach to the cliffs, on the summit of which, like the nest of some sea-eagle, the founder of the fortalice had perched his eyrie. The pale moon, which had hitherto been contending with flitting clouds, now shone out, and gave them a view of the solitary and naked tower, situated on a projecting cliff that beetled on the German Ocean. On three sides the rock was precipitous; on the fourth, which was that towards the land, it had been originally fenced by an artificial ditch and drawbridge, but the latter was broken down and ruinous, and the former had been in part filled up, so as to allow passage for a horseman into the narrow courtyard, encircled on two sides with low offices and stables, partly ruinous, and closed on the landward front by a low embattled wall, while the remaining side of the quadrangle was occupied by the tower itself, which, tall and narrow, and built of a greyish stone, stood glimmering in the moonlight, like the sheeted spectre of some huge giant. A wilder or more disconsolate dwelling it was perhaps difficult to conceive. The sombrous and heavy sound of the billows, successively dashing against the rocky beach at a profound distance beneath, was to the ear what the landscape was to the eye—a symbol of unvaried and monotonous melancholy, not unmingled with horror.

Although the night was not far advanced, there was no sign of living inhabitant about this forlorn abode, excepting that one, and only one, of the narrow and stanchelled windows which appeared at irregular heights and distances in the walls of the building showed a small glimmer of light.

"There," said Ravenswood, "sits the only male domestic that remains to the house of Ravenswood; and it is well that he does remain there, since otherwise we had little hope to find either light or fire. But follow me cautiously; the road is narrow, and admits only one horse in front."

In effect, the path led along a kind of isthmus, at the peninsular extremity of which the tower was situated, with that exclusive attention to strength and security, in preference to every circumstances of convenience, which dictated to the Scottish barons the choice of their situations, as well as their style of building.

By adopting the cautious mode of approach recommended by the proprietor of this wild hold, they entered the courtyard in safety. But it was long ere the efforts of Ravenswood, though loudly exerted by knocking at the low-browed entrance, and repeated shouts to Caleb to open the gate and admit them, received any answer.

"The old man must be departed," he began to say, "or fallen into some fit; for the noise I have made would have waked the seven sleepers."

At length a timid and hesitating voice replied: "Master—Master of Ravenswood, is it you?"

"Yes, it is I, Caleb; open the door quickly."

"But it is you in very blood and body? For I would sooner face fifty deevils as my master's ghaist, or even his wraith; wherefore, aroint ye, if ye were ten times my master, unless ye come in bodily shape, lith and limb." "It is I, you old fool," answered Ravenswood, "in bodily shape and alive, save that I am half dead with cold."

The light at the upper window disappeared, and glancing from loophole to loophole in slow succession, gave intimation that the bearer was in the act of descending, with great deliberation, a winding staircase occupying one of the turrets which graced the angles of the old tower. The tardiness of his descent extracted some exclamations of impatience from Ravenswood, and several oaths from his less patient and more mecurial companion. Caleb again paused ere he unbolted the door, and once more asked if they were men of mould that demanded entrance at this time of night.

"Were I near you, you old fool," said Bucklaw, "I would give you sufficient proofs of MY bodily condition."

"Open the gate, Caleb," said his master, in a more soothing tone, partly from his regard to the ancient and faithful seneschal, partly perhaps because he thought that angry words would be thrown away, so long as Caleb had a stout iron-clenched oaken door betwixt his person and the speakers.

At length Caleb, with a trembling hand, undid the bars, opened the heavy door, and stood before them, exhibiting his thin grey hairs, bald forehead, and sharp high features, illuminated by a quivering lamp which he held in one hand, while he shaded and protected its flame with the other. The timorous, courteous glance which he threw around him, the effect of the partial light upon his white hair and illumined features, might have made a good painting; but our travellers were too impatient for security against the rising storm to permit them to indulge themselves in studying the picturesque. "Is it you, my dear master?—is it you yourself, indeed?" exclaimed the old domestic. "I am wae ye suld hae stude waiting at your ain gate; but wha wad hae thought o' seeing ye sae sune, and a strange gentleman with a—(Here he exclaimed apart, as it were, and to some inmate of the tower, in a voice not meant to be heard by those in the court)—Mysie—Mysie, woman! stir for dear life, and get the fire mended; take the auld three-legged stool, or ony thing that's readiest that will make a lowe. I doubt we are but puirly provided, no expecting ye this some months, when doubtless ye was hae been received conform till your rank, as gude right is; but natheless—"

"Natheless, Caleb," said the Master, "we must have our horses put up, and ourselves too, the best way we can. I hope you are not sorry to see me sooner than you expected?"

"Sorry, my lord! I am sure ye sall aye be my lord wi' honest folk, as your noble ancestors hae been these three hundred years, and never asked a Whig's leave. Sorry to see the Lord of Ravenswood at ane o' his ain castles! (Then again apart to his unseen associate behind the screen) Mysie, kill the brood-hen without thinking twice on it; let them care that come ahint. No to say it's our best dwelling," he added, turning to Bucklaw; "but just a strength for the Lord of Ravenswood to flee until—that is, no to FLEE, but to retreat until in troublous times, like the present, when it was ill convenient for him to live farther in the country in ony of his better and mair principal manors; but, for its antiquity, maist folk think that the outside of Wolf's Crag is worthy of a large perusal."

"And you are determined we shall have time to make it," said Ravenswood, somewhat amused with the shifts the old man used to detain them without doors until his confederate Mysie had made her preparations within.

"Oh, never mind the outside of the house, my good friend," said Bucklaw; "let's see the inside, and let our horses see the stable, that's all." "Oh yes, sir—ay, sir— unquestionably, sir—my lord and ony of his honourable companions—"

"But our horses, my friend—our horses; they will be dead-founded by standing here in the cold after riding hard, and mine is too good to be spoiled; therefore, once more, our horses!" exclaimed Bucklaw.

"True—ay—your horses—yes—I will call the grooms"; and sturdily did Caleb roar till the old tower rang again: "John—William—Saunders! The lads are gane out, or sleeping," he observed, after pausing for an answer, which he knew that he had no human chance of receiving. "A' gaes wrang when the Master's out-bye; but I'll take care o' your cattle mysell."

"I think you had better," said Ravenswood, "otherwise I see little chance of their being attended to at all."

"Whisht, my lord—whisht, for God's sake," said Caleb, in an imploring tone, and apart to his master; "if ye dinna regard your ain credit, think on mine; we'll hae hard enugh wark to make a decent night o't, wi' a' the lees I can tell."

"Well, well, never mind," said his master; "go to the stable. There is hay and corn, I trust?"

"Ou ay, plenty of hay and corn"; this was uttered boldly and aloud, and, in a lower tone, "there was some half fous o' aits, and some taitis o' meadow-hay, left after the burial."

"Very well," said Ravenswood, taking the lamp from his domestic's unwilling hand, "I will show the stranger upstairs myself."

"I canna think o' that, my lord; if ye wad but have five minutes, or ten minutes, or, at maist, a quarter of an hour's patience, and look at the fine moonlight prospect of the Bass and North Berwick Law till I sort the horses, I would marshal ye up, as reason is ye suld be marshalled, your lordship and your honourable visitor. And I hae lockit up the siller candlesticks, and the lamp is not fit——"

"It will do very well in the mean time," said Ravenswood, "and you will have no difficulty for want of light in the stable, for, if I recollect, half the roof is off."

"Very true, my lord," replied the trusty adherent, and with ready wit instantly added, "and the lazy sclater loons have never come to put it on a' this while, your lordship."

"If I were disposed to jest at the calamities of my house," said Ravenswood, as he led the way upstairs, "poor old Caleb would furnish me with ample means. His passion consists in representing things about our miserable menage, not as they are, but as, in his opinion, they ought to be; and, to say the truth, I have been often diverted with the poor wretch's expedients to supply what he thought was essential for the credit of the family, and his still more generous apologies for the want of those articles for which his ingenuity could discover no substitute. But though the tower is none of the largest, I shall have some trouble without him to find the apartment in which there is a fire."

As he spoke thus, he opened the door of the hall. "Here, at least," he said, "there is neither hearth nor harbour."

It was indeed a scene of desolation. A large vaulted room, the beams of which, combined like those of Westminster Hall, were rudely carved at the extremities, remained nearly in the situation in which it had been left after the entertainment at Allan Lord Ravenswood's funeral. Overturned pitchers, and black-jacks, and pewter stoups, and flagons still cumbered the large oaken table; glasses, those more perishable implements of conviviality, many of which had been voluntarily sacrificed by the guests in their enthusiastic pledges to favourite toasts, strewed the stone floor with their fragments. As for the articles of plate, lent for the purpose by friends and kinsfolk, those had been carefully withdrawn so soon as the ostentatious display of festivity, equally unnecessary and strangely timed, had been made and ended. Nothing, in short, remained that indicated wealth; all the signs were those of recent wastefulness and present desolation. The black cloth hangings, which, on the late mournful occasion, replaced the tattered moth-eaten tapestries, had been partly pulled down, and, dangling from the wall in irregular festoons, disclosed the rough stonework of the building, unsmoothed either by plaster or the chisel. The seats thrown down, or left in disorder, intimated the careless confusion which had concluded the mournful revel. "This room," said Ravenswood, holding up the lamp—"this room, Mr. Hayston, was riotous when it should have been sad; it is a just retribution that it should now be sad when it ought to be cheerful."

They left this disconsolate apartment, and went upstairs, where, after opening one or two doors in vain, Ravenswood led the way into a little matted ante-room, in which, to their great joy, they found a tolerably good fire, which Mysie, by some such expedient as Caleb had suggested, had supplied with a reasonable quantity of fuel. Glad at the heart to see more of comfort than the castle had yet seemed to offer, Bucklaw rubbed his hands heartily over the fire, and now listened with more complacency to the apologies which the Master of Ravenswood offered. "Comfort," he said, "I cannot provide for you, for I have it not for myself; it is long since these walls have known it, if, indeed, they were ever acquainted with it. Shelter and safety, I think, I can promise you."

"Excellent matters, Master," replied Bucklaw, "and, with a mouthful of food and wine, positively all I can require to-night."

"I fear," said the Master, "your supper will be a poor one; I hear the matter in discussion betwixt Caleb and Mysie. Poor Balderstone is something deaf, amongst his other accomplishments, so that much of what he means should be spoken aside is overheard by the whole audience, and especially by those from whom he is most anxious to conceal his private manoeuvres. Hark!"

They listened, and heard the old domestic's voice in conversation with Mysie to the following effect:

"Just mak the best o't—make the besto't, woman; it's easy to put a fair face on ony thing."

"But the auld brood-hen? She'll be as teugh as bow-strings and bend-leather!"

"Say ye made a mistake—say ye made a mistake, Mysie," replied the faithful seneschal, in a soothing and undertoned voice; "tak it a' on yoursell; never let the credit o' the house suffer."

"But the brood-hen," remonstrated Mysie—"ou, she's sitting some gate aneath the dais in the hall, and I am feared to gae in in the dark for the dogle; and if I didna see the bogle, I could as ill see the hen, for it's pit-mirk, and there's no another light in the house, save that very blessed lamp whilk the Master has in his ain hand. And if I had the hen, she's to pu', and to draw, and to dress; how can I do that, and them sitting by the only fire we have?"

"Weel, weel, Mysie," said the butler, "bide ye there a wee, and I'll try to get the lamp wiled away frae them."

Accordingly, Caleb Balderstone entered the apartment, little aware that so much of his by-play had been audible there. "Well, Caleb, my old friend, is there any chance of supper?" said the Master of Ravenswood.

"CHANCE of supper, your lordship?" said Caleb, with an emphasis of strong scorn at the implied doubt. "How should there be ony question of that, and us in your lordship's house? Chance of supper, indeed! But ye'll no be for butcher-meat? There's walth o' fat poultry, ready either for spit or brander. The fat capon, Mysie!" he added, calling out as boldly as if such a thing had been in existence.

"Quite unnecessary," said Bucklaw, who deemed himself bound in courtesy to relieve some part of the anxious butler's perplexity, "if you have anything cold, or a morsel of bread."

"The best of bannocks!" exclaimed Caleb, much relieve; "and, for cauld meat, a' that we hae is cauld enOUGH,—how-beit, maist of the cauld meat and pastry was gien to the poor folk after the ceremony of interment, as gude reason was; nevertheless——"

"Come, Caleb," said the Master of Ravenswood, "I must cut this matter short. This is the young Laird of Bucklaw; he is under hiding, and therefore, you know——"

"He'll be nae nicer than your lordship's honour, I'se warrant," answered Caleb, cheerfully, with a nod of intelligence; "I am sorry that the gentleman is under distress, but I am blythe that he canna say muckle agane our housekeeping, for I believe his ain pinches may matach ours; no that we are pinched, thank God," he added, retracting the admission which he had made in his first burst of joy, "but nae doubt we are waur aff than we hae been, or suld be. And for eating—what signifies telling a lee? there's just the hinder end of the mutton-ham that has been but three times on the table, and the nearer the bane the sweeter, as your honours weel ken; and—there's the heel of the ewe-milk kebbuck, wi' a bit of nice butter, and—and—that's a' that's to trust to." And with great alacrity he produced his slender stock of provisions, and placed them with much formality upon a small round table betwixt the two gentlemen, who were not deterred either by the homely quality or limited quantity of the repast from doing it full justice. Caleb in the mean while waited on them with grave officiousness, as if anxious to make up, by his own respectful assiduity, for the want of all other attendance.

But, alas! how little on such occasions can form, however anxiously and scrupulously observed, supply the lack of substantial fare! Bucklaw, who had eagerly eaten a considerable portion of the thrice-sacked mutton-ham, now began to demand ale.

"I wadna just presume to recommend our ale," said Caleb; "the maut was ill made, and there was awfu' thunner last week; but siccan water as the Tower well has ye'll seldome see, Bucklaw, and that I'se engage for."

"But if your ale is bad, you can let us have some wine," said Bucklaw, making a grimace at the mention of the pure element which Caleb so earnestly recommended.

"Wine!" answered Caleb, undauntedly, "eneugh of wine! It was but twa days syne—wae's me for the cause—there was as much wine drunk in this house as would have floated a pinnacle. There never was lack of wine at Wolf's Crag."

"Do fetch us some then," said the master, "instead of talking about it." And Caleb boldly departed.

Every expended butt in the old cellar did he set a-tilt, and shake with the desperate expectation of collecting enough of the grounds of claret to fill the large pewter measure which he carried in his hand. Alas! each had been too devoutly drained; and, with all the squeezing and manoeuvring which his craft as a butler suggested, he could only collect about half a quart that seemed presentable. Still, however, Caleb was too good a general to renounce the field without a strategem to cover his retreat. He undauntedly threw down an empty flagon, as if he had stumbled at the entrance of the apartment, called upon Mysie to wipe up the wine that had never been spilt, and placing the other vessel on the table, hoped there was still enough left for their honours. There was indeed; for even Bucklaw, a sworn friend to the grape, found no encouragement to renew his first attack upon the vintage of Wolf's Crag, but contented himself, however reluctantly, with a draught of fair water. Arrangements were now made for his repose; and as the secret chamber was assigned for this purpose, it furnished Caleb with a first-rate and most plausible apology for all deficiencies of furniture, bedding, etc.

"For wha," said he, "would have thought of the secret chaumer being needed? It has not been used since the time of the Gowrie Conspiracy, and I durst never let a woman ken of the entrance to it, or your honour will allow that it wad not hae been a secret chaumer lang."

CHAPTER VIII.

*The hearth in hall was black and dead,
No board was dight in bower within,
Nor merry bowl nor welcome bed;
"Here's sorry cheer," quoth the Heir of Linne.*

Old Ballad

THE feelings of the prodigal Heir of Linne, as expressed in that excellent old song, when, after dissipating his whole fortune, he found himself the deserted inhabitant of "the lonely lodge," might perhaps have some resemblance to those of the Master of Ravenswood in his deserted mansion of Wolf's Crag. The Master, however, had this advantage over the spendthrift in the legend, that, if he was in similar distress, he could not impute it to his own imprudence. His misery had been bequeathed to him by his father, and, joined to his high blood, and to a title which the courteous might give or the churlish withhold at their pleasure, it was the whole inheritance he had derived from his ancestry. Perhaps this melancholy yet consolatory reflection crossed the mind of the unfortunate young nobleman with a breathing of comfort. Favourable to calm reflection, as well as to the Muses, the morning, while it dispelled the shades of night, had a composing and sedative effect upon the stormy passions by which the Master of Ravenswood had been agitated on the preceding day. He now felt himself able to analyse the different feelings by which he was agitated, and much resolved to combat and to subdue them. The morning, which had arisen calm and bright, gave a pleasant effect even to the waste moorland view which was seen from the castle on looking to the landward; and the glorious ocean, crisped with a thousand rippling waves of silver, extended on the other side, in awful yet complacent majesty, to the verge of the horizon. With such scenes of calm sublimity the human heart sympathises even in its most disturbed moods, and deeds of honour and virtue are inspired by their majestic influence. To seek out Bucklaw in the retreat which he had afforded him, was the first occupation of the Master, after he had performed, with a scrutiny unusually severe, the important task of self-examination. "How now, Bucklaw?" was his morning's salutation—"how like you the couch in which the exiled Earl of Angus once slept in security, when he was pursued by the full energy of a king's resentment?"

"Umph!" returned the sleeper awakened; "I have little to complain of where so great a man was quartered before me, only the mattress was of the hardest, the vault somewhat damp, the rats rather more mutinous than I would have expected from the state of Caleb's larder; and if there had been shutters to that grated window, or a curtain to the bed, I should think it, upon the whole, an improvement in your accommodations."

"It is, to be sure, forlorn enough," said the Master, looking around the small vault; "but if you will rise and leave it, Caleb will endeavour to find you a better breakfast than your supper of last night."

"Pray, let it be no better," said Bucklaw, getting up, and endeavouring to dress himself as well as the obscurity of the place would permit—"let it, I say, be no better, if you mean me to preserve in my proposed reformation. The very recollection of Caleb's beverage has done more to suppress my longing to open the day with a morning draught than twenty sermons would have done. And you, master, have you been able to give battle valiantly to your bosom-snake? You see I am in the way of smothering my vipers one by one."

"I have commenced the battle, at least, Bucklaw, and I have had a fair vision of an angel who descended to my assistance," replied the Master.

"Woe's me!" said his guest, "no vision can I expect, unless my aunt, Lady Grinington, should betake herself to the tomb; and then it would be the substance of her heritage rather than the appearance of her phantom that I should consider as the support of my good resolutions. But this same breakfast, Master—does the deer that is to make the pasty run yet on foot, as the ballad has it?"

"I will inquire into that matter," said his entertainer; and, leaving the apartment, he went in search of Caleb, whom, after some difficulty, he found in an obscure sort of dungeon, which had been in former times the buttery of the castle. Here the old man was employed busily in the doubtful task of burnishing a pewter flagon until it should take the hue and semblance of silver-plate. "I think it may do—I think it might pass, if they winna bring it ower muckle in the light o' the window!" were the ejaculations which he muttered from time to time, as if to encourage himself in his undertaking, when he was interrupted by the voice of his master.

"Take this," said the Master of Ravenswood, "and get what is necessary for the family." And with these words he gave to the old butler the purse which had on the preceding evening so narrowly escaped the fangs of Craigengelt.

The old man shook his silvery and thin locks, and looked with an expression of the most heartfelt anguish at his master as he weighed in his hand the slender treasure, and said in a sorrowful voice, "And is this a' that's left?"

"All that is left at present," said the Master, affecting more cheerfulness than perhaps he really felt, "is just the green purse and the wee pickle gowd, as the old song says; but we shall do better one day, Caleb."

"Before that day comes," said Caleb, "I doubt there will be an end of an auld sang, and an auld serving-man to boot. But it disna become me to speak that gate to your honour, and you looking sae pale. Tak back the purse, and keep it to be making a show before company; for if your honour would just take a bidding, and be whiles taking it out afore folk and putting it up again, there's naebody would refuse us trust, for a' that's come and gane yet."

"But, Caleb," said the Master, "I still intend to leave this country very soon, and desire to do so with the reputation of an honest man, leaving no debty behind me, at last of my own contracting."

"And gude right ye suld gang away as a true man, and so ye shall; for auld Caleb can tak the wyte of whatever is taen on for the house, and then it will be a' just ae man's burden; and I will live just as weel in the tolbooth as out of it, and the credit of the family will be a' safe and sound."

The Master endeavoured, in vain, to make Caleb comprehend that the butler's incurring the responsibility of debts in his own person would rather add to than remove the objections which he had to their being contracted. He spoke to a premier too busy in devising ways and means to puzzle himself with refuting the arguments offered against their justice or expediency.

"There's Eppie Sma'trash will trust us for ale," said Caleb to himself—"she has lived a' her life under the family—and maybe wi' a soup brandy; I canna say for wine—she is but a lone woman, and gets her claret by a runlet at a time; but I'll work a wee drap out o' her by fair means or foul. For doos, there's the doocot; there will be poultry among the tenants, though Luckie Chirnside says she has paid the kain twice ower. We'll mak shift, an it like your honour—we'll mak shift; keep your heart abune, for the house sall haud its credit as lang as auld Caleb is to the fore."

The entertainment which the old man's exertions of various kinds enabled him to present to the young gentlemen for three or four days was certainly of no splendid description, but it may readily be believed it was set before no critical guests; and even the distresses, excuses, evasions, and shifts of Caleb afforded amusement to the young men, and added a sort of interest to the scrambling and irregular style of their table. They had indeed occasion to seize on every circumstance that might serve to diversify or enliven time, which otherwise passed away so heavily.

Bucklaw, shut out from his usual field-sports and joyous carouses by the necessity of remaining concealed within the walls of the castle, became a joyless and uninteresting companion. When the Master of Ravenswood would no longer fence or play at shovel-board; when he himself had polished to the extremity the coat of his palfrey with brush, curry comb, and hair-cloth; when he had seen him eat his provender, and gently lie down in his stall, he could hardly help envying the animal's apparent acquiescence in a life so monotonous. "The stupid brute," he said, "thinks neither of the race-ground or the hunting-field, or his green paddock at Bucklaw, but enjoys himself as comfortably when haltered to the rack in this ruinous vault, as if he had been foaled in it; and, I who have the freedom of a prisoner at large, to range through the dungeons of this wretched old tower, can hardly, betwixt whistling and sleeping, contrive to pass away the hour till dinner-time."

And with this disconsolate reflection, he wended his way to the bartizan or battlements of the tower, to watch what objects might appear on the distant moor, or to pelt, with pebbles and pieces of lime, the sea-mews and cormorants which established themselves incautiously within the reach of an idle young man.

Ravenswood, with a mind incalculably deeper and more powerful than that of his companion, had his own anxious subjects of reflection, which wrought for him the same unhappiness that sheer enui and want of occupation inflicted on his companion. The first sight of Lucy Ashton had been less impressive than her image proved to be upon reflection. As the depth and violence of that revengeful passion by which he had been actuated in seeking an interview with the father began to abate by degrees, he looked back on his conduct towards the daughter as harsh and unworthy towards a female of rank and beauty. Her looks of grateful acknowledgment, her words of affectionate courtesy, had been repelled with something which approached to disdain; and if the Master of Ravenswood had sustained wrongs at the hand of Sir William Ashton, his conscience told him they had been unhandsomely resented towards his daughter. When his thoughts took this turn of self-reproach, the recollection of Lucy Ashton's beautiful features, rendered yet more interesting by the circumstances in which their meeting had taken place, made an impression upon his mind at once soothing and painful. The sweetness of her voice, the delicacy of her expressions, the vivid glow of her filial affection, embittered his regret at having repulsed her gratitude with rudeness, while, at the same time, they placed before his imagination a picture of the most seducing sweetness.

Even young Ravenswood's strength of moral feeling and rectitude of purpose at once increased the danger of cherishing these recollections, and the propensity to entertain them. Firmly resolved as he was to subdue, if possible, the predominating vice in his character, he admitted with willingness—nay, he summoned up in his imagination—the ideas by which it could be most powerfully counteracted; and, while he did so, a sense of his own harsh conduct towards the daughter of his enemy naturally induced him, as if by way of recompense, to invest her with more of grace and beauty than perhaps she could actually claim.

Had any one at this period told the Master of Ravenswood that he had so lately vowed vengeance against the whole lineage of him whom he considered, not unjustly, as author of his father's ruin and death, he might at first have repelled the charge as a foul calumny; yet, upon serious self-examination, he would have been compelled to admit that it had, at one period, some foundation in truth, though, according to the present tone of his sentiments, it was difficult to believe that this had really been the case.

There already existed in his bosom two contradictory passions—a desire to revenge the death of his father, strangely qualified by admiration of his enemy's daughter. Against the former feeling he had struggled, until it seemed to him upon the wane; against the latter he used no means of resistance, for he did not suspect its existence. That this was actually the case was chiefly evinced by his resuming his resolution to leave Scotland. Yet, though such was his purpose, he remained day after day at Wolf's Crag, without taking measures for carrying it into execution. It is true, that he had written to one or two kinsmen who resided in a distant quarter of Scotland, and particularly to the Marquis of A——, intimating his purpose; and when pressed upon the subject by Bucklaw, he was wont to allege the necessity of waiting for their reply, especially that of the Marquis, before taking so decisive a measure.

The Marquis was rich and powerful; and although he was suspected to entertain sentiments unfavourable to the government established at the Revolution, he had nevertheless address enough to head a party in the Scottish privy council, connected with the High Church faction in England, and powerful enough to menace those to whom the Lord Keeper adhered with a probable subversion of their power. The consulting with a personage of such importance was a plausible excuse, which Ravenswood used to Bucklaw, and probably to himself, for continuing his residence at Wolf's Crag; and it was rendered yet more so by a general report which began to be current of a probable change of ministers and measures in the Scottish administration. The rumours, strongly asserted by some, and as resolutely denied by others, as their wishes or interest dictated, found their way even to the ruinous Tower of Wolf's Crag, chiefly through the medium of Caleb, the butler, who, among his other excellences, was an ardent politician, and seldom made an excursion from the old fortress to the neighbouring village of Wolf's Hope without bringing back what tidings were current in the vicinity.

But if Bucklaw could not offer any satisfactory objections to the delay of the Master in leaving Scotland, he did not the less suffer with impatience the state of inaction to which it confined him; and it was only the ascendancy which his new companion had acquired over him that induced him to submit to a course of life so alien to his habits and inclinations.

"You were wont to be thought a stirring active young fellow, Master," was his frequent remonstrance; "yet here you seem determined to live on and on like a rat in a hole, with this trifling difference, that the wiser vermin chooses a hermitage where he can find food at least; but as for us, Caleb's excuses become longer as his diet turns more spare, and I fear we shall realise the stories they tell of the slother: we have almost eat up the last green leaf on the plant, and have nothing left for it but to drop from the tree and break our necks."

"Do not fear it," said Ravenswood; "there is a fate watches for us, and we too have a stake in the revolution that is now impending, and which already has alarmed many a bosom."

"What fate—what revolution?" inquired his companion. "We have had one revolution too much already, I think."

Ravenswood interrupted him by putting into his hands a letter.

"Oh," answered Bucklaw, "my dream's out. I thought I heard Caleb this morning pressing some unfortunate fellow to a drink of cold water, and assuring him it was better for his stomach in the morning than ale or brandy."

"It was my Lord of A——'s courier," said Ravenswood, "who was doomed to experience his ostentatious hospitality, which I believe ended in sour beer and herrings. Read, and you will see the news he has brought us." "I will as fast as I can," said Bucklaw; "but I am no great clerk, nor does his lordship seem to be the first of scribes."

The reader will peruse in, a few seconds, by the aid our friend Ballantyne's types, what took Bucklaw a good half hour in perusal, though assisted by the Master of Ravenswood. The tenor was as follows:

"RIGHT HONOURABLE OUR COUSIN:

"Our hearty commendations premised, these come to assure you of the interest which we take in your welfare, and in your purpose towards its augmentation. If we have been less active in showing forth our effective good-will towards you than, as a loving kinsman and blood-relative, we would willingly have desired, we request that you will impute it to lack of opportunity to show our good-liking, not to any coldness of our will. Touching your resolution to travel in foreign parts, as at this time we hold the same little advisable, in respect that your ill-willers may, according to the custom of such persons, impute motives for your journey, whereof, although we know and believe you to be as clear as ourselves, yet natheless their words may find credence in places where the belief in them may much prejudice you, and which we should see with more unwillingness and displeasure than with means of remedy.

"Having thus, as becometh our kindred, given you our poor mind on the subject of your journeying forth of Scotland, we would willingly add reasons of weight, which might materially advantage you and your father's house, thereby to determine you to abide at Wolf's Crag, until this harvest season shall be passed over.

But what sayeth the proverb, verbum sapienti—a word is more to him that hath wisdom than a sermon to a fool. And albeit we have written this poor scroll with our own hand, and are well assured of the fidelity of our messenger, as him that is many ways bounden to us, yet so it is, that sliddery ways crave wary walking, and that we may not peril upon paper matters which we would gladly impart to you by word of mouth. Wherefore, it was our purpose to have prayed you heartily to come to this our barren Highland country to kill a stag, and to treat of the matters which we are now more painfully inditing to you anent. But commodity does not serve at present for such our meeting, which, therefore, shall be deferred until sic time as we may in all mirth rehearse those things whereof we now keep silence. Meantime, we pray you to think that we are, and will still be, your good kinsman and well-wisher, waiting but for times of whilk we do, as it were, entertain a twilight prospect, and appear and hope to be also your effectual well-doer. And in which hope we heartily write ourself,

"Right Honourable,

"Your loving cousin,

"A——. "Given from our poor house of B——," etc.

Superscribed—"For the right honourable, and our honoured kinsman, the Master of Ravenswood—These, with haste, haste, post haste—ride and run until these be delivered."

"What think you of this epistle, Bucklaw?" said the Master, when his companion had hammered out all the sense, and almost all the words of which it consisted.

"Truly, that the Marquis's meaning is as great a riddle as his manuscript. He is really in much need of *Wit's Interpreter*, or the *Complete Letter-Writer*, and were I you, I would send him a copy by the bearer. He writes you very kindly to remain wasting your time and your money in this vile, stupid, oppressed country, without so much as offering you the countenance and shelter of his house. In my opinion, he has some scheme in view in which he supposes you can be useful, and he wishes to keep you at hand, to make use of you when it ripens, reserving the power of turning you adrift, should his plot fail in the concoction."

"His plot! Then you suppose it is a treasonable business," answered Ravenswood.

"What else can it be?" replied Bucklaw; "the Marquis has been long suspected to have an eye to Saint Germain's."

"He should not engage me rashly in such an adventure," said Ravenswood; "when I recollect the times of the first and second Charles, and of the last James, truly I see little reason that, as a man or a patriot, I should draw my sword for their descendants."

"Humph!" replied Bucklaw; "so you have set yourself down to mourn over the crop-eared dogs whom honest Claver'se treated as they deserved?"

"They first gave the dogs an ill name, and then hanged them," replied Ravenswood. "I hope to see the day when justice shall be open to Whig and Tory, and when these nicknames shall only be used among coffee-house politicians, as 'slut' and 'jade' are among apple-women, as cant terms of idle spite and rancour."

"That will nto be in our days, Master: the iron has entered too deeply into our sides and our souls."

"It will be, however, one day," replied the Master; "men will not always start at these nicknames as at a trumpet-sound. As social life is better protected, its comforts will become too dear to be hazarded without some better reasons than speculative politics."

"*It is fine talking,*" answered Bucklaw; "*but my heart is with the old song—*

*To see good corn upon the rigs,
And a gallow built to hang the Whigs,
And the right restored where the right should be.
Oh, that is the thing that would wanton me."*

"You may sing as loudly as you will, cantabit vacuum——," answered the Master; "but I believe the Marquis is too wise, at least too wary, to join you in such a burden. I suspect he alludes to a revolution in the Scottish privy council, rather than in the British kingdoms."

"Oh, confusion to your state tricks!" exclaimed Bucklaw—"your cold calculating manoeuvres, which old gentlemen in wrought nightcaps and furred gowns execute like so many games at chess, and displace a treasurer or lord commissioner as they would take a rook or a pawn. Tennis for my sport, and battle for my earnest! And you, Master, so dep and considerate as you would seem, you have that within you makes the blood boil faster than suits your present humour of moralising on political truths. You are one of those wise men who see everything with great composure till their blood is up, and then—woe to any one who should put them in mind of their own prudential maxims!" "Perhaps," said Ravenswood, "you read me more rightly than I can myself. But to think justly will certainly go some length in helping me to act so. But hark! I hear Caleb tolling the dinner-bell."

"Which he always does with the more sonorous grace in proportion to the meagreness of the cheer which he has provided," said Bucklaw; "as if that infernal clang and jangle, which will one day bring the belfry down the cliff, could convert a starved hen into a fat capon, and a blade-bone of mutton into a haunch of venison."

"I wish we may be so well off as your worst conjectures surmise, Bucklaw, from the extreme solemnity and ceremony with which Caleb seems to place on the table that solitary covered dish."

"Uncover, Caleb! uncover, for Heaven's sake!" said Bucklaw; "let us have what you can give us without preface. Why, it stands well enough, man," he continued, addressing impatiently the ancient butler, who, without reply, kept shifting the dish, until he had at length placed it with mathematical precision in the very midst of the table.

"What have we got here, Caleb?" inquired the Master in his turn.

"Ahem! sir, ye suld have known before; but his honour the Laird of Bucklaw is so impatient," answered Caleb, still holding the dish with one hand and the cover with the other, with evident reluctance to disclose the contents.

"But what is it, a God's name—not a pair of clean spurs, I hope, in the Border fashion of old times?"

"Ahem! ahem!" reiterated Caleb, "your honour is pleased to be facetious; natheless, I might presume to say it was a convenient fashion, and used, as I have heard, in an honourable and thriving family. But touching your present dinner, I judged that this being St. Magdalen's [Margaret's] Eve, who was a worthy queen of Scotland in her day, your honours might judge it decorous, if not altogether to fast, yet only to sustain nature with some slight refection, as ane saulted herring or the like." And, uncovering the dish, he displayed four of the savoury fishes which he mentioned, adding, in a subdued tone, "that they were no just common herring neither, being every ane melters, and sauted with uncommon care by the housekeeper (poor Mysie) for his honour's especial use."

"Out upon all apologies!" said the Master, "let us eat the herrings, since there is nothing better to be had; but I begin to think with you, Bucklaw, that we are consuming the last green leaf, and that, in spite of the Marquis's political machinations, we must positively shift camp for want of forage, without waiting the issue of them."

CHAPTER IX.

*Ay, and when huntsmen wind the merry horn,
And from its covert starts the fearful prey,
Who, warm'd with youth's blood in his swelling veins,
Would, like a lifeless clod, outstretched lie,
Shut out from all the fair creation offers?*

Ethwald, Act I. Scene 1.

LIGHT meals procure light slumbers; and therefore it is not surprising that, considering the fare which Caleb's conscience, or his necessity, assuming, as will sometimes happen, that disguise, had assigned to the guests of Wolf's Crag, their slumbers should have been short.

In the morning Bucklaw rushed into his host's apartment with a loud halloo, which might have awaked the dead.

"Up! up! in the name of Heaven! The hunters are out, the only piece of sport I have seen this month; and you lie here, Master, on a bed that has little to recommend it, except that it may be something softer than the stone floor of your ancestor's vault."

"I wish," said Ravenswood, raising his head peevishly, "you had forborne so early a jest, Mr. Hayston; it is really no pleasure to lose the very short repose which I had just begun to enjoy, after a night spent in thoughts upon fortune far harder than my couch, Bucklaw."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" replied his guest; "get up—get up; the hounds are abroad. I have saddled the horses myself, for old Caleb was calling for grooms and lackeys, and would never have proceeded without two hours' apology for the absence of men that were a hundred miles off. Get up, Master; I say the hounds are out—get up, I say; the hunt is up." And off ran Bucklaw.

"And I say," said the Master, rising slowly, "that nothing can concern me less. Whose hounds come so near to us?"

"The Honourable Lord Brittlebrains's," answered Caleb, who had followed the impatient Laird of Bucklaw into his master's bedroom, "and truly I ken nae title they have to be yowling and howling within the freedoms and immunities of your lordship's right of free forestry."

"Nor I, Caleb," replied Ravenswood, "excepting that they have bought both the lands and the right of forestry, and may think themselves entitled to exercise the rights they have paid their money for."

"It may be sae, my lord," replied Caleb; "but it's no gentleman's deed of them to come here and exercise such-like right, and your lordship living at your ain castle of Wolf's Crag. Lord Brittlebrains would weel to remember what his folk have been."

"And what we now are," said the Master, with suppressed bitterness of feeling. "But reach me my cloak, Caleb, and I will indulge Bucklaw with a sight of this chase. It is selfish to sacrifice my guest's pleasure to my own."

"Sacrifice!" echoed Caleb, in a tone which seemed to imply the total absurdity of his master making the least concession in deference to any one—"sacrifice, indeed!—but I crave your honour's pardon, and whilk doublet is it your pleasure to wear?"

"Any one you will, Caleb; my wardrobe, I suppose, is not very extensive."

"Not extensive!" echoed his assistant; "when there is the grey and silver that your lordship bestowed on Hew Hildebrand, your outrider; and the French velvet that went with my lord your father—be gracious to him!—my lord your father's auld wardrobe to the puir friends of the family; and the drap-de-Berry——"

"Which I gave to you, Caleb, and which, I suppose, is the only dress we have any chance to come at, except that I wore yesterday; pray, hand me that, and say no more about it."

"If your honour has a fancy," replied Caleb, "and doubtless it's a sad-coloured suit, and you are in mourning; nevertheless, I have never tried on the drap-de-Berry—ill wad it become me—and your honour having no change of claihs at this present—and it's weel brushed, and as there are leddies down yonder——"

"Ladies!" said Ravenswood; "and what ladies, pray?"

"What do I ken, your lordship? Looking down at them from the Warden's Tower, I could but see them glent by wi' their bridles ringing and their feathers fluttering, like the court of Elfland."

"Well, well, Caleb," replied the Master, "help me on with my cloak, and hand me my sword-belt. What clatter is that in the courtyard?"

"Just Bucklaw bringing out the horses," said Caleb, after a glance through the window, "as if there werena men eneugh in the castle, or as if I couldna serve the turn of ony o' them that are out o' the gate."

"Alas! Caleb, we should want little if your ability were equal to your will," replied the Master.

"And I hope your lordship disna want that muckle," said Caleb; "for, considering a' things, I trust we support the credit of the family as weel as things will permit of,—only Bucklaw is aye sae frank and sae forward. And there he has brought out your lordship's palfrey, without the saddle being decored wi' the broidered sumpter-cloth! and I could have brushed it in a minute."

"It is all very well," said his master, escaping from him and descending the narrow and steep winding staircase which led to the courtyard.

"It MAY be a' very weel," said Caleb, somewhat peevishly; "but if your lordship wad tarry a bit, I will tell you what will NOT be very weel."

"And what is that?" said Ravenswood, impatiently, but stopping at the same time.

"Why, just that ye suld speer ony gentleman hame to dinner; for I canna mak anither fast on a feast day, as when I cam ower Bucklaw wi' Queen Margaret; and, to speak truth, if your lordship wad but please to cast yourself in the way of dining wi' Lord Bittlebrains, I'se warrand I wad cast about brawly for the morn; or if, stead o' that, ye wad but dine wi' them at the change-house, ye might mak your shift for the awing: ye might say ye had forgot your purse, or that the carline awed ye rent, and that ye wad allow it in the settlement."

"Or any other lie that cam uppermost, I suppose?" said his master. "Good-bye, Caleb; I commend your care for the honour of the family." And, throwing himself on his horse, he followed Bucklaw, who, at the manifest risk of his neck, had begun to gallop down the steep path which led from the Tower as soon as he saw Ravenswood have his foot in the stirrup.

Caleb Balderstone looked anxiously after them, and shook his thin grey locks: "And I trust they will come to no evil; but they have reached the plain, and folk cannot say but that the horse are hearty and in spirits." Animated by the natural impetuosity and fire of his temper, young Bucklaw rushed on with the careless speed of a whirlwind. Ravenswood was scarce more moderate in his pace, for his was a mind unwillingly roused from contemplative inactivity, but which, when once put into motion, acquired a spirit of forcible and violent progression. Neither was his eagerness proportioned in all cases to the motive of impulse, but might be compared to the sped of a stone, which rushes with like fury down the hill whether it was first put in motion by the arm of a giant or the hand of a boy. He felt, therefore, in no ordinary degree, the headlong impulse of the chase, a pastime so natural to youth of all ranks, that it seems rather to be an inherent passion in our animal nature, which levels all differences of rank and education, than an acquired habit of rapid exercise.

The repeated bursts of the French horn, which was then always used for the encouragement and direction of the hounds; the deep, though distant baying of the pack; the half-heard cries of the huntsmen; the half-seen forms which were discovered, now emerging from glens which crossed the moor, now sweeping over its surface, now picking their way where it was impeded by morasses; and, above all, the feeling of his own rapid motion, animated the Master of Ravenswood, at last for the moment, above the recollections of a more painful nature by which he was surrounded. The first thing which recalled him to those unpleasing circumstances was feeling that his horse, notwithstanding all the advantages which he received from his rider's knowledge of the country, was unable to keep up with the chase. As he drew his bridle up with the bitter feeling that his poverty excluded him from the favourite recreation of his forefathers, and indeed their sole employment when not engaged in military pursuits, he was accosted by a well-mounted stranger, who, unobserved, had kept near him during the earlier part of his career.

"Your horse is blown," said the man, with a complaisance seldom used in a hunting-field. "Might I crave your honour to make use of mine?"

"Sir," said Ravenswood, more surprised than pleased at such a proposal. "I really do not know how I have merited such a favour at a stranger's hands."

"Never ask a question about it, Master," said Bucklaw, who, with great unwillingness, had hitherto reined in his own gallant steed, not to outride his host and entertainer. "Take the goods the gods provide you, as the great John Dryden says; or stay—here, my friend, lend me that horse; I see you have been puzzled to rein him up this half-hour. I'll take the devil out of him for you. Now, Master, do you ride mine, which will carry you like an eagle."

And throwing the rein of his own horse to the Master of Ravenswood, he sprung upon that which the stranger resigned to him, and continued his career at full speed. "Was ever so thoughtless a being!" said the Master; "and you, my friend, how could you trust him with your horse?"

"The horse," said the man, "belongs to a person who will make your honour, or any of your honourable friends, most welcome to him, flesh and fell."

"And the owner's name is——?" asked Ravenswood.

"Your honour must excuse me, you will learn that from himself. If you please to take your friend's horse, and leave me your galloway, I will meet you after the fall of the stag, for I hear they are blowing him at bay."

"I believe, my friend, it will be the best way to recover your good horse for you," answered Ravenswood; and mounting the nag of his friend Bucklaw, he made all the haste in his power to the spot where the blast of the horn announced that the stag's career was nearly terminated.

These jovial sounds were intermixed with the huntsmen's shouts of "Hyke a Talbot! Hyke a Teviot! now, boys, now!" and similar cheering halloos of the olden hunting-field, to which the impatient yelling of the hounds, now close of the object of their pursuit, gave a lively and unremitting chorus. The straggling riders began now to rally towards the scene of action, collecting from different points as to a common centre.

Bucklaw kept the start which he had gotten, and arrived first at the spot, where the stag, incapable of sustaining a more prolonged flight, had turned upon the hounds, and, in the hunter's phrase, was at bay. With his stately head bent down, his sides white with foam, his eyes strained betwixt rage and terror, the hunted animal had now in his turn become an object of intimidation to his pursuers. The hunters came up one by one, and watched an opportunity to assail him with some advantage, which, in such circumstances, can only be done with caution. The dogs stood aloof and bayed loudly, intimating at once eagerness and fear, and each of the sportsmen seemed to expect that his comrade would take upon him the perilous task of assaulting and disabling the animal. The ground, which was a hollow in the common or moor, afforded little advantage for approaching the stag unobserved; and general was the shout of triumph when Bucklaw, with the dexterity proper to an accomplished cavalier of the day, sprang from his horse, and dashing suddenly and swiftly at the stag, brought him to the ground by a cut on the hind leg with his short hunting-sword. The pack, rushing in upon their disabled enemy, soon ended his painful struggles, and solemnised his fall with their clamour; the hunters, with their horns and voices, whooping and blowing a mort, or death-note, which resounded far over the billows of the adjacent ocean.

The huntsman then withdrew the hounds from the throttled stag, and on his knee presented his knife to a fair female form, on a white palfrey, whose terror, or perhaps her compassion, had till then kept her at some distance. She wore a black silk riding-mask, which was then a common fashion, as well for preserving the complexion from the sun and rain, as from an idea of decorum, which did not permit a lady to appear barefaced while engaged in a boisterous sport, and attended by a promiscuous company. The richness of her dress, however, as well as the mettle and form of her palfrey, together with the silvan compliment paid to her by the huntsman, pointed her out to Bucklaw as the principal person in the field. It was not without a feeling of pity, approaching even to contempt, that this enthusiastic hunter observed her refuse the huntsman's knife, presented to her for the purpose of making the first incision in the stag's breast, and thereby discovering the venison. He felt more than half inclined to pay his compliments to her; but it had been Bucklaw's misfortune, that his habits of life had not rendered him familiarly acquainted with the higher and better classes of female society, so that, with all his natural audacity, he felt sheepish and bashful when it became necessary to address a lady of distinction.

Taking unto himself heart of grace (to use his own phrase), he did at length summon up resolution enough to give the fair huntress good time of the day, and trust that her sport had answered her expectation. Her answer was very courteously and modestly expressed, and testified some gratitude to the gallant cavalier, whose exploit had terminated the chase so adroitly, when the hounds and huntsmen seemed somewhat at a stand.

"Uds daggers and scabbard, madam," said Bucklaw, whom this observation brought at once upon his own ground, "there is no difficulty or merit in that matter at all, so that a fellow is not too much afraid of having a pair of antlers in his guts. I have hunted at force five hundred times, madam; and I never yet saw the stag at bay, by land or water, but I durst have gone roundly in on him. It is all use and wont, madam; and I'll tell you, madam, for all that, it must be done with good heed and caution; and you will do well, madam, to have your hunting-sword right sharp and double-edged, that you may strike either fore-handed or back-handed, as you see reason, for a hurt with a buck's horn is a perilous ad somewhat venomous matter."

"I am afraid, sir," said the young lady, and her smile was scarce concealed by her vizard, "I shall have little use for such careful preparation."

"But the gentleman says very right for all that, my lady," said an old huntsman, who had listened to Bucklaw's harangue with no small edification; "and I have heard my father say, who was a forester at the Cabrach, that a wild boar's gaunch is more easily healed than a hurt from the deer's horn, for so says the old woodman's rhyme—

If thou be hurt with horn of hart, it brings thee to they bier;

But tusk of boar shall leeches heal, thereof have lesser fear."

"An I might advise," continued Bucklaw, who was now in his element, and desirous of assuming the whole management, "as the hounds are surbated and weary, the head of the stag should be cabaged in order to reward them; and if I may presume to speak, the huntsman, who is to break up the stag, ought to drink to your good ladyship's health a good lusty bicker of ale, or a tass of brandy; for if he breaks him up without drinking, the venison will not keep well."

This very agreeable prescription received, as will be readily believed, all acceptance from the huntsman, who, in requital, offered to bucklaw the compliment of his knife, which the young lady had declined.

This polite proffer was seconded by his mistress. "I believe, sir," she said, withdrawing herself from the circle, "that my father, for whose amusement Lord Bittlebrain's hounds have been out to-day, will readily surrender all care of these matters to a gentleman of your experience."

Then, bending gracefully from her horse, she wished him good morning, and, attended by one or two domestics, who seemed immediately attached to her service, retired from the scene of action, to which Bucklaw, too much delighted with an opportunity of displaying his woodcraft to care about man or woman either, paid little attention; but was soon stript to his doublet, with tucked-up sleeves, and naked arms up to the elbows in blood and grease, slashing, cutting, hacking, and hewing, with the precision of Sir Tristrem himself, and wrangling and disputing with all around him concerning nombles, briskets, flankards, and raven-bones, then usual terms of the art of hunting, or of butchery, whichever the reader chooses to call it, which are now probably antiquated.

When Ravenswood, who followed a short pace behind his friend, saw that the stag had fallen, his temporary ardour for the chase gave way to that feeling of reluctance which he endured at encountering in his fallen fortunes the gaze whether of equals or inferiors. He reined up his horse on the top of a gentle eminence, from which he observed the busy and gay scene beneath him, and heard the whoops of the huntsmen, gaily mingled with the cry of the dogs, and the neighing and trampling of the horses. But these jovial sounds fell sadly on the ear of the ruined nobleman. The chase, with all its train of excitations, has ever since feudal times been accounted the almost exclusive privilege of the aristocracy, and was anciently their chief employment in times of peace. The sense that he was excluded by his situation from enjoying the silvan sport, which his rank assigned to him as a special prerogative, and the feeling that new men were now exercising it over the downs which had been jealously reserved by his ancestors for their own amusement, while he, the heir of the domain, was fain to hold himself at a distance from their party, awakened reflections calculated to depress deeply a mind like Ravenswood's, which was naturally contemplative and melancholy. His pride, however, soon shook off this feeling of dejection, and it gave way to impatience upon finding that his volatile friend Bucklaw seemed in no hurry to return with his borrowed steed, which Ravenswood, before leaving the field, wished to see restored to the obliging owner. As he was about to move towards the group of assembled huntsmen, he was joined by a horseman, who, like himself, had kept aloof during the fall of the deer.

This personage seemed stricken in years. He wore a scarlet cloak, buttoning high upon his face, and his hat was unlooped and slouched, probably by way of defence against the weather. His horse, a strong and steady palfrey, was calculated for a rider who proposed to witness the sport of the day rather than to share it. An attendant waited at some distance, and the whole equipment was that of an elderly gentleman of rank and fashion. He accosted Ravenswood very politely, but not without some embarrassment.

"You seem a gallant young gentleman, sir," he said, "and yet appear as indifferent to this brave sport as if you had my load of years on your shoulders."

"I have followed the sport with more spirit on other occasions," replied the Master; "at present, late events in my family must be my apology; and besides," he added, "I was but indifferently mounted at the beginning of the sport."

"I think," said the stranger, "one of my attendants had the sense to accommodate your friend with a horse."

"I was much indebted to his politeness and yours," replied Ravenswood. "My friend is Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw, whom I dare say you will be sure to find in the thick of the keenest sportsmen. He will return your servant's horse, and take my pony in exchange; and will add," he concluded, turning his horse's head from the stranger, "his best acknowledgments to mine for the accommodation."

The Master of Ravenswood, having thus expressed himself, began to move homeward, with the manner of one who has taken leave of his company. But the stranger was not so to be shaken off. He turned his horse at the same time, and rode in the same direction, so near to the Master that, without outriding him, which the formal civility of the time, and the respect due to the stranger's age and recent civility, would have rendered improper, he could not easily escape from his company.

The stranger did not long remain silent. "This, then," he said, "is the ancient Castle of Wolf's Crag, often mentioned in the Scottish records," looking to the old tower, then darkening under the influence of a stormy cloud, that formed its background; for at the distance of a short mile, the chase, having been circuitous, had brought the hunters nearly back to the point which they had attained when Ravenswood and Bucklaw had set forward to join them.

Ravenswood answered this observation with a cold and distant assent. "It was, as I have heard," continued the stranger, unabashed by his coldness, "one of the most early possessions of the honourable family of Ravenswood."

"Their earliest possession," answered the Master, "and probably their latest."

"I—I—I should hope not, sir," answered the stranger, clearing his voice with more than one cough, and making an effort to overcome a certain degree of hesitation; "Scotland knows what she owes to this ancient family, and remembers their frequent and honourable achievements. I have little doubt that, were it properly represented to her Majesty that so ancient and noble a family were subjected to dilapidation—I mean to decay—means might be found, ad re-aedificandum antiquam domum——"

"I will save you the trouble, sir, of discussing this point farther," interrupted the Master, haughtily. "I am the heir of that unfortunate house—I am the Master of Ravenswood. And you, sir, who seem to be a gentleman of fashion and education, must be sensible that the next mortification after being unhappy is the being loaded with undesired commiseration."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the elder horseman; "I did not know—I am sensible I ought not to have mentioned—nothing could be farther from my thoughts than to suppose——"

"There are no apologies necessary, sir," answered Ravenswood, "for here, I suppose, our roads separate, and I assure you that we part in perfect equanimity on my side."

As speaking these words, he directed his horse's head towards a narrow causeway, the ancient approach to Wolf's Crag, of which it might be truly said, in the words of the Bard of Hope, that

*Frequented by few was the grass-cover'd road,
Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode,
To his hills that encircle the sea.*

But, ere he could disengage himself from his companion, the young lady we have already mentioned came up to join the stranger, followed by her servants.

"Daughter," said the stranger to the unmasked damsel, "this is the Master of Ravenswood."

It would have been natural that the gentleman should have replied to this introduction; but there was something in the graceful form and retiring modesty of the female to whom he was thus presented, which not only prevented him from inquiring to whom, and by whom, the annunciation had been made, but which even for the time struck him absolutely mute. At this moment the cloud which had long lowered above the height on which Wolf's Crag is situated, and which now, as it advanced, spread itself in darker and denser folds both over land and sea, hiding the distant objects and obscuring those which were nearer, turning the sea to a leaden complexion and the heath to a darker brown, began now, by one or two distant peals, to announce the thunders with which it was fraught; while two flashes of lightning, following each other very closely, showed in the distance the grey turrets of Wolf's Crag, and, more nearly, the rolling billows of the ocean, crested suddenly with red and dazzling light.

The horse of the fair huntress showed symptoms of impatience and restiveness, and it became impossible for Ravenswood, as a man or a gentleman, to leave her abruptly to the case of an aged father or her menial attendants. He was, or believed himself, obliged in courtesy to take hold of her bridle, and assist her in managing the unruly animal. While he was thus engaged, the old gentleman observed that the storm seemed to increase; that they were far from Lord Bittlebrains's, whose guests they were for the present; and that he would be obliged to the Master of Ravenswood to point him the way to the nearest place of refuge from the storm. At the same time he cast a wistful and embarrassed look towards the Tower of Wolf's Crag, which seemed to render it almost impossible for the owner to avoid offering an old man and a lady, in such an emergency, the temporary use of his house. Indeed, the condition of the young huntress made this courtesy indispensable; for, in the course of the services which he rendered, he could not but perceive that she trembled much, and was extremely agitated, from her apprehensions, doubtless, of the coming storm.

I know not if the Master of Ravenswood shared her terrors, but he was not entirely free from something like a similar disorder of nerves, as he observed, "The Tower of Wolf's Crag has nothing to offer beyond the shelter of its roof, but if that can be acceptable at such a moment——" he paused, as if the rest of the invitation stuck in his throat. But the old gentleman, his self-constituted companion, did not allow him to recede from the invitation, which he had rather suffered to be implied than directly expressed.

"The storm," said the stranger, "must be an apology for waiving ceremony; his daughter's health was weak, she had suffered much from a recent alarm; he trusted their intrusion on the Master of Ravenswood's hospitality would not be altogether unpardonable in the circumstances of the case: his child's safety must be dearer to him than ceremony."

There was no room to retreat. The Master of Ravenswood led the way, continuing to keep hold of the lady's bridle to prevent her horse from starting at some unexpected explosion of thunder. He was not so bewildered in his own hurried reflections but that he remarked, that the deadly paleness which had occupied her neck and temples, and such of her features as the riding-mask left exposed, gave place to a deep and rosy suffusion; and he felt with embarrassment that a flush was by tacit sympathy excited in his own cheeks. The stranger, with watchfulness which he disguised under apprehensions of the safety of his daughter, continued to observe the expression of the Master's countenance as they ascended the hill to Wolf's Crag. When they stood in front of that ancient fortress, Ravenswood's emotions were of a very complicated description; and as he led the way into the rude courtyard, and hallooed to Caleb to give attendance, there was a tone of sternness, almost of fierceness, which seemed somewhat alien from the courtesies of one who is receiving honoured guests.

Caleb came; and not the paleness of the fair stranger at the first approach of the thunder, nor the paleness of any other person, in any other circumstances whatever, equalled that which overcame the thin cheeks of the disconsolate seneschal when he beheld this accession of guests to the castle, and reflected that the dinner hour was fast approaching. "Is he daft?" he muttered to himself;—"is he clean daft a'thegither, to bring lords and leddies, and a host of folk behind them, and twal o'clock chappit?" Then approaching the Master, he craved pardon for having permitted the rest of his people to go out to see the hunt, observing, that "They wad never think of his lordship coming back till mirk night, and that he dreaded they might play the truant."

"Silence, Balderstone!" said Ravenswood, sternly; "your folly is unseasonable. Sir and madam," he said, turning to his guests, "this old man, and a yet older and more imbecile female domestic, form my whole retinue. Our means of refreshing you are more scanty than even so miserable a retinue, and a dwelling so dilapidated, might seem to promise you; but, such as they may chance to be, you may command them."

The elder stranger, struck with the ruined and even savage appearance of the Tower, rendered still more disconsolate by the lowering and gloomy sky, and perhaps not altogether unmoved by the grave and determined voice in which their host addressed them, looked round him anxiously, as if he half repented the readiness with which he had accepted the offered hospitality. But there was now no opportunity of receding from the situation in which he had placed himself. As for Caleb, he was so utterly stunned by his master's public and unqualified acknowledgment of the nakedness of the land, that for two minutes he could only mutter within his hebdomadal beard, which had not felt the razor for six days, "He's daft—clean daft—red wud, and awa' wit! But deil hae Caleb Balderstone," said he, collecting his powers of invention and resource, "if the family shall lose credit, if he were as mad as the seven wise masters!" He then boldly advanced, and in spite of his master's frowns and impatience, gravely asked, "If he should not serve up some slight refection for the young leddy, and a glass of tokay, or old sack—or——"

"Truce to this ill-timed foolery," said the Master, sternly; "put the horses into the stable, and interrupt us no more with your absurdities."

"Your honour's pleasure is to be obeyed aboon a' things," said Caleb; "nevertheless, as for the sack and tokay which it is not your noble guests' pleasure to accept——"

But here the voice of Bucklaw, heard even above the clattering of hoofs and braying of horns with which it mingled, announced that he was scaling the pathway to the Tower at the head of the greater part of the gallant hunting train.

"The deil be in me," said Caleb, taking heart in spite of this new invasion of Philistines, "if they shall beat me yet! The hellicat ne'er-do-weel! to bring such a crew here, that will expect to find brandy as plenty as ditch-water, and he kenning sae absolutely the case in whilk we stand for the present! But I trow, could I get rid of thae gaping gowks of flunkies that hae won into the courtyard at the back of their betters, as mony a man gets preferment, I could make a' right yet."

The measures which he took to execute this dauntless resolution, the reader shall learn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

*With throat unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard him call;
Gramercy they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they had been drinking all!*

COLERIDGE'S *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

HAYSTON of Bucklaw was one of the thoughtless class who never hesitate between their friend and their jest. When it was announced that the principal persons of the chase had taken their route towards Wolf's Crag, the huntsmen, as a point of civility, offered to transfer the venison to that mansion; a proffer which was readily accepted by Bucklaw, who thought much of the astonishment which their arrival in full body would occasion poor old Caleb Balderstone, and very little of the dilemma to which he was about to expose his friend the Master, so ill circumstanced to receive such a party. But in old Caleb he had to do with a crafty and alert antagonist, prompt at supplying, upon all emergencies, evasions and excuses suitable, as he thought, to the dignity of the family.

"Praise be blest!" said Caleb to himself, "ae leaf of the muckle gate has been swung to wi' yestreen's wind, and I think I can manage to shut the ither."

But he was desirous, like a prudent governor, at the same time to get rid, if possible, of the internal enemy, in which light he considered almost every one who eat and drank, ere he took measures to exclude those whom their jocund noise now pronounced to be near at hand. He waited, therefore, with impatience until his master had shown his two principal guests into the Tower, and then commenced his operations.

"I think," he said to the stranger menials, "that, as they are bringing the stag's head to the castle in all honour, we, who are indwellers, should receive them at the gate."

The unwary grooms had no sooner hurried out, in compliance with this insidious hint, than, one folding-door of the ancient gate being already closed by the wind, as has been already intimated, honest Caleb lost no time in shutting the other with a clang, which resounded from donjon-vault to battlement. Having thus secured the pass, he forthwith indulged the excluded huntsmen in brief parley, from a small projecting window, or shot-hole, through which, in former days, the warders were wont to reconnoitre those who presented themselves before the gates. He gave them to understand, in a short and pity speech, that the gate of the castle was never on any account opened during meal-times; that his honour, the Master of Ravenswood, and some guests of quality, had just sat down to dinner; that there was excellent brandy at the hostler-wife's at Wolf's Hope down below; and he held out some obscure hint that the reckoning would be discharged by the Master; but this was uttered in a very dubious and oracular strain, for, like Louis XIV., Caleb Balderstone hesitated to carry finesse so far as direct falsehood, and was content to deceive, if possible, without directly lying.

This annunciation was received with surprise by some, with laughter by others, and with dismay by the expelled lackeys, who endeavoured to demonstrate that their right of readmission, for the purpose of waiting upon their master and mistress, was at least indisputable. But Caleb was not in a humour to understand or admit any distinctions. He stuck to his original proposition with that dogged but convenient pertinacity which is armed against all conviction, and deaf to all reasoning. Bucklaw now came from the rear of the party, and demanded admittance in a very angry tone. But the resolution of Caleb was immovable.

"If the king on the throne were at the gate," he declared, "his ten fingers should never open it contrair to the established use and wont of the family of Ravenswood, and his duty as their head-servant."

Bucklaw was now extremely incensed, and with more oaths and curses than we care to repeat, declared himself most unworthily treated, and demanded peremptorily to speak with the Master of Ravenswood himself.

But to this also Caleb turned a deaf ear. "He's as soon a-bleeze as a tap of tow, the lad Bucklaw," he said; "but the deil of ony master's face he shall see till he has sleepit and waken'd on't. He'll ken himself better the morn's morning. It sets the like o' him, to be bringing a crew of drunken hunters here, when he kens there is but little preparation to sloken his ain drought." And he disappeared from the window, leaving them all to digest their exclusion as they best might.

But another person, of whose presence Caleb, in the animation of the debate, was not aware, had listened in silence to its progress. This was the principal domestic of the stranger—a man of trust and consequence—the same who, in the hunting-field, had accommodated Bucklaw with the use of his horse. He was in the stable when Caleb had contrived the expulsion of his fellow-servants, and thus avoided sharing the same fate, from which his personal importance would certainly not have otherwise saved him.

This personage perceived the manoeuvre of Caleb, easily appreciated the motive of his conduct, and knowing his master's intentions towards the family of Ravenswood, had no difficulty as to the line of conduct he ought to adopt. He took the place of Caleb (unperceived by the latter) at the post of audience which he had just left, and announced to the assembled domestics, "That it was his master's pleasure that Lord Bittlebrain's retinue and his own should go down to the adjacent change-house and call for what refreshments they might have occasion for, and he should take care to discharge the lawing."

The jolly troop of huntsmen retired from the inhospitable gate of Wolf's Crag, execrating, as they descended the steep pathway, the niggard and unworthy disposition of the proprietor, and damning, with more than silvan license, both the castle and its inhabitants. Bucklaw, with many qualities which would have made him a man of worth and judgment in more favourable circumstances, had been so utterly neglected in point of education, that he was apt to think and feel according to the ideas of the companions of his pleasures. The praises which had recently been heaped upon himself he contrasted with the general abuse now levelled against Ravenswood; he recalled to his mind the dull and monotonous days he had spent in the Tower of Wolf's Crag, compared with the joviality of his

usual life; he felt with great indignation his exclusion from the castle, which he considered as a gross affront, and every mingled feeling led him to break off the union which he had formed with the Master of Ravenswood.

On arriving at the change-house of the village of Wolf's Hope, he unexpectedly met with an acquaintance just alighting from his horse. This was no other than the very respectable Captain Craigenfelt, who immediately came up to him, and, without appearing to retain any recollection of the indifferent terms on which they had parted, shook him by the hand in the warmest manner possible. A warm grasp of the hand was what Bucklaw could never help returning with cordiality, and no sooner had Craigenfelt felt the pressure of his fingers than he knew the terms on which he stood with him.

"Long life to you, Bucklaw!" he exclaimed; "there's life for honest folk in this bad world yet!"

The Jacobites at this period, with what propriety I know not, used, it must be noticed, the term of HONEST MEN as peculiarly descriptive of their own party.

"Ay, and for others besides, it seems," answered Bucklaw; "otherways, how came you to venture hither, noble Captain?"

"Who—I? I am as free as the wind at Martinmas, that pays neither land-rent nor annual; all is explained—all settled with the honest old drivellers yonder of Auld Reekie. Pooh! pooh! they dared not keep me a week of days in durance. A certain person has better friends among them than you wot of, and can serve a friend when it is least likely."

"Pshaw!" answered Hayston, who perfectly knew and thoroughly despised the character of this man, "none of your cogging gibberish; tell me truly, are you at liberty and in safety?"

"Free and safe as a Whig bailie on the causeway of his own borough, or a canting Presbyterian minister in his own pulpit; and I came to tell you that you need not remain in hiding any longer."

"Then I suppose you call yourself my friend, Captain Craigenfelt?" said Bucklaw.

"Friend!" replied Craigenfelt, "my cock of the pit! why, I am thy very Achates, man, as I have heard scholars say—hand and glove—bark and tree—thine to life and death!"

"I'll try that in a moment," answered Bucklaw. "Thou art never without money, however thou comest by it. Lend me two pieces to wash the dust out of these honest fellows' throats in the first place, and then——"

"Two pieces! Twenty are at thy service, my lad, and twenty to back them."

"Ay, say you so?" said Bucklaw, pausing, for his natural penetration led him to suspect some extraordinary motive lay couched under an excess of generosity.

"Craigenfelt, you are either an honest fellow in right good earnest, and I scarce know how to believe that; or you are cleverer than I took you for, and I scarce know how to believe that either."

"L'un n'empeche pas l'autre," said Craigenfelt. "Touch and try; the gold is good as ever was weighed."

He put a quantity of gold pieces into Bucklaw's hand, which he thrust into his pocket without either counting or looking at them, only observing, "That he was so circumstanced that he must enlist, though the devil offered the press-money"; and then turning to the huntsmen, he called out, "Come along, my lads; all is at my cost."

"Long life to Bucklaw!" shouted the men of the chase.

"And confusion to him that takes his share of the sport, and leaves the hunters as dry as a drumhead," added another, by way of corollary.

"The house of Ravenswood was ance a gude and an honourable house in this land," said an old man; "but it's lost its credit this day, and the Master has shown himself no better than a greedy cullion."

And with this conclusion, which was unanimously agreed to by all who heard it, they rushed tumultuously into the house of entertainment, where they revelled till a late hour. The jovial temper of Bucklaw seldom permitted him to be nice in the choice of his associates; and on the present occasion, when his joyous debauch received additional zest from the intervention of an unusual space of sobriety, and almost abstinence, he was as happy in leading the revels as if his comrades had been sons of princes. Craigenfelt had his own purposes in fooling him up to the top of his bent; and having some low humour, much impudence, and the power of singing a good song, understanding besides thoroughly the disposition of his regained associate, he headily succeeded in involving him bumper-deep in the festivity of the meeting.

A very different scene was in the mean time passing in the Tower of Wolf's Crag. When the Master of Ravenswood left the courtyard, too much busied with his own perplexed reflections to pay attention to the manoeuvre of Caleb, he ushered his guests into the great hall of the castle.

The indefatigable Balderstone, who, from choice or habit, worked on from morning to night, had by degrees cleared this desolate apartment of the confused relics of the funeral banquet, and restored it to some order. But not all his skill and labour, in disposing to advantage the little furniture which remained, could remove the dark and disconsolate appearance of those ancient and disfurnished walls. The narrow windows, flanked by deep indentures into the walls, seemed formed rather to exclude than to admit the cheerful light; and the heavy and gloomy appearance of the thunder-sky added still farther to the obscurity.

As Ravenswood, with the grace of a gallant of that period, but not without a certain stiffness and embarrassment of manner, handed the young lady to the upper end of the apartment, her father remained standing more near to the door, as if about to disengage himself from his hat and cloak. At this moment the clang of the portal was heard, a sound at which the stranger started, stepped hastily to the window, and looked with an air of alarm at Ravenswood, when he saw that the gate of the court was shut, and his domestics excluded.

"You have nothing to fear, sir," said Ravenswood, gravely; "this roof retains the means of giving protection, though not welcome. Methinks," he added, "it is time that I should know who they are that have thus highly honoured my ruined dwelling!" The young lady remained silent and motionless, and the father, to whom the question was more directly addressed, seemed in the situation of a performer who has ventured to take upon himself a part which he finds himself unable to present, and who comes to a pause when it is most to be expected that he should speak. While he endeavoured to cover his embarrassment with the exterior ceremonials of a well-bred demeanour, it was obvious that, in making his bow, one foot shuffled forward, as if to advance, the other backward, as if with the purpose of escape; and as he undid the cape of his coat, and raised his beaver from his face, his fingers fumbled as if the one had been linked with rusted iron, or the other had weighed equal with a stone of lead. The darkness of the sky seemed to increase, as if to supply the want of those mufflings which he laid aside with such evident reluctance. The impatience of Ravenswood increased also in proportion to the delay of the stranger, and he appeared to struggle under agitation, though probably from a very different cause. He laboured to restrain his desire to speak, while the stranger, to all appearance, was at a loss for words to express what he felt necessary to say.

At length Ravenswood's impatience broke the bounds he had imposed upon it. "I perceive," he said, "that Sir William Ashton is unwilling to announced himself in the Castle of Wolf's Crag."

"I had hoped it was unnecessary," said the Lord Keeper, relieved from his silence, as a spectre by the voice of the exorcist, "and I am obliged to you, Master of Ravenswood, for breaking the ice at once, where circumstances—unhappy circumstances, let me call them—rendered self-introduction peculiarly awkward."

"And I am not then," said the Master of Ravenswood, gravely, "to consider the honour of this visit as purely accidental?"

"Let us distinguish a little," said the Keeper, assuming an appearance of ease which perhaps his heart was a stranger to; "this is an honour which I have eagerly desired for some time, but which I might never have obtained, save for the accident of the storm. My daughter and I are alike grateful for this opportunity of thanking the brave man to whom she owes her life and I mine."

The hatred which divided the great families in the feudal times had lost little of its bitterness, though it no longer expressed itself in deeds of open violence. Not the feelings which Ravenswood had begun to entertain towards Lucy Ashton, not the hospitality due to his guests, were able entirely to subdue, though they warmly combated, the deep passions which arose within him at beholding his father's foe standing in the hall of the family of which he had in a great measure accelerated the ruin. His looks glanced from the father to the daughter with an irresolution of which Sir William Ashton did not think it proper to await the conclusion. He had now disembarrassed himself of his riding-dress, and walking up to his daughter, he undid the fastening of her mask.

"Lucy, my love," he said, raising her and leading her towards Ravenswood, "lay aside your mask, and let us express our gratitude to the Master openly and barefaced."

"If he will condescend to accept it," was all that Lucy uttered; but in a tone so sweetly modulated, and which seemed to imply at once a feeling and a forgiving of the cold reception to which they were exposed, that, coming from a creature so innocent and so beautiful, her words cut Ravenswood to the very heart for his harshness. He muttered something of surprise, something of confusion, and, ending with a warm and eager expression of his happiness at being able to afford her shelter under his roof, he saluted her, as the ceremonial of the time enjoined upon such occasions. Their cheeks had touched and were withdrawn from each other; Ravenswood had not quitted the hand which he had taken in kindly courtesy; a blush, which attached more consequence by far than was usual to such ceremony, still mantled on Lucy Ashton's beautiful cheek, when the apartment was suddenly illuminated by a flash of lightning, which seemed absolutely to swallow the darkness of the hall. Every object might have been for an instant seen distinctly. The slight and half-sinking form of Lucy Ashton; the well-proportioned and stately figure of Ravenswood, his dark features, and the fiery yet irresolute expression of his eyes; the old arms and scutcheons which hung on the walls of the apartment, were for an instant distinctly visible to the Keeper by a strong red brilliant glare of light. Its disappearance was almost instantly followed by a burst of thunder, for the storm-cloud was very near the castle; and the peal was so sudden and dreadful, that the old tower rocked to its foundation, and every inmate concluded it was falling upon them. The soot, which had not been disturbed for centuries, showered down the huge tunnelled chimneys; lime and dust flew in clouds from the wall; and, whether the lightning had actually struck the castle or whether through the violent concussion of the air, several heavy stones were hurled from the mouldering battlements into the roaring sea beneath. It might seem as if the ancient founder of the castle were bestriding the thunderstorm, and proclaiming his displeasure at the reconciliation of his descendant with the enemy of his house.

The consternation was general, and it required the efforts of both the Lord Keeper and Ravenswood to keep Lucy from fainting. Thus was the Master a second time engaged in the most delicate and dangerous of all tasks, that of affording support and assistance to a beautiful and helpless being, who, as seen before in a similar situation, had already become a favourite of his imagination, both when awake and when slumbering. If the genius of the house really condemned a union betwixt the Master and his fair guest, the means by which he expressed his sentiments were as unhappily chosen as if he had been a mere mortal. The train of little attentions, absolutely necessary to soothe the young lady's mind, and aid her in composing her spirits, necessarily threw the Master of Ravenswood into such an intercourse with her father as was calculated, for the moment at least, to break down the barrier of feudal enmity which divided them. To express himself churlishly, or even coldly, towards an old man whose daughter (and SUCH a daughter) lay before them, overpowered with natural terror—and all this under his own roof, the thing was impossible; and by the time that Lucy, extending a hand to each, was able to thank them for their kindness, the Master felt that his sentiments of hostility towards the Lord Keeper were by no means those most predominant in his bosom.

The weather, her state of health, the absence of her attendants, all prevented the possibility of Lucy Ashton renewing her journey to Bittlebrains House, which was full five miles distant; and the Master of Ravenswood could not but, in common courtesy, offer the shelter of his roof for the rest of the day and for the night. But a flush of less soft expression, a look much more habitual to his features, resumed predominance when he mentioned how meanly he was provided for the entertainment of his guests.

"Do not mention deficiencies," said the Lord Keeper, eager to interrupt him and prevent his resuming an alarming topic; "you are preparing to set out for the Continent, and your house is probably for the present unfurnished. All this we understand; but if you mention inconvenience, you will oblige us to seek accommodations in the hamlet."

As the Master of Ravenswood was about to reply, the door of the hall opened, and Caleb Balderstone rushed in.

CHAPTER XI.

*Let them have meat enough, woman—half a hen;
There be old rotten pilchards—put them off too;
'Tis but a little new anointing of them,
And a strong onion, that confounds the savour.*

Love's Pilgrimage.

THE thunderbolt, which had stunned all who were within hearing of it, had only served to awaken the bold and inventive genius of the flower of majors-domo. Almost before the clatter had ceased, and while there was yet scarce an assurance whether the castle was standing or falling, Caleb exclaimed, "Heaven be praised! this comes to hand like the bowl of a pint-stoup." He then barred the kitchen door in the face of the Lord Keeper's servant, whom he perceived returning from the party at the gate, and muttering, "How the deil cam he in?—but deil may care. Mysie, what are ye sitting shaking and greeting in the chimney-neuk for? Come here—or stay where ye are, and skirl as loud as ye can; it's a' ye're gude for. I say, ye auld deevil, skirl—skirl—louder—louder, woman; gar the gentles hear ye in the ha'. I have heard ye as far off as the Bass for a less matter. And stay—down wi' that crockery——"

And with a sweeping blow, he threw down from a shelf some articles of pewter and earthenware. He exalted his voice amid the clatter, shouting and roaring in a manner which changed Mysie's hysterical terrors of the thunder into fears that her old fellow-servant was gone distracted. "He has dung down a' the bits o' pigs, too—the only thing we had left to haud a soup milk—and he has spilt the hatted hit that was for the Master's dinner. Mercy save us, the auld man's gaen clean and clear wud wi' the thunner!"

"Haud your tongue, ye b——!" said Caleb, in the impetuous and overbearing triumph of successful invention, "a's provided now—dinner and a' thing; the thunner's done a' in a clap of a hand!"

"Puir man, he's muckle astray," said Mysie, looking at him with a mixture of pity and alarm; "I wish he may ever come hame to himsell again."

"Here, ye auld doited deevil," said Caleb, still exulting in his extrication from a dilemma which had seemed insurmountable; "keep the strange man out of the kitchen; swear the thunner came down the chimney and spoiled the best dinner ye ever dressed—beef—bacon—kid—lark—leveret—wild-fowl—venison, and what not. Lay it on thick, and never mind expenses. I'll awa' up to the la'. Make a' the confusion ye can; but be sure ye keep out the strange servant."

With these charges to his ally, Caleb posted up to the hall, but stopping to reconnoitre through an aperture, which time, for the convenience of many a domestic in succession, had made in the door, and perceiving the situation of Miss Ashton, he had prudence enough to make a pause, both to avoid adding to her alarm and in order to secure attention to his account of the disastrous effects of the thunder.

But when he perceived that the lady was recovered, and heard the conversation turn upon the accommodation and refreshment which the castle afforded, he thought it time to burst into the room in the manner announced in the last chapter.

"Willawins!—willawins! Such a misfortune to befa' the house of Ravenswood, and I to live to see it."

"What is the matter, Caleb?" said his master, somewhat alarmed in his turn; "has any part of the castle fallen?"

"Castle fa'an! na, but the sute's fa'an, and the thunner's come right down the kitchen-lum, and the things are a' lying here awa', there awa', like the Laird o' Hotchpotch's lands; and wi' brave guests of honour and quality to entertain (a low bow here to Sir William Ashton and his daughter), and naething left in the house fit to present for dinner, or for supper either, for aught that I can see!"

"I very believe you, Caleb," said Ravenswood, drily. Balderstone here turned to his master a half-upbraiding, half-imploring countenance, and edged towards him as he repeated, "It was nae great matter of preparation; but just something added to your honour's ordinary course of fare—petty cover, as they say at the Louvre—three courses and the fruit."

"Keep your intolerable nonsense to yourself, you old fool!" said Ravenswood, mortified at his officiousness, yet not knowing how to contradict him, without the risk of giving rise to scenes yet more ridiculous.

Caleb saw his advantage, and resolved to improve it. But first, observing that the Lord Keeper's servant entered the apartment and spoke apart with his master, he took the same opportunity to whisper a few words into Ravenswood's ear: "Haud your tongue, for heaven's sake, sir; if it's my pleasure to hazard my soul in telling lees for the honour of the family, it's nae business o' yours; and if ye let me gang on quietly, I'll be moderate in my banquet; but if ye contradict me, deil but I dress ye a dinner fit for a duke!"

Ravenswood, in fact, thought it would be best to let his officious butler run on, who proceeded to enumerate upon his fingers—"No muckle provision—might hae served four persons of honour,—first course, capons in white broth—roast kid—bacon with reverence; second course, roasted leveret—butter crabs—a veal florentine; third course, blackcock—it's black eneugh now wi' the sute—plumdamas—a tart—a flam—and some nonsense sweet things, adn comfits—and that's a'," he said, seeing the impatience of his master—"that's just a' was o't—forbye the apples and pears."

Miss Ashton had by degrees gathered her spirits, so far as to pay some attention to what was going on; and observing the restrained impatience of Ravenswood, contrasted with the peculiar determination of manner with which Caleb detailed his imaginary banquet, the whole struck her as so ridiculous that, despite every effort to the contrary, she burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, in which she was joined by her father, though with more moderation, and finally by the Master of Ravenswood himself, though conscious that the jest was at his own expense. Their mirth—for a scene which we read with little emotion often appears extremely ludicrous to the spectators—made the old vault ring again. They ceased—they renewed—they ceased—they renewed again their shouts of laughter! Caleb, in the mean time, stood his ground with a grave, angry, and scornful dignity, which greatly enhanced the ridicule of the scene and mirth of the spectators.

At length, when the voices, and nearly the strength, of the laughers were exhausted, he exclaimed, with very little ceremony: "The deil's in the gentles! they breakfast sae lordly, that the loss of the best dinner ever cook pat fingers to makes them as merry as if it were the best jeest in a' George Buchanan. If there was as little in your honours' wames as there is in Caleb Balderstone's, less caickling wad serve ye on sic a gravaminous subject."

Caleb's blunt expression of resentment again awakened the mirth of the company, which, by the way, he regarded not only as an aggression upon the dignity of the family, but a special contempt of the eloquence with which he himself had summed up the extent of their supposed losses. "A description of a dinner," as he said afterwards to Mysie, "that wad hae made a fu' man hungry, and them to sit there laughing at it!"

"But," said Miss Ashton, composing her countenance as well as she could, "are all these delicacies so totally destroyed that no scrap can be collected?"

"Collected, my leddy! what wad ye collect out of the sute and the ass? Ye may gang down yoursell, and look into our kitchen—the cookmaid in the trembling exies—the gude vivers lying a' about—beef, capons, and white broth—florentine and flams—bacon wi' reverence—and a' the sweet confections and whim-whams—ye'll see them a', my leddy—that is," said he, correcting himself, "ye'll no see ony of them now, for the cook has soopit them up, as was weel her part; but ye'll see the white broth where it was spilt. I pat my fingers in it, and it tastes as like sour milk as ony thing else; if that isna the effect of thunner, I kenna what is. This gentleman here couldna but hear the clash of our haill dishes, china and silver thegither?"

The Lord Keeper's domestic, though a statesman's attendant, and of course trained to command his countenance upon all occasions, was somewhat discomposed by this appeal, to which he only answered by a bow.

"I think, Mr. Butler," said the Lord Keeper, who began to be afraid lest the prolongation of this scene should at length displease Ravenswood—"I think that, were you to retire with my servant Lockhard—he has travelled, and is quite accustomed to accidents and contingencies of every kind, and I hope betwixt you, you may find out some mode of supply at this emergency."

"His honour kens," said Caleb, who, however hopeless of himself of accomplishing what was desirable, would, like the high-spirited elephant, rather have died in the effort than brooked the aid of a brother in commission—"his honour kens weel I need nae counsellor, when the honour of the house is concerned."

"I should be unjust if I denied it, Caleb," said his master; "but your art lies chiefly in making apologies, upon which we can no more dine than upon the bill of fare of our thunder-blasted dinner. Now, possibly Mr. Lockhard's talent may consist in finding some substitute for that which certainly is not, and has in all probability never been."

"Your honour is pleased to be facetious," said Caleb, "but I am sure that, for the warst, for a walk as far as Wolf's Hope, I could dine forty men—no that the folk there deserve your honour's custom. They hae been ill advised in the matter of the duty eggs and butter, I winna deny that."

"Do go consult together," said the Master; "go down to the village, and do the best you can. We must not let our guests remain without refreshment, to save the honour of a ruined family. And here, Caleb, take my purse; I believe that will prove your best ally."

"Purse! purse, indeed!" quoth Caleb, indignantly flinging out of the room; "what suld I do wi' your honour's purse, on your ain grund? I trust we are no to pay for our ain?"

The servants left the hall; and the door was no sooner shut than the Lord Keeper began to apologise for the rudeness of his mirth; and Lucy to hope she had given no pain or offence to the kind-hearted faithful old man.

"Caleb and I must both learn, madam, to undergo with good humour, or at least with patience, the ridicule which everywhere attaches itself to poverty."

"You do yourself injustice, Master of Ravenswood, on my word of honour," answered his elder guest. "I believe I know more of your affairs than you do yourself, and I hope to show you that I am interested in them; and that—in short, that your prospects are better than you apprehend. In the mean time, I can conceive nothing so respectable as the spirit which rises above misfortune, and prefers honourable privations to debt or dependence."

Whether from fear of offending the delicacy or awakening the pride of the Master, the Lord Keeper made these allusions with an appearance of fearful and hesitating reserve, and seemed to be afraid that he was intruding too far, in venturing to touch, however lightly, upon such a topic, even when the Master had led to it. In short, he appeared at once pushed on by his desire of appearing friendly, and held back by the fear of intrusion. It was no wonder that the Master of Ravenswood, little acquainted as he then was with life, should have given this consummate courtier credit for more sincerity than was probably to be found in a score of his cast. He answered, however, with reserve, that he was indebted to all who might think well of him; and, apologising to his guests, he left the hall, in order to make such arrangements for their entertainment as circumstances admitted.

Upon consulting with old Mysie, the accommodations for the night were easily completed, as indeed they admitted of little choice. The Master surrendered his apartment for the use of Miss Ashton, and Mysie, once a person of consequence, dressed in a black satin gown which had belonged of yore to the Master's grandmother, and had figured in the court-balls of Henrietta Maria, went to attend her as lady's-maid. He next inquired after Bucklaw, and understanding he was at the change-house with the huntsmen and some companions, he desired Caleb to call there, and acquaint him how he was circumstanced at Wolf's Crag; to intimate to him that it would be most convenient if he could find a bed in the hamlet, as the elder guest must necessarily be quartered in the secret chamber, the only spare bedroom which could be made fit to receive him. The Master saw no hardship in passing the night by the hall fire, wrapt in his campaign-cloak; and to Scottish domestics of the day, even of the highest rank, nay, to young men of family or fashion, on any pinch, clean straw, or a dry hayloft, was always held good night-quarters.

For the rest, Lockhard had his master's orders to bring some venison from the inn, and Caleb was to trust to his wits for the honour of his family. The Master, indeed, a second time held out his purse; but, as it was in sight of the strange servant, the butler thought himself obliged to decline what his fingers itched to clutch. "Couldna he hae slippit it gently into my hand?" said Caleb; "but his honour will never learn how to bear himself in siccan cases."

Mysie, in the mean time, according to a uniform custom in remote places in Scotland, offered the strangers the produce of her little dairy, "while better meat was getting ready." And according to another custom, not yet wholly in desuetude, as the storm was now drifting off to leeward, the Master carried the Keeper to the top of his highest tower to admire a wide and waste extent of view, and to "weary for his dinner."

CHAPTER XII.

*"Now dame," quoth he, "Je vous dis sans doute,
Had I nought of a capon but the liver,
And of your white bread nought but a shiver,
And after that a roasted pigge's head
(But I ne wold for me no beast were dead),
Then had I with you homely sufferance."*

CHAUCER, *Summer's Tale*.

IT was not without some secret misgivings that Caleb set out upon his exploratory expedition. In fact, it was attended with a treble difficulty. He dared not tell his mast the offence which he had that morning given to Bucklaw, just for the honour of the family; he dared not acknowledge he had been too hasty in refusing the purse; and, thirdly, he was somewhat apprehensive of unpleasant consequences upon his meeting Hayston under the impression of an affront, and probably by this time under the influence also of no small quantity of brandy.

Caleb, to do him justice, was as bold as any lion where the honour of the family of Ravenswood was concerned; but his was that considerate valour which does not delight in unnecessary risks. This, however, was a secondary consideration; the main point was to veil the indigence of the housekeeping at the castle, and to make good his vaunt of the cheer which his resources could procure, without Lockhard's assistance, and without supplies from his master. This was as prime a point of honour with him as with the generous elephant with whom we have already compared him, who, being overtasked, broke his skull through the desperate exertions which he made to discharge his duty, when he perceived they were bringing up another to his assistance.

The village which they now approached had frequently afforded the distressed butler resources upon similar emergencies; but his relations with it had been of late much altered.

It was a little hamlet which straggled along the side of a creek formed by the discharge of a small brook into the sea, and was hidden from the castle, to which it had been in former times an appendage, by the intervention of the shoulder of a hill forming a projecting headland. It was called Wolf's Hope (i.e. Wolf's Haven), and the few inhabitants gained a precarious subsistence by manning two or three fishing-boats in the herring season, and smuggling gin and brandy during the winter months. They paid a kind of hereditary respect to the Lords of Ravenswood; but, in the difficulties of the family, most of the inhabitants of Wolf's Hope had contrived to get feu-rights to their little possessions, their huts, kail-yards, and rights of common, so that they were emancipated from the chains of feudal dependence, and free from the various exactions with which, under every possible pretext, or without any pretext at all, the Scottish landlords of the period, themselves in great poverty, were wont to harass their still poorer tenants at will. They might be, on the whole, termed independent, a circumstance peculiarly galling to Caleb, who had been wont to exercise over them the same sweeping authority in levying contributions which was exercised in former times in England, when "the royal purveyors, sallying forth from under the Gothic portcullis to purchase provisions with power and prerogative, instead of money, brought home the plunder of an hundred markets, and all that could be seized from a flying and hiding country, and deposited their spoil in an hundred caverns."

Caleb loved the memory and resented the downfall of that authority, which mimicked, on a petty scale, the grand contributions exacted by the feudal sovereigns. And as he fondly flattered himself that the awful rule and right supremacy, which assigned to the Barons of Ravenswood the first and most effective interest in all productions of nature within five miles of their castle, only slumbered, and was not departed for ever, he used every now and then to give the recollection of the inhabitants a little jog by some petty exaction. These were at first submitted to, with more or less readiness, by the inhabitants of the hamlet; for they had been so long used to consider the wants of the Baron and his family as having a title to be preferred to their own, that their actual independence did not convey to them an immediate sense of freedom. They resembled a man that has been long fettered, who, even at liberty, feels in imagination the grasp of the handcuffs still binding his wrists. But the exercise of freedom is quickly followed with the natural consciousness of its immunities, as the enlarged prisoner, by the free use of his limbs, soon dispels the cramped feeling they had acquired when bound.

The inhabitants of Wolf's Hope began to grumble, to resist, and at length positively to refuse compliance with the exactions of Caleb Balderstone. It was in vain he reminded them, that when the eleventh Lord Ravenswood, called the Skipper, from his delight in naval matters, had encouraged the trade of their port by building the pier (a bulwark of stones rudely piled together), which protected the fishing-boats from the weather, it had been matter of understanding that he was to have the first stone of butter after the calving of every cow within the barony, and the first egg, thence called the Monday's egg, laid by every hen on every Monday in the year.

The feuars heard and scratched their heads, coughed, sneezed, and being pressed for answer, rejoined with one voice, "They could not say"—the universal refuge of a Scottish peasant when pressed to admit a claim which his conscience owns, or perhaps his feelings, and his interest inclines him to deny.

Caleb, however, furnished the notables of Wolf's Hope with a note of the requisition of butter and eggs, which he claimed as arrears of the aforesaid subsidy, or kindly aid, payable as above mentioned; and having intimated that he would not be averse to compound the same for goods or money, if it was inconvenient to them to pay in kind, left them, as he hoped, to debate the mode of assessing themselves for that purpose. On the contrary, they met with a determined purpose of resisting the exaction, and were only undecided as to the mode of grounding their opposition, when the cooper, a very important person on a fishing-station, and one of the conscript fathers of the village, observed, "That their hens had caickled mony a day for the Lords of Ravenswood, and it was time they suld caickle for those that gave them roosts and barley." An unanimous grin intimated the assent of the assembly. "And," continued the orator, "if it's your wull, I'll just tak a step as far as Dunse for Davie Dingwall, the writer, that's come frae the North to settle amang us, and he'll pit this job to rights, I'se warrant him."

A day was accordingly fixed for holding a grand palaver at Wolf's Hope on the subject of Caleb's requisitions, and he was invited to attend at the hamlet for that purpose.

He went with open hands and empty stomach, trusting to fill the one on his master's account and the other on his own score, at the expense of the feuars of Wolf's Hope. But, death to his hopes! as he entered the eastern end of the straggling village, the awful form of Davie Dingwall, a sly, dry, hard-fisted, shrewd country attorney, who had already acted against the family of Ravenswood, and was a principal agent of Sir William Ashton, trotted in at the western extremity, bestriding a leathern portmanteau stuffed with the feu-charters of the hamlet, and hoping he had not kept Mr. Balderstone waiting, "as he was instructed and fully empowered to pay or receive, compound or compensate, and, in fine, to age as accords respecting all mutual and unsettled claims whatsoever, belonging or competent to the Honourable Edgar Ravenswood, commonly called the Master of Ravenswood——"

"The RIGHT Honourable Edgar LORD RAVENSWOOD," said Caleb, with great emphasis; for, though conscious he had little chance of advantage in the conflict to ensue, he was resolved not to sacrifice one jot of honour.

"Lord Ravenswood, then," said the man of business—"we shall not quarrel with you about titles of courtesy—commonly called Lord Ravenswood, or Master of Ravenswood, heritable proprietor of the lands and barony of Wolf's Crag, on othe ne part, and to John Whitefish and others, feuars in the town of Wolf's Hope, within the barony aforesaid, on the other part."

Caleb was conscious, from sad experience, that he would wage a very different strife with this mercenary champion than with the individual feuars themselves, upon whose old recollections, predilections, and habits of thinking he might have wrought by an hundred indirect arguments, to which their deputy-representative was totally insensible. The issue of the debate proved the reality of his apprehensions. It was in vain he strained his eloquence and ingenuity, and collected into one mass all arguments arising from antique custom and hereditary respect, from the good deeds done by the Lords of Ravenswood to the community of Wolf's

Hope in former days, and from what might be expected from them in future. The writer stuck to the contents of his feu-charters; he could not see it: 'twas not in the bond. And when Caleb, determined to try what a little spirit would do, deprecated the consequences of Lord Ravenswood's withdrawing his protection from the burgh, and even hinted in his using active measures of resentment, the man of law sneered in his face.

"His clients," he said, "had determined to do the best they could for their own town, and he thought Lord Ravenswood, since he was a lord, might have enough to do to look after his own castle. As to any threats of stouthrief oppression, by rule of thumb, or via facti, as the law termed it, he would have Mr. Balderstone recollect, that new times were not as old times; that they lived on the south of the Forth, and far from the Highlands; that his clients thought they were able to protect themselves; but should they find themselves mistaken, they would apply to the government for the protection of a corporal and four red-coats, who," said Mr. Dingwall, with a grin, "would be perfectly able to secure them against Lord Ravenswood, and all that he or his followers could do by the strong hand."

If Caleb could have concentrated all the lightnings of aristocracy in his eye, to have struck dead this contemner of allegiance and privilege, he would have launched them at his head, without respect to the consequences. As it was, he was compelled to turn his course backward to the castle; and there he remained for full half a day invisible and inaccessible even to Mysie, sequestered in his own peculiar dungeon, where he sat burnishing a single pewter plate and whistling "Maggie Lauder" six hours without intermission.

The issue of this unfortunate requisition had shut against Caleb all resources which could be derived from Wolf's Hope and its purlieu, the El Dorado, or Peru, from which, in all former cases of exigence, he had been able to extract some assistance. He had, indeed, in a manner vowed that the deil should have him, if ever he put the print of his foot within its causeway again. He had hitherto kept his word; and, strange to tell, this secession had, as he intended, in some degree, the effect of a punishment upon the refractory feuars. Mr. Balderstone had been a person in their eyes connected with a superior order of beings, whose presence used to grace their little festivities, whose advice they found useful on many occasions, and whose communications gave a sort of credit to their village. The place, they acknowledged, "didna look as it used to do, and should do, since Mr. Caleb keepit the castle sae closely; but doubtless, touching the eggs and butter, it was a most unreasonable demand, as Mr. Dingwall had justly made manifest."

Thus stood matters betwixt the parties, when the old butler, though it was gall and wormwood to him, found himself obliged either to acknowledge before a strange man of quality, and, what was much worse, before that stranger's servant, the total inability of Wolf's Crag to produce a dinner, or he must trust to the compassion of the feuars of Wolf's Hope. It was a dreadful degradation; but necessity was equally imperious and lawless. With these feelings he entered the street of the village.

Willing to shake himself from his companion as soon as possible, he directed Mr. Lockhard to Luckie Sma-trash's change-house, where a din, proceeding from the revels of Bucklaw, Craigengelt, and their party, sounded half-way down the street, while the red glare from the window overpowered the grey twilight which was now settling down, and glimmered against a parcel of old tubs, kegs, and barrels, piled up in the cooper's yard, on the other side of the way.

"If you, Mr. Lockhard," said the old butler to his companion, "will be pleased to step to the change-house where that light comes from, and where, as I judge, they are now singing 'Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,' ye may do your master's errand about the venison, and I will do mine about Bucklaw's bed, as I return frae getting the rest of the vivers. It's no that the venison is actually needfu'," he added, detaining his colleague by the button, "to make up the dinner; but as a compliment to the hunters, ye ken; and, Mr. Lockhard, if they offer ye a drink o' yill, or a cup o' wine, or a glass o' brandy, ye'll be a wise man to take it, in case the thunner should hae soured ours at the castle, whilk is ower muckle to be dreaded."

He then permitted Lockhard to depart; and with foot heavy as lead, and yet far lighter than his heart, stepped on through the unequal street of the straggling village, meditating on whom he ought to make his first attack. It was necessary he should find some one with whom old acknowledged greatness should weigh more than recent independence, and to whom his application might appear an act of high dignity, relenting at once and soothing. But he could not recollect an inhabitant of a mind so constructed. "Our kail is like to be cauld enough too," he reflected, as the chorus of "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen" again reached his ears. The minister—he had got his presentation from the late lord, but they had quarrelled about teinds; the brewster's wife—she had trusted long, and the bill was aye scored up, and unless the dignity of the family should actually require it, it would be a sin to distress a widow woman. None was so able—but, on the other hand, none was likely to be less willing—to stand his friend upon the present occasion, than Gibbie Girder, the man of tubs and barrels already mentioned, who had headed the insurrection in the matter of the egg and butter subsidy. "But a' comes o' taking folk on the right side, I trow," quoted Caleb to himself; "and I had ance the ill hap to say he was but a Johnny New-come in our town, and the carle bore the family an ill-will ever since. But he married a bonny young quean, Jean Lightbody, auld Lightbody's daughter, him that was in the steading of Loup-the-Dyke; and auld Lightbody was married himself to Marion, that was about my lady in the family forty years syne. I hae had mony a day's daffing wi' Jean's mither, and they say she bides on wi' them. The carle has Jacobuses and Georgiuses baith, an ane could get at them; and sure I am, it's doing him an honour him or his never deserved at our hand, the ungracious sumph; and if he loses by us a'thegither, he is e'en cheap o't: he can spare it brawly." Shaking off irresolution, therefore, and turning at once upon his heel, Caleb walked hastily back to the cooper's house, lifted the latch withotu ceremony, and, in a moment, found himself behind the "hallan," or partition, from which position he could, himself unseen, reconnoitre the interior of the "but," or kitchen apartment, of the mansion.

Reverse of the sad menage at the Castle of Wolf's Crag, a bickering fire roared up the cooper's chimney. His wife, on the one side, in her pearlings and pudding-sleeves, put the last finishing touch to her holiday's apparel, while she contemplated a very handsome and good-humoured face in a broken mirror, raised upon the "bink" (the shelves on which the plates are disposed) for her special accommodation. Her mother, old Luckie Loup-the-Dyke, "a canty carline" as was within twenty miles of her, according to the unanimous report of the "cummers," or gossips, sat by the fire in the full glory of a grogram gown, lammer beads, and a clean cockernony, whiffing a snug pipe of tobacco, and superintending the affairs of the kitchen; for—sight more interesting to the anxious heart and craving entrails of the desponding seneschal than either buxom dame or canty cummer—there bubbled on the aforesaid bickering fire a huge pot, or rather cauldron, steaming with beef and brewis; while before it revolved two spits, turned each by one of the cooper's apprentices, seated in the opposite corners of the chimney, the one loaded with a quarter of mutton, while the other was gamed with a fat goose and a brace of wild ducks. The sight and scent of such a land of plenty almost wholly overcame the drooping spirits of Caleb. He turned, for a moment's space to reconnoitre the "ben," or parlour end of the house, and there saw a sight scarce less affecting to his feelings—a large round table, covered for ten or twelve persons, decored (according to his own favourite terms) with napery as white as snow, grand flagons of pewter, intermixed with one or two silver cups, containing, as was probable, something worthy the brilliancy of their outward appearance, clean trenchers, cutty spoons, knives and forks, sharp, burnished, and prompt for action, which lay all displayed as for an especial festival.

"The devil's in the peddling tub-coopering carl!" muttered Caleb, in all the envy of astonishment; "it's a shame to see the like o' them gusting their gabs at sic a rate. But if some o' that gude cheer does not find its way to Wolf's Crag this night, my name is not Caleb Balderstone."

So resolving, he entered the apartment, and, in all courteous greeting, saluted both the mother and the daughter. Wolf's Crag was the court of the barony, Caleb prime minister at Wolf's Crag; and it has ever been remarked that, though the masculine subject who pays the taxes sometimes growls at the courtiers by whom they are imposed, the said courtiers continue, nevertheless, welcome to the fair sex, to whom they furnish the newest small-talk and the earliest fashions. Both the dames were, therefore, at once about old Caleb's neck, setting up their throats together by way of welcome.

"Ay, sirs, Mr. Balderstone, and is this you? A sight of you is gude for sair een. Sit down—sit down; the gudeman will be blythe to see you—ye nar saw him sae cadgy in your life; but we are to christen our bit wean the night, as ye will hae heard, and doubtless ye will stay and see the ordinance. We hae killed a wether, and ane o' our lads has been out wi' his gun at the moss; ye used to like wild-fowl."

"Na, na, gudewife," said Caleb; "I just keekit in to wish ye joy, and I wad be glad to hae spoken wi' the gudeman, but——" moving, as if to go away.

"The ne'er a fit ye's gang," said the elder dame, laughing and holding him fast, with a freedom which belonged to their old acquaintance; "wha kens what ill it may bring to the bairn, if ye owerlook it in that gate?"

"But I'm in a preceese hurry, gudewife," said the butler, suffering himself to be dragged to a seat without much resistance; "and as to eating," for he observed the mistress of the dwelling bustling about to place a trencher for him—"as for eating—lack-a-day, we are just killed up yonder wi' eating frae morning to night! It's

shamefu' epicurism; but that's what we hae gotten frae the English pock-puddings." "Hout, never mind the English pock-puddings," said Luckie Lightbody; "try our puddings, Mr. Balderstone; there is black pudding and white-hass; try whilk ye like best."

"Baith gude—baith excellent—canna be better; but the very smell is enough for me that hae dined sae lately (the faithful wretch had fasted since daybreak). But I wadna affront your housewifeskep, gudewife; and, with your permission, I'se e'en pit them in my napkin, and eat them to my supper at e'en, for I am wearied of Mysie's pastry and nonsense; ye ken landward dainties aye pleased me best, Marion, and landward lasses too (looking at the cooper's wife). Ne'er a bit but she looks far better than when she married Gilbert, and then she was the bonniest lass in our parochine and the neist till't. But gawsie cow, goodly calf."

The women smiled at the compliment each to herself, and they smiled again to each other as Caleb wrapt up the puddings in a towel which he had brought with him, as a dragoon carries his foraging bag to receive what my fall in his way.

"And what news at the castle?" quo' the gudewife.

"News! The bravest news ye ever heard—the Lord Keeper's up yonder wi' his fair daughter, just ready to fling her at my lord's head, if he winna tak her out o' his arms; and I'se warrant he'll stitch our auld lands of Ravenswood to her petticoat tail."

"Eh! sirs—ay!—and will hae her? and is she weel-favoured? and what's the colour o' her hair? and does she wear a habit or a raily?" were the questions which the females showered upon the butler.

"Hout tout! it wad tak a man a day to answer a' your questions, and I hae hardly a minute. Where's the gudeman?"

"Awa' to fetch the minister," said Mrs. Girder, "precious Mr. Peter Bide-the-Bent, frae the Mosshead; the honest man has the rheumatism wi' lying in the hills in the persecution."

"Ay! Whig and a mountain-man, nae less!" said Caleb, with a peevishness he could not suppress. "I hae seen the day, Luckie, when worthy Mr. Cuffcushion and the service-book would hae served your turn (to the elder dame), or ony honest woman in like circumstances."

"And that's true too," said Mrs. Lightbody, "but what can a body do? Jean maun baith sing her psalms and busk her cockernony the gate the gudeman likes, and nae ither gate; for he's maister and mair at hame, I can tell ye, Mr. Balderstone."

"Ay, ay, and does he guide the gear too?" said Caleb, to whose projects masculine rule boded little good. "Ilka penny on't; but he'll dress her as dink as a daisy, as ye see; sae she has little reason to complain: where there's ane better aff there's ten waur."

"Aweel, gudewife," said Caleb, crestfallen, but not beaten off, "that wasna the way ye guided your gudeman; bt ilka land has its ain lauch. I maun be ganging. I just wanted to round in the gudeman's lug, that I heard them say up-bye yonder that Peter Puncheon, that was cooper to the Queen's stores at the Timmer Burse at Leith, is dead; sae I though that maybe a word frae my lord to the Lord Keeper might hae served Gilbert; but since he's frae hame——"

"O, but ye maun stay his hame-coming," said the dame. "I aye telled the gudeman ye meant weel to him; but he taks the tout at every bit lippening word."

"Aweel, I'll stay the last minute I can."

"And so," said the handsome young spouse of Mr. Girder, "ye think this Miss Ashton is weel-favoured? Troth, and sae should she, to set up for our young lord, with a face and a hand, and a seat on his horse, that might become a king's son. D'ye ken that he aye glowers up at my window, Mr. Balderstone, when he chaunces to ride thro' the town? Sae I hae a right to ken what like he is, as weel as ony body."

"I ken that brawly," said Caleb, "for I hae heard his lordship say the cooper's wife had the blackest ee in the barony; and I said, 'Weel may that be, my lord, for it was her mither's afore her, as I ken to my cost.' Eh, Marion? Ha, ha, ha! Ah! these were merry days!"

"Hout awa', auld carle," said the old dame, "to speak sic daffing to young folk. But, Jean—fie, woman, dinna ye hear the bairn greet? I'se warrant it's that dreary weid has come ower't again."

Up got mother and grandmother, and scoured away, jostling each other as they ran, into some remote corner of the tenement, where the young hero of the evening was deposited. When Caleb saw the coast fairly clear, he took an invigorating pinch of snuff, to sharpen and confirm his resolution.

"Cauld be my cast," thought he, "if either Bide-the-Bent or Girder taste that broach of wild-fowl this evening"; and then addressing the eldest turnspit, a boy of about eleven years old, and putting a penny into his hand, he said, "Here is twal pennies, my man; carry that ower to Mrs. Sma'trash, and bid her fill my mill wi' snishing, and I'll turn the broche for ye in the mean time; and she will gie ye a ginge-bread snap for your pains."

No sooner was the elder boy departed on this mission than Caleb, looking the remaining turnspit gravely and steadily in the face, removed from the fire the spit bearing the wild-fowl of which he had undertaken the charge, clapped his hat on his head, and fairly marched off with it, he stopped at the door of the change-house only to say, in a few brief words, that Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw was not to expect a bed that evening in the castle.

If this message was too briefly delivered by Caleb, it became absolute rudeness when conveyed through the medium of a suburb landlady; and Bucklaw was, as a more calm and temperate man might have been, highly incensed. Captain Craigengelt proposed, with the unanimous applause of all present, that they should course the old fox (meaning Caleb) ere he got to cover, and toss him in a blanket. But Lockhard intimated to his master's servants and those of Lord Bittlebrains, in a tone of authority, that the slightest impertinence to the Master of Ravenswood's domestic would give Sir William Ashton the highest offence. And having so said, in a manner sufficient to prevent any aggression on their part, he left the public-house, taking along with him two servants loaded with such provisions as he had been able to procure, and overtook Caleb just when he had cleared the village.

CHAPTER XIII.

Should I take aught of you? 'Tis true I begged now;

And what is worse than that, I stole a kindness;

And, what is worst of all, I lost my way in't.

Wit Without Money.

THE face of the little boy, sole witness of Caleb's infringement upon the laws at once of property and hospitality, would have made a good picture. He sat motionless, as if he had witnessed some of the spectral appearances which he had heard told of in a winter's evening; and as he forgot his own duty, and allowed his spit to stand still, he added to the misfortunes of the evening by suffering the mutton to burn as black as a coal. He was first recalled from his trance of astonishment by a hearty cuff administered by Dame Lightbody, who, in whatever other respects she might conform to her name, was a woman strong of person, and expert in the use of her hands, as some say her deceased husband had known to his cost.

"What garr'd ye let the roast burn, ye ill-clerkit gude-for-nought?"

"I dinna ken," said the boy.

"And where's that ill-deedy gett, Giles?"

"I dinna ken," blubbered the astonished declarant.

"And where's Mr. Balderstone?—and abune a', and in the name of council and kirk-session, that I suld say sae, where's the broche wi' the wild-fowl?" As Mrs. Girder here entered, and joined her mother's exclamations, screaming into one ear while the old lady deafened the other, they succeeded in so utterly confounding the unhappy urchin, that he could not for some time tell his story at all, and it was only when the elder boy returned that the truth began to dawn on their minds.

"Weel, sirs!" said Mrs. Lightbody, "wha wad hae thought o' Caleb Balderstone playing an auld acquaintance sic a pliskie!"

"Oh, weary on him!" said the spouse of Mr. Girder; "and what am I to say to the gudeman? He'll brain me, if there wasna anither woman in a' Wolf's Hope."

"Hout tout, silly quean," said the mother; "na, na, it's come to muckle, but it's no come to that neither; for an he brain you he maun brain me, and I have garr'd his betters stand back. Hands aff is fair play; we maunna heed a bit flying."

The tramp of horses now announced the arrival of the cooper, with the minister. They had no sooner dismounted than they made for the kitchen fire, for the evening was cool after the thunderstorm, and the woods wet and dirty. The young gudewife, strong in the charms of her Sunday gown and biggonets, threw herself in the way of receiving the first attack, while her mother, like the veteran division of the Roman legion, remained in the rear, ready to support her in case of necessity. Both hoped to protract the discovery of what had happened—the mother, by interposing her bustling person betwixt Mr. Girder and the fire, and the daughter, by the extreme cordiality with which she received the minister and her husband, and the anxious fears which she expressed lest they should have "gotten cauld." "Cauld!" quoted the husband, surlily, for he was not of that class of lords and masters whose wives are viceroys over them, "we'll be cauld eneugh, I think, if ye dinna let us in to the fire."

And so saying, he burst his way through both lines of defence; and, as he had a careful eye over his property of every kind, he perceived at one glance the absence of the spit with its savoury burden. "What the deil, woman——"

"Fie for shame!" exclaimed both the women; "and before Mr. Bide-the-Bent!"

"I stand reproved," said the cooper; "but——"

"The taking in our mouths the name of the great enemy of our souls," said Mr. Bide-the-Bent——

"I stand reproved," said the cooper.

"——Is an exposing ourselves to his temptations," continued the reverend monitor, "and in inviting, or, in some sort, a compelling, of him to lay aside his other trafficking with unhappy persons, and wait upon those in whose speech his name is frequent."

"Weel, weel, Mr. Bide-the-Bent, can a man do mair than stand reproved?" said the cooper; "but jest let me ask the women what for they hae dished the wild-fowl before we came."

"They arena dished, Gilbert," said his wife; "but—but an accident——"

"What accident?" said Girder, with flashing eyes. "Nae ill come ower them, I trust? Uh?"

His wife, who stood much in awe of him, durst not reply, but her mother bustled up to her support, with arms disposed as if they were about to be a-kimbo at the next reply.——"I gied them to an acquaintance of mine, Gibbie Girder; and what about it now?"

Her excess of assurance struck Girder mute for an instant. "And YE gied the wild-fowl, the best end of our christening dinner, to a friend of yours, ye auld rudas! And what might HIS name be, I pray ye?"

"Just worthy Mr. Caleb Balderstone——frae Wolf's Crag," answered Marion, prompt and prepared for battle.

Girder's wrath foamed over all restraint. If there was a circumstance which could have added to the resentment he felt, it was that this extravagant donation had been made in favour of our friend Caleb, towards whom, for reasons to which the reader is no stranger, he nourished a decided resentment. He raised his riding-wand against the elder matron, but she stood firm, collected in herself, and undauntedly brandished the iron ladle with which she had just been "flaming" (Anglice, basting) the roast of mutton. Her weapon was certainly the better, and her arm not the weakest of the two; so that Gilbert thought it safest to turn short off upon his wife, who had by this time hatched a sort of hysterical whine, which greatly moved the minister, who was in fact as simple and kind-hearted a creature as ever breathed. "And you, ye thowless jade, to sit still and see my substance disposed upon to an idle, drunken, reprobate, worm-eaten serving-man, just because he kittles the lugs o' a silly auld wife wi' useless clavers, and every twa words a lee? I'll gar ye as gude——"

Here the minister interposed, both by voice and action, while Dame Lightbody threw herself in front of her daughter, and flourished her ladle.

"Am I no to chastise my ain wife?" exclaimed the cooper very indignantly.

"Ye may chastise your ain wife if ye like," answered Dame Lightbody; "but ye shall never lay finger on my daughter, and that ye may found upon." "For shame, Mr. Girder!" said the clergyman; "this is what I little expected to have seen of you, that you suld give rein to your sinful passions against your nearest and your dearest, and this night too, when ye are called to the most solemn duty of a Christian parent; and a' for what? For a redundancy of creature-comforts, as worthless as they are unneedful."

"Worthless!" exclaimed the cooper. "A better guse never walkit on stubble; two finer, dentier wild ducks never wat a feather."

"Be it sae, neighbour," rejoined the minister; "but see what superfluities are yet revolving before your fire. I have seen the day when ten of the bannocks which stand upon that board would have been an acceptable dainty to as many men, that were starving on hills and bogs, and in caves of the earth, for the Gospel's sake."

"And that's what vexes me maist of a'," said the cooper, anxious to get some one to sympathise with his not altogether causeless anger; "an the quean had gien it to ony suffering sant, or to ony body ava but that reaving, lying, oppressing Tory villain, that rade in the wicked troop of militia when it was commanded out against the sants at Bothwell Brig by the auld tyrant Allan Ravenswood, that is gane to his place, I wad the less hae minded it. But to gie the principal parts o' the feast to the like o' him——!"

"Aweel, Gilbert," said the minister, "and dinna ye see a high judgment in this? The seed of the righteous are not seen begging their bread: think of the son of a powerful oppressor being brought to the pass of supporting his household from your fulness."

"And, besides," said the wife, "it wasna for Lord Ravenswood neither, an he wad hear but a body speak: it was to help to entertain the Lord Keeper, as they ca' him, that's up yonder at Wolf's Crag."

"Sir William Ashton at Wolf's Crag!" ejaculated the astonished man of hoops and staves.

"And hand and glove wi' Lord Ravenswood," added Dame Lightbody.

"Doited idiot! that auld, clavering sneckdrawer wad gar ye throw the moon is made of green cheese. The Lord Keeper and Ravenswood! they are cat and dog, hare and hound."

"I tell ye they are man and wife, and gree better than some others that are sae," retorted the mother-in-law; "forbye, Peter Puncheon, that's cooper the Queen's stores, is dead, and the place is to fill, and——"

"Od guide us, wull ye haud your skirling tongues!" said Girder,—for we are to remark, that this explanation was given like a catch for two voices, the younger dame, much encouraged by the turn of the debate, taking up and repeating in a higher tone the words as fast as they were uttered by her mother.

"The gudewife says naething but what's true, maister," said Girder's foreman, who had come in during the fray. "I saw the Lord Keeper's servants drinking and driving ower at Luckie Sma'trash's, ower-bye yonder."

"And is their maister up at Wolf's Crag?" said Girder.

"Ay, troth is he," replied his man of confidence.

"And friends wi' Ravenswood?"

"It's like sae," answered the foreman, "since he is putting up wi' him."

"And Peter Puncheon's dead?"

"Ay, ay, Puncheon has leaked out at last, the auld carle," said the foreman; "mony a dribble o' brandy has gaen through him in his day. But as for the broche and the wild-fowl, the saddle's no aff your mare yet, maister, and I could follow and bring it back, for Mr. Balderstone's no far aff the town yet."

"Do sae, Will; and come here, I'll tell ye what to do when ye overtake him."

He relieved the females of his presence, and gave Will his private instructions.

"A bonny-like thing," said the mother-in-law, as the cooper re-entered the apartment, "to send the innocent lad after an armed man, when ye ken Mr. Balderstone aye wears a rapier, and whiles a dirk into the bargain."

"I trust," said the minister, "ye have reflected weel on what ye have done, lest you should minister cause of strife, of which it is my duty to say, he who affordeth matter, albeit he himself striketh not, is in no manner guiltless."

"Never fash your beard, Mr. Bide-the-Bent," replied Girder; "ane canna get their breath out here between wives and ministers. I ken best how to turn my ain cake. Jean, serve up the dinner, and nae mair about it."

Nor did he again allude to the deficiency in the course of the evening.

Meantime, the foreman, mounted on his master's steed, and charged with his special orders, pricked swiftly forth in pursuit of the marauder Caleb. That personage, it may be imagined, did not linger by the way. He intermitted even his dearly-beloved chatter, for the purpose of making more haste, only assuring Mr. Lockhard that he had made the purveyor's wife give the wild-fowl a few turns before the fire, in case that Mysie, who had been so much alarmed by the thunder, should not have her kitchen-grate in full splendour. Meanwhile, alleging the necessity of being at Wolf's Crag as soon as possible, he pushed on so fast that his companions could scarce keep up with him. He began already to think he was safe from pursuit, having gained the summit of the swelling eminence which divides Wolf's Crag from the village, when he heard the distant tread of a horse, and a voice which shouted at intervals, "Mr. Caleb—Mr. Balderstone—Mr. Caleb Balderstone—hollo—bide a wee!"

Caleb, it may be well believed, was in no hurry to acknowledge the summons. First, he would not heart it, and faced his companions down, that it was the echo of the wind; then he said it was not worth stopping for; and, at length, halting reluctantly, as the figure of the horseman appeared through the shades of the evening, he bent up his whole soul to the task of defending his prey, threw himself into an attitude of dignity, advanced the spit, which is his grasp might with its burden seem both spear and shield, and firmly resolved to die rather than surrender it.

What was his astonishment, when the cooper's foreman, riding up and addressing him with respect, told him: "His master was very sorry he was absent when he came to his dwelling, and grieved that he could not tarry the christening dinner; and that he had taen the freedom to send a sma' runlet of sack, and ane anker of brandy, as he understood there were guests at the castle, and that they were short of preparation."

I have heard somewhere a story of an elderly gentleman who was pursued by a bear that had gotten loose from its muzzle, until completely exhausted. In a fit of desperation, he faced round upon Bruin and lifted his cane; at the sight of which the instinct of discipline prevailed, and the animal, instead of tearing him to pieces, rose up upon his hind-legs and instantly began to shuffle a saraband. Not less than the joyful surprise of the senior, who had supposed himself in the extremity of peril from which he was thus unexpectedly relieved, was that of our excellent friend Caleb, when he found the pursuer intended to add to his prize, instead of bereaving him of it. He recovered his latitude, however, instantly, so soon as the foreman, stooping from his nag, where he sate perched betwixt the two barrels, whispered in his ear: "If ony thing about Peter Puncheon's place could be airted their way, John [Gibbie] Girder wad mak it better to the Master of Ravenswood than a pair of new gloves; and that he wad be blythe to speak wi' Maister Balderstone on that head, and he wad find him as pliant as a hoop-willow in a' that he could wish of him."

Caleb heard all this without rendering any answer, except that of all great men from Louis XIV. downwards, namely, "We will see about it"; and then added aloud, for the edification of Mr. Lockhard: "Your master has acted with becoming civility and attention in forwarding the liquors, and I will not fail to represent it properly to my Lord Ravenswood. And, my lad," he said, "you may ride on to the castle, and if none of the servants are returned, whilk is to be dreaded, as they make day and night of it when they are out of sight, ye may put them into the porter's lodge, whilk is on the right hand of the great entry; the porter has got leave to go to see his friends, sae ye will met no ane to steer ye."

The foreman, having received his orders, rode on; and having deposited the casks in the deserted and ruinous porter's lodge, he returned unquestioned by any one. Having thus executed his master's commission, and doffed his bonnet to Caleb and his company as he repassed them in his way to the village, he returned to have his share of the christening festivity.

CHAPTER XIV.

*As, to the Autumn breeze's bugle sound,
Various and vague the dry leaves dance their round;
Or, from the garner-door, on ether borne,
The chaff flies devious from the winnow'd corn;
So vague, so devious, at the breath of heaven,
From their fix'd aim are mortal counsels driv'n.*

Anonymous.

WE left Caleb Balderstone in the extremity of triumph at the success of his various achievements for the honour of the house of Ravenswood. When he had mustered and marshalled his dishes of divers kinds, a more royal provision had not been seen in Wolf's Crag since the funeral feast of its deceased lord. Great was the glory of the serving-man, as he "decored" the old oaken table with a clean cloth, and arranged upon it carbonaded venison and roasted wild-fowl, with a glance, every now and then, as if to upbraid the incredulity of his master and his guests; and with many a story, more or less true, was Lockhard that evening regaled concerning the ancient grandeur of Wolf's Crag, and the sway of its barons over the country in their neighbourhood.

"A vassal scarce held a calf or a lamb his ain, till he had first asked if the Lord of Ravenswood was pleased to accept it; and they were obliged to ask the lord's consent before they married in these days, and mony a merry tale they tell about that right as weel as others. And although," said Caleb, "these times are not like the gude auld times, when authority had its right, yet true it is, Mr. Lockhard, and you yoursell may partly have remarked, that we of the house of Ravenswood do our endeavour in keeping up, by all just and lawful exertion of our baronial authority, that due and fitting connexion betwixt superior and vassal, whilk is in some danger of falling into desuetude, owing to the general license and misrule of these present unhappy times."

"Umph!" said Mr. Lockhard; "and if I may inquire, Mr. Balderstone, pray do you find your people at the village yonder amenable? for I must needs say, that at Ravenswood Castle, now pertaining to my master the Lord Keeper, ye have not left behind ye the most compliant set of tenantry."

"Ah! but Mr. Lockhard," replied Caleb, "ye must consider there has been a change of hands, and the auld lord might expect twa turns frae them, when the new-comer canna get ane. A dour and fractious set they were, thae tenants of Ravenswood, and ill to live wi' when they dinna ken their master; and if your master put them mad ance, the whole country will not put them down."

"Troth," said Mr. Lockhard, "an such be the case, I think the wisest thing for us a' wad be to hammer up a match between your young lord and our winsome young leddy up-bye there; and Sir William might just stitch your auld barony to her gown-sleeve, and he wad sune cuitle another out o' somebody else, sic a lang head as he has."

Caleb shook his head. "I wish," he said—"I wish that may answer, Mr. Lockhard. There are auld prophecies about this house I wad like ill to see fulfilled wi' my auld een, that has seen evil enough already."

"Pshaw! never mind freits," said his brother butler; "if the young folk liked ane anither, they wad make a winsome couple. But, to say truth, there is a leddy sits in our hall-neuk, maun have her hand in that as weel as in every other job. But there's no harm in drinking to their healths, and I will fill Mrs. Mysie a cup of Mr. Girder's canary."

While they thus enjoyed themselves in the kitchen, the company in the hall were not less pleasantly engaged. So soon as Ravenswood had determined upon giving the Lord Keeper such hospitality as he had to offer, he deemed it incumbent on him to assume the open and courteous brow of a well-pleased host. It has

been often remarked, that when a man commences by acting a character, he frequently ends by adopting it in good earnest. In the course of an hour or two, Ravenswood, to his own surprise, found himself in the situation of one who frankly does his best to entertain welcome and honoured guests. How much of this change in his disposition was to be ascribed to the beauty and simplicity of Miss Ashton, to the readiness with which she accommodated herself to the inconveniences of her situation; how much to the smooth and plausible conversation of the Lord Keeper, remarkably gifted with those words which win the ear, must be left to the reader's ingenuity to conjecture. But Ravenswood was insensible to neither.

The Lord Keeper was a veteran statesman, well acquainted with courts and cabinets, and intimate with all the various turns of public affairs during the last eventful years of the 17th century. He could talk, from his own knowledge, of men and events, in a way which failed not to win attention, and had the peculiar art, while he never said a word which committed himself, at the same time to persuade the hearer that he was speaking without the least shadow of scrupulous caution or reserve. Ravenswood, in spite of his prejudices and real grounds of resentment, felt himself at once amused and instructed in listening to him, while the statesman, whose inward feelings had at first so much impeded his efforts to make himself known, had now regained all the ease and fluency of a silver-tongued lawyer of the very highest order.

His daughter did not speak much, but she smiled; and what she did say argued a submissive gentleness, and a desire to give pleasure, which, to a proud man like Ravenswood, was more fascinating than the most brilliant wit. Above all, he could not but observe that, whether from gratitude or from some other motive, he himself, in his deserted and unprovided hall, was as much the object of respectful attention to his guests as he would have been when surrounded by all the appliances and means of hospitality proper to his high birth. All deficiencies passed unobserved, or, if they did not escape notice, it was to praise the substitutes which Caleb had contrived to supply the want of the usual accommodations. Where a smile was unavoidable, it was a very good-humoured one, and often coupled with some well-turned compliment, to show how much the guests esteemed the merits of their noble host, how little they thought of the inconveniences with which they were surrounded. I am not sure whether the pride of being found to outbalance, in virtue of his own personal merit, all the disadvantages of fortune, did not make as favourable an impression upon the haughty heart of the Master of Ravenswood as the conversation of the father and the beauty of Lucy Ashton.

The hour of repose arrived. The Keeper and his daughter retired to their apartments, which were "decored" more properly than could have been anticipated. In making the necessary arrangements, Mysie had indeed enjoyed the assistance of a gossip who had arrived from the village upon an exploratory expedition, but had been arrested by Caleb, and impressed into the domestic drudgery of the evening; so that, instead of returning home to describe the dress and person of the grand young lady, she found herself compelled to be active in the domestic economy of Wolf's Crag.

According to the custom of the time, the Master of Ravenswood attended the Lord Keeper to his apartment, followed by Caleb, who placed on the table, with all the ceremonials due to torches of wax, two rudely-framed tallow-candles, such as in those days were only used by the peasantry, hooped in paltry clasps of wire, which served for candlesticks. He then disappeared, and presently entered with two earthen flagons (the china, he said, had been little used since my lady's time), one filled with canary wine, the other with brandy. The canary sack, unheeding all probabilities of detection, he declared had been twenty years in the cellars of Wolf's Crag, "though it was not for him to speak before their honours; the brandy—it was weel-kenn'd liquor, as mild as mead and as strong as Sampson; it had been in the house ever since the memorable revel, in which auld Micklestob had been slain at the head of the stair by Jamie of Jenklebrae, on account of the honour of the worshipful Lady Muirend, who was in some sort an ally of the family; nathelless——"

"But to cut that matter short, Mr. Caleb," said the Keeper, "perhaps you will favour me with a ewer of water."

"God forbid your lordship should drink water in this family," replied Caleb, "to the disgrace of so honourable an house!"

"Nevertheless, if his lordship have a fancy," said the Master, smiling, "I think you might indulge him; for, if I mistake not, there has been water drank here at no distant date, and with good relish too."

"To be sure, if his lordship has a fancy," said Caleb; and re-entering with a jug of pure element—"He will scarce find such water anywhere as is drawn frae the well at Wolf's Crag; nevertheless——"

"Nevertheless, we must leave the Lord Keeper to his repose in this poor chamber of ours," said the Master of Ravenswood, interrupting his talkative domestic, who immediately turning to the doorway, with a profound reverence, prepared to usher his master from the secret chamber.

But the Lord Keeper prevented his host's departure—"I have but one word to say to the Master of Ravenswood, Mr. Caleb, and I fancy he will excuse your waiting."

With a second reverence, lower than the former, Caleb withdrew; and his master stood motionless, expecting, with considerable embarrassment, what was to close the events of a day fraught with unexpected incidents.

"Master of Ravenswood," said Sir William Ashton, with some embarrassment, "I hope you understand the Christian law too well to suffer the sun to set upon your anger."

The Master blushed and replied, "He had no occasion that evening to exercise the duty enjoined upon him by his Christian faith."

"I should have thought otherwise," said his guest, "considering the various subjects of dispute and litigation which have unhappily occurred more frequently than was desirable or necessary betwixt the late honourable lord, your father, and myself."

"I could wish, my lord," said Ravenswood, agitated by suppressed emotion, "that reference to these circumstances should be made anywhere rather than under my father's roof."

"I should have felt the delicacy of this appeal at another time," said Sir William Ashton, "but now I must proceed with what I mean to say. I have suffered too much in my own mind, from the false delicacy which prevented my soliciting with earnestness, what indeed I frequently requested, a personal communing with your father: much distress of mind to him and to me might have been prevented."

"It is true," said Ravenswood, after a moment's reflection, "I have heard my father say your lordship had proposed a personal interview."

"Proposed, my dear Master? I did indeed propose it; but I ought to have begged, entreated, beseeched it. I ought to have torn away the veil, which interested persons had stretched betwixt us, and shown myself as I was, willing to sacrifice a considerable part even of my legal rights, in order to conciliate feelings so natural as his must be allowed to have been. Let me say for myself, my young friend, for so I will call you, that had your father and I spent the same time together which my good fortune has allowed me to-day to pass in your company, it is possible the land might yet have enjoyed one of the most respectable of its ancient nobility, and I should have been spared the pain of parting in enmity from a person whose general character I so much admired and honoured."

He put his handkerchief to his eyes. Ravenswood also was moved, but awaited in silence the progress of this extraordinary communication.

"It is necessary," continued the Lord Keeper, "and proper that you should understand, that there have been many points betwixt us, in which, although I judged it proper that there should be an exact ascertainment of my legal rights by the decree of a court of justice, yet it was never my intention to press them beyond the verge of equity."

"My lord," said the Master of Ravenswood, "it is unnecessary to pursue this topic farther. What the law will give you, or has given you, you enjoy—or you shall enjoy; neither my father nor I myself would have received anything on the footing of favour."

"Favour! No, you misunderstand me," resumed the Keeper; "or rather you are no lawyer. A right may be good in law, and ascertained to be so, which yet a man of honour may not in every case care to avail himself of."

"I am sorry for it, my lord," said the Master.

"Nay, nay," retorted his guest, "you speak like a young counsellor; your spirit goes before your wit. There are many things still open for decision betwixt us. Can you blame me, an old man desirous of peace, and in the castle of a young nobleman who has saved my daughter's life and my own, that I am desirous, anxiously desirous, that these should be settled on the most liberal principles?" The old man kept fast hold of the Master's passive hand as he spoke, and made it

impossible for him, be his predetermination what it would, to return any other than an acquiescent reply; and wishing his guest goodnight, he postponed farther conference until the next morning.

Ravenswood hurried into the hall, where he was to spend the night, and for a time traversed its pavement with a disordered and rapid pace. His mortal foe was under his roof, yet his sentiments towards him were neither those of a feudal enemy nor of a true Christian. He felt as if he could neither forgive him in the one character, nor follow forth his vengeance in the other, but that he was making a base and dishonourable composition betwixt his resentment against the father and his affection for his daughter. He cursed himself, as he hurried to and fro in the pale moonlight, and more ruddy gleams of the expiring wood-fire. He threw open and shut the latticed windows with violence, as if alike impatient of the admission and exclusion of free air. At length, however, the torrent of passion foamed off its madness, and he flung himself into the chair which he proposed as his place of repose for the night.

"If, in reality," such were the calmer thoughts that followed the first tempest of his passion—"if, in reality, this man desires no more than the law allows him—if he is willing to adjust even his acknowledged rights upon an equitable footing, what could be my father's cause of complaint?—what is mine? Those from who we won our ancient possessions fell under the sword of my ancestors, and left lands and livings to the conquerors; we sink under the force of the law, now too powerful for the Scottish cavalry. Let us parley with the victors of the day, as if we had been besieged in our fortress, and without hope of relief. This man may be other than I have thought him; and his daughter—but I have resolved not to think of her."

He wrapt his cloak around him, fell asleep, and dreamed of Lucy Ashton till daylight gleamed through the lattices.

CHAPTER XV.

*We worldly men, when we see friends and kinsmen
Past hope sunk in their fortunes, lend no hand
To lift them up, but rather set our feet
Upon their heads to press them to the bottom,
As I must yield with you I practised it;
But now I see you in a way to rise,
I can and will assist you.*

New Way to Pay Old Debts.

THE Lord Keeper carried with him, to a couch harder than he was accustomed to stretch himself upon, the same ambitious thoughts and political perplexities which drive sleep from the softest down that ever spread a bed of state. He had sailed long enough amid the contending tides and currents of the time to be sensible of their peril, and of the necessity of trimming his vessel to the prevailing wind, if he would have her escape shipwreck in the storm. The nature of his talents, and the timorousness of disposition connected with them, had made him assume the pliability of the versatile old Earl of Northampton, who explained the art by which he kept his ground during all the changes of state, from the reign of Henry VIII. to that of Elizabeth, by the frank avowal, that he was born of the willow, not of the oak. It had accordingly been Sir William Ashton's policy, on all occasions, to watch the changes in the political horizon, and, ere yet the conflict was decided, to negotiate some interest for himself with the party most likely to prove victorious. His time-serving disposition was well-known, and excited the contempt of the more daring leaders of both factions in the state. But his talents were of a useful and practical kind, and his legal knowledge held in high estimation; and they so far counterbalanced other deficiencies that those in power were glad to use and to reward, though without absolutely trusting or greatly respecting, him.

The Marquis of A—— had used his utmost influence to effect a change in the Scottish cabinet, and his schemes had been of late so well laid and so ably supported, that there appeared a very great chance of his proving ultimately successful. He did not, however, feel so strong or so confident as to neglect any means of drawing recruits to his standard. The acquisition of the Lord Keeper was deemed of some importance, and a friend, perfectly acquainted with his circumstances and character, became responsible for his political conversion.

When this gentleman arrived at Ravenswood Castle upon a visit, the real purpose of which was disguised under general courtesy, he found the prevailing fear which at present beset the Lord Keeper was that of danger to his own person from the Master of Ravenswood. The language which the blind sibyl, Old Alice, had used; the sudden appearance of the Master, armed, and within his precincts, immediately after he had been warned against danger from him; the cold and haughty return received in exchange for the acknowledgments with which he loaded him for his timely protection, had all made a strong impression on his imagination.

So soon as the Marquis's political agent found how the wind sate, he began to insinuate fears and doubts of another kind, scarce less calculated to affect the Lord Keeper. He inquired with seeming interest, whether the proceedings in Sir William's complicated litigation with the Ravenswood family were out of court, and settled without the possibility of appeal. The Lord Keeper answered in the affirmative; but his interrogator was too well informed to be imposed upon. He pointed out to him, by unanswerable arguments, that some of the most important points which had been decided in his favour against the house of Ravenswood were liable, under the Treaty of Union, to be reviewed by the British House of Peers, a court of equity of which the Lord Keeper felt an instinctive dread. This course came instead of an appeal to the old Scottish Parliament, or, as it was technically termed, "a protestation for remeid in law."

The Lord Keeper, after he had for some time disputed the legality of such a proceeding, was compelled, at length, to comfort himself with the improbability of the young Master of Ravenswood's finding friends in parliament capable of stirring in so weighty an affair.

"Do not comfort yourself with that false hope," said his wily friend; "it is possible that, in the next session of Parliament, young Ravenswood may find more friends and favour even than your lordship."

"That would be a sight worth seeing," said the Keeper, scornfully.

"And yet," said his friend, "such things have been seen ere now, and in our own time. There are many at the head of affairs even now that a few years ago were under hiding for their lives; and many a man now dines on plate of silver that was fain to eat his crowdy without a bicker; and many a high head has been brought full low among us in as short a space. Scott of Scotsarvet's Staggering State of Scots Statesmen, of which curious memoir you showed me a manuscript, has been outstaggered in our time."

The Lord Keeper answered with a deep sigh, "That these mutations were no new sights in Scotland, and had been witnessed long before the time of the satirical author he had quoted. It was many a long year," he said, "since Fordun had quoted as an ancient proverb, 'Neque dives, neque fortis, sed nec sapiens Scotus, praeponderante invidia, diu durabit in terra.'"

"And be assured, my esteemed friend," was the answer, "that even your long services to the state, or deep legal knowledge, will not save you, or render your estate stable, if the Marquis of A—— comes in with a party in the British Parliament. You know that the deceased Lord Ravenswood was his near ally, his lady being fifth in descent from the Knight of Tillibardine; and I am well assured that he will take young Ravenswood by the hand, and be his very good lord and kinsman. Why should he not? The Master is an active and stirring young fellow, able to help himself with tongue and hands; and it is such as he that finds friends among their kindred, and not those unarmed and unable Mephibosheths that are sure to be a burden to every one that takes them up. And so, if these Ravenswood cases be called over the coals in the House of Peers, you will find that the Marquis will have a crow to pluck with you."

"That would be an evil requital," said the Lord Keeper, "for my long services to the state, and the ancient respect in which I have held his lordship's honourable family and person."

"Ay, but," rejoined the agent of the Marquis, "it is in vain to look back on past service and auld respect, my lord; it will be present service and immediate proofs of regard which, in these sliddery times, will be expected by a man like the Marquis."

The Lord Keeper now saw the full drift of his friend's argument, but he was too cautious to return any positive answer.

"He knew not," he said, "the service which the Lord Marquis could expect from one of his limited abilities, that had not always stood at his command, still saving and reserving his duty to his king and country."

Having thus said nothing, while he seemed to say everything, for the exception was calculated to cover whatever he might afterwards think proper to bring under it, Sir William Ashton changed the conversation, nor did he again permit the same topic to be introduced. His guest departed, without having brought the wily old statesman the length of committing himself, or of pledging himself to any future line of conduct, but with the certainty that he had alarmed his fears in a most sensible point, and laid a foundation for future and farther treaty.

When he rendered an account of his negotiation to the Marquis, they both agreed that the Keeper ought not to be permitted to relapse into security, and that he should be plied with new subjects of alarm, especially during the absence of his lady. They were well aware that her proud, vindictive, and predominating spirit would be likely to supply him with the courage in which he was deficient; that she was immovably attached to the party now in power, with whom she maintained a close correspondence and alliance; and that she hated, without fearing, the Ravenswood family (whose more ancient dignity threw discredit on the newly acquired grandeur of her husband) to such a degree that she would have perilled the interest of her own house to have the prospect of altogether crushing that of her enemy.

But Lady Ashton was now absent. The business which had long detained her in Edinburgh had afterwards induced her to travel to London, not without the hope that she might contribute her share to disconcert the intrigues of the Marquis at court; for she stood high in favour with the celebrated Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, to whom, in point of character, she bore considerable resemblance. It was necessary to press her husband hard before her return; and, as a preparatory step, the Marquis wrote to the Master of Ravenswood the letter which we rehearsed in a former chapter. It was cautiously worded, so as to leave it in the power of the writer hereafter to take as deep or as slight an interest in the fortunes of his kinsmen as the progress of his own schemes might require. But however unwilling, as a statesman, the Marquis might be to commit himself, or assume the character of a patron, while he had nothing to give away, it must be said to his honour that he felt a strong inclination effectually to befriend the Master of Ravenswood, as well as to use his name as a means of alarming the terrors of the Lord Keeper.

As the messenger who carried this letter was to pass near the house of the Lord Keeper, he had it in direction that, in the village adjoining to the park-gate of the castle, his horse should lose a shoe, and that, while it was replaced by the smith of the place, he should express the utmost regret for the necessary loss of time, and in the vehemence of his impatience give it to be understood that he was bearing a message from the Marquis of A—— to the Master of Ravenswood upon a matter of life and death.

This news, with exaggerations, was speedily carried from various quarters to the ears of the Lord Keeper, and each reporter dwelt upon the extreme impatience of the courier, and the surprising short time in which he had executed his journey. The anxious statesman heard in silence; but in private Lockhard received orders to watch the courier on his return, to waylay him in the village, to ply him with liquor, if possible, and to use all means, fair or foul, to learn the contents of the letter of which he was the bearer. But as this plot had been foreseen, the messenger returned by a different and distant road, and thus escaped the snare that was laid for him.

After he had been in vain expected for some time, Mr. Dingwall had orders to make especial inquiry among his clients of Wolf's Hope, whether such a domestic belonging to the Marquis of A—— had actually arrived at the neighbouring castle. This was easily ascertained; for Caleb had been in the village one morning by five o'clock, to borrow "two chappins of ale and a kipper" for the messenger's refreshment, and the poor fellow had been ill for twenty-four hours at Luckie Sma'trash's, in consequence of dining upon "saut saumon and sour drink." So that the existence of a correspondence betwixt the Marquis and his distressed kinsman, which Sir William Ashton had sometimes treated as a bugbear, was proved beyond the possibility of further doubt.

The alarm of the Lord Keeper became very serious; since the Claim of Right, the power of appealing from the decisions of the civil court to the Estates of Parliament, which had formerly been held incompetent, had in many instances been claimed, and in some allowed, and he had no small reason to apprehend the issue, if the English House of Lords should be disposed to act upon an appeal from the Master of Ravenswood "for remeid in law." It would resolve into an equitable claim, and be decided, perhaps, upon the broad principles of justice, which were not quite so favourable to the Lord Keeper as those of strict law. Besides, judging, though most inaccurately, from courts which he had himself known in the unhappy times preceding the Scottish Union, the Keeper might have too much right to think that, in the House to which his lawsuits were to be transferred, the old maxim might prevail which was too well recognised in Scotland in former times: "Show me the man, and I'll show you the law." The high and unbiased character of English judicial proceedings was then little known in Scotland, and the extension of them to that country was one of the most valuable advantages which it gained by the Union. But this was a blessing which the Lord Keeper, who had lived under another system, could not have the means of foreseeing. In the loss of his political consequence, he anticipated the loss of his lawsuit. Meanwhile, every report which reached him served to render the success of the Marquis's intrigues the more probable, and the Lord Keeper began to think it indispensable that he should look round for some kind of protection against the coming storm. The timidity of his temper induced him to adopt measures of compromise and conciliation. The affair of the wild bull, properly managed, might, he thought, be made to facilitate a personal communication and reconciliation betwixt the Master and himself. He would then learn, if possible, what his own ideas were of the extent of his rights, and the means of enforcing them; and perhaps matters might be brought to a compromise, where one party was wealthy and the other so very poor. A reconciliation with Ravenswood was likely to give him an opportunity to play his own game with the Marquis of A——. "And besides," said he to himself, "it will be an act of generosity to raise up the heir of this distressed family; and if he is to be warmly and effectually befriended by the new government, who knows but my virtue may prove its own reward?"

Thus thought Sir William Ashton, covering with no unusual self-delusion his interested views with a hue of virtue; and having attained this point, his fancy strayed still farther. He began to bethink himself, "That if Ravenswood was to have a distinguished place of power and trust, and if such a union would sopite the heavier part of his unadjusted claims, there might be worse matches for his daughter Lucy: the Master might be reponed against the attainder. Lord Ravenswood was an ancient title, and the alliance would, in some measure, legitimate his own possession of the greater part of the Master's spoils, and make the surrender of the rest a subject of less bitter regret."

With these mingled and multifarious plans occupying his head, the Lord Keeper availed himself of my Lord Bittlebrains's repeated invitation to his residence, and thus came within a very few miles of Wolf's Crag. Here he found the lord of the mansion absent, but was courteously received by the lady, who expected her husband's immediate return. She expressed her particular delight at seeing Miss Ashton, and appointed the hounds to be taken out for the Lord Keeper's special amusement. He readily entered into the proposal, as giving him an opportunity to reconnoitre Wolf's Crag, and perhaps to make some acquaintance with the owner, if he should be tempted from his desolate mansion by the chase. Lockhard had his orders to endeavour on his part to make some acquaintance with the inmates of the castle, and we have seen how he played his part.

The accidental storm did more to further the Lord Keeper's plan of forming a personal acquaintance with young Ravenswood than his most sanguine expectations could have anticipated. His fear of the young nobleman's personal resentment had greatly decreased since he considered him as formidable from his legal claims and the means he might have of enforcing them. But although he thought, not unreasonably, that only desperate circumstances drove men on desperate measures, it was not without a secret terror, which shook his heart within him, that he first felt himself inclosed within the desolate Tower of Wolf's Crag; a place so well fitted, from solitude and strength, to be a scene of violence and vengeance. The stern reception at first given to them by the Master of Ravenswood, and the difficulty he felt in explaining to that injured nobleman what guests were under the shelter of his roof, did not soothe these alarms; so that when Sir William Ashton heard the door of the courtyard shut behind him with violence, the words of Alice rung in his ears, "That he had drawn on matters too hardly with so fierce a race as those of Ravenswood, and that they would bide their time to be avenged."

The subsequent frankness of the Master's hospitality, as their acquaintance increased, abated the apprehensions these recollections were calculated to excite; and it did not escape Sir William Ashton, that it was to Lucy's grace and beauty he owed the change in their host's behavior.

All these thoughts thronged upon him when he took possession of the secret chamber. The iron lamp, the unfurnished apartment, more resembling a prison than a place of ordinary repose, the hoarse and ceaseless sound of the waves rushing against the base of the rock on which the castle was founded, saddened and perplexed his mind. To his own successful machinations, the ruin of the family had been in a great measure owing, but his disposition was crafty, and not cruel; so that actually to witness the desolation and distress he had himself occasioned was as painful to him as it would be to the humane mistress of a family to superintend in person the execution of the lambs and poultry which are killed by her own directions. At the same time, when he thought of the alternative of restoring to Ravenswood a large proportion of his spoils, or of adopting, as an ally and member of his own family, the heir of this impoverished house, he felt as the spider may be supposed to do when his whole web, the intricacies of which had been planned with so much art, is destroyed by the chance sweep of a broom. And then, if he should commit himself too far in this matter, it gave rise to a perilous question, which many a good husband, when under temptation to act as a free agent, has asked himself without being able to return a satisfactory answer: "What will my wife—what will Lady Ashton say?" On the whole, he came at length to the resolution in which minds of a weaker cast so often take refuge. He resolved to watch events, to take advantage of circumstances as they occurred, and regulate his conduct accordingly. In this spirit of temporising policy, he at length composed his mind to rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

A slight note I have about me for you, for the delivery of which you must excuse me. It is an offer that friendship calls upon me to do, and no way offensive to you, since I desire nothing but right upon both sides.

King and no King.

WHEN Ravenswood and his guest met in the morning, the gloom of the Master's spirit had in part returned. He, also, had passed a night rather of reflection than of slumber; and the feelings which he could not but entertain towards Lucy Ashton had to support a severe conflict against those which he had so long nourished against her father. To clasp in friendship the hand of the enemy of his house, to entertain him under his roof, to exchange with him the courtesies and the kindness of domestic familiarity, was a degradation which his proud spirit could not be bent to without a struggle.

But the ice being once broken, the Lord Keeper was resolved it should not have time against to freeze. It had been part of his plan to stun and confuse Ravenswood's ideas, by a complicated and technical statement of the matters which had been in debate betwixt their families, justly thinking that it would be difficult for a youth of his age to follow the expositions of a practical lawyer, concerning actions of compt and reckoning, and of multiplepointings, and adjudications and wadsets, proper and improper, and pointings of the ground, and declarations of the expiry of the legal. "Thus," thought Sir William, "I shall have all the grace of appearing perfectly communicative, while my party will derive very little advantage from anything I may tell him." He therefore took Ravenswood aside into the deep recess of a window in the hall, and resuming the discourse of the proceeding evening, expressed a hope that his young friend would assume some patience, in order to hear him enter in a minute and explanatory detail of those unfortunate circumstances in which his late honourable father had stood at variance with the Lord Keeper. The Master of Ravenswood coloured highly, but was silent; and the Lord Keeper, though not greatly approving the sudden heightening of his auditor's complexion, commenced the history of a bond for twenty thousand merks, advanced by his father to the father of Allan Lord Ravenswood, and was proceeding to detail the executorial proceedings by which this large sum had been rendered a debitum fundi, when he was interrupted by the Master.

"It is not in this place," he said, "that I can hear Sir William Ashton's explanation of the matters in question between us. It is not here, where my father died of a broken heart, that I can with decency or temper investigate the cause of his distress. I might remember that I was a son, and forget the duties of a host. A time, however, there must come, when these things shall be discussed, in a place and in a presence where both of us will have equal freedom to speak and to hear."

"Any time," the Lord Keeper said, "any place, was alike to those who sought nothing but justice. Yet it would seem he was, in fairness, entitled to some premonition respecting the grounds upon which the Master proposed to impugn the whole train of legal proceedings, which had been so well and ripely advised in the only courts competent."

"Sir William Ashton," answered the Master, with warmth, "the lands which you now occupy were granted to my remote ancestor for services done with his sword against the English invaders. How they have glided from us by a train of proceedings that seem to be neither sale, nor mortgage, nor adjudication for debt, but a nondescript and entangled mixture of all these rights; how annual rent has been accumulated upon principal, and no nook or coign of legal advantage left unoccupied, until our interest in our hereditary property seems to have melted away like an icicle in thaw—all this you understand better than I do. I am willing, however, to suppose, from the frankness of your conduct towards me, that I may in a great measure have mistaken your personal character, and that things may have appeared right and fitting to you, a skilful and practised lawyer, which to my ignorant understanding seem very little short of injustice and gross oppression."

"And you, my dear Master," answered Sir William—"you, permit me to say, have been equally misrepresented to me. I was taught to believe you a fierce, imperious, hot-headed youth, ready, at the slightest provocation, to throw your sword into the scales of justice, and to appeal to those rude and forcible measures from which civil polity has long protected the people of Scotland. Then, since we were mutually mistaken in each other, why should not the young nobleman be willing to listen to the old lawyer, while, at least, he explains the points of difference betwixt them?"

"No, my lord," answered Ravenswood; "it is in the House of British Peers, whose honour must be equal to their rank—it is in the court of last resort that we must parley together. The belted lords of Britain, her ancient peers, must decide, if it is their will that a house, not the least noble of their members, shall be stripped of their possessions, the reward of the patriotism of generations, as the pawn of a wretched mechanic becomes forfeit to the usurer the instant the hour of redemption has passed away. If they yield to the grasping severity of the creditor, and to the gnawing usury that eats into our lands as moths into a raiment, it will be of more evil consequence to them and their posterity than to Edgar Ravenswood. I shall still have my sword and my cloak, and can follow the profession of arms wherever a trumpet shall sound."

As he pronounced these words, in a firm yet melancholy tone, he raised his eyes, and suddenly encountered those of Lucy Ashton, who had stolen unawares on their interview, and observed her looks fastened on them with an expression of enthusiastic interest and admiration, which had wrapt her for the moment beyond the fear of discovery. The noble form and fine features of Ravenswood, fired with the pride of birth and sense of internal dignity, the mellow and expressive tones of his voice, the desolate state of his fortunes, and the indifference with which he seemed to endure and to dare the worst that might befall, rendered him a dangerous object of contemplation for a maiden already too much disposed to dwell upon recollections connected with him. When their eyes encountered each other, both blushed deeply, conscious of some strong internal emotion, and shunned again to meet each other's looks. Sir William Ashton had, of course, closely watched the expression of their countenances. "I need fear," said he internally, "neither Parliament nor protestation; I have an effectual mode of reconciling myself with this hot-tempered young fellow, in case he shall become formidable. The present object is, at all events, to avoid committing ourselves. The hook is fixed; we will not strain the line too soon: it is as well to reserve the privilege of slipping it loose, if we do not find the fish worth landing."

In this selfish and cruel calculation upon the supposed attachment of Ravenswood to Lucy, he was so far from considering the pain he might give to the former, by thus dallying with his affections, that he even did not think upon the risk of involving his own daughter in the perils of an unfortunate passion; as if her predilection,

which could not escape his attention, were like the flame of a taper which might be lighted or extinguished at pleasure. But Providence had prepared a dreadful requital for this keen observer of human passions, who had spent his life in securing advantages to himself by artfully working upon the passions of others.

Caleb Balderstone now came to announce that breakfast was prepared; for in those days of substantial feeding, the relics of the supper simply furnished forth the morning meal. Neither did he forget to present to the Lord Keeper, with great reverence, a morning draught in a large pewter cup, garnished with leaves of parsley and scurvy-grass. He craved pardon, of course, for having omitted to serve it in the great silver standing cup as behoved, being that it was at present in a silversmith's in Edinburgh, for the purpose of being overlaid with gilt.

"In Edinburgh like enough," said Ravenswood; "but in what place, or for what purpose, I am afraid neither you nor I know."

"Aweel!" said Caleb, peevishly, "there's a man standing at the gate already this morning—that's ae thing that I ken. Does your honour ken whether ye will speak wi' him or no?"

"Does he wish to speak with me, Caleb?"

"Less will no serve him," said Caleb; "but ye had best take a visie of him through the wicket before opening the gate; it's no every ane we suld let into this castle."

"What! do you suppose him to be a messenger come to arrest me for debt?" said Ravenswood.

"A messenger arrest your honour for debt, and in your Castle of Wolf's Crag! Your honour is jesting wi' auld Caleb this morning." However, he whispered in his ear, as he followed him out, "I would be loth to do ony decent man a prejudice in your honour's gude opinion; but I would tak twa looks o' that chield before I let him within these walls."

He was not an officer of the law, however; being no less a person than Captain Craigengelt, with his nose as red as a comfortable cup of brandy could make it, his laced cocked hat set a little aside upon the top of his black riding periwig, a sword by his side and pistols at his holsters, and his person arrayed in a riding suit, laid over with tarnished lace—the very moral of one who would say, "Stand to a true man."

When the Master had recognised him, he ordered the gates to be opened. "I suppose," he said, "Captain Craigengelt, there are no such weighty matters betwixt you and me, but may be discussed in this place. I have company in the castle at present, and the terms upon which we last parted must excuse my asking you to make part of them."

Craigengelt, although possessing the very perfection of impudence, was somewhat abashed by this unfavourable reception. "He had no intention," he said, "to force himself upon the Master of Ravenswood's hospitality; he was in the honourable service of bearing a message to him from a friend, otherwise the Master of Ravenswood should not have had reason to complain of this intrusion."

"Let it be short, sir," said the Master, "for that will be the best apology. Who is the gentleman who is so fortunate as to have your services as a messenger?"

"My friend, Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw," answered Craigengelt, with conscious importance, and that confidence which the acknowledged courage of his principal inspired, "who conceives himself to have been treated by you with something much short of the respect which he had reason to demand, and, therefore is resolved to exact satisfaction. I bring with me," said he, taking a piece of paper out of his pocket, "the precise length of his sword; and he requests you will meet him, accompanied by a friend, and equally armed, at any place within a mile of the castle, when I shall give attendance as umpire, or second, on his behoof."

"Satisfaction! and equal arms!" repeated Ravenswood, who, the reader will recollect, had no reason to suppose he had given the slightest offence to his late intimate; "upon my word, Captain Craigengelt, either you have invented the most improbable falsehood that ever came into the mind of such a person, or your morning draught has been somewhat of the strongest. What could persuade Bucklaw to send me such a message?"

"For that, sir," replied Craigengelt, "I am desired to refer you to what, in duty to my friend, I am to term your inhospitality in excluding him from your house, without reasons assigned."

"It is impossible," replied the Master; "he cannot be such a fool as to interpret actual necessity as an insult. Nor do I believe that, knowing my opinion of you, Captain, he would have employed the services of so slight and inconsiderable a person as yourself upon such an errand, as I certainly could expect no man of honour to act with you in the office of umpire."

"I slight and inconsiderable?" said Craigengelt, raising his voice, and laying his hand on his cutlass; "if it were not that the quarrel of my friend craves the precedence, and is in dependence before my own, I would give you to understand——"

"I can understand nothing upon your explanation, Captain Craigengelt. Be satisfied of that, and oblige me with your departure."

"D——n!" muttered the bully; "and is this the answer which I am to carry back to an honourable message?"

"Tell the Laird of Bucklaw," answered Ravenswood, "if you are really sent by him, that, when he sends me his cause of grievance by a person fitting to carry such an errand betwixt him and me, I will either explain it or maintain it."

"Then, Master, you will at least cause to be returned to Hayston, by my hands, his property which is remaining in your possession."

"Whatever property Bucklaw may have left behind him, sir," replied the Master, "shall be returned to him by my servant, as you do not show me any credentials from him which entitle you to receive it."

"Well, Master," said Captain Craigengelt, with malice which even his fear of the consequences could not suppress, "you have this morning done me an egregious wrong adn dishonour, but far more to yourself. A castle indeed!" he continued, looking around him; "why, this is worse than a coupe-gorge house, where they receive travellers to plunder them of their property."

"You insolent rascal," said the Master, raising his cane, and making a grasp at the Captain's bridle, "if you do not depart without uttering another syllable, I will baton you to death!"

At the motion of the Master towards him, the bully turned so rapidly round, that with some difficulty he escaped throwing down his horse, whose hoofs struck fire from the rocky pavement in every direction. Recovering him, however, with the bridle, he pushed for the gate, and rode sharply back again in the direction of the village.

As Ravenswood turned round to leave the courtyard after this dialogue, he found that the Lord Keeper had descended from the hall, and witnessed, though at the distance prescribed by politeness, his interview with Craigengelt.

"I have seen," said the Lord Keeper, "that gentleman's face, and at no great distance of time; his name is Craig—Craig—something, is it not?"

"Craigengelt is the fellow's name," said the Master, "at least that by which he passes at present."

"Craig-in-guilt," said Caleb, punning upon the word "craig," which in Scotch signifies throat; "if he is Craig-in-guilt just now, he is as likely to be Craig-in-peril as any chield I ever saw; the loon has woodie written on his very visnomy, and I wad wager twa and a plack that hemp plaits his cravat yet."

"You understand physiognomy, good Mr. Caleb," said the Keeper, smiling; "I assure you the gentleman has been near such a consummation before now; for I most distinctly recollect that, upon occasion of a journey which I made about a fortnight ago to Edinburgh, I saw Mr. Craigengelt, or whatever is his name, undergo a severe examination before the privy council."

"Upon what account?" said the Master of Ravenswood, with some interest.

The question led immediately to a tale which the Lord Keeper had been very anxious to introduce, when he could find a graceful and fitting opportunity. He took hold of the Master's arm, and led him back towards the hall. "The answer to your question," he said, "though it is a ridiculous business, is only fit for your own ear." As they entered the hall, he again took the Master apart into one of the recesses of the window, where it will be easily believed that Miss Ashton did not venture again to intrude upon their conference.

*Here is a father now,
Will truck his daughter for a foreign venture,
Make her the stop-gap to some canker'd feud,
Or fling her o'er, like Jonah, to the fishes,
To appease the sea at highest.*

Anonymous.

THE Lord Keeper opened his discourse with an appearance of unconcern, marking, however, very carefully, the effect of his communication upon young Ravenswood.

"You are aware," he said, "my young friend, that suspicion is the natural vice of our unsettled times, and exposes the best and wisest of us to the imposition of artful rascals. If I had been disposed to listen to such the other day, or even if I had been the wily politicians which you have been taught to believe me, you, Master of Ravenswood, instead of being at freedom, and with fully liberty to solicit and act against me as you please, in defence of what you suppose to be your rights, would have been in the Castle of Edinburgh, or some other state prison; or, if you had escaped that destiny, it must have been by flight to a foreign country, and at the risk of a sentence of fugitation."

"My Lord Keeper," said the Master, "I think you would not jest on such a subject; yet it seems impossible you can be in earnest."

"Innocence," said the Lord Keeper, "is also confident, and sometimes, though very excusably, presumptuously so."

"I do not understand," said Ravenswood, "how a consciousness of innocence can be, in any case, accounted presumptuous."

"Imprudent, at least, it may be called," said Sir William Ashton, "since it is apt to lead us into the mistake of supposing that sufficiently evident to others of which, in fact, we are only conscious ourselves. I have known a rogue, for this very reason, make a better defence than an innocent man could have done in the same circumstances of suspicion. Having no consciousness of innocence to support him, such a fellow applies himself to all the advantages which the law will afford him, and sometimes—if his counsel be men of talent—succeeds in compelling his judges to receive him as innocent. I remember the celebrated case of Sir Coolie Condiddle of Condiddle, who was tried for theft under trust, of which all the world knew him guilty, and yet was not only acquitted, but lived to sit in judgment on honest folk."

"Allow me to beg you will return to the point," said the Master; "you seemed to say that I had suffered under some suspicion."

"Suspicion, Master! Ay, truly, and I can show you the proofs of it; if I happen only to have them with me. Here, Lockhard." His attendant came. "Fetch me the little private mail with the padlocks, that I recommended to your particular charge, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, my lord." Lockhard vanished; and the Keeper continued, as if half speaking to himself.

"I think the papers are with me—I think so, for, as I was to be in this country, it was natural for me to bring them with me. I have them, however, at Ravenswood Castle, that I am sure; so perhaps you might condescend——"

Here Lockhard entered, and put the leathern scrutoire, or mail-box, into his hands. The Keeper produced one or two papers, respecting the information laid before the privy council concerning the riot, as it was termed, at the funeral of Allan Lord Ravenswood, and the active share he had himself taken in quashing the proceedings against the Master. These documents had been selected with care, so as to irritate the natural curiosity of Ravenswood upon such a subject, without gratifying it, yet to show that Sir William Ashton had acted upon that trying occasion the part of an advocate and peacemaker betwixt him and the jealous authorities of the day. Having furnished his host with such subjects for examination, the Lord Keeper went to the breakfast-table, and entered into light conversation, addressed partly to old Caleb, whose resentment against the usurper of the Castle of Ravenswood began to be softened by his familiarity, and partly to his daughter.

After perusing these papers, the Master of Ravenswood remained for a minute or two with his hand pressed against his brow, in deep and profound meditation. He then again ran his eye hastily over the papers, as if desirous of discovering in them some deep purpose, or some mark of fabrication, which had escaped him at first perusal. Apparently the second reading confirmed the opinion which had pressed upon him at the first, for he started from the stone bench on which he was sitting, and, going to the Lord Keeper, took his hand, and, strongly pressing it, asked his pardon repeatedly for the injustice he had done him, when it appeared he was experiencing, at his hands, the benefit of protection to his person and vindication to his character.

The statesman received these acknowledgments at first with well-feigned surprise, and then with an affectation of frank cordiality. The tears began already to start from Lucy's blue eyes at viewing this unexpected and moving scene. To see the Master, late so haughty and reserved, and whom she had always supposed the injured person, supplicating her father for forgiveness, was a change at once surprising, flattering, and affecting.

"Dry your eyes, Lucy," said her father; "why should you weep, because your father, though a lawyer, is discovered to be a fair and honourable man? What have you to thank me for, my dear Master," he continued, addressing Ravenswood, "that you would not have done in my case? 'Suum cuique tribuito,' was the Roman justice, and I learned it when I studied Justinian. Besides, have you not overpaid me a thousand times, in saving the life of this dear child?"

"Yes," answered the Master, in all the remorse of self-accusation; "but the little service I did was an act of mere brutal instinct; YOUR defence of my cause, when you knew how ill I thought of you, and how much I was disposed to be your enemy, was an act of generous, manly, and considerate wisdom."

"Pshaw!" said the Lord Keeper, "each of us acted in his own way; you as a gallant soldier, I as an upright judge and privy-councillor. We could not, perhaps, have changed parts; at least I should have made a very sorry tauridor, and you, my good Master, though your cause is so excellent, might have pleaded it perhaps worse yourself than I who acted for you before the council."

"My generous friend!" said Ravenswood; and with that brief word, which the Keeper had often lavished upon him, but which he himself now pronounced for the first time, he gave to his feudal enemy the full confidence of an haughty but honourable heart. The Master had been remarked among his contemporaries for sense and acuteness, as well as for his reserved, pertinacious, and irascible character. His prepossessions accordingly, however obstinate, were of a nature to give way before love and gratitude; and the real charms of the daughter, joined to the supposed services of the father, cancelled in his memory the vows of vengeance which he had taken so deeply on the eve of his father's funeral. But they had been heard and registered in the book of fate.

Caleb was present at this extraordinary scene, and he could conceive no other reason for a proceeding so extraordinary than an alliance betwixt the houses, and Ravenswood Castle assigned for the young lady's dowry. As for Lucy, when Ravenswood uttered the most passionate excuses for his ungrateful negligence, she could but smile through her tears, and, as she abandoned her hand to him, assure him, in broken accents, of the delight with which she beheld the complete reconciliation between her father and her deliverer. Even the statesman was moved and affected by the fiery, unreserved, and generous self-abandonment with which the Master of Ravenswood renounced his feudal enmity, and threw himself without hesitation upon his forgiveness. His eyes glistened as he looked upon a couple who were obviously becoming attached, and who seemed made for each other. He thought how high the proud and chivalrous character of Ravenswood might rise under many circumstances in which HE found himself "overcrowded," to use a phrase of Spenser, and kept under, by his brief pedigree, and timidity of disposition. Then his daughter—his favorite child—his constant playmate—seemed formed to live happy in a union with such a commanding spirit as Ravenswood; and even the fine, delicate, fragile form of Lucy Ashton seemed to require the support of the Master's muscular strength and masculine character. And it was not merely during a few minutes that Sir William Ashton looked upon their marriage as a probable and even desirable event, for a full hour intervened ere his imagination was crossed by recollection of the Master's poverty, and the sure displeasure of Lady Ashton. It is certain, that the very unusual flow of kindly feeling with which the Lord Keeper had been thus surprised, was one of the circumstances which gave much tacit encouragement to the attachment between the Master and his daughter, and led both the lovers distinctly to believe that it was a connexion which would be most agreeable to him. He himself was supposed to have admitted this in effect, when, long after the catastrophe of their love, he used to warn his hearers against permitting their feelings to obtain an ascendancy

over their judgment, and affirm, that the greatest misfortune of his life was owing to a very temporary predominance of sensibility over self-interest. It must be owned, if such was the case, he was long and severely punished for an offence of very brief duration.

After some pause, the Lord Keeper resumed the conversation.—

"In your surprise at finding me an honest man than you expected, you have lost your curiosity about this Craigengelt, my good Master; and yet your name was brought in, in the course of that matter too."

"The scoundrell!" said Ravenswood. "My connexion with him was of the most temporary nature possible; and yet I was very foolish to hold any communication with him at all. What did he say of me?"

"Enough," said the Keeper, "to excite the very loyal terrors of some of our sages, who are for proceeding against men on the mere grounds of suspicion or mercenary information. Some nonsense about your proposing to enter into the service of France, or of the Pretender, I don't recollect which, but which the Marquis of A——, one of your best friends, and another person, whom some call one of your worst and most interested enemies, could not, somehow, be brought to listen to."

"I am obliged to my honourable friend; and yet," shaking the Lord Keeper's hand—"and yet I am still more obliged to my honourable enemy."

"Inimicus amicissimus," said the Lord Keeper, returning the pressure; "but this gentleman—this Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw—I am afraid the poor young man—I heard the fellow mention his name—is under very bad guidance."

"He is old enough to govern himself," answered the Master.

"Old enough, perhaps, but scarce wise enough, if he has chosen this fellow for his fidus Achates. Why, he lodged an information against him—that is, such a consequence might have ensued from his examination, had we not looked rather at the character of the witness than the tenor of his evidence."

"Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw," said the master, "is, I believe, a most honourable man, and capable of nothing that is mean or disgraceful."

"Capable of much that is unreasonable, though; that you must needs allow, master. Death will soon put him in possession of a fair estate, if he hath it not already; old Lady Girnington—an excellent person, excepting that her inveterate ill-nature rendered her intolerable to the whole world—is probably dead by this time. Six heirs portioners have successively died to make her wealthy. I know the estates well; they march with my own—a noble property."

"I am glad of it," said Ravenswood, "and should be more so, were I confident that Bucklaw would change his company and habits with his fortunes. This appearance of Craigengelt, acting in the capacity of his friend, is a most vile augury for his future respectability."

"He is a bird of evil omen, to be sure," said the Keeper, "and croaks of jail and gallows-tree. But I see Mr. Caleb grows impatient for our return to breakfast."

CHAPTER XVIII.

*Sir, stay at home and take an old man's counsel;
Seek not to bask you by a stranger's hearth;
Our own blue smoke is warmer than their fire.
Domestic food is wholesome, though 'tis homely,
And foreign dainties poisonous, though tasteful.*

The French Courtezan.

THE Master of Ravenswood took an opportunity to leave his guests to prepare for their departure, while he himself made the brief arrangements necessary previous to his absence from Wolf's Crag for a day or two. It was necessary to communicate with Caleb on this occasion, and he found that faithful servitor in his sooty and ruinous den, greatly delighted with the departure of their visitors, and computing how long, with good management, the provisions which had been unexpended might furnish the Master's table. "He's nae belly god, that's ae blessing; and Bucklaw's gane, that could have eaten a horse behind the saddle. Cresses or water-purpie, and a bit ait-cake, can serve the Master for breakfast as weel as Caleb. Then for dinner—there's no muckle left on the spule-bane; it will brander, though—it will brander very weel."

His triumphant calculations were interrupted by the Master, who communicated to him, not without some hesitation, his purpose to ride with the Lord Keeper as far as Ravenswood Castle, and to remain there for a day or two.

"The mercy of Heaven forbid!" said the old serving-man, turning as pal as the table-cloth which he was folding up.

"And why, Caleb?" said his master—"why should the mercy of Heaven forbid my returning the Lord Keeper's visit?"

"Oh, sir!" replied Caleb—"oh, Mr. Edgar! I am your servant, and it ill becomes me to speak; but I am an auld servant—have served baith your father and gudesire, and mind to have seen Lord Randal, your great-grandfather, but that was when I was a bairn."

"And what of all this, Balderstone?" said the Master; "what can it possibly have to do with my paying some ordinary civility to a neighbour."

"Oh, Mr. Edgar,—that is, my lord!" answered the butler, "your ain conscience tells you it isna for your father's son to be neighbouring wi' the like o' him; it isna for the credit of the family. An he were ance come to terms, and to gie ye back your ain, e'en though ye suld honour his house wi' your alliance, I suldna say na; for the young leddy is a winsome sweet creature. But keep your ain state wi' them—I ken the race o' them weel—they will think the mair o' ye."

"Why, now, you go farther than I do, Caleb," said the Master, drowning a certain degree of consciousness in a forced laugh; "you are for marrying me into a family that you will nto allow me to visit, how this? and you look as pale as death besides."

"Oh, sir," repeated Caleb again, "you would but laugh if I tauld it; but Thomas the Rhymer, whose tongue couldna be fause, spoke the word of your house that will e'en prove ower true if you go to Ravenswood this day. Oh, that it should e'er have been fulfilled in my time!"

"And what is it, Caleb?" said Ravenswood, wishing to soothe the fears of his old servant.

Caleb replied: "He had never repeated the lines to living mortal; they were told to him by an auld priest that had been confessor to Lord Allan's father when the family were Catholic. But mony a time," he said, "I hae soughed thae dark words ower to myself, and, well-a-day! little did I think of their coming round this day."

"Truce with your nonsense, and let me hear the doggerel which has put it into your head," said the Master, impatiently.

With a quivering voice, and a cheek pale with apprehension, Caleb faltered out the following lines:

"When the last Laird of Ravenswood to Ravenswood shall ride, And woo a dead maiden to be his bride, He shall stable his steed in the Kelpie's flow, And his name shall be lost for evermoe!"

"I know the Kelpie's flow well enough," said the Master; "I suppose, at least, you mean the quicksand betwixt this tower and Wolf's Hope; but why any man in his senses should stable a steed there——"

"Oh, ever speer ony thing about that, sir—God forbid we should ken what the prophecy means—but just bide you at hame, and let the strangers ride to Ravenswood by themselves. We have done eneugh for them; and to do mair would be mair against the credit of the family than in its favour."

"Well, Caleb," said the Master, "I give you the best possible credit for your good advice on this occasion; but as I do not go to Ravenswood to seek a bride, dead or alive, I hope I shall choose a better stable for my horse than the Kelpie's quicksand, and especially as I have always had a particular dread of it since the patrol of dragoons were lost there ten years since. My father and I saw them from the tower struggling against the advancing tide, and they were lost long before any help could reach them."

"And they deserved it weel, the southern loons!" said Caleb; "what had they ado capering on our sands, and hindering a wheen honest folk frae bringing on shore a drap brandy? I hae seen them that busy, that I wad hae fired the auld culverin or the demi-saker that's on the south bartizan at them, only I was feared they might burst in the ganging aff."

Caleb's brain was now fully engaged with abuse of the English soldiery and excisemen, so that his master found no great difficulty in escaping from him and rejoining his guests. All was now ready for their departure; and one of the Lord Keeper's grooms having saddled the Master's steed, they mounted in the courtyard.

Caleb had, with much toil, opened the double doors of the outward gate, and thereat stationed himself, endeavouring, by the reverential, and at the same time consequential, air which he assumed, to supply, by his own gaunt, wasted, and thin person, the absence of a whole baronial establishment of porters, warders, and liveried menials.

The Keeper returned his deep reverence with a cordial farewell, stooping at the same time from his horse, and sliding into the butler's hand the remuneration which in those days was always given by a departing guest to the domestics of the family where he had been entertained. Lucy smiled on the old man with her usual sweetness, bade him adieu, and deposited her guerdon with a grace of action and a gentleness of accent which could not have failed to have won the faithful retainer's heart, but for Thomas the Rhymer, and the successful lawsuit against his master. As it was, he might have adopted the language of the Duke in *As You Like It*:

Thou wouldst have better pleased me with this deed, If thou hadst told me of another father.

Ravenswood was at the lady's bridle-rein, encouraging her timidity, and guiding her horse carefully down the rocky path which led to the moor, when one of the servants announced from the rear that Caleb was calling loudly after them, desiring to speak with his master. Ravenswood felt it would look singular to neglect this summons, although inwardly cursing Caleb for his impertinent officiousness; therefore he was compelled to relinquish to Mr. Lockhard the agreeable duty in which he was engaged, and to ride back to the gate of the courtyard. Here he was beginning, somewhat peevishly, to ask Caleb the cause of his clamour, when the good old man exclaimed: "Whisht, sir!—whisht, and let me speak just ae word that I couldna say afore folk; there (putting into his lord's hand the money he had just received)—there's three gowd pieces; and ye'll want siller up-bye yonder. But stay, whisht, now!" for the Master was beginning to exclaim against this transference, "never say a word, but just see to get them changed in the first town ye ride through, for they are bran new frae the mint, and ken-speckle a wee bit."

"You forget, Caleb," said his master, striving to force back the money on his servant, and extricate the bridle from his hold—"you forget that I have some gold pieces left of my own. Keep these to yourself, my old friend; and, once more, good day to you. I assure you, I have plenty. You know you have managed that our living should cost us little or nothing."

"Aweel," said Caleb, "these will serve for you another time; but see ye hae enough, for, doubtless, for the credit of the family, there maun be some civility to the servants, and ye maun hae something to mak a show with when they say, 'Master, will you bet a broad piece?' Then ye maun tak out your purse, and say, 'I carena if I do'; and tak care no to agree on the articles of the wager, and just put up your purse again, and——"

"This is intolerable, Caleb; I really must be gone."

"And you will go, then?" said Caleb, loosening his hold upon the Master's cloak, and changing his didactics into a pathetic and mournful tone—"and you WILL go, for a' I have told you about the prophecy, and the dead bride, and the Kelpie's quicksand? Aweel! a wilful man maun hae his way: he that will to Cupar maun to Cupar. But pity of your life, sir, if ye be fowling or shooting in the Park, beware of drinking at the Mermaiden's Well—He's gane! he's down the path arrow-flight after her! The head is as clean taen aff the Ravenswood family this day as I wad chap the head aff a sybo!"

The old butler looked long after his master, often clearing away the dew as it rose to his eyes, that he might, as long as possible, distinguish his stately form from those of the other horsemen. "Close to her bridle-rein—ay, close to her bridle-rein! Wisely saith the holy man, 'By this also you may know that woman hath dominion over all men'; and without this lass would not our ruin have been a'thegither fulfilled."

With a heart fraught with such sad auguries did Caleb return to his necessary duties at Wof's Crag, as soon as he could no longer distinguish the object of his anxiety among the group of riders, which diminished in the distance.

In the mean time the party pursued their route joyfully. Having once taken his resolution, the Master of Ravenswood was not of a character to hesitate or pause upon it. He abandoned himself to the pleasure he felt in Miss Ashton's company, and displayed an assiduous gallantry which approached as nearly to gaiety as the temper of his mind and state of his family permitted. The Lord Keeper was much struck with his depth of observation, and the unusual improvement which he had derived from his studies. Of these accomplishments Sir William Ashton's profession and habits of society rendered him an excellent judge; and he well knew how to appreciate a quality to which he himself was a total stranger—the brief and decided dauntlessness of the Master of Ravenswood's fear. In his heart the Lord Keeper rejoiced at having conciliated an adversary so formidable, while, with a mixture of pleasure and anxiety, he anticipated the great things his young companion might achieve, were the breath of court-favour to fill his sails.

"What could she desire," he thought, his mind always conjuring up opposition in the person of Lady Ashton to his new prevailing wish—"what could a woman desire in a match more than the sopiting of a very dangerous claim, and the alliance of a son-in-law, noble, brave, well-gifted, and highly connected; sure to float whenever the tide sets his way; strong, exactly where we are weak, in pedigree and in the temper of a swordsman? Sure, no reasonable woman would hesitate. But alas——!" Here his argument was stopped by the consciousness that Lady Ashton was not always reasonable, in his sense of the word. "To prefer some clownish Merse laird to the gallant young nobleman, and to the secure possession of Ravenswood upon terms of easy compromise—it would be the act of a madwoman!"

Thus pondered the veteran politician, until they reached Bittlebrains House, where it had been previously settled they were to dine and repose themselves, and prosecute their journey in the afternoon.

They were received with an excess of hospitality; and the most marked attention was offered to the Master of Ravenswood, in particular, by their noble entertainers. The truth was, that Lord Bittlebrains had obtained his peerage by a good deal of plausibility, an art of building up a character for wisdom upon a very trite style of commonplace eloquence, a steady observation of the changes of the times, and the power of rendering certain political services to those who could best reward them. His lady and he, not feeling quite easy under their new honours, to which use had not adapted their feelings, were very desirous to procure the fraternal countenance of those who were born denizens of the regions into which they had been exalted from a lower sphere. The extreme attention which they paid to the Master of Ravenswood had its usual effect in exalting his importance in the eyes of the Lord Keeper, who, although he had a reasonable degree of contempt for Lord Bittlebrains's general parts, entertained a high opinion of the acuteness of his judgment in all matters of self-interest.

"I wish Lady Ashton had seen this," was his internal reflection; "no man knows so well as Bittlebrains on which side his bread is buttered; and he fawns on the Master like a beggar's messan on a cook. And my lady, too, bringing forward her beetle-browed misses to skirl and play upon the virginals, as if she said, 'Pick and choose.' They are no more comparable to Lucy than an owl is to a cygnet, and so they may carry their black brows to a farther market."

The entertainment being ended, our travellers, who had still to measure the longest part of their journey, resumed their horses; and after the Lord Keeper, the Master, and the domestics had drunk doch-an-dorroch, or the stirrup-cup, in the liquors adapted to their various ranks, the cavalcade resumed its progress.

It was dark by the time they entered the avenue of Ravenswood Castle, a long straight line leading directly to the front of the house, flanked with huge elm-trees, which sighed to the night-wind, as if they compassionated the heir of their ancient proprietors, who now returned to their shades in the society, and almost in the retinue, of their new master. Some feelings of the same kind oppressed the mind of the Master himself. He gradually became silent, and dropped a little behind the lady, at whose bridle-rein he had hitherto waited with such devotion. He well recollected the period when, at the same hour in the evening, he had accompanied his father, as that nobleman left, never again to return to it, the mansion from which he derived his name and title. The extensive front of the old castle, on which he remembered having often looked back, was then "as black as mourning weed." The same front now glanced with many lights, some throwing far forward into the night a fixed and stationary blaze, and others hurrying from one window to another, intimating the bustle and busy preparation preceding their

arrival, which had been intimated by an avant-courier. The contrast pressed so strongly upon the Master's heart as to awaken some of the sterner feelings with which he had been accustomed to regard the new lord of his paternal domain, and to impress his countenance with an air of severe gravity, when, alighted from his horse, he stood in the hall no longer his own, surrounded by the numerous menials of its present owner.

The Lord Keeper, when about to welcome him with the cordiality which their late intercourse seemed to render proper, became aware of the change, refrained from his purpose, and only intimated the ceremony of reception by a deep reverence to his guest, seeming thus delicately to share the feelings which predominated on his brow.

Two upper domestics, bearing each a huge pair of silver candlesticks, now marshalled the company into a large saloon, or withdrawing-room, where new alterations impressed upon Ravenswood the superior wealth of the present inhabitants of the castle. The mouldering tapestry, which, in his father's time, had half covered the walls of this stately apartment, and half streamed from them in tatters, had given place to a complete finishing of wainscot, the cornice of which, as well as the frames of the various compartments, were ornamented with festoons of flowers and with birds, which, though carved in oak, seemed, such was the art of the chisel, actually to swell their throats and flutter their wings. Several old family portraits of armed heroes of the house of Ravenswood, together with a suit or two of old armour and some military weapons, had given place to those of King William and Queen Mary, or Sir Thomas Hope and Lord Stair, two distinguished Scottish lawyers. The pictures of the Lord Keeper's father and mother were also to be seen; the latter, sour, shrewish, and solemn, in her black hood and close pinnars, with a book of devotion in her hand; the former, exhibiting beneath a black silk Geneva cowl, or skull-cap, which sat as close to the head as if it had been shaven, a pinched, peevish, Puritanical set of features, terminating in a hungry, reddish, peaked beard, forming on the whole a countenance in the expression of which the hypocrite seemed to contend with the miser and the knave. "And it is to make room for such scarecrows as these," thought Ravenswood, "that my ancestors have been torn down from the walls which they erected!" he looked at them again, and, as he looked, the recollection of Lucy Ashton, for she had not entered the apartment with them, seemed less lively in his imagination. There were also two or three Dutch drogeries, as the pictures of Ostade and Teniers were then termed, with one good painting of the Italian school. There was, besides, a noble full-length of the Lord Keeper in his robes of office, placed beside his lady in silk and ermine, a haughty beauty, bearing in her looks all the pride of the house of Douglas, from which she was descended. The painter, notwithstanding his skill, overcome by the reality, or, perhaps, from a suppressed sense of humour, had not been able to give the husband on the canvas that air of awful rule and right supremacy which indicates the full possession of domestic authority. It was obvious at the first glance that, despite mace and gold frogs, the Lord Keeper was somewhat henpecked. The floor of this fine saloon was laid with rich carpets, huge fires blazed in the double chimneys, and ten silver sconces, reflecting with their bright plates the lights which they supported, made the whole seem as brilliant as day.

"Would you choose any refreshment, Master?" said Sir William Ashton, not unwilling to break the awkward silence.

He received no answer, the Master being so busily engaged in marking the various changes which had taken place in the apartment, that he hardly heard the Lord Keeper address him. A repetition of the offer of refreshment, with the addition, that the family meal would be presently ready, compelled his attention, and reminded him that he acted a weak, perhaps even a ridiculous, part in suffering himself to be overcome by the circumstances in which he found himself. He compelled himself, therefore, to enter into conversation with Sir William Ashton, with as much appearance of indifference as he could well command.

"You will not be surprised, Sir William, that I am interested in the changes you have made for the better in this apartment. In my father's time, after our misfortunes compelled him to live in retirement, it was little used, except by me as a play-room, when the weather would not permit me to go abroad. In that recess was my little workshop, where I treasured the few carpenters' tools which old Caleb procured for me, and taught me how to use; there, in yonder corner, under that handsome silver scone, I kept my fishing-rods and hunting poles, bows and arrows."

"I have a young birkie," said the Lord Keeper, willing to change the tone of the conversation, "of much the same turn. He is never happy save when he is in the field. I wonder he is not here. Here, Lockhard; send William Shaw for Mr. Henry. I suppose he is, as usual, tied to Lucy's apron-string; that foolish girl, Master, draws the whole family after her at her pleasure."

Even this allusion to his daughter, though artfully thrown out, did not recall Ravenswood from his own topic. "We were obliged to leave," he said, "some armour and portraits in this apartment; may I ask where they have been removed to?"

"Why," answered the Keeper, with some hesitation, "the room was fitted up in our absence, and *cedant arma togae* is the maxim of lawyers, you know: I am afraid it has been here somewhat too literally complied with. I hope—I believe they are safe, I am sure I gave orders; may I hope that when they are recovered, and put in proper order, you will do me the honour to accept them at my hand, as an atonement for their accidental derangement?"

The Master of Ravenswood bowed stiffly, and, with folded arms, again resumed his survey of the room.

Henry, a spoilt boy of fifteen, burst into the room, and ran up to his father. "Think of Lucy, papa; she has come home so cross and so fractious, that she will not go down to the stable to see my new pony, that Bob Wilson brought from the Mull of Galloway."

"I think you were very unreasonable to ask her," said the Keeper.

"Then you are as cross as she is," answered the boy; "but when mamma comes home, she'll claw up both your mittens."

"Hush your impertinence, you little forward imp!" said his father; "where is your tutor?"

"Gone to a wedding at Dunbar; I hope he'll get a haggis to his dinner"; and he began to sing the old Scottish song:

"There was a haggis in Dunbar, Fal de ral, etc. Mony better and few waur, Fal de ral," etc.

"I am much obliged to Mr. Cordery for his attentions," said the Lord Keeper; "and pray who has had the charge of you while I was away, Mr. Henry?"

"Norman and Bob Wilson, forbye my own self."

"A groom and a gamekeeper, and your own silly self—proper guardians for a young advocate! Why, you will never know any statutes but those against shooting red-deer, killing salmon, and——"

"And speaking of red-game," said the young scapegrace, interrupting his father without scruple or hesitation, "Norman has shot a buck, and I showed the branches to Lucy, and she says they have but eight tynes; and she says that you killed a deer with Lord Bittlebrains's hounds, when you were west away, and, do you know, she says it had ten tynes; is it true?"

"It may have had twenty, Henry, for what I know; but if you go to that gentleman, he can tell you all about it. Go speak to him, Henry; it is the Master of Ravenswood."

While they conversed thus, the father and son were standing by the fire; and the Master, having walked towards the upper end of the apartment, stood with his back towards them, apparently engaged in examining one of the paintings. The boy ran up to him, and pulled him by the skirt of the coat with the freedom of a spoilt child, saying, "I say, sir, if you please to tell me——" but when the Master turned round, and Henry saw his face, he became suddenly and totally disconcerted; walked two or three steps backward, and still gazed on Ravenswood with an air of fear and wonder, which had totally banished from his features their usual expression of pert vivacity.

"Come to me, young gentleman," said the Master, "and I will tell you all I know about the hunt."

"Go to the gentleman, Henry," said his father; "you are not used to be so shy."

But neither invitation nor exhortation had any effect on the boy. On the contrary, he turned round as soon as he had completed his survey of the Master, and walking as cautiously as if he had been treading upon eggs, he glided back to his father, and pressed as close to him as possible. Ravenswood, to avoid hearing the dispute betwixt the father and the overindulged boy, thought it most polite to turn his face once more towards the pictures, and pay no attention to what they said.

"Why do you not speak to the Master, you little fool?" said the Lord Keeper.

"I am afraid," said Henry, in a very low tone of voice.

"Afraid, you goose!" said his father, giving him a slight shake by the collar. "What makes you afraid?"

"What makes him to like the picture of Sir Malise Ravenswood then?" said the boy, whispering.

"What picture, you natural?" said his father. "I used to think you only a scapegrace, but I believe you will turn out a born idiot."

"I tell you, it is the picture of old Malise of Ravenswood, and he is as like it as if he had loupén out of the canvas; and it is up in the old baron's hall that the maids launder the clothes in; and it has armour, and not a coat like the gentleman; and he has not a beard and whiskers like the picture; and it has another kind of thing about the throat, and no band-strings as he has; and——"

"And why should not the gentleman be like his ancestor, you silly boy?" said the Lord Keeper.

"Ay; but if he is come to chase us all out of the castle," said the boy, "and has twenty men at his back in disguise; and is come to say, with a hollow voice, 'I bide my time'; and is to kill you on the hearth as Malise did the other man, and whose blood is still to be seen!"

"Hush! nonsense!" said the Lord Keeper, not himself much pleased to hear these disagreeable coincidences forced on his notice. "Master, here comes Lockhard to say supper is served."

And, at the same instant, Lucy entered at another door, having changed her dress since her return. The exquisite feminine beauty of her countenance, now shaded only by a profusion of sunny tresses; the sylph-like form, disencumbered of her heavy riding-skirt and mantled in azure silk; the grace of her manner and of her smile, cleared, with a celerity which surprised the Master himself, all the gloomy and unfavourable thoughts which had for some time overclouded his fancy. In those features, so simply sweet, he could trace no alliance with the pinched visage of the peak-bearded, black-capped Puritan, or his starched, withered spouse, with the craft expressed in the Lord Keeper's countenance, or the haughtiness which predominated in that of his lady; and, while he gazed on Lucy Ashton, she seemed to be an angel descended on earth, unallied to the coarser mortals among whom she deigned to dwell for a season. Such is the power of beauty over a youthful and enthusiastic fancy.

CHAPTER XIX.

*I do too ill in this,
And must not think but that a parent's plaint
Will move the heavens to pour forth misery
Upon the head of disobedency.
Yet reason tells us, parents are o'erseen,
When with too strict a rein they do hold in
Their child's affection, and control that love,
Which the high powers divine inspire them with.*

The Hog hath lost his Pearl.

THE feast of Ravenswood Castle was as remarkable for its profusion as that of Wolf's Crag had been for its ill-veiled penury. The Lord Keeper might feel internal pride at the contrast, but he had too much tact to suffer it to appear. On the contrary, he seemed to remember with pleasure what he called Mr. Balderstone's bachelor's meal, and to be rather disgusted than pleased with the display upon his own groaning board.

"We do these things," he said, "because others do them; but I was bred a plain man at my father's frugal table, and I should like well would my wife and family permit me to return to my sowens and my poor-man-of-mutton."

This was a little overstretched. The Master only answered, "That different ranks—I mean," said he, correcting himself, "different degrees of wealth require a different style of housekeeping."

This dry remark put a stop to further conversation on the subject, nor is it necessary to record that which was substituted in its place. The evening was spent with freedom, and even cordiality; and Henry had so far overcome his first apprehensions, that he had settled a party for coursing a stag with the representative and living resemblance of grim Sir Malise of Ravenswood, called the Revenger. The next morning was the appointed time. It rose upon active sportsmen and successful sport. The banquet came in course; and a pressing invitation to tarry yet another day was given and accepted. This Ravenswood had resolved should be the last of his stay; but he recollected he had not yet visited the ancient and devoted servant of his house, Old Alice, and it was but kind to dedicate one morning to the gratification of so ancient an adherent.

To visit Alice, therefore, a day was devoted, and Lucy was the Master's guide upon the way. Henry, it is true, accompanied them, and took from their walk the air of a tete-a-tete, while, in reality, it was little else, considering the variety of circumstances which occurred to prevent the boy from giving the least attention to what passed between his companions. Now a rook settled on a branch within shot; anon a hare crossed their path, and Henry and his greyhound went astray in pursuit of it; then he had to hold a long conversation with the forester, which detained him a while behind his companions; and again he went to examine the earth of a badger, which carried him on a good way before them.

The conversation betwixt the Master and his sister, meanwhile, took an interesting, and almost a confidential, turn. She could not help mentioning her sense of the pain he must feel in visiting scenes so well known to him, bearing now an aspect so different; and so gently was her sympathy expressed, that Ravenswood felt it for a moment as a full requital of all his misfortunes. Some such sentiment escaped him, which Lucy heard with more of confusion than displeasure; and she may be forgiven the imprudence of listening to such language, considering that the situation in which she was placed by her father seemed to authorise Ravenswood to use it. Yet she made an effort to turn the conversation, and she succeeded; for the Master also had advanced farther than he intended, and his conscience had instantly checked him when he found himself on the verge of speaking of love to the daughter of Sir William Ashton.

They now approached the hut of Old Alice, which had of late been rendered more comfortable, and presented an appearance less picturesque, perhaps, but far neater than before. The old woman was on her accustomed seat beneath the weeping birch, basking, with the listless enjoyment of age and infirmity, in the beams of the autumn sun. At the arrival of her visitors she turned her head towards them. "I hear your step, Miss Ashton," she said, "but the gentleman who attends you is not my lord, your father."

"And why should you think so, Alice?" said Lucy; "or how is it possible for you to judge so accurately by the sound of a step, on this firm earth, and in the open air?"

"My hearing, my child, has been sharpened by my blindness, and I can now draw conclusions from the slightest sounds, which formerly reached my ears as unheeded as they now approach yours. Necessity is a stern but an excellent schoolmistress, and she that has lost her sight must collect her information from other sources."

"Well, you hear a man's step, I grant it," said Lucy; "but why, Alice, may it not be my father's?"

"The pace of age, my love, is timid and cautious: the foot takes leave of the earth slowly, and is planted down upon it with hesitation; it is the hasty and determined step of youth that I now hear, and—could I give credit to so strange a thought—I should say it was the step of a Ravenswood."

"This is indeed," said Ravenswood, "an acuteness of organ which I could not have credited had I not witnessed it. I am indeed the Master of Ravenswood, Alice,—the son of your old master."

"You!" said the old woman, with almost a scream of surprise—"you the Master of Ravenswood—here—in this place, and thus accompanied! I cannot believe it. Let me pass my old hand over your face, that my touch may bear witness to my ears."

The Master sat down beside her on the earthen bank, and permitted her to touch his features with her trembling hand.

"It is indeed!" she said—"it is the features as well as the voice of Ravenswood—the high lines of pride, as well as the bold and haughty tone. But what do you here, Master of Ravenswood?—what do you in your enemy's domain, and in company with his child?" As Old Alice spoke, her face kindled, as probably that of an ancient feudal vassal might have done in whose presence his youthful liege-lord had showed some symptom of degenerating from the spirit of his ancestors.

"The Master of Ravenswood," said Lucy, who liked not the tone of this expostulation, and was desirous to abridge it, "is upon a visit to my father."

"Indeed!" said the old blind woman, in an accent of surprise.

"I knew," continued Lucy, "I should do him a pleasure by conducting him to your cottage."

"Where, to say the truth, Alice," said Ravenswood, "I expected a more cordial reception."

"It is most wonderful!" said the old woman, muttering to herself; "but the ways of Heaven are not like our ways, and its judgments are brought about by means far beyond our fathoming. Harken, young man," she said; "your fathers were implacable, but they were honourable, foes; they sought not to ruin their enemies under the mask of hospitality. What have you to do with Lucy Ashton? why should your steps move in the same footpath with hers? why should your voice sound in the same chord and time with those of Sir William Ashton's daughter? Young man, he who aims at revenge by dishonourable means——"

"Be silent, woman!" said Ravenswood, sternly; "it is the devil that prompts your voice? Know that this young lady has not on earth a friend who would venture farther to save her from injury or from insult."

"And is it even so?" said the old woman, in an altered but melancholy tone, "then God help you both!"

"Amen! Alice," said Lucy, who had not comprehended the import of what the blind woman had hinted, "and send you your senses, Alice, and your good humour. If you hold this mysterious language, instead of welcoming your friends, they will think of you as other people do."

"And how do other people think?" said Ravenswood, for he also began to believe the old woman spoke with incoherence.

"They think," said Henry Ashton, who came up at that moment, and whispered into Ravenswood's ear, "that she is a witch, that should have been burned with them that suffered at Haddington."

"What is it you say?" said Alice, turning towards the boy, her sightless visage inflamed with passion; "that I am a witch, and ought to have suffered with the helpless old wretches who were murdered at Haddington?"

"Hear to that now," again whispered Henry, "and me whispering lower than a wren cheeps!"

"If the usurer, and the oppressor, and the grinder of the poor man's face, and the remover of ancient landmarks, and the subverter of ancient houses, were at the same stake with me, I could say, 'Light the fire, in God's name!'"

"This is dreadful," said Lucy; "I have never seen the poor deserted woman in this state of mind; but age and poverty can ill bear reproach. Come, Henry, we will leave her for the present; she wishes to speak with the Master alone. We will walk homeward, and rest us," she added, looking at Ravenswood, "by the Mermaid's Well." "And Alice," said the boy, "if you know of any hare that comes through among the deer, and makes them drop their calves out of season, you may tell her, with my compliments to command, that if Norman has not got a silver bullet ready for her, I'll lend him one of my doublet-buttons on purpose."

Alice made no answer till she was aware that the sister and brother were out of hearing. She then said to Ravenswood: "And you, too, are angry with me for my love? It is just that strangers should be offended, but you, too, are angry!"

"I am not angry, Alice," said the Master, "only surprised that you, whose good sense I have heard so often praised, should give way to offensive and unfounded suspicions."

"Offensive!" said Alice. "Ay, trust is ever offensive; but, surely, not unfounded."

"I tell you, dame, most groundless," replied Ravenswood.

"Then the world has changed its wont, and the Ravenswoods their hereditary temper, and the eyes of Old Alice's understanding are yet more blind than those of her countenance. When did a Ravenswood seek the house of his enemy but with the purpose of revenge? and hither are you come, Edgar Ravenswood, either in fatal anger or in still more fatal love."

"In neither," said Ravenswood, "I give you mine honour—I mean, I assure you."

Alice could not see his blushing cheek, but she noticed his hesitation, and that he retracted the pledge which he seemed at first disposed to attach to his denial.

"It is so, then," she said, "and therefore she is to tarry by the Mermaid's Well! Often has it been called a place fatal to the race of Ravenswood—often has it proved so; but never was it likely to verify old sayings as much as on this day."

"You drive me to madness, Alice," said Ravenswood; "you are more silly and more superstitious than old Balderstone. Are you such a wretched Christian as to suppose I would in the present day levy war against the Ashton family, as was the sanguinary custom in elder times? or do you suppose me so foolish, that I cannot walk by a young lady's side without plunging headlong in love with her?"

"My thoughts," replied Alice, "are my own; and if my mortal sight is closed to objects present with me, it may be I can look with more steadiness into future events. Are you prepared to sit lowest at the board which was once your father's own, unwillingly, as a connexion and ally of his proud successor? Are you ready to live on his bounty; to follow him in the bye-paths of intrigue and chicane, which none can better point out to you; to gnaw the bones of his prey when he has devoured the substance? Can you say as Sir William Ashton says, think as he thinks, vote as he votes, and call your father's murderer your worshipful father-in-law and revered patron? Master of Ravenswood, I am the eldest servant of your house, and I would rather see you shrouded and coffined!"

The tumult in Ravenswood's mind was uncommonly great; she struck upon and awakened a chord which he had for some time successfully silenced. He strode backwards and forwards through the little garden with a hasty pace; and at length checking himself, and stopping right opposite to Alice, he exclaimed: "Woman! on the verge of the grave, dare you urge the son of your master to blood and to revenge?"

"God forbid!" said Alice, solemnly; "and therefore I would have you depart these fatal bounds, where your love, as well as your hatred, threatens sure mischief, or at least disgrace, both to yourself and others. I would shield, were it in the power of this withered hand, the Ashtons from you, and you from them, and both from their own passions. You can have nothing—ought to have nothing, in common with them. Begone from among them; and if God has destined vengeance on the oppressor's house, do not you be the instrument."

"I will think on what you have said, Alice," said Ravenswood, more composedly. "I believe you mean truly and faithfully by me, but you urge the freedom of an ancient domestic somewhat too far. But farewell; and if Heaven afford me better means, I will not fail to contribute to your comfort."

He attempted to put a piece of gold into her hand, which she refused to receive; and, in the slight struggle attending his wish to force it upon her, it dropped to the earth.

"Let it remain an instant on the ground," said Alice, as the Master stooped to raise it; "and believe me, that piece of gold is an emblem of her whom you love; she is as precious, I grant, but you must stoop even to abasement before you can win her. For me, I have as little to do with gold as with earthly passions; and the best news that the world has in store for me is, that Edgar Ravenswood is an hundred miles distant from the seat of his ancestors, with the determination never again to behold it."

"Alice," said the Master, who began to think this earnestness had some more secret cause than arose from anything that the blind woman could have gathered from this casual visit, "I have heard you praised by my mother for your sense, acuteness, and fidelity; you are no fool to start at shadows, or to dread old superstitious saws, like Caleb Balderstone; tell me distinctly where my danger lies, if you are aware of any which is tending towards me. If I know myself, I am free from all such views respecting Miss Ashton as you impute to me. I have necessary business to settle with Sir William; that arranged, I shall depart, and with as little wish, as you may easily believe, to return to a place full of melancholy subjects of reflection, as you have to see me here." Alice bent her sightless eyes on the ground, and was for some time plunged in deep meditation. "I will speak the truth," she said at length, raising up her head—"I will tell you the source of my apprehensions, whether my candour be for good or for evil. Lucy Ashton loves you, Lord of Ravenswood!"

"It is impossible," said the Master.

"A thousand circumstances have proved it to me," replied the blind woman. "Her thoughts have turned on no one else since you saved her from death, and that my experienced judgment has won from her own conversation. Having told you this—if you are indeed a gentleman and your father's son—you will make it a motive for flying from her presence. Her passion will die like a lamp for want of that the flame should feed upon; but, if you remain here, her destruction, or yours, or that of both, will be the inevitable consequence of her misplaced attachment. I tell you this secret unwillingly, but it could not have been hid long from your own observation, and it is better you learn it from mine. Depart, Master of Ravenswood; you have my secret. If you remain an hour under Sir William Ashton's roof without the resolution to marry his daughter, you are a villain; if with the purpose of allying yourself with kin, you are an infatuated and predestined fool." So saying, the old blind woman arose, assumed her staff, and, tottering to her hut, entered it and closed the door, leaving Ravenswood to his own reflections.

CHAPTER XX.

*Lovelier in her own retired abode
....than Naiad by the side
Of Grecian brook—or Lady of the Mere
Lone sitting by the shores of old romance.*

WORDSWORTH.

THE meditations of Ravenswood were of a very mixed complexion. He saw himself at once in the very dilemma which he had for some time felt apprehensive he might be placed in. The pleasure he felt in Lucy's company had indeed approached to fascination, yet it had never altogether surmounted his internal reluctance to wed with the daughter of his father's foe; and even in forgiving Sir William Ashton the injuries which his family had received, and giving him credit for the kind intentions he professed to entertain, he could not bring himself to contemplate as possible an alliance betwixt their houses. Still, he felt that Alice poke truth, and that his honour now required he should take an instant leave of Ravenswood Castle, or become a suitor of Lucy Ashton. The possibility of being rejected, too, should he make advances to her wealthy and powerful father—to sue for the hand of an Ashton and be refused—this were a consummation too disgraceful. "I wish her well," he said to himself, "and for her sake I forgive the injuries her father has done to my house; but I will never—no, never see her more!"

With one bitter pang he adopted this resolution, just as he came to where two paths parted: the one to the Mermaid's Fountain, where he knew Lucy waited him, the other leading to the castle by another and more circuitous road. He paused an instant when about to take the latter path, thinking what apology he should make for conduct which must needs seem extraordinary, and had just muttered to himself, "Sudden news from Edinburgh—any pretext will serve; only let me dally no longer here," when young Henry came flying up to him, half out of breath: "Master, Master you must give Lucy your arm back to the castle, for I cannot give her mine; for Norman is waiting for me, and I am to go with him to make his ring-walk, and I would not stay away for a gold Jacobus; and Lucy is afraid to walk home alone, though all the wild nowt have been shot, and so you must come away directly."

Betwixt two scales equally loaded, a feather's weight will turn the scale. "It is impossible for me to leave the young lady in the wood alone," said Ravenswood; "to see her once more can be of little consequence, after the frequent meetings we have had. I ought, too, in courtesy, to apprise her of my intention to quit the castle."

And having thus satisfied himself that he was taking not only a wise, but an absolutely necessary, step, he took the path to the fatal fountain. Henry no sooner saw him on the way to join his sister than he was off like lightning in another direction, to enjoy the society of the forester in their congenial pursuits. Ravenswood, not allowing himself to give a second thought to the propriety of his own conduct, walked with a quick step towards the stream, where he found Lucy seated alone by the ruin.

She sate upon one of the disjointed stones of the ancient fountain, and seemed to watch the progress of its current, as it bubbled forth to daylight, in gay and sparkling profusion, from under the shadow of the ribbed and darksome vault, with which veneration, or perhaps remorse, had canopied its source. To a superstitious eye, Lucy Ashton, folded in her plaided mantle, with her long hair, escaping partly from the snood and falling upon her silver neck, might have suggested the idea of the murdered Nymph of the fountain. But Ravenswood only saw a female exquisitely beautiful, and rendered yet more so in his eyes—how could it be otherwise?—by the consciousness that she had placed her affections on him. As he gazed on her, he felt his fixed resolution melting like wax in the sun, and hastened, therefore, from his concealment in the neighbouring thicket. She saluted him, but did not arise from the stone on which she was seated.

"My madcap brother," she said, "has left me, but I expect him back in a few minutes; for, fortunately, as anything pleases him for a minute, nothing has charms for him much longer."

Ravenswood did not feel the power of informing Lucy that her brother meditated a distant excursion, and would not return in haste. He sate himself down on the grass, at some little distance from Miss Ashton, and both were silent for a short space.

"I like this spot," said Lucy at length, as if she found the silence embarrassing; "the bubbling murmur of the clear fountain, the waving of the trees, the profusion of grass and wild-flowers that rise among the ruins, make it like a scene in romance. I think, too, I have heard it is a spot connected with the legendary lore which I love so well."

"It has been thought," answered Ravenswood, "a fatal spot to my family; and I have some reason to term it so, for it was here I first saw Miss Ashton; and it is here I must take my leave of her for ever."

The blood, which the first part of this speech called into Lucy's cheeks, was speedily expelled by its conclusion.

"To take leave of us, Master!" she exclaimed; "what can have happened to hurry you away? I know Alice hates—I mean dislikes my father; and I hardly understood her humour to-day, it was so mysterious. But I am certain my father is sincerely grateful for the high service you rendered us. Let me hope that, having won your friendship hardly, we shall not lose it lightly."

"Lose it, Miss Ashton!" said the Master of Ravenswood. "No; wherever my fortune calls me—whatever she inflicts upon me—it is your friend—your sincere friend, who acts or suffers. But there is a fate on me, and I must go, or I shall add the ruin of others to my own."

"Yet do not go from us, Master," said Lucy; and she laid her hand, in all simplicity and kindness, upon the skirt of his cloak, as if to detain him. "You shall not part from us. My father is powerful, he has friends that are more so than himself; do not go till you see what his gratitude will do for you. Believe me, he is already labouring in your behalf with the council."

"It may be so," said the Master, proudly; "yet it is not to your father, Miss Ashton, but to my own exertions, that I ought to owe success in the career on which I am about to enter. My preparations are already made—a sword and a cloak, and a bold heart and a determined hand."

Lucy covered her face her hands, and the tears, in spite of her, forced their way between her fingers.

"Forgive me," said Ravenswood, taking her right hand, which, after slight resistance, she yielded to him, still continuing to shade her face with the left—"I am too rude—too rough—too intractable to deal with any being so soft and gentle as you are. Forget that so stern a vision has crossed your path of life; and let me pursue mine, sure that I can meet with no worse misfortune after the moment it divides me from your side."

Lucy wept on, but her tears were less bitter. Each attempt which the Master made to explain his purpose of departure only proved a new evidence of his desire to stay; until, at length, instead of bidding her farewell, he gave his faith to her for ever, and received her troth in return. The whole passed so suddenly, and arose so much out of the immediate impulse of the moment, that ere the Master of Ravenswood could reflect upon the consequences of the step which he had taken, their lips, as well as their hands, had pledged the sincerity of their affection.

"And now," he said, after a moment's consideration, "it is fit I should speak to Sir William Ashton; he must know of our engagement. Ravenswood must not seem to dwell under his roof to solicit clandestinely the affections of his daughter."

"You would not speak to my father on the subject?" said Lucy, doubtingly; and then added more warmly: "Oh do not—do not! Let your lot in life be determined—your station and purpose ascertained, before you address my father. I am sure he loves you—I think he will consent; but then my mother——!"

She paused, ashamed to express the doubt she felt how far her father dared to form any positive resolution on this most important subject without the consent of his lady.

"Your mother, my Lucy!" replied Ravenswood. "She is of the house of Douglas, a house that has intermarried with mine even when its glory and power were at the highest; what could your mother object to my alliance?"

"I did not say object," said Lucy; "but she is jealous of her rights, and may claim a mother's title to be consulted in the first instance."

"Be it so," replied Ravenswood. "London is distant, but a letter will reach it and receive an answer within a fortnight; I will not press on the Lord Keeper for an instant reply to my proposal."

"But," hesitated Lucy, "were it not better to wait—to wait a few weeks? Were my mother to see you—to know you, I am sure she would approve; but you are unacquainted personally, and the ancient feud between the families——"

Ravenswood fixed upon her his keen dark eyes, as if he was desirous of penetrating into her very soul.

"Lucy," he said, "I have sacrificed to you projects of vengeance long nursed, and sworn to with ceremonies little better than heathen—I sacrificed them to your image, ere I knew the worth which it represented. In the evening which succeeded my poor father's funeral, I cut a lock from my hair, and, as it consumed in the fire, I swore that my rage and revenge should pursue his enemies, until they shrivelled before me like that scorched-up symbol of annihilation."

"It was a deadly sin," said Lucy, turning pale, "to make a vow so fatal."

"I acknowledge it," said Ravenswood, "and it had been a worse crime to keep it. It was for your sake that I abjured these purposes of vengeance, though I scarce knew that such was the argument by which I was conquered, until I saw you once more, and became conscious of the influence you possessed over me."

"And why do you now," said Lucy, "recall sentiments so terrible—sentiments so inconsistent with those you profess for me—with those your importunity has prevailed on me to acknowledge?"

"Because," said her lover, "I would impress on you the price at which I have bought your love—the right I have to expect your constancy. I say not that I have bartered for it the honour of my house, its last remaining possession; but though I say it not, and think it not, I cannot conceal from myself that the world may do both."

"If such are your sentiments," said Lucy, "you have played a cruel game with me. But it is not too late to give it over: take back the faith and troth which you could not plight to me without suffering abatement of honour—let what is passed be as if it had not been—forget me; I will endeavour to forget myself."

"You do me injustice," said the Master of Ravenswood—"by all I hold true and honourable, you do me the extremity of injustice; if I mentioned the price at which I have bought your love, it is only to show how much I prize it, to bind our engagement by a still firmer tie, and to show, by what I have done to attain this station in your regard, how much I must suffer should you ever break your faith."

"And why, Ravenswood," answered Lucy, "should you think that possible? Why should you urge me with even the mention of infidelity? Is it because I ask you to delay applying to my father for a little space of time? Bind me by what vows you please; if vows are unnecessary to secure constancy, they may yet prevent suspicion." Ravenswood pleaded, apologised, and even kneeled, to appease her displeasure; and Lucy, as placable as she was single-hearted, readily forgave the offence which his doubts had implied. The dispute thus agitated, however, ended by the lovers going through an emblematic ceremony of their troth-pledge, of which the vulgar still preserve some traces. They broke betwixt them the thin broad-piece of gold which Alice had refused to receive from Ravenswood.

"And never shall this leave my bosom," said Lucy, as she hung the piece of gold round her neck, and concealed it with her handkerchief, "until you, Edgar Ravenswood, ask me to resign it to you; and, while I wear it, never shall that heart acknowledge another love than yours."

With like protestations, Ravenswood placed his portion of the coin opposite to his heart. And now, at length, it struck them that time had hurried fast on during this interview, and their absence at the castle would be subject of remark, if not of alarm. As they arose to leave the fountain which had been witness of their mutual engagement, an arrow whistled through the air, and struck a raven perched on the sere branch of an old oak, near to where they had been seated. The bird fluttered a few yards and dropped at the feet of Lucy, whose dress was stained with some spots of its blood.

Miss Ashton was much alarmed, and Ravenswood, surprised and angry, looked everywhere for the marksman, who had given them a proof of his skill as little expected as desired. He was not long of discovering himself, being no other than Henry Ashton, who came running up with a crossbow in his hand.

"I knew I should startle you," he said; "and do you know, you looked so busy that I hoped it would have fallen souse on your heads before you were aware of it. What was the Master saying to you, Lucy?"

"I was telling your sister what an idle lad you were, keeping us waiting here for you so long," said Ravenswood, to save Lucy's confusion.

"Waiting for me! Why, I told you to see Lucy home, and that I was to go to make the ring-walk with old Norman in the Hayberry thicket, and you may be sure that would take a good hour, and we have all the deer's marks and furnishes got, while you were sitting here with Lucy, like a lazy loon."

"Well, well, Mr. Henry," said Ravenswood; "but let us see how you will answer to me for killing the raven. Do you know, the ravens are all under the protection of the Lords of Ravenswood, and to kill one in their presence is such bad luck that it deserves the stab?"

"And that's what Norman said," replied the boy; "he came as far with me as within a flight-shot of you, and he said he never saw a raven sit still so near living folk, and he wished it might be for good luck, for the raven is one of the wildest birds that flies, unless it be a tame one; and so I crept on and on, till I was within threescore yards of him, and then whiz went the bolt, and there he lies, faith! Was it not well shot? and, I dare say, I have not shot in a crossbow!—not ten times, maybe."

"Admirably shot, indeed," said Ravenswood; "and you will be a fine marksman if you practise hard."

"And that's what Norman says," answered the boy; "but I am sure it is not my fault if I do not practise enough; for, of free will, I would do little else, only my father and tutor are angry sometimes, and only Miss Lucy there gives herself airs about my being busy, for all she can sit idle by a well-side the whole day, when she has a handsome young gentleman to prate with. I have known her do so twenty times, if you will believe me."

The boy looked at his sister as he spoke, and, in the midst of his mischievous chatter, had the sense to see that he was really inflicting pain upon her, though without being able to comprehend the cause or the amount.

"Come now, Lucy," he said, "don't grieve; and if I have said anything beside the mark, I'll deny it again; and what does the Master of Ravenswood care if you had a hundred sweethearts? so ne'er put finger in your eye about it."

The Master of Ravenswood was, for the moment, scarce satisfied with what he heard; yet his good sense naturally regarded it as the chatter of a spoilt boy, who strove to mortify his sister in the point which seemed most accessible for the time. But, although of a temper equally slow in receiving impressions and obstinate in retaining them, the prattle of Henry served to nourish in his mind some vague suspicion that his present engagement might only end in his being exposed, like a conquered enemy in a Roman triumph, a captive attendant on the car of a victor who meditated only the satiating his pride at the expense of the vanquished. There was, we repeat it, no real ground whatever for such an apprehension, nor could he be said seriously to entertain such for a moment. Indeed, it was impossible to look at the clear blue eye of Lucy Ashton, and entertain the slightest permanent doubt concerning the sincerity of her disposition. Still, however, conscious pride and conscious poverty combined to render a mind suspicious which in more fortunate circumstances would have been a stranger to that as well as to every other meanness.

They reached the castle, where Sir William Ashton, who had been alarmed by the length of their stay, met them in the hall.

"Had Lucy," he said, "been in any other company than that of one who had shown he had so complete power of protecting her, he confessed he should have been very uneasy, and would have despatched persons in quest of them. But, in the company of the Master of Ravenswood, he knew his daughter had nothing to dread." Lucy commenced some apology for their long delay, but, conscience-struck, becomes confused as she proceeded; and when Ravenswood, coming to her assistance, endeavoured to render the explanation complete and satisfactory, he only involved himself in the same disorder, like one who, endeavouring to extricate his companion from a slough, entangles himself in the same tenacious swamp. It cannot be supposed that the confusion of the two youthful lovers escaped the observation of the subtle lawyer, accustomed, by habit and profession, to trace human nature through all her windings. But it was not his present policy to take any notice of what he observed. He desired to hold the Master of Ravenswood bound, but wished that he himself should remain free; and it did not occur to him that his plan might be defeated by Lucy's returning the passion which he hoped she might inspire. If she should adopt some romantic feelings towards Ravenswood, in which circumstances, or the positive and absolute opposition of Lady Ashton, might render it inadvisable to indulge her, the Lord Keeper conceived they might be easily superseded and annulled by a journey to Edinburgh, or even to London, a new set of Brussels lace, and the soft whispers of half a dozen lovers, anxious to replace him whom it was convenient she should renounce. This was his provision for the worst view of the case. But, according to its more probable issue, any passing favours she might entertain for the Master of Ravenswood might require encouragement rather than repression.

This seemed the more likely, as he had that very morning, since their departure from the castle, received a letter, the contents of which he hastened to communicate to Ravenswood. A foot-post had arrived with a packet to the Lord Keeper from that friend whom we have already mentioned, who was labouring hard underhand to consolidate a band of patriots, at the head of whom stood Sir William's greatest terror, the active and ambitious Marquis of A——. The success of this convenient friend had been such, that he had obtained from Sir William, not indeed a directly favourable answer, but certainly a most patient hearing. This he had reported to his principal, who had replied by the ancient French adage, "Chateau qui parle, et femme qui ecoute, l'un et l'autre va se rendre." A statesman who hears you propose a change of measures without reply was, according to the Marquis's opinion, in the situation of the fortress which parleys and the lady who listens, and he resolved to press the siege of the Lord Keeper.

The packet, therefore, contained a letter from his friend and ally, and another from himself, to the Lord Keeper, frankly offering an unceremonious visit. They were crossing the country to go to the southward; the roads were indifferent; the accommodation of the inns as execrable as possible; the Lord Keeper had been long acquainted intimately with one of his correspondents, and, though more slightly known to the Marquis, had yet enough of his lordship's acquaintance to render the visit sufficiently natural, and to shut the mouths of those who might be disposed to impute it to a political intrigue. He instantly accepted the offered visit, determined, however, that he would not pledge himself an inch farther for the furtherance of their views than REASON (by which he meant his own self-interest) should plainly point out to him as proper.

Two circumstances particularly delighted him—the presence of Ravenswood, and the absence of his own lady. By having the former under his roof, he conceived he might be able to quash all such hazardous and hostile proceedings as he might otherwise have been engaged in, under the patronage of the Marquis; and Lucy, he foresaw, would make, for his immediate purpose of delay and procrastination, a much better mistress of his family than her mother, who would, he was sure, in some shape or other, contrive to disconcert his political schemes by her proud and implacable temper.

His anxious solicitations that the Master would stay to receive his kinsman, were, of course, readily complied with, since the eclairsissement which had taken place at the Mermaiden's Fountain had removed all wish for sudden departure. Lucy and Lockhard, had, therefore, orders to provide all things necessary in their different departments, for receiving the expected guests with a pomp and display of luxury very uncommon in Scotland at that remote period.

CHAPTER XXI.

*Marall: Sir, the man of honour's come,
Newly alighted—Overreach: In without reply,
And do as I command....
Is the loud music I gave order for
Ready to receive him?*

New Way to pay Old Debts.

SIR WILLIAM ASHTON, although a man of sense, legal information, and great practical knowledge of the world, had yet some points of character which corresponded better with the timidity of his disposition and the supple arts by which he had risen in the world, than to the degree of eminence which he had attained; as they tended to show an original mediocrity of understanding, however highly it had been cultivated, and a native meanness of disposition, however carefully veiled. He loved the ostentatious display of his wealth, less as a man to whom habit has made it necessary, than as one to whom it is still delightful from its novelty. The most trivial details did not escape him; and Lucy soon learned to watch the flush of scorn which crossed Ravenswood's cheek, when he heard her father gravely arguing with Lockhard, nay, even with the old housekeeper, upon circumstances which, in families of rank, are left uncared for, because it is supposed impossible they can be neglected.

"I could pardon Sir William," said Ravenswood, one evening after he had left the room, "some general anxiety upon this occasion, for the Marquis's visit is an honour, and should be received as such; but I am worn out by these miserable minutiae of the buttery, and the larder, and the very hencoop—they drive me beyond my patience; I would rather endure the poverty of Wolf's Crag than be pestered with the wealth of Ravenswood Castle."

"And yet," said Lucy, "it was by attention to these minutiae that my father acquired the property——"

"Which my ancestors sold for lack of it," replied Ravenswood. "Be it so; a porter still bears but a burden, though the burden be of gold."

Lucy sighed; she perceived too plainly that her lover held in scorn the manners and habits of a father to whom she had long looked up as her best and most partial friend, whose fondness had often consoled her for her mother's contemptuous harshness.

The lovers soon discovered that they differed upon other and no less important topics. Religion, the mother of peace, was, in those days of discord, so much misconstrued and mistaken, that her rules and forms were the subject of the most opposite opinions and the most hostile animosities. The Lord Keeper, being a Whig, was, of course, a Presbyterian, and had found it convenient, at different periods, to express greater zeal for the kirk than perhaps he really felt. His family, equally of course, were trained under the same institution. Ravenswood, as we know, was a High Churchman, or Episcopalian, and frequently objected to Lucy the fanaticism of some of her own communion, while she intimated, rather than expressed, horror at the latitudinarian principles which she had been taught to think connected with the prelatial form of church government.

Thus, although their mutual affection seemed to increase rather than to be diminished as their characters opened more fully on each other, the feelings of each were mingled with some less agreeable ingredients. Lucy felt a secret awe, amid all her affection for Ravenswood. His soul was of an higher, prouder character than those with whom she had hitherto mixed in intercourse; his ideas were more fierce and free; and he contemned many of the opinions which had been inculcated upon her as chiefly demanding her veneration. On the other hand, Ravenswood saw in Lucy a soft and flexible character, which, in his eyes at least, seemed too susceptible of being moulded to any form by those with whom she lived. He felt that his own temper required a partner of a more independent spirit, who could set sail with him on his course of life, resolved as himself to dare indifferently the storm and the favouring breeze. But Lucy was so beautiful, so devoutly attached to him, of a temper so exquisitely soft and kind, that, while he could have wished it were possible to inspire her with a greater degree of firmness and resolution, and while he sometimes became impatient of the extreme fear which she expressed of their attachment being prematurely discovered, he felt that the softness of a mind, amounting almost to feebleness, rendered her even dearer to him, as a being who had voluntarily clung to him for protection, and made

him the arbiter of her fate for weal or woe. His feelings towards her at such moments were those which have been since so beautifully expressed by our immortal Joanna Baillie:

*Thou sweetest thing,
That e'er did fix its lightly-fibred sprays
To the rude rock, ah! wouldst thou cling to me?
Rough and storm-worn I am; yet love me as
Thou truly dost, I will love thee again
With true and honest heart, though all unmeet
To be the mate of such sweet gentleness.*

Thus the very points in which they differed seemed, in some measure, to ensure the continuance of their mutual affection. If, indeed, they had so fully appreciated each other's character before the burst of passion in which they hastily pledged their faith to each other, Lucy might have feared Ravenswood too much ever to have loved him, and he might have construed her softness and docile temper as imbecility, rendering her unworthy of his regard. But they stood pledged to each other; and Lucy only feared that her lover's pride might one day teach him to regret his attachment; Ravenswood, that a mind so ductile as Lucy's might, in absence or difficulties, be induced, by the entreaties or influence of those around her, to renounce the engagement she had formed.

"Do not fear it," said Lucy, when upon one occasion a hint of such suspicion escaped her lover; "the mirrors which receive the reflection of all successive objects are framed of hard materials like glass or steel; the softer substances, when they receive an impression, retain it undefaced."

"This is poetry, Lucy," said Ravenswood; "and in poetry there is always fallacy, and sometimes fiction."

"Believe me, then, once more, in honest prose," said Lucy, "that, though I will never wed man without the consent of my parents, yet neither force nor persuasion shall dispose of my hand till you renounce the right I have given you to it."

The lovers had ample time for such explanations. Henry was now more seldom their companion, being either a most unwilling attendant upon the lessons of his tutor, or a forward volunteer under the instructions of the foresters or grooms. As for the Keeper, his mornings were spent in his study, maintaining correspondences of all kinds, and balancing in his anxious mind the various intelligence which he collected from every quarter concerning the expected change of Scottish politics, and the probable strength of the parties who were about to struggle for power. At other times he busied himself about arranging, and countermanding, and then again arranging, the preparations which he judged necessary for the reception of the Marquis of A——, whose arrival had been twice delayed by some necessary cause of detention.

In the midst of all these various avocations, political and domestic, he seemed not to observe how much his daughter and his guest were thrown into each other's society, and was censured by many of his neighbours, according to the fashion of neighbours in all countries, for suffering such an intimate connexion to take place betwixt two young persons. The only natural explanation was, that he designed them for each other; while, in truth, his only motive was to temporise and procrastinate until he should discover the real extent of the interest which the Marquis took in Ravenswood's affairs, and the power which he was likely to possess of advancing them. Until these points should be made both clear and manifest, the Lord Keeper resolved that he would do nothing to commit himself, either in one shape or other; and, like many cunning persons, he overreached himself deplorably.

Amongst those who had been disposed to censure, with the greatest severity, the conduct of Sir William Ashton, in permitting the prolonged residence of Ravenswood under his roof, and his constant attendance on Miss Ashton, was the new Laird of Girnington, and his faithful squire and bottleholder, personages formerly well known to us by the names of Hayston and Bucklaw, and his companion Captain Craigengelt. The former had at length succeeded to the extensive property of his long-lived grand-aunt, and to considerable wealth besides, which he had employed in redeeming his paternal acres (by the title appertaining to which he still chose to be designated), notwithstanding Captain Craigengelt had proposed to him a most advantageous mode of vesting the money in Law's scheme, which was just then broached, and offered his services to travel express to Paris for the purpose. But Bucklaw had so far derived wisdom from adversity, that he would listen to no proposal which Craigengelt could invent, which had the slightest tendency to risk his newly-acquired independence. He that had once eat pease-bannocks, drank sour wine, and slept in the secret chamber at Wolf's Crag, would, he said, prize good cheer and a soft bed as long as he lived, and take special care never to need such hospitality again.

Craigengelt, therefore, found himself disappointed in the first hopes he had entertained of making a good hand of the Laird of Bucklaw. Still, however, he reaped many advantages from his friend's good fortune. Bucklaw, who had never been at all scrupulous in choosing his companions, was accustomed to, and entertained by, a fellow whom he could either laugh with or laugh at as he had a mind, who would take, according to Scottish phrase, "the bit and the buffet," understood all sports, whether within or without doors, and, when the laird had a mind for a bottle of wine (no infrequent circumstance), was always ready to save him from the scandal of getting drunk by himself. Upon these terms, Craigengelt was the frequent, almost the constant, inmate of the house of Girnington.

In no time, and under no possibility of circumstances, could good have been derived from such an intimacy, however its bad consequences might be qualified by the thorough knowledge which Bucklaw possessed of his dependant's character, and the high contempt in which he held it. But, as circumstances stood, this evil communication was particularly liable to corrupt what good principles nature had implanted in the patron.

Craigengelt had never forgiven the scorn with which Ravenswood had torn the mask of courage and honesty from his countenance; and to exasperate Bucklaw's resentment against him was the safest mode of revenge which occurred to his cowardly, yet cunning and malignant, disposition.

He brought up on all occasions the story of the challenge which Ravenswood had declined to accept, and endeavoured, by every possible insinuation, to make his patron believe that his honour was concerned in bringing that matter to an issue by a present discussion with Ravenswood. But respecting this subject Bucklaw imposed on him, at length, a peremptory command of silence.

"I think," he said, "the Master has treated me unlike a gentleman, and I see no right he had to send me back a cavalier answer when I demanded the satisfaction of one. But he gave me my life once; and, in looking the matter over at present, I put myself but on equal terms with him. Should he cross me again, I shall consider the old accopt as balanced, and his Mastership will do well to look to himself."

"That he should," re-echoed Craigengelt; "for when you are in practice, Bucklaw, I would bet a magnum you are through him before the third pass."

"Then you know nothing of the matter," said Bucklaw, "and you never saw him fence."

"And I know nothing of the matter?" said the dependant—"a good jest, I promise you! And though I never saw Ravenswood fence, have I not been at Monsieur Sagoon's school, who was the first maitre d'armes at Paris; and have I not been at Signor Poco's at Florence, and Meinheer Durchstossen's at Vienna, and have I not seen all their play?"

"I don't know whether you have or not," said Bucklaw; "but what about it, though you had?"

"Only that I will be d—d if ever I saw French, Italian, or High-Dutchman ever make foot, hand, and eye keep time half so well as you, Bucklaw."

"I believe you lie, Craigie," said Bucklaw; "however, I can hold my own, both with single rapier, backsword, sword and dagger, broadsword, or case of falchions—and that's as much as any gentleman need know of the matter."

"And the doubt of what ninety-nine out of a hundred know," said Craigengelt; "they learn to change a few thrusts with the small sword, and then, forsooth, they understand the noble art of defence! Now, when I was at Rouen in the year 1695, there was a Chevalier de Chapon and I went to the opera, where we found three bits of English birkies——" "Is it a long story you are going to tell?" said Bucklaw, interrupting him without ceremony.

"Just as you like," answered the parasite, "for we made short work of it."

"Then I like it short," said Bucklaw. "Is it serious or merry?"

"Devilish serious, I assure you, and so they found it; for the Chevalier and I——"

"Then I don't like it at all," said Bucklaw; "so fill a brimmer of my auld auntie's claret, rest her heart! And, as the Hielandman says, Skioch doch na skiall."

"That was what tough old Sir Even Dhu used to say to me when I was out with the metall'd lads in 1689. 'Craigengelt,' he used to say, 'you are as pretty a fellow as ever held steel in his grip, but you have one fault.'"

"If he had known you as long as I have don," said Bucklaw, "he would have found out some twenty more; but hand long stories, give us your toast, man."

Craigengelt rose, went a-tiptoe to the door, peeped out, shut it carefully, came back again, clapped his tarnished gold-laced hat on one side of his head, took his glass in one hand, and touching the hilt of his hanger with the other, named, "The King over the water."

"I tell you what it is, Captain Craigengelt," said Bucklaw; "I shall keep my mind to myself on these subjects, having too much respect for the memory of my venerable Aunt Girnington to put her lands and tenements in the way of committing treason against established authority. Bring me King James to Edinburgh, Captain, with thirty thousand men at his back, and I'll tell you what I think about his title; but as for running my neck into a noose, and my good broad lands into the statutory penalties, 'in that case made and provided,' rely upon it, you will find me no such fool. So, when you mean to vapour with your hanger and your dram-cup in support of treasonable toasts, you must find your liquor and company elsewhere."

"Well, then," said Craigengelt, "name the toast yourself, and be it what it like, I'll pledge you, were it a mile to the bottom."

"And I'll give you a toast that deserves it, my boy," said Bucklaw; "what say you to Miss Lucy Ashton?"

"Up with it," said the Captain, as he tossed off his brimmer, "the bonniest lass in Lothian! What a pity the old sneckdrawing Whigamore, her father, is about to throw her away upon that rag of pride and beggary, the Master of Ravenswood!"

"That's not quite so clear," said Bucklaw, in a tone which, though it seemed indifferent, excited his companion's eager curiosity; and not that only, but also his hope of working himself into some sort of confidence, which might make him necessary to his patron, being by no means satisfied to rest on mere sufferance, if he could form by art or industry a more permanent title to his favour.

"I thought," said he, after a moment's pause, "that was a settled matter; they are continually together, and nothing else is spoken of betwixt Lammer Law and Traprain."

"They may say what they please," replied his patron, "but I know better; and I'll give you Miss Lucy Ashton's health again, my boy."

"And I woul drink it on my knee," said Craigengelt, "if I thought the girl had the spirit to jilt that d—d son of a Spaniard."

"I am to request you will not use the word 'jilt' and Miss Ashton's name together," said Bucklaw, gravely.

"Jilt, did I say? Discard, my lad of acres—by Jove, I meant to discard," replied Craigengelt; "and I hope she'll discard him like a small card at piquet, and take in the king of hearts, my boy! But yet——"

"But what?" said his patron.

"But yet I know for certain they are hours together alone, and in the woods and the fields."

"That's her foolish father's dotage; that will be soon put out of the lass's head, if it ever gets into it," answered Bucklaw. "And now fill your glass again, Captain; I am going to make you happy; I am going to let you into a secret—a plot—a noosing plot—only the noose is but typical."

"A marrying matter?" said Craigengelt, and his jaw fell as he asked the question, for he suspected that matrimony would render his situation at Girnington much more precarious than during the jolly days of his patron's bachelorhood.

"Ay, a marriage, man," said Bucklaw; "but wherefore droops thy mighty spirit, and why grow the rubies on thy cheek so pale? The board will have a corner, and the corner will have a trencher, and the trencher will have a glass beside it; and the board-end shall be filled, and the trencher and the glass shall be replenished for thee, if all the petticoats in Lothian had sworn the contrary. What, man! I am not the boy to put myself into leading-strings."

"So says many an honest fellow," said Craigengelt, "and some of my special friends; but, curse me if I know the reason, the women could never bear me, and always contrived to trundle me out of favour before the honeymoon was over."

"If you could have kept your ground till that was over, you might have made a good year's pension," said Bucklaw.

"But I never could," answered the dejected parasite. "There was my Lord Castle-Cuddy—we were hand and glove: I rode his horses, borrowed money both for him and from him, trained his hawks, and taught him how to lay his bets; and when he took a fancy of marrying, I married him to Katie Glegg, whom I thought myself as sure of as man could be of woman. Egad, she had me out of the house, as if I had run on wheels, within the first fortnight!"

"Well!" replied Bucklaw, "I think I have nothing of Castle-Cuddy about me, or Lucy of Katie Glegg. But you see the thing will go on whether you like it or no; the only question is, will you be useful?"

"Useful!" exclaimed the Captain, "and to thee, my lad of lands, my darling boy, whom I would tramp barefooted through the world for! Name time, place, mode, and circumstances, and see if I will not be useful in all uses that can be devised."

"Why, then, you must ride two hundred miles for me," said the patron.

"A thousand, and call them a flea's leap," answered the dependant; "I'll cause saddle my horse directly."

"Better stay till you know where you are to go, and what you are to do," quoth Bucklaw. "You know I have a kinswoman in Northumberland, Lady Blenkinsop by name, whose old acquaintance I had the misfortune to lose in the period of my poverty, but the light of whose countenance shone forth upon me when the sun of my prosperity began to arise."

"D—n all such double-faced jades!" exclaimed Craigengelt, heroically; "this I will say for John Craigengelt, that he is his friend's friend through good report and bad report, poverty and riches; and you know something of that yourself, Bucklaw."

"I have not forgot your merits," said his patron; "I do remember that, in my extremities, you had a mind to CRIMP me for the service of the French king, or of the Pretender; and, moreover, that you afterwards lent me a score of pieces, when, as I firmly believe, you had heard the news that old Lady Girnington had a touch of the dead palsy. But don't be downcast, John; I believe, after all, you like me very well in your way, and it is my misfortune to have no better counsellor at present. To return to this Lady Blenkinsop, you must know, she is a close confederate of Duchess Sarah."

"What! of Sall Jennings?" exclaimed Craigengelt; "then she must be a good one."

"Hold your tongue, and keep your Tory rants to yourself, if it be possible," said Bucklaw. "I tell you, that through the Duchess of Marlborough has this Northumbrian cousin of mine become a crony of Lady Ashton, the Keeper's wife, or, I may say, the Lord Keeper's Lady Keeper, and she has favoured Lady Blenkinsop with a visit on her return from London, and is just now at her old mansion-house on the banks of the Wansbeck. Now, sir, as it has been the use and wont of these ladies to consider their husbands as of no importance in the management of their own families, it has been their present pleasure, without consulting Sir William Ashton, to put on the tapis a matrimonial alliance, to be concluded between Lucy Ashton and my own right honourable self, Lady Ashton acting as self-constituted plenipotentiary on the part of her daughter and husband, and Mother Blenkinsop, equally unaccredited, doing me the honour to be my representative. You may suppose I was a little astonished when I found that a treaty, in which I was so considerably interested, had advanced a good way before I was even consulted."

"Capot me! if I think that was according to the rules of the game," said his confidant; "and pray, what answer did you return?"

"Why, my first thought was to send the treaty to the devil, and the negotiators along with it, for a couple of meddling old women; my next was to laugh very heartily; and my third and last was a settled opinion that the thing was reasonable, and would suit me well enough."

"Why, I thought you had never seen the wench but once, and then she had her riding-mask on; I am sure you told me so."

"Ay, but I liked her very well then. And Ravenswood's dirty usage of me—shutting me out of doors to dine with the lackeys, because he had the Lord Keeper, forsooth, and his daughter, to be guests in his beggarly castle of starvation,—d—n me, Craigengelt, if I ever forgive him till I play him as good a trick!"

"No more you should, if you are a lad of mettle," said Craigengelt, the matter now taking a turn in which he could sympathise; "and if you carry this wench from him, it will break his heart."

"That it will not," said Bucklaw; "his heart is all steeled over with reason and philosophy, things that you, Craigie, know nothing about more than myself, God help me. But it will break his pride, though, and that's what I'm driving at."

"Distance me!" said Craigengelt, "but I know the reason now of his unmannerly behaviour at his old tumble-down tower yonder. Ashamed of your company?—no, no! Gad, he was afraid you would cut in and carry off the girl."

"Eh! Craigengelt?" said Bucklaw, "do you really think so? but no, no! he is a devilish deal prettier man than I am." "Who—he?" exclaimed the parasite. "He's as black as the crook; and for his size—he's a tall fellow, to be sure, but give me a light, stout, middle-sized——"

"Plague on thee!" said Bucklaw, interrupting him, "and on me for listening to you! You would say as much if I were hunch-backed. But as to Ravenswood—he has kept no terms with me, I'll keep none with him; if I CAN win this girl from him, I WILL win her."

"Win her! 'sblood, you SHALL win her, point, quint, and quatorze, my king of trumps; you shall pique, repique, and capot him."

"Prithee, stop thy gambling cant for one instant," said Bucklaw. "Things have come thus far, that I have entertained the proposal of my kinswoman, agreed to the terms of jointure, amount of fortune, and so forth, and that the affair is to go forward when Lady Ashton comes down, for she takes her daughter and her son in her own hand. Now they want me to send up a confidential person with some writings."

"By this good win, I'll ride to the end of the world—the very gates of Jericho, and the judgment-seat of Prester John, for thee!" ejaculated the Captain.

"Why, I believe you would do something for me, and a great deal for yourself. Now, any one could carry the writings; but you will have a little more to do. You must contrive to drop out before my Lady Ashton, just as if it were a matter of little consequence, the residence of Ravenswood at her husband's house, and his close intercourse with Miss Ashton; and you may tell her that all the country talks of a visit from the Marquis of A——, as it is supposed, to make up the match betwixt Ravenswood and her daughter. I should like to hear what she says to all this; for, rat me! if I have any idea of starting for the plate at all if Ravenswood is to win the race, and he has odds against me already."

"Never a bit; the wench has too much sense, and in that belief I drink her health a third time; and, were time and place fitting, I would drink it on bended knees, and he that would not pledge me, I would make his guts garter his stockings."

"Hark ye, Craigengelt; as you are going into the society of women of rank," said Bucklaw, "I'll thank you to forget your strange blackguard oaths and 'damme's.' I'll write to them, though, that you are a blunt, untaught fellow."

"Ay, ay," replied Craigengelt—"a plain, blunt, honest, downright soldier."

"Not too honest, not too much of the soldier neither; but such as thou art, it is my luck to need thee, for I must have spurs put to Lady Ashton's motions." "I'll dash them up to the rowel-heads," said Craigengelt; "she shall come here at the gallop, like a cow chased by a whole nest of hornets, and her tail over her rump like a corkscrew."

"And hear ye, Craigie," said Bucklaw; "your boots and doublet are good enough to drink in, as the man says in the play, but they are somewhat too greasy for tea-table service; prithee, get thyself a little better rigged out, and here is to pay all charges."

"Nay, Bucklaw; on my soul, man, you use me ill. However," added Craigengelt, pocketing the money, "if you will have me so far indebted to you, I must be conforming."

"Well, horse and away!" said the patron, "so soon as you have got your riding livery in trim. You may ride the black crop-ear; and, hark ye, I'll make you a present of him to boot."

"I drink to the good luck of my mission," answered the ambassador, "in a half-pint bumper."

"I thank ye, Craigie, and pledge you; I see nothing against it but the father or the girl taking a tantrum, and I am told the mother can wind them both round her little finger. Take care not to affront her with any of your Jacobite jargon."

"Oh, ay, true—she is a Whig, and a friend of old Sall of Marlborough; thank my stars, I can hoist any colours at a pinch! I have fought as hard under John Churchill as ever I did under Dundee or the Duke of Berwick."

"I verily believe you, Craigie," said the lord of the mansion; "but, Craigie, do you, pray, step down to the cellar, and fetch us up a bottle of the Burgundy, 1678; it is in the fourth bin from the right-hand turn. And I say, Craigie, you may fetch up half a dozen whilst you are about it. Egad, we'll make a night on't!"

CHAPTER XXII.

*And soon they spied the merry-men green,
And eke the coach and four.*

Duke upon Duke.

CRAIGENGELT set forth on his mission so soon as his equipage was complete, prosecuted his journey with all diligence, and accomplished his commission with all the dexterity for which bucklaw had given him credit. As he arrived with credentials from Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw, he was extremely welcome to both ladies; and those who are prejudiced in favour of a new acquaintance can, for a time at least, discover excellencies in his very faults and perfections in his deficiencies. Although both ladies were accustomed to good society, yet, being pre-determined to find out an agreeable and well-behaved gentleman in Mr. Hayston's friend, they succeeded wonderfully in imposing on themselves. It is true that Craigengelt was now handsomely dressed, and that was a point of no small consequence. But, independent of outward show, his blackguard impudence of address was construed into honourable bluntness becoming his supposed military profession; his hectoring passed for courage, and his sauciness for wit. Lest, however, any one should think this a violation of probability, we must add, in fairness to the two ladies, that their discernment was greatly blinded, and their favour propitiated, by the opportune arrival of Captain Craigengelt in the moment when they were longing for a third hand to make a party at tre-dille, in which, as in all games, whether of chance or skill, that worthy person was a great proficient.

When he found himself established in favour, his next point was how best to use it for the furtherance of his patron's views. He found Lady Ashton prepossessed strongly in favour of the motion which Lady Blenkinsop, partly from regard to her kinswoman, partly from the spirit of match-making, had not hesitated to propose to her; so that his task was an easy one. Bucklaw, reformed from his prodigality, was just the sort of husband which she desired to have for her Shepherdess of Lammermoor; and while the marriage gave her an easy fortune, and a respectable country gentleman for her husband, Lady Ashton was of opinion that her destinies would be fully and most favourably accomplished. It so chanced, also, that Bucklaw, among his new acquisitions, had gained the management of a little political interest in a neighbouring county where the Douglas family originally held large possessions. It was one of the bosom-hopes of Lady Ashton that her eldest son, Sholto, should represent this county in the British Parliament, and she saw this alliance with Bucklaw as a circumstance which might be highly favourable to her wishes.

Craigengelt, who, in his way, by no means wanted sagacity, no sooner discovered in what quarter the wind of Lady Ashton's wishes sate, than he trimmed his course accordingly. "There was little to prevent Bucklaw himself from sitting for the county; he must carry the heat—must walk the course. Two cousins-german, six more distant kinsmen, his factor and his chamberlain, were all hollow votes; and the Girlington interest had always carried, betwixt love and fear, about as many more. But Bucklaw cared no more about riding the first horse, and that sort of thing, than he, Craigengelt, did about a game at birkie: it was a pity his interest was not in good guidance."

All this Lady Ashton drank in with willing and attentive ears, resolving internally to be herself the person who should take the management of the political influence of her destined son-in-law, for the benefit of her eldest-born, Sholto, and all other parties concerned.

When he found her ladyship thus favourably disposed, the Captain proceeded, to use his employer's phrase, to set spurs to her resolution, by hinting at the situation of matters at Ravenswood Castle, the long residence which the heir of that family had made with the Lord Keeper, and the reports which—though he would be d—d ere he gave credit to any of them—had been idly circulated in the neighbourhood. It was not the Captain's cue to appear himself to be uneasy on the subject of these rumours; but he easily saw from Lady Ashton's flushed cheek, hesitating voice, and flashing eye, that she had caught the alarm which he intended to communicate. She had not heard from her husband so often or so regularly as she thought him bound in duty to have written, and of this very interesting intelligence concerning his visit to the Tower of Wolf's Crag, and the guest whom, with such cordiality, he had received at Ravenswood Castle, he had suffered his lady to remain altogether ignorant, until she now learned it by the chance information of a stranger. Such concealment approached, in her apprehension, to a misprision, at last, of treason, if not to actual rebellion against her matrimonial authority; and in her inward soul she did vow to take vengeance on the Lord Keeper, as on a subject detected in meditating revolt. Her indignation burned the more fiercely as she found herself obliged to suppress it in presence of Lady Blenkinsop, the kinswoman, and of Craigenfelt, the confidential friend, of Bucklaw, of whose alliance she now became trebly desirous, since it occurred to her alarmed imagination that her husband might, in his policy or timidity, prefer that of Ravenswood.

The Captain was engineer enough to discover that the train was fired; and therefore heard, in the course of the same day, without the least surprise, that Lady Ashton had resolved to abridge her visit to Lady Blenkinsop, and set forth with the peep of morning on her return to Scotland, using all the despatch which the state of the roads and the mode of travelling would possibly permit.

Unhappy Lord Keeper! little was he aware what a storm was travelling towards him in all the speed with which an old-fashioned coach and six could possibly achieve its journey. He, like Don Gayferos, "forgot his lady fair and true," and was only anxious about the expected visit of the Marquis of A——. Soothfast tidings had assured him that this nobleman was at length, and without fail, to honour his castle at one in the afternoon, being a late dinner-hour; and much was the bustle in consequence of the annunciation. The Lord Keeper traversed the chambers, held consultation with the butler in the cellars, and even ventured, at the risk of a demele with a cook of a spirit lofty enough to scorn the admonitions of Lady Ashton herself, to peep into the kitchen. Satisfied, at length, that everything was in as active a train of preparation as was possible, he summoned Ravenswood and his daughter to walk upon the terrace, for the purpose of watching, from that commanding position, the earliest symptoms of his lordship's approach. For this purpose, with slow and idle step, he paraded the terrace, which, flanked with a heavy stone battlement, stretched in front of the castle upon a level with the first story; while visitors found access to the court by a projecting gateway, the bartizan or flat-leaded roof of which was accessible from the terrace by an easy flight of low and broad steps. The whole bore a resemblance partly to a castle, partly to a nobleman's seat; and though calculated, in some respects, for defence, evinced that it had been constructed under a sense of the power and security of the ancient Lords of Ravenswood.

This pleasant walk commanded a beautiful and extensive view. But what was most to our present purpose, there were seen from the terrace two roads, one leading from the east, and one from the westward, which, crossing a ridge opposed to the eminence on which the castle stood, at different angles, gradually approached each other, until they joined not far from the gate of the avenue. It was to the westward approach that the Lord Keeper, from a sort of fidgeting anxiety, his daughter, from complaisance to him, and Ravenswood, though feeling some symptoms of internal impatience, out of complaisance to his daughter, directed their eyes to see the precursors of the Marquis's approach.

These were not long of presenting themselves. Two running footmen, dressed in white, with black jockey-caps, and long staffs in their hands, headed the train; and such was their agility, that they found no difficulty in keeping the necessary advance, which the etiquette of their station required, before the carriage and horsemen. Onward they came at a long swinging trot, arguing unwearied speed in their long-breathed calling. Such running footmen are often alluded to in old plays (I would particularly instance Middleton's *Mad World, my Masters*), and perhaps may be still remembered by some old persons in Scotland, as part of the retinue of the ancient nobility when travelling in full ceremony. Behind these glancing meteors, who footed it as if the Avenger of Blood had been behind them, came a cloud of dust, raised by riders who preceded, attended, or followed the state-carriage of the Marquis.

The privilege of nobility, in those days, had something in it impressive on the imagination. The dresses and liveries and number of their attendants, their style of travelling, the imposing, and almost warlike, air of the armed men who surrounded them, place them far above the laird, who travelled with his brace of footmen; and as to rivalry from the mercantile part of the community, these would as soon have thought of imitating the state equipage of the Sovereign. At present it is different; and I myself, Peter Pattieson, in a late journey to Edinburgh, had the honour, in the mail-coach phrase to "change a leg" with a peer of the realm. It was not so in the days of which I write; and the Marquis's approach, so long expected in vain, now took place in the full pomp of ancient aristocracy. Sir William Ashton was so much interested in what he beheld, and in considering the ceremonial of reception, in case any circumstance had been omitted, that he scarce heard his son Henry exclaim: "There is another coach and six coming down the east road, papa; can they both belong to the Marquis of A——?"

At length, when the youngster had fairly compelled his attention by pulling his sleeve,

He turned his eyes, and, as he turned, survey'd

An awful vision.

Sure enough, another coach and six, with four servants or outriders in attendance, was descending the hill from the eastward, at such a pace as made it doubtful which of the carriages thus approaching from different quarters would first reach the gate at the extremity of the avenue. The one coach was green, the other blue; and not the green and blue chariots in the circus of Rome or Constantinople excited more turmoil among the citizens than the double apparition occasioned in the mind of the Lord Keeper.

We all remember the terrible exclamation of the dying profligate, when a friend, to destroy what he supposed the hypochondriac idea of a spectre appearing in a certain shape at a given hour, placed before him a person dressed up in the manner he described. "Mon Dieu!" said the expiring sinner, who, it seems, saw both the real and polygraphic apparition, "il y en a deux!" The surprise of the Lord Keeper was scarcely less unpleasing at the duplication of the expected arrival; his mind misgave him strangely. There was no neighbour who would have approached so unceremoniously, at a time when ceremony was held in such respect. It must be Lady Ashton, said his conscience, and followed up the hint with an anxious anticipation of the purpose of her sudden and unannounced return. He felt that he was caught "in the manner." That the company in which she had so unluckily surprised him was likely to be highly distasteful to her, there was no question; and the only hope which remained for him was her high sense of dignified propriety, which, he trusted, might prevent a public explosion. But so active were his doubts and fears as altogether to derange his purposed ceremonial for the reception of the Marquis.

These feelings of apprehension were not confined to Sir William Ashton. "It is my mother—it is my mother!" said Lucy, turning as pale as ashes, and clasping her hands together as she looked at Ravenswood.

"And if it be Lady Ashton," said her lover to her in a low tone, "what can be the occasion of such alarm? Surely the return of a lady to the family from which she has been so long absent should excite other sensations than those of fear and dismay."

"You do not know my mother," said Miss Ashton, in a tone almost breathless with terror; "what will she say when she sees you in this place!"

"My stay has been too long," said Ravenswood, somewhat haughtily, "if her displeasure at my presence is likely to be so formidable. My dear Lucy," he resumed, in a tone of soothing encouragement, "you are too childishly afraid of Lady Ashton; she is a woman of family—a lady of fashion—a person who must know the world, and what is due to her husband and her husband's guests." Lucy shook her head; and, as if her mother, still at the distance of half a mile, could have seen and scrutinised her deportment, she withdrew herself from beside Ravenswood, and, taking her brother Henry's arm, led him to a different part of the terrace. The Keeper also shuffled down towards the portal of the great gate, without inviting Ravenswood to accompany him; and thus he remained standing alone on the terrace, deserted and shunned, as it were, by the inhabitants of the mansion. This suited not the mood of one who was proud in proportion to his poverty, and who thought that, in sacrificing his deep-rooted resentments so far as to become Sir William Ashton's guest, he conferred a favour, and received none. "I can forgive Lucy," he said to himself; "she is young, timid, and conscious of an important engagement assumed without her mother's sanction; yet she should remember with whom it has been assumed, and leave me no reason to suspect that she is ashamed of her choice. For the Keeper, sense, spirit, and expression seem to have

left his face and manner since he had the first glimpse of Lady Ashton's carriage. I must watch how this is to end; and, if they give me reason to think myself an unwelcome guest, my visit is soon abridged."

With these suspicions floating on his mind, he left the terrace, and walking towards the stables of the castle, gave directions that his horse should be kept in readiness, in case he should have occasion to ride abroad.

In the mean while, the drivers of the two carriages, the approach of which had occasioned so much dismay at the castle, had become aware of each other's presence, as they approached upon different lines to the head of the avenue, as a common centre. Lady Ashton's driver and postilions instantly received orders to get foremost, if possible, her ladyship being desirous of despatching her first interview with her husband before the arrival of these guests, whoever they might happen to be. On the other hand, the coachman of the Marquis, conscious of his own dignity and that of his master, and observing the rival charioteer was mending his pace, resolved, like a true brother of the whip, whether ancient or modern, to vindicate his right of precedence. So that, to increase the confusion of the Lord Keeper's understanding, he saw the short time which remained for consideration abridged by the haste of the contending coachmen, who, fixing their eyes sternly on each other, and applying the lash smartly to their horses, began to thunder down the descent with emulous rapidity, while the horsemen who attended them were forced to put on to a hand-gallop.

Sir William's only chance now remaining was the possibility of an overturn, and that his lady or visitor might break their necks. I am not aware that he formed any distinct wish on the subject, but I have no reason to think that his grief in either case would have been altogether inconsolable. This chance, however, also disappeared; for Lady Ashton, though insensible to fear, began to see the ridicule of running a race with a visitor of distinction, the goal being the portal of her own castle, and commanded her coachman, as they approached the avenue, to slacken his pace, and allow precedence to the stranger's equipage; a command which he gladly obeyed, as coming in time to save his honour, the horses of the Marquis's carriage being better, or, at least, fresher than his own. He restrained his pace, therefore, and suffered the green coach to enter the avenue, with all its retinue, which pass it occupied with the speed of a whirlwind. The Marquis's laced charioteer no sooner found the *pas d'avance* was granted to him than he resumed a more deliberate pace, at which he advanced under the embowering shade of the lofty elms, surrounded by all the attendants; while the carriage of Lady Ashton followed, still more slowly, at some distance.

In the front of the castle, and beneath the portal which admitted guests into the inner court, stood Sir William Ashton, much perplexed in mind, his younger son and daughter beside him, and in their rear a train of attendants of various ranks, in and out of livery. The nobility and gentry of Scotland, at this period, were remarkable even to extravagance for the number of their servants, whose services were easily purchased in a country where men were numerous beyond proportion to the means of employing them.

The manners of a man trained like Sir William Ashton are too much at his command to remain long disconcerted with the most adverse concurrence of circumstances. He received the Marquis, as he alighted from his equipage, with the usual compliments of welcome; and, as he ushered him into the great hall, expressed his hope that his journey had been pleasant. The Marquis was a tall, well-made man, with a thoughtful and intelligent countenance, and an eye in which the fire of ambition had for some years replaced the vivacity of youth; a bold, proud expression of countenance, yet chastened by habitual caution, and the desire which, as the head of a party, he necessarily entertained of acquiring popularity. He answered with courtesy the courteous inquiries of the Lord Keeper, and was formally presented to Miss Ashton, in the course of which ceremony the Lord Keeper gave the first symptom of what was chiefly occupying his mind, by introducing his daughter as "his wife, Lady Ashton."

Lucy blushed; the Marquis looked surprised at the extremely juvenile appearance of his hostess, and the Lord Keeper with difficulty rallied himself so far as to explain. "I should have said my daughter, my lord; but the truth is, that I saw Lady Ashton's carriage enter the avenue shortly after your lordship's, and——"

"Make no apology, my lord," replied his noble guest; "let me entreat you will wait on your lady, and leave me to cultivate Miss Ashton's acquaintance. I am shocked my people should have taken precedence of our hostess at her own gate; but your lordship is aware that I supposed Lady Ashton was still in the south. Permit me to beseech you will waive ceremony, and hasten to welcome her."

This was precisely what the Lord Keeper longed to do; and he instantly profited by his lordship's obliging permission. To see Lady Ashton, and encounter the first burst of her displeasure in private, might prepare her, in some degree, to receive her unwelcome guests with due decorum. As her carriage, therefore, stopped, the arm of the attentive husband was ready to assist Lady Ashton in dismounting. Looking as if she saw him not, she put his arm aside, and requested that of Captain Craigengelt, who stood by the coach with his laced hat under his arm, having acted as *cavaliere servente*, or squire in attendance, during the journey. Taking hold of this respectable person's arm as if to support her, Lady Ashton traversed the court, uttering a word or two by way of direction to the servants, but not one to Sir William, who in vain endeavoured to attract her attention, as he rather followed than accompanied her into the hall, in which they found the Marquis in close conversation with the Master of Ravenswood. Lucy had taken the first opportunity of escaping. There was embarrassment on every countenance except that of the Marquis of A——; for even Craigengelt's impudence was hardly able to veil his fear of Ravenswood, and the rest felt the awkwardness of the position in which they were thus unexpectedly placed.

After waiting a moment to be presented by Sir William Ashton, the Marquis resolved to introduce himself. "The Lord Keeper," he said, bowing to Lady Ashton, "has just introduced to me his daughter as his wife; he might very easily present Lady Ashton as his daughter, so little does she differ from what I remember her some years since. Will she permit an old acquaintance the privilege of a guest?"

He saluted the lady with too good a grace to apprehend a repulse, and then proceeded: "This, Lady Ashton, is a peacemaking visit, and therefore I presume to introduce my cousin, the young Master of Ravenswood, to your favourable notice."

Lady Ashton could not choose but courtesy; but there was in her obeisance an air of haughtiness approaching to contemptuous repulse. Ravenswood could not choose but bow; but his manner returned the scorn with which he had been greeted.

"Allow me," she said, "to present to your lordship MY friend." Craigengelt, with the forward impudence which men of his cast mistake for ease, made a sliding bow to the Marquis, which he graced by a flourish of his gold-laced hat. The lady turned to her husband. "You and I, Sir William," she said, and these were the first words she had addressed to him, "have acquired new acquaintances since we parted; let me introduce the acquisition I have made to mine—Captain Craigengelt."

Another bow, and another flourish of the gold-laced hat, which was returned by the Lord Keeper without intimation of former recognition, and with that sort of anxious readiness which intimated his wish that peace and amnesty should take place betwixt the contending parties, including the auxiliaries on both sides. "Let me introduce you to the Master of Ravenswood," said he to Captain Craigengelt, following up the same amicable system.

But the Master drew up his tall form to the full extent of his height, and without so much as looking towards the person thus introduced to him, he said, in a marked tone: "Captain Craigengelt and I are already perfectly well acquainted with each other."

"Perfectly—perfectly," replied the Captain, in a mumbling tone, like that of a double echo, and with a flourish of his hat, the circumference of which was greatly abridged, compared with those which had so cordially graced his introduction to the Marquis and the Lord Keeper.

Lockhard, followed by three menials, now entered with wine and refreshments, which it was the fashion to offer as a whet before dinner; and when they were placed before the guests, Lady Ashton made an apology for withdrawing her husband from them for some minutes upon business of special import. The Marquis, of course, requested her ladyship would lay herself under no restraint; and Craigengelt, bolting with speed a second glass of racy canary, hastened to leave the room, feeling no great pleasure in the prospect of being left alone with the Marquis of A—— and the Master of Ravenswood; the presence of the former holding him in awe, and that of the latter in bodily terror.

Some arrangements about his horse and baggage formed the pretext for his sudden retreat, in which he persevered, although Lady Ashton gave Lockhard orders to be careful most particularly to accommodate Captain Craigengelt with all the attendance which he could possibly require. The Marquis and the Master of Ravenswood were thus left to communicate to each other their remarks upon the reception which they had met with, while Lady Ashton led the way, and her lord followed somewhat like a condemned criminal, to her ladyship's dressing-room.

So soon as the spouses had both entered, her ladyship gave way to that fierce audacity of temper which she had with difficulty suppressed, out of respect to appearances. She shut the door behind the alarmed Lord Keeper, took the key out of the spring-lock, and with a countenance which years had not bereft of its haughty charms, and eyes which spoke at once resolution and resentment, she addressed her astounded husband in these words: "My lord, I am not greatly surprised at the connexions you have been pleased to form during my absence, they are entirely in conformity with your birth and breeding; and if I did expect anything else, I heartily own my error, and that I merit, by having done so, the disappointment you had prepared for me."

"My dear Lady Ashton—my dear Eleanor [Margaret]," said the Lord Keeper, "listen to reason for a moment, and I will convince you I have acted with all the regard due to the dignity, as well as the interest, of my family."

"To the interest of YOUR family I conceive you perfectly capable of attending," returned the indignant lady, "and even to the dignity of your own family also, as far as it requires any looking after. But as mine happens to be inextricably involved with it, you will excuse me if I choose to give my own attention so far as that is concerned."

"What would you have, Lady Ashton?" said the husband. "What is it that displeases you? Why is it that, on your return after so long an absence, I am arraigned in this manner?" "Ask your own conscience, Sir William, what has prompted you to become a renegade to your political party and opinions, and led you, for what I know, to be on the point of marrying your only daughter to a beggarly Jacobite bankrupt, the inveterate enemy of your family to the boot."

"Why, what, in the name of common sense and common civility, would you have me do, madam?" answered her husband. "Is it possible for me, with ordinary decency, to turn a young gentleman out of my house, who saved my daughter's life and my own, but the other morning, as it were?"

"Saved your life! I have heard of that story," said the lady. "The Lord Keeper was scared by a dun cow, and he takes the young fellow who killed her for Guy of Warwick: any butcher from Haddington may soon have an equal claim on your hospitality."

"Lady Ashton," stammered the Keeper, "this is intolerable; and when I am desirous, too, to make you easy by any sacrifice, if you would but tell me what you would be at."

"Go down to your guests," said the imperious dame, "and make your apology to Ravenswood, that the arrival of Captain Craigengelt and some other friends renders it impossible for you to offer him lodgings at the castle. I expect young Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw."

"Good heavens, madam!" ejaculated her husband. "Ravenswood to give place to Craigengelt, a common gambler and an informer! It was all I could do to forbear desiring the fellow to get out of my house, and I was much surprised to see him in your ladyship's train."

"Since you saw him there, you might be well assured," answered this meek helpmate, "that he was proper society. As to this Ravenswood, he only meets with the treatment which, to my certain knowledge, he gave to a much-valued friend of mine, who had the misfortune to be his guest some time since. But take your resolution; for, if Ravenswood does not quit the house, I will."

Sir William Ashton paced up and down the apartment in the most distressing agitation; fear, and shame, and anger contending against the habitual deference he was in the use of rendering to his lady. At length it ended, as is usual with timid minds placed in such circumstances, in his adopting a mezzo termine—a middle measure.

"I tell you frankly, madam, I neither can nor will be guilty of the incivility you propose to the Master of Ravenswood; he has not deserved it at my hand. If you will be so unreasonable as to insult a man of quality under your own roof, I cannot prevent you; but I will not at least be the agent in such a preposterous proceeding."

"You will not?" asked the lady.

"No, by heavens, madam!" her husband replied; "ask me anything congruent with common decency, as to drop his acquaintance by degrees, or the like; but to bid him leave my house is what I will not and cannot consent to."

"Then the task of supporting the honour of the family will fall on me, as it has often done before," said the lady.

She sat down, and hastily wrote a few lines. The Lord Keeper made another effort to prevent her taking a step so decisive, just as she opened the door to call her female attendant from the ante-room. "Think what you are doing, Lady Ashton: you are making a mortal enemy of a young man who is like to have the means of harming us——"

"Did you ever know a Douglas who feared an enemy?" answered the lady, contemptuously.

"Ay, but he is as proud and vindictive as an hundred Douglasses, and an hundred devils to boot. Think of it for a night only."

"Not for another moment," answered the lady. "Here, Mrs. Patullo, give this billet to young Ravenswood."

"To the Master, madam!" said Mrs. Patullo.

"Ay, to the Master, if you call him so."

"I wash my hands of it entirely," said the Keeper; "and I shall go down into the garden, and see that Jardine gathers the winter fruit for the dessert."

"Do so," said the lady, looking after him with glances of infinite contempt; "and thank God that you leave one behind you as fit to protect the honour of the family as you are to look after pippins and pears."

The Lord Keeper remained long enough in the garden to give her ladyship's mind time to explode, and to let, as he thought, at least the first violence of Ravenswood's displeasure blow over. When he entered the hall, he found the Marquis of A—— giving orders to some of his attendants. He seemed in high displeasure, and interrupted an apology which Sir William had commenced for having left his lordship alone.

"I presume, Sir William, you are no stranger to this singular billet with which MY kinsman of Ravenswood (an emphasis on the word 'my') has been favoured by your lady; and, of course, that you are prepared to receive my adieus. My kinsman is already gone, having thought it unnecessary to offer any on his part, since all former civilities had been cancelled by this singular insult."

"I protest, my lord," said Sir William, holding the billet in his hand, "I am not privy to the contents of this letter. I know Lady Ashton is a warm-tempered and prejudiced woman, and I am sincerely sorry for any offence that has been given or taken; but I hope your lordship will consider that a lady——"

"Should bear herself towards persons of a certain rank with the breeding of one," said the Marquis, completing the half-uttered sentence.

"True, my lord," said the unfortunate Keeper; "but Lady Ashton is still a woman——"

"And, as such, methinks," said the Marquis, again interrupting him, "should be taught the duties which correspond to her station. But here she comes, and I will learn from her own mouth the reason of this extraordinary and unexpected affront offered to my near relation, while both he and I were her ladyship's guests."

Lady Ashton accordingly entered the apartment at this moment. Her dispute with Sir William, and a subsequent interview with her daughter, had not prevented her from attending to the duties of her toilette. She appeared in full dress; and, from the character of her countenance and manner, well became the splendour with which ladies of quality then appeared on such occasions.

The Marquis of A—— bowed haughtily, and she returned the salute with equal pride and distance of demeanour. He then took from the passive hand of Sir William Ashton the billet he had given him the moment before he approached the lady, and was about to speak, when she interrupted him. "I perceive, my lord, you are about to enter upon an unpleasant subject. I am sorry any such should have occurred at this time, to interrupt in the slightest degree the respectful reception due to your lordship; but so it is. Mr. Edgar Ravenswood, for whom I have addressed the billet in your lordship's hand, has abused the hospitality of this family, and Sir William Ashton's softness of temper, in order to seduce a young person into engagements without her parents' consent, and of which they never can approve."

Both gentlemen answered at once. "My kinsman is incapable——" said the Lord Marquis.

"I am confident that my daughter Lucy is still more incapable——" said the Lord Keeper.

Lady Ashton at once interrupted and replied to them both: "My Lord Marquis, your kinsman, if Mr. Ravenswood has the honour to be so, has made the attempt privately to secure the affections of this young and inexperienced girl. Sir William Ashton, your daughter has been simple enough to give more encouragement than she ought to have done to so very improper a suitor."

"And I think, madam," said the Lord Keeper, losing his accustomed temper and patience, "that if you had nothing better to tell us, you had better have kept this family secret to yourself also."

"You will pardon me, Sir William," said the lady, calmly; "the noble Marquis has a right to know the cause of the treatment I have found it necessary to use to a gentleman whom he calls his blood-relation."

"It is a cause," muttered the Lord Keeper, "which has emerged since the effect has taken place; for, if it exists at all, I am sure she knew nothing of it when her letter to Ravenswood was written."

"It is the first time that I have heard of this," said the Marquis; "but, since your ladyship has tabled a subject so delicate, permit me to say, that my kinsman's birth and connexions entitled him to a patient hearing, and at least a civil refusal, even in case of his being so ambitious as to raise his eyes to the daughter of Sir William Ashton."

"You will recollect, my lord, of what blood Miss Lucy Ashton is come by the mother's side," said the lady.

"I do remember your descent—from a younger branch of the house of Angus," said the Marquis; "and your ladyship—forgive me, lady—ought not to forget that the Ravenswoods have thrice intermarried with the main stem. Come, madam, I know how matters stand—old and long-fostered prejudices are difficult to get over, I make every allowance for them; I ought not, and I would not, otherwise have suffered my kinsman to depart alone, expelled, in a manner, from this house, but I had hopes of being a mediator. I am still unwilling to leave you in anger, and shall not set forward till after noon, as I rejoin the Master of Ravenswood upon the road a few miles from hence. Let us talk over this matter more coolly."

"It is what I anxiously desire, my lord," said Sir William Ashton, eagerly. "Lady Ashton, we will not permit my Lord of A—— to leave us in displeasure. We must compel him to tarry dinner at the castle."

"The castle," said the lady, "and all that it contains, are at the command of the Marquis, so long as he chooses to honour it with his residence; but touching the farther discussion of this disagreeable topic——"

"Pardon me, good madam," said the Marquis; "but I cannot allow you to express any hasty resolution on a subject so important. I see that more company is arriving; and, since I have the good fortune to renew my former acquaintance with Lady Ashton, I hope she will give me leave to avoid perilling what I prize so highly upon any disagreeable subject of discussion—at least till we have talked over more pleasant topics."

The lady smiled, courtesied, and gave her hand to the Marquis, by whom, with all the formal gallantry of the time, which did not permit the guest to tuck the lady of the house under the arm, as a rustic does his sweetheart at a wake, she was ushered to the eating-room.

Here they were joined by Bucklaw, Craigengelt, and other neighbours, whom the Lord Keeper had previously invited to meet the Marquis of A——. An apology, founded upon a slight indisposition, was alleged as an excuse for the absence of Miss Ashton, whose seat appeared unoccupied. The entertainment was splendid to profusion, and was protracted till a late hour.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*Such was our fallen father's fate,
Yet better than mine own;
He shared his exile with his mate,
I'm banish'd forth alone.*

WALLER

I WILL not attempt to describe the mixture of indignation and regret with which Ravenswood left the seat which had belonged to his ancestors. The terms in which Lady Ashton's billet was couched rendered it impossible for him, without being deficient in that spirit of which he perhaps had too much, to remain an instant longer within its walls. The Marquis, who had his share in the affront, was, nevertheless, still willing to make some efforts at conciliation. He therefore suffered his kinsman to depart alone, making him promise, however, that he would wait for him at the small inn called the Tod's Hole, situated, as our readers may be pleased to recollect, half-way betwixt Ravenswood Castle and Wolf's Crag, and about five Scottish miles distant from each. Here the Marquis proposed to join the Master of Ravenswood, either that night or the next morning. His own feelings would have induced him to have left the castle directly, but he was loth to forfeit, without at least one effort, the advantages which he had proposed from his visit to the Lord Keeper; and the Master of Ravenswood was, even in the very heat of his resentment, unwilling to foreclose any chance of reconciliation which might arise out of the partiality which Sir William Ashton had shown towards him, as well as the intercessory arguments of his noble kinsman. He himself departed without a moment's delay, farther than was necessary to make this arrangement.

At first he spurred his horse at a quick pace through an avenue of the park, as if, by rapidity of motion, he could stupify the confusion of feelings with which he was assailed. But as the road grew wilder and more sequestered, and when the trees had hidden the turrets of the castle, he gradually slackened his pace, as if to indulge the painful reflections which he had in vain endeavoured to repress. The path in which he found himself led him to the Mermaiden's Fountain, and to the cottage of Alice; and the fatal influence which superstitious belief attached to the former spot, as well as the admonitions which had been in vain offered to him by the inhabitant of the latter, forced themselves upon his memory. "Old saws speak truth," he said to himself, "and the Mermaiden's Well has indeed witnessed the last act of rashness of the heir of Ravenswood. Alice spoke well," he continued, "and I am in the situation which she foretold; or rather, I am more deeply dishonoured—not the dependant and ally of the destroyer of my father's house, as the old sibyl presaged, but the degraded wretch who has aspired to hold that subordinate character, and has been rejected with disdain."

We are bound to tell the tale as we have received it; and, considering the distance of the time, and propensity of those through whose mouths it has passed to the marvellous, this could not be called a Scottish story unless it manifested a tinge of Scottish superstition. As Ravenswood approached the solitary fountain, he is said to have met with the following singular adventure: His horse, which was moving slowly forward, suddenly interrupted its steady and composed pace, snorted, reared, and, though urged by the spur, refused to proceed, as if some object of terror had suddenly presented itself. On looking to the fountain, Ravenswood discerned a female figure, dressed in a white, or rather greyish, mantle, placed on the very spot on which Lucy Ashton had reclined while listening to the fatal tale of love. His immediate impression was that she had conjectured by which path he would traverse the park on his departure, and placed herself at this well-known and sequestered place of rendezvous, to indulge her own sorrow and his parting interview. In this belief he jumped from his horse, and, making its bridle fast to a tree, walked hastily towards the fountain, pronouncing eagerly, yet under his breath, the words, "Miss Ashton!—Lucy!"

The figure turned as he addressed it, and displayed to his wondering eyes the features, not of Lucy Ashton, but of old blind Alice. The singularity of her dress, which rather resembled a shroud than the garment of a living woman; the appearance of her person, larger, as it struck him, than it usually seemed to be; above all, the strange circumstance of a blind, infirm, and decrepit person being found alone and at a distance from her habitation (considerable, if her infirmities be taken into account), combined to impress him with a feeling of wonder approaching to fear. As he approached, she arose slowly from her seat, held her shrivelled hand up as if to prevent his coming more near, and her withered lips moved fast, although no sound issued from them. Ravenswood stopped; and as, after a moment's pause, he again advanced towards her, Alice, or her apparition, moved or glided backwards towards the thicket, still keeping her face turned towards him. The trees soon hid the form from his sight; and, yielding to the strong and terrific impression that the being which he had seen was not of this world, the Master of Ravenswood remained rooted to the ground whereon he had stood when he caught his last view of her. At length, summoning up his courage, he advanced to the spot on which the figure had seemed to be seated; but neither was there pressure of the grass nor any other circumstance to induce him to believe that what he had seen was real and substantial.

Full of those strange thoughts and confused apprehensions which awake in the bosom of one who conceives he has witnessed some preternatural appearance, the Master of Ravenswood walked back towards his horse, frequently, however, looking behind him, not without apprehension, as if expecting that the vision would reappear. But the apparition, whether it was real or whether it was the creation of a heated and agitated imagination, returned not again; and he found his horse sweating and terrified, as if experiencing that agony of fear with which the presence of a supernatural being is supposed to agitate the brute creation. The Master mounted, and rode slowly forward, soothing his steed from time to time, while the animal seemed internally to shrink and shudder, as if expecting some new object of fear at the opening of every glade. The rider, after a moment's consideration, resolved to investigate the matter further. "Can my eyes have deceived me," he said, "and deceived me for such a space of time? Or are this woman's infirmities but feigned, in order to excite compassion? And even then, her motion resembled not that of a living and existing person. Must I adopt the popular creed, and think that the unhappy being has formed a league with the powers of darkness? I am determined to be resolved; I will not brook imposition even from my own eyes."

In this uncertainty he rode up to the little wicket of Alice's garden. Her seat beneath the birch-tree was vacant, though the day was pleasant and the sun was high. He approached the hut, and heard from within the sobs and wailing of a female. No answer was returned when he knocked, so that, after a moment's pause, he lifted the latch and entered. It was indeed a house of solitude and sorrow. Stretched upon her miserable pallet lay the corpse of the last retainer of the house of Ravenswood who still abode on their paternal domains! Life had but shortly departed; and the little girl by whom she had been attended in her last moments was wringing her hands and sobbing, betwixt childish fear and sorrow, over the body of her mistress.

The Master of Ravenswood had some difficulty to compose the terrors of the poor child, whom his unexpected appearance had at first rather appalled than comforted; and when he succeeded, the first expression which the girl used intimated that "he had come too late." Upon inquiring the meaning of this expression, he learned that the deceased, upon the first attack of the mortal agony, had sent a peasant to the castle to beseech an interview of the Master of Ravenswood, and had expressed the utmost impatience for his return. But the messengers of the poor are tardy and negligent: the fellow had not reached the castle, as was afterwards learned, until Ravenswood had left it, and had then found too much amusement among the retinue of the strangers to return in any haste to the cottage of Alice. Meantime her anxiety of mind seemed to increase with the agony of her body; and, to use the phrase of Babie, her only attendant, "she prayed powerfully that she might see her master's son once more, and renew her warning." She died just as the clock in the distant village tolled one; and Ravenswood remembered, with internal shuddering, that he had heard the chime sound through the wood just before he had seen what he was now much disposed to consider as the spectre of the deceased.

It was necessary, as well from his respect to the departed as in common humanity to her terrified attendant, that he should take some measures to relieve the girl from her distressing situation. The deceased, he understood, had expressed a desire to be buried in a solitary churchyard, near the little inn of the Tod's Hole, called the Hermitage, or more commonly Armitage, in which lay interred some of the Ravenswood family, and many of their followers. Ravenswood conceived it his duty to gratify this predilection, commonly found to exist among the Scottish peasantry, and despatched Babie to the neighbouring village to procure the assistance of some females, assuring her that, in the mean while, he would himself remain with the dead body, which, as in Thessaly of old, it is accounted highly unfit to leave without a watch.

Thus, in the course of a quarter of an hour or little more, he found himself sitting a solitary guard over the inanimate corpse of her whose dismissed spirit, unless his eyes had strangely deceived him, had so recently manifested itself before him. Notwithstanding his natural courage, the Master was considerably affected by a concurrence of circumstances so extraordinary. "She died expressing her eager desire to see me. Can it be, then," was his natural course of reflection—"can strong and earnest wishes, formed during the last agony of nature, survive its catastrophe, surmount the awful bounds of the spiritual world, and place before us its inhabitants in the hues and colouring of life? And why was that manifested to the eye which could not unfold its tale to the ear? and wherefore should a breach be made in the laws of nature, yet its purpose remain unknown? Vain questions, which only death, when it shall make me like the pale and withered form before me, can ever resolve."

He laid a cloth, as he spoke, over the lifeless face, upon whose features he felt unwilling any longer to dwell. He then took his place in an old carved oaken chair, ornamented with his own armorial bearings, which Alice had contrived to appropriate to her own use in the pillage which took place among creditors, officers, domestics, and messengers of the law when his father left Ravenswood Castle for the last time. Thus seated, he banished, as much as he could, the superstitious feelings which the late incident naturally inspired. His own were sad enough, without the exaggeration of supernatural terror, since he found himself transferred from the situation of a successful lover of Lucy Ashton, and an honoured and respected friend of her father, into the melancholy and solitary guardian of the abandoned and forsaken corpse of a common pauper.

He was relieved, however, from his sad office sooner than he could reasonably have expected, considering the distance betwixt the hut of the deceased and the village, and the age and infirmities of three old women who came from thence, in military phrase, to relieve guard upon the body of the defunct. On any other occasion the speed of these reverend sibyls would have been much more moderate, for the first was eighty years of age and upwards, the second was paralytic, and the third lame of a leg from some accident. But the burial duties rendered to the deceased are, to the Scottish peasant of either sex, a labour of love. I know not whether it is from the temper of the people, grave and enthusiastic as it certainly is, or from the recollection of the ancient Catholic opinions, when the funeral rites were always considered as a period of festival to the living; but feasting, good cheer, and even inebriety, were, and are, the frequent accompaniments of a Scottish old-fashioned burial. What the funeral feast, or "dirgie," as it is called, was to the men, the gloomy preparations of the dead body for the coffin were to the women. To straighten the contorted limbs upon a board used for that melancholy purpose, to array the corpse in clean linen, and over that in its woollen shroud, were operations committed always to the old matrons of the village, and in which they found a singular and gloomy delight.

The old women paid the Master their salutations with a ghastly smile, which reminded him of the meeting betwixt Macbeth and the witches on the blasted heath of Forres. He gave them some money, and recommended to them the charge of the dead body of their contemporary, an office which they willingly undertook; intimating to him at the same time that he must leave the hut, in order that they might begin their mournful duties. Ravenswood readily agreed to depart, only tarrying to recommend to them due attention to the body, and to receive information where he was to find the sexton, or beadle, who had in charge the deserted churchyard of the Armitage, in order to prepare matters for the reception of Old Alice in the place of repose which she had selected for herself.

"Ye'll no be pinched to find out Johnie Mortsheugh," said the elder sibyl, and still her withered cheek bore a grisly smile; "he dwells near the Tod's Hole, an house of entertainment where there has been mony a blythe birling, for death and drink-draining are near neighbours to ane anither."

"Ay! and that's e'en true, cummer," said the lame hag, propping herself with a crutch which supported the shortness of her left leg, "for I mind when the father of this Master of Ravenswood that is now standing before us sticked young Blackhall with his whinger, for a wrang word said ower their wine, or brandy, or what not: he gaed in as light as a lark, and he came out wi' his feet foremost. I was at the winding of the corpse; and when the bluid was washed off, he was a bonny bouk of man's body." It may be easily believed that this ill-timed anecdote hastened the Master's purpose of quitting a company so evil-omened and so odious. Yet, while walking to the tree to which his horse was tied, and busying himself with adjusting the girths of the saddle, he could not avoid hearing, through the hedge of the little garden, a conversation respecting himself, betwixt the lame woman and the octogenarian sibyl. The pair had hobbled into the garden to gather rosemary, southernwood, rue, and other plants proper to be strewed upon the body, and burned by way of fumigation in the chimney of the cottage. The paralytic wretch, almost exhausted by the journey, was left guard upon the corpse, lest witches or fiends might play their sport with it.

The following law, croaking dialogue was necessarily overheard by the Master of Ravenswood:

"That's a fresh and full-grown hemlock, Annie Winnie; mony a cummer lang syne wad hae sought nae better horse to flee over hill and how, through mist and moonlight, and light down in the King of France's cellar."

"Ay, cummer! but the very deil has turned as hard-hearted now as the Lord Keeper and the grit folk, that hae breasts like whinstane. They prick us and they pine us, and they pit us on the pinnywinkles for witches; and, if I say my prayers backwards ten times ower, Satan will never gie me amends o' them."

"Did ye ever see the foul thief?" asked her neighbour.

"Na!" replied the other spokeswoman; "but I trow I hae dreamed of him mony a time, and I think the day will come they will burn me for't. But ne'er mind, cummer! we hae this dollar of the Master's, and we'll send down for bread and for yill, and tobacco, and a drap brandy to burn, and a wee pickle saft sugar; and be there deil, or nae deil, lass, we'll hae a merry night o't."

Here her leathern chops uttered a sort of cackling, ghastly laugh, resembling, to a certain degree, the cry of the screech-owl.

"He's a frank man, and a free-handed man, the Master," said Annie Winnie, "and a comely personage—broad in the shouthers, and narrow around the lunyies. He wad mak a bonny corpse; I wad like to hae the streiking and winding o' him."

"It is written on his brow, Annie Winnie," returned the octogenarian, her companion, "that hand of woman, or of man either, will never straught him: dead-deal will never be laid on his back, make you your market of that, for I hae it frae a sure hand."

"Will it be his lot to die on the battle-ground then, Ailsie Gourlay? Will he die by the sword or the ball, as his forbears had dune before him, mony ane o' them?"

"Ask nae mair questions about it—he'll no be graced sae far," replied the sage.

"I ken ye are wiser than ither folk, Aislie Gourlay. But wha tell'd ye this?" "Fashna your thumb about that, Annie Winnie," answered the sibyl, "I hae it frae a hand sure enough."

"But ye said ye never saw the foul thief," reiterated her inquisitive companion.

"I hae it frae as sure a hand," said Ailsie, "and frae them that spaed his fortune before the sark gaed ower his head."

"Hark! I hear his horse's feet riding aff," said the other, "they dinna sound as if good luck was wi' them."

"Mak haste, sirs," cried the paralytic hag from the cottage, "and let us do what is needfu', and say what is fitting; for, if the dead corpse binna straughted, it will girn and thrav, and that will fear the best o' us."

Ravenswood was now out of hearing. He despised most of the ordinary prejudices about witchcraft, omens, and vaticination, to which his age and country still gave such implicit credit that to express a doubt of them was accounted a crime equal to the unbelief of Jews or Saracens; he knew also that the prevailing belief, concerning witches, operating upon the hypochondriac habits of those whom age, infirmity, and poverty rendered liable to suspicion, and enforced by the fear of death and the pangs of the most cruel tortures, often extorted those confessions which encumber and disgrace the criminal records of Scotland during the 17th century. But the vision of that morning, whether real or imaginary, had impressed his mind with a superstitious feeling which he in vain endeavoured to shake off. The nature of the business which awaited him at the little inn, called Tod's Hole, where he soon after arrived, was not of a kind to restore his spirits.

It was necessary he should see Mortsheugh, the sexton of the old burial-ground at Armitage, to arrange matters for the funeral of Alice; and, as the man dwelt near the place of her late residence, the Master, after a slight refreshment, walked towards the place where the body of Alice was to be deposited. It was situated in the nook formed by the eddying sweep of a stream, which issued from the adjoining hills. A rude cavern in an adjacent rock, which, in the interior, was cut into the shape of a cross, formed the hermitage, where some Saxon saint had in ancient times done penance, and given name to the place. The rich Abbey of Coldingham had, in latter days, established a chapel in the neighbourhood, of which no vestige was now visible, though the churchyard which surrounded it was still, as upon the present occasion, used for the interment of particular persons. One or two shattered yew-trees still grew within the precincts of that which had once been holy ground. Warriors and barons had been buried there of old, but their names were forgotten, and their monuments demolished. The only sepulchral memorials which remained were the upright headstones which mark the graves of persons of inferior rank. The abode of the sexton was a solitary cottage adjacent to the ruined wall of the cemetery, but so low that, with its thatch, which nearly reached the ground, covered with a thick crop of grass, fog, and house-leeks, it resembled an overgrown grave. On inquiry, however, Ravenswood found that the man of the last mattock was absent at a bridal, being fiddler as well as grave-digger to the vicinity. He therefore retired to the little inn, leaving a message that early next morning he would again call for the person whose double occupation connected him at once with the house of mourning and the house of feasting.

An outrider of the Marquis arrived at Tod's Hole shortly after, with a message, intimating that his master would join Ravenswood at that place on the following morning; and the Master, who would otherwise have proceeded to his old retreat at Wolf's Crag, remained there accordingly to give meeting to his noble kinsman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hamlet: Has this fellow no feeling of his business? he sings at grave making.

Horatio: Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Hamlet: 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

Hamlet, Act V. Scene 1.

THE sleep of Ravenswood was broken by ghastly and agitating visions, and his waking intervals disturbed by melancholy reflections on the past and painful anticipations of the future. He was perhaps the only traveller who ever slept in that miserable kennel without complaining of his lodgings, or feeling inconvenience from their deficiencies. It is when "the mind is free the body's delicate." Morning, however, found the Master an early riser, in hopes that the fresh air of the dawn might afford the refreshment which night had refused him. He took his way towards the solitary burial-ground, which lay about half a mile from the inn.

The thin blue smoke, which already began to curl upward, and to distinguish the cottage of the living from the habitation of the dead, apprised him that its inmate had returned and was stirring. Accordingly, on entering the little churchyard, he saw the old man labouring in a half-made grave. "My destiny," thought Ravenswood, "seems to lead me to scenes of fate and of death; but these are childish thoughts, and they shall not master me. I will not again suffer my imagination to beguile my senses." The old man rested on his spade as the Master approached him, as if to receive his commands; and as he did not immediately speak, the sexton opened the discourse in his own way.

"Ye will be a wedding customer, sir, I'se warrant?"

"What makes you think so, friend?" replied the Master.

"I live by twa trades, sir," replied the blythe old man—"fiddle, sir, and spade; filling the world, and emptying of it; and I suld ken baith cast of customers by head-mark in thirty years' practice."

"You are mistaken, however, this morning," replied Ravenswood.

"Am I?" said the old man, looking keenly at him, "troth and it may be; since, for as brent as your brow is, there is something sitting upon it this day that is as near akin to death as to wedlock. Weel—weel; the pick and shovel are as ready to your order as bow and fiddle."

"I wish you," said Ravenswood, "to look after the decent interment of an old woman, Alice Gray, who lived at the Graigfoot in Ravenswood Park."

"Alice Gray!—blind Alice!" said the sexton; "and is she gane at last? that's another jow of the bell to bid me be ready. I mind when Habbie Gray brought her down to this land; a likely lass she was then, and looked ower her southland nose at us a'. I trow her pride got a downcome. And is she e'en gane?"

"She died yesterday," said Ravenswood; "and desired to be buried here beside her husband; you know where he lies, no doubt?"

"Ken where he lies!" answered the sexton, with national indirection of response. "I ken whar a'body lies, that lies here. But ye were speaking o' her grave? Lord help us, it's no an ordinar grave that will haud her in, if a's true that folk said of Alice in her auld days; and if I gae to six feet deep—and a warlock's grave shouldna be an inch mair ebb, or her ain witch cummers would soon whirl her out of her shroud for a' their auld acquaintance—and be't six feet, or be't three, wha's to pay the making o't, I pray ye?"

"I will pay that, my friend, and all other reasonable charges."

"Reasonable charges!" said the sexton; "ou, there's grundmail—and bell-siller, though the bell's broken, nae doubt—and the kist—and my day's wark—and my bit fee—and some brandy and yill to the dirgie, I am no thinking that you can inter her, to ca' decently, under sixteen pund Scots."

"There is the money, my friend," said Ravenswood, "and something over. Be sure you know the grave."

"Ye'll be ane o' her English relations, I'se warrant," said the hoary man of skulls; "I hae heard she married far below her station. It was very right to let her bite on the bridle when she was living, and it's very right to gie her a decent burial now she's dead, for that's a matter o' credit to yoursell rather than to her. Folk may let their kindred shift for themsells when they are alive, and can bear the burden of their ain misdoings; but it's an unnatural thing to let them be buried like dogs, when a' the discredit gangs to the kindred. What kens the dead corpse about it?"

"You would not have people neglect their relations on a bridal occasion neither?" said Ravenswood, who was amused with the professional limitation of the grave-digger's philanthropy.

The old man cast up his sharp grey eyes with a shrewd smile, as if he understood the jest, but instantly continued, with his former gravity: "Bridals—wha wad neglect bridals that had ony regard for plenishing the earth? To be sure, they suld be celebrated with all manner of good cheer, and meeting of friends, and musical instruments—harp, sackbut, and psalter; or gude fiddle and pipes, when these auld-warld instruments of melody are hard to be compassed."

"The presence of the fiddle, I dare say," replied Ravenswood, "would atone for the absence of all the others."

The sexton again looked sharply up at him, as he answered. "Nae doubt—nae doubt, if it were weel played; but yonder," he said, as if to change the discourse, "is Halbert Gray's lang hame, that ye were speering after, just the third bourock beyond the muckle through-stane that stands on sax legs yonder, abune some ane of the Ravenswoods; for there is mony of their kin and followers here, deil lift them! though it isna just their main burial-place."

"They are no favourites, then, of yours, these Ravenswoods?" said the Master, no much pleased with the passing benediction which was thus bestowed on his family and name.

"I kenna wha should favour them," said the grave-digger; "when they had lands and power, they were ill guides of them baith, and now their head's down, there's few care how lang they may be of lifting it again."

"Indeed!" said Ravenswood; "I never heard that this unhappy family deserved ill-will at the hands of their country. I grant their poverty, if that renders them contemptible."

"It will gang a far way till't" said the sexton of Hermitage, "ye may tak my word for that; at least, I ken naething else that suld mak myself contemptible, and folk are far frae respecting me as they wad do if I lived in a twa-lofted sclated house. But as for the Ravenswoods, I hae seen three generations of them, and deil ane to mend other."

"I thought they had enjoyed a fair character in the country," said their descendant.

"Character! Ou, ye see, sir," said the sexton, "as for the auld gudesire body of a lord, I lived on his land when I was a swanking young chield, and could hae blawn the trumpet wi' ony body, for I had wind enOUGH then; and touching this trumpeter Marine that I have heard play afore the lords of the circuit, I wad hae made nae mair o' him than of a bairn and a bawbee whistle. I defy him to hae played 'Boot and saddle,' or 'Horse and away,' or 'Gallants, come trot,' with me; he hadna the tones."

"But what is all this to old Lord Ravenswood, my friend?" said the Master, who, with an anxiety not unnatural in his circumstances, was desirous of prosecuting the musician's first topic—"what had his memory to do with the degeneracy of the trumpet music?"

"Just this, sir," answered the sexton, "that I lost my wind in his service. Ye see I was trumpeter at the castle, and had allowance for blawing at break of day, and at dinner time, and other whiles when there was company about, and it pleased my lord; and when he raised his militia to caper awa' to Bothwell Brig against the wrang-headed westland Whigs, I behoved, reason or name, to munt a horse and caper awa' wi' them."

"And very reasonable," said Ravenswood; "you were his servant and vassal."

"Servitor, say ye?" replied the sexton, "and so I was; but it was to blaw folk to their warm dinner, or at the warst to a decent kirkyard, and no to skirl them awa' to a bluidy braeside, where there was deil a bedral but the hooded craw. But bide ye, ye shall hear what cam o't, and how far I am bund to be bedesman to the Ravenswoods. Till't, ye see, we gaed on a braw simmer morning, twenty-fourth of June, sixteen hundred and se'enty-nine, of a' the days of the month and year—drums beat, guns rattled, horses kicked and trampled. Hackstoun of Rathillet keepit the brig wi' mustket and carabine and pike, sword and scythe for what I ken, and we horsemen were ordered down to cross at the ford,—I hate fords at a' times, let abee when there's thousands of armed men on the other side. There was auld Ravenswood brandishing his Andrew Ferrara at the head, and crying to us to come and buckle to, as if we had been gaun to a fair; there was Caleb Balderstone, that is living yet, flourishing in the rear, and swearing Gog and Magog, he would put steel through the guts of ony man that turned bridle; there was young Allan Ravenswood, that was then Master, wi' a bended pistol in his hand—it was a mercy it gaed na aff!—crying to me, that had scarce as much wind left as serve the necessary purpose of my ain lungs, 'Sound, you poltroon!—sound, you damned cowardly villain, or I will blow your brains out!' and, to be sure, I blew sic points of war that the scraugh of a clockin-hen was music to them."

"Well, sir, cut all this short," said Ravenswood.

"Short! I had like to hae been cut short mysell, in the flower of my youth, as Scripture says; and that's the very thing that I compleen o'. Weel! in to the water we behoved a' to splash, heels ower head, sit or fa'—ae horse driving on anither, as is the way of brute beasts, and riders that hae as little sense; the very bushes on the ither side were a-bleeze wi' the flashes of the Whig guns; and my horse had just taen the grund, when a blackavised westland carle—I wad mind the face o' him a hundred years yet—an ee like a wild falcon's, and a beard as broad as my shovel—clapped the end o' his lang black gun within a quarter's length of my lug! By the grace o' Mercy, the horse swarved round, and I fell aff at the tae side as the ball whistled by at the tither, and the fell auld lord took the Whig such a swauk wi' his broadsword that he made twa pieces o' his head, and down fell the lurdance wi' a' his bouk abune me."

"You were rather obliged to the old lord, I think," said Ravenswood.

"Was I? my sartie! first for bringing me into jeopardy, would I nould I, and then for whomling a chield on the tap o' me that dang the very wind out of my body? I hae been short-breathed ever since, and canna gang twenty yards without peghing like a miller's aiver."

"You lost, then, your place as trumpeter?" said Ravenswood.

"Lost it! to be sure I lost it," replied the sexton, "for I couldna hae played pew upon a dry hemlock; but I might hae dune weel enOUGH, for I keepit the wage and the free house, and little to do but play on the fiddle to them, but for Allan, last Lord Ravenswood, that was far waur than ever his father was."

"What," said the Master, "did my father—I mean, did his father's son—this last Lord Ravenswood, deprive you of what the bounty of his father allowed you?"

"Ay, troth did he," answered the old man; "for he loot his affairs gang to the dogs, and let in this Sir William Ashton on us, that will gie naething for naething, and just removed me and a' the puir creatures that had bite and soup at the castle, and a hole to put our heads in, when things were in the auld way."

"If Lord Ravenswood protected his people, my friend, while he had the means of doing so, I think they might spare his memory," replied the Master.

"Ye are welcome to your ain opinion, sir," said the sexton; "but ye winna persuade me that he did his duty, either to himsell or to huz puir dependent creatures, in guiding us the gate he has done; he might hae gien us life-rent tacks of our bits o' houses and yards; and me, that's an auld man, living in yon miserable cabin, that's fitter for the dead than the quick, and killed wi' rheumatise, and John Smith in my dainty bit mailing, and his window glazen, and a' because Ravenswood guided his gear like a fule!"

"It is but too true," said Ravenswood, conscience-struck; "the penalties of extravagance extend far beyond the prodigal's own sufferings." "However," said the sexton, "this young man Edgar is like to avenge my wrangs on the hail of his kindred." "Indeed?" said Ravenswood; "why should you suppose so?"

"They say he is about to marry the daughter of Leddy Ashton; and let her leddyship get his head ance under her oter, and see you if she winna gie his neck a thraw. Sorra a bit, if I were him! Let her alane for hauding a'thing in het water that draws near her. Sae the warst wish I shall wish the lad is, that he may take his ain creditable gate o't, and ally himsell wi' his father's enemies, that have taken his broad lands and my bonny kail-yard from the lawful owners thereof."

Cervantes acutely remarks, that flattery is pleasing even from the mouth of a madman; and censure, as well as praise, often affects us, while we despise the opinions and motives on which it is founded and expressed. Ravenswood, abruptly reiterating his command that Alice's funeral should be attended to, flung away from the sexton, under the painful impression that the great as well as the small vulgar would think of his engagement with Lucy like this ignorant and selfish peasant.

"And I have stooped to subject myself to these calumnies, and am rejected notwithstanding! Lucy, your faith must be true and perfect as the diamond to compensate for the dishonour which men's opinions, and the conduct of your mother, attach to the heir of Ravenswood!"

As he raised his eyes, he beheld the Marquis of A——, who, having arrived at the Tod's Hole, had walked forth to look for his kinsman.

After mutual greetings, he made some apology to the Master for not coming forward on the preceding evening. "It was his wish," he said, "to have done so, but he had come to the knowledge of some matters which induced him to delay his purpose. I find," he proceeded, "there has been a love affair here, kinsman; and though I might blame you for not having communicated with me, as being in some degree the chief of your family——"

"With your lordship's permission," said Ravenswood, "I am deeply grateful for the interest you are pleased to take in me, but / am the chief and head of my family."

"I know it—I know it," said the Marquis; "in a strict heraldic and genealogical sense, you certainly are so; what I mean is, that being in some measure under my guardianship——"

"I must take the liberty to say, my lord——" answered Ravenswood, and the tone in which he interrupted the Marquis boded no long duration to the friendship of the noble relatives, when he himself was interrupted by the little sexton, who cam puffing after them, to ask if their honours would choose music at the change-house to make up for short cheer.

"We want no music," said the Master, abruptly.

"Your honour disna ken what ye're refusing, then," said the fiddler, with the impertinent freedom of his profession. "I can play, 'Wilt thou do't again,' and 'The Auld Man's Mear's Dead,' sax times better than ever Patie Birnie. I'll get my fiddle in the turning of a coffin-screw."

"Take yourself away, sir," said the Marquis.

"And if your honour be a north-country gentleman," said the persevering minstrel, "whilk I wad judge from your tongue, I can play 'Liggeram Cosh,' and 'Mullin Dhu,' and 'The Cummers of Athole.'"

"Take yourself away, friend; you interrupt our conversation."

"Or if, under your honour's favour, ye should happen to be a thought honest, I can play (this in a low and confidential tone) 'Killiecrankie,' and 'The King shall hae his ain,' and 'The Auld Stuarts back again'; and the wife at the change-house is a decent, discreet body, neither kens nor cares what toasts are drucken, and what tunes are played, in her house: she's deaf to a'thing but the clink o' the siller."

The Marquis, who was sometimes suspected of Jacobitism, could not help laughing as he threw the fellow a dollar, and bid him go play to the servants if he had a mind, and leave them at peace.

"Aweel, gentlemen," said he, "I am wishing your honours gude day. I'll be a' the better of the dollar, and ye'll be the waur of wanting music, I'se tell ye. But I'se gang hame, and finish the grave in the tuning o' a fiddle-string, lay by my spade, and then get my tother bread-winner, and awa' to your folk, and see if they hae better lugs than their masters."

CHAPTER XXV.

*True love, an thou be true,
Thou has ane kittle part to play;
For fortune, fashion, fancy, and thou,
Maun strive for many a day.*

*I've kend by mony a friend's tale,
Far better by this heart of mine,
What time and change of fancy avail
A true-love knot to untwine.*

HENDERSOUN.

"I WISHED to tell you, my good kinsman," said the Marquis, "now that we are quit of that impertinent fiddler, that I had tried to discuss this love affair of yours with Sir William Ashton's daughter. I never saw the young lady but for a few minutes to-day; so, being a stranger to her personal merits, I pay a compliment to you, and offer her no offence, in saying you might do better."

"My lord, I am much indebted for the interest you have taken in my affairs," said Ravenswood. "I did not intend to have troubled you in any matter concerning Miss Ashton. As my engagement with that young lady has reached your lordship, I can only say, that you must necessarily suppose that I was aware of the objections to my marrying into her father's family, and of course must have been completely satisfied with the reasons by which these objections are overbalanced, since I have proceeded so far in the matter."

"Nay, Master, if you had heard me out," said his noble relation, "you might have spared that observation; for, without questioning that you had reasons which seemed to you to counterbalance every other obstacle, I set myself, by every means that it became me to use towards the Ashtons, to persuade them to meet your views."

"I am obliged to your lordship for your unsolicited intercession," said Ravenswood; "especially as I am sure your lordship would never carry it beyond the bounds which it became me to use."

"Of that," said the Marquis, "you may be confident; I myself felt the delicacy of the matter too much to place a gentleman nearly connected with my house in a degrading or dubious situation with these Ashtons. But I pointed out all the advantages of their marrying their daughter into a house so honourable, and so nearly related with the first of Scotland; I explained the exact degree of relationship in which the Ravenswoods stand to ourselves; and I even hinted how political matters were like to turn, and what cards would be trumps next Parliament. I said I regarded you as a son—or a nephew, or so—rather than as a more distant relation; and that I made your affair entirely my own."

"And what was the issue of your lordship's explanation?" said Ravenswood, in some doubt whether he should resent or express gratitude for his interference.

"Why, the Lord Keeper would have listened to reason," said the Marquis; "he is rather unwilling to leave his place, which, in the present view of a change, must be vacated; and, to say truth, he seemed to have a liking for you, and to be sensible of the general advantages to be attained by such a match. But his lady, who is tongue of the trump, Master——"

"What of Lady Ashton, my lord?" said Ravenswood; "let me know the issue of this extraordinary conference: I can bear it."

"I am glad of that, kinsman," said the Marquis, "for I am ashamed to tell you half what she said. It is enough—her mind is made up, and the mistress of a first-rate boarding-school could not have rejected with more haughty indifference the suit of a half-pay Irish officer, beseeching permission to wait upon the heiress of a West India planter, than Lady Ashton spurned every proposal of mediation which it could at all become me to offer in behalf of you, my good kinsman. I cannot guess what she means. A more honourable connexion she could not form, that's certain. As for money and land, that used to be her husband's business rather than hers; I really think she hates you for having the rank which her husband has not, and perhaps for not having the lands that her goodman has. But I should only vex you to say more about it—here we are at the change-house."

The Master of Ravenswood paused as he entered the cottage, which reeked through all its crevices, and they were not few, from the exertions of the Marquis's travelling-cooks to supply good cheer, and spread, as it were, a table in the wilderness.

"My Lord Marquis," said Ravenswood, "I already mentioned that accident has put your lordship in possession of a secret which, with my consent, should have remained one even to you, my kinsman, for some time. Since the secret was to part from my own custody, and that of the only person besides who was interested in it, I am not sorry it should have reached your lordship's ears, as being fully aware that you are my noble kinsman and friend."

"You may believe it is safely lodged with me, Master of Ravenswood," said the Marquis; "but I should like well to hear you say that you renounced the idea of an alliance which you can hardly pursue without a certain degree of degradation."

"Of that, my lord, I shall judge," answered Ravenswood, "and I hope with delicacy as sensitive as any of my friends. But I have no engagement with Sir William and Lady Ashton. It is with Miss Ashton alone that I have entered upon the subject, and my conduct in the matter shall be entirely ruled by hers. If she continues to prefer me in my poverty to the wealthier suitors whom her friends recommend, I may well make some sacrifice to her sincere affection: I may well surrender to her the less tangible and less palpable advantages of birth, and the deep-rooted prejudices of family hatred. If Miss Lucy Ashton should change her mind on a subject of such delicacy, I trust my friends will be silent on my disappointment, and I shall know how to make my enemies so."

"Spoke like a gallant young nobleman," said the Marquis; "for my part, I have that regard for you, that I should be sorry the thing went on. This Sir William Ashton was a pretty enough pettifogging kind of a lawyer twenty years ago, and betwixt battling at the bar and leading in committees of Parliament he has got well on; the Darien matter lent him a lift, for he had good intelligence and sound views, and sold out in time; but the best work is had out of him. No government will take him at his own, or rather his wife's extravagant, valuation; and betwixt his indecision and her insolence, from all I can guess, he will outsit his market, and be had cheap when no one will bid for him. I say nothing of Miss Ashton; but I assure you, a connexion with her father will be neither useful nor ornamental, beyond that part of your father's spoils which he may be prevailed upon to disgorge by way of tocher-good; and take my word for it, you will get more if you have spirit to bell the cat with him in the House of Peers. And I will be the man, cousin," continued his lordship, "will course the fox for you, and make him rue the day that ever he refused a composition too honourable for him, and proposed by me on the behalf of a kinsman."

There was something in all this that, as it were, overshot the mark. Ravenswood could not disguise from himself that his noble kinsman had more reasons for taking offence at the reception of his suit than regarded his interest and honour, yet he could neither complain nor be surprised that it should be so. He contented himself, therefore, with repeating, that his attachment was to Miss Ashton personally; that he desired neither wealth nor aggrandisement from her father's means and influence; and that nothing should prevent his keeping his engagement, excepting her own express desire that it should be relinquished; and he requested as a favour that the matter might be no more mentioned betwixt them at present, assuring the Marquis of A—that he should be his confidant or its interruption.

The Marquis soon had more agreeable, as well as more interesting, subjects on which to converse. A foot-post, who had followed him from Edinburgh to Ravenswood Castle, and had traced his steps to the Tod's Hole, brought him a packet laden with good news. The political calculations of the Marquis had proved just, both in London and at Edinburgh, and he saw almost within his grasp the pre-eminence for which he had panted. The refreshments which the servants had prepared were now put on the table, and an epicure would perhaps have enjoyed them with additional zest from the contrast which such fare afforded to the miserable cabin in which it was served up.

The turn of conversation corresponded with and added to the social feelings of the company. The Marquis expanded with pleasure on the power which probably incidents were likely to assign to him, and on the use which he hoped to make of it in serving his kinsman Ravenswood. Ravenswood could but repeat the gratitude which he really felt, even when he considered the topic as too long dwelt upon. The wine was excellent, notwithstanding its having been brought in a runlet from Edinburgh; and the habits of the Marquis, when engaged with such good cheer, were somewhat sedentary. And so it fell out that they delayed their journey two hours later than was their original purpose.

"But what of that, my good young friend?" said the Marquis. "Your Castle of Wolf's Crag is at but five or six miles' distance, and will afford the same hospitality to your kinsman of A—that it gave to this same Sir William Ashton."

"Sir William took the castle by storm," said Ravenswood, "and, like many a victor, had little reason to congratulate himself on his conquest." "Well—well!" said Lord A——, whose dignity was something relaxed by the wine he had drunk, "I see I must bribe you to harbour me. Come, pledge me in a bumper health to the last young lady that slept at Wolf's Crag, and liked her quarters. My bones are not so tender as hers, and I am resolved to occupy her apartment to-night, that I may judge how hard the couch is that love can soften."

"Your lordship may choose what penance you please," said Ravenswood; "but I assure you, I should expect my old servant to hang himself, or throw himself from the battlements, should your lordship visit him so unexpectedly. I do assure you, we are totally and literally unprovided."

But his declaration only brought from his noble patron an assurance of his own total indifference as to every species of accommodation, and his determination to see the Tower of Wolf's Crag. His ancestor, he said, had been feasted there, when he went forward with the then Lord Ravenswood to the fatal battle of Flodden, in which they both fell. Thus hard pressed, the Master offered to ride forward to get matters put in such preparation as time and circumstances admitted; but the Marquis protested his kinsman must afford him his company, and would only consent that an avant-courier should carry to the desinted seneschal, Caleb Balderstone, the unexpected news of this invasion.

The Master of Ravenswood soon after accompanied the Marquis in his carriage, as the latter had proposed; and when they became better acquainted in the progress of the journey, his noble relation explained the very liberal views which he entertained for his relation's preferment, in case of the success of his own political schemes. They related to a secret and highly important commission beyond sea, which could only be entrusted to a person of rank, talent, and perfect confidence, and which, as it required great trust and reliance on the envoy employed, could but not prove both honourable and advantageous to him. We need not enter into the nature and purpose of this commission, farther than to acquaint our readers that the charge was in prospect highly acceptable to the Master of Ravenswood, who hailed with pleasure the hope of emerging from his present state of indigence and inaction into independence and honourable exertion.

While he listened thus eagerly to the details with which the Marquis now thought it necessary to entrust him, the messenger who had been despatched to the Tower of Wolf's Crag returned with Caleb Balderstone's humble duty, and an assurance that "a" should be in seemly order, sic as the hurry of time permitted, to receive their lordships as it behaved."

Ravenswood was too well accustomed to his seneschal's mode of acting and speaking to hope much from this confident assurance. He knew that Caleb acted upon the principle of the Spanish generals, in the campaign of —, who, much to the perplexity of the Prince of Orange, their commander-in-chief, used to report their troops as full in number, and possessed of all necessary points of equipment, not considering it consistent with their dignity, or the honour of Spain, to confess any deficiency either in men or munition, until the want of both was unavoidably discovered in the day of battle. Accordingly, Ravenswood thought it necessary to give the Marquis some hint that the fair assurance which they had just received from Caleb did not by any means ensure them against a very indifferent reception.

"You do yourself injustice, Master," said the Marquis, "or you wish to surprise me agreeably. From this window I see a great light in the direction where, if I remember aright, Wolf's Crag lies; and, to judge from the splendour which the old Tower sheds around it, the preparations for our reception must be of no ordinary

description. I remember your father putting the same deception on me, when we went to the Tower for a few days' hawking, about twenty years since, and yet we spent our time as jollily at Wolf's Crag as we could have done at my own hunting seat at B——."

"Your lordship, I fear, will experience that the faculty of the present proprietor to entertain his friends is greatly abridged," said Ravenswood; "the will, I need hardly say, remains the same. But I am as much at a loss as your lordship to account for so strong and brilliant a light as is now above Wolf's Crag; the windows of the Tower are few and narrow, and those of the lower story are hidden from us by the walls of the court. I cannot conceive that any illumination of an ordinary nature could afford such a blaze of light."

The mystery was soon explained; for the cavalcade almost instantly halted, and the voice of Caleb Balderstone was heard at the coach window, exclaiming, in accents broken by grief and fear, "Och, gentlemen! Och, my gude lords! Och, haud to the right! Wolf's Crag is burning, bower and ha'—a' the rich plenishing outside and inside—a' the fine graith, pictures, tapestries, needle-wark, hangings, and other decorements—a' in a bleeze, as if they were nae mair than sae mony peats, or as muckle pease-strae! Haud to the right, gentlemen, I implore ye; there is some sma' provision making at Luckie Sma'trash's; but oh, wae for this night, and wae for me that lives to see it!"

Ravenswood was first stunned by this new and unexpected calamity; but after a moment's recollection he sprang from the carriage, and hastily bidding his noble kinsman goodnight, was about to ascend the hill towards the castle, the broad and full conflagration of which now flung forth a high column of red light, that flickered far to seaward upon the dashing waves of the ocean.

"Take a horse, Master," exclaimed the Marquis, greatly affected by this additional misfortune, so unexpectedly heaped upon his young protege; "and give me my ambling palfrey; and haste forward, you knaves, to see what can be done to save the furniture, or to extinguish the fire—ride, you knaves, for your lives!"

The attendants bustled together, and began to strike their horses with the spur, and call upon Caleb to show them the road. But the voice of that careful seneschal was heard above the tumult, "Oh, stop sirs, stop—turn bridle, for the luve of Mercy; add not loss of lives to the loss of world's gean! Thirty barrels of powther, landed out of a Dunkirk dogger in the auld lord's time—a' in the vau'ts of the auld tower,—the fire canna be far off it, I trow. Lord's sake, to the right, lads—to the right; let's pit the hill atween us and peril,—a wap wi' a corner-stane o' Wolf's Crag wad defy the doctor!"

It will readily be supposed that this annunciation hurried the Marquis and his attendants into the route which Caleb prescribed, dragging Ravenswood along with them, although there was much in the matter which he could not possibly comprehend. "Gunpowder!" he exclaimed, laying hold of Caleb, who in vain endeavoured to escape from him; "what gunpowder? How any quantity of powder could be in Wolf's Crag without my knowledge, I cannot possibly comprehend."

"But I can," interrupted the Marquis, whispering him, "I can comprehend it thoroughly; for God's sake, ask him no more questions at present."

"There it is, now," said Caleb, extricating himself from his master, and adjusting his dress, "your honour will believe his lordship's honourable testimony. His lordship minds weel how, in the year that him they ca'd King Willie died——"

"Hush! hush, my good friend!" said the Marquis; "I shall satisfy your master upon that subject."

"And the people at Wolf's Hope," said Ravenswood, "did none of them come to your assistance before the flame got so high?"

"Ay did they, mony ane of them, the rapsallions!" said Caleb; "but truly I was in nae hurry to let them into the Tower, where there were so much plate and valuables."

"Confound you for an impudent liar!" said Ravenswood, in uncontrollable ire, "there was not a single ounce of——"

"Forbye," said the butler, most irreverently raising his voice to a pitch which drowned his master's, "the fire made fast on us, owing to the store of tapestry and carved timmer in the banqueting-ha', and the loons ran like scalded rats sae sune as they heard of the gunpouter."

"I do entreat," said the Marquis to Ravenswood, "you will ask him no more questions."

"Only one, my lord. What has become of poor Mysie?"

"Mysie!" said Caleb, "I had nae time to look about ony Mysie; she's in the Tower, I'se warrant, biding her awful doom." "By heaven," said Ravenswood, "I do not understand all this! The life of a faithful old creature is at stake; my lord, I will be withheld no longer; I will at least ride up, and see whether the danger is as imminent as this old fool pretends."

"Weel, then, as I live by bread," said Caleb, "Mysie is weel and safe. I saw her out of the castle before I left it mysell. Was I ganging to forget an auld fellow-servant?"

"What made you tell me the contrary this moment?" said his master.

"Did I tell you the contrary?" said Caleb; "then I maun hae been dreaming surely, or this awsome night has turned my judgment; but safe she is, and ne'er a living soul in the castle, a' the better for them: they wau have gotten an unco heezy."

The Master of Ravenswood, upon this assurance being solemnly reiterated, and notwithstanding his extreme wish to witness the last explosion, which was to ruin to the ground the mansion of his fathers, suffered himself to be dragged onward towards the village of Wolf's Hope, where not only the change-house, but that of our well-known friend the cooper, were all prepared for reception of himself and his noble guest, with a liberality of provision which requires some explanation.

We omitted to mention in its place, that Lockhard having fished out the truth concerning the mode by which Caleb had obtained the supplies for his banquet, the Lord Keeper, amused with the incident, and desirous at the time to gratify Ravenswood, had recommended the cooper of Wolf's Hope to the official situation under government the prospect of which had reconciled him to the loss of his wild-fowl. Mr. Girder's preferment had occasioned a pleasing surprise to old Caleb; for when, some days after his master's departure, he found himself absolutely compelled, by some necessary business, to visit the fishing hamlet, and was gliding like a ghost past the door of the cooper, for fear of being summoned to give some account of the progress of the solicitation in his favour, or, more probably that the inmates might upbraid him with the false hope he had held out upon the subject, he heard himself, not without some apprehension, summoned at once in treble, tenor, and bass—a trio performed by the voices of Mrs. Girder, old Dame Loup-the-Dyke, and the Goodman of the dwelling—"Mr. Caleb!—Mr. Caleb Balderstone! I hope ye arena ganging dry-lipped by our door, and we sae muckle indebted to you?"

This might be said ironically as well as in earnest. Caleb augured the worst, turned a deaf ear to the trio aforesaid, and was moving doggedly on, his ancient castor pulled over his brows, and his eyes bent on the ground, as if to count the flinty pebbles with which the rude pathway was causewayed. But on a sudden he found himself surrounded in his progress, like a stately merchantman in the Gut of Gibraltar (I hope the ladies will excuse the tarpaulin phrase) by three Algerine galleys. "Gude guide us, Mr. Balderstone!" said Mrs. Girder. "Wha wad hae thought it of an auld and kenn'd friend!" said the mother.

"And no sae muckle as stay to receive our thanks," said the cooper himself, "and frae the like o' me that seldom offers them! I am sure I hope there's nae ill seed sawn between us, Mr. Balderstone. Ony man that has said to ye I am no gratefu' for the situation of Queen's cooper, let me hae a whample at him wi' mine eatche, that's a'."

"My good friends—my dear friends," said Caleb, still doubting how the certainty of the matter might stand, "what needs a' this ceremony? Ane tries to serve their friends, and sometimes they may happen to prosper, and sometimes to misgie. Naething I care to be fashed wi' less than thanks; I never could bide them."

"Faith, Mr. Balderstone, ye suld hae been fashed wi' few o' mine," said the downright man of staves and hoops, "if I had only your gude-will to thank ye for: I suld e'en hae set the guse, and the wild deukes, adn the runlet of sack to balance that account. Gude-will, man, is a geizen'd tub, that hauds in nae liquor; but gude deed's like the cask, tight, round, and sound, that will haud liquor for the king."

"Have ye no heard of our letter," said the mother-in-law, "making our John [Gibbie] the Queen's cooper for certain? and scarce a chield that had ever hammered gird upon tub but was applying for it?"

"Have I heard!!!" said Caleb, who now found how the wind set, with an accent of exceeding contempt, at the doubt expressed—"have I heard, quo'she!!!" and as he spoke he changed his shambling, skulking, dodging pace into a manly and authoritative step, readjusted his cocked hat, and suffered his brow to emerge from under it in all the pride of aristocracy, like the sun from behind a cloud.

"To be sure, he canna but hae heard," said the good woman.

"Ay, to be sure it's impossible but I should," said Caleb; "and sae I'll be the first to kiss ye, joe, and wish you, cooper, much joy of your preferment, naething doubting but ye ken wha are your friends, and HAVE helped ye, and CAN help ye. I thought it right to look a wee strange upon it at first," added Caleb, "just to see if ye were made of the right mettle; but ye ring true, lad—ye ring true!"

So saying, with a most lordly air he kissed the women, and abandoned his hand, with an air of serene patronage, to the hearty shake of Mr. Girder's horn-hard palm. Upon this complete, and to Caleb most satisfactory, information he did not, it may readily be believed, hesitate to accept an invitation to a solemn feast, to which were invited, not only all the NOTABLES of the village, but even his ancient antagonist, Mr. Dingwall, himself. At this festivity he was, of course, the most welcome and most honoured guest; and so well did he ply the company with stories of what he could do with his master, his master with the Lord Keeper, the Lord Keeper with the council, and the council with the king [queen], that before the company dismissed (which was, indeed, rather at an early hour than a late one), every man of note in the village was ascending to the top-gallant of some ideal preferment by the ladder of ropes which Caleb had presented to their imagination. Nay, the cunning butler regained in that moment not only all the influence he possessed formerly over the villagers, when the baronial family which he served were at the proudest, but acquired even an accession of importance. The writer—the very attorney himself, such is the thirst of preferment—felt the force of the attraction, and taking an opportunity to draw Caleb into a corner, spoke, with affectionate regret, of the declining health of the sheriff-clerk of the county.

"An excellent man—a most valuable man, Mr. Caleb; but fat sall I say! we are peer feckless bodies, here the day and awa' by cock-screech the morn; and if he failies, there maun be somebody in his place; and gif that ye could airt it my way, I sall be thankful, man—a gluve stuffed wi gowd nobles; an' hark ye, man something canny till yourself, and the Wolf's Hope carles to settle kindly wi' the Master of Ravenswood—that is, Lord Ravenswood—God bless his lordship!"

A smile, and a hearty squeeze by the hand, was the suitable answer to this overture; and Caleb made his escape from the jovial party, in order to avoid committing himself by any special promises.

"The Lord be gude to me," said Caleb, when he found himself in the open air, and at liberty to give vent to the self-exultation with which he was, as it were, distended; "did ever ony man see sic a set of green-gaislings? The very pickmaws and solan-geese out-bye yonder at the Bass hae ten times their sense! God, an I had been the Lord High Commissioner to the Estates o' Parliament, they couldna hae beflumm'd me mair; and, to speak Heaven's truth, I could hardly hae beflumm'd them better neither! But the writer—ha! ha! ha!—ah, ha! ha! mercy on me, that I suld live in my auld days to gie the ganag-bye to the very writer! Sheriff-clerk!!! But I hae an auld account to settle wi' the carle; and to make amends for bye-ganes, the office shall just cost him as much time-serving and tide-serving as if he were to get it in gude earnest, of whilk there is sma' appearance, unless the Master learns mair the ways of this warld, whilk it is muckle to be doubted that he never will do."

CHAPTER XXVI.

*Why flames yon far summit—why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast?
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From thine eyrie, that beacons the darkness of Heaven.*

CAMPBELL.

THE circumstances announced in the conclusion of the last chapter will account for the ready and cheerful reception of the Marquis of A—— and the Master of Ravenswood in the village of Wolf's Hope. In fact, Caleb had no sooner announced the conflagration of the tower than the whole hamlet were upon foot to hasten to extinguish the flames. And although that zealous adherent diverted their zeal by intimating the formidable contents of the subterranean apartments, yet the check only turned their assiduity into another direction. Never had there been such slaughtering of capons, and fat geese, and barndoor fowls; never such boiling of "reested" hams; never such making of car-cakes and sweet scones, Selkirk bannocks, cookies, and petticoat-tails—delicacies little known to the present generation. Never had there been such a tapping of barrels, and such uncorking of greybeards, in the village of Wolf's Hope. All the inferior houses were thrown open for the reception of the Marquis's dependants, who came, it was thought, as precursors of the shower of preferment which hereafter was to leave the rest of Scotland dry, in order to distil its rich dew on the village of Wolf's Hope under Lammermoor. The minister put in his claim to have the guests of distinction lodged at the manse, having his eye, it was thought, upon a neighbouring preferment, where the incumbent was sickly; but Mr. Balderstone destined that honour to the cooper, his wife, and wife's mother, who danced for joy at the preferences thus assigned them.

Many a beck and many a bow welcomed these noble guests to as good entertainment as persons of such rank could set before such visitors; and the old dame, who had formerly lived in Ravenswood Castle, and knew, as she said, the ways of the nobility, was in no whit wanting in arranging matters, as well as circumstances permitted, according to the etiquette of the times. The cooper's house was so roomy that each guest had his separate retiring-room, to which they were ushered with all due ceremony, while the plentiful supper was in the act of being placed upon the table.

Ravenswood no sooner found himself alone than, impelled by a thousand feelings, he left the apartment, the house, and the village, and hastily retraced his steps to the brow of the hill, which rose betwixt the village and screened it from the tower, in order to view the final fall of the house of his fathers. Some idle boys from the hamlet had taken the same direction out of curiosity, having first witnessed the arrival of the coach and six and its attendants. As they ran one by one past the Master, calling to each other to "Come and see the auld tower blaw up in the lift like the peelings of an ingan," he could not but feel himself moved with indignation. "And these are the sons of my father's vassals," he said—"of men bound, both by law and gratitude, to follow our steps through battle, and fire, and flood; and now the destruction of their liege lord's house is but a holiday's sight to them."

These exasperating reflections were partly expressed in the acrimony with which he exclaimed, on feeling himself pulled by the cloak: "What do you want, you dog?"

"I am a dog, and an auld dog too," answered Caleb, for it was he who had taken the freedom, "and I am like to get a dog's wages; but it does not signification a pinch of sneezing, for I am ower auld a dog to learn new tricks, or to follow a new master."

As he spoke, Ravenswood attained the ridge of the hill from which Wolf's Crag was visible; the flames had entirely sunk down, and, to his great surprise, there was only a dusky reddening upon the clouds immediately over the castle, which seemed the reflection of the embers of the sunken fire.

"The place cannot have blown up," said the Master; "we must have heard the report: if a quarter of the gunpowder was there you tell me of, it would have been heard twenty miles off."

"It've very like it wad," said Balderstone, composedly.

"Then the fire cannot have reached the vaults?"

"It's like no," answered Caleb, with the same impenetrable gravity.

"Hark ye, Caleb," said his master, "this grows a little too much for my patience. I must go and examine how matters stand at Wolf's Crag myself."

"Your honour is ganging to gang nae sic gate," said Caleb, firmly.

"And why not?" said Ravenswood, sharply; "who or what shall prevent me?"

"Even I mysell," said Caleb, with the same determination.

"You, Balderstone!" replied the Master; "you are forgetting yourself, I think."

"But I think no," said Balderstone; "for I can just tell ye a' about the castle on this knowe-head as weel as if ye were at it. Only dinna pit yourself into a kippage, and expose yourself before the weans, or before the Marquis, when ye gang down-bye."

"Speak out, you old fool," replied his master, "and let me know the best and the worst at once."

"Ou, the best and the warst is, just that the tower is standing hail and feir, as safe and as empty as when ye left it."

"Indeed! and the fire?" said Ravenswood. "Not a gleed of fire, then, except the bit kindling peat, and maybe a spunk in Mysie's cutty-pipe," replied Caleb.

"But the flame?" demanded Ravenswood—"the broad blaze which might have been seen ten miles off—what occasioned that?"

"Hout awa! it's an auld saying and a true—

Little's the light Will be seen far in a mirk night.

A wheen fern and horse little that I fired in the courtyard, after sending back the loon of a footman; and, to speak Heaven's truth, the next time that ye send or bring ony body here, let them ge gentles allenarly, without ony fremd servants, like that chield Lockhard, to be gleding and gleeing about, and looking upon the wrang side of ane's housekeeping, to the discredit of the family, and forcing ane to damn their souls wi' telling ae lee after another faster than I can count them: I wad rather set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family dishonoured in the sort."

"Upon my word, I am infinitely obliged by the proposal, Caleb," said his master, scarce able to restrain his laughter, though rather angry at the same time. "But the gunpowder—is there such a thing in the tower? The Marquis seemed to know of it." "The pouter, ha! ha! ha!—the Marquis, ha! ha! ha!" replied Caleb,—"if your honour were to brain me, I behooved to laugh,—the Marquis—the pouter! Was it there? Ay, it was there. Did he ken o't? My certie! the Marquis kenn'd o't, and it was the best o' the game; for, when I couldna pacify your honour wi' a' that I could say, I aye threw out a word mair about the gunpouter, and garr'd the Marquis tak the job in his ain hand."

"But you have not answered my question," said the Master, impatiently; "how came the powder there, and where is it now?"

"Ou, it came there, an ye maun needs ken," said Caleb, looking mysteriously, and whispering, "when there was like to be a wee bit rising here; and the Marquis, and a' the great lords of the north, were a' in it, and mony a gudely gun and broadsword were ferried ower frae Dunkirk forbye the pouter. Awfu' work we had getting them into the tower under cloud o' night, for ye maun think it wasna everybody could be trusted wi' sic kittle jobs. But if ye will gae hame to your supper, I will tell you a' about it as ye gang down."

"And these wretched boys," said Ravenswood, "is it your pleasure they are to sit there all night, to wait for the blowing up of a tower that is not even on fire?"

"Surely not, if it is your honour's pleasure that they suld gang hame; although," added Caleb, "it wadna do them a grain's damage: they wad screigh less the next day, and sleep the sounder at e'en. But just as your honour likes."

Stepping accordingly towards the urchins who manned the knolls near which they stood, Caleb informed them, in an authoritative tone, that their honours Lord Ravenswood and the Marquis of A—— had given orders that the tower was not to be blow up till next day at noon. The boys dispersed upon this comfortable assurance. One or two, however, followed Caleb for more information, particularly the urchin whom he had cheated while officiating as turnspit, who screamed, "Mr. Balderstone!—Mr. Balderstone! then the castle's gane out like an auld wife's spunk?"

"To be sure it is, callant," said the butler; "do ye think the castle of as great a lord as Lord Ravenswood wad continue in a bleeze, and him standing looking on wi' his ain very een? It's aye right," continued Caleb, shaking off his ragged page, and closing in to his Master, "to train up weans, as the wise man says, in the way they should go, and, aboon a', to teach them respect to their superiors."

"But all this while, Caleb, you have never told me what became of the arms and powder," said Ravenswood.

"Why, as for the arms," said Caleb, "it was just like the bairn's rhyme—

*Some gaed east and some gaed west,
And some gaed to the craw's nest.*

And for the pouter, I e'en changed it, as occasion served, with the skippers o' Dutch luggers and French vessels, for gin and brandy, and is served the house mony a year—a gude swap too, between what cheereth the soul of man and that which hingeth it clean out of his body; forbye, I keepit a wheen pounds of it for yoursell when ye wanted to take the pleasure o' shooting: whiles, in these latter days, I wad hardly hae kenn'd else whar to get pouter for your pleasure. And now that your anger is ower, sir, wasna that weel managed o' me, and arena ye far better sorted down yonder than ye could hae been in your ain auld ruins up-bye yonder, as the case stands wi' us now? the mair's the pity!"

"I believe you may be right, Caleb; but, before burning down my castle, either in jest or in earnest," said Ravenswood, "I think I had a right to be in the secret."

"Fie for shame, your honour!" replied Caleb; "it fits an auld carle like me weel enough to tell lees for the credit of the family, but it wadna beseem the like o' your honour's sell; besides, young folk are no judicious: they cannot make the maist of a bit figment. Now this fire—for a fire it sall be, if I suld burn the auld stable to make it mair feasible—this fire, besides that it will be an excuse for asking ony thing we want through the country, or down at the haven—this fire will settle mony things on an honourable footing for the family's credit, that cost me telling twenty daily lees to a wheen idle chaps and queans, and, what's waur, without gaining credence." "That was hard indeed, Caleb; but I do not see how this fire should help your veracity or your credit."

"There it is now?" said Caleb; "wasna I saying that young folk had a green judgment? How suld it help me, quotha? It will be a creditable apology for the honour of the family for this score of years to come, if it is weel guided. 'Where's the family pictures?' says ae meddling body. 'The great fire at Wolf's Crag,' answers I. 'Where's the family plate?' says another. 'The great fire,' says I; 'wha was to think of plate, when life and limb were in danger?' 'Where's the wardrobe and the linens?—where's the tapestries and the decorements?—beds of state, twilts, pands and testors, napery and broidered wark?' 'The fire—the fire—the fire.' Guide the fire weel, and it will serve ye for a' that ye suld have and have not; and, in some sort, a gude excuse is better than the things themselves; for they maun crack and wear out, and be consumed by time, whereas a gude offcome, prudently and creditably handled, may serve a nobleman and his family, Lord kens how lang!" Ravenswood was too well acquainted with his butler's pertinacity and self-opinion to dispute the point with him any farther. Leaving Caleb, therefore, to the enjoyment of his own successful ingenuity, he returned to the hamlet, where he found the Marquis and the good women of the mansion under some anxiety—the former on account of his absence, the others for the discredit their cookery might sustain by the delay of the supper. All were now at ease, and heard with pleasure that the fire at the castle had burned out of itself without reaching the vaults, which was the only information that Ravenswood thought it proper to give in public concerning the event of his butler's strategem.

They sat down to an excellent supper. No invitation could prevail on Mr. and Mrs. Girder, even in their own house, to sit down at table with guests of such high quality. They remained standing in the apartment, and acted the part of respectful and careful attendants on the company. Such were the manners of the time. The elder dame, confident through her age and connexion with the Ravenswood family, was less scrupulously ceremonious. She played a mixed part betwixt that of the hostess of an inn and the mistress of a private house, who receives guests above her own degree. She recommended, and even pressed, what she thought best, and was herself easily entreated to take a moderate share of the good cheer, in order to encourage her guests by her own example. Often she interrupted herself, to express her regret that "my lord did not eat; that the Master was pyking a bare bane; that, to be sure, there was naething there fit to set before their honours; that Lord Allan, rest his saul, used to like a pouthered guse, and said it was Latin for a tass o' brandy; that the brandy came frae France direct; for, for a' the English laws and gaugers, the Wolf's Hope brigs hadna forgotten the gate to Dunkirk."

Here the cooper admonished his mother-in-law with his elbow, which procured him the following special notice in the progress of her speech:

"Ye needna be dunshin that gate, John [Gibbie]," continued the old lady; "naebody says that YE ken whar the brandy comes frae; and it wadna be fitting ye should, and you the Queen's cooper; and what signifies't," continued she, addressing Lord Ravenswood, "to king, queen, or kaiser whar an auld wife like me buys her pickle sneeshin, or her drap brandy-wine, to haud her heart up?"

Having thus extricated herself from her supposed false step, Dame Loup-the-Dyke proceeded, during the rest of the evening, to supply, with great animation, and very little assistance from her guests, the funds necessary for the support of the conversation, until, declining any further circulation of their glass, her guests requested her permission to retire to their apartments.

The Marquis occupied the chamber of dais, which, in every house above the rank of a mere cottage, was kept sacred for such high occasions as the present. The modern finishing with plaster was then unknown, and tapestry was confined to the houses of the nobility and superior gentry. The cooper, therefore, who was a man of some vanity, as well as some wealth, had imitated the fashion observed by the inferior landholders and clergy, who usually ornamented their state apartments with hangings of a sort of stamped leather, manufactured in the Netherlands, garnished with trees and animals executed in copper foil, and with many a pithy sentence of morality, which, although couched in Low Dutch, were perhaps as much attended to in practice as if written in broad Scotch. The whole had somewhat of a gloomy aspect; but the fire, composed of old pitch-barrel staves, blazed merrily up the chimney; the bed was decorated with linen of most fresh and dazzling whiteness, which had never before been used, and might, perhaps, have never been used at all, but for this high occasion. On the toilette beside, stood an old-fashioned mirror, in a fillagree frame, part of the dispersed finery of the neighbouring castle. It was flanked by a long-necked bottle of Florence wine, by which stood a glass nearly as tall, resembling in shape that which Teniers usually places in the hands of his own portrait, when he paints himself as mingling in the revels of a country village. To counterbalance those foreign sentinels, there mounted guard on the other side of the mirror two stout warders of Scottish lineage; a jug, namely, of double ale, which held a Scotch pint, and a quaigh, or bicker, of ivory and ebony, hooped with silver, the work of John Girder's own hands, and the pride of his heart. Besides these preparations against thirst, there was a goodly diet-loaf, or sweet cake; so that, with such auxiliaries, the apartment seemed victualled against a siege of two or three days.

It only remains to say, that the Marquis's valet was in attendance, displaying his master's brocaded nightgown, and richly embroidered velvet cap, lined and faced with Brussels lace, upon a huge leathern easy-chair, wheeled round so as to have the full advantage of the comfortable fire which we have already mentioned. We therefore commit that eminent person to his night's repose, trusting he profited by the ample preparations made for his accommodation—preparations which we have mentioned in detail, as illustrative of ancient Scottish manners.

It is not necessary we should be equally minute in describing the sleeping apartment of the Master of Ravenswood, which was that usually occupied by the goodman and goodwife themselves. It was comfortably hung with a sort of warm-coloured worsted, manufactured in Scotland, approaching in texture to what is now called shalloon. A staring picture of John [Gibbie] Girder himself ornamented this dormitory, painted by a starving Frenchman, who had, God knows how or why, strolled over from Flushing or Dunkirk to Wolf's Hope in a smuggling dogger. The features were, indeed, those of the stubborn, opinionative, yet sensible artisan, but Monsieur had contrived to throw a French grace into the look and manner, so utterly inconsistent with the dogged gravity of the original, that it was impossible to look at it without laughing. John and his family, however, piqued themselves not a little upon this picture, and were proportionably censured by the neighbourhood, who pronounced that the cooper, in sitting for the same, and yet more in presuming to hang it up in his bedchamber, had exceeded his privilege as the richest man of the village; at once stepped beyond the bounds of his own rank, and encroached upon those of the superior orders; and, in fine, had been guilty of a very overweening act of vanity and presumption. Respect for the memory of my deceased friend, Mr. Richard Tinto, has obliged me to treat this matter at some length; but I spare the reader his prolix though curious observations, as well upon the character of the French school as upon the state of painting in Scotland at the beginning of the 18th century.

The other preparations of the Master's sleeping apartment were similar to those in the chamber of dais.

At the usual early hour of that period, the Marquis of A—— and his kinsman prepared to resume their journey. This could not be done without an ample breakfast, in which cold meat and hot meat, and oatmeal flummery, wine and spirits, and milk varied by every possible mode of preparation, evinced the same desire to do honour to their guests which had been shown by the hospitable owners of the mansion upon the evening before. All the bustle of preparation for departure now resounded through Wolf's Hope. There was paying of bills and shaking of hands, and saddling of horses, and harnessing of carriages, and distributing of drink-money. The Marquis left a broad piece for the gratification of John Girder's household, which he, the said John, was for some time disposed to convert to his own use; Dingwall, the writer, assuring him he was justified in so doing, seeing he was the disburser of those expenses which were the occasion of the gratification. But, notwithstanding this legal authority, John could not find in his heart to dim the splendour of his late hospitality by picketing anything in the nature of a gratuity. He only assured his menials he would consider them as a damned ungrateful pack if they bought a gill of brandy elsewhere than out of his own stores; and as the drink-money was likely to go to its legitimate use, he comforted himself that, in this manner, the Marquis's donative would, without any impeachment of credit and character, come ultimately into his own exclusive possession.

While arrangements were making for departure, Ravenswood made blythe the heart of his ancient butler by informing him, cautiously however (for he knew Caleb's warmth of imagination), of the probable change which was about to take place in his fortunes. He deposited with Balderstone, at the same time, the greater part of his slender funds, with an assurance, which he was obliged to reiterate more than once, that he himself had sufficient supplies in certain prospect. He therefore enjoined Caleb, as he valued his favour, to desist from all farther manoeuvres against the inhabitants of Wolf's Hope, their cellars, poultry-yards, and substance whatsoever. In this prohibition, the old domestic acquiesced more readily than his master expected.

"It was doubtless," he said, "a shame, a discredit, and a sin to harry the poor creatures, when the family were in circumstances to live honourably on their ain means; and there might be wisdom," he added, "in giving them a while's breathing-time at any rate, that they might be the more readily brought forward upon his honour's future occasions."

This matter being settled, and having taken an affectionate farewell of his old domestic, the Master rejoined his noble relative, who was now ready to enter his carriage. The two landladies, old and young, having received in all kindly greeting a kiss from each of their noble guests, stood simpering at the door of their house, as the coach and six, followed by its train of clattering horsemen, thundered out of the village. John Girder also stood upon his threshold, now looking at his honoured right hand, which had been so lately shaken by a marquis and a lord, and now giving a glance into the interior of his mansion, which manifested all the disarray of the late revel, as if balancing the distinction which he had attained with the expenses of the entertainment.

At length he opened his oracular jaws. "Let every man and woman here set about their ain business, as if there was nae sic thing as marquis or master, duke or drake, laird or lord, in this world. Let the house be redd up, the broken meat set bye, and if there is ony thing totally uneatable, let it be gien to the poor folk; and, gude mother and wife, I hae just ae thing to entreat ye, that ye will never speak to me a single word, good or bad, anent a' this nonsense wark, but keep a' your cracks about it to yoursell and your kimmers, for my head is weel-nigh dung donnart wi' it already."

As John's authority was tolerably absolute, all departed to their usual occupations, leaving him to build castles in the air, if he had a mind, upon the court favour which he had acquired by the expenditure of his worldly substance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

*Why, now I have Dame Fortune by the Forelock,
And if she escapes my grasp, the fault is mine;
He that hath buffeted with stern adversity
Best knows the shape his course to favouring breezes.*

Old Play.

OUR travellers reach Edinburgh without any farther adventure, and the Master of Ravenswood, as had been previously settled, took up his abode with his noble friend.

In the mean time, the political crisis which had been expected took place, and the Tory party obtained in the Scottish, as in the English, councils of Queen Anne a short-lived ascendancy, of which it is not our business to trace either the cause or consequences. Suffice it to say, that it affected the different political parties according to the nature of their principles. In England, many of the High Church party, with Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, at their head, affected to separate their principles from those of the Jacobites, and, on that account, obtained the denomination of Whimsicals. The Scottish High Church party, on the contrary, or, as they termed themselves, the Cavaliers, were more consistent, if not so prudent, in their politics, and viewed all the changes now made as preparatory to calling to the throne, upon the queen's demise, her brother the Chevalier de St. George. Those who had suffered in his service now entertained the most unreasonable hopes, not only of indemnification, but of vengeance upon their political adversaries; while families attached to the Whig interest saw nothing before them but a renewal of the hardships they had undergone during the reigns of Charles the Second and his brother, and a retaliation of the confiscation which had been inflicted upon the Jacobites during that of King William.

But the most alarmed at the change of system was that prudential set of persons, some of whom are found in all governments, but who abound in a provincial administration like that of Scotland during the period, and who are what Cromwell called waiters upon Providence, or, in other words, uniform adherents to the party who are uppermost. Many of these hastened to read their recantation to the Marquis of A——; and, as it was easily seen that he took a deep interest in the affairs of his kinsman, the Master of Ravenswood, they were the first to suggest measures for retrieving at least a part of his property, and for restoring him in blood against his father's attainder.

Old Lord Turntipplet professed to be one of the most anxious for the success of these measures; for "it grieved him to the very saul," he said, "to see so brave a young gentleman, of sic auld and undoubted nobility, and, what was mair than a' that, a bluid relation of the Marquis of A——, the man whom," he swore, "he honoured most upon the face of the earth, brought to so severe a pass. For his ain puir peculiar," as he said, "and to contribute something to the rehabilitation of sae auld ane house," the said Turntipplet sent in three family pictures lacking the frames, and six high-backed chairs, with worked Turkey cushions, having the crest of Ravenswood brodered thereon, without charging a penny either of the principal or interest they had cost him, when he bought them, sixteen years before, at a roup of the furniture of Lord Ravenswood's lodgings in the Canongate.

Much more to Lord Turntipplet's dismay than to his surprise, although he affected to feel more of the latter than the former, the Marquis received his gift very drily, and observed, that his lordship's restitution, if he expected it to be received by the Master of Ravenswood and his friends, must comprehend a pretty large farm, which, having been mortgaged to Turntipplet for a very inadequate sum, he had contrived, during the confusion of the family affairs, and by means well understood by the lawyers of that period, to acquire to himself in absolute property.

The old time-serving lord winced excessively under the requisition, protesting to God, that he saw no occasion the lad could have for the instant possession of the land, seeing he would doubtless now recover the bulk of his estate from Sir William Ashton, to which he was ready to contribute by every means in his power, as was just and reasonable; and finally declaring, that he was willing to settle the land on the young gentleman after his own natural demise.

But all these excuses availed nothing, and he was compelled to disgorge the property, on receiving back the sum for which it had been mortgaged. Having no other means of making peace with the higher powers, he returned home sorrowful and discontent, complaining to his confidants, "That every mutation or change in the state had hitherto been productive of some sma' advantage to him in his ain quiet affairs; but that the present had—pize upon it!—cost him one of the best penfeathers o' his wing."

Similar measures were threatened against others who had profited by the wreck of the fortune of Ravenswood; and Sir William Ashton, in particular, was menaced with an appeal to the House of Peers, a court of equity, against the judicial sentences, proceeding upon a strict and severe construction of the letter of the law, under which he held the castle and barony of Ravenswood. With him, however, the Master, as well for Lucy's sake as on account of the hospitality he had received from him, felt himself under the necessity of proceeding with great candor. He wrote to the late Lord Keeper, for he no longer held that office, stating frankly the engagement which existed between him and Miss Ashton, requesting his permission for their union, and assuring him of his willingness to put the settlement of all matters between them upon such a footing as Sir William himself should think favourable.

The same messenger was charged with a letter to Lady Ashton, deprecating any cause of displeasure which the Master might unintentionally have given her, enlarging upon his attachment to Miss Ashton, and the length to which it had proceeded, and conjuring the lady, as a Douglas in nature as well as in name, generously to forget ancient prejudices and misunderstandings, and to believe that the family had acquired a friend, and she herself a respectful and attached humble servant, in him who subscribed himself, "Edgar, Master of Ravenswood." A third letter Ravenswood addressed to Lucy, and the messenger was instructed to find some secret and secure means of delivering it into her own hands. It contained the strongest protestations of continued affection, and dwelt upon the approaching change of the writer's fortunes, as chiefly valuable by tending to remove the impediments to their union. He related the steps he had taken to overcome the prejudices of her parents, and especially of her mother, and expressed his hope they might prove effectual. If not, he still trusted that his absence from Scotland upon an important and honourable mission might give time for prejudices to die away; while he hoped and trusted Miss Ashton's constancy, on which he had the most implicit reliance, would baffle any effort that might be used to divert her attachment. Much more there was, which, however interesting to the lovers themselves, would afford the reader neither interest nor information. To each of these three letters the Master of Ravenswood received an answer, but by different means of conveyance, and certainly couched in very different styles.

Lady Ashton answered his letter by his own messenger, who was not allowed to remain at Ravenswood a moment longer than she was engaged in penning these lines.

"For the hand of Mr. Ravenswood of Wolf's Crag—These:

"SIR, UNKNOWN:

"I have received a letter, signed 'Edgar, Master of Ravenswood,' concerning the writer whereof I am uncertain, seeing that the honours of such a family were forfeited for high treason in the person of Allan, late Lord Ravenswood. Sir, if you shall happen to be the person so subscribing yourself, you will please to know, that I claim the full interest of a parent in Miss Lucy Ashton, which I have disposed of irrevocably in behalf of a worthy person. And, sir, were this otherwise, I would not listen to a proposal from you, or any of your house, seeing their hand has been uniformly held up against the freedom of the subject and the immunities of God's kirk. Sir, it is not a flighting blink of prosperity which can change my constant opinion in this regard, seeing it has been my lot before now, like holy David, to see the wicked great in power and flourishing like a green bay-tree; nevertheless I passed, and they were not, and the place thereof knew them no more. Wishing you to lay these things to your heart for your own sake, so far as they may concern you, I pray you to take no farther notice of her who desires to remain your unknown servant,

"MARGARET DOUGLAS,

"otherwise ASHTON."

About two days after he had received this very unsatisfactory epistle, the Master of Ravenswood, while walking up the High Street of Edinburgh, was jostled by a person, in whom, as the man pulled off his hat to make an apology, he recognized Lockhard, the confidential domestic of Sir William Ashton. The man bowed, slipt a letter into his hand, and disappeared. The packet contained four close-written folios, from which, however, as is sometimes incident to the compositions of great lawyers, little could be extracted, excepting that the writer felt himself in a very puzzling predicament.

Sir William spoke at length of his high value and regard for his dear young friend, the Master of Ravenswood, and of his very extreme high value and regard for the Marquis of A——, his very dear old friend; he trusted that any measures that they might adopt, in which he was concerned, would be carried on with due regard to the sanctity of decreets and judgments obtained in foro contentioso; protesting, before men and angels, that if the law of Scotland, as declared in her supreme courts, were to undergo a reversal in the English House of Lords, the evils which would thence arise to the public would inflict a greater wound upon his

heart than any loss he might himself sustain by such irregular proceedings. He flourished much on generosity and forgiveness of mutual injuries, and hinted at the mutability of human affairs, always favourite topics with the weaker party in politics. He pathetically lamented, and gently censured, the haste which had been used in depriving him of his situation of Lord Keeper, which his experience had enabled him to fill with some advantage to the public, without so much as giving him an opportunity of explaining how far his own views of general politics might essentially differ from those now in power. He was convinced the Marquis of A—— had as sincere intentions towards the public as himself or any man; and if, upon a conference, they could have agreed upon the measures by which it was to be pursued, his experience and his interest should have gone to support the present administration. Upon the engagement betwixt Ravenswood and his daughter, he spoke in a dry and confused manner. He regretted so premature a step as the engagement of the young people should have been taken, and conjured the Master to remember he had never given any encouragement thereunto; and observed that, as a transaction inter minores, and without concurrence of his daughter's natural curators, the engagement was inept, and void in law. This precipitate measure, he added, had produced a very bad effect upon Lady Ashton's mind, which it was impossible at present to remove. Her son, Colonel Douglas Ashton, had embraced her prejudices in the fullest extent, and it was impossible for Sir William to adopt a course disagreeable to them without a fatal and irreconcilable breach in his family; which was not at present to be thought of. Time, the great physician, he hoped, would mend all.

In a postscript, Sir William said something more explicitly, which seemed to intimate that, rather than the law of Scotland should sustain a severe wound through his sides, by a reversal of the judgment of her supreme courts, in the case of the barony of Ravenswood, through the intervention of what, with all submission, he must term a foreign court of appeal, he himself would extrajudicially consent to considerable sacrifices.

From Lucy Ashton, by some unknown conveyance, the Master received the following lines: "I received yours, but it was at the utmost risk; do not attempt to write again till better times. I am sore beset, but I will be true to my word, while the exercise of my reason is vouchsafed to me. That you are happy and prosperous is some consolation, and my situation requires it all." The note was signed "L.A."

This letter filled Ravenswood with the most lively alarm. He made many attempts, notwithstanding her prohibition, to convey letters to Miss Ashton, and even to obtain an interview; but his plans were frustrated, and he had only the mortification to learn that anxious and effectual precautions had been taken to prevent the possibility of their correspondence. The Master was the more distressed by these circumstances, as it became impossible to delay his departure from Scotland, upon the important mission which had been confided to him. Before his departure, he put Sir William Ashton's letter into the hands of the Marquis of A——, who observed with a smile, that Sir William's day of grace was past, and that he had now to learn which side of the hedge the sun had got to. It was with the greatest difficulty that Ravenswood extorted from the Marquis a promise that he would compromise the proceedings in Parliament, providing Sir William should be disposed to acquiesce in a union between him and Lucy Ashton.

"I would hardly," said the Marquis, "consent to your throwing away your birthright in this manner, were I not perfectly confident that Lady Ashton, or Lady Douglas, or whatever she calls herself, will, as Scotchmen say, keep her threep; and that her husband dares not contradict her."

"But yet," said the Master, "I trust your lordship will consider my engagement as sacred."

"Believe my word of honour," said the Marquis, "I would be a friend even to your follies; and having thus told you MY opinion, I will endeavour, as occasion offers, to serve you according to your own."

The master of Ravenswood could but thank his generous kinsman and patron, and leave him full power to act in all his affairs. He departed from Scotland upon his mission, which, it was supposed, might detain him upon the continent for some months.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?

Was ever woman in this humour won?

I'll have her.

Richard III.

TWELVE months had passed away since the Master of Ravenswood's departure for the continent, and, although his return to Scotland had been expected in a much shorter space, yet the affairs of his mission, or, according to a prevailing report, others of a nature personal to himself, still detained him abroad. In the mean time, the altered state of affairs in Sir William Ashton's family may be gathered from the following conversation which took place betwixt Bucklaw and his confidential bottle companion and dependant, the noted Captain Craigengelt. They were seated on either side of the huge sepulchral-looking freestone chimney in the low hall at Girnington. A wood fire blazed merrily in the grate; a round oaken table, placed between them, supported a stoup of excellent claret, two rummer glasses, and other good cheer; and yet, with all these appliances and means to boot, the countenance of the patron was dubious, doubtful, and unsatisfied, while the invention of his dependant was taxed to the utmost to parry what he most dreaded, a fit, as he called it, of the sullen, on the part of his protector. After a long pause, only interrupted by the devil's tattoo, which Bucklaw kept beating against the hearth with the toe of his boot, Craigengelt at last ventured to break silence. "May I be double distanced," said he, "if ever I saw a man in my life have less the air of a bridegroom! Cut me out of feather, if you have not more the look of a man condemned to be hanged!"

"My kind thanks for the compliment," replied Bucklaw; "but I suppose you think upon the predicament in which you yourself are most likely to be placed; and pray, Captain Craigengelt, if it please your worship, why should I look merry, when I'm sad, and devilish sad too?"

"And that's what vexes me," said Craigengelt. "Here is this match, the best in the whole country, and which were so anxious about, is on the point of being concluded, and you are as sulky as a bear that has lost its whelps."

"I do not know," answered the Laird, doggedly, "whether I should conclude or not, if it was not that I am too far forwards to leap back."

"Leap back!" exclaimed Craigengelt, with a well-assumed air of astonishment, "that would be playing the back-game with a witness! Leap back! Why, is not the girl's fortune——"

"The young lady's, if you please," said Hayston, interrupting him.

"Well——well, no disrespect meant. Will Miss Ashton's tocher not weigh against any in Lothian?"

"Granted," answered Bucklaw; "but I care not a penny for her tocher; I have enough of my own."

"And the mother, that loves you like her own child?"

"Better than some of her children, I believe," said Bucklaw, "or there would be little love wared on the matter."

"And Colonel Sholto Douglas Ashton, who desires the marriage above all earthly things?"

"Because," said Bucklaw, "he expects to carry the county of —— through my interest."

"And the father, who is as keen to see the match concluded as ever I have been to win a main?"

"Ay," said Bucklaw, in the same disparaging manner, "it lies with Sir William's policy to secure the next best match, since he cannot barter his child to save the great Ravenswood estate, which the English House of Lords are about to wrench out of his clutches."

"What say you to the young lady herself?" said Craigengelt; "the finest young woman in all Scotland, one that you used to be so fond of when she was cross, and now she consents to have you, and gives up her engagement with Ravenswood, you are for jibbing. I must say, the devil's in ye, when ye neither know what you would have nor what you would want."

"I'll tell you my meaning in a word," answered Bucklaw, getting up and walking through the room; "I want to know what the devil is the cause of Miss Ashton's changing her mind so suddenly?"

"And what need you care," said Craigenfelt, "since the change is in your favour?"

"I'll tell you what it is," returned his patron, "I never knew much of that sort of fine ladies, and I believe they may be as capricious as the devil; but there is something in Miss Ashton's change a devilish deal too sudden and too serious for a mere flisk of her own. I'll be bound, Lady Ashton understands every machine for breaking in the human mind, and there are as many as there are cannon-bit, martingales, and cavessons for young colts."

"And if that were not the case," said Craigenfelt, "how the devil should we ever get them into training at all?"

"And that's true too," said Bucklaw, suspending his march through the dining-room, and leaning upon the back of a chair. "And besides, here's Ravenswood in the way still, do you think he'll give up Lucy's engagement?"

"To be sure he will," answered Craigenfelt; "what good can it do him to refuse, since he wishes to marry another woman and she another man?"

"And you believe seriously," said Bucklaw, "that he is going to marry the foreign lady we heard of?"

"You heard yourself," answered Craigenfelt, "what Captain Westenho said about it, and the great preparation made for their blythesome bridal."

"Captain Westenho," replied Bucklaw, "has rather too much of your own cast about, Craigie, to make what Sir William would call a 'famous witness.' He drinks deep, plays deep, swears deep, and I suspect can lie and cheat a little into the bargain; useful qualities, Craigie, if kept in their proper sphere, but which have a little too much of the freebooter to make a figure in a court of evidence."

"Well, then," said Craigenfelt, "will you believe Colonel Douglas Ashton, who heard the Marquis of A—— say in a public circle, but not aware that he was within ear-shot, that his kinsman had made a better arrangement for himself than to give his father's land for the pale-cheeked daughter of a broken-down fanatic, and that Bucklaw was welcome to the wearing of Ravenswood's shaughled shoes."

"Did he say so, by heavens!" cried Bucklaw, breaking out into one of those uncontrollable fits of passion to which he was constitutionally subject; "if I had heard him, I would have torn the tongue out of his throat before all his peats and minions, and Highland bullies into the bargain. Why did not Ashton run him through the body?"

"Capot me if I know," said the Captain. "He deserved it sure enough; but he is an old man, and a minister of state, and there would be more risk than credit in meddling with him. You had more need to think of making up to Miss Lucy Ashton the disgrace that's like to fall upon her than of interfering with a man too old to fight, and on too high a tool for your hand to reach him."

"It SHALL reach him, though, one day," said Bucklaw, "and his kinsman Ravenswood to boot. In the mean time, I'll take care Miss Ashton receives no discredit for the slight they have put upon her. It's an awkward job, however, and I wish it were ended; I scarce know how to talk to her,—but fill a bumper, Craigie, and we'll drink her health. It grows late, and a night-cowl of good claret is worth all the considering-caps in Europe."

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was the copy of our conference.

In bed she slept not, for my urging it;

At board she fed not, for my urging it;

Alone, it was the subject of my theme;

In company I often glanced at it.

Comedy of Errors.

THE next morning saw Bucklaw and his faithful Achates, Craigenfelt, at Ravenswood Castle. They were most courteously received by the knight and his lady, as well, as by their son and heir, Colonel Ashton. After a good deal of stammering and blushing—for Bucklaw, notwithstanding his audacity in other matters, had all the sheepish bashfulness common to those who have lived little in respectable society—he contrived at length to explain his wish to be admitted to a conference with Miss Ashton upon the subject of their approaching union. Sir William and his son looked at Lady Ashton, who replied with the greatest composure, "That Lucy would wait upon Mr. Hayston directly. I hope," she added with a smile, "that as Lucy is very young, and has been lately trepanned into an engagement of which she is now heartily ashamed, our dear Bucklaw will excuse her wish that I should be present at their interview?"

"In truth, my dear lady," said Bucklaw, "it is the very thing that I would have desired on my own account; for I have been so little accustomed to what is called gallantry, that I shall certainly fall into some cursed mistake unless I have the advantage of your ladyship as an interpreter."

It was thus that Bucklaw, in the perturbation of his embarrassment upon this critical occasion, forgot the just apprehensions he had entertained of Lady Ashton's overbearing ascendancy over her daughter's mind, and lost an opportunity of ascertaining, by his own investigation, the real state of Lucy's feelings.

The other gentlemen left the room, and in a short time Lady Ashton, followed by her daughter, entered the apartment. She appeared, as he had seen her on former occasions, rather composed than agitated; but a nicer judge than he could scarce have determined whether her calmness was that of despair or of indifference. Bucklaw was too much agitated by his own feelings minutely to scrutinise those of the lady. He stammered out an unconnected address, confounding together the two or three topics to which it related, and stopt short before he brought it to any regular conclusion. Miss Ashton listened, or looked as if she listened, but returned not a single word in answer, continuing to fix her eyes on a small piece of embroidery on which, as if by instinct or habit, her fingers were busily employed. Lady Ashton sat at some distance, almost screened from notice by the deep embrasure of the window in which she had placed her chair. From this she whispered, in a tone of voice which, though soft and sweet, had something in it of admonition, if not command: "Lucy, my dear, remember—have you heard what Bucklaw has been saying?"

The idea of her mother's presence seemed to have slipped from the unhappy girl's recollection. She started, dropped her needle, and repeated hastily, and almost in the same breath, the contradictory answers: "Yes, madam—no, my lady—I beg pardon, I did not hear."

"You need not blush, my love, and still less need you look so pale and frightened," said Lady Ashton, coming forward; "we know that maiden's ears must be slow in receiving a gentleman's language; but you must remember Mr. Hayston speaks on a subject on which you have long since agreed to give him a favourable hearing. You know how much your father and I have our hearts set upon an event so extremely desirable."

In Lady Ashton's voice, a tone of impressive, and even stern, innuendo was sedulously and skilfully concealed under an appearance of the most affectionate maternal tenderness. The manner was for Bucklaw, who was easily enough imposed upon; the matter of the exhortation was for the terrified Lucy, who well knew how to interpret her mother's hints, however skilfully their real purport might be veiled from general observation.

Miss Ashton sat upright in her chair, cast round her a glance in which fear was mingled with a still wilder expression, but remained perfectly silent. Bucklaw, who had in the mean time paced the room to and fro, until he had recovered his composure, now stopped within two or three yards of her chair, and broke out as follows: "I believe I have been a d—d fool, Miss Ashton; I have tried to speak to you as people tell me young ladies like to be talked to, and I don't think you comprehend what I have been saying; and no wonder, for d—n me if I understand it myself! But, however, once for all, and in broad Scotch, your father and mother like what is proposed, and if you can take a plain young fellow for your husband, who will never cross you in anything you have a mind to, I will place you at the head of the best establishment in the three Lothians; you shall have Lady Girnington's lodging in the Canongate of Edinburgh, go where you please, do what you please, and see what you please—and that's fair. Only I must have a corner at the board-end for a worthless old playfellow of mine, whose company I

would rather want than have, if it were not that the d—d fellow has persuaded me that I can't do without him; and so I hope you won't except against Craigie, although it might be easy to find much better company."

"Now, out upon you, Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, again interposing; "how can you think Lucy can have any objection to that blunt, honest, good-natured creature, Captain Craigengelt?"

"Why, madam," replied Bucklaw, "as to Craigie's sincerity, honesty, and good-nature, they are, I believe, pretty much upon a par; but that's neither here nor there—the fellow knows my ways, and has got useful to me, and I cannot well do without him, as I said before. But all this is nothing to the purpose; for since I have mustered up courage to make a plain proposal, I would fain hear Miss Ashton, from her own lips, give me a plain answer."

"My dear Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, "let me spare Lucy's bashfulness. I tell you, in her presence, that she has already consented to be guided by her father and me in this matter. Lucy, my love," she added, with that singular combination of suavity of tone and pointed energy which we have already noticed—"Lucy, my dearest love! speak for yourself, is it not as I say?"

Her victim answered in a tremulous and hollow voice: "I HAVE promised to obey you—but upon one condition."

"She means," said Lady Ashton, turning to Bucklaw, "she expects an answer to the demand which she has made upon the man at Vienna, or Ratisbon, or Paris—or where is he?—for restitution of the engagement in which he had the art to involve her. You will not, I am sure, my dear friend, think it is wrong that she should feel much delicacy upon this head; indeed, it concerns us all."

"Perfectly right—quite fair," said Bucklaw, half humming, half speaking the end of the old song—

*"It is best to be off wi' the old love
Before you be on wi' the new.*

But I thought," said he, pausing, "you might have had an answer six times told from Ravenswood. D—n me, if I have not a mind to go fetch one myself, if Miss Ashton will honour me with the commission."

"By no means," said Lady Ashton; "we have had the utmost difficulty of preventing Douglas, for whom it would be more proper, from taking so rash a step; and do you think we could permit you, my good friend, almost equally dear to us, to go to a desperate man upon an errand so desperate? In fact, all the friends of the family are of opinion, and my dear Lucy herself ought so to think, that, as this unworthy person has returned no answer to her letter, silence must on this, as in other cases, be held to give consent, and a contract must be supposed to be given up, when the party waives insisting upon it. Sir William, who should know best, is clear upon this subject; and therefore, my dear Lucy——"

"Madam," said Lucy, with unwonted energy, "urge me no farther; if this unhappy engagement be restored, I have already said you shall dispose of me as you will; till then I should commit a heavy sin in the sight of God and man in doing what you require." "But, my love, if this man remains obstinately silent——"

"He will NOT be silent," answered Lucy; "it is six weeks since I sent him a double of my former letter by a sure hand."

"You have not—you could not—you durst not," said Lady Ashton, with violence inconsistent with the tone she had intended to assume; but instantly correcting herself, "My dearest Lucy," said she, in her sweetest tone of expostulation, "how could you think of such a thing?"

"No matter," said Bucklaw; "I respect Miss Ashton for her sentiments, and I only wish I had been her messenger myself."

"And pray how long, Miss Ashton," said her mother, ironically, "are we to wait the return of your Pacolet—your fairy messenger—since our humble couriers of flesh and blood could not be trusted in this matter?"

"I have numbered weeks, days, hours, and minutes," said Miss Ashton; "within another week I shall have an answer, unless he is dead. Till that time, sir," she said, addressing Bucklaw, "let me be thus far beholden to you, that you will beg my mother to forbear me upon this subject."

"I will make it my particular entreaty to Lady Ashton," said Bucklaw. "By my honour, madam, I respect your feelings; and, although the prosecution of this affair be rendered dearer to me than ever, yet, as I am a gentleman, I would renounce it, were it so urged as to give you a moment's pain."

"Mr. Hayston, I think, cannot comprehend that," said Lady Ashton, looking pale with anger, "when the daughter's happiness lies in the bosom of the mother. Let me ask you, Miss Ashton, in what terms your last letter was couched?"

"Exactly in the same, madam," answered Lucy, "which you dictated on a former occasion."

"When eight days have elapsed, then," said her mother, resuming her tone of tenderness, "we shall hope, my dearest love, that you will end this suspense."

"Miss Ashton must not be hurried, madam," said Bucklaw, whose bluntness of feeling did not by any means arise from want of good-nature; "messengers may be stopped or delayed. I have known a day's journey broke by the casting of a foreshoe. Stay, let me see my calendar: the twentieth day from this is St. Jude's, and the day before I must be at Caverton Edge, to see the match between the Laird of Kittlegirth's black mare and Johnston the meal-monger's four-year-old-colt; but I can ride all night, or Craigie can bring me word how the match goes; and I hope, in the mean time, as I shall not myself distress Miss Ashton with any further importunity, that your ladyship yourself, and Sir William, and Colonel Douglas will have the goodness to allow her uninterrupted time for making up her mind."

"Sir," said Miss Ashton, "you are generous."

"As for that, madam," answered Bucklaw, "I only pretend to be a plain, good-humoured young fellow, as I said before, who will willingly make you happy if you will permit him, and show him how to do so." Having said this, he saluted her with more emotion than was consistent with his usual train of feeling, and took his leave; Lady Ashton, as she accompanied him out of the apartment, assuring him that her daughter did full justice to the sincerity of his attachment, and requesting him to see Sir William before his departure, "since," as she said, with a keen glance reverting towards Lucy, "against St. Jude's day, we must all be ready to SIGN AND SEAL."

"To sign and seal!" echoed Lucy, in a muttering tone, as the door of the apartment closed—"to sign and seal—to do and die!" and, clasping her extenuated hands together, she sunk back on the easy-chair she occupied, in a state resembling stupor.

From this she was shortly after awakened by the boisterous entry of her brother Henry, who clamorously reminded her of a promise to give him two yards of carnation ribbon to make knots to his new garters. With the most patient composure Lucy arose, and opening a little ivory cabinet, sought out the ribbon the lad wanted, measured it accurately, cut it off into proper lengths, and knotted it into the fashion his boyish whim required.

"Dinna shut the cabinet yet," said Henry, "for I must have some of your silver wire to fasten the bells to my hawk's jesses,—and yet the new falcon's not worth them neither; for do you know, after all the plague we had to get her from an eyrie, all the way at Posso, in Mannor Water, she's going to prove, after all, nothing better than a riffer: she just wets her singles in the blood of the partridge, and then breaks away, and lets her fly; and what good can the poor bird do after that, you know, except pine and die in the first heather-cow or whin-bush she can crawl into?"

"Right, Henry—right—very right," said Luch, mournfully, holding the boy fast by the hand, after she had given him the wire he wanted; "but there are more riflers in the world than your falcon, and more wounded birds that seek but to die in quiet, that can find neither brake nor whin-bush to hide their head in."

"Ah! that's some speech out of your romances," said the boy; "and Sholto says they have turned your head. But I hear Norman whistling to the hawk; I must go fasten on the jesses."

And he scampered away with the thoughtless gaiety of boyhood, leaving his sister to the bitterness of her own reflections.

"It is decreed," she said, "that every living creature, even those who owe me most kindness, are to shun me, and leave me to those by whom I am beset. It is just it should be thus. Alone and uncounselled, I involved myself in these perils; alone and uncounselled, I must extricate myself or die."

*What doth ensue
But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair,
And at her heel, a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures, and foes to life?*

Comedy of Errors.

AS some vindication of the ease with which Bucklaw (who otherwise, as he termed himself, was really a very good-humoured fellow) resigned his judgment to the management of Lady Ashton, while paying his addresses to her daughter, the reader must call to mind the strict domestic discipline which, at this period, was exercised over the females of a Scottish family.

The manners of the country in this, as in many other respects, coincided with those of France before the Revolution. Young women of the higher rank seldom mingled in society until after marriage, and, both in law and fact, were held to be under the strict tutelage of their parents, who were too apt to enforce the views for their settlement in life without paying any regard to the inclination of the parties chiefly interested. On such occasions, the suitor expected little more from his bride than a silent acquiescence in the will of her parents; and as few opportunities of acquaintance, far less of intimacy, occurred, he made his choice by the outside, as the lovers in the Merchant of Venice select the casket, contented to trust to chance the issue of the lottery in which he had hazarded a venture.

It was not therefore surprising, such being the general manners of the age, that Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw, whom dissipated habits had detached in some degree from the best society, should not attend particularly to those feelings in his elected bride to which many men of more sentiment, experience, and reflection would, in all probability, have been equally indifferent. He knew what all accounted the principal point, that her parents and friends, namely, were decidedly in his favour, and that there existed most powerful reasons for their predilection.

In truth, the conduct of the Marquis of A——, since Ravenswood's departure, had been such as almost to bar the possibility of his kinsman's union with Lucy Ashton. The Marquis was Ravenswood's sincere but misjudging friend; or rather, like many friends and patrons, he consulted what he considered to be his relation's true interest, although he knew that in doing so he ran counter to his inclinations.

The Marquis drove on, therefore, with the plentitude of ministerial authority, an appeal to the British House of Peers against those judgments of the courts of law by which Sir William became possessed of Ravenswood's hereditary property. As this measure, enforced with all the authority of power, was new in Scottish judicial proceedings, though now so frequently resorted to, it was exclaimed against by the lawyers on the opposite side of politics, as an interference with the civil judicature of the country, equally new, arbitrary, and tyrannical. And if it thus affected even strangers connected with them only by political party, it may be guessed what the Ashton family themselves said and thought under so gross a dispensation. Sir William, still more worldly-minded than he was timid, was reduced to despair by the loss by which he was threatened. His son's haughtier spirit was exalted into rage at the idea of being deprived of his expected patrimony. But to Lady Ashton's yet more vindictive temper the conduct of Ravenswood, or rather of his patron, appeared to be an offence challenging the deepest and most immortal revenge. Even the quiet and confiding temper of Lucy herself, swayed by the opinions expressed by all around her, could not but consider the conduct of Ravenswood as precipitate, and even unkind. "It was my father," she repeated with a sigh, "who welcomed him to this place, and encouraged, or at least allowed, the intimacy between us. Should he not have remembered this, and requited it with at least some moderate degree of procrastination in the assertion of his own alleged rights? I would have forfeited for him double the value of these lands, which he pursues with an ardour that shows he has forgotten how much I am implicated in the matter."

Lucy, however, could only murmur these things to herself, unwilling to increase the prejudices against her lover entertained by all around her, who exclaimed against the steps pursued on his account as illegal, vexatious, and tyrannical, resembling the worst measures in the worst times of the worst Stuarts, and a degradation of Scotland, the decisions of whose learned judges were thus subjected to the review of a court composed indeed of men of the highest rank, and who were not trained to the study of any municipal law, and might be supposed specially to hold in contempt that of Scotland. As a natural consequence of the alleged injustice meditated towards her father, every means was restored to, and every argument urged to induce Miss Ashton to break off her engagement with Ravenswood, as being scandalous, shameful, and sinful, formed with the mortal enemy of her family, and calculated to add bitterness to the distress of her parents.

Lucy's spirit, however, was high, and, although unaided and alone, she could have borne much: she could have endured the repinings of her father; his murmurs against what he called the tyrannical usage of the ruling party; his ceaseless charges of ingratitude against Ravenswood; his endless lectures on the various means by which contracts may be voided and annulled; his quotations from the civil, municipal, and the canon law; and his prelections upon the patria potestas. She might have borne also in patience, or repelled with scorn, the bitter taunts and occasional violence of her brother, Colonel Douglas Ashton, and the impertinent and intrusive interference of other friends and relations. But it was beyond her power effectually to withstand or elude the constant and unceasing persecution of Lady Ashton, who, laying every other wish aside, had bent the whole efforts of her powerful mind to break her daughter's contract with Ravenswood, and to place a perpetual bar between the lovers, by effecting Lucy's union with Bucklaw. Far more deeply skilled than her husband in the recesses of the human heart, she was aware that in this way she might strike a blow of deep and decisive vengeance upon one whom she esteemed as her mortal enemy; nor did she hesitate at raising her arm, although she knew that the wound must be dealt through the bosom of her daughter. With this stern and fixed purpose, she sounded every deep and shallow of her daughter's soul, assumed alternately every disguise of manner which could serve her object, and prepared at leisure every species of dire machinery by which the human mind can be wrenched from its settled determination. Some of these were of an obvious description, and require only to be cursorily mentioned; others were characteristic of the time, the country, and the persons engaged in this singular drama.

It was of the last consequence that all intercourse betwixt the lovers should be stopped, and, by dint of gold and authority, Lady Ashton contrived to possess herself of such a complete command of all who were placed around her daughter, that, if fact, no leaguered fortress was ever more completely blockaded; while, at the same time, to all outward appearance Miss Ashton lay under no restriction. The verge of her parents' domains became, in respect to her, like the viewless and enchanted line drawn around a fairy castle, where nothing unpermitted can either enter from without or escape from within. Thus every letter, in which Ravenswood conveyed to Lucy Ashton the indispensable reasons which detained him abroad, and more than one note which poor Lucy had addressed to him through what she thought a secure channel, fell into the hands of her mother. It could not be but that the tenor of these intercepted letters, especially those of Ravenswood, should contain something to irritate the passions and fortify the obstinacy of her into whose hands they fell; but Lady Ashton's passions were too deep-rooted to require this fresh food. She burnt the papers as regularly as she perused them; and as they consumed into vapour and tinder, regarded them with a smile upon her compressed lips, and an exultation in her steady eye, which showed her confidence that the hopes of the writers should soon be rendered equally unsubstantial.

It usually happens that fortune aids the machinations of those who are prompt to avail themselves of every chance that offers. A report was wafted from the continent, founded, like others of the same sort, upon many plausible circumstances, but without any real basis, stating the Master of Ravenswood to be on the eve of marriage with a foreign lady of fortune and distinction. This was greedily caught up by both the political parties, who were at once struggling for power and for popular favour, and who seized, as usual, upon the most private circumstances in the lives of each other's partisans to convert them into subjects of political discussion.

The Marquis of A—— gave his opinion aloud and publicly, not indeed in the coarse terms ascribed to him by Captain Craigengelt, but in a manner sufficiently offensive to the Ashtons. "He thought the report," he said, "highly probably, and heartily wished it might be true. Such a match was fitter and far more creditable for a spirited young fellow than a marriage with the daughter of an old Whig lawyer, whose chicanery had so nearly ruined his father."

The other party, of course, laying out of view the opposition which the Master of Ravenswood received from Miss Ashton's family, cried shame upon his fickleness and perfidy, as if he had seduced the young lady into an engagement, and wilfully and causelessly abandoned her for another.

Sufficient care was taken that this report should find its way to Ravenswood Castle through every various channel, Lady Ashton being well aware that the very reiteration of the same rumour, from so many quarters, could not but give it a semblance of truth. By some it was told as a piece of ordinary news, by some communicated as serious intelligence; now it was whispered to Lucy Ashton's ear in the tone of malignant pleasantry, and now transmitted to her as a matter of grave and serious warning.

Even the boy Henry was made the instrument of adding to his sister's torments. One morning he rushed into the room with a willow branch in his hand, which he told her had arrived that instant from Germany for her special wearing. Lucy, as we have seen, was remarkably fond of her younger brother, and at that moment his wanton and thoughtless unkindness seemed more keenly injurious than even the studied insults of her elder brother. Her grief, however, had no shade of resentment; she folded her arms about the boy's neck, and saying faintly, "Poor Henry! you speak but what they tell you" she burst into a flood of unrestrained tears. The boy was moved, notwithstanding the thoughtlessness of his age and character. "The devil take me," said he, "Lucy, if I fetch you any more of these tormenting messages again; for I like you better," said he, kissing away the tears, "than the whole pack of them; and you shall have my grey pony to ride on, and you shall canter him if you like—ay, and ride beyond the village, too, if you have a mind."

"Who told you," said Lucy, "that I am not permitted to ride where I please?"

"That's a secret," said the boy; "but you will find you can never ride beyond the village but your horse will cast a shoe, or fall lame, or the cattle bell will ring, or something will happen to bring you back. But if I tell you more of these things, Douglas will not get me the pair of colours they have promised me, and so good-morrow to you."

This dialogue plunged Lucy in still deeper dejection, as it tended to show her plainly what she had for some time suspected, that she was little better than a prisoner at large in her father's house. We have described her in the outset of our story as of a romantic disposition, delighting in tales of love and wonder, and readily identifying herself with the situation of those legendary heroines with whose adventures, for want of better reading, her memory had become stocked. The fairy wand, with which in her solitude she had delighted to raise visions of enchantment, became now the rod of a magician, the bond slave of evil *genii*, serving only to invoke spectres at which the exorcist trembled. She felt herself the object of suspicion, of scorn, of dislike at least, if not of hatred, to her own family; and it seemed to her that she was abandoned by the very person on whose account she was exposed to the enmity of all around her. Indeed, the evidence of Ravenswood's infidelity began to assume every day a more determined character. A soldier of fortune, of the name of Westenho, an old familiar of Craigengelt's, chanced to arrive from abroad about this time. The worthy Captain, though without any precise communication with Lady Ashton, always acted most regularly and sedulously in support of her plans, and easily prevailed upon his friend, by dint of exaggeration of real circumstances and coming of others, to give explicit testimony to the truth of Ravenswood's approaching marriage.

Thus beset on all hands, and in a manner reduced to despair, Lucy's temper gave way under the pressure of constant affliction and persecution. She became gloomy and abstracted, and, contrary to her natural and ordinary habit of mind, sometimes turned with spirit, and even fierceness, on those by whom she was long and closely annoyed. Her health also began to be shaken, and her hectic cheek and wandering eye gave symptoms of what is called a fever upon the spirits. In most mothers this would have moved compassion; but Lady Ashton, compact and firm of purpose, saw these waverings of health and intellect with no greater sympathy than that with which the hostile engineer regards the towers of a beleaguered city as they reel under the discharge of his artillery; or rather, she considered these starts and inequalities of temper as symptoms of Lucy's expiring resolution; as the angler, by the throes and convulsive exertions of the fish which he has hooked, becomes aware that he soon will be able to land him. To accelerate the catastrophe in the present case, Lady Ashton had recourse to an expedient very consistent with the temper and credulity of those times, but which the reader will probably pronounce truly detestable and diabolical.

CHAPTER XXXI.

*In which a witch did dwell, in loathly weeds,
And wilful want, all careless of her deeds;
So choosing solitary to abide,
Far from all neighbours, that her devilish deeds
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off, unknown, whome'er she envied.*

Faerie Queene.

THE health of Lucy Ashton soon required the assistance of a person more skilful in the office of a sick-nurse than the female domestics of the family. Ailsie Gourlay, sometimes called the Wise Woman of Bowden, was the person whom, for her own strong reasons, Lady Ashton selected as an attendant upon her daughter.

This woman had acquired a considerable reputation among the ignorant by the pretended cures which she performed, especially in "oncomes," as the Scotch call them, or mysterious diseases, which baffle the regular physician. Her pharmacopoeia consisted partly of herbs selected in planetary hours, partly of words, signs, and charms, which sometimes, perhaps, produced a favourable influence upon the imagination of her patients. Such was the avowed profession of Luckie Gourlay, which, as may well be supposed, was looked upon with a suspicious eye, not only by her neighbours, but even by the clergy of the district. In private, however, she traded more deeply in the occult sciences; for, notwithstanding the dreadful punishments inflicted upon the supposed crime of witchcraft, there wanted not those who, steeled by want and bitterness of spirit, were willing to adopt the hateful and dangerous character, for the sake of the influence which its terrors enabled them to exercise in the vicinity, and the wretched emolument which they could extract by the practice of their supposed art.

Ailsie Gourlay was not indeed fool enough to acknowledge a compact with the Evil One, which would have been a swift and ready road to the stake and tar-barrel. Her fairy, she said, like Caliban's, was a harmless fairy. Nevertheless, she "spaed fortunes," read dreams, composed philtres, discovered stolen goods, and made and dissolved matches as successfully as if, according to the belief of the whole neighbourhood, she had been aided in those arts by Beelzebub himself. The worst of the pretenders to these sciences was, that they were generally persons who, feeling themselves odious to humanity, were careless of what they did to deserve the public hatred. Real crimes were often committed under pretence of magical imposture; and it somewhat relieves the disgust with which we read, in the criminal records, the conviction of these wretches, to be aware that many of them merited, as poisoners, suborners, and diabolical agents in secret domestic crimes, the severe fate to which they were condemned for the imaginary guilt of witchcraft.

Such was Ailsie Gourlay, whom, in order to attain the absolute subjugation of Lucy Ashton's mind, her mother thought it fitting to place near her person. A woman of less consequence than Lady Ashton had not dared to take such a step; but her high rank and strength of character set her above the censure of the world, and she was allowed to have selected for her daughter's attendant the best and most experienced sick-nurse and "mediciner" in the neighbourhood, where an inferior person would have fallen under the reproach of calling in the assistance of a partner and ally of the great Enemy of mankind.

The beldam caught her cue readily and by innuendo, without giving Lady Ashton the pain of distinct explanation. She was in many respects qualified for the part she played, which indeed could not be efficiently assumed without some knowledge of the human heart and passions. Dame Gourlay perceived that Lucy shuddered at her external appearance, which we have already described when we found her in the death-chamber of blind Alice; and while internally she hated the poor girl for the involuntary horror with which she saw she was regarded, she commenced her operations by endeavouring to efface or overcome those

prejudices which, in her heart, she resented as mortal offences. This was easily done, for the hag's external ugliness was soon balanced by a show of kindness and interest, to which Lucy had of late been little accustomed; her attentive services and real skill gained her the ear, if not the confidence, of her patient; and under pretence of diverting the solitude of a sick-room, she soon led her attention captive by the legends in which she was well skilled, and to which Lucy's habit of reading and reflection induced her to "lend an attentive ear." Dame Gourlay's tales were at first of a mild and interesting character—

*Of fays that nightly dance upon the wold,
And lovers doom'd to wander and to weep,
And castles high, where wicked wizards keep
Their captive thralls.*

Gradually, however, they assumed a darker and more mysterious character, and became such as, told by the midnight lamp, and enforced by the tremulous tone, the quivering and livid lip, the uplifted skinny forefinger, and the shaking head of the blue-eyed hag, might have appalled a less credulous imagination in an age more hard of belief. The old Sycorax saw her advantage, and gradually narrowed her magic circle around the devoted victim on whose spirit she practised. Her legends began to relate to the fortunes of the Ravenswood family, whose ancient grandeur and portentous authority credulity had graced with so many superstitious attributes. The story of the fatal fountain was narrated at full length, and with formidable additions, by the ancient sibyl. The prophecy, quoted by Caleb, concerning the dead bride who was to be won by the last of the Ravenswoods, had its own mysterious commentary; and the singular circumstance of the apparition seen by the Master of Ravenswood in the forest, having partly transpired through his hasty inquiries in the cottage of Old Alice, formed a theme for many exaggerations.

Lucy might have despised these tales if they had been related concerning another family, or if her own situation had been less despondent. But circumstanced as she was, the idea that an evil fate hung over her attachment became predominant over her other feelings; and the gloom of superstition darkened a mind already sufficiently weakened by sorrow, distress, uncertainty, and an oppressive sense of desertion and desolation. Stories were told by her attendant so closely resembling her own in their circumstances, that she was gradually led to converse upon such tragic and mystical subjects with the beldam, and to repose a sort of confidence in the sibyl, whom she still regarded with involuntary shuddering. Dame Gourlay knew how to avail herself of this imperfect confidence. She directed Lucy's thoughts to the means of inquiring into futurity—the surest mode perhaps, of shaking the understanding and destroying the spirits. Omens were expounded, dreams were interpreted, and other tricks of jugglery perhaps resorted to, by which the pretended adepts of the period deceived and fascinated their deluded followers. I find it mentioned in the articles of distay against Ailsie Gourlay—for it is some comfort to know that the old hag was tried, condemned, and burned on the top of North Berwick Law, by sentence of a commission from the privy council—I find, I say, it was charged against her, among other offences, that she had, by the aid and delusions of Satan, shown to a young person of quality, in a mirror glass, a gentleman then abroad, to whom the said young person was betrothed, and who appeared in the vision to be in the act of bestowing his hand upon another lady. But this and some other parts of the record appear to have been studiously left imperfect in names and dates, probably out of regard to the honour of the families concerned. If Dame Gourlay was able actually to play off such a piece of jugglery, it is clear she must have had better assistance to practise the deception than her own skill or funds could supply. Meanwhile, this mysterious visionary traffic had its usual effect in unsettling Miss Ashton's mind. Her temper became unequal, her health decayed daily, her manners grew moping, melancholy, and uncertain. Her father, guessing partly at the cause of these appearances, made a point of banishing Dame Gourlay from the castle; but the arrow was shot, and was rankling barb-deep in the side of the wounded deer.

It was shortly after the departure of this woman, that Lucy Ashton, urged by her parents, announced to them, with a vivacity by which they were startled, "That she was conscious heaven and earth and hell had set themselves against her union with Ravenswood; still her contract," she said, "was a binding contract, and she neither would nor could resign it without the consent of Ravenswood. Let me be assured," she concluded, "that he will free me from my engagement, and dispose of me as you please, I care not how. When the diamonds are gone, what signifies the casket?"

The tone of obstinacy with which this was said, her eyes flashing with unnatural light, and her hands firmly clenched, precluded the possibility of dispute; and the utmost length which Lady Ashton's art could attain, only got her the privilege of dictating the letter, by which her daughter required to know of Ravenswood whether he intended to abide by or to surrender what she termed "their unfortunate engagement." Of this advantage Lady Ashton so far and so ingeniously availed herself that, according to the wording of the letter, the reader would have supposed Lucy was calling upon her lover to renounce a contract which was contrary to the interests and inclinations of both. Not trusting even to this point of deception, Lady Ashton finally determined to suppress the letter altogether, in hopes that Lucy's impatience would induce her to condemn Ravenswood unheard and in absence. In this she was disappointed. The time, indeed, had long elapsed when an answer should have been received from the continent. The faint ray of hope which still glimmered in Lucy's mind was well nigh extinguished. But the idea never forsook her that her letter might not have been duly forwarded. One of her mother's new machinations unexpectedly furnished her with the means of ascertaining what she most desired to know.

The female agent of hell having been dismissed from the castle, Lady Ashton, who wrought by all variety of means, resolved to employ, for working the same end on Lucy's mind, an agent of a very different character. This was no other than the Reverent Mr. Bide-the-Bent, a presbyterian clergyman, formerly mentioned, of the very strictest order and the most rigid orthodoxy, whose aid she called in, upon the principle of the tyrant in the in the tragedy:

*I'll have a priest shall preach her from her faith,
And make it sin not to renounce that vow
Which I'd have broken.*

But Lady Ashton was mistaken in the agent she had selected. His prejudices, indeed, were easily enlisted on her side, and it was no difficult matter to make him regard with horror the prospect of a union betwixt the daughter of a God-fearing, professing, and Presbyterian family of distinction and the heir of a bloodthirsty prelatist and persecutor, the hands of whose fathers had been dyed to the wrists in the blood of God's saints. This resembled, in the divine's opinion, the union of a Moabish stranger with a daughter of Zion. But with all the more severe prejudices and principles of his sect, Bide-the-Bent possessed a sound judgment, and had learnt sympathy even in that very school of persecution where the heart is so frequently hardened. In a private interview with Miss Ashton, he was deeply moved by her distress, and could not but admit the justice of her request to be permitted a direct communication with Ravenswood upon the subject of their solemn contract. When she urged to him the great uncertainty under which she laboured whether her letter had been ever forwarded, the old man paced the room with long steps, shook his grey head, rested repeatedly for a space on his ivory-headed staff, and, after much hesitation, confessed that he thought her doubts so reasonable that he would himself aid in the removal of them.

"I cannot but opine, Miss Lucy," he said, "that your worshipful lady mother hath in this matter an eagerness whilk, although it ariseth doubtless from love to your best interests here and hereafter, for the man is of persecuting blood, and himself a persecutor, a Cavalier or Malignant, and a scoffer, who hath no inheritance in Jesse; nevertheless, we are commanded to do justice unto all, and to fulfil our bond and covenant, as well to the stranger as to him who is in brotherhood with us. Wherefore myself, even I myself, will be aiding unto the delivery of your letter to the man Edgar Ravenswood, trusting that the issue thereof may be your deliverance from the nets in which he hath sinfully engaged you. And that I may do in this neither more nor less than hath been warranted by your honourable parents, I pray you to transcribe, without increment or subtraction, the letter formerly expeded under the dictation of your right honourable mother; and I shall put it into such sure course of being delivered, that if, honourable young madam, you shall receive no answer, it will be necessary that you conclude that the man meaneth in silence to abandon that naughty contract, which, peradventure, he may be unwilling directly to restore."

Lucy eagerly embraced the expedient of the worthy divine. A new letter was written in the precise terms of the former, and consigned by Mr. Bide-the-Bent to the charge of Saunders Moonshine, a zealous elder of the church when on shore, and when on board his brig as bold a smuggler as ever ran out a sliding bowsprit to the winds that blow betwixt Campvere and the east coast of Scotland. At the recommendation of his pastor, Saunders readily undertook that the letter should be securely conveyed to the Master of Ravenswood at the court where he now resided.

This retrospect became necessary to explain the conference betwixt Miss Ashton, her mother, and Bucklaw which we have detailed in a preceding chapter. Lucy was now like the sailor who, while drifting through a tempestuous ocean, clings for safety to a single plank, his powers of grasping it becoming every moment more feeble, and the deep darkness of the night only checkered by the flashes of lightning, hissing as they show the white tops of the billows, in which he is soon to be engulfed. Week crept away after week, and day after day. St. Jude's day arrived, the last and protracted term to which Lucy had limited herself, and there was neither letter nor news of Ravenswood.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*How fair these names, how much unlike they look
To all the blurr'd subscriptions in my book!
The bridegroom's letters stand in row above,
Tapering, yet straight, like pine-trees in his grove;
While free and fine the bride's appear below,
As light and slender as her jessamines grow.*

CRABBE.

ST. JUDE's day came, the term assigned by Lucy herself as the furthest date of expectation, and, as we have already said, there were neither letters from nor news of Ravenswood. But there were news of Bucklaw, and of his trusty associate Craigengelt, who arrived early in the morning for the completion of the proposed espousals, and for signing the necessary deeds.

These had been carefully prepared under the revisal of Sir William Ashton himself, it having been resolved, on account of the state of Miss Ashton's health, as it was said, that none save the parties immediately interested should be present when the parchments were subscribed. It was further determined that the marriage should be solemnised upon the fourth day after signing the articles, a measure adopted by Lady Ashton, in order that Lucy might have as little time as possible to recede or relapse into intractability. There was no appearance, however, of her doing either. She heard the proposed arrangement with the calm indifference of despair, or rather with an apathy arising from the oppressed and stupified state of her feelings. To an eye so unobserving as that of Bucklaw, her demeanour had little more of reluctance than might suit the character of a bashful young lady, who, however, he could not disguise from himself, was complying with the choice of her friends rather than exercising any personal predilection in his favour.

When the morning compliment of the bridegroom had been paid, Miss Ashton was left for some time to herself; her mother remarking, that the deeds must be signed before the hour of noon, in order that the marriage might be happy. Lucy suffered herself to be attired for the occasion as the taste of her attendants suggested, and was of course splendidly arrayed. Her dress was composed of white satin and Brussels lace, and her hair arranged with a profusion of jewels, whose lustre made a strange contrast to the deadly paleness of her complexion, and to the trouble which dwelt in her unsettled eye.

Her toilette was hardly finished ere Henry appeared, to conduct the passive bride to the state apartment, where all was prepared for signing the contract. "Do you know, sister," he said, "I am glad you are to have Bucklaw after all, instead of Ravenswood, who looked like a Spanish grandee come to cut our throats and trample our bodies under foot. And I am glad the broad seas are between us this day, for I shall never forget how frightened I was when I took him for the picture of old Sir Malise walked out of the canvas. Tell me true, are you not glad to be fairly shot of him?"

"Ask me no questions, dear Henry," said his unfortunate sister; "there is little more can happen to make me either glad or sorry in this world."

"And that's what all young brides say," said Henry; "and so do not be cast down, Lucy, for you'll tell another tale a twelvemonth hence; and I am to be bride's-man, and ride before you to the kirk; and all our kith, kin, and allies, and all Bucklaw's, are to be mounted and in order; and I am to have a scarlet laced coat, and a feathered hat, and a swordbelt, double bordered with gold, and point d'Espagne, and a dagger instead of a sword; and I should like a sword much better, but my father won't hear of it. All my things, and a hundred besides, are to come out from Edinburgh to-night with old Gilbert and the sumpter mules; and I will bring them and show them to you the instant they come."

The boy's chatter was here interrupted by the arrival of Lady Ashton, somewhat alarmed at her daughter's stay. With one of her sweetest smiles, she took Lucy's arm under her own.

There were only present, Sir William Ashton and Colonel Douglas Ashton, the last in full regimentals; Bucklaw, in bridegroom trim; Craigengelt, freshly equipt from top to toe by the bounty of his patron, and bedizened with as much lace as might have become the dress of the Copper Captain; together with the Rev. Mr. Bide-the-Bent; the presence of a minister being, in strict Presbyterian families, an indispensable requisite upon all occasions of unusual solemnity.

Wines and refreshments were placed on a table, on which the writings were displayed, ready for signature.

But before proceeding either to business or refreshment, Mr. Bide-the-Bent, at a signal from Sir William Ashton, invited the company to join him in a short extemporary prayer, in which he implored a blessing upon the contract now to be solemnised between the honourable parties then present. With the simplicity of his times and profession, which permitted strong personal allusions, he petitioned that the wounded mind of one of these noble parties might be healed, in reward of her compliance with the advice of her right honourable parents; and that, as she had proved herself a child after God's commandment, by honouring her father and mother, she and hers might enjoy the promised blessing—length of days in the land here, and a happy portion hereafter in a better country. He prayed farther, that the bridegroom might be weaned from those follies which seduced youth from the path of knowledge; that he might cease to take delight in vain and unprofitable company, scoffers, rioters, and those who sit late at the wine (here Bucklaw winked at Craigengelt), and cease from the society that causeth to err. A suitable supplication in behalf of Sir William and Lady Ashton and their family concluded this religious address, which thus embraced every individual present excepting Craigengelt, whom the worthy divine probably considered as past all hopes of grace.

The business of the day now went forward: Sir William Ashton signed the contract with legal solemnity and precision; his son, with military nonchalance; and Bucklaw, having subscribed as rapidly as Craigengelt could manage to turn the leaves, concluded by wiping his pen on that worthy's new laced cravat. It was now Miss Ashton's turn to sign the writings, and she was guided by her watchful mother to the table for that purpose. At her first attempt, she began to write with a dry pen, and when the circumstance was pointed out, seemed unable, after several attempts, to dip it in the massive silver ink-standish, which stood full before her. Lady Ashton's vigilance hastened to supply the deficiency. I have myself seen the fatal deed, and in the distinct characters in which the name of Lucy Ashton is traced on each page there is only a very slight tremulous irregularity, indicative of her state of mind at the time of the subscription. But the last signature is incomplete, defaced, and blotted; for, while her hand was employed in tracing it, the hasty tramp of a horse was heard at the gate, succeeded by a step in the outer gallery, and a voice which, in a commanding tone, bore down the opposition of the menials. The pen dropped from Lucy's fingers, as she exclaimed with a faint shriek: "He is come—he is come!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

*This by his tongue should be a Montague!
Fetch me my rapier, boy;*

*Now, by the faith and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.*

Romeo and Juliet.

HARDLY had Miss Ashton dropped the pen, when the door of the apartment flew open, and the Master of Ravenswood entered the apartment. Lockhard and another domestic, who had in vain attempted to oppose his passage through the gallery or antechamber, were seen standing on the threshold transfixed with surprise, which was instantly communicated to the whole party in the state-room. That of Colonel Douglas Ashton was mingled with resentment; that of Bucklaw with haughty and affected indifference; the rest, even Lady Ashton herself, showed signs of fear; and Lucy seemed stiffened to stone by this unexpected apparition. Apparition it might well be termed, for Ravenswood had more the appearance of one returned from the dead than of a living visitor. He planted himself full in the middle of the apartment, opposite to the table at which Lucy was seated, on whom, as if she had been alone in the chamber, he bent his eyes with a mingled expression of deep grief and deliberate indignation. His dark-coloured riding cloak, displaced from one shoulder, hung around one side of his person in the ample folds of the Spanish mantle. The rest of his rich dress was travel-soiled, and deranged by hard riding. He had a sword by his side, and pistols in his belt. His slouched hat, which he had not removed at entrance, gave an additional gloom to his dark features, which, wasted by sorrow and marked by the ghastly look communicated by long illness, added to a countenance naturally somewhat stern and wild a fierce and even savage expression. The matted and dishevelled locks of hair which escaped from under his hat, together with his fixed and unmoved posture, made his head more resemble that of a marble bust than that of a living man. He said not a single word, and there was a deep silence in the company for more than two minutes. It was broken by Lady Ashton, who in that space partly recovered her natural audacity. She demanded to know the cause of this unauthorised intrusion. "That is a question, madam," said her son, "which I have the best right to ask; and I must request of the Master of Ravenswood to follow me where he can answer it at leisure."

Bucklaw interposed, saying, "No man on earth should usurp his previous right in demanding an explanation from the Master. Craigengelt," he added, in an undertone, "d—n ye, why do you stand staring as if you saw a ghost? fetch me my sword from the gallery."

"I will relinquish to none," said Colonel Ashton, "my right of calling to account the man who has offered this unparalleled affront to my family." "Be patient, gentlemen," said Ravenswood, turning sternly towards them, and waving his hand as if to impose silence on their altercation. "If you are as weary of your lives as I am, I will find time and place to pledge mine against one or both; at present, I have no leisure for the disputes of triflers."

"Triflers!" echoed Colonel Ashton, half unsheathing his sword, while Bucklaw laid his hand on the hilt of that which Craigengelt had just reached him. Sir William Ashton, alarmed for his son's safety, rushed between the young men and Ravenswood, exclaiming: "My son, I command you—Bucklaw, I entreat you—keep the peace, in the name of the Queen and of the law!"

"In the name of the law of God," said Bide-the-Bent, advancing also with uplifted hands between Bucklaw, the Colonel, and the object of their resentment—"in the name of Him who brought peace on earth and good-will to mankind, I implore—I beseech—I command you to forbear violence towards each other! God hateth the bloodthirsty man; he who striketh with the sword shall perish with the sword."

"Do you take me for a dog, sir?" said Colonel Ashton, turning fiercely upon him, "or something more brutally stupid, to endure this insult in my father's house? Let me go, Bucklaw! He shall account to me, or, by Heavens, I will stab him where he stands!"

"You shall not touch him here," said Bucklaw; "he once gave me my life, and were he the devil come to fly away with the whole house and generation, he shall have nothing but fair play."

The passions of the two young men thus counteracting each other gave Ravenswood leisure to exclaim, in a stern and steady voice: "Silence!—let him who really seeks danger take the fitting time when it is to be found; my mission here will be shortly accomplished. Is THAT your handwriting, madam?" he added in a softer tone, extending towards Miss Ashton her last letter.

A faltering "Yes" seemed rather to escape from her lips than to be uttered as a voluntary answer.

"And is THIS also your handwriting?" extending towards her the mutual engagement.

Lucy remained silent. Terror, and a yet stronger and more confused feeling, so utterly disturbed her understanding that she probably scarcely comprehended the question that was put to her.

"If you design," said Sir William Ashton, "to found any legal claim on that paper, sir, do not expect to receive any answer to an extrajudicial question."

"Sir William Ashton," said Ravenswood, "I pray you, and all who hear me, that you will not mistake my purpose. If this young lady, of her own free will, desires the restoration of this contract, as her letter would seem to imply, there is not a withered leaf which this autumn wind strews on the heath that is more valueless in my eyes. But I must and will hear the truth from her own mouth; without this satisfaction I will not leave this spot. Murder me by numbers you possibly may; but I am an armed man—I am a desperate man, and I will not die without ample vengeance. This is my resolution, take it as you may. I _will_ hear her determination from her own mouth; from her own mouth, alone, and without witnesses, will I hear it. Now, choose," he said, drawing his sword with the right hand, and, with the left, by the same motion taking a pistol from his belt and cocking it, but turning the point of one weapon and the muzzle of the other to the ground—"choose if you will have this hall floated with blood, or if you will grant me the decisive interview with my affianced bride which the laws of God and the country alike entitle me to demand."

All recoiled at the sound of his voice and the determined action by which it was accompanied; for the ecstasy of real desperation seldom fails to overpower the less energetic passions by which it may be opposed. The clergyman was the first to speak. "In the name of God," he said, "receive an overture of peace from the meanest of His servants. What this honourable person demands, albeit it is urged with over violence, hath yet in it something of reason. Let him hear from Miss Lucy's own lips that she hath dutifully acceded to the will of her parents, and repenteth her of her covenant with him; and when he is assured of this he will depart in peace unto his own dwelling, and cumber us no more. Alas! the workings of the ancient Adam are strong even in the regenerate; surely we should have long-suffering with those who, being yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, are swept forward by the uncontrollable current of worldly passion. Let then, the Master of Ravenswood have the interview on which he insisteth; it can but be as a passing pang to this honourable maiden, since her faith is now irrevocably pledged to the choice of her parents. Let it, I say, be this: it belongeth to my functions to entreat your honours' compliance with this headling overture."

"Never!" answered Lady Ashton, whose rage had now overcome her first surprise and terror—"never shall this man speak in private with my daughter, the affianced bride of another! pass from this room who will, I remain here. I fear neither his violence nor his weapons, though some," she said, glancing a look towards Colonel Ashton, "who bear my name appear more moved by them."

"For God's sake, madam," answered the worthy divine, "add not fuel to firebrands. The Master of Ravenswood cannot, I am sure, object to your presence, the young lady's state of health being considered, and your maternal duty. I myself will also tarry; peradventure my grey hairs may turn away wrath."

"You are welcome to do so, sir," said Ravenswood; "and Lady Ashton is also welcome to remain, if she shall think proper; but let all others depart."

"Ravenswood," said Colonel Ashton, crossing him as he went out, "you shall account for this ere long."

"When you please," replied Ravenswood.

"But I," said Bucklaw, with a half smile, "have a prior demand on your leisure, a claim of some standing."

"Arrange it as you will," said Ravenswood; "leave me but this day in peace, and I will have no dearer employment on earth to-morrow than to give you all the satisfaction you can desire."

The other gentlemen left the apartment; but Sir William Ashton lingered.

"Master of Ravenswood," he said, in a conciliating tone, "I think I have not deserved that you should make this scandal and outrage in my family. If you will sheathe your sword, and retire with me into my study, I will prove to you, by the most satisfactory arguments, the inutility of your present irregular procedure——"

"To-morrow, sir—to-morrow—to-morrow, I will hear you at length," reiterated Ravenswood, interrupting him; "this day hath its own sacred and indispensable business."

He pointed to the door, and Sir William left the apartment.

Ravenswood sheathed his sword, uncocked and returned his pistol to his belt; walked deliberately to the door of the apartment, which he bolted; returned, raised his hat from his forehead, and gazing upon Lucy with eyes in which an expression of sorrow overcame their late fierceness, spread his dishevelled locks back from his face, and said, "Do you know me, Miss Ashton? I am still Edgar Ravenswood." She was silent, and he went on with increasing vehemence: "I am still that Edgar Ravenswood who, for your affection, renounced the dear ties by which injured honour bound him to seek vengeance. I am that Ravenswood who, for your sake, forgave, nay, clasped hands in friendship with, the oppressor and pillager of his house, the traducer and murderer of his father."

"My daughter," answered Lady Ashton, interrupting him, "has no occasion to dispute the identity of your person; the venom of your present language is sufficient to remind her that she speaks with the mortal enemy of her father."

"I pray you to be patient, madam," answered Ravenswood; "my answer must come from her own lips. Once more, Miss Lucy Ashton, I am that Ravenswood to whom you granted the solemn engagement which you now desire to retract and cancel."

Lucy's bloodless lips could only falter out the words, "It was my mother."

"She speaks truly," said Lady Ashton, "it WAS I who, authorised alike by the laws of God and man, advised her, and concurred with her, to set aside an unhappy and precipitate engagement, and to annul it by the authority of Scripture itself."

"Scripture!" said Ravenswood, scornfully.

"Let him hear the text," said Lady Ashton, appealing to the divine, "on which you yourself, with cautious reluctance, declared the nullity of the pretended engagement insisted upon by this violent man."

The clergyman took his clasped Bible from his pocket, and read the following words: "If a woman vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth, and her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every vow wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand."

"And was it not even so with us?" interrupted Ravenswood.

"Control thy impatience, young man," answered the divine, "and hear what follows in the sacred text: 'But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth, not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand; and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.'"

"And was not," said Lady Ashton, fiercely and triumphantly breaking in—"was not ours the case stated in the Holy Writ? Will this person deny, that the instant her parents heard of the vow, or bond, by which our daughter had bound her soul, we disallowed the same in the most express terms, and informed him by writing of our determination?"

"And is this all?" said Ravenswood, looking at Lucy. "Are you willing to barter sworn faith, the exercise of free will, and the feelings of mutual affection to this wretched hypocritical sophistry?"

"Hear him!" said Lady Ashton, looking to the clergyman—"hear the blasphemer!"

"May God forgive him," said Bide-the-Bent, "and enlighten his ignorance!"

"Hear what I have sacrificed for you," said Ravenswood, still addressing Lucy, "ere you sanction what has been done in your name. The honour of an ancient family, the urgent advice of my best friends, have been in vain used to sway my resolution; neither the arguments of reason nor the portents of superstition have shaken my fidelity. The very dead have arisen to warn me, and their warning has been despised. Are you prepared to pierce my heart for its fidelity with the very weapon which my rash confidence entrusted to your grasp?"

"Master of Ravenswood," said Lady Ashton, "you have asked what questions you thought fit. You see the total incapacity of my daughter to answer you. But I will reply for her, and in a manner which you cannot dispute. You desire to know whether Lucy Ashton, of her own free will, desires to annul the engagement into which she has been trepanned. You have her letter under her own hand, demanding the surrender of it; and, in yet more full evidence of her purpose, here is the contract which she has this morning subscribed, in presence of this reverence gentleman, with Mr. Hayston of Bucklaw."

Ravenswood gazed upon the deed as if petrified. "And it was without fraud or compulsion," said he, looking towards the clergyman, "that Miss Ashton subscribed this parchment?"

"I couch it upon my sacred character."

"This is indeed, madam, an undeniable piece of evidence," said Ravenswood, sternly; "and it will be equally unnecessary and dishonourable to waste another word in useless remonstrance or reproach. There, madam," he said, laying down before Lucy the signed paper and the broken piece of gold—"there are the evidences of your first engagement; may you be more faithful to that which you have just formed. I will trouble you to return the corresponding tokens of my ill-placed confidence; I ought rather to say, of my egregious folly."

Lucy returned the scornful glance of her lover with a gaze from which perception seemed to have been banished; yet she seemed partly to have understood his meaning, for she raised her hands as if to undo a blue ribbon which she wore around her neck. She was unable to accomplish her purpose, but Lady Ashton cut the ribbon asunder, and detached the broken piece of gold, which Miss Ashton had till then worn concealed in her bosom; the written counterpart of the lovers' engagement she for some time had had in her own possession. With a haughty courtesy, she delivered both to Ravenswood, who was much softened when he took the piece of gold.

"And she could wear it thus," he said, speaking to himself—"could wear it in her very bosom—could wear it next to her heart—even when—— But complain avails not," he said, dashing from his eye the tear which had gathered in it, and resuming the stern composure of his manner. He strode to the chimney, and threw into the fire the paper and piece of gold, stamping upon the coals with the heel of his boot, as if to ensure their destruction. "I will be no longer," he then said, "an intruder here. Your evil wishes, and your worse offices, Lady Ashton, I will only return by hoping these will be your last machinations against your daughter's honour and happiness. And to you, madam," he said, addressing Lucy, "I have nothing farther to say, except to pray to God that you may not become a world's wonder for this act of wilful and deliberate perjury." Having uttered these words, he turned on his heel and left the apartment.

Sir William Ashton, by entreaty and authority, had detained his son and Bucklaw in a distant part of the castle, in order to prevent their again meeting with Ravenswood; but as the Master descended the great staircase, Lockhard delivered him a billet, signed "Sholto Douglas Ashton," requesting to know where the Master of Ravenswood would be heard of four or five days from hence, as the writer had business of weight to settle with him, so soon as an important family event had taken place.

"Tell Colonel Ashton," said Ravenswood, composedly, "I shall be found at Wolf's Crag when his leisure serves him."

As he descended the outward stair which led from the terrace, he was a second time interrupted by Craigengelt, who, on the part of his principal, the Laird of Bucklaw, expressed a hope that Ravenswood would not leave Scotland within ten days at least, as he had both former and recent civilities for which to express his gratitude.

"Tell your master," said Ravenswood, fiercely, "to choose his own time. He will find me at Wolf's Crag, if his purpose is not forestalled."

"MY master!" replied Craigengelt, encouraged by seeing Colonel Ashton and Bucklaw at the bottom of the terrace. "Give me leave to say I know of no such person upon earth, nor will I permit such language to be used to me!"

"Seek your master, then, in hell!" exclaimed Ravenswood, giving way to the passion he had hitherto restrained, and throwing Craigengelt from him with such violence that he rolled down the steps and lay senseless at the foot of them. "I am a fool," he instantly added, "to vent my passion upon a caitiff so worthless."

He then mounted his horse, which at his arrival he had secured to a balustrade in front of the castle, rode very slowly past Bucklaw and Colonel Ashton, raising his hat as he passed each, and looking in their faces steadily while he offered this mute salutation, which was returned by both with the same stern gravity.

Ravenswood walked on with equal deliberation until he reached the head of the avenue, as if to show that he rather courted than avoided interruption. When he had passed the upper gate, he turned his horse, and looked at the castle with a fixed eye; then set spurs to his good steed, and departed with the speed of a demon dismissed by the exorcist.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Who comes from the bridal chamber?
It is Azrael, the angel of death.*

Thalaba.

AFTER the dreadful scene that had taken place at the castle, Lucy was transported to her own chamber, where she remained for some time in a state of absolute stupor. Yet afterwards, in the course of the ensuing day, she seemed to have recovered, not merely her spirits and resolution, but a sort of flighty levity, that was foreign to her character and situation, and which was at times chequered by fits of deep silence and melancholy and of capricious pettishness. Lady Ashton became much alarmed and consulted the family physicians. But as her pulse indicated no change, they could only say that the disease was on the spirits, and recommended gentle exercise and amusement. Miss Ashton never alluded to what had passed in the state-room. It seemed doubtful even if she was conscious of it, for she was often observed to raise her hands to her neck, as if in search of the ribbon that had been taken from it, and mutter, in surprise and discontent, when she could not find it, "It was the link that bound me to life."

Notwithstanding all these remarkable symptoms, Lady Ashton was too deeply pledged to delay her daughter's marriage even in her present state of health. It cost her much trouble to keep up the fair side of appearances towards Bucklaw. She was well aware, that if he once saw any reluctance on her daughter's part, he would break off the treaty, to her great personal shame and dishonour. She therefore resolved that, if Lucy continued passive, the marriage should take place upon the day that had been previously fixed, trusting that a change of place, of situation, and of character would operate a more speedy and effectual cure upon the unsettled spirits of her daughter than could be attained by the slow measures which the medical men recommended. Sir William Ashton's views of family aggrandisement, and his desire to strengthen himself against the measures of the Marquis of A——, readily induced him to acquiesce in what he could not have perhaps resisted if willing to do so. As for the young men, Bucklaw and Colonel Ashton, they protested that, after what had happened, it would be most dishonourable to postpone for a single hour the time appointed for the marriage, as it would be generally ascribed to their being intimidated by the intrusive visit and threats of Ravenswood.

Bucklaw would indeed have been incapable of such precipitation, had he been aware of the state of Miss Ashton's health, or rather of her mind. But custom, upon these occasions, permitted only brief and sparing intercourse between the bridegroom and the betrothed; a circumstance so well improved by Lady Ashton, that Bucklaw neither saw nor suspected the real state of the health and feelings of his unhappy bride.

On the eve of the bridal day, Lucy appeared to have one of her fits of levity, and surveyed with a degree of girlish interest the various preparations of dress, etc., etc., which the different members of the family had prepared for the occasion.

The morning dawned bright and cheerily. The bridal guests assembled in gallant troops from distant quarters. Not only the relations of Sir William Ashton, and the still more dignified connexions of his lady, together with the numerous kinsmen and allies of the bridegroom, were present upon this joyful ceremony, gallantly mounted, arrayed, and caparisoned, but almost every Presbyterian family of distinction within fifty miles made a point of attendance upon an occasion which was considered as giving a sort of triumph over the Marquis of A——, in the person of his kinsman. Splendid refreshments awaited the guests on their arrival, and after these were finished, the cry was "To horse." The bride was led forth betwixt her brother Henry and her mother. Her gaiety of the preceding day had given rise [place] to a deep shade of melancholy, which, however, did not misbecome an occasion so momentous. There was a light in her eyes and a colour in her cheek which had not been kindled for many a day, and which, joined to her great beauty, and the splendour of her dress, occasioned her entrance to be greeted with an universal murmur of applause, in which even the ladies could not refrain from joining. While the cavalcade were getting to horse, Sir William Ashton, a man of peace and of form, censured his son Henry for having begirt himself with a military sword of preposterous length, belonging to his brother, Colonel Ashton.

"If you must have a weapon," he said, "upon such a peaceful occasion, why did you not use the short poniard sent from Edinburgh on purpose?"

The boy vindicated himself by saying it was lost.

"You put it out of the way yourself, I suppose," said his father, "out of ambition to wear that preposterous thing, which might have served Sir William Wallace. But never mind, get to horse now, and take care of your sister."

The boy did so, and was placed in the centre of the gallant train. At the time, he was too full of his own appearance, his sword, his laced cloak, his feathered hat, and his managed horse, to pay much regard to anything else; but he afterwards remembered to the hour of his death, that when the hand of his sister, by which she supported herself on the pillion behind him, touched his own, it felt as wet and cold as sepulchral marble.

Glancing wide over hill and dale, the fair bridal procession at last reached the parish church, which they nearly filled; for, besides domestics, above a hundred gentlemen and ladies were present upon the occasion. The marriage ceremony was performed according to the rites of the Presbyterian persuasion, to which Bucklaw of late had judged it proper to conform.

On the outside of the church, a liberal dole was distributed to the poor of the neighbouring parishes, under the direction of Johnie Mortheuch [Mortsheugh], who had lately been promoted from his desolate quarters at the Hermitage to fill the more eligible situation of sexton at the parish church of Ravenswood. Dame Gourlay, with two of her contemporaries, the same who assisted at Alice's late-wake, seated apart upon a flat monument, or "through-stane," sate enviously comparing the shares which had been allotted to them in dividing the dole.

"Johnie Mortheuch," said Annie Winnie, "might hae minded auld lang syne, and thought of his auld kimmers, for as braw as he is with his new black coat. I hae gotten but five herring instead o' sax, and this disna look like a gude saxpennys, and I dare say this bit morsel o' beef is an unce lighter than ony that's been dealt round; and it's a bit o' the tenony hough, mair by token than yours, Maggie, is out o' the back-sey."

"Mine, quo' she!" mumbled the paralytic hag—"mine is half banes, I trow. If grit folk gie poor bodies ony thing for coming to their weddings and burials, it suld be something that wad do them gude, I think."

"Their gifts," said Ailsie Gourlay, "are dealt for nae love of us, nor out of respect for whether we feed or starve. They wad gie us whinstanes for loaves, if it would serve their ain vanity, and yet they expect us to be as gratefu', as they ca' it, as if they served us for true love and liking."

"And that's truly said," answered her companion.

"But, Ailsie Gourlay, ye're the auldest o' us three—did ye ever see a mair grand bridal?"

"I winna say that I have," answered the hag; "but I think soon to see as braw a burial."

"And that wad please me as weel," said Annie Winnie; "for there's as large a dole, and folk are no obliged to girn and laugh, and mak murgeons, and wish joy to these hellicat quality, that lord it ower us like brute beasts. I like to pack the dead-dole in my lap and rin ower my auld rhyme—

*My loaf in my lap, my penny in my purse,
Thou art ne'er the better, and
I'm ne'er the worse."*

"That's right, Annie," said the paralytic woman; "God send us a green Yule and a fat kirkyard!"

"But I wad like to ken, Luckie Gourlay, for ye're the auldest and wisest amang us, whilk o' these revellers' turn it will be to be streikit first?"

"D'ye see yon dandilly maiden," said Dame Gourlay, "a' glistenin' wi' gowd and jewels, that they are lifting up on the white horse behind that hare-brained callant in scarlet, wi' the lang sword at his side?"

"But that's the bride!" said her companion, her cold heart touched with some sort of compassion—"that's the very bride herself! Eh, whow! sae young, sae braw, and sae bonny—and is her time sae short?"

"I tell ye," said the sibyl, "her winding sheet is up as high as her throat already, believe it wha list. Her sand has but few grains to rin out; and nae wonder—they've been weel shaken. The leaves are withering fast on the trees, but she'll never see the Martinmas wind gar them dance in swirls like the fairy rings." "Ye waited on her for a quarter," said the paralytic woman, "and got twa red pieces, or I am far beguiled?"

"Ay, ay," answered Ailsie, with a bitter grin; "and Sir William Ashton promised me a bonny red gown to the boot o' that—a stake, and a chain, and a tar-barrel, lass! what think ye o' that for a propine?—for being up early and down late for fourscore nights and mair wi' his dwinin daughter. But he may keep it for his ain leddy, cummers."

"I hae heard a sough," said Annie Winnie, "as if Leddy Ashton was nae canny body."

"D'ye see her yonder," said Dame Gourlay, "as she prances on her grey gelding out at the kirkyard? There's mair o' utter deevilry in that woman, as brave and fair-fashioned as she rides yonder, than in a' the Scotch withces that ever flew by moonlight ower North Berwick Law."

"What's that ye say about witches, ye damned hags?" said Johnie Mortheuch [Mortsheugh]; "are ye casting yer cantrips in the very kirkyard, to mischieve the bride and bridegroom? Get awa' hame, for if I tak my souple t'ye, I'll gar ye find the road faster than ye wad like."

"Hegh, sirs!" answered Ailsie Gourlay; "how bra' are we wi' our new black coat and our weel-pouthered head, as if we had never kenn'd hunger nor thirst ourself! and we'll be screwing up our bit fiddle, doubtless, in the ha' the night, amang a' the other elbo'-jiggers for miles round. Let's see if the pins haud, Johnie—that's a', lad."

"I take ye a' to witness, gude people," said Morheuch, "that she threatens me wi' mischief, and forespeaks me. If ony thing but gude happens to me or my fiddle this night, I'll make it the blackest night's job she ever stirred in. I'll hae her before presbytery and synod: I'm half a minister mysell, now that I'm a bedral in an inhabited parish."

Although the mutual hatred betwixt these hags and the rest of mankind had steeled their hearts against all impressions of festivity, this was by no means the case with the multitude at large. The splendour of the bridal retinue, the gay dresses, the spirited horses, the blythesome appearance of the handsome women and gallant gentlemen assembled upon the occasion, had the usual effect upon the minds of the populace. The repeated shouts of "Ashton and Bucklaw for ever!" the discharge of pistols, guns, and musketoons, to give what was called the bridal shot, evinced the interest the people took in the occasion of the cavalcade, as they accompanied it upon their return to the castle. If there was here and there an elder peasant or his wife who sneered at the pomp of the upstart family, and remembered the days of the long-descended Ravenswoods, even they, attracted by the plentiful cheer which the castle that day afforded to rich and poor, held their way thither, and acknowledged, notwithstanding their prejudices, the influence of l'Amphitryon ou l'on dine.

Thus accompanied with the attendance both of rich and poor, Lucy returned to her father's house. Bucklaw used his privilege of riding next to the bride, but, new to such a situation, rather endeavoured to attract attention by the display of his person and horsemanship, than by any attempt to address her in private. They reached the castle in safety, amid a thousand joyous acclamations.

It is well known that the weddings of ancient days were celebrated with a festive publicity rejected by the delicacy of modern times. The marriage guests, on the present occasion, were regaled with a banquet of unbounded profusion, the relics of which, after the domestics had feasted in their turn, were distributed among the shouting crowd, with as many barrels of ale as made the hilarity without correspond to that within the castle. The gentlemen, according to the fashion of the times, indulged, for the most part, in deep draughts of the richest wines, while the ladies, prepared for the ball which always closed a bridal entertainment, impatiently expected their arrival in the state gallery. At length the social party broke up at a late hour, and the gentlemen crowded into the saloon, where, enlivened by wine and the joyful occasion, they laid aside their swords and handed their impatient partners to the floor. The music already rung from the gallery, along the fretted roof of the ancient state apartment. According to strict etiquette, the bride ought to have opened the ball; but Lady Ashton, making an apology on account of her daughter's health, offered her own hand to Bucklaw as substitute for her daughter's. But as Lady Ashton raised her head gracefully, expecting the strain at which she was to begin the dance, she was so much struck by an unexpected alteration in the ornaments of the apartment that she was surprised into an exclamation, "Who has dared to change the pictures?"

All looked up, and those who knew the usual state of the apartment observed, with surprise, that the picture of Sir William Ashton's father was removed from its place, and in its stead that of old Sir Malise Ravenswood seemed to frown wrath and vengeance upon the party assembled below. The exchange must have been made while the apartments were empty, but had not been observed until the torches and lights in the sconces were kindled for the ball. The haughty and heated spirits of the gentlemen led them to demand an immediate inquiry into the cause of what they deemed an affront to their host and to themselves; but Lady Ashton, recovering herself, passed it over as the freak of a crazy wench who was maintained about the castle, and whose susceptible imagination had been observed to be much affected by the stories which Dame Gourlay delighted to tell concerning "the former family," so Lady Ashton named the Ravenswoods. The obnoxious picture was immediately removed, and the ball was opened by Lady Ashton, with a grace and dignity which supplied the charms of youth, and almost verified the extravagant encomiums of the elder part of the company, who extolled her performance as far exceeding the dancing of the rising generation.

When Lady Ashton sat down, she was not surprised to find that her daughter had left the apartment, and she herself followed, eager to obviate any impression which might have been made upon her nerves by an incident so likely to affect them as the mysterious transposition of the portraits. Apparently she found her apprehensions groundless, for she returned in about an hour, and whispered the bridegroom, who extricated himself from the dancers, and vanished from the apartment. The instruments now played their loudest strains; the dancers pursued their exercise with all the enthusiasm inspired by youth, mirth, and high spirits, when a cry was heard so shrill and piercing as at once to arrest the dance and the music. All stood motionless; but when the yell was again repeated, Colonel Ashton snatched a torch from the sconce, and demanding the key of the bridal-chamber from Henry, to whom, as bride's-man, it had been entrusted, rushed thither, followed by Sir William Ashton and Lady Ashton, and one or two others, near relations of the family. The bridal guests waited their return in stupified amazement.

Arrived at the door of the apartment, Colonel Ashton knocked and called, but received no answer except stifled groans. He hesitated no longer to open the door of the apartment, in which he found opposition from something which lay against it. When he had succeeded in opening it, the body of the bridegroom was found lying on the threshold of the bridal chamber, and all around was flooded with blood. A cry of surprise and horror was raised by all present; and the company, excited by this new alarm, began to rush tumultuously towards the sleeping apartment. Colonel Ashton, first whispering to his mother, "Search for her; she has murdered him!" drew his sword, planted himself in the passage, and declared he would suffer no man to pass excepting the clergyman and a medical person present. By their assistance, Bucklaw, who still breathed, was raised from the ground, and transported to another apartment, where his friends, full of suspicion and murmuring, assembled round him to learn the opinion of the surgeon.

In the mean while, Lady Ashton, her husband, and their assistants in vain sought Lucy in the bridal bed and in the chamber. There was no private passage from the room, and they began to think that she must have thrown herself from the window, when one of the company, holding his torch lower than the rest, discovered something white in the corner of the great old-fashioned chimney of the apartment. Here they found the unfortunate girl seated, or rather couched like a hare upon its form—her head-gear dishevelled, her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, her eyes glazed, and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity. When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac.

Female assistance was now hastily summoned; the unhappy bride was overpowered, not without the use of some force. As they carried her over the threshold, she looked down, and uttered the only articulate words that she had yet spoken, saying, with a sort of grinning exultation, "So, you have ta'en up your bonny bridegroom?" She was, by the shuddering assistants, conveyed to another and more retired apartment, where she was secured as her situation required, and

closely watched. The unutterable agony of the parents, the horror and confusion of all who were in the castle, the fury of contending passions between the friends of the different parties—passions augmented by previous intemperance—surpass description. The surgeon was the first who obtained something like a patient hearing; he pronounced that the wound of Bucklaw, though severe and dangerous, was by no means fatal, but might readily be rendered so by disturbance and hasty removal. This silenced the numerous party of Bucklaw's friends, who had previously insisted that he should, at all rates, be transported from the castle to the nearest of their houses. They still demanded, however, that, in consideration of what had happened, four of their number should remain to watch over the sick-bed of their friend, and that a suitable number of their domestics, well armed, should also remain in the castle. This condition being acceded to on the part of Colonel Ashton and his father, the rest of the bridegroom's friends left the castle, notwithstanding the hour and the darkness of the night. The cares of the medical man were next employed in behalf of Miss Ashton, whom he pronounced to be in a very dangerous state. Farther medical assistance was immediately summoned. All night she remained delirious. On the morning, she fell into a state of absolute insensibility. The next evening, the physicians said, would be the crisis of her malady. It proved so; for although she awoke from her trance with some appearance of calmness, and suffered her night-clothes to be changed, or put in order, yet so soon as she put her hand to her neck, as if to search for the fatal flue ribbon, a tide of recollections seemed to rush upon her, which her mind and body were alike incapable of bearing. Convulsion followed convulsion, till they closed in death, without her being able to utter a word explanatory of the fatal scene. The provincial judge of the district arrived the day after the young lady had expired, and executed, though with all possible delicacy to the afflicted family, the painful duty of inquiring into this fatal transaction. But there occurred nothing to explain the general hypothesis that the bride, in a sudden fit of insanity, had stabbed the bridegroom at the threshold of the apartment. The fatal weapon was found in the chamber smeared with blood. It was the same poniard which Henry should have worn on the wedding-day, and the unhappy sister had probably contrived to secrete on the preceding evening, when it had been shown to her among other articles of preparation for the wedding. The friends of Bucklaw expected that on his recovery he would throw some light upon this dark story, and eagerly pressed him with inquiries, which for some time he evaded under pretext of weakness. When, however, he had been transported to his own house, and was considered in a state of convalescence, he assembled those persons, both male and female, who had considered themselves as entitled to press him on this subject, and returned them thanks for the interest they had exhibited in his behalf, and their offers of adherence and support. "I wish you all," he said, "my friends, to understand, however, that I have neither story to tell nor injuries to avenge. If a lady shall question me henceforward upon the incident of that unhappy night, I shall remain silent, and in future consider her as one who has shown herself desirous to break of her friendship with me; in a word, I will never speak to her again. But if a gentleman shall ask me the same question, I shall regard the incivility as equivalent to an invitation to meet him in the Duke's Walk, and I expect that he will rule himself accordingly." A declaration so decisive admitted no commentary; and it was soon after seen that Bucklaw had arisen from the bed of sickness a sadder and a wiser man than he had hitherto shown himself. He dismissed Craigenfelt from his society, but not without such a provision as, if well employed, might secure him against indigence and against temptation. Bucklaw afterwards went abroad, and never returned to Scotland; nor was he known ever to hint at the circumstances attending his fatal marriage. By many readers this may be deemed overstrained, romantic, and composed by the wild imagination of an author desirous of gratifying the popular appetite for the horrible; but those who are read in the private family history of Scotland during the period in which the scene is laid, will readily discover, through the disguise of borrowed names and added incidents, the leading particulars of AN OWER TRUE TALE.

CHAPTER XXXV.

*Whose mind's so marbled, and his heart so hard,
That would not, when this huge mishap was heard,
To th' utmost note of sorrow set their song,
To see a gallant, with so great a grace,
So suddenly unthought on, so o'erthrown,
And so to perish, in so poor a place,
By too rash riding in a ground unknown!*

POEM, IN NISBET'S *Heraldry*, vol. ii.

WE have anticipated the course of time to mention Bucklaw's recovery and fate, that we might not interrupt the detail of events which succeeded the funeral of the unfortunate Lucy Ashton. This melancholy ceremony was performed in the misty dawn of an autumnal morning, with such moderate attendance and ceremony as could not possibly be dispensed with. A very few of the nearest relations attended her body to the same churchyard to which she had so lately been led as a bride, with as little free will, perhaps, as could be now testified by her lifeless and passive remains. An aisle adjacent to the church had been fitted up by Sir William Ashton as a family cemetery; and here, in a coffin bearing neither name nor date, were consigned to dust the remains of what was once lovely, beautiful, and innocent, though exasperated to frenzy by a long tract of unremitting persecution.

While the mourners were busy in the vault, the three village hags, who, notwithstanding the unwonted earliness of the hour, had snuffed the carrion like vultures, were seated on the "through-stane," and engaged in their wonted unhallowed conference.

"Did not I say," said Dame Gourlay, "that the braw bridal would be followed by as braw a funeral?"

"I think," answered Dame Winnie, "there's little bravery at it: neither meat nor drink, and just a wheen silver tippences to the poor folk; it was little worth while to come sae far a road for sae sma' profit, and us sae frail."

"Out, wretch!" replied Dame Gourlay, "can a' the dainties they could gie us be half sae sweet as this hour's vengeance? There they are that were capering on their prancing nags four days since, and they are now ganging as dreigh and sober as oursells the day. They were a' glistening wi' gowd and silver; they're now as black as the crook. And Miss Lucy Ashton, that grudged when an honest woman came near her—a taid may sit on her coffin that day, and she can never scunner when he croaks. And Lady Ashton has hell-fire burning in her breast by this time; and Sir William, wi' his gibbets, and his faggots, and his chains, how likes he the witcheries of his ain dwelling-house?"

"And is it true, then," mumbled the paralytic wretch, "that the bride was trailed out of her bed and up the chimly by evil spirits, and that the bridegroom's face was wrung round ahint him?"

"Ye needna care wha did it, or how it was done," said Aislie Gourlay; "but I'll uphaud it for nae stickit job, and that the lairds and leddies ken weel this day."

"And was it true," said Annie Winnie, "sin ye ken sae muckle about it, that the picture of auld Sir Malise Ravenswood came down on the ha' floor, and led out the braw before them a'?"

"Na," said Ailsie; "but into the ha' came the picture—and I ken weel how it came there—to gie them a warning that pride wad get a fa'. But there's as queer a ploy, cummers, as ony o' thae, that's gaun on even now in the burial vault yonder: ye saw twall mourners, wi' crape and cloak, gang down the steps pair and pair!"

"What should ail us to see them?" said the one old woman.

"I counted them," said the other, with the eagerness of a person to whom the spectacle had afforded too much interest to be viewed with indifference.

"But ye did not see," said Ailsie, exulting in her superior observation, "that there's a thirteenth among them that they ken naething about; and, if auld freits say true, there's ane o' that company that'll no be lang for this warld. But come awa' cummers; if we bide here, I'll se warrant we get the wyte o' whatever ill comes of it, and that gude will come of it nane o' them need ever think to see."

And thus, croaking like the ravens when they anticipate pestilence, the ill-boding sibyls withdrew from the churchyard.

In fact, the mourners, when the service of interment was ended, discovered that there was among them one more than the invited number, and the remark was communicated in whispers to each other. The suspicion fell upon a figure which, muffled in the same deep mourning with the others, was reclined, almost in a state of insensibility, against one of the pillars of the sepulchral vault. The relatives of the Ashton family were expressing in whispers their surprise and displeasure at the intrusion, when they were interrupted by Colonel Ashton, who, in his father's absence, acted as principal mourner. "I know," he said in a whisper, "who this person is, he has, or shall soon have, as deep cause of mourning as ourselves; leave me to deal with him, and do not disturb the ceremony by unnecessary exposure." So saying, he separated himself from the group of his relations, and taking the unknown mourner by the cloak, he said to him, in a tone of suppressed emotion, "Follow me."

The stranger, as if starting from a trance at the sound of his voice, mechanically obeyed, and they ascended the broken ruinous stair which led from the sepulchre into the churchyard. The other mourners followed, but remained grouped together at the door of the vault, watching with anxiety the motions of Colonel Ashton and the stranger, who now appeared to be in close conference beneath the shade of a yew-tree, in the most remote part of the burial-ground.

To this sequestered spot Colonel Ashton had guided the stranger, and then turning round, addressed him in a stern and composed tone.—"I cannot doubt that I speak to the Master of Ravenswood?" No answer was returned. "I cannot doubt," resumed the Colonel, trembling with rising passion, "that I speak to the murderer of my sister!"

"You have named me but too truly," said Ravenswood, in a hollow and tremulous voice.

"If you repent what you have done," said the Colonel, "may your penitence avail you before God; with me it shall serve you nothing. Here," he said, giving a paper, "is the measure of my sword, and a memorandum of the time and place of meeting. Sunrise to-morrow morning, on the links to the east of Wolf's Hope."

The Master of Ravenswood held the paper in his hand, and seemed irresolute. At length he spoke—"Do not," he said, "urge to farther desperation a wretch who is already desperate. Enjoy your life while you can, and let me seek my death from another."

"That you never, never shall!" said Douglas Ashton. "You shall die by my hand, or you shall complete the ruin of my family by taking my life. If you refuse my open challenge, there is no advantage I will not take of you, no indignity with which I will not load you, until the very name of Ravenswood shall be the sign of everything that is dishonourable, as it is already of all that is villainous."

"That it shall never be," said Ravenswood, fiercely; "if I am the last who must bear it, I owe it to those who once owned it that the name shall be extinguished without infamy. I accept your challenge, time, and place of meeting. We meet, I presume, alone?"

"Alone we meet," said Colonel Ashton, "and alone will the survivor of us return from that place of rendezvous."

"Then God have mercy on the soul of him who falls!" said Ravenswood.

"So be it!" said Colonel Ashton; "so far can my charity reach even for the man I hate most deadly, and with the deepest reason. Now, break off, for we shall be interrupted. The links by the sea-shore to the east of Wolf's Hope; the hour, sunrise; our swords our only weapons."

"Enough," said the Master, "I will not fail you."

They separated; Colonel Ashton joining the rest of the mourners, and the Master of Ravenswood taking his horse, which was tied to a tree behind the church. Colonel Ashton returned to the castle with the funeral guests, but found a pretext for detaching himself from them in the evening, when, changing his dress to a riding-habit, he rode to Wolf's Hope, that night, and took up his abode in the little inn, in order that he might be ready for his rendezvous in the morning.

It is not known how the Master of Ravenswood disposed of the rest of that unhappy day. Late at night, however, he arrived at Wolf's Crag, and aroused his old domestic, Caleb Balderstone, who had ceased to expect his return. Confused and flying rumours of the late tragical death of Miss Ashton, and of its mysterious cause, had already reached the old man, who was filled with the utmost anxiety, on account of the probable effect these events might produce upon the mind of his master.

The conduct of Ravenswood did not alleviate his apprehensions. To the butler's trembling entreaties that he would take some refreshment, he at first returned no answer, and then suddenly and fiercely demanding wine, he drank, contrary to his habits, a very large draught. Seeing that his master would eat nothing, the old man affectionately entreated that he would permit him to light him to his chamber. It was not until the request was three or four times repeated that Ravenswood made a mute sign of compliance. But when Balderstone conducted him to an apartment which had been comfortably fitted up, and which, since his return, he had usually occupied, Ravenswood stopped short on the threshold.

"Not here," said he, sternly; "show me the room in which my father died; the room in which SHE slept the night she was at the castle."

"Who, sir?" said Caleb, too terrified to preserve his presence of mind.

"SHE, Lucy Ashton! Would you kill me, old man, by forcing me to repeat her name?"

Caleb would have said something of the disrepair of the chamber, but was silenced by the irritable impatience which was expressed in his master's countenance; he lighted the way trembling and in silence, placed the lamp on the table of the deserted room, and was about to attempt some arrangement of the bed, when his master bid him begone in a tone that admitted of no delay. The old man retired, not to rest, but to prayer; and from time to time crept to the door of the apartment, in order to find out whether Ravenswood had gone to repose. His measured heavy step upon the floor was only interrupted by deep groans; and the repeated stamps of the heel of his heavy boot intimated too clearly that the wretched inmate was abandoning himself at such moments to paroxysms of uncontrolled agony. The old man thought that the morning, for which he longed, would never have dawned; but time, whose course rolls on with equal current, however it may seem more rapid or more slow to mortal apprehension, brought the dawn at last, and spread a ruddy light on the broad verge of the glistening ocean. It was early in November, and the weather was serene for the season of the year. But an easterly wind had prevailed during the night, and the advancing tide rolled nearer than usual to the foot of the crags on which the castle was founded.

With the first peep of light, Caleb Balderstone again resorted to the door of Ravenswood's sleeping apartment, through a chink of which he observed him engaged in measuring the length of two or three swords which lay in a closet adjoining to the apartment. He muttered to himself, as he selected one of these weapons: "It is shorter: let him have this advantage, as he has every other."

Caleb Balderstone knew too well, from what he witnessed, upon what enterprise his master was bound, and how vain all interference on his part must necessarily prove. He had but time to retreat from the door, so nearly was he surprised by his master suddenly coming out and descending to the stables. The faithful domestic followed; and from the dishevelled appearance of his master's dress, and his ghastly looks, was confirmed in his conjecture that he had passed the night without sleep or repose. He found him busily engaged in saddling his horse, a service from which Caleb, though with faltering voice and trembling hands, offered to relieve him. Ravenswood rejected his assistance by a mute sign, and having led the animal into the court, was just about to mount him, when the old domestic's fear giving way to the strong attachment which was the principal passion of his mind, he flung himself suddenly at Ravenswood's feet, and clasped his knees, while he exclaimed: "Oh, sir! oh, master! kill me if you will, but do not go out on this dreadful errand! Oh! my dear master, wait but this day; the Marquis of A—— comes to-morrow, and a' will be remedied."

"You have no longer a master, Caleb," said Ravenswood, endeavouring to extricate himself; "why, old man, would you cling to a falling tower?"

"But I HAVE a master," cried Caleb, still holding him fast, "while the heir of Ravenswood breathes. I am but a servant; but I was born your father's—your grandfather's servant. I was born for the family—I have lived for them—I would die for them! Stay but at home, and all will be well!"

"Well, fool! well!" said Ravenswood. "Vain old man, nothing hereafter in life will be well with me, and happiest is the hour that shall soonest close it!"

So saying, he extricated himself from the old man's hold, threw himself on his horse, and rode out the gate; but instantly turning back, he threw towards Caleb, who hastened to meet him, a heavy purse of gold. "Caleb!" he said with a ghastly smile, "I make you my executor," and again turning his bridle, he resumed his course down the hill. The gold fell unheeded on the pavement, for the old man ran to observe the course which was taken by his master, who turned to the left down a small and broken path, which gained the sea-shore through a cleft in the rock, and led to a sort of cove where, in former times, the boats of the castle

were wont to be moored. Observing him take this course, Caleb hastened to the eastern battlement, which commanded the prospect of the whole sands, very near as far as the village of Wolf's Hope. He could easily see his master riding in that direction, as fast as the horse could carry him. The prophecy at once rushed on Balderstone's mind, that the Lord of Ravenswood should perish on the Kelpie's flow, which lay half-way betwixt the Tower and the links, or sand knolls, to the northward of Wolf's Hope. He saw him according reach the fatal spot; but he never saw him pass further. Colonel Ashton, frantic for revenge, was already in the field, pacing the turf with eagerness, and looking with impatience towards the Tower for the arrival of his antagonist. The sun had now risen, and showed its broad disk above the eastern sea, so that he could easily discern the horseman who rode towards him with speed which argued impatience equal to his own. At once the figure became invisible, as if it had melted into the air. He rubbed his eyes, as if he had witnessed an apparition, and then hastened to the spot, near which he was met by Balderstone, who came from the opposite direction. No trace whatever of horse or rider could be discerned; it only appeared that the late winds and high tides had greatly extended the usual bounds of the quicksand, and that the unfortunate horseman, as appeared from the hoof-tracks, in his precipitate haste, had not attended to keep on the firm sands on the foot of the rock, but had taken the shortest and most dangerous course. One only vestige of his fate appeared. A large sable feather had been detached from his hat, and the rippling waves of the rising tide wafted it to Caleb's feet. The old man took it up, dried it, and placed it in his bosom. The inhabitants of Wolf's Hope were now alarmed, and crowded to the place, some on shore, and some in boats, but their search availed nothing. The tenacious depths of the quicksand, as is usual in such cases, retained its prey. Our tale draws to a conclusion. The Marquis of A——, alarmed at the frightful reports that were current, and anxious for his kinsman's safety, arrived on the subsequent day to mourn his loss; and, after renewing in vain a search for the body, returned, to forget what had happened amid the bustle of politics and state affairs. Not so Caleb Balderstone. If wordly profit could have consoled the old man, his age was better provided for than his earlier years had ever been; but life had lost to him its salt and its savour. His whole course of ideas, his feelings, whether of pride or of apprehension, of pleasure or of pain, had all arisen from its close connexion with the family which was now extinguished. He held up his head no longer, forsook all his usual haunts and occupations, and seemed only to find pleasure in moping about those apartments in the old castle which the Master of Ravenswood had last inhabited. He ate without refreshment, and slumbered without repose; and, with a fidelity sometimes displayed by the canine race, but seldom by human beings, he pined and died within a year after the catastrophe which we have narrated. The family of Ashton did not long survive that of Ravenswood. Sir William Ashton outlived his eldest son, the Colonel, who was slain in a duel in Flanders; and Henry, by whom he was succeeded, died unmarried. Lady Ashton lived to the verge of extreme old age, the only survivor of the group of unhappy persons whose misfortunes were owing to her implacability. That she might internally feel compunction, and reconcile herself with Heaven, whom she had offended, we will not, and we dare not, deny; but to those around her she did not evince the slightest symptom either of repentance or remorse. In all external appearance she bore the same bold, haughty, unbending character which she had displayed before these unhappy events. A splendid marble monument records her name, titles, and virtues, while her victims remain undistinguished by tomb or epitath.

CHAPTER FIRST.

*How have I sinn'd, that this affliction
Should light so heavy on me? I have no more sons,
And this no more mine own.—My grand curse
Hang o'er his head that thus transformed thee!—
Travel? I'll send my horse to travel next.*

Monsieur Thomas.

You have requested me, my dear friend, to bestow some of that leisure, with which Providence has blessed the decline of my life, in registering the hazards and difficulties which attended its commencement. The recollection of those adventures, as you are pleased to term them, has indeed left upon my mind a chequered and varied feeling of pleasure and of pain, mingled, I trust, with no slight gratitude and veneration to the Disposer of human events, who guided my early course through much risk and labour, that the ease with which he has blessed my prolonged life might seem softer from remembrance and contrast. Neither is it possible for me to doubt, what you have often affirmed, that the incidents which befell me among a people singularly primitive in their government and manners, have something interesting and attractive for those who love to hear an old man's stories of a past age.

Still, however, you must remember, that the tale told by one friend, and listened to by another, loses half its charms when committed to paper; and that the narratives to which you have attended with interest, as heard from the voice of him to whom they occurred, will appear less deserving of attention when perused in the seclusion of your study. But your greener age and robust constitution promise longer life than will, in all human probability, be the lot of your friend. Throw, then, these sheets into some secret drawer of your escritoire till we are separated from each other's society by an event which may happen at any moment, and which must happen within the course of a few—a very few years. When we are parted in this world, to meet, I hope, in a better, you will, I am well aware, cherish more than it deserves the memory of your departed friend, and will find in those details which I am now to commit to paper, matter for melancholy, but not unpleasing reflection. Others bequeath to the confidants of their bosom portraits of their external features—I put into your hands a faithful transcript of my thoughts and feelings, of my virtues and of my failings, with the assured hope, that the follies and headstrong impetuosity of my youth will meet the same kind construction and forgiveness which have so often attended the faults of my matured age.

One advantage, among the many, of addressing my Memoirs (if I may give these sheets a name so imposing) to a dear and intimate friend, is, that I may spare some of the details, in this case unnecessary, with which I must needs have detained a stranger from what I have to say of greater interest. Why should I bestow all my tediousness upon you, because I have you in my power, and have ink, paper, and time before me? At the same time, I dare not promise that I may not abuse the opportunity so temptingly offered me, to treat of myself and my own concerns, even though I speak of circumstances as well known to you as to myself. The seductive love of narrative, when we ourselves are the heroes of the events which we tell, often disregards the attention due to the time and patience of the audience, and the best and wisest have yielded to its fascination. I need only remind you of the singular instance evinced by the form of that rare and original edition of Sully's Memoirs, which you (with the fond vanity of a book-collector) insist upon preferring to that which is reduced to the useful and ordinary form of Memoirs, but which I think curious, solely as illustrating how far so great a man as the author was accessible to the foible of self-importance. If I recollect rightly, that venerable peer and great statesman had appointed no fewer than four gentlemen of his household to draw up the events of his life, under the title of Memorials of the Sage and Royal Affairs of State, Domestic, Political, and Military, transacted by Henry IV., and so forth. These grave recorders, having made their compilation, reduced the Memoirs containing all the remarkable events of their master's life into a narrative, addressed to himself in *propria persona*. And thus, instead of telling his own story, in the third person, like Julius Caesar, or in the first person, like most who, in the hall, or the study, undertake to be the heroes of their own tale, Sully enjoyed the refined, though whimsical pleasure, of having the events of his life told over to him by his secretaries, being himself the auditor, as he was also the hero, and probably the author, of the whole book. It must have been a great sight to have seen the ex-minister, as bolt upright as a starched ruff and laced cassock could make him, seated in state beneath his canopy, and listening to the recitation of his compilers, while, standing bare in his presence, they informed him gravely, "Thus said the duke—so did the duke infer—such were your grace's sentiments upon this important point—such were your secret counsels to the king on that other emergency,"—circumstances, all of which must have been much better known to their hearer than to themselves, and most of which could only be derived from his own special communication.

My situation is not quite so ludicrous as that of the great Sully, and yet there would be something whimsical in Frank Osbaldistone giving Will Tresham a formal account of his birth, education, and connections in the world. I will, therefore, wrestle with the tempting spirit of P. P., Clerk of our Parish, as I best may, and endeavour to tell you nothing that is familiar to you already. Some things, however, I must recall to your memory, because, though formerly well known to you, they may have been forgotten through lapse of time, and they afford the ground-work of my destiny.

You must remember my father well; for, as your own was a member of the mercantile house, you knew him from infancy. Yet you hardly saw him in his best days, before age and infirmity had quenched his ardent spirit of enterprise and speculation. He would have been a poorer man, indeed, but perhaps as happy, had he devoted to the extension of science those active energies, and acute powers of observation, for which commercial pursuits found occupation. Yet, in the fluctuations of mercantile speculation, there is something captivating to the adventurer, even independent of the hope of gain. He who embarks on that fickle sea, requires to possess the skill of the pilot and the fortitude of the navigator, and after all may be wrecked and lost, unless the gales of fortune breathe in his favour. This mixture of necessary attention and inevitable hazard,—the frequent and awful uncertainty whether prudence shall overcome fortune, or fortune baffle the schemes of prudence, affords full occupation for the powers, as well as for the feelings of the mind, and trade has all the fascination of gambling without its moral guilt.

Early in the 18th century, when I (Heaven help me) was a youth of some twenty years old, I was summoned suddenly from Bourdeaux to attend my father on business of importance. I shall never forget our first interview. You recollect the brief, abrupt, and somewhat stern mode in which he was wont to communicate his pleasure to those around him. Methinks I see him even now in my mind's eye;—the firm and upright figure,—the step, quick and determined,—the eye, which shot so keen and so penetrating a glance,—the features, on which care had already planted wrinkles,—and hear his language, in which he never wasted word in vain, expressed in a voice which had sometimes an occasional harshness, far from the intention of the speaker.

When I dismounted from my post-horse, I hastened to my father's apartment. He was traversing it with an air of composed and steady deliberation, which even my arrival, although an only son unseen for four years, was unable to discompose. I threw myself into his arms. He was a kind, though not a fond father, and the tear twinkled in his dark eye, but it was only for a moment.

"Dubourg writes to me that he is satisfied with you, Frank."

"I am happy, sir"—

"But I have less reason to be so" he added, sitting down at his bureau.

"I am sorry, sir"—

"Sorry and happy, Frank, are words that, on most occasions, signify little or nothing—Here is your last letter."

He took it out from a number of others tied up in a parcel of red tape, and curiously labelled and filed. There lay my poor epistle, written on the subject the nearest to my heart at the time, and couched in words which I had thought would work compassion if not conviction,—there, I say, it lay, squeezed up among the letters on miscellaneous business in which my father's daily affairs had engaged him. I cannot help smiling internally when I recollect the mixture of hurt vanity, and

wounded feeling, with which I regarded my remonstrance, to the penning of which there had gone, I promise you, some trouble, as I beheld it extracted from amongst letters of advice, of credit, and all the commonplace lumber, as I then thought them, of a merchant's correspondence. Surely, thought I, a letter of such importance (I dared not say, even to myself, so well written) deserved a separate place, as well as more anxious consideration, than those on the ordinary business of the counting-house.

But my father did not observe my dissatisfaction, and would not have minded it if he had. He proceeded, with the letter in his hand. "This, Frank, is yours of the 21st ultimo, in which you advise me (reading from my letter), that in the most important business of forming a plan, and adopting a profession for life, you trust my paternal goodness will hold you entitled to at least a negative voice; that you have insuperable—ay, insuperable is the word—I wish, by the way, you would write a more distinct current hand—draw a score through the tops of your t's, and open the loops of your l's—insuperable objections to the arrangements which I have proposed to you. There is much more to the same effect, occupying four good pages of paper, which a little attention to perspicuity and distinctness of expression might have comprised within as many lines. For, after all, Frank, it amounts but to this, that you will not do as I would have you."

"That I cannot, sir, in the present instance, not that I will not."

"Words avail very little with me, young man," said my father, whose inflexibility always possessed the air of the most perfect calmness of self-possession. "*Can not* may be a more civil phrase than *will not*, but the expressions are synonymous where there is no moral impossibility. But I am not a friend to doing business hastily; we will talk this matter over after dinner.—Owen!"

Owen appeared, not with the silver locks which you were used to venerate, for he was then little more than fifty; but he had the same, or an exactly similar uniform suit of light-brown clothes,—the same pearl-grey silk stockings,—the same stock, with its silver buckle,—the same plaited cambric ruffles, drawn down over his knuckles in the parlour, but in the counting-house carefully folded back under the sleeves, that they might remain unstained by the ink which he daily consumed;—in a word, the same grave, formal, yet benevolent cast of features, which continued to his death to distinguish the head clerk of the great house of Osbaldistone and Tresham.

"Owen," said my father, as the kind old man shook me affectionately by the hand, "you must dine with us to-day, and hear the news Frank has brought us from our friends in Bourdeaux."

Owen made one of his stiff bows of respectful gratitude; for, in those days, when the distance between superiors and inferiors was enforced in a manner to which the present times are strangers, such an invitation was a favour of some little consequence.

I shall long remember that dinner-party. Deeply affected by feelings of anxiety, not unmingled with displeasure, I was unable to take that active share in the conversation which my father seemed to expect from me; and I too frequently gave unsatisfactory answers to the questions with which he assailed me. Owen, hovering betwixt his respect for his patron, and his love for the youth he had dandled on his knee in childhood, like the timorous, yet anxious ally of an invaded nation, endeavoured at every blunder I made to explain my no-meaning, and to cover my retreat; manoeuvres which added to my father's pettish displeasure, and brought a share of it upon my kind advocate, instead of protecting me. I had not, while residing in the house of Dubourg, absolutely conducted myself like

A clerk condemn'd his father's soul to cross,

Who penn'd a stanza when he should engross;—

but, to say truth, I had frequented the counting-house no more than I had thought absolutely necessary to secure the good report of the Frenchman, long a correspondent of our firm, to whom my father had trusted for initiating me into the mysteries of commerce. In fact, my principal attention had been dedicated to literature and manly exercises. My father did not altogether discourage such acquirements, whether mental or personal. He had too much good sense not to perceive, that they sate gracefully upon every man, and he was sensible that they relieved and dignified the character to which he wished me to aspire. But his chief ambition was, that I should succeed not merely to his fortune, but to the views and plans by which he imagined he could extend and perpetuate the wealthy inheritance which he designed for me.

Love of his profession was the motive which he chose should be most ostensible, when he urged me to tread the same path; but he had others with which I only became acquainted at a later period. Impetuous in his schemes, as well as skilful and daring, each new adventure, when successful, became at once the incentive, and furnished the means, for farther speculation. It seemed to be necessary to him, as to an ambitious conqueror, to push on from achievement to achievement, without stopping to secure, far less to enjoy, the acquisitions which he made. Accustomed to see his whole fortune trembling in the scales of chance, and dexterous at adopting expedients for casting the balance in his favour, his health and spirits and activity seemed ever to increase with the animating hazards on which he staked his wealth; and he resembled a sailor, accustomed to brave the billows and the foe, whose confidence rises on the eve of tempest or of battle. He was not, however, insensible to the changes which increasing age or supervening malady might make in his own constitution; and was anxious in good time to secure in me an assistant, who might take the helm when his hand grew weary, and keep the vessel's way according to his counsel and instruction. Paternal affection, as well as the furtherance of his own plans, determined him to the same conclusion. Your father, though his fortune was vested in the house, was only a sleeping partner, as the commercial phrase goes; and Owen, whose probity and skill in the details of arithmetic rendered his services invaluable as a head clerk, was not possessed either of information or talents sufficient to conduct the mysteries of the principal management. If my father were suddenly summoned from life, what would become of the world of schemes which he had formed, unless his son were moulded into a commercial Hercules, fit to sustain the weight when relinquished by the falling Atlas? and what would become of that son himself, if, a stranger to business of this description, he found himself at once involved in the labyrinth of mercantile concerns, without the clew of knowledge necessary for his extraction? For all these reasons, avowed and secret, my father was determined I should embrace his profession; and when he was determined, the resolution of no man was more immovable. I, however, was also a party to be consulted, and, with something of his own pertinacity, I had formed a determination precisely contrary. It may, I hope, be some palliative for the resistance which, on this occasion, I offered to my father's wishes, that I did not fully understand upon what they were founded, or how deeply his happiness was involved in them. Imagining myself certain of a large succession in future, and ample maintenance in the meanwhile, it never occurred to me that it might be necessary, in order to secure these blessings, to submit to labour and limitations unpleasant to my taste and temper. I only saw in my father's proposal for my engaging in business, a desire that I should add to those heaps of wealth which he had himself acquired; and imagining myself the best judge of the path to my own happiness, I did not conceive that I should increase that happiness by augmenting a fortune which I believed was already sufficient, and more than sufficient, for every use, comfort, and elegant enjoyment.

Accordingly, I am compelled to repeat, that my time at Bourdeaux had not been spent as my father had proposed to himself. What he considered as the chief end of my residence in that city, I had postponed for every other, and would (had I dared) have neglected altogether. Dubourg, a favoured and benefited correspondent of our mercantile house, was too much of a shrewd politician to make such reports to the head of the firm concerning his only child, as would excite the displeasure of both; and he might also, as you will presently hear, have views of selfish advantage in suffering me to neglect the purposes for which I was placed under his charge. My conduct was regulated by the bounds of decency and good order, and thus far he had no evil report to make, supposing him so disposed; but, perhaps, the crafty Frenchman would have been equally complaisant, had I been in the habit of indulging worse feelings than those of indolence and aversion to mercantile business. As it was, while I gave a decent portion of my time to the commercial studies he recommended, he was by no means envious of the hours which I dedicated to other and more classical attainments, nor did he ever find fault with me for dwelling upon Corneille and Boileau, in preference to Postlethwayte (supposing his folio to have then existed, and Monsieur Dubourg able to have pronounced his name), or Savary, or any other writer on commercial economy. He had picked up somewhere a convenient expression, with which he rounded off every letter to his correspondent,—"*I was all*," he said, "*that a father could wish*."

My father never quarrelled with a phrase, however frequently repeated, provided it seemed to him distinct and expressive; and Addison himself could not have found expressions so satisfactory to him as, "Yours received, and duly honoured the bills enclosed, as per margin."

Knowing, therefore, very well what he desired me to, be, Mr. Osbaldistone made no doubt, from the frequent repetition of Dubourg's favourite phrase, that I was the very thing he wished to see me; when, in an evil hour, he received my letter, containing my eloquent and detailed apology for declining a place in the firm, and a desk and stool in the corner of the dark counting-house in Crane Alley, surmounting in height those of Owen, and the other clerks, and only inferior to the tripod of my father himself. All was wrong from that moment. Dubourg's reports became as suspicious as if his bills had been noted for dishonour. I was summoned home in all haste, and received in the manner I have already communicated to you.

CHAPTER SECOND.

*I begin shrewdly to suspect the young man of a terrible
taint—Poetry; with which idle disease if he be infected,
there's no hope of him in a state course. Actum est of him
for a commonwealth's man, if he go to't in rhyme once.*

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair.

My father had, generally speaking, his temper under complete self-command, and his anger rarely indicated itself by words, except in a sort of dry testy manner, to those who had displeased him. He never used threats, or expressions of loud resentment. All was arranged with him on system, and it was his practice to do "the needful" on every occasion, without wasting words about it. It was, therefore, with a bitter smile that he listened to my imperfect answers concerning the state of commerce in France, and unmercifully permitted me to involve myself deeper and deeper in the mysteries of agio, tariffs, tare and tret; nor can I charge my memory with his having looked positively angry, until he found me unable to explain the exact effect which the depreciation of the louis d'or had produced on the negotiation of bills of exchange. "The most remarkable national occurrence in my time," said my father (who nevertheless had seen the Revolution)—"and he knows no more of it than a post on the quay!"

"Mr. Francis," suggested Owen, in his timid and conciliatory manner, "cannot have forgotten, that by an *arret* of the King of France, dated 1st May 1700, it was provided that the *porteur*, within ten days after due, must make demand"—

"Mr. Francis," said my father, interrupting him, "will, I dare say, recollect for the moment anything you are so kind as hint to him. But, body o' me! how Dubourg could permit him! Hark ye, Owen, what sort of a youth is Clement Dubourg, his nephew there, in the office, the black-haired lad?"

"One of the cleverest clerks, sir, in the house; a prodigious young man for his time," answered Owen; for the gaiety and civility of the young Frenchman had won his heart.

"Ay, ay, I suppose *he* knows something of the nature of exchange. Dubourg was determined I should have one youngster at least about my hand who understood business. But I see his drift, and he shall find that I do so when he looks at the balance-sheet. Owen, let Clement's salary be paid up to next quarter-day, and let him ship himself back to Bourdeaux in his father's ship, which is clearing out yonder."

"Dismiss Clement Dubourg, sir?" said Owen, with a faltering voice.

"Yes, sir, dismiss him instantly; it is enough to have a stupid Englishman in the counting-house to make blunders, without keeping a sharp Frenchman there to profit by them."

I had lived long enough in the territories of the *Grand Monarque* to contract a hearty aversion to arbitrary exertion of authority, even if it had not been instilled into me with my earliest breeding; and I could not refrain from interposing, to prevent an innocent and meritorious young man from paying the penalty of having acquired that proficiency which my father had desired for me.

"I beg pardon, sir," when Mr. Osbaldistone had done speaking; "but I think it but just, that if I have been negligent of my studies, I should pay the forfeit myself. I have no reason to charge Monsieur Dubourg with having neglected to give me opportunities of improvement, however little I may have profited by them; and with respect to Monsieur Clement Dubourg"—

"With respect to him, and to you, I shall take the measures which I see needful," replied my father; "but it is fair in you, Frank, to take your own blame on your own shoulders—very fair, that cannot be denied.—I cannot acquit old Dubourg," he said, looking to Owen, "for having merely afforded Frank the means of useful knowledge, without either seeing that he took advantage of them or reporting to me if he did not. You see, Owen, he has natural notions of equity becoming a British merchant."

"Mr. Francis," said the head-clerk, with his usual formal inclination of the head, and a slight elevation of his right hand, which he had acquired by a habit of sticking his pen behind his ear before he spoke—"Mr. Francis seems to understand the fundamental principle of all moral accounting, the great ethic rule of three. Let A do to B, as he would have B do to him; the product will give the rule of conduct required."

My father smiled at this reduction of the golden rule to arithmetical form, but instantly proceeded.

"All this signifies nothing, Frank; you have been throwing away your time like a boy, and in future you must learn to live like a man. I shall put you under Owen's care for a few months, to recover the lost ground."

I was about to reply, but Owen looked at me with such a supplicatory and warning gesture, that I was involuntarily silent.

"We will then," continued my father, "resume the subject of mine of the 1st ultimo, to which you sent me an answer which was unadvised and unsatisfactory. So now, fill your glass, and push the bottle to Owen."

Want of courage—of audacity if you will—was never my failing. I answered firmly, "I was sorry that my letter was unsatisfactory, unadvised it was not; for I had given the proposal his goodness had made me, my instant and anxious attention, and it was with no small pain that I found myself obliged to decline it."

My father bent his keen eye for a moment on me, and instantly withdrew it. As he made no answer, I thought myself obliged to proceed, though with some hesitation, and he only interrupted me by monosyllables.—"It is impossible, sir, for me to have higher respect for any character than I have for the commercial, even were it not yours."

"Indeed!"

"It connects nation with nation, relieves the wants, and contributes to the wealth of all; and is to the general commonwealth of the civilised world what the daily intercourse of ordinary life is to private society, or rather, what air and food are to our bodies."

"Well, sir?"

"And yet, sir, I find myself compelled to persist in declining to adopt a character which I am so ill qualified to support."

"I will take care that you acquire the qualifications necessary. You are no longer the guest and pupil of Dubourg."

"But, my dear sir, it is no defect of teaching which I plead, but my own inability to profit by instruction."

"Nonsense.—Have you kept your journal in the terms I desired?"

"Yes, sir."

"Be pleased to bring it here."

The volume thus required was a sort of commonplace book, kept by my father's recommendation, in which I had been directed to enter notes of the miscellaneous information which I had acquired in the course of my studies. Foreseeing that he would demand inspection of this record, I had been attentive to transcribe such particulars of information as he would most likely be pleased with, but too often the pen had discharged the task without much correspondence with the head. And it had also happened, that, the book being the receptacle nearest to my hand, I had occasionally jotted down memoranda which had little regard to traffic. I now put it into my father's hand, devoutly hoping he might light on nothing that would increase his displeasure against me. Owen's face, which had looked something

blank when the question was put, cleared up at my ready answer, and wore a smile of hope, when I brought from my apartment, and placed before my father, a commercial-looking volume, rather broader than it was long, having brazen clasps and a binding of rough calf. This looked business-like, and was encouraging to my benevolent well-wisher. But he actually smiled with pleasure as he heard my father run over some part of the contents, muttering his critical remarks as he went on.

"—*Brandies—Barils and barricants, also tonneaux.—At Nantz 29—Velles to the barique at Cognac and Rochelle 27—At Bourdeaux 32—Very right, Frank—Duties on tonnage and custom-house, see Saxby's Tables—That's not well; you should have transcribed the passage; it fixes the thing in the memory—Reports outward and inward—Corn debentures—Over-sea Cockets—Linens—Isingham—Gentish—Stock-fish—Titling—Cropling—Lub-fish.* You should have noted that they are all, nevertheless to be entered as titlings.—How many inches long is a titling?"

Owen, seeing me at fault, hazarded a whisper, of which I fortunately caught the import.

"Eighteen inches, sir."

"And a lub-fish is twenty-four—very right. It is important to remember this, on account of the Portuguese trade—But what have we here?—*Bourdeaux founded in the year—Castle of the Trompette—Palace of Gallienus—Well, well, that's very right too.—This is a kind of waste-book, Owen, in which all the transactions of the day,—emptions, orders, payments, receipts, acceptances, draughts, commissions, and advices,—are entered miscellaneously.*"

"That they may be regularly transferred to the day-book and ledger," answered Owen: "I am glad Mr. Francis is so methodical."

I perceived myself getting so fast into favour, that I began to fear the consequence would be my father's more obstinate perseverance in his resolution that I must become a merchant; and as I was determined on the contrary, I began to wish I had not, to use my friend Mr. Owen's phrase, been so methodical. But I had no reason for apprehension on that score; for a blotted piece of paper dropped out of the book, and, being taken up by my father, he interrupted a hint from Owen, on the propriety of securing loose memoranda with a little paste, by exclaiming, "To the memory of Edward the Black Prince—What's all this?—verses!—By Heaven, Frank, you are a greater blockhead than I supposed you!"

My father, you must recollect, as a man of business, looked upon the labour of poets with contempt; and as a religious man, and of the dissenting persuasion, he considered all such pursuits as equally trivial and profane. Before you condemn him, you must recall to remembrance how too many of the poets in the end of the seventeenth century had led their lives and employed their talents. The sect also to which my father belonged, felt, or perhaps affected, a puritanical aversion to the lighter exertions of literature. So that many causes contributed to augment the unpleasant surprise occasioned by the ill-timed discovery of this unfortunate copy of verses. As for poor Owen, could the bob-wig which he then wore have uncurled itself, and stood on end with horror, I am convinced the morning's labour of the friseur would have been undone, merely by the excess of his astonishment at this enormity. An inroad on the strong-box, or an erasure in the ledger, or a mis-summation in a fitted account, could hardly have surprised him more disagreeably. My father read the lines sometimes with an affectation of not being able to understand the sense—sometimes in a mouthing tone of mock heroic—always with an emphasis of the most bitter irony, most irritating to the nerves of an author.

*"O for the voice of that wild horn,
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
The dying hero's call,
That told imperial Charlemagne,
How Paynim sons of swarthy Spain
Had wrought his champion's fall.*

"*Fontarabian echoes!*" continued my father, interrupting himself; "the Fontarabian Fair would have been more to the purpose—*Paynim!*—What's Paynim?—Could you not say Pagan as well, and write English at least, if you must needs write nonsense?—

*"Sad over earth and ocean sounding.
And England's distant cliffs astounding.
Such are the notes should say
How Britain's hope, and France's fear,
Victor of Cressy and Poitier,
In Bordeaux dying lay."*

"Poitiers, by the way, is always spelt with an s, and I know no reason why orthography should give place to rhyme.—

*"Raise my faint head, my squires," he said,
'And let the casement be display'd,
That I may see once more
The splendour of the setting sun
Gleam on thy mirrored wave, Garonne,
And Blaye's empurpled shore.*

"*Garonne and sun* is a bad rhyme. Why, Frank, you do not even understand the beggarly trade you have chosen.

*"Like me, he sinks to Glory's sleep,
His fall the dews of evening steep,
As if in sorrow shed,
So soft shall fall the trickling tear,
When England's maids and matrons hear
Of their Black Edward dead.*

*"And though my sun of glory set,
Nor France, nor England, shall forget
The terror of my name;
And oft shall Britain's heroes rise,
New planets in these southern skies,
Through clouds of blood and flame.'*

"A cloud of flame is something new—Good-morrow, my masters all, and a merry Christmas to you!—Why, the bellman writes better lines." He then tossed the paper from him with an air of superlative contempt, and concluded—"Upon my credit, Frank, you are a greater blockhead than I took you for."

What could I say, my dear Tresham? There I stood, swelling with indignant mortification, while my father regarded me with a calm but stern look of scorn and pity; and poor Owen, with uplifted hands and eyes, looked as striking a picture of horror as if he had just read his patron's name in the Gazette. At length I took courage to speak, endeavouring that my tone of voice should betray my feelings as little as possible.

"I am quite aware, sir, how ill qualified I am to play the conspicuous part in society you have destined for me; and, luckily, I am not ambitious of the wealth I might acquire. Mr. Owen would be a much more effective assistant." I said this in some malice, for I considered Owen as having deserted my cause a little too soon.

"Owen!" said my father—"The boy is mad—actually insane. And, pray, sir, if I may presume to inquire, having coolly turned me over to Mr. Owen (although I may expect more attention from any one than from my son), what may your own sage projects be?"

"I should wish, sir," I replied, summoning up my courage, "to travel for two or three years, should that consist with your pleasure; otherwise, although late, I would willingly spend the same time at Oxford or Cambridge."

"In the name of common sense! was the like ever heard?—to put yourself to school among pedants and Jacobites, when you might be pushing your fortune in the world! Why not go to Westminster or Eton at once, man, and take to Lilly's Grammar and Accidence, and to the birch, too, if you like it?"

"Then, sir, if you think my plan of improvement too late, I would willingly return to the Continent."

"You have already spent too much time there to little purpose, Mr. Francis."

"Then I would choose the army, sir, in preference to any other active line of life."

"Choose the d—!" answered my father, hastily, and then checking himself—"I profess you make me as great a fool as you are yourself. Is he not enough to drive one mad, Owen?"—Poor Owen shook his head, and looked down. "Hark ye, Frank," continued my father, "I will cut all this matter very short. I was at your age when my father turned me out of doors, and settled my legal inheritance on my younger brother. I left Osbaldistone Hall on the back of a broken-down hunter, with ten guineas in my purse. I have never crossed the threshold again, and I never will. I know not, and I care not, if my fox-hunting brother is alive, or has broken his neck; but he has children, Frank, and one of them shall be my son if you cross me farther in this matter."

"You will do your pleasure," I answered—rather, I fear, with more sullen indifference than respect, "with what is your own."

"Yes, Frank, what I have is my own, if labour in getting, and care in augmenting, can make a right of property; and no drone shall feed on my honeycomb. Think on it well: what I have said is not without reflection, and what I resolve upon I will execute."

"Honoured sir!—dear sir!" exclaimed Owen, tears rushing into his eyes, "you are not wont to be in such a hurry in transacting business of importance. Let Mr. Francis run up the balance before you shut the account; he loves you, I am sure; and when he puts down his filial obedience to the *per contra*, I am sure his objections will disappear."

"Do you think I will ask him twice," said my father, sternly, "to be my friend, my assistant, and my confidant?—to be a partner of my cares and of my fortune?—Owen, I thought you had known me better."

He looked at me as if he meant to add something more, but turned instantly away, and left the room abruptly. I was, I own, affected by this view of the case, which had not occurred to me; and my father would probably have had little reason to complain of me, had he commenced the discussion with this argument.

But it was too late. I had much of his own obduracy of resolution, and Heaven had decreed that my sin should be my punishment, though not to the extent which my transgression merited. Owen, when we were left alone, continued to look at me with eyes which tears from time to time moistened, as if to discover, before attempting the task of intercessor, upon what point my obstinacy was most assailable. At length he began, with broken and disconcerted accents,—*"O L—d, Mr. Francis!—Good Heavens, sir!—My stars, Mr. Osbaldistone!—that I should ever have seen this day—and you so young a gentleman, sir!—For the love of Heaven! look at both sides of the account—think what you are going to lose—a noble fortune, sir—one of the finest houses in the City, even under the old firm of Tresham and Trent, and now Osbaldistone and Tresham—You might roll in gold, Mr. Francis—And, my dear young Mr. Frank, if there was any particular thing in the business of the house which you disliked, I would"* (sinking his voice to a whisper) *"put it in order for you termly, or weekly, or daily, if you will—Do, my dear Mr. Francis, think of the honour due to your father, that your days may be long in the land."*

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Owen," said I—"very much obliged indeed; but my father is best judge how to bestow his money. He talks of one of my cousins: let him dispose of his wealth as he pleases—I will never sell my liberty for gold."

"Gold, sir?—I wish you saw the balance-sheet of profits at last term—It was in five figures—five figures to each partner's sum total, Mr. Frank—And all this is to go to a Papist, and a north-country booby, and a disaffected person besides—It will break my heart, Mr. Francis, that have been toiling more like a dog than a man, and all for love of the firm. Think how it will sound, Osbaldistone, Tresham, and Osbaldistone—or perhaps, who knows" (again lowering his voice), "Osbaldistone, Osbaldistone, and Tresham, for our Mr. Osbaldistone can buy them all out."

"But, Mr. Owen, my cousin's name being also Osbaldistone, the name of the company will sound every bit as well in your ears."

"O fie upon you, Mr. Francis, when you know how well I love you—Your cousin, indeed!—a Papist, no doubt, like his father, and a disaffected person to the Protestant succession—that's another item, doubtless."

"There are many very good men Catholics, Mr. Owen," rejoined I.

As Owen was about to answer with unusual animation, my father re-entered the apartment.

"You were right," he said, "Owen, and I was wrong; we will take more time to think over this matter.—Young man, you will prepare to give me an answer on this important subject this day month."

I bowed in silence, sufficiently glad of a reprieve, and trusting it might indicate some relaxation in my father's determination.

The time of probation passed slowly, unmarked by any accident whatever. I went and came, and disposed of my time as I pleased, without question or criticism on the part of my father. Indeed, I rarely saw him, save at meal-times, when he studiously avoided a discussion which you may well suppose I was in no hurry to press onward. Our conversation was of the news of the day, or on such general topics as strangers discourse upon to each other; nor could any one have guessed, from its tenor, that there remained undecided betwixt us a dispute of such importance. It haunted me, however, more than once, like the nightmare. Was it possible he would keep his word, and disinherit his only son in favour of a nephew whose very existence he was not perhaps quite certain of? My grandfather's conduct, in similar circumstances, boded me no good, had I considered the matter rightly. But I had formed an erroneous idea of my father's character, from the importance which I recollected I maintained with him and his whole family before I went to France. I was not aware that there are men who indulge their children at an early age, because to do so interests and amuses them, and who can yet be sufficiently severe when the same children cross their expectations at a more advanced period. On the contrary, I persuaded myself, that all I had to apprehend was some temporary alienation of affection—perhaps a rustication of a few weeks, which I thought would rather please me than otherwise, since it would give me an opportunity of setting about my unfinished version of *Orlando Furioso*, a poem which I longed to render into English verse. I suffered this belief to get such absolute possession of my mind, that I had resumed my blotted papers, and was busy in meditation on the oft-recurring rhymes of the Spenserian stanza, when I heard a low and cautious tap at the door of my apartment. "Come in," I said, and Mr. Owen entered. So regular were the motions and habits of this worthy man, that in all probability this was the first time he had ever been in the second story of his patron's house, however conversant with the first; and I am still at a loss to know in what manner he discovered my apartment.

"Mr. Francis," he said, interrupting my expression of surprise and pleasure at seeing him, "I do not know if I am doing well in what I am about to say—it is not right to speak of what passes in the compting-house out of doors—one should not tell, as they say, to the post in the warehouse, how many lines there are in the ledger. But young Twineall has been absent from the house for a fortnight and more, until two days since."

"Very well, my dear sir, and how does that concern us?"

"Stay, Mr. Francis;—your father gave him a private commission; and I am sure he did not go down to Falmouth about the pilchard affair; and the Exeter business with Blackwell and Company has been settled; and the mining people in Cornwall, Trevanion and Treguilliam, have paid all they are likely to pay; and any other matter of business must have been put through my books:—in short, it's my faithful belief that Twineall has been down in the north."

"Do you really suppose?" so said I, somewhat startled.

"He has spoken about nothing, sir, since he returned, but his new boots, and his Ripon spurs, and a cockfight at York—it's as true as the multiplication-table. Do, Heaven bless you, my dear child, make up your mind to please your father, and to be a man and a merchant at once."

I felt at that instant a strong inclination to submit, and to make Owen happy by requesting him to tell my father that I resigned myself to his disposal. But pride—pride, the source of so much that is good and so much that is evil in our course of life, prevented me. My acquiescence stuck in my throat; and while I was coughing to get it up, my father's voice summoned Owen. He hastily left the room, and the opportunity was lost.

My father was methodical in everything. At the very same time of the day, in the same apartment, and with the same tone and manner which he had employed an exact month before, he recapitulated the proposal he had made for taking me into partnership, and assigning me a department in the counting-house, and requested to have my final decision. I thought at the time there was something unkind in this; and I still think that my father's conduct was injudicious. A more conciliatory treatment would, in all probability, have gained his purpose. As it was, I stood fast, and, as respectfully as I could, declined the proposal he made to me. Perhaps—for who can judge of their own heart?—I felt it unmanly to yield on the first summons, and expected farther solicitation, as at least a pretext for changing my mind. If so, I was disappointed; for my father turned coolly to Owen, and only said, "You see it is as I told you.—Well, Frank" (addressing me), "you are nearly of age, and as well qualified to judge of what will constitute your own happiness as you ever are like to be; therefore, I say no more. But as I am not bound to give in to your plans, any more than you are compelled to submit to mine, may I ask to know if you have formed any which depend on my assistance?" I answered, not a little abashed, "That being bred to no profession, and having no funds of my own, it was obviously impossible for me to subsist without some allowance from my father; that my wishes were very moderate; and that I hoped my aversion for the profession to which he had designed me, would not occasion his altogether withdrawing his paternal support and protection."

"That is to say, you wish to lean on my arm, and yet to walk your own way? That can hardly be, Frank;—however, I suppose you mean to obey my directions, so far as they do not cross your own humour?"

I was about to speak—"Silence, if you please," he continued. "Supposing this to be the case, you will instantly set out for the north of England, to pay your uncle a visit, and see the state of his family. I have chosen from among his sons (he has six, I believe) one who, I understand, is most worthy to fill the place I intended for you in the counting-house. But some farther arrangements may be necessary, and for these your presence may be requisite. You shall have farther instructions at Osbaldistone Hall, where you will please to remain until you hear from me. Everything will be ready for your departure to-morrow morning."

With these words my father left the apartment.

"What does all this mean, Mr. Owen?" said I to my sympathetic friend, whose countenance wore a cast of the deepest dejection.

"You have ruined yourself, Mr. Frank, that's all. When your father talks in that quiet determined manner, there will be no more change in him than in a fitted account."

And so it proved; for the next morning, at five o'clock, I found myself on the road to York, mounted on a reasonably good horse, and with fifty guineas in my pocket; travelling, as it would seem, for the purpose of assisting in the adoption of a successor to myself in my father's house and favour, and, for aught I knew, eventually in his fortune also.

CHAPTER THIRD.

*The slack sail shifts from side to side,
The boat, untrimm'd, admits the tide,
Borne down, adrift, at random tost,
The oar breaks short, the rudder's lost.*

Gay's Fables.

I have tagged with rhyme and blank verse the subdivisions of this important narrative, in order to seduce your continued attention by powers of composition of stronger attraction than my own. The preceding lines refer to an unfortunate navigator, who daringly unloosed from its moorings a boat, which he was unable to manage, and thrust it off into the full tide of a navigable river. No schoolboy, who, betwixt frolic and defiance, has executed a similar rash attempt, could feel himself, when adrift in a strong current, in a situation more awkward than mine, when I found myself driving, without a compass, on the ocean of human life. There had been such unexpected ease in the manner in which my father slipt a knot, usually esteemed the strongest which binds society together, and suffered me to depart as a sort of outcast from his family, that it strangely lessened the confidence in my own personal accomplishments, which had hitherto sustained me. Prince Prettyman, now a prince, and now a fisher's son, had not a more awkward sense of his degradation. We are so apt, in our engrossing egotism, to consider all those accessories which are drawn around us by prosperity, as pertaining and belonging to our own persons, that the discovery of our unimportance, when left to our own proper resources, becomes inexpressibly mortifying. As the hum of London died away on my ear, the distant peal of her steeples more than once sounded to my ears the admonitory "Turn again," erst heard by her future Lord Mayor; and when I looked back from Highgate on her dusky magnificence, I felt as if I were leaving behind me comfort, opulence, the charms of society, and all the pleasures of cultivated life.

But the die was cast. It was, indeed, by no means probable that a late and ungracious compliance with my father's wishes would have reinstated me in the situation which I had lost. On the contrary, firm and strong of purpose as he himself was, he might rather have been disgusted than conciliated by my tardy and compulsory acquiescence in his desire that I should engage in commerce. My constitutional obstinacy came also to my aid, and pride whispered how poor a figure I should make, when an airing of four miles from London had blown away resolutions formed during a month's serious deliberation. Hope, too, that never forsakes the young and hardy, lent her lustre to my future prospects. My father could not be serious in the sentence of foris-filiation, which he had so unhesitatingly pronounced. It must be but a trial of my disposition, which, endured with patience and steadiness on my part, would raise me in his estimation, and lead to an amicable accommodation of the point in dispute between us. I even settled in my own mind how far I would concede to him, and on what articles of our supposed treaty I would make a firm stand; and the result was, according to my computation, that I was to be reinstated in my full rights of filiation, paying the easy penalty of some ostensible compliances to atone for my past rebellion.

In the meanwhile, I was lord of my person, and experienced that feeling of independence which the youthful bosom receives with a thrilling mixture of pleasure and apprehension. My purse, though by no means amply replenished, was in a situation to supply all the wants and wishes of a traveller. I had been accustomed, while at Bourdeaux, to act as my own valet; my horse was fresh, young, and active, and the buoyancy of my spirits soon surmounted the melancholy reflections with which my journey commenced.

I should have been glad to have journeyed upon a line of road better calculated to afford reasonable objects of curiosity, or a more interesting country, to the traveller. But the north road was then, and perhaps still is, singularly deficient in these respects; nor do I believe you can travel so far through Britain in any other direction without meeting more of what is worthy to engage the attention. My mental ruminations, notwithstanding my assumed confidence, were not always of an unchequered nature. The Muse too,—the very coquette who had led me into this wilderness,—like others of her sex, deserted me in my utmost need, and I should have been reduced to rather an uncomfortable state of dulness, had it not been for the occasional conversation of strangers who chanced to pass the same way. But the characters whom I met with were of a uniform and uninteresting description. Country parsons, jogging homewards after a visitation; farmers, or graziers, returning from a distant market; clerks of traders, travelling to collect what was due to their masters, in provincial towns; with now and then an officer going down into the country upon the recruiting service, were, at this period, the persons by whom the turnpikes and tapsters were kept in exercise. Our speech, therefore, was of tithes and creeds, of beeves and grain, of commodities wet and dry, and the solvency of the retail dealers, occasionally varied by the description of a siege, or battle, in Flanders, which, perhaps, the narrator only gave me at second hand. Robbers, a fertile and alarming theme, filled up every vacancy; and the names of the Golden Farmer, the Flying Highwayman, Jack Needham, and other Beggars' Opera heroes, were familiar in our mouths as household words. At such tales, like children closing their circle round the fire when the ghost story draws to its climax, the riders drew near to each other, looked before and behind them, examined the priming of their pistols, and vowed to stand by each other in case of danger; an engagement which, like other offensive and defensive alliances, sometimes glided out of remembrance when there was an appearance of actual peril.

Of all the fellows whom I ever saw haunted by terrors of this nature, one poor man, with whom I travelled a day and a half, afforded me most amusement. He had upon his pillion a very small, but apparently a very weighty portmanteau, about the safety of which he seemed particularly solicitous; never trusting it out of his own immediate care, and uniformly repressing the officious zeal of the waiters and ostlers, who offered their services to carry it into the house. With the same precaution he laboured to conceal, not only the purpose of his journey, and his ultimate place of destination, but even the direction of each day's route. Nothing embarrassed him more than to be asked by any one, whether he was travelling upwards or downwards, or at what stage he intended to bait. His place of rest for the night he scrutinised with the most anxious care, alike avoiding solitude, and what he considered as bad neighbourhood; and at Grantham, I believe, he sate up all night to avoid sleeping in the next room to a thick-set squinting fellow, in a black wig, and a tarnished gold-laced waistcoat. With all these cares on his mind, my fellow traveller, to judge by his thews and sinews, was a man who might have set danger at defiance with as much impunity as most men. He was strong and well built; and, judging from his gold-laced hat and cockade, seemed to have served in the army, or, at least, to belong to the military profession in one capacity or other. His conversation also, though always sufficiently vulgar, was that of a man of sense, when the terrible bugbears which haunted his imagination for a moment ceased to occupy his attention. But every accidental association recalled them. An open heath, a close plantation, were alike subjects of apprehension; and the whistle of a shepherd lad was instantly converted into the signal of a depredator. Even the sight of a gibbet, if it assured him that one robber was safely disposed of by justice, never failed to remind him how many remained still unchanged.

I should have wearied of this fellow's company, had I not been still more tired of my own thoughts. Some of the marvellous stories, however, which he related, had in themselves a cast of interest, and another whimsical point of his peculiarities afforded me the occasional opportunity of amusing myself at his expense. Among his tales, several of the unfortunate travellers who fell among thieves, incurred that calamity from associating themselves on the road with a well-dressed and entertaining stranger, in whose company they trusted to find protection as well as amusement; who cheered their journey with tale and song, protected them against the evils of over-charges and false reckonings, until at length, under pretext of showing a near path over a desolate common, he seduced his unsuspecting victims from the public road into some dismal glen, where, suddenly blowing his whistle, he assembled his comrades from their lurking-place, and displayed himself in his true colours—the captain, namely, of the band of robbers to whom his unwary fellow-travellers had forfeited their purses, and perhaps their lives. Towards the conclusion of such a tale, and when my companion had wrought himself into a fever of apprehension by the progress of his own narrative, I observed that he usually eyed me with a glance of doubt and suspicion, as if the possibility occurred to him, that he might, at that very moment, be in company with a character as dangerous as that which his tale described. And ever and anon, when such suggestions pressed themselves on the mind of this ingenious self-tormentor, he drew off from me to the opposite side of the high-road, looked before, behind, and around him, examined his arms, and seemed to prepare himself for flight or defence, as circumstances might require.

The suspicion implied on such occasions seemed to me only momentary, and too ludicrous to be offensive. There was, in fact, no particular reflection on my dress or address, although I was thus mistaken for a robber. A man in those days might have all the external appearance of a gentleman, and yet turn out to be a highwayman. For the division of labour in every department not having then taken place so fully as since that period, the profession of the polite and accomplished adventurer, who nicked you out of your money at White's, or bowled you out of it at Marylebone, was often united with that of the professed ruffian, who on Bagshot Heath, or Finchley Common, commanded his brother beau to stand and deliver. There was also a touch of coarseness and hardness about the manners of the times, which has since, in a great degree, been softened and shaded away. It seems to me, on recollection, as if desperate men had less reluctance then than now to embrace the most desperate means of retrieving their fortune. The times were indeed past, when Anthony-a-Wood mourned over the execution of two men, goodly in person, and of undisputed courage and honour, who were hanged without mercy at Oxford, merely because their distress had driven them to raise contributions on the highway. We were still farther removed from the days of "the mad Prince and Pains." And yet, from the number of unenclosed and extensive heaths in the vicinity of the metropolis, and from the less populous state of remote districts, both were frequented by that species of mounted highwaymen, that may possibly become one day unknown, who carried on their trade with something like courtesy; and, like Gibbet in the Beaux Stratagem, piqued themselves on being the best behaved men on the road, and on conducting themselves with all appropriate civility in the exercise of their vocation. A young man, therefore, in my circumstances was not entitled to be highly indignant at the mistake which confounded him with this worshipful class of depredators.

Neither was I offended. On the contrary, I found amusement in alternately exciting, and lulling to sleep, the suspicions of my timorous companion, and in purposely so acting as still farther to puzzle a brain which nature and apprehension had combined to render none of the clearest. When my free conversation had lulled him into complete security, it required only a passing inquiry concerning the direction of his journey, or the nature of the business which occasioned it, to put his suspicions once more in arms. For example, a conversation on the comparative strength and activity of our horses, took such a turn as follows:—

"O sir," said my companion, "for the gallop I grant you; but allow me to say, your horse (although he is a very handsome gelding—that must be owned,) has too little bone to be a good roadster. The trot, sir" (striking his Bucephalus with his spurs),—"the trot is the true pace for a hackney; and, were we near a town, I should like to try that daisy-cutter of yours upon a piece of level road (barring canter) for a quart of claret at the next inn."

"Content, sir," replied I; "and here is a stretch of ground very favourable."

"Hem, ahem," answered my friend with hesitation; "I make it a rule of travelling never to blow my horse between stages; one never knows what occasion he may have to put him to his mettle: and besides, sir, when I said I would match you, I meant with even weight; you ride four stone lighter than I."

"Very well; but I am content to carry weight. Pray, what may that portmanteau of yours weigh?"

"My p-p-portmanteau?" replied he, hesitating—"O very little—a feather—just a few shirts and stockings."

"I should think it heavier, from its appearance. I'll hold you the quart of claret it makes the odds betwixt our weight."

"You're mistaken, sir, I assure you—quite mistaken," replied my friend, edging off to the side of the road, as was his wont on these alarming occasions.

"Well, I am willing to venture the wine; or, I will bet you ten pieces to five, that I carry your portmanteau on my croupe, and out-trot you into the bargain."

This proposal raised my friend's alarm to the uttermost. His nose changed from the natural copper hue which it had acquired from many a comfortable cup of claret or sack, into a palish brassy tint, and his teeth chattered with apprehension at the unveiled audacity of my proposal, which seemed to place the barefaced plunderer before him in full atrocity. As he faltered for an answer, I relieved him in some degree by a question concerning a steeple, which now became visible, and an observation that we were now so near the village as to run no risk from interruption on the road. At this his countenance cleared up: but I easily perceived that it was long ere he forgot a proposal which seemed to him so fraught with suspicion as that which I had now hazarded. I trouble you with this detail of the man's disposition, and the manner in which I practised upon it, because, however trivial in themselves, these particulars were attended by an important influence on future incidents which will occur in this narrative. At the time, this person's conduct only inspired me with contempt, and confirmed me in an opinion which I already entertained, that of all the propensities which teach mankind to torment themselves, that of causeless fear is the most irritating, busy, painful, and pitiable.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

*The Scots are poor, cries surly English pride.
True is the charge; nor by themselves denied.
Are they not, then, in strictest reason clear,
Who wisely come to mend their fortunes here?*
Churchill.

There was, in the days of which I write, an old-fashioned custom on the English road, which I suspect is now obsolete, or practised only by the vulgar. Journeys of length being made on horseback, and, of course, by brief stages, it was usual always to make a halt on the Sunday in some town where the traveller might attend

divine service, and his horse have the benefit of the day of rest, the institution of which is as humane to our brute labourers as profitable to ourselves. A counterpart to this decent practice, and a remnant of old English hospitality, was, that the landlord of a principal inn laid aside his character of a publican on the seventh day, and invited the guests who chanced to be within his walls to take a part of his family beef and pudding. This invitation was usually complied with by all whose distinguished rank did not induce them to think compliance a derogation; and the proposal of a bottle of wine after dinner, to drink the landlord's health, was the only recompense ever offered or accepted.

I was born a citizen of the world, and my inclination led me into all scenes where my knowledge of mankind could be enlarged; I had, besides, no pretensions to sequester myself on the score of superior dignity, and therefore seldom failed to accept of the Sunday's hospitality of mine host, whether of the Garter, Lion, or Bear. The honest publican, dilated into additional consequence by a sense of his own importance, while presiding among the guests on whom it was his ordinary duty to attend, was in himself an entertaining, spectacle; and around his genial orbit, other planets of inferior consequence performed their revolutions. The wits and humorists, the distinguished worthies of the town or village, the apothecary, the attorney, even the curate himself, did not disdain to partake of this hebdomadal festivity. The guests, assembled from different quarters, and following different professions, formed, in language, manners, and sentiments, a curious contrast to each other, not indifferent to those who desired to possess a knowledge of mankind in its varieties.

It was on such a day, and such an occasion, that my timorous acquaintance and I were about to grace the board of the ruddy-faced host of the Black Bear, in the town of Darlington, and bishopric of Durham, when our landlord informed us, with a sort of apologetic tone, that there was a Scotch gentleman to dine with us.

"A gentleman!—what sort of a gentleman?" said my companion somewhat hastily—his mind, I suppose, running on gentlemen of the pad, as they were then termed.

"Why, a Scotch sort of a gentleman, as I said before," returned mine host; "they are all gentle, ye mun know, though they ha' narra shirt to back; but this is a decentish hallion—a canny North Briton as e'er cross'd Berwick Bridge—I trow he's a dealer in cattle."

"Let us have his company, by all means," answered my companion; and then, turning to me, he gave vent to the tenor of his own reflections. "I respect the Scotch, sir; I love and honour the nation for their sense of morality. Men talk of their filth and their poverty: but commend me to sterling honesty, though clad in rags, as the poet saith. I have been credibly assured, sir, by men on whom I can depend, that there was never known such a thing in Scotland as a highway robbery."

"That's because they have nothing to lose," said mine host, with the chuckle of a self-applauding wit.

"No, no, landlord," answered a strong deep voice behind him, "it's e'en because your English gaugers and supervisors,* that you have sent down benorth the Tweed, have taen up the trade of thievery over the heads of the native professors."

* The introduction of gaugers, supervisors, and examiners, was one of the great complaints of the Scottish nation, though a natural consequence of the Union.

"Well said, Mr. Campbell," answered the landlord; "I did not think thoud'st been sae near us, mon. But thou kens I'm an outspoken Yorkshire tyke. And how go markets in the south?"

"Even in the ordinar," replied Mr. Campbell; "wise folks buy and sell, and fools are bought and sold."

"But wise men and fools both eat their dinner," answered our jolly entertainer; "and here a comes—as prime a buttock of beef as e'er hungry men stuck fork in."

So saying, he eagerly whetted his knife, assumed his seat of empire at the head of the board, and loaded the plates of his sundry guests with his good cheer.

This was the first time I had heard the Scottish accent, or, indeed, that I had familiarly met with an individual of the ancient nation by whom it was spoken. Yet, from an early period, they had occupied and interested my imagination. My father, as is well known to you, was of an ancient family in Northumberland, from whose seat I was, while eating the aforesaid dinner, not very many miles distant. The quarrel betwixt him and his relatives was such, that he scarcely ever mentioned the race from which he sprung, and held as the most contemptible species of vanity, the weakness which is commonly termed family pride. His ambition was only to be distinguished as William Osbaldistone, the first, at least one of the first, merchants on Change; and to have proved him the lineal representative of William the Conqueror would have far less flattered his vanity than the hum and bustle which his approach was wont to produce among the bulls, bears, and brokers of Stock-alley. He wished, no doubt, that I should remain in such ignorance of my relatives and descent as might insure a correspondence between my feelings and his own on this subject. But his designs, as will happen occasionally to the wisest, were, in some degree at least, counteracted by a being whom his pride would never have supposed of importance adequate to influence them in any way. His nurse, an old Northumbrian woman, attached to him from his infancy, was the only person connected with his native province for whom he retained any regard; and when fortune dawned upon him, one of the first uses which he made of her favours, was to give Mabel Rickets a place of residence within his household. After the death of my mother, the care of nursing me during my childish illnesses, and of rendering all those tender attentions which infancy exacts from female affection, devolved on old Mabel. Interdicted by her master from speaking to him on the subject of the heaths, glades, and dales of her beloved Northumberland, she poured herself forth to my infant ear in descriptions of the scenes of her youth, and long narratives of the events which tradition declared to have passed amongst them. To these I inclined my ear much more seriously than to graver, but less animated instructors. Even yet, methinks I see old Mabel, her head slightly agitated by the palsy of age, and shaded by a close cap, as white as the driven snow,—her face wrinkled, but still retaining the healthy tinge which it had acquired in rural labour—I think I see her look around on the brick walls and narrow street which presented themselves before our windows, as she concluded with a sigh the favourite old ditty, which I then preferred, and—why should I not tell the truth?—which I still prefer to all the opera airs ever minted by the capricious brain of an Italian Mus. D.—

Oh, the oak, the ash, and the bonny ivy tree,

They flourish best at home in the North Countrie!

Now, in the legends of Mabel, the Scottish nation was ever freshly remembered, with all the embittered declamation of which the narrator was capable. The inhabitants of the opposite frontier served in her narratives to fill up the parts which ogres and giants with seven-leagued boots occupy in the ordinary nursery tales. And how could it be otherwise? Was it not the Black Douglas who slew with his own hand the heir of the Osbaldistone family the day after he took possession of his estate, surprising him and his vassals while solemnizing a feast suited to the occasion? Was it not Wat the Devil, who drove all the year-old hogs off the braes of Lanthorn-side, in the very recent days of my grandfather's father? And had we not many a trophy, but, according to old Mabel's version of history, far more honourably gained, to mark our revenge of these wrongs? Did not Sir Henry Osbaldistone, fifth baron of the name, carry off the fair maid of Fairnington, as Achilles did his Chryseis and Briseis of old, and detain her in his fortress against all the power of her friends, supported by the most mighty Scottish chiefs of warlike fame? And had not our swords shone foremost at most of those fields in which England was victorious over her rival? All our family renown was acquired—all our family misfortunes were occasioned—by the northern wars.

Warmed by such tales, I looked upon the Scottish people during my childhood, as a race hostile by nature to the more southern inhabitants of this realm; and this view of the matter was not much corrected by the language which my father sometimes held with respect to them. He had engaged in some large speculations concerning oak-woods, the property of Highland proprietors, and alleged, that he found them much more ready to make bargains, and extort earnest of the purchase-money, than punctual in complying on their side with the terms of the engagements. The Scottish mercantile men, whom he was under the necessity of employing as a sort of middle-men on these occasions, were also suspected by my father of having secured, by one means or other, more than their own share of the profit which ought to have accrued. In short, if Mabel complained of the Scottish arms in ancient times, Mr. Osbaldistone inveighed no less against the arts of these modern Sinons; and between them, though without any fixed purpose of doing so, they impressed my youthful mind with a sincere aversion to the northern inhabitants of Britain, as a people bloodthirsty in time of war, treacherous during truce, interested, selfish, avaricious, and tricky in the business of peaceful life, and having few good qualities, unless there should be accounted such, a ferocity which resembled courage in martial affairs, and a sort of wily craft which supplied the place of wisdom in the ordinary commerce of mankind. In justification, or apology, for those who entertained such prejudices, I must remark, that the Scotch of that period were guilty of similar injustice to the English, whom they branded universally as a race of purse-proud arrogant epicures. Such seeds of national dislike remained between the two countries, the natural consequences of their existence as separate and rival states. We have seen recently the breath of a demagogue blow these sparks into a temporary flame, which I sincerely hope is now extinguished in its own ashes.*

* This seems to have been written about the time of Wilkes and Liberty.

It was, then, with an impression of dislike, that I contemplated the first Scotchman I chanced to meet in society. There was much about him that coincided with my previous conceptions. He had the hard features and athletic form said to be peculiar to his country, together with the national intonation and slow pedantic mode of expression, arising from a desire to avoid peculiarities of idiom or dialect. I could also observe the caution and shrewdness of his country in many of the observations which he made, and the answers which he returned. But I was not prepared for the air of easy self-possession and superiority with which he seemed to predominate over the company into which he was thrown, as it were by accident. His dress was as coarse as it could be, being still decent; and, at a time when great expense was lavished upon the wardrobe, even of the lowest who pretended to the character of gentleman, this indicated mediocrity of circumstances, if not poverty. His conversation intimated that he was engaged in the cattle trade, no very dignified professional pursuit. And yet, under these disadvantages, he seemed, as a matter of course, to treat the rest of the company with the cool and condescending politeness which implies a real, or imagined, superiority over those towards whom it is used. When he gave his opinion on any point, it was with that easy tone of confidence used by those superior to their society in rank or information, as if what he said could not be doubted, and was not to be questioned. Mine host and his Sunday guests, after an effort or two to support their consequence by noise and bold averment, sunk gradually under the authority of Mr. Campbell, who thus fairly possessed himself of the lead in the conversation. I was tempted, from curiosity, to dispute the ground with him myself, confiding in my knowledge of the world, extended as it was by my residence abroad, and in the stores with which a tolerable education had possessed my mind. In the latter respect he offered no competition, and it was easy to see that his natural powers had never been cultivated by education. But I found him much better acquainted than I was myself with the present state of France, the character of the Duke of Orleans, who had just succeeded to the regency of that kingdom, and that of the statesmen by whom he was surrounded; and his shrewd, caustic, and somewhat satirical remarks, were those of a man who had been a close observer of the affairs of that country.

On the subject of politics, Campbell observed a silence and moderation which might arise from caution. The divisions of Whig and Tory then shook England to her very centre, and a powerful party, engaged in the Jacobite interest, menaced the dynasty of Hanover, which had been just established on the throne. Every alehouse resounded with the brawls of contending politicians, and as mine host's politics were of that liberal description which quarrelled with no good customer, his hebdomadal visitants were often divided in their opinion as irreconcilably as if he had feasted the Common Council. The curate and the apothecary, with a little man, who made no boast of his vocation, but who, from the flourish and snap of his fingers, I believe to have been the barber, strongly espoused the cause of high church and the Stuart line. The excise-man, as in duty bound, and the attorney, who looked to some petty office under the Crown, together with my fellow-traveller, who seemed to enter keenly into the contest, staunchly supported the cause of King George and the Protestant succession. Dire was the screaming—deep the oaths! Each party appealed to Mr. Campbell, anxious, it seemed, to elicit his approbation.

"You are a Scotchman, sir; a gentleman of your country must stand up for hereditary right," cried one party.

"You are a Presbyterian," assumed the other class of disputants; "you cannot be a friend to arbitrary power."

"Gentlemen," said our Scotch oracle, after having gained, with some difficulty, a moment's pause, "I havena much dubitation that King George weel deserves the predilection of his friends; and if he can haud the grip he has gotten, why, doubtless, he may made the gauger, here, a commissioner of the revenue, and confer on our friend, Mr. Quitam, the preferment of solicitor-general; and he may also grant some good deed or reward to this honest gentleman who is sitting upon his portmanteau, which he prefers to a chair: And, questionless, King James is also a grateful person, and when he gets his hand in play, he may, if he be so minded, make this reverend gentleman archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr. Mixit chief physician to his household, and commit his royal beard to the care of my friend Latherum. But as I doubt mickle whether any of the competing sovereigns would give Rob Campbell a tass of aquavita, if he lacked it, I give my vote and interest to Jonathan Brown, our landlord, to be the King and Prince of Skinkers, conditionally that he fetches us another bottle as good as the last."

This sally was received with general applause, in which the landlord cordially joined; and when he had given orders for fulfilling the condition on which his preferment was to depend, he failed not to acquaint them, "that, for as peaceable a gentleman as Mr. Campbell was, he was, moreover, as bold as a lion—seven highwaymen had he defeated with his single arm, that beset him as he came from Whitson-Truste."

"Thou art deceived, friend Jonathan," said Campbell, interrupting him; "they were but barely two, and two cowardly loons as man could wish to meet withal."

"And did you, sir, really," said my fellow-traveller, edging his chair (I should have said his portmanteau) nearer to Mr. Campbell, "really and actually beat two highwaymen yourself alone?"

"In troth did I, sir," replied Campbell; "and I think it nae great thing to make a sang about."

"Upon my word, sir," replied my acquaintance, "I should be happy to have the pleasure of your company on my journey—I go northward, sir."

This piece of gratuitous information concerning the route he proposed to himself, the first I had heard my companion bestow upon any one, failed to excite the corresponding confidence of the Scotchman.

"We can scarce travel together," he replied, drily. "You, sir, doubtless, are well mounted, and I for the present travel on foot, or on a Highland shelty, that does not help me much faster forward."

So saying, he called for a reckoning for the wine, and throwing down the price of the additional bottle which he had himself introduced, rose as if to take leave of us. My companion made up to him, and taking him by the button, drew him aside into one of the windows. I could not help overhearing him pressing something—I supposed his company upon the journey, which Mr. Campbell seemed to decline.

"I will pay your charges, sir," said the traveller, in a tone as if he thought the argument should bear down all opposition.

"It is quite impossible," said Campbell, somewhat contemptuously; "I have business at Rothbury."

"But I am in no great hurry; I can ride out of the way, and never miss a day or so for good company."

"Upon my faith, sir," said Campbell, "I cannot render you the service you seem to desiderate. I am," he added, drawing himself up haughtily, "travelling on my own private affairs, and if ye will act by my advisement, sir, ye will neither unite yourself with an absolute stranger on the road, nor communicate your line of journey to those who are asking ye no questions about it." He then extricated his button, not very ceremoniously, from the hold which detained him, and coming up to me as the company were dispersing, observed, "Your friend, sir, is too communicative, considering the nature of his trust."

"That gentleman," I replied, looking towards the traveller, "is no friend of mine, but an acquaintance whom I picked up on the road. I know neither his name nor business, and you seem to be deeper in his confidence than I am."

"I only meant," he replied hastily, "that he seems a thought rash in conferring the honour of his company on those who desire it not."

"The gentleman," replied I, "knows his own affairs best, and I should be sorry to constitute myself a judge of them in any respect."

Mr. Campbell made no farther observation, but merely wished me a good journey, and the party dispersed for the evening.

Next day I parted company with my timid companion, as I left the great northern road to turn more westerly in the direction of Osbaldistone Manor, my uncle's seat. I cannot tell whether he felt relieved or embarrassed by my departure, considering the dubious light in which he seemed to regard me. For my own part, his tremors ceased to amuse me, and, to say the truth, I was heartily glad to get rid of him.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

*How melts my beating heart as I behold
Each lovely nymph, our island's boast and pride,
Push on the generous steed, that sweeps along
O'er rough, o'er smooth, nor heeds the steepy hill,*

I approached my native north, for such I esteemed it, with that enthusiasm which romantic and wild scenery inspires in the lovers of nature. No longer interrupted by the babble of my companion, I could now remark the difference which the country exhibited from that through which I had hitherto travelled. The streams now more properly deserved the name, for, instead of slumbering stagnant among reeds and willows, they brawled along beneath the shade of natural copsewood; were now hurried down declivities, and now purled more leisurely, but still in active motion, through little lonely valleys, which, opening on the road from time to time, seemed to invite the traveller to explore their recesses. The Cheviots rose before me in frowning majesty; not, indeed, with the sublime variety of rock and cliff which characterizes mountains of the primary class but huge, round-headed, and clothed with a dark robe of russet, gaining, by their extent and desolate appearance, an influence upon the imagination, as a desert district possessing a character of its own.

The abode of my fathers, which I was now approaching, was situated in a glen, or narrow valley, which ran up among those hills. Extensive estates, which once belonged to the family of Osbaldistone, had been long dissipated by the misfortunes or misconduct of my ancestors; but enough was still attached to the old mansion, to give my uncle the title of a man of large property. This he employed (as I was given to understand by some inquiries which I made on the road) in maintaining the prodigal hospitality of a northern squire of the period, which he deemed essential to his family dignity.

From the summit of an eminence I had already had a distant view of Osbaldistone Hall, a large and antiquated edifice, peeping out from a Druidical grove of huge oaks; and I was directing my course towards it, as straightly and as speedily as the windings of a very indifferent road would permit, when my horse, tired as he was, pricked up his ears at the enlivening notes of a pack of hounds in full cry, cheered by the occasional bursts of a French horn, which in those days was a constant accompaniment to the chase. I made no doubt that the pack was my uncle's, and drew up my horse with the purpose of suffering the hunters to pass without notice, aware that a hunting-field was not the proper scene to introduce myself to a keen sportsman, and determined when they had passed on, to proceed to the mansion-house at my own pace, and there to await the return of the proprietor from his sport. I paused, therefore, on a rising ground, and, not unmoved by the sense of interest which that species of silvan sport is so much calculated to inspire (although my mind was not at the moment very accessible to impressions of this nature), I expected with some eagerness the appearance of the huntsmen.

The fox, hard run, and nearly spent, first made his appearance from the copse which clothed the right-hand side of the valley. His drooping brush, his soiled appearance, and jaded trot, proclaimed his fate impending; and the carrion crow, which hovered over him, already considered poor Reynard as soon to be his prey. He crossed the stream which divides the little valley, and was dragging himself up a ravine on the other side of its wild banks, when the headmost hounds, followed by the rest of the pack in full cry, burst from the coppice, followed by the huntsman and three or four riders. The dogs pursued the trace of Reynard with unerring instinct; and the hunters followed with reckless haste, regardless of the broken and difficult nature of the ground. They were tall, stout young men, well mounted, and dressed in green and red, the uniform of a sporting association, formed under the auspices of old Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone.—"My cousins!" thought I, as they swept past me. The next reflection was, what is my reception likely to be among these worthy successors of Nimrod? and how improbable is it that I, knowing little or nothing of rural sports, shall find myself at ease, or happy, in my uncle's family. A vision that passed me interrupted these reflections.

It was a young lady, the loveliness of whose very striking features was enhanced by the animation of the chase and the glow of the exercise, mounted on a beautiful horse, jet black, unless where he was flecked by spots of the snow-white foam which embossed his bridle. She wore, what was then somewhat unusual, a coat, vest, and hat, resembling those of a man, which fashion has since called a riding habit. The mode had been introduced while I was in France, and was perfectly new to me. Her long black hair streamed on the breeze, having in the hurry of the chase escaped from the ribbon which bound it. Some very broken ground, through which she guided her horse with the most admirable address and presence of mind, retarded her course, and brought her closer to me than any of the other riders had passed. I had, therefore, a full view of her uncommonly fine face and person, to which an inexpressible charm was added by the wild gaiety of the scene, and the romance of her singular dress and unexpected appearance. As she passed me, her horse made, in his impetuosity, an irregular movement, just while, coming once more upon open ground, she was again putting him to his speed. It served as an apology for me to ride close up to her, as if to her assistance. There was, however, no cause for alarm; it was not a stumble, nor a false step; and, if it had, the fair Amazon had too much self-possession to have been deranged by it. She thanked my good intentions, however, by a smile, and I felt encouraged to put my horse to the same pace, and to keep in her immediate neighbourhood. The clamour of "Whoop! dead! dead!"—and the corresponding flourish of the French horn, soon announced to us that there was no more occasion for haste, since the chase was at a close. One of the young men whom we had seen approached us, waving the brush of the fox in triumph, as if to upbraid my fair companion,

"I see," she replied,—"I see; but make no noise about it: if Phoebe," she said, patting the neck of the beautiful animal on which she rode, "had not got among the cliffs, you would have had little cause for boasting."

They met as she spoke, and I observed them both look at me, and converse a moment in an under-tone, the young lady apparently pressing the sportsman to do something which he declined shyly, and with a sort of sheepish sullenness. She instantly turned her horse's head towards me, saying,—"Well, well, Thornie, if you won't, I must, that's all.—Sir," she continued, addressing me, "I have been endeavouring to persuade this cultivated young gentleman to make inquiry of you whether, in the course of your travels in these parts, you have heard anything of a friend of ours, one Mr. Francis Osbaldistone, who has been for some days expected at Osbaldistone Hall?"

I was too happy to acknowledge myself to be the party inquired after, and to express my thanks for the obliging inquiries of the young lady.

"In that case, sir," she rejoined, "as my kinsman's politeness seems to be still slumbering, you will permit me (though I suppose it is highly improper) to stand mistress of ceremonies, and to present to you young Squire Thornclyff Osbaldistone, your cousin, and Die Vernon, who has also the honour to be your accomplished cousin's poor kinswoman."

There was a mixture of boldness, satire, and simplicity in the manner in which Miss Vernon pronounced these words. My knowledge of life was sufficient to enable me to take up a corresponding tone as I expressed my gratitude to her for her condescension, and my extreme pleasure at having met with them. To say the truth, the compliment was so expressed, that the lady might easily appropriate the greater share of it, for Thornclyff seemed an arrant country bumpkin, awkward, shy, and somewhat sulky withal. He shook hands with me, however, and then intimated his intention of leaving me that he might help the huntsman and his brothers to couple up the hounds,—a purpose which he rather communicated by way of information to Miss Vernon than as apology to me.

"There he goes," said the young lady, following him with eyes in which disdain was admirably painted—"the prince of grooms and cock-fighters, and blackguard horse-courers. But there is not one of them to mend another.—Have you read Markham?" said Miss Vernon.

"Read whom, ma'am?—I do not even remember the author's name."

"O lud! on what a strand are you wrecked!" replied the young lady. "A poor forlorn and ignorant stranger, unacquainted with the very Alcoran of the savage tribe whom you are come to reside among—Never to have heard of Markham, the most celebrated author on farriery! then I fear you are equally a stranger to the more modern names of Gibson and Bartlett?"

"I am, indeed, Miss Vernon."

"And do you not blush to own it?" said Miss Vernon. "Why, we must forswear your alliance. Then, I suppose, you can neither give a ball, nor a mash, nor a horn!"

"I confess I trust all these matters to an ostler, or to my groom."

"Incredible carelessness!—And you cannot shoe a horse, or cut his mane and tail; or worm a dog, or crop his ears, or cut his dew-claws; or reclaim a hawk, or give him his casting-stones, or direct his diet when he is sealed; or"—

"To sum up my insignificance in one word," replied I, "I am profoundly ignorant in all these rural accomplishments."

"Then, in the name of Heaven, Mr. Francis Osbaldistone, what *can* you do?"

"Very little to the purpose, Miss Vernon; something, however, I can pretend to—When my groom has dressed my horse I can ride him, and when my hawk is in the field, I can fly him."

"Can you do this?" said the young lady, putting her horse to a canter.

There was a sort of rude overgrown fence crossed the path before us, with a gate composed of pieces of wood rough from the forest; I was about to move forward to open it, when Miss Vernon cleared the obstruction at a flying leap. I was bound in point of honour to follow, and was in a moment again at her side. "There are hopes of you yet," she said. "I was afraid you had been a very degenerate Osbaldistone. But what on earth brings you to Cub-Castle?—for so the neighbours have christened this hunting-hall of ours. You might have stayed away, I suppose, if you would?"

I felt I was by this time on a very intimate footing with my beautiful apparition, and therefore replied, in a confidential under-tone—"Indeed, my dear Miss Vernon, I might have considered it as a sacrifice to be a temporary resident in Osbaldistone Hall, the inmates being such as you describe them; but I am convinced there is one exception that will make amends for all deficiencies."

"O, you mean Rashleigh?" said Miss Vernon.

"Indeed I do not; I was thinking—forgive me—of some person much nearer me."

"I suppose it would be proper not to understand your civility?—But that is not my way—I don't make a courtesy for it because I am sitting on horseback. But, seriously, I deserve your exception, for I am the only conversable being about the Hall, except the old priest and Rashleigh."

"And who is Rashleigh, for Heaven's sake?"

"Rashleigh is one who would fain have every one like him for his own sake. He is Sir Hildebrand's youngest son—about your own age, but not so—not well looking, in short. But nature has given him a mouthful of common sense, and the priest has added a bushelful of learning; he is what we call a very clever man in this country, where clever men are scarce. Bred to the church, but in no hurry to take orders."

"To the Catholic Church?"

"The Catholic Church? what Church else?" said the young lady. "But I forgot—they told me you are a heretic. Is that true, Mr. Osbaldistone?"

"I must not deny the charge."

"And yet you have been abroad, and in Catholic countries?"

"For nearly four years."

"You have seen convents?"

"Often; but I have not seen much in them which recommended the Catholic religion."

"Are not the inhabitants happy?"

"Some are unquestionably so, whom either a profound sense of devotion, or an experience of the persecutions and misfortunes of the world, or a natural apathy of temper, has led into retirement. Those who have adopted a life of seclusion from sudden and overstrained enthusiasm, or in hasty resentment of some disappointment or mortification, are very miserable. The quickness of sensation soon returns, and like the wilder animals in a menagerie, they are restless under confinement, while others muse or fatten in cells of no larger dimensions than theirs."

"And what," continued Miss Vernon, "becomes of those victims who are condemned to a convent by the will of others? what do they resemble? especially, what do they resemble, if they are born to enjoy life, and feel its blessings?"

"They are like imprisoned singing-birds," replied I, "condemned to wear out their lives in confinement, which they try to beguile by the exercise of accomplishments which would have adorned society had they been left at large."

"I shall be," returned Miss Vernon—"that is," said she, correcting herself—"I should be rather like the wild hawk, who, barred the free exercise of his soar through heaven, will dash himself to pieces against the bars of his cage. But to return to Rashleigh," said she, in a more lively tone, "you will think him the pleasantest man you ever saw in your life, Mr. Osbaldistone,—that is, for a week at least. If he could find out a blind mistress, never man would be so secure of conquest; but the eye breaks the spell that enchants the ear.—But here we are in the court of the old hall, which looks as wild and old-fashioned as any of its inmates. There is no great toilette kept at Osbaldistone Hall, you must know; but I must take off these things, they are so unpleasantly warm,—and the hat hurts my forehead, too," continued the lively girl, taking it off, and shaking down a profusion of sable ringlets, which, half laughing, half blushing, she separated with her white slender fingers, in order to clear them away from her beautiful face and piercing hazel eyes. If there was any coquetry in the action, it was well disguised by the careless indifference of her manner. I could not help saying, "that, judging of the family from what I saw, I should suppose the toilette a very unnecessary care."

"That's very politely said—though, perhaps, I ought not to understand in what sense it was meant," replied Miss Vernon; "but you will see a better apology for a little negligence when you meet the Orsons you are to live amongst, whose forms no toilette could improve. But, as I said before, the old dinner-bell will clang, or rather clank, in a few minutes—it cracked of its own accord on the day of the landing of King Willie, and my uncle, respecting its prophetic talent, would never permit it to be mended. So do you hold my palfrey, like a duteous knight, until I send some more humble squire to relieve you of the charge."

She threw me the rein as if we had been acquainted from our childhood, jumped from her saddle, tripped across the courtyard, and entered at a side-door, leaving me in admiration of her beauty, and astonished with the over-frankness of her manners, which seemed the more extraordinary at a time when the dictates of politeness, flowing from the court of the Grand Monarque Louis XIV., prescribed to the fair sex an unusual severity of decorum. I was left awkwardly enough stationed in the centre of the court of the old hall, mounted on one horse, and holding another in my hand.

The building afforded little to interest a stranger, had I been disposed to consider it attentively; the sides of the quadrangle were of various architecture, and with their stone-shafted latticed windows, projecting turrets, and massive architraves, resembled the inside of a convent, or of one of the older and less splendid colleges of Oxford. I called for a domestic, but was for some time totally unattended to; which was the more provoking, as I could perceive I was the object of curiosity to several servants, both male and female, from different parts of the building, who popped out their heads and withdrew them, like rabbits in a warren, before I could make a direct appeal to the attention of any individual. The return of the huntsmen and hounds relieved me from my embarrassment, and with some difficulty I got one down to relieve me of the charge of the horses, and another stupid boor to guide me to the presence of Sir Hildebrand. This service he performed with much such grace and good-will, as a peasant who is compelled to act as guide to a hostile patrol; and in the same manner I was obliged to guard against his deserting me in the labyrinth of low vaulted passages which conducted to "Stun Hall," as he called it, where I was to be introduced to the gracious presence of my uncle.

We did, however, at length reach a long vaulted room, floored with stone, where a range of oaken tables, of a weight and size too massive ever to be moved aside, were already covered for dinner. This venerable apartment, which had witnessed the feasts of several generations of the Osbaldistone family, bore also evidence of their success in field sports. Huge antlers of deer, which might have been trophies of the hunting of Chevy Chace, were ranged around the walls, interspersed with the stuffed skins of badgers, otters, martins, and other animals of the chase. Amidst some remnants of old armour, which had, perhaps, served against the Scotch, hung the more valued weapons of silvan war, cross-bows, guns of various device and construction, nets, fishing-rods, otter-spears, hunting-poles, with many other singular devices, and engines for taking or killing game. A few old pictures, dimmed with smoke, and stained with March beer, hung on the walls, representing knights and ladies, honoured, doubtless, and renowned in their day; those frowning fearfully from huge bushes of wig and of beard; and these looking delightfully with all their might at the roses which they brandished in their hands.

I had just time to give a glance at these matters, when about twelve blue-coated servants burst into the hall with much tumult and talk, each rather employed in directing his comrades than in discharging his own duty. Some brought blocks and billets to the fire, which roared, blazed, and ascended, half in smoke, half in flame, up a huge tunnel, with an opening wide enough to accommodate a stone seat within its ample vault, and which was fronted, by way of chimney-piece, with a huge piece of heavy architecture, where the monsters of heraldry, embodied by the art of some Northumbrian chisel, grinned and ramped in red free-stone, now jappanned by the smoke of centuries. Others of these old-fashioned serving-men bore huge smoking dishes, loaded with substantial fare; others brought in cups,

flagons, bottles, yea barrels of liquor. All tramped, kicked, plunged, shouldered, and jostled, doing as little service with as much tumult as could well be imagined. At length, while the dinner was, after various efforts, in the act of being arranged upon the board, "the clamour much of men and dogs," the cracking of whips, calculated for the intimidation of the latter, voices loud and high, steps which, impressed by the heavy-heeled boots of the period, clattered like those in the statue of the *Festin de Pierre*,* announced the arrival of those for whose benefit the preparations were made.

* Now called Don Juan.

The hubbub among the servants rather increased than diminished as this crisis approached. Some called to make haste,—others to take time,—some exhorted to stand out of the way, and make room for Sir Hildebrand and the young squires,—some to close round the table and be *in* the way,—some bawled to open, some to shut, a pair of folding-doors which divided the hall from a sort of gallery, as I afterwards learned, or withdrawing-room, fitted up with black wainscot. Opened the doors were at length, and in rushed curs and men,—eight dogs, the domestic chaplain, the village doctor, my six cousins, and my uncle.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

*The rude hall rocks—they come, they come,—
The din of voices shakes the dome;—
In stalk the various forms, and, drest
In varying morion, varying vest,
All march with haughty step—all proudly shake the crest.
Penrose.*

If Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone was in no hurry to greet his nephew, of whose arrival he must have been informed for some time, he had important avocations to allege in excuse. "Had seen thee sooner, lad," he exclaimed, after a rough shake of the hand, and a hearty welcome to Osbaldistone Hall, "but had to see the hounds kennelled first. Thou art welcome to the Hall, lad—here is thy cousin Percie, thy cousin Thornie, and thy cousin John—your cousin Dick, your cousin Wilfred, and—stay, where's Rashleigh?—ay, here's Rashleigh—take thy long body aside Thornie, and let's see thy brother a bit—your cousin Rashleigh. So, thy father has thought on the old Hall, and old Sir Hildebrand at last—better late than never—Thou art welcome, lad, and there's enough. Where's my little Die?—ay, here she comes—this is my niece Die, my wife's brother's daughter—the prettiest girl in our dales, be the other who she may—and so now let's to the sirloin."—

To gain some idea of the person who held this language, you must suppose, my dear Tresham, a man aged about sixty, in a hunting suit which had once been richly laced, but whose splendour had been tarnished by many a November and December storm. Sir Hildebrand, notwithstanding the abruptness of his present manner, had, at one period of his life, known courts and camps; had held a commission in the army which encamped on Hounslow Heath previous to the Revolution—and, recommended perhaps by his religion, had been knighted about the same period by the unfortunate and ill-advised James II. But the Knight's dreams of further preferment, if he ever entertained any, had died away at the crisis which drove his patron from the throne, and since that period he had spent a sequestered life upon his native domains. Notwithstanding his rusticity, however, Sir Hildebrand retained much of the exterior of a gentleman, and appeared among his sons as the remains of a Corinthian pillar, defaced and overgrown with moss and lichen, might have looked, if contrasted with the rough unhewn masses of upright stones in Stonhenge, or any other Druidical temple. The sons were, indeed, heavy unadorned blocks as the eye would desire to look upon. Tall, stout, and comely, all and each of the five eldest seemed to want alike the Promethean fire of intellect, and the exterior grace and manner, which, in the polished world, sometimes supply mental deficiency. Their most valuable moral quality seemed to be the good-humour and content which was expressed in their heavy features, and their only pretence to accomplishment was their dexterity in field sports, for which alone they lived. The strong Gyas, and the strong Cloanthus, are not less distinguished by the poet, than the strong Percival, the strong Thornclyff, the strong John, Richard, and Wilfred Osbaldistones, were by outward appearance.

But, as if to indemnify herself for a uniformity so uncommon in her productions, Dame Nature had rendered Rashleigh Osbaldistone a striking contrast in person and manner, and, as I afterwards learned, in temper and talents, not only to his brothers, but to most men whom I had hitherto met with. When Percie, Thornie, and Co. had respectively nodded, grinned, and presented their shoulder rather than their hand, as their father named them to their new kinsman, Rashleigh stepped forward, and welcomed me to Osbaldistone Hall, with the air and manner of a man of the world. His appearance was not in itself prepossessing. He was of low stature, whereas all his brethren seemed to be descendants of Anak; and while they were handsomely formed, Rashleigh, though strong in person, was bull-necked and cross-made, and from some early injury in his youth had an imperfection in his gait, so much resembling an absolute halt, that many alleged that it formed the obstacle to his taking orders; the Church of Rome, as is well known, admitting none to the clerical profession who labours under any personal deformity. Others, however, ascribed this unsightly defect to a mere awkward habit, and contended that it did not amount to a personal disqualification from holy orders.

The features of Rashleigh were such, as, having looked upon, we in vain wish to banish from our memory, to which they recur as objects of painful curiosity, although we dwell upon them with a feeling of dislike, and even of disgust. It was not the actual plainness of his face, taken separately from the meaning, which made this strong impression. His features were, indeed, irregular, but they were by no means vulgar; and his keen dark eyes, and shaggy eyebrows, redeemed his face from the charge of commonplace ugliness. But there was in these eyes an expression of art and design, and, on provocation, a ferocity tempered by caution, which nature had made obvious to the most ordinary physiognomist, perhaps with the same intention that she has given the rattle to the poisonous snake. As if to compensate him for these disadvantages of exterior, Rashleigh Osbaldistone was possessed of a voice the most soft, mellow, and rich in its tones that I ever heard, and was at no loss for language of every sort suited to so fine an organ. His first sentence of welcome was hardly ended, ere I internally agreed with Miss Vernon, that my new kinsman would make an instant conquest of a mistress whose ears alone were to judge his cause. He was about to place himself beside me at dinner, but Miss Vernon, who, as the only female in the family, arranged all such matters according to her own pleasure, contrived that I should sit betwixt Thornclyff and herself; and it can scarce be doubted that I favoured this more advantageous arrangement.

"I want to speak with you," she said, "and I have placed honest Thornie betwixt Rashleigh and you on purpose. He will be like—

*Feather-bed 'twixt castle wall
And heavy brunt of cannon ball,*

while I, your earliest acquaintance in this intellectual family, ask of you how you like us all?"

"A very comprehensive question, Miss Vernon, considering how short while I have been at Osbaldistone Hall."

"Oh, the philosophy of our family lies on the surface—there are minute shades distinguishing the individuals, which require the eye of an intelligent observer; but the species, as naturalists I believe call it, may be distinguished and characterized at once."

"My five elder cousins, then, are I presume of pretty nearly the same character."

"Yes, they form a happy compound of sot, gamekeeper, bully, horse-jockey, and fool; but as they say there cannot be found two leaves on the same tree exactly alike, so these happy ingredients, being mingled in somewhat various proportions in each individual, make an agreeable variety for those who like to study character."

"Give me a sketch, if you please, Miss Vernon."

"You shall have them all in a family-piece, at full length—the favour is too easily granted to be refused. Percie, the son and heir, has more of the sot than of the gamekeeper, bully, horse-jockey, or fool—My precious Thornie is more of the bully than the sot, gamekeeper, jockey, or fool—John, who sleeps whole weeks

amongst the hills, has most of the gamekeeper—The jockey is powerful with Dickon, who rides two hundred miles by day and night to be bought and sold at a horse-race—And the fool predominates so much over Wilfred's other qualities, that he may be termed a fool positive."

"A goodly collection, Miss Vernon, and the individual varieties belong to a most interesting species. But is there no room on the canvas for Sir Hildebrand?"

"I love my uncle," was her reply: "I owe him some kindness (such it was meant for at least), and I will leave you to draw his picture yourself, when you know him better."

"Come," thought I to myself, "I am glad there is some forbearance. After all, who would have looked for such bitter satire from a creature so young, and so exquisitely beautiful?"

"You are thinking of me," she said, bending her dark eyes on me, as if she meant to pierce through my very soul.

"I certainly was," I replied, with some embarrassment at the determined suddenness of the question, and then, endeavouring to give a complimentary turn to my frank avowal—"How is it possible I should think of anything else, seated as I have the happiness to be?"

She smiled with such an expression of concentrated haughtiness as she alone could have thrown into her countenance. "I must inform you at once, Mr. Osbaldistone, that compliments are entirely lost upon me; do not, therefore, throw away your pretty sayings—they serve fine gentlemen who travel in the country, instead of the toys, beads, and bracelets, which navigators carry to propitiate the savage inhabitants of newly-discovered lands. Do not exhaust your stock in trade;—you will find natives in Northumberland to whom your fine things will recommend you—on me they would be utterly thrown away, for I happen to know their real value."

I was silenced and confounded.

"You remind me at this moment," said the young lady, resuming her lively and indifferent manner, "of the fairy tale, where the man finds all the money which he had carried to market suddenly changed into pieces of slate. I have cried down and ruined your whole stock of complimentary discourse by one unlucky observation. But come, never mind it—You are belied, Mr. Osbaldistone, unless you have much better conversation than these *fadeurs*, which every gentleman with a toupet thinks himself obliged to recite to an unfortunate girl, merely because she is dressed in silk and gauze, while he wears superfine cloth with embroidery. Your natural paces, as any of my five cousins might say, are far preferable to your complimentary amble. Endeavour to forget my unlucky sex; call me Tom Vernon, if you have a mind, but speak to me as you would to a friend and companion; you have no idea how much I shall like you."

"That would be a bribe indeed," returned I.

"Again!" replied Miss Vernon, holding up her finger; "I told you I would not bear the shadow of a compliment. And now, when you have pledged my uncle, who threatens you with what he calls a brimmer, I will tell you what you think of me."

The bumper being pledged by me, as a dutiful nephew, and some other general intercourse of the table having taken place, the continued and business-like clang of knives and forks, and the devotion of cousin Thorncliff on my right hand, and cousin Dickon, who sate on Miss Vernon's left, to the huge quantities of meat with which they heaped their plates, made them serve as two occasional partitions, separating us from the rest of the company, and leaving us to our *tete-a-tete*. "And now," said I, "give me leave to ask you frankly, Miss Vernon, what you suppose I am thinking of you!—I could tell you what I really *do* think, but you have interdicted praise."

"I do not want your assistance. I am conjuror enough to tell your thoughts without it. You need not open the casement of your bosom; I see through it. You think me a strange bold girl, half coquette, half romp; desirous of attracting attention by the freedom of her manners and loudness of her conversation, because she is ignorant of what the Spectator calls the softer graces of the sex; and perhaps you think I have some particular plan of storming you into admiration. I should be sorry to shock your self-opinion, but you were never more mistaken. All the confidence I have reposed in you, I would have given as readily to your father, if I thought he could have understood me. I am in this happy family as much secluded from intelligent listeners as Sancho in the Sierra Morena, and when opportunity offers, I must speak or die. I assure you I would not have told you a word of all this curious intelligence, had I cared a pin who knew it or knew it not."

"It is very cruel in you, Miss Vernon, to take away all particular marks of favour from your communications, but I must receive them on your own terms.—You have not included Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone in your domestic sketches."

She shrunk, I thought, at this remark, and hastily answered, in a much lower tone, "Not a word of Rashleigh! His ears are so acute when his selfishness is interested, that the sounds would reach him even through the mass of Thorncliff's person, stuffed as it is with beef, venison-pasty, and pudding."

"Yes," I replied; "but peeping past the living screen which divides us, before I put the question, I perceived that Mr. Rashleigh's chair was empty—he has left the table."

"I would not have you be too sure of that," Miss Vernon replied. "Take my advice, and when you speak of Rashleigh, get up to the top of Otterscope-hill, where you can see for twenty miles round you in every direction—stand on the very peak, and speak in whispers; and, after all, don't be too sure that the bird of the air will not carry the matter, Rashleigh has been my tutor for four years; we are mutually tired of each other, and we shall heartily rejoice at our approaching separation."

"Mr. Rashleigh leaves Osbaldistone Hall, then?"

"Yes, in a few days;—did you not know that?—your father must keep his resolutions much more secret than Sir Hildebrand. Why, when my uncle was informed that you were to be his guest for some time, and that your father desired to have one of his hopeful sons to fill up the lucrative situation in his counting-house which was vacant by your obstinacy, Mr. Francis, the good knight held a *cour ple'n'ie're* of all his family, including the butler, housekeeper, and gamekeeper. This reverend assembly of the peers and household officers of Osbaldistone Hall was not convoked, as you may suppose, to elect your substitute, because, as Rashleigh alone possessed more arithmetic than was necessary to calculate the odds on a fighting cock, none but he could be supposed qualified for the situation. But some solemn sanction was necessary for transforming Rashleigh's destination from starving as a Catholic priest to thriving as a wealthy banker; and it was not without some reluctance that the acquiescence of the assembly was obtained to such an act of degradation."

"I can conceive the scruples—but how were they got over?"

"By the general wish, I believe, to get Rashleigh out of the house," replied Miss Vernon. "Although youngest of the family, he has somehow or other got the entire management of all the others; and every one is sensible of the subjection, though they cannot shake it off. If any one opposes him, he is sure to rue having done so before the year goes about; and if you do him a very important service, you may rue it still more."

"At that rate," answered I, smiling, "I should look about me; for I have been the cause, however unintentionally, of his change of situation."

"Yes; and whether he regards it as an advantage or disadvantage, he will owe you a grudge for it—But here comes cheese, radishes, and a bumper to church and king, the hint for chaplains and ladies to disappear; and I, the sole representative of womanhood at Osbaldistone Hall, retreat, as in duty bound."

She vanished as she spoke, leaving me in astonishment at the mingled character of shrewdness, audacity, and frankness, which her conversation displayed. I despair conveying to you the least idea of her manner, although I have, as nearly as I can remember, imitated her language. In fact, there was a mixture of untaught simplicity, as well as native shrewdness and haughty boldness, in her manner, and all were modified and recommended by the play of the most beautiful features I had ever beheld. It is not to be thought that, however strange and uncommon I might think her liberal and unreserved communications, a young man of two-and-twenty was likely to be severely critical on a beautiful girl of eighteen, for not observing a proper distance towards him. On the contrary, I was equally diverted and flattered by Miss Vernon's confidence, and that notwithstanding her declaration of its being conferred on me solely because I was the first auditor who occurred, of intelligence enough to comprehend it. With the presumption of my age, certainly not diminished by my residence in France, I imagined that well-formed features, and a handsome person, both which I conceived myself to possess, were not unsuitable qualifications for the confidant of a young beauty. My vanity thus enlisted in Miss Vernon's behalf, I was far from judging her with severity, merely for a frankness which I supposed was in some degree justified by my own personal merit; and the feelings of partiality, which her beauty, and the singularity of her situation, were of themselves calculated to excite, were enhanced by my opinion of her penetration and judgment in her choice of a friend.

After Miss Vernon quitted the apartment, the bottle circulated, or rather flew, around the table in unceasing revolution. My foreign education had given me a distaste to intemperance, then and yet too common a vice among my countrymen. The conversation which seasoned such orgies was as little to my taste, and if anything could render it more disgusting, it was the relationship of the company. I therefore seized a lucky opportunity, and made my escape through a side door, leading I knew not whither, rather than endure any longer the sight of father and sons practising the same degrading intemperance, and holding the same coarse and disgusting conversation. I was pursued, of course, as I had expected, to be reclaimed by force, as a deserter from the shrine of Bacchus. When I heard the whoop and hollo, and the tramp of the heavy boots of my pursuers on the winding stair which I was descending, I plainly foresaw I should be overtaken unless I could get into the open air. I therefore threw open a casement in the staircase, which looked into an old-fashioned garden, and as the height did not exceed six feet, I jumped out without hesitation, and soon heard far behind the "hey whoop! stole away! stole away!" of my baffled pursuers. I ran down one alley, walked fast up another; and then, conceiving myself out of all danger of pursuit, I slackened my pace into a quiet stroll, enjoying the cool air which the heat of the wine I had been obliged to swallow, as well as that of my rapid retreat, rendered doubly grateful.

As I sauntered on, I found the gardener hard at his evening employment, and saluted him, as I paused to look at his work.

"Good even, my friend."

"Gude e'en—gude e'en t'ye," answered the man, without looking up, and in a tone which at once indicated his northern extraction.

"Fine weather for your work, my friend."

"It's no that muckle to be compleened o'," answered the man, with that limited degree of praise which gardeners and farmers usually bestow on the very best weather. Then raising his head, as if to see who spoke to him, he touched his Scotch bonnet with an air of respect, as he observed, "Eh, gude safe us!—it's a sight for sair een, to see a gold-laced jeistiecor in the Ha'garden sae late at e'en."

"A gold-laced what, my good friend?"

"Ou, a jeistiecor*—that's a jacket like your ain, there. They

* Perhaps from the French *Juste-au-corps*.

hae other things to do wi' them up yonder—unbuttoning them to make room for the beef and the bag-puddings, and the claret-wine, nae doubt—that's the ordinary for evening lecture on this side the border."

"There's no such plenty of good cheer in your country, my good friend," I replied, "as to tempt you to sit so late at it."

"Hout, sir, ye ken little about Scotland; it's no for want of gude vivers—the best of fish, flesh, and fowl hae we, by sybos, ingans, turneeps, and other garden fruit. But we hae mense and discretion, and are moderate of our mouths;—but here, frae the kitchen to the ha', it's fill and fetch mair, frae the tae end of the four-and-twenty till the tother. Even their fast days—they ca' it fasting when they hae the best o' sea-fish frae Hartlepool and Sunderland by land carriage, forbye trouts, grises, salmon, and a' the lave o't, and so they make their very fasting a kind of luxury and abomination; and then the awfu' masses and matins of the puir deceived souls—But I shouldna speak about them, for your honour will be a Roman, I'se warrant, like the lave."

"Not I, my friend; I was bred an English presbyterian, or dissenter."

"The right hand of fellowship to your honour, then," quoth the gardener, with as much alacrity as his hard features were capable of expressing, and, as if to show that his good-will did not rest on words, he plucked forth a huge horn snuff-box, or mull, as he called it, and proffered a pinch with a most fraternal grin.

Having accepted his courtesy, I asked him if he had been long a domestic at Osbaldistone Hall.

"I have been fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus," said he, looking towards the building, "for the best part of these four-and-twenty years, as sure as my name's Andrew Fairservice."

"But, my excellent friend, Andrew Fairservice, if your religion and your temperance are so much offended by Roman rituals and southern hospitality, it seems to me that you must have been putting yourself to an unnecessary penance all this while, and that you might have found a service where they eat less, and are more orthodox in their worship. I dare say it cannot be want of skill which prevented your being placed more to your satisfaction."

"It disna become me to speak to the point of my qualifications," said Andrew, looking round him with great complacency; "but nae doubt I should understand my trade of horticulture, seeing I was bred in the parish of Dreepdaily, where they raise lang-kale under glass, and force the early nettles for their spring kale. And, to speak truth, I hae been flitting every term these four-and-twenty years; but when the time comes, there's aye something to saw that I would like to see sawn,—or something to maw that I would like to see mawn,—or something to ripe that I would like to see ripen,—and sae I e'en daiker on wi' the family frae year's end to year's end. And I wad say for certain, that I am gaun to quit at Cannlemas, only I was just as positive on it twenty years syne, and I find mysell still turning up the mouls here, for a' that. Forbye that, to tell your honour the evendown truth, there's nae better place ever offered to Andrew. But if your honour wad wush me to ony place where I wad hear pure doctrine, and hae a free cow's grass, and a cot, and a yard, and mair than ten pund's of annual fee, and where there's nae leddy about the town to count the apples, I'se hold mysell muckle indebted t'ye."

"Bravo, Andrew! I perceive you'll lose no preferment for want of asking patronage."

"I canna see what for I should," replied Andrew; "it's no a generation to wait till ane's worth's discovered, I trow."

"But you are no friend, I observe, to the ladies."

"Na, by my troth, I keep up the first gardener's quarrel to them. They're fasheous bargains—aye crying for apricocks, pears, plums, and apples, summer and winter, without distinction o' seasons; but we hae nae slices o' the spare rib here, be praised for't! except auld Martha, and she's weel eneugh pleased wi' the freedom o' the berry-bushes to her sister's weans, when they come to drink tea in a holiday in the housekeeper's room, and wi' a wheen codlings now and then for her ain private supper."

"You forget your young mistress."

"What mistress do I forget?—whae's that?"

"Your young mistress, Miss Vernon."

"What! the lassie Vernon?—She's nae mistress o' mine, man. I wish she was her ain mistress; and I wish she mayna be some other body's mistress or it's lang—She's a wild slip that."

"Indeed!" said I, more interested than I cared to own to myself, or to show to the fellow—"why, Andrew, you know all the secrets of this family."

"If I ken them, I can keep them," said Andrew; "they winna work in my wame like harm in a barrel, I'se warrant ye. Miss Die is—but it's neither beef nor brose o' mine."

And he began to dig with a great semblance of assiduity.

"What is Miss Vernon, Andrew? I am a friend of the family, and should like to know."

"Other than a gude ane, I'm fearing," said Andrew, closing one eye hard, and shaking his head with a grave and mysterious look—"something glee'd—your honour understands me?"

"I cannot say I do," said I, "Andrew; but I should like to hear you explain yourself," and therewithal I slipped a crown-piece into Andrew's horn-hard hand. The touch of the silver made him grin a ghastly smile, as he nodded slowly, and thrust it into his breeches pocket; and then, like a man who well understood that there was value to be returned, stood up, and rested his arms on his spade, with his features composed into the most important gravity, as for some serious communication.

"Ye maun ken, then, young gentleman, since it imports you to know, that Miss Vernon is"—

Here breaking off, he sucked in both his cheeks, till his lantern jaws and long chin assumed the appearance of a pair of nut-crackers; winked hard once more, frowned, shook his head, and seemed to think his physiognomy had completed the information which his tongue had not fully told.

"Good God!" said I—"so young, so beautiful, so early lost!"

"Troth ye may say sae—she's in a manner lost, body and saul; forby being a Papist, I'se uphaud her for"—and his northern caution prevailed, and he was again silent.

"For what, sir?" said I sternly. "I insist on knowing the plain meaning of all this."

"On, just for the bitterest Jacobite in the haill shire."

"Pshaw! a Jacobite?—is that all?"

Andrew looked at me with some astonishment, at hearing his information treated so lightly; and then muttering, "Aweel, it's the warst thing I ken about the lassie, howsoe'er," he resumed his spade, like the king of the Vandals, in Marmontel's late novel.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

Bardolph.—The sheriff, with a monstrous watch, is at the door.

Henry IV. First Part.

I found out with some difficulty the apartment which was destined for my accommodation; and having secured myself the necessary good-will and attention from my uncle's domestics, by using the means they were most capable of comprehending, I secluded myself there for the remainder of the evening, conjecturing, from the fair way in which I had left my new relatives, as well as from the distant noise which continued to echo from the stone-hall (as their banqueting-room was called), that they were not likely to be fitting company for a sober man.

"What could my father mean by sending me to be an inmate in this strange family?" was my first and most natural reflection. My uncle, it was plain, received me as one who was to make some stay with him, and his rude hospitality rendered him as indifferent as King Hal to the number of those who fed at his cost. But it was plain my presence or absence would be of as little importance in his eyes as that of one of his blue-coated serving-men. My cousins were mere cubs, in whose company I might, if I liked it, unlearn whatever decent manners, or elegant accomplishments, I had acquired, but where I could attain no information beyond what regarded worming dogs, rowelling horses, and following foxes. I could only imagine one reason, which was probably the true one. My father considered the life which was led at Osbaldistone Hall as the natural and inevitable pursuits of all country gentlemen, and he was desirous, by giving me an opportunity of seeing that with which he knew I should be disgusted, to reconcile me, if possible, to take an active share in his own business. In the meantime, he would take Rashleigh Osbaldistone into the counting-house. But he had an hundred modes of providing for him, and that advantageously, whenever he chose to get rid of him. So that, although I did feel a certain qualm of conscience at having been the means of introducing Rashleigh, being such as he was described by Miss Vernon, into my father's business—perhaps into his confidence—I subdued it by the reflection that my father was complete master of his own affairs—a man not to be imposed upon, or influenced by any one—and that all I knew to the young gentleman's prejudice was through the medium of a singular and giddy girl, whose communications were made with an injudicious frankness, which might warrant me in supposing her conclusions had been hastily or inaccurately formed. Then my mind naturally turned to Miss Vernon herself; her extreme beauty; her very peculiar situation, relying solely upon her reflections, and her own spirit, for guidance and protection; and her whole character offering that variety and spirit which piques our curiosity, and engages our attention in spite of ourselves. I had sense enough to consider the neighbourhood of this singular young lady, and the chance of our being thrown into very close and frequent intercourse, as adding to the dangers, while it relieved the dulness, of Osbaldistone Hall; but I could not, with the fullest exertion of my prudence, prevail upon myself to regret excessively this new and particular hazard to which I was to be exposed. This scruple I also settled as young men settle most difficulties of the kind—I would be very cautious, always on my guard, consider Miss Vernon rather as a companion than an intimate; and all would do well enough. With these reflections I fell asleep, Miss Vernon, of course, forming the last subject of my contemplation.

Whether I dreamed of her or not, I cannot satisfy you, for I was tired and slept soundly. But she was the first person I thought of in the morning, when waked at dawn by the cheerful notes of the hunting horn. To start up, and direct my horse to be saddled, was my first movement; and in a few minutes I was in the courtyard, where men, dogs, and horses, were in full preparation. My uncle, who, perhaps, was not entitled to expect a very alert sportsman in his nephew, bred as he had been in foreign parts, seemed rather surprised to see me, and I thought his morning salutation wanted something of the hearty and hospitable tone which distinguished his first welcome. "Art there, lad?—ay, youth's aye rathe—but look to thyself—mind the old song, lad—

He that gallops his horse on Blackstone edge

May chance to catch a fall."

I believe there are few young men, and those very sturdy moralists, who would not rather be taxed with some moral peccadillo than with want of knowledge in horsemanship. As I was by no means deficient either in skill or courage, I resented my uncle's insinuation accordingly, and assured him he would find me up with the hounds.

"I doubtna, lad," was his reply; "thou'rt a rank rider, I'se warrant thee—but take heed. Thy father sent thee here to me to be bitted, and I doubt I must ride thee on the curb, or we'll hae some one to ride thee on the halter, if I takena the better heed."

As this speech was totally unintelligible to me—as, besides, it did not seem to be delivered for my use, or benefit, but was spoken as it were aside, and as if expressing aloud something which was passing through the mind of my much-honoured uncle, I concluded it must either refer to my desertion of the bottle on the preceding evening, or that my uncle's morning hours being a little discomposed by the revels of the night before, his temper had suffered in proportion. I only made the passing reflection, that if he played the ungracious landlord, I would remain the shorter while his guest, and then hastened to salute Miss Vernon, who advanced cordially to meet me. Some show of greeting also passed between my cousins and me; but as I saw them maliciously bent upon criticising my dress and accoutrements, from the cap to the stirrup-irons, and sneering at whatever had a new or foreign appearance, I exempted myself from the task of paying them much attention; and assuming, in requital of their grins and whispers, an air of the utmost indifference and contempt, I attached myself to Miss Vernon, as the only person in the party whom I could regard as a suitable companion. By her side, therefore, we sallied forth to the destined cover, which was a dingle or copse on the side of an extensive common. As we rode thither, I observed to Diana, "that I did not see my cousin Rashleigh in the field;" to which she replied,—"O no—he's a mighty hunter, but it's after the fashion of Nimrod, and his game is man."

The dogs now brushed into the cover, with the appropriate encouragement from the hunters—all was business, bustle, and activity. My cousins were soon too much interested in the business of the morning to take any further notice of me, unless that I overheard Dickon the horse-jockey whisper to Wilfred the fool—"Look thou, an our French cousin be nat off a' first burst."

To which Wilfred answered, "Like enow, for he has a queer outlandish binding on's castor."

Thornclyff, however, who in his rude way seemed not absolutely insensible to the beauty of his kinswoman, appeared determined to keep us company more closely than his brothers,—perhaps to watch what passed betwixt Miss Vernon and me—perhaps to enjoy my expected mishaps in the chase. In the last particular he was disappointed. After beating in vain for the greater part of the morning, a fox was at length found, who led us a chase of two hours, in the course of which, notwithstanding the ill-omened French binding upon my hat, I sustained my character as a horseman to the admiration of my uncle and Miss Vernon, and the secret disappointment of those who expected me to disgrace it. Reynard, however, proved too wily for his pursuers, and the hounds were at fault. I could at this time observe in Miss Vernon's manner an impatience of the close attendance which we received from Thornclyff Osbaldistone; and, as that active-spirited young lady never hesitated at taking the readiest means to gratify any wish of the moment, she said to him, in a tone of reproach—"I wonder, Thornie, what keeps you dangling at my horse's crupper all this morning, when you know the earths above Woolverton-mill are not stopt."

"I know no such an thing then, Miss Die, for the miller swore himself as black as night, that he stopt them at twelve o'clock midnight that was."

"O fie upon you, Thornie! would you trust to a miller's word?—and these earths, too, where we lost the fox three times this season! and you on your grey mare, that can gallop there and back in ten minutes!"

"Well, Miss Die, I'se go to Woolverton then, and if the earths are not stopt, I'se raddle Dick the miller's bones for him."

"Do, my dear Thornie; horsewhip the rascal to purpose—via—fly away, and about it;"—Thornclyff went off at the gallop—"or get horsewhipt yourself, which will serve my purpose just as well.—I must teach them all discipline and obedience to the word of command. I am raising a regiment, you must know. Thornie shall be my sergeant-major, Dickon my riding-master, and Wilfred, with his deep dub-a-dub tones, that speak but three syllables at a time, my kettle-drummer."

"And Rashleigh?"

"Rashleigh shall be my scout-master." "And will you find no employment for me, most lovely colonel?"

"You shall have the choice of being pay-master, or plunder-master, to the corps. But see how the dogs puzzle about there. Come, Mr. Frank, the scent's cold; they won't recover it there this while; follow me, I have a view to show you."

And in fact, she cantered up to the top of a gentle hill, commanding an extensive prospect. Casting her eyes around, to see that no one was near us, she drew up her horse beneath a few birch-trees, which screened us from the rest of the hunting-field—"Do you see yon peaked, brown, heathy hill, having something like a whitish speck upon the side?"

"Terminating that long ridge of broken moorish uplands?—I see it distinctly."

"That whitish speck is a rock called Hawkesmore-crag, and Hawkesmore-crag is in Scotland."

"Indeed! I did not think we had been so near Scotland."

"It is so, I assure you, and your horse will carry you there in two hours."

"I shall hardly give him the trouble; why, the distance must be eighteen miles as the crow flies."

"You may have my mare, if you think her less blown—I say, that in two hours you may be in Scotland."

"And I say, that I have so little desire to be there, that if my horse's head were over the Border, I would not give his tail the trouble of following. What should I do in Scotland?"

"Provide for your safety, if I must speak plainly. Do you understand me now, Mr. Frank?"

"Not a whit; you are more and more oracular."

"Then, on my word, you either mistrust me most unjustly, and are a better dissembler than Rashleigh Osbaldistone himself, or you know nothing of what is imputed to you; and then no wonder you stare at me in that grave manner, which I can scarce see without laughing."

"Upon my word of honour, Miss Vernon," said I, with an impatient feeling of her childish disposition to mirth, "I have not the most distant conception of what you mean. I am happy to afford you any subject of amusement, but I am quite ignorant in what it consists."

"Nay, there's no sound jest after all," said the young lady, composing herself; "only one looks so very ridiculous when he is fairly perplexed. But the matter is serious enough. Do you know one Moray, or Morris, or some such name?"

"Not that I can at present recollect."

"Think a moment. Did you not lately travel with somebody of such a name?"

"The only man with whom I travelled for any length of time was a fellow whose soul seemed to lie in his portmanteau."

"Then it was like the soul of the licentiate Pedro Garcias, which lay among the ducats in his leathern purse. That man has been robbed, and he has lodged an information against you, as connected with the violence done to him."

"You jest, Miss Vernon!"

"I do not, I assure you—the thing is an absolute fact."

"And do you," said I, with strong indignation, which I did not attempt to suppress, "do you suppose me capable of meriting such a charge?"

"You would call me out for it, I suppose, had I the advantage of being a man—You may do so as it is, if you like it—I can shoot flying, as well as leap a five-barred gate."

"And are colonel of a regiment of horse besides," replied I, reflecting how idle it was to be angry with her—"But do explain the present jest to me."

"There's no jest whatever," said Diana; "you are accused of robbing this man, and my uncle believes it as well as I did."

"Upon my honour, I am greatly obliged to my friends for their good opinion!"

"Now do not, if you can help it, snort, and stare, and snuff the wind, and look so exceedingly like a startled horse—There's no such offence as you suppose—you are not charged with any petty larceny or vulgar felony—by no means. This fellow was carrying money from Government, both specie and bills, to pay the troops in the north; and it is said he has been also robbed of some despatches of great consequence."

"And so it is high treason, then, and not simple robbery, of which I am accused!"

"Certainly—which, you know, has been in all ages accounted the crime of a gentleman. You will find plenty in this country, and one not far from your elbow, who think it a merit to distress the Hanoverian government by every means possible."

"Neither my politics nor my morals, Miss Vernon, are of a description so accommodating."

"I really begin to believe that you are a Presbyterian and Hanoverian in good earnest. But what do you propose to do?"

"Instantly to refute this atrocious calumny.—Before whom," I asked, "was this extraordinary accusation laid?"

"Before old Squire Inglewood, who had sufficient unwillingness to receive it. He sent tidings to my uncle, I suppose, that he might smuggle you away into Scotland, out of reach of the warrant. But my uncle is sensible that his religion and old predilections render him obnoxious to Government, and that, were he caught playing booty, he would be disarmed, and probably dismounted (which would be the worse evil of the two), as a Jacobite, papist, and suspected person."*

* On occasions of public alarm, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the horses of the Catholics were often seized upon, as they were always supposed to be on the eve of rising in rebellion.

"I can conceive that, sooner than lose his hunters, he would give up his nephew."

"His nephew, nieces, sons—daughters, if he had them, and whole generation," said Diana;—"therefore trust not to him, even for a single moment, but make the best of your way before they can serve the warrant."

"That I shall certainly do; but it shall be to the house of this Squire Inglewood—Which way does it lie?"

"About five miles off, in the low ground, behind yonder plantations—you may see the tower of the clock-house."

"I will be there in a few minutes," said I, putting my horse in motion.

"And I will go with you, and show you the way," said Diana, putting her palfrey also to the trot.

"Do not think of it, Miss Vernon," I replied. "It is not—permit me the freedom of a friend—it is not proper, scarcely even delicate, in you to go with me on such an errand as I am now upon."

"I understand your meaning," said Miss Vernon, a slight blush crossing her haughty brow;—"it is plainly spoken;" and after a moment's pause she added, "and I believe kindly meant."

"It is indeed, Miss Vernon. Can you think me insensible of the interest you show me, or ungrateful for it?" said I, with even more earnestness than I could have wished to express. "Yours is meant for true kindness, shown best at the hour of need. But I must not, for your own sake—for the chance of misconstruction—suffer you to pursue the dictates of your generosity; this is so public an occasion—it is almost like venturing into an open court of justice."

"And if it were not almost, but altogether entering into an open court of justice, do you think I would not go there if I thought it right, and wished to protect a friend? You have no one to stand by you—you are a stranger; and here, in the outskirts of the kingdom, country justices do odd things. My uncle has no desire to embroil

himself in your affair; Rashleigh is absent, and were he here, there is no knowing which side he might take; the rest are all more stupid and brutal one than another. I will go with you, and I do not fear being able to serve you. I am no fine lady, to be terrified to death with law-books, hard words, or big wigs."

"But my dear Miss Vernon"—

"But my dear Mr. Francis, be patient and quiet, and let me take my own way; for when I take the bit between my teeth, there is no bridle will stop me."

Flattered with the interest so lovely a creature seemed to take in my fate, yet vexed at the ridiculous appearance I should make, by carrying a girl of eighteen along with me as an advocate, and seriously concerned for the misconstruction to which her motives might be exposed, I endeavoured to combat her resolution to accompany me to Squire Inglewood's. The self-willed girl told me roundly, that my dissuasions were absolutely in vain; that she was a true Vernon, whom no consideration, not even that of being able to do but little to assist him, should induce to abandon a friend in distress; and that all I could say on the subject might be very well for pretty, well-educated, well-behaved misses from a town boarding-school, but did not apply to her, who was accustomed to mind nobody's opinion but her own.

While she spoke thus, we were advancing hastily towards Inglewood Place, while, as if to divert me from the task of further remonstrance, she drew a ludicrous picture of the magistrate and his clerk.—Inglewood was—according to her description—a white-washed Jacobite; that is, one who, having been long a non-juror, like most of the other gentlemen of the country, had lately qualified himself to act as a justice, by taking the oaths to Government. "He had done so," she said, "in compliance with the urgent request of most of his brother squires, who saw, with regret, that the palladium of silvan sport, the game-laws, were likely to fall into disuse for want of a magistrate who would enforce them; the nearest acting justice being the Mayor of Newcastle, and he, as being rather inclined to the consumption of the game when properly dressed, than to its preservation when alive, was more partial, of course, to the cause of the poacher than of the sportsman. Resolving, therefore, that it was expedient some one of their number should sacrifice the scruples of Jacobitical loyalty to the good of the community, the Northumbrian country gentlemen imposed the duty on Inglewood, who, being very inert in most of his feelings and sentiments, might, they thought, comply with any political creed without much repugnance. Having thus procured the body of justice, they proceeded," continued Miss Vernon, "to attach to it a clerk, by way of soul, to direct and animate its movements. Accordingly they got a sharp Newcastle attorney, called Jobson, who, to vary my metaphor, finds it a good thing enough to retail justice at the sign of Squire Inglewood, and, as his own emoluments depend on the quantity of business which he transacts, he hooks in his principal for a great deal more employment in the justice line than the honest squire had ever bargained for; so that no apple-wife within the circuit of ten miles can settle her account with a costermonger without an audience of the reluctant Justice and his alert clerk, Mr. Joseph Jobson. But the most ridiculous scenes occur when affairs come before him, like our business of to-day, having any colouring of politics. Mr. Joseph Jobson (for which, no doubt, he has his own very sufficient reasons) is a prodigious zealot for the Protestant religion, and a great friend to the present establishment in church and state. Now, his principal, retaining a sort of instinctive attachment to the opinions which he professed openly until he relaxed his political creed with the patriotic view of enforcing the law against unauthorized destroyers of black-game, grouse, partridges, and hares, is peculiarly embarrassed when the zeal of his assistant involves him in judicial proceedings connected with his earlier faith; and, instead of seconding his zeal, he seldom fails to oppose to it a double dose of indolence and lack of exertion. And this inactivity does not by any means arise from actual stupidity. On the contrary, for one whose principal delight is in eating and drinking, he is an alert, joyous, and lively old soul, which makes his assumed dulness the more diverting. So you may see Jobson on such occasions, like a bit of a broken down blood-tit condemned to drag an overloaded cart, puffing, strutting, and spluttering, to get the Justice put in motion, while, though the wheels groan, creak, and revolve slowly, the great and preponderating weight of the vehicle fairly frustrates the efforts of the willing quadruped, and prevents its being brought into a state of actual progression. Nay more, the unfortunate pony, I understand, has been heard to complain that this same car of justice, which he finds it so hard to put in motion on some occasions, can on others run fast enough down hill of its own accord, dragging his reluctant self backwards along with it, when anything can be done of service to Squire Inglewood's quondam friends. And then Mr. Jobson talks big about reporting his principal to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if it were not for his particular regard and friendship for Mr. Inglewood and his family."

As Miss Vernon concluded this whimsical description, we found ourselves in front of Inglewood Place, a handsome, though old-fashioned building. which showed the consequence of the family.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*"Sir," quoth the Lawyer, "not to flatter ye,
You have as good and fair a battery
As heart could wish, and need not shame
The proudest man alive to claim."
Butler.*

Our horses were taken by a servant in Sir Hildebrand's livery, whom we found in the court-yard, and we entered the house. In the entrance-hall I was somewhat surprised, and my fair companion still more so, when we met Rashleigh Osbaldistone, who could not help showing equal wonder at our rencontre.

"Rashleigh," said Miss Vernon, without giving him time to ask any question, "you have heard of Mr. Francis Osbaldistone's affair, and you have been talking to the Justice about it?"

"Certainly," said Rashleigh, composedly—"it has been my business here.— I have been endeavouring," he said, with a bow to me, "to render my cousin what service I can. But I am sorry to meet him here."

"As a friend and relation, Mr. Osbaldistone, you ought to have been sorry to have met me anywhere else, at a time when the charge of my reputation required me to be on this spot as soon as possible."

"True; but judging from what my father said, I should have supposed a short retreat into Scotland—just till matters should be smoothed over in a quiet way"—

I answered with warmth, "That I had no prudential measures to observe, and desired to have nothing smoothed over;—on the contrary, I was come to inquire into a rascally calumny, which I was determined to probe to the bottom."

"Mr. Francis Osbaldistone is an innocent man, Rashleigh," said Miss Vernon, "and he demands an investigation of the charge against him, and I intend to support him in it."

"You do, my pretty cousin?—I should think, now, Mr. Francis Osbaldistone was likely to be as effectually, and rather more delicately, supported by my presence than by yours."

"Oh, certainly; but two heads are better than one, you know."

"Especially such a head as yours, my pretty Die," advancing and taking her hand with a familiar fondness, which made me think him fifty times uglier than nature had made him. She led him, however, a few steps aside; they conversed in an under voice, and she appeared to insist upon some request which he was unwilling or unable to comply with. I never saw so strong a contrast betwixt the expression of two faces. Miss Vernon's, from being earnest, became angry; her eyes and cheeks became more animated, her colour mounted, she clenched her little hand, and stamping on the ground with her tiny foot, seemed to listen with a mixture of contempt and indignation to the apologies, which, from his look of civil deference, his composed and respectful smile, his body rather drawing back than advanced, and other signs of look and person, I concluded him to be pouring out at her feet. At length she flung away from him, with "I *will* have it so."

"It is not in my power—there is no possibility of it.—Would you think it, Mr. Osbaldistone?" said he, addressing me—

"You are not mad?" said she, interrupting him.

"Would you think it?" said he, without attending to her hint—"Miss Vernon insists, not only that I know your innocence (of which, indeed, it is impossible for any one to be more convinced), but that I must also be acquainted with the real perpetrators of the outrage on this fellow—if indeed such an outrage has been committed. Is this reasonable, Mr. Osbaldistone?"

"I will not allow any appeal to Mr. Osbaldistone, Rashleigh," said the young lady; "he does not know, as I do, the incredible extent and accuracy of your information on all points."

"As I am a gentleman, you do me more honour than I deserve."

"Justice, Rashleigh—only justice:—and it is only justice which I expect at your hands."

"You are a tyrant, Diana," he answered, with a sort of sigh—"a capricious tyrant, and rule your friends with a rod of iron. Still, however, it shall be as you desire. But you ought not to be here—you know you ought not;—you must return with me."

Then turning from Diana, who seemed to stand undecided, he came up to me in the most friendly manner, and said, "Do not doubt my interest in what regards you, Mr. Osbaldistone. If I leave you just at this moment, it is only to act for your advantage. But you must use your influence with your cousin to return; her presence cannot serve you, and must prejudice herself."

"I assure you, sir," I replied, "you cannot be more convinced of this than I; I have urged Miss Vernon's return as anxiously as she would permit me to do."

"I have thought on it," said Miss Vernon after a pause, "and I will not go till I see you safe out of the hands of the Philistines. Cousin Rashleigh, I dare say, means well; but he and I know each other well. Rashleigh, I will not go;—I know," she added, in a more soothing tone, "my being here will give you more motive for speed and exertion."

"Stay then, rash, obstinate girl," said Rashleigh; "you know but too well to whom you trust;" and hastening out of the hall, we heard his horse's feet a minute afterwards in rapid motion.

"Thank Heaven he is gone!" said Diana. "And now let us seek out the Justice."

"Had we not better call a servant?"

"Oh, by no means; I know the way to his den—we must burst on him suddenly—follow me."

I did follow her accordingly, as she tripped up a few gloomy steps, traversed a twilight passage, and entered a sort of ante-room, hung round with old maps, architectural elevations, and genealogical trees. A pair of folding-doors opened from this into Mr. Inglewood's sitting apartment, from which was heard the fag-end of an old ditty, chanted by a voice which had been in its day fit for a jolly bottle-song.

*"O, in Skipton-in-Craven
Is never a haven,
But many a day foul weather;
And he that would say
A pretty girl nay,
I wish for his cravat a tether."*

"Heyday!" said Miss Vernon, "the genial Justice must have dined already—I did not think it had been so late."

It was even so. Mr. Inglewood's appetite having been sharpened by his official investigations, he had antedated his meridian repast, having dined at twelve instead of one o'clock, then the general dining hour in England. The various occurrences of the morning occasioned our arriving some time after this hour, to the Justice the most important of the four-and-twenty, and he had not neglected the interval.

"Stay you here," said Diana. "I know the house, and I will call a servant; your sudden appearance might startle the old gentleman even to choking;" and she escaped from me, leaving me uncertain whether I ought to advance or retreat. It was impossible for me not to hear some part of what passed within the dinner apartment, and particularly several apologies for declining to sing, expressed in a dejected croaking voice, the tones of which, I conceived, were not entirely new to me.

"Not sing, sir? by our Lady! but you must—What! you have cracked my silver-mounted cocoa-nut of sack, and tell me that you cannot sing!—Sir, sack will make a cat sing, and speak too; so up with a merry stave, or trundle yourself out of my doors!—Do you think you are to take up all my valuable time with your d-d declarations, and then tell me you cannot sing?"

"Your worship is perfectly in rule," said another voice, which, from its pert conceited accent, might be that of the cleric, "and the party must be conformable; he hath *canet* written on his face in court hand."

"Up with it then," said the Justice, "or by St. Christopher, you shall crack the cocoa-nut full of salt-and-water, according to the statute for such effect made and provided."

Thus exhorted and threatened, my quondam fellow-traveller, for I could no longer doubt that he was the recusant in question, uplifted, with a voice similar to that of a criminal singing his last psalm on the scaffold, a most doleful stave to the following effect:—

*"Good people all, I pray give ear,
A woeful story you shall hear,
'Tis of a robber as stout as ever
Bade a true man stand and deliver.
With his foodle doo fa loodle loo.*

*"This knave, most worthy of a cord,
Being armed with pistol and with sword,
'Twixt Kensington and Brentford then
Did boldly stop six honest men.
With his foodle doo, etc.*

*"These honest men did at Brentford dine,
Having drank each man his pint of wine,
When this bold thief, with many curses,
Did say, You dogs, your lives or purses.
With his foodle doo," etc.*

I question if the honest men, whose misfortune is commemorated in this pathetic ditty, were more startled at the appearance of the bold thief than the songster was at mine; for, tired of waiting for some one to announce me, and finding my situation as a listener rather awkward, I presented myself to the company just as my friend Mr. Morris, for such, it seems, was his name, was uplifting the fifth stave of his doleful ballad. The high tone with which the tune started died away in a

quaver of consternation on finding himself so near one whose character he supposed to be little less suspicious than that of the hero of his madrigal, and he remained silent, with a mouth gaping as if I had brought the Gorgon's head in my hand.

The Justice, whose eyes had closed under the influence of the somniferous lullaby of the song, started up in his chair as it suddenly ceased, and stared with wonder at the unexpected addition which the company had received while his organs of sight were in abeyance. The clerk, as I conjectured him to be from his appearance, was also commoved; for, sitting opposite to Mr. Morris, that honest gentleman's terror communicated itself to him, though he wotted not why.

I broke the silence of surprise occasioned by my abrupt entrance.—"My name, Mr. Inglewood, is Francis Osbaldistone; I understand that some scoundrel has brought a complaint before you, charging me with being concerned in a loss which he says he has sustained."

"Sir," said the Justice, somewhat peevishly, "these are matters I never enter upon after dinner;—there is a time for everything, and a justice of peace must eat as well as other folks."

The goodly person of Mr. Inglewood, by the way, seemed by no means to have suffered by any fasts, whether in the service of the law or of religion.

"I beg pardon for an ill-timed visit, sir; but as my reputation is concerned, and as the dinner appears to be concluded"—

"It is not concluded, sir," replied the magistrate; "man requires digestion as well as food, and I protest I cannot have benefit from my victuals unless I am allowed two hours of quiet leisure, intermixed with harmless mirth, and a moderate circulation of the bottle."

"If your honour will forgive me," said Mr. Jobson, who had produced and arranged his writing implements in the brief space that our conversation afforded; "as this is a case of felony, and the gentleman seems something impatient, the charge is *contra pacem domini regis*"—

"D—n *dominie regis*!" said the impatient Justice—"I hope it's no treason to say so; but it's enough to make one mad to be worried in this way. Have I a moment of my life quiet for warrants, orders, directions, acts, bails, bonds, and recognisances?—I pronounce to you, Mr. Jobson, that I shall send you and the justiceship to the devil one of these days."

"Your honour will consider the dignity of the office one of the quorum and custos rotulorum, an office of which Sir Edward Coke wisely saith, The whole Christian world hath not the like of it, so it be duly executed."

"Well," said the Justice, partly reconciled by this eulogium on the dignity of his situation, and gulping down the rest of his dissatisfaction in a huge bumper of claret, "let us to this gear then, and get rid of it as fast as we can.—Here you, sir—you, Morris—you, knight of the sorrowful countenance—is this Mr. Francis Osbaldistone the gentleman whom you charge with being art and part of felony?"

"I, sir?" replied Morris, whose scattered wits had hardly yet reassembled themselves; "I charge nothing—I say nothing against the gentleman,"

"Then we dismiss your complaint, sir, that's all, and a good riddance—Push about the bottle—Mr. Osbaldistone, help yourself."

Jobson, however, was determined that Morris should not back out of the scrape so easily. "What do you mean, Mr. Morris?—Here is your own declaration—the ink scarce dried—and you would retract it in this scandalous manner!"

"How do I know," whispered the other in a tremulous tone, "how many rogues are in the house to back him? I have read of such things in Johnson's Lives of the Highwaymen. I protest the door opens"—

And it did open, and Diana Vernon entered—"You keep fine order here, Justice—not a servant to be seen or heard of."

"Ah!" said the Justice, starting up with an alacrity which showed that he was not so engrossed by his devotions to Themis or Comus, as to forget what was due to beauty—"Ah, ha! Die Vernon, the heath-bell of Cheviot, and the blossom of the Border, come to see how the old bachelor keeps house? Art welcome, girl, as flowers in May."

"A fine, open, hospitable house you do keep, Justice, that must be allowed—not a soul to answer a visitor."

"Ah, the knaves! they reckoned themselves secure of me for a couple of hours—But why did you not come earlier?—Your cousin Rashleigh dined here, and ran away like a poltroon after the first bottle was out—But you have not dined—we'll have something nice and ladylike—sweet and pretty like yourself, tossed up in a trice."

"I may eat a crust in the ante-room before I set out," answered Miss Vernon—"I have had a long ride this morning; but I can't stay long, Justice—I came with my cousin, Frank Osbaldistone, there, and I must show him the way back again to the Hall, or he'll lose himself in the wolds."

"Whew! sits the wind in that quarter?" inquired the Justice—

"She showed him the way, she showed him the way,

She showed him the way to woo.

What! no luck for old fellows, then, my sweet bud of the wilderness?"

"None whatever, Squire Inglewood; but if you will be a good kind Justice, and despatch young Frank's business, and let us canter home again, I'll bring my uncle to dine with you next week, and we'll expect merry doings."

"And you shall find them, my pearl of the Tyne—Zookers, lass, I never envy these young fellows their rides and scampers, unless when you come across me. But I must not keep you just now, I suppose?—I am quite satisfied with Mr. Francis Osbaldistone's explanation—here has been some mistake, which can be cleared at greater leisure."

"Pardon me, sir," said I; "but I have not heard the nature of the accusation yet."

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, who, at the appearance of Miss Vernon, had given up the matter in despair, but who picked up courage to press farther investigation on finding himself supported from a quarter whence assuredly he expected no backing—"Yes, sir, and Dalton saith, That he who is apprehended as a felon shall not be discharged upon any man's discretion, but shall be held either to bail or commitment, paying to the clerk of the peace the usual fees for recognisance or commitment."

The Justice, thus goaded on, gave me at length a few words of explanation.

It seems the tricks which I had played to this man Morris had made a strong impression on his imagination; for I found they had been arrayed against me in his evidence, with all the exaggerations which a timorous and heated imagination could suggest. It appeared also, that on the day he parted from me, he had been stopped on a solitary spot and eased of his beloved travelling-companion, the portmanteau, by two men, well mounted and armed, having their faces covered with vizards.

One of them, he conceived, had much of my shape and air, and in a whispering conversation which took place betwixt the freebooters, he heard the other apply to him the name of Osbaldistone. The declaration farther set forth, that upon inquiring into the principles of the family so named, he, the said declarant, was informed that they were of the worst description, the family, in all its members, having been Papists and Jacobites, as he was given to understand by the dissenting clergyman at whose house he stopped after his rencontre, since the days of William the Conqueror.

Upon all and each of these weighty reasons, he charged me with being accessory to the felony committed upon his person; he, the said declarant, then travelling in the special employment of Government, and having charge of certain important papers, and also a large sum in specie, to be paid over, according to his instructions, to certain persons of official trust and importance in Scotland.

Having heard this extraordinary accusation, I replied to it, that the circumstances on which it was founded were such as could warrant no justice, or magistrate, in any attempt on my personal liberty. I admitted that I had practised a little upon the terrors of Mr. Morris, while we travelled together, but in such trifling particulars as could have excited apprehension in no one who was one whit less timorous and jealous than himself. But I added, that I had never seen him since we parted, and if that which he feared had really come upon him, I was in nowise accessory to an action so unworthy of my character and station in life. That one of the robbers was called Osbaldistone, or that such a name was mentioned in the course of the conversation betwixt them, was a trifling circumstance, to which no weight was due. And concerning the disaffection alleged against me, I was willing to prove, to the satisfaction of the Justice, the clerk, and even the witness

himself, that I was of the same persuasion as his friend the dissenting clergyman; had been educated as a good subject in the principles of the Revolution, and as such now demanded the personal protection of the laws which had been assured by that great event.

The Justice fidgeted, took snuff, and seemed considerably embarrassed, while Mr. Attorney Jobson, with all the volubility of his profession, ran over the statute of the 34 Edward III., by which justices of the peace are allowed to arrest all those whom they find by indictment or suspicion, and to put them into prison. The rogue even turned my own admissions against me, alleging, "that since I had confessedly, upon my own showing, assumed the bearing or deportment of a robber or malefactor, I had voluntarily subjected myself to the suspicions of which I complained, and brought myself within the compass of the act, having wilfully clothed my conduct with all the colour and livery of guilt."

I combated both his arguments and his jargon with much indignation and scorn, and observed, "That I should, if necessary, produce the bail of my relations, which I conceived could not be refused, without subjecting the magistrate in a misdemeanour."

"Pardon me, my good sir—pardon me," said the insatiable clerk; "this is a case in which neither bail nor mainprize can be received, the felon who is liable to be committed on heavy grounds of suspicion, not being replevisable under the statute of the 3d of King Edward, there being in that act an express exception of such as be charged of commandment, or force, and aid of felony done;" and he hinted that his worship would do well to remember that such were no way replevisable by common writ, nor without writ.

At this period of the conversation a servant entered, and delivered a letter to Mr. Jobson. He had no sooner run it hastily over, than he exclaimed, with the air of one who wished to appear much vexed at the interruption, and felt the consequence attached to a man of multifarious avocations—"Good God!—why, at this rate, I shall have neither time to attend to the public concerns nor my own—no rest—no quiet—I wish to Heaven another gentleman in our line would settle here!"

"God forbid!" said the Justice in a tone of *sotto-voce* deprecation; "some of us have enough of one of the tribe."

"This is a matter of life and death, if your worship pleases."

"In God's name! no more justice business, I hope," said the alarmed magistrate.

"No—no," replied Mr. Jobson, very consequentially; "old Gaffer Rutledge of Grime's-hill is subpoenaed for the next world; he has sent an express for Dr. Kill-down to put in bail—another for me to arrange his worldly affairs."

"Away with you, then," said Mr. Inglewood, hastily; "his may not be a replevisable case under the statute, you know, or Mr. Justice Death may not like the doctor for a *main pemor*, or bailsmen."

"And yet," said Jobson, lingering as he moved towards the door, "if my presence here be necessary—I could make out the warrant for committal in a moment, and the constable is below—And you have heard," he said, lowering his voice, "Mr. Rashleigh's opinion"—the rest was lost in a whisper.

The Justice replied aloud, "I tell thee no, man, no—we'll do nought till thou return, man; 'tis but a four-mile ride—Come, push the bottle, Mr. Morris—Don't be cast down, Mr. Osbaldistone—And you, my rose of the wilderness—one cup of claret to refresh the bloom of your cheeks."

Diana started, as if from a reverie, in which she appeared to have been plunged while we held this discussion. "No, Justice—I should be afraid of transferring the bloom to a part of my face where it would show to little advantage; but I will pledge you in a cooler beverage;" and filling a glass with water, she drank it hastily, while her hurried manner belied her assumed gaiety.

I had not much leisure to make remarks upon her demeanour, however, being full of vexation at the interference of fresh obstacles to an instant examination of the disgraceful and impertinent charge which was brought against me. But there was no moving the Justice to take the matter up in absence of his clerk, an incident which gave him apparently as much pleasure as a holiday to a schoolboy. He persisted in his endeavours to inspire jollity into a company, the individuals of which, whether considered with reference to each other, or to their respective situations, were by no means inclined to mirth. "Come, Master Morris, you're not the first man that's been robbed, I trow—grieving ne'er brought back loss, man. And you, Mr. Frank Osbaldistone, are not the first bully-boy that has said stand to a true man. There was Jack Winterfield, in my young days, kept the best company in the land—at horse-races and cock-fights who but he—hand and glove was I with Jack. Push the bottle, Mr. Morris, it's dry talking—Many quart bumpers have I cracked, and thrown many a merry main with poor Jack—good family—ready wit—quick eye—as honest a fellow, barring the deed he died for—we'll drink to his memory, gentlemen—Poor Jack Winterfield—And since we talk of him, and of those sort of things, and since that d—d clerk of mine has taken his gibberish elsewhere, and since we're snug among ourselves, Mr. Osbaldistone, if you will have my best advice, I would take up this matter—the law's hard—very severe—hanged poor Jack Winterfield at York, despite family connections and great interest, all for easing a fat west-country grazier of the price of a few beasts—Now, here is honest Mr. Morris, has been frightened, and so forth—D—n it, man, let the poor fellow have back his portmanteau, and end the frolic at once."

Morris's eyes brightened up at this suggestion, and he began to hesitate forth an assurance that he thirsted for no man's blood, when I cut the proposed accommodation short, by resenting the Justice's suggestion as an insult, that went directly to suppose me guilty of the very crime which I had come to his house with the express intention of disavowing. We were in this awkward predicament when a servant, opening the door, announced, "A strange gentleman to wait upon his honour;" and the party whom he thus described entered the room without farther ceremony.

CHAPTER NINTH.

*One of the thieves come back again! I'll stand close,
He dares not wrong me now, so near the house,
And call in vain 'tis, till I see him offer it.*

The Widow.

"A stranger!" echoed the Justice—"not upon business, I trust, for I'll be"—

His protestation was cut short by the answer of the man himself. "My business is of a nature somewhat onerous and particular," said my acquaintance, Mr. Campbell—for it was he, the very Scotchman whom I had seen at Northallerton—"and I must solicit your honour to give instant and heedful consideration to it.—I believe, Mr. Morris," he added, fixing his eye on that person with a look of peculiar firmness and almost ferocity—"I believe ye ken brawly what I am—I believe ye cannot have forgotten what passed at our last meeting on the road?" Morris's jaw dropped—his countenance became the colour of tallow—his teeth chattered, and he gave visible signs of the utmost consternation. "Take heart of grace, man," said Campbell, "and dinna sit clattering your jaws there like a pair of castanets! I think there can be nae difficulty in your telling Mr. Justice, that ye have seen me of yore, and ken me to be a cavalier of fortune, and a man of honour. Ye ken fu' weel ye will be some time resident in my vicinity, when I may have the power, as I will possess the inclination, to do you as good a turn."

"Sir—sir—I believe you to be a man of honour, and, as you say, a man of fortune. Yes, Mr. Inglewood," he added, clearing his voice, "I really believe this gentleman to be so."

"And what are this gentleman's commands with me?" said the Justice, somewhat peevishly. "One man introduces another, like the rhymes in the 'house that Jack built,' and I get company without either peace or conversation!"

"Both shall be yours, sir," answered Campbell, "in a brief period of time. I come to release your mind from a piece of troublesome duty, not to make increment to it."

"Body o' me! then you are welcome as ever Scot was to England, and that's not saying much. But get on, man—let's hear what you have got to say at once."

"I presume, this gentleman," continued the North Briton, "told you there was a person of the name of Campbell with him, when he had the mischance to lose his valise?"

"He has not mentioned such a name, from beginning to end of the matter," said the Justice.

"Ah! I conceive—I conceive," replied Mr. Campbell;—"Mr. Morris was kindly afeared of committing a stranger into collision wi' the judicial forms of the country; but as I understand my evidence is necessary to the compurgation of one honest gentleman here, Mr. Francis Osbaldistone, wha has been most unjustly suspected, I will dispense with the precaution. Ye will therefore" (he added addressing Morris with the same determined look and accent) "please tell Mr. Justice Inglewood,

whether we did not travel several miles together on the road, in consequence of your own anxious request and suggestion, reiterated ance and again, baith on the evening that we were at Northallerton, and there declined by me, but afterwards accepted, when I overtook ye on the road near Cloberry Allers, and was prevailed on by you to resign my ain intentions of proceeding to Rothbury; and, for my misfortune, to accompany you on your proposed route."

"It's a melancholy truth," answered Morris, holding down his head, as he gave this general assent to the long and leading question which Campbell put to him, and seemed to acquiesce in the statement it contained with rueful docility.

"And I presume you can also asseverate to his worship, that no man is better qualified than I am to bear testimony in this case, seeing that I was by you, and near you, constantly during the whole occurrence."

"No man better qualified, certainly," said Morris, with a deep and embarrassed sigh.

"And why the devil did you not assist him, then," said the Justice, "since, by Mr. Morris's account, there were but two robbers; so you were two to two, and you are both stout likely men?"

"Sir, if it please your worship," said Campbell, "I have been all my life a man of peace and quietness, noways given to broils or batteries. Mr. Morris, who belongs, as I understand, or hath belonged, to his Majesty's army, might have used his pleasure in resistance, he travelling, as I also understand, with a great charge of treasure; but, for me, who had but my own small peculiar to defend, and who am, moreover, a man of a pacific occupation, I was unwilling to commit myself to hazard in the matter."

I looked at Campbell as he muttered these words, and never recollect to have seen a more singular contrast than that between the strong daring sternness expressed in his harsh features, and the air of composed meekness and simplicity which his language assumed. There was even a slight ironical smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, which seemed, involuntarily as it were, to intimate his disdain of the quiet and peaceful character which he thought proper to assume, and which led me to entertain strange suspicions that his concern in the violence done to Morris had been something very different from that of a fellow-sufferer, or even of a mere spectator.

Perhaps some suspicious crossed the Justice's mind at the moment, for he exclaimed, as if by way of ejaculation, "Body o' me! but this is a strange story."

The North Briton seemed to guess at what was passing in his mind; for he went on, with a change of manner and tone, dismissing from his countenance some part of the hypocritical affectation of humility which had made him obnoxious to suspicion, and saying, with a more frank and unconstrained air, "To say the truth, I am just ane o' those canny folks wha care not to fight but when they hae gotten something to fight for, which did not chance to be my predicament when I fell in wi' these loons. But that your worship may know that I am a person of good fame and character, please to cast your eye over that billet."

Mr. Inglewood took the paper from his hand, and read, half aloud, "These are to certify, that the bearer, Robert Campbell of—of some place which I cannot pronounce," interjected the Justice—"is a person of good lineage, and peaceable demeanour, travelling towards England on his own proper affairs, &c. &c. &c. Given under our hand, at our Castle of Inver—Invera—rara—Argyle."

"A slight testimonial, sir, which I thought fit to impetrate from that worthy nobleman" (here he raised his hand to his head, as if to touch his hat), "MacCallum More."

"MacCallum who, sir?" said the Justice.

"Whom the Southern call the Duke of Argyle."

"I know the Duke of Argyle very well to be a nobleman of great worth and distinction, and a true lover of his country. I was one of those that stood by him in 1714, when he unhorsed the Duke of Marlborough out of his command. I wish we had more noblemen like him. He was an honest Tory in those days, and hand and glove with Ormond. And he has acceded to the present Government, as I have done myself, for the peace and quiet of his country; for I cannot presume that great man to have been actuated, as violent folks pretend, with the fear of losing his places and regiment. His testimonial, as you call it, Mr. Campbell, is perfectly satisfactory; and now, what have you got to say to this matter of the robbery?"

"Briefly this, if it please your worship,—that Mr. Morris might as weel charge it against the babe yet to be born, or against myself even, as against this young gentleman, Mr. Osbaldistone; for I am not only free to depone that the person whom he took for him was a shorter man, and a thicker man, but also, for I chanced to obtain a glist of his visage, as his fause-face slipped aside, that he was a man of other features and complexion than those of this young gentleman, Mr. Osbaldistone. And I believe," he added, turning round with a natural, yet somewhat sterner air, to Mr. Morris, "that the gentleman will allow I had better opportunity to take cognisance wha were present on that occasion than he, being, I believe, much the cooler o' the twa."

"I agree to it, sir—I agree to it perfectly," said Morris, shrinking back as Campbell moved his chair towards him to fortify his appeal—"And I incline, sir," he added, addressing Mr. Inglewood, "to retract my information as to Mr. Osbaldistone; and I request, sir, you will permit him, sir, to go about his business, and me to go about mine also; your worship may have business to settle with Mr. Campbell, and I am rather in haste to be gone."

"Then, there go the declarations," said the Justice, throwing them into the fire—"And now you are at perfect liberty, Mr Osbaldistone. And you, Mr. Morris, are set quite at your ease."

"Ay," said Campbell, eyeing Morris as he assented with a rueful grin to the Justice's observations, "much like the ease of a tod under a pair of harrows—But fear nothing, Mr. Morris; you and I maun leave the house thegither. I will see you safe—I hope you will not doubt my honour, when I say sae—to the next highway, and then we part company; and if we do not meet as friends in Scotland, it will be your ain fault."

With such a lingering look of terror as the condemned criminal throws, when he is informed that the cart awaits him, Morris arose; but when on his legs, appeared to hesitate. "I tell thee, man, fear nothing," reiterated Campbell; "I will keep my word with you—Why, thou sheep's heart, how do ye ken but we may can pick up some speerings of your valise, if ye will be amenable to gude counsel?—Our horses are ready. Bid the Justice fareweel, man, and show your Southern breeding." Morris, thus exhorted and encouraged, took his leave, under the escort of Mr. Campbell; but, apparently, new scruples and terrors had struck him before they left the house, for I heard Campbell reiterating assurances of safety and protection as they left the ante-room—"By the soul of my body, man, thou'rt as safe as in thy father's kailyard—Zounds! that a chield wi' sic a black beard should hae nae mair heart than a hen-partridge!—Come on wi' ye, like a frank fallow, anes and for aye."

The voices died away, and the subsequent trampling of their horses announced to us that they had left the mansion of Justice Inglewood.

The joy which that worthy magistrate received at this easy conclusion of a matter which threatened him with some trouble in his judicial capacity, was somewhat damped by reflection on what his clerk's views of the transaction might be at his return. "Now, I shall have Jobson on my shoulders about these d—d papers—I doubt I should not have destroyed them, after all—But hang it! it is only paying his fees, and that will make all smooth—And now, Miss Die Vernon, though I have liberated all the others, I intend to sign a writ for committing you to the custody of Mother Blakes, my old housekeeper, for the evening, and we will send for my neighbour Mrs. Musgrave, and the Miss Dawkins, and your cousins, and have old Cobs the fiddler, and be as merry as the maids; and Frank Osbaldistone and I will have a carouse that will make us fit company for you in half-an-hour."

"Thanks, most worshipful," returned Miss Vernon; "but, as matters stand, we must return instantly to Osbaldistone Hall, where they do not know what has become of us, and relieve my uncle of his anxiety on my cousin's account, which is just the same as if one of his own sons were concerned."

"I believe it truly," said the Justice; "for when his eldest son, Archie, came to a bad end, in that unlucky affair of Sir John Fenwick's, old Hildebrand used to hollo out his name as readily as any of the remaining six, and then complain that he could not recollect which of his sons had been hanged. So, pray hasten home, and relieve his paternal solicitude, since go you must. But hark thee hither, heath-blossom," he said, pulling her towards him by the hand, and in a good-humoured tone of admonition, "another time let the law take its course, without putting your pretty finger into her old musty pie, all full of fragments of law gibberish—French and dog-Latin—And, Die, my beauty, let young fellows show each other the way through the moors, in case you should lose your own road, while you are pointing out theirs, my pretty Will o' the Wisp."

With this admonition, he saluted and dismissed Miss Vernon, and took an equally kind farewell of me.

"Thou seems to be a good tight lad, Mr. Frank, and I remember thy father too—he was my playfellow at school. Hark thee, lad,—ride early at night, and don't swagger with chance passengers on the king's highway. What, man! all the king's liege subjects are not bound to understand joking, and it's ill cracking jests on matters of felony. And here's poor Die Vernon too—in a manner alone and deserted on the face of this wide earth, and left to ride, and run, and scamper, at her own silly pleasure. Thou must be careful of Die, or, egad, I will turn a young fellow again on purpose, and fight thee myself, although I must own it would be a great deal of trouble. And now, get ye both gone, and leave me to my pipe of tobacco, and my meditations; for what says the song—

*The Indian leaf doth briefly burn;
So doth man's strength to weakness turn
The fire of youth extinguished quite,
Comes age, like embers, dry and white.
Think of this as you take tobacco."*

* [The lines here quoted belong to or were altered from a set of verses at one time very popular in England, beginning, *Tobacco that is withered quite*. In Scotland, the celebrated Ralph Erskine, author of the *Gospel Sonnets*, published what he called "*Smoking Spiritualized*, in two parts. The first part being an Old Meditation upon Smoking Tobacco." It begins—*

*This Indian weed now withered quite,
Tho' green at noon, cut down at night,
Shows thy decay;
All flesh is hay.
Thus thank, and smoke tobacco.]*

I was much pleased with the gleams of sense and feeling which escaped from the Justice through the vapours of sloth and self-indulgence, assured him of my respect to his admonitions, and took a friendly farewell of the honest magistrate and his hospitable mansion.

We found a repast prepared for us in the ante-room, which we partook of slightly, and rejoined the same servant of Sir Hildebrand who had taken our horses at our entrance, and who had been directed, as he informed Miss Vernon, by Mr. Rashleigh, to wait and attend upon us home. We rode a little way in silence, for, to say truth, my mind was too much bewildered with the events of the morning, to permit me to be the first to break it. At length Miss Vernon exclaimed, as if giving vent to her own reflections, "Well, Rashleigh is a man to be feared and wondered at, and all but loved; he does whatever he pleases, and makes all others his puppets—has a player ready to perform every part which he imagines, and an invention and readiness which supply expedients for every emergency."

"You think, then," said I, answering rather to her meaning, than to the express words she made use of, "that this Mr. Campbell, whose appearance was so opportune, and who trussed up and carried off my accuser as a falcon trusses a partridge, was an agent of Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone's?"

"I do guess as much," replied Diana; "and shrewdly suspect, moreover, that he would hardly have appeared so very much in the nick of time, if I had not happened to meet Rashleigh in the hall at the Justice's."

"In that case, my thanks are chiefly due to you, my fair preserver."

"To be sure they are," returned Diana; "and pray, suppose them paid, and accepted with a gracious smile, for I do not care to be troubled with hearing them in good earnest, and am much more likely to yawn than to behave becoming. In short, Mr. Frank, I wished to serve you, and I have fortunately been able to do so, and have only one favour to ask in return, and that is, that you will say no more about it.—But who comes here to meet us, 'bloody with spurring, fiery-red with haste?' It is the subordinate man of law, I think—no less than Mr. Joseph Jobson."

And Mr. Joseph Jobson it proved to be, in great haste, and, as it speedily appeared, in most extreme bad humour. He came up to us, and stopped his horse, as we were about to pass with a slight salutation.

"So, sir—so, Miss Vernon—ay, I see well enough how it is—bail put in during my absence, I suppose—I should like to know who drew the recognisance, that's all. If his worship uses this form of procedure often, I advise him to get another clerk, that's all, for I shall certainly demit."

"Or suppose he get this present clerk stitched to his sleeve, Mr. Jobson," said Diana; "would not that do as well? And pray, how does Farmer Rutledge, Mr. Jobson? I hope you found him able to sign, seal, and deliver?"

This question seemed greatly to increase the wrath of the man of law. He looked at Miss Vernon with such an air of spite and resentment, as laid me under a strong temptation to knock him off his horse with the butt-end of my whip, which I only suppressed in consideration of his insignificance.

"Farmer Rutledge, ma'am?" said the clerk, as soon as his indignation permitted him to articulate, "Farmer Rutledge is in as handsome enjoyment of his health as you are—it's all a bam, ma'am—all a bamboozle and a bite, that affair of his illness; and if you did not know as much before, you know it now, ma'am."

"La you there now!" replied Miss Vernon, with an affectation of extreme and simple wonder, "sure you don't say so, Mr. Jobson?"

"But I *do* say so, ma'am," rejoined the incensed scribe; "and moreover I say, that the old miserly clod-breaker called me pettifogger—pettifogger, ma'am—and said I came to hunt for a job, ma'am—which I have no more right to have said to me than any other gentleman of my profession, ma'am—especially as I am clerk to the peace, having and holding said office under *Trigesimo Septimo Henrici Octavi* and *Primo Gulielmi*, the first of King William, ma'am, of glorious and immortal memory—our immortal deliverer from papists and pretenders, and wooden shoes and warming pans, Miss Vernon."

"Sad things, these wooden shoes and warming pans," retorted the young lady, who seemed to take pleasure in augmenting his wrath;—"and it is a comfort you don't seem to want a warming pan at present, Mr. Jobson. I am afraid Gaffer Rutledge has not confined his incivility to language—Are you sure he did not give you a beating?"

"Beating, ma'am!—no"—(very shortly)—"no man alive shall beat me, I promise you, ma'am."

"That is according as you happen to merit, sir," said I: "for your mode of speaking to this young lady is so unbecoming, that, if you do not change your tone, I shall think it worth while to chastise you myself."

"Chastise, sir? and—me, sir?—Do you know whom you speak to, sir?"

"Yes, sir," I replied; "you say yourself you are clerk of peace to the county; and Gaffer Rutledge says you are a pettifogger; and in neither capacity are you entitled to be impertinent to a young lady of fashion."

Miss Vernon laid her hand on my arm, and exclaimed, "Come, Mr. Osbaldistone, I will have no assaults and battery on Mr. Jobson; I am not in sufficient charity with him to permit a single touch of your whip—why, he would live on it for a term at least. Besides, you have already hurt his feelings sufficiently—you have called him impertinent."

"I don't value his language, Miss," said the clerk, somewhat crestfallen: "besides, impertinent is not an actionable word; but pettifogger is slander in the highest degree, and that I will make Gaffer Rutledge know to his cost, and all who maliciously repeat the same, to the breach of the public peace, and the taking away of my private good name."

"Never mind that, Mr. Jobson," said Miss Vernon; "you know, where there is nothing, your own law allows that the king himself must lose his rights; and for the taking away of your good name, I pity the poor fellow who gets it, and wish you joy of losing it with all my heart."

"Very well, ma'am—good evening, ma'am—I have no more to say—only there are laws against papists, which it would be well for the land were they better executed. There's third and fourth Edward VI., of antiphoners, missals, grails, professionals, manuals, legends, pies, portuasses, and those that have such trinkets in their possession, Miss Vernon—and there's summoning of papists to take the oaths—and there are popish recusant convicts under the first of his present Majesty—ay, and there are penalties for hearing mass—See twenty-third of Queen Elizabeth, and third James First, chapter twenty-fifth. And there are estates to be registered, and deeds and wills to be enrolled, and double taxes to be made, according to the acts in that case made and provided"—

"See the new edition of the Statutes at Large, published under the careful revision of Joseph Jobson, Gent., Clerk of the Peace," said Miss Vernon.

"Also, and above all," continued Jobson,—“for I speak to your warning—you, Diana Vernon, spinstress, not being a *femme couverte*, and being a convict popish recusant, are bound to repair to your own dwelling, and that by the nearest way, under penalty of being held felon to the king—and diligently to seek for passage at common ferries, and to tarry there but one ebb and flood; and unless you can have it in such places, to walk every day into the water up to the knees, assaying to pass over.”

"A sort of Protestant penance for my Catholic errors, I suppose," said Miss Vernon, laughing.—“Well, I thank you for the information, Mr. Jobson, and will hie me home as fast as I can, and be a better housekeeper in time coming. Good-night, my dear Mr. Jobson, thou mirror of clerical courtesy.”

"Good-night, ma'am, and remember the law is not to be trifled with.”

And we rode on our separate ways.

"There he goes for a troublesome mischief-making tool," said Miss Vernon, as she gave a glance after him; "it is hard that persons of birth and rank and estate should be subjected to the official impertinence of such a paltry pickthank as that, merely for believing as the whole world believed not much above a hundred years ago—for certainly our Catholic Faith has the advantage of antiquity at least.”

"I was much tempted to have broken the rascal's head," I replied.

"You would have acted very like a hasty young man," said Miss Vernon; "and yet, had my own hand been an ounce heavier than it is, I think I should have laid its weight upon him. Well, it does not signify complaining, but there are three things for which I am much to be pitied, if any one thought it worth while to waste any compassion upon me.”

"And what are these three things, Miss Vernon, may I ask?"

"Will you promise me your deepest sympathy, if I tell you?"

"Certainly;—can you doubt it?" I replied, closing my horse nearer to hers as I spoke, with an expression of interest which I did not attempt to disguise.

"Well, it is very seducing to be pitied, after all; so here are my three grievances: In the first place, I am a girl, and not a young fellow, and would be shut up in a mad-house if I did half the things that I have a mind to;—and that, if I had your happy prerogative of acting as you list, would make all the world mad with imitating and applauding me.”

"I can't quite afford you the sympathy you expect upon this score," I replied; "the misfortune is so general, that it belongs to one half of the species; and the other half”—

"Are so much better cared for, that they are jealous of their prerogatives," interrupted Miss Vernon—"I forgot you were a party interested. Nay," she said, as I was going to speak, "that soft smile is intended to be the preface of a very pretty compliment respecting the peculiar advantages which Die Vernon's friends and kinsmen enjoy, by her being born one of their Helots; but spare me the utterance, my good friend, and let us try whether we shall agree better on the second count of my indictment against fortune, as that quill-driving puppy would call it. I belong to an oppressed sect and antiquated religion, and, instead of getting credit for my devotion, as is due to all good girls beside, my kind friend, Justice Inglewood, may send me to the house of correction, merely for worshipping God in the way of my ancestors, and say, as old Pembroke did to the Abbess of Wilton,* when he usurped her convent and establishment, 'Go spin, you jade,—Go spin.'"

* Note F. The Abbess of Wilton.

"This is not a cureless evil," said I gravely. "Consult some of our learned divines, or consult your own excellent understanding, Miss Vernon; and surely the particulars in which our religious creed differs from that in which you have been educated"—

"Hush!" said Diana, placing her fore-finger on her mouth,—“Hush! no more of that. Forsake the faith of my gallant fathers! I would as soon, were I a man, forsake their banner when the tide of battle pressed hardest against it, and turn, like a hireling recreant, to join the victorious enemy.”

"I honour your spirit, Miss Vernon; and as to the inconveniences to which it exposes you, I can only say, that wounds sustained for the sake of conscience carry their own balsam with the blow.”

"Ay; but they are fretful and irritating, for all that. But I see, hard of heart as you are, my chance of beating hemp, or drawing out flax into marvellous coarse thread, affects you as little as my condemnation to coif and pinners, instead of beaver and cockade; so I will spare myself the fruitless pains of telling my third cause of vexation.”

"Nay, my dear Miss Vernon, do not withdraw your confidence, and I will promise you, that the threefold sympathy due to your very unusual causes of distress shall be all duly and truly paid to account of the third, providing you assure me, that it is one which you neither share with all womankind, nor even with every Catholic in England, who, God bless you, are still a sect more numerous than we Protestants, in our zeal for church and state, would desire them to be.”

"It is indeed," said Diana, with a manner greatly altered, and more serious than I had yet seen her assume, "a misfortune that well merits compassion. I am by nature, as you may easily observe, of a frank and unreserved disposition—a plain true-hearted girl, who would willingly act openly and honestly by the whole world, and yet fate has involved me in such a series of nets and toils, and entanglements, that I dare hardly speak a word for fear of consequences—not to myself, but to others.”

"That is indeed a misfortune, Miss Vernon, which I do most sincerely compassionate, but which I should hardly have anticipated.”

"O, Mr. Osbaldistone, if you but knew—if any one knew, what difficulty I sometimes find in hiding an aching heart with a smooth brow, you would indeed pity me. I do wrong, perhaps, in speaking to you even thus far on my own situation; but you are a young man of sense and penetration—you cannot but long to ask me a hundred questions on the events of this day—on the share which Rashleigh has in your deliverance from this petty scrape—upon many other points which cannot but excite your attention; and I cannot bring myself to answer with the necessary falsehood and finesse—I should do it awkwardly, and lose your good opinion, if I have any share of it, as well as my own. It is best to say at once, Ask me no questions,—I have it not in my power to reply to them.”

Miss Vernon spoke these words with a tone of feeling which could not but make a corresponding impression upon me. I assured her she had neither to fear my urging her with impertinent questions, nor my misconstruing her declining to answer those which might in themselves be reasonable, or at least natural.

"I was too much obliged," I said, "by the interest she had taken in my affairs, to misuse the opportunity her goodness had afforded me of prying into hers—I only trusted and entreated, that if my services could at any time be useful, she would command them without doubt or hesitation.”

"Thank you—thank you," she replied; "your voice does not ring the cuckoo chime of compliment, but speaks like that of one who knows to what he pledges himself. If—but it is impossible—but yet, if an opportunity should occur, I will ask you if you remember this promise; and I assure you, I shall not be angry if I find you have forgotten it, for it is enough that you are sincere in your intentions just now—much may occur to alter them ere I call upon you, should that moment ever come, to assist Die Vernon, as if you were Die Vernon's brother.”

"And if I were Die Vernon's brother," said I, "there could not be less chance that I should refuse my assistance—And now I am afraid I must not ask whether Rashleigh was willingly accessory to my deliverance?"

"Not of me; but you may ask it of himself, and depend upon it, he will say yes; for rather than any good action should walk through the world like an appropriated adjective in an ill-arranged sentence, he is always willing to stand noun substantive to it himself.”

"And I must not ask whether this Campbell be himself the party who eased Mr. Morris of his portmanteau,—or whether the letter, which our friend the attorney received, was not a finesse to withdraw him from the scene of action, lest he should have marred the happy event of my deliverance? And I must not ask"—

"You must ask nothing of me," said Miss Vernon; "so it is quite in vain to go on putting cases. You are to think just as well of me as if I had answered all these queries, and twenty others besides, as glibly as Rashleigh could have done; and observe, whenever I touch my chin just so, it is a sign that I cannot speak upon the topic which happens to occupy your attention. I must settle signals of correspondence with you, because you are to be my confidant and my counsellor, only you are to know nothing whatever of my affairs.”

"Nothing can be more reasonable," I replied, laughing; "and the extent of your confidence will, you may rely upon it, only be equalled by the sagacity of my counsels.”

This sort of conversation brought us, in the highest good-humour with each other, to Osbaldistone Hall, where we found the family far advanced in the revels of the evening.

"Get some dinner for Mr. Osbaldistone and me in the library," said Miss Vernon to a servant.—"I must have some compassion upon you," she added, turning to me, "and provide against your starving in this mansion of brutal abundance; otherwise I am not sure that I should show you my private haunts. This same library is my den—the only corner of the Hall-house where I am safe from the Ourang-Outangs, my cousins. They never venture there, I suppose for fear the folios should fall down and crack their skulls; for they will never affect their heads in any other way—So follow me."

And I followed through hall and bower, vaulted passage and winding stair, until we reached the room where she had ordered our refreshments.

CHAPTER TENTH.

*In the wide pile, by others heeded not,
Hers was one sacred solitary spot,
Whose gloomy aisles and bending shelves contain
For moral hunger food, and cures for moral pain.*

Anonymous.

The library at Osbaldistone Hall was a gloomy room, whose antique oaken shelves bent beneath the weight of the ponderous folios so dear to the seventeenth century, from which, under favour be it spoken, we have distilled matter for our quartos and octavos, and which, once more subjected to the alembic, may, should our sons be yet more frivolous than ourselves, be still farther reduced into duodecimos and pamphlets. The collection was chiefly of the classics, as well foreign as ancient history, and, above all, divinity. It was in wretched order. The priests, who in succession had acted as chaplains at the Hall, were, for many years, the only persons who entered its precincts, until Rashleigh's thirst for reading had led him to disturb the venerable spiders, who had muffled the fronts of the presses with their tapestry. His destination for the church rendered his conduct less absurd in his father's eyes, than if any of his other descendants had betrayed so strange a propensity, and Sir Hildebrand acquiesced in the library receiving some repairs, so as to fit it for a sitting-room. Still an air of dilapidation, as obvious as it was uncomfortable, pervaded the large apartment, and announced the neglect from which the knowledge which its walls contained had not been able to exempt it. The tattered tapestry, the worm-eaten shelves, the huge and clumsy, yet tottering, tables, desks, and chairs, the rusty grate, seldom gladdened by either sea-coal or faggots, intimated the contempt of the lords of Osbaldistone Hall for learning, and for the volumes which record its treasures.

"You think this place somewhat disconsolate, I suppose?" said Diana, as I glanced my eye round the forlorn apartment; "but to me it seems like a little paradise, for I call it my own, and fear no intrusion. Rashleigh was joint proprietor with me, while we were friends."

"And are you no longer so?" was my natural question. Her fore-finger immediately touched her dimpled chin, with an arch look of prohibition.

"We are still *allies*," she continued, "bound, like other confederate powers, by circumstances of mutual interest; but I am afraid, as will happen in other cases, the treaty of alliance has survived the amicable dispositions in which it had its origin. At any rate, we live less together; and when he comes through that door there, I vanish through this door here; and so, having made the discovery that we two were one too many for this apartment, as large as it seems, Rashleigh, whose occasions frequently call him elsewhere, has generously made a cession of his rights in my favour; so that I now endeavour to prosecute alone the studies in which he used formerly to be my guide."

"And what are those studies, if I may presume to ask?"

"Indeed you may, without the least fear of seeing my fore-finger raised to my chin. Science and history are my principal favourites; but I also study poetry and the classics."

"And the classics? Do you read them in the original?"

"Unquestionably. Rashleigh, who is no contemptible scholar, taught me Greek and Latin, as well as most of the languages of modern Europe. I assure you there has been some pains taken in my education, although I can neither sew a tucker, nor work cross-stitch, nor make a pudding, nor—as the vicar's fat wife, with as much truth as elegance, good-will, and politeness, was pleased to say in my behalf—do any other useful thing in the varsal world."

"And was this selection of studies Rashleigh's choice, or your own, Miss Vernon?" I asked.

"Um!" said she, as if hesitating to answer my question,—"*It's not worth while lifting my finger about, after all. Why, partly his and partly mine. As I learned out of doors to ride a horse, and bridle and saddle him in cue of necessity, and to clear a five-barred gate, and fire a gun without winking, and all other of those masculine accomplishments that my brute cousins run mad after, I wanted, like my rational cousin, to read Greek and Latin within doors, and make my complete approach to the tree of knowledge, which you men-scholars would engross to yourselves, in revenge, I suppose, for our common mother's share in the great original transgression.*"

"And Rashleigh indulged your propensity to learning?"

"Why, he wished to have me for his scholar, and he could but teach me that which he knew himself—he was not likely to instruct me in the mysteries of washing lace-ruffles, or hemming cambric handkerchiefs, I suppose."

"I admit the temptation of getting such a scholar, and have no doubt that it made a weighty consideration on the tutor's part."

"Oh, if you begin to investigate Rashleigh's motives, my finger touches my chin once more. I can only be frank where my own are inquired into. But to resume—he has resigned the library in my favour, and never enters without leave had and obtained; and so I have taken the liberty to make it the place of deposit for some of my own goods and chattels, as you may see by looking round you."

"I beg pardon, Miss Vernon, but I really see nothing around these walls which I can distinguish as likely to claim you as mistress."

"That is, I suppose, because you neither see a shepherd or shepherdess wrought in worsted, and handsomely framed in black ebony, or a stuffed parrot,—or a breeding-cage, full of canary birds,—or a housewife-case, brodered with tarnished silver,—or a toilet-table with a nest of japanned boxes, with as many angles as Christmas minced-pies,—or a broken-backed spinet,—or a lute with three strings,—or rock-work,—or shell-work,—or needle-work, or work of any kind,—or a lap-dog with a litter of blind puppies—None of these treasures do I possess," she continued, after a pause, in order to recover the breath she had lost in enumerating them—"But there stands the sword of my ancestor Sir Richard Vernon, slain at Shrewsbury, and sorely slandered by a sad fellow called Will Shakspeare, whose Lancastrian partialities, and a certain knack at embodying them, has turned history upside down, or rather inside out;—and by that redoubted weapon hangs the mail of the still older Vernon, squire to the Black Prince, whose fate is the reverse of his descendant's, since he is more indebted to the bard who took the trouble to celebrate him, for good-will than for talents,—

*Amiddes the route you may discern one
Brave knight, with pipes on shield, ycleped Vernon
Like a borne fiend along the plain he thundered,
Prest to be carving throtes, while others plundered.*

"Then there is a model of a new martingale, which I invented myself—a great improvement on the Duke of Newcastle's; and there are the hood and bells of my falcon Cheviot, who spitted himself on a heron's bill at Horsely-moss—poor Cheviot, there is not a bird on the perches below, but are kites and rifiers compared to him; and there is my own light fowling-piece, with an improved firelock; with twenty other treasures, each more valuable than another—And there, that speaks for itself."

She pointed to the carved oak frame of a full-length portrait by Vandyke, on which were inscribed, in Gothic letters, the words *Vernon semper viret*. I looked at her for explanation. "Do you not know," said she, with some surprise, "our motto—the Vernon motto, where,

Like the solemn vice iniquity,

We moralise two meanings in one word

And do you not know our cognisance, the pipes?" pointing to the armorial bearings sculptured on the oaken scutcheon, around which the legend was displayed.

"Pipes!—they look more like penny-whistles—But, pray, do not be angry with my ignorance," I continued, observing the colour mount to her cheeks, "I can mean no affront to your armorial bearings, for I do not even know my own."

"You an Osbaldistone, and confess so much!" she exclaimed. "Why, Percie, Thornie, John, Dickon—Wilfred himself, might be your instructor. Even ignorance itself is a plummet over you."

"With shame I confess it, my dear Miss Vernon, the mysteries couched under the grim hieroglyphics of heraldry are to me as unintelligible as those of the pyramids of Egypt."

"What! is it possible?—Why, even my uncle reads Gwilym sometimes of a winter night—Not know the figures of heraldry!—of what could your father be thinking?"

"Of the figures of arithmetic," I answered; "the most insignificant unit of which he holds more highly than all the blazonry of chivalry. But, though I am ignorant to this inexpressible degree, I have knowledge and taste enough to admire that splendid picture, in which I think I can discover a family likeness to you. What ease and dignity in the attitude!—what richness of colouring—what breadth and depth of shade!"

"Is it really a fine painting?" she asked.

"I have seen many works of the renowned artist," I replied, "but never beheld one more to my liking!"

"Well, I know as little of pictures as you do of heraldry," replied Miss Vernon; "yet I have the advantage of you, because I have always admired the painting without understanding its value."

"While I have neglected pipes and tabors, and all the whimsical combinations of chivalry, still I am informed that they floated in the fields of ancient fame. But you will allow their exterior appearance is not so peculiarly interesting to the uninformed spectator as that of a fine painting.—Who is the person here represented?"

"My grandfather. He shared the misfortunes of Charles I., and, I am sorry to add, the excesses of his son. Our patrimonial estate was greatly impaired by his prodigality, and was altogether lost by his successor, my unfortunate father. But peace be with them who have got it!—it was lost in the cause of loyalty."

"Your father, I presume, suffered in the political dissensions of the period?"

"He did indeed;—he lost his all. And hence is his child a dependent orphan—eating the bread of others—subjected to their caprices, and compelled to study their inclinations; yet prouder of having had such a father, than if, playing a more prudent but less upright part, he had left me possessor of all the rich and fair baronies which his family once possessed."

As she thus spoke, the entrance of the servants with dinner cut off all conversation but that of a general nature.

When our hasty meal was concluded, and the wine placed on the table, the domestic informed us, "that Mr. Rashleigh had desired to be told when our dinner was removed."

"Tell him," said Miss Vernon, "we shall be happy to see him if he will step this way—place another wineglass and chair, and leave the room.— You must retire with him when he goes away," she continued, addressing herself to me; "even *my* liberality cannot spare a gentleman above eight hours out of the twenty-four; and I think we have been together for at least that length of time."

"The old scythe-man has moved so rapidly," I answered, "that I could not count his strides."

"Hush!" said Miss Vernon, "here comes Rashleigh;" and she drew off her chair, to which I had approached mine rather closely, so as to place a greater distance between us. A modest tap at the door,—a gentle manner of opening when invited to enter,—a studied softness and humility of step and deportment, announced that the education of Rashleigh Osbaldistone at the College of St. Omers accorded well with the ideas I entertained of the manners of an accomplished Jesuit. I need not add, that, as a sound Protestant, these ideas were not the most favourable. "Why should you use the ceremony of knocking," said Miss Vernon, "when you knew that I was not alone?"

This was spoken with a burst of impatience, as if she had felt that Rashleigh's air of caution and reserve covered some insinuation of impertinent suspicion. "You have taught me the form of knocking at this door so perfectly, my fair cousin," answered Rashleigh, without change of voice or manner, "that habit has become a second nature."

"I prize sincerity more than courtesy, sir, and you know I do," was Miss Vernon's reply.

"Courtesy is a gallant gay, a courtier by name and by profession," replied Rashleigh, "and therefore most fit for a lady's bower."

"But Sincerity is the true knight," retorted Miss Vernon, "and therefore much more welcome, cousin. But to end a debate not over amusing to your stranger kinsman, sit down, Rashleigh, and give Mr. Francis Osbaldistone your countenance to his glass of wine. I have done the honours of the dinner, for the credit of Osbaldistone Hall."

Rashleigh sat down, and filled his glass, glancing his eye from Diana to me, with an embarrassment which his utmost efforts could not entirely disguise. I thought he appeared to be uncertain concerning the extent of confidence she might have reposed in me, and hastened to lead the conversation into a channel which should sweep away his suspicion that Diana might have betrayed any secrets which rested between them. "Miss Vernon," I said, "Mr. Rashleigh, has recommended me to return my thanks to you for my speedy disengagement from the ridiculous accusation of Morris; and, unjustly fearing my gratitude might not be warm enough to remind me of this duty, she has put my curiosity on its side, by referring me to you for an account, or rather explanation, of the events of the day."

"Indeed?" answered Rashleigh; "I should have thought" (looking keenly at Miss Vernon) "that the lady herself might have stood interpreter;" and his eye, reverting from her face, sought mine, as if to search, from the expression of my features, whether Diana's communication had been as narrowly limited as my words had intimated. Miss Vernon retorted his inquisitorial glance with one of decided scorn; while I, uncertain whether to deprecate or resent his obvious suspicion, replied, "If it is your pleasure, Mr. Rashleigh, as it has been Miss Vernon's, to leave me in ignorance, I must necessarily submit; but, pray, do not withhold your information from me on the ground of imagining that I have already obtained any on the subject. For I tell you, as a man of honour, I am as ignorant as that picture of anything relating to the events I have witnessed to-day, excepting that I understand from Miss Vernon, that you have been kindly active in my favour."

"Miss Vernon has overrated my humble efforts," said Rashleigh, "though I claim full credit for my zeal. The truth is, that as I galloped back to get some one of our family to join me in becoming your bail, which was the most obvious, or, indeed, I may say, the only way of serving you which occurred to my stupidity, I met the man Cawmil—Colville—Campbell, or whatsoever they call him. I had understood from Morris that he was present when the robbery took place, and had the good fortune to prevail on him (with some difficulty, I confess) to tender his evidence in your exculpation—which I presume was the means of your being released from an unpleasant situation."

"Indeed?—I am much your debtor for procuring such a seasonable evidence in my behalf. But I cannot see why (having been, as he said, a fellow-sufferer with Morris) it should have required much trouble to persuade him to step forth and bear evidence, whether to convict the actual robber, or free an innocent person."

"You do not know the genius of that man's country, sir," answered Rashleigh;—"discretion, prudence, and foresight, are their leading qualities; these are only modified by a narrow-spirited, but yet ardent patriotism, which forms as it were the outmost of the concentric bulwarks with which a Scotchman fortifies himself against all the attacks of a generous philanthropical principle. Surmount this mound, you find an inner and still dearer barrier—the love of his province, his village, or, most probably, his clan; storm this second obstacle, you have a third—his attachment to his own family—his father, mother, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, and cousins, to the ninth generation. It is within these limits that a Scotchman's social affection expands itself, never reaching those which are outermost, till all means of discharging itself in the interior circles have been exhausted. It is within these circles that his heart throbs, each pulsation being fainter and fainter, till,

beyond the widest boundary, it is almost unfelt. And what is worst of all, could you surmount all these concentric outworks, you have an inner citadel, deeper, higher, and more efficient than them all—a Scotchman's love for himself."

"All this is extremely eloquent and metaphorical, Rashleigh," said Miss Vernon, who listened with unrepressed impatience; "there are only two objections to it: first, it is *not* true; secondly, if true, it is nothing to the purpose."

"It is true, my fairest Diana," returned Rashleigh; "and moreover, it is most instantly to the purpose. It is true, because you cannot deny that I know the country and people intimately, and the character is drawn from deep and accurate consideration—and it is to the purpose, because it answers Mr. Francis Osbaldistone's question, and shows why this same wary Scotchman, considering our kinsman to be neither his countryman, nor a Campbell, nor his cousin in any of the inextricable combinations by which they extend their pedigree; and, above all, seeing no prospect of personal advantage, but, on the contrary, much hazard of loss of time and delay of business"—

"With other inconveniences, perhaps, of a nature yet more formidable," interrupted Miss Vernon.

"Of which, doubtless, there might be many," said Rashleigh, continuing in the same tone—"In short, my theory shows why this man, hoping for no advantage, and afraid of some inconvenience, might require a degree of persuasion ere he could be prevailed on to give his testimony in favour of Mr. Osbaldistone."

"It seems surprising to me," I observed, "that during the glance I cast over the declaration, or whatever it is termed, of Mr. Morris, he should never have mentioned that Campbell was in his company when he met the marauders."

"I understood from Campbell, that he had taken his solemn promise not to mention that circumstance," replied Rashleigh: "his reason for exacting such an engagement you may guess from what I have hinted—he wished to get back to his own country, undelayed and unembarrassed by any of the judicial inquiries which he would have been under the necessity of attending, had the fact of his being present at the robbery taken air while he was on this side of the Border. But let him once be as distant as the Forth, Morris will, I warrant you, come forth with all he knows about him, and, it may be, a good deal more. Besides, Campbell is a very extensive dealer in cattle, and has often occasion to send great droves into Northumberland; and, when driving such a trade, he would be a great fool to embroil himself with our Northumbrian thieves, than whom no men who live are more vindictive."

"I dare be sworn of that," said Miss Vernon, with a tone which implied something more than a simple acquiescence in the proposition.

"Still," said I, resuming the subject, "allowing the force of the reasons which Campbell might have for desiring that Morris should be silent with regard to his promise when the robbery was committed, I cannot yet see how he could attain such an influence over the man, as to make him suppress his evidence in that particular, at the manifest risk of subjecting his story to discredit."

Rashleigh agreed with me, that it was very extraordinary, and seemed to regret that he had not questioned the Scotchman more closely on that subject, which he allowed looked extremely mysterious. "But," he asked, immediately after this acquiescence, "are you very sure the circumstance of Morris's being accompanied by Campbell is really not alluded to in his examination?"

"I read the paper over hastily," said I; "but it is my strong impression that no such circumstance is mentioned;—at least, it must have been touched on very slightly, since it failed to catch my attention."

"True, true," answered Rashleigh, forming his own inference while he adopted my words; "I incline to think with you, that the circumstance must in reality have been mentioned, but so slightly that it failed to attract your attention. And then, as to Campbell's interest with Morris, I incline to suppose that it must have been gained by playing upon his fears. This chicken-hearted fellow, Morris, is bound, I understand, for Scotland, destined for some little employment under Government; and, possessing the courage of the wrathful dove, or most magnanimous mouse, he may have been afraid to encounter the ill-will of such a kill-cow as Campbell, whose very appearance would be enough to fright him out of his little wits. You observed that Mr. Campbell has at times a keen and animated manner—something of a martial cast in his tone and bearing."

"I own," I replied, "that his expression struck me as being occasionally fierce and sinister, and little adapted to his peaceable professions. Has he served in the army?"

"Yes—no—not, strictly speaking, *served*; but he has been, I believe, like most of his countrymen, trained to arms. Indeed, among the hills, they carry them from boyhood to the grave. So, if you know anything of your fellow-traveller, you will easily judge, that, going to such a country, he will take cue to avoid a quarrel, if he can help it, with any of the natives. But, come, I see you decline your wine—and I too am a degenerate Osbaldistone, so far as respects the circulation of the bottle. If you will go to my room, I will hold you a hand at piquet."

We rose to take leave of Miss Vernon, who had from time to time suppressed, apparently with difficulty, a strong temptation to break in upon Rashleigh's details. As we were about to leave the room, the smothered fire broke forth.

"Mr. Osbaldistone," she said, "your own observation will enable you to verify the justice, or injustice, of Rashleigh's suggestions concerning such individuals as Mr. Campbell and Mr. Morris. But, in slandering Scotland, he has borne false witness against a whole country; and I request you will allow no weight to his evidence."

"Perhaps," I answered, "I may find it somewhat difficult to obey your injunction, Miss Vernon; for I must own I was bred up with no very favourable idea of our northern neighbours."

"Distrust that part of your education, sir," she replied, "and let the daughter of a Scotchwoman pray you to respect the land which gave her parent birth, until your own observation has proved them to be unworthy of your good opinion. Preserve your hatred and contempt for dissimulation, baseness, and falsehood, wheresoever they are to be met with. You will find enough of all without leaving England.—Adieu, gentlemen, I wish you good evening."

And she signed to the door, with the manner of a princess dismissing her train.

We retired to Rashleigh's apartment, where a servant brought us coffee and cards. I had formed my resolution to press Rashleigh no farther on the events of the day. A mystery, and, as I thought, not of a favourable complexion, appeared to hang over his conduct; but to ascertain if my suspicions were just, it was necessary to throw him off his guard. We cut for the deal, and were soon earnestly engaged in our play. I thought I perceived in this trifling for amusement (for the stake which Rashleigh proposed was a mere trifle) something of a fierce and ambitious temper. He seemed perfectly to understand the beautiful game at which he played, but preferred, as it were on principle, the risking bold and precarious strokes to the ordinary rules of play; and neglecting the minor and better-balanced chances of the game, he hazarded everything for the chance of piquing, repiquing, or capoting his adversary. So soon as the intervention of a game or two at piquet, like the music between the acts of a drama, had completely interrupted our previous course of conversation, Rashleigh appeared to tire of the game, and the cards were superseded by discourse, in which he assumed the lead.

More learned than soundly wise—better acquainted with men's minds than with the moral principles that ought to regulate them, he had still powers of conversation which I have rarely seen equalled, never excelled. Of this his manner implied some consciousness; at least, it appeared to me that he had studied hard to improve his natural advantages of a melodious voice, fluent and happy expression, apt language, and fervid imagination. He was never loud, never overbearing, never so much occupied with his own thoughts as to outrun either the patience or the comprehension of those he conversed with. His ideas succeeded each other with the gentle but unintermitting flow of a plentiful and bounteous spring; while I have heard those of others, who aimed at distinction in conversation, rush along like the turbid gush from the sluice of a mill-pond, as hurried, and as easily exhausted. It was late at night ere I could part from a companion so fascinating; and, when I gained my own apartment, it cost me no small effort to recall to my mind the character of Rashleigh, such as I had pictured him previous to this *tete-a-tete*.

So effectual, my dear Tresham, does the sense of being pleased and amused blunt our faculties of perception and discrimination of character, that I can only compare it to the taste of certain fruits, at once luscious and poignant, which renders our palate totally unfit for relishing or distinguishing the viands which are subsequently subjected to its criticism.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

*What gars ye gaunt, my merry-men a?
What gars ye look sae dreary?
What gars ye hing your head sae sair
In the castle of Balwearie?
Old Scotch Ballad.*

The next morning chanced to be Sunday, a day peculiarly hard to be got rid of at Osbaldistone Hall; for after the formal religious service of the morning had been performed, at which all the family regularly attended, it was hard to say upon which individual, Rashleigh and Miss Vernon excepted, the fiend of ennui descended with the most abundant outpouring of his spirit. To speak of my yesterday's embarrassment amused Sir Hildebrand for several minutes, and he congratulated me on my deliverance from Morpeth or Hexham jail, as he would have done if I had fallen in attempting to clear a five-barred gate, and got up without hurting myself.

"Hast had a lucky turn, lad; but do na be over venturesome again. What, man! the king's road is free to all men, be they Whigs, be they Tories."

"On my word, sir, I am innocent of interrupting it; and it is the most provoking thing on earth, that every person will take it for granted that I am accessory to a crime which I despise and detest, and which would, moreover, deservedly forfeit my life to the laws of my country."

"Well, well, lad; even so be it; I ask no questions—no man bound to tell on himself—that's fair play, or the devil's in't."

Rashleigh here came to my assistance; but I could not help thinking that his arguments were calculated rather as hints to his father to put on a show of acquiescence in my declaration of innocence, than fully to establish it.

"In your own house, my dear sir—and your own nephew—you will not surely persist in hurting his feelings by seeming to discredit what he is so strongly interested in affirming. No doubt, you are fully deserving of all his confidence, and I am sure, were there anything you could do to assist him in this strange affair, he would have recourse to your goodness. But my cousin Frank has been dismissed as an innocent man, and no one is entitled to suppose him otherwise. For my part, I have not the least doubt of his innocence; and our family honour, I conceive, requires that we should maintain it with tongue and sword against the whole country."

"Rashleigh," said his father, looking fixedly at him, "thou art a sly loon—thou hast ever been too cunning for me, and too cunning for most folks. Have a care thou provena too cunning for thyself—two faces under one hood is no true heraldry. And since we talk of heraldry, I'll go and read Gwilym."

This resolution he intimated with a yawn, resistless as that of the Goddess in the Dunciad, which was responsively echoed by his giant sons, as they dispersed in quest of the pastimes to which their minds severally inclined them—Percie to discuss a pot of March beer with the steward in the buttery,—Thornclyff to cut a pair of cudgels, and fix them in their wicker hilts,—John to dress May-flies,—Dickon to play at pitch and toss by himself, his right hand against his left,—and Wilfred to bite his thumbs and hum himself into a slumber which should last till dinner-time, if possible. Miss Vernon had retired to the library.

Rashleigh and I were left alone in the old hall, from which the servants, with their usual bustle and awkwardness, had at length contrived to hurry the remains of our substantial breakfast. I took the opportunity to upbraid him with the manner in which he had spoken of my affair to his father, which I frankly stated was highly offensive to me, as it seemed rather to exhort Sir Hildebrand to conceal his suspicions, than to root them out.

"Why, what can I do, my dear friend?" replied Rashleigh "my father's disposition is so tenacious of suspicions of all kinds, when once they take root (which, to do him justice, does not easily happen), that I have always found it the best way to silence him upon such subjects, instead of arguing with him. Thus I get the better of the weeds which I cannot eradicate, by cutting them over as often as they appear, until at length they die away of themselves. There is neither wisdom nor profit in disputing with such a mind as Sir Hildebrand's, which hardens itself against conviction, and believes in its own inspirations as firmly as we good Catholics do in those of the Holy Father of Rome."

"It is very hard, though, that I should live in the house of a man, and he a near relation too, who will persist in believing me guilty of a highway robbery."

"My father's foolish opinion, if one may give that epithet to any opinion of a father's, does not affect your real innocence; and as to the disgrace of the fact, depend on it, that, considered in all its bearings, political as well as moral, Sir Hildebrand regards it as a meritorious action—a weakening of the enemy—a spoiling of the Amalekites; and you will stand the higher in his regard for your supposed accession to it."

"I desire no man's regard, Mr. Rashleigh, on such terms as must sink me in my own; and I think these injurious suspicions will afford a very good reason for quitting Osbaldistone Hall, which I shall do whenever I can communicate on the subject with my father."

The dark countenance of Rashleigh, though little accustomed to betray its master's feelings, exhibited a suppressed smile, which he instantly chastened by a sigh.

"You are a happy man, Frank—you go and come, as the wind bloweth where it listeth. With your address, taste, and talents, you will soon find circles where they will be more valued, than amid the dull inmates of this mansion; while I—" he paused.

"And what is there in your lot that can make you or any one envy mine,—an outcast, as I may almost term myself, from my father's house and favour?"

"Ay, but," answered Rashleigh, "consider the gratified sense of independence which you must have attained by a very temporary sacrifice,—for such I am sure yours will prove to be; consider the power of acting as a free agent, of cultivating your own talents in the way to which your taste determines you, and in which you are well qualified to distinguish yourself. Fame and freedom are cheaply purchased by a few weeks' residence in the North, even though your place of exile be Osbaldistone Hall. A second Ovid in Thrace, you have not his reasons for writing Tristia."

"I do not know," said I, blushing as became a young scribbler, "how you should be so well acquainted with my truant studies."

"There was an emissary of your father's here some time since, a young coxcomb, one Twineall, who informed me concerning your secret sacrifices to the muses, and added, that some of your verses had been greatly admired by the best judges."

Tresham, I believe you are guiltless of having ever essayed to build the lofty rhyme; but you must have known in your day many an apprentice and fellow-craft, if not some of the master-masons, in the temple of Apollo. Vanity is their universal foible, from him who decorated the shades of Twickenham, to the veriest scribbler whom he has lashed in his Dunciad. I had my own share of this common failing, and without considering how little likely this young fellow Twineall was, by taste and habits, either to be acquainted with one or two little pieces of poetry, which I had at times insinuated into Button's coffee-house, or to report the opinion of the critics who frequented that resort of wit and literature, I almost instantly gorged the bait; which Rashleigh perceiving, improved his opportunity by a diffident, yet apparently very anxious request to be permitted to see some of my manuscript productions.

"You shall give me an evening in my own apartment," he continued; "for I must soon lose the charms of literary society for the drudgery of commerce, and the coarse every-day avocations of the world. I repeat it, that my compliance with my father's wishes for the advantage of my family, is indeed a sacrifice, especially considering the calm and peaceful profession to which my education destined me."

I was vain, but not a fool, and this hypocrisy was too strong for me to swallow. "You would not persuade me," I replied, "that you really regret to exchange the situation of an obscure Catholic priest, with all its privations, for wealth and society, and the pleasures of the world?"

Rashleigh saw that he had coloured his affectation of moderation too highly, and, after a second's pause, during which, I suppose, he calculated the degree of candour which it was necessary to use with me (that being a quality of which he was never needlessly profuse), he answered, with a smile—"At my age, to be condemned, as you say, to wealth and the world, does not, indeed, sound so alarming as perhaps it ought to do. But, with pardon be it spoken, you have mistaken my destination—a Catholic priest, if you will, but not an obscure one. No, sir,—Rashleigh Osbaldistone will be more obscure, should he rise to be the richest citizen in London, than he might have been as a member of a church, whose ministers, as some one says, 'set their sandall'd feet on princes.' My family interest at a certain exiled court is high, and the weight which that court ought to possess, and does possess, at Rome is yet higher—my talents not altogether inferior to the education I have received. In sober judgment, I might have looked forward to high eminence in the church—in the dream of fancy, to the very highest. Why might

not"—(he added, laughing, for it was part of his manner to keep much of his discourse apparently betwixt jest and earnest)—"why might not Cardinal Osbaldistone have swayed the fortunes of empires, well-born and well-connected, as well as the low-born Mazarin, or Alberoni, the son of an Italian gardener?"

"Nay, I can give you no reason to the contrary; but in your place I should not much regret losing the chance of such precarious and invidious elevation."

"Neither would I," he replied, "were I sure that my present establishment was more certain; but that must depend upon circumstances which I can only learn by experience—the disposition of your father, for example."

"Confess the truth without finesse, Rashleigh; you would willingly know something of him from me?"

"Since, like Die Vernon, you make a point of following the banner of the good knight Sincerity, I reply—certainly."

"Well, then, you will find in my father a man who has followed the paths of thriving more for the exercise they afforded to his talents, than for the love of the gold with which they are strewed. His active mind would have been happy in any situation which gave it scope for exertion, though that exertion had been its sole reward. But his wealth has accumulated, because, moderate and frugal in his habits, no new sources of expense have occurred to dispose of his increasing income. He is a man who hates dissimulation in others; never practises it himself; and is peculiarly alert in discovering motives through the colouring of language. Himself silent by habit, he is readily disgusted by great talkers; the rather, that the circumstances by which he is most interested, afford no great scope for conversation. He is severely strict in the duties of religion; but you have no reason to fear his interference with yours, for he regards toleration as a sacred principle of political economy. But if you have any Jacobitical partialities, as is naturally to be supposed, you will do well to suppress them in his presence, as well as the least tendency to the highflying or Tory principles; for he holds both in utter detestation. For the rest, his word is his own bond, and must be the law of all who act under him. He will fail in his duty to no one, and will permit no one to fail towards him; to cultivate his favour, you must execute his commands, instead of echoing his sentiments. His greatest failings arise out of prejudices connected with his own profession, or rather his exclusive devotion to it, which makes him see little worthy of praise or attention, unless it be in some measure connected with commerce."

"O rare-painted portrait!" exclaimed Rashleigh, when I was silent—"Vandyke was a dauber to you, Frank. I see thy sire before me in all his strength and weakness; loving and honouring the King as a sort of lord mayor of the empire, or chief of the board of trade—venerating the Commons, for the acts regulating the export trade—and respecting the Peers, because the Lord Chancellor sits on a woolsack."

"Mine was a likeness, Rashleigh; yours is a caricature. But in return for the *carte du pays* which I have unfolded to you, give me some lights on the geography of the unknown lands"—

"On which you are wrecked," said Rashleigh. "It is not worth while; it is no Isle of Calypso, umbrageous with shade and intricate with silvan labyrinth—but a bare ragged Northumbrian moor, with as little to interest curiosity as to delight the eye; you may descry it in all its nakedness in half an hour's survey, as well as if I were to lay it down before you by line and compass."

"O, but something there is, worthy a more attentive survey—What say you to Miss Vernon? Does not she form an interesting object in the landscape, were all round as rude as Iceland's coast?"

I could plainly perceive that Rashleigh disliked the topic now presented to him; but my frank communication had given me the advantageous title to make inquiries in my turn. Rashleigh felt this, and found himself obliged to follow my lead, however difficult he might find it to play his cards successfully. "I have known less of Miss Vernon," he said, "for some time, than I was wont to do formerly. In early age I was her tutor; but as she advanced towards womanhood, my various avocations,—the gravity of the profession to which I was destined,—the peculiar nature of her engagements,—our mutual situation, in short, rendered a close and constant intimacy dangerous and improper. I believe Miss Vernon might consider my reserve as unkindness, but it was my duty; I felt as much as she seemed to do, when compelled to give way to prudence. But where was the safety in cultivating an intimacy with a beautiful and susceptible girl, whose heart, you are aware, must be given either to the cloister or to a betrothed husband?"

"The cloister or a betrothed husband?" I echoed—"Is that the alternative destined for Miss Vernon?"

"It is indeed," said Rashleigh, with a sigh. "I need not, I suppose, caution you against the danger of cultivating too closely the friendship of Miss Vernon;—you are a man of the world, and know how far you can indulge yourself in her society with safety to yourself, and justice to her. But I warn you, that, considering her ardent temper, you must let your experience keep guard over her as well as yourself, for the specimen of yesterday may serve to show her extreme thoughtlessness and neglect of decorum."

There was something, I was sensible, of truth, as well as good sense, in all this; it seemed to be given as a friendly warning, and I had no right to take it amiss; yet I felt I could with pleasure have run Rashleigh Osbaldistone through the body all the time he was speaking.

"The deuce take his insolence!" was my internal meditation. "Would he wish me to infer that Miss Vernon had fallen in love with that hatchet-face of his, and become degraded so low as to require his shyness to cure her of an imprudent passion? I will have his meaning from him," was my resolution, "if I should drag it out with cart-ropes."

For this purpose, I placed my temper under as accurate a guard as I could, and observed, "That, for a lady of her good sense and acquired accomplishments, it was to be regretted that Miss Vernon's manners were rather blunt and rustic."

"Frank and unreserved, at least, to the extreme," replied Rashleigh: "yet, trust me, she has an excellent heart. To tell you the truth, should she continue her extreme aversion to the cloister, and to her destined husband, and should my own labours in the mine of Plutus promise to secure me a decent independence, I shall think of reviewing our acquaintance and sharing it with Miss Vernon."

"With all his fine voice, and well-turned periods," thought I, "this same Rashleigh Osbaldistone is the ugliest and most conceited coxcomb I ever met with!"

"But," continued Rashleigh, as if thinking aloud, "I should not like to supplant Thornciff."

"Supplant Thornciff!—Is your brother Thornciff," I inquired, with great surprise, "the destined husband of Diana Vernon?"

"Why, ay, her father's commands, and a certain family-contract, destined her to marry one of Sir Hildebrand's sons. A dispensation has been obtained from Rome to Diana Vernon to marry *Blank* Osbaldistone, Esq., son of Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone, of Osbaldistone Hall, Bart., and so forth; and it only remains to pitch upon the happy man whose name shall fill the gap in the manuscript. Now, as Percie is seldom sober, my father pitched on Thornciff, as the second prop of the family, and therefore most proper to carry on the line of the Osbaldistones."

"The young lady," said I, forcing myself to assume an air of pleasantry, which, I believe, became me extremely ill, "would perhaps have been inclined to look a little lower on the family-tree, for the branch to which she was desirous of clinging."

"I cannot say," he replied. "There is room for little choice in our family; Dick is a gambler, John a boor, and Wilfred an ass. I believe my father really made the best selection for poor Die, after all."

"The present company," said I, "being always excepted."

"Oh, my destination to the church placed me out of the question; otherwise I will not affect to say, that, qualified by my education both to instruct and guide Miss Vernon, I might not have been a more creditable choice than any of my elders."

"And so thought the young lady, doubtless?"

"You are not to suppose so," answered Rashleigh, with an affectation of denial which was contrived to convey the strongest affirmation the case admitted of: "friendship—only friendship—formed the tie betwixt us, and the tender affection of an opening mind to its only instructor—Love came not near us—I told you I was wise in time."

I felt little inclination to pursue this conversation any farther, and shaking myself clear of Rashleigh, withdrew to my own apartment, which I recollect I traversed with much vehemence of agitation, repeating aloud the expressions which had most offended me.—"Susceptible—ardent—tender affection—Love—Diana Vernon, the most beautiful creature I ever beheld, in love with him, the bandy-legged, bull-necked, limping scoundrel! Richard the Third in all but his hump-back!—And yet the opportunities he must have had during his cursed course of lectures; and the fellow's flowing and easy strain of sentiment; and her extreme seclusion

from every one who spoke and acted with common sense; ay, and her obvious pique at him, mixed with admiration of his talents, which looked as like the result of neglected attachment as anything else—Well, and what is it to me, that I should storm and rage at it? Is Diana Vernon the first pretty girl that has loved and married an ugly fellow? And if she were free of every Osbaldistone of them, what concern is it of mine?—a Catholic—a Jacobite—a termagant into the boot—for me to look that way were utter madness."

By throwing such reflections on the flame of my displeasure, I subdued it into a sort of smouldering heart-burning, and appeared at the dinner-table in as sulky a humour as could well be imagined.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

Drunk?—and speak parrot?—and squabble?—swagger?—

Swear?—and discourse fustian with one's own shadow?

Othello.

I have already told you, my dear Tresham, what probably was no news to you, that my principal fault was an unconquerable pitch of pride, which exposed me to frequent mortification. I had not even whispered to myself that I loved Diana Vernon; yet no sooner did I hear Rashleigh talk of her as a prize which he might stoop to carry off, or neglect, at his pleasure, than every step which the poor girl had taken, in the innocence and openness of her heart, to form a sort of friendship with me, seemed in my eyes the most insulting coquetry.—"Soh! she would secure me as a *pis aller*, I suppose, in case Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone should not take compassion upon her! But I will satisfy her that I am not a person to be trepanned in that manner—I will make her sensible that I see through her arts, and that I scorn them."

I did not reflect for a moment, that all this indignation, which I had no right whatever to entertain, proved that I was anything but indifferent to Miss Vernon's charms; and I sate down to table in high ill-humour with her and all the daughters of Eve.

Miss Vernon heard me, with surprise, return ungracious answers to one or two playful strokes of satire which she threw out with her usual freedom of speech; but, having no suspicion that offence was meant, she only replied to my rude repartees with jests somewhat similar, but polished by her good temper, though pointed by her wit. At length she perceived I was really out of humour, and answered one of my rude speeches thus:—

"They say, Mr. Frank, that one may gather sense from fools—I heard cousin Wilfred refuse to play any longer at cudgels the other day with cousin Thornie, because cousin Thornie got angry, and struck harder than the rules of amicable combat, it seems, permitted. 'Were I to break your head in good earnest,' quoth honest Wilfred, 'I care not how angry you are, for I should do it so much the more easily but it's hard I should get raps over the costard, and only pay you back in make-believes'—Do you understand the moral of this, Frank?"

"I have never felt myself under the necessity, madam, of studying how to extract the slender portion of sense with which this family season their conversation."

"Necessity! and madam!—You surprise me, Mr. Osbaldistone."

"I am unfortunate in doing so."

"Am I to suppose that this capricious tone is serious? or is it only assumed, to make your good-humour more valuable?"

"You have a right to the attention of so many gentlemen in this family, Miss Vernon, that it cannot be worth your while to inquire into the cause of my stupidity and bad spirits."

"What!" she said, "am I to understand, then, that you have deserted my faction, and gone over to the enemy?"

Then, looking across the table, and observing that Rashleigh, who was seated opposite, was watching us with a singular expression of interest on his harsh features, she continued—

*"Horrible thought!—Ay, now I see 'tis true,
For the grim-visaged Rashleigh smiles on me,
And points at thee for his!—"*

Well, thank Heaven, and the unprotected state which has taught me endurance, I do not take offence easily; and that I may not be forced to quarrel, whether I like it or no, I have the honour, earlier than usual, to wish you a happy digestion of your dinner and your bad humour."

And she left the table accordingly.

Upon Miss Vernon's departure, I found myself very little satisfied with my own conduct. I had hurled back offered kindness, of which circumstances had but lately pointed out the honest sincerity, and I had but just stopped short of insulting the beautiful, and, as she had said with some emphasis, the unprotected being by whom it was proffered. My conduct seemed brutal in my own eyes. To combat or drown these painful reflections, I applied myself more frequently than usual to the wine which circulated on the table.

The agitated state of my feelings combined with my habits of temperance to give rapid effect to the beverage. Habitual toppers, I believe, acquire the power of soaking themselves with a quantity of liquor that does little more than muddy those intellects which in their sober state are none of the clearest; but men who are strangers to the vice of drunkenness as a habit, are more powerfully acted upon by intoxicating liquors. My spirits, once aroused, became extravagant; I talked a great deal, argued upon what I knew nothing of, told stories of which I forgot the point, then laughed immoderately at my own forgetfulness; I accepted several bets without having the least judgment; I challenged the giant John to wrestle with me, although he had kept the ring at Hexham for a year, and I never tried so much as a single fall.

My uncle had the goodness to interpose and prevent this consummation of drunken folly, which, I suppose, would have otherwise ended in my neck being broken. It has even been reported by maligners, that I sung a song while under this vinous influence; but, as I remember nothing of it, and never attempted to turn a tune in all my life before or since, I would willingly hope there is no actual foundation for the calumny. I was absurd enough without this exaggeration. Without positively losing my senses, I speedily lost all command of my temper, and my impetuous passions whirled me onward at their pleasure. I had sate down sulky and discontented, and disposed to be silent—the wine rendered me loquacious, disputatious, and quarrelsome. I contradicted whatever was asserted, and attacked, without any respect to my uncle's table, both his politics and his religion. The affected moderation of Rashleigh, which he well knew how to qualify with irritating ingredients, was even more provoking to me than the noisy and bullying language of his obstreperous brothers. My uncle, to do him justice, endeavoured to bring us to order; but his authority was lost amidst the tumult of wine and passion. At length, frantic at some real or supposed injurious insinuation, I actually struck Rashleigh with my fist. No Stoic philosopher, superior to his own passion and that of others, could have received an insult with a higher degree of scorn. What he himself did not think it apparently worth while to resent, Thorncliff resented for him. Swords were drawn, and we exchanged one or two passes, when the other brothers separated us by main force; and I shall never forget the diabolical sneer which writhed Rashleigh's wayward features, as I was forced from the apartment by the main strength of two of these youthful Titans. They secured me in my apartment by locking the door, and I heard them, to my inexpressible rage, laugh heartily as they descended the stairs. I essayed in my fury to break out; but the window-grates, and the strength of a door clenched with iron, resisted my efforts. At length I threw myself on my bed, and fell asleep amidst vows of dire revenge to be taken in the ensuing day.

But with the morning cool repentance came. I felt, in the keenest manner, the violence and absurdity of my conduct, and was obliged to confess that wine and passion had lowered my intellects even below those of Wilfred Osbaldistone, whom I held in so much contempt. My uncomfortable reflections were by no means soothed by meditating the necessity of an apology for my improper behaviour, and recollecting that Miss Vernon must be a witness of my submission. The impropriety and unkindness of my conduct to her personally, added not a little to these galling considerations, and for this I could not even plead the miserable excuse of intoxication.

Under all these aggravating feelings of shame and degradation, I descended to the breakfast hall, like a criminal to receive sentence. It chanced that a hard frost had rendered it impossible to take out the hounds, so that I had the additional mortification to meet the family, excepting only Rashleigh and Miss Vernon, in full divan, surrounding the cold venison pasty and chine of beef. They were in high glee as I entered, and I could easily imagine that the jests were furnished at my expense. In fact, what I was disposed to consider with serious pain, was regarded as an excellent good joke by my uncle, and the greater part of my cousins. Sir Hildebrand, while he rallied me on the exploits of the preceding evening, swore he thought a young fellow had better be thrice drunk in one day, than sneak sober to bed like a Presbyterian, and leave a batch of honest fellows, and a double quart of claret. And to back this consolatory speech, he poured out a large bumper of brandy, exhorting me to swallow "a hair of the dog that had bit me."

"Never mind these lads laughing, nevoy," he continued; "they would have been all as great milksops as yourself, had I not nursed them, as one may say, on the toast and tankard."

Ill-nature was not the fault of my cousins in general; they saw I was vexed and hurt at the recollections of the preceding evening, and endeavoured, with clumsy kindness, to remove the painful impression they had made on me. Thorncliff alone looked sullen and unreconciled. This young man had never liked me from the beginning; and in the marks of attention occasionally shown me by his brothers, awkward as they were, he alone had never joined. If it was true, of which, however, I began to have my doubts, that he was considered by the family, or regarded himself, as the destined husband of Miss Vernon, a sentiment of jealousy might have sprung up in his mind from the marked predilection which it was that young lady's pleasure to show for one whom Thorncliff might, perhaps, think likely to become a dangerous rival.

Rashleigh at last entered, his visage as dark as mourning weed—brooding, I could not but doubt, over the unjustifiable and disgraceful insult I had offered to him. I had already settled in my own mind how I was to behave on the occasion, and had schooled myself to believe, that true honour consisted not in defending, but in apologising for, an injury so much disproportioned to any provocation I might have to allege.

I therefore hastened to meet Rashleigh, and to express myself in the highest degree sorry for the violence with which I had acted on the preceding evening. "No circumstances," I said, "could have wrung from me a single word of apology, save my own consciousness of the impropriety of my behaviour. I hoped my cousin would accept of my regrets so sincerely offered, and consider how much of my misconduct was owing to the excessive hospitality of Osbaldistone Hall."

"He shall be friends with thee, lad," cried the honest knight, in the full effusion of his heart; "or d—n me, if I call him son more!—Why, Rashie, dost stand there like a log? *Sorry for it* is all a gentleman can say, if he happens to do anything awry, especially over his claret. I served in Hounslow, and should know something, I think, of affairs of honour. Let me hear no more of this, and we'll go in a body and rummage out the badger in Birkenwood-bank."

Rashleigh's face resembled, as I have already noticed, no other countenance that I ever saw. But this singularity lay not only in the features, but in the mode of changing their expression. Other countenances, in altering from grief to joy, or from anger to satisfaction, pass through some brief interval, ere the expression of the predominant passion supersedes entirely that of its predecessor. There is a sort of twilight, like that between the clearing up of the darkness and the rising of the sun, while the swollen muscles subside, the dark eye clears, the forehead relaxes and expands itself, and the whole countenance loses its sterner shades, and becomes serene and placid. Rashleigh's face exhibited none of these gradations, but changed almost instantaneously from the expression of one passion to that of the contrary. I can compare it to nothing but the sudden shifting of a scene in the theatre, where, at the whistle of the prompter, a cavern disappears, and a grove arises.

My attention was strongly arrested by this peculiarity on the present occasion. At Rashleigh's first entrance, "black he stood as night!" With the same inflexible countenance he heard my excuse and his father's exhortation; and it was not until Sir Hildebrand had done speaking, that the cloud cleared away at once, and he expressed, in the kindest and most civil terms, his perfect satisfaction with the very handsome apology I had offered.

"Indeed," he said, "I have so poor a brain myself, when I impose on it the least burden beyond my usual three glasses, that I have only, like honest Cassio, a very vague recollection of the confusion of last night—remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly—a quarrel, but nothing wherefore—So, my dear Cousin," he continued, shaking me kindly by the hand, "conceive how much I am relieved by finding that I have to receive an apology, instead of having to make one—I will not have a word said upon the subject more; I should be very foolish to institute any scrutiny into an account, when the balance, which I expected to be against me, has been so unexpectedly and agreeably struck in my favour. You see, Mr. Osbaldistone, I am practising the language of Lombard Street, and qualifying myself for my new calling."

As I was about to answer, and raised my eyes for the purpose, they encountered those of Miss Vernon, who, having entered the room unobserved during the conversation, had given it her close attention. Abashed and confounded, I fixed my eyes on the ground, and made my escape to the breakfast-table, where I herded among my busy cousins.

My uncle, that the events of the preceding day might not pass out of our memory without a practical moral lesson, took occasion to give Rashleigh and me his serious advice to correct our milksop habits, as he termed them, and gradually to inure our brains to bear a gentlemanlike quantity of liquor, without brawls or breaking of heads. He recommended that we should begin piddling with a regular quart of claret per day, which, with the aid of March beer and brandy, made a handsome competence for a beginner in the art of toping. And for our encouragement, he assured us that he had known many a man who had lived to our years without having drunk a pint of wine at a sitting, who yet, by falling into honest company, and following hearty example, had afterwards been numbered among the best good fellows of the time, and could carry off their six bottles under their belt quietly and comfortably, without brawling or babbling, and be neither sick nor sorry the next morning.

Sage as this advice was, and comfortable as was the prospect it held out to me, I profited but little by the exhortation—partly, perhaps, because, as often as I raised my eyes from the table, I observed Miss Vernon's looks fixed on me, in which I thought I could read grave compassion blended with regret and displeasure. I began to consider how I should seek a scene of explanation and apology with her also, when she gave me to understand she was determined to save me the trouble of soliciting an interview. "Cousin Francis," she said, addressing me by the same title she used to give to the other Osbaldistones, although I had, properly speaking, no title to be called her kinsman, "I have encountered this morning a difficult passage in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante; will you have the goodness to step to the library and give me your assistance? and when you have unearthed for me the meaning of the obscure Florentine, we will join the rest at Birkenwood-bank, and see their luck at unearthing the badger."

I signified, of course, my readiness to wait upon her. Rashleigh made an offer to accompany us. "I am something better skilled," he said, "at tracking the sense of Dante through the metaphors and elisions of his wild and gloomy poem, than at hunting the poor inoffensive hermit yonder out of his cave."

"Pardon me, Rashleigh," said Miss Vernon, "but as you are to occupy Mr. Francis's place in the counting-house, you must surrender to him the charge of your pupil's education at Osbaldistone Hall. We shall call you in, however, if there is any occasion; so pray do not look so grave upon it. Besides, it is a shame to you not to understand field-sports—What will you do should our uncle in Crane-Alley ask you the signs by which you track a badger?"

"Ay, true, Die,—true," said Sir Hildebrand, with a sigh, "I misdoubt Rashleigh will be found short at the leap when he is put to the trial. An he would ha' learned useful knowledge like his brothers, he was bred up where it grew, I wuss; but French antics, and book-learning, with the new turnips, and the rats, and the Hanoverians, ha' changed the world that I ha' known in Old England—But come along with us, Rashie, and carry my hunting-staff, man; thy cousin lacks none of thy company as now, and I wonna ha' Die crossed—It's ne'er be said there was but one woman in Osbaldistone Hall, and she died for lack of her will."

Rashleigh followed his father, as he commanded, not, however, ere he had whispered to Diana, "I suppose I must in discretion bring the courtier, Ceremony, in my company, and knock when I approach the door of the library?"

"No, no, Rashleigh," said Miss Vernon; "dismiss from your company the false archimage Dissimulation, and it will better ensure your free access to our classical consultations."

So saying, she led the way to the library, and I followed—like a criminal, I was going to say, to execution; but, as I bethink me, I have used the simile once, if not twice before. Without any simile at all, then, I followed, with a sense of awkward and conscious embarrassment, which I would have given a great deal to shake

off. I thought it a degrading and unworthy feeling to attend one on such an occasion, having breathed the air of the Continent long enough to have imbibed the notion that lightness, gallantry, and something approaching to well-bred self-assurance, should distinguish the gentleman whom a fair lady selects for her companion in a *tete-a-tete*.

My English feelings, however, were too many for my French education, and I made, I believe, a very pitiful figure, when Miss Vernon, seating herself majestically in a huge elbow-chair in the library, like a judge about to hear a cause of importance, signed to me to take a chair opposite to her (which I did, much like the poor fellow who is going to be tried), and entered upon conversation in a tone of bitter irony.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

*Dire was his thought, who first in poison steeped
The weapon formed for slaughter—direr his,
And worthier of damnation, who instilled
The mortal venom in the social cup,
To fill the veins with death instead of life.*

Anonymous.

"Upon my Word, Mr. Francis Osbaldistone," said Miss Vernon, with the air of one who thought herself fully entitled to assume the privilege of ironical reproach, which she was pleased to exert, "your character improves upon us, sir—I could not have thought that it was in you. Yesterday might be considered as your assay-piece, to prove yourself entitled to be free of the corporation of Osbaldistone Hall. But it was a masterpiece."

"I am quite sensible of my ill-breeding, Miss Vernon, and I can only say for myself that I had received some communications by which my spirits were unusually agitated. I am conscious I was impertinent and absurd."

"You do yourself great injustice," said the merciless monitor—"you have contrived, by what I saw and have since heard, to exhibit in the course of one evening a happy display of all the various masterly qualifications which distinguish your several cousins;—the gentle and generous temper of the benevolent Rashleigh,—the temperance of Percie,—the cool courage of Thorndiff,—John's skill in dog-breaking,—Dickon's aptitude to betting,—all exhibited by the single individual, Mr. Francis, and that with a selection of time, place, and circumstance, worthy the taste and sagacity of the sapient Wilfred."

"Have a little mercy, Miss Vernon," said I; for I confess I thought the schooling as severe as the case merited, especially considering from what quarter it came, "and forgive me if I suggest, as an excuse for follies I am not usually guilty of, the custom of this house and country. I am far from approving of it; but we have Shakspeare's authority for saying, that good wine is a good familiar creature, and that any man living may be overtaken at some time."

"Ay, Mr. Francis, but he places the panegyric and the apology in the mouth of the greatest villain his pencil has drawn. I will not, however, abuse the advantage your quotation has given me, by overwhelming you with the refutation with which the victim Cassio replies to the tempter Iago. I only wish you to know, that there is one person at least sorry to see a youth of talents and expectations sink into the slough in which the inhabitants of this house are nightly wallowing."

"I have but wet my shoe, I assure you, Miss Vernon, and am too sensible of the filth of the puddle to step farther in."

"If such be your resolution," she replied, "it is a wise one. But I was so much vexed at what I heard, that your concerns have pressed before my own,—You behaved to me yesterday, during dinner, as if something had been told you which lessened or lowered me in your opinion—I beg leave to ask you what it was?"

I was stupified. The direct bluntness of the demand was much in the style one gentleman uses to another, when requesting explanation of any part of his conduct in a good-humoured yet determined manner, and was totally devoid of the circumlocutions, shadings, softenings, and periphrasis, which usually accompany explanations betwixt persons of different sexes in the higher orders of society.

I remained completely embarrassed; for it pressed on my recollection, that Rashleigh's communications, supposing them to be correct, ought to have rendered Miss Vernon rather an object of my compassion than of my pettish resentment; and had they furnished the best apology possible for my own conduct, still I must have had the utmost difficulty in detailing what inferred such necessary and natural offence to Miss Vernon's feelings. She observed my hesitation, and proceeded, in a tone somewhat more peremptory, but still temperate and civil—"I hope Mr. Osbaldistone does not dispute my title to request this explanation. I have no relative who can protect me; it is, therefore, just that I be permitted to protect myself."

I endeavoured with hesitation to throw the blame of my rude behaviour upon indisposition—upon disagreeable letters from London. She suffered me to exhaust my apologies, and fairly to run myself aground, listening all the while with a smile of absolute incredulity.

"And now, Mr. Francis, having gone through your prologue of excuses, with the same bad grace with which all prologues are delivered, please to draw the curtain, and show me that which I desire to see. In a word, let me know what Rashleigh says of me; for he is the grand engineer and first mover of all the machinery of Osbaldistone Hall."

"But, supposing there was anything to tell, Miss Vernon, what does he deserve that betrays the secrets of one ally to another?—Rashleigh, you yourself told me, remained your ally, though no longer your friend."

"I have neither patience for evasion, nor inclination for jesting, on the present subject. Rashleigh cannot—ought not—dare not, hold any language respecting me, Diana Vernon, but what I may demand to hear repeated. That there are subjects of secrecy and confidence between us, is most certain; but to such, his communications to you could have no relation; and with such, I, as an individual, have no concern."

I had by this time recovered my presence of mind, and hastily determined to avoid making any disclosure of what Rashleigh had told me in a sort of confidence. There was something unworthy in retailing private conversation; it could, I thought, do no good, and must necessarily give Miss Vernon great pain. I therefore replied, gravely, "that nothing but frivolous talk had passed between Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone and me on the state of the family at the Hall; and I protested, that nothing had been said which left a serious impression to her disadvantage. As a gentleman," I said, "I could not be more explicit in reporting private conversation."

She started up with the animation of a Camilla about to advance into battle. "This shall not serve your turn, sir,—I must have another answer from you." Her features kindled—her brow became flushed—her eye glanced wild-fire as she proceeded—"I demand such an explanation, as a woman basely slandered has a right to demand from every man who calls himself a gentleman—as a creature, motherless, friendless, alone in the world, left to her own guidance and protection, has a right to require from every being having a happier lot, in the name of that God who sent *them* into the world to enjoy, and *her* to suffer. You shall not deny me—or," she added, looking solemnly upwards, "you will rue your denial, if there is justice for wrong either on earth or in heaven."

I was utterly astonished at her vehemence, but felt, thus conjured, that it became my duty to lay aside scrupulous delicacy, and gave her briefly, but distinctly, the heads of the information which Rashleigh had conveyed to me.

She sate down and resumed her composure, as soon as I entered upon the subject, and when I stopped to seek for the most delicate turn of expression, she repeatedly interrupted me with "Go on—pray, go on; the first word which occurs to you is the plainest, and must be the best. Do not think of my feelings, but speak as you would to an unconcerned third party."

Thus urged and encouraged, I stammered through all the account which Rashleigh had given of her early contract to marry an Osbaldistone, and of the uncertainty and difficulty of her choice; and there I would willingly have paused. But her penetration discovered that there was still something behind, and even guessed to what it related.

"Well, it was ill-natured of Rashleigh to tell this tale on me. I am like the poor girl in the fairy tale, who was betrothed in her cradle to the Black Bear of Norway, but complained chiefly of being called Bruin's bride by her companions at school. But besides all this, Rashleigh said something of himself with relation to me—Did he not?"

"He certainly hinted, that were it not for the idea of supplanting his brother, he would now, in consequence of his change of profession, be desirous that the word Rashleigh should fill up the blank in the dispensation, instead of the word Thorncliff."

"Ay? indeed?" she replied—"was he so very condescending?—Too much honour for his humble handmaid, Diana Vernon—And she, I suppose, was to be enraptured with joy could such a substitute be effected?"

"To confess the truth, he intimated as much, and even farther insinuated"—

"What?—Let me hear it all!" she exclaimed, hastily.

"That he had broken off your mutual intimacy, lest it should have given rise to an affection by which his destination to the church would not permit him to profit."

"I am obliged to him for his consideration," replied Miss Vernon, every feature of her fine countenance taxed to express the most supreme degree of scorn and contempt. She paused a moment, and then said, with her usual composure, "There is but little I have heard from you which I did not expect to hear, and which I ought not to have expected; because, bating one circumstance, it is all very true. But as there are some poisons so active, that a few drops, it is said, will infect a whole fountain, so there is one falsehood in Rashleigh's communication, powerful enough to corrupt the whole well in which Truth herself is said to have dwelt. It is the leading and foul falsehood, that, knowing Rashleigh as I have reason too well to know him, any circumstance on earth could make me think of sharing my lot with him. No," she continued with a sort of inward shuddering that seemed to express involuntary horror, "any lot rather than that—the sot, the gambler, the bully, the jockey, the insensate fool, were a thousand times preferable to Rashleigh:—the convent—the jail—the grave, shall be welcome before them all."

There was a sad and melancholy cadence in her voice, corresponding with the strange and interesting romance of her situation. So young, so beautiful, so untaught, so much abandoned to herself, and deprived of all the support which her sex derives from the countenance and protection of female friends, and even of that degree of defence which arises from the forms with which the sex are approached in civilised life,—it is scarce metaphorical to say, that my heart bled for her. Yet there was an expression of dignity in her contempt of ceremony—of upright feeling in her disdain of falsehood—of firm resolution in the manner in which she contemplated the dangers by which she was surrounded, which blended my pity with the warmest admiration. She seemed a princess deserted by her subjects, and deprived of her power, yet still scorning those formal regulations of society which are created for persons of an inferior rank; and, amid her difficulties, relying boldly and confidently on the justice of Heaven, and the unshaken constancy of her own mind.

I offered to express the mingled feelings of sympathy and admiration with which her unfortunate situation and her high spirit combined to impress me, but she imposed silence on me at once.

"I told you in jest," she said, "that I disliked compliments—I now tell you in earnest, that I do not ask sympathy, and that I despise consolation. What I have borne, I have borne—What I am to bear I will sustain as I may; no word of commiseration can make a burden feel one feather's weight lighter to the slave who must carry it. There is only one human being who could have assisted me, and that is he who has rather chosen to add to my embarrassment—Rashleigh Osbaldistone.—Yes! the time once was that I might have learned to love that man—But, great God! the purpose for which he insinuated himself into the confidence of one already so forlorn—the undeviating and continued assiduity with which he pursued that purpose from year to year, without one single momentary pause of remorse or compassion—the purpose for which he would have converted into poison the food he administered to my mind—Gracious Providence! what should I have been in this world, and the next, in body and soul, had I fallen under the arts of this accomplished villain!"

I was so much struck with the scene of perfidious treachery which these words disclosed, that I rose from my chair hardly knowing what I did, laid my hand on the hilt of my sword, and was about to leave the apartment in search of him on whom I might discharge my just indignation. Almost breathless, and with eyes and looks in which scorn and indignation had given way to the most lively alarm, Miss Vernon threw herself between me and the door of the apartment.

"Stay!" she said—"stay!—however just your resentment, you do not know half the secrets of this fearful prison-house." She then glanced her eyes anxiously round the room, and sunk her voice almost to a whisper—"He bears a charmed life; you cannot assail him without endangering other lives, and wider destruction. Had it been otherwise, in some hour of justice he had hardly been safe, even from this weak hand. I told you," she said, motioning me back to my seat, "that I needed no comforter. I now tell you I need no avenger."

I resumed my seat mechanically, musing on what she said, and recollecting also, what had escaped me in my first glow of resentment, that I had no title whatever to constitute myself Miss Vernon's champion. She paused to let her own emotions and mine subside, and then addressed me with more composure.

"I have already said that there is a mystery connected with Rashleigh, of a dangerous and fatal nature. Villain as he is, and as he knows he stands convicted in my eyes, I cannot—dare not, openly break with or defy him. You also, Mr. Osbaldistone, must bear with him with patience, foil his artifices by opposing to them prudence, not violence; and, above all, you must avoid such scenes as that of last night, which cannot but give him perilous advantages over you. This caution I designed to give you, and it was the object with which I desired this interview; but I have extended my confidence farther than I proposed."

I assured her it was not misplaced.

"I do not believe that it is," she replied. "You have that in your face and manners which authorises trust. Let us continue to be friends. You need not fear," she said, laughing, while she blushed a little, yet speaking with a free and unembarrassed voice, "that friendship with us should prove only a specious name, as the poet says, for another feeling. I belong, in habits of thinking and acting, rather to your sex, with which I have always been brought up, than to my own. Besides, the fatal veil was wrapt round me in my cradle; for you may easily believe I have never thought of the detestable condition under which I may remove it. The time," she added, "for expressing my final determination is not arrived, and I would fain have the freedom of wild heath and open air with the other commoners of nature, as long as I can be permitted to enjoy them. And now that the passage in Dante is made so clear, pray go and see what has become of the badger-baiters. My head aches so much that I cannot join the party."

I left the library, but not to join the hunters. I felt that a solitary walk was necessary to compose my spirits before I again trusted myself in Rashleigh's company, whose depth of calculating villany had been so strikingly exposed to me. In Dubourg's family (as he was of the reformed persuasion) I had heard many a tale of Romish priests who gratified, at the expense of friendship, hospitality, and the most sacred ties of social life, those passions, the blameless indulgence of which is denied by the rules of their order. But the deliberate system of undertaking the education of a deserted orphan of noble birth, and so intimately allied to his own family, with the perfidious purpose of ultimately seducing her, detailed as it was by the intended victim with all the glow of virtuous resentment, seemed more atrocious to me than the worst of the tales I had heard at Bourdeaux, and I felt it would be extremely difficult for me to meet Rashleigh, and yet to suppress the abhorrence with which he impressed me. Yet this was absolutely necessary, not only on account of the mysterious charge which Diana had given me, but because I had, in reality, no ostensible ground for quarrelling with him.

I therefore resolved, as far as possible, to meet Rashleigh's dissimulation with equal caution on my part during our residence in the same family; and when he should depart for London, I resolved to give Owen at least such a hint of his character as might keep him on his guard over my father's interests. Avarice or ambition, I thought, might have as great, or greater charms, for a mind constituted like Rashleigh's, than unlawful pleasure; the energy of his character, and his power of assuming all seeming good qualities, were likely to procure him a high degree of confidence, and it was not to be hoped that either good faith or gratitude would prevent him from abusing it. The task was somewhat difficult, especially in my circumstances, since the caution which I threw out might be imputed to jealousy of my rival, or rather my successor, in my father's favour. Yet I thought it absolutely necessary to frame such a letter, leaving it to Owen, who, in his own line, was wary, prudent, and circumspect, to make the necessary use of his knowledge of Rashleigh's true character. Such a letter, therefore, I indited, and despatched to the post-house by the first opportunity.

At my meeting with Rashleigh, he, as well as I, appeared to have taken up distant ground, and to be disposed to avoid all pretext for collision. He was probably conscious that Miss Vernon's communications had been unfavourable to him, though he could not know that they extended to discovering his meditated villany towards her. Our intercourse, therefore, was reserved on both sides, and turned on subjects of little interest. Indeed, his stay at Osbaldistone Hall did not exceed a few days after this period, during which I only remarked two circumstances respecting him. The first was the rapid and almost intuitive manner in which his powerful and active mind seized upon and arranged the elementary principles necessary to his new profession, which he now studied hard, and occasionally

made parade of his progress, as if to show me how light it was for him to lift the burden which I had flung down from very weariness and inability to carry it. The other remarkable circumstance was, that, notwithstanding the injuries with which Miss Vernon charged Rashleigh, they had several private interviews together of considerable length, although their bearing towards each other in public did not seem more cordial than usual.

When the day of Rashleigh's departure arrived, his father bade him farewell with indifference; his brothers with the ill-concealed glee of school-boys who see their task-master depart for a season, and feel a joy which they dare not express; and I myself with cold politeness. When he approached Miss Vernon, and would have saluted her she drew back with a look of haughty disdain; but said, as she extended her hand to him, "Farewell, Rashleigh; God reward you for the good you have done, and forgive you for the evil you have meditated."

"Amen, my fair cousin," he replied, with an air of sanctity, which belonged, I thought, to the seminary of Saint Omers; "happy is he whose good intentions have borne fruit in deeds, and whose evil thoughts have perished in the blossom."

These were his parting words. "Accomplished hypocrite!" said Miss Vernon to me, as the door closed behind him—"how nearly can what we most despise and hate, approach in outward manner to that which we most venerate!"

I had written to my father by Rashleigh, and also a few lines to Owen, besides the confidential letter which I have already mentioned, and which I thought it more proper and prudent to despatch by another conveyance. In these epistles, it would have been natural for me to have pointed out to my father and my friend, that I was at present in a situation where I could improve myself in no respect, unless in the mysteries of hunting and hawking; and where I was not unlikely to forget, in the company of rude grooms and horse-boys, any useful knowledge or elegant accomplishments which I had hitherto acquired. It would also have been natural that I should have expressed the disgust and tedium which I was likely to feel among beings whose whole souls were centred in field-sports or more degrading pastimes—that I should have complained of the habitual intemperance of the family in which I was a guest, and the difficulty and almost resentment with which my uncle, Sir Hildebrand, received any apology for deserting the bottle. This last, indeed, was a topic on which my father, himself a man of severe temperance, was likely to be easily alarmed, and to have touched upon this spring would to a certainty have opened the doors of my prison-house, and would either have been the means of abridging my exile, or at least would have procured me a change of residence during my rustication.

I say, my dear Tresham, that, considering how very unpleasant a prolonged residence at Osbaldistone Hall must have been to a young man of my age, and with my habits, it might have seemed very natural that I should have pointed out all these disadvantages to my father, in order to obtain his consent for leaving my uncle's mansion. Nothing, however, is more certain, than that I did not say a single word to this purpose in my letters to my father and Owen. If Osbaldistone Hall had been Athens in all its pristine glory of learning, and inhabited by sages, heroes, and poets, I could not have expressed less inclination to leave it.

If thou hast any of the salt of youth left in thee, Tresham, thou wilt be at no loss to account for my silence on a topic seemingly so obvious. Miss Vernon's extreme beauty, of which she herself seemed so little conscious—her romantic and mysterious situation—the evils to which she was exposed—the courage with which she seemed to face them—her manners, more frank than belonged to her sex, yet, as it seemed to me, exceeding in frankness only from the dauntless consciousness of her innocence,—above all, the obvious and flattering distinction which she made in my favour over all other persons, were at once calculated to interest my best feelings, to excite my curiosity, awaken my imagination, and gratify my vanity. I dared not, indeed, confess to myself the depth of the interest with which Miss Vernon inspired me, or the large share which she occupied in my thoughts. We read together, walked together, rode together, and sate together. The studies which she had broken off upon her quarrel with Rashleigh, she now resumed, under the auspices of a tutor whose views were more sincere, though his capacity was far more limited.

In truth, I was by no means qualified to assist her in the prosecution of several profound studies which she had commenced with Rashleigh, and which appeared to me more fitted for a churchman than for a beautiful female. Neither can I conceive with what view he should have engaged Diana in the gloomy maze of casuistry which schoolmen called philosophy, or in the equally abstruse though more certain sciences of mathematics and astronomy; unless it were to break down and confound in her mind the difference and distinction between the sexes, and to habituate her to trains of subtle reasoning, by which he might at his own time invest that which is wrong with the colour of that which is right. It was in the same spirit, though in the latter case the evil purpose was more obvious, that the lessons of Rashleigh had encouraged Miss Vernon in setting at nought and despising the forms and ceremonial limits which are drawn round females in modern society. It is true, she was sequestered from all female company, and could not learn the usual rules of decorum, either from example or precept; yet such was her innate modesty, and accurate sense of what was right and wrong, that she would not of herself have adopted the bold uncompromising manner which struck me with so much surprise on our first acquaintance, had she not been led to conceive that a contempt of ceremony indicated at once superiority of understanding and the confidence of conscious innocence. Her wily instructor had, no doubt, his own views in levelling those outworks which reserve and caution erect around virtue. But for these, and for his other crimes, he has long since answered at a higher tribunal.

Besides the progress which Miss Vernon, whose powerful mind readily adopted every means of information offered to it, had made in more abstract science, I found her no contemptible linguist, and well acquainted both with ancient and modern literature. Were it not that strong talents will often go farthest when they seem to have least assistance, it would be almost incredible to tell the rapidity of Miss Vernon's progress in knowledge; and it was still more extraordinary, when her stock of mental acquisitions from books was compared with her total ignorance of actual life. It seemed as if she saw and knew everything, except what passed in the world around her;—and I believe it was this very ignorance and simplicity of thinking upon ordinary subjects, so strikingly contrasted with her fund of general knowledge and information, which rendered her conversation so irresistibly fascinating, and rivetted the attention to whatever she said or did; since it was absolutely impossible to anticipate whether her next word or action was to display the most acute perception, or the most profound simplicity. The degree of danger which necessarily attended a youth of my age and keen feelings from remaining in close and constant intimacy with an object so amiable, and so peculiarly interesting, all who remember their own sentiments at my age may easily estimate.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

*Yon lamp its line of quivering light
Shoots from my lady's bower;
But why should Beauty's lamp be bright
At midnight's lonely hour?
OLD BALLAD.*

The mode of life at Osbaldistone Hall was too uniform to admit of description. Diana Vernon and I enjoyed much of our time in our mutual studies; the rest of the family killed theirs in such sports and pastimes as suited the seasons, in which we also took a share. My uncle was a man of habits, and by habit became so much accustomed to my presence and mode of life, that, upon the whole, he was rather fond of me than otherwise. I might probably have risen yet higher in his good graces, had I employed the same arts for that purpose which were used by Rashleigh, who, availing himself of his father's disinclination to business, had gradually insinuated himself into the management of his property. But although I readily gave my uncle the advantage of my pen and my arithmetic so often as he desired to correspond with a neighbour, or settle with a tenant, and was, in so far, a more useful inmate in his family than any of his sons, yet I was not willing to oblige Sir Hildebrand by relieving him entirely from the management of his own affairs; so that, while the good knight admitted that nevoy Frank was a steady, handy lad, he seldom failed to remark in the same breath, that he did not think he should ha' missed Rashleigh so much as he was like to do.

As it is particularly unpleasant to reside in a family where we are at variance with any part of it, I made some efforts to overcome the ill-will which my cousins entertained against me. I exchanged my laced hat for a jockey-cap, and made some progress in their opinion; I broke a young colt in a manner which carried me

further into their good graces. A bet or two opportunely lost to Dickon, and an extra health pledged with Percie, placed me on an easy and familiar footing with all the young squires, except Thorncliff.

I have already noticed the dislike entertained against me by this young fellow, who, as he had rather more sense, had also a much worse temper, than any of his brethren. Sullen, dogged, and quarrelsome, he regarded my residence at Osbaldistone Hall as an intrusion, and viewed with envious and jealous eyes my intimacy with Diana Vernon, whom the effect proposed to be given to a certain family-compact assigned to him as an intended spouse. That he loved her, could scarcely be said, at least without much misapplication of the word; but he regarded her as something appropriated to himself, and resented internally the interference which he knew not how to prevent or interrupt. I attempted a tone of conciliation towards Thorncliff on several occasions; but he rejected my advances with a manner about as gracious as that of a growling mastiff, when the animal shuns and resents a stranger's attempts to caress him. I therefore abandoned him to his ill-humour, and gave myself no further trouble about the matter.

Such was the footing upon which I stood with the family at Osbaldistone Hall; but I ought to mention another of its inmates with whom I occasionally held some discourse. This was Andrew Fairservice, the gardener who (since he had discovered that I was a Protestant) rarely suffered me to pass him without proffering his Scotch mull for a social pinch. There were several advantages attending this courtesy. In the first place, it was made at no expense, for I never took snuff; and secondly, it afforded an excellent apology to Andrew (who was not particularly fond of hard labour) for laying aside his spade for several minutes. But, above all, these brief interviews gave Andrew an opportunity of venting the news he had collected, or the satirical remarks which his shrewd northern humour suggested.

"I am saying, sir," he said to me one evening, with a face obviously charged with intelligence, "I hae been down at the Trinlay-knowe."

"Well, Andrew, and I suppose you heard some news at the alehouse?"

"Na, sir; I never gang to the yillhouse—that is unless ony neighbour was to gie me a pint, or the like o' that; but to gang there on ane's ain coat-tail, is a waste o' precious time and hard-won siller.—But I was down at the Trinlay-knowe, as I was saying, about a wee bit business o' my ain wi' Mattie Simpson, that wants a forpit or twa o' peers that will never be missed in the Ha'-house—and when we were at the thrangest o' our bargain, wha suld come in but Pate Macready the travelling merchant?"

"Pedlar, I suppose you mean?"

"E'en as your honour likes to ca' him; but it's a creditable calling and a gainfu', and has been lang in use wi' our folk. Pate's a far-awa cousin o' mine, and we were blythe to meet wi' ane anither."

"And you went and had a jug of ale together, I suppose, Andrew?—For Heaven's sake, cut short your story."

"Bide a wee—bide a wee; you southrons are aye in sic a hurry, and this is something concerns yourself, an ye wad tak patience to hear't—Yill?—deil a drap o' yill did Pate offer me; but Mattie gae us baith a drap skimmed milk, and ane o' her thick ait jannocks, that was as wat and raw as a divot. O for the bonnie girdle cakes o' the north!—and sae we sat down and took out our clavers."

"I wish you would take them out just now. Pray, tell me the news, if you have got any worth telling, for I can't stop here all night."

"Than, if ye maun hae't, the folk in Lunnun are a' clean wud about this bit job in the north here."

"Clean wud! what's that?"

"Ou, just real daft—neither to haud nor to bind—a' hirdy-girdy—clean through ither—the deil's ower Jock Wabster."

"But what does all this mean? or what business have I with the devil or Jack Webster?"

"Umph!" said Andrew, looking extremely knowing, "it's just because—just that the dirdum's a' about yon man's pokmanty."

"Whose portmanteau? or what do you mean?"

"Ou, just the man Morris's, that he said he lost yonder: but if it's no your honour's affair, as little is it mine; and I mauna lose this gracious evening."

And, as if suddenly seized with a violent fit of industry, Andrew began to labour most diligently.

My attention, as the crafty knave had foreseen, was now arrested, and unwilling, at the same time, to acknowledge any particular interest in that affair, by asking direct questions, I stood waiting till the spirit of voluntary communication should again prompt him to resume his story. Andrew dug on manfully, and spoke at intervals, but nothing to the purpose of Mr. Macready's news; and I stood and listened, cursing him in my heart, and desirous at the same time to see how long his humour of contradiction would prevail over his desire of speaking upon the subject which was obviously uppermost in his mind.

"Am trenching up the sparry-grass, and am gaun to saw some Misegun beans; they winna want them to their swine's flesh, I'se warrant—muckle gude may it do them. And siclike dung as the grievie has gien me!—it should be wheat-strae, or aiten at the warst o't, and it's pease dirt, as fizenless as chuckie-stanes. But the huntsman guides a' as he likes about the stable-yard, and he's solded the best o' the litter, I'se warrant. But, howsoever, we mauna lose a turn o' this Saturday at e'en, for the wather's sair broken, and if there's a fair day in seven, Sunday's sure to come and lick it up—Howsomever, I'm no denying that it may settle, if it be Heaven's will, till Monday morning,—and what's the use o' my breaking my back at this rate?—I think, I'll e'en awa' hame, for yon's the curfew, as they ca' their jowing-in bell."

Accordingly, applying both his hands to his spade, he pitched it upright in the trench which he had been digging and, looking at me with the air of superiority of one who knows himself possessed of important information, which he may communicate or refuse at his pleasure, pulled down the sleeves of his shirt, and walked slowly towards his coat, which lay carefully folded up upon a neighbouring garden-seat.

"I must pay the penalty of having interrupted the tiresome rascal," thought I to myself, "and even gratify Mr. Fairservice by taking his communication on his own terms." Then raising my voice, I addressed him,—“And after all, Andrew, what are these London news you had from your kinsman, the travelling merchant?"

"The pedlar, your honour means?" retorted Andrew—"but ca' him what ye wull, they're a great convenience in a country-side that's scant o' borough-towns like this Northumberland—That's no the case, now, in Scotland,—there's the kingdom of Fife, frae Culross to the East Nuik, it's just like a great combined city—sae mony royal boroughs yoked on end to end, like ropes of ingans, with their hie-streets and their booths, nae doubt, and their kraemes, and houses of stane and lime and fore-stairs—Kirkcaldy, the sell o't, is langer than ony town in England."

"I daresay it is all very splendid and very fine—but you were talking of the London news a little while ago, Andrew."

"Ay," replied Andrew; "but I dinna think your honour cared to hear about them—Howsoever" (he continued, grinning a ghastly smile), "Pate Macready does say, that they are sair mistrysted yonder in their Parliament House about this rubbery o' Mr. Morris, or whatever they ca' the chiel."

"In the House of Parliament, Andrew!—how came they to mention it there?"

"Ou, that's just what I said to Pate; if it like your honour, I'll tell you the very words; it's no worth making a lie for the matter—'Pate,' said I, 'what ado had the lords and lairds and gentles at Lunnun wi' the carle and his walise?—When we had a Scotch Parliament, Pate,' says I (and deil rax their thrapples that reft us o't!) 'they sate dously down and made laws for a haill country and kinrick, and never fashed their beards about things that were competent to the judge ordinar o' the bounds; but I think,' said I, 'that if ae kailwife pou'd aff her neighbour's mutch they wad hae the twasome o' them into the Parliament House o' Lunnun. It's just,' said I, 'amaist as silly as our auld daft laird here and his gomerils o' sons, wi' his huntsmen and his hounds, and his hunting cattle and horns, riding haill days after a bit beast that winna weigh sax pund when they hae caught it.'"

"You argued most admirably, Andrew," said I, willing to encourage him to get into the marrow of his intelligence; "and what said Pate?"

"Ou," he said, "what better could be expected of a wheen pock-pudding English folk?—But as to the robbery, it's like that when they're a' at the thrang o' their Whig and Tory wark, and ca'ing ane anither, like unhangd blackguards—up gets ae lang-tongued chield, and he says, that a' the north of England were rank Jacobites (and, quietly, he wasna far wrang maybe), and that they had levied amaist open war, and a king's messenger had been stoppit and rubbit on the highway, and that the best bluid o' Northumberland had been at the doing o't—and mickle gowd ta'en aff him, and mony valuable papers; and that there was nae redress to be gotten by remeed of law for the first justice o' the peace that the rubbit man gaed to, he had fund the twa loons that did the deed birling and drinking

wi' him, wha but they; and the justice took the word o' the tane for the compearance o' the tither; and that they e'en gae him leg-bail, and the honest man that had lost his siller was fain to leave the country for fear that waur had come of it."

"Can this be really true?" said I.

"Pate swears it's as true as that his ellwand is a yard lang—and so it is, just bating an inch, that it may meet the English measure)—And when the chield had said his warst, there was a terrible cry for names, and out comes he wi' this man Morris's name, and your uncle's, and Squire Inglewood's, and other folk's beside" (looking sly at me)—"And then another dragon o' a chield got up on the other side, and said, wad they accuse the best gentleman in the land on the oath of a broken coward?—for it's like that Morris had been drummed out o' the army for rinning awa in Flanders; and he said, it was like the story had been made up between the minister and him or ever he had left Lunnun; and that, if there was to be a search-warrant granted, he thought the siller wad be fund some gate near to St. James's Palace. Aweel, they trailed up Morris to their bar, as they ca't, to see what he could say to the job; but the folk that were again him, gae him sic an awfu' throughgaun about his rinnin' awa, and about a' the ill he had ever dune or said for a' the forepart o' his life, that Patie says he looked mair like ane dead than living; and they cou'dna get a word o' sense out o' him, for downright fright at their growling and routing. He maun be a saft sap, wi' a head nae better than a fozy frosted turnip—it wad hae ta'en a hantle o' them to scaur Andrew Fairservice out o' his tale."

"And how did it all end, Andrew? did your friend happen to learn?"

"Ou, ay; for as his walk is in this country, Pate put aff his journey for the space of a week or thereby, because it wad be acceptable to his customers to bring down the news. It's just a' gaed aft like moonshine in water. The fallow that began it drew in his horns, and said, that though he believed the man had been rubbit, yet he acknowledged he might hae been mista'en about the particulars. And then the other chield got up, and said, he caredna whether Morris was rubbed or no, provided it wasna to become a stain on ony gentleman's honour and reputation, especially in the north of England; for, said he before them, I come frae the north mysell, and I carena a boddle wha kens it. And this is what they ca' explaining—the tane gies up a bit, and the tither gies up a bit, and a' friends again. Aweel, after the Commons' Parliament had tuggit, and rived, and rugged at Morris and his rubbery till they were tired o't, the Lords' Parliament they behoved to hae their spell o't. In puir auld Scotland's Parliament they a' sate thegither, cheek by choul, and than they didna need to hae the same blethers twice ower again. But till't their lordships went wi' as muckle teeth and gude-will, as if the matter had been a' speck and span new. Forbye, there was something said about ane Campbell, that suld hae been concerned in the rubbery, mair or less, and that he suld hae had a warrant frae the Duke of Argyle, as a testimonial o' his character. And this put MacCallum More's beard in a bleize, as gude reason there was; and he gat up wi' an unco bang, and garr'd them a' look about them, and wad ram it even doun their throats, there was never ane o' the Campbells but was as wight, wise, warlike, and worthy trust, as auld Sir John the Graeme. Now, if your honour's sure ye arena a drap's bluid a-kin to a Campbell, as I am nane mysell, sae far as I can count my kin, or hae had it counted to me, I'll gie ye my mind on that matter."

"You may be assured I have no connection whatever with any gentleman of the name."

"Ou, than we may speak it quietly amang ourselfs. There's baith gude and bad o' the Campbells, like other names, But this MacCallum More has an unco sway and say baith, amang the grit folk at Lunnun even now; for he canna preceesely be said to belang to ony o' the twa sides o' them, sae deil any o' them likes to quarrel wi' him; sae they e'en voted Morris's tale a fause calumnious libel, as they ca't, and if he hadna gien them leg-bail, he was likely to hae ta'en the air on the pillory for leasing-making."

So speaking, honest Andrew collected his dibbles, spades, and hoes, and threw them into a wheel-barrow,—leisurely, however, and allowing me full time to put any further questions which might occur to me before he trundled them off to the tool-house, there to repose during the ensuing day. I thought it best to speak out at once, lest this meddling fellow should suppose there were more weighty reasons for my silence than actually existed.

"I should like to see this countryman of yours, Andrew and to hear his news from himself directly. You have probably heard that I had some trouble from the impertinent folly of this man Morris" (Andrew grinned a most significant grin), "and I should wish to see your cousin the merchant, to ask him the particulars of what he heard in London, if it could be done without much trouble."

"Naething mair easy," Andrew observed; "he had but to hint to his cousin that I wanted a pair or twa o' hose, and he wad be wi' me as fast as he could lay leg to the grund."

"O yes, assure him I shall be a customer; and as the night is, as you say, settled and fair, I shall walk in the garden until he comes; the moon will soon rise over the fells. You may bring him to the little back-gate; and I shall have pleasure, in the meanwhile, in looking on the bushes and evergreens by the bright frosty moonlight."

"Vara right, vara right—that's what I hae aften said; a kail-blade, or a colliflour, glances sae glegly by moonlight, it's like a ledly in her diamonds."

So saying, off went Andrew Fairservice with great glee. He had to walk about two miles, a labour he undertook with the greatest pleasure, in order to secure to his kinsman the sale of some articles of his trade, though it is probable he would not have given him sixpence to treat him to a quart of ale. "The good will of an Englishman would have displayed itself in a manner exactly the reverse of Andrew's," thought I, as I paced along the smooth-cut velvet walks, which, embowered with high, hedges of yew and of holly, intersected the ancient garden of Osbaldistone Hall.

As I turned to retrace my steps, it was natural that I should lift up my eyes to the windows of the old library; which, small in size, but several in number, stretched along the second story of that side of the house which now faced me. Light glanced from their casements. I was not surprised at this, for I knew Miss Vernon often sat there of an evening, though from motives of delicacy I put a strong restraint upon myself, and never sought to join her at a time when I knew, all the rest of the family being engaged for the evening, our interviews must necessarily have been strictly *tete-a-tete*. In the mornings we usually read together in the same room; but then it often happened that one or other of our cousins entered to seek some parchment duodecimo that could be converted into a fishing-book, despite its gildings and illumination, or to tell us of some "sport toward," or from mere want of knowing where else to dispose of themselves. In short, in the mornings the library was a sort of public room, where man and woman might meet as on neutral ground. In the evening it was very different and bred in a country where much attention is paid, or was at least then paid, to *biense'ance*, I was desirous to think for Miss Vernon concerning those points of propriety where her experience did not afford her the means of thinking for herself. I made her therefore comprehend, as delicately as I could, that when we had evening lessons, the presence of a third party was proper.

Miss Vernon first laughed, then blushed, and was disposed to be displeased; and then, suddenly checking herself, said, "I believe you are very right; and when I feel inclined to be a very busy scholar, I will bribe old Martha with a cup of tea to sit by me and be my screen."

Martha, the old housekeeper, partook of the taste of the family at the Hall. A toast and tankard would have pleased her better than all the tea in China. However, as the use of this beverage was then confined to the higher ranks, Martha felt some vanity in being asked to partake of it; and by dint of a great deal of sugar, many words scarce less sweet, and abundance of toast and butter, she was sometimes prevailed upon to give us her countenance. On other occasions, the servants almost unanimously shunned the library after nightfall, because it was their foolish pleasure to believe that it lay on the haunted side of the house. The more timorous had seen sights and heard sounds there when all the rest of the house was quiet; and even the young squires were far from having any wish to enter these formidable precincts after nightfall without necessity.

That the library had at one time been a favourite resource of Rashleigh—that a private door out of one side of it communicated with the sequestered and remote apartment which he chose for himself, rather increased than disarmed the terrors which the household had for the dreaded library of Osbaldistone Hall. His extensive information as to what passed in the world—his profound knowledge of science of every kind—a few physical experiments which he occasionally showed off, were, in a house of so much ignorance and bigotry, esteemed good reasons for supposing him endowed with powers over the spiritual world. He understood Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; and, therefore, according to the apprehension, and in the phrase of his brother Wilfred, needed not to care "for ghaist or bar-ghaist, devil or dobbie." Yea, the servants persisted that they had heard him hold conversations in the library, when every varsal soul in the family were gone

to bed; and that he spent the night in watching for bogles, and the morning in sleeping in his bed, when he should have been heading the hounds like a true Osbaldistone.

All these absurd rumours I had heard in broken hints and imperfect sentences, from which I was left to draw the inference; and, as easily may be supposed, I laughed them to scorn. But the extreme solitude to which this chamber of evil fame was committed every night after curfew time, was an additional reason why I should not intrude on Miss Vernon when she chose to sit there in the evening.

To resume what I was saying,—I was not surprised to see a glimmering of light from the library windows: but I was a little struck when I distinctly perceived the shadows of two persons pass along and intercept the light from the first of the windows, throwing the casement for a moment into shade. "It must be old Martha," thought I, "whom Diana has engaged to be her companion for the evening; or I must have been mistaken, and taken Diana's shadow for a second person. No, by Heaven! it appears on the second window,—two figures distinctly traced; and now it is lost again—it is seen on the third—on the fourth—the darkened forms of two persons distinctly seen in each window as they pass along the room, betwixt the windows and the lights. Whom can Diana have got for a companion?"—The passage of the shadows between the lights and the casements was twice repeated, as if to satisfy me that my observation served me truly; after which the lights were extinguished, and the shades, of course, were seen no more.

Trifling as this circumstance was, it occupied my mind for a considerable time. I did not allow myself to suppose that my friendship for Miss Vernon had any directly selfish view; yet it is incredible the displeasure I felt at the idea of her admitting any one to private interviews, at a time, and in a place, where, for her own sake, I had been at some trouble to show her that it was improper for me to meet with her.

"Silly, romping, incorrigible girl!" said I to myself, "on whom all good advice and delicacy are thrown away! I have been cheated by the simplicity of her manner, which I suppose she can assume just as she could a straw bonnet, were it the fashion, for the mere sake of celebrity. I suppose, notwithstanding the excellence of her understanding, the society of half a dozen of clowns to play at whisk and swabbers would give her more pleasure than if Ariosto himself were to awake from the dead."

This reflection came the more powerfully across my mind, because, having mustered up courage to show to Diana my version of the first books of Ariosto, I had requested her to invite Martha to a tea-party in the library that evening, to which arrangement Miss Vernon had refused her consent, alleging some apology which I thought frivolous at the time. I had not long speculated on this disagreeable subject, when the back garden-door opened, and the figures of Andrew and his country-man—bending under his pack—crossed the moonlight alley, and called my attention elsewhere.

I found Mr. Macready, as I expected, a tough, sagacious, long-headed Scotchman, and a collector of news both from choice and profession. He was able to give me a distinct account of what had passed in the House of Commons and House of Lords on the affair of Morris, which, it appears, had been made by both parties a touchstone to ascertain the temper of the Parliament. It appeared also, that, as I had learned from Andrew, by second hand, the ministry had proved too weak to support a story involving the character of men of rank and importance, and resting upon the credit of a person of such indifferent fame as Morris, who was, moreover, confused and contradictory in his mode of telling the story. Macready was even able to supply me with a copy of a printed journal, or News-Letter, seldom extending beyond the capital, in which the substance of the debate was mentioned; and with a copy of the Duke of Argyle's speech, printed upon a broadside, of which he had purchased several from the hawkers, because, he said, it would be a saleable article on the north of the Tweed. The first was a meagre statement, full of blanks and asterisks, and which added little or nothing to the information I had from the Scotchman; and the Duke's speech, though spirited and eloquent, contained chiefly a panegyric on his country, his family, and his clan, with a few compliments, equally sincere, perhaps, though less glowing, which he took so favourable an opportunity of paying to himself. I could not learn whether my own reputation had been directly implicated, although I perceived that the honour of my uncle's family had been impeached, and that this person Campbell, stated by Morris to have been the most active robber of the two by whom he was assailed, was said by him to have appeared in the behalf of a Mr. Osbaldistone, and by the connivance of the Justice procured his liberation. In this particular, Morris's story jumped with my own suspicions, which had attached to Campbell from the moment I saw him appear at Justice Inglewood's. Vexed upon the whole, as well as perplexed, with this extraordinary story, I dismissed the two Scotchmen, after making some purchases from Macready, and a small compliment to Fairservice, and retired to my own apartment to consider what I ought to do in defence of my character thus publicly attacked.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

Whence, and what art you?

Milton.

After exhausting a sleepless night in meditating on the intelligence I had received, I was at first inclined to think that I ought, as speedily as possible, to return to London, and by my open appearance repel the calumny which had been spread against me. But I hesitated to take this course on recollection of my father's disposition, singularly absolute in his decisions as to all that concerned his family. He was most able, certainly, from experience, to direct what I ought to do, and from his acquaintance with the most distinguished Whigs then in power, had influence enough to obtain a hearing for my cause. So, upon the whole, I judged it most safe to state my whole story in the shape of a narrative, addressed to my father; and as the ordinary opportunities of intercourse between the Hall and the post-town recurred rarely, I determined to ride to the town, which was about ten miles' distance, and deposit my letter in the post-office with my own hands.

Indeed I began to think it strange that though several weeks had elapsed since my departure from home, I had received no letter, either from my father or Owen, although Rashleigh had written to Sir Hildebrand of his safe arrival in London, and of the kind reception he had met with from his uncle. Admitting that I might have been to blame, I did not deserve, in my own opinion at least, to be so totally forgotten by my father; and I thought my present excursion might have the effect of bringing a letter from him to hand more early than it would otherwise have reached me. But before concluding my letter concerning the affair of Morris, I failed not to express my earnest hope and wish that my father would honour me with a few lines, were it but to express his advice and commands in an affair of some difficulty, and where my knowledge of life could not be supposed adequate to my own guidance. I found it impossible to prevail on myself to urge my actual return to London as a place of residence, and I disguised my unwillingness to do so under apparent submission to my father's will, which, as I imposed it on myself as a sufficient reason for not urging my final departure from Osbaldistone Hall, would, I doubted not, be received as such by my parent. But I begged permission to come to London, for a short time at least, to meet and refute the infamous calumnies which had been circulated concerning me in so public a manner. Having made up my packet, in which my earnest desire to vindicate my character was strangely blended with reluctance to quit my present place of residence, I rode over to the post-town, and deposited my letter in the office. By doing so, I obtained possession, somewhat earlier than I should otherwise have done, of the following letter from my friend Mr. Owen:—

"Dear Mr. Francis,

"Yours received per favour of Mr. R. Osbaldistone, and note the contents. Shall do Mr. R. O. such civilities as are in my power, and have taken him to see the Bank and Custom-house. He seems a sober, steady young gentleman, and takes to business; so will be of service to the firm. Could have wished another person had turned his mind that way; but God's will be done. As cash may be scarce in those parts, have to trust you will excuse my enclosing a goldsmith's bill at six days' sight, on Messrs. Hooper and Girder of Newcastle, for L100, which I doubt not will be duly honoured.—I remain, as in duty bound, dear Mr. Frank, your very respectful and obedient servant,

"Joseph Owen.

"*Postscriptum.*—Hope you will advise the above coming safe to hand. Am sorry we have so few of yours. Your father says he is as usual, but looks poorly."

From this epistle, written in old Owen's formal style, I was rather surprised to observe that he made no acknowledgment of that private letter which I had written to him, with a view to possess him of Rashleigh's real character, although, from the course of post, it seemed certain that he ought to have received it. Yet I had sent

it by the usual conveyance from the Hall, and had no reason to suspect that it could miscarry upon the road. As it comprised matters of great importance both to my father and to myself, I sat down in the post-office and again wrote to Owen, recapitulating the heads of my former letter, and requesting to know, in course of post, if it had reached him in safety. I also acknowledged the receipt of the bill, and promised to make use of the contents if I should have any occasion for money. I thought, indeed, it was odd that my father should leave the care of supplying my necessities to his clerk; but I concluded it was a matter arranged between them. At any rate, Owen was a bachelor, rich in his way, and passionately attached to me, so that I had no hesitation in being obliged to him for a small sum, which I resolved to consider as a loan, to be returned with my earliest ability, in case it was not previously repaid by my father; and I expressed myself to this purpose to Mr. Owen. A shopkeeper in a little town, to whom the post-master directed me, readily gave me in gold the amount of my bill on Messrs. Hooper and Girder, so that I returned to Osbaldistone Hall a good deal richer than I had set forth. This recruit to my finances was not a matter of indifference to me, as I was necessarily involved in some expenses at Osbaldistone Hall; and I had seen, with some uneasy impatience, that the sum which my travelling expenses had left unexhausted at my arrival there was imperceptibly diminishing. This source of anxiety was for the present removed. On my arrival at the Hall I found that Sir Hildebrand and all his offspring had gone down to the little hamlet, called Trinlay-knowes, "to see," as Andrew Fairservice expressed it, "a wheen midden cocks pike ilk ither's barns out."

"It is indeed a brutal amusement, Andrew; I suppose you have none such in Scotland?"

"Na, na," answered Andrew boldly; then shaded away his negative with, "unless it be on Fastern's-e'en, or the like o' that—But indeed it's no muckle matter what the folk do to the midden pootry, for they had siccan a skarting and scraping in the yard, that there's nae getting a bean or pea keepit for them.—But I am wondering what it is that leaves that turret-door open;—now that Mr. Rashleigh's away, it canna be him, I trow."

The turret-door to which he alluded opened to the garden at the bottom of a winding stair, leading down from Mr. Rashleigh's apartment. This, as I have already mentioned, was situated in a sequestered part of the house, communicating with the library by a private entrance, and by another intricate and dark vaulted passage with the rest of the house. A long narrow turf walk led, between two high holly hedges, from the turret-door to a little postern in the wall of the garden. By means of these communications Rashleigh, whose movements were very independent of those of the rest of his family, could leave the Hall or return to it at pleasure, without his absence or presence attracting any observation. But during his absence the stair and the turret-door were entirely disused, and this made Andrew's observation somewhat remarkable.

"Have you often observed that door open?" was my question.

"No just that often neither; but I hae noticed it ance or twice. I'm thinking it maun hae been the priest, Father Vaughan, as they ca' him. Ye'll no catch ane o' the servants gauging up that stair, puir frightened heathens that they are, for fear of bogles and brownies, and lang-nebbit things frae the neist warld. But Father Vaughan thinks himself a privileged person—set him up and lay him down!—I'se be caution the warst stibbler that ever stickit a sermon out ower the Tweed yonder, wad lay a ghaist twice as fast as him, wi' his holy water and his idolatrous trinkets. I dinna believe he speaks gude Latin neither; at least he disna take me up when I tell him the learned names o' the plants."

Of Father Vaughan, who divided his time and his ghostly care between Osbaldistone Hall and about half a dozen mansions of Catholic gentlemen in the neighbourhood, I have as yet said nothing, for I had seen but little. He was aged about sixty—of a good family, as I was given to understand, in the north—of a striking and imposing presence, grave in his exterior, and much respected among the Catholics of Northumberland as a worthy and upright man. Yet Father Vaughan did not altogether lack those peculiarities which distinguish his order. There hung about him an air of mystery, which, in Protestant eyes, savoured of priestcraft. The natives (such they might be well termed) of Osbaldistone Hall looked up to him with much more fear, or at least more awe, than affection. His condemnation of their revels was evident, from their being discontinued in some measure when the priest was a resident at the Hall. Even Sir Hildebrand himself put some restraint upon his conduct at such times, which, perhaps, rendered Father Vaughan's presence rather irksome than otherwise. He had the well-bred, insinuating, and almost flattering address peculiar to the clergy of his persuasion, especially in England, where the lay Catholic, hemmed in by penal laws, and by the restrictions of his sect and recommendation of his pastor, often exhibits a reserved, and almost a timid manner in the society of Protestants; while the priest, privileged by his order to mingle with persons of all creeds, is open, alert, and liberal in his intercourse with them, desirous of popularity, and usually skilful in the mode of obtaining it.

Father Vaughan was a particular acquaintance of Rashleigh's, otherwise, in all probability, he would scarce have been able to maintain his footing at Osbaldistone Hall. This gave me no desire to cultivate his intimacy, nor did he seem to make any advances towards mine; so our occasional intercourse was confined to the exchange of mere civility. I considered it as extremely probable that Mr. Vaughan might occupy Rashleigh's apartment during his occasional residence at the Hall; and his profession rendered it likely that he should occasionally be a tenant of the library. Nothing was more probable than that it might have been his candle which had excited my attention on a preceding evening. This led me involuntarily to recollect that the intercourse between Miss Vernon and the priest was marked with something like the same mystery which characterised her communications with Rashleigh. I had never heard her mention Vaughan's name, or even allude to him, excepting on the occasion of our first meeting, when she mentioned the old priest and Rashleigh as the only conversable beings, besides herself, in Osbaldistone Hall. Yet although silent with respect to Father Vaughan, his arrival at the Hall never failed to impress Miss Vernon with an anxious and fluttering tremor, which lasted until they had exchanged one or two significant glances.

Whatever the mystery might be which overclouded the destinies of this beautiful and interesting female, it was clear that Father Vaughan was implicated in it; unless, indeed, I could suppose that he was the agent employed to procure her settlement in the cloister, in the event of her rejecting a union with either of my cousins,—an office which would sufficiently account for her obvious emotion at his appearance. As to the rest, they did not seem to converse much together, or even to seek each other's society. Their league, if any subsisted between them, was of a tacit and understood nature, operating on their actions without any necessity of speech. I recollected, however, on reflection, that I had once or twice discovered signs pass betwixt them, which I had at the time supposed to bear reference to some hint concerning Miss Vernon's religious observances, knowing how artfully the Catholic clergy maintain, at all times and seasons, their influence over the minds of their followers. But now I was disposed to assign to these communications a deeper and more mysterious import. Did he hold private meetings with Miss Vernon in the library? was a question which occupied my thoughts; and if so, for what purpose? And why should she have admitted an intimate of the deceitful Rashleigh to such close confidence?

These questions and difficulties pressed on my mind with an interest which was greatly increased by the impossibility of resolving them. I had already begun to suspect that my friendship for Diana Vernon was not altogether so disinterested as in wisdom it ought to have been. I had already felt myself becoming jealous of the contemptible lout Thorndcliff, and taking more notice, than in prudence or dignity of feeling I ought to have done, of his silly attempts to provoke me. And now I was scrutinising the conduct of Miss Vernon with the most close and eager observation, which I in vain endeavoured to palm on myself as the offspring of idle curiosity. All these, like Benedick's brushing his hat of a morning, were signs that the sweet youth was in love; and while my judgment still denied that I had been guilty of forming an attachment so imprudent, she resembled those ignorant guides, who, when they have led the traveller and themselves into irretrievable error, persist in obstinately affirming it to be impossible that they can have missed the way.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

It happened one day about noon, going to my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen on the sand.

Robinson Crusoe.

With the blended feelings of interest and jealousy which were engendered by Miss Vernon's singular situation, my observations of her looks and actions became acutely sharpened, and that to a degree which, notwithstanding my efforts to conceal it, could not escape her penetration. The sense that she was observed, or, more properly speaking, that she was watched by my looks, seemed to give Diana a mixture of embarrassment, pain, and pettishness. At times it seemed that she sought an opportunity of resenting a conduct which she could not but feel as offensive, considering the frankness with which she had mentioned the difficulties that surrounded her. At other times she seemed prepared to expostulate upon the subject. But either her courage failed, or some other sentiment impeded her seeking an *eclaircissement*. Her displeasure evaporated in repartee, and her expostulations died on her lips. We stood in a singular relation to each other,—spending, and by mutual choice, much of our time in close society with each other, yet disguising our mutual sentiments, and jealous of, or offended by, each other's actions. There was betwixt us intimacy without confidence;—on one side, love without hope or purpose, and curiosity without any rational or justifiable motive; and on the other, embarrassment and doubt, occasionally mingled with displeasure. Yet I believe that this agitation of the passions (such is the nature of the human bosom), as it continued by a thousand irritating and interesting, though petty circumstances, to render Miss Vernon and me the constant objects of each other's thoughts, tended, upon the whole, to increase the attachment with which we were naturally disposed to regard each other. But although my vanity early discovered that my presence at Osbaldistone Hall had given Diana some additional reason for disliking the cloister, I could by no means confide in an affection which seemed completely subordinate to the mysteries of her singular situation. Miss Vernon was of a character far too formed and determined, to permit her love for me to overpower either her sense of duty or of prudence, and she gave me a proof of this in a conversation which we had together about this period. We were sitting together in the library. Miss Vernon, in turning over a copy of the Orlando Furioso, which belonged to me, shook a piece of writing paper from between the leaves. I hastened to lift it, but she prevented me.—"It is verse," she said, on glancing at the paper; and then unfolding it, but as if to wait my answer before proceeding—"May I take the liberty?—Nay, nay, if you blush and stammer, I must do violence to your modesty, and suppose that permission is granted." "It is not worthy your perusal—a scrap of a translation—My dear Miss Vernon, it would be too severe a trial, that you, who understand the original so well, should sit in judgment."

"Mine honest friend," replied Diana, "do not, if you will be guided by my advice, bait your hook with too much humility; for, ten to one, it will not catch a single compliment. You know I belong to the unpopular family of Tell-truths, and would not flatter Apollo for his lyre."

She proceeded to read the first stanza, which was nearly to the following purpose:—

*"Ladies, and knights, and arms, and love's fair flame,
Deeds of emprise and courtesy, I sing;
What time the Moors from sultry Africk came,
Led on by Agramant, their youthful king—
He whom revenge and hasty ire did bring
O'er the broad wave, in France to waste and war;
Such ills from old Trojano's death did spring,
Which to avenge he came from realms afar,
And menaced Christian Charles, the Roman Emperor.
Of dauntless Roland, too, my strain shall sound,
In import never known in prose or rhyme,
How He, the chief, of judgment deemed profound,
For luckless love was crazed upon a time"—*

"There is a great deal of it," said she, glancing along the paper, and interrupting the sweetest sounds which mortal ears can drink in,—those of a youthful poet's verses, namely, read by the lips which are dearest to him.

"Much more than ought to engage your attention, Miss Vernon," I replied, something mortified; and I took the verses from her reluctant hand—"And yet," I continued, "shut up as I am in this retired situation, I have felt sometimes I could not amuse myself better than by carrying on—merely for my own amusement, you will of course understand—the version of this fascinating author, which I began some months since when I was on the banks of the Garonne."

"The question would only be," said Diana, gravely, "whether you could not spend your time to better purpose?"

"You mean in original composition?" said I, greatly flattered—"But, to say truth, my genius rather lies in finding words and rhymes than ideas; and therefore I am happy to use those which Ariosto has prepared to my hand. However, Miss Vernon, with the encouragement you give"—

"Pardon me, Frank—it is encouragement not of my giving, but of your taking. I meant neither original composition nor translation, since I think you might employ your time to far better purpose than in either. You are mortified," she continued, "and I am sorry to be the cause."

"Not mortified,—certainly not mortified," said I, with the best grace I could muster, and it was but indifferently assumed; "I am too much obliged by the interest you take in me."

"Nay, but," resumed the relentless Diana, "there is both mortification and a little grain of anger in that constrained tone of voice; do not be angry if I probe your feelings to the bottom—perhaps what I am about to say will affect them still more."

I felt the childishness of my own conduct, and the superior manliness of Miss Vernon's, and assured her, that she need not fear my wincing under criticism which I knew to be kindly meant.

"That was honestly meant and said," she replied; "I knew full well that the fiend of poetical irritability flew away with the little preluding cough which ushered in the declaration. And now I must be serious—Have you heard from your father lately?"

"Not a word," I replied; "he has not honoured me with a single line during the several months of my residence here."

"That is strange!—you are a singular race, you bold Osbaldistones. Then you are not aware that he has gone to Holland, to arrange some pressing affairs which required his own immediate presence?"

"I never heard a word of it until this moment."

"And farther, it must be news to you, and I presume scarcely the most agreeable, that he has left Rashleigh in the almost uncontrolled management of his affairs until his return."

I started, and could not suppress my surprise and apprehension.

"You have reason for alarm," said Miss Vernon, very gravely; "and were I you, I would endeavour to meet and obviate the dangers which arise from so undesirable an arrangement."

"And how is it possible for me to do so?"

"Everything is possible for him who possesses courage and activity," she said, with a look resembling one of those heroines of the age of chivalry, whose encouragement was wont to give champions double valour at the hour of need; "and to the timid and hesitating, everything is impossible, because it seems so."

"And what would you advise, Miss Vernon?" I replied, wishing, yet dreading, to hear her answer.

She paused a moment, then answered firmly—"That you instantly leave Osbaldistone Hall, and return to London. You have perhaps already," she continued, in a softer tone, "been here too long; that fault was not yours. Every succeeding moment you waste here will be a crime. Yes, a crime: for I tell you plainly, that if Rashleigh long manages your father's affairs, you may consider his ruin as consummated."

"How is this possible?"

"Ask no questions," she said; "but believe me, Rashleigh's views extend far beyond the possession or increase of commercial wealth: he will only make the command of Mr. Osbaldistone's revenues and property the means of putting in motion his own ambitious and extensive schemes. While your father was in Britain this was impossible; during his absence, Rashleigh will possess many opportunities, and he will not neglect to use them."

"But how can I, in disgrace with my father, and divested of all control over his affairs, prevent this danger by my mere presence in London?"

"That presence alone will do much. Your claim to interfere is a part of your birthright, and it is inalienable. You will have the countenance, doubtless, of your father's head-clerk, and confidential friends and partners. Above all, Rashleigh's schemes are of a nature that"—(she stopped abruptly, as if fearful of saying too much)—"are, in short," she resumed, "of the nature of all selfish and unconscientious plans, which are speedily abandoned as soon as those who frame them perceive their arts are discovered and watched. Therefore, in the language of your favourite poet—

To horse! to horse! Urge doubts to those that fear."

A feeling, irresistible in its impulse, induced me to reply—"Ah! Diana, can you give me advice to leave Osbaldistone Hall?—then indeed I have already been a resident here too long!"

Miss Vernon coloured, but proceeded with great firmness—"Indeed, I do give you this advice—not only to quit Osbaldistone Hall, but never to return to it more. You have only one friend to regret here," she continued, forcing a smile, "and she has been long accustomed to sacrifice her friendships and her comforts to the welfare of others. In the world you will meet a hundred whose friendship will be as disinterested—more useful—less encumbered by untoward circumstances—less influenced by evil tongues and evil times."

"Never!" I exclaimed, "never!—the world can afford me nothing to repay what I must leave behind me." Here I took her hand, and pressed it to my lips.

"This is folly!" she exclaimed—"this is madness!" and she struggled to withdraw her hand from my grasp, but not so stubbornly as actually to succeed until I had held it for nearly a minute. "Hear me, sir!" she said, "and curb this unmanly burst of passion. I am, by a solemn contract, the bride of Heaven, unless I could prefer being wedded to villany in the person of Rashleigh Osbaldistone, or brutality in that of his brother. I am, therefore, the bride of Heaven,—betrothed to the convent from the cradle. To me, therefore, these raptures are misapplied—they only serve to prove a farther necessity for your departure, and that without delay." At these words she broke suddenly off, and said, but in a suppressed tone of voice, "Leave me instantly—we will meet here again, but it must be for the last time."

My eyes followed the direction of hers as she spoke, and I thought I saw the tapestry shake, which covered the door of the secret passage from Rashleigh's room to the library. I conceived we were observed, and turned an inquiring glance on Miss Vernon.

"It is nothing," said she, faintly; "a rat behind the arras."

"Dead for a ducat," would have been my reply, had I dared to give way to the feelings which rose indignant at the idea of being subjected to an eaves-dropper on such an occasion. Prudence, and the necessity of suppressing my passion, and obeying Diana's reiterated command of "Leave me! leave me!" came in time to prevent my rash action. I left the apartment in a wild whirl and giddiness of mind, which I in vain attempted to compose when I returned to my own.

A chaos of thoughts intruded themselves on me at once, passing hastily through my brain, intercepting and overshadowing each other, and resembling those fogs which in mountainous countries are wont to descend in obscure volumes, and disfigure or obliterate the usual marks by which the traveller steers his course through the wilds. The dark and undefined idea of danger arising to my father from the machinations of such a man as Rashleigh Osbaldistone—the half declaration of love that I had offered to Miss Vernon's acceptance—the acknowledged difficulties of her situation, bound by a previous contract to sacrifice herself to a cloister or to an ill-assorted marriage,—all pressed themselves at once upon my recollection, while my judgment was unable deliberately to consider any of them in their just light and bearings. But chiefly and above all the rest, I was perplexed by the manner in which Miss Vernon had received my tender of affection, and by her manner, which, fluctuating betwixt sympathy and firmness, seemed to intimate that I possessed an interest in her bosom, but not of force sufficient to counterbalance the obstacles to her avowing a mutual affection. The glance of fear, rather than surprise, with which she had watched the motion of the tapestry over the concealed door, implied an apprehension of danger which I could not but suppose well grounded; for Diana Vernon was little subject to the nervous emotions of her sex, and totally unapt to fear without actual and rational cause. Of what nature could those mysteries be, with which she was surrounded as with an enchanter's spell, and which seemed continually to exert an active influence over her thoughts and actions, though their agents were never visible? On this subject of doubt my mind finally rested, as if glad to shake itself free from investigating the propriety or prudence of my own conduct, by transferring the inquiry to what concerned Miss Vernon. I will be resolved, I concluded, ere I leave Osbaldistone Hall, concerning the light in which I must in future regard this fascinating being, over whose life frankness and mystery seem to have divided their reign,—the former inspiring her words and sentiments—the latter spreading in misty influence over all her actions.

Joined to the obvious interests which arose from curiosity and anxious passion, there mingled in my feelings a strong, though unavowed and undefined, infusion of jealousy. This sentiment, which springs up with love as naturally as the tares with the wheat, was excited by the degree of influence which Diana appeared to concede to those unseen beings by whom her actions were limited. The more I reflected upon her character, the more I was internally though unwillingly convinced, that she was formed to set at defiance all control, excepting that which arose from affection; and I felt a strong, bitter, and gnawing suspicion, that such was the foundation of that influence by which she was overawed.

These tormenting doubts strengthened my desire to penetrate into the secret of Miss Vernon's conduct, and in the prosecution of this sage adventure, I formed a resolution, of which, if you are not weary of these details, you will find the result in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

*I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which says, I must not stay;
I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me awry.
Tickell.*

I have already told you, Tresham, if you deign to bear it in remembrance, that my evening visits to the library had seldom been made except by appointment, and under the sanction of old Dame Martha's presence. This, however, was entirely a tacit conventional arrangement of my own instituting. Of late, as the embarrassments of our relative situation had increased, Miss Vernon and I had never met in the evening at all. She had therefore no reason to suppose that I was likely to seek a renewal of these interviews, and especially without some previous notice or appointment betwixt us, that Martha might, as usual, be placed upon duty; but, on the other hand, this cautionary provision was a matter of understanding, not of express enactment. The library was open to me, as to the other members of the family, at all hours of the day and night, and I could not be accused of intrusion, however suddenly and unexpectedly I might make my appearance in it. My belief was strong, that in this apartment Miss Vernon occasionally received Vaughan, or some other person, by whose opinion she was accustomed to regulate her conduct, and that at the times when she could do so with least chance of interruption. The lights which gleamed in the library at unusual hours—the passing shadows which I had myself remarked—the footsteps which might be traced in the morning-dew from the turret-door to the postern-gate in the garden—sounds and sights which some of the servants, and Andrew Fairservice in particular, had observed, and accounted for in their own way,—all tended to show that the place was visited by some one different from the ordinary inmates of the hall. Connected as this visitant probably must be with the fates of Diana Vernon, I did not hesitate to form a plan of discovering who or what he was,—how far his influence was likely to produce good or evil consequences to her on whom he acted;—above all, though I endeavoured to persuade myself that this was a mere subordinate consideration, I desired to know by what means this person had acquired or maintained his influence over Diana, and whether he ruled over her by fear or by affection. The proof that this jealous curiosity was

uppermost in my mind, arose from my imagination always ascribing Miss Vernon's conduct to the influence of some one individual agent, although, for aught I knew about the matter, her advisers might be as numerous as the Legion. I remarked this over and over to myself; but I found that my mind still settled back in my original conviction, that one single individual, of the masculine sex, and in all probability young and handsome, was at the bottom of Miss Vernon's conduct; and it was with a burning desire of discovering, or rather of detecting, such a rival, that I stationed myself in the garden to watch the moment when the lights should appear in the library windows.

So eager, however, was my impatience, that I commenced my watch for a phenomenon, which could not appear until darkness, a full hour before the daylight disappeared, on a July evening. It was Sabbath, and all the walks were still and solitary. I walked up and down for some time, enjoying the refreshing coolness of a summer evening, and meditating on the probable consequences of my enterprise. The fresh and balmy air of the garden, impregnated with fragrance, produced its usual sedative effects on my over-heated and feverish blood. As these took place, the turmoil of my mind began proportionally to abate, and I was led to question the right I had to interfere with Miss Vernon's secrets, or with those of my uncle's family. What was it to me whom my uncle might choose to conceal in his house, where I was myself a guest only by tolerance? And what title had I to pry into the affairs of Miss Vernon, fraught, as she had avowed them to be, with mystery, into which she desired no scrutiny?

Passion and self-will were ready with their answers to these questions. In detecting this secret, I was in all probability about to do service to Sir Hildebrand, who was probably ignorant of the intrigues carried on in his family—and a still more important service to Miss Vernon, whose frank simplicity of character exposed her to so many risks in maintaining a private correspondence, perhaps with a person of doubtful or dangerous character. If I seemed to intrude myself on her confidence, it was with the generous and disinterested (yes, I even ventured to call it the *disinterested*) intention of guiding, defending, and protecting her against craft—against malice,—above all, against the secret counsellor whom she had chosen for her confidant. Such were the arguments which my will boldly preferred to my conscience, as coin which ought to be current, and which conscience, like a grumbling shopkeeper, was contented to accept, rather than come to an open breach with a customer, though more than doubting that the tender was spurious.

While I paced the green alleys, debating these things *pro* and *con*, I suddenly alighted upon Andrew Fairservice, perched up like a statue by a range of bee-hives, in an attitude of devout contemplation—one eye, however, watching the motions of the little irritable citizens, who were settling in their straw-thatched mansion for the evening, and the other fixed on a book of devotion, which much attrition had deprived of its corners, and worn into an oval shape; a circumstance which, with the close print and dingy colour of the volume in question, gave it an air of most respectable antiquity.

"I was e'en taking a spell o' worthy Mess John Quackleben's Flower of a Sweet Savour sown on the Middenstead of this World," said Andrew, closing his book at my appearance, and putting his horn spectacles, by way of mark, at the place where he had been reading.

"And the bees, I observe, were dividing your attention, Andrew, with the learned author?"

"They are a contumacious generation," replied the gardener; "they hae sax days in the week to hive on, and yet it's a common observe that they will aye swarm on the Sabbath-day, and keep folk at hame frae hearing the word—But there's nae preaching at Graneagain chapel the e'en—that's aye ae mercy."

"You might have gone to the parish church as I did, Andrew, and heard an excellent discourse."

"Clauts o' could parritch—clauts o' could parritch," replied Andrew, with a most supercilious sneer,—"*gude aneueh* for dogs, begging your honour's pardon—Ay! I might nae doubt hae heard the curate linking awa at it in his white sark yonder, and the musicians playing on whistles, mair like a penny-wedding than a sermon—and to the boot of that, I might hae gaen to even-song, and heard Daddie Docharty mumbling his mass—muckle the better I wad hae been o' that!"

"Docharty!" said I (this was the name of an old priest, an Irishman, I think, who sometimes officiated at Osbaldistone Hall)—"I thought Father Vaughan had been at the Hall. He was here yesterday."

"Ay," replied Andrew; "but he left it yestreen, to gang to Greystock, or some o' thae west-country haulds. There's an unco stir among them a' e'enow. They are as busy as my bees are—God sain them! that I suld even the pair things to the like o' papists. Ye see this is the second swarm, and whiles they will swarm off in the afternoon. The first swarm set off sune in the morning.—But I am thinking they are settled in their skeps for the night; sae I wuss your honour good-night, and grace, and muckle o't."

So saying, Andrew retreated, but often cast a parting glance upon the *skeps*, as he called the bee-hives.

I had indirectly gained from him an important piece of information, that Father Vaughan, namely, was not supposed to be at the Hall. If, therefore, there appeared light in the windows of the library this evening, it either could not be his, or he was observing a very secret and suspicious line of conduct. I waited with impatience the time of sunset and of twilight. It had hardly arrived, ere a gleam from the windows of the library was seen, dimly distinguishable amidst the still enduring light of the evening. I marked its first glimpse, however, as speedily as the benighted sailor descries the first distant twinkle of the lighthouse which marks his course. The feelings of doubt and propriety, which had hitherto contended with my curiosity and jealousy, vanished when an opportunity of gratifying the former was presented to me. I re-entered the house, and avoiding the more frequented apartments with the consciousness of one who wishes to keep his purpose secret, I reached the door of the library—hesitated for a moment as my hand was upon the latch—heard a suppressed step within—opened the door—and found Miss Vernon alone.

Diana appeared surprised,—whether at my sudden entrance, or from some other cause, I could not guess; but there was in her appearance a degree of flutter, which I had never before remarked, and which I knew could only be produced by unusual emotion. Yet she was calm in a moment; and such is the force of conscience, that I, who studied to surprise her, seemed myself the surprised, and was certainly the embarrassed person.

"Has anything happened?" said Miss Vernon—"has any one arrived at the Hall?"

"No one that I know of," I answered, in some confusion; "I only sought the Orlando."

"It lies there," said Miss Vernon, pointing to the table. In removing one or two books to get at that which I pretended to seek, I was, in truth, meditating to make a handsome retreat from an investigation to which I felt my assurance inadequate, when I perceived a man's glove lying upon the table. My eyes encountered those of Miss Vernon, who blushed deeply.

"It is one of my relics," she said with hesitation, replying not to my words but to my looks; "it is one of the gloves of my grandfather, the original of the superb Vandyke which you admire."

As if she thought something more than her bare assertion was necessary to prove her statement true, she opened a drawer of the large oaken table, and taking out another glove, threw it towards me.—When a temper naturally ingenuous stoops to equivocate, or to dissemble, the anxious pain with which the unwonted task is laboured, often induces the hearer to doubt the authenticity of the tale. I cast a hasty glance on both gloves, and then replied gravely—"The gloves resemble each other, doubtless, in form and embroidery; but they cannot form a pair, since they both belong to the right hand."

She bit her lip with anger, and again coloured deeply.

"You do right to expose me," she replied, with bitterness: "some friends would have only judged from what I said, that I chose to give no particular explanation of a circumstance which calls for none—at least to a stranger. You have judged better, and have made me feel, not only the meanness of duplicity, but my own inadequacy to sustain the task of a dissembler. I now tell you distinctly, that that glove is not the fellow, as you have acutely discerned, to the one which I just now produced;—it belongs to a friend yet dearer to me than the original of Vandyke's picture—a friend by whose counsels I have been, and will be, guided—whom I honour—whom I"—she paused.

I was irritated at her manner, and filled up the blank in my own way—"Whom she *loves*, Miss Vernon would say."

"And if I do say so," she replied haughtily, "by whom shall my affection be called to account?"

"Not by me, Miss Vernon, assuredly—I entreat you to hold me acquitted of such presumption.—*But*," I continued, with some emphasis, for I was now piqued in return, "I hope Miss Vernon will pardon a friend, from whom she seems disposed to withdraw the title, for observing"—

"Observe nothing, sir," she interrupted with some vehemence, "except that I will neither be doubted nor questioned. There does not exist one by whom I will be either interrogated or judged; and if you sought this unusual time of presenting yourself in order to spy upon my privacy, the friendship or interest with which you pretend to regard me, is a poor excuse for your uncivil curiosity."

"I relieve you of my presence," said I, with pride equal to her own; for my temper has ever been a stranger to stooping, even in cases where my feelings were most deeply interested—"I relieve you of my presence. I awake from a pleasant, but a most delusive dream; and—but we understand each other."

I had reached the door of the apartment, when Miss Vernon, whose movements were sometimes so rapid as to seem almost instinctive, overtook me, and, catching hold of my arm, stopped me with that air of authority which she could so whimsically assume, and which, from the *naïvete* and simplicity of her manner, had an effect so peculiarly interesting.

"Stop, Mr. Frank," she said, "you are not to leave me in that way neither; I am not so amply provided with friends, that I can afford to throw away even the ungrateful and the selfish. Mark what I say, Mr. Francis Osbaldistone. You shall know nothing of this mysterious glove," and she held it up as she spoke—"nothing—no, not a single iota more than you know already; and yet I will not permit it to be a gauntlet of strife and defiance betwixt us. My time here," she said, sinking into a tone somewhat softer, "must necessarily be very short; yours must be still shorter: we are soon to part never to meet again; do not let us quarrel, or make any mysterious miseries the pretext for farther embittering the few hours we shall ever pass together on this side of eternity."

I do not know, Tresham, by what witchery this fascinating creature obtained such complete management over a temper which I cannot at all times manage myself. I had determined on entering the library, to seek a complete explanation with Miss Vernon. I had found that she refused it with indignant defiance, and avowed to my face the preference of a rival; for what other construction could I put on her declared preference of her mysterious confidant? And yet, while I was on the point of leaving the apartment, and breaking with her for ever, it cost her but a change of look and tone, from that of real and haughty resentment to that of kind and playful despotism, again shaded off into melancholy and serious feeling, to lead me back to my seat, her willing subject, on her own hard terms.

"What does this avail?" said I, as I sate down. "What can this avail, Miss Vernon? Why should I witness embarrassments which I cannot relieve, and mysteries which I offend you even by attempting to penetrate? Inexperienced as you are in the world, you must still be aware that a beautiful young woman can have but one male friend. Even in a male friend I will be jealous of a confidence shared with a third party unknown and concealed; but with *you*, Miss Vernon"—

"You are, of course, jealous, in all the tenses and moods of that amiable passion? But, my good friend, you have all this time spoke nothing but the paltry gossip which simpletons repeat from play-books and romances, till they give mere cant a real and powerful influence over their minds. Boys and girls prate themselves into love; and when their love is like to fall asleep, they prate and tease themselves into jealousy. But you and I, Frank, are rational beings, and neither silly nor idle enough to talk ourselves into any other relation than that of plain honest disinterested friendship. Any other union is as far out of our reach as if I were man, or you woman—To speak truth," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "even though I am so complaisant to the decorum of my sex as to blush a little at my own plain dealing, we cannot marry if we would; and we ought not if we could."

And certainly, Tresham, she did blush most angelically, as she made this cruel declaration. I was about to attack both her positions, entirely forgetting those very suspicions which had been confirmed in the course of the evening, but she proceeded with a cold firmness which approached to severity—"What I say is sober and indisputable truth, on which I will neither hear question nor explanation. We are therefore friends, Mr. Osbaldistone—are we not?" She held out her hand, and taking mine, added—"And nothing to each other now, or henceforward, except as friends."

She let go my hand. I sunk it and my head at once, fairly *overcrowded*, as Spenser would have termed it, by the mingled kindness and firmness of her manner. She hastened to change the subject.

"Here is a letter," she said, "directed for you, Mr. Osbaldistone, very duly and distinctly; but which, notwithstanding the caution of the person who wrote and addressed it, might perhaps never have reached your hands, had it not fallen into the possession of a certain Pacolet, or enchanted dwarf of mine, whom, like all distressed damsels of romance, I retain in my secret service."

I opened the letter and glanced over the contents. The unfolded sheet of paper dropped from my hands, with the involuntary exclamation of "Gracious Heaven! my folly and disobedience have ruined my father!"

Miss Vernon rose with looks of real and affectionate alarm—"You grow pale—you are ill—shall I bring you a glass of water? Be a man, Mr. Osbaldistone, and a firm one. Is your father—is he no more?"

"He lives," said I, "thank God! but to what distress and difficulty"—

"If that be all, despair not, May I read this letter?" she said, taking it up.

I assented, hardly knowing what I said. She read it with great attention.

"Who is this Mr. Tresham, who signs the letter?"

"My father's partner"—(your own good father, Will)—"but he is little in the habit of acting personally in the business of the house."

"He writes here," said Miss Vernon, "of various letters sent to you previously."

"I have received none of them," I replied.

"And it appears," she continued, "that Rashleigh, who has taken the full management of affairs during your father's absence in Holland, has some time since left London for Scotland, with effects and remittances to take up large bills granted by your father to persons in that country, and that he has not since been heard of."

"It is but too true."

"And here has been," she added, looking at the letter, "a head-clerk, or some such person,—Owenson—Owen—despatched to Glasgow, to find out Rashleigh, if possible, and you are entreated to repair to the same place, and assist him in his researches."

"It is even so, and I must depart instantly."

"Stay but one moment," said Miss Vernon. "It seems to me that the worst which can come of this matter, will be the loss of a certain sum of money;—and can that bring tears into your eyes? For shame, Mr. Osbaldistone!"

"You do me injustice, Miss Vernon," I answered. "I grieve not for the loss of the money, but for the effect which I know it will produce on the spirits and health of my father, to whom mercantile credit is as honour; and who, if declared insolvent, would sink into the grave, oppressed by a sense of grief, remorse, and despair, like that of a soldier convicted of cowardice or a man of honour who had lost his rank and character in society. All this I might have prevented by a trifling sacrifice of the foolish pride and indolence which recoiled from sharing the labours of his honourable and useful profession. Good Heaven! how shall I redeem the consequences of my error?"

"By instantly repairing to Glasgow, as you are conjured to do by the friend who writes this letter."

"But if Rashleigh," said I, "has really formed this base and unconscientious scheme of plundering his benefactor, what prospect is there that I can find means of frustrating a plan so deeply laid?"

"The prospect," she replied, "indeed, may be uncertain; but, on the other hand, there is no possibility of your doing any service to your father by remaining here. Remember, had you been on the post destined for you, this disaster could not have happened: hasten to that which is now pointed out, and it may possibly be retrieved.—Yet stay—do not leave this room until I return."

She left me in confusion and amazement; amid which, however, I could find a lucid interval to admire the firmness, composure, and presence of

mind which Miss Vernon seemed to possess on every crisis, however sudden.

In a few minutes she returned with a sheet of paper in her hand, folded and sealed like a letter, but without address. "I trust you," she said, "with this proof of my friendship, because I have the most perfect confidence in your honour. If I understand the nature of your distress rightly, the funds in Rashleigh's possession must be recovered by a certain day—the 12th of September, I think is named—in order that they may be applied to pay the bills in question; and, consequently, that if adequate funds be provided before that period, your father's credit is safe from the apprehended calamity."

"Certainly—I so understand Mr. Tresham"—I looked at your father's letter again, and added, "There cannot be a doubt of it."

"Well," said Diana, "in that case my little Pacolet may be of use to you. You have heard of a spell contained in a letter. Take this packet; do not open it until other and ordinary means have failed. If you succeed by your own exertions, I trust to your honour for destroying it without opening or suffering it to be opened;—but if not, you may break the seal within ten days of the fated day, and you will find directions which may possibly be of service to you. Adieu, Frank; we never meet more—but sometimes think of your friend Die Vernon."

She extended her hand, but I clasped her to my bosom. She sighed as she extricated herself from the embrace which she permitted—escaped to the door which led to her own apartment—and I saw her no more.

PART II

CHAPTER FIRST

*And hurry, hurry, off they rode,
As fast as fast might be;
Hurra, hurra, the dead can ride,
Dost fear to ride with me?
Burger.*

There is one advantage in an accumulation of evils, differing in cause and character, that the distraction which they afford by their contradictory operation prevents the patient from being overwhelmed under either. I was deeply grieved at my separation from Miss Vernon, yet not so much so as I should have been, had not my father's apprehended distresses forced themselves on my attention; and I was distressed by the news of Mr. Tresham, yet less so than if they had fully occupied my mind. I was neither a false lover nor an unfeeling son; but man can give but a certain portion of distressful emotions to the causes which demand them; and if two operate at once, our sympathy, like the funds of a compounding bankrupt, can only be divided between them. Such were my reflections when I gained my apartment—it seems, from the illustration, they already began to have a twang of commerce in them.

I set myself seriously to consider your father's letter. It was not very distinct, and referred for several particulars to Owen, whom I was entreated to meet with as soon as possible at a Scotch town called Glasgow; being informed, moreover, that my old friend was to be heard of at Messrs. MacVittie, MacFin, and Company, merchants in the Gallowgate of the said town. It likewise alluded to several letters,—which, as it appeared to me, must have miscarried or have been intercepted, and complained of my obdurate silence, in terms which would have, been highly unjust, had my letters reached their purposed destination. I was amazed as I read. That the spirit of Rashleigh walked around me, and conjured up these doubts and difficulties by which I was surrounded, I could not doubt for one instant; yet it was frightful to conceive the extent of combined villany and power which he must have employed in the perpetration of his designs. Let me do myself justice in one respect. The evil of parting from Miss Vernon, however distressing it might in other respects and at another time have appeared to me, sunk into a subordinate consideration when I thought of the dangers impending over my father. I did not myself set a high estimation on wealth, and had the affectation of most young men of lively imagination, who suppose that they can better dispense with the possession of money, than resign their time and faculties to the labour necessary to acquire it. But in my father's case, I knew that bankruptcy would be considered as an utter and irretrievable disgrace, to which life would afford no comfort, and death the speediest and sole relief.

My mind, therefore, was bent on averting this catastrophe, with an intensity which the interest could not have produced had it referred to my own fortunes; and the result of my deliberation was a firm resolution to depart from Osbaldistone Hall the next day and wend my way without loss of time to meet Owen at Glasgow. I did not hold it expedient to intimate my departure to my uncle, otherwise than by leaving a letter of thanks for his hospitality, assuring him that sudden and important business prevented my offering them in person. I knew the blunt old knight would readily excuse ceremony; and I had such a belief in the extent and decided character of Rashleigh's machinations, that I had some apprehension of his having provided means to intercept a journey which was undertaken with a view to disconcert them, if my departure were publicly announced at Osbaldistone Hall.

I therefore determined to set off on my journey with daylight on the ensuing morning, and to gain the neighbouring kingdom of Scotland before any idea of my departure was entertained at the Hall. But one impediment of consequence was likely to prevent that speed which was the soul of my expedition. I did not know the shortest, nor indeed any road to Glasgow; and as, in the circumstances in which I stood, despatch was of the greatest consequence, I determined to consult Andrew Fairservice on the subject, as the nearest and most authentic authority within my reach. Late as it was, I set off with the intention of ascertaining this important point, and after a few minutes' walk reached the dwelling of the gardener.

Andrew's dwelling was situated at no great distance from the exterior wall of the garden—a snug comfortable Northumbrian cottage, built of stones roughly dressed with the hammer, and having the windows and doors decorated with huge heavy architraves, or lintels, as they are called, of hewn stone, and its roof covered with broad grey flags, instead of slates, thatch, or tiles. A jargonelle pear-tree at one end of the cottage, a rivulet and flower-plot of a rood in extent in front, and a kitchen-garden behind; a paddock for a cow, and a small field, cultivated with several crops of grain, rather for the benefit of the cottager than for sale, announced the warm and cordial comforts which Old England, even at her most northern extremity, extends to her meanest inhabitants.

As I approached the mansion of the sapient Andrew, I heard a noise, which, being of a nature peculiarly solemn, nasal, and prolonged, led me to think that Andrew, according to the decent and meritorious custom of his countrymen, had assembled some of his neighbours to join in family exercise, as he called evening devotion. Andrew had indeed neither wife, child, nor female inmate in his family. "The first of his trade," he said, "had had enuegh o'thae cattle." But, notwithstanding, he sometimes contrived to form an audience for himself out of the neighbouring Papists and Church-of-Englandmen—brands, as he expressed it, snatched out of the burning, on whom he used to exercise his spiritual gifts, in defiance alike of Father Vaughan, Father Docharty, Rashleigh, and all the world of Catholics around him, who deemed his interference on such occasions an act of heretical interloping. I conceived it likely, therefore, that the well-disposed neighbours might have assembled to hold some chapel of ease of this nature. The noise, however, when I listened to it more accurately, seemed to proceed entirely from the lungs of the said Andrew; and when I interrupted it by entering the house, I found Fairservice alone, combating as he best could, with long words and hard names, and reading aloud, for the purpose of his own edification, a volume of controversial divinity.

"I was just taking a spell," said he, laying aside the huge folio volume as I entered, "of the worthy Doctor Lightfoot."

"Lightfoot!" I replied, looking at the ponderous volume with some surprise; "surely your author was unhappily named."

"Lightfoot was his name, sir; a divine he was, and another kind of a divine than they hae now-adays. Always, I crave your pardon for keeping ye standing at the door, but having been mistrysted (gude preserve us!) with ae bogle the night already, I was dubious o' opening the yett till I had gaen through the e'ening worship; and I had just finished the fifth chapter of Nehemiah—if that winna gar them keep their distance, I wotna what will."

"Trysted with a bogle!" said I; "what do you mean by that, Andrew?"

"I said mistrysted," replied Andrew; "that is as muckle as to say, fley'd wi' a ghaist—Gude preserve us, I say again!"

"Flay'd by a ghost, Andrew! how am I to understand that?"

"I did not say flay'd," replied Andrew, "but *fley'd*,—that is, I got a fleg, and was ready to jump out o' my skin, though naebody offered to whirl it aff my body as a man wad bark a tree."

"I beg a truce to your terrors in the present case, Andrew, and I wish to know whether you can direct me the nearest way to a town in your country of Scotland, called Glasgow?"

"A town ca'd Glasgow!" echoed Andrew Fairservice. "Glasgow's a ceety, man.—And is't the way to Glasgow ye were speering if I ken'd?—What suld ail me to ken it?—it's no that dooms far frae my ain parish of Dreepdaily, that lies a bittock farther to the west. But what may your honour be gaun to Glasgow for?"

"Particular business," replied I.

"That's as muckle as to say, Speer nae questions, and I'll tell ye nae lees.—To Glasgow?"—he made a short pause—"I am thinking ye wad be the better o' some ane to show you the road."

"Certainly, if I could meet with any person going that way."

"And your honour, doubtless, wad consider the time and trouble?"

"Unquestionably—my business is pressing, and if you can find any guide to accompany me, I'll pay him handsomely."

"This is no a day to speak o' carnal matters," said Andrew, casting his eyes upwards; "but if it werena Sabbath at e'en, I wad speer what ye wad be content to gie to ane that wad bear ye pleasant company on the road, and tell ye the names of the gentlemen's and noblemen's seats and castles, and count their kin to ye?"

"I tell you, all I want to know is the road I must travel; I will pay the fellow to his satisfaction—I will give him anything in reason."

"Anything," replied Andrew, "is naething; and this lad that I am speaking o' kens a' the short cuts and queer by-paths through the hills, and"—

"I have no time to talk about it, Andrew; do you make the bargain for me your own way."

"Aha! that's speaking to the purpose," answered Andrew.—"I am thinking, since sae be that sae it is, I'll be the lad that will guide you mysel."

"You, Andrew?—how will you get away from your employment?"

"I tell'd your honour a while syne, that it was lang that I hae been thinking o' flitting, maybe as lang as frae the first year I came to Osbaldistone Hall; and now I am o' the mind to gang in gude earnest—better soon as syne—better a finger aff as aye wagging."

"You leave your service, then?—but will you not lose your wages?"

"Nae doubt there will be a certain loss; but then I hae siller o' the laird's in my hands that I took for the apples in the auld orchyard—and a sair bargain the folk had that bought them—a wheen green trash—and yet Sir Hildebrand's as keen to hae the siller (that is, the steward is as pressing about it) as if they had been a' gowden pippins—and then there's the siller for the seeds—I'm thinking the wage will be in a manner decently made up.—But doubtless your honour will consider my risk of loss when we win to Glasgow—and ye'll be for setting out forthwith?"

"By day-break in the morning," I answered.

"That's something o' the suddenest—whare am I to find a naig?—Stay—I ken just the beast that will answer me."

"At five in the morning, then, Andrew, you will meet me at the head of the avenue."

"Deil a fear o' me (that I suld say sae) missing my tryste," replied Andrew, very briskly; "and if I might advise, we wad be aff twa hours earlier. I ken the way, dark or light, as weel as blind Ralph Ronaldson, that's travelled ower every moor in the country-side, and disna ken the colour of a heather-cowe when a's dune."

I highly approved of Andrew's amendment on my original proposal, and we agreed to meet at the place appointed at three in the morning. At once, however, a reflection came across the mind of my intended travelling companion.

"The bogle! the bogle! what if it should come out upon us?—I downa forgather wi' thae things twice in the four-and-twenty hours."

"Pooh! pooh!" I exclaimed, breaking away from him, "fear nothing from the next world—the earth contains living fiends, who can act for themselves without assistance, were the whole host that fell with Lucifer to return to aid and abet them."

With these words, the import of which was suggested by my own situation, I left Andrew's habitation, and returned to the Hall.

I made the few preparations which were necessary for my proposed journey, examined and loaded my pistols, and then threw myself on my bed, to obtain, if possible, a brief sleep before the fatigue of a long and anxious journey. Nature, exhausted by the tumultuous agitations of the day, was kinder to me than I expected, and I stink into a deep and profound slumber, from which, however, I started as the old clock struck two from a turret adjoining to my bedchamber. I instantly arose, struck a light, wrote the letter I proposed to leave for my uncle, and leaving behind me such articles of dress as were cumbrous in carriage, I deposited the rest of my wardrobe in my valise, glided down stairs, and gained the stable without impediment. Without being quite such a groom as any of my cousins, I had learned at Osbaldistone Hall to dress and saddle my own horse, and in a few minutes I was mounted and ready for my sally.

As I paced up the old avenue, on which the waning moon threw its light with a pale and whitish tinge, I looked back with a deep and boding sigh towards the walls which contained Diana Vernon, under the despondent impression that we had probably parted to meet no more. It was impossible, among the long and irregular lines of Gothic casements, which now looked ghastly white in the moonlight, to distinguish that of the apartment which she inhabited. "She is lost to me already," thought I, as my eye wandered over the dim and indistinguishable intricacies of architecture offered by the moonlight view of Osbaldistone Hall—"She is lost to me already, ere I have left the place which she inhabits! What hope is there of my maintaining any correspondence with her, when leagues shall lie between?"

While I paused in a reverie of no very pleasing nature, the "iron tongue of time told three upon the drowsy ear of night," and reminded me of the necessity of keeping my appointment with a person of a less interesting description and appearance—Andrew Fairservice.

At the gate of the avenue I found a horseman stationed in the shadow of the wall, but it was not until I had coughed twice, and then called "Andrew," that the horticulturist replied, "I'se warrant it's Andrew."

"Lead the way, then," said I, "and be silent if you can, till we are past the hamlet in the valley."

Andrew led the way accordingly, and at a much brisker pace than I would have recommended.—and so well did he obey my injunctions of keeping silence, that he would return no answer to my repeated inquiries into the cause of such unnecessary haste. Extricating ourselves by short cuts, known to Andrew, from the numerous stony lanes and by-paths which intersected each other in the vicinity of the Hall, we reached the open heath and riding swiftly across it, took our course among the barren hills which divide England from Scotland on what are called the Middle Marches. The way, or rather the broken track which we occupied, was a happy interchange of bog and shingles; nevertheless, Andrew relented nothing of his speed, but trotted manfully forward at the rate of eight or ten miles an hour. I was both surprised and provoked at the fellow's obstinate persistence, for we made abrupt ascents and descents over ground of a very break-neck character, and traversed the edge of precipices, where a slip of the horse's feet would have consigned the rider to certain death. The moon, at best, afforded a dubious and imperfect light; but in some places we were so much under the shade of the mountain as to be in total darkness, and then I could only trace Andrew by the clatter of his horse's feet, and the fire which they struck from the flints. At first, this rapid motion, and the attention which, for the sake of personal safety, I was compelled to give to the conduct of my horse, was of service, by forcibly diverting my thoughts from the various painful reflections which must otherwise have pressed on my mind. But at length, after hallooing repeatedly to Andrew to ride slower, I became seriously incensed at his impudent perseverance in refusing either to obey or to reply to me. My anger was, however, quite impotent. I attempted once or twice to get up alongside of my self-willed guide, with the purpose of knocking him off his horse with the butt-end of my whip; but Andrew was better mounted than I, and either the spirit of the animal which he bestrode, or more probably some presentiment of my kind intentions towards him, induced him to quicken his pace whenever I attempted to make up to him. On the other hand, I was compelled to exert my spurs to keep him in sight, for without his guidance I was too well aware that I should never find my way through the howling wilderness which we now traversed at such an unwonted pace. I was so angry at length, that I threatened to have recourse to my pistols, and send a bullet after the Hotspur Andrew, which should stop his fiery-footed career, if he did not abate it of his own accord. Apparently this threat made some impression on the tympanum of his ear, however deaf to all my milder entreaties; for he relaxed his pace upon hearing it, and, suffering me to close up to him, observed, "There wasna muckle sense in riding at sic a daft-like gate."

"And what did you mean by doing so at all, you self-willed scoundrel?" replied I; for I was in a towering passion,—to which, by the way, nothing contributes more than the having recently undergone a spice of personal fear, which, like a few drops of water flung on a glowing fire, is sure to inflame the ardour which it is insufficient to quench.

"What's your honour's wull?" replied Andrew, with impenetrable gravity.

"My will, you rascal?—I have been roaring to you this hour to ride slower, and you have never so much as answered me—Are you drunk or mad to behave so?"

"An it like your honour, I am something dull o' hearing; and I'll no deny but I might have maybe taen a stirrup-cup at parting frae the auld bigging whare I hae dwelt sae lang; and having naebody to pledge, nae doubt I was obliged to do mysell reason, or else leave the end o' the brandy stoup to thae papists—and that wad be a waste, as your honour kens."

This might be all very true,—and my circumstances required that I should be on good terms with my guide; I therefore satisfied myself with requiring of him to take his directions from me in future concerning the rate of travelling.

Andrew, emboldened by the mildness of my tone, elevated his own into the pedantic, conceited octave, which was familiar to him on most occasions.

"Your honour winna persuade me, and naebody shall persuade me, that it's either halesome or prudent to tak the night air on thae moors without a cordial o' clow-gilliflower water, or a tass of brandy or aquavita, or sic-like creature-comfort. I hae taen the bent ower the Otterscrape-rigg a hundred times, day and night, and never could find the way unless I had taen my morning; mair by token that I had whiles twa bits o' ankers o' brandy on ilk side o' me."

"In other words, Andrew," said I, "you were a smuggler—how does a man of your strict principles reconcile yourself to cheat the revenue?"

"It's a mere spoiling o' the Egyptians," replied Andrew; "puir auld Scotland suffers eneugh by thae blackguard loons o' excisemen and gaugers, that hae come down on her like locusts since the sad and sorrowfu' Union; it's the part of a kind son to bring her a soup o' something that will keep up her auld heart,—and that will they nill they, the ill-fa'ard thieves!"

Upon more particular inquiry, I found Andrew had frequently travelled these mountain-paths as a smuggler, both before and after his establishment at Osbaldistone Hall—a circumstance which was so far of importance to me, as it proved his capacity as a guide, notwithstanding the escapade of which he had been guilty at his outset, Even now, though travelling at a more moderate pace, the stirrup-cup, or whatever else had such an effect in stimulating Andrew's motions, seemed not totally to have lost its influence. He often cast a nervous and startled look behind him; and whenever the road seemed at all practicable, showed symptoms of a desire to accelerate his pace, as if he feared some pursuit from the rear. These appearances of alarm gradually diminished as we reached the top of a high bleak ridge, which ran nearly east and west for about a mile, with a very steep descent on either side. The pale beams of the morning were now enlightening the horizon, when Andrew cast a look behind him, and not seeing the appearance of a living being on the moors which he had travelled, his hard features gradually unbent, as he first whistled, then sung, with much glee and little melody, the end of one of his native songs—

*"Jenny, lass! I think I hae her
Ower the muir amang the heather,
All their clan shall never get her."*

He patted at the same time the neck of the horse which had carried him so gallantly; and my attention being directed by that action to the animal, I instantly recognised a favourite mare of Thorncliff Osbaldistone. "How is this, sir?" said I sternly; "that is Mr. Thorncliff's mare!"

"I'll no say but she may aiblins hae been his honour's Squire Thorncliff's in her day—but she's mine now."

"You have stolen her, you rascal."

"Na, na, sir—nae man can wyte me wi' theft. The thing stands this gate, ye see. Squire Thorncliff borrowed ten punds o' me to gang to York Races—deil a boddle wad he pay me back again, and spake o' raddling my banes, as he ca'd it, when I asked him but for my ain back again;—now I think it will riddle him or he gets his horse ower the Border again—unless he pays me plack and bawbee, he sall never see a hair o' her tail. I ken a canny chield at Loughmaben, a bit writer lad, that will put me in the way to sort him. Steal the mear! na, na, far be the sin o' theft frae Andrew Fairservice—I have just arrested her *jurisdictionis fandandy causey*. Thae are bonny writer words—amaist like the language o' huz gardeners and other learned men—it's a pity they're sae dear;—thae three words were a' that Andrew got for a lang law-plea and four ankers o' as gude brandy as was e'er coupit ower craig—Hech, sirs! but law's a dear thing."

"You are likely to find it much dearer than you suppose, Andrew, if you proceed in this mode of paying yourself, without legal authority."

"Hout tout, we're in Scotland now (be praised for't!) and I can find baith friends and lawyers, and judges too, as weel as ony Osbaldistone o' them a'. My mither's mither's third cousin was cousin to the Provost o' Dumfries, and he winna see a drap o' her blude wranged. Hout awa! the laws are indifferently administered here to a' men alike; it's no like on yon side, when a chield may be whuppit awa' wi' ane o' Clerk Jobson's warrants, afore he kens where he is. But they will hae little enough law amang them by and by, and that is ae grand reason that I hae gi'en them gude-day."

I was highly provoked at the achievement of Andrew, and considered it as a hard fate, which a second time threw me into collision with a person of such irregular practices. I determined, however, to buy the mare of him, when he should reach the end of our journey, and send her back to my cousin at Osbaldistone Hall; and with this purpose of reparation I resolved to make my uncle acquainted from the next post-town. It was needless, I thought, to quarrel with Andrew in the meantime, who had, after all, acted not very unnaturally for a person in his circumstances. I therefore smothered my resentment, and asked him what he meant by his last expressions, that there would be little law in Northumberland by and by?

"Law!" said Andrew, "hout, ay—there will be club-law eneugh. The priests and the Irish officers, and thae papist cattle that hae been sodgering abroad, because they durstna bide at hame, are a' fleeing thick in Northumberland e'enow; and thae corbies dinna gather without they smell carrion. As sure as ye live, his honour Sir Hildebrand is gaun to stick his horn in the bog—there's naething but gun and pistol, sword and dagger, amang them—and they'll be laying on, l'se warrant; for they're fearless fules the young Osbaldistone squires, aye craving your honour's pardon."

This speech recalled to my memory some suspicions that I myself had entertained, that the Jacobites were on the eve of some desperate enterprise. But, conscious it did not become me to be a spy on my uncle's words and actions, I had rather avoided than availed myself of any opportunity which occurred of remarking upon the signs of the times.—Andrew Fairservice felt no such restraint, and doubtless spoke very truly in stating his conviction that some desperate plots were in agitation, as a reason which determined his resolution to leave the Hall.

"The servants," he stated, "with the tenantry and others, had been all regularly enrolled and mustered, and they wanted me to take arms also. But I'll ride in nae siccan troop—they little ken'd Andrew that asked him. I'll fight when I like mysell, but it sall neither be for the hure o' Babylon, nor any hure in England."

CHAPTER SECOND.

*Where longs to fall yon rifted spire,
As weary of the insulting air,—
The poet's thoughts, the warrior's fire,
The lover's sighs, are sleeping there.
Langhorne.*

At the first Scotch town which we reached, my guide sought out his friend and counsellor, to consult upon the proper and legal means of converting into his own lawful property the "bonny creature," which was at present his own only by one of those sleight-of-hand arrangements which still sometimes took place in that once lawless district. I was somewhat diverted with the dejection of his looks on his return. He had, it seems, been rather too communicative to his confidential friend, the attorney; and learned with great dismay, in return for his unsuspecting frankness, that Mr. Touthope had, during his absence, been appointed clerk to

the peace of the county, and was bound to communicate to justice all such achievements as that of his friend Mr. Andrew Fairservice. There was a necessity, this alert member of the police stated, for arresting the horse, and placing him in Bailie Trumbull's stable, therein to remain at livery, at the rate of twelve shillings (Scotch) per diem, until the question of property was duly tried and debated. He even talked as if, in strict and rigorous execution of his duty, he ought to detain honest Andrew himself; but on my guide's most piteously entreating his forbearance, he not only desisted from this proposal, but made a present to Andrew of a broken-winded and spavined pony, in order to enable him to pursue his journey. It is true, he qualified this act of generosity by exacting from poor Andrew an absolute cession of his right and interest in the gallant palfrey of Thornclyff Osbaldistone—a transference which Mr. Touthope represented as of very little consequence, since his unfortunate friend, as he facetiously observed, was likely to get nothing of the mare excepting the halter.

Andrew seemed woeful and disconcerted, as I screwed out of him these particulars; for his northern pride was cruelly pinched by being compelled to admit that attorneys were attorneys on both sides of the Tweed; and that Mr. Clerk Touthope was not a farthing more sterling coin than Mr. Clerk Jobson.

"It wadna hae vexed him half sae muckle to hae been cheated out o' what might amaise be said to be won with the peril o' his craig, had it happened amang the Englishers; but it was an unco thing to see hawks pike out hawks' e'en, or ae kindly Scot cheat anither. But nae doubt things were strangely changed in his country sin' the sad and sorrowfu' Union," an event to which Andrew referred every symptom of depravity or degeneracy which he remarked among his countrymen, more especially the inflammation of reckonings, the diminished size of pint-stoups, and other grievances, which he pointed out to me during our journey.

For my own part, I held myself, as things had turned out, acquitted of all charge of the mare, and wrote to my uncle the circumstances under which she was carried into Scotland, concluding with informing him that she was in the hands of justice, and her worthy representatives, Bailie Trumbull and Mr. Clerk Touthope, to whom I referred him for farther particulars. Whether the property returned to the Northumbrian fox-hunter, or continued to bear the person of the Scottish attorney, it is unnecessary for me at present to say.

We now pursued our journey to the north-westward, at a rate much slower than that at which we had achieved our nocturnal retreat from England. One chain of barren and uninteresting hills succeeded another, until the more fertile vale of Clyde opened upon us; and, with such despatch as we might, we gained the town, or, as my guide pertinaciously termed it, the city, of Glasgow. Of late years, I understand, it has fully deserved the name, which, by a sort of political second sight, my guide assigned to it. An extensive and increasing trade with the West Indies and American colonies, has, if I am rightly informed, laid the foundation of wealth and prosperity, which, if carefully strengthened and built upon, may one day support an immense fabric of commercial prosperity; but in the earlier time of which I speak, the dawn of this splendour had not arisen. The Union had, indeed, opened to Scotland the trade of the English colonies; but, betwixt want of capital, and the national jealousy of the English, the merchants of Scotland were as yet excluded, in a great measure, from the exercise of the privileges which that memorable treaty conferred on them. Glasgow lay on the wrong side of the island for participating in the east country or continental trade, by which the trifling commerce as yet possessed by Scotland chiefly supported itself. Yet, though she then gave small promise of the commercial eminence to which, I am informed, she seems now likely one day to attain, Glasgow, as the principal central town of the western district of Scotland, was a place of considerable rank and importance. The broad and brimming Clyde, which flows so near its walls, gave the means of an inland navigation of some importance. Not only the fertile plains in its immediate neighbourhood, but the districts of Ayr and Dumfries regarded Glasgow as their capital, to which they transmitted their produce, and received in return such necessities and luxuries as their consumption required.

The dusky mountains of the western Highlands often sent forth wilder tribes to frequent the marts of St. Mungo's favourite city. Hordes of wild shaggy, dwarfish cattle and ponies, conducted by Highlanders, as wild, as shaggy, and sometimes as dwarfish, as the animals they had in charge, often traversed the streets of Glasgow. Strangers gazed with surprise on the antique and fantastic dress, and listened to the unknown and dissonant sounds of their language, while the mountaineers, armed, even while engaged in this peaceful occupation, with musket and pistol, sword, dagger, and target, stared with astonishment on the articles of luxury of which they knew not the use, and with an avidity which seemed somewhat alarming on the articles which they knew and valued. It is always with unwillingness that the Highlander quits his deserts, and at this early period it was like tearing a pine from its rock, to plant him elsewhere. Yet even then the mountain glens were over-peopled, although thinned occasionally by famine or by the sword, and many of their inhabitants strayed down to Glasgow—there formed settlements—there sought and found employment, although different, indeed, from that of their native hills. This supply of a hardy and useful population was of consequence to the prosperity of the place, furnished the means of carrying on the few manufactures which the town already boasted, and laid the foundation of its future prosperity.

The exterior of the city corresponded with these promising circumstances. The principal street was broad and important, decorated with public buildings, of an architecture rather striking than correct in point of taste, and running between rows of tall houses, built of stone, the fronts of which were occasionally richly ornamented with mason-work—a circumstance which gave the street an imposing air of dignity and grandeur, of which most English towns are in some measure deprived, by the slight, insubstantial, and perishable quality and appearance of the bricks with which they are constructed.

In the western metropolis of Scotland, my guide and I arrived on a Saturday evening, too late to entertain thoughts of business of any kind. We alighted at the door of a jolly hostler-wife, as Andrew called her,—the Ostelere of old father Chaucer,—by whom we were civilly received.

On the following morning the bells pealed from every steeple, announcing the sanctity of the day. Notwithstanding, however, what I had heard of the severity with which the Sabbath is observed in Scotland, my first impulse, not unnaturally, was to seek out Owen; but on inquiry I found that my attempt would be in vain, "until kirk time was ower." Not only did my landlady and guide jointly assure me that "there wadna be a living soul either in the counting-house or dwelling-house of Messrs. MacVittie, MacFin, and Company," to which Owen's letter referred me, but, moreover, "far less would I find any of the partners there. They were serious men, and wad be where a' gude Christians ought to be at sic a time, and that was in the Barony Laigh Kirk."

* [The Laigh Kirk or Crypt of the Cathedral of Glasgow served for more * than two centuries as the church of the Barony Parish, and, for a time, was * converted into a burial-place. In the restorations of this grand building * the crypt was cleared out, and is now admired as one of the richest specimens * of Early English architecture existing in Scotland.]

Andrew Fairservice, whose disgust at the law of his country had fortunately not extended itself to the other learned professions of his native land, now sung forth the praises of the preacher who was to perform the duty, to which my hostess replied with many loud amens. The result was, that I determined to go to this popular place of worship, as much with the purpose of learning, if possible, whether Owen had arrived in Glasgow, as with any great expectation of edification. My hopes were exalted by the assurance, that if Mr. Ephraim MacVittie (worthy man) were in the land of life, he would surely honour the Barony Kirk that day with his presence; and if he chanced to have a stranger within his gates, doubtless he would bring him to the duty along with him. This probability determined my motions, and under the escort of my faithful Andrew, I set forth for the Barony Kirk.

On this occasion, however, I had little need of his guidance; for the crowd, which forced its way up a steep and rough-paved street, to hear the most popular preacher in the west of Scotland, would of itself have swept me along with it. On attaining the summit of the hill, we turned to the left, and a large pair of folding doors admitted us, amongst others, into the open and extensive burying-place which surrounds the Minster or Cathedral Church of Glasgow. The pile is of a gloomy and massive, rather than of an elegant, style of Gothic architecture; but its peculiar character is so strongly preserved, and so well suited with the accompaniments that surround it, that the impression of the first view was awful and solemn in the extreme. I was indeed so much struck, that I resisted for a few minutes all Andrew's efforts to drag me into the interior of the building, so deeply was I engaged in surveying its outward character.

Situated in a populous and considerable town, this ancient and massive pile has the appearance of the most sequestered solitude. High walls divide it from the buildings of the city on one side; on the other it is bounded by a ravine, at the bottom of which, and invisible to the eye, murmurs a wandering rivulet, adding, by its gentle noise, to the imposing solemnity of the scene. On the opposite side of the ravine rises a steep bank, covered with fir-trees closely planted, whose dusky shade extends itself over the cemetery with an appropriate and gloomy effect. The churchyard itself had a peculiar character; for though in reality extensive, it is small in proportion to the number of respectable inhabitants who are interred within it, and whose graves are almost all covered with tombstones. There is therefore no room for the long rank grass, which, in most cases, partially clothes the surface of those retreats where the wicked cease from troubling, and the

weary are at rest. The broad flat monumental stones are placed so close to each other, that the precincts appear to be flagged with them, and, though roofed only by the heavens, resemble the floor of one of our old English churches, where the pavement is covered with sepulchral inscriptions. The contents of these sad records of mortality, the vain sorrows which they preserve, the stern lesson which they teach of the nothingness of humanity, the extent of ground which they so closely cover, and their uniform and melancholy tenor, reminded me of the roll of the prophet, which was "written within and without, and there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe."

The Cathedral itself corresponds in impressive majesty with these accompaniments. We feel that its appearance is heavy, yet that the effect produced would be destroyed were it lighter or more ornamental. It is the only metropolitan church in Scotland, excepting, as I am informed, the Cathedral of Kirkwall, in the Orkneys, which remained uninjured at the Reformation; and Andrew Fairservice, who saw with great pride the effect which it produced upon my mind, thus accounted for its preservation—"Ah! it's a brave kirk—nane o' yere whig-maleeries and curliwurlies and opensteek hems about it—a' solid, weel-jointed mason-wark, that will stand as lang as the world, keep hands and gunpowther aff it. It had amaist a douncome lang syne at the Reformation, when they pu'd doun the kirks of St. Andrews and Perth, and thereawa', to cleanse them o' Papery, and idolatry, and surplices, and sic like rags o' the muckle hure that sitteth on seven hills, as if ane wasna braid enough for her auld hinder end. Sae the commons o' Renfrew, and o' the Barony, and the Gorbals and a' about, they behoved to come into Glasgow no fair morning, to try their hand on purging the High Kirk o' Popish nick-nackets. But the townsmen o' Glasgow, they were feared their auld edifice might slip the girths in gaun through siccan rough physic, sae they rang the common bell, and assembled the train-bands wi' took o' drum. By good luck, the worthy James Rabat was Dean o' Guild that year—(and a gude mason he was himself, made him the keener to keep up the auld bigging)—and the trades assembled, and offered downright battle to the commons, rather than their kirk should coup the crans as others had done elsewhere. It wasna for luve o' Paperie—na, na!—nane could ever say that o' the trades o' Glasgow—Sae they sune came to an agreement to take a' the idolatrous statues of sants (sorrow be on them) out o' their neuks—and sae the bits o' stane idols were broken in pieces by Scripture warrant, and flung into the Molendinar burn, and the auld kirk stood as crouse as a cat when the flaes are kaimed aff her, and a' body was alike pleased. And I hae heard wise folk say, that if the same had been done in ilka kirk in Scotland, the Reform wad just hae been as pure as it is e'en now, and we wad hae mair Christian-like kirks; for I hae been sae lang in England, that naething will drivd out o' my head, that the dog-kennel at Osbaldistone Hall is better than mony a house o' God in Scotland."

Thus saying, Andrew led the way into the place of worship.

CHAPTER THIRD.

—It strikes an awe

And terror on my aching sight; the tombs

And monumental caves of death look cold,

And shoot a chillness to the trembling heart.

Mourning Bride.

Notwithstanding the impatience of my conductor, I could not forbear to pause and gaze for some minutes on the exterior of the building, rendered more impressively dignified by the solitude which ensued when its hitherto open gates were closed, after having, as it were, devoured the multitude which had lately crowded the churchyard, but now, enclosed within the building, were engaged, as the choral swell of voices from within announced to us, in the solemn exercises of devotion. The sound of so many voices united by the distance into one harmony, and freed from those harsh discordances which jar the ear when heard more near, combining with the murmuring brook, and the wind which sung among the old firs, affected me with a sense of sublimity. All nature, as invoked by the Psalmist whose verses they chanted, seemed united in offering that solemn praise in which trembling is mixed with joy as she addressed her Maker. I had heard the service of high mass in France, celebrated with all the *e'clat* which the choicest music, the richest dresses, the most imposing ceremonies, could confer on it; yet it fell short in effect of the simplicity of the Presbyterian worship. The devotion in which every one took a share seemed so superior to that which was recited by musicians as a lesson which they had learned by rote, that it gave the Scottish worship all the advantage of reality over acting.

As I lingered to catch more of the solemn sound, Andrew, whose impatience became ungovernable, pulled me by the sleeve—"Come awa', sir—come awa'; we maunna be late o' gaun in to disturb the worship; if we bide here the searchers will be on us, and carry us to the guard-house for being idlers in kirk-time."

Thus admonished, I followed my guide, but not, as I had supposed, into the body of the cathedral. "This gate—this gate, sir," he exclaimed, dragging me off as I made towards the main entrance of the building—"There's but cauldrie law-work gaun on yonder—carnal morality, as dow'd and as fusionless as rue leaves at Yule—Here's the real savour of doctrine."

So saying, we entered a small low-arched door, secured by a wicket, which a grave-looking person seemed on the point of closing, and descended several steps as if into the funeral vaults beneath the church. It was even so; for in these subterranean precincts,—why chosen for such a purpose I knew not,—was established a very singular place of worship.

Conceive, Tresham, an extensive range of low-browed, dark, and twilight vaults, such as are used for sepulchres in other countries, and had long been dedicated to the same purpose in this, a portion of which was seated with pews, and used as a church. The part of the vaults thus occupied, though capable of containing a congregation of many hundreds, bore a small proportion to the darker and more extensive caverns which yawned around what may be termed the inhabited space. In those waste regions of oblivion, dusky banners and tattered escutcheons indicated the graves of those who were once, doubtless, "princes in Israel." Inscriptions, which could only be read by the painful antiquary, in language as obsolete as the act of devotional charity which they employed, invited the passengers to pray for the souls of those whose bodies rested beneath. Surrounded by these receptacles of the last remains of mortality, I found a numerous congregation engaged in the act of prayer. The Scotch perform this duty in a standing instead of a kneeling posture—more, perhaps, to take as broad a distinction as possible from the ritual of Rome than for any better reason; since I have observed, that in their family worship, as doubtless in their private devotions, they adopt, in their immediate address to the Deity, that posture which other Christians use as the humblest and most reverential. Standing, therefore, the men being uncovered, a crowd of several hundreds of both sexes, and all ages, listened with great reverence and attention to the extempore, at least the unwritten, prayer of an aged clergyman,* who was very popular in the city.

* I have in vain laboured to discover this gentleman's name, and the period of his incumbency. I do not, however, despair to see these points, with some others which may elude my sagacity, satisfactorily elucidated by one or other of the periodical publications which have devoted their pages to explanatory commentaries on my former volumes; and whose research and ingenuity claim my peculiar gratitude, for having discovered many persons and circumstances connected with my narratives, of which I myself never so much as dreamed.

Educated in the same religious persuasion, I seriously bent my mind to join in the devotion of the day; and it was not till the congregation resumed their seats, that my attention was diverted to the consideration of the appearance of all around me.

At the conclusion of the prayer, most of the men put on their hats or bonnets, and all who had the happiness to have seats sate down. Andrew and I were not of this number, having been too late of entering the church to secure such accommodation. We stood among a number of other persons in the same situation, forming a sort of ring around the seated part of the congregation. Behind and around us were the vaults I have already described; before us the devout audience, dimly shown by the light which streamed on their faces through one or two low Gothic windows, such as give air and light to charnel-houses. By this were seen the usual variety of countenances which are generally turned towards a Scotch pastor on such occasions, almost all composed to attention, unless where a father or mother here and there recalls the wandering eyes of a lively child, or disturbs the slumbers of a dull one. The high-boned and harsh countenance of the nation,

with the expression of intelligence and shrewdness which it frequently exhibits, is seen to more advantage in the act of devotion, or in the ranks of war, than on lighter and more cheerful occasions of assemblage. The discourse of the preacher was well qualified to call forth the various feelings and faculties of his audience. Age and infirmities had impaired the powers of a voice originally strong and sonorous. He read his text with a pronunciation somewhat inarticulate; but when he closed the Bible, and commenced his sermon, his tones gradually strengthened, as he entered with vehemence into the arguments which he maintained. They related chiefly to the abstract points of the Christian faith,—subjects grave, deep, and fathomless by mere human reason, but for which, with equal ingenuity and propriety, he sought a key in liberal quotations from the inspired writings. My mind was unprepared to coincide in all his reasoning, nor was I sure that in some instances I rightly comprehended his positions. But nothing could be more impressive than the eager enthusiastic manner of the good old man, and nothing more ingenious than his mode of reasoning. The Scotch, it is well known, are more remarkable for the exercise of their intellectual powers, than for the keenness of their feelings; they are, therefore, more moved by logic than by rhetoric, and more attracted by acute and argumentative reasoning on doctrinal points, than influenced by the enthusiastic appeals to the heart and to the passions, by which popular preachers in other countries win the favour of their hearers.

Among the attentive group which I now saw, might be distinguished various expressions similar to those of the audience in the famous cartoon of Paul preaching at Athens. Here sat a zealous and intelligent Calvinist, with brows bent just as much as to indicate profound attention; lips slightly compressed; eyes fixed on the minister with an expression of decent pride, as if sharing the triumph of his argument; the forefinger of the right hand touching successively those of the left, as the preacher, from argument to argument, ascended towards his conclusion. Another, with fiercer and sterner look, intimated at once his contempt of all who doubted the creed of his pastor, and his joy at the appropriate punishment denounced against them. A third, perhaps belonging to a different congregation, and present only by accident or curiosity, had the appearance of internally impeaching some link of the reasoning; and you might plainly read, in the slight motion of his head, his doubts as to the soundness of the preacher's argument. The greater part listened with a calm, satisfied countenance, expressive of a conscious merit in being present, and in listening to such an ingenious discourse, although perhaps unable entirely to comprehend it. The women in general belonged to this last division of the audience; the old, however, seeming more grimly intent upon the abstract doctrines laid before them; while the younger females permitted their eyes occasionally to make a modest circuit around the congregation; and some of them, Tresham (if my vanity did not greatly deceive me), contrived to distinguish your friend and servant, as a handsome young stranger and an Englishman. As to the rest of the congregation, the stupid gaped, yawned, or slept, till awakened by the application of their more zealous neighbours' heels to their shins; and the idle indicated their inattention by the wandering of their eyes, but dared give no more decided token of weariness. Amid the Lowland costume of coat and cloak, I could here and there discern a Highland plaid, the wearer of which, resting on his basket-hilt, sent his eyes among the audience with the unrestrained curiosity of savage wonder; and who, in all probability, was inattentive to the sermon for a very pardonable reason—because he did not understand the language in which it was delivered. The martial and wild look, however, of these stragglers, added a kind of character which the congregation could not have exhibited without them. They were more numerous, Andrew afterwards observed, owing to some cattle-fair in the neighbourhood.

Such was the group of countenances, rising tier on tier, discovered to my critical inspection by such sunbeams as forced their way through the narrow Gothic lattices of the Laigh Kirk of Glasgow; and, having illuminated the attentive congregation, lost themselves in the vacuity of the vaults behind, giving to the nearer part of their labyrinth a sort of imperfect twilight, and leaving their recesses in an utter darkness, which gave them the appearance of being interminable.

I have already said that I stood with others in the exterior circle, with my face to the preacher, and my back to those vaults which I have so often mentioned. My position rendered me particularly obnoxious to any interruption which arose from any slight noise occurring amongst these retiring arches, where the least sound was multiplied by a thousand echoes. The occasional sound of rain-drops, which, admitted through some cranny in the ruined roof, fell successively, and splashed upon the pavement beneath, caused me to turn my head more than once to the place from whence it seemed to proceed, and when my eyes took that direction, I found it difficult to withdraw them; such is the pleasure our imagination receives from the attempt to penetrate as far as possible into an intricate labyrinth, imperfectly lighted, and exhibiting objects which irritate our curiosity, only because they acquire a mysterious interest from being undefined and dubious. My eyes became habituated to the gloomy atmosphere to which I directed them, and insensibly my mind became more interested in their discoveries than in the metaphysical subtleties which the preacher was enforcing.

My father had often checked me for this wandering mood of mind, arising perhaps from an excitability of imagination to which he was a stranger; and the finding myself at present solicited by these temptations to inattention, recalled the time when I used to walk, led by his hand, to Mr. Shower's chapel, and the earnest injunctions which he then laid on me to redeem the time, because the days were evil. At present, the picture which my thoughts suggested, far from fixing my attention, destroyed the portion I had yet left, by conjuring up to my recollection the peril in which his affairs now stood. I endeavoured, in the lowest whisper I could frame, to request Andrew to obtain information, whether any of the gentlemen of the firm of MacVittie & Co. were at present in the congregation. But Andrew, wrapped in profound attention to the sermon, only replied to my suggestion by hard punches with his elbow, as signals to me to remain silent. I next strained my eyes, with equally bad success, to see if, among the sea of up-turned faces which bent their eyes on the pulpit as a common centre, I could discover the sober and business-like physiognomy of Owen. But not among the broad beavers of the Glasgow citizens, or the yet broader brimmed Lowland bonnets of the peasants of Lanarkshire, could I see anything resembling the decent periwig, starched ruffles, or the uniform suit of light-brown garments appertaining to the head-clerk of the establishment of Osbaldistone and Tresham. My anxiety now returned on me with such violence as to overpower not only the novelty of the scene around me, by which it had hitherto been diverted, but moreover my sense of decorum. I pulled Andrew hard by the sleeve, and intimated my wish to leave the church, and pursue my investigation as I could. Andrew, obdurate in the Laigh Kirk of Glasgow as on the mountains of Cheviot, for some time deigned me no answer; and it was only when he found I could not otherwise be kept quiet, that he condescended to inform me, that, being once in the church, we could not leave it till service was over, because the doors were locked so soon as the prayers began. Having thus spoken in a brief and peevish whisper, Andrew again assumed the air of intelligent and critical importance, and attention to the preacher's discourse.

While I endeavoured to make a virtue of necessity, and recall my attention to the sermon, I was again disturbed by a singular interruption. A voice from behind whispered distinctly in my ear, "You are in danger in this city."—I turned round, as if mechanically.

One or two starched and ordinary-looking mechanics stood beside and behind me,—stragglers, who, like ourselves, had been too late in obtaining entrance. But a glance at their faces satisfied me, though I could hardly say why, that none of these was the person who had spoken to me. Their countenances seemed all composed to attention to the sermon, and not one of them returned any glance of intelligence to the inquisitive and startled look with which I surveyed them. A massive round pillar, which was close behind us, might have concealed the speaker the instant he uttered his mysterious caution; but wherefore it was given in such a place, or to what species of danger it directed my attention, or by whom the warning was uttered, were points on which my imagination lost itself in conjecture. It would, however, I concluded, be repeated, and I resolved to keep my countenance turned towards the clergyman, that the whisperer might be tempted to renew his communication under the idea that the first had passed unobserved.

My plan succeeded. I had not resumed the appearance of attention to the preacher for five minutes, when the same voice whispered, "Listen, but do not look back." I kept my face in the same direction. "You are in danger in this place," the voice proceeded; "so am I—meet me to-night on the Brigg, at twelve preceesely—keep at home till the gloaming, and avoid observation."

Here the voice ceased, and I instantly turned my head. But the speaker had, with still greater promptitude, glided behind the pillar, and escaped my observation. I was determined to catch a sight of him, if possible, and extricating myself from the outer circle of hearers, I also stepped behind the column. All there was empty; and I could only see a figure wrapped in a mantle, whether a Lowland cloak, or Highland plaid, I could not distinguish, which traversed, like a phantom, the dreary vacuity of vaults which I have described.

I made a mechanical attempt to pursue the mysterious form, which glided away and vanished in the vaulted cemetery, like the spectre of one of the numerous dead who rested within its precincts. I had little chance of arresting the course of one obviously determined not to be spoken with; but that little chance was lost by my stumbling and falling before I had made three steps from the column. The obscurity which occasioned my misfortune, covered my disgrace; which I accounted

rather lucky, for the preacher, with that stern authority which the Scottish ministers assume for the purpose of keeping order in their congregations, interrupted his discourse, to desire the "proper officer" to take into custody the causer of this disturbance in the place of worship. As the noise, however, was not repeated, the beadle, or whatever else he was called, did not think it necessary to be rigorous in searching out the offender, so that I was enabled, without attracting farther observation, to place myself by Andrew's side in my original position. The service proceeded, and closed without the occurrence of anything else worthy of notice. As the congregation departed and dispersed, my friend Andrew exclaimed, "See, yonder is worthy Mr. MacVittie, and Mrs. MacVittie, and Miss Alison MacVittie, and Mr. Thamas MacFin, that they say is to marry Miss Alison, if a' bowls row right—she'll hae a hantle siller, if she's no that bonny."

My eyes took the direction he pointed out. Mr. MacVittie was a tall, thin, elderly man, with hard features, thick grey eyebrows, light eyes, and, as I imagined, a sinister expression of countenance, from which my heart recoiled. I remembered the warning I had received in the church, and hesitated to address this person, though I could not allege to myself any rational ground of dislike or suspicion.

I was yet in suspense, when Andrew, who mistook my hesitation for bashfulness, proceeded to exhort me to lay it aside. "Speak till him—speak till him, Mr. Francis—he's no provost yet, though they say he'll be my lord neist year. Speak till him, then—he'll gie ye a decent answer for as rich as he is, unless ye were wanting siller frae him—they say he's dour to draw his purse."

It immediately occurred to me, that if this merchant were really of the churlish and avaricious disposition which Andrew intimated, there might be some caution necessary in making myself known, as I could not tell how accounts might stand between my father and him. This consideration came in aid of the mysterious hint which I had received, and the dislike which I had conceived at the man's countenance. Instead of addressing myself directly to him, as I had designed to have done, I contented myself with desiring Andrew to inquire at Mr. MacVittie's house the address of Mr. Owen, an English gentleman; and I charged him not to mention the person from whom he received the commission, but to bring me the result to the small inn where we lodged. This Andrew promised to do. He said something of the duty of my attending the evening service; but added with a causticity natural to him, that "in troth, if folk couldna keep their legs still, but wad needs be coupling the creels ower through-stanes, as if they wad raise the very dead folk wi' the clatter, a kirk wi' a chimley in't was fittest for them."

CHAPTER FOURTH.

*On the Rialto, every night at twelve,
I take my evening's walk of meditation:
There we two will meet.
Venice Preserved.*

Full of sinister augury, for which, however, I could assign no satisfactory cause, I shut myself up in my apartment at the inn, and having dismissed Andrew, after resisting his importunity to accompany him to St. Enoch's Kirk,* where, he said, "a soul-searching divine was to haud forth," I set myself seriously to consider what were best to be done.

* This I believe to be an anachronism, as Saint Enoch's Church was not built at the date of the story. [It was founded in 1780, and has since been rebuilt.]

I never was what is properly called superstitious; but I suppose that all men, in situations of peculiar doubt and difficulty, when they have exercised their reason to little purpose, are apt, in a sort of despair, to abandon the reins to their imagination, and be guided altogether by chance, or by those whimsical impressions which take possession of the mind, and to which we give way as if to involuntary impulses. There was something so singularly repulsive in the hard features of the Scotch trader, that I could not resolve to put myself into his hands without transgressing every caution which could be derived from the rules of physiognomy; while, at the same time, the warning voice, the form which flitted away like a vanishing shadow through those vaults, which might be termed "the valley of the shadow of death," had something captivating for the imagination of a young man, who, you will farther please to remember, was also a young poet.

If danger was around me, as the mysterious communication intimated, how could I learn its nature, or the means of averting it, but by meeting my unknown counsellor, to whom I could see no reason for imputing any other than kind intentions. Rashleigh and his machinations occurred more than once to my remembrance;—but so rapid had my journey been, that I could not suppose him apprised of my arrival in Glasgow, much less prepared to play off any stratagem against my person. In my temper also I was bold and confident, strong and active in person, and in some measure accustomed to the use of arms, in which the French youth of all kinds were then initiated. I did not fear any single opponent; assassination was neither the vice of the age nor of the country; the place selected for our meeting was too public to admit any suspicion of meditated violence. In a word, I resolved to meet my mysterious counsellor on the bridge, as he had requested, and to be afterwards guided by circumstances. Let me not conceal from you, Tresham, what at the time I endeavoured to conceal from myself—the subdued, yet secretly-cherished hope, that Diana Vernon might—by what chance I knew not—through what means I could not guess—have some connection with this strange and dubious intimation conveyed at a time and place, and in a manner so surprising. She alone—whispered this insidious thought—she alone knew of my journey; from her own account, she possessed friends and influence in Scotland; she had furnished me with a talisman, whose power I was to invoke when all other aid failed me; who then but Diana Vernon possessed either means, knowledge, or inclination, for averting the dangers, by which, as it seemed, my steps were surrounded? This flattering view of my very doubtful case pressed itself upon me again and again. It insinuated itself into my thoughts, though very bashfully, before the hour of dinner; it displayed its attractions more boldly during the course of my frugal meal, and became so courageously intrusive during the succeeding half-hour (aided perhaps by the flavour of a few glasses of most excellent claret), that, with a sort of desperate attempt to escape from a delusive seduction, to which I felt the danger of yielding, I pushed my glass from me, threw aside my dinner, seized my hat, and rushed into the open air with the feeling of one who would fly from his own thoughts. Yet perhaps I yielded to the very feelings from which I seemed to fly, since my steps insensibly led me to the bridge over the Clyde, the place assigned for the rendezvous by my mysterious monitor.

Although I had not partaken of my repast until the hours of evening church-service were over,—in which, by the way, I complied with the religious scruples of my landlady, who hesitated to dress a hot dinner between sermons, and also with the admonition of my unknown friend, to keep my apartment till twilight,—several hours had still to pass away betwixt the time of my appointment and that at which I reached the assigned place of meeting. The interval, as you will readily credit, was wearisome enough; and I can hardly explain to you how it passed away. Various groups of persons, all of whom, young and old, seemed impressed with a reverential feeling of the sanctity of the day, passed along the large open meadow which lies on the northern bank of the Clyde, and serves at once as a bleaching-field and pleasure-walk for the inhabitants, or paced with slow steps the long bridge which communicates with the southern district of the county. All that I remember of them was the general, yet not unpleasing, intimation of a devotional character impressed on each little party—formally assumed perhaps by some, but sincerely characterising the greater number—which hushed the petulant gaiety of the young into a tone of more quiet, yet more interesting, interchange of sentiments, and suppressed the vehement argument and protracted disputes of those of more advanced age. Notwithstanding the numbers who passed me, no general sound of the human voice was heard; few turned again to take some minutes' voluntary exercise, to which the leisure of the evening, and the beauty of the surrounding scenery, seemed to invite them: all hurried to their homes and resting-places. To one accustomed to the mode of spending Sunday evenings abroad, even among the French Calvinists, there seemed something Judaical, yet, at the same time striking and affecting, in this mode of keeping the Sabbath holy. Insensibly I felt my mode of sauntering by the side of the river, and crossing successively the various persons who were passing homeward, and without tarrying or delay, must expose me to observation at least, if not to censure; and I slunk out of the frequented path, and found a trivial occupation for my mind in marshalling my revolving walk in such a manner as should least render me obnoxious to observation. The different alleys lined out through this extensive meadow, and which are planted with trees, like the Park of St. James's in London, gave me facilities for carrying into effect these childish manoeuvres.

As I walked down one of these avenues, I heard, to my surprise, the sharp and conceited voice of Andrew Fairservice, raised by a sense of self-consequence to a pitch somewhat higher than others seemed to think consistent with the solemnity of the day. To slip behind the row of trees under which I walked was perhaps no

very dignified proceeding; but it was the easiest mode of escaping his observation, and perhaps his impertinent assiduity, and still more intrusive curiosity. As he passed, I heard him communicate to a grave-looking man, in a black coat, a slouched hat, and Geneva cloak, the following sketch of a character, which my self-love, while revolting against it as a caricature, could not, nevertheless, refuse to recognise as a likeness.

"Ay, ay, Mr. Hammorgaw, it's e'en as I tell ye. He's no a'thegither sae void o' sense neither; he has a gloaming sight o' what's reasonable—that is anes and awa'—a glisk and nae mair; but he's crack-brained and cockle-headed about his nipperty-tipperty poetry nonsense—He'll glower at an auld-world barkit aik-snaig as if it were a queezmaddam in full bearing; and a naked craig, wi' a bum jawing owert, is unto him as a garden garnisht with flowering knots and choice pot-herbs. Then he wad rather claver wi' a daft quean they ca' Diana Vernon (weel I wet they might ca' her Diana of the Ephesians, for she's little better than a heathen—better? she's waur—a Roman, a mere Roman)—he'll claver wi' her, or any ither idle slut, rather than hear what might do him gude a' the days of his life, frae you or me, Mr. Hammorgaw, or any ither sober and sponable person. Reason, sir, is what he canna endure—he's a' for your vanities and volubilities; and he ance tell'd me (puir blinded creature!) that the Psalms of David were excellent poetry! as if the holy Psalmist thought o' rattling rhymes in a blether, like his ain silly clinkum-clankum things that he ca's verse. Gude help him!—twa lines o' Davie Lindsay would ding a' he ever clerkit."

While listening to this perverted account of my temper and studies, you will not be surprised if I meditated for Mr. Fairservice the unpleasant surprise of a broken pate on the first decent opportunity. His friend only intimated his attention by "Ay, ay!" and "Is't e'en sae?" and suchlike expressions of interest, at the proper breaks in Mr. Fairservice's harangue, until at length, in answer to some observation of greater length, the import of which I only collected from my trusty guide's reply, honest Andrew answered, "Tell him a bit o' my mind, quoth ye? Wha wad be fule then but Andrew? He's a red-wad deevil, man—He's like Giles Heathertap's auld boar;—ye need but shake a clout at him to make him turn and gore. Bide wi' him, say ye?—Troth, I kenna what for I bide wi' him mysell. But the lad's no a bad lad after a'; and he needs some carefu' body to look after him. He hasna the right grip o' his hand—the gowd slips through't like water, man; and it's no that ill a thing to be near him when his purse is in his hand, and it's seldom out o't. And then he's come o' guid kith and kin—My heart warms to the poor thoughtless callant, Mr. Hammorgaw—and then the penny fee!"

In the latter part of this instructive communication, Mr. Fairservice lowered his voice to a tone better befitting the conversation in a place of public resort on a Sabbath evening, and his companion and he were soon beyond my hearing. My feelings of hasty resentment soon subsided, under the conviction that, as Andrew himself might have said, "A harkener always hears a bad tale of himself," and that whoever should happen to overhear their character discussed in their own servants'-hall, must prepare to undergo the scalpel of some such anatomist as Mr. Fairservice. The incident was so far useful, as, including the feelings to which it gave rise, it sped away a part of the time which hung so heavily on my hand.

Evening had now closed, and the growing darkness gave to the broad, still, and deep expanse of the brimful river, first a hue sombre and uniform—then a dismal and turbid appearance, partially lighted by a waning and pallid moon. The massive and ancient bridge which stretches across the Clyde was now but dimly visible, and resembled that which Mirza, in his unequalled vision, has described as traversing the valley of Bagdad. The low-browed arches, seen as imperfectly as the dusky current which they bestrode, seemed rather caverns which swallowed up the gloomy waters of the river, than apertures contrived for their passage. With the advancing night the stillness of the scene increased. There was yet a twinkling light occasionally seen to glide along by the stream, which conducted home one or two of the small parties, who, after the abstinence and religious duties of the day, had partaken of a social supper—the only meal at which the rigid Presbyterians made some advance to sociality on the Sabbath. Occasionally, also, the hoofs of a horse were heard, whose rider, after spending the Sunday in Glasgow, was directing his steps towards his residence in the country. These sounds and sights became gradually of more rare occurrence; at length they altogether ceased, and I was left to enjoy my solitary walk on the shores of the Clyde in solemn silence, broken only by the tolling of the successive hours from the steeples of the churches.

But as the night advanced my impatience at the uncertainty of the situation in which I was placed increased every moment, and became nearly ungovernable. I began to question whether I had been imposed upon by the trick of a fool, the raving of a madman, or the studied machinations of a villain, and paced the little quay or pier adjoining the entrance to the bridge, in a state of incredible anxiety and vexation. At length the hour of twelve o'clock swung its summons over the city from the belfry of the metropolitan church of St. Mungo, and was answered and vouched by all the others like dutiful diocesans. The echoes had scarcely ceased to repeat the last sound, when a human form—the first I had seen for two hours—appeared passing along the bridge from the southern shore of the river. I advanced to meet him with a feeling as if my fate depended on the result of the interview, so much had my anxiety been wound up by protracted expectation. All that I could remark of the passenger as we advanced towards each other, was that his frame was rather beneath than above the middle size, but apparently strong, thick-set, and muscular; his dress a horseman's wrapping coat. I slackened my pace, and almost paused as I advanced in expectation that he would address me. But to my inexpressible disappointment he passed without speaking, and I had no pretence for being the first to address one who, notwithstanding his appearance at the very hour of appointment, might nevertheless be an absolute stranger. I stopped when he had passed me, and looked after him, uncertain whether I ought not to follow him. The stranger walked on till near the northern end of the bridge, then paused, looked back, and turning round, again advanced towards me. I resolved that this time he should not have the apology for silence proper to apparitions, who, it is vulgarly supposed, cannot speak until they are spoken to. "You walk late, sir," said I, as we met a second time.

"I bide tryste," was the reply; "and so I think do you, Mr. Osbaldistone."

"You are then the person who requested to meet me here at this unusual hour?"

"I am," he replied. "Follow me, and you shall know my reasons."

"Before following you, I must know your name and purpose," I answered.

"I am a man," was the reply; "and my purpose is friendly to you."

"A man!" I repeated;—"that is a very brief description."

"It will serve for one who has no other to give," said the stranger. "He that is without name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man; and he that has all these is no more."

"Yet this is still too general an account of yourself, to say the least of it, to establish your credit with a stranger."

"It is all I mean to give, howsoe'er; you may choose to follow me, or to remain without the information I desire to afford you."

"Can you not give me that information here?" I demanded.

"You must receive it from your eyes, not from my tongue—you must follow me, or remain in ignorance of the information which I have to give you."

There was something short, determined, and even stern, in the man's manner, not certainly well calculated to conciliate undoubting confidence.

"What is it you fear?" he said impatiently. "To whom, think ye, is your life of such consequence, that they should seek to bereave ye of it?"

"I fear nothing," I replied firmly, though somewhat hastily. "Walk on—I attend you."

We proceeded, contrary to my expectation, to re-enter the town, and glided like mute spectres, side by side, up its empty and silent streets. The high and gloomy stone fronts, with the variegated ornaments and pediments of the windows, looked yet taller and more sable by the imperfect moonshine. Our walk was for some minutes in perfect silence. At length my conductor spoke.

"Are you afraid?"

"I retort your own words," I replied: "wherefore should I fear?"

"Because you are with a stranger—perhaps an enemy, in a place where you have no friends and many enemies."

"I neither fear you nor them; I am young, active, and armed."

"I am not armed," replied my conductor: "but no matter, a willing hand never lacked weapon. You say you fear nothing; but if you knew who was by your side, perhaps you might underlie a tremor."

"And why should I?" replied I. "I again repeat, I fear nought that you can do."

"Nought that I can do?—Be it so. But do you not fear the consequences of being found with one whose very name whispered in this lonely street would make the stones themselves rise up to apprehend him—on whose head half the men in Glasgow would build their fortune as on a found treasure, had they the luck to grip him by the collar—the sound of whose apprehension were as welcome at the Cross of Edinburgh as ever the news of a field stricken and won in Flanders?"

"And who then are you, whose name should create so deep a feeling of terror?" I replied.

"No enemy of yours, since I am conveying you to a place, where, were I myself recognised and identified, iron to the heels and hemp to the craig would be my brief dooming."

I paused and stood still on the pavement, drawing back so as to have the most perfect view of my companion which the light afforded me, and which was sufficient to guard against any sudden motion of assault.

"You have said," I answered, "either too much or too little—too much to induce me to confide in you as a mere stranger, since you avow yourself a person amenable to the laws of the country in which we are—and too little, unless you could show that you are unjustly subjected to their rigour."

As I ceased to speak, he made a step towards me. I drew back instinctively, and laid my hand on the hilt of my sword.

"What!" said he—"on an unarmed man, and your friend?"

"I am yet ignorant if you are either the one or the other," I replied; "and to say the truth, your language and manner might well entitle me to doubt both."

"It is manfully spoken," replied my conductor; "and I respect him whose hand can keep his head.—I will be frank and free with you—I am conveying you to prison."

"To prison!" I exclaimed—"by what warrant or for what offence?—You shall have my life sooner than my liberty—I defy you, and I will not follow you a step farther."

"I do not," he said, "carry you there as a prisoner; I am," he added, drawing himself haughtily up, "neither a messenger nor sheriff's officer. I carry you to see a prisoner from whose lips you will learn the risk in which you presently stand. Your liberty is little risked by the visit; mine is in some peril; but that I readily encounter on your account, for I care not for risk, and I love a free young blood, that kens no protector but the cross o' the sword."

While he spoke thus, we had reached the principal street, and were pausing before a large building of hewn stone, garnished, as I thought I could perceive, with gratings of iron before the windows.

"Muckle," said the stranger, whose language became more broadly national as he assumed a tone of colloquial freedom—"Muckle wad the provost and bailies o' Glasgow gie to hae him sitting with iron garters to his hose within their tolbooth that now stands wi' his legs as free as the red-deer's on the outside on't. And little wad it avail them; for an if they had me there wi' a stane's weight o' iron at every ankle, I would show them a toom room and a lost lodger before to-morrow—But come on, what stint ye for?"

As he spoke thus, he tapped at a low wicket, and was answered by a sharp voice, as of one awakened from a dream or reverie,—*"Fa's tat?—Wha's that, I wad say?—and fat a deil want ye at this hour at e'en?—Clean again rules—clean again rules, as they ca' them."*

The protracted tone in which the last words were uttered, betokened that the speaker was again composing himself to slumber. But my guide spoke in a loud whisper—"Dougal, man! hae ye forgotten Ha nun Gregarach?"

"Deil a bit, deil a bit," was the ready and lively response, and I heard the internal guardian of the prison-gate bustle up with great alacrity. A few words were exchanged between my conductor and the turnkey in a language to which I was an absolute stranger. The bolts revolved, but with a caution which marked the apprehension that the noise might be overheard, and we stood within the vestibule of the prison of Glasgow,—a small, but strong guard-room, from which a narrow staircase led upwards, and one or two low entrances conducted to apartments on the same level with the outward gate, all secured with the jealous strength of wickets, bolts, and bars. The walls, otherwise naked, were not unsuitably garnished with iron fetters, and other uncouth implements, which might be designed for purposes still more inhuman, interspersed with partisans, guns, pistols of antique manufacture, and other weapons of defence and offence.

At finding myself so unexpectedly, fortuitously, and, as it were, by stealth, introduced within one of the legal fortresses of Scotland, I could not help recollecting my adventure in Northumberland, and fretting at the strange incidents which again, without any demerits of my own, threatened to place me in a dangerous and disagreeable collision with the laws of a country which I visited only in the capacity of a stranger.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

*Look round thee, young Astolpho: Here's the place
Which men (for being poor) are sent to starve in;
Rude remedy, I trow, for sore disease.
Within these walls, stifled by damp and stench,
Doth Hope's fair torch expire; and at the snuff,
Ere yet 'tis quite extinct, rude, wild, and way-ward,
The desperate revelries of wild despair,
Kindling their hell-born cressets, light to deeds
That the poor captive would have died ere practised,
Till bondage sunk his soul to his condition.*

The Prison, Scene III. Act I.

At my first entrance I turned an eager glance towards my conductor; but the lamp in the vestibule was too low in flame to give my curiosity any satisfaction by affording a distinct perusal of his features. As the turnkey held the light in his hand, the beams fell more full on his own scarce less interesting figure. He was a wild shock-headed looking animal, whose profusion of red hair covered and obscured his features, which were otherwise only characterised by the extravagant joy that affected him at the sight of my guide. In my experience I have met nothing so absolutely resembling my idea of a very uncouth, wild, and ugly savage, adoring the idol of his tribe. He grinned, he shivered, he laughed, he was near crying, if he did not actually cry. He had a "Where shall I go?—What can I do for you?" expression of face; the complete, surrendered, and anxious subservience and devotion of which it is difficult to describe, otherwise than by the awkward combination which I have attempted. The fellow's voice seemed choking in his ecstasy, and only could express itself in such interjections as "Oigh! oigh!—Ay! ay!—it's lang since she's seen ye!" and other exclamations equally brief, expressed in the same unknown tongue in which he had communicated with my conductor while we were on the outside of the jail door. My guide received all this excess of joyful gratulation much like a prince too early accustomed to the homage of those around him to be much moved by it, yet willing to requite it by the usual forms of royal courtesy. He extended his hand graciously towards the turnkey, with a civil inquiry of "How's a' wi' you, Dougal?"

"Oigh! oigh!" exclaimed Dougal, softening the sharp exclamations of his surprise as he looked around with an eye of watchful alarm—"Oigh! to see you here—to see you here!—Oigh!—what will come o' ye gin the bailies suld come to get witting—ta filthy, gutty hallions, tat they are?"

My guide placed his finger on his lip, and said, "Fear nothing, Dougal; your hands shall never draw a bolt on me."

"Tat sall they no," said Dougal; "she suld—she wad—that is, she wishes them hacked aff by the elbows first—But when are ye gaun yonder again? and ye'll no forget to let her ken—she's your puir cousin, God kens, only seven times removed."

"I will let you ken, Dougal, as soon as my plans are settled."

"And, by her sooth, when you do, an it were twal o' the Sunday at e'en, she'll fling her keys at the provost's head or she gie them anither turn, and that or ever Monday morning begins—see if she winna."

My mysterious stranger cut his acquaintance's ecstasies short by again addressing him, in what I afterwards understood to be the Irish, Earse, or Gaelic, explaining, probably, the services which he required at his hand. The answer, "Wi' a' her heart—wi' a' her soul," with a good deal of indistinct muttering in a similar tone, intimated the turnkey's acquiescence in what he proposed. The fellow trimmed his dying lamp, and made a sign to me to follow him.

"Do you not go with us?" said I, looking to my conductor.

"It is unnecessary," he replied; "my company may be inconvenient for you, and I had better remain to secure our retreat."

"I do not suppose you mean to betray me to danger," said I.

"To none but what I partake in doubly," answered the stranger, with a voice of assurance which it was impossible to mistrust.

I followed the turnkey, who, leaving the inner wicket unlocked behind him, led me up a *turnpike* (so the Scotch call a winding stair), then along a narrow gallery—then opening one of several doors which led into the passage, he ushered me into a small apartment, and casting his eye on the pallet-bed which occupied one corner, said with an under voice, as he placed the lamp on a little deal table, "She's sleeping."

"She!—who?—can it be Diana Vernon in this abode of misery?"

I turned my eye to the bed, and it was with a mixture of disappointment oddly mingled with pleasure, that I saw my first suspicion had deceived me. I saw a head neither young nor beautiful, garnished with a grey beard of two days' growth, and accommodated with a red nightcap. The first glance put me at ease on the score of Diana Vernon; the second, as the slumberer awoke from a heavy sleep, yawned, and rubbed his eyes, presented me with features very different indeed—even those of my poor friend Owen. I drew back out of view an instant, that he might have time to recover himself; fortunately recollecting that I was but an intruder on these cells of sorrow, and that any alarm might be attended with unhappy consequences.

Meantime, the unfortunate formalist, raising himself from the pallet-bed with the assistance of one hand, and scratching his cap with the other, exclaimed in a voice in which as much peevishness as he was capable of feeling, contended with drowsiness, "I'll tell you what, Mr. Dug-well, or whatever your name may be, the sum-total of the matter is, that if my natural rest is to be broken in this manner, I must complain to the lord mayor."

"Shentlemans to speak wi' her," replied Dougal, resuming the true dogged sullen tone of a turnkey, in exchange for the shrill clang of Highland congratulation with which he had welcomed my mysterious guide; and, turning on his heel, he left the apartment.

It was some time before I could prevail upon the unfortunate sleeper awakening to recognise me; and when he did so, the distress of the worthy creature was extreme, at supposing, which he naturally did, that I had been sent thither as a partner of his captivity.

"O, Mr. Frank, what have you brought yourself and the house to?—I think nothing of myself, that am a mere cipher, so to speak; but you, that was your father's sum-total—his omnium,—you that might have been the first man in the first house in the first city, to be shut up in a nasty Scotch jail, where one cannot even get the dirt brushed off their clothes!"

He rubbed, with an air of peevish irritation, the once stainless brown coat, which had now shared some of the impurities of the floor of his prison-house,—his habits of extreme punctilious neatness acting mechanically to increase his distress.—"O Heaven be gracious to us!" he continued. "What news this will be on 'Change! There has not the like come there since the battle of Almanza, where the total of the British loss was summed up to five thousand men killed and wounded, besides a floating balance of missing—but what will that be to the news that Osbaldistone and Tresham have stopped!"

I broke in on his lamentations to acquaint him that I was no prisoner, though scarce able to account for my being in that place at such an hour. I could only silence his inquiries by persisting in those which his own situation suggested; and at length obtained from him such information as he was able to give me. It was none of the most distinct; for, however clear-headed in his own routine of commercial business, Owen, you are well aware, was not very acute in comprehending what lay beyond that sphere.

The sum of his information was, that of two correspondents of my father's firm at Glasgow, where, owing to engagements in Scotland formerly alluded to, he transacted a great deal of business, both my father and Owen had found the house of MacVittie, MacFin, and Company, the most obliging and accommodating. They had deferred to the great English house on every possible occasion; and in their bargains and transactions acted, without repining, the part of the jackall, who only claims what the lion is pleased to leave him. However small the share of profit allotted to them, it was always, as they expressed it, "enough for the like of them;" however large the portion of trouble, "they were sensible they could not do too much to deserve the continued patronage and good opinion of their honoured friends in Crane Alley."

The dictates of my father were to MacVittie and MacFin the laws of the Medes and Persians, not to be altered, innovated, or even discussed; and the punctilios exacted by Owen in their business transactions, for he was a great lover of form, more especially when he could dictate it *ex cathedra*, seemed scarce less sanctimonious in their eyes. This tone of deep and respectful observance went all currently down with Owen; but my father looked a little closer into men's bosoms, and whether suspicious of this excess of deference, or, as a lover of brevity and simplicity in business, tired with these gentlemen's long-winded professions of regard, he had uniformly resisted their desire to become his sole agents in Scotland. On the contrary, he transacted many affairs through a correspondent of a character perfectly different—a man whose good opinion of himself amounted to self-conceit, and who, disliking the English in general as much as my father did the Scotch, would hold no communication but on a footing of absolute equality; jealous, moreover; captious occasionally; as tenacious of his own opinions in point of form as Owen could be of his; and totally indifferent though the authority of all Lombard Street had stood against his own private opinion.

As these peculiarities of temper rendered it difficult to transact business with Mr. Nicol Jarvie,—as they occasioned at times disputes and coldness between the English house and their correspondent, which were only got over by a sense of mutual interest,—as, moreover, Owen's personal vanity sometimes suffered a little in the discussions to which they gave rise, you cannot be surprised, Tresham, that our old friend threw at all times the weight of his influence in favour of the civil, discreet, accommodating concern of MacVittie and MacFin, and spoke of Jarvie as a petulant, conceited Scotch pedlar, with whom there was no dealing.

It was also not surprising, that in these circumstances, which I only learned in detail some time afterwards, Owen, in the difficulties to which the house was reduced by the absence of my father, and the disappearance of Rashleigh, should, on his arrival in Scotland, which took place two days before mine, have recourse to the friendship of those correspondents, who had always professed themselves obliged, gratified, and devoted to the service of his principal. He was received at Messrs. MacVittie and MacFin's counting-house in the Gallowgate, with something like the devotion a Catholic would pay to his tutelar saint. But, alas! this sunshine was soon overclouded, when, encouraged by the fair hopes which it inspired, he opened the difficulties of the house to his friendly correspondents, and requested their counsel and assistance. MacVittie was almost stunned by the communication; and MacFin, ere it was completed, was already at the ledger of their firm, and deeply engaged in the very bowels of the multitudinous accounts between their house and that of Osbaldistone and Tresham, for the purpose of discovering on which side the balance lay. Alas! the scale depressed considerably against the English firm; and the faces of MacVittie and MacFin, hitherto only blank and doubtful, became now ominous, grim, and lowering. They met Mr. Owen's request of countenance and assistance with a counter-demand of instant security against imminent hazard of eventual loss; and at length, speaking more plainly, required that a deposit of assets, destined for other purposes, should be placed in their hands for that purpose. Owen repelled this demand with great indignation, as dishonourable to his constituents, unjust to the other creditors of Osbaldistone and Tresham, and very ungrateful on the part of those by whom it was made.

The Scotch partners gained, in the course of this controversy, what is very convenient to persons who are in the wrong, an opportunity and pretext for putting themselves in a violent passion, and for taking, under the pretext of the provocation they had received, measures to which some sense of decency, if not of conscience, might otherwise have deterred them from resorting.

Owen had a small share, as I believe is usual, in the house to which he acted as head-clerk, and was therefore personally liable for all its obligations. This was known to Messrs. MacVittie and MacFin; and, with a view of making him feel their power, or rather in order to force him, at this emergency, into those measures in their favour, to which he had expressed himself so repugnant, they had recourse to a summary process of arrest and imprisonment,—which it seems the law of

Scotland (therein surely liable to much abuse) allows to a creditor, who finds his conscience at liberty to make oath that the debtor meditates departing from the realm. Under such a warrant had poor Owen been confined to durance on the day preceding that when I was so strangely guided to his prison-house.

Thus possessed of the alarming outline of facts, the question remained, what was to be done and it was not of easy determination. I plainly perceived the perils with which we were surrounded, but it was more difficult to suggest any remedy. The warning which I had already received seemed to intimate, that my own personal liberty might be endangered by an open appearance in Owen's behalf. Owen entertained the same apprehension, and, in the exaggeration of his terror, assured me that a Scotchman, rather than run the risk of losing a farthing by an Englishman, would find law for arresting his wife, children, man-servant, maidservant, and stranger within his household. The laws concerning debt, in most countries, are so unmercifully severe, that I could not altogether disbelieve his statement; and my arrest, in the present circumstances, would have been a *coup-de-grace* to my father's affairs. In this dilemma, I asked Owen if he had not thought of having recourse to my father's other correspondent in Glasgow, Mr. Nicol Jarvie?

"He had sent him a letter," he replied, "that morning; but if the smooth-tongued and civil house in the Gallowgate* had used him thus, what was to be expected from the cross-grained crab-stock in the Salt-Market?

* [A street in the old town of Glasgow.]

You might as well ask a broker to give up his percentage, as expect a favour from him without the *per contra*. He had not even," Owen said, "answered his letter though it was put into his hand that morning as he went to church." And here the despairing man-of-figures threw himself down on his pallet, exclaiming,—"My poor dear master! My poor dear master! O Mr. Frank, Mr. Frank, this is all your obstinacy!—But God forgive me for saying so to you in your distress! It's God's disposing, and man must submit."

My philosophy, Tresham, could not prevent my sharing in the honest creature's distress, and we mingled our tears,—the more bitter on my part, as the perverse opposition to my father's will, with which the kind-hearted Owen forbore to upbraid me, rose up to my conscience as the cause of all this affliction.

In the midst of our mingled sorrow, we were disturbed and surprised by a loud knocking at the outward door of the prison. I ran to the top of the staircase to listen, but could only hear the voice of the turnkey, alternately in a high tone, answering to some person without, and in a whisper, addressed to the person who had guided me hither—"She's coming—she's coming," aloud; then in a low key, "O hon-a-ri! O hon-a-ri! what'll she do now?—Gang up ta stair, and hide yourself ahint ta Sassenach shentleman's ped.—She's coming as fast as she can.—Ahellanay! it's my lord provosts, and ta pailies, and ta guard—and ta captain's coming toon stairs too—Got press her! gang up or he meets her.—She's coming—she's coming—ta lock's sair roosted."

While Dougal, unwillingly, and with as much delay as possible, undid the various fastenings to give admittance to those without, whose impatience became clamorous, my guide ascended the winding stair, and sprang into Owen's apartment, into which I followed him. He cast his eyes hastily round, as if looking for a place of concealment; then said to me, "Lend me your pistols—yet it's no matter, I can do without them—Whatever you see, take no heed, and do not mix your hand in another man's feud—This gear's mine, and I must manage it as I dow; but I have been as hard bested, and worse, than I am even now."

As the stranger spoke these words, he stripped from his person the cumbrous upper coat in which he was wrapt, confronted the door of the apartment, on which he fixed a keen and determined glance, drawing his person a little back to concentrate his force, like a fine horse brought up to the leaping-bar. I had not a moment's doubt that he meant to extricate himself from his embarrassment, whatever might be the cause of it, by springing full upon those who should appear when the doors opened, and forcing his way through all opposition into the street;—and such was the appearance of strength and agility displayed in his frame, and of determination in his look and manner, that I did not doubt a moment but that he might get clear through his opponents, unless they employed fatal means to stop his purpose. It was a period of awful suspense betwixt the opening of the outward gate and that of the door of the apartment, when there appeared—no guard with bayonets fixed, or watch with clubs, bills, or partisans, but a good-looking young woman, with grogram petticoats, tucked up for trudging through the streets, and holding a lantern in her hand. This female ushered in a more important personage, in form, stout, short, and somewhat corpulent; and by dignity, as it soon appeared, a magistrate, bob-wigged, bustling, and breathless with peevish impatience. My conductor, at his appearance, drew back as if to escape observation; but he could not elude the penetrating twinkle with which this dignitary reconnoitered the whole apartment.

"A bonny thing it is, and a beseeming, that I should be kept at the door half an hour, Captain Stanchells," said he, addressing the principal jailor, who now showed himself at the door as if in attendance on the great man, "knocking as hard to get into the tolbooth as onybody else wad to get out of it, could that avail them, poor fallen creatures!—And how's this?—how's this?—strangers in the jail after lock-up hours, and on the Sabbath evening!—I shall look after this, Stanchells, you may depend on't—Keep the door locked, and I'll speak to these gentlemen in a gliffing—But first I maun hae a crack wi' an auld acquaintance here.— Mr. Owen, Mr. Owen, how's a' wi' ye, man?"

"Pretty well in body, I thank you, Mr. Jarvie," drawled out poor Owen, "but sore afflicted in spirit."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt—ay, ay—it's an awfu' whummle—and for ane that held his head sae high too—human nature, human nature—Ay ay, we're a' subject to a downcome. Mr. Osbaldistone is a gude honest gentleman; but I aye said he was ane o' them wad make a spune or spoil a horn, as my father the worthy deacon used to say. The deacon used to say to me, 'Nick—young Nick' (his name was Nicol as weel as mine; sae folk ca'd us in their daffin', young Nick and auld Nick)—'Nick,' said he, 'never put out your arm farther than ye can draw it easily back again.' I hae said sae to Mr. Osbaldistone, and he didna seem to take it a'thegither sae kind as I wished—but it was weel meant—weel meant."

This discourse, delivered with prodigious volubility, and a great appearance of self-complacency, as he recollected his own advice and predictions, gave little promise of assistance at the hands of Mr. Jarvie. Yet it soon appeared rather to proceed from a total want of delicacy than any deficiency of real kindness; for when Owen expressed himself somewhat hurt that these things should be recalled to memory in his present situation, the Glaswegian took him by the hand, and bade him "Cheer up a gliff! D'ye think I wad hae comed out at twal o'clock at night, and amais broken the Lord's day, just to tell a fa'en man o' his backslidings? Na, na, that's no Bailie Jarvie's gate, nor was't his worthy father's the deacon afore him. Why, man! it's my rule never to think on worldly business on the Sabbath, and though I did a' I could to keep your note that I gat this morning out o' my head, yet I thought mair on it a' day, than on the preaching—And it's my rule to gang to my bed wi' the yellow curtains preceesely at ten o'clock—unless I were eating a haddock wi' a neighbour, or a neighbour wi' me—ask the lass-quean there, if it isna a fundamental rule in my household; and here hae I sitten up reading gude books, and gaping as if I wad swallow St. Enox Kirk, till it chappit twal, whilk was a lawfu' hour to gie a look at my ledger, just to see how things stood between us; and then, as time and tide wait for no man, I made the lass get the lantern, and came slipping my ways here to see what can be dune anent your affairs. Bailie Jarvie can command entrance into the tolbooth at any hour, day or night;—sae could my father the deacon in his time, honest man, praise to his memory."

Although Owen groaned at the mention of the ledger, leading me grievously to fear that here also the balance stood in the wrong column; and although the worthy magistrate's speech expressed much self-complacency, and some ominous triumph in his own superior judgment, yet it was blended with a sort of frank and blunt good-nature, from which I could not help deriving some hopes. He requested to see some papers he mentioned, snatched them hastily from Owen's hand, and sitting on the bed, to "rest his shanks," as he was pleased to express the accommodation which that posture afforded him, his servant girl held up the lantern to him, while, pshawing, muttering, and sputtering, now at the imperfect light, now at the contents of the packet, he ran over the writings it contained.

Seeing him fairly engaged in this course of study, the guide who had brought me hither seemed disposed to take an unceremonious leave. He made a sign to me to say nothing, and intimated, by his change of posture, an intention to glide towards the door in such a manner as to attract the least possible observation. But the alert magistrate (very different from my old acquaintance, Mr. Justice Inglewood) instantly detected and interrupted his purposes. "I say, look to the door, Stanchells—shut and lock it, and keep watch on the outside."

The stranger's brow darkened, and he seemed for an instant again to meditate the effecting his retreat by violence; but ere he had determined, the door closed, and the ponderous bolt revolved. He muttered an exclamation in Gaelic, strode across the floor, and then, with an air of dogged resolution, as if fixed and prepared to see the scene to an end, sate himself down on the oak table, and whistled a strathspey.

Mr. Jarvie, who seemed very alert and expeditious in going through business, soon showed himself master of that which he had been considering, and addressed himself to Mr. Owen in the following strain:—"Weel, Mr. Owen, weel—your house are awin' certain sums to Messrs. MacVittie and MacFin (shame fa' their souple snouts! they made that and mair out o' a bargain about the aik-woods at Glen-Cailziechat, that they took out atween my teeth—wi' help o' your gude word, I maun needs say, Mr. Owen—but that makes nae odds now)—Weel, sir, your house awes them this siller; and for this, and relief of other engagements they stand in for you, they hae putten a double turn o' Stanchells' muckle key on ye.—Weel, sir, ye awe this siller—and maybe ye awe some mair to some other body too—maybe ye awe some to myself, Bailie Nicol Jarvie."

"I cannot deny, sir, but the balance may of this date be brought out against us, Mr. Jarvie," said Owen; "but you'll please to consider"—

"I hae nae time to consider e'enow, Mr. Owen—Sae near Sabbath at e'en, and out o' ane's warm bed at this time o' night, and a sort o' drow in the air besides—there's nae time for considering—But, sir, as I was saying, ye awe me money—it winna deny—ye awe me money, less or mair, I'll stand by it. But then, Mr. Owen, I canna see how you, an active man that understands business, can redd out the business ye're come down about, and clear us a' aff—as I have gritt hope ye will—if ye're keepit lying here in the tolbooth of Glasgow. Now, sir, if you can find caution *judicio sisti*,—that is, that ye winna flee the country, but appear and relieve your caution when ca'd for in our legal courts, ye may be set at liberty this very morning."

"Mr. Jarvie," said Owen, "if any friend would become surety for me to that effect, my liberty might be usefully employed, doubtless, both for the house and all connected with it."

"Aweel, sir," continued Jarvie, "and doubtless such a friend wad expect ye to appear when ca'd on, and relieve him o' his engagement."

"And I should do so as certainly, bating sickness or death, as that two and two make four."

"Aweel, Mr. Owen," resumed the citizen of Glasgow, "I dinna misdoubt ye, and I'll prove it, sir—I'll prove it. I am a carefu' man, as is weel ken'd, and industrious, as the hale town can testify; and I can win my crowns, and keep my crowns, and count my crowns, wi' onybody in the Saut Market, or it may be in the Gallowgate. And I'm a prudent man, as my father the deacon was before me;—but rather than an honest civil gentleman, that understands business, and is willing to do justice to all men, should lie by the heels this gate, unable to help himsell or onybody else—why, conscience, man! I'll be your bail myself—But ye'll mind it's a bail *judicio sisti*, as our town-clerk says, not *judicatum solvi*; ye'll mind that, for there's muckle difference."

Mr. Owen assured him, that as matters then stood, he could not expect any one to become surety for the actual payment of the debt, but that there was not the most distant cause for apprehending loss from his failing to present himself when lawfully called upon.

"I believe ye—I believe ye. Eneugh said—eneugh said. We've hae your legs loose by breakfast-time.—And now let's hear what thir chamber chieles o' yours hae to say for themselves, or how, in the name of unrule, they got here at this time o' night."

CHAPTER SIXTH.

*Hame came our gudeman at e'en,
And hame came he,
And there he saw a man
Where a man suldna be.
"How's this now, kimmer?
How's this?" quo he,—
"How came this carle here
Without the leave o' me?"
Old Song.*

The magistrate took the light out of the servant-maid's hand, and advanced to his scrutiny, like Diogenes in the street of Athens, lantern-in-hand, and probably with as little expectation as that of the cynic, that he was likely to encounter any especial treasure in the course of his researches. The first whom he approached was my mysterious guide, who, seated on a table as I have already described him, with his eyes firmly fixed on the wall, his features arranged into the utmost inflexibility of expression, his hands folded on his breast with an air betwixt carelessness and defiance, his heel patting against the foot of the table, to keep time with the tune which he continued to whistle, submitted to Mr. Jarvie's investigation with an air of absolute confidence and assurance which, for a moment, placed at fault the memory and sagacity of the acute investigator.

"Ah!—Eh!—Oh!" exclaimed the Bailie. "My conscience!—it's impossible!—and yet—no!—Conscience!—it canna be!—and yet again—Deil hae me, that I suld say sae!—Ye robber—ye cateran—ye born deevil that ye are, to a' bad ends and nae gude ane!—can this be you?"

"E'en as ye see, Bailie," was the laconic answer.

"Conscience! if I am na clean bumbaized—*you*, ye cheat-the-wuddy rogue—*you* here on your venture in the tolbooth o' Glasgow?—What d'ye think's the value o' your head?"

"Umph!—why, fairly weighed, and Dutch weight, it might weigh down one provost's, four bailies', a town-clerk's, six deacons', besides stent-masters"—

"Ah, ye reiving villain!" interrupted Mr. Jarvie. "But tell ower your sins, and prepare ye, for if I say the word"—

"True, Bailie," said he who was thus addressed, folding his hands behind him with the utmost *nonchalance*, "but ye will never say that word."

"And why suld I not, sir?" exclaimed the magistrate—"Why suld I not? Answer me that—why suld I not?"

"For three sufficient reasons, Bailie Jarvie.—First, for auld langsyne; second, for the sake of the auld wife ayont the fire at Stuckavrallachan, that made some mixture of our bluids, to my own proper shame be it spoken! that has a cousin wi' accounts, and yarn winnles, and looms and shuttles, like a mere mechanical person; and lastly, Bailie, because if I saw a sign o' your betraying me, I would plaster that wa' with your harns ere the hand of man could rescue you!"

"Ye're a bauld desperate villain, sir," retorted the undaunted Bailie; "and ye ken that I ken ye to be sae, and that I wadna stand a moment for my ain risk."

"I ken weel," said the other, "ye hae gentle bluid in your veins, and I wad be laith to hurt my ain kinsman. But I'll gang out here as free as I came in, or the very wa's o' Glasgow tolbooth shall tell o't these ten years to come."

"Weel, weel," said Mr. Jarvie, "bluid's thicker than water; and it liesna in kith, kin, and ally, to see motes in ilka other's een if other een see them no. It wad be sair news to the auld wife below the Ben of Stuckavrallachan, that you, ye Hieland limmer, had knockit out my harns, or that I had kilted you up in a tow. But ye'll own, ye dour deevil, that were it no your very sell, I wad hae grippit the best man in the Hielands."

"Ye wad hae tried, cousin," answered my guide, "that I wot weel; but I doubt ye wad hae come aff wi' the short measure; for we gang-there-out Hieland bodies are an unchancy generation when you speak to us o' bondage. We downa bide the coercion of gude braid-claith about our hinderlans, let a be breeks o' free-stone, and garters o' iron."

"Ye'll find the stane breeks and the ain garters—ay, and the hemp cravat, for a' that, neighbour," replied the Bailie.

"Nae man in a civilised country ever played the pliskies ye hae done—but e'en pickle in your ain pock-neuk—I hae gi'en ye wanting."

"Well, cousin," said the other, "ye'll wear black at my burial."

"Deil a black cloak will be there, Robin, but the corbies and the hoodie-craws, I've gie ye my hand on that. But whar's the gude thousand pund Scots that I lent ye, man, and when am I to see it again?"

"Where it is," replied my guide, after the affectation of considering for a moment, "I cannot justly tell—probably where last year's snaw is."

"And that's on the tap of Schehallion, ye Hieland dog," said Mr. Jarvie; "and I look for payment frae you where ye stand."

"Ay," replied the Highlander, "but I keep neither snaw nor dollars in my sporan. And as to when you'll see it—why, just when the king enjoys his ain again, as the auld sang says."

"Warst of a', Robin," retorted the Glaswegian,—"I mean, ye disloyal traitor—Warst of a'!—Wad ye bring popery in on us, and arbitrary power, and a foist and a warming-pan, and the set forms, and the curates, and the auld enormities o' surplices and cerements? Ye had better stick to your auld trade o' theft-boot, black-mail, spreaghs, and gillravaging—better stealing nowte than ruining nations."

"Hout, man—whisht wi' your whiggery," answered the Celt; "we hae ken'd ane anither mony a lang day. I'se take care your counting-room is no cleaned out when the Gillon-a-naillie* come to redd up the Glasgow buiths, and clear them o' their auld shop-wares."

* The lads with the kilts or petticoats.

And, unless it just fa' in the preceese way o' your duty, ye maunna see me oftener, Nicol, than I am disposed to be seen."

"Ye are a dauring villain, Rob," answered the Bailie; "and ye will be hanged, that will be seen and heard tell o'; but I'se ne'er be the ill bird and foul my nest, set apart strong necessity and the skreigh of duty, which no man should hear and be inobedient. And wha the deevil's this?" he continued, turning to me—"Some gillravager that ye hae listed, I daur say. He looks as if he had a bauld heart to the highway, and a lang craig for the gibbet."

"This, good Mr. Jarvie," said Owen, who, like myself, had been struck dumb during this strange recognition, and no less strange dialogue, which took place betwixt these extraordinary kinsmen—"This, good Mr. Jarvie, is young Mr. Frank Osbaldistone, only child of the head of our house, who should have been taken into our firm at the time Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone, his cousin, had the luck to be taken into it"—(Here Owen could not suppress a groan)—"But howsoever"—

"Oh, I have heard of that smaik," said the Scotch merchant, interrupting him; "it is he whom your principal, like an obstinate auld fule, wad make a merchant o', wad he or wad he no,—and the lad turned a strolling stage-player, in pure dislike to the labour an honest man should live by. Weel, sir, what say you to your handiwork? Will Hamlet the Dane, or Hamlet's ghost, be good security for Mr. Owen, sir?"

"I don't deserve your taunt," I replied, "though I respect your motive, and am too grateful for the assistance you have afforded Mr. Owen, to resent it. My only business here was to do what I could (it is perhaps very little) to aid Mr. Owen in the management of my father's affairs. My dislike of the commercial profession is a feeling of which I am the best and sole judge."

"I protest," said the Highlander, "I had some respect for this callant even before I ken'd what was in him; but now I honour him for his contempt of weavers and spinners, and sic-like mechanical persons and their pursuits."

"Ye're mad, Rob," said the Bailie—"mad as a March hare—though wherefore a hare suld be mad at March mair than at Martinmas, is mair than I can weel say. Weavers! Deil shake ye out o' the web the weaver craft made. Spinners! ye'll spin and wind yourself a bonny pirn. And this young birkie here, that ye're hoying and hounding on the shortest road to the gallows and the deevil, will his stage-plays and his poetries help him here, dye think, ony mair than your deep oaths and drawn dirks, ye reprobate that ye are?—Will *Tityre tu patulae*, as they ca' it, tell him where Rashleigh Osbaldistone is? or Macbeth, and all his kernes and galla-glasses, and your awn to boot, Rob, procure him five thousand pounds to answer the bills which fall due ten days hence, were they a' roup'd at the Cross,—basket-hilts, Andra-Ferraras, leather targets, brogues, brochan, and sporrans?"

"Ten days," I answered, and instinctively drew out Diana Vernon's packet; and the time being elapsed during which I was to keep the seal sacred, I hastily broke it open. A sealed letter fell from a blank enclosure, owing to the trepidation with which I opened the parcel. A slight current of wind, which found its way through a broken pane of the window, wafted the letter to Mr. Jarvie's feet, who lifted it, examined the address with unceremonious curiosity, and, to my astonishment, handed it to his Highland kinsman, saying, "Here's a wind has blown a letter to its right owner, though there were ten thousand chances against its coming to hand."

The Highlander, having examined the address, broke the letter open without the least ceremony. I endeavoured to interrupt his proceeding.

"You must satisfy me, sir," said I, "that the letter is intended for you before I can permit you to peruse it."

"Make yourself quite easy, Mr. Osbaldistone," replied the mountaineer with great composure.—"remember Justice Inglewood, Clerk Jobson, Mr. Morris—above all, remember your vera humble servant, Robert Cawmil, and the beautiful Diana Vernon. Remember all this, and doubt no longer that the letter is for me."

I remained astonished at my own stupidity.—Through the whole night, the voice, and even the features of this man, though imperfectly seen, haunted me with recollections to which I could assign no exact local or personal associations. But now the light dawned on me at once; this man was Campbell himself. His whole peculiarities flashed on me at once,—the deep strong voice—the inflexible, stern, yet considerate cast of features—the Scottish brogue, with its corresponding dialect and imagery, which, although he possessed the power at times of laying them aside, recurred at every moment of emotion, and gave pith to his sarcasm, or vehemence to his expostulation. Rather beneath the middle size than above it, his limbs were formed upon the very strongest model that is consistent with agility, while from the remarkable ease and freedom of his movements, you could not doubt his possessing the latter quality in a high degree of perfection. Two points in his person interfered with the rules of symmetry; his shoulders were so broad in proportion to his height, as, notwithstanding the lean and lathy appearance of his frame, gave him something the air of being too square in respect to his stature; and his arms, though round, sinewy, and strong, were so very long as to be rather a deformity. I afterwards heard that this length of arm was a circumstance on which he prided himself; that when he wore his native Highland garb, he could tie the garters of his hose without stooping; and that it gave him great advantage in the use of the broad-sword, at which he was very dexterous. But certainly this want of symmetry destroyed the claim he might otherwise have set up, to be accounted a very handsome man; it gave something wild, irregular, and, as it were, unearthly, to his appearance, and reminded me involuntarily of the tales which Mabel used to tell of the old Picts who ravaged Northumberland in ancient times, who, according to her tradition, were a sort of half-goblin half-human beings, distinguished, like this man, for courage, cunning, ferocity, the length of their arms, and the squareness of their shoulders.

When, however, I recollected the circumstances in which we formerly met, I could not doubt that the billet was most probably designed for him. He had made a marked figure among those mysterious personages over whom Diana seemed to exercise an influence, and from whom she experienced an influence in her turn. It was painful to think that the fate of a being so amiable was involved in that of desperadoes of this man's description;—yet it seemed impossible to doubt it. Of what use, however, could this person be to my father's affairs?—I could think only of one. Rashleigh Osbaldistone had, at the instigation of Miss Vernon, certainly found means to produce Mr. Campbell when his presence was necessary to exculpate me from Morris's accusation—Was it not possible that her influence, in like manner, might prevail on Campbell to produce Rashleigh? Speaking on this supposition, I requested to know where my dangerous kinsman was, and when Mr. Campbell had seen him. The answer was indirect.

"It's a kittle cast she has gien me to play; but yet it's fair play, and I winna baulk her. Mr. Osbaldistone, I dwell not very far from hence—my kinsman can show you the way—Leave Mr. Owen to do the best he can in Glasgow—do you come and see me in the glens, and it's like I may pleasure you, and stead your father in his extremity. I am but a poor man; but wit's better than wealth—and, cousin" (turning from me to address Mr. Jarvie), "if ye daur venture sae muckle as to eat a dish of Scotch collops, and a leg o' red-deer venison wi' me, come ye wi' this Sassenach gentleman as far as Drymen or Bucklivie,—or the Clachan of Aberfoil will be better than ony o' them,—and I'll hae somebody waiting to wise ye the gate to the place where I may be for the time—What say ye, man? There's my thumb, I'll ne'er beguile thee."

"Na, na, Robin," said the cautious burgher, "I seldom like to leave the Gorbals;* I have nae freedom to gang among your wild hills, Robin, and your kilted red-shanks—it disna become my place, man."

* [The *Gorbals* or "suburbs" are situate on the south side of the River.]

"The devil damn your place and you baith!" reiterated Campbell. "The only drap o' gentle bluid that's in your body was our great-grand-uncle's that was justified* at Dumbarton, and you set yourself up to say ye wad derogate frae your place to visit me!

* [Executed for treason.]

Hark thee, man—I owe thee a day in harst—I'll pay up your thousan pund Scots, plack and bawbee, gin ye'll be an honest fallow for anes, and just daiker up the gate wi' this Sassenach."

"Hout awa' wi' your gentility," replied the Bailie; "carry your gentle bluid to the Cross, and see what ye'll buy wi't. But, if I were to come, wad ye really and soothfastly pay me the siller?"

"I swear to ye," said the Highlander, "upon the halidome of him that sleeps beneath the grey stane at Inch-Cailleach."*

* Inch-Cailleach is an island in Lochlomond, where the clan of MacGregor were wont to be interred, and where their sepulchres may still be seen. It formerly contained a nunnery; hence the name of Inch-Cailleach, or the island of Old Women.

"Say nae mair, Robin—say nae mair—We'll see what may be dune. But ye maunna expect me to gang ower the Highland line—I'll gae beyond the line at no rate. Ye maun meet me about Bucklivie or the Clachan of Aberfoil,—and dinna forget the needful."

"Nae fear—nae fear," said Campbell; "I'll be as true as the steel blade that never failed its master. But I must be budging, cousin, for the air o' Glasgow tolbooth is no that ower salutary to a Highlander's constitution."

"Troth," replied the merchant, "and if my duty were to be dune, ye couldna change your atmosphere, as the minister ca's it, this ae wee while.—Ochon, that I sud ever be concerned in aiding and abetting an escape frae justice! it will be a shame and disgrace to me and mine, and my very father's memory, for ever."

"Hout tout, man! let that flee stick in the wa'," answered his kinsman; "when the dirt's dry it will rub out—Your father, honest man, could look ower a friend's fault as weel as anither."

"Ye may be right, Robin," replied the Bailie, after a moment's reflection; "he was a considerate man the deacon; he ken'd we had a' our frailties, and he lo'ed his friends—Ye'll no hae forgotten him, Robin?" This question he put in a softened tone, conveying as much at least of the ludicrous as the pathetic.

"Forgotten him!" replied his kinsman—"what suld ail me to forget him?—a wapping weaver he was, and wrought my first pair o' hose.—But come awa', kinsman,

*Come fill up my cap, come fill up my cann,
Come saddle my horses, and call up my man;
Come open your gates, and let me gae free,
I daurna stay langer in bonny Dundee."*

"Whisht, sir!" said the magistrate, in an authoritative tone—"lilting and singing sae near the latter end o' the Sabbath! This house may hear ye sing anither tune yet—Aweel, we hae a' backslidings to answer for—Stanchells, open the door."

The jailor obeyed, and we all sallied forth. Stanchells looked with some surprise at the two strangers, wondering, doubtless, how they came into these premises without his knowledge; but Mr. Jarvie's "Friends o' mine, Stanchells—friends o' mine," silenced all disposition to inquiries. We now descended into the lower vestibule, and hallooed more than once for Dougal, to which summons no answer was returned; when Campbell observed with a sardonic smile, "That if Dougal was the lad he kent him, he would scarce wait to get thanks for his ain share of the night's wark, but was in all probability on the full trot to the pass of Ballamaha"—

"And left us—and, abune a', me, mysell, locked up in the tolbooth a' night!" exclaimed the Bailie, in ire and perturbation. "Ca' for forehammers, sledge-hammers, pinches, and coulters; send for Deacon Yettlin, the smith, an let him ken that Bailie Jarvie's shut up in the tolbooth by a Highland blackguard, whom he'll hang up as high as Haman"—

"When ye catch him," said Campbell, gravely; "but stay—the door is surely not locked."

Indeed, on examination, we found that the door was not only left open, but that Dougal in his retreat had, by carrying off the keys along with him, taken care that no one should exercise his office of porter in a hurry.

"He has glimmerings o' common sense now, that creature Dougal," said Campbell.—"he ken'd an open door might hae served me at a pinch."

We were by this time in the street.

"I tell you, Robin," said the magistrate, "in my puir mind, if ye live the life ye do, ye suld hae ane o' your gillies door-keeper in every jail in Scotland, in case o' the warst."

"Ane o' my kinsmen a bailie in ilka burgh will just do as weel, cousin Nicol—So, gude-night or gude-morning to ye; and forget not the Clachan of Aberfoil."

And without waiting for an answer, he sprung to the other side of the street, and was lost in darkness. Immediately on his disappearance, we heard him give a low whistle of peculiar modulation, which was instantly replied to.

"Hear to the Hieland deevils," said Mr. Jarvie; "they think themselves on the skirts of Benlomond already, where they may gang whewingand whistling about without minding Sunday or Saturday." Here he was interrupted by something which fell with a heavy clash on the street before us—"Gude guide us what's this mair o't?—Mattie, haud up the lantern—Conscience if it isna the keys!—Weel, that's just as weel—they cost the burgh siller, and there might hae been some clavers about the loss o' them. O, an Bailie Grahame were to get word o' this night's job, it would be a sair hair in my neck!"

As we were still but a few steps from the tolbooth door, we carried back these implements of office, and consigned them to the head jailor, who, in lieu of the usual mode of making good his post by turning the keys, was keeping sentry in the vestibule till the arrival of some assistant, whom he had summoned in order to replace the Celtic fugitive Dougal.

Having discharged this piece of duty to the burgh, and my road lying the same way with the honest magistrate's, I profited by the light of his lantern, and he by my arm, to find our way through the streets, which, whatever they may now be, were then dark, uneven, and ill-paved. Age is easily propitiated by attentions from the young. The Bailie expressed himself interested in me, and added, "That since I was nane o' that play-acting and play-ganging generation, whom his saul hated, he wad be glad if I wad eat a reisted haddock or a fresh herring, at breakfast wi' him the morn, and meet my friend, Mr. Owen, whom, by that time, he would place at liberty."

"My dear sir," said I, when I had accepted of the invitation with thanks, "how could you possibly connect me with the stage?"

"I watna," replied Mr. Jarvie;—"it was a bletherin' phrasin' chield they ca' Fairservice, that cam at e'en to get an order to send the crier through the toun for ye at skreigh o' day the morn. He tell't me whae ye were, and how ye were sent frae your father's house because ye wadna be a dealer, and that ye mightna disgrace your family wi' ganging on the stage. Ane Hammorgaw, our precentor, brought him here, and said he was an auld acquaintance; but I sent them both away wi' a flae in their lug for bringing me sic an errand, on sic a night. But I see he's a fule-creature a'thegither, and clean mistaen about ye. I like ye, man," he continued; "I like a lad that will stand by his friends in trouble—I aye did it mysell, and sae did the deacon my father, rest and bless him! But ye suldna keep ower muckle company wi' Hielandmen and thae wild cattle. Can a man touch pitch and no be defiled?—aye mind that. Nae doubt, the best and wisest may err—Once, twice, and thrice have I backslidden, man, and dune three things this night—my father wadna hae believed his een if he could hae looked up and seen me do them."

He was by this time arrived at the door of his own dwelling. He paused, however, on the threshold, and went on in a solemn tone of deep contrition,—*"Firstly, I hae thought my ain thoughts on the Sabbath—secondly, I hae g'i'en security for an Englishman—and, in the third and last place, well-a-day! I hae let an ill-doer escape from the place of imprisonment—But there's balm in Gilead, Mr. Osbaldistone— Mattie, I can let mysell in—see Mr. Osbaldistone to Luckie Flyter's, at the corner o' the wynd.—Mr. Osbaldistone—in a whisper—"ye'll offer nae incivility to Mattie—she's an honest man's daughter, and a near cousin o' the Laird o' Limmerfield's."*

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

*"Will it please your worship to accept of my poor service? I beseech
that I may feed upon your bread, though it be the brownest, and
drink of your drink, though it be of the smallest; for I will do*

your Worship as much service for forty shillings as another man shall for three pounds."

Greene's Tu Quoque.

I remembered the honest Baillie's parting charge, but did not conceive there was any incivility in adding a kiss to the half-crown with which I remunerated Mattie's attendance;—nor did her "Fie for shame, sir!" express any very deadly resentment of the affront. Repeated knocking at Mrs. Flyter's gate awakened in due order, first, one or two stray dogs, who began to bark with all their might; next two or three night-capped heads, which were thrust out of the neighbouring windows to reprehend me for disturbing the solemnity of the Sunday night by that untimely noise. While I trembled lest the thunders of their wrath might dissolve in showers like that of Xantippe, Mrs. Flyter herself awoke, and began, in a tone of oburgation not unbecoming the philosophical spouse of Socrates, to scold one or two loiterers in her kitchen, for not hastening to the door to prevent a repetition of my noisy summons.

These worthies were, indeed, nearly concerned in the fracas which their laziness occasioned, being no other than the faithful Mr. Fairservice, with his friend Mr. Hammorgaw, and another person, whom I afterwards found to be the town-crier, who were sitting over a cog of ale, as they called it (at my expense, as my bill afterwards informed me), in order to devise the terms and style of a proclamation to be made through the streets the next day, in order that "the unfortunate young gentleman," as they had the impudence to qualify me, might be restored to his friends without farther delay. It may be supposed that I did not suppress my displeasure at this impertinent interference with my affairs; but Andrew set up such ejaculations of transport at my arrival, as fairly drowned my expressions of resentment. His raptures, perchance, were partly political; and the tears of joy which he shed had certainly their source in that noble fountain of emotion, the tankard. However, the tumultuous glee which he felt, or pretended to feel, at my return, saved Andrew the broken head which I had twice destined him;—first, on account of the colloquy he had held with the precentor on my affairs; and secondly, for the impertinent history he had thought proper to give of me to Mr. Jarvie. I however contented myself with slapping the door of my bedroom in his face as he followed me, praising Heaven for my safe return, and mixing his joy with admonitions to me to take care how I walked my own ways in future. I then went to bed, resolving my first business in the morning should be to discharge this troublesome, pedantic, self-conceited coxcomb, who seemed so much disposed to constitute himself rather a preceptor than a domestic.

Accordingly in the morning I resumed my purpose, and calling Andrew into my apartment, requested to know his charge for guiding and attending me as far as Glasgow. Mr. Fairservice looked very blank at this demand, justly considering it as a presage to approaching dismissal.

"Your honour," he said, after some hesitation, "wunna think—wunna think"—

"Speak out, you rascal, or I'll break your head," said I, as Andrew, between the double risk of losing all by asking too much, or a part, by stating his demand lower than what I might be willing to pay, stood gasping in the agony of doubt and calculation.

Out it came with a bolt, however, at my threat; as the kind violence of a blow on the back sometimes delivers the windpipe from an intrusive morsel.—"Aughteen pennies sterling per diem—that is, by the day—your honour wadna think unconscionable."

"It is double what is usual, and treble what you merit, Andrew; but there's a guinea for you, and get about your business."

"The Lord forgie us! Is your honour mad?" exclaimed Andrew.

"No; but I think you mean to make me so—I give you a third above your demand, and you stand staring and expostulating there as if I were cheating you. Take your money, and go about your business."

"Gude safe us!" continued Andrew, "in what can I hae offended your honour? Certainly a' flesh is but as the flowers of the field; but if a bed of camomile hath value in medicine, of a surety the use of Andrew Fairservice to your honour is nothing less evident—it's as muckle as your life's worth to part wi' me."

"Upon my honour," replied I, "it is difficult to say whether you are more knave or fool. So you intend then to remain with me whether I like it or no?"

"Troth, I was e'en thinking sae," replied Andrew, dogmatically; "for if your honour disna ken when ye hae a gude servant, I ken when I hae a gude master, and the deil be in my feet gin I leave ye—and there's the brief and the lang o't besides I hae received nae regular warning to quit my place."

"Your place, sir!" said I;—"why, you are no hired servant of mine,—you are merely a guide, whose knowledge of the country I availed myself of on my road."

"I am no just a common servant, I admit, sir," remonstrated Mr. Fairservice; "but your honour kens I quitted a gude place at an hour's notice, to comply wi' your honour's solicitations. A man might make honestly, and wi' a clear conscience, twenty sterling pounds per annum, weel counted siller, o' the garden at Osbaldistone Hall, and I wasna likely to gie up a' that for a guinea, I trow—I reckoned on staying wi' your honour to the term's end at the least o't; and I account my wage, board-wage, fee and bountith,—ay, to that length o't at the least."

"Come, come, sir," replied I, "these impudent pretensions won't serve your turn; and if I hear any more of them, I shall convince you that Squire Thorncliff is not the only one of my name that can use his fingers."

While I spoke thus, the whole matter struck me as so ridiculous, that, though really angry, I had some difficulty to forbear laughing at the gravity with which Andrew supported a plea so utterly extravagant. The rascal, aware of the impression he had made on my muscles, was encouraged to perseverance. He judged it safer, however, to take his pretensions a peg lower, in case of overstraining at the same time both his plea and my patience.

"Admitting that my honour could part with a faithful servant, that had served me and mine by day and night for twenty years, in a strange place, and at a moment's warning, he was weel assured," he said, "it wasna in my heart, nor in no true gentleman's, to pit a puir lad like himself, that had come forty or fifty, or say a hundred miles out o' his road purely to bear my honour company, and that had nae handing but his penny-fee, to sic a hardship as this comes to."

I think it was you, Will, who once told me, that, to be an obstinate man, I am in certain things the most gullable and malleable of mortals. The fact is, that it is only contradiction which makes me peremptory, and when I do not feel myself called on to give battle to any proposition, I am always willing to grant it, rather than give myself much trouble. I knew this fellow to be a greedy, tiresome, meddling coxcomb; still, however, I must have some one about me in the quality of guide and domestic, and I was so much used to Andrew's humour, that on some occasions it was rather amusing. In the state of indecision to which these reflections led me, I asked Fairservice if he knew the roads, towns, etc., in the north of Scotland, to which my father's concerns with the proprietors of Highland forests were likely to lead me. I believe if I had asked him the road to the terrestrial paradise, he would have at that moment undertaken to guide me to it; so that I had reason afterwards to think myself fortunate in finding that his actual knowledge did not fall very much short of that which he asserted himself to possess. I fixed the amount of his wages, and reserved to myself the privilege of dismissing him when I chose, on paying him a week in advance. I gave him finally a severe lecture on his conduct of the preceding day, and then dismissed him rejoicing at heart, though somewhat crestfallen in countenance, to rehearse to his friend the precentor, who was taking his morning draught in the kitchen, the mode in which he had "cuitled up the daft young English squire."

Agreeable to appointment, I went next to Baillie Nicol Jarvie's, where a comfortable morning's repast was arranged in the parlour, which served as an apartment of all hours, and almost all work, to that honest gentleman. The bustling and benevolent magistrate had been as good as his word. I found my friend Owen at liberty, and, conscious of the refreshments and purification of brush and basin, was of course a very different person from Owen a prisoner, squalid, heart-broken, and hopeless. Yet the sense of pecuniary difficulties arising behind, before, and around him, had depressed his spirit, and the almost paternal embrace which the good man gave me, was embittered by a sigh of the deepest anxiety. And when he sate down, the heaviness in his eye and manner, so different from the quiet composed satisfaction which they usually exhibited, indicated that he was employing his arithmetic in mentally numbering up the days, the hours, the minutes, which yet remained as an interval between the dishonour of bills and the downfall of the great commercial establishment of Osbaldistone and Tresham. It was left to me, therefore, to do honour to our landlord's hospitable cheer—to his tea, right from China, which he got in a present from some eminent ship's-husband at Wapping—to his coffee, from a snug plantation of his own, as he informed us with a wink, called Saltmarket Grove, in the island of Jamaica—to his English toast and ale, his Scotch dried salmon, his Lochfine herrings, and even to the double-damask table-cloth, "wrought by no hand, as you may guess," save that of his deceased father the worthy Deacon Jarvie.

Having conciliated our good-humoured host by those little attentions which are great to most men, I endeavoured in my turn to gain from him some information which might be useful for my guidance, as well as for the satisfaction of my curiosity. We had not hitherto made the least allusion to the transactions of the

preceding night, a circumstance which made my question sound somewhat abrupt, when, without any previous introduction of the subject, I took advantage of a pause when the history of the table-cloth ended, and that of the napkins was about to commence, to inquire, "Pray, by the by, Mr. Jarvie, who may this Mr. Robert Campbell be, whom we met with last night?"

The interrogatory seemed to strike the honest magistrate, to use the vulgar phrase, "all of a heap," and instead of answering, he returned the question—"Whae's Mr. Robert Campbell?—ahem! ahay! Whae's Mr. Robert Campbell, quo' he?"

"Yes," said I, "I mean who and what is he?"

"Why, he's—ahay!—he's—ahem!—Where did ye meet with Mr. Robert Campbell, as ye ca' him?"

"I met him by chance," I replied, "some months ago in the north of England."

"Ou then, Mr. Osbaldistone," said the Bailie, doggedly, "ye'll ken as muckle about him as I do."

"I should suppose not, Mr. Jarvie," I replied;—"you are his relation, it seems, and his friend."

"There is some cousin-red between us, doubtless," said the Bailie reluctantly; "but we hae seen little o' ilk other since Rob gae tip the cattle-line o' dealing, poor fallow! he was hardly guided by them might hae used him better—and they haena made their plack a bawbee o't neither. There's mony ane this day wad rather they had never chased puir Robin frae the Cross o' Glasgow—there's mony ane wad rather see him again at the tale o' three hundred kyloes, than at the head o' thirty waur cattle."

"All this explains nothing to me, Mr. Jarvie, of Mr. Campbell's rank, habits of life, and means of subsistence," I replied.

"Rank?" said Mr. Jarvie; "he's a Hieland gentleman, nae doubt—better rank need nane to be;—and for habit, I judge he wears the Hieland habit amang the hills, though he has breeks on when he comes to Glasgow;—and as for his subsistence, what needs we care about his subsistence, sae lang as he asks naething frae us, ye ken? But I hae nae time for clavering about him e'en now, because we maun look into your father's concerns wi' all speed."

So saying, he put on his spectacles, and sate down to examine Mr. Owen's states, which the other thought it most prudent to communicate to him without reserve. I knew enough of business to be aware that nothing could be more acute and sagacious than the views which Mr. Jarvie entertained of the matters submitted to his examination; and, to do him justice, it was marked by much fairness, and even liberality. He scratched his ear indeed repeatedly on observing the balance which stood at the debit of Osbaldistone and Tresham in account with himself personally.

"It may be a dead loss," he observed; "and, conscience! whate'er ane o' your Lombard Street goldsmiths may say to it, it's a snell ane in the Saut-Market* o' Glasgow. It will be a heavy deficit—a staff out o' my bicker, I trow."

* [The Saltmarket. This ancient street, situate in the heart of Glasgow, has of late been almost entirely renovated.]

But what then?—I trust the house wunna coup the crane for a' that's come and gane yet; and if it does, I'll never bear sae base a mind as thae corbies in the Gallowgate—an I am to lose by ye, I'se ne'er deny I hae won by ye mony a fair pund sterling—Sae, an it come to the warst, I'se een lay the head o' the sow to the tail o' the grice."

* *Anglice*, the head of the sow to the tail of the pig.

I did not altogether understand the proverbial arrangement with which Mr. Jarvie consoled himself, but I could easily see that he took a kind and friendly interest in the arrangement of my father's affairs, suggested several expedients, approved several plans proposed by Owen, and by his countenance and counsel greatly abated the gloom upon the brow of that afflicted delegate of my father's establishment.

As I was an idle spectator on this occasion, and, perhaps, as I showed some inclination more than once to return to the prohibited, and apparently the puzzling subject of Mr. Campbell, Mr. Jarvie dismissed me with little formality, with an advice to "gang up the gate to the college, where I wad find some chields could speak Greek and Latin weel—at least they got plenty o' siller for doing deil haet else, if they didna do that; and where I might read a spell o' the worthy Mr. Zachary Boyd's translation o' the Scriptures—better poetry need nane to be, as he had been tell'd by them that ken'd or suld hae ken'd about sic things." But he seasoned this dismissal with a kind and hospitable invitation "to come back and take part o' his family-chack at ane preceesely—there wad be a leg o' mutton, and, it might be, a tup's head, for they were in season;" but above all, I was to return at "ane o'clock preceesely—it was the hour he and the deacon his father aye dined at—they pat it off for naething nor for naebody."

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*So stands the Thracian herdsman with his spear
Full in the gap, and hopes the hunted bear;
And hears him in the rustling wood, and sees
His course at distance by the bending trees,
And thinks—Here comes my mortal enemy,
And either he must fall in fight, or I.
Palamon and Arcite.*

I took the route towards the college, as recommended by Mr. Jarvie, less with the intention of seeking for any object of interest or amusement, than to arrange my own ideas, and meditate on my future conduct. I wandered from one quadrangle of old-fashioned buildings to another, and from thence to the College-yards, or walking ground, where, pleased with the solitude of the place, most of the students being engaged in their classes, I took several turns, pondering on the waywardness of my own destiny.

I could not doubt, from the circumstances attending my first meeting with this person Campbell, that he was engaged in some strangely desperate courses; and the reluctance with which Mr. Jarvie alluded to his person or pursuits, as well as all the scene of the preceding night, tended to confirm these suspicions. Yet to this man Diana Vernon had not, it would seem, hesitated to address herself in my behalf; and the conduct of the magistrate himself towards him showed an odd mixture of kindness, and even respect, with pity and censure. Something there must be uncommon in Campbell's situation and character; and what was still more extraordinary, it seemed that his fate was doomed to have influence over, and connection with, my own. I resolved to bring Mr. Jarvie to close quarters on the first proper opportunity, and learn as much as was possible on the subject of this mysterious person, in order that I might judge whether it was possible for me, without prejudice to my reputation, to hold that degree of farther correspondence with him to which he seemed to invite.

While I was musing on these subjects, my attention was attracted by three persons who appeared at the upper end of the walk through which I was sauntering, seemingly engaged in very earnest conversation. That intuitive impression which announces to us the approach of whomsoever we love or hate with intense vehemence, long before a more indifferent eye can recognise their persons, flashed upon my mind the sure conviction that the midmost of these three men was Rashleigh Osbaldistone. To address him was my first impulse;—my second was, to watch him until he was alone, or at least to reconnoitre his companions before confronting him. The party was still at such distance, and engaged in such deep discourse, that I had time to step unobserved to the other side of a small hedge, which imperfectly screened the alley in which I was walking. It was at this period the fashion of the young and gay to wear, in their morning walks, a scarlet cloak, often laced and embroidered, above their other dress, and it was the trick of the time for gallants occasionally to dispose it so as to muffle a part of the face. The imitating this fashion, with the degree of shelter which I received from the hedge, enabled me to meet my cousin, unobserved by him or the others, except perhaps as a passing stranger. I was not a little startled at recognising in his companions that very Morris on whose account I had been summoned before Justice Inglewood, and Mr. MacVittie the merchant, from whose starched and severe aspect I had recoiled on the preceding day.

A more ominous conjunction to my own affairs, and those of my father, could scarce have been formed. I remembered Morris's false accusation against me, which he might be as easily induced to renew as he had been intimidated to withdraw; I recollected the inauspicious influence of MacVittie over my father's affairs, testified by the imprisonment of Owen;—and I now saw both these men combined with one, whose talent for mischief I deemed little inferior to those of the great author of all ill, and my abhorrence of whom almost amounted to dread.

When they had passed me for some paces, I turned and followed them unobserved. At the end of the walk they separated, Morris and MacVittie leaving the gardens, and Rashleigh returning alone through the walks. I was now determined to confront him, and demand reparation for the injuries he had done my father, though in what form redress was likely to be rendered remained to be known. This, however, I trusted to chance; and flinging back the cloak in which I was muffled, I passed through a gap of the low hedge, and presented myself before Rashleigh, as, in a deep reverie, he paced down the avenue.

Rashleigh was no man to be surprised or thrown off his guard by sudden occurrences. Yet he did not find me thus close to him, wearing undoubtedly in my face the marks of that indignation which was glowing in my bosom, without visibly starting at an apparition so sudden and menacing.

"You are well met, sir," was my commencement; "I was about to take a long and doubtful journey in quest of you."

"You know little of him you sought then," replied Rashleigh, with his usual undaunted composure. "I am easily found by my friends—still more easily by my foes;—your manner compels me to ask in which class I must rank Mr. Francis Osbaldistone?"

"In that of your foes, sir," I answered—"in that of your mortal foes, unless you instantly do justice to your benefactor, my father, by accounting for his property."

"And to whom, Mr. Osbaldistone," answered Rashleigh, "am I, a member of your father's commercial establishment, to be compelled to give any account of my proceedings in those concerns, which are in every respect identified with my own?—Surely not to a young gentleman whose exquisite taste for literature would render such discussions disgusting and unintelligible."

"Your sneer, sir, is no answer; I will not part with you until I have full satisfaction concerning the fraud you meditate—you shall go with me before a magistrate."

"Be it so," said Rashleigh, and made a step or two as if to accompany me; then pausing, proceeded—"Were I inclined to do so as you would have me, you should soon feel which of us had most reason to dread the presence of a magistrate. But I have no wish to accelerate your fate. Go, young man! amuse yourself in your world of poetical imaginations, and leave the business of life to those who understand and can conduct it."

His intention, I believe, was to provoke me, and he succeeded. "Mr. Osbaldistone," I said, "this tone of calm insolence shall not avail you. You ought to be aware that the name we both bear never submitted to insult, and shall not in my person be exposed to it."

"You remind me," said Rashleigh, with one of his blackest looks, "that it was dishonoured in my person!—and you remind me also by whom! Do you think I have forgotten the evening at Osbaldistone Hall when you cheaply and with impunity played the bully at my expense? For that insult—never to be washed out but by blood!—for the various times you have crossed my path, and always to my prejudice—for the persevering folly with which you seek to traverse schemes, the importance of which you neither know nor are capable of estimating,—for all these, sir, you owe me a long account, for which there shall come an early day of reckoning."

"Let it come when it will," I replied, "I shall be willing and ready to meet it. Yet you seem to have forgotten the heaviest article—that I had the pleasure to aid Miss Vernon's good sense and virtuous feeling in extricating her from your infamous toils."

I think his dark eyes flashed actual fire at this home-taunt, and yet his voice retained the same calm expressive tone with which he had hitherto conducted the conversation.

"I had other views with respect to you, young man," was his answer: "less hazardous for you, and more suitable to my present character and former education. But I see you will draw on yourself the personal chastisement your boyish insolence so well merits. Follow me to a more remote spot, where we are less likely to be interrupted."

I followed him accordingly, keeping a strict eye on his motions, for I believed him capable of the very worst actions. We reached an open spot in a sort of wilderness, laid out in the Dutch taste, with clipped hedges, and one or two statues. I was on my guard, and it was well with me that I was so; for Rashleigh's sword was out and at my breast ere I could throw down my cloak, or get my weapon unsheathed, so that I only saved my life by springing a pace or two backwards. He had some advantage in the difference of our weapons; for his sword, as I recollect, was longer than mine, and had one of those bayonet or three-cornered blades which are now generally worn; whereas mine was what we then called a Saxon blade—narrow, flat, and two-edged, and scarcely so manageable as that of my enemy. In other respects we were pretty equally matched: for what advantage I might possess in superior address and agility, was fully counterbalanced by Rashleigh's great strength and coolness. He fought, indeed, more like a fiend than a man—with concentrated spite and desire of blood, only allayed by that cool consideration which made his worst actions appear yet worse from the air of deliberate premeditation which seemed to accompany them. His obvious malignity of purpose never for a moment threw him off his guard, and he exhausted every feint and stratagem proper to the science of defence; while, at the same time, he meditated the most desperate catastrophe to our rencounter.

On my part, the combat was at first sustained with more moderation. My passions, though hasty, were not malevolent; and the walk of two or three minutes' space gave me time to reflect that Rashleigh was my father's nephew, the son of an uncle, who after his fashion had been kind to me, and that his falling by my hand could not but occasion much family distress. My first resolution, therefore, was to attempt to disarm my antagonist—a manoeuvre in which, confiding in my superiority of skill and practice, I anticipated little difficulty. I found, however, I had met my match; and one or two foils which I received, and from the consequences of which I narrowly escaped, obliged me to observe more caution in my mode of fighting. By degrees I became exasperated at the rancour with which Rashleigh sought my life, and returned his passes with an inveteracy resembling in some degree his own; so that the combat had all the appearance of being destined to have a tragic issue. That issue had nearly taken place at my expense. My foot slipped in a full lounge which I made at my adversary, and I could not so far recover myself as completely to parry the thrust with which my pass was repaid. Yet it took but partial effect, running through my waistcoat, grazing my ribs, and passing through my coat behind. The hilt of Rashleigh's sword, so great was the vigour of his thrust, struck against my breast with such force as to give me great pain, and confirm me in the momentary belief that I was mortally wounded. Eager for revenge, I grappled with my enemy, seizing with my left hand the hilt of his sword, and shortening my own with the purpose of running him through the body. Our death-grapple was interrupted by a man who forcibly threw himself between us, and pushing us separate from each other, exclaimed, in a loud and commanding voice, "What! the sons of those fathers who sucked the same breast shedding each others blood as it were strangers!—By the hand of my father, I will cleave to the brisket the first man that mints another stroke!"

I looked up in astonishment. The speaker was no other than Campbell. He had a basket-hilted broadsword drawn in his hand, which he made to whistle around his head as he spoke, as if for the purpose of enforcing his mediation. Rashleigh and I stared in silence at this unexpected intruder, who proceeded to exhort us alternately:—"Do you, Maister Francis, opine that ye will re-establish your father's credit by cutting your kinsman's thrapple, or getting your ain sneekit instead thereof in the College-yards of Glasgow?—Or do you, Mr Rashleigh, think men will trust their lives and fortunes wi' ane, that, when in point of trust and in point of confidence wi' a great political interest, gangs about brawling like a drunken gillie?—Nay, never look gash or grim at me, man—if ye're angry, ye ken how to turn the buckle o' your belt behind you."

"You presume on my present situation," replied Rashleigh, "or you would have hardly dared to interfere where my honour is concerned."

"Hout! tout! tout!—Presume? And what for should it be presuming?—Ye may be the richer man, Mr. Osbaldistone, as is maist likely; and ye may be the mair learned man, whilk I dispute not: but I reckon ye are neither a prettier man nor a better gentleman than mysell—and it will be news to me when I hear ye are as gude. And *dare* too? Muckle daring there's about it—I trow, here I stand, that hae slashed as het a haggis as ony o' the twa o' ye, and thought nae muckle o' my morning's wark when it was dune. If my foot were on the heather as it's on the causeway, or this pickle gravel, that's little better, I hae been waur mistrusted than if I were set to gie ye baith your ser'ing o't."

Rashleigh had by this time recovered his temper completely. "My kinsman," he said, "will acknowledge he forced this quarrel on me. It was none of my seeking. I am glad we are interrupted before I chastised his forwardness more severely."

"Are ye hurt, lad?" inquired Campbell of me, with some appearance of interest.

"A very slight scratch," I answered, "which my kind cousin would not long have boasted of had not you come between us."

"In troth, and that's true, Maister Rashleigh," said Campbell; "for the cauld iron and your best bluid were like to hae become acquaint when I mastered Mr. Frank's right hand. But never look like a sow playing upon a trump for the luve of that, man—come and walk wi' me. I hae news to tell ye, and ye'll cool and come to yourself, like MacGibbon's crowdy, when he set it out at the window-bole."

"Pardon me, sir," said I. "Your intentions have seemed friendly to me on more occasions than one; but I must not, and will not, quit sight of this person until he yields up to me those means of doing justice to my father's engagements, of which he has treacherously possessed himself."

"Ye're daft, man," replied Campbell; "it will serve ye naething to follow us e'enow; ye hae just enow o' ae man—wad ye bring twa on your head, and might bide quiet?"

"Twenty," I replied, "if it be necessary."

I laid my hand on Rashleigh's collar, who made no resistance, but said, with a sort of scornful smile, "You hear him, MacGregor! he rushes on his fate—will it be my fault if he falls into it?—The warrants are by this time ready, and all is prepared."

The Scotchman was obviously embarrassed. He looked around, and before, and behind him, and then said—"The ne'er a bit will I yield my consent to his being ill-guided for standing up for the father that got him—and I gie God's malison and mine to a' sort o' magistrates, justices, bailies., sheriffs, sheriff-officers, constables, and sic-like black cattle, that hae been the plagues o' puir auld Scotland this hunder year.—it was a merry warld when every man held his ain gear wi' his ain grip, and when the country side wasna fashed wi' warrants and poindings and apprizings, and a' that cheatry craft. And ance mair I say it, my conscience winna see this puir thoughtless lad ill-guided, and especially wi' that sort o' trade. I wad rather ye fell till't again, and fought it out like douce honest men."

"Your conscience, MacGregor!" said Rashleigh; "you forget how long you and I have known each other."

"Yes, my conscience," reiterated Campbell, or MacGregor, or whatever was his name; "I hae such a thing about me, Maister Osbaldistone; and therein it may weel chance that I hae the better o' you. As to our knowledge of each other,—if ye ken what I am, ye ken what usage it was made me what I am; and, whatever you may think, I would not change states with the proudest of the oppressors that hae driven me to tak the heather-bush for a beild. What *you* are, Maister Rashleigh, and what excuse ye hae for being *what* you are, is between your ain heart and the lang day.—And now, Maister Francis, let go his collar; for he says truly, that ye are in mair danger from a magistrate than he is, and were your cause as straight as an arrow, he wad find a way to put you wrang—So let go his craig, as I was saying."

He seconded his words with an effort so sudden and unexpected, that he freed Rashleigh from my hold, and securing me, notwithstanding my struggles, in his own Herculean gripe, he called out—"Take the bent, Mr. Rashleigh—Make ae pair o' legs worth twa pair o' hands; ye hae dune that before now."

"You may thank this gentleman, kinsman," said Rashleigh, "if I leave any part of my debt to you unpaid; and if I quit you now, it is only in the hope we shall soon meet again without the possibility of interruption."

He took up his sword, wiped it, sheathed it, and was lost among the bushes.

The Scotchman, partly by force, partly by remonstrance, prevented my following him; indeed I began to be of opinion my doing so would be to little purpose.

"As I live by bread," said Campbell, when, after one or two struggles in which he used much forbearance towards me, he perceived me inclined to stand quiet, "I never saw sae daft a callant! I wad hae gien the best man in the country the breadth o' his back gin he had gien me sic a kemping as ye hae dune. What wad ye do?—Wad ye follow the wolf to his den? I tell ye, man, he has the auld trap set for ye—He has got the collector-creature Morris to bring up a' the auld story again, and ye maun look for nae help frae me here, as ye got at Justice Inglewood's;—it isna good for my health to come in the gate o' the whigamore bailie bodies. Now gang your ways hame, like a gude bairn—jouk and let the jaw gae by—Keep out o' sight o' Rashleigh, and Morris, and that MacVittie animal—Mind the Clachan of Aberfoil, as I said before, and by the word of a gentleman, I wanna see ye wranged. But keep a calm sough till we meet again—I maun gae and get Rashleigh out o' the town afore waur comes o't, for the neb o' him's never out o' mischief—Mind the Clachan of Aberfoil."

He turned upon his heel, and left me to meditate on the singular events which had befallen me. My first care was to adjust my dress and reassume my cloak, disposing it so as to conceal the blood which flowed down my right side. I had scarcely accomplished this, when, the classes of the college being dismissed, the gardens began to be filled with parties of the students. I therefore left them as soon as possible; and in my way towards Mr. Jarvie's, whose dinner hour was now approaching, I stopped at a small unpretending shop, the sign of which intimated the indweller to be Christopher Neilson, surgeon and apothecary. I requested of a little boy who was pounding some stuff in a mortar, that he would procure me an audience of this learned pharmacopolist. He opened the door of the back shop, where I found a lively elderly man, who shook his head incredulously at some idle account I gave him of having been wounded accidentally by the button breaking off my antagonist's foil while I was engaged in a fencing match. When he had applied some lint and somewhat else he thought proper to the trifling wound I had received, he observed—"There never was button on the foil that made this hurt. Ah! young blood! young blood!—But we surgeons are a secret generation—If it werena for hot blood and ill blood, what wad become of the twa learned faculties?"

With which moral reflection he dismissed me; and I experienced very little pain or inconvenience afterwards from the scratch I had received.

CHAPTER NINTH.

*An iron race the mountain-cliffs maintain,
Foes to the gentler genius of the plain.*

*Who while their rocky ramparts round they see,
The rough abode of want and liberty,
As lawless force from confidence will grow,
Insult the plenty of the vales below.*

Gray.

"What made ye sae late?" said Mr. Jarvie, as I entered the dining-parlour of that honest gentleman; "it is chappit ane the best feek o' five minutes by-gane. Mattie has been twice at the door wi' the dinner, and weel for you it was a tup's head, for that canna suffer by delay. A sheep's head ower muckle boiled is rank poison, as my worthy father used to say—he likit the lug o' ane weel, honest man."

I made a suitable apology for my breach of punctuality, and was soon seated at table, where Mr. Jarvie presided with great glee and hospitality, compelling, however, Owen and myself to do rather more justice to the Scottish dainties with which his board was charged, than was quite agreeable to our southern palates. I escaped pretty well, from having those habits of society which enable one to elude this species of well-meant persecution. But it was ridiculous enough to see Owen, whose ideas of politeness were more rigorous and formal, and who was willing, in all acts of lawful compliance, to evince his respect for the friend of the firm, eating with rueful complaisance mouthful after mouthful of singed wool, and pronouncing it excellent, in a tone in which disgust almost overpowered civility.

When the cloth was removed, Mr. Jarvie compounded with his own hands a very small bowl of brandy-punch, the first which I had ever the fortune to see.

"The limes," he assured us, "were from his own little farm yonder-awa" (indicating the West Indies with a knowing shrug of his shoulders), "and he had learned the art of composing the liquor from auld Captain Coffinkey, who acquired it," he added in a whisper, "as maist folk thought, among the Buccaniers. But it's excellent liquor," said he, helping us round; "and good ware has aften come frae a wicked market. And as for Captain Coffinkey, he was a decent man when I kent him, only he used to swear awfully—But he's dead, and gaen to his account, and I trust he's accepted—I trust he's accepted."

We found the liquor exceedingly palatable, and it led to a long conversation between Owen and our host on the opening which the Union had afforded to trade between Glasgow and the British Colonies in America and the West Indies, and on the facilities which Glasgow possessed of making up sortable cargoes for that market. Mr. Jarvie answered some objection which Owen made on the difficulty of sorting a cargo for America, without buying from England, with vehemence and volubility.

"Na, na, sir, we stand on our ain bottom—we pickle in our ain pock-neuk—We hae our Stirling serges, Musselburgh stuffs, Aberdeen hose, Edinburgh shalloons, and the like, for our woollen or worsted goods—and we hae linens of a' kinds better and cheaper than you hae in Lunnon itself—and we can buy your north o' England wares, as Manchester wares, Sheffield wares, and Newcastle earthenware, as cheap as you can at Liverpool—And we are making a fair spell at cottons and muslins—Na, na! let every herring hing by its ain head, and every sheep by its ain shank, and ye'll find, sir, us Glasgow folk no sae far ahint but what we may follow.—This is but poor entertainment for you, Mr. Osbaldistone" (observing that I had been for some time silent); "but ye ken cadgers maun aye be speaking about cart-saddles."

I apologised, alleging the painful circumstances of my own situation, and the singular adventures of the morning, as the causes of my abstraction and absence of mind. In this manner I gained what I sought—an opportunity of telling my story distinctly and without interruption. I only omitted mentioning the wound I had received, which I did not think worthy of notice. Mr. Jarvie listened with great attention and apparent interest, twinkling his little grey eyes, taking snuff, and only interrupting me by brief interjections. When I came to the account of the rencounter, at which Owen folded his hands and cast up his eyes to Heaven, the very image of woeful surprise, Mr. Jarvie broke in upon the narration with "Wrang now—clean wrang—to draw a sword on your kinsman is inhibited by the laws o' God and man; and to draw a sword on the streets of a royal burgh is punishable by fine and imprisonment—and the College-yards are nae better privileged—they should be a place of peace and quietness, I trow. The College didna get gude L600 a year out o' bishops' rents (sorrow fa' the brood o' bishops and their rents too!), nor yet a lease o' the archbishopric o' Glasgow the sell o't, that they suld let folk tuilzie in their yards, or the wild callants bicker there wi' snaw-ba's as they whiles do, that when Mattie and I gae through, we are fain to make a baik and a bow, or run the risk o' our harns being knocked out—it suld be looked to.*—But come awa'wi' your tale—what fell neist?"

* The boys in Scotland used formerly to make a sort of Saturnalia in a snow-storm, by pelting passengers with snowballs. But those exposed to that annoyance were excused from it on the easy penalty of a baik (courtesy) from a female, or a bow from a man. It was only the refractory who underwent the storm.

On my mentioning the appearance of Mr. Campbell, Jarvie arose in great surprise, and paced the room, exclaiming, "Robin again!—Robert's mad—clean wud, and waur—Rob will be hanged, and disgrace a' his kindred, and that will be seen and heard tell o'. My father the deacon wrought him his first hose—Od, I am thinking Deacon Threepie, the rape-spinner, will be twisting his last cravat. Ay, ay, puir Robin is in a fair way o' being hanged—But come awa', come awa'—let's hear the lave o't."

I told the whole story as pointedly as I could; but Mr. Jarvie still found something lacking to make it clear, until I went back, though with considerable reluctance, on the whole story of Morris, and of my meeting with Campbell at the house of Justice Inglewood. Mr. Jarvie inclined a serious ear to all this, and remained silent for some time after I had finished my narrative.

"Upon all these matters I am now to ask your advice, Mr. Jarvie, which, I have no doubt, will point out the best way to act for my father's advantage and my own honour."

"Ye're right, young man—ye're right," said the Bailie. "Aye take the counsel of those who are aulder and wiser than yourself, and binna like the godless Rehoboam, who took the advice o' a wheen beardless callants, neglecting the auld counsellors who had sate at the feet o' his father Solomon, and, as it was weel put by Mr. Meiklejohn, in his lecture on the chapter, were doubtless partakers of his sapience. But I maun hear naething about honour—we ken naething here but about credit. Honour is a homicide and a bloodspiller, that gangs about making frays in the street; but Credit is a decent honest man, that sits at hame and makes the pat play."

"Assuredly, Mr. Jarvie," said our friend Owen, "credit is the sum total; and if we can but save that, at whatever discount"—

"Ye are right, Mr. Owen—ye are right; ye speak weel and wisely; and I trust bowls will row right, though they are a wee ajee e'enow. But touching Robin, I am of opinion he will befriend this young man if it is in his power. He has a gude heart, puir Robin; and though I lost a matter o' twa hundred puns wi' his former engagements, and haena muckle expectation ever to see back my thousand puns Scots that he promises me e'enow, yet I will never say but what Robin means fair by men."

"I am then to consider him," I replied, "as an honest man?"

"Umph!" replied Jarvie, with a precautionary sort of cough—"Ay, he has a kind o' Hieland honesty—he's honest after a sort, as they say. My father the deacon used aye to laugh when he tauld me how that by-word came up. Ane Captain Costlett was cracking crouse about his loyalty to King Charles, and Clerk Pettigrew (ye'll hae heard mony a tale about him) asked him after what manner he served the king, when he was fighting again him at Wor'ster in Cromwell's army; and Captain Costlett was a ready body, and said that he served him *after a sort*. My honest father used to laugh weel at that sport—and sae the by-word came up."

"But do you think," I said, "that this man will be able to serve me after a sort, or should I trust myself to this place of rendezvous which he has given me?"

"Frankly and fairly, it's worth trying. Ye see yourself there's some risk in your staying here. This bit body Morris has gotten a custom-house place down at Greenock—that's a port on the Firth down by here; and tho' a' the world kens him to be but a twa-leggit creature, wi' a goose's head and a hen's heart, that goes about on the quay plaguing folk about permits, and cockits, and dockits, and a' that vexatious trade, yet if he lodge an information—ou, nae doubt a man in magisterial duty maun attend to it, and ye might come to be clapped up between four wa's, whilk wad be ill-convenient to your father's affairs."

"True," I observed; "yet what service am I likely to render him by leaving Glasgow, which, it is probable, will be the principal scene of Rashleigh's machinations, and committing myself to the doubtful faith of a man of whom I know little but that he fears justice, and has doubtless good reasons for doing so; and that, for some secret, and probably dangerous purpose, he is in close league and alliance with the very person who is like to be the author of our ruin?"

"Ah, but ye judge Rob hardly," said the Bailie, "ye judge him hardly, puir chield; and the truth is, that ye ken naething about our hill country, or Hielands, as we ca' them. They are clean anither set frae the like o' huz;—there's nae bailie-courts amang them—nae magistrates that dinna bear the sword in vain, like the worthy deacon that's awa', and, I may say't, like mysell and other present magistrates in this city—But it's just the laird's command, and the loon maun loup; and the never another law hae they but the length o' their dirks—the broadsword's pursuer, or plaintiff, as you Englishers ca' it, and the target is defender; the stoutest head bears longest out;—and there's a Hieland plea for ye."

Owen groaned deeply; and I allow that the description did not greatly increase my desire to trust myself in a country so lawless as he described these Scottish mountains.

"Now, sir," said Jarvie, "we speak little o' thae things, because they are familiar to oursells; and where's the use o' vilifying ane's country, and bringing a discredit on ane's kin, before southrons and strangers? It's an ill bird that files its ain nest."

"Well, sir, but as it is no impertinent curiosity of mine, but real necessity, that obliges me to make these inquiries, I hope you will not be offended at my pressing for a little farther information. I have to deal, on my father's account, with several gentlemen of these wild countries, and I must trust your good sense and experience for the requisite lights upon the subject."

This little morsel of flattery was not thrown out in vain. "Experience!" said the Bailie—"I hae had experience, nae doubt, and I hae made some calculations—Ay, and to speak quietly amang oursells, I hae made some perquisitions through Andrew Wylie, my auld clerk; he's wi' MacVittie & Co. now—but he whiles drinks a gill on the Saturday afternoons wi' his auld master. And since ye say ye are willing to be guided by the Glasgow weaver-body's advice, I am no the man that will refuse it to the son of an auld correspondent, and my father the deacon was nane sic afore me. I have whiles thought o' letting my lights burn before the Duke of Argyle, or his brother Lord Ilay (for wherefore should they be hidden under a bushel?), but the like o' thae grit men wadna mind the like o' me, a puir wabster

body—they think mair o' wha says a thing, than o' what the thing is that's said. The mair's the pity—mair's the pity. Not that I wad speak ony ill of this MacCallum More—'Curse not the rich in your bedchamber,' saith the son of Sirach, 'for a bird of the air shall carry the clatter, and pint-stoups hae lang lugs.'"

I interrupted these prolegomena, in which Mr. Jarvie was apt to be somewhat diffuse, by praying him to rely upon Mr. Owen and myself as perfectly secret and safe confidants.

"It's no for that," he replied, "for I fear nae man—what for suld I?—I speak nae treason—Only thae Hielandmen hae lang grips, and I whiles gang a wee bit up the glens to see some auld kinsfolks, and I wadna willingly be in bad blude wi' ony o' their clans. Howsumever, to proceed—ye maun understand I found my remarks on figures, whilk as Mr. Owen here weel kens, is the only true demonstrable root of human knowledge."

Owen readily assented to a proposition so much in his own way, and our orator proceeded.

"These Hielands of ours, as we ca' them, gentlemen, are but a wild kind of warld by themselfs, full of heights and howes, woods, caverns, lochs, rivers, and mountains, that it wad tire the very deevil's wings to flee to the tap o' them. And in this country, and in the isles, whilk are little better, or, to speak the truth, rather waur than the mainland, there are about twa hunder and thirty parochines, including the Orkneys, where, whether they speak Gaelic or no I wotna, but they are an uncivilised people. Now, sirs, I sall haud ilk parochine at the moderate estimate of eight hunder examinable persons, deducting children under nine years of age, and then adding one-fifth to stand for bairns of nine years auld, and under, the whole population will reach to the sum of—let us add one-fifth to 800 to be the multiplier, and 230 being the multiplicand"—

"The product," said Mr. Owen, who entered delightedly into these statistics of Mr. Jarvie, "will be 230,000."

"Right, sir—perfectly right; and the military array of this Hieland country, were a' the men-folk between aughteen and fifty-six brought out that could bear arms, couldna come weel short of fifty-seven thousand five hundred men. Now, sir, it's a sad and awfu' truth, that there is neither wark, nor the very fashion nor appearance of wark, for the tae half of thae puir creatures; that is to say, that the agriculture, the pasturage, the fisheries, and every species of honest industry about the country, cannot employ the one moiety of the population, let them work as lazily as they like, and they do work as if a pleugh or a spade burnt their fingers. Aweel, sir, this moiety of unemployed bodies, amounting to"—

"To one hundred and fifteen thousand souls," said Owen, "being the half of the above product."

"Ye hae't, Mr. Owen—ye hae't—whereof there may be twenty-eight thousand seven hundred able-bodied gillies fit to bear arms, and that do bear arms, and will touch or look at nae honest means of livelihood even if they could get it—which, lack-a-day! they cannot."

"But is it possible," said I, "Mr. Jarvie, that this can be a just picture of so large a portion of the island of Britain?"

"Sir, I'll make it as plain as Peter Pasley's pike-staff. I will allow that ilk parochine, on an average, employs fifty pleughs, whilk is a great proportion in sic miserable soil as thae creatures hae to labour, and that there may be pasture enough for pleugh-horses, and owsen, and forty or fifty cows; now, to take care o' the pleughs and cattle, we'se allow seventy-five families of six lives in ilk family, and we'se add fifty mair to make even numbers, and ye hae five hundred souls, the tae half o' the population, employed and maintained in a sort o' fashion, wi' some chance of sour-milk and crowdie; but I wad be glad to ken what the other five hunder are to do?"

"In the name of God!" said I, "what do they do, Mr. Jarvie? It makes me shudder to think of their situation."

"Sir," replied the Baillie, "ye wad maybe shudder mair if ye were living near hand them. For, admitting that the tae half of them may make some little thing for themselfs honestly in the Lowlands by shearing in harst, droving, hay-making, and the like; ye hae still mony hundreds and thousands o' lang-legged Hieland gillies that will neither work nor want, and maun gang thigging and sorning* about on their acquaintance, or live by doing the laird's bidding, be't right or be't wrang.

* *Thigging* and *sorning* was a kind of genteel begging, or rather something between begging and robbing, by which the needy in Scotland used to extort cattle, or the means of subsistence, from those who had any to give.

And mair especially, mony hundreds o' them come down to the borders of the low country, where there's gear to grip, and live by stealing, reiving, lifting cows, and the like depredations—a thing deplorable in ony Christian country!—the mair especially, that they take pride in it, and reckon driving a spreagh (whilk is, in plain Scotch, stealing a herd of nowte) a gallant, manly action, and mair befitting of pretty* men (as sic reivers will ca' themselves), than to win a day's wage by ony honest thrift.

* The word *pretty* is or was used in Scotch, in the sense of the German *prachtig*, and meant a gallant, alert fellow, prompt and ready at his weapons.

And the lairds are as bad as the loons; for if they dinna bid them gae reive and harry, the deil a bit they forbid them; and they shelter them, or let them shelter themselves, in their woods and mountains, and strongholds, whenever the thing's dune. And every ane o' them will maintain as mony o' his ane name, or his clan, as we say, as he can rap and rend means for; or, whilk's the same thing, as mony as can in ony fashion, fair or foul, mainteen themselfs. And there they are wi' gun and pistol, dirk and dourlach, ready to disturb the peace o' the country whenever the laird likes; and that's the grievance of the Hielands, whilk are, and hae been for this thousand years by-past, a bike o' the maist lawless unchristian limmers that ever disturbed a douce, quiet, God-fearing neighbourhood, like this o' ours in the west here."

"And this kinsman of yours, and friend of mine, is he one of those great proprietors who maintain the household troops you speak of?" I inquired.

"Na, na," said Baillie Jarvie; "he's nane o' your great grandees o' chiefs, as they ca' them, neither. Though he is weel born, and lineally descended frae auld Glenstrae—I ken his lineage—indeed he is a near kinsman, and, as I said, of gude gentle Hieland blude, though ye may think weel that I care little about that nonsense—it's a' moonshine in water—waste threads and thrums, as we say—But I could show ye letters frae his father, that was the third aff Glenstrae, to my father Deacon Jarvie (peace be wi' his memory!) beginning, Dear Deacon, and ending, your loving kinsman to command,—they are amaisht a' about borrowed siller, sae the gude deacon, that's dead and gane, keepit them as documents and evidents—He was a carefu' man."

"But if he is not," I resumed, "one of their chiefs or patriarchal leaders, whom I have heard my father talk of, this kinsman of yours has, at least, much to say in the Highlands, I presume?"

"Ye may say that—nae name better ken'd between the Lennox and Breadalbane. Robin was ance a weel-doing, painstaking drover, as ye wad see amang ten thousand—It was a pleasure to see him in his belted plaid and brogues, wi' his target at his back, and claymore and dirk at his belt, following a hundred Highland stots, and a dozen o' the gillies, as rough and ragged as the beasts they drive. And he was baith civil and just in his dealings; and if he thought his chapman had made a hard bargain, he wad gie him a luck-penny to the mends. I hae ken'd him gie back five shillings out o' the pund sterling."

"Twenty-five per cent," said Owen—"a heavy discount."

"He wad gie it though, sir, as I tell ye; mair especially if he thought the buyer was a puir man, and couldna stand by a loss. But the times cam hard, and Rob was venturesome. It wasna my faut—it wasna my faut; he canna wyte me—I aye tauld him o't—And the creditors, mair especially some grit neighbours o' his, gripped to his living and land; and they say his wife was turned out o' the house to the hill-side, and sair misguided to the boot. Shamefu'! shamefu'!—I am a peacefu' man and a magistrate, but if ony ane had guided sae muckle as my servant quean, Mattie, as it's like they guided Rob's wife, I think it suld hae set the shabbie* that my father the deacon had at Bothwell brig a-walking again.

* Cutlass.

Weel, Rob cam hame, and fand desolation, God pity us! where he left plenty; he looked east, west, south, north, and saw neither hauld nor hope—neither beild nor shelter; sae he e'en pu'd the bonnet ower his brow, belted the broadsword to his side, took to the brae-side, and became a broken man."*

* An outlaw.

The voice of the good citizen was broken by his contending feelings. He obviously, while he professed to contemn the pedigree of his Highland kinsman, attached a secret feeling of consequence to the connection, and he spoke of his friend in his prosperity with an overflow of affection, which deepened his sympathy for his misfortunes, and his regret for their consequences.

"Thus tempted and urged by despair," said I, seeing Mr. Jarvie did not proceed in his narrative, "I suppose your kinsman became one of those depredators you have described to us?"

"No sae bad as that," said the Glaswegian,— "no a'thegither and outright sae bad as that; but he became a levier of black-mail, wider and farther than ever it was raised in our day, a through the Lennox and Menteith, and up to the gates o' Stirling Castle."

"Black-mail?—I do not understand the phrase," I remarked.

"Ou, ye see, Rob soon gathered an unco band o' blue-bonnets at his back, for he comes o' a rough name when he's kent by his ain, and a name that's held its ain for mony a lang year, baith again king and parliament, and kirk too, for aught I ken—an auld and honourable name, for as sair as it has been worried and hadden down and oppressed. My mother was a MacGregor—I carena wha kens it—And Rob had soon a gallant band; and as it grieved him (he said) to see sic *her ship* and waste and depredation to the south o' the Hieland line, why, if ony heritor or farmer wad pay him four puns Scots out of each hundred puns of valued rent, whilk was doubtless a moderate consideration, Rob engaged to keep them scaithless;—let them send to him if they lost sae muckle as a single clout by thieving, and Rob engaged to get them again, or pay the value—and he aye keepit his word—I canna deny but he keepit his word—a men allow Rob keeps his word."

"This is a very singular contract of assurance," said Mr. Owen.

"It's clean again our statute law, that must be owned," said Jarvie, "clean again law; the levying and the paying black-mail are baith punishable: but if the law canna protect my barn and byre, whatfor suld I no engage wi' a Hieland gentleman that can?—answer me that."

"But," said I, "Mr. Jarvie, is this contract of black-mail, as you call it, completely voluntary on the part of the landlord or farmer who pays the insurance? or what usually happens, in case any one refuses payment of this tribute?"

"Aha, lad!" said the Bailie, laughing, and putting his finger to his nose, "ye think ye hae me there. Troth, I wad advise ony friends o' mine to gree wi' Rob; for, watch as they like, and do what they like, they are sair apt to be harried* when the lang nights come on."

* Plundered.

Some o' the Grahame and Cohoon gentry stood out; but what then?—they lost their haill stock the first winter; sae maist folks now think it best to come into Rob's terms. He's easy wi' a body that will be easy wi' him; but if ye thraw him, ye had better thraw the deevil."

"And by his exploits in these vocations," I continued, "I suppose he has rendered himself amenable to the laws of the country?"

"Amenable?—ye may say that; his craig wad ken the weight o' his hurdies if they could get haud o' Rob. But he has gude friends amang the grit folks; and I could tell ye o' ae grit family that keeps him up as far as they decently can, to be a them in the side of another. And then he's sic an auld-farran lang-headed chield as never took up the trade o' cateran in our time; mony a daft reik he has played—mair than wad fill a book, and a queer ane it wad be—as gude as Robin Hood, or William Wallace—a fu' o' venturesome deeds and escapes, sic as folk tell ower at a winter ingle in the daft days. It's a queer thing o' me, gentlemen, that am a man o' peace mysell, and a peacefu man's son—for the deacon my father quarrelled wi' nane out o' the town-council—it's a queer thing, I say, but I think the Hieland blude o' me warms at thae daft tales, and whiles I like better to hear them than a word o' profit, gude forgie me! But they are vanities—sinfu' vanities—and, moreover, again the statute law—again the statute and gospel law."

I now followed up my investigation, by inquiring what means of influence this Mr. Robert Campbell could possibly possess over my affairs, or those of my father.

"Why, ye are to understand," said Mr. Jarvie in a very subdued tone—"I speak amang friends, and under the rose—Ye are to understand, that the Hielands hae been keepit quiet since the year aughty-nine—that was Killiecrankie year. But how hae they been keepit quiet, think ye? By siller, Mr. Owen—by siller, Mr. Osbaldistone. King William caused Breadalbane distribute twenty thousand oude puns sterling amang them, and it's said the auld Hieland Earl keepit a lang lug o't in his ain sporrان. And then Queen Anne, that's dead, gae the chiefs bits o' pensions, sae they had wherewith to support their gillies and caterans that work nae wark, as I said afore; and they lay by quiet eneugh, saying some spreagerie on the Lowlands, whilk is their use and wont, and some cutting o' thrapples amang themsells, that nae civilised body kens or cares onything anent.—Weel, but there's a new warld come up wi' this King George (I say, God bless him, for ane)—there's neither like to be siller nor pensions gaun amang them; they haena the means o' mainteening the clans that eat them up, as ye may guess frae what I said before; their credit's gane in the Lowlands; and a man that can whistle ye up a thousand or feifteen hundred linking lads to do his will, wad hardly get fifty puns on his band at the Cross o' Glasgow—This canna stand lang—there will be an outbreak for the Stuarts—there will be an outbreak—they will come down on the low country like a flood, as they did in the waefu' wars o' Montrose, and that will be seen and heard tell o' ere a twalmouth gangs round."

"Yet still," I said, "I do not see how this concerns Mr. Campbell, much less my father's affairs."

"Rob can levy five hundred men, sir, and therefore war suld concern him as muckle as maist folk," replied the Bailie; "for it is a faculty that is far less profitable in time o' peace. Then, to tell ye the truth, I doubt he has been the prime agent between some o' our Hieland chiefs and the gentlemen in the north o' England. We a' heard o' the public money that was taen frae the chield Morris somewhere about the fit o' Cheviot by Rob and ane o' the Osbaldistone lads; and, to tell ye the truth, word gaed that it was yoursell Mr. Francis,—and sorry was I that your father's son suld hae taen to sic practices—Na, ye needna say a word about it—I see weel I was mistaen; but I wad believe onything o' a stage-player, whilk I concluded ye to be. But now, I doubtna, it has been Rashleigh himself or some other o' your cousins—they are a' tarred wi' the same stick—rank Jacobites and papists, and wad think the government siller and government papers lawfu' prize. And the creature Morris is sic a cowardly caitiff, that to this hour he daurna say that it was Rob took the portmanteau aff him; and troth he's right, for your custom-house and excise cattle are ill liket on a' sides, and Rob might get a back-handed lick at him, before the Board, as they ca't, could help him."

"I have long suspected this, Mr. Jarvie," said I, "and perfectly agree with you. But as to my father's affairs"—

"Suspected it?—it's certain—it's certain—I ken them that saw some of the papers that were taen aff Morris—it's needless to say where. But to your father's affairs—Ye hae maun think that in thae twenty years by-gane, some o' the Hieland lairds and chiefs hae come to some sma' sense o' their ain interest—your father and others hae bought the woods of Glen-Disseries, Glen Kissoch, Tober-na-Kippoch, and mony mair besides, and your father's house has granted large bills in payment,—and as the credit o' Osbaldistone and Tresham was gude—for I'll say before Mr. Owen's face, as I wad behind his back, that, bating misfortunes o' the Lord's sending, nae men could be mair honourable in business—the Hieland gentlemen, holders o' thae bills, hae found credit in Glasgow and Edinburgh—(I might amaist say in Glasgow wholly, for it's little the pridefu' Edinburgh folk do in real business)—for all, or the greater part of the contents o' thae bills. So that—Aha! d'ye see me now?"

I confessed I could not quite follow his drift.

"Why," said he, "if these bills are not paid, the Glasgow merchant comes on the Hieland lairds, whae hae deil a boddle o' siller, and will like ill to spew up what is item a' spent—They will turn desperate—five hundred will rise that might hae sitten at hame—the deil will gae ower Jock Wabster—and the stopping of your father's house will hasten the outbreak that's been sae lang biding us."

"You think, then," said I, surprised at this singular view of the case, "that Rashleigh Osbaldistone has done this injury to my father, merely to accelerate a rising in the Highlands, by distressing the gentlemen to whom these bills were originally granted?"

"Doubtless—doubtless—it has been one main reason, Mr. Osbaldistone. I doubtna but what the ready money he carried off wi' him might be another. But that makes comparatively but a sma' part o' your father's loss, though it might make the maist part o' Rashleigh's direct gain. The assets he carried off are of nae mair use to him than if he were to light his pipe wi' them. He tried if MacVittie & Co. wad gie him siller on them—that I ken by Andro Wylie—but they were ower auld cats to draw that strae afore them—they keepit aff, and gae fair words. Rashleigh Osbaldistone is better ken'd than trusted in Glasgow, for he was here about some jacobitical papistical troking in seventeen hundred and seven, and left debt ahint him. Na, na—he canna pit aff the paper here; folk will misdoubt him how he came by it. Na, na—he'll hae the stuff safe at some o' their haulds in the Hielands, and I daur say my cousin Rob could get at it gin he liked."

"But would he be disposed to serve us in this pinch, Mr. Jarvie?" said I. "You have described him as an agent of the Jacobite party, and deeply connected in their intrigues: will he be disposed for my sake, or, if you please, for the sake of justice, to make an act of restitution, which, supposing it in his power, would, according to your view of the case, materially interfere with their plans?"

"I canna preceesely speak to that: the grandees among them are doubtfu' o' Rob, and he's doubtfu' o' them.—And he's been weel friended wi' the Argyle family, wha stand for the present model of government. If he was freed o' his hornings and captions, he would rather be on Argyle's side than he wad be on Breadalbane's, for there's auld ill-will between the Breadalbane family and his kin and name. The truth is, that Rob is for his ain hand, as Henry Wynd feught*—he'll take the side that suits him best; if the deil was laird, Rob wad be for being tenant; and ye canna blame him, puir fallow, considering his circumstances.

* Two great clans fought out a quarrel with thirty men of a side, in presence of the king, on the North Inch of Perth, on or about the year 1392; a man was amissing on one side, whose room was filled by a little bandy-legged citizen of Perth. This substitute, Henry Wynd—or, as the Highlanders called him, *Gow Chrom*, that is, the bandy-legged smith—fought well, and contributed greatly to the fate of the battle, without knowing which side he fought on;—so, "To fight for your own hand, like Henry Wynd," passed into a proverb. [This incident forms a conspicuous part of the subsequent novel, "The Fair Maid of Perth."]

But there's ae thing sair again ye—Rob has a grey mear in his stable at hame."

"A grey mare?" said I. "What is that to the purpose?"

"The wife, man—the wife,—an awfu' wife she is. She downa bide the sight o' a kindly Scot, if he come frae the Lowlands, far less of an Inglisher, and she'll be keen for a' that can set up King James, and ding down King George."

"It is very singular," I replied, "that the mercantile transactions of London citizens should become involved with revolutions and rebellions."

"Not at a', man—not at a'," returned Mr. Jarvie; "that's a' your silly prejudications. I read whiles in the lang dark nights, and I hae read in Baker's Chronicle* that the merchants o' London could gar the Bank of Genoa break their promise to advance a mighty sum to the King o' Spain, whereby the sailing of the Grand Spanish Armada was put aff for a haill year—What think you of that, sir?"

* [*The Chronicle of the Kings of England*, by Sir Richard Baker, with continuations, passed through several editions between 1641 and 1733. Whether any of them contain the passage alluded to is doubtful.]

"That the merchants did their country golden service, which ought to be honourably remembered in our histories."

"I think sae too; and they wad do weel, and deserve weal baith o' the state and o' humanity, that wad save three or four honest Hieland gentlemen frae louping heads ower heels into destruction, wi' a' their puir sackless* followers, just because they canna pay back the siller they had reason to count upon as their ain—and save your father's credit—and my ain gude siller that Osbaldistone and Tresham awes me into the bargain.

* Sackless, that is, innocent.

I say, if ane could manage a' this, I think it suld be done and said unto him, even if he were a puir ca'-the-shuttle body, as unto one whom the king delighteth to honour."

"I cannot pretend to estimate the extent of public gratitude," I replied; "but our own thankfulness, Mr. Jarvie, would be commensurate with the extent of the obligation."

"Which," added Mr. Owen, "we would endeavour to balance with a *per contra*, the instant our Mr. Osbaldistone returns from Holland."

"I doubtna—I doubtna—he is a very worthy gentleman, and a sponse, and wi' some o' my lights might do muckle business in Scotland—Weel, sir, if these assets could be redeemed out o' the hands o' the Philistines, they are gude paper—they are the right stuff when they are in the right hands, and that's yours, Mr. Owen. And I'se find ye three men in Glasgow, for as little as ye may think o' us, Mr. Owen—that's Sandie Steenson in the Trade's-Land, and John Pirie in Candleriggs, and another that sall be nameless at this present, sall advance what soums are sufficient to secure the credit of your house, and seek nae better security."

Owen's eyes sparkled at this prospect of extrication; but his countenance instantly fell on recollecting how improbable it was that the recovery of the assets, as he technically called them, should be successfully achieved.

"Dinna despair, sir—dinna despair," said Mr. Jarvie; "I hae taen sae muckle concern wi' your affairs already, that it maun een be ower shoon ower boots wi' me now. I am just like my father the deacon (praise be wi' him!) I canna meddle wi' a friend's business, but I aye end wi' making it my ain—Sae, I'll e'en pit on my boots the morn, and be jogging ower Drymen Muir wi' Mr. Frank here; and if I canna mak Rob hear reason, and his wife too, I dinna ken wha can—I hae been a kind freend to them afore now, to say naething o' ower-looking him last night, when naming his name wad hae cost him his life—I'll be hearing o' this in the council maybe frae Bailie Grahame and MacVittie, and some o' them. They hae coost up my kindred to Rob to me already—set up their nashgabs! I tauld them I wad vindicate nae man's faults; but set apart what he had done again the law o' the country, and the hership o' the Lennox, and the misfortune o' some folk losing life by him, he was an honest man than stood on ony o' their shanks—And whatfor suld I mind their clavers? If Rob is an outlaw, to himsell be it said—there is nae laws now about reset of inter-communed persons, as there was in the ill times o' the last Stuarts—I trow I hae a Scotch tongue in my head—if they speak, I'se answer."

It was with great pleasure that I saw the Bailie gradually surmount the barriers of caution, under the united influence of public spirit and good-natured interest in our affairs, together with his natural wish to avoid loss and acquire gain, and not a little harmless vanity. Through the combined operation of these motives, he at length arrived at the doughty resolution of taking the field in person, to aid in the recovery of my father's property. His whole information led me to believe, that if the papers were in possession of this Highland adventurer, it might be possible to induce him to surrender what he could not keep with any prospect of personal advantage; and I was conscious that the presence of his kinsman was likely to have considerable weight with him. I therefore cheerfully acquiesced in Mr. Jarvie's proposal that we should set out early next morning.

That honest gentleman was indeed as vivacious and alert in preparing to carry his purpose into execution, as he had been slow and cautious in forming it. He roared to Mattie to "air his trot-cosey, to have his jack-boots greased and set before the kitchen-fire all night, and to see that his beast be corned, and a' his riding gear in order." Having agreed to meet him at five o'clock next morning, and having settled that Owen, whose presence could be of no use to us upon this expedition, should await our return at Glasgow, we took a kind farewell of this unexpectedly zealous friend. I installed Owen in an apartment in my lodgings, contiguous to my own, and, giving orders to Andrew Fairservice to attend me next morning at the hour appointed, I retired to rest with better hopes than it had lately been my fortune to entertain.

CHAPTER TENTH.

*Far as the eye could reach no tree was seen,
Earth, clad in russet, scorned the lively green;
No birds, except as birds of passage flew;
No bee was heard to hum, no dove to coo;
No streams, as amber smooth-as amber clear,
Were seen to glide, or heard to warble here.*

Prophecy of Famine.

It was in the bracing atmosphere of a harvest morning, that I met by appointment Fairservice, with the horses, at the door of Mr. Jarvie's house, which was but little space distant from Mrs. Flyter's hotel. The first matter which caught my attention was, that whatever were the deficiencies of the pony which Mr. Fairservice's

legal adviser, Clerk Touthope, generously bestowed upon him in exchange for Thorncliff's mare, he had contrived to part with it, and procure in its stead an animal with so curious and complete a lameness, that it seemed only to make use of three legs for the purpose of progression, while the fourth appeared as if meant to be flourished in the air by way of accompaniment. "What do you mean by bringing such a creature as that here, sir? and where is the pony you rode to Glasgow upon?" were my very natural and impatient inquiries.

"I sell't it, sir. It was a slink beast, and wad hae eaten its head aff, standing at Luckie Flyter's at livery. And I hae bought this on your honour's account. It's a grand bargain—cost but a pund sterling the foot—that's four a'thegither. The stringhalt will gae aff when it's gaen a mile; it's a weel-ken'd ganger; they call it Souple Tam."

"On my soul, sir," said I, "you will never rest till my supple-jack and your shoulders become acquainted, If you do not go instantly and procure the other brute, you shall pay the penalty of your ingenuity."

Andrew, notwithstanding my threats, continued to battle the point, as he said it would cost him a guinea of rue-bargain to the man who had bought his pony, before he could get it back again. Like a true Englishman, though sensible I was duped by the rascal, I was about to pay his exaction rather than lose time, when forth sallied Mr. Jarvie, cloaked, mantled, hooded, and booted, as if for a Siberian winter, while two apprentices, under the immediate direction of Mattie, led forth the decent ambling steed which had the honour on such occasions to support the person of the Glasgow magistrate. Ere he "clombe to the saddle," an expression more descriptive of the Bailie's mode of mounting than that of the knights-errant to whom Spenser applies it, he inquired the cause of the dispute betwixt my servant and me. Having learned the nature of honest Andrew's manoeuvre he instantly cut short all debate, by pronouncing, that if Fairservice did not forthwith return the three-legged palfrey, and produce the more useful quadruped which he had discarded, he would send him to prison, and amerce him in half his wages. "Mr. Osbaldistone," said he, "contracted for the service of both your horse and you—two brutes at ance—ye unconscionable rascal!—but I'se look weel after you during this journey."

"It will be nonsense fining me," said Andrew, doughtily, "that hasna a grey groat to pay a fine wi'—it's ill taking the breeks aff a Hielandman."

"If ye hae nae purse to fine, ye hae flesh to pine," replied the Bailie, "and I will look weel to ye getting your deserts the tae way or the tither."

To the commands of Mr. Jarvie, therefore, Andrew was compelled to submit, only muttering between his teeth, "Ower mony maisters,—ower mony maisters, as the paddock said to the harrow, when every tooth gae her a tig."

Apparently he found no difficulty in getting rid of Supple Tam, and recovering possession of his former Bucephalus, for he accomplished the exchange without being many minutes absent; nor did I hear further of his having paid any smart-money for breach of bargain.

We now set forward, but had not reached the top of the street in which Mr. Jarvie dwelt, when a loud hallooing and breathless call of "Stop, stop!" was heard behind us. We stopped accordingly, and were overtaken by Mr. Jarvie's two lads, who bore two parting tokens of Mattie's care for her master. The first was conveyed in the form of a voluminous silk handkerchief, like the mainsail of one of his own West-Indiamen, which Mrs. Mattie particularly desired he would put about his neck, and which, thus entreated, he added to his other integuments. The second youngster brought only a verbal charge (I thought I saw the rogue disposed to laugh as he delivered it) on the part of the housekeeper, that her master would take care of the waters. "Pooh! pooh! silly hussy," answered Mr. Jarvie; but added, turning to me, "it shows a kind heart though—it shows a kind heart in sae young a quean—Mattie's a carefu' lass." So speaking, he pricked the sides of his palfrey, and we left the town without farther interruption.

While we paced easily forward, by a road which conducted us north-eastward from the town, I had an opportunity to estimate and admire the good qualities of my new friend. Although, like my father, he considered commercial transactions the most important objects of human life, he was not wedded to them so as to undervalue more general knowledge. On the contrary, with much oddity and vulgarity of manner,—with a vanity which he made much more ridiculous by disguising it now and then under a thin veil of humility, and devoid as he was of all the advantages of a learned education, Mr. Jarvie's conversation showed tokens of a shrewd, observing, liberal, and, to the extent of its opportunities, a well-improved mind. He was a good local antiquary, and entertained me, as we passed along, with an account of remarkable events which had formerly taken place in the scenes through which we passed. And as he was well acquainted with the ancient history of his district, he saw with the prospective eye of an enlightened patriot, the buds of many of those future advantages which have only blossomed and ripened within these few years. I remarked also, and with great pleasure, that although a keen Scotchman, and abundantly zealous for the honour of his country, he was disposed to think liberally of the sister kingdom. When Andrew Fairservice (whom, by the way, the Bailie could not abide) chose to impute the accident of one of the horses casting his shoe to the deteriorating influence of the Union, he incurred a severe rebuke from Mr. Jarvie.

"Whisht, sir!—whisht! it's ill-scraped tongues like yours, that make mischief atween neighbourhoods and nations. There's naething sae gude on this side o' time but it might hae been better, and that may be said o' the Union. Nane were keener against it than the Glasgow folk, wi' their rabblings and their risings, and their mobs, as they ca' them now-a-days. But it's an ill wind blows naebody gude—Let ilka ane roose the ford as they find it—I say let Glasgow flourish! whilk is judiciously and elegantly putten round the town's arms, by way of by-word.—Now, since St. Mungo catched herrings in the Clyde, what was ever like to gar us flourish like the sugar and tobacco trade? Will onybody tell me that, and grumble at the treaty that opened us a road west-awa' yonder?"

Andrew Fairservice was far from acquiescing in these arguments of expedience, and even ventured to enter a grumbling protest, "That it was an unco change to hae Scotland's laws made in England; and that, for his share, he wadna for a' the herring-barrels in Glasgow, and a' the tobacco-casks to boot, hae gien up the riding o' the Scots Parliament, or sent awa' our crown, and our sword, and our sceptre, and Mons Meg,* to be keepit by thae English pock-puddings in the Tower o' Lunnon.

* Note G. Mons Meg.

What wad Sir William Wallace, or auld Davie Lindsay, hae said to the Union, or them that made it?"

The road which we travelled, while diverting the way with these discussions, had become wild and open, as soon as we had left Glasgow a mile or two behind us, and was growing more dreary as we advanced. Huge continuous heaths spread before, behind, and around us, in hopeless barrenness—now level and interspersed with swamps, green with treacherous verdure, or sable with turf, or, as they call them in Scotland, peat-bogs,—and now swelling into huge heavy ascents, which wanted the dignity and form of hills, while they were still more toilsome to the passenger. There were neither trees nor bushes to relieve the eye from the russet livery of absolute sterility. The very heath was of that stunted imperfect kind which has little or no flower, and affords the coarsest and meanest covering, which, as far as my experience enables me to judge, mother Earth is ever arrayed in. Living thing we saw none, except occasionally a few straggling sheep of a strange diversity of colours, as black, bluish, and orange. The sable hue predominated, however, in their faces and legs. The very birds seemed to shun these wastes, and no wonder, since they had an easy method of escaping from them;—at least I only heard the monotonous and plaintive cries of the lapwing and curlew, which my companions denominated the peasweep and whaup.

At dinner, however, which we took about noon, at a most miserable alehouse, we had the good fortune to find that these tiresome screamers of the morass were not the only inhabitants of the moors. The goodwife told us, that "the gudeman had been at the hill;" and well for us that he had been so, for we enjoyed the produce of his *chasse* in the shape of some broiled moor-game,—a dish which gallantly eked out the ewe-milk cheese, dried salmon, and oaten bread, being all besides that the house afforded. Some very indifferent two-penny ale, and a glass of excellent brandy, crowned our repast; and as our horses had, in the meantime, discussed their corn, we resumed our journey with renovated vigour.

I had need of all the spirits a good dinner could give, to resist the dejection which crept insensibly on my mind, when I combined the strange uncertainty of my errand with the disconsolate aspect of the country through which it was leading me. Our road continued to be, if possible, more waste and wild than that we had travelled in the forenoon. The few miserable hovels that showed some marks of human habitation, were now of still rarer occurrence; and at length, as we began to ascend an uninterrupted swell of moorland, they totally disappeared. The only exercise which my imagination received was, when some particular turn of the road gave us a partial view, to the left, of a large assemblage of dark-blue mountains stretching to the north and north-west, which promised to include within their recesses a country as wild perhaps, but certainly differing greatly in point of interest, from that which we now travelled. The peaks of this screen of mountains

were as wildly varied and distinguished, as the hills which we had seen on the right were tame and lumpish; and while I gazed on this Alpine region, I felt a longing to explore its recesses, though accompanied with toil and danger, similar to that which a sailor feels when he wishes for the risks and animation of a battle or a gale, in exchange for the insupportable monotony of a protracted calm. I made various inquiries of my friend Mr. Jarvie respecting the names and positions of these remarkable mountains; but it was a subject on which he had no information, or did not choose to be communicative. "They're the Hieland hills—the Hieland hills—Ye'll see and hear eneugh about them before ye see Glasgow Cross again—I downa look at them—I never see them but they gar me grew. It's no for fear—no for fear, but just for grief, for the puir blinded half-starved creatures that inhabit them—but say nae mair about it—it's ill speaking o' Hielandmen sae near the line. I hae ken'd mony an honest man wadna hae ventured this length without he had made his last will and testament—Mattie had ill-will to see me set awa' on this ride, and grat awee, the sillie tawpie; but it's nae mair ferlie to see a woman greet than to see a goose gang barefit."

I next attempted to lead the discourse on the character and history of the person whom we were going to visit; but on this topic Mr. Jarvie was totally inaccessible, owing perhaps in part to the attendance of Mr. Andrew Fairservice, who chose to keep so close in our rear that his ears could not fail to catch every word which was spoken, while his tongue assumed the freedom of mingling in our conversation as often as he saw an opportunity. For this he occasionally incurred Mr. Jarvie's reproof.

"Keep back, sir, as best sets ye," said the Bailie, as Andrew pressed forward to catch the answer to some question I had asked about Campbell. —"ye wad fain ride the fore-horse, an ye wist how.—That chield's aye for being out o' the cheese-fat he was moulded in.—Now, as for your questions, Mr. Osbaldistone, now that chield's out of ear-shot, I'll just tell you it's free to you to speer, and it's free to me to answer, or no—Gude I canna say muckle o' Rob, puir chield; ill I winna say o' him, for, forby that he's my cousin, we're coming near his ain country, and there may be ane o' his gillies ahint every whin-bush, for what I ken—And if ye'll be guided by my advice, the less ye speak about him, or where we are gaun, or what we are gaun to do, we'll be the mair likely to speed us in our errand. For it's like we may fa' in wi' some o' his unfreends—there are e'en ower mony o' them about—and his bonnet sits even on his brow yet for a' that; but I doubt they'll be upsides wi' Rob at the last—air day or late day, the fox's hide finds aye the flaying knife."

"I will certainly," I replied, "be entirely guided by your experience."

"Right, Mr. Osbaldistone—right. But I maun speak to this gabbling skyte too, for bairns and fules speak at the Cross what they hear at the ingle-side.—D'ye hear, you, Andrew—what's your name?—Fairservice!"

Andrew, who at the last rebuff had fallen a good way behind, did not choose to acknowledge the summons.

"Andrew, ye scoundrel!" repeated Mr. Jarvie; "here, sir here!"

"Here is for the dog," said Andrew, coming up sulkily.

"I'll gie you dog's wages, ye rascal, if ye dinna attend to what I say t'ye—We are gaun into the Hielands a bit"—

"I judged as muckle," said Andrew.

"Haud your peace, ye knave, and hear what I have to say till ye—We are gaun a bit into the Hielands"—

"Ye tauld me sae already," replied the incorrigible Andrew.

"I'll break your head," said the Bailie, rising in wrath, "if ye dinna haud your tongue."

"A hadden tongue," replied Andrew, "makes a slabbered mouth."

It was now necessary I should interfere, which I did by commanding Andrew, with an authoritative tone, to be silent at his peril.

"I am silent," said Andrew. "I'se do a' your lawfu' bidding without a nay-say. My puir mother used aye to tell me,

Be it better, be it worse,

Be ruled by him that has the purse.

Sae ye may e'en speak as lang as ye like, baith the tane and the tither o' you, for Andrew."

Mr. Jarvie took the advantage of his stopping after quoting the above proverb, to give him the requisite instructions. "Now, sir, it's as muckle as your life's worth—that wad be dear o' little siller, to be sure—but it is as muckle as a' our lives are worth, if ye dinna mind what I sae to ye. In this public whar we are gaun to, and whar it is like we may hae to stay a' night, men o' a' clans and kindred—Hieland and Lawland—tak up their quarters—And whiles there are mair drawn dirks than open Bibles amang them, when the usquebaugh gets uppermost. See ye neither meddle nor mak, nor gie nae offence wi' that claverin tongue o' yours, but keep a calm sough, and let ilka cock fight his ain battle."

"Muckle needs to tell me that," said Andrew, contemptuously, "as if I had never seen a Hielandman before, and ken'd nae how to manage them. Nae man alive can cuite up Donald better than mysell—I hae bought wi' them, sauld wi' them, eaten wi' them, drucken wi' them"—

"Did ye ever fight wi' them?" said Mr. Jarvie.

"Na, na," answered Andrew, "I took care o' that: it wad ill hae set me, that am an artist and half a scholar to my trade, to be fighting amang a wheen kilted loons that dinna ken the name o' a single herb or flower in braid Scots, let abee in the Latin tongue."

"Then," said Mr. Jarvie, "as ye wad keep either your tongue in your mouth, or your lugs in your head (and ye might miss them, for as saucy members as they are), I charge ye to say nae word, gude or bad, that ye can weel get by, to onybody that may be in the Clachan. And ye'll specially understand that ye're no to be bleezing and blasting about your master's name and mine, or saying that this is Mr. Bailie Nicol Jarvie o' the Saut Market, son o' the worthy Deacon Nicol Jarvie, that a' body has heard about; and this is Mr. Frank Osbaldistone, son of the managing partner of the great house of Osbaldistone and Tresham, in the City."

"Eneueh said," answered Andrew—"eneueh said. What need ye think I wad be speaking about your names for?—I hae mony things o' mair importance to speak about, I trow."

"It's thae very things of importance that I am feared for, ye blethering goose; ye maunna speak ony thing, gude or bad, that ye can by any possibility help."

"If ye dinna think me fit," replied Andrew, in a huff, "to speak like ither folk, gie me my wages and my board-wages, and I'se gae back to Glasgow—There's sma' sorrow at our parting, as the auld mear said to the broken cart."

Finding Andrew's perverseness again rising to a point which threatened to occasion me inconvenience, I was under the necessity of explaining to him, that he might return if he thought proper, but that in that case I would not pay him a single farthing for his past services. The argument *ad crumenam*, as it has been called by jocular logicians, has weight with the greater part of mankind, and Andrew was in that particular far from affecting any trick of singularity. He "drew in his horns," to use the Bailie's phrase, on the instant, professed no intention whatever to disoblige, and a resolution to be guided by my commands, whatever they might be.

Concord being thus happily restored to our small party, we continued to pursue our journey. The road, which had ascended for six or seven English miles, began now to descend for about the same space, through a country which neither in fertility nor interest could boast any advantage over that which we had passed already, and which afforded no variety, unless when some tremendous peak of a Highland mountain appeared at a distance. We continued, however, to ride on without pause and even when night fell and overshadowed the desolate wilds which we traversed, we were, as I understood from Mr. Jarvie, still three miles and a bittock distant from the place where we were to spend the night.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

*Baron of Bucklivie,
May the foul fiend drive ye,
And a' to pieces rive ye,*

For building sic a town,
Where there's neither horse meat,
Nor man's meat,
Nor a chair to sit down.

Scottish Popular Rhymes on a bad Inn.

The night was pleasant, and the moon afforded us good light for our journey. Under her rays, the ground over which we passed assumed a more interesting appearance than during the broad daylight, which discovered the extent of its wasteness. The mingled light and shadows gave it an interest which naturally did not belong to it; and, like the effect of a veil flung over a plain woman, irritated our curiosity on a subject which had in itself nothing gratifying.

The descent, however, still continued, turned, winded, left the more open heaths, and got into steeper ravines, which promised soon to lead us to the banks of some brook or river, and ultimately made good their presage. We found ourselves at length on the bank of a stream, which rather resembled one of my native English rivers than those I had hitherto seen in Scotland. It was narrow, deep, still, and silent; although the imperfect light, as it gleamed on its placid waters, showed also that we were now among the lofty mountains which formed its cradle. "That's the Forth," said the Bailie, with an air of reverence, which I have observed the Scotch usually pay to their distinguished rivers. The Clyde, the Tweed, the Forth, the Spey, are usually named by those who dwell on their banks with a sort of respect and pride, and I have known duels occasioned by any word of disparagement. I cannot say I have the least quarrel with this sort of harmless enthusiasm. I received my friend's communication with the importance which he seemed to think appertained to it. In fact, I was not a little pleased, after so long and dull a journey, to approach a region which promised to engage the imagination. My faithful squire, Andrew, did not seem to be quite of the same opinion, for he received the solemn information, "That is the Forth," with a "Umph!—an he had said that's the public-house, it wad hae been mair to the purpose."

The Forth, however, as far as the imperfect light permitted me to judge, seemed to merit the admiration of those who claimed an interest in its stream. A beautiful eminence of the most regular round shape, and clothed with copsewood of hazels, mountain-ash, and dwarf-oak, intermixed with a few magnificent old trees, which, rising above the underwood, exposed their forked and bared branches to the silver moonshine, seemed to protect the sources from which the river sprung. If I could trust the tale of my companion, which, while professing to disbelieve every word of it, he told under his breath, and with an air of something like intimidation, this hill, so regularly formed, so richly verdant, and garlanded with such a beautiful variety of ancient trees and thriving copsewood, was held by the neighbourhood to contain, within its unseen caverns, the palaces of the fairies—a race of airy beings, who formed an intermediate class between men and demons, and who, if not positively malignant to humanity, were yet to be avoided and feared, on account of their capricious, vindictive, and irritable disposition.*

* Note H. Fairy Superstition.

"They ca' them," said Mr. Jarvie, in a whisper, "*Daoine Schie*,—whilk signifies, as I understand, men of peace; meaning thereby to make their gudewill. And we may e'en as weel ca' them that too, Mr. Osbaldistone, for there's nae gude in speaking ill o' the laird within his ain bounds." But he added presently after, on seeing one or two lights which twinkled before us, "It's deceits o' Satan, after a', and I fearn to say it—for we are near the manse now, and yonder are the lights in the Clachan of Aberfoil."

I own I was well pleased at the circumstance to which Mr. Jarvie alluded; not so much that it set his tongue at liberty, in his opinion, with all safety to declare his real sentiments with respect to the *Daoine Schie*, or fairies, as that it promised some hours' repose to ourselves and our horses, of which, after a ride of fifty miles and upwards, both stood in some need.

We crossed the infant Forth by an old-fashioned stone bridge, very high and very narrow. My conductor, however, informed me, that to get through this deep and important stream, and to clear all its tributary dependencies, the general pass from the Highlands to the southward lay by what was called the Fords of Frew, at all times deep and difficult of passage, and often altogether unfordable. Beneath these fords, there was no pass of general resort until so far east as the bridge of Stirling; so that the river of Forth forms a defensible line between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, from its source nearly to the Firth, or inlet of the ocean, in which it terminates. The subsequent events which we witnessed led me to recall with attention what the shrewdness of Bailie Jarvie suggested in his proverbial expression, that "Forth bridles the wild Highlandman."

About half a mile's riding, after we crossed the bridge, placed us at the door of the public-house where we were to pass the evening. It was a hovel rather worse than better than that in which we had dined; but its little windows were lighted up, voices were heard from within, and all intimated a prospect of food and shelter, to which we were by no means indifferent. Andrew was the first to observe that there was a peeled willow-wand placed across the half-open door of the little inn. He hung back and advised us not to enter. "For," said Andrew, "some of their chiefs and grit men are birling at the usquebaugh in by there, and dinna want to be disturbed; and the least we'll get, if we gang ramstam in on them, will be a broken head, to learn us better havings, if we dinna come by the length of a cauld dirk in our wame, whilk is just as likely."

I looked at the Bailie, who acknowledged, in a whisper, "that the gowk had some reason for singing, ance in the year."

Meantime a staring half-clad wench or two came out of the inn and the neighbouring cottages, on hearing the sound of our horses' feet. No one bade us welcome, nor did any one offer to take our horses, from which we had alighted; and to our various inquiries, the hopeless response of "Ha niel Sassenach," was the only answer we could extract. The Bailie, however, found (in his experience) a way to make them speak English. "If I gie ye a bawbee," said he to an urchin of about ten years old, with a fragment of a tattered plaid about him, "will you understand Sassenach?"

"Ay, ay, that will I," replied the brat, in very decent English. "Then gang and tell your mammy, my man, there's twa Sassenach gentlemen come to speak wi' her." The landlady presently appeared, with a lighted piece of split fir blazing in her hand. The turpentine in this species of torch (which is generally dug from out the turf-bogs) makes it blaze and sparkle readily, so that it is often used in the Highlands in lieu of candles. On this occasion such a torch illuminated the wild and anxious features of a female, pale, thin, and rather above the usual size, whose soiled and ragged dress, though aided by a plaid or tartan screen, barely served the purposes of decency, and certainly not those of comfort. Her black hair, which escaped in uncombed elf-locks from under her coif, as well as the strange and embarrassed look with which she regarded us, gave me the idea of a witch disturbed in the midst of her unlawful rites. She plainly refused to admit us into the house. We remonstrated anxiously, and pleaded the length of our journey, the state of our horses, and the certainty that there was not another place where we could be received nearer than Callander, which the Bailie stated to be seven Scots miles distant. How many these may exactly amount to in English measurement, I have never been able to ascertain, but I think the double *ratio* may be pretty safely taken as a medium computation. The obdurate hostess treated our expostulation with contempt. "Better gang farther than fare waur," she said, speaking the Scottish Lowland dialect, and being indeed a native of the Lennox district—"Her house was taen up wi' them wadna like to be intruded on wi' strangers. She didna ken wha mair might be there—red-coats, it might be, frae the garrison." (These last words she spoke under her breath, and with very strong emphasis.) "The night," she said, "was fair abune head—a night among the heather wad caller our bloods—we might sleep in our claes, as mony a gude blade does in the scabbard—there wasna muckle flowmoss in the shaw, if we took up our quarters right, and we might pit up our horses to the hill, naebody wad say naething against it."

"But, my good woman," said I, while the Bailie groaned and remained undecided, "it is six hours since we dined, and we have not taken a morsel since. I am positively dying with hunger, and I have no taste for taking up my abode supperless among these mountains of yours. I positively must enter; and make the best apology you can to your guests for adding a stranger or two to their number. Andrew, you will see the horses put up."

The Hecate looked at me with surprise, and then ejaculated—"A wilfu' man will hae his way—them that will to Cupar maun to Cupar!—To see thae English belly-gods! he has had ae fu' meal the day already, and he'll venture life and liberty, rather than he'll want a het supper! Set roasted beef and pudding on the opposite side o' the pit o' Tophet, and an Englishman will mak a spang at it—But I wash my hands o't—Follow me sir" (to Andrew), "and I'se show ye where to pit the beasts."

I own I was somewhat dismayed at my landlady's expressions, which seemed to be ominous of some approaching danger. I did not, however, choose to shrink back after having declared my resolution, and accordingly I boldly entered the house; and after narrowly escaping breaking my shins over a turf back and a salting

tub, which stood on either side of the narrow exterior passage, I opened a crazy half-decayed door, constructed not of plank, but of wicker, and, followed by the Bailie, entered into the principal apartment of this Scottish caravansary.

The interior presented a view which seemed singular enough to southern eyes. The fire, fed with blazing turf and branches of dried wood, blazed merrily in the centre; but the smoke, having no means to escape but through a hole in the roof, eddied round the rafters of the cottage, and hung in sable folds at the height of about five feet from the floor. The space beneath was kept pretty clear by innumerable currents of air which rushed towards the fire from the broken panel of basket-work which served as a door—from two square holes, designed as ostensible windows, through one of which was thrust a plaid, and through the other a tattered great-coat—and moreover, through various less distinguishable apertures in the walls of the tenement, which, being built of round stones and turf, cemented by mud, let in the atmosphere at innumerable crevices.

At an old oaken table, adjoining to the fire, sat three men, guests apparently, whom it was impossible to regard with indifference. Two were in the Highland dress; the one, a little dark-complexioned man, with a lively, quick, and irritable expression of features, wore the trews, or close pantaloons wove out of a sort of chequered stocking stuff. The Bailie whispered me, that "he behoved to be a man of some consequence, for that naeboddy but their Duinhe'wassels wore the trews—they were ill to weave exactly to their Highland pleasure."

The other mountaineer was a very tall, strong man, with a quantity of reddish hair, freckled face, high cheek-bones, and long chin—a sort of caricature of the national features of Scotland. The tartan which he wore differed from that of his companion, as it had much more scarlet in it, whereas the shades of black and dark-green predominated in the chequers of the other. The third, who sate at the same table, was in the Lowland dress,—a bold, stout-looking man, with a cast of military daring in his eye and manner, his riding-dress showily and profusely laced, and his cocked hat of formidable dimensions. His hanger and a pair of pistols lay on the table before him. Each of the Highlanders had their naked dirks stuck upright in the board beside him,—an emblem, I was afterwards informed, but surely a strange one, that their computation was not to be interrupted by any brawl. A mighty pewter measure, containing about an English quart of usquebaugh, a liquor nearly as strong as brandy, which the Highlanders distil from malt, and drink undiluted in excessive quantities, was placed before these worthies. A broken glass, with a wooden foot, served as a drinking cup to the whole party, and circulated with a rapidity, which, considering the potency of the liquor, seemed absolutely marvellous. These men spoke loudly and eagerly together, sometimes in Gaelic, at other times in English. Another Highlander, wrapt in his plaid, reclined on the floor, his head resting on a stone, from which it was only separated by a wisp of straw, and slept or seemed to sleep, without attending to what was going on around him. He also was probably a stranger, for he lay in full dress, and accoutred with the sword and target, the usual arms of his countrymen when on a journey. Cribbs there were of different dimensions beside the walls, formed, some of fractured boards, some of shattered wicker-work or plaited boughs, in which slumbered the family of the house, men, women, and children, their places of repose only concealed by the dusky wreaths of vapour which arose above, below, and around them.

Our entrance was made so quietly, and the carousers I have described were so eagerly engaged in their discussions, that we escaped their notice for a minute or two. But I observed the Highlander who lay beside the fire raise himself on his elbow as we entered, and, drawing his plaid over the lower part of his face, fix his look on us for a few seconds, after which he resumed his recumbent posture, and seemed again to betake himself to the repose which our entrance had interrupted.

We advanced to the fire, which was an agreeable spectacle after our late ride, during the chillness of an autumn evening among the mountains, and first attracted the attention of the guests who had preceded us, by calling for the landlady. She approached, looking doubtfully and timidly, now at us, now at the other party, and returned a hesitating and doubtful answer to our request to have something to eat.

"She didna ken," she said, "she wasna sure there was onything in the house," and then modified her refusal with the qualification—"that is, onything fit for the like of us."

I assured her we were indifferent to the quality of our supper; and looking round for the means of accommodation, which were not easily to be found, I arranged an old hen-coop as a seat for Mr. Jarvie, and turned down a broken tub to serve for my own. Andrew Fairservice entered presently afterwards, and took a place in silence behind our backs. The natives, as I may call them, continued staring at us with an air as if confounded by our assurance, and we, at least I myself, disguised as well as we could, under an appearance of indifference, any secret anxiety we might feel concerning the mode in which we were to be received by those whose privacy we had disturbed.

At length, the lesser Highlander, addressing himself to me said, in very good English, and in a tone of great haughtiness, "Ye make yourself at home, sir, I see."

"I usually do so," I replied, "when I come into a house of public entertainment."

"And did she na see," said the taller man, "by the white wand at the door, that gentlemans had taken up the public-house on their ain business?"

"I do not pretend to understand the customs of this country but I am yet to learn," I replied, "how three persons should be entitled to exclude all other travellers from the only place of shelter and refreshment for miles round."

"There's nae reason for't, gentlemen," said the Bailie; "we mean nae offence—but there's neither law nor reason for't; but as far as a stoup o' gude brandy wad make up the quarrel, we, being peaceable folk, wad be willing."

"Damn your brandy, sir!" said the Lowlander, adjusting his cocked hat fiercely upon his head; "we desire neither your brandy nor your company," and up he rose from his seat. His companions also arose, muttering to each other, drawing up their plaids, and snorting and snuffing the air after the manner of their countrymen when working themselves into a passion.

"I tauld ye what wad come, gentlemen," said the landlady, "an ye wad hae been tauld:—get awa' wi' ye out o' my house, and make nae disturbance here—there's nae gentleman be disturbed at Jeanie MacAlpine's an she can hinder. A wheen idle English loons, gaun about the country under cloud o' night, and disturbing honest peaceable gentlemen that are drinking their drap drink at the fireside!"

At another time I should have thought of the old Latin adage,

"Dat veniam corvis, vexat censure columbas"—

But I had not any time for classical quotation, for there was obviously a fray about to ensue, at which, feeling myself indignant at the inhospitable insolence with which I was treated, I was totally indifferent, unless on the Bailie's account, whose person and qualities were ill qualified for such an adventure. I started up, however, on seeing the others rise, and dropped my cloak from my shoulders, that I might be ready to stand on the defensive.

"We are three to three," said the lesser Highlander, glancing his eyes at our party: "if ye be pretty men, draw!" and unsheathing his broadsword, he advanced on me. I put myself in a posture of defence, and aware of the superiority of my weapon, a rapier or small-sword, was little afraid of the issue of the contest. The Bailie behaved with unexpected mettle. As he saw the gigantic Highlander confront him with his weapon drawn, he tugged for a second or two at the hilt of his *shabblie*, as he called it; but finding it loth to quit the sheath, to which it had long been secured by rust and disuse, he seized, as a substitute, on the red-hot coulters of a plough which had been employed in arranging the fire by way of a poker, and brandished it with such effect, that at the first pass he set the Highlander's plaid on fire, and compelled him to keep a respectful distance till he could get it extinguished. Andrew, on the contrary, who ought to have faced the Lowland champion, had, I grieve to say it, vanished at the very commencement of the fray. But his antagonist, crying "Fair play, fair play!" seemed courteously disposed to take no share in the scuffle. Thus we commenced our rencontre on fair terms as to numbers. My own aim was, to possess myself, if possible, of my antagonist's weapon; but I was deterred from closing, for fear of the dirk which he held in his left hand, and used in parrying the thrusts of my rapier. Meantime the Bailie, notwithstanding the success of his first onset, was sorely bested. The weight of his weapon, the corpulence of his person, the very effervescence of his own passions, were rapidly exhausting both his strength and his breath, and he was almost at the mercy of his antagonist, when up started the sleeping Highlander from the floor on which he reclined, with his naked sword and target in his hand, and threw himself between the discomfited magistrate and his assailant, exclaiming, "Her nainsell has eaten the town pread at the Cross o' Glasgow, and py her troth she'll fight for Bailie Sharvie at the Clachan of Aberfoil—tat will she e'en!" And seconding his words with deeds, this unexpected auxiliary made his sword whistle about the ears of his tall countryman, who, nothing abashed,

returned his blows with interest. But being both accoutred with round targets made of wood, studded with brass, and covered with leather, with which they readily parried each other's strokes, their combat was attended with much more noise and clatter than serious risk of damage. It appeared, indeed, that there was more of bravado than of serious attempt to do us any injury; for the Lowland gentleman, who, as I mentioned, had stood aside for want of an antagonist when the brawl commenced, was now pleased to act the part of moderator and peacemaker.

"Hand your hands! haud your hands!—eneugh done!—eneugh done! the quarrel's no mortal. The strange gentlemen have shown themselves men of honour, and gien reasonable satisfaction. I'll stand on mine honour as kittle as ony man, but I hate unnecessary bloodshed."

It was not, of course, my wish to protract the fray—my adversary seemed equally disposed to sheathe his sword—the Bailie, gasping for breath, might be considered as *hors de combat*, and our two sword-and-buckler men gave up their contest with as much indifference as they had entered into it.

"And now," said the worthy gentleman who acted as umpire, "let us drink and gree like honest fellows—The house will haud us a'. I propose that this good little gentleman, that seems sair forfoughen, as I may say, in this tuilzie, shall send for a tass o' brandy and I'll pay for another, by way of archilowe,* and then we'll birl our bawbees a' round about, like brethren."

"And fa's to pay my new ponnie plaid," said the larger Highlander, "wi' a hole burnt in't ane might put a kail-pat through? Saw ever onybody a decent gentleman fight wi' a firebrand before?"

"Let that be nae hinderance," said the Bailie, who had now recovered his breath, and was at once disposed to enjoy the triumph of having behaved with spirit, and avoid the necessity of again resorting to such hard and doubtful arbitrament—"Gin I hae broken the head," he said, "I sall find the plaister. A new plaid sall ye hae, and o' the best—your ain clan-colours, man,—an ye will tell me where it can be sent t'ye frae Glasco."

"I needna name my clan—I am of a king's clan, as is weel ken'd," said the Highlander; "but ye may tak a bit o' the plaid—figh! she smells like a singit sheep's head!—and that'll learn ye the sett—and a gentleman, that's a cousin o' my ain, that carries eggs down frae Glencroe, will ca' for't about Martimas, an ye will tell her where ye bide. But, honest gentleman, neist time ye fight, an ye hae ony respect for your athversary, let it be wi' your sword, man, since ye wear ane, and no wi' thae het culters and firebrands, like a wild Indian."

"Conscience!" replied the Bailie, "every man maun do as he dow. My sword hasna seen the light since Bothwell Brigg, when my father that's dead and gane, ware it; and I kenna weel if it was forthcoming then either, for the battle was o' the briefest—At ony rate, it's glued to the scabbard now beyond my power to part them; and, finding that, I e'en grippit at the first thing I could make a fend wi'. I trow my fighting days is done, though I like ill to take the scorn, for a' that.—But where's the honest lad that tuik my quarrel on himself sae frankly?—I'se bestow a gill o' aquavita on him, an I suld never ca' for anither."

* Archilowe, of unknown derivation, signifies a peace-offering.

The champion for whom he looked around was, however, no longer to be seen. He had escaped unobserved by the Bailie, immediately when the brawl was ended, yet not before I had recognised, in his wild features and shaggy red hair, our acquaintance Dougal, the fugitive turnkey of the Glasgow jail. I communicated this observation in a whisper to the Bailie, who answered in the same tone, "Weel, weel,—I see that him that ye ken o' said very right; there *is* some glimmering o' common sense about that creature Dougal; I maun see and think o' something will do him some gude."

Thus saying, he sat down, and fetching one or two deep aspirations, by way of recovering his breath, called to the landlady—"I think, Luckie, now that I find that there's nae hole in my wame, whilk I had muckle reason to doubt frae the doings o' your house, I wad be the better o' something to pit intill't."

The dame, who was all officiousness so soon as the storm had blown over, immediately undertook to broil something comfortable for our supper. Indeed, nothing surprised me more, in the course of the whole matter, than the extreme calmness with which she and her household seemed to regard the martial tumult that had taken place. The good woman was only heard to call to some of her assistants—"Steek the door! steek the door! kill or be killed, let naeboddy pass out till they hae paid the lawin." And as for the slumberers in those lairs by the wall, which served the family for beds, they only raised their shirtless bodies to look at the fray, ejaculated, "Oigh! oigh!" in the tone suitable to their respective sex and ages, and were, I believe, fast asleep again, ere our swords were well returned to their scabbards.

Our landlady, however, now made a great bustle to get some victuals ready, and, to my surprise, very soon began to prepare for us in the frying-pan a savoury mess of venison collops, which she dressed in a manner that might well satisfy hungry men, if not epicures. In the meantime the brandy was placed on the table, to which the Highlanders, however partial to their native strong waters, showed no objection, but much the contrary; and the Lowland gentleman, after the first cup had passed round, became desirous to know our profession, and the object of our journey.

"We are bits o' Glasgow bodies, if it please your honour," said the Bailie, with an affectation of great humility, "travelling to Stirling to get in some siller that is awing us."

I was so silly as to feel a little disconcerted at the unassuming account which he chose to give of us; but I recollected my promise to be silent, and allow the Bailie to manage the matter his own way. And really, when I recollected, Will, that I had not only brought the honest man a long journey from home, which even in itself had been some inconvenience (if I were to judge from the obvious pain and reluctance with which he took his seat, or arose from it), but had also put him within a hair's-breadth of the loss of his life, I could hardly refuse him such a compliment. The spokesman of the other party, snuffing up his breath through his nose, repeated the words with a sort of sneer;—"You Glasgow tradesfolks hae naething to do but to gang frae the tae end o' the west o' Scotland to the ither, to plague honest folks that may chance to be awae ahint the hand, like me."

"If our debtors were a' sic honest gentlemen as I believe you to be, Garschattachin," replied the Bailie, "conscience! we might save ourselves a labour, for they wad come to seek us."

"Eh! what! how!" exclaimed the person whom he had addressed,—"as I shall live by bread (not forgetting beef and brandy), it's my auld friend Nicol Jarvie, the best man that ever counted down merks on a band till a distressed gentleman. Were ye na coming up my way?—were ye na coming up the Endrick to Garschattachin?"

"Troth no, Maister Galbraith," replied the Bailie, "I had other eggs on the spit—and I thought ye wad be saying I cam to look about the annual rent that's due on the bit heritable band that's between us."

"Damn the annual rent!" said the laird, with an appearance of great heartiness—"Deil a word o' business will you or I speak, now that ye're so near my country. To see how a trot-cosey and a joseph can disguise a man—that I suldna ken my auld feal friend the deacon!"

"The Bailie, if ye please," resumed my companion; "but I ken what gars ye mistak—the band was granted to my father that's happy, and he was deacon; but his name was Nicol as weel as mine. I dinna mind that there's been a payment of principal sum or annual rent on it in my day, and doubtless that has made the mistake."

"Weel, the devil take the mistake and all that occasioned it!" replied Mr. Galbraith. "But I am glad ye are a bailie. Gentlemen, fill a brimmer—this is my excellent friend, Bailie Nicol Jarvie's health—I ken'd him and his father these twenty years. Are ye a' cleared kelly aff?—Fill anither. Here's to his being sune provost—I say provost—Lord Provost Nicol Jarvie!—and them that affirms there's a man walks the Hie-street o' Glasgow that's fitter for the office, they will do weel not to let me, Duncan Galbraith of Garschattachin, hear them say sae—that's all." And therewith Duncan Galbraith martially cocked his hat, and placed it on one side of his head with an air of defiance.

The brandy was probably the best recommendation of there complimentary toasts to the two Highlanders, who drank them without appearing anxious to comprehend their purport. They commenced a conversation with Mr. Galbraith in Gaelic, which he talked with perfect fluency, being, as I afterwards learned, a near neighbour to the Highlands.

"I ken'd that Scant-o'-grace weel eneugh frae the very outset," said the Bailie, in a whisper to me; "but when blude was warm, and swords were out at ony rate, wha kens what way he might hae thought o' paying his debts? it will be lang or he does it in common form. But he's an honest lad, and has a warm heart too; he

disna come often to the Cross o' Glasgow, but mony a buck and blackcock he sends us doun frae the hills. And I can want my siller weel eneugh. My father the deacon had a great regard for the family of Garschattachin."

Supper being now nearly ready, I looked round for Andrew Fairservice; but that trusty follower had not been seen by any one since the beginning of the rencontre. The hostess, however, said that she believed our servant had gone into the stable, and offered to light me to the place, saying that "no entreaties of the bairns or hers could make him give any answer; and that truly she caredna to gang into the stable herself at this hour. She was a lone woman, and it was weel ken'd how the Brownie of Ben-ye-gask guided the gudewife of Ardnagowan; and it was aye judged there was a Brownie in our stable, which was just what garr'd me gie ower keeping an hostler."

As, however, she lighted me towards the miserable hovel into which they had crammed our unlucky steeds, to regale themselves on hay, every fibre of which was as thick as an ordinary goose-quill, she plainly showed me that she had another reason for drawing me aside from the company than that which her words implied. "Read that," she said, slipping a piece of paper into my hand, as we arrived at the door of the shed; "I bless God I am rid o't. Between sogers and Saxons, and caterans and cattle-lifters, and hership and bluidshed, an honest woman wad live quieter in hell than on the Hieland line."

So saying, she put the pine-torch into my hand, and returned into the house,

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

*Bagpipes, not lyres, the Highland hills adorn,
MacLean's loud hollo, and MacGregor's horn.*

John Cooper's Reply to Allan Ramsay.

I stopped in the entrance of the stable, if indeed a place be entitled to that name where horses were stowed away along with goats, poultry, pigs, and cows, under the same roof with the mansion-house; although, by a degree of refinement unknown to the rest of the hamlet, and which I afterwards heard was imputed to an overpride on the part of Jeanie MacAlpine, our landlady, the apartment was accommodated with an entrance different from that used by her biped customers. By the light of my torch, I deciphered the following billet, written on a wet, crumpled, and dirty piece of paper, and addressed—"For the honoured hands of Mr. F. O., a Saxon young gentleman—These." The contents were as follows:—

"Sir,

"There are night-hawks abroad, so that I cannot give you and my respected kinsman, B. N. J., the meeting at the Clachan of Aberfoil, whilk was my purpose. I pray you to avoid unnecessary communication with those you may find there, as it may give future trouble. The person who gives you this is faithful and may be trusted, and will guide you to a place where, God willing, I may safely give you the meeting, when I trust my kinsman and you will visit my poor house, where, in despite of my enemies, I can still promise sic cheer as ane Hielandman may gie his friends, and where we will drink a solemn health to a certain D. V., and look to certain affairs whilk I hope to be your aidance in; and I rest, as is wont among gentlemen, your servant to command, R. M. C."

I was a good deal mortified at the purport of this letter, which seemed to adjourn to a more distant place and date the service which I had hoped to receive from this man Campbell. Still, however, it was some comfort to know that he continued to be in my interest, since without him I could have no hope of recovering my father's papers. I resolved, therefore, to obey his instructions; and, observing all caution before the guests, to take the first good opportunity I could find to procure from the landlady directions how I was to obtain a meeting with this mysterious person.

My next business was to seek out Andrew Fairservice, whom I called several times by name, without receiving any answer, surveying the stable all round, at the same time, not without risk of setting the premises on fire, had not the quantity of wet litter and mud so greatly counterbalanced two or three bunches of straw and hay. At length my repeated cries of "Andrew Fairservice! Andrew! fool!—ass! where are you?" produced a doleful "Here," in a groaning tone, which might have been that of the Brownie itself. Guided by this sound, I advanced to the corner of a shed, where, ensconced in the angle of the wall, behind a barrel full of the feathers of all the fowls which had died in the cause of the public for a month past, I found the manful Andrew; and partly by force, partly by command and exhortation, compelled him forth into the open air. The first words he spoke were, "I am an honest lad, sir."

"Who the devil questions your honesty?" said I, "or what have we to do with it at present? I desire you to come and attend us at supper."

"Yes," reiterated Andrew, without apparently understanding what I said to him, "I am an honest lad, whatever the Bailie may say to the contrary. I grant the world and the world's gear sits ower near my heart whiles, as it does to mony a ane—But I am an honest lad; and, though I spak o' leaving ye in the muir, yet God knows it was far frae my purpose, but just like idle things folk says when they're driving a bargain, to get it as far to their ain side as they can—And I like your honour weel for sae young a lad, and I wadna part wi' ye lightly."

"What the deuce are you driving at now?" I replied. "Has not everything been settled again and again to your satisfaction? And are you to talk of leaving me every hour, without either rhyme or reason?"

"Ay,—but I was only making fashion before," replied Andrew; "but it's come on me in sair earnest now—Lose or win, I daur gae nae farther wi' your honour; and if ye'll tak my foolish advice, ye'll bide by a broken tryste, rather than gang forward yoursell. I hae a sincere regard for ye, and I'm sure ye'll be a credit to your friends if ye live to saw out your wild aits, and get some mair sense and steadiness—But I can follow ye nae farther, even if ye suld founder and perish from the way for lack of guidance and counsel. To gang into Rob Roy's country is a mere tempting o' Providence."

"Rob Roy?" said I, in some surprise; "I know no such person. What new trick is this, Andrew?"

"It's hard," said Andrew—"very hard, that a man canna be believed when he speaks Heaven's truth, just because he's whiles owercome, and tells lees a little when there is necessary occasion. Ye needna ask whae Rob Roy is, the reiving lifter that he is—God forgie me! I hope naebody hears us—when ye hae a letter frae him in your pouch. I heard ane o' his gillies bid that auld rudas jaud of a gudewife gie ye that. They thought I didna understand their gibberish; but, though I canna speak it muckle, I can gie a gude guess at what I hear them say—I never thought to hae tauld ye that, but in a fright a' things come out that suld be keepit in. O, Maister Frank! a' your uncle's follies, and a' your cousin's pliskies, were naething to this! Drink clean cap out, like Sir Hildebrand; begin the blessed morning with brandy sops, like Squire Percy; swagger, like Squire Thornclyff; rin wud amang the lasses, like Squire John; gamble, like Richard; win souls to the Pope and the deevil, like Rashleigh; rive, rant, break the Sabbath, and do the Pope's bidding, like them a' put thegither—But, merciful Providence! take care o' your young bluid, and gang nae near Rob Roy!"

Andrew's alarm was too sincere to permit me to suppose he counterfeited. I contented myself, however, with telling him, that I meant to remain in the alehouse that night, and desired to have the horses well looked after. As to the rest, I charged him to observe the strictest silence upon the subject of his alarm, and he might rely upon it I would not incur any serious danger without due precaution. He followed me with a dejected air into the house, observing between his teeth, "Man suld be served afore beast—I haena had a morsel in my mouth, but the rough legs o' that auld muircock, this hail blessed day."

The harmony of the company seemed to have suffered some interruption since my departure, for I found Mr. Galbraith and my friend the Bailie high in dispute.

"I'll hear nae sic language," said Mr. Jarvie, as I entered, "respecting the Duke o' Argyle and the name o' Campbell. He's a worthy public-spirited nobleman, and a credit to the country, and a friend and benefactor to the trade o' Glasgow."

"I'll sae naething against MacCallum More and the Slioch-nan-Diarmid," said the lesser Highlander, laughing. "I live on the wrang side of Glencroe to quarrel with Inverara."

"Our loch ne'er saw the Cawmil lymphads,"* said the bigger Highlander.

* *Lymphads*. The galley which the family of Argyle and others of the * Clan Campbell carry in their arms.

"She'll speak her mind and fear naeboddy—She doesna value a Cawmil mair as a Cowan, and ye may tell MacCallum More that Allan Iverach said sae— It's a far cry to Lochow."*

* Lochow and the adjacent districts formed the original seat of the * Campbells. The expression of a "far cry to Lochow" was proverbial.

Mr. Galbraith, on whom the repeated pledges which he had quaffed had produced some influence, slapped his hand on the table with great force, and said, in a stern voice, "There's a bloody debt due by that family, and they will pay it one day—The banes of a loyal and a gallant Grahame hae lang rattled in their coffin for vengeance on thae Dukes of Guile and Lords for Lorn. There ne'er was treason in Scotland but a Cawmil was at the bottom o't; and now that the wrang side's uppermost, wha but the Cawmils for keeping down the right? But this world winna last lang, and it will be time to sharp the maiden* for shearing o' craigs and thrapples. I hope to see the auld rusty lass linking at a bluidy harst again."

* A rude kind of guillotine formerly used in Scotland.

"For shame, Garschattachin!" exclaimed the Bailie; "fy for shame, sir! Wad ye say sic things before a magistrate, and bring yoursell into trouble?—How d'ye think to maintain your family and satisfy your creditors (mysell and others), if ye gang on in that wild way, which cannot but bring you under the law, to the prejudice of a' that's connected wi' ye?"

"D—n my creditors!" retorted the gallant Galbraith, "and you if ye be ane o' them! I say there will be a new world sune—And we shall hae nae Cawmils cocking their bonnet sae hie, and hounding their dogs where they daurna come themsells, nor protecting thieves, nor murderers, and oppressors, to harry and spoil better men and mair loyal clans than themsells."

The Bailie had a great mind to have continued the dispute, when the savoury vapour of the broiled venison, which our landlady now placed before us, proved so powerful a mediator, that he betook himself to his trencher with great eagerness, leaving the strangers to carry on the dispute among themselves.

"And tat's true," said the taller Highlander—whose name I found was Stewart—"for we suldna be plagued and worried here wi' meetings to pit down Rob Roy, if the Cawmils didna gie him refutch. I was ane o' thirty o' my ain name—part Glenfinlas, and part men that came down frae Appine. We shased the MacGregors as ye wad shase rae-deer, till we came into Glenfalloch's country, and the Cawmils raise, and wadna let us pursue nae farder, and sae we lost our labour; but her wad gie twa and a plack to be as near Rob as she was tat day."

It seemed to happen very unfortunately, that in every topic of discourse which these warlike gentlemen introduced, my friend the Bailie found some matter of offence. "Ye'll forgie me speaking my mind, sir; but ye wad maybe hae gien the best bowl in your bonnet to hae been as far awae frae Rob as ye are e'en now—Od! my het pleugh-culter wad hae been naething to his claymore."

"She had better speak nae mair about her culter, or, by G—! her will gar her eat her words, and twa handfuls o' cauld steel to drive them ower wi'!" And, with a most inauspicious and menacing look, the mountaineer laid his hand on his dagger.

"We'll hae nae quarrelling, Allan," said his shorter companion; "and if the Glasgow gentleman has ony regard for Rob Roy, he'll maybe see him in cauld irons the night, and playing tricks on a tow the morn; for this country has been owre lang plagued wi' him, and his race is near-hand run—And it's time, Allan, we were ganging to our lads."

"Hout awa, Inverashalloch," said Galbraith;—"Mind the auld saw, man— It's a bauld moon, quoth Bennygask—another pint, quoth Lesley;—we'll no start for another chappin."

"I hae had chappins enugh," said Inverashalloch; "I'll drink my quart of usquebaugh or brandy wi' ony honest fellow, but the deil a drap mair when I hae wark to do in the morning. And, in my puir thinking, Garschattachin, ye had better be thinking to bring up your horsemen to the Clachan before day, that we may ay start fair."

"What the deevil are ye in sic a hurry for?" said Garschattachin; "meat and mass never hindered wark. An it had been my directing, deil a bit o' me wad hae fashed ye to come down the glens to help us. The garrison and our ain horse could hae taen Rob Roy easily enough. There's the hand," he said, holding up his own, "should lay him on the green, and never ask a Hielandman o' ye a' for his help."

"Ye might hae loot us bide still where we were, then," said Inverashalloch. "I didna come sixty miles without being sent for. But an ye'll hae my opinion, I redd ye keep your mouth better steekit, if ye hope to speed. Shored folk live lang, and sae may him ye ken o'. The way to catch a bird is no to fling your bannet at her. And also thae gentlemen hae heard some things they suldna hae heard, an the brandy hadna been ower bauld for your brain, Major Galbraith. Ye needna cock your hat and bully wi' me, man, for I will not bear it."

"I hae said it," said Galbraith, with a solemn air of drunken gravity, "that I will quarrel no more this night either with broadcloth or tartan. When I am off duty I'll quarrel with you or ony man in the Hiелands or Lowlands, but not on duty—no—no. I wish we heard o' these red-coats. If it had been to do onything against King James, we wad hae seen them lang syne—but when it's to keep the peace o' the country they can lie as lound as their neighbours."

As he spoke we heard the measured footsteps of a body of infantry on the march; and an officer, followed by two or three files of soldiers, entered the apartment. He spoke in an English accent, which was very pleasant to my ears, now so long accustomed to the varying brogue of the Highland and Lowland Scotch.—"You are, I suppose, Major Galbraith, of the squadron of Lennox Militia, and these are the two Highland gentlemen with whom I was appointed to meet in this place?"

They assented, and invited the officer to take some refreshments, which he declined.—"I have been too late, gentlemen, and am desirous to make up time. I have orders to search for and arrest two persons guilty of treasonable practices."

"We'll wash our hands o' that," said Inverashalloch. "I came here wi' my men to fight against the red MacGregor that killed my cousin, seven times removed, Duncan MacLaren, in Invernenty,* but I will hae nothing to do touching honest gentlemen that may be gaun through the country on their ain business."

* This, as appears from the introductory matter to this Tale, is an anachronism. The slaughter of MacLaren, a retainer of the chief of Appine, by the MacGregors, did not take place till after Rob Roy's death, since it happened in 1736.

"Nor I neither," said Iverach.

Major Galbraith took up the matter more solemnly, and, premising his oration with a hiccup, spoke to the following purpose:—

"I shall say nothing against King George, Captain, because, as it happens, my commission may rin in his name—But one commission being good, sir, does not make another bad; and some think that James may be just as good a name as George. There's the king that is—and there's the king that suld of right be—I say, an honest man may and suld be loyal to them both, Captain. But I am of the Lord Lieutenant's opinion for the time, as it becomes a militia officer and a depute-lieutenant—and about treason and all that, it's lost time to speak of it—least said is sunest mended."

"I am sorry to see how you have been employing your time, sir," replied the English officer—as indeed the honest gentleman's reasoning had a strong relish of the liquor he had been drinking—"and I could wish, sir, it had been otherwise on an occasion of this consequence. I would recommend to you to try to sleep for an hour.—Do these gentlemen belong to your party?"—looking at the Bailie and me, who, engaged in eating our supper, had paid little attention to the officer on his entrance.

"Travellers, sir," said Galbraith—"lawful travellers by sea and land, as the prayer-book hath it."

"My instructions," said the Captain, taking a light to survey us closer, "are to place under arrest an elderly and a young person—and I think these gentlemen answer nearly the description."

"Take care what you say, sir," said Mr. Jarvie; "it shall not be your red coat nor your laced hat shall protect you, if you put any affront on me. I'se convene ye baith in an action of scandal and false imprisonment—I am a free burgess and a magistrate o' Glasgow; Nicol Jarvie is my name, sae was my father's afore me—I am a bailie, be praised for the honour, and my father was a deacon."

"He was a prick-eared cur," said Major Galbraith, "and fought agane the King at Bothwell Brigg."

"He paid what he ought and what he bought, Mr. Galbraith," said the Bailie, "and was an honestest man than ever stude on your shanks."

"I have no time to attend to all this," said the officer; "I must positively detain you, gentlemen, unless you can produce some respectable security that you are loyal subjects."

"I desire to be carried before some civil magistrate," said the Bailie—"the sherra or the judge of the bounds;—I am not obliged to answer every red-coat that speers questions at me."

"Well, sir, I shall know how to manage you if you are silent—And you, sir" (to me), "what may your name be?"

"Francis Osbaldistone, sir."

"What, a son of Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone of Northumberland?"

"No, sir," interrupted the Bailie; "a son of the great William Osbaldistone of the House of Osbaldistone and Tresham, Crane-Alley, London."

"I am afraid, sir," said the officer, "your name only increases the suspicions against you, and lays me under the necessity of requesting that you will give up what papers you have in charge."

I observed the Highlanders look anxiously at each other when this proposal was made.

"I had none," I replied, "to surrender."

The officer commanded me to be disarmed and searched. To have resisted would have been madness. I accordingly gave up my arms, and submitted to a search, which was conducted as civilly as an operation of the kind well could. They found nothing except the note which I had received that night through the hand of the landlady.

"This is different from what I expected," said the officer; "but it affords us good grounds for detaining you. Here I find you in written communication with the outlawed robber, Robert MacGregor Campbell, who has been so long the plague of this district—How do you account for that?"

"Spies of Rob!" said Inverashalloch. "We wad serve them right to strap them up till the neist tree."

"We are gaun to see after some gear o' our ain, gentlemen," said the Bailie, "that's fa'en into his hands by accident—there's nae law agane a man looking after his ain, I hope?"

"How did you come by this letter?" said the officer, addressing himself to me.

I could not think of betraying the poor woman who had given it to me, and remained silent.

"Do you know anything of it, fellow?" said the officer, looking at Andrew, whose jaws were chattering like a pair of castanets at the threats thrown out by the Highlander.

"O ay, I ken a' about it—it was a Hieland loon gied the letter to that lang-tongued jaud the gudewife there; I'll be sworn my maister ken'd naething about it. But he's wilfu' to gang up the hills and speak wi' Rob; and oh, sir, it wad be a charity just to send a wheen o' your red-coats to see him safe back to Glasgow again whether he will or no—And ye can keep Mr. Jarvie as lang as ye like—He's responsible enough for ony fine ye may lay on him—and so's my master for that matter; for me, I'm just a puir gardener lad, and no worth your steering."

"I believe," said the officer, "the best thing I can do is to send these persons to the garrison under an escort. They seem to be in immediate correspondence with the enemy, and I shall be in no respect answerable for suffering them to be at liberty. Gentlemen, you will consider yourselves as my prisoners. So soon as dawn approaches, I will send you to a place of security. If you be the persons you describe yourselves, it will soon appear, and you will sustain no great inconvenience from being detained a day or two. I can hear no remonstrances," he continued, turning away from the Bailie, whose mouth was open to address him; "the service I am on gives me no time for idle discussions."

"Aweel, aweel, sir," said the Bailie, "you're welcome to a tune on your ain fiddle; but see if I dinna gar ye dance till't afore a's dune."

An anxious consultation now took place between the officer and the Highlanders, but carried on in so low a tone, that it was impossible to catch the sense. So soon as it was concluded they all left the house. At their departure, the Bailie thus expressed himself:—"Thae Hielandmen are o' the westland clans, and just as light-handed as their neighbours, an a' tales be true, and yet ye see they hae brought them frae the head o' Argyleshire to make war wi' puir Rob for some auld ill-will that they hae at him and his sirname. And there's the Grahames, and the Buchanans, and the Lennox gentry, a' mounted and in order—It's weel ken'd their quarrel; and I dinna blame them—naebody likes to lose his kye. And then there's sodgers, puir things, hoyed out frae the garrison at a' body's bidding—Puir Rob will hae his hands fu' by the time the sun comes ower the hill. Weel—it's wrang for a magistrate to be wishing anything agane the course o' justice, but deil o' me an I wad break my heart to hear that Rob had gien them a' their paiks!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

—General,

Hear me, and mark me well, and look upon me

Directly in my face—my woman's face—

See if one fear, one shadow of a terror,

One paleness dare appear, but from my anger,

To lay hold on your mercies.

Bonduca.

We were permitted to slumber out the remainder of the night in the best manner that the miserable accommodations of the alehouse permitted. The Bailie, fatigued with his journey and the subsequent scenes—less interested also in the event of our arrest, which to him could only be a matter of temporary inconvenience—perhaps less nice than habit had rendered me about the cleanliness or decency of his couch,—tumbled himself into one of the cribs which I have already described, and soon was heard to snore soundly. A broken sleep, snatched by intervals, while I rested my head upon the table, was my only refreshment. In the course of the night I had occasion to observe that there seemed to be some doubt and hesitation in the motions of the soldiery. Men were sent out, as if to obtain intelligence, and returned apparently without bringing any satisfactory information to their commanding officer. He was obviously eager and anxious, and again despatched small parties of two or three men, some of whom, as I could understand from what the others whispered to each other, did not return again to the Clachan.

The morning had broken, when a corporal and two men rushed into the hut, dragging after them, in a sort of triumph, a Highlander, whom I immediately recognised as my acquaintance the ex-turnkey. The Bailie, who started up at the noise with which they entered, immediately made the same discovery, and exclaimed—"Mercy on us! they hae grippit the puir creature Dougal.—Captain, I will put in bail—sufficient bail, for that Dougal creature."

To this offer, dictated undoubtedly by a grateful recollection of the late interference of the Highlander in his behalf, the Captain only answered by requesting Mr. Jarvie to "mind his own affairs, and remember that he was himself for the present a prisoner."

"I take you to witness, Mr. Osbaldistone," said the Bailie, who was probably better acquainted with the process in civil than in military cases, "that he has refused sufficient bail. It's my opinion that the creature Dougal will have a good action of wrongous imprisonment and damages agane him, under the Act seventeen hundred and one, and I'll see the creature righted."

The officer, whose name I understood was Thornton, paying no attention to the Bailie's threats or expostulations, instituted a very close inquiry into Dougal's life and conversation, and compelled him to admit, though with apparent reluctance, the successive facts,—that he knew Rob Roy MacGregor—that he had seen him within these twelve months—within these six months—within this month—within this week; in fine, that he had parted from him only an hour ago. All this detail

came like drops of blood from the prisoner, and was, to all appearance, only extorted by the threat of a halter and the next tree, which Captain Thornton assured him should be his doom, if he did not give direct and special information.

"And now, my friend," said the officer, "you will please inform me how many men your master has with him at present."

Dougal looked in every direction except at the querist, and began to answer, "She canna just be sure about that."

"Look at me, you Highland dog," said the officer, "and remember your life depends on your answer. How many rogues had that outlawed scoundrel with him when you left him?"

"Ou, no aboon sax rogues when I was gane."

"And where are the rest of his banditti?"

"Gane wi' the Lieutenant agane ta westland carles."

"Against the westland clans?" said the Captain. "Umph—that is likely enough; and what rogue's errand were you despatched upon?"

"Just to see what your honour and ta gentlemen red-coats were doing down here at ta Clachan."

"The creature will prove fause-hearted, after a'," said the Bailie, who by this time had planted himself close behind me; "it's lucky I didna pit mysell to expenses anent him."

"And now, my friend," said the Captain, "let us understand each other. You have confessed yourself a spy, and should string up to the next tree—But come, if you will do me one good turn, I will do you another. You, Donald—you shall just, in the way of kindness, carry me and a small party to the place where you left your master, as I wish to speak a few words with him on serious affairs; and I'll let you go about your business, and give you five guineas to boot."

"Oigh! oigh!" exclaimed Dougal, in the extremity of distress and perplexity; "she canna do tat—she canna do tat; she'll rather be hanged."

"Hanged, then, you shall be, my friend" said the officer; "and your blood be upon your own head. Corporal Cramp, do you play Provost-Marshal—away with him!" The corporal had confronted poor Dougal for some time, ostentatiously twisting a piece of cord which he had found in the house into the form of a halter. He now threw it about the culprit's neck, and, with the assistance of two soldiers, had dragged Dougal as far as the door, when, overcome with the terror of immediate death, he exclaimed, "Shentlemans, stops—stops! She'll do his honour's bidding—stops!"

"Awa' wi' the creature!" said the Bailie, "he deserves hanging mair now than ever; awa' wi' him, corporal. Why dinna ye tak him awa'?"

"It's my belief and opinion, honest gentleman," said the corporal, "that if you were going to be hanged yourself, you would be in no such d—d hurry."

This by-dialogue prevented my hearing what passed between the prisoner and Captain Thornton; but I heard the former snivel out, in a very subdued tone, "And ye'll ask her to gang nae farther than just to show ye where the MacGregor is?—Ohon! ohon!"

"Silence your howling, you rascal—No; I give you my word I will ask you to go no farther.—Corporal, make the men fall in, in front of the houses. Get out these gentlemen's horses; we must carry them with us. I cannot spare any men to guard them here. Come, my lads, get under arms."

The soldiers bustled about, and were ready to move. We were led out, along with Dougal, in the capacity of prisoners. As we left the hut, I heard our companion in captivity remind the Captain of "ta foive kuineas."

"Here they are for you," said the officer, putting gold into his hand; "but observe, that if you attempt to mislead me, I will blow your brains out with my own hand."

"The creature," said the Bailie, "is waur than I judged him—it is a worldly and a perfidious creature. O the filthy lucre of gain that men gies themselves up to! My father the deacon used to say, the penny siller slew mair souls than the naked sword slew bodies."

The landlady now approached, and demanded payment of her reckoning, including all that had been quaffed by Major Galbraith and his Highland friends. The English officer remonstrated, but Mrs. MacAlpine declared, if "she hadna trusted to his honour's name being used in their company, she wad never hae drawn them a stoup o' liquor; for Mr. Galbraith, she might see him again, or she might no, but weel did she wot she had sma' chance of seeing her siller—and she was a puir widow, had naething but her custom to rely on."

Captain Thornton put a stop to her remonstrances by paying the charge, which was only a few English shillings, though the amount sounded very formidable in Scottish denominations. The generous officer would have included Mr. Jarvie and me in this general acquittance; but the Bailie, disregarding an intimation from the landlady to "make as muckle of the Inglishers as we could, for they were sure to gie us plague eneugh," went into a formal accounting respecting our share of the reckoning, and paid it accordingly. The Captain took the opportunity to make us some slight apology for detaining us. "If we were loyal and peaceable subjects," he said, "we would not regret being stopt for a day, when it was essential to the king's service; if otherwise, he was acting according to his duty."

We were compelled to accept an apology which it would have served no purpose to refuse, and we sallied out to attend him on his march.

I shall never forget the delightful sensation with which I exchanged the dark, smoky, smothering atmosphere of the Highland hut, in which we had passed the night so uncomfortably, for the refreshing fragrance of the morning air, and the glorious beams of the rising sun, which, from a tabernacle of purple and golden clouds, were darted full on such a scene of natural romance and beauty as had never before greeted my eyes. To the left lay the valley, down which the Forth wandered on its easterly course, surrounding the beautiful detached hill, with all its garland of woods. On the right, amid a profusion of thickets, knolls, and crags, lay the bed of a broad mountain lake, lightly curled into tiny waves by the breath of the morning breeze, each glittering in its course under the influence of the sunbeams. High hills, rocks, and banks, waving with natural forests of birch and oak, formed the borders of this enchanting sheet of water; and, as their leaves rustled to the wind and twinkled in the sun, gave to the depth of solitude a sort of life and vivacity. Man alone seemed to be placed in a state of inferiority, in a scene where all the ordinary features of nature were raised and exalted. The miserable little *bourocks*, as the Bailie termed them, of which about a dozen formed the village called the Clachan of Aberfoil, were composed of loose stones, cemented by clay instead of mortar, and thatched by turfs, laid rudely upon rafters formed of native and unhewn birches and oaks from the woods around. The roofs approached the ground so nearly, that Andrew Fairservice observed we might have ridden over the village the night before, and never found out we were near it, unless our horses' feet had "gane through the riggin'."

From all we could see, Mrs. MacAlpine's house, miserable as were the quarters it afforded, was still by far the best in the hamlet; and I dare say (if my description gives you any curiosity to see it) you will hardly find it much improved at the present day, for the Scotch are not a people who speedily admit innovation, even when it comes in the shape of improvement.*

* Note I. Clachan of Aberfoil.

The inhabitants of these miserable dwellings were disturbed by the noise of our departure; and as our party of about twenty soldiers drew up in rank before marching off, we were reconnoitred by many a beldam from the half-opened door of her cottage. As these sibyls thrust forth their grey heads, imperfectly covered with close caps of flannel, and showed their shrivelled brows, and long skinny arms, with various gestures, shrugs, and muttered expressions in Gaelic addressed to each other, my imagination recurred to the witches of Macbeth, and I imagined I read in the features of these crones the malevolence of the weird sisters. The little children also, who began to crawl forth, some quite naked, and others very imperfectly covered with tatters of tartan stuff, clapped their tiny hands, and grinned at the English soldiers, with an expression of national hate and malignity which seemed beyond their years. I remarked particularly that there were no men, nor so much as a boy of ten or twelve years old, to be seen among the inhabitants of a village which seemed populous in proportion to its extent; and the idea certainly occurred to me, that we were likely to receive from them, in the course of our journey, more effectual tokens of ill-will than those which lowered on the visages, and dictated the murmurs, of the women and children. It was not until we commenced our march that the malignity of the elder persons of the community broke forth into expressions. The last file of men had left the village, to pursue a small broken track, formed by the sledges in which the natives transported their peats and turfs, and which led through the woods that fringed the lower end of the lake, when a shrilly sound of female exclamation broke forth, mixed with the screams of children, the whooping of boys, and the clapping of hands, with which the Highland dames enforce their notes, whether of rage or lamentation. I asked Andrew, who looked as pale as death, what all this meant.

"I doubt we'll ken that ower sune," said he. "Means? It means that the Highland wives are cursing and banning the red-coats, and wishing ill-luck to them, and ilka ane that ever spoke the Saxon tongue. I have heard wives flyte in England and Scotland—it's nae marvel to hear them flyte ony gate; but sic ill-scrapit tongues as

thae Highland carlines'—and sic grewsome wishes, that men should be slaughtered like sheep—and that they may lapper their hands to the elbows in their heart's blude—and that they suld dee the death of Walter Cuming of Guiyock,* wha hadna as muckle o' him left thegither as would supper a messan-dog—sic awsome language as that I ne'er heard out o' a human thrapple;—and, unless the deil wad rise amang them to gie them a lesson, I thinkna that their talent at cursing could be amended.

* A great feudal oppressor, who, riding on some cruel purpose through the forest of Guiyock, was thrown from his horse, and his foot being caught in the stirrup, was dragged along by the frightened animal till he was torn to pieces. The expression, "Walter of Guiyock's curse," is proverbial.

The warst o't is, they bid us aye gang up the loch, and see what we'll land in."

Adding Andrew's information to what I had myself observed, I could scarce doubt that some attack was meditated upon our party. The road, as we advanced, seemed to afford every facility for such an unpleasant interruption. At first it winded apart from the lake through marshy meadow ground, overgrown with copsewood, now traversing dark and close thickets which would have admitted an ambuscade to be sheltered within a few yards of our line of march, and frequently crossing rough mountain torrents, some of which took the soldiers up to the knees, and ran with such violence, that their force could only be stemmed by the strength of two or three men holding fast by each other's arms. It certainly appeared to me, though altogether unacquainted with military affairs, that a sort of half-savage warriors, as I had heard the Highlanders asserted to be, might, in such passes as these, attack a party of regular forces with great advantage. The Bailie's good sense and shrewd observation had led him to the same conclusion, as I understood from his requesting to speak with the captain, whom he addressed nearly in the following terms:—"Captain, it's no to fleech ony favour out o' ye, for I scorn it—and it's under protest that I reserve my action and pleas of oppression and wrongous imprisonment;—but, being a friend to King George and his army, I take the liberty to speer—Dinna ye think ye might tak a better time to gang up this glen? If ye are seeking Rob Roy, he's ken'd to be better than half a hunder men strong when he's at the fewest; an if he brings in the Glengyle folk, and the Glenfinlas and Balquhider lads, he may come to gie you your kail through the reek; and it's my sincere advice, as a king's friend, ye had better tak back again to the Clachan, for thae women at Aberfoil are like the scarts and seamaws at the Cumries—there's aye foul weather follows their skirting."

"Make yourself easy, sir," replied Captain Thornton; "I am in the execution of my orders. And as you say you are a friend to King George, you will be glad to learn that it is impossible that this gang of ruffians, whose license has disturbed the country so long, can escape the measures now taken to suppress them. The horse squadron of militia, commanded by Major Galbraith, is already joined by two or more troops of cavalry, which will occupy all the lower passes of this wild country; three hundred Highlanders, under the two gentlemen you saw at the inn, are in possession of the upper part, and various strong parties from the garrison are securing the hills and glens in different directions. Our last accounts of Rob Roy correspond with what this fellow has confessed, that, finding himself surrounded on all sides, he had dismissed the greater part of his followers, with the purpose either of lying concealed, or of making his escape through his superior knowledge of the passes."

"I dinna ken," said the Bailie; "there's mair brandy than brains in Garschattachin's head this morning—And I wadna, an I were you, Captain, rest my main dependance on the Hielandmen—hawks winna pike out hawks' een. They may quarrel among themsells, and gie ilk ither ill names, and maybe a slash wi' a claymore; but they are sure to join in the lang run, against a' civilised folk, that wear breeks on their hinder ends, and hae purses in their pouches."

Apparently these admonitions were not altogether thrown away on Captain Thornton. He reformed his line of march, commanded his soldiers to unsling their firelocks and fix their bayonets, and formed an advanced and rear-guard, each consisting of a non-commissioned officer and two soldiers, who received strict orders to keep an alert look-out. Dougal underwent another and very close examination, in which he steadfastly asserted the truth of what he had before affirmed; and being rebuked on account of the suspicious and dangerous appearance of the route by which he was guiding them, he answered with a sort of testiness that seemed very natural, "Her nainsell didna mak ta road; an shentlemans likit grand roads, she suld hae pided at Glasco."

All this passed off well enough, and we resumed our progress.

Our route, though leading towards the lake, had hitherto been so much shaded by wood, that we only from time to time obtained a glimpse of that beautiful sheet of water. But the road now suddenly emerged from the forest ground, and, winding close by the margin of the loch, afforded us a full view of its spacious mirror, which now, the breeze having totally subsided, reflected in still magnificence the high dark heathy mountains, huge grey rocks, and shaggy banks, by which it is encircled. The hills now sunk on its margin so closely, and were so broken and precipitous, as to afford no passage except just upon the narrow line of the track which we occupied, and which was overhung with rocks, from which we might have been destroyed merely by rolling down stones, without much possibility of offering resistance. Add to this, that, as the road winded round every promontory and bay which indented the lake, there was rarely a possibility of seeing a hundred yards before us. Our commander appeared to take some alarm at the nature of the pass in which he was engaged, which displayed itself in repeated orders to his soldiers to be on the alert, and in many threats of instant death to Dougal, if he should be found to have led them into danger. Dougal received these threats with an air of stupid impenetrability, which might arise either from conscious innocence, or from dogged resolution.

"If shentlemans were seeking ta Red Gregarach," he said, "to be sure they couldna expect to find her without some wee danger."

Just as the Highlander uttered these words, a halt was made by the corporal commanding the advance, who sent back one of the file who formed it, to tell the Captain that the path in front was occupied by Highlanders, stationed on a commanding point of particular difficulty. Almost at the same instant a soldier from the rear came to say, that they heard the sound of a bagpipe in the woods through which we had just passed. Captain Thornton, a man of conduct as well as courage, instantly resolved to force the pass in front, without waiting till he was assailed from the rear; and, assuring his soldiers that the bagpipes which they heard were those of the friendly Highlanders who were advancing to their assistance, he stated to them the importance of advancing and securing Rob Roy, if possible, before these auxiliaries should come up to divide with them the honour, as well as the reward which was placed on the head of this celebrated freebooter. He therefore ordered the rearguard to join the centre, and both to close up to the advance, doubling his files so as to occupy with his column the whole practicable part of the road, and to present such a front as its breadth admitted. Dougal, to whom he said in a whisper, "You dog, if you have deceived me, you shall die for it!" was placed in the centre, between two grenadiers, with positive orders to shoot him if he attempted an escape. The same situation was assigned to us, as being the safest, and Captain Thornton, taking his half-pike from the soldier who carried it, placed himself at the head of his little detachment, and gave the word to march forward.

The party advanced with the firmness of English soldiers. Not so Andrew Fairservice, who was frightened out of his wits; and not so, if truth must be told, either the Bailie or I myself, who, without feeling the same degree of trepidation, could not with stoical indifference see our lives exposed to hazard in a quarrel with which we had no concern. But there was neither time for remonstrance nor remedy.

We approached within about twenty yards of the spot where the advanced guard had seen some appearance of an enemy. It was one of those promontories which run into the lake, and round the base of which the road had hitherto winded in the manner I have described. In the present case, however, the path, instead of keeping the water's edge, sealed the promontory by one or two rapid zigzags, carried in a broken track along the precipitous face of a slaty grey rock, which would otherwise have been absolutely inaccessible. On the top of this rock, only to be approached by a road so broken, so narrow, and so precarious, the corporal declared he had seen the bonnets and long-barrelled guns of several mountaineers, apparently couched among the long heath and brushwood which crested the eminence. Captain Thornton ordered him to move forward with three files, to dislodge the supposed ambuscade, while, at a more slow but steady pace, he advanced to his support with the rest of his party.

The attack which he meditated was prevented by the unexpected apparition of a female upon the summit of the rock.

"Stand!" she said, with a commanding tone, "and tell me what ye seek in MacGregor's country?"

I have seldom seen a finer or more commanding form than this woman. She might be between the term of forty and fifty years, and had a countenance which must once have been of a masculine cast of beauty; though now, imprinted with deep lines by exposure to rough weather, and perhaps by the wasting influence of grief and passion, its features were only strong, harsh, and expressive. She wore her plaid, not drawn around her head and shoulders, as is the fashion of the

women in Scotland, but disposed around her body as the Highland soldiers wear theirs. She had a man's bonnet, with a feather in it, an unsheathed sword in her hand, and a pair of pistols at her girdle.

"It's Helen Campbell, Rob's wife," said the Bailie, in a whisper of considerable alarm; "and there will be broken heads among us or it's lang."

"What seek ye here?" she asked again of Captain Thornton, who had himself advanced to reconnoitre.

"We seek the outlaw, Rob Roy MacGregor Campbell," answered the officer, "and make no war on women; therefore offer no vain opposition to the king's troops, and assure yourself of civil treatment."

"Ay," retorted the Amazon, "I am no stranger to your tender mercies. Ye have left me neither name nor fame—my mother's bones will shrink aside in their grave when mine are laid beside them—Ye have left me neither house nor hold, blanket nor bedding, cattle to feed us, or flocks to clothe us—Ye have taken from us all—all!—The very name of our ancestors have ye taken away, and now ye come for our lives."

"I seek no man's life," replied the Captain; "I only execute my orders. If you are alone, good woman, you have nought to fear—if there are any with you so rash as to offer useless resistance, their own blood be on their own heads. Move forward, sergeant."

"Forward! march!" said the non-commissioned officer. "Huzza, my boys, for Rob Roy's head and a purse of gold."

He quickened his pace into a run, followed by the six soldiers; but as they attained the first traverse of the ascent, the flash of a dozen of firelocks from various parts of the pass parted in quick succession and deliberate aim. The sergeant, shot through the body, still struggled to gain the ascent, raised himself by his hands to clamber up the face of the rock, but relaxed his grasp, after a desperate effort, and falling, rolled from the face of the cliff into the deep lake, where he perished. Of the soldiers, three fell, slain or disabled; the others retreated on their main body, all more or less wounded.

"Grenadiers, to the front!" said Captain Thornton.—You are to recollect, that in those days this description of soldiers actually carried that destructive species of firework from which they derive their name. The four grenadiers moved to the front accordingly. The officer commanded the rest of the party to be ready to support them, and only saying to us, "Look to your safety, gentlemen," gave, in rapid succession, the word to the grenadiers—"Open your pouches—handle your grenades—blow your matches—fall on."

The whole advanced with a shout, headed by Captain Thornton,—the grenadiers preparing to throw their grenades among the bushes where the ambuscade lay, and the musketeers to support them by an instant and close assault. Dougal, forgotten in the scuffle, wisely crept into the thicket which overhung that part of the road where we had first halted, which he ascended with the activity of a wild cat. I followed his example, instinctively recollecting that the fire of the Highlanders would sweep the open track. I clambered until out of breath; for a continued spattering fire, in which every shot was multiplied by a thousand echoes, the hissing of the kindled fusees of the grenades, and the successive explosion of those missiles, mingled with the huzzas of the soldiers, and the yells and cries of their Highland antagonists, formed a contrast which added—I do not shame to own it—wings to my desire to reach a place of safety. The difficulties of the ascent soon increased so much, that I despaired of reaching Dougal, who seemed to swing himself from rock to rock, and stump to stump, with the facility of a squirrel, and I turned down my eyes to see what had become of my other companions. Both were brought to a very awkward standstill.

The Bailie, to whom I suppose fear had given a temporary share of agility, had ascended about twenty feet from the path, when his foot slipping, as he straddled from one huge fragment of rock to another, he would have slumbered with his father the deacon, whose acts and words he was so fond of quoting, but for a projecting branch of a ragged thorn, which, catching hold of the skirts of his riding-coat, supported him in mid-air, where he dangled not unlike to the sign of the Golden Fleece over the door of a mercer in the Trongate of his native city.

As for Andrew Fairservice, he had advanced with better success, until he had attained the top of a bare cliff, which, rising above the wood, exposed him, at least in his own opinion, to all the dangers of the neighbouring skirmish, while, at the same time, it was of such a precipitous and impracticable nature, that he dared neither to advance nor retreat. Footing it up and down upon the narrow space which the top of the cliff afforded (very like a fellow at a country-fair dancing upon a trencher), he roared for mercy in Gaelic and English alternately, according to the side on which the scale of victory seemed to predominate, while his exclamations were only answered by the groans of the Bailie, who suffered much, not only from apprehension, but from the pendulous posture in which he hung suspended by the loins.

On perceiving the Bailie's precarious situation, my first idea was to attempt to render him assistance; but this was impossible without the concurrence of Andrew, whom neither sign, nor entreaty, nor command, nor expostulation, could inspire with courage to adventure the descent from his painful elevation, where, like an unskilful and obnoxious minister of state, unable to escape from the eminence to which he had presumptuously ascended, he continued to pour forth piteous prayers for mercy, which no one heard, and to skip to and fro, writhing his body into all possible antic shapes to avoid the balls which he conceived to be whistling around him.

In a few minutes this cause of terror ceased, for the fire, at first so well sustained, now sunk at once—a sure sign that the conflict was concluded. To gain some spot from which I could see how the day had gone was now my object, in order to appeal to the mercy of the victors, who, I trusted (whichever side might be gainers), would not suffer the honest Bailie to remain suspended, like the coffin of Mahomet, between heaven and earth, without lending a hand to disengage him. At length, by dint of scrambling, I found a spot which commanded a view of the field of battle. It was indeed ended; and, as my mind already augured, from the place and circumstances attending the contest, it had terminated in the defeat of Captain Thornton. I saw a party of Highlanders in the act of disarming that officer, and the scanty remainder of his party. They consisted of about twelve men most of whom were wounded, who, surrounded by treble their number, and without the power either to advance or retreat, exposed to a murderous and well-aimed fire, which they had no means of returning with effect, had at length laid down their arms by the order of their officer, when he saw that the road in his rear was occupied, and that protracted resistance would be only wasting the lives of his brave followers. By the Highlanders, who fought under cover, the victory was cheaply bought, at the expense of one man slain and two wounded by the grenades. All this I learned afterwards. At present I only comprehended the general result of the day, from seeing the English officer, whose face was covered with blood, stripped of his hat and arms, and his men, with sullen and dejected countenances which marked their deep regret, enduring, from the wild and martial figures who surrounded them, the severe measures to which the laws of war subject the vanquished for security of the victors.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

*"Woe to the vanquished!" was stern Brenno's word,
When sunk proud Rome beneath the Gallic sword—
"Woe to the vanquished!" when his massive blade
Bore down the scale against her ransom weigh'd;
And on the field of foughten battle still,
Woe knows no limits save the victor's will.*

The Gaulliad.

I anxiously endeavoured to distinguish Dougal among the victors. I had little doubt that the part he had played was assumed, on purpose to lead the English officer into the defile, and I could not help admiring the address with which the ignorant, and apparently half-brutal savage, had veiled his purpose, and the affected reluctance with which he had suffered to be extracted from him the false information which it must have been his purpose from the beginning to communicate. I foresaw we should incur some danger on approaching the victors in the first flush of their success, which was not unstained with cruelty; for one or two of the soldiers, whose wounds prevented them from rising, were poniarded by the victors, or rather by some ragged Highland boys who had mingled with

them. I concluded, therefore, it would be unsafe to present ourselves without some mediator; and as Campbell, whom I now could not but identify with the celebrated freebooter Rob Roy, was nowhere to be seen, I resolved to claim the protection of his emissary, Dougal.

After gazing everywhere in vain, I at length retraced my steps to see what assistance I could individually render to my unlucky friend, when, to my great joy, I saw Mr. Jarvie delivered from his state of suspense; and though very black in the face, and much deranged in the garments, safely seated beneath the rock, in front of which he had been so lately suspended. I hastened to join him and offer my congratulations, which he was at first far from receiving in the spirit of cordiality with which they were offered. A heavy fit of coughing scarce permitted him breath enough to express the broken hints which he threw out against my sincerity.

"Uh! uh! uh! uh!—they say a friend—uh! uh!—a friend sticketh closer than a brither—uh! uh! uh! When I came up here, Maister Osbaldistone, to this country, cursed of God and man—uh! uh—Heaven forgie me for swearing—on nae man's errand but yours, d'ye think it was fair—uh! uh! uh!—to leave me, first, to be shot or drowned atween red-wad Highlanders and red-coats; and next to be hung up between heaven and earth, like an auld potato-bogle, without sae muckle as trying—uh! uh!—sae muckle as trying to relieve me?"

I made a thousand apologies, and laboured so hard to represent the impossibility of my affording him relief by my own unassisted exertions, that at length I succeeded, and the Bailie, who was as placable as hasty in his temper, extended his favour to me once more. I next took the liberty of asking him how he had contrived to extricate himself.

"Me extricate! I might hae hung there till the day of judgment or I could hae helped mysell, wi' my head hinging down on the tae side, and my heels on the tother, like the yarn-scales in the weigh-house. It was the creature Dougal that extricated me, as he did yestreen; he cuttit aff the tails o' my coat wi' his durk, and another gillie and him set me on my legs as cleverly as if I had never been aff them. But to see what a thing gude braid claieth is! Had I been in ony o' your rotten French camlets now, or your drab-de-berries, it would hae screeded like an auld rag wi' sic a weight as mine. But fair fa' the weaver that wrought the weft o't—I swung and bobbit yonder as safe as a gabbart* that's moored by a three-ply cable at the Broomielaw."

* A kind of lighter used in the river Clyde,—probably from the French * *abare*.

I now inquired what had become of his preserver.

"The creature," so he continued to call the Highlandman, "contrived to let me ken there wad be danger in gaun near the leddy till he came back, and bade me stay here. I am o' the mind," he continued, "that he's seeking after you—it's a considerate creature—and troth, I wad swear he was right about the leddy, as he ca's her, too—Helen Campbell was nane o' the maist douce maidens, nor meekest wives neither, and folk say that Rob himsell stands in awe o' her. I doubt she winna ken me, for it's mony years since we met—I am clear for waiting for the Dougal creature or we gang near her."

I signified my acquiescence in this reasoning; but it was not the will of fate that day that the Bailie's prudence should profit himself or any one else.

Andrew Fairservice, though he had ceased to caper on the pinnacle upon the cessation of the firing, which had given occasion for his whimsical exercise, continued, as perched on the top of an exposed cliff, too conspicuous an object to escape the sharp eyes of the Highlanders, when they had time to look a little around them. We were apprized he was discovered, by a wild and loud halloo set up among the assembled victors, three or four of whom instantly plunged into the copsewood, and ascended the rocky side of the hill in different directions towards the place where they had discovered this whimsical apparition.

Those who arrived first within gunshot of poor Andrew, did not trouble themselves to offer him any assistance in the ticklish posture of his affairs, but levelling their long Spanish-barrelled guns, gave him to understand, by signs which admitted of no misconception, that he must contrive to come down and submit himself to their mercy, or to be marked at from beneath, like a regimental target set up for ball-practice. With such a formidable hint for venturous exertion, Andrew Fairservice could no longer hesitate; the more imminent peril overcame his sense of that which seemed less inevitable, and he began to descend the cliff at all risks, clutching to the ivy and oak stumps, and projecting fragments of rock, with an almost feverish anxiety, and never failing, as circumstances left him a hand at liberty, to extend it to the plaided gentry below in an attitude of supplication, as if to deprecate the discharge of their levelled firearms. In a word, the fellow, under the influence of a counteracting motive for terror, achieved a safe descent from his perilous eminence, which, I verily believe, nothing but the fear of instant death could have moved him to attempt. The awkward mode of Andrew's descent greatly amused the Highlanders below, who fired a shot or two while he was engaged in it, without the purpose of injuring him, as I believe, but merely to enhance the amusement they derived from his extreme terror, and the superlative exertions of agility to which it excited him.

At length he attained firm and comparatively level ground—or rather, to speak more correctly, his foot slipping at the last point of descent, he fell on the earth at his full length, and was raised by the assistance of the Highlanders, who stood to receive him, and who, ere he gained his legs, stripped him not only of the whole contents of his pockets, but of periwig, hat, coat, doublet, stockings, and shoes, performing the feat with such admirable celerity, that, although he fell on his back a well-clothed and decent burgher-seeming serving-man, he arose a forked, uncased, bald-pated, beggarly-looking scarecrow. Without respect to the pain which his undefended toes experienced from the sharp encounter of the rocks over which they hurried him, those who had detected Andrew proceeded to drag him downward towards the road through all the intervening obstacles.

In the course of their descent, Mr. Jarvie and I became exposed to their lynx-eyed observation, and instantly half-a-dozen of armed Highlanders thronged around us, with drawn dirks and swords pointed at our faces and throats, and cocked pistols presented against our bodies. To have offered resistance would have been madness, especially as we had no weapons capable of supporting such a demonstration. We therefore submitted to our fate; and with great roughness on the part of those who assisted at our toilette, were in the act of being reduced to as unsophisticated a state (to use King Lear's phrase) as the plume-less biped Andrew Fairservice, who stood shivering between fear and cold at a few yards' distance. Good chance, however, saved us from this extremity of wretchedness; for, just as I had yielded up my cravat (a smart Steinkirk, by the way, and richly laced), and the Bailie had been disrobed of the fragments of his riding-coat—enter Dougal, and the scene was changed. By a high tone of expostulation, mixed with oaths and threats, as far as I could conjecture the tenor of his language from the violence of his gestures, he compelled the plunderers, however reluctant, not only to give up their further depredations on our property, but to restore the spoil they had already appropriated. He snatched my cravat from the fellow who had seized it, and twisted it (in the zeal of his restitution) around my neck with such suffocating energy as made me think that he had not only been, during his residence at Glasgow, a substitute of the jailor, but must moreover have taken lessons as an apprentice of the hangman. He flung the tattered remnants of Mr. Jarvie's coat around his shoulders, and as more Highlanders began to flock towards us from the high road, he led the way downwards, directing and commanding the others to afford us, but particularly the Bailie, the assistance necessary to our descending with comparative ease and safety. It was, however, in vain that Andrew Fairservice employed his lungs in obsecrating a share of Dougal's protection, or at least his interference to procure restoration of his shoes.

"Na, na," said Dougal in reply, "she's nae gentle pody, I trow; her petters hae ganged parefoot, or she's muckle mista'en." And, leaving Andrew to follow at his leisure, or rather at such leisure as the surrounding crowd were pleased to indulge him with, he hurried us down to the pathway in which the skirmish had been fought, and hastened to present us as additional captives to the female leader of his band.

We were dragged before her accordingly, Dougal fighting, struggling, screaming, as if he were the party most apprehensive of hurt, and repulsing, by threats and efforts, all those who attempted to take a nearer interest in our capture than he seemed to do himself. At length we were placed before the heroine of the day, whose appearance, as well as those of the savage, uncouth, yet martial figures who surrounded us, struck me, to own the truth, with considerable apprehension. I do not know if Helen MacGregor had personally mingled in the fray, and indeed I was afterwards given to understand the contrary; but the specks of blood on her brow, her hands and naked arms, as well as on the blade of her sword which she continued to hold in her hand—her flushed countenance, and the disordered state of the raven locks which escaped from under the red bonnet and plume that formed her head-dress, seemed all to intimate that she had taken an immediate share in the conflict. Her keen black eyes and features expressed an imagination inflamed by the pride of gratified revenge, and the triumph of victory. Yet there was nothing positively sanguinary, or cruel, in her deportment; and she reminded me, when the immediate alarm of the interview was over, of some of the paintings I had seen of the inspired heroines in the Catholic churches of France. She was not, indeed, sufficiently beautiful for a Judith, nor had she the inspired expression of features which painters have given to Deborah, or to the wife of Heber the Kenite, at whose feet the strong oppressor of Israel, who dwelled in

Harosheth of the Gentiles, bowed down, fell, and lay a dead man. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm by which she was agitated gave her countenance and deportment, wildly dignified in themselves, an air which made her approach nearly to the ideas of those wonderful artists who gave to the eye the heroines of Scripture history.

I was uncertain in what terms to accost a personage so uncommon, when Mr. Jarvie, breaking the ice with a preparatory cough (for the speed with which he had been brought into her presence had again impeded his respiration), addressed her as follows:—"Uh! uh! &c. &c. I am very happy to have this *joyful* opportunity" (a quaver in his voice strongly belied the emphasis which he studiously laid on the word joyful)—"this joyful occasion," he resumed, trying to give the adjective a more suitable accentuation, "to wish my kinsman Robin's wife a very good morning—Uh! uh!—How's a' wi' ye?" (by this time he had talked himself into his usual jog-trot manner, which exhibited a mixture of familiarity and self-importance)—"How's a' wi' ye this lang time? Ye'll hae forgotten me, Mrs. MacGregor Campbell, as your cousin—uh! uh!—but ye'll mind my father, Deacon Nicol Jarvie, in the Saut Market o' Glasgow?—an honest man he was, and a sponible, and respectit you and yours. Sae, as I said before, I am right glad to see you, Mrs. MacGregor Campbell, as my kinsman's wife. I wad crave the liberty of a kinsman to salute you, but that your gillies keep such a dolefu' fast haud o' my arms, and, to speak Heaven's truth and a magistrate's, ye wadna be the waur of a cogfu' o' water before ye welcomed your friends."

There was something in the familiarity of this introduction which ill suited the exalted state of temper of the person to whom it was addressed, then busied with distributing dooms of death, and warm from conquest in a perilous encounter.

"What fellow are you," she said, "that dare to claim kindred with the MacGregor, and neither wear his dress nor speak his language?—What are you, that have the tongue and the habit of the hound, and yet seek to lie down with the deer?"

"I dinna ken," said the undaunted Bailie, "if the kindred has ever been weel redd out to you yet, cousin—but it's ken'd, and can be prov'd. My mother, Elspeth MacFarlane, was the wife of my father, Deacon Nicol Jarvie—peace be wi' them baith!—and Elspeth was the daughter of Parlane MacFarlane, at the Sheeling o' Loch Sloy. Now, this Parlane MacFarlane, as his surviving daughter Maggy MacFarlane, *alias* MacNab, wha married Duncan MacNab o' Stuckavrallachan, can testify, stood as near to your gudeman, Robert MacGregor, as in the fourth degree of kindred, for"—

The virago lopped the genealogical tree, by demanding haughtily, "If a stream of rushing water acknowledged any relation with the portion withdrawn from it for the mean domestic uses of those who dwell on its banks?"

"Vera true, kinswoman," said the Bailie; "but for a' that, the burn wad be glad to hae the milldam back again in simmer, when the chuckie-stanes are white in the sun. I ken weel enough you Hieland folk haud us Glasgow people light and cheap for our language and our claes;—but everybody speaks their native tongue that they learned in infancy; and it would be a daft-like thing to see me wi' my fat wame in a short Hieland coat, and my puir short houghs gartered below the knee, like ane o' your lang-legged gillies. Mair by token, kinswoman," he continued, in defiance of various intimations by which Dougal seemed to recommend silence, as well as of the marks of impatience which the Amazon evinced at his loquacity, "I wad hae ye to mind that the king's errand whiles comes in the cadger's gate, and that, for as high as ye may think o' the gudeman, as it's right every wife should honour her husband—there's Scripture warrant for that—yet as high as ye haud him, as I was saying, I hae been serviceable to Rob ere now;—forbye a set o' pearlins I sent yourself when ye was gaun to be married, and when Rob was an honest weel-doing drover, and nane o' this unlawfu' wark, wi' fighting, and flashes, and fluff-gibs, disturbing the king's peace and disarming his soldiers."

He had apparently touched on a key which his kinswoman could not brook. She drew herself up to her full height, and betrayed the acuteness of her feelings by a laugh of mingled scorn and bitterness.

"Yes," she said, "you, and such as you, might claim a relation to us, when we stooped to be the paltry wretches fit to exist under your dominion, as your hewers of wood and drawers of water—to find cattle for your banquets, and subjects for your laws to oppress and trample on. But now we are free—free by the very act which left us neither house nor hearth, food nor covering—which bereaved me of all—of all—and makes me groan when I think I must still cumber the earth for other purposes than those of vengeance. And I will carry on the work, this day has so well commenced, by a deed that shall break all bands between MacGregor and the Lowland churls. Here Allan—Dougal—bind these Sassenachs neck and heel together, and throw them into the Highland Loch to seek for their Highland kinsfolk."

The Bailie, alarmed at this mandate, was commencing an expostulation, which probably would have only inflamed the violent passions of the person whom he addressed, when Dougal threw himself between them, and in his own language, which he spoke with a fluency and rapidity strongly contrasted by the slow, imperfect, and idiot-like manner in which he expressed himself in English, poured forth what I doubt not was a very animated pleading in our behalf.

His mistress replied to him, or rather cut short his harangue, by exclaiming in English (as if determined to make us taste in anticipation the full bitterness of death)—"Base dog, and son of a dog, do you dispute my commands? Should I tell ye to cut out their tongues and put them into each other's throats, to try which would there best knap Southron, or to tear out their hearts and put them into each other's breasts, to see which would there best plot treason against the MacGregor—and such things have been done of old in the day of revenge, when our fathers had wrongs to redress—Should I command you to do this, would it be your part to dispute my orders?"

"To be sure, to be sure," Dougal replied, with accents of profound submission; "her pleasure suld be done—tat's but reason; but an it were—tat is, an it could be thought the same to her to coup the ill-faured loon of ta red-coat Captain, and hims corporal Cramp, and twa three o' the red-coats, into the loch, herself wad do't wi' muckle mair great satisfaction than to hurt ta honest civil shentlemans as were friends to the Gregarach, and came up on the Chiefs assurance, and not to do no treason, as herself could testify."

The lady was about to reply, when a few wild strains of a pibroch were heard advancing up the road from Aberfoil, the same probably which had reached the ears of Captain Thornton's rear-guard, and determined him to force his way onward rather than return to the village, on finding the pass occupied. The skirmish being of very short duration, the armed men who followed this martial melody, had not, although quickening their march when they heard the firing, been able to arrive in time sufficient to take any share in the rencontre. The victory, therefore, was complete without them, and they now arrived only to share in the triumph of their countrymen.

There was a marked difference betwixt the appearance of these new comers and that of the party by which our escort had been defeated—and it was greatly in favour of the former. Among the Highlanders who surrounded the Chieftainess, if I may presume to call her so without offence to grammar, were men in the extremity of age, boys scarce able to bear a sword, and even women—all, in short, whom the last necessity urges to take up arms; and it added a shade of bitter shame to the defection which clouded Thornton's manly countenance, when he found that the numbers and position of a foe, otherwise so despicable, had enabled them to conquer his brave veterans. But the thirty or forty Highlanders who now joined the others, were all men in the prime of youth or manhood, active clean-made fellows, whose short hose and belted plaids set out their sinewy limbs to the best advantage. Their arms were as superior to those of the first party as their dress and appearance. The followers of the female Chief had axes, scythes, and other antique weapons, in aid of their guns; and some had only clubs, daggers, and long knives. But of the second party, most had pistols at the belt, and almost all had dirks hanging at the pouches which they wore in front. Each had a good gun in his hand, and a broadsword by his side, besides a stout round target, made of light wood, covered with leather, and curiously studded with brass, and having a steel spike screwed into the centre. These hung on their left shoulder during a march, or while they were engaged in exchanging fire with the enemy, and were worn on their left arm when they charged with sword in hand.

But it was easy to see that this chosen band had not arrived from a victory such as they found their ill-appointed companions possessed of. The pibroch sent forth occasionally a few wailing notes expressive of a very different sentiment from triumph; and when they appeared before the wife of their Chieftain, it was in silence, and with downcast and melancholy looks. They paused when they approached her, and the pipes again sent forth the same wild and melancholy strain.

Helen rushed towards them with a countenance in which anger was mingled with apprehension.—"What means this, Alaster?" she said to the minstrel—"why a lament in the moment of victory?—Robert—Hamish—where's the MacGregor?—where's your father?"

Her sons, who led the band, advanced with slow and irresolute steps towards her, and murmured a few words in Gaelic, at hearing which she set up a shriek that made the rocks ring again, in which all the women and boys joined, clapping their hands and yelling as if their lives had been expiring in the sound. The mountain echoes, silent since the military sounds of battle had ceased, had now to answer these frantic and discordant shrieks of sorrow, which drove the very night-birds from their haunts in the rocks, as if they were startled to hear orgies more hideous and ill-omened than their own, performed in the face of open day.

"Taken!" repeated Helen, when the clamour had subsided—"Taken!—captive!—and you live to say so?—Coward dogs! did I nurse you for this, that you should spare your blood on your father's enemies? or see him prisoner, and come back to tell it?"

The sons of MacGregor, to whom this expostulation was addressed, were youths, of whom the eldest had hardly attained his twentieth year. *Hamish*, or James, the elder of these youths, was the tallest by a head, and much handsomer than his brother; his light-blue eyes, with a profusion of fair hair, which streamed from under his smart blue bonnet, made his whole appearance a most favourable specimen of the Highland youth. The younger was called Robert; but, to distinguish him from his father, the Highlanders added the epithet *Oig*, or the young. Dark hair, and dark features, with a ruddy glow of health and animation, and a form strong and well-set beyond his years, completed the sketch of the young mountaineer.

Both now stood before their mother with countenances clouded with grief and shame, and listened, with the most respectful submission, to the reproaches with which she loaded them. At length when her resentment appeared in some degree to subside, the eldest, speaking in English, probably that he might not be understood by their followers, endeavoured respectfully to vindicate himself and his brother from his mother's reproaches. I was so near him as to comprehend much of what he said; and, as it was of great consequence to me to be possessed of information in this strange crisis, I failed not to listen as attentively as I could.

"The MacGregor," his son stated, "had been called out upon a trysting with a Lowland hallion, who came with a token from"—he muttered the name very low, but I thought it sounded like my own. "The MacGregor," he said, "accepted of the invitation, but commanded the Saxon who brought the message to be detained, as a hostage that good faith should be observed to him. Accordingly he went to the place of appointment" (which had some wild Highland name that I cannot remember), "attended only by Angus Breck and Little Rory, commanding no one to follow him. Within half an hour Angus Breck came back with the doleful tidings that the MacGregor had been surprised and made prisoner by a party of Lennox militia, under Galbraith of Garschattachin." He added, "that Galbraith, on being threatened by MacGregor, who upon his capture menaced him with retaliation on the person of the hostage, had treated the threat with great contempt, replying, 'Let each side hang his man; we'll hang the thief, and your catherans may hang the gauger, Rob, and the country will be rid of two damned things at once, a wild Highlander and a revenue officer.' Angus Breck, less carefully looked to than his master, contrived to escape from the hands of the captors, after having been in their custody long enough to hear this discussion, and to bring off the news."

"And did you learn this, you false-hearted traitor," said the wife of MacGregor, "and not instantly rush to your father's rescue, to bring him off, or leave your body on the place?"

The young MacGregor modestly replied, by representing the very superior force of the enemy, and stated, that as they made no preparation for leaving the country, he had fallen back up the glen with the purpose of collecting a band sufficient to attempt a rescue with some tolerable chance of success. At length he said, "the militiamen would quarter, he understood, in the neighbouring house of Gartartan, or the old castle in the port of Monteith, or some other stronghold, which, although strong and defensible, was nevertheless capable of being surprised, could they but get enough of men assembled for the purpose."

I understood afterwards that the rest of the freebooter's followers were divided into two strong bands, one destined to watch the remaining garrison of Inversnaid, a party of which, under Captain Thornton, had been defeated; and another to show front to the Highland clans who had united with the regular troops and Lowlanders in this hostile and combined invasion of that mountainous and desolate territory, which lying between the lakes of Loch Lomond, Loch Katrine, and Loch Ard, was at this time currently called Rob Roy's, or the MacGregor country. Messengers were despatched in great haste, to concentrate, as I supposed, their forces, with a view to the purposed attack on the Lowlanders; and the dejection and despair, at first visible on each countenance, gave place to the hope of rescuing their leader, and to the thirst of vengeance. It was under the burning influence of the latter passion that the wife of MacGregor commanded that the hostage exchanged for his safety should be brought into her presence. I believe her sons had kept this unfortunate wretch out of her sight, for fear of the consequences; but if it was so, their humane precaution only postponed his fate. They dragged forward at her summons a wretch already half dead with terror, in whose agonised features I recognised, to my horror and astonishment, my old acquaintance Morris.

He fell prostrate before the female Chief with an effort to clasp her knees, from which she drew back, as if his touch had been pollution, so that all he could do in token of the extremity of his humiliation, was to kiss the hem of her plaid. I never heard entreaties for life poured forth with such agony of spirit. The ecstasy of fear was such, that instead of paralysing his tongue, as on ordinary occasions, it even rendered him eloquent; and, with cheeks pale as ashes, hands compressed in agony, eyes that seemed to be taking their last look of all mortal objects, he protested, with the deepest oaths, his total ignorance of any design on the person of Rob Roy, whom he swore he loved and honoured as his own soul. In the inconsistency of his terror, he said he was but the agent of others, and he muttered the name of Rashleigh. He prayed but for life—for life he would give all he had in the world: it was but life he asked—life, if it were to be prolonged under tortures and privations: he asked only breath, though it should be drawn in the damp of the lowest caverns of their hills.

It is impossible to describe the scorn, the loathing, and contempt, with which the wife of MacGregor regarded this wretched petitioner for the poor boon of existence.

"I could have bid ye live," she said, "had life been to you the same weary and wasting burden that it is to me—that it is to every noble and generous mind. But you—wretch! you could creep through the world unaffected by its various disgraces, its ineffable miseries, its constantly accumulating masses of crime and sorrow: you could live and enjoy yourself, while the noble-minded are betrayed—while nameless and birthless villains tread on the neck of the brave and the long-descended: you could enjoy yourself, like a butcher's dog in the shambles, batten on garbage, while the slaughter of the oldest and best went on around you! This enjoyment you shall not live to partake of!—you shall die, base dog! and that before yon cloud has passed over the sun."

She gave a brief command in Gaelic to her attendants, two of whom seized upon the prostrate suppliant, and hurried him to the brink of a cliff which overhung the flood. He set up the most piercing and dreadful cries that fear ever uttered—I may well term them dreadful, for they haunted my sleep for years afterwards. As the murderers, or executioners, call them as you will, dragged him along, he recognised me even in that moment of horror, and exclaimed, in the last articulate words I ever heard him utter, "Oh, Mr. Osbaldistone, save me!—save me!"

I was so much moved by this horrid spectacle, that, although in momentary expectation of sharing his fate, I did attempt to speak in his behalf, but, as might have been expected, my interference was sternly disregarded. The victim was held fast by some, while others, binding a large heavy stone in a plaid, tied it round his neck, and others again eagerly stripped him of some part of his dress. Half-naked, and thus manacled, they hurled him into the lake, there about twelve feet deep, with a loud halloo of vindictive triumph,—above which, however, his last death-shriek, the yell of mortal agony, was distinctly heard. The heavy burden splashed in the dark-blue waters, and the Highlanders, with their pole-axes and swords, watched an instant to guard, lest, extricating himself from the load to which he was attached, the victim might have struggled to regain the shore. But the knot had been securely bound—the wretched man sunk without effort; the waters, which his fall had disturbed, settled calmly over him, and the unit of that life for which he had pleaded so strongly, was for ever withdrawn from the sum of human existence.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

*And be he safe restored ere evening set,
Or, if there's vengeance in an injured heart,
And power to wreak it in an armed hand,
Your land shall ache for't.*

Old Play.

I know not why it is that a single deed of violence and cruelty affects our nerves more than when these are exercised on a more extended scale. I had seen that day several of my brave countrymen fall in battle: it seemed to me that they met a lot appropriate to humanity, and my bosom, though thrilling with interest, was affected with nothing of that sickening horror with which I beheld the unfortunate Morris put to death without resistance, and in cold blood. I looked at my companion, Mr. Jarvie, whose face reflected the feelings which were painted in mine. Indeed he could not so suppress his horror, but that the words escaped him in a low and broken whisper,—

"I take up my protest against this deed, as a bloody and cruel murder—it is a cursed deed, and God will avenge it in his due way and time."

"Then you do not fear to follow?" said the virago, bending on him a look of death, such as that with which a hawk looks at his prey ere he pounces.

"Kinswoman," said the Bailie, "nae man willingly wad cut short his thread of life before the end o' his pirl was fairly measured off on the yarn-winsles—And I hae muckle to do, an I be spared, in this world—public and private business, as weel that belonging to the magistracy as to my ain particular; and nae doubt I hae some to depend on me, as puir Mattie, wha is an orphan—She's a far-awa' cousin o' the Laird o' Limmerfield. Sae that, laying a' this thegither—skin for skin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for his life."

"And were I to set you at liberty," said the imperious dame, "what name could you give to the drowning of that Saxon dog?"

"Uh! uh!—hem! hem!" said the Bailie, clearing his throat as well as he could, "I suld study to say as little on that score as might be—least said is sunest mended."

"But if you were called on by the courts, as you term them, of justice," she again demanded, "what then would be your answer?"

The Bailie looked this way and that way, like a person who meditates an escape, and then answered in the tone of one who, seeing no means of accomplishing a retreat, determines to stand the brunt of battle—"I see what you are driving me to the wa' about. But I'll tell you't plain, kinswoman,—I behoved just to speak according to my ain conscience; and though your ain gudeman, that I wish had been here for his ain sake and mine, as wool as the puir Hieland creature Dougal, can tell ye that Nicol Jarvie can wink as hard at a friend's failings as onybody, yet I'se tell ye, kinswoman, mine's ne'er be the tongue to belie my thought; and sooner than say that yonder puir wretch was lawfully slaughtered, I wad consent to be laid beside him—though I think ye are the first Hieland woman wad mint sic a doom to her husband's kinsman but four times removed."

It is probable that the tone and firmness assumed by the Bailie in his last speech was better suited to make an impression on the hard heart of his kinswoman than the tone of supplication he had hitherto assumed, as gems can be cut with steel, though they resist softer metals. She commanded us both to be placed before her. "Your name," she said to me, "is Osbaldistone?—the dead dog, whose death you have witnessed, called you so."

"My name *is* Osbaldistone," was my answer.

"Rashleigh, then, I suppose, is your Christian name?" she pursued.

"No,—my name is Francis."

"But you know Rashleigh Osbaldistone," she continued. "He is your brother, if I mistake not,—at least your kinsman and near friend."

"He is my kinsman," I replied, "but not my friend. We were lately engaged together in a rencontre, when we were separated by a person whom I understand to be your husband. My blood is hardly yet dried on his sword, and the wound on my side is yet green. I have little reason to acknowledge him as a friend."

"Then," she replied, "if a stranger to his intrigues, you can go in safety to Garschattachin and his party without fear of being detained, and carry them a message from the wife of the MacGregor?"

I answered that I knew no reasonable cause why the militia gentlemen should detain me; that I had no reason, on my own account, to fear being in their hands; and that if my going on her embassy would act as a protection to my friend and servant, who were here prisoners, "I was ready to set out directly." I took the opportunity to say, "That I had come into this country on her husband's invitation, and his assurance that he would aid me in some important matters in which I was interested; that my companion, Mr. Jarvie, had accompanied me on the same errand."

"And I wish Mr. Jarvie's boots had been fu' o' boiling water when he drew them on for sic a purpose," interrupted the Bailie.

"You may read your father," said Helen MacGregor, turning to her sons, "in what this young Saxon tells us—Wise only when the bonnet is on his head, and the sword is in his hand, he never exchanges the tartan for the broad-cloth, but he runs himself into the miserable intrigues of the Lowlanders, and becomes again, after all he has suffered, their agent—their tool—their slave."

"Add, madam," said I, "and their benefactor."

"Be it so," she said; "for it is the most empty title of them all, since he has uniformly sown benefits to reap a harvest of the most foul ingratitude.—But enough of this. I shall cause you to be guided to the enemy's outposts. Ask for their commander, and deliver him this message from me, Helen MacGregor;—that if they injure a hair of MacGregor's head, and if they do not set him at liberty within the space of twelve hours, there is not a lady in the Lennox but shall before Christmas cry the coronach for them she will be loath to lose,—there is not a farmer but shall sing well-a-wa over a burnt barnyard and an empty byre,—there is not a laird nor heritor shall lay his head on the pillow at night with the assurance of being a live man in the morning,—and, to begin as we are to end, so soon as the term is expired, I will send them this Glasgow Bailie, and this Saxon Captain, and all the rest of my prisoners, each bundled in a plaid, and chopped into as many pieces as there are checks in the tartan."

As she paused in her denunciation, Captain Thornton, who was within hearing, added, with great coolness, "Present my compliments—Captain Thornton's of the Royals, compliments—to the commanding officer, and tell him to do his duty and secure his prisoner, and not waste a thought upon me. If I have been fool enough to have been led into an ambushade by these artful savages, I am wise enough to know how to die for it without disgracing the service. I am only sorry for my poor fellows," he said, "that have fallen into such butcherly hands."

"Whist! whist!" exclaimed the Bailie; "are ye weary o' your life?—Ye'll gie my service to the commanding officer, Mr. Osbaldistone—Bailie Nicol Jarvie's service, a magistrate o' Glasgow, as his father the deacon was before him—and tell him, here are a wheen honest men in great trouble, and like to come to mair; and the best thing he can do for the common good, will be just to let Rob come his wa's up the glen, and nae mair about it. There's been some ill dune here already; but as it has lighted chiefly on the gauger, it winna be muckle worth making a stir about."

With these very opposite injunctions from the parties chiefly interested in the success of my embassy, and with the reiterated charge of the wife of MacGregor to remember and detail every word of her injunctions, I was at length suffered to depart; and Andrew Fairservice, chiefly, I believe, to get rid of his clamorous supplications, was permitted to attend me. Doubtful, however, that I might use my horse as a means of escape from my guides, or desirous to retain a prize of some value, I was given to understand that I was to perform my journey on foot, escorted by Hamish MacGregor, the elder brother, who, with two followers, attended, as well to show me the way, as to reconnoitre the strength and position of the enemy. Dougal had been at first ordered on this party, but he contrived to elude the service, with the purpose, as we afterwards understood, of watching over Mr. Jarvie, whom, according to his wild principles of fidelity, he considered as entitled to his good offices, from having once acted in some measure as his patron or master.

After walking with great rapidity about an hour, we arrived at an eminence covered with brushwood, which gave us a commanding prospect down the valley, and a full view of the post which the militia occupied. Being chiefly cavalry, they had judiciously avoided any attempt to penetrate the pass which had been so unsuccessfully essayed by Captain Thornton. They had taken up their situation with some military skill, on a rising ground in the centre of the little valley of Aberfoil, through which the river Forth winds its earliest course, and which is formed by two ridges of hills, faced with barricades of limestone rock, intermixed with huge masses of breecia, or pebbles imbedded in some softer substance which has hardened around them like mortar; and surrounded by the more lofty mountains in the distance. These ridges, however, left the valley of breadth enough to secure the cavalry from any sudden surprise by the mountaineers and they had stationed sentinels and outposts at proper distances from this main body, in every direction, so that they might secure full time to mount and get under arms upon the least alarm. It was not, indeed, expected at that time, that Highlanders would attack cavalry in an open plain, though late events have shown that they may do so with success.*

* The affairs of Prestonpans and Falkirk are probably alluded to, which * marks the time of writing the Memoirs as subsequent to 1745.

When I first knew the Highlanders, they had almost a superstitious dread of a mounted trooper, the horse being so much more fierce and imposing in his appearance than the little shelties of their own hills, and moreover being trained, as the more ignorant mountaineers believed, to fight with his feet and his teeth. The appearance of the piequeterd horses, feeding in this little vale—the forms of the soldiers, as they sate, stood, or walked, in various groups in the vicinity of the beautiful river, and of the bare yet romantic ranges of rock which hedge in the landscape on either side,—formed a noble foreground; while far to the eastward the eye caught a glance of the lake of Menteith; and Stirling Castle, dimly seen along with the blue and distant line of the Ochil Mountains, closed the scene.

After gazing on this landscape with great earnestness, young MacGregor intimated to me that I was to descend to the station of the militia and execute my errand to their commander,—enjoining me at the same time, with a menacing gesture, neither to inform them who had guided me to that place, nor where I had parted from my escort. Thus tutored, I descended towards the military post, followed by Andrew, who, only retaining his breeches and stockings of the English costume, without a hat, bare-legged, with brogues on his feet, which Dougal had given him out of compassion, and having a tattered plaid to supply the want of all upper garments, looked as if he had been playing the part of a Highland Tom-of-Bedlam. We had not proceeded far before we became visible to one of the videttes, who, riding towards us, presented his carabine and commanded me to stand. I obeyed, and when the soldier came up, desired to be conducted to his commanding-officer. I was immediately brought where a circle of officers, sitting upon the grass, seemed in attendance upon one of superior rank. He wore a cuirass of polished steel, over which were drawn the insignia of the ancient Order of the Thistle. My friend Garschattachin, and many other gentlemen, some in uniform, others in their ordinary dress, but all armed and well attended, seemed to receive their orders from this person of distinction. Many servants in rich liveries, apparently a part of his household, were also in waiting.

Having paid to this nobleman the respect which his rank appeared to demand, I acquainted him that I had been an involuntary witness to the king's soldiers having suffered a defeat from the Highlanders at the pass of Loch-Ard (such I had learned was the name of the place where Mr. Thornton was made prisoner), and that the victors threatened every species of extremity to those who had fallen into their power, as well as to the Low Country in general, unless their Chief, who had that morning been made prisoner, were returned to them uninjured. The Duke (for he whom I addressed was of no lower rank) listened to me with great composure, and then replied, that he should be extremely sorry to expose the unfortunate gentlemen who had been made prisoners to the cruelty of the barbarians into whose hands they had fallen, but that it was folly to suppose that he would deliver up the very author of all these disorders and offences, and so encourage his followers in their license. "You may return to those who sent you," he proceeded, "and inform them, that I shall certainly cause Rob Roy Campbell, whom they call MacGregor, to be executed, by break of day, as an outlaw taken in arms, and deserving death by a thousand acts of violence; that I should be most justly held unworthy of my situation and commission did I act otherwise; that I shall know how to protect the country against their insolent threats of violence; and that if they injure a hair of the head of any of the unfortunate gentlemen whom an unlucky accident has thrown into their power, I will take such ample vengeance, that the very stones of their glens shall sing woe for it this hundred years to come!"

I humbly begged leave to remonstrate respecting the honourable mission imposed on me, and touched upon the obvious danger attending it, when the noble commander replied, "that such being the case, I might send my servant."

"The deil be in my feet," said Andrew, without either having respect to the presence in which he stood, or waiting till I replied—"the deil be in my feet, if I gang my tae's length. Do the folk think I hae another thrapple in my pouch after John Highlandman's sneaked this ane wi' his jockaleg? or that I can dive down at the tae side of a Highland loch and rise at the tother, like a shell-drake? Na, na—ilk ane for himsell, and God for us a'. Folk may just make a page o' their ain age, and serve themsells till their bairns grow up, and gang their ain errands for Andrew. Rob Roy never came near the parish of Dreepdaily, to steal either pippin or pear frae me or mine."

Silencing my follower with some difficulty, I represented to the Duke the great danger Captain Thornton and Mr. Jarvie would certainly be exposed to, and entreated he would make me the bearer of such modified terms as might be the means of saving their lives. I assured him I should decline no danger if I could be of service; but from what I had heard and seen, I had little doubt they would be instantly murdered should the chief of the outlaws suffer death.

The Duke was obviously much affected. "It was a hard case," he said, "and he felt it as such; but he had a paramount duty to perform to the country—Rob Roy must die!"

I own it was not without emotion that I heard this threat of instant death to my acquaintance Campbell, who had so often testified his good-will towards me. Nor was I singular in the feeling, for many of those around the Duke ventured to express themselves in his favour. "It would be more advisable," they said, "to send him to Stirling Castle, and there detain him a close prisoner, as a pledge for the submission and dispersion of his gang. It were a great pity to expose the country to be plundered, which, now that the long nights approached, it would be found very difficult to prevent, since it was impossible to guard every point, and the Highlanders were sure to select those that were left exposed." They added, that there was great hardship in leaving the unfortunate prisoners to the almost certain doom of massacre denounced against them, which no one doubted would be executed in the first burst of revenge.

Garschattachin ventured yet farther, confiding in the honour of the nobleman whom he addressed, although he knew he had particular reasons for disliking their prisoner. "Rob Roy," he said, "though a kittle neighbour to the Low Country, and particularly obnoxious to his Grace, and though he maybe carried the catheran trade farther than ony man o' his day, was an auld-farrand carle, and there might be some means of making him hear reason; whereas his wife and sons were reckless fiends, without either fear or mercy about them, and, at the head of a' his limmer loons, would be a worse plague to the country than ever he had been."

"Pooh! pooh!" replied his Grace, "it is the very sense and cunning of this fellow which has so long maintained his reign—a mere Highland robber would have been put down in as many weeks as he has flourished years. His gang, without him, is no more to be dreaded as a permanent annoyance—it will no longer exist—than a wasp without its head, which may sting once perhaps, but is instantly crushed into annihilation."

Garschattachin was not so easily silenced. "I am sure, my Lord Duke," he replied, "I have no favour for Rob, and he as little for me, seeing he has twice cleaned out my ain byres, beside skaith among my tenants; but, however"—

"But, however, Garschattachin," said the Duke, with a smile of peculiar expression, "I fancy you think such a freedom may be pardoned in a friend's friend, and Rob's supposed to be no enemy to Major Galbraith's friends over the water."

"If it be so, my lord," said Garschattachin, in the same tone of jocularly, "it's no the warst thing I have heard of him. But I wish we heard some news from the clans, that we have waited for sae lang. I vow to God they'll keep a Hielandman's word wi' us—I never ken'd them better—it's ill drawing boots upon trows."

"I cannot believe it," said the Duke. "These gentlemen are known to be men of honour, and I must necessarily suppose they are to keep their appointment. Send out two more horse-men to look for our friends. We cannot, till their arrival, pretend to attack the pass where Captain Thornton has suffered himself to be surprised, and which, to my knowledge, ten men on foot might make good against a regiment of the best horse in Europe—Meanwhile let refreshments be given to the men."

I had the benefit of this last order, the more necessary and acceptable, as I had tasted nothing since our hasty meal at Aberfoil the evening before. The videttes who had been despatched returned without tidings of the expected auxiliaries, and sunset was approaching, when a Highlander belonging to the clans whose co-operation was expected, appeared as the bearer of a letter, which he delivered to the Duke with a most profound conge'.

"Now will I wad a hogshead of claret," said Garschattachin, "that this is a message to tell us that these cursed Highlandmen, whom we have fetched here at the expense of so much plague and vexation, are going to draw off, and leave us to do our own business if we can."

"It is even so, gentlemen," said the Duke, reddening with indignation, after having perused the letter, which was written upon a very dirty scrap of paper, but most punctiliously addressed, "For the much-honoured hands of Ane High and Mighty Prince, the Duke," &c. &c. &c. "Our allies," continued the Duke, "have deserted us, gentlemen, and have made a separate peace with the enemy."

"It's just the fate of all alliances," said Garschattachin, "the Dutch were gaun to serve us the same gate, if we had not got the start of them at Utrecht."

"You are facetious, air," said the Duke, with a frown which showed how little he liked the pleasantry; "but our business is rather of a grave cut just now.—I suppose no gentleman would advise our attempting to penetrate farther into the country, unsupported either by friendly Highlanders, or by infantry from Inversnaid?"

A general answer announced that the attempt would be perfect madness.

"Nor would there be great wisdom," the Duke added, "in remaining exposed to a night-attack in this place. I therefore propose that we should retreat to the house of Duchray and that of Gartartan, and keep safe and sure watch and ward until morning. But before we separate, I will examine Rob Roy before you all, and make you sensible, by your own eyes and ears, of the extreme unfitness of leaving him space for farther outrage." He gave orders accordingly, and the prisoner was brought before him, his arms belted down above the elbow, and secured to his body by a horse-girth buckled tight behind him. Two non-commissioned officers had hold of him, one on each side, and two file of men with carabines and fixed bayonets attended for additional security.

I had never seen this man in the dress of his country, which set in a striking point of view the peculiarities of his form. A shock-head of red hair, which the hat and periwig of the Lowland costume had in a great measure concealed, was seen beneath the Highland bonnet, and verified the epithet of *Roy*, or *Red*, by which he was much better known in the Low Country than by any other, and is still, I suppose, best remembered. The justice of the appellation was also vindicated by the appearance of that part of his limbs, from the bottom of his kilt to the top of his short hose, which the fashion of his country dress left bare, and which was covered with a fell of thick, short, red hair, especially around his knees, which resembled in this respect, as well as from their sinewy appearance of extreme strength, the limbs of a red-coloured Highland bull. Upon the whole, betwixt the effect produced by the change of dress, and by my having become acquainted with his real and formidable character, his appearance had acquired to my eyes something so much wilder and more striking than it before presented, that I could scarce recognise him to be the same person.

His manner was bold, unconstrained unless by the actual bonds, haughty, and even dignified. He bowed to the Duke, nodded to Garschattachin and others, and showed some surprise at seeing me among the party.

"It is long since we have met, Mr. Campbell," said the Duke.

"It is so, my Lord Duke; I could have wished it had been" (looking at the fastening on his arms) "when I could have better paid the compliments I owe to your Grace;—but there's a gude time coming."

"No time like the time present, Mr. Campbell," answered the Duke, "for the hours are fast flying that must settle your last account with all mortal affairs. I do not say this to insult your distress; but you must be aware yourself that you draw near the end of your career. I do not deny that you may sometimes have done less harm than others of your unhappy trade, and that you may occasionally have exhibited marks of talent, and even of a disposition which promised better things. But you are aware how long you have been the terror and the oppressor of a peaceful neighbourhood, and by what acts of violence you have maintained and extended your usurped authority. You know, in short, that you have deserved death, and that you must prepare for it."

"My Lord," said Rob Roy, "although I may well lay my misfortunes at your Grace's door, yet I will never say that you yourself have been the wilful and witting author of them. My Lord, if I had thought sae, your Grace would not this day have been sitting in judgment on me; for you have been three times within good rifle distance of me when you were thinking but of the red deer, and few people have ken'd me miss my aim. But as for them that have abused your Grace's ear, and set you up against a man that was ance as peacefu' a man as ony in the land, and made your name the warrant for driving me to utter extremity,—I have had some amends of them, and, for a' that your Grace now says, I expect to live to hae mair."

"I know," said the Duke, in rising anger, "that you are a determined and impudent villain, who will keep his oath if he swears to mischief; but it shall be my care to prevent you. You have no enemies but your own wicked actions."

"Had I called myself Grahame, instead of Campbell, I might have heard less about them," answered Rob Roy, with dogged resolution.

"You will do well, sir," said the Duke, "to warn your wife and family and followers, to beware how they use the gentlemen now in their hands, as I will requite tenfold on them, and their kin and allies, the slightest injury done to any of his Majesty's liege subjects."

"My Lord," said Roy in answer, "none of my enemies will allege that I have been a bloodthirsty man, and were I now wi' my folk, I could rule four or five hundred wild Hielanders as easy as your Grace those eight or ten lackeys and foot-boys—But if your Grace is bent to take the head away from a house, ye may lay your account there will be misrule among the members.—However, come o't what like, there's an honest man, a kinsman o' my ain, maun come by nae skaith. Is there ony body here wad do a gude deed for MacGregor?—he may repay it, though his hands be now tied."

The Highlander who had delivered the letter to the Duke replied, "I'll do your will for you, MacGregor; and I'll gang back up the glen on purpose."

He advanced, and received from the prisoner a message to his wife, which, being in Gaelic, I did not understand, but I had little doubt it related to some measures to be taken for the safety of Mr. Jarvie.

"Do you hear the fellow's impudence?" said the Duke; "he confides in his character of a messenger. His conduct is of a piece with his master's, who invited us to make common cause against these freebooters, and have deserted us so soon as the MacGregors have agreed to surrender the Balquhiddy lands they were squabbling about."

No truth in plaids, no faith in tartan trews!

Chameleon-like, they change a thousand hues."

"Your great ancestor never said so, my Lord," answered Major Galbraith;—"and, with submission, neither would your Grace have occasion to say it, wad ye but be for beginning justice at the well-head—Gie the honest man his mear again—Let every head wear it's ane bannet, and the distractions o' the Lennox wad be mended wi' them o'the land."

"Hush! hush! Garschattachin," said the Duke; "this is language dangerous for you to talk to any one, and especially to me; but I presume you reckon yourself a privileged person. Please to draw off your party towards Gartartan; I shall myself see the prisoner escorted to Duchray, and send you orders tomorrow. You will please grant no leave of absence to any of your troopers."

"Here's auld ordering and counter-ordering," muttered Garschattachin between his teeth. "But patience! patience!—we may ae day play at change seats, the king's coming."

The two troops of cavalry now formed, and prepared to march off the ground, that they might avail themselves of the remainder of daylight to get to their evening quarters. I received an intimation, rather than an invitation, to attend the party; and I perceived, that, though no longer considered as a prisoner, I was yet under some sort of suspicion. The times were indeed so dangerous,—the great party questions of Jacobite and Hanoverian divided the country so effectually,—and the constant disputes and jealousies between the Highlanders and Lowlanders, besides a number of inexplicable causes of feud which separated the great leading families in Scotland from each other, occasioned such general suspicion, that a solitary and unprotected stranger was almost sure to meet with something disagreeable in the course of his travels.

I acquiesced, however, in my destination with the best grace I could, consoling myself with the hope that I might obtain from the captive freebooter some information concerning Rashleigh and his machinations. I should do myself injustice did I not add, that my views were not merely selfish. I was too much interested in my singular acquaintance not to be desirous of rendering him such services as his unfortunate situation might demand, or admit of his receiving.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

*And when he came to broken brigg,
He bent his bow and swam;
And when he came to grass growing,*

Set down his feet and ran.

Gil Morrice.

The echoes of the rocks and ravines, on either side, now rang to the trumpets of the cavalry, which, forming themselves into two distinct bodies, began to move down the valley at a slow trot. That commanded by Major Galbraith soon took to the right hand, and crossed the Forth, for the purpose of taking up the quarters assigned them for the night, when they were to occupy, as I understood, an old castle in the vicinity. They formed a lively object while crossing the stream, but were soon lost in winding up the bank on the opposite side, which was clothed with wood.

We continued our march with considerable good order. To ensure the safe custody of the prisoner, the Duke had caused him to be placed on horseback behind one of his retainers, called, as I was informed, Ewan of Brigglands, one of the largest and strongest men who were present. A horse-belt, passed round the bodies of both, and buckled before the yeoman's breast, rendered it impossible for Rob Roy to free himself from his keeper. I was directed to keep close beside them, and accommodated for the purpose with a troop-horse. We were as closely surrounded by the soldiers as the width of the road would permit, and had always at least one, if not two, on each side, with pistol in hand. Andrew Fairservice, furnished with a Highland pony, of which they had made prey somewhere or other, was permitted to ride among the other domestics, of whom a great number attended the line of march, though without falling into the ranks of the more regularly trained troopers.

In this manner we travelled for a certain distance, until we arrived at a place where we also were to cross the river. The Forth, as being the outlet of a lake, is of considerable depth, even where less important in point of width, and the descent to the ford was by a broken precipitous ravine, which only permitted one horseman to descend at once. The rear and centre of our small body halting on the bank while the front files passed down in succession, produced a considerable delay, as is usual on such occasions, and even some confusion; for a number of those riders, who made no proper part of the squadron, crowded to the ford without regularity, and made the militia cavalry, although tolerably well drilled, partake in some degree of their own disorder.

It was while we were thus huddled together on the bank that I heard Rob Roy whisper to the man behind whom he was placed on horseback, "Your father, Ewan, wadna hae carried an auld friend to the shambles, like a calf, for a' the Dukes in Christendom."

Ewan returned no answer, but shrugged, as one who would express by that sign that what he was doing was none of his own choice.

"And when the MacGregors come down the glen, and ye see toom faulds, a bluidy hearthstone, and the fire flashing out between the rafters o' your house, ye may be thinking then, Ewan, that were your friend Rob to the fore, you would have had that safe which it will make your heart sair to lose."

Ewan of Brigglands again shrugged and groaned, but remained silent.

"It's a sair thing," continued Rob, sliding his insinuations so gently into Ewan's ear that they reached no other but mine, who certainly saw myself in no shape called upon to destroy his prospects of escape—"It's a sair thing, that Ewan of Brigglands, whom Roy MacGregor has helped with hand, sword, and purse, suld mind a gloom from a great man mair than a friend's life."

Ewan seemed sorely agitated, but was silent.—We heard the Duke's voice from the opposite bank call, "Bring over the prisoner."

Ewan put his horse in motion, and just as I heard Roy say, "Never weigh a MacGregor's bluid against a broken whang o' leather, for there will be another accounting to gie for it baith here and hereafter," they passed me hastily, and dashing forward rather precipitately, entered the water.

"Not yet, sir—not yet," said some of the troopers to me, as I was about to follow, while others pressed forward into the stream.

I saw the Duke on the other side, by the waning light, engaged in commanding his people to get into order, as they landed dispersedly, some higher, some lower. Many had crossed, some were in the water, and the rest were preparing to follow, when a sudden splash warned me that MacGregor's eloquence had prevailed on Ewan to give him freedom and a chance for life. The Duke also heard the sound, and instantly guessed its meaning. "Dog!" he exclaimed to Ewan as he landed, "where is your prisoner?" and, without waiting to hear the apology which the terrified vassal began to falter forth, he fired a pistol at his head, whether fatally I know not, and exclaimed, "Gentlemen, disperse and pursue the villain—An hundred guineas for him that secures Rob Roy!"

All became an instant scene of the most lively confusion. Rob Roy, disengaged from his bonds, doubtless by Ewan's slipping the buckle of his belt, had dropped off at the horse's tail, and instantly dived, passing under the belly of the troop-horse which was on his left hand. But as he was obliged to come to the surface an instant for air, the glimpse of his tartan plaid drew the attention of the troopers, some of whom plunged into the river, with a total disregard to their own safety, rushing, according to the expression of their country, through pool and stream, sometimes swimming their horses, sometimes losing them and struggling for their own lives. Others, less zealous or more prudent, broke off in different directions, and galloped up and down the banks, to watch the places at which the fugitive might possibly land. The howling, the whooping, the calls for aid at different points, where they saw, or conceived they saw, some vestige of him they were seeking,—the frequent report of pistols and carabines, fired at every object which excited the least suspicion,—the sight of so many horsemen riding about, in and out of the river, and striking with their long broadswords at whatever excited their attention, joined to the vain exertions used by their officers to restore order and regularity,—and all this in so wild a scene, and visible only by the imperfect twilight of an autumn evening, made the most extraordinary hubbub I had hitherto witnessed. I was indeed left alone to observe it, for our whole cavalcade had dispersed in pursuit, or at least to see the event of the search. Indeed, as I partly suspected at the time, and afterwards learned with certainty, many of those who seemed most active in their attempts to waylay and recover the fugitive, were, in actual truth, least desirous that he should be taken, and only joined in the cry to increase the general confusion, and to give Rob Roy a better opportunity of escaping.

Escape, indeed, was not difficult for a swimmer so expert as the freebooter, as soon as he had eluded the first burst of pursuit. At one time he was closely pressed, and several blows were made which flashed in the water around him; the scene much resembling one of the otter-hunts which I had seen at Osbaldistone Hall, where the animal is detected by the hounds from his being necessitated to put his nose above the stream to vent or breathe, while he is enabled to elude them by getting under water again so soon as he has refreshed himself by respiration. MacGregor, however, had a trick beyond the otter; for he contrived, when very closely pursued, to disengage himself unobserved from his plaid, and suffer it to float down the stream, where in its progress it quickly attracted general attention; many of the horsemen were thus put upon a false scent, and several shots or stabs were averted from the party for whom they were designed.

Once fairly out of view, the recovery of the prisoner became almost impossible, since, in so many places, the river was rendered inaccessible by the steepness of its banks, or the thickets of alders, poplars, and birch, which, overhanging its banks, prevented the approach of horsemen. Errors and accidents had also happened among the pursuers, whose task the approaching night rendered every moment more hopeless. Some got themselves involved in the eddies of the stream, and required the assistance of their companions to save them from drowning. Others, hurt by shots or blows in the confused mele'e, implored help or threatened vengeance, and in one or two instances such accidents led to actual strife. The trumpets, therefore, sounded the retreat, announcing that the commanding officer, with whatsoever unwillingness, had for the present relinquished hopes of the important prize which had thus unexpectedly escaped his grasp, and the troopers began slowly, reluctantly, and brawling with each other as they returned, again to assume their ranks. I could see them darkening, as they formed on the southern bank of the river,—whose murmurs, long drowned by the louder cries of vengeful pursuit, were now heard hoarsely mingling with the deep, discontented, and reproachful voices of the disappointed horsemen.

Hitherto I had been as it were a mere spectator, though far from an uninterested one, of the singular scene which had passed. But now I heard a voice suddenly exclaim, "Where is the English stranger?—It was he gave Rob Roy the knife to cut the belt."

"Cleeve the pock-pudding to the chafts!" cried one voice.

"Weize a brace of balls through his harn-pan!" said a second.

"Drive three inches of cauld airn into his brisket!" shouted a third.

And I heard several horses galloping to and fro, with the kind purpose, doubtless, of executing these denunciations. I was immediately awakened to the sense of my situation, and to the certainty that armed men, having no restraint whatever on their irritated and inflamed passions, would probably begin by shooting or

cutting me down, and afterwards investigate the justice of the action. Impressed by this belief, I leaped from my horse, and turning him loose, plunged into a bush of alder-trees, where, considering the advancing obscurity of the night, I thought there was little chance of my being discovered. Had I been near enough to the Duke to have invoked his personal protection, I would have done so; but he had already commenced his retreat, and I saw no officer on the left bank of the river, of authority sufficient to have afforded protection, in case of my surrendering myself. I thought there was no point of honour which could require, in such circumstances, an unnecessary exposure of my life. My first idea, when the tumult began to be appeased, and the clatter of the horses' feet was heard less frequently in the immediate vicinity of my hiding-place, was to seek out the Duke's quarters when all should be quiet, and give myself up to him, as a liege subject, who had nothing to fear from his justice, and a stranger, who had every right to expect protection and hospitality. With this purpose I crept out of my hiding-place, and looked around me.

The twilight had now melted nearly into darkness; a few or none of the troopers were left on my side of the Forth, and of those who were already across it, I only heard the distant trample of the horses' feet, and the wailing and prolonged sound of their trumpets, which rung through the woods to recall stragglers. Here, therefore, I was left in a situation of considerable difficulty. I had no horse, and the deep and wheeling stream of the river, rendered turbid by the late tumult of which its channel had been the scene, and seeming yet more so under the doubtful influence of an imperfect moonlight, had no inviting influence for a pedestrian by no means accustomed to wade rivers, and who had lately seen horsemen weltering, in this dangerous passage, up to the very saddle-laps. At the same time, my prospect, if I remained on the side of the river on which I then stood, could be no other than of concluding the various fatigues of this day and the preceding night, by passing that which was now closing in, *al fresco* on the side of a Highland hill.

After a moment's reflection, I began to consider that Fairservice, who had doubtless crossed the river with the other domestics, according to his forward and impertinent custom of putting himself always among the foremost, could not fail to satisfy the Duke, or the competent authorities, respecting my rank and situation; and that, therefore, my character did not require my immediate appearance, at the risk of being drowned in the river—of being unable to trace the march of the squadron in case of my reaching the other side in safety—or, finally, of being cut down, right or wrong, by some straggler, who might think such a piece of good service a convenient excuse for not sooner rejoining his ranks. I therefore resolved to measure my steps back to the little inn, where I had passed the preceding night. I had nothing to apprehend from Rob Roy. He was now at liberty, and I was certain, in case of my falling in with any of his people, the news of his escape would ensure me protection. I might thus also show, that I had no intention to desert Mr. Jarvie in the delicate situation in which he had engaged himself chiefly on my account. And lastly, it was only in this quarter that I could hope to learn tidings concerning Rashleigh and my father's papers, which had been the original cause of an expedition so fraught with perilous adventure. I therefore abandoned all thoughts of crossing the Forth that evening; and, turning my back on the Fords of Frew, began to retrace my steps towards the little village of Aberfoil.

A sharp frost-wind, which made itself heard and felt from time to time, removed the clouds of mist which might otherwise have slumbered till morning on the valley; and, though it could not totally disperse the clouds of vapour, yet threw them in confused and changeful masses, now hovering round the heads of the mountains, now filling, as with a dense and voluminous stream of smoke, the various deep gullies where masses of the composite rock, or breccia, tumbling in fragments from the cliffs, have rushed to the valley, leaving each behind its course a rent and torn ravine resembling a deserted water-course. The moon, which was now high, and twinkled with all the vivacity of a frosty atmosphere, silvered the windings of the river and the peaks and precipices which the mist left visible, while her beams seemed as it were absorbed by the fleecy whiteness of the mist, where it lay thick and condensed; and gave to the more light and vapoury specks, which were elsewhere visible, a sort of filmy transparency resembling the lightest veil of silver gauze. Despite the uncertainty of my situation, a view so romantic, joined to the active and inspiring influence of the frosty atmosphere, elevated my spirits while it braced my nerves. I felt an inclination to cast care away, and bid defiance to danger, and involuntarily whistled, by way of cadence to my steps, which my feeling of the cold led me to accelerate, and I felt the pulse of existence beat prouder and higher in proportion as I felt confidence in my own strength, courage, and resources. I was so much lost in these thoughts, and in the feelings which they excited, that two horsemen came up behind me without my hearing their approach, until one was on each side of me, when the left-hand rider, pulling up his horse, addressed me in the English tongue—"So ho, friend! whither so late?"

"To my supper and bed at Aberfoil," I replied.

"Are the passes open?" he inquired, with the same commanding tone of voice.

"I do not know," I replied; "I shall learn when I get there. But," I added, the fate of Morris recurring to my recollection, "if you are an English stranger, I advise you to turn back till daylight; there has been some disturbance in this neighbourhood, and I should hesitate to say it is perfectly safe for strangers."

"The soldiers had the worst?—had they not?" was the reply.

"They had indeed; and an officer's party were destroyed or made prisoners."

"Are you sure of that?" replied the horseman.

"As sure as that I hear you speak," I replied. "I was an unwilling spectator of the skirmish."

"Unwilling!" continued the interrogator. "Were you not engaged in it then?"

"Certainly no," I replied; "I was detained by the king's officer."

"On what suspicion? and who are you? or what is your name?" he continued.

"I really do not know, sir," said I, "why I should answer so many questions to an unknown stranger. I have told you enough to convince you that you are going into a dangerous and distracted country. If you choose to proceed, it is your own affair; but as I ask you no questions respecting your name and business, you will oblige me by making no inquiries after mine."

"Mr. Francis Osbaldistone," said the other rider, in a voice the tones of which thrilled through every nerve of my body, "should not whistle his favourite airs when he wishes to remain undiscovered."

And Diana Vernon—for she, wrapped in a horseman's cloak, was the last speaker—whistled in playful mimicry the second part of the tune which was on my lips when they came up.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, like one thunderstruck, "can it be you, Miss Vernon, on such a spot—at such an hour—in such a lawless country—in such"—

"In such a masculine dress, you would say.—But what would you have? The philosophy of the excellent Corporal Nym is the best after all; things must be as they may—*pauca verba*."

While she was thus speaking, I eagerly took advantage of an unusually bright gleam of moonshine, to study the appearance of her companion; for it may be easily supposed, that finding Miss Vernon in a place so solitary, engaged in a journey so dangerous, and under the protection of one gentleman only, were circumstances to excite every feeling of jealousy, as well as surprise. The rider did not speak with the deep melody of Rashleigh's voice; his tones were more high and commanding; he was taller, moreover, as he sat on horseback, than that first-rate object of my hate and suspicion. Neither did the stranger's address resemble that of any of my other cousins; it had that indescribable tone and manner by which we recognise a man of sense and breeding, even in the first few sentences he speaks.

The object of my anxiety seemed desirous to get rid of my investigation.

"Diana," he said, in a tone of mingled kindness and authority, "give your cousin his property, and let us not spend time here."

Miss Vernon had in the meantime taken out a small case, and leaning down from her horse towards me, she said, in a tone in which an effort at her usual quaint lightness of expression contended with a deeper and more grave tone of sentiment, "You see, my dear coz, I was born to be your better angel. Rashleigh has been compelled to yield up his spoil, and had we reached this same village of Aberfoil last night, as we purposed, I should have found some Highland sylph to have wafted to you all these representatives of commercial wealth. But there were giants and dragons in the way; and errant-knights and damsels of modern times, bold though they be, must not, as of yore, run into useless danger—Do not you do so either, my dear coz."

"Diana," said her companion, "let me once more warn you that the evening waxes late, and we are still distant from our home."

"I am coming, sir, I am coming—Consider," she added, with a sigh, "how lately I have been subjected to control—besides, I have not yet given my cousin the packet, and bid him fare-well—for ever. Yes, Frank," she said, "for ever!—there is a gulf between us—a gulf of absolute perdition;—where we go, you must not follow—what we do, you must not share in—Farewell—be happy!"

In the attitude in which she bent from her horse, which was a Highland pony, her face, not perhaps altogether unwillingly, touched mine. She pressed my hand, while the tear that trembled in her eye found its way to my cheek instead of her own. It was a moment never to be forgotten—inexpressibly bitter, yet mixed with a sensation of pleasure so deeply soothing and affecting, as at once to unlock all the flood-gates of the heart. It was *but* a moment, however; for, instantly recovering from the feeling to which she had involuntarily given way, she intimated to her companion she was ready to attend him, and putting their horses to a brisk pace, they were soon far distant from the place where I stood.

Heaven knows, it was not apathy which loaded my frame and my tongue so much, that I could neither return Miss Vernon's half embrace, nor even answer her farewell. The word, though it rose to my tongue, seemed to choke in my throat like the fatal *guilty*, which the delinquent who makes it his plea, knows must be followed by the doom of death. The surprise—the sorrow, almost stupified me. I remained motionless with the packet in my hand, gazing after them, as if endeavouring to count the sparkles which flew from the horses' hoofs. I continued to look after even these had ceased to be visible, and to listen for their footsteps long after the last distant trampling had died in my ears. At length, tears rushed to my eyes, glazed as they were by the exertion of straining after what was no longer to be seen. I wiped them mechanically, and almost without being aware that they were flowing—but they came thicker and thicker; I felt the tightening of the throat and breast—the *hysterica passio* of poor Lear; and sitting down by the wayside, I shed a flood of the first and most bitter tears which had flowed from my eyes since childhood.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

Dangle.—Egad, I think the interpreter is the harder to be understood of the two.

Critic.

I had scarce given vent to my feelings in this paroxysm, ere was ashamed of my weakness. I remembered that I had been for some time endeavouring to regard Diana Vernon, when her idea intruded itself on my remembrance, as a friend, for whose welfare I should indeed always be anxious, but with whom I could have little further communication. But the almost unrepressed tenderness of her manner, joined to the romance of our sudden meeting where it was so little to have been expected, were circumstances which threw me entirely off my guard. I recovered, however, sooner than might have been expected, and without giving myself time accurately to examine my motives. I resumed the path on which I had been travelling when overtaken by this strange and unexpected apparition.

"I am not," was my reflection, "transgressing her injunction so pathetically given, since I am but pursuing my own journey by the only open route.—If I have succeeded in recovering my father's property, it still remains incumbent on me to see my Glasgow friend delivered from the situation in which he has involved himself on my account; besides, what other place of rest can I obtain for the night excepting at the little inn of Aberfoil? They also must stop there, since it is impossible for travellers on horseback to go farther—Well, then, we shall meet again—meet for the last time perhaps—But I shall see and hear her—I shall learn who this happy man is who exercises over her the authority of a husband—I shall learn if there remains, in the difficult course in which she seems engaged, any difficulty which my efforts may remove, or aught that I can do to express my gratitude for her generosity—for her disinterested friendship."

As I reasoned thus with myself, colouring with every plausible pretext which occurred to my ingenuity my passionate desire once more to see and converse with my cousin, I was suddenly hailed by a touch on the shoulder; and the deep voice of a Highlander, who, walking still faster than I, though I was proceeding at a smart pace, accosted me with, "A braw night, Maister Osbaldistone—we have met at the mirk hour before now."

There was no mistaking the tone of MacGregor; he had escaped the pursuit of his enemies, and was in full retreat to his own wilds and to his adherents. He had also contrived to arm himself, probably at the house of some secret adherent, for he had a musket on his shoulder, and the usual Highland weapons by his side. To have found myself alone with such a character in such a situation, and at this late hour in the evening, might not have been pleasant to me in any ordinary mood of mind; for, though habituated to think of Rob Roy in rather a friendly point of view, I will confess frankly that I never heard him speak but that it seemed to thrill my blood. The intonation of the mountaineers gives a habitual depth and hollowness to the sound of their words, owing to the guttural expression so common in their native language, and they usually speak with a good deal of emphasis. To these national peculiarities Rob Roy added a sort of hard indifference of accent and manner, expressive of a mind neither to be daunted, nor surprised, nor affected by what passed before him, however dreadful, however sudden, however afflicting. Habitual danger, with unbounded confidence in his own strength and sagacity, had rendered him indifferent to fear, and the lawless and precarious life he led had blunted, though its dangers and errors had not destroyed, his feelings for others. And it was to be remembered that I had very lately seen the followers of this man commit a cruel slaughter on an unarmed and suppliant individual.

Yet such was the state of my mind, that I welcomed the company of the outlaw leader as a relief to my own overstrained and painful thoughts; and was not without hopes that through his means I might obtain some clew of guidance through the maze in which my fate had involved me. I therefore answered his greeting cordially, and congratulated him on his late escape in circumstances when escape seemed impossible.

"Ay," he replied, "there is as much between the craig and the woodie* as there is between the cup and the lip. But my peril was less than you may think, being a stranger to this country.

* *i.e.* The throat and the withy. Twigs of willow, such as bind faggots, were often used for halters in Scotland and Ireland, being a sage economy of hemp.

Of those that were summoned to take me, and to keep me, and to retake me again, there was a moiety, as cousin Nicol Jarvie calls it, that had nae will that I suld be either taen, or keepit fast, or retaen; and of tother moiety, there was as half was feared to stir me; and so I had only like the fourth part of fifty or sixty men to deal withal."

"And enough, too, I should think," replied I.

"I dinna ken that," said he; "but I ken, that turn every ill-willer that I had amang them out upon the green before the Clachan of Aberfoil, I wad find them play with broadsword and target, one down and another come on."

He now inquired into my adventures since we entered his country, and laughed heartily at my account of the battle we had in the inn, and at the exploits of the Bailie with the red-hot poker.

"Let Glasgow Flourish!" he exclaimed. "The curse of Cromwell on me, if I wad hae wished better sport than to see cousin Nicol Jarvie singe Iverach's plaid, like a sheep's head between a pair of tongs. But my cousin Jarvie," he added, more gravely, "has some gentleman's bluid in his veins, although he has been unhappily bred up to a peaceful and mechanical craft, which could not but blunt any pretty man's spirit.—Ye may estimate the reason why I could not receive you at the Clachan of Aberfoil as I purposed. They had made a fine hosenet for me when I was absent twa or three days at Glasgow, upon the king's business—But I think I broke up the league about their lugs—they'll no be able to hound one clan against another as they hae dune. I hope soon to see the day when a' Hielandmen will stand shouther to shouther. But what chanced next?"

I gave him an account of the arrival of Captain Thornton and his party, and the arrest of the Bailie and myself under pretext of our being suspicious persons; and upon his more special inquiry, I recollected the officer had mentioned that, besides my name sounding suspicious in his ears, he had orders to secure an old and young person, resembling our description. This again moved the outlaw's risibility.

"As man lives by bread," he said, "the buzzards have mistaen my friend the Bailie for his Excellency, and you for Diana Vernon—O, the most egregious night-howlets!"

"Miss Vernon?" said I, with hesitation, and trembling for the answer—"Does she still bear that name? She passed but now, along with a gentleman who seemed to use a style of authority."

"Ay, ay," answered Rob, "she's under lawfu' authority now; and full time, for she was a daft hempie—But she's a mettle quean. It's a pity his Excellency is a thought eldern. The like o' yourself, or my son Hamish, wad be mair sortable in point of years."

Here, then, was a complete downfall of those castles of cards which my fancy had, in despite of my reason, so often amused herself with building. Although in truth I had scarcely anything else to expect, since I could not suppose that Diana could be travelling in such a country, at such an hour, with any but one who had a legal title to protect her, I did not feel the blow less severely when it came; and MacGregor's voice, urging me to pursue my story, sounded in my ears without conveying any exact import to my mind.

"You are ill," he said at length, after he had spoken twice without receiving an answer; "this day's wark has been ower muckle for ane doubtless unused to sic things."

The tone of kindness in which this was spoken, recalling me to myself, and to the necessities of my situation, I continued my narrative as well as I could. Rob Roy expressed great exultation at the successful skirmish in the pass.

"They say," he observed, "that king's chaff is better than other folk's corn; but I think that canna be said o' king's soldiers, if they let themselves be beaten wi' a wheen auld carles that are past fighting, and bairns that are no come till't, and wives wi' their rocks and distaffs, the very wally-draigles o' the countryside. And Dougal Gregor, too—wha wad hae thought there had been as muckle sense in his tatty-pow, that ne'er had a better covering than his ain shaggy hassock of hair!—But say away—though I dread what's to come neist—for my Helen's an incarnate devil when her bluid's up—puir thing, she has ower muckle reason."

I observed as much delicacy as I could in communicating to him the usage we had received, but I obviously saw the detail gave him great pain.

"I wad rather than a thousand merks," he said, "that I had been at hame! To misguide strangers, and forbye a', my ain natural cousin, that had showed me sic kindness—I wad rather they had burned half the Lennox in their folly! But this comes o' trusting women and their bairns, that have neither measure nor reason in their dealings. However, it's a' owing to that dog of a gauger, wha betrayed me by pretending a message from your cousin Rashleigh, to meet him on the king's affairs, whilk I thought was very like to be anent Garschattachin and a party of the Lennox declaring themselves for King James. Faith! but I ken'd I was clean beguiled when I heard the Duke was there; and when they strapped the horse-girth ower my arms, I might hae judged what was bidding me; for I ken'd your kinsman, being, wi' pardon, a slippery loon himself, is prone to employ those of his ain kidney—I wish he mayna hae been at the bottom o' the ploy himself—I thought the chield Morris looked devilish queer when I determined he should remain a wad, or hostage, for my safe back-coming. But I *am* come back, nae thanks to him, or them that employed him; and the question is, how the collector loon is to win back himself—I promise him it will not be without a ransom."

"Morris," said I, "has already paid the last ransom which mortal man can owe."

"Eh! What?" exclaimed my companion hastily; "what d'ye say? I trust it was in the skirmish he was killed?"

"He was slain in cold blood after the fight was over, Mr. Campbell."

"Cold blood?—Damnation!" he said, muttering betwixt his teeth—"How fell that, sir? Speak out, sir, and do not Maister or Campbell me—my foot is on my native heath, and my name is MacGregor!"

His passions were obviously irritated; but without noticing the rudeness of his tone, I gave him a short and distinct account of the death of Morris. He struck the butt of his gun with great vehemence against the ground, and broke out—"I vow to God, such a deed might make one forswear kin, clan, country, wife, and bairns! And yet the villain wrought long for it. And what is the difference between warsling below the water wi' a stane about your neck, and wavering in the wind wi' a tether round it?—it's but choking after a', and he drees the doom he ettled for me. I could have wished, though, they had rather putten a ball through him, or a dirk; for the fashion of removing him will give rise to mony idle clavers—But every wight has his weird, and we maun a' dee when our day comes—And naebody will deny that Helen MacGregor has deep wrongs to avenge."

So saying, he seemed to dismiss the theme altogether from his mind, and proceeded to inquire how I got free from the party in whose hands he had seen me.

My story was soon told; and I added the episode of my having recovered the papers of my father, though I dared not trust my voice to name the name of Diana.

"I was sure ye wad get them," said MacGregor;—"the letter ye brought me contained his Excellency's pleasure to that effect and nae doubt it was my will to have aided in it. And I asked ye up into this glen on the very errand. But it's like his Excellency has foregathered wi' Rashleigh sooner than I expected."

The first part of this answer was what most forcibly struck me.

"Was the letter I brought you, then, from this person you call his Excellency? Who is he? and what is his rank and proper name?"

"I am thinking," said MacGregor, "that since ye dinna ken them already they canna be o' muckle consequence to you, and sae I shall say naething on that score. But weel I wot the letter was frae his ain hand, or, having a sort of business of my ain on my hands, being, as ye weel may see, just as much as I can fairly manage, I canna say I would hae fashed mysell sae muckle about the matter."

I now recollected the lights seen in the library—the various circumstances which had excited my jealousy—the glove—the agitation of the tapestry which covered the secret passage from Rashleigh's apartment; and, above all, I recollected that Diana retired in order to write, as I then thought, the billet to which I was to have recourse in case of the last necessity. Her hours, then, were not spent in solitude, but in listening to the addresses of some desperate agent of Jacobitical treason, who was a secret resident within the mansion of her uncle! Other young women have sold themselves for gold, or suffered themselves to be seduced from their first love from vanity; but Diana had sacrificed my affections and her own to partake the fortunes of some desperate adventurer—to seek the haunts of freebooters through midnight deserts, with no better hopes of rank or fortune than that mimicry of both which the mock court of the Stuarts at St. Germain's had in their power to bestow.

"I will see her," I said internally, "if it be possible, once more. I will argue with her as a friend—as a kinsman—on the risk she is incurring, and I will facilitate her retreat to France, where she may, with more comfort and propriety, as well as safety, abide the issue of the turmoils which the political trepanner, to whom she has united her fate, is doubtless busied in putting into motion."

"I conclude, then," I said to MacGregor, after about five minutes' silence on both sides, "that his Excellency, since you give me no other name for him, was residing in Osbaldistone Hall at the same time with myself?"

"To be sure—to be sure—and in the young lady's apartment, as best reason was." This gratuitous information was adding gall to bitterness. "But few," added MacGregor, "ken'd he was derved there, save Rashleigh and Sir Hildebrand; for you were out o' the question; and the young lads haena wit eneugh to ca' the cat frae the cream—But it's a bra' auld-fashioned house, and what I specially admire is the abundance o' holes and bores and concealments—ye could put twenty or thirty men in ae corner, and a family might live a week without finding them out—whilk, nae doubt, may on occasion be a special convenience. I wish we had the like o' Osbaldistone Hall on the braes o' Craig-Royston—But we maun gar woods and caves serve the like o' us puir Hieland bodies."

"I suppose his Excellency," said I, "was privy to the first accident which befell"—

I could not help hesitating a moment.

"Ye were going to say Morris," said Rob Roy coolly, for he was too much accustomed to deeds of violence for the agitation he had at first expressed to be of long continuance. "I used to laugh heartily at that reik; but I'll hardly hae the heart to do't again, since the ill-far'd accident at the Loch. Na, na—his Excellency ken'd nought o' that ploy—it was a' managed atween Rashleigh and mysell. But the sport that came after—and Rashleigh's shift o' turning the suspicion aff himself upon you, that he had nae grit favour to frae the beginning—and then Miss Die, she maun hae us sweep up a' our spiders' webs again, and set you out o' the Justice's claws—and then the frightened craven Morris, that was scared out o' his seven senses by seeing the real man when he was charging the innocent stranger—and the gowk of a clerk—and the drunken carle of a justice—Ohon! ohon!—mony a laugh that job's gien me—and now, a' that I can do for the puir devil is to get some messes said for his soul."

"May I ask," said I, "how Miss Vernon came to have so much influence over Rashleigh and his accomplices as to derange your projected plan?"

"Mine! it was none of mine. No man can say I ever laid my burden on other folk's shoulders—it was a' Rashleigh's doings. But, undoubtedly, she had great influence wi' us baith on account of his Excellency's affection, as weel as that she ken'd far ower mony secrets to be lightied in a matter o' that kind.—Deil tak him," he ejaculated, by way of summing up, "that gies women either secret to keep or power to abuse—fules shouldna hae chapping-sticks."

We were now within a quarter of a mile from the village, when three Highlanders, springing upon us with presented arms, commanded us to stand and tell our business. The single word *Gregaragh*, in the deep and commanding voice of my companion, was answered by a shout, or rather yell, of joyful recognition. One, throwing down his firelock, clasped his leader so fast round the knees, that he was unable to extricate himself, muttering, at the same time, a torrent of Gaelic gratulation, which every now and then rose into a sort of scream of gladness. The two others, after the first howling was over, set off literally with the speed of deers, contending which should first carry to the village, which a strong party of the MacGregors now occupied, the joyful news of Rob Roy's escape and return. The intelligence excited such shouts of jubilation, that the very hills rung again, and young and old, men, women, and children, without distinction of sex or age, came running down the vale to meet us, with all the tumultuous speed and clamour of a mountain torrent. When I heard the rushing noise and yells of this joyful multitude approach us, I thought it a fitting precaution to remind MacGregor that I was a stranger, and under his protection. He accordingly held me fast by the hand, while the assemblage crowded around him with such shouts of devoted attachment, and joy at his return, as were really affecting; nor did he extend to his followers what all eagerly sought, the grasp, namely, of his hand, until he had made them understand that I was to be kindly and carefully used.

The mandate of the Sultan of Delhi could not have been more promptly obeyed. Indeed, I now sustained nearly as much inconvenience from their well-meant attentions as formerly from their rudeness. They would hardly allow the friend of their leader to walk upon his own legs, so earnest were they in affording me support and assistance upon the way; and at length, taking advantage of a slight stumble which I made over a stone, which the press did not permit me to avoid, they fairly seized upon me, and bore me in their arms in triumph towards Mrs. MacAlpine's.

On arrival before her hospitable wigwam, I found power and popularity had its inconveniences in the Highlands, as everywhere else; for, before MacGregor could be permitted to enter the house where he was to obtain rest and refreshment, he was obliged to relate the story of his escape at least a dozen times over, as I was told by an officious old man, who chose to translate it at least as often for my edification, and to whom I was in policy obliged to seem to pay a decent degree of attention. The audience being at length satisfied, group after group departed to take their bed upon the heath, or in the neighbouring huts, some cursing the Duke and Garschattachin, some lamenting the probable danger of Ewan of Brigglads, incurred by his friendship to MacGregor, but all agreeing that the escape of Rob Roy himself lost nothing in comparison with the exploit of any one of their chiefs since the days of Dougal Ciar, the founder of his line.

The friendly outlaw, now taking me by the arm, conducted me into the interior of the hut. My eyes roved round its smoky recesses in quest of Diana and her companion; but they were nowhere to be seen, and I felt as if to make inquiries might betray some secret motives, which were best concealed. The only known countenance upon which my eyes rested was that of the Bailie, who, seated on a stool by the fireside, received with a sort of reserved dignity, the welcomes of Rob Roy, the apologies which he made for his indifferent accommodation, and his inquiries after his health.

"I am pretty weel, kinsman," said the Bailie—"indifferent weel, I thank ye; and for accommodations, ane canna expect to carry about the Saut Market at his tail, as a snail does his caup;—and I am blythe that ye hae gotten out o' the hands o' your unfreends."

"Weel, weel, then," answered Roy, "what is't ails ye, man—a's weel that ends weel!—the world will last our day—Come, take a cup o' brandy—your father the deacon could take ane at anorra time."

"It might be he might do sae, Robin, after fatigue—whilk has been my lot mair ways than ane this day. But," he continued, slowly filling up a little wooden stoup which might hold about three glasses, "he was a moderate man of his bicker, as I am mysell—Here's wussing health to ye, Robin" (a sip), "and your weelfare here and hereafter" (another taste), "and also to my cousin Helen—and to your twa hopefu' lads, of whom mair anon."

So saying, he drank up the contents of the cup with great gravity and deliberation, while MacGregor winked aside to me, as if in ridicule of the air of wisdom and superior authority which the Bailie assumed towards him in their intercourse, and which he exercised when Rob was at the head of his armed clan, in full as great, or a greater degree, than when he was at the Bailie's mercy in the Tolbooth of Glasgow. It seemed to me, that MacGregor wished me, as a stranger, to understand, that if he submitted to the tone which his kinsman assumed, it was partly out of deference to the rights of hospitality, but still more for the jest's sake.

As the Bailie set down his cup he recognised me, and giving me a cordial welcome on my return, he waived farther communication with me for the present.—"I will speak to your matters anon; I maun begin, as in reason, wi' those of my kinsman.—I presume, Robin, there's naeboddy here will carry aught o' what I am gaun to say, to the town-council or elsewhere, to my prejudice or to yours?"

"Make yourself easy on that head, cousin Nicol," answered MacGregor; "the tae half o' the gillies winna ken what ye say, and the tother winna care—besides that, I wad stow the tongue out o' the head o' any o' them that suld presume to say ower again any speech held wi' me in their presence."

"Aweel, cousin, sic being the case, and Mr. Osbaldistone here being a prudent youth, and a safe friend—I se plainly tell ye, ye are breeding up your family to gang an ill gate." Then, clearing his voice with a preliminary hem, he addressed his kinsman, checking, as Malvolio proposed to do when seated in his state, his familiar smile with an austere regard of control.—"Ye ken yourself ye haud light by the law—and for my cousin Helen, forbye that her reception o' me this blessed day—whilk I excuse on account of perturbation of mind, was muckle on the north side o' *friendly*, I say (outputting this personal reason of complaint) I hae that to say o' your wife"—

"Say *nothing* of her, kinsman," said Rob, in a grave and stern tone, "but what is befitting a friend to say, and her husband to hear. Of me you are welcome to say your full pleasure."

"Aweel, aweel," said the Bailie, somewhat disconcerted, "we se let that be a pass-over—I dinna approve of making mischief in families. But here are your twa sons, Hamish and Robin, whilk signifies, as I'm gien to understand, James and Robert—I trust ye will call them sae in future—there comes nae gude o' Hamishes, and Eachines, and Angusses, except that they're the names ane aye chances to see in the indictments at the Western Circuits for cow-lifting, at the instance of his majesty's advocate for his majesty's interest. Aweel, but the twa lads, as I was saying, they haena sae muckle as the ordinar grounds, man, of liberal education—they dinna ken the very multiplication table itself, whilk is the root of a' usefu' knowledge, and they did naething but laugh and fleer at me when I tauld them my mind on their ignorance—It's my belief they can neither read, write, nor cipher, if sic a thing could be believed o' ane's ain connections in a Christian land."

"If they could, kinsman," said MacGregor, with great indifference, "their learning must have come o' free will, for whar the deil was I to get them a teacher?—wad ye hae had me put on the gate o' your Divinity Hall at Glasgow College, 'Wanted, a tutor for Rob Roy's bairns?'"

"Na, kinsman," replied Mr. Jarvie, "but ye might hae sent the lads whar they could hae learned the fear o' God, and the usages of civilised creatures. They are as ignorant as the kyloes ye used to drive to market, or the very English churls that ye sauld them to, and can do naething whatever to purpose."

"Umph!" answered Rob; "Hamish can bring down a black-cock when he's on the wing wi' a single bullet, and Rob can drive a dirk through a twa-inch board."

"Sae muckle the waur for them, cousin!—sae muckle the waur for them baith!" answered the Glasgow merchant in a tone of great decision; "an they ken naething better than that, they had better no ken that neither. Tell me yourself, Rob, what has a' this cutting, and stabbing, and shooting, and driving of dirks, whether through human flesh or fir deals, dune for yourself?—and werena ye a happier man at the tail o' your nowte-bestial, when ye were in an honest calling, than ever ye hae been since, at the head o' your Hieland kernes and gally-glasses?"

I observed that MacGregor, while his well-meaning kinsman spoke to him in this manner, turned and writhed his body like a man who indeed suffers pain, but is determined no groan shall escape his lips; and I longed for an opportunity to interrupt the well-meant, but, as it was obvious to me, quite mistaken strain, in which Jarvie addressed this extraordinary person. The dialogue, however, came to an end without my interference.

"And sae," said the Bailie, "I hae been thinking, Rob, that as it may be ye are ower deep in the black book to win a pardon, and ower auld to mend yourself, that it wad be a pity to bring up twa hopefu' lads to sic a godless trade as your ain, and I wad blythely tak them for prentices at the loom, as I began mysell, and my father the deacon afore me, though, praise to the Giver, I only trade now as wholesale dealer—And—and"—

He saw a storm gathering on Rob's brow, which probably induced him to throw in, as a sweetener of an obnoxious proposition, what he had reserved to crown his own generosity, had it been embraced as an acceptable one;—"and Robin, lad, ye needna look sae glum, for I'll pay the prentice-fee, and never plague ye for the thousand merks neither."

"*Ceade millia diaoul*, hundred thousand devils!" exclaimed Rob, rising and striding through the hut, "My sons weavers!—*Millia molligheart!*—but I wad see every loom in Glasgow, beam, traddles, and shuttles, burnt in hell-fire sooner!"

With some difficulty I made the Bailie, who was preparing a reply, comprehend the risk and impropriety of pressing our host on this topic, and in a minute he recovered, or reassumed, his serenity of temper.

"But ye mean weel—ye mean weel," said he; "so gie me your hand, Nicol, and if ever I put my sons apprentice, I will gie you the refusal o' them. And, as you say, there's the thousand merks to be settled between us.— Here, Eachin MacAnaleister, bring me my sporran."

The person he addressed, a tall, strong mountaineer, who seemed to act as MacGregor's lieutenant, brought from some place of safety a large leathern pouch, such as Highlanders of rank wear before them when in full dress, made of the skin of the sea-otter, richly garnished with silver ornaments and studs.

"I advise no man to attempt opening this sporran till he has my secret," said Rob Roy; and then twisting one button in one direction, and another in another, pulling one stud upward, and pressing another downward, the mouth of the purse, which was bound with massive silver plate, opened and gave admittance to his hand. He made me remark, as if to break short the subject on which Bailie Jarvie had spoken, that a small steel pistol was concealed within the purse, the trigger of which was connected with the mounting, and made part of the machinery, so that the weapon would certainly be discharged, and in all probability its contents lodged in the person of any one, who, being unacquainted with the secret, should tamper with the lock which secured his treasure. "This," said he touching the pistol—"this is the keeper of my privy purse."

The simplicity of the contrivance to secure a furred pouch, which could have been ripped open without any attempt on the spring, reminded me of the verses in the Odyssey, where Ulysses, in a yet ruder age, is content to secure his property by casting a curious and involved complication of cordage around the sea-chest in which it was deposited.

The Bailie put on his spectacles to examine the mechanism, and when he had done, returned it with a smile and a sigh, observing—"Ah! Rob, had ither folk's purses been as weel guarded, I doubt if your sporran wad hae been as weel filled as it kythes to be by the weight."

"Never mind, kinsman," said Rob, laughing; "it will aye open for a friend's necessity, or to pay a just due—and here," he added, pulling out a rouleau of gold, "here is your ten hundred merks—count them, and see that you are full and justly paid."

Mr. Jarvie took the money in silence, and weighing it in his hand for an instant, laid it on the table, and replied, "Rob, I canna tak it—I downa intromit with it—there can nae gude come o't—I hae seen ower weel the day what sort of a gate your gowd is made in—ill-got gear ne'er prospered; and, to be plain wi' you, I winna meddle wi't—it looks as there might be bluid on't."

"Troutsho!" said the outlaw, affecting an indifference which perhaps he did not altogether feel; "it's gude French gowd, and ne'er was in Scotchman's pouch before mine. Look at them, man—they are a' louis-d'ors, bright and bonnie as the day they were coined."

"The waur, the waur—just sae muckle the waur, Robin," replied the Bailie, averting his eyes from the money, though, like Caesar on the Lupercal, his fingers seemed to itch for it—"Rebellion is waur than witchcraft, or robbery either; there's gospel warrant for't."

"Never mind the warrant, kinsman," said the freebooter; "you come by the gowd honestly, and in payment of a just debt—it came from the one king, you may gie it to the other, if ye like; and it will just serve for a weakening of the enemy, and in the point where puir King James is weakest too, for, God knows, he has hands and hearts eneugh, but I doubt he wants the siller."

"He'll no get mony Hielanders then, Robin," said Mr. Jarvie, as, again replacing his spectacles on his nose, he undid the rouleau, and began to count its contents.

"Nor Lowlanders neither," said MacGregor, arching his eyebrow, and, as he looked at me, directing a glance towards Mr. Jarvie, who, all unconscious of the ridicule, weighed each piece with habitual scrupulosity; and having told twice over the sum, which amounted to the discharge of his debt, principal and interest, he returned three pieces to buy his kinswoman a gown, as he expressed himself, and a brace more for the twa bairns, as he called them, requesting they might buy anything they liked with them except gunpowder. The Highlander stared at his kinsman's unexpected generosity, but courteously accepted his gift, which he deposited for the time in his well-secured pouch.

The Bailie next produced the original bond for the debt, on the back of which he had written a formal discharge, which, having subscribed himself, he requested me to sign as a witness. I did so, and Bailie Jarvie was looking anxiously around for another, the Scottish law requiring the subscription of two witnesses to validate either a bond or acquittance. "You will hardly find a man that can write save ourselves within these three miles," said Rob, "but I'll settle the matter as easily;" and, taking the paper from before his kinsman, he threw it in the fire. Bailie Jarvie stared in his turn, but his kinsman continued, "That's a Hieland settlement of accounts. The time might come, cousin, were I to keep a' these charges and discharges, that friends might be brought into trouble for having dealt with me."

The Bailie attempted no reply to this argument, and our supper now appeared in a style of abundance, and even delicacy, which, for the place, might be considered as extraordinary. The greater part of the provisions were cold, intimating they had been prepared at some distance; and there were some bottles of good French wine to relish pasties of various sorts of game, as well as other dishes. I remarked that MacGregor, while doing the honours of the table with great and anxious hospitality, prayed us to excuse the circumstance that some particular dish or pasty had been infringed on before it was presented to us. "You must know," said he to Mr. Jarvie, but without looking towards me, "you are not the only guests this night in the MacGregor's country, whilk, doubtless, ye will believe, since my wife and the twa lads would otherwise have been maist ready to attend you, as weel beseems them."

Bailie Jarvie looked as if he felt glad at any circumstance which occasioned their absence; and I should have been entirely of his opinion, had it not been that the outlaw's apology seemed to imply they were in attendance on Diana and her companion, whom even in my thoughts I could not bear to designate as her husband. While the unpleasant ideas arising from this suggestion counteracted the good effects of appetite, welcome, and good cheer, I remarked that Rob Roy's attention had extended itself to providing us better bedding than we had enjoyed the night before. Two of the least fragile of the bedsteads, which stood by the wall of the hut, had been stuffed with heath, then in full flower, so artificially arranged, that, the flowers being uppermost, afforded a mattress at once elastic and fragrant. Cloaks, and such bedding as could be collected, stretched over this vegetable couch, made it both soft and warm. The Bailie seemed exhausted by fatigue. I resolved to adjourn my communication to him until next morning; and therefore suffered him to betake himself to bed so soon as he had finished a plentiful supper. Though tired and harassed, I did not myself feel the same disposition to sleep, but rather a restless and feverish anxiety, which led to some farther discourse betwixt me and MacGregor.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

*A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate;
I've seen the last look of her heavenly eyes,—
I've heard the last sound of her blessed voice,—
I've seen her fair form from my sight depart;
My doom is closed.
Count Basil.*

"I ken not what to make of you, Mr. Osbaldistone," said MacGregor, as he pushed the flask towards me. "You eat not, you show no wish for rest; and yet you drink not, though that flask of Bourdeaux might have come out of Sir Hildebrand's ain cellar. Had you been always as abstinent, you would have escaped the deadly hatred of your cousin Rashleigh."

"Had I been always prudent," said I, blushing at the scene he recalled to my recollection, "I should have escaped a worse evil—the reproach of my own conscience."

MacGregor cast a keen and somewhat fierce glance on me, as if to read whether the reproof, which he evidently felt, had been intentionally conveyed. He saw that I was thinking of myself, not of him, and turned his face towards the fire with a deep sigh. I followed his example, and each remained for a few minutes wrapt in his own painful reverie. All in the hut were now asleep, or at least silent, excepting ourselves.

MacGregor first broke silence, in the tone of one who takes up his determination to enter on a painful subject. "My cousin Nicol Jarvie means well," he said, "but he presses ower hard on the temper and situation of a man like me, considering what I have been—what I have been forced to become—and, above all, that which has forced me to become what I am."

He paused; and, though feeling the delicate nature of the discussion in which the conversation was likely to engage me, I could not help replying, that I did not doubt his present situation had much which must be most unpleasant to his feelings.

"I should be happy to learn," I added, "that there is an honourable chance of your escaping from it."

"You speak like a boy," returned MacGregor, in a low tone that growled like distant thunder—"like a boy, who thinks the auld gnarled oak can be twisted as easily as the young sapling. Can I forget that I have been branded as an outlaw—stigmatised as a traitor—a price set on my head as if I had been a wolf—my family treated as the dam and cubs of the hill-fox, whom all may torment, vilify, degrade, and insult—the very name which came to me from a long and noble line of martial ancestors, denounced, as if it were a spell to conjure up the devil with?"

As he went on in this manner, I could plainly see, that, by the enumeration of his wrongs, he was lashing himself up into a rage, in order to justify in his own eyes the errors they had led him into. In this he perfectly succeeded; his light grey eyes contracting alternately and dilating their pupils, until they seemed actually to flash with flame, while he thrust forward and drew back his foot, grasped the hilt of his dirk, extended his arm, clenched his fist, and finally rose from his seat.

"And they *shall* find," he said, in the same muttered but deep tone of stifled passion, "that the name they have dared to proscribe—that the name of MacGregor—is a spell to raise the wild devil withal. *They* shall hear of my vengeance, that would scorn to listen to the story of my wrongs—The miserable Highland drover, bankrupt, barefooted,—stripped of all, dishonoured and hunted down, because the avarice of others grasped at more than that poor all could pay, shall burst on them in an awful change. They that scoffed at the grovelling worm, and trode upon him, may cry and howl when they see the stoop of the flying and fiery-mouthed dragon.—But why do I speak of all this?" he said, sitting down again, and in a calmer tone—"Only ye may opine it frets my patience, Mr. Osbaldistone, to be hunted like an otter, or a sealgh, or a salmon upon the shallows, and that by my very friends and neighbours; and to have as many sword-cuts made, and pistols flashed at me, as I had this day in the ford of Avondow, would try a saint's temper, much more a Highlander's, who are not famous for that gude gift, as ye may hae heard, Mr. Osbaldistone.—But as thing bides wi' me o' what Nicol said;—I'm vexed for the bairns—I'm vexed when I think o' Hamish and Robert living their father's life." And yielding to despondence on account of his sons, which he felt not upon his own, the father rested his head upon his hand.

I was much affected, Will. All my life long I have been more melted by the distress under which a strong, proud, and powerful mind is compelled to give way, than by the more easily excited sorrows of softer dispositions. The desire of aiding him rushed strongly on my mind, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty, and even impossibility, of the task.

"We have extensive connections abroad," said I: "might not your sons, with some assistance—and they are well entitled to what my father's house can give—find an honourable resource in foreign service?"

I believe my countenance showed signs of sincere emotion; but my companion, taking me by the hand, as I was going to speak farther, said—"I thank—I thank ye—but let us say nae mair o' this. I did not think the eye of man would again have seen a tear on MacGregor's eye-lash." He dashed the moisture from his long gray eye-lash and shaggy red eye-brow with the back of his hand. "To-morrow morning," he said, "we'll talk of this, and we will talk, too, of your affairs—for we are early starters in the dawn, even when we have the luck to have good beds to sleep in. Will ye not pledge me in a grace cup?" I declined the invitation.

"Then, by the soul of St. Maronoch! I must pledge myself," and he poured out and swallowed at least half-a-quart of wine.

I laid myself down to repose, resolving to delay my own inquiries until his mind should be in a more composed state. Indeed, so much had this singular man possessed himself of my imagination, that I felt it impossible to avoid watching him for some minutes after I had flung myself on my heath mattress to seeming rest. He walked up and down the hut, crossed himself from time to time, muttering over some Latin prayer of the Catholic church; then wrapped himself in his plaid, with his naked sword on one side, and his pistol on the other, so disposing the folds of his mantle that he could start up at a moment's warning, with a weapon in either hand, ready for instant combat. In a few minutes his heavy breathing announced that he was fast asleep. Overpowered by fatigue, and stunned by the various unexpected and extraordinary scenes of the day, I, in my turn, was soon overpowered by a slumber deep and overwhelming, from which, notwithstanding every cause for watchfulness, I did not awake until the next morning.

When I opened my eyes, and recollected my situation, I found that MacGregor had already left the hut. I awakened the Bailie, who, after many a snort and groan, and some heavy complaints of the soreness of his bones, in consequence of the unwonted exertions of the preceding day, was at length able to comprehend the joyful intelligence, that the assets carried off by Rashleigh Osbaldistone had been safely recovered. The instant he understood my meaning, he forgot all his grievances, and, bustling up in a great hurry, proceeded to compare the contents of the packet which I put into his hands, with Mr. Owen's memorandums, muttering, as he went on, "Right, right—the real thing—Bailie and Whittington—where's Bailie and Whittington?—seven hundred, six, and eight—exact to a fraction—Pollock and Peelman—twenty-eight, seven—exact—Praise be blest!—Grub and Grinder—seven—exact—better men cannot be—three hundred and seventy—Gliblad—twenty; I doubt Gliblad's ganging—Slipprytongue; Slipprytongue's gaen—but they are sma'sums—sma'sums—the rest's a'right—Praise be blest! we have got the stuff, and may leave this doleful country. I shall never think on Loch-Ard but the thought will gar me grew again."

"I am sorry, cousin," said MacGregor, who entered the hut during the last observation, "I have not been altogether in the circumstances to make your reception sic as I could have desired—natheless, if you would condescend to visit my *puir dwelling*"—

"Muckle obliged, muckle obliged," answered Mr. Jarvie, very hastily—"But we maun be ganging—we maun be jogging, Mr. Osbaldistone and me—business canna wait."

"Aweel, kinsman," replied the Highlander, "ye ken our fashion—foster the guest that comes—further him that maun gang. But ye cannot return by Drymen—I must set you on Loch Lomond, and boat ye down to the Ferry o' Balloch, and send your nags round to meet ye there. It's a maxim of a wise man never to return by the same road he came, providing another's free to him."

"Ay, ay, Rob," said the Bailie, "that's ane o' the maxims ye learned when ye were a drover;—ye caredna to face the tenants where your beasts had been taking a rug of their moorland grass in the by-ganging, and I doubt your road's waur marked now than it was then."

"The mair need not to travel it ower often, kinsman," replied Rob; "but I'll send round your nags to the ferry wi' Dougal Gregor, wha is converted for that purpose into the Bailie's man, coming—not, as ye may believe, from Aberfoil or Rob Roy's country, but on a quiet jaunt from Stirling. See, here he is."

"I wadna hae ken'd the creature," said Mr. Jarvie; nor indeed was it easy to recognise the wild Highlander, when he appeared before the door of the cottage, attired in a hat, periwig, and riding-coat, which had once called Andrew Fairservice master, and mounted on the Bailie's horse, and leading mine. He received his last orders from his master to avoid certain places where he might be exposed to suspicion—to collect what intelligence he could in the course of his journey, and to await our coming at an appointed place, near the Ferry of Balloch.

At the same time, MacGregor invited us to accompany him upon our own road, assuring us that we must necessarily march a few miles before breakfast, and recommending a dram of brandy as a proper introduction to the journey, in which he was pledged by the Bailie, who pronounced it "an unlawful and perilous habit

to begin the day wi' spirituous liquors, except to defend the stomach (whilk was a tender part) against the morning mist; in whilk case his father the deacon had recommended a dram, by precept and example."

"Very true, kinsman," replied Rob, "for which reason we, who are Children of the Mist, have a right to drink brandy from morning till night."

The Bailie, thus refreshed, was mounted on a small Highland pony; another was offered for my use, which, however, I declined; and we resumed, under very different guidance and auspices, our journey of the preceding day.

Our escort consisted of MacGregor, and five or six of the handsomest, best armed, and most athletic mountaineers of his band, and whom he had generally in immediate attendance upon his own person.

When we approached the pass, the scene of the skirmish of the preceding day, and of the still more direful deed which followed it, MacGregor hastened to speak, as if it were rather to what he knew must be necessarily passing in my mind, than to any thing I had said—he spoke, in short, to my thoughts, and not to my words.

"You must think hardly of us, Mr. Osbaldistone, and it is not natural that it should be otherwise. But remember, at least, we have not been unprovoked. We are a rude and an ignorant, and it may be a violent and passionate, but we are not a cruel people. The land might be at peace and in law for us, did they allow us to enjoy the blessings of peaceful law. But we have been a persecuted generation."

"And persecution," said the Bailie, "maketh wise men mad."

"What must it do then to men like us, living as our fathers did a thousand years since, and possessing scarce more lights than they did? Can we view their bluidy edicts against us—their hanging, heading, hounding, and hunting down an ancient and honourable name—as deserving better treatment than that which enemies give to enemies?—Here I stand, have been in twenty frays, and never hurt man but when I was in het bluid; and yet they wad betray me and hang me like a masterless dog, at the gate of ony great man that has an ill will at me."

I replied, "that the proscription of his name and family sounded in English ears as a very cruel and arbitrary law;" and having thus far soothed him, I resumed my propositions of obtaining military employment for himself, if he chose it, and his sons, in foreign parts. MacGregor shook me very cordially by the hand, and detaining me, so as to permit Mr. Jarvie to precede us, a manoeuvre for which the narrowness of the road served as an excuse, he said to me—"You are a kind-hearted and an honourable youth, and understand, doubtless, that which is due to the feelings of a man of honour. But the heather that I have trode upon when living, must bloom ower me when I am dead—my heart would sink, and my arm would shrink and wither like fern in the frost, were I to lose sight of my native hills; nor has the world a scene that would console me for the loss of the rocks and cairns, wild as they are, that you see around us.—And Helen—what could become of her, were I to leave her the subject of new insult and atrocity?—or how could she bear to be removed from these scenes, where the remembrance of her wrongs is aye sweetened by the recollection of her revenge?—I was once so hard put at by my Great enemy, as I may well ca' him, that I was forced e'en to gie way to the tide, and removed myself and my people and family from our dwellings in our native land, and to withdraw for a time into MacCallum More's country—and Helen made a Lament on our departure, as weel as MacRimmon* himsell could hae framed it—and so piteously sad and waesome, that our hearts amaist broke as we sate and listened to her—it was like the wailing of one that mourns for the mother that bore him—the tears came down the rough faces of our gillies as they hearkened; and I wad not have the same touch of heartbreak again, no, not to have all the lands that ever were owned by MacGregor."

* The MacRimmons or MacCrimmonds were hereditary pipers to the chiefs of MacLeod, and celebrated for their talents. The pibroch said to have been composed by Helen MacGregor is still in existence. See the Introduction to this Novel.

"But your sons," I said—"they are at the age when your countrymen have usually no objection to see the world?"

"And I should be content," he replied, "that they pushed their fortune in the French or Spanish service, as is the wont of Scottish cavaliers of honour; and last night your plan seemed feasible enough—But I hae seen his Excellency this morning before ye were up."

"Did he then quarter so near us?" said I, my bosom throbbing with anxiety.

"Nearer than ye thought," was MacGregor's reply; "but he seemed rather in some shape to jalouse your speaking to the young leddy; and so you see"—

"There was no occasion for jealousy," I answered, with some haughtiness;—"I should not have intruded on his privacy."

"But ye must not be offended, or look out from amang your curls then, like a wildcat out of an ivy-tod, for ye are to understand that he wishes most sincere weel to you, and has proved it. And it's partly that whilk has set the heather on fire e'en now."

"Heather on fire?" said I. "I do not understand you."

"Why," resumed MacGregor, "ye ken weel enough that women and gear are at the bottom of a' the mischief in this world. I hae been misdoubting your cousin Rashleigh since ever he saw that he wasna to get Die Vernon for his marrow, and I think he took grudge at his Excellency mainly on that account. But then came the splore about the surrendering your papers—and we hae now gude evidence, that, sae soon as he was compelled to yield them up, he rade post to Stirling, and tauld the Government all and mair than all, that was gaun doucely on amang us hill-folk; and, doubtless, that was the way that the country was laid to take his Excellency and the leddy, and to make sic an unexpected raid on me. And I hae as little doubt that the poor deevil Morris, whom he could gar believe anything, was egged on by him, and some of the Lowland gentry, to trepan me in the gate he tried to do. But if Rashleigh Osbaldistone were baith the last and best of his name, and granting that he and I ever forgather again, the fiend go down my weasand with a bare blade at his belt, if we part before my dirk and his best blude are weel acquainted thegither!"

He pronounced the last threat with an ominous frown, and the appropriate gesture of his hand upon his dagger.

"I should almost rejoice at what has happened," said I, "could I hope that Rashleigh's treachery might prove the means of preventing the explosion of the rash and desperate intrigues in which I have long suspected him to be a prime agent."

"Trow ye na that," said Rob Roy; "traitor's word never yet hurt honest cause. He was ower deep in our secrets, that's true; and had it not been so, Stirling and Edinburgh Castles would have been baith in our hands by this time, or briefly hereafter, whilk is now scarce to be hoped for. But there are ower mony engaged, and far ower gude a cause to be gien up for the breath of a traitor's tale, and that will be seen and heard of ere it be lang. And so, as I was about to say, the best of my thanks to you for your offer anent my sons, whilk last night I had some thoughts to have embraced in their behalf. But I see that this villain's treason will convince our great folks that they must instantly draw to a head, and make a blow for it, or be taen in their houses, coupled up like hounds, and driven up to London like the honest noblemen and gentlemen in the year seventeen hundred and seven. Civil war is like a cockatrice;—we have sitten hatching the egg that held it for ten years, and might hae sitten on for ten years mair, when in comes Rashleigh, and chips the shell, and out bangs the wonder amang us, and cries to fire and sword. Now in sic a matter I'll hae need o' a' the hands I can mak; and, nae disparagement to the Kings of France and Spain, whom I wish very weel to, King James is as gude a man as ony o' them, and has the best right to Hamish and Rob, being his natural-born subjects."

I easily comprehended that these words boded a general national convulsion; and, as it would have been alike useless and dangerous to have combated the political opinions of my guide, at such a place and moment, I contented myself with regretting the promiscuous scene of confusion and distress likely to arise from any general exertion in favour of the exiled royal family.

"Let it come, man—let it come," answered MacGregor; "ye never saw dull weather clear without a shower; and if the world is turned upside down, why, honest men have the better chance to cut bread out of it."

I again attempted to bring him back to the subject of Diana; but although on most occasions and subjects he used a freedom of speech which I had no great delight in listening to, yet upon that alone which was most interesting to me, he kept a degree of scrupulous reserve, and contented himself with intimating, "that he hoped the leddy would be soon in a quieter country than this was like to be for one while." I was obliged to be content with this answer, and to proceed in the hope that accident might, as on a former occasion, stand my friend, and allow me at least the sad gratification of bidding farewell to the object which had occupied such a share of my affections, so much beyond even what I had supposed, till I was about to be separated from her for ever.

We pursued the margin of the lake for about six English miles, through a devious and beautifully variegated path, until we attained a sort of Highland farm, or assembly of hamlets, near the head of that fine sheet of water, called, if I mistake not, Lediart, or some such name. Here a numerous party of MacGregor's men were stationed in order to receive us. The taste as well as the eloquence of tribes in a savage, or, to speak more properly, in a rude state, is usually just, because it is unfettered by system and affectation; and of this I had an example in the choice these mountaineers had made of a place to receive their guests. It has been said that a British monarch would judge well to receive the embassy of a rival power in the cabin of a man-of-war; and a Highland leader acted with some propriety in choosing a situation where the natural objects of grandeur proper to his country might have their full effect on the minds of his guests.

We ascended about two hundred yards from the shores of the lake, guided by a brawling brook, and left on the right hand four or five Highland huts, with patches of arable land around them, so small as to show that they must have been worked with the spade rather than the plough, cut as it were out of the surrounding copsewood, and waving with crops of barley and oats. Above this limited space the hill became more steep; and on its edge we descried the glittering arms and waving drapery of about fifty of MacGregor's followers. They were stationed on a spot, the recollection of which yet strikes me with admiration. The brook, hurling its waters downwards from the mountain, had in this spot encountered a barrier rock, over which it had made its way by two distinct leaps. The first fall, across which a magnificent old oak, slanting out from the farther bank, partly extended itself as if to shroud the dusky stream of the cascade, might be about twelve feet high; the broken waters were received in a beautiful stone basin, almost as regular as if hewn by a sculptor; and after wheeling around its flinty margin, they made a second precipitous dash, through a dark and narrow chasm, at least fifty feet in depth, and from thence, in a hurried, but comparatively a more gentle course, escaped to join the lake.

With the natural taste which belongs to mountaineers, and especially to the Scottish Highlanders, whose feelings, I have observed, are often allied with the romantic and poetical, Rob Roy's wife and followers had prepared our morning repast in a scene well calculated to impress strangers with some feelings of awe. They are also naturally a grave and proud people, and, however rude in our estimation, carry their ideas of form and politeness to an excess that would appear overstrained, except from the demonstration of superior force which accompanies the display of it; for it must be granted that the air of punctilious deference and rigid etiquette which would seem ridiculous in an ordinary peasant, has, like the salute of a *corps-de-garde*, a propriety when tendered by a Highlander completely armed. There was, accordingly, a good deal of formality in our approach and reception.

The Highlanders, who had been dispersed on the side of the hill, drew themselves together when we came in view, and, standing firm and motionless, appeared in close column behind three figures, whom I soon recognised to be Helen MacGregor and her two sons. MacGregor himself arranged his attendants in the rear, and, requesting Mr. Jarvie to dismount where the ascent became steep, advanced slowly, marshalling us forward at the head of the troop. As we advanced, we heard the wild notes of the bagpipes, which lost their natural discord from being mingled with the dashing sound of the cascade. When we came close, the wife of MacGregor came forward to meet us. Her dress was studiously arranged in a more feminine taste than it had been on the preceding day, but her features wore the same lofty, unbending, and resolute character; and as she folded my friend the Bailie in an unexpected and apparently unwelcome embrace, I could perceive by the agitation of his wig, his back, and the calves of his legs, that he felt much like to one who feels himself suddenly in the gripe of a she-bear, without being able to distinguish whether the animal is in kindness or in wrath.

"Kinsman," she said, "you are welcome—and you, too, stranger," she added, releasing my alarmed companion, who instinctively drew back and settled his wig, and addressing herself to me—"you also are welcome. You came," she added, "to our unhappy country, when our bloods were chafed, and our hands were red. Excuse the rudeness that gave you a rough welcome, and lay it upon the evil times, and not upon us." All this was said with the manners of a princess, and in the tone and style of a court. Nor was there the least tincture of that vulgarity, which we naturally attach to the Lowland Scottish. There was a strong provincial accentuation, but, otherwise, the language rendered by Helen MacGregor, out of the native and poetical Gaelic, into English, which she had acquired as we do learned tongues, but had probably never heard applied to the mean purposes of ordinary life, was graceful, flowing, and declamatory. Her husband, who had in his time played many parts, used a much less elevated and emphatic dialect;—but even *his* language rose in purity of expression, as you may have remarked, if I have been accurate in recording it, when the affairs which he discussed were of an agitating and important nature; and it appears to me in his case, and in that of some other Highlanders whom I have known, that, when familiar and facetious, they used the Lowland Scottish dialect,—when serious and impassioned, their thoughts arranged themselves in the idiom of their native language; and in the latter case, as they uttered the corresponding ideas in English, the expressions sounded wild, elevated, and poetical. In fact, the language of passion is almost always pure as well as vehement, and it is no uncommon thing to hear a Scotchman, when overwhelmed by a countryman with a tone of bitter and fluent upbraiding, reply by way of taunt to his adversary, "You have gotten to your English."

Be this as it may, the wife of MacGregor invited us to a refreshment spread out on the grass, which abounded with all the good things their mountains could offer, but was clouded by the dark and undisturbed gravity which sat on the brow of our hostess, as well as by our deep and anxious recollection of what had taken place on the preceding day. It was in vain that the leader exerted himself to excite mirth;—a chill hung over our minds, as if the feast had been funereal; and every bosom felt light when it was ended.

"Adieu, cousin," she said to Mr. Jarvie, as we rose from the entertainment; "the best wish Helen MacGregor can give to a friend is, that he may see her no more." The Bailie struggled to answer, probably with some commonplace maxim of morality;—but the calm and melancholy sternness of her countenance bore down and disconcerted the mechanical and formal importance of the magistrate. He coughed,—hemmed,—bowed,—and was silent.

"For you, stranger," she said, "I have a token, from one whom you can never"—

"Helen!" interrupted MacGregor, in a loud and stern voice, "what means this?—have you forgotten the charge?"

"MacGregor," she replied, "I have forgotten nought that is fitting for me to remember. It is not such hands as these," and she stretched forth her long, sinewy, and bare arm, "that are fitting to convey love-tokens, were the gift connected with aught but misery. Young man," she said, presenting me with a ring, which I well remembered as one of the few ornaments that Miss Vernon sometimes wore, "this comes from one whom you will never see more. If it is a joyless token, it is well fitted to pass through the hands of one to whom joy can never be known. Her last words were—Let him forget me for ever."

"And can she," I said, almost without being conscious that I spoke, "suppose that is possible?"

"All may be forgotten," said the extraordinary female who addressed me,—all—but the sense of dishonour, and the desire of vengeance."

"*Seid suas!*"* cried the MacGregor, stamping with impatience.

* "Strike up."

The bagpipes sounded, and with their thrilling and jarring tones cut short our conference. Our leave of our hostess was taken by silent gestures; and we resumed our journey with an additional proof on my part, that I was beloved by Diana, and was separated from her for ever.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

*Farewell to the land where the clouds love to rest,
Like the shroud of the dead, on the mountain's cold breast
To the cataract's roar where the eagles reply,
And the lake her lone bosom expands to the sky.*

Our route lay through a dreary, yet romantic country, which the distress of my own mind prevented me from remarking particularly, and which, therefore, I will not attempt to describe. The lofty peak of Ben Lomond, here the predominant monarch of the mountains, lay on our right hand, and served as a striking landmark. I was not awakened from my apathy, until, after a long and toilsome walk, we emerged through a pass in the hills, and Loch Lomond opened before us. I will spare

you the attempt to describe what you would hardly comprehend without going to see it. But certainly this noble lake, boasting innumerable beautiful islands, of every varying form and outline which fancy can frame,—its northern extremity narrowing until it is lost among dusky and retreating mountains,—while, gradually widening as it extends to the southward, it spreads its base around the indentures and promontories of a fair and fertile land, affords one of the most surprising, beautiful, and sublime spectacles in nature. The eastern side, peculiarly rough and rugged, was at this time the chief seat of MacGregor and his clan,—to curb whom, a small garrison had been stationed in a central position betwixt Loch Lomond and another lake. The extreme strength of the country, however, with the numerous passes, marshes, caverns, and other places of concealment or defence, made the establishment of this little fort seem rather an acknowledgment of the danger, than an effectual means of securing against it.

On more than one occasion, as well as on that which I witnessed, the garrison suffered from the adventurous spirit of the outlaw and his followers. These advantages were never sullied by ferocity when he himself was in command; for, equally good-tempered and sagacious, he understood well the danger of incurring unnecessary odium. I learned with pleasure that he had caused the captives of the preceding day to be liberated in safety; and many traits of mercy, and even of generosity, are recorded of this remarkable man on similar occasions.

A boat waited for us in a creek beneath a huge rock, manned by four lusty Highland rowers; and our host took leave of us with great cordiality, and even affection. Betwixt him and Mr. Jarvie, indeed, there seemed to exist a degree of mutual regard, which formed a strong contrast to their different occupations and habits. After kissing each other very lovingly, and when they were just in the act of parting, the Bailie, in the fulness of his heart, and with a faltering voice, assured his kinsman, "that if ever an hundred pund, or even twa hundred, would put him or his family in a settled way, he need but just send a line to the Saut-Market;" and Rob, grasping his basket-hilt with one hand, and shaking Mr. Jarvie's heartily with the other, protested, "that if ever anybody should affront his kinsman, an he would but let him ken, he would stow his lugs out of his head, were he the best man in Glasgow."

With these assurances of mutual aid and continued good-will, we bore away from the shore, and took our course for the south-western angle of the lake, where it gives birth to the river Leven. Rob Roy remained for some time standing on the rock from beneath which we had departed, conspicuous by his long gun, waving tartans, and the single plume in his cap, which in those days denoted the Highland gentleman and soldier; although I observe that the present military taste has decorated the Highland bonnet with a quantity of black plumage resembling that which is borne before funerals. At length, as the distance increased between us, we saw him turn and go slowly up the side of the hill, followed by his immediate attendants or bodyguard.

We performed our voyage for a long time in silence, interrupted only by the Gaelic chant which one of the rowers sung in low irregular measure, rising occasionally into a wild chorus, in which the others joined.

My own thoughts were sad enough;—yet I felt something soothing in the magnificent scenery with which I was surrounded; and thought, in the enthusiasm of the moment, that had my faith been that of Rome, I could have consented to live and die a lonely hermit in one of the romantic and beautiful islands amongst which our boat glided.

The Bailie had also his speculations, but they were of somewhat a different complexion; as I found when, after about an hour's silence, during which he had been mentally engaged in the calculations necessary, he undertook to prove the possibility of draining the lake, and "giving to plough and harrow many hundred, ay, many a thousand acres, from whilk no man could get earthly gude e'enow, unless it were a gedd,* or a dish of perch now and then."

* A pike.

Amidst a long discussion, which he "crammed into mine ear against the stomach of my sense," I only remember, that it was part of his project to preserve a portion of the lake just deep enough and broad enough for the purposes of water-carriage, so that coal-barges and gabbards should pass as easily between Dumbarton and Glenfalloch as between Glasgow and Greenock.

At length we neared our distant place of landing, adjoining to the ruins of an ancient castle, and just where the lake discharges its superfluous waters into the Leven. There we found Dougal with the horses. The Bailie had formed a plan with respect to "the creature," as well as upon the draining of the lake; and, perhaps in both cases, with more regard to the utility than to the practical possibility of his scheme. "Dougal," he said, "ye are a kindly creature, and hae the sense and feeling o' what is due to your betters—and I'm e'en wae for you, Dougal, for it canna be but that in the life ye lead you suld get a Jeddart cast* ae day suner or later. I trust, considering my services as a magistrate, and my father the deacon's afore me, I hae interest eneugh in the council to gar them wink a wee at a waur faut than yours.

* ["The memory of Dunbar's legal (?) proceedings at Jedburgh is preserved in the proverbial phrase *Jeddart Justice*, which signifies trial *after* execution."—*Minstrelsy of the Border*, Preface, p. lvi.]

Sae I hae been thinking, that if ye will gang back to Glasgow wi' us, being a strong-backit creature, ye might be employed in the warehouse till something better suld cast up."

"Her nainsell muckle obliged till the Bailie's honour," replied Dougal; "but teil be in her shanks fan she gangs on a cause-way'd street, unless she be drawn up the Gallowgate wi' tows, as she was before."

In fact, I afterwards learned that Dougal had originally come to Glasgow as a prisoner, from being concerned in some depredation, but had somehow found such favour in the eyes of the jailor, that, with rather overweening confidence, he had retained him in his service as one of the turnkeys; a task which Dougal had discharged with sufficient fidelity, so far as was known, until overcome by his clannish prejudices on the unexpected appearance of his old leader.

Astonished at receiving so round a refusal to so favourable an offer, the Bailie, turning to me, observed, that the "creature was a natural-born idiot." I testified my own gratitude in a way which Dougal much better relished, by slipping a couple of guineas into his hand. He no sooner felt the touch of the gold, than he sprung twice or thrice from the earth with the agility of a wild buck, flinging out first one heel and then another, in a manner which would have astonished a French dancing-master. He ran to the boatmen to show them the prize, and a small gratuity made them take part in his raptures. He then, to use a favourite expression of the dramatic John Bunyan, "went on his way, and I saw him no more."

The Bailie and I mounted our horses, and proceeded on the road to Glasgow. When we had lost the view of the lake, and its superb amphitheatre of mountains, I could not help expressing with enthusiasm, my sense of its natural beauties, although I was conscious that Mr. Jarvie was a very uncongenial spirit to communicate with on such a subject.

"Ye are a young gentleman," he replied, "and an Englishman, and a' this may be very fine to you; but for me, wha am a plain man, and ken something o' the different values of land, I wadna gie the finest sight we hae seen in the Hielands, for the first keek o' the Gorbals o' Glasgow; and if I were ance there, it suldna be every fule's errand, begging your pardon, Mr. Francis, that suld take me out o' sight o' Saint Mungo's steeple again!"

The honest man had his wish; for, by dint of travelling very late, we arrived at his own house that night, or rather on the succeeding morning. Having seen my worthy fellow-traveller safely consigned to the charge of the considerate and officious Mattie, I proceeded to Mrs. Flyter's, in whose house, even at this unwonted hour, light was still burning. The door was opened by no less a person than Andrew Fairservice himself, who, upon the first sound of my voice, set up a loud shout of joyful recognition, and, without uttering a syllable, ran up stairs towards a parlour on the second floor, from the windows of which the light proceeded. Justly conceiving that he went to announce my return to the anxious Owen, I followed him upon the foot. Owen was not alone, there was another in the apartment—it was my father.

The first impulse was to preserve the dignity of his usual equanimity,—"Francis, I am glad to see you." The next was to embrace me tenderly,—"My dear—dear son!"—Owen secured one of my hands, and wetted it with his tears, while he joined in gratulating my return. These are scenes which address themselves to the eye and to the heart rather than to the ear—My old eye-lids still moisten at the recollection of our meeting; but your kind and affectionate feelings can well imagine what I should find it impossible to describe.

When the tumult of our joy was over, I learnt that my father had arrived from Holland shortly after Owen had set off for Scotland. Determined and rapid in all his movements, he only stopped to provide the means of discharging the obligations incumbent on his house. By his extensive resources, with funds enlarged, and

credit fortified, by eminent success in his continental speculation, he easily accomplished what perhaps his absence alone rendered difficult, and set out for Scotland to exact justice from Rashleigh Osbaldistone, as well as to put order to his affairs in that country. My father's arrival in full credit, and with the ample means of supporting his engagements honourably, as well as benefiting his correspondents in future, was a stunning blow to MacVittie and Company, who had conceived his star set for ever. Highly incensed at the usage his confidential clerk and agent had received at their hands, Mr. Osbaldistone refused every tender of apology and accommodation; and having settled the balance of their account, announced to them that, with all its numerous contingent advantages, that leaf of their ledger was closed for ever.

While he enjoyed this triumph over false friends, he was not a little alarmed on my account. Owen, good man, had not supposed it possible that a journey of fifty or sixty miles, which may be made with so much ease and safety in any direction from London, could be attended with any particular danger. But he caught alarm, by sympathy, from my father, to whom the country, and the lawless character of its inhabitants, were better known.

These apprehensions were raised to agony, when, a few hours before I arrived, Andrew Fairservice made his appearance, with a dismal and exaggerated account of the uncertain state in which he had left me. The nobleman with whose troops he had been a sort of prisoner, had, after examination, not only dismissed him, but furnished him with the means of returning rapidly to Glasgow, in order to announce to my friends my precarious and unpleasant situation.

Andrew was one of those persons who have no objection to the sort of temporary attention and woeful importance which attaches itself to the bearer of bad tidings, and had therefore by no means smoothed down his tale in the telling, especially as the rich London merchant himself proved unexpectedly one of the auditors. He went at great length into an account of the dangers I had escaped, chiefly, as he insinuated, by means of his own experience, exertion, and sagacity.

"What was to come of me now, when my better angel, in his (Andrew's) person, was removed from my side, it was," he said, "sad and sair to conjecture; that the Bailie was nae better than just naebody at a pinch, or something waur, for he was a conceited body—and Andrew hated conceit—but certainly, atween the pistols and the carabines of the troopers, that rappit aff the tane after the tother as fast as hail, and the dirks and claymores o' the Hielanders, and the deep waters and weils o' the Avondow, it was to be thought there wad be a puir account of the young gentleman."

This statement would have driven Owen to despair, had he been alone and unsupported; but my father's perfect knowledge of mankind enabled him easily to appreciate the character of Andrew, and the real amount of his intelligence. Stripped of all exaggeration, however, it was alarming enough to a parent. He determined to set out in person to obtain my liberty by ransom or negotiation, and was busied with Owen till a late hour, in order to get through some necessary correspondence, and devolve on the latter some business which should be transacted during his absence; and thus it chanced that I found them watchers.

It was late ere we separated to rest, and, too impatient long to endure repose, I was stirring early the next morning. Andrew gave his attendance at my levee, as in duty bound, and, instead of the scarecrow figure to which he had been reduced at Aberfoil, now appeared in the attire of an undertaker, a goodly suit, namely, of the deepest mourning. It was not till after one or two queries, which the rascal affected as long as he could to misunderstand, that I found out he "had thought it but decent to put on mourning, on account of my inexpressible loss; and as the broker at whose shop he had equipped himself, declined to receive the goods again, and as his own garments had been destroyed or carried off in my honour's service, doubtless I and my honourable father, whom Providence had blessed wi' the means, wadna suffer a puir lad to sit down wi' the loss; a stand o' claes was nae great matter to an Osbaldistone (be praised for't!)", especially to an old and attached servant o' the house."

As there was something of justice in Andrew's plea of loss in my service, his finesse succeeded; and he came by a good suit of mourning, with a beaver and all things conforming, as the exterior signs of woe for a master who was alive and merry.

My father's first care, when he arose, was to visit Mr. Jarvie, for whose kindness he entertained the most grateful sentiments, which he expressed in very few, but manly and nervous terms. He explained the altered state of his affairs, and offered the Bailie, on such terms as could not but be both advantageous and acceptable, that part in his concerns which had been hitherto managed by MacVittie and Company. The Bailie heartily congratulated my father and Owen on the changed posture of their affairs, and, without affecting to disclaim that he had done his best to serve them, when matters looked otherwise, he said, "He had only just acted as he wad be done by—that, as to the extension of their correspondence, he frankly accepted it with thanks. Had MacVittie's folk behaved like honest men," he said, "he wad hae liked ill to hae come in ahint them, and out afore them this gate. But it's otherwise, and they maun e'en stand the loss."

The Bailie then pulled me by the sleeve into a corner, and, after again cordially wishing me joy, proceeded, in rather an embarrassed tone—"I wad heartily wish, Maister Francis, there suld be as little said as possible about the queer things we saw up yonder awa. There's nae gude, unless ane were judicially examine, to say onything about that awfu' job o' Morris—and the members o' the council wadna think it creditable in ane of their body to be fighting wi' a wheen Hielandmen, and singeing their plaidens—And abune a', though I am a decent sponable man, when I am on my right end, I canna but think I maun hae made a queer figure without my hat and my periwig, hinging by the middle like bawdrons, or a cloak flung ower a cloak-pin. Bailie Grahame wad hae an unco hair in my neck an he got that tale by the end."

I could not suppress a smile when I recollected the Bailie's situation, although I certainly thought it no laughing matter at the time. The good-natured merchant was a little confused, but smiled also when he shook his head—"I see how it is—I see how it is. But say naething about it—there's a gude callant; and charge that lang-tongued, conceited, upsetting serving man o' yours, to sae naething neither. I wadna for ever sae muckle that even the lassock Mattie ken'd onything about it. I wad never hear an end o't."

He was obviously relieved from his impending fears of ridicule, when I told him it was my father's intention to leave Glasgow almost immediately. Indeed he had now no motive for remaining, since the most valuable part of the papers carried off by Rashleigh had been recovered. For that portion which he had converted into cash and expended in his own or on political intrigues, there was no mode of recovering it but by a suit at law, which was forthwith commenced, and proceeded, as our law-agents assured us, with all deliberate speed.

We spent, accordingly, one hospitable day with the Bailie, and took leave of him, as this narrative now does. He continued to grow in wealth, honour, and credit, and actually rose to the highest civic honours in his native city. About two years after the period I have mentioned, he tired of his bachelor life, and promoted Mattie from her wheel by the kitchen fire to the upper end of his table, in the character of Mrs. Jarvie. Bailie Grahame, the MacVitties, and others (for all men have their enemies, especially in the council of a royal burgh), ridiculed this transformation. "But," said Mr. Jarvie, "let them say their say. I'll ne'er fash mysell, nor lose my liking for sae feckless a matter as a nine days' clash. My honest father the deacon had a byword,

Brent brow and lily skin,

A loving heart, and a leal within,

Is better than gowd or gentle kin.

Besides," as he always concluded, "Mattie was nae ordinary lassock-quean; she was akin to the Laird o' Limmerfield."

Whether it was owing to her descent or her good gifts, I do not presume to decide; but Mattie behaved excellently in her exaltation, and relieved the apprehensions of some of the Bailie's friends, who had deemed his experiment somewhat hazardous. I do not know that there was any other incident of his quiet and useful life worthy of being particularly recorded.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

"Come ye hither my 'six' good sons,

Gallant men I trow ye be,

How many of you, my children dear,

Will stand by that good Earl and me?"

*"Five" of them did answer make—
"Five" of them spoke hastily,
"O father, till the day we die,
We'll stand by that good Earl and thee."
The Rising in the North.*

On the morning when we were to depart from Glasgow, Andrew Fairservice bounced into my apartment like a madman, jumping up and down, and singing, with more vehemence than tune,

*The kiln's on fire—the kiln's on fire—
The kiln's on fire—she's a' in a lowe.*

With some difficulty I prevailed on him to cease his confounded clamour, and explain to me what the matter was. He was pleased to inform me, as if he had been bringing the finest news imaginable, "that the Hielands were clean broken out, every man o' them, and that Rob Roy, and a' his breekless bands, wad be down upon Glasgow or twenty-four hours o' the clock gaed round."

"Hold your tongue," said I, "you rascal! You must be drunk or mad; and if there is any truth in your news, is it a singing matter, you scoundrel?"

"Drunk or mad? nae doubt," replied Andrew, dauntlessly; "ane's aye drunk or mad if he tells what grit folks dinna like to hear—Sing? Od, the clans will make us sing on the wrang side o' our mouth, if we are sae drunk or mad as to bide their coming."

I rose in great haste, and found my father and Owen also on foot, and in considerable alarm.

Andrew's news proved but too true in the main. The great rebellion which agitated Britain in the year 1715 had already broken out, by the unfortunate Earl of Mar's setting up the standard of the Stuart family in an ill-omened hour, to the ruin of many honourable families, both in England and Scotland. The treachery of some of the Jacobite agents (Rashleigh among the rest), and the arrest of others, had made George the First's Government acquainted with the extensive ramifications of a conspiracy long prepared, and which at last exploded prematurely, and in a part of the kingdom too distant to have any vital effect upon the country, which, however, was plunged into much confusion.

This great public event served to confirm and elucidate the obscure explanations I had received from MacGregor; and I could easily see why the westland clans, who were brought against him, should have waived their private quarrel, in consideration that they were all shortly to be engaged in the same public cause. It was a more melancholy reflection to my mind, that Diana Vernon was the wife of one of those who were most active in turning the world upside down, and that she was herself exposed to all the privations and perils of her husband's hazardous trade.

We held an immediate consultation on the measures we were to adopt in this crisis, and acquiesced in my father's plan, that we should instantly get the necessary passports, and make the best of our way to London. I acquainted my father with my wish to offer my personal service to the Government in any volunteer corps, several being already spoken of. He readily acquiesced in my proposal; for though he disliked war as a profession, yet, upon principle, no man would have exposed his life more willingly in defence of civil and religious liberty.

We travelled in haste and in peril through Dumfriesshire and the neighbouring counties of England. In this quarter, gentlemen of the Tory interest were already in motion, mustering men and horses, while the Whigs assembled themselves in the principal towns, armed the inhabitants, and prepared for civil war. We narrowly escaped being stopped on more occasions than one, and were often compelled to take circuitous routes to avoid the points where forces were assembling.

When we reached London, we immediately associated with those bankers and eminent merchants who agreed to support the credit of Government, and to meet that run upon the funds, on which the conspirators had greatly founded their hopes of furthering their undertaking, by rendering the Government, as it were, bankrupt. My father was chosen one of the members of this formidable body of the monied interest, as all had the greatest confidence in his zeal, skill, and activity. He was also the organ by which they communicated with Government, and contrived, from funds belonging to his own house, or over which he had command, to find purchasers for a quantity of the national stock, which was suddenly flung into the market at a depreciated price when the rebellion broke out. I was not idle myself, but obtained a commission, and levied, at my father's expense, about two hundred men, with whom I joined General Carpenter's army.

The rebellion, in the meantime, had extended itself to England. The unfortunate Earl of Derwentwater had taken arms in the cause, along with General Foster. My poor uncle, Sir Hildebrand, whose estate was reduced to almost nothing by his own carelessness and the expense and debauchery of his sons and household, was easily persuaded to join that unfortunate standard. Before doing so, however, he exhibited a degree of precaution of which no one could have suspected him—he made his will!

By this document he devised his estates at Osbaldistone Hall, and so forth, to his sons successively, and their male heirs, until he came to Rashleigh, whom, on account of the turn he had lately taken in politics, he detested with all his might,—he cut him off with a shilling, and settled the estate on me as his next heir. I had always been rather a favourite of the old gentleman; but it is probable that, confident in the number of gigantic youths who now armed around him, he considered the destination as likely to remain a dead letter, which he inserted chiefly to show his displeasure at Rashleigh's treachery, both public and domestic. There was an article, by which he, bequeathed to the niece of his late wife, Diana Vernon, now Lady Diana Vernon Beauchamp, some diamonds belonging to her late aunt, and a great silver ewer, having the arms of Vernon and Osbaldistone quarterly engraven upon it.

But Heaven had decreed a more speedy extinction of his numerous and healthy lineage, than, most probably, he himself had reckoned on. In the very first muster of the conspirators, at a place called Green-Rigg, Thornciff Osbaldistone quarrelled about precedence with a gentleman of the Northumbrian border, to the full as fierce and intractable as himself. In spite of all remonstrances, they gave their commander a specimen of how far their discipline might be relied upon, by fighting it out with their rapiers, and my kinsman was killed on the spot. His death was a great loss to Sir Hildebrand, for, notwithstanding his infernal temper, he had a grain or two of more sense than belonged to the rest of the brotherhood, Rashleigh always excepted.

Perceval, the sot, died also in his calling. He had a wager with another gentleman (who, from his exploits in that line, had acquired the formidable epithet of Brandy Swalewell), which should drink the largest cup of strong liquor when King James was proclaimed by the insurgents at Morpeth. The exploit was something enormous. I forget the exact quantity of brandy which Percie swallowed, but it occasioned a fever, of which he expired at the end of three days, with the word, *water, water*, perpetually on his tongue.

Dickon broke his neck near Warrington Bridge, in an attempt to show off a foundered blood-mare which he wished to palm upon a Manchester merchant who had joined the insurgents. He pushed the animal at a five-barred gate; she fell in the leap, and the unfortunate jockey lost his life.

Wilfred the fool, as sometimes befalls, had the best fortune of the family. He was slain at Proud Preston, in Lancashire, on the day that General Carpenter attacked the barricades, fighting with great bravery, though I have heard he was never able exactly to comprehend the cause of quarrel, and did not uniformly remember on which king's side he was engaged. John also behaved very boldly in the same engagement, and received several wounds, of which he was not happy enough to die on the spot.

Old Sir Hildebrand, entirely brokenhearted by these successive losses, became, by the next day's surrender, one of the unhappy prisoners, and was lodged in Newgate with his wounded son John.

I was now released from my military duty, and lost no time, therefore, in endeavouring to relieve the distresses of these new relations. My father's interest with Government, and the general compassion excited by a parent who had sustained the successive loss of so many sons within so short a time, would have prevented my uncle and cousin from being brought to trial for high treason. But their doom was given forth from a greater tribunal. John died of his wounds in Newgate, recommending to me in his last breath, a cast of hawks which he had at the Hall, and a black spaniel bitch called Lucy.

My poor uncle seemed beaten down to the very earth by his family calamities, and the circumstances in which he unexpectedly found himself. He said little, but seemed grateful for such attentions as circumstances permitted me to show him. I did not witness his meeting with my father for the first time for so many years,

and under circumstances so melancholy; but, judging from my father's extreme depression of spirits, it must have been melancholy in the last degree. Sir Hildebrand spoke with great bitterness against Rashleigh, now his only surviving child; laid upon him the ruin of his house, and the deaths of all his brethren, and declared, that neither he nor they would have plunged into political intrigue, but for that very member of his family, who had been the first to desert them. He once or twice mentioned Diana, always with great affection; and once he said, while I sat by his bedside—"Nevo, since Thorncliff and all of them are dead, I am sorry you cannot have her."

The expression affected me much at the time; for it was a usual custom of the poor old baronet's, when joyously setting forth upon the morning's chase, to distinguish Thorncliff, who was a favourite, while he summoned the rest more generally; and the loud jolly tone in which he used to hollo, "Call Thornie—call all of them," contrasted sadly with the woebegone and self-abandoning note in which he uttered the disconsolate words which I have above quoted. He mentioned the contents of his will, and supplied me with an authenticated copy;—the original he had deposited with my old acquaintance Mr. Justice Inglewood, who, dreaded by no one, and confided in by all as a kind of neutral person, had become, for aught I know, the depositary of half the wills of the fighting men of both factions in the county of Northumberland.

The greater part of my uncle's last hours were spent in the discharge of the religious duties of his church, in which he was directed by the chaplain of the Sardinian ambassador, for whom, with some difficulty, we obtained permission to visit him. I could not ascertain by my own observation, or through the medical attendants, that Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone died of any formed complaint bearing a name in the science of medicine. He seemed to me completely worn out and broken down by fatigue of body and distress of mind, and rather ceased to exist, than died of any positive struggle,—just as a vessel, buffeted and tossed by a succession of tempestuous gales, her timbers overstrained, and her joints loosened, will sometimes spring a leak and founder, when there are no apparent causes for her destruction.

It was a remarkable circumstance that my father, after the last duties were performed to his brother, appeared suddenly to imbibe a strong anxiety that I should act upon the will, and represent his father's house, which had hitherto seemed to be the thing in the world which had least charms for him. But formerly, he had been like the fox in the fable, contemplating what was beyond his reach; and, moreover, I doubt not that the excessive dislike which he entertained against Rashleigh (now Sir Rashleigh) Osbaldistone, who loudly threatened to attack his father Sir Hildebrand's will and settlement, corroborated my father's desire to maintain it.

"He had been most unjustly disinherited," he said, "by his own father—his brother's will had repaired the disgrace, if not the injury, by leaving the wreck of his property to Frank, the natural heir, and he was determined the bequest should take effect."

In the meantime, Rashleigh was not altogether a contemptible personage as an opponent. The information he had given to Government was critically well-timed, and his extreme plausibility, with the extent of his intelligence, and the artful manner in which he contrived to assume both merit and influence, had, to a certain extent, procured him patrons among Ministers. We were already in the full tide of litigation with him on the subject of his pillaging the firm of Osbaldistone and Tresham; and, judging from the progress we made in that comparatively simple lawsuit, there was a chance that this second course of litigation might be drawn out beyond the period of all our natural lives.

To avert these delays as much as possible, my father, by the advice of his counsel learned in the law, paid off and vested in my person the rights to certain large mortgages affecting Osbaldistone Hall. Perhaps, however, the opportunity to convert a great share of the large profits which accrued from the rapid rise of the funds upon the suppression of the rebellion, and the experience he had so lately had of the perils of commerce, encouraged him to realise, in this manner, a considerable part of his property. At any rate, it so chanced, that, instead of commanding me to the desk, as I fully expected, having intimated my willingness to comply with his wishes, however they might destine me, I received his directions to go down to Osbaldistone Hall, and take possession of it as the heir and representative of the family. I was directed to apply to Squire Inglewood for the copy of my uncle's will deposited with him, and take all necessary measures to secure that possession which sages say makes nine points of the law.

At another time I should have been delighted with this change of destination. But now Osbaldistone Hall was accompanied with many painful recollections. Still, however, I thought, that in that neighbourhood only I was likely to acquire some information respecting the fate of Diana Vernon. I had every reason to fear it must be far different from what I could have wished it. But I could obtain no precise information on the subject.

It was in vain that I endeavoured, by such acts of kindness as their situation admitted, to conciliate the confidence of some distant relations who were among the prisoners in Newgate. A pride which I could not condemn, and a natural suspicion of the Whig Frank Osbaldistone, cousin to the double-distilled traitor Rashleigh, closed every heart and tongue, and I only received thanks, cold and extorted, in exchange for such benefits as I had power to offer. The arm of the law was also gradually abridging the numbers of those whom I endeavoured to serve, and the hearts of the survivors became gradually more contracted towards all whom they conceived to be concerned with the existing Government. As they were led gradually, and by detachments, to execution, those who survived lost interest in mankind, and the desire of communicating with them. I shall long remember what one of them, Ned Shafton by name, replied to my anxious inquiry, whether there was any indulgence I could procure him? "Mr. Frank Osbaldistone, I must suppose you mean me kindly, and therefore I thank you. But, by G—, men cannot be fattened like poultry, when they see their neighbours carried off day by day to the place of execution, and know that their own necks are to be twisted round in their turn."

Upon the whole, therefore, I was glad to escape from London, from Newgate, and from the scenes which both exhibited, to breathe the free air of Northumberland. Andrew Fairservice had continued in my service more from my father's pleasure than my own. At present there seemed a prospect that his local acquaintance with Osbaldistone Hall and its vicinity might be useful; and, of course, he accompanied me on my journey, and I enjoyed the prospect of getting rid of him, by establishing him in his old quarters. I cannot conceive how he could prevail upon my father to interest himself in him, unless it were by the art, which he possessed in no inconsiderable degree, of affecting an extreme attachment to his master; which theoretical attachment he made compatible in practice with playing all manner of tricks without scruple, providing only against his master being cheated by any one but himself.

We performed our journey to the North without any remarkable adventure, and we found the country, so lately agitated by rebellion, now peaceful and in good order. The nearer we approached to Osbaldistone Hall, the more did my heart sink at the thought of entering that deserted mansion; so that, in order to postpone the evil day, I resolved first to make my visit at Mr. Justice Inglewood's.

That venerable person had been much disturbed with thoughts of what he had been, and what he now was; and natural recollections of the past had interfered considerably with the active duty which in his present situation might have been expected from him. He was fortunate, however, in one respect; he had got rid of his clerk Jobson, who had finally left him in dudgeon at his inactivity, and become legal assistant to a certain Squire Standish, who had lately commenced operations in those parts as a justice, with a zeal for King George and the Protestant succession, which, very different from the feelings of his old patron, Mr. Jobson had more occasion to restrain within the bounds of the law, than to stimulate to exertion.

Old Justice Inglewood received me with great courtesy, and readily exhibited my uncle's will, which seemed to be without a flaw. He was for some time in obvious distress, how he should speak and act in my presence; but when he found, that though a supporter of the present Government upon principle, I was disposed to think with pity on those who had opposed it on a mistaken feeling of loyalty and duty, his discourse became a very diverting medley of what he had done, and what he had left undone,—the pains he had taken to prevent some squires from joining, and to wink at the escape of others, who had been so unlucky as to engage in the affair.

We were *tete-a-tete*, and several bumpers had been quaffed by the Justice's special desire, when, on a sudden, he requested me to fill a *bona fide* brimmer to the health of poor dear Die Vernon, the rose of the wilderness, the heath-bell of Cheviot, and the blossom that's transplanted to an infernal convent.

"Is not Miss Vernon married, then?" I exclaimed, in great astonishment. "I thought his Excellency"—

"Pooh! pooh! his Excellency and his Lordship's all a humbug now, you know—mere St. Germain's titles—Earl of Beauchamp, and ambassador plenipotentiary from France, when the Duke Regent of Orleans scarce knew that he lived, I dare say. But you must have seen old Sir Frederick Vernon at the Hall, when he played the part of Father Vaughan?"

"Good Heavens! then Vaughan was Miss Vernon's father?"

"To be sure he was," said the Justice coolly;—"there's no use in keeping the secret now, for he must be out of the country by this time—otherwise, no doubt, it would be my duty to apprehend him.—Come, off with your bumper to my dear lost Die!

And let her health go round, around, around,

And let her health go round;

For though your stocking be of silk,

*Your knees near kiss the ground, aground, aground."**

* This pithy verse occurs, it is believed, in Shadwell's play of Bury Fair.

I was unable, as the reader may easily conceive, to join in the Justice's jollity. My head swam with the shock I had received. "I never heard," I said, "that Miss Vernon's father was living."

"It was not our Government's fault that he is," replied Inglewood, "for the devil a man there is whose head would have brought more money. He was condemned to death for Fenwick's plot, and was thought to have had some hand in the Knightsbridge affair, in King William's time; and as he had married in Scotland a relation of the house of Breadalbane, he possessed great influence with all their chiefs. There was a talk of his being demanded to be given up at the peace of Ryswick, but he shammed ill, and his death was given publicly out in the French papers. But when he came back here on the old score, we old cavaliers knew him well,—that is to say, I knew him, not as being a cavalier myself, but no information being lodged against the poor gentleman, and my memory being shortened by frequent attacks of the gout, I could not have sworn to him, you know."

"Was he, then, not known at Osbaldistone Hall?" I inquired.

"To none but to his daughter, the old knight, and Rashleigh, who had got at that secret as he did at every one else, and held it like a twisted cord about poor Die's neck. I have seen her one hundred times she would have spit at him, if it had not been fear for her father, whose life would not have been worth five minutes' purchase if he had been discovered to the Government.—But don't mistake me, Mr. Osbaldistone; I say the Government is a good, a gracious, and a just Government; and if it has hanged one-half of the rebels, poor things, all will acknowledge they would not have been touched had they staid peaceably at home."

Waiving the discussion of these political questions, I brought back Mr. Inglewood to his subject, and I found that Diana, having positively refused to marry any of the Osbaldistone family, and expressed her particular detestation of Rashleigh, he had from that time begun to cool in zeal for the cause of the Pretender; to which, as the youngest of six brethren, and bold, artful, and able, he had hitherto looked forward as the means of making his fortune. Probably the compulsion with which he had been forced to render up the spoils which he had abstracted from my father's counting-house by the united authority of Sir Frederick Vernon and the Scottish Chiefs, had determined his resolution to advance his progress by changing his opinions and betraying his trust. Perhaps also—for few men were better judges where his interest was concerned—he considered their means and talents to be, as they afterwards proved, greatly inadequate to the important task of overthrowing an established Government. Sir Frederick Vernon, or, as he was called among the Jacobites, his Excellency Viscount Beauchamp, had, with his daughter, some difficulty in escaping the consequences of Rashleigh's information. Here Mr. Inglewood's information was at fault; but he did not doubt, since we had not heard of Sir Frederick being in the hands of the Government, he must be by this time abroad, where, agreeably to the cruel bond he had entered into with his brother-in-law, Diana, since she had declined to select a husband out of the Osbaldistone family, must be confined to a convent. The original cause of this singular agreement Mr. Inglewood could not perfectly explain; but he understood it was a family compact, entered into for the purpose of securing to Sir Frederick the rents of the remnant of his large estates, which had been vested in the Osbaldistone family by some legal manoeuvre; in short, a family compact, in which, like many of those undertaken at that time of day, the feelings of the principal parties interested were no more regarded than if they had been a part of the live-stock upon the lands.

I cannot tell,—such is the waywardness of the human heart,—whether this intelligence gave me joy or sorrow. It seemed to me, that, in the knowledge that Miss Vernon was eternally divided from me, not by marriage with another, but by seclusion in a convent, in order to fulfil an absurd bargain of this kind, my regret for her loss was aggravated rather than diminished. I became dull, low-spirited, absent, and unable to support the task of conversing with Justice Inglewood, who in his turn yawned, and proposed to retire early. I took leave of him overnight, determining the next day, before breakfast, to ride over to Osbaldistone Hall.

Mr. Inglewood acquiesced in my proposal. "It would be well," he said, "that I made my appearance there before I was known to be in the country, the more especially as Sir Rashleigh Osbaldistone was now, he understood, at Mr. Jobson's house, hatching some mischief, doubtless. They were fit company," he added, "for each other, Sir Rashleigh having lost all right to mingle in the society of men of honour; but it was hardly possible two such d—d rascals should colloque together without mischief to honest people."

He concluded, by earnestly recommending a toast and tankard, and an attack upon his venison pasty, before I set out in the morning, just to break the cold air on the words.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

His master's gone, and no one now

Dwells in the halls of Ivor;

Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead,

He is the sole survivor.

Wordsworth.

There are few more melancholy sensations than those with which we regard scenes of past pleasure when altered and deserted. In my ride to Osbaldistone Hall, I passed the same objects which I had seen in company with Miss Vernon on the day of our memorable ride from Inglewood Place. Her spirit seemed to keep me company on the way; and when I approached the spot where I had first seen her, I almost listened for the cry of the hounds and the notes of the horn, and strained my eye on the vacant space, as if to descry the fair huntress again descend like an apparition from the hill. But all was silent, and all was solitary. When I reached the Hall, the closed doors and windows, the grass-grown pavement, the courts, which were now so silent, presented a strong contrast to the gay and bustling scene I had so often seen them exhibit, when the merry hunters were going forth to their morning sport, or returning to the daily festival. The joyous bark of the fox-hounds as they were uncoupled, the cries of the huntsmen, the clang of the horses' hoofs, the loud laugh of the old knight at the head of his strong and numerous descendants, were all silenced now and for ever.

While I gazed round the scene of solitude and emptiness, I was inexpressibly affected, even by recollecting those whom, when alive, I had no reason to regard with affection. But the thought that so many youths of goodly presence, warm with life, health, and confidence, were within so short a time cold in the grave, by various, yet all violent and unexpected modes of death, afforded a picture of mortality at which the mind trembled. It was little consolation to me, that I returned a proprietor to the halls which I had left almost like a fugitive. My mind was not habituated to regard the scenes around as my property, and I felt myself an usurper, at least an intruding stranger, and could hardly divest myself of the idea, that some of the bulky forms of my deceased kinsmen were, like the gigantic spectres of a romance, to appear in the gateway, and dispute my entrance.

While I was engaged in these sad thoughts, my follower Andrew, whose feelings were of a very different nature, exerted himself in thundering alternately on every door in the building, calling, at the same time, for admittance, in a tone so loud as to intimate, that *he*, at least, was fully sensible of his newly acquired importance, as squire of the body to the new lord of the manor. At length, timidly and reluctantly, Anthony Syddall, my uncle's aged butler and major-domo, presented himself at a lower window, well fenced with iron bars, and inquired our business.

"We are come to tak your charge aff your hand, my auld friend," said Andrew Fairservice; "ye may gie up your keys as sune as ye like—ilka dog has his day. I'll tak the plate and napery aff your hand. Ye hae had your ain time o't, Mr. Syddall; but ilka bean has its black, and ilka path has its puddle; and it will just set you henceforth to sit at the board-end, as weel as it did Andrew lang syne."

Checking with some difficulty the forwardness of my follower, I explained to Syddall the nature of my right, and the title I had to demand admittance into the Hall, as into my own property. The old man seemed much agitated and distressed, and testified manifest reluctance to give me entrance, although it was couched in a humble and submissive tone. I allowed for the agitation of natural feelings, which really did the old man honour; but continued peremptory in my demand of admittance, explaining to him that his refusal would oblige me to apply for Mr. Inglewood's warrant, and a constable.

"We are come from Mr. Justice Inglewood's this morning," said Andrew, to enforce the menace;—"and I saw Archie Rutledge, the constable, as I came up by;—the country's no to be lawless as it has been, Mr. Syddall, letting rebels and papists gang on as they best listed."

The threat of the law sounded dreadful in the old man's ears, conscious as he was of the suspicion under which he himself lay, from his religion and his devotion to Sir Hildebrand and his sons. He undid, with fear and trembling, one of the postern entrances, which was secured with many a bolt and bar, and humbly hoped that I would excuse him for fidelity in the discharge of his duty.—I reassured him, and told him I had the better opinion of him for his caution.

"Sae have not I," said Andrew; "Syddall is an auld sneck-drawer; he wadna be looking as white as a sheet, and his knees knocking thegither, unless it were for something mair than he's like to tell us."

"Lord forgive you, Mr. Fairservice," replied the butler, "to say such things of an old friend and fellow-servant!—Where"—following me humbly along the passage—"where would it be your honour's pleasure to have a fire lighted? I fear me you will find the house very dull and dreary—But perhaps you mean to ride back to Inglewood Place to dinner?"

"Light a fire in the library," I replied.

"In the library!" answered the old man;—"nobody has sat there this many a day, and the room smokes, for the daws have built in the chimney this spring, and there were no young men about the Hall to pull them down."

"Our ain reekes better than other folk's fire," said Andrew. "His honour likes the library;—he's nane o' your Papishers, that delight in blinded ignorance, Mr. Syddall."

Very reluctantly as it appeared to me, the butler led the way to the library, and, contrary to what he had given me to expect, the interior of the apartment looked as if it had been lately arranged, and made more comfortable than usual. There was a fire in the grate, which burned clearly, notwithstanding what Syddall had reported of the vent. Taking up the tongs, as if to arrange the wood, but rather perhaps to conceal his own confusion, the butler observed, "it was burning clear now, but had smoked woundily in the morning."

Wishing to be alone, till I recovered myself from the first painful sensations which everything around me recalled, I desired old Syddall to call the land-steward, who lived at about a quarter of a mile from the Hall. He departed with obvious reluctance. I next ordered Andrew to procure the attendance of a couple of stout fellows upon whom he could rely, the population around being Papists, and Sir Rashleigh, who was capable of any desperate enterprise, being in the neighbourhood. Andrew Fairservice undertook this task with great cheerfulness, and promised to bring me up from Trinlay-Knowe, "twa true-blue Presbyterians like himself, that would face and out-face baith the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender—and blythe will I be o' their company mysell, for the very last night that I was at Osbaldistone Hall, the blight be on ilka blossom in my bit yard, if I didna see that very picture" (pointing to the full-length portrait of Miss Vernon's grandfather) "walking by moonlight in the garden! I tauld your honour I was fleyed wi' a bogle that night, but ye wadna listen to me—I aye thought there was witchcraft and deevilry amang the Papishers, but I ne'er saw't wi' bodily een till that awfu' night."

"Get along, sir," said I, "and bring the fellows you talk of; and see they have more sense than yourself, and are not frightened at their own shadow."

"I hae been counted as gude a man as my neighbours ere now," said Andrew, petulantly; "but I dinna pretend to deal wi' evil spirits." And so he made his exit, as Wardlaw the land-steward made his appearance.

He was a man of sense and honesty, without whose careful management my uncle would have found it difficult to have maintained himself a housekeeper so long as he did. He examined the nature of my right of possession carefully, and admitted it candidly. To any one else the succession would have been a poor one, so much was the land encumbered with debt and mortgage. Most of these, however, were already vested in my father's person, and he was in a train of acquiring the rest; his large gains by the recent rise of the funds having made it a matter of ease and convenience for him to pay off the debt which affected his patrimony.

I transacted much necessary business with Mr. Wardlaw, and detained him to dine with me. We preferred taking our repast in the library, although Syddall strongly recommended our removing to the stone-hall, which he had put in order for the occasion. Meantime Andrew made his appearance with his true-blue recruits, whom he recommended in the highest terms, as "sober decent men, weel founded in doctrinal points, and, above all, as bold as lions." I ordered them something to drink, and they left the room. I observed old Syddall shake his head as they went out, and insisted upon knowing the reason.

"I maybe cannot expect," he said, "that your honour should put confidence in what I say, but it is Heaven's truth for all that—Ambrose Wingfield is as honest a man as lives, but if there is a false knave in the country, it is his brother Lencie;—the whole country knows him to be a spy for Clerk Jobson on the poor gentlemen that have been in trouble—But he's a dissenter, and I suppose that's enough now-a-days."

Having thus far given vent to his feelings,—to which, however, I was little disposed to pay attention,—and having placed the wine on the table, the old butler left the apartment.

Mr. Wardlaw having remained with me until the evening was somewhat advanced, at length bundled up his papers, and removed himself to his own habitation, leaving me in that confused state of mind in which we can hardly say whether we desire company or solitude. I had not, however, the choice betwixt them; for I was left alone in the room of all others most calculated to inspire me with melancholy reflections.

As twilight was darkening the apartment, Andrew had the sagacity to advance his head at the door,—not to ask if I wished for lights, but to recommend them as a measure of precaution against the bogles which still haunted his imagination. I rejected his proffer somewhat peevishly, trimmed the wood-fire, and placing myself in one of the large leathern chairs which flanked the old Gothic chimney, I watched unconsciously the bickering of the blaze which I had fostered. "And this," said I alone, "is the progress and the issue of human wishes! Nursed by the merest trifles, they are first kindled by fancy—nay, are fed upon the vapour of hope, till they consume the substance which they inflame; and man, and his hopes, passions, and desires, sink into a worthless heap of embers and ashes!"

There was a deep sigh from the opposite side of the room, which seemed to reply to my reflections. I started up in amazement—Diana Vernon stood before me, resting on the arm of a figure so strongly resembling that of the portrait so often mentioned, that I looked hastily at the frame, expecting to see it empty. My first idea was, either that I had gone suddenly distracted, or that the spirits of the dead had arisen and been placed before me. A second glance convinced me of my being in my senses, and that the forms which stood before me were real and substantial. It was Diana herself, though paler and thinner than her former self; and it was no tenant of the grave who stood beside her, but Vaughan, or rather Sir Frederick Vernon, in a dress made to imitate that of his ancestor, to whose picture his countenance possessed a family resemblance. He was the first that spoke, for Diana kept her eyes fast fixed on the ground, and astonishment actually riveted my tongue to the roof of my mouth.

"We are your suppliants, Mr. Osbaldistone," he said, "and we claim the refuge and protection of your roof till we can pursue a journey where dungeons and death gape for me at every step."

"Surely," I articulated with great difficulty—"Miss Vernon cannot suppose—you, sir, cannot believe, that I have forgot your interference in my difficulties, or that I am capable of betraying any one, much less you?"

"I know it," said Sir Frederick; "yet it is with the most inexpressible reluctance that I impose on you a confidence, disagreeable perhaps—certainly dangerous—and which I would have specially wished to have conferred on some one else. But my fate, which has chased me through a life of perils and escapes, is now pressing me hard, and I have no alternative."

At this moment the door opened, and the voice of the officious Andrew was heard—"A'm bringin' in the caunles—Ye can light them gin ye like—Can do is easy carried about wi' ane."

I ran to the door, which, as I hoped, I reached in time to prevent his observing who were in the apartment, I turned him out with hasty violence, shut the door after him, and locked it—then instantly remembering his two companions below, knowing his talkative humour, and recollecting Syddall's remark, that one of them was supposed to be a spy, I followed him as fast as I could to the servants' hall, in which they were assembled. Andrew's tongue was loud as I opened the door, but my unexpected appearance silenced him.

"What is the matter with you, you fool?" said I; "you stare and look wild, as if you had seen a ghost."

"N—n—no—nothing," said Andrew.—"but your worship was pleased to be hasty."

"Because you disturbed me out of a sound sleep, you fool. Syddall tells me he cannot find beds for these good fellows tonight, and Mr. Wardlaw thinks there will be no occasion to detain them. Here is a crown-piece for them to drink my health, and thanks for their good-will. You will leave the Hall immediately, my good lads."

The men thanked me for my bounty, took the silver, and withdrew, apparently unsuspecting and contented. I watched their departure until I was sure they could have no further intercourse that night with honest Andrew. And so instantly had I followed on his heels, that I thought he could not have had time to speak two words with them before I interrupted him. But it is wonderful what mischief may be done by only two words. On this occasion they cost two lives.

Having made these arrangements, the best which occurred to me upon the pressure of the moment, to secure privacy for my guests, I returned to report my proceedings, and added, that I had desired Syddall to answer every summons, concluding that it was by his connivance they had been secreted in the Hall. Diana raised her eyes to thank me for the caution.

"You now understand my mystery," she said;—"you know, doubtless, how near and dear that relative is, who has so often found shelter here; and will be no longer surprised that Rashleigh, having such a secret at his command, should rule me with a rod of iron."

Her father added, "that it was their intention to trouble me with their presence as short a time as was possible."

I entreated the fugitives to waive every consideration but what affected their safety, and to rely on my utmost exertions to promote it. This led to an explanation of the circumstances under which they stood.

"I always suspected Rashleigh Osbaldistone," said Sir Frederick; "but his conduct towards my unprotected child, which with difficulty I wrung from her, and his treachery in your father's affairs, made me hate and despise him. In our last interview I concealed not my sentiments, as I should in prudence have attempted to do; and in resentment of the scorn with which I treated him, he added treachery and apostasy to his catalogue of crimes. I at that time fondly hoped that his defection would be of little consequence. The Earl of Mar had a gallant army in Scotland, and Lord Derwentwater, with Forster, Kenmure, Winterton, and others, were assembling forces on the Border. As my connections with these English nobility and gentry were extensive, it was judged proper that I should accompany a detachment of Highlanders, who, under Brigadier MacIntosh of Borlum, crossed the Firth of Forth, traversed the low country of Scotland, and united themselves on the Borders with the English insurgents. My daughter accompanied me through the perils and fatigues of a march so long and difficult."

"And she will never leave her dear father!" exclaimed Miss Vernon, clinging fondly to his arm.

"I had hardly joined our English friends, when I became sensible that our cause was lost. Our numbers diminished instead of increasing, nor were we joined by any except of our own persuasion. The Tories of the High Church remained in general undecided, and at length we were cooped up by a superior force in the little town of Preston. We defended ourselves resolutely for one day. On the next, the hearts of our leaders failed, and they resolved to surrender at discretion. To yield myself up on such terms, were to have laid my head on the block. About twenty or thirty gentlemen were of my mind: we mounted our horses, and placed my daughter, who insisted on sharing my fate, in the centre of our little party. My companions, struck with her courage and filial piety, declared that they would die rather than leave her behind. We rode in a body down a street called Fishergate, which leads to a marshy ground or meadow, extending to the river Ribble, through which one of our party promised to show us a good ford. This marsh had not been strongly invested by the enemy, so that we had only an affair with a patrol of Honeywood's dragoons, whom we dispersed and cut to pieces. We crossed the river, gained the high road to Liverpool, and then dispersed to seek several places of concealment and safety. My fortune led me to Wales, where there are many gentlemen of my religious and political opinions. I could not, however, find a safe opportunity of escaping by sea, and found myself obliged again to draw towards the North. A well-trying friend has appointed to meet me in this neighbourhood, and guide me to a seaport on the Solway, where a sloop is prepared to carry me from my native country for ever. As Osbaldistone Hall was for the present uninhabited, and under the charge of old Syddall, who had been our confidant on former occasions, we drew to it as to a place of known and secure refuge. I resumed a dress which had been used with good effect to scare the superstitious rustics, or domestics, who chanced at any time to see me; and we expected from time to time to hear by Syddall of the arrival of our friendly guide, when your sudden coming hither, and occupying this apartment, laid us under the necessity of submitting to your mercy."

Thus ended Sir Frederick's story, whose tale sounded to me like one told in a vision; and I could hardly bring myself to believe that I saw his daughter's form once more before me in flesh and blood, though with diminished beauty and sunk spirits. The buoyant vivacity with which she had resisted every touch of adversity, had now assumed the air of composed and submissive, but dauntless resolution and constancy. Her father, though aware and jealous of the effect of her praises on my mind, could not forbear expatiating upon them.

"She has endured trials," he said, "which might have dignified the history of a martyr;—she has faced danger and death in various shapes;—she has undergone toil and privation, from which men of the strongest frame would have shrunk;—she has spent the day in darkness, and the night in vigil, and has never breathed a murmur of weakness or complaint. In a word, Mr. Osbaldistone," he concluded, "she is a worthy offering to that God, to whom" (crossing himself) "I shall dedicate her, as all that is left dear or precious to Frederick Vernon."

There was a silence after these words, of which I well understood the mournful import. The father of Diana was still as anxious to destroy my hopes of being united to her now as he had shown himself during our brief meeting in Scotland.

"We will now," said he to his daughter, "intrude no farther on Mr. Osbaldistone's time, since we have acquainted him with the circumstances of the miserable guests who claim his protection."

I requested them to stay, and offered myself to leave the apartment. Sir Frederick observed, that my doing so could not but excite my attendant's suspicion; and that the place of their retreat was in every respect commodious, and furnished by Syddall with all they could possibly want. "We might perhaps have even contrived to remain there, concealed from your observation; but it would have been unjust to decline the most absolute reliance on your honour."

"You have done me but justice," I replied.—"To you, Sir Frederick, I am but little known; but Miss Vernon, I am sure, will bear me witness that"—

"I do not want my daughter's evidence," he said, politely, but yet with an air calculated to prevent my addressing myself to Diana, "since I am prepared to believe all that is worthy of Mr. Francis Osbaldistone. Permit us now to retire; we must take repose when we can, since we are absolutely uncertain when we may be called upon to renew our perilous journey."

He drew his daughter's arm within his, and with a profound reverence, disappeared with her behind the tapestry.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

*But now the hand of fate is on the curtain,
And gives the scene to light.
Don Sebastian.*

I felt stunned and chilled as they retired. Imagination, dwelling on an absent object of affection, paints her not only in the fairest light, but in that in which we most desire to behold her. I had thought of Diana as she was, when her parting tear dropped on my cheek—when her parting token, received from the wife of MacGregor, augured her wish to convey into exile and conventual seclusion the remembrance of my affection. I saw her; and her cold passive manner, expressive of little except composed melancholy, disappointed, and, in some degree, almost offended me.

In the egotism of my feelings, I accused her of indifference—of insensibility. I upbraided her father with pride—with cruelty—with fanaticism,—forgetting that both were sacrificing their interest, and Diana her inclination, to the discharge of what they regarded as their duty.

Sir Frederick Vernon was a rigid Catholic, who thought the path of salvation too narrow to be trodden by an heretic; and Diana, to whom her father's safety had been for many years the principal and moving spring of thoughts, hopes, and actions, felt that she had discharged her duty in resigning to his will, not alone her property in the world, but the dearest affections of her heart. But it was not surprising that I could not, at such a moment, fully appreciate these honourable motives; yet my spleen sought no ignoble means of discharging itself.

"I am contemned, then," I said, when left to run over the tenor of Sir Frederick's communications—"I am contemned, and thought unworthy even to exchange words with her. Be it so; they shall not at least prevent me from watching over her safety. Here will I remain as an outpost, and, while under my roof at least, no danger shall threaten her, if it be such as the arm of one determined man can avert."

I summoned Syddall to the library. He came, but came attended by the eternal Andrew, who, dreaming of great things in consequence of my taking possession of the Hall and the annexed estates, was resolved to lose nothing for want of keeping himself in view; and, as often happens to men who entertain selfish objects, overshot his mark, and rendered his attentions tedious and inconvenient.

His unrequired presence prevented me from speaking freely to Syddall, and I dared not send him away for fear of increasing such suspicions as he might entertain from his former abrupt dismissal from the library. "I shall sleep here, sir," I said, giving them directions to wheel nearer to the fire an old-fashioned day-bed, or settee. "I have much to do, and shall go late to bed."

Syddall, who seemed to understand my look, offered to procure me the accommodation of a mattress and some bedding. I accepted his offer, dismissed my attendant, lighted a pair of candles, and desired that I might not be disturbed till seven in the ensuing morning.

The domestics retired, leaving me to my painful and ill-arranged reflections, until nature, worn out, should require some repose.

I endeavoured forcibly to abstract my mind from the singular circumstances in which I found myself placed. Feelings which I had gallantly combated while the exciting object was remote, were now exasperated by my immediate neighbourhood to her whom I was so soon to part with for ever. Her name was written in every book which I attempted to peruse; and her image forced itself on me in whatever train of thought I strove to engage myself. It was like the officious slave of Prior's Solomon,—

Abra was ready ere I named her name,

And when I called another, Abra came.

I alternately gave way to these thoughts, and struggled against them, sometimes yielding to a mood of melting tenderness of sorrow which was scarce natural to me, sometimes arming myself with the hurt pride of one who had experienced what he esteemed unmerited rejection. I paced the library until I had chafed myself into a temporary fever. I then threw myself on the couch, and endeavoured to dispose myself to sleep;—but it was in vain that I used every effort to compose myself—that I lay without movement of finger or of muscle, as still as if I had been already a corpse—that I endeavoured to divert or banish disquieting thoughts, by fixing my mind on some act of repetition or arithmetical process. My blood throbbed, to my feverish apprehension, in pulsations which resembled the deep and regular strokes of a distant fulling-mill, and tingled in my veins like streams of liquid fire.

At length I arose, opened the window, and stood by it for some time in the clear moonlight, receiving, in part at least, that refreshment and dissipation of ideas from the clear and calm scene, without which they had become beyond the command of my own volition. I resumed my place on the couch—with a heart, Heaven knows, not lighter but firmer, and more resolved for endurance. In a short time a slumber crept over my senses; still, however, though my senses slumbered, my soul was awake to the painful feelings of my situation, and my dreams were of mental anguish and external objects of terror.

I remember a strange agony, under which I conceived myself and Diana in the power of MacGregor's wife, and about to be precipitated from a rock into the lake; the signal was to be the discharge of a cannon, fired by Sir Frederick Vernon, who, in the dress of a Cardinal, officiated at the ceremony. Nothing could be more lively than the impression which I received of this imaginary scene. I could paint, even at this moment, the mute and courageous submission expressed in Diana's features—the wild and distorted faces of the executioners, who crowded around us with "mopping and mowing," grimaces ever changing, and each more hideous than that which preceded. I saw the rigid and inflexible fanaticism painted in the face of the father—I saw him lift the fatal match—the deadly signal exploded—It was repeated again and again and again, in rival thunders, by the echoes of the surrounding cliffs, and I awoke from fancied horror to real apprehension.

The sounds in my dream were not ideal. They reverberated on my waking ears, but it was two or three minutes ere I could collect myself so as distinctly to understand that they proceeded from a violent knocking at the gate. I leaped from my couch in great apprehension, took my sword under my arm, and hastened to forbid the admission of any one. But my route was necessarily circuitous, because the library looked not upon the quadrangle, but into the gardens. When I had reached a staircase, the windows of which opened upon the entrance court, I heard the feeble and intimidated tones of Syddall expostulating with rough voices, which demanded admittance, by the warrant of Justice Standish, and in the King's name, and threatened the old domestic with the heaviest penal consequences if he refused instant obedience. Ere they had ceased, I heard, to my unspeakable provocation, the voice of Andrew bidding Syddall stand aside, and let him open the door.

"If they come in King George's name, we have naething to fear—we hae spent baith bluid and gowd for him—We dinna need to darn ourselves like some folks, Mr. Syddall—we are neither Papists nor Jacobites, I trow."

It was in vain I accelerated my pace down stairs; I heard bolt after bolt withdrawn by the officious scoundrel, while all the time he was boasting his own and his master's loyalty to King George; and I could easily calculate that the party must enter before I could arrive at the door to replace the bars. Devoting the back of Andrew Fairservice to the cudgel so soon as I should have time to pay him his deserts, I ran back to the library, barricaded the door as I best could, and hastened to that by which Diana and her father entered, and begged for instant admittance. Diana herself undid the door. She was ready dressed, and betrayed neither perturbation nor fear.

"Danger is so familiar to us," she said, "that we are always prepared to meet it. My father is already up—he is in Rashleigh's apartment. We will escape into the garden, and thence by the postern-gate (I have the key from Syddall in case of need.) into the wood—I know its dingles better than any one now alive. Keep them a few minutes in play. And, dear, dear Frank, once more fare-thee-well!"

She vanished like a meteor to join her father, and the intruders were rapping violently, and attempting to force the library door by the time I had returned into it.

"You robber dogs!" I exclaimed, wilfully mistaking the purpose of their disturbance, "if you do not instantly quit the house I will fire my blunderbuss through the door."

"Fire a fule's bauble!" said Andrew Fairservice; "it's Mr. Clerk Jobson, with a legal warrant"—

"To search for, take, and apprehend," said the voice of that execrable pettifogger, "the bodies of certain persons in my warrant named, charged of high treason under the 13th of King William, chapter third."

And the violence on the door was renewed. "I am rising, gentlemen," said I, desirous to gain as much time as possible—"commit no violence—give me leave to look at your warrant, and, if it is formal and legal, I shall not oppose it."

"God save great George our King!" ejaculated Andrew. "I tauld ye that ye would find nae Jacobites here."

Spinning out the time as much as possible, I was at length compelled to open the door, which they would otherwise have forced.

Mr. Jobson entered, with several assistants, among whom I discovered the younger Wingfield, to whom, doubtless, he was obliged for his information, and exhibited his warrant, directed not only against Frederick Vernon, an attainted traitor, but also against Diana Vernon, spinster, and Francis Osbaldistone, gentleman, accused of misprision of treason. It was a case in which resistance would have been madness; I therefore, after capitulating for a few minutes' delay, surrendered myself a prisoner.

I had next the mortification to see Jobson go straight to the chamber of Miss Vernon, and I learned that from thence, without hesitation or difficulty, he went to the room where Sir Frederick had slept. "The hare has stolen away," said the brute, "but her form is warm—the greyhounds will have her by the haunches yet."

A scream from the garden announced that he prophesied too truly. In the course of five minutes, Rashleigh entered the library with Sir Frederick Vernon and his daughter as prisoners.

"The fox," he said, "knew his old earth, but he forgot it could be stopped by a careful huntsman.—I had not forgot the garden-gate, Sir Frederick—or, if that title suits you better, most noble Lord Beauchamp."

"Rashleigh," said Sir Frederick, "thou art a detestable villain!"

"I better deserved the name, Sir Knight, or my Lord, when, under the direction of an able tutor, I sought to introduce civil war into the bosom of a peaceful country. But I have done my best," said he, looking upwards, "to atone for my errors."

I could hold no longer. I had designed to watch their proceedings in silence, but I felt that I must speak or die. "If hell," I said, "has one complexion more hideous than another, it is where villany is masked by hypocrisy."

"Ha! my gentle cousin," said Rashleigh, holding a candle towards me, and surveying me from head to foot; "right welcome to Osbaldistone Hall!—I can forgive your spleen—It is hard to lose an estate and a mistress in one night; for we shall take possession of this poor manor-house in the name of the lawful heir, Sir Rashleigh Osbaldistone."

While Rashleigh braved it out in this manner, I could see that he put a strong force upon his feelings, both of anger and shame. But his state of mind was more obvious when Diana Vernon addressed him. "Rashleigh," she said, "I pity you—for, deep as the evil is which you have laboured to do me, and the evil you have actually done, I cannot hate you so much as I scorn and pity you. What you have now done may be the work of an hour, but will furnish you with reflection for your life—of what nature I leave to your own conscience, which will not slumber for ever."

Rashleigh strode once or twice through the room, came up to the side-table, on which wine was still standing, and poured out a large glass with a trembling hand; but when he saw that we observed his tremor, he suppressed it by a strong effort, and, looking at us with fixed and daring composure, carried the bumper to his head without spilling a drop. "It is my father's old burgundy," he said, looking to Jobson; "I am glad there is some of it left.—You will get proper persons to take care of old butler, and that foolish Scotch rascal. Meanwhile we will convey these persons to a more proper place of custody. I have provided the old family coach for your convenience," he said, "though I am not ignorant that even the lady could brave the night-air on foot or on horseback, were the errand more to her mind."

Andrew wrung his hands.—"I only said that my master was surely speaking to a ghaist in the library—and the villain Lencie to betray an auld friend, that sang aff the same Psalm-book wi' him every Sabbath for twenty years!"

He was turned out of the house, together with Syddall, without being allowed to conclude his lamentation. His expulsion, however, led to some singular consequences. Resolving, according to his own story, to go down for the night where Mother Simpson would give him a lodging for old acquaintance' sake, he had just got clear of the avenue, and into the old wood, as it was called, though it was now used as a pasture-ground rather than woodland, when he suddenly lighted on a drove of Scotch cattle, which were lying there to repose themselves after the day's journey. At this Andrew was in no way surprised, it being the well-known custom of his countrymen, who take care of those droves, to quarter themselves after night upon the best unenclosed grass-ground they can find, and depart before day-break to escape paying for their night's lodgings. But he was both surprised and startled, when a Highlander, springing up, accused him of disturbing the cattle, and refused him to pass forward till he had spoken to his master. The mountaineer conducted Andrew into a thicket, where he found three or four more of his countrymen. "And," said Andrew, "I saw sune they were ower mony men for the drove; and from the questions they put to me, I judged they had other tow on their rock."

They questioned him closely about all that had passed at Osbaldistone Hall, and seemed surprised and concerned at the report he made to them.

"And troth," said Andrew, "I tauld them a' I ken'd; for dirks and pistols were what I could never refuse information to in a' my life."

They talked in whispers among themselves, and at length collected their cattle together, and drove them close up to the entrance of the avenue, which might be half a mile distant from the house. They proceeded to drag together some felled trees which lay in the vicinity, so as to make a temporary barricade across the road, about fifteen yards beyond the avenue. It was now near daybreak, and there was a pale eastern gleam mingled with the fading moonlight, so that objects could be discovered with some distinctness. The lumbering sound of a coach drawn by four horses, and escorted by six men on horseback, was heard coming up the avenue. The Highlanders listened attentively. The carriage contained Mr. Jobson and his unfortunate prisoners. The escort consisted of Rashleigh, and of several horsemen, peace-officers and their assistants. So soon as we had passed the gate at the head of the avenue, it was shut behind the cavalcade by a Highland-man, stationed there for that purpose. At the same time the carriage was impeded in its farther progress by the cattle, amongst which we were involved, and by the barricade in front. Two of the escort dismounted to remove the felled trees, which they might think were left there by accident or carelessness. The others began with their whips to drive the cattle from the road.

"Who dare abuse our cattle?" said a rough voice.—"Shoot him, Angus!"

Rashleigh instantly called out—"A rescue! a rescue!" and, firing a pistol, wounded the man who spoke.

"Claymore!" cried the leader of the Highlanders, and a scuffle instantly commenced. The officers of the law, surprised at so sudden an attack, and not usually possessing the most desperate bravery, made but an imperfect defence, considering the superiority of their numbers. Some attempted to ride back to the Hall, but on a pistol being fired from behind the gate, they conceived themselves surrounded, and at length galloped off in different directions. Rashleigh, meanwhile, had dismounted, and on foot had maintained a desperate and single-handed conflict with the leader of the band. The window of the carriage, on my side, permitted me to witness it. At length Rashleigh dropped.

"Will you ask forgiveness for the sake of God, King James, and auld friendship?" said a voice which I knew right well.

"No, never!" said Rashleigh, firmly.

"Then, traitor, die in your treason!" retorted MacGregor, and plunged his sword in his prostrate antagonist.

In the next moment he was at the carriage door—handed out Miss Vernon, assisted her father and me to alight, and dragging out the attorney, head foremost, threw him under the wheel.

"Mr. Osbaldistone," he said, in a whisper, "you have nothing to fear—I must look after those who have—Your friends will soon be in safety—Farewell, and forget not the MacGregor."

He whistled—his band gathered round him, and, hurrying Diana and her father along with him, they were almost instantly lost in the glades of the forest. The coachman and postilion had abandoned their horses, and fled at the first discharge of firearms; but the animals, stopped by the barricade, remained perfectly still; and well for Jobson that they did so, for the slightest motion would have dragged the wheel over his body. My first object was to relieve him, for such was the rascal's terror that he never could have risen by his own exertions. I next commanded him to observe, that I had neither taken part in the rescue, nor availed myself of it to make my escape, and enjoined him to go down to the Hall, and call some of his party, who had been left there, to assist the wounded.—But Jobson's fears had so mastered and controlled every faculty of his mind, that he was totally incapable of moving. I now resolved to go myself, but in my way I stumbled over the body of a man, as I thought, dead or dying. It was, however, Andrew Fairservice, as well and whole as ever he was in his life, who had only taken this recumbent posture to avoid the slashes, stabs, and pistol-balls, which for a moment or two were flying in various directions. I was so glad to find him, that I did not inquire how he came thither, but instantly commanded his assistance.

Rashleigh was our first object. He groaned when I approached him, as much through spite as through pain, and shut his eyes, as if determined, like Iago, to speak no word more. We lifted him into the carriage, and performed the same good office to another wounded man of his party, who had been left on the field. I then with difficulty made Jobson understand that he must enter the coach also, and support Sir Rashleigh upon the seat. He obeyed, but with an air as if he but half comprehended my meaning. Andrew and I turned the horses' heads round, and opening the gate of the avenue, led them slowly back to Osbaldistone Hall. Some fugitives had already reached the Hall by circuitous routes, and alarmed its garrison by the news that Sir Rashleigh, Clerk Jobson, and all their escort, save they who escaped to tell the tale, had been cut to pieces at the head of the avenue by a whole regiment of wild Highlanders. When we reached the mansion, therefore, we heard such a buzz as arises when bees are alarmed, and mustering in their hives. Mr. Jobson, however, who had now in some measure come to his senses, found voice enough to make himself known. He was the more anxious to be released from the carriage, as one of his companions (the peace-officer) had, to his inexpressible terror, expired by his side with a hideous groan.

Sir Rashleigh Osbaldistone was still alive, but so dreadfully wounded that the bottom of the coach was filled with his blood, and long traces of it left from the entrance-door into the stone-hall, where he was placed in a chair, some attempting to stop the bleeding with cloths, while others called for a surgeon, and no one seemed willing to go to fetch one. "Torment me not," said the wounded man—"I know no assistance can avail me—I am a dying man." He raised himself in his chair, though the damps and chill of death were already on his brow, and spoke with a firmness which seemed beyond his strength. "Cousin Francis," he said, "draw near to me." I approached him as he requested.—"I wish you only to know that the pangs of death do not alter I one iota of my feelings towards you. I hate you!" he said, the expression of rage throwing a hideous glare into the eyes which were soon to be closed for ever—"I hate you with a hatred as intense, now while I lie bleeding and dying before you, as if my foot trode on your neck."

"I have given you no cause, sir," I replied,—"*and for your own sake I could wish your mind in a better temper.*"

"You *have* given me cause," he rejoined. "In love, in ambition, in the paths of interest, you have crossed and blighted me at every turn. I was born to be the honour of my father's house—I have been its disgrace—and all owing to you. My very patrimony has become yours—Take it," he said, "*and may the curse of a dying man cleave to it!*"

In a moment after he had uttered this frightful wish, he fell back in the chair; his eyes became glazed, his limbs stiffened, but the grin and glare of mortal hatred survived even the last gasp of life. I will dwell no longer on so painful a picture, nor say any more of the death of Rashleigh, than that it gave me access to my rights of inheritance without farther challenge, and that Jobson found himself compelled to allow, that the ridiculous charge of misprision of high treason was got up on an affidavit which he made with the sole purpose of favouring Rashleigh's views, and removing me from Osbaldistone Hall. The rascal's name was struck off the list of attorneys, and he was reduced to poverty and contempt.

I returned to London when I had put my affairs in order at Osbaldistone Hall, and felt happy to escape from a place which suggested so many painful recollections. My anxiety was now acute to learn the fate of Diana and her father. A French gentleman who came to London on commercial business, was intrusted with a letter to me from Miss Vernon, which put my mind at rest respecting their safety.

It gave me to understand that the opportune appearance of MacGregor and his party was not fortuitous. The Scottish nobles and gentry engaged in the insurrection, as well as those of England, were particularly anxious to further the escape of Sir Frederick Vernon, who, as an old and trusted agent of the house of Stuart, was possessed of matter enough to have ruined half Scotland. Rob Roy, of whose sagacity and courage they had known so many proofs, was the person whom they pitched upon to assist his escape, and the place of meeting was fixed at Osbaldistone Hall. You have already heard how nearly the plan had been disconcerted by the unhappy Rashleigh. It succeeded, however, perfectly; for when once Sir Frederick and his daughter were again at large, they found horses prepared for them, and, by MacGregor's knowledge of the country—for every part of Scotland, and of the north of England, was familiar to him—were conducted to the western sea-coast, and safely embarked for France. The same gentleman told me that Sir Frederick was not expected to survive for many months a lingering disease, the consequence of late hardships and privations. His daughter was placed in a convent, and although it was her father's wish she should take the veil, he was understood to refer the matter entirely to her own inclinations.

When these news reached me, I frankly told the state of my affections to my father, who was not a little startled at the idea of my marrying a Roman Catholic. But he was very desirous to see me "settled in life," as he called it; and he was sensible that, in joining him with heart and hand in his commercial labours, I had sacrificed my own inclinations. After a brief hesitation, and several questions asked and answered to his satisfaction, he broke out with—"I little thought a son of mine should have been Lord of Osbaldistone Manor, and far less that he should go to a French convent for a spouse. But so dutiful a daughter cannot but prove a good wife. You have worked at the desk to please me, Frank; it is but fair you should wive to please yourself."

How I sped in my wooing, Will Tresham, I need not tell you. You know, too, how long and happily I lived with Diana. You know how I lamented her; but you do not—cannot know, how much she deserved her husband's sorrow. I have no more of romantic adventure to tell, nor, indeed, anything to communicate farther, since the latter incidents of my life are so well known to one who has shared, with the most friendly sympathy, the joys, as well as the sorrows, by which its scenes have been chequered. I often visited Scotland, but never again saw the bold Highlander who had such an influence on the early events of my life. I learned, however, from time to time, that he continued to maintain his ground among the mountains of Loch Lomond, in despite of his powerful enemies, and that he even obtained, to a certain degree, the connivance of Government to his self-elected office of protector of the Lennox, in virtue of which he levied black-mail with as much regularity as the proprietors did their ordinary rents. It seemed impossible that his life should have concluded without a violent end. Nevertheless he died in old age and by a peaceful death, some time about the year 1733, and is still remembered in his country as the Robin Hood of Scotland—the dread of the wealthy, but the friend of the poor—and possessed of many qualities, both of head and heart, which would have graced a less equivocal profession than that to which his fate condemned him. Old Andrew Fairservice used to say, that "There were many things ower bad for blessing, and ower gude for banning, like Rob Roy."

BOOK XXII
THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN
PART I

CHAPTER FIRST.

*Whoe'er's been at Paris must needs know the Gre've,
The fatal retreat of the unfortunate brave,
Where honour and justice most oddly contribute,
To ease heroes' pains by an halter and gibbet.*

*There death breaks the shackles which force had put on,
And the hangman completes what the judge but began;
There the squire of the poet, and knight of the post,
Find their pains no more baulked, and their hopes no more
crossed.*

Prior.

In former times, England had her Tyburn, to which the devoted victims of justice were conducted in solemn procession up what is now called Oxford Street. In Edinburgh, a large open street, or rather oblong square, surrounded by high houses, called the Grassmarket, was used for the same melancholy purpose. It was not ill chosen for such a scene, being of considerable extent, and therefore fit to accommodate a great number of spectators, such as are usually assembled by this melancholy spectacle. On the other hand, few of the houses which surround it were, even in early times, inhabited by persons of fashion; so that those likely to be offended or over deeply affected by such unpleasant exhibitions were not in the way of having their quiet disturbed by them. The houses in the Grassmarket are, generally speaking, of a mean description; yet the place is not without some features of grandeur, being overhung by the southern side of the huge rock on which the Castle stands, and by the moss-grown battlements and turreted walls of that ancient fortress.

It was the custom, until within these thirty years or thereabouts, to use this esplanade for the scene of public executions. The fatal day was announced to the public by the appearance of a huge black gallows-tree towards the eastern end of the Grassmarket. This ill-omened apparition was of great height, with a scaffold surrounding it, and a double ladder placed against it, for the ascent of the unhappy criminal and executioner. As this apparatus was always arranged before dawn, it seemed as if the gallows had grown out of the earth in the course of one night, like the production of some foul demon; and I well remember the fright with which the schoolboys, when I was one of their number, used to regard these ominous signs of deadly preparation. On the night after the execution the gallows again disappeared, and was conveyed in silence and darkness to the place where it was usually deposited, which was one of the vaults under the Parliament House, or courts of justice. This mode of execution is now exchanged for one similar to that in front of Newgate,—with what beneficial effect is uncertain. The mental sufferings of the convict are indeed shortened. He no longer stalks between the attendant clergymen, dressed in his grave-clothes, through a considerable part of the city, looking like a moving and walking corpse, while yet an inhabitant of this world; but, as the ultimate purpose of punishment has in view the prevention of crimes, it may at least be doubted, whether, in abridging the melancholy ceremony, we have not in part diminished that appalling effect upon the spectators which is the useful end of all such inflictions, and in consideration of which alone, unless in very particular cases, capital sentences can be altogether justified.

On the 7th day of September 1736, these ominous preparations for execution were descried in the place we have described, and at an early hour the space around began to be occupied by several groups, who gazed on the scaffold and gibbet with a stern and vindictive show of satisfaction very seldom testified by the populace, whose good nature, in most cases, forgets the crime of the condemned person, and dwells only on his misery. But the act of which the expected culprit had been convicted was of a description calculated nearly and closely to awaken and irritate the resentful feelings of the multitude. The tale is well known; yet it is necessary to recapitulate its leading circumstances, for the better understanding what is to follow; and the narrative may prove long, but I trust not uninteresting even to those who have heard its general issue. At any rate, some detail is necessary, in order to render intelligible the subsequent events of our narrative.

Contraband trade, though it strikes at the root of legitimate government, by encroaching on its revenues,—though it injures the fair trader, and debauches the mind of those engaged in it,—is not usually looked upon, either by the vulgar or by their betters, in a very heinous point of view. On the contrary, in those countries where it prevails, the cleverest, boldest, and most intelligent of the peasantry, are uniformly engaged in illicit transactions, and very often with the sanction of the farmers and inferior gentry. Smuggling was almost universal in Scotland in the reigns of George I. and II.; for the people, unaccustomed to imposts, and regarding them as an unjust aggression upon their ancient liberties, made no scruple to elude them whenever it was possible to do so.

The county of Fife, bounded by two firths on the south and north, and by the sea on the east, and having a number of small seaports, was long famed for maintaining successfully a contraband trade; and, as there were many seafaring men residing there, who had been pirates and buccaneers in their youth, there were not wanting a sufficient number of daring men to carry it on. Among these, a fellow called Andrew Wilson, originally a baker in the village of Pathhead, was particularly obnoxious to the revenue officers. He was possessed of great personal strength, courage, and cunning,—was perfectly acquainted with the coast, and capable of conducting the most desperate enterprises. On several occasions he succeeded in baffling the pursuit and researches of the king's officers; but he became so much the object of their suspicions and watchful attention, that at length he was totally ruined by repeated seizures. The man became desperate. He considered himself as robbed and plundered; and took it into his head that he had a right to make reprisals, as he could find opportunity. Where the heart is prepared for evil, opportunity is seldom long wanting. This Wilson learned that the Collector of the Customs at Kirkcaldy had come to Pittenweem, in the course of his official round of duty, with a considerable sum of public money in his custody. As the amount was greatly within the value of the goods which had been seized from him, Wilson felt no scruple of conscience in resolving to reimburse himself for his losses, at the expense of the Collector and the revenue. He associated with himself one Robertson, and two other idle young men, whom, having been concerned in the same illicit trade, he persuaded to view the transaction in the same justifiable light in which he himself considered it. They watched the motions of the Collector; they broke forcibly into the house where he lodged,—Wilson, with two of his associates, entering the Collector's apartment, while Robertson, the fourth, kept watch at the door with a drawn cutlass in his hand. The officer of the customs, conceiving his life in danger, escaped out of his bedroom window, and fled in his shirt, so that the plunderers, with much ease, possessed themselves of about two hundred pounds of public money. The robbery was committed in a very audacious manner, for several persons were passing in the street at the time. But Robertson, representing the noise they heard as a dispute or fray betwixt the Collector and the people of the house, the worthy citizens of Pittenweem felt themselves no way called on to interfere in behalf of the obnoxious revenue officer; so, satisfying themselves with this very superficial account of the matter, like the Levite in the parable, they passed on the opposite side of the way. An alarm was at length given, military were called in, the depredators were pursued, the booty recovered, and Wilson and Robertson tried and condemned to death, chiefly on the evidence of an accomplice.

Many thought that, in consideration of the men's erroneous opinion of the nature of the action they had committed, justice might have been satisfied with a less forfeiture than that of two lives. On the other hand, from the audacity of the fact, a severe example was judged necessary; and such was the opinion of the Government. When it became apparent that the sentence of death was to be executed, files, and other implements necessary for their escape, were transmitted secretly to the culprits by a friend from without. By these means they sawed a bar out of one of the prison-windows, and might have made their escape, but for the obstinacy of Wilson, who, as he was daringly resolute, was doggedly pertinacious of his opinion. His comrade, Robertson, a young and slender man, proposed to make the experiment of passing the foremost through the gap they had made, and enlarging it from the outside, if necessary, to allow Wilson free passage. Wilson, however, insisted on making the first experiment, and being a robust and lusty man, he not only found it impossible to get through betwixt the bars, but, by his struggles, he jammed himself so fast, that he was unable to draw his body back again. In these circumstances discovery became unavoidable, and sufficient

precautions were taken by the jailor to prevent any repetition of the same attempt. Robertson uttered not a word of reflection on his companion for the consequences of his obstinacy; but it appeared from the sequel, that Wilson's mind was deeply impressed with the recollection that, but for him, his comrade, over whose mind he exercised considerable influence, would not have engaged in the criminal enterprise which had terminated thus fatally; and that now he had become his destroyer a second time, since, but for his obstinacy, Robertson might have effected his escape. Minds like Wilson's, even when exercised in evil practices, sometimes retain the power of thinking and resolving with enthusiastic generosity. His whole thoughts were now bent on the possibility of saving Robertson's life, without the least respect to his own. The resolution which he adopted, and the manner in which he carried it into effect, were striking and unusual. Adjacent to the tolbooth or city jail of Edinburgh, is one of three churches into which the cathedral of St. Giles is now divided, called, from its vicinity, the Tolbooth Church. It was the custom that criminals under sentence of death were brought to this church, with a sufficient guard, to hear and join in public worship on the Sabbath before execution. It was supposed that the hearts of these unfortunate persons, however hardened before against feelings of devotion, could not but be accessible to them upon uniting their thoughts and voices, for the last time, along with their fellow-mortals, in addressing their Creator. And to the rest of the congregation, it was thought it could not but be impressive and affecting, to find their devotions mingling with those, who, sent by the doom of an earthly tribunal to appear where the whole earth is judged, might be considered as beings trembling on the verge of eternity. The practice, however edifying, has been discontinued, in consequence of the incident we are about to detail.

The clergyman, whose duty it was to officiate in the Tolbooth Church, had concluded an affecting discourse, part of which was particularly directed to the unfortunate men, Wilson and Robertson, who were in the pew set apart for the persons in their unhappy situation, each secured betwixt two soldiers of the city guard. The clergyman had reminded them, that the next congregation they must join would be that of the just, or of the unjust; that the psalms they now heard must be exchanged, in the space of two brief days, for eternal hallelujahs, or eternal lamentations; and that this fearful alternative must depend upon the state to which they might be able to bring their minds before the moment of awful preparation: that they should not despair on account of the suddenness of the summons, but rather to feel this comfort in their misery, that, though all who now lifted the voice, or bent the knee in conjunction with them, lay under the same sentence of certain death, *they* only had the advantage of knowing the precise moment at which it should be executed upon them. "Therefore," urged the good man, his voice trembling with emotion, "redeem the time, my unhappy brethren, which is yet left; and remember, that, with the grace of Him to whom space and time are but as nothing, salvation may yet be assured, even in the pittance of delay which the laws of your country afford you."

Robertson was observed to weep at these words; but Wilson seemed as one whose brain had not entirely received their meaning, or whose thoughts were deeply impressed with some different subject;—an expression so natural to a person in his situation, that it excited neither suspicion nor surprise.

The benediction was pronounced as usual, and the congregation was dismissed, many lingering to indulge their curiosity with a more fixed look at the two criminals, who now, as well as their guards, rose up, as if to depart when the crowd should permit them. A murmur of compassion was heard to pervade the spectators, the more general, perhaps, on account of the alleviating circumstances of the case; when all at once, Wilson, who, as we have already noticed, was a very strong man, seized two of the soldiers, one with each hand, and calling at the same time to his companion, "Run, Geordie, run!" threw himself on a third, and fastened his teeth on the collar of his coat. Robertson stood for a second as if thunderstruck, and unable to avail himself of the opportunity of escape; but the cry of "Run, run!" being echoed from many around, whose feelings surprised them into a very natural interest in his behalf, he shook off the grasp of the remaining soldier, threw himself over the pew, mixed with the dispersing congregation, none of whom felt inclined to stop a poor wretch taking his last chance for his life, gained the door of the church, and was lost to all pursuit.

The generous intrepidity which Wilson had displayed on this occasion augmented the feeling of compassion which attended his fate. The public, where their own prejudices are not concerned, are easily engaged on the side of disinterestedness and humanity, admired Wilson's behaviour, and rejoiced in Robertson's escape. This general feeling was so great, that it excited a vague report that Wilson would be rescued at the place of execution, either by the mob or by some of his old associates, or by some second extraordinary and unexpected exertion of strength and courage on his own part. The magistrates thought it their duty to provide against the possibility of disturbance. They ordered out, for protection of the execution of the sentence, the greater part of their own City Guard, under the command of Captain Porteous, a man whose name became too memorable from the melancholy circumstances of the day, and subsequent events. It may be necessary to say a word about this person, and the corps which he commanded. But the subject is of importance sufficient to deserve another chapter.

CHAPTER SECOND.

*And thou, great god of aquavitae!
Wha sways the empire of this city
(When fou we're sometimes capernoity),*

*Be thou prepared,
To save us frae that black banditti,*

*The City Guard!
Fergusson's Daft Days.*

Captain John Porteous, a name memorable in the traditions of Edinburgh, as well as in the records of criminal jurisprudence, was the son of a citizen of Edinburgh, who endeavoured to breed him up to his own mechanical trade of a tailor. The youth, however, had a wild and irreclaimable propensity to dissipation, which finally sent him to serve in the corps long maintained in the service of the States of Holland, and called the Scotch Dutch. Here he learned military discipline; and, returning afterwards, in the course of an idle and wandering life, to his native city, his services were required by the magistrates of Edinburgh in the disturbed year 1715, for disciplining their City Guard, in which he shortly afterwards received a captain's commission. It was only by his military skill and an alert and resolute character as an officer of police, that he merited this promotion, for he is said to have been a man of profligate habits, an unnatural son, and a brutal husband. He was, however, useful in his station, and his harsh and fierce habits rendered him formidable to rioters or disturbers of the public peace.

The corps in which he held his command is, or perhaps we should rather say *was*, a body of about one hundred and twenty soldiers divided into three companies, and regularly armed, clothed, and embodied. They were chiefly veterans who enlisted in this corps, having the benefit of working at their trades when they were off duty. These men had the charge of preserving public order, repressing riots and street robberies, acting, in short, as an armed police, and attending on all public occasions where confusion or popular disturbance might be expected.*

* The Lord Provost was ex-officio commander and colonel of the corps, which might be increased to three hundred men when the times required it. No other drum but theirs was allowed to sound on the High Street between the Luckenbooths and the Netherbow.

Poor Fergusson, whose irregularities sometimes led him into unpleasant rencontres with these military conservators of public order, and who mentions them so often that he may be termed their poet laureate,* thus admonishes his readers, warned doubtless by his own experience:—

* [Robert Fergusson, the Scottish Poet, born 1750, died 1774.]

*"Gude folk, as ye come frae the fair,
Bide yont frae this black squad:
There's nae sic savages elsewhere
Allowed to wear cockad."*

In fact, the soldiers of the City Guard, being, as we have said, in general discharged veterans, who had strength enough remaining for this municipal duty, and being, moreover, for the greater part, Highlanders, were neither by birth, education, nor former habits, trained to endure with much patience the insults of the rabble, or the provoking petulance of truant schoolboys, and idle debauchees of all descriptions, with whom their occupation brought them into contact. On the contrary, the tempers of the poor old fellows were soured by the indignities with which the mob distinguished them on many occasions, and frequently might have required the soothing strains of the poet we have just quoted—

*"O soldiers! for your ain dear sakes,
For Scotland's love, the Land o' Cakes,
Gie not her bairns sic deadly paiks,
Nor be sae rude,
Wi' firelock or Lochaber-axe,
As spill their bluid!"*

On all occasions when a holiday licensed some riot and irregularity, a skirmish with these veterans was a favourite recreation with the rabble of Edinburgh. These pages may perhaps see the light when many have in fresh recollection such onsets as we allude to. But the venerable corps, with whom the contention was held, may now be considered as totally extinct. Of late the gradual diminution of these civic soldiers reminds one of the abatement of King Lear's hundred knights. The edicts of each succeeding set of magistrates have, like those of Goneril and Regan, diminished this venerable band with the similar question, "What need we five-and-twenty?—ten?—or five?" And it is now nearly come to, "What need one?" A spectre may indeed here and there still be seen, of an old grey-headed and grey-bearded Highlander, with war-worn features, but bent double by age; dressed in an old fashioned cocked-hat, bound with white tape instead of silver lace; and in coat, waistcoat, and breeches, of a muddy-coloured red, bearing in his withered hand an ancient weapon, called a Lochaber-axe; a long pole, namely, with an axe at the extremity, and a hook at the back of the hatchet.*

* This hook was to enable the bearer of the Lochaber-axe to scale a gateway, by grappling the top of the door, and swinging himself up by the staff of his weapon. Such a phantom of former days still creeps, I have been informed, round the statue of Charles the Second, in the Parliament Square, as if the image of a Stuart were the last refuge for any memorial of our ancient manners; and one or two others are supposed to glide around the door of the guardhouse assigned to them in the Luckenbooths, when their ancient refuge in the High Street was laid low.*

* This ancient corps is now entirely disbanded. Their last march to do duty at Hallowfair had something in it affecting. Their drums and fifes had been wont on better days to play, on this joyous occasion, the lively tune of "Jockey to the fair;" but on his final occasion the afflicted veterans moved slowly to the dirge of "The last time I came ower the muir."

But the fate of manuscripts bequeathed to friends and executors is so uncertain, that the narrative containing these frail memorials of the old Town Guard of Edinburgh, who, with their grim and valiant corporal, John Dhu (the fiercest-looking fellow I ever saw), were, in my boyhood, the alternate terror and derision of the petulant brood of the High School, may, perhaps, only come to light when all memory of the institution has faded away, and then serve as an illustration of Kay's caricatures, who has preserved the features of some of their heroes. In the preceding generation, when there was a perpetual alarm for the plots and activity of the Jacobites, some pains were taken by the magistrates of Edinburgh to keep this corps, though composed always of such materials as we have noticed, in a more effective state than was afterwards judged necessary, when their most dangerous service was to skirmish with the rabble on the king's birthday. They were, therefore, more the objects of hatred, and less that of scorn, than they were afterwards accounted.

To Captain John Porteous, the honour of his command and of his corps seems to have been a matter of high interest and importance. He was exceedingly incensed against Wilson for the affront which he construed him to have put upon his soldiers, in the effort he made for the liberation of his companion, and expressed himself most ardently on the subject. He was no less indignant at the report, that there was an intention to rescue Wilson himself from the gallows, and uttered many threats and imprecations upon that subject, which were afterwards remembered to his disadvantage. In fact, if a good deal of determination and promptitude rendered Porteous, in one respect, fit to command guards designed to suppress popular commotion, he seems, on the other, to have been disqualified for a charge so delicate, by a hot and surly temper, always too ready to come to blows and violence; a character void of principle; and a disposition to regard the rabble, who seldom failed to regale him and his soldiers with some marks of their displeasure, as declared enemies, upon whom it was natural and justifiable that he should seek opportunities of vengeance. Being, however, the most active and trustworthy among the captains of the City Guard, he was the person to whom the magistrates confided the command of the soldiers appointed to keep the peace at the time of Wilson's execution. He was ordered to guard the gallows and scaffold, with about eighty men, all the disposable force that could be spared for that duty.

But the magistrates took farther precautions, which affected Porteous's pride very deeply. They requested the assistance of part of a regular infantry regiment, not to attend upon the execution, but to remain drawn up on the principal street of the city, during the time that it went forward, in order to intimidate the multitude, in case they should be disposed to be unruly, with a display of force which could not be resisted without desperation. It may sound ridiculous in our ears, considering the fallen state of this ancient civic corps, that its officer should have felt punctiliously jealous of its honour. Yet so it was. Captain Porteous resented, as an indignity, the introducing the Welsh Fusileers within the city, and drawing them up in the street where no drums but his own were allowed to be sounded without the special command or permission of the magistrates. As he could not show his ill-humour to his patrons the magistrates, it increased his indignation and his desire to be revenged on the unfortunate criminal Wilson, and all who favoured him. These internal emotions of jealousy and rage wrought a change on the man's mien and bearing, visible to all who saw him on the fatal morning when Wilson was appointed to suffer. Porteous's ordinary appearance was rather favourable. He was about the middle size, stout, and well made, having a military air, and yet rather a gentle and mild countenance. His complexion was brown, his face somewhat fretted with the sears of the smallpox, his eyes rather languid than keen or fierce. On the present occasion, however, it seemed to those who saw him as if he were agitated by some evil demon. His step was irregular, his voice hollow and broken, his countenance pale, his eyes staring and wild, his speech imperfect and confused, and his whole appearance so disordered, that many remarked he seemed to be *fey*, a Scottish expression, meaning the state of those who are driven on to their impending fate by the strong impulse of some irresistible necessity.

One part of his conduct was truly diabolical, if indeed it has not been exaggerated by the general prejudice entertained against his memory. When Wilson, the unhappy criminal, was delivered to him by the keeper of the prison, in order that he might be conducted to the place of execution, Porteous, not satisfied with the usual precautions to prevent escape, ordered him to be manacled. This might be justifiable from the character and bodily strength of the malefactor, as well as from the apprehensions so generally entertained of an expected rescue. But the handcuffs which were produced being found too small for the wrists of a man so big-boned as Wilson, Porteous proceeded with his own hands, and by great exertion of strength, to force them till they clasped together, to the exquisite torture of the unhappy criminal. Wilson remonstrated against such barbarous usage, declaring that the pain distracted his thoughts from the subjects of meditation proper to his unhappy condition.

"It signifies little," replied Captain Porteous; "your pain will soon be at an end."

"Your cruelty is great," answered the sufferer. "You know not how soon you yourself may have occasion to ask the mercy which you are now refusing to a fellow-creature. May God forgive you!"

These words, long afterwards quoted and remembered, were all that passed between Porteous and his prisoner; but as they took air, and became known to the people, they greatly increased the popular compassion for Wilson, and excited a proportionate degree of indignation against Porteous; against whom, as strict, and even violent in the discharge of his unpopular office, the common people had some real, and many imaginary causes of complaint.

When the painful procession was completed, and Wilson, with the escort, had arrived at the scaffold in the Grassmarket, there appeared no signs of that attempt to rescue him which had occasioned such precautions. The multitude, in general, looked on with deeper interest than at ordinary executions; and there might be seen, on the countenances of many, a stern and indignant expression, like that with which the ancient Cameronians might be supposed to witness the execution

of their brethren, who glorified the Covenant on the same occasion, and at the same spot. But there was no attempt at violence. Wilson himself seemed disposed to hasten over the space that divided time from eternity. The devotions proper and usual on such occasions were no sooner finished than he submitted to his fate, and the sentence of the law was fulfilled.

He had been suspended on the gibbet so long as to be totally deprived of life, when at once, as if occasioned by some newly received impulse, there arose a tumult among the multitude. Many stones were thrown at Porteous and his guards; some mischief was done; and the mob continued to press forward with whoops, shrieks, howls, and exclamations. A young fellow, with a sailor's cap slouched over his face, sprung on the scaffold, and cut the rope by which the criminal was suspended. Others approached to carry off the body, either to secure for it a decent grave, or to try, perhaps, some means of resuscitation. Captain Porteous was wrought, by this appearance of insurrection against his authority, into a rage so headlong as made him forget, that, the sentence having been fully executed, it was his duty not to engage in hostilities with the misguided multitude, but to draw off his men as fast as possible. He sprung from the scaffold, snatched a musket from one of his soldiers, commanded the party to give fire, and, as several eye-witnesses concurred in swearing, set them the example, by discharging his piece, and shooting a man dead on the spot. Several soldiers obeyed his command or followed his example; six or seven persons were slain, and a great many were hurt and wounded.

After this act of violence, the Captain proceeded to withdraw his men towards their guard-house in the High Street. The mob were not so much intimidated as incensed by what had been done. They pursued the soldiers with execrations, accompanied by volleys of stones. As they pressed on them, the rearmost soldiers turned, and again fired with fatal aim and execution. It is not accurately known whether Porteous commanded this second act of violence; but of course the odium of the whole transactions of the fatal day attached to him, and to him alone. He arrived at the guard-house, dismissed his soldiers, and went to make his report to the magistrates concerning the unfortunate events of the day.

Apparently by this time Captain Porteous had begun to doubt the propriety of his own conduct, and the reception he met with from the magistrates was such as to make him still more anxious to gloss it over. He denied that he had given orders to fire; he denied he had fired with his own hand; he even produced the fusee which he carried as an officer for examination; it was found still loaded. Of three cartridges which he was seen to put in his pouch that morning, two were still there; a white handkerchief was thrust into the muzzle of the piece, and re-turned unsoiled or blackened. To the defence founded on these circumstances it was answered, that Porteous had not used his own piece, but had been seen to take one from a soldier. Among the many who had been killed and wounded by the unhappy fire, there were several of better rank; for even the humanity of such soldiers as fired over the heads of the mere rabble around the scaffold, proved in some instances fatal to persons who were stationed in windows, or observed the melancholy scene from a distance. The voice of public indignation was loud and general; and, ere men's tempers had time to cool, the trial of Captain Porteous took place before the High Court of Justiciary. After a long and patient hearing, the jury had the difficult duty of balancing the positive evidence of many persons, and those of respectability, who deposed positively to the prisoner's commanding his soldiers to fire, and himself firing his piece, of which some swore that they saw the smoke and flash, and beheld a man drop at whom it was pointed, with the negative testimony of others, who, though well stationed for seeing what had passed, neither heard Porteous give orders to fire, nor saw him fire himself; but, on the contrary, averred that the first shot was fired by a soldier who stood close by him. A great part of his defence was also founded on the turbulence of the mob, which witnesses, according to their feelings, their predilections, and their opportunities of observation, represented differently; some describing as a formidable riot, what others represented as a trifling disturbance such as always used to take place on the like occasions, when the executioner of the law, and the men commissioned to protect him in his task, were generally exposed to some indignities. The verdict of the jury sufficiently shows how the evidence preponderated in their minds. It declared that John Porteous fired a gun among the people assembled at the execution; that he gave orders to his soldiers to fire, by which many persons were killed and wounded; but, at the same time, that the prisoner and his guard had been wounded and beaten, by stones thrown at them by the multitude. Upon this verdict, the Lords of Justiciary passed sentence of death against Captain John Porteous, adjudging him, in the common form, to be hanged on a gibbet at the common place of execution, on Wednesday, 8th September 1736, and all his movable property to be forfeited to the king's use, according to the Scottish law in cases of wilful murder.*

* The signatures affixed to the death-warrant of Captain Porteous were— Andrew Fletcher of Milton, Lord Justice-Clerk. Sir James Mackenzie, Lord Royston. David Erskine, Lord Dun. Sir Walter Pringle, Lord Newhall. Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Minto.

CHAPTER THIRD.

*"The hour's come, but not the man."**

* There is a tradition, that while a little stream was swollen into a torrent by recent showers, the discontented voice of the Water Spirit was heard to pronounce these words. At the some moment a man, urged on by his fate, or, in Scottish language, *fey*, arrived at a gallop, and prepared to cross the water. No remonstrance from the bystanders was of power to stop him—he plunged into the stream, and perished.

Kelpie.

On the day when the unhappy Porteous was expected to suffer the sentence of the law, the place of execution, extensive as it is, was crowded almost to suffocation. There was not a window in all the lofty tenements around it, or in the steep and crooked street called the Bow, by which the fatal procession was to descend from the High Street, that was not absolutely filled with spectators. The uncommon height and antique appearance of these houses, some of which were formerly the property of the Knights Templars, and the Knights of St. John, and still exhibit on their fronts and gables the iron cross of these orders, gave additional effect to a scene in itself so striking. The area of the Grassmarket resembled a huge dark lake or sea of human heads, in the centre of which arose the fatal tree, tall, black, and ominous, from which dangled the deadly halter. Every object takes interest from its uses and associations, and the erect beam and empty noose, things so simple in themselves, became, on such an occasion, objects of terror and of solemn interest.

Amid so numerous an assembly there was scarcely a word spoken, save in whispers. The thirst of vengeance was in some degree allayed by its supposed certainty; and even the populace, with deeper feeling than they are wont to entertain, suppressed all clamorous exultation, and prepared to enjoy the scene of retaliation in triumph, silent and decent, though stern and relentless. It seemed as if the depth of their hatred to the unfortunate criminal scorned to display itself in anything resembling the more noisy current of their ordinary feelings. Had a stranger consulted only the evidence of his ears, he might have supposed that so vast a multitude were assembled for some purpose which affected them with the deepest sorrow, and stilled those noises which, on all ordinary occasions, arise from such a concourse; but if he had gazed upon their faces, he would have been instantly undeceived. The compressed lip, the bent brow, the stern and flashing eye of almost everyone on whom he looked, conveyed the expression of men come to glut their sight with triumphant revenge. It is probable that the appearance of the criminal might have somewhat changed the temper of the populace in his favour, and that they might in the moment of death have forgiven the man against whom their resentment had been so fiercely heated. It had, however, been destined, that the mutability of their sentiments was not to be exposed to this trial.

The usual hour for producing the criminal had been past for many minutes, yet the spectators observed no symptom of his appearance. "Would they venture to defraud public justice?" was the question which men began anxiously to ask at each other. The first answer in every case was bold and positive,—*"They dare not."* But when the point was further canvassed, other opinions were entertained, and various causes of doubt were suggested. Porteous had been a favourite officer of the magistracy of the city, which, being a numerous and fluctuating body, requires for its support a degree of energy in its functionaries, which the individuals who compose it cannot at all times alike be supposed to possess in their own persons. It was remembered, that in the Information for Porteous (the paper, namely, in which his case was stated to the Judges of the criminal court), he had been described by his counsel as the person on whom the magistrates chiefly relied in all emergencies of uncommon difficulty. It was argued, too, that his conduct, on the unhappy occasion of Wilson's execution, was capable of being attributed to an imprudent excess of zeal in the execution of his duty, a motive for which those under whose authority he acted might be supposed to have great

sympathy. And as these considerations might move the magistrates to make a favourable representation of Porteous's case, there were not wanting others in the higher departments of Government, which would make such suggestions favourably listened to.

The mob of Edinburgh, when thoroughly excited, had been at all times one of the fiercest which could be found in Europe; and of late years they had risen repeatedly against the Government, and sometimes not without temporary success. They were conscious, therefore, that they were no favourites with the rulers of the period, and that, if Captain Porteous's violence was not altogether regarded as good service, it might certainly be thought, that to visit it with a capital punishment would render it both delicate and dangerous for future officers, in the same circumstances, to act with effect in repressing tumults. There is also a natural feeling, on the part of all members of Government, for the general maintenance of authority; and it seemed not unlikely, that what to the relatives of the sufferers appeared a wanton and unprovoked massacre, should be otherwise viewed in the cabinet of St. James's. It might be there supposed, that upon the whole matter, Captain Porteous was in the exercise of a trust delegated to him by the lawful civil authority; that he had been assaulted by the populace, and several of his men hurt; and that, in finally repelling force by force, his conduct could be fairly imputed to no other motive than self-defence in the discharge of his duty.

These considerations, of themselves very powerful, induced the spectators to apprehend the possibility of a reprieve; and to the various causes which might interest the rulers in his favour, the lower part of the rabble added one which was peculiarly well adapted to their comprehension. It was averred, in order to increase the odium against Porteous, that while he repressed with the utmost severity the slightest excesses of the poor, he not only overlooked the license of the young nobles and gentry, but was very willing to lend them the countenance of his official authority, in execution of such loose pranks as it was chiefly his duty to have restrained. This suspicion, which was perhaps much exaggerated, made a deep impression on the minds of the populace; and when several of the higher rank joined in a petition, recommending Porteous to the mercy of the Crown, it was generally supposed he owed their favour not to any conviction of the hardship of his case, but to the fear of losing a convenient accomplice in their debaucheries. It is scarcely necessary to say how much this suspicion augmented the people's detestation of this obnoxious criminal, as well as their fear of his escaping the sentence pronounced against him.

While these arguments were stated and replied to, and canvassed and supported, the hitherto silent expectation of the people became changed into that deep and agitating murmur, which is sent forth by the ocean before the tempest begins to howl. The crowded populace, as if their motions had corresponded with the unsettled state of their minds, fluctuated to and fro without any visible cause of impulse, like the agitation of the waters, called by sailors the ground-swell. The news, which the magistrates had almost hesitated to communicate to them, were at length announced, and spread among the spectators with a rapidity like lightning. A reprieve from the Secretary of State's office, under the hand of his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, had arrived, intimating the pleasure of Queen Caroline (regent of the kingdom during the absence of George II. on the Continent), that the execution of the sentence of death pronounced against John Porteous, late Captain-Lieutenant of the City Guard of Edinburgh, present prisoner in the Tolbooth of that city, be respite for six weeks from the time appointed for his execution.

The assembled spectators of almost all degrees, whose minds had been wound up to the pitch which we have described, uttered a groan, or rather a roar of indignation and disappointed revenge, similar to that of a tiger from whom his meal has been rent by his keeper when he was just about to devour it. This fierce exclamation seemed to forbode some immediate explosion of popular resentment, and, in fact, such had been expected by the magistrates, and the necessary measures had been taken to repress it. But the shout was not repeated, nor did any sudden tumult ensue, such as it appeared to announce. The populace seemed to be ashamed of having expressed their disappointment in a vain clamour, and the sound changed, not into the silence which had preceded the arrival of these stunning news, but into stifled mutterings, which each group maintained among themselves, and which were blended into one deep and hoarse murmur which floated above the assembly.

Yet still, though all expectation of the execution was over, the mob remained assembled, stationary, as it were, through very resentment, gazing on the preparations for death, which had now been made in vain, and stimulating their feelings, by recalling the various claims which Wilson might have had on royal mercy, from the mistaken motives on which he acted, as well as from the generosity he had displayed towards his accomplice. "This man," they said,—"the brave, the resolute, the generous, was executed to death without mercy for stealing a purse of gold, which in some sense he might consider as a fair reprisal; while the profligate satellite, who took advantage of a trifling tumult, inseparable from such occasions, to shed the blood of twenty of his fellow-citizens, is deemed a fitting object for the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy. Is this to be borne?—would our fathers have borne it? Are not we, like them, Scotsmen and burghers of Edinburgh?"

The officers of justice began now to remove the scaffold, and other preparations which had been made for the execution, in hopes, by doing so, to accelerate the dispersion of the multitude. The measure had the desired effect; for no sooner had the fatal tree been unfixed from the large stone pedestal or socket in which it was secured, and sunk slowly down upon the wain intended to remove it to the place where it was usually deposited, than the populace, after giving vent to their feelings in a second shout of rage and mortification, began slowly to disperse to their usual abodes and occupations.

The windows were in like manner gradually deserted, and groups of the more decent class of citizens formed themselves, as if waiting to return homewards when the streets should be cleared of the rabble. Contrary to what is frequently the case, this description of persons agreed in general with the sentiments of their inferiors, and considered the cause as common to all ranks. Indeed, as we have already noticed, it was by no means amongst the lowest class of the spectators, or those most likely to be engaged in the riot at Wilson's execution, that the fatal fire of Porteous's soldiers had taken effect. Several persons were killed who were looking out at windows at the scene, who could not of course belong to the rioters, and were persons of decent rank and condition. The burghers, therefore, resenting the loss which had fallen on their own body, and proud and tenacious of their rights, as the citizens of Edinburgh have at all times been, were greatly exasperated at the unexpected respite of Captain Porteous.

It was noticed at the time, and afterwards more particularly remembered, that, while the mob were in the act of dispersing, several individuals were seen busily passing from one place and one group of people to another, remaining long with none, but whispering for a little time with those who appeared to be declaiming most violently against the conduct of Government. These active agents had the appearance of men from the country, and were generally supposed to be old friends and confederates of Wilson, whose minds were of course highly excited against Porteous.

If, however, it was the intention of these men to stir the multitude to any sudden act of mutiny, it seemed for the time to be fruitless. The rabble, as well as the more decent part of the assembly, dispersed, and went home peaceably; and it was only by observing the moody discontent on their brows, or catching the tenor of the conversation they held with each other, that a stranger could estimate the state of their minds. We will give the reader this advantage, by associating ourselves with one of the numerous groups who were painfully ascending the steep declivity of the West Bow, to return to their dwellings in the Lawnmarket.

"An unco thing this, Mrs. Howden," said old Peter Plumdamas to his neighbour the rouping-wife, or saleswoman, as he offered her his arm to assist her in the toilsome ascent, "to see the grit folk at Lunnon set their face against law and gospel, and let loose sic a reprobate as Porteous upon a peaceable town!"

"And to think o' the weary walk they hae gien us," answered Mrs. Howden, with a groan; "and sic a comfortable window as I had gotten, too, just within a penny-stane-cast of the scaffold—I could hae heard every word the minister said—and to pay twalpennies for my stand, and a' for naething!"

"I am judging," said Mr. Plumdamas, "that this reprieve wadna stand gude in the auld Scots law, when the kingdom was a kingdom."

"I dinna ken muckle about the law," answered Mrs. Howden; "but I ken, when we had a king, and a chancellor, and parliament men o' our ain, we could aye peeble them wi' stanes when they werena gude bairns—But naeboddy's nails can reach the length o' Lunnon."

"Weary on Lunnon, and a' that e'er came out o't!" said Miss Grizel Damahoy, an ancient seamstress; "they hae taen away our parliament, and they hae oppressed our trade. Our gentles will hardly allow that a Scots needle can sew ruffles on a sark, or lace on an owerlay."

"Ye may say that—Miss Damahoy, and I ken o' them that hae gotten raisins frae Lunnon by forpits at ance," responded Plumdamas; "and then sic an host of idle English gaugers and excisemen as hae come down to vex and torment us, that an honest man canna fetch sae muckle as a bit anker o' brandy frae Leith to the

Lawnmarket, but he's like to be rubbit o' the very gudes he's bought and paid for.—Weel, I winna justify Andrew Wilson for pitting hands on what wasna his; but if he took nae mair than his ain, there's an awfu' difference between that and the fact this man stands for."

"If ye speak about the law," said Mrs. Howden, "here comes Mr. Saddletree, that can settle it as weel as ony on the bench."

The party she mentioned, a grave elderly person, with a superb periwig, dressed in a decent suit of sad-coloured clothes, came up as she spoke, and courteously gave his arm to Miss Grizel Damahoy.

It may be necessary to mention, that Mr. Bartoline Saddletree kept an excellent and highly-esteemed shop for harness, saddles, &c. &c., at the sign of the Golden Nag, at the head of Bess Wynd.*

* [Maitland calls it Best's Wynd, and later writers Beth's Wynd. As the name implies, it was an open thoroughfare or alley leading from the Lawnmarket, and extended in a direct line between the old Tolbooth to near the head of the Cowgate. It was partly destroyed by fire in 1786, and was totally removed in 1809, preparatory to the building of the new libraries of the Faculty of Advocates and writers to the Signet.]

His genius, however (as he himself and most of his neighbours conceived), lay towards the weightier matters of the law, and he failed not to give frequent attendance upon the pleadings and arguments of the lawyers and judges in the neighbouring square, where, to say the truth, he was oftener to be found than would have consisted with his own emolument; but that his wife, an active painstaking person, could, in his absence, make an admirable shift to please the customers and scold the journeymen. This good lady was in the habit of letting her husband take his way, and go on improving his stock of legal knowledge without interruption; but, as if in requital, she insisted upon having her own will in the domestic and commercial departments which he abandoned to her. Now, as Bartoline Saddletree had a considerable gift of words, which he mistook for eloquence, and conferred more liberally upon the society in which he lived than was at all times gracious and acceptable, there went forth a saying, with which wags used sometimes to interrupt his rhetoric, that, as he had a golden nag at his door, so he had a grey mare in his shop. This reproach induced Mr. Saddletree, on all occasions, to assume rather a haughty and stately tone towards his good woman, a circumstance by which she seemed very little affected, unless he attempted to exercise any real authority, when she never failed to fly into open rebellion. But such extremes Bartoline seldom provoked; for, like the gentle King Jamie, he was fonder of talking of authority than really exercising it. This turn of mind was, on the whole, lucky for him; since his substance was increased without any trouble on his part, or any interruption of his favourite studies.

This word in explanation has been thrown in to the reader, while Saddletree was laying down, with great precision, the law upon Porteous's case, by which he arrived at this conclusion, that, if Porteous had fired five minutes sooner, before Wilson was cut down, he would have been *versans in licito*; engaged, that is, in a lawful act, and only liable to be punished *propter excessum*, or for lack of discretion, which might have mitigated the punishment to *poena ordinaria*.

"Discretion!" echoed Mrs. Howden, on whom, it may well be supposed, the fineness of this distinction was entirely thrown away,—“whan had Jock Porteous either grace, discretion, or gude manners?—I mind when his father"

"But, Mrs. Howden," said Saddletree—

"And I," said Miss Damahoy, "mind when his mother"

"Miss Damahoy," entreated the interrupted orator

"And I," said Plumdamas, "mind when his wife"

"Mr. Plumdamas—Mrs. Howden—Miss Damahoy," again implored the orator,—“Mind the distinction, as Counsellor Crossmyloof says—I,' says he, 'take a distinction.' Now, the body of the criminal being cut down, and the execution ended, Porteous was no longer official; the act which he came to protect and guard, being done and ended, he was no better than *cuius ex populo*."

"*Quivis—quivis*, Mr. Saddletree, craving your pardon," said (with a prolonged emphasis on the first syllable) Mr. Butler, the deputy-schoolmaster of a parish near Edinburgh, who at that moment came up behind them as the false Latin was uttered.

"What signifies interrupting me, Mr. Butler?—but I am glad to see ye notwithstanding—I speak after Counsellor Crossmyloof, and he said *cuius*."

"If Counsellor Crossmyloof used the dative for the nominative, I would have crossed his loof with a tight leathern strap, Mr. Saddletree; there is not a boy on the booby form but should have been scourged for such a solecism in grammar."

"I speak Latin like a lawyer, Mr. Butler, and not like a schoolmaster," retorted Saddletree.

"Scarce like a schoolboy, I think," rejoined Butler.

"It matters little," said Bartoline; "all I mean to say is, that Porteous has become liable to the *poena extra ordinem*, or capital punishment—which is to say, in plain Scotch, the gallows—simply because he did not fire when he was in office, but waited till the body was cut down, the execution whilk he had in charge to guard implemented, and he himself exonerated of the public trust imposed on him."

"But, Mr. Saddletree," said Plumdamas, "do ye really think John Porteous's case wad hae been better if he had begun firing before ony stanes were flung at a'?"

"Indeed do I, neighbour Plumdamas," replied Bartoline, confidently, "he being then in point of trust and in point of power, the execution being but inchoat, or, at least, not implemented, or finally ended; but after Wilson was cut down it was a' ower—he was clean exauctorated, and had nae mair ado but to get awa wi' his guard up this West Bow as fast as if there had been a caption after him—And this is law, for I heard it laid down by Lord Vincovincenem."

"Vincovincenem?—Is he a lord of state, or a lord of seat?" inquired Mrs. Howden.*

* A nobleman was called a Lord of State. The Senators of the College * of Justice were termed Lords of Seat, or of the Session.

"A lord of seat—a lord of session.—I fash mysell little wi' lords o' state; they vex me wi' a wheen idle questions about their saddles, and curpels, and holsters and horse-furniture, and what they'll cost, and whan they'll be ready—a wheen galloping geese—my wife may serve the like o' them."

"And so might she, in her day, hae served the best lord in the land, for as little as ye think o' her, Mr. Saddletree," said Mrs. Howden, somewhat indignant at the contemptuous way in which her gossip was mentioned; "whan she and I were twa gilpies, we little thought to hae sitten doun wi' the like o' my auld Davie Howden, or you either, Mr. Saddletree."

While Saddletree, who was not bright at a reply, was cudgelling his brains for an answer to this homethrust, Miss Damahoy broke in on him.

"And as for the lords of state," said Miss Damahoy, "ye suld mind the riding o' the parliament, Mr. Saddletree, in the gude auld time before the Union,—a year's rent o' mony a gude estate gaed for horse-graith and harnessing, forby broidered robes and foot-mantles, that wad hae stude by their lane wi' gold brocade, and that were muckle in my ain line."

"Ay, and then the lusty banqueting, with sweetmeats and comfits wet and dry, and dried fruits of divers sorts," said Plumdamas. "But Scotland was Scotland in these days."

"I'll tell ye what it is, neighbours," said Mrs. Howden, "I'll ne'er believe Scotland is Scotland ony mair, if our kindly Scots sit doun with the affront they hae gien us this day. It's not only the blude that is shed, but the blude that might hae been shed, that's required at our hands; there was my daughter's wean, little Eppie Daidle—my oe, ye ken, Miss Grizel—had played the truant frae the school, as bairns will do, ye ken, Mr. Butler—"

"And for which," interjected Mr. Butler, "they should be soundly scourged by their well-wishers."

"And had just cruppen to the gallows' foot to see the hanging, as was natural for a wean; and what for mightna she hae been shot as weel as the rest o' them, and where wad we a' hae been then? I wonder how Queen Carline (if her name be Carline) wad hae liked to hae had ane o' her ain bairns in sic a venture?"

"Report says," answered Butler, "that such a circumstance would not have distressed her majesty beyond endurance."

"Aweel," said Mrs. Howden, "the sum o' the matter is, that, were I a man, I wad hae amends o' Jock Porteous, be the upshot what like o't, if a' the carles and carlines in England had sworn to the nay-say."

"I would claw down the Tolbooth door wi' my nails," said Miss Grizel, "but I wad be at him."

"Ye may be very right, ladies," said Butler, "but I would not advise you to speak so loud."

"Speak!" exclaimed both the ladies together, "there will be naething else spoken about frae the Weigh-house to the Water-gate, till this is either ended or mended."

The females now departed to their respective places of abode. Plumdamas joined the other two gentlemen in drinking their *meridian* (a bumper-dram of brandy), as they passed the well-known low-browed shop in the Lawnmarket, where they were wont to take that refreshment. Mr. Plumdamas then departed towards his shop, and Mr. Butler, who happened to have some particular occasion for the rein of an old bridle (the truants of that busy day could have anticipated its application), walked down the Lawnmarket with Mr. Saddletree, each talking as he could get a word thrust in, the one on the laws of Scotland, the other on those of syntax, and neither listening to a word which his companion uttered.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

*Elswhair he colde right weel lay down the law,
But in his house was meek as is a daw.*

Davie Lindsay.

"There has been Jock Driver the carrier here, speering about his new graith," said Mrs. Saddletree to her husband, as he crossed his threshold, not with the purpose, by any means, of consulting him upon his own affairs, but merely to intimate, by a gentle recapitulation, how much duty she had gone through in his absence.

"Weel," replied Bartoline, and deigned not a word more.

"And the laird of Girdingburst has had his running footman here, and ca'd himsell (he's a civil pleasant young gentleman), to see when the broidered saddle-cloth for his sorrel horse will be ready, for he wants it agane the Kelso races."

"Weel, aweel," replied Bartoline, as laconically as before.

"And his lordship, the Earl of Blazonbury, Lord Flash and Flame, is like to be clean daft, that the harness for the six Flanders mears, wi' the crests, coronets, housings, and mountings conform, are no sent hame according to promise gien."

"Weel, weel, weel—weel, weel, gudewife," said Saddletree, "if he gangs daft, we'll hae him cognosced—it's a' very weel."

"It's weel that ye think sae, Mr. Saddletree," answered his helpmate, rather nettled at the indifference with which her report was received; "there's mony ane wad hae thought themselves affronted, if sae mony customers had ca'd and naebody to answer them but women-folk; for a' the lads were aff, as soon as your back was turned, to see Porteous hanged, that might be counted upon; and sae, you no being at hame—"

"Houts, Mrs. Saddletree," said Bartoline, with an air of consequence, "dinna deave me wi' your nonsense; I was under the necessity of being elsewhere—*non omnia*—as Mr. Crossmyloof said, when he was called by two macers at once—*non omnia possumus—pessimus—possimis*—I ken our law-latin offends Mr. Butler's ears, but it means, Naebody, an it were the Lord President himsell, can do twa turns at ance."

"Very right, Mr. Saddletree," answered his careful helpmate, with a sarcastic smile; "and nae doubt it's a decent thing to leave your wife to look after young gentlemen's saddles and bridles, when ye gang to see a man, that never did ye nae ill, raxing a halter."

"Woman," said Saddletree, assuming an elevated tone, to which the *meridian* had somewhat contributed, "desist,—I say forbear, from intromitting with affairs thou canst not understand. D'ye think I was born to sit here brogging an elshin through bend-leather, when sic men as Duncan Forbes, and that other Arniston chield there, without muckle greater parts, if the close-head speak true, than mysell maun be presidents and king's advocates, nae doubt, and wha but they? Whereas, were favour equally distribute, as in the days of the wight Wallace—"

"I ken naething we wad hae gotten by the wight Wallace," said Mrs. Saddletree, "unless, as I hae heard the auld folk tell, they fought in thae days wi' bend-leather guns, and then it's a chance but what, if he had bought them, he might have forgot to pay for them. And as for the greatness of your parts, Bartley, the folk in the close-head* maun ken mair about them than I do, if they make sic a report of them."

* [*Close-head*, the entrance of a blind alley.]

"I tell ye, woman," said Saddletree, in high dudgeon, "that ye ken naething about these matters. In Sir William Wallace's days there was nae man pinned down to sic a slavish wark as a saddler's, for they got ony leather graith that they had use for ready-made out of Holland."

"Well," said Butler, who was, like many of his profession, something of a humorist and dry joker, "if that be the case, Mr. Saddletree, I think we have changed for the better; since we make our own harness, and only import our lawyers from Holland."

"It's ower true, Mr. Butler," answered Bartoline, with a sigh; "if I had had the luck—or rather, if my father had had the sense to send me to Leyden and Utrecht to learn the Substitutes and Pandex—"

"You mean the Institutes—Justinian's Institutes, Mr. Saddletree?" said Butler.

"Institutes and substitutes are synonymous words, Mr. Butler, and used indifferently as such in deeds of tailzie, as you may see in Balfour's Practiques, or Dallas of St. Martin's Styles. I understand these things pretty weel, I thank God but I own I should have studied in Holland."

"To comfort you, you might not have been farther forward than you are now, Mr. Saddletree," replied Mr. Butler; "for our Scottish advocates are an aristocratic race. Their brass is of the right Corinthian quality, and *Non cuius contigit adire Corinthum*—Aha, Mr. Saddletree?"

"And aha, Mr. Butler," rejoined Bartoline, upon whom, as may be well supposed, the jest was lost, and all but the sound of the words, "ye said a gliff syne it was *quavis*, and now I heard ye say *cuius* with my ain ears, as plain as ever I heard a word at the fore-bar."

"Give me your patience, Mr. Saddletree, and I'll explain the discrepancy in three words," said Butler, as pedantic in his own department, though with infinitely more judgment and learning, as Bartoline was in his self-assumed profession of the law—"Give me your patience for a moment—You'll grant that the nominative case is that by which a person or thing is nominated or designed, and which may be called the primary case, all others being formed from it by alterations of the termination in the learned languages, and by prepositions in our modern Babylonian jargons—You'll grant me that, I suppose, Mr. Saddletree?"

"I dinna ken whether I will or no—*ad avisandum*, ye ken—naebody should be in a hurry to make admissions, either in point of law, or in point of fact," said Saddletree, looking, or endeavouring to look, as if he understood what was said.

"And the dative case," continued Butler

"I ken what a tutor dative is," said Saddletree, "readily enough."

"The dative case," resumed the grammarian, "is that in which anything is given or assigned as properly belonging to a person or thing—You cannot deny that, I am sure."

"I am sure I'll no grant it, though," said Saddletree.

"Then, what the *deevil* d'ye take the nominative and the dative cases to be?" said Butler, hastily, and surprised at once out of his decency of expression and accuracy of pronunciation.

"I'll tell you that at leisure, Mr. Butler," said Saddletree, with a very knowing look; "I'll take a day to see and answer every article of your condescendence, and then I'll hold you to confess or deny as accords."

"Come, come, Mr. Saddletree," said his wife, "we'll hae nae confessions and condescendences here; let them deal in thae sort o' wares that are paid for them—they suit the like o' us as all as a demipique saddle would suit a draught ox."

"Aha!" said Mr. Butler, "*Optat ephippia bos piger*, nothing new under the sun—But it was a fair hit of Mrs. Saddletree, however."

"And it wad far better become ye, Mr. Saddletree," continued his helpmate, "since ye say ye hae skeel o' the law, to try if ye can do onything for Effie Deans, puir thing, that's lying up in the tolbooth yonder, cauld, and hungry, and comfortless—A servant lass of ours, Mr. Butler, and as innocent a lass, to my thinking, and as usefu' in the shop—When Mr. Saddletree gangs out,—and ye're aware he's seldom at hame when there's ony o' the plea-houses open,—poor Effie used to help me to tumble the bundles o' barked leather up and down, and range out the gudes, and suit a' body's humours—And troth, she could aye please the customers wi' her answers, for she was aye civil, and a bonnier lass wasna in Auld Reekie. And when folk were hasty and unreasonable, she could serve them better than me, that am no sae young as I hae been, Mr. Butler, and a wee bit short in the temper into the bargain. For when there's ower many folks crying on me at anes, and nane but ae tongue to answer them, folk maun speak hastily, or they'll ne'er get through their wark—Sae I miss Effie daily."

"*De die in diem*," added Saddletree.

"I think," said Butler, after a good deal of hesitation, "I have seen the girl in the shop—a modest-looking, fair-haired girl?"

"Ay, ay, that's just puir Effie," said her mistress. "How she was abandoned to hersell, or whether she was sackless o' the sinful deed, God in Heaven knows; but if she's been guilty, she's been sair tempted, and I wad amaist take my Bible-aith she hasna been hersell at the time."

Butler had by this time become much agitated; he fidgeted up and down the shop, and showed the greatest agitation that a person of such strict decorum could be supposed to give way to. "Was not this girl," he said, "the daughter of David Deans, that had the parks at St. Leonard's taken? and has she not a sister?"

"In troth has she,—puir Jeanie Deans, ten years aulder than hersell; she was here greeting a wee while syne about her tittie. And what could I say to her, but that she behoved to come and speak to Mr. Saddletree when he was at hame? It wasna that I thought Mr. Saddletree could do her or ony ither body muckle good or ill, but it wad aye serve to keep the puir thing's heart up for a wee while; and let sorrow come when sorrow maun."

"Ye're mistaen though, gudewife," said Saddletree scornfully, "for I could hae gien her great satisfaction; I could hae proved to her that her sister was indicted upon the statute sixteen hundred and ninety, chapter one—For the mair ready prevention of child-murder—for concealing her pregnancy, and giving no account of the child which she had borne."

"I hope," said Butler,—"I trust in a gracious God, that she can clear herself."

"And sae do I, Mr. Butler," replied Mrs. Saddletree. "I am sure I wad hae answered for her as my ain daughter; but wae's my heart, I had been tender a' the simmer, and scarce ower the door o' my room for twal weeks. And as for Mr. Saddletree, he might be in a lying-in hospital, and ne'er find out what the women cam there for. Sae I could see little or naething o' her, or I wad hae had the truth o' her situation out o' her, I'se warrant ye—But we a' think her sister maun be able to speak something to clear her."

"The haill Parliament House," said Saddletree, "was speaking o' naething else, till this job o' Porteous's put it out o' head—It's a beautiful point of presumptive murder, and there's been nane like it in the Justiciar Court since the case of Luckie Smith the howdie, that suffered in the year sixteen hundred and seventy-nine."

"But what's the matter wi' you, Mr. Butler?" said the good woman; "ye are looking as white as a sheet; will ye tak a dram?"

"By no means," said Butler, compelling himself to speak. "I walked in from Dumfries yesterday, and this is a warm day."

"Sit down," said Mrs. Saddletree, laying hands on him kindly, "and rest ye—yell kill yoursell, man, at that rate.—And are we to wish you joy o' getting the scule, Mr. Butler?"

"Yes—no—I do not know," answered the young man vaguely. But Mrs. Saddletree kept him to point, partly out of real interest, partly from curiosity.

"Ye dinna ken whether ye are to get the free scule o' Dumfries or no, after hinging on and teaching it a' the simmer?"

"No, Mrs. Saddletree—I am not to have it," replied Butler, more collectedly. "The Laird of Black-at-the-Bane had a natural son bred to the kirk, that the Presbytery could not be prevailed upon to license; and so—"

"Ay, ye need say nae mair about it; if there was a laird that had a puir kinsman or a bastard that it wad suit, there's enough said.—And ye're e'en come back to Liberton to wait for dead men's shoon?—and for as frail as Mr. Whackbairn is, he may live as lang as you, that are his assistant and successor."

"Very like," replied Butler, with a sigh; "I do not know if I should wish it otherwise."

"Nae doubt, it's a very vexing thing," continued the good lady, "to be in that dependent station; and you that hae right and title to sae muckle better, I wonder how ye bear these crosses."

"*Quos diligit castigat*," answered Butler; "even the pagan Seneca could see an advantage in affliction, The Heathens had their philosophy, and the Jews their revelation, Mrs. Saddletree, and they endured their distresses in their day. Christians have a better dispensation than either—but doubtless—"

He stopped and sighed.

"I ken what ye mean," said Mrs. Saddletree, looking toward her husband; "there's whiles we lose patience in spite of baith book and Bible—But ye are no gaun awa, and looking sae poorly—ye'll stay and take some kale wi' us?"

Mr. Saddletree laid aside Balfour's Practiques (his favourite study, and much good may it do him), to join in his wife's hospitable importunity. But the teacher declined all entreaty, and took his leave upon the spot.

"There's something in a' this," said Mrs. Saddletree, looking after him as he walked up the street; "I wonder what makes Mr. Butler sae distressed about Effie's misfortune—there was nae acquaintance atween them that ever I saw or heard of; but they were neighbours when David Deans was on the Laird o' Dumbiedikes' land. Mr. Butler wad ken her father, or some o' her folk.—Get up, Mr. Saddletree—ye have set yoursell down on the very brecham that wants stitching—and here's little Willie, the prentice.—Ye little rin-there-out deil that ye are, what takes you raking through the gutters to see folk hangit?—how wad ye like when it comes to be your ain chance, as I winna ensure ye, if ye dinna mend your manners?—And what are ye maundering and greeting for, as if a word were breaking your banes?—Gang in by, and be a better bairn another time, and tell Peggy to gie ye a bicker o' broth, for ye'll be as gleg as a gled, I'se warrant ye.—It's a fatherless bairn, Mr. Saddletree, and motherless, whilk in some cases may be waur, and ane would take care o' him if they could—it's a Christian duty."

"Very true, gudewife," said Saddletree in reply, "we are *in loco parentis* to him during his years of pupillarity, and I hae had thoughts of applying to the Court for a commission as factor *loco tutoris*, seeing there is nae tutor nominate, and the tutor-at-law declines to act; but only I fear the expense of the procedure wad not be *in rem versam*, for I am not aware if Willie has ony effects whereof to assume the administration."

He concluded this sentence with a self-important cough, as one who has laid down the law in an indisputable manner.

"Effects!" said Mrs. Saddletree, "what effects has the puir wean?—he was in rags when his mother died; and the blue polonie that Effie made for him out of an auld mantle of my ain, was the first decent dress the bairn ever had on. Poor Effie! can ye tell me now really, wi' a' your law, will her life be in danger, Mr. Saddletree, when they arena able to prove that ever there was a bairn ava?"

"Whoy," said Mr. Saddletree, delighted at having for once in his life seen his wife's attention arrested by a topic of legal discussion—"Whoy, there are two sorts of *murdrum* or *murdragium*, or what you *populariter et vulgariter* call murder. I mean there are many sorts; for there's your *murthrum per vigiliis et insidias*, and your *murthrum* under trust."

"I am sure," replied his moiety, "that murder by trust is the way that the gentry murder us merchants, and whiles make us shut the booth up—but that has naething to do wi' Effie's misfortune."

"The case of Effie (or Euphemia) Deans," resumed Saddletree, "is one of those cases of murder presumptive, that is, a murder of the law's inferring or construction, being derived from certain *indicia* or grounds of suspicion."

"So that," said the good woman, "unless poor Effie has communicated her situation, she'll be hanged by the neck, if the bairn was still-born, or if it be alive at this moment?"

"Assuredly," said Saddletree, "it being a statute made by our Sovereign Lord and Lady, to prevent the horrid delict of bringing forth children in secret—The crime is rather a favourite of the law, this species of murder being one of its ain creation."

"Then, if the law makes murders," said Mrs. Saddletree, "the law should be hanged for them; or if they wad hang a lawyer instead, the country wad find nae faut." A summons to their frugal dinner interrupted the farther progress of the conversation, which was otherwise like to take a turn much less favourable to the science of jurisprudence and its professors, than Mr. Bartoline Saddletree, the fond admirer of both, had at its opening anticipated.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

But up then raise all Edinburgh.

They all rose up by thousands three.

Johnnie Armstrang's Goodnight.

Butler, on his departure from the sign of the Golden Nag, went in quest of a friend of his connected with the law, of whom he wished to make particular inquiries concerning the circumstances in which the unfortunate young woman mentioned in the last chapter was placed, having, as the reader has probably already conjectured, reasons much deeper than those dictated by mere humanity for interesting himself in her fate. He found the person he sought absent from home, and was equally unfortunate in one or two other calls which he made upon acquaintances whom he hoped to interest in her story. But everybody was, for the moment, stark-mad on the subject of Porteous, and engaged busily in attacking or defending the measures of Government in reprieving him; and the ardour of dispute had excited such universal thirst, that half the young lawyers and writers, together with their very clerks, the class whom Butler was looking after, had adjourned the debate to some favourite tavern. It was computed by an experienced arithmetician, that there was as much twopenny ale consumed on the discussion as would have floated a first-rate man-of-war.

Butler wandered about until it was dusk, resolving to take that opportunity of visiting the unfortunate young woman, when his doing so might be least observed; for he had his own reasons for avoiding the remarks of Mrs. Saddletree, whose shop-door opened at no great distance from that of the jail, though on the opposite or south side of the street, and a little higher up. He passed, therefore, through the narrow and partly covered passage leading from the north-west end of the Parliament Square.

He stood now before the Gothic entrance of the ancient prison, which, as is well known to all men, rears its ancient front in the very middle of the High Street, forming, as it were, the termination to a huge pile of buildings called the Luckenbooths, which, for some inconceivable reason, our ancestors had jammed into the midst of the principal street of the town, leaving for passage a narrow street on the north; and on the south, into which the prison opens, a narrow crooked lane, winding betwixt the high and sombre walls of the Tolbooth and the adjacent houses on the one side, and the buttresses and projections of the old Cathedral upon the other. To give some gaiety to this sombre passage (well known by the name of the Krames), a number of little booths, or shops, after the fashion of cobblers' stalls, are plastered, as it were, against the Gothic projections and abutments, so that it seemed as if the traders had occupied with nests, bearing the same proportion to the building, every buttress and coign of vantage, as the martlett did in Macbeth's Castle. Of later years these booths have degenerated into mere toy-shops, where the little loiterers chiefly interested in such wares are tempted to linger, enchanted by the rich display of hobby-horses, babies, and Dutch toys, arranged in artful and gay confusion; yet half-scared by the cross looks of the withered pantaloon, or spectacled old lady, by whom these tempting stores are watched and superintended. But, in the times we write of, the hosiers, the glovers, the hatters, the mercers, the milliners, and all who dealt in the miscellaneous wares now termed haberdasher's goods, were to be found in this narrow alley.

To return from our digression. Butler found the outer turnkey, a tall thin old man, with long silver hair, in the act of locking the outward door of the jail. He addressed himself to this person, and asked admittance to Effie Deans, confined upon accusation of child-murder. The turnkey looked at him earnestly, and, civilly touching his hat out of respect to Butler's black coat and clerical appearance, replied, "It was impossible any one could be admitted at present."

"You shut up earlier than usual, probably on account of Captain Porteous's affair?" said Butler.

The turnkey, with the true mystery of a person in office, gave two grave nods, and withdrawing from the wards a ponderous key of about two feet in length, he proceeded to shut a strong plate of steel, which folded down above the keyhole, and was secured by a steel spring and catch. Butler stood still instinctively while the door was made fast, and then looking at his watch, walked briskly up the street, muttering to himself, almost unconsciously—

Porta adversa, ingens, solidoque adamante columnae;

Vis ut nulla virum, non ipsi excindere ferro

*Coelicolae valeant—Stat ferrea turris ad auras—etc.**

Dryden's Virgil, Book vi.

* Wide is the fronting gate, and, raised on high, With adamantine columns threats the sky; Vain is the force of man, and Heaven's as vain, To crush the pillars which the pile sustain: Sublime on these a tower of steel is reard.

Having wasted half-an-hour more in a second fruitless attempt to find his legal friend and adviser, he thought it time to leave the city and return to his place of residence, in a small village about two miles and a half to the southward of Edinburgh. The metropolis was at this time surrounded by a high wall, with battlements and flanking projections at some intervals, and the access was through gates, called in the Scottish language *ports*, which were regularly shut at night. A small fee to the keepers would indeed procure egress and ingress at any time, through a wicket left for that purpose in the large gate; but it was of some importance, to a man so poor as Butler, to avoid even this slight pecuniary mulct; and fearing the hour of shutting the gates might be near, he made for that to which he found himself nearest, although, by doing so, he somewhat lengthened his walk homewards. Bristo Port was that by which his direct road lay, but the West Port, which leads out of the Grassmarket, was the nearest of the city gates to the place where he found himself, and to that, therefore, he directed his course. He reached the port in ample time to pass the circuit of the walls, and entered a suburb called Portsburgh, chiefly inhabited by the lower order of citizens and mechanics. Here he was unexpectedly interrupted.

He had not gone far from the gate before he heard the sound of a drum, and, to his great surprise, met a number of persons, sufficient to occupy the whole front of the street, and form a considerable mass behind, moving with great speed towards the gate he had just come from, and having in front of them a drum beating to arms. While he considered how he should escape a party, assembled, as it might be presumed, for no lawful purpose, they came full on him and stopped him.

"Are you a clergyman?" one questioned him.

Butler replied that "he was in orders, but was not a placed minister."

"It's Mr. Butler from Liberton," said a voice from behind, "he'll discharge the duty as weel as any man."

"You must turn back with us, sir," said the first speaker, in a tone civil but peremptory.

"For what purpose, gentlemen?" said Mr. Butler. "I live at some distance from town—the roads are unsafe by night—you will do me a serious injury by stopping me."

"You shall be sent safely home—no man shall touch a hair of your head—but you must and shall come along with us."

"But to what purpose or end, gentlemen?" said Butler. "I hope you will be so civil as to explain that to me."

"You shall know that in good time. Come along—for come you must, by force or fair means; and I warn you to look neither to the right hand nor the left, and to take no notice of any man's face, but consider all that is passing before you as a dream."

"I would it were a dream I could awaken from," said Butler to himself; but having no means to oppose the violence with which he was threatened, he was compelled to turn round and march in front of the rioters, two men partly supporting and partly holding him. During this parley the insurgents had made themselves masters of the West Port, rushing upon the Waiters (so the people were called who had the charge of the gates), and possessing themselves of the keys. They bolted and barred the folding doors, and commanded the person, whose duty it usually was, to secure the wicket, of which they did not understand the fastenings.

The man, terrified at an incident so totally unexpected, was unable to perform his usual office, and gave the matter up, after several attempts. The rioters, who seemed to have come prepared for every emergency, called for torches, by the light of which they nailed up the wicket with long nails, which, it seemed probable, they had provided on purpose.

While this was going on, Butler could not, even if he had been willing, avoid making remarks on the individuals who seemed to lead this singular mob. The torch-light, while it fell on their forms and left him in the shade, gave him an opportunity to do so without their observing him. Several of those who seemed most active were dressed in sailors' jackets, trousers, and sea-caps; others in large loose-bodied greatcoats, and slouched hats; and there were several who, judging from their dress, should have been called women, whose rough deep voices, uncommon size, and masculine deportment and mode of walking, forbade them being so interpreted. They moved as if by some well-concerted plan of arrangement. They had signals by which they knew, and nicknames by which they distinguished each other. Butler remarked, that the name of Wildfire was used among them, to which one stout Amazon seemed to reply.

The rioters left a small party to observe the West Port, and directed the Waiters, as they valued their lives, to remain within their lodge, and make no attempt for that night to repossess themselves of the gate. They then moved with rapidity along the low street called the Cowgate, the mob of the city everywhere rising at the sound of their drum, and joining them. When the multitude arrived at the Cowgate Port, they secured it with as little opposition as the former, made it fast, and left a small party to observe it. It was afterwards remarked, as a striking instance of prudence and precaution, singularly combined with audacity, that the parties left to guard those gates did not remain stationary on their posts, but flitted to and fro, keeping so near the gates as to see that no efforts were made to open them, yet not remaining so long as to have their persons closely observed. The mob, at first only about one hundred strong, now amounted to thousands, and were increasing every moment. They divided themselves so as to ascend with more speed the various narrow lanes which lead up from the Cowgate to the High Street; and still beating to arms as they went, an calling on all true Scotsmen to join them, they now filled the principal street of the city.

The Netherbow Port might be called the Temple Bar of Edinburgh, as, intersecting the High Street at its termination, it divided Edinburgh, properly so called, from the suburb named the Canongate, as Temple Bar separates London from Westminster. It was of the utmost importance to the rioters to possess themselves of this pass, because there was quartered in the Canongate at that time a regiment of infantry, commanded by Colonel Moyle, which might have occupied the city by advancing through this gate, and would possess the power of totally defeating their purpose. The leaders therefore hastened to the Netherbow Port, which they secured in the same manner, and with as little trouble, as the other gates, leaving a party to watch it, strong in proportion to the importance of the post.

The next object of these hardy insurgents was at once to disarm the City Guard, and to procure arms for themselves; for scarce any weapons but staves and bludgeons had been yet seen among them. The Guard-house was a long, low, ugly building (removed in 1787), which to a fanciful imagination might have suggested the idea of a long black snail crawling up the middle of the High Street, and deforming its beautiful esplanade. This formidable insurrection had been so unexpected, that there were no more than the ordinary sergeant's guard of the city-corps upon duty; even these were without any supply of powder and ball; and sensible enough what had raised the storm, and which way it was rolling, could hardly be supposed very desirous to expose themselves by a valiant defence to the animosity of so numerous and desperate a mob, to whom they were on the present occasion much more than usually obnoxious.

There was a sentinel upon guard, who (that one town-guard soldier might do his duty on that eventful evening) presented his piece, and desired the foremost of the rioters to stand off. The young Amazon, whom Butler had observed particularly active, sprung upon the soldier, seized his musket, and after a struggle succeeded in wrenching it from him, and throwing him down on the causeway. One or two soldiers, who endeavoured to turn out to the support of their sentinel, were in the same manner seized and disarmed, and the mob without difficulty possessed themselves of the Guard-house, disarming and turning out of doors the rest of the men on duty. It was remarked, that, notwithstanding the city soldiers had been the instruments of the slaughter which this riot was designed to revenge, no ill usage or even insult was offered to them. It seemed as if the vengeance of the people disdained to stoop at any head meaner than that which they considered as the source and origin of their injuries.

On possessing themselves of the guard, the first act of the multitude was to destroy the drums, by which they supposed an alarm might be conveyed to the garrison in the castle; for the same reason they now silenced their own, which was beaten by a young fellow, son to the drummer of Portsburgh, whom they had forced upon that service. Their next business was to distribute among the boldest of the rioters the guns, bayonets, partisans, halberts, and battle or Lochaber axes. Until this period the principal rioters had preserved silence on the ultimate object of their rising, as being that which all knew, but none expressed. Now, however, having accomplished all the preliminary parts of their design, they raised a tremendous shout, "Porteous! To the Tolbooth!"

They proceeded with the same prudence when the object seemed to be nearly in their grasp, as they had done hitherto when success was more dubious. A strong party of the rioters, drawn up in front of the Luckenbooths, and facing down the street, prevented all access from the eastward, and the west end of the defile formed by the Luckenbooths was secured in the same manner; so that the Tolbooth was completely surrounded, and those who undertook the task of breaking it open effectually secured against the risk of interruption.

The magistrates, in the meanwhile, had taken the alarm, and assembled in a tavern, with the purpose of raising some strength to subdue the rioters. The deacons, or presidents of the trades, were applied to, but declared there was little chance of their authority being respected by the craftsmen, where it was the object to save a man so obnoxious. Mr. Lindsay, member of parliament for the city, volunteered the perilous task of carrying a verbal message, from the Lord Provost to Colonel Moyle, the commander of the regiment lying in the Canongate, requesting him to force the Netherbow Port, and enter the city to put down the tumult. But Mr. Lindsay declined to charge himself with any written order, which, if found on his person by an enraged mob, might have cost him his life; and the issue, of the application was, that Colonel Moyle having no written requisition from the civil authorities, and having the fate of Porteous before his eyes as an example of the severe construction put by a jury on the proceedings of military men acting on their own responsibility, declined to encounter the risk to which the Provost's verbal communication invited him.

More than one messenger was despatched by different ways to the Castle, to require the commanding officer to march down his troops, to fire a few cannon-shot, or even to throw a shell among the mob, for the purpose of clearing the streets. But so strict and watchful were the various patrols whom the rioters had established in different parts of the streets, that none of the emissaries of the magistrates could reach the gate of the Castle. They were, however, turned back without either injury or insult, and with nothing more of menace than was necessary to deter them from again attempting to accomplish their errand.

The same vigilance was used to prevent everybody of the higher, and those which, in this case, might be deemed the more suspicious orders of society, from appearing in the street, and observing the movements, or distinguishing the persons, of the rioters. Every person in the garb of a gentleman was stopped by small parties of two or three of the mob, who partly exhorted, partly required of them, that they should return to the place from whence they came. Many a quadrille table was spoilt that memorable evening; for the sedan chairs of ladies; even of the highest rank, were interrupted in their passage from one point to another, in spite of the laced footmen and blazing flambeaux. This was uniformly done with a deference and attention to the feelings of the terrified females, which could hardly have been expected from the videttes of a mob so desperate. Those who stopped the chair usually made the excuse, that there was much disturbance on the streets, and that it was absolutely necessary for the lady's safety that the chair should turn back. They offered themselves to escort the vehicles which they had thus interrupted in their progress, from the apprehension, probably, that some of those who had casually united themselves to the riot might disgrace their systematic and determined plan of vengeance, by those acts of general insult and license which are common on similar occasions.

Persons are yet living who remember to have heard from the mouths of ladies thus interrupted on their journey in the manner we have described, that they were escorted to their lodgings by the young men who stopped them, and even handed out of their chairs, with a polite attention far beyond what was consistent with their dress, which was apparently that of journeymen mechanics.*

* A near relation of the author's used to tell of having been stopped by the rioters, and escorted home in the manner described. On reaching her own home one of her attendants, in the appearance a *baxter*, a baker's lad, handed her out of her chair, and took leave with a bow, which, in the lady's opinion, argued breeding that could hardly be learned at the oven's mouth.

It seemed as if the conspirators, like those who assassinated Cardinal Beaton in former days, had entertained the opinion, that the work about which they went was a judgment of Heaven, which, though unsanctioned by the usual authorities, ought to be proceeded in with order and gravity.

While their outposts continued thus vigilant, and suffered themselves neither from fear nor curiosity to neglect that part of the duty assigned to them, and while the main guards to the east and west secured them against interruption, a select body of the rioters thundered at the door of the jail, and demanded instant admission. No one answered, for the outer keeper had prudently made his escape with the keys at the commencement of the riot, and was nowhere to be found. The door was instantly assailed with sledge-hammers, iron crows, and the coulter of ploughs, ready provided for the purpose, with which they prized, heaved, and battered for some time with little effect; for the door, besides being of double oak planks, clenched, both endlong and athwart, with broad-headed nails, was so hung and secured as to yield to no means of forcing, without the expenditure of much time. The rioters, however, appeared determined to gain admittance. Gang after gang relieved each other at the exercise, for, of course, only a few could work at once; but gang after gang retired, exhausted with their violent exertions, without making much progress in forcing the prison door. Butler had been led up near to this the principal scene of action; so near, indeed, that he was almost deafened by the unceasing clang of the heavy fore-hammers against the iron-bound portal of the prison. He began to entertain hopes, as the task seemed protracted, that the populace might give it over in despair, or that some rescue might arrive to disperse them. There was a moment at which the latter seemed probable.

The magistrates, having assembled their officers, and some of the citizens who were willing to hazard themselves for the public tranquillity, now sallied forth from the tavern where they held their sitting, and approached the point of danger. Their officers went before them with links and torches, with a herald to read the riot-act, if necessary. They easily drove before them the outposts and videttes of the rioters; but when they approached the line of guard which the mob, or rather, we should say, the conspirators, had drawn across the street in the front of the Luckenbooths, they were received with an unintermitted volley of stones, and, on their nearer approach, the pikes, bayonets, and Lochaber-axes, of which the populace had possessed themselves, were presented against them. One of their ordinary officers, a strong resolute fellow, went forward, seized a rioter, and took from him a musket; but, being unsupported, he was instantly thrown on his back in the street, and disarmed in his turn. The officer was too happy to be permitted to rise and run away without receiving any farther injury; which afforded another remarkable instance of the mode in which these men had united a sort of moderation towards all others, with the most inflexible inveteracy against the object of their resentment. The magistrates, after vain attempts to make themselves heard and obeyed, possessing no means of enforcing their authority, were constrained to abandon the field to the rioters, and retreat in all speed from the showers of missiles that whistled around their ears.

The passive resistance of the Tolbooth gate promised to do more to baffle the purpose of the mob than the active interference of the magistrates. The heavy sledge-hammers continued to din against it without intermission, and with a noise which, echoed from the lofty buildings around the spot, seemed enough to have alarmed the garrison in the Castle. It was circulated among the rioters, that the troops would march down to disperse them, unless they could execute their purpose without loss of time; or that, even without quitting the fortress, the garrison might obtain the same end by throwing a bomb or two upon the street.

Urged by such motives for apprehension, they eagerly relieved each other at the labour of assailing the Tolbooth door: yet such was its strength, that it still defied their efforts. At length, a voice was heard to pronounce the words, "Try it with fire." The rioters, with an unanimous shout, called for combustibles, and as all their wishes seemed to be instantly supplied, they were soon in possession of two or three empty tar-barrels. A huge red glaring bonfire speedily arose close to the door of the prison, sending up a tall column of smoke and flame against its antique turrets and strongly-grated windows, and illuminating the ferocious and wild gestures of the rioters, who surrounded the place, as well as the pale and anxious groups of those, who, from windows in the vicinage, watched the progress of this alarming scene. The mob fed the fire with whatever they could find fit for the purpose. The flames roared and crackled among the heaps of nourishment piled on the fire, and a terrible shout soon announced that the door had kindled, and was in the act of being destroyed. The fire was suffered to decay, but, long ere it was quite extinguished, the most forward of the rioters rushed, in their impatience, one after another, over its yet smouldering remains. Thick showers of sparkles rose high in the air, as man after man bounded over the glowing embers, and disturbed them in their passage. It was now obvious to Butler, and all others who were present, that the rioters would be instantly in possession of their victim, and have it in their power to work their pleasure upon him, whatever that might be.*

* Note C. The Old Tolbooth.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

*The evil you teach us,
We will execute; and it shall go hard, but we will
Better the instruction.*

Merchant of Venice.

The unhappy object of this remarkable disturbance had been that day delivered from the apprehension of public execution, and his joy was the greater, as he had some reason to question whether Government would have run the risk of unpopularity by interfering in his favour, after he had been legally convicted by the verdict of a jury, of a crime so very obnoxious. Relieved from this doubtful state of mind, his heart was merry within him, and he thought, in the emphatic words of Scripture on a similar occasion, that surely the bitterness of death was past. Some of his friends, however, who had watched the manner and behaviour of the crowd when they were made acquainted with the reprieve, were of a different opinion. They augured, from the unusual sternness and silence with which they bore their disappointment, that the populace nourished some scheme of sudden and desperate vengeance; and they advised Porteous to lose no time in petitioning the proper authorities, that he might be conveyed to the Castle under a sufficient guard, to remain there in security until his ultimate fate should be determined. Habituated, however, by his office, to overawe the rabble of the city, Porteous could not suspect them of an attempt so audacious as to storm a strong and defensible prison; and, despising the advice by which he might have been saved, he spent the afternoon of the eventful day in giving an entertainment to some friends who visited him in jail, several of whom, by the indulgence of the Captain of the Tolbooth, with whom he had an old intimacy, arising from their official connection, were even permitted to remain to supper with him, though contrary to the rules of the jail.

It was, therefore, in the hour of unalloyed mirth, when this unfortunate wretch was "full of bread," hot with wine, and high in mistimed and ill-grounded confidence, and alas! with all his sins full blown, when the first distant shouts of the rioters mingled with the song of merriment and intemperance. The hurried call of the jailor to the guests, requiring them instantly to depart, and his yet more hasty intimation that a dreadful and determined mob had possessed themselves of the city gates and guard-house, were the first explanation of these fearful clamours.

Porteous might, however, have eluded the fury from which the force of authority could not protect him, had he thought of slipping on some disguise, and leaving the prison along with his guests. It is probable that the jailor might have connived at his escape, or even that in the hurry of this alarming contingency, he might not have observed it. But Porteous and his friends alike wanted presence of mind to suggest or execute such a plan of escape. The former hastily fled from a place where their own safety seemed compromised, and the latter, in a state resembling stupefaction, awaited in his apartment the termination of the enterprise of the rioters. The cessation of the clang of the instruments with which they had at first attempted to force the door, gave him momentary relief. The flattering hopes, that the military had marched into the city, either from the Castle or from the suburbs, and that the rioters were intimidated, and dispersing, were soon destroyed by the broad and glaring light of the flames, which, illuminating through the grated window every corner of his apartment, plainly showed that the mob, determined on their fatal purpose, had adopted a means of forcing entrance equally desperate and certain.

The sudden glare of light suggested to the stupified and astonished object of popular hatred the possibility of concealment or escape. To rush to the chimney, to ascend it at the risk of suffocation, were the only means which seemed to have occurred to him; but his progress was speedily stopped by one of those iron gratings, which are, for the sake of security, usually placed across the vents of buildings designed for imprisonment. The bars, however, which impeded his farther progress, served to support him in the situation which he had gained, and he seized them with the tenacious grasp of one who esteemed himself clinging to his

last hope of existence. The lurid light which had filled the apartment, lowered and died away; the sound of shouts was heard within the walls, and on the narrow and winding stair, which, eased within one of the turrets, gave access to the upper apartments of the prison. The huzza of the rioters was answered by a shout wild and desperate as their own, the cry, namely, of the imprisoned felons, who, expecting to be liberated in the general confusion, welcomed the mob as their deliverers. By some of these the apartment of Porteous was pointed out to his enemies. The obstacle of the lock and bolts was soon overcome, and from his hiding place the unfortunate man heard his enemies search every corner of the apartment, with oaths and maledictions, which would but shock the reader if we recorded them, but which served to prove, could it have admitted of doubt, the settled purpose of soul with which they sought his destruction.

A place of concealment so obvious to suspicion and scrutiny as that which Porteous had chosen, could not long screen him from detection. He was dragged from his lurking-place, with a violence which seemed to argue an intention to put him to death on the spot. More than one weapon was directed towards him, when one of the rioters, the same whose female disguise had been particularly noticed by Butler, interfered in an authoritative tone. "Are ye mad?" he said, "or would ye execute an act of justice as if it were a crime and a cruelty? This sacrifice will lose half its savour if we do not offer it at the very horns of the altar. We will have him die where a murderer should die, on the common gibbet—We will have him die where he spilled the blood of so many innocents!"

A loud shout of applause followed the proposal, and the cry, "To the gallows with the murderer!—to the Grassmarket with him!" echoed on all hands.

"Let no man hurt him," continued the speaker; "let him make his peace with God, if he can; we will not kill both his soul and body."

"What time did he give better folk for preparing their account?" answered several voices. "Let us mete to him with the same measure he measured to them."

But the opinion of the spokesman better suited the temper of those he addressed, a temper rather stubborn than impetuous, sedate though ferocious, and desirous of colouring their cruel and revengeful action with a show of justice and moderation.

For an instant this man quitted the prisoner, whom he consigned to a selected guard, with instructions to permit him to give his money and property to whomsoever he pleased. A person confined in the jail for debt received this last deposit from the trembling hand of the victim, who was at the same time permitted to make some other brief arrangements to meet his approaching fate. The felons, and all others who, wished to leave the jail, were now at full liberty to do so; not that their liberation made any part of the settled purpose of the rioters, but it followed as almost a necessary consequence of forcing the jail doors. With wild cries of jubilee they joined the mob, or disappeared among the narrow lanes to seek out the hidden receptacles of vice and infamy, where they were accustomed to lurk and conceal themselves from justice.

Two persons, a man about fifty years old and a girl about eighteen, were all who continued within the fatal walls, excepting two or three debtors, who probably saw no advantage in attempting their escape. The persons we have mentioned remained in the strong room of the prison, now deserted by all others. One of their late companions in misfortune called out to the man to make his escape, in the tone of an acquaintance. "Rin for it, Ratcliffe—the road's clear."

"It may be sae, Willie," answered Ratcliffe, composedly, "but I have taen a fancy to leave aff trade, and set up for an honest man."

"Stay there, and be hanged, then, for a donnard auld deevil!" said the other, and ran down the prison stair.

The person in female attire whom we have distinguished as one of the most active rioters, was about the same time at the ear of the young woman. "Flee, Effie, flee!" was all he had time to whisper. She turned towards him an eye of mingled fear, affection, and upbraiding, all contending with a sort of stupified surprise. He again repeated, "Flee, Effie, flee! for the sake of all that's good and dear to you!" Again she gazed on him, but was unable to answer. A loud noise was now heard, and the name of Madge Wildfire was repeatedly called from the bottom of the staircase.

"I am coming,—I am coming," said the person who answered to that appellative; and then reiterating hastily, "For God's sake—for your own sake—for my sake, flee, or they'll take your life!" he left the strong room.

The girl gazed after him for a moment, and then, faintly muttering, "Better tyne life, since tint is gude fame," she sunk her head upon her hand, and remained, seemingly, unconscious as a statue of the noise and tumult which passed around her.

That tumult was now transferred from the inside to the outside of the Tolbooth. The mob had brought their destined victim forth, and were about to conduct him to the common place of execution, which they had fixed as the scene of his death. The leader, whom they distinguished by the name of Madge Wildfire, had been summoned to assist at the procession by the impatient shouts of his confederates.

"I will insure you five hundred pounds," said the unhappy man, grasping Wildfire's hand,— "five hundred pounds for to save my life."

The other answered in the same undertone, and returning his grasp with one equally convulsive, "Five hundredweight of coined gold should not save you.—Remember Wilson!"

A deep pause of a minute ensued, when Wildfire added, in a more composed tone, "Make your peace with Heaven.—Where is the clergyman?"

Butler, who in great terror and anxiety, had been detained within a few yards of the Tolbooth door, to wait the event of the search after Porteous, was now brought forward, and commanded to walk by the prisoner's side, and to prepare him for immediate death. His answer was a supplication that the rioters would consider what they did. "You are neither judges nor jury," said he. "You cannot have, by the laws of God or man, power to take away the life of a human creature, however deserving he may be of death. If it is murder even in a lawful magistrate to execute an offender otherwise than in the place, time, and manner which the judges' sentence prescribes, what must it be in you, who have no warrant for interference but your own wills? In the name of Him who is all mercy, show mercy to this unhappy man, and do not dip your hands in his blood, nor rush into the very crime which you are desirous of avenging!"

"Cut your sermon short—you are not in your pulpit," answered one of the rioters.

"If we hear more of your clavers," said another, "we are like to hang you up beside him."

"Peace—hush!" said Wildfire. "Do the good man no harm—he discharges his conscience, and I like him the better."

He then addressed Butler. "Now, sir, we have patiently heard you, and we just wish you to understand, in the way of answer, that you may as well argue to the ashlar-work and iron stanchels of the Tolbooth as think to change our purpose—Blood must have blood. We have sworn to each other by the deepest oaths ever were pledged, that Porteous shall die the death he deserves so richly; therefore, speak no more to us, but prepare him for death as well as the briefness of his change will permit."

They had suffered the unfortunate Porteous to put on his night-gown and slippers, as he had thrown off his coat and shoes, in order to facilitate his attempted escape up the chimney. In this garb he was now mounted on the hands of two of the rioters, clasped together, so as to form what is called in Scotland, "The King's Cushion." Butler was placed close to his side, and repeatedly urged to perform a duty always the most painful which can be imposed on a clergyman deserving of the name, and now rendered more so by the peculiar and horrid circumstances of the criminal's case. Porteous at first uttered some supplications for mercy, but when he found that there was no chance that these would be attended to, his military education, and the natural stubbornness of his disposition, combined to support his spirits.

"Are you prepared for this dreadful end?" said Butler, in a faltering voice. "O turn to Him, in whose eyes time and space have no existence, and to whom a few minutes are as a lifetime, and a lifetime as a minute."

"I believe I know what you would say," answered Porteous sullenly. "I was bred a soldier; if they will murder me without time, let my sins as well as my blood lie at their door."

"Who was it," said the stern voice of Wildfire, "that said to Wilson at this very spot, when he could not pray, owing to the galling agony of his fetters, that his pains would soon be over?—I say to you to take your own tale home; and if you cannot profit by the good man's lessons, blame not them that are still more merciful to you than you were to others."

The procession now moved forward with a slow and determined pace. It was enlightened by many blazing, links and torches; for the actors of this work were so far from affecting any secrecy on the occasion, that they seemed even to court observation. Their principal leaders kept close to the person of the prisoner, whose pallid yet stubborn features were seen distinctly by the torch-light, as his person was raised considerably above the concourse which thronged around him. Those who bore swords, muskets, and battle-axes, marched on each side, as if forming a regular guard to the procession. The windows, as they went along, were filled

with the inhabitants, whose slumbers had been broken by this unusual disturbance. Some of the spectators muttered accents of encouragement; but in general they were so much appalled by a sight so strange and audacious, that they looked on with a sort of stupefied astonishment. No one offered, by act or word, the slightest interruption.

The rioters, on their part, continued to act with the same air of deliberate confidence and security which had marked all their proceedings. When the object of their resentment dropped one of his slippers, they stopped, sought for it, and replaced it upon his foot with great deliberation.*

* This little incident, characteristic of the extreme composure of this extraordinary mob, was witnessed by a lady, who, disturbed like others from her slumbers, had gone to the window. It was told to the Author by the lady's daughter.

As they descended the Bow towards the fatal spot where they designed to complete their purpose, it was suggested that there should be a rope kept in readiness. For this purpose the booth of a man who dealt in cordage was forced open, a coil of rope fit for their purpose was selected to serve as a halter, and the dealer next morning found that a guinea had been left on his counter in exchange; so anxious were the perpetrators of this daring action to show that they meditated not the slightest wrong or infraction of law, excepting so far as Porteous was himself concerned.

Leading, or carrying along with them, in this determined and regular manner, the object of their vengeance, they at length reached the place of common execution, the scene of his crime, and destined spot of his sufferings. Several of the rioters (if they should not rather be described as conspirators) endeavoured to remove the stone which filled up the socket in which the end of the fatal tree was sunk when it was erected for its fatal purpose; others sought for the means of constructing a temporary gibbet, the place in which the gallows itself was deposited being reported too secure to be forced, without much loss of time. Butler endeavoured to avail himself of the delay afforded by these circumstances, to turn the people from their desperate design. "For God's sake," he exclaimed, "remember it is the image of your Creator which you are about to deface in the person of this unfortunate man! Wretched as he is, and wicked as he may be, he has a share in every promise of Scripture, and you cannot destroy him in impenitence without blotting his name from the Book of Life—Do not destroy soul and body; give time for preparation."

"What time had they," returned a stern voice, "whom he murdered on this very spot?—The laws both of God and man call for his death."

"But what, my friends," insisted Butler, with a generous disregard to his own safety—"what hath constituted you his judges?"

"We are not his judges," replied the same person; "he has been already judged and condemned by lawful authority. We are those whom Heaven, and our righteous anger, have stirred up to execute judgment, when a corrupt Government would have protected a murderer."

"I am none," said the unfortunate Porteous; "that which you charge upon me fell out in self-defence, in the lawful exercise of my duty."

"Away with him—away with him!" was the general cry.

"Why do you trifle away time in making a gallows?—that dyester's pole is good enough for the homicide."

The unhappy man was forced to his fate with remorseless rapidity. Butler, separated from him by the press, escaped the last horrors of his struggles. Unnoticed by those who had hitherto detained him as a prisoner,—he fled from the fatal spot, without much caring in what direction his course lay. A loud shout proclaimed the stern delight with which the agents of this deed regarded its completion. Butler, then, at the opening into the low street called the Cowgate, cast back a terrified glance, and, by the red and dusky light of the torches, he could discern a figure wavering and struggling as it hung suspended above the heads of the multitude, and could even observe men striking at it with their Lochaber-axes and partisans. The sight was of a nature to double his horror, and to add wings to his flight.

The street down which the fugitive ran opens to one of the eastern ports or gates of the city. Butler did not stop till he reached it, but found it still shut. He waited nearly an hour, walking up and down in inexpressible perturbation of mind. At length he ventured to call out, and rouse the attention of the terrified keepers of the gate, who now found themselves at liberty to resume their office without interruption. Butler requested them to open the gate. They hesitated. He told them his name and occupation.

"He is a preacher," said one; "I have heard him preach in Haddo's-hole."

"A fine preaching has he been at the night," said another "but maybe least said is sunest mended."

Opening then the wicket of the main gate, the keepers suffered Butler to depart, who hastened to carry his horror and fear beyond the walls of Edinburgh. His first purpose was instantly to take the road homeward; but other fears and cares, connected with the news he had learned in that remarkable day, induced him to linger in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh until daybreak. More than one group of persons passed him as he was whiling away the hours of darkness that yet remained, whom, from the stifled tones of their discourse, the unwonted hour when they travelled, and the hasty pace at which they walked, he conjectured to have been engaged in the late fatal transaction.

Certain it was, that the sudden and total dispersion of the rioters, when their vindictive purpose was accomplished, seemed not the least remarkable feature of this singular affair. In general, whatever may be the impelling motive by which a mob is at first raised, the attainment of their object has usually been only found to lead the way to farther excesses. But not so in the present case. They seemed completely satiated with the vengeance they had prosecuted with such stanch and sagacious activity. When they were fully satisfied that life had abandoned their victim, they dispersed in every direction, throwing down the weapons which they had only assumed to enable them to carry through their purpose. At daybreak there remained not the least token of the events of the night, excepting the corpse of Porteous, which still hung suspended in the place where he had suffered, and the arms of various kinds which the rioters had taken from the city guard-house, which were found scattered about the streets as they had thrown them from their hands when the purpose for which they had seized them was accomplished.

The ordinary magistrates of the city resumed their power, not without trembling at the late experience of the fragility of its tenure. To march troops into the city, and commence a severe inquiry into the transactions of the preceding night, were the first marks of returning energy which they displayed. But these events had been conducted on so secure and well-calculated a plan of safety and secrecy, that there was little or nothing learned to throw light upon the authors or principal actors in a scheme so audacious. An express was despatched to London with the tidings, where they excited great indignation and surprise in the council of regency, and particularly in the bosom of Queen Caroline, who considered her own authority as exposed to contempt by the success of this singular conspiracy. Nothing was spoke of for some time save the measure of vengeance which should be taken, not only on the actors of this tragedy, so soon as they should be discovered, but upon the magistrates who had suffered it to take place, and upon the city which had been the scene where it was exhibited. On this occasion, it is still recorded in popular tradition, that her Majesty, in the height of her displeasure, told the celebrated John Duke of Argyle, that, sooner than submit to such an insult, she would make Scotland a hunting-field. "In that case, Madam," answered that high-spirited nobleman, with a profound bow, "I will take leave of your Majesty, and go down to my own country to get my hounds ready."

The import of the reply had more than met the ear; and as most of the Scottish nobility and gentry seemed actuated by the same national spirit, the royal displeasure was necessarily checked in mid-volley, and milder courses were recommended and adopted, to some of which we may hereafter have occasion to advert.*

* Note D. Memorial concerning the murder of Captain Porteous.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

*Arthur's Seat shall be my bed,
The sheets shall ne'er be pressed by me,
St. Anton's well shall be my drink,
Sin' my true-love's forsaken me.
Old Song.*

If I were to choose a spot from which the rising or setting sun could be seen to the greatest possible advantage, it would be that wild path winding around the foot of the high belt of semicircular rocks, called Salisbury Crags, and marking the verge of the steep descent which slopes down into the glen on the south-eastern side of the city of Edinburgh. The prospect, in its general outline, commands a close-built, high-piled city, stretching itself out beneath in a form, which, to a romantic imagination, may be supposed to represent that of a dragon; now, a noble arm of the sea, with its rocks, isles, distant shores, and boundary of mountains; and now, a fair and fertile champaign country, varied with hill, dale, and rock, and skirted by the picturesque ridge of the Pentland mountains. But as the path gently circles around the base of the cliffs, the prospect, composed as it is of these enchanting and sublime objects, changes at every step, and presents them blended with, or divided from, each other, in every possible variety which can gratify the eye and the imagination. When a piece of scenery so beautiful, yet so varied,—so exciting by its intricacy, and yet so sublime,—is lighted up by the tints of morning or of evening, and displays all that variety of shadowy depth, exchanged with partial brilliancy, which gives character even to the tamest of landscapes, the effect approaches near to enchantment. This path used to be my favourite evening and morning resort, when engaged with a favourite author, or new subject of study. It is, I am informed, now become totally impassable; a circumstance which, if true, reflects little credit on the taste of the Good Town or its leaders.*

** A beautiful and solid pathway has, within a few years, been formed around these romantic rocks; and the Author has the pleasure to think, that the passage in the text gave rise to the undertaking.*

It was from this fascinating path—the scene to me of so much delicious musing, when life was young and promised to be happy, that I have been unable to pass it over without an episodic description—it was, I say, from this romantic path that Butler saw the morning arise the day after the murder of Porteous. It was possible for him with ease to have found a much shorter road to the house to which he was directing his course, and, in fact, that which he chose was extremely circuitous. But to compose his own spirits, as well as to while away the time, until a proper hour for visiting the family without surprise or disturbance, he was induced to extend his circuit by the foot of the rocks, and to linger upon his way until the morning should be considerably advanced. While, now standing with his arms across, and waiting the slow progress of the sun above the horizon, now sitting upon one of the numerous fragments which storms had detached from the rocks above him, he is meditating, alternately upon the horrible catastrophe which he had witnessed, and upon the melancholy, and to him most interesting, news which he had learned at Saddletree's, we will give the reader to understand who Butler was, and how his fate was connected with that of Effie Deans, the unfortunate handmaiden of the careful Mrs. Saddletree.

Reuben Butler was of English extraction, though born in Scotland. His grandfather was a trooper in Monk's army, and one of the party of dismounted dragoons which formed the forlorn hope at the storming of Dundee in 1651. Stephen Butler (called from his talents in reading and expounding, Scripture Stephen, and Bible Butler) was a staunch Independent, and received in its fullest comprehension the promise that the saints should inherit the earth. As hard knocks were what had chiefly fallen to his share hitherto in the division of this common property, he lost not the opportunity which the storm and plunder of a commercial place afforded him, to appropriate as large a share of the better things of this world as he could possibly compass. It would seem that he had succeeded indifferently well, for his exterior circumstances appeared, in consequence of this event, to have been much mended.

The troop to which he belonged was quartered at the village of Dalkeith, as forming the bodyguard of Monk, who, in the capacity of general for the Commonwealth, resided in the neighbouring castle. When, on the eve of the Restoration, the general commenced his march from Scotland, a measure pregnant with such important consequences, he new-modelled his troops, and more especially those immediately about his person, in order that they might consist entirely of individuals devoted to himself. On this occasion Scripture Stephen was weighed in the balance, and found wanting. It was supposed he felt no call to any expedition which might endanger the reign of the military sainthood, and that he did not consider himself as free in conscience to join with any party which might be likely ultimately to acknowledge the interest of Charles Stuart, the son of "the last man," as Charles I. was familiarly and irreverently termed by them in their common discourse, as well as in their more elaborate predications and harangues. As the time did not admit of cashiering such dissidents, Stephen Butler was only advised in a friendly way to give up his horse and accoutrements to one of Middleton's old troopers who possessed an accommodating conscience of a military stamp, and which squared itself chiefly upon those of the colonel and paymaster. As this hint came recommended by a certain sum of arrears presently payable, Stephen had carnal wisdom enough to embrace the proposal, and with great indifference saw his old corps depart for Coldstream, on their route for the south, to establish the tottering Government of England on a new basis.

The zone of the ex-trooper, to use Horace's phrase, was weighty enough to purchase a cottage and two or three fields (still known by the name of Beersheba), within about a Scottish mile of Dalkeith; and there did Stephen establish himself with a youthful helpmate, chosen out of the said village, whose disposition to a comfortable settlement on this side of the grave reconciled her to the gruff manners, serious temper, and weather-beaten features of the martial enthusiast. Stephen did not long survive the falling on "evil days and evil tongues," of which Milton, in the same predicament, so mournfully complains. At his death his consort remained an early widow, with a male child of three years old, which, in the sobriety wherewith it demeaned itself, in the old-fashioned and even grim cast of its features, and in its sententious mode of expressing itself, would sufficiently have vindicated the honour of the widow of Beersheba, had any one thought proper to challenge the babe's descent from Bible Butler.

Butler's principles had not descended to his family, or extended themselves among his neighbours. The air of Scotland was alien to the growth of independency, however favourable to fanaticism under other colours. But, nevertheless, they were not forgotten; and a certain neighbouring Laird, who piqued himself upon the loyalty of his principles "in the worst of times" (though I never heard they exposed him to more peril than that of a broken head, or a night's lodging in the main guard, when wine and cavalierism predominated in his upper storey), had found it a convenient thing to rake up all matter of accusation against the deceased Stephen. In this enumeration his religious principles made no small figure, as, indeed, they must have seemed of the most exaggerated enormity to one whose own were so small and so faintly traced, as to be well nigh imperceptible. In these circumstances, poor widow Butler was supplied with her full proportion of fines for nonconformity, and all the other oppressions of the time, until Beersheba was fairly wrenched out of her hands, and became the property of the Laird who had so wantonly, as it had hitherto appeared, persecuted this poor forlorn woman. When his purpose was fairly achieved, he showed some remorse or moderation, of whatever the reader may please to term it, in permitting her to occupy her husband's cottage, and cultivate, on no very heavy terms, a croft of land adjacent. Her son, Benjamin, in the meanwhile, grew up to manhood, and, moved by that impulse which makes men seek marriage, even when its end can only be the perpetuation of misery, he wedded and brought a wife, and, eventually, a son, Reuben, to share the poverty of Beersheba.

The Laird of Dumbiedikes* had hitherto been moderate in his exactions, perhaps because he was ashamed to tax too highly the miserable means of support which remained to the widow Butler.

* Dumbiedikes, selected as descriptive of the taciturn character of the imaginary owner, is really the name of a house bordering on the King's Park, so called because the late Mr. Braidwood, an instructor of the deaf and dumb, resided there with his pupils. The situation of the real house is different from that assigned to the ideal mansion.

But when a stout active young fellow appeared as the labourer of the croft in question, Dumbiedikes began to think so broad a pair of shoulders might bear an additional burden. He regulated, indeed, his management of his dependants (who fortunately were but few in number) much upon the principle of the carters whom he observed loading their carts at a neighbouring coal-hill, and who never failed to clap an additional brace of hundredweights on their burden, so soon as by any means they had compassed a new horse of somewhat superior strength to that which had broken down the day before. However reasonable this practice appeared to the Laird of Dumbiedikes, he ought to have observed, that it may be overdone, and that it infers, as a matter of course, the destruction and loss of both horse, and cart, and loading. Even so it befell when the additional "prestations" came to be demanded of Benjamin Butler. A man of few words, and few ideas, but attached to Beersheba with a feeling like that which a vegetable entertains to the spot in which it chances to be planted, he neither remonstrated with the Laird, nor endeavoured to escape from him, but, toiling night and day to accomplish the terms of his taskmaster, fell into a burning fever and died. His wife did not long survive him; and, as if it had been the fate of this family to be left orphans, our Reuben Butler was, about the year 1704-5, left in the same circumstances in which his father had been placed, and under the same guardianship, being that of his grandmother, the widow of Monk's old trooper.

The same prospect of misery hung over the head of another tenant of this hardhearted lord of the soil. This was a tough true-blue Presbyterian, called Deans, who, though most obnoxious to the Laird on account of principles in church and state, contrived to maintain his ground upon the estate by regular payment of mail-duties, kain, arriage, carriage, dry multure, lock, gowpen, and knaveship, and all the various exactions now commuted for money, and summed up in the emphatic word rent. But the years 1700 and 1701, long remembered in Scotland for dearth and general distress, subdued the stout heart of the agricultural whig. Citations by the ground-officer, decreets of the Baron Court, sequestrations, poidings of outside and inside plenishing, flew about his ears as fast as the tory bullets whistled around those of the Covenanters at Pentland, Bothwell Brigg, or Airmoss. Struggle as he might, and he struggled gallantly, "Douce David Deans" was routed horse and foot, and lay at the mercy of his grasping landlord just at the time that Benjamin Butler died. The fate of each family was anticipated; but they who prophesied their expulsion to beggary and ruin were disappointed by an accidental circumstance.

On the very term-day when their ejection should have taken place, when all their neighbours were prepared to pity, and not one to assist them, the minister of the parish, as well as a doctor from Edinburgh, received a hasty summons to attend the Laird of Dumbiedikes. Both were surprised, for his contempt for both faculties had been pretty commonly his theme over an extra bottle, that is to say, at least once every day. The leech for the soul, and he for the body, alighted in the court of the little old manor-house at almost the same time; and when they had gazed a moment at each other with some surprise, they in the same breath expressed their conviction that Dumbiedikes must needs be very ill indeed, since he summoned them both to his presence at once. Ere the servant could usher them to his apartment, the party was augmented by a man of law, Nichil Novit, writing himself procurator before the sheriff-court, for in those days there were no solicitors. This latter personage was first summoned to the apartment of the Laird, where, after some short space, the soul-curer and the body-curer were invited to join him. Dumbiedikes had been by this time transported into the best bedroom, used only upon occasions of death and marriage, and called, from the former of these occupations, the Dead-Room. There were in this apartment, besides the sick person himself and Mr. Novit, the son and heir of the patient, a tall gawky silly-looking boy of fourteen or fifteen, and a housekeeper, a good buxom figure of a woman, betwixt forty and fifty, who had kept the keys and managed matters at Dumbiedikes since the lady's death. It was to these attendants that Dumbiedikes addressed himself pretty nearly in the following words; temporal and spiritual matters, the care of his health and his affairs, being strangely jumbled in a head which was never one of the clearest.

"These are sair times wi' me, gentlemen and neighbours! amais as ill as at the aughty-nine, when I was rabbled by the collegeaners.*

* Immediately previous to the Revolution, the students at the Edinburgh College were violent anti-catholics. They were strongly suspected of burning the house of Prestonfield, belonging to Sir James Dick, the Lord Provost; and certainly were guilty of creating considerable riots in 1688-9.

—They mistook me muckle—they ca'd me a papist, but there was never a papist bit about me, minister.—Jock, ye'll take warning—it's a debt we maun a' pay, and there stands Nichil Novit that will tell ye I was never gude at paying debts in my life.—Mr. Novit, ye'll no forget to draw the annual rent that's due on the yerl's band—if I pay debt to other folk, I think they suld pay it to me—that equals aquals.—Jock, when ye hae naething else to do, ye may be aye sticking in a tree; it will be growing, Jock, when ye're sleeping.*

* The Author has been flattered by the assurance, that this *naïve* mode of recommending arboriculture (which was actually delivered in these very words by a Highland laird, while on his death-bed, to his son) had so much weight with a Scottish earl as to lead to his planting a large tract of country.

"My father tauld me sae forty years sin', but I ne'er fand time to mind him—Jock, ne'er drink brandy in the morning, it files the stamach sair; gin ye take a morning's draught, let it be aqua mirabilis; Jenny there makes it weel—Doctor, my breath is growing as scant as a broken-winded piper's, when he has played for four-and-twenty hours at a penny wedding—Jenny, pit the cod aneath my head—but it's a' needless!—Mass John, could ye think o' rattling ower some bit short prayer, it wad do me gude maybe, and keep some queer thoughts out o' my head, Say something, man."

"I cannot use a prayer like a rat-rhyme," answered the honest clergyman; "and if you would have your soul redeemed like a prey from the fowler, Laird, you must needs show me your state of mind."

"And shouldna ye ken that without my telling you?" answered the patient. "What have I been paying stipend and teind, parsonage and vicarage, for, ever sin' the aughty-nine, and I canna get a spell of a prayer for't, the only time I ever asked for ane in my life?—Gang awa wi' your whiggery, if that's a' ye can do; auld Curate Kilstoup wad hae read half the prayer-book to me by this time—Awa wi' ye!—Doctor, let's see if ye can do onything better for me."

The doctor, who had obtained some information in the meanwhile from the housekeeper on the state of his complaints, assured him the medical art could not prolong his life many hours.

"Then damn Mass John and you baith!" cried the furious and intractable patient. "Did ye come here for naething but to tell me that ye canna help me at the pinch? Out wi' them, Jenny—out o' the house! and, Jock, my curse, and the curse of Cromwell, go wi' ye, if ye gie them either fee or bountith, or sae muckle as a black pair o' cheverons!"*

**Cheverons*—gloves.

The clergyman and doctor made a speedy retreat out of the apartment, while Dumbiedikes fell into one of those transports of violent and profane language, which had procured him the surname of Damn-me-dikes. "Bring me the brandy bottle, Jenny, ye b—," he cried, with a voice in which passion contended with pain. "I can die as I have lived, without fashing ony o' them. But there's ae thing," he said, sinking his voice—"there's ae fearful thing hings about my heart, and an anker of brandy winna wash it away.—The Deanses at Woodend!—I sequestrated them in the dear years, and now they are to flit, they'll starve—and that Beersheba, and that auld trooper's wife and her oe, they'll starve—they'll starve! —Look out, Jock; what kind o' night is't?"

"On-ding o' snaw, father," answered Jock, after having opened the window, and looked out with great composure.

"They'll perish in the drifts!" said the expiring sinner—"they'll perish wi' cauld!—but I'll be het enough, gin a' tales be true."

This last observation was made under breath, and in a tone which made the very attorney shudder. He tried his hand at ghostly advice, probably for the first time in his life, and recommended as an opiate for the agonised conscience of the Laird, reparation of the injuries he had done to these distressed families, which, he observed by the way, the civil law called *restitutio in integrum*. But Mammon was struggling with Remorse for retaining his place in a bosom he had so long possessed; and he partly succeeded, as an old tyrant proves often too strong for his insurgent rebels.

"I canna do't," he answered, with a voice of despair. "It would kill me to do't—how can ye bid me pay back siller, when ye ken how I want it? or dispone Beersheba, when it lies sae weel into my ain plaid-nuik? Nature made Dumbiedikes and Beersheba to be ae man's land—She did, by Nichil, it wad kill me to part them."

"But ye maun die whether or no, Laird," said Mr. Novit; "and maybe ye wad die easier—it's but trying. I'll scroll the disposition in nae time."

"Dinna speak o't, sir," replied Dumbiedikes, "or I'll fling the stoup at your head.—But, Jock, lad, ye see how the warld warstles wi' me on my deathbed—be kind to the puir creatures, the Deanses and the Butlers—be kind to them, Jock. Dinna let the warld get a grip o' ye, Jock—but keep the gear thegither! and whate'er ye do, dispone Beersheba at no rate. Let the creatures stay at a moderate mailing, and hae bite and soup; it will maybe be the better wi' your father whare he's gaun, lad."

After these contradictory instructions, the Laird felt his mind so much at ease, that he drank three bumpers of brandy continuously, and "soughed awa," as Jenny expressed it, in an attempt to sing "Deil stick the Minister."

His death made a revolution in favour of the distressed families. John Dumbie, now of Dumbiedikes, in his own right, seemed to be close and selfish enough, but wanted the grasping spirit and active mind of his father; and his guardian happened to agree with him in opinion, that his father's dying recommendation should be attended to. The tenants, therefore, were not actually turned out of doors among the snow-wreaths, and were allowed wherewith to procure butter-milk and peas-bannocks, which they ate under the full force of the original malediction. The cottage of Deans, called Woodend, was not very distant from that at Beersheba. Formerly there had been but little intercourse between the families. Deans was a sturdy Scotsman, with all sort of prejudices against the southern, and the spawn of the southern. Moreover, Deans was, as we have said, a stanch Presbyterian, of the most rigid and unbending adherence to what he conceived to be the only possible straight line, as he was wont to express himself, between right-hand heats and extremes and left-hand defections; and, therefore, he held in high dread and horror all Independents, and whomsoever he supposed allied to them.

But, notwithstanding these national prejudices and religious professions, Deans and the widow Butler were placed in such a situation, as naturally and at length created some intimacy between the families. They had shared a common danger and a mutual deliverance. They needed each other's assistance, like a company, who, crossing a mountain stream, are compelled to cling close together, lest the current should be too powerful for any who are not thus supported.

On nearer acquaintance, too, Deans abated some of his prejudices. He found old Mrs. Butler, though not thoroughly grounded in the extent and bearing of the real testimony against the defections of the times, had no opinions in favour of the Independent party; neither was she an Englishwoman. Therefore, it was to be hoped, that, though she was the widow of an enthusiastic corporal of Cromwell's dragoons, her grandson might be neither schismatic nor anti-national, two qualities concerning which Goodman Deans had as wholesome a terror as against papists and malignants, Above all (for Douce Davie Deans had his weak side), he perceived that widow Butler looked up to him with reverence, listened to his advice, and compounded for an occasional fling at the doctrines of her deceased husbands to which, as we have seen, she was by no means warmly attached, in consideration of the valuable counsels which the Presbyterian afforded her for the management of her little farm. These usually concluded with "they may do otherwise in England, neighbour Butler, for aught I ken;" or, "it may be different in foreign parts;" or, "they wha think differently on the great foundation of our covenanted reformation, overturning and mishguggling the government and discipline of the kirk, and breaking down the carved work of our Zion, might be for saving the craft wi' aits; but I say peace, peace." And as his advice was shrewd and sensible, though conceitedly given, it was received with gratitude, and followed with respect.

The intercourse which took place betwixt the families at Beersheba and Woodend became strict and intimate, at a very early period, betwixt Reuben Butler, with whom the reader is already in some degree acquainted, and Jeanie Deans, the only child of Douce Davie Deans by his first wife, "that singular Christian woman," as he was wont to express himself, "whose name was savoury to all that knew her for a desirable professor, Christian Menzies in Hochmagirdle." The manner of which intimacy, and the consequences thereof, we now proceed to relate.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*Reuben and Rachel, though as fond as doves,
Were yet discreet and cautious in their loves,
Nor would attend to Cupid's wild commands,
Till cool reflection bade them join their hands;
When both were poor, they thought it argued ill
Of hasty love to make them poorer still.*

Crabbe's Parish Register.

While widow Butler and widower Deans struggled with poverty, and the hard and sterile soil of "those parts and portions" of the lands of Dumbiedikes which it was their lot to occupy, it became gradually apparent that Deans was to gain the strife, and his ally in the conflict was to lose it. The former was a Man, and not much past the prime of life—Mrs. Butler a woman, and declined into the vale of years, This, indeed, ought in time to have been balanced by the circumstance, that Reuben was growing up to assist his grandmothers labours, and that Jeanie Deans, as a girl, could be only supposed to add to her father's burdens. But Douce Davie Deans knew better things, and so schooled and trained the young minion, as he called her, that from the time she could walk, upwards, she was daily employed in some task or other, suitable to her age and capacity; a circumstance which, added to her father's daily instructions and lectures, tended to give her mind, even when a child, a grave, serious, firm, and reflecting cast. An uncommonly strong and healthy temperament, free from all nervous affection and every other irregularity, which, attacking the body in its more noble functions, so often influences the mind, tended greatly to establish this fortitude, simplicity, and decision of character.

On the other hand, Reuben was weak in constitution, and, though not timid in temper might be safely pronounced anxious, doubtful, and apprehensive. He partook of the temperament of his mother, who had died of a consumption in early age. He was a pale, thin, feeble, sickly boy, and somewhat lame, from an accident in early youth. He was, besides, the child of a doting grandmother, whose too solicitous attention to him soon taught him a sort of diffidence in himself, with a disposition to overrate his own importance, which is one of the very worst consequences that children deduce from over-indulgence.

Still, however, the two children clung to each other's society, not more from habit than from taste. They herded together the handful of sheep, with the two or three cows, which their parents turned out rather to seek food than actually to feed upon the unenclosed common of Dumbiedikes. It was there that the two urchins might be seen seated beneath a blooming bush of whin, their little faces laid close together under the shadow of the same plaid drawn over both their heads, while the landscape around was embrowned by an overshadowing cloud, big with the shower which had driven the children to shelter. On other occasions they went together to school, the boy receiving that encouragement and example from his companion, in crossing the little brooks which intersected their path, and encountering cattle, dogs, and other perils, upon their journey, which the male sex in such cases usually consider it as their prerogative to extend to the weaker. But when, seated on the benches of the school-house, they began to con their lessons together, Reuben, who was as much superior to Jeanie Deans in acuteness of intellect, as inferior to her in firmness of constitution, and in that insensibility to fatigue and danger which depends on the conformation of the nerves, was able fully to requite the kindness and countenance with which, in other circumstances, she used to regard him. He was decidedly the best scholar at the little parish school; and so gentle was his temper and disposition, that he was rather admired than envied by the little mob who occupied the noisy mansion, although he was the declared favourite of the master. Several girls, in particular (for in Scotland they are taught with the boys), longed to be kind to and comfort the sickly lad, who was so much cleverer than his companions. The character of Reuben Butler was so calculated as to offer scope both for their sympathy and their admiration, the feelings, perhaps, through which the female sex (the more deserving part of them at least) is more easily attached.

But Reuben, naturally reserved and distant, improved none of these advantages; and only became more attached to Jeanie Deans, as the enthusiastic approbation of his master assured him of fair prospects in future life, and awakened his ambition. In the meantime, every advance that Reuben made in learning (and, considering his opportunities, they were uncommonly great) rendered him less capable of attending to the domestic duties of his grandmother's farm. While studying the *pons asinorum* in Euclid, he suffered everycuddie upon the common to trespass upon a large field of peas belonging to the Laird, and nothing but the

active exertions of Jeanie Deans, with her little dog Dustiefoot, could have saved great loss and consequent punishment. Similar miscarriages marked his progress in his classical studies. He read Virgil's Georgics till he did not know bere from barley; and had nearly destroyed the crofts of Beersheba while attempting to cultivate them according to the practice of Columella and Cato the Censor.

These blunders occasioned grief to his grand-dame, and disconcerted the good opinion which her neighbour, Davie Deans, had for some time entertained of Reuben.

"I see naething ye can make of that silly callant, neighbour Butler," said he to the old lady, "unless ye train him to the wark o' the ministry. And ne'er was there mair need of poorfu' preachers than e'en now in these cauld Gallio days, when men's hearts are hardened like the nether mill-stone, till they come to regard none of these things. It's evident this puir callant of yours will never be able to do an usefu' day's wark, unless it be as an ambassador from our Master; and I will make it my business to procure a license when he is fit for the same, trusting he will be a shaft cleanly polished, and meet to be used in the body of the kirk; and that he shall not turn again, like the sow, to wallow in the mire of heretical extremes and defections, but shall have the wings of a dove, though he hath lain among the pots."

The poor widow gulped down the affront to her husband's principles, implied in this caution, and hastened to take Butler from the High School, and encourage him in the pursuit of mathematics and divinity, the only physics and ethics that chanced to be in fashion at the time.

Jeanie Deans was now compelled to part from the companion of her labour, her study, and her pastime, and it was with more than childish feeling that both children regarded the separation. But they were young, and hope was high, and they separated like those who hope to meet again at a more auspicious hour. While Reuben Butler was acquiring at the University of St. Andrews the knowledge necessary for a clergyman, and macerating his body with the privations which were necessary in seeking food for his mind, his grand-dame became daily less able to struggle with her little farm, and was at length obliged to throw it up to the new Laird of Dumbiedikes. That great personage was no absolute Jew, and did not cheat her in making the bargain more than was tolerable. He even gave her permission to tenant the house in which she had lived with her husband, as long as it should be "tenantable;" only he protested against paying for a farthing of repairs, any benevolence which he possessed being of the passive, but by no means of the active mood.

In the meanwhile, from superior shrewdness, skill, and other circumstances, some of them purely accidental, Davie Deans gained a footing in the world, the possession of some wealth, the reputation of more, and a growing disposition to preserve and increase his store; for which, when he thought upon it seriously, he was inclined to blame himself. From his knowledge in agriculture, as it was then practised, he became a sort of favourite with the Laird, who had no great pleasure either in active sports or in society, and was wont to end his daily saunter by calling at the cottage of Woodend.

Being himself a man of slow ideas and confused utterance, Dumbiedikes used to sit or stand for half-an-hour with an old laced hat of his father's upon his head, and an empty tobacco-pipe in his mouth, with his eyes following Jeanie Deans, or "the lassie" as he called her, through the course of her daily domestic labour; while her father, after exhausting the subject of bestial, of ploughs, and of harrows, often took an opportunity of going full-sail into controversial subjects, to which discussions the dignitary listened with much seeming patience, but without making any reply, or, indeed, as most people thought, without understanding a single word of what the orator was saying. Deans, indeed, denied this stoutly, as an insult at once to his own talents for expounding hidden truths, of which he was a little vain, and to the Laird's capacity of understanding them. He said, "Dumbiedikes was nane of these flashy gentles, wi' lace on their skirts and swords at their tails, that were rather for riding on horseback to hell than gauging barefooted to heaven. He wasna like his father—nae profane company-keeper—nae swearer—nae drinker—nae frequenter of play-house, or music-house, or dancing-house—nae Sabbath-breaker—nae imposer of aiths, or bonds, or denier of liberty to the flock.—He clave to the warld, and the warld's gear, a wee ower muckle, but then there was some breathing of a gale upon his spirit," etc. etc. All this honest Davie said and believed.

It is not to be supposed, that, by a father and a man of sense and observation, the constant direction of the Laird's eyes towards Jeanie was altogether unnoticed. This circumstance, however, made a much greater impression upon another member of his family, a second helpmate, to wit, whom he had chosen to take to his bosom ten years after the death of his first. Some people were of opinion, that Douce Davie had been rather surprised into this step, for, in general, he was no friend to marriages or giving in marriage, and seemed rather to regard that state of society as a necessary evil,—a thing lawful, and to be tolerated in the imperfect state of our nature, but which clipped the wings with which we ought to soar upwards, and tethered the soul to its mansion of clay, and the creature-comforts of wife and bairns. His own practice, however, had in this material point varied from his principles, since, as we have seen, he twice knitted for himself this dangerous and ensnaring entanglement.

Rebecca, his spouse, had by no means the same horror of matrimony, and as she made marriages in imagination for every neighbour round, she failed not to indicate a match betwixt Dumbiedikes and her step-daughter Jeanie. The goodman used regularly to frown and pshaw whenever this topic was touched upon, but usually ended by taking his bonnet and walking out of the house, to conceal a certain gleam of satisfaction, which, at such a suggestion, involuntarily diffused itself over his austere features.

The more youthful part of my readers may naturally ask, whether Jeanie Deans was deserving of this mute attention of the Laird of Dumbiedikes; and the historian, with due regard to veracity, is compelled to answer, that her personal attractions were of no uncommon description. She was short, and rather too stoutly made for her size, had grey eyes, light coloured hair, a round good-humoured face, much tanned with the sun, and her only peculiar charm was an air of inexpressible serenity, which a good conscience, kind feelings, contented temper, and the regular discharge of all her duties, spread over her features. There was nothing, it may be supposed, very appalling in the form or manners of this rustic heroine; yet, whether from sheepish bashfulness, or from want of decision and imperfect knowledge of his own mind on the subject, the Laird of Dumbiedikes, with his old laced hat and empty tobacco-pipe, came and enjoyed the beatific vision of Jeanie Deans day after day, week after week, year after year, without proposing to accomplish any of the prophecies of the stepmother.

This good lady began to grow doubly impatient on the subject, when, after having been some years married, she herself presented Douce Davie with another daughter, who was named Euphemia, by corruption, Effie. It was then that Rebecca began to turn impatient with the slow pace at which the Laird's wooing proceeded, judiciously arguing, that, as Lady Dumbiedikes would have but little occasion for tocher, the principal part of her gudeman's substance would naturally descend to the child by the second marriage. Other step-dames have tried less laudable means for clearing the way to the succession of their own children; but Rebecca, to do her justice, only sought little Effie's advantage through the promotion, or which must have generally been accounted such, of her elder sister. She therefore tried every female art within the compass of her simple skill, to bring the Laird to a point; but had the mortification to perceive that her efforts, like those of an unskilful angler, only scared the trout she meant to catch. Upon one occasion, in particular, when she joked with the Laird on the propriety of giving a mistress to the house of Dumbiedikes, he was so effectually startled, that neither laced hat, tobacco-pipe, nor the intelligent proprietor of these movables, visited Woodend for a fortnight. Rebecca was therefore compelled to leave the Laird to proceed at his own snail's pace, convinced, by experience, of the grave-digger's aphorism, that your dull ass will not mend his pace for beating.

Reuben, in the meantime, pursued his studies at the university, supplying his wants by teaching the younger lads the knowledge he himself acquired, and thus at once gaining the means of maintaining himself at the seat of learning, and fixing in his mind the elements of what he had already obtained. In this manner, as is usual among the poorer students of divinity at Scottish universities, he contrived not only to maintain himself according to his simple wants, but even to send considerable assistance to his sole remaining parent, a sacred duty, of which the Scotch are seldom negligent. His progress in knowledge of a general kind, as well as in the studies proper to his profession, was very considerable, but was little remarked, owing to the retired modesty of his disposition, which in no respect qualified him to set off his learning to the best advantage. And thus, had Butler been a man given to make complaints, he had his tale to tell, like others, of unjust preferences, bad luck, and hard usage. On these subjects, however, he was habitually silent, perhaps from modesty, perhaps from a touch of pride, or perhaps from a conjunction of both.

He obtained his license as a preacher of the gospel, with some compliments from the Presbytery by whom it was bestowed; but this did not lead to any preferment, and he found it necessary to make the cottage at Beersheba his residence for some months, with no other income than was afforded by the

precarious occupation of teaching in one or other of the neighbouring families. After having greeted his aged grandmother, his first visit was to Woodend, where he was received by Jeanie with warm cordiality, arising from recollections which had never been dismissed from her mind, by Rebecca with good-humoured hospitality, and by old Deans in a mode peculiar to himself.

Highly as Douce Davie honoured the clergy, it was not upon each individual of the cloth that he bestowed his approbation; and, a little jealous, perhaps, at seeing his youthful acquaintance erected into the dignity of a teacher and preacher, he instantly attacked him upon various points of controversy, in order to discover whether he might not have fallen into some of the snares, defections, and desertions of the time. Butler was not only a man of stanch Presbyterian principles, but was also willing to avoid giving pain to his old friend by disputing upon points of little importance; and therefore he might have hoped to have come like fine gold out of the furnace of Davie's interrogatories. But the result on the mind of that strict investigator was not altogether so favourable as might have been hoped and anticipated. Old Judith Butler, who had hobbled that evening as far as Woodend, in order to enjoy the congratulations of her neighbours upon Reuben's return, and upon his high attainments, of which she was herself not a little proud, was somewhat mortified to find that her old friend Deans did not enter into the subject with the warmth she expected. At first, in he seemed rather silent than dissatisfied; and it was not till Judith had essayed the subject more than once that it led to the following dialogue.

"Aweel, neibor Deans, I thought ye wad hae been glad to see Reuben amang us again, poor fellow."

"I am glad, Mrs. Butler," was the neighbour's concise answer.

"Since he has lost his grandfather and his father (praised be Him that giveth and taketh!), I ken nae friend he has in the world that's been sae like a father to him as the sell o'ye, neibor Deans."

"God is the only father of the fatherless," said Deans, touching his bonnet and looking upwards. "Give honour where it is due, gudewife, and not to an unworthy instrument."

"Aweel, that's your way o' turning it, and nae doubt ye ken best; but I hae ken'd ye, Davie, send a forpit o' meal to Beersheba when there wasna a bow left in the meal-ark at Woodend; ay, and I hae ken'd ye"

"Gudewife," said Davie, interrupting her, "these are but idle tales to tell me; fit for naething but to puff up our inward man wi' our ain vain acts. I stude beside blessed Alexander Peden, when I heard him call the death and testimony of our happy martyrs but draps of blude and scarts of ink in respect of fitting discharge of our duty; and what suld I think of ony thing the like of me can do?"

"Weel, neibor Deans, ye ken best; but I maun say that, I am sure you are glad to see my bairn again—the halt's gane now, unless he has to walk ower mony miles at a stretch; and he has a wee bit colour in his cheek, that glads my auld een to see it; and he has as decent a black coat as the minister; and"

"I am very heartily glad he is weel and thriving," said Mr. Deans, with a gravity that seemed intended to cut short the subject; but a woman who is bent upon a point is not easily pushed aside from it.

"And," continued Mrs. Butler, "he can wag his head in a pulpit now, neibor Deans, think but of that—my ain oe—and a'budy maun sit still and listen to him, as if he were the Paip of Rome."

"The what?—the who?—woman!" said Deans, with a sternness far beyond his usual gravity, as soon as these offensive words had struck upon the tympanum of his ear.

"Eh, guide us!" said the poor woman; "I had forgot what an ill will ye had aye at the Paip, and sae had my puir gudeman, Stephen Butler. Mony an afternoon he wad sit and take up his testimony again the Paip, and again baptizing of bairns, and the like."

"Woman!" reiterated Deans, "either speak about what ye ken something o', or be silent; I say that independency is a foul heresy, and anabaptism a damnable and deceiving error, whilk suld be rooted out of the land wi' the fire o' the spiritual, and the sword o' the civil magistrate."

"Weel, weel, neibor, I'll no say that ye mayna be right," answered the submissive Judith. "I am sure ye are right about the sawing and the mawing, the shearing and the leading, and what for suld ye no be right about kirkwark, too?—But concerning my oe, Reuben Butler—"

"Reuben Butler, gudewife," said David, with solemnity, "is a lad I wish heartily weel to, even as if he were mine ain son—but I doubt there will be outs and ins in the track of his walk. I muckle fear his gifts will get the heels of his grace. He has ower muckle human wit and learning, and thinks as muckle about the form of the bicker as he does about the healsomeness of the food—he maun broider the marriage-garment with lace and passments, or it's no gude eneugh for him. And it's like he's something proud o' his human gifts and learning, whilk enables him to dress up his doctrine in that fine airy dress. But," added he, at seeing the old woman's uneasiness at his discourse, "affliction may gie him a jagg, and let the wind out o' him, as out o' a cow that's eaten wet clover, and the lad may do weel, and be a burning and a shining light; and I trust it will be yours to see, and his to feel it, and that soon."

Widow Butler was obliged to retire, unable to make anything more of her neighbour, whose discourse, though she did not comprehend it, filled her with undefined apprehensions on her grandson's account, and greatly depressed the joy with which she had welcomed him on his return. And it must not be concealed, in justice to Mr. Deans's discernment, that Butler, in their conference, had made a greater display of his learning than the occasion called for, or than was likely to be acceptable to the old man, who, accustomed to consider himself as a person preeminently entitled to dictate upon theological subjects of controversy, felt rather humbled and mortified when learned authorities were placed in array against him. In fact, Butler had not escaped the tinge of pedantry which naturally flowed from his education, and was apt, on many occasions, to make parade of his knowledge, when there was no need of such vanity.

Jeanie Deans, however, found no fault with this display of learning, but, on the contrary, admired it; perhaps on the same score that her sex are said to admire men of courage, on account of their own deficiency in that qualification. The circumstances of their families threw the young people constantly together; their old intimacy was renewed, though upon a footing better adapted to their age; and it became at length understood betwixt them, that their union should be deferred no longer than until Butler should obtain some steady means of support, however humble. This, however, was not a matter speedily to be accomplished. Plan after plan was formed, and plan after plan failed. The good-humoured cheek of Jeanie lost the first flush of juvenile freshness; Reuben's brow assumed the gravity of manhood, yet the means of obtaining a settlement seemed remote as ever. Fortunately for the lovers, their passion was of no ardent or enthusiastic cast; and a sense of duty on both sides induced them to bear, with patient fortitude, the protracted interval which divided them from each other.

In the meanwhile, time did not roll on without effecting his usual changes. The widow of Stephen Butler, so long the prop of the family of Beersheba, was gathered to her fathers; and Rebecca, the careful spouse of our friend Davie Deans, wa's also summoned from her plans of matrimonial and domestic economy. The morning after her death, Reuben Butler went to offer his mite of consolation to his old friend and benefactor. He witnessed, on this occasion, a remarkable struggle betwixt the force of natural affection and the religious stoicism which the sufferer thought it was incumbent upon him to maintain under each earthly dispensation, whether of weal or woe.

On his arrival at the cottage, Jeanie, with her eyes overflowing with tears, pointed to the little orchard, "in which," she whispered with broken accents, "my poor father has been since his misfortune." Somewhat alarmed at this account, Butler entered the orchard, and advanced slowly towards his old friend, who, seated in a small rude arbour, appeared to be sunk in the extremity of his affliction. He lifted his eyes somewhat sternly as Butler approached, as if offended at the interruption; but as the young man hesitated whether he ought to retreat or advance, he arose, and came forward to meet him with a self-possessed, and even dignified air.

"Young man," said the sufferer, "lay it not to heart, though the righteous perish, and the merciful are removed, seeing, it may well be said, that they are taken away from the evils to come. Woe to me were I to shed a tear for the wife of my bosom, when I might weep rivers of water for this afflicted Church, cursed as it is with carnal seekers, and with the dead of heart."

"I am happy," said Butler, "that you can forget your private affliction in your regard for public duty."

"Forget, Reuben?" said poor Deans, putting his handkerchief to his eyes—"She's not to be forgotten on this side of time; but He that gives the wound can send the ointment. I declare there have been times during this night when my meditation has been so rapt, that I knew not of my heavy loss. It has been with me as with the worthy John Semple, called Carspharn John,* upon a like trial—I have been this night on the banks of Ulai, plucking an apple here and there!"

* Note E. Carspharn John.

Notwithstanding the assumed fortitude of Deans, which he conceived to be the discharge of a great Christian duty, he had too good a heart not to suffer deeply under this heavy loss. Woodend became altogether distasteful to him; and as he had obtained both substance and experience by his management of that little farm, he resolved to employ them as a dairy-farmer, or cowfeeder, as they are called in Scotland. The situation he chose for his new settlement was at a place called Saint Leonard's Crag, lying betwixt Edinburgh and the mountain called Arthur's Seat, and adjoining to the extensive sheep pasture still named the King's Park, from its having been formerly dedicated to the preservation of the royal game. Here he rented a small lonely house, about half-a-mile distant from the nearest point of the city, but the site of which, with all the adjacent ground, is now occupied by the buildings which form the southeastern suburb. An extensive pasture-ground adjoining, which Deans rented from the keeper of the Royal Park, enabled him to feed his milk-cows; and the unceasing industry and activity of Jeanie, his oldest daughter, were exerted in making the most of their produce.

She had now less frequent opportunities of seeing Reuben, who had been obliged, after various disappointments, to accept the subordinate situation of assistant in a parochial school of some eminence, at three or four miles' distance from the city. Here he distinguished himself, and became acquainted with several respectable burgesses, who, on account of health, or other reasons, chose that their children should commence their education in this little village. His prospects were thus gradually brightening, and upon each visit which he paid at Saint Leonard's he had an opportunity of gliding a hint to this purpose into Jeanie's ear. These visits were necessarily very rare, on account of the demands which the duties of the school made upon Butler's time. Nor did he dare to make them even altogether so frequent as these avocations would permit. Deans received him with civility indeed, and even with kindness; but Reuben, as is usual in such cases, imagined that he read his purpose in his eyes, and was afraid too premature an explanation on the subject would draw down his positive disapproval. Upon the whole, therefore, he judged it prudent to call at Saint Leonard's just so frequently as old acquaintance and neighbourhood seemed to authorise, and no oftener. There was another person who was more regular in his visits.

When Davie Deans intimated to the Laird of Dumbiedikes his purpose of "quitting wi' the land and house at Woodend," the Laird stared and said nothing. He made his usual visits at the usual hour without remark, until the day before the term, when, observing the bustle of moving furniture already commenced, the great east-country *awmrie* dragged out of its nook, and standing with its shoulder to the company, like an awkward booby about to leave the room, the Laird again stared mightily, and was heard to ejaculate,—“Hegh, sirs!” Even after the day of departure was past and gone, the Laird of Dumbiedikes, at his usual hour, which was that at which David Deans was wont to “loose the pleugh,” presented himself before the closed door of the cottage at Woodend, and seemed as much astonished at finding it shut against his approach as if it was not exactly what he had to expect. On this occasion he was heard to ejaculate, “Gude guide us!” which, by those who knew him, was considered as a very unusual mark of emotion. From that moment forward Dumbiedikes became an altered man, and the regularity of his movements, hitherto so exemplary, was as totally disconcerted as those of a boy's watch when he has broken the main-spring. Like the index of the said watch did Dumbiedikes spin round the whole bounds of his little property, which may be likened unto the dial of the timepiece, with unwonted velocity. There was not a cottage into which he did not enter, nor scarce a maiden on whom he did not stare. But so it was, that although there were better farm-houses on the land than Woodend, and certainly much prettier girls than Jeanie Deans, yet it did somehow befall that the blank in the Laird's time was not so pleasantly filled up as it had been. There was no seat accommodated him so well as the “bunker” at Woodend, and no face he loved so much to gaze on as Jeanie Deans's. So, after spinning round and round his little orbit, and then remaining stationary for a week, it seems to have occurred to him that he was not pinned down to circulate on a pivot, like the hands of the watch, but possessed the power of shifting his central point, and extending his circle if he thought proper. To realise which privilege of change of place, he bought a pony from a Highland drover, and with its assistance and company stepped, or rather stumbled, as far as Saint Leonard's Crag.

Jeanie Deans, though so much accustomed to the Laird's staring that she was sometimes scarce conscious of his presence, had nevertheless some occasional fears lest he should call in the organ of speech to back those expressions of admiration which he bestowed on her through his eyes. Should this happen, farewell, she thought, to all chance of a union with Butler. For her father, however stouthearted and independent in civil and religious principles, was not without that respect for the laird of the land, so deeply imprinted on the Scottish tenantry of the period. Moreover, if he did not positively dislike Butler, yet his fund of carnal learning was often the object of sarcasms on David's part, which were perhaps founded in jealousy, and which certainly indicated no partiality for the party against whom they were launched. And lastly, the match with Dumbiedikes would have presented irresistible charms to one who used to complain that he felt himself apt to take “ower grit an armfu' o' the world.” So that, upon the whole, the Laird's diurnal visits were disagreeable to Jeanie from apprehension of future consequences, and it served much to console her, upon removing from the spot where she was bred and born, that she had seen the last of Dumbiedikes, his laced hat, and tobacco-pipe. The poor girl no more expected he could muster courage to follow her to Saint Leonard's Crag than that any of her apple-trees or cabbages which she had left rooted in the “yard” at Woodend, would spontaneously, and unaided, have undertaken the same journey. It was therefore with much more surprise than pleasure that, on the sixth day after their removal to Saint Leonard's, she beheld Dumbiedikes arrive, laced hat, tobacco-pipe, and all, and, with the self-same greeting of “How's a' wi' ye, Jeanie?—Whare's the gudeman?” assume as nearly as he could the same position in the cottage at Saint Leonard's which he had so long and so regularly occupied at Woodend. He was no sooner, however, seated, than with an unusual exertion of his powers of conversation, he added, “Jeanie—I say, Jeanie, woman”—here he extended his hand towards her shoulder with all the fingers spread out as if to clutch it, but in so bashful and awkward a manner, that when she whisked herself beyond its reach, the paw remained suspended in the air with the palm open, like the claw of a heraldic griffin—“Jeanie,” continued the swain in this moment of inspiration—“I say, Jeanie, it's a braw day out-by, and the roads are no that ill for boot-hose.”

“The deil's in the daidling body,” muttered Jeanie between her teeth; “wha had hae thought o' his daikering out this length?” And she afterwards confessed that she threw a little of this ungracious sentiment into her accent and manner; for her father being abroad, and the “body,” as she irreverently termed the landed proprietor, “looking unco gleg and canty, she didna ken what he might be coming out wi' next.”

Her frowns, however, acted as a complete sedative, and the Laird relapsed from that day into his former taciturn habits, visiting the cowfeeder's cottage three or four times every week, when the weather permitted, with apparently no other purpose than to stare at Jeanie Deans, while Douce Davie poured forth his eloquence upon the controversies and testimonies of the day.

CHAPTER NINTH.

*Her air, her manners, all who saw admired,
Courteous, though coy, and gentle, though retired;
The joy of youth and health her eyes displayed;
And ease of heart her every look conveyed.*

Crabbe.

The visits of the Laird thus again sunk into matters of ordinary course, from which nothing was to be expected or apprehended. If a lover could have gained a fair one as a snake is said to fascinate a bird, by pertinaciously gazing on her with great stupid greenish eyes, which began now to be occasionally aided by spectacles, unquestionably Dumbiedikes would have been the person to perform the feat. But the art of fascination seems among the *artes perditae*, and I cannot learn that this most pertinacious of stargazers produced any effect by his attentions beyond an occasional yawn.

In the meanwhile, the object of his gaze was gradually attaining the verge of youth, and approaching to what is called in females the middle age, which is impolitely held to begin a few years earlier with their more fragile sex than with men. Many people would have been of opinion, that the Laird would have done better to have transferred his glances to an object possessed of far superior charms to Jeanie's, even when Jeanie's were in their bloom, who began now to be distinguished by all who visited the cottage at St. Leonard's Crag.

Effie Deans, under the tender and affectionate care of her sister, had now shot up into a beautiful and blooming girl. Her Grecian shaped head was profusely rich in waving ringlets of brown hair, which, confined by a blue snood of silk, and shading a laughing Hebe countenance, seemed the picture of health, pleasure, and contentment. Her brown russet short-gown set off a shape, which time, perhaps, might be expected to render too robust, the frequent objection to Scottish beauty, but which, in her present early age, was slender and taper, with that graceful and easy sweep of outline which at once indicates health and beautiful proportion of parts.

These growing charms, in all their juvenile profusion, had no power to shake the steadfast mind, or divert the fixed gaze of the constant Laird of Dumbiedikes. But there was scarce another eye that could behold this living picture of health and beauty, without pausing on it with pleasure. The traveller stopped his weary horse on the eve of entering the city which was the end of his journey, to gaze at the sylph-like form that tripped by him, with her milk-pail poised on her head, bearing herself so erect, and stepping so light and free under her burden, that it seemed rather an ornament than an encumbrance. The lads of the neighbouring suburb, who held their evening rendezvous for putting the stone, casting the hammer, playing at long bowls, and other athletic exercises, watched the motions of Effie Deans, and contended with each other which should have the good fortune to attract her attention. Even the rigid Presbyterians of her father's persuasion, who held each indulgence of the eye and sense to be a snare at least if not a crime, were surprised into a moment's delight while gazing on a creature so exquisite,—instantly checked by a sigh, reproaching at once their own weakness, and mourning that a creature so fair should share in the common and hereditary guilt and imperfection of our nature, which she deserved as much by her guileless purity of thought, speech, and action, as by her uncommon loveliness of face and person.

Yet there were points in Effie's character which gave rise not only to strange doubt and anxiety on the part of Douce David Deans, whose ideas were rigid, as may easily be supposed, upon the subject of youthful amusements, but even of serious apprehension to her more indulgent sister. The children of the Scotch of the inferior classes are usually spoiled by the early indulgence of their parents; how, wherefore, and to what degree, the lively and instructive narrative of the amiable and accomplished authoress of "Glenburnie"* has saved me and all future scribblers the trouble of recording.

* [The late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton.]

Effie had had a double share of this inconsiderate and misjudged kindness. Even the strictness of her father's principles could not condemn the sports of infancy and childhood; and to the good old man, his younger daughter, the child of his old age, seemed a child for some years after she attained the years of womanhood, was still called the "bit lassie," and "little Effie," and was permitted to run up and down uncontrolled, unless upon the Sabbath, or at the times of family worship. Her sister, with all the love and care of a mother, could not be supposed to possess the same authoritative influence; and that which she had hitherto exercised became gradually limited and diminished as Effie's advancing years entitled her, in her own conceit at least, to the right of independence and free agency. With all the innocence and goodness of disposition, therefore, which we have described, the Lily of St. Leonard's possessed a little fund of self-conceit and obstinacy, and some warmth and irritability of temper, partly natural perhaps, but certainly much increased by the unrestrained freedom of her childhood. Her character will be best illustrated by a cottage evening scene.

The careful father was absent in his well-stocked byre, foddering those useful and patient animals on whose produce his living depended, and the summer evening was beginning to close in, when Jeanie Deans began to be very anxious for the appearance of her sister, and to fear that she would not reach home before her father returned from the labour of the evening, when it was his custom to have "family exercise," and when she knew that Effie's absence would give him the most serious displeasure. These apprehensions hung heavier upon her mind, because, for several preceding evenings, Effie had disappeared about the same time, and her stay, at first so brief as scarce to be noticed, had been gradually protracted to half-an-hour, and an hour, and on the present occasion had considerably exceeded even this last limit. And now, Jeanie stood at the door, with her hand before her eyes to avoid the rays of the level sun, and looked alternately along the various tracks which led towards their dwelling, to see if she could descry the nymph-like form of her sister. There was a wall and a stile which separated the royal domain, or King's Park, as it is called, from the public road; to this pass she frequently directed her attention, when she saw two persons appear there somewhat suddenly, as if they had walked close by the side of the wall to screen themselves from observation. One of them, a man, drew back hastily; the other, a female, crossed the stile, and advanced towards her—It was Effie. She met her sister with that affected liveliness of manner, which, in her rank, and sometimes in those above it, females occasionally assume to hide surprise or confusion; and she carolled as she came—

*"The elfin knight sate on the brae,
The broom grows bonny, the broom grows fair;
And by there came liltin' a lady so gay,
And we daurna gang down to the broom nae mair."*

"Whisht, Effie," said her sister, "our father's coming out o' the byre." —The damsel stinted in her song.—"Whare hae ye been sae late at e'en?"

"It's no late, lass," answered Effie.

"It's chappit eight on every clock o' the town, and the sun's gaun down ahint the Corstorphine hills—Whare can ye hae been sae late?"

"Nae gate," answered Effie.

"And wha was that parted wi' you at the stile?"

"Naebody," replied Effie once more.

"Nae gate?—Naebody?—I wish it may be a right gate, and a right body, that keeps folk out sae late at e'en, Effie."

"What needs ye be aye speering then at folk?" retorted Effie. "I'm sure, if ye'll ask nae questions, I'll tell ye nae lees. I never ask what brings the Laird of Dumbiedikes glowering here like a wull-cat (only his een's greener, and no sae gleg), day after day, till we are a' like to gaunt our charts aft."

"Because ye ken very weel he comes to see our father," said Jeanie, in answer to this pert remark.

"And Dominie Butler—Does he come to see our father, that's sae taen wi' his Latin words?" said Effie, delighted to find that by carrying the war into the enemy's country, she could divert the threatened attack upon herself, and with the petulance of youth she pursued her triumph over her prudent elder sister. She looked at her with a sly air, in which there was something like irony, as she chanted, in a low but marked tone, a scrap of an old Scotch song—

*"Through the kirkyard
I met wi' the Laird,
The silly pair body he said me nae harm;
But just ere 'twas dark,
I met wi' the clerk"*

Here the songstress stopped, looked full at her sister, and, observing the tears gather in her eyes, she suddenly flung her arms round her neck, and kissed them away. Jeanie, though hurt and displeased, was unable to resist the caresses of this untaught child of nature, whose good and evil seemed to flow rather from impulse than from reflection. But as she returned the sisterly kiss, in token of perfect reconciliation, she could not suppress the gentle reproof—"Effie, if ye will learn fule sangs, ye might make a kinder use of them."

"And so I might, Jeanie," continued the girl, clinging to her sister's neck; "and I wish I had never learned ane o' them—and I wish we had never come here—and I wish my tongue had been blistered or I had vexed ye."

"Never mind that, Effie," replied the affectionate sister; "I canna be muckle vexed wi' ony thing ye say to me—but O, dinna vex our father!"

"I will not—I will not," replied Effie; "and if there were as many dances the morn's night as there are merry dancers in the north firmament on a frosty e'en, I winna budge an inch to gang near ane o' them."

"Dance!" echoed Jeanie Deans in astonishment. "O Effie, what could take ye to a dance?"

It is very possible, that, in the communicative mood into which the Lily of St. Leonard's was now surprised, she might have given her sister her unreserved confidence, and saved me the pain of telling a melancholy tale; but at the moment the word dance was uttered, it reached the ear of old David Deans, who had turned the corner of the house, and came upon his daughters ere they were aware of his presence. The word *prelate*, or even the word *pope*, could hardly have produced so appalling an effect upon David's ear; for, of all exercises, that of dancing, which he termed a voluntary and regular fit of distraction, he deemed most destructive of serious thoughts, and the readiest inlet to all sorts of licentiousness; and he accounted the encouraging, and even permitting, assemblies or meetings, whether among those of high or low degree, for this fantastic and absurd purpose, or for that of dramatic representations, as one of the most flagrant proofs of defection and causes of wrath. The pronouncing of the word *dance* by his own daughters, and at his own door, now drove him beyond the verge of patience. "Dance!" he exclaimed. "Dance!—dance, said ye? I daur ye, limmers that ye are, to name sic a word at my door-cheek! It's a dissolute profane pastime, practised by the Israelites only at their base and brutal worship of the Golden Calf at Bethel, and by the unhappy lass wha danced aff the head of John the Baptist, upon whilk chapter I will exercise this night for your farther instruction, since ye need it sae muckle, nothing doubting that she has cause to rue the day, lang or this time, that e'er she suld hae shook a limb on sic an errand. Better for her to hae been born a cripple, and carried frae door to door, like auld Bessie Bowie, begging bawbees, than to be a king's daughter, fiddling and flinging the gate she did. I hae often wondered that ony ane that ever bent a knee for the right purpose, should ever daur to crook a hough to fyke and fling at piper's wind and fiddler's squealing. And I bless God (with that singular worthy, Peter Walker the packman at Bristo-Port),* that ordered my lot in my dancing days, so that fear of my head and throat, dread of bloody rope and swift bullet, and trenchant swords and pain of boots and thumkins, cauld and hunger, wetness and weariness, stopped the lightness of my head, and the wantonness of my feet.

* Note F. Peter Walker.

And now, if I hear ye, quean lassies, sae muckle as name dancing, or think there's sic a thing in this world as flinging to fiddler's sounds, and piper's springs, as sure as my father's spirit is with the just, ye shall be no more either charge or concern of mine! Gang in, then—gang in, then, hinnies," he added, in a softer tone, for the tears of both daughters, but especially those of Effie, began to flow very fast,—"Gang in, dears, and we'll seek grace to preserve us frae all, manner of profane folly, whilk causeth to sin, and promoteth the kingdom of darkness, warring with the kingdom of light."

The objurgation of David Deans, however well meant, was unhappily timed. It created a division of feelings in Effie's bosom, and deterred her from her intended confidence in her sister. "She wad hand me nae better than the dirt below her feet," said Effie to herself, "were I to confess I hae danced wi' him four times on the green down by, and ance at Maggie Macqueens's; and she'll maybe hing it ower my head that she'll tell my father, and then she wad be mistress and mair. But I'll no gang back there again. I'm resolved I'll no gang back. I'll lay in a leaf of my Bible,* and that's very near as if I had made an aith, that I winna gang back."

* This custom of making a mark by folding a leaf in the party's Bible, when a solemn resolution is formed, is still held to be, in some sense, an appeal to Heaven for his or her sincerity.

And she kept her vow for a week, during which she was unusually cross and fretful, blemishes which had never before been observed in her temper, except during a moment of contradiction.

There was something in all this so mysterious as considerably to alarm the prudent and affectionate Jeanie, the more so as she judged it unkind to her sister to mention to their father grounds of anxiety which might arise from her own imagination. Besides, her respect for the good old man did not prevent her from being aware that he was both hot-tempered and positive, and she sometimes suspected that he carried his dislike to youthful amusements beyond the verge that religion and reason demanded. Jeanie had sense enough to see that a sudden and severe curb upon her sister's hitherto unrestrained freedom might be rather productive of harm than good, and that Effie, in the headstrong wilfulness of youth, was likely to make what might be overstrained in her father's precepts an excuse to herself for neglecting them altogether. In the higher classes, a damsel, however giddy, is still under the dominion of etiquette, and subject to the surveillance of mammas and chaperons; but the country girl, who snatches her moment of gaiety during the intervals of labour, is under no such guardianship or restraint, and her amusement becomes so much the more hazardous. Jeanie saw all this with much distress of mind, when a circumstance occurred which appeared calculated to relieve her anxiety.

Mrs. Saddletree, with whom our readers have already been made acquainted, chanced to be a distant relation of Douce David Deans, and as she was a woman orderly in her life and conversation, and, moreover, of good substance, a sort of acquaintance was formally kept up between the families. Now, this careful dame, about a year and a half before our story commences, chanced to need, in the line of her profession, a better sort of servant, or rather shop-woman. "Mr. Saddletree," she said, "was never in the shop when he could get his nose within the Parliament House, and it was an awkward thing for a woman-body to be standing among bundles o' barked leather her lane, selling saddles and bridles; and she had cast her eyes upon her far-awa cousin Effie Deans, as just the very sort of lassie she would want to keep her in countenance on such occasions."

In this proposal there was much that pleased old David,—there was bed, board, and bountith—it was a decent situation—the lassie would be under Mrs. Saddletree's eye, who had an upright walk, and lived close by the Tolbooth Kirk, in which might still be heard the comforting doctrines of one of those few ministers of the Kirk of Scotland who had not bent the knee unto Baal, according to David's expression, or become accessory to the course of national defections,—union, toleration, patronages, and a bundle of prelatical Erastian oaths which had been imposed on the church since the Revolution, and particularly in the reign of "the late woman" (as he called Queen Anne), the last of that unhappy race of Stuarts. In the good man's security concerning the soundness of the theological doctrine which his daughter was to hear, he was nothing disturbed on account of the snares of a different kind, to which a creature so beautiful, young, and wilful, might be exposed in the centre of a populous and corrupted city. The fact is, that he thought with so much horror on all approaches to irregularities of the nature most to be dreaded in such cases, that he would as soon have suspected and guarded against Effie's being induced to become guilty of the crime of murder. He only regretted that she should live under the same roof with such a worldly-wise man as Bartoline Saddletree, whom David never suspected of being an ass as he was, but considered as one really endowed with all the legal knowledge to which he made pretension, and only liked him the worse for possessing it. The lawyers, especially those amongst them who sate as ruling elders in the General Assembly of the Kirk, had been forward in promoting the measures of patronage, of the abjuration oath, and others, which, in the opinion of David Deans, were a breaking down of the carved work of the sanctuary, and an intrusion upon the liberties of the kirk. Upon the dangers of listening to the doctrines of a legalised formalist, such as Saddletree, David gave his daughter many lectures; so much so, that he had time to touch but slightly on the dangers of chambering, company-keeping, and promiscuous dancing, to which, at her time of life, most people would have thought Effie more exposed, than to the risk of theoretical error in her religious faith.

Jeanie parted from her sister with a mixed feeling of regret, and apprehension, and hope. She could not be so confident concerning Effie's prudence as her father, for she had observed her more narrowly, had more sympathy with her feelings, and could better estimate the temptations to which she was exposed. On the other hand, Mrs. Saddletree was an observing, shrewd, notable woman, entitled to exercise over Effie the full authority of a mistress, and likely to do so strictly, yet with kindness. Her removal to Saddletree's, it was most probable, would also serve to break off some idle acquaintances, which Jeanie suspected her sister to have formed in the neighbouring suburb. Upon the whole, then, she viewed her departure from Saint Leonard's with pleasure, and it was not until the very moment of their parting for the first time in their lives, that she felt the full force of sisterly sorrow. While they repeatedly kissed each other's cheeks, and wrung each other's hands, Jeanie took that moment of affectionate sympathy, to press upon her sister the necessity of the utmost caution in her conduct while residing in Edinburgh. Effie listened, without once raising her large dark eyelashes, from which the drops fell so fast as almost to resemble a fountain. At the conclusion she sobbed again, kissed her sister, promised to recollect all the good counsel she had given her, and they parted.

During the first weeks, Effie was all that her kinswoman expected, and even more. But with time there came a relaxation of that early zeal which she manifested in Mrs. Saddletree's service. To borrow once again from the poet, who so correctly and beautifully describes living manners:—

*Something there was,—what, none presumed to say,—
Clouds lightly passing on a summer's day;
Whispers and hints, which went from ear to ear,
And mixed reports no judge on earth could clear.*

During this interval, Mrs. Saddletree was sometimes displeased by Effie's lingering when she was sent upon errands about the shop business, and sometimes by a little degree of impatience which she manifested at being rebuked on such occasions. But she good-naturedly allowed, that the first was very natural to a girl to whom everything in Edinburgh was new and the other was only the petulance of a spoiled child, when subjected to the yoke of domestic discipline for the first time. Attention and submission could not be learned at once—Holyrood was not built in a day—use would make perfect.

It seemed as if the considerate old lady had presaged truly. Ere many months had passed, Effie became almost wedded to her duties, though she no longer discharged them with the laughing cheek and light step, which had at first attracted every customer. Her mistress sometimes observed her in tears, but they were signs of secret sorrow, which she concealed as often as she saw them attract notice. Time wore on, her cheek grew pale, and her step heavy. The cause of these changes could not have escaped the matronly eye of Mrs. Saddletree, but she was chiefly confined by indisposition to her bedroom for a considerable time during the latter part of Effie's service. This interval was marked by symptoms of anguish almost amounting to despair. The utmost efforts of the poor girl to command her fits of hysterical agony were, often totally unavailing, and the mistakes which she made in the shop the while, were so numerous and so provoking that Bartoline Saddletree, who, during his wife's illness, was obliged to take closer charge of the business than consisted with his study of the weightier matters of the law, lost all patience with the girl, who, in his law Latin, and without much respect to gender, he declared ought to be cognosced by inquest of a jury, as *fatuus*, *furiosus*, and *naturaliter idiota*. Neighbours, also, and fellow-servants, remarked with malicious curiosity or degrading pity, the disfigured shape, loose dress, and pale cheeks, of the once beautiful and still interesting girl. But to no one would she grant her confidence, answering all taunts with bitter sarcasm, and all serious expostulation with sullen denial, or with floods of tears.

At length, when Mrs. Saddletree's recovery was likely to permit her wonted attention to the regulation of her household, Effie Deans, as if unwilling to face an investigation made by the authority of her mistress, asked permission of Bartoline to go home for a week or two, assigning indisposition, and the wish of trying the benefit of repose and the change of air, as the motives of her request. Sharp-eyed as a lynx (or conceiving himself to be so) in the nice sharp quillits of legal discussion, Bartoline was as dull at drawing inferences from the occurrences of common life as any Dutch professor of mathematics. He suffered Effie to depart without much suspicion, and without any inquiry.

It was afterwards found that a period of a week intervened betwixt her leaving her master's house and arriving at St. Leonard's. She made her appearance before her sister in a state rather resembling the spectre than the living substance of the gay and beautiful girl, who had left her father's cottage for the first time scarce seventeen months before. The lingering illness of her mistress had, for the last few months, given her a plea for confining herself entirely to the dusky precincts of the shop in the Lawnmarket, and Jeanie was so much occupied, during the same period, with the concerns of her father's household, that she had rarely found leisure for a walk in the city, and a brief and hurried visit to her sister. The young women, therefore, had scarcely seen each other for several months, nor had a single scandalous surmise reached the ears of the secluded inhabitants of the cottage at St. Leonard's. Jeanie, therefore, terrified to death at her sister's appearance, at first overwhelmed her with inquiries, to which the unfortunate young woman returned for a time incoherent and rambling answers, and finally fell into a hysterical fit. Rendered too certain of her sister's misfortune, Jeanie had now the dreadful alternative of communicating her ruin to her father, or of endeavouring to conceal it from him. To all questions concerning the name or rank of her seducer, and the fate of the being to whom her fall had given birth, Effie remained as mute as the grave, to which she seemed hastening; and indeed the least allusion to either seemed to drive her to distraction. Her sister, in distress and in despair, was about to repair to Mrs. Saddletree to consult her experience, and at the same time to obtain what lights she could upon this most unhappy affair, when she was saved that trouble by a new stroke of fate, which seemed to carry misfortune to the uttermost.

David Deans had been alarmed at the state of health in which his daughter had returned to her paternal residence; but Jeanie had contrived to divert him from particular and specific inquiry. It was therefore like a clap of thunder to the poor old man, when, just as the hour of noon had brought the visit of the Laird of Dumbiedikes as usual, other and sterner, as well as most unexpected guests, arrived at the cottage of St. Leonard's. These were the officers of justice, with a warrant of justiciary to search for and apprehend Euphemia, or Effie Deans, accused of the crime of child-murder. The stunning weight of a blow so totally unexpected bore down the old man, who had in his early youth resisted the brow of military and civil tyranny, though backed with swords and guns, tortures and gibbets. He fell extended and senseless upon his own hearth; and the men, happy to escape from the scene of his awakening, raised, with rude humanity, the object of their warrant from her bed, and placed her in a coach, which they had brought with them. The hasty remedies which Jeanie had applied to bring back her father's senses were scarce begun to operate, when the noise of the wheels in motion recalled her attention to her miserable sister. To run shrieking after the carriage was the first vain effort of her distraction, but she was stopped by one or two female neighbours, assembled by the extraordinary appearance of a coach in that sequestered place, who almost forced her back to her father's house. The deep and sympathetic affliction of these poor people, by whom the little family at St. Leonard's were held in high regard, filled the house with lamentation. Even Dumbiedikes was moved from his wonted apathy, and, groping for his purse as he spoke, ejaculated, "Jeanie, woman!—Jeanie, woman! dinna greet—it's sad wark, but siller will help it;" and he drew out his purse as he spoke.

The old man had now raised himself from the ground, and, looking about him as if he missed something, seemed gradually to recover the sense of his wretchedness. "Where," he said, with a voice that made the roof ring, "where is the vile harlot, that has disgraced the blood of an honest man?—Where is she, that has no place among us, but has come foul with her sins, like the Evil One, among the children of God?—Where is she, Jeanie?—Bring her before me, that I may kill her with a word and a look!"

All hastened around him with their appropriate sources of consolation—the Laird with his purse, Jeanie with burnt feathers and strong waters, and the women with their exhortations. "O neighbour—O Mr. Deans, it's a sair trial, doubtless—but think of the Rock of Ages, neighbour—think of the promise!"

"And I do think of it, neighbours—and I bless God that I can think of it, even in the wrack and ruin of a' that's nearest and dearest to me—But to be the father of a castaway—a profligate—a bloody Zipporah—a mere murderess!—O, how will the wicked exult in the high places of their wickedness!—the prelatists, and the latitudinarians, and the hand-waied murderers, whose hands are hard as horn wi' handling the slaughter-weapons—they will push out the lip, and say that we are even such as themselves. Sair, sair I am grieved, neighbours, for the poor castaway—for the child of mine old age—but sairer for the stumbling-block and scandal it will be to all tender and honest souls!"

"Davie—winna siller do't?" insinuated the laird, still proffering his green purse, which was full of guineas.

"I tell ye, Dumbiedikes," said Deans, "that if telling down my haill substance could hae saved her frae this black snare, I wad hae walked out wi' naething but my bonnet and my staff to beg an awmous for God's sake, and ca'd mysell an happy man—But if a dollar, or a plack, or the nineteenth part of a boddle, wad save her open guilt and open shame frae open punishment, that purchase wad David Deans never make!—Na, na; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, life for life, blood for blood—it's the law of man, and it's the law of God.—Leave me, sirs—leave me—I maun warstle wi' this trial in privacy and on my knees."

Jeanie, now in some degree restored to the power of thought, joined in the same request. The next day found the father and daughter still in the depth of affliction, but the father sternly supporting his load of ill through a proud sense of religious duty, and the daughter anxiously suppressing her own feelings to avoid again awakening his. Thus was it with the afflicted family until the morning after Porteous's death, a period at which we are now arrived.

CHAPTER TENTH.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

*The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—Oh!—and is all forgot?
Midsummer Night's Dream.*

We have been a long while in conducting Butler to the door of the cottage at St. Leonard's; yet the space which we have occupied in the preceding narrative does not exceed in length that which he actually spent on Salisbury Crags on the morning which succeeded the execution done upon Porteous by the rioters. For this delay he had his own motives. He wished to collect his thoughts, strangely agitated as they were, first by the melancholy news of Effie Deans's situation, and afterwards by the frightful scene which he had witnessed. In the situation also in which he stood with respect to Jeanie and her father, some ceremony, at least some choice of fitting time and season, was necessary to wait upon them. Eight in the morning was then the ordinary hour for breakfast, and he resolved that it should arrive before he made his appearance in their cottage.

Never did hours pass so heavily. Butler shifted his place and enlarged his circle to while away the time, and heard the huge bell of St. Giles's toll each successive hour in swelling tones, which were instantly attested by those of the other steeples in succession. He had heard seven struck in this manner, when he began to think he might venture to approach nearer to St. Leonard's, from which he was still a mile distant. Accordingly he descended from his lofty station as low as the bottom of the valley, which divides Salisbury Crags from those small rocks which take their name from Saint Leonard. It is, as many of my readers may know, a deep, wild, grassy valley, scattered with huge rocks and fragments which have descended from the cliffs and steep ascent to the east.

This sequestered dell, as well as other places of the open pasturage of the King's Park, was, about this time, often the resort of the gallants of the time who had affairs of honour to discuss with the sword. Duels were then very common in Scotland, for the gentry were at once idle, haughty, fierce, divided by faction, and addicted to intemperance, so that there lacked neither provocation, nor inclination to resent it when given; and the sword, which was part of every gentleman's dress, was the only weapon used for the decision of such differences. When, therefore, Butler observed a young man, skulking, apparently to avoid observation, among the scattered rocks at some distance from the footpath, he was naturally led to suppose that he had sought this lonely spot upon that evil errand. He was so strongly impressed with this, that, notwithstanding his own distress of mind, he could not, according to his sense of duty as a clergyman, pass this person without speaking to him. There are times, thought he to himself, when the slightest interference may avert a great calamity—when a word spoken in season may do more for prevention than the eloquence of Tully could do for remedying evil—And for my own griefs, be they as they may, I shall feel them the lighter, if they divert me not from the prosecution of my duty.

Thus thinking and feeling, he quitted the ordinary path, and advanced nearer the object he had noticed. The man at first directed his course towards the hill, in order, as it appeared, to avoid him; but when he saw that Butler seemed disposed to follow him, he adjusted his hat fiercely, turned round, and came forward, as if to meet and defy scrutiny.

Butler had an opportunity of accurately studying his features as they advanced slowly to meet each other. The stranger seemed about twenty-five years old. His dress was of a kind which could hardly be said to indicate his rank with certainty, for it was such as young gentlemen sometimes wore while on active exercise in the morning, and which, therefore, was imitated by those of the inferior ranks, as young clerks and tradesmen, because its cheapness rendered it attainable, while it approached more nearly to the apparel of youths of fashion than any other which the manners of the times permitted them to wear. If his air and manner could be trusted, however, this person seemed rather to be dressed under than above his rank; for his carriage was bold and somewhat supercilious, his step easy and free, his manner daring and unconstrained. His stature was of the middle size, or rather above it, his limbs well-proportioned, yet not so strong as to infer the reproach of clumsiness. His features were uncommonly handsome, and all about him would have been interesting and prepossessing but for that indescribable expression which habitual dissipation gives to the countenance, joined with a certain audacity in look and manner, of that kind which is often assumed as a mask for confusion and apprehension.

Butler and the stranger met—surveyed each other—when, as the latter, slightly touching his hat, was about to pass by him, Butler, while he returned the salutation, observed, "A fine morning, sir—You are on the hill early."

"I have business here," said the young man, in a tone meant to repress farther inquiry.

"I do not doubt it, sir," said Butler. "I trust you will forgive my hoping that it is of a lawful kind?"

"Sir," said the other, with marked surprise, "I never forgive impertinence, nor can I conceive what title you have to hope anything about what no way concerns you."

"I am a soldier, sir," said Butler, "and have a charge to arrest evil-doers in the name of my Master."

"A soldier!" said the young man, stepping back, and fiercely laying his hand on his sword—"A soldier, and arrest me! Did you reckon what your life was worth, before you took the commission upon you?"

"You mistake me, sir," said Butler, gravely; "neither my warfare nor my warrant are of this world. I am a preacher of the gospel, and have power, in my Master's name, to command the peace upon earth and good-will towards men, which was proclaimed with the gospel."

"A minister!" said the stranger, carelessly, and with an expression approaching to scorn. "I know the gentlemen of your cloth in Scotland claim a strange right of intermeddling with men's private affairs. But I have been abroad, and know better than to be priest-ridden."

"Sir, if it be true that any of my cloth, or, it might be more decently said, of my calling, interfere with men's private affairs, for the gratification either of idle curiosity, or for worse motives, you cannot have learned a better lesson abroad than to condemn such practices. But in my Master's work, I am called to be busy in season and out of season; and, conscious as I am of a pure motive, it were better for me to incur your contempt for speaking, than the correction of my own conscience for being silent."

"In the name of the devil!" said the young man impatiently, "say what you have to say, then; though whom you take me for, or what earthly concern you have with me, a stranger to you, or with my actions and motives, of which you can know nothing, I cannot conjecture for an instant."

"You are about," said Butler, "to violate one of your country's wisest laws—you are about, which is much more dreadful, to violate a law, which God himself has implanted within our nature, and written as it were, in the table of our hearts, to which every thrill of our nerves is responsive."

"And what is the law you speak of?" said the stranger, in a hollow and somewhat disturbed accent.

"Thou shalt do no murder," said Butler, with a deep and solemn voice.

The young man visibly started, and looked considerably appalled. Butler perceived he had made a favourable impression, and resolved to follow it up. "Think," he said, "young man," laying his hand kindly upon the stranger's shoulder, "what an awful alternative you voluntarily choose for yourself, to kill or be killed. Think what it is to rush uncalled into the presence of an offended Deity, your heart fermenting with evil passions, your hand hot from the steel you had been urging, with your best skill and malice, against the breast of a fellow-creature. Or, suppose yourself the scarce less wretched survivor, with the guilt of Cain, the first murderer, in your heart, with the stamp upon your brow—that stamp which struck all who gazed on him with unutterable horror, and by which the murderer is made manifest to all who look upon him. Think—"

The stranger gradually withdrew himself from under the hand of his monitor; and, pulling his hat over his brows, thus interrupted him. "Your meaning, sir, I dare say, is excellent, but you are throwing your advice away. I am not in this place with violent intentions against any one. I may be bad enough—you priests say all men are so—but I am here for the purpose of saving life, not of taking it away. If you wish to spend your time rather in doing a good action than in talking about you know not what, I will give you an opportunity. Do you see yonder crag to the right, over which appears the chimney of a lone house? Go thither, inquire for one Jeanie Deans, the daughter of the goodman; let her know that he she wots of remained here from daybreak till this hour, expecting to see her, and that he can abide no longer. Tell her, she *must* meet me at the Hunter's Bog to-night, as the moon rises behind St. Anthony's Hill, or that she will make a desperate man of me."

"Who or what are you," replied Butler, exceedingly and most unpleasantly surprised, "who charge me with such an errand?"

"I am the devil!"—answered the young man hastily.

Butler stepped instinctively back, and commanded himself internally to Heaven; for, though a wise and strong-minded man, he was neither wiser nor more strong-minded than those of his age and education, with whom, to disbelieve witchcraft or spectres, was held an undeniable proof of atheism.

The stranger went on without observing his emotion. "Yes! call me Apollyon, Abaddon, whatever name you shall choose, as a clergyman acquainted with the upper and lower circles of spiritual denomination, to call me by, you shall not find an appellation more odious to him that bears it, than is mine own."

This sentence was spoken with the bitterness of self-upbraiding, and a contortion of visage absolutely demoniacal. Butler, though a man brave by principle, if not by constitution, was overawed; for intensity of mental distress has in it a sort of sublimity which repels and overawes all men, but especially those of kind and sympathetic dispositions. The stranger turned abruptly from Butler as he spoke, but instantly returned, and, coming up to him closely and boldly, said, in a fierce, determined tone, "I have told you who and what I am—who and what are you? What is your name?"

"Butler," answered the person to whom this abrupt question was addressed, surprised into answering it by the sudden and fierce manner of the querist—"Reuben Butler, a preacher of the gospel."

At this answer, the stranger again plucked more deep over his brows the hat which he had thrown back in his former agitation. "Butler!" he repeated—"the assistant of the schoolmaster at Liberton?"

"The same," answered Butler composedly.

The stranger covered his face with his hand, as if on sudden reflection, and then turned away, but stopped when he had walked a few paces; and seeing Butler follow him with his eyes, called out in a stern yet suppressed tone, just as if he had exactly calculated that his accents should not be heard a yard beyond the spot on which Butler stood. "Go your way, and do mine errand. Do not look after me. I will neither descend through the bowels of these rocks, nor vanish in a flash of fire; and yet the eye that seeks to trace my motions shall have reason to curse it was ever shrouded by eyelid or eyelash. Begone, and look not behind you. Tell Jeanie Deans, that when the moon rises I shall expect to meet her at Nicol Muschat's Cairn, beneath Saint Anthony's Chapel."

As he uttered these words, he turned and took the road against the hill, with a haste that seemed as peremptory as his tone of authority.

Dreading he knew not what of additional misery to a lot which seemed little capable of receiving augmentation, and desperate at the idea that any living man should dare to send so extraordinary a request, couched in terms so imperious, to the half-betrothed object of his early and only affection, Butler strode hastily towards the cottage, in order to ascertain how far this daring and rude gallant was actually entitled to press on Jeanie Deans a request, which no prudent, and scarce any modest young woman, was likely to comply with.

Butler was by nature neither jealous nor superstitious; yet the feelings which lead to those moods of the mind were rooted in his heart, as a portion derived from the common stock of humanity. It was maddening to think that a profligate gallant, such as the manner and tone of the stranger evinced him to be, should have it in his power to command forth his future bride and plighted true love, at a place so improper, and an hour so unseasonable. Yet the tone in which the stranger spoke had nothing of the soft half-breathed voice proper to the seducer who solicits an assignation; it was bold, fierce, and imperative, and had less of love in it than of menace and intimidation.

The suggestions of superstition seemed more plausible, had Butler's mind been very accessible to them. Was this indeed the Roaring Lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour? This was a question which pressed itself on Butler's mind with an earnestness that cannot be conceived by those who live in the present day. The fiery eye, the abrupt demeanour, the occasionally harsh, yet studiously subdued tone of voice,—the features, handsome, but now clouded with pride, now disturbed by suspicion, now inflamed with passion—those dark hazel eyes which he sometimes shaded with his cap, as if he were averse to have them seen while they were occupied with keenly observing the motions and bearing of others—those eyes that were now turbid with melancholy, now gleaming with scorn, and now sparkling with fury—was it the passions of a mere mortal they expressed, or the emotions of a fiend, who seeks, and seeks in vain, to conceal his fiendish designs under the borrowed mask of manly beauty? The whole partook of the mien, language, and port of the ruined archangel; and, imperfectly as we have been able to describe it, the effect of the interview upon Butler's nerves, shaken as they were at the time by the horrors of the preceding night, were greater than his understanding warranted, or his pride cared to submit to. The very place where he had met this singular person was desecrated, as it were, and unhallowed, owing to many violent deaths, both in duels and by suicide, which had in former times taken place there; and the place which he had named as a rendezvous at so late an hour, was held in general to be accursed, from a frightful and cruel murder which had been there committed by the wretch from whom the place took its name, upon the person of his own wife.*

* Note G. Muschat's Cairn.

It was in such places, according to the belief of that period (when the laws against witchcraft were still in fresh observance, and had even lately been acted upon), that evil spirits had power to make themselves visible to human eyes, and to practise upon the feelings and senses of mankind. Suspicions, founded on such circumstances, rushed on Butler's mind, unprepared as it was by any previous course of reasoning, to deny that which all of his time, country, and profession believed; but common sense rejected these vain ideas as inconsistent, if not with possibility, at least with the general rules by which the universe is governed,—a deviation from which, as Butler well argued with himself, ought not to be admitted as probable, upon any but the plainest and most incontrovertible evidence. An earthly lover, however, or a young man, who, from whatever cause, had the right of exercising such summary and unceremonious authority over the object of his long-settled, and apparently sincerely returned affection, was an object scarce less appalling to his mind, than those which superstition suggested.

His limbs exhausted with fatigue, his mind harassed with anxiety, and with painful doubts and recollections, Butler dragged himself up the ascent from the valley to St. Leonard's Crag, and presented himself at the door of Deans's habitation, with feelings much akin to the miserable reflections and fears of its inhabitants.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

Then she stretched out her lily hand,

And for to do her best;

"Hae back thy faith and troth, Willie,

God gie thy soul good rest!"

Old Ballad.

"Come in," answered the low and sweet-toned voice he loved best to hear, as Butler tapped at the door of the cottage. He lifted the latch, and found himself under the roof of affliction. Jeanie was unable to trust herself with more than one glance towards her lover, whom she now met under circumstances so agonising to her feelings, and at the same time so humbling to her honest pride. It is well known, that much, both of what is good and bad in the Scottish national character, arises out of the intimacy of their family connections. "To be come of honest folk," that is, of people who have borne a fair and unstained reputation, is an advantage as highly prized among the lower Scotch, as the emphatic counterpart, "to be of a good family," is valued among their gentry. The worth and respectability of one member of a peasant's family is always accounted by themselves and others, not only a matter of honest pride, but a guarantee for the good conduct of the whole. On the contrary, such a melancholy stain as was now flung on one of the children of Deans, extended its disgrace to all connected with him, and Jeanie felt herself lowered at once, in her own eyes, and in those of her lover. It was in vain that she repressed this feeling, as far subordinate and too selfish to be mingled with her sorrow for her sister's calamity. Nature prevailed; and while she shed tears for her sister's distress and danger, there mingled with them bitter drops of grief for her own degradation.

As Butler entered, the old man was seated by the fire with his well-worn pocket Bible in his hands, the companion of the wanderings and dangers of his youth, and bequeathed to him on the scaffold by one of those, who, in the year 1686, sealed their enthusiastic principles with their blood. The sun sent its rays through a small window at the old man's back, and, "shining mottly through the reek," to use the expression of a bard of that time and country, illumined the grey hairs of the old man, and the sacred page which he studied. His features, far from handsome, and rather harsh and severe, had yet from their expression of habitual gravity, and contempt for earthly things, an expression of stoical dignity amidst their sternness. He boasted, in no small degree, the attributes which Southey ascribes to the ancient Scandinavians, whom he terms "firm to inflict, and stubborn to endure." The whole formed a picture, of which the lights might have been given by Rembrandt, but the outline would have required the force and vigour of Michael Angelo.

Deans lifted his eye as Butler entered, and instantly withdrew it, as from an object which gave him at once surprise and sudden pain. He had assumed such high ground with this carnal-witted scholar, as he had in his pride termed Butler, that to meet him, of all men, under feelings of humiliation, aggravated his misfortune, and was a consummation like that of the dying chief in the old ballad—"Earl Percy sees my fall!"

Deans raised the Bible with his left hand, so as partly to screen his face, and putting back his right as far as he could, held it towards Butler in that position, at the same time turning his body from, him, as if to prevent his seeing the working of his countenance. Butler clasped the extended hand which had supported his orphan infancy, wept over it, and in vain endeavoured to say more than the words—"God comfort you—God comfort you!"

"He will—he doth, my friend," said Deans, assuming firmness as he discovered the agitation of his guest; "he doth now, and he will yet more in his own gude time. I have been ower proud of my sufferings in a gude cause, Reuben, and now I am to be tried with those whilk will turn my pride and glory into a reproach and a hissing. How muckle better I hae thought mysell than them that lay saft, fed sweet, and drank deep, when I was in the moss-haggs and moors, wi' precious Donald Cameron, and worthy Mr. Blackadder, called Guess-again; and how proud I was o' being made a spectacle to men and angels, having stood on their pillory at the Canongate afore I was fifteen years old, for the cause of a National Covenant! To think, Reuben, that I, wha hae been sae honoured and exalted in my youth, nay, when I was but a hafflins callant, and that hae borne testimony again the defections o' the times yearly, monthly, daily, hourly, minutely, striving and testifying with uplifted hand and voice, crying aloud, and sparing not, against all great national snares, as the nation-wasting and church-sinking abomination of union, toleration, and patronage, imposed by the last woman of that unhappy race of Stuarts; also against the infringements and invasions of the just powers of eldership, whereanent, I uttered my paper, called a 'Cry of an Howl in the Desert,' printed at the Bow-head, and sold by all flying stationers in town and country—and now—"

Here he paused. It may well be supposed that Butler, though not absolutely coinciding in all the good old man's ideas about church government, had too much consideration and humanity to interrupt him, while he reckoned up with conscious pride his sufferings, and the constancy of his testimony. On the contrary, when he paused under the influence of the bitter recollections of the moment, Butler instantly threw in his mite of encouragement.

"You have been well known, my old and revered friend, a true and tried follower of the Cross; one who, as Saint Jerome hath it, '*per infamiam et bonam famam grassari ad immortalitatem*,' which may be freely rendered, 'who rusheth on to immortal life, through bad report and good report.' You have been one of those to whom the tender and fearful souls cry during the midnight solitude—"Watchman, what of the night?"—Watchman, what of the night?"—And, assuredly, this heavy dispensation, as it comes not without divine permission, so it comes not without its special commission and use."

"I do receive it as such," said poor Deans, returning the grasp of Butler's hand; "and if I have not been taught to read the Scripture in any other tongue but my native Scottish" (even in his distress Butler's Latin quotation had not escaped his notice), "I have nevertheless so learned them, that I trust to bear even this crook in my lot with submission. But, oh! Reuben Butler, the kirk, of whilk, though unworthy, I have yet been thought a polished shaft, and meet to be a pillar, holding, from my youth upward, the place of ruling elder—what will the lightsome and profane think of the guide that cannot keep his own family from stumbling? How will they take up their song and their reproach, when they see that the children of professors are liable to as foul backsliding as the offspring of Belial! But I will bear my cross with the comfort, that whatever showed like goodness in me or mine, was but like the light that shines frae creeping insects, on the brae-side, in a dark night—it kythes bright to the ee, because all is dark around it; but when the morn comes on the mountains, it is, but a puir crawling kail-worm after a'. And sae it shows, wi' ony rag of human righteousness, or formal law-work, that we may pit round us to cover our shame."

As he pronounced these words, the door again opened, and Mr. Bartoline Saddletree entered, his three-pointed hat set far back on his head, with a silk handkerchief beneath it to keep it in that cool position, his gold-headed cane in his hand, and his whole deportment that of a wealthy burgher, who might one day look to have a share in the magistracy, if not actually to hold the curule chair itself.

Rochefoucault, who has torn the veil from so many foul gangrenes of the human heart, says, we find something not altogether unpleasant to us in the misfortunes of our best friends. Mr. Saddletree would have been very angry had any one told him that he felt pleasure in the disaster of poor Effie Deans, and the disgrace of her family; and yet there is great question whether the gratification of playing the person of importance, inquiring, investigating, and laying down the law on the whole affair, did not offer, to say the least, full consolation for the pain which pure sympathy gave him on account of his wife's kinswoman. He had now got a piece of real judicial business by the end, instead of being obliged, as was his common case, to intrude his opinion where it was neither wished nor wanted; and felt as happy in the exchange as a boy when he gets his first new watch, which actually goes when wound up, and has real hands and a true dial-plate. But besides this subject for legal disquisition, Bartoline's brains were also overloaded with the affair of Porteous, his violent death, and all its probable consequences to the city and community. It was what the French call *l'embarras des richesses*, the confusion arising from too much mental wealth. He walked in with a consciousness of double importance, full fraught with the superiority of one who possesses more information than the company into which he enters, and who feels a right to discharge his learning on them without mercy. "Good morning, Mr. Deans,—good-morrow to you, Mr. Butler,—I was not aware that you were acquainted with Mr. Deans."

Butler made some slight answer; his reasons may be readily imagined for not making his connection with the family, which, in his eyes, had something of tender mystery, a frequent subject of conversation with indifferent persons, such as Saddletree.

The worthy burgher, in the plenitude of self-importance, now sate down upon a chair, wiped his brow, collected his breath, and made the first experiment of the resolved pith of his lungs, in a deep and dignified sigh, resembling a groan in sound and intonation—"Awfu' times these, neighbour Deans, awfu' times!"

"Sinfu', shamefu', heaven-daring times!" answered Deans, in a lower and more subdued tone.

"For my part," continued Saddletree, swelling with importance, "what between the distress of my friends, and my poor auld country, ony wit that ever I had may be said to have abandoned me, sae that I sometimes think myself as ignorant as if I were *inter rusticos*. Here when I arise in the morning, wi' my mind just arranged touching what's to be done in puir Effie's misfortune, and hae gotten the hail statute at my finger-ends, the mob maun get up and string Jock Porteous to a dyester's beam, and ding a' thing out of my head again."

Deeply as he was distressed with his own domestic calamity, Deans could not help expressing some interest in the news. Saddletree immediately entered on details of the insurrection and its consequences, while Butler took the occasion to seek some private conversation with Jeanie Deans. She gave him the opportunity he sought, by leaving the room, as if in prosecution of some part of her morning labour. Butler followed her in a few minutes, leaving Deans so closely engaged by his busy visitor, that there was little chance of his observing their absence.

The scene of their interview was an outer apartment, where Jeanie was used to busy herself in arranging the productions of her dairy. When Butler found an opportunity of stealing after her into this place, he found her silent, dejected, and ready to burst into tears. Instead of the active industry with which she had been accustomed, even while in the act of speaking, to employ her hands in some useful branch of household business, she was seated listless in a corner, sinking apparently under the weight of her own thoughts. Yet the instant he entered, she dried her eyes, and, with the simplicity and openness of her character, immediately entered on conversation.

"I am glad you have come in, Mr. Butler," said she, "for—for—for I wished to tell ye, that all maun be ended between you and me—it's best for baith our sakes."

"Ended!" said Butler, in surprise; "and for what should it be ended?—I grant this is a heavy dispensation, but it lies neither at your door nor mine—it's an evil of God's sending, and it must be borne; but it cannot break plighted troth, Jeanie, while they that plighted their word wish to keep it."

"But, Reuben," said the young woman, looking at him affectionately, "I ken weel that ye think mair of me than yourself; and, Reuben, I can only in requital think mair of your weal than of my ain. Ye are a man of spotless name, bred to God's ministry, and a' men say that ye will some day rise high in the kirk, though poverty keep ye doun e'en now. Poverty is a bad back-friend, Reuben, and that ye ken ower weel; but ill-fame is a waur ane, and that is a truth ye sall never learn through my means."

"What do you mean?" said Butler, eagerly and impatiently; "or how do you connect your sister's guilt, if guilt there be, which, I trust in God, may yet be disproved, with our engagement?—how can that affect you or me?"

"How can you ask me that, Mr. Butler? Will this stain, d'ye think, ever be forgotten, as lang as our heads are abune the grund? Will it not stick to us, and to our bairns, and to their very bairns' bairns? To hae been the child of an honest man, might hae been saying something for me and mine; but to be the sister of a—O my God!"—With this exclamation her resolution failed, and she burst into a passionate fit of tears.

The lover used every effort to induce her to compose herself, and at length succeeded; but she only resumed her composure to express herself with the same positiveness as before. "No, Reuben, I'll bring disgrace hame to nae man's hearth; my ain distresses I can bear, and I maun bear, but there is nae occasion for buckling them on other folk's shouthers. I will bear my load alone—the back is made for the burden."

A lover is by charter wayward and suspicious; and Jeanie's readiness to renounce their engagement, under pretence of zeal for his peace of mind and respectability of character, seemed to poor Butler to form a portentous combination with the commission of the stranger he had met with that morning. His voice faltered as he asked, "whether nothing but a sense of her sister's present distress occasioned her to talk in that manner?"

"And what else can do sae?" she replied with simplicity. "Is it not ten long years since we spoke together in this way?"

"Ten years!" said Butler. "It's a long time—sufficient perhaps for a woman to weary—"

"To weary of her auld gown," said Jeanie, "and to wish for a new ane if she likes to be brave, but not long enough to weary of a friend—The eye may wish change, but the heart never."

"Never!" said Reuben,—"that's a bold promise."

"But not more bauld than true," said Jeanie, with the same quiet simplicity which attended her manner in joy and grief in ordinary affairs, and in those which most interested her feelings.

Butler paused, and looking at her fixedly—"I am charged," he said, "with a message to you, Jeanie."

"Indeed! From whom? Or what can ony ane have to say to me?"

"It is from a stranger," said Butler, affecting to speak with an indifference which his voice belied—"A young man whom I met this morning in the Park."

"Mercy!" said Jeanie, eagerly; "and what did he say?"

"That he did not see you at the hour he expected, but required you should meet him alone at Muschat's Cairn this night, so soon as the moon rises."

"Tell him," said Jeanie, hastily, "I shall certainly come."

"May I ask," said Butler, his suspicions increasing at the ready alacrity of the answer, "who this man is to whom you are so willing to give the meeting at a place and hour so uncommon?"

"Folk maun do muckle they have little will to do, in this world," replied Jeanie.

"Granted," said her lover; "but what compels you to this?—who is this person? What I saw of him was not very favourable—who, or what is he?"

"I do not know," replied Jeanie, composedly.

"You do not know!" said Butler, stepping impatiently through the apartment—"You purpose to meet a young man whom you do not know, at such a time, and in a place so lonely—you say you are compelled to do this—and yet you say you do not know the person who exercises such an influence over you!—Jeanie, what am I to think of this?"

"Think only, Reuben, that I speak truth, as if I were to answer at the last day.—I do not ken this man—I do not even ken that I ever saw him; and yet I must give him the meeting he asks—there's life and death upon it."

"Will you not tell your father, or take him with you?" said Butler.

"I cannot," said Jeanie; "I have no permission."

"Will you let *me* go with you? I will wait in the Park till nightfall, and join you when you set out."

"It is impossible," said Jeanie; "there maunna be mortal creature within hearing of our conference."

"Have you considered well the nature of what you are going to do?—the time—the place—an unknown and suspicious character?—Why, if he had asked to see you in this house, your father sitting in the next room, and within call, at such an hour, you should have refused to see him."

"My weird maun be fulfilled, Mr. Butler; my life and my safety are in God's hands, but I'll not spare to risk either of them on the errand I am gaun to do."

"Then, Jeanie," said Butler, much displeased, "we must indeed break short off, and bid farewell. When there can be no confidence betwixt a man and his plighted wife on such a momentous topic, it is a sign that she has no longer the regard for him that makes their engagement safe and suitable."

Jeanie looked at him and sighed. "I thought," she said, "that I had brought myself to bear this parting—but—but—I did not ken that we were to part in unkindness. But I am a woman and you are a man—it may be different wi' you—if your mind is made easier by thinking sae hardly of me, I would not ask you to think otherwise."

"You are," said Butler, "what you have always been—wiser, better, and less selfish in your native feelings, than I can be, with all the helps philosophy can give to a Christian—But why—why will you persevere in an undertaking so desperate? Why will you not let me be your assistant—your protector, or at least your adviser?"

"Just because I cannot, and I dare not," answered Jeanie.—"But hark, what's that? Surely my father is no weel?"

In fact, the voices in the next room became obstreperously loud of a sudden, the cause of which vociferation it is necessary to explain before we go farther.

When Jeanie and Butler retired, Mr. Saddletree entered upon the business which chiefly interested the family. In the commencement of their conversation he found old Deans, who in his usual state of mind, was no granter of propositions, so much subdued by a deep sense of his daughter's danger and disgrace, that he heard without replying to, or perhaps without understanding, one or two learned disquisitions on the nature of the crime imputed to her charge, and on the steps which ought to be taken in consequence. His only answer at each pause was, "I am no misdoubting that you wuss us weel—your wife's our far-awa cousin."

Encouraged by these symptoms of acquiescence, Saddletree, who, as an amateur of the law, had a supreme deference for all constituted authorities, again recurred to his other topic of interest, the murder, namely, of Porteous, and pronounced a severe censure on the parties concerned.

"These are kittle times—kittle times, Mr. Deans, when the people take the power of life and death out of the hands of the rightful magistrate into their ain rough grip. I am of opinion, and so I believe will Mr. Crossmyloof and the Privy Council, that this rising in effeir of war, to take away the life of a reprieved man, will prove little better than perduellion."

"If I hadna that on my mind whilk is ill to bear, Mr. Saddletree," said Deans, "I wad make bold to dispute that point wi' you."

"How could you dispute what's plain law, man?" said Saddletree, somewhat contemptuously; "there's no a callant that e'er carried a pock wi' a process in't, but will tell you that perduellion is the warst and maist virulent kind of treason, being an open convocating of the king's lieges against his authority (mair especially in arms, and by touk of drum, to baith whilk accessories my een and lugs bore witness), and muckle worse than lese-majesty, or the concealment of a treasonable purpose—It winna bear a dispute, neighbour."

"But it will, though," retorted Douce Davie Deans; "I tell ye it will bear a disputer never like your cauld, legal, formal doctrines, neighbour Saddletree. I haud unco little by the Parliament House, since the awfu' downfall of the hopes of honest folk that followed the Revolution."

"But what wad ye hae had, Mr. Deans?" said Saddletree, impatiently; "didna ye get baith liberty and conscience made fast, and settled by tailzie on you and your heirs for ever?"

"Mr. Saddletree," retorted Deans, "I ken ye are one of those that are wise after the manner of this world, and that ye hand your part, and cast in your portion, wi' the lang heads and lang gowns, and keep with the smart witty-pated lawyers of this our land—Weary on the dark and dolefu' cast that they hae gien this unhappy kingdom, when their black hands of defection were clasped in the red hands of our sworn murderers: when those who had numbered the towers of our Zion, and marked the bulwarks of Reformation, saw their hope turn into a snare, and their rejoicing into weeping."

"I canna understand this, neighbour," answered Saddletree. "I am an honest Presbyterian of the Kirk of Scotland, and stand by her and the General Assembly, and the due administration of justice by the fifteen Lords o' Session and the five Lords o' Justiciary."

"Out upon ye, Mr. Saddletree!" exclaimed David, who, in an opportunity of giving his testimony on the offences and backslidings of the land, forgot for a moment his own domestic calamity—"out upon your General Assembly, and the back of my hand to your Court o' Session!—What is the tane but a waefu' bunch o' cauldrie professors and ministers, that sate bien and warm when the persecuted remnant were warstling wi' hunger, and cauld, and fear of death, and danger of fire and sword upon wet brae-sides, peat-haggs, and flow-mosses, and that now creep out of their holes, like bluebottle flees in a blink of sunshine, to take the pu'pits and places of better folk—of them that witnessed, and testified, and fought, and endured pit, prison-house, and transportation beyond seas?—A bonny bike there's o' them!—And for your Court o' Session—"

"Ye may say what ye will o' the General Assembly," said Saddletree, interrupting him, "and let them clear them that kens them; but as for the Lords o' Session, forby that they are my next-door neighbours, I would have ye ken, for your ain regulation, that to raise scandal anent them, whilk is termed to *murmur* again them, is a crime *sui generis*,—*sui generis*, Mr. Deans—ken ye what that amounts to?"

"I ken little o' the language of Antichrist," said Deans; "and I care less than little what carnal courts may call the speeches of honest men. And as to murmur again them, it's what a' the folk that loses their pleas, and nine-tenths o' them that win them, will be gey sure to be guilty in. Sae I wad hae ye ken that I hand a' your gleg-tongued advocates, that sell their knowledge for pieces of silver—and your worldly-wise judges, that will gie three days of hearing in presence to a debate about the peeling of an ingan, and no ae half-hour to the gospel testimony—as legalists and formalists, countenancing by sentences, and quirks, and cunning terms of law, the late begun courses of national defections—union, toleration, patronages, and Yerastian prelatie oaths. As for the soul and body-killing Court o' Justiciary—"

The habit of considering his life as dedicated to bear testimony in behalf of what he deemed the suffering and deserted cause of true religion, had swept honest David along with it thus far; but with the mention of the criminal court, the recollection of the disastrous condition of his daughter rushed at once on his mind; he stopped short in the midst of his triumphant declamation, pressed his hands against his forehead, and remained silent.

Saddletree was somewhat moved, but apparently not so much so as to induce him to relinquish the privilege of prosing in his turn afforded him by David's sudden silence. "Nae doubt, neighbour," he said, "it's a sair thing to hae to do wi' courts of law, unless it be to improve ane's knowledge and pratique, by waiting on as a hearer; and touching this unhappy affair of Effie—ye'll hae seen the dittay, doubtless?" He dragged out of his pocket a bundle of papers, and began to turn them over. "This is no it—this is the information of Mungo Marsport, of that ilk, against Captain Lackland, for coming on his lands of Marsport with hawks, hounds, lying-dogs, nets, guns, cross-bows, hagbuts of found, or other engines more or less for destruction of game, sic as red-deer, fallow-deer, cappercaillies, grey-fowl, moor-fowl, patricks, herons, and sic like; he, the said defender not being ane qualified person, in terms of the statute sixteen hundred and twenty-ane; that is, not having ane plough-gate of land. Now, the defences proponed say, that *non constat* at this present what is a plough-gate of land, whilk uncertainty is sufficient to elide the conclusions of the libel. But then the answers to the defences (they are signed by Mr. Crossmyloof, but Mr. Younglad drew them), they propone, that it signifies naething, *in hoc statu*, what or how muckle a plough-gate of land may be, in respect the defender has nae lands whatsoever, less or mair. 'Sae grant a plough-gate' (here Saddletree read from the paper in his hand) "'to be less than the nineteenth part of a guse's grass'—(I trow Mr. Crossmyloof put in that—I ken his style),—'of a guse's grass, what the better will the defender be, seeing he hasna a divot-cast of land in Scotland?—*Advocatus* for Lackland duplies, that *nil interest de possessione*, the pursuer must put his case under the statute'—(now, this is worth your notice, neighbour),—'and must show, *formaliter et specialiter*, as well as *generaliter*, what is the qualification that defender Lackland does *not* possess—let him tell me what a plough-gate of land is, and I'll tell him if I have one or no. Surely the pursuer is bound to understand his own libel, and his own statute that he founds upon. *Titius* pursues *Maevius* for recovery of ane *black* horse lent to *Maevius*—surely he shall have judgment; but if *Titius* pursue *Maevius* for ane *scarlet* or *crimson* horse, doubtless he shall be bound to show that there is sic ane animal *in rerum natura*. No man can be bound to plead to nonsense—that is to say, to a charge which cannot be explained or understood'—(he's wrang there—the better the pleadings the fewer understand them),—'and so the reference unto this undefined and unintelligible measure of land is, as if a penalty was inflicted by statute for any man who suld hunt or hawk, or use lying-dogs, and wearing a sky-blue pair of breeches, without having—'But I am wearying you, Mr. Deans,—we'll pass to your ain business,—though this cue of Marsport against Lackland has made an unco din in the Outer House. Weel, here's the dittay against puir Effie: 'Whereas it is humbly meant and shown to us,' etc. (they are words of mere style), 'that whereas, by the laws of this and every other well-regulated realm, the murder of any one, more especially of an infant child, is a crime of ane high nature, and severely punishable: And whereas, without prejudice to the foresaid generality, it was, by ane act made in the second session of the First Parliament of our most High and Dread Sovereigns William and Mary, especially enacted, that ane woman who shall have concealed her condition, and shall not be able to show that she hath called for help at the birth in case that the child shall be found dead or amissing, shall be deemed and held guilty of the murder thereof; and the said facts of concealment and pregnancy being found proven or confessed, shall sustain the pains of law accordingly; yet, nevertheless, you, Effie, or Euphemia Deans—"

"Read no farther!" said Deans, raising his head up; "I would rather ye thrust a sword into my heart than read a word farther!"

"Weel, neighbour," said Saddletree, "I thought it wad hae comforted ye to ken the best and the warst o't. But the question is, what's to be dune?"

"Nothing," answered Deans firmly, "but to abide the dispensation that the Lord sees meet to send us. Oh, if it had been His will to take the grey head to rest before this awful visitation on my house and name! But His will be done. I can say that yet, though I can say little mair."

"But, neighbour," said Saddletree, "ye'll retain advocates for the puir lassie? it's a thing maun needs be thought of."

"If there was ae man of them," answered Deans, "that held fast his integrity—but I ken them weel, they are a' carnal, crafty, and world-hunting self-seekers, Yerastians, and Arminians, every ane o' them."

"Hout tout, neighbour, ye mauna take the warld at its word," said Saddletree; "the very deil is no sae ill as he's ca'd; and I ken mair than ae advocate that may be said to hae some integrity as weel as their neighbours; that is, after a sort o' fashion' o' their ain."

"It is indeed but a fashion of integrity that ye will find amang them," replied David Deans, "and a fashion of wisdom, and fashion of carnal learning—gazing, glancing-glasses they are, fit only to fling the glaiks in folk's een, wi' their pawky policy, and earthly ingine, their flights and refinements, and periods of eloquence, frae heathen emperors and popish canons. They canna, in that daft trash ye were reading to me, sae muckle as ca' men that are sae ill-starred as to be amang their hands, by ony name o' the dispensation o' grace, but maun new baptize them by the names of the accursed *Titus*, wha was made the instrument of burning the holy Temple, and other sic like heathens!"

"It's *Tishius*," interrupted Saddletree, "and no *Titus*. Mr. Crossmyloof cares as little about *Titus* or the Latin as ye do.—But it's a case of necessity—she maun hae counsel. Now, I could speak to Mr. Crossmyloof—he's weel ken'd for a round-spun Presbyterian, and a ruling elder to boot."

"He's a rank Yerastian," replied Deans; "one of the public and polititious warldly-wise men that stude up to prevent ane general owning of the cause in the day of power!"

"What say ye to the auld Laird of Cuffabout?" said Saddletree; "he whiles thumps the dust out of a case gey and well."

"He? the fause loon!" answered Deans—"he was in his bandaliers to hae joined the ungracious Highlanders in 1715, an they had ever had the luck to cross the Firth."

"Weel, Arniston? there's a clever chield for ye!" said Bartoline, triumphantly.

"Ay, to bring popish medals in till their very library from that schismatic woman in the north, the Duchess of Gordon."*

* [James Dundas younger of Arniston was tried in the year 1711 upon charge of leasing-making, in having presented, from the Duchess of Gordon, medal of the Pretender, for the purpose, it was said, of affronting Queen Anne.]

"Weel, weel, but somebody ye maun hae—What think ye o' Kittlepunt?"

"He's an Arminian."

"Woodsetter?"

"He's, I doubt, a Cocceian."

"Auld Whilliewhaw?"

"He's ony thing ye like."

"Young Naemmo?"

"He's naething at a'."

"Ye're ill to please, neighbour," said Saddletree: "I hae run ower the pick o' them for you, ye maun e'en choose for yoursell; but bethink ye that in the multitude of counsellors there's safety—What say ye to try young Mackenyie? he has a' his uncle's Practiques at the tongue's end."

"What, sir, wad ye speak to me," exclaimed the sturdy Presbyterian in excessive wrath, "about a man that has the blood of the saints at his fingers' ends? Did na his eme [Uncle] die and gang to his place wi' the name of the Bluidy Mackenyie? and winna he be kend by that name sae lang as there's a Scots tongue to speak the word? If the life of the dear bairn that's under a suffering dispensation, and Jeanie's, and my ain, and a' mankind's, depended on my asking sic a slave o' Satan to speak a word for me or them, they should a' gae doun the water thegither for Davie Deans!"

It was the exalted tone in which he spoke this last sentence that broke up the conversation between Butler and Jeanie, and brought them both "ben the house," to use the language of the country. Here they found the poor old man half frantic between grief and zealous ire against Saddletree's proposed measures, his cheek inflamed, his hand clenched, and his voice raised, while the tear in his eye, and the occasional quiver of his accents, showed that his utmost efforts were inadequate to shaking off the consciousness of his misery. Butler, apprehensive of the consequences of his agitation to an aged and feeble frame, ventured to utter to him a recommendation to patience.

"I *am* patient," returned the old man sternly,—"*more* patient than any one who is alive to the woeful backslidings of a miserable time can be patient; and in so much, that I need neither sectarians, nor sons nor grandsons of sectarians, to instruct my grey hairs how to bear my cross."

"But, sir," continued Butler, taking no offence at the slur cast on his grandfather's faith, "we must use human means. When you call in a physician, you would not, I suppose, question him on the nature of his religious principles!"

"Wad I *no*?" answered David—"but I wad, though; and if he didna satisfy me that he had a right sense of the right hand and left hand defections of the day, not a goutte of his physic should gang through my father's son."

It is a dangerous thing to trust to an illustration. Butler had done so and miscarried; but, like a gallant soldier when his musket misses fire, he stood his ground, and charged with the bayonet.—"This is too rigid an interpretation of your duty, sir. The sun shines, and the rain descends, on the just and unjust, and they are placed together in life in circumstances which frequently render intercourse between them indispensable, perhaps that the evil may have an opportunity of being converted by the good, and perhaps, also, that the righteous might, among other trials, be subjected to that of occasional converse with the profane."

"Ye're a silly callant, Reuben," answered Deans, "with your bits of argument. Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled? Or what think ye of the brave and worthy champions of the Covenant, that wadna sae muckle as hear a minister speak, be his gifts and graces as they would, that hadna witnessed against the enormities of the day? Nae lawyer shall ever speak for me and mine that hasna concurred in the testimony of the scattered, yet lovely remnant, which abode in the cliffs of the rocks."

So saying, and as if fatigued, both with the arguments and presence of his guests, the old man arose, and seeming to bid them adieu with a motion of his head and hand, went to shut himself up in his sleeping apartment.

"It's thraving his daughter's life awa," said Saddletree to Butler, "to hear him speak in that daft gate. Where will he ever get a Cameronian advocate? Or wha ever heard of a lawyer's suffering either for ae religion or another? The lassie's life is clean flung awa."

During the latter part of this debate, Dumbiedikes had arrived at the door, dismounted, hung the pony's bridle on the usual hook, and sunk down on his ordinary settle. His eyes, with more than their usual animation, followed first one speaker then another, till he caught the melancholy sense of the whole from Saddletree's last words. He rose from his seat, stumped slowly across the room, and, coming close up to Saddletree's ear, said in a tremulous anxious voice, "Will—will siller do naething for them, Mr. Saddletree?"

"Umph!" said Saddletree, looking grave,—"*siller* will certainly do it in the Parliament House, if ony thing *can* do it; but where's the siller to come frae? Mr. Deans, ye see, will do naething; and though Mrs. Saddletree's their far-awa friend, and right good weel-wisher, and is weel disposed to assist, yet she wadna like to stand to be bound *singuli in solidum* to such an expensive wark. An ilka friend wad bear a share o' the burden, something might be dune—ilka ane to be liable for their ain input—I wadna like to see the case fa' through without being pled—it wadna be creditable, for a' that daft whig body says."

"I'll—I will—yes" (assuming fortitude), "I will be answerable," said Dumbiedikes, "for a score of punds sterling."—And he was silent, staring in astonishment at finding himself capable of such unwonted resolution and excessive generosity.

"God Almighty bless ye, Laird!" said Jeanie, in a transport of gratitude.

"Ye may ca' the twenty punds thretty," said Dumbiedikes, looking bashfully away from her, and towards Saddletree.

"That will do bravely," said Saddletree, rubbing his hands; "and ye sall hae a' my skill and knowledge to gar the siller gang far—I'll tape it out weel—I ken how to gar the birkies tak short fees, and be glad o' them too—it's only garring them trow ye hae twa or three cases of importance coming on, and they'll work cheap to get custom. Let me alane for whilly-whaing an advocate—it's nae sin to get as muckle flue them for our siller as we can—after a', it's but the wind o' their mouth—it costs them naething; whereas, in my wretched occupation of a saddler, horse milliner, and harness maker, we are out unconscionable sums just for barked hides and leather."

"Can I be of no use?" said Butler. "My means, alas! are only worth the black coat I wear; but I am young—I owe much to the family—Can I do nothing?"

"Ye can help to collect evidence, sir," said Saddletree; "if we could but find ony ane to say she had gien the least hint o' her condition, she wad be brought aft wi' a wat finger—Mr. Crossmyloof tell'd me sae. The crown, says he, canna be craved to prove a positive—was't a positive or a negative they couldna be ca'd to prove?—it was the tane or the tither o' them, I am sure, and it maksna muckle matter whilk. Wherefore, says he, the libel maun be redargued by the panel proving her defences. And it canna be done otherwise."

"But the fact, sir," argued Butler, "the fact that this poor girl has borne a child; surely the crown lawyers must prove that?" said Butler.

Saddletree paused a moment, while the visage of Dumbiedikes, which traversed, as if it had been placed on a pivot, from the one spokesman to the other, assumed a more blithe expression.

"Ye—ye—ye—es," said Saddletree, after some grave hesitation; "unquestionably that is a thing to be proved, as the court will more fully declare by an interlocutor of relevancy in common form; but I fancy that job's done already, for she has confessed her guilt."

"Confessed the murder?" exclaimed Jeanie, with a scream that made them all start.

"No, I didna say that," replied Bartoline. "But she confessed bearing the babe."

"And what became of it, then?" said Jeanie, "for not a word could I get from her but bitter sighs and tears."

"She says it was taken away from her by the woman in whose house it was born, and who assisted her at the time."

"And who was that woman?" said Butler. "Surely by her means the truth might be discovered.—Who was she? I will fly to her directly."

"I wish," said Dumbiedikes, "I were as young and as supple as you, and had the gift of the gab as weel."

"Who is she?" again reiterated Butler impatiently.—"Who could that woman be?"

"Ay, wha kens that but herself?" said Saddletree; "she deponed farther, and declined to answer that interrogatory."

"Then to herself will I instantly go," said Butler; "farewell, Jeanie," then coming close up to her—"Take no *rash steps* till you hear from me. Farewell!" and he immediately left the cottage.

"I wad gang too," said the landed proprietor, in an anxious, jealous, and repining tone, "but my powny winna for the life o' me gang ony other road than just frae Dumbiedikes to this house-end, and sae straight back again."

"Yell do better for them," said Saddletree, as they left the house together, "by sending me the thretty punds."

"Thretty punds!" hesitated Dumbiedikes, who was now out of the reach of those eyes which had inflamed his generosity; "I only said *twenty* punds."

"Ay; but," said Saddletree, "that was under protestation to add and eik; and so ye craved leave to amend your libel, and made it thretty."

"Did I? I dinna mind that I did," answered Dumbiedikes. "But whatever I said I'll stand to." Then bestriding his steed with some difficulty, he added, "Dinna ye think poor Jeanie's een wi' the tears in them glanced like lamour beads, Mr. Saddletree?"

"I kenna muckle about women's een, Laird," replied the insensible Bartoline; "and I care just as little. I wuss I were as weel free o' their tongues; though few wives," he added, recollecting the necessity of keeping up his character for domestic rule, "are under better command than mine, Laird. I allow neither perduellion nor lese-majesty against my sovereign authority."

The Laird saw nothing so important in this observation as to call for a rejoinder, and when they had exchanged a mute salutation, they parted in peace upon their different errands.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

*I'll warrant that fellow from drowning,
were the ship no stronger than a nut-shell.*

The Tempest.

Butler felt neither fatigue nor want of refreshment, although, from the mode in which he had spent the night, he might well have been overcome with either. But in the earnestness with which he hastened to the assistance of the sister of Jeanie Deans, he forgot both.

In his first progress he walked with so rapid a pace as almost approached to running, when he was surprised to hear behind him a call upon his name, contending with an asthmatic cough, and half-drowned amid the resounding trot of a Highland pony. He looked behind, and saw the Laird of Dumbiedikes making after him with what speed he might, for it happened, fortunately for the Laird's purpose of conversing with Butler, that his own road homeward was for about two hundred yards the same with that which led by the nearest way to the city. Butler stopped when he heard himself thus summoned, internally wishing no good to the panting equestrian who thus retarded his journey.

"Uh! uh! uh!" ejaculated Dumbiedikes, as he checked the hobbling pace of the pony by our friend Butler. "Uh! uh! it's a hard-set willyard beast this o' mine." He had in fact just overtaken the object of his chase at the very point beyond which it would have been absolutely impossible for him to have continued the pursuit, since there Butler's road parted from that leading to Dumbiedikes, and no means of influence or compulsion which the rider could possibly have used towards his Bucephalus could have induced the Celtic obstinacy of Rory Bean (such was the pony's name) to have diverged a yard from the path that conducted him to his own paddock.

Even when he had recovered from the shortness of breath occasioned by a trot much more rapid than Rory or he were accustomed to, the high purpose of Dumbiedikes seemed to stick as it were in his throat, and impede his utterance, so that Butler stood for nearly three minutes ere he could utter a syllable; and when he did find voice, it was only to say, after one or two efforts, "Uh! uh! uhm! I say, Mr.—Mr. Butler, it's a braw day for the har'st."

"Fine day, indeed," said Butler. "I wish you good morning, sir."

"Stay—stay a bit," rejoined Dumbiedikes; "that was no what I had gotten to say."

"Then, pray be quick, and let me have your commands," rejoined Butler; "I crave your pardon, but I am in haste, and *Tempus nemini*—you know the proverb."

Dumbiedikes did not know the proverb, nor did he even take the trouble to endeavour to look as if he did, as others in his place might have done. He was concentrating all his intellects for one grand proposition, and could not afford any detachment to defend outposts. "I say, Mr. Butler," said he, "ken ye if Mr. Saddletree's a great lawyer?"

"I have no person's word for it but his own," answered Butler, drily; "but undoubtedly he best understands his own qualities."

"Umph!" replied the taciturn Dumbiedikes, in a tone which seemed to say, "Mr. Butler, I take your meaning." "In that case," he pursued, "I'll employ my ain man o' business, Nichil Novit (auld Nichil's son, and amaist as gleg as his father), to agent Effie's plea."

And having thus displayed more sagacity than Butler expected from him, he courteously touched his gold-laced cocked hat, and by a punch on the ribs, conveyed to Rory Bean, it was his rider's pleasure that he should forthwith proceed homewards; a hint which the quadruped obeyed with that degree of alacrity with which men and animals interpret and obey suggestions that entirely correspond with their own inclinations.

Butler resumed his pace, not without a momentary revival of that jealousy which the honest Laird's attention to the family of Deans had at different times excited in his bosom. But he was too generous long to nurse any feeling which was allied to selfishness. "He is," said Butler to himself, "rich in what I want; why should I feel vexed that he has the heart to dedicate some of his pelf to render them services, which I can only form the empty wish of executing? In God's name, let us each do what we can. May she be but happy!—saved from the misery and disgrace that seems impending—Let me but find the means of preventing the fearful experiment of this evening, and farewell to other thoughts, though my heart-strings break in parting with them!"

He redoubled his pace, and soon stood before the door of the Tolbooth, or rather before the entrance where the door had formerly been placed. His interview with the mysterious stranger, the message to Jeanie, his agitating conversation with her on the subject of breaking off their mutual engagements, and the interesting scene with old Deans, had so entirely occupied his mind as to drown even recollection of the tragical event which he had witnessed the preceding evening. His attention was not recalled to it by the groups who stood scattered on the street in conversation, which they hushed when strangers approached, or by the bustling search of the agents of the city police, supported by small parties of the military, or by the appearance of the Guard-House, before which were treble sentinels, or, finally, by the subdued and intimidated looks of the lower orders of society, who, conscious that they were liable to suspicion, if they were not guilty of accession to a riot likely to be strictly inquired into, glided about with an humble and dismayed aspect, like men whose spirits being exhausted in the revel and the dangers of a desperate debauch over-night, are nerve-shaken, timorous, and unenterprising on the succeeding day.

None of these symptoms of alarm and trepidation struck Butler, whose mind was occupied with a different, and to him still more interesting subject, until he stood before the entrance to the prison, and saw it defended by a double file of grenadiers, instead of bolts and bars. Their "Stand, stand!" the blackened appearance of the doorless gateway, and the winding staircase and apartments of the Tolbooth, now open to the public eye, recalled the whole proceedings of the eventful night.

Upon his requesting to speak with Effie Deans, the same tall, thin, silver-haired turnkey, whom he had seen on the preceding evening, made his appearance, "I think," he replied to Butler's request of admission, with true Scottish indirectness, "ye will be the same lad that was for in to see her yestreen?"

Butler admitted he was the same person.

"And I am thinking," pursued the turnkey, "that ye speered at me when we locked up, and if we locked up earlier on account of Porteous?"

"Very likely I might make some such observation," said Butler; "but the question now is, can I see Effie Deans?"

"I dinna ken—gang in by, and up the turnpike stair, and turn till the ward on the left hand."

The old man followed close behind him, with his keys in his hand, not forgetting even that huge one which had once opened and shut the outward gate of his dominions, though at present it was but an idle and useless burden. No sooner had Butler entered the room to which he was directed, than the experienced hand of the warder selected the proper key, and locked it on the outside. At first Butler conceived this manoeuvre was only an effect of the man's habitual and official caution and jealousy. But when he heard the hoarse command, "Turn out the guard!" and immediately afterwards heard the clash of a sentinel's arms, as he was posted at the door of his apartment, he again called out to the turnkey, "My good friend, I have business of some consequence with Effie Deans, and I beg to see her as soon as possible." No answer was returned. "If it be against your rules to admit me," repeated Butler, in a still louder tone, "to see the prisoner, I beg you will tell me so, and let me go about my business.—*Fugit irrevocabile tempus!*" muttered he to himself.

"If ye had business to do, ye suld hae dune it before ye cam here," replied the man of keys from the outside; "yell find it's easier wunnin in than wunnin out here—there's sma' likelihood o' another Porteous mob coming to rabble us again—the law will haud her ain now, neighbour, and that yell find to your cost."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" retorted Butler. "You must mistake me for some other person. My name is Reuben Butler, preacher of the gospel."

"I ken that weel enough," said the turnkey.

"Well, then, if you know me, I have a right to know from you in return, what warrant you have for detaining me; that, I know, is the right of every British subject."

"Warrant!" said the jailor,—*"the warrant's awa to Libberton wi' twa sheriff officers seeking ye. If ye had staid at hame, as honest men should do, ye wad hae seen the warrant; but if ye come to be incarcerated of your ain accord, wha can help it, my jo?"*

"So I cannot see Effie Deans, then," said Butler; "and you are determined not to let me out?"

"Troth will I no, neighbour," answered the old man, doggedly; "as for Effie Deans, ye'll hae eneuch ado to mind your ain business, and let her mind hers; and for letting you out, that maun be as the magistrate will determine. And fare ye weel for a bit, for I maun see Deacon Sawyers put on ane or twa o' the doors that your quiet folk broke down yesternight, Mr. Butler."

There was something in this exquisitely provoking, but there was also something darkly alarming. To be imprisoned, even on a false accusation, has something in it disagreeable and menacing even to men of more constitutional courage than Butler had to boast; for although he had much of that resolution which arises from a sense of duty and an honourable desire to discharge it, yet, as his imagination was lively, and his frame of body delicate, he was far from possessing that cool insensibility to danger which is the happy portion of men of stronger health, more firm nerves, and less acute sensibility. An indistinct idea of peril, which he could neither understand nor ward off, seemed to float before his eyes. He tried to think over the events of the preceding night, in hopes of discovering some means of explaining or vindicating his conduct for appearing among the mob, since it immediately occurred to him that his detention must be founded on that circumstance. And it was with anxiety that he found he could not recollect to have been under the observation of any disinterested witness in the attempts that he made from time to time to expostulate with the rioters, and to prevail on them to release him. The distress of Deans's family, the dangerous rendezvous which Jeanie had formed, and which he could not now hope to interrupt, had also their share in his unpleasant reflections. Yet, impatient as he was to receive an *eclaircissement* upon the cause of his confinement, and if possible to obtain his liberty, he was affected with a trepidation which seemed no good omen; when, after remaining an hour in this solitary apartment, he received a summons to attend the sitting magistrate. He was conducted from prison strongly guarded by a party of soldiers, with a parade of precaution, that, however ill-timed and unnecessary, is generally displayed *after* an event, which such precaution, if used in time, might have prevented.

He was introduced into the Council Chamber, as the place is called where the magistrates hold their sittings, and which was then at a little distance from the prison. One or two of the senators of the city were present, and seemed about to engage in the examination of an individual who was brought forward to the foot of the long green-covered table round which the council usually assembled. "Is that the preacher?" said one of the magistrates, as the city officer in attendance introduced Butler. The man answered in the affirmative. "Let him sit down there for an instant; we will finish this man's business very briefly."

"Shall we remove Mr. Butler?" queried the assistant.

"It is not necessary—Let him remain where he is."

Butler accordingly sate down on a bench at the bottom of the apartment, attended by one of his keepers.

It was a large room, partially and imperfectly lighted; but by chance, or the skill of the architect, who might happen to remember the advantage which might occasionally be derived from such an arrangement, one window was so placed as to throw a strong light at the foot of the table at which prisoners were usually posted for examination, while the upper end, where the examiners sate, was thrown into shadow. Butler's eyes were instantly fixed on the person whose examination was at present proceeding, in the idea that he might recognise some one of the conspirators of the former night. But though the features of this man were sufficiently marked and striking, he could not recollect that he had ever seen them before.

The complexion of this person was dark, and his age somewhat advanced. He wore his own hair, combed smooth down, and cut very short. It was jet black, slightly curled by nature, and already mottled with grey. The man's face expressed rather knavery than vice, and a disposition to sharpness, cunning, and roguery, more than the traces of stormy and indulged passions. His sharp quick black eyes, acute features, ready sardonic smile, promptitude and effrontery, gave him altogether what is called among the vulgar a *knowing* look, which generally implies a tendency to knavery. At a fair or market, you could not for a moment have doubted that he was a horse-jockey, intimate with all the tricks of his trade; yet, had you met him on a moor, you would not have apprehended any violence from him. His dress was also that of a horse-dealer—a close-buttoned jockey-coat, or wrap-rascal, as it was then termed, with huge metal buttons, coarse blue upper stockings, called boot-hose because supplying the place of boots, and a slouched hat. He only wanted a loaded whip under his arm and a spur upon one heel, to complete the dress of the character he seemed to represent.

"Your name is James Ratcliffe?" said the magistrate.

"Ay—always wi' your honour's leave."

"That is to say, you could find me another name if I did not like that one?"

"Twenty to pick and choose upon, always with your honour's leave," resumed the respondent.

"But James Ratcliffe is your present name?—what is your trade?"

"I canna just say, distinctly, that I have what ye wad ca' preceesely a trade."

"But," repeated the magistrate, "what are your means of living—your occupation?"

"Hout tout—your honour, wi' your leave, kens that as weel as I do," replied the examined.

"No matter, I want to hear you describe it," said the examiner.

"Me describe!—and to your honour!—far be it from Jemmie Ratcliffe," responded the prisoner.

"Come, sir, no trifling—I insist on an answer."

"Weel, sir," replied the declarant, "I maun make a clean breast, for ye see, wi' your leave, I am looking for favour—Describe my occupation, quo' ye?—troth it will be ill to do that, in a feasible way, in a place like this—but what is't again that the aught command says?"

"Thou shalt not steal," answered the magistrate.

"Are you sure o' that?" replied the accused.—"Troth, then, my occupation, and that command, are sair at odds, for I read it, thou *shalt* steal; and that makes an unco difference, though there's but a wee bit word left out."

"To cut the matter short, Ratcliffe, you have been a most notorious thief," said the examiner.

"I believe Highlands and Lowlands ken that, sir, forby England and Holland," replied Ratcliffe, with the greatest composure and effrontery.

"And what d'ye think the end of your calling will be?" said the magistrate.

"I could have gien a braw guess yesterday—but I dinna ken sae weel the day," answered the prisoner.

"And what would you have said would have been your end, had you been asked the question yesterday?"

"Just the gallows," replied Ratcliffe, with the same composure.

"You are a daring rascal, sir," said the magistrate; "and how dare you hope times are mended with you to-day?"

"Dear, your honour," answered Ratcliffe, "there's muckle difference between lying in prison under sentence of death, and staying there of ane's ain proper accord, when it would have cost a man naething to get up and rin awa—what was to hinder me from stepping out quietly, when the rabble walked awa wi' Jock Porteous yestreen?—and does your honour really think I staid on purpose to be hanged?"

"I do not know what you may have proposed to yourself; but I know," said the magistrate, "what the law proposes for you, and that is, to hang you next Wednesday eight days."

"Na, na, your honour," said Ratcliffe firmly, "craving your honour's pardon, I'll ne'er believe that till I see it. I have kend the law this mony a year, and mony a thrawart job I hae had wi' her first and last; but the auld jaud is no sae ill as that comes to—I aye fand her bark waur than her bite."

"And if you do not expect the gallows, to which you are condemned (for the fourth time to my knowledge), may I beg the favour to know," said the magistrate, "what it is you *do* expect, in consideration of your not having taken your flight with the rest of the jail-birds, which I will admit was a line of conduct little to have been expected?"

"I would never have thought for a moment of staying in that auld gousty toom house," answered Ratcliffe, "but that use and wont had just gien me a fancy to the place, and I'm just expecting a bit post in't."

"A post!" exclaimed the magistrate; "a whipping-post, I suppose, you mean?"

"Na, na, sir, I had nae thoughts o' a whuppin-post. After having been four times doomed to hang by the neck till I was dead, I think I am far beyond being whuppit."

"Then, in Heaven's name, what *did* you expect?"

"Just the post of under-turnkey, for I understand there's a vacancy," said the prisoner; "I wadna think of asking the lockman's* place ower his head; it wadna suit me sae weel as ither folk, for I never could put a beast out o' the way, much less deal wi' a man."

* Note H. Hangman, or Lockman.

"That's something in your favour," said the magistrate, making exactly the inference to which Ratcliffe was desirous to lead him, though he mantled his art with an affectation of oddity.

"But," continued the magistrate, "how do you think you can be trusted with a charge in the prison, when you have broken at your own hand half the jails in Scotland?"

"Wi' your honour's leave," said Ratcliffe, "if I kend sae weel how to wun out mysell, it's like I wad be a' the better a hand to keep other folk in. I think they wad ken their business weel that held me in when I wanted to be out, or wan out when I wanted to hand them in."

The remark seemed to strike the magistrate, but he made no further immediate observation, only desired Ratcliffe to be removed.

When this daring and yet sly freebooter was out of hearing, the magistrate asked the city clerk, "what he thought of the fellow's assurance?"

"It's no for me to say, sir," replied the clerk; "but if James Ratcliffe be inclined to turn to good, there is not a man e'er came within the ports of the burgh could be of sae muckle use to the Good Town in the thief and lock-up line of business. I'll speak to Mr. Sharpitlaw about him."

Upon Ratcliffe's retreat, Butler was placed at the table for examination. The magistrate conducted his inquiry civilly, but yet in a manner which gave him to understand that he laboured under strong suspicion. With a frankness which at once became his calling and character, Butler avowed his involuntary presence at the murder of Porteous, and, at the request of the magistrate, entered into a minute detail of the circumstances which attended that unhappy affair. All the particulars, such as we have narrated, were taken minutely down by the clerk from Butler's dictation.

When the narrative was concluded, the cross-examination commenced, which it is a painful task even for the most candid witness to undergo, since a story, especially if connected with agitating and alarming incidents, can scarce be so clearly and distinctly told, but that some ambiguity and doubt may be thrown upon it by a string of successive and minute interrogatories.

The magistrate commenced by observing, that Butler had said his object was to return to the village of Libberton, but that he was interrupted by the mob at the West Port. "Is the West Port your usual way of leaving town when you go to Libberton?" said the magistrate, with a sneer.

"No, certainly," answered Butler, with the haste of a man anxious to vindicate the accuracy of his evidence; "but I chanced to be nearer that port than any other, and the hour of shutting the gates was on the point of striking."

"That was unlucky," said the magistrate, drily. "Pray, being, as you say, under coercion and fear of the lawless multitude, and compelled to accompany them through scenes disagreeable to all men of humanity, and more especially irreconcilable to the profession of a minister, did you not attempt to struggle, resist, or escape from their violence?"

Butler replied, "that their numbers prevented him from attempting resistance, and their vigilance from effecting his escape."

"That was unlucky," again repeated the magistrate, in the same dry inacquiescent tone of voice and manner. He proceeded with decency and politeness, but with a stiffness which argued his continued suspicion, to ask many questions concerning the behaviour of the mob, the manners and dress of the ringleaders; and when he conceived that the caution of Butler, if he was deceiving him, must be lulled asleep, the magistrate suddenly and artfully returned to former parts of his declaration, and required a new recapitulation of the circumstances, to the minutest and most trivial point, which attended each part of the melancholy scene. No confusion or contradiction, however, occurred, that could countenance the suspicion which he seemed to have adopted against Butler. At length the train of his interrogatories reached Madge Wildfire, at whose name the magistrate and town-clerk exchanged significant glances. If the fate of the Good Town had depended on her careful magistrate's knowing the features and dress of this personage, his inquiries could not have been more particular. But Butler could say almost nothing of this person's features, which were disguised apparently with red paint and soot, like an Indian going to battle, besides the projecting shade of a curch, or coif, which muffled the hair of the supposed female. He declared that he thought he could not know this Madge Wildfire, if placed before him in a different dress, but that he believed he might recognise her voice.

The magistrate requested him again to state by what gate he left the city.

"By the Cowgate Port," replied Butler.

"Was that the nearest road to Libberton?"

"No," answered Butler, with embarrassment; "but it was the nearest way to extricate myself from the mob."

The clerk and magistrate again exchanged glances.

"Is the Cowgate Port a nearer way to Libberton from the Grassmarket than Bristo Port?"

"No," replied Butler; "but I had to visit a friend."

"Indeed!" said the interrogator—"You were in a hurry to tell the sight you had witnessed, I suppose?"

"Indeed I was not," replied Butler; "nor did I speak on the subject the whole time I was at St. Leonard's Craggs."

"Which road did you take to St. Leonard's Craggs?"

"By the foot of Salisbury Craggs," was the reply.

"Indeed? you seem partial to circuitous routes," again said the magistrate. "Whom did you see after you left the city?"

One by one he obtained a description of every one of the groups who had passed Butler, as already noticed, their number, demeanour, and appearance; and, at length, came to the circumstance of the mysterious stranger in the King's Park. On this subject Butler would fain have remained silent, But the magistrate had no sooner got a slight hint concerning the incident, than he seemed bent to possess himself of the most minute particulars.

"Look ye, Mr. Butler," said he, "you are a young man, and bear an excellent character; so much I will myself testify in your favour. But we are aware there has been, at times, a sort of bastard and fiery zeal in some of your order, and those, men irreproachable in other points, which has led them into doing and countenancing great irregularities, by which the peace of the country is liable to be shaken.—I will deal plainly with you. I am not at all satisfied with this story, of your setting out again and again to seek your dwelling by two several roads, which were both circuitous. And, to be frank, no one whom we have examined on this unhappy affair could trace in your appearance any thing like your acting under compulsion. Moreover, the waiters at the Cowgate Port observed something like the trepidation of guilt in your conduct, and declare that you were the first to command them to open the gate, in a tone of authority, as if still presiding over the guards and out-posts of the rabble, who had besieged them the whole night."

"God forgive them!" said Butler; "I only asked free passage for myself; they must have much misunderstood, if they did not wilfully misrepresent me."

"Well, Mr. Butler," resumed the magistrate, "I am inclined to judge the best and hope the best, as I am sure I wish the best; but you must be frank with me, if you wish to secure my good opinion, and lessen the risk of inconvenience to yourself. You have allowed you saw another individual in your passage through the King's Park to Saint Leonard's Crags—I must know every word which passed betwixt you."

Thus closely pressed, Butler, who had no reason for concealing what passed at that meeting, unless because Jeanie Deans was concerned in it, thought it best to tell the whole truth from beginning to end.

"Do you suppose," said the magistrate, pausing, "that the young woman will accept an invitation so mysterious?"

"I fear she will," replied Butler.

"Why do you use the word *fear* it?" said the magistrate.

"Because I am apprehensive for her safety, in meeting at such a time and place, one who had something of the manner of a desperado, and whose message was of a character so inexplicable."

"Her safety shall be cared for," said the magistrate. "Mr. Butler, I am concerned I cannot immediately discharge you from confinement, but I hope you will not be long detained.—Remove Mr. Butler, and let him be provided with decent accommodation in all respects."

He was conducted back to the prison accordingly; but, in the food offered to him, as well as in the apartment in which he was lodged, the recommendation of the magistrate was strictly attended to.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

*Dark and eerie was the night,
And lonely was the way,
As Janet, wi' her green mantell,
To Miles' Cross she did gae.
Old Ballad.*

Leaving Butler to all the uncomfortable thoughts attached to his new situation, among which the most predominant was his feeling that he was, by his confinement, deprived of all possibility of assisting the family at St. Leonard's in their greatest need, we return to Jeanie Deans, who had seen him depart, without an opportunity of farther explanation, in all that agony of mind with which the female heart bids adieu to the complicated sensations so well described by Coleridge,—

*Hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng;
And gentle wishes long subdued—
Subdued and cherished long.*

It is not the firmest heart (and Jeanie, under her russet rokelay, had one that would not have disgraced Cato's daughter) that can most easily bid adieu to these soft and mingled emotions. She wept for a few minutes bitterly, and without attempting to refrain from this indulgence of passion. But a moment's recollection induced her to check herself for a grief selfish and proper to her own affections, while her father and sister were plunged into such deep and irretrievable affliction. She drew from her pocket the letter which had been that morning flung into her apartment through an open window, and the contents of which were as singular as the expression was violent and energetic. "If she would save a human being from the most damning guilt, and all its desperate consequences,—if she desired the life an honour of her sister to be saved from the bloody fangs of an unjust law,—if she desired not to forfeit peace of mind here, and happiness hereafter," such was the frantic style of the conjuration, "she was entreated to give a sure, secret, and solitary meeting to the writer. She alone could rescue him," so ran the letter, "and he only could rescue her." He was in such circumstances, the billet farther informed her, that an attempt to bring any witness of their conference, or even to mention to her father, or any other person whatsoever, the letter which requested it, would inevitably prevent its taking place, and ensure the destruction of her sister. The letter concluded with incoherent but violent protestations, that in obeying this summons she had nothing to fear personally.

The message delivered to her by Butler from the stranger in the Park tallied exactly with the contents of the letter, but assigned a later hour and a different place of meeting. Apparently the writer of the letter had been compelled to let Butler so far into his confidence, for the sake of announcing this change to Jeanie. She was more than once on the point of producing the billet, in vindication of herself from her lover's half-hinted suspicions. But there is something in stooping to justification which the pride of innocence does not at all times willingly submit to; besides that the threats contained in the letter, in case of her betraying the secret, hung heavy on her heart. It is probable, however, that had they remained longer together, she might have taken the resolution to submit the whole matter to Butler, and be guided by him as to the line of conduct which she should adopt. And when, by the sudden interruption of their conference, she lost the opportunity of doing so, she felt as if she had been unjust to a friend, whose advice might have been highly useful, and whose attachment deserved her full and unreserved confidence.

To have recourse to her father upon this occasion, she considered as highly imprudent. There was no possibility of conjecturing in what light the matter might strike old David, whose manner of acting and thinking in extraordinary circumstances depended upon feelings and principles peculiar to himself, the operation of which could not be calculated upon even by those best acquainted with him. To have requested some female friend to have accompanied her to the place of rendezvous, would perhaps have been the most eligible expedient; but the threats of the writer, that betraying his secret would prevent their meeting (on which her sister's safety was said to depend) from taking place at all, would have deterred her from making such a confidence, even had she known a person in whom she thought it could with safety have been reposed. But she knew none such. Their acquaintance with the cottagers in the vicinity had been very slight, and limited to trifling acts of good neighbourhood. Jeanie knew little of them, and what she knew did not greatly incline her to trust any of them. They were of the order of loquacious good-humoured gossips usually found in their situation of life; and their conversation had at all times few charms for a young woman, to whom nature and the circumstance of a solitary life had given a depth of thought and force of character superior to the frivolous part of her sex, whether in high or low degree.

Left alone and separated from all earthly counsel, she had recourse to a friend and adviser, whose ear is open to the cry of the poorest and most afflicted of his people. She knelt, and prayed with fervent sincerity, that God would please to direct her what course to follow in her arduous and distressing situation. It was the belief of the time and sect to which she belonged, that special answers to prayer, differing little in their character from divine inspiration, were, as they expressed

it, "borne in upon their minds" in answer to their earnest petitions in a crisis of difficulty. Without entering into an abstruse point of divinity, one thing is plain;—namely, that the person who lays open his doubts and distresses in prayer, with feeling and sincerity, must necessarily, in the act of doing so, purify his mind from the dross of worldly passions and interests, and bring it into that state, when the resolutions adopted are likely to be selected rather from a sense of duty, than from any inferior motive. Jeanie arose from her devotions, with her heart fortified to endure affliction, and encouraged to face difficulties.

"I will meet this unhappy man," she said to herself—"unhappy he must be, since I doubt he has been the cause of poor Effie's misfortune—but I will meet him, be it for good or ill. My mind shall never cast up to me, that, for fear of what might be said or done to myself, I left that undone that might even yet be the rescue of her."

With a mind greatly composed since the adoption of this resolution, she went to attend her father. The old man, firm in the principles of his youth, did not, in outward appearance at least, permit a thought of his family distress to interfere with the stoical reserve of his countenance and manners. He even chided his daughter for having neglected, in the distress of the morning, some trifling domestic duties which fell under her department.

"Why, what meaneth this, Jeanie?" said the old man—"The brown four-year-old's milk is not seiled yet, nor the bowies put up on the bink. If ye neglect your worldly duties in the day of affliction, what confidence have I that ye mind the greater matters that concern salvation? God knows, our bowies, and our pipkins, and our draps o' milk, and our bits o' bread, are nearer and dearer to us than the bread of life!"

Jeanie, not displeased to hear her father's thoughts thus expand themselves beyond the sphere of his immediate distress, obeyed him, and proceeded to put her household matters in order; while old David moved from place to place about his ordinary employments, scarce showing, unless by a nervous impatience at remaining long stationary, an occasional convulsive sigh, or twinkle of the eyelid, that he was labouring under the yoke of such bitter affliction.

The hour of noon came on, and the father and child sat down to their homely repast. In his petition for a blessing on the meal, the poor old man added to his supplication, a prayer that the bread eaten in sadness of heart, and the bitter waters of Marah, might be made as nourishing as those which had been poured forth from a full cup and a plentiful basket and store; and having concluded his benediction, and resumed the bonnet which he had laid "reverently aside," he proceeded to exhort his daughter to eat, not by example indeed, but at least by precept.

"The man after God's own heart," he said, "washed and anointed himself, and did eat bread, in order to express his submission under a dispensation of suffering, and it did not become a Christian man or woman so to cling to creature-comforts of wife or bairns"—(here the words became too great, as it were, for his utterance),—"as to forget the first duty,—submission to the Divine will."

To add force to his precept, he took a morsel on his plate, but nature proved too strong even for the powerful feelings with which he endeavoured to bridle it. Ashamed of his weakness, he started up, and ran out of the house, with haste very unlike the deliberation of his usual movements. In less than five minutes he returned, having successfully struggled to recover his ordinary composure of mind and countenance, and affected to colour over his late retreat, by muttering that he thought he heard the "young staig loose in the byre."

He did not again trust himself with the subject of his former conversation, and his daughter was glad to see that he seemed to avoid farther discourse on that agitating topic. The hours glided on, as on they must and do pass, whether winged with joy or laden with affliction. The sun set beyond the dusky eminence of the Castle and the screen of western hills, and the close of evening summoned David Deans and his daughter to the family duty of the night. It came bitterly upon Jeanie's recollection, how often, when the hour of worship approached, she used to watch the lengthening shadows, and look out from the door of the house, to see if she could spy her sister's return homeward. Alas! this idle and thoughtless waste of time, to what evils had it not finally led? and was she altogether guiltless, who, noticing Effie's turn to idle and light society, had not called in her father's authority to restrain her?—But I acted for the best, she again reflected, and who could have expected such a growth of evil, from one grain of human leaven, in a disposition so kind, and candid, and generous?

As they sat down to the "exercise," as it is called, a chair happened accidentally to stand in the place which Effie usually occupied. David Deans saw his daughter's eyes swim in tears as they were directed towards this object, and pushed it aside, with a gesture of some impatience, as if desirous to destroy every memorial of earthly interest when about to address the Deity. The portion of Scripture was read, the psalm was sung, the prayer was made; and it was remarkable that, in discharging these duties, the old man avoided all passages and expressions, of which Scripture affords so many, that might be considered as applicable to his own domestic misfortune. In doing so it was perhaps his intention to spare the feelings of his daughter, as well as to maintain, in outward show at least, that stoical appearance of patient endurance of all the evil which earth could bring, which was in his opinion essential to the character of one who rated all earthly things at their just estimate of nothingness. When he had finished the duty of the evening, he came up to his daughter, wished her good-night, and, having done so, continued to hold her by the hands for half-a-minute; then drawing her towards him, kissed her forehead, and ejaculated, "The God of Israel bless you, even with the blessings of the promise, my dear bairn!"

It was not either in the nature or habits of David Deans to seem a fond father; nor was he often observed to experience, or at least to evince, that fulness of the heart which seeks to expand itself in tender expressions or caresses even to those who were dearest to him. On the contrary, he used to censure this as a degree of weakness in several of his neighbours, and particularly in poor widow Butler. It followed, however, from the rarity of such emotions in this self-denied and reserved man, that his children attached to occasional marks of his affection and approbation a degree of high interest and solemnity; well considering them as evidences of feelings which were only expressed when they became too intense for suppression or concealment.

With deep emotion, therefore, did he bestow, and his daughter receive, this benediction and paternal caress. "And you, my dear father," exclaimed Jeanie, when the door had closed upon the venerable old man, "may you have purchased and promised blessings multiplied upon you—upon *you*, who walk in this world as though you were not of the world, and hold all that it can give or take away but as the *midges* that the sun-blink brings out, and the evening wind sweeps away!"

She now made preparation for her night-walk. Her father slept in another part of the dwelling, and, regular in all his habits, seldom or never left his apartment when he had betaken himself to it for the evening. It was therefore easy for her to leave the house unobserved, so soon as the time approached at which she was to keep her appointment. But the step she was about to take had difficulties and terrors in her own eyes, though she had no reason to apprehend her father's interference. Her life had been spent in the quiet, uniform, and regular seclusion of their peaceful and monotonous household. The very hour which some damsels of the present day, as well of her own as of higher degree, would consider as the natural period of commencing an evening of pleasure, brought, in her opinion, awe and solemnity in it; and the resolution she had taken had a strange, daring, and adventurous character, to which she could hardly reconcile herself when the moment approached for putting it into execution. Her hands trembled as she snooded her fair hair beneath the riband, then the only ornament or cover which young unmarried women wore on their head, and as she adjusted the scarlet tartan screen or muffler made of plaid, which the Scottish women wore, much in the fashion of the black silk veils still a part of female dress in the Netherlands. A sense of impropriety as well as of danger pressed upon her, as she lifted the latch of her paternal mansion to leave it on so wild an expedition, and at so late an hour, unprotected, and without the knowledge of her natural guardian.

When she found herself abroad and in the open fields, additional subjects of apprehension crowded upon her. The dim cliffs and scattered rocks, interspersed with greensward, through which she had to pass to the place of appointment, as they glimmered before her in a clear autumn night, recalled to her memory many a deed of violence, which, according to tradition, had been done and suffered among them. In earlier days they had been the haunt of robbers and assassins, the memory of whose crimes is preserved in the various edicts which the council of the city, and even the parliament of Scotland, had passed for dispersing their bands, and ensuring safety to the lieges, so near the precincts of the city. The names of these criminals, and, of their atrocities, were still remembered in traditions of the scattered cottages and the neighbouring suburb. In latter times, as we have already noticed, the sequestered and broken character of the ground rendered it a fit theatre for duels and rencontres among the fiery youth of the period. Two or three of these incidents, all sanguinary, and one of them fatal in its termination, had happened since Deans came to live at St. Leonard's. His daughter's recollections, therefore, were of blood and horror as she pursued the small scarce-tracked solitary path, every step of which conveyed her to a greater distance from help, and deeper into the ominous seclusion of these unhallowed precincts.

As the moon began to peer forth on the scene with a doubtful, flitting, and solemn light, Jeanie's apprehensions took another turn, too peculiar to her rank and country to remain unnoticed. But to trace its origin will require another chapter.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

*The spirit I have seen
May be the devil. And the devil has power
To assume a pleasing shape.
Hamlet.*

Witchcraft and demonology, as we have already had occasion to remark, were at this period believed in by almost all ranks, but more especially among the stricter classes of Presbyterians, whose government, when their party were at the head of the state, had been much sullied by their eagerness to inquire into and persecute these imaginary crimes. Now, in this point of view, also, Saint Leonard's Crags and the adjacent Chase were a dreaded and ill-reputed district. Not only had witches held their meetings there, but even of very late years the enthusiast or impostor, mentioned in the *Pandaemonium* of Richard Bovet, Gentleman,* had, among the recesses of these romantic cliffs, found his way into the hidden retreats where the fairies revel in the bowels of the earth.

* Note I. The Fairy Boy of Leith.

With all these legends Jeanie Deans was too well acquainted to escape that strong impression which they usually make on the imagination. Indeed, relations of this ghostly kind had been familiar to her from her infancy, for they were the only relief which her father's conversation afforded from controversial argument, or the gloomy history of the strivings and testimonies, escapes, captures, tortures, and executions of those martyrs of the Covenant, with whom it was his chiefest boast to say he had been acquainted. In the recesses of mountains, in caverns, and in morasses, to which these persecuted enthusiasts were so ruthlessly pursued, they conceived they had often to contend with the visible assaults of the Enemy of mankind, as in the cities, and in the cultivated fields, they were exposed to those of the tyrannical government and their soldiery. Such were the terrors which made one of their gifted seers exclaim, when his companion returned to him, after having left him alone in a haunted cavern in Sorn in Galloway, "It is hard living in this world-incarnate devils above the earth, and devils under the earth! Satan has been here since ye went away, but I have dismissed him by resistance; we will be no more troubled with him this night." David Deans believed this, and many other such ghostly encounters and victories, on the faith of the Ansars, or auxiliaries of the banished prophets. This event was beyond David's remembrance. But he used to tell with great awe, yet not without a feeling of proud superiority to his auditors, how he himself had been present at a field-meeting at Crochmade, when the duty of the day was interrupted by the apparition of a tall black man, who, in the act of crossing a ford to join the congregation, lost ground, and was carried down apparently by the force of the stream. All were instantly at work to assist him, but with so little success, that ten or twelve stout men, who had hold of the rope which they had cast in to his aid, were rather in danger to be dragged into the stream, and lose their own lives, than likely to save that of the supposed perishing man. "But famous John Semple of Carspharn," David Deans used to say with exultation, "saw the whaup in the rape.—'Quit the rope,' he cried to us (for I that was but a callant had a hand o' the rape mysell), 'it is the Great Enemy! he will burn, but not drown; his design is to disturb the good wark, by raising wonder and confusion in your minds; to put off from your spirits all that ye hae heard and felt.'—Sae we let go the rape," said David, "and he went adown the water screeching and bullering like a Bull of Bashan, as he's ca'd in Scripture."*

* Note J. Intercourse of the Covenanters with the invisible world.

Trained in these and similar legends, it was no wonder that Jeanie began to feel an ill-defined apprehension, not merely of the phantoms which might beset her way, but of the quality, nature, and purpose of the being who had thus appointed her a meeting, at a place and hour of horror, and at a time when her mind must be necessarily full of those tempting and ensnaring thoughts of grief and despair, which were supposed to lay sufferers particularly open to the temptations of the Evil One. If such an idea had crossed even Butler's well-informed mind, it was calculated to make a much stronger impression upon hers. Yet firmly believing the possibility of an encounter so terrible to flesh and blood, Jeanie, with a degree of resolution of which we cannot sufficiently estimate the merit, because the incredulity of the age has rendered us strangers to the nature and extent of her feelings, persevered in her determination not to omit an opportunity of doing something towards saving her sister, although, in the attempt to avail herself of it, she might be exposed to dangers so dreadful to her imagination. So, like Christiana in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, when traversing with a timid yet resolved step the terrors of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, she glided on by rock and stone, "now in glimmer and now in gloom," as her path lay through moonlight or shadow, and endeavoured to overpower the suggestions of fear, sometimes by fixing her mind upon the distressed condition of her sister, and the duty she lay under to afford her aid, should that be in her power; and more frequently by recurring in mental prayer to the protection of that Being to whom night is as noon-day.

Thus drowning at one time her fears by fixing her mind on a subject of overpowering interest, and arguing them down at others by referring herself to the protection of the Deity, she at length approached the place assigned for this mysterious conference.

It was situated in the depth of the valley behind Salisbury Crags, which has for a background the north-western shoulder of the mountain called Arthur's Seat, on whose descent still remain the ruins of what was once a chapel, or hermitage, dedicated to St. Anthony the Eremit. A better site for such a building could hardly have been selected; for the chapel, situated among the rude and pathless cliffs, lies in a desert, even in the immediate vicinity of a rich, populous, and tumultuous capital: and the hum of the city might mingle with the orisons of the recluses, conveying as little of worldly interest as if it had been the roar of the distant ocean. Beneath the steep ascent on which these ruins are still visible, was, and perhaps is still pointed out, the place where the wretch Nichol Muschat, who has been already mentioned in these pages, had closed a long scene of cruelty towards his unfortunate wife, by murdering her, with circumstances of uncommon barbarity.*

* See Note G. Muschat's Cairn.

The execration in which the man's crime was held extended itself to the place where it was perpetrated, which was marked by a small *cairn*, or heap of stones, composed of those which each chance passenger had thrown there in testimony of abhorrence, and on the principle, it would seem, of the ancient British malediction, "May you have a cairn for your burial-place!"

As our heroine approached this ominous and unhallowed spot, she paused and looked to the moon, now rising broad in the north-west, and shedding a more distinct light than it had afforded during her walk thither. Eyeing the planet for a moment, she then slowly and fearfully turned her head towards the cairn, from which it was at first averted. She was at first disappointed. Nothing was visible beside the little pile of stones, which shone grey in the moonlight. A multitude of confused suggestions rushed on her mind. Had her correspondent deceived her, and broken his appointment?—was he too tardy at the appointment he had made?—or had some strange turn of fate prevented him from appearing as he proposed?—or, if he were an unearthly being, as her secret apprehensions suggested, was it his object merely to delude her with false hopes, and put her to unnecessary toil and terror, according to the nature, as she had heard, of those wandering demons?—or did he purpose to blast her with the sudden horrors of his presence when she had come close to the place of rendezvous? These anxious reflections did not prevent her approaching to the cairn with a pace that, though slow, was determined.

When she was within two yards of the heap of stones, a figure rose suddenly up from behind it, and Jeanie scarce forbore to scream aloud at what seemed the realisation of the most frightful of her anticipations. She constrained herself to silence, however, and, making a dead pause, suffered the figure to open the conversation, which he did, by asking, in a voice which agitation rendered tremulous and hollow, "Are you the sister of that ill-fated young woman?"

"I am—I am the sister of Effie Deans!" exclaimed Jeanie. "And as ever you hope God will hear you at your need, tell me, if you can tell, what can be done to save her!"

"I do *not* hope God will hear me at my need," was the singular answer. "I do not deserve—I do not expect he will." This desperate language he uttered in a tone calmer than that with which he had at first spoken, probably because the shock of first addressing her was what he felt most difficult to overcome. Jeanie remained mute with horror to hear language expressed so utterly foreign to all which she had ever been acquainted with, that it sounded in her ears rather like that

of a fiend than of a human being. The stranger pursued his address to her, without seeming to notice her surprise. "You see before you a wretch, predestined to evil here and hereafter."

"For the sake of Heaven, that hears and sees us," said Jeanie, "dinna speak in this desperate fashion! The gospel is sent to the chief of sinners—to the most miserable among the miserable."

"Then should I have my own share therein," said the stranger, "if you call it sinful to have been the destruction of the mother that bore me—of the friend that loved me—of the woman that trusted me—of the innocent child that was born to me. If to have done all this is to be a sinner, and survive it is to be miserable, then am I most guilty and most miserable indeed."

"Then you are the wicked cause of my sister's ruin?" said Jeanie, with a natural touch of indignation expressed in her tone of voice.

"Curse me for it, if you will," said the stranger; "I have well deserved it at your hand."

"It is fitter for me," said Jeanie, "to pray to God to forgive you."

"Do as you will, how you will, or what you will," he replied, with vehemence; "only promise to obey my directions, and save your sister's life."

"I must first know," said Jeanie, "the means you would have me use in her behalf."

"No!—you must first swear—solemnly swear, that you will employ them when I make them known to you."

"Surely, it is needless to swear that I will do all that is lawful to a Christian to save the life of my sister?"

"I will have no reservation!" thundered the stranger; "lawful or unlawful, Christian or heathen, you shall swear to do my hest, and act by my counsel, or—you little know whose wrath you provoke!"

"I will think on what you have said," said Jeanie, who began to get much alarmed at the frantic vehemence of his manner, and disputed in her own mind, whether she spoke to a maniac, or an apostate spirit incarnate—"I will think on what you say, and let you ken to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the man with a laugh of scorn—"And where will I be to-morrow?—or, where will you be to-night, unless you swear to walk by my counsel?—there was one accursed deed done at this spot before now; and there shall be another to match it, unless you yield up to my guidance body and soul."

As he spoke, he offered a pistol at the unfortunate young woman. She neither fled nor fainted, but sunk on her knees, and asked him to spare her life.

"Is that all you have to say?" said the unmoved ruffian.

"Do not dip your hands in the blood of a defenceless creature that has trusted to you," said Jeanie, still on her knees.

"Is that all you can say for your life?—Have you no promise to give?—Will you destroy your sister, and compel me to shed more blood?"

"I can promise nothing," said Jeanie, "which is unlawful for a Christian."

He cocked the weapon, and held it towards her.

"May God forgive you!" she said, pressing her hands forcibly against her eyes.

"D—n!" muttered the man; and, turning aside from her, he uncocked the pistol, and replaced it in his pocket—"I am a villain," he said, "steeped in guilt and wretchedness, but not wicked enough to do you any harm! I only wished to terrify you into my measures—She hears me not—she is gone!—Great God! what a wretch am I become!"

As he spoke, she recovered herself from an agony which partook of the bitterness of death; and, in a minute or two, through the strong exertion of her natural sense and courage, collected herself sufficiently to understand he intended her no personal injury.

"No!" he repeated; "I would not add to the murder of your sister, and of her child, that of any one belonging to her!—Mad, frantic, as I am, and unrestrained by either fear or mercy, given up to the possession of an evil being, and forsaken by all that is good, I would not hurt you, were the world offered me for a bribe! But, for the sake of all that is dear to you, swear you will follow my counsel. Take this weapon, shoot me through the head, and with your own hand revenge your sister's wrong, only follow the course—the only course, by which her life can be saved."

"Alas! is she innocent or guilty?"

"She is guiltless—guiltless of every thing, but of having trusted a villain!—Yet, had it not been for those that were worse than I am—yes, worse than I am, though I am bad indeed—this misery had not befallen."

"And my sister's child—does it live?" said Jeanie.

"No; it was murdered—the new-born infant was barbarously murdered," he uttered in a low, yet stern and sustained voice.—"but," he added hastily, "not by her knowledge or consent."

"Then, why cannot the guilty be brought to justice, and the innocent freed?"

"Torment me not with questions which can serve no purpose," he sternly replied—"The deed was done by those who are far enough from pursuit, and safe enough from discovery!—No one can save Effie but yourself."

"Woe's me! how is it in my power?" asked Jeanie, in despondency.

"Hearken to me!—You have sense—you can apprehend my meaning—I will trust you. Your sister is innocent of the crime charged against her—"

"Thank God for that!" said Jeanie.

"Be still and hearken!—The person who assisted her in her illness murdered the child; but it was without the mother's knowledge or consent—She is therefore guiltless, as guiltless as the unhappy innocent, that but gasped a few minutes in this unhappy world—the better was its hap, to be so soon at rest. She is innocent as that infant, and yet she must die—it is impossible to clear her of the law!"

"Cannot the wretches be discovered, and given up to punishment?" said Jeanie.

"Do you think you will persuade those who are hardened in guilt to die to save another?—Is that the reed you would lean to?"

"But you said there was a remedy," again gasped out the terrified young woman.

"There is," answered the stranger, "and it is in your own hands. The blow which the law aims cannot be broken by directly encountering it, but it may be turned aside. You saw your sister during the period preceding the birth of her child—what is so natural as that she should have mentioned her condition to you? The doing so would, as their cant goes, take the case from under the statute, for it removes the quality of concealment. I know their jargon, and have had sad cause to know it; and the quality of concealment is essential to this statutory offence.*

* Note K. Child Murder.

Nothing is so natural as that Effie should have mentioned her condition to you—think—reflect—I am positive that she did."

"Woe's me!" said Jeanie, "she never spoke to me on the subject, but grat sorely when I spoke to her about her altered looks, and the change on her spirits."

"You asked her questions on the subject?" he said eagerly. "You *must* remember her answer was, a confession that she had been ruined by a villain—yes, lay a strong emphasis on that—a cruel false villain call it—any other name is unnecessary; and that she bore under her bosom the consequences of his guilt and her folly; and that he had assured her he would provide safely for her approaching illness.—Well he kept his word!" These last words he spoke as if it were to himself, and with a violent gesture of self-accusation, and then calmly proceeded, "You will remember all this?—That is all that is necessary to be said."

"But I cannot remember," answered Jeanie, with simplicity, "that which Effie never told me."

"Are you so dull—so very dull of apprehension?" he exclaimed, suddenly grasping her arm, and holding it firm in his hand. "I tell you" (speaking between his teeth, and under his breath, but with great energy), "you *must* remember that she told you all this, whether she ever said a syllable of it or no. You must repeat this tale, in which there is no falsehood, except in so far as it was not told to you, before these Justices—Justiciary—whatever they call their bloodthirsty court, and save your sister from being murdered, and them from becoming murderers. Do not hesitate—I pledge life and salvation, that in saying what I have said, you will only speak the simple truth."

"But," replied Jeanie, whose judgment was too accurate not to see the sophistry of this argument, "I shall be man-sworn in the very thing in which my testimony is wanted, for it is the concealment for which poor Effie is blamed, and you would make me tell a falsehood anent it."

"I see," he said, "my first suspicions of you were right, and that you will let your sister, innocent, fair, and guiltless, except in trusting a villain, die the death of a murderess, rather than bestow the breath of your mouth and the sound of your voice to save her."

"I wad ware the best blood in my body to keep her skaithless," said Jeanie, weeping in bitter agony, "but I canna change right into wrang, or make that true which is false."

"Foolish, hardhearted girl," said the stranger, "are you afraid of what they may do to you? I tell you, even the retainers of the law, who course life as greyhounds do hares, will rejoice at the escape of a creature so young—so beautiful, that they will not suspect your tale; that, if they did suspect it, they would consider you as deserving, not only of forgiveness, but of praise for your natural affection."

"It is not man I fear," said Jeanie, looking upward; "the God, whose name I must call on to witness the truth of what I say, he will know the falsehood."

"And he will know the motive," said the stranger, eagerly; "he will know that you are doing this—not for lucre of gain, but to save the life of the innocent, and prevent the commission of a worse crime than that which the law seeks to avenge."

"He has given us a law," said Jeanie, "for the lamp of our path; if we stray from it we err against knowledge—I may not do evil, even that good may come out of it. But you—you that ken all this to be true, which I must take on your word—you that, if I understood what you said e'en now, promised her shelter and protection in her travail, why do not *you* step forward, and bear leal and soothfast evidence in her behalf, as ye may with a clear conscience?"

"To whom do you talk of a clear conscience, woman?" said he, with a sudden fierceness which renewed her terrors,—*"to me?"*—I have not known one for many a year. Bear witness in her behalf?—a proper witness, that even to speak these few words to a woman of so little consequence as yourself, must choose such an hour and such a place as this. When you see owls and bats fly abroad, like larks, in the sunshine, you may expect to see such as I am in the assemblies of men.—Hush—listen to that."

A voice was heard to sing one of those wild and monotonous strains so common in Scotland, and to which the natives of that country chant their old ballads. The sound ceased—then came nearer, and was renewed; the stranger listened attentively, still holding Jeanie by the arm (as she stood by him in motionless terror), as if to prevent her interrupting the strain by speaking or stirring. When the sounds were renewed, the words were distinctly audible:

*"When the glede's in the blue cloud,
The lavrock lies still;
When the hound's in' the green-wood,
The hind keeps the hill."*

The person who sung kept a strained and powerful voice at its highest pitch, so that it could be heard at a very considerable distance. As the song ceased, they might hear a stifled sound, as of steps and whispers of persons approaching them. The song was again raised, but the tune was changed:

*"O sleep ye sound, Sir James, she said,
When ye suld rise and ride;
There's twenty men, wi' bow and blade,
Are seeking where ye hide."*

"I dare stay no longer," said the stranger; "return home, or remain till they come up—you have nothing to fear—but do not tell you saw me—your sister's fate is in your hands." So saying, he turned from her, and with a swift, yet cautiously noiseless step, plunged into the darkness on the side most remote from the sounds which they heard approaching, and was soon lost to her sight. Jeanie remained by the cairn terrified beyond expression, and uncertain whether she ought to fly homeward with all the speed she could exert, or wait the approach of those who were advancing towards her. This uncertainty detained her so long, that she now distinctly saw two or three figures already so near to her, that a precipitate flight would have been equally fruitless and impolitic.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

*She speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up to fit their own thoughts.
Hamlet.*

Like the digressive poet Ariosto, I find myself under the necessity of connecting the branches of my story, by taking up the adventures of another of the characters, and bringing them down to the point at which we have left those of Jeanie Deans. It is not, perhaps, the most artificial way of telling a story, but it has the advantage of sparing the necessity of resuming what a knitter (if stocking-looms have left such a person in the land) might call our "dropped stitches;" a labour in which the author generally toils much, without getting credit for his pains.

"I could risk a sma' wad," said the clerk to the magistrate, "that this rascal Ratcliffe, if he were insured of his neck's safety, could do more than any ten of our police-people and constables to help us to get out of this scrape of Porteous's. He is weel acquent wi' a' the smugglers, thieves, and banditti about Edinburgh; and, indeed, he may be called the father of a' the misdoers in Scotland, for he has passed among them for these twenty years by the name of Daddie Rat."

"A bonny sort of a scoundrel," replied the magistrate, "to expect a place under the city!"

"Begging your honour's pardon," said the city's procurator-fiscal, upon whom the duties of superintendent of police devolved, "Mr. Fairscrieve is perfectly in the right. It is just sic as Ratcliffe that the town needs in my department; an' if sae be that he's disposed to turn his knowledge to the city service, yell no find a better man.—Ye'll get nae saints to be searchers for uncustomed goods, or for thieves and sic like;—and your decent sort of men, religious professors, and broken tradesmen, that are put into the like o' sic trust, can do nae gude ava. They are feared for this, and they are scrupulous about that, and they arena free to tell a lie, though it may be for the benefit of the city; and they dinna like to be out at irregular hours, and in a dark cauld night, and they like a clout ower the crown far waur; and sae between the fear o' God, and the fear o' man, and the fear o' getting a sair throat, or sair banes, there's a dozen o' our city-folk, baith waiters, and officers, and constables, that can find out naething but a wee bit skulduddery for the benefit of the Kirk treasurer. Jock Porteous, that's stiff and stark, puir fallow, was worth a dozen o' them; for he never had any fears, or scruples, or doubts, or conscience, about anything your honours bade him."

"He was a gude servant o' the town," said the Bailie, "though he was an ower free-living man. But if you really think this rascal Ratcliffe could do us ony service in discovering these malefactors, I would insure him life, reward, and promotion. It's an awsome thing this mischance for the city, Mr. Fairscrieve. It will be very ill taen wi' abune stairs. Queen Caroline, God bless her! is a woman—at least I judge sae, and it's nae treason to speak my mind sae far—and ye maybe ken as weel as I do, for ye hae a housekeeper, though ye arena a married man, that women are wilfu', and downa bide a slight. And it will sound ill in her ears, that sic a confused mistake suld come to pass, and naebody sae muckle as to be put into the Tolbooth about it."

"If ye thought that, sir," said the procurator-fiscal, "we could easily clap into the prison a few blackguards upon suspicion. It will have a gude active look, and I hae aye plenty on my list, that wadna be a hair the waur of a week or twa's imprisonment; and if ye thought it no strictly just, ye could be just the easier wi' them the neist time they did onything to deserve it; they arena the sort to be lang o' gieing ye an opportunity to clear scores wi' them on that account."

"I doubt that will hardly do in this case, Mr. Sharpitlaw," returned the town-clerk; "they'll run their letters,* and be adrift again, before ye ken where ye are."

* A Scottish form of procedure, answering, in some respects, to the English Habeas Corpus.

"I will speak to the Lord Provost," said the magistrate, "about Ratcliffe's business. Mr. Sharpitlaw, you will go with me, and receive instructions—something may be made too out of this story of Butler's and his unknown gentleman—I know no business any man has to swagger about in the King's Park, and call himself the devil, to the terror of honest folks, who dinna care to hear mair about the devil than is said from the pulpit on the Sabbath. I cannot think the preacher himsell wad be heading the mob, though the time has been, they hae been as forward in a bruilzie as their neighbours."

"But these times are lang by," said Mr. Sharpitlaw. "In my father's time, there was mair search for silenced ministers about the Bow-head and the Covenant Close, and all the tents of Kedar, as they ca'd the dwellings o' the godly in those days, than there's now for thieves and vagabonds in the Laigh Calton and the back o' the Canongate. But that time's weel by, an it bide. And if the Bailie will get me directions and authority from the Provost, I'll speak wi' Daddie Rat mysell; for I'm thinking I'll make mair out o' him than ye'll do."

Mr. Sharpitlaw, being necessarily a man of high trust, was accordingly empowered, in the course of the day, to make such arrangements as might seem in the emergency most advantageous for the Good Town. He went to the jail accordingly, and saw Ratcliffe in private.

The relative positions of a police-officer and a professed thief bear a different complexion, according to circumstances. The most obvious simile of a hawk pouncing upon his prey is often least applicable. Sometimes the guardian of justice has the air of a cat watching a mouse, and, while he suspends his purpose of springing upon the pilferer, takes care so to calculate his motions that he shall not get beyond his power. Sometimes, more passive still, he uses the art of fascination ascribed to the rattlesnake, and contents himself with glaring on the victim, through all his devious flutterings; certain that his terror, confusion, and disorder of ideas, will bring him into his jaws at last. The interview between Ratcliffe and Sharpitlaw had an aspect different from all these. They sat for five minutes silent, on opposite sides of a small table, and looked fixedly at each other, with a sharp, knowing, and alert cast of countenance, not unmingled with an inclination to laugh, and resembled more than anything else, two dogs, who, preparing for a game at romps, are seen to couch down, and remain in that posture for a little time, watching each other's movements, and waiting which shall begin the game.

"So, Mr. Ratcliffe," said the officer, conceiving it suited his dignity to speak first, "you give up business, I find?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ratcliffe; "I shall be on that lay nae mair—and I think that will save your folk some trouble, Mr. Sharpitlaw?"

"Which Jock Daigleish" (then finisher of the law* in the Scottish metropolis) "wad save them as easily," returned the procurator-fiscal.

* [Among the flying leaves of the period, there is one called "Sutherland's Lament for the loss of his post,—with his advice, to John Daglees his successor." He was whipped and banished 25th July 1722. There is another, called the Speech and dying words of John Dalgleish, lockman *alias* hangman of Edinburgh, containing these lines:—

*Death, I've a Favour for to beg,
That ye wad only gie a Fleg,
And spare my Life;
As I did to ill-hanged Megg,
The Webster's Wife."*

"Ay; if I waited in the Tolbooth here to have him fit my cravat—but that's an idle way o' speaking, Mr. Sharpitlaw."

"Why, I suppose you know you are under sentence of death, Mr. Ratcliffe?" replied Mr. Sharpitlaw.

"Aye, so are a', as that worthy minister said in the Tolbooth Kirk the day Robertson wan off; but naebody kens when it will be executed. Gude faith, he had better reason to say sae than he dreamed off, before the play was played out that morning!"

"This Robertson," said Sharpitlaw, in a lower and something like a confidential tone, "d'ye ken, Rat—that is, can ye gie us ony inkling where he is to be heard tell o'?"

"Troth, Mr. Sharpitlaw, I'll be frank wi' ye; Robertson is rather a cut abune me—a wild deevil he was, and mony a daft prank he played; but except the Collector's job that Wilson led him into, and some tuilzies about run goods wi' the gaugers and the waiters, he never did onything that came near our line o' business."

"Umph! that's singular, considering the company he kept."

"Fact, upon my honour and credit," said Ratcliffe, gravely. "He keepit out o' our little bits of affairs, and that's mair than Wilson did; I hae dune business wi' Wilson afore now. But the lad will come on in time; there's nae fear o' him; naebody will live the life he has led, but what he'll come to sooner or later."

"Who or what is he, Ratcliffe? you know, I suppose?" said Sharpitlaw.

"He's better born, I judge, than he cares to let on; he's been a soldier, and he has been a play-actor, and I watna what he has been or hasna been, for as young as he is, sae that it had daffing and nonsense about it."

"Pretty pranks he has played in his time, I suppose?"

"Ye may say that," said Ratcliffe, with a sardonic smile; "and" (touching his nose) "a deevil amang the lasses."

"Like enough," said Sharpitlaw. "Weel, Ratcliffe, I'll no stand niffering wi' ye; ye ken the way that favour's gotten in my office; ye maun be usefu'."

"Certainly, sir, to the best of my power—naething for naething—I ken the rule of the office," said the ex-depredator.

"Now the principal thing in hand e'en now," said the official person, "is the job of Porteous's; an ye can gie us a lift—why, the inner turnkey's office to begin wi', and the captainship in time—ye understand my meaning?"

"Ay, troth do I, sir; a wink's as gude as a nod to a blind horse; but Jock Porteous's job—Lord help ye!—I was under sentence the hail time. God! but I couldna help laughing when I heard Jock skirting for mercy in the lads' hands. Mony a het skin ye hae gien me, neighbour, thought I, tak ye what's gaun: time about's fair play; ye'll ken now what hanging's gude for."

"Come, come, this is all nonsense, Rat," said the procurator. "Ye canna creep out at that hole, lad; you must speak to the point—you understand me—if you want favour; gif-gaf makes gude friends, ye ken."

"But how can I speak to the point, as your honour ca's it," said Ratcliffe, demurely, and with an air of great simplicity, "when ye ken I was under sentence and in the strong room a' the while the job was going on?"

"And how can we turn ye loose on the public again, Daddie Rat, unless ye do or say something to deserve it?"

"Well, then, d—n it!" answered the criminal, "since it maun be sae, I saw Geordie Robertson among the boys that brake the jail; I suppose that will do me some gude?"

"That's speaking to the purpose, indeed," said the office-bearer; "and now, Rat, where think ye we'll find him?"

"Deil haet o' me kens," said Ratcliffe; "he'll no likely gang back to ony o' his auld howffs; he'll be off the country by this time. He has gude friends some gate or other, for a' the life he's led; he's been weel educate."

"He'll grace the gallows the better," said Mr. Sharpitlaw; "a desperate dog, to murder an officer of the city for doing his duty! Wha kens wha's turn it might be next?—But you saw him plainly?"

"As plainly as I see you."

"How was he dressed?" said Sharpitlaw.

"I couldna weel see; something of a woman's bit mutch on his head; but ye never saw sic a ca'-throw. Ane couldna hae een to a' thing."

"But did he speak to no one?" said Sharpitlaw.

"They were a' speaking and gabbling through other," said Ratcliffe, who was obviously unwilling to carry his evidence farther than he could possibly help.

"This will not do, Ratcliffe," said the procurator; "you must speak *out—out—out*," tapping the table emphatically, as he repeated that impressive monosyllable.

"It's very hard, sir," said the prisoner; "and but for the under-turnkey's place—"

"And the reversion of the captaincy—the captaincy of the Tolbooth, man—that is, in case of gude behaviour."

"Ay, ay," said Ratcliffe, "gude behaviour!—there's the deevil. And then it's waiting for dead folk's shoon into the bargain."

"But Robertson's head will weigh something," said Sharpitlaw; "something gey and heavy, Rat; the town maun show cause—that's right and reason—and then ye'll hae freedom to enjoy your gear honestly."

"I dinna ken," said Ratcliffe; "it's a queer way of beginning the trade of honesty—but deil ma care. Weel, then, I heard and saw him speak to the wench Effie Deans, that's up there for child-murder."

"The deil ye did? Rat, this is finding a mare's nest wi' a witness.—And the man that spoke to Butler in the Park, and that was to meet wi' Jeanie Deans at Muschat's Cairn—whew! lay that and that together? As sure as I live he's been the father of the lassie's wean."

"There hae been waur guesses than that, I'm thinking," observed Ratcliffe, turning his quid of tobacco in his cheek, and squirting out the juice. "I heard something a while syne about his drawing up wi' a bonny quean about the Pleasaunts, and that it was a' Wilson could do to keep him frae marrying her."

Here a city officer entered, and told Sharpitlaw that they had the woman in custody whom he had directed them to bring before him.

"It's little matter now," said he, "the thing is taking another turn; however, George, ye may bring her in."

The officer retired, and introduced, upon his return, a tall, strapping wench of eighteen or twenty, dressed, fantastically, in a sort of blue riding-jacket, with tarnished lace, her hair clubbed like that of a man, a Highland bonnet, and a bunch of broken feathers, a riding-skirt (or petticoat) of scarlet camlet, embroidered with tarnished flowers. Her features were coarse and masculine, yet at a little distance, by dint of very bright wild-looking black eyes, an aquiline nose, and a commanding profile, appeared rather handsome. She flourished the switch she held in her hand, dropped a courtesy as low as a lady at a birth-night introduction, recovered herself seemingly according to Touchstone's directions to Audrey, and opened the conversation without waiting till any questions were asked.

"God gie your honour gude-e'en, and mony o' them, bonny Mr. Sharpitlaw!—Gude-e'en to ye, Daddie Ratton—they tauld me ye were hanged, man; or did ye get out o' John Dalgleish's hands like half-hangit Maggie Dickson?"

"Whisht, ye daft jaud," said Ratcliffe, "and hear what's said to ye."

"Wi' a' my heart, Ratton. Great preferment for poor Madge to be brought up the street wi' a grand man, wi' a coat a' passemented wi' worset-lace, to speak wi' provosts, and bailies, and town-clerks, and prokitors, at this time o' day—and the hail town looking at me too—This is honour on earth for ance!"

"Ay, Madge," said Mr. Sharpitlaw, in a coaxing tone; "and ye're dressed out in your braws, I see; these are not your every-days' claihs ye have on."

"Deil be in my fingers, then!" said Madge—"Eh, sirs!" (observing Butler come into the apartment), "there's a minister in the Tolbooth—wha will ca' it a graceless place now?—I'se warrant he's in for the gude auld cause—but it's be nae cause o' mine," and off she went into a song—

"Hey for cavaliers, ho for cavaliers, Dub a dub, dub a dub, Have at old Beelzebub,— Oliver's squeaking for fear."

"Did you ever see that mad woman before?" said Sharpitlaw to Butler.

"Not to my knowledge, sir," replied Butler.

"I thought as much," said the procurator-fiscal, looking towards Ratcliffe, who answered his glance with a nod of acquiescence and intelligence.—

"But that is Madge Wildfire, as she calls herself," said the man of law to Butler.

"Ay, that I am," said Madge, "and that I have been ever since I was something better—Heigh ho!"—(and something like melancholy dwelt on her features for a minute)—"But I canna mind when that was—it was lang syne, at any rate, and I'll ne'er fash my thumb about it.—

I glance like the wildfire through country and town;

I'm seen on the causeway—I'm seen on the down;

The lightning that flashes so bright and so free,

Is scarcely so blithe or so bonny as me."

"Hand your tongue, ye skirling limmer!" said the officer who had acted as master of the ceremonies to this extraordinary performer, and who was rather scandalised at the freedom of her demeanour before a person of Mr. Sharpitlaw's importance—"haud your tongue, or I'se gie ye something to skirl for!"

"Let her alone, George," said Sharpitlaw, "dinna put her out o' tune; I hae some questions to ask her—But first, Mr. Butler, take another look of her."

"Do sae, minister—do sae," cried Madge; "I am as weel worth looking at as ony book in your aught.—And I can say the single carritch, and the double carritch, and justification, and effectual calling, and the assembly of divines at Westminster, that is" (she added in a low tone), "I could say them ance—but it's lang syne—and ane forgets, ye ken." And poor Madge heaved another deep sigh.

"Weel, sir," said Mr. Sharpitlaw to Butler, "what think ye now?"

"As I did before," said Butler; "that I never saw the poor demented creature in my life before."

"Then she is not the person whom you said the rioters last night described as Madge Wildfire?"

"Certainly not," said Butler. "They may be near the same height, for they are both tall, but I see little other resemblance."

"Their dress, then, is not alike?" said Sharpitlaw.

"Not in the least," said Butler.

"Madge, my bonny woman," said Sharpitlaw, in the same coaxing manner, "what did ye do wi' your ilka-day's claise yesterday?"

"I dinna mind," said Madge.

"Where was ye yesterday at e'en, Madge?"

"I dinna mind ony thing about yesterday," answered Madge; "ae day is eneugh for ony body to wun ower wi' at a time, and ower muckle sometimes."

"But maybe, Madge, ye wad mind something about it, if I was to gie ye this half-crown?" said Sharpitlaw, taking out the piece of money.

"That might gar me laugh, but it couldna gar me mind."

"But, Madge," continued Sharpitlaw, "were I to send you to the workhouse in Leith Wynd, and gar Jock Daigleish lay the tawse on your back—"

"That wad gar me greet," said Madge, sobbing, "but it couldna gar me mind, ye ken."

"She is ower far past reasonable folks' motives, sir," said Ratcliffe, "to mind siller, or John Daigleish, or the cat-and-nine-tails either; but I think I could gar her tell us something."

"Try her, then, Ratcliffe," said Sharpitlaw, "for I am tired of her crazy pate, and be d—d to her."

"Madge," said Ratcliffe, "hae ye ony joes now?"

"An ony body ask ye, say ye dinna ken.—Set him to be speaking of my joes, auld Daddie Ratton!"

"I dare say, ye hae deil ane?"

"See if I haena then," said Madge, with the toss of the head of affronted beauty—"there's Rob the Ranter, and Will Fleming, and then there's Geordie Robertson, lad—that's Gentleman Geordie—what think ye o' that?"

Ratcliffe laughed, and, winking to the procurator-fiscal, pursued the inquiry in his own way. "But, Madge, the lads only like ye when ye hae on your braws—they wadna touch you wi' a pair o' tangs when you are in your auld ilka-day rags."

"Ye're a leeing auld sorrow then," replied the fair one; "for Gentle Geordie Robertson put my ilka-day's claise on his ain bonny sell yestreen, and gaed a' through the town wi' them; and gawsie and grand he lookit, like ony queen in the land."

"I dinna believe a word o't," said Ratcliffe, with another wink to the procurator. "Thae duds were a' o' the colour o' moonshine in the water, I'm thinking, Madge—The gown wad be a sky-blue scarlet, I'se warrant ye?"

"It was nae sic thing," said Madge, whose unretentive memory let out, in the eagerness of contradiction, all that she would have most wished to keep concealed, had her judgment been equal to her inclination. "It was neither scarlet nor sky-blue, but my ain auld brown threshie-coat of a short-gown, and my mother's auld mutch, and my red rokelay—and he gied me a croun and a kiss for the use o' them, blessing on his bonny face—though it's been a dear ane to me."

"And where did he change his clothes again, hinnie?" said Sharpitlaw, in his most conciliatory manner.

"The procurator's spoiled a'," observed Ratcliffe, drily. And it was even so; for the question, put in so direct a shape, immediately awakened Madge to the propriety of being reserved upon those very topics on which Ratcliffe had indirectly seduced her to become communicative.

"What was't ye were speering at us, sir?" she resumed, with an appearance of stolidity so speedily assumed, as showed there was a good deal of knavery mixed with her folly.

"I asked you," said the procurator, "at what hour, and to what place, Robertson brought back your clothes."

"Robertson?—Lord hand a care o' us! what Robertson?"

"Why, the fellow we were speaking of, Gentle Geordie, as you call him."

"Geordie Gentle!" answered Madge, with well-feigned amazement—"I dinna ken naeboddy they ca' Geordie Gentle."

"Come, my jo," said Sharpitlaw, "this will not do; you must tell us what you did with these clothes of yours."

Madge Wildfire made no answer, unless the question may seem connected with the snatch of a song with which she indulged the embarrassed investigator:—

"What did ye wi' the bridal ring—bridal ring—bridal ring?"

What did ye wi' your wedding ring, ye little cutty quean, O?

I gied it till a sodger, a sodger, a sodger,

I gied it till a sodger, an auld true love o' mine, O."

Of all the madwomen who have sung and said, since the days of Hamlet the Dane, if Ophelia be the most affecting, Madge Wildfire was the most provoking.

The procurator-fiscal was in despair. "I'll take some measures with this d—d Bess of Bedlam," said he, "that shall make her find her tongue."

"Wi' your favour, sir," said Ratcliffe, "better let her mind settle a little—Ye have aye made out something."

"True," said the official person; "a brown short-gown, mutch, red rokelay—that agrees with your Madge Wildfire, Mr. Butler?" Butler agreed that it did so. "Yes, there was a sufficient motive for taking this crazy creature's dress and name, while he was about such a job."

"And I am free to say *now*," said Ratcliffe

"When you see it has come out without you," interrupted Sharpitlaw.

"Just sae, sir," reiterated Ratcliffe. "I am free to say now, since it's come out otherwise, that these were the clothes I saw Robertson wearing last night in the jail, when he was at the head of the rioters."

"That's direct evidence," said Sharpitlaw; "stick to that, Rat—I will report favourably of you to the provost, for I have business for you to-night. It wears late; I must home and get a snack, and I'll be back in the evening. Keep Madge with you, Ratcliffe, and try to get her into a good tune again." So saying he left the prison.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

And some they whistled—and some they sang,

And some did loudly say,

Whenever Lord Barnard's horn it blew,

"Away, Musgrave away!"

Ballad of Little Musgrave.

When the man of office returned to the Heart of Mid-Lothian, he resumed his conference with Ratcliffe, of whose experience and assistance he now held himself secure. "You must speak with this wench, Rat—this Effie Deans—you must sift her a wee bit; for as sure as a tether she will ken Robertson's haunts—till her, Rat—till her without delay."

"Craving your pardon, Mr. Sharpitlaw," said the turnkey elect, "that's what I am not free to do."

"Free to do, man? what the deil ails ye now?—I thought we had settled a' that?"

"I dinna ken, sir," said Ratcliffe; "I hae spoken to this Effie—she's strange to this place and to its ways, and to a' our ways, Mr. Sharpitlaw; and she greets, the silly tawpie, and she's breaking her heart already about this wild chield; and were she the mean's o' taking him, she wad break it outright."

"She wunna hae time, lad," said Sharpitlaw; "the woodie will hae it's ain o' her before that—a woman's heart takes a lang time o' breaking."

"That's according to the stuff they are made o' sir," replied Ratcliffe—"But to make a lang tale short, I canna undertake the job. It gangs against my conscience."

"Your conscience, Rat?" said Sharpitlaw, with a sneer, which the reader will probably think very natural upon the occasion.

"Ou ay, sir," answered Ratcliffe, calmly, "just my conscience; a'boddy has a conscience, though it may be ill wunnin at it. I think mine's as weel out o' the gate as maist folk's are; and yet it's just like the noop of my elbow, it whiles gets a bit dirl on a corner."

"Weel, Rat," replied Sharpitlaw, "since ye are nice, I'll speak to the hussy mysell."

Sharpitlaw, accordingly, caused himself to be introduced into the little dark apartment tenanted by the unfortunate Effie Deans. The poor girl was seated on her little flock-bed, plunged in a deep reverie. Some food stood on the table, of a quality better than is usually supplied to prisoners, but it was untouched. The person under whose care she was more particularly placed, said, "that sometimes she tasted naething from the tae end of the four-and-twenty hours to the t'other, except a drink of water."

Sharpitlaw took a chair, and, commanding the turnkey to retire, he opened the conversation, endeavouring to throw into his tone and countenance as much commiseration as they were capable of expressing, for the one was sharp and harsh, the other sly, acute, and selfish.

"How's a' wi' ye, Effie?—How d'ye find yoursell, hinny?"

A deep sigh was the only answer.

"Are the folk civil to ye, Effie?—it's my duty to inquire."

"Very civil, sir," said Effie, compelling herself to answer, yet hardly knowing what she said.

"And your victuals," continued Sharpitlaw, in the same condoling tone,— "do you get what you like?—or is there anything you would particularly fancy, as your health seems but silly?"

"It's a' very weel, sir, I thank ye," said the poor prisoner, in a tone how different from the sportive vivacity of those of the Lily of St. Leonard's!—"it's a' very gude—ower gude for me."

"He must have been a great villain, Effie, who brought you to this pass," said Sharpitlaw.

The remark was dictated partly by a natural feeling, of which even he could not divest himself, though accustomed to practise on the passions of others, and keep a most heedful guard over his own, and partly by his wish to introduce the sort of conversation which might, best serve his immediate purpose. Indeed, upon the present occasion, these mixed motives of feeling and cunning harmonised together wonderfully; for, said Sharpitlaw to himself, the greater rogue Robertson is, the more will be the merit of bringing him to justice. "He must have been a great villain, indeed," he again reiterated; "and I wish I had the skelping o' him."

"I may blame mysell mair than him," said Effie; "I was bred up to ken better; but he, poor fellow,"—(she stopped).

"Was a thorough blackguard a' his life, I dare say," said Sharpitlaw. "A stranger he was in this country, and a companion of that lawless vagabond, Wilson, I think, Effie?"

"It wad hae been dearly telling him that he had ne'er seen Wilson's face."

"That's very true that you are saying, Effie," said Sharpitlaw. "Where was't that Robertson and you were used to howff thegither? Somegate about the Laigh Calton, I am thinking."

The simple and dispirited girl had thus far followed Mr. Sharpitlaw's lead, because he had artfully adjusted his observations to the thoughts he was pretty certain must be passing through her own mind, so that her answers became a kind of thinking aloud, a mood into which those who are either constitutionally absent in mind, or are rendered so by the temporary pressure of misfortune, may be easily led by a skilful train of suggestions. But the last observation of the procurator-fiscal was too much of the nature of a direct interrogatory, and it broke the charm accordingly.

"What was it that I was saying?" said Effie, starting up from her reclining posture, seating herself upright, and hastily shading her dishevelled hair back from her wasted but still beautiful countenance. She fixed her eyes boldly and keenly upon Sharpitlaw—"You are too much of a gentleman, sir,—too much of an honest man, to take any notice of what a poor creature like me says, that can hardly ca' my senses my ain—God help me!"

"Advantage!—I would be of some advantage to you if I could," said Sharpitlaw, in a soothing tone; "and I ken naething sae likely to serve ye, Effie, as gripping this rascal, Robertson."

"O dinna misca' him, sir, that never misca'd you!—Robertson?—I am sure I had naething to say against ony man o' the name, and naething will I say."

"But if you do not heed your own misfortune, Effie, you should mind what distress he has brought on your family," said the man of law.

"O, Heaven help me!" exclaimed poor Effie—"My poor father—my dear Jeanie—O, that's sairest to bide of a'! O, sir, if you hae ony kindness—if ye hae ony touch of compassion—for a' the folk I see here are as hard as the wa'-stones—If ye wad but bid them let my sister Jeanie in the next time she ca's! for when I hear them put her awa frae the door, and canna climb up to that high window to see sae muckle as her gown-tail, it's like to pit me out o' my judgment." And she looked on him with a face of entreaty, so earnest, yet so humble, that she fairly shook the steadfast purpose of his mind.

"You shall see your sister," he began, "if you'll tell me,"—then interrupting himself, he added, in a more hurried tone,—"no, d—n it, you shall see your sister whether you tell me anything or no." So saying, he rose up and left the apartment.

When he had rejoined Ratcliffe, he observed, "You are right, Ratton; there's no making much of that lassie. But ae thing I have cleared—that is, that Robertson has been the father of the bairn, and so I will wager a boddle it will be he that's to meet wi' Jeanie Deans this night at Muschat's Cairn, and there we'll nail him, Rat, or my name is not Gideon Sharpitlaw."

"But," said Ratcliffe, perhaps because he was in no hurry to see anything which was like to be connected with the discovery and apprehension of Robertson, "an that were the case, Mr. Butler wad hae kend the man in the King's Park to be the same person wi' him in Madge Wildfire's claise, that headed the mob."

"That makes nae difference, man," replied Sharpitlaw—"the dress, the light, the confusion, and maybe a touch o' a blackit cork, or a slake o' paint-hout, Ratton, I have seen ye dress your ainsell, that the deevil ye belang to durstna hae made oath t'ye."

"And that's true, too," said Ratcliffe.

"And besides, ye donnard carle," continued Sharpitlaw, triumphantly, "the minister *did* say that he thought he knew something of the features of the birkie that spoke to him in the Park, though he could not charge his memory where or when he had seen them."

"It's evident, then, your honour will be right," said Ratcliffe.

"Then, Rat, you and I will go with the party ousells this night, and see him in grips or we are done wi' him."

"I seena muckle use I can be o' to your honour," said Ratcliffe, reluctantly.

"Use?" answered Sharpitlaw—"You can guide the party—you ken the ground. Besides, I do not intend to quit sight o' you, my good friend, till I have him in hand."

"Weel, sir," said Ratcliffe, but in no joyful tone of acquiescence; "Ye maun hae it your ain way—but mind he's a desperate man."

"We shall have that with us," answered Sharpitlaw, "that will settle him, if it is necessary."

"But, sir," answered Ratcliffe, "I am sure I couldna undertake to guide you to Muschat's Cairn in the night-time; I ken the place as mony does, in fair day-light, but how to find it by moonshine, amang sae mony crags and stanes, as like to each other as the collier to the deil, is mair than I can tell. I might as soon seek moonshine in water."

"What's the meaning o' this, Ratcliffe?" said Sharpitlaw, while he fixed his eye on the recusant, with a fatal and ominous expression,—"*Have you forgotten that you are still under sentence of death?*"

"No, sir," said Ratcliffe, "that's a thing no easily put out o' memory; and if my presence be judged necessary, nae doubt I maun gang wi' your honour. But I was gaun to tell your honour of ane that has mair skeel o' the gate than me, and that's e'en Madge Wildfire."

"The devil she has!—Do you think me as mad as she, is, to trust to her guidance on such an occasion?"

"Your honour is the best judge," answered Ratcliffe; "but I ken I can keep her in tune, and garr her haud the straight path—she often sleeps out, or rambles about amang thae hills the haill simmer night, the daft limmer."

"Weel, Ratcliffe," replied the procurator-fiscal, "if you think she can guide us the right way—but take heed to what you are about—your life depends on your behaviour."

"It's a sair judgment on a man," said Ratcliffe, "when he has ance gane sae far wrang as I hae done, that deil a bit he can be honest, try't whilk way he will."

Such was the reflection of Ratcliffe, when he was left for a few minutes to himself, while the retainer of justice went to procure a proper warrant, and give the necessary directions.

The rising moon saw the whole party free from the walls of the city, and entering upon the open ground. Arthur's Seat, like a couchant lion of immense size—Salisbury Crags, like a huge belt or girdle of granite, were dimly visible. Holding their path along the southern side of the Canongate, they gained the Abbey of Holyrood House, and from thence found their way by step and stile into the King's Park. They were at first four in number—an officer of justice and Sharpitlaw, who were well armed with pistols and cutlasses; Ratcliffe, who was not trusted with weapons, lest, he might, peradventure, have used them on the wrong side; and the female. But at the last stile, when they entered the Chase, they were joined by other two officers, whom Sharpitlaw, desirous to secure sufficient force for his purpose, and at the same time to avoid observation, had directed to wait for him at this place. Ratcliffe saw this accession of strength with some disquietude, for he had hitherto thought it likely that Robertson, who was a bold, stout, and active young fellow, might have made his escape from Sharpitlaw and the single officer, by force or agility, without his being implicated in the matter. But the present strength of the followers of justice was overpowering, and the only mode of saving Robertson (which the old sinner was well disposed to do, providing always he could accomplish his purpose without compromising his own safety), must be by contriving that he should have some signal of their approach. It was probably with this view that Ratcliffe had requested the addition of Madge to the party, having considerable confidence in her propensity to exert her lungs. Indeed, she had already given them so many specimens of her clamorous loquacity, that Sharpitlaw half determined to send her back with one of the officers, rather than carry forward in his company a person so extremely ill qualified to be a guide in a secret expedition. It seemed, too, as if the open air, the approach to the hills, and the ascent of the moon, supposed to be so portentous over those whose brain is infirm, made her spirits rise in a degree tenfold more loquacious than she had hitherto exhibited. To silence her by fair means seemed impossible; authoritative commands and coaxing entreaties she set alike at defiance, and threats only made her sulky and altogether intractable.

"Is there no one of you," said Sharpitlaw, impatiently, "that knows the way to this accursed place—this Nichol Muschat's Cairn—excepting this mad clavering idiot?"

"Deil ane o' them kens it except mysell," exclaimed Madge; "how suld they, the puir fule cowards! But I hae sat on the grave frae batfleeing time till cook-crow, and had mony a fine crack wi' Muschat and Ailie Muschat, that are lying sleeping below."

"The devil take your crazy brain," said Sharptitlaw; "will you not allow the men to answer a question?"

The officers obtaining a moment's audience while Ratcliffe diverted Madge's attention, declared that, though they had a general knowledge of the spot, they could not undertake to guide the party to it by the uncertain light of the moon, with such accuracy as to insure success to their expedition.

"What shall we do, Ratcliffe?" said Sharptitlaw, "if he sees us before we see him,—and that's what he is certain to do, if we go strolling about, without keeping the straight road,—we may bid gude day to the job, and I would rather lose one hundred pounds, baith for the credit of the police, and because the provost says somebody maun be hanged for this job o' Porteous, come o't what likes."

"I think," said Ratcliffe, "we maun just try Madge; and I'll see if I can get her keepit in ony better order. And at ony rate, if he suld hear her skirting her auld ends o' sangs, he's no to ken for that that there's onybody wi' her."

"That's true," said Sharptitlaw; "and if he thinks her alone, he's as like to come towards her as to rin frae her. So set forward—we hae lost ower muckle time already—see to get her to keep the right road."

"And what sort o' house does Nichol Muschat and his wife keep now?" said Ratcliffe to the mad woman, by way of humouring her vein of folly; "they were but thrawn folk lang syne, an a' tales be true."

"Ou, ay, ay, ay—but a's forgotten now," replied Madge, in the confidential tone of a gossip giving the history of her next-door neighbour—"Ye see, I spoke to them mysell, and tauld them byganes suld be byganes—her throat's sair misguggled and mashackered though; she wears her corpse-sheet drawn weel up to hide it, but that canna hinder the bluid seiping through, ye ken. I wussed her to wash it in St. Anthony's Well, and that will cleanse if onything can—But they say bluid never bleaches out o' linen claith—Deacon Sanders's new cleansing draps winna do't—I tried them mysell on a bit rag we hae at hame that was mailed wi' the bluid of a bit skirting wean that was hurt some gate, but out it winna come—Weel, yell say that's queer; but I will bring it out to St. Anthony's blessed Well some braw night just like this, and I'll cry up Allie Muschat, and she and I will hae a grand bouking-washing, and bleach our claes in the beams of the bonny Lady Moon, that's far pleasanter to me than the sun—the sun's ower het, and ken ye, cummers, my brains are het eneugh already. But the moon, and the dew, and the night-wind, they are just like a caller kail-blade laid on my brow; and whiles I think the moon just shines on purpose to pleasure me, when naebody sees her but mysell." This raving discourse she continued with prodigious volubility, walking on at a great pace, and dragging Ratcliffe along with her, while he endeavoured, in appearance at least, if not in reality, to induce her to moderate her voice.

All at once she stopped short upon the top of a little hillock, gazed upward fixedly, and said not one word for the space of five minutes. "What the devil is the matter with her now?" said Sharptitlaw to Ratcliffe—"Can you not get her forward?"

"Ye maun just take a grain o' patience wi' her, sir," said Ratcliffe. "She'll no gae a foot faster than she likes herself."

"D—n her," said Sharptitlaw, "I'll take care she has her time in Bedlam or Bridewell, or both, for she's both mad and mischievous."

In the meanwhile, Madge, who had looked very pensive when she first stopped, suddenly burst into a vehement fit of laughter, then paused and sighed bitterly,—then was seized with a second fit of laughter—then, fixing her eyes on the moon, lifted up her voice and sung,—

*"Good even, good fair moon, good even to thee;
I prithee, dear moon, now show to me
The form and the features, the speech and degree,
Of the man that true lover of mine shall be.*

But I need not ask that of the bonny Lady Moon—I ken that weel eneugh mysell—*true*-love though he wasna—But naebody shall sae that I ever tauld a word about the matter—But whiles I wish the bairn had lived—Weel, God guide us, there's a heaven aboon us a',"—(here she sighed bitterly), "and a bonny moon, and sterns in it forby" (and here she laughed once more).

"Are we to stand, here all night!" said Sharptitlaw, very impatiently. "Drag her forward."

"Ay, sir," said Ratcliffe, "if we kend whilk way to drag her, that would settle it at ance.—Come, Madge, hinny," addressing her, "we'll no be in time to see Nichol and his wife, unless ye show us the road."

"In troth and that I will, Ratton," said she, seizing him by the arm, and resuming her route with huge strides, considering it was a female who took them. "And I'll tell ye, Ratton, blithe will Nichol Muschat be to see ye, for he says he kens weel there isna sic a villain out o' hell as ye are, and he wad be ravished to hae a crack wi' you—like to like ye ken—it's a proverb never fails—and ye are baith a pair o' the deevil's peats I trow—hard to ken whilk deserves the hettest corner o' his ingle-side."

Ratcliffe was conscience-struck, and could not forbear making an involuntary protest against this classification. "I never shed blood," he replied.

"But ye hae sauld it, Ratton—ye hae sauld blood mony a time. Folk kill wi' the tongue as weel as wi' the hand—wi' the word as weel as wi' the gully!—

*It is the 'bonny butcher lad,
That wears the sleeves of blue,
He sells the flesh on Saturday,
On Friday that he slew."*

"And what is that I ain doing now?" thought Ratcliffe. "But I'll hae nae wyte of Robertson's young bluid, if I can help it;" then speaking apart to Madge, he asked her, "Whether she did not remember ony o' her auld Sangs?"

"Mony a dainty ane," said Madge; "and blithely can I sing them, for lightsome sangs make merry gate." And she sang,—

*"When the glede's in the blue cloud,
The lavrock lies still;
When the hound's in the greenwood.
The hind keeps the hill."*

"Silence her cursed noise, if you should throttle her," said Sharptitlaw; "I see somebody yonder.—Keep close, my boys, and creep round the shoulder of the height. George Poinder, stay you with Ratcliffe and tha mad yelling bitch; and you other two, come with me round under the shadow of the brae."

And he crept forward with the stealthy pace of an Indian savage, who leads his band to surprise an unsuspecting party of some hostile tribe. Ratcliffe saw them glide of, avoiding the moonlight, and keeping as much in: the shade as possible.

"Robertson's done up," said he to himself; "thae young lads are aye sae thoughtless. What deevil could he hae to say to Jeanie Deans, or to ony woman on earth, that he suld gang awa and get his neck raxed for her? And this mad quean, after cracking like a pen-gun, and skirling like a pea-hen for the haill night, behoves just to hae hadden her tongue when her clavers might have dune some gude! But it's aye the way wi' women; if they ever hand their tongues ava', ye may swear it's for mischief. I wish I could set her on again without this blood-sucker kenning what I am doing. But he's as gleg as MacKeachan's elshin,* that ran through sax plies of bendleather and half-an-inch into the king's heel."

* [Elshin, a shoemaker's awl.]

He then began to hum, but in a very low and suppressed tone, the first stanza of a favourite ballad of Wildfire's, the words of which bore some distant analogy with the situation of Robertson, trusting that the power of association would not fail to bring the rest to her mind:—

*"There's a bloodhound ranging Tinwald wood,
There's harness glancing sheen:
There's a maiden sits on Tinwald brae,
And she sings loud between."*

Madge had no sooner received the catch-word, than she vindicated Ratcliffe's sagacity by setting off at score with the song:—

*"O sleep ye sound, Sir James, she said,
When ye suld rise and ride?
There's twenty men, wi' bow and blade,
Are seeking where ye hide."*

Though Ratcliffe was at a considerable distance from the spot called Muschat's Cairn, yet his eyes, practised like those of a cat to penetrate darkness, could mark that Robertson had caught the alarm. George Poinder, less keen of sight, or less attentive, was not aware of his flight any more than Sharpitlaw and his assistants, whose view, though they were considerably nearer to the cairn, was intercepted by the broken nature of the ground under which they were screening themselves. At length, however, after the interval of five or six minutes, they also perceived that Robertson had fled, and rushed hastily towards the place, while Sharpitlaw called out aloud, in the harshest tones of a voice which resembled a saw-mill at work, "Chase, lads—chase—haud the brae—I see him on the edge of the hill!" Then hollowing back to the rear-guard of his detachment, he issued his farther orders: "Ratcliffe, come here, and detain the woman—George, run and kepp the stile at the Duke's Walk—Ratcliffe, come here directly—but first knock out that mad bitch's brains!"

"Ye had better rin for it, Madge," said Ratcliffe, "for it's ill dealing wi' an angry man."

Madge Wildfire was not so absolutely void of common sense as not to understand this innuendo; and while Ratcliffe, in seemingly anxious haste of obedience, hastened to the spot where Sharpitlaw waited to deliver up Jeanie Deans to his custody, she fled with all the despatch she could exert in an opposite direction. Thus the whole party were separated, and in rapid motion of flight or pursuit, excepting Ratcliffe and Jeanie, whom, although making no attempt to escape, he held fast by the cloak, and who remained standing by Muschat's Cairn.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

*You have paid the heavens your function,
and the prisoner the very debt of your calling.
Measure for Measure.*

Jeanie Deans,—for here our story unites itself with that part of the narrative which broke off at the end of the fourteenth chapter,—while she waited, in terror and amazement, the hasty advance of three or four men towards her, was yet more startled at their suddenly breaking asunder, and giving chase in different directions to the late object of her terror, who became at that moment, though she could not well assign a reasonable cause, rather the cause of her interest. One of the party (it was Sharpitlaw) came straight up to her, and saying, "Your name is Jeanie Deans, and you are my prisoner," immediately added, "But if you will tell me which way he ran I will let you go."

"I dinna ken, sir," was all the poor girl could utter; and, indeed, it is the phrase which rises most readily to the lips of any person in her rank, as the readiest reply to any embarrassing question.

"But," said Sharpitlaw, "ye *ken* wha it was ye were speaking wi', my leddy, on the hill side, and midnight sae near; ye surely ken *that*, my bonny woman?"

"I dinna ken, sir," again iterated Jeanie, who really did not comprehend in her terror the nature of the questions which were so hastily put to her in this moment of surprise.

"We will try to mend your memory by and by, hinny," said Sharpitlaw, and shouted, as we have already told the reader, to Ratcliffe, to come up and take charge of her, while he himself directed the chase after Robertson, which he still hoped might be successful. As Ratcliffe approached, Sharpitlaw pushed the young woman towards him with some rudeness, and betaking himself to the more important object of his quest, began to scale crags and scramble up steep banks, with an agility of which his profession and his general gravity of demeanour would previously have argued him incapable. In a few minutes there was no one within sight, and only a distant halloo from one of the pursuers to the other, faintly heard on the side of the hill, argued that there was any one within hearing. Jeanie Deans was left in the clear moonlight, standing under the guard of a person of whom she knew nothing, and, what was worse, concerning whom, as the reader is well aware, she could have learned nothing that would not have increased her terror.

When all in the distance was silent, Ratcliffe for the first time addressed her, and it was in that cold sarcastic indifferent tone familiar to habitual depravity, whose crimes are instigated by custom rather than by passion. "This is a braw night for ye, dearie," he said, attempting to pass his arm across her shoulder, "to be on the green hill wi' your jo." Jeanie extricated herself from his grasp, but did not make any reply.

"I think lads and lasses," continued the ruffian, "dinna meet at Muschat's Cairn at midnight to crack nuts," and he again attempted to take hold of her.

"If ye are an officer of justice, sir," said Jeanie, again eluding his attempt to seize her, "ye deserve to have your coat stripped from your back."

"Very true, hinny," said he, succeeding forcibly in his attempt to get hold of her, "but suppose I should strip your cloak off first?"

"Ye are more a man, I am sure, than to hurt me, sir," said Jeanie; "for God's sake have pity on a half-distracted creature!"

"Come, come," said Ratcliffe, "you're a good-looking wench, and should not be cross-grained. I was going to be an honest man—but the devil has this very day flung first a lawyer, and then a woman, in my gate. I'll tell you what, Jeanie, they are out on the hill-side—if you'll be guided by me, I'll carry you to a wee bit corner in the Pleasance, that I ken o' in an auld wife's, that a' the prokitors o' Scotland wot naething o', and we'll send Robertson word to meet us in Yorkshire, for there is a set o' braw lads about the midland counties, that I hae dune business wi' before now, and sae we'll leave Mr. Sharpitlaw to whistle on his thumb."

It was fortunate for Jeanie, in an emergency like the present, that she possessed presence of mind and courage, so soon as the first hurry of surprise had enabled her to rally her recollection. She saw the risk she was in from a ruffian, who not only was such by profession, but had that evening been stupifying, by means of strong liquors, the internal aversion which he felt at the business on which Sharpitlaw had resolved to employ him.

"Dinna speak sae loud," said she, in a low voice; "he's up yonder."

"Who?—Robertson?" said Ratcliffe, eagerly.

"Ay," replied Jeanie; "up yonder;" and she pointed to the ruins of the hermitage and chapel.

"By G—d, then," said Ratcliffe, "I'll make my ain of him, either one way or other—wait for me here."

But no sooner had he set off as fast as he could run, towards the chapel, than Jeanie started in an opposite direction, over high and low, on the nearest path homeward. Her juvenile exercise as a herdsman had put "life and mettle" in her heels, and never had she followed Dustiefoot, when the cows were in the corn, with half so much speed as she now cleared the distance betwixt Muschat's Cairn and her father's cottage at St. Leonard's. To lift the latch—to enter—to shut, bolt, and double bolt the door—to draw against it a heavy article of furniture (which she could not have moved in a moment of less energy), so as to make yet farther provision against violence, was almost the work of a moment, yet done with such silence as equalled the celerity.

Her next anxiety was upon her father's account, and she drew silently to the door of his apartment, in order to satisfy herself whether he had been disturbed by her return. He was awake,—probably had slept but little; but the constant presence of his own sorrows, the distance of his apartment from the outer door of the house, and the precautions which Jeanie had taken to conceal her departure and return, had prevented him from being sensible of either. He was engaged in his devotions, and Jeanie could distinctly hear him use these words:—"And for the other child thou hast given me to be a comfort and stay to my old age, may her days be long in the land, according to the promise thou hast given to those who shall honour father and mother; may all her purchased and promised blessings be multiplied upon her; keep her in the watches of the night, and in the uprising of the morning, that all in this land may know that thou hast not utterly hid thy face from those that seek thee in truth and in sincerity." He was silent, but probably continued his petition in the strong fervency of mental devotion.

His daughter retired to her apartment, comforted, that while she was exposed to danger, her head had been covered by the prayers of the just as by an helmet, and under the strong confidence, that while she walked worthy of the protection of Heaven, she would experience its countenance. It was in that moment that a

vague idea first darted across her mind, that something might yet be achieved for her sister's safety, conscious as she now was of her innocence of the unnatural murder with which she stood charged. It came, as she described it, on her mind, like a sun-blink on a stormy sea; and although it instantly vanished, yet she felt a degree of composure which she had not experienced for many days, and could not help being strongly persuaded that, by some means or other, she would be called upon, and directed, to work out her sister's deliverance. She went to bed, not forgetting her usual devotions, the more fervently made on account of her late deliverance, and she slept soundly in spite of her agitation.

We must return to Ratcliffe, who had started, like a greyhound from the slips when the sportsman cries halloo, as soon as Jeanie had pointed to the ruins. Whether he meant to aid Robertson's escape, or to assist his pursuers, may be very doubtful; perhaps he did not himself know but had resolved to be guided by circumstances. He had no opportunity, however, of doing either; for he had no sooner surmounted the steep ascent, and entered under the broken arches of the rains, than a pistol was presented at his head, and a harsh voice commanded him, in the king's name, to surrender himself prisoner. "Mr. Sharpitlaw!" said Ratcliffe, surprised, "is this your honour?"

"Is it only you, and be d—d to you?" answered the fiscal, still more disappointed—"what made you leave the woman?"

"She told me she saw Robertson go into the ruins, so I made what haste I could to cleek the callant."

"It's all over now," said Sharpitlaw; "we shall see no more of him to-night; but he shall hide himself in a bean-hool, if he remains on Scottish ground without my finding him. Call back the people, Ratcliffe."

Ratcliffe hollowed to the dispersed officers, who willingly obeyed the signal; for probably there was no individual among them who would have been much desirous of a rencontre, hand to hand, and at a distance from his comrades, with such an active and desperate fellow as Robertson.

"And where are the two women?" said Sharpitlaw.

"Both made their heels serve them, I suspect," replied Ratcliffe, and he hummed the end of the old song—

*"Then hey play up the rin-awa bride,
For she has taen the gee."*

"One woman," said Sharpitlaw,—for, like all rogues, he was a great calumniator of the fair sex,*—"one woman is enough to dark the fairest ploy that was ever planned; and how could I be such an ass as to expect to carry through a job that had two in it?"

* Note L. Calumniator of the Fair Sex.

But we know how to come by them both, if they are wanted, that's one good thing."

Accordingly, like a defeated general, sad and sulky, he led back his discomfited forces to the metropolis, and dismissed them for the night.

The next morning early, he was under the necessity of making his report to the sitting magistrate of the day. The gentleman who occupied the chair of office on this occasion (for the bailies, *Anglice*, aldermen, take it by rotation) chanced to be the same by whom Butler was committed, a person very generally respected among his fellow-citizens. Something he was of a humorist, and rather deficient in general education; but acute, patient, and upright, possessed of a fortune acquired by honest industry which made him perfectly independent; and, in short, very happily qualified to support the respectability of the office, which he held.

Mr. Middleburgh had just taken his seat, and was debating in an animated manner, with one of his colleagues, the doubtful chances of a game at golf which they had played the day before, when a letter was delivered to him, addressed "For Bailie Middleburgh; These: to be forwarded with speed." It contained these words:—

"Sir,—I know you to be a sensible and a considerate magistrate, and one who, as such, will be content to worship God, though the devil bid you. I therefore expect that, notwithstanding the signature of this letter acknowledges my share in an action, which, in a proper time and place, I would not fear either to avow or to justify, you will not on that account reject what evidence I place before you. The clergyman, Butler, is innocent of all but involuntary presence at an action which he wanted spirit to approve of, and from which he endeavoured, with his best set phrases, to dissuade us. But it was not for him that it is my hint to speak. There is a woman in your jail, fallen under the edge of a law so cruel, that it has hung by the wall like unsecured armour, for twenty years, and is now brought down and whetted to spill the blood of the most beautiful and most innocent creature whom the walls of a prison ever girdled in. Her sister knows of her innocence, as she communicated to her that she was betrayed by a villain.—O that high Heaven

*Would put in every honest hand a whip,
To scourge me such a villain through the world!*

"I write distractedly—But this girl—this Jeanie Deans, is a peevish puritan, superstitious and scrupulous after the manner of her sect; and I pray your honour, for so my phrase must go, to press upon her, that her sister's life depends upon her testimony. But though she should remain silent, do not dare to think that the young woman is guilty—far less to permit her execution. Remember the death of Wilson was fearfully avenged; and those yet live who can compel you to drink the dregs of your poisoned chalice.—I say, remember Porteous, and say that you had good counsel from

"One of his Slayers."

The magistrate read over this extraordinary letter twice or thrice. At first he was tempted to throw it aside as the production of a madman, so little did "the scraps from play-books," as he termed the poetical quotation, resemble the correspondence of a rational being. On a re-perusal, however, he thought that, amid its incoherence, he could discover something like a tone of awakened passion, though expressed in a manner quaint and unusual.

"It is a cruelly severe statute," said the magistrate to his assistant, "and I wish the girl could be taken from under the letter of it. A child may have been born, and it may have been conveyed away while the mother was insensible, or it may have perished for want of that relief which the poor creature herself—helpless, terrified, distracted, despairing, and exhausted—may have been unable to afford to it. And yet it is certain, if the woman is found guilty under the statute, execution will follow. The crime has been too common, and examples are necessary."

"But if this other wench," said the city-clerk, "can speak to her sister communicating her situation, it will take the case from under the statute."

"Very true," replied the Bailie; "and I will walk out one of these days to St. Leonard's, and examine the girl myself. I know something of their father Deans—an old true-blue Cameronian, who would see house and family go to wreck ere he would disgrace his testimony by a sinful complying with the defections of the times; and such he will probably uphold the taking an oath before a civil magistrate. If they are to go on and flourish with their bull-headed obstinacy, the legislature must pass an act to take their affirmations, as in the case of Quakers. But surely neither a father nor a sister will scruple in a case of this kind. As I said before, I will go speak with them myself, when the hurry of this Porteous investigation is somewhat over; their pride and spirit of contradiction will be far less alarmed, than if they were called into a court of justice at once."

"And I suppose Butler is to remain incarcerated?" said the city-clerk.

"For the present, certainly," said the magistrate. "But I hope soon to set him at liberty upon bail."

"Do you rest upon the testimony of that light-headed letter?" asked the clerk.

"Not very much," answered the Bailie; "and yet there is something striking about it too—it seems the letter of a man beside himself, either from great agitation, or some great sense of guilt."

"Yes," said the town-clerk, "it is very like the letter of a mad strolling play-actor, who deserves to be hanged with all the rest of his gang, as your honour justly observes."

"I was not quite so bloodthirsty," continued the magistrate. "But to the point, Butler's private character is excellent; and I am given to understand, by some inquiries I have been making this morning, that he did actually arrive in town only the day before yesterday, so that it was impossible he could have been concerned in any previous machinations of these unhappy rioters, and it is not likely that he should have joined them on a suddeny."

"There's no saying anent that—zeal catches fire at a slight spark as fast as a brunstane match," observed the secretary. "I hae kend a minister wad be fair gude-day and fair gude-e'en wi' ilka man in the parochine, and hing just as quiet as a rocket on a stick, till ye mentioned the word abjuration-oath, or patronage, or siclike, and then, whiz, he was off, and up in the air an hundred miles beyond common manners, common sense, and common comprehension."

"I do not understand," answered the burgher-magistrate, "that the young man Butler's zeal is of so inflammable a character. But I will make farther investigation. What other business is there before us?"

And they proceeded to minute investigations concerning the affair of Porteous's death, and other affairs through which this history has no occasion to trace them. In the course of their business they were interrupted by an old woman of the lower rank, extremely haggard in look, and wretched in her appearance, who thrust herself into the council room.

"What do you want, gudewife?—Who are you?" said Bailie Middleburgh.

"What do I want!" replied she, in a sulky tone—"I want my bairn, or I want naething frae nane o' ye, for as grand's ye are." And she went on muttering to herself with the wayward spitefulness of age—"They maun hae lordships and honours, nae doubt—set them up, the gutter-bloods! and deil a gentleman among them."—Then again addressing the sitting magistrate, "Will *your honour* gie me back my puir crazy bairn?—*His honour!*—I hae kend the day when less wad ser'd him, the oe of a Campvere skipper."

"Good woman," said the magistrate to this shrewish suppliant—"tell us what it is you want, and do not interrupt the court."

"That's as muckle as till say, Bark, Bawtie, and be dune wi't!—I tell ye," raising her termagant voice, "I want my bairn! is na that braid Scots?"

"Who *are* you?—who is your bairn?" demanded the magistrate.

"Wha am I?—wha suld I be, but Meg Murdockson, and wha suld my bairn be but Magdalen Murdockson?—Your guard soldiers, and your constables, and your officers, ken us weel enough when they rive the bits o' duds aff our backs, and take what penny o' siller we hae, and harle us to the Correctionhouse in Leith Wynd, and pettle us up wi' bread and water and siclike sunkets."

"Who is she?" said the magistrate, looking round to some of his people.

"Other than a gude ane, sir," said one of the city officers, shrugging his shoulders and smiling.

"Will ye say sae?" said the termagant, her eye gleaming with impotent fury; "an I had ye amang the Figgat-Whins,* wadna I set my ten talents in your wuzzent face for that very word?" and she suited the word to the action, by spreading out a set of claws resembling those of St. George's dragon on a country sign-post.

* [This was a name given to a tract of sand hillocks extending along the sea-shore from Leith to Portobello, and which at this time were covered with *whin*-bushes or furze.]

"What does she want here?" said the impatient magistrate—"Can she not tell her business, or go away?"

"It's my bairn!—it's Magdalen Murdockson I'm wantin'," answered the beldam, screaming at the highest pitch of her cracked and mistuned voice—"havena I been telling ye sae this half-hour? And if ye are deaf, what needs ye sit cockit up there, and keep folk scraughin' t'ye this gate?"

"She wants her daughter, sir," said the same officer whose interference had given the hag such offence before—"her daughter, who was taken up last night—Madge Wildfire, as they ca' her."

"Madge Hellfire, as they ca' her!" echoed the beldam "and what business has a blackguard like you to ca' an honest woman's bairn out o' her ain name?"

"An *honest* woman's bairn, Maggie?" answered the peace-officer, smiling and shaking his head with an ironical emphasis on the adjective, and a calmness calculated to provoke to madness the furious old shrew.

"If I am no honest now, I was honest ance," she replied; "and that's mair than ye can say, ye born and bred thief, that never kend ither folks' gear frae your ain since the day ye was cleckit. Honest, say ye?—ye pykit your mother's pouch o' twalpennies Scots when ye were five years auld, just as she was taking leave o' your father at the fit o' the gallows."

"She has you there, George," said the assistants, and there was a general laugh; for the wit was fitted for the meridian of the place where it was uttered. This general applause somewhat gratified the passions of the old hag; the "grim feature" smiled and even laughed—but it was a laugh of bitter scorn. She descended, however, as if appeased by the success of her sally, to explain her business more distinctly, when the magistrate, commanding silence, again desired her either to speak out her errand, or to leave the place.

"Her bairn," she said, "was her bairn, and she came to fetch her out of ill haft and waur guiding. If she wasna sae wise as ither folk, few ither folk had suffered as muckle as she had done; forby that she could fend the waur for hersell within the four wa's of a jail. She could prove by fifty witnesses, and fifty to that, that her daughter had never seen Jock Porteous, alive or dead, since he had gien her a laundering wi' his cane, the neger that he was! for driving a dead cat at the provost's wig on the Elector of Hanover's birthday."

Notwithstanding the wretched appearance and violent demeanour of this woman, the magistrate felt the justice of her argument, that her child might be as dear to her as to a more fortunate and more amiable mother. He proceeded to investigate the circumstances which had led to Madge Murdockson's (or Wildfire's) arrest, and as it was clearly shown that she had not been engaged in the riot, he contented himself with directing that an eye should be kept upon her by the police, but that for the present she should be allowed to return home with her mother. During the interval of fetching Madge from the jail, the magistrate endeavoured to discover whether her mother had been privy to the change of dress betwixt that young woman and Robertson. But on this point he could obtain no light. She persisted in declaring, that she had never seen Robertson since his remarkable escape during service-time; and that, if her daughter had changed clothes with him, it must have been during her absence at a hamlet about two miles out of town, called Duddingstone, where she could prove that she passed that eventful night. And, in fact, one of the town-officers, who had been searching for stolen linen at the cottage of a washer-woman in that village, gave his evidence, that he had seen Maggie Murdockson there, whose presence had considerably increased his suspicion of the house in which she was a visitor, in respect that he considered her as a person of no good reputation.

"I tauld ye sae," said the hag; "see now what it is to hae a character, gude or bad!—Now, maybe, after a', I could tell ye something about Porteous that you council-chamber bodies never could find out, for as muckle stir as ye mak."

All eyes were turned towards her—all ears were alert. "Speak out!" said the magistrate.

"It will be for your ain gude," insinuated the town-clerk.

"Dinna keep the Bailie waiting," urged the assistants.

She remained doggedly silent for two or three minutes, casting around a malignant and sulky glance, that seemed to enjoy the anxious suspense with which they waited her answer. And then she broke forth at once,—"*A'* that I ken about him is, that he was neither soldier nor gentleman, but just a thief and a blackguard, like maist o' yoursell, dears—What will ye gie me for that news, now?—He wad hae served the gude town lang or provost or bailie wad hae fund that out, my jo!"

While these matters were in discussion, Madge Wildfire entered, and her first exclamation was, "Eh! see if there isna our auld ne'er-do-weel deevil's-buckie o' a mither—Hegh, sirs! but we are a hopeful family, to be twa o' us in the Guard at ance—But there were better days wi' us ance—were there na, mither?"

Old Maggie's eyes had glistened with something like an expression of pleasure when she saw her daughter set at liberty. But either her natural affection, like that of the tigress, could not be displayed without a strain of ferocity, or there was something in the ideas which Madge's speech awakened, that again stirred her cross and savage temper. "What signifies what we, were, ye street-raking limmer!" she exclaimed, pushing her daughter before her to the door, with no gentle degree of violence. "I'se tell thee what thou is now—thou's a crazed hellicat Bess o' Bedlam, that sall taste naething but bread and water for a fortnight, to serve ye for the plague ye hae gien me—and ower gude for ye, ye idle taupie!"

Madge, however, escaped from her mother at the door, ran back to the foot of the table, dropped a very low and fantastic courtesy to the judge, and said, with a giggling laugh,—“Our minnie's sair mis-set, after her ordinar, sir—She'll hae had some quarrel wi' her auld gudeman—that's Satan, ye ken, sirs.” This explanatory note she gave in a low confidential tone, and the spectators of that credulous generation did not hear it without an involuntary shudder. “The gudeman and her disna aye gree weel, and then I maun pay the piper; but my back's broad enough to bear't a'—an' if she hae nae havings, that's nae reason why wiser folk shouldna hae some.” Here another deep courtesy, when the ungracious voice of her mother was heard.

“Madge, ye limmer! If I come to fetch ye!”

“Hear till her,” said Madge. “But I'll wun out a gliff the night for a' that, to dance in the moonlight, when her and the gudeman will be whirring through the blue lift on a broom-shank, to see Jean Jap, that they hae putten intill the Kirkcaldy Tolbooth—ay, they will hae a merry sail ower Inchkeith, and ower a' the bits o' bonny waves that are poppling and plashing against the rocks in the gowden glimmer o' the moon, ye ken.—I'm coming, mother—I'm coming,” she concluded, on hearing a scuffle at the door betwixt the beldam and the officers, who were endeavouring to prevent her re-entrance. Madge then waved her hand wildly towards the ceiling, and sung, at the topmost pitch of her voice,

*“Up in the air,
On my bonny grey mare,
And I see, and I see, and I see her yet;”*

and with a hop, skip, and jump, sprung out of the room, as the witches of Macbeth used, in less refined days, to seem to fly upwards from the stage.

Some weeks intervened before Mr. Middleburgh, agreeably to his benevolent resolution, found an opportunity of taking a walk towards St. Leonard's, in order to discover whether it might be possible to obtain the evidence hinted at in the anonymous letter respecting Effie Deans.

In fact, the anxious perquisitions made to discover the murderers of Porteous occupied the attention of all concerned with the administration of justice.

In the course of these inquiries, two circumstances happened material to our story. Butler, after a close investigation of his conduct, was declared innocent of accession to the death of Porteous; but, as having been present during the whole transaction, was obliged to find bail not to quit his usual residence at Liberton, that he might appear as a witness when called upon. The other incident regarded the disappearance of Madge Wildfire and her mother from Edinburgh. When they were sought, with the purpose of subjecting them to some farther interrogatories, it was discovered by Mr. Sharptlaw that they had eluded the observation of the police, and left the city so soon as dismissed from the council-chamber. No efforts could trace the place of their retreat.

In the meanwhile the excessive indignation of the Council of Regency, at the slight put upon their authority by the murder of Porteous, had dictated measures, in which their own extreme desire of detecting the actors in that conspiracy were consulted in preference to the temper of the people and the character of their churchmen. An act of Parliament was hastily passed, offering two hundred pounds reward to those who should inform against any person concerned in the deed, and the penalty of death, by a very unusual and severe enactment, was denounced against those who should harbour the guilty. But what was chiefly accounted exceptionable, was a clause, appointing the act to be read in churches by the officiating clergyman, on the first Sunday of every month, for a certain period, immediately before the sermon. The ministers who should refuse to comply with this injunction were declared, for the first offence, incapable of sitting or voting in any church judicature, and for the second, incapable of holding any ecclesiastical preferment in Scotland.

This last order united in a common cause those who might privately rejoice in Porteous's death, though they dared not vindicate the manner of it, with the more scrupulous Presbyterians, who held that even the pronouncing the name of the “Lords Spiritual” in a Scottish pulpit was, *quodammodo*, an acknowledgment of prelacy, and that the injunction of the legislature was an interference of the civil government with the *jus divinum* of Presbytery, since to the General Assembly alone, as representing the invisible head of the kirk, belonged the sole and exclusive right of regulating whatever pertained to public worship. Very many also, of different political or religious sentiments, and therefore not much moved by these considerations, thought they saw, in so violent an act of parliament, a more vindictive spirit than became the legislature of a great country, and something like an attempt to trample upon the rights and independence of Scotland. The various steps adopted for punishing the city of Edinburgh, by taking away her charter and liberties, for what a violent and overmastering mob had done within her walls, were resented by many, who thought a pretext was too hastily taken for degrading the ancient metropolis of Scotland. In short, there was much heart-burning, discontent, and disaffection, occasioned by these ill-considered measures.*

** The magistrates were closely interrogated before the House of Peers, concerning the particulars of the Porteous Mob, and the patois in which these functionaries made their answers, sounded strange in the ears of the Southern nobles. The Duke of Newcastle having demanded to know with what kind of shot the guard which Porteous commanded had loaded their muskets, was answered, naively, “Ow, just sic as ane shoots dukes and fools with.” This reply was considered as a contempt of the House of Lords, and the Provost would have suffered accordingly, but that the Duke of Argyll explained, that the expression, properly rendered into English, meant ducks and waterfowls.*

Amidst these heats and dissensions, the trial of Effie Deans, after she had been many weeks imprisoned, was at length about to be brought forward, and Mr. Middleburgh found leisure to inquire into the evidence concerning her. For this purpose, he chose a fine day for his walk towards her father's house.

The excursion into the country was somewhat distant, in the opinion of a burgher of those days, although many of the present inhabit suburban villas considerably beyond the spot to which we allude. Three-quarters of an hour's walk, however, even at a pace of magisterial gravity, conducted our benevolent office-bearer to the Crag of St. Leonard's, and the humble mansion of David Deans.

The old man was seated on the deas, or turf-seat, at the end of his cottage, busied in mending his cart-harness with his own hands; for in those days any sort of labour which required a little more skill than usual fell to the share of the goodman himself, and that even when he was well to pass in the world. With stern and austere gravity he persevered in his task, after having just raised his head to notice the advance of the stranger. It would have been impossible to have discovered, from his countenance and manner, the internal feelings of agony with which he contended. Mr. Middleburgh waited an instant, expecting Deans would in some measure acknowledge his presence, and lead into conversation; but, as he seemed determined to remain silent, he was himself obliged to speak first.

“My name is Middleburgh—Mr. James Middleburgh, one of the present magistrates of the city of Edinburgh.”

“It may be sae,” answered Deans laconically, and without interrupting his labour.

“You must understand,” he continued, “that the duty of a magistrate is sometimes an unpleasant one.”

“It may be sae,” replied David; “I hae naething to say in the contrair;” and he was again doggedly silent.

“You must be aware,” pursued the magistrate, “that persons in my situation are often obliged to make painful and disagreeable inquiries of individuals, merely because it is their bounden duty.”

“It may be sae,” again replied Deans; “I hae naething to say anent it, either the tae way or the t'other. But I do ken there was ance in a day a just and God-fearing magistracy in yon town o' Edinburgh, that did not bear the sword in vain, but were a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to such as kept the path. In the glorious days of auld worthy faithfu' Provost Dick,* when there was a true and faithfu' General Assembly of

* Note M. Sir William Dick of Braid.

the Kirk, walking hand in hand with the real noble Scottish-hearted barons, and with the magistrates of this and other towns, gentles, burgesses, and commons of all ranks, seeing with one eye, hearing with one ear, and upholding the ark with their united strength—And then folk might see men deliver up their silver to the state's use, as if it had been as muckle slate stanes. My father saw them toom the sacks of dollars out o' Provost Dick's window intill the carts that carried them to the army at Dunse Law; and if ye winna believe his testimony, there is the window itself still standing in the Luckenbooths—I think it's a claiith-merchant's booth the day*—at the ain stanchells, five doors abune Gossford's Close.

* I think so too—But if the reader be curious, he may consult Mr. Chambers's Traditions of Edinburgh.

—But now we haena sic spirit amang us; we think mair about the warst wallydraigle in our ain byre, than about the blessing which the angel of the covenant gave to the Patriarch even at Peniel and Mahanaim, or the binding obligation of our national vows; and we wad rather gie a pund Scots to buy an unguent to clear out auld rannell-trees and our beds o' the English bugs as they ca' them, than we wad gie a plack to rid the land of the swarm of Arminian caterpillars, Socinian pismires, and deistical Miss Katies, that have ascended out of the bottomless pit, to plague this perverse, insidious, and lukewarm generation."

It happened to Davie Deans on this occasion, as it has done to many other habitual orators; when once he became embarked on his favourite subject, the stream of his own enthusiasm carried him forward in spite of his mental distress, while his well-exercised memory supplied him amply with all the types and tropes of rhetoric peculiar to his sect and cause.

Mr. Middleburgh contented himself with answering—"All this may be very true, my friend; but, as you said just now, I have nothing to say to it at present, either one way or other.—You have two daughters, I think, Mr. Deans?"

The old man winced, as one whose smarting sore is suddenly galled; but instantly composed himself, resumed the work which, in the heat of his declamation, he had laid down, and answered with sullen resolution, "Ae daughter, sir—only *ane*."

"I understand you," said Mr. Middleburgh; "you have only one daughter here at home with you—but this unfortunate girl who is a prisoner—she is, I think, your youngest daughter?"

The Presbyterian sternly raised his eyes. "After the world, and according to the flesh, she *is* my daughter; but when she became a child of Belial, and a company-keeper, and a trader in guilt and iniquity, she ceased to be a bairn of mine."

"Alas, Mr. Deans," said Middleburgh, sitting down by him, and endeavouring to take his hand, which the old man proudly withdrew, "we are ourselves all sinners; and the errors of our offspring, as they ought not to surprise us, being the portion which they derive of a common portion of corruption inherited through us, so they do not entitle us to cast them off because they have lost themselves."

"Sir," said Deans impatiently, "I ken a' that as weel as—I mean to say," he resumed, checking the irritation he felt at being schooled—a discipline of the mind which those most ready to bestow it on others do themselves most reluctantly submit to receive—"I mean to say, that what ye o serve may be just and reasonable—But I hae nae freedom to enter into my ain private affairs wi' strangers—And now, in this great national emergency, When there's the Porteous' Act has come doun frae London, that is a deeper blow to this poor sinfu' kingdom and suffering kirk than any that has been heard of since the foul and fatal Test—at a time like this—"

"But, goodman," interrupted Mr. Middleburgh, "you must think of your own household first, or else you are worse even than the infidels."

"I tell ye, Bailie Middleburgh," retorted David Deans, "if ye be a bailie, as there is little honour in being *ane* in these evil days—I tell ye, I heard the gracious Saunders Peden—I wotna when it was; but it was in killing time, when the plowers were drawing along their furrows on the back of the Kirk of Scotland—I heard him tell his hearers, gude and waled Christians they were too, that some o' them wad greet mair for a bit drowned calf or stirk than for a' the defections and oppressions of the day; and that they were some o' them thinking o' ae thing, some o' anither, and there was Lady Hundleslope thinking o' greeting Jock at the fireside! And the lady confessed in my hearing that a drow of anxiety had come ower her for her son that she had left at hame weak of a decay*—And what wad he hae said of me if I had ceased to think of the gude cause for a castaway—a—It kills me to think of what she is!"

* See *Life of Peden*, p. 14.

"But the life of your child, goodman—think of that—if her life could be saved," said Middleburgh.

"Her life!" exclaimed David—"I wadna gie *ane* o' my grey hairs for her life, if her gude name be gane—And yet," said he, relenting and retracting as he spoke, "I wad make the niffer, Mr. Middleburgh—I wad gie a' these grey hairs that she has brought to shame and sorrow—I wad gie the auld head they grow on for her life, and that she might hae time to amend and return, for what hae the wicked beyond the breath of their nostrils?—but I'll never see her mair—No!—that—that I am determined in—I'll never see her mair!" His lips continued to move for a minute after his voice ceased to be heard, as if he were repeating the same vow internally.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Middleburgh, "I speak to you as a man of sense; if you would save your daughter's life, you must use human means."

"I understand what you mean; but Mr. Novit, who is the procurator and doer of an honourable person, the Laird of Dumbiedikes, is to do what carnal wisdom can do for her in the circumstances. Mysell am not clear to trinquet and traffic wi' courts o' justice as they are now constituted; I have a tenderness and scruple in my mind anent them."

"That is to say," said Middleburgh, "that you are a Cameronian, and do not acknowledge the authority of our courts of judicature, or present government?"

"Sir, under your favour," replied David, who was too proud of his own polemical knowledge to call himself the follower of any one, "ye take me up before I fall down. I canna see why I suld be termed a Cameronian, especially now that ye hae given the name of that famous and savoury sufferer, not only until a regimental band of souldiers, [H. M. 26th Foot] whereof I am told many can now curse, swear, and use profane language, as fast as ever Richard Cameron could preach or pray, but also because ye have, in as far as it is in your power, rendered that martyr's name vain and contemptible, by pipes, drums, and fifes, playing the vain carnal spring called the Cameronian Rant, which too many professors of religion dance to—a practice maist unbecoming a professor to dance to any tune whatsoever, more especially promiscuously, that is, with the female sex.* A brutish fashion it is, whilk is the beginning of defection with many, as I may hae as muckle cause as maist folk to testify."

* See Note F. Peter Walker.

"Well, but, Mr. Deans," replied Mr. Middleburgh, "I only meant to say that you were a Cameronian, or MacMillanite, one of the society people, in short, who think it inconsistent to take oaths under a government where the Covenant is not ratified."

"Sir," replied the controversialist, who forgot even his present distress in such discussions as these, "you cannot fickle me sae easily as you do opine. I am *not* a MacMillanite, or a Russelite, or a Hamiltonian, or a Harleyite, or a Howdenite*—I will be led by the nose by none—I take my name as a Christian from no vessel of clay. I have my own principles and practice to answer for, and am an humble pleader for the gude auld cause in a legal way."

* All various species of the great genus Cameronian.

"That is to say, Mr. Deans," said Middleburgh, "that you are a *Deanite*, and have opinions peculiar to yourself."

"It may please you to say sae," said David Deans; "but I have maintained my testimony before as great folk, and in sharper times; and though I will neither exalt myself nor pull down others, I wish every man and woman in this land had kept the true testimony, and the middle and straight path, as it were, on the ridge of a hill, where wind and water shears, avoiding right-hand snares and extremes, and left-hand way-slidings, as weel as Johnny Dodds of Farthing's Acre, and ae man mair that shall be nameless."

"I suppose," replied the magistrate, "that is as much as to say, that Johnny Dodds of Farthing's Acre, and David Deans of St. Leonard's, constitute the only members of the true, real, unsophisticated Kirk of Scotland?"

"God forbid that I suld make sic a vain-glorious speech, when there are sae mony professing Christians!" answered David; "but this I maun say, that all men act according to their gifts and their grace, 'sae that it is nae marvel that—"

"This is all very fine," interrupted Mr. Middleburgh; "but I have no time to spend in hearing it. The matter in hand is this—I have directed a citation to be lodged in your daughter's hands—If she appears on the day of trial and gives evidence, there is reason to hope she may save her sister's life—if, from any constrained scruples about the legality of her performing the office of an affectionate sister and a good subject, by appearing in a court held under the authority of the law and government, you become the means of deterring her from the discharge of this duty, I must say, though the truth may sound harsh in your ears, that you, who gave life to this unhappy girl, will become the means of her losing it by a premature and violent death."

So saying, Mr. Middleburgh turned to leave him.

"Bide awee—bide awee, Mr. Middleburgh," said Deans, in great perplexity and distress of mind; but the Bailie, who was probably sensible that protracted discussion might diminish the effect of his best and most forcible argument, took a hasty leave, and declined entering farther into the controversy.

Deans sunk down upon his seat, stunned with a variety of conflicting emotions. It had been a great source of controversy among those holding his opinions in religious matters how far the government which succeeded the Revolution could be, without sin, acknowledged by true Presbyterians, seeing that it did not recognise the great national testimony of the Solemn League and Covenant? And latterly, those agreeing in this general doctrine, and assuming the sounding title of "The anti-Popish, anti-Prelatic, anti-Erastian, anti-Sectarian, true Presbyterian remnant," were divided into many petty sects among themselves, even as to the extent of submission to the existing laws and rulers, which constituted such an acknowledgment as amounted to sin.

At a very stormy and tumultuous meeting, held in 1682, to discuss these important and delicate points, the testimonies of the faithful few were found utterly inconsistent with each other.*

* This remarkable convocation took place upon 15th June 1682, and an account of its confused and divisive proceedings may be found in Michael Shield's *Faithful Contendings Displayed* (first printed at Glasgow, 1780, p. 21). It affords a singular and melancholy example how much a metaphysical and polemical spirit had crept in amongst these unhappy sufferers, since amid so many real injuries which they had to sustain, they were disposed to add disagreement and disunion concerning the character and extent of such as were only imaginary.

The place where this conference took place was remarkably well adapted for such an assembly. It was a wild and very sequestered dell in Tweeddale, surrounded by high hills, and far remote from human habitation. A small river, or rather a mountain torrent, called the Talla, breaks down the glen with great fury, dashing successively over a number of small cascades, which has procured the spot the name of Talla Linns. Here the leaders among the scattered adherents to the Covenant, men who, in their banishment from human society, and in the recollection of the seventies to which they had been exposed, had become at once sullen in their tempers, and fantastic in their religious opinions, met with arms in their hands, and by the side of the torrent discussed, with a turbulence which the noise of the stream could not drown, points of controversy as empty and unsubstantial as its foam.

It was the fixed judgment of most of the meeting, that all payment of cess or tribute to the existing government was utterly unlawful, and a sacrificing to idols. About other impositions and degrees of submission there were various opinions; and perhaps it is the best illustration of the spirit of those military fathers of the church to say, that while all allowed it was impious to pay the cess employed for maintaining the standing army and militia, there was a fierce controversy on the lawfulness of paying the duties levied at ports and bridges, for maintaining roads and other necessary purposes; that there were some who, repugnant to these imposts for turnpikes and pontages, were nevertheless free in conscience to make payment of the usual freight at public ferries, and that a person of exceeding and punctilious zeal, James Russel, one of the slayers of the Archbishop of St. Andrews, had given his testimony with great warmth even against this last faint shade of subjection to constituted authority. This ardent and enlightened person and his followers had also great scruples about the lawfulness of bestowing the ordinary names upon the days of the week and the months of the year, which savoured in their nostrils so strongly of paganism, that at length they arrived at the conclusion that they who owned such names as Monday, Tuesday, January, February, and so forth, "served themselves heirs to the same, if not greater punishment, than had been denounced against the idolaters of old."

David Deans had been present on this memorable occasion, although too young to be a speaker among the polemical combatants. His brain, however, had been thoroughly heated by the noise, clamour, and metaphysical ingenuity of the discussion, and it was a controversy to which his mind had often returned; and though he carefully disguised his vacillation from others, and, perhaps from himself, he had never been able to come to any precise line of decision on the subject. In fact, his natural sense had acted as a counterpoise to his controversial zeal. He was by no means pleased with the quiet and indifferent manner in which King William's government slurred over the errors of the times, when, far from restoring the Presbyterian kirk to its former supremacy, they passed an act of oblivion even to those who had been its persecutors, and bestowed on many of them titles, favours, and employments. When, in the first General Assembly which succeeded the Revolution, an overture was made for the revival of the League and Covenant, it was with horror that Douce David heard the proposal eluded by the men of carnal wit and policy, as he called them, as being inapplicable to the present times, and not falling under the modern model of the church. The reign of Queen Anne had increased his conviction, that the Revolution government was not one of the true Presbyterian complexion. But then, more sensible than the bigots of his sect, he did not confound the moderation and tolerance of these two reigns with the active tyranny and oppression exercised in those of Charles II. and James II. The Presbyterian form of religion, though deprived of the weight formerly attached to its sentences of excommunication, and compelled to tolerate the coexistence of Episcopacy, and of sects of various descriptions, was still the National Church; and though the glory of the second temple was far inferior to that which had flourished from 1639 till the battle of Dunbar, still it was a structure that, wanting the strength and the terrors, retained at least the form and symmetry, of the original model. Then came the insurrection in 1715, and David Deans's horror for the revival of the Popish and prelatical faction reconciled him greatly to the government of King George, although he grieved that that monarch might be suspected of a leaning unto Erastianism. In short, moved by so many different considerations, he had shifted his ground at different times concerning the degree of freedom which he felt in adopting any act of immediate acknowledgment or submission to the present government, which, however mild and paternal, was still uncovenanted, and now he felt himself called upon, by the most powerful motive conceivable, to authorise his daughter's giving testimony in a court of justice, which all who have been since called Cameronians accounted a step of lamentable and direct defection. The voice of nature, however, exclaimed loud in his bosom against the dictates of fanaticism; and his imagination, fertile in the solution of polemical difficulties, devised an expedient for extricating himself from the fearful dilemma, in which he saw, on the one side, a falling off from principle, and, on the other, a scene from which a father's thoughts could not but turn in shuddering horror.

"I have been constant and unchanged in my testimony," said David Deans; "but then who has said it of me, that I have judged my neighbour over closely, because he hath had more freedom in his walk than I have found in mine? I never was a separatist, nor for quarrelling with tender souls about mint, cummin, or other the lesser tithes. My daughter Jean may have a light in this subject that is hid frae my auld een—it is laid on her conscience, and not on mine—If she hath freedom to gang before this judicatory, and hold up her hand for this poor castaway, surely I will not say she steppeth over her bounds; and if not"—He paused in his mental argument, while a pang of unutterable anguish convulsed his features, yet, shaking it off, he firmly resumed the strain of his reasoning—"And if not—God forbid that she should go into defection at bidding of mine! I wunna fret the tender conscience of one bairn—no, not to save the life of the other."

A Roman would have devoted his daughter to death from different feelings and motives, but not upon a more heroic principle of duty.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

*To man, in this his trial state,
The privilege is given,
When tost by tides of human fate,
To anchor fast on heaven.
Watts's Hymns.*

It was with a firm step that Deans sought his daughter's apartment, determined to leave her to the light of her own conscience in the dubious point of casuistry in which he supposed her to be placed.

The little room had been the sleeping apartment of both sisters, and there still stood there a small occasional bed which had been made for Effie's accommodation, when, complaining of illness, she had declined to share, as in happier times, her sister's pillow. The eyes of Deans rested involuntarily, on entering the room, upon this little couch, with its dark-green coarse curtains, and the ideas connected with it rose so thick upon his soul as almost to incapacitate him from opening his errand to his daughter. Her occupation broke the ice. He found her gazing on a slip of paper, which contained a citation to her to appear as a witness upon her sister's trial in behalf of the accused. For the worthy magistrate, determined to omit no chance of doing Effie justice, and to leave her sister no apology for not giving the evidence which she was supposed to possess, had caused the ordinary citation, or *subpoena*, of the Scottish criminal court, to be served upon her by an officer during his conference with David.

This precaution was so far favourable to Deans, that it saved him the pain of entering upon a formal explanation with his daughter; he only said, with a hollow and tremulous voice, "I perceive ye are aware of the matter."

"O father, we are cruelly stee'd between God's laws and man's laws—What shall we do?—What can we do?"

Jeanie, it must be observed, had no hesitation whatever about the mere act of appearing in a court of justice. She might have heard the point discussed by her father more than once; but we have already noticed that she was accustomed to listen with reverence to much which she was incapable of understanding, and that subtle arguments of casuistry found her a patient, but unedified hearer. Upon receiving the citation, therefore, her thoughts did not turn upon the chimerical scruples which alarmed her father's mind, but to the language which had been held to her by the stranger at Muschat's Cairn. In a word, she never doubted but she was to be dragged forward into the court of justice, in order to place her in the cruel position of either sacrificing her sister by telling the truth, or committing perjury in order to save her life. And so strongly did her thoughts run in this channel, that she applied her father's words, "Ye are aware of the matter," to his acquaintance with the advice that had been so fearfully enforced upon her. She looked up with anxious surprise, not unmingled with a cast of horror, which his next words, as she interpreted and applied them, were not qualified to remove.

"Daughter," said David, "it has ever been my mind, that in things of ane doubtful and controversial nature, ilk Christian's conscience sould be his ain guide—Wherefore descend into yourself, try your ain mind with sufficiency of soul exercise, and as you sall finally find yourself clear to do in this matter—even so be it."

"But, father," said Jeanie, whose mind revolted at the construction which she naturally put upon his language, "can this—this be a doubtful or controversial matter?—Mind, father, the ninth command—'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'"

David Deans paused; for, still applying her speech to his preconceived difficulties, it seemed to him as if *she*, a woman, and a sister, was scarce entitled to be scrupulous upon this occasion, where he, a man, exercised in the testimonies of that testifying period, had given indirect countenance to her following what must have been the natural dictates of her own feelings. But he kept firm his purpose, until his eyes involuntarily rested upon the little settle-bed, and recalled the form of the child of his old age, as she sate upon it, pale, emaciated, and broken-hearted. His mind, as the picture arose before him, involuntarily conceived, and his tongue involuntarily uttered—but in a tone how different from his usual dogmatical precision!—arguments for the course of conduct likely to ensure his child's safety.

"Daughter," he said, "I did not say that your path was free from stumbling—and, questionless, this act may be in the opinion of some a transgression, since he who beareth witness unlawfully, and against his conscience, doth in some sort bear false witness against his neighbour. Yet in matters of compliance, the guilt lieth not in the compliance sae muckle, as in the mind and conscience of him that doth comply; and, therefore, although my testimony hath not been spared upon public defections, I haena felt freedom to separate mysell from the communion of many who have been clear to hear those ministers who have taken the fatal indulgence because they might get good of them, though I could not."

When David had proceeded thus far, his conscience reproved him, that he might be indirectly undermining the purity of his daughter's faith, and smoothing the way for her falling off from strictness of principle. He, therefore, suddenly stopped, and changed his tone:—"Jeanie, I perceive that our vile affections,—so I call them in respect of doing the will of our Father,—cling too heavily to me in this hour of trying sorrow, to permit me to keep sight of my ain duty, or to airt you to yours. I will speak nae mair anent this overtrying matter—Jeanie, if ye can, wi' God and gude conscience, speak in favour of this puir unhappy"—(here his voice faltered)—"She is your sister in the flesh—worthless and castaway as she is, she is the daughter of a saint in heaven, that was a mother to you, Jeanie, in place of your ain—but if ye arena free in conscience to speak for her in the court of judicature, follow your conscience, Jeanie, and let God's will be done." After this adjuration he left the apartment, and his daughter remained in a state of great distress and perplexity.

It would have been no small addition to the sorrows of David Deans, even in this extremity of suffering, had he known that his daughter was applying the casuistical arguments which he had been using, not in the sense of a permission to follow her own opinion on a dubious and disputed point of controversy, but rather as an encouragement to transgress one of those divine commandments which Christians of all sects and denominations unite in holding most sacred.

"Can this be?" said Jeanie, as the door closed on her father—"Can these be his words that I have heard, or has the Enemy taken his voice and features to give weight unto the counsel which causeth to perish?—a sister's life, and a father pointing out how to save it!—O God, deliver me!—this is a fearfu' temptation."

Roaming from thought to thought, she at one time imagined her father understood the ninth commandment literally, as prohibiting false witness *against* our neighbour, without extending the denunciation against falsehood uttered *in favour* of the criminal. But her clear and unsophisticated power of discriminating between good and evil, instantly rejected an interpretation so limited, and so unworthy of the Author of the law. She remained in a state of the most agitating terror and uncertainty—afraid to communicate her thoughts freely to her father, lest she should draw forth an opinion with which she could not comply,—wrung with distress on her sister's account, rendered the more acute by reflecting that the means of saving her were in her power, but were such as her conscience prohibited her from using,—tossed, in short, like a vessel in an open roadstead during a storm, and, like that vessel, resting on one only sure cable and anchor,—faith in Providence, and a resolution to discharge her duty.

Butler's affection and strong sense of religion would have been her principal support in these distressing circumstances, but he was still under restraint, which did not permit him to come to St. Leonard's Crags; and her distresses were of a nature, which, with her indifferent habits of scholarship, she found it impossible to express in writing. She was therefore compelled to trust for guidance to her own unassisted sense of what was right or wrong. It was not the least of Jeanie's distresses, that, although she hoped and believed her sister to be innocent, she had not the means of receiving that assurance from her own mouth.

The double-dealing of Ratcliffe in the matter of Robertson had not prevented his being rewarded, as double-dealers frequently have been, with favour and preferment. Sharpitlaw, who found in him something of a kindred genius, had been intercessor in his behalf with the magistrates, and the circumstance of his having voluntarily remained in the prison, when the doors were forced by the mob, would have made it a hard measure to take the life which he had such easy means of saving. He received a full pardon; and soon afterwards, James Ratcliffe, the greatest thief and housebreaker in Scotland, was, upon the faith, perhaps, of an ancient proverb, selected as a person to be entrusted with the custody of other delinquents.

When Ratcliffe was thus placed in a confidential situation, he was repeatedly applied to by the sapient Saddle-tree and others, who took some interest in the Deans family, to procure an interview between the sisters; but the magistrates, who were extremely anxious for the apprehension of Robertson, had given strict orders to the contrary, hoping that, by keeping them separate, they might, from the one or the other, extract some information respecting that fugitive. On this subject Jeanie had nothing to tell them. She informed Mr. Middleburgh, that she knew nothing of Robertson, except having met him that night by appointment to give her some advice respecting her sister's concern, the purport of which, she said, was betwixt God and her conscience. Of his motions, purposes, or plans, past, present, or future, she knew nothing, and so had nothing to communicate.

Effie was equally silent, though from a different cause. It was in vain that they offered a commutation and alleviation of her punishment, and even a free pardon, if she would confess what she knew of her lover. She answered only with tears; unless, when at times driven into pettish sulkiness by the persecution of the interrogators, she made them abrupt and disrespectful answers.

At length, after her trial had been delayed for many weeks, in hopes she might be induced to speak out on a subject infinitely more interesting to the magistracy than her own guilt or innocence, their patience was worn out, and even Mr. Middleburgh finding no ear lent to farther intercession in her behalf, the day was fixed for the trial to proceed.

It was now, and not sooner, that Sharptilaw, recollecting his promise to Effie Deans, or rather being dinned into compliance by the unceasing remonstrances of Mrs. Saddletree, who was his next-door neighbour, and who declared it was heathen cruelty to keep the twa brokenhearted creatures separate, issued the important mandate, permitting them to see each other.

On the evening which preceded the eventful day of trial, Jeanie was permitted to see her sister—an awful interview, and occurring at a most distressing crisis. This, however, formed a part of the bitter cup which she was doomed to drink, to atone for crimes and follies to which she had no accession; and at twelve o'clock noon, being the time appointed for admission to the jail, she went to meet, for the first time for several months, her guilty, erring, and most miserable sister, in that abode of guilt, error, and utter misery.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

*Sweet sister, let me live!
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far,
That it becomes a virtue.
Measure for Measure.*

Jeanie Deans was admitted into the jail by Ratcliffe. This fellow, as void of shame as of honesty, as he opened the now trebly secured door, asked her, with a leer which made her shudder, "whether she remembered him?"

A half-pronounced and timid "No," was her answer.

"What! not remember moonlight, and Muschat's Cairn, and Rob and Rat?" said he, with the same sneer;—"Your memory needs redding up, my jo."

If Jeanie's distresses had admitted of aggravation, it must have been to find her sister under the charge of such a profligate as this man. He was not, indeed, without something of good to balance so much that was evil in his character and habits. In his misdemeanours he had never been bloodthirsty or cruel; and in his present occupation, he had shown himself, in a certain degree, accessible to touches of humanity. But these good qualities were unknown to Jeanie, who, remembering the scene at Muschat's Cairn, could scarce find voice to acquaint him, that she had an order from Bailie Middleburgh, permitting her to see her sister.

"I ken that fa' weel, my bonny doo; mair by token, I have a special charge to stay in the ward with you a' the time ye are thegither."

"Must that be sae?" asked Jeanie, with an imploring voice.

"Hout, ay, hinny," replied the turnkey; "and what the waur will you and your tittie be of Jim Ratcliffe hearing what ye hae to say to ilk other?—Deil a word ye'll say that will gar him ken your kittle sex better than he kens them already; and another thing is, that if ye dinna speak o' breaking the Tolbooth, deil a word will I tell ower, either to do ye good or ill."

Thus saying, Ratcliffe marshalled her the way to the apartment where Effie was confined.

Shame, fear, and grief, had contended for mastery in the poor prisoner's bosom during the whole morning, while she had looked forward to this meeting; but when the door opened, all gave way to a confused and strange feeling that had a tinge of joy in it, as, throwing herself on her sister's neck, she ejaculated, "My dear Jeanie!—my dear Jeanie! it's lang since I hae seen ye." Jeanie returned the embrace with an earnestness that partook almost of rapture, but it was only a flitting emotion, like a sunbeam unexpectedly penetrating betwixt the clouds of a tempest, and obscured almost as soon as visible. The sisters walked together to the side of the pallet bed, and sate down side by side, took hold of each other's hands, and looked each other in the face, but without speaking a word. In this posture they remained for a minute, while the gleam of joy gradually faded from their features, and gave way to the most intense expression, first of melancholy, and then of agony, till, throwing themselves again into each other's arms, they, to use the language of Scripture, lifted up their voices, and wept bitterly.

Even the hardhearted turnkey, who had spent his life in scenes calculated to stifle both conscience and feeling, could not witness this scene without a touch of human sympathy. It was shown in a trifling action, but which had more delicacy in it than seemed to belong to Ratcliffe's character and station. The unglazed window of the miserable chamber was open, and the beams of a bright sun fell right upon the bed where the sufferers were seated. With a gentleness that had something of reverence in it, Ratcliffe partly closed the shutter, and seemed thus to throw a veil over a scene so sorrowful.

"Ye are ill, Effie," were the first words Jeanie could utter; "ye are very ill."

"O, what wad I gie to be ten times waur, Jeanie!" was the reply—"what wad I gie to be cauld dead afore the ten o'clock bell the morn! And our father—but I am his bairn nae langer now—O, I hae nae friend left in the world!—O, that I were lying dead at my mother's side, in Newbattle kirkyard!"

"Hout, lassie," said Ratcliffe, willing to show the interest which he absolutely felt, "dinna be sae dooms doon-hearted as a' that; there's mony a tod hunted that's no killed. Advocate Langtale has brought folk through waur snappers than a' this, and there's no a cleverer agent than Nichil Novit e'er drew a bill of suspension. Hanged or unhanged, they are weel aff has sic an agent and counsel; ane's sure o' fair play. Ye are a bonny lass, too, an ye wad busk up your cockernony a bit; and a bonny lass will find favour wi' judge and jury, when they would strap up a grewsome carle like me for the fifteenth part of a flea's hide and tallow, d—n them."

To this homely strain of consolation the mourners returned no answer; indeed, they were so much lost in their own sorrows as to have become insensible of Ratcliffe's presence. "O Effie," said her elder sister, "how could you conceal your situation from me? O woman, had I deserved this at your hand?—had ye spoke but ae word—sorry we might hae been, and shamed we might hae been, but this awfu' dispensation had never come ower us."

"And what gude wad that hae dune?" answered the prisoner. "Na, na, Jeanie, a' was ower when ance I forgot what I promised when I faulded down the leaf of my Bible. See," she said, producing the sacred volume, "the book opens aye at the place o' itsell. O see, Jeanie, what a fearfu' Scripture!"

Jeanie took her sister's Bible, and found that the fatal mark was made at this impressive text in the book of Job: "He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone. And mine hope hath he removed like a tree."

"Isna that ower true a doctrine?" said the prisoner "Isna my crown, my honour, removed? And what am I but a poor, wasted, wan-thriven tree, dug up by the roots, and flung out to waste in the highway, that man and beast may tread it under foot? I thought o' the bonny bit them that our father rooted out o' the yard last May, when it had a' the flush o' blossoms on it; and then it lay in the court till the beasts had trod them a' to pieces wi' their feet. I little thought, when I was wae for the bit silly green bush and its flowers, that I was to gang the same gate mysell."

"O, if ye had spoken ae word," again sobbed Jeanie,— "if I were free to swear that ye had said but ae word of how it stude wi' ye, they couldna hae touched your life this day."

"Could they na?" said Effie, with something like awakened interest—for life is dear even to those who feel it is a burden—"Wha tauld ye that, Jeanie?"

"It was ane that kend what he was saying weel enough," replied Jeanie, who had a natural reluctance at mentioning even the name of her sister's seducer.

"Wha was it?—I conjure you to tell me," said Effie, seating herself upright.—"Wha could tak interest in sic a cast-by as I am now?—Was it—was it *him*?"

"Hout," said Ratcliffe, "what signifies keeping the poor lassie in a swither? I'se uphaud it's been Robertson that learned ye that doctrine when ye saw him at Muschat's Cairn."

"Was it him?" said Effie, catching eagerly at his words—"was it him, Jeanie, indeed?—O, I see it was him—poor lad, and I was thinking his heart was as hard as the nether millstone—and him in sic danger on his ain part—poor George!"

Somewhat indignant at this burst of tender feeling towards the author of her misery, Jeanie could not help exclaiming—"O Effie, how can ye speak that gate of sic a man as that?"

"We maun forgie our enemies, ye ken," said poor Effie, with a timid look and a subdued voice; for her conscience told her what a different character the feelings with which she regarded her seducer bore, compared with the Christian charity under which she attempted to veil it.

"And ye hae suffered a' this for him, and ye can think of loving him still?" said her sister, in a voice betwixt pity and blame.

"Love him!" answered Effie—"If I hadna loved as woman seldom loves, I hadna been within these wa's this day; and trow ye, that love sic as mine is lightly forgotten?—Na, na—ye may hew down the tree, but ye canna change its bend—And, O Jeanie, if ye wad do good to me at this moment, tell me every word that he said, and whether he was sorry for poor Effie or no!"

"What needs I tell ye onything about it?" said Jeanie. "Ye may be sure he had ower muckle to do to save himsell, to speak lang or muckle about ony body beside."

"That's no true, Jeanie, though a saunt had said it," replied Effie, with a sparkle of her former lively and irritable temper. "But ye dinna ken, though I do, how far he pat his life in venture to save mine." And looking at Ratcliffe, she checked herself and was silent.

"I fancy," said Ratcliffe, with one of his familiar sneers, "the lassie thinks that naebody has een but hersell—Didna I see when Gentle Geordie was seeking to get other folk out of the Tolbooth forby Jock Porteous?—but ye are of my mind, hinny—better sit and rue, than flit and rue—ye needna look in my face sae amazed. I ken mair things than that, maybe."

"O my God! my God!" said Effie, springing up and throwing herself down on her knees before him—"D'ye ken where they hae putten my bairn?—O my bairn! my bairn! the poor sackless innocent new-born wee ane—bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh!—O man, if ye wad e'er deserve a portion in Heaven, or a brokenhearted creature's blessing upon earth, tell me where they hae put my bairn—the sign of my shame, and the partner of my suffering! tell me wha has taen't away, or what they hae dune wi't?"

"Hout tout," said the turnkey, endeavouring to extricate himself from the firm grasp with which she held him, "that's taking me at my word wi' a witness—Bairn, quo' she? How the deil suld I ken onything of your bairn, huzzy? Ye maun ask that of auld Meg Murdockson, if ye dinna ken ower muckle about it yoursell."

As his answer destroyed the wild and vague hope which had suddenly gleamed upon her, the unhappy prisoner let go her hold of his coat, and fell with her face on the pavement of the apartment in a strong convulsion fit.

Jeanie Deans possessed, with her excellently clear understanding, the concomitant advantage of promptitude of spirit, even in the extremity of distress.

She did not suffer herself to be overcome by her own feelings of exquisite sorrow, but instantly applied herself to her sister's relief, with the readiest remedies which circumstances afforded; and which, to do Ratcliffe justice, he showed himself anxious to suggest, and alert in procuring. He had even the delicacy to withdraw to the farthest corner of the room, so as to render his official attendance upon them as little intrusive as possible, when Effie was composed enough again to resume her conference with her sister.

The prisoner once more, in the most earnest and broken tones, conjured Jeanie to tell her the particulars of the conference with Robertson, and Jeanie felt it was impossible to refuse her this gratification.

"Do ye mind," she said, "Effie, when ye were in the fever before we left Woodend, and how angry your mother, that's now in a better place, was wi' me for gieing ye milk and water to drink, because ye grat for it? Ye were a bairn then, and ye are a woman now, and should ken better than ask what canna but hurt you—But come weal or woe, I canna refuse ye onything that ye ask me wi' the tear in your ee."

Again Effie threw herself into her arms, and kissed her cheek and forehead, murmuring, "O, if ye kend how lang it is since I heard his name mentioned?—if ye but kend how muckle good it does me but to ken onything o' him, that's like goodness or kindness, ye wadna wonder that I wish to hear o' him!"

Jeanie sighed, and commenced her narrative of all that had passed betwixt Robertson and her, making it as brief as possible. Effie listened in breathless anxiety, holding her sister's hand in hers, and keeping her eye fixed upon her face, as if devouring every word she uttered. The interjections of "Poor fellow,"—"Poor George," which escaped in whispers, and betwixt sighs, were the only sounds with which she interrupted the story. When it was finished she made a long pause.

"And this was his advice?" were the first words she uttered.

"Just sic as I hae tell'd ye," replied her sister.

"And he wanted you to say something to yon folks, that wad save my young life?"

"He wanted," answered Jeanie, "that I suld be man-sworn."

"And you tauld him," said Effie, "that ye wadna hear o' coming between me and the death that I am to die, and me no aughten year auld yet?"

"I told him," replied Jeanie, who now trembled at the turn which her sister's reflection seemed about to take, "that I daured na swear to an untruth."

"And what d'ye ca' an untruth?" said Effie, again showing a touch of her former spirit—"Ye are muckle to blame, lass, if ye think a mother would, or could, murder her ain bairn—Murder!—I wad hae laid down my life just to see a blink o' its ee!"

"I do believe," said Jeanie, "that ye are as innocent of sic a purpose as the new-born babe itsell."

"I am glad ye do me that justice," said Effie, haughtily; "ifs whiles the faut of very good folk like you, Jeanie, that, they think a' the rest of the world are as bad as the warst temptations can make them."

"I didna deserve this frae ye, Effie," said her sister, sobbing, and feeling at once the injustice of the reproach, and compassion for the state of mind which dictated it.

"Maybe no, sister," said Effie. "But ye are angry because I love Robertson—How can I help loving him, that loves me better than body and soul baith?—Here he put his life in a niffer, to break the prison to let me out; and sure am I, had it stude wi' him as it stands wi' you"—Here she paused and was silent.

"O, if it stude wi' me to save ye wi' risk of my life!" said Jeanie.

"Ay, lass," said her sister, "that's lightly said, but no sae lightly credited, frae ane that winna ware a word for me; and if it be a wrang word, ye'll hae time enough to repent o't."

"But that word is a grievous sin, and it's a deeper offence when it's a sin wilfully and presumptuously committed."

"Weel, weel, Jeanie," said Effie, "I mind a' about the sins o' presumption in the questions—we'll speak nae mair about this matter, and ye may save your breath to say your carritch and for me, I'll soon hae nae breath to waste on onybody."

"I must needs say," interposed Ratcliffe, "that it's d—d hard, when three words of your mouth would give the girl the chance to nick Moll Blood,* that you make such scrupling about rapping** to them. D—n me, if they would take me, if I would not rap to all what d'ye callums—Hyssop's Fables, for her life—I am us'd to't, b—t me, for less matters. Why, I have smacked calf-skin*** fifty times in England for a keg of brandy."

* The gallows. ** Swearing. *** Kissed the book.

"Never speak mair o't," said the prisoner. "It's just as weel as it is—and gude-day, sister; ye keep Mr. Ratcliffe waiting on—Ye'll come back and see me, I reckon, before"—here she stopped and became deadly pale.

"And are we to part in this way," said Jeanie, "and you in sic deadly peril? O Effie, look but up, and say what ye wad hae me to do, and I could find in my heart amais't to say that I wad do't."

"No, Jeanie," replied her sister after an effort, "I am better minded now. At my best, I was never half sae gude as ye were, and what for suld you begin to mak yoursell waur to save me, now that I am no worth saving? God knows, that in my sober mind, I wadna wuss ony living creature to do a wrang thing to save my life. I might have fled frae this Tolbooth on that awfu' night wi' ane wad hae carried me through the warld, and friended me, and fended for me. But I said to them, let life gang when gude fame is gane before it. But this lang imprisonment has broken my spirit, and I am whiles sair left to mysell, and then I wad gie the Indian

mines of gold and diamonds, just for life and breath—for I think, Jeanie, I have such roving fits as I used to hae in the fever; but, instead of the fiery een and wolves, and Widow Butler's bullseg, that I used to see spieling upon my bed, I am thinking now about a high, black gibbet, and me standing up, and such seas of faces all looking up at poor Effie Deans, and asking if it be her that George Robertson used to call the Lily of St. Leonard's. And then they stretch out their faces, and make mouths, and girn at me, and whichever way I look, I see a face laughing like Meg Murdockson, when she tauld me I had seen the last of my wean. God preserve us, Jeanie, that carline has a fearsome face!"

She clapped her hands before her eyes as she uttered this exclamation, as if to secure herself against seeing the fearful object she had alluded to.

Jeanie Deans remained with her sister for two hours, during which she endeavoured, if possible, to extract something from her that might be serviceable in her exculpation. But she had nothing to say beyond what she had declared on her first examination, with the purport of which the reader will be made acquainted in proper time and place. "They wadna believe her," she said, "and she had naething mair to tell them."

At length, Ratcliffe, though reluctantly, informed the sisters that there was a necessity that they should part. "Mr. Novit," he said, "was to see the prisoner, and maybe Mr. Langtale too. Langtale likes to look at a bonny lass, whether in prison or out o' prison."

Reluctantly, therefore, and slowly, after many a tear, and many an embrace, Jeanie retired from the apartment, and heard its jarring bolts turned upon the dear being from whom she was separated. Somewhat familiarised now even with her rude conductor, she offered him a small present in money, with a request he would do what he could for her sister's accommodation. To her surprise, Ratcliffe declined the fee. "I wasna bloody when I was on the pad," he said, "and I winna be greedy—that is, beyond what's right and reasonable—now that I am in the lock.—Keep the siller; and for civility, your sister sall hae sic as I can bestow; but I hope you'll think better on it, and rap an oath for her—deil a hair ill there is in it, if ye are rapping again the crown. I kend a worthy minister, as gude a man, bating the deed they deposed him for, as ever ye heard claver in a pu'pit, that rapped to a hogshead of pigtail tobacco, just for as muckle as filled his spleuchan.*

* Tobacco-pouch.

But maybe ye are keeping your ain counsel—weel, weel, there's nae harm in that. As for your sister, I'll see that she gets her meat clean and warm, and I'll try to gar her lie down and take a sleep after dinner, for deil a ee she'll close the night. I hae gude experience of these matters. The first night is aye the warst o't. I hae never heard o' ane that sleepit the night afore trial, but of mony a ane that sleepit as sound as a tap the night before their necks were straughted. And it's nae wonder—the warst may be tholed when it's kend—Better a finger aff as aye wagging."

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

Yet though thou mayst be dragg'd in scorn
To yonder ignominious tree,
Thou shalt not want one faithful friend
To share the cruel fates' decree.
Jemmy Dawson.

After spending the greater part of the morning in his devotions (for his benevolent neighbours had kindly insisted upon discharging his task of ordinary labour), David Deans entered the apartment when the breakfast meal was prepared. His eyes were involuntarily cast down, for he was afraid to look at Jeanie, uncertain as he was whether she might feel herself at liberty, with a good conscience, to attend the Court of Justiciary that day, to give the evidence which he understood that she possessed, in order to her sister's exculpation. At length, after a minute of apprehensive hesitation, he looked at her dress to discover whether it seemed to be in her contemplation to go abroad that morning. Her apparel was neat and plain, but such as conveyed no exact intimation of her intentions to go abroad. She had exchanged her usual garb for morning labour, for one something inferior to that with which, as her best, she was wont to dress herself for church, or any more rare occasion of going into society. Her sense taught her, that it was respectful to be decent in her apparel on such an occasion, while her feelings induced her to lay aside the use of the very few and simple personal ornaments, which, on other occasions, she permitted herself to wear. So that there occurred nothing in her external appearance which could mark out to her father, with anything like certainty, her intentions on this occasion.

The preparations for their humble meal were that morning made in vain. The father and daughter sat, each assuming the appearance of eating, when the other's eyes were turned to them, and desisting from the effort with disgust, when the affectionate imposture seemed no longer necessary.

At length these moments of constraint were removed. The sound of St. Giles's heavy toll announced the hour previous to the commencement of the trial; Jeanie arose, and with a degree of composure for which she herself could not account, assumed her plaid, and made her other preparations for a distant walking. It was a strange contrast between the firmness of her demeanour, and the vacillation and cruel uncertainty of purpose indicated in all her father's motions; and one unacquainted with both could scarcely have supposed that the former was, in her ordinary habits of life, a docile, quiet, gentle, and even timid country maiden, while her father, with a mind naturally proud and strong, and supported by religious opinions of a stern, stoical, and unyielding character, had in his time undergone and withstood the most severe hardships, and the most imminent peril, without depression of spirit, or subjugation of his constancy. The secret of this difference was, that Jeanie's mind had already anticipated the line of conduct which she must adopt, with all its natural and necessary consequences; while her father, ignorant of every other circumstance, tormented himself with imagining what the one sister might say or swear, or what effect her testimony might have upon the awful event of the trial.

He watched his daughter, with a faltering and indecisive look, until she looked back upon him, with a look of unutterable anguish, as she was about to leave the apartment.

"My dear lassie," said he, "I will." His action, hastily and confusedly searching for his worsted mittans* and staff, showed his purpose of accompanying her, though his tongue failed distinctly to announce it.

* A kind of worsted gloves, used by the lower orders.

"Father," said Jeanie, replying rather to his action than his words, "ye had better not."

"In the strength of my God," answered Deans, assuming firmness, "I will go forth."

And, taking his daughter's arm under his, he began to walk from the door with a step so hasty, that she was almost unable to keep up with him. A trifling circumstance, but which marked the perturbed state of his mind, checked his course.

"Your bonnet, father?" said Jeanie, who observed he had come out with his grey hairs uncovered. He turned back with a slight blush on his cheek, being ashamed to have been detected in an omission which indicated so much mental confusion, assumed his large blue Scottish bonnet, and with a step slower, but more composed, as if the circumstance, had obliged him to summon up his resolution, and collect his scattered ideas, again placed his daughter's arm under his, and resumed the way to Edinburgh.

The courts of justice were then, and are still, held in what is called the Parliament Close, or, according to modern phrase, Parliament Square, and occupied the buildings intended for the accommodation of the Scottish Estates. This edifice, though in an imperfect and corrupted style of architecture, had then a grave, decent, and, as it were, a judicial aspect, which was at least entitled to respect from its antiquity. For which venerable front, I observed, on my last occasional visit to the metropolis, that modern taste had substituted, at great apparent expense, a pile so utterly inconsistent with every monument of antiquity around, and in itself so clumsy at the same time and fantastic, that it may be likened to the decorations of Tom Errand the porter, in the Trip to the Jubilee, when he appears bedizened with the tawdry finery of Beau Clincher. Sed transeat cum caeteris erroribus.

The small quadrangle, or Close, if we may presume still to give it that appropriate, though antiquated title, which at Lichfield, Salisbury, and elsewhere, is properly applied to designate the enclosure adjacent to a cathedral, already evinced tokens of the fatal scene which was that day to be acted. The soldiers of the City Guard were on their posts, now enduring, and now rudely repelling with the butts of their muskets, the motley crew who thrust each other forward, to catch a

glance at the unfortunate object of trial, as she should pass from the adjacent prison to the Court in which her fate was to be determined. All must have occasionally observed, with disgust, the apathy with which the vulgar gaze on scenes of this nature, and how seldom, unless when their sympathies are called forth by some striking and extraordinary circumstance, the crowd evince any interest deeper than that of callous, unthinking bustle, and brutal curiosity. They laugh, jest, quarrel, and push each other to and fro, with the same unfeeling indifference as if they were assembled for some holiday sport, or to see an idle procession. Occasionally, however, this demeanour, so natural to the degraded populace of a large town, is exchanged for a temporary touch of human affections; and so it chanced on the present occasion.

When Deans and his daughter presented themselves in the Close, and endeavoured to make their way forward to the door of the Court-house, they became involved in the mob, and subject, of course, to their insolence. As Deans repelled with some force the rude pushes which he received on all sides, his figure and antiquated dress caught the attention of the rabble, who often show an intuitive sharpness in ascribing the proper character from external appearance,—

"Ye're welcome, whigs,
Frae Bothwell briggs,"

sung one fellow (for the mob of Edinburgh were at that time jacobitically disposed, probably because that was the line of sentiment most diametrically opposite to existing authority).

"Mess David Williamson,
Chosen of twenty,
Ran up the pu'pit stair,
And sang Killiecrankie,"

chanted a siren, whose profession might be guessed by her appearance. A tattered caidie, or errand-porter, whom David Deans had jostled in his attempt to extricate himself from the vicinity of these scorners, exclaimed in a strong north-country tone, "Ta deil ding out her Cameronian een—what gies her titles to dunch gentlemans about?"

"Make room for the ruling elder," said yet another; "he comes to see a precious sister glorify God in the Grassmarket!"

"Whisht; shame's in ye, sirs," said the voice of a man very loudly, which, as quickly sinking, said in a low but distinct tone, "It's her father and sister."

All fell back to make way for the sufferers; and all, even the very rudest and most profligate, were struck with shame and silence. In the space thus abandoned to them by the mob, Deans stood, holding his daughter by the hand, and said to her, with a countenance strongly and sternly expressive of his internal emotion, "Ye hear with your ears, and ye see with your eyes, where and to whom the backslidings and defections of professors are ascribed by the scoffers. Not to themselves alone, but to the kirk of which they are members, and to its blessed and invisible Head. Then, weel may we take wi' patience our share and portion of this outspreading reproach."

The man who had spoken, no other than our old friend, Dumbiedikes, whose mouth, like that of the prophet's ass, had been opened by the emergency of the case, now joined them, and, with his usual taciturnity, escorted them into the Court-house. No opposition was offered to their entrance either by the guards or doorkeepers; and it is even said that one of the latter refused a shilling of civility-money tendered him by the Laird of Dumbiedikes, who was of opinion that "siller wad make a' easy." But this last incident wants confirmation.

Admitted within the precincts of the Court-house, they found the usual number of busy office-bearers, and idle loiterers, who attend on these scenes by choice, or from duty. Burghers gaped and stared; young lawyers sauntered, sneered, and laughed, as in the pit of the theatre; while others apart sat on a bench retired, and reasoned highly, inter apices juris, on the doctrines of constructive crime, and the true import of the statute. The bench was prepared for the arrival of the judges. The jurors were in attendance. The crown-counsel, employed in looking over their briefs and notes of evidence, looked grave, and whispered with each other. They occupied one side of a large table placed beneath the bench; on the other sat the advocates, whom the humanity of the Scottish law (in this particular more liberal than that of the sister-country) not only permits, but enjoins, to appear and assist with their advice and skill all persons under trial. Mr. Nichil Novit was seen actively instructing the counsel for the panel (so the prisoner is called in Scottish law-phraseology), busy, bustling, and important. When they entered the Court-room, Deans asked the Laird, in a tremulous whisper, "Where will she sit?"

Dumbiedikes whispered Novit, who pointed to a vacant space at the bar, fronting the judges, and was about to conduct Deans towards it.

"No!" he said; "I cannot sit by her—I cannot own her—not as yet, at least—I will keep out of her sight, and turn mine own eyes elsewhere—better for us baith."

Saddletree, whose repeated interference with the counsel had procured him one or two rebuffs, and a special request that he would concern himself with his own matters, now saw with pleasure an opportunity of playing the person of importance. He bustled up to the poor old man, and proceeded to exhibit his consequence, by securing, through his interest with the bar-keepers and macers, a seat for Deans, in a situation where he was hidden from the general eye by the projecting corner of the bench.

"It's gude to have a friend at court," he said, continuing his heartless harangues to the passive auditor, who neither heard nor replied to them; "few folk but mysell could hae sorted ye out a seat like this—the Lords will be here incontinent, and proceed instanter to trial. They wunna fence the Court as they do at the Circuit—the High Court of Justiciary is aye fenced.—But, Lord's sake, what's this o't—Jeanie, ye are a cited witness—Macer, this lass is a witness—she maun be enclosed—she maun on nae account be at large.—Mr. Novit, suldna Jeanie Deans be enclosed?"

Novit answered in the affirmative, and offered to conduct Jeanie to the apartment, where, according to the scrupulous practice of the Scottish Court, the witnesses remain in readiness to be called into Court to give evidence; and separated, at the same time, from all who might influence their testimony, or give them information concerning that which was passing upon the trial.

"Is this necessary?" said Jeanie, still reluctant to quit her father's hand.

"A matter of absolute needcessity," said Saddletree, "wha ever heard of witnesses no being enclosed?"

"It is really a matter of necessity," said the younger counsellor, retained for her sister; and Jeanie reluctantly followed the macer of the Court to the place appointed.

"This, Mr. Deans," said Saddletree, "is ca'd sequestering a witness; but it's clean different (whilk maybe ye wadna fund out o' yoursell) frae sequestering ane's estate or effects, as in cases of bankruptcy. I hae often been sequestered as a witness, for the Sheriff is in the use whiles to cry me in to witness the declarations at precognitions, and so is Mr. Sharpitlaw; but I was ne'er like to be sequestered o' land and gudes but ance, and that was lang syne, afore I was married. But whisht, whisht! here's the Court coming."

As he spoke, the five Lords of Justiciary, in their long robes of scarlet, faced with white, and preceded by their mace-bearer, entered with the usual formalities, and took their places upon the bench of judgment.

The audience rose to receive them; and the bustle occasioned by their entrance was hardly composed, when a great noise and confusion of persons struggling, and forcibly endeavouring to enter at the doors of the Court-room, and of the galleries, announced that the prisoner was about to be placed at the bar. This tumult takes place when the doors, at first only opened to those either having right to be present, or to the better and more qualified ranks, are at length laid open to all whose curiosity induces them to be present on the occasion. With inflamed countenances and dishevelled dresses, struggling with, and sometimes tumbling over each other, in rushed the rude multitude, while a few soldiers, forming, as it were, the centre of the tide, could scarce, with all their efforts, clear a passage for the prisoner to the place which she was to occupy. By the authority of the Court, and the exertions of its officers, the tumult among the spectators was at length appeased, and the unhappy girl brought forward, and placed betwixt two sentinels with drawn bayonets, as a prisoner at the bar, where she was to abide her deliverance for good or evil, according to the issue of her trial.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

We have strict statutes, and most biting laws—
The needful bits and curbs for headstrong steeds—
Which, for these fourteen years, we have let sleep,
Like to an o'ergrown lion in a cave,
That goes not out to prey.

Measure for Measure.

"Euphemia Deans," said the presiding Judge, in an accent in which pity was blended with dignity, "stand up and listen to the criminal indictment now to be preferred against you."

The unhappy girl, who had been stupified by the confusion through which the guards had forced a passage, cast a bewildered look on the multitude of faces around her, which seemed to tapestry, as it were, the walls, in one broad slope from the ceiling to the floor, with human countenances, and instinctively obeyed a command, which rung in her ears like the trumpet of the judgment-day.

"Put back your hair, Effie," said one of the macers. For her beautiful and abundant tresses of long fair hair, which, according to the costume of the country, unmarried women were not allowed to cover with any sort of cap, and which, alas! Effie dared no longer confine with the snood or riband, which implied purity of maiden-fame, now hung unbound and dishevelled over her face, and almost concealed her features. On receiving this hint from the attendant, the unfortunate young woman, with a hasty, trembling, and apparently mechanical compliance, shaded back from her face her luxuriant locks, and showed to the whole court, excepting one individual, a countenance, which, though pale and emaciated, was so lovely amid its agony, that it called forth a universal murmur of compassion and sympathy. Apparently the expressive sound of human feeling recalled the poor girl from the stupor of fear, which predominated at first over every other sensation, and awakened her to the no less painful sense of shame and exposure attached to her present situation. Her eye, which had at first glanced wildly around, was turned on the ground; her cheek, at first so deadly pale, began gradually to be overspread with a faint blush, which increased so fast, that, when in agony of shame she strove to conceal her face, her temples, her brow, her neck, and all that her slender fingers and small palms could not cover, became of the deepest crimson.

All marked and were moved by these changes, excepting one. It was old Deans, who, motionless in his seat, and concealed, as we have said, by the corner of the bench, from seeing or being seen, did nevertheless keep his eyes firmly fixed on the ground, as if determined that, by no possibility whatever, would he be an ocular witness of the shame of his house.

"Ichabod!" he said to himself—"Ichabod! my glory is departed!"

While these reflections were passing through his mind, the indictment, which set forth in technical form the crime of which the panel stood accused, was read as usual, and the prisoner was asked if she was Guilty, or Not Guilty.

"Not guilty of my poor bairn's death," said Effie Deans, in an accent corresponding in plaintive softness of tone to the beauty of her features, and which was not heard by the audience without emotion.

The presiding Judge next directed the counsel to plead to the relevancy; that is, to state on either part the arguments in point of law, and evidence in point of fact, against and in favour of the criminal; after which it is the form of the Court to pronounce a preliminary judgment, sending the cause to the cognisance of the jury, or assize.

The counsel for the crown briefly stated the frequency of the crime of infanticide, which had given rise to the special statute under which the panel stood indicted. He mentioned the various instances, many of them marked with circumstances of atrocity, which had at length induced the King's Advocate, though with great reluctance, to make the experiment, whether, by strictly enforcing the Act of Parliament which had been made to prevent such enormities, their occurrence might be prevented. "He expected," he said, "to be able to establish by witnesses, as well as by the declaration of the panel herself, that she was in the state described by the statute. According to his information, the panel had communicated her pregnancy to no one, nor did she allege in her own declaration that she had done so. This secrecy was the first requisite in support of the indictment. The same declaration admitted, that she had borne a male child, in circumstances which gave but too much reason to believe it had died by the hands, or at least with the knowledge or consent, of the unhappy mother. It was not, however, necessary for him to bring positive proof that the panel was accessory to the murder, nay, nor even to prove, that the child was murdered at all. It was sufficient to support the indictment, that it could not be found. According to the stern, but necessary severity of this statute, she who should conceal her pregnancy, who should omit to call that assistance which is most necessary on such occasions, was held already to have meditated the death of her offspring, as an event most likely to be the consequence of her culpable and cruel concealment. And if, under such circumstances, she could not alternatively show by proof that the infant had died a natural death, or produce it still in life, she must, under the construction of the law, be held to have murdered it, and suffer death accordingly."

The counsel for the prisoner, Mr. Fairbrother, a man of considerable fame in his profession, did not pretend directly to combat the arguments of the King's Advocate. He began by lamenting that his senior at the bar, Mr. Langtale, had been suddenly called to the county of which he was sheriff, and that he had been applied to, on short warning, to give the panel his assistance in this interesting case. He had had little time, he said, to make up for his inferiority to his learned brother by long and minute research; and he was afraid he might give a specimen of his incapacity, by being compelled to admit the accuracy of the indictment under the statute. "It was enough for their Lordships," he observed, "to know that such was the law, and he admitted the advocate had a right to call for the usual interlocutor of relevancy." But he stated, "that when he came to establish his case by proof, he trusted to make out circumstances which would satisfactorily elide the charge in the libel. His client's story was a short, but most melancholy one. She was bred up in the strictest tenets of religion and virtue, the daughter of a worthy and conscientious person, who, in evil times, had established a character for courage and religion, by becoming a sufferer for conscience' sake."

David Deans gave a convulsive start at hearing himself thus mentioned, and then resumed the situation, in which, with his face stooped against his hands, and both resting against the corner of the elevated bench on which the Judges sate, he had hitherto listened to the procedure in the trial. The Whig lawyers seemed to be interested; the Tories put up their lip.

"Whatever may be our difference of opinion," resumed the lawyer, whose business it was to carry his whole audience with him if possible, "concerning the peculiar tenets of these people" (here Deans groaned deeply), "it is impossible to deny them the praise of sound, and even rigid morals, or the merit of training up their children in the fear of God; and yet it was the daughter of such a person whom a jury would shortly be called upon, in the absence of evidence, and upon mere presumptions, to convict of a crime more properly belonging to a heathen, or a savage, than to a Christian and civilised country. It was true," he admitted, "that the excellent nurture and early instruction which the poor girl had received, had not been sufficient to preserve her from guilt and error. She had fallen a sacrifice to an inconsiderate affection for a young man of prepossessing manners, as he had been informed, but of a very dangerous and desperate character. She was seduced under promise of marriage—a promise, which the fellow might have, perhaps, done her justice by keeping, had he not at that time been called upon by the law to atone for a crime, violent and desperate in itself, but which became the preface to another eventful history, every step of which was marked by blood and guilt, and the final termination of which had not even yet arrived. He believed that no one would hear him without surprise, when he stated that the father of this infant now amissing, and said by the learned Advocate to have been murdered, was no other than the notorious George Robertson, the accomplice of Wilson, the hero of the memorable escape from the Tolbooth Church, and as no one knew better than his learned friend the Advocate, the principal actor in the Porteous conspiracy—"

"I am sorry to interrupt a counsel in such a case as the present," said, the presiding Judge; "but I must remind the learned gentleman that he is travelling out of the case before us."

The counsel bowed and resumed. "He only judged it necessary," he said, "to mention the name and situation of Robertson, because the circumstance in which that character was placed, went a great way in accounting for the silence on which his Majesty's counsel had laid so much weight, as affording proof that his client proposed to allow no fair play for its life to the helpless being whom she was about to bring into the world. She had not announced to her friends that she had

been seduced from the path of honour—and why had she not done so?—Because she expected daily to be restored to character, by her seducer doing her that justice which she knew to be in his power, and believed to be in his inclination. Was it natural—was it reasonable—was it fair, to expect that she should in the interim, become *felo de se* of her own character, and proclaim her frailty to the world, when she had every reason to expect, that, by concealing it for a season, it might be veiled for ever? Was it not, on the contrary, pardonable, that, in such an emergency, a young woman, in such a situation, should be found far from disposed to make a confidant of every prying gossip, who, with sharp eyes, and eager ears, pressed upon her for an explanation of suspicious circumstances, which females in the lower—he might say which females of all ranks, are so alert in noticing, that they sometimes discover them where they do not exist? Was it strange or was it criminal, that she should have repelled their inquisitive impertinence with petulant denials? The sense and feeling of all who heard him would answer directly in the negative. But although his client had thus remained silent towards those to whom she was not called upon to communicate her situation,—to whom," said the learned gentleman, "I will add, it would have been unadvised and improper in her to have done so; yet, I trust, I shall remove this case most triumphantly from under the statute, and obtain the unfortunate young woman an honourable dismissal from your Lordships' bar, by showing that she did, in due time and place, and to a person most fit for such confidence, mention the calamitous circumstances in which she found herself. This occurred after Robertson's conviction, and when he was lying in prison in expectation of the fate which his comrade Wilson afterwards suffered, and from which he himself so strangely escaped. It was then, when all hopes of having her honour repaired by wedlock vanished from her eyes,—when an union with one in Robertson's situation, if still practicable, might, perhaps, have been regarded rather as an addition to her disgrace,—it was then, that I trust to be able to prove that the prisoner communicated and consulted with her sister, a young woman several years older than herself, the daughter of her father, if I mistake not, by a former marriage, upon the perils and distress of her unhappy situation."

"If, indeed, you are able to instruct that point, Mr. Fairbrother," said the presiding Judge.

"If I am indeed able to instruct that point, my Lord," resumed Mr. Fairbrother, "I trust not only to serve my client, but to relieve your Lordships from that which I know you feel the most painful duty of your high office; and to give all who now hear me the exquisite pleasure of beholding a creature, so young, so ingenuous, and so beautiful, as she that is now at the bar of your Lordships' Court, dismissed from thence in safety and in honour."

This address seemed to affect many of the audience, and was followed by a slight murmur of applause. Deans, as he heard his daughter's beauty and innocent appearance appealed to, was involuntarily about to turn his eyes towards her; but, recollecting himself, he bent them again on the ground with stubborn resolution.

"Will not my learned brother, on the other side of the bar," continued the advocate, after a short pause, "share in this general joy, since, I know, while he discharges his duty in bringing an accused person here, no one rejoices more in their being freely and honourably sent hence? My learned brother shakes his head doubtfully, and lays his hand on the panel's declaration. I understand him perfectly—he would insinuate that the facts now stated to your Lordships are inconsistent with the confession of Euphemia Deans herself. I need not remind your Lordships, that her present defence is no whit to be narrowed within the bounds of her former confession; and that it is not by any account which she may formerly have given of herself, but by what is now to be proved for or against her, that she must ultimately stand or fall. I am not under the necessity of accounting for her choosing to drop out of her declaration the circumstances of her confession to her sister. She might not be aware of its importance; she might be afraid of implicating her sister; she might even have forgotten the circumstance entirely, in the terror and distress of mind incidental to the arrest of so young a creature on a charge so heinous. Any of these reasons are sufficient to account for her having suppressed the truth in this instance, at whatever risk to herself; and I incline most to her erroneous fear of criminating her sister, because I observe she has had a similar tenderness towards her lover (however undeserved on his part), and has never once mentioned Robertson's name from beginning to end of her declaration.

"But, my Lords," continued Fairbrother, "I am aware the King's Advocate will expect me to show, that the proof I offer is consistent with other circumstances of the case, which I do not and cannot deny. He will demand of me how Effie Deans's confession to her sister, previous to her delivery, is reconcilable with the mystery of the birth,—with the disappearance, perhaps the murder (for I will not deny a possibility which I cannot disprove) of the infant. My Lords, the explanation of this is to be found in the placability, perchance, I may say, in the facility and pliability, of the female sex. The *dulcis Amaryllidis irae*, as your Lordships well know, are easily appeased; nor is it possible to conceive a woman so atrociously offended by the man whom she has loved, but that she will retain a fund of forgiveness, upon which his penitence, whether real or affected, may draw largely, with a certainty that his bills will be answered. We can prove, by a letter produced in evidence, that this villain Robertson, from the bottom of the dungeon whence he already probably meditated the escape, which he afterwards accomplished by the assistance of his comrade, contrived to exercise authority over the mind, and to direct the motions, of this unhappy girl. It was in compliance with his injunctions, expressed in that letter, that the panel was prevailed upon to alter the line of conduct which her own better thoughts had suggested; and, instead of resorting, when her time of travail approached, to the protection of her own family, was induced to confide herself to the charge of some vile agent of this nefarious seducer, and by her conducted to one of those solitary and secret purlieus of villany, which, to the shame of our police, still are suffered to exist in the suburbs of this city, where, with the assistance, and under the charge, of a person of her own sex, she bore a male child, under circumstances which added treble bitterness to the woe denounced against our original mother. What purpose Robertson had in all this, it is hard to tell, or even to guess. He may have meant to marry the girl, for her father is a man of substance. But, for the termination of the story, and the conduct of the woman whom he had placed about the person of Euphemia Deans, it is still more difficult to account. The unfortunate young woman was visited by the fever incidental to her situation. In this fever she appears to have been deceived by the person that waited on her, and, on recovering her senses, she found that she was childless in that abode of misery. Her infant had been carried off, perhaps for the worst purposes, by the wretch that waited on her. It may have been murdered, for what I can tell."

He was here interrupted by a piercing shriek, uttered by the unfortunate prisoner. She was with difficulty brought to compose herself. Her counsel availed himself of the tragical interruption, to close his pleading with effect.

"My Lords," said he, "in that piteous cry you heard the eloquence of maternal affection, far surpassing the force of my poor words—Rachel weeping for her children! Nature herself bears testimony in favour of the tenderness and acuteness of the prisoner's parental feelings. I will not dishonour her plea by adding a word more."

"Heard ye ever the like o' that, Laird?" said Saddletree to Dumbiedikes, when the counsel had ended his speech. "There's a chield can spin a muckle pirn out of a wee tait of tow! Deil haet he kens mair about it than what's in the declaration, and a surmise that Jeanie Deans suld hae been able to say something about her sister's situation, whilk surmise, Mr. Crossmyloof says, rests on sma' authority. And he's cleckit this great muckle bird out o' this wee egg! He could wile the very flounders out o' the Firth.—What garr'd my father no send me to Utrecht?—But whisht, the Court is gaun to pronounce the interlocutor of relevancy."

And accordingly the Judges, after a few words, recorded their judgment, which bore, that the indictment, if proved, was relevant to infer the pains of law: And that the defence, that the panel had communicated her situation to her sister, was a relevant defence: And, finally, appointed the said indictment and defence to be submitted to the judgment of an assize.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

Most righteous judge! a sentence.—Come, prepare.

Merchant of Venice.

It is by no means my intention to describe minutely the forms of a Scottish criminal trial, nor am I sure that I could draw up an account so intelligible and accurate as to abide the criticism of the gentlemen of the long robe. It is enough to say that the jury was impanelled, and the case proceeded. The prisoner was again required to plead to the charge, and she again replied, "Not Guilty," in the same heart-thrilling tone as before.

The crown counsel then called two or three female witnesses, by whose testimony it was established, that Effie's situation had been remarked by them, that they had taxed her with the fact, and that her answers had amounted to an angry and petulant denial of what they charged her with. But, as very frequently happens, the declaration of the panel or accused party herself was the evidence which bore hardest upon her case.

In the event of these tales ever finding their way across the Border, it may be proper to apprise the southern reader that it is the practice in Scotland, on apprehending a suspected person, to subject him to a judicial examination before a magistrate. He is not compelled to answer any of the questions asked of him, but may remain silent if he sees it his interest to do so. But whatever answers he chooses to give are formally written down, and being subscribed by himself and the magistrate, are produced against the accused in case of his being brought to trial. It is true, that these declarations are not produced as being in themselves evidence properly so called, but only as adminicles of testimony, tending to corroborate what is considered as legal and proper evidence. Notwithstanding this nice distinction, however, introduced by lawyers to reconcile this procedure to their own general rule, that a man cannot be required to bear witness against himself, it nevertheless usually happens that these declarations become the means of condemning the accused, as it were, out of their own mouths. The prisoner, upon these previous examinations, has indeed the privilege of remaining silent if he pleases; but every man necessarily feels that a refusal to answer natural and pertinent interrogatories, put by judicial authority, is in itself a strong proof of guilt, and will certainly lead to his being committed to prison; and few can renounce the hope of obtaining liberty by giving some specious account of themselves, and showing apparent frankness in explaining their motives and accounting for their conduct. It, therefore, seldom happens that the prisoner refuses to give a judicial declaration, in which, nevertheless, either by letting out too much of the truth, or by endeavouring to substitute a fictitious story, he almost always exposes himself to suspicion and to contradictions, which weigh heavily in the minds of the jury. The declaration of Effie Deans was uttered on other principles, and the following is a sketch of its contents, given in the judicial form, in which they may still be found in the Books of Adjournal.

The declarant admitted a criminal intrigue with an individual whose name she desired to conceal. "Being interrogated, what her reason was for secrecy on this point? She declared, that she had no right to blame that person's conduct more than she did her own, and that she was willing to confess her own faults, but not to say anything which might criminate the absent. Interrogated, if she confessed her situation to any one, or made any preparation for her confinement? Declares, she did not. And being interrogated, why she forbore to take steps which her situation so peremptorily required? Declares, she was ashamed to tell her friends, and she trusted the person she has mentioned would provide for her and the infant. Interrogated if he did so? Declares, that he did not do so personally; but that it was not his fault, for that the declarant is convinced he would have laid down his life sooner than the bairn or she had come to harm. Interrogated, what prevented him from keeping his promise? Declares, that it was impossible for him to do so, he being under trouble at the time, and declines farther answer to this question. Interrogated, where she was from the period she left her master, Mr. Saddletree's family, until her appearance at her father's, at St. Leonard's, the day before she was apprehended? Declares, she does not remember. And, on the interrogatory being repeated, declares, she does not mind muckle about it, for she was very ill. On the question being again repeated, she declares, she will tell the truth, if it should be the undoing of her, so long as she is not asked to tell on other folk; and admits, that she passed that interval of time in the lodging of a woman, an acquaintance of that person who had wished her to that place to be delivered, and that she was there delivered accordingly of a male child. Interrogated, what was the name of that person? Declares and refuses to answer this question. Interrogated, where she lives? Declares, she has no certainty, for that she was taken to the lodging aforesaid under cloud of night. Interrogated, if the lodging was in the city or suburbs? Declares and refuses to answer that question. Interrogated, whether, when she left the house of Mr. Saddletree, she went up or down the street? Declares and refuses to answer the question. Interrogated, whether she had ever seen the woman before she was wished to her, as she termed it, by the person whose name she refuses to answer? Declares and replies, not to her knowledge. Interrogated, whether this woman was introduced to her by the said person verbally, or by word of mouth? Declares, she has no freedom to answer this question. Interrogated, if the child was alive when it was born? Declares, that—God help her and it!—it certainly was alive. Interrogated, if it died a natural death after birth? Declares, not to her knowledge. Interrogated, where it now is? Declares, she would give her right hand to ken, but that she never hopes to see mair than the banes of it. And being interrogated, why she supposes it is now dead? the declarant wept bitterly and made no answer. Interrogated, if the woman, in whose lodging she was, seemed to be a fit person to be with her in that situation? Declares, she might be fit enough for skill, but that she was an hard-hearted bad woman. Interrogated, if there was any other person in the lodging excepting themselves two? Declares, that she thinks there was another woman; but her head was so carried with pain of body and trouble of mind, that she minded her very little. Interrogated, when the child was taken away from her? Declared that she fell in a fever, and was light-headed, and when she came to her own mind, the woman told her the bairn was dead; and that the declarant answered, if it was dead it had had foul play. That, thereupon, the woman was very sair on her, and gave her much ill language; and that the deponent was frightened, and crawled out of the house when her back was turned, and went home to Saint Leonard's Craggs, as well as a woman in her condition dought.*

* i.e. Was able to do.

Interrogated, why she did not tell her story to her sister and father, and get force to search the house for her child, dead or alive? Declares, it was her purpose to do so, but she had not time. Interrogated, why she now conceals the name of the woman, and the place of her abode? The declarant remained silent for a time, and then said, that to do so could not repair the skaith that was done, but might be the occasion of more. Interrogated, whether she had herself, at any time, had any purpose of putting away the child by violence? Declares, never; so might God be merciful to her—and then again declares, never, when she was in her perfect senses; but what bad thoughts the Enemy might put into her brain when she was out of herself, she cannot answer. And again solemnly interrogated, declares, that she would have been drawn with wild horses, rather than have touched the bairn with an unmotherly hand. Interrogated, declares, that among the ill-language the woman gave her, she did say sure enough that the declarant had hurt the bairn when she was in the brain fever; but that the declarant does not believe that she said this from any other cause than to frighten her, and make her be silent. Interrogated, what else the woman said to her? Declares, that when the declarant cried loud for her bairn, and was like to raise the neighbours, the woman threatened her, that they that could stop the wean's skirling would stop hers, if she did not keep a' the founder.*

* i.e. The quieter.

And that this threat, with the manner of the woman, made the declarant conclude, that the bairn's life was gone, and her own in danger, for that the woman was a desperate bad woman, as the declarant judged from the language she used. Interrogated, declares, that the fever and delirium were brought on her by hearing bad news, suddenly told to her, but refuses to say what the said news related to. Interrogated, why she does not now communicate these particulars, which might, perhaps, enable the magistrate to ascertain whether the child is living or dead; and requested to observe, that her refusing to do so, exposes her own life, and leaves the child in bad hands; as also that her present refusal to answer on such points is inconsistent with her alleged intention to make a clean breast to her sister? Declares, that she kens the bairn is now dead, or, if living, there is one that will look after it; that for her own living or dying, she is in God's hands, who knows her innocence of harming her bairn with her will or knowledge; and that she has altered her resolution of speaking out, which she entertained when she left the woman's lodging, on account of a matter which she has since learned. And declares, in general, that she is wearied, and will answer no more questions at this time."

Upon a subsequent examination, Euphemia Deans adhered to the declaration she had formerly made, with this addition, that a paper found in her trunk being shown to her, she admitted that it contained the credentials, in consequence of which she resigned herself to the conduct of the woman at whose lodgings she was delivered of the child. Its tenor ran thus:—

"Dearest Effie,—I have gotten the means to send to you by a woman who is well qualified to assist you in your approaching streight; she is not what I could wish her, but I cannot do better for you in my present condition. I am obliged to trust to her in this present calamity, for myself and you too. I hope for the best, though I am now in a sore pinch; yet thought is free—I think Handie Dandie and I may queer the stifler* for all that is come and gone.

* Avoid the gallows.

You will be angry for me writing this to my little Cameronian Lily; but if I can but live to be a comfort to you, and a father to your babie, you will have plenty of time to scold.—Once more, let none knew your counsel—my life depends on this hag, d—n her—she is both deep and dangerous, but she has more wiles and wit than ever were in a beldam's head, and has cause to be true to me. Farewell, my Lily—Do not droop on my account—in a week I will be yours or no more my own."

Then followed a postscript. "If they must truss me, I will repent of nothing so much, even at the last hard pinch, as of the injury I have done my Lily."

Effie refused to say from whom she had received this letter, but enough of the story was now known, to ascertain that it came from Robertson; and from the date, it appeared to have been written about the time when Andrew Wilson (called for a nickname Handie Dandie) and he were meditating their first abortive attempt to escape, which miscarried in the manner mentioned in the beginning of this history.

The evidence of the Crown being concluded, the counsel for the prisoner began to lead a proof in her defence. The first witnesses were examined upon the girl's character. All gave her an excellent one, but none with more feeling than worthy Mrs. Saddletree, who, with the tears on her cheeks, declared, that she could not have had a higher opinion of Effie Deans, nor a more sincere regard for her, if she had been her own daughter. All present gave the honest woman credit for her goodness of heart, excepting her husband, who whispered to Dumbiedikes, "That Nichil Novit of yours is but a raw hand at leading evidence, I'm thinking. What signified his bringing a woman here to snorter and snivel, and bather their Lordships? He should hae ceeted me, sir, and I should hae gien them sic a screed o' testimony, they shauldna hae touched a hair o' her head."

"Hadna ye better get up and tryt yet?" said the Laird. "I'll mak a sign to Novit."

"Na, na," said Saddletree, "thank ye for naething, neighbour—that would be ultroneous evidence, and I ken what belangs to that; but Nichil Novit suld hae had me ceeted debito tempore." And wiping his mouth with his silk handkerchief with great importance, he resumed the port and manner of an edified and intelligent auditor.

Mr. Fairbrother now premised, in a few words, "that he meant to bring forward his most important witness, upon whose evidence the cause must in a great measure depend. What his client was, they had learned from the preceding witnesses; and so far as general character, given in the most forcible terms, and even with tears, could interest every one in her fate, she had already gained that advantage. It was necessary, he admitted, that he should produce more positive testimony of her innocence than what arose out of general character, and this he undertook to do by the mouth of the person to whom she had communicated her situation—by the mouth of her natural counsellor and guardian—her sister.—Macer, call into court, Jean, or Jeanie Deans, daughter of David Deans, cowfeeder, at Saint Leonard's Crags!"

When he uttered these words, the poor prisoner instantly started up, and stretched herself half-way over the bar, towards the side at which her sister was to enter. And when, slowly following the officer, the witness advanced to the foot of the table, Effie, with the whole expression of her countenance altered, from that of confused shame and dismay, to an eager, imploring, and almost ecstatic earnestness of entreaty, with outstretched hands, hair streaming back, eyes raised eagerly to her sister's face, and glistening through tears, exclaimed in a tone which went through the heart of all who heard her,—*"O Jeanie, Jeanie, save me, save me!"*

With a different feeling, yet equally appropriated to his proud and self-dependent character, old Deans drew himself back still farther under the cover of the bench; so that when Jeanie, as she entered the court, cast a timid glance towards the place at which she had left him seated, his venerable figure was no longer visible. He sate down on the other side of Dumbiedikes, wrung his hand hard, and whispered, "Ah, Laird, this is warst of a'—if I can but win ower this part—I feel my head unco dizzy; but my Master is strong in his servant's weakness." After a moment's mental prayer, he again started up, as if impatient of continuing in any one posture, and gradually edged himself forward towards the place he had just quitted.

Jeanie in the meantime had advanced to the bottom of the table, when, unable to resist the impulse of affections she suddenly extended her hand to her sister. Effie was just within the distance that she could seize it with both hers, press it to her mouth, cover it with kisses, and bathe it in tears, with the fond devotion that a Catholic would pay to a guardian saint descended for his safety; while Jeanie, hiding her own face with her other hand, wept bitterly. The sight would have moved a heart of stone, much more of flesh and blood. Many of the spectators shed tears, and it was some time before the presiding Judge himself could so far subdue his emotion as to request the witness to compose herself, and the prisoner to forbear those marks of eager affection, which, however natural, could not be permitted at that time, and in that presence.

The solemn oath,—*"the truth to tell, and no truth to conceal, as far as she knew or should be asked,"* was then administered by the Judge *"in the name of God, and as the witness should answer to God at the great day of judgment;"* an awful adjuration, which seldom fails to make impression even on the most hardened characters, and to strike with fear even the most upright. Jeanie, educated in deep and devout reverence for the name and attributes of the Deity, was, by the solemnity of a direct appeal to his person and justice, awed, but at the same time elevated above all considerations, save those which she could, with a clear conscience, call Him to witness. She repeated the form in a low and reverent, but distinct tone of voice, after the Judge, to whom, and not to any inferior officer of the Court, the task is assigned in Scotland of directing the witness in that solemn appeal which is the sanction of his testimony.

When the Judge had finished the established form, he added in a feeling, but yet a monitory tone, an advice, which the circumstances appeared to him to call for. *"Young woman,"* these were his words, *"you come before this Court in circumstances, which it would be worse than cruel not to pity and to sympathise with. Yet it is my duty to tell you, that the truth, whatever its consequences may be, the truth is what you owe to your country, and to that God whose word is truth, and whose name you have now invoked. Use your own time in answering the questions that gentleman"* (pointing to the counsel) *"shall put to you.—But remember, that what you may be tempted to say beyond what is the actual truth, you must answer both here and hereafter."*

The usual questions were then put to her:—Whether any one had instructed her what evidence she had to deliver? Whether any one had given or promised her any good deed, hire, or reward, for her testimony? Whether she had any malice or ill-will at his Majesty's Advocate, being the party against whom she was cited as a witness? To which questions she successively answered by a quiet negative. But their tenor gave great scandal and offence to her father, who was not aware that they are put to every witness as a matter of form.

"Na, na," he exclaimed, loud enough to be heard, "my bairn is no like the Widow of Tekoah—nae man has putten words into her mouth."

One of the judges, better acquainted, perhaps, with the Books of Adjournal than with the Book of Samuel, was disposed to make some instant inquiry after this Widow of Tekoah, who, as he construed the matter, had been tampering with the evidence. But the presiding Judge, better versed in Scripture history, whispered to his learned brother the necessary explanation; and the pause occasioned by this mistake had the good effect of giving Jeanie Deans time to collect her spirits for the painful task she had to perform.

Fairbrother, whose practice and intelligence were considerable, saw the necessity of letting the witness compose herself. In his heart he suspected that she came to bear false witness in her sister's cause.

"But that is her own affair," thought Fairbrother; "and it is my business to see that she has plenty of time to regain composure, and to deliver her evidence, be it true, or be it false—valeat quantum."

Accordingly, he commenced his interrogatories with uninteresting questions, which admitted of instant reply.

"You are, I think, the sister of the prisoner?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not the full sister, however?"

"No, sir—we are by different mothers."

"True; and you are, I think, several years older than your sister?"

"Yes, sir," etc.

After the advocate had conceived that, by these preliminary and unimportant questions, he had familiarised the witness with the situation in which she stood, he asked, "whether she had not remarked her sister's state of health to be altered, during the latter part of the term when she had lived with Mrs. Saddletree?"

Jeanie answered in the affirmative.

"And she told you the cause of it, my dear, I suppose?" said Fairbrother, in an easy, and, as one may say, an inductive sort of tone.

"I am sorry to interrupt my brother," said the Crown Counsel, rising; "but I am in your Lordships' judgment, whether this be not a leading question?"

"If this point is to be debated," said the presiding Judge, "the witness must be removed."

For the Scottish lawyers regard with a sacred and scrupulous horror every question so shaped by the counsel examining, as to convey to a witness the least intimation of the nature of the answer which is desired from him. These scruples, though founded on an excellent principle, are sometimes carried to an absurd pitch of nicety, especially as it is generally easy for a lawyer who has his wits about him to elude the objection. Fairbrother did so in the present case.

"It is not necessary to waste the time of the Court, my Lord since the King's Counsel thinks it worth while to object to the form of my question, I will shape it otherwise.—Pray, young woman, did you ask your sister any question when you observed her looking unwell?—take courage—speak out."

"I asked her," replied Jeanie, "what ailed her."

"Very well—take your own time—and what was the answer she made?" continued Mr. Fairbrother.

Jeanie was silent, and looked deadly pale. It was not that she at any one instant entertained an idea of the possibility of prevarication—it was the natural hesitation to extinguish the last spark of hope that remained for her sister.

"Take courage, young woman," said Fairbrother.—"I asked what your sister said ailed her when you inquired?"

"Nothing," answered Jeanie, with a faint voice, which was yet heard distinctly in the most distant corner of the Court-room,—such an awful and profound silence had been preserved during the anxious interval, which had interposed betwixt the lawyer's question and the answer of the witness.

Fairbrother's countenance fell; but with that ready presence of mind, which is as useful in civil as in military emergencies, he immediately rallied.—"Nothing? True; you mean nothing at first—but when you asked her again, did she not tell you what ailed her?"

The question was put in a tone meant to make her comprehend the importance of her answer, had she not been already aware of it. The ice was broken, however, and with less pause than at first, she now replied,—"Alack! alack! she never breathed word to me about it."

A deep groan passed through the Court. It was echoed by one deeper and more agonised from the unfortunate father. The hope to which unconsciously, and in spite of himself, he had still secretly clung, had now dissolved, and the venerable old man fell forward senseless on the floor of the Court-house, with his head at the foot of his terrified daughter. The unfortunate prisoner, with impotent passion, strove with the guards betwixt whom she was placed. "Let me gang to my father!—I will gang to him—I will gang to him—he is dead—he is killed—I hae killed him!"—she repeated, in frenzied tones of grief, which those who heard them did not speedily forget.

Even in this moment of agony and general confusion, Jeanie did not lose that superiority, which a deep and firm mind assures to its possessor under the most trying circumstances.

"He is my father—he is our father," she mildly repeated to those who endeavoured to separate them, as she stooped,—shaded aside his grey hairs, and began assiduously to chafe his temples.

The Judge, after repeatedly wiping his eyes, gave directions that they should be conducted into a neighbouring apartment, and carefully attended. The prisoner, as her father was borne from the Court, and her sister slowly followed, pursued them with her eyes so earnestly fixed, as if they would have started from their sockets. But when they were no longer visible, she seemed to find, in her despairing and deserted state, a courage which she had not yet exhibited.

"The bitterness of it is now past," she said, and then boldly, addressed the Court. "My Lords, if it is your pleasure to gang on wi' this matter, the weariest day will hae its end at last."

The Judge, who, much to his honour, had shared deeply in the general sympathy, was surprised at being recalled to his duty by the prisoner. He collected himself, and requested to know if the panel's counsel had more evidence to produce. Fairbrother replied, with an air of dejection, that his proof was concluded.

The King's Counsel addressed the jury for the crown. He said in a few words, that no one could be more concerned than he was for the distressing scene which they had just witnessed. But it was the necessary consequence of great crimes to bring distress and ruin upon all connected with the perpetrators. He briefly reviewed the proof, in which he showed that all the circumstances of the case concurred with those required by the act under which the unfortunate prisoner was tried: That the counsel for the panel had totally failed in proving, that Euphemia Deans had communicated her situation to her sister: That, respecting her previous good character, he was sorry to observe, that it was females who possessed the world's good report, and to whom it was justly valuable, who were most strongly tempted, by shame and fear of the world's censure, to the crime of infanticide: That the child was murdered, he professed to entertain no doubt. The vacillating and inconsistent declaration of the prisoner herself, marked as it was by numerous refusals to speak the truth on subjects, when, according to her own story, it would have been natural, as well as advantageous, to have been candid; even this imperfect declaration left no doubt in his mind as to the fate of the unhappy infant. Neither could he doubt that the panel was a partner in this guilt. Who else had an interest in a deed so inhuman? Surely neither Robertson, nor Robertson's agent, in whose house she was delivered, had the least temptation to commit such a crime, unless upon her account, with her connivance, and for the sake of saying her reputation. But it was not required of him, by the law, that he should bring precise proof of the murder, or of the prisoner's accession to it. It was the very purpose of the statute to substitute a certain chain of presumptive evidence in place of a probation, which, in such cases, it was peculiarly difficult to obtain. The jury might peruse the statute itself, and they had also the libel and interlocutor of relevancy to direct them in point of law. He put it to the conscience of the jury, that under both he was entitled to a verdict of Guilty.

The charge of Fairbrother was much cramped by his having failed in the proof which he expected to lead. But he fought his losing cause with courage and constancy. He ventured to arraign the severity of the statute under which the young woman was tried. "In all other cases," he said, "the first thing required of the criminal prosecutor was to prove unequivocally that the crime libelled had actually been committed, which lawyers called proving the corpus delicti. But this statute, made doubtless with the best intentions, and under the impulse of a just horror for the unnatural crime of infanticide, ran the risk of itself occasioning the worst of murders, the death of an innocent person, to atone for a supposed crime which may never have been committed by anyone. He was so far from acknowledging the alleged probability of the child's violent death, that he could not even allow that there was evidence of its having ever lived."

The King's Counsel pointed to the woman's declaration; to which the counsel replied—"A production concocted in a moment of terror and agony, and which approached to insanity," he said, "his learned brother well knew was no sound evidence against the party who emitted it. It was true, that a judicial confession, in presence of the Justices themselves, was the strongest of all proof, insomuch that it is said in law, that 'in confitentem nullae sunt partes judicis.' But this was true of judicial confession only, by which law meant that which is made in presence of the justices, and the sworn inquest. Of extrajudicial confession, all authorities held with the illustrious Farinaceus and Matthaeus, 'confessio extrajudicialis in se nulla est; et quod nullum est, non potest adminiculari.' It was totally inept, and void of all strength and effect from the beginning; incapable, therefore, of being bolstered up or supported, or, according to the law phrase, adminiculated, by other presumptive circumstances. In the present case, therefore, letting the extrajudicial confession go, as it ought to go, for nothing," he contended, "the prosecutor had not made out the second quality of the statute, that a live child had been born; and that, at least, ought to be established before presumptions were received that it had been murdered. If any of the assize," he said, "should be of opinion that this was dealing rather narrowly with the statute, they ought to consider that it was in its nature highly penal, and therefore entitled to no favourable construction."

He concluded a learned speech, with an eloquent peroration on the scene they had just witnessed, during which Saddletree fell fast asleep.

It was now the presiding Judge's turn to address the jury. He did so briefly and distinctly.

"It was for the jury," he said, "to consider whether the prosecutor had made out his plea. For himself, he sincerely grieved to say, that a shadow of doubt remained not upon his mind concerning the verdict which the inquest had to bring in. He would not follow the prisoner's counsel through the impeachment which he had brought against the statute of King William and Queen Mary. He and the jury were sworn to judge according to the laws as they stood, not to criticise, or evade, or even to justify them. In no civil case would a counsel have been permitted to plead his client's case in the teeth of the law; but in the hard situation in which counsel were often placed in the Criminal Court, as well as out of favour to all presumptions of innocence, he had not inclined to interrupt the learned gentleman, or narrow his plea. The present law, as it now stood, had been instituted by the wisdom of their fathers, to check the alarming progress of a dreadful crime; when it was found too severe for its purpose it would doubtless be altered by the wisdom of the Legislature; at present it was the law of the land, the rule of the Court, and, according to the oath which they had taken, it must be that of the jury. This unhappy girl's situation could not be doubted; that she had borne a child, and that

the child had disappeared, were certain facts. The learned counsel had failed to show that she had communicated her situation. All the requisites of the case required by the statute were therefore before the jury. The learned gentleman had, indeed, desired them to throw out of consideration the panel's own confession, which was the plea usually urged, in penury of all others, by counsel in his situation, who usually felt that the declarations of their clients bore hard on them. But that the Scottish law designed that a certain weight should be laid on these declarations, which, he admitted, were quodammodo extrajudicial, was evident from the universal practice by which they were always produced and read, as part of the prosecutor's probation. In the present case, no person who had heard the witnesses describe the appearance of the young woman before she left Saddle-tree's house, and contrasted it with that of her state and condition at her return to her father's, could have any doubt that the fact of delivery had taken place, as set forth in her own declaration, which was, therefore, not a solitary piece of testimony, but adminiculated and supported by the strongest circumstantial proof.

"He did not," he said, "state the impression upon his own mind with the purpose of biasing theirs. He had felt no less than they had done from the scene of domestic misery which had been exhibited before them; and if they, having God and a good conscience, the sanctity of their oath, and the regard due to the law of the country, before their eyes, could come to a conclusion favourable to this unhappy prisoner, he should rejoice as much as anyone in Court; for never had he found his duty more distressing than in discharging it that day, and glad he would be to be relieved from the still more painful task which would otherwise remain for him."

The jury, having heard the Judge's address, bowed and retired, preceded by a macer of Court, to the apartment destined for their deliberation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

Law, take thy victim—May she find the mercy
In yon mild heaven, which this hard world denies her!

It was an hour ere the jurors returned, and as they traversed the crowd with slow steps, as men about to discharge themselves of a heavy and painful responsibility, the audience was hushed into profound, earnest, and awful silence.

"Have you agreed on your chancellor, gentlemen?" was the first question of the Judge.

The foreman, called in Scotland the chancellor of the jury, usually the man of best rank and estimation among the assizers, stepped forward, and with a low reverence, delivered to the Court a sealed paper, containing the verdict, which, until of late years, that verbal returns are in some instances permitted, was always couched in writing. The jury remained standing while the Judge broke the seals, and having perused the paper, handed it with an air of mournful gravity down to the clerk of Court, who proceeded to engross in the record the yet unknown verdict, of which, however, all omened the tragical contents. A form still remained, trifling and unimportant in itself, but to which imagination adds a sort of solemnity, from the awful occasion upon which it is used. A lighted candle was placed on the table, the original paper containing the verdict was enclosed in a sheet of paper, and, sealed with the Judge's own signet, was transmitted to the Crown Office, to be preserved among other records of the same kind. As all this is transacted in profound silence, the producing and extinguishing the candle seems a type of the human spark which is shortly afterwards doomed to be quenched, and excites in the spectators something of the same effect which in England is obtained by the Judge assuming the fatal cap of judgment. When these preliminary forms had been gone through, the Judge required Euphemia Deans to attend to the verdict to be read.

After the usual words of style, the verdict set forth, that the Jury having made choice of John Kirk, Esq., to be their chancellor, and Thomas Moore, merchant, to be their clerk, did, by a plurality of voices, find the said Euphemia Deans Guilty of the crime libelled; but, in consideration of her extreme youth, and the cruel circumstances of her case, did earnestly entreat that the Judge would recommend her to the mercy of the Crown.

"Gentlemen," said the Judge, "you have done your duty—and a painful one it must have been to men of humanity like you. I will undoubtedly transmit your recommendation to the throne. But it is my duty to tell all who now hear me, but especially to inform that unhappy young woman, in order that her mind may be settled accordingly, that I have not the least hope of a pardon being granted in the present case. You know the crime has been increasing in this land, and I know farther, that this has been ascribed to the lenity in which the laws have been exercised, and that there is therefore no hope whatever of obtaining a remission for this offence." The jury bowed again, and, released from their painful office, dispersed themselves among the mass of bystanders.

The Court then asked Mr. Fairbrother whether he had anything to say, why judgment should not follow on the verdict? The counsel had spent some time in persuing and reperusing the verdict, counting the letters in each juror's name, and weighing every phrase, nay, every syllable, in the nicest scales of legal criticism. But the clerk of the jury had understood his business too well. No flaw was to be found, and Fairbrother mournfully intimated, that he had nothing to say in arrest of judgment.

The presiding Judge then addressed the unhappy prisoner:—"Euphemia Deans, attend to the sentence of the Court now to be pronounced against you."

She rose from her seat, and with a composure far greater than could have been augured from her demeanour during some parts of the trial, abode the conclusion of the awful scene. So nearly does the mental portion of our feelings resemble those which are corporeal, that the first severe blows which we receive bring with them a stunning apathy, which renders us indifferent to those that follow them. Thus said Mandrin, when he was undergoing the punishment of the wheel; and so have all felt, upon whom successive inflictions have descended with continuous and reiterated violence.*

* [The notorious Mandrin was known as the Captain-General of French & smugglers. See a Tract on his exploits, printed 1753.]

"Young woman," said the Judge, "it is my painful duty to tell you, that your life is forfeited under a law, which, if it may seem in some degree severe, is yet wisely so, to render those of your unhappy situation aware what risk they run, by concealing, out of pride or false shame, their lapse from virtue, and making no preparation to save the lives of the unfortunate infants whom they are to bring into the world. When you concealed your situation from your mistress, your sister, and other worthy and compassionate persons of your own sex, in whose favour your former conduct had given you a fair place, you seem to me to have had in your contemplation, at least, the death of the helpless creature, for whose life you neglected to provide. How the child was disposed of—whether it was dealt upon by another, or by yourself—whether the extraordinary story you have told is partly false, or altogether so, is between God and your own conscience. I will not aggravate your distress by pressing on that topic, but I do most solemnly adjure you to employ the remaining space of your time in making your peace with God, for which purpose such reverend clergymen, as you yourself may name, shall have access to you. Notwithstanding the humane recommendation of the jury, I cannot afford to you, in the present circumstances of the country, the slightest hope that your life will be prolonged beyond the period assigned for the execution of your sentence. Forsaking, therefore, the thoughts of this world, let your mind be prepared by repentance for those of more awful moments—for death, judgment, and eternity.—Doomster, read the sentence."*

* Note N. Doomster, or Dempster, of Court.

When the Doomster showed himself, a tall haggard figure, arrayed in a fantastic garment of black and grey, passmented with silver lace, all fell back with a sort of instinctive horror, and made wide way for him to approach the foot of the table. As this office was held by the common executioner, men shouldered each other backward to avoid even the touch of his garment, and some were seen to brush their own clothes, which had accidentally become subject to such contamination. A sound went through the Court, produced by each person drawing in their breath hard, as men do when they expect or witness what is frightful, and at the same time affecting. The caitiff villain yet seemed, amid his hardened brutality, to have some sense of his being the object of public detestation, which made him impatient of being in public, as birds of evil omen are anxious to escape from daylight, and from pure air.

Repeating after the Clerk of Court, he gabbled over the words of the sentence, which condemned Euphemia Deans to be conducted back to the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, and detained there until Wednesday the day of —; and upon that day, betwixt the hours of two and four o'clock afternoon, to be conveyed to the common place of execution, and there hanged by the neck upon a gibbet. "And this," said the Doomster, aggravating his harsh voice, "I pronounce for doom."

He vanished when he had spoken the last emphatic word, like a foul fiend after the purpose of his visitation had been accomplished; but the impression of horror excited by his presence and his errand, remained upon the crowd of spectators.

The unfortunate criminal,—for so she must now be termed,—with more susceptibility, and more irritable feelings than her father and sister, was found, in this emergence, to possess a considerable share of their courage. She had remained standing motionless at the bar while the sentence was pronounced, and was observed to shut her eyes when the Doomster appeared. But she was the first to break silence when that evil form had left his place.

"God forgive ye, my Lords," she said, "and dinna be angry wi' me for wishing it—we a' need forgiveness.—As for myself, I canna blame ye, for ye act up to your lights; and if I havena killed my poor infant, ye may witness a' that hae seen it this day, that I hae been the means of killing my greyheaded father—I deserve the warst frae man, and frae God too—But God is mair mercifu' to us than we are to each other."

With these words the trial concluded. The crowd rushed, bearing forward and shouldering each other, out of the Court, in the same tumultuary mode in which they had entered; and, in excitation of animal motion and animal spirits, soon forgot whatever they had felt as impressive in the scene which they had witnessed. The professional spectators, whom habit and theory had rendered as callous to the distress of the scene as medical men are to those of a surgical operation, walked homeward in groups, discussing the general principle of the statute under which the young woman was condemned, the nature of the evidence, and the arguments of the counsel, without considering even that of the Judge as exempt from their criticism.

The female spectators, more compassionate, were loud in exclamation against that part of the Judge's speech which seemed to cut off the hope of pardon.

"Set him up, indeed," said Mrs. Howden, "to tell us that the poor lassie behaved to die, when Mr. John Kirk, as civil a gentleman as is within the ports of the town, took the pains to prigg for her himsell."

"Ay, but, neighbour," said Miss Damahoy, drawing up her thin maidenly form to its full height of prim dignity—"I really think this unnatural business of having bastard-bairns should be putten a stop to.—There isna a hussy now on this side of thirty that you can bring within your doors, but there will be chields—writer-lads, prentice-lads, and what not—coming traiking after them for their destruction, and discrediting ane's honest house into the bargain—I hae nae patience wi' them."

"Hout, neighbour," said Mrs. Howden, "we suld live and let live—we hae been young oursells, and we are no aye to judge the warst when lads and lasses forgather."

"Young oursells! and judge the warst!" said Miss Damahoy. "I am no sae auld as that comes to, Mrs. Howden; and as for what ye ca' the warst, I ken neither good nor bad about the matter, I thank my stars!"

"Ye are thankfu' for sma' mercies, then," said Mrs. Howden with a toss of her head; "and as for you and young—I trow ye were doing for yoursell at the last riding of the Scots Parliament, and that was in the gracious year seven, sae ye can be nae sic chicken at ony rate."

Plumdamas, who acted as squire of the body to the two contending dames, instantly saw the hazard of entering into such delicate points of chronology, and being a lover of peace and good neighbourhood, lost no time in bringing back the conversation to its original subject.

"The Judge didna tell us a' he could hae tell'd us, if he had liked, about the application for pardon, neighbours," said he "there is aye a wimple in a lawyer's clew; but it's a wee bit of a secret."

"And what is't—what is't, neighbour Plumdamas?" said Mrs. Howden and Miss Damahoy at once, the acid fermentation of their dispute being at once neutralised by the powerful alkali implied in the word secret.

"Here's Mr. Saddletree can tell ye that better than me, for it was him that tauld me," said Plumdamas as Saddletree came up, with his wife hanging on his arm, and looking very disconsolate.

When the question was put to Saddletree, he looked very scornful. "They speak about stopping the frequency of child-murder," said he, in a contemptuous tone; "do ye think our auld enemies of England, as Glendook aye ca's them in his printed Statute-book, care a boddle whether we didna kill ane anither, skin and birm, horse and foot, man, woman, and bairns, all and sindry, omnes et singulos, as Mr. Crossmyloof says? Na, na, it's no that hinders them frae pardoning the bit lassie. But here is the pinch of the plea. The king and queen are sae ill pleased wi' that mistak about Porteous, that deil a kindly Scot will they pardon again, either by reprieve or remission, if the haill town o' Edinburgh should be a' hanged on ae tow."

"Deil that they were back at their German kale-yard then, as my neighbour MacCroskie ca's it," said Mrs. Howden, "an that's the way they're gaun to guide us!"

"They say for certain," said Miss Damahoy, "that King George flang his periwig in the fire when he heard o' the Porteous mob."

"He has done that, they say," replied Saddletree, "for less thing."

"Aweel," said Miss Damahoy, "he might keep mair wit in his anger—but it's a' the better for his wigmaker, I se warrant."

"The queen tore her biggonets for perfect anger,—ye'll hae heard o' that too?" said Plumdamas. "And the king, they say, kickit Sir Robert Walpole for no keeping down the mob of Edinburgh; but I dinna believe he wad behave sae ungenteel."

"It's dooms truth, though," said Saddletree; "and he was for kickin' the Duke of Argyle* too."

* Note O. John Duke of Argyle and Greenwich.

"Kickin' the Duke of Argyle!" exclaimed the hearers at once, in all the various combined keys of utter astonishment.

"Ay, but MacCallummore's blood wadna sit down wi' that; there was risk of Andro Ferrara coming in thirdsman."

"The duke is a real Scotsman—a true friend to the country," answered Saddletree's hearers.

"Ay, troth is he, to king and country baith, as ye sall hear," continued the orator, "if ye will come in bye to our house, for it's safest speaking of sic things inter parietes."

When they entered his shop, he thrust his prentice boy out of it, and, unlocking his desk, took out, with an air of grave and complacent importance, a dirty and crumpled piece of printed paper; he observed, "This is new corn—it's no every body could show you the like o' this. It's the duke's speech about the Porteous mob, just promulgated by the hawkers. Ye shall hear what Ian Roy Cean* says for himsell."

* Red John the warrior, a name personal and proper in the Highlands to John Duke of Argyle and Greenwich, as MacCummin was that of his race or dignity.

My correspondent bought it in the Palace-yard, that's like just under the king's nose—I think he claws up their mittans!—It came in a letter about a foolish bill of exchange that the man wanted me to renew for him. I wish ye wad see about it, Mrs. Saddletree."

Honest Mrs. Saddletree had hitherto been so sincerely distressed about the situation of her unfortunate prote'ge'e, that she had suffered her husband to proceed in his own way, without attending to what he was saying. The words bills and renew had, however, an awakening sound in them; and she snatched the letter which her husband held towards her, and wiping her eyes, and putting on her spectacles, endeavoured, as fast as the dew which collected on her glasses would permit, to get at the meaning of the needful part of the epistle; while her husband, with pompous elevation, read an extract from the speech.

"I am no minister, I never was a minister, and I never will be one"

"I didna ken his Grace was ever designed for the ministry," interrupted Mrs. Howden.

"He disna mean a minister of the gospel, Mrs. Howden, but a minister of state," said Saddletree, with condescending goodness, and then proceeded: "The time was when I might have been a piece of a minister, but I was too sensible of my own incapacity to engage in any state affair. And I thank God that I had always too great a value for those few abilities which Nature has given me, to employ them in doing any drudgery, or any job of what kind soever. I have, ever since I set out in the world (and I believe few have set out more early), served my prince with my tongue; I have served him with any little interest I had, and I have served him with my sword, and in my profession of arms. I have held employments which I have lost, and were I to be to-morrow deprived of those which still remain to me, and which I have endeavoured honestly to deserve, I would still serve him to the last acre of my inheritance, and to the last drop of my blood—"

Mrs. Saddletree here broke in upon the orator:—"Mr. Saddletree, what is the meaning of a' this? Here are ye claverin about the Duke of Argyle, and this man Martingale gaun to break on our hands, and lose us gude sixty pounds—I wonder what duke will pay that, quotha—I wish the Duke of Argyle would pay his ain

accounts—He is in a thousand punds Scots on thae very books when he was last at Roystoun—I'm no saying but he's a just nobleman, and that it's gude siller—but it wad drive ane daft to be confused wi' deukes and drakes, and thae distressed folk up-stairs, that's Jeanie Deans and her father. And then, putting the very callant that was sewing the curpel out o' the shop, to play wi' blackguards in the close—Sit still, neighbours, it's no that I mean to disturb you; but what between courts o' law and courts o' state, and upper and under parliaments, and parliament houses, here and in London, the gudeman's gane clean gyte, I think." The gossips understood civility, and the rule of doing as they would be done by, too well, to tarry upon the slight invitation implied in the conclusion of this speech, and therefore made their farewells and departure as fast as possible, Saddletree whispering to Plundamas that he would "meet him at MacCroskie's" (the low-browed shop in the Luckenbooths, already mentioned), "in the hour of cause, and put MacCallummore's speech in his pocket, for a' the gudewife's din." When Mrs. Saddletree saw the house freed of her importunate visitors, and the little boy reclaimed from the pastimes of the wynd to the exercise of the awl, she went to visit her unhappy relative, David Deans, and his elder daughter, who had found in her house the nearest place of friendly refuge.

PART II

CHAPTER FIRST.

Isab.—Alas! what poor ability's in me

To do him good?

Lucio.—Assay the power you have.

Measure for Measure.

When Mrs. Saddletree entered the apartment in which her guests had shrouded their misery, she found the window darkened. The feebleness which followed his long swoon had rendered it necessary to lay the old man in bed. The curtains were drawn around him, and Jeanie sate motionless by the side of the bed. Mrs. Saddletree was a woman of kindness, nay, of feeling, but not of delicacy. She opened the half-shut window, drew aside the curtain, and, taking her kinsman by the hand, exhorted him to sit up, and bear his sorrow like a good man, and a Christian man, as he was. But when she quitted his hand, it fell powerless by his side, nor did he attempt the least reply.

"Is all over?" asked Jeanie, with lips and cheeks as pale as ashes,— "and is there nae hope for her?"

"Nane, or next to nane," said Mrs. Saddletree; "I heard the Judge-carle say it with my ain ears—It was a burning shame to see sae mony o' them set up yonder in their red gowns and black gowns, and to take the life o' a bit senseless lassie. I had never muckle broo o' my gudeman's gossips, and now I like them waur than ever. The only wiselike thing I heard onybody say, was decent Mr. John Kirk of Kirk-knowe, and he wussed them just to get the king's mercy, and nae mair about it. But he spake to unreasonable folk—he might just hae keepit his breath to hae blawn on his porridge."

"But *can* the king gie her mercy?" said Jeanie, earnestly. "Some folk tell me he canna gie mercy in cases of mur in cases like hers."

"*Can* he gie mercy, hinny?—I weel I wot he can, when he likes. There was young Singlesword, that stickit the Laird of Ballencleuch, and Captain Hackum, the Englishman, that killed Lady Colgrain's gudeman, and the Master of Saint Clair, that shot the twa Shaws,* and mony mair in my time—to be sure they were gentle blood, and had their kin to speak for them—And there was Jock Porteous the other day—I'se warrant there's mercy, an folk could win at it."

* [In 1828, the Author presented to the Roxburgh Club a curious volume containing the "Proceedings in the Court-Martial held upon John, Master of Sinclair, for the murder of Ensign Schaw, and Captain Schaw, 17th October 1708.]"

"Porteous?" said Jeanie; "very true—I forget a' that I suld maist mind.—Fare ye weel, Mrs. Saddletree; and may ye never want a friend in the hour of distress!"

"Will ye no stay wi' your father, Jeanie, bairn?—Ye had better," said Mrs. Saddletree.

"I will be wanted ower yonder," indicating the Tolbooth with her hand, "and I maun leave him now, or I will never be able to leave him. I fearn a' for his life—I ken how strong-hearted he is—I ken it," she said, laying her hand on her bosom, "by my ain heart at this minute."

"Weel, hinny, if ye think it's for the best, better he stay here and rest him, than gang back to St. Leonard's."

"Muckle better—muckle better—God bless you!—God bless you!—At no rate let him gang till ye hear frae me," said Jeanie.

"But ye'll be back belive?" said Mrs. Saddletree, detaining her; "they winna let ye stay yonder, hinny."

"But I maun gang to St. Leonard's—there's muckle to be dune, and little time to do it in—And I have friends to speak to—God bless you—take care of my father." She had reached the door of the apartment, when, suddenly turning, she came back, and knelt down by the bedside.—"O father, gie me your blessing—I dare not go till ye bless me. Say but 'God bless ye, and prosper ye, Jeanie'—try but to say that!"

Instinctively, rather than by an exertion of intellect, the old man murmured a prayer, that "purchased and promised blessings might be multiplied upon her."

"He has blessed mine errand," said his daughter, rising from her knees, "and it is borne in upon my mind that I shall prosper."

So saying, she left the room.

Mrs. Saddletree looked after her, and shook her head. "I wish she binna roving, poor thing—There's something queer about a' thae Deanses. I dinna like folk to be sae muckle better than other folk—seldom comes gude o't. But if she's gaun to look after the kye at St. Leonard's, that's another story; to be sure they maun be sorted.—Grizzie, come up here, and tak tent to the honest auld man, and see he wants naething.—Ye silly tawpie" (addressing the maid-servant as she entered), "what garr'd ye busk up your cockemony that gate?—I think there's been enough the day to gie an awfa' warning about your cockups and your fallal duds—see what they a' come to," etc. etc. etc.

Leaving the good lady to her lecture upon worldly vanities, we must transport our reader to the cell in which the unfortunate Effie Deans was now immured, being restricted of several liberties which she had enjoyed before the sentence was pronounced.

When she had remained about an hour in the state of stupified horror so natural in her situation, she was disturbed by the opening of the jarring bolts of her place of confinement, and Ratcliffe showed himself. "It's your sister," he said, "wants to speak t'ye, Effie."

"I canna see naebody," said Effie, with the hasty irritability which misery had rendered more acute—"I canna see naebody, and least of a' her—Bid her take care o' the auld man—I am naething to ony o' them now, nor them to me."

"She says she maun see ye, though," said Ratcliffe; and Jeanie, rushing into the apartment, threw her arms round her sister's neck, who writhed to extricate herself from her embrace.

"What signifies coming to greet ower me," said poor Effie, "when you have killed me?—killed me, when a word of your mouth would have saved me—killed me, when I am an innocent creature—innocent of that guilt at least—and me that wad hae wared body and soul to save your finger from being hurt?"

"You shall not die," said Jeanie, with enthusiastic firmness; "say what you like o' me—think what you like o' me—only promise—for I doubt your proud heart—that ye wunna harm yourself, and you shall not die this shameful death."

"A *shameful* death I will not die, Jeanie, lass. I have that in my heart—though it has been ower kind a' ane—that wunna bide shame. Gae hame to our father, and think nae mair on me—I have eat my last earthly meal."

"Oh, this was what I feared!" said Jeanie.

"Hout, tout, hinny," said Ratcliffe; "it's but little ye ken o' thae things. Ane aye thinks at the first dinnle o' the sentence, they hae heart enough to die rather than bide out the sax weeks; but they aye bide the sax weeks out for a' that. I ken the gate o't weel; I hae fronted the doomster three times, and here I stand, Jim Ratcliffe, for a' that. Had I tied my napkin strait the first time, as I had a great mind till't—and it was a' about a bit grey cowl, wasna worth ten punds sterling—where would I have been now?"

"And how *did* you escape?" said Jeanie, the fates of this man, at first so odious to her, having acquired a sudden interest in her eyes from their correspondence with those of her sister.

"*How* did I escape?" said Ratcliffe, with a knowing wink,— "I tell ye I 'scapit in a way that naebody will escape from this Tolbooth while I keep the keys."

"My sister shall come out in the face of the sun," said Jeanie; "I will go to London, and beg her pardon from the king and queen. If they pardoned Porteous, they may pardon her; if a sister asks a sister's life on her bended knees, they will pardon her—they *shall* pardon her—and they will win a thousand hearts by it."

Effie listened in bewildered astonishment, and so earnest was her sister's enthusiastic assurance, that she almost involuntarily caught a gleam of hope; but it instantly faded away.

"Ah, Jeanie! the king and queen live in London, a thousand miles from this—far ayont the saut sea; I'll be gane before ye win there."

"You are mistaen," said Jeanie; "it is no sae far, and they go to it by land; I learned something about thae things from Reuben Butler."

"Ah, Jeanie! ye never learned onything but what was gude frae the folk ye keepit company wi'; but!—but!"—she wrung her hands and wept bitterly.

"Dinna think on that now," said Jeanie; "there will be time for that if the present space be redeemed. Fare ye weel. Unless I die by the road, I will see the king's face that gies grace—O, sir" (to Ratcliffe), "be kind to her—She ne'er ken'd what it was to need a stranger's kindness till now.—Fareweel—fareweel, Effie!—Dinna speak to me—I maunna greet now—my head's ower dizzy already!"

She tore herself from her sister's arms, and left the cell. Ratcliffe followed her, and beckoned her into a small room. She obeyed his signal, but not without trembling.

"What's the fule thing shaking for?" said he; "I mean nothing but civility to you. D—n me, I respect you, and I can't help it. You have so much spunk, that d—n me, but I think there's some chance of your carrying the day. But you must not go to the king till you have made some friend; try the duke—try MacCallummore; he's Scotland's friend—I ken that the great folks dinna muckle like him—but they fear him, and that will serve your purpose as weel. D'ye ken naebody wad gie ye a letter to him?"

"Duke of Argyle!" said Jeanie, recollecting herself suddenly, "what was he to that Argyle that suffered in my father's time—in the persecution?"

"His son or grandson, I'm thinking," said Ratcliffe, "but what o' that?"

"Thank God!" said Jeanie, devoutly clasping her hands.

"You whigs are aye thanking God for something," said the ruffian. "But hark ye, hinny, I'll tell ye a secret. Ye may meet wi' rough customers on the Border, or in the Midland, afore ye get to Lunnon. Now, deil ane o' them will touch an acquaintance o' Daddie Ratton's; for though I am retired frae public practice, yet they ken I can do a gude or an ill turn yet—and deil a gude fellow that has been but a twelvemonth on the lay, be he ruffler or padder, but he knows my gybe* as well as the jark** of e'er a queer coffin*** in England—and there's rogue's Latin for you."

* Pass. ** Seal. *** Justice of Peace.

It was indeed totally unintelligible to Jeanie Deans, who was only impatient to escape from him. He hastily scrawled a line or two on a dirty piece of paper, and said to her, as she drew back when he offered it, "Hey!—what the deil—it wunna bite you, my lass—if it does nae gude, it can do nae ill. But I wish you to show it, if you have ony fasherie wi' ony o' St. Nicholas's clerks."

"Alas!" said she, "I do not understand what you mean."

"I mean, if ye fall among thieves, my precious,—that is a Scripture phrase, if ye will hae ane—the bauldest of them will ken a scart o' my guse feather. And now awa wi' ye—and stick to Argyle; if onybody can do the job, it maun be him."

After casting an anxious look at the grated windows and blackened walls of the old Tolbooth, and another scarce less anxious at the hospitable lodging of Mrs. Saddletree, Jeanie turned her back on that quarter, and soon after on the city itself. She reached St. Leonard's Crag without meeting any one whom she knew, which, in the state of her mind, she considered as a great blessing. "I must do naething," she thought, as she went along, "that can soften or weaken my heart—it's ower weak already for what I hae to do. I will think and act as firmly as I can, and speak as little."

There was an ancient servant, or rather cottar, of her father's, who had lived under him for many years, and whose fidelity was worthy of full confidence. She sent for this woman, and explaining to her that the circumstances of her family required that she should undertake a journey, which would detain her for some weeks from home, she gave her full instructions concerning the management of the domestic concerns in her absence. With a precision, which, upon reflection, she herself could not help wondering at, she described and detailed the most minute steps which were to be taken, and especially such as were necessary for her father's comfort. "It was probable," she said, "that he would return to St. Leonard's to-morrow! certain that he would return very soon—all must be in order for him. He had enugh to distress him, without being fashed about worldly matters."

In the meanwhile she toiled busily, along with May Hettly, to leave nothing unarranged.

It was deep in the night when all these matters were settled; and when they had partaken of some food, the first which Jeanie had tasted on that eventful day, May Hettly, whose usual residence was a cottage at a little distance from Deans's house, asked her young mistress, whether she would not permit her to remain in the house all night? "Ye hae had an awfu' day," she said, "and sorrow and fear are but bad companions in the watches of the night, as I hae heard the gudeman say himself."

"They are ill companions indeed," said Jeanie; "but I maun learn to abide their presence, and better begin in the house than in the field."

She dismissed her aged assistant accordingly,—for so slight was the gradation in their rank of life, that we can hardly term May a servant,—and proceeded to make a few preparations for her journey.

The simplicity of her education and country made these preparations very brief and easy. Her tartan screen served all the purposes of a riding-habit and of an umbrella; a small bundle contained such changes of linen as were absolutely necessary. Barefooted, as Sancho says, she had come into the world, and barefooted she proposed to perform her pilgrimage; and her clean shoes and change of snow-white thread stockings were to be reserved for special occasions of ceremony. She was not aware, that the English habits of comfort attach an idea of abject misery to the idea of a barefooted traveller; and if the objection of cleanliness had been made to the practice, she would have been apt to vindicate herself upon the very frequent ablutions to which, with Mahometan scrupulosity, a Scottish damsel of some condition usually subjects herself. Thus far, therefore, all was well.

From an oaken press, or cabinet, in which her father kept a few old books, and two or three bundles of papers, besides his ordinary accounts and receipts, she sought out and extracted from a parcel of notes of sermons, calculations of interest, records of dying speeches of the martyrs, and the like, one or two documents which she thought might be of some use to her upon her mission. But the most important difficulty remained behind, and it had not occurred to her until that very evening. It was the want of money; without which it was impossible she could undertake so distant a journey as she now meditated.

David Deans, as we have said, was easy, and even opulent in his circumstances. But his wealth, like that of the patriarchs of old, consisted in his kine and herds, and in two or three sums lent out at interest to neighbours or relatives, who, far from being in circumstances to pay anything to account of the principal sums, thought they did all that was incumbent on them when, with considerable difficulty, they discharged the "annual rent." To these debtors it would be in vain, therefore, to apply, even with her father's concurrence; nor could she hope to obtain such concurrence, or assistance in any mode, without such a series of explanations and debates as she felt might deprive her totally of the power of taking the step, which, however daring and hazardous, she felt was absolutely necessary for trying the last chance in favour of her sister. Without departing from filial reverence, Jeanie had an inward conviction that the feelings of her father, however just, and upright, and honourable, were too little in unison with the spirit of the time to admit of his being a good judge of the measures to be adopted in this crisis. Herself more flexible in manner, though no less upright in principle, she felt that to ask his consent to her pilgrimage would be to encounter the risk of drawing down his positive prohibition, and under that she believed her journey could not be blessed in its progress and event. Accordingly, she had determined upon the means by which she might communicate to him her undertaking and its purpose, shortly after her actual departure. But it was impossible to apply to him for money without altering this arrangement, and discussing fully the propriety of her journey; pecuniary assistance from that quarter, therefore, was laid out of the question.

It now occurred to Jeanie that she should have consulted with Mrs. Saddletree on this subject. But, besides the time that must now necessarily be lost in recurring to her assistance Jeanie internally revolted from it. Her heart acknowledged the goodness of Mrs. Saddletree's general character, and the kind interest she took in

their family misfortunes; but still she felt that Mrs. Saddletree was a woman of an ordinary and worldly way of thinking, incapable, from habit and temperament, of taking a keen or enthusiastic view of such a resolution as she had formed; and to debate the point with her, and to rely upon her conviction of its propriety, for the means of carrying it into execution, would have been gall and wormwood.

Butler, whose assistance she might have been assured of, was greatly poorer than herself. In these circumstances, she formed a singular resolution for the purpose of surmounting this difficulty, the execution of which will form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SECOND

*'Tis the voice of the sluggard, I've heard him complain,
'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again;'
As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed,
Turns his side, and his shoulders, and his heavy head.
Dr. Watts.*

The mansion-house of Dumbiedikes, to which we are now to introduce our readers, lay three or four miles—no matter for the exact topography—to the southward of St. Leonard's. It had once borne the appearance of some little celebrity; for the "auld laird," whose humours and pranks were often mentioned in the ale-houses for about a mile round it, wore a sword, kept a good horse, and a brace of greyhounds; brawled, swore, and betted at cock-fights and horse-matches; followed Somerville of Drum's hawks, and the Lord Ross's hounds, and called himself *point devise* a gentleman. But the line had been veiled of its splendour in the present proprietor, who cared for no rustic amusements, and was as saying, timid, and retired, as his father had been at once grasping and selfishly extravagant—daring, wild, and intrusive.

Dumbiedikes was what is called in Scotland a single house; that is, having only one room occupying its whole depth from back to front, each of which single apartments was illuminated by six or eight cross lights, whose diminutive panes and heavy frames permitted scarce so much light to enter as shines through one well-constructed modern window. This inartificial edifice, exactly such as a child would build with cards, had a steep roof flagged with coarse grey stones instead of slates; a half-circular turret, battlemented, or, to use the appropriate phrase, bartizan'd on the top, served as a case for a narrow turnpike stair, by which an ascent was gained from storey to storey; and at the bottom of the said turret was a door studded with large-headed nails. There was no lobby at the bottom of the tower, and scarce a landing-place opposite to the doors which gave access to the apartments. One or two low and dilapidated outhouses, connected by a courtyard wall equally ruinous, surrounded the mansion. The court had been paved, but the flags being partly displaced and partly renewed, a gallant crop of docks and thistles sprung up between them, and the small garden, which opened by a postern through the wall, seemed not to be in a much more orderly condition. Over the low-arched gateway which led into the yard there was a carved stone, exhibiting some attempt at armorial bearings; and above the inner entrance hung, and had hung, for many years, the mouldering hatchment, which announced that umquhile Laurence Dumbie of Dumbiedikes had been gathered to his fathers in Newbattle kirkyard. The approach to this palace of pleasure was by a road formed by the rude fragments of stone gathered from the fields, and it was surrounded by ploughed, but unenclosed land. Upon a baulk, that is, an unploughed ridge of land interposed among the corn, the Laird's trusty palfrey was tethered by the head, and picking a meal of grass. The whole argued neglect and discomfort; the consequence, however, of idleness and indifference, not of poverty.

In this inner court, not without a sense of bashfulness and timidity, stood Jeanie Deans, at an early hour in a fine spring morning. She was no heroine of romance, and therefore looked with some curiosity and interest on the mansion-house and domains, of which, it might at that moment occur to her, a little encouragement, such as women of all ranks know by instinct how to apply, might have made her mistress. Moreover, she was no person of taste beyond her time, rank, and country, and certainly thought the house of Dumbiedikes, though inferior to Holyrood House, or the palace at Dalkeith, was still a stately structure in its way, and the land a "very bonny bit, if it were better seen to and done to." But Jeanie Deans was a plain, true-hearted, honest girl, who, while she acknowledged all the splendour of her old admirer's habitation, and the value of his property, never for a moment harboured a thought of doing the Laird, Butler, or herself, the injustice, which many ladies of higher rank would not have hesitated to do to all three on much less temptation.

Her present errand being with the Laird, she looked round the offices to see if she could find any domestic to announce that she wished to see him. As all was silence, she ventured to open one door—it was the old Laird's dog-kennel, now deserted, unless when occupied, as one or two tubs seemed to testify, as a washing-house. She tried another—it was the rootless shed where the hawks had been once kept, as appeared from a perch or two not yet completely rotten, and a lure and jesses which were mouldering on the wall. A third door led to the coal-house, which was well stocked. To keep a very good fire was one of the few points of domestic management in which Dumbiedikes was positively active; in all other matters of domestic economy he was completely passive, and at the mercy of his housekeeper—the same buxom dame whom his father had long since bequeathed to his charge, and who, if fame did her no injustice, had feathered her nest pretty well at his expense.

Jeanie went on opening doors, like the second Calender wanting an eye, in the castle of the hundred obliging damsels, until, like the said prince errant, she came to a stable. The Highland Pegasus, Rory Bean, to which belonged the single entire stall, was her old acquaintance, whom she had seen grazing on the baulk, as she failed not to recognise by the well-known ancient riding furniture and demi-pique saddle, which half hung on the walls, half trailed on the litter. Beyond the "trevis," which formed one side of the stall, stood a cow, who turned her head and lowed when Jeanie came into the stable, an appeal which her habitual occupations enabled her perfectly to understand, and with which she could not refuse complying, by shaking down some fodder to the animal, which had been neglected like most things else in the castle of the sluggard.

While she was accommodating "the milky mother" with the food which she should have received two hours sooner, a slipshod wench peeped into the stable, and perceiving that a stranger was employed in discharging the task which she, at length, and reluctantly, had quitted her slumbers to perform, ejaculated, "Eh, sirs! the Brownie! the Brownie!" and fled, yelling as if she had seen the devil.

To explain her terror it may be necessary to notice that the old house of Dumbiedikes had, according to report, been long haunted by a Brownie, one of those familiar spirits who were believed in ancient times to supply the deficiencies of the ordinary labourer—

Whirl the long mop, and ply the airy flail.

Certes, the convenience of such a supernatural assistance could have been nowhere more sensibly felt than in a family where the domestics were so little disposed to personal activity; yet this serving maiden was so far from rejoicing in seeing a supposed aerial substitute discharging a task which she should have long since performed herself, that she proceeded to raise the family by her screams of horror, uttered as thick as if the Brownie had been flaying her. Jeanie, who had immediately resigned her temporary occupation, and followed the yelling damsel into the courtyard, in order to undeceive and appease her, was there met by Mrs. Janet Balchristie, the favourite sultana of the last Laird, as scandal went—the housekeeper of the present. The good-looking buxom woman, betwixt forty and fifty (for such we described her at the death of the last Laird), was now a fat, red-faced, old dame of seventy, or thereabouts, fond of her place, and jealous of her authority. Conscious that her administration did not rest on so sure a basis as in the time of the old proprietor, this considerate lady had introduced into the family the screamer aforesaid, who added good features and bright eyes to the powers of her lungs. She made no conquest of the Laird, however, who seemed to live as if there was not another woman in the world but Jeanie Deans, and to bear no very ardent or overbearing affection even to her. Mrs. Janet Balchristie, notwithstanding, had her own uneasy thoughts upon the almost daily visits to St. Leonard's Crags, and often, when the Laird looked at her wistfully and paused, according to his custom before utterance, she expected him to say, "Jenny, I am gaun to change my condition;" but she was relieved by, "Jenny, I am gaun to change my shoon."

Still, however, Mrs. Balchristie regarded Jeanie Deans with no small portion of malevolence, the customary feeling of such persons towards anyone who they think has the means of doing them an injury. But she had also a general aversion to any female tolerably young, and decently well-looking, who showed a wish to approach the house of Dumbiedikes and the proprietor thereof. And as she had raised her mass of mortality out of bed two hours earlier than usual, to come to the rescue of her clamorous niece, she was in such extreme bad humour against all and sundry, that Saddletree would have pronounced that she harboured *inimicitiam contra omnes mortales*.

"Wha the deil are ye?" said the fat dame to poor Jeanie, whom she did not immediately recognise, "scouping about a decent house at sic an hour in the morning?" "It was ane wanting to speak to the Laird," said Jeanie, who felt something of the intuitive terror which she had formerly entertained for this termagant, when she was occasionally at Dumbiedikes on business of her father's.

"Ane!—And what sort of ane are ye!—hae ye nae name?—D'ye think his honour has naething else to do than to speak wi' ilka idle tramp that comes about the town, and him in his bed yet, honest man?"

"Dear Mrs. Balchristie," replied Jeanie, in a submissive tone, "d'ye no mind me?—d'ye no mind Jeanie Deans?"

"Jeanie Deans!" said the termagant, in accents affecting the utmost astonishment; then, taking two strides nearer to her, she peered into her face with a stare of curiosity, equally scornful and malignant—"I say Jeanie Deans indeed—Jeanie Deevil, they had better hae ca'ed ye!—A bonny spot o' wark your tittie and you hae made out, murdering ae puir wean, and your light limmer of a sister's to be hanged for't, as weel she deserves!—And the like o' you to come to ony honest man's house, and want to be into a decent bachelor gentleman's room at this time in the morning, and him in his bed!—Gae wa', gae wa'!"

Jeanie was struck mute with shame at the unfeeling brutality of this accusation, and could not even find words to justify herself from the vile construction put upon her visit. When Mrs. Balchristie, seeing her advantage, continued in the same tone, "Come, come, bundle up your pipes and tramp awa wi' ye!—ye may be seeking a father to another wean for ony thing I ken. If it warn that your father, auld David Deans, had been a tenant on our land, I would cry up the men-folk, and hae ye dookit in the burn for your impudence."

Jeanie had already turned her back, and was walking towards the door of the court-yard, so that Mrs. Balchristie, to make her last threat impressively audible to her, had raised her stentorian voice to its utmost pitch. But, like many a general, she lost the engagement by pressing her advantage too far.

The Laird had been disturbed in his morning slumbers by the tones of Mrs. Balchristie's objurgation, sounds in themselves by no means uncommon, but very remarkable, in respect to the early hour at which they were now heard. He turned himself on the other side, however, in hopes the squall would blow by, when, in the course of Mrs. Balchristie's second explosion of wrath, the name of Deans distinctly struck the tympanum of his ear. As he was, in some degree, aware of the small portion of benevolence with which his housekeeper regarded the family at St. Leonard's, he instantly conceived that some message from thence was the cause of this untimely ire, and getting out of his bed, he slipped as speedily as possible into an old brocaded night-gown, and some other necessary garments, clapped on his head his father's gold-laced hat (for though he was seldom seen without it, yet it is proper to contradict the popular report that he slept in it, as Don Quixote did in his helmet), and opening the window of his bedroom, beheld, to his great astonishment, the well-known figure of Jeanie Deans herself retreating from his gate; while his housekeeper, with arms a-kimbo, fist clenched and extended, body erect, and head shaking with rage, sent after her a volley of Billingsgate oaths. His choler rose in proportion to the surprise, and, perhaps, to the disturbance of his repose. "Hark ye," he exclaimed from the window, "ye auld limb of Satan—wha the deil gies you commission to guide an honest man's daughter that gate?"

Mrs. Balchristie was completely caught in the manner. She was aware, from the unusual warmth with which the Laird expressed himself, that he was quite serious in this matter, and she knew, that with all his indolence of nature, there were points on which he might be provoked, and that, being provoked, he had in him something dangerous, which her wisdom taught her to fear accordingly. She began, therefore, to retract her false step as fast as she could. "She was but speaking for the house's credit, and she couldna think of disturbing his honour in the morning sae early, when the young woman might as weel wait or call again; and to be sure, she might make a mistake between the twa sisters, for ane o' them wasna sae creditable an acquaintance."

"Haud your peace, ye auld jade," said Dumbiedikes; "the warst quean e'er stude in their shoon may ca' you cousin, an a' be true that I have heard.—Jeanie, my woman, gang into the parlour—but stay, that winna be redd up yet—wait there a minute till I come down to let ye in—Dinna mind what Jenny says to ye."

"Na, na," said Jenny, with a laugh of affected heartiness, "never mind me, lass—a' the warld kens my bark's waur than my bite—if ye had had an appointment wi' the Laird, ye might hae tauld me—I am nae uncivil person—gang your ways in by, hinny," and she opened the door of the house with a master-key.

"But I had no appointment wi' the Laird," said Jeanie, drawing back; "I want just to speak twa words to him, and I wad rather do it standing here, Mrs. Balchristie."

"In the open court-yard!—Na, na, that wad never do, lass; we mauna guide ye that gate neither—And how's that douce honest man, your father?"

Jeanie was saved the pain of answering this hypocritical question by the appearance of the Laird himself.

"Gang in and get breakfast ready," said he to his housekeeper—"and, d'ye hear, breakfast wi' us yoursell—ye ken how to manage thae porringers of tea-water—and, hear ye, see abune a' that there's a gude fire.—Weel, Jeanie, my woman, gang in by—gang in by, and rest ye."

"Na, Laird," Jeanie replied, endeavouring as much as she could to express herself with composure, notwithstanding she still trembled, "I canna gang in—I have a lang day's darg afore me—I maun be twenty mile o' gate the night yet, if feet will carry me."

"Guide and deliver us!—twenty mile—twenty mile on your feet!" ejaculated Dumbiedikes, whose walks were of a very circumscribed diameter,—"Ye maun never think o' that—come in by."

"I canna do that, Laird," replied Jeanie; "the twa words I have to say to ye I can say here; forby that Mrs. Balchristie—"

"The deil flee awa wi' Mrs. Balchristie," said Dumbiedikes, "and he'll hae a heavy lading o' her! I tell ye, Jeanie Deans, I am a man of few words, but I am laird at hame, as well as in the field; deil a brute or body about my house but I can manage when I like, except Rory Bean, my powny; but I can seldom be at the plague, an it binna when my bluid's up."

"I was wanting to say to ye, Laird," said Jeanie, who felt the necessity of entering upon her business, "that I was gaun a lang journey, outby of my father's knowledge."

"Outby his knowledge, Jeanie!—Is that right? Ye maun think o' again—it's no right," said Dumbiedikes, with a countenance of great concern.

"If I were ance at Lunnon," said Jeanie, in exculpation, "I am amais sure I could get means to speak to the queen about my sister's life."

"Lunnon—and the queen—and her sister's life!" said Dumbiedikes, whistling for very amazement—"the lassie's demented."

"I am no out o' my mind," said she, "and sink or swim, I am determined to gang to Lunnon, if I suld beg my way frae door to door—and so I maun, unless ye wad lend me a small sum to pay my expenses—little thing will do it; and ye ken my father's a man of substance, and wad see nae man, far less you, Laird, come to loss by me."

Dumbiedikes, on comprehending the nature of this application, could scarce trust his ears—he made no answer whatever, but stood with his eyes rivetted on the ground.

"I see ye are no for assisting me, Laird," said Jeanie, "sae fare ye weel—and gang and see my poor father as often as ye can—he will be lonely enough now."

"Where is the silly bairn gaun?" said Dumbiedikes; and, laying hold of her hand, he led her into the house. "It's no that I didna think o't before," he said, "but it stack in my throat."

Thus speaking to himself, he led her into an old-fashioned parlour, shut the door behind them, and fastened it with a bolt. While Jeanie, surprised at this manoeuvre, remained as near the door as possible, the Laird quitted her hand, and pressed upon a spring lock fixed in an oak panel in the wainscot, which instantly slipped aside. An iron strong-box was discovered in a recess of the wall; he opened this also, and pulling out two or three drawers, showed that they were filled with leathern bags full of gold and silver coin.

"This is my bank, Jeanie lass," he said, looking first at her and then at the treasure, with an air of great complacency,—"nane o' your goldsmith's bills for me,—they bring folk to ruin."

Then, suddenly changing his tone, he resolutely said,—“Jeanie, I will make ye Lady Dumbiedikes afore the sun sets and ye may ride to Lunnon in your ain coach, if ye like.”

“Na, Laird,” said Jeanie, “that can never be—my father’s grief—my sister’s situation—the discredit to you—”

“That’s *my* business,” said Dumbiedikes; “ye wad say naething about that if ye werena a fule—and yet I like ye the better for’t—ae wise body’s eneugh in the married state. But if your heart’s ower fu’, take what siller will serve ye, and let it be when ye come back again—as gude syne as sune.”

“But, Laird,” said Jeanie, who felt the necessity of being explicit with so extraordinary a lover, “I like another man better than you, and I canna marry ye.”

“Another man better than me, Jeanie!” said Dumbiedikes; “how is that possible? It’s no possible, woman—ye hae ken’d me sae lang.”

“Ay but, Laird,” said Jeanie, with persevering simplicity, “I hae ken’d him langer.”

“Langer! It’s no possible!” exclaimed the poor Laird. “It canna be; ye were born on the land. O Jeanie woman, ye haena lookit—ye haena seen the half o’ the gear.” He drew out another drawer—“A’ gowd, Jeanie, and there’s bands for siller lent—And the rental book, Jeanie—clear three hunder sterling—deil a wadset, heritable band, or burden—Ye haena lookit at them, woman—And then my mother’s wardrobe, and my grandmother’s forby—silk gowns wad stand on their ends, their pearline-lace as fine as spiders’ webs, and rings and ear-rings to the boot of a’ that—they are a’ in the chamber of deas—Oh, Jeanie, gang up the stair and look at them!”

But Jeanie held fast her integrity, though beset with temptations, which perhaps the Laird of Dumbiedikes did not greatly err in supposing were those most affecting to her sex.

“It canna be, Laird—I have said it—and I canna break my word till him, if ye wad gie me the haill barony of Dalkeith, and Lugton into the bargain.”

“Your word to *him*,” said the Laird, somewhat pettishly; “but wha is he, Jeanie?—wha is he?—I haena heard his name yet—Come now, Jeanie, ye are but queering us—I am no trowing that there is sic a ane in the world—ye are but making fashion—What is he?—wha is he?”

“Just Reuben Butler, that’s schulemaster at Liberton,” said Jeanie.

“Reuben Butler! Reuben Butler!” echoed the Laird of Dumbiedikes, pacing the apartment in high disdain,—“Reuben Butler, the dominie at Liberton—and a dominie depute too!—Reuben, the son of my cottar!—Very weel, Jeanie lass, wilfu’ woman will hae her way—Reuben Butler! he hasna in his pouch the value o’ the auld black coat he wears—But it disna signify.” And as he spoke, he shut successively and with vehemence the drawers of his treasury. “A fair offer, Jeanie, is nae cause of feud—Ae man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty winna gar him drink—And as for wasting my substance on other folk’s joes—”

There was something in the last hint that nettled Jeanie’s honest pride.—“I was begging nane frae your honour,” she said; “least of a’ on sic a score as ye pit it on.—Gude morning to ye, sir; ye hae been kind to my father, and it isna in my heart to think otherwise than kindly of you.”

So saying, she left the room without listening to a faint “But, Jeanie—Jeanie—stay, woman!” and traversing the courtyard with a quick step, she set out on her forward journey, her bosom glowing with that natural indignation and shame, which an honest mind feels at having subjected itself to ask a favour, which had been unexpectedly refused. When out of the Laird’s ground, and once more upon the public road, her pace slackened, her anger cooled, and anxious anticipations of the consequence of this unexpected disappointment began to influence her with other feelings. Must she then actually beg her way to London? for such seemed the alternative; or must she turn back, and solicit her father for money? and by doing so lose time, which was precious, besides the risk of encountering his positive prohibition respecting the journey! Yet she saw no medium between these alternatives; and, while she walked slowly on, was still meditating whether it were not better to return.

While she was thus in an uncertainty, she heard the clatter of a horse’s hoofs, and a well-known voice calling her name. She looked round, and saw advancing towards her on a pony, whose bare back and halter assorted ill with the nightgown, slippers, and laced cocked-hat of the rider, a cavalier of no less importance than Dumbiedikes himself. In the energy of his pursuit, he had overcome even the Highland obstinacy of Rory Bean, and compelled that self-willed palfrey to canter the way his rider chose; which Rory, however, performed with all the symptoms of reluctance, turning his head, and accompanying every bound he made in advance with a sidelong motion, which indicated his extreme wish to turn round,—a manoeuvre which nothing but the constant exercise of the Laird’s heels and cudgel could possibly have counteracted.

When the Laird came up with Jeanie, the first words he uttered were,—“Jeanie, they say ane shouldna aye take a woman at her first word?”

“Ay, but ye maun take me at mine, Laird,” said Jeanie, looking on the ground, and walking on without a pause.—“I hae but ae word to bestow on ony body, and that’s aye a true ane.”

“Then,” said Dumbiedikes, “at least ye suldna aye take a man at *his* first word. Ye maunna gang this wilfu’ gate sillerless, come o’t what like.”—He put a purse into her hand. “I wad gie you Rory too, but he’s as wilfu’ as yoursell, and he’s ower weel used to a gate that maybe he and I hae gaen ower aften, and he’ll gang nae road else.”

“But, Laird,” said Jeanie, “though I ken my father will satisfy every penny of this siller, whatever there’s o’t, yet I wadna like to borrow it frae ane that maybe thinks of something mair than the paying o’t back again.”

“There’s just twenty-five guineas o’t,” said Dumbiedikes, with a gentle sigh, “and whether your father pays or disna pay, I make ye free till’t without another word. Gang where ye like—do what ye like—and marry a’ the Butlers in the country gin ye like—And sae, gude morning to you, Jeanie.”

“And God bless you, Laird, wi’ mony a gude morning!” said Jeanie, her heart more softened by the unwonted generosity of this uncouth character, than perhaps Butler might have approved, had he known her feelings at that moment; “and comfort, and the Lord’s peace, and the peace of the world, be with you, if we suld never meet again!”

Dumbiedikes turned and waved his hand; and his pony, much more willing to return than he had been to set out, hurried him homeward so fast, that, wanting the aid of a regular bridle, as well as of saddle and stirrups, he was too much puzzled to keep his seat to permit of his looking behind, even to give the parting glance of a forlorn swain. I am ashamed to say, that the sight of a lover, ran away with in nightgown and slippers and a laced hat, by a bare-backed Highland pony, had something in it of a sedative, even to a grateful and deserved burst of affectionate esteem. The figure of Dumbiedikes was too ludicrous not to confirm Jeanie in the original sentiments she entertained towards him.

“He’s a gude creature,” said she, “and a kind—it’s a pity he has sae willyard a powny.” And she immediately turned her thoughts to the important journey which she had commenced, reflecting with pleasure, that, according to her habits of life and of undergoing fatigue, she was now amply or even superfluously provided with the means of encountering the expenses of the road, up and down from London, and all other expenses whatever.

CHAPTER THIRD

What strange and wayward thoughts will slide

Into a lover’s head;

“O mercy!” to myself I cried,

“If Lucy should be dead!”

Wordsworth.

In pursuing her solitary journey, our heroine, soon after passing the house of Dumbiedikes, gained a little eminence, from which, on looking to the eastward down a prattling brook, whose meanders were shaded with straggling widows and alder trees, she could see the cottages of Woodend and Beersheba, the haunts and habitation of her early life, and could distinguish the common on which she had so often herded sheep, and the recesses of the rivulet where she had pulled

rushes with Butler, to plait crowns and sceptres for her sister Effie, then a beautiful but spoiled child, of about three years old. The recollections which the scene brought with them were so bitter, that, had she indulged them, she would have sate down and relieved her heart with tears.

"But I ken'd," said Jeanie, when she gave an account of her pilgrimage, "that greeting would do but little good, and that it was mair beseeming to thank the Lord, that had showed me kindness and countenance by means of a man, that mony ca'd a Nabal, and churl, but wha was free of his gudes to me, as ever the fountain was free of the stream. And I minded the Scripture about the sin of Israel at Meribah, when the people murmured, although Moses had brought water from the dry rock that the congregation might drink and live. Sae, I wad not trust mysell with another look at puir Woodend, for the very blue reek that came out of the lum-head pat me in mind of the change of market days with us."

In this resigned and Christian temper she pursued her journey until she was beyond this place of melancholy recollections, and not distant from the village where Butler dwelt, which, with its old-fashioned church and steeple, rises among a tuft of trees, occupying the ridge of an eminence to the south of Edinburgh. At a quarter of a mile's distance is a clumsy square tower, the residence of the Laird of Liberton, who, in former times, with the habits of the predatory chivalry of Germany, is said frequently to have annoyed the city of Edinburgh, by intercepting the supplies and merchandise which came to the town from the southward.

This village, its tower, and its church, did not lie precisely in Jeanie's road towards England; but they were not much aside from it, and the village was the abode of Butler. She had resolved to see him in the beginning of her journey, because she conceived him the most proper person to write to her father concerning her resolution and her hopes. There was probably another reason latent in her affectionate bosom. She wished once more to see the object of so early and so sincere an attachment, before commencing a pilgrimage, the perils of which she did not disguise from herself, although she did not allow them so to press upon her mind as to diminish the strength and energy of her resolution. A visit to a lover from a young person in a higher rank of life than Jeanie's, would have had something forward and improper in its character. But the simplicity of her rural habits was unacquainted with these punctilious ideas of decorum, and no notion, therefore, of impropriety crossed her imagination, as, setting out upon a long journey, she went to bid adieu to an early friend.

There was still another motive that pressed upon her mind with additional force as she approached the village. She had looked anxiously for Butler in the courthouse, and had expected that, certainly, in some part of that eventful day, he would have appeared to bring such countenance and support as he could give to his old friend, and the protector of his youth, even if her own claims were laid aside.

She knew, indeed, that he was under a certain degree of restraint; but she still had hoped that he would have found means to emancipate himself from it, at least for one day. In short, the wild and wayward thoughts which Wordsworth has described as rising in an absent lover's imagination, suggested, as the only explanation of his absence, that Butler must be very ill. And so much had this wrought on her imagination, that when she approached the cottage where her lover occupied a small apartment, and which had been pointed out to her by a maiden with a milk-pail on her head, she trembled at anticipating the answer she might receive on inquiring for him.

Her fears in this case had, indeed, only hit upon the truth. Butler, whose constitution was naturally feeble, did not soon recover the fatigue of body and distress of mind which he had suffered, in consequence of the tragical events with which our narrative commenced. The painful idea that his character was breathed on by suspicion, was an aggravation to his distress.

But the most cruel addition was the absolute prohibition laid by the magistrates on his holding any communication with Deans or his family. It had unfortunately appeared likely to them, that some intercourse might be again attempted with that family by Robertson, through the medium of Butler, and this they were anxious to intercept, or prevent if possible. The measure was not meant as a harsh or injurious severity on the part of the magistrates; but, in Butler's circumstances, it pressed cruelly hard. He felt he must be suffering under the bad opinion of the person who was dearest to him, from an imputation of unkind desertion, the most alien to his nature.

This painful thought, pressing on a frame already injured, brought on a succession of slow and lingering feverish attacks, which greatly impaired his health, and at length rendered him incapable even of the sedentary duties of the school, on which his bread depended. Fortunately, old Mr. Whackbairn, who was the principal teacher of the little parochial establishment, was sincerely attached to Butler. Besides that he was sensible of his merits and value as an assistant, which had greatly raised the credit of his little school, the ancient pedagogue, who had himself been tolerably educated, retained some taste for classical lore, and would gladly relax, after the drudgery of the school was over, by conning over a few pages of Horace or Juvenal with his usher. A similarity of taste begot kindness, and accordingly he saw Butler's increasing debility with great compassion, roused up his own energies to teaching the school in the morning hours, insisted upon his assistant's reposing himself at that period, and, besides, supplied him with such comforts as the patient's situation required, and his own means were inadequate to compass.

Such was Butler's situation, scarce able to drag himself to the place where his daily drudgery must gain his daily bread, and racked with a thousand fearful anticipations concerning the fate of those who were dearest to him in the world, when the trial and condemnation of Effie Deans put the copestone upon his mental misery.

He had a particular account of these events, from a fellow-student who resided in the same village, and who, having been present on the melancholy occasion, was able to place it in all its agony of horrors before his excruciated imagination. That sleep should have visited his eyes after such a curfew-note, was impossible. A thousand dreadful visions haunted his imagination all night, and in the morning he was awaked from a feverish slumber, by the only circumstance which could have added to his distress,—the visit of an intrusive ass.

This unwelcome visitant was no other than Bartoline Saddle-tree. The worthy and sapient burgher had kept his appointment at MacCroskie's with Plumdamas and some other neighbours, to discuss the Duke of Argyle's speech, the justice of Effie Deans's condemnation, and the improbability of her obtaining a reprieve. This sage conclave disputed high and drank deep, and on the next morning Bartoline felt, as he expressed it, as if his head was like a "confused progress of writs."

To bring his reflective powers to their usual serenity, Saddle-tree resolved to take a morning's ride upon a certain hackney, which he, Plumdamas, and another honest shopkeeper, combined to maintain by joint subscription, for occasional jaunts for the purpose of business or exercise. As Saddle-tree had two children boarded with Whackbairn, and was, as we have seen, rather fond of Butler's society, he turned his palfrey's head towards Liberton, and came, as we have already said, to give the unfortunate usher that additional vexation, of which Imogene complains so feelingly, when she says,—

"I'm sprighted with a fool—

Sprighted and anger'd worse."

If anything could have added gall to bitterness, it was the choice which Saddle-tree made of a subject for his prosing harangues, being the trial of Effie Deans, and the probability of her being executed. Every word fell on Butler's ear like the knell of a death-bell, or the note of a screech-owl.

Jeanie paused at the door of her lover's humble abode upon hearing the loud and pompous tones of Saddle-tree sounding from the inner apartment, "Credit me, it will be sae, Mr. Butler. Brandy cannot save her. She maun gang down the Bow wi' the lad in the pioted coat* at her heels.—

* The executioner, in livery of black or dark grey and silver, likened by low wit to a magpie.

I am sorry for the lassie, but the law, sir, maun hae its course—

Vivat Rex,

Currat Lex,

as the poet has it, in whilk of Horace's odes I know not."

Here Butler groaned, in utter impatience of the brutality and ignorance which Bartoline had contrived to amalgamate into one sentence. But Saddle-tree, like other prozers, was blessed with a happy obtuseness of perception concerning the unfavourable impression which he sometimes made on his auditors. He proceeded to deal forth his scraps of legal knowledge without mercy, and concluded by asking Butler, with great self-complacency, "Was it na a pity my father didna send me to Utrecht? Havena I missed the chance to turn out as *clarissimus* an *ictus*, as auld Grunwiggin himself?—Whatfor dinna ye speak, Mr. Butler? Wad I no hae been a *clarissimus ictus*?—Eh, man?"

"I really do not understand you, Mr. Saddletree," said Butler, thus pushed hard for an answer. His faint and exhausted tone of voice was instantly drowned in the sonorous bray of Bartoline.

"No understand me, man? *Ictus* is Latin for a lawyer, is it not?"

"Not that ever I heard of," answered Butler in the same dejected tone.

"The deil ye didna!—See, man, I got the word but this morning out of a memorial of Mr. Crossmyloof's—see, there it is, *ictus clarissimus et perti—peritissimus*—it's a' Latin, for it's printed in the Italian types."

"O, you mean *juris-consultus*—*Ictus* is an abbreviation for *juris-consultus*."

"Dinna tell me, man," persevered Saddletree, "there's nae abbreviates except in adjudications; and this is a' about a servitude of water-drap—that is to say, *tillicidian** (maybe ye'll say that's no Latin neither), in Mary King's Close in the High Street."

* He meant, probably, *stillicidium*.

"Very likely," said poor Butler, overwhelmed by the noisy perseverance of his visitor. "I am not able to dispute with you."

"Few folk are—few folk are, Mr. Butler, though I say it that shouldna say it," returned Bartoline with great delight. "Now, it will be twa hours yet or ye're wanted in the schule, and as ye are no weel, I'll sit wi' you to divert ye, and explain t'ye the nature of *atillicidian*. Ye maun ken, the petitioner, Mrs. Crombie, a very decent woman, is a friend of mine, and I hae stude her friend in this case, and brought her wi' credit into the court, and I doubtna that in due time she will win out o't wi' credit, win she or lose she. Ye see, being an inferior tenement or laigh house, we grant ourselves to be burdened wi' the *tillicide*, that is, that we are obligated to receive the natural water-drap of the superior tenement, sae far as the same fa's frae the heavens, or the roof of our neighbour's house, and from thence by the gutters or eaves upon our laigh tenement. But the other night comes a Highland quean of a lass, and she flashes, God kens what, out at the eastmost window of Mrs. MacPhail's house, that's the superior tenement. I believe the auld women wad hae agreed, for Luckie MacPhail sent down the lass to tell my friend Mrs. Crombie that she had made the gardyloo out of the wrang window, out of respect for twa Highlandmen that were speaking Gaelic in the close below the right ane. But luckily for Mrs. Crombie, I just chanced to come in in time to break aff the communing, for it's a pity the point suldna be tried. We had Mrs. MacPhail into the Ten-Mark Court—The Hieland limmer of a lass wanted to swear herself free—but haud ye there, says I."

The detailed account of this important suit might have lasted until poor Butler's hour of rest was completely exhausted, had not Saddletree been interrupted by the noise of voices at the door. The woman of the house where Butler lodged, on returning with her pitcher from the well, whence she had been fetching water for the family, found our heroine Jeanie Deans standing at the door, impatient of the prolix harangue of Saddletree, yet unwilling to enter until he should have taken his leave.

The good woman abridged the period of hesitation by inquiring, "Was ye wanting the gudeman or me, lass?"

"I wanted to speak with Mr. Butler, if he's at leisure," replied Jeanie.

"Gang in by then, my woman," answered the goodwife; and opening the door of a room, she announced the additional visitor with, "Mr. Butler, here's a lass wants to speak t'ye."

The surprise of Butler was extreme, when Jeanie, who seldom stirred half-a-mile from home, entered his apartment upon this annunciation.

"Good God!" he said, starting from his chair, while alarm restored to his cheek the colour of which sickness had deprived it; "some new misfortune must have happened!"

"None, Mr. Reuben, but what you must hae heard of—but oh, ye are looking ill yourself!"—for the "hectic of a moment" had not concealed from her affectionate eyes the ravages which lingering disease and anxiety of mind had made in her lover's person.

"No: I am well—quite well," said Butler with eagerness; "if I can do anything to assist you, Jeanie—or your father."

"Ay, to be sure," said Saddletree; "the family may be considered as limited to them twa now, just as if Effie had never been in the tailzie, puir thing. But, Jeanie lass, what brings you out to Liberton sae air in the morning, and your father lying ill in the Luckenbooths?"

"I had a message frae my father to Mr. Butler," said Jeanie with embarrassment; but instantly feeling ashamed of the fiction to which she had resorted, for her love of and veneration for truth was almost Quaker-like, she corrected herself—"That is to say, I wanted to speak with Mr. Butler about some business of my father's and puir Effie's."

"Is it law business?" said Bartoline; "because if it be, ye had better take my opinion on the subject than his."

"It is not just law business," said Jeanie, who saw considerable inconvenience might arise from letting Mr. Saddletree into the secret purpose of her journey; "but I want Mr. Butler to write a letter for me."

"Very right," said Mr. Saddletree; "and if ye'll tell me what it is about, I'll dictate to Mr. Butler as Mr. Crossmyloof does to his clerk.—Get your pen and ink in initialibus, Mr. Butler."

Jeanie looked at Butler, and wrung her hands with vexation and impatience.

"I believe, Mr. Saddletree," said Butler, who saw the necessity of getting rid of him at all events, "that Mr. Whackbairn will be somewhat affronted if you do not hear your boys called up to their lessons."

"Indeed, Mr. Butler, and that's as true; and I promised to ask a half play-day to the schule, so that the bairns might gang and see the hanging, which canna but have a pleasing effect on their young minds, seeing there is no knowing what they may come to themselves.—Odd so, I didna mind ye were here, Jeanie Deans; but ye maun use yoursell to hear the matter spoken o'.—Keep Jeanie here till I come back, Mr. Butler; I winna bide ten minutes."

And with this unwelcome assurance of an immediate return, he relieved them of the embarrassment of his presence.

"Reuben," said Jeanie, who saw the necessity of using the interval of his absence in discussing what had brought her there, "I am bound on a lang journey—I am gaun to Lunnon to ask Effie's life of the king and of the queen."

"Jeanie! you are surely not yourself," answered Butler, in the utmost surprise;—"you go to London—you address the king and queen!"

"And what for no, Reuben?" said Jeanie, with all the composed simplicity of her character; "it's but speaking to a mortal man and woman when a' is done. And their hearts maun be made o' flesh and blood like other folk's, and Effie's story wad melt them were they stane. Forby, I hae heard that they are no sic bad folk as what the Jacobites ca' them."

"Yes, Jeanie," said Butler; "but their magnificence—their retinue—the difficulty of getting audience?"

"I have thought of a' that, Reuben, and it shall not break my spirit. Nae doubt their claihts will be very grand, wi' their crowns on their heads, and their sceptres in their hands, like the great King Ahasuerus when he sate upon his royal throne forment the gate of his house, as we are told in Scripture. But I have that within me that will keep my heart from failing, and I am amaist sure that I will be strengthened to speak the errand I came for."

"Alas! alas!" said Butler, "the kings now-a-days do not sit in the gate to administer justice, as in patriarchal times. I know as little of courts as you do, Jeanie, by experience; but by reading and report I know, that the King of Britain does everything by means of his ministers."

"And if they be upright, God-fearing ministers," said Jeanie, "it's sae muckle the better chance for Effie and me."

"But you do not even understand the most ordinary words relating to a court," said Butler; "by the ministry is meant not clergymen, but the king's official servants."

"Nae doubt," returned Jeanie, "he maun hae a great number mair, I daur to say, than the duchess has at Dalkeith, and great folk's servants are aye mair saucy than themselves. But I'll be decently put on, and I'll offer them a trifle o' siller, as if I came to see the palace. Or, if they scruple that, I'll tell them I'm come on a business of life and death, and then they will surely bring me to speech of the king and queen?"

Butler shook his head. "O Jeanie, this is entirely a wild dream. You can never see them but through some great lord's intercession, and I think it is scarce possible even then."

"Weel, but maybe I can get that too," said Jeanie, "with a little helping from you."

"From me, Jeanie! this is the wildest imagination of all."

"Ay, but it is not, Reuben. Havena I heard you say, that your grandfather (that my father never likes to hear about) did some gude langsyne to the forbear of this MacCallummore, when he was Lord of Lorn?"

"He did so," said Butler, eagerly, "and I can prove it.—I will write to the Duke of Argyle—report speaks him a good kindly man, as he is known for a brave soldier and true patriot—I will conjure him to stand between your sister and this cruel fate. There is but a poor chance of success, but we will try all means."

"We *must* try all means," replied Jeanie; "but writing winna do it—a letter canna look, and pray, and beg, and beseech, as the human voice can do to the human heart. A letter's like the music that the ladies have for their spinets—naething but black scores, compared to the same tune played or sung. It's word of mouth maun do it, or naething, Reuben."

"You are right," said Reuben, recollecting his firmness, "and I will hope that Heaven has suggested to your kind heart and firm courage the only possible means of saving the life of this unfortunate girl. But, Jeanie, you must not take this most perilous journey alone; I have an interest in you, and I will not agree that my Jeanie throws herself away. You must even, in the present circumstances, give me a husband's right to protect you, and I will go with you myself on this journey, and assist you to do your duty by your family."

"Alas, Reuben!" said Jeanie in her turn, "this must not be; a pardon will not gie my sister her fair fame again, or make me a bride fitting for an honest man and an usefu' minister. Wha wad mind what he said in the pu'pit, that had to wife the sister of a woman that was condemned for sic wickedness?"

"But, Jeanie," pleaded her lover, "I do not believe, and I cannot believe, that Effie has done this deed."

"Heaven bless ye for saying sae, Reuben," answered Jeanie; "but she maun bear the blame o't after all."

"But the blame, were it even justly laid on her, does not fall on you."

"Ah, Reuben, Reuben," replied the young woman, "ye ken it is a blot that spreads to kith and kin.—Ichabod—as my poor father says—the glory is departed from our house; for the poorest man's house has a glory, where there are true hands, a divine heart, and an honest fame—And the last has gane frae us a."

"But, Jeanie, consider your word and plighted faith to me; and would you undertake such a journey without a man to protect you?—and who should that protector be but your husband?"

"You are kind and good, Reuben, and wad take me wi' a' my shame, I doubtna. But ye canna but own that this is no time to marry or be given in marriage. Na, if that suld ever be, it maun be in another and a better season.—And, dear Reuben, ye speak of protecting me on my journey—Alas! who will protect and take care of you?—your very limbs tremble with standing for ten minutes on the floor; how could you undertake a journey as far as Lunnon?"

"But I am strong—I am well," continued Butler, sinking in his seat totally exhausted, "at least I shall be quite well to-morrow."

"Ye see, and ye ken, ye maun just let me depart," said Jeanie, after a pause; and then taking his extended hand, and gazing kindly in his face, she added, "It's e'en a grief the mair to me to see you in this way. But ye maun keep up your heart for Jeanie's sake, for if she isna your wife, she will never be the wife of living man. And now gie me the paper for MacCallummore, and bid God speed me on my way."

There was something of romance in Jeanie's venturous resolution; yet, on consideration, as it seemed impossible to alter it by persuasion, or to give her assistance but by advice, Butler, after some farther debate, put into her hands the paper she desired, which, with the muster-roll in which it was folded up, were the sole memorials of the stout and enthusiastic Bible Butler, his grandfather. While Butler sought this document, Jeanie had time to take up his pocket Bible. "I have marked a scripture," she said, as she again laid it down, "with your kylevine pen, that will be useful to us baith. And ye maun tak the trouble, Reuben, to write a' this to my father, for, God help me, I have neither head nor hand for lang letters at any time, forby now; and I trust him entirely to you, and I trust you will soon be permitted to see him. And, Reuben, when ye do win to the speech o' him, mind a' the auld man's bits o' ways, for Jeanie's sake; and dinna speak o' Latin or English terms to him, for he's o' the auld warld, and downa bide to be fashed wi' them, though I daresay he may be wrang. And dinna ye say muckle to him, but set him on speaking himself, for he'll bring himsell mair comfort that way. And O, Reuben, the poor lassie in yon dungeon!—but I needna bid your kind heart—gie her what comfort ye can as soon as they will let ye see her—tell her—But I maunna speak mair about her, for I maunna take leave o' ye wi' the tear in my ee, for that wouldna be canny.—God bless ye, Reuben!"

To avoid so ill an omen she left the room hastily, while her features yet retained the mournful and affectionate smile which she had compelled them to wear, in order to support Butler's spirits.

It seemed as if the power of sight, of speech, and of reflection, had left him as she disappeared from the room, which she had entered and retired from so like an apparition. Saddletree, who entered immediately afterwards, overwhelmed him with questions, which he answered without understanding them, and with legal disquisitions, which conveyed to him no iota of meaning. At length the learned burgess recollected that there was a Baron Court to be, held at Loanhead that day, and though it was hardly worth while, "he might as weel go to see if there was onything doing, as he was acquainted with the baron bailie, who was a decent man, and would be glad of a word of legal advice."

So soon as he departed, Butler flew to the Bible, the last book which Jeanie had touched. To his extreme surprise, a paper, containing two or three pieces of gold, dropped from the book. With a black-lead pencil, she had marked the sixteenth and twenty-fifth verses of the thirty-seventh Psalm,—"*A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of the wicked.*"—"I have been young and am now old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."

Deeply impressed with the affectionate delicacy which shrouded its own generosity under the cover of a providential supply to his wants, he pressed the gold to his lips with more ardour than ever the metal was greeted with by a miser. To emulate her devout firmness and confidence seemed now the pitch of his ambition, and his first task was to write an account to David Deans of his daughter's resolution and journey southward. He studied every sentiment, and even every phrase, which he thought could reconcile the old man to her extraordinary resolution. The effect which this epistle produced will be hereafter adverted to. Butler committed it to the charge of an honest clown, who had frequent dealings with Deans in the sale of his dairy produce, and who readily undertook a journey to Edinburgh to put the letter into his own hands.*

* By dint of assiduous research I am enabled to certify the reader, that the name of this person was Saunders Broadfoot, and that he dealt in the wholesome commodity called kirn-milk (*Anglice*, butter-milk).— J. C.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

"My native land, good night."

Lord Byron.

In the present day, a journey from Edinburgh to London is a matter at once safe, brief, and simple, however inexperienced or unprotected the traveller. Numerous coaches of different rates of charge, and as many packets, are perpetually passing and repassing betwixt the capital of Britain and her northern sister, so that the most timid or indolent may execute such a journey upon a few hours' notice. But it was different in 1737. So slight and infrequent was the intercourse betwixt London and Edinburgh, that men still alive remember that upon one occasion the mail from the former city arrived at the General Post-Office in Scotland with only one letter in it.*

* The fact is certain. The single epistle was addressed to the principal director of the British Linen Company.

The usual mode of travelling was by means of post-horses, the traveller occupying one, and his guide another, in which manner, by relays of horses from stage to stage, the journey might be accomplished in a wonderfully short time by those who could endure fatigue. To have the bones shaken to pieces by a constant change of those hacks was a luxury for the rich—the poor were under the necessity of using the mode of conveyance with which nature had provided them.

With a strong heart, and a frame patient of fatigue, Jeanie Deans, travelling at the rate of twenty miles a-day, and sometimes farther, traversed the southern part of Scotland, and advanced as far as Durham.

Hitherto she had been either among her own country-folk, or those to whom her bare feet and tartan screen were objects too familiar to attract much attention. But as she advanced, she perceived that both circumstances exposed her to sarcasm and taunts, which she might otherwise have escaped; and although in her heart she thought it unkind, and inhospitable, to sneer at a passing stranger on account of the fashion of her attire, yet she had the good sense to alter those parts of her dress which attracted ill-natured observation. Her chequed screen was deposited carefully in her bundle, and she conformed to the national extravagance of wearing shoes and stockings for the whole day. She confessed afterwards, that, "besides the wastrife, it was lang or she could walk sae comfortably with the shoes as without them; but there was often a bit saft heather by the road-side, and that helped her weel on." The want of the screen, which was drawn over the head like a veil, she supplied by a *bon-grace*, as she called it; a large straw bonnet like those worn by the English maidens when labouring in the fields. "But I thought unco shame o' mysell," she said, "the first time I put on a married woman's *bon-grace*, and me a single maiden."

With these changes she had little, as she said, to make "her kenspeckle when she didna speak," but her accent and language drew down on her so many jests and gibes, couched in a worse *patois* by far than her own, that she soon found it was her interest to talk as little and as seldom as possible. She answered, therefore, civil salutations of chance passengers with a civil courtesy, and chose, with anxious circumspection, such places of repose as looked at once most decent and sequestered. She found the common people of England, although inferior in courtesy to strangers, such as was then practised in her own more unfrequented country, yet, upon the whole, by no means deficient in the real duties of hospitality. She readily obtained food, and shelter, and protection at a very moderate rate, which sometimes the generosity of mine host altogether declined, with a blunt apology,—*"Thee hast a long way afore thee, lass; and I'se ne'er take penny out o' a single woman's purse; it's the best friend thou can have on the road."*

It often happened, too, that mine hostess was struck with "the tidy, nice Scotch body," and procured her an escort, or a cast in a waggon, for some part of the way, or gave her a useful advice and recommendation respecting her resting-places.

At York our pilgrim stopped for the best part of a day, partly to recruit her strength,—partly because she had the good luck to obtain a lodging in an inn kept by a countrywoman,—partly to indite two letters to her father and Reuben Butler; an operation of some little difficulty, her habits being by no means those of literary composition. That to her father was in the following words.—

"Dearest Father,—I make my present pilgrimage more heavy and burdensome, through the sad occasion to reflect that it is without your knowledge, which, God knows, was far contrary to my heart; for Scripture says, that 'the vow of the daughter should not be binding without the consent of the father,' wherein it may be I have been guilty to tak this wearie journey without your consent. Nevertheless, it was borne in upon my mind that I should be an instrument to help my poor sister in this extremity of needcessity, otherwise I wad not, for wealth or for world's gear, or for the haill lands of Da'keith and Lugton, have done the like o' this, without your free will and knowledge. Oh, dear father, as ye wad desire a blessing on my journey, and upon your household, speak a word or write a line of comfort to yon poor prisoner. If she has sinned, she has sorrowed and suffered, and ye ken better than me, that we maun forgie others, as we pray to be forgien. Dear father, forgive my saying this muckle, for it doth not become a young head to instruct grey hairs; but I am sae far frae ye, that my heart yearns to ye a', and fain wad I hear that ye had forgien her trespass, and sae I nae doubt say mair than may become me. The folk here are civil, and, like the barbarians unto the holy apostle, hae shown me much kindness; and there are a sort of chosen people in the land, for they hae some kirks without organs that are like ours, and are called meeting-houses, where the minister preaches without a gown. But most of the country are prelatists, whilk is awfu' to think; and I saw twa men that were ministers following hunds, as bauld as Roslin or Driden, the young Laird of Loup-the-dike, or ony wild gallant in Lothian. A sorrowfa' sight to behold! Oh, dear father, may a blessing be with your down-lying and up-rising, and remember in your prayers your affectionate daughter to command,

"Jean Deans."

A postscript bore, "I learned from a decent woman, a grazier's widow, that they hae a cure for the muir-ill in Cumberland, whilk is ane pint, as they ca't, of yill, whilk is a dribble in comparison of our gawsie Scots pint, and hardly a mutchkin, boiled wi' sope and hartshorn draps, and toomed down the creature's throat wi' ane whorn. Ye might try it on the bauson-faced year-auld quey; an it does nae gude, it can do nae ill.— She was a kind woman, and seemed skeely about horned beasts. When I reach Lunnon, I intend to gang to our cousin Mrs. Glass, the tobacconist, at the sign o' the Thistle, wha is so ceevil as to send you down your spleuchan-fu' anes a year; and as she must be well kend in Lunnon, I doubt not easily to find out where she lives."

Being seduced into betraying our heroine's confidence thus far, we will stretch our communication a step beyond, and impart to the reader her letter to her lover.

"Mr. Reuben Butler,—Hoping this will find you better, this comes to say, that I have reached this great town safe, and am not wearied with walking, but the better for it. And I have seen many things which I trust to tell you one day, also the muckle kirk of this place; and all around the city are mills, whilk havena muckle wheels nor mill-dams, but gang by the wind—strange to behold. Ane miller asked me to gang in and see it work, but I wad not, for I am not come to the south to make acquaintance with strangers. I keep the straight road, and just beck if onybody speaks to me ceevilly, and answers naebody with the tong but women of my ain sect. I wish, Mr. Butler, I kend onything that wad mak ye weel, for they hae mair medicines in this town of York than wad cure a' Scotland, and surely some of them wad be gude for your complaints. If ye had a kindly motherly body to nurse ye, and no to let ye waste yoursell wi' reading—whilk ye read mair than enuegh wi' the bairns in the schule—and to gie ye warm milk in the morning, I wad be mair easy for ye. Dear Mr. Butler, keep a good heart, for we are in the hands of Ane that kens better what is gude for us than we ken what is for oursells. I hae nae doubt to do that for which I am come—I canna doubt it—I winna think to doubt it—because, if I haena full assurance, how shall I bear myself with earnest entreaties in the great folk's presence? But to ken that ane's purpose is right, and to make their heart strong, is the way to get through the warst day's darg. The bairns' rime says, the warst blast of the borrowing days* couldna kill the three silly poor hog-lams.

* The last three days of March, old style, are called the Borrowing Days; for, as they are remarked to be unusually stormy, it is feigned that March had borrowed them from April, to extend the sphere of his rougher sway. The rhyme on the subject is quoted in the glossary to Leyden's edition of the "Complaynt of Scotland"—

[March said to Aperill,

I see three hogs upon a hill,

A young sheep before it has lost its first fleece.

*But when the borrowed days were gane
The three silly hogs came hirplin hame.]*

"And if it be God's pleasure, we that are sindered in sorrow may meet again in joy, even on this hither side of Jordan. I dinna bid ye mind what I said at our partin' anent my poor father, and that misfortunate lassie, for I ken you will do sae for the sake of Christian charity, whilk is mair than the entreaties of her that is your servant to command,

"Jeanie Deans."

This letter also had a postscript. "Dear Reuben, If ye think that it wad hae been right for me to have said mair and kinder things to ye, just think that I hae written sae, since I am sure that I wish a' that is kind and right to ye and by ye. Ye will think I am turned waster, for I wear clean hose and shoon every day; but it's the fashion here for decent bodies and ilka land has it's ain landlaw. Ower and aboon a', if laughing days were e'er to come back again till us, ye wad laugh weel to see my round face at the far end of a *strae-bon-grace*, that looks as muckle and round as the middell aisle in Libberton Kirk. But it sheds the sun weel aff, and keeps uncivil folk frae staring as if ane were a worrycow. I sall tell ye by writ how I come on wi' the Duke of Argyle, when I won up to Lunnon. Direct a line, to say how ye are, to me, to the charge of Mrs. Margaret Glass, tobacconist, at the sign of the Thistle, Lunnon, whilk, if it assures me of your health, will make my mind sae muckle easier. Excuse bad spelling and writing, as I have ane ill pen."

The orthography of these epistles may seem to the southron to require a better apology than the letter expresses, though a bad pen was the excuse of a certain Galwegian laird for bad spelling; but, on behalf of the heroine, I would have them to know, that, thanks to the care of Butler, Jeanie Deans wrote and spelled fifty times better than half the women of rank in Scotland at that period, whose strange orthography and singular diction form the strongest contrast to the good sense which their correspondence usually intimates.

For the rest, in the tenor of these epistles, Jeanie expressed, perhaps, more hopes, a firmer courage, and better spirits, than she actually felt. But this was with the amiable idea of relieving her father and lover from apprehensions on her account, which she was sensible must greatly add to their other troubles. "If they think me weel, and like to do weel," said the poor pilgrim to herself, "my father will be kinder to Effie, and Butler will be kinder to himself. For I ken weel that they will think mair o' me than I do o' mysell."

Accordingly, she sealed her letters carefully, and put them into the post-office with her own hand, after many inquiries concerning the time in which they were likely to reach Edinburgh. When this duty was performed, she readily accepted her landlady's pressing invitation to dine with her, and remain till the next morning. The hostess, as we have said, was her countrywoman, and the eagerness with which Scottish people meet, communicate, and, to the extent of their power, assist each other, although it is often objected to us as a prejudice and narrowness of sentiment, seems, on the contrary, to arise from a most justifiable and honourable feeling of patriotism, combined with a conviction, which, if undeserved, would long since have been confuted by experience, that the habits and principles of the nation are a sort of guarantee for the character of the individual. At any rate, if the extensive influence of this national partiality be considered as an additional tie, binding man to man, and calling forth the good offices of such as can render them to the countryman who happens to need them, we think it must be found to exceed, as an active and efficient motive, to generosity, that more impartial and wider principle of general benevolence, which we have sometimes seen pleaded as an excuse for assisting no individual whatever.

Mrs. Bickerton, lady of the ascendant of the Seven Stars, in the Castle-gate, York, was deeply infected with the unfortunate prejudices of her country. Indeed, she displayed so much kindness to Jeanie Deans (because she herself, being a Merse woman, *marched* with Mid-Lothian, in which Jeanie was born), showed such motherly regard to her, and such anxiety for her farther progress, that Jeanie thought herself safe, though by temper sufficiently cautious, in communicating her whole story to her.

Mrs. Bickerton raised her hands and eyes at the recital, and exhibited much wonder and pity. But she also gave some effectual good advice.

She required to know the strength of Jeanie's purse, reduced by her deposit at Liberton, and the necessary expense of her journey, to about fifteen pounds.

"This," she said, "would do very well, providing she would carry it a' safe to London."

"Safe!" answered Jeanie; "I'll se warrant my carrying it safe, bating the needful expenses."

"Ay, but highwaymen, lassie," said Mrs. Bickerton; "for ye are come into a more civilised, that is to say, a more roguish country than the north, and how ye are to get forward, I do not profess to know. If ye could wait here eight days, our waggons would go up, and I would recommend you to Joe Broadwheel, who would see you safe to the Swan and two Necks. And dinna sneeze at Joe, if he should be for drawing up wi' you" (continued Mrs. Bickerton, her acquired English mingling with her national or original dialect), "he's a handy boy, and a wanter, and no lad better thought o' on the road; and the English make good husbands enough, witness my poor man, Moses Bickerton, as is i' the kirkyard."

Jeanie hastened to say, that she could not possibly wait for the setting forth of Joe Broadwheel; being internally by no means gratified with the idea of becoming the object of his attention during the journey,

"Aweel, lass," answered the good landlady, "then thou must pickle in thine ain poke-nook, and buckle thy girdle thine ain gate. But take my advice, and hide thy gold in thy stays, and keep a piece or two and some silver, in case thou be'st spoke withal; for there's as wud lads haunt within a day's walk from hence, as on the braes of Doune in Perthshire. And, lass, thou maunna gang staring through Lunnon, asking wha kens Mrs. Glass at the sign o' the Thistle; marry, they would laugh thee to scorn. But gang thou to this honest man," and she put a direction into Jeanie's hand, "he kens maist part of the sponisible Scottish folk in the city, and he will find out your friend for thee."

Jeanie took the little introductory letter with sincere thanks; but, something alarmed on the subject of the highway robbers, her mind recurred to what Ratcliffe had mentioned to her, and briefly relating the circumstances which placed a document so extraordinary in her hands, she put the paper he had given her into the hand of Mrs. Bickerton.

The Lady of the Seven Stars did not indeed ring a bell, because such was not the fashion of the time, but she whistled on a silver call, which was hung by her side, and a tight serving-maid entered the room.

"Tell Dick Ostler to come here," said Mrs. Bickerton.

Dick Ostler accordingly made his appearance;—a queer, knowing, shambling animal, with a hatchet-face, a squint, a game-arm, and a limp.

"Dick Ostler," said Mrs. Bickerton, in a tone of authority that showed she was (at least by adoption) Yorkshire too, "thou knowest most people and most things o' the road."

"Eye, eye, God help me, mistress," said Dick, shrugging his shoulders betwixt a repentant and a knowing expression—"Eye! I ha' know'd a thing or twa i' ma day, mistress." He looked sharp and laughed—looked grave and sighed, as one who was prepared to take the matter either way.

"Kenst thou this wee bit paper amang the rest, man?" said Mrs. Bickerton, handing him the protection which Ratcliffe had given Jeanie Deans.

When Dick had looked at the paper, he winked with one eye, extended his grotesque mouth from ear to ear, like a navigable canal, scratched his head powerfully, and then said, "Ken!—ay—maybe we ken summat, an it werena for harm to him, mistress!"

"None in the world," said Mrs. Bickerton; "only a dram of Hollands to thyself, man, an thou wilt speak."

"Why, then," said Dick, giving the head-band of his breeches a knowing hoist with one hand, and kicking out one foot behind him to accommodate the adjustment of that important habiliment, "I dares to say the pass will be kend weel enough on the road, an that be all."

"But what sort of a lad was he?" said Mrs. Bickerton, winking to Jeanie, as proud of her knowing Ostler.

"Why, what ken I?—Jim the Rat—why he was Cock o' the North within this twelmonth—he and Scotch Wilson, Handle Dandie, as they called him—but he's been out o' this country a while, as I rackon; but ony gentleman, as keeps the road o' this side Stamford, will respect Jim's pass."

Without asking farther questions, the landlady filled Dick Ostler a bumper of Hollands. He ducked with his head and shoulders, scraped with his more advanced hoof, bolted the alcohol, to use the learned phrase, and withdrew to his own domains.

"I would advise thee, Jeanie," said Mrs. Bickerton, "an thou meetest with ugly customers o' the road, to show them this bit paper, for it will serve thee, assure thyself."

A neat little supper concluded the evening. The exported Scotswoman, Mrs. Bickerton by name, ate heartily of one or two seasoned dishes, drank some sound old ale, and a glass of stiff negus; while she gave Jeanie a history of her gout, admiring how it was possible that she, whose fathers and mothers for many generations had been farmers in Lammermuir, could have come by a disorder so totally unknown to them. Jeanie did not choose to offend her friendly landlady, by speaking her mind on the probable origin of this complaint; but she thought on the flesh-pots of Egypt, and, in spite of all entreaties to better fare, made her evening meal upon vegetables, with a glass of fair water.

Mrs. Bickerton assured her, that the acceptance of any reckoning was entirely out of the question, furnished her with credentials to her correspondent in London, and to several inns upon the road where she had some influence or interest, reminded her of the precautions she should adopt for concealing her money, and as she was to depart early in the morning, took leave of her very affectionately, taking her word that she would visit her on her return to Scotland, and tell her how she had managed, and that summum bonum for a gossip, "all how and about it." This Jeanie faithfully promised.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

*And Need and Misery, Vice and Danger, bind,
In sad alliance, each degraded mind.*

As our traveller set out early on the ensuing morning to prosecute her journey, and was in the act of leaving the innyard, Dick Ostler, who either had risen early or neglected to go to bed, either circumstance being equally incident to his calling, hollowed out after her,—"The top of the morning to you, Moggie. Have a care o' Gunterby Hill, young one. Robin Hood's dead and gwone, but there be takers yet in the vale of Bever. Jeanie looked at him as if to request a farther explanation, but, with a leer, a shuffle, and a shrug, inimitable (unless by Emery*), Dick turned again to the raw-boned steed which he was currying, and sung as he employed the comb and brush,—

*"Robin Hood was a yeoman right good,
And his bow was of trusty yew;
And if Robin said stand on the king's lea-land,
Pray, why should not we say so too?"*

* [John Emery, an eminent comedian, played successfully at Covent Garden Theatre between 1798 and 1820. Among his characters, were those of Dandie Dinmont in *Guy Mannering*, Dougal in *Rob Roy*, and Ratcliffe in the *Heart of Mid-Lothian*.]

Jeanie pursued her journey without farther inquiry, for there was nothing in Dick's manner that inclined her to prolong their conference. A painful day's journey brought her to Ferrybridge, the best inn, then and since, upon the great northern road; and an introduction from Mrs. Bickerton, added to her own simple and quiet manners, so propitiated the landlady of the Swan in her favour, that the good dame procured her the convenient accommodation of a pillion and post-horse then returning to Tuxford, so that she accomplished, upon the second day after leaving York, the longest journey she had yet made. She was a good deal fatigued by a mode of travelling to which she was less accustomed than to walking, and it was considerably later than usual on the ensuing morning that she felt herself able to resume her pilgrimage. At noon the hundred-armed Trent, and the blackened ruins of Newark Castle, demolished in the great civil war, lay before her. It may easily be supposed, that Jeanie had no curiosity to make antiquarian researches, but, entering the town, went straight to the inn to which she had been directed at Ferrybridge. While she procured some refreshment, she observed the girl who brought it to her, looked at her several times with fixed and peculiar interest, and at last, to her infinite surprise, inquired if her name was not Deans, and if she was not a Scotchwoman, going to London upon justice business. Jeanie, with all her simplicity of character, had some of the caution of her country, and, according to Scottish universal custom, she answered the question by another, requesting the girl would tell her why she asked these questions?

The Maritornes of the Saracen's Head, Newark, replied, "Two women had passed that morning, who had made inquiries after one Jeanie Deans, travelling to London on such an errand, and could scarce be persuaded that she had not passed on."

Much surprised and somewhat alarmed (for what is inexplicable is usually alarming), Jeanie questioned the wench about the particular appearance of these two women, but could only learn that the one was aged, and the other young; that the latter was the taller, and that the former spoke most, and seemed to maintain an authority over her companion, and that both spoke with the Scottish accent.

This conveyed no information whatever, and with an indescribable presentiment of evil designed towards her, Jeanie adopted the resolution of taking post-horses for the next stage. In this, however, she could not be gratified; some accidental circumstances had occasioned what is called a run upon the road, and the landlord could not accommodate her with a guide and horses. After waiting some time, in hopes that a pair of horses that had gone southward would return in time for her use, she at length, feeling ashamed at her own pusillanimity, resolved to prosecute her journey in her usual manner.

"It was all plain road," she was assured, "except a high mountain called Gunnerby Hill, about three miles from Grantham, which was her stage for the night.

"I'm glad to hear there's a hill," said Jeanie, "for baith my sight and my very feet are weary o' sic tracts o' level ground—it looks a' the way between this and York as if a' the land had been trenched and levelled, whilk is very wearisome to my Scotch een. When I lost sight of a muckle blue hill they ca' Ingleboro', I thought I hadna a friend left in this strange land."

"As for the matter of that, young woman," said mine host, "an you be so fond o' hill, I carena an thou couldst carry Gunnerby away with thee in thy lap, for it's a murder to post-horses. But here's to thy journey, and mayst thou win well through it, for thou is a bold and a canny lass."

So saying, he took a powerful pull at a solemn tankard of home-brewed ale.

"I hope there is nae bad company on the road, sir?" said Jeanie.

"Why, when it's clean without them I'll thatch Groby pool wi' pancakes. But there arena sae mony now; and since they hae lost Jim the Rat, they hold together no better than the men of Marsham when they lost their common. Take a drop ere thou goest," he concluded, offering her the tankard; "thou wilt get naething at night save Grantham gruel, nine grots and a gallon of water."

Jeanie courteously declined the tankard, and inquired what was her "lawing?"

"Thy lawing! Heaven help thee, wench! what ca'st thou that?"

"It is—I was wanting to ken what was to pay," replied Jeanie.

"Pay? Lord help thee!—why nought, woman—we hae drawn no liquor but a gill o' beer, and the Saracen's Head can spare a mouthful o' meat to a stranger like o' thee, that cannot speak Christian language. So here's to thee once more. The same again, quoth Mark of Bellgrave," and he took another profound pull at the tankard.

The travellers who have visited Newark more lately, will not fail to remember the remarkably civil and gentlemanly manners of the person who now keeps the principal inn there, and may find some amusement in contrasting them with those of his more rough predecessor. But we believe it will be found that the polish has worn off none of the real worth of the metal.

Taking leave of her Lincolnshire Gaius, Jeanie resumed her solitary walk, and was somewhat alarmed when evening and twilight overtook her in the open ground which extends to the foot of Gunnerby Hill, and is intersected with patches of copse and with swampy spots. The extensive commons on the north road, most of which are now enclosed, and in general a relaxed state of police, exposed the traveller to a highway robbery in a degree which is now unknown, except in the immediate vicinity of the metropolis. Aware of this circumstance, Jeanie mended her pace when she heard the trampling of a horse behind, and instinctively drew

to one side of the road, as if to allow as much room for the rider to pass as might be possible. When the animal came up, she found that it was bearing two women, the one placed on a side-saddle, the other on a pillion behind her, as may still occasionally be seen in England.

"A braw good-night to ye, Jeanie Deans," said the foremost female as the horse passed our heroine; "What think ye o' yon bonny hill yonder, lifting its brow to the moon? Trow ye yon's the gate to heaven, that ye are sae fain of?—maybe we will win there the night yet, God sain us, though our minny here's rather dreigh in the upgang."

The speaker kept changing her seat in the saddle, and half stopping the horse as she brought her body round, while the woman that sate behind her on the pillion seemed to urge her on, in words which Jeanie heard but imperfectly.

"Hand your tongue, ye moon-raised b——! what is your business with ——, or with heaven or hell either?"

"Troth, mither, no muckle wi' heaven, I doubt, considering wha I carry ahint me—and as for hell, it will fight its ain battle at its ain time, I'se be bound.—Come, naggie, trot awa, man, an as thou wert a broomstick, for a witch rides thee—

With my curth on my foot, and my shoe on my hand,

I glance like the wildfire through brugh and through land."

The tramp of the horse, and the increasing distance, drowned the rest of her song, but Jeanie heard for some time the inarticulate sounds ring along the waste.

Our pilgrim remained stupified with undefined apprehensions. The being named by her name in so wild a manner, and in a strange country, without farther explanation or communing, by a person who thus strangely flitted forward and disappeared before her, came near to the supernatural sounds in Comus:—

The airy tongues, which syllable men's names

On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

And although widely different in features, deportment, and rank, from the Lady of that enchanting masque, the continuation of the passage may be happily applied to Jeanie Deans upon this singular alarm:—

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound

The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended

By a strong siding champion—Conscience.

In fact, it was, with the recollection of the affectionate and dutiful errand on which she was engaged, her right, if such a word could be applicable, to expect protection in a task so meritorious. She had not advanced much farther, with a mind calmed by these reflections, when she was disturbed by a new and more instant subject of terror. Two men, who had been lurking among some copse, started up as she advanced, and met her on the road in a menacing manner. "Stand and deliver," said one of them, a short stout fellow, in a smock-frock, such as are worn by waggoners.

"The woman," said the other, a tall thin figure, "does not understand the words of action.—Your money, my precious, or your life."

"I have but very little money, gentlemen," said poor Jeanie, tendering that portion which she had separated from her principal stock, and kept apart for such an emergency; "but if you are resolved to have it, to be sure you must have it."

"This won't do, my girl. D—n me, if it shall pass!" said the shorter ruffian; "do ye think gentlemen are to hazard their lives on the road to be cheated in this way? We'll have every farthing you have got, or we will strip you to the skin, curse me."

His companion, who seemed to have something like compassion for the horror which Jeanie's countenance now expressed, said, "No, no, Tom, this is one of the precious sisters, and we'll take her word, for once, without putting her to the stripping proof—Hark ye, my lass, if ye look up to heaven, and say, this is the last penny you have about ye, why, hang it, we'll let you pass."

"I am not free," answered Jeanie, "to say what I have about me, gentlemen, for there's life and death depends on my journey; but if you leave me as much as finds me bread and water, I'll be satisfied, and thank you, and pray for you."

"D—n your prayers!" said the shorter fellow, "that's a coin that won't pass with us;" and at the same time made a motion to seize her.

"Stay, gentlemen," Ratcliffe's pass suddenly occurring to her; "perhaps you know this paper."

"What the devil is she after now, Frank?" said the more savage ruffian—"Do you look at it, for, d—n me if I could read it if it were for the benefit of my clergy."

"This is a jark from Jim Ratcliffe," said the taller, having looked at the bit of paper. "The wench must pass by our cutter's law."

"I say no," answered his companion; "Rat has left the lay, and turned bloodhound, they say."

"We may need a good turn from him all the same," said the taller ruffian again.

"But what are we to do then?" said the shorter man—"We promised, you know, to strip the wench, and send her begging back to her own beggarly country, and now you are for letting her go on."

"I did not say that," said the other fellow, and whispered to his companion, who replied, "Be alive about it then, and don't keep chattering till some travellers come up to nab us."

"You must follow us off the road, young woman," said the taller.

"For the love of God!" exclaimed Jeanie, "as you were born of woman, dinna ask me to leave the road! rather take all I have in the world."

"What the devil is the wench afraid of?" said the other fellow. "I tell you you shall come to no harm; but if you will not leave the road and come with us, d—n me, but I'll beat your brains out where you stand."

"Thou art a rough bear, Tom," said his companion.—"An ye touch her, I'll give ye a shake by the collar shall make the Leicester beans rattle in thy guts.—Never mind him, girl; I will not allow him to lay a finger on you, if you walk quietly on with us; but if you keep jabbering there, d—n me, but I'll leave him to settle it with you."

This threat conveyed all that is terrible to the imagination of poor Jeanie, who saw in him that "was of milder mood" her only protection from the most brutal treatment. She, therefore, not only followed him, but even held him by the sleeve, lest he should escape from her; and the fellow, hardened as he was, seemed something touched by these marks of confidence, and repeatedly assured her, that he would suffer her to receive no harm.

They conducted their prisoner in a direction leading more and more from the public road, but she observed that they kept a sort of track or by-path, which relieved her from part of her apprehensions, which would have been greatly increased had they not seemed to follow a determined and ascertained route. After about half-an-hour's walking, all three in profound silence, they approached an old barn, which stood on the edge of some cultivated ground, but remote from everything like a habitation. It was itself, however, tenanted, for there was light in the windows.

One of the footpads scratched at the door, which was opened by a female, and they entered with their unhappy prisoner. An old woman, who was preparing food by the assistance of a stifling fire of lighted charcoal, asked them, in the name of the devil, what they brought the wench there for, and why they did not strip her and turn her abroad on the common?

"Come, come, Mother Blood," said the tall man, "we'll do what's right to oblige you, and we'll do no more; we are bad enough, but not such as you would make us,—devils incarnate."

"She has got a jark from Jim Ratcliffe," said the short fellow, "and Frank here won't hear of our putting her through the mill."

"No, that I will not, by G—d!" answered Frank; "but if old Mother Blood could keep her here for a little while, or send her back to Scotland, without hurting her, why, I see no harm in that—not I."

"I'll tell you what, Frank Levitt," said the old woman, "if you call me Mother Blood again, I'll paint this gully" (and she held a knife up as if about to make good her threat) "in the best blood in your body, my bonny boy."

"The price of ointment must be up in the north," said Frank, "that puts Mother Blood so much out of humour."

Without a moment's hesitation the fury darted her knife at him with the vengeful dexterity of a wild Indian. As he was on his guard, he avoided the missile by a sudden motion of his head, but it whistled past his ear, and stuck deep in the clay wall of a partition behind.

"Come, come, mother," said the robber, seizing her by both wrists, "I shall teach you who's master;" and so saying, he forced the hag backwards by main force, who strove vehemently until she sunk on a bunch of straw, and then, letting go her hands, he held up his finger towards her in the menacing posture by which a maniac is intimidated by his keeper. It appeared to produce the desired effect; for she did not attempt to rise from the seat on which he had placed her, or to resume any measures of actual violence, but wrung her withered hands with impotent rage, and brayed and howled like a demoniac.

"I will keep my promise with you, you old devil," said Frank; "the wench shall not go forward on the London road, but I will not have you touch a hair of her head, if it were but for your insolence."

This intimation seemed to compose in some degree the vehement passion of the old hag; and while her exclamations and howls sunk into a low, maundering, growling tone of voice, another personage was added to this singular party.

"Eh, Frank Levitt," said this new-comer, who entered with a hop, step, and jump, which at once conveyed her from the door into the centre of the party, "were ye killing our mother? or were ye cutting the grunter's weasand that Tam brought in this morning? or have ye been reading your prayers backward, to bring up my auld acquaintance the deil amang ye?"

The tone of the speaker was so particular, that Jeanie immediately recognised the woman who had rode foremost of the pair which passed her just before she met the robbers; a circumstance which greatly increased her terror, as it served to show that the mischief designed against her was premeditated, though by whom, or for what cause, she was totally at a loss to conjecture. From the style of her conversation, the reader also may probably acknowledge in this female an old acquaintance in the earlier part of our narrative.

"Out, ye mad devil!" said Tom, whom she had disturbed in the middle of a draught of some liquor with which he had found means of accommodating himself; "betwixt your Bess of Bedlam pranks, and your dam's frenzies, a man might live quieter in the devil's ken than here."—And he again resumed the broken jug out of which he had been drinking.

"And wha's this o't?" said the mad woman, dancing up to Jeanie Deans, who, although in great terror, yet watched the scene with a resolution to let nothing pass unnoticed which might be serviceable in assisting her to escape, or informing her as to the true nature of her situation, and the danger attending it,— "Wha's this o't?" again exclaimed Madge Wildfire.

"Douce Davie Deans, the auld doited whig body's daughter, in a gipsy's barn, and the night setting in? This is a sight for sair een!—Eh, sirs, the falling off o' the godly!—and the t'other sister's in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh; I am very sorry for her, for my share—it's my mother wusses ill to her, and no me—though maybe I hae as muckle cause."

"Hark ye, Madge," said the taller ruffian, "you have not such a touch of the devil's blood as the hag your mother, who may be his dam for what I know—take this young woman to your kennel, and do not let the devil enter, though he should ask in God's name."

"Ou ay; that I will, Frank," said Madge, taking hold of Jeanie by the arm, and pulling her along; "for it's no for decent Christian young leddies, like her and me, to be keeping the like o' you and Tyburn Tam company at this time o' night. Sae gude-e'en t'ye, sirs, and mony o' them; and may ye a' sleep till the hangman wauken ye, and then it will be weel for the country."

She then, as her wild fancy seemed suddenly to prompt her, walked demurely towards her mother, who, seated by the charcoal fire, with the reflection of the red light on her withered and distorted features marked by every evil passion, seemed the very picture of Hecate at her infernal rites; and, suddenly dropping on her knees, said, with the manner of a six years' old child, "Mammie, hear me say my prayers before I go to bed, and say God bless my bonny face, as ye used to do lang syne."

"The deil flay the hide o' it to sole his brogues wi'!" said the old lady, aiming a buffet at the suppliant, in answer to her duteous request.

The blow missed Madge, who, being probably acquainted by experience with the mode in which her mother was wont to confer her maternal benedictions, slipped out of arm's length with great dexterity and quickness. The hag then started up, and, seizing a pair of old fire-tongs, would have amended her motion, by beating out the brains either of her daughter or Jeanie (she did not seem greatly to care which), when her hand was once more arrested by the man whom they called Frank Levitt, who, seizing her by the shoulder, flung her from him with great violence, exclaiming, "What, Mother Damnable—again, and in my sovereign presence!—Hark ye, Madge of Bedlam! get to your hole with your playfellow, or we shall have the devil to pay here, and nothing to pay him with."

Madge took Levitt's advice, retreating as fast as she could, and dragging Jeanie along with her into a sort of recess, partitioned off from the rest of the barn, and filled with straw, from which it appeared that it was intended for the purpose of slumber. The moonlight shone, through an open hole, upon a pillion, a pack-saddle, and one or two wallets, the travelling furniture of Madge and her amiable mother.—"Now, saw ye e'er in your life," said Madge, "sae dainty a chamber of deas? see as the moon shines down sae caller on the fresh strae! There's no a pleasanter cell in Bedlam, for as braw a place as it is on the outside.—Were ye ever in Bedlam?"

"No," answered Jeanie faintly, appalled by the question, and the way in which it was put, yet willing to soothe her insane companion, being in circumstances so unhappily precarious, that even the society of this gibbering madwoman seemed a species of protection.

"Never in Bedlam?" said Madge, as if with some surprise.—"But ye'll hae been in the cells at Edinburgh!"

"Never," repeated Jeanie.

"Weel, I think thae daft carles the magistrates send naebody to Bedlam but me—thae maun hae an unco respect for me, for whenever I am brought to them, thae aye hae me back to Bedlam. But troth, Jeanie" (she said this in a very confidential tone), "to tell ye my private mind about it, I think ye are at nae great loss; for the keeper's a cross-patch, and he maun hae it a' his ain gate, to be sure, or he makes the place waur than hell. I often tell him he's the daftest in a' the house.—But what are they making sic a skirling for?—Deil ane o' them's get in here—it wadna be mensfu'! I will sit wi' my back again the door; it winna be that easy stirring me."

"Madge!"—"Madge!"—"Madge Wildfire!"—"Madge devil! what have ye done with the horse?" was repeatedly asked by the men without.

"He's e'en at his supper, puir thing," answered Madge; "deil an ye were at yours, too, an it were scauding brimstone, and then we wad hae less o' your din."

"His supper!" answered the more sulky ruffian—"What d'ye mean by that!—Tell me where he is, or I will knock your Bedlam brains out!"

"He's in Gaffer Gablewood's wheat-close, an ye maun ken."

"His wheat-close, you crazed jilt!" answered the other, with an accent of great indignation.

"O, dear Tyburn Tam, man, what ill will the blades of the young wheat do to the puir nag?"

"That is not the question," said the other robber; "but what the country will say to us to-morrow, when they see him in such quarters?—Go, Tom, and bring him in; and avoid the soft ground, my lad; leave no hoof-track behind you."

"I think you give me always the fag of it, whatever is to be done," grumbled his companion.

"Leap, Laurence, you're long enough," said the other; and the fellow left the barn accordingly, without farther remonstrance.

In the meanwhile, Madge had arranged herself for repose on the straw; but still in a half-sitting posture, with her back resting against the door of the hovel, which, as it opened inwards, was in this manner kept shut by the weight of the person.

"There's mair shifts by stealing, Jeanie," said Madge Wildfire; "though whiles I can hardly get our mother to think sae. Wha wad hae thought but mysell of making a bolt of my ain back-bane? But it's no sae strong as thae that I hae seen in the Tolbooth at Edinburgh. The hammermen of Edinburgh are to my mind afore the warld for making stancheons, ring-bolts, fetter-bolts, bars, and locks. And they arena that bad at girdles for carcakes neither, though the Cu'ross hammermen have the gree for that. My mother had ance a bonny Cu'ross girdle, and I thought to have baked carcakes on it for my puir wean that's dead and gane nae fair way—But we maun a' dee, ye ken, Jeanie—You Cameronian bodies ken that brawlies; and ye're for making a hell upon earth that ye may be less unwillin' to part

wi' it. But as touching Bedlam that ye were speaking about, I'se ne'er recommend it muckle the tae gate or the other, be it right—be it wrang. But ye ken what the sang says." And, pursuing the unconnected and floating wanderings of her mind, she sung aloud—

*"In the bonny cells of Bedlam,
Ere I was ane-and-twenty,
I had hempen bracelets strong,
And merry whips, ding-dong,
And prayer and fasting plenty.*

"Weel, Jeanie, I am something herse the night, and I canna sing muckle mair; and troth, I think, I am gaun to sleep."

She drooped her head on her breast, a posture from which Jeanie, who would have given the world for an opportunity of quiet to consider the means and the probability of her escape, was very careful not to disturb her. After nodding, however, for a minute or two, with her eyes half-closed, the unquiet and restless spirit of her malady again assailed Madge. She raised her head, and spoke, but with a lowered tone, which was again gradually overcome by drowsiness, to which the fatigue of a day's journey on horseback had probably given unwonted occasion,—"*I dinna ken what makes me sae sleepy—I amaisht never sleep till my bonny Lady Moon gangs till her bed—mair by token, when she's at the full, ye ken, rowing aboon us yonder in her grand silver coach—I have danced to her my lane sometimes for very joy—and whiles dead folk came and danced wi' me—the like o' Jock Porteous, or ony body I had ken'd when I was living—for ye maun ken I was ance dead mysell.*" Here the poor maniac sung, in a low and wild tone,

*"My banes are buried in yon kirkyard
Sae far ayont the sea,
And it is but my blithesome ghaist
That's speaking now to thee.*

"But after a', Jeanie, my woman, naebody kens weel wha's living and wha's dead—or wha's gone to Fairyland—there's another question. Whiles I think my puir bairn's dead—ye ken very weel it's buried—but that signifies naething. I have had it on my knee a hundred times, and a hundred till that, since it was buried—and how could that be were it dead, ye ken?—it's merely impossible."—And here, some conviction half-overcoming the reveries of her imagination, she burst into a fit of crying and ejaculation, "Wae's me! wae's me! wae's me!" till at length she moaned and sobbed herself into a deep sleep, which was soon intimated by her breathing hard, leaving Jeanie to her own melancholy reflections and observations.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

*Bind her quickly; or, by this steel,
I'll tell, although I truss for company.
Fletcher.*

The imperfect light which shone into the window enabled Jeanie to see that there was scarcely any chance of making her escape in that direction; for the aperture was high in the wall, and so narrow, that, could she have climbed up to it, she might well doubt whether it would have permitted her to pass her body through it. An unsuccessful attempt to escape would be sure to draw down worse treatment than she now received, and she, therefore, resolved to watch her opportunity carefully ere making such a perilous effort. For this purpose she applied herself to the ruinous clay partition, which divided the hovel in which she now was from the rest of the waste barn. It was decayed and full of cracks and chinks, one of which she enlarged with her fingers, cautiously and without noise, until she could obtain a plain view of the old hag and the taller ruffian, whom they called Levitt, seated together beside the decayed fire of charcoal, and apparently engaged in close conference. She was at first terrified by the sight; for the features of the old woman had a hideous cast of hardened and inveterate malice and ill-humour, and those of the man, though naturally less unfavourable, were such as corresponded well with licentious habits, and a lawless profession.

"But I remembered," said Jeanie, "my worthy fathers tales of a winter evening, how he was confined with the blessed martyr, Mr. James Renwick, who lifted up the fallen standard of the true reformed Kirk of Scotland, after the worthy and renowned Daniel Cameron, our last blessed banner-man, had fallen among the swords of the wicked at Airmoss, and how the very hearts of the wicked malefactors and murderers, whom they were confined withal, were melted like wax at the sound of their doctrine: and I bethought mysell, that the same help that was wi' them in their strait, wad be wi' me in mine, an I could but watch the Lord's time and opportunity for delivering my feet from their snare; and I minded the Scripture of the blessed Psalmist, whilk he insisteth on, as weel in the forty-second as in the forty-third psalm—'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'"

Strengthened in a mind naturally calm, sedate, and firm, by the influence of religious confidence, this poor captive was enabled to attend to, and comprehend, a great part of an interesting conversation which passed betwixt those into whose hands she had fallen, notwithstanding that their meaning was partly disguised by the occasional use of cant terms, of which Jeanie knew not the import, by the low tone in which they spoke, and by their mode of supplying their broken phrases by shrugs and signs, as is usual amongst those of their disorderly profession.

The man opened the conversation by saying, "Now, dame, you see I am true to my friend. I have not forgot that you *planked a chury*,* which helped me through the bars of the Castle of York, and I came to do your work without asking questions; for one good turn deserves another.

* Concealed a knife.

But now that Madge, who is as loud as Tom of Lincoln, is somewhat still, and this same Tyburn Neddie is shaking his heels after the old nag, why, you must tell me what all this is about, and what's to be done—for d—n me if I touch the girl, or let her be touched, and she with Jim Rat's pass, too."

"Thou art an honest lad, Frank," answered the old woman, "but e'en too good for thy trade; thy tender heart will get thee into trouble. I will see ye gang up Holborn Hill backward, and a' on the word of some silly loon that could never hae rapped to ye had ye drawn your knife across his weasand."

"You may be balked there, old one," answered the robber; "I have known many a pretty lad cut short in his first summer upon the road, because he was something hasty with his flats and sharps. Besides, a man would fain live out his two years with a good conscience. So, tell me what all this is about, and what's to be done for you that one can do decently?"

"Why, you must know, Frank—but first taste a snap of right Hollands." She drew a flask from her pocket, and filled the fellow a large bumper, which he pronounced to be the right thing.—"You must know, then, Frank—wunna ye mend your hand?" again offering the flask.

"No, no,—when a woman wants mischief from you, she always begins by filling you drunk. D—n all Dutch courage. What I do I will do soberly—I'll last the longer for that too."

"Well, then, you must know," resumed the old woman, without any further attempts at propitiation, "that this girl is going to London."

Here Jeanie could only distinguish the word sister.

The robber answered in a louder tone, "Fair enough that; and what the devil is your business with it?"

"Business enough, I think. If the b—queers the noose, that silly cull will marry her."

"And who cares if he does?" said the man.

"Who cares, ye donnard Neddie! I care; and I will strangle her with my own hands, rather than she should come to Madge's preferment."

"Madge's preferment! Does your old blind eyes see no farther than that? If he is as you say, dye think he'll ever marry a moon-calf like Madge? Ecod, that's a good one—Marry Madge Wildfire!—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Hark ye, ye crack-rope padder, born beggar, and bred thief!" replied the hag, "suppose he never marries the wench, is that a reason he should marry another, and that other to hold my daughter's place, and she crazed, and I a beggar, and all along of him? But I know that of him will hang him—I know that of him will hang him, if he had a thousand lives—I know that of him will hang—hang—hang him!"

She grinned as she repeated and dwelt upon the fatal monosyllable, with the emphasis of a vindictive fiend.

"Then why don't you hang—hang—hang him?" said Frank, repeating her words contemptuously. "There would be more sense in that, than in wreaking yourself here upon two wenches that have done you and your daughter no ill."

"No ill?" answered the old woman—"and he to marry this jail-bird, if ever she gets her foot loose!"

"But as there is no chance of his marrying a bird of your brood, I cannot, for my soul, see what you have to do with all this," again replied the robber, shrugging his shoulders. "Where there is ought to be got, I'll go as far as my neighbours, but I hate mischief for mischiefs sake."

"And would you go nae length for revenge?" said the hag—"for revenge—the sweetest morsel to the mouth that over was cooked in hell!"

"The devil may keep it for his own eating, then," said the robber; "for hang me if I like the sauce he dresses it with."

"Revenge!" continued the old woman; "why, it is the best reward the devil gives us for our time here and hereafter. I have wrought hard for it—I have suffered for it—and I have sinned for it—and I will have it,—or there is neither justice in heaven or in hell!"

Levitt had by this time lighted a pipe, and was listening with great composure to the frantic and vindictive ravings of the old hag. He was too much, hardened by his course of life to be shocked with them—too indifferent, and probably too stupid, to catch any part of their animation or energy. "But, mother," he said, after a pause, "still I say, that if revenge is your wish, you should take it on the young fellow himself."

"I wish I could," she said, drawing in her breath, with the eagerness of a thirsty person while mimicking the action of drinking—"I wish I could—but no—I cannot—I cannot."

"And why not?—You would think little of peaching and hanging him for this Scotch affair.—Rat me, one might have milled the Bank of England, and less noise about it."

"I have nursed him at this withered breast," answered the old woman, folding her hands on her bosom, as if pressing an infant to it, "and, though he has proved an adder to me—though he has been the destruction of me and mine—though he has made me company for the devil, if there be a devil, and food for hell, if there be such a place, yet I cannot take his life.—No, I cannot," she continued, with an appearance of rage against herself; "I have thought of it—I have tried it—but, Francis Levitt, I canna gang through wi't—Na, na—he was the first bairn I ever nurst—ill I had been—and man can never ken what woman feels for the bairn she has held first to her bosom!"

"To be sure," said Levitt, "we have no experience; but, mother, they say you ha'n't been so kind to other bairns, as you call them, that have come in your way.—Nay, d—n me, never lay your hand on the whittle, for I am captain and leader here, and I will have no rebellion."

The hag, whose first motion had been, upon hearing the question, to grasp the haft of a large knife, now unclosed her hand, stole it away from the weapon, and suffered it to fall by her side, while she proceeded with a sort of smile—"Bairns! ye are joking, lad—wha wad touch bairns? Madge, puir thing, had a misfortune wi' ane—and the t'other"—Here her voice sunk so much, that Jeanie, though anxiously upon the watch, could not catch a word she said, until she raised her tone at the conclusion of the sentence—"So Madge, in her daffin", threw it into the Nor'-lock, I trow."

Madge, whose slumbers, like those of most who labour under mental malady, had been short, and were easily broken, now made herself heard from her place of repose.

"Indeed, mother, that's a great lie, for I did nae sic thing."

"Hush, thou hellicat devil," said her mother—"By Heaven! the other wench will be waking too."

"That may be dangerous," said Frank; and he rose, and followed Meg Murdockson across the floor.

"Rise," said the hag to her daughter, "or I sall drive the knife between the planks into the Bedlam back of thee!"

Apparently she at the same time seconded her threat by pricking her with the point of a knife, for Madge, with a faint scream, changed her place, and the door opened.

The old woman held a candle in one hand, and a knife in the other. Levitt appeared behind her, whether with a view of preventing, or assisting her in any violence she might meditate, could not be well guessed. Jeanie's presence of mind stood her friend in this dreadful crisis. She had resolution enough to maintain the attitude and manner of one who sleeps profoundly, and to regulate even her breathing, notwithstanding the agitation of instant terror, so as to correspond with her attitude.

The old woman passed the light across her eyes; and although Jeanie's fears were so powerfully awakened by this movement, that she often declared afterwards, that she thought she saw the figures of her destined murderers through her closed eyelids, she had still the resolution to maintain the feint, on which her safety perhaps depended.

Levitt looked at her with fixed attention; he then turned the old woman out of the place, and followed her himself. Having regained the outward apartment, and seated themselves, Jeanie heard the highwayman say, to her no small relief, "She's as fast as if she were in Bedfordshire.—Now, old Meg, d—n me if I can understand a glim of this story of yours, or what good it will do you to hang the one wench and torment the other; but, rat me, I will be true to my friend, and serve ye the way ye like it. I see it will be a bad job; but I do think I could get her down to Surfleet on the Wash, and so on board Tom Moonshine's neat lugger, and keep her out of the way three or four weeks, if that will please ye—But d—n me if any one shall harm her, unless they have a mind to choke on a brace of blue plums.—It's a cruel, bad job, and I wish you and it, Meg, were both at the devil."

"Never mind, hinny Levitt," said the old woman; "you are a ruffler, and will have a' your ain gate—She shanna gang to heaven an hour sooner for me; I carena whether she live or die—it's her sister—ay, her sister!"

"Well, we'll say no more about it; I hear Tom coming in. We'll couch a hogshead,* and so better had you."

* Lay ourselves down to sleep.

They retired to repose accordingly, and all was silent in this asylum of iniquity.

Jeanie lay for a long time awake. At break of day she heard the two ruffians leave the barn, after whispering to the old woman for some time. The sense that she was now guarded by persons of her own sex gave her some confidence, and irresistible lassitude at length threw her into slumber.

When the captive awakened, the sun was high in heaven, and the morning considerably advanced. Madge Wildfire was still in the hovel which had served them for the night, and immediately bid her good-morning, with her usual air of insane glee. "And dye ken, lass," said Madge, "there's queer things chanced since ye hae been in the land of Nod. The constables hae been here, woman, and they met wi' my minnie at the door, and they whirld her awa to the Justice's about the man's wheat.—Dear! thae English churls think as muckle about a blade of wheat or grass, as a Scotch laird does about his maukins and his muir-poots. Now, lass, if ye like, we'll play them a fine jink; we will awa out and take a walk—they will mak unco wark when they miss us, but we can easily be back by dinner time, or before dark night at ony rate, and it will be some frolic and fresh air.—But maybe ye wad like to take some breakfast, and then lie down again? I ken by myself, there's whiles I can sit wi' my head in my hand the hail day, and havena a word to cast at a dog—and other whiles, that I canna sit still a moment. That's when the folk think me warst, but I am aye canny enough—ye needna be feared to walk wi' me."

Had Madge Wildfire been the most raging lunatic, instead of possessing a doubtful, uncertain, and twilight sort of rationality, varying, probably, from the influence of the most trivial causes, Jeanie would hardly have objected to leave a place of captivity, where she had so much to apprehend. She eagerly assured Madge that she had no occasion for further sleep, no desire whatever for eating; and, hoping internally that she was not guilty of sin in doing so, she flattered her keeper's crazy humour for walking in the woods.

"It's no a'thegither for that neither," said poor Madge; "but I am judging ye will wun the better out o' thae folk's hands; no that they are a'thegither bad folk neither, but they have queer ways wi' them, and I whiles dinna think it has ever been weel wi' my mother and me since we kept sic-like company."

With the haste, the joy, the fear, and the hope of a liberated captive, Jeanie snatched up her little bundle, followed Madge into the free air, and eagerly looked round her for a human habitation; but none was to be seen. The ground was partly cultivated, and partly left in its natural state, according as the fancy of the slovenly agriculturists had decided. In its natural state it was waste, in some places covered with dwarf trees and bushes, in others swamp, and elsewhere firm and dry downs or pasture grounds.

Jeanie's active mind next led her to conjecture which way the high-road lay, whence she had been forced. If she regained that public road, she imagined she must soon meet some person, or arrive at some house, where she might tell her story, and request protection. But, after a glance around her, she saw with regret that she had no means whatever of directing her course with any degree of certainty, and that she was still in dependence upon her crazy companion. "Shall we not walk upon the high-road?" said she to Madge, in such a tone as a nurse uses to coax a child. "It's brawer walking on the road than among thae wild bushes and whins."

Madge, who was walking very fast, stopped at this question, and looked at Jeanie with a sudden and scrutinising glance, that seemed to indicate complete acquaintance with her purpose. "Aha, lass!" she exclaimed, "are ye gaun to guide us that gate?—Ye'll be for making your heels save your head, I am judging."

Jeanie hesitated for a moment, on hearing her companion thus express herself, whether she had not better take the hint, and try to outstrip and get rid of her. But she knew not in which direction to fly; she was by no means sure that she would prove the swiftest, and perfectly conscious that in the event of her being pursued and overtaken, she would be inferior to the madwoman in strength. She therefore gave up thoughts for the present of attempting to escape in that manner, and, saying a few words to allay Madge's suspicions, she followed in anxious apprehension the wayward path by which her guide thought proper to lead her. Madge, infirm of purpose, and easily reconciled to the present scene, whatever it was, began soon to talk with her usual diffuseness of ideas.

"It's a dainty thing to be in the woods on a fine morning like this! I like it far better than the town, for there isna a wheen duddie bairns to be crying after ane, as if ane were a world's wonder, just because ane maybe is a thought bonnier and better put-on than their neighbours—though, Jeanie, ye suld never be proud o' braw claiaths, or beauty neither—wae's me! they're but a snare—I ance thought better o'them, and what came o't?"

"Are ye sure ye ken the way ye are taking us?" said Jeanie, who began to imagine that she was getting deeper into the woods and more remote from the high-road.

"Do I ken the road?—Wasna I mony a day living here, and what for shouldna I ken the road? I might hae forgotten, too, for it was afore my accident; but there are some things ane can never forget, let them try it as muckle as they like."

By this time they had gained the deepest part of a patch of woodland. The trees were a little separated from each other, and at the foot of one of them, a beautiful poplar, was a hillock of moss, such as the poet of Grasmere has described. So soon as she arrived at this spot, Madge Wildfire, joining her hands above her head with a loud scream that resembled laughter, flung herself all at once upon the spot, and remained lying there motionless.

Jeanie's first idea was to take the opportunity of flight; but her desire to escape yielded for a moment to apprehension for the poor insane being, who, she thought, might perish for want of relief. With an effort, which in her circumstances, might be termed heroic, she stooped down, spoke in a soothing tone, and endeavoured to raise up the forlorn creature. She effected this with difficulty, and as she placed her against the tree in a sitting posture, she observed with surprise, that her complexion, usually florid, was now deadly pale, and that her face was bathed in tears. Notwithstanding her own extreme danger, Jeanie was affected by the situation of her companion; and the rather, that, through the whole train of her wavering and inconsistent state of mind and line of conduct, she discerned a general colour of kindness towards herself, for which she felt gratitude.

"Let me alane!—let me alane!" said the poor young woman, as her paroxysm of sorrow began to abate—"Let me alane—it does me good to weep. I canna shed tears but maybe ance or twice a year, and I aye come to wet this turf with them, that the flowers may grow fair, and the grass may be green."

"But what is the matter with you?" said Jeanie—"Why do you weep so bitterly?"

"There's matter enow," replied the lunatic,— "mair than ae puir mind can bear, I trow. Stay a bit, and I'll tell you a' about it; for I like ye, Jeanie Deans—a'boddy spoke weel about ye when we lived in the Pleasaunts— And I mind aye the drink o' milk ye gae me yon day, when I had been on Arthur's Seat for four-and-twenty hours, looking for the ship that somebody was sailing in."

These words recalled to Jeanie's recollection, that, in fact, she had been one morning much frightened by meeting a crazy young woman near her father's house at an early hour, and that, as she appeared to be harmless, her apprehension had been changed into pity, and she had relieved the unhappy wanderer with some food, which she devoured with the haste of a famished person. The incident, trifling in itself, was at present of great importance, if it should be found to have made a favourable and permanent impression in her favour on the mind of the object of her charity.

"Yes," said Madge, "I'll tell ye a' about it, for ye are a decent man's daughter—Douce Davie Deans, ye ken—and maybe ye'll can teach me to find out the narrow way, and the straight path, for I have been burning bricks in Egypt, and walking through the weary wilderness of Sinai, for lang and mony a day. But whenever I think about mine errors, I am like to cover my lips for shame."—Here she looked up and smiled.—"It's a strange thing now—I hae spoke mair gude words to you in ten minutes, than I wad speak to my mother in as mony years—it's no that I dinna think on them—and whiles they are just at my tongue's end, but then comes the devil, and brushes my lips with his black wing, and lays his broad black loof on my mouth—for a black loof it is, Jeanie—and sweeps away a' my gude thoughts, and dits up my gude words, and pits a wheen fule sangs and idle vanities in their place."

"Try, Madge," said Jeanie,— "try to settle your mind and make your breast clean, and you'll find your heart easier.—Just resist the devil, and he will flee from you—and mind that, as my worthy father tells me, there is nae devil sae deceitfu' as our ain wandering thoughts."

"And that's true too, lass," said Madge, starting up; "and I'll gang a gate where the devil daurna follow me; and it's a gate that you will like dearly to gang—but I'll keep a fast haud o' your arm, for fear Apollyon should stride across the path, as he did in the Pilgrim's Progress."

Accordingly she got up, and, taking Jeanie by the arm, began to walk forward at a great pace; and soon, to her companion's no small joy, came into a marked path, with the meanders of which she seemed perfectly acquainted. Jeanie endeavoured to bring her back to the confessional, but the fancy was gone by. In fact, the mind of this deranged being resembled nothing so much as a quantity of dry leaves, which may for a few minutes remain still, but are instantly discomposed and put in motion by the first casual breath of air. She had now got John Bunyan's parable into her head, to the exclusion of everything else, and on she went with great volubility.

"Did ye never read the Pilgrim's Progress? And you shall be the woman, Christiana, and I will be the maiden, Mercy—for ye ken Mercy was of the fairer countenance, and the more alluring than her companion—and if I had my little messan dog here, it would be Great-heart, their guide, ye ken, for he was e'en as bauld, that he wad bark at ony thing twenty times his size; and that was e'en the death of him, for he bit Corporal MacAlpine's heels ae morning when they were hauling me to the guard-house, and Corporal MacAlpine killed the bit faithfu' thing wi' his Lochaber axe—deil pike the Highland banes o' him."

"O fie! Madge," said Jeanie, "ye should not speak such words."

"It's very true," said Madge, shaking her head; "but then I maunna think o' my puir bit doggie, Snap, when I saw it lying dying in the gutter. But it's just as weel, for it suffered baith cauld and hunger when it was living, and in the grave there is rest for a' things—rest for the doggie, and my puir bairn, and me."

"Your bairn?" said Jeanie, conceiving that by speaking on such a topic, supposing it to be a real one, she could not fail to bring her companion to a more composed temper.

She was mistaken, however, for Madge coloured, and replied with some anger, "My bairn? ay, to be sure, my bairn. Whatfor shouldna I hae a bairn and lose a bairn too, as weel as your bonnie tittle, the Lily of St. Leonard's?"

The answer struck Jeanie with some alarm, and she was anxious to soothe the irritation she had unwittingly given occasion to. "I am very sorry for your misfortune—"

"Sorry! what wad ye be sorry for?" answered Madge. "The bairn was a blessing—that is, Jeanie, it wad hae been a blessing if it hadna been for my mother; but my mother's a queer woman.—Ye see, there was an auld carle wi' a bit land, and a gude clat o' siller besides, just the very picture of old Mr. Feeblemind or Mr. Ready-to-halt, that Great-heart delivered from Slaygood the giant, when he was rifling him and about to pick his bones, for Slaygood was of the nature of the flesh-eaters—and Great-heart killed Giant Despair too—but I am doubting Giant Despair's come alive again, for a' the story book—I find him busy at my heart whiles."

"Weel, and so the auld carle," said Jeanie, for she was painfully interested in getting to the truth of Madge's history, which she could not but suspect was in some extraordinary way linked and entwined with the fate of her sister. She was also desirous, if possible, to engage her companion in some narrative which might be carried on in a lower tone of voice, for she was in great apprehension lest the elevated notes of Madge's conversation should direct her mother or the robbers in search of them.

"And so the auld carle," said Madge, repeating her words—"I wish ye had seen him stoiting about, aff ae leg on to the other, wi' a kind o' dot-and-go-one sort o' motion, as if ilk ane o' his twa legs had belanged to sindry folk—but Gentle George could take him aff brawly—Eh, as I used to laugh to see George gang hip-hop like him!—I dinna ken, I think I laughed heartier then than what I do now, though maybe no just sae muckle."

"And who was Gentle George?" said Jeanie, endeavouring to bring her back to her story.

"O, he was Georgie Robertson, ye ken, when he was in Edinburgh; but that's no his right name neither—His name is—But what is your business wi' his name?" said she, as if upon sudden recollection, "What have ye to do asking for folk's names?—Have ye a mind I should scour my knife between your ribs, as my mother says?"

As this was spoken with a menacing tone and gesture, Jeanie hastened to protest her total innocence of purpose in the accidental question which she had asked, and Madge Wildfire went on somewhat pacified.

"Never ask folk's names, Jeanie—it's no civil—I hae seen half-a-dozen o' folk in my mother's at ance, and ne'er ane a' them ca'd the ither by his name; and Daddie Ratton says, it is the most uncivil thing may be, because the bailie bodies are aye asking fashions questions, when ye saw sic a man, or sic a man; and if ye dinna ken their names, ye ken there can be nae mair speerd about it."

"In what strange school," thought Jeanie to herself, "has this poor creature been bred up, where such remote precautions are taken against the pursuits of justice? What would my father or Reuben Butler think if I were to tell them there are sic folk in the world? And to abuse the simplicity of this demented creature! Oh, that I were but safe at hame amang mine ain leal and true people! and I'll bless God, while I have breath, that placed me amongst those who live in His fear, and under the shadow of His wing."

She was interrupted by the insane laugh of Madge Wildfire, as she saw a magpie hop across the path.

"See there!—that was the gate my auld joe used to cross the country, but no just sae lightly—he hadna wings to help his auld legs, I trow; but I behoved to have married him for a' that, Jeanie, or my mother wad hae been the dead o' me. But then came in the story of my poor bairn, and my mother thought he wad be deaved wi' it's skirling, and she pat it away in below the bit bourock of turf yonder, just to be out o' the gate; and I think she buried my best wits with it, for I have never been just mysell since. And only think, Jeanie, after my mother had been at a' these pains, the auld doited body Johnny Drottie turned up his nose, and wadna hae aught to say to me! But it's little I care for him, for I have led a merry life ever since, and ne'er a braw gentleman looks at me but ye wad think he was gaun to drop off his horse for mere love of me. I have ken'd some o' them put their hand in their pocket, and gie me as muckle as sixpence at a time, just for my weel-faured face."

This speech gave Jeanie a dark insight into Madge's history. She had been courted by a wealthy suitor, whose addresses her mother had favoured, notwithstanding the objection of old age and deformity. She had been seduced by some profligate, and, to conceal her shame and promote the advantageous match she had planned, her mother had not hesitated to destroy the offspring of their intrigue. That the consequence should be the total derangement of amind which was constitutionally unsettled by giddiness and vanity, was extremely natural; and such was, in fact, the history of Madge Wildfire's insanity.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

*So free from danger, free from fear
They crossed the court—right glad they were.
Christabel.*

Pursuing the path which Madge had chosen, Jeanie Deans observed, to her no small delight, that marks of more cultivation appeared, and the thatched roofs of houses, with their blue smoke arising in little columns, were seen embosomed in a tuft of trees at some distance. The track led in that direction, and Jeanie, therefore, resolved, while Madge continued to pursue it, that she would ask her no questions; having had the penetration to observe, that by doing so she ran the risk of irritating her guide, or awakening suspicions, to the impressions of which, persons in Madge's unsettled state of mind are particularly liable.

Madge, therefore, uninterrupted, went on with the wild disjointed chat which her rambling imagination suggested; a mood in which she was much more communicative respecting her own history, and that of others, than when there was any attempt made, by direct queries, or cross-examinations, to extract information on these subjects.

"It's a queer thing," she said, "but whiles I can speak about the bit bairn and the rest of it, just as if it had been another body's, and no my ain; and whiles I am like to break my heart about it—Had you ever a bairn, Jeanie?"

Jeanie replied in the negative.

"Ay; but your sister had, though—and I ken what came o't too."

"In the name of heavenly mercy," said Jeanie, forgetting the line of conduct which she had hitherto adopted, "tell me but what became of that unfortunate babe, and—"

Madge stopped, looked at her gravely and fixedly, and then broke into a great fit of laughing—"Aha, lass,—catch me if you can—I think it's easy to gar you trow ony thing.—How suld I ken onything o' your sister's wean? Lasses suld hae naething to do wi' weans till they are married—and then a' the gossips and cummers come in and feast as if it were the blithest day in the warld.—They say maidens' bairns are weel guided. I wot that wasna true of your tittie's and mine; but these are sad tales to tell.—I maun just sing a bit to keep up my heart—It's a sang that Gentle George made on me lang syne, when I went with him to Lockington wake, to see him act upon a stage, in fine clothes, with the player folk. He might hae dune waur than married me that night as he promised—better wed over the mixen* as over the moor, as they say in Yorkshire—

* A homely proverb, signifying better wed a neighbour than one fetched from a distance.—Mixer signifies dunghill.

he may gang farther and fare waur—but that's a' ane to the sang,

*I'm Madge of the country, I'm Madge of the town,
And I'm Madge of the lad I am blithest to own—
The Lady of Beeve in diamonds may shine,
But has not a heart half so lightsome as mine.
I am Queen of the Wake, and I'm Lady of May,
And I lead the blithe ring round the May-pole to-day;
The wildfire that flashes so fair and so free,*

Was never so bright, or so bonny, as me.'

"I like that the best o' a' my sangs," continued the maniac, "because he made it. I am often singing it, and that's maybe the reason folk ca' me Madge Wildfire. I aye answer to the name, though it's no my ain, for what's the use of making a fash?"

"But ye shouldna sing upon the Sabbath at least," said Jeanie, who, amid all her distress and anxiety, could not help being scandalised at the deportment of her companion, especially as they now approached near to the little village.

"Ay! is this Sunday?" said Madge. "My mother leads sic a life, wi' turning night into day, that ane loses a' count o' the days o' the week, and disna ken Sunday frae Saturday. Besides, it's a' your whiggery—in England, folk sings when they like—And then, ye ken, you are Christiana and I am Mercy—and ye ken, as they went on their way, they sang."—And she immediately raised one of John Bunyan's ditties:—

"He that is down need fear no fall,

He that is low no pride,

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.

"Fulness to such a burthen is

That go on pilgrimage;

Here little, and hereafter bliss,

Is best from age to age."

"And do ye ken, Jeanie, I think there's much truth in that book, the Pilgrim's Progress. The boy that sings that song was feeding his father's sheep in the Valley of Humiliation, and Mr. Great-heart says, that he lived a merrier life, and had more of the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than they that wear silk and velvet like me, and are as bonny as I am."

Jeanie Deans had never read the fanciful and delightful parable to which Madge alluded. Bunyan was, indeed, a rigid Calvinist, but then he was also a member of a Baptist congregation, so that his works had no place on David Deans's shelf of divinity. Madge, however, at some time of her life, had been well acquainted, as it appeared, with the most popular of his performances, which, indeed, rarely fails to make a deep impression upon children, and people of the lower rank.

"I am sure," she continued, "I may weel say I am come out of the city of Destruction, for my mother is Mrs. Bat's-eyes, that dwells at Deadman's corner; and Frank Levitt, and Tyburn Tam, they may be likened to Mistrust and Guilt, that came galloping up, and struck the poor pilgrim to the ground with a great club, and stole a bag of silver, which was most of his spending money, and so have they done to many, and will do to more. But now we will gang to the Interpreter's house, for I ken a man that will play the Interpreter right weel; for he has eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, and he stands as if he pleaded wi' men—Oh, if I had minded what he had said to me, I had never been the cutaway creature that I am!—But it is all over now.—But we'll knock at the gate, and then the keeper will admit Christiana, but Mercy will be left out—and then I'll stand at the door, trembling and crying, and then Christiana—that's you, Jeanie—will intercede for me; and then Mercy—that's me, ye ken, will faint; and then the Interpreter—yes, the Interpreter, that's Mr. Staunton himself, will come out and take me—that's poor, lost, demented me—by the hand, and give me a pomegranate, and a piece of honeycomb, and a small bottle of spirits, to stay my fainting—and then the good times will come back again, and we'll be the happiest folk you ever saw."

In the midst of the confused assemblage of ideas indicated in this speech, Jeanie thought she saw a serious purpose on the part of Madge, to endeavour to obtain the pardon and countenance of some one whom she had offended; an attempt the most likely of all others to bring them once more into contact with law and legal protection. She, therefore, resolved to be guided by her while she was in so hopeful a disposition, and act for her own safety according to circumstances.

They were now close by the village, one of those beautiful scenes which are so often found in merry England, where the cottages, instead of being built in two direct lines on each side of a dusty high-road, stand in detached groups, interspersed not only with large oaks and elms, but with fruit-trees, so many of which were at this time in flourish, that the grove seemed enamelled with their crimson and white blossoms. In the centre of the hamlet stood the parish church, and its little Gothic tower, from which at present was heard the Sunday chime of bells.

"We will wait here until the folk are a' in the church—they ca' the kirk a church in England, Jeanie, be sure you mind that—for if I was gaun forward among them, a' the gaitts o' boys and lasses wad be crying at Madge Wildfire's tail, the little hell-rakers! and the beadle would be as hard upon us as if it was our fault. I like their skirting as ill as he does, I can tell him; I'm sure I often wish there was a het peat down their throats when they set them up that gate."

Conscious of the disorderly appearance of her own dress after the adventure of the preceding night, and of the grotesque habit and demeanour of her guide, and sensible how important it was to secure an attentive and impatient audience to her strange story from some one who might have the means to protect her, Jeanie readily acquiesced in Madge's proposal to rest under the trees, by which they were still somewhat screened, until the commencement of service should give them an opportunity of entering the hamlet without attracting a crowd around them. She made the less opposition, that Madge had intimated that this was not the village where her mother was in custody, and that the two squires of the pad were absent in a different direction.

She sate herself down, therefore, at the foot of an oak, and by the assistance of a placid fountain, which had been dammed up for the use of the villagers, and which served her as a natural mirror, she began—no uncommon thing with a Scottish maiden of her rank—to arrange her toilette in the open air, and bring her dress, soiled and disordered as it was, into such order as the place and circumstances admitted.

She soon perceived reason, however, to regret that she had set about this task, however decent and necessary, in the present time and society. Madge Wildfire, who, among other indications of insanity, had a most overweening opinion of those charms, to which, in fact, she had owed her misery, and whose mind, like a raft upon a lake, was agitated and driven about at random by each fresh impulse, no sooner beheld Jeanie begin to arrange her hair, place her bonnet in order, rub the dust from her shoes and clothes, adjust her neck-handkerchief and mittens, and so forth, than with imitative zeal she began to bedizen and trick herself out with shreds and remnants of beggarly finery, which she took out of a little bundle, and which, when disposed around her person, made her appearance ten times more fantastic and apish than it had been before.

Jeanie groaned in spirit, but dared not interfere in a matter so delicate. Across the man's cap or riding hat which she wore, Madge placed a broken and soiled white feather, intersected with one which had been shed from the train of a peacock. To her dress, which was a kind of riding-habit, she stitched, pinned, and otherwise secured, a large furbelow of artificial flowers, all crushed, wrinkled and dirty, which had at first bedecked a lady of quality, then descended to her Abigail, and dazzled the inmates of the servants' hall. A tawdry scarf of yellow silk, trimmed with tinsel and spangles, which had seen as hard service, and boasted as honourable a transmission, was next flung over one shoulder, and fell across her person in the manner of a shoulder-belt, or baldrick. Madge then stripped off the coarse ordinary shoes, which she wore, and replaced them by a pair of dirty satin ones, spangled and embroidered to match the scarf, and furnished with very high heels. She had cut a willow switch in her morning's walk, almost as long as a boy's fishing-rod. This she set herself seriously to peel, and when it was transformed into such a wand as the Treasurer or High Steward bears on public occasions, she told Jeanie that she thought they now looked decent, as young women should do upon the Sunday morning, and that, as the bells had done ringing, she was willing to conduct her to the Interpreter's house.

Jeanie sighed heavily, to think it should be her lot on the Lord's day, and during kirk time too, to parade the street of an inhabited village with so very grotesque a comrade; but necessity had no law, since, without a positive quarrel with the madwoman, which, in the circumstances, would have been very unadvisable, she could see no means of shaking herself free of her society.

As for poor Madge, she was completely elated with personal vanity, and the most perfect satisfaction concerning her own dazzling dress, and superior appearance. They entered the hamlet without being observed, except by one old woman, who, being nearly "high-gravel blind," was only conscious that something very fine and glittering was passing by, and dropped as deep a reverence to Madge as she would have done to a countess. This filled up the measure of Madge's self-approbation. She minced, she ambled, she smiled, she simpered, and waved Jeanie Deans forward with the condescension of a noble *chaperone*, who has undertaken the charge of a country miss on her first journey to the capital.

Jeanie followed in patience, and with her eyes fixed on the ground, that she might save herself the mortification of seeing her companion's absurdities; but she started when, ascending two or three steps, she found herself in the churchyard, and saw that Madge was making straight for the door of the church. As Jeanie had no mind to enter the congregation in such company, she walked aside from the pathway, and said in a decided tone, "Madge, I will wait here till the church comes out—you may go in by yourself if you have a mind."

As she spoke these words, she was about to seat herself upon one of the grave-stones.

Madge was a little before Jeanie when she turned aside; but, suddenly changing her course, she followed her with long strides, and, with every feature inflamed with passion, overtook and seized her by the arm. "Do ye think, ye ungratefu' wretch, that I am gaun to let you sit down upon my father's grave? The deil settle ye doun, if ye dinna rise and come into the Interpreter's house, that's the house of God, wi' me, but I'll rive every dud aft your back!"

She adapted the action to the phrase; for with one clutch she stripped Jeanie of her straw bonnet and a handful of her hair to boot, and threw it up into an old yew-tree, where it stuck fast. Jeanie's first impulse was to scream, but conceiving she might receive deadly harm before she could obtain the assistance of anyone, notwithstanding the vicinity of the church, she thought it wiser to follow the madwoman into the congregation, where she might find some means of escape from her, or at least be secured against her violence. But when she meekly intimated her consent to follow Madge, her guide's uncertain brain had caught another train of ideas. She held Jeanie fast with one hand, and with the other pointed to the inscription on the grave-stone, and commanded her to read it. Jeanie obeyed, and read these words:—

*"This Monument was erected to the Memory of Donald
Murdochson of the King's xxvi., or Cameronian
Regiment, a sincere Christian, a brave Soldier, and
a faithful Servant, by his grateful and sorrowing
master, Robert Staunton."*

"It's very weel read, Jeanie; it's just the very words," said Madge, whose ire had now faded into deep melancholy, and with a step which, to Jeanie's great joy, was uncommonly quiet and mournful, she led her companion towards the door of the church.

It was one of those old-fashioned Gothic parish churches which are frequent in England, the most cleanly, decent, and reverential places of worship that are, perhaps, anywhere to be found in the Christian world. Yet, notwithstanding the decent solemnity of its exterior, Jeanie was too faithful to the directory of the Presbyterian kirk to have entered a prelatie place of worship, and would, upon any other occasion, have thought that she beheld in the porch the venerable figure of her father waving her back from the entrance, and pronouncing in a solemn tone, "Cease, my child, to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge." But in her present agitating and alarming situation, she looked for safety to this forbidden place of assembly, as the hunted animal will sometimes seek shelter from imminent danger in the human habitation, or in other places of refuge most alien to its nature and habits. Not even the sound of the organ, and of one or two flutes which accompanied the psalmody, prevented her from following her guide into the chancel of the church.

No sooner had Madge put her foot upon the pavement, and become sensible that she was the object of attention to the spectators, than she resumed all the fantastic extravagance of deportment which some transient touch of melancholy had banished for an instant. She swam rather than walked up the centre aisle, dragging Jeanie after her, whom she held fast by the hand. She would, indeed, have fain slipped aside into the pew nearest to the door, and left Madge to ascend in her own manner and alone to the high places of the synagogue; but this was impossible, without a degree of violent resistance, which seemed to her inconsistent with the time and place, and she was accordingly led in captivity up the whole length of the church by her grotesque conductress, who, with half-shut eyes, a prim smile upon her lips, and a mincing motion with her hands, which corresponded with the delicate and affected pace at which she was pleased to move, seemed to take the general stare of the congregation, which such an exhibition necessarily excited, as a high compliment, and which she returned by nods and half-courtesies to individuals amongst the audience, whom she seemed to distinguish as acquaintances. Her absurdity was enhanced in the eyes of the spectators by the strange contrast which she formed to her companion, who, with dishevelled hair, downcast eyes, and a face glowing with shame, was dragged, as it were in triumph after her.

Madge's airs were at length fortunately cut short by her encountering in her progress the looks of the clergyman, who fixed upon her a glance, at once steady, compassionate, and admonitory. She hastily opened an empty pew which happened to be near her, and entered, dragging in Jeanie after her. Kicking Jeanie on the shins, by way of hint that she should follow her example, she sunk her head upon her hand for the space of a minute. Jeanie, to whom this posture of mental devotion was entirely new, did not attempt to do the like, but looked round her with a bewildered stare, which her neighbours, judging from the company in which they saw her, very naturally ascribed to insanity. Every person in their immediate vicinity drew back from this extraordinary couple as far as the limits of their pew permitted; but one old man could not get beyond Madge's reach, ere, she had snatched the prayer-book from his hand, and ascertained the lesson of the day. She then turned up the ritual, and with the most overstrained enthusiasm of gesture and manner, showed Jeanie the passages as they were read in the service, making, at the same time, her own responses so loud as to be heard above those of every other person.

Notwithstanding the shame and vexation which Jeanie felt in being thus exposed in a place of worship, she could not and durst not omit rallying her spirits so as to look around her, and consider to whom she ought to appeal for protection so soon as the service should be concluded. Her first ideas naturally fixed upon the clergyman, and she was confirmed in the resolution by observing that he was an aged gentleman, of a dignified appearance and deportment, who read the service with an undisturbed and decent gravity, which brought back to becoming attention those younger members of the congregation who had been disturbed by the extravagant behaviour of Madge Wildfire. To the clergyman, therefore, Jeanie resolved to make her appeal when the service was over.

It is true she felt disposed to be shocked at his surplice, of which she had heard so much, but which she had never seen upon the person of a preacher of the word. Then she was confused by the change of posture adopted in different parts of the ritual, the more so as Madge Wildfire, to whom they seemed familiar, took the opportunity to exercise authority over her, pulling her up and pushing her down with a bustling assiduity, which Jeanie felt must make them both the objects of painful attention. But, notwithstanding these prejudices, it was her prudent resolution, in this dilemma, to imitate as nearly as she could what was done around her. The prophet, she thought, permitted Naaman the Syrian to bow even in the house of Rimmon. Surely if I, in this streight, worship the God of my fathers in mine own language, although the manner thereof be strange to me, the Lord will pardon me in this thing.

In this resolution she became so much confirmed, that, withdrawing herself from Madge as far as the pew permitted, she endeavoured to evince by serious and composed attention to what was passing, that her mind was composed to devotion. Her tormentor would not long have permitted her to remain quiet, but fatigue overpowered her, and she fell fast asleep in the other corner of the pew.

Jeanie, though her mind in her own despite sometimes reverted to her situation, compelled herself to give attention to a sensible, energetic, and well-composed discourse, upon the practical doctrines of Christianity, which she could not help approving, although it was every word written down and read by the preacher, and although it was delivered in a tone and gesture very different from those of Boanerges Stormheaven, who was her father's favourite preacher. The serious and placid attention with which Jeanie listened, did not escape the clergyman. Madge Wildfire's entrance had rendered him apprehensive of some disturbance, to provide against which, as far as possible, he often turned his eyes to the part of the church where Jeanie and she were placed, and became soon aware that, although the loss of her head-gear, and the awkwardness of her situation, had given an uncommon and anxious air to the features of the former, yet she was in a state of mind very different from that of her companion. When he dismissed the congregation, he observed her look around with a wild and terrified look, as if uncertain what course she ought to adopt, and noticed that she approached one or two of the most decent of the congregation, as if to address them, and then shrunk back timidly, on observing that they seemed to shun and to avoid her. The clergyman was satisfied there must be something extraordinary in all this, and as a benevolent man, as well as a good Christian pastor, he resolved to inquire into the matter more minutely.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*There governed in that year
A stern, stout churl—an angry overseer.
Crabbe.*

While Mr. Staunton, for such was this worthy clergyman's name, was laying aside his gown in the vestry, Jeanie was in the act of coming to an open rupture with Madge.

"We must return to Mummer's barn directly," said Madge; "we'll be ower late, and my mother will be angry."

"I am not going back with you, Madge," said Jeanie, taking out a guinea, and offering it to her; "I am much obliged to you, but I maun gang my ain road."

"And me coming a' this way out o' my gate to pleasure you, ye ungratefu' cutty," answered Madge; "and me to be brained by my mother when I gang hame, and a' for your sake!—But I will gar ye as good"

"For God's sake," said Jeanie to a man who stood beside them, "keep her off!—she is mad."

"Ey, ey," answered the boor; "I hae some guess of that, and I trow thou be'st a bird of the same feather.—Howsomever, Madge, I redd thee keep hand off her, or I'se lend thee a whisterpoop."

Several of the lower class of the parishioners now gathered round the strangers, and the cry arose among the boys that "there was a-going to be a fite between mad Madge Murdockson and another Bess of Bedlam." But while the fry assembled with the humane hope of seeing as much of the fun as possible, the laced cocked-hat of the beadle was discerned among the multitude, and all made way for that person of awful authority. His first address was to Madge.

"What's brought thee back again, thou silly donnot, to plague this parish? Hast thou brought ony more bastards wi' thee to lay to honest men's doors? or does thou think to burden us with this goose, that's as hare-brained as thyself, as if rates were no up enow? Away wi' thee to thy thief of a mother; she's fast in the stocks at Barkston town-end—Away wi' ye out o' the parish, or I'se be at ye with the ratan."

Madge stood sulky for a minute; but she had been too often taught submission to the beadle's authority by ungentle means to feel courage enough to dispute it.

"And my mother—my puir auld mother, is in the stocks at Barkston!—This is a' your wyte, Miss Jeanie Deans; but I'll be upsides wi' you, as sure as my name's Madge Wildfire—I mean Murdockson—God help me, I forget my very name in this confused waste!"

So saying, she turned upon her heel, and went off, followed by all the mischievous imps of the village, some crying, "Madge, canst thou tell thy name yet?" some pulling the skirts of her dress, and all, to the best of their strength and ingenuity, exercising some new device or other to exasperate her into frenzy.

Jeanie saw her departure with infinite delight, though she wished that, in some way or other, she could have requited the service Madge had conferred upon her. In the meantime, she applied to the beadle to know whether "there was any house in the village where she could be civilly entertained for her money, and whether she could be permitted to speak to the clergyman?"

"Ay, ay, we'se ha' reverend care on thee; and I think," answered the man of constituted authority, "that, unless thou answer the Rector all the better, we'se spare thy money, and gie thee lodging at the parish charge, young woman."

"Where am I to go then?" said Jeanie, in some alarm.

"Why, I am to take thee to his Reverence, in the first place, to gie an account o' thyself, and to see thou comena to be a burden upon the parish."

"I do not wish to burden anyone," replied Jeanie; "I have enough for my own wants, and only wish to get on my journey safely."

"Why, that's another matter," replied the beadle, "and if it be true—and I think thou dost not look so polrumptious as thy playfellow yonder—Thou wouldst be a mettle lass enow, an thou wert snog and snod a bid better. Come thou away, then—the Rector is a good man."

"Is that the minister," said Jeanie, "who preached"

"The minister? Lord help thee! What kind o' Presbyterian art thou?—Why, 'tis the Rector—the Rector's sell, woman, and there isna the like o' him in the county, nor the four next to it. Come away—away with thee—we maunna bide here."

"I am sure I am very willing to go to see the minister," said Jeanie; "for though he read his discourse, and wore that surplice, as they call it here, I canna but think he must be a very worthy God-fearing man, to preach the root of the matter in the way he did."

The disappointed rabble, finding that there was like to be no farther sport, had by this time dispersed, and Jeanie, with her usual patience, followed her consequential and surly, but not brutal, conductor towards the rectory.

This clerical mansion was large and commodious, for the living was an excellent one, and the advowson belonged to a very wealthy family in the neighbourhood, who had usually bred up a son or nephew to the church for the sake of inducting him, as opportunity offered, into this very comfortable provision. In this manner the rectory of Willingham had always been considered as a direct and immediate appanage of Willingham Hall; and as the rich baronets to whom the latter belonged had usually a son, or brother, or nephew, settled in the living, the utmost care had been taken to render their habitation not merely respectable and commodious, but even dignified and imposing.

It was situated about four hundred yards from the village, and on a rising ground which sloped gently upward, covered with small enclosures, or closes, laid out irregularly, so that the old oaks and elms, which were planted in hedge-rows, fell into perspective, and were blended together in beautiful irregularity. When they approached nearer to the house, a handsome gateway admitted them into a lawn, of narrow dimensions indeed, but which was interspersed with large sweet chestnut trees and beeches, and kept in handsome order. The front of the house was irregular. Part of it seemed very old, and had, in fact, been the residence of the incumbent in Romish times. Successive occupants had made considerable additions and improvements, each in the taste of his own age, and without much regard to symmetry. But these incongruities of architecture were so graduated and happily mingled, that the eye, far from being displeased with the combinations of various styles, saw nothing but what was interesting in the varied and intricate pile which they displayed. Fruit-trees displayed on the southern wall, outer staircases, various places of entrance, a combination of roofs and chimneys of different ages, united to render the front, not indeed beautiful or grand, but intricate, perplexed, or, to use Mr. Price's appropriate phrase, picturesque. The most considerable addition was that of the present Rector, who, "being a bookish man," as the beadle was at the pains to inform Jeanie, to augment, perhaps, her reverence for the person before whom she was to appear, had built a handsome library and parlour, and no less than two additional bedrooms.

"Mony men would hae scrupled such expense," continued the parochial officer, "seeing as the living mun go as it pleases Sir Edmund to will it; but his Reverence has a canny bit land of his own, and need not look on two sides of a penny."

Jeanie could not help comparing the irregular yet extensive and commodious pile of building before her to the "Manses" in her own country, where a set of penurious heritors, professing all the while the devotion of their lives and fortunes to the Presbyterian establishment, strain their inventions to discover what may be nipped, and clipped, and pared from a building which forms but a poor accommodation even for the present incumbent, and, despite the superior advantage of stone-masonry, must, in the course of forty or fifty years, again burden their descendants with an expense, which, once liberally and handsomely employed, ought to have freed their estates from a recurrence of it for more than a century at least.

Behind the Rector's house the ground sloped down to a small river, which, without possessing the romantic vivacity and rapidity of a northern stream, was, nevertheless, by its occasional appearance through the ranges of willows and poplars that crowned its banks, a very pleasing accompaniment to the landscape. "It was the best trouting stream," said the beadle, whom the patience of Jeanie, and especially the assurance that she was not about to become a burden to the parish, had rendered rather communicative, "the best trouting stream in all Lincolnshire; for when you got lower, there was nought to be done wi' fly-fishing."

Turning aside from the principal entrance, he conducted Jeanie towards a sort of portal connected with the older part of the building, which was chiefly occupied by servants, and knocking at the door, it was opened by a servant in grave purple livery, such as befitted a wealthy and dignified clergyman.

"How dost do, Tummas?" said the beadle—"and how's young Measter Staunton?"

"Why, but poorly—but poorly, Measter Stubbs.—Are you wanting to see his Reverence?"

"Ay, ay, Tummas; please to say I ha' brought up the young woman as came to service to-day with mad Madge Murdockson seems to be a decentish koin'd o' body; but I ha' asked her never a question. Only I can tell his Reverence that she is a Scotchwoman, I judge, and as flat as the fens of Holland."

Tummas honoured Jeanie Deans with such a stare, as the pampered domestics of the rich, whether spiritual or temporal, usually esteem it part of their privilege to bestow upon the poor, and then desired Mr. Stubbs and his charge to step in till he informed his master of their presence.

The room into which he showed them was a sort of steward's parlour, hung with a county map or two, and three or four prints of eminent persons connected with the county, as Sir William Monson, James York the blacksmith of Lincoln,* and the famous Peregrine, Lord Willoughby, in complete armour, looking as when he said in the words of the legend below the engraving,—

* [Author of the *Union of Honour*, a treatise on English Heraldry. London, 1641.]

*"Stand to it, noble pikemen,
And face ye well about;
And shoot ye sharp, bold bowmen,
And we will keep them out.*

*"Ye musquet and calliver-men,
Do you prove true to me,
I'll be the foremost man in fight,
Said brave Lord Willoughbee."*

When they had entered this apartment, Tummas as a matter of course offered, and as a matter of course Mr. Stubbs accepted, a "summat" to eat and drink, being the respectable relies of a gammon of bacon, and a *whole whiskin*, or black pot of sufficient double ale. To these eatables Mr. Beadle seriously inclined himself, and (for we must do him justice) not without an invitation to Jeanie, in which Tummas joined, that his prisoner or charge would follow his good example. But although she might have stood in need of refreshment, considering she had tasted no food that day, the anxiety of the moment, her own sparing and abstemious habits, and a bashful aversion to eat in company of the two strangers, induced her to decline their courtesy. So she sate in a chair apart, while Mr. Stubbs and Mr. Tummas, who had chosen to join his friend in consideration that dinner was to be put back till after the afternoon service, made a hearty luncheon, which lasted for half-an-hour, and might not then have concluded, had not his Reverence rung his bell, so that Tummas was obliged to attend his master. Then, and no sooner, to save himself the labour of a second journey to the other end of the house, he announced to his master the arrival of Mr. Stubbs, with the other madwoman, as he chose to designate Jeanie, as an event which had just taken place. He returned with an order that Mr. Stubbs and the young woman should be instantly ushered up to the library. The beadle bolted in haste his last mouthful of fat bacon, washed down the greasy morsel with the last rinsings of the pot of ale, and immediately marshalled Jeanie through one or two intricate passages which led from the ancient to the more modern buildings, into a handsome little hall, or anteroom, adjoining to the library, and out of which a glass door opened to the lawn.

"Stay here," said Stubbs, "till I tell his Reverence you are come."

So saying, he opened a door and entered the library. Without wishing to hear their conversation, Jeanie, as she was circumstanced, could not avoid it; for as Stubbs stood by the door, and his Reverence was at the upper end of a large room, their conversation was necessarily audible in the anteroom.

"So you have brought the young woman here at last, Mr. Stubbs. I expected you some time since. You know I do not wish such persons to remain in custody a moment without some inquiry into their situation."

"Very true, your Reverence," replied the beadle; "but the young woman had eat nought to-day, and so Measter Tummas did set down a drap of drink and a morsel, to be sure."

"Thomas was very right, Mr. Stubbs; and what has, become of the other most unfortunate being?"

"Why," replied Mr. Stubbs, "I did think the sight on her would but vex your Reverence, and soa I did let her go her ways back to her mother, who is in trouble in the next parish."

"In trouble!—that signifies in prison, I suppose?" said Mr. Staunton.

"Ay, truly; something like it, an it like your Reverence."

"Wretched, unhappy, incorrigible woman!" said the clergyman. "And what sort of person is this companion of hers?"

"Why, decent enow, an it like your Reverence," said Stubbs; "for aught I sees of her, there's no harm of her, and she says she has cash enow to carry her out of the county."

"Cash! that is always what you think of, Stubbs—But, has she sense?—has she her wits?—has she the capacity of taking care of herself?"

"Why, your Reverence," replied Stubbs, "I cannot just say—I will be sworn she was not born at Witt-ham;* for Gaffer Gibbs looked at her all the time of service, and he says, she could not turn up a single lesson like a Christian, even though she had Madge Murdockson to help her—but then, as to fending for herself, why, she's a bit of a Scotchwoman, your Reverence, and they say the worst donnot of them can look out for their own turn—and she is decently put on enow, and not bechounded like t'other."

* A proverbial and punning expression in that county, to intimate that a person is not very clever.

"Send her in here, then, and do you remain below, Mr. Stubbs."

This colloquy had engaged Jeanie's attention so deeply, that it was not until it was over that she observed that the sashed door, which, we have said, led from the anteroom into the garden, was opened, and that there entered, or rather was borne in by two assistants, a young man, of a very pale and sickly appearance, whom they lifted to the nearest couch, and placed there, as if to recover from the fatigue of an unusual exertion. Just as they were making this arrangement, Stubbs came out of the library, and summoned Jeanie to enter it. She obeyed him, not without tremor; for, besides the novelty of the situation, to a girl of her secluded habits, she felt also as if the successful prosecution of her journey was to depend upon the impression she should be able to make on Mr. Staunton.

It is true, it was difficult to suppose on what pretext a person travelling on her own business, and at her own charge, could be interrupted upon her route. But the violent detention she had already undergone, was sufficient to show that there existed persons at no great distance who had the interest, the inclination, and the audacity, forcibly to stop her journey, and she felt the necessity of having some countenance and protection, at least till she should get beyond their reach. While these things passed through her mind, much faster than our pen and ink can record, or even the reader's eye collect the meaning of its traces, Jeanie found herself in a handsome library, and in presence of the Rector of Willingham. The well-furnished presses and shelves which surrounded the large and handsome apartment, contained more books than Jeanie imagined existed in the world, being accustomed to consider as an extensive collection two fir shelves, each about three feet long, which contained her father's treasured volumes, the whole pith and marrow, as he used sometimes to boast, of modern divinity. An orrery, globes, a telescope, and some other scientific implements, conveyed to Jeanie an impression of admiration and wonder, not unmixed with fear; for, in her ignorant apprehension, they seemed rather adapted for magical purposes than any other; and a few stuffed animals (as the Rector was fond of natural history) added to the impressive character of the apartment.

Mr. Staunton spoke to her with great mildness. He observed, that, although her appearance at church had been uncommon, and in strange, and he must add, discreditable society, and calculated, upon the whole, to disturb the congregation during divine worship, he wished, nevertheless, to hear her own account of herself before taking any steps which his duty might seem to demand. He was a justice of peace, he informed her, as well as a clergyman.

"His Honour" (for she would not say his Reverence) "was very civil and kind," was all that poor Jeanie could at first bring out.

"Who are you, young woman?" said the clergyman, more peremptorily—"and what do you do in this country, and in such company?—We allow no strollers or vagrants here."

"I am not a vagrant or a stroller, sir," said Jeanie, a little roused by the supposition. "I am a decent Scots lass, travelling through the land on my own business and my own expenses and I was so unhappy as to fall in with bad company, and was stopped a' night on my journey. And this puir creature, who is something light-headed, let me out in the morning."

"Bad company!" said the clergyman. "I am afraid, young woman, you have not been sufficiently anxious to avoid them."

"Indeed, sir," returned Jeanie, "I have been brought up to shun evil communication. But these wicked people were thieves, and stopped me by violence and mastery."

"Thieves!" said Mr. Staunton; "then you charge them with robbery, I suppose?"

"No, sir; they did not take so much as a boddle from me," answered Jeanie; "nor did they use me ill, otherwise than by confining me."

The clergyman inquired into the particulars of her adventure, which she told him from point to point.

"This is an extraordinary, and not a very probable tale, young woman," resumed Mr. Staunton. "Here has been, according to your account, a great violence committed without any adequate motive. Are you aware of the law of this country—that if you lodge this charge, you will be bound over to prosecute this gang?"

Jeanie did not understand him, and he explained, that the English law, in addition to the inconvenience sustained by persons who have been robbed or injured, has the goodness to intrust to them the care and the expense of appearing as prosecutors.

Jeanie said, "that her business at London was express; all she wanted was, that any gentleman would, out of Christian charity, protect her to some town where she could hire horses and a guide; and finally," she thought, "it would be her father's mind that she was not free to give testimony in an English court of justice, as the land was not under a direct gospel dispensation."

Mr. Staunton stared a little, and asked if her father was a Quaker.

"God forbid, sir," said Jeanie—"He is nae schismatic nor sectary, nor ever treated for sic black commodities as theirs, and that's weel kend o' him."

"And what is his name, pray?" said Mr. Staunton.

"David Deans, sir, the cowfeeder at Saint Leonard's Crag, near Edinburgh."

A deep groan from the anteroom prevented the Rector from replying, and, exclaiming, "Good God! that unhappy boy!" he left Jeanie alone, and hastened into the outer apartment.

Some noise and bustle was heard, but no one entered the library for the best part of an hour.

CHAPTER NINTH.

*Fantastic passions' maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!
Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
Which, all confused, I could not know
Whether I suffer'd or I did,
For all seem'd guilt, remorse, or woe;
My own, or others, still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.
Coleridge.*

During the interval while she was thus left alone, Jeanie anxiously revolved in her mind what course was best for her to pursue. She was impatient to continue her journey, yet she feared she could not safely adventure to do so while the old hag and her assistants were in the neighbourhood, without risking a repetition of their violence. She thought she could collect from the conversation which she had partly overheard, and also from the wild confessions of Madge Wildfire, that her mother had a deep and revengeful motive for obstructing her journey if possible. And from whom could she hope for assistance if not from Mr. Staunton? His whole appearance and demeanour seemed to encourage her hopes. His features were handsome, though marked with a deep cast of melancholy; his tone and language were gentle and encouraging; and, as he had served in the army for several years during his youth, his air retained that easy frankness which is peculiar to the profession of arms. He was, besides, a minister of the gospel; and, although a worshipper, according to Jeanie's notions, in the court of the Gentiles, and so benighted as to wear a surplice; although he read the Common Prayer, and wrote down every word of his sermon before delivering it; and although he was, moreover, in strength of lungs, as well as pith and marrow of doctrine, vastly inferior to Boanerges Stormheaven, Jeanie still thought he must be a very different person from Curate Kilstoup, and other prelatical divines of her father's earlier days, who used to get drunk in their canonical dress, and hound out the dragoons against the wandering Cameronians. The house seemed to be in some disturbance, but as she could not suppose she was altogether forgotten, she thought it better to remain quiet in the apartment where she had been left, till some one should take notice of her.

The first who entered was, to her no small delight, one of her own sex, a motherly-looking aged person of a housekeeper. To her Jeanie explained her situation in a few words, and begged her assistance.

The dignity of a housekeeper did not encourage too much familiarity with a person who was at the Rectory on justice-business, and whose character might seem in her eyes somewhat precarious; but she was civil, although distant.

"Her young master," she said, "had had a bad accident by a fall from his horse, which made him liable to fainting fits; he had been taken very ill just now, and it was impossible his Reverence could see Jeanie for some time; but that she need not fear his doing all that was just and proper in her behalf the instant he could get her business attended to."—She concluded by offering to show Jeanie a room, where she might remain till his Reverence was at leisure.

Our heroine took the opportunity to request the means of adjusting and changing her dress.

The housekeeper, in whose estimation order and cleanliness ranked high among personal virtues, gladly complied with a request so reasonable; and the change of dress which Jeanie's bundle furnished made so important an improvement in her appearance, that the old lady hardly knew the soiled and disordered traveller, whose attire showed the violence she had sustained, in the neat, clean, quiet-looking little Scotch-woman, who now stood before her. Encouraged by such a favourable alteration in her appearance, Mrs. Dalton ventured to invite Jeanie to partake of her dinner, and was equally pleased with the decent propriety of her conduct during the meal.

"Thou canst read this book, canst thou, young woman?" said the old lady, when their meal was concluded, laying her hand upon a large Bible.

"I hope sae, madam," said Jeanie, surprised at the question "my father wad hae wanted mony a thing ere I had wanted *that* schuling."

"The better sign of him, young woman. There are men here, well to pass in the world, would not want their share of a Leicester plover, and that's a bag-pudding, if fasting for three hours would make all their poor children read the Bible from end to end. Take thou the book, then, for my eyes are something dazed, and read where thou listest—it's the only book thou canst not happen wrong in."

Jeanie was at first tempted to turn up the parable of the good Samaritan, but her conscience checked her, as if it were a use of Scripture, not for her own edification, but to work upon the mind of others for the relief of her worldly afflictions; and under this scrupulous sense of duty, she selected, in preference, a CHAPTER of the prophet Isaiah, and read it, notwithstanding her northern accent and tone, with a devout propriety, which greatly edified Mrs. Dalton.

"Ah," she said, "an all Scotchwomen were sic as thou but it was our luck to get born devils of thy country, I think—every one worse than t'other. If thou knowest of any tidy lass like thyself that wanted a place, and could bring a good character, and would not go laiking about to wakes and fairs, and wore shoes and stockings all the day round—why, I'll not say but we might find room for her at the Rectory. Hast no cousin or sister, lass, that such an offer would suit?"

This was touching upon a sore point, but Jeanie was spared the pain of replying by the entrance of the same man-servant she had seen before.

"Measter wishes to see the young woman from Scotland," was Tummas's address.

"Go to his Reverence, my dear, as fast as you can, and tell him all your story—his Reverence is a kind man," said Mrs. Dalton. "I will fold down the leaf, and wake you a cup of tea, with some nice muffin, against you come down, and that's what you seldom see in Scotland, girl."

"Measter's waiting for the young woman," said Tummas impatiently.

"Well, Mr. Jack-Sauce, and what is your business to put in your oar?—And how often must I tell you to call Mr. Staunton his Reverence, seeing as he is a dignified clergyman, and not be meastering, meastering him, as if he were a little petty squire?"

As Jeanie was now at the door, and ready to accompany Tummas, the footman said nothing till he got into the passage, when he muttered, "There are moe masters than one in this house, and I think we shall have a mistress too, an Dame Dalton carries it thus."

Tummas led the way through a more intricate range of passages than Jeanie had yet threaded, and ushered her into an apartment which was darkened by the closing of most of the window-shutters, and in which was a bed with the curtains partly drawn.

"Here is the young woman, sir," said Tummas.

"Very well," said a voice from the bed, but not that of his Reverence; "be ready to answer the bell, and leave the room."

"There is some mistake," said Jeanie, confounded at finding herself in the apartment of an invalid; "the servant told me that the minister"

"Don't trouble yourself," said the invalid, "there is no mistake. I know more of your affairs than my father, and I can manage them better.—Leave the room, Tom."

The servant obeyed.—"We must not," said the invalid, "lose time, when we have little to lose. Open the shutters of that window."

She did so, and as he drew aside the curtain of his bed, the light fell on his pale countenance, as, turban'd with bandages, and dressed in a night-gown, he lay, seemingly exhausted, upon the bed.

"Look at me," he said, "Jeanie Deans; can you not recollect me?"

"No, sir," said she, full of surprise. "I was never in this country before."

"But I may have been in yours. Think—recollect. I should faint did I name the name you are most dearly bound to loathe and to detest. Think—remember!"

A terrible recollection flashed on Jeanie, which every tone of the speaker confirmed, and which his next words rendered certainty.

"Be composed—remember Muschat's Cairn, and the moonlight night!"

Jeanie sunk down on a chair with clasped hands, and gasped in agony.

"Yes, here I lie," he said, "like a crushed snake, writhing with impatience at my incapacity of motion—here I lie, when I ought to have been in Edinburgh, trying every means to save a life that is dearer to me than my own.—How is your sister?—how fares it with her?—condemned to death, I know it, by this time! O, the horse that carried me safely on a thousand errands of folly and wickedness, that he should have broke down with me on the only good mission I have undertaken for years! But I must rein in my passion—my frame cannot endure it, and I have much to say. Give me some of the cordial which stands on that table.—Why do you tremble? But you have too good cause.—Let it stand—I need it not."

Jeanie, however reluctant, approached him with the cup into which she had poured the draught, and could not forbear saying, "There is a cordial for the mind, sir, if the wicked will turn from their transgressions, and seek to the Physician of souls."

"Silence!" he said sternly—"and yet I thank you. But tell me, and lose no time in doing so, what you are doing in this country? Remember, though I have been your sister's worst enemy, yet I will serve her with the best of my blood, and I will serve you for her sake; and no one can serve you to such purpose, for no one can know the circumstances so well—so speak without fear."

"I am not afraid, sir," said Jeanie, collecting her spirits. "I trust in God; and if it pleases Him to redeem my sister's captivity, it is all I seek, whosoever be the instrument. But, sir, to be plain with you, I dare not use your counsel, unless I were enabled to see that it accords with the law which I must rely upon."

"The devil take the Puritan!" cried George Staunton, for so we must now call him—"I beg your pardon; but I am naturally impatient, and you drive me mad! What harm can it possibly do to tell me in what situation your sister stands, and your own expectations of being able to assist her? It is time enough to refuse my advice when I offer any which you may think improper. I speak calmly to you, though 'tis against my nature; but don't urge me to impatience—it will only render me incapable of serving Effie."

There was in the looks and words of this unhappy young man a sort of restrained eagerness and impetuosity which seemed to prey upon itself, as the impatience of a fiery steed fatigues itself with churning upon the bit. After a moment's consideration, it occurred to Jeanie that she was not entitled to withhold from him, whether on her sister's account or her own, the fatal account of the consequences of the crime which he had committed, nor to reject such advice, being in itself lawful and innocent, as he might be able to suggest in the way of remedy. Accordingly, in as few words as she could express it, she told the history of her sister's trial and condemnation, and of her own journey as far as Newark. He appeared to listen in the utmost agony of mind, yet repressed every violent symptom of emotion, whether by gesture or sound, which might have interrupted the speaker, and, stretched on his couch like the Mexican monarch on his bed of live coals, only the contortions of his cheek, and the quivering of his limbs, gave indication of his sufferings. To much of what she said he listened with stifled groans, as if he were only hearing those miseries confirmed, whose fatal reality he had known before; but when she pursued her tale through the circumstances which had interrupted her journey, extreme surprise and earnest attention appeared to succeed to the symptoms of remorse which he had before exhibited. He questioned Jeanie closely concerning the appearance of the two men, and the conversation which she had overheard between the taller of them and the woman.

When Jeanie mentioned the old woman having alluded to her foster-son—"It is too true," he said; "and the source from which I derived food, when an infant, must have communicated to me the wretched—the fated—propensity to vices that were strangers in my own family.—But go on."

Jeanie passed slightly over her journey in company with Madge, having no inclination to repeat what might be the effect of mere raving on the part of her companion, and therefore her tale was now closed.

Young Staunton lay for a moment in profound meditation and at length spoke with more composure than he had yet displayed during their interview.—"You are a sensible, as well as a good young woman, Jeanie Deans, and I will tell you more of my story than I have told to any one.—Story did I call it?—it is a tissue of folly, guilt, and misery.—But take notice—I do it because I desire your confidence in return—that is, that you will act in this dismal matter by my advice and direction. Therefore do I speak."

"I will do what is fitting for a sister, and a daughter, and a Christian woman to do," said Jeanie; "but do not tell me any of your secrets.—It is not good that I should come into your counsel, or listen to the doctrine which causeth to err."

"Simple fool!" said the young man. "Look at me. My head is not horned, my foot is not cloven, my hands are not garnished with talons; and, since I am not the very devil himself, what interest can any one else have in destroying the hopes with which you comfort or fool yourself? Listen to me patiently, and you will find that, when you have heard my counsel, you may go to the seventh heaven with it in your pocket, if you have a mind, and not feel yourself an ounce heavier in the ascent."

At the risk of being somewhat heavy, as explanations usually prove, we must here endeavour to combine into a distinct narrative, information which the invalid communicated in a manner at once too circumstantial, and too much broken by passion, to admit of our giving his precise words. Part of it indeed he read from a manuscript, which he had perhaps drawn up for the information of his relations after his decease.

"To make my tale short—this wretched hag—this Margaret Murdockson, was the wife of a favourite servant of my father—she had been my nurse—her husband was dead—she resided in a cottage near this place—she had a daughter who grew up, and was then a beautiful but very giddy girl; her mother endeavoured to promote her marriage with an old and wealthy churl in the neighbourhood—the girl saw me frequently—She was familiar with me, as our connection seemed to permit—and I—in a word, I wronged her cruelly—It was not so bad as your sister's business, but it was sufficiently villanous—her folly should have been her protection. Soon after this I was sent abroad—To do my father justice, if I have turned out a fiend it is not his fault—he used the best means. When I returned, I found the wretched mother and daughter had fallen into disgrace, and were chased from this country.—My deep share in their shame and misery was discovered—my father used very harsh language—we quarrelled. I left his house, and led a life of strange adventure, resolving never again to see my father or my father's home.

"And now comes the story!—Jeanie, I put my life into your hands, and not only my own life, which, God knows, is not worth saving, but the happiness of a respectable old man, and the honour of a family of consideration. My love of low society, as such propensities as I was cursed with are usually termed, was, I think of an uncommon kind, and indicated a nature, which, if not depraved by early debauchery, would have been fit for better things. I did not so much delight in the wild revel, the low humour, the unconfined liberty of those with whom I associated as in the spirit of adventure, presence of mind in peril, and sharpness of intellect which they displayed in prosecuting their maraudings upon the revenue, or similar adventures.—Have you looked round this rectory?—is it not a sweet and pleasant retreat?"

Jeanie, alarmed at this sudden change of subject, replied in the affirmative.

"Well! I wish it had been ten thousand fathoms under ground, with its church-lands, and tithes, and all that belongs to it. Had it not been for this cursed rectory, I should have been permitted to follow the bent of my own inclinations and the profession of arms, and half the courage and address that I have displayed among smugglers and deer-stealers would have secured me an honourable rank among my contemporaries. Why did I not go abroad when I left this house!—Why did I leave it at all!—why—But it came to that point with me that it is madness to look back, and misery to look forward!"

He paused, and then proceeded with more composure.

"The chances of a wandering life brought me unhappily to Scotland, to embroil myself in worse and more criminal actions than I had yet been concerned in. It was now I became acquainted with Wilson, a remarkable man in his station of life; quiet, composed, and resolute, firm in mind, and uncommonly strong in person, gifted with a sort of rough eloquence which raised him above his companions. Hitherto I had been

As dissolute as desperate, yet through both

Were seen some sparkles of a better hope.

"But it was this man's misfortune, as well as mine, that, notwithstanding the difference of our rank and education, he acquired an extraordinary and fascinating influence over me, which I can only account for by the calm determination of his character being superior to the less sustained impetuosity of mine. Where he led I felt myself bound to follow; and strange was the courage and address which he displayed in his pursuits. While I was engaged in desperate adventures, under so strange and dangerous a preceptor, I became acquainted with your unfortunate sister at some sports of the young people in the suburbs, which she frequented by stealth—and her ruin proved an interlude to the tragic scenes in which I was now deeply engaged. Yet this let me say—the villany was not premeditated, and I was firmly resolved to do her all the justice which marriage could do, so soon as I should be able to extricate myself from my unhappy course of life, and embrace some one more suited to my birth. I had wild visions—visions of conducting her as if to some poor retreat, and introducing her at once to rank and fortune she never dreamt of. A friend, at my request, attempted a negotiation with my father, which was protracted for some time, and renewed at different intervals. At length, and just when I expected my father's pardon, he learned by some means or other my infamy, painted in even exaggerated colours, which was, God knows, unnecessary. He wrote me a letter—how it found me out I know not—enclosing me a sum of money, and disowning me for ever. I became desperate—I became frantic—I readily joined Wilson in a perilous smuggling adventure in which we miscarried, and was willingly blinded by his logic to consider the robbery of the officer of the customs in Fife as a fair and honourable reprisal. Hitherto I had observed a certain line in my criminality, and stood free of assaults upon personal property, but now I felt a wild pleasure in disgracing myself as much as possible.

"The plunder was no object to me. I abandoned that to my comrades, and only asked the post of danger. I remember well that when I stood with my drawn sword guarding the door while they committed the felony, I had not a thought of my own safety. I was only meditating on my sense of supposed wrong from my family, my impotent thirst of vengeance, and how it would sound in the haughty cars of the family of Willingham, that one of their descendants, and the heir apparent of their honours, should perish by the hands of the hangman for robbing a Scottish gauger of a sum not equal to one-fifth part of the money I had in my pocket-book. We were taken—I expected no less. We were condemned—that also I looked for. But death, as he approached nearer, looked grimly; and the recollection of your sister's destitute condition determined me on an effort to save my life.—I forgot to tell you, that in Edinburgh I again met the woman Murdockson and her daughter. She had followed the camp when young, and had now, under pretence of a trifling traffic, resumed predatory habits, with which she had already been too familiar. Our first meeting was stormy; but I was liberal of what money I had, and she forgot, or seemed to forget, the injury her daughter had received. The unfortunate girl herself seemed hardly even to know her seducer, far less to retain any sense of the injury she had received. Her mind is totally alienated, which, according to her mother's account, is sometimes the consequence of an unfavourable confinement. But it was *my doing*. Here was another stone knitted round my neck to sink me into the pit of perdition. Every look—every word of this poor creature—her false spirits—her imperfect recollections—her allusions to things which she had forgotten, but which were recorded in my conscience, were stabs of a poniard—stabs did I say?—they were tearing with hot pincers, and scalding the raw wound with burning sulphur—they were to be endured however, and they were endured.—I return to my prison thoughts.

"It was not the least miserable of them that your sister's time approached. I knew her dread of you and of her father. She often said she would die a thousand deaths ere you should know her shame—yet her confinement must be provided for. I knew this woman Murdockson was an infernal hag, but I thought she loved me, and that money would make her true. She had procured a file for Wilson, and a spring-saw for me; and she undertook readily to take charge of Effie during her illness, in which she had skill enough to give the necessary assistance. I gave her the money which my father had sent me. It was settled that she should receive Effie into her house in the meantime, and wait for farther directions from me, when I should effect my escape. I communicated this purpose, and recommended the old hag to poor Effie by a letter, in which I recollect that I endeavoured to support the character of Macheath under condemnation—a fine, gay, bold-faced ruffian, who is game to the last. Such, and so wretchedly poor, was my ambition! Yet I had resolved to forsake the courses I had been engaged in, should I be so fortunate as to escape the gibbet. My design was to marry your sister, and go over to the West Indies. I had still a considerable sum of money left, and I trusted to be able, in one way or other, to provide for myself and my wife.

"We made the attempt to escape, and by the obstinacy of Wilson, who insisted upon going first, it totally miscarried. The undaunted and self-denied manner in which he sacrificed himself to redeem his error, and accomplish my escape from the Tolbooth Church, you must have heard of—all Scotland rang with it. It was a gallant and extraordinary deed—All men spoke of it—all men, even those who most condemned the habits and crimes of this self-devoted man, praised the heroism of his friendship. I have many vices, but cowardice or want of gratitude, are none of the number. I resolved to requite his generosity, and even your sister's safety became a secondary consideration with me for the time. To effect Wilson's liberation was my principal object, and I doubted not to find the means.

"Yet I did not forget Effie neither. The bloodhounds of the law were so close after me, that I dared not trust myself near any of my old haunts, but old Murdockson met me by appointment, and informed me that your sister had happily been delivered of a boy. I charged the hag to keep her patient's mind easy, and let her want for nothing that money could purchase, and I retreated to Fife, where, among my old associates of Wilson's gang, I hid myself in those places of concealment where the men engaged in that desperate trade are used to find security for themselves and their uncustomed goods. Men who are disobedient both to human

and divine laws are not always insensible to the claims of courage and generosity. We were assured that the mob of Edinburgh, strongly moved with the hardship of Wilson's situation, and the gallantry of his conduct, would back any bold attempt that might be made to rescue him even from the foot of the gibbet. Desperate as the attempt seemed, upon my declaring myself ready to lead the onset on the guard, I found no want of followers who engaged to stand by me, and returned to Lothian, soon followed by some steady associates, prepared to act whenever the occasion might require.

"I have no doubt I should have rescued him from the very noose that dangled over his head," he continued with animation, which seemed a flash of the interest which he had taken in such exploits; "but amongst other precautions, the magistrates had taken one, suggested, as we afterwards learned, by the unhappy wretch Porteous, which effectually disconcerted my measures. They anticipated, by half-an-hour, the ordinary period for execution; and, as it had been resolved amongst us, that, for fear of observation from the officers of justice, we should not show ourselves upon the street until the time of action approached, it followed, that all was over before our attempt at a rescue commenced. It did commence, however, and I gained the scaffold and cut the rope with my own hand. It was too late! The bold, stouthearted, generous criminal was no more—and vengeance was all that remained to us—a vengeance, as I then thought, doubly due from my hand, to whom Wilson had given life and liberty when he could as easily have secured his own."

"O sir," said Jeanie, "did the Scripture never come into your mind, 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it?'"

"Scripture! Why, I had not opened a Bible for five years," answered Staunton.

"Wae's me, sirs," said Jeanie—"and a minister's son too!"

"It is natural for you to say so; yet do not interrupt me, but let me finish my most accursed history. The beast, Porteous, who kept firing on the people long after it had ceased to be necessary, became the object of their hatred for having overdone his duty, and of mine for having done it too well. We that is, I and the other determined friends of Wilson, resolved to be avenged—but caution was necessary. I thought I had been marked by one of the officers, and therefore continued to lurk about the vicinity of Edinburgh, but without daring to venture within the walls. At length I visited, at the hazard of my life, the place where I hoped to find my future wife and my son—they were both gone. Dame Murdockson informed me, that so soon as Effie heard of the miscarriage of the attempt to rescue Wilson, and the hot pursuit after me, she fell into a brain fever; and that being one day obliged to go out on some necessary business and leave her alone, she had taken that opportunity to escape, and she had not seen her since. I loaded her with reproaches, to which she listened with the most provoking and callous composure; for it is one of her attributes, that, violent and fierce as she is upon most occasions, there are some in which she shows the most imperturbable calmness. I threatened her with justice; she said I had more reason to fear justice than she had. I felt she was right, and was silenced. I threatened her with vengeance; she replied in nearly the same words, that, to judge by injuries received, I had more reason to fear her vengeance, than she to dread mine. She was again right, and I was left without an answer. I flung myself from her in indignation, and employed a comrade to make inquiry in the neighbourhood of Saint Leonard's concerning your sister; but ere I received his answer, the opening quest of a well-scented terrier of the law drove me from the vicinity of Edinburgh, to a more distant and secluded place of concealment. A secret and trusty emissary at length brought me the account of Porteous's condemnation, and of your sister's imprisonment on a criminal charge; thus astounding one of mine ears, while he gratified the other.

"I again ventured to the Pleasance—again charged Murdockson with treachery to the unfortunate Effie and her child, though I could conceive no reason, save that of appropriating the whole of the money I had lodged with her. Your narrative throws light on this, and shows another motive, not less powerful because less evident—the desire of wreaking vengeance on the seducer of her daughter,—the destroyer at once of her reason and reputation. Great God! how I wish that, instead of the revenge she made choice of, she had delivered me up to the cord!"

"But what account did the wretched woman give of Effie and the bairn?" said Jeanie, who, during this long and agitating narrative, had firmness and discernment enough to keep her eye on such points as might throw light on her sister's misfortunes.

"She would give none," said Staunton; "she said the mother made a moonlight flitting from her house, with the infant in her arms—that she had never seen either of them since—that the lass might have thrown the child into the North Loch or the Quarry Holes for what she knew, and it was like enough she had done so."

"And how came you to believe that she did not speak the fatal truth?" said Jeanie, trembling.

"Because, on this second occasion, I saw her daughter, and I understood from her, that, in fact, the child had been removed or destroyed during the illness of the mother. But all knowledge to be got from her is so uncertain and indirect, that I could not collect any farther circumstances. Only the diabolical character of old Murdockson makes me augur the worst."

"The last account agrees with that given by my poor sister," said Jeanie; "but gang on wi' your ain tale, sir."

"Of this I am certain," said Staunton, "that Effie, in her senses, and with her knowledge, never injured living creature.—But what could I do in her exculpation?—Nothing—and, therefore, my whole thoughts were turned toward her safety. I was under the cursed necessity of suppressing my feelings towards Murdockson; my life was in the hag's hand—that I cared not for; but on my life hung that of your sister. I spoke the wretch fair; I appeared to confide in her; and to me, so far as I was personally concerned, she gave proofs of extraordinary fidelity. I was at first uncertain what measures I ought to adopt for your sister's liberation, when the general rage excited among the citizens of Edinburgh on account of the reprieve, of Porteous, suggested to me the daring idea of forcing the jail, and at once carrying off your sister from the clutches of the law, and bringing to condign punishment a miscreant, who had tormented the unfortunate Wilson, even in the hour of death as if he had been a wild Indian taken captive by a hostile tribe. I flung myself among the multitude in the moment of fermentation—so did others among Wilson's mates, who had, like me, been disappointed in the hope of glutting their eyes with Porteous's execution. All was organised, and I was chosen for the captain. I felt not—I do not now feel, compunction for what was to be done, and has since been executed."

"O, God forgive ye, sir, and bring ye to a better sense of your ways!" exclaimed Jeanie, in horror at the avowal of such violent sentiments.

"Amen," replied Staunton, "if my sentiments are wrong. But I repeat, that, although willing to aid the deed, I could have wished them to have chosen another leader; because I foresaw that the great and general duty of the night would interfere with the assistance which I proposed to render Effie. I gave a commission however, to a trusty friend to protect her to a place of safety, so soon as the fatal procession had left the jail. But for no persuasions which I could use in the hurry of the moment, or which my comrade employed at more length, after the mob had taken a different direction, could the unfortunate girl be prevailed upon to leave the prison. His arguments were all wasted upon the infatuated victim, and he was obliged to leave her in order to attend to his own safety. Such was his account; but, perhaps, he persevered less steadily in his attempts to persuade her than I would have done."

"Effie was right to remain," said Jeanie; "and I love her the better for it."

"Why will you say so?" said Staunton.

"You cannot understand my reasons, sir, if I should render them," answered Jeanie composedly; "they that thirst for the blood of their enemies have no taste for the well-spring of life."

"My hopes," said Staunton, "were thus a second time disappointed. My next efforts were to bring her through her trial by means of yourself. How I urged it, and where, you cannot have forgotten. I do not blame you for your refusal; it was founded, I am convinced, on principle, and not on indifference to your sister's fate. For me, judge of me as a man frantic; I knew not what hand to turn to, and all my efforts were unavailing. In this condition, and close beset on all sides, I thought of what might be done by means of my family, and their influence. I fled from Scotland—I reached this place—my miserably wasted and unhappy appearance procured me from my father that pardon, which a parent finds it so hard to refuse, even to the most undeserving son. And here I have awaited in anguish of mind, which the condemned criminal might envy, the event of your sister's trial."

"Without taking any steps for her relief?" said Jeanie.

"To the last I hoped her ease might terminate more favourably; and it is only two days since that the fatal tidings reached me. My resolution was instantly taken. I mounted my best horse with the purpose of making the utmost haste to London and there compounding with Sir Robert Walpole for your sister's safety, by surrendering to him, in the person of the heir of the family of Willingham, the notorious George Robertson, the accomplice of Wilson, the breaker of the Tolbooth prison, and the well-known leader of the Porteous mob."

"But would that save my sister?" said Jeanie, in astonishment.

"It would, as I should drive my bargain," said Staunton. "Queens love revenge as well as their subjects—Little as you seem to esteem it, it is a poison which pleases all palates, from the prince to the peasant. Prime ministers love no less the power of gratifying sovereigns by gratifying their passions.—The life of an obscure village girl! Why, I might ask the best of the crown-jewels for laying the head of such an insolent conspiracy at the foot of her majesty, with a certainty of being gratified. All my other plans have failed, but this could not—Heaven is just, however, and would not honour me with making this voluntary atonement for the injury I have done your sister. I had not rode ten miles, when my horse, the best and most sure-footed animal in this country, fell with me on a level piece of road, as if he had been struck by a cannon-shot. I was greatly hurt, and was brought back here in the condition in which you now see me."

As young Staunton had come to the conclusion, the servant opened the door, and, with a voice which seemed intended rather for a signal, than merely the announcing of a visit, said, "His Reverence, sir, is coming up stairs to wait upon you."

"For God's sake, hide yourself, Jeanie," exclaimed Staunton, "in that dressing closet!"

"No, sir," said Jeanie; "as I am here for nae ill, I canna take the shame of hiding myself frae the master of the house."

"But, good Heavens!" exclaimed George Staunton, "do but consider—"

Ere he could complete the sentence, his father entered the apartment.

CHAPTER TENTH.

And now, will pardon, comfort, kindness, draw

The youth from vice? will honour, duty, law?

Crabbe.

Jeanie arose from her seat, and made her quiet reverence, when the elder Mr. Staunton entered the apartment. His astonishment was extreme at finding his son in such company.

"I perceive, madam, I have made a mistake respecting you, and ought to have left the task of interrogating you, and of righting your wrongs, to this young man, with whom, doubtless, you have been formerly acquainted."

"It's unwitting on my part that I am here," said Jeanie; "the servant told me his master wished to speak with me."

"There goes the purple coat over my ears," murmured Tummas. "D—n her, why must she needs speak the truth, when she could have as well said anything else she had a mind?"

"George," said Mr. Staunton, "if you are still, as you have ever been,—lost to all self-respect, you might at least have spared your father and your father's house, such a disgraceful scene as this."

"Upon my life—upon my soul, sir!" said George, throwing his feet over the side of the bed, and starting from his recumbent posture.

"Your life, sir?" interrupted his father, with melancholy sternness,—"*What sort of life has it been?—Your soul! alas! what regard have you ever paid to it? Take care to reform both ere offering either as pledges of your sincerity.*"

"On my honour, sir, you do me wrong," answered George Staunton; "I have been all that you can call me that's bad, but in the present instance you do me injustice. By my honour you do!"

"Your honour!" said his father, and turned from him, with a look of the most upbraiding contempt, to Jeanie. "From you, young woman, I neither ask nor expect any explanation; but as a father alike and as a clergyman, I request your departure from this house. If your romantic story has been other than a pretext to find admission into it (which, from the society in which you first appeared, I may be permitted to doubt), you will find a justice of peace within two miles, with whom, more properly than with me, you may lodge your complaint."

"This shall not be," said George Staunton, starting up to his feet. "Sir, you are naturally kind and humane—you shall not become cruel and inhospitable on my account. Turn out that eaves-dropping rascal," pointing to Thomas, "and get what hartshorn drops, or what better receipt you have against fainting, and I will explain to you in two words the connection betwixt this young woman and me. She shall not lose her fair character through me. I have done too much mischief to her family already, and I know too well what belongs to the loss of fame."

"Leave the room, sir," said the Rector to the servant; and when the man had obeyed, he carefully shut the door behind him. Then, addressing his son, he said sternly, "Now, sir, what new proof of your infamy have you to impart to me?"

Young Staunton was about to speak, but it was one of those moments when those, who, like Jeanie Deans, possess the advantage of a steady courage and unruffled temper, can assume the superiority over more ardent but less determined spirits.

"Sir," she said to the elder Staunton, "ye have an undoubted right to ask your ain son to render a reason of his conduct. But respecting me, I am but a wayfaring traveller, no ways obligated or indebted to you, unless it be for the meal of meat which, in my ain country, is willingly gien by rich or poor, according to their ability, to those who need it; and for which, forby that, I am willing to make payment, if I didna think it would be an affront to offer siller in a house like this—only I dinna ken the fashions of the country."

"This is all very well, young woman," said the Rector, a good deal surprised, and unable to conjecture whether to impute Jeanie's language to simplicity or impertinence; "this may be all very well—but let me bring it to a point. Why do you stop this young man's mouth, and prevent his communicating to his father and his best friend, an explanation (since he says he has one) of circumstances which seem in themselves not a little suspicious?"

"He may tell of his ain affairs what he likes," answered Jeanie; "but my family and friends have nae right to hae ony stories told anent them without their express desire; and, as they canna be here to speak for themselves, I entreat ye wadna ask Mr. George Rob—I mean Staunton, or whatever his name is, ony questions anent me or my folk; for I maun be free to tell you, that he will neither have the bearing of a Christian or a gentleman, if he answers you against my express desire."

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever met with," said the Rector, as, after fixing his eyes keenly on the placid, yet modest countenance of Jeanie, he turned them suddenly upon his son. "What have you to say, sir?"

"That I feel I have been too hasty in my promise, sir," answered George Staunton; "I have no title to make any communications respecting the affairs of this young person's family without her assent."

The elder Mr. Staunton turned his eyes from one to the other with marks of surprise.

"This is more, and worse, I fear," he said, addressing his son, "than one of your frequent and disgraceful connections—I insist upon knowing the mystery."

"I have already said, sir," replied his son, rather sullenly, "that I have no title to mention the affairs of this young woman's family without her consent."

"And I hae nae mysteries to explain, sir," said Jeanie, "but only to pray you, as a preacher of the gospel and a gentleman, to permit me to go safe to the next public-house on the Lunnon road."

"I shall take care of your safety," said young Staunton "you need ask that favour from no one."

"Do you say so before my face?" said the justly-incensed father. "Perhaps, sir, you intend to fill up the cup of disobedience and profligacy by forming a low and disgraceful marriage? But let me bid you beware."

"If you were feared for sic a thing happening wi' me, sir," said Jeanie, "I can only say, that not for all the land that lies between the twa ends of the rainbow wad I be the woman that should wed your son."

"There is something very singular in all this," said the elder Staunton; "follow me into the next room, young woman."

"Hear me speak first," said the young man. "I have but one word to say. I confide entirely in your prudence; tell my father as much or as little of these matters as you will, he shall know neither more nor less from me."

His father darted at him a glance of indignation, which softened into sorrow as he saw him sink down on the couch, exhausted with the scene he had undergone. He left the apartment, and Jeanie followed him, George Staunton raising himself as she passed the door-way, and pronouncing the word, "Remember!" in a tone as monitory as it was uttered by Charles I. upon the scaffold. The elder Staunton led the way into a small parlour, and shut the door.

"Young woman," said he, "there is something in your face and appearance that marks both sense and simplicity, and, if I am not deceived, innocence also—Should it be otherwise, I can only say, you are the most accomplished hypocrite I have ever seen.—I ask to know no secret that you have unwillingness to divulge, least of all those which concern my son. His conduct has given me too much unhappiness to permit me to hope comfort or satisfaction from him. If you are such as I suppose you, believe me, that whatever unhappy circumstances may have connected you with George Staunton, the sooner you break them through the better."

"I think I understand your meaning, sir," replied Jeanie; "and as ye are sae frank as to speak o' the young gentleman in sic a way, I must needs say that it is but the second time of my speaking wi' him in our lives, and what I hae heard frae him on these twa occasions has been such that I never wish to hear the like again."

"Then it is your real intention to leave this part of the country, and proceed to London?" said the Rector.

"Certainly, sir; for I may say, in one sense, that the avenger of blood is behind me; and if I were but assured against mischief by the way"

"I have made inquiry," said the clergyman, "after the suspicious characters you described. They have left their place of rendezvous; but as they may be lurking in the neighbourhood, and as you say you have special reason to apprehend violence from them, I will put you under the charge of a steady person, who will protect you as far as Stamford, and see you into a light coach, which goes from thence to London."

"A coach is not for the like of me, sir," said Jeanie, to whom the idea of a stage-coach was unknown, as, indeed, they were then only used in the neighbourhood of London.

Mr. Staunton briefly explained that she would find that mode of conveyance more commodious, cheaper, and more safe, than travelling on horseback. She expressed her gratitude with so much singleness of heart, that he was induced to ask her whether she wanted the pecuniary means of prosecuting her journey. She thanked him, but said she had enough for her purpose; and, indeed, she had husbanded her stock with great care. This reply served also to remove some doubts, which naturally enough still floated in Mr. Staunton's mind, respecting her character and real purpose, and satisfied him, at least, that money did not enter into her scheme of deception, if an impostor she should prove. He next requested to know what part of the city she wished to go to.

"To a very decent merchant, a cousin o' my ain, a Mrs. Glass, sir, that sells snuff and tobacco, at the sign o' the Thistle, somegate in the town."

Jeanie communicated this intelligence with a feeling that a connection so respectable ought to give her consequence in the eyes of Mr. Staunton; and she was a good deal surprised when he answered—

"And is this woman your only acquaintance in London, my poor girl? and have you really no better knowledge where she is to be found?"

"I was gaun to see the Duke of Argyle, forby Mrs. Glass," said Jeanie; "and if your honour thinks it would be best to go there first, and get some of his Grace's folk to show me my cousin's shop"

"Are you acquainted with any of the Duke of Argyle's people?" said the Rector.

"No, sir."

"Her brain must be something touched after all, or it would be impossible for her to rely on such introductions.—Well," said he aloud, "I must not inquire into the cause of your journey, and so I cannot be fit to give you advice how to manage it. But the landlady of the house where the coach stops is a very decent person; and as I use her house sometimes, I will give you a recommendation to her."

Jeanie thanked him for his kindness with her best courtesy, and said, "That with his honour's line, and ane from worthy Mrs. Bickerton, that keeps the Seven Stars at York, she did not doubt to be well taken out in Lunnon."

"And now," said he, "I presume you will be desirous to set out immediately."

"If I had been in an inn, sir, or any suitable resting-place," answered Jeanie, "I wad not have presumed to use the Lord's day for travelling but as I am on a journey of mercy, I trust my doing so will not be imputed."

"You may, if you choose, remain with Mrs. Dalton for the evening; but I desire you will have no farther correspondence with my son, who is not a proper counsellor for a person of your age, whatever your difficulties may be."

"Your honour speaks ower truly in that," said Jeanie; "it was not with my will that I spoke wi' him just now, and—not to wish the gentleman onything but gude—I never wish to see him between the een again."

"If you please," added the Rector, "as you seem to be a seriously disposed young woman, you may attend family worship in the hall this evening."

"I thank your honour," said Jeanie; "but I am doubtful if my attendance would be to edification."

"How!" said the Rector; "so young, and already unfortunate enough to have doubts upon the duties of religion!"

"God forbid, sir," replied Jeanie; "it is not for that; but I have been bred in the faith of the suffering remnant of the Presbyterian doctrine in Scotland, and I am doubtful if I can lawfully attend upon your fashion of worship, seeing it has been testified against by many precious souls of our kirk, and specially by my worthy father."

"Well, my good girl," said the Rector, with a good-humoured smile, "far be it from me to put any force upon your conscience; and yet you ought to recollect that the same divine grace dispenses its streams to other kingdoms as well as to Scotland. As it is as essential to our spiritual, as water to our earthly wants, its springs, various in character, yet alike efficacious in virtue, are to be found in abundance throughout the Christian world."

"Ah, but," said Jeanie, "though the waters may be alike, yet, with your worship's leave, the blessing upon them may not be equal. It would have been in vain for Naaman the Syrian leper to have bathed in Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus, when it was only the waters of Jordon that were sanctified for the cure."

"Well," said the Rector, "we will not enter upon the great debate betwixt our national churches at present. We must endeavour to satisfy you, that, at least, amongst our errors, we preserve Christian charity, and a desire to assist our brethren."

He then ordered Mrs. Dalton into his presence, and consigned Jeanie to her particular charge, with directions to be kind to her, and with assurances, that, early in the morning, a trusty guide and a good horse should be ready to conduct her to Stamford. He then took a serious and dignified, yet kind leave of her, wishing her full success in the objects of her journey, which he said he doubted not were laudable, from the soundness of thinking which she had displayed in conversation.

Jeanie was again conducted by the housekeeper to her own apartment. But the evening was not destined to pass over without farther torment from young Staunton. A paper was slipped into her hand by the faithful Tummas, which intimated his young master's desire, or rather demand, to see her instantly, and assured her he had provided against interruption.

"Tell your young master," said Jeanie, openly, and regardless of all the winks and signs by which Tummas strove to make her comprehend that Mrs. Dalton was not to be admitted into the secret of the correspondence, "that I promised faithfully to his worthy father that I would not see him again."

"Tummas," said Mrs. Dalton, "I think you might be much more creditably employed, considering the coat you wear, and the house you live in, than to be carrying messages between your young master and girls that chance to be in this house."

"Why, Mrs. Dalton, as to that, I was hired to carry messages, and not to ask any questions about them; and it's not for the like of me to refuse the young gentleman's bidding, if he were a little wildish or so. If there was harm meant, there's no harm done, you see."

"However," said Mrs. Dalton, "I gie you fair warning, Tummas Ditton, that an I catch thee at this work again, his Reverence shall make a clear house of you."

Thomas retired, abashed and in dismay. The rest of the evening passed away without anything worthy of notice.

Jeanie enjoyed the comforts of a good bed and a sound sleep with grateful satisfaction, after the perils and hardships of the preceding day; and such was her fatigue, that she slept soundly until six o'clock, when she was awakened by Mrs. Dalton, who acquainted her that her guide and horse were ready, and in attendance. She hastily rose, and, after her morning devotions, was soon ready to resume her travels. The motherly care of the housekeeper had provided an early breakfast, and, after she had partaken of this refreshment, she found herself safe seated on a pillion behind a stout Lincolnshire peasant, who was, besides, armed with pistols, to protect her against any violence which might be offered.

They trudged along in silence for a mile or two along a country road, which conducted them, by hedge and gate-way, into the principal highway, a little beyond Grantham. At length her master of the horse asked her whether her name was not Jean, or Jane, Deans. She answered in the affirmative, with some surprise. "Then here's a bit of a note as concerns you," said the man, handing it over his left shoulder. "It's from young master, as I judge, and every man about Willingham is fain to pleasure him either for love or fear; for he'll come to be landlord at last, let them say what they like."

Jeanie broke the seal of the note, which was addressed to her, and read as follows:—

"You refuse to see me. I suppose you are shocked at my character: but, in painting myself such as I am, you should give me credit for my sincerity. I am, at least, no hypocrite. You refuse, however, to see me, and your conduct may be natural—but is it wise? I have expressed my anxiety to repair your sister's misfortunes at the expense of my honour,—my family's honour—my own life, and you think me too debased to be admitted even to sacrifice what I have remaining of honour, fame, and life, in her cause. Well, if the offerer be despised, the victim is still equally at hand; and perhaps there may be justice in the decree of Heaven, that I shall not have the melancholy credit of appearing to make this sacrifice out of my own free good-will. You, as you have declined my concurrence, must take the whole upon yourself. Go, then, to the Duke of Argyle, and, when other arguments fail you, tell him you have it in your power to bring to condign punishment the most active conspirator in the Porteous mob. He will hear you on this topic, should he be deaf to every other. Make your own terms, for they will be at your own making. You know where I am to be found; and you may be assured I will not give you the dark side of the hill, as at Muschat's Cairn; I have no thoughts of stirring from the house I was born in; like the hare, I shall be worried in the seat I started from. I repeat it—make your own terms. I need not remind you to ask your sister's life, for that you will do of course; but make terms of advantage for yourself—ask wealth and reward—office and income for Butler—ask anything—you will get anything—and all for delivering to the hands of the executioner a man most deserving of his office;—one who, though young in years, is old in wickedness, and whose most earnest desire is, after the storms of an unquiet life, to sleep and be at rest."

This extraordinary letter was subscribed with the initials G. S.

Jeanie read it over once or twice with great attention, which the slow pace of the horse, as he stalked through a deep lane, enabled her to do with facility.

When she had perused this billet, her first employment was to tear it into as small pieces as possible, and disperse these pieces in the air by a few at a time, so that a document containing so perilous a secret might not fall into any other person's hand.

The question how far, in point of extremity, she was entitled to save her sister's life by sacrificing that of a person who, though guilty towards the state, had done her no injury, formed the next earnest and most painful subject of consideration. In one sense, indeed, it seemed as if denouncing the guilt of Staunton, the cause of her sister's errors and misfortunes, would have been an act of just, and even providential retribution. But Jeanie, in the strict and severe tone of morality in which she was educated, had to consider not only the general aspect of a proposed action, but its justness and fitness in relation to the actor, before she could be, according to her own phrase, free to enter upon it. What right had she to make a barter between the lives of Staunton and of Effie, and to sacrifice the one for the safety of the other? His guilt—that guilt for which he was amenable to the laws—was a crime against the public indeed, but it was not against her.

Neither did it seem to her that his share in the death of Porteous, though her mind revolted at the idea of using violence to any one, was in the relation of a common murder, against the perpetrator of which every one is called to aid the public magistrate. That violent action was blended with many circumstances, which, in the eyes of those in Jeanie's rank of life, if they did not altogether deprive it of the character of guilt, softened, at least, its most atrocious features. The anxiety of the government to obtain conviction of some of the offenders, had but served to increase the public feeling which connected the action, though violent and irregular, with the idea of ancient national independence. The rigorous measures adopted or proposed against the city of Edinburgh, the ancient metropolis of Scotland—the extremely unpopular and injudicious measure of compelling the Scottish clergy, contrary to their principles and sense of duty, to promulgate from the pulpit the reward offered for the discovery of the perpetrators of this slaughter, had produced on the public mind the opposite consequences from what were intended; and Jeanie felt conscious, that whoever should lodge information concerning that event, and for whatsoever purpose it might be done, it would be considered as an act of treason against the independence of Scotland. With the fanaticism of the Scottish Presbyterians, there was always mingled a glow of national feeling, and Jeanie, trembled at the idea of her name being handed down to posterity with that of the "fause Monteath," and one or two others, who, having deserted and betrayed the cause of their country, are damned to perpetual remembrance and execration among its peasantry. Yet, to part with Effie's life once more, when a word spoken might save it, pressed severely on the mind of her affectionate sister.

"The Lord support and direct me!" said Jeanie, "for it seems to be His will to try me with difficulties far beyond my ain strength."

While this thought passed through Jeanie's mind, her guard, tired of silence, began to show some inclination to be communicative. He seemed a sensible, steady peasant, but not having more delicacy or prudence than is common to those in his situation, he, of course, chose the Willingham family as the subject of his conversation. From this man Jeanie learned some particulars of which she had hitherto been ignorant, and which we will briefly recapitulate for the information of the reader.

The father of George Staunton had been bred a soldier, and during service in the West Indies, had married the heiress of a wealthy planter. By this lady he had an only child, George Staunton, the unhappy young man who has been so often mentioned in this narrative. He passed the first part of his early youth under the charge of a doting mother, and in the society of negro slaves, whose study it was to gratify his every caprice. His father was a man of worth and sense; but as he alone retained tolerable health among the officers of the regiment he belonged to, he was much engaged with his duty. Besides, Mrs. Staunton was beautiful and wilful, and enjoyed but delicate health; so that it was difficult for a man of affection, humanity, and a quiet disposition, to struggle with her on the point of her over-indulgence to an only child. Indeed, what Mr. Staunton did do towards counteracting the baneful effects of his wife's system, only tended to render it more pernicious; for every restraint imposed on the boy in his father's presence, was compensated by treble license during his absence. So that George Staunton acquired, even in childhood, the habit of regarding his father as a rigid censor, from whose severity he was desirous of emancipating himself as soon and absolutely as possible.

When he was about ten years old, and when his mind had received all the seeds of those evil weeds which afterwards grew apace, his mother died, and his father, half heart-broken, returned to England. To sum up her imprudence and unjustifiable indulgence, she had contrived to place a considerable part of her fortune at her son's exclusive control or disposal, in consequence of which management, George Staunton had not been long in England till he learned his independence, and how to abuse it. His father had endeavoured to rectify the defects of his education by placing him in a well-regulated seminary. But although he showed some capacity for learning, his riotous conduct soon became intolerable to his teachers. He found means (too easily afforded to all youths who have certain expectations) of procuring such a command of money as enabled him to anticipate in boyhood the frolics and follies of a more mature age, and, with these accomplishments, he was returned on his father's hands as a profligate boy, whose example might ruin a hundred.

The elder Mr. Staunton, whose mind, since his wife's death, had been tinged with a melancholy, which certainly his son's conduct did not tend to dispel, had taken orders, and was inducted by his brother Sir William Staunton into the family living of Willingham. The revenue was a matter of consequence to him, for he derived little advantage from the estate of his late wife; and his own fortune was that of a younger brother.

He took his son to reside with him at the rectory, but he soon found that his disorders rendered him an intolerable inmate. And as the young men of his own rank would not endure the purse-proud insolence of the Creole, he fell into that taste for low society, which is worse than "pressing to death, whipping, or hanging." His father sent him abroad, but he only returned wilder and more desperate than before. It is true, this unhappy youth was not without his good qualities. He had lively wit, good temper, reckless generosity, and manners, which, while he was under restraint, might pass well in society. But all these availed him nothing. He was so

well acquainted with the turf, the gaming-table, the cock-pit, and every worse rendezvous of folly and dissipation, that his mother's fortune was spent before he was twenty-one, and he was soon in debt and in distress. His early history may be concluded in the words of our British Juvenal, when describing a similar character:—

*Headstrong, determined in his own career,
He thought reproof unjust, and truth severe.
The soul's disease was to its crisis come,
He first abused, and then abjured, his home;
And when he chose a vagabond to be,
He made his shame his glory, "I'll be free!"**
[Crabbe's Borough, Letter xii.]

"And yet 'tis pity on Measter George, too," continued the honest boor, "for he has an open hand, and winna let a poor body want an he has it."

The virtue of profuse generosity, by which, indeed, they themselves are most directly advantaged, is readily admitted by the vulgar as a cloak for many sins.

At Stamford our heroine was deposited in safety by her communicative guide. She obtained a place in the coach, which, although termed a light one, and accommodated with no fewer than six horses, only reached London on the afternoon of the second day. The recommendation of the elder Mr. Staunton procured Jeanie a civil reception at the inn where the carriage stopped, and, by the aid of Mrs. Bickerton's correspondent, she found out her friend and relative Mrs. Glass, by whom she was kindly received and hospitably entertained.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

*My name is Argyle, you may well think it strange,
To live at the court and never to change.
Ballad.*

Few names deserve more honourable mention in the history of Scotland, during this period, than that of John, Duke of Argyle and Greenwich. His talents as a statesman and a soldier were generally admitted; he was not without ambition, but "without the illness that attends it"—without that irregularity of thought and aim, which often excites great men, in his peculiar situation, (for it was a very peculiar one), to grasp the means of raising themselves to power, at the risk of throwing a kingdom into confusion. Pope has distinguished him as

*Argyle, the state's whole thunder born to wield,
And shake alike the senate and the field.*

He was alike free from the ordinary vices of statesmen, falsehood, namely, and dissimulation; and from those of warriors, inordinate and violent thirst after self-aggrandisement.

Scotland, his native country, stood at this time in a very precarious and doubtful situation. She was indeed united to England, but the cement had not had time to acquire consistence. The irritation of ancient wrongs still subsisted, and betwixt the fretful jealousy of the Scottish, and the supercilious disdain of the English, quarrels repeatedly occurred, in the course of which the national league, so important to the safety of both, was in the utmost danger of being dissolved. Scotland had, besides, the disadvantage of being divided into intestine factions, which hated each other bitterly, and waited but a signal to break forth into action.

In such circumstances, another man, with the talents and rank of Argyle, but without a mind so happily regulated, would have sought to rise from the earth in the whirlwind, and direct its fury. He chose a course more safe and more honourable. Soaring above the petty distinctions of faction, his voice was raised, whether in office or opposition, for those measures which were at once just and lenient. His high military talents enabled him, during the memorable year 1715, to render such services to the House of Hanover, as, perhaps, were too great to be either acknowledged or repaid. He had employed, too, his utmost influence in softening the consequences of that insurrection to the unfortunate gentlemen whom a mistaken sense of loyalty had engaged in the affair, and was rewarded by the esteem and affection of his country in an uncommon degree. This popularity, with a discontented and warlike people, was supposed to be a subject of jealousy at court, where the power to become dangerous is sometimes of itself obnoxious, though the inclination is not united with it. Besides, the Duke of Argyle's independent and somewhat haughty mode of expressing himself in Parliament, and acting in public, were ill calculated to attract royal favour. He was, therefore, always respected, and often employed; but he was not a favourite of George the Second, his consort, or his ministers. At several different periods in his life, the Duke might be considered as in absolute disgrace at court, although he could hardly be said to be a declared member of opposition. This rendered him the dearer to Scotland, because it was usually in her cause that he incurred the displeasure of his sovereign; and upon this very occasion of the Porteous mob, the animated and eloquent opposition which he had offered to the severe measures which were about to be adopted towards the city of Edinburgh, was the more gratefully received in that metropolis, as it was understood that the Duke's interposition had given personal offence to Queen Caroline.

His conduct upon this occasion, as, indeed, that of all the Scottish members of the legislature, with one or two unworthy exceptions, had been in the highest degree spirited. The popular tradition, concerning his reply to Queen Caroline, has been given already, and some fragments of his speech against the Porteous Bill are still remembered. He retorted upon the Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, the insinuation that he had stated himself in this case rather as a party than as a judge:—"I appeal," said Argyle, "to the House—to the nation, if I can be justly branded with the infamy of being a jobber or a partisan. Have I been a briber of votes?—a buyer of boroughs?—the agent of corruption for any purpose, or on behalf of any party?—Consider my life; examine my actions in the field and in the cabinet, and see where there lies a blot that can attach to my honour. I have shown myself the friend of my country—the loyal subject of my king. I am ready to do so again, without an instant's regard to the frowns or smiles of a court. I have experienced both, and am prepared with indifference for either. I have given my reasons for opposing this bill, and have made it appear that it is repugnant to the international treaty of union, to the liberty of Scotland, and, reflectively, to that of England, to common justice, to common sense, and to the public interest. Shall the metropolis of Scotland, the capital of an independent nation, the residence of a long line of monarchs, by whom that noble city was graced and dignified—shall such a city, for the fault of an obscure and unknown body of rioters, be deprived of its honours and its privileges—its gates and its guards?—and shall a native Scotsman tamely behold the havoc? I glory, my Lords, in opposing such unjust rigour, and reckon it my dearest pride and honour to stand up in defence of my native country while thus laid open to undeserved shame, and unjust spoliation."

Other statesmen and orators, both Scottish and English, used the same arguments, the bill was gradually stripped of its most oppressive and obnoxious clauses, and at length ended in a fine upon the city of Edinburgh in favour of Porteous's widow. So that, as somebody observed at the time, the whole of these fierce debates ended in making the fortune of an old cook-maid, such having been the good woman's original capacity.

The court, however, did not forget the baffle they had received in this affair, and the Duke of Argyle, who had contributed so much to it, was thereafter considered as a person in disgrace. It is necessary to place these circumstances under the reader's observation, both because they are connected with the preceding and subsequent part of our narrative.

The Duke was alone in his study, when one of his gentlemen acquainted him, that a country-girl, from Scotland, was desirous of speaking with his Grace.

"A country-girl, and from Scotland!" said the Duke; "what can have brought the silly fool to London?—Some lover pressed and sent to sea, or some stock sank in the South-Sea funds, or some such hopeful concern, I suppose, and then nobody to manage the matter but MacCallummore,—Well, this same popularity has its inconveniences.—However, show our countrywoman up, Archibald—it is ill manners to keep her in attendance."

A young woman of rather low stature, and whose countenance might be termed very modest and pleasing in expression, though sun-burnt, somewhat freckled, and not possessing regular features, was ushered into the splendid library. She wore the tartan plaid of her country, adjusted so as partly to cover her head, and

partly to fall back over her shoulders. A quantity of fair hair, disposed with great simplicity and neatness, appeared in front of her round and good-humoured face, to which the solemnity of her errand, and her sense of the Duke's rank and importance, gave an appearance of deep awe, but not of slavish fear, or fluttered bashfulness. The rest of Jeanie's dress was in the style of Scottish maidens of her own class; but arranged with that scrupulous attention to neatness and cleanliness, which we often find united with that purity of mind, of which it is a natural emblem.

She stopped near the entrance of the room, made her deepest reverence, and crossed her hands upon her bosom, without uttering a syllable. The Duke of Argyle advanced towards her; and, if she admired his graceful deportment and rich dress, decorated with the orders which had been deservedly bestowed on him, his courteous manner, and quick and intelligent cast of countenance, he on his part was not less, or less deservedly, struck with the quiet simplicity and modesty expressed in the dress, manners, and countenance of his humble countrywoman.

"Did you wish to speak with me, my bonny lass?" said the Duke, using the encouraging epithet which at once acknowledged the connection betwixt them as country-folk; "or did you wish to see the Duchess?"

"My business is with your honour, my Lord—I mean your Lordship's Grace."

"And what is it, my good girl?" said the Duke, in the same mild and encouraging tone of voice. Jeanie looked at the attendant. "Leave us, Archibald," said the Duke, "and wait in the anteroom." The domestic retired. "And now sit down, my good lass," said the Duke; "take your breath—take your time, and tell me what you have got to say. I guess by your dress, you are just come up from poor Scotland—Did you come through the streets in your tartan plaid?"

"No, sir," said Jeanie; "a friend brought me in ane o' their street coaches—a very decent woman," she added, her courage increasing as she became familiar with the sound of her own voice in such a presence; "your Lordship's Grace kens her—it's Mrs. Glass, at the sign o' the Thistle."

"O, my worthy snuff-merchant—I have always a chat with Mrs. Glass when I purchase my Scots high-dried. Well, but your business, my bonny woman—time and tide, you know, wait for no one."

"Your honour—I beg your Lordship's pardon—I mean your Grace,"—for it must be noticed, that this matter of addressing the Duke by his appropriate title had been anxiously inculcated upon Jeanie by her friend Mrs. Glass, in whose eyes it was a matter of such importance, that her last words, as Jeanie left the coach, were, "Mind to say your Grace;" and Jeanie, who had scarce ever in her life spoke to a person of higher quality than the Laird of Dumbiedikes, found great difficulty in arranging her language according to the rules of ceremony.

The Duke, who saw her embarrassment, said, with his usual affability, "Never mind my grace, lassie; just speak out a plain tale, and show you have a Scots tongue in your head."

"Sir, I am muckle obliged—Sir, I am the sister of that poor unfortunate criminal, Effie Deans, who is ordered for execution at Edinburgh."

"Ah!" said the Duke, "I have heard of that unhappy story, I think—a case of child-murder, under a special act of parliament—Duncan Forbes mentioned it at dinner the other day."

"And I was come up frae the north, sir, to see what could be done for her in the way of getting a reprieve or pardon, sir, or the like of that."

"Alas! my poor girl," said the Duke; "you have made a long and a sad journey to very little purpose—Your sister is ordered for execution."

"But I am given to understand that there is law for reprieving her, if it is in the king's pleasure," said Jeanie.

"Certainly, there is," said the Duke; "but that is purely in the king's breast. The crime has been but too common—the Scots crown-lawyers think it is right there should be an example. Then the late disorders in Edinburgh have excited a prejudice in government against the nation at large, which they think can only be managed by measures of intimidation and severity. What argument have you, my poor girl, except the warmth of your sisterly affection, to offer against all this?—What is your interest?—What friends have you at court?"

"None, excepting God and your Grace," said Jeanie, still keeping her ground resolutely, however.

"Alas!" said the Duke, "I could almost say with old Ormond, that there could not be any, whose influence was smaller with kings and ministers. It is a cruel part of our situation, young woman—I mean of the situation of men in my circumstances, that the public ascribe to them influence which they do not possess; and that individuals are led to expect from them assistance which we have no means of rendering. But candour and plain dealing is in the power of every one, and I must not let you imagine you have resources in my influence, which do not exist, to make your distress the heavier—I have no means of averting your sister's fate—She must die."

"We must a' die, sir," said Jeanie; "it is our common doom for our father's transgression; but we shouldna hasten ilk other out o' the world, that's what your honour kens better than me."

"My good young woman," said the Duke, mildly, "we are all apt to blame the law under which we immediately suffer; but you seem to have been well educated in your line of life, and you must know that it is alike the law of God and man, that the murderer shall surely die."

"But, sir, Effie—that is, my poor sister, sir—canna be proved to be a murderer; and if she be not, and the law take her life notwithstanding, wha is it that is the murderer then?"

"I am no lawyer," said the Duke; "and I own I think the statute a very severe one."

"You are a law-maker, sir, with your leave; and, therefore, ye have power over the law," answered Jeanie.

"Not in my individual capacity," said the Duke; "though, as one of a large body, I have a voice in the legislation. But that cannot serve you—nor have I at present, I care not who knows it, so much personal influence with the sovereign, as would entitle me to ask from him the most insignificant favour. What could tempt you, young woman, to address yourself to me?"

"It was yourself, sir."

"Myself?" he replied—"I am sure you have never seen me before."

"No, sir; but a' the world kens that the Duke of Argyle is his country's friend; and that ye fight for the right, and speak for the right, and that there's nane like you in our present Israel, and so they that think themselves wranged draw to refuge under your shadow; and if ye wunna stir to save the blood of an innocent countrywoman of your ain, what should we expect frae southerners and strangers? And maybe I had another reason for troubling your honour."

"And what is that?" asked the Duke.

"I hae understood from my father, that your honour's house, and especially your gudesire and his father, laid down their lives on the scaffold in the persecuting time. And my father was honoured to gie his testimony baith in the cage and in the pillory, as is specially mentioned in the books of Peter Walker the packman, that your honour, I dare say, kens, for he uses maist partly the westland of Scotland. And, sir, there's ane that takes concern in me, that wished me to gang to your Grace's presence, for his gudesire had done your gracious gudesire some good turn, as ye will see frae these papers."

With these words, she delivered to the Duke the little parcel which she had received from Butler. He opened it, and, in the envelope, read with some surprise, "Musterroll of the men serving in the troop of that godly gentleman, Captain Salathiel Bangtext.—Obadiah Muggleton, Sin-Despise Double-knock, Stand-fast-in-faith Gipps, Turn-to-the-right Thwack-away"—What the deuce is this? A list of Praise-God Barebone's Parliament I think, or of old Noll's evangelical army—that last fellow should understand his wheelings, to judge by his name.—But what does all this mean, my girl?"

"It was the other paper, sir," said Jeanie, somewhat abashed at the mistake.

"O, this is my unfortunate grandfather's hand sure enough—To all who may have friendship for the house of Argyle, these are to certify, that Benjamin Butler, of Monk's regiment of dragoons, having been, under God, the means of saving my life from four English troopers who were about, to slay me, I, having no other present means of recompense in my power, do give him this acknowledgment, hoping that it may be useful to him or his during these troublesome times; and do conjure my friends, tenants, kinsmen, and whoever will do aught for me, either in the Highlands or Lowlands, to protect and assist the said Benjamin Butler, and his friends or family, on their lawful occasions, giving them such countenance, maintenance, and supply, as may correspond with the benefit he hath bestowed on me; witness my hand—Lorne."

"This is a strong injunction—This Benjamin Butler was your grandfather, I suppose?—You seem too young to have been his daughter."

"He was nae akin to me, sir—he was grandfather to ane—to a neighbour's son—to a sincere weel-wisher of mine, sir," dropping her little courtesy as she spoke.

"O, I understand," said the Duke—"a true-love affair. He was the grandsire of one you are engaged to?"

"One I was engaged to, sir," said Jeanie, sighing; "but this unhappy business of my poor sister—"

"What!" said the Duke, hastily—"he has not deserted you on that account, has he?"

"No, sir; he wad be the last to leave a friend in difficulties," said Jeanie; "but I maun think for him as weel as for mysell. He is a clergyman, sir, and it would not beseem him to marry the like of me, wi' this disgrace on my kindred."

"You are a singular young woman," said the Duke. "You seem to me to think of every one before yourself. And have you really come up from Edinburgh on foot, to attempt this hopeless solicitation for your sister's life?"

"It was not a'thegither on foot, sir," answered Jeanie; "for I sometimes got a cast in a waggon, and I had a horse from Ferrybridge, and then the coach"

"Well, never mind all that," interrupted the Duke—"What reason have you for thinking your sister innocent?"

"Because she has not been proved guilty, as will appear from looking at these papers."

She put into his hand a note of the evidence, and copies of her sister's declaration. These papers Butler had procured after her departure, and Saddletree had them forwarded to London, to Mrs. Glass's care, so that Jeanie found the documents, so necessary for supporting her suit, lying in readiness at her arrival.

"Sit down in that chair, my good girl," said the Duke,— "until I glance over the papers."

She obeyed, and watched with the utmost anxiety each change in his countenance as he cast his eye through the papers briefly, yet with attention, and making memoranda as he went along. After reading them hastily over, he looked up, and seemed about to speak, yet changed his purpose, as if afraid of committing himself by giving too hasty an opinion, and read over again several passages which he had marked as being most important. All this he did in shorter time than can be supposed by men of ordinary talents; for his mind was of that acute and penetrating character which discovers, with the glance of intuition, what facts bear on the particular point that chances to be subjected to consideration. At length he rose, after a few minutes' deep reflection.— "Young woman," said he, "your sister's case must certainly be termed a hard one."

"God bless you, sir, for that very word!" said Jeanie.

"It seems contrary to the genius of British law," continued the Duke, "to take that for granted which is not proved, or to punish with death for a crime, which, for aught the prosecutor has been able to show, may not have been committed at all."

"God bless you, sir!" again said Jeanie, who had risen from her seat, and, with clasped hands, eyes glittering through tears, and features which trembled with anxiety, drank in every word which the Duke uttered.

"But, alas! my poor girl," he continued, "what good will my opinion do you, unless I could impress it upon those in whose hands your sister's life is placed by the law? Besides, I am no lawyer; and I must speak with some of our Scottish gentlemen of the gown about the matter."

"O, but, sir, what seems reasonable to your honour, will certainly be the same to them," answered Jeanie.

"I do not know that," replied the Duke; "ilka man buckles his belt his ain gate—you know our old Scots proverb?—But you shall not have placed this reliance on me altogether in vain. Leave these papers with me, and you shall hear from me to-morrow or next day. Take care to be at home at Mrs. Glass's, and ready to come to me at a moment's warning. It will be unnecessary for you to give Mrs. Glass the trouble to attend you;—and by the by, you will please to be dressed just as you are at present."

"I wad hae putten on a cap, sir," said Jeanie, "but your honour kens it isna the fashion of my country for single women; and I judged that, being sae many hundred miles frae hame, your Grace's heart wad warm to the tartan," looking at the corner of her plaid.

"You judged quite right," said the Duke. "I know the full value of the snood; and MacCallummore's heart will be as cold as death can make it, when it does *not* warm to the tartan. Now, go away, and don't be out of the way when I send."

Jeanie replied,— "There is little fear of that, sir, for I have little heart to go to see sights among this wilderness of black houses. But if I might say to your gracious honour, that if ye ever condescend to speak to ony ane that is of greater degree than yoursell, though maybe it isna civil in me to say sae, just if you would think there can be nae sic odds between you and them, as between poor Jeanie Deans from St. Leonard's and the Duke of Argyle; and so dinna be chappit back or cast down wi' the first rough answer."

"I am not apt," said the Duke, laughing, "to mind rough answers much—Do not you hope too much from what I have promised. I will do my best, but God has the hearts of Kings in his own hand."

Jeanie courtesied reverently and withdrew, attended by the Duke's gentleman, to her hackney-coach, with a respect which her appearance did not demand, but which was perhaps paid to the length of the interview with which his master had honoured her.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

Ascend

*While radiant summer opens all its pride,
Thy hill, delightful Shene! Here let us sweep
The boundless landscape.*

Thomson.

From her kind and officious, but somewhat gossiping friend, Mrs. Glass, Jeanie underwent a very close catechism on their road to the Strand, where the Thistle of the good lady flourished in full glory, and, with its legend of *Nemo me impune*, distinguished a shop then well known to all Scottish folk of high and low degree.

"And were you sure aye to say *your* Grace to him?" said the good old lady; "for ane should make a distinction between MacCallummore and the bits o' southern bodies that they ca' lords here—there are as mony o' them, Jeanie, as would gar ane think they maun cost but little fash in the making—some of them I wadna trust wi' six pennies-worth of black-rappee—some of them I wadna gie mysell the trouble to put up a hapnyworth in brown paper for—But I hope you showed your breeding to the Duke of Argyle, for what sort of folk would he think your friends in London, if you had been lording him, and him a Duke?"

"He didna seem muckle to mind," said Jeanie; "he kend that I was landward bred."

"Weel, weel," answered the good lady. "His Grace kens me weel; so I am the less anxious about it. I never fill his snug-box but he says, 'How d'ye do, good Mrs. Glass?—How are all our friends in the North?' or it may be—'Have ye heard from the North lately?' And you may be sure, I make my best courtesy, and answer, 'My Lord Duke, I hope your Grace's noble Duchess, and your Grace's young ladies, are well; and I hope the snuff continues to give your Grace satisfaction.' And then ye will see the people in the shop begin to look about them; and if there's a Scotsman, as there may be three or half-a-dozen, aff go the hats, and mony a look after him, and 'There goes the Prince of Scotland, God bless him!' But ye have not told me yet the very words he said 't'ye."

Jeanie had no intention to be quite so communicative. She had, as the reader may have observed, some of the caution and shrewdness, as well as of the simplicity of her country. She answered generally, that the Duke had received her very compassionately, and had promised to interest himself in her sister's affair, and to let her hear from him in the course of the next day, or the day after. She did not choose to make any mention of his having desired her to be in readiness to attend him, far less of his hint, that she should not bring her landlady. So that honest Mrs. Glass was obliged to remain satisfied with the general intelligence above mentioned, after having done all she could to extract more.

It may easily be conceived, that, on the next day, Jeanie declined all invitations and inducements, whether of exercise or curiosity, to walk abroad, and continued to inhale the close, and somewhat professional atmosphere of Mrs. Glass's small parlour. The latter flavour it owed to a certain cupboard, containing, among other articles, a few canisters of real Havannah, which, whether from respect to the manufacture, or out of a reverend fear of the exciseman, Mrs. Glass did not care to trust in the open shop below, and which communicated to the room a scent, that, however fragrant to the nostrils of the connoisseur, was not very agreeable to those of Jeanie.

"Dear sirs," she said to herself, "I wonder how my cousin's silk manty, and her gowd watch, or any thing in the world, can be worth sitting sneezing all her life in this little stilling room, and might walk on green braes if she liked."

Mrs. Glass was equally surprised at her cousin's reluctance to stir abroad, and her indifference to the fine sights of London. "It would always help to pass away the time," she said, "to have something to look at, though ane was in distress." But Jeanie was unpersuadable.

The day after her interview with the Duke was spent in that "hope delayed, which maketh the heart sick." Minutes glided after minutes—hours fled after hours—it became too late to have any reasonable expectation of hearing from the Duke that day; yet the hope which she disowned, she could not altogether relinquish, and her heart throbbed, and her ears tingled, with every casual sound in the shop below. It was in vain. The day wore away in the anxiety of protracted and fruitless expectation.

The next morning commenced in the same manner. But before noon, a well-dressed gentleman entered Mrs. Glass's shop, and requested to see a young woman from Scotland.

"That will be my cousin Jeanie Deans, Mr. Archibald," said Mrs. Glass, with a courtesy of recognisance. "Have you any message for her from his Grace the Duke of Argyle, Mr. Archibald? I will carry it to her in a moment."

"I believe I must give her the trouble of stepping down, Mrs. Glass."

"Jeanie—Jeanie Deans!" said Mrs. Glass, screaming at the bottom of the little staircase, which ascended from the corner of the shop to the higher regions.

"Jeanie—Jeanie Deans, I say! come down stairs instantly; here is the Duke of Argyle's groom of the chambers desires to see you directly." This was announced in a voice so loud, as to make all who chanced to be within hearing aware of the important communication.

It may easily be supposed, that Jeanie did not tarry long in adjusting herself to attend the summons, yet her feet almost failed her as she came down stairs.

"I must ask the favour of your company a little way," said Archibald, with civility.

"I am quite ready, sir," said Jeanie.

"Is my cousin going out, Mr. Archibald? then I will hae to go wi' her, no doubt.—James Rasper—Look to the shop, James.—Mr. Archibald," pushing a jar towards him, "you take his Grace's mixture, I think. Please to fill your box, for old acquaintance' sake, while I get on my things."

Mr. Archibald transferred a modest parcel of snuff from the jar to his own mull, but said he was obliged to decline the pleasure of Mrs. Glass's company, as his message was particularly to the young person.

"Particularly to the young person?" said Mrs. Glass; "is not that uncommon, Mr. Archibald? But his Grace is the best judge; and you are a steady person, Mr. Archibald. It is not every one that comes from a great man's house I would trust my cousin with.—But, Jeanie, you must not go through the streets with Mr. Archibald with your tartan what-d'ye-call-it there upon your shoulders, as if you had come up with a drove of Highland cattle. Wait till I bring down my silk cloak. Why, we'll have the mob after you!"

"I have a hackney-coach in waiting, madam," said Mr. Archibald, interrupting the officious old lady, from whom Jeanie might otherwise have found it difficult to escape; "and, I believe, I must not allow her time for any change of dress."

So saying, he hurried Jeanie into the coach, while she internally praised and wondered at the easy manner in which he shifted off Mrs. Glass's officious offers and inquiries, without mentioning his master's orders, or entering into any explanation,

On entering the coach, Mr. Archibald seated himself in the front seat opposite to our heroine, and they drove on in silence. After they had driven nearly half-an-hour, without a word on either side, it occurred to Jeanie, that the distance and time did not correspond with that which had been occupied by her journey on the former occasion, to and from the residence of the Duke of Argyle. At length she could not help asking her taciturn companion, "Whilk way they were going?"

"My Lord Duke will inform you himself, madam," answered Archibald, with the same solemn courtesy which marked his whole demeanour. Almost as he spoke, the hackney-coach drew up, and the coachman dismounted and opened the door. Archibald got out, and assisted Jeanie to get down. She found herself in a large turnpike road, without the bounds of London, upon the other side of which road was drawn up a plain chariot and four horses, the panels without arms, and the servants without liveries.

"You have been punctual, I see, Jeanie," said the Duke of Argyle, as Archibald opened the carriage-door. "You must be my companion for the rest of the way. Archibald will remain here with the hackney-coach till your return."

Ere Jeanie could make answer, she found herself, to her no small astonishment, seated by the side of a duke, in a carriage which rolled forward at a rapid yet smooth rate, very different in both particulars from the lumbering, jolting vehicle which she had just left; and which, lumbering and jolting as it was, conveyed to one who had seldom been in a coach before a certain feeling of dignity and importance.

"Young woman," said the Duke, "after thinking as attentively on your sister's case as is in my power, I continue to be impressed with the belief that great injustice may be done by the execution of her sentence. So are one or two liberal and intelligent lawyers of both countries whom I have spoken with.—Nay, pray hear me out before you thank me.—I have already told you my personal conviction is of little consequence, unless I could impress the same upon others. Now I have done for you what I would certainly not have done to serve any purpose of my own—I have asked an audience of a lady whose interest with the king is deservedly very high. It has been allowed me, and I am desirous that you should see her and speak for yourself. You have no occasion to be abashed; tell your story simply, as you did to me."

"I am much obliged to your Grace," said Jeanie, remembering Mrs. Glass's charge, "and I am sure, since I have had the courage to speak to your Grace in poor Effie's cause, I have less reason to be shame-faced in speaking to a leddy. But, sir, I would like to ken what to ca' her, whether your grace or your honour, or your leddyship, as we say to lairds and leddies in Scotland, and I will take care to mind it; for I ken leddies are full mair particular than gentlemen about their titles of honour."

"You have no occasion to call her anything but Madam. Just say what you think is likely to make the best impression—look at me from time to time—and if I put my hand to my cravat so—(showing her the motion)—you will stop; but I shall only do this when you say anything that is not likely to please."

"But, sir, your Grace," said Jeanie, "if it wasna ower muckle trouble, wad it no be better to tell me what I should say, and I could get it by heart?"

"No, Jeanie, that would not have the same effect—that would be like reading a sermon, you know, which we good Presbyterians think has less unction than when spoken without book," replied the Duke. "Just speak as plainly and boldly to this lady, as you did to me the day before yesterday, and if you can gain her consent, I'll wad ye a plack, as we say in the north, that you get the pardon from the king."

As he spoke, he took a pamphlet from his pocket, and began to read. Jeanie had good sense and tact, which constitute betwixt them that which is called natural good breeding. She interpreted the Duke's manoeuvre as a hint that she was to ask no more questions, and she remained silent accordingly.

The carriage rolled rapidly onwards through fertile meadows, ornamented with splendid old oaks, and catching occasionally a glance of the majestic mirror of a broad and placid river. After passing through a pleasant village, the equipage stopped on a commanding eminence, where the beauty of English landscape was displayed in its utmost luxuriance. Here the Duke alighted, and desired Jeanie to follow him. They paused for a moment on the brow of a hill, to gaze on the unrivalled landscape which it presented. A huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves, was tenanted by numberless flocks and herds, which seemed to wander unrestrained and unbounded through the rich pastures. The Thames, here turreted with villas, and there

garlanded with forests, moved on slowly and placidly, like the mighty monarch of the scene, to whom all its other beauties were but accessories, and bore on its bosom an hundred barks and skiffs, whose white sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole.

The Duke of Argyle was, of course, familiar with this scene; but to a man of taste it must be always new. Yet, as he paused and looked on this inimitable landscape, with the feeling of delight which it must give to the bosom of every admirer of nature, his thoughts naturally reverted to his own more grand, and scarce less beautiful, domains of Inverary.—"This is a fine scene," he said to his companion, curious, perhaps, to draw out her sentiments; "we have nothing like it in Scotland."

"It's braw rich feeding for the cows, and they have a fine breed o' cattle here," replied Jeanie; "but I like just as weel to look at the craigs of Arthur's Seat, and the sea coming in ayont them as at a' thae muckle trees."

The Duke smiled at a reply equally professional and national, and made a signal for the carriage to remain where it was. Then adopting an unfrequented footpath, he conducted Jeanie through several complicated mazes to a postern-door in a high brick wall.

It was shut; but as the Duke tapped slightly at it, a person in waiting within, after reconnoitring through a small iron grate, contrived for the purpose, unlocked the door and admitted them. They entered, and it was immediately closed and fastened behind them. This was all done quickly, the door so instantly closing, and the person who opened it so suddenly disappearing, that Jeanie could not even catch a glimpse of his exterior.

They found themselves at the extremity of a deep and narrow alley, carpeted with the most verdant and close-shaven turf, which felt like velvet under their feet, and screened from the sun by the branches of the lofty elms which united over the path, and caused it to resemble, in the solemn obscurity of the light which they admitted, as well as from the range of columnar stems, and intricate union of their arched branches, one of the narrow side aisles in an ancient Gothic cathedral.

CHAPTER THIRTEETH

I beseech you—

These tears beseech you, and these chaste hands woo you

That never yet were heaved but to things holy—

Things like yourself—You are a God above us;

Be as a God, then, full of saving mercy!

The Bloody Brother.

Encouraged as she was by the courteous manners of her noble countryman, it was not without a feeling of something like terror that Jeanie felt herself in a place apparently so lonely with a man of such high rank. That she should have been permitted to wait on the Duke in his own house, and have been there received to a private interview, was in itself an uncommon and distinguished event in the annals of a life so simple as hers; but to find herself his travelling companion in a journey, and then suddenly to be left alone with him in so secluded a situation, had something in it of awful mystery. A romantic heroine might have suspected and dreaded the power of her own charms; but Jeanie was too wise to let such a silly thought intrude on her mind. Still, however, she had a most eager desire to know where she now was, and to whom she was to be presented.

She remarked that the Duke's dress, though still such as indicated rank and fashion (for it was not the custom of men of quality at that time to dress themselves like their own coachmen or grooms), was nevertheless plainer than that in which she had seen him upon a former occasion, and was divested, in particular, of all those badges of external decoration which intimated superior consequence. In short, he was attired as plainly as any gentleman of fashion could appear in the streets of London in a morning; and this circumstance helped to shake an opinion which Jeanie began to entertain, that, perhaps, he intended she should plead her cause in the presence of royalty itself. "But surely," said she to, herself, "he wad hae putten on his braw star and garter, an he had thought o' coming before the face of majesty—and after a', this is mair like a gentleman's policy than a royal palace."

There was some sense in Jeanie's reasoning; yet she was not sufficiently mistress either of the circumstances of etiquette, or the particular relations which existed betwixt the government and the Duke of Argyle, to form an accurate judgment. The Duke, as we have said, was at this time in open opposition to the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, and was understood to be out of favour with the royal family, to whom he had rendered such important services. But it was a maxim of Queen Caroline to bear herself towards her political friends with such caution, as if there was a possibility of their one day being her enemies, and towards political opponents with the same degree of circumspection, as if they might again become friendly to her measures. Since Margaret of Anjou, no queen-consort had exercised such weight in the political affairs of England, and the personal address which she displayed on many occasions, had no small share in reclaiming from their political heresy many of those determined Tories, who, after the reign of the Stuarts had been extinguished in the person of Queen Anne, were disposed rather to transfer their allegiance to her brother the Chevalier de St. George, than to acquiesce in the settlement of the crown on the Hanover family. Her husband, whose most shining quality was courage in the field of battle, and who endured the office of King of England, without ever being able to acquire English habits, or any familiarity with English dispositions, found the utmost assistance from the address of his partner, and while he jealously affected to do everything according to his own will and pleasure, was in secret prudent enough to take and follow the advice of his more adroit consort. He intrusted to her the delicate office of determining the various degrees of favour necessary to attach the wavering, or to confirm such as were already friendly, or to regain those whose good-will had been lost.

With all the winning address of an elegant, and, according to the times, an accomplished woman, Queen Caroline possessed the masculine soul of the other sex. She was proud by nature, and even her policy could not always temper her expressions of displeasure, although few were more ready at repairing any false step of this kind, when her prudence came up to the aid of her passions. She loved the real possession of power rather than the show of it, and whatever she did herself that was either wise or popular, she always desired that the King should have the full credit as well as the advantage of the measure, conscious that, by adding to his respectability, she was most likely to maintain her own. And so desirous was she to comply with all his tastes, that, when threatened with the gout, she had repeatedly had recourse to checking the fit, by the use of the cold bath, thereby endangering her life, that she might be able to attend the king in his walks.

It was a very consistent part of Queen Caroline's character, to keep up many private correspondences with those to whom in public she seemed unfavourable, or who, for various reasons, stood ill with the court. By this means she kept in her hands the thread of many a political intrigue, and, without pledging herself to anything, could often prevent discontent from becoming hatred, and opposition from exaggerating itself into rebellion. If by any accident her correspondence with such persons chanced to be observed or discovered, which she took all possible pains to prevent, it was represented as a mere intercourse of society, having no reference to politics; an answer with which even the prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, was compelled to remain satisfied, when he discovered that the Queen had given a private audience to Pulteney, afterwards Earl of Bath, his most formidable and most inveterate enemy.

In thus maintaining occasional intercourse with several persons who seemed most alienated from the crown, it may readily be supposed that Queen Caroline had taken care not to break entirely with the Duke of Argyle. His high birth, his great talents, the estimation in which he was held in his own country, the great services which he had rendered the house of Brunswick in 1715, placed him high in that rank of persons who were not to be rashly neglected. He had, almost by his single and unassisted talents, stopped the irruption of the banded force of all the Highland chiefs; there was little doubt, that, with the slightest encouragement, he could put them all in motion, and renew the civil war; and it was well known that the most flattering overtures had been transmitted to the Duke from the court of St. Germans. The character and temper of Scotland was still little known, and it was considered as a volcano, which might, indeed, slumber for a series of years, but was still liable, at a moment the least expected, to break out into a wasteful irruption. It was, therefore, of the highest importance to retain come hold over so

important a personage as the Duke of Argyle, and Caroline preserved the power of doing so by means of a lady, with whom, as wife of George II., she might have been supposed to be on less intimate terms.

It was not the least instance of the Queen's address, that she had contrived that one of her principal attendants, Lady Suffolk, should unite in her own person the two apparently inconsistent characters, of her husband's mistress, and her own very obsequious and complaisant confidant. By this dexterous management the Queen secured her power against the danger which might most have threatened it—the thwarting influence of an ambitious rival; and if she submitted to the mortification of being obliged to connive at her husband's infidelity, she was at least guarded against what she might think its most dangerous effects, and was besides at liberty, now and then, to bestow a few civil insults upon "her good Howard," whom, however, in general, she treated with great decorum.*

* See Horace Walpole's *Reminiscences*.

Lady Suffolk lay under strong obligations to the Duke of Argyle, for reasons which may be collected from Horace Walpole's *Reminiscences* of that reign, and through her means the Duke had some occasional correspondence with Queen Caroline, much interrupted, however, since the part he had taken in the debate concerning the Porteous mob, an affair which the Queen, though somewhat unreasonably, was disposed to resent, rather as an intended and premeditated insolence to her own person and authority, than as a sudden ebullition of popular vengeance. Still, however, the communication remained open betwixt them, though it had been of late disused on both sides. These remarks will be found necessary to understand the scene which is about to be presented to the reader.

From the narrow alley which they had traversed, the Duke turned into one of the same character, but broader and still longer. Here, for the first time since they had entered these gardens, Jeanie saw persons approaching them.

They were two ladies; one of whom walked a little behind the other, yet not so much as to prevent her from hearing and replying to whatever observation was addressed to her by the lady who walked foremost, and that without her having the trouble to turn her person. As they advanced very slowly, Jeanie had time to study their features and appearance. The Duke also slackened his pace, as if to give her time to collect herself, and repeatedly desired her not to be afraid. The lady who seemed the principal person had remarkably good features, though somewhat injured by the small-pox, that venomous scourge which each village Esculapius (thanks to Jenner) can now tame as easily as their tutelary deity subdued the Python. The lady's eyes were brilliant, her teeth good, and her countenance formed to express at will either majesty or courtesy. Her form, though rather *embonpoint*, was nevertheless graceful; and the elasticity and firmness of her step gave no room to suspect, what was actually the case, that she suffered occasionally from a disorder the most unfavourable to pedestrian exercise. Her dress was rather rich than gay, and her manner commanding and noble.

Her companion was of lower stature, with light brown hair and expressive blue eyes. Her features, without being absolutely regular, were perhaps more pleasing than if they had been critically handsome. A melancholy, or at least a pensive expression, for which her lot gave too much cause, predominated when she was silent, but gave way to a pleasing and good-humoured smile when she spoke to any one.

When they were within twelve or fifteen yards of these ladies, the Duke made a sign that Jeanie should stand still, and stepping forward himself, with the grace which was natural to him, made a profound obeisance, which was formally, yet in a dignified manner, returned by the personage whom he approached.

"I hope," she said, with an affable and condescending smile, "that I see so great a stranger at court, as the Duke of Argyle has been of late, in as good health as his friends there and elsewhere could wish him to enjoy."

The Duke replied, "That he had been perfectly well," and added, "that the necessity of attending to the public business before the House, as well as the time occupied by a late journey to Scotland, had rendered him less assiduous in paying his duty at the levee and drawing-room than he could have desired."

"When your Grace *can* find time for a duty so frivolous," replied the Queen, "you are aware of your title to be well received. I hope my readiness to comply with the wish which you expressed yesterday to Lady Suffolk, is, a sufficient proof that one of the royal family, at least, has not forgotten ancient and important services, in resenting something which resembles recent neglect." This was said apparently with great good humour, and in a tone which expressed a desire of conciliation.

The Duke replied, "That he would account himself the most unfortunate of men, if he could be supposed capable of neglecting his duty, in modes and circumstances when it was expected, and would have been agreeable. He was deeply gratified by the honour which her Majesty was now doing to him personally; and he trusted she would soon perceive that it was in a matter essential to his Majesty's interest that he had the boldness to give her this trouble."

"You cannot oblige me more, my Lord Duke," replied the Queen, "than by giving me the advantage of your lights and experience on any point of the King's service. Your Grace is aware, that I can only be the medium through which the matter is subjected to his Majesty's superior wisdom; but if it is a suit which respects your Grace personally, it shall lose no support by being preferred through me."

"It is no suit of mine, madam," replied the Duke; "nor have I any to prefer for myself personally, although I feel in full force my obligation to your Majesty. It is a business which concerns his Majesty, as a lover of justice and of mercy, and which, I am convinced, may be highly useful in conciliating the unfortunate irritation which at present subsists among his Majesty's good subjects in Scotland."

There were two parts of this speech disagreeable to Caroline. In the first place, it removed the flattering notion she had adopted, that Argyle designed to use her personal intercession in making his peace with the administration, and recovering the employments of which he had been deprived; and next, she was displeased that he should talk of the discontents in Scotland as irritations to be conciliated, rather than suppressed.

Under the influence of these feelings, she answered hastily, "That his Majesty has good subjects in England, my Lord Duke, he is bound to thank God and the laws—that he has subjects in Scotland, I think he may thank God and his sword."

The Duke, though a courtier, coloured slightly, and the Queen, instantly sensible of her error, added, without displaying the least change of countenance, and as if the words had been an original branch of the sentence—"And the swords of those real Scotchmen who are friends to the House of Brunswick, particularly that of his Grace of Argyle."

"My sword, madam," replied the Duke, "like that of my fathers, has been always at the command of my lawful king, and of my native country—I trust it is impossible to separate their real rights and interests. But the present is a matter of more private concern, and respects the person of an obscure individual."

"What is the affair, my Lord?" said the Queen. "Let us find out what we are talking about, lest we should misconstrue and misunderstand each other."

"The matter, madam," answered the Duke of Argyle, "regards the fate of an unfortunate young woman in Scotland, now lying under sentence of death, for a crime of which I think it highly probable that she is innocent. And my humble petition to your Majesty is, to obtain your powerful intercession with the King for a pardon."

It was now the Queen's turn to colour, and she did so over cheek and brow, neck and bosom. She paused a moment as if unwilling to trust her voice with the first expression of her displeasure; and on assuming the air of dignity and an austere regard of control, she at length replied, "My Lord Duke, I will not ask your motives for addressing to me a request, which circumstances have rendered such an extraordinary one. Your road to the King's closet, as a peer and a privy-councillor, entitled to request an audience, was open, without giving me the pain of this discussion. I, at least, have had enough of Scotch pardons."

The Duke was prepared for this burst of indignation, and he was not shaken by it. He did not attempt a reply while the Queen was in the first heat of displeasure, but remained in the same firm, yet respectful posture, which he had assumed during the interview. The Queen, trained from her situation to self-command, instantly perceived the advantage she might give against herself by yielding to passion; and added, in the same condescending and affable tone in which she had opened the interview, "You must allow me some of the privileges of the sex, my Lord; and do not judge uncharitably of me, though I am a little moved at the recollection of the gross insult and outrage done in your capital city to the royal authority, at the very time when it was vested in my unworthy person. Your Grace cannot be surprised that I should both have felt it at the time, and recollected it now."

"It is certainly a matter not speedily to be forgotten," answered the Duke. "My own poor thoughts of it have been long before your Majesty, and I must have expressed myself very ill if I did not convey my detestation of the murder which was committed under such extraordinary circumstances. I might, indeed, be so unfortunate as to differ with his Majesty's advisers on the degree in which it was either just or politic to punish the innocent instead of the guilty. But I trust your Majesty will permit me to be silent on a topic in which my sentiments have not the good fortune to coincide with those of more able men."

"We will not prosecute a topic on which we may probably differ," said the Queen. "One word, however, I may say in private—you know our good Lady Suffolk is a little deaf—the Duke of Argyle, when disposed to renew his acquaintance with his master and mistress, will hardly find many topics on which we should disagree."

"Let me hope," said the Duke, bowing profoundly to so flattering an intimation, "that I shall not be so unfortunate as to have found one on the present occasion."

"I must first impose on your Grace the duty of confession," said the Queen, "before I grant you absolution. What is your particular interest in this young woman? She does not seem" (and she scanned Jeanie, as she said this, with the eye of a connoisseur) "much qualified to alarm my friend the Duchess's jealousy."

"I think your Majesty," replied the Duke, smiling in his turn, "will allow my taste may be a pledge for me on that score."

"Then, though she has not much the air *d'une grande dame*, I suppose she is some thirtieth cousin in the terrible CHAPTER of Scottish genealogy?"

"No, madam," said the Duke; "but I wish some of my nearer relations had half her worth, honesty, and affection."

"Her name must be Campbell, at least?" said Queen Caroline.

"No, madam; her name is not quite so distinguished, if I may be permitted to say so," answered the Duke.

"Ah! but she comes from Inverary or Argyleshire?" said the Sovereign.

"She has never been farther north in her life than Edinburgh, madam."

"Then my conjectures are all ended," said the Queen, "and your Grace must yourself take the trouble to explain the affair of your prote'ge'e."

With that precision and easy brevity which is only acquired by habitually conversing in the higher ranks of society, and which is the diametrical opposite of that protracted style of disquisition,

Which squires call potter, and which men call prose,

the Duke explained the singular law under which Effie Deans had received sentence of death, and detailed the affectionate exertions which Jeanie had made in behalf of a sister, for whose sake she was willing to sacrifice all but truth and conscience.

Queen Caroline listened with attention; she was rather fond, it must be remembered, of an argument, and soon found matter in what the Duke told her for raising difficulties to his request.

"It appears to me, my Lord," she replied, "that this is a severe law. But still it is adopted upon good grounds, I am bound to suppose, as the law of the country, and the girl has been convicted under it. The very presumptions which the law construes into a positive proof of guilt exist in her case; and all that your Grace has said concerning the possibility of her innocence may be a very good argument for annulling the Act of Parliament, but cannot, while it stands good, be admitted in favour of any individual convicted upon the statute."

The Duke saw and avoided the snare, for he was conscious, that, by replying to the argument, he must have been inevitably led to a discussion, in the course of which the Queen was likely to be hardened in her own opinion, until she became obliged, out of mere respect to consistency, to let the criminal suffer.

"If your Majesty," he said, "would condescend to hear my poor countrywoman herself, perhaps she may find an advocate in your own heart, more able than I am, to combat the doubts suggested by your understanding."

The Queen seemed to acquiesce, and the Duke made a signal for Jeanie to advance from the spot where she had hitherto remained watching countenances, which were too long accustomed to suppress all apparent signs of emotion, to convey to her any interesting intelligence. Her Majesty could not help smiling at the awe-struck manner in which the quiet demure figure of the little Scotchwoman advanced towards her, and yet more at the first sound of her broad northern accent. But Jeanie had a voice low and sweetly toned, an admirable thing in woman, and eke besought "her Ledyship to have pity on a poor misguided young creature," in tones so affecting, that, like the notes of some of her native songs, provincial vulgarity was lost in pathos.

"Stand up, young woman," said the Queen, but in a kind tone, "and tell me what sort of a barbarous people your country-folk are, where child-murder is become so common as to require the restraint of laws like yours?"

"If your Ledyship pleases," answered Jeanie, "there are many places besides Scotland where mothers are unkind to their ain flesh and blood."

It must be observed, that the disputes between George the Second and Frederick Prince of Wales were then at the highest, and that the good-natured part of the public laid the blame on the Queen. She coloured highly, and darted a glance of a most penetrating character first at Jeanie, and then at the Duke. Both sustained it unmoved; Jeanie from total unconsciousness of the offence she had given, and the Duke from his habitual composure. But in his heart he thought, My unlucky *protegee* has with this luckless answer shot dead, by a kind of chance-medley, her only hope of success.

Lady Suffolk, good-humouredly and skilfully, interposed in this awkward crisis. "You should tell this lady," she said to Jeanie, "the particular causes which render this crime common in your country."

"Some thinks it's the Kirk-session—that is—it's the—the cutty-stool, if your Ledyship pleases," said Jeanie, looking down and courtesying.

"The what?" said Lady Suffolk, to whom the phrase was new, and who besides was rather deaf.

"That's the stool of repentance, madam, if it please your Ledyship," answered Jeanie, "for light life and conversation, and for breaking the seventh command." Here she raised her eyes to the Duke, saw his hand at his chin, and, totally unconscious of what she had said out of joint, gave double effect to the innuendo, by stopping short and looking embarrassed.

As for Lady Suffolk, she retired like a covering party, which, having interposed betwixt their retreating friends and the enemy, have suddenly drawn on themselves a fire unexpectedly severe.

The deuce take the lass, thought the Duke of Argyle to himself; there goes another shot—and she has hit with both barrels right and left!

Indeed the Duke had himself his share of the confusion, for, having acted as master of ceremonies to this innocent offender, he felt much in the circumstances of a country squire, who, having introduced his spaniel into a well-appointed drawing-room, is doomed to witness the disorder and damage which arises to china and to dress-gowns, in consequence of its untimely frolics. Jeanie's last chance-hit, however, obliterated the ill impression which had arisen from the first; for her Majesty had not so lost the feelings of a wife in those of a Queen, but that she could enjoy a jest at the expense of "her good Suffolk." She turned towards the Duke of Argyle with a smile, which marked that she enjoyed the triumph, and observed, "The Scotch are a rigidly moral people." Then, again applying herself to Jeanie, she asked how she travelled up from Scotland.

"Upon my foot mostly, madam," was the reply.

"What, all that immense way upon foot?—How far can you walk in a day."

"Five-and-twenty miles and a bittock."

"And a what?" said the Queen, looking towards the Duke of Argyle.

"And about five miles more," replied the Duke.

"I thought I was a good walker," said the Queen, "but this shames me sadly."

"May your Ledyship never hae sae weary a heart, that ye canna be sensible of the weariness of the limbs," said Jeanie. That came better off, thought the Duke; it's the first thing she has said to the purpose.

"And I didna just a'thegither walk the haill way neither, for I had whiles the cast of a cart; and I had the cast of a horse from Ferrybridge—and divers other easements," said Jeanie, cutting short her story, for she observed the Duke made the sign he had fixed upon.

"With all these accommodations," answered the Queen, "you must have had a very fatiguing journey, and, I fear, to little purpose; since, if the King were to pardon your sister, in all probability it would do her little good, for I suppose your people of Edinburgh would hang her out of spite."

She will sink herself now outright, thought the Duke.

But he was wrong. The shoals on which Jeanie had touched in this delicate conversation lay under ground, and were unknown to her; this rock was above water, and she avoided it.

"She was confident," she said, "that baith town and country wad rejoice to see his Majesty taking compassion on a poor unfriended creature."

"His Majesty has not found it so in a late instance," said the Queen; "but I suppose my Lord Duke would advise him to be guided by the votes of the rabble themselves, who should be hanged and who spared?"

"No, madam," said the Duke; "but I would advise his Majesty to be guided by his own feelings, and those of his royal consort; and then I am sure punishment will only attach itself to guilt, and even then with cautious reluctance."

"Well, my Lord," said her Majesty, "all these fine speeches do not convince me of the propriety of so soon showing any mark of favour to you—I suppose I must not say rebellious?—but, at least, your very disaffected and intractable metropolis. Why, the whole nation is in a league to screen the savage and abominable murderers of that unhappy man; otherwise, how is it possible but that, of so many perpetrators, and engaged in so public an action for such a length of time, one at least must have been recognised? Even this wench, for aught I can tell, may be a depositary of the secret.—Hark you, young woman, had you any friends engaged in the Porteous mob?"

"No, madam," answered Jeanie, happy that the question was so framed that she could, with a good conscience, answer it in the negative.

"But I suppose," continued the Queen, "if you were possessed of such a secret, you would hold it a matter of conscience to keep it to yourself?"

"I would pray to be directed and guided what was the line of duty, madam," answered Jeanie.

"Yes, and take that which suited your own inclinations," replied her Majesty.

"If it like you, madam," said Jeanie, "I would hae gaen to the end of the earth to save the life of John Porteous, or any other unhappy man in his condition; but I might lawfully doubt how far I am called upon to be the avenger of his blood, though it may become the civil magistrate to do so. He is dead and gane to his place, and they that have slain him must answer for their ain act. But my sister, my puir sister, Effie, still lives, though her days and hours are numbered! She still lives, and a word of the King's mouth might restore her to a brokenhearted auld man, that never in his daily and nightly exercise, forgot to pray that his Majesty might be blessed with a long and a prosperous reign, and that his throne, and the throne of his posterity, might be established in righteousness. O madam, if ever ye kend what it was to sorrow for and with a sinning and a suffering creature, whose mind is sae tossed that she can be neither ca'd fit to live or die, have some compassion on our misery!—Save an honest house from dishonour, and an unhappy girl, not eighteen years of age, from an early and dreadful death! Alas! it is not when we sleep soft and wake merrily ourselves that we think on other people's sufferings. Our hearts are waxed light within us then, and we are for righting our ain wrangs and fighting our ain battles. But when the hour of trouble comes to the mind or to the body—and seldom may it visit your Ledyship—and when the hour of death comes, that comes to high and low—lang and late may it be yours!—Oh, my Ledy, then it isna what we hae dune for ourself, but what we hae dune for others, that we think on maist pleasantly. And the thoughts that ye hae intervened to spare the puir thing's life will be sweeter in that hour, come when it may, than if a word of your mouth could hang the haill Porteous mob at the tail of ae tow."

Tear followed tear down Jeanie's cheeks, as, her features glowing and quivering with emotion, she pleaded her sister's cause with a pathos which was at once simple and solemn.

"This is eloquence," said her Majesty to the Duke of Argyle. "Young woman," she continued, addressing herself to Jeanie, "I cannot grant a pardon to your sister—but you shall not want my warm intercession with his Majesty. Take this house-wife case," she continued, putting a small embroidered needle-case into Jeanie's hands; "do not open it now, but at your leisure—you will find something in it which will remind you that you have had an interview with Queen Caroline."

Jeanie, having her suspicions thus confirmed, dropped on her knees, and would have expanded herself in gratitude; but the Duke who was upon thorns lest she should say more or less than just enough, touched his chin once more.

"Our business is, I think, ended for the present, my Lord Duke," said the Queen, "and, I trust, to your satisfaction. Hereafter I hope to see your Grace more frequently, both at Richmond and St. James's.—Come Lady Suffolk, we must wish his Grace good-morning."

They exchanged their parting reverences, and the Duke, so soon as the ladies had turned their backs, assisted Jeanie to rise from the ground, and conducted her back through the avenue, which she trode with the feeling of one who walks in her sleep.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

*So soon as I can win the offended king,
I will be known your advocate.
Cymbeline.*

The Duke of Argyle led the way in silence to the small postern by which they had been admitted into Richmond Park, so long the favourite residence of Queen Caroline. It was opened by the same half-seen janitor, and they found themselves beyond the precincts of the royal demesne. Still not a word was spoken on either side. The Duke probably wished to allow his rustic prote'ge'e time to recruit her faculties, dazzled and sunk with colloquy sublime; and betwixt what she had guessed, had heard, and had seen, Jeanie Deans's mind was too much agitated to permit her to ask any questions.

They found the carriage of the Duke in the place where they had left it; and when they resumed their places, soon began to advance rapidly on their return to town.

"I think, Jeanie," said the Duke, breaking silence, "you have every reason to congratulate yourself on the issue of your interview with her Majesty."

"And that leddy was the Queen herself?" said Jeanie; "I misdoubted it when I saw that your honour didna put on your hat—And yet I can hardly believe it, even when I heard her speak it herself."

"It was certainly Queen Caroline," replied the Duke. "Have you no curiosity to see what is in the little pocket-book?"

"Do you think the pardon will be in it, sir?" said Jeanie, with the eager animation of hope.

"Why, no," replied the Duke; "that is unlikely. They seldom carry these things about them, unless they were likely to be wanted; and, besides, her Majesty told you it was the King, not she, who was to grant it."

"That is true, too," said Jeanie; "but I am so confused in my mind—But does your honour think there is a certainty of Effie's pardon then?" continued she, still holding in her hand the unopened pocket-book.

"Why, kings are kittle cattle to shoe behind, as we say in the north," replied the Duke; "but his wife knows his trim, and I have not the least doubt that the matter is quite certain."

"Oh, God be praised! God be praised!" ejaculated Jeanie; "and may the gude leddy never want the heart's ease she has gien me at this moment!— And God bless you too, my Lord!—without your help I wad ne'er hae won near her."

The Duke let her dwell upon this subject for a considerable time, curious, perhaps, to see how long the feelings of gratitude would continue to supersede those of curiosity. But so feeble was the latter feeling in Jeanie's mind, that his Grace, with whom, perhaps, it was for the time a little stronger, was obliged once more to bring forward the subject of the Queen's present. It was opened accordingly. In the inside of the case was the usual assortment of silk and needles, with scissors, tweezers, etc.; and in the pocket was a bank-bill for fifty pounds.

The Duke had no sooner informed Jeanie of the value of this last document, for she was unaccustomed to see notes for such sums, than she expressed her regret at the mistake which had taken place. "For the hussy itself," she said, "was a very valuable thing for a keepsake, with the Queen's name written in the inside with her ain hand doubtless—*Caroline*—as plain as could be, and a crown drawn aboon it."

She therefore tendered the bill to the Duke, requesting him to find some mode of returning it to the royal owner.

"No, no, Jeanie," said the Duke, "there is no mistake in the case. Her Majesty knows you have been put to great expense, and she wishes to make it up to you."

"I am sure she is even ower gude," said Jeanie, "and it glads me muckle that I can pay back Dumbiedikes his siller, without distressing my father, honest man."

"Dumbiedikes! What, a freeholder of Mid-Lothian, is he not?" said his Grace, whose occasional residence in that county made him acquainted with most of the heritors, as landed persons are termed in Scotland.—"He has a house not far from Dalkeith, wears a black wig and a laced hat?"

"Yes sir," answered Jeanie, who had her reasons for being brief in her answers upon this topic.

"Ah, my old friend Dumbie!" said the Duke; "I have thrice seen him fou, and only once heard the sound of his voice—Is he a cousin of yours, Jeanie?"

"No, sir,—my Lord."

"Then he must be a well-wisher, I suspect?"

"Ye—yes,—my Lord, sir," answered Jeanie, blushing, and with hesitation.

"Aha! then, if the Laird starts, I suppose my friend Butler must be in some danger?"

"O no, sir," answered Jeanie, much more readily, but at the same time blushing much more deeply.

"Well, Jeanie," said the Duke, "you are a girl may be safely trusted with your own matters, and I shall inquire no farther about them. But as to this same pardon, I must see to get it passed through the proper forms; and I have a friend in office who will for auld lang syne, do me so much favour. And then, Jeanie, as I shall have occasion to send an express down to Scotland, who will travel with it safer and more swiftly than you can do, I will take care to have it put into the proper channel; meanwhile you may write to your friends by post of your good success."

"And does your Honour think," said Jeanie, "that will do as weel as if I were to take my tap in my lap, and slip my ways hame again on my ain errand?"

"Much better, certainly," said the Duke. "You know the roads are not very safe for a single woman to travel."

Jeanie internally acquiesced in this observation.

"And I have a plan for you besides. One of the Duchess's attendants, and one of mine—your acquaintance Archibald—are going down to Inverary in a light calash, with four horses I have bought, and there is room enough in the carriage for you to go with them as far as Glasgow, where Archibald will find means of sending you safely to Edinburgh.—And in the way I beg you will teach the woman as much as you can of the mystery of cheese-making, for she is to have a charge in the dairy, and I dare swear you are as tidy about your milk-pail as about your dress."

"Does your Honour like cheese?" said Jeanie, with a gleam of conscious delight as she asked the question.

"Like it?" said the Duke, whose good-nature anticipated what was to follow,—"cakes and cheese are a dinner for an emperor, let alone a Highlandman."

"Because," said Jeanie, with modest confidence, and great and evident self-gratulation, "we have been thought so particular in making cheese, that some folk think it as gude as the real Dunlop; and if your honour's Grace wad but accept a stane or twa, blithe, and fain, and proud it wad make us? But maybe ye may like the ewe-milk, that is, the Buckholmside* cheese better; or maybe the gait-milk, as ye come frae the Highlands—and I canna pretend just to the same skeel o' them; but my cousin Jean, that lives at Lockermachus in Lammermuir, I could speak to her, and—"

* The hilly pastures of Buckholm, which the Author now surveys,—"Not in the frenzy of a dreamer's eye,"—are famed for producing the best ewe-milk cheese in the south of Scotland.

"Quite unnecessary," said the Duke; "the Dunlop is the very cheese of which I am so fond, and I will take it as the greatest favour you can do me to send one to Caroline Park. But remember, be on honour with it, Jeanie, and make it all yourself, for I am a real good judge."

"I am not feared," said Jeanie, confidently, "that I may please your Honour; for I am sure you look as if you could hardly find fault wi' onybody that did their best; and weel is it my part, I trow, to do mine."

This discourse introduced a topic upon which the two travellers, though so different in rank and education, found each a good deal to say. The Duke, besides his other patriotic qualities, was a distinguished agriculturist, and proud of his knowledge in that department. He entertained Jeanie with his observations on the different breeds of cattle in Scotland, and their capacity for the dairy, and received so much information from her practical experience in return, that he promised her a couple of Devonshire cows in reward for the lesson. In short his mind was so transported back to his rural employments and amusements, that he sighed when his carriage stopped opposite to the old hackney-coach, which Archibald had kept in attendance at the place where they had left it. While the coachman again bridled his lean cattle, which had been indulged with a bite of musty hay, the Duke cautioned Jeanie not to be too communicative to her landlady concerning what had passed. "There is," he said, "no use of speaking of matters till they are actually settled; and you may refer the good lady to Archibald, if she presses you hard with questions. She is his old acquaintance, and he knows how to manage with her."

He then took a cordial farewell of Jeanie, and told her to be ready in the ensuing week to return to Scotland—saw her safely established in her hackney-coach, and rolled off in his own carriage, humming a stanza of the ballad which he is said to have composed:—

*"At the sight of Dumbarton once again,
I'll cock up my bonnet and march amain,
With my claymore hanging down to my heel,
To whang at the bannocks of barley meal."*

Perhaps one ought to be actually a Scotsman to conceive how ardently, under all distinctions of rank and situation, they feel their mutual connection with each other as natives of the same country. There are, I believe, more associations common to the inhabitants of a rude and wild, than of a well-cultivated and fertile country; their ancestors have more seldom changed their place of residence; their mutual recollection of remarkable objects is more accurate; the high and the low are more interested in each other's welfare; the feelings of kindred and relationship are more widely extended, and in a word, the bonds of patriotic affection, always honourable even when a little too exclusively strained, have more influence on men's feelings and actions.

The rumbling hackney-coach, which tumbled over the (then) execrable London pavement, at a rate very different from that which had conveyed the ducal carriage to Richmond, at length deposited Jeanie Deans and her attendant at the national sign of the Thistle. Mrs. Glass, who had been in long and anxious expectation, now rushed, full of eager curiosity and open-mouthed interrogation, upon our heroine, who was positively unable to sustain the overwhelming cataract of her questions, which burst forth with the sublimity of a grand gardylloo:—

"Had she seen the Duke, God bless him—the Duchess—the young ladies?— Had she seen the King, God bless him—the Queen—the Prince of Wales—the Princess—or any of the rest of the royal family?—Had she got her sister's pardon?—Was it out and out—or was it only a commutation of punishment?—How far had she gone—where had she driven to—whom had she seen—what had been said—what had kept her so long?"

Such were the various questions huddled upon each other by a curiosity so eager, that it could hardly wait for its own gratification. Jeanie would have been more than sufficiently embarrassed by this overbearing tide of interrogations, had not Archibald, who had probably received from his master a hint to that purpose, advanced to her rescue. "Mrs. Glass," said Archibald, "his Grace desired me particularly to say, that he would take it as a great favour if you would ask the young woman no questions, as he wishes to explain to you more distinctly than she can do how her affairs stand, and consult you on some matters which she cannot altogether so well explain. The Duke will call at the Thistle to-morrow or next day for that purpose."

"His Grace is very condescending," said Mrs. Glass, her zeal for inquiry slaked for the present by the dexterous administration of this sugar plum—"his Grace is sensible that I am in a manner accountable for the conduct of my young kinswoman, and no doubt his Grace is the best judge how far he should intrust her or me with the management of her affairs."

"His Grace is quite sensible of that," answered Archibald, with national gravity, "and will certainly trust what he has to say to the most discreet of the two; and therefore, Mrs. Glass, his Grace relies you will speak nothing to Mrs. Jean Deans, either of her own affairs or her sister's, until he sees you himself. He desired me to assure you, in the meanwhile, that all was going on as well as your kindness could wish, Mrs. Glass."

"His Grace is very kind—very considerate, certainly, Mr. Archibald—his Grace's commands shall be obeyed, and—But you have had a far drive, Mr. Archibald, as I guess by the time of your absence, and I guess" (with an engaging smile) "you winna be the waur o' a glass of the right Rosa Solis."

"I thank you, Mrs. Glass," said the great man's great man, "but I am under the necessity of returning to my Lord directly." And, making his adieus civilly to both cousins, he left the shop of the Lady of the Thistle.

"I am glad your affairs have prospered so well, Jeanie, my love," said Mrs. Glass; "though, indeed, there was little fear of them so soon as the Duke of Argyle was so condescending as to take them into hand. I will ask you no questions about them, because his Grace, who is most considerate and prudent in such matters, intends to tell me all that you ken yourself, dear, and doubtless a great deal more; so that anything that may lie heavily on your mind may be imparted to me in the meantime, as you see it is his Grace's pleasure that I should be made acquainted with the whole matter forthwith, and whether you or he tells it, will make no difference in the world, ye ken. If I ken what he is going to say beforehand, I will be much more ready to give my advice, and whether you or he tell me about it, cannot much signify after all, my dear. So you may just say whatever you like, only mind I ask you no questions about it."

Jeanie was a little embarrassed. She thought that the communication she had to make was perhaps the only means she might have in her power to gratify her friendly and hospitable kinswoman. But her prudence instantly suggested that her secret interview with Queen Caroline, which seemed to pass under a certain sort of mystery, was not a proper subject for the gossip of a woman like Mrs. Glass, of whose heart she had a much better opinion than of her prudence. She, therefore, answered in general, that the Duke had had the extraordinary kindness to make very particular inquiries into her sister's bad affair, and that he thought he had found the means of putting it a' straight again, but that he proposed to tell all that he thought about the matter to Mrs. Glass herself.

This did not quite satisfy the penetrating mistress of the Thistle. Searching as her own small rappee, she, in spite of her promise, urged Jeanie with still farther questions. "Had she been a' that time at Argyle House? Was the Duke with her the whole time? and had she seen the Duchess? and had she seen the young ladies—and specially Lady Caroline Campbell?"—To these questions Jeanie gave the general reply, that she knew so little of the town that she could not tell exactly where she had been; that she had not seen the Duchess to her knowledge; that she had seen two ladies, one of whom, she understood, bore the name of Caroline; and more, she said, she could not tell about the matter.

"It would be the Duke's eldest daughter, Lady Caroline Campbell, there is no doubt of that," said Mrs. Glass; "but doubtless, I shall know more particularly through his Grace.—And so, as the cloth is laid in the little parlour above stairs, and it is past three o'clock, for I have been waiting this hour for you, and I have had a snack myself; and, as they used to say in Scotland in my time—I do not ken if the word be used now—there is ill talking between a full body and a fasting."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

*Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,—
Some banished lover or some captive maid.*

Pope.

By dint of unwonted labour with the pen, Jeanie Deans contrived to indite, and give to the charge of the postman on the ensuing day, no less than three letters, an exertion altogether strange to her habits; insomuch so, that, if milk had been plenty, she would rather have made thrice as many Dunlop cheeses. The first of them was very brief. It was addressed to George Staunton, Esq., at the Rectory, Willingham, by Grantham; the address being part of the information she had extracted from the communicative peasant who rode before her to Stamford. It was in these words:—

*"Sir,—To prevent farder mischieves, whereof there hath been enough,
comes these: Sir, I have my sister's pardon from the Queen's Majesty,
whereof I do not doubt you will be glad, having had to say naut of
matters whereof you know the purport. So, Sir, I pray for your better
welfare in bodie and soul, and that it will please the fisycian to visit
you in His good time. Alwaies, sir, I pray you will never come again to
see my sister, whereof there has been too much. And so, wishing you no
evil, but even your best good, that you may be turned from your iniquity
(for why suld ye die?) I rest your humble servant to command,*

"Ye ken wha."

The next letter was to her father. It is too long altogether for insertion, so we only give a few extracts. It commenced—

*"Dearest and truly honoured father,—This comes with my duty to inform
you, that it has pleased God to redeem that captivitie of my poor sister,
in respect the Queen's blessed Majesty, for whom we are ever bound to
pray, hath redeemed her soul from the slayer, granting the ransom of her,
whilk is ane pardon or reprieve. And I spoke with the Queen face to face
and yet live; for she is not muckle differing from other grand leddies,
saying that she has a stately presence, and een like a blue huntin'
hawk's, whilk gaed throu' and throu' me like a Highland durk—And all
this good was, alway under the Great Giver, to whom all are but
instruments, wrought forth for us by the Duk of Argile, wha is ane native
true-hearted Scotsman, and not pridefu', like other folk we ken of—and
likewise skeely enow in bestial, whereof he has promised to gie me twa
Devonshire kye, of which he is enamoured, although I do still haud by the
real hawlit Airshire breed—and I have promised him a cheese; and I wad
wuss ye, if Gowans, the brockit cow, has a quey, that she suld suck her
fill of milk, as I am given to understand he has none of that breed, and
is not scornfu' but will take a thing frae a puir body, that it may
lighten their heart of the loading of debt that they awe him. Also his
honour the Duke will accept ane of our Dunlop cheeses, and it sall be my
faut if a better was ever yearned in Lowden."—[Here follow some
observations respecting the breed of cattle, and the produce of the
dairy, which it is our intention to forward to the Board of
Agriculture.]—"Nevertheless, these are but matters of the after-harvest,
in respect of the great good which Providence hath gifted us with—and,
in especial, poor Effie's life. And oh, my dear father, since it hath
pleased God to be merciful to her, let her not want your free pardon,
whilk will make her meet to be ane vessel of grace, and also a comfort to
your ain graie hairs. Dear Father, will ye let the Laird ken that we have
had friends strangely raised up to us, and that the talent whilk he lent*

me will be thankfully repaid. I hae some of it to the fore; and the rest of it is not knotted up in ane purse or napkin, but in ane wee bit paper, as is the fashion heir, whilk I am assured is gude for the siller. And, dear father, through Mr. Butler's means I hae gude friendship with the Duke, for their had been kindness between their forbears in the auld troublesome time bye-past. And Mrs. Glass has been kind like my very mother. She has a braw house here, and lives bien and warm, wi' twa servant lasses, and a man and a callant in the shop. And she is to send you doun a pound of her hie-dried, and some other tobaka, and we maun think of some propine for her, since her kindness hath been great. And the Duk is to send the pardun doun by an express messenger, in respect that I canna travel sae fast; and I am to come doun wi' twa of his Honour's servants—that is, John Archibald, a decent elderly gentleman, that says he has seen you lang syne, when ye were buying beasts in the west frae the Laird of Augtermuggitie—but maybe ye winna mind him—ony way, he's a civil man—and Mrs. Dolly Dutton, that is to be dairy-maid at Inverara; and they bring me on as far as Glasgo, whilk will make it nae pinch to win hame, whilk I desire of all things. May the Giver of all good things keep ye in your outgauns and incomings, whereof devoutly prayeth your loving dauter,

"Jean Deans."

The third letter was to Butler, and its tenor as follows:—

"Master Butler.—Sir,—It will be pleasure to you to ken, that all I came for is, thanks be to God, weel dune and to the gude end, and that your forbear's letter was right welcome to the Duke of Argile, and that he wrote your name down with a kylevine pen in a leathern book, whereby it seems like he will do for you either wi' a scule or a kirk; he has enow of baith, as I am assured. And I have seen the queen, which gave me a hussy-case out of her own hand. She had not her crown and skeptre, but they are laid by for her, like the bairns' best claise, to be worn when she needs them. And they are keepit in a tour, whilk is not like the tour of Libberton, nor yet Craigmillar, but mair like to the castell of Edinburgh, if the buildings were taen and set down in the midst of the Nor'-Loch. Also the Queen was very bounteous, giving me a paper worth fiftie pounds, as I am assured, to pay my expenses here and back agen. Sae, Master Butler, as we were aye neebours' bairns, forby onything else that may hae been spoken between us, I trust you winna skrimp yoursell for what is needfu' for your health, since it signifies not muckle whilk o' us has the siller, if the other wants it. And mind this is no meant to haud ye to onything whilk ye wad rather forget, if ye suld get a charge of a kirk or a scule, as above said. Only I hope it will be a scule, and not a kirk, because of these difficulties anent aiths and patronages, whilk might gang ill down wi' my honest father. Only if ye could compass a harmonious call frae the parish of Skreegh-me-dead, as ye anes had hope of, I trow it wad please him weel; since I hae heard him say, that the root of the matter was mair deeply hafted in that wild muirland parish than in the Canongate of Edinburgh. I wish I had whaten books ye wanted, Mr. Butler, for they hae haill houses of them here, and they are obliged to set sum out in the street, whilk are sald cheap, doubtless, to get them out of the weather. It is a muckle place, and I hae seen sae muckle of it, that my poor head turns round. And ye ken langsyne, I am nae great pen-woman, and it is near eleven o'clock o' the night. I am cumming down in good company, and safe—and I had troubles in gaun up whilk makes me blither of travelling wi' kend folk. My cousin, Mrs. Glass, has a braw house here, but a' thing is sae poisoned wi' snuff, that I am like to be scomfished whiles. But what signifies these things, in comparison of the great deliverance whilk has been vouchsafed to my father's house, in whilk you, as our auld and dear well-wisher, will, I dout not, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. And I am, dear Mr. Butler, your sincere well-wisher in temporal and eternal things,

"J. D."

After these labours of an unwonted kind, Jeanie retired to her bed, yet scarce could sleep a few minutes together, so often was she awakened by the heart-stirring consciousness of her sister's safety, and so powerfully urged to deposit her burden of joy, where she had before laid her doubts and sorrows, in the warm and sincere exercises of devotion.

All the next, and all the succeeding day, Mrs. Glass fidgeted about her shop in the agony of expectation, like a pea (to use a vulgar simile which her profession renders appropriate) upon one of her own tobacco pipes. With the third morning came the expected coach, with four servants clustered behind on the footboard, in dark brown and yellow liveries; the Duke in person, with laced coat, gold-headed cane, star and garter, all, as the story-book says, very grand.

He inquired for his little countrywoman of Mrs. Glass, but without requesting to see her, probably because he was unwilling to give an appearance of personal intercourse betwixt them, which scandal might have misinterpreted. "The Queen," he said to Mrs. Glass, "had taken the case of her kinswoman into her gracious consideration, and being specially moved by the affectionate and resolute character of the elder sister, had condescended to use her powerful intercession with his Majesty, in consequence of which a pardon had been despatched to Scotland to Effie Deans, on condition of her banishing herself forth of Scotland for

fourteen years. The King's Advocate had insisted," he said, "upon this qualification of the pardon, having pointed out to his Majesty's ministers, that, within the course of only seven years, twenty-one instances of child-murder had occurred in Scotland.

"Weary on him!" said Mrs. Glass, "what for needed he to have telled that of his ain country, and to the English folk abune a'? I used aye to think the Advocate a douce decent man, but it is an ill bird*—begging your Grace's pardon for speaking of such a coorse by-word.

* [It's an ill bird that fouls its own pest.]

And then what is the poor lassie to do in a foreign land?—Why, wae's me, it's just sending her to play the same pranks ower again, out of sight or guidance of her friends."

"Pooh! pooh!" said the Duke, "that need not be anticipated. Why, she may come up to London, or she may go over to America, and marry well for all that is come and gone."

"In troth, and so she may, as your Grace is pleased to intimate," replied Mrs. Glass; "and now I think upon it, there is my old correspondent in Virginia, Ephraim Buckskin, that has supplied the Thistle this forty years with tobacco, and it is not a little that serves our turn, and he has been writing to me this ten years to send him out a wife. The carle is not above sixty, and hale and hearty, and well to pass in the world, and a line from my hand would settle the matter, and Effie Deans's misfortune (forby that there is no special occasion to speak about it) would be thought little of there."

"Is she a pretty girl?" said the Duke; "her sister does not get beyond a good comely sonsy lass."

"Oh, far prettier is Effie than Jeanie," said Mrs. Glass; "though it is long since I saw her mysell, but I hear of the Deanses by all my Lowden friends when they come—your Grace kens we Scots are clannish bodies."

"So much the better for us," said the Duke, "and the worse for those who meddle with us, as your good old-fashioned sign says, Mrs. Glass. And now I hope you will approve of the measures I have taken for restoring your kinswoman to her friends." These he detailed at length, and Mrs. Glass gave her unqualified approbation, with a smile and a courtesy at every sentence. "And now, Mrs. Glass, you must tell Jeanie, I hope, she will not forget my cheese when she gets down to Scotland. Archibald has my orders to arrange all her expenses."

"Begging your Grace's humble pardon," said Mrs. Glass, "it is a pity to trouble yourself about them; the Deanses are wealthy people in their way, and the lass has money in her pocket."

"That's all very true," said the Duke; "but you know, where MacCallummore travels he pays all; it is our Highland privilege to take from all what we want, and to give to all what *they* want."

"Your Grace is better at giving than taking," said Mrs. Glass.

"To show you the contrary," said the Duke, "I will fill my box out of this canister without paying you a bawbee," and again desiring to be remembered to Jeanie, with his good wishes for her safe journey, he departed, leaving Mrs. Glass uplifted in heart and in countenance, the proudest and happiest of tobacco and snuff dealers.

Reflectively, his Grace's good humour and affability had a favourable effect upon Jeanie's situation.—Her kinswoman, though civil and kind to her, had acquired too much of London breeding to be perfectly satisfied with her cousin's rustic and national dress, and was, besides, something scandalised at the cause of her journey to London. Mrs. Glass might, therefore, have been less sedulous in her attentions towards Jeanie, but for the interest which the foremost of the Scottish nobles (for such, in all men's estimation, was the Duke of Argyle) seemed to take in her fate. Now, however, as a kinswoman whose virtues and domestic affections had attracted the notice and approbation of royalty itself, Jeanie stood to her relative in a light very different and much more favourable, and was not only treated with kindness, but with actual observance and respect.

It depended on herself alone to have made as many visits, and seen as many sights, as lay within Mrs. Glass's power to compass. But, excepting that she dined abroad with one or two "far away kinsfolk," and that she paid the same respect, on Mrs. Glass's strong urgency, to Mrs. Deputy Dabby, wife of the Worshipful Mr. Deputy Dabby, of Farringdon Without, she did not avail herself of the opportunity. As Mrs. Dabby was the second lady of great rank whom Jeanie had seen in London, she used sometimes afterwards to draw a parallel betwixt her and the Queen, in which she observed, "that Mrs. Dabby was dressed twice as grand, and was twice as big, and spoke twice as loud, and twice as muckle, as the Queen did, but she hadna the same goss-hawk glance that makes the skin creep, and the knee bend; and though she had very kindly gifted her with a loaf of sugar and twa pund's of tea, yet she hadna a'thegither the sweet look that the Queen had when she put the needle-book into her hand."

Jeanie might have enjoyed the sights and novelties of this great city more, had it not been for the qualification added to her sister's pardon, which greatly grieved her affectionate disposition. On this subject, however, her mind was somewhat relieved by a letter which she received in return of post, in answer to that which she had written to her father. With his affectionate blessing, it brought his full approbation of the step which she had taken, as one inspired by the immediate dictates of Heaven, and which she had been thrust upon in order that she might become the means of safety to a perishing household.

"If ever a deliverance was dear and precious, this," said the letter, "is a dear and precious deliverance—and if life saved can be made more sweet and savoury, it is when it cometh by the hands of those whom we hold in the ties of affection. And do not let your heart be disquieted within you, that this victim, who is rescued from the horns of the altar, whereuntil she was fast bound by the chains of human law, is now to be driven beyond the bounds of our land. Scotland is a blessed land to those who love the ordinances of Christianity, and it is a faer land to look upon, and dear to them who have dwelt in it a' their days; and weel said that judicious Christian, worthy John Livingstone, a sailor in Borrowstouness, as the famous Patrick Walker reporteth his words, that howbeit he thought Scotland was a Gehennah of wickedness when he was at home, yet when he was abroad, he accounted it ane paradise; for the evils of Scotland he found everywhere, and the good of Scotland he found nowhere. But we are to hold in remembrance that Scotland, though it be our native land, and the land of our fathers, is not like Goshen, in Egypt, on whilk the sun of the heavens and of the gospel shineth allenarly, and leaveth the rest of the world in utter darkness. Therefore, and also because this increase of profit at Saint Leonard's Crags may be a cauld waff of wind blowing from the frozen land of earthly self, where never plant of grace took root or grew, and because my concerns make me take something ower muckle a grip of the gear of the world in mine arms, I receive this dispensation anent Effie as a call to depart out of Haran, as righteous Abraham of old, and leave my father's kindred and my mother's house, and the ashes and mould of them who have gone to sleep before me, and which wait to be mingled with these auld crazed bones of mine own. And my heart is lightened to do this, when I call to mind the decay of active and earnest religion in this land, and survey the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of national defections, and how the love of many is waxing lukewarm and cold; and I am strengthened in this resolution to change my domicile likewise, as I hear that store-farms are to be set at an easy mail in Northumberland, where there are many precious souls that are of our true though suffering persuasion. And sic part of the kye or stock as I judge it fit to keep, may be driven thither without incommodity—say about Wooler, or that gate, keeping aye a shouter to the hills,—and the rest may be sauld to gude profit and advantage, if we had grace weel to use and guide these gifts of the world. The Laird has been a true friend on our unhappy occasions, and I have paid him back the siller for Effie's misfortune, whereof Mr. Nichil Novit returned him no balance, as the Laird and I did expect he wad hae done. But law licks up a', as the common folk say. I have had the siller to borrow out of sax purses. Mr. Saddletree advised to give the Laird of Lounsbeck a charge on his hand for a thousand merks. But I hae nae broo' of charges, since that awfu' morning that a tout of a horn, at the Cross of Edinburgh, blew half the faithfu' ministers of Scotland out of their pulpits. However, I sall raise an adjudication, whilk Mr. Saddletree says comes instead of the auld apprisings, and will not lose weel-won gear with the like of him, if it may be helped. As for the Queen, and the credit that she hath done to a poor man's daughter, and the mercy and the grace ye found with her, I can only pray for her weel-being here and hereafter, for the establishment of her house now and for ever, upon the throne of these kingdoms. I doubt not but what you told her Majesty, that I was the same David Deans of whom there was a sport at the Revolution, when I noited thegither the heads of twa false prophets, these ungracious Graces the prelates, as they stood on the Hie Street, after being expelled from the Convention-parliament.*

* Note P. Expulsion of the Scotch Bishops.

The Duke of Argyle is a noble and true-hearted nobleman, who pleads the cause of the poor, and those who have none to help them; verily his reward shall not be lacking unto him.—I have, been writing of many things, but not of that whilk lies nearest mine heart. I have seen the misguided thing, she will be at freedom the morn, on enacted caution that she shall leave Scotland in four weeks. Her mind is in an evil frame,—casting her eye backward on Egypt, I doubt, as if the bitter waters of the wilderness were harder to endure than the brick furnaces, by the side of which there were savoury flesh-pots. I need not bid you make haste down, for you are, excepting always my Great Master, my only comfort in these straits. I charge you to withdraw your feet from the delusion of that Vanity-fair in whilk ye are a sojourner, and not to go to their worship, whilk is an ill-mumbled mass, as it was weel termed by James the Sext, though he afterwards, with his unhappy son, strove to bring it ower back and belly into his native kingdom, wherethrough their race have been cut off as foam upon the water, and shall be as wanderers among the nations—see the prophecies of Hosea, ninth and seventeenth, and the same, tenth and seventh. But us and our house, let us say with the same prophet, "Let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us—He hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

He proceeded to say, that he approved of her proposed mode of returning by Glasgow, and entered into sundry minute particulars not necessary to be quoted. A single line in the letter, but not the least frequently read by the party to whom it was addressed, intimated, that "Reuben Butler had been as a son to him in his sorrows." As David Deans scarce ever mentioned Butler before, without some gibe, more or less direct, either at his carnal gifts and learning, or at his grandfather's heresy, Jeanie drew a good omen from no such qualifying clause being added to this sentence respecting him.

A lover's hope resembles the bean in the nursery tale,—let it once take root, and it will grow so rapidly, that in the course of a few hours the giant Imagination builds a castle on the top, and by and by comes Disappointment with the "curtal axe," and hews down both the plant and the superstructure. Jeanie's fancy, though not the most powerful of her faculties, was lively enough to transport her to a wild farm in Northumberland, well stocked with milk-cows, yeald beasts, and sheep; a meeting-house, hard by, frequented by serious Presbyterians, who had united in a harmonious call to Reuben Butler to be their spiritual guide—Effie restored, not to gaiety, but to cheerfulness at least—their father, with his grey hairs smoothed down, and spectacles on his nose—herself, with the maiden snood exchanged for a matron's curch—all arranged in a pew in the said meeting-house, listening to words of devotion, rendered sweeter and more powerful by the affectionate ties which combined them with the preacher. She cherished such visions from day to day, until her residence in London began to become insupportable and tedious to her; and it was with no ordinary satisfaction that she received a summons from Argyle House, requiring her in two days to be prepared to join their northward party.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

*One was a female, who had grievous ill
Wrought in revenge, and she enjoy'd it still;
Sullen she was, and threatening; in her eye
Glared the stern triumph that she dared to die.
Crabbe.*

The summons of preparation arrived after Jeanie Deans had resided in the metropolis about three weeks.

On the morning appointed she took a grateful farewell of Mrs. Glass, as that good woman's attention to her particularly required, placed herself and her movable goods, which purchases and presents had greatly increased, in a hackney-coach, and joined her travelling companions in the housekeeper's apartment at Argyle House. While the carriage was getting ready, she was informed that the Duke wished to speak with her; and being ushered into a splendid saloon, she was surprised to find that he wished to present her to his lady and daughters.

"I bring you my little countrywoman, Duchess," these were the words of the introduction. "With an army of young fellows, as gallant and steady as she is, and, a good cause, I would not fear two to one."

"Ah, papa!" said a lively young lady, about twelve years old, "remember you were full one to two at Sheriffmuir, and yet" (singing the well-known ballad)—

"Some say that we wan, and some say that they wan, And some say that nane wan at a', man But of ae thing I'm sure, that on Sheriff-muir A battle there was that I saw, man."

"What, little Mary turned Tory on my hands?—This will be fine news for our countrywoman to carry down to Scotland!"

"We may all turn Tories for the thanks we have got for remaining Whigs," said the second young lady.

"Well, hold your peace, you discontented monkeys, and go dress your babies; and as for the Bob of Dunblane,

*'If it wasna weel bobbie, weel bobbie, weel bobbie,
If it wasna weel bobbie, we'll bob it again.'"*

"Papa's wit is running low," said Lady Mary: "the poor gentleman is repeating himself—he sang that on the field of battle, when he was told the Highlanders had cut his left wing to pieces with their claymores."

A pull by the hair was the repartee to this sally.

"Ah! brave Highlanders and bright claymores," said the Duke, "well do I wish them, 'for a' the ill they've done me yet,' as the song goes.—But come, madcaps, say a civil word to your countrywoman—I wish ye had half her canny hamely sense; I think you may be as leal and true-hearted."

The Duchess advanced, and, in a few words, in which there was as much kindness as civility, assured Jeanie of the respect which she had for a character so affectionate, and yet so firm, and added, "When you get home, you will perhaps hear from me."

"And from me." "And from me." "And from me, Jeanie," added the young ladies one after the other, "for you are a credit to the land we love so well."

Jeanie, overpowered by these unexpected compliments, and not aware that the Duke's investigation had made him acquainted with her behaviour on her sister's trial, could only answer by blushing, and courtesying round and round, and uttering at intervals, "Mony thanks! mony thanks!"

"Jeanie," said the Duke, "you must have *doch an' dorroch*, or you will be unable to travel."

There was a salver with cake and wine on the table. He took up a glass, drank "to all true hearts that lo'ed Scotland," and offered a glass to his guest.

Jeanie, however, declined it, saying, "that she had never tasted wine in her life."

"How comes that, Jeanie?" said the Duke,—"wine maketh glad the heart, you know."

"Ay, sir, but my father is like Jonadab the son of Rechab, who charged his children that they should drink no wine."

"I thought your father would have had more sense," said the Duke, "unless indeed he prefers brandy. But, however, Jeanie, if you will not drink, you must eat, to save the character of my house."

He thrust upon her a large piece of cake, nor would he permit her to break off a fragment, and lay the rest on a salver.

"Put it in your pouch, Jeanie," said he; "you will be glad of it before you see St. Giles's steeple. I wish to Heaven I were to see it as soon as you! and so my best service to all my friends at and about Auld Reekie, and a blithe journey to you."

And, mixing the frankness of a soldier with his natural affability, he shook hands with his prote'ge'e, and committed her to the charge of Archibald, satisfied that he had provided sufficiently for her being attended to by his domestics, from the unusual attention with which he had himself treated her.

Accordingly, in the course of her journey, she found both her companions disposed to pay her every possible civility, so that her return, in point of comfort and safety, formed a strong contrast to her journey to London.

Her heart also was disburdened of the weight of grief, shame, apprehension, and fear, which had loaded her before her interview with the Queen at Richmond. But the human mind is so strangely capricious, that, when freed from the pressure of real misery, it becomes open and sensitive to the apprehension of ideal

calamities. She was now much disturbed in mind, that she had heard nothing from Reuben Butler, to whom the operation of writing was so much more familiar than it was to herself.

"It would have cost him sae little fash," she said to herself; "for I hae seen his pen gan as fast ower the paper, as ever it did ower the water when it was in the grey goose's wing. Wae's me! maybe he may be badly—but then my father wad likely hae said somethin about it—Or maybe he may hae taen the rue, and kensna how to let me wot of his change of mind. He needna be at muckle fash about it,"—she went on, drawing herself up, though the tear of honest pride and injured affection gathered in her eye, as she entertained the suspicion,— "Jeanie Deans is no the lass to pu' him by the sleeve, or put him in mind of what he wishes to forget. I shall wish him weel and happy a' the same; and if he has the luck to get a kirk in our country, I sall gang and hear him just the very same, to show that I bear nae malice." And as she imagined the scene, the tear stole over her eye.

In these melancholy reveries, Jeanie had full time to indulge herself; for her travelling companions, servants in a distinguished and fashionable family, had, of course, many topics of conversation, in which it was absolutely impossible she could have either pleasure or portion. She had, therefore, abundant leisure for reflection, and even for self-tormenting, during the several days which, indulging the young horses the Duke was sending down to the North with sufficient ease and short stages, they occupied in reaching the neighbourhood of Carlisle.

In approaching the vicinity of that ancient city, they discerned a considerable crowd upon an eminence at a little distance from the high road, and learned from some passengers who were gathering towards that busy scene from the southward, that the cause of the concourse was, the laudable public desire "to see a doomed Scotch witch and thief get half of her due upo' Haribeebroo' yonder, for she was only to be hanged; she should hae been boorned aloive, an' cheap on't."

"Dear Mr. Archibald," said the dame of the dairy elect, "I never seed a woman hanged in a' my life, and only four men, as made a goodly spectacle."

Mr. Archibald, however, was a Scotchman, and promised himself no exuberant pleasure in seeing his countrywoman undergo "the terrible behests of law." Moreover, he was a man of sense and delicacy in his way, and the late circumstances of Jeanie's family, with the cause of her expedition to London, were not unknown to him; so that he answered drily, it was impossible to stop, as he must be early at Carlisle on some business of the Duke's, and he accordingly bid the postilions get on.

The road at that time passed at about a quarter of a mile's distance from the eminence, called Haribee or Harabee-brow, which, though it is very moderate in size and height, is nevertheless seen from a great distance around, owing to the flatness of the country through which the Eden flows. Here many an outlaw, and border-rider of both kingdoms, had wavered in the wind during the wars, and scarce less hostile truces, between the two countries. Upon Harabee, in latter days, other executions had taken place with as little ceremony as compassion; for these frontier provinces remained long unsettled, and, even at the time of which we write, were ruder than those in the centre of England.

The postilions drove on, wheeling as the Penrith road led them, round the verge of the rising ground. Yet still the eyes of Mrs. Dolly Dutton, which, with the head and substantial person to which they belonged, were all turned towards the scene of action, could discern plainly the outline of the gallows-tree, relieved against the clear sky, the dark shade formed by the persons of the executioner and the criminal upon the light rounds of the tall aerial ladder, until one of the objects, launched into the air, gave unequivocal signs of mortal agony, though appearing in the distance not larger than a spider dependent at the extremity of his invisible thread, while the remaining form descended from its elevated situation, and regained with all speed an undistinguished place among the crowd. This termination of the tragic scene drew forth of course a squall from Mrs. Dutton, and Jeanie, with instinctive curiosity, turned her head in the same direction.

The sight of a female culprit in the act of undergoing the fatal punishment from which her beloved sister had been so recently rescued, was too much, not perhaps for her nerves, but for her mind and feelings. She turned her head to the other side of the carriage, with a sensation of sickness, of loathing, and of fainting. Her female companion overwhelmed her with questions, with proffers of assistance, with requests that the carriage might be stopped—that a doctor might be fetched—that drops might be gotten—that burnt feathers and asafoetida, fair water, and hartshorn, might be procured, all at once, and without one instant's delay. Archibald, more calm and considerate, only desired the carriage to push forward; and it was not till they had got beyond sight of the fatal spectacle, that, seeing the deadly paleness of Jeanie's countenance, he stopped the carriage, and jumping out himself, went in search of the most obvious and most easily procured of Mrs. Dutton's pharmacopoeia—a draught, namely, of fair water.

While Archibald was absent on this good-natured piece of service, damning the ditches which produced nothing but mud, and thinking upon the thousand bubbling springlets of his own mountains, the attendants on the execution began to pass the stationary vehicle in their way back to Carlisle.

From their half-heard and half-understood words, Jeanie, whose attention was involuntarily rivetted by them, as that of children is by ghost stories, though they know the pain with which they will afterwards remember them, Jeanie, I say, could discern that the present victim of the law had died game, as it is termed by those unfortunates; that is, sullen, reckless, and impenitent, neither fearing God nor regarding man.

"A sture woife, and a dour," said one Cumbrian peasant, as he clattered by in his wooden brogues, with a noise like the trampling of a dray-horse.

"She has gone to ho master, with ho's name in her mouth," said another; "Shame the country should be harried wi' Scotch witches and Scotch bitches this gate—but I say hang and drown."

"Ay, ay, Gaffer Tramp, take awa yealdon, take awa low—hang the witch, and there will be less scathe amang us; mine owsen hae been reckan this towmont."

"And mine bairns hae been crining too, mon," replied his neighbour.

"Silence wi' your fule tongues, ye churls," said an old woman, who hobbled past them, as they stood talking near the carriage; "this was nae witch, but a bluidy-fingered thief and murderess."

"Ay? was it e'en sae, Dame Hinchup?" said one in a civil tone, and stepping out of his place to let the old woman pass along the footpath—"Nay, you know best, sure—but at any rate, we hae but tint a Scot of her, and that's a thing better lost than found."

The old woman passed on without making any answer.

"Ay, ay, neighbour," said Gaffer Tramp, "seest thou how one witch will speak for t'other—Scots or English, the same to them."

His companion shook his head, and replied in the same subdued tone, "Ay, ay, when a Sark-foot wife gets on her broomstick, the dames of Allonby are ready to mount, just as sure as the by-word gangs o' the hills,—

If Skiddaw hath a cap,

Criffel, wots full weel of that."

"But," continued Gaffer Tramp, "thinkest thou the daughter o' yon hangit body isna as rank a witch as ho?"

"I kenna clearly," returned the fellow, "but the folk are speaking o' swimming her i' the Eden." And they passed on their several roads, after wishing each other good-morning.

Just as the clowns left the place, and as Mr. Archibald returned with some fair water, a crowd of boys and girls, and some of the lower rabble of more mature age, came up from the place of execution, grouping themselves with many a yell of delight around a tall female fantastically dressed, who was dancing, leaping, and bounding in the midst of them. A horrible recollection pressed on Jeanie as she looked on this unfortunate creature; and the reminiscence was mutual, for by a sudden exertion of great strength and agility, Madge Wildfire broke out of the noisy circle of tormentors who surrounded her, and clinging fast to the door of the calash, uttered, in a sound betwixt laughter and screaming, "Eh, d'ye ken, Jeanie Deans, they hae hangit our mother?" Then suddenly changing her tone to that of the most piteous entreaty, she added, "O gar them let me gang to cut her down!—let me but cut her down!—she is my mother, if she was waur than the deil, and she'll be nae mair kenspeckle than half-hangit Maggie Dickson,* that cried saut mony a day after she had been hangit; her voice was roupit and hoarse, and her neck was a wee agee, or ye wad hae kend nae odds on her frae any other saut-wife."

* Note Q. Half-hanged Maggie Dickson.

Mr. Archibald, embarrassed by the madwoman's clinging to the carriage, and detaining around them her noisy and mischievous attendants, was all this while looking out for a constable or beadle, to whom he might commit the unfortunate creature. But seeing no such person of authority, he endeavoured to loosen her

hold from the carriage, that they might escape from her by driving on. This, however, could hardly be achieved without some degree of violence; Madge held fast, and renewed her frantic entreaties to be permitted to cut down her mother. "It was but a tenpenny tow lost," she said, "and what was that to a woman's life?" There came up, however, a parcel of savage-looking fellows, butchers and graziers chiefly, among whose cattle there had been of late a very general and fatal distemper, which their wisdom imputed to witchcraft. They laid violent hands on Madge, and tore her from the carriage, exclaiming— "What, doest stop folk o' king's high-way? Hast no done mischief enow already, wi' thy murders and thy witcherings?"

"Oh, Jeanie Deans—Jeanie Deans!" exclaimed the poor maniac, "save my mother, and I will take ye to the Interpreter's house again,—and I will teach ye a' my bonny sangs,—and I will tell ye what came o' the." The rest of her entreaties were drowned in the shouts of the rabble.

"Save her, for God's sake!—save her from those people!" exclaimed Jeanie to Archibald.

"She is mad, but quite innocent; she is mad, gentlemen," said Archibald; "do not use her ill, take her before the Mayor."

"Ay, ay, we've hae care enow on her," answered one of the fellows; "gang thou thy gate, man, and mind thine own matters."

"He's a Scot by his tongue," said another; "and an he will come out o' his whirlingig there, I'll gie him his tartan plaid fu' o' broken banes."

It was clear nothing could be done to rescue Madge; and Archibald, who was a man of humanity, could only bid the postilions hurry on to Carlisle, that he might obtain some assistance to the unfortunate woman. As they drove off, they heard the hoarse roar with which the mob preface acts of riot or cruelty, yet even above that deep and dire note, they could discern the screams of the unfortunate victim. They were soon out of hearing of the cries, but had no sooner entered the streets of Carlisle, than Archibald, at Jeanie's earnest and urgent entreaty, went to a magistrate, to state the cruelty which was likely to be exercised on this unhappy creature.

In about an hour and a half he returned, and reported to Jeanie, that the magistrate had very readily gone in person, with some assistance, to the rescue of the unfortunate woman, and that he had himself accompanied him; that when they came to the muddy pool, in which the mob were ducking her, according to their favourite mode of punishment, the magistrate succeeded in rescuing her from their hands, but in a state of insensibility, owing to the cruel treatment which she had received. He added, that he had seen her carried to the workhouse, and understood that she had been brought to herself, and was expected to do well.

This last averment was a slight alteration in point of fact, for Madge Wildfire was not expected to survive the treatment she had received; but Jeanie seemed so much agitated, that Mr. Archibald did not think it prudent to tell her the worst at once. Indeed, she appeared so fluttered and disordered by this alarming accident, that, although it had been their intention to proceed to Longtown that evening, her companions judged it most advisable to pass the night at Carlisle.

This was particularly agreeable to Jeanie, who resolved, if possible, to procure an interview with Madge Wildfire. Connecting some of her wild flights with the narrative of George Staunton, she was unwilling to omit the opportunity of extracting from her, if possible, some information concerning the fate of that unfortunate infant which had cost her sister so dear. Her acquaintance with the disordered state of poor Madge's mind did not permit her to cherish much hope that she could acquire from her any useful intelligence; but then, since Madge's mother had suffered her deserts, and was silent for ever, it was her only chance of obtaining any kind of information, and she was loath to lose the opportunity.

She coloured her wish to Mr. Archibald by saying that she had seen Madge formerly, and wished to know, as a matter of humanity, how she was attended to under her present misfortunes. That complaisant person immediately went to the workhouse, or hospital, in which he had seen the sufferer lodged, and brought back for reply, that the medical attendants positively forbade her seeing any one. When the application for admittance was repeated next day, Mr. Archibald was informed that she had been very quiet and composed, inasmuch that the clergyman who acted as chaplain to the establishment thought it expedient to read prayers beside her bed, but that her wandering fit of mind had returned soon after his departure; however, her countrywoman might see her if she chose it. She was not expected to live above an hour or two.

Jeanie had no sooner received this information than she hastened to the hospital, her companions attending her. They found the dying person in a large ward, where there were ten beds, of which the patient's was the only one occupied.

Madge was singing when they entered—singing her own wild snatches of songs and obsolete airs, with a voice no longer overstrained by false spirits, but softened, saddened, and subdued by bodily exhaustion. She was still insane, but was no longer able to express her wandering ideas in the wild notes of her former state of exalted imagination. There was death in the plaintive tones of her voice, which yet, in this moderated and melancholy mood, had something of the lulling sound with which a mother sings her infant asleep. As Jeanie entered she heard first the air, and then a part of the chorus and words, of what had been, perhaps, the song of a jolly harvest-home.

*"Our work is over—over now,
The goodman wipes his weary brow,
The last long wain wends slow away,
And we are free to sport and play.*

*"The night comes on when sets the sun,
And labour ends when day is done.
When Autumn's gone and Winter's come,
We hold our jovial harvest-home."*

Jeanie advanced to the bedside when the strain was finished, and addressed Madge by her name. But it produced no symptoms of recollection. On the contrary, the patient, like one provoked by interruption, changed her posture, and called out with an impatient tone, "Nurse—nurse, turn my face to the wa', that I may never answer to that name ony mair, and never see mair of a wicked world."

The attendant on the hospital arranged her in her bed as she desired, with her face to the wall and her back to the light. So soon as she was quiet in this new position, she began again to sing in the same low and modulated strains, as if she was recovering the state of abstraction which the interruption of her visitants had disturbed. The strain, however, was different, and rather resembled the music of the Methodist hymns, though the measure of the song was similar to that of the former:

*"When the fight of grace is fought—
When the marriage vest is wrought—
When Faith hath chased cold Doubt away,
And Hope but sickens at delay—*

*"When Charity, imprisoned here,
Longs for a more expanded sphere,
Doff thy robes of sin and clay;
Christian, rise, and come away."*

The strain was solemn and affecting, sustained as it was by the pathetic warble of a voice which had naturally been a fine one, and which weakness, if it diminished its power, had improved in softness. Archibald, though a follower of the court, and a pococurante by profession, was confused, if not affected; the dairy-maid blubbered; and Jeanie felt the tears rise spontaneously to her eyes. Even the nurse, accustomed to all modes in which the spirit can pass, seemed considerably moved.

The patient was evidently growing weaker, as was intimated by an apparent difficulty of breathing, which seized her from time to time, and by the utterance of low listless moans, intimating that nature was succumbing in the last conflict. But the spirit of melody, which must originally have so strongly possessed this

unfortunate young woman, seemed, at every interval of ease, to triumph over her pain and weakness. And it was remarkable that there could always be traced in her songs something appropriate, though perhaps only obliquely or collaterally so, to her present situation. Her next seemed the fragment of some old ballad:

*"Cauld is my bed, Lord Archibald,
And sad my sleep of sorrow;
But thine sall be as sad and cauld,
My fause true-love! to-morrow.*

*"And weep ye not, my maidens free,
Though death your mistress borrow;
For he for whom I die to-day
Shall die for me to-morrow."*

Again she changed the tune to one wilder, less monotonous, and less regular. But of the words, only a fragment or two could be collected by those who listened to this singular scene:

*"Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.*

*"Tell me, thou bonny bird.
When shall I marry me?'
'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.'*

*"Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?'—
'The grey-headed sexton,
That delves the grave duly.*

*"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady;
The owl from the steeple sing,
'Welcome, proud lady.'"*

Her voice died away with the last notes, and she fell into a slumber, from which the experienced attendant assured them that she never would awake at all, or only in the death agony.

The nurse's prophecy proved true. The poor maniac parted with existence, without again uttering a sound of any kind. But our travellers did not witness this catastrophe. They left the hospital as soon as Jeanie had satisfied herself that no elucidation of her sister's misfortunes was to be hoped from the dying person.*

* Note R. Madge Wildfire.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

*Wilt thou go on with me?
The moon is bright, the sea is calm,
And I know well the ocean paths . . .
Thou wilt go on with me!
Thalaba.*

The fatigue and agitation of these various scenes had agitated Jeanie so much, notwithstanding her robust strength of constitution, that Archibald judged it necessary that she should have a day's repose at the village of Longtown. It was in vain that Jeanie protested against any delay. The Duke of Argyle's man of confidence was of course consequential; and as he had been bred to the medical profession in his youth (at least he used this expression to describe his having, thirty years before, pounded for six months in the mortar of old Mungo Mangleman, the surgeon at Greenock), he was obstinate whenever a matter of health was in question.

In this case he discovered febrile symptoms, and having once made a happy application of that learned phrase to Jeanie's case, all farther resistance became in vain; and she was glad to acquiesce, and even to go to bed, and drink water-gruel, in order that she might possess her soul in quiet and without interruption.

Mr. Archibald was equally attentive in another particular. He observed that the execution of the old man, and the miserable fate of her daughter, seemed to have had a more powerful effect upon Jeanie's mind, than the usual feelings of humanity might naturally have been expected to occasion. Yet she was obviously a strong-minded, sensible young woman, and in no respect subject to nervous affections; and therefore Archibald, being ignorant of any special connection between his master's prote'ge'e and these unfortunate persons, excepting that she had seen Madge formerly in Scotland, naturally imputed the strong impression these events had made upon her, to her associating them with the unhappy circumstances in which her sister had so lately stood. He became anxious, therefore, to prevent anything occurring which might recall these associations to Jeanie's mind.

Archibald had speedily an opportunity of exercising this precaution. A pedlar brought to Longtown that evening, amongst other wares, a large broad-side sheet, giving an account of the "Last Speech and Execution of Margaret Murdockson, and of the barbarous Murder of her Daughter, Magdalene or Madge Murdockson, called Madge Wildfire; and of her pious conversation with his Reverence Archdeacon Fleming;" which authentic publication had apparently taken place on the day they left Carlisle, and being an article of a nature peculiarly acceptable to such country-folk as were within hearing of the transaction, the itinerant biblioplist had forthwith added them to his stock in trade. He found a merchant sooner than he expected; for Archibald, much applauding his own prudence, purchased the whole lot for two shillings and ninepence; and the pedlar, delighted with the profit of such a wholesale transaction, instantly returned to Carlisle to supply himself with more.

The considerate Mr. Archibald was about to commit his whole purchase to the flames, but it was rescued by the yet more considerate dairy-damsel, who said, very prudently, it was a pity to waste so much paper, which might crepe hair, pin up bonnets, and serve many other useful purposes; and who promised to put the parcel into her own trunk, and keep it carefully out of the sight of Mrs. Jeanie Deans: "Though, by-the-bye, she had no great notion of folk being so very nice. Mrs. Deans might have had enough to think about the gallows all this time to endure a sight of it, without all this to-do about it."

Archibald reminded the dame of the dairy of the Duke's particular charge, that they should be attentive and civil to Jeanie as also that they were to part company soon, and consequently would not be doomed to observing any one's health or temper during the rest of the journey. With which answer Mrs. Dolly Dutton was

obliged to hold herself satisfied. On the morning they resumed their journey, and prosecuted it successfully, travelling through Dumfriesshire and part of Lanarkshire, until they arrived at the small town of Rutherglen, within about four miles of Glasgow. Here an express brought letters to Archibald from the principal agent of the Duke of Argyle in Edinburgh.

He said nothing of their contents that evening; but when they were seated in the carriage the next day, the faithful squire informed Jeanie, that he had received directions from the Duke's factor, to whom his Grace had recommended him to carry her, if she had no objection, for a stage or two beyond Glasgow. Some temporary causes of discontent had occasioned tumults in that city and the neighbourhood, which would render it unadvisable for Mrs. Jeanie Deans to travel alone and unprotected betwixt that city and Edinburgh; whereas, by going forward a little farther, they would meet one of his Grace's subfactors, who was coming down from the Highlands to Edinburgh with his wife, and under whose charge she might journey with comfort and in safety.

Jeanie remonstrated against this arrangement. "She had been lang," she said, "frae hame—her father and her sister behaved to be very anxious to see her—there were other friends she had that werena weel in health. She was willing to pay for man and horse at Glasgow, and surely naeboddy wad meddle wi' sae harmless and feckless a creature as she was.—She was muckle obliged by the offer; but never hunted deer langed for its resting-place as I do to find myself at Saint Leonard's."

The groom of the chambers exchanged a look with his female companion, which seemed so full of meaning, that Jeanie screamed aloud—"O Mr. Archibald—Mrs. Dutton, if ye ken of onything that has happened at Saint Leonard's, for God's sake—for pity's sake, tell me, and dinna keep me in suspense!"

"I really know nothing, Mrs. Deans," said the groom of the chambers.

"And I—I—I am sure, I knows as little," said the dame of the dairy, while some communication seemed to tremble on her lips, which, at a glance of Archibald's eye, she appeared to swallow down, and compressed her lips thereafter into a state of extreme and vigilant firmness, as if she had been afraid of its bolting out before she was aware.

Jeanie saw there was to be something concealed from her, and it was only the repeated assurances of Archibald that her father—her sister—all her friends were, as far as he knew, well and happy, that at all pacified her alarm. From such respectable people as those with whom she travelled she could apprehend no harm, and yet her distress was so obvious, that Archibald, as a last resource, pulled out, and put into her hand, a slip of paper, on which these words were written:—

"Jeanie Deans—You will do me a favour by going with Archibald and my female domestic a day's journey beyond Glasgow, and asking them no questions, which will greatly oblige your friend, 'Argyle & Greenwich.'"

Although this laconic epistle, from a nobleman to whom she was bound by such inestimable obligations, silenced all Jeanie's objections to the proposed route, it rather added to than diminished the eagerness of her curiosity. The proceeding to Glasgow seemed now no longer to be an object with her fellow-travellers. On the contrary, they kept the left-hand side of the river Clyde, and travelled through a thousand beautiful and changing views down the side of that noble stream, till, ceasing to hold its inland character, it began to assume that of a navigable river.

"You are not for gaun intill Glasgow then?" said Jeanie, as she observed that the drivers made no motion for inclining their horses' heads towards the ancient bridge, which was then the only mode of access to St. Mungo's capital.

"No," replied Archibald; "there is some popular commotion, and as our Duke is in opposition to the court, perhaps we might be too well received; or they might take it in their heads to remember that the Captain of Carrick came down upon them with his Highlandmen in the time of Shawfield's mob in 1725, and then we would be too ill received.* And, at any rate, it is best for us, and for me in particular, who may be supposed to possess his Grace's mind upon many particulars, to leave the good people of the Gorbals to act according to their own imaginations, without either provoking or encouraging them by my presence."

* In 1725, there was a great riot in Glasgow on account of the malt-tax. Among the troops brought in to restore order, was one of the independent companies of Highlanders levied in Argyleshire, and distinguished, in a lampoon of the period, as "Campbell of Carrick and his Highland thieves." It was called Shawfield's Mob, because much of the popular violence was directed against Daniel Campbell, Esq. of Shawfield, M. P., Provost of the town.

To reasoning of such tone and consequence Jeanie had nothing to reply, although it seemed to her to contain fully as much self-importance as truth.

The carriage meantime rolled on; the river expanded itself, and gradually assumed the dignity of an estuary or arm of the sea. The influence of the advancing and retiring tides became more and more evident, and in the beautiful words of him of the laurel wreath, the river waxed—

A broader and yet broader stream.

The cormorant stands upon its shoals,

His black and dripping wings

Half open'd to the wind.

[From Southey's Thalaba, Book xi. stanza 36.]

"Which way lies Inverary?" said Jeanie, gazing on the dusky ocean of Highland hills, which now, piled above each other, and intersected by many a lake, stretched away on the opposite side of the river to the northward. "Is yon high castle the Duke's hoose?"

"That, Mrs. Deans?—Lud help thee," replied Archibald, "that's the old castle of Dumbarton, the strongest place in Europe, be the other what it may. Sir William Wallace was governor of it in the old war with the English, and his Grace is governor just now. It is always entrusted to the best man in Scotland."

"And does the Duke live on that high rock, then?" demanded Jeanie.

"No, no, he has his deputy-governor, who commands in his absence; he lives in the white house you see at the bottom of the rock—His Grace does not reside there himself."

"I think not, indeed," said the dairy-woman, upon whose mind the road, since they had left Dumfries, had made no very favourable impression, "for if he did, he might go whistle for a dairy-woman, an he were the only duke in England. I did not leave my place and my friends to come down to see cows starve to death upon hills as they be at that pig-stye of Elfinfoot, as you call it, Mr. Archibald, or to be perched upon the top of a rock, like a squirrel in his cage, hung out of a three pair of stairs' window."

Inwardly chuckling that these symptoms of recalcitration had not taken place until the fair malcontent was, as he mentally termed it, under his thumb, Archibald coolly replied, "That the hills were none of his making, nor did he know how to mend them; but as to lodging, they would soon be in a house of the Duke's in a very pleasant island called Roseneath, where they went to wait for shipping to take them to Inverary, and would meet the company with whom Jeanie was to return to Edinburgh."

"An island?" said Jeanie, who, in the course of her various and adventurous travels, had never quitted terra firma, "then I am doubting we maun gang in ane of these boats; they look unco sma', and the waves are something rough, and—"

"Mr. Archibald," said Mrs. Dutton, "I will not consent to it; I was never engaed to leave the country, and I desire you will bid the boys drive round the other way to the Duke's hoose."

"There is a safe pinnace belonging to his Grace, ma'am, close by," replied Archibald, "and you need be under no apprehensions whatsoever."

"But I am under apprehensions," said the damsel; "and I insist upon going round by land, Mr. Archibald, were it ten miles about."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you, madam, as Roseneath happens to be an island."

"If it were ten islands," said the incensed dame, "that's no reason why I should be drowned in going over the seas to it."

"No reason why you should be drowned certainly, ma'am," answered the unmoved groom of the chambers, "but an admirable good one why you cannot proceed to it by land." And, fixed his master's mandates to perform, he pointed with his hand, and the drivers, turning off the high-road, proceeded towards a small hamlet of fishing huts, where a shallop, somewhat more gaily decorated than any which they had yet seen, having a flag which displayed a boar's head, crested with a ducal coronet, waited with two or three seamen, and as many Highlanders.

The carriage stopped, and the men began to unyoke their horses, while Mr. Archibald gravely superintended the removal of the baggage from the carriage to the little vessel. "Has the Caroline been long arrived?" said Archibald to one of the seamen.

"She has been here in five days from Liverpool, and she's lying down at Greenock," answered the fellow.

"Let the horses and carriage go down to Greenock then," said Archibald, "and be embarked there for Inverary when I send notice—they may stand in my cousin's, Duncan Archibald the stabler's.—Ladies," he added, "I hope you will get yourselves ready; we must not lose the tide."

"Mrs. Deans," said the Cowslip of Inverary, "you may do as you please—but I will sit here all night, rather than go into that there painted egg-shell.—Fellow—fellow!" (this was addressed to a Highlander who was lifting a travelling trunk), "that trunk is *mine*, and that there band-box, and that pillion mail, and those seven bundles, and the paper-bag; and if you venture to touch one of them, it shall be at your peril."

The Celt kept his eye fixed on the speaker, then turned his head towards Archibald, and receiving no countervailing signal, he shouldered the portmanteau, and without farther notice of the distressed damsel, or paying any attention to remonstrances, which probably he did not understand, and would certainly have equally disregarded whether he understood them or not, moved off with Mrs. Dutton's wearables, and deposited the trunk containing them safely in the boat.

The baggage being stowed in safety, Mr. Archibald handed Jeanie out of the carriage, and, not without some tremor on her part, she was transported through the surf and placed in the boat. He then offered the same civility to his fellow-servant, but she was resolute in her refusal to quit the carriage, in which she now remained in solitary state, threatening all concerned or unconcerned with actions for wages and board-wages, damages and expenses, and numbering on her fingers the gowns and other habiliments, from which she seemed in the act of being separated for ever. Mr. Archibald did not give himself the trouble of making many remonstrances, which, indeed, seemed only to aggravate the damsel's indignation, but spoke two or three words to the Highlanders in Gaelic; and the wily mountaineers, approaching the carriage cautiously, and without giving the slightest intimation of their intention, at once seized the recusant so effectually fast that she could neither resist nor struggle, and hoisting her on their shoulders in nearly a horizontal posture, rushed down with her to the beach, and through the surf, and with no other inconvenience than ruffling her garments a little, deposited her in the boat; but in a state of surprise, mortification, and terror, at her sudden transportation, which rendered her absolutely mute for two or three minutes. The men jumped in themselves; one tall fellow remained till he had pushed off the boat, and then tumbled in upon his companions. They took their oars and began to pull from the shore, then spread their sail, and drove merrily across the firth.

"You Scotch villain!" said the infuriated damsel to Archibald, "how dare you use a person like me in this way?"

"Madam," said Archibald, with infinite composure, "it's high time you should know you are in the Duke's country, and that there is not one of these fellows but would throw you out of the boat as readily as into it, if such were his Grace's pleasure."

"Then the Lord have mercy on me!" said Mrs. Dutton. "If I had had any on myself, I would never have engaged with you."

"It's something of the latest to think of that now, Mrs. Dutton," said Archibald; "but I assure you, you will find the Highlands have their pleasures. You will have a dozen of cow-milkers under your own authority at Inverary, and you may throw any of them into the lake, if you have a mind, for the Duke's head people are almost as great as himself."

"This is a strange business, to be sure, Mr. Archibald," said the lady; "but I suppose I must make the best on't.—Are you sure the boat will not sink? it leans terribly to one side, in my poor mind."

"Fear nothing," said Mr. Archibald, taking a most important pinch of snuff; "this same ferry on Clyde knows us very well, or we know it, which is all the same; no fear of any of our people meeting with any accident. We should have crossed from the opposite shore, but for the disturbances at Glasgow, which made it improper for his Grace's people to pass through the city."

"Are you not afeard, Mrs. Deans," said the dairy-vestal, addressing Jeanie, who sat, not in the most comfortable state of mind, by the side of Archibald, who himself managed the helm.—"are you not afeard of these wild men with their naked knees, and of this nut-shell of a thing, that seems bobbing up and down like a skimming-dish in a milk-pail?"

"No—no—madam," answered Jeanie with some hesitation, "I am not feared; for I hae seen Hielandmen before, though never was sae near them; and for the danger of the deep waters, I trust there is a Providence by sea as well as by land."

"Well," said Mrs. Dutton, "it is a beautiful thing to have learned to write and read, for one can always say such fine words whatever should befall them."

Archibald, rejoicing in the impression which his vigorous measures had made upon the intractable dairymaid, now applied himself, as a sensible and good-natured man, to secure by fair means the ascendancy which he had obtained by some wholesome violence; and he succeeded so well in representing to her the idle nature of her fears, and the impossibility of leaving her upon the beach enthroned in an empty carriage, that the good understanding of the party was completely revived ere they landed at Roseneath.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

*Did Fortune guide,
Or rather Destiny, our bark, to which
We could appoint no port, to this best place?
Fletcher.*

The islands in the Firth of Clyde, which the daily passage of so many smoke-pennoned steamboats now renders so easily accessible, were in our fathers' times secluded spots, frequented by no travellers, and few visitants of any kind. They are of exquisite, yet varied beauty. Arran, a mountainous region, or Alpine island, abounds with the grandest and most romantic scenery. Bute is of a softer and more woodland character. The Cumbrays, as if to exhibit a contrast to both, are green, level, and bare, forming the links of a sort of natural bar which is drawn along the mouth of the firth, leaving large intervals, however, of ocean. Roseneath, a smaller isle, lies much higher up the firth, and towards its western shore, near the opening of the lake called the Gare Loch, and not far from Loch Long and Loch Scant, or the Holy Loch, which wind from the mountains of the Western Highlands to join the estuary of the Clyde.

In these isles the severe frost winds which tyrannise over the vegetable creation during a Scottish spring, are comparatively little felt; nor, excepting the gigantic strength of Arran, are they much exposed to the Atlantic storms, lying landlocked and protected to the westward by the shores of Ayrshire. Accordingly, the weeping-willow, the weeping-birch, and other trees of early and pendulous shoots, flourish in these favoured recesses in a degree unknown in our eastern districts; and the air is also said to possess that mildness which is favourable to consumptive cases.

The picturesque beauty of the island of Roseneath, in particular, had such recommendations, that the Earls and Dukes of Argyle, from an early period, made it their occasional residence, and had their temporary accommodation in a fishing or hunting-lodge, which succeeding improvements have since transformed into a palace. It was in its original simplicity when the little bark which we left traversing the firth at the end of last CHAPTER approached the shores of the isle.

When they touched the landing-place, which was partly shrouded by some old low but wide-spreading oak-trees, intermixed with hazel-bushes, two or three figures were seen as if awaiting their arrival. To these Jeanie paid little attention, so that it was with a shock of surprise almost electrical, that, upon being carried by the rowers out of the boat to the shore, she was received in the arms of her father!

It was too wonderful to be believed—too much like a happy dream to have the stable feeling of reality—She extricated herself from his close and affectionate embrace, and held him at arm's length, to satisfy her mind that it was no illusion. But the form was indisputable—Douce David Deans himself, in his best light-blue Sunday's coat, with broad metal buttons, and waistcoat and breeches of the same, his strong gramashes or leggins of thick grey cloth—the very copper buckles—the broad Lowland blue bonnet, thrown back as he lifted his eyes to Heaven in speechless gratitude—the grey locks that straggled from beneath it down his weather-beaten "haffets"—the bald and furrowed forehead—the clear blue eye, that, undimmed by years, gleamed bright and pale from under its shaggy grey

pent-house—the features, usually so stern and stoical, now melted into the unwonted expression of rapturous joy, affection, and gratitude—were all those of David Deans; and so happily did they assort together, that, should I ever again see my friends Wilkie or Allan, I will try to borrow or steal from them a sketch of this very scene.

"Jeanie—my ain Jeanie—my best—my maist dutiful bairn—the Lord of Israel be thy father, for I am hardly worthy of thee! Thou hast redeemed our captivity—brought back the honour of our house—Bless thee, my bairn, with mercies promised and purchased! But He *has* blessed thee, in the good of which He has made thee the instrument."

These words broke from him not without tears, though David was of no melting mood. Archibald had, with delicate attention, withdrawn the spectators from the interview, so that the wood and setting sun alone were witnesses of the expansion of their feelings.

"And Effie?—and Effie, dear father?" was an eager interjectional question which Jeanie repeatedly threw in among her expressions of joyful thankfulness.

"Ye will hear—Ye will hear," said David hastily, and over and anon renewed his grateful acknowledgments to Heaven for sending Jeanie safe down from the land of prelatel deadness and schismatic heresy; and had delivered her from the dangers of the way, and the lions that were in the path.

"And Effie?" repeated her affectionate sister again and again. "And—and" (fain would she have said Butler, but she modified the direct inquiry)—"and Mr. and Mrs. Saddletree—and Dumbiedikes—and a' friends?"

"A' weel—a' weel, praise to His name!"

"And—Mr. Butler—he wasna weel when I gaed awa?"

"He is quite mended—quite weel," replied her father.

"Thank God—but O, dear father, Effie?—Effie?"

"You will never see her mair, my bairn," answered Deans in a solemn tone—"You are the ae and only leaf left now on the auld tree—hale be your portion!"

"She is dead!—She is slain!—It has come ower late!" exclaimed Jeanie, wringing her hands.

"No, Jeanie," returned Deans, in the same grave melancholy tone. "She lives in the flesh, and is at freedom from earthly restraint, if she were as much alive in faith, and as free from the bonds of Satan."

"The Lord protect us!" said Jeanie.—"Can the unhappy bairn hae left you for that villain?"

"It is ower truly spoken," said Deans—"She has left her auld father, that has wept and prayed for her—She has left her sister, that travailed and toiled for her like a mother—She has left the bones of her mother, and the land of her people, and she is ower the march wi' that son of Belial—She has made a moonlight flitting of it." He paused, for a feeling betwixt sorrow and strong resentment choked his utterance.

"And wi' that man?—that fearfu' man?" said Jeanie. "And she has left us to gang aff wi' him?—O Effie, Effie, wha could hae thought it, after sic a deliverance as you had been gifted wi'!"

"She went out from us, my bairn, because she was not of us," replied David. "She is a withered branch will never bear fruit of grace—a scapegoat gone forth into the wilderness of the world, to carry wi' her, as I trust, the sins of our little congregation. The peace of the warld gang wi' her, and a better peace when she has the grace to turn to it! If she is of His elected, His ain hour will come. What would her mother have said, that famous and memorable matron, Rebecca MacNaught, whose memory is like a flower of sweet savour in Newbattle, and a pot of frankincense in Lugton? But be it sae—let her part—let her gang her gate—let her bite on her ain bridle—The Lord kens his time—She was the bairn of prayers, and may not prove an utter castaway. But never, Jeanie, never more let her name be spoken between you and me—She hath passed from us like the brook which vanisheth when the summer waxeth warm, as patient Job saith—let her pass, and be forgotten."

There was a melancholy pause which followed these expressions. Jeanie would fain have asked more circumstances relating to her sister's departure, but the tone of her father's prohibition was positive. She was about to mention her interview with Staunton at his father's rectory; but, on hastily running over the particulars in her memory, she thought that, on the whole, they were more likely to aggravate than diminish his distress of mind. She turned, therefore, the discourse from this painful subject, resolving to suspend farther inquiry until she should see Butler, from whom she expected to learn the particulars of her sister's elopement.

But when was she to see Butler? was a question she could not forbear asking herself, especially while her father, as if eager to escape from the subject of his youngest daughter, pointed to the opposite shore of Dumbartonshire, and asking Jeanie "if it werena a pleasant abode?" declared to her his intention of removing his earthly tabernacle to that country, "in respect he was solicited by his Grace the Duke of Argyle, as one well skilled in country labour, and a' that appertained to flocks and herds, to superintend a store-farm, whilk his Grace had taen into his ain hand for the improvement of stock."

Jeanie's heart sunk within her at this declaration. "She allowed it was a goodly and pleasant land, and sloped bonnily to the western sun; and she doubtedna that the pasture might be very gude, for the grass looked green, for as drouthy as the weather had been. But it was far frae hame, and she thought she wad be often thinking on the bonny spots of turf, sae fu' of gowans and yellow king-cups, amang the Craggs at St. Leonard's."

"Dinna speak on't, Jeanie," said her father; "I wish never to hear it named mair—that is, after the roupin is ower, and the bills paid. But I brought a' the beasts owerby that I thought ye wad like best. There is Gowans, and there's your ain brockit cow, and the wee hawkit ane, that ye ca'd—I needna tell ye how ye ca'd it—but I couldna bid them sell the petted creature, though the sight o' it may sometimes gie us a sair heart—it's no the poor dumb creature's fault—And ane or twa beasts mair I hae reserved, and I caused them to be driven before the other beasts, that men might say, as when the son of Jesse returned from battle, 'This is David's spoil.'"

Upon more particular inquiry, Jeanie found new occasion to admire the active beneficence of her friend the Duke of Argyle. While establishing a sort of experimental farm on the skirts of his immense Highland estates, he had been somewhat at a loss to find a proper person in whom to vest the charge of it. The conversation his Grace had upon country matters with Jeanie Deans during their return from Richmond, had impressed him with a belief that the father, whose experience and success she so frequently quoted, must be exactly the sort of person whom he wanted. When the condition annexed to Effie's pardon rendered it highly probable that David Deans would choose to change his place of residence, this idea again occurred to the Duke more strongly, and as he was an enthusiast equally in agriculture and in benevolence, he imagined he was serving the purposes of both, when he wrote to the gentleman in Edinburgh entrusted with his affairs, to inquire into the character of David Deans, cowfeeder, and so forth, at St. Leonard's Craggs; and if he found him such as he had been represented, to engage him without delay, and on the most liberal terms, to superintend his fancy-farm in Dumbartonshire.

The proposal was made to old David by the gentleman so commissioned, on the second day after his daughter's pardon had reached Edinburgh. His resolution to leave St. Leonard's had been already formed; the honour of an express invitation from the Duke of Argyle to superintend a department where so much skill and diligence was required, was in itself extremely flattering; and the more so, because honest David, who was not without an excellent opinion of his own talents, persuaded himself that, by accepting this charge, he would in some sort repay the great favour he had received at the hands of the Argyle family. The appointments, including the right of sufficient grazing for a small stock of his own, were amply liberal; and David's keen eye saw that the situation was convenient for trafficking to advantage in Highland cattle. There was risk of "her'ship"* from the neighbouring mountains, indeed, but the awful name of the Duke of Argyle would be a great security, and a trifle of *black-mail* would, David was aware, assure his safety.

* Her'ship, a Scottish word which may be said to be now obsolete; because, fortunately, the practice of "plundering by armed force," which is its meaning, does not require to be commonly spoken of.

Still however, there were two points on which he haggled. The first was the character of the clergyman with whose worship he was to join; and on this delicate point he received, as we will presently show the reader, perfect satisfaction. The next obstacle was the condition of his youngest daughter, obliged as she was to leave Scotland for so many years.

The gentleman of the law smiled, and said, "There was no occasion to interpret that clause very strictly—that if the young woman left Scotland for a few months, or even weeks, and came to her father's new residence by sea from the western side of England, nobody would know of her arrival, or at least nobody who had either the right or inclination to give her disturbance. The extensive heritable jurisdictions of his Grace excluded the interference of other magistrates with those living on his estates, and they who were in immediate dependence on him would receive orders to give the young woman no disturbance. Living on the verge of the Highlands, she might, indeed, be said to be out of Scotland, that is, beyond the bounds of ordinary law and civilisation."

Old Deans was not quite satisfied with this reasoning; but the elopement of Effie, which took place on the third night after her liberation, rendered his residence at St. Leonard's so detestable to him, that he closed at once with the proposal which had been made him, and entered with pleasure into the idea of surprising Jeanie, as had been proposed by the Duke, to render the change of residence more striking to her. The Duke had apprised Archibald of these circumstances, with orders to act according to the instructions he should receive from Edinburgh, and by which accordingly he was directed to bring Jeanie to Roseneath.

The father and daughter communicated these matters to each other, now stopping, now walking slowly towards the Lodge, which showed itself among the trees, at about half-a-mile's distance from the little bay in which they had landed. As they approached the house, David Deans informed his daughter, with somewhat like a grim smile, which was the utmost advance he ever made towards a mirthful expression of visage, that "there was baith a worshipful gentleman, and ane reverend gentleman, residing therein. The worshipful gentleman was his honour the Laird of Knocktarlittie, who was bailie of the lordship under the Duke of Argyle, ane Highland gentleman, tarr'd wi' the same stick," David doubted, "as mony of them, namely, a hasty and choleric temper, and a neglect of the higher things that belong to salvation, and also a gripping unto the things of this world, without muckle distinction of property; but, however, ane gude hospitable gentleman, with whom it would be a part of wisdom to live on a gude understanding (for Hielandmen were hasty, ower hasty). As for the reverend person of whom he had spoken, he was candidate by favour of the Duke of Argyle (for David would not for the universe have called him presentee) for the kirk of the parish in which their farm was situated, and he was likely to be highly acceptable unto the Christian souls of the parish, who were hungering for spiritual manna, having been fed but upon sour Hieland sowens by Mr. Duncan MacDonought, the last minister, who began the morning duly, Sunday and Saturday, with a mutchkin of usquebaugh. But I need say the less about the present lad," said David, again grimly grimacing, "as I think ye may hae seen him afore; and here he is come to meet us."

She had indeed seen him before, for it was no other than Reuben Butler himself.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

*No more shalt thou behold thy sister's face;
Thou hast already had her last embrace.*

Elegy on Mrs. Anne Killigrew.

This second surprise had been accomplished for Jeanie Deans by the rod of the same benevolent enchanter, whose power had transplanted her father from the Craggs of St. Leonard's to the banks of the Gare Loch. The Duke of Argyle was not a person to forget the hereditary debt of gratitude, which had been bequeathed to him by his grandfather, in favour of the grandson of old Bible Butler. He had internally resolved to provide for Reuben Butler in this kirk of Knocktarlittie, of which the incumbent had just departed this life. Accordingly, his agent received the necessary instructions for that purpose, under the qualifying condition always, that the learning and character of Mr. Butler should be found proper for the charge. Upon inquiry, these were found as highly satisfactory as had been reported in the case of David Deans himself.

By this preferment, the Duke of Argyle more essentially benefited his friend and *protegee*, Jeanie, than he himself was aware of, since he contributed to remove objections in her father's mind to the match, which he had no idea had been in existence.

We have already noticed that Deans had something of a prejudice against Butler, which was, perhaps, in some degree owing to his possessing a sort of consciousness that the poor usher looked with eyes of affection upon his eldest daughter. This, in David's eyes, was a sin of presumption, even although it should not be followed by any overt act, or actual proposal. But the lively interest which Butler had displayed in his distresses, since Jeanie set forth on her London expedition, and which, therefore, he ascribed to personal respect for himself individually, had greatly softened the feelings of irritability with which David had sometimes regarded him. And, while he was in this good disposition towards Butler, another incident took place which had great influence on the old man's mind. So soon as the shock of Effie's second elopement was over, it was Deans's early care to collect and refund to the Laird of Dumbiedikes the money which he had lent for Effie's trial, and for Jeanie's travelling expenses. The Laird, the pony, the cocked hat, and the tobacco-pipe, had not been seen at St. Leonard's Craggs for many a day; so that, in order to pay this debt, David was under the necessity of repairing in person to the mansion of Dumbiedikes.

He found it in a state of unexpected bustle. There were workmen pulling down some of the old hangings, and replacing them with others, altering, repairing, scrubbing, painting, and white-washing. There was no knowing the old house, which had been so long the mansion of sloth and silence. The Laird himself seemed in some confusion, and his reception, though kind, lacked something of the reverential cordiality, with which he used to greet David Deans. There was a change also, David did not very well know of what nature, about the exterior of this landed proprietor—an improvement in the shape of his garments, a spruceness in the air with which they were put on, that were both novelties. Even the old hat looked smarter; the cock had been newly pointed, the lace had been refreshed, and instead of slouching backward or forward on the Laird's head, as it happened to be thrown on, it was adjusted with a knowing inclination over one eye.

David Deans opened his business, and told down the cash. Dumbiedikes steadily inclined his ear to the one, and counted the other with great accuracy, interrupting David, while he was talking of the redemption of the captivity of Judah, to ask him whether he did not think one or two of the guineas looked rather light. When he was satisfied on this point, had pocketed his money, and had signed a receipt, he addressed David with some little hesitation,—"Jeanie wad be writing ye something, gudeman?"

"About the siller?" replied David—"Nae doubt, she did."

"And did she say nae mair about me?" asked the Laird.

"Nae mair but kind and Christian wishes—what suld she hae said?" replied David, fully expecting that the Laird's long courtship (if his dangling after Jeanie deserves so active a name) was now coming to a point. And so indeed it was, but not to that point which he wished or expected.

"Aweel, she kens her ain mind best, gudeman. I hae made a clean house o' Jenny Balchristie, and her niece. They were a bad pack—steal'd meat and mault, and loot the carters magg the coals—I'm to be married the morn, and kirkit on Sunday."

Whatever David felt, he was too proud and too steady-minded to show any unpleasant surprise in his countenance and manner.

"I wuss ye happy, sir, through Him that gies happiness—marriage is an honourable state."

"And I am wedding into an honourable house, David—the Laird of Lickpelf's youngest daughter—she sits next us in the kirk, and that's the way I came to think on't."

There was no more to be said but again to wish the Laird joy, to taste a cup of his liquor, and to walk back again to St. Leonard's, musing on the mutability of human affairs and human resolutions. The expectation that one day or other Jeanie would be Lady Dumbiedikes, had, in spite of himself, kept a more absolute possession of David's mind than he himself was aware of. At least, it had hitherto seemed a union at all times within his daughter's reach, whenever she might choose to give her silent lover any degree of encouragement, and now it was vanished for ever. David returned, therefore, in no very gracious humour for so good a man. He was angry with Jeanie for not having encouraged the Laird—he was angry with the Laird for requiring encouragement—and he was angry with himself for being angry at all on the occasion.

On his return he found the gentleman who managed the Duke of Argyle's affairs was desirous of seeing him, with a view to completing the arrangement between them. Thus, after a brief repose, he was obliged to set off anew for Edinburgh, so that old May Hettly declared, "That a' this was to end with the master just walking himself aff his feet."

When the business respecting the farm had been talked over and arranged, the professional gentleman acquainted David Deans, in answer to his inquiries concerning the state of public worship, that it was the pleasure of the Duke to put an excellent young clergyman, called Reuben Butler, into the parish, which was to be his future residence.

"Reuben Butler!" exclaimed David—"Reuben Butler, the usher at Liberton?"

"The very same," said the Duke's commissioner; "his Grace has heard an excellent character of him, and has some hereditary obligations to him besides—few ministers will be so comfortable as I am directed to make Mr. Butler."

"Obligations?—The Duke?—Obligations to Reuben Butler—Reuben Butler a placed minister of the Kirk of Scotland?" exclaimed David, in interminable astonishment, for somehow he had been led by the bad success which Butler had hitherto met with in all his undertakings, to consider him as one of those stepsons of Fortune, whom she treats with unceasing rigour, and ends with disinheriting altogether.

There is, perhaps, no time at which we are disposed to think so highly of a friend, as when we find him standing higher than we expected in the esteem of others. When assured of the reality of Butler's change of prospects, David expressed his great satisfaction at his success in life, which, he observed, was entirely owing to himself (David). "I advised his puir grand-mother, who was but a silly woman, to breed him up to the ministry; and I prophesied that, with a blessing on his endeavours, he would become a polished shaft in the temple. He may be something ower proud o' his carnal learning, but a gude lad, and has the root of the matter—as ministers gang now, where yell find ane better, ye'll find ten waur, than Reuben Butler."

He took leave of the man of business, and walked homeward, forgetting his weariness in the various speculations to which this wonderful piece of intelligence gave rise. Honest David had now, like other great men, to go to work to reconcile his speculative principles with existing circumstances; and, like other great men, when they set seriously about that task, he was tolerably successful.

Ought Reuben Butler in conscience to accept of this preferment in the Kirk of Scotland, subject as David at present thought that establishment was to the Erastian encroachments of the civil power? This was the leading question, and he considered it carefully. "The Kirk of Scotland was shorn of its beams, and deprived of its full artillery and banners of authority; but still it contained zealous and fructifying pastors, attentive congregations, and, with all her spots and blemishes, the like of this Kirk was nowhere else to be seen upon earth."

David's doubts had been too many and too critical to permit him ever unequivocally to unite himself with any of the dissenters, who upon various accounts absolutely seceded from the national church. He had often joined in communion with such of the established clergy as approached nearest to the old Presbyterian model and principles of 1640. And although there were many things to be amended in that system, yet he remembered that he, David Deans, had himself ever been an humble pleader for the good old cause in a legal way, but without rushing into right-hand excesses, divisions and separations. But, as an enemy to separation, he might join the right-hand of fellowship with a minister of the Kirk of Scotland in its present model. *Ergo*, Reuben Butler might take possession of the parish of Knocktarlitie, without forfeiting his friendship or favour—Q. E. D. But, secondly, came the trying point of lay-patronage, which David Deans had ever maintained to be a coming in by the window, and over the wall, a cheating and starving the souls of a whole parish, for the purpose of clothing the back and filling the belly of the incumbent.

This presentation, therefore, from the Duke of Argyle, whatever was the worth and high character of that nobleman, was a limb of the brazen image, a portion of the evil thing, and with no kind of consistency could David bend his mind to favour such a transaction. But if the parishioners themselves joined in a general call to Reuben Butler to be their pastor, it did not seem quite so evident that the existence of this unhappy presentation was a reason for his refusing them the comforts of his doctrine. If the Presbytery admitted him to the kirk, in virtue rather of that act of patronage than of the general call of the congregation, that might be their error, and David allowed it was a heavy one. But if Reuben Butler accepted of the cure as tendered to him by those whom he was called to teach, and who had expressed themselves desirous to learn, David, after considering and reconsidering the matter, came, through the great virtue of if, to be of opinion that he might safely so act in that matter.

There remained a third stumbling-block—the oaths to Government exacted from the established clergymen, in which they acknowledge an Erastian king and parliament, and homologate the incorporating Union between England and Scotland, through which the latter kingdom had become part and portion of the former, wherein Prelacy, the sister of Popery, had made fast her throne, and elevated the horns of her mitre. These were symptoms of defection which had often made David cry out, "My bowels—my bowels!—I am pained at the very heart!" And he remembered that a godly Bow-head matron had been carried out of the Tolbooth church in a swoon, beyond the reach of brandy and burnt feathers, merely on hearing these fearful words, "It is enacted by the Lords *spiritual* and temporal," pronounced from a Scottish pulpit, in the proem to the Porteous Proclamation. These oaths were, therefore, a deep compliance and dire abomination—a sin and a snare, and a danger and a defection. But this shibboleth was not always exacted. Ministers had respect to their own tender consciences, and those of their brethren; and it was not till a later period that the reins of discipline were taken up tight by the General Assemblies and Presbyteries. The peacemaking particle came again to David's assistance. *If* an incumbent was not called upon to make such compliances, and *if* he got a right entry into the church without intrusion, and by orderly appointment, why, upon the whole, David Deans came to be of opinion, that the said incumbent might lawfully enjoy the spirituality and temporality of the cure of souls at Knocktarlitie, with stipend, manse, glebe, and all thereunto appertaining.

The best and most upright-minded men are so strongly influenced by existing circumstances, that it would be somewhat cruel to inquire too nearly what weight parental affection gave to these ingenious trains of reasoning. Let David Deans's situation be considered. He was just deprived of one daughter, and his eldest, to whom he owed so much, was cut off, by the sudden resolution of Dumbiedikes, from the high hope which David had entertained, that she might one day be mistress of that fair lordship. Just while this disappointment was bearing heavy on his spirits, Butler comes before his imagination—no longer the half-starved threadbare usher, but fat and sleek and fair, the beneficed minister of Knocktarlitie, beloved by his congregation—exemplary in his life—powerful in his doctrine—doing the duty of the kirk as never Highland minister did before—turning sinners as a colley dog turns sheep—a favourite of the Duke of Argyle, and drawing a stipend of eight hundred pounds Scots, and four chalders of victual. Here was a match, making up in David's mind, in a tenfold degree, the disappointment in the case of Dumbiedikes, in so far as the Goodman of St. Leonard's held a powerful minister in much greater admiration than a mere landed proprietor. It did not occur to him, as an additional reason in favour of the match, that Jeanie might herself have some choice in the matter; for the idea of consulting her feelings never once entered into the honest man's head, any more than the possibility that her inclination might perhaps differ from his own.

The result of his meditations was, that he was called upon to take the management of the whole affair into his own hand, and give, if it should be found possible without sinful compliance, or backsliding, or defection of any kind, a worthy pastor to the kirk of Knocktarlitie. Accordingly, by the intervention of the honest dealer in butter-milk who dwelt in Liberton, David summoned to his presence Reuben Butler. Even from this worthy messenger he was unable to conceal certain swelling emotions of dignity, inasmuch, that, when the carter had communicated his message to the usher, he added, that "Certainly the Gudeman of St. Leonard's had some grand news to tell him, for he was as uplifted as a midden-cock upon pattens."

Butler, it may readily be conceived, immediately obeyed the summons. He was a plain character, in which worth and good sense and simplicity were the principal ingredients; but love, on this occasion, gave him a certain degree of address. He had received an intimation of the favour designed him by the Duke of Argyle, with what feelings those only can conceive who have experienced a sudden prospect of being raised to independence and respect from penury and toil. He resolved, however, that the old man should retain all the consequence of being, in his own opinion, the first to communicate the important intelligence. At the same time, he also determined that in the expected conference he would permit David Deans to expatiate at length upon the proposal, in all its bearings, without irritating him either by interruption or contradiction. This last was the most prudent plan he could have adopted; because, although there were many doubts which David Deans

could himself clear up to his own satisfaction, yet he might have been by no means disposed to accept the solution of any other person; and to engage him in an argument would have been certain to confirm him at once and for ever in the opinion which Butler chanced to impugn.

He received his friend with an appearance of important gravity, which real misfortune had long compelled him to lay aside, and which belonged to those days of awful authority in which he predominated over Widow Butler, and dictated the mode of cultivating the crofts of Beersheba. He made known to Reuben, with great prolixity, the prospect of his changing his present residence for the charge of the Duke of Argyle's stock-farm in Dumbartonshire, and enumerated the various advantages of the situation with obvious self-congratulation; but assured the patient hearer, that nothing had so much moved him to acceptance, as the sense that, by his skill in bestial, he could render the most important services to his Grace the Duke of Argyle, to whom, "in the late unhappy circumstance" (here a tear dimmed the sparkle of pride in the old man's eye), "he had been sae muckle obliged."

"To put a rude Hielandman into sic a charge," he continued, "what could be expected but that he suld be sic a chiefest herdsman, as wicked Doeg the Edomite? whereas, while this grey head is to the fore, not a clute o' them but sall be as weel cared for as if they were the fatted kine of Pharaoh.—And now, Reuben, lad, seeing we maun remove our tent to a strange country, ye will be casting a dolefu' look after us, and thinking with whom ye are to hold counsel anent your government in thae slippery and backsliding times; and nae doubt remembering, that the auld man, David Deans, was made the instrument to bring you out of the mire of schism and heresy, wherein your father's house delighted to wallow; aften also, nae doubt, when ye are pressed wi' ensnaring trials and tentations and heart-plagues, you, that are like a recruit that is marching for the first time to the touk of drum, will miss the auld, bauld, and experienced veteran soldier that has felt the brunt of mony a foul day, and heard the bullets whistle as aften as he has hairs left on his auld pow."

It is very possible that Butler might internally be of opinion, that the reflection on his ancestor's peculiar tenets might have been spared, or that he might be presumptuous enough even to think, that, at his years, and with his own lights, he might be able to hold his course without the pilotage of honest David. But he only replied, by expressing his regret, that anything should separate him from an ancient, tried, and affectionate friend.

"But how can it be helped, man?" said David, twisting his features into a sort of smile—"How can we help it?—I trow, ye canna tell me that—Ye maun leave that to ither folk—to the Duke of Argyle and me, Reuben. It's a gude thing to hae friends in this world—how muckle better to hae an interest beyond it!"

And David, whose piety, though not always quite rational, was as sincere as it was habitual and fervent, looked reverentially upward and paused. Mr. Butler intimated the pleasure with which he would receive his friend's advice on a subject so important, and David resumed.

"What think ye now, Reuben, of a kirk—a regular kirk under the present establishment?—Were sic offered to ye, wad ye be free to accept it, and under whilk provisions?—I am speaking but by way of query."

Butler replied, "That if such a prospect were held out to him, he would probably first consult whether he was likely to be useful to the parish he should be called to; and if there appeared a fair prospect of his proving so, his friend must be aware, that in every other point of view, it would be highly advantageous for him."

"Right, Reuben, very right, lad," answered the monitor, "your ain conscience is the first thing to be satisfied—for how sall he teach others that has himself sae ill learned the Scriptures, as to grip for the lucre of foul earthly preferment, sic as gear and manse, money and victual, that which is not his in a spiritual sense—or wha makes his kirk a stalking-horse, from behind which he may tak aim at his stipend? But I look for better things of you—and specially ye maun be minded not to act altogether on your ain judgment, for therethrough comes sair mistakes, backslidings and defections, on the left and on the right. If there were sic a day of trial put to you, Reuben, you, who are a young lad, although it may be ye are gifted wi' the carnal tongues, and those whilk were spoken at Rome, whilk is now the seat of the scarlet abomination, and by the Greeks, to whom the Gospel was as foolishness, yet nae-the-less ye may be entreated by your weel-wisher to take the counsel of those prudent and resolved and weather-withstanding professors, wha hae kend what it was to lurk on banks and in mosses, in bogs and in caverns, and to risk the peril of the head rather than renounce the honesty of the heart."

Butler replied, "That certainly, possessing such a friend as he hoped and trusted he had in the goodman himself, who had seen so many changes in the preceding century, he should be much to blame if he did not avail himself of his experience and friendly counsel."

"Eneugh said—eneugh said, Reuben," said David Deans, with internal exultation; "and say that ye were in the predicament whereof I hae spoken, of a surety I would deem it my duty to gang to the root o' the matter, and lay bare to you the ulcers and imposthumes, and the sores and the leprosies, of this our time, crying aloud and sparing not."

David Deans was now in his element. He commenced his examination of the doctrines and belief of the Christian Church with the very Culdees, from whom he passed to John Knox,—from John Knox to the recusants in James the Sixth's time—Bruce, Black, Blair, Livingstone,—from them to the brief, and at length triumphant period of the Presbyterian Church's splendour, until it was overrun by the English Independents. Then followed the dismal times of prelacy, the indulgences, seven in number, with all their shades and bearings, until he arrived at the reign of King James the Second, in which he himself had been, in his own mind, neither an obscure actor nor an obscure sufferer. Then was Butler doomed to hear the most detailed and annotated edition of what he had so often heard before,—David Deans's confinement, namely, in the iron cage in the Canongate Tolbooth, and the cause thereof.

We should be very unjust to our friend David Deans, if we should "pretermit"—to use his own expression—a narrative which he held essential to his fame. A drunken trooper of the Royal Guards, Francis Gordon by name, had chased five or six of the skulking Whigs, among whom was our friend David; and after he had compelled them to stand, and was in the act of brawling with them, one of their number fired a pocket-pistol, and shot him dead. David used to sneer and shake his head when any one asked him whether *he* had been the instrument of removing this wicked persecutor from the face of the earth. In fact the merit of the deed lay between him and his friend, Patrick Walker, the pedlar, whose words he was so fond of quoting. Neither of them cared directly to claim the merit of silencing Mr. Francis Gordon of the Life-Guards, there being some wild cousins of his about Edinburgh, who might have been even yet addicted to revenge, but yet neither of them chose to disown or yield to the other the merit of this active defence of their religious rights. David said, that if he had fired a pistol then, it was what he never did after or before. And as for Mr. Patrick Walker, he has left it upon record, that his great surprise was, that so small a pistol could kill so big a man. These are the words of that venerable biographer, whose trade had not taught him by experience, that an inch was as good as an ell. "He," (Francis Gordon) "got a shot in his head out of a pocket-pistol, rather fit for diverting a boy than killing such a furious, mad, brisk man, which notwithstanding killed him dead!"*

* Note S. Death of Francis Gordon.

Upon the extensive foundation which the history of the kirk afforded, during its short-lived triumph and long tribulation, David, with length of breath and of narrative, which would have astounded any one but a lover of his daughter, proceeded to lay down his own rules for guiding the conscience of his friend, as an aspirant to serve in the ministry. Upon this subject, the good man went through such a variety of nice and casuistical problems, supposed so many extreme cases, made the distinctions so critical and nice betwixt the right hand and the left hand—betwixt compliance and defection—holding back and stepping aside—slipping and stumbling—snares and errors—that at length, after having limited the path of truth to a mathematical line, he was brought to the broad admission, that each man's conscience, after he had gained a certain view of the difficult navigation which he was to encounter, would be the best guide for his pilotage. He stated the examples and arguments for and against the acceptance of a kirk on the present revolution model, with much more impartiality to Butler than he had been

able to place them before his own view. And he concluded, that his young friend ought to think upon these things, and be guided by the voice of his own conscience, whether he could take such an awful trust as the charge of souls without doing injury to his own internal conviction of what is right or wrong.

When David had finished his very long harangue, which was only interrupted by monosyllables, or little more, on the part of Butler, the orator himself was greatly astonished to find that the conclusion, at which he very naturally wished to arrive, seemed much less decisively attained than when he had argued the case in his own mind.

In this particular, David's current of thinking and speaking only illustrated the very important and general proposition, concerning the excellence of the publicity of debate. For, under the influence of any partial feeling, it is certain, that most men can more easily reconcile themselves to any favourite measure, when agitating it in their own mind, than when obliged to expose its merits to a third party, when the necessity of seeming impartial procures for the opposite arguments a much more fair statement than that which he affords it in tacit meditation. Having finished what he had to say, David thought himself obliged to be more explicit in point of fact, and to explain that this was no hypothetical case, but one on which (by his own influence and that of the Duke of Argyle) Reuben Butler would soon be called to decide.

It was even with something like apprehension that David Deans heard Butler announce, in return to this communication, that he would take that night to consider on what he had said with such kind intentions, and return him an answer the next morning. The feelings of the father mastered David on this occasion. He pressed Butler to spend the evening with him—He produced, most unusual at his meals, one, nay, two bottles of aged strong ale.—He spoke of his daughter—of her merits—her housewifery—her thrift—her affection. He led Butler so decidedly up to a declaration of his feelings towards Jeanie, that, before nightfall, it was distinctly understood she was to be the bride of Reuben Butler; and if they thought it indelicate to abridge the period of deliberation which Reuben had stipulated, it seemed to be sufficiently understood betwixt them, that there was a strong probability of his becoming minister of Knocktarlitie, providing the congregation were as willing to accept of him, as the Duke to grant him the presentation. The matter of the oaths, they agreed, it was time enough to dispute about, whenever the shibboleth should be tendered.

Many arrangements were adopted that evening, which were afterwards ripened by correspondence with the Duke of Argyle's man of business, who intrusted Deans and Butler with the benevolent wish of his principal, that they should all meet with Jeanie, on her return from England, at the Duke's hunting-lodge in Roseneath.

This retrospect, so far as the placid loves of Jeanie Deans and Reuben Butler are concerned, forms a full explanation of the preceding narrative up to their meeting on the island, as already mentioned.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

*"I come," he said, "my love, my life,
And—nature's dearest name—my wife:
Thy father's house and friends resign,
My home, my friends, my sire, are thine."
Logan.*

The meeting of Jeanie and Butler, under circumstances promising to crown an affection so long delayed, was rather affecting, from its simple sincerity than from its uncommon vehemence of feeling. David Deans, whose practice was sometimes a little different from his theory, appalled them at first, by giving them the opinion of sundry of the suffering preachers and champions of his younger days, that marriage, though honourable by the laws of Scripture, was yet a state over-rashly coveted by professors, and specially by young ministers, whose desire, he said, was at times too inordinate for kirks, stipends, and wives, which had frequently occasioned over-ready compliance with the general defections of the times. He endeavoured to make them aware also, that hasty wedlock had been the bane of many a savoury professor—that the unbelieving wife had too often reversed the text and perverted the believing husband—that when the famous Donald Cargill, being then hiding in Lee-Wood, in Lanarkshire, it being killing-time, did, upon importunity, marry Robert Marshal of Starry Shaw, he had thus expressed himself: "What hath induced Robert to marry this woman? her ill will overcome his good—he will not keep the way long—his thriving days are done." To the sad accomplishment of which prophecy David said he was himself a living witness, for Robert Marshal, having fallen into foul compliances with the enemy, went home, and heard the curates, declined into other steps of defection, and became lightly esteemed. Indeed, he observed, that the great upholders of the standard, Cargill, Peden, Cameron, and Renwick, had less delight in tying the bonds of matrimony than in any other piece of their ministerial work; and although they would neither dissuade the parties, nor refuse their office, they considered the being called to it as an evidence of indifference, on the part of those between whom it was solemnised, to the many grievous things of the day. Notwithstanding, however, that marriage was a snare unto many, David was of opinion (as, indeed, he had showed in his practice) that it was in itself honourable, especially if times were such that honest men could be secure against being shot, hanged, or banished, and had an competent livelihood to maintain themselves, and those that might come after them. "And, therefore," as he concluded something abruptly, addressing Jeanie and Butler, who, with faces as high-coloured as crimson, had been listening to his lengthened argument for and against the holy state of matrimony, "I will leave you to your ain cracks."

As their private conversation, however interesting to themselves, might probably be very little so to the reader, so far as it respected their present feelings and future prospects, we shall pass it over, and only mention the information which Jeanie received from Butler concerning her sister's elopement, which contained many particulars that she had been unable to extract from her father.

Jeanie learned, therefore, that, for three days after her pardon had arrived, Effie had been the inmate of her father's house at St. Leonard's—that the interviews betwixt David and his erring child, which had taken place before she was liberated from prison, had been touching in the extreme; but Butler could not suppress his opinion, that, when he was freed from the apprehension of losing her in a manner so horrible, her father had tightened the bands of discipline, so as, in some degree, to gall the feelings, and aggravate the irritability of a spirit naturally impatient and petulant, and now doubly so from the sense of merited disgrace.

On the third night, Effie disappeared from St. Leonard's, leaving no intimation whatever of the route she had taken. Butler, however, set out in pursuit of her, and with much trouble traced her towards a little landing-place, formed by a small brook which enters the sea betwixt Musselburgh and Edinburgh. This place, which has been since made into a small harbour, surrounded by many villas and lodging-houses, is now termed Portobello. At this time it was surrounded by a waste common, covered with furze, and unfrequented, save by fishing-boats, and now and then a smuggling lugger. A vessel of this description had been hovering in the firth at the time of Effie's elopement, and, as Butler ascertained, a boat had come ashore in the evening on which the fugitive had disappeared, and had carried on board a female. As the vessel made sail immediately, and landed no part of their cargo, there seemed little doubt that they were accomplices of the notorious Robertson, and that the vessel had only come into the firth to carry off his paramour.

This was made clear by a letter which Butler himself soon afterwards received by post, signed E. D., but without bearing any date of place or time. It was miserably ill written and spelt; sea-sickness having apparently aided the derangement of Effie's very irregular orthography and mode of expression. In this epistle, however, as in all that unfortunate girl said or did, there was something to praise as well as to blame. She said in her letter, "That she could not endure that her father and her sister should go into banishment, or be partakers of her shame,—that if her burden was a heavy one, it was of her own binding, and she had the more right to bear it alone,—that in future they could not be a comfort to her, or she to them, since every look and word of her father put her in mind of her

transgression, and was like to drive her mad,—that she had nearly lost her judgment during the three days she was at St. Leonard's—her father meant weel by her, and all men, but he did not know the dreadful pain he gave her in casting up her sins. If Jeanie had been at hame, it might hae dune better—Jeanie was ane, like the angels in heaven, that rather weep for sinners, than reckon their transgressions. But she should never see Jeanie ony mair, and that was the thought that gave her the sairest heart of a' that had come and gane yet. On her bended knees would she pray for Jeanie night and day, baith for what she had done, and what she had scorned to do, in her behalf; for what a thought would it have been to her at that moment o' time, if that upright creature had made a fault to save her! She desired her father would give Jeanie a' the gear—her ain (*i.e.* Effie's) mother's and a'—She had made a deed, giving up her right, and it was in Mr. Novit's hand—World's gear was henceforward the least of her care, nor was it likely to be muckle her mister—She hoped this would make it easy for her sister to settle;" and immediately after this expression, she wished Butler himself all good things, in return for his kindness to her. "For herself," she said, "she kend her lot would be a waesome ane, but it was of her own framing, sae she desired the less pity. But, for her friends' satisfaction, she wished them to know that she was gaun nae ill gate—that they who had done her maist wrong were now willing to do her what justice was in their power; and she would, in some worldly respects, be far better off than she deserved. But she desired her family to remain satisfied with this assurance, and give themselves no trouble in making farther inquiries after her."

To David Deans and to Butler this letter gave very little comfort; for what was to be expected from this unfortunate girl's uniting her fate to that of a character so notorious as Robertson, who they readily guessed was alluded to in the last sentence, excepting that she should become the partner and victim of his future crimes? Jeanie, who knew George Staunton's character and real rank, saw her sister's situation under a ray of better hope. She augured well of the haste he had shown to reclaim his interest in Effie, and she trusted he had made her his wife. If so, it seemed improbable that, with his expected fortune, and high connections, he should again resume the life of criminal adventure which he had led, especially since, as matters stood, his life depended upon his keeping his own secret, which could only be done by an entire change of his habits, and particularly by avoiding all those who had known the heir of Willingham under the character of the audacious, criminal, and condemned Robertson.

She thought it most likely that the couple would go abroad for a few years, and not return to England until the affair of Porteous was totally forgotten. Jeanie, therefore, saw more hopes for her sister than Butler or her father had been able to perceive; but she was not at liberty to impart the comfort which she felt in believing that she would be secure from the pressure of poverty, and in little risk of being seduced into the paths of guilt. She could not have explained this without making public what it was essentially necessary for Effie's chance of comfort to conceal, the identity, namely, of George Staunton and George Robertson. After all, it was dreadful to think that Effie had united herself to a man condemned for felony, and liable to trial for murder, whatever might be his rank in life, and the degree of his repentance. Besides, it was melancholy to reflect, that, she herself being in possession of the whole dreadful secret, it was most probable he would, out of regard to his own feelings, and fear for his safety, never again permit her to see poor Effie. After perusing and re-perusing her sister's valedictory letter, she gave ease to her feelings in a flood of tears, which Butler in vain endeavoured to check by every soothing attention in his power. She was obliged, however, at length to look up and wipe her eyes, for her father, thinking he had allowed the lovers time enough for conference, was now advancing towards them from the Lodge, accompanied by the Captain of Knockdunder, or, as his friends called him for brevity's sake, Duncan Knock, a title which some youthful exploits had rendered peculiarly appropriate.

This Duncan of Knockdunder was a person of first-rate importance in the island of Roseneath,* and the continental parishes of Knocktarlitie, Kilmun, and so forth; nay, his influence extended as far as Cowal, where, however, it was obscured by that of another factor.

* [This is, more correctly speaking, a peninsula.]

The Tower of Knockdunder still occupies, with its remains, a cliff overhanging the Holy Loch. Duncan swore it had been a royal castle; if so, it was one of the smallest, the space within only forming a square of sixteen feet, and bearing therefore a ridiculous proportion to the thickness of the walls, which was ten feet at least. Such as it was, however, it had long given the title of Captain, equivalent to that of Chatellain, to the ancestors of Duncan, who were retainers of the house of Argyle, and held a hereditary jurisdiction under them, of little extent indeed, but which had great consequence in their own eyes, and was usually administered with a vigour somewhat beyond the law.

The present representative of that ancient family was a stout short man about fifty, whose pleasure it was to unite in his own person the dress of the Highlands and Lowlands, wearing on his head a black tie-wig, surmounted by a fierce cocked-hat, deeply guarded with gold lace, while the rest of his dress consisted of the plaid and philabeg. Duncan superintended a district which was partly Highland, partly Lowland, and therefore might be supposed to combine their national habits, in order to show his impartiality to Trojan or Tyrian. The incongruity, however, had a whimsical and ludicrous effect, as it made his head and body look as if belonging to different individuals; or, as some one said who had seen the executions of the insurgent prisoners in 1715, it seemed as if some Jacobite enchanter, having recalled the sufferers to life, had clapped, in his haste, an Englishman's head on a Highlander's body. To finish the portrait, the bearing of the gracious Duncan was brief, bluff, and consequential, and the upward turn of his short copper-coloured nose indicated that he was somewhat addicted to wrath and usquebaugh.

When this dignitary had advanced up to Butler and to Jeanie, "I take the freedom, Mr. Deans," he said in a very consequential manner, "to salute your daughter, whilk I presume this young lass to be—I kiss every pretty girl that comes to Roseneath, in virtue of my office." Having made this gallant speech, he took out his quid, saluted Jeanie with a hearty smack, and bade her welcome to Argyle's country. Then addressing Butler, he said, "Ye maun gang ower and meet the carle ministers yonder the Morn, for they will want to do your job, and synd it down with usquebaugh doubtless—they seldom make dry wark in this kintra."

"And the Laird"—said David Deans, addressing Butler in farther explanation—

"The Captain, man," interrupted Duncan; "folk winna ken wha ye are speaking aboot, unless ye gie shentlemens their proper title."

"The Captain, then," said David, "assures me that the call is unanimous on the part of the parishioners—a real harmonious call, Reuben."

"I pelieve," said Duncan, "it was as harmonious as could be expected, when the tae half o' the bodies were claverin Sassenach, and the t'other skirting Gaelic, like sea-maws and clackgeese before a storm. Ane wad hae needed the gift of tongues to ken preceesely what they said—but I pelieve the best end of it was, 'Long live MacCallummore and Knockdunder!'—And as to its being an unanimous call, I wad be glad to ken fat business the carles have to call ony thing or ony body but what the Duke and mysell likes!"

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Butler, "if any of the parishioners have any scruples, which sometimes happen in the mind of sincere professors, I should be happy of an opportunity of trying to remove—"

"Never fash your peard about it, man," interrupted Duncan Knock—"Leave it a' to me.—Scruple! deil ane o' them has been bred up to scruple onything that they're bidden to do. And if sic a thing suld happen as ye speak o', ye sall see the sincere professor, as ye ca' him, towed at the stern of my boat for a few furlongs. I'll try if the water of the Haly Loch winna wash off scruples as weel as fleas—Cot tam!"

The rest of Duncan's threat was lost in a growling gargling sort of sound, which he made in his throat, and which menaced recusants with no gentle means of conversion. David Deans would certainly have given battle in defence of the right of the Christian congregation to be consulted in the choice of their own pastor, which, in his estimation, was one of the choicest and most inalienable of their privileges; but he had again engaged in close conversation with Jeanie, and, with more interest than he was in use to take in affairs foreign alike to his occupation and to his religious tenets, was inquiring into the particulars of her London journey. This was, perhaps, fortunate for the newformed friendship betwixt him and the Captain of Knockdunder, which rested, in David's estimation, upon the proofs he had given of his skill in managing stock; but, in reality, upon the special charge transmitted to Duncan from the Duke and his agent, to behave with the utmost attention to Deans and his family.

"And now, sirs," said Duncan, in a commanding tone, "I am to pray ye a' to come in to your supper, for yonder is Mr. Archibald half famished, and a Saxon woman, that looks as if her een were fleeing out o' her head wi' fear and wonder, as if she had never seen a shentleman in a philabeg pefore."

"And Reuben Butler," said David, "will doubtless desire instantly to retire, that he may prepare his mind for the exercise of to-morrow, that his work may suit the day, and be an offering of a sweet savour in the nostrils of the reverend Presbytery!"

"Hout tout, man, it's but little ye ken about them," interrupted the Captain. "Teil a ane o' them wad gie the savour of the hot venison pasty which I smell" (turning his squab nose up in the air) "a' the way frae the Lodge, for a' that Mr. Putler, or you either, can say to them."

David groaned; but judging he had to do with a Gallio, as he said, did not think it worth his while to give battle. They followed the Captain to the house, and arranged themselves with great ceremony round a well-loaded supper-table. The only other circumstance of the evening worthy to be recorded is, that Butler pronounced the blessing; that Knockdunder found it too long, and David Deans censured it as too short, from which the charitable reader may conclude it was exactly the proper length.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

*Now turn the Psalms of David ower,
And lift wi' holy clangor;
Of double verse come gie us four,
And skirl up the Bangor.
Burns.*

The next was the important day, when, according to the forms and ritual of the Scottish Kirk, Reuben Butler was to be ordained minister of Knocktarlitie, by the Presbytery of ———. And so eager were the whole party, that all, excepting Mrs. Dutton, the destined Cowslip of Inverary, were stirring at an early hour.

Their host, whose appetite was as quick and keen as his temper, was not long in summoning them to a substantial breakfast, where there were at least a dozen of different preparations of milk, plenty of cold meat, scores boiled and roasted eggs, a huge cag of butter, half-a-firkin herrings boiled and broiled, fresh and salt, and tea and coffee for them that liked it, which, as their landlord assured them, with a nod and a wink, pointing, at the same time, to a little cutter which seemed dodging under the lee of the island, cost them little beside the fetching ashore.

"Is the contraband trade permitted here so openly?" said Butler. "I should think it very unfavourable to the people's morals."

"The Duke, Mr. Putler, has gien nae orders concerning the putting of it down," said the magistrate, and seemed to think that he had said all that was necessary to justify his connivance. Butler was a man of prudence, and aware that real good can only be obtained by remonstrance when remonstrance is well-timed; so for the present he said nothing more on the subject.

When breakfast was half over, in flounced Mrs. Dolly, as fine as a blue sacque and cherry-coloured ribands could make her.

"Good morrow to you, madam," said the master of ceremonies; "I trust your early rising will not skaith ye."

The dame apologised to Captain Knockunder, as she was pleased to term their entertainer; "but, as we say in Cheshire," she added, "I was like the Mayor of Altringham, who lies in bed while his breeches are mending, for the girl did not bring up the right bundle to my room, till she had brought up all the others by mistake one after t'other—Well, I suppose we are all for church to-day, as I understand—Pray may I be so bold as to ask, if it is the fashion for your North country gentlemen to go to church in your petticoats, Captain Knockunder?"

"Captain of Knockdunder, madam, if you please, for I knock under to no man; and in respect of my garb, I shall go to church as I am, at your service, madam; for if I were to lie in bed like your Major What-d'ye-callum, till my preeches were mended, I might be there all my life, seeing I never had a pair of them on my person but twice in my life, which I am pound to remember, it peing when the Duke brought his Duchess here, when her Grace pehoved to be pleased; so I e'en porrowed the minister's trews for the twa days his Grace was pleased to stay—but I will put myself under sic confinement again for no man on earth, or woman either, but her Grace being always excepted, as in duty pound."

The mistress of the milking-pail stared but, making no answer to this round declaration, immediately proceeded to show, that the alarm of the preceding evening had in no degree injured her appetite.

When the meal was finished, the Captain proposed to them to take boat, in order that Mrs. Jeanie might see her new place of residence, and that he himself might inquire whether the necessary preparations had been made there, and at the Manse, for receiving the future inmates of these mansions.

The morning was delightful, and the huge mountain-shadows slept upon the mirrored wave of the firth, almost as little disturbed as if it had been an inland lake. Even Mrs. Dutton's fears no longer annoyed her. She had been informed by Archibald, that there was to be some sort of junketting after the sermon, and that was what she loved dearly; and as for the water, it was so still that it would look quite like a pleasuring on the Thames.

The whole party being embarked, therefore, in a large boat, which the captain called his coach and six, and attended by a smaller one termed his gig, the gallant Duncan steered straight upon the little tower of the old-fashioned church of Knocktarlitie, and the exertions of six stout rowers sped them rapidly on their voyage. As they neared the land, the hills appeared to recede from them, and a little valley, formed by the descent of a small river from the mountains, evolved itself as it were upon their approach. The style of the country on each side was simply pastoral, and resembled, in appearance and character, the description of a forgotten Scottish poet, which runs nearly thus:—

*The water gently down a level slid,
With little din, but couthy what it made;
On ilka side the trees grew thick and lang,
And wi' the wild birds' notes were a' in sang;
On either side, a full bow-shot and mair,
The green was even, gowany, and fair;
With easy slope on every hand the braes
To the hills' feet with scatter'd bushes raise;
With goats and sheep aboon, and kye below,
The bonny banks all in a swarm did go.**

* Ross's *Fortunate Shepherdess*. Edit. 1778, p. 23.

They landed in this Highland Arcadia, at the mouth of the small stream which watered the delightful and peaceable valley. Inhabitants of several descriptions came to pay their respects to the Captain of Knockdunder, a homage which he was very peremptory in exacting, and to see the new settlers. Some of these were men after David Deans's own heart, elders of the kirk-session, zealous professors, from the Lennox, Lanarkshire, and Ayrshire, to whom the preceding Duke of Argyle had given *rooms* in this corner of his estate, because they had suffered for joining his father, the unfortunate Earl, during his ill-fated attempt in 1686. These were cakes of the right leaven for David regaling himself with; and, had it not been for this circumstance, he has been heard to say, "that the Captain of Knockdunder would have swore him out of the country in twenty-four hours, sae awsome it was to ony thinking soul to hear his imprecations, upon the slightest temptation that crossed his humour."

Besides these, there were a wilder set of parishioners, mountaineers from the upper glen and adjacent hill, who spoke Gaelic, went about armed, and wore the Highland dress. But the strict commands of the Duke had established such good order in this part of his territories, that the Gael and Saxons lived upon the best possible terms of good neighbourhood. They first visited the Manse, as the parsonage is termed in Scotland. It was old, but in good repair, and stood snugly embosomed in a grove of sycamore, with a well-stocked garden in front, bounded by the small river, which was partly visible from the windows, partly concealed

by the bushes, trees, and bounding hedge. Within, the house looked less comfortable than it might have been, for it had been neglected by the late incumbent; but workmen had been labouring, under the directions of the Captain of Knockdunder, and at the expense of the Duke of Argyle, to put it into some order. The old "plenishing" had been removed, and neat, but plain household furniture had been sent down by the Duke in a brig of his own called the *Caroline*, and was now ready to be placed in order in the apartments.

The gracious Duncan, finding matters were at a stand among the workmen, summoned before him the delinquents, and impressed all who heard him with a sense of his authority, by the penalties with which he threatened them for their delay. Mulcting them in half their charge, he assured them, would be the least of it; for, if they were to neglect his pleasure and the Duke's, "he would be tamn'd if he paid them the t'other half either, and they might seek law for it where they could get it." The work-people humbled themselves before the offended dignitary, and spake him soft and fair; and at length, upon Mr. Butler recalling to his mind that it was the ordination-day, and that the workmen were probably thinking of going to church, Knockdunder agreed to forgive them, out of respect to their new minister.

"But an I catch them neglecting my duty again, Mr. Putler, the teil pe in me if the kirk shall be an excuse; for what has the like o' them rapparees to do at the kirk ony day put Sundays, or then either, if the Duke and I has the necessitous uses for them?"

It may be guessed with what feelings of quiet satisfaction and delight Butler looked forward to spending his days, honoured and useful as he trusted to be, in this sequestered valley, and how often an intelligent glance was exchanged betwixt him and Jeanie, whose good-humoured face looked positively handsome, from the expression of modesty, and, at the same time, of satisfaction, which she wore when visiting the apartments of which she was soon to call herself mistress. She was left at liberty to give more open indulgence to her feelings of delight and admiration, when, leaving the Manse, the company proceeded to examine the destined habitation of David Deans.

Jeanie found with pleasure that it was not above a musket-shot from the Manse; for it had been a bar to her happiness to think she might be obliged to reside at a distance from her father, and she was aware that there were strong objections to his actually living in the same house with Butler. But this brief distance was the very thing which she could have wished.

The farmhouse was on the plan of an improved cottage, and contrived with great regard to convenience; an excellent little garden, an orchard, and a set of offices complete, according to the best ideas of the time, combined to render it a most desirable habitation for the practical farmer, and far superior to the hovel at Woodend, and the small house at Saint Leonard's Crags. The situation was considerably higher than that of the Manse, and fronted to the west. The windows commanded an enchanting view of the little vale over which the mansion seemed to preside, the windings of the stream, and the firth, with its associated lakes and romantic islands. The hills of Dumbartonshire, once possessed by the fierce clan of MacFarlanes, formed a crescent behind the valley, and far to the right were seen the dusky and more gigantic mountains of Argyleshire, with a seaward view of the shattered and thunder-split peaks of Arran.

But to Jeanie, whose taste for the picturesque, if she had any by nature, had never been awakened or cultivated, the sight of the faithful old May Hettly, as she opened the door to receive them in her clean toy, Sunday's russet-gown, and blue apron, nicely smoothed down before her, was worth the whole varied landscape. The raptures of the faithful old creature at seeing Jeanie were equal to her own, as she hastened to assure her, "that baith the gudeman and the beasts had been as weel seen after as she possibly could contrive." Separating her from the rest of the company, May then hurried her young mistress to the offices, that she might receive the compliments she expected for her care of the cows. Jeanie rejoiced, in the simplicity of her heart, to see her charge once more; and the mute favourites of our heroine, Gowans, and the others, acknowledged her presence by lowing, turning round their broad and decent brows when they heard her well-known "Pruh, my leddy—pruh, my woman," and, by various indications, known only to those who have studied the habits of the milky mothers, showing sensible pleasure as she approached to caress them in their turn.

"The very brute beasts are glad to see ye again," said May; "but nae wonder, Jeanie, for ye were aye kind to beast and body. And I maun learn to ca' ye *mistress* now, Jeanie, since ye hae been up to Lunnon, and seen the Duke, and the King, and a' the braw folk. But wha kens," added the old dame sily, "what I'll hae to ca' ye forby mistress, for I am thinking it wunna lang be Deans."

"Ca' me your ain Jeanie, May, and then ye can never gang wrang."

In the cow-house which they examined, there was one animal which Jeanie looked at till the tears gushed from her eyes. May, who had watched her with a sympathising expression, immediately observed, in an under-tone, "The gudeman aye sorts that beast himself, and is kinder to it than ony beast in the byre; and I noticed he was that way e'en when he was angriest, and had maist cause to be angry.—Eh, sirs! a parent's heart's a queer thing!—Mony a warsle he has had for that puir lassie—I am thinking he petitions mair for her than for yoursell, hinny; for what can he plead for you but just to wish you the blessing ye deserve? And when I sleept ayont the hallan, when we came first here, he was often earnest a' night, and I could hear him come ower and ower again wi' 'Effie—puir blinded misguided thing!' it was aye 'Effie! Effie!'—If that puir wandering lamb comena into the sheepfauld in the Shepherd's ain time, it will be an unco wonder, for I wot she has been a child of prayers. Oh, if the puir prodigal wad return, sae blithely as the goodman wad kill the fatted calf!—though Brockie's calf will no be fit for killing this three weeks yet."

And then, with the discursive talent of persons of her description, she got once more afloat in her account of domestic affairs, and left this delicate and affecting topic.

Having looked at every thing in the offices and the dairy, and expressed her satisfaction with the manner in which matters had been managed in her absence, Jeanie rejoined the rest of the party, who were surveying the interior of the house, all excepting David Deans and Butler, who had gone down to the church to meet the kirk-session and the clergymen of the Presbytery, and arrange matters for the duty of the day.

In the interior of the cottage all was clean, neat, and suitable to the exterior. It had been originally built and furnished by the Duke, as a retreat for a favourite domestic of the higher class, who did not long enjoy it, and had been dead only a few months, so that every thing was in excellent taste and good order. But in Jeanie's bedroom was a neat trunk, which had greatly excited Mrs. Dutton's curiosity, for she was sure that the direction, "For Mrs. Jean Deans, at Auchingower, parish of Knocktarlitie," was the writing of Mrs. Semple, the Duchess's own woman. May Hettly produced the key in a sealed parcel, which bore the same address, and attached to the key was a label, intimating that the trunk and its contents were "a token of remembrance to Jeanie Deans, from her friends the Duchess of Argyle and the young ladies." The trunk, hastily opened, as the reader will not doubt, was found to be full of wearing apparel of the best quality, suited to Jeanie's rank in life; and to most of the articles the names of the particular donors were attached, as if to make Jeanie sensible not only of the general, but of the individual interest she had excited in the noble family. To name the various articles by their appropriate names, would be to attempt things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme; besides that the old-fashioned terms of manteaus, sacques, kissing-strings, and so forth, would convey but little information even to the milliners of the present day. I shall deposit, however, an accurate inventory of the contents of the trunk with my kind friend, Miss Martha Buskbody, who has promised, should the public curiosity seem interested in the subject, to supply me with a professional glossary and commentary. Suffice it to say, that the gift was such as became the donors, and was suited to the situation of the receiver; that every thing was handsome and appropriate, and nothing forgotten which belonged to the wardrobe of a young person in Jeanie's situation in life, the destined bride of a respectable clergyman.

Article after article was displayed, commented upon, and admired, to the wonder of May, who declared, "she didna think the queen had mair or better claise," and somewhat to the envy of the northern Cowslip. This unamiable, but not very unnatural, disposition of mind, broke forth in sundry unfounded criticisms to the disparagement of the articles, as they were severally exhibited. But it assumed a more direct character, when, at the bottom of all, was found a dress of white silk, very plainly made, but still of white silk, and French silk to boot, with a paper pinned to it, bearing that it was a present from the Duke of Argyle to his travelling companion, to be worn on the day when she should change her name.

Mrs. Dutton could forbear no longer, but whispered into Mr. Archibald's ear, that it was a clever thing to be a Scotchwoman: "She supposed all *her* sisters, and she had half-a-dozen, might have been hanged, without any one sending her a present of a pocket handkerchief."

"Or without your making any exertion to save them, Mrs. Dolly," answered Archibald drily.—"But I am surprised we do not hear the bell yet," said he, looking at his watch.

"Fat ta deil, Mr. Archibald," answered the Captain of Knockdunder, "wad ye hae them ring the bell before I am ready to gang to kirk?—I wad gar the bedral eat the bell-rope, if he took ony sic freedom. But if ye want to hear the bell, I will just show mysell on the knowe-head, and it will begin jowing forthwith."

Accordingly, so soon as they sallied out, and that the gold-laced hat of the Captain was seen rising like Hesper above the dewy verge of the rising ground, the clash (for it was rather a clash than a clang) of the bell was heard from the old moss-grown tower, and the clapper continued to thump its cracked sides all the while they advanced towards the kirk, Duncan exhorting them to take their own time, "for teil ony sport wad be till he came."*

* Note T. Tolling to service in Scotland.

Accordingly, the bell only changed to the final and impatient chime when they crossed the stile; and "rang in," that is, concluded its mistuned summons, when they had entered the Duke's seat, in the little kirk, where the whole party arranged themselves, with Duncan at their head, excepting David Deans, who already occupied a seat among the elders.

The business of the day, with a particular detail of which it is unnecessary to trouble the reader, was gone through according to the established form, and the sermon pronounced upon the occasion had the good fortune to please even the critical David Deans, though it was only an hour and a quarter long, which David termed a short allowance of spiritual provender.

The preacher, who was a divine that held many of David's opinions, privately apologised for his brevity by saying, "That he observed the Captain was gaunting grievously, and that if he had detained him longer, there was no knowing how long he might be in paying the next term's victual stipend."

David groaned to find that such carnal motives could have influence upon the mind of a powerful preacher. He had, indeed, been scandalised by another circumstance during the service.

So soon as the congregation were seated after prayers, and the clergyman had read his text, the gracious Duncan, after rummaging the leathern purse which hung in front of his petticoat, produced a short tobacco-pipe made of iron, and observed, almost aloud, "I hae forgotten my spleuchan—Lachlan, gang down to the clachan, and bring me up a pennyworth of twist." Six arms, the nearest within reach, presented, with an obedient start, as many tobacco-pouches to the man of office. He made choice of one with an nod of acknowledgment, filled his pipe, lighted it with the assistance of his pistol-flint, and smoked with infinite composure during the whole time of the sermon. When the discourse was finished, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, replaced it in his sporran, returned the tobacco-pouch or spleuchan to its owner, and joined in the prayer with decency and attention.

At the end of the service, when Butler had been admitted minister of the kirk of Knocktarlitie, with all its spiritual immunities and privileges, David, who had frowned, groaned, and murmured at Knockdunder's irreverent demeanour, communicated his plain thoughts of the matter to Isaac Meiklehose, one of the elders, with whom a reverential aspect and huge grizzle wig had especially disposed him to seek fraternisation. "It didna become a wild Indian," David said, "much less a Christian, and a gentleman, to sit in the kirk puffing tobacco-reek, as if he were in a change-house."

Meiklehose shook his head, and allowed it was "far frae beseeming—But what will ye say? The Captain's a queer hand, and to speak to him about that or onything else that crosses the maggot, wad be to set the kiln a-low. He keeps a high hand ower the country, and we couldna deal wi' the Hielandmen without his protection, sin' a' the keys o' the kintray hings at his belt; and he's no an ill body in the main, and maistry, ye ken, maws the meadows down."

"That may be very true, neighbour," said David; "but Reuben Butler isna the man I take him to be, if he disna learn the Captain to fuff his pipe some other gate than in God's house, or the quarter be ower."

"Fair and softly gangs far," said Meiklehose; "and if a fule may gie a wise man a counsel, I wad hae him think twice or he mells with Knockdunder—He auld hae a lang-shankit spune that wad sup kail wi' the deil. But they are a' away to their dinner to the change-house, and if we dinna mend our pace, we'll come short at meal-time."

David accompanied his friend without answer; but began to feel from experience, that the glen of Knocktarlitie, like the rest of the world, was haunted by its own special subjects of regret and discontent. His mind was, so much occupied by considering the best means of converting Duncan of Knock to a sense of reverend decency during public worship, that he altogether forgot to inquire whether Butler was called upon to subscribe the oaths to Government.

Some have insinuated, that his neglect on this head was, in some degree, intentional; but I think this explanation inconsistent with the simplicity of my friend David's character. Neither have I ever been able, by the most minute inquiries, to know whether the *formula*, at which he so much scrupled, had been exacted from Butler, ay or no. The books of the kirk-session might have thrown some light on this matter; but unfortunately they were destroyed in the year 1746, by one Donacha Dhu na Dunaigh, at the instance, it was said, or at least by the connivance, of the gracious Duncan of Knock, who had a desire to obliterate the recorded foibles of a certain Kate Finlayson.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

Now butt and ben the change-house fills

Wi' yill-caup commentators,

Here's crying out for bakes and gills,

And there the pint-stoup clatters.

Wi' thick and thrang, and loud and lang,—

Wi' logic and wi' scripture,

They raise a din that in the end

Is like to breed a rupture,

O' wrath that day.

Burns.

A plentiful entertainment, at the Duke of Argyle's cost, regaled the reverend gentlemen who had assisted at the ordination of Reuben Butler, and almost all the respectable part of the parish. The feast was, indeed, such as the country itself furnished; for plenty of all the requisites for "a rough and round dinner" were always at Duncan of Knock's command. There was the beef and mutton on the braes, the fresh and salt-water fish in the lochs, the brooks, and firth; game of every kind, from the deer to the leveret, were to be had for the killing, in the Duke's forests, moors, heaths, and mosses; and for liquor, home-brewed ale flowed as freely as water; brandy and usquebaugh both were had in those happy times without duty; even white wine and claret were got for nothing, since the Duke's extensive rights of admiralty gave him a title to all the wine in cask which is drifted ashore on the western coast and isles of Scotland, when shipping have suffered by severe weather. In short, as Duncan boasted, the entertainment did not cost MacCallummure a plack out of his sporran, and was nevertheless not only liberal, but overflowing.

The Duke's health was solemnised in a *bona fide* bumper, and David Deans himself added perhaps the first huzza that his lungs had ever uttered, to swell the shout with which the pledge was received. Nay, so exalted in heart was he upon this memorable occasion, and so much disposed to be indulgent, that, he expressed no dissatisfaction when three bagpipers struck up, "The Campbells are coming." The health of the reverend minister of Knocktarlitie was received with similar honours; and there was a roar of laughter, when one of his brethren slyly subjoined the addition of, "A good wife to our brother, to keep the Manse in order." On this occasion David Deans was delivered of his first-born joke; and apparently the parturition was accompanied with many throes, for sorely did he twist about his physiognomy, and much did he stumble in his speech, before he could express his idea, "That the lad being now wedded to his spiritual bride, it was hard to

threaten him with ane temporal spouse in the same day." He then laughed a hoarse and brief laugh, and was suddenly grave and silent, as if abashed at his own vivacious effort.

After another toast or two, Jeanie, Mrs. Dolly, and such of the female natives as had honoured the feast with their presence, retired to David's new dwelling at Auchingower, and left the gentlemen to their potatoes.

The feast proceeded with great glee. The conversation, where Duncan had it under his direction, was not indeed always strictly canonical, but David Deans escaped any risk of being scandalised, by engaging with one of his neighbours in a recapitulation of the sufferings of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, during what was called the invasion of the Highland Host; the prudent Mr. Meiklehose cautioning them from time to time to lower their voices, "for that Duncan Knock's father had been at that onslaught, and brought back muckle gude plenishing, and that Duncan was no unlikely to hae been there himself, for what he kend."

Meanwhile, as the mirth grew fast and furious, the graver members of the party began to escape as well as they could. David Deans accomplished his retreat, and Butler anxiously watched an opportunity to follow him. Knockdunder, however, desirous, he said, of knowing what stuff was in the new minister, had no intention to part with him so easily, but kept him pinned to his side, watching him sedulously, and with obliging violence filling his glass to the brim, as often as he could seize an opportunity of doing so. At length, as the evening was wearing late, a venerable brother chanced to ask Mr. Archibald when they might hope to see the Duke, *tam carum caput*, as he would venture to term him, at the Lodge of Roseneath. Duncan of Knock, whose ideas were somewhat conglomerated, and who, it may be believed, was no great scholar, catching up some imperfect sound of the words, conceived the speaker was drawing a parallel between the Duke and Sir Donald Gorme of Sleat; and being of opinion that such comparison was odious, snorted thrice, and prepared himself to be in a passion.

To the explanation of the venerable divine the Captain answered, "I heard the word Gorme myself, sir, with my ain ears. D'ye think I do not know Gaelic from Latin?"

"Apparently not, sir;"—so the clergyman, offended in his turn, and taking a pinch of snuff, answered with great coolness.

The copper nose of the gracious Duncan now became heated like the Bull of Phalaris, and while Mr. Archibald mediated betwixt the offended parties, and the attention of the company was engaged by their dispute, Butler took an opportunity to effect his retreat.

He found the females at Auchingower very anxious for the breaking up of the convivial party; for it was a part of the arrangement, that although David Deans was to remain at Auchingower, and Butler was that night to take possession of the Manse, yet Jeanie, for whom complete accommodations were not yet provided in her father's house, was to return for a day or two to the Lodge at Roseneath, and the boats had been held in readiness accordingly. They waited, therefore, for Knockdunder's return, but twilight came, and they still waited in vain. At length Mr. Archibald, who was a man of decorum, had taken care not to exceed in his conviviality, made his appearance, and advised the females strongly to return to the island under his escort; observing, that, from the humour in which he had left the Captain, it was a great chance whether he budged out of the public-house that night, and it was absolutely certain that he would not be very fit company for ladies. The gig was at their disposal, he said, and there was still pleasant twilight for a party on the water.

Jeanie, who had considerable confidence in Archibald's prudence, immediately acquiesced in this proposal; but Mrs. Dolly positively objected to the small boat. If the big boat could be gotten, she agreed to set out, otherwise she would sleep on the floor, rather than stir a step. Reasoning with Dolly was out of the question, and Archibald did not think the difficulty so pressing as to require compulsion. He observed, it was not using the Captain very politely to deprive him of his coach and six; "but as it was in the ladies' service," he gallantly said, "he would use so much freedom—besides the gig would serve the Captain's purpose better, as it could come off at any hour of the tide; the large boat should, therefore, be at Mrs. Dolly's service."

They walked to the beach accordingly, accompanied by Butler. It was some time before the boatmen could be assembled, and ere they were well embarked, and ready to depart, the pale moon was come over the hill, and flinging a trembling reflection on the broad and glittering waves. But so soft and pleasant was the night, that Butler, in bidding farewell to Jeanie, had no apprehension for her safety; and what is yet more extraordinary, Mrs. Dolly felt no alarm for her own. The air was soft, and came over the cooling wave with something of summer fragrance. The beautiful scene of headlands, and capes, and bays, around them, with the broad blue chain of mountains, were dimly visible in the moonlight; while every dash of the oars made the waters glance and sparkle with the brilliant phenomenon called the sea fire.

This last circumstance filled Jeanie with wonder, and served to amuse the mind of her companion, until they approached the little bay, which seemed to stretch its dark and wooded arms into the sea as if to welcome them.

The usual landing-place was at a quarter of a mile's distance from the Lodge, and although the tide did not admit of the large boat coming quite close to the jetty of loose stones which served as a pier, Jeanie, who was both bold and active, easily sprung ashore; but Mrs., Dolly positively refusing to commit herself to the same risk, the complaisant Mr. Archibald ordered the boat round to a more regular landing-place, at a considerable distance along the shore. He then prepared to land himself, that he might, in the meanwhile, accompany Jeanie to the Lodge. But as there was no mistaking the woodland lane, which led from thence to the shore, and as the moonlight showed her one of the white chimneys rising out of the wood which embosomed the building, Jeanie declined this favour with thanks, and requested him to proceed with Mrs. Dolly, who, being "in a country where the ways were so strange to her, had mair need of countenance."

This, indeed, was a fortunate circumstance, and might even be said to save poor Cowslip's life, if it was true, as she herself used solemnly to aver, that she must positively have expired for fear, if she had been left alone in the boat with six wild Highlanders in kilts.

The night was so exquisitely beautiful, that Jeanie, instead of immediately directing her course towards the Lodge, stood looking after the boat as it again put off from the side, and rowed into the little bay, the dark figures of her companions growing less and less distinct as they diminished in the distance, and the jorram, or melancholy boat-song of the rowers, coming on the ear with softened and sweeter sound, until the boat rounded the headland, and was lost to her observation.

Still Jeanie remained in the same posture, looking out upon the sea. It would, she was aware, be some time ere her companions could reach the Lodge, as the distance by the more convenient landing-place was considerably greater than from the point where she stood, and she was not sorry to have an opportunity to spend the interval by herself.

The wonderful change which a few weeks had wrought in her situation, from shame and grief, and almost despair, to honour, joy, and a fair prospect of future happiness, passed before her eyes with a sensation which brought the tears into them. Yet they flowed at the same time from another source. As human happiness is never perfect, and as well-constructed minds are never more sensible of the distresses of those whom they love, than when their own situation forms a contrast with them, Jeanie's affectionate regrets turned to the fate of her poor sister—the child of so many hopes—the fondled nursling of so many years—now an exile, and, what was worse, dependent on the will of a man, of whose habits she had every reason to entertain the worst opinion, and who, even in his strongest paroxysms of remorse, had appeared too much a stranger to the feelings of real penitence.

While her thoughts were occupied with these melancholy reflections, a shadowy figure seemed to detach itself from the copsewood on her right hand. Jeanie started, and the stories of apparitions and wraiths, seen by solitary travellers in wild situations, at such times, and in such an hour, suddenly came full upon her imagination. The figure glided on, and as it came betwixt her and the moon, she was aware that it had the appearance of a woman. A soft voice twice repeated, "Jeanie—Jeanie!"—Was it indeed—could it be the voice of her sister?—Was she still among the living, or had the grave given uly its tenant?—Ere she could state these questions to her own mind, Effie, alive, and in the body, had clasped her in her arms and was straining her to her bosom, and devouring her with kisses. "I have wandered here," she said, "like a ghaist, to see you, and nae wonder you take me for ane—I thought but to see you gang by, or to hear the sound of your voice; but to speak to yourself again, Jeanie, was mair than I deserved, and mair than I durst pray for."

"O Effie! how came ye here alone, and at this hour, and on the wild seabeach?—Are you sure it's your ain living sell?" There was something of Effie's former humour in her practically answering the question by a gentle pinch, more befitting the fingers of a fairy than of a ghost. And again the sisters embraced, and laughed, and wept by turns.

"But ye maun gang up wi' me to the Lodge, Effie," said Jeanie, "and tell me a' your story—I hae gude folk there that will make ye welcome for my sake."

"Na, na, Jeanie," replied her sister sorrowfully,—"ye hae forgotten what I am—a banished outlawed creature, scarce escaped the gallows by your being the bauldest and the best sister that ever lived—I'll gae near nane o' your grand friends, even if there was nae danger to me."

"There is nae danger—there shall be nae danger," said Jeanie eagerly. "O Effie, dinna be wilfu—be guided for ance—we will be sae happy a' thegither!"

"I have a' the happiness I deserve on this side of the grave, now that I hae seen you," answered Effie; "and whether there were danger to mysell or no, naeboddy shall ever say that I come with my cheat-the-gallows face to shame my sister among her grand friends."

"I hae nae grand friends," said Jeanie; "nae friends but what are friends of yours—Reuben Butler and my father.—O unhappy lassie, dinna be dour, and turn your back on your happiness again! We wunna see another acquaintance—Come hame to us, your ain dearest friends—it's better sheltering under an auld hedge than under a new-planted wood."

"It's in vain speaking, Jeanie,—I maun drink as I hae brewed—I am married, and I maun follow my husband for better for worse."

"Married, Effie!" exclaimed Jeanie—"Misfortunate creature! and to that awfu!"

"Hush, hush," said Effie, clapping one hand on her mouth, and pointing to the thicket with the other, "he is yonder." She said this in a tone which showed that her husband had found means to inspire her with awe, as well as affection. At this moment a man issued from the wood.

It was young Staunton. Even by the imperfect light of the moon, Jeanie could observe that he was handsomely dressed, and had the air of a person of rank.

"Effie," he said, "our time is well-nigh spent—the skiff will be aground in the creek, and I dare not stay longer.—I hope your sister will allow me to salute her?" But Jeanie shrunk back from him with a feeling of internal abhorrence. "Well," he said, "it does not much signify; if you keep up the feeling of ill-will, at least you do not act upon it, and I thank you for your respect to my secret, when a word (which in your place I would have spoken at once) would have cost me my life. People say, you should keep from the wife of your bosom the secret that concerns your neck—my wife and her sister both know mine, and I shall not sleep a wink the less sound."

"But are you really married to my sister, sir?" asked Jeanie, in great doubt and anxiety; for the haughty, careless tone in which he spoke seemed to justify her worst apprehensions.

"I really am legally married, and by my own name," replied Staunton, more gravely.

"And your father—and your friends?"

"And my father and my friends must just reconcile themselves to that which is done and cannot be undone," replied Staunton. "However, it is my intention, in order to break off dangerous connections, and to let my friends come to their temper, to conceal my marriage for the present, and stay abroad for some years. So that you will not hear of us for some time, if ever you hear of us again at all. It would be dangerous, you must be aware, to keep up the correspondence; for all would guess that the husband of Effie was the—what shall I call myself?—the slayer of Porteous."

Hard-hearted light man! thought Jeanie—to what a character she has intrusted her happiness!—She has sown the wind, and maun reap the whirlwind.

"Dinna think ill o' him," said Effie, breaking away from her husband, and leading Jeanie a step or two out of hearing—"dinna think very ill o' him—he's gude to me, Jeanie—as gude as I deserve—And he is determined to gie up his bad courses—Sae, after a', dinna greet for Effie; she is better off than she has wrought for.—But you—oh, you!—how can you be happy eneugh! never till ye get to heaven, where a'boddy is as gude as yoursell.—Jeanie, if I live and thrive, ye shall hear of me—if not, just forget that sic a creature ever lived to vex ye—fare ye weel—fare ye weel—fare ye weel!"

She tore herself from her sister's arms—rejoined her husband—they plunged into the copsewood, and she saw them no more. The whole scene had the effect of a vision, and she could almost have believed it such, but that very soon after they quitted her, she heard the sound of oars, and a skiff was seen on the firth, pulling swiftly towards the small smuggling sloop which lay in the offing. It was on board of such a vessel that Effie had embarked at Portobello, and Jeanie had no doubt that the same conveyance was destined, as Staunton had hinted, to transport them to a foreign country.

Although it was impossible to determine whether this interview, while it was passing, gave more pain or pleasure to Jeanie Deans, yet the ultimate impression which remained on her mind was decidedly favourable. Effie was married—made, according to the common phrase, an honest woman—that was one main point; it seemed also as if her husband were about to abandon the path of gross vice in which he had run so long and so desperately—that was another. For his final and effectual conversion he did not want understanding, and God knew his own hour.

Such were the thoughts with which Jeanie endeavoured to console her anxiety respecting her sister's future fortune. On her arrival at the lodge, she found Archibald in some anxiety at her stay, and about to walk out in quest of her. A headache served as an apology for retiring to rest, in order to conceal her visible agitation of mind from her companions.

By this secession also she escaped a scene of a different sort. For, as if there were danger in all gigs, whether by sea or land, that of Knockdunder had been run down by another boat, an accident owing chiefly to the drunkenness of the Captain, his crew, and passengers. Knockdunder, and two or three guests, whom he was bringing along with him to finish the conviviality of the evening at the Lodge, got a sound ducking; but, being rescued by the crew of the boat which endangered them, there was no ultimate loss, excepting that of the Captain's laced hat, which, greatly to the satisfaction of the Highland part of the district, as well as to the improvement of the conformity of his own personal appearance, he replaced by a smart Highland bonnet next day. Many were the vehement threats of vengeance which, on the succeeding morning, the gracious Duncan threw out against the boat which had upset him; but as neither she, nor the small smuggling vessel to which she belonged, was any longer to be seen in the firth, he was compelled to sit down with the affront. This was the more hard, he said, as he was assured the mischief was done on purpose, these scoundrels having lurked about after they had landed every drop of brandy, and every bag of tea they had on board; and he understood the coxswain had been on shore, making particular inquiries concerning the time when his boat was to cross over, and to return, and so forth.

"Put the neist time they meet me on the firth," said Duncan, with great majesty, "I will teach the moonlight rascallions and vagabonds to keep their ain side of the road, and pe tamn'd to them!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

*Lord! who would live turmoiled in a court,
And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?
Shakespeare.*

Within a reasonable time after Butler was safely and comfortably settled in his living, and Jeanie had taken up her abode at Auchingower with her father,—the precise extent of which interval we request each reader to settle according to his own sense of what is decent and proper upon the occasion,—and after due proclamation of banns, and all other formalities, the long wooing of this worthy pair was ended by their union in the holy bands of matrimony. On this occasion, David Deans stoutly withstood the iniquities of pipes, fiddles, and promiscuous dancing, to the great wrath of the Captain of Knockdunder, who said, if he "had guessed it was to be sic a tamn'd Quakers' meeting, he wad hae seen them peyont the cairn before he wad hae darkened their doors."

And so much rancour remained on the spirits of the gracious Duncan upon this occasion, that various "picqueerings," as David called them, took place upon the same and similar topics and it was only in consequence of an accidental visit of the Duke to his Lodge at Roseneath, that they were put a stop to. But upon that occasion his Grace showed such particular respect to Mr. and Mrs. Butler, and such favour even to old David, that Knockdunder held it prudent to change his course towards the latter. He, in future, used to express himself among friends, concerning the minister and his wife, as "very worthy decent folk, just a little over strict in their notions; put it was pest for thae plack cattle to err on the safe side." And respecting David, he allowed that "he was an excellent judge of nowte and sheep, and a sensible eneugh carle, an it werena for his tamn'd Cameronian nonsense, whilk it is not worth while of a shentleman to knock out of an auld silly

head, either by force of reason or otherwise." So that, by avoiding topics of dispute, the personages of our tale lived in great good habits with the gracious Duncan, only that he still grieved David's soul, and set a perilous example to the congregation, by sometimes bringing his pipe to the church during a cold winter day, and almost always sleeping during sermon in the summer time.

Mrs. Butler, whom we must no longer, if we can help it, term by the familiar name of Jeanie, brought into the married state the same firm mind and affectionate disposition—the same natural and homely good sense, and spirit of useful exertion—in a word, all the domestic good qualities of which she had given proof during her maiden life. She did not indeed rival Butler in learning; but then no woman more devoutly venerated the extent of her husband's erudition. She did not pretend to understand his expositions of divinity; but no minister of the Presbytery had his humble dinner so well arranged, his clothes and linen in equal good order, his fireside so neatly swept, his parlour so clean, and his books so well dusted.

If he talked to Jeanie of what she did not understand—and (for the man was mortal, and had been a schoolmaster) he sometimes did harangue more scholarly and wisely than was necessary—she listened in placid silence; and whenever the point referred to common life, and was such as came under the grasp of a strong natural understanding, her views were more forcible, and her observations more acute, than his own. In acquired politeness of manners, when it happened that she mingled a little in society, Mrs. Butler was, of course, judged deficient. But then she had that obvious wish to oblige, and that real and natural good-breeding depending on, good sense and good humour, which, joined to a considerable degree of archness and liveliness of manner, rendered her behaviour acceptable to all with whom she was called upon to associate. Notwithstanding her strict attention to all domestic affairs, she always appeared the clean well-dressed mistress of the house, never the sordid household drudge. When complimented on this occasion by Duncan Knock, who swore "that he thought the fairies must help her, since her house was always clean, and nobody ever saw anybody sweeping it," she modestly replied, "That much might be dune by timing ane's turns."

Duncan replied, "He heartily wished she could teach that art to the huzzies at the Lodge, for he could never discover that the house was washed at a', except now and then by breaking his shins over the pail—Cot tamn the jauds!"

Of lesser matters there is not occasion to speak much. It may easily be believed that the Duke's cheese was carefully made, and so graciously accepted, that the offering became annual. Remembrances and acknowledgments of past favours were sent to Mrs. Bickerton and Mrs. Glass, and an amicable intercourse maintained from time to time with these two respectable and benevolent persons.

It is especially necessary to mention that, in the course of five years, Mrs. Butler had three children, two boys and a girl, all stout healthy babes of grace, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and strong-limbed. The boys were named David and Reuben, an order of nomenclature which was much to the satisfaction of the old hero of the Covenant, and the girl, by her mother's special desire, was christened Euphemia, rather contrary to the wish both of her father and husband, who nevertheless loved Mrs. Butler too well, and were too much indebted to her for their hours of happiness, to withstand any request which she made with earnestness, and as a gratification to herself. But from some feeling, I know not of what kind, the child was never distinguished by the name of Effie, but by the abbreviation of Femie, which in Scotland is equally commonly applied to persons called Euphemia.

In this state of quiet and unostentatious enjoyment, there were, besides the ordinary rubs and ruffles which disturb even the most uniform life, two things which particularly chequered Mrs. Butler's happiness. "Without these," she said to our informer, "her life would have been but too happy; and perhaps," she added, "she had need of some crosses in this world to remind her that there was a better to come behind it."

The first of these related to certain polemical skirmishes betwixt her father and her husband, which, notwithstanding the mutual respect and affection they entertained for each other, and their great love for her—notwithstanding, also, their general agreement in strictness, and even severity, of Presbyterian principle—often threatened unpleasant weather between them. David Deans, as our readers must be aware, was sufficiently opinionative and intractable, and having prevailed on himself to become a member of a kirk-session under the Established Church, he felt doubly obliged to evince that, in so doing, he had not compromised any whit of his former professions, either in practice or principle. Now Mr. Butler, doing all credit to his father-in-law's motives, was frequently of opinion that it were better to drop out of memory points of division and separation, and to act in the manner most likely to attract and unite all parties who were serious in religion. Moreover, he was not pleased, as a man and a scholar, to be always dictated to by his unlettered father-in-law; and as a clergyman, he did not think it fit to seem for ever under the thumb of an elder of his own kirk-session. A proud but honest thought carried his opposition now and then a little farther than it would otherwise have gone. "My brethren," he said, "will suppose I am flattering and conciliating the old man for the sake of his succession, if I defer and give way to him on every occasion; and, besides, there are many on which I neither can nor will conscientiously yield to his notions. I cannot be persecuting old women for witches, or ferreting out matter of scandal among the young ones, which might otherwise have remained concealed."

From this difference of opinion it happened that, in many cases of nicety, such as in owning certain defections, and failing to testify against certain backslidings of the time, in not always severely tracing forth little matters of scandal and *fama clamosa*, which David called a loosening of the reins of discipline, and in failing to demand clear testimonies in other points of controversy which had, as it were, drifted to leeward with the change of times, Butler incurred the censure of his father-in-law; and sometimes the disputes betwixt them became eager and almost unfriendly. In all such cases Mrs Butler was a mediating spirit, who endeavoured, by the alkaline smoothness of her own disposition, to neutralise the acidity of theological controversy. To the complaints of both she lent an unprejudiced and attentive ear, and sought always rather to excuse than absolutely to defend the other party.

She reminded her father that Butler had not "his experience of the auld and wrastling times, when folk were gifted wi' a far look into eternity, to make up for the oppressions whilk they suffered here below in time. She freely allowed that many devout ministers and professors in times past had enjoyed downright revelation, like the blessed Peden, and Lundie, and Cameron, and Renwick, and John Caird the tinkler, wha entered into the secrets, and Elizabeth Melvil, Lady Culross, wha prayed in her bed, surrounded by a great many Christians in a large room, in whilk it was placed on purpose, and that for three hours' time, with wonderful assistance; and Lady Roberland, whilk got six sure outgates of grace, and mony other in times past; and of a specially, Mr. John Scrimgeour, minister of Kinghorn, who, having a beloved child sick to death of the crewels, was free to expostulate with his Maker with such impatience of displeasure, and complaining so bitterly, that at length it was said unto him, that he was heard for this time, but that he was requested to use no such boldness in time coming; so that when he returned he found the child sitting up in the bed hale and fair, with all its wounds closed, and supping its parritch, whilk babe he had left at the time of death. But though these things might be true in these needful times, she contended that those ministers who had not seen such vouchsafed and especial mercies, were to seek their rule in the records of ancient times; and therefore Reuben was carefu' both to search the Scriptures and the books written by wise and good men of old; and sometimes in this way it wad happen that twa precious saints might pu' sundry wise, like twa cows riving at the same hayband."

To this David used to reply, with a sigh, "Ah, hinny, thou kenn'st little o't; but that saam John Scrimgeour, that blew open the gates of heaven as an it had been wi' a sax-pund cannonball, used devoutly to wish that most part of books were burnt, except the Bible. Reuben's a gude lad and a kind—I have aye allowed that; but as to his not allowing inquiry anent the scandal of Marjory Kittlesides and Rory MacRand, under pretence that they have southered sin wi' marriage, it's clear agane the Christian discipline o' the kirk. And then there's Aily MacClure of Deepheugh, that practises her abominations, spacing folks' fortunes wi' egg-shells, and mutton-banes, and dreams and divinations, whilk is a scandal to ony Christian land to suffer sic a wretch to live; and I'll uphau'd that, in a' judicatures, civil or ecclesiastical."

"I daresay ye are very right, father," was the general style of Jeanie's answer; "but ye maun come down to the Manse to your dinner the day. The bits o' bairns, puir things, are wearying to see their luckie dad; and Reuben never sleeps weel, nor I neither, when you and he hae had ony bit outcast."

"Nae outcast, Jeanie; God forbid I suld cast out wi' thee, or aught that is dear to thee!" And he put on his Sundays coat, and came to the Manse accordingly.

With her husband, Mrs. Butler had a more direct conciliatory process. Reuben had the utmost respect for the old man's motives, and affection for his person, as well as gratitude for his early friendship. So that, upon any such occasion of accidental irritation, it was only necessary to remind him with delicacy of his father-in-law's age, of his scanty education, strong prejudices, and family distresses. The least of these considerations always inclined Butler to measures of conciliation, in

so far as he could accede to them without compromising principle; and thus our simple and unpretending heroine had the merit of those peacemakers, to whom it is pronounced as a benediction, that they shall inherit the earth.

The second crook in Mrs. Butler's lot, to use the language of her father, was the distressing circumstance, that she had never heard of her sister's safety, or of the circumstances in which she found herself, though betwixt four and five years had elapsed since they had parted on the beach of the island of Roseneath. Frequent intercourse was not to be expected—not to be desired, perhaps, in their relative situations; but Effie had promised, that, if she lived and prospered, her sister should hear from her. She must then be no more, or sunk into some abyss of misery, since she had never redeemed her pledge. Her silence seemed strange and portentous, and wrung from Jeanie, who could never forget the early years of their intimacy, the most painful anticipation concerning her fate. At length, however, the veil was drawn aside.

One day, as the Captain of Knockdunder had called in at the Manse, on his return from some business in the Highland part of the parish, and had been accommodated, according to his special request, with a mixture of milk, brandy, honey, and water, which he said Mrs. Butler compounded "potter than ever a woman in Scotland,"—for, in all innocent matters, she studied the taste of every one around her,—he said to Butler, "Py the py, minister, I have a letter here either for your canny pody of a wife or you, which I got when I was last at Glasco; the postage comes to fourpence, which you may either pay me forthwith, or give me tooble or quits in a hit at packcammon."

The playing at backgammon and draughts had been a frequent amusement of Mr. Whackbairn, Butler's principal, when at Liberton school. The minister, therefore, still piqued himself on his skill at both games, and occasionally practised them, as strictly canonical, although David Deans, whose notions of every kind were more rigorous, used to shake his head, and groan grievously, when he espied the tables lying in the parlour, or the children playing with the dice boxes or backgammon men. Indeed, Mrs. Butler was sometimes chidden for removing these implements of pastime into some closet or corner out of sight. "Let them be where they are, Jeanie," would Butler say upon such occasions; "I am not conscious of following this, or any other trifling relaxation, to the interruption of my more serious studies, and still more serious duties. I will not, therefore, have it supposed that I am indulging by stealth, and against my conscience, in an amusement which, using it so little as I do, I may well practise openly, and without any check of mind—*Nil conscire sibi*, Jeanie, that is my motto; which signifies, my love, the honest and open confidence which a man ought to entertain when he is acting openly, and without any sense of doing wrong."

Such being Butler's humour, he accepted the Captain's defiance to a twopenny hit at backgammon, and handed the letter to his wife, observing the post-mark was York, but, if it came from her friend Mrs. Bickerton, she had considerably improved her handwriting, which was uncommon at her years.

Leaving the gentlemen to their game, Mrs. Butler went to order something for supper, for Captain Duncan had proposed kindly to stay the night with them, and then carelessly broke open her letter. It was not from Mrs. Bickerton; and, after glancing over the first few lines, she soon found it necessary to retire to her own bedroom, to read the document at leisure.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

*Happy thou art! then happy be,
Nor envy me my lot;
Thy happy state I envy thee,
And peaceful cot.*

Lady Charlotte Campbell.

The letter, which Mrs. Butler, when retired into her own apartment, perused with anxious wonder, was certainly from Effie, although it had no other signature than the letter E.; and although the orthography, style, and penmanship, were very far superior not only to anything which Effie could produce, who, though a lively girl, had been a remarkably careless scholar, but even to her more considerate sister's own powers of composition and expression. The manuscript was a fair Italian hand, though something stiff and constrained—the spelling and the diction that of a person who had been accustomed to read good composition, and mix in good society.

The tenor of the letter was as follows:—

"My Dearest Sister,—At many risks I venture to write to you, to inform you that I am still alive, and, as to worldly situation, that I rank higher than I could expect or merit. If wealth, and distinction, and an honourable rank, could make a woman happy, I have them all; but you, Jeanie, whom the world might think placed far beneath me in all these respects, are far happier than I am. I have had means of hearing of your welfare, my dearest Jeanie, from time to time—I think I should have broken my heart otherwise. I have learned with great pleasure of your increasing family. We have not been worthy of such a blessing; two infants have been successively removed, and we are now childless—God's will be done! But, if we had a child, it would perhaps divert him from the gloomy thoughts which make him terrible to himself and others. Yet do not let me frighten you, Jeanie; he continues to be kind, and I am far better off than I deserve. You will wonder at my better scholarship; but when I was abroad, I had the best teachers, and I worked hard, because my progress pleased him. He is kind, Jeanie, only he has much to distress him, especially when he looks backward. When I look backward myself, I have always a ray of comfort: it is in the generous conduct of a sister, who forsook me not when I was forsaken by every one. You have had your reward. You live happy in the esteem and love of all who know you, and I drag on the life of a miserable impostor, indebted for the marks of regard I receive to a tissue of deceit and lies, which the slightest accident may unravel. He has produced me to his friends, since the estate opened to him, as a daughter of a Scotchman of rank, banished on account of the Viscount of Dundee's wars—that is, our Fr's old friend Clavers, you know—and he says I was educated in a Scotch convent; indeed, I lived in such a place long enough to enable me to support the character. But when a countryman approaches me, and begins to talk, as they all do, of the various families engaged in Dundee's affair, and to make inquiries into my connections, and when I see his eye bent on mine with such an expression of agony, my terror brings me to the very risk of detection. Good-nature and politeness have hitherto saved me, as they prevented people from pressing on me with distressing questions. But how long—O how long, will this be the case!—And if I bring this disgrace on him, he will hate me—he will kill me, for as much as he loves me; he is as jealous of his family honour now, as ever he was careless about it. I have been in England four months, and have often thought of writing to you; and yet, such are the dangers that might arise from an intercepted letter, that I have hitherto forborne. But now I am obliged to run the risk. Last week I saw your great friend, the D. of A. He came to my box, and sate by me; and something in the play put him in mind of you—Gracious Heaven! he told over your whole London journey to all who were in the box, but particularly to the wretched creature who was the occasion of it all. If he had known—if he could have conceived, beside whom he was sitting, and to whom the story was told!—I suffered with courage, like an Indian at the stake, while they are rending his fibres and boring his eyes, and while he smiles applause at each well-imagined contrivance of his torturers. It was too much for me at last, Jeanie—I fainted; and my agony was imputed partly to the heat of the place, and partly to my extreme sensibility; and, hypocrite all over, I encouraged both opinions—anything but discovery! Luckily, *he* was not there. But the incident has more alarms. I am obliged to meet your great man often; and he seldom sees me without talking of E. D. and J. D., and R. B. and D. D., as persons in whom my amiable sensibility is interested. My amiable sensibility!!!—And then the cruel tone of light indifference with which persons in the fashionable world speak together on the most affecting subjects! To hear my guilt, my folly, my agony, the foibles and weaknesses of my friends—even your heroic exertions, Jeanie, spoken of in the drolling style which is the present tone in fashionable life—Scarce all that I formerly endured is equal to this state of irritation—then it was blows and stabs—now it is pricking to death with needles and pins.—He—I mean the D.—goes down next month to spend the shooting-season in Scotland—he says, he makes a point of always dining one day at the Manse—be on your guard, and do not betray yourself, should he mention me—Yourself, alas! *you* have nothing to betray—nothing to fear; you, the pure, the virtuous, the heroine of unstained faith, unblemished purity, what can you have to fear from the world or its proudest minions? It is E. whose life is once more in your hands—it is E. whom you are to save from being plucked of her borrowed plumes, discovered, branded, and trodden down, first by him, perhaps, who has raised her to this dizzy

pinnacle!—The enclosure will reach you twice a-year—do not refuse it—it is out of my own allowance, and may be twice as much when you want it. With you it may do good—with me it never can.

"Write to me soon, Jeanie, or I shall remain in the agonising apprehension that this has fallen into wrong hands—Address simply to L. S., under cover, to the Reverend George Whiterose, in the Minster-Close, York. He thinks I correspond with some of my noble Jacobite relations who are in Scotland. How high-church and jacobitical zeal would burn in his checks, if he knew he was the agent, not of Euphemia Setoun, of the honourable house of Winton, but of E. D., daughter of a Cameronian cowfeeder!—Jeanie, I can laugh yet sometimes—but God protect you from such mirth.—My father—I mean your father, would say it was like the idle crackling of thorns; but the thorns keep their poignancy, they remain unconsumed. Farewell, my dearest Jeanie—Do not show this even to Mr. Butler, much less to any one else. I have every respect for him, but his principles are over strict, and my case will not endure severe handling.—I rest your affectionate sister, E."

In this long letter there was much to surprise as well as to distress Mrs. Butler. That Effie—her sister Effie, should be mingling freely in society, and apparently on not unequal terms, with the Duke of Argyle, sounded like something so extraordinary, that she even doubted if she read truly. Not was it less marvellous, that, in the space of four years, her education should have made such progress. Jeanie's humility readily allowed that Effie had always, when she chose it, been smarter at her book than she herself was, but then she was very idle, and, upon the whole, had made much less proficiency. Love, or fear, or necessity, however, had proved an able school-mistress, and completely supplied all her deficiencies.

What Jeanie least liked in the tone of the letter, was a smothered degree of egotism. "We should have heard little about her," said Jeanie to herself, "but that she was feared the Duke might come to learn wha she was, and a' about her puir friends here; but Effie, puir thing, aye looks her ain way, and folk that do that think mair o' themselves than of their neighbours.—I am no clear about keeping her siller," she added, taking up a L50 note which had fallen out of the paper to the floor. "We hae eneugh, and it looks unco like theftboot, or hushmoney, as they ca' it; she might hae been sure that I wad say naething wad harm her, for a' the gowd in Lunnon. And I maun tell the minister about it. I dinna see that she suld be sae feared for her ain bonny bargain o' a gudeman, and that I shouldna reverence Mr. Butler just as much; and sae I'll e'en tell him, when that tipping body the Captain has ta'en boat in the morning.—But I wonder at my ain state of mind," she added, turning back, after she had made a step or two to the door to join the gentlemen; "surely I am no sic a fule as to be angry that Effie's a braw lady, while I am only a minister's wife?—and yet I am as petted as a bairn, when I should bless God, that has redeemed her from shame, and poverty, and guilt, as ower likely she might hae been plunged into."

Sitting down upon a stool at the foot of the bed, she folded her arms upon her bosom, saying within herself, "From this place will I not rise till I am in a better frame of mind;" and so placed, by dint of tearing the veil from the motives of her little temporary spleen against her sister, she compelled herself to be ashamed of them, and to view as blessings the advantages of her sister's lot, while its embarrassments were the necessary consequences of errors long since committed. And thus she fairly vanquished the feeling of pique which she naturally enough entertained, at seeing Effie, so long the object of her care and her pity, soar suddenly so high above her in life, as to reckon amongst the chief objects of her apprehension the risk of their relationship being discovered.

When this unwonted burst of *amour propre* was thoroughly subdued, she walked down to the little parlour where the gentlemen were finishing their game, and heard from the Captain a confirmation of the news intimated in her letter, that the Duke of Argyle was shortly expected at Roseneath.

"He'll find plenty of moor-fowls and plack-cock on the moors of Auchingower, and he'll pe nae doubt for taking a late dinner, and a ped at the Manse, as he has done before now."

"He has a gude right, Captain," said Jeanie.

"Teil ane potter to ony ped in the kintra," answered the Captain. "And ye had potter tell your father, puir body, to get his beasts a' in order, and put his tamn'd Cameronian nonsense out o' his head for twa or three days, if he can pe so opliging; for fan I speak to him apout prute pestil, he answers me out o' the Pible, whilk is not using a shentleman weel, unless it be a person of your cloth, Mr. Putler."

No one understood better than Jeanie the merit of the soft answer, which turneth away wrath; and she only smiled, and hoped that his Grace would find everything that was under her father's care to his entire satisfaction.

But the Captain, who had lost the whole postage of the letter at backgammon, was in the pouting mood not unusual to losers, and which, says the proverb, must be allowed to them.

"And, Master Putler, though you know I never meddle with the things of your kirk-sessions, yet I must pe allowed to say that I will not be pleased to allow Ailie MacClure of Deepheugh to be poonished as a witch, in respect she only spaes fortunes, and does not lame, or plind, or pedevil any persons, or coup cadger's carts, or ony sort of mischief; put only tells people good fortunes, as anent our poats killing so many seals and doug-fishes, whilk is very pleasant to hear."

"The woman," said Butler, "is, I believe, no witch, but a cheat: and it is only on that head that she is summoned to the kirk-session, to cause her to desist in future from practising her impostures upon ignorant persons."

"I do not know," replied the gracious Duncan, "what her practices or postures are, but I pelieve that if the poys take hould on her to duck her in the Clachan purn, it will be a very sorry practice—and I pelieve, moreover, that if I come in thirdsman among you at the kirk-sessions, you will be all in a tamn'd pad posture indeed."

Without noticing this threat, Mr. Butler replied, "That he had not attended to the risk of ill-usage which the poor woman might undergo at the hands of the rabble, and that he would give her the necessary admonition in private, instead of bringing her before the assembled session."

"This," Duncan said, "was speaking like a reasonable shentleman;" and so the evening passed peaceably off.

Next morning, after the Captain had swallowed his morning draught of Athole brose, and departed in his coach and six, Mrs. Butler anew deliberated upon communicating to her husband her sister's letter. But she was deterred by the recollection, that, in doing so, she would unveil to him the whole of a dreadful secret, of which, perhaps, his public character might render him an unfit depositary. Butler already had reason to believe that Effie had eloped with that same Robertson who had been a leader in the Porteous mob, and who lay under sentence of death for the robbery at Kirkcaldy. But he did not know his identity with George Staunton, a man of birth and fortune, who had now apparently reassumed his natural rank in society. Jeanie had respected Staunton's own confession as sacred, and upon reflection she considered the letter of her sisters equally so, and resolved to mention the contents to no one.

On reperusing the letter, she could not help observing the staggering and unsatisfactory condition of those who have risen to distinction by undue paths, and the outworks and bulwarks of fiction and falsehood, by which they are under the necessity of surrounding and defending their precarious advantages. But she was not called upon, she thought, to unveil her sister's original history—it would restore no right to any one, for she was usurping none—it would only destroy her happiness, and degrade her in the public estimation. Had she been wise, Jeanie thought she would have chosen seclusion and privacy, in place of public life and gaiety; but the power of choice might not be hers. The money, she thought, could not be returned without her seeming haughty and unkind. She resolved, therefore, upon reconsidering this point, to employ it as occasion should serve, either in educating her children better than her own means could compass, or for their future portion. Her sister had enough, was strongly bound to assist Jeanie by any means in her power, and the arrangement was so natural and proper, that it ought not to be declined out of fastidious or romantic delicacy. Jeanie accordingly wrote to her sister, acknowledging her letter, and requesting to hear from her as often as she could. In entering into her own little details of news, chiefly respecting domestic affairs, she experienced a singular vacillation of ideas; for sometimes she apologised for mentioning things unworthy the notice of a lady of rank, and then recollected that everything which concerned her should be interesting to Effie. Her letter, under the cover of Mr. Whiterose, she committed to the post-office at Glasgow, by the intervention of a parishioner who had business at that city.

The next week brought the Duke to Roseneath, and shortly afterwards he intimated his intention of sporting in their neighbourhood, and taking his bed at the Manse; an honour which he had once or twice done to its inmates on former occasions.

Effie proved to be perfectly right in her auticipations. The Duke had hardly set himself down at Mrs. Butler's right hand, and taken upon himself the task of carving the excellent "barn-door chucky," which had been selected as the high dishes upon this honourable occasion, before he began to speak of Lady Staunton of

Willingham, in Lincolnshire, and the great noise which her wit and beauty made in London. For much of this Jeanie was, in some measure, prepared—but Effie's wit! that would never have entered into her imagination, being ignorant how exactly raillery in the higher rank resembles flippancy among their inferiors.

"She has been the ruling belle—the blazing star—the universal toast of the winter," said the Duke; "and is really the most beautiful creature that was seen at court upon the birth-day."

The birthday! and at court!—Jeanie was annihilated, remembering well her own presentation, all its extraordinary circumstances, and particularly the cause of it.

"I mention this lady particularly to you, Mrs. Butler," said the Duke, "because she has something in the sound of her voice, and cast of her countenance, that reminded me of you—not when you look so pale though—you have over-fatigued yourself—you must pledge me in a glass of wine."

She did so, and Butler observed, "It was dangerous flattery in his Grace to tell a poor minister's wife that she was like a court-beauty."

"Oho, Mr. Butler," said the Duke, "I find you are growing jealous; but it's rather too late in the day, for you know how long I have admired your wife. But seriously, there is betwixt them one of those inexplicable likenesses which we see in countenances, that do not otherwise resemble each other."

"The perilous part of the compliment has flown off," thought Mr. Butler.

His wife, feeling the awkwardness of silence, forced herself to say, "That, perhaps, the lady might be her countrywoman, and the language might have made some resemblance."

"You are quite right," replied the Duke. "She is a Scotch-woman, and speaks with a Scotch accent, and now and then a provincial word drops out so prettily, that it is quite Doric, Mr. Butler."

"I should have thought," said the clergyman, "that would have sounded vulgar in the great city."

"Not at all," replied the Duke; "you must suppose it is not the broad coarse Scotch that is spoken in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, or in the Gorbals. This lady has been very little in Scotland, in fact she was educated in a convent abroad, and speaks that pure court-Scotch, which was common in my younger days; but it is so generally disused now, that it sounds like a different dialect, entirely distinct from our modern *patois*."

Notwithstanding her anxiety, Jeanie could not help admiring within herself, how the most correct judges of life and manners can be imposed on by their own preconceptions, while the Duke proceeded thus: "She is of the unfortunate house of Winton, I believe; but, being bred abroad, she had missed the opportunity of learning her own pedigree, and was obliged to me for informing her, that she must certainly come of the Setons of Windygoul. I wish you could have seen how prettily she blushed at her own ignorance. Amidst her noble and elegant manners, there is now and then a little touch of bashfulness and conventual rusticity, if I may call it so, that makes her quite enchanting. You see at once the rose that had bloomed untouched amid the chaste precincts of the cloister, Mr. Butler."

True to the hint, Mr. Butler failed not to start with his

"Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis," etc.,

while his wife could hardly persuade herself that all this was spoken of Effie Deans, and by so competent a judge as the Duke of Argyle; and had she been acquainted with Catullus, would have thought the fortunes of her sister had reversed the whole passage.

She was, however, determined to obtain some indemnification for the anxious feelings of the moment, by gaining all the intelligence she could; and therefore ventured to make some inquiry about the husband of the lady his Grace admired so much.

"He is very rich," replied the Duke; "of an ancient family, and has good manners: but he is far from being such a general favourite as his wife. Some people say he can be very pleasant—I never saw him so; but should rather judge him reserved, and gloomy, and capricious. He was very wild in his youth, they say, and has bad health; yet he is a good-looking man enough—a great friend of your Lord High Commissioner of the Kirk, Mr. Butler."

"Then he is the friend of a very worthy and honourable nobleman," said Butler.

"Does he admire his lady as much as other people do?" said Jeanie, in a low voice.

"Who—Sir George? They say he is very fond of her," said the Duke; "but I observe she trembles a little when he fixes his eye on her, and that is no good sign—But it is strange how I am haunted by this resemblance of yours to Lady Staunton, in look and tone of voice. One would almost swear you were sisters."

Jeanie's distress became uncontrollable, and beyond concealment. The Duke of Argyle was much disturbed, good-naturedly ascribing it to his having unwittingly recalled, to her remembrance her family misfortunes. He was too well-bred to attempt to apologise; but hastened to change the subject, and arrange certain points of dispute which had occurred betwixt Duncan of Knock and the minister, acknowledging that his worthy substitute was sometimes a little too obstinate, as well as too energetic, in his executive measures.

Mr. Butler admitted his general merits; but said, "He would presume to apply to the worthy gentleman the words of the poet to Marrucinus Asinius,

Manu

Non belle uteris in joco atque vino."

The discourse being thus turned on parish business, nothing farther occurred that can interest the reader.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,

And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

Thence to be wretch'd by an unlineal hand,

No son of mine succeeding.

Macbeth.

After this period, but under the most strict precautions against discovery, the sisters corresponded occasionally, exchanging letters about twice every year. Those of Lady Staunton spoke of her husband's health and spirits as being deplorably uncertain; her own seemed also to be sinking, and one of the topics on which she most frequently dwelt was their want of family. Sir George Staunton, always violent, had taken some aversion at the next heir, whom he suspected of having irritated his friends against him during his absence; and he declared, he would bequeath Willingham and all its lands to an hospital, ere that fetch-and-carry tell-tale should inherit an acre of it.

"Had he but a child," said the unfortunate wife, "or had that luckless infant survived, it would be some motive for living and for exertion. But Heaven has denied us a blessing which we have not deserved."

Such complaints, in varied form, but turning frequently on the same topic, filled the letters which passed from the spacious but melancholy halls of Willingham, to the quiet and happy parsonage at Knocktarlitie. Years meanwhile rolled on amid these fruitless repinings. John, Duke of Argyle and Greenwich, died in the year 1743, universally lamented, but by none more than by the Butlers, to whom his benevolence had been so distinguished. He was succeeded by his brother Duke Archibald, with whom they had not the same intimacy; but who continued the protection which his brother had extended towards them. This, indeed, became more necessary than ever; for, after the breaking out and suppression of the rebellion in 1745, the peace of the country, adjacent to the Highlands, was considerably disturbed. Marauders, or men that had been driven to that desperate mode of life, quartered themselves in the fastnesses nearest to the Lowlands, which were their scene of plunder; and there is scarce a glen in the romantic and now peaceable Highlands of Perth, Stirling, and Dumbartonshire, where one or more did not take up their residence.

The prime pest of the parish of Knocktarlitie was a certain Donacha dhu na Dunaigh, or Black Duncan the Mischievous, whom we have already casually mentioned. This fellow had been originally a tinkler, or *caird*, many of whom stroll about these districts; but when all police was disorganised by the civil war, he

threw up his profession, and from half thief became whole robber; and being generally at the head of three or four active young fellows, and he himself artful, bold, and well acquainted with the passes, he plied his new profession with emolument to himself, and infinite plague to the country.

All were convinced that Duncan of Knock could have put down his namesake Donacha any morning he had a mind; for there were in the parish a set of stout young men, who had joined Argyle's banner in the war under his old friend, and behaved very well on several occasions. And as for their leader, as no one doubted his courage, it was generally supposed that Donacha had found out the mode of conciliating his favour, a thing not very uncommon in that age and country. This was the more readily believed, as David Deans's cattle (being the property of the Duke) were left untouched, when the minister's cows were carried off by the thieves. Another attempt was made to renew the same act of rapine, and the cattle were in the act of being driven off, when Butler, laying his profession aside in a case of such necessity, put himself at the head of some of his neighbours, and rescued the creagh, an exploit at which Deans attended in person, notwithstanding his extreme old age, mounted on a Highland pony, and girded with an old broadsword, likening himself (for he failed not to arrogate the whole merit of the expedition) to David, the son of Jesse, when he recovered the spoil of Ziklag from the Amalekites. This spirited behaviour had so far a good effect, that Donacha dhu na Dunaigh kept his distance for some time to come; and, though his distant exploits were frequently spoken of, he did not exercise any depredations in that part of the country. He continued to flourish, and to be heard of occasionally, until the year 1751, when, if the fear of the second David had kept him in check, fate released him from that restraint, for the venerable patriarch of St. Leonard's was that year gathered to his fathers.

David Deans died full of years and of honour. He is believed, for the exact time of his birth is not known, to have lived upwards of ninety years; for he used to speak of events as falling under his own knowledge, which happened about the time of the battle of Bothwell Bridge. It was said that he even bore arms there; for once, when a drunken Jacobite laird wished for a Bothwell Brigg whig, that "he might stow the lugs out of his head," David informed him with a peculiar austerity of countenance, that, if he liked to try such a prank, there was one at his elbow; and it required the interference of Butler to preserve the peace.

He expired in the arms of his beloved daughter, thankful for all the blessings which Providence had vouchsafed to him while in this valley of strife and toil—and thankful also for the trials he had been visited with; having found them, he said, needful to mortify that spiritual pride and confidence in his own gifts, which was the side on which the wily Enemy did most sorely beset him. He prayed in the most affecting manner for Jeanie, her husband, and her family, and that her affectionate duty to the puir auld man might purchase her length of days here, and happiness hereafter; then, in a pathetic petition, too well understood by those who knew his family circumstances, he besought the Shepherd of souls, while gathering his flock, not to forget the little one that had strayed from the fold, and even then might be in the hands of the ravening wolf.—He prayed for the national Jerusalem, that peace might be in her land, and prosperity in her palaces—for the welfare of the honourable House of Argyle, and for the conversion of Duncan of Knockdunder. After this he was silent, being exhausted, nor did he again utter anything distinctly. He was heard, indeed, to mutter something about national defections, right-hand extremes, and left-hand failings off; but, as May Hettly observed, his head was carried at the time; and it is probable that these expressions occurred to him merely out of general habit, and that he died in the full spirit of charity with all men. About an hour afterwards he slept in the Lord.

Notwithstanding her father's advanced age, his death was a severe shock to Mrs. Butler. Much of her time had been dedicated to attending to his health and his wishes, and she felt as if part of her business in the world was ended, when the good old man was no more. His wealth, which came nearly to fifteen hundred pounds, in disposable capital, served to raise the fortunes of the family at the Manse. How to dispose of this sum for the best advantage of his family, was matter of anxious consideration to Butler. "If we put it on heritable bond, we shall maybe lose the interest; for there's that bond over Lounsbeck's land, your father could neither get principal nor interest for it—If we bring it into the funds, we shall maybe lose the principal and all, as many did in the South Sea scheme. The little estate of Craigsture is in the market—it lies within two miles of the Manse, and Knock says his Grace has no thought to buy it. But they ask L2500, and they may, for it is worth the money; and were I to borrow the balance, the creditor might call it up suddenly, or in case of my death my family might be distressed."

"And so if we had mair siller, we might buy that bonny pasture-ground, where the grass comes so early?" asked Jeanie.

"Certainly, my dear; and Knockdunder, who is a good judge, is strongly advising me to it. To be sure it is his nephew that is selling it."

"Aweel, Reuben," said Jeanie, "ye maun just look up a text in Scripture, as ye did when ye wanted siller before—just look up a text in the Bible."

"Ah, Jeanie," said Butler, laughing and pressing her hand at the same time, "the best people in these times can only work miracles once."

"We will see," said Jeanie composedly; and going to the closet in which she kept her honey, her sugar, her pots of jelly, her vials of the more ordinary medicines, and which served her, in short, as a sort of store-room, she jangled vials and gallipots, till, from out the darkest nook, well flanked by a triple row of bottles and jars, which she was under the necessity of displacing, she brought a cracked brown cann, with a piece of leather tied over the top. Its contents seemed to be written papers, thrust in disorder into this uncommon*secrè'taire*. But from among these Jeanie brought an old clasped Bible, which had been David Deans's companion in his earlier wanderings, and which he had given to his daughter when the failure of his eyes had compelled him to use one of a larger print. This she gave to Butler, who had been looking at her motions with some surprise, and desired him to see what that book could do for him. He opened the clasps, and to his astonishment a parcel of L50 bank-notes dropped out from betwixt the leaves, where they had been separately lodged, and fluttered upon the floor. "I didna think to hae tauld you o' my wealth, Reuben," said his wife, smiling at his surprise, "till on my deathbed, or maybe on some family pinch; but it wad be better laid out on yon bonny grass-holms, than lying useless here in this auld pigg."

"How on earth came ye by that siller, Jeanie?—Why, here is more than a thousand pounds," said Butler, lifting up and counting the notes.

"If it were ten thousand, it's a' honestly come by," said Jeanie; "and troth I kenna how muckle there is o't, but it's a' there that ever I got.—And as for how I came by it, Reuben—it's weel come by, and honestly, as I said before—And it's mair folk's secret than mine, or ye wad hae kend about it lang syne; and as for anything else, I am not free to answer mair questions about it, and ye maun just ask me nane."

"Answer me but one," said Butler. "Is it all freely and indisputably your own property, to dispose of it as you think fit?—Is it possible no one has a claim in so large a sum except you?"

"It was mine, free to dispose of it as I like," answered Jeanie; "and I have disposed of it already, for now it is yours, Reuben—You are Bible Butler now, as well as your forbear, that my puir father had sic an ill will at. Only, if ye like, I wad wish Fernie to get a gude share o't when we are gane."

"Certainly, it shall be as you choose—But who on earth ever pitched on such a hiding-place for temporal treasures?"

"That is just ane o' my auld-fashioned gates, as you ca' them, Reuben. I thought if Donacha Dhu was to make an outbreak upon us, the Bible was the last thing in the house he wad meddle wi'—but an ony mair siller should drap in, as it is not unlikely, I shall e'en pay it ower to you, and ye may lay it out your ain way."

"And I positively must not ask you how you have come by all this money?" said the clergyman.

"Indeed, Reuben, you must not; for if you were asking me very sair I wad maybe tell you, and then I am sure I would do wrong."

"But tell me," said Butler, "is it anything that distresses your own mind?"

"There is baith weal and woe come aye wi' world's gear, Reuben; but ye maun ask me naething mair—This siller binds me to naething, and can never be speered back again."

"Surely," said Mr. Butler, when he had again counted over the money, as if to assure himself that the notes were real, "there was never man in the world had a wife like mine—a blessing seems to follow her."

"Never," said Jeanie, "since the enchanted princess in the bairn's fairy tale, that kamed gold nobles out o' the tae side of her haffit locks, and Dutch dollars out o' the tother. But gang away now, minister, and put by the siller, and dinna keep the notes wampishing in your hand that gate, or I shall wish them in the brown pigg again, for fear we get a black cast about them—we're ower near the hills in these times to be thought to hae siller in the house. And, besides, ye maun gree wi' Knockdunder, that has the selling o' the lands; and dinna you be simple and let him ken o' this windfa', but keep him to the very lowest penny, as if ye had to borrow siller to make the price up."

In the last admonition, Jeanie showed distinctly, that, although she did not understand how to secure the money which came into her hands otherwise than by saving and hoarding it, yet she had some part of her father David's shrewdness, even upon worldly subjects. And Reuben Butler was a prudent man, and went

and did even as his wife had advised him. The news quickly went abroad into the parish that the minister had bought Craigsture; and some wished him joy, and some "were sorry it had gane out of the auld name." However, his clerical brethren, understanding that he was under the necessity of going to Edinburgh about the ensuing Whitsunday, to get together David Deans's cash to make up the purchase-money of his new acquisition, took the opportunity to name him their delegate to the General Assembly, or Convocation of the Scottish Church, which takes place usually in the latter end of the month of May.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

*But who is this? what thing of sea or land—
Female of sex it seems—
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing?
Milton.*

Not long after the incident of the Bible and the bank-notes, Fortune showed that she could surprise Mrs Butler as well as her husband. The Minister, in order to accomplish the various pieces of business which his unwonted visit to Edinburgh rendered necessary, had been under the necessity of setting out from home in the latter end of the month of February, concluding justly that he would find the space betwixt his departure and the term of Whitsunday (24th May) short enough for the purpose of bringing forward those various debtors of old David Deans, out of whose purses a considerable part of the price of his new purchase was to be made good.

Jeanie was thus in the unwonted situation of inhabiting a lonely house, and she felt yet more solitary from the death of the good old man who used to divide her cares with her husband. Her children were her principal resource, and to them she paid constant attention.

It happened a day or two after Butler's departure that, while she was engaged in some domestic duties, she heard a dispute among the young folk, which, being maintained with obstinacy, appeared to call for her interference. All came to their natural umpire with their complaints. Femie, not yet ten years old, charged Davie and Reubie with an attempt to take away her book by force; and David and Reuben replied, the elder, "That it was not a book for Femie to read," and Reuben, "That it was about a bad woman."

"Where did you get the book, ye little hempie?" said Mrs. Butler. "How dare ye touch papa's books when he is away?" But the little lady, holding fast a sheet of crumpled paper, declared "It was nane o' papa's books, and May Hettly had taken it off the muckle cheese which came from Inverara;" for, as was very natural to suppose, a friendly intercourse, with interchange of mutual civilities, was kept up from time to time between Mrs. Dolly Dutton, now Mrs. MacCorkindale, and her former friends.

Jeanie took the subject of contention out of the child's hand, to satisfy herself of the propriety of her studies; but how much was she struck when she read upon the title of the broadside-sheet, "The Last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words of Margaret MacCraw, or Murdockson, executed on Harabee Hill, near Carlisle, the day of 1737." It was, indeed, one of those papers which Archibald had bought at Longtown, when he monopolised the pedlar's stock, which Dolly had thrust into her trunk out of sheer economy. One or two copies, it seems, had remained in her repositories at Inverary, till she chanced to need them in packing a cheese, which, as a very superior production, was sent, in the way of civil challenge, to the dairy at Knocktarlitie.

The title of this paper, so strangely fallen into the very hands from which, in well-meant respect to her feelings, it had been so long detained, was of itself sufficiently startling; but the narrative itself was so interesting, that Jeanie, shaking herself loose from the children, ran upstairs to her own apartment, and bolted the door, to peruse it without interruption.

The narrative, which appeared to have been drawn up, or at least corrected, by the clergyman who attended this unhappy woman, stated the crime for which she suffered to have been "her active part in that atrocious robbery and murder, committed near two years since near Haltwhistle, for which the notorious Frank Levitt was committed for trial at Lancaster assizes. It was supposed the evidence of the accomplice Thomas Tuck, commonly called Tyburn Tom, upon which the woman had been convicted, would weigh equally heavy against him; although many were inclined to think it was Tuck himself who had struck the fatal blow, according to the dying statement of Meg Murdockson."

After a circumstantial account of the crime for which she suffered, there was a brief sketch of Margaret's life. It was stated that she was a Scotchwoman by birth, and married a soldier in the Cameronian regiment—that she long followed the camp, and had doubtless acquired in fields of battle, and similar scenes, that ferocity and love of plunder for which she had been afterwards distinguished—that her husband, having obtained his discharge, became servant to a beneficed clergyman of high situation and character in Lincolnshire, and that she acquired the confidence and esteem of that honourable family. She had lost this many years after her husband's death, it was stated, in consequence of conniving at the irregularities of her daughter with the heir of the family, added to the suspicious circumstances attending the birth of a child, which was strongly suspected to have met with foul play, in order to preserve, if possible, the girl's reputation. After this she had led a wandering life both in England and Scotland, under colour sometimes of telling fortunes, sometimes of driving a trade in smuggled wares, but, in fact, receiving stolen goods, and occasionally actively joining in the exploits by which they were obtained. Many of her crimes she had boasted of after conviction, and there was one circumstance for which she seemed to feel a mixture of joy and occasional compunction. When she was residing in the suburbs of Edinburgh during the preceding summer, a girl, who had been seduced by one of her confederates, was intrusted to her charge, and in her house delivered of a male infant. Her daughter, whose mind was in a state of derangement ever since she had lost her own child, according to the criminal's account, carried off the poor girl's infant, taking it for her own, of the reality of whose death she at times could not be persuaded.

Margaret Murdockson stated that she, for some time, believed her daughter had actually destroyed the infant in her mad fits, and that she gave the father to understand so, but afterwards learned that a female stroller had got it from her. She showed some compunction at having separated mother and child, especially as the mother had nearly suffered death, being condemned, on the Scotch law, for the supposed murder of her infant. When it was asked what possible interest she could have had in exposing the unfortunate girl to suffer for a crime she had not committed, she asked, if they thought she was going to put her own daughter into trouble to save another? She did not know what the Scotch law would have done to her for carrying the child away. This answer was by no means satisfactory to the clergyman, and he discovered, by close examination, that she had a deep and revengeful hatred against the young person whom she had thus injured. But the paper intimated, that, whatever besides she had communicated upon this subject was confided by her in private to the worthy and reverend Archdeacon who had bestowed such particular pains in affording her spiritual assistance. The broadside went on to intimate, that, after her execution, of which the particulars were given, her daughter, the insane person mentioned more than once, and who was generally known by the name of Madge Wildfire, had been very ill-used by the populace, under the belief that she was a sorceress, and an accomplice in her mother's crimes, and had been with difficulty rescued by the prompt interference of the police.

Such (for we omit moral reflections, and all that may seem unnecessary to the explanation of our story) was the tenor of the broadside. To Mrs. Butler it contained intelligence of the highest importance, since it seemed to afford the most unequivocal proof of her sister's innocence respecting the crime for which she had so nearly suffered. It is true, neither she nor her husband, nor even her father, had ever believed her capable of touching her infant with an unkind hand when in possession of her reason; but there was a darkness on the subject, and what might have happened in a moment of insanity was dreadful to think upon. Besides, whatever was their own conviction, they had no means of establishing Effie's innocence to the world, which, according to the tenor of this fugitive publication, was now at length completely manifested by the dying confession of the person chiefly interested in concealing it.

After thanking God for a discovery so dear to her feelings, Mrs. Butler began to consider what use she should make of it. To have shown it to her husband would have been her first impulse; but, besides that he was absent from home, and the matter too delicate to be the subject of correspondence by an indifferent

penwoman, Mrs. Butler recollected that he was not possessed of the information necessary to form a judgment upon the occasion; and that, adhering to the rule which she had considered as most advisable, she had best transmit the information immediately to her sister, and leave her to adjust with her husband the mode in which they should avail themselves of it. Accordingly, she despatched a special messenger to Glasgow with a packet, enclosing the Confession of Margaret Murdockson, addressed, as usual, under cover, to Mr. Whiterose of York. She expected, with anxiety, an answer, but none arrived in the usual course of post, and she was left to imagine how many various causes might account for Lady Staunton's silence. She began to be half sorry that she had parted with the printed paper, both for fear of its having fallen into bad hands, and from the desire of regaining the document which might be essential to establish her sister's innocence. She was even doubting whether she had not better commit the whole matter to her husband's consideration, when other incidents occurred to divert her purpose. Jeanie (she is a favourite, and we beg her pardon for still using the familiar title) had walked down to the sea-side with her children one morning after breakfast, when the boys, whose sight was more discriminating than hers, exclaimed, that "the Captain's coach and six was coming right for the shore, with ladies in it." Jeanie instinctively bent her eyes on the approaching boat, and became soon sensible that there were two females in the stern, seated beside the gracious Duncan, who acted as pilot. It was a point of politeness to walk towards the landing-place, in order to receive them, especially as she saw that the Captain of Knockdunder was upon honour and ceremony. His piper was in the bow of the boat, sending forth music, of which one half sounded the better that the other was drowned by the waves and the breeze. Moreover, he himself had his brigadier wig newly frizzed, his bonnet (he had abjured the cocked-hat) decorated with Saint George's red cross, his uniform mounted as a captain of militia, the Duke's flag with the boar's head displayed—all intimated parade and gala. As Mrs. Butler approached the landing-place, she observed the Captain hand the ladies ashore with marks of great attention, and the parties advanced towards her, the Captain a few steps before the two ladies, of whom the taller and elder leaned on the shoulder of the other, who seemed to be an attendant or servant. As they met, Duncan, in his best, most important, and deepest tone of Highland civility, "pegged leave to introduce to Mrs. Putler, Lady—eh—eh—I hae forgotten your leddyship's name!"

"Never mind my name, sir," said the lady; "I trust Mrs. Butler will be at no loss. The Duke's letter"—And, as she observed Mrs. Butler look confused, she said again to Duncan somethin sharply, "Did you not send the letter last night, sir?"

"In troth and I didna, and I crave your leddyship's pardon; but you see, matam, I thought it would do as weel to-tay, because Mrs. Putler is never taen out o'sorts—never—and the coach was out fishing—and the gig was gane to Greenock for a cag of prandy—and—Put here's his Grace's letter."

"Give it me, sir," said the lady, taking it out of his hand; "since you have not found it convenient to do me the favour to send it before me, I will deliver it myself."

Mrs. Butler looked with great attention, and a certain dubious feeling of deep interest, on the lady, who thus expressed herself with authority over the man of authority, and to whose mandates he seemed to submit, resigning the letter with a "Just as your leddyship is pleased to order it."

The lady was rather above the middle size, beautifully made, though something *embonpoint*, with a hand and arm exquisitely formed. Her manner was easy, dignified, and commanding, and seemed to evince high birth and the habits of elevated society. She wore a travelling dress—a grey beaver hat, and a veil of Flanders lace. Two footmen, in rich liveries, who got out of the barge, and lifted out a trunk and portmanteau, appeared to belong to her suite.

"As you did not receive the letter, madam, which should have served for my introduction—for I presume you are Mrs. Butler—I will not present it to you till you are so good as to admit me into your house without it."

"To pe sure, matam," said Knockdunder, "ye canna doubt Mrs. Putler will do that.—Mrs. Putler, this is Lady—Lady—these tamned Southern names rin out o' my head like a stane trowling down hill—put I believe she is a Scottish woman porn—the mair our credit—and I presume her leddyship is of the house of—"

"The Duke of Argyle knows my family very well, sir," said the lady, in a tone which seemed designed to silence Duncan, or, at any rate, which had that effect completely.

There was something about the whole of this stranger's address, and tone, and manner, which acted upon Jeanie's feelings like the illusions of a dream, that tease us with a puzzling approach to reality. Something there was of her sister in the gait and manner of the stranger, as well as in the sound of her voice, and something also, when, lifting her veil, she showed features, to which, changed as they were in expression and complexion, she could not but attach many remembrances.

The stranger was turned of thirty certainly; but so well were her personal charms assisted by the power of dress, and arrangement of ornament, that she might well have passed for one-and-twenty. And her behaviour was so steady and so composed, that, as often as Mrs. Butler perceived anew some point of resemblance to her unfortunate sister, so often the sustained self-command and absolute composure of the stranger destroyed the ideas which began to arise in her imagination. She led the way silently towards the Manse, lost in a confusion of reflections, and trusting the letter with which she was to be there intrusted, would afford her satisfactory explanation of what was a most puzzling and embarrassing scene.

The lady maintained in the meanwhile the manners of a stranger of rank. She admired the various points of view like one who has studied nature, and the best representations of art. At length she took notice of the children.

"These are two fine young mountaineers—Yours, madam, I presume?"

Jeanie replied in the affirmative. The stranger sighed, and sighed once more as they were presented to her by name.

"Come here, Femie," said Mrs. Butler, "and hold your head up."

"What is your daughter's name, madam?" said the lady.

"Euphemia, madam," answered Mrs. Butler.

"I thought the ordinary Scottish contraction of the name had been Effie," replied the stranger, in a tone which went to Jeanie's heart; for in that single word there was more of her sister—more of *lang syne* ideas—than in all the reminiscences which her own heart had anticipated, or the features and manner of the stranger had suggested.

When they reached the Manse, the lady gave Mrs. Butler the letter which she had taken out of the hands of Knockdunder; and as she gave it she pressed her hand, adding aloud, "Perhaps, madam, you will have the goodness to get me a little milk!"

"And me a drap of the grey-peard, if you please, Mrs. Putler," added Duncan.

Mrs. Butler withdrew; but, deputed to May Hettly and to David the supply of the strangers' wants, she hastened into her own room to read the letter. The envelope was addressed in the Duke of Argyle's hand, and requested Mrs. Butler's attentions and civility to a lady of rank, a particular friend of his late brother, Lady Staunton of Willingham, who, being recommended to drink goats' whey by the physicians, was to honour the Lodge at Roseneath with her residence, while her husband made a short tour in Scotland. But within the same cover, which had been given to Lady Staunton unsealed, was a letter from that lady, intended to prepare her sister for meeting her, and which, but for the Captain's negligence, she ought to have received on the preceding evening. It stated that the news in Jeanie's last letter had been so interesting to her husband, that he was determined to inquire farther into the confession made at Carlisle, and the fate of that poor innocent, and that, as he had been in some degree successful, she had, by the most earnest entreaties, extorted rather than obtained his permission, under promise of observing the most strict incognito, to spend a week or two with her sister, or in her neighbourhood, while he was prosecuting researches, to which (though it appeared to her very vainly) he seemed to attach some hopes of success.

There was a postscript, desiring that Jeanie would trust to Lady S. the management of their intercourse, and be content with assenting to what she should propose. After reading and again reading the letter, Mrs. Butler hurried down stairs, divided betwixt the fear of betraying her secret, and the desire to throw herself upon her sister's neck. Effie received her with a glance at once affectionate and cautionary, and immediately proceeded to speak.

"I have been telling Mr. ———, Captain ———, this gentleman, Mrs. Butler, that if you could accommodate me with an apartment in your house, and a place for Ellis to sleep, and for the two men, it would suit me better than the Lodge, which his Grace has so kindly placed at my disposal. I am advised I should reside as near where the goats feed as possible."

"I have been assuring my leddy, Mrs. Putler," said Duncan, "that though it could not discommode you to receive any of his Grace's visitors or mine, yet she had mooch petter stay at the Lodge; and for the gaits, the creatures can be fetched there, in respect it is mair fitting they suld wait upon her Leddyskip, than she upon the like o' them."

"By no means derange the goats for me," said Lady Staunton; "I am certain the milk must be much better here." And this she said with languid negligence, as one whose slightest intimation of humour is to bear down all argument.

Mrs. Butler hastened to intimate, that her house, such as it was, was heartily at the disposal of Lady Staunton; but the Captain continued to remonstrate..

"The Duke," he said, "had written"

"I will settle all that with his Grace"

"And there were the things had been sent down frae Glasco"

"Anything necessary might be sent over to the Parsonage—She would beg the favour of Mrs. Butler to show her an apartment, and of the Captain to have her trunks, etc., sent over from Roseneath."

So she courtesied off poor Duncan, who departed, saying in his secret soul, "Cot tamn her English impudence!—she takes possession of the minister's house as an it were her ain—and speaks to shentlemens as if they were pounden servants, and per tamned to her!—And there's the deer that was shot too—but we will send it ower to the Manse, whilk will pe put civil, seeing I hae prought worthy Mrs. Putler sic a fliskmahoy."— And with these kind intentions, he went to the shore to give his orders accordingly.

In the meantime, the meeting of the sisters was as affectionate as it was extraordinary, and each evinced her feelings in the way proper to her character. Jeanie was so much overcome by wonder, and even by awe, that her feelings were deep, stunning, and almost overpowering. Effie, on the other hand, wept, laughed, sobbed, screamed, and clapped her hands for joy, all in the space of five minutes, giving way at once, and without reserve, to a natural excessive vivacity of temper, which no one, however, knew better how to restrain under the rules of artificial breeding.

After an hour had passed like a moment in their expressions of mutual affection, Lady Staunton observed the Captain walking with impatient steps below the window. "That tiresome Highland fool has returned upon our hands," she said. "I will pray him to grace us with his absence."

"Hout no! hout no!" said Mrs. Butler, in a tone of entreaty; "ye maunna affront the Captain."

"Affront?" said Lady Staunton; "nobody is ever affronted at what I do or say, my dear. However, I will endure him, since you think it proper."

The Captain was accordingly graciously requested by Lady Staunton to remain during dinner. During this visit his studious and punctilious complaisance towards the lady of rank was happily contrasted by the cavalier air of civil familiarity in which he indulged towards the minister's wife.

"I have not been able to persuade Mrs. Butler," said Lady Staunton to the Captain, during the interval when Jeanie had left the parlour, "to let me talk of making any recompense for storming her house, and garrisoning it in the way I have done."

"Doubtless, matam," said the Captain, "it wad ill become Mrs. Putler, wha is a very decent pody, to make any such sharge to a lady who comes from my house, or his Grace's, which is the same thing.—And speaking of garrisons, in the year forty-five, I was poot with a garrison of twenty of my lads in the house of Inver-Garry, whilk had near been unhappily, for—"

"I beg your pardon, sir—But I wish I could think of some way of indemnifying this good lady."

"O, no need of indemnifying at all—no trouble for her, nothing at all— So, peing in the house of Inver-Garry, and the people about it being uncanny, I doubted the warst, and—"

"Do you happen to know, sir," said Lady Staunton, "if any of these two lads, these young Butlers, I mean, show any turn for the army?"

"Could not say, indeed, my leddy," replied Knockdunder—"So, I knowing the people to pe unchancy, and not to lippen to, and hearing a pibroch in the wood, I pegan to pid my lads look to their flints, and then—"

"For," said Lady Staunton, with the most ruthless disregard to the narrative which she mangled by these interruptions, "if that should be the case, it should cost Sir George but the asking a pair of colours for one of them at the War-Office, since we have always supported Government, and never had occasion to trouble ministers."

"And if you please, my leddy," said Duncan, who began to find some savour in this proposal, "as I hae a braw weel-grown lad of a nevoy, ca'd Duncan MacGilligan, that is as pig as paith the Putler pairns putten thegither, Sir George could ask a pair for him at the same time, and it wad pe put ae asking for a'."

Lady Staunton only answered this hint with a well-bred stare, which gave no sort of encouragement.

Jeanie, who now returned, was lost in amazement at the wonderful difference betwixt the helpless and despairing girl, whom she had seen stretched on a flock-bed in a dungeon, expecting a violent and disgraceful death, and last as a forlorn exile upon the midnight beach, with the elegant, well-bred, beautiful woman before her. The features, now that her sister's veil was laid aside, did not appear so extremely different, as the whole manner, expression, look, and bearing. In outside show, Lady Staunton seemed completely a creature too soft and fair for sorrow to have touched; so much accustomed to have all her whims complied with by those around her, that she seemed to expect she should even be saved the trouble of forming them; and so totally unacquainted with contradiction, that she did not even use the tone of self-will, since to breathe a wish was to have it fulfilled. She made no ceremony of ridding herself of Duncan as soon as the evening approached; but complimented him out of the house under pretext of fatigue, with the utmost *nonchalance*.

When they were alone, her sister could not help expressing her wonder at the self-possession with which Lady Staunton sustained her part.

"I daresay you are surprised at it," said Lady Staunton composedly; "for you, my dear Jeanie, have been truth itself from your cradle upwards; but you must remember that I am a liar of fifteen years' standing, and therefore must by this time be used to my character."

In fact, during the feverish tumult of feelings excited during the two or three first days, Mrs. Butler thought her sister's manner was completely contradictory of the desponding tone which pervaded her concidence. She was moved to tears, indeed, by the sight of her father's grave, marked by a modest stone recording his piety and integrity; but lighter impressions and associations had also power over her. She amused herself with visiting the dairy, in which she had so long been assistant, and was so near discovering herself to May Hettly, by betraying her acquaintance with the celebrated receipt for Dunlop cheese, that she compared herself to Bedreddin Hassan, whom the vizier, his father-in-law, discovered by his superlative skill in composing cream-tarts with pepper in them. But when the novelty of such avocations ceased to amuse her, she showed to her sister but too plainly, that the gaudy colouring with which she veiled her unhappiness afforded as little real comfort, as the gay uniform of the soldier when it is drawn over his mortal wound. There were moods and moments, in which her despondence seemed to exceed even that which she herself had described in her letters, and which too well convinced Mrs. Butler how little her sister's lot, which in appearance was so brilliant, was in reality to be envied.

There was one source, however, from which Lady Staunton derived a pure degree of pleasure. Gifted in every particular with a higher degree of imagination than that of her sister, she was an admirer of the beauties of nature, a taste which compensates many evils to those who happen to enjoy it. Here her character of a fine lady stopped short, where she ought to have

Scream'd at ilk cleugh, and screech'd at ilka how,

As loud as she had seen the worrie-cow.

On the contrary, with the two boys for her guides, she undertook long and fatiguing walks among the neighbouring mountains, to visit glens, lakes, waterfalls, or whatever scenes of natural wonder or beauty lay concealed among their recesses. It is Wordsworth, I think, who, talking of an old man under difficulties, remarks, with a singular attention to nature,

Whether it was care that spurr'd him,

God only knows; but to the very last,

He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale.

In the same manner, languid, listless, and unhappy, within doors, at times even indicating something which approached near to contempt of the homely accommodations of her sister's house, although she instantly endeavoured, by a thousand kindnesses, to atone for such ebullitions of spleen, Lady Staunton appeared to feel interest and energy while in the open air, and traversing the mountain landscapes in society with the two boys, whose ears she delighted with stories of what she had seen in other countries, and what she had to show them at Willingham Manor. And they, on the other hand, exerted themselves in doing the honours of Dumbartonshire to the lady who seemed so kind, insomuch that there was scarce a glen in the neighbouring hills to which they did not introduce her.

Upon one of these excursions, while Reuben was otherwise employed, David alone acted as Lady Staunton's guide, and promised to show her a cascade in the hills, grander and higher than any they had yet visited. It was a walk of five long miles, and over rough ground, varied, however, and cheered, by mountain views, and peeps now of the firth and its islands, now of distant lakes, now of rocks and precipices. The scene itself, too, when they reached it, amply rewarded the labour of the walk. A single shoot carried a considerable stream over the face of a black rock, which contrasted strongly in colour with the white foam of the cascade, and, at the depth of about twenty feet, another rock intercepted the view of the bottom of the fall. The water, wheeling out far beneath, swept round the crag, which thus bounded their view, and tumbled down the rocky glen in a torrent of foam. Those who love nature always desire to penetrate into its utmost recesses, and Lady Staunton asked David whether there was not some mode of gaining a view of the abyss at the foot of the fall. He said that he knew a station on a shelf on the farther side of the intercepting rock, from which the whole waterfall was visible, but that the road to it was steep and slippery and dangerous. Bent, however, on gratifying her curiosity, she desired him to lead the way; and accordingly he did so over crag and stone, anxiously pointing out to her the resting-places where she ought to step, for their mode of advancing soon ceased to be walking, and became scrambling.

In this manner, clinging like sea-birds to the face of the rock, they were enabled at length to turn round it, and came full in front of the fall, which here had a most tremendous aspect, boiling, roaring, and thundering with unceasing din, into a black cauldron, a hundred feet at least below them, which resembled the crater of a volcano. The noise, the dashing of the waters, which gave an unsteady appearance to all around them, the trembling even of the huge crag on which they stood, the precariousness of their footing, for there was scarce room for them to stand on the shelf of rock which they had thus attained, had so powerful an effect on the senses and imagination of Lady Staunton, that she called out to David she was falling, and would in fact have dropped from the crag had he not caught hold of her. The boy was bold and stout of his age—still he was but fourteen years old, and as his assistance gave no confidence to Lady Staunton, she felt her situation become really perilous. The chance was, that, in the appalling novelty of the circumstances, he might have caught the infection of her panic, in which case it is likely that both must have perished. She now screamed with terror, though without hope of calling any one to her assistance. To her amazement, the scream was answered by a whistle from above, of a tone so clear and shrill, that it was heard even amid the noise of the waterfall.

In this moment of terror and perplexity, a human face, black, and having grizzled hair hanging down over the forehead and cheeks, and mixing with mustaches and a beard of the same colour, and as much matted and tangled, looked down on them from a broken part of the rock above.

"It is the Enemy!" said the boy, who had very nearly become incapable of supporting Lady Staunton.

"No, no," she exclaimed, inaccessible to supernatural terrors, and restored to the presence of mind of which she had been deprived by the danger of her situation, "it is a man—For God's sake, my friend, help us!"

The face glared at them, but made no answer; in a second or two afterwards, another, that of a young lad, appeared beside the first, equally swart and begrimed, but having tangled black hair, descending in elf-locks, which gave an air of wildness and ferocity to the whole expression of the countenance. Lady Staunton repeated her entreaties, clinging to the rock with more energy, as she found that, from the superstitious terror of her guide, he became incapable of supporting her. Her words were probably drowned in the roar of the falling stream, for, though she observed the lips of the young being whom she supplicated move as he spoke in reply, not a word reached her ear.

A moment afterwards it appeared he had not mistaken the nature of her supplication, which, indeed, was easy to be understood from her situation and gestures. The younger apparition disappeared, and immediately after lowered a ladder of twisted osiers, about eight feet in length, and made signs to David to hold it fast while the lady ascended. Despair gives courage, and finding herself in this fearful predicament, Lady Staunton did not hesitate to risk the ascent by the precarious means which this accommodation afforded; and, carefully assisted by the person who had thus providentially come to her aid, she reached the summit in safety. She did not, however, even look around her until she saw her nephew lightly and actively follow her examples although there was now no one to hold the ladder fast. When she saw him safe she looked round, and could not help shuddering at the place and company in which she found herself. They were on a sort of platform of rock, surrounded on every side by precipices, or overhanging cliffs, and which it would have been scarce possible for any research to have discovered, as it did not seem to be commanded by any accessible position. It was partly covered by a huge fragment of stone, which, having fallen from the cliffs above, had been intercepted by others in its descent, and jammed so as to serve for a sloping roof to the farther part of the broad shelf or platform on which they stood. A quantity of withered moss and leaves, strewed beneath this rude and wretched shelter, showed the lairs,—they could not be termed the beds,—of those who dwelt in this eyrie, for it deserved no other name. Of these, two were before Lady Staunton. One, the same who had afforded such timely assistance, stood upright before them, a tall, lathy, young savage; his dress a tattered plaid and philabeg, no shoes, no stockings, no hat or bonnet, the place of the last being supplied by his hair, twisted and matted like the *glibbe* of the ancient wild Irish, and, like theirs, forming a natural thick-set stout enough to bear off the cut of a sword. Yet the eyes of the lad were keen and sparkling; his gesture free and noble, like that of all savages. He took little notice of David Butler, but gazed with wonder on Lady Staunton, as a being different probably in dress, and superior in beauty, to anything he had ever beheld. The old man, whose face they had first seen, remained recumbent in the same posture as when he had first looked down on them, only his face was turned towards them as he lay and looked up with a lazy and listless apathy, which belied the general expression of his dark and rugged features. He seemed a very tall man, but was scarce better clad than the younger. He had on a loose Lowland greatcoat, and ragged tartan trews or pantaloons. All around looked singularly wild and unpropitious. Beneath the brow of the incumbent rock was a charcoal fire, on which there was a still working, with bellows, pincers, hammers, a movable anvil, and other smith's tools; three guns, with two or three sacks and barrels, were disposed against the wall of rock, under shelter of the superincumbent crag; a dirk and two swords, and a Lochaber axe, lay scattered around the fire, of which the red glare cast a ruddy tinge on the precipitous foam and mist of the cascade. The lad, when he had satisfied his curiosity with staring at Lady Staunton, fetched an earthen jar and a horn-cup, into which he poured some spirits, apparently hot from the still, and offered them successively to the lady and to the boy. Both declined, and the young savage quaffed off the draught, which could not amount to less than three ordinary glasses. He then fetched another ladder from the corner of the cavern, if it could be termed so, adjusted it against the transverse rock, which served as a roof, and made signs for the lady to ascend it, while he held it fast below. She did so, and found herself on the top of a broad rock, near the brink of the chasm into which the brook precipitates itself. She could see the crest of the torrent flung loose down the rock, like the mane of a wild horse, but without having any view of the lower platform from which she had ascended.

David was not suffered to mount so easily; the lad, from sport or love of mischief, shook the ladder a good deal as he ascended, and seemed to enjoy the terror of young Butler, so that, when they had both come up, they looked on each other with no friendly eyes. Neither, however, spoke. The young caird, or tinker, or gipsy, with a good deal of attention, assisted Lady Staunton up a very perilous ascent which she had still to encounter, and they were followed by David Butler, until all three stood clear of the ravine on the side of a mountain, whose sides were covered with heather and sheets of loose shingle. So narrow was the chasm out of which they ascended, that, unless when they were on the very verge, the eye passed to the other side without perceiving the existence of a rent so fearful, and nothing was seen of the cataract, though its deep hoarse voice was still heard.

Lady Staunton, freed from the danger of rock and river, had now a new subject of anxiety. Her two guides confronted each other with angry countenances; for David, though younger by two years at least, and much shorter, was a stout, well-set, and very bold boy.

"You are the black-coat's son of Knocktarlittie," said the young caird; "if you come here again, I'll pitch you down the linn like a foot-ball."

"Ay, lad, ye are very short to be sae lang," retorted young Butler undauntedly, and measuring his opponent's height with an undismayed eye; "I am thinking you are a gillie of Black Donacha; if you come down the glen, we'll shoot you like a wild buck."

"You may tell your father," said the lad, "that the leaf on the timber is the last he shall see—we will hae amends for the mischief he has done to us."

"I hope he will live to see mony summers, and do ye muckle mair," answered David.

More might have passed, but Lady Staunton stepped between them with her purse in her hand, and taking out a guinea, of which it contained several, visible through the net-work, as well as some silver in the opposite end, offered it to the caird.

"The white siller, lady—the white siller," said the young savage, to whom the value of gold was probably unknown. Lady Staunton poured what silver she had into his hand, and the juvenile savage snatched it greedily, and made a sort of half inclination of acknowledgment and adieu.

"Let us make haste now, Lady Staunton," said David, "for there will be little peace with them since they hae seen your purse."

They hurried on as fast as they could; but they had not descended the hill a hundred yards or two before they heard a halloo behind them, and looking back, saw both the old man and the young one pursuing them with great speed, the former with a gun on his shoulder. Very fortunately, at this moment a sportsman, a gamekeeper of the Duke, who was engaged in stalking deer, appeared on the face of the hill. The bandits stopped on seeing him, and Lady Staunton hastened to put herself under his protection. He readily gave them his escort home, and it required his athletic form and loaded rifle to restore to the lady her usual confidence and courage.

Donald listened with much gravity to the account of their adventure; and answered with great composure to David's repeated inquiries, whether he could have suspected that the cairds had been lurking there,—"*Inteed, Master Tavie, I might hae had some guess that they were there, or thereabout, though maybe I had nane. But I am aften on the hill; and they are like wasps—they stang only them that fashes them; sae, for my part, I make a point not to see them, unless I were ordered out on the preceese errand by MacCallummore or Knockdunder, whilk is a clean different case.*"

They reached the Manse late; and Lady Staunton, who had suffered much both from fright and fatigue, never again permitted her love of the picturesque to carry her so far among the mountains without a stronger escort than David, though she acknowledged he had won the stand of colours by the intrepidity he had displayed, so soon as assured he had to do with an earthly antagonist. "*I couldna maybe hae made muckle o' a bargain wi' yon lang callant,*" said David, when thus complimented on his valour; "*but when ye deal wi' thae folk, it's tyne heart tyne a'.*"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

*What see you there,
That hath so cowarded and chased your blood
Out of appearance?
Henry the Fifth.*

We are under the necessity of returning to Edinburgh, where the General Assembly was now sitting. It is well known, that some Scottish nobleman is usually deputed as High Commissioner, to represent the person of the King in this convocation; that he has allowances for the purpose of maintaining a certain outward show and solemnity, and supporting the hospitality of the representative of Majesty. Whoever are distinguished by rank, or office, in or near the capital, usually attend the morning levees of the Lord Commissioner, and walk with him in procession to the place where the Assembly meets.

The nobleman who held this office chanced to be particularly connected with Sir George Staunton, and it was in his train that he ventured to tread the High Street of Edinburgh for the first time since the fatal night of Porteous's execution. Walking at the right hand of the representative of Sovereignty, covered with lace and embroidery, and with all the paraphernalia of wealth and rank, the handsome though wasted figure of the English stranger attracted all eyes. Who could have recognised in a form so aristocratic the plebeian convict, that, disguised in the rags of Madge Wildfire, had led the formidable rioters to their destined revenge? There was no possibility that this could happen, even if any of his ancient acquaintances, a race of men whose lives are so brief, had happened to survive the span commonly allotted to evil-doers. Besides, the whole affair had long fallen asleep, with the angry passions in which it originated. Nothing is more certain than that persons known to have had a share in that formidable riot, and to have fled from Scotland on that account, had made money abroad, returned to enjoy it in their native country, and lived and died undisturbed by the law.*

* See Arnot's *Criminal Trials*, 4to ed. p. 235.

The forbearance of the magistrate was, in these instances, wise, certainly, and just; for what good impression could be made on the public mind by punishment, when the memory of the offence was obliterated, and all that was remembered was the recent inoffensive, or perhaps exemplary conduct of the offender?

Sir George Staunton might, therefore, tread the scene of his former audacious exploits, free from the apprehension of the law, or even of discovery or suspicion. But with what feelings his heart that day throbbed, must be left to those of the reader to imagine. It was an object of no common interest which had brought him to encounter so many painful remembrances.

In consequence of Jeanie's letter to Lady Staunton, transmitting the confession, he had visited the town of Carlisle, and had found Archdeacon Fleming still alive, by whom that confession had been received. This reverend gentleman, whose character stood deservedly very high, he so far admitted into his confidence, as to own himself the father of the unfortunate infant which had been spirited away by Madge Wildfire, representing the intrigue as a matter of juvenile extravagance on his own part, for which he was now anxious to atone, by tracing, if possible, what had become of the child. After some recollection of the circumstances, the clergyman was able to call to memory, that the unhappy woman had written a letter to George Staunton, Esq., younger, Rectory, Willingham, by Grantham; that he had forwarded it to the address accordingly, and that it had been returned, with a note from the Reverend Mr. Staunton, Rector of Willingham, saying, he knew no such person as him to whom the letter was addressed. As this had happened just at the time when George had, for the last time, absconded from his father's house to carry off Effie, he was at no loss to account for the cause of the resentment, under the influence of which his father had disowned him. This was another instance in which his ungovernable temper had occasioned his misfortune; had he remained at Willingham but a few days longer, he would have received Margaret Murdockson's letter, in which were exactly described the person and haunts of the woman, Annaple Bailzou, to whom she had parted with the infant. It appeared that Meg Murdockson had been induced to make this confession, less from any feelings of contrition, than from the desire of obtaining, through George Staunton or his father's means, protection and support for her daughter Madge. Her letter to George Staunton said, "*That while the writer lived, her daughter would have needed nought from any body, and that she would never have meddled in these affairs, except to pay back the ill that George had done to her and hers. But she was to die, and her daughter would be destitute, and without reason to guide her. She had lived in the world long enough to know that people did nothing for nothing;—so she had told George Staunton all he could wish to know about his wean, in hopes he would not see the demented young creature he had ruined perish for want. As for her motives for not telling them sooner, she had a long account to reckon for in the next world, and she would reckon for that too.*"

The clergyman said that Meg had died in the same desperate state of mind, occasionally expressing some regret about the child which was lost, but oftener sorrow that the mother had not been hanged—her mind at once a chaos of guilt, rage, and apprehension for her daughter's future safety; that instinctive feeling of parental anxiety which she had in common with the she-wolf and lioness, being the last shade of kindly affection that occupied a breast equally savage.

The melancholy catastrophe of Madge Wildfire was occasioned by her taking the confusion of her mother's execution, as affording an opportunity of leaving the workhouse to which the clergyman had sent her, and presenting herself to the mob in their fury, to perish in the way we have already seen. When Dr. Fleming found the convict's letter was returned from Lincolnshire, he wrote to a friend in Edinburgh, to inquire into the fate of the unfortunate girl whose child had been stolen, and was informed by his correspondent, that she had been pardoned, and that, with all her family, she had retired to some distant part of Scotland, or left

the kingdom entirely. And here the matter rested, until, at Sir George Staunton's application, the clergyman looked out, and produced Margaret Murdockson's returned letter, and the other memoranda which he had kept concerning the affair.

Whatever might be Sir George Staunton's feelings in ripping up this miserable history, and listening to the tragical fate of the unhappy girl whom he had ruined, he had so much of his ancient wilfulness of disposition left, as to shut his eyes on everything, save the prospect which seemed to open itself of recovering his son. It was true, it would be difficult to produce him, without telling much more of the history of his birth, and the misfortunes of his parents, than it was prudent to make known. But let him once be found, and, being found, let him but prove worthy of his father's protection, and many ways might be fallen upon to avoid such risk. Sir George Staunton was at liberty to adopt him as his heir, if he pleased, without communicating the secret of his birth; or an Act of Parliament might be obtained, declaring him legitimate, and allowing him the name and arms of his father. He was indeed already a legitimate child according to the law of Scotland, by the subsequent marriage of his parents. Wilful in everything, Sir George's sole desire now was to see this son, even should his recovery bring with it a new series of misfortunes, as dreadful as those which followed on his being lost.

But where was the youth who might eventually be called to the honours and estates of this ancient family? On what heath was he wandering, and shrouded by what mean disguise? Did he gain his precarious bread by some petty trade, by menial toil, by violence, or by theft? These were questions on which Sir George's anxious investigations could obtain no light. Many remembered that Annaple Bailzou wandered through the country as a beggar and fortune-teller, or spae-wife—some remembered that she had been seen with an infant in 1737 or 1738,—but for more than ten years she had not travelled that district; and that she had been heard to say she was going to a distant part of Scotland, of which country she was a native. To Scotland, therefore, came Sir George Staunton, having parted with his lady at Glasgow; and his arrival at Edinburgh happening to coincide with the sitting of the General Assembly of the Kirk, his acquaintance with the nobleman who held the office of Lord High Commissioner forced him more into public than suited either his views or inclinations.

At the public table of this nobleman, Sir George Staunton was placed next to a clergyman of respectable appearance, and well-bred, though plain demeanour, whose name he discovered to be Butler. It had been no part of Sir George's plan to take his brother-in-law into his confidence, and he had rejoiced exceedingly in the assurances he received from his wife, that Mrs. Butler, the very soul of integrity and honour, had never suffered the account he had given of himself at Willingham Rectory to transpire, even to her husband. But he was not sorry to have an opportunity to converse with so near a connection without being known to him, and to form a judgment of his character and understanding. He saw much, and heard more, to raise Butler very high in his opinion. He found he was generally respected by those of his own profession, as well as by the laity who had seats in the Assembly. He had made several public appearances in the Assembly, distinguished by good sense, candour, and ability; and he was followed and admired as a sound, and, at the same time, an eloquent preacher.

This was all very satisfactory to Sir George Staunton's pride, which had revolted at the idea of his wife's sister being obscurely married. He now began, on the contrary, to think the connection so much better than he expected, that, if it should be necessary to acknowledge it, in consequence of the recovery of his son, it would sound well enough that Lady Staunton had a sister, who, in the decayed state of the family, had married a Scottish clergyman, high in the opinion of his countrymen, and a leader in the church.

It was with these feelings, that, when the Lord High Commissioner's company broke up, Sir George Staunton, under pretence of prolonging some inquiries concerning the constitution of the Church of Scotland, requested Butler to go home to his lodgings in the Lawnmarket, and drink a cup of coffee. Butler agreed to wait upon him, providing Sir George would permit him, in passing, to call at a friend's house where he resided, and make his apology for not coming to partake her tea. They proceeded up the High Street, entered the Krames, and passed the begging-box, placed to remind those at liberty of the distresses of the poor prisoners. Sir George paused there one instant, and next day a L20 note was found in that receptacle for public charity.

When he came up to Butler again, he found him with his eyes fixed on the entrance of the Tolbooth, and apparently in deep thought.

"That seems a very strong door," said Sir George, by way of saying something.

"It is so, sir," said Butler, turning off and beginning to walk forward, "but it was my misfortune at one time to see it prove greatly too weak."

At this moment, looking at his companion, he asked him whether he felt himself ill? and Sir George Staunton admitted, that he had been so foolish as to eat ice, which sometimes disagreed with him. With kind officiousness, that would not be gainsaid, and ere he could find out where he was going, Butler hurried Sir George into the friend's house, near to the prison, in which he himself had lived since he came to town, being, indeed, no other than that of our old friend Bartoline Saddletree, in which Lady Staunton had served a short noviciate as a shop-maid. This recollection rushed on her husband's mind, and the blush of shame which it excited overpowered the sensation of fear which had produced his former paleness. Good Mrs. Saddletree, however, bustled about to receive the rich English baronet as the friend of Mr. Butler, and requested an elderly female in a black gown to sit still, in a way which seemed to imply a wish, that she would clear the way for her betters. In the meanwhile, understanding the state of the case, she ran to get some cordial waters, sovereign, of course, in all cases of faintishness whatsoever. During her absence, her visitor, the female in black, made some progress out of the room, and might have left it altogether without particular observation, had she not stumbled at the threshold, so near Sir George Staunton, that he, in point of civility, raised her and assisted her to the door.

"Mrs. Porteous is turned very doited now, puir body," said Mrs. Saddletree, as she returned with her bottle in her hand—"She is no sae auld, but she got a sair back-cast wi' the slaughter o' her husband—Ye had some trouble about that job, Mr. Butler.—I think, sir," to Sir George, "ye had better drink out the haill glass, for to my een ye look waur than when ye came in."

And, indeed, he grew as pale as a corpse, on recollecting who it was that his arm had so lately supported—the widow whom he had so large a share in making such.

"It is a prescribed job that case of Porteous now," said old Saddletree, who was confined to his chair by the gout—"clean prescribed and out of date."

"I am not clear of that, neighbour," said Plumdamas, "for I have heard them say twenty years should rin, and this is but the fifty-ane— Porteous's mob was in thretty-seven."

"Ye'll no teach me law, I think, neighbour—me that has four gaun pleas, and might hae had fourteen, an it hadna been the gudewife? I tell ye, if the foremost of the Porteous mob were standing there where that gentleman stands, the King's Advocate wadna meddle wi' him—it fa's under the negative prescription."

"Haud your din, carles," said Mrs. Saddletree, "and let the gentleman sit down and get a dish of comfortable tea."

But Sir George had had quite enough of their conversation; and Butler, at his request, made an apology to Mrs. Saddletree, and accompanied him to his lodgings. Here they found another guest waiting Sir George Staunton's return. This was no other than our reader's old acquaintance, Ratcliffe.

This man had exercised the office of turnkey with so much vigilance, acuteness, and fidelity, that he gradually rose to be governor, or captain of the Tolbooth. And it is yet to be remembered in tradition, that young men, who rather sought amusing than select society in their merry-meetings, used sometimes to request Ratcliffe's company, in order that he might regale them with legends of his extraordinary feats in the way of robbery and escape.*

* There seems an anachronism in the history of this person. Ratcliffe, among other escapes from justice, was released by the Porteous mob when under sentence of death; and he was again under the same predicament, when the Highlanders made a similar jail-delivery in 1745. He was too sincere a whig to embrace liberation at the hands of the Jacobites, and in reward was made one of the keepers of the Tolbooth. So at least runs constant tradition.

But he lived and died without resuming his original vocation, otherwise than in his narratives over a bottle.

Under these circumstances, he had been recommended to Sir George Staunton by a man of the law in Edinburgh, as a person likely to answer any questions he might have to ask about Annaple Bailzou, who, according to the colour which Sir George Staunton gave to his cause of inquiry, was supposed to have stolen a child in the west of England, belonging to a family in which he was interested. The gentleman had not mentioned his name, but only his official title; so that Sir George Staunton, when told that the captain of the Tolbooth was waiting for him in his parlour, had no idea of meeting his former acquaintance, Jem Ratcliffe.

This, therefore, was another new and most unpleasant surprise, for he had no difficulty in recollecting this man's remarkable features. The change, however, from George Robertson to Sir George Staunton, baffled even the penetration of Ratcliffe, and he bowed very low to the baronet and his guest, hoping Mr. Butler would excuse his recollecting that he was an old acquaintance.

"And once rendered my wife a piece of great service," said Mr. Butler, "for which she sent you a token of grateful acknowledgment, which I hope came safe and was welcome."

"Deil a doubt on't," said Ratcliffe, with a knowing nod; "but ye are muckle changed for the better since I saw ye, Maister Butler."

"So much so, that I wonder you knew me."

"Aha, then!—Deil a face I see I ever forget," said Ratcliffe while Sir George Staunton, tied to the stake, and incapable of escaping, internally cursed the accuracy of his memory. "And yet, sometimes," continued Ratcliffe, "the sharpest hand will be ta'en in. There is a face in this very room, if I might presume to be sae bauld, that, if I didna ken the honourable person it belongs to, I might think it had some cut of an auld acquaintance."

"I should not be much flattered," answered the Baronet, sternly, and roused by the risk in which he saw himself placed, "if it is to me you mean to apply that compliment."

"By no manner of means, sir," said Ratcliffe, bowing very low; "I am come to receive your honour's commands, and no to trouble your honour wi' my poor observations."

"Well, sir," said Sir George, "I am told you understand police matters—So do I.—To convince you of which, here are ten guineas of retaining fee—I make them fifty when you can find me certain notice of a person, living or dead, whom you will find described in that paper. I shall leave town presently—you may send your written answer to me to the care of Mr. ——" (naming his highly respectable agent), "or of his Grace the Lord High Commissioner." Ratcliffe bowed and withdrew.

"I have angered the proud peat now," he said to himself, "by finding out a likeness; but if George Robertson's father had lived within a mile of his mother, d—n me if I should not know what to think, for as high as he carries his head."

When he was left alone with Butler, Sir George Staunton ordered tea and coffee, which were brought by his valet, and then, after considering with himself for a minute, asked his guest whether he had lately heard from his wife and family. Butler, with some surprise at the question, replied, "that he had received no letter for some time; his wife was a poor penwoman."

"Then," said Sir George Staunton, "I am the first to inform you there has been an invasion of your quiet premises since you left home. My wife, whom the Duke of Argyle had the goodness to permit to use Roseneath Lodge, while she was spending some weeks in your country, has sallied across and taken up her quarters in the Manse, as she says, to be nearer the goats, whose milk she is using; but, I believe, in reality, because she prefers Mrs. Butler's company to that of the respectable gentleman who acts as seneschal on the Duke's domains."

Mr. Butler said, "He had often heard the late Duke and the present speak with high respect of Lady Staunton, and was happy if his house could accommodate any friend of theirs—it would be but a very slight acknowledgment of the many favours he owed them."

"That does not make Lady Staunton and myself the less obliged to your hospitality, sir," said Sir George. "May I inquire if you think of returning home soon?"

"In the course of two days," Mr. Butler answered, "his duty in the Assembly would be ended; and the other matters he had in town being all finished, he was desirous of returning to Dumbartonshire as soon as he could; but he was under the necessity of transporting a considerable sum in bills and money with him, and therefore wished to travel in company with one or two of his brethren of the clergy."

"My escort will be more safe," said Sir George Staunton, "and I think of setting off to-morrow or next day. If you will give me the pleasure of your company, I will undertake to deliver you and your charge safe at the Manse, provided you will admit me along with you."

Mr. Butler gratefully accepted of this proposal; the appointment was made accordingly, and, by despatches with one of Sir George's servants, who was sent forward for the purpose, the inhabitants of the manse of Knocktarlitie were made acquainted with the intended journey; and the news rung through the whole vicinity, "that the minister was coming back wi' a braw English gentleman and a' the siller that was to pay for the estate of Craigsture."

This sudden resolution of going to Knocktarlitie had been adopted by Sir George Staunton in consequence of the incidents of the evening. In spite of his present consequence, he felt he had presumed too far in venturing so near the scene of his former audacious acts of violence, and he knew too well, from past experience, the acuteness of a man like Ratcliffe, again to encounter him. The next two days he kept his lodgings, under pretence of indisposition, and took leave by writing of his noble friend the High Commissioner, alleging the opportunity of Mr. Butler's company as a reason for leaving Edinburgh sooner than he had proposed. He had a long conference with his agent on the subject of Annaple Bailzou; and the professional gentleman, who was the agent also of the Argyle family, had directions to collect all the information which Ratcliffe or others might be able to obtain concerning the fate of that woman and the unfortunate child, and so soon as anything transpired which had the least appearance of being important, that he should send an express with it instantly to Knocktarlitie. These instructions were backed with a deposit of money, and a request that no expense might be spared; so that Sir George Staunton had little reason to apprehend negligence on the part of the persons intrusted with the commission.

The journey, which the brothers made in company, was attended with more pleasure, even to Sir George Staunton, than he had ventured to expect. His heart lightened in spite of himself when they lost sight of Edinburgh; and the easy, sensible conversation of Butler was well calculated to withdraw his thoughts from painful reflections. He even began to think whether there could be much difficulty in removing his wife's connections to the rectory of Willingham; it was only on his part procuring some still better preferment for the present incumbent, and on Butler's, that he should take orders according to the English Church, to which he could not conceive a possibility of his making objection, and then he had them residing under his wing. No doubt there was pain in seeing Mrs. Butler, acquainted, as he knew her to be, with the full truth of his evil history; but then her silence, though he had no reason to complain of her indiscretion hitherto, was still more absolutely ensured. It would keep his lady, also, both in good temper and in more subjection; for she was sometimes troublesome to him by insisting on remaining in town when he desired to retire to the country, alleging the total want of society at Willingham. "Madam, your sister is there," would, he thought, be a sufficient answer to this ready argument.

He sounded Butler on this subject, asking what he would think of an English living of twelve hundred pounds yearly, with the burden of affording his company now and then to a neighbour, whose health was not strong or his spirits equal. "He might meet," he said, "occasionally, a very learned and accomplished gentleman, who was in orders as a Catholic priest, but he hoped that would be no insurmountable objection to a man of his liberality of sentiment. What," he said, "would Mr. Butler think of as an answer, if the offer should be made to him?"

"Simply that I could not accept of it," said Mr. Butler. "I have no mind to enter into the various debates between the churches; but I was brought up in mine own, have received her ordination, am satisfied of the truth of her doctrines, and will die under the banner I have enlisted to."

"What may be the value of your preferment?" said Sir George Staunton, "unless I am asking an indiscreet question."

"Probably one hundred a-year, one year with another, besides my glebe and pasture-ground."

"And you scruple to exchange that for twelve hundred a-year, without alleging any damning difference of doctrine betwixt the two churches of England and Scotland?"

"On that, sir, I have reserved my judgment; there may be much good, and there are certainly saving means in both; but every man must act according to his own lights. I hope I have done, and am in the course of doing, my Master's work in this Highland parish; and it would ill become me, for the sake of lucre, to leave my sheep in the wilderness. But, even in the temporal view which you have taken of the matter, Sir George, this hundred pounds a-year of stipend hath fed and clothed us, and left us nothing to wish for; my father-in-law's succession, and other circumstances, have added a small estate of about twice as much more, and how we are to dispose of it I do not know—So I leave it to you, sir, to think if I were wise, not having the wish or opportunity of spending three hundred a-year, to covet the possession of four times that sum."

"This is philosophy," said Sir George; "I have heard of it, but I never saw it before."

"It is common sense," replied Butler, "which accords with philosophy and religion more frequently than pedants or zealots are apt to admit."

Sir George turned the subject, and did not again resume it. Although they travelled in Sir George's chariot, he seemed so much fatigued with the motion, that it was necessary for him to remain for a day at a small town called Mid-Calder, which was their first stage from Edinburgh. Glasgow occupied another day, so slow were their motions.

They travelled on to Dumbarton, where they had resolved to leave the equipage and to hire a boat to take them to the shores near the manse, as the Gare-Loch lay betwixt them and that point, besides the impossibility of travelling in that district with wheel-carriages. Sir George's valet, a man of trust, accompanied them, as also a footman; the grooms were left with the carriage. Just as this arrangement was completed, which was about four o'clock in the afternoon, an express arrived from Sir George's agent in Edinburgh, with a packet, which he opened and read with great attention, appearing much interested and agitated by the contents. The packet had been despatched very soon after their leaving Edinburgh, but the messenger had missed the travellers by passing through Mid-Calder in the night, and overshot his errand by getting to Roseneath before them. He was now on his return, after having waited more than four-and-twenty hours. Sir George Staunton instantly wrote back an answer, and rewarding the messenger liberally, desired him not to sleep till he placed it in his agent's hands.

At length they embarked in the boat, which had waited for them some time. During their voyage, which was slow, for they were obliged to row the whole way, and often against the tide, Sir George Staunton's inquiries ran chiefly on the subject of the Highland banditti who had infested that country since the year 1745. Butler informed him that many of them were not native Highlanders, but gipsies, tinkers, and other men of desperate fortunes, who had taken advantage of the confusion introduced by the civil war, the general discontent of the mountaineers, and the unsettled state of police, to practise their plundering trade with more audacity. Sir George next inquired into their lives, their habits, whether the violences which they committed were not sometimes atoned for by acts of generosity, and whether they did not possess the virtues as well as the vices of savage tribes?

Butler answered, that certainly they did sometimes show sparks of generosity, of which even the worst class of malefactors are seldom utterly divested; but that their evil propensities were certain and regular principles of action, while any occasional burst of virtuous feeling was only a transient impulse not to be reckoned upon, and excited probably by some singular and unusual concatenation of circumstances. In discussing these inquiries, which Sir George pursued with an apparent eagerness that rather surprised Butler, the latter chanced to mention the name of Donacha dhu na Dunaigh, with which the reader is already acquainted. Sir George caught the sound up eagerly, and as if it conveyed particular interest to his ear. He made the most minute inquiries concerning the man whom he mentioned, the number of his gang, and even the appearance of those who belonged to it. Upon these points Butler could give little answer. The man had a name among the lower class, but his exploits were considerably exaggerated; he had always one or two fellows with him, but never aspired to the command of above three or four. In short, he knew little about him, and the small acquaintance he had had by no means inclined him to desire more.

"Nevertheless, I should like to see him some of these days."

"That would be a dangerous meeting, Sir George, unless you mean we are to see him receive his deserts from the law, and then it were a melancholy one."

"Use every man according to his deserts, Mr. Butler, and who shall escape whipping? But I am talking riddles to you. I will explain them more fully to you when I have spoken over the subject with Lady Staunton.—Pull away, my lads," he added, addressing himself to the rowers; "the clouds threaten us with a storm."

In fact, the dead and heavy closeness of the air, the huge piles of clouds which assembled in the western horizon, and glowed like a furnace under the influence of the setting sun—that awful stillness in which nature seems to expect the thunder-burst, as a condemned soldier waits for the platoon fire which is to stretch him on the earth, all betokened a speedy storm. Large broad drops fell from time to time, and induced the gentlemen to assume the boat-cloaks; but the rain again ceased, and the oppressive heat, so unusual in Scotland in the end of May, inclined them to throw them aside. "There is something solemn in this delay of the storm," said Sir George; "it seems as if it suspended its peal till it solemnised some important event in the world below."

"Alas!" replied Butler, "what are we that the laws of nature should correspond in their march with our ephemeral deeds or sufferings! The clouds will burst when surcharged with the electric fluid, whether a goat is falling at that instant from the cliffs of Arran, or a hero expiring on the field of battle he has won."

"The mind delights to deem it otherwise," said Sir George Staunton; "and to dwell on the fate of humanity as on that which is the prime central movement of the mighty machine. We love not to think that we shall mix with the ages that have gone before us, as these broad black raindrops mingle with the waste of waters, making a trifling and momentary eddy, and are then lost for ever."

"*For ever!*—we are not—we cannot be lost for ever," said Butler, looking upward; "death is to us change, not consummation; and the commencement of a new existence, corresponding in character to the deeds which we have done in the body."

While they agitated these grave subjects, to which the solemnity of the approaching storm naturally led them, their voyage threatened to be more tedious than they expected, for gusts of wind, which rose and fell with sudden impetuosity, swept the bosom of the firth, and impeded the efforts of the rowers. They had now only to double a small headland, in order to get to the proper landing-place in the mouth of the little river; but in the state of the weather, and the boat being heavy, this was like to be a work of time, and in the meanwhile they must necessarily be exposed to the storm.

"Could we not land on this side of the headland," asked Sir George, "and so gain some shelter?"

Butler knew of no landing-place, at least none affording a convenient or even practicable passage up the rocks which surrounded the shore.

"Think again," said Sir George Staunton; "the storm will soon be violent."

"Hout, ay," said one of the boatmen, "there's the Caird's Cove; but we dinna tell the minister about it, and I am no sure if I can steer the boat to it, the bay is sae fa' o' shoals and sunk rocks."

"Try," said Sir George, "and I will give you half-a-guinea."

The old fellow took the helm, and observed, "That, if they could get in, there was a steep path up from the beach, and half-an-hour's walk from thence to the Manse."

"Are you sure you know the way?" said Butler to the old man.

"I maybe kend it a wee better fifteen years syne, when Dandie Wilson was in the firth wi' his clean-ganging lugger. I mind Dandie had a wild young Englisher wi' him, that they ca'd—"

"If you chatter so much," said Sir George Staunton, "you will have the boat on the Grindstone—bring that white rock in a line with the steeple."

"By G—," said the veteran, staring, "I think your honour kens the bay as weel as me.—Your honour's nose has been on the Grindstone ere now, I'm thinking."

As they spoke thus, they approached the little cove, which, concealed behind crags, and defended on every point by shallows and sunken rocks, could scarce be discovered or approached, except by those intimate with the navigation. An old shattered boat was already drawn up on the beach within the cove, close beneath the trees, and with precautions for concealment.

Upon observing this vessel, Butler remarked to his companion, "It is impossible for you to conceive, Sir George, the difficulty I have had with my poor people, in teaching them the guilt and the danger of this contraband trade—yet they have perpetually before their eyes all its dangerous consequences. I do not know anything that more effectually depraves and ruins their moral and religious principles."

Sir George forced himself to say something in a low voice about the spirit of adventure natural to youth, and that unquestionably many would become wiser as they grew older.

"Too seldom, sir," replied Butler. "If they have been deeply engaged, and especially if they, have mingled in the scenes of violence and blood to which their occupation naturally leads, I have observed, that, sooner or later, they come to an evil end. Experience, as well as Scripture, teaches us, Sir George, that mischief shall hunt the violent man, and that the bloodthirsty man shall not live half his days—But take my arm to help you ashore."

Sir George needed assistance, for he was contrasting in his altered thought the different feelings of mind and frame with which he had formerly frequented the same place. As they landed, a low growl of thunder was heard at a distance.

"That is ominous, Mr. Butler," said Sir George.

"*Intonuit laevum*—it is ominous of good, then," answered Butler, smiling.

The boatmen were ordered to make the best of their way round the headland to the ordinary landing-place; the two gentlemen, followed by their servant, sought their way by a blind and tangled path, through a close copsewood, to the Manse of Knocktarlitie, where their arrival was anxiously expected.

The sisters in vain had expected their husbands' return on the preceding day, which was that appointed by Sir George's letter. The delay of the travellers at Calder had occasioned this breach of appointment. The inhabitants of the Manse began even to doubt whether they would arrive on the present day. Lady Staunton felt this hope of delay as a brief reprieve, for she dreaded the pangs which her husband's pride must undergo at meeting with a sister-in-law, to whom the whole of his unhappy and dishonourable history was too well known. She knew, whatever force or constraint he might put upon his feelings in public, that she herself must be doomed to see them display themselves in full vehemence in secret,—consume his health, destroy his temper, and render him at once an object of dread and compassion. Again and again she cautioned Jeanie to display no tokens of recognition, but to receive him as a perfect stranger,—and again and again Jeanie renewed her promise to comply with her wishes.

Jeanie herself could not fail to bestow an anxious thought on the awkwardness of the approaching meeting; but her conscience was ungalled—and then she was cumbered with many household cares of an unusual nature, which, joined to the anxious wish once more to see Butler, after an absence of unusual length, made her extremely desirous that the travellers should arrive as soon as possible. And—why should I disguise the truth?—ever and anon a thought stole across her mind that her gala dinner had now been postponed for two days; and how few of the dishes, after every art of her simple cuisine had been exerted to dress them, could with any credit or propriety appear again upon the third; and what was she to do with the rest?—Upon this last subject she was saved the trouble of farther deliberation, by the sudden appearance of the Captain at the head of half-a-dozen stout fellows, dressed and armed in the Highland fashion.

"Goot-morrow morning to ye, Leddy Staunton, and I hope I hae the pleasure to see you weel—And goot-morrow to you, goot Mrs. Putler—I do peg you will order some victuals and ale and prandy for the lads, for we hae been out on firth and moor since afore daylight, and a' to no purpose neither—Cot tam!"

So saying, he sate down, pushed back his brigadier wig, and wiped his head with an air of easy importance; totally regardless of the look of well-bred astonishment by which Lady Staunton endeavoured to make him comprehend that he was assuming too great a liberty.

"It is some comfort, when one has had a sair tussel," continued the Captain, addressing Lady Staunton, with an air of gallantry, "that it is in a fair ledly's service, or in the service of a gentleman whilk has a fair ledly, whilk is the same thing, since serving the husband is serving the wife, as Mrs. Putler does very weel know."

"Really, sir," said Lady Staunton, "as you seem to intend this compliment for me, I am at a loss to know what interest Sir George or I can have in your movements this morning."

"O, Cot tam!—this is too cruel, my ledly—as if it was not py special express from his Grace's honourable agent and commissioner at Edinburgh, with a warrant conform, that I was to seek for and apprehend Donacha dhu na Dunaigh, and bring him before myself and Sir George Staunton, that he may have his deserts, that is to say, the gallows, whilk he has doubtless deserved, py peing the means of frightening your ledlyship, as weel as for something of less importance."

"Frightening me!" said her ladyship; "why, I never wrote to Sir George about my alarm at the waterfall."

"Then he must have heard it otherwise; for what else can give him sic an earnest tesire to see this rapsallion, that I maun ripe the haill mosses and muirs in the country for him, as if I were to get something for finding him, when the pest o't might pe a pall through my prains?"

"Can it be really true, that it is on Sir George's account that you have been attempting to apprehend this fellow?"

"Py Cot, it is for no other cause that I know than his honour's pleasure; for the creature might hae gone on in a decent quiet way for me, sae lang as he respectit the Duke's pounds—put reason goot he suld be taen, and hangit to poet, if it may pleasure ony honourable shentleman that is the Duke's friend—Sae I got the express over night, and I caused warn half a score of pretty lads, and was up in the morning before the sun, and I garr'd the lads take their kilts and short coats."

"I wonder you did that, Captain," said Mrs. Butler, "when you know the act of Parliament against wearing the Highland dress."

"Hout, tout, ne'er fash your thumb, Mrs. Putler. The law is put twa-three years auld yet, and is ower young to hae come our length; and pesides, how is the lads to climb the praes wi' thae tamn'd breeches on them? It makes me sick to see them. Put ony how, I thought I kend Donacha's haunt gey and weel, and I was at the place where he had rested yestreen; for I saw the leaves the limmers had lain on, and the ashes of them; by the same token, there was a pit greeshoch purning yet. I am thinking they got some word oat o' the island what was intended—I sought every glen and clench, as if I had been deer-stalking, but teil a want of his coat-tail could I see—Cot tam!"

"He'll be away down the Firth to Cowal," said David; and Reuben, who had been out early that morning a-nutting, observed, "That he had seen a boat making for the Caird's Cove;" a place well known to the boys, though their less adventurous father was ignorant of its existence.

"Py Cot," said Duncan, "then I will stay here no longer than to trink this very horn of prandy and water, for it's very possible they will pe in the wood. Donacha's a clever fellow, and maybe thinks it pest to sit next the chimley when the lum reeks. He thought naebody would look for him sae near hand! I peg your ledlyship will excuse my aprupt departure, as I will return forthwith, and I will either bring you Donacha in life, or else his head, whilk I dare to say will be as satisfactory. And I hope to pass a pleasant evening with your ledlyship; and I hope to have mine revenges on Mr. Putler at backgammon, for the four pennies whilk he won, for he will pe surely at home soon, or else he will have a wet journey, seeing it is apout to pe a scud."

Thus saying, with many scrapes and bows, and apologies for leaving them, which were very readily received, and reiterated assurances of his speedy return (of the sincerity whereof Mrs. Butler entertained no doubt, so long as her best greybeard of brandy was upon duty), Duncan left the Manse, collected his followers, and began to scour the close and entangled wood which lay between the little glen and the Caird's Cove. David, who was a favourite with the Captain, on account of his spirit and courage, took the opportunity of escaping, to attend the investigations of that great man.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

I did send for thee,

That Talbot's name might be in thee revived,

When sapless age and weak, unable limbs,

Should bring thy father to his drooping chair.

But—O malignant and ill-boding stars!—

First part of Henry the Sixth.

Duncan and his party had not proceeded very far in the direction of the Caird's Cove before they heard a shot, which was quickly followed by one or two others. "Some tamn'd villains among the roe-deer," said Duncan; "look sharp out, lads."

The clash of swords was next heard, and Duncan and his myrmidons, hastening to the spot, found Butler and Sir George Staunton's servant in the hands of four ruffians. Sir George himself lay stretched on the ground, with his drawn sword in his hand. Duncan, who was as brave as a lion, instantly fired his pistol at the leader of the band, unsheathed his sword, cried out to his men, *Claymore!* and run his weapon through the body of the fellow whom he had previously wounded, who was no other than Donacha dhu na Dunaigh himself. The other banditti were speedily overpowered, excepting one young lad, who made wonderful resistance for his years, and was at length secured with difficulty.

Butler, so soon as he was liberated from the ruffians, ran to raise Sir George Staunton, but life had wholly left him.

"A creat misfortune," said Duncan; "I think it will pe pest that I go forward to intimate it to the coot lady.—Tavie, my dear, you hae smelled pouthier for the first time this day—take my sword and hack off Donacha's head, whilk will pe coot practice for you against the time you may wish to do the same kindness to a living shentleman—or hould! as your father does not approve, you may leave it alone, as he will pe a greater object of satisfaction to Leddy Staunton to see him entire; and I hope she will do me the credit to pelieve that I can afenge a shentleman's plood fery speedily and well."

Such was the observation of a man too much accustomed to the ancient state of manners in the Highlands, to look upon the issue of such a skirmish as anything worthy of wonder or emotion.

We will not attempt to describe the very contrary effect which the unexpected disaster produced upon Lady Staunton, when the bloody corpse of her husband was brought to the house, where she expected to meet him alive and well. All was forgotten, but that he was the lover of her youth; and whatever were his faults to the world, that he had towards her exhibited only those that arose from the inequality of spirits and temper, incident to a situation of unparalleled difficulty. In the vivacity of her grief she gave way to all the natural irritability of her temper; shriek followed shriek, and swoon succeeded to swoon. It required all Jeanie's watchful affection to prevent her from making known, in these paroxysms of affliction, much which it was of the highest importance that she should keep secret.

At length silence and exhaustion succeeded to frenzy, and Jeanie stole out to take counsel with her husband, and to exhort him to anticipate the Captain's interference, by taking possession, in Lady Staunton's name, of the private papers of her deceased husband. To the utter astonishment of Butler, she now, for the first time, explained the relation betwixt herself and Lady Staunton, which authorised, nay, demanded, that he should prevent any stranger from being unnecessarily made acquainted with her family affairs. It was in such a crisis that Jeanie's active and undaunted habits of virtuous exertion were most conspicuous. While the Captain's attention was still engaged by a prolonged refreshment, and a very tedious examination, in Gaelic and English, of all the prisoners, and every other witness of the fatal transaction, she had the body of her brother-in-law undressed and properly disposed. It then appeared, from the crucifix, the beads, and the shirt of hair which he wore next his person, that his sense of guilt had induced him to receive the dogmata of a religion, which pretends, by the maceration of the body, to expiate the crimes of the soul. In the packet of papers which the express had brought to Sir George Staunton from Edinburgh, and which Butler, authorised by his connection with the deceased, did not scruple to examine, he found new and astonishing intelligence, which gave him reason to thank God he had taken that measure.

Ratcliffe, to whom all sorts of misdeeds and misdoers were familiar, instigated by the promised reward, soon found himself in a condition to trace the infant of these unhappy parents. The woman to whom Meg Murdockson had sold that most unfortunate child, had made it the companion of her wanderings and her beggary, until he was about seven or eight years old, when, as Ratcliffe learned from a companion of hers, then in the Correction House of Edinburgh, she sold him in her turn to Donacha dhu na Dunaigh. This man, to whom no act of mischief was unknown, was occasionally an agent in a horrible trade then carried on betwixt Scotland and America, for supplying the plantations with servants, by means of *kidnapping*, as it was termed, both men and women, but especially children under age. Here Ratcliffe lost sight of the boy, but had no doubt but Donacha Dhu could give an account of him. The gentleman of the law, so often mentioned, despatched therefore an express, with a letter to Sir George Staunton, and another covering a warrant for apprehension of Donacha, with instructions to the Captain of Knockdunder to exert his utmost energy for that purpose.

Possessed of this information, and with a mind agitated by the most gloomy apprehensions, Butler now joined the Captain, and obtained from him with some difficulty a sight of the examinations. These, with a few questions to the elder of the prisoners, soon confirmed the most dreadful of Butler's anticipations. We give the heads of the information, without descending into minute details.

Donacha Dhu had indeed purchased Effie's unhappy child, with the purpose of selling it to the American traders, whom he had been in the habit of supplying with human flesh. But no opportunity occurred for some time; and the boy, who was known by the name of "The Whistler," made some impression on the heart and affections even of this rude savage, perhaps because he saw in him flashes of a spirit as fierce and vindictive as his own. When Donacha struck or threatened him—a very common occurrence—he did not answer with complaints and entreaties like other children, but with oaths and efforts at revenge—he had all the wild merit, too, by which Woggarwolfe's arrow-bearing page won the hard heart of his master:

*Like a wild cub, rear'd at the ruffian's feet,
He could say biting jests, bold ditties sing,
And quaff his foaming bumper at the board,
With all the mockery of a little man.**

* Ethwald.

In short, as Donacha Dhu said, the Whistler was a born imp of Satan, and *therefore* he should never leave him. Accordingly, from his eleventh year forward, he was one of the band, and often engaged in acts of violence. The last of these was more immediately occasioned by the researches which the Whistler's real father made after him whom he had been taught to consider as such. Donacha Dhu's fears had been for some time excited by the strength of the means which began now to be employed against persons of his description. He was sensible he existed only by the precarious indulgence of his namesake, Duncan of Knockdunder, who was used to boast that he could put him down or string him up when he had a mind. He resolved to leave the kingdom by means of one of those sloops which were engaged in the traffic of his old kidnapping friends, and which was about to sail for America; but he was desirous first to strike a bold stroke.

The ruffian's cupidity was excited by the intelligence, that a wealthy Englishman was coming to the Manse—he had neither forgotten the Whistler's report of the gold he had seen in Lady Staunton's purse, nor his old vow of revenge against the minister; and, to bring the whole to a point, he conceived the hope of appropriating the money, which, according to the general report of the country, the minister was to bring from Edinburgh to pay for his pew purchase. While he was considering how he might best accomplish his purpose, he received the intelligence from one quarter, that the vessel in which he proposed to sail was to sail immediately from Greenock; from another, that the minister and a rich English lord, with a great many thousand pounds, were expected the next evening at the Manse; and from a third, that he must consult his safety by leaving his ordinary haunts as soon as possible, for that the Captain had ordered out a party to scour the glens for him at break of day. Donacha laid his plans with promptitude and decision. He embarked with the Whistler and two others of his band (whom, by the by, he meant to sell to the kidnappers), and set sail for the Caird's Cove. He intended to lurk till nightfall in the wood adjoining to this place, which he thought was too near the habitation of men to excite the suspicion of Duncan Knock, then break into Butler's peaceful habitation, and flesh at once his appetite for plunder and revenge. When his villany was accomplished, his boat was to convey him to the vessel, which, according to previous agreement with the master, was instantly to set sail.

This desperate design would probably have succeeded, but for the ruffians being discovered in their lurking-place by Sir George Staunton and Butler, in their accidental walk from the Caird's Cove towards the Manse. Finding himself detected, and at the same time observing that the servant carried a casket, or strong-box, Donacha conceived that both his prize and his victims were within his power, and attacked the travellers without hesitation. Shots were fired and swords drawn on both sides; Sir George Staunton offered the bravest resistance till he fell, as there was too much reason to believe, by the hand of a son, so long sought, and now at length so unhappily met.

While Butler was half-stunned with this intelligence, the hoarse voice of Knockdunder added to his consternation.

"I will take the liberty to take down the pell-ropes, Mr. Putler, as I must be taking order to hang these idle people up to-morrow morning, to teach them more consideration in their doings in future."

Butler entreated him to remember the act abolishing the heritable jurisdictions, and that he ought to send them to Glasgow or Inverary, to be tried by the Circuit. Duncan scorned the proposal.

"The Jurisdiction Act," he said, "had nothing to do put with the rebels, and specially not with Argyle's country; and he would hang the men up all three in one row before coot Leddy Staunton's windows, which would be a great comfort to her in the morning to see that the coot gentleman, her husband, had been suitably afenged."

And the utmost length that Butler's most earnest entreaties could prevail was, that he would, reserve "the twa pig carles for the Circuit, but as for him they ca'd the Fustler, he should try how he could fustle in a swinging tow, for it suldna be said that a shentleman, friend to the Duke, was killed in his country, and his people didna take at least twa lives for ane."

Butler entreated him to spare the victim for his soul's sake. But Knockdunder answered, "that the soul of such a scum had been long the tefil's property, and that, Cot tam! he was determined to gif the tefil his due."

All persuasion was in vain, and Duncan issued his mandate for execution on the succeeding morning. The child of guilt and misery was separated from his companions, strongly pinioned, and committed to a separate room, of which the Captain kept the key.

In the silence of the night, however, Mrs. Butler arose, resolved, if possible, to avert, at least to delay, the fate which hung over her nephew, especially if, upon conversing with him, she should see any hope of his being brought to better temper. She had a master-key that opened every lock in the house; and at midnight, when all was still, she stood before the eyes of the astonished young savage, as, hard bound with cords, he lay, like a sheep designed for slaughter, upon a quantity of the refuse of flax which filled a corner in the apartment. Amid features sunburnt, tawny, grimed with dirt, and obscured by his shaggy hair of a rusted black colour, Jeanie tried in vain to trace the likeness of either of his very handsome parents. Yet how could she refuse compassion to a creature so young and so wretched,—so much more wretched than even he himself could be aware of, since the murder he had too probably committed with his own hand, but in which he had at any rate participated, was in fact a parricide? She placed food on a table near him, raised him, and slacked the cords on his arms, so as to permit him to feed himself. He stretched out his hands, still smeared with blood perhaps that of his father, and he ate voraciously and in silence.

"What is your first name?" said Jeanie, by way of opening the conversation.

"The Whistler."

"But your Christian name, by which you were baptized?"

"I never was baptized that I know of—I have no other name than the Whistler."

"Poor unhappy abandoned lad!" said Jeanie. "What would ye do if you could escape from this place, and the death you are to die to-morrow morning?"

"Join wi' Rob Roy, or wi' Sergeant More Cameron" (noted freebooters at that time), "and revenge Donacha's death on all and sundry."

"O ye unhappy boy," said Jeanie, "do ye ken what will come o' ye when ye die?"

"I shall neither feel could nor hunger more," said the youth doggedly.

"To let him be execute in this dreadful state of mind would be to destroy baith body and soul—and to let him gang I dare not—what will be done?— But he is my sister's son—my own nephew—our flesh and blood—and his hands and feet are yerked as tight as cords can be drawn.—Whistler, do the cords hurt you?"

"Very much."

"But, if I were to slacken them, you would harm me?"

"No, I would not—you never harmed me or mine."

There may be good in him yet, thought Jeanie; I will try fair play with him.

She cut his bonds—he stood upright, looked round with a laugh of wild exultation, clapped his hands together, and sprung from the ground, as if in transport on finding himself at liberty. He looked so wild, that Jeanie trembled at what she had done.

"Let me out," said the young savage.

"I wunna, unless you promise"

"Then I'll make you glad to let us both out."

He seized the lighted candle and threw it among the flax, which was instantly in a flame. Jeanie screamed, and ran out of the room; the prisoner rushed past her, threw open a window in the passage, jumped into the garden, sprung over its enclosure, bounded through the woods like a deer, and gained the seashore. Meantime, the fire was extinguished, but the prisoner was sought in vain. As Jeanie kept her own secret, the share she had in his escape was not discovered: but they learned his fate some time afterwards—it was as wild as his life had hitherto been.

The anxious inquiries of Butler at length learned, that the youth had gained the ship in which his master, Donacha, had designed to embark. But the avaricious shipmaster, inured by his evil trade to every species of treachery, and disappointed of the rich booty which Donacha had proposed to bring aboard, secured the person of the fugitive, and having transported him to America, sold him as a slave, or indented servant, to a Virginian planter, far up the country. When these tidings reached Butler, he sent over to America a sufficient sum to redeem the lad from slavery, with instructions that measures should be taken for improving his mind, restraining his evil propensities, and encouraging whatever good might appear in his character. But this aid came too late. The young man had headed a conspiracy in which his inhuman master was put to death, and had then fled to the next tribe of wild Indians. He was never more heard of; and it may therefore be presumed that he lived and died after the manner of that savage people, with whom his previous habits had well fitted him to associate.

All hopes of the young man's reformation being now ended, Mr. and Mrs. Butler thought it could serve no purpose to explain to Lady Staunton a history so full of horror. She remained their guest more than a year, during the greater part of which period her grief was excessive. In the latter months, it assumed the appearance of listlessness and low spirits, which the monotony of her sister's quiet establishment afforded no means of dissipating. Effie, from her earliest youth, was never formed for a quiet low content. Far different from her sister, she required the dissipation of society to divert her sorrow, or enhance her joy. She left the seclusion of Knocktarlitie with tears of sincere affection, and after heaping its inmates with all she could think of that might be valuable in their eyes. But she *did* leave it; and, when the anguish of the parting was over, her departure was a relief to both sisters.

The family at the Manse of Knocktarlitie, in their own quiet happiness, heard of the well-dowered and beautiful Lady Staunton resuming her place in the fashionable world. They learned it by more substantial proofs, for David received a commission; and as the military spirit of Bible Butler seemed to have revived in him, his good behaviour qualified the envy of five hundred young Highland cadets, "come of good houses," who were astonished at the rapidity of his promotion. Reuben followed the law, and rose more slowly, yet surely. Euphemia Butler, whose fortune, augmented by her aunt's generosity, and added to her own beauty, rendered her no small prize, married a Highland laird, who never asked the name of her grand-father, and was loaded on the occasion with presents from Lady Staunton, which made her the envy of all the beauties in Dumbarton and Argyle shires.

After blazing nearly ten years in the fashionable world, and hiding, like many of her compeers, an aching heart with a gay demeanour—after declining repeated offers of the most respectable kind for a second matrimonial engagement, Lady Staunton betrayed the inward wound by retiring to the Continent, and taking up her abode in the convent where she had received her education. She never took the veil, but lived and died in severe seclusion, and in the practice of the Roman Catholic religion, in all its formal observances, vigils, and austerities.

Jeanie had so much of her father's spirit as to sorrow bitterly for this apostasy, and Butler joined in her regret. "Yet any religion, however imperfect," he said, "was better than cold scepticism, or the hurrying din of dissipation, which fills the ears of worldlings, until they care for none of these things."

Meanwhile, happy in each other, in the prosperity of their family, and the love and honour of all who knew them, this simple pair lived beloved, and died lamented.

BOOK XXIII
IT'S 60 YEARS SINCE WAVERLEY
PART I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The title of this work has not been chosen without the grave and solid deliberation which matters of importance demand from the prudent. Even its first, or general denomination, was the result of no common research or selection, although, according to the example of my predecessors, I had only to seize upon the most sounding and euphonic surname that English history or topography affords, and elect it at once as the title of my work and the name of my hero. But, alas! what could my readers have expected from the chivalrous epithets of Howard, Mordaunt, Mortimer, or Stanley, or from the softer and more sentimental sounds of Belmour, Belville, Belfield, and Belgrave, but pages of inanity, similar to those which have been so christened for half a century past? I must modestly admit I am too diffident of my own merit to place it in unnecessary opposition to preconceived associations; I have, therefore, like a maiden knight with his white shield, assumed for my hero, WAVERLEY, an uncontaminated name, bearing with its sound little of good or evil, excepting what the reader shall hereafter be pleased to affix to it. But my second or supplemental title was a matter of much more difficult election, since that, short as it is, may be held as pledging the author to some special mode of laying his scene, drawing his characters, and managing his adventures. Had I, for example, announced in my frontispiece, 'Waverley, a Tale of other Days,' must not every novel-reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing had long been uninhabited, and the keys either lost, or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title-page? and could it have been possible for me, with a moderate attention to decorum, to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularity of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's fille-de-chambre, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servants' hall? Again, had my title borne, 'Waverley, a Romance from the German,' what head so obtuse as not to image forth a profligate abbot, an oppressive duke, a secret and mysterious association of Rosycrucians and Illuminati, with all their properties of black cowls, caverns, daggers, electrical machines, trap-doors, and dark-lanterns? Or if I had rather chosen to call my work a 'Sentimental Tale,' would it not have been a sufficient presage of a heroine with a profusion of auburn hair, and a harp, the soft solace of her solitary hours, which she fortunately finds always the means of transporting from castle to cottage, although she herself be sometimes obliged to jump out of a two-pair-of-stairs window, and is more than once bewildered on her journey, alone and on foot, without any guide but a blowzy peasant girl, whose jargon she hardly can understand? Or, again, if my Waverley had been entitled 'A Tale of the Times,' wouldst thou not, gentle reader, have demanded from me a dashing sketch of the fashionable world, a few anecdotes of private scandal thinly veiled, and if lusciously painted, so much the better? a heroine from Grosvenor Square, and a hero from the Barouche Club or the Four-in-Hand, with a set of subordinate characters from the elegantes of Queen Anne Street East, or the dashing heroes of the Bow-Street Office? I could proceed in proving the importance of a title-page, and displaying at the same time my own intimate knowledge of the particular ingredients necessary to the composition of romances and novels of various descriptions;—but it is enough, and I scorn to tyrannise longer over the impatience of my reader, who is doubtless already anxious to know the choice made by an author so profoundly versed in the different branches of his art.

By fixing, then, the date of my story Sixty Years before this present 1st November, 1805, I would have my readers understand, that they will meet in the following pages neither a romance of chivalry nor a tale of modern manners; that my hero will neither have iron on his shoulders, as of yore, nor on the heels of his boots, as is the present fashion of Bond Street; and that my damsels will neither be clothed 'in purple and in pall,' like the Lady Alice of an old ballad, nor reduced to the primitive nakedness of a modern fashionable at a rout. From this my choice of an era the understanding critic may farther presage that the object of my tale is more a description of men than manners. A tale of manners, to be interesting, must either refer to antiquity so great as to have become venerable, or it must bear a vivid reflection of those scenes which are passing daily before our eyes, and are interesting from their novelty. Thus the coat-of-mail of our ancestors, and the triple-furred pelisse of our modern beaux, may, though for very different reasons, be equally fit for the array of a fictitious character; but who, meaning the costume of his hero to be impressive, would willingly attire him in the court dress of George the Second's reign, with its no collar, large sleeves, and low pocket-holes? The same may be urged, with equal truth, of the Gothic hall, which, with its darkened and tinted windows, its elevated and gloomy roof, and massive oaken table garnished with boar's-head and rosemary, pheasants and peacocks, cranes and cygnets, has an excellent effect in fictitious description. Much may also be gained by a lively display of a modern fete, such as we have daily recorded in that part of a newspaper entitled the Mirror of Fashion, if we contrast these, or either of them, with the splendid formality of an entertainment given Sixty Years Since; and thus it will be readily seen how much the painter of antique or of fashionable manners gains over him who delineates those of the last generation.

Considering the disadvantages inseparable from this part of my subject, I must be understood to have resolved to avoid them as much as possible, by throwing the force of my narrative upon the characters and passions of the actors;—those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart, whether it throbbed under the steel corslet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day. [Footnote: Alas! that attire, respectable and gentlemanlike in 1805, or thereabouts, is now as antiquated as the Author of Waverley has himself become since that period! The reader of fashion will please to fill up the costume with an embroidered waistcoat of purple velvet or silk, and a coat of whatever colour he pleases.] Upon these passions it is no doubt true that the state of manners and laws casts a necessary colouring; but the bearings, to use the language of heraldry, remain the same, though the tincture may be not only different, but opposed in strong contradistinction. The wrath of our ancestors, for example, was coloured gules; it broke forth in acts of open and sanguinary violence against the objects of its fury. Our malignant feelings, which must seek gratification through more indirect channels, and undermine the obstacles which they cannot openly bear down, may be rather said to be tintured sable. But the deep-ruling impulse is the same in both cases; and the proud peer, who can now only ruin his neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration. It is from the great book of Nature, the same through a thousand editions, whether of black-letter, or wire-wove and hot-pressed, that I have venturously essayed to read a chapter to the public. Some favourable opportunities of contrast have been afforded me by the state of society in the northern part of the island at the period of my history, and may serve at once to vary and to illustrate the moral lessons, which I would willingly consider as the most important part of my plan; although I am sensible how short these will fall of their aim if I shall be found unable to mix them with amusement—a task not quite so easy in this critical generation as it was 'Sixty Years Since.'

CHAPTER II

WAVERLEY-HONOUR—A RETROSPECT

It is, then, sixty years since Edward Waverley, the hero of the following pages, took leave of his family, to join the regiment of dragoons in which he had lately obtained a commission. It was a melancholy day at Waverley-Honour when the young officer parted with Sir Everard, the affectionate old uncle to whose title and estate he was presumptive heir.

A difference in political opinions had early separated the Baronet from his younger brother Richard Waverley, the father of our hero. Sir Everard had inherited from his sires the whole train of Tory or High-Church predilections and prejudices which had distinguished the house of Waverley since the Great Civil War. Richard, on the contrary, who was ten years younger, beheld himself born to the fortune of a second brother, and anticipated neither dignity nor entertainment in sustaining the character of Will Wimble. He saw early that, to succeed in the race of life, it was necessary he should carry as little weight as possible. Painters talk of the difficulty of expressing the existence of compound passions in the same features at the same moment; it would be no less difficult for the moralist to analyse the mixed motives which unite to form the impulse of our actions. Richard Waverley read and satisfied himself from history and sound argument that, in the words of the old song,

<i>Passive</i>	<i>obedience</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>jest,</i>
<i>And pshaw! was non-resistance;</i>				

yet reason would have probably been unable to combat and remove hereditary prejudice could Richard have anticipated that his elder brother, Sir Everard, taking to heart an early disappointment, would have remained a bachelor at seventy-two. The prospect of succession, however remote, might in that case have led him to endure dragging through the greater part of his life as 'Master Richard at the Hall, the Baronet's brother,' in the hope that ere its conclusion he should be distinguished as Sir Richard Waverley of Waverley-Honour, successor to a princely estate, and to extended political connections as head of the county interest in the shire where it lay.

But this was a consummation of things not to be expected at Richard's outset, when Sir Everard was in the prime of life, and certain to be an acceptable suitor in almost any family, whether wealth or beauty should be the object of his pursuit, and when, indeed, his speedy marriage was a report which regularly amused the neighbourhood once a year. His younger brother saw no practicable road to independence save that of relying upon his own exertions, and adopting a political creed more consonant both to reason and his own interest than the hereditary faith of Sir Everard in High-Church and in the house of Stuart. He therefore read his recantation at the beginning of his career, and entered life as an avowed Whig and friend of the Hanover succession.

The ministry of George the First's time were prudently anxious to diminish the phalanx of opposition. The Tory nobility, depending for their reflected lustre upon the sunshine of a court, had for some time been gradually reconciling themselves to the new dynasty. But the wealthy country gentlemen of England, a rank which retained, with much of ancient manners and primitive integrity, a great proportion of obstinate and unyielding prejudice, stood aloof in haughty and sullen opposition, and cast many a look of mingled regret and hope to Bois le Due, Avignon, and Italy. [Footnote: Where the Chevalier St. George, or, as he was termed, the Old Pretender, held his exiled court, as his situation compelled him to shift his place of residence.] The accession of the near relation of one of those steady and inflexible opponents was considered as a means of bringing over more converts, and therefore Richard Waverley met with a share of ministerial favour more than proportioned to his talents or his political importance. It was, however, discovered that he had respectable talents for public business, and the first admittance to the minister's levee being negotiated, his success became rapid. Sir Everard learned from the public 'News-Letter,' first, that Richard Waverley, Esquire, was returned for the ministerial borough of Barterfaith; next, that Richard Waverley, Esquire, had taken a distinguished part in the debate upon the Excise Bill in the support of government; and, lastly, that Richard Waverley, Esquire, had been honoured with a seat at one of those boards where the pleasure of serving the country is combined with other important gratifications, which, to render them the more acceptable, occur regularly once a quarter.

Although these events followed each other so closely that the sagacity of the editor of a modern newspaper would have presaged the two last even while he announced the first, yet they came upon Sir Everard gradually, and drop by drop, as it were, distilled through the cool and procrastinating alembic of Dyer's 'Weekly Letter.' [Footnote: See Note I.] For it may be observed in passing, that instead of those mail-coaches, by means of which every mechanic at his six-penny club, may nightly learn from twenty contradictory channels the yesterday's news of the capital, a weekly post brought, in those days, to Waverley-Honour, a Weekly Intelligencer, which, after it had gratified Sir Everard's curiosity, his sister's, and that of his aged butler, was regularly transferred from the Hall to the Rectory, from the Rectory to Squire Stubbs's at the Grange, from the Squire to the Baronet's steward at his neat white house on the heath, from the steward to the bailiff, and from him through a huge circle of honest dames and gaffers, by whose hard and horny hands it was generally worn to pieces in about a month after its arrival.

This slow succession of intelligence was of some advantage to Richard Waverley in the case before us; for, had the sum total of his enormities reached the ears of Sir Everard at once, there can be no doubt that the new commissioner would have had little reason to pique himself on the success of his politics. The Baronet, although the mildest of human beings, was not without sensitive points in his character; his brother's conduct had wounded these deeply; the Waverley estate was fettered by no entail (for it had never entered into the head of any of its former possessors that one of their progeny could be guilty of the atrocities laid by Dyer's 'Letter' to the door of Richard), and if it had, the marriage of the proprietor might have been fatal to a collateral heir. These various ideas floated through the brain of Sir Everard without, however, producing any determined conclusion.

He examined the tree of his genealogy, which, emblazoned with many an emblematic mark of honour and heroic achievement, hung upon the well-varnished wainscot of his hall. The nearest descendants of Sir Hildebrand Waverley, failing those of his eldest son Wilfred, of whom Sir Everard and his brother were the only representatives, were, as this honoured register informed him (and, indeed, as he himself well knew), the Waverleys of Highley Park, com. Hants; with whom the main branch, or rather stock, of the house had renounced all connection since the great law-suit in 1670.

This degenerate scion had committed a farther offence against the head and source of their gentility, by the intermarriage of their representative with Judith, heiress of Oliver Bradshawe, of Highley Park, whose arms, the same with those of Bradshawe the regicide, they had quartered with the ancient coat of Waverley. These offences, however, had vanished from Sir Everard's recollection in the heat of his resentment; and had Lawyer Clippurse, for whom his groom was despatched express, arrived but an hour earlier, he might have had the benefit of drawing a new settlement of the lordship and manor of Waverley-Honour, with all its dependencies. But an hour of cool reflection is a great matter when employed in weighing the comparative evil of two measures to neither of which we are internally partial. Lawyer Clippurse found his patron involved in a deep study, which he was too respectful to disturb, otherwise than by producing his paper and leathern ink-case, as prepared to minute his honour's commands. Even this slight manoeuvre was embarrassing to Sir Everard, who felt it as a reproach to his indecision. He looked at the attorney with some desire to issue his fiat, when the sun, emerging from behind a cloud, poured at once its chequered light through the stained window of the gloomy cabinet in which they were seated. The Baronet's eye, as he raised it to the splendour, fell right upon the central scutcheon, impressed with the same device which his ancestor was said to have borne in the field of Hastings,—three ermines passant, argent, in a field azure, with its appropriate motto, Sans tache. 'May our name rather perish,' exclaimed Sir Everard, 'than that ancient and loyal symbol should be blended with the dishonoured insignia of a traitorous Roundhead!'

All this was the effect of the glimpse of a sunbeam, just sufficient to light Lawyer Clippurse to mend his pen. The pen was mended in vain. The attorney was dismissed, with directions to hold himself in readiness on the first summons.

The apparition of Lawyer Clippurse at the Hall occasioned much speculation in that portion of the world to which Waverley-Honour formed the centre. But the more judicious politicians of this microcosm augured yet worse consequences to Richard Waverley from a movement which shortly followed his apostasy. This was no less than an excursion of the Baronet in his coach-and-six, with four attendants in rich liveries, to make a visit of some duration to a noble peer on the confines of the shire, of untainted descent, steady Tory principles, and the happy father of six unmarried and accomplished daughters.

Sir Everard's reception in this family was, as it may be easily conceived, sufficiently favourable; but of the six young ladies, his taste unfortunately determined him in favour of Lady Emily, the youngest, who received his attentions with an embarrassment which showed at once that she durst not decline them, and that they afforded her anything but pleasure.

Sir Everard could not but perceive something uncommon in the restrained emotions which the young lady testified at the advances he hazarded; but, assured by the prudent Countess that they were the natural effects of a retired education, the sacrifice might have been completed, as doubtless has happened in many similar instances, had it not been for the courage of an elder sister, who revealed to the wealthy suitor that Lady Emily's affections were fixed upon a young soldier of fortune, a near relation of her own.

Sir Everard manifested great emotion on receiving this intelligence, which was confirmed to him, in a private interview, by the young lady herself, although under the most dreadful apprehensions of her father's indignation.

Honour and generosity were hereditary attributes of the house of Waverley. With a grace and delicacy worthy the hero of a romance, Sir Everard withdrew his claim to the hand of Lady Emily. He had even, before leaving Blandeville Castle, the address to extort from her father a consent to her union with the object of her choice. What arguments he used on this point cannot exactly be known, for Sir Everard was never supposed strong in the powers of persuasion; but the young officer, immediately after this transaction, rose in the army with a rapidity far surpassing the usual pace of unpatronised professional merit, although, to outward appearance, that was all he had to depend upon.

The shock which Sir Everard encountered upon this occasion, although diminished by the consciousness of having acted virtuously and generously had its effect upon his future life. His resolution of marriage had been adopted in a fit of indignation; the labour of courtship did not quite suit the dignified indolence of his habits; he had but just escaped the risk of marrying a woman who could never love him, and his pride could not be greatly flattered by the termination of his amour, even if his heart had not suffered. The result of the whole matter was his return to Waverley-Honour without any transfer of his affections, notwithstanding the sighs and languishments of the fair tell-tale, who had revealed, in mere sisterly affection, the secret of Lady Emily's attachment, and in despite of the nods, winks, and innuendos of the officious lady mother, and the grave eulogiums which the Earl pronounced successively on the prudence, and good sense, and admirable dispositions, of his first, second, third, fourth, and fifth daughters.

The memory of his unsuccessful amour was with Sir Everard, as with many more of his temper, at once shy, proud, sensitive, and indolent, a beacon against exposing himself to similar mortification, pain, and fruitless exertion for the time to come. He continued to live at Waverley-Honour in the style of an old English gentleman, of an ancient descent and opulent fortune. His sister, Miss Rachel Waverley, presided at his table; and they became, by degrees, an old bachelor and an ancient maiden lady, the gentlest and kindest of the votaries of celibacy.

The vehemence of Sir Everard's resentment against his brother was but short-lived; yet his dislike to the Whig and the placeman, though unable to stimulate him to resume any active measures prejudicial to Richard's interest, in the succession to the family estate, continued to maintain the coldness between them. Richard knew enough of the world, and of his brother's temper, to believe that by any ill-considered or precipitate advances on his part, he might turn passive dislike into a more active principle. It was accident, therefore, which at length occasioned a renewal of their intercourse. Richard had married a young woman of rank, by whose family interest and private fortune he hoped to advance his career. In her right he became possessor of a manor of some value, at the distance of a few miles from Waverley-Honour.

Little Edward, the hero of our tale, then in his fifth year, was their only child. It chanced that the infant with his maid had strayed one morning to a mile's distance from the avenue of Brerewood Lodge, his father's seat. Their attention was attracted by a carriage drawn by six stately long-tailed black horses, and with as much carving and gilding as would have done honour to my lord mayor's. It was waiting for the owner, who was at a little distance inspecting the progress of a half-built farm-house. I know not whether the boy's nurse had been a Welsh—or a Scotch-woman, or in what manner he associated a shield emblazoned with three ermines with the idea of personal property, but he no sooner beheld this family emblem than he stoutly determined on vindicating his right to the splendid vehicle on which it was displayed. The Baronet arrived while the boy's maid was in vain endeavouring to make him desist from his determination to appropriate the gilded coach-and-six. The rencontre was at a happy moment for Edward, as his uncle had been just eyeing wistfully, with something of a feeling like envy, the chubby boys of the stout yeoman whose mansion was building by his direction. In the round-faced rosy cherub before him, bearing his eye and his name, and vindicating a hereditary title to his family, affection, and patronage, by means of a tie which Sir Everard held as sacred as either Garter or Blue-mantle, Providence seemed to have granted to him the very object best calculated to fill up the void in his hopes and affections. Sir Everard returned to Waverley-Hall upon a led horse, which was kept in readiness for him, while the child and his attendant were sent home in the carriage to Brerewood Lodge, with such a message as opened to Richard Waverley a door of reconciliation with his elder brother.

Their intercourse, however, though thus renewed, continued to be rather formal and civil than partaking of brotherly cordiality; yet it was sufficient to the wishes of both parties. Sir Everard obtained, in the frequent society of his little nephew, something on which his hereditary pride might find the anticipated pleasure of a continuation of his lineage, and where his kind and gentle affections could at the same time fully exercise themselves. For Richard Waverley, he beheld in the growing attachment between the uncle and nephew the means of securing his son's, if not his own, succession to the hereditary estate, which he felt would be rather endangered than promoted by any attempt on his own part towards a closer intimacy with a man of Sir Everard's habits and opinions.

Thus, by a sort of tacit compromise, little Edward was permitted to pass the greater part of the year at the Hall, and appeared to stand in the same intimate relation to both families, although their mutual intercourse was otherwise limited to formal messages and more formal visits. The education of the youth was regulated alternately by the taste and opinions of his uncle and of his father. But more of this in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION

The education of our hero, Edward Waverley, was of a nature somewhat desultory. In infancy his health suffered, or was supposed to suffer (which is quite the same thing), by the air of London. As soon, therefore, as official duties, attendance on Parliament, or the prosecution of any of his plans of interest or ambition, called his father to town, which was his usual residence for eight months in the year, Edward was transferred to Waverley-Honour, and experienced a total change of instructors and of lessons, as well as of residence. This might have been remedied had his father placed him under the superintendence of a permanent tutor. But he considered that one of his choosing would probably have been unacceptable at Waverley-Honour, and that such a selection as Sir Everard might have made, were the matter left to him, would have burdened him with a disagreeable inmate, if not a political spy, in his family. He therefore prevailed upon his private secretary, a young man of taste and accomplishments, to bestow an hour or two on Edward's education while at Brerewood Lodge, and left his uncle answerable for his improvement in literature while an inmate at the Hall. This was in some degree respectably provided for. Sir Everard's chaplain, an Oxonian, who had lost his fellowship for declining to take the oaths at the accession of George I, was not only an excellent classical scholar, but reasonably skilled in science, and master of most modern languages. He was, however, old and indulgent, and the recurring interregnum, during which Edward was entirely freed from his discipline,

occasioned such a relaxation of authority, that the youth was permitted, in a great measure, to learn as he pleased, what he pleased, and when he pleased. This slackness of rule might have been ruinous to a boy of slow understanding, who, feeling labour in the acquisition of knowledge, would have altogether neglected it, save for the command of a taskmaster; and it might have proved equally dangerous to a youth whose animal spirits were more powerful than his imagination or his feelings, and whom the irresistible influence of Alma would have engaged in field-sports from morning till night. But the character of Edward Waverley was remote from either of these. His powers of apprehension were so uncommonly quick as almost to resemble intuition, and the chief care of his preceptor was to prevent him, as a sportsman would phrase it, from over-running his game—that is, from acquiring his knowledge in a slight, flimsy, and inadequate manner. And here the instructor had to combat another propensity too often united with brilliancy of fancy and vivacity of talent—that indolence, namely, of disposition, which can only be stirred by some strong motive of gratification, and which renounces study as soon as curiosity is gratified, the pleasure of conquering the first difficulties exhausted, and the novelty of pursuit at an end. Edward would throw himself with spirit upon any classical author of which his preceptor proposed the perusal, make himself master of the style so far as to understand the story, and, if that pleased or interested him, he finished the volume. But it was in vain to attempt fixing his attention on critical distinctions of philology, upon the difference of idiom, the beauty of felicitous expression, or the artificial combinations of syntax. 'I can read and understand a Latin author,' said young Edward, with the self-confidence and rash reasoning of fifteen, 'and Scaliger or Bentley could not do much more.' Alas! while he was thus permitted to read only for the gratification of his amusement, he foresaw not that he was losing for ever the opportunity of acquiring habits of firm and assiduous application, of gaining the art of controlling, directing, and concentrating the powers of his mind for earnest investigation—an art far more essential than even that intimate acquaintance with classical learning which is the primary object of study.

I am aware I may be here reminded of the necessity of rendering instruction agreeable to youth, and of Tasso's infusion of honey into the medicine prepared for a child; but an age in which children are taught the driest doctrines by the insinuating method of instructive games, has little reason to dread the consequences of study being rendered too serious or severe. The history of England is now reduced to a game at cards, the problems of mathematics to puzzles and riddles, and the doctrines of arithmetic may, we are assured, be sufficiently acquired by spending a few hours a week at a new and complicated edition of the Royal Game of the Goose. There wants but one step further, and the Creed and Ten Commandments may be taught in the same manner, without the necessity of the grave face, deliberate tone of recital, and devout attention, hitherto exacted from the well-governed childhood of this realm. It may, in the meantime, be subject of serious consideration, whether those who are accustomed only to acquire instruction through the medium of amusement may not be brought to reject that which approaches under the aspect of study; whether those who learn history by the cards may not be led to prefer the means to the end; and whether, were we to teach religion in the way of sport, our pupils may not thereby be gradually induced to make sport of their religion. To our young hero, who was permitted to seek his instruction only according to the bent of his own mind, and who, of consequence, only sought it so long as it afforded him amusement, the indulgence of his tutors was attended with evil consequences, which long continued to influence his character, happiness, and utility.

Edward's power of imagination and love of literature, although the former was vivid and the latter ardent, were so far from affording a remedy to this peculiar evil, that they rather inflamed and increased its violence. The library at Waverley-Honour, a large Gothic room, with double arches and a gallery, contained such a miscellaneous and extensive collection of volumes as had been assembled together, during the course of two hundred years, by a family which had been always wealthy, and inclined, of course, as a mark of splendour, to furnish their shelves with the current literature of the day, without much scrutiny or nicety of discrimination. Throughout this ample realm Edward was permitted to roam at large. His tutor had his own studies; and church politics and controversial divinity, together with a love of learned ease, though they did not withdraw his attention at stated times from the progress of his patron's presumptive heir, induced him readily to grasp at any apology for not extending a strict and regulated survey towards his general studies. Sir Everard had never been himself a student, and, like his sister, Miss Rachel Waverley, he held the common doctrine, that idleness is incompatible with reading of any kind, and that the mere tracing the alphabetical characters with the eye is in itself a useful and meritorious task, without scrupulously considering what ideas or doctrines they may happen to convey. With a desire of amusement, therefore, which better discipline might soon have converted into a thirst for knowledge, young Waverley drove through the sea of books like a vessel without a pilot or a rudder. Nothing perhaps increases by indulgence more than a desultory habit of reading, especially under such opportunities of gratifying it. I believe one reason why such numerous instances of erudition occur among the lower ranks is, that, with the same powers of mind, the poor student is limited to a narrow circle for indulging his passion for books, and must necessarily make himself master of the few he possesses ere he can acquire more. Edward, on the contrary, like the epicure who only deigned to take a single morsel from the sunny side of a peach, read no volume a moment after it ceased to excite his curiosity or interest; and it necessarily happened, that the habit of seeking only this sort of gratification rendered it daily more difficult of attainment, till the passion for reading, like other strong appetites, produced by indulgence a sort of satiety.

Ere he attained this indifference, however, he had read, and stored in a memory of uncommon tenacity, much curious, though ill-arranged and miscellaneous information. In English literature he was master of Shakespeare and Milton, of our earlier dramatic authors, of many picturesque and interesting passages from our old historical chronicles, and was particularly well acquainted with Spenser, Drayton, and other poets who have exercised themselves on romantic fiction, of all themes the most fascinating to a youthful imagination, before the passions have roused themselves and demand poetry of a more sentimental description. In this respect his acquaintance with Italian opened him yet a wider range. He had perused the numerous romantic poems, which, from the days of Pulci, have been a favourite exercise of the wits of Italy, and had sought gratification in the numerous collections of novelle, which were brought forth by the genius of that elegant though luxurious nation, in emulation of the 'Decameron.' In classical literature, Waverley had made the usual progress, and read the usual authors; and the French had afforded him an almost exhaustless collection of memoirs, scarcely more faithful than romances, and of romances so well written as hardly to be distinguished from memoirs. The splendid pages of Froissart, with his heart-stirring and eye-dazzling descriptions of war and of tournaments, were among his chief favourites; and from those of Brantome and De la Noue he learned to compare the wild and loose, yet superstitious, character of the nobles of the League with the stern, rigid, and sometimes turbulent disposition of the Huguenot party. The Spanish had contributed to his stock of chivalrous and romantic lore. The earlier literature of the northern nations did not escape the study of one who read rather to awaken the imagination than to benefit the understanding. And yet, knowing much that is known but to few, Edward Waverley might justly be considered as ignorant, since he knew little of what adds dignity to man, and qualifies him to support and adorn an elevated situation in society.

The occasional attention of his parents might indeed have been of service to prevent the dissipation of mind incidental to such a desultory course of reading. But his mother died in the seventh year after the reconciliation between the brothers, and Richard Waverley himself, who, after this event, resided more constantly in London, was too much interested in his own plans of wealth and ambition to notice more respecting Edward than that he was of a very bookish turn, and probably destined to be a bishop. If he could have discovered and analysed his son's waking dreams, he would have formed a very different conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

CASTLE-BUILDING

I have already hinted that the dainty, squeamish, and fastidious taste acquired by a surfeit of idle reading had not only rendered our hero unfit for serious and sober study, but had even disgusted him in some degree with that in which he had hitherto indulged.

He was in his sixteenth year when his habits of abstraction and love of solitude became so much marked as to excite Sir Everard's affectionate apprehension. He tried to counterbalance these propensities by engaging his nephew in field-sports, which had been the chief pleasure of his own youthful days. But although Edward eagerly carried the gun for one season, yet when practice had given him some dexterity, the pastime ceased to afford him amusement.

In the succeeding spring, the perusal of old Isaac Walton's fascinating volume determined Edward to become 'a brother of the angle.' But of all diversions which ingenuity ever devised for the relief of idleness, fishing is the worst qualified to amuse a man who is at once indolent and impatient; and our hero's rod was speedily flung aside. Society and example, which, more than any other motives, master and sway the natural bent of our passions, might have had their usual effect upon the youthful visionary. But the neighbourhood was thinly inhabited, and the home-bred young squires whom it afforded were not of a class fit to form Edward's usual companions, far less to excite him to emulation in the practice of those pastimes which composed the serious business of their lives.

There were a few other youths of better education and a more liberal character, but from their society also our hero was in some degree excluded. Sir Everard had, upon the death of Queen Anne, resigned his seat in Parliament, and, as his age increased and the number of his contemporaries diminished, had gradually withdrawn himself from society; so that when, upon any particular occasion, Edward mingled with accomplished and well-educated young men of his own rank and expectations, he felt an inferiority in their company, not so much from deficiency of information, as from the want of the skill to command and to arrange that which he possessed. A deep and increasing sensibility added to this dislike of society. The idea of having committed the slightest solecism in politeness, whether real or imaginary, was agony to him; for perhaps even guilt itself does not impose upon some minds so keen a sense of shame and remorse, as a modest, sensitive, and inexperienced youth feels from the consciousness of having neglected etiquette or excited ridicule. Where we are not at ease, we cannot be happy; and therefore it is not surprising that Edward Waverley supposed that he disliked and was unfitted for society, merely because he had not yet acquired the habit of living in it with ease and comfort, and of reciprocally giving and receiving pleasure.

The hours he spent with his uncle and aunt were exhausted in listening to the oft-repeated tale of narrative old age. Yet even there his imagination, the predominant faculty of his mind, was frequently excited. Family tradition and genealogical history, upon which much of Sir Everard's discourse turned, is the very reverse of amber, which, itself a valuable substance, usually includes flies, straws, and other trifles; whereas these studies, being themselves very insignificant and trifling, do nevertheless serve to perpetuate a great deal of what is rare and valuable in ancient manners, and to record many curious and minute facts which could have been preserved and conveyed through no other medium. If, therefore, Edward Waverley yawned at times over the dry deduction of his line of ancestors, with their various intermarriages, and inwardly deprecated the remorseless and protracted accuracy with which the worthy Sir Everard rehearsed the various degrees of propinquity between the house of Waverley-Honour and the doughty barons, knights, and squires to whom they stood allied; if (notwithstanding his obligations to the three ermines passant) he sometimes cursed in his heart the jargon of heraldry, its griffins, its moldwarps, its wyverns, and its dragons, with all the bitterness of Hotspur himself, there were moments when these communications interested his fancy and rewarded his attention.

The deeds of Wilibert of Waverley in the Holy Land, his long absence and perilous adventures, his supposed death, and his return on the evening when the betrothed of his heart had wedded the hero who had protected her from insult and oppression during his absence; the generosity with which the Crusader relinquished his claims, and sought in a neighbouring cloister that peace which passeth not away; [Footnote: See Note 2.]—to these and similar tales he would hearken till his heart glowed and his eye glistened. Nor was he less affected when his aunt, Mrs. Rachel, narrated the sufferings and fortitude of Lady Alice Waverley during the Great Civil War. The benevolent features of the venerable spinster kindled into more majestic expression as she told how Charles had, after the field of Worcester, found a day's refuge at Waverley-Honour, and how, when a troop of cavalry were approaching to search the mansion, Lady Alice dismissed her youngest son with a handful of domestics, charging them to make good with their lives an hour's diversion, that the king might have that space for escape. 'And, God help her,' would Mrs. Rachel continue, fixing her eyes upon the heroine's portrait as she spoke, 'full dearly did she purchase the safety of her prince with the life of her darling child. They brought him here a prisoner, mortally wounded; and you may trace the drops of his blood from the great hall door along the little gallery, and up to the saloon, where they laid him down to die at his mother's feet. But there was comfort exchanged between them; for he knew, from the glance of his mother's eye, that the purpose of his desperate defence was attained. Ah! I remember,' she continued, 'I remember well to have seen one that knew and loved him. Miss Lucy Saint Aubin lived and died a maid for his sake, though one of the most beautiful and wealthy matches in this country; all the world ran after her, but she wore widow's mourning all her life for poor William, for they were betrothed though not married, and died in—I cannot think of the date; but I remember, in the November of that very year, when she found herself sinking, she desired to be brought to Waverley-Honour once more, and visited all the places where she had been with my grand-uncle, and caused the carpets to be raised that she might trace the impression of his blood, and if tears could have washed it out, it had not been there now; for there was not a dry eye in the house. You would have thought, Edward, that the very trees mourned for her, for their leaves dropt around her without a gust of wind, and, indeed, she looked like one that would never see them green again.'

From such legends our hero would steal away to indulge the fancies they excited. In the corner of the large and sombre library, with no other light than was afforded by the decaying brands on its ponderous and ample hearth, he would exercise for hours that internal sorcery by which past or imaginary events are presented in action, as it were, to the eye of the muser. Then arose in long and fair array the splendour of the bridal feast at Waverley-Castle; the tall and emaciated form of its real lord, as he stood in his pilgrim's weeds, an unnoticed spectator of the festivities of his supposed heir and intended bride; the electrical shock occasioned by the discovery; the springing of the vassals to arms; the astonishment of the bridegroom; the terror and confusion of the bride; the agony with which Wilibert observed that her heart as well as consent was in these nuptials; the air of dignity, yet of deep feeling, with which he flung down the half-drawn sword, and turned away for ever from the house of his ancestors. Then would he change the scene, and fancy would at his wish represent Aunt Rachel's tragedy. He saw the Lady Waverley seated in her bower, her ear strained to every sound, her heart throbbing with double agony, now listening to the decaying echo of the hoofs of the king's horse, and when that had died away, hearing in every breeze that shook the trees of the park, the noise of the remote skirmish. A distant sound is heard like the rushing of a swoln stream; it comes nearer, and Edward can plainly distinguish the galloping of horses, the cries and shouts of men, with straggling pistol-shots between, rolling forwards to the Hall. The lady starts up—a terrified menial rushes in—but why pursue such a description?

As living in this ideal world became daily more delectable to our hero, interruption was disagreeable in proportion. The extensive domain that surrounded the Hall, which, far exceeding the dimensions of a park, was usually termed Waverley-Chase, had originally been forest ground, and still, though broken by extensive glades, in which the young deer were sporting, retained its pristine and savage character. It was traversed by broad avenues, in many places half grown up with brush-wood, where the beauties of former days used to take their stand to see the stag coursed with greyhounds, or to gain an aim at him with the crossbow. In one spot, distinguished by a moss-grown Gothic monument, which retained the name of Queen's Standing, Elizabeth herself was said to have pierced seven bucks with her own arrows. This was a very favourite haunt of Waverley. At other times, with his gun and his spaniel, which served as an apology to others, and with a book in his pocket, which perhaps served as an apology to himself, he used to pursue one of these long avenues, which, after an ascending sweep of four miles, gradually narrowed into a rude and contracted path through the clifty and woody pass called Mirkwood Dingle, and opened suddenly upon a deep, dark, and small lake, named, from the same cause, Mirkwood-Mere. There stood, in former times, a solitary tower upon a rock almost surrounded by the water, which had acquired the name of the Strength of Waverley, because in perilous times it had often been the refuge of the family. There, in the wars of York and Lancaster, the last adherents of the Red Rose who dared to maintain her cause carried on a harassing and predatory warfare, till the stronghold was reduced by the celebrated Richard of Gloucester. Here, too, a party of Cavaliers long maintained themselves under Nigel Waverley, elder brother of that William whose fate Aunt Rachel commemorated. Through these scenes it was that Edward loved to 'chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy,' and, like a child among his toys, culled and arranged, from the splendid yet useless imagery and emblems with which his imagination was stored, visions as brilliant and as fading as those of an evening sky. The effect of this indulgence upon his temper and character will appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CHOICE OF A PROFESSION

From the minuteness with which I have traced Waverley's pursuits, and the bias which these unavoidably communicated to his imagination, the reader may perhaps anticipate, in the following tale, an imitation of the romance of Cervantes. But he will do my prudence injustice in the supposition. My intention is not to follow the steps of that inimitable author, in describing such total perversion of intellect as misconstrues the objects actually presented to the senses, but that more common aberration from sound judgment, which apprehends occurrences indeed in their reality, but communicates to them a tincture of its own romantic tone and colouring. So far was Edward Waverley from expecting general sympathy with his own feelings, or concluding that the present state of things was calculated to exhibit the reality of those visions in which he loved to indulge, that he dreaded nothing more than the detection of such sentiments as were dictated by his musings. He neither had nor wished to have a confidant, with whom to communicate his reveries; and so sensible was he of the ridicule attached to them, that, had he been to choose between any punishment short of ignominy, and the necessity of giving a cold and composed account of the ideal world in which he lived the better part of his days, I think he would not have hesitated to prefer the former infliction. This secrecy became doubly precious as he felt in advancing life the influence of the awakening passions. Female forms of exquisite grace and beauty began to mingle in his mental adventures; nor was he long without looking abroad to compare the creatures of his own imagination with the females of actual life.

The list of the beauties who displayed their hebdomadal finery at the parish church of Waverley was neither numerous nor select. By far the most passable was Miss Sissly, or, as she rather chose to be called, Miss Cecilia Stubbs, daughter of Squire Stubbs at the Grange. I know not whether it was by the 'merest accident in the world,' a phrase which, from female lips, does not always exclude malice prepense, or whether it was from a conformity of taste, that Miss Cecilia more than once crossed Edward in his favourite walks through Waverley-Chase. He had not as yet assumed courage to accost her on these occasions; but the meeting was not without its effect. A romantic lover is a strange idolater, who sometimes cares not out of what log he frames the object of his adoration; at least, if nature has given that object any passable proportion of personal charms, he can easily play the Jeweller and Dervise in the Oriental tale, [Footnote: See Hoppner's tale of *The Seven Lovers*.] and supply her richly, out of the stores of his own imagination, with supernatural beauty, and all the properties of intellectual wealth.

But ere the charms of Miss Cecilia Stubbs had erected her into a positive goddess, or elevated her at least to a level with the saint her namesake, Mrs. Rachel Waverley gained some intimation which determined her to prevent the approaching apotheosis. Even the most simple and unsuspicious of the female sex have (God bless them!) an instinctive sharpness of perception in such matters, which sometimes goes the length of observing partialities that never existed, but rarely misses to detect such as pass actually under their observation. Mrs. Rachel applied herself with great prudence, not to combat, but to elude, the approaching danger, and suggested to her brother the necessity that the heir of his house should see something more of the world than was consistent with constant residence at Waverley-Honour.

Sir Everard would not at first listen to a proposal which went to separate his nephew from him. Edward was a little bookish, he admitted, but youth, he had always heard, was the season for learning, and, no doubt, when his rage for letters was abated, and his head fully stocked with knowledge, his nephew would take to field-sports and country business. He had often, he said, himself regretted that he had not spent some time in study during his youth: he would neither have shot nor hunted with less skill, and he might have made the roof of Saint Stephen's echo to longer orations than were comprised in those zealous Noes, with which, when a member of the House during Godolphin's administration, he encountered every measure of government.

Aunt Rachel's anxiety, however, lent her address to carry her point. Every representative of their house had visited foreign parts, or served his country in the army, before he settled for life at Waverley-Honour, and she appealed for the truth of her assertion to the genealogical pedigree, an authority which Sir Everard was never known to contradict. In short, a proposal was made to Mr. Richard Waverley, that his son should travel, under the direction of his present tutor Mr. Pembroke, with a suitable allowance from the Baronet's liberality. The father himself saw no objection to this overture; but upon mentioning it casually at the table of the minister, the great man looked grave. The reason was explained in private. The unhappy turn of Sir Everard's politics, the minister observed, was such as would render it highly improper that a young gentleman of such hopeful prospects should travel on the Continent with a tutor doubtless of his uncle's choosing, and directing his course by his instructions. What might Mr. Edward Waverley's society be at Paris, what at Rome, where all manner of snares were spread by the Pretender and his sons—these were points for Mr. Waverley to consider. This he could himself say, that he knew his Majesty had such a just sense of Mr. Richard Waverley's merits, that, if his son adopted the army for a few years, a troop, he believed, might be reckoned upon in one of the dragoon regiments lately returned from Flanders.

A hint thus conveyed and enforced was not to be neglected with impunity; and Richard Waverley, though with great dread of shocking his brother's prejudices, deemed he could not avoid accepting the commission thus offered him for his son. The truth is, he calculated much, and justly, upon Sir Everard's fondness for Edward, which made him unlikely to resent any step that he might take in due submission to parental authority. Two letters announced this determination to the Baronet and his nephew. The latter barely communicated the fact, and pointed out the necessary preparations for joining his regiment. To his brother, Richard was more diffuse and circuitous. He coincided with him, in the most flattering manner, in the propriety of his son's seeing a little more of the world, and was even humble in expressions of gratitude for his proposed assistance; was, however, deeply concerned that it was now, unfortunately, not in Edward's power exactly to comply with the plan which had been chalked out by his best friend and benefactor. He himself had thought with pain on the boy's inactivity, at an age when all his ancestors had borne arms; even Royalty itself had deigned to inquire whether young Waverley was not now in Flanders, at an age when his grandfather was already bleeding for his king in the Great Civil War. This was accompanied by an offer of a troop of horse. What could he do? There was no time to consult his brother's inclinations, even if he could have conceived there might be objections on his part to his nephew's following the glorious career of his predecessors. And, in short, that Edward was now (the intermediate steps of cornet and lieutenant being overleapt with great agility) Captain Waverley, of Gardiner's regiment of dragoons, which he must join in their quarters at Dundee in Scotland, in the course of a month.

Sir Everard Waverley received this intimation with a mixture of feelings. At the period of the Hanoverian succession he had withdrawn from parliament, and his conduct in the memorable year 1715 had not been altogether unsuspected. There were reports of private musters of tenants and horses in Waverley-Chase by moonlight, and of cases of carbines and pistols purchased in Holland, and addressed to the Baronet, but intercepted by the vigilance of a riding officer of the excise, who was afterwards tossed in a blanket on a moonless night, by an association of stout yeomen, for his officiousness. Nay, it was even said, that at the arrest of Sir William Wyndham, the leader of the Tory party, a letter from Sir Everard was found in the pocket of his night-gown. But there was no overt act which an attainder could be founded on, and government, contented with suppressing the insurrection of 1715, felt it neither prudent nor safe to push their vengeance farther than against those unfortunate gentlemen who actually took up arms.

Nor did Sir Everard's apprehensions of personal consequences seem to correspond with the reports spread among his Whig neighbours. It was well known that he had supplied with money several of the distressed Northumbrians and Scotchmen, who, after being made prisoners at Preston in Lancashire, were imprisoned in Newgate and the Marshalsea, and it was his solicitor and ordinary counsel who conducted the defence of some of these unfortunate gentlemen at their trial. It

was generally supposed, however, that, had ministers possessed any real proof of Sir Everard's accession to the rebellion, he either would not have ventured thus to brave the existing government, or at least would not have done so with impunity. The feelings which then dictated his proceedings were those of a young man, and at an agitating period. Since that time Sir Everard's Jacobitism had been gradually decaying, like a fire which burns out for want of fuel. His Tory and High-Church principles were kept up by some occasional exercise at elections and quarter-sessions; but those respecting hereditary right were fallen into a sort of abeyance. Yet it jarred severely upon his feelings, that his nephew should go into the army under the Brunswick dynasty; and the more so, as, independent of his high and conscientious ideas of paternal authority, it was impossible, or at least highly imprudent, to interfere authoritatively to prevent it. This suppressed vexation gave rise to many poohs and pshaws which were placed to the account of an incipient fit of gout, until, having sent for the Army List, the worthy Baronet consoled himself with reckoning the descendants of the houses of genuine loyalty, Mordaunts, Granvilles, and Stanleys, whose names were to be found in that military record; and, calling up all his feelings of family grandeur and warlike glory, he concluded, with logic something like Falstaff's, that when war was at hand, although it were shame to be on any side but one, it were worse shame to be idle than to be on the worst side, though blacker than usurpation could make it. As for Aunt Rachel, her scheme had not exactly terminated according to her wishes, but she was under the necessity of submitting to circumstances; and her mortification was diverted by the employment she found in fitting out her nephew for the campaign, and greatly consoled by the prospect of beholding him blaze in complete uniform. Edward Waverley himself received with animated and undefined surprise this most unexpected intelligence. It was, as a fine old poem expresses it, 'like a fire to heather set,' that covers a solitary hill with smoke, and illumines it at the same time with dusky fire. His tutor, or, I should say, Mr. Pembroke, for he scarce assumed the name of tutor, picked up about Edward's room some fragments of irregular verse, which he appeared to have composed under the influence of the agitating feelings occasioned by this sudden page being turned up to him in the book of life. The doctor, who was a believer in all poetry which was composed by his friends, and written out in fair straight lines, with a capital at the beginning of each, communicated this treasure to Aunt Rachel, who, with her spectacles dimmed with tears, transferred them to her commonplace book, among choice receipts for cookery and medicine, favourite texts, and portions from High-Church divines, and a few songs, amatory and Jacobitical, which she had carolled in her younger days, from whence her nephew's poetical tentamina were extracted when the volume itself, with other authentic records of the Waverley family, were exposed to the inspection of the unworthy editor of this memorable history. If they afford the reader no higher amusement, they will serve, at least, better than narrative of any kind, to acquaint him with the wild and irregular spirit of our hero:—

Late, when the Autumn evening fell On Mirkwood-Mere's romantic dell, The lake return'd, in chaste'n'd gleam, The purple cloud, the golden beam: Reflected in the crystal pool, Headland and bank lay fair and cool; The weather-tinted rock and tower, Each drooping tree, each fairy flower, So true, so soft, the mirror gave, As if there lay beneath the wave, Secure from trouble, toil, and care, A world than earthly world more fair.

But distant winds began to wake, And roused the Genius of the Lake! He heard the groaning of the oak, And donn'd at once his sable cloak, As warrior, at the battle-cry, Invests him with his panoply: Then, as the whirlwind nearer press'd He 'gan to shake his foamy crest O'er furrow'd brow and blacken'd cheek, And bade his surge in thunder speak. In wild and broken eddies whirl'd. Flitted that fond ideal world, And to the shore in tumult tost The realms of fairy bliss were lost.

Yet, with a stern delight and strange, I saw the spirit-stirring change, As warr'd the wind with wave and wood, Upon the ruin'd tower I stood, And felt my heart more strongly bound, Responsive to the lofty sound, While, joying in the mighty roar, I mourn'd that tranquil scene no more.

So, on the idle dreams of youth, Breaks the loud trumpet-call of truth, Bids each fair vision pass away, Like landscape on the lake that lay, As fair, as flitting, and as frail, As that which fled the Autumn gale.— For ever dead to fancy's eye Be each gay form that glided by, While dreams of love and lady's charms Give place to honour and to arms!

In sober prose, as perhaps these verses intimate less decidedly, the transient idea of Miss Cecilia Stubbs passed from Captain Waverley's heart amid the turmoil which his new destinies excited. She appeared, indeed, in full splendour in her father's pew upon the Sunday when he attended service for the last time at the old parish church, upon which occasion, at the request of his uncle and Aunt Rachel, he was induced (nothing both, if the truth must be told) to present himself in full uniform.

There is no better antidote against entertaining too high an opinion of others than having an excellent one of ourselves at the very same time. Miss Stubbs had indeed summoned up every assistance which art could afford to beauty; but, alas! hoop, patches, frizzled locks, and a new mantua of genuine French silk, were lost upon a young officer of dragoons who wore for the first time his gold-laced hat, jack-boots, and broadsword. I know not whether, like the champion of an old ballad,—

*His heart was all on honour bent,
He could not stoop to love;
No lady in the land had power
His frozen heart to move;*

or whether the deep and flaming bars of embroidered gold, which now fenced his breast, defied the artillery of Cecilia's eyes; but every arrow was launched at him in vain.

*Yet did I mark where Cupid's shaft did light;
It lighted not on little western flower,
But on bold yeoman, flower of all the west,
Hight Jonas Culbertfield, the steward's son.*

Craving pardon for my heroics (which I am unable in certain cases to resist giving way to), it is a melancholy fact, that my history must here take leave of the fair Cecilia, who, like many a daughter of Eve, after the departure of Edward, and the dissipation of certain idle visions which she had adopted, quietly contented herself with a pisaller, and gave her hand, at the distance of six months, to the aforesaid Jonas, son of the Baronet's steward, and heir (no unfertile prospect) to a steward's fortune, besides the snug probability of succeeding to his father's office. All these advantages moved Squire Stubbs, as much as the ruddy brown and manly form of the suitor influenced his daughter, to abate somewhat in the article of their gentry; and so the match was concluded. None seemed more gratified than Aunt Rachel, who had hitherto looked rather askance upon the presumptuous damsel (as much so, peradventure, as her nature would permit), but who, on the first appearance of the new-married pair at church, honoured the bride with a smile and a profound curtsy, in presence of the rector, the curate, the clerk, and the whole congregation of the united parishes of Waverley cum Beverley.

I beg pardon, once and for all, of those readers who take up novels merely for amusement, for plaguing them so long with old-fashioned politics, and Whig and Tory, and Hanoverians and Jacobites. The truth is, I cannot promise them that this story shall be intelligible, not to say probable, without it. My plan requires that I should explain the motives on which its action proceeded; and these motives necessarily arose from the feelings, prejudices, and parties of the times. I do not invite my fair readers, whose sex and impatience give them the greatest right to complain of these circumstances, into a flying chariot drawn by hippogriffs, or moved by enchantment. Mine is a humble English post-chaise, drawn upon four wheels, and keeping his Majesty's highway. Such as dislike the vehicle may leave it at the next halt, and wait for the conveyance of Prince Hussein's tapestry, or Malek the Weaver's flying sentrybox. Those who are contented to remain with me will be occasionally exposed to the dulness inseparable from heavy roads, steep hills, sloughs, and other terrestrial retardations; but with tolerable horses and a civil driver (as the advertisements have it), I engage to get as soon as possible into a more picturesque and romantic country, if my passengers incline to have

some patience with me during my first stages. [Footnote: These Introductory Chapters have been a good deal censured as tedious and unnecessary. Yet there are circumstances recorded in them which the author has not been able to persuade himself to retrench or cancel.]

CHAPTER IV

THE ADIEUS OF WAVERLEY

It was upon the evening of this memorable Sunday that Sir Everard entered the library, where he narrowly missed surprising our young hero as he went through the guards of the broadsword with the ancient weapon of old Sir Hildebrand, which, being preserved as an heirloom, usually hung over the chimney in the library, beneath a picture of the knight and his horse, where the features were almost entirely hidden by the knight's profusion of curled hair, and the Bucephalus which he bestrode concealed by the voluminous robes of the Bath with which he was decorated. Sir Everard entered, and after a glance at the picture and another at his nephew, began a little speech, which, however, soon dropt into the natural simplicity of his common manner, agitated upon the present occasion by no common feeling. 'Nephew,' he said; and then, as mending his phrase, 'My dear Edward, it is God's will, and also the will of your father, whom, under God, it is your duty to obey, that you should leave us to take up the profession of arms, in which so many of your ancestors have been distinguished. I have made such arrangements as will enable you to take the field as their descendant, and as the probable heir of the house of Waverley; and, sir, in the field of battle you will remember what name you bear. And, Edward, my dear boy, remember also that you are the last of that race, and the only hope of its revival depends upon you; therefore, as far as duty and honour will permit, avoid danger—I mean unnecessary danger—and keep no company with rakes, gamblers, and Whigs, of whom, it is to be feared, there are but too many in the service into which you are going. Your colonel, as I am informed, is an excellent man—for a Presbyterian; but you will remember your duty to God, the Church of England, and the—' (this breach ought to have been supplied, according to the rubric, with the word KING; but as, unfortunately, that word conveyed a double and embarrassing sense, one meaning *de facto* and the other *de jure*, the knight filled up the blank otherwise)—'the Church of England, and all constituted authorities.' Then, not trusting himself with any further oratory, he carried his nephew to his stables to see the horses destined for his campaign. Two were black (the regimental colour), superb chargers both; the other three were stout active hacks, designed for the road, or for his domestics, of whom two were to attend him from the Hall; an additional groom, if necessary, might be picked up in Scotland.

'You will depart with but a small retinue,' quoth the Baronet, 'compared to Sir Hildebrand, when he mustered before the gate of the Hall a larger body of horse than your whole regiment consists of. I could have wished that these twenty young fellows from my estate, who have enlisted in your troop, had been to march with you on your journey to Scotland. It would have been something, at least; but I am told their attendance would be thought unusual in these days, when every new and foolish fashion is introduced to break the natural dependence of the people upon their landlords.'

Sir Everard had done his best to correct this unnatural disposition of the times; for he had brightened the chain of attachment between the recruits and their young captain, not only by a copious repast of beef and ale, by way of parting feast, but by such a pecuniary donation to each individual as tended rather to improve the conviviality than the discipline of their march. After inspecting the cavalry, Sir Everard again conducted his nephew to the library, where he produced a letter, carefully folded, surrounded by a little stripe of floss-silk, according to ancient form, and sealed with an accurate impression of the Waverley coat-of-arms. It was addressed, with great formality, 'To Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine, Esq., of Bradwardine, at his principal mansion of Tully-Veolan, in Perthshire, North Britain. These—By the hands of Captain Edward Waverley, nephew of Sir Everard Waverley, of Waverley-Honour, Bart.'

The gentleman to whom this enormous greeting was addressed, of whom we shall have more to say in the sequel, had been in arms for the exiled family of Stuart in the year 1715, and was made prisoner at Preston in Lancashire. He was of a very ancient family, and somewhat embarrassed fortune; a scholar, according to the scholarship of Scotchmen, that is, his learning was more diffuse than accurate, and he was rather a reader than a grammarian. Of his zeal for the classic authors he is said to have given an uncommon instance. On the road between Preston and London, he made his escape from his guards; but being afterwards found loitering near the place where they had lodged the former night, he was recognised, and again arrested. His companions, and even his escort, were surprised at his infatuation, and could not help inquiring, why, being once at liberty, he had not made the best of his way to a place of safety; to which he replied, that he had intended to do so, but, in good faith, he had returned to seek his Titus Livius, which he had forgot in the hurry of his escape. [Footnote: See Note 3.] The simplicity of this anecdote struck the gentleman, who, as we before observed, had managed the defence of some of those unfortunate persons, at the expense of Sir Everard, and perhaps some others of the party. He was, besides, himself a special admirer of the old Patavian, and though probably his own zeal might not have carried him such extravagant lengths, even to recover the edition of Sweynheim and Pannartz (supposed to be the princeps), he did not the less estimate the devotion of the North Briton, and in consequence exerted himself to so much purpose to remove and soften evidence, detect legal flaws, et cetera, that he accomplished the final discharge and deliverance of Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine from certain very awkward consequences of a plea before our sovereign lord the king in Westminster.

The Baron of Bradwardine, for he was generally so called in Scotland (although his intimates, from his place of residence, used to denominate him Tully-Veolan, or more familiarly, Tully), no sooner stood rectus in curia than he posted down to pay his respects and make his acknowledgments at Waverley-Honour. A congenial passion for field-sports, and a general coincidence in political opinions, cemented his friendship with Sir Everard, notwithstanding the difference of their habits and studies in other particulars; and, having spent several weeks at Waverley-Honour, the Baron departed with many expressions of regard, warmly pressing the Baronet to return his visit, and partake of the diversion of grouse-shooting, upon his moors in Perthshire next season. Shortly after, Mr. Bradwardine remitted from Scotland a sum in reimbursement of expenses incurred in the King's High Court of Westminster, which, although not quite so formidable when reduced to the English denomination, had, in its original form of Scotch pounds, shillings, and pence, such a formidable effect upon the frame of Duncan Macwheeble, the laird's confidential factor, baron-baillie, and man of resource, that he had a fit of the cholic, which lasted for five days, occasioned, he said, solely and utterly by becoming the unhappy instrument of conveying such a serious sum of money out of his native country into the hands of the false English. But patriotism, as it is the fairest, so it is often the most suspicious mask of other feelings; and many who knew Bailie Macwheeble concluded that his professions of regret were not altogether disinterested, and that he would have grudged the moneys paid to the LOONS at Westminster much less had they not come from Bradwardine estate, a fund which he considered as more particularly his own. But the Bailie protested he was absolutely disinterested—

'Woe, woe, for Scotland, not a whit for me!'

The laird was only rejoiced that his worthy friend, Sir Everard Waverley of Waverley-Honour, was reimbursed of the expenditure which he had outlaid on account of the house of Bradwardine. It concerned, he said, the credit of his own family, and of the kingdom of Scotland at large, that these disbursements should be repaid forthwith, and, if delayed, it would be a matter of national reproach. Sir Everard, accustomed to treat much larger sums with indifference, received the remittance of £294, 13s. 6d. without being aware that the payment was an international concern, and, indeed, would probably have forgot the circumstance altogether, if Bailie Macwheeble had thought of comforting his cholic by intercepting the subsidy. A yearly intercourse took place, of a short letter and a hamper or a cask or two, between Waverley-Honour and Tully-Veolan, the English exports consisting of mighty cheeses and mightier ale, pheasants, and venison, and the Scottish returns being vested in grouse, white hares, pickled salmon, and usquebaugh; all which were meant, sent, and received as pledges of constant friendship

and amity between two important houses. It followed as a matter of course, that the heir-apparent of Waverley-Honour could not with propriety visit Scotland without being furnished with credentials to the Baron of Bradwardine.

When this matter was explained and settled, Mr. Pembroke expressed his wish to take a private and particular leave of his dear pupil. The good man's exhortations to Edward to preserve an unblemished life and morals, to hold fast the principles of the Christian religion, and to eschew the profane company of scoffers and latitudinarians, too much abounding in the army, were not unmingled with his political prejudices. It had pleased Heaven, he said, to place Scotland (doubtless for the sins of their ancestors in 1642) in a more deplorable state of darkness than even this unhappy kingdom of England. Here, at least, although the candlestick of the Church of England had been in some degree removed from its place, it yet afforded a glimmering light; there was a hierarchy, though schismatical, and fallen from the principles maintained by those great fathers of the church, Sancroft and his brethren; there was a liturgy, though woefully perverted in some of the principal petitions. But in Scotland it was utter darkness; and, excepting a sorrowful, scattered, and persecuted remnant, the pulpits were abandoned to Presbyterians, and, he feared, to sectaries of every description. It should be his duty to fortify his dear pupil to resist such unhallowed and pernicious doctrines in church and state as must necessarily be forced at times upon his unwilling ears.

Here he produced two immense folded packets, which appeared each to contain a whole ream of closely written manuscript. They had been the labour of the worthy man's whole life; and never were labour and zeal more absurdly wasted. He had at one time gone to London, with the intention of giving them to the world, by the medium of a bookseller in Little Britain, well known to deal in such commodities, and to whom he was instructed to address himself in a particular phrase and with a certain sign, which, it seems, passed at that time current among the initiated Jacobites. The moment Mr. Pembroke had uttered the Shibboleth, with the appropriate gesture, the bibliopoliſt greeted him, notwithstanding every disclamation, by the title of Doctor, and conveying him into his back shop, after inspecting every possible and impossible place of concealment, he commenced: 'Eh, Doctor!—Well—all under the rose—snug—I keep no holes here even for a Hanoverian rat to hide in. And, what—eh! any good news from our friends over the water?—and how does the worthy King of France?—Or perhaps you are more lately from Rome? it must be Rome will do it at last—the church must light its candle at the old lamp.—Eh—what, cautious? I like you the better; but no fear.' Here Mr. Pembroke with some difficulty stopt a torrent of interrogations, eked out with signs, nods, and winks; and, having at length convinced the bookseller that he did him too much honour in supposing him an emissary of exiled royalty, he explained his actual business.

The man of books with a much more composed air proceeded to examine the manuscripts. The title of the first was 'A Dissent from Dissenters, or the Comprehension confuted; showing the Impossibility of any Composition between the Church and Puritans, Presbyterians, or Sectaries of any Description; illustrated from the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and the soundest Controversial Divines.' To this work the bookseller positively demurred. 'Well meant,' he said, 'and learned, doubtless; but the time had gone by. Printed on small-pica it would run to eight hundred pages, and could never pay. Begged therefore to be excused. Loved and honoured the true church from his soul, and, had it been a sermon on the martyrdom, or any twelve-penny touch—why, I would venture something for the honour of the cloth. But come, let's see the other. "Right Hereditary righted!"—Ah! there's some sense in this. Hum—hum—hum—pages so many, paper so much, letter-press—Ah—I'll tell you, though, Doctor, you must knock out some of the Latin and Greek; heavy, Doctor, damn'd heavy—(beg your pardon) and if you throw in a few grains more pepper—I am he that never preached my author. I have published for Drake and Charlwood Lawton, and poor Amhurst [Footnote: See Note 4.]—Ah, Caleb! Caleb! Well, it was a shame to let poor Caleb starve, and so many fat rectors and squires among us. I gave him a dinner once a week; but, Lord love you, what's once a week, when a man does not know where to go the other six days? Well, but I must show the manuscript to little Tom Alibi the solicitor, who manages all my law affairs—must keep on the windy side; the mob were very uncivil the last time I mounted in Old Palace Yard—all Whigs and Roundheads every man of them, Williamites and Hanover rats.'

The next day Mr. Pembroke again called on the publisher, but found Tom Alibi's advice had determined him against undertaking the work. 'Not but what I would go to—(what was I going to say?) to the Plantations for the church with pleasure—but, dear Doctor, I have a wife and family; but, to show my zeal, I'll recommend the job to my neighbour Trimmel—he is a bachelor, and leaving off business, so a voyage in a western barge would not inconvenience him.' But Mr. Trimmel was also obdurate, and Mr. Pembroke, fortunately perchance for himself, was compelled to return to Waverley-Honour with his treatise in vindication of the real fundamental principles of church and state safely packed in his saddle-bags.

As the public were thus likely to be deprived of the benefit arising from his lucubrations by the selfish cowardice of the trade, Mr. Pembroke resolved to make two copies of these tremendous manuscripts for the use of his pupil. He felt that he had been indolent as a tutor, and, besides, his conscience checked him for complying with the request of Mr. Richard Waverley, that he would impress no sentiments upon Edward's mind inconsistent with the present settlement in church and state. But now, thought he, I may, without breach of my word, since he is no longer under my tuition, afford the youth the means of judging for himself, and have only to dread his reproaches for so long concealing the light which the perusal will flash upon his mind. While he thus indulged the reveries of an author and a politician, his darling proselyte, seeing nothing very inviting in the title of the tracts, and appalled by the bulk and compact lines of the manuscript, quietly consigned them to a corner of his travelling trunk.

Aunt Rachel's farewell was brief and affectionate. She only cautioned her dear Edward, whom she probably deemed somewhat susceptible, against the fascination of Scottish beauty. She allowed that the northern part of the island contained some ancient families, but they were all Whigs and Presbyterians except the Highlanders; and respecting them she must needs say, there could be no great delicacy among the ladies, where the gentlemen's usual attire was, as she had been assured, to say the least, very singular, and not at all decorous. She concluded her farewell with a kind and moving benediction, and gave the young officer, as a pledge of her regard, a valuable diamond ring (often worn by the male sex at that time), and a purse of broad gold-pieces, which also were more common Sixty Years Since than they have been of late.

CHAPTER VII

A HORSE-QUARTER IN SCOTLAND

The next morning, amid varied feelings, the chief of which was a predominant, anxious, and even solemn impression, that he was now in a great measure abandoned to his own guidance and direction, Edward Waverley departed from the Hall amid the blessings and tears of all the old domestics and the inhabitants of the village, mingled with some sly petitions for sergeantcies and corporalships, and so forth, on the part of those who professed that 'they never thoſt to ha' seen Jacob, and Giles, and Jonathan go off for soldiers, save to attend his honour, as in duty bound.' Edward, as in duty bound, extricated himself from the supplicants with the pledge of fewer promises than might have been expected from a young man so little accustomed to the world. After a short visit to London, he proceeded on horseback, then the general mode of travelling, to Edinburgh, and from thence to Dundee, a seaport on the eastern coast of Angus-shire, where his regiment was then quartered.

He now entered upon a new world, where, for a time, all was beautiful because all was new. Colonel Gardiner, the commanding officer of the regiment, was himself a study for a romantic, and at the same time an inquisitive youth. In person he was tall, handsome, and active, though somewhat advanced in life. In his early years he had been what is called, by manner of palliative, a very gay young man, and strange stories were circulated about his sudden conversion from

doubt, if not infidelity, to a serious and even enthusiastic turn of mind. It was whispered that a supernatural communication, of a nature obvious even to the exterior senses, had produced this wonderful change; and though some mentioned the proselyte as an enthusiast, none hinted at his being a hypocrite. This singular and mystical circumstance gave Colonel Gardiner a peculiar and solemn interest in the eyes of the young soldier. [Footnote: See Note 5.] It may be easily imagined that the officers, of a regiment commanded by so respectable a person composed a society more sedate and orderly than a military mess always exhibits; and that Waverley escaped some temptations to which he might otherwise have been exposed.

Meanwhile his military education proceeded. Already a good horseman, he was now initiated into the arts of the manege, which, when carried to perfection, almost realise the fable of the Centaur, the guidance of the horse appearing to proceed from the rider's mere volition, rather than from the use of any external and apparent signal of motion. He received also instructions in his field duty; but I must own, that when his first ardour was past, his progress fell short in the latter particular of what he wished and expected. The duty of an officer, the most imposing of all others to the inexperienced mind, because accompanied with so much outward pomp and circumstance, is in its essence a very dry and abstract task, depending chiefly upon arithmetical combinations, requiring much attention, and a cool and reasoning head to bring them into action. Our hero was liable to fits of absence, in which his blunders excited some mirth, and called down some reproof. This circumstance impressed him with a painful sense of inferiority in those qualities which appeared most to deserve and obtain regard in his new profession. He asked himself in vain, why his eye could not judge of distance or space so well as those of his companions; why his head was not always successful in disentangling the various partial movements necessary to execute a particular evolution; and why his memory, so alert upon most occasions, did not correctly retain technical phrases and minute points of etiquette or field discipline. Waverley was naturally modest, and therefore did not fall into the egregious mistake of supposing such minuter rules of military duty beneath his notice, or conceiving himself to be born a general, because he made an indifferent subaltern. The truth was, that the vague and unsatisfactory course of reading which he had pursued, working upon a temper naturally retired and abstracted, had given him that wavering and unsettled habit of mind which is most averse to study and riveted attention. Time, in the mean while, hung heavy on his hands. The gentry of the neighbourhood were disaffected, and showed little hospitality to the military guests; and the people of the town, chiefly engaged in mercantile pursuits, were not such as Waverley chose to associate with. The arrival of summer, and a curiosity to know something more of Scotland than he could see in a ride from his quarters, determined him to request leave of absence for a few weeks. He resolved first to visit his uncle's ancient friend and correspondent, with the purpose of extending or shortening the time of his residence according to circumstances. He travelled of course on horse-back, and with a single attendant, and passed his first night at a miserable inn, where the landlady had neither shoes nor stockings, and the landlord, who called himself a gentleman, was disposed to be rude to his guest, because he had not bespoke the pleasure of his society to supper. [Footnote: See Note 6.] The next day, traversing an open and unclosed country, Edward gradually approached the Highlands of Perthshire, which at first had appeared a blue outline in the horizon, but now swelled into huge gigantic masses, which frowned defiance over the more level country that lay beneath them. Near the bottom of this stupendous barrier, but still in the Lowland country, dwelt Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine of Bradwardine; and, if grey-haired eld can be in aught believed, there had dwelt his ancestors, with all their heritage, since the days of the gracious King Duncan.

CHAPTER VIII

A SCOTTISH MANOR-HOUSE SIXTY YEARS SINCE

It was about noon when Captain Waverley entered the straggling village, or rather hamlet, of Tully-Veolan, close to which was situated the mansion of the proprietor. The houses seemed miserable in the extreme, especially to an eye accustomed to the smiling neatness of English cottages. They stood, without any respect for regularity, on each side of a straggling kind of unpaved street, where children, almost in a primitive state of nakedness, lay sprawling, as if to be crushed by the hoofs of the first passing horse. Occasionally, indeed, when such a consummation seemed inevitable, a watchful old grandam, with her close cap, distaff, and spindle, rushed like a sibyl in frenzy out of one of these miserable cells, dashed into the middle of the path, and snatching up her own charge from among the sunburnt loiterers, saluted him with a sound cuff, and transported him back to his dungeon, the little white-headed varlet screaming all the while, from the very top of his lungs, a shrilly treble to the growling remonstrances of the enraged matron. Another part in this concert was sustained by the incessant yelping of a score of idle useless curs, which followed, snarling, barking, howling, and snapping at the horses' heels; a nuisance at that time so common in Scotland, that a French tourist, who, like other travellers, longed to find a good and rational reason for everything he saw, has recorded, as one of the memorabilia of Caledonia, that the state maintained, in each village a relay of curs, called collies, whose duty it was to chase the chevaux de poste (too starved and exhausted to move without such a stimulus) from one hamlet to another, till their annoying convoy drove them to the end of their stage. The evil and remedy (such as it is) still exist.— But this is remote from our present purpose, and is only thrown out for consideration of the collectors under Mr. Dent's Dog Bill.

As Waverley moved on, here and there an old man, bent as much by toil as years, his eyes bleared with age and smoke, tottered to the door of his hut, to gaze on the dress of the stranger and the form and motions of the horses, and then assembled, with his neighbours, in a little group at the smithy, to discuss the probabilities of whence the stranger came and where he might be going. Three or four village girls, returning from the well or brook with pitchers and pails upon their heads, formed more pleasing objects, and, with their thin short-gowns and single petticoats, bare arms, legs, and feet, uncovered heads and braided hair, somewhat resembled Italian forms of landscape. Nor could a lover of the picturesque have challenged either the elegance of their costume or the symmetry of their shape; although, to say the truth, a mere Englishman in search of the COMFORTABLE, a word peculiar to his native tongue, might have wished the clothes less scanty, the feet and legs somewhat protected from the weather, the head and complexion shrouded from the sun, or perhaps might even have thought the whole person and dress considerably improved by a plentiful application of spring water, with a quantum sufficit of soap. The whole scene was depressing; for it argued, at the first glance, at least a stagnation of industry, and perhaps of intellect. Even curiosity, the busiest passion of the idle, seemed of a listless cast in the village of Tully-Veolan: the curs aforesaid alone showed any part of its activity; with the villagers it was passive. They stood, and gazed at the handsome young officer and his attendant, but without any of those quick motions and eager looks that indicate the earnestness with which those who live in monotonous ease at home look out for amusement abroad. Yet the physiognomy of the people, when more closely examined, was far from exhibiting the indifference of stupidity; their features were rough, but remarkably intelligent; grave, but the very reverse of stupid; and from among the young women an artist might have chosen more than one model whose features and form resembled those of Minerva. The children also, whose skins were burnt black, and whose hair was bleached white, by the influence of the sun, had a look and manner of life and interest. It seemed, upon the whole, as if poverty, and indolence, its too frequent companion, were combining to depress the natural genius and acquired information of a hardy, intelligent, and reflecting peasantry.

Some such thoughts crossed Waverley's mind as he paced his horse slowly through the rugged and flinty street of Tully-Veolan, interrupted only in his meditations by the occasional caprioles which his charger exhibited at the reiterated assaults of those canine Cossacks, the collies before mentioned. The village was more than half a mile long, the cottages being irregularly divided from each other by gardens, or yards, as the inhabitants called them, of different sizes, where (for it is Sixty Years Since) the now universal potato was unknown, but which were stored with gigantic plants of kale or colewort, encircled with groves of nettles, and exhibited here and there a huge hemlock, or the national thistle, overshadowing a quarter of the petty inclosure. The broken ground on which the village was built

had never been levelled; so that these inclosures presented declivities of every degree, here rising like terraces, there sinking like tan-pits. The dry-stone walls which fenced, or seemed to fence (for they were sorely breached), these hanging gardens of Tully-Veolan were intersected by a narrow lane leading to the common field, where the joint labour of the villagers cultivated alternate ridges and patches of rye, oats, barley, and pease, each of such minute extent that at a little distance the unprofitable variety of the surface resembled a tailor's book of patterns. In a few favoured instances, there appeared behind the cottages a miserable wigwam, compiled of earth, loose stones, and turf, where the wealthy might perhaps shelter a starved cow or sorely galled horse. But almost every hut was fenced in front by a huge black stack of turf on one side of the door, while on the other the family dunghill ascended in noble emulation.

About a bowshot from the end of the village appeared the inclosures proudly denominated the Parks of Tully-Veolan, being certain square fields, surrounded and divided by stone walls five feet in height. In the centre of the exterior barrier was the upper gate of the avenue, opening under an archway, battlemented on the top, and adorned with two large weather-beaten mutilated masses of upright stone, which, if the tradition of the hamlet could be trusted, had once represented, at least had been once designed to represent, two rampant Bears, the supporters of the family of Bradwardine. This avenue was straight and of moderate length, running between a double row of very ancient horse-chestnuts, planted alternately with sycamores, which rose to such huge height, and nourished so luxuriantly, that their boughs completely over-arched the broad road beneath. Beyond these venerable ranks, and running parallel to them, were two high walls, of apparently the like antiquity, overgrown with ivy, honeysuckle, and other climbing plants. The avenue seemed very little trodden, and chiefly by foot-passengers; so that being very broad, and enjoying a constant shade, it was clothed with grass of a deep and rich verdure, excepting where a foot-path, worn by occasional passengers, tracked with a natural sweep the way from the upper to the lower gate. This nether portal, like the former, opened in front of a wall ornamented with some rude sculpture, with battlements on the top, over which were seen, half-hidden by the trees of the avenue, the high steep roofs and narrow gables of the mansion, with lines indented into steps, and corners decorated with small turrets. One of the folding leaves of the lower gate was open, and as the sun shone full into the court behind, a long line of brilliancy was flung upon the aperture up the dark and gloomy avenue. It was one of those effects which a painter loves to represent, and mingled well with the struggling light which found its way between the boughs of the shady arch that vaulted the broad green alley.

The solitude and repose of the whole scene seemed almost monastic; and Waverley, who had given his horse to his servant on entering the first gate, walked slowly down the avenue, enjoying the grateful and cooling shade, and so much pleased with the placid ideas of rest and seclusion excited by this confined and quiet scene, that he forgot the misery and dirt of the hamlet he had left behind him. The opening into the paved court-yard corresponded with the rest of the scene. The house, which seemed to consist of two or three high, narrow, and steep-roofed buildings, projecting from each other at right angles, formed one side of the inclosure. It had been built at a period when castles were no longer necessary, and when the Scottish architects had not yet acquired the art of designing a domestic residence. The windows were numberless, but very small; the roof had some nondescript kind of projections, called bartizans, and displayed at each frequent angle a small turret, rather resembling a pepper-box than a Gothic watchtower. Neither did the front indicate absolute security from danger. There were loop-holes for musketry, and iron stanchions on the lower windows, probably to repel any roving band of gypsies, or resist a predatory visit from the caterans of the neighbouring Highlands. Stables and other offices occupied another side of the square. The former were low vaults, with narrow slits instead of windows, resembling, as Edward's groom observed, 'rather a prison for murderers, and larceners, and such like as are tried at 'sises, than a place for any Christian cattle.' Above these dungeon-looking stables were granaries, called girnells, and other offices, to which there was access by outside stairs of heavy masonry. Two battlemented walls, one of which faced the avenue, and the other divided the court from the garden, completed the inclosure.

Nor was the court without its ornaments. In one corner was a tun-bellied pigeon-house, of great size and rotundity, resembling in figure and proportion the curious edifice called Arthur's Oven, which would have turned the brains of all the antiquaries in England, had not the worthy proprietor pulled it down for the sake of mending a neighbouring dam-dyke. This dove-cot, or columbarium, as the owner called it, was no small resource to a Scottish laird of that period, whose scanty rents were eked out by the contributions levied upon the farms by these light foragers, and the conscriptions exacted from the latter for the benefit of the table. Another corner of the court displayed a fountain, where a huge bear, carved in stone, predominated over a large stone-basin, into which he disgorged the water. This work of art was the wonder of the country ten miles round. It must not be forgotten, that all sorts of bears, small and large, demi or in full proportion, were carved over the windows, upon the ends of the gables, terminated the spouts, and supported the turrets, with the ancient family motto, 'Beware the Bear', cut under each hyperborean form. The court was spacious, well paved, and perfectly clean, there being probably another entrance behind the stables for removing the litter. Everything around appeared solitary, and would have been silent, but for the continued plashing of the fountain; and the whole scene still maintained the monastic illusion which the fancy of Waverley had conjured up. And here we beg permission to close a chapter of still life. [Footnote: See Note 7.]

CHAPTER IX

MORE OF THE MANOR-HOUSE AND ITS ENVIRONS

After having satisfied his curiosity by gazing around him for a few minutes, Waverley applied himself to the massive knocker of the hall-door, the architrave of which bore the date 1594. But no answer was returned, though the peal resounded through a number of apartments, and was echoed from the court-yard walls without the house, startling the pigeons from the venerable rotunda which they occupied, and alarming anew even the distant village curs, which had retired to sleep upon their respective dunghills. Tired of the din which he created, and the unprofitable responses which it excited, Waverley began to think that he had reached the castle of Orgoglio as entered by the victorious Prince Arthur,—

When	'gan	he	loudly	through	the	house	to	call,
But	no	man	cared	to	answer	to	his	cry;
There	reign'd	a	solemn	silence	over			all,

Nor voice was heard, nor wight was seen in bower or hall.

Filled almost with expectation of beholding some 'old, old man, with beard as white as snow,' whom he might question concerning this deserted mansion, our hero turned to a little oaken wicket-door, well clenched with iron-nails, which opened in the court-yard wall at its angle with the house. It was only latched, notwithstanding its fortified appearance, and, when opened, admitted him into the garden, which presented a pleasant scene. [Footnote: Footnote: At Ravelston may be seen such a garden, which the taste of the proprietor, the author's friend and kinsman, Sir Alexander Keith, Knight Mareschal, has judiciously preserved. That, as well as the house is, however, of smaller dimensions than the Baron of Bradwardine's mansion and garden are presumed to have been.] The southern side of the house, clothed with fruit-trees, and having many evergreens trained upon its walls, extended its irregular yet venerable front along a terrace, partly paved, partly gravelled, partly bordered with flowers and choice shrubs. This elevation descended by three several flights of steps, placed in its centre and at the extremities, into what might be called the garden proper, and was fenced along the top by a stone parapet with a heavy balustrade, ornamented from space to space with huge grotesque figures of animals seated upon their haunches, among which the favourite bear was repeatedly introduced. Placed in the middle of the terrace between a sashed-door opening from the house and the central flight of steps, a huge animal of the same species supported on his head and fore-paws a sun-dial of large circumference, inscribed with more diagrams than Edward's mathematics enabled him to decipher.

The garden, which seemed to be kept with great accuracy, abounded in fruit-trees, and exhibited a profusion of flowers and evergreens, cut into grotesque forms. It was laid out in terraces, which descended rank by rank from the western wall to a large brook, which had a tranquil and smooth appearance, where it served as a boundary to the garden; but, near the extremity, leapt in tumult over a strong dam, or wear-head, the cause of its temporary tranquillity, and there forming a cascade, was overlooked by an octangular summer-house, with a gilded bear on the top by way of vane. After this feat, the brook, assuming its natural rapid and fierce character, escaped from the eye down a deep and wooded dell, from the copse of which arose a massive, but ruinous tower, the former habitation of the Barons of Bradwardine. The margin of the brook, opposite to the garden, displayed a narrow meadow, or haugh, as it was called, which formed a small washing-green; the bank, which retired behind it, was covered by ancient trees.

The scene, though pleasing, was not quite equal to the gardens of Alcina; yet wanted not the 'due donzellette garrule' of that enchanted paradise, for upon the green aforesaid two bare-legged damsels, each standing in a spacious tub, performed with their feet the office of a patent washing-machine. These did not, however, like the maidens of Armida, remain to greet with their harmony the approaching guest, but, alarmed at the appearance of a handsome stranger on the opposite side, dropped their garments (I should say garment, to be quite correct) over their limbs, which their occupation exposed somewhat too freely, and, with a shrill exclamation of 'Eh, sirs!' uttered with an accent between modesty and coquetry, sprung off like deer in different directions.

Waverley began to despair of gaining entrance into this solitary and seemingly enchanted mansion, when a man advanced up one of the garden alleys, where he still retained his station. Trusting this might be a gardener, or some domestic belonging to the house, Edward descended the steps in order to meet him; but as the figure approached, and long before he could descry its features, he was struck with the oddity of its appearance and gestures. Sometimes this mister wight held his hands clasped over his head, like an Indian Jogue in the attitude of penance; sometimes he swung them perpendicularly, like a pendulum, on each side; and anon he slapped them swiftly and repeatedly across his breast, like the substitute used by a hackney-coachman for his usual flogging exercise, when his cattle are idle upon the stand, in a clear frosty day. His gait was as singular as his gestures, for at times he hopped with great perseverance on the right foot, then exchanged that supporter to advance in the same manner on the left, and then putting his feet close together he hopped upon both at once. His attire also was antiquated and extravagant. It consisted in a sort of grey jerkin, with scarlet cuffs and slashed sleeves, showing a scarlet lining; the other parts of the dress corresponded in colour, not forgetting a pair of scarlet stockings, and a scarlet bonnet, proudly surmounted with a turkey's feather. Edward, whom he did not seem to observe, now perceived confirmation in his features of what the mien and gestures had already announced. It was apparently neither idiocy nor insanity which gave that wild, unsettled, irregular expression to a face which naturally was rather handsome, but something that resembled a compound of both, where the simplicity of the fool was mixed with the extravagance of a crazed imagination. He sung with great earnestness, and not without some taste, a fragment of an old Scottish ditty:—

*False love, and hast thou play'd me this
In summer among the flowers?
I will repay thee back again
In winter among the showers.
Unless again, again, my love,
Unless you turn again;
As you with other maidens rove,
I'll smile on other men.*

[Footnote: This is a genuine ancient fragment, with some alteration in the two last lines.]

Here lifting up his eyes, which had hitherto been fixed in observing how his feet kept time to the tune, he beheld Waverley, and instantly doffed his cap, with many grotesque signals of surprise, respect, and salutation. Edward, though with little hope of receiving an answer to any constant question, requested to know whether Mr. Bradwardine were at home, or where he could find any of the domestics. The questioned party replied, and, like the witch of Thalaba, 'still his speech was song,'—

*The Knight's to the mountain
His bugle to wind;
The Lady's to greenwood
Her garland to bind.
The bower of Burd Ellen
Has moss on the floor,
That the step of Lord William
Be silent and sure.*

This conveyed no information, and Edward, repeating his queries, received a rapid answer, in which, from the haste and peculiarity of the dialect, the word 'butler' was alone intelligible. Waverley then requested to see the butler; upon which the fellow, with a knowing look and nod of intelligence, made a signal to Edward to follow, and began to dance and caper down the alley up which he had made his approaches. A strange guide this, thought Edward, and not much unlike one of Shakespeare's roynish clowns. I am not over prudent to trust to his pilotage; but wiser men have been led by fools. By this time he reached the bottom of the alley, where, turning short on a little parterre of flowers, shrouded from the east and north by a close yew hedge, he found an old man at work without his coat, whose appearance hovered between that of an upper servant and gardener; his red nose and ruffled shirt belonging to the former profession; his hale and sunburnt visage, with his green apron, appearing to indicate

Old Adam's likeness, set to dress this garden.

The major domo, for such he was, and indisputably the second officer of state in the barony (nay, as chief minister of the interior, superior even to Bailie Macwheeble in his own department of the kitchen and cellar)—the major domo laid down his spade, slipped on his coat in haste, and with a wrathful look at Edward's guide, probably excited by his having introduced a stranger while he was engaged in this laborious, and, as he might suppose it, degrading office, requested to know the gentleman's commands. Being informed that he wished to pay his respects to his master, that his name was Waverley, and so forth, the old man's countenance assumed a great deal of respectful importance. 'He could take it upon his conscience to say, his honour would have exceeding pleasure in seeing him. Would not Mr. Waverley choose some refreshment after his journey? His honour was with the folk who were getting doon the dark hag; the twa gardener lads (an emphasis on the word twa) had been ordered to attend him; and he had been just amusing himself in the mean time with dressing Miss Rose's flower-bed, that he might be near to receive his honour's orders, if need were; he was very fond of a garden, but had little time for such diversements.'

'He canna get it wrought in abune twa days in the week at no rate whatever,' said Edward's fantastic conductor.

A grim look from the butler chastised his interference, and he commanded him, by the name of Davie Gellatley, in a tone which admitted no discussion, to look for his honour at the dark hag, and tell him there was a gentleman from the south had arrived at the Ha'.

'Can this poor fellow deliver a letter?' asked Edward.

'With all fidelity, sir, to any one whom he respects. I would hardly trust him with a long message by word of mouth—though he is more knave than fool.'

Waverley delivered his credentials to Mr. Gellatley, who seemed to confirm the butler's last observation, by twisting his features at him, when he was looking another way, into the resemblance of the grotesque face on the bole of a German tobacco pipe; after which, with an odd conge to Waverley, he danced off to discharge his errand.

'He is an innocent, sir,' said the butler; 'there is one such in almost every town in the country, but ours is brought far ben. [Footnote: See Note 8.] He used to work a day's turn weel enough; but he helped Miss Rose when she was flemit with the Laird of Killancureit's new English bull, and since that time we ca' him Davie Dottle; indeed we might ca' him Davie Do-naething, for since he got that gay clothing, to please his honour and my young mistress (great folks will have their fancies), he has done naething but dance up and down about the toun, without doing a single turn, unless trimming the laird's fishing-wand or busking his flies, or may be catching a dish of trouts at an orra time. But here comes Miss Rose, who, I take burden upon me for her, will be especial glad to see one of the house of Waverley at her father's mansion of Tully-Veolan.'

But Rose Bradwardine deserves better of her unworthy historian than to be introduced at the end of a chapter.

In the mean while it may be noticed, that Waverley learned two things from this colloquy: that in Scotland a single house was called a TOWN, and a natural fool an INNOCENT.

CHAPTER X

ROSE BRADWARDINE AND HER FATHER

Miss Bradwardine was but seventeen; yet, at the last races of the county town of——, upon her health being proposed among a round of beauties, the Laird of Bumperquaigh, permanent toast-master and croupier of the Bautherwhillery Club, not only said MORE to the pledge in a pint bumper of Bourdeaux, but, ere pouring forth the libation, denominated the divinity to whom it was dedicated, 'the Rose of Tully-Veolan'; upon which festive occasion three cheers were given by all the sitting members of that respectable society, whose throats the wine had left capable of such exertion. Nay, I am well assured, that the sleeping partners of the company snorted applause, and that although strong bumpers and weak brains had consigned two or three to the floor, yet even these, fallen as they were from their high estate, and weltering—I will carry the parody no farther—uttered divers inarticulate sounds, intimating their assent to the motion.

Such unanimous applause could not be extorted but by acknowledged merit; and Rose Bradwardine not only deserved it, but also the approbation of much more rational persons than the Bautherwhillery Club could have mustered, even before discussion of the first magnum. She was indeed a very pretty girl of the Scotch cast of beauty, that is, with a profusion of hair of paley gold, and a skin like the snow of her own mountains in whiteness. Yet she had not a pallid or pensive cast of countenance; her features, as well as her temper, had a lively expression; her complexion, though not florid, was so pure as to seem transparent, and the slightest emotion sent her whole blood at once to her face and neck. Her form, though under the common size, was remarkably elegant, and her motions light, easy, and unembarrassed. She came from another part of the garden to receive Captain Waverley, with a manner that hovered between bashfulness and courtesy.

The first greetings past, Edward learned from her that the dark hag, which had somewhat puzzled him in the butler's account of his master's avocations, had nothing to do either with a black cat or a broomstick, but was simply a portion of oak copse which was to be felled that day. She offered, with diffident civility, to show the stranger the way to the spot, which, it seems, was not far distant; but they were prevented by the appearance of the Baron of Bradwardine in person, who, summoned by David Gellatley, now appeared, 'on hospitable thoughts intent,' clearing the ground at a prodigious rate with swift and long strides, which reminded Waverley of the seven-league boots of the nursery fable. He was a tall, thin, athletic figure, old indeed and grey-haired, but with every muscle rendered as tough as whip-cord by constant exercise. He was dressed carelessly, and more like a Frenchman than an Englishman of the period, while, from his hard features and perpendicular rigidity of stature, he bore some resemblance to a Swiss officer of the guards, who had resided some time at Paris, and caught the costume, but not the ease or manner, of its inhabitants. The truth was, that his language and habits were as heterogeneous as his external appearance.

Owing to his natural disposition to study, or perhaps to a very general Scottish fashion of giving young men of rank a legal education, he had been bred with a view to the bar. But the politics of his family precluding the hope of his rising in that profession, Mr. Bradwardine travelled with high reputation for several years, and made some campaigns in foreign service. After his demele with the law of high treason in 1715, he had lived in retirement, conversing almost entirely with those of his own principles in the vicinage. The pedantry of the lawyer, superinduced upon the military pride of the soldier, might remind a modern of the days of the zealous volunteer service, when the bar-gown of our pleaders was often flung over a blazing uniform. To this must be added the prejudices of ancient birth and Jacobite politics, greatly strengthened by habits of solitary and secluded authority, which, though exercised only within the bounds of his half-cultivated estate, was there indisputable and undisputed. For, as he used to observe, 'the lands of Bradwardine, Tully-Veolan, and others, had been erected into a free barony by a charter from David the First, cum liberali potest. habendi curias et justicias, cum fossa et furca (LIE, pit and gallows) et saka et soka, et thol et theam, et infang-thief et outfang-thief, sive hand-habend, sive bak-barand.' The peculiar meaning of all these cabalistical words few or none could explain; but they implied, upon the whole, that the Baron of Bradwardine might, in case of delinquency, imprison, try, and execute his vassals at his pleasure. Like James the First, however, the present possessor of this authority was more pleased in talking about prerogative than in exercising it; and excepting that he imprisoned two poachers in the dungeon of the old tower of Tully-Veolan, where they were sorely frightened by ghosts, and almost eaten by rats, and that he set an old woman in the joughs (or Scottish pillory) for saying 'there were mair fules in the laird's ha' house than Davie Gellatley,' I do not learn that he was accused of abusing his high powers. Still, however, the conscious pride of possessing them gave additional importance to his language and deportment.

At his first address to Waverley, it would seem that the hearty pleasure he felt to behold the nephew of his friend had somewhat discomposed the stiff and upright dignity of the Baron of Bradwardine's demeanour, for the tears stood in the old gentleman's eyes, when, having first shaken Edward heartily by the hand in the English fashion, he embraced him a la mode Francoise, and kissed him on both sides of his face; while the hardness of his gripe, and the quantity of Scotch snuff which his accolade communicated, called corresponding drops of moisture to the eyes of his guest.

'Upon the honour of a gentleman,' he said, 'but it makes me young again to see you here, Mr. Waverley! A worthy scion of the old stock of Waverley-Honour—spes altera, as Maro hath it—and you have the look of the old line, Captain Waverley; not so portly yet as my old friend Sir Everard—mais cela viendra avec le tems, as my Dutch acquaintance, Baron Kikkibroeck, said of the sagesse of Madame son epouse. And so ye have mounted the cockade? Right, right; though I could have wished the colour different, and so I would ha' deemed might Sir Everard. But no more of that; I am old, and times are changed. And how does the worthy knight baronet, and the fair Mrs. Rachel?—Ah, ye laugh, young man! In troth she was the fair Mrs. Rachel in the year of grace seventeen hundred and sixteen; but time passes—et singula praedantur anni—that is most certain. But once again ye are most heartily welcome to my poor house of Tully-Veolan! Hie to the house, Rose, and see that Alexander Sanderson looks out the old Chateau Margaux, which I sent from Bourdeaux to Dundee in the year 1713.'

Rose tripped off demurely enough till she turned the first corner, and then ran with the speed of a fairy, that she might gain leisure, after discharging her father's commission, to put her own dress in order, and produce all her little finery, an occupation for which the approaching dinner-hour left but limited time.

'We cannot rival the luxuries of your English table, Captain Waverley, or give you the epulae lautiores of Waverley-Honour. I say epulae rather than prandium, because the latter phrase is popular: epulae ad senatum, prandium vero ad populum attinet, says Suetonius Tranquillus. But I trust ye will applaud my Bourdeaux; c'est des deux oreilles, as Captain Vinsauf used to say; vinum primae notae, the principal of Saint Andrews denominated it. And, once more, Captain Waverley, right glad am I that ye are here to drink the best my cellar can make forthcoming.'

This speech, with the necessary interjectional answers, continued from the lower alley where they met up to the door of the house, where four or five servants in old-fashioned liveries, headed by Alexander Saunderson, the butler, who now bore no token of the sable stains of the garden, received them in grand COSTUME, In an old hall hung round with pikes and with bows, With old bucklers and corslets that had borne many shrewd blows.

With much ceremony, and still more real kindness, the Baron, without stopping in any intermediate apartment, conducted his guest through several into the great dining parlour, wainscotted with black oak, and hung round with the pictures of his ancestry, where a table was set forth in form for six persons, and an old-fashioned beaufet displayed all the ancient and massive plate of the Bradwardine family. A bell was now heard at the head of the avenue; for an old man, who acted as porter upon gala days, had caught the alarm given by Waverley's arrival, and, repairing to his post, announced the arrival of other guests.

These, as the Baron assured his young friend, were very estimable persons. 'There was the young Laird of Balmawhapple, a Falconer by surname, of the house of Glenfarquhar, given right much to field-sports—gaudet equis et canibus—but a very discreet young gentleman. Then there was the Laird of Killancureit, who had devoted his leisure UNTILL tillage and agriculture, and boasted himself to be possessed of a bull of matchless merit, brought from the county of Devon (the Damnonia of the Romans, if we can trust Robert of Cirencester). He is, as ye may well suppose from such a tendency, but of yeoman extraction—servabit odorem testa diu—and I believe, between ourselves, his grandsire was from the wrong side of the Border—one Bullsegg, who came hither as a steward, or bailiff, or ground-officer, or something in that department, to the last Girnigo of Killancureit, who died of an atrophy. After his master's death, sir,—ye would hardly believe such a scandal,—but this Bullsegg, being portly and comely of aspect, intermarried with the lady dowager, who was young and amorous, and possessed himself of the estate, which devolved on this unhappy woman by a settlement of her umwhile husband, in direct contravention of an unrecorded tailie, and to the prejudice of the disponent's own flesh and blood, in the person of his natural heir and seventh cousin, Girnigo of Tipperhewit, whose family was so reduced by the ensuing law-suit, that his representative is now serving as a private gentleman-sentinel in the Highland Black Watch. But this gentleman, Mr. Bullsegg of Killancureit that now is, has good blood in his veins by the mother and grandmother, who were both of the family of Pickletillim, and he is well liked and looked upon, and knows his own place. And God forbid, Captain Waverley, that we of irreproachable lineage should exult over him, when it may be, that in the eighth, ninth, or tenth generation, his progeny may rank, in a manner, with the old gentry of the country. Rank and ancestry, sir, should be the last words in the mouths of us of unblemished race—vix ea nostra voco, as Naso saith. There is, besides, a clergyman of the true (though suffering) Episcopal church of Scotland. [Footnote: See Note 9.] He was a confessor in her cause after the year 1715, when a Whiggish mob destroyed his meeting-house, tore his surplice, and plundered his dwelling-house of four silver spoons, intronitting also with his mart and his mealark, and with two barrels, one of single and one of double ale, besides three bottles of brandy. My baron-bailie and doer, Mr. Duncan Macwheeble, is the fourth on our list. There is a question, owing to the incertitude of ancient orthography, whether he belongs to the clan of Wheedle or of Quibble, but both have produced persons eminent in the law.'—

As such he described them by person and name, They enter'd, and dinner was served as they came.

CHAPTER XI

THE BANQUET

The entertainment was ample and handsome, according to the Scotch ideas of the period, and the guests did great honour to it. The Baron eat like a famished soldier, the Laird of Balmawhapple like a sportsman, Bullsegg of Killancureit like a farmer, Waverley himself like a traveller, and Bailie Macwheeble like all four together; though, either out of more respect, or in order to preserve that proper declination of person which showed a sense that he was in the presence of his patron, he sat upon the edge of his chair, placed at three feet distance from the table, and achieved a communication with his plate by projecting his person towards it in a line which obliques from the bottom of his spine, so that the person who sat opposite to him could only see the foretop of his riding periwig.

This stooping position might have been inconvenient to another person; but long habit made it, whether seated or walking, perfectly easy to the worthy Bailie. In the latter posture it occasioned, no doubt, an unseemly projection of the person towards those who happened to walk behind; but those being at all times his inferiors (for Mr. Macwheeble was very scrupulous in giving place to all others), he cared very little what inference of contempt or slight regard they might derive from the circumstance. Hence, when he waddled across the court to and from his old grey pony, he somewhat resembled a turnspit walking upon its hind legs.

The nonjuring clergyman was a pensive and interesting old man, with much of the air of a sufferer for conscience' sake. He was one of those

Who, undeprived, their benefice forsook.

For this whim, when the Baron was out of hearing, the Bailie used sometimes gently to rally Mr. Rubrick, upbraiding him with the nicety of his scruples. Indeed, it must be owned, that he himself, though at heart a keen partisan of the exiled family, had kept pretty fair with all the different turns of state in his time; so that Davie Gellatley once described him as a particularly good man, who had a very quiet and peaceful conscience, THAT NEVER DID HIM ANY HARM.

When the dinner was removed, the Baron announced the health of the King, politely leaving to the consciences of his guests to drink to the sovereign de facto or de jure, as their politics inclined. The conversation now became general; and, shortly afterwards, Miss Bradwardine, who had done the honours with natural grace and simplicity, retired, and was soon followed by the clergyman. Among the rest of the party, the wine, which fully justified the encomiums of the landlord, flowed freely round, although Waverley, with some difficulty, obtained the privilege of sometimes neglecting the glass. At length, as the evening grew more late, the Baron made a private signal to Mr. Saunders Saunderson, or, as he facetiously denominated him, Alexander ab Alexandro, who left the room with a nod, and soon after returned, his grave countenance mantling with a solemn and mysterious smile, and placed before his master a small oaken casket, mounted with brass ornaments of curious form. The Baron, drawing out a private key, unlocked the casket, raised the lid, and produced a golden goblet of a singular and antique appearance, moulded into the shape of a rampant bear, which the owner regarded with a look of mingled reverence, pride, and delight, that irresistibly reminded Waverley of Ben Jonson's Tom Otter, with his Bull, Horse, and Dog, as that wag wittily denominated his chief carousing cups. But Mr. Bradwardine, turning towards him with complacency, requested him to observe this curious relic of the olden time.

'It represents,' he said, 'the chosen crest of our family, a bear, as ye observe, and RAMPANT; because a good herald will depict every animal in its noblest posture, as a horse SALIENT, a greyhound CURRANT, and, as may be inferred, a ravenous animal in actu ferociori, or in a voracious, lacerating, and devouring posture. Now, sir, we hold this most honourable achievement by the wappen-brief, or concession of arms, of Frederick Red-beard, Emperor of Germany, to my predecessor, Godmund Bradwardine, it being the crest of a gigantic Dane, whom he slew in the lists in the Holy Land, on a quarrel touching the chastity of the emperor's spouse or daughter, tradition saith not precisely which, and thus, as Virgilius hath it—

Then for the cup, Captain Waverley, it was wrought by the command of Saint Duthac, Abbot of Aberbrothock, for behoof of another baron of the house of Bradwardine, who had valiantly defended the patrimony of that monastery against certain encroaching nobles. It is properly termed the Blessed Bear of Bradwardine (though old Doctor Doubleit used jocosely to call it Ursa Major), and was supposed, in old and Catholic times, to be invested with certain properties of a mystical and supernatural quality. And though I give not in to such anilia, it is certain it has always been esteemed a solemn standard cup and heirloom of our house; nor is it ever used but upon seasons of high festival, and such I hold to be the arrival of the heir of Sir Everard under my roof; and I devote this draught to the health and prosperity of the ancient and highly-to-be-honoured house of Waverley.'

During this long harangue, he carefully decanted a cob-webbed bottle of claret into the goblet, which held nearly an English pint; and, at the conclusion, delivering the bottle to the butler, to be held carefully in the same angle with the horizon, he devoutly quaffed off the contents of the Blessed Bear of Bradwardine.

Edward, with horror and alarm, beheld the animal making his rounds, and thought with great anxiety upon the appropriate motto, 'Beware the Bear'; but, at the same time, plainly foresaw that, as none of the guests scrupled to do him this extraordinary honour, a refusal on his part to pledge their courtesy would be extremely ill received. Resolving, therefore, to submit to this last piece of tyranny, and then to quit the table, if possible, and confiding in the strength of his constitution, he did justice to the contents of the Blessed Bear, and felt less inconvenience from the draught than he could possibly have expected. The others, whose time had been more actively employed, began to show symptoms of innovation—'the good wine did its good office.' [Footnote: Southey's Madoc.] The frost of etiquette and pride of birth began to give way before the genial blessings of this benign constellation, and the formal appellatives with which the three dignitaries had hitherto addressed each other were now familiarly abbreviated into Tully, Bally, and Killie. When a few rounds had passed, the two latter, after whispering together, craved permission (a joyful hearing for Edward) to ask the grace-cup. This, after some delay, was at length produced, and Waverley concluded the orgies of Bacchus were terminated for the evening. He was never more mistaken in his life.

As the guests had left their horses at the small inn, or change-house, as it was called, of the village, the Baron could not, in politeness, avoid walking with them up the avenue, and Waverley from the same motive, and to enjoy after this feverish revel the cool summer evening, attended the party. But when they arrived at Luckie Macleary's the Lairds of Balmawhapple and Killancureit declared their determination to acknowledge their sense of the hospitality of Tully-Veolan by partaking, with their entertainer and his guest Captain Waverley, what they technically called deoch an doruis, a stirrup-cup, [Footnote 2: See Note 10] to the honour of the Baron's roof-tree.

It must be noticed that the Bailie, knowing by experience that the day's jovialty, which had been hitherto sustained at the expense of his patron, might terminate partly at his own, had mounted his spavined grey pony, and, between gaiety of heart and alarm for being hooked into a reckoning, spurred him into a hobbling canter (a trot was out of the question), and had already cleared the village. The others entered the change-house, leading Edward in unresisting submission; for his landlord whispered him, that to demur to such an overture would be construed into a high misdemeanour against the leges convivales, or regulations of genial computation. Widow Macleary seemed to have expected this visit, as well she might, for it was the usual consummation of merry bouts, not only at Tully-Veolan, but at most other gentlemen's houses in Scotland, Sixty Years Since. The guests thereby at once acquitted themselves of their burden of gratitude for their entertainer's kindness, encouraged the trade of his change-house, did honour to the place which afforded harbour to their horses, and indemnified themselves for the previous restraints imposed by private hospitality, by spending what Falstaff calls the sweet of the night in the genial license of a tavern.

Accordingly, in full expectation of these distinguished guests, Luckie Macleary had swept her house for the first time this fortnight, tempered her turf-fire to such a heat as the season required in her damp hovel even at Midsummer, set forth her deal table newly washed, propped its lame foot with a fragment of turf, arranged four or five stools of huge and clumsy form upon the sites which best suited the inequalities of her clay floor; and having, moreover, put on her clean toy, rokelay, and scarlet plaid, gravely awaited the arrival of the company, in full hope of custom and profit. When they were seated under the sooty rafters of Luckie Macleary's only apartment, thickly tapestried with cobwebs, their hostess, who had already taken her cue from the Laird of Balmawhapple, appeared with a huge pewter measuring-pot, containing at least three English quarts, familiarly denominated a Tappit Hen, and which, in the language of the hostess, reamed (i.e., mantled) with excellent claret just drawn from the cask.

It was soon plain that what crumbs of reason the Bear had not devoured were to be picked up by the Hen; but the confusion which appeared to prevail favoured Edward's resolution to evade the gaily circling glass. The others began to talk thick and at once, each performing his own part in the conversation without the least respect to his neighbour. The Baron of Bradwardine sung French chansons-a-boire, and spouted pieces of Latin; Killancureit talked, in a steady unalterable dull key, of top-dressing and bottom-dressing, [Footnote: This has been censured as an anachronism; and it must be confessed that agriculture of this kind was unknown to the Scotch Sixty Years Since.] and year-olds, and gimmers, and dinmonts, and stots, and runts, and kyloes, and a proposed turnpike-act; while Balmawhapple, in notes exalted above both, extolled his horse, his hawks, and a greyhound called Whistler. In the middle of this din, the Baron repeatedly implored silence; and when at length the instinct of polite discipline so far prevailed that for a moment he obtained it, he hastened to beseech their attention 'unto a military ariette, which was a particular favourite of the Marechal Duc de Berwick'; then, imitating, as well as he could, the manner and tone of a French musquetaire, he immediately commenced,—

*Mon coeur volage, dit elle,
N'est pas pour vous, garçon;
Est pour un homme de guerre,
Qui a barbe au menton.
Lon, Lon, Laridon.*

*Qui port chapeau a plume,
Soulier a rouge talon,
Qui joue de la flute,
Aussi du violon.
Lon, Lon, Laridon.*

Balmawhapple could hold no longer, but broke in with what he called a d—d good song, composed by Gibby Gaethroughwi't, the piper of Cupar; and, without wasting more time, struck up,—

*It's up Glenbarchan's braes I gaed,
And o'er the bent of Killiebraid,
And mony a weary cast I made,
To cuittle the moor-fowl's tail.*

[Footnote: Suum cuique. This snatch of a ballad was composed by Andrew MacDonald, the ingenious and unfortunate author of Vimonda.]

The Baron, whose voice was drowned in the louder and more obstreperous strains of Balmawhapple, now dropped the competition, but continued to hum 'Lon, Lon, Laridon,' and to regard the successful candidate for the attention of the company with an eye of disdain, while Balmawhapple proceeded,—

If up a bonny black-cock should spring,

*To whistle him down wi' a slug in his wing,
And strap him on to my lunzie string,
Right seldom would I fail.*

After an ineffectual attempt to recover the second verse, he sung the first over again; and, in prosecution of his triumph, declared there was 'more sense in that than in all the derry-dongs of France, and Fifeshire to the boot of it.' The Baron only answered with a long pinch of snuff and a glance of infinite contempt. But those noble allies, the Bear and the Hen, had emancipated the young laird from the habitual reverence in which he held Bradwardine at other times. He pronounced the claret shilpit, and demanded brandy with great vociferation. It was brought; and now the Demon of Politics envied even the harmony arising from this Dutch concert, merely because there was not a wrathful note in the strange compound of sounds which it produced. Inspired by her, the Laird of Balmawhapple, now superior to the nods and winks with which the Baron of Bradwardine, in delicacy to Edward, had hitherto checked his entering upon political discussion, demanded a bumper, with the lungs of a Stentor, 'to the little gentleman in black velvet who did such service in 1702, and may the white horse break his neck over a mound of his making!'

Edward was not at that moment clear-headed enough to remember that King William's fall, which occasioned his death, was said to be owing to his horse stumbling at a mole-hill; yet felt inclined to take umbrage at a toast which seemed, from the glance of Balmawhapple's eye, to have a peculiar and uncivil reference to the Government which he served. But, ere he could interfere, the Baron of Bradwardine had taken up the quarrel. 'Sir,' he said, 'whatever my sentiments *tanquam privatus* may be in such matters, I shall not tamely endure your saying anything that may impinge upon the honourable feelings of a gentleman under my roof. Sir, if you have no respect for the laws of urbanity, do ye not respect the military oath, the *sacramentum militare*, by which every officer is bound to the standards under which he is enrolled? Look at Titus Livius, what he says of those Roman soldiers who were so unhappy as *exuere sacramentum*, to renounce their legionary oath; but you are ignorant, sir, alike of ancient history and modern courtesy.'

'Not so ignorant as ye would pronounce me,' roared Balmawhapple. 'I ken weel that you mean the Solemn League and Covenant; but if a' the Whigs in hell had taken the—'

Here the Baron and Waverley both spoke at once, the former calling out, 'Be silent, sir! ye not only show your ignorance, but disgrace your native country before a stranger and an Englishman'; and Waverley, at the same moment, entreating Mr. Bradwardine to permit him to reply to an affront which seemed levelled at him personally. But the Baron was exalted by wine, wrath, and scorn above all sublunary considerations.

'I crave you to be hushed, Captain Waverley; you are elsewhere, peradventure, *sui juris*,—*foris-familiated*, that is, and entitled, it may be, to think and resent for yourself; but in my domain, in this poor Barony of Bradwardine, and under this roof, which is quasi mine, being held by tacit relocation by a tenant at will, I am in *loco parentis* to you, and bound to see you scathless. And for you, Mr. Falconer of Balmawhapple, I warn ye, let me see no more aberrations from the paths of good manners.'

'And I tell you, Mr. Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine of Bradwardine and Tully-Veolan,' retorted the sportsman in huge disdain, 'that I'll make a moor-cock of the man that refuses my toast, whether it be a crop-eared English Whig wi' a black ribband at his lug, or ane wha deserts his ain friends to claw favour wi' the rats of Hanover.'

In an instant both rapiers were brandished, and some desperate passes exchanged. Balmawhapple was young, stout, and active; but the Baron, infinitely more master of his weapon, would, like Sir Toby Belch, have tickled his opponent other gates than he did had he not been under the influence of *Ursa Major*.

Edward rushed forward to interfere between the combatants, but the prostrate bulk of the Laird of Killancureit, over which he stumbled, intercepted his passage. How Killancureit happened to be in this recumbent posture at so interesting a moment was never accurately known. Some thought he was about to insconce himself under the table; he himself alleged that he stumbled in the act of lifting a joint-stool, to prevent mischief, by knocking down Balmawhapple. Be that as it may, if readier aid than either his or Waverley's had not interposed, there would certainly have been bloodshed. But the well-known clash of swords, which was no stranger to her dwelling, aroused Luckie Macleary as she sat quietly beyond the hallan, or earthen partition of the cottage, with eyes employed on Boston's 'Crook the Lot,' while her ideas were engaged in summing up the reckoning. She boldly rushed in, with the shrill expostulation, 'Wad their honours slay ane another there, and bring discredit on an honest widow-woman's house, when there was a' the lee-land in the country to fight upon?' a remonstrance which she seconded by flinging her plaid with great dexterity over the weapons of the combatants. The servants by this time rushed in, and being, by great chance, tolerably sober, separated the incensed opponents, with the assistance of Edward and Killancureit. The latter led off Balmawhapple, cursing, swearing, and vowing revenge against every Whig, Presbyterian, and fanatic in England and Scotland, from John-o'-Groat's to the Land's End, and with difficulty got him to horse. Our hero, with the assistance of Saunders Sanderson, escorted the Baron of Bradwardine to his own dwelling, but could not prevail upon him to retire to bed until he had made a long and learned apology for the events of the evening, of which, however, there was not a word intelligible, except something about the Centaurs and the Lapithae.

CHAPTER XII

REPENTANCE AND A RECONCILIATION

Waverley was unaccustomed to the use of wine, excepting with great temperance. He slept therefore soundly till late in the succeeding morning, and then awakened to a painful recollection of the scene of the preceding evening. He had received a personal affront—he, a gentleman, a soldier, and a Waverley. True, the person who offered it was not, at the time it was given, possessed of the moderate share of sense which nature had allotted him; true also, in resenting this insult, he would break the laws of Heaven as well as of his country; true, in doing so, he might take the life of a young man who perhaps respectably discharged the social duties, and render his family miserable, or he might lose his own—no pleasant alternative even to the bravest, when it is debated coolly and in private.

All this pressed on his mind; yet the original statement recurred with the same irresistible force. He had received a personal insult; he was of the house of Waverley; and he bore a commission. There was no alternative; and he descended to the breakfast parlour with the intention of taking leave of the family, and writing to one of his brother officers to meet him at the inn midway between Tully-Veolan and the town where they were quartered, in order that he might convey such a message to the Laird of Balmawhapple as the circumstances seemed to demand. He found Miss Bradwardine presiding over the tea and coffee, the table loaded with warm bread, both of flour, oatmeal, and barleymeal, in the shape of loaves, cakes, biscuits, and other varieties, together with eggs, reindeer ham, mutton and beef ditto, smoked salmon, marmalade, and all the other delicacies which induced even Johnson himself to extol the luxury of a Scotch breakfast above that of all other countries. A mess of oatmeal porridge, flanked by a silver jug, which held an equal mixture of cream and butter-milk, was placed for the Baron's share of this repast; but Rose observed, he had walked out early in the morning, after giving orders that his guest should not be disturbed.

Waverley sat down almost in silence, and with an air of absence and abstraction which could not give Miss Bradwardine a favourable opinion of his talents for conversation. He answered at random one or two observations which she ventured to make upon ordinary topics; so that, feeling herself almost repulsed in her efforts at entertaining him, and secretly wondering that a scarlet coat should cover no better breeding, she left him to his mental amusement of cursing Doctor

Doubleit's favourite constellation of Ursa Major as the cause of all the mischief which had already happened and was likely to ensue. At once he started, and his colour heightened, as, looking toward the window, he beheld the Baron and young Balmawhapple pass arm in arm, apparently in deep conversation; and he hastily asked, 'Did Mr. Falconer sleep here last night?' Rose, not much pleased with the abruptness of the first question which the young stranger had addressed to her, answered drily in the negative, and the conversation again sunk into silence.

At this moment Mr. Saunderson appeared, with a message from his master, requesting to speak with Captain Waverley in another apartment. With a heart which beat a little quicker, not indeed from fear, but from uncertainty and anxiety, Edward obeyed the summons. He found the two gentlemen standing together, an air of complacent dignity on the brow of the Baron, while something like sullenness or shame, or both, blanked the bold visage of Balmawhapple. The former slipped his arm through that of the latter, and thus seeming to walk with him, while in reality he led him, advanced to meet Waverley, and, stopping in the midst of the apartment, made in great state the following oration: 'Captain Waverley—my young and esteemed friend, Mr. Falconer of Balmawhapple, has craved of my age and experience, as of one not wholly unskilled in the dependencies and punctilios of the duello or monomachia, to be his interlocutor in expressing to you the regret with which he calls to remembrance certain passages of our symposion last night, which could not but be highly displeasing to you, as serving for the time under this present existing government. He craves you, sir, to drown in oblivion the memory of such solecisms against the laws of politeness, as being what his better reason disavows, and to receive the hand which he offers you in amity; and I must needs assure you that nothing less than a sense of being dans son tort, as a gallant French chevalier, Mons. Le Breuilleur, once said to me on such an occasion, and an opinion also of your peculiar merit, could have extorted such concessions; for he and all his family are, and have been, time out of mind, Mavortia pectora, as Buchanan saith, a bold and warlike sept, or people.'

Edward immediately, and with natural politeness, accepted the hand which Balmawhapple, or rather the Baron in his character of mediator, extended towards him. 'It was impossible,' he said, 'for him to remember what a gentleman expressed his wish he had not uttered; and he willingly imputed what had passed to the exuberant festivity of the day.'

'That is very handsomely said,' answered the Baron; 'for undoubtedly, if a man be ebrius, or intoxicated, an incident which on solemn and festive occasions may and will take place in the life of a man of honour; and if the same gentleman, being fresh and sober, recants the contumelies which he hath spoken in his liquor, it must be held vinum locutum est; the words cease to be his own. Yet would I not find this exculpation relevant in the case of one who was ebrius, or an habitual drunkard; because, if such a person choose to pass the greater part of his time in the predicament of intoxication, he hath no title to be exeemed from the obligations of the code of politeness, but should learn to deport himself peaceably and courteously when under influence of the vinous stimulus. And now let us proceed to breakfast, and think no more of this daft business.'

I must confess, whatever inference may be drawn from the circumstance, that Edward, after so satisfactory an explanation, did much greater honour to the delicacies of Miss Bradwardine's breakfast-table than his commencement had promised. Balmawhapple, on the contrary, seemed embarrassed and dejected; and Waverley now, for the first time, observed that his arm was in a sling, which seemed to account for the awkward and embarrassed manner with which he had presented his hand. To a question from Miss Bradwardine, he muttered in answer something about his horse having fallen; and seeming desirous to escape both from the subject and the company, he arose as soon as breakfast was over, made his bow to the party, and, declining the Baron's invitation to tarry till after dinner, mounted his horse and returned to his own home.

Waverley now announced his purpose of leaving Tully-Veolan early enough after dinner to gain the stage at which he meant to sleep; but the unaffected and deep mortification with which the good-natured and affectionate old gentleman heard the proposal quite deprived him of courage to persist in it. No sooner had he gained Waverley's consent to lengthen his visit for a few days than he laboured to remove the grounds upon which he conceived he had meditated a more early retreat. 'I would not have you opine, Captain Waverley, that I am by practice or precept an advocate of ebriety, though it may be that, in our festivity of last night, some of our friends, if not perchance altogether ebrii, or drunken, were, to say the least, ebrioli, by which the ancients designed those who were fuddled, or, as your English vernacular and metaphorical phrase goes, half-seas-over. Not that I would so insinuate respecting you, Captain Waverley, who, like a prudent youth, did rather abstain from potation; nor can it be truly said of myself, who, having assisted at the tables of many great generals and marechals at their solemn carousals, have the art to carry my wine discreetly, and did not, during the whole evening, as ye must have doubtless observed, exceed the bounds of a modest hilarity.'

There was no refusing assent to a proposition so decidedly laid down by him, who undoubtedly was the best judge; although, had Edward formed his opinion from his own recollections, he would have pronounced that the Baron was not only ebriolus, but verging to become ebrius; or, in plain English, was incomparably the most drunk of the party, except perhaps his antagonist the Laird of Balmawhapple. However, having received the expected, or rather the required, compliment on his sobriety, the Baron proceeded—'No, sir, though I am myself of a strong temperament, I abhor ebriety, and detest those who swallow wine gulce causa, for the oblectation of the gullet; albeit I might deprecate the law of Pittacus of Mitylene, who punished doubly a crime committed under the influence of 'Liber Pater'; nor would I utterly accede to the objurgation of the younger Plinius, in the fourteenth book of his 'Historia Naturalis.' No, sir, I distinguish, I discriminate, and approve of wine so far only as it maketh glad the face, or, in the language of Flaccus, recepto amico.'

Thus terminated the apology which the Baron of Bradwardine thought it necessary to make for the superabundance of his hospitality; and it may be easily believed that he was neither interrupted by dissent nor any expression of incredulity.

He then invited his guest to a morning ride, and ordered that Davie Gellatley should meet them at the dern path with Ban and Buscar. 'For, until the shooting season commence, I would willingly show you some sport, and we may, God willing, meet with a roe. The roe, Captain Waverley, may be hunted at all times alike; for never being in what is called PRIDE OF GREASE, he is also never out of season, though it be a truth that his venison is not equal to that of either the red or fallow deer. [Footnote: The learned in cookery dissent from the Baron of Bradwardine, and hold the roe venison dry and indifferent food, unless when dressed in soup and Scotch collops.] But he will serve to show how my dogs run; and therefore they shall attend us with Davie Gellatley.'

Waverley expressed his surprise that his friend Davie was capable of such trust; but the Baron gave him to understand that this poor simpleton was neither fatuous, nec naturaliter idiota, as is expressed in the briefes of furiosity, but simply a crack-brained knave, who could execute very well any commission which jumped with his own humour, and made his folly a plea for avoiding every other. 'He has made an interest with us,' continued the Baron, 'by saving Rose from a great danger with his own proper peril; and the roguish loon must therefore eat of our bread and drink of our cup, and do what he can, or what he will, which, if the suspicions of Saunderson and the Bailie are well founded, may perchance in his case be commensurate terms.'

Miss Bradwardine then gave Waverley to understand that this poor simpleton was dotingly fond of music, deeply affected by that which was melancholy, and transported into extravagant gaiety by light and lively airs. He had in this respect a prodigious memory, stored with miscellaneous snatches and fragments of all tunes and songs, which he sometimes applied, with considerable address, as the vehicles of remonstrance, explanation, or satire. Davie was much attached to the few who showed him kindness; and both aware of any slight or ill usage which he happened to receive, and sufficiently apt, where he saw opportunity, to revenge it. The common people, who often judge hardly of each other as well as of their betters, although they had expressed great compassion for the poor innocent while suffered to wander in rags about the village, no sooner beheld him decently clothed, provided for, and even a sort of favourite, than they called up all the instances of sharpness and ingenuity, in action and repartee, which his annals afforded, and charitably bottomed thereupon a hypothesis that David Gellatley was no farther fool than was necessary to avoid hard labour. This opinion was not better founded than that of the Negroes, who, from the acute and mischievous pranks of the monkeys, suppose that they have the gift of speech, and only suppress their powers of elocution to escape being set to work. But the hypothesis was entirely imaginary; David Gellatley was in good earnest the half-crazed simpleton which he appeared, and was incapable of any constant and steady exertion. He had just so much solidity as kept on the windy side of insanity, so much wild wit as saved him from the imputation of idiocy, some dexterity in field-sports (in which we have known as great fools excel), great kindness and humanity in the treatment of animals entrusted to him, warm affections, a prodigious memory, and an ear for music.

The stamping of horses was now heard in the court, and Davie's voice singing to the two large deer greyhounds,

*Hie away, hie away,
Over bank and over brae,
Where the copsewood is the greenest,
Where the fountains glisten sheenest,
Where the lady-fern grows strongest,
Where the morning dew lies longest,
Where the black-cock sweetest sips it,
Where the fairy latest trips it.
Hie to haunts right seldom seen,
Lovely, lonesome, cool, and green,
Over bank and over brae,
Hie away, hie away.*

'Do the verses he sings,' asked Waverley, 'belong to old Scottish poetry, Miss Bradwardine?'

'I believe not,' she replied. 'This poor creature had a brother, and Heaven, as if to compensate to the family Davie's deficiencies, had given him what the hamlet thought uncommon talents. An uncle contrived to educate him for the Scottish kirk, but he could not get preferment because he came from our GROUND. He returned from college hopeless and brokenhearted, and fell into a decline. My father supported him till his death, which happened before he was nineteen. He played beautifully on the flute, and was supposed to have a great turn for poetry. He was affectionate and compassionate to his brother, who followed him like his shadow, and we think that from him Davie gathered many fragments of songs and music unlike those of this country. But if we ask him where he got such a fragment as he is now singing, he either answers with wild and long fits of laughter, or else breaks into tears of lamentation; but was never heard to give any explanation, or to mention his brother's name since his death.'

'Surely,' said Edward, who was readily interested by a tale bordering on the romantic, 'surely more might be learned by more particular inquiry.'

'Perhaps so,' answered Rose; 'but my father will not permit any one to practise on his feelings on this subject.'

By this time the Baron, with the help of Mr. Saunderson, had indued a pair of jack-boots of large dimensions, and now invited our hero to follow him as he stalked clattering down the ample stair-case, tapping each huge balustrade as he passed with the butt of his massive horse-whip, and humming, with the air of a chasseur of Louis Quatorze,—

*Pour la chasse ordonnee il faut preparer tout.
Ho la ho! Vite! vite debout!*

CHAPTER XIII

A MORE RATIONAL DAY THAN THE LAST

The Baron of Bradwardine, mounted on an active and well-managed horse, and seated on a demi-pique saddle, with deep housings to agree with his livery, was no bad representative of the old school. His light-coloured embroidered coat, and superbly barred waistcoat, his brigadier wig, surmounted by a small gold-laced cocked-hat, completed his personal costume; but he was attended by two well-mounted servants on horseback, armed with holster-pistols.

In this guise he ambled forth over hill and valley, the admiration of every farm-yard which they passed in their progress, till, 'low down in a grassy vale,' they found David Gellatley leading two very tall deer greyhounds, and presiding over half a dozen curs, and about as many bare-legged and bare-headed boys, who, to procure the chosen distinction of attending on the chase, had not failed to tickle his ears with the dulcet appellation of Maister Gellatley, though probably all and each had hooted him on former occasions in the character of daft Davie. But this is no uncommon strain of flattery to persons in office, nor altogether confined to the barelegged villagers of Tully-Veolan; it was in fashion Sixty Years Since, is now, and will be six hundred years hence, if this admirable compound of folly and knavery, called the world, shall be then in existence.

These Gillie-wet-foots, as they were called, were destined to beat the bushes, which they performed with so much success, that, after half an hour's search, a roe was started, coursed, and killed; the Baron following on his white horse, like Earl Percy of yore, and magnanimously flaying and embowelling the slain animal (which, he observed, was called by the French chasseurs, faire la curee) with his own baronial couteau de chasse. After this ceremony, he conducted his guest homeward by a pleasant and circuitous route, commanding an extensive prospect of different villages and houses, to each of which Mr. Bradwardine attached some anecdote of history or genealogy, told in language whimsical from prejudice and pedantry, but often respectable for the good sense and honourable feelings which his narrative displayed, and almost always curious, if not valuable, for the information they contained.

The truth is, the ride seemed agreeable to both gentlemen, because they found amusement in each other's conversation, although their characters and habits of thinking were in many respects totally opposite. Edward, we have informed the reader, was warm in his feelings, wild and romantic in his ideas and in his taste of reading, with a strong disposition towards poetry. Mr Bradwardine was the reverse of all this, and piqued himself upon stalking through life with the same upright, starched, stoical gravity which distinguished his evening promenade upon the terrace of Tully-Veolan, where for hours together—the very model of old Hardyknute—

*Stately stepp'd he east the wa',
And stately stepp'd he west*

As for literature, he read the classic poets, to be sure, and the 'Epithalamium' of Georgius Buchanan and Arthur Johnston's Psalms, of a Sunday; and the 'Deliciae Poetarum Scotorum,' and Sir David Lindsay's 'Works', and Barbour's 'Brace', and Blind Harry's 'Wallace', and 'The Gentle Shepherd', and 'The Cherry and The Slae.'

But though he thus far sacrificed his time to the Muses, he would, if the truth must be spoken, have been much better pleased had the pious or sapient apothegms, as well as the historical narratives, which these various works contained, been presented to him in the form of simple prose. And he sometimes could not refrain from expressing contempt of the 'vain and unprofitable art of poem-making', in which, he said, 'the only one who had excelled in his time was Allan Ramsay, the periwigmaker.'

[Footnote: The Baron ought to have remembered that the joyous Allan literally drew his blood from the house of the noble earl whom he terms—

Dalhousie of an old descent

But although Edward and he differed TOTO COELO, as the Baron would have said, upon this subject, yet they met upon history as on a neutral ground, in which each claimed an interest. The Baron, indeed, only cumbered his memory with matters of fact, the cold, dry, hard outlines which history delineates. Edward, on the contrary, loved to fill up and round the sketch with the colouring of a warm and vivid imagination, which gives light and life to the actors and speakers in the drama of past ages. Yet with tastes so opposite, they contributed greatly to each other's amusement. Mr. Bradwardine's minute narratives and powerful memory supplied to Waverley fresh subjects of the kind upon which his fancy loved to labour, and opened to him a new mine of incident and of character. And he repaid the pleasure thus communicated by an earnest attention, valuable to all story-tellers, more especially to the Baron, who felt his habits of self-respect flattered by it; and sometimes also by reciprocal communications, which interested Mr. Bradwardine, as confirming or illustrating his own favourite anecdotes. Besides, Mr. Bradwardine loved to talk of the scenes of his youth, which had been spent in camps and foreign lands, and had many interesting particulars to tell of the generals under whom he had served and the actions he had witnessed.

Both parties returned to Tully-Veolan in great good-humour with each other; Waverley desirous of studying more attentively what he considered as a singular and interesting character, gifted with a memory containing a curious register of ancient and modern anecdotes; and Bradwardine disposed to regard Edward as puer (or rather juvenis) bonae spei et magnae indolis, a youth devoid of that petulant volatility which is impatient of, or vilipends, the conversation and advice of his seniors, from which he predicted great things of his future success and deportment in life. There was no other guest except Mr. Rubrick, whose information and discourse, as a clergyman and a scholar, harmonised very well with that of the Baron and his guest.

Shortly after dinner, the Baron, as if to show that his temperance was not entirely theoretical, proposed a visit to Rose's apartment, or, as he termed it, her troisième etage. Waverley was accordingly conducted through one or two of those long awkward passages with which ancient architects studied to puzzle the inhabitants of the houses which they planned, at the end of which Mr. Bradwardine began to ascend, by two steps at once, a very steep, narrow, and winding stair, leaving Mr. Rubrick and Waverley to follow at more leisure, while he should announce their approach to his daughter.

After having climbed this perpendicular corkscrew until their brains were almost giddy, they arrived in a little matted lobby, which served as an anteroom to Rose's sanctum sanctorum, and through which they entered her parlour. It was a small, but pleasant apartment, opening to the south, and hung with tapestry; adorned besides with two pictures, one of her mother, in the dress of a shepherdess, with a bell-hoop; the other of the Baron, in his tenth year, in a blue coat, embroidered waistcoat, laced hat, and bag-wig, with a bow in his hand. Edward could not help smiling at the costume, and at the odd resemblance between the round, smooth, red-cheeked, staring visage in the portrait, and the gaunt, bearded, hollow-eyed, swarthy features, which travelling, fatigues of war, and advanced age, had bestowed on the original. The Baron joined in the laugh. 'Truly,' he said, 'that picture was a woman's fantasy of my good mother's (a daughter of the Laird of Tullielum, Captain Waverley; I indicated the house to you when we were on the top of the Shinnysheuch; it was burnt by the Dutch auxiliaries brought in by the Government in 1715); I never sat for my portrait but once since that was painted, and it was at the special and reiterated request of the Marechal Duke of Berwick.'

The good old gentleman did not mention what Mr. Rubrick afterwards told Edward, that the Duke had done him this honour on account of his being the first to mount the breach of a fort in Savoy during the memorable campaign of 1709, and his having there defended himself with his half-pike for nearly ten minutes before any support reached him. To do the Baron justice, although sufficiently prone to dwell upon, and even to exaggerate, his family dignity and consequence, he was too much a man of real courage ever to allude to such personal acts of merit as he had himself manifested.

Miss Rose now appeared from the interior room of her apartment, to welcome her father and his friends. The little labours in which she had been employed obviously showed a natural taste, which required only cultivation. Her father had taught her French and Italian, and a few of the ordinary authors in those languages ornamented her shelves. He had endeavoured also to be her preceptor in music; but as he began with the more abstruse doctrines of the science, and was not perhaps master of them himself, she had made no proficiency farther than to be able to accompany her voice with the harpsichord; but even this was not very common in Scotland at that period. To make amends, she sung with great taste and feeling, and with a respect to the sense of what she uttered that might be proposed in example to ladies of much superior musical talent. Her natural good sense taught her that, if, as we are assured by high authority, music be 'married to immortal verse,' they are very often divorced by the performer in a most shameful manner. It was perhaps owing to this sensibility to poetry, and power of combining its expression with those of the musical notes, that her singing gave more pleasure to all the unlearned in music, and even to many of the learned, than could have been communicated by a much finer voice and more brilliant execution unguided by the same delicacy of feeling.

A bartizan, or projecting gallery, before the windows of her parlour, served to illustrate another of Rose's pursuits; for it was crowded with flowers of different kinds, which she had taken under her special protection. A projecting turret gave access to this Gothic balcony, which commanded a most beautiful prospect. The formal garden, with its high bounding walls, lay below, contracted, as it seemed, to a mere parterre; while the view extended beyond them down a wooded glen, where the small river was sometimes visible, sometimes hidden in copse. The eye might be delayed by a desire to rest on the rocks, which here and there rose from the dell with massive or spiry fronts, or it might dwell on the noble, though ruined tower, which was here beheld in all its dignity, frowning from a promontory over the river. To the left were seen two or three cottages, a part of the village, the brow of the hill concealed the others. The glen, or dell, was terminated by a sheet of water, called Loch Veolan, into which the brook discharged itself, and which now glistened in the western sun. The distant country seemed open and varied in surface, though not wooded; and there was nothing to interrupt the view until the scene was bounded by a ridge of distant and blue hills, which formed the southern boundary of the strath or valley. To this pleasant station Miss Bradwardine had ordered coffee.

The view of the old tower, or fortalice, introduced some family anecdotes and tales of Scottish chivalry, which the Baron told with great enthusiasm. The projecting peak of an impending crag which rose near it had acquired the name of Saint Swithin's Chair. It was the scene of a peculiar superstition, of which Mr. Rubrick mentioned some curious particulars, which reminded Waverley of a rhyme quoted by Edgar in King Lear; and Rose was called upon to sing a little legend, in which they had been interwoven by some village poet,

Who, noteless as the race from which he sprung,

Saved others' names, but left his own unsung.

The sweetness of her voice, and the simple beauty of her music, gave all the advantage which the minstrel could have desired, and which his poetry so much wanted. I almost doubt if it can be read with patience, destitute of these advantages, although I conjecture the following copy to have been somewhat corrected by Waverley, to suit the taste of those who might not relish pure antiquity.

Saint Swithin's Chair

On Hallow-Mass Eve, ere ye boune ye to rest,

Ever beware that your couch be bless'd;

Sign it with cross, and sain it with bead,

Sing the Ave, and say the Creed.

For on Hallow-Mass Eve the Night-Hag will ride,

And all her nine-fold sweeping on by her side,

Whether the wind sing lowly or loud,

Sailing through moonshine or swath'd in the cloud.

The Lady she sat in Saint Swithin's Chair,

*The dew of the night has damp'd her hair:
Her cheek was pale; but resolved and high
Was the word of her lip and the glance of her eye.*

*She mutter'd the spell of Swithin bold,
When his naked foot traced the midnight wold,
When he stopp'd the Hag as she rode the night,
And bade her descend, and her promise plight.*

*He that dare sit on Saint Swithin's Chair,
When the Night-Hag wings the troubled air,
Questions three, when he speaks the spell,
He may ask, and she must tell.*

*The Baron has been with King Robert his liege
These three long years in battle and siege;
News are there none of his weal or his woe,
And fain the Lady his fate would know.*

*She shudders and stops as the charm she speaks;—
Is it the moody owl that shrieks?
Or is it that sound, betwixt laughter and scream,
The voice of the Demon who haunts the stream?*

*The moan of the wind sunk silent and low,
And the roaring torrent had ceased to flow;
The calm was more dreadful than raging storm,
When the cold grey mist brought the ghastly Form!*

'I am sorry to disappoint the company, especially Captain Waverley, who listens with such laudable gravity; it is but a fragment, although I think there are other verses, describing the return of the Baron from the wars, and how the lady was found "clay-cold upon the grounsill ledge."

'It is one of those figments,' observed Mr. Bradwardine, 'with which the early history of distinguished families was deformed in the times of superstition; as that of Rome, and other ancient nations, had their prodigies, sir, the which you may read in ancient histories, or in the little work compiled by Julius Obsequens, and inscribed by the learned Scheffer, the editor, to his patron, Benedictus Skytte, Baron of Dudershoff.'

'My father has a strange defiance of the marvellous, Captain Waverley,' observed Rose, 'and once stood firm when a whole synod of Presbyterian divines were put to the rout by a sudden apparition of the foul fiend.'

Waverley looked as if desirous to hear more.

'Must I tell my story as well as sing my song? Well—Once upon a time there lived an old woman, called Janet Gellatley, who was suspected to be a witch, on the infallible grounds that she was very old, very ugly, very poor, and had two sons, one of whom was a poet and the other a fool, which visitation, all the neighbourhood agreed, had come upon her for the sin of witchcraft. And she was imprisoned for a week in the steeple of the parish church, and sparely supplied with food, and not permitted to sleep until she herself became as much persuaded of her being a witch as her accusers; and in this lucid and happy state of mind was brought forth to make a clean breast, that is, to make open confession of her sorceries, before all the Whig gentry and ministers in the vicinity, who were no conjurors themselves. My father went to see fair play between the witch and the clergy; for the witch had been born on his estate. And while the witch was confessing that the Enemy appeared, and made his addresses to her as a handsome black man,—which, if you could have seen poor old blear-eyed Janet, reflected little honour on Apollyon's taste,—and while the auditors listened with astonished ears, and the clerk recorded with a trembling hand, she, all of a sudden, changed the low mumbling tone with which she spoke into a shrill yell, and exclaimed, "Look to yourselves! look to yourselves! I see the Evil One sitting in the midst of ye." The surprise was general, and terror and flight its immediate consequences. Happy were those who were next the door; and many were the disasters that befell hats, bands, cuffs, and wigs, before they could get out of the church, where they left the obstinate prelatist to settle matters with the witch and her admirer at his own peril or pleasure.'

'Risu solvuntur tabulae,' said the Baron; 'when they recovered their panic trepidation they were too much ashamed to bring any wakening of the process against Janet Gellatley.' [Footnote: See Note 36]

This anecdote led to a long discussion of

*All those idle thoughts and fantasies,
Devices, dreams, opinions unsound,
Shows, visions, soothsays, and prophecies,
And all that feigned is, as leasings, tales, and lies.*

With such conversation, and the romantic legends which it introduced, closed our hero's second evening in the house of Tully-Veolan.

CHAPTER XIV

A DISCOVERY—WAVERLEY BECOMES DOMESTICATED AT TULLY-VEOLAN

The next day Edward arose betimes, and in a morning walk around the house and its vicinity came suddenly upon a small court in front of the dog-kennel, where his friend Davie was employed about his four-footed charge. One quick glance of his eye recognised Waverley, when, instantly turning his back, as if he had not observed him, he began to sing part of an old ballad:—

*Young men will love thee more fair and more fast;
Heard ye so merry the little bird sing?*

*Old men's love the longest will last,
And the throstle-cock's head is under his wing.*

*The young man's wrath is like light straw on fire;
Heard ye so merry the little bird sing?
But like red-hot steel is the old man's ire,
And the throstle-cock's head is under his wing.*

*The young man will brawl at the evening board;
Heard ye so merry the little bird sing?
But the old man will draw at the dawning the sword,
And the throstle-cock's head is under his wing.*

Waverley could not avoid observing that Davie laid something like a satirical emphasis on these lines. He therefore approached, and endeavoured, by sundry queries, to elicit from him what the innuendo might mean; but Davie had no mind to explain, and had wit enough to make his folly cloak his knavery. Edward could collect nothing from him, excepting that the Laird of Balmawhapple had gone home yesterday morning 'wi' his boots fu' o' bluid.' In the garden, however, he met the old butler, who no longer attempted to conceal that, having been bred in the nursery line with Sumack and Co. of Newcastle, he sometimes wrought a turn in the flower-borders to oblige the Laird and Miss Rose. By a series of queries, Edward at length discovered, with a painful feeling of surprise and shame, that Balmawhapple's submission and apology had been the consequence of a rencontre with the Baron before his guest had quitted his pillow, in which the younger combatant had been disarmed and wounded in the sword arm.

Greatly mortified at this information, Edward sought out his friendly host, and anxiously expostulated with him upon the injustice he had done him in anticipating his meeting with Mr. Falconer, a circumstance which, considering his youth and the profession of arms which he had just adopted, was capable of being represented much to his prejudice. The Baron justified himself at greater length than I choose to repeat. He urged that the quarrel was common to them, and that Balmawhapple could not, by the code of honour, evade giving satisfaction to both, which he had done in his case by an honourable meeting, and in that of Edward by such a palinode as rendered the use of the sword unnecessary, and which, being made and accepted, must necessarily sopite the whole affair.

With this excuse, or explanation, Waverley was silenced, if not satisfied; but he could not help testifying some displeasure against the Blessed Bear, which had given rise to the quarrel, nor refrain from hinting that the sanctified epithet was hardly appropriate. The Baron observed, he could not deny that 'the Bear, though allowed by heralds as a most honourable ordinary, had, nevertheless, somewhat fierce, churlish, and morose in his disposition (as might be read in Archibald Simson, pastor of Dalkeith's 'Hieroglyphica Animalium') and had thus been the type of many quarrels and dissensions which had occurred in the house of Bradwardine; of which,' he continued, 'I might commemorate mine own unfortunate dissension with my third cousin by the mother's side, Sir Hew Halbert, who was so unthinking as to deride my family name, as if it had been QUASI BEAR-WARDEN; a most uncivil jest, since it not only insinuated that the founder of our house occupied such a mean situation as to be a custodian of wild beasts, a charge which, ye must have observed, is only entrusted to the very basest plebeians; but, moreover, seemed to infer that our coat-armour had not been achieved by honourable actions in war, but bestowed by way of paranomasia, or pun, upon our family appellation,—a sort of bearing which the French call armoires parlantes, the Latins arma cantantia, and your English authorities canting heraldry, [Footnote: See Note 37] being indeed a species of emblazoning more befitting canterers, gaberlunzies, and such like mendicants, whose gibberish is formed upon playing upon the word, than the noble, honourable, and useful science of heraldry, which assigns armorial bearings as the reward of noble and generous actions, and not to tickle the ear with vain quodlibets, such as are found in jestbooks.' Of his quarrel with Sir Hew he said nothing more than that it was settled in a fitting manner.

Having been so minute with respect to the diversions of Tully-Veolan on the first days of Edward's arrival, for the purpose of introducing its inmates to the reader's acquaintance, it becomes less necessary to trace the progress of his intercourse with the same accuracy. It is probable that a young man, accustomed to more cheerful society, would have tired of the conversation of so violent an assessor of the 'boast of heraldry' as the Baron; but Edward found an agreeable variety in that of Miss Bradwardine, who listened with eagerness to his remarks upon literature, and showed great justness of taste in her answers. The sweetness of her disposition had made her submit with complacency, and even pleasure, to the course of reading prescribed by her father, although it not only comprehended several heavy folios of history, but certain gigantic tomes in high-church polemics. In heraldry he was fortunately contented to give her only such a slight tincture as might be acquired by perusal of the two folio volumes of Nisbet. Rose was indeed the very apple of her father's eye. Her constant liveliness, her attention to all those little observances most gratifying to those who would never think of exacting them, her beauty, in which he recalled the features of his beloved wife, her unfeigned piety, and the noble generosity of her disposition, would have justified the affection of the most doting father.

His anxiety on her behalf did not, however, seem to extend itself in that quarter where, according to the general opinion, it is most efficiently displayed, in labouring, namely, to establish her in life, either by a large dowry or a wealthy marriage. By an old settlement, almost all the landed estates of the Baron went, after his death, to a distant relation; and it was supposed that Miss Bradwardine would remain but slenderly provided for, as the good gentleman's cash matters had been too long under the exclusive charge of Bailie Macwheeble to admit of any great expectations from his personal succession. It is true, the said Bailie loved his patron and his patron's daughter next (though at an incomparable distance) to himself. He thought it was possible to set aside the settlement on the male line, and had actually procured an opinion to that effect (and, as he boasted, without a fee) from an eminent Scottish counsel, under whose notice he contrived to bring the point while consulting him regularly on some other business. But the Baron would not listen to such a proposal for an instant. On the contrary, he used to have a perverse pleasure in boasting that the barony of Bradwardine was a male fief, the first charter having been given at that early period when women were not deemed capable to hold a feudal grant; because, according to Les coutumes de Normandie, c'est l'homme ki se bast et ki conseille; or, as is yet more ungallantly expressed by other authorities, all of whose barbarous names he delighted to quote at full length, because a woman could not serve the superior, or feudal lord, in war, on account of the decorum of her sex, nor assist him with advice, because of her limited intellect, nor keep his counsel, owing to the infirmity of her disposition. He would triumphantly ask, how it would become a female, and that female a Bradwardine, to be seen employed in servitio exuendi, seu detrahendi, caligas regis post battaliam? that is, in pulling off the king's boots after an engagement, which was the feudal service by which he held the barony of Bradwardine. 'No,' he said, 'beyond hesitation, procul dubio, many females, as worthy as Rose, had been excluded, in order to make way for my own succession, and Heaven forbid that I should do aught that might contravene the destination of my forefathers, or impinge upon the right of my kinsman, Malcolm Bradwardine of Inchgrabbit, an honourable, though decayed branch of my own family.'

The Bailie, as prime minister, having received this decisive communication from his sovereign, durst not press his own opinion any farther, but contented himself with deploring, on all suitable occasions, to Saunderson, the minister of the interior, the laird's self-willedness, and with laying plans for uniting Rose with the young Laird of Balmawhapple, who had a fine estate, only moderately burdened, and was a faultless young gentleman, being as sober as a saint—if you keep brandy from him and him from brandy—and who, in brief, had no imperfection but that of keeping light company at a time; such as Jinker, the horse-couper, and Gibby Gaethroughwi't, the piper o' Cupar; 'o' wi'lk follies, Mr. Saunderson, he'll mend, he'll mend,' pronounced the Bailie.

'Like sour ale in simmer,' added Davie Gellatley, who happened to be nearer the conclave than they were aware of.

Miss Bradwardine, such as we have described her, with all the simplicity and curiosity of a recluse, attached herself to the opportunities of increasing her store of literature which Edward's visit afforded her. He sent for some of his books from his quarters, and they opened to her sources of delight of which she had hitherto had no idea. The best English poets, of every description, and other works on belles-lettres, made a part of this precious cargo. Her music, even her flowers, were neglected, and Saunders not only mourned over, but began to mutiny against, the labour for which he now scarce received thanks. These new pleasures became gradually enhanced by sharing them with one of a kindred taste. Edward's readiness to comment, to recite, to explain difficult passages, rendered his assistance

invaluable; and the wild romance of his spirit delighted a character too young and inexperienced to observe its deficiencies. Upon subjects which interested him, and when quite at ease, he possessed that flow of natural, and somewhat florid eloquence, which has been supposed as powerful even as figure, fashion, fame, or fortune, in winning the female heart. There was, therefore, an increasing danger in this constant intercourse to poor Rose's peace of mind, which was the more imminent as her father was greatly too much abstracted in his studies, and wrapped up in his own dignity, to dream of his daughter's incurring it. The daughters of the house of Bradwardine were, in his opinion, like those of the house of Bourbon or Austria, placed high above the clouds of passion which might obfuscate the intellects of meaner females; they moved in another sphere, were governed by other feelings, and amenable to other rules than those of idle and fantastic affection. In short, he shut his eyes so resolutely to the natural consequences of Edward's intimacy with Miss Bradwardine, that the whole neighbourhood concluded that he had opened them to the advantages of a match between his daughter and the wealthy young Englishman, and pronounced him much less a fool than he had generally shown himself in cases where his own interest was concerned.

If the Baron, however, had really meditated such an alliance, the indifference of Waverley would have been an insuperable bar to his project. Our hero, since mixing more freely with the world, had learned to think with great shame and confusion upon his mental legend of Saint Cecilia, and the vexation of these reflections was likely, for some time at least, to counterbalance the natural susceptibility of his disposition. Besides, Rose Bradwardine, beautiful and amiable as we have described her, had not precisely the sort of beauty or merit which captivates a romantic imagination in early youth. She was too frank, too confiding, too kind; amiable qualities, undoubtedly, but destructive of the marvellous, with which a youth of imagination delights to dress the empress of his affections. Was it possible to bow, to tremble, and to adore, before the timid, yet playful little girl, who now asked Edward to mend her pen, now to construe a stanza in Tasso, and now how to spell a very—very long word in her version of it? All these incidents have their fascination on the mind at a certain period of life, but not when a youth is entering it, and rather looking out for some object whose affection may dignify him in his own eyes than stooping to one who looks up to him for such distinction. Hence, though there can be no rule in so capricious a passion, early love is frequently ambitious in choosing its object; or, which comes to the same, selects her (as in the case of Saint Cecilia aforesaid) from a situation that gives fair scope for the beau ideal, which the reality of intimate and familiar life rather tends to limit and impair. I knew a very accomplished and sensible young man cured of a violent passion for a pretty woman, whose talents were not equal to her face and figure, by being permitted to bear her company for a whole afternoon. Thus, it is certain, that had Edward enjoyed such an opportunity of conversing with Miss Stubbs, Aunt Rachel's precaution would have been unnecessary, for he would as soon have fallen in love with the dairy-maid. And although Miss Bradwardine was a very different character, it seems probable that the very intimacy of their intercourse prevented his feeling for her other sentiments than those of a brother for an amiable and accomplished sister; while the sentiments of poor Rose were gradually, and without her being conscious, assuming a shade of warmer affection.

I ought to have said that Edward, when he sent to Dundee for the books before mentioned, had applied for, and received permission, extending his leave of absence. But the letter of his commanding officer contained a friendly recommendation to him not to spend his time exclusively with persons who, estimable as they might be in a general sense, could not be supposed well affected to a government which they declined to acknowledge by taking the oath of allegiance. The letter further insinuated, though with great delicacy, that although some family connections might be supposed to render it necessary for Captain Waverley to communicate with gentlemen who were in this unpleasant state of suspicion, yet his father's situation and wishes ought to prevent his prolonging those attentions into exclusive intimacy. And it was intimated, that, while his political principles were endangered by communicating with laymen of this description, he might also receive erroneous impressions in religion from the prelatic clergy, who so perversely laboured to set up the royal prerogative in things sacred.

This last insinuation probably induced Waverley to set both down to the prejudices of his commanding officer. He was sensible that Mr. Bradwardine had acted with the most scrupulous delicacy, in never entering upon any discussion that had the most remote tendency to bias his mind in political opinions, although he was himself not only a decided partisan of the exiled family, but had been trusted at different times with important commissions for their service. Sensible, therefore, that there was no risk of his being perverted from his allegiance, Edward felt as if he should do his uncle's old friend injustice in removing from a house where he gave and received pleasure and amusement, merely to gratify a prejudiced and ill-judged suspicion. He therefore wrote a very general answer, assuring his commanding officer that his loyalty was not in the most distant danger of contamination, and continued an honoured guest and inmate of the house of Tully-Veolan.

CHAPTER XV

A CREAGH, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

When Edward had been a guest at Tully-Veolan nearly six weeks, he descried, one morning, as he took his usual walk before the breakfast hour, signs of uncommon perturbation in the family. Four bare-legged dairy-maids, with each an empty milk-pail in her hand, ran about with frantic gestures, and uttering loud exclamations of surprise, grief, and resentment. From their appearance, a pagan might have conceived them a detachment of the celebrated Belides, just come from their baling penance. As nothing was to be got from this distracted chorus, excepting 'Lord guide us!' and 'Eh sirs!' ejaculations which threw no light upon the cause of their dismay, Waverley repaired to the fore-court, as it was called, where he beheld Bailie Macwheeble cantering his white pony down the avenue with all the speed it could muster. He had arrived, it would seem, upon a hasty summons, and was followed by half a score of peasants from the village who had no great difficulty in keeping pace with him.

The Bailie, greatly too busy and too important to enter into explanations with Edward, summoned forth Mr. Saunderson, who appeared with a countenance in which dismay was mingled with solemnity, and they immediately entered into close conference. Davie Gellatley was also seen in the group, idle as Diogenes at Sinope while his countrymen were preparing for a siege. His spirits always rose with anything, good or bad, which occasioned tumult, and he continued frisking, hopping, dancing, and singing the burden of an old ballad—

'Our gear's a' gane,'

until, happening to pass too near the Bailie, he received an admonitory hint from his horse-whip, which converted his songs into lamentation.

Passing from thence towards the garden, Waverley beheld the Baron in person, measuring and re-measuring, with swift and tremendous strides, the length of the terrace; his countenance clouded with offended pride and indignation, and the whole of his demeanour such as seemed to indicate, that any inquiry concerning the cause of his discomposure would give pain at least, if not offence. Waverley therefore glided into the house, without addressing him, and took his way to the breakfast-parlour, where he found his young friend Rose, who, though she neither exhibited the resentment of her father, the turbid importance of Bailie Macwheeble, nor the despair of the handmaidens, seemed vexed and thoughtful. A single word explained the mystery. 'Your breakfast will be a disturbed one, Captain Waverley. A party of Caterans have come down upon us last night, and have driven off all our milch cows.'

'A party of Caterans?'

'Yes; robbers from the neighbouring Highlands. We used to be quite free from them while we paid blackmail to Fergus Mac-Ivor Vich Ian Vohr; but my father thought it unworthy of his rank and birth to pay it any longer, and so this disaster has happened. It is not the value of the cattle, Captain Waverley, that vexes me;

but my father is so much hurt at the affront, and is so bold and hot, that I fear he will try to recover them by the strong hand; and if he is not hurt himself, he will hurt some of these wild people, and then there will be no peace between them and us perhaps for our life-time; and we cannot defend ourselves as in old times, for the government have taken all our arms; and my dear father is so rash—O what will become of us!"—Here poor Rose lost heart altogether, and burst into a flood of tears.

The Baron entered at this moment, and rebuked her with more asperity than Waverley had ever heard him use to any one. 'Was it not a shame,' he said, 'that she should exhibit herself before any gentleman in such a light, as if she shed tears for a drove of horned nolt and milch kine, like the daughter of a Cheshire yeoman!—Captain Waverley, I must request your favourable construction of her grief, which may, or ought to proceed, solely from seeing her father's estate exposed to spulzie and depredation from common thieves and sorners, while we are not allowed to keep half a score of muskets, whether for defence or rescue.' Baillie Macwheeble entered immediately afterwards, and by his report of arms and ammunition confirmed this statement, informing the Baron, in a melancholy voice, that though the people would certainly obey his honour's orders, yet there was no chance of their following the gear to any guid purpose, in respect there were only his honour's body servants who had swords and pistols, and the depredators were twelve Highlanders, completely armed after the manner of their country. Having delivered this doleful annunciation, he assumed a posture of silent dejection, shaking his head slowly with the motion of a pendulum when it is ceasing to vibrate, and then remained stationary, his body stooping at a more acute angle than usual, and the latter part of his person projecting in proportion.

The Baron, meanwhile, paced the room in silent indignation, and at length fixing his eye upon an old portrait, whose person was clad in armour, and whose features glared grimly out of a huge bush of hair, part of which descended from his head to his shoulders, and part from his chin and upper-lip to his breast-plate,—'That gentleman, Captain Waverley, my grandsire,' he said, 'with two hundred horse,—whom he levied within his own bounds, discomfited and put to the rout more than five hundred of these Highland reivers, who have been ever lapis offensiois et petra scandali, a stumbling-block and a rock of offence, to the Lowland vicinage—he discomfited them, I say, when they had the temerity to descend to harry this country, in the time of the civil dissensions, in the year of grace sixteen hundred forty and two. And now, sir, I, his grandson, am thus used at such unworthy hands.'

Here there was an awful pause; after which all the company, as is usual in cases of difficulty, began to give separate and inconsistent counsel. Alexander ab Alexandro proposed they should send some one to compound with the Caterans, who would readily, he said, give up their prey for a dollar a head. The Bailie opined that this transaction would amount to theft-boot, or composition of felony; and he recommended that some canny hand should be sent up to the glens to make the best bargain he could, as it were for himself, so that the Laird might not be seen in such a transaction. Edward proposed to send off to the nearest garrison for a party of soldiers and a magistrate's warrant; and Rose, as far as she dared, endeavoured to insinuate the course of paying the arrears of tribute money to Fergus Mac-Ivor Vich Ian Vohr, who, they all knew, could easily procure restoration of the cattle, if he were properly propitiated.

None of these proposals met the Baron's approbation. The idea of composition, direct or implied, was absolutely ignominious; that of Waverley only showed that he did not understand the state of the country, and of the political parties which divided it; and, standing matters as they did with Fergus Mac-Ivor Vich Ian Vohr, the Baron would make no concession to him, were it, he said, 'to procure restitution in integrum of every stirk and stot that the chief, his forefathers, and his clan, had stolen since the days of Malcolm Canmore.'

In fact his voice was still for war, and he proposed to send expresses to Balmawhapple, Killancureit, Tullielum, and other lairds, who were exposed to similar depredations, inviting them to join in the pursuit; 'and then, sir, shall these nebulones nequissimi, as Leslaeus calls them, be brought to the fate of their predecessor Cacus,

"Elisos oculos, et siccum sanguine guttur."

The Bailie, who by no means relished these warlike counsels, here pulled forth an immense watch, of the colour, and nearly of the size, of a pewter warming-pan, and observed it was now past noon, and that the Caterans had been seen in the pass of Ballybrough soon after sunrise; so that, before the allied forces could assemble, they and their prey would be far beyond the reach of the most active pursuit, and sheltered in those pathless deserts, where it was neither advisable to follow, nor indeed possible to trace them.

This proposition was undeniable. The council therefore broke up without coming to any conclusion, as has occurred to councils of more importance; only it was determined that the Bailie should send his own three milkcows down to the mains for the use of the Baron's family, and brew small ale, as a substitute for milk, in his own. To this arrangement, which was suggested by Saunderson, the Bailie readily assented, both from habitual deference to the family, and an internal consciousness that his courtesy would, in some mode or other, be repaid tenfold.

The Baron having also retired to give some necessary directions, Waverley seized the opportunity to ask, whether this Fergus, with the unpronounceable name, was the chief thief-taker of the district?

'Thief-taker!' answered Rose, laughing; 'he is a gentleman of great honour and consequence, the chieftain of an independent branch of a powerful Highland clan, and is much respected, both for his own power and that of his kith, kin, and allies.'

'And what has he to do with the thieves, then? Is he a magistrate, or in the commission of the peace?' asked Waverley.

'The commission of war rather, if there be such a thing,' said Rose; 'for he is a very unquiet neighbour to his unfriends, and keeps a greater following on foot than many that have thrice his estate. As to his connection with the thieves, that I cannot well explain; but the boldest of them will never steal a hoof from any one that pays black-mail to Vich Ian Vohr.'

'And what is black-mail?'

'A sort of protection-money that Low-Country gentlemen and heritors, lying near the Highlands, pay to some Highland chief, that he may neither do them harm himself, nor suffer it to be done to them by others; and then if your cattle are stolen, you have only to send him word, and he will recover them; or it may be, he will drive away cows from some distant place, where he has a quarrel, and give them to you to make up your loss.' [Footnote: See note 13.]

'And is this sort of Highland Jonathan Wild admitted into society, and called a gentleman?'

'So much so,' said Rose, 'that the quarrel between my father and Fergus Mac-Ivor began at a county meeting, where he wanted to take precedence of all the Lowland gentlemen then present, only my father would not suffer it. And then he upbraided my father that he was under his banner, and paid him tribute; and my father was in a towering passion, for Baillie Macwheeble, who manages such things his own way, had contrived to keep this black-mail a secret from him, and passed it in his account for cess-money. And they would have fought; but Fergus Mac-Ivor said, very gallantly, he would never raise his hand against a grey head that was so much respected as my father's.—O I wish, I wish they had continued friends!'

'And did you ever see this Mr. Mac-Ivor, if that be his name, Miss Bradwardine?'

'No, that is not his name; and he would consider MASTER as a sort of affront, only that you are an Englishman, and know no better. But the Lowlanders call him, like other gentlemen, by the name of his estate, Glennaquoich; and the Highlanders call him Vich Ian Vohr, that is, the son of John the Great; and we upon the braes here call him by both names indifferently.'

'I am afraid I shall never bring my English tongue to call him by either one or other.'

'But he is a very polite, handsome man,' continued Rose; 'and his sister Flora is one of the most beautiful and accomplished young ladies in this country; she was bred in a convent in France, and was a great friend of mine before this unhappy dispute. Dear Captain Waverley, try your influence with my father to make matters up. I am sure this is but the beginning of our troubles; for Tully-Veolan has never been a safe or quiet residence when we have been at feud with the Highlanders. When I was a girl about ten, there was a skirmish fought between a party of twenty of them and my father and his servants behind the mains; and the bullets broke several panes in the north windows, they were so near. Three of the Highlanders were killed, and they brought them in wrapped in their plaids, and laid them on the stone floor of the hall; and next morning, their wives and daughters came, clapping their hands, and crying the coronach, and shrieking, and carried away the dead bodies, with the pipes playing before them. I could not sleep for six weeks without starting and thinking I heard these terrible cries, and saw the

bodies lying on the steps, all stiff and swathed up in their bloody tartans. But since that time there came a party from the garrison at Stirling, with a warrant from the Lord Justice Clerk, or some such great man, and took away all our arms; and now, how are we to protect ourselves if they come down in any strength?' Waverley could not help starting at a story which bore so much resemblance to one of his own day-dreams. Here was a girl scarce seventeen, the gentlest of her sex, both in temper and appearance, who had witnessed with her own eyes such a scene as he had used to conjure up in his imagination, as only occurring in ancient times, and spoke of it coolly, as one very likely to recur. He felt at once the impulse of curiosity, and that slight sense of danger which only serves to heighten its interest. He might have said with Malvolio, "'I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me!" I am actually in the land of military and romantic adventures, and it only remains to be seen what will be my own share in them.'

The whole circumstances now detailed concerning the state of the country seemed equally novel and extraordinary. He had indeed often heard of Highland thieves, but had no idea of the systematic mode in which their depredations were conducted; and that the practice was connived at, and even encouraged, by many of the Highland chieftains, who not only found the creaghs, or forays, useful for the purpose of training individuals of their clan to the practice of arms, but also of maintaining a wholesome terror among their Lowland neighbours, and levying, as we have seen, a tribute from them, under colour of protection-money. Bailie Macwheeble, who soon afterwards entered, expatiated still more at length upon the same topic. This honest gentleman's conversation was so formed upon his professional practice, that Davie Gellatley once said his discourse was like a 'charge of horning.' He assured our hero, that 'from the maist ancient times of record, the lawless thieves, limmers, and broken men of the Highlands, had been in fellowship together by reason of their surnames, for the committing of divers thefts, reifs, and herships upon the honest men of the Low Country, when they not only intromitted with their whole goods and gear, corn, cattle, horse, nolt, sheep, outstight and insight plenishing, at their wicked pleasure, but moreover made prisoners, ransomed them, or concussed them into giving borrows (pledges) to enter into captivity again;—all which was directly prohibited in divers parts of the Statute Book, both by the act one thousand five hundred and sixty-seven, and various others; the whilk statutes, with all that had followed and might follow thereupon, were shamefully broken and vilipended by the said sorners, limmers, and broken men, associated into fellowships, for the aforesaid purposes of theft, stouthreef, fire-raising, murther, raptus mulierum, or forcible abduction of women, and such like as aforesaid.'

It seemed like a dream to Waverley that these deeds of violence should be familiar to men's minds, and currently talked of as falling within the common order of things, and happening daily in the immediate vicinity, without his having crossed the seas, and while he was yet in the otherwise well-ordered island of Great Britain.

CHAPTER XVI

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY APPEARS

The Baron returned at the dinner-hour, and had in a great measure recovered his composure and good-humour. He not only confirmed the stories which Edward had heard from Rose and Bailie Macwheeble, but added many anecdotes from his own experience, concerning the state of the Highlands and their inhabitants. The chiefs he pronounced to be, in general, gentlemen of great honour and high pedigree, whose word was accounted as a law by all those of their own sept, or clan. 'It did not indeed,' he said, 'become them, as had occurred in late instances, to propone their prosapia, a lineage which rested for the most part on the vain and fond rhymes of their seannachies or bhaids, as aequiponderate with the evidence of ancient charters and royal grants of antiquity, conferred upon distinguished houses in the Low Country by divers Scottish monarchs; nevertheless, such was their outrecuidance and presumption, as to undervalue those who possessed such evidents, as if they held their lands in a sheep's skin.'

This, by the way, pretty well explained the cause of quarrel between the Baron and his Highland ally. But he went on to state so many curious particulars concerning the manners, customs, and habits of this patriarchal race that Edward's curiosity became highly interested, and he inquired whether it was possible to make with safety an excursion into the neighbouring Highlands, whose dusky barrier of mountains had already excited his wish to penetrate beyond them. The Baron assured his guest that nothing would be more easy, providing this quarrel were first made up, since he could himself give him letters to many of the distinguished chiefs, who would receive him with the utmost courtesy and hospitality.

While they were on this topic, the door suddenly opened, and, ushered by Saunders Saunderson, a Highlander, fully armed and equipped, entered the apartment. Had it not been that Saunders acted the part of master of the ceremonies to this martial apparition, without appearing to deviate from his usual composure, and that neither Mr. Bradwardine nor Rose exhibited any emotion, Edward would certainly have thought the intrusion hostile. As it was, he started at the sight of what he had not yet happened to see, a mountaineer in his full national costume. The individual Gael was a stout, dark, young man, of low stature, the ample folds of whose plaid added to the appearance of strength which his person exhibited. The short kilt, or petticoat, showed his sinewy and clean-made limbs; the goatskin purse, flanked by the usual defences, a dirk and steel-wrought pistol, hung before him; his bonnet had a short feather, which indicated his claim to be treated as a duinhe-wassel, or sort of gentleman; a broadsword dangled by his side, a target hung upon his shoulder, and a long Spanish fowling-piece occupied one of his hands. With the other hand he pulled off his bonnet, and the Baron, who well knew their customs, and the proper mode of addressing them, immediately said, with an air of dignity, but without rising, and much, as Edward thought, in the manner of a prince receiving an embassy, 'Welcome, Evan Dhu Maccombich; what news from Fergus Mac-Ivor Vich Ian Vohr?'

'Fergus Mac-Ivor Vich Ian Vohr,' said the ambassador, in good English, 'greet you well, Baron of Bradwardine and Tully-Veolan, and is sorry there has been a thick cloud interposed between you and him, which has kept you from seeing and considering the friendship and alliances that have been between your houses and forebears of old; and he prays you that the cloud may pass away, and that things may be as they have been heretofore between the clan Ivor and the house of Bradwardine, when there was an egg between them for a flint and a knife for a sword. And he expects you will also say, you are sorry for the cloud, and no man shall hereafter ask whether it descended from the bill to the valley, or rose from the valley to the hill; for they never struck with the scabbard who did not receive with the sword, and woe to him who would lose his friend for the stormy cloud of a spring morning.'

To this the Baron of Bradwardine answered with suitable dignity, that he knew the chief of Clan Ivor to be a well-wisher to the King, and he was sorry there should have been a cloud between him and any gentleman of such sound principles, 'for when folks are banding together, feeble is he who hath no brother.'

This appearing perfectly satisfactory, that the peace between these august persons might be duly solemnised, the Baron ordered a stoup of usquebaugh, and, filling a glass, drank to the health and prosperity of Mac-Ivor of Glennaquoich; upon which the Celtic ambassador, to requite his politeness, turned down a mighty bumper of the same generous liquor, seasoned with his good wishes to the house of Bradwardine.

Having thus ratified the preliminaries of the general treaty of pacification, the envoy retired to adjust with Mr. Macwheeble some subordinate articles with which it was not thought necessary to trouble the Baron. These probably referred to the discontinuance of the subsidy, and apparently the Bailie found means to satisfy their ally, without suffering his master to suppose that his dignity was compromised. At least, it is certain, that after the plenipotentiaries had drunk a bottle of brandy in single drams, which seemed to have no more effect upon such seasoned vessels than if it had been poured upon the two bears at the top of the avenue, Evan Dhu Maccombich, having possessed himself of all the information which he could procure respecting the robbery of the preceding night, declared

his intention to set off immediately in pursuit of the cattle, which he pronounced to be 'no that far off; they have broken the bone,' he observed, 'but they have had no time to suck the marrow.'

Our hero, who had attended Evan Dhu during his perquisitions, was much struck with the ingenuity which he displayed in collecting information, and the precise and pointed conclusions which he drew from it. Evan Dhu, on his part, was obviously flattered with the attention of Waverley, the interest he seemed to take in his inquiries, and his curiosity about the customs and scenery of the Highlands. Without much ceremony he invited Edward to accompany him on a short walk of ten or fifteen miles into the mountains, and see the place where the cattle were conveyed to; adding, 'If it be as I suppose, you never saw such a place in your life, nor ever will, unless you go with me or the like of me.'

Our hero, feeling his curiosity considerably excited by the idea of visiting the den of a Highland Cacus, took, however, the precaution to inquire if his guide might be trusted. He was assured that the invitation would on no account have been given had there been the least danger, and that all he had to apprehend was a little fatigue; and, as Evan proposed he should pass a day at his Chieftain's house in returning, where he would be sure of good accommodation and an excellent welcome, there seemed nothing very formidable in the task he undertook. Rose, indeed, turned pale when she heard of it; but her father, who loved the spirited curiosity of his young friend, did not attempt to damp it by an alarm of danger which really did not exist, and a knapsack, with a few necessaries, being bound on the shoulders of a sort of deputy gamekeeper, our hero set forth with a fowling-piece in his hand, accompanied by his new friend Evan Dhu, and followed by the gamekeeper aforesaid, and by two wild Highlanders, the attendants of Evan, one of whom had upon his shoulder a hatchet at the end of a pole, called a Lochaber-axe, [Footnote: See Note 14] and the other a long ducking-gun. Evan, upon Edward's inquiry, gave him to understand that this martial escort was by no means necessary as a guard, but merely, as he said, drawing up and adjusting his plaid with an air of dignity, that he might appear decently at Tully-Veolan, and as Vich Ian Vohr's foster-brother ought to do. 'Ah!' said he, 'if you Saxon duinhe-wassel (English gentleman) saw but the Chief with his tail on!'

'With his tail on?' echoed Edward in some surprise.

'Yes—that is, with all his usual followers, when he visits those of the same rank. There is,' he continued, stopping and drawing himself proudly up, while he counted upon his fingers the several officers of his chief's retinue; 'there is his hanchman, or right-hand man; then his bard, or poet; then his bladier, or orator, to make harangues to the great folks whom he visits; then his gilly-more, or armour-bearer, to carry his sword and target, and his gun; then his gilly-casfliuch, who carries him on his back through the sikes and brooks; then his gilly-comstrian, to lead his horse by the bridle in steep and difficult paths; then his gilly-trushharnish, to carry his knapsack; and the piper and the piper's man, and it may be a dozen young lads beside, that have no business, but are just boys of the belt, to follow the Laird and do his honour's bidding.'

'And does your Chief regularly maintain all these men?' demanded Waverley.

'All these?' replied Evan; 'ay, and many a fair head beside, that would not ken where to lay itself, but for the mickle barn at Glennaquoich.'

With similar tales of the grandeur of the Chief in peace and war, Evan Dhu beguiled the way till they approached more closely those huge mountains which Edward had hitherto only seen at a distance. It was towards evening as they entered one of the tremendous passes which afford communication between the high and low country; the path, which was extremely steep and rugged, wound up a chasm between two tremendous rocks, following the passage which a foaming stream, that brawled far below, appeared to have worn for itself in the course of ages. A few slanting beams of the sun, which was now setting, reached the water in its darksome bed, and showed it partially, chafed by a hundred rocks and broken by a hundred falls. The descent from the path to the stream was a mere precipice, with here and there a projecting fragment of granite, or a scathed tree, which had warped its twisted roots into the fissures of the rock. On the right hand, the mountain rose above the path with almost equal inaccessibility; but the hill on the opposite side displayed a shroud of copsewood, with which some pines were intermingled.

'This,' said Evan, 'is the pass of Bally-Brough, which was kept in former times by ten of the clan Donnochie against a hundred of the Low-Country carles. The graves of the slain are still to be seen in that little corrie, or bottom, on the opposite side of the burn; if your eyes are good, you may see the green specks among the heather. See, there is an earn, which you Southrons call an eagle. You have no such birds as that in England. He is going to fetch his supper from the Laird of Bradwardine's braes, but I 'll send a slug after him.'

He fired his piece accordingly, but missed the superb monarch of the feathered tribes, who, without noticing the attempt to annoy him, continued his majestic flight to the southward. A thousand birds of prey, hawks, kites, carrion-crows, and ravens, disturbed from the lodgings which they had just taken up for the evening, rose at the report of the gun, and mingled their hoarse and discordant notes with the echoes which replied to it, and with the roar of the mountain cataracts. Evan, a little disconcerted at having missed his mark, when he meant to have displayed peculiar dexterity, covered his confusion by whistling part of a pibroch as he reloaded his piece, and proceeded in silence up the pass.

It issued in a narrow glen, between two mountains, both very lofty and covered with heath. The brook continued to be their companion, and they advanced up its mazes, crossing them now and then, on which occasions Evan Dhu uniformly offered the assistance of his attendants to carry over Edward; but our hero, who had been always a tolerable pedestrian, declined the accommodation, and obviously rose in his guide's opinion, by showing that he did not fear wetting his feet. Indeed he was anxious, so far as he could without affectation, to remove the opinion which Evan seemed to entertain of the effeminacy of the Lowlanders, and particularly of the English.

Through the gorge of this glen they found access to a black bog, of tremendous extent, full of large pit-holes, which they traversed with great difficulty and some danger, by tracks which no one but a Highlander could have followed. The path itself, or rather the portion of more solid ground on which the travellers half walked, half waded, was rough, broken, and in many places quaggy and unsound. Sometimes the ground was so completely unsafe that it was necessary to spring from one hillock to another, the space between being incapable of bearing the human weight. This was an easy matter to the Highlanders, who wore thin-soled brogues fit for the purpose, and moved with a peculiar springing step; but Edward began to find the exercise, to which he was unaccustomed, more fatiguing than he expected. The lingering twilight served to show them through this Serbonian bog, but deserted them almost totally at the bottom of a steep and very stony hill, which it was the travellers' next toilsome task to ascend. The night, however, was pleasant, and not dark; and Waverley, calling up mental energy to support personal fatigue, held on his march gallantly, though envying in his heart his Highland attendants, who continued, without a symptom of abated vigour, the rapid and swinging pace, or rather trot, which, according to his computation, had already brought them fifteen miles upon their journey.

After crossing this mountain and descending on the other side towards a thick wood, Evan Dhu held some conference with his Highland attendants, in consequence of which Edward's baggage was shifted from the shoulders of the gamekeeper to those of one of the gillies, and the former was sent off with the other mountaineer in a direction different from that of the three remaining travellers. On asking the meaning of this separation, Waverley was told that the Lowlander must go to a hamlet about three miles off for the night; for unless it was some very particular friend, Donald Bean Lean, the worthy person whom they supposed to be possessed of the cattle, did not much approve of strangers approaching his retreat. This seemed reasonable, and silenced a qualm of suspicion which came across Edward's mind when he saw himself, at such a place and such an hour, deprived of his only Lowland companion. And Evan immediately afterwards added, 'that indeed he himself had better get forward, and announce their approach to Donald Bean Lean, as the arrival of a sidier roy (red soldier) might otherwise be a disagreeable surprise.' And without waiting for an answer, in jockey phrase, he trotted out, and putting himself to a very round pace, was out of sight in an instant.

Waverley was now left to his own meditations, for his attendant with the battle-axe spoke very little English. They were traversing a thick, and, as it seemed, an endless wood of pines, and consequently the path was altogether indiscernible in the murky darkness which surrounded them. The Highlander, however, seemed to trace it by instinct, without the hesitation of a moment, and Edward followed his footsteps as close as he could.

After journeying a considerable time in silence, he could not help asking, 'Was it far to the end of their journey?'

'Ta cove was tree, four mile; but as duinhe-wassel was a wee taiglit, Donald could, tat is, might—would—should send ta curragh.'

This conveyed no information. The curragh which was promised might be a man, a horse, a cart, or chaise; and no more could be got from the man with the battle-axe but a repetition of 'Aich ay! ta curragh.'

But in a short time Edward began to conceive his meaning, when, issuing from the wood, he found himself on the banks of a large river or lake, where his conductor gave him to understand they must sit down for a little while. The moon, which now began to rise, showed obscurely the expanse of water which spread before them, and the shapeless and indistinct forms of mountains with which it seemed to be surrounded. The cool and yet mild air of the summer night refreshed Waverley after his rapid and toilsome walk; and the perfume which it wafted from the birch trees, [Footnote: It is not the weeping birch, the most common species in the Highlands, but the woolly-leaved Lowland birch, that is distinguished by this fragrance.] bathed in the evening dew, was exquisitely fragrant.

He had now time to give himself up to the full romance of his situation. Here he sate on the banks of an unknown lake, under the guidance of a wild native, whose language was unknown to him, on a visit to the den of some renowned outlaw, a second Robin Hood, perhaps, or Adam o' Gordon, and that at deep midnight, through scenes of difficulty and toil, separated from his attendant, left by his guide. What a variety of incidents for the exercise of a romantic imagination, and all enhanced by the solemn feeling of uncertainty at least, if not of danger! The only circumstance which assorted ill with the rest was the cause of his journey—the Baron's milk-cows! this degrading incident he kept in the background.

While wrapt in these dreams of imagination, his companion gently touched him, and, pointing in a direction nearly straight across the lake, said, 'Yon's ta cove.' A small point of light was seen to twinkle in the direction in which he pointed, and, gradually increasing in size and lustre, seemed to flicker like a meteor upon the verge of the horizon. While Edward watched this phenomenon, the distant dash of oars was heard. The measured sound approached near and more near, and presently a loud whistle was heard in the same direction. His friend with the battle-axe immediately whistled clear and shrill, in reply to the signal, and a boat, manned with four or five Highlanders, pushed for a little inlet, near which Edward was sitting. He advanced to meet them with his attendant, was immediately assisted into the boat by the officious attention of two stout mountaineers, and had no sooner seated himself than they resumed their oars, and began to row across the lake with great rapidity.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOLD OF A HIGHLAND ROBBER

The party preserved silence, interrupted only by the monotonous and murmured chant of a Gaelic song, sung in a kind of low recitative by the steersman, and by the dash of the oars, which the notes seemed to regulate, as they dipped to them in cadence. The light, which they now approached more nearly, assumed a broader, redder and more irregular splendour. It appeared plainly to be a large fire, but whether kindled upon an island or the mainland Edward could not determine. As he saw it, the red glaring orb seemed to rest on the very surface of the lake itself, and resembled the fiery vehicle in which the Evil Genius of an Oriental tale traverses land and sea. They approached nearer, and the light of the fire sufficed to show that it was kindled at the bottom of a huge dark crag or rock, rising abruptly from the very edge of the water; its front, changed by the reflection to dusky red, formed a strange and even awful contrast to the banks around, which were from time to time faintly and partially illuminated by pallid moonlight.

The boat now neared the shore, and Edward could discover that this large fire, amply supplied with branches of pine-wood by two figures, who, in the red reflection of its light, appeared like demons, was kindled in the jaws of a lofty cavern, into which an inlet from the lake seemed to advance; and he conjectured, which was indeed true, that the fire had been lighted as a beacon to the boatmen on their return. They rowed right for the mouth of the cave, and then, shifting their oars, permitted the boat to enter in obedience to the impulse which it had received. The skiff passed the little point or platform of rock on which the fire was blazing, and running about two boats' lengths farther, stopped where the cavern (for it was already arched overhead) ascended from the water by five or six broad ledges of rock, so easy and regular that they might be termed natural steps. At this moment a quantity of water was suddenly flung upon the fire, which sunk with a hissing noise, and with it disappeared the light it had hitherto afforded. Four or five active arms lifted Waverley out of the boat, placed him on his feet, and almost carried him into the recesses of the cave. He made a few paces in darkness, guided in this manner; and advancing towards a hum of voices, which seemed to sound from the centre of the rock, at an acute turn Donald Bean Lean and his whole establishment were before his eyes.

The interior of the cave, which here rose very high, was illuminated by torches made of pine-tree, which emitted a bright and bickering light, attended by a strong though not unpleasant odour. Their light was assisted by the red glare of a large charcoal fire, round which were seated five or six armed Highlanders, while others were indistinctly seen couched on their plaids in the more remote recesses of the cavern. In one large aperture, which the robber facetiously called his SPENCE (or pantry), there hung by the heels the carcasses of a sheep, or ewe, and two cows lately slaughtered. The principal inhabitant of this singular mansion, attended by Evan Dhu as master of the ceremonies, came forward to meet his guest, totally different in appearance and manner from what his imagination had anticipated. The profession which he followed, the wilderness in which he dwelt, the wild warrior forms that surrounded him, were all calculated to inspire terror. From such accompaniments, Waverley prepared himself to meet a stern, gigantic, ferocious figure, such as Salvator would have chosen to be the central object of a group of banditti. [Footnote: See Note 15.]

Donald Bean Lean was the very reverse of all these. He was thin in person and low in stature, with light sandy-coloured hair, and small pale features, from which he derived his agnomen of BEAN or white; and although his form was light, well proportioned and active, he appeared, on the whole, rather a diminutive and insignificant figure. He had served in some inferior capacity in the French army, and in order to receive his English visitor in great form, and probably meaning, in his way, to pay him a compliment, he had laid aside the Highland dress for the time, to put on an old blue and red uniform and a feathered hat, in which he was far from showing to advantage, and indeed looked so incongruous, compared with all around him, that Waverley would have been tempted to laugh, had laughter been either civil or safe. The robber received Captain Waverley with a profusion of French politeness and Scottish hospitality, seemed perfectly to know his name and connections, and to be particularly acquainted with his uncle's political principles. On these he bestowed great applause, to which Waverley judged it prudent to make a very general reply.

Being placed at a convenient distance from the charcoal fire, the heat of which the season rendered oppressive, a strapping Highland damsel placed before Waverley, Evan, and Donald Bean three cogues, or wooden vessels composed of staves and hoops, containing eanarich, [Footnote: This was the regale presented by Rob Roy to the Laird of Tullibody.] a sort of strong soup, made out of a particular part of the inside of the beeves. After this refreshment, which, though coarse, fatigue and hunger rendered palatable, steaks, roasted on the coals, were supplied in liberal abundance, and disappeared before Evan Dhu and their host with a promptitude that seemed like magic, and astonished Waverley, who was much puzzled to reconcile their voracity with what he had heard of the abstemiousness of the Highlanders. He was ignorant that this abstinence was with the lower ranks wholly compulsory, and that, like some animals of prey, those who practise it were usually gifted with the power of indemnifying themselves to good purpose when chance threw plenty in their way. The whisky came forth in abundance to crown the cheer. The Highlanders drank it copiously and undiluted; but Edward, having mixed a little with water, did not find it so palatable as to invite him to repeat the draught. Their host bewailed himself exceedingly that he could offer him no wine: 'Had he but known four-and-twenty hours before, he would have had some, had it been within the circle of forty miles round him. But no gentleman could do more to show his sense of the honour of a visit from

another than to offer him the best cheer his house afforded. Where there are no bushes there can be no nuts, and the way of those you live with is that you must follow.'

He went on regretting to Evan Dhu the death of an aged man, Donnacha an Amrigh, or Duncan with the Cap, 'a gifted seer,' who foretold, through the second sight, visitors of every description who haunted their dwelling, whether as friends or foes.

'Is not his son Malcolm taishat (a second-sighted person)?' asked Evan.

'Nothing equal to his father,' replied Donald Bean. 'He told us the other day, we were to see a great gentleman riding on a horse, and there came nobody that whole day but Shemus Beg, the blind harper, with his dog. Another time he advertised us of a wedding, and behold it proved a funeral; and on the creagh, when he foretold to us we should bring home a hundred head of horned cattle, we gripped nothing but a fat bailie of Perth.'

From this discourse he passed to the political and military state of the country; and Waverley was astonished, and even alarmed, to find a person of this description so accurately acquainted with the strength of the various garrisons and regiments quartered north of the Tay. He even mentioned the exact number of recruits who had joined Waverley's troop from his uncle's estate, and observed they were PRETTY MEN, meaning, not handsome, but stout warlike fellows. He put Waverley in mind of one or two minute circumstances which had happened at a general review of the regiment, which satisfied him that the robber had been an eye-witness of it; and Evan Dhu having by this time retired from the conversation, and wrapped himself up in his plaid to take some repose, Donald asked Edward, in a very significant manner, whether he had nothing particular to say to him.

Waverley, surprised and somewhat startled at this question from such a character, answered, he had no motive in visiting him but curiosity to see his extraordinary place of residence. Donald Bean Lean looked him steadily in the face for an instant, and then said, with a significant nod, 'You might as well have confided in me; I am as much worthy of trust as either the Baron of Bradwardine or Vich Ian Vohr. But you are equally welcome to my house.'

Waverley felt an involuntary shudder creep over him at the mysterious language held by this outlawed and lawless bandit, which, in despite of his attempts to master it, deprived him of the power to ask the meaning of his insinuations. A heath pallet, with the flowers stuck uppermost, had been prepared for him in a recess of the cave, and here, covered with such spare plaids as could be mustered, he lay for some time watching the motions of the other inhabitants of the cavern. Small parties of two or three entered or left the place, without any other ceremony than a few words in Gaelic to the principal outlaw, and, when he fell asleep, to a tall Highlander who acted as his lieutenant, and seemed to keep watch during his repose. Those who entered seemed to have returned from some excursion, of which they reported the success, and went without farther ceremony to the larder, where, cutting with their dirks their rations from the carcasses which were there suspended, they proceeded to broil and eat them at their own pleasure and leisure. The liquor was under strict regulation, being served out either by Donald himself, his lieutenant, or the strapping Highland girl aforesaid, who was the only female that appeared. The allowance of whisky, however, would have appeared prodigal to any but Highlanders, who, living entirely in the open air and in a very moist climate, can consume great quantities of ardent spirits without the usual baneful effects either upon the brain or constitution.

At length the fluctuating groups began to swim before the eyes of our hero as they gradually closed; nor did he re-open them till the morning sun was high on the lake without, though there was but a faint and glimmering twilight in the recesses of Uaimh an Ri, or the King's Cavern, as the abode of Donald Bean Lean was proudly denominated.

CHAPTER XVIII

WAVERLEY PROCEEDS ON HIS JOURNEY

When Edward had collected his scattered recollection, he was surprised to observe the cavern totally deserted. Having arisen and put his dress in some order, he looked more accurately round him; but all was still solitary. If it had not been for the decayed brands of the fire, now sunk into grey ashes, and the remnants of the festival, consisting of bones half burnt and half gnawed, and an empty keg or two, there remained no traces of Donald and his band. When Waverley sallied forth to the entrance of the cave, he perceived that the point of rock, on which remained the marks of last night's beacon, was accessible by a small path, either natural or roughly hewn in the rock, along the little inlet of water which ran a few yards up into the cavern, where, as in a wetdock, the skiff which brought him there the night before was still lying moored. When he reached the small projecting platform on which the beacon had been established, he would have believed his further progress by land impossible, only that it was scarce probable but what the inhabitants of the cavern had some mode of issuing from it otherwise than by the lake. Accordingly, he soon observed three or four shelving steps, or ledges of rock, at the very extremity of the little platform; and, making use of them as a staircase, he clambered by their means around the projecting shoulder of the crag on which the cavern opened, and, descending with some difficulty on the other side, he gained the wild and precipitous shores of a Highland loch, about four miles in length and a mile and a half across, surrounded by heathy and savage mountains, on the crests of which the morning mist was still sleeping.

Looking back to the place from which he came, he could not help admiring the address which had adopted a retreat of such seclusion and secrecy. The rock, round the shoulder of which he had turned by a few imperceptible notches, that barely afforded place for the foot, seemed, in looking back upon it, a huge precipice, which barred all further passage by the shores of the lake in that direction. There could be no possibility, the breadth of the lake considered, of descrying the entrance of the narrow and low-browed cave from the other side; so that, unless the retreat had been sought for with boats, or disclosed by treachery, it might be a safe and secret residence to its garrison as long as they were supplied with provisions. Having satisfied his curiosity in these particulars, Waverley looked around for Evan Dhu and his attendants, who, he rightly judged, would be at no great distance, whatever might have become of Donald Bean Lean and his party, whose mode of life was, of course, liable to sudden migrations of abode. Accordingly, at the distance of about half a mile, he beheld a Highlander (Evan apparently) angling in the lake, with another attending him, whom, from the weapon which he shouldered, he recognised for his friend with the battle-axe.

Much nearer to the mouth of the cave he heard the notes of a lively Gaelic song, guided by which, in a sunny recess, shaded by a glittering birch-tree, and carpeted with a bank of firm white sand, he found the damsel of the cavern, whose lay had already reached him, busy, to the best of her power, in arranging to advantage a morning repast of milk, eggs, barley-bread, fresh butter, and honey-comb. The poor girl had already made a circuit of four miles that morning in search of the eggs, of the meal which baked her cakes, and of the other materials of the breakfast, being all delicacies which she had to beg or borrow from distant cottagers. The followers of Donald Bean Lean used little food except the flesh of the animals which they drove away from the Lowlands; bread itself was a delicacy seldom thought of, because hard to be obtained, and all the domestic accommodations of milk, poultry, butter, etc., were out of the question in this Scythian camp. Yet it must not be omitted that, although Alice had occupied a part of the morning in providing those accommodations for her guest which the cavern did not afford, she had secured time also to arrange her own person in her best trim. Her finery was very simple. A short russet-coloured jacket and a petticoat of scanty longitude was her whole dress; but these were clean, and neatly arranged. A piece of scarlet embroidered cloth, called the snood, confined her hair, which fell over it in a profusion of rich dark curls. The scarlet plaid, which formed part of her dress, was laid aside, that it might not impede her activity in

attending the stranger. I should forget Alice's proudest ornament were I to omit mentioning a pair of gold ear-rings and a golden rosary, which her father (for she was the daughter of Donald Bean Lean) had brought from France, the plunder, probably, of some battle or storm.

Her form, though rather large for her years, was very well proportioned, and her demeanour had a natural and rustic grace, with nothing of the sheepishness of an ordinary peasant. The smiles, displaying a row of teeth of exquisite whiteness, and the laughing eyes, with which, in dumb show, she gave Waverley that morning greeting which she wanted English words to express, might have been interpreted by a coxcomb, or perhaps by a young soldier who, without being such, was conscious of a handsome person, as meant to convey more than the courtesy of an hostess. Nor do I take it upon me to say that the little wild mountaineer would have welcomed any staid old gentleman advanced in life, the Baron of Bradwardine, for example, with the cheerful pains which she bestowed upon Edward's accommodation. She seemed eager to place him by the meal which she had so sedulously arranged, and to which she now added a few bunches of cranberries, gathered in an adjacent morass. Having had the satisfaction of seeing him seated at his breakfast, she placed herself demurely upon a stone at a few yards' distance, and appeared to watch with great complacency for some opportunity of serving him.

Evan and his attendant now returned slowly along the beach, the latter bearing a large salmon-trout, the produce of the morning's sport, together with the angling-rod, while Evan strolled forward, with an easy, self-satisfied, and important gait, towards the spot where Waverley was so agreeably employed at the breakfast-table. After morning greetings had passed on both sides, and Evan, looking at Waverley, had said something in Gaelic to Alice, which made her laugh, yet colour up to her eyes, through a complexion well en-browned by sun and wind, Evan intimated his commands that the fish should be prepared for breakfast. A spark from the lock of his pistol produced a light, and a few withered fir branches were quickly in flame, and as speedily reduced to hot embers, on which the trout was broiled in large slices. To crown the repast, Evan produced from the pocket of his short jerkin a large scallop shell, and from under the folds of his plaid a ram's horn full of whisky. Of this he took a copious dram, observing he had already taken his MORNING with Donald Bean Lean before his departure; he offered the same cordial to Alice and to Edward, which they both declined. With the bounteous air of a lord, Evan then proffered the scallop to Dugald Mahony, his attendant, who, without waiting to be asked a second time, drank it off with great gusto. Evan then prepared to move towards the boat, inviting Waverley to attend him. Meanwhile, Alice had made up in a small basket what she thought worth removing, and flinging her plaid around her, she advanced up to Edward, and with the utmost simplicity, taking hold of his hand, offered her cheek to his salute, dropping at the same time her little curtsy. Evan, who was esteemed a wag among the mountain fair, advanced as if to secure a similar favour; but Alice, snatching up her basket, escaped up the rocky bank as fleetly as a roe, and, turning round and laughing, called something out to him in Gaelic, which he answered in the same tone and language; then, waving her hand to Edward, she resumed her road, and was soon lost among the thickets, though they continued for some time to hear her lively carol, as she proceeded gaily on her solitary journey.

They now again entered the gorge of the cavern, and stepping into the boat, the Highlander pushed off, and, taking advantage of the morning breeze, hoisted a clumsy sort of sail, while Evan assumed the helm, directing their course, as it appeared to Waverley, rather higher up the lake than towards the place of his embarkation on the preceding night. As they glided along the silver mirror, Evan opened the conversation with a panegyric upon Alice, who, he said, was both CANNY and FENDY; and was, to the boot of all that, the best dancer of a strathspey in the whole strath. Edward assented to her praises so far as he understood them, yet could not help regretting that she was condemned to such a perilous and dismal life.

'Oich! for that,' said Evan, 'there is nothing in Perthshire that she need want, if she ask her father to fetch it, unless it be too hot or too heavy.'

'But to be the daughter of a cattle-stealer—a common thief!' 'Common thief!—no such thing: Donald Bean Lean never LIFTED less than a drove in his life.'

'Do you call him an uncommon thief, then?'

'No; he that steals a cow from a poor widow, or a stirk from a cotter, is a thief; he that lifts a drove from a Sassenach laird is a gentleman-drover. And, besides, to take a tree from the forest, a salmon from the river, a deer from the hill, or a cow from a Lowland strath, is what no Highlander need ever think shame upon.'

'But what can this end in, were he taken in such an appropriation?'

'To be sure he would DIE FOR THE LAW, as many a pretty man has done before him.'

'Die for the law!'

'Ay; that is, with the law, or by the law; be strapped up on the KIND gallows of Crieff, [Footnote: See Note 16.] where his father died, and his goodsire died, and where I hope he'll live to die himself, if he's not shot, or slashed, in a creagh.'

'You HOPE such a death for your friend, Evan?'

'And that do I e'en; would you have me wish him to die on a bundle of wet straw in yon den of his, like a mangy tyke?'

'But what becomes of Alice, then?'

'Troth, if such an accident were to happen, as her father would not need her help ony langer, I ken nought to hinder me to marry her mysell.'

'Gallantly resolved,' said Edward; 'but, in the meanwhile, Evan, what has your father-in-law (that shall be, if he have the good fortune to be hanged) done with the Baron's cattle?'

'Oich,' answered Evan, 'they were all trudging before your lad and Allan Kennedy before the sun blinked ower Ben Lawers this morning; and they'll be in the pass of Bally-Brough by this time, in their way back to the parks of Tully-Veolan, all but two, that were unhappily slaughtered before I got last night to Uaimh an Ri.'

'And where are we going, Evan, if I may be so bold as to ask?' said Waverley.

'Where would you be ganging, but to the Laird's ain house of Glennaquoich? Ye would not think to be in his country, without ganging to see him? It would be as much as a man's life's worth.'

'And are we far from Glennaquoich?'

'But five bits of miles; and Vich Ian Vohr will meet us.'

In about half an hour they reached the upper end of the lake, where, after landing Waverley, the two Highlanders drew the boat into a little creek among thick flags and reeds, where it lay perfectly concealed. The oars they put in another place of concealment, both for the use of Donald Bean Lean probably, when his occasions should next bring him to that place.

The travellers followed for some time a delightful opening into the hills, down which a little brook found its way to the lake. When they had pursued their walk a short distance, Waverley renewed his questions about their host of the cavern.

'Does he always reside in that cave?'

'Out, no! it's past the skill of man to tell where he's to be found at a' times; there's not a dern nook, or cove, or corrie, in the whole country that he's not acquainted with.'

'And do others beside your master shelter him?'

'My master? MY master is in Heaven,' answered Evan, haughtily; and then immediately assuming his usual civility of manner, 'but you mean my Chief;—no, he does not shelter Donald Bean Lean, nor any that are like him; he only allows him (with a smile) wood and water.'

'No great boon, I should think, Evan, when both seem to be very plenty.'

'Ah! but ye dinna see through it. When I say wood and water, I mean the loch and the land; and I fancy Donald would be put till 't if the Laird were to look for him wi' threescore men in the wood of Kailychat yonder; and if our boats, with a score or twa mair, were to come down the loch to Uaimh an Ri, headed by mysell, or any other pretty man.'

'But suppose a strong party came against him from the Low Country, would not your Chief defend him?'

'Na, he would not ware the spark of a flint for him—if they came with the law.'

'And what must Donald do, then?'

'He behoved to rid this country of himsell, and fall back, it may be, over the mount upon Letter Scriven.'

'And if he were pursued to that place?'

'I'se warrant he would go to his cousin's at Rannoch.'

'Well, but if they followed him to Rannoch?'

'That,' quoth Evan, 'is beyond all belief; and, indeed, to tell you the truth, there durst not a Lowlander in all Scotland follow the fray a gun-shot beyond Bally-Brough, unless he had the help of the Sidier Dhu.'

'Whom do you call so?'

'The Sidier Dhu? the black soldier; that is what they call the independent companies that were raised to keep peace and law in the Highlands. Vich Ian Vohr commanded one of them for five years, and I was sergeant mysell, I shall warrant ye. They call them Sidier Dhu because they wear the tartans, as they call your men—King George's men—Sidier Roy, or red soldiers.'

'Well, but when you were in King George's pay, Evan, you were surely King George's soldiers?'

'Troth, and you must ask Vich Ian Vohr about that; for we are for his king, and care not much which o' them it is. At ony rate, nobody can say we are King George's men now, when we have not seen his pay this twelve-month.'

This last argument admitted of no reply, nor did Edward attempt any; he rather chose to bring back the discourse to Donald Bean Lean. 'Does Donald confine himself to cattle, or does he LIFT, as you call it, anything else that comes in his way?'

'Troth, he's nae nice body, and he'll just tak onything, but most readily cattle, horse, or live Christians; for sheep are slow of travel, and inside plenishing is cumbrous to carry, and not easy to put away for siller in this country.'

'But does he carry off men and women?'

'Out, ay. Did not ye hear him speak o' the Perth baillie? It cost that body five hundred merks ere he got to the south of Bally-Brough. And ance Donald played a pretty sport. [Footnote: See Note 17.] There was to be a blythe bridal between the Lady Cramfeezier, in the howe o' the Mearns (she was the auld laird's widow, and no sae young as she had been hersell), and young Gilliewhackit, who had spent his heirship and movables, like a gentleman, at cock-matches, bull-baitings, horse-races, and the like. Now, Donald Bean Lean, being aware that the bridegroom was in request, and wanting to cleik the cunzie (that is, to hook the siller), he cannily carried off Gilliewhackit ae night when he was riding dovering hame (wi' the malt rather abune the meal), and with the help of his gillies he gat him into the hills with the speed of light, and the first place he wakened in was the cove of Uaimh an Ri. So there was old to do about ransoming the bridegroom; for Donald would not lower a farthing of a thousand pounds—'

'The devil!'

'Punds Scottish, ye shall understand. And the lady had not the siller if she had pawned her gown; and they applied to the governor o' Stirling castle, and to the major o' the Black Watch; and the governor said it was ower far to the northward, and out of his district; and the major said his men were gane hame to the shearing, and he would not call them out before the victual was got in for all the Cramfeezerers in Christendom, let alane the Mearns, for that it would prejudice the country. And in the meanwhile ye'll no hinder Gilliewhackit to take the small-pox. There was not the doctor in Perth or Stirling would look near the poor lad; and I cannot blame them, for Donald had been misguggled by ane of these doctors about Paris, and he swore he would fling the first into the loch that he caught beyond the pass. However some cailliachs (that is, old women) that were about Donald's hand nursed Gilliewhackit sae weel that, between the free open air in the cove and the fresh whey, deil an he did not recover maybe as weel as if he had been closed in a glazed chamber and a bed with curtains, and fed with red wine and white meat. And Donald was sae vexed about it that, when he was stout and weel, he even sent him free home, and said he would be pleased with onything they would like to gie him for the plague and trouble which he had about Gilliewhackit to an unkenn'd degree. And I cannot tell you precisely how they sorted; but they agreed sae right that Donald was invited to dance at the wedding in his Highland trews, and they said that there was never sae meikle siller clinked in his purse either before or since. And to the boot of all that, Gilliewhackit said that, be the evidence what it liked, if he had the luck to be on Donald's inquest, he would bring him in guilty of nothing whatever, unless it were wilful arson or murder under trust.'

With such bald and disjointed chat Evan went on illustrating the existing state of the Highlands, more perhaps to the amusement of Waverley than that of our readers. At length, after having marched over bank and brae, moss and heather, Edward, though not unacquainted with the Scottish liberality in computing distance, began to think that Evan's five miles were nearly doubled. His observation on the large measure which the Scottish allowed of their land, in comparison to the computation of their money, was readily answered by Evan with the old jest, 'The deil take them wha have the least pint stoup.'

*[Footnote: The Scotch are liberal in computing their land and liquor; the Scottish pint corresponds to two English quarts. As for their coin, every one knows the couplet—
How can the rogues pretend to sense?
Their pound is only twenty pence.]*

And now the report of a gun was heard, and a sportsman was seen, with his dogs and attendant, at the upper end of the glen. 'Shough,' said Dugald Mahony, 'tat's ta Chief.'

'It is not,' said Evan, imperiously. 'Do you think he would come to meet a Sassenach duinhe-wassel in such a way as that?'

But as they approached a little nearer, he said, with an appearance of mortification, 'And it is even he, sure enough; and he has not his tail on after all; there is no living creature with him but Callum Beg.'

In fact, Fergus Mac-Ivor, of whom a Frenchman might have said as truly as of any man in the Highlands, 'Qu'il connoit bien ses gens' had no idea of raising himself in the eyes of an English young man of fortune by appearing with a retinue of idle Highlanders disproportioned to the occasion. He was well aware that such an unnecessary attendance would seem to Edward rather ludicrous than respectable; and, while few men were more attached to ideas of chieftainship and feudal power, he was, for that very reason, cautious of exhibiting external marks of dignity, unless at the time and in the manner when they were most likely to produce an imposing effect. Therefore, although, had he been to receive a brother chieftain, he would probably have been attended by all that retinue which Evan described with so much unction, he judged it more respectable to advance to meet Waverley with a single attendant, a very handsome Highland boy, who carried his master's shooting-pouch and his broadsword, without which he seldom went abroad.

When Fergus and Waverley met, the latter was struck with the peculiar grace and dignity of the Chieftain's figure. Above the middle size and finely proportioned, the Highland dress, which he wore in its simplest mode, set off his person to great advantage. He wore the trews, or close trowsers, made of tartan, chequed scarlet and white; in other particulars his dress strictly resembled Evan's, excepting that he had no weapon save a dirk, very richly mounted with silver. His page, as we have said, carried his claymore; and the fowling-piece, which he held in his hand, seemed only designed for sport. He had shot in the course of his walk some young wild-ducks, as, though CLOSE TIME was then unknown, the broods of grouse were yet too young for the sportsman. His countenance was decidedly Scottish, with all the peculiarities of the northern physiognomy, but yet had so little of its harshness and exaggeration that it would have been pronounced in any country extremely handsome. The martial air of the bonnet, with a single eagle's feather as a distinction, added much to the manly appearance of his head, which was besides ornamented with a far more natural and graceful cluster of close black curls than ever were exposed to sale in Bond Street.

An air of openness and affability increased the favorable impression derived from this handsome and dignified exterior. Yet a skilful physiognomist would have been less satisfied with the countenance on the second than on the first view. The eyebrow and upper lip bespoke something of the habit of peremptory command and decisive superiority. Even his courtesy, though open, frank, and unconstrained, seemed to indicate a sense of personal importance; and, upon any check or accidental excitation, a sudden, though transient lour of the eye showed a hasty, haughty, and vindictive temper, not less to be dreaded because it seemed much under its owner's command. In short, the countenance of the Chieftain resembled a smiling summer's day, in which, notwithstanding, we are made sensible by certain, though slight signs that it may thunder and lighten before the close of evening.

It was not, however, upon their first meeting that Edward had an opportunity of making these less favourable remarks. The Chief received him as a friend of the Baron of Bradwardine, with the utmost expression of kindness and obligation for the visit; upbraided him gently with choosing so rude an abode as he had done the night before; and entered into a lively conversation with him about Donald Bean's housekeeping, but without the least hint as to his predatory habits, or the immediate occasion of Waverley's visit, a topic which, as the Chief did not introduce it, our hero also avoided. While they walked merrily on towards the house of Glennaquoich, Evan, who now fell respectfully into the rear, followed with Callum Beg and Dugald Mahony.

We shall take the opportunity to introduce the reader to some particulars of Fergus Mac-Ivor's character and history, which were not completely known to Waverley till after a connection which, though arising from a circumstance so casual, had for a length of time the deepest influence upon his character, actions, and prospects. But this, being an important subject, must form the commencement of a new chapter.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHIEF AND HIS MANSION

The ingenious licentiate Francisco de Ubeda, when he commenced his history of 'La Picara Justina Diez,'—which, by the way, is one of the most rare books of Spanish literature,—complained of his pen having caught up a hair, and forthwith begins, with more eloquence than common sense, an affectionate expostulation with that useful implement, upbraiding it with being the quill of a goose,—a bird inconstant by nature, as frequenting the three elements of water, earth, and air indifferently, and being, of course, 'to one thing constant never.' Now I protest to thee, gentle reader, that I entirely dissent from Francisco de Ubeda in this matter, and hold it the most useful quality of my pen, that it can speedily change from grave to gay, and from description and dialogue to narrative and character. So that if my quill display no other properties of its mother-goose than her mutability, truly I shall be well pleased; and I conceive that you, my worthy friend, will have no occasion for discontent. From the jargon, therefore, of the Highland gillies I pass to the character of their Chief. It is an important examination, and therefore, like Dogberry, we must spare no wisdom.

The ancestor of Fergus Mac-Ivor, about three centuries before, had set up a claim to be recognised as chief of the numerous and powerful clan to which he belonged, the name of which it is unnecessary to mention. Being defeated by an opponent who had more justice, or at least more force, on his side, he moved southwards, with those who adhered to him, in quest of new settlements, like a second Aeneas. The state of the Perthshire Highlands favoured his purpose. A great baron in that country had lately become traitor to the crown; Ian, which was the name of our adventurer, united himself with those who were commissioned by the king to chastise him, and did such good service that he obtained a grant of the property, upon which he and his posterity afterwards resided. He followed the king also in war to the fertile regions of England, where he employed his leisure hours so actively in raising subsidies among the boors of Northumberland and Durham, that upon his return he was enabled to erect a stone tower, or fortalice, so much admired by his dependants and neighbours that he, who had hitherto been called Ian Mac-Ivor, or John the son of Ivor, was thereafter distinguished, both in song and genealogy, by the high title of Ian nan Chaistel, or John of the Tower. The descendants of this worthy were so proud of him that the reigning chief always bore the patronymic title of Vich Ian Vohr, i.e. the son of John the Great; while the clan at large, to distinguish them from that from which they had seceded, were denominated Sliochd nan Ivor, the race of Ivor.

The father of Fergus, the tenth in direct descent from John of the Tower, engaged heart and hand in the insurrection of 1715, and was forced to fly to France, after the attempt of that year in favour of the Stuarts had proved unsuccessful. More fortunate than other fugitives, he obtained employment in the French service, and married a lady of rank in that kingdom, by whom he had two children, Fergus and his sister Flora. The Scottish estate had been forfeited and exposed to sale, but was repurchased for a small price in the name of the young proprietor, who in consequence came to reside upon his native domains. [Footnote: See Note 18.] It was soon perceived that he possessed a character of uncommon acuteness, fire, and ambition, which, as he became acquainted with the state of the country, gradually assumed a mixed and peculiar tone, that could only have been acquired Sixty Years Since.

Had Fergus Mac-Ivor lived Sixty Years sooner than he did, he would in all probability have wanted the polished manner and knowledge of the world which he now possessed; and had he lived Sixty Years later, his ambition and love of rule would have lacked the fuel which his situation now afforded. He was indeed, within his little circle, as perfect a politician as Castruccio Castracani himself. He applied himself with great earnestness to appease all the feuds and dissensions which often arose among other clans in his neighbourhood, so that he became a frequent umpire in their quarrels. His own patriarchal power he strengthened at every expense which his fortune would permit, and indeed stretched his means to the uttermost to maintain the rude and plentiful hospitality which was the most valued attribute of a chieftain. For the same reason he crowded his estate with a tenantry, hardy indeed, and fit for the purposes of war, but greatly outnumbering what the soil was calculated to maintain. These consisted chiefly of his own clan, not one of whom he suffered to quit his lands if he could possibly prevent it. But he maintained, besides, many adventurers from the mother sept, who deserted a less warlike, though more wealthy chief to do homage to Fergus Mac-Ivor. Other individuals, too, who had not even that apology, were nevertheless received into his allegiance, which indeed was refused to none who were, like Poins, proper men of their hands, and were willing to assume the name of Mac-Ivor.

He was enabled to discipline these forces, from having obtained command of one of the independent companies raised by government to preserve the peace of the Highlands. While in this capacity he acted with vigour and spirit, and preserved great order in the country under his charge. He caused his vassals to enter by rotation into his company, and serve for a certain space of time, which gave them all in turn a general notion of military discipline. In his campaigns against the banditti, it was observed that he assumed and exercised to the utmost the discretionary power which, while the law had no free course in the Highlands, was conceived to belong to the military parties who were called in to support it. He acted, for example, with great and suspicious lenity to those freebooters who made restitution on his summons and offered personal submission to himself, while he rigorously pursued, apprehended, and sacrificed to justice all such interlopers as dared to despise his admonitions or commands. On the other hand, if any officers of justice, military parties, or others, presumed to pursue thieves or marauders through his territories, and without applying for his consent and concurrence, nothing was more certain than that they would meet with some notable foil or defeat; upon which occasions Fergus Mac-Ivor was the first to condole with them, and after gently blaming their rashness, never failed deeply to lament the lawless state of the country. These lamentations did not exclude suspicion, and matters were so represented to government that our Chieftain was deprived of his military command. [Footnote: See Note 19.]

Whatever Fergus Mac-Ivor felt on this occasion, he had the art of entirely suppressing every appearance of discontent; but in a short time the neighbouring country began to feel bad effects from his disgrace. Donald Bean Lean, and others of his class, whose depredations had hitherto been confined to other districts, appeared from thenceforward to have made a settlement on this devoted border; and their ravages were carried on with little opposition, as the Lowland gentry were chiefly Jacobites, and disarmed. This forced many of the inhabitants into contracts of black-mail with Fergus Mac-Ivor, which not only established him their protector, and gave him great weight in all their consultations, but, moreover, supplied funds for the waste of his feudal hospitality, which the discontinuance of his pay might have otherwise essentially diminished.

In following this course of conduct, Fergus had a further object than merely being the great man of his neighbourhood, and ruling despotically over a small clan. From his infancy upward he had devoted himself to the cause of the exiled family, and had persuaded himself, not only that their restoration to the crown of Britain

would be speedy, but that those who assisted them would be raised to honour and rank. It was with this view that he laboured to reconcile the Highlanders among themselves, and augmented his own force to the utmost, to be prepared for the first favourable opportunity of rising. With this purpose also he conciliated the favour of such Lowland gentlemen in the vicinity as were friends to the good cause; and for the same reason, having incautiously quarrelled with Mr. Bradwardine, who, notwithstanding his peculiarities, was much respected in the country, he took advantage of the foray of Donald Bean Lean to solder up the dispute in the manner we have mentioned. Some, indeed, surmised that he caused the enterprise to be suggested to Donald, on purpose to pave the way to a reconciliation, which, supposing that to be the case, cost the Laird of Bradwardine two good milch cows. This zeal in their behalf the House of Stuart repaid with a considerable share of their confidence, an occasional supply of louis-d'or, abundance of fair words, and a parchment, with a huge waxen seal appended, purporting to be an earl's patent, granted by no less a person than James the Third King of England, and Eighth King of Scotland, to his right feal, trusty, and well-beloved Fergus Mac-Ivor of Glennaquoich, in the county of Perth, and kingdom of Scotland.

With this future coronet glittering before his eyes, Fergus plunged deeply into the correspondence and plots of that unhappy period; and, like all such active agents, easily reconciled his conscience to going certain lengths in the service of his party, from which honour and pride would have deterred him had his sole object been the direct advancement of his own personal interest. With this insight into a bold, ambitious, and ardent, yet artful and politic character, we resume the broken thread of our narrative.

The chief and his guest had by this time reached the house of Glennaquoich, which consisted of Ian nan Chaistel's mansion, a high rude-looking square tower, with the addition of a lofted house, that is, a building of two stories, constructed by Fergus's grandfather when he returned from that memorable expedition, well remembered by the western shires under the name of the Highland Host. Upon occasion of this crusade against the Ayrshire Whigs and Covenanters, the Vich Ian Vohr of the time had probably been as successful as his predecessor was in harrying Northumberland, and therefore left to his posterity a rival edifice as a monument of his magnificence.

Around the house, which stood on an eminence in the midst of a narrow Highland valley, there appeared none of that attention to convenience, far less to ornament and decoration, which usually surrounds a gentleman's habitation. An inclosure or two, divided by dry-stone walls, were the only part of the domain that was fenced; as to the rest, the narrow slips of level ground which lay by the side of the brook exhibited a scanty crop of barley, liable to constant depredations from the herds of wild ponies and black cattle that grazed upon the adjacent hills. These ever and anon made an incursion upon the arable ground, which was repelled by the loud, uncouth, and dissonant shouts of half a dozen Highland swains, all running as if they had been mad, and every one hallooing a half-starved dog to the rescue of the forage. At a little distance up the glen was a small and stunted wood of birch; the hills were high and heathy, but without any variety of surface; so that the whole view was wild and desolate rather than grand and solitary. Yet, such as it was, no genuine descendant of Ian nan Chaistel would have changed the domain for Stow or Blenheim.

There was a sight, however, before the gate, which perhaps would have afforded the first owner of Blenheim more pleasure than the finest view in the domain assigned to him by the gratitude of his country. This consisted of about a hundred Highlanders, in complete dress and arms; at sight of whom the Chieftain apologised to Waverley in a sort of negligent manner. 'He had forgot,' he said, 'that he had ordered a few of his clan out, for the purpose of seeing that they were in a fit condition to protect the country, and prevent such accidents as, he was sorry to learn, had befallen the Baron of Bradwardine. Before they were dismissed, perhaps Captain Waverley might choose to see them go through a part of their exercise.'

Edward assented, and the men executed with agility and precision some of the ordinary military movements. They then practised individually at a mark, and showed extraordinary dexterity in the management of the pistol and firelock. They took aim, standing, sitting, leaning, or lying prostrate, as they were commanded, and always with effect upon the target. Next, they paired off for the broadsword exercise; and, having manifested their individual skill and dexterity, united in two bodies, and exhibited a sort of mock encounter, in which the charge, the rally, the flight, the pursuit, and all the current of a heady fight, were exhibited to the sound of the great war bagpipe.

On a signal made by the Chief, the skirmish was ended. Matches were then made for running, wrestling, leaping, pitching the bar, and other sports, in which this feudal militia displayed incredible swiftness, strength, and agility; and accomplished the purpose which their Chieftain had at heart, by impressing on Waverley no light sense of their merit as soldiers, and of the power of him who commanded them by his nod. [Footnote: See Note 20.]

'And what number of such gallant fellows have the happiness to call you leader?' asked Waverley.

'In a good cause, and under a chieftain whom they loved, the race of Ivor have seldom taken the field under five hundred claymores. But you are aware, Captain Waverley, that the disarming act, passed about twenty years ago, prevents their being in the complete state of preparation as in former times; and I keep no more of my clan under arms than may defend my own or my friends' property, when the country is troubled with such men as your last night's landlord; and government, which has removed other means of defence, must connive at our protecting ourselves.'

'But, with your force, you might soon destroy or put down such gangs as that of Donald Bean Lean.'

'Yes, doubtless; and my reward would be a summons to deliver up to General Blakeney, at Stirling, the few broadswords they have left us; there were little policy in that, methinks. But come, captain, the sound of the pipes informs me that dinner is prepared. Let me have the honour to show you into my rude mansion.'

CHAPTER XX

A HIGHLAND FEAST

Ere Waverley entered the banqueting hall, he was offered the patriarchal refreshment of a bath for the feet, which the sultry weather, and the morasses he had traversed, rendered highly acceptable. He was not, indeed, so luxuriously attended upon this occasion as the heroic travellers in the Odyssey; the task of ablution and abstersion being performed, not by a beautiful damsel, trained

To chafe the limb, and pour the fragrant oil,

but by a smoke-dried skinny old Highland woman, who did not seem to think herself much honoured by the duty imposed upon her, but muttered between her teeth, 'Our fathers' herds did not feed so near together that I should do you this service.' A small donation, however, amply reconciled this ancient handmaiden to the supposed degradation; and, as Edward proceeded to the hall, she gave him her blessing in the Gaelic proverb, 'May the open hand be filled the fullest.'

The hall, in which the feast was prepared, occupied all the first story of Ian nan Chaistel's original erection, and a huge oaken table extended through its whole length. The apparatus for dinner was simple, even to rudeness, and the company numerous, even to crowding. At the head of the table was the Chief himself, with Edward, and two or three Highland visitors of neighbouring clans; the elders of his own tribe, wadsetters and tacksmen, as they were called, who occupied portions of his estate as mortgagers or lessees, sat next in rank; beneath them, their sons and nephews and foster-brethren; then the officers of the Chief's household, according to their order; and lowest of all, the tenants who actually cultivated the ground. Even beyond this long perspective, Edward might see upon the green, to which a huge pair of folding doors opened, a multitude of Highlanders of a yet inferior description, who, nevertheless, were considered as guests, and had their share both of the countenance of the entertainer and of the cheer of the day. In the distance, and fluctuating round this extreme verge of the

banquet, was a changeful group of women, ragged boys and girls, beggars, young and old, large greyhounds, and terriers, and pointers, and curs of low degree; all of whom took some interest, more or less immediate, in the main action of the piece.

This hospitality, apparently unbounded, had yet its line of economy. Some pains had been bestowed in dressing the dishes of fish, game, etc., which were at the upper end of the table, and immediately under the eye of the English stranger. Lower down stood immense clumsy joints of mutton and beef, which, but for the absence of pork, [Footnote: See Note 21.] abhorred in the Highlands, resembled the rude festivity of the banquet of Penelope's suitors. But the central dish was a yearling lamb, called 'a hog in har'st,' roasted whole. It was set upon its legs, with a bunch of parsley in its mouth, and was probably exhibited in that form to gratify the pride of the cook, who piqued himself more on the plenty than the elegance of his master's table. The sides of this poor animal were fiercely attacked by the clansmen, some with dirks, others with the knives which were usually in the same sheath with the dagger, so that it was soon rendered a mangled and rueful spectacle. Lower down still, the victuals seemed of yet coarser quality, though sufficiently abundant. Broth, onions, cheese, and the fragments of the feast regaled the sons of Ivor who feasted in the open air.

The liquor was supplied in the same proportion, and under similar regulations. Excellent claret and champagne were liberally distributed among the Chief's immediate neighbours; whisky, plain or diluted, and strong beer refreshed those who sat near the lower end. Nor did this inequality of distribution appear to give the least offence. Every one present understood that his taste was to be formed according to the rank which he held at table; and, consequently, the tacksmen and their dependants always professed the wine was too cold for their stomachs, and called, apparently out of choice, for the liquor which was assigned to them from economy. [Footnote: See Note 22.] The bag-pipers, three in number, screamed, during the whole time of dinner, a tremendous war-tune; and the echoing of the vaulted roof, and clang of the Celtic tongue, produced such a Babel of noises that Waverley dreaded his ears would never recover it. Mac-Ivor, indeed, apologised for the confusion occasioned by so large a party, and pleaded the necessity of his situation, on which unlimited hospitality was imposed as a paramount duty. 'These stout idle kinsmen of mine,' he said, 'account my estate as held in trust for their support; and I must find them beef and ale, while the rogues will do nothing for themselves but practise the broadsword, or wander about the hills, shooting, fishing, hunting, drinking, and making love to the lasses of the strath. But what can I do, Captain Waverley? everything will keep after its kind, whether it be a hawk or a Highlander.' Edward made the expected answer, in a compliment upon his possessing so many bold and attached followers.

'Why, yes,' replied the Chief, 'were I disposed, like my father, to put myself in the way of getting one blow on the head, or two on the neck, I believe the loons would stand by me. But who thinks of that in the present day, when the maxim is, "Better an old woman with a purse in her hand than three men with belted brands"?' Then, turning to the company, he proposed the 'Health of Captain Waverley, a worthy friend of his kind neighbour and ally, the Baron of Bradwardine.'

'He is welcome hither,' said one of the elders, 'if he come from Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine.'

'I say nay to that,' said an old man, who apparently did not mean to pledge the toast; 'I say nay to that. While there is a green leaf in the forest, there will be fraud in a Comyne.'

'There is nothing but honour in the Baron of Bradwardine,' answered another ancient; 'and the guest that comes hither from him should be welcome, though he came with blood on his hand, unless it were blood of the race of Ivor.'

The old man whose cup remained full replied, 'There has been blood enough of the race of Ivor on the hand of Bradwardine.'

'Ah! Ballenkeiroch,' replied the first, 'you think rather of the flash of the carbine at the mains of Tully-Veolan than the glance of the sword that fought for the cause at Preston.'

'And well I may,' answered Ballenkeiroch; 'the flash of the gun cost me a fair-haired son, and the glance of the sword has done but little for King James.'

The Chieftain, in two words of French, explained to Waverley that the Baron had shot this old man's son in a fray near Tully-Veolan, about seven years before; and then hastened to remove Ballenkeiroch's prejudice, by informing him that Waverley was an Englishman, unconnected by birth or alliance with the family of Bradwardine; upon which the old gentleman raised the hitherto-untasted cup and courteously drank to his health. This ceremony being requited in kind, the Chieftain made a signal for the pipes to cease, and said aloud, 'Where is the song hidden, my friends, that Mac-Murrough cannot find it?'

Mac-Murrough, the family bhairdh, an aged man, immediately took the hint, and began to chant, with low and rapid utterance, a profusion of Celtic verses, which were received by the audience with all the applause of enthusiasm. As he advanced in his declamation, his ardour seemed to increase. He had at first spoken with his eyes fixed on the ground; he now cast them around as if beseeching, and anon as if commanding, attention, and his tones rose into wild and impassioned notes, accompanied with appropriate gestures. He seemed to Edward, who attended to him with much interest, to recite many proper names, to lament the dead, to apostrophise the absent, to exhort, and entreat, and animate those who were present. Waverley thought he even discerned his own name, and was convinced his conjecture was right from the eyes of the company being at that moment turned towards him simultaneously. The ardour of the poet appeared to communicate itself to the audience. Their wild and sun-burnt countenances assumed a fiercer and more animated expression; all bent forward towards the reciter, many sprung up and waved their arms in ecstasy, and some laid their hands on their swords. When the song ceased, there was a deep pause, while the aroused feelings of the poet and of the hearers gradually subsided into their usual channel.

The Chieftain, who, during this scene had appeared rather to watch the emotions which were excited than to partake their high tone of enthusiasm, filled with claret a small silver cup which stood by him. 'Give this,' he said to an attendant, 'to Mac-Murrough nan Fonn (i.e. of the songs), and when he has drank the juice, bid him keep, for the sake of Vich Ian Vohr, the shell of the gourd which contained it.' The gift was received by Mac-Murrough with profound gratitude; he drank the wine, and, kissing the cup, shrouded it with reverence in the plaid which was folded on his bosom. He then burst forth into what Edward justly supposed to be an extemporaneous effusion of thanks and praises of his Chief. It was received with applause, but did not produce the effect of his first poem. It was obvious, however, that the clan regarded the generosity of their Chieftain with high approbation. Many approved Gaelic toasts were then proposed, of some of which the Chieftain gave his guest the following versions:—

'To him that will not turn his back on friend or foe.' 'To him that never forsook a comrade.' 'To him that never bought or sold justice.' 'Hospitality to the exile, and broken bones to the tyrant.' 'The lads with the kilts.' 'Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder,'—with many other pithy sentiments of the like nature.

Edward was particularly solicitous to know the meaning of that song which appeared to produce such effect upon the passions of the company, and hinted his curiosity to his host. 'As I observe,' said the Chieftain, 'that you have passed the bottle during the last three rounds, I was about to propose to you to retire to my sister's tea-table, who can explain these things to you better than I can. Although I cannot stint my clan in the usual current of their festivity, yet I neither am addicted myself to exceed in its amount, nor do I,' added he, smiling, 'keep a Bear to devour the intellects of such as can make good use of them.'

Edward readily assented to this proposal, and the Chieftain, saying a few words to those around him, left the table, followed by Waverley. As the door closed behind them, Edward heard Vich Ian Vohr's health invoked with a wild and animated cheer, that expressed the satisfaction of the guests and the depth of their devotion to his service.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHIEFTAIN'S SISTER

The drawing-room of Flora Mac-Ivor was furnished in the plainest and most simple manner; for at Glennaquoich every other sort of expenditure was retrenched as much as possible, for the purpose of maintaining, in its full dignity, the hospitality of the Chieftain, and retaining and multiplying the number of his dependants and adherents. But there was no appearance of this parsimony in the dress of the lady herself, which was in texture elegant, and even rich, and arranged in a manner which partook partly of the Parisian fashion and partly of the more simple dress of the Highlands, blended together with great taste. Her hair was not disfigured by the art of the friseur, but fell in jetty ringlets on her neck, confined only by a circlet, richly set with diamonds. This peculiarity she adopted in compliance with the Highland prejudices, which could not endure that a woman's head should be covered before wedlock.

Flora Mac-Ivor bore a most striking resemblance to her brother Fergus; so much so that they might have played Viola and Sebastian with the same exquisite effect produced by the appearance of Mrs. Henry Siddons and her brother, Mr. William Murray, in these characters. They had the same antique and regular correctness of profile; the same dark eyes, eye-lashes, and eye-brows; the same clearness of complexion, excepting that Fergus's was embrowned by exercise and Flora's possessed the utmost feminine delicacy. But the haughty and somewhat stern regularity of Fergus's features was beautifully softened in those of Flora. Their voices were also similar in tone, though differing in the key. That of Fergus, especially while issuing orders to his followers during their military exercise, reminded Edward of a favourite passage in the description of Emetrius:

*—whose voice was heard around,
Loud as a trumpet with a silver sound.*

That of Flora, on the contrary, was soft and sweet—'an excellent thing in woman'; yet, in urging any favourite topic, which she often pursued with natural eloquence, it possessed as well the tones which impress awe and conviction as those of persuasive insinuation. The eager glance of the keen black eye, which, in the Chieftain, seemed impatient even of the material obstacles it encountered, had in his sister acquired a gentle pensiveness. His looks seemed to seek glory, power, all that could exalt him above others in the race of humanity; while those of his sister, as if she were already conscious of mental superiority, seemed to pity, rather than envy, those who were struggling for any farther distinction. Her sentiments corresponded with the expression of her countenance. Early education had impressed upon her mind, as well as on that of the Chieftain, the most devoted attachment to the exiled family of Stuart. She believed it the duty of her brother, of his clan, of every man in Britain, at whatever personal hazard, to contribute to that restoration which the partisans of the Chevalier St. George had not ceased to hope for. For this she was prepared to do all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all. But her loyalty, as it exceeded her brother's in fanaticism, excelled it also in purity. Accustomed to petty intrigue, and necessarily involved in a thousand paltry and selfish discussions, ambitious also by nature, his political faith was tintured, at least, if not tainted, by the views of interest and advancement so easily combined with it; and at the moment he should unsheathe his claymore, it might be difficult to say whether it would be most with the view of making James Stuart a king or Fergus Mac-Ivor an earl. This, indeed, was a mixture of feeling which he did not avow even to himself, but it existed, nevertheless, in a powerful degree.

In Flora's bosom, on the contrary, the zeal of loyalty burnt pure and unmixed with any selfish feeling; she would have as soon made religion the mask of ambitious and interested views as have shrouded them under the opinions which she had been taught to think patriotism. Such instances of devotion were not uncommon among the followers of the unhappy race of Stuart, of which many memorable proofs will recur to the minds of most of my readers. But peculiar attention on the part of the Chevalier de St. George and his princess to the parents of Fergus and his sister, and to themselves when orphans, had riveted their faith. Fergus, upon the death of his parents, had been for some time a page of honour in the train of the Chevalier's lady, and, from his beauty and sprightly temper, was uniformly treated by her with the utmost distinction. This was also extended to Flora, who was maintained for some time at a convent of the first order at the princess's expense, and removed from thence into her own family, where she spent nearly two years. Both brother and sister retained the deepest and most grateful sense of her kindness.

Having thus touched upon the leading principle of Flora's character, I may dismiss the rest more slightly. She was highly accomplished, and had acquired those elegant manners to be expected from one who, in early youth, had been the companion of a princess; yet she had not learned to substitute the gloss of politeness for the reality of feeling. When settled in the lonely regions of Glennaquoich, she found that her resources in French, English, and Italian literature were likely to be few and interrupted; and, in order to fill up the vacant time, she bestowed a part of it upon the music and poetical traditions of the Highlanders, and began really to feel the pleasure in the pursuit which her brother, whose perceptions of literary merit were more blunt, rather affected for the sake of popularity than actually experienced. Her resolution was strengthened in these researches by the extreme delight which her inquiries seemed to afford those to whom she resorted for information.

Her love of her clan, an attachment which was almost hereditary in her bosom, was, like her loyalty, a more pure passion than that of her brother. He was too thorough a politician, regarded his patriarchal influence too much as the means of accomplishing his own aggrandisement, that we should term him the model of a Highland Chieftain. Flora felt the same anxiety for cherishing and extending their patriarchal sway, but it was with the generous desire of vindicating from poverty, or at least from want and foreign oppression, those whom her brother was by birth, according to the notions of the time and country, entitled to govern. The savings of her income, for she had a small pension from the Princess Sobieski, were dedicated, not to add to the comforts of the peasantry, for that was a word which they neither knew nor apparently wished to know, but to relieve their absolute necessities when in sickness or extreme old age. At every other period they rather toiled to procure something which they might share with the Chief, as a proof of their attachment, than expected other assistance from him save what was afforded by the rude hospitality of his castle, and the general division and subdivision of his estate among them. Flora was so much beloved by them that, when Mac-Murrough composed a song in which he enumerated all the principal beauties of the district, and intimated her superiority by concluding, that 'the fairest apple hung on the highest bough,' he received, in donatives from the individuals of the clan, more seed-barley than would have sowed his Highland Parnassus, the bard's croft, as it was called, ten times over.

From situation as well as choice, Miss Mac-Ivor's society was extremely limited. Her most intimate friend had been Rose Bradwardine, to whom she was much attached; and when seen together, they would have afforded an artist two admirable subjects for the gay and the melancholy muse. Indeed Rose was so tenderly watched by her father, and her circle of wishes was so limited, that none arose but what he was willing to gratify, and scarce any which did not come within the compass of his power. With Flora it was otherwise. While almost a girl she had undergone the most complete change of scene, from gaiety and splendour to absolute solitude and comparative poverty; and the ideas and wishes which she chiefly fostered respected great national events, and changes not to be brought round without both hazard and bloodshed, and therefore not to be thought of with levity. Her manner, consequently, was grave, though she readily contributed her talents to the amusement of society, and stood very high in the opinion of the old Baron, who used to sing along with her such French duets of Lindor and Cloris, etc., as were in fashion about the end of old Louis le Grand.

It was generally believed, though no one durst have hinted it to the Baron of Bradwardine, that Flora's entreaties had no small share in allaying the wrath of Fergus upon occasion of their quarrel. She took her brother on the assailable side, by dwelling first upon the Baron's age, and then representing the injury which the cause might sustain, and the damage which must arise to his own character in point of prudence—so necessary to a political agent, if he persisted in carrying it to extremity. Otherwise it is probable it would have terminated in a duel, both because the Baron had, on a former occasion, shed blood of the clan, though the matter had been timely accommodated, and on account of his high reputation for address at his weapon, which Fergus almost condescended to envy. For the same reason she had urged their reconciliation, which the Chieftain the more readily agreed to as it favoured some ulterior projects of his own.

To this young lady, now presiding at the female empire of the tea-table, Fergus introduced Captain Waverley, whom she received with the usual forms of politeness.

CHAPTER XXII

HIGHLAND MINSTRELSY

When the first salutations had passed, Fergus said to his sister, 'My dear Flora, before I return to the barbarous ritual of our forefathers, I must tell you that Captain Waverley is a worshipper of the Celtic muse, not the less so perhaps that he does not understand a word of her language. I have told him you are eminent as a translator of Highland poetry, and that Mac-Murrough admires your version of his songs upon the same principle that Captain Waverley admires the original,—because he does not comprehend them. Will you have the goodness to read or recite to our guest in English the extraordinary string of names which Mac-Murrough has tacked together in Gaelic? My life to a moor-fowl's feather, you are provided with a version; for I know you are in all the bard's councils, and acquainted with his songs long before he rehearses them in the hall.'

'How can you say so, Fergus? You know how little these verses can possibly interest an English stranger, even if I could translate them as you pretend.'

'Not less than they interest me, lady fair. To-day your joint composition, for I insist you had a share in it, has cost me the last silver cup in the castle, and I suppose will cost me something else next time I hold cour pleniére, if the muse descends on Mac-Murrough; for you know our proverb,—"When the hand of the chief ceases to bestow, the breath of the bard is frozen in the utterance."—Well, I would it were even so: there are three things that are useless to a modern Highlander,—a sword which he must not draw, a bard to sing of deeds which he dare not imitate, and a large goat-skin purse without a louis-d'or to put into it.'

'Well, brother, since you betray my secrets, you cannot expect me to keep yours. I assure you, Captain Waverley, that Fergus is too proud to exchange his broadsword for a marechal's baton, that he esteems Mac-Murrough a far greater poet than Homer, and would not give up his goat-skin purse for all the louis-d'or which it could contain.'

'Well pronounced, Flora; blow for blow, as Conan [Footnote: See Note 23.] said to the devil. Now do you two talk of bards and poetry, if not of purses and claymores, while I return to do the final honours to the senators of the tribe of Ivor.' So saying, he left the room.

The conversation continued between Flora and Waverley; for two well-dressed young women, whose character seemed to hover between that of companions and dependants, took no share in it. They were both pretty girls, but served only as foils to the grace and beauty of their patroness. The discourse followed the turn which the Chieftain had given it, and Waverley was equally amused and surprised with the account which the lady gave him of Celtic poetry.

'The recitation,' she said, 'of poems recording the feats of heroes, the complaints of lovers, and the wars of contending tribes, forms the chief amusement of a winter fire-side in the Highlands. Some of these are said to be very ancient, and if they are ever translated into any of the languages of civilised Europe, cannot fail to produce a deep and general sensation. Others are more modern, the composition of those family bards whom the chieftains of more distinguished name and power retain as the poets and historians of their tribes. These, of course, possess various degrees of merit; but much of it must evaporate in translation, or be lost on those who do not sympathise with the feelings of the poet.'

'And your bard, whose effusions seemed to produce such effect upon the company to-day, is he reckoned among the favourite poets of the mountains?'

'That is a trying question. His reputation is high among his countrymen, and you must not expect me to depreciate it. [Footnote: The Highland poet almost always was an improvisatore. Captain Burt met one of them at Lovat's table.]

'But the song, Miss Mac-Ivor, seemed to awaken all those warriors, both young and old.'

'The song is little more than a catalogue of names of the Highland clans under their distinctive peculiarities, and an exhortation to them to remember and to emulate the actions of their forefathers.'

'And am I wrong in conjecturing, however extraordinary the guess appears, that there was some allusion to me in the verses which he recited?'

'You have a quick observation, Captain Waverley, which in this instance has not deceived you. The Gaelic language, being uncommonly vocalic, is well adapted for sudden and extemporaneous poetry; and a bard seldom fails to augment the effects of a premeditated song by throwing in any stanzas which may be suggested by the circumstances attending the recitation.'

'I would give my best horse to know what the Highland bard could find to say of such an unworthy Southron as myself.'

'It shall not even cost you a lock of his mane. Una, mavourneen! (She spoke a few words to one of the young girls in attendance, who instantly curtsied and tripped out of the room.) I have sent Una to learn from the bard the expressions he used, and you shall command my skill as dragoman.'

Una returned in a few minutes, and repeated to her mistress a few lines in Gaelic. Flora seemed to think for a moment, and then, slightly colouring, she turned to Waverley—'It is impossible to gratify your curiosity, Captain Waverley, without exposing my own presumption. If you will give me a few moments for consideration, I will endeavour to engraft the meaning of these lines upon a rude English translation which I have attempted of a part of the original. The duties of the tea-table seem to be concluded, and, as the evening is delightful, Una will show you the way to one of my favourite haunts, and Cathleen and I will join you there.'

Una, having received instructions in her native language, conducted Waverley out by a passage different from that through which he had entered the apartment. At a distance he heard the hall of the Chief still resounding with the clang of bagpipes and the high applause of his guests. Having gained the open air by a postern door, they walked a little way up the wild, bleak, and narrow valley in which the house was situated, following the course of the stream that winded through it. In a spot, about a quarter of a mile from the castle, two brooks, which formed the little river, had their junction. The larger of the two came down the long bare valley, which extended, apparently without any change or elevation of character, as far as the hills which formed its boundary permitted the eye to reach. But the other stream, which had its source among the mountains on the left hand of the strath, seemed to issue from a very narrow and dark opening betwixt two large rocks. These streams were different also in character. The larger was placid, and even sullen in its course, wheeling in deep eddies, or sleeping in dark blue pools; but the motions of the lesser brook were rapid and furious, issuing from between precipices, like a maniac from his confinement, all foam and uproar.

It was up the course of this last stream that Waverley, like a knight of romance, was conducted by the fair Highland damsel, his silent guide. A small path, which had been rendered easy in many places for Flora's accommodation, led him through scenery of a very different description from that which he had just quitted. Around the castle all was cold, bare, and desolate, yet tame even in desolation; but this narrow glen, at so short a distance, seemed to open into the land of romance. The rocks assumed a thousand peculiar and varied forms. In one place a crag of huge size presented its gigantic bulk, as if to forbid the passenger's farther progress; and it was not until he approached its very base that Waverley discerned the sudden and acute turn by which the pathway wheeled its course around this formidable obstacle. In another spot the projecting rocks from the opposite sides of the chasm had approached so near to each other that two pine-trees laid across, and covered with turf, formed a rustic bridge at the height of at least one hundred and fifty feet. It had no ledges, and was barely three feet in breadth.

While gazing at this pass of peril, which crossed, like a single black line, the small portion of blue sky not intercepted by the projecting rocks on either side, it was with a sensation of horror that Waverley beheld Flora and her attendant appear, like inhabitants of another region, propped, as it were, in mid air, upon this trembling structure. She stopped upon observing him below, and, with an air of graceful ease which made him shudder, waved her handkerchief to him by way of signal. He was unable, from the sense of dizziness which her situation conveyed, to return the salute; and was never more relieved than when the fair apparition passed on from the precarious eminence which she seemed to occupy with so much indifference, and disappeared on the other side.

Advancing a few yards, and passing under the bridge which he had viewed with so much terror, the path ascended rapidly from the edge of the brook, and the glen widened into a sylvan amphitheatre, waving with birch, young oaks, and hazels, with here and there a scattered yew-tree. The rocks now receded, but still showed their grey and shaggy crests rising among the copse-wood. Still higher rose eminences and peaks, some bare, some clothed with wood, some round and purple with heath, and others splintered into rocks and crags. At a short turning the path, which had for some furlongs lost sight of the brook, suddenly placed Waverley in front of a romantic waterfall. It was not so remarkable either for great height or quantity of water as for the beautiful accompaniments which made the spot interesting. After a broken cataract of about twenty feet, the stream was received in a large natural basin filled to the brim with water, which, where the bubbles of the fall subsided, was so exquisitely clear that, although it was of great depth, the eye could discern each pebble at the bottom. Eddying round this reservoir, the brook found its way as if over a broken part of the ledge, and formed a second fall, which seemed to seek the very abyss; then, wheeling out beneath from among the smooth dark rocks which it had polished for ages, it wandered murmuring down the glen, forming the stream up which Waverley had just ascended. [Footnote: See Note 24.] The borders of this romantic reservoir corresponded in beauty; but it was beauty of a stern and commanding cast, as if in the act of expanding into grandeur. Mossy banks of turf were broken and interrupted by huge fragments of rock, and decorated with trees and shrubs, some of which had been planted under the direction of Flora, but so cautiously that they added to the grace without diminishing the romantic wildness of the scene.

Here, like one of those lovely forms which decorate the landscapes of Poussin, Waverley found Flora gazing on the waterfall. Two paces further back stood Cathleen, holding a small Scottish harp, the use of which had been taught to Flora by Rory Dall, one of the last harpers of the Western Highlands. The sun, now stooping in the west, gave a rich and varied tinge to all the objects which surrounded Waverley, and seemed to add more than human brilliancy to the full expressive darkness of Flora's eye, exalted the richness and purity of her complexion, and enhanced the dignity and grace of her beautiful form. Edward thought he had never, even in his wildest dreams, imagined a figure of such exquisite and interesting loveliness. The wild beauty of the retreat, bursting upon him as if by magic, augmented the mingled feeling of delight and awe with which he approached her, like a fair enchantress of Boiardo or Ariosto, by whose nod the scenery around seemed to have been created an Eden in the wilderness.

Flora, like every beautiful woman, was conscious of her own power, and pleased with its effects, which she could easily discern from the respectful yet confused address of the young soldier. But, as she possessed excellent sense, she gave the romance of the scene and other accidental circumstances full weight in appreciating the feelings with which Waverley seemed obviously to be impressed; and, unacquainted with the fanciful and susceptible peculiarities of his character, considered his homage as the passing tribute which a woman of even inferior charms might have expected in such a situation. She therefore quietly led the way to a spot at such a distance from the cascade that its sound should rather accompany than interrupt that of her voice and instrument, and, sitting down upon a mossy fragment of rock, she took the harp from Cathleen.

'I have given you the trouble of walking to this spot, Captain Waverley, both because I thought the scenery would interest you, and because a Highland song would suffer still more from my imperfect translation were I to introduce it without its own wild and appropriate accompaniments. To speak in the poetical language of my country, the seat of the Celtic Muse is in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream. He who woos her must love the barren rock more than the fertile valley, and the solitude of the desert better than the festivity of the hall.'

Few could have heard this lovely woman make this declaration, with a voice where harmony was exalted by pathos, without exclaiming that the muse whom she invoked could never find a more appropriate representative. But Waverley, though the thought rushed on his mind, found no courage to utter it. Indeed, the wild feeling of romantic delight with which he heard the few first notes she drew from her instrument amounted almost to a sense of pain. He would not for worlds have quitted his place by her side; yet he almost longed for solitude, that he might decipher and examine at leisure the complication of emotions which now agitated his bosom.

Flora had exchanged the measured and monotonous recitative of the bard for a lofty and uncommon Highland air, which had been a battle-song in former ages. A few irregular strains introduced a prelude of a wild and peculiar tone, which harmonised well with the distant waterfall, and the soft sigh of the evening breeze in the rustling leaves of an aspen, which overhung the seat of the fair harpess. The following verses convey but little idea of the feelings with which, so sung and accompanied, they were heard by Waverley:—

*There is mist on the mountain, and night on the vale,
But more dark is the sleep of the sons of the Gael.
A stranger commanded—it sunk on the land,
It has frozen each heart, and benumb'd every hand!*

*The dirk and the target lie sordid with dust,
The bloodless claymore is but redden'd with rust;
On the hill or the glen if a gun should appear,
It is only to war with the heath-cock or deer.*

*The deeds of our sires if our bards should rehearse,
Let a blush or a blow be the meed of their verse!
Be mute every string, and be hush'd every tone,
That shall bid us remember the fame that is flown.*

*But the dark hours of night and of slumber are past,
The morn on our mountains is dawning at last;
Glenaladale's peaks are illumined with the rays,
And the streams of Glenfinnan leap bright in the blaze.*

[Footnote: The young and daring adventurer, Charles Edward, landed at Glenaladale, in Moidart, and displayed his standard in the valley of Glenfinnan, mustering around it the Mac-Donalds, the Camerons, and other less numerous clans, whom he had prevailed on to join him. There is a monument erected on the spot, with a Latin inscription by the late Doctor Gregory.]

*O high-minded Moray! the exiled! the dear!
In the blush of the dawning the STANDARD uprear!
Wide, wide on the winds of the north let it fly,
Like the sun's latest flash when the tempest is nigh!*

[Footnote: The Marquis of Tullibardine's elder brother, who, long exiled, returned to Scotland with Charles Edward in 1745.]

*Ye sons of the strong, when that dawning shall break,
Need the harp of the aged remind you to wake?
That dawn never beam'd on your forefathers' eye,
But it roused each high chieftain to vanquish or die.*

*O, sprung from the Kings who in Islay kept state,
Proud chiefs of Clan Ranald, Glengarry, and Sleat!
Combine like three streams from one mountain of snow,
And resistless in union rush down on the foe!*

*True son of Sir Evan, undaunted Lochiel,
Place thy targe on thy shoulder and burnish thy steel!
Rough Keppoch, give breath to thy bugle's bold swell,
Till far Coryarrick resound to the knell!*

*Stern son of Lord Kenneth, high chief of Kintail,
Let the stag in thy standard bound wild in the gale!
May the race of Clan Gillean, the fearless and free,
Remember Glenlivat, Harlaw, and Dundee!*

*Let the clan of grey Fingon, whose offspring has given
Such heroes to earth and such martyrs to heaven,
Unite with the race of renown'd Rorri More,
To launch the long galley and stretch to the oar.*

*How Mac-Shimei will joy when their chief shall display
The yew-crested bonnet o'er tresses of grey!
How the race of wrong'd Alpine and murder'd Glencoe
Shall shout for revenge when they pour on the foe!*

*Ye sons of brown Dermid, who slew the wild boar,
Resume the pure faith of the great Callum-More!
Mac-Neil of the islands, and Moy of the Lake,
For honour, for freedom, for vengeance awake!*

Here a large greyhound, bounding up the glen, jumped upon Flora and interrupted her music by his importunate caresses. At a distant whistle he turned and shot down the path again with the rapidity of an arrow. That is Fergus's faithful attendant, Captain Waverley, and that was his signal. He likes no poetry but what is humorous, and comes in good time to interrupt my long catalogue of the tribes, whom one of your saucy English poets calls

*Our bootless host of high-born beggars,
Mac-Leans, Mac-Kenzies, and Mac-Gregors.'*

Waverley expressed his regret at the interruption.

'O you cannot guess how much you have lost! The bard, as in duty bound, has addressed three long stanzas to Vich Ian Vohr of the Banners, enumerating all his great properties, and not forgetting his being a cheerer of the harper and bard—"a giver of bounteous gifts." Besides, you should have heard a practical admonition to the fair-haired son of the stranger, who lives in the land where the grass is always green—the rider on the shining pampered steed, whose hue is like the raven, and whose neigh is like the scream of the eagle for battle. This valiant horseman is affectionately conjured to remember that his ancestors were distinguished by their loyalty as well as by their courage. All this you have lost; but, since your curiosity is not satisfied, I judge, from the distant sound of my brother's whistle, I may have time to sing the concluding stanzas before he comes to laugh at my translation.'

*Awake on your hills, on your islands awake,
Brave sons of the mountain, the frith, and the lake!
'T is the bugle—but not for the chase is the call;
'T is the pibroch's shrill summons—but not to the hall.*

*'T is the summons of heroes for conquest or death,
When the banners are blazing on mountain and heath:
They call to the dirk, the claymore, and the targe,
To the march and the muster, the line and the charge.*

*Be the brand of each chieftain like Fin's in his ire!
May the blood through his veins flow like currents of fire!
Burst the base foreign yoke as your sires did of yore,
Or die like your sires, and endure it no more!*

CHAPTER XXIII WAVERLEY CONTINUES AT GLENNAQUOICH

As Flora concluded her song, Fergus stood before them. 'I knew I should find you here, even without the assistance of my friend Bran. A simple and unsublimed taste now, like my own, would prefer a jet d'eau at Versailles to this cascade, with all its accompaniments of rock and roar; but this is Flora's Parnassus, Captain Waverley, and that fountain her Helicon. It would be greatly for the benefit of my cellar if she could teach her coadjutor, Mac-Murrough, the value of its influence: he has just drunk a pint of usquebaugh to correct, he said, the coldness of the claret. Let me try its virtues.' He sipped a little water in the hollow of his hand, and immediately commenced, with a theatrical air,—

*'O Lady of the desert, hail!
That lovest the harping of the Gael,
Through fair and fertile regions borne,
Where never yet grew grass or corn.*

But English poetry will never succeed under the influence of a Highland Helicon. Allons, courage!

*O vous, qui buvez, a tasse pleine,
A cette heureuse fontaine,
Ou on ne voit, sur le rivage,*

Que quelques vilains troupeaux,
Suivis de nymphes de village,
Qui les escortent sans sabots—'

'A truce, dear Fergus! spare us those most tedious and insipid persons of all Arcadia. Do not, for Heaven's sake, bring down Coridon and Lindor upon us.'

'Nay, if you cannot relish la houlette et le chalumeau, have with you in heroic strains.'

'Dear Fergus, you have certainly partaken of the inspiration of Mac-Murrough's cup rather than of mine.'

'I disclaim it, ma belle demoiselle, although I protest it would be the more congenial of the two. Which of your crack-brained Italian romancers is it that says,
Io d'Elicona niente

Mi curo, in fe de Dio; che'l bere d'acque

(Bea chi ber ne vuol) sempre mi spiacque!

[Good sooth, I reck nought of your Helicon;

Drink water whoso will, in faith I will drink none.]

But if you prefer the Gaelic, Captain Waverley, here is little Cathleen shall sing you Drimmindhu. Come, Cathleen, astore (i.e. my dear), begin; no apologies to the cean-kinne.'

Cathleen sung with much liveliness a little Gaelic song, the burlesque elegy of a countryman on the loss of his cow, the comic tones of which, though he did not understand the language, made Waverley laugh more than once. [Footnote: This ancient Gaelic ditty is still well known, both in the Highlands and in Ireland It was translated into English, and published, if I mistake not, under the auspices of the facetious Tom D'Urfey, by the title of 'Colley, my Cow.']

'Admirable, Cathleen!' cried the Chieftain; 'I must find you a handsome husband among the clansmen one of these days.'

Cathleen laughed, blushed, and sheltered herself behind her companion.

In the progress of their return to the castle, the Chieftain warmly pressed Waverley to remain for a week or two, in order to see a grand hunting party, in which he and some other Highland gentlemen proposed to join. The charms of melody and beauty were too strongly impressed in Edward's breast to permit his declining an invitation so pleasing. It was agreed, therefore, that he should write a note to the Baron of Bradwardine, expressing his intention to stay a fortnight at Glennaquoich, and requesting him to forward by the bearer (a gilly of the Chieftain's) any letters which might have arrived for him.

This turned the discourse upon the Baron, whom Fergus highly extolled as a gentleman and soldier. His character was touched with yet more discrimination by Flora, who observed he was the very model of the old Scottish cavalier, with all his excellencies and peculiarities. 'It is a character, Captain Waverley, which is fast disappearing; for its best point was a self-respect which was never lost sight of till now. But in the present time the gentlemen whose principles do not permit them to pay court to the existing government are neglected and degraded, and many conduct themselves accordingly; and, like some of the persons you have seen at Tully-Veolan, adopt habits and companions inconsistent with their birth and breeding. The ruthless proscription of party seems to degrade the victims whom it brands, however unjustly. But let us hope a brighter day is approaching, when a Scottish country gentleman may be a scholar without the pedantry of our friend the Baron, a sportsman without the low habits of Mr. Falconer, and a judicious improver of his property without becoming a boorish two-legged steer like Killancureit.'

Thus did Flora prophesy a revolution, which time indeed has produced, but in a manner very different from what she had in her mind.

The amiable Rose was next mentioned, with the warmest encomium on her person, manners, and mind. 'That man,' said Flora, 'will find an inestimable treasure in the affections of Rose Bradwardine who shall be so fortunate as to become their object. Her very soul is in home, and in the discharge of all those quiet virtues of which home is the centre. Her husband will be to her what her father now is, the object of all her care, solicitude, and affection. She will see nothing, and connect herself with nothing, but by him and through him. If he is a man of sense and virtue, she will sympathise in his sorrows, divert his fatigue, and share his pleasures. If she becomes the property of a churlish or negligent husband, she will suit his taste also, for she will not long survive his unkindness. And, alas! how great is the chance that some such unworthy lot may be that of my poor friend! O that I were a queen this moment, and could command the most amiable and worthy youth of my kingdom to accept happiness with the hand of Rose Bradwardine!'

'I wish you would command her to accept mine en attendant,' said Fergus, laughing.

I don't know by what caprice it was that this wish, however jocularly expressed, rather jarred on Edward's feelings, notwithstanding his growing inclination to Flora and his indifference to Miss Bradwardine. This is one of the inexplicabilities of human nature, which we leave without comment.

'Yours, brother?' answered Flora, regarding him steadily. 'No; you have another bride—Honour; and the dangers you must run in pursuit of her rival would break poor Rose's heart.'

With this discourse they reached the castle, and Waverley soon prepared his despatches for Tully-Veolan. As he knew the Baron was punctilious in such matters, he was about to impress his billet with a seal on which his armorial bearings were engraved, but he did not find it at his watch, and thought he must have left it at Tully-Veolan. He mentioned his loss, borrowing at the same time the family seal of the Chieftain.

'Surely,' said Miss Mac-Ivor, 'Donald Bean Lean would not—'

'My life for him in such circumstances,' answered her brother; 'besides, he would never have left the watch behind.'

'After all, Fergus,' said Flora, 'and with every allowance, I am surprised you can countenance that man.'

'I countenance him? This kind sister of mine would persuade you, Captain Waverley, that I take what the people of old used to call "a steakraid," that is, a "collop of the foray," or, in plainer words, a portion of the robber's booty, paid by him to the Laird, or Chief, through whose grounds he drove his prey. O, it is certain that, unless I can find some way to charm Flora's tongue, General Blakeney will send a sergeant's party from Stirling (this he said with haughty and emphatic irony) to seize Vich Ian Vohr, as they nickname me, in his own castle.'

'Now, Fergus, must not our guest be sensible that all this is folly and affectation? You have men enough to serve you without enlisting banditti, and your own honour is above taint. Why don't you send this Donald Bean Lean, whom I hate for his smoothness and duplicity even more than for his rapine, out of your country at once? No cause should induce me to tolerate such a character.'

'No cause, Flora?' said the Chieftain significantly.

'No cause, Fergus! not even that which is nearest to my heart. Spare it the omen of such evil supporters!'

'O but, sister,' rejoined the Chief gaily, 'you don't consider my respect for la belle passion. Evan Dhu Maccombich is in love with Donald's daughter, Alice, and you cannot expect me to disturb him in his amours. Why, the whole clan would cry shame on me. You know it is one of their wise sayings, that a kinsman is part of a man's body, but a foster-brother is a piece of his heart.'

'Well, Fergus, there is no disputing with you; but I would all this may end well.'

'Devoutly prayed, my dear and prophetic sister, and the best way in the world to close a dubious argument. But hear ye not the pipes, Captain Waverley? Perhaps you will like better to dance to them in the hall than to be deafened with their harmony without taking part in the exercise they invite us to.'

Waverley took Flora's hand. The dance, song, and merry-making proceeded, and closed the day's entertainment at the castle of Vich Ian Vohr. Edward at length retired, his mind agitated by a variety of new and conflicting feelings, which detained him from rest for some time, in that not displeasing state of mind in which fancy takes the helm, and the soul rather drifts passively along with the rapid and confused tide of reflections than exerts itself to encounter, systematise, or examine them. At a late hour he fell asleep, and dreamed of Flora Mac-Ivor.

CHAPTER XXIV A STAG-HUNT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Shall this be a long or a short chapter? This is a question in which you, gentle reader, have no vote, however much you may be interested in the consequences; just as you may (like myself) probably have nothing to do with the imposing a new tax, excepting the trifling circumstance of being obliged to pay it. More happy surely in the present case, since, though it lies within my arbitrary power to extend my materials as I think proper, I cannot call you into Exchequer if you do not think proper to read my narrative. Let me therefore consider. It is true that the annals and documents in my hands say but little of this Highland chase; but then I can find copious materials for description elsewhere. There is old Lindsay of Pitscottie ready at my elbow, with his Athole hunting, and his 'lofted and joisted palace of green timber; with all kind of drink to be had in burgh and land, as ale, beer, wine, muscadell, malvaise, hippocras, and aquavita; with wheat-bread, main-bread, ginge-bread, beef, mutton, lamb, veal, venison, goose, grice, capon, coney, crane, swan, partridge, plover, duck, drake, brisselcock, pawnies, black-cock, muir-fowl, and capercaillies'; not forgetting the 'costly bedding, vasselle, and napry,' and least of all the 'excelling stewards, cunning baxters, excellent cooks, and pottengars, with confections and drugs for the desserts.' Besides the particulars which may be thence gleaned for this Highland feast (the splendour of which induced the Pope's legate to dissent from an opinion which he had hitherto held, that Scotland, namely, was the—the—the latter end of the world)—besides these, might I not illuminate my pages with Taylor the Water Poet's hunting in the Braes of Mar, where,—

Through heather, mosse, 'mong frogs, and bogs, and fogs,

'Mongst craggy cliffs and thunder-batter'd hills,

Hares, hinds, bucks, roes, are chased by men and dogs,

Where two hours' hunting fourscore fat deer kills.

Lowland, your sports are low as is your seat;

The Highland games and minds are high and great?

But without further tyranny over my readers, or display of the extent of my own reading, I shall content myself with borrowing a single incident from the memorable hunting at Lude, commemorated in the ingenious Mr. Gunn's essay on the Caledonian Harp, and so proceed in my story with all the brevity that my natural style of composition, partaking of what scholars call the periphrastic and ambagitory, and the vulgar the circumbendibus, will permit me.

The solemn hunting was delayed, from various causes, for about three weeks. The interval was spent by Waverley with great satisfaction at Glenaquoich; for the impression which Flora had made on his mind at their first meeting grew daily stronger. She was precisely the character to fascinate a youth of romantic imagination. Her manners, her language, her talents for poetry and music, gave additional and varied influence to her eminent personal charms. Even in her hours of gaiety she was in his fancy exalted above the ordinary daughters of Eve, and seemed only to stoop for an instant to those topics of amusement and gallantry which others appear to live for. In the neighbourhood of this enchantress, while sport consumed the morning and music and the dance led on the hours of evening, Waverley became daily more delighted with his hospitable landlord, and more enamoured of his bewitching sister.

At length the period fixed for the grand hunting arrived, and Waverley and the Chieftain departed for the place of rendezvous, which was a day's journey to the northward of Glenaquoich. Fergus was attended on this occasion by about three hundred of his clan, well armed and accoutred in their best fashion. Waverley complied so far with the custom of the country as to adopt the trews (he could not be reconciled to the kilt), brogues, and bonnet, as the fittest dress for the exercise in which he was to be engaged, and which least exposed him to be stared at as a stranger when they should reach the place of rendezvous. They found on the spot appointed several powerful Chiefs, to all of whom Waverley was formally presented, and by all cordially received. Their vassals and clansmen, a part of whose feudal duty it was to attend on these parties, appeared in such numbers as amounted to a small army. These active assistants spread through the country far and near, forming a circle, technically called the tinchel, which, gradually closing, drove the deer in herds together towards the glen where the Chiefs and principal sportsmen lay in wait for them. In the meanwhile these distinguished personages bivouacked among the flowery heath, wrapped up in their plaids, a mode of passing a summer's night which Waverley found by no means unpleasant.

For many hours after sunrise the mountain ridges and passes retained their ordinary appearance of silence and solitude, and the Chiefs, with their followers, amused themselves with various pastimes, in which the joys of the shell, as Ossian has it, were not forgotten. 'Others apart sate on a hill retired,' probably as deeply engaged in the discussion of politics and news as Milton's spirits in metaphysical disquisition. At length signals of the approach of the game were descried and heard. Distant shouts resounded from valley to valley, as the various parties of Highlanders, climbing rocks, struggling through copses, wading brooks, and traversing thickets, approached more and more near to each other, and compelled the astonished deer, with the other wild animals that fled before them, into a narrower circuit. Every now and then the report of muskets was heard, repeated by a thousand echoes. The baying of the dogs was soon added to the chorus, which grew ever louder and more loud. At length the advanced parties of the deer began to show themselves; and as the stragglers came bounding down the pass by two or three at a time, the Chiefs showed their skill by distinguishing the fattest deer, and their dexterity in bringing them down with their guns. Fergus exhibited remarkable address, and Edward was also so fortunate as to attract the notice and applause of the sportsmen.

But now the main body of the deer appeared at the head of the glen, compelled into a very narrow compass, and presenting such a formidable phalanx that their antlers appeared at a distance, over the ridge of the steep pass, like a leafless grove. Their number was very great, and from a desperate stand which they made, with the tallest of the red-deer stags arranged in front, in a sort of battle-array, gazing on the group which barred their passage down the glen, the more experienced sportsmen began to augur danger. The work of destruction, however, now commenced on all sides. Dogs and hunters were at work, and muskets and fuses resounded from every quarter. The deer, driven to desperation, made at length a fearful charge right upon the spot where the more distinguished sportsmen had taken their stand. The word was given in Gaelic to fling themselves upon their faces; but Waverley, on whose English ears the signal was lost, had almost fallen a sacrifice to his ignorance of the ancient language in which it was communicated. Fergus, observing his danger, sprung up and pulled him with violence to the ground, just as the whole herd broke down upon them. The tide being absolutely irresistible, and wounds from a stag's horn highly dangerous, the activity of the Chieftain may be considered, on this occasion, as having saved his guest's life. He detained him with a firm grasp until the whole herd of deer had fairly run over them. Waverley then attempted to rise, but found that he had suffered several very severe contusions, and, upon a further examination, discovered that he had sprained his ankle violently.

[Footnote: The thrust from the tynes, or branches, of the stag's horns was accounted far more dangerous than those of the boar's tusk:—

If thou be hurt with horn of stag,

it brings thee to thy bier,

But barber's hand shall boar's hurt heal,

thereof have thou no fear.]

This checked the mirth of the meeting, although the Highlanders, accustomed to such incidents, and prepared for them, had suffered no harm themselves. A wigwam was erected almost in an instant, where Edward was deposited on a couch of heather. The surgeon, or he who assumed the office, appeared to unite the characters of a leech and a conjuror. He was an old smoke-dried Highlander, wearing a venerable grey beard, and having for his sole garment a tartan frock, the skirts of which descended to the knee, and, being undivided in front, made the vestment serve at once for doublet and breeches. [Footnote: This garb, which resembled the dress often put on children in Scotland, called a polonie (i. e. polonaise), is a very ancient modification of the Highland garb. It was, in fact, the hauberk or shirt of mail, only composed of cloth instead of rings of armour.] He observed great ceremony in approaching Edward; and though our hero was writhing with pain, would not proceed to any operation which might assuage it until he had perambulated his couch three times, moving from east to west, according to the course of the sun. This, which was called making the deasil, [Footnote: Old Highlanders will still make the deasil around those whom they wish well to. To go round a person in the opposite direction, or withershins (German wider-shins), is unlucky, and a sort of incantation.] both the leech and the assistants seemed to consider as a matter of the last importance to the accomplishment of a cure; and Waverley, whom pain rendered incapable of expostulation, and who indeed saw no chance of its being attended to, submitted in silence.

After this ceremony was duly performed, the old Esculapius let his patient's blood with a cupping-glass with great dexterity, and proceeded, muttering all the while to himself in Gaelic, to boil on the fire certain herbs, with which he compounded an embrocation. He then fomented the parts which had sustained injury, never failing to murmur prayers or spells, which of the two Waverley could not distinguish, as his ear only caught the words Gaspar-Melchior-Balthazar-max-prax-fax, and similar gibberish. The fomentation had a speedy effect in alleviating the pain and swelling, which our hero imputed to the virtue of the herbs or the effect of the chafing, but which was by the bystanders unanimously ascribed to the spells with which the operation had been accompanied. Edward was given to understand that not one of the ingredients had been gathered except during the full moon, and that the herbalist had, while collecting them, uniformly recited a charm, which in English ran thus:—

Hail to thee, thou holy herb,
That sprung on holy ground!
All in the Mount Olivet
First wert thou found.
Thou art boot for many a bruise,
And healest many a wound;
In our Lady's blessed name,
I take thee from the ground.

[Footnote: This metrical spell, or something very like it, is preserved by Reginald Scott in his work on Witchcraft.]

Edward observed with some surprise that even Fergus, notwithstanding his knowledge and education, seemed to fall in with the superstitious ideas of his countrymen, either because he deemed it impolitic to affect scepticism on a matter of general belief, or more probably because, like most men who do not think deeply or accurately on such subjects, he had in his mind a reserve of superstition which balanced the freedom of his expressions and practice upon other occasions. Waverley made no commentary, therefore, on the manner of the treatment, but rewarded the professor of medicine with a liberality beyond the utmost conception of his wildest hopes. He uttered on the occasion so many incoherent blessings in Gaelic and English that Mac-Ivor, rather scandalised at the excess of his acknowledgments, cut them short by exclaiming, Ceud mile mhalloich ort! i.e. 'A hundred thousand curses on you!' and so pushed the helper of men out of the cabin.

After Waverley was left alone, the exhaustion of pain and fatigue—for the whole day's exercise had been severe—threw him into a profound, but yet a feverish sleep, which he chiefly owed to an opiate draught administered by the old Highlander from some decoction of herbs in his pharmacopoeia.

Early the next morning, the purpose of their meeting being over, and their sports damped by the untoward accident, in which Fergus and all his friends expressed the greatest sympathy, it became a question how to dispose of the disabled sportsman. This was settled by Mac-Ivor, who had a litter prepared, of 'birch and hazel-grey,'

[FOOTNOTE:

On the morrow they made their biers
Of birch and hazel grey. Chevy Chase.]

which was borne by his people with such caution and dexterity as renders it not improbable that they may have been the ancestors of some of those sturdy Gael who have now the happiness to transport the belles of Edinburgh in their sedan-chairs to ten routs in one evening. When Edward was elevated upon their shoulders he could not help being gratified with the romantic effect produced by the breaking up of this sylvan camp. [Footnote: See Note 25.]

The various tribes assembled, each at the pibroch of their native clan, and each headed by their patriarchal ruler. Some, who had already begun to retire, were seen winding up the hills, or descending the passes which led to the scene of action, the sound of their bagpipes dying upon the ear. Others made still a moving picture upon the narrow plain, forming various changeful groups, their feathers and loose plaids waving in the morning breeze, and their arms glittering in the rising sun. Most of the Chiefs came to take farewell of Waverley, and to express their anxious hope they might again, and speedily, meet; but the care of Fergus abridged the ceremony of taking leave. At length, his own men being completely assembled and mustered, Mac-Ivor commenced his march, but not towards the quarter from which they had come. He gave Edward to understand that the greater part of his followers now on the field were bound on a distant expedition, and that when he had deposited him in the house of a gentleman, who he was sure would pay him every attention, he himself should be under the necessity of accompanying them the greater part of the way, but would lose no time in rejoining his friend.

Waverley was rather surprised that Fergus had not mentioned this ulterior destination when they set out upon the hunting-party; but his situation did not admit of many interrogatories. The greater part of the clansmen went forward under the guidance of old Ballenkeiroch and Evan Dhu Maccombich, apparently in high spirits. A few remained for the purpose of escorting the Chieftain, who walked by the side of Edward's litter, and attended him with the most affectionate assiduity. About noon, after a journey which the nature of the conveyance, the pain of his bruises, and the roughness of the way rendered inexpressibly painful, Waverley was hospitably received into the house of a gentleman related to Fergus, who had prepared for him every accommodation which the simple habits of living then universal in the Highlands put in his power. In this person, an old man about seventy, Edward admired a relic of primitive simplicity. He wore no dress but what his estate afforded; the cloth was the fleece of his own sheep, woven by his own servants, and stained into tartan by the dyes produced from the herbs and lichens of the hills around him. His linen was spun by his daughters and maidservants, from his own flax; nor did his table, though plentiful, and varied with game and fish, offer an article but what was of native produce.

Claiming himself no rights of clanship or vassalage, he was fortunate in the alliance and protection of Vich Ian Vohr and other bold and enterprising Chieftains, who protected him in the quiet unambitious life he loved. It is true, the youth born on his grounds were often enticed to leave him for the service of his more active friends; but a few old servants and tenants used to shake their grey locks when they heard their master censured for want of spirit, and observed, 'When the wind is still, the shower falls soft.' This good old man, whose charity and hospitality were unbounded, would have received Waverley with kindness had he been the meanest Saxon peasant, since his situation required assistance. But his attention to a friend and guest of Vich Ian Vohr was anxious and unremitted. Other embrocations were applied to the injured limb, and new spells were put in practice. At length, after more solicitude than was perhaps for the advantage of his health, Fergus took farewell of Edward for a few days, when, he said, he would return to Tomanrait, and hoped by that time Waverley would be able to ride one of the Highland ponies of his landlord, and in that manner return to Glennaquoich.

The next day, when his good old host appeared, Edward learned that his friend had departed with the dawn, leaving none of his followers except Callum Beg, the sort of foot-page who used to attend his person, and who had now in charge to wait upon Waverley. On asking his host if he knew where the Chieftain was gone, the old man looked fixedly at him, with something mysterious and sad in the smile which was his only reply. Waverley repeated his question, to which his host answered in a proverb,—

What sent the messengers to hell,
Was asking what they knew full well.

[Footnote: Corresponding to the Lowland saying, 'Mony ane speirs the gate they ken fu' weel.']

He was about to proceed, but Callum Beg said, rather pertly, as Edward thought, that 'Ta Tighearnach (i.e. the Chief) did not like ta Sassenagh duinhe-wassel to be pingled wi' mickle speaking, as she was na tat weel.' From this Waverley concluded he should disoblige his friend by inquiring of a stranger the object of a journey which he himself had not communicated.

It is unnecessary to trace the progress of our hero's recovery. The sixth morning had arrived, and he was able to walk about with a staff, when Fergus returned with about a score of his men. He seemed in the highest spirits, congratulated Waverley on his progress towards recovery, and finding he was able to sit on

horseback, proposed their immediate return to Glennaquoich. Waverley joyfully acceded, for the form of its fair mistress had lived in his dreams during all the time of his confinement.

Now he has ridden o'er moor and moss,
O'er hill and many a glen,

Fergus, all the while, with his myrmidons, striding stoutly by his side, or diverging to get a shot at a roe or a heath-cock. Waverley's bosom beat thick when they approached the old tower of Ian nan Chaistel, and could distinguish the fair form of its mistress advancing to meet them. Fergus began immediately, with his usual high spirits, to exclaim, 'Open your gates, incomparable princess, to the wounded Moor Abindarez, whom Rodrigo de Narvez, constable of Antiquera, conveys to your castle; or open them, if you like it better, to the renowned Marquis of Mantua, the sad attendant of his half-slain friend Baldovinos of the Mountain. Ah, long rest to thy soul, Cervantes! without quoting thy remnants, how should I frame my language to befit romantic ears!' Flora now advanced, and welcoming Waverley with much kindness, expressed her regret for his accident, of which she had already heard particulars, and her surprise that her brother should not have taken better care to put a stranger on his guard against the perils of the sport in which he engaged him. Edward easily exculpated the Chieftain, who, indeed, at his own personal risk, had probably saved his life. This greeting over, Fergus said three or four words to his sister in Gaelic. The tears instantly sprung to her eyes, but they seemed to be tears of devotion and joy, for she looked up to heaven and folded her hands as in a solemn expression of prayer or gratitude. After the pause of a minute, she presented to Edward some letters which had been forwarded from Tully-Veolan during his absence, and at the same time delivered some to her brother. To the latter she likewise gave three or four numbers of the Caledonian Mercury, the only newspaper which was then published to the north of the Tweed. Both gentlemen retired to examine their despatches, and Edward speedily found that those which he had received contained matters of very deep interest.

CHAPTER XXV NEWS FROM ENGLAND

The letters which Waverley had hitherto received from his relations in England were not such as required any particular notice in this narrative. His father usually wrote to him with the pompous affectation of one who was too much oppressed by public affairs to find leisure to attend to those of his own family. Now and then he mentioned persons of rank in Scotland to whom he wished his son should pay some attention; but Waverley, hitherto occupied by the amusements which he had found at Tully-Veolan and Glennaquoich, dispensed with paying any attention to hints so coldly thrown out, especially as distance, shortness of leave of absence, and so forth furnished a ready apology. But latterly the burden of Mr. Richard Waverley's paternal epistles consisted in certain mysterious hints of greatness and influence which he was speedily to attain, and which would ensure his son's obtaining the most rapid promotion, should he remain in the military service. Sir Everard's letters were of a different tenor. They were short; for the good Baronet was none of your illimitable correspondents, whose manuscript overflows the folds of their large post paper, and leaves no room for the seal; but they were kind and affectionate, and seldom concluded without some allusion to our hero's stud, some question about the state of his purse, and a special inquiry after such of his recruits as had preceded him from Waverley-Honour. Aunt Rachel charged him to remember his principles of religion, to take care of his health, to beware of Scotch mists, which, she had heard, would wet an Englishman through and through, never to go out at night without his great-coat, and, above all, to wear flannel next to his skin.

Mr. Pembroke only wrote to our hero one letter, but it was of the bulk of six epistles of these degenerate days, containing, in the moderate compass of ten folio pages, closely written, a precis of a supplementary quarto manuscript of addenda, delenda, et corrigenda in reference to the two tracts with which he had presented Waverley. This he considered as a mere sop in the pan to stay the appetite of Edward's curiosity until he should find an opportunity of sending down the volume itself, which was much too heavy for the post, and which he proposed to accompany with certain interesting pamphlets, lately published by his friend in Little Britain, with whom he had kept up a sort of literary correspondence, in virtue of which the library shelves of Waverley-Honour were loaded with much trash, and a good round bill, seldom summed in fewer than three figures, was yearly transmitted, in which Sir Everard Waverley of Waverley-Honour, Bart., was marked Dr. to Jonathan Grubbet, bookseller and stationer, Little Britain. Such had hitherto been the style of the letters which Edward had received from England; but the packet delivered to him at Glennaquoich was of a different and more interesting complexion. It would be impossible for the reader, even were I to insert the letters at full length, to comprehend the real cause of their being written, without a glance into the interior of the British cabinet at the period in question.

The ministers of the day happened (no very singular event) to be divided into two parties; the weakest of which, making up by assiduity of intrigue their inferiority in real consequence, had of late acquired some new proselytes, and with them the hope of superseding their rivals in the favour of their sovereign, and overpowering them in the House of Commons. Amongst others, they had thought it worth while to practise upon Richard Waverley. This honest gentleman, by a grave mysterious demeanour, an attention to the etiquette of business rather more than to its essence, a facility in making long dull speeches, consisting of truisms and commonplaces, hashed up with a technical jargon of office, which prevented the inanity of his orations from being discovered, had acquired a certain name and credit in public life, and even established, with many, the character of a profound politician; none of your shining orators, indeed, whose talents evaporate in tropes of rhetoric and flashes of wit, but one possessed of steady parts for business, which would wear well, as the ladies say in choosing their silks, and ought in all reason to be good for common and every-day use, since they were confessedly formed of no holiday texture.

This faith had become so general that the insurgent party in the cabinet, of which we have made mention, after sounding Mr. Richard Waverley, were so satisfied with his sentiments and abilities as to propose that, in case of a certain revolution in the ministry, he should take an ostensible place in the new order of things, not indeed of the very first rank, but greatly higher, in point both of emolument and influence, than that which he now enjoyed. There was no resisting so tempting a proposal, notwithstanding that the Great Man under whose patronage he had enlisted, and by whose banner he had hitherto stood firm, was the principal object of the proposed attack by the new allies. Unfortunately this fair scheme of ambition was blighted in the very bud by a premature movement. All the official gentlemen concerned in it who hesitated to take the part of a voluntary resignation were informed that the king had no further occasion for their services; and in Richard Waverley's case, which the minister considered as aggravated by ingratitude, dismissal was accompanied by something like personal contempt and contumely. The public, and even the party of whom he shared the fall, sympathised little in the disappointment of this selfish and interested statesman; and he retired to the country under the comfortable reflection that he had lost, at the same time, character, credit, and,—what he at least equally deplored,—emolument.

Richard Waverley's letter to his son upon this occasion was a masterpiece of its kind. Aristides himself could not have made out a harder case. An unjust monarch and an ungrateful country were the burden of each rounded paragraph. He spoke of long services and unrequited sacrifices; though the former had been overpaid by his salary, and nobody could guess in what the latter consisted, unless it were in his deserting, not from conviction, but for the lucre of gain, the Tory principles of his family. In the conclusion, his resentment was wrought to such an excess by the force of his own oratory, that he could not repress some threats of vengeance, however vague and impotent, and finally acquainted his son with his pleasure that he should testify his sense of the ill-treatment he had sustained by throwing up his commission as soon as the letter reached him. This, he said, was also his uncle's desire, as he would himself intimate in due course.

Accordingly, the next letter which Edward opened was from Sir Everard. His brother's disgrace seemed to have removed from his well-natured bosom all recollection of their differences, and, remote as he was from every means of learning that Richard's disgrace was in reality only the just as well as natural consequence of his own unsuccessful intrigues, the good but credulous Baronet at once set it down as a new and enormous instance of the injustice of the existing government. It was true, he said, and he must not disguise it even from Edward, that his father could not have sustained such an insult as was now, for the first time, offered to one of his house, unless he had subjected himself to it by accepting of an employment under the present system. Sir Everard had no doubt that he now both saw and felt the magnitude of this error, and it should be his (Sir Everard's) business to take care that the cause of his regret should not extend itself to pecuniary consequences. It was enough for a Waverley to have sustained the public disgrace; the patrimonial injury could easily be obviated by the head of their family. But it was both the opinion of Mr. Richard Waverley and his own that Edward, the representative of the family of Waverley-Honour, should not remain in a situation which subjected him also to such treatment as that with which his father had been stigmatised. He requested his nephew therefore to take the fittest, and at the same time the most speedy, opportunity of transmitting his resignation to the War Office, and hinted, moreover, that little ceremony was necessary where so little had been used to his father. He sent multitudinous greetings to the Baron of Bradwardine.

A letter from Aunt Rachel spoke out even more plainly. She considered the disgrace of brother Richard as the just reward of his forfeiting his allegiance to a lawful though exiled sovereign, and taking the oaths to an alien; a concession which her grandfather, Sir Nigel Waverley, refused to make, either to the Roundhead Parliament or to Cromwell, when his life and fortune stood in the utmost extremity. She hoped her dear Edward would follow the footsteps of his ancestors, and as speedily as possible get rid of the badge of servitude to the usurping family, and regard the wrongs sustained by his father as an admonition from Heaven that every desertion of the line of loyalty becomes its own punishment. She also concluded with her respects to Mr. Bradwardine, and begged Waverley would inform her whether his daughter, Miss Rose, was old enough to wear a pair of very handsome ear-rings, which she proposed to send as a token of her affection. The good lady also desired to be informed whether Mr. Bradwardine took as much Scotch snuff and danced as unweariedly as he did when he was at Waverley-Honour about thirty years ago.

These letters, as might have been expected, highly excited Waverley's indignation. From the desultory style of his studies, he had not any fixed political opinion to place in opposition to the movements of indignation which he felt at his father's supposed wrongs. Of the real cause of his disgrace Edward was totally ignorant; nor had his habits at all led him to investigate the politics of the period in which he lived, or remark the intrigues in which his father had been so actively engaged. Indeed, any impressions which he had accidentally adopted concerning the parties of the times were (owing to the society in which he had lived at Waverley-Honour) of a nature rather unfavourable to the existing government and dynasty. He entered, therefore, without hesitation into the resentful feeling of the relations who had the best title to dictate his conduct, and not perhaps the less willingly when he remembered the tedium of his quarters, and the inferior figure which he had made among the officers of his regiment. If he could have had any doubt upon the subject it would have been decided by the following letter from his commanding officer, which, as it is very short, shall be inserted verbatim:—

SIR,—

Having carried somewhat beyond the line of my duty an indulgence which even the lights of nature, and much more those of Christianity, direct towards errors which may arise from youth and inexperience, and that altogether without effect, I am reluctantly compelled, at the present crisis, to use the only remaining remedy which is in my power. You are, therefore, hereby commanded to repair to—, the headquarters of the regiment, within three days after the date of this letter. If you shall fail to do so, I must report you to the War Office as absent without leave, and also take other steps, which will be disagreeable to you as well as to,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. GARDINER, Lieut.-Col.

Commanding the——Regt. Dragoons.

Edward's blood boiled within him as he read this letter. He had been accustomed from his very infancy to possess in a great measure the disposal of his own time, and thus acquired habits which rendered the rules of military discipline as unpleasing to him in this as they were in some other respects. An idea that in his own case they would not be enforced in a very rigid manner had also obtained full possession of his mind, and had hitherto been sanctioned by the indulgent conduct of his lieutenant-colonel. Neither had anything occurred, to his knowledge, that should have induced his commanding officer, without any other warning than the hints we noticed at the end of the fourteenth chapter, so suddenly to assume a harsh and, as Edward deemed it, so insolent a tone of dictatorial authority. Connecting it with the letters he had just received from his family, he could not but suppose that it was designed to make him feel, in his present situation, the same pressure of authority which had been exercised in his father's case, and that the whole was a concerted scheme to depress and degrade every member of the Waverley family.

Without a pause, therefore, Edward wrote a few cold lines, thanking his lieutenant-colonel for past civilities, and expressing regret that he should have chosen to efface the remembrance of them by assuming a different tone towards him. The strain of his letter, as well as what he (Edward) conceived to be his duty in the present crisis, called upon him to lay down his commission; and he therefore inclosed the formal resignation of a situation which subjected him to so unpleasant a correspondence, and requested Colonel Gardiner would have the goodness to forward it to the proper authorities.

Having finished this magnanimous epistle, he felt somewhat uncertain concerning the terms in which his resignation ought to be expressed, upon which subject he resolved to consult Fergus Mac-Ivor. It may be observed in passing that the bold and prompt habits of thinking, acting, and speaking which distinguished this young Chieftain had given him a considerable ascendancy over the mind of Waverley. Endowed with at least equal powers of understanding, and with much finer genius, Edward yet stooped to the bold and decisive activity of an intellect which was sharpened by the habit of acting on a preconceived and regular system, as well as by extensive knowledge of the world.

When Edward found his friend, the latter had still in his hand the newspaper which he had perused, and advanced to meet him with the embarrassment of one who has unpleasing news to communicate. 'Do your letters, Captain Waverley, confirm the unpleasing information which I find in this paper?'

He put the paper into his hand, where his father's disgrace was registered in the most bitter terms, transferred probably from some London journal. At the end of the paragraph was this remarkable innuendo:—

'We understand that "this same RICHARD who hath done all this" is not the only example of the WAVERING HONOUR of W-v-r-ly H-n-r. See the Gazette of this day.'

With hurried and feverish apprehension our hero turned to the place referred to, and found therein recorded, 'Edward Waverley, captain in——regiment dragoons, superseded for absence without leave'; and in the list of military promotions, referring to the same regiment, he discovered this farther article, 'Lieut. Julius Butler, to be captain, VICE Edward Waverley, superseded.'

Our hero's bosom glowed with the resentment which undeserved and apparently premeditated insult was calculated to excite in the bosom of one who had aspired after honour, and was thus wantonly held up to public scorn and disgrace. Upon comparing the date of his colonel's letter with that of the article in the Gazette, he perceived that his threat of making a report upon his absence had been literally fulfilled, and without inquiry, as it seemed, whether Edward had either received his summons or was disposed to comply with it. The whole, therefore, appeared a formed plan to degrade him in the eyes of the public; and the idea of its having succeeded filled him with such bitter emotions that, after various attempts to conceal them, he at length threw himself into Mac-Ivor's arms, and gave vent to tears of shame and indignation.

It was none of this Chieftain's faults to be indifferent to the wrongs of his friends; and for Edward, independent of certain plans with which he was connected, he felt a deep and sincere interest. The proceeding appeared as extraordinary to him as it had done to Edward. He indeed knew of more motives than Waverley was privy to for the peremptory order that he should join his regiment. But that, without further inquiry into the circumstances of a necessary delay, the commanding officer, in contradiction to his known and established character, should have proceeded in so harsh and unusual a manner was a mystery which he could not penetrate. He soothed our hero, however, to the best of his power, and began to turn his thoughts on revenge for his insulted honour.

Edward eagerly grasped at the idea. 'Will you carry a message for me to Colonel Gardiner, my dear Fergus, and oblige me for ever?'

Fergus paused. 'It is an act of friendship which you should command, could it be useful, or lead to the righting your honour; but in the present case I doubt if your commanding officer would give you the meeting on account of his having taken measures which, however harsh and exasperating, were still within the strict bounds of his duty. Besides, Gardiner is a precise Huguenot, and has adopted certain ideas about the sinfulness of such rencontres, from which it would be impossible to make him depart, especially as his courage is beyond all suspicion. And besides, I—I, to say the truth—I dare not at this moment, for some very weighty reasons, go near any of the military quarters or garrisons belonging to this government.'

'And am I,' said Waverley, 'to sit down quiet and contented under the injury I have received?'

'That will I never advise my friend,' replied Mac-Ivor. 'But I would have vengeance to fall on the head, not on the hand, on the tyrannical and oppressive government which designed and directed these premeditated and reiterated insults, not on the tools of office which they employed in the execution of the injuries they aimed at you.'

'On the government!' said Waverley.

'Yes,' replied the impetuous Highlander, 'on the usurping House of Hanover, whom your grandfather would no more have served than he would have taken wages of red-hot gold from the great fiend of hell!'

'But since the time of my grandfather two generations of this dynasty have possessed the throne,' said Edward coolly.

'True,' replied the Chieftain; 'and because we have passively given them so long the means of showing their native character,—because both you and I myself have lived in quiet submission, have even truckled to the times so far as to accept commissions under them, and thus have given them an opportunity of disgracing us publicly by resuming them, are we not on that account to resent injuries which our fathers only apprehended, but which we have actually sustained? Or is the cause of the unfortunate Stuart family become less just, because their title has devolved upon an heir who is innocent of the charges of misgovernment brought against his father? Do you remember the lines of your favourite poet?

Had Richard unconstrain'd resign'd the throne,
A king can give no more than is his own;
The title stood entail'd had Richard had a son.

You see, my dear Waverley, I can quote poetry as well as Flora and you. But come, clear your moody brow, and trust to me to show you an honourable road to a speedy and glorious revenge. Let us seek Flora, who perhaps has more news to tell us of what has occurred during our absence. She will rejoice to hear that you are relieved of your servitude. But first add a postscript to your letter, marking the time when you received this calvinistical colonel's first summons, and express your regret that the hastiness of his proceedings prevented your anticipating them by sending your resignation. Then let him blush for his injustice.' The letter was sealed accordingly, covering a formal resignation of the commission, and Mac-Ivor despatched it with some letters of his own by a special messenger, with charge to put them into the nearest post-office in the Lowlands.

CHAPTER XXVI AN ECLAIRCISSEMENT

The hint which the Chieftain had thrown out respecting Flora was not unpremeditated. He had observed with great satisfaction the growing attachment of Waverley to his sister, nor did he see any bar to their union, excepting the situation which Waverley's father held in the ministry, and Edward's own commission in the army of George II. These obstacles were now removed, and in a manner which apparently paved the way for the son's becoming reconciled to another allegiance. In every other respect the match would be most eligible. The safety, happiness, and honourable provision of his sister, whom he dearly loved, appeared to be ensured by the proposed union; and his heart swelled when he considered how his own interest would be exalted in the eyes of the ex-monarch to whom he had dedicated his service, by an alliance with one of those ancient, powerful, and wealthy English families of the steady cavalier faith, to awaken whose decayed attachment to the Stuart family was now a matter of such vital importance to the Stuart cause. Nor could Fergus perceive any obstacle to such a scheme. Waverley's attachment was evident; and as his person was handsome, and his taste apparently coincided with her own, he anticipated no opposition on the part of Flora. Indeed, between his ideas of patriarchal power and those which he had acquired in France respecting the disposal of females in marriage, any opposition from his sister, dear as she was to him, would have been the last obstacle on which he would have calculated, even had the union been less eligible.

Influenced by these feelings, the Chief now led Waverley in quest of Miss Mac-Ivor, not without the hope that the present agitation of his guest's spirits might give him courage to cut short what Fergus termed the romance of the courtship. They found Flora, with her faithful attendants, Una and Cathleen, busied in preparing what appeared to Waverley to be white bridal favours. Disguising as well as he could the agitation of his mind, Waverley asked for what joyful occasion Miss Mac-Ivor made such ample preparation.

'It is for Fergus's bridal,' she said, smiling.

'Indeed!' said Edward; 'he has kept his secret well. I hope he will allow me to be his bride's-man.'

'That is a man's office, but not yours, as Beatrice says,' retorted Flora.

'And who is the fair lady, may I be permitted to ask, Miss Mac-Ivor?'

'Did not I tell you long since that Fergus wooed no bride but Honour?' answered Flora.

'And am I then incapable of being his assistant and counsellor in the pursuit of honour?' said our hero, colouring deeply. 'Do I rank so low in your opinion?'

'Far from it, Captain Waverley. I would to God you were of our determination! and made use of the expression which displeased you, solely

Because you are not of our quality,
But stand against us as an enemy.'

'That time is past, sister,' said Fergus; 'and you may wish Edward Waverley (no longer captain) joy of being freed from the slavery to an usurper, implied in that sable and ill-omened emblem.'

'Yes,' said Waverley, undoing the cockade from his hat, 'it has pleased the king who bestowed this badge upon me to resume it in a manner which leaves me little reason to regret his service.'

'Thank God for that!' cried the enthusiast; 'and O that they may be blind enough to treat every man of honour who serves them with the same indignity, that I may have less to sigh for when the struggle approaches!'

'And now, sister,' said the Chieftain, 'replace his cockade with one of a more lively colour. I think it was the fashion of the ladies of yore to arm and send forth their knights to high achievement.'

'Not,' replied the lady, 'till the knight adventurer had well weighed the justice and the danger of the cause, Fergus. Mr. Waverley is just now too much agitated by feelings of recent emotion for me to press upon him a resolution of consequence.'

Waverley felt half alarmed at the thought of adopting the badge of what was by the majority of the kingdom esteemed rebellion, yet he could not disguise his chagrin at the coldness with which Flora parried her brother's hint. 'Miss Mac-Ivor, I perceive, thinks the knight unworthy of her encouragement and favour,' said he, somewhat bitterly.

'Not so, Mr. Waverley,' she replied, with great sweetness. 'Why should I refuse my brother's valued friend a boon which I am distributing to his whole clan? Most willingly would I enlist every man of honour in the cause to which my brother has devoted himself. But Fergus has taken his measures with his eyes open. His life has been devoted to this cause from his cradle; with him its call is sacred, were it even a summons to the tomb. But how can I wish you, Mr. Waverley, so new to the world, so far from every friend who might advise and ought to influence you,—in a moment, too, of sudden pique and indignation,—how can I wish you to plunge yourself at once into so desperate an enterprise?'

Fergus, who did not understand these delicacies, strode through the apartment biting his lip, and then, with a constrained smile, said, 'Well, sister, I leave you to act your new character of mediator between the Elector of Hanover and the subjects of your lawful sovereign and benefactor,' and left the room.

There was a painful pause, which was at length broken by Miss Mac-Ivor. 'My brother is unjust,' she said, 'because he can bear no interruption that seems to thwart his loyal zeal.'

'And do you not share his ardour?' asked Waverley,

'Do I not?' answered Flora. 'God knows mine exceeds his, if that be possible. But I am not, like him, rapt by the bustle of military preparation, and the infinite detail necessary to the present undertaking, beyond consideration of the grand principles of justice and truth, on which our enterprise is grounded; and these, I am

certain, can only be furthered by measures in themselves true and just. To operate upon your present feelings, my dear Mr. Waverley, to induce you to an irretrievable step, of which you have not considered either the justice or the danger, is, in my poor judgment, neither the one nor the other.'

'Incomparable Flora!' said Edward, taking her hand, 'how much do I need such a monitor!'

'A better one by far,' said Flora, gently withdrawing her hand, 'Mr. Waverley will always find in his own bosom, when he will give its small still voice leisure to be heard.'

'No, Miss Mac-Ivor, I dare not hope it; a thousand circumstances of fatal self-indulgence have made me the creature rather of imagination than reason. Durst I but hope—could I but think—that you would deign to be to me that affectionate, that condescending friend, who would strengthen me to redeem my errors, my future life—'

'Hush, my dear sir! now you carry your joy at escaping the hands of a Jacobite recruiting officer to an unparalleled excess of gratitude.'

'Nay, dear Flora, trifle with me no longer; you cannot mistake the meaning of those feelings which I have almost involuntarily expressed; and since I have broken the barrier of silence, let me profit by my audacity. Or may I, with your permission, mention to your brother—'

'Not for the world, Mr. Waverley!'

'What am I to understand?' said Edward. 'Is there any fatal bar—has any prepossession—'

'None, sir,' answered Flora. 'I owe it to myself to say that I never yet saw the person on whom I thought with reference to the present subject.'

'The shortness of our acquaintance, perhaps—If Miss Mac-Ivor will deign to give me time—'

'I have not even that excuse. Captain Waverley's character is so open—is, in short, of that nature that it cannot be misconstrued, either in its strength or its weakness.'

'And for that weakness you despise me?' said Edward.

'Forgive me, Mr. Waverley—and remember it is but within this half hour that there existed between us a barrier of a nature to me insurmountable, since I never could think of an officer in the service of the Elector of Hanover in any other light than as a casual acquaintance. Permit me then to arrange my ideas upon so unexpected a topic, and in less than an hour I will be ready to give you such reasons for the resolution I shall express as may be satisfactory at least, if not pleasing to you.' So saying Flora withdrew, leaving Waverley to meditate upon the manner in which she had received his addresses.

Ere he could make up his mind whether to believe his suit had been acceptable or no, Fergus re-entered the apartment. 'What, a la mort, Waverley?' he cried. 'Come down with me to the court, and you shall see a sight worth all the tirades of your romances. An hundred firelocks, my friend, and as many broadswords, just arrived from good friends; and two or three hundred stout fellows almost fighting which shall first possess them. But let me look at you closer. Why, a true Highlander would say you had been blighted by an evil eye. Or can it be this silly girl that has thus blanked your spirit. Never mind her, dear Edward; the wisest of her sex are fools in what regards the business of life.'

'Indeed, my good friend,' answered Waverley, 'all that I can charge against your sister is, that she is too sensible, too reasonable.'

'If that be all, I ensure you for a louis-d'or against the mood lasting four-and-twenty hours. No woman was ever steadily sensible for that period; and I will engage, if that will please you, Flora shall be as unreasonable to-morrow as any of her sex. You must learn, my dear Edward, to consider women en mousquetaire.' So saying, he seized Waverley's arm and dragged him off to review his military preparations.

CHAPTER XXVII UPON THE SAME SUBJECT

Fergus Mac-Ivor had too much tact and delicacy to renew the subject which he had interrupted. His head was, or appeared to be, so full of guns, broadswords, bonnets, canteens, and tartan hose that Waverley could not for some time draw his attention to any other topic.

'Are you to take the field so soon, Fergus,' he asked, 'that you are making all these martial preparations?'

'When we have settled that you go with me, you shall know all; but otherwise, the knowledge might rather be prejudicial to you.'

'But are you serious in your purpose, with such inferior forces, to rise against an established government? It is mere frenzy.'

'Laissez faire a Don Antoine; I shall take good care of myself. We shall at least use the compliment of Conan, who never got a stroke but he gave one. I would not, however,' continued the Chieftain, 'have you think me mad enough to stir till a favourable opportunity: I will not slip my dog before the game's afoot. But, once more, will you join with us, and you shall know all?'

'How can I?' said Waverley; 'I, who have so lately held that commission which is now posting back to those that gave it? My accepting it implied a promise of fidelity, and an acknowledgment of the legality of the government.'

'A rash promise,' answered Fergus, 'is not a steel handcuff, it may be shaken off, especially when it was given under deception, and has been repaid by insult. But if you cannot immediately make up your mind to a glorious revenge, go to England, and ere you cross the Tweed you will hear tidings that will make the world ring; and if Sir Everard be the gallant old cavalier I have heard him described by some of our HONEST gentlemen of the year one thousand seven hundred and fifteen, he will find you a better horse-troop and a better cause than you have lost.'

'But your sister, Fergus?'

'Out, hyperbolical fiend!' replied the Chief, laughing; 'how vexest thou this man! Speak'st thou of nothing but of ladies?'

'Nay, be serious, my dear friend,' said Waverley; 'I feel that the happiness of my future life must depend upon the answer which Miss Mac-Ivor shall make to what I ventured to tell her this morning.'

'And is this your very sober earnest,' said Fergus, more gravely, 'or are we in the land of romance and fiction?'

'My earnest, undoubtedly. How could you suppose me jesting on such a subject?'

'Then, in very sober earnest,' answered his friend, 'I am very glad to hear it; and so highly do I think of Flora, that you are the only man in England for whom I would say so much. But before you shake my hand so warmly, there is more to be considered. Your own family—will they approve your connecting yourself with the sister of a high-born Highland beggar?'

'My uncle's situation,' said Waverley, 'his general opinions, and his uniform indulgence, entitle me to say, that birth and personal qualities are all he would look to in such a connection. And where can I find both united in such excellence as in your sister?'

'O nowhere! cela va sans dire,' replied Fergus, with a smile. 'But your father will expect a father's prerogative in being consulted.'

'Surely; but his late breach with the ruling powers removes all apprehension of objection on his part, especially as I am convinced that my uncle will be warm in my cause.'

'Religion perhaps,' said Fergus, 'may make obstacles, though we are not bigotted Catholics.'

'My grandmother was of the Church of Rome, and her religion was never objected to by my family. Do not think of MY friends, dear Fergus; let me rather have your influence where it may be more necessary to remove obstacles—I mean with your lovely sister.'

'My lovely sister,' replied Fergus, 'like her loving brother, is very apt to have a pretty decisive will of her own, by which, in this case, you must be ruled; but you shall not want my interest, nor my counsel. And, in the first place, I will give you one hint—Loyalty is her ruling passion; and since she could spell an English book she has been in love with the memory of the gallant Captain Wogan, who renounced the service of the usurper Cromwell to join the standard of Charles II, marched a handful of cavalry from London to the Highlands to join Middleton, then in arms for the king, and at length died gloriously in the royal cause. Ask her to show you some verses she made on his history and fate; they have been much admired, I assure you. The next point is—I think I saw Flora go up towards the waterfall a short time since; follow, man, follow! don't allow the garrison time to strengthen its purposes of resistance. Alerte a la muraille! Seek Flora out, and learn her decision as soon as you can, and Cupid go with you, while I go to look over belts and cartouch-boxes.'

Waverley ascended the glen with an anxious and throbbing heart. Love, with all its romantic train of hopes, fears, and wishes, was mingled with other feelings of a nature less easily defined. He could not but remember how much this morning had changed his fate, and into what a complication of perplexity it was likely to plunge him. Sunrise had seen him possessed of an esteemed rank in the honourable profession of arms, his father to all appearance rapidly rising in the favour of his sovereign. All this had passed away like a dream: he himself was dishonoured, his father disgraced, and he had become involuntarily the confidant at least, if not the accomplice, of plans, dark, deep, and dangerous, which must infer either the subversion of the government he had so lately served or the destruction of all who had participated in them. Should Flora even listen to his suit favourably, what prospect was there of its being brought to a happy termination amid the tumult of an impending insurrection? Or how could he make the selfish request that she should leave Fergus, to whom she was so much attached, and, retiring with him to England, wait, as a distant spectator, the success of her brother's undertaking, or the ruin of all his hopes and fortunes? Or, on the other hand, to engage himself, with no other aid than his single arm, in the dangerous and precipitate counsels of the Chieftain, to be whirled along by him, the partaker of all his desperate and impetuous motions, renouncing almost the power of judging, or deciding upon the rectitude or prudence of his actions, this was no pleasing prospect for the secret pride of Waverley to stoop to. And yet what other conclusion remained, saving the rejection of his addresses by Flora, an alternative not to be thought of in the present high-wrought state of his feelings with anything short of mental agony. Pondering the doubtful and dangerous prospect before him, he at length arrived near the cascade, where, as Fergus had augured, he found Flora seated.

She was quite alone, and as soon as she observed his approach she rose and came to meet him. Edward attempted to say something within the verge of ordinary compliment and conversation, but found himself unequal to the task. Flora seemed at first equally embarrassed, but recovered herself more speedily, and (an unfavourable augury for Waverley's suit) was the first to enter upon the subject of their last interview. 'It is too important, in every point of view, Mr. Waverley, to permit me to leave you in doubt on my sentiments.'

'Do not speak them speedily,' said Waverley, much agitated, 'unless they are such as I fear, from your manner, I must not dare to anticipate. Let time—let my future conduct—let your brother's influence—'

'Forgive me, Mr. Waverley,' said Flora, her complexion a little heightened, but her voice firm and composed. 'I should incur my own heavy censure did I delay expressing my sincere conviction that I can never regard you otherwise than as a valued friend. I should do you the highest injustice did I conceal my sentiments for a moment. I see I distress you, and I grieve for it, but better now than later; and O, better a thousand times, Mr. Waverley, that you should feel a present momentary disappointment than the long and heart-sickening griefs which attend a rash and ill-assorted marriage!'

'Good God!' exclaimed Waverley, 'why should you anticipate such consequences from a union where birth is equal, where fortune is favourable, where, if I may venture to say so, the tastes are similar, where you allege no preference for another, where you even express a favourable opinion of him whom you reject?'

'Mr. Waverley, I HAVE that favourable opinion,' answered Flora; 'and so strongly that, though I would rather have been silent on the grounds of my resolution, you shall command them, if you exact such a mark of my esteem and confidence.'

She sat down upon a fragment of rock, and Waverley, placing himself near her, anxiously pressed for the explanation she offered.

'I dare hardly,' she said, 'tell you the situation of my feelings, they are so different from those usually ascribed to young women at my period of life; and I dare hardly touch upon what I conjecture to be the nature of yours, lest I should give offence where I would willingly administer consolation. For myself, from my infancy till this day I have had but one wish—the restoration of my royal benefactors to their rightful throne. It is impossible to express to you the devotion of my feelings to this single subject; and I will frankly confess that it has so occupied my mind as to exclude every thought respecting what is called my own settlement in life. Let me but live to see the day of that happy restoration, and a Highland cottage, a French convent, or an English palace will be alike indifferent to me.'

'But, dearest Flora, how is your enthusiastic zeal for the exiled family inconsistent with my happiness?'

'Because you seek, or ought to seek, in the object of your attachment a heart whose principal delight should be in augmenting your domestic felicity and returning your affection, even to the height of romance. To a man of less keen sensibility, and less enthusiastic tenderness of disposition, Flora Mac-Ivor might give content, if not happiness; for, were the irrevocable words spoken, never would she be deficient in the duties which she vowed.'

'And why,—why, Miss Mac-Ivor, should you think yourself a more valuable treasure to one who is less capable of loving, of admiring you, than to me?'

'Simply because the tone of our affections would be more in unison, and because his more blunted sensibility would not require the return of enthusiasm which I have not to bestow. But you, Mr. Waverley, would for ever refer to the idea of domestic happiness which your imagination is capable of painting, and whatever fell short of that ideal representation would be construed into coolness and indifference, while you might consider the enthusiasm with which I regarded the success of the royal family as defrauding your affection of its due return.'

'In other words, Miss Mac-Ivor, you cannot love me?' said her suitor dejectedly.

'I could esteem you, Mr. Waverley, as much, perhaps more, than any man I have ever seen; but I cannot love you as you ought to be loved. O! do not, for your own sake, desire so hazardous an experiment! The woman whom you marry ought to have affections and opinions moulded upon yours. Her studies ought to be your studies; her wishes, her feelings, her hopes, her fears, should all mingle with yours. She should enhance your pleasures, share your sorrows, and cheer your melancholy.'

'And why will not you, Miss Mac-Ivor, who can so well describe a happy union, why will not you be yourself the person you describe?'

'Is it possible you do not yet comprehend me?' answered Flora. 'Have I not told you that every keener sensation of my mind is bent exclusively towards an event upon which, indeed, I have no power but those of my earnest prayers?'

'And might not the granting the suit I solicit,' said Waverley, too earnest on his purpose to consider what he was about to say, 'even advance the interest to which you have devoted yourself? My family is wealthy and powerful, inclined in principles to the Stuart race, and should a favourable opportunity—'

'A favourable opportunity!' said Flora—somewhat scornfully. 'Inclined in principles! Can such lukewarm adherence be honourable to yourselves, or gratifying to your lawful sovereign? Think, from my present feelings, what I should suffer when I held the place of member in a family where the rights which I hold most sacred are subjected to cold discussion, and only deemed worthy of support when they shall appear on the point of triumphing without it!'

'Your doubts,' quickly replied Waverley, 'are unjust as far as concerns myself. The cause that I shall assert, I dare support through every danger, as undauntedly as the boldest who draws sword in its behalf.'

'Of that,' answered Flora, 'I cannot doubt for a moment. But consult your own good sense and reason rather than a prepossession hastily adopted, probably only because you have met a young woman possessed of the usual accomplishments in a sequestered and romantic situation. Let your part in this great and perilous drama rest upon conviction, and not on a hurried and probably a temporary feeling.'

Waverley attempted to reply, but his words failed him. Every sentiment that Flora had uttered vindicated the strength of his attachment; for even her loyalty, although wildly enthusiastic, was generous and noble, and disdained to avail itself of any indirect means of supporting the cause to which she was devoted.

After walking a little way in silence down the path, Flora thus resumed the conversation.—'One word more, Mr. Waverley, ere we bid farewell to this topic for ever; and forgive my boldness if that word have the air of advice. My brother Fergus is anxious that you should join him in his present enterprise. But do not consent to this; you could not, by your single exertions, further his success, and you would inevitably share his fall, if it be God's pleasure that fall he must. Your character would also suffer irretrievably. Let me beg you will return to your own country; and, having publicly freed yourself from every tie to the usurping government, I trust you will see cause, and find opportunity, to serve your injured sovereign with effect, and stand forth, as your loyal ancestors, at the head of your natural followers and adherents, a worthy representative of the house of Waverley.'

'And should I be so happy as thus to distinguish myself, might I not hope—'

'Forgive my interruption,' said Flora. 'The present time only is ours, and I can but explain to you with candour the feelings which I now entertain; how they might be altered by a train of events too favourable perhaps to be hoped for, it were in vain even to conjecture. Only be assured, Mr. Waverley, that, after my brother's honour and happiness, there is none which I shall more sincerely pray for than for yours.' With these words she parted from him, for they were now arrived where

two paths separated. Waverley reached the castle amidst a medley of conflicting passions. He avoided any private interview with Fergus, as he did not find himself able either to encounter his raillery or reply to his solicitations. The wild revelry of the feast, for Mac-Ivor kept open table for his clan, served in some degree to stun reflection. When their festivity was ended, he began to consider how he should again meet Miss Mac-Ivor after the painful and interesting explanation of the morning. But Flora did not appear. Fergus, whose eyes flashed when he was told by Cathleen that her mistress designed to keep her apartment that evening, went himself in quest of her; but apparently his remonstrances were in vain, for he returned with a heightened complexion and manifest symptoms of displeasure. The rest of the evening passed on without any allusion, on the part either of Fergus or Waverley, to the subject which engrossed the reflections of the latter, and perhaps of both. When retired to his own apartment, Edward endeavoured to sum up the business of the day. That the repulse he had received from Flora would be persisted in for the present, there was no doubt. But could he hope for ultimate success in case circumstances permitted the renewal of his suit? Would the enthusiastic loyalty, which at this animating moment left no room for a softer passion, survive, at least in its engrossing force, the success or the failure of the present political machinations? And if so, could he hope that the interest which she had acknowledged him to possess in her favour might be improved into a warmer attachment? He taxed his memory to recall every word she had used, with the appropriate looks and gestures which had enforced them, and ended by finding himself in the same state of uncertainty. It was very late before sleep brought relief to the tumult of his mind, after the most painful and agitating day which he had ever passed.

CHAPTER XXVIII A LETTER FROM TULLY-VEOLAN

In the morning, when Waverley's troubled reflections had for some time given way to repose, there came music to his dreams, but not the voice of Selma. He imagined himself transported back to Tully-Veolan, and that he heard Davie Gellatley singing in the court those matins which used generally to be the first sounds that disturbed his repose while a guest of the Baron of Bradwardine. The notes which suggested this vision continued, and waxed louder, until Edward awoke in earnest. The illusion, however, did not seem entirely dispelled. The apartment was in the fortress of Ian nan Chaistel, but it was still the voice of Davie Gellatley that made the following lines resound under the window:—

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

[Footnote: These lines form the burden of an old song to which Burns wrote additional verses.]

Curious to know what could have determined Mr. Gellatley on an excursion of such unwonted extent, Edward began to dress himself in all haste, during which operation the minstrelsy of Davie changed its tune more than once:—

There's nought in the Highlands but syboes and leeks,
And lang-leggit callants gaun wanting the breeks,
Wanting the breeks, and without hose and shoon,
But we'll a'win the breeks when King Jamie comes hame.

[Footnote: These lines are also ancient, and I believe to the tune of 'We'll never hae peace till Jamie comes hame,' to which Burns likewise wrote some verses.]

By the time Waverley was dressed and had issued forth, David had associated himself with two or three of the numerous Highland loungers who always graced the gates of the castle with their presence, and was capering and dancing full merrily in the doubles and full career of a Scotch foursome reel, to the music of his own whistling. In this double capacity of dancer and musician he continued, until an idle piper, who observed his zeal, obeyed the unanimous call of *seid suas* (i.e. blow up), and relieved him from the latter part of his trouble. Young and old then mingled in the dance as they could find partners. The appearance of Waverley did not interrupt David's exercise, though he contrived, by grinning, nodding, and throwing one or two inclinations of the body into the graces with which he performed the Highland fling, to convey to our hero symptoms of recognition. Then, while busily employed in setting, whooping all the while, and snapping his fingers over his head, he of a sudden prolonged his side-step until it brought him to the place where Edward was standing, and, still keeping time to the music like Harlequin in a pantomime, he thrust a letter into our hero's hand, and continued his saltation without pause or intermission. Edward, who perceived that the address was in Rose's hand-writing, retired to peruse it, leaving the faithful bearer to continue his exercise until the piper or he should be tired out. The contents of the letter greatly surprised him. It had originally commenced with 'Dear Sir'; but these words had been carefully erased, and the monosyllable 'Sir' substituted in their place. The rest of the contents shall be given in Rose's own language.

I fear I am using an improper freedom by intruding upon you, yet I cannot trust to any one else to let you know some things which have happened here, with which it seems necessary you should be acquainted. Forgive me, if I am wrong in what I am doing; for, alas! Mr. Waverley, I have no better advice than that of my own feelings; my dear father is gone from this place, and when he can return to my assistance and protection, God alone knows. You have probably heard that, in consequence of some troublesome news from the Highlands, warrants were sent out for apprehending several gentlemen in these parts, and, among others, my dear father. In spite of all my tears and entreaties that he would surrender himself to the government, he joined with Mr. Falconer and some other gentlemen, and they have all gone northwards, with a body of about forty horsemen. So I am not so anxious concerning his immediate safety as about what may follow afterwards, for these troubles are only beginning. But all this is nothing to you, Mr. Waverley, only I thought you would be glad to learn that my father has escaped, in case you happen to have heard that he was in danger.

The day after my father went off there came a party of soldiers to Tully-Veolan, and behaved very rudely to Bailie Macwheeble; but the officer was very civil to me, only said his duty obliged him to search for arms and papers. My father had provided against this by taking away all the arms except the old useless things which hung in the hall, and he had put all his papers out of the way. But O! Mr. Waverley, how shall I tell you, that they made strict inquiry after you, and asked when you had been at Tully-Veolan, and where you now were. The officer is gone back with his party, but a non-commissioned officer and four men remain as a sort of garrison in the house. They have hitherto behaved very well, as we are forced to keep them in good-humour. But these soldiers have hinted as if, on your falling into their hands, you would be in great danger; I cannot prevail on myself to write what wicked falsehoods they said, for I am sure they are falsehoods; but you will best judge what you ought to do. The party that returned carried off your servant prisoner, with your two horses, and everything that you left at Tully-Veolan. I hope God will protect you, and that you will get safe home to England, where you used to tell me there was no military violence nor fighting among clans permitted, but everything was done according to an equal law that protected all who were harmless and innocent. I hope you will exert your indulgence as to my boldness in writing to you, where it seems to me, though perhaps erroneously, that your safety and honour are concerned. I am sure—at least I think, my father would approve of my writing; for Mr. Rubrick is fled to his cousin's at the Duchran, to be out of danger from the soldiers and the Whigs, and Bailie Macwheeble does not like to meddle (he says) in other men's concerns, though I hope what may serve my father's friend at such a time as this cannot be termed improper interference. Farewell, Captain Waverley! I shall probably never see you more; for it would be very improper to wish you to call at Tully-Veolan just now, even if these men were gone; but I will always remember with gratitude your kindness in assisting so poor a scholar as myself, and your attentions to my dear, dear father.

I remain, your obliged servant,
ROSE COMYNE BRADWARDINE.

P.S.—I hope you will send me a line by David Gellatley, just to say you have received this and that you will take care of yourself; and forgive me if I entreat you, for your own sake, to join none of these unhappy cabals, but escape, as fast as possible, to your own fortunate country. My compliments to my dear Flora and to Glennaquoich. Is she not as handsome and accomplished as I have described her?

Thus concluded the letter of Rose Bradwardine, the contents of which both surprised and affected Waverley. That the Baron should fall under the suspicions of government, in consequence of the present stir among the partisans of the house of Stuart, seemed only the natural consequence of his political predilections; but how HE himself should have been involved in such suspicions, conscious that until yesterday he had been free from harbouring a thought against the prosperity of the reigning family, seemed inexplicable. Both at Tully-Veolan and Glennaquoich his hosts had respected his engagements with the existing government, and though enough passed by accidental innuendo that might induce him to reckon the Baron and the Chief among those disaffected gentlemen who were still numerous in Scotland, yet until his own connection with the army had been broken off by the resumption of his commission, he had no reason to suppose that they nourished any immediate or hostile attempts against the present establishment. Still he was aware that, unless he meant at once to embrace the proposal of Fergus Mac-Ivor, it would deeply concern him to leave the suspicious neighbourhood without delay, and repair where his conduct might undergo a satisfactory examination. Upon this he was rather determined, as Flora's advice favoured his doing so, and because he felt inexpressible repugnance at the idea of being accessory to the plague of civil war. Whatever were the original rights of the Stuarts, calm reflection told him that, omitting the question how far James the Second could forfeit those of his posterity, he had, according to the united voice of the whole nation, justly forfeited his own. Since that period four monarchs had reigned in peace and glory over Britain, sustaining and exalting the character of the nation abroad and its liberties at home. Reason asked, was it worth while to disturb a government so long settled and established, and to plunge a kingdom into all the miseries of civil war, for the purpose of replacing upon the throne the descendants of a monarch by whom it had been wilfully forfeited? If, on the other hand, his own final conviction of the goodness of their cause, or the commands of his father or uncle, should recommend to him allegiance to the Stuarts, still it was necessary to clear his own character by showing that he had not, as seemed to be falsely insinuated, taken any step to this purpose during his holding the commission of the reigning monarch,

The affectionate simplicity of Rose and her anxiety for his safety, his sense too of her unprotected state, and of the terror and actual dangers to which she might be exposed, made an impression upon his mind, and he instantly wrote to thank her in the kindest terms for her solicitude on his account, to express his earnest good wishes for her welfare and that of her father, and to assure her of his own safety. The feelings which this task excited were speedily lost in the necessity which he now saw of bidding farewell to Flora Mac-Ivor, perhaps for ever. The pang attending this reflection was inexpressible; for her high-minded elevation of character, her self-devotion to the cause which she had embraced, united to her scrupulous rectitude as to the means of serving it, had vindicated to his judgment the choice adopted by his passions. But time pressed, calumny was busy with his fame, and every hour's delay increased the power to injure it. His departure must be instant.

With this determination he sought out Fergus, and communicated to him the contents of Rose's letter, with his own resolution instantly to go to Edinburgh, and put into the hands of some one or other of those persons of influence to whom he had letters from his father his exculpation from any charge which might be preferred against him.

'You run your head into the lion's mouth,' answered Mac-Ivor. 'You do not know the severity of a government harassed by just apprehensions, and a consciousness of their own illegality and insecurity. I shall have to deliver you from some dungeon in Stirling or Edinburgh Castle.'

'My innocence, my rank, my father's intimacy with Lord M—, General G—, etc., will be a sufficient protection,' said Waverley.

'You will find the contrary,' replied the Chieftain, 'these gentlemen will have enough to do about their own matters. Once more, will you take the plaid, and stay a little while with us among the mists and the crows, in the bravest cause ever sword was drawn in?'

[Footnote: A Highland rhyme on Glencairn's Expedition, in 1650, has these lines—

We'll bide a while amang ta crows,

We'll wiske ta sword and bend ta bows]

'For many reasons, my dear Fergus, you must hold me excused.'

'Well then,' said Mac-Ivor, 'I shall certainly find you exerting your poetical talents in elegies upon a prison, or your antiquarian researches in detecting the Ogham

[Footnote: The Ogham is a species of the old Irish character. The idea of the correspondence betwixt the Celtic and Punic, founded on a scene in Plautus, was not started till General Vallancey set up his theory, long after the date of Fergus Mac-Ivor] character or some Punic hieroglyphic upon the keystones of a vault, curiously arched. Or what say you to un petit pendement bien joli? against which awkward ceremony I don't warrant you, should you meet a body of the armed West-Country Whigs.'

'And why should they use me so?' said Waverley.

'For a hundred good reasons,' answered Fergus. 'First, you are an Englishman; secondly, a gentleman; thirdly, a prelatist abjured; and, fourthly, they have not had an opportunity to exercise their talents on such a subject this long while. But don't be cast down, beloved; all will be done in the fear of the Lord.'

'Well, I must run my hazard.'

'You are determined, then?'

'I am.'

'Wilful will do't' said Fergus. 'But you cannot go on foot, and I shall want no horse, as I must march on foot at the head of the children of Ivor; you shall have brown Dermid.'

'If you will sell him, I shall certainly be much obliged.'

'If your proud English heart cannot be obliged by a gift or loan, I will not refuse money at the entrance of a campaign: his price is twenty guineas. [Remember, reader, it was Sixty Years Since.] And when do you propose to depart?'

'The sooner the better,' answered Waverley.

'You are right, since go you must, or rather, since go you will. I will take Flora's pony and ride with you as far as Bally-Brough. Callum Beg, see that our horses are ready, with a pony for yourself, to attend and carry Mr. Waverley's baggage as far as—(naming a small town), where he can have a horse and guide to Edinburgh. Put on a Lowland dress, Callum, and see you keep your tongue close, if you would not have me cut it out. Mr. Waverley rides Dermid.' Then turning to Edward, 'You will take leave of my sister?'

'Surely—that is, if Miss Mac-Ivor will honour me so far.'

'Cathleen, let my sister know Mr. Waverley wishes to bid her farewell before he leaves us. But Rose Bradwardine, her situation must be thought of; I wish she were here. And why should she not? There are but four red-coats at Tully-Veolan, and their muskets would be very useful to us.'

To these broken remarks Edward made no answer; his ear indeed received them, but his soul was intent upon the expected entrance of Flora. The door opened. It was but Cathleen, with her lady's excuse, and wishes for Captain Waverley's health and happiness.

CHAPTER XXIX

WAVERLEY'S RECEPTION IN THE LOWLANDS AFTER HIS HIGHLAND TOUR

It was noon when the two friends stood at the top of the pass of Bally-Brough. 'I must go no farther,' said Fergus Mac-Ivor, who during the journey had in vain endeavoured to raise his friend's spirits. 'If my cross-grained sister has any share in your dejection, trust me she thinks highly of you, though her present anxiety about the public cause prevents her listening to any other subject. Confide your interest to me; I will not betray it, providing you do not again assume that vile cockade.'

'No fear of that, considering the manner in which it has been recalled. Adieu, Fergus; do not permit your sister to forget me.'

'And adieu, Waverley; you may soon hear of her with a prouder title. Get home, write letters, and make friends as many and as fast as you can; there will speedily be unexpected guests on the coast of Suffolk, or my news from France has deceived me.' [Footnote: The sanguine Jacobites, during the eventful years 1745-46, kept up the spirits of their party by the rumour of descents from France on behalf of the Chevalier St. George.]

Thus parted the friends; Fergus returning back to his castle, while Edward, followed by Callum Beg, the latter transformed from point to point into a Low-Country groom, proceeded to the little town of—.

Edward paced on under the painful and yet not altogether embittered feelings which separation and uncertainty produce in the mind of a youthful lover. I am not sure if the ladies understand the full value of the influence of absence, nor do I think it wise to teach it them, lest, like the Clelias and Mandanes of yore, they should resume the humour of sending their lovers into banishment. Distance, in truth, produces in idea the same effect as in real perspective. Objects are softened, and rounded, and rendered doubly graceful; the harsher and more ordinary points of character are mellowed down, and those by which it is remembered are the more striking outlines that mark sublimity, grace, or beauty. There are mists too in the mental as well as the natural horizon, to conceal what is less pleasing in distant objects, and there are happy lights, to stream in full glory upon those points which can profit by brilliant illumination.

Waverley forgot Flora Mac-Ivor's prejudices in her magnanimity, and almost pardoned her indifference towards his affection when he recollected the grand and decisive object which seemed to fill her whole soul. She, whose sense of duty so wholly engrossed her in the cause of a benefactor, what would be her feelings in favour of the happy individual who should be so fortunate as to awaken them? Then came the doubtful question, whether he might not be that happy man,—a question which fancy endeavoured to answer in the affirmative, by conjuring up all she had said in his praise, with the addition of a comment much more flattering than the text warranted. All that was commonplace, all that belonged to the every-day world, was melted away and obliterated in those dreams of imagination, which only remembered with advantage the points of grace and dignity that distinguished Flora from the generality of her sex, not the particulars which she held in common with them. Edward was, in short, in the fair way of creating a goddess out of a high-spirited, accomplished, and beautiful young woman; and the time was wasted in castle-building until, at the descent of a steep hill, he saw beneath him the market-town of —.

The Highland politeness of Callum Beg—there are few nations, by the way, who can boast of so much natural politeness as the Highlanders [Footnote: The Highlander, in former times, had always a high idea of his own gentility, and was anxious to impress the same upon those with whom he conversed. His language abounded in the phrases of courtesy and compliment; and the habit of carrying arms, and mixing with those who did so, made it particularly desirable they should use cautious politeness in their intercourse with each other.]—the Highland civility of his attendant had not permitted him to disturb the reveries of our hero. But observing him rouse himself at the sight of the village, Callum pressed closer to his side, and hoped 'when they came to the public, his honour wad not say nothing about Vich Ian Vohr, for ta people were bitter Whigs, deil burst tem.'

Waverley assured the prudent page that he would be cautious; and as he now distinguished, not indeed the ringing of bells, but the tinkling of something like a hammer against the side of an old mossy, green, inverted porridge-pot that hung in an open booth, of the size and shape of a parrot's cage, erected to grace the east end of a building resembling an old barn, he asked Callum Beg if it were Sunday.

'Could na say just preceesely; Sunday seldom cam aboon the pass of Bally-Brough.'

On entering the town, however, and advancing towards the most apparent public-house which presented itself, the numbers of old women, in tartan screens and red cloaks, who streamed from the barn-resembling building, debating as they went the comparative merits of the blessed youth Jabesh Rentowel and that chosen vessel Maister Goukthrapple, induced Callum to assure his temporary master 'that it was either ta muckle Sunday hersell, or ta little government Sunday that they ca'd ta fast.'

On alighting at the sign of the Seven-branched Golden Candlestick, which, for the further delectation of the guests, was graced with a short Hebrew motto, they were received by mine host, a tall thin puritanical figure, who seemed to debate with himself whether he ought to give shelter to those who travelled on such a day. Reflecting, however, in all probability, that he possessed the power of mulcting them for this irregularity, a penalty which they might escape by passing into Gregor Duncanson's, at the sign of the Highlander and the Hawick Gill, Mr. Ebenezer Cruickshanks condescended to admit them into his dwelling.

To this sanctified person Waverley addressed his request that he would procure him a guide, with a saddle-horse, to carry his portmanteau to Edinburgh.

'And whar may ye be coming from?' demanded mine host of the Candlestick.

'I have told you where I wish to go; I do not conceive any further information necessary either for the guide or his saddle-horse.'

'Hem! Ahem!' returned he of the Candlestick, somewhat disconcerted at this rebuff. 'It's the general fast, sir, and I cannot enter into ony carnal transactions on sic a day, when the people should be humbled and the backsliders should return, as worthy Mr. Goukthrapple said; and moreover when, as the precious Mr. Jabesh Rentowel did weel observe, the land was mourning for covenants burnt, broken, and buried.'

'My good friend,' said Waverley, 'if you cannot let me have a horse and guide, my servant shall seek them elsewhere.'

'Aweel! Your servant? and what for gangs he not forward wi' you himsell?'

Waverley had but very little of a captain of horse's spirit within him—I mean of that sort of spirit which I have been obliged to when I happened, in a mail coach or diligence, to meet some military man who has kindly taken upon him the disciplining of the waiters and the taxing of reckonings. Some of this useful talent our hero had, however, acquired during his military service, and on this gross provocation it began seriously to arise. 'Look ye, sir; I came here for my own accommodation, and not to answer impertinent questions. Either say you can, or cannot, get me what I want; I shall pursue my course in either case.'

Mr. Ebenezer Cruickshanks left the room with some indistinct mutterings; but whether negative or acquiescent, Edward could not well distinguish. The hostess, a civil, quiet, laborious drudge, came to take his orders for dinner, but declined to make answer on the subject of the horse and guide; for the Salique law, it seems, extended to the stables of the Golden Candlestick.

From a window which overlooked the dark and narrow court in which Callum Beg rubbed down the horses after their journey, Waverley heard the following dialogue betwixt the subtle foot-page of Vich Ian Vohr and his landlord:—

'Ye'll be frae the north, young man?' began the latter.

'And ye may say that,' answered Callum.

'And ye'll hae ridden a lang way the day, it may weel be?'

'Sae lang, that I could weel tak a dram.'

'Gudewife, bring the gill stoup.'

Here some compliments passed fitting the occasion, when my host of the Golden Candlestick, having, as he thought, opened his guest's heart by this hospitable propitiation, resumed his scrutiny.

'Ye'll no hae mickle better whisky than that aboon the Pass?'

'I am nae frae aboon the Pass.'

'Ye're a Highlandman by your tongue?'

'Na; I am but just Aberdeen-a-way.'

'And did your master come frae Aberdeen wi' you?'

'Ay; that's when I left it mysell,' answered the cool and impenetrable Callum Beg.

'And what kind of a gentleman is he?'

'I believe he is ane o' King George's state officers; at least he's aye for ganging on to the south, and he has a hantle siller, and never grudges onything till a poor body, or in the way of a lawing.'

'He wants a guide and a horse frae hence to Edinburgh?'

'Ay, and ye maun find it him forthwith.'

'Ahem! It will be chargeable.'

'He cares na for that a bodle.'

'Aweel, Duncan—did ye say your name was Duncan, or Donald?'

'Na, man—Jamie—Jamie Steenson—I telt ye before.'

This last undaunted parry altogether foiled Mr. Cruickshanks, who, though not quite satisfied either with the reserve of the master or the extreme readiness of the man, was contented to lay a tax on the reckoning and horse-hire that might compound for his ungratified curiosity. The circumstance of its being the fast day was not forgotten in the charge, which, on the whole, did not, however, amount to much more than double what in fairness it should have been.

Callum Beg soon after announced in person the ratification of this treaty, adding, 'Ta auld deevil was ganging to ride wi' ta duinhe-wassel hersell.'

'That will not be very pleasant, Callum, nor altogether safe, for our host seems a person of great curiosity; but a traveller must submit to these inconveniences. Meanwhile, my good lad, here is a trifle for you to drink Vich Ian Vohr's health.'

The hawk's eye of Callum flashed delight upon a golden guinea, with which these last words were accompanied. He hastened, not without a curse on the intricacies of a Saxon breeches pocket, or spleuchan, as he called it, to deposit the treasure in his fob; and then, as if he conceived the benevolence called for some requital on his part, he gathered close up to Edward, with an expression of countenance peculiarly knowing, and spoke in an undertone, 'If his honour thought ta auld deevil Whig carle was a bit dangerous, she could easily provide for him, and teil ane ta wiser.'

'How, and in what manner?'

'Her ain sell,' replied Callum, 'could wait for him a wee bit frae the toun, and kittle his quarters wi'her skene-occle.'

'Skene-occle! what's that?'

Callum unbuttoned his coat, raised his left arm, and, with an emphatic nod, pointed to the hilt of a small dirk, snugly deposited under it, in the lining of his jacket. Waverley thought he had misunderstood his meaning; he gazed in his face, and discovered in Callum's very handsome though embrowned features just the degree of roguish malice with which a lad of the same age in England would have brought forward a plan for robbing an orchard.

'Good God, Callum, would you take the man's life?'

'Indeed,' answered the young desperado, 'and I think he has had just a lang enough lease o' t, when he's for betraying honest folk that come to spend siller at his public.'

Edward saw nothing was to be gained by argument, and therefore contented himself with enjoining Callum to lay aside all practices against the person of Mr. Ebenezer Cruickshanks; in which injunction the page seemed to acquiesce with an air of great indifference.

'Ta duinhe-wassel might please himsell; ta auld rudas loon had never done Callum nae ill. But here's a bit line frae ta Tighearna, tat he bade me gie your honour ere I came back.'

The letter from the Chief contained Flora's lines on the fate of Captain Wogan, whose enterprising character is so well drawn by Clarendon. He had originally engaged in the service of the Parliament, but had abjured that party upon the execution of Charles I; and upon hearing that the royal standard was set up by the Earl of Glencairn and General Middleton in the Highlands of Scotland, took leave of Charles II, who was then at Paris, passed into England, assembled a body of Cavaliers in the neighbourhood of London, and traversed the kingdom, which had been so long under domination of the usurper, by marches conducted with such skill, dexterity, and spirit that he safely united his handful of horsemen with the body of Highlanders then in arms. After several months of desultory warfare, in which Wogan's skill and courage gained him the highest reputation, he had the misfortune to be wounded in a dangerous manner, and no surgical assistance being within reach he terminated his short but glorious career.

There were obvious reasons why the politic Chieftain was desirous to place the example of this young hero under the eye of Waverley, with whose romantic disposition it coincided so peculiarly. But his letter turned chiefly upon some trifling commissions which Waverley had promised to execute for him in England, and it was only toward the conclusion that Edward found these words: 'I owe Flora a grudge for refusing us her company yesterday; and, as I am giving you the trouble of reading these lines, in order to keep in your memory your promise to procure me the fishing-tackle and cross-bow from London, I will enclose her verses on the Grave of Wogan. This I know will tease her; for, to tell you the truth, I think her more in love with the memory of that dead hero than she is likely to be with any living one, unless he shall tread a similar path. But English squires of our day keep their oak-trees to shelter their deer parks, or repair the losses of an evening at White's, and neither invoke them to wreathe their brows nor shelter their graves. Let me hope for one brilliant exception in a dear friend, to whom I would most gladly give a dearer title.'

The verses were inscribed,

To an Oak Tree

In the Church-Yard of —, in the Highlands of Scotland, said to mark the Grave of Captain Wogan, killed in 1649.

Emblem of England's ancient faith,
Full proudly may thy branches wave,
Where loyalty lies low in death,
And valour fills a timeless grave.

And thou, brave tenant of the tomb!
Repine not if our clime deny,
Above thine honour'd sod to bloom
The flowerets of a milder sky.

These owe their birth to genial May;
Beneath a fiercer sun they pine,
Before the winter storm decay;
And can their worth be type of thine?

No! for, 'mid storms of Fate opposing,
Still higher swell'd thy dauntless heart,
And, while Despair the scene was closing,
Commenced thy brief but brilliant part.

'T was then thou sought'st on Albyn's hill,
(When England's sons the strife resign'd)
A rugged race resisting still,
And unsubdued though unrefined.

Thy death's hour heard no kindred wail,
No holy knell thy requiem rung;
Thy mourners were the plaided Gael,
Thy dirge the clamorous pibroch sung.

Yet who, in Fortune's summer-shine
To waste life's longest term away,
Would change that glorious dawn of thine,
Though darken'd ere its noontide day!

Be thine the tree whose dauntless boughs
Brave summer's drought and winter's gloom.
Rome bound with oak her patriots' brows,
As Albyn shadows Wogan's tomb.

Whatever might be the real merit of Flora Mac-Ivor's poetry, the enthusiasm which it intimated was well calculated to make a corresponding impression upon her lover. The lines were read—read again, then deposited in Waverley's bosom, then again drawn out, and read line by line, in a low and smothered voice, and with frequent pauses which prolonged the mental treat, as an epicure protracts, by sipping slowly, the enjoyment of a delicious beverage. The entrance of Mrs. Cruickshanks with the sublunary articles of dinner and wine hardly interrupted this pantomime of affectionate enthusiasm.

At length the tall ungainly figure and ungracious visage of Ebenezer presented themselves. The upper part of his form, notwithstanding the season required no such defence, was shrouded in a large great-coat, belted over his under habiliments, and crested with a huge cowl of the same stuff, which, when drawn over the head and hat, completely overshadowed both, and, being buttoned beneath the chin, was called a trot-cozy. His hand grasped a huge jockey-whip, garnished with brassmounting. His thin legs tenanted a pair of gambadoes, fastened at the sides with rusty clasps. Thus accoutred, he stalked into the midst of the apartment, and announced his errand in brief phrase: 'Yer horses are ready.'

'You go with me yourself then, landlord?'

'I do as far as Perth; where ye may be supplied with a guide to Embro' as your occasions shall require.' Thus saying, he placed under Waverley's eye the bill which he held in his hand; and at the same time, self-invited, filled a glass of wine and drank devoutly to a blessing on their journey. Waverley stared at the man's impudence, but, as their connection was to be short and promised to be convenient, he made no observation upon it; and, having paid his reckoning, expressed his intention to depart immediately. He mounted Dermid accordingly and sallied forth from the Golden Candlestick, followed by the puritanical figure we have described, after he had, at the expense of some time and difficulty, and by the assistance of a 'louping-on-stane,' or structure of masonry erected for the traveller's convenience in front of the house, elevated his person to the back of a long-backed, raw-boned, thin-gutted phantom of a broken-down blood-horse, on which Waverley's portmanteau was deposited. Our hero, though not in a very gay humour, could hardly help laughing at the appearance of his new squire, and at imagining the astonishment which his person and equipage would have excited at Waverley-Honour. Edward's tendency to mirth did not escape mine host of the Candlestick, who, conscious of the cause, infused a double portion of souring into the pharisaical leaven of his countenance, and resolved internally that, in one way or other, the young 'Englischer' should pay dearly for the contempt with which he seemed to regard him. Callum also stood at the gate and enjoyed, with undissembled glee, the ridiculous figure of Mr. Cruickshanks. As Waverley passed him he pulled off his hat respectfully, and, approaching his stirrup, bade him 'Tak heed the auld whig deevil played him nae cantrip.' Waverley once more thanked and bade him farewell, and then rode briskly onward, not sorry to be out of hearing of the shouts of the children, as they beheld old Ebenezer rise and sink in his stirrups to avoid the concussions occasioned by a hard trot upon a half-paved street. The village of—was soon several miles behind him.

PART II

CHAPTER I

SHOWS THAT THE LOSS OF A HORSE'S SHOE MAY BE A SERIOUS INCONVENIENCE

The manner and air of Waverley, but, above all, the glittering contents of his purse, and the indifference with which he seemed to regard them, somewhat overawed his companion, and deterred him from making any attempts to enter upon conversation. His own reflections were moreover agitated by various surmises, and by plans of self-interest with which these were intimately connected. The travellers journeyed, therefore, in silence, until it was interrupted by the annunciation, on the part of the guide, that his 'naig had lost a fore-foot shoe, which, doubtless, his honour would consider it was his part to replace.'

This was what lawyers call a fishing question, calculated to ascertain how far Waverley was disposed to submit to petty imposition. 'My part to replace your horse's shoe, you rascal!' said Waverley, mistaking the purport of the intimation.

'Indubitably,' answered Mr. Cruickshanks; 'though there was no preceese clause to that effect, it canna be expected that I am to pay for the casualties whilk may befall the purr naig while in your honour's service. Nathless, if your honour—'

'O, you mean I am to pay the farrier; but where shall we find one?'

Rejoiced at discerning there would be no objection made on the part of his temporary master, Mr. Cruickshanks assured him that Cairnvreckan, a village which they were about to enter, was happy in an excellent blacksmith; 'but as he was a professor, he would drive a nail for no man on the Sabbath or kirk-fast, unless it were in a case of absolute necessity, for which he always charged sixpence each shoe.' The most important part of this communication, in the opinion of the speaker, made a very slight impression on the hearer, who only internally wondered what college this veterinary professor belonged to, not aware that the word was used to denote any person who pretended to uncommon sanctity of faith and manner.

As they entered the village of Cairnvreckan, they speedily distinguished the smith's house. Being also a public, it was two stories high, and proudly reared its crest, covered with grey slate, above the thatched hovels by which it was surrounded. The adjoining smithy betokened none of the Sabbatical silence and repose which Ebenezer had augured from the sanctity of his friend. On the contrary, hammer clashed and anvil rang, the bellows groaned, and the whole apparatus of Vulcan appeared to be in full activity. Nor was the labour of a rural and pacific nature. The master smith, benempt, as his sign intimated, John Mucklewrath, with two assistants, toiled busily in arranging, repairing, and furbishing old muskets, pistols, and swords, which lay scattered around his workshop in military confusion. The open shed, containing the forge, was crowded with persons who came and went as if receiving and communicating important news, and a single glance at the aspect of the people who traversed the street in haste, or stood assembled in groups, with eyes elevated and hands uplifted, announced that some extraordinary intelligence was agitating the public mind of the municipality of Cairnvreckan. 'There is some news,' said mine host of the Candlestick, pushing his lantern-jawed visage and bare-boned nag rudely forward into the crowd—'there is some news; and, if it please my Creator, I will forthwith obtain speirings thereof.' Waverley, with better regulated curiosity than his attendant's, dismounted and gave his horse to a boy who stood idling near. It arose, perhaps, from the shyness of his character in early youth, that he felt dislike at applying to a stranger even for casual information, without previously glancing at his physiognomy and appearance. While he looked about in order to select the person with whom he would most willingly hold communication, the buzz around saved him in some degree the trouble of interrogatories. The names of Lochiel, Clanronald, Glengarry, and other distinguished Highland Chiefs, among whom Vich Ian Vohr was repeatedly mentioned, were as familiar in men's mouths as household words; and from the alarm generally expressed, he easily conceived that their descent into the Lowlands, at the head of their armed tribes, had either already taken place or was instantly apprehended.

Ere Waverley could ask particulars, a strong, large-boned, hard-featured woman, about forty, dressed as if her clothes had been flung on with a pitchfork, her cheeks flushed with a scarlet red where they were not smutted with soot and lamp-black, jostled through the crowd, and, brandishing high a child of two years old, which she danced in her arms without regard to its screams of terror, sang forth with all her might,—

*Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling,
Charlie is my darling,
The young Chevalier!*

'D' ye hear what's come ower ye now,' continued the virago, 'ye whingeing Whig carles? D' ye hear wha's coming to cow yer cracks?

*Little wot ye wha's coming,
Little wot ye wha's coming,
A' the wild Macraus are coming.'*

The Vulcan of Cairnvreckan, who acknowledged his Venus in this exulting Bacchante, regarded her with a grim and ire-foreboding countenance, while some of the senators of the village hastened to interpose. 'Whisht, gudewife; is this a time or is this a day to be singing your ranting fule sangs in?—a time when the wine of wrath is poured out without mixture in the cup of indignation, and a day when the land should give testimony against popery, and prelacy, and quakerism, and independency, and supremacy, and erastianism, and antinomianism, and a' the errors of the church?'

'And that's a' your Whiggery,' reechoed the Jacobite heroine; 'that's a' your Whiggery, and your presbytery, ye cut-lugged, graning carles! What! d' ye think the lads wi' the kilts will care for yer synods and yer presbyteries, and yer buttock-mail, and yer stool o' repentance? Vengeance on the black face o't! mony an honest woman's been set upon it than streaks doon beside ony Whig in the country. I mysel—'

Here John Mucklewrath, who dreaded her entering upon a detail of personal experience, interposed his matrimonial authority. 'Gae hame, and be d—(that I should say sae), and put on the sowens for supper.'

'And you, ye doil'd dotard,' replied his gentle helpmate, her wrath, which had hitherto wandered abroad over the whole assembly, being at once and violently impelled into its natural channel, 'YE stand there hammering dog-heads for fules that will never snap them at a Highlandman, instead of earning bread for your family and shoeing this winsome young gentleman's horse that's just come frae the north! I'se warrant him nane of your whingeing King George folk, but a gallant Gordon, at the least o' him.'

The eyes of the assembly were now turned upon Waverley, who took the opportunity to beg the smith to shoe his guide's horse with all speed, as he wished to proceed on his journey; for he had heard enough to make him sensible that there would be danger in delaying long in this place. The smith's eyes rested on him with a look of displeasure and suspicion, not lessened by the eagerness with which his wife enforced Waverley's mandate. 'D' ye hear what the weel-favoured young gentleman says, ye drunken ne'er-do-good?'

'And what may your name be, sir?' quoth Mucklewrath.

'It is of no consequence to you, my friend, provided I pay your labour.'

'But it may be of consequence to the state, sir,' replied an old farmer, smelling strongly of whisky and peat-smoke; 'and I doubt we maun delay your journey till you have seen the Laird.'

'You certainly,' said Waverley, haughtily, 'will find it both difficult and dangerous to detain me, unless you can produce some proper authority.'

There was a pause and a whisper among the crowd—'Secretary Murray'—'Lord Lewis Gordon'—'Maybe the Chevalier himsell!' Such were the surmises that passed hurriedly among them, and there was obviously an increased disposition to resist Waverley's departure. He attempted to argue mildly with them, but his voluntary ally, Mrs. Mucklewrath, broke in upon and drowned his expostulations, taking his part with an abusive violence which was all set down to Edward's account by those on whom it was bestowed. 'YE'LL stop ony gentleman that's the Prince's freend?' for she too, though with other feelings, had adopted the general opinion respecting Waverley. 'I daur ye to touch him,' spreading abroad her long and muscular fingers, garnished with claws which a vulture might have envied. 'I'll set my ten commandments in the face o' the first loon that lays a finger on him.'

'Gae hame, gudewife,' quoth the farmer aforesaid; 'it wad better set you to be nursing the gudeman's bairns than to be deaving us here.'

'HIS bairns?' retorted the Amazon, regarding her husband with a grin of ineffable contempt—'HIS bairns!

*O gin ye were dead, gudeman,
And a green turf on your head, gudeman!
Then I wad ware my widowhood
Upon a ranting Highlandman'*

This canticle, which excited a suppressed titter among the younger part of the audience, totally overcame the patience of the taunted man of the anvil. 'Deil be in me but I'll put this hot gad down her throat!' cried he in an ecstasy of wrath, snatching a bar from the forge; and he might have executed his threat, had he not been withheld by a part of the mob, while the rest endeavoured to force the termagant out of his presence.

Waverley meditated a retreat in the confusion, but his horse was nowhere to be seen. At length he observed at some distance his faithful attendant, Ebenezer, who, as soon as he had perceived the turn matters were likely to take, had withdrawn both horses from the press, and, mounted on the one and holding the other, answered the loud and repeated calls of Waverley for his horse. 'Na, na! if ye are nae friend to kirk and the king, and are detained as siccan a person, ye maun answer to honest men of the country for breach of contract; and I maun keep the naig and the walse for damage and expense, in respect my horse and mysel will lose to-morrow's day's wark, besides the afternoon preaching.'

Edward, out of patience, hemmed in and hustled by the rabble on every side, and every moment expecting personal violence, resolved to try measures of intimidation, and at length drew a pocket-pistol, threatening, on the one hand, to shoot whomsoever dared to stop him, and, on the other, menacing Ebenezer with a similar doom if he stirred a foot with the horses. The sapient Partridge says that one man with a pistol is equal to a hundred unarmed, because, though he can shoot but one of the multitude, yet no one knows but that he himself may be that luckless individual. The levy en masse of Cairnvreckan would therefore probably have given way, nor would Ebenezer, whose natural paleness had waxed three shades more cadaverous, have ventured to dispute a mandate so enforced, had not the Vulcan of the village, eager to discharge upon some more worthy object the fury which his helpmate had provoked, and not ill satisfied to find such an object in Waverley, rushed at him with the red-hot bar of iron with such determination as made the discharge of his pistol an act of self-defence. The unfortunate man fell; and while Edward, thrilled with a natural horror at the incident, neither had presence of mind to unsheathe his sword nor to draw his remaining pistol, the populace threw themselves upon him, disarmed him, and were about to use him with great violence, when the appearance of a venerable clergyman, the pastor of the parish, put a curb on their fury.

This worthy man (none of the Goukthrapples or Rentowels) maintained his character with the common people, although he preached the practical fruits of Christian faith as well as its abstract tenets, and was respected by the higher orders, notwithstanding he declined soothing their speculative errors by converting the pulpit of the gospel into a school of heathen morality. Perhaps it is owing to this mixture of faith and practice in his doctrine that, although his memory has formed a sort of era in the annals of Cairnvreckan, so that the parishioners, to denote what befell Sixty Years Since, still say it happened 'in good Mr. Morton's time,' I have never been able to discover which he belonged to, the evangelical or the moderate party in the kirk. Nor do I hold the circumstance of much moment, since, in my own remembrance, the one was headed by an Erskine, the other by a Robertson.

[Footnote: The Reverend John Erskine, D. D, an eminent Scottish divine and a most excellent man, headed the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland at the time when the celebrated Doctor Robertson, the historian, was the leader of the Moderate party. These two distinguished persons were colleagues in the Old Grey Friars' Church, Edinburgh; and, however much they differed in church politics, preserved the most perfect harmony as private friends and as clergymen serving the same cure]

Mr. Morton had been alarmed by the discharge of the pistol and the increasing hubbub around the smithy. His first attention, after he had directed the bystanders to detain Waverley, but to abstain from injuring him, was turned to the body of Mucklewrath, over which his wife, in a revulsion of feeling, was weeping, howling, and tearing her elf-locks in a state little short of distraction. On raising up the smith, the first discovery was that he was alive; and the next that he was likely to live

as long as if he had never heard the report of a pistol in his life. He had made a narrow escape, however; the bullet had grazed his head and stunned him for a moment or two, which trance terror and confusion of spirit had prolonged somewhat longer. He now arose to demand vengeance on the person of Waverley, and with difficulty acquiesced in the proposal of Mr. Morton that he should be carried before the Laird, as a justice of peace, and placed at his disposal. The rest of the assistants unanimously agreed to the measure recommended; even Mrs. Mucklewraith, who had begun to recover from her hysterics, whimpered forth, 'She wadna say naething against what the minister proposed; he was e'en ower gude for his trade, and she hoped to see him wi' a dainty decent bishop's gown on his back; a comelier sight than your Geneva cloaks and bands, I wis.'

All controversy being thus laid aside, Waverley, escorted by the whole inhabitants of the village who were not bed-ridden, was conducted to the house of Cairnvreckan, which was about half a mile distant.

CHAPTER II

AN EXAMINATION

Major Melville of Cairnvreckan, an elderly gentleman, who had spent his youth in the military service, received Mr. Morton with great kindness, and our hero with civility, which the equivocal circumstances wherein Edward was placed rendered constrained and distant.

The nature of the smith's hurt was inquired into, and, as the actual injury was likely to prove trifling, and the circumstances in which it was received rendered the infliction on Edward's part a natural act of self-defence, the Major conceived he might dismiss that matter on Waverley's depositing in his hands a small sum for the benefit of the wounded person.

'I could wish, sir,' continued the Major, 'that my duty terminated here; but it is necessary that we should have some further inquiry into the cause of your journey through the country at this unfortunate and distracted time.'

Mr. Ebenezer Cruickshanks now stood forth, and communicated to the magistrate all he knew or suspected from the reserve of Waverley and the evasions of Callum Beg. The horse upon which Edward rode, he said, he knew to belong to Vich Ian Vohr, though he dared not tax Edward's former attendant with the fact, lest he should have his house and stables burnt over his head some night by that godless gang, the Mac-Ivors. He concluded by exaggerating his own services to kirk and state, as having been the means, under God (as he modestly qualified the assertion), of attaching this suspicious and formidable delinquent. He intimated hopes of future reward, and of instant reimbursement for loss of time, and even of character, by travelling on the state business on the fast-day.

To this Major Melville answered, with great composure, that so far from claiming any merit in this affair, Mr. Cruickshanks ought to deprecate the imposition of a very heavy fine for neglecting to lodge, in terms of the recent proclamation, an account with the nearest magistrate of any stranger who came to his inn; that, as Mr. Cruickshanks boasted so much of religion and loyalty, he should not impute this conduct to disaffection, but only suppose that his zeal for kirk and state had been lulled asleep by the opportunity of charging a stranger with double horse-hire; that, however, feeling himself incompetent to decide singly upon the conduct of a person of such importance, he should reserve it for consideration of the next quarter-sessions. Now our history for the present saith no more of him of the Candlestick, who wended dolorous and malcontent back to his own dwelling.

Major Melville then commanded the villagers to return to their homes, excepting two, who officiated as constables, and whom he directed to wait below. The apartment was thus cleared of every person but Mr. Morton, whom the Major invited to remain; a sort of factor, who acted as clerk; and Waverley himself. There ensued a painful and embarrassed pause, till Major Melville, looking upon Waverley with much compassion, and often consulting a paper or memorandum which he held in his hand, requested to know his name.

'Edward Waverley.'

'I thought so; late of the—dragoons, and nephew of Sir Everard Waverley of Waverley-Honour?'

'The same.'

'Young gentleman, I am extremely sorry that this painful duty has fallen to my lot.'

'Duty, Major Melville, renders apologies superfluous.'

'True, sir; permit me, therefore, to ask you how your time has been disposed of since you obtained leave of absence from your regiment, several weeks ago, until the present moment?'

'My reply,' said Waverley, 'to so general a question must be guided by the nature of the charge which renders it necessary. I request to know what that charge is, and upon what authority I am forcibly detained to reply to it?'

'The charge, Mr. Waverley, I grieve to say, is of a very high nature, and affects your character both as a soldier and a subject. In the former capacity you are charged with spreading mutiny and rebellion among the men you commanded, and setting them the example of desertion, by prolonging your own absence from the regiment, contrary to the express orders of your commanding officer. The civil crime of which you stand accused is that of high treason and levying war against the king, the highest delinquency of which a subject can be guilty.'

'And by what authority am I detained to reply to such heinous calumnies?'

'By one which you must not dispute, nor I disobey.'

He handed to Waverley a warrant from the Supreme Criminal Court of Scotland, in full form, for apprehending and securing the person of Edward Waverley, Esq., suspected of treasonable practices and other high crimes and misdemeanours.

The astonishment which Waverley expressed at this communication was imputed by Major Melville to conscious guilt, while Mr. Morton was rather disposed to construe it into the surprise of innocence unjustly suspected. There was something true in both conjectures; for although Edward's mind acquitted him of the crime with which he was charged, yet a hasty review of his own conduct convinced him he might have great difficulty in establishing his innocence to the satisfaction of others.

'It is a very painful part of this painful business,' said Major Melville, after a pause, 'that, under so grave a charge, I must necessarily request to see such papers as you have on your person.'

'You shall, sir, without reserve,' said Edward, throwing his pocket-book and memorandums upon the table; 'there is but one with which I could wish you would dispense.'

'I am afraid, Mr. Waverley, I can indulge you with no reservation,'

'You shall see it then, sir; and as it can be of no service, I beg it may be returned.'

He took from his bosom the lines he had that morning received, and presented them with the envelope. The Major perused them in silence, and directed his clerk to make a copy of them. He then wrapped the copy in the envelope, and placing it on the table before him, returned the original to Waverley, with an air of melancholy gravity.

After indulging the prisoner, for such our hero must now be considered, with what he thought a reasonable time for reflection, Major Melville resumed his examination, premising that, as Mr. Waverley seemed to object to general questions, his interrogatories should be as specific as his information permitted. He then proceeded in his investigation, dictating, as he went on, the import of the questions and answers to the amanuensis, by whom it was written down.

'Did Mr. Waverley know one Humphry Houghton, a non-commissioned officer in Gardiner's dragoons?'

'Certainly; he was sergeant of my troop, and son of a tenant of my uncle.'

'Exactly—and had a considerable share of your confidence, and an influence among his comrades?'

'I had never occasion to repose confidence in a person of his description,' answered Waverley. 'I favoured Sergeant Houghton as a clever, active young fellow, and I believe his fellow-soldiers respected him accordingly.'

'But you used through this man,' answered Major Melville, 'to communicate with such of your troop as were recruited upon Waverley-Honour?'

'Certainly; the poor fellows, finding themselves in a regiment chiefly composed of Scotch or Irish, looked up to me in any of their little distresses, and naturally made their countryman and sergeant their spokesman on such occasions.'

'Sergeant Houghton's influence,' continued the Major, 'extended, then, particularly over those soldiers who followed you to the regiment from your uncle's estate?'

'Surely; but what is that to the present purpose?'

'To that I am just coming, and I beseech your candid reply. Have you, since leaving the regiment, held any correspondence, direct or indirect, with this Sergeant Houghton?'

'I!—I hold correspondence with a man of his rank and situation! How, or for what purpose?'

'That you are to explain. But did you not, for example, send to him for some books?'

'You remind me of a trifling commission,' said Waverley, 'which I gave Sergeant Houghton, because my servant could not read. I do recollect I bade him, by letter, select some books, of which I sent him a list, and send them to me at Tully-Veolan.'

'And of what description were those books?'

'They related almost entirely to elegant literature; they were designed for a lady's perusal.'

'Were there not, Mr. Waverley, treasonable tracts and pamphlets among them?'

'There were some political treatises, into which I hardly looked. They had been sent to me by the officiousness of a kind friend, whose heart is more to be esteemed than his prudence or political sagacity; they seemed to be dull compositions.'

'That friend,' continued the persevering inquirer, 'was a Mr. Pembroke, a nonjuring clergyman, the author of two treasonable works, of which the manuscripts were found among your baggage?'

'But of which, I give you my honour as a gentleman,' replied Waverley, 'I never read six pages.'

'I am not your judge, Mr. Waverley; your examination will be transmitted elsewhere. And now to proceed. Do you know a person that passes by the name of Wily Will, or Will Ruthven?'

'I never heard of such a name till this moment.'

'Did you never through such a person, or any other person, communicate with Sergeant Humphry Houghton, instigating him to desert, with as many of his comrades as he could seduce to join him, and unite with the Highlanders and other rebels now in arms under the command of the Young Pretender?'

'I assure you I am not only entirely guiltless of the plot you have laid to my charge, but I detest it from the very bottom of my soul, nor would I be guilty of such treachery to gain a throne, either for myself or any other man alive.'

'Yet when I consider this envelope in the handwriting of one of those misguided gentlemen who are now in arms against their country, and the verses which it enclosed, I cannot but find some analogy between the enterprise I have mentioned and the exploit of Wogan, which the writer seems to expect you should imitate.'

Waverley was struck with the coincidence, but denied that the wishes or expectations of the letter-writer were to be regarded as proofs of a charge otherwise chimerical.

'But, if I am rightly informed, your time was spent, during your absence from the regiment, between the house of this Highland Chieftain and that of Mr. Bradwardine of Bradwardine, also in arms for this unfortunate cause?'

'I do not mean to disguise it; but I do deny, most resolutely, being privy to any of their designs against the government.'

'You do not, however, I presume, intend to deny that you attended your host Glennaquoich to a rendezvous, where, under a pretence of a general hunting match, most of the accomplices of his treason were assembled to concert measures for taking arms?'

'I acknowledge having been at such a meeting,' said Waverley; 'but I neither heard nor saw anything which could give it the character you affix to it.'

'From thence you proceeded,' continued the magistrate, 'with Glennaquoich and a part of his clan to join the army of the Young Pretender, and returned, after having paid your homage to him, to discipline and arm the remainder, and unite them to his bands on their way southward?'

'I never went with Glennaquoich on such an errand. I never so much as heard that the person whom you mention was in the country.'

He then detailed the history of his misfortune at the hunting match, and added, that on his return he found himself suddenly deprived of his commission, and did not deny that he then, for the first time, observed symptoms which indicated a disposition in the Highlanders to take arms; but added that, having no inclination to join their cause, and no longer any reason for remaining in Scotland, he was now on his return to his native country, to which he had been summoned by those who had a right to direct his motions, as Major Melville would perceive from the letters on the table.

Major Melville accordingly perused the letters of Richard Waverley, of Sir Everard, and of Aunt Rachel; but the inferences he drew from them were different from what Waverley expected. They held the language of discontent with government, threw out no obscure hints of revenge, and that of poor Aunt Rachel, which plainly asserted the justice of the Stuart cause, was held to contain the open avowal of what the others only ventured to insinuate.

'Permit me another question, Mr. Waverley,' said Major Melville. 'Did you not receive repeated letters from your commanding officer, warning you and commanding you to return to your post, and acquainting you with the use made of your name to spread discontent among your soldiers?'

'I never did, Major Melville. One letter, indeed, I received from him, containing a civil intimation of his wish that I would employ my leave of absence otherwise than in constant residence at Bradwardine, as to which, I own, I thought he was not called on to interfere; and, finally, I received, on the same day on which I observed myself superseded in the "Gazette," a second letter from Colonel Gardiner, commanding me to join the regiment, an order which, owing to my absence, already mentioned and accounted for, I received too late to be obeyed. If there were any intermediate letters, and certainly from the Colonel's high character I think it probable that there were, they have never reached me.'

'I have omitted, Mr. Waverley,' continued Major Melville, 'to inquire after a matter of less consequence, but which has nevertheless been publicly talked of to your disadvantage. It is said that a treasonable toast having been proposed in your hearing and presence, you, holding his Majesty's commission, suffered the task of resenting it to devolve upon another gentleman of the company. This, sir, cannot be charged against you in a court of justice; but if, as I am informed, the officers of your regiment requested an explanation of such a rumour, as a gentleman and soldier I cannot but be surprised that you did not afford it to them.'

This was too much. Beset and pressed on every hand by accusations, in which gross falsehoods were blended with such circumstances of truth as could not fail to procure them credit,—alone, unfriended, and in a strange land, Waverley almost gave up his life and honour for lost, and, leaning his head upon his hand, resolutely refused to answer any further questions, since the fair and candid statement he had already made had only served to furnish arms against him.

Without expressing either surprise or displeasure at the change in Waverley's manner, Major Melville proceeded composedly to put several other queries to him.

'What does it avail me to answer you?' said Edward sullenly. 'You appear convinced of my guilt, and wrest every reply I have made to support your own preconceived opinion. Enjoy your supposed triumph, then, and torment me no further. If I am capable of the cowardice and treachery your charge burdens me

with, I am not worthy to be believed in any reply I can make to you. If I am not deserving of your suspicion—and God and my own conscience bear evidence with me that it is so—then I do not see why I should, by my candour, lend my accusers arms against my innocence. There is no reason I should answer a word more, and I am determined to abide by this resolution.'

And again he resumed his posture of sullen and determined silence.

'Allow me,' said the magistrate, 'to remind you of one reason that may suggest the propriety of a candid and open confession. The inexperience of youth, Mr. Waverley, lays it open to the plans of the more designing and artful; and one of your friends at least—I mean Mac-Ivor of Glen-na-quich—ranks high in the latter class, as, from your apparent ingenuousness, youth, and unacquaintance with the manners of the Highlands, I should be disposed to place you among the former. In such a case, a false step or error like yours, which I shall be happy to consider as involuntary, may be atoned for, and I would willingly act as intercessor. But, as you must necessarily be acquainted with the strength of the individuals in this country who have assumed arms, with their means and with their plans, I must expect you will merit this mediation on my part by a frank and candid avowal of all that has come to your knowledge upon these heads; in which case, I think I can venture to promise that a very short personal restraint will be the only ill consequence that can arise from your accession to these unhappy intrigues.'

Waverley listened with great composure until the end of this exhortation, when, springing from his seat with an energy he had not yet displayed, he replied, 'Major Melville, since that is your name, I have hitherto answered your questions with candour, or declined them with temper, because their import concerned myself alone; but, as you presume to esteem me mean enough to commence informer against others, who received me, whatever may be their public misconduct, as a guest and friend, I declare to you that I consider your questions as an insult infinitely more offensive than your calumnious suspicions; and that, since my hard fortune permits me no other mode of resenting them than by verbal defiance, you should sooner have my heart out of my bosom than a single syllable of information on subjects which I could only become acquainted with in the full confidence of unsuspecting hospitality.'

Mr. Morton and the Major looked at each other; and the former, who, in the course of the examination, had been repeatedly troubled with a sorry rheum, had recourse to his snuff-box and his handkerchief.

'Mr. Waverley,' said the Major, 'my present situation prohibits me alike from giving or receiving offence, and I will not protract a discussion which approaches to either. I am afraid I must sign a warrant for detaining you in custody, but this house shall for the present be your prison. I fear I cannot persuade you to accept a share of our supper?—(Edward shook his head)—but I will order refreshments in your apartment.'

Our hero bowed and withdrew, under guard of the officers of justice, to a small but handsome room, where, declining all offers of food or wine, he flung himself on the bed, and, stupified by the harassing events and mental fatigue of this miserable day, he sunk into a deep and heavy slumber. This was more than he himself could have expected; but it is mentioned of the North-American Indians, when at the stake of torture, that on the least intermission of agony they will sleep until the fire is applied to awaken them.

CHAPTER III

A CONFERENCE AND THE CONSEQUENCE

Major Melville had detained Mr. Morton during his examination of Waverley, both because he thought he might derive assistance from his practical good sense and approved loyalty, and also because it was agreeable to have a witness of unimpeached candour and veracity to proceedings which touched the honour and safety of a young Englishman of high rank and family, and the expectant heir of a large fortune. Every step he knew would be rigorously canvassed, and it was his business to place the justice and integrity of his own conduct beyond the limits of question.

When Waverley retired, the laird and clergyman of Cairnvreckan sat down in silence to their evening meal. While the servants were in attendance neither chose to say anything on the circumstances which occupied their minds, and neither felt it easy to speak upon any other. The youth and apparent frankness of Waverley stood in strong contrast to the shades of suspicion which darkened around him, and he had a sort of naivete and openness of demeanour that seemed to belong to one unhackneyed in the ways of intrigue, and which pleaded highly in his favour.

Each mused over the particulars of the examination, and each viewed it through the medium of his own feelings. Both were men of ready and acute talent, and both were equally competent to combine various parts of evidence, and to deduce from them the necessary conclusions. But the wide difference of their habits and education often occasioned a great discrepancy in their respective deductions from admitted premises.

Major Melville had been versed in camps and cities; he was vigilant by profession and cautious from experience, had met with much evil in the world, and therefore, though himself an upright magistrate and an honourable man, his opinions of others were always strict, and sometimes unjustly severe. Mr. Morton, on the contrary, had passed from the literary pursuits of a college, where he was beloved by his companions and respected by his teachers, to the ease and simplicity of his present charge, where his opportunities of witnessing evil were few, and never dwelt upon but in order to encourage repentance and amendment; and where the love and respect of his parishioners repaid his affectionate zeal in their behalf by endeavouring to disguise from him what they knew would give him the most acute pain, namely, their own occasional transgressions of the duties which it was the business of his life to recommend. Thus it was a common saying in the neighbourhood (though both were popular characters), that the laird knew only the ill in the parish and the minister only the good.

A love of letters, though kept in subordination to his clerical studies and duties, also distinguished the pastor of Cairnvreckan, and had tinged his mind in earlier days with a slight feeling of romance, which no after incidents of real life had entirely dissipated. The early loss of an amiable young woman whom he had married for love, and who was quickly followed to the grave by an only child, had also served, even after the lapse of many years, to soften a disposition naturally mild and contemplative. His feelings on the present occasion were therefore likely to differ from those of the severe disciplinarian, strict magistrate, and distrustful man of the world.

When the servants had withdrawn, the silence of both parties continued, until Major Melville, filling his glass and pushing the bottle to Mr. Morton, commenced—

'A distressing affair this, Mr. Morton. I fear this youngster has brought himself within the compass of a halter.'

'God forbid!' answered the clergyman.

'Marry, and amen,' said the temporal magistrate; 'but I think even your merciful logic will hardly deny the conclusion.'

'Surely, Major,' answered the clergyman, 'I should hope it might be averted, for aught we have heard tonight?'

'Indeed!' replied Melville. 'But, my good parson, you are one of those who would communicate to every criminal the benefit of clergy.'

'Unquestionably I would. Mercy and long-suffering are the grounds of the doctrine I am called to teach.'

'True, religiously speaking; but mercy to a criminal may be gross injustice to the community. I don't speak of this young fellow in particular, who I heartily wish may be able to clear himself, for I like both his modesty and his spirit. But I fear he has rushed upon his fate.'

'And why? Hundreds of misguided gentlemen are now in arms against the government, many, doubtless, upon principles which education and early prejudice have gilded with the names of patriotism and heroism; Justice, when she selects her victims from such a multitude (for surely all will not be destroyed), must

regard the moral motive. He whom ambition or hope of personal advantage has led to disturb the peace of a well-ordered government, let him fall a victim to the laws; but surely youth, misled by the wild visions of chivalry and imaginary loyalty, may plead for pardon.'

'If visionary chivalry and imaginary loyalty come within the predicament of high treason,' replied the magistrate, 'I know no court in Christendom, my dear Mr. Morton, where they can sue out their Habeas Corpus.'

'But I cannot see that this youth's guilt is at all established to my satisfaction,' said the clergyman.

'Because your good-nature blinds your good sense,' replied Major Melville. 'Observe now: This young man, descended of a family of hereditary Jacobites, his uncle the leader of the Tory interest in the county of —, his father a disobliged and discontented courtier, his tutor a nonjuror and the author of two treasonable volumes—this youth, I say, enters into Gardiner's dragoons, bringing with him a body of young fellows from his uncle's estate, who have not stickled at avowing in their way the High-Church principles they learned at Waverley-Honour, in their disputes with their comrades. To these young men Waverley is unusually attentive; they are supplied with money beyond a soldier's wants and inconsistent with his discipline; and are under the management of a favourite sergeant, through whom they hold an unusually close communication with their captain, and affect to consider themselves as independent of the other officers, and superior to their comrades.'

'All this, my dear Major, is the natural consequence of their attachment to their young landlord, and of their finding themselves in a regiment levied chiefly in the north of Ireland and the west of Scotland, and of course among comrades disposed to quarrel with them, both as Englishmen and as members of the Church of England.'

'Well said, parson!' replied the magistrate. 'I would some of your synod heard you. But let me go on. This young man obtains leave of absence, goes to Tully-Veolan—the principles of the Baron of Bradwardine are pretty well known, not to mention that this lad's uncle brought him off in the year fifteen; he engages there in a brawl, in which he is said to have disgraced the commission he bore; Colonel Gardiner writes to him, first mildly, then more sharply—I think you will not doubt his having done so, since he says so; the mess invite him to explain the quarrel in which he is said to have been involved; he neither replies to his commander nor his comrades. In the meanwhile his soldiers become mutinous and disorderly, and at length, when the rumour of this unhappy rebellion becomes general, his favourite Sergeant Houghton and another fellow are detected in correspondence with a French emissary, accredited, as he says, by Captain Waverley, who urges him, according to the men's confession, to desert with the troop and join their captain, who was with Prince Charles. In the meanwhile this trusty captain is, by his own admission, residing at Glennaquoich with the most active, subtle, and desperate Jacobite in Scotland; he goes with him at least as far as their famous hunting rendezvous, and I fear a little farther. Meanwhile two other summonses are sent him; one warning him of the disturbances in his troop, another peremptorily ordering him to repair to the regiment, which, indeed, common sense might have dictated, when he observed rebellion thickening all round him. He returns an absolute refusal, and throws up his commission.'

'He had been already deprived of it,' said Mr. Morton.

'But he regrets,' replied Melville, 'that the measure had anticipated his resignation. His baggage is seized at his quarters and at Tully-Veolan, and is found to contain a stock of pestilent Jacobitical pamphlets, enough to poison a whole country, besides the unprinted lucubrations of his worthy friend and tutor Mr. Pembroke.'

'He says he never read them,' answered the minister.

'In an ordinary case I should believe him,' replied the magistrate, 'for they are as stupid and pedantic in composition as mischievous in their tenets. But can you suppose anything but value for the principles they maintain would induce a young man of his age to lug such trash about with him? Then, when news arrive of the approach of the rebels, he sets out in a sort of disguise, refusing to tell his name; and, if yon old fanatic tell truth, attended by a very suspicious character, and mounted on a horse known to have belonged to Glennaquoich, and bearing on his person letters from his family expressing high rancour against the house of Brunswick, and a copy of verses in praise of one Wogan, who abjured the service of the Parliament to join the Highland insurgents, when in arms to restore the house of Stuart, with a body of English cavalry—the very counterpart of his own plot—and summed up with a "Go thou and do likewise" from that loyal subject, and most safe and peaceable character, Fergus Mac-Ivor of Glennaquoich, Vich Ian Vohr, and so forth. And, lastly,' continued Major Melville, 'warming in the detail of his arguments, where do we find this second edition of Cavalier Wogan? Why, truly, in the very track most proper for execution of his design, and pistolling the first of the king's subjects who ventures to question his intentions.'

Mr. Morton prudently abstained from argument, which he perceived would only harden the magistrate in his opinion, and merely asked how he intended to dispose of the prisoner?

'It is a question of some difficulty, considering the state of the country,' said Major Melville.

'Could you not detain him (being such a gentleman-like young man) here in your own house, out of harm's way, till this storm blow over?'

'My good friend,' said Major Melville, 'neither your house nor mine will be long out of harm's way, even were it legal to confine him here. I have just learned that the commander-in-chief, who marched into the Highlands to seek out and disperse the insurgents, has declined giving them battle at Coryarrick, and marched on northward with all the disposable force of government to Inverness, John-o'-Groat's House, or the devil, for what I know, leaving the road to the Low Country open and undefended to the Highland army.'

'Good God!' said the clergyman. 'Is the man a coward, a traitor, or an idiot?'

'None of the three, I believe,' answered Melville. 'Sir John has the commonplace courage of a common soldier, is honest enough, does what he is commanded, and understands what is told him, but is as fit to act for himself in circumstances of importance as I, my dear parson, to occupy your pulpit.'

This important public intelligence naturally diverted the discourse from Waverley for some time; at length, however, the subject was resumed.

'I believe,' said Major Melville, 'that I must give this young man in charge to some of the detached parties of armed volunteers who were lately sent out to overawe the disaffected districts. They are now recalled towards Stirling, and a small body comes this way to-morrow or next day, commanded by the westland man—what's his name? You saw him, and said he was the very model of one of Cromwell's military saints.'

'Gilfillan, the Cameronian,' answered Mr. Morton. 'I wish the young gentleman may be safe with him. Strange things are done in the heat and hurry of minds in so agitating a crisis, and I fear Gilfillan is of a sect which has suffered persecution without learning mercy.'

'He has only to lodge Mr. Waverley in Stirling Castle,' said the Major; 'I will give strict injunctions to treat him well. I really cannot devise any better mode for securing him, and I fancy you would hardly advise me to encounter the responsibility of setting him at liberty.'

'But you will have no objection to my seeing him tomorrow in private?' said the minister.

'None, certainly; your loyalty and character are my warrant. But with what view do you make the request?'

'Simply,' replied Mr. Morton, 'to make the experiment whether he may not be brought to communicate to me some circumstances which may hereafter be useful to alleviate, if not to exculpate, his conduct.'

The friends now parted and retired to rest, each filled with the most anxious reflections on the state of the country.

CHAPTER IV

A CONFIDANT

Waverley awoke in the morning from troubled dreams and unrefreshing slumbers to a full consciousness of the horrors of his situation. How it might terminate he knew not. He might be delivered up to military law, which, in the midst of civil war, was not likely to be scrupulous in the choice of its victims or the quality of the evidence. Nor did he feel much more comfortable at the thoughts of a trial before a Scottish court of justice, where he knew the laws and forms differed in many respects from those of England, and had been taught to believe, however erroneously, that the liberty and rights of the subject were less carefully protected. A sentiment of bitterness rose in his mind against the government, which he considered as the cause of his embarrassment and peril, and he cursed internally his scrupulous rejection of Mac-Ivor's invitation to accompany him to the field.

'Why did not I,' he said to himself, 'like other men of honour, take the earliest opportunity to welcome to Britain the descendant of her ancient kings and lineal heir of her throne? Why did not I—

Unthread the rude eye of rebellion,

And welcome home again discarded faith,

Seek out Prince Charles, and fall before his feet?

All that has been recorded of excellence and worth in the house of Waverley has been founded upon their loyal faith to the house of Stuart. From the interpretation which this Scotch magistrate has put upon the letters of my uncle and father, it is plain that I ought to have understood them as marshalling me to the course of my ancestors; and it has been my gross dulness, joined to the obscurity of expression which they adopted for the sake of security, that has confounded my judgment. Had I yielded to the first generous impulse of indignation when I learned that my honour was practised upon, how different had been my present situation! I had then been free and in arms fighting, like my forefathers, for love, for loyalty, and for fame. And now I am here, netted and in the toils, at the disposal of a suspicious, stern, and cold-hearted man, perhaps to be turned over to the solitude of a dungeon or the infamy of a public execution. O, Fergus! how true has your prophecy proved; and how speedy, how very speedy, has been its accomplishment!

While Edward was ruminating on these painful subjects of contemplation, and very naturally, though not quite so justly, bestowing upon the reigning dynasty that blame which was due to chance, or, in part at least, to his own unreflecting conduct, Mr. Morton availed himself of Major Melville's permission to pay him an early visit.

Waverley's first impulse was to intimate a desire that he might not be disturbed with questions or conversation; but he suppressed it upon observing the benevolent and reverend appearance of the clergyman who had rescued him from the immediate violence of the villagers.

'I believe, sir,' said the unfortunate young man, 'that in any other circumstances I should have had as much gratitude to express to you as the safety of my life may be worth; but such is the present tumult of my mind, and such is my anticipation of what I am yet likely to endure, that I can hardly offer you thanks for your interposition.'

Mr. Morton replied, that, far from making any claim upon his good opinion, his only wish and the sole purpose of his visit was to find out the means of deserving it. 'My excellent friend, Major Melville,' he continued, 'has feelings and duties as a soldier and public functionary by which I am not fettered; nor can I always coincide in opinions which he forms, perhaps with too little allowance for the imperfections of human nature.' He paused and then proceeded: 'I do not intrude myself on your confidence, Mr. Waverley, for the purpose of learning any circumstances the knowledge of which can be prejudicial either to yourself or to others; but I own my earnest wish is that you would intrust me with any particulars which could lead to your exculpation. I can solemnly assure you they will be deposited with a faithful and, to the extent of his limited powers, a zealous agent.'

'You are, sir, I presume, a Presbyterian clergyman?' Mr. Morton bowed. 'Were I to be guided by the prepossessions of education, I might distrust your friendly professions in my case; but I have observed that similar prejudices are nourished in this country against your professional brethren of the Episcopal persuasion, and I am willing to believe them equally unfounded in both cases.'

'Evil to him that thinks otherwise,' said Mr. Morton; 'or who holds church government and ceremonies as the exclusive gage of Christian faith or moral virtue.'

'But,' continued Waverley, 'I cannot perceive why I should trouble you with a detail of particulars, out of which, after revolving them as carefully as possible in my recollection, I find myself unable to explain much of what is charged against me. I know, indeed, that I am innocent, but I hardly see how I can hope to prove myself so.'

'It is for that very reason, Mr. Waverley,' said the clergyman, 'that I venture to solicit your confidence. My knowledge of individuals in this country is pretty general, and can upon occasion be extended. Your situation will, I fear, preclude your taking those active steps for recovering intelligence or tracing imposture which I would willingly undertake in your behalf; and if you are not benefited by my exertions, at least they cannot be prejudicial to you.'

Waverley, after a few minutes' reflection, was convinced that his reposing confidence in Mr. Morton, so far as he himself was concerned, could hurt neither Mr. Bradwardine nor Fergus Mac-Ivor, both of whom had openly assumed arms against the government, and that it might possibly, if the professions of his new friend corresponded in sincerity with the earnestness of his expression, be of some service to himself. He therefore ran briefly over most of the events with which the reader is already acquainted, suppressing his attachment to Flora, and indeed neither mentioning her nor Rose Bradwardine in the course of his narrative.

Mr. Morton seemed particularly struck with the account of Waverley's visit to Donald Bean Lean. 'I am glad,' he said, 'you did not mention this circumstance to the Major. It is capable of great misconstruction on the part of those who do not consider the power of curiosity and the influence of romance as motives of youthful conduct. When I was a young man like you, Mr. Waverley, any such hair-brained expedition (I beg your pardon for the expression) would have had inexpressible charms for me. But there are men in the world who will not believe that danger and fatigue are often incurred without any very adequate cause, and therefore who are sometimes led to assign motives of action entirely foreign to the truth. This man Bean Lean is renowned through the country as a sort of Robin Hood, and the stories which are told of his address and enterprise are the common tales of the winter fireside. He certainly possesses talents beyond the rude sphere in which he moves; and, being neither destitute of ambition nor encumbered with scruples, he will probably attempt, by every means, to distinguish himself during the period of these unhappy commotions.' Mr. Morton then made a careful memorandum of the various particulars of Waverley's interview with Donald Bean Lean and the other circumstances which he had communicated.

The interest which this good man seemed to take in his misfortunes, above all, the full confidence he appeared to repose in his innocence, had the natural effect of softening Edward's heart, whom the coldness of Major Melville had taught to believe that the world was leagued to oppress him. He shook Mr. Morton warmly by the hand, and, assuring him that his kindness and sympathy had relieved his mind of a heavy load, told him that, whatever might be his own fate, he belonged to a family who had both gratitude and the power of displaying it. The earnestness of his thanks called drops to the eyes of the worthy clergyman, who was doubly interested in the cause for which he had volunteered his services, by observing the genuine and undissembled feelings of his young friend.

Edward now inquired if Mr. Morton knew what was likely to be his destination.

'Stirling Castle,' replied his friend; 'and so far I am well pleased for your sake, for the governor is a man of honour and humanity. But I am more doubtful of your treatment upon the road; Major Melville is involuntarily obliged to intrust the custody of your person to another.'

'I am glad of it,' answered Waverley. 'I detest that cold-blooded calculating Scotch magistrate. I hope he and I shall never meet more. He had neither sympathy with my innocence nor with my wretchedness; and the petrifying accuracy with which he attended to every form of civility, while he tortured me by his questions, his suspicions, and his inferences, was as tormenting as the racks of the Inquisition. Do not vindicate him, my dear sir, for that I cannot bear with patience; tell me rather who is to have the charge of so important a state prisoner as I am.'

'I believe a person called Gilfillan, one of the sect who are termed Cameronians.'

'I never heard of them before.'

'They claim,' said the clergyman, 'to represent the more strict and severe Presbyterians, who, in Charles Second's and James Second's days, refused to profit by the Toleration, or Indulgence, as it was called, which was extended to others of that religion. They held conventicles in the open fields, and, being treated with great violence and cruelty by the Scottish government, more than once took arms during those reigns. They take their name from their leader, Richard Cameron.'

'I recollect,' said Waverley; 'but did not the triumph of Presbytery at the Revolution extinguish that sect?'

'By no means,' replied Morton; 'that great event fell yet far short of what they proposed, which was nothing less than the complete establishment of the Presbyterian Church upon the grounds of the old Solemn League and Covenant. Indeed, I believe they scarce knew what they wanted; but being a numerous body of men, and not unacquainted with the use of arms, they kept themselves together as a separate party in the state, and at the time of the Union had nearly formed a most unnatural league with their old enemies the Jacobites to oppose that important national measure. Since that time their numbers have gradually diminished; but a good many are still to be found in the western counties, and several, with a better temper than in 1707, have now taken arms for government. This person, whom they call Gifted Gilfillan, has been long a leader among them, and now heads a small party, which will pass here to-day or to-morrow on their march towards Stirling, under whose escort Major Melville proposes you shall travel. I would willingly speak to Gilfillan in your behalf; but, having deeply imbibed all the prejudices of his sect, and being of the same fierce disposition, he would pay little regard to the remonstrances of an Erastian divine, as he would politely term me. And now, farewell, my young friend; for the present I must not weary out the Major's indulgence, that I may obtain his permission to visit you again in the course of the day.'

CHAPTER V

THINGS MEND A LITTLE

About noon Mr. Morton returned and brought an invitation from Major Melville that Mr. Waverley would honour him with his company to dinner, notwithstanding the unpleasant affair which detained him at Cairnvreckan, from which he should heartily rejoice to see Mr. Waverley completely extricated. The truth was that Mr. Morton's favourable report and opinion had somewhat staggered the preconceptions of the old soldier concerning Edward's supposed accession to the mutiny in the regiment; and in the unfortunate state of the country the mere suspicion of disaffection or an inclination to join the insurgent Jacobites might infer criminality indeed, but certainly not dishonour. Besides, a person whom the Major trusted had reported to him (though, as it proved, inaccurately) a contradiction of the agitating news of the preceding evening. According to this second edition of the intelligence, the Highlanders had withdrawn from the Lowland frontier with the purpose of following the army in their march to Inverness. The Major was at a loss, indeed, to reconcile his information with the well-known abilities of some of the gentlemen in the Highland army, yet it was the course which was likely to be most agreeable to others. He remembered the same policy had detained them in the north in the year 1715, and he anticipated a similar termination to the insurrection as upon that occasion.

This news put him in such good-humour that he readily acquiesced in Mr. Morton's proposal to pay some hospitable attention to his unfortunate guest, and voluntarily added, he hoped the whole affair would prove a youthful escapade, which might be easily atoned by a short confinement. The kind mediator had some trouble to prevail on his young friend to accept the invitation. He dared not urge to him the real motive, which was a good-natured wish to secure a favourable report of Waverley's case from Major Melville to Governor Blakeney. He remarked, from the flashes of our hero's spirit, that touching upon this topic would be sure to defeat his purpose. He therefore pleaded that the invitation argued the Major's disbelief of any part of the accusation which was inconsistent with Waverley's conduct as a soldier and a man of honour, and that to decline his courtesy might be interpreted into a consciousness that it was unmerited. In short, he so far satisfied Edward that the manly and proper course was to meet the Major on easy terms that, suppressing his strong dislike again to encounter his cold and punctilious civility, Waverley agreed to be guided by his new friend.

The meeting at first was stiff and formal enough. But Edward, having accepted the invitation, and his mind being really soothed and relieved by the kindness of Morton, held himself bound to behave with ease, though he could not affect cordiality. The Major was somewhat of a bon vivant, and his wine was excellent. He told his old campaign stories, and displayed much knowledge of men and manners. Mr. Morton had an internal fund of placid and quiet gaiety, which seldom failed to enliven any small party in which he found himself pleasantly seated. Waverley, whose life was a dream, gave ready way to the predominating impulse and became the most lively of the party. He had at all times remarkable natural powers of conversation, though easily silenced by discouragement. On the present occasion he piqued himself upon leaving on the minds of his companions a favourable impression of one who, under such disastrous circumstances, could sustain his misfortunes with ease and gaiety. His spirits, though not unyielding, were abundantly elastic, and soon seconded his efforts. The trio were engaged in very lively discourse, apparently delighted with each other, and the kind host was pressing a third bottle of Burgundy, when the sound of a drum was heard at some distance. The Major, who, in the glee of an old soldier, had forgot the duties of a magistrate, cursed, with a muttered military oath, the circumstances which recalled him to his official functions. He rose and went towards the window, which commanded a very near view of the highroad, and he was followed by his guests.

The drum advanced, beating no measured martial tune, but a kind of rub-a-dub-dub, like that with which the fire-drum startles the slumbering artisans of a Scotch burgh. It is the object of this history to do justice to all men; I must therefore record, in justice to the drummer, that he protested he could beat any known march or point of war known in the British army, and had accordingly commenced with 'Dumbarton's Drums,' when he was silenced by Gifted Gilfillan, the commander of the party, who refused to permit his followers to move to this profane, and even, as he said, persecutive tune, and commanded the drummer to beat the 119th Psalm. As this was beyond the capacity of the drubber of sheepskin, he was fain to have recourse to the inoffensive row-de-dow as a harmless substitute for the sacred music which his instrument or skill were unable to achieve. This may be held a trifling anecdote, but the drummer in question was no less than town-drummer of Anderton. I remember his successor in office, a member of that enlightened body, the British Convention. Be his memory, therefore, treated with due respect.

CHAPTER VI

A VOLUNTEER SIXTY YEARS SINCE

On hearing the unwelcome sound of the drum, Major Melville hastily opened a sashed door and stepped out upon a sort of terrace which divided his house from the highroad from which the martial music proceeded. Waverley and his new friend followed him, though probably he would have dispensed with their attendance. They soon recognised in solemn march, first, the performer upon the drum; secondly, a large flag of four compartments, on which were inscribed the words, COVENANT, KIRK, KING, KINGDOMS. The person who was honoured with this charge was followed by the commander of the party, a thin, dark, rigid-looking man, about sixty years old. The spiritual pride, which in mine host of the Candlestick mantled in a sort of supercilious hypocrisy, was in this man's face elevated and yet darkened by genuine and undoubting fanaticism. It was impossible to behold him without imagination placing him in some strange crisis, where religious zeal was the ruling principle. A martyr at the stake, a soldier in the field, a lonely and banished wanderer consoled by the intensity and supposed purity of his faith under every earthly privation, perhaps a persecuting inquisitor, as terrific in power as unyielding in adversity; any of these seemed congenial characters to this personage. With these high traits of energy, there was something in the affected precision and solemnity of his deportment and discourse that bordered upon the ludicrous; so that, according to the mood of the spectator's mind and the light under which Mr. Gilfillan presented himself, one might have feared, admired, or laughed at him. His dress was that of a West-Country peasant, of better materials indeed than that of the lower rank, but in no respect affecting either the mode of the age or of the Scottish gentry at any period. His arms were a broadsword and pistols, which, from the antiquity of their appearance, might have seen the rout of Pentland or Bothwell Brigg.

As he came up a few steps to meet Major Melville, and touched solemnly, but slightly, his huge and over-brimmed blue bonnet, in answer to the Major, who had courteously raised a small triangular gold-laced hat, Waverley was irresistibly impressed with the idea that he beheld a leader of the Roundheads of yore in conference with one of Marlborough's captains.

The group of about thirty armed men who followed this gifted commander was of a motley description. They were in ordinary Lowland dresses, of different colours, which, contrasted with the arms they bore, gave them an irregular and mobbish appearance; so much is the eye accustomed to connect uniformity of dress with the military character. In front were a few who apparently partook of their leader's enthusiasm, men obviously to be feared in a combat, where their natural courage was exalted by religious zeal. Others puffed and strutted, filled with the importance of carrying arms and all the novelty of their situation, while the rest, apparently fatigued with their march, dragged their limbs listlessly along, or straggled from their companions to procure such refreshments as the neighbouring cottages and alehouses afforded. Six grenadiers of Ligonier's, thought the Major to himself, as his mind reverted to his own military experience, would have sent all these fellows to the right about.

Greeting, however, Mr. Gilfillan civilly, he requested to know if he had received the letter he had sent to him upon his march, and could undertake the charge of the state prisoner whom he there mentioned as far as Stirling Castle. 'Yea,' was the concise reply of the Cameronian leader, in a voice which seemed to issue from the very penetralia of his person.

'But your escort, Mr. Gilfillan, is not so strong as I expected,' said Major Melville.

'Some of the people,' replied Gilfillan, 'hungered and were athirst by the way, and tarried until their poor souls were refreshed with the word.'

'I am sorry, sir,' replied the Major, 'you did not trust to your refreshing your men at Cairnvreckan; whatever my house contains is at the command of persons employed in the service.'

'It was not of creature-comforts I spake,' answered the Covenanter, regarding Major Melville with something like a smile of contempt; 'howbeit, I thank you; but the people remained waiting upon the precious Mr. Jabesh Rentowel for the out-pouring of the afternoon exhortation.'

'And have you, sir,' said the Major, 'when the rebels are about to spread themselves through this country, actually left a great part of your command at a fieldpreaching?'

Gilfillan again smiled scornfully as he made this indirect answer—'Even thus are the children of this world wiser in their generation than the children of light!'

'However, sir,' said the Major, 'as you are to take charge of this gentleman to Stirling, and deliver him, with these papers, into the hands of Governor Blakeney, I beseech you to observe some rules of military discipline upon your march. For example, I would advise you to keep your men more closely together, and that each in his march should cover his file-leader, instead of straggling like geese upon a common; and, for fear of surprise, I further recommend to you to form a small advance-party of your best men, with a single vidette in front of the whole march, so that when you approach a village or a wood'—(here the Major interrupted himself)—'But as I don't observe you listen to me, Mr. Gilfillan, I suppose I need not give myself the trouble to say more upon the subject. You are a better judge, unquestionably, than I am of the measures to be pursued; but one thing I would have you well aware of, that you are to treat this gentleman, your prisoner, with no rigour nor incivility, and are to subject him to no other restraint than is necessary for his security.'

'I have looked into my commission,' said Mr. Gilfillan, 'subscribed by a worthy and professing nobleman, William, Earl of Glencairn; nor do I find it therein set down that I am to receive any charges or commands anent my doings from Major William Melville of Cairnvreckan.'

Major Melville reddened even to the well-powdered ears which appeared beneath his neat military sidecurls, the more so as he observed Mr. Morton smile at the same moment. 'Mr. Gilfillan,' he answered, with some asperity, 'I beg ten thousand pardons for interfering with a person of your importance. I thought, however, that as you have been bred a grazier, if I mistake not, there might be occasion to remind you of the difference between Highlanders and Highland cattle; and if you should happen to meet with any gentleman who has seen service, and is disposed to speak upon the subject, I should still imagine that listening to him would do you no sort of harm. But I have done, and have only once more to recommend this gentleman to your civility as well as to your custody. Mr. Waverley, I am truly sorry we should part in this way; but I trust, when you are again in this country, I may have an opportunity to render Cairnvreckan more agreeable than circumstances have permitted on this occasion.'

So saying, he shook our hero by the hand. Morton also took an affectionate farewell, and Waverley, having mounted his horse, with a musketeer leading it by the bridle and a file upon each side to prevent his escape, set forward upon the march with Gilfillan and his party. Through the little village they were accompanied with the shouts of the children, who cried out, 'Eh! see to the Southland gentleman that's gaun to be hanged for shooting lang John Mucklewraith, the smith!'

CHAPTER VII

AN INCIDENT

The dinner hour of Scotland Sixty Years Since was two o'clock. It was therefore about four o'clock of a delightful autumn afternoon that Mr. Gilfillan commenced his march, in hopes, although Stirling was eighteen miles distant, he might be able, by becoming a borrower of the night for an hour or two, to reach it that evening. He therefore put forth his strength, and marched stoutly along at the head of his followers, eyeing our hero from time to time, as if he longed to enter into controversy with him. At length, unable to resist the temptation, he slackened his pace till he was alongside of his prisoner's horse, and after marching a few steps in silence abreast of him, he suddenly asked—'Can ye say wha the carle was wi' the black coat and the mousted head, that was wi' the Laird of Cairnvreckan?'

'A Presbyterian clergyman,' answered Waverley.

'Presbyterian!' answered Gilfillan contemptuously; 'a wretched Erastian, or rather an obscure Prelatist, a favourer of the black indulgence, one of thae dumb dogs that canna bark; they tell ower a clash o' terror and a clatter o' comfort in their sermons, without ony sense, or savour, or life. Ye've been fed in siccan a fauld, belike?'

'No; I am of the Church of England,' said Waverley.

'And they're just neighbour-like,' replied the Covenanter; 'and nae wonder they gree sae weel. Wha wad hae thought the goodly structure of the Kirk of Scotland, built up by our fathers in 1642, wad hae been defaced by carnal ends and the corruptions of the time;—ay, wha wad hae thought the carved work of the sanctuary would hae been sae soon cut down!'

To this lamentation, which one or two of the assistants chorussed with a deep groan, our hero thought it unnecessary to make any reply. Whereupon Mr. Gilfillan, resolving that he should be a hearer at least, if not a disputant, proceeded in his Jeremiade.

'And now is it wonderful, when, for lack of exercise anent the call to the service of the altar and the duty of the day, ministers fall into sinful compliances with patronage, and indemnities, and oaths, and bonds, and other corruptions,—is it wonderful, I say, that you, sir, and other sic-like unhappy persons, should labour to build up your auld Babel of iniquity, as in the bluidy persecuting saint-killing times? I trow, gin ye werena blinded wi' the graces and favours, and services and enjoyments, and employments and inheritances, of this wicked world, I could prove to you, by the Scripture, in what a filthy rag ye put your trust; and that your surplices, and your copes and vestments, are but cast-off garments of the muckle harlot that sitteth upon seven hills and drinketh of the cup of abomination. But, I trow, ye are deaf as adders upon that side of the head; ay, ye are deceived with her enchantments, and ye traffic with her merchandise, and ye are drunk with the cup of her fornication!'

How much longer this military theologian might have continued his invective, in which he spared nobody but the scattered remnant of HILL-FOLK, as he called them, is absolutely uncertain. His matter was copious, his voice powerful, and his memory strong; so that there was little chance of his ending his exhortation till the party had reached Stirling, had not his attention been attracted by a pedlar who had joined the march from a cross-road, and who sighed or groaned with great regularity at all fitting pauses of his homily.

'And what may ye be, friend?' said the Gifted Gilfillan.

'A puir pedlar, that's bound for Stirling, and craves the protection of your honour's party in these kittle times. Ah' your honour has a notable faculty in searching and explaining the secret,—ay, the secret and obscure and incomprehensible causes of the backslidings of the land; ay, your honour touches the root o' the matter.'

'Friend,' said Gilfillan, with a more complacent voice than he had hitherto used, 'honour not me. I do not go out to park-dikes and to steadings and to market-towns to have herds and cottars and burghers pull off their bonnets to me as they do to Major Melville o' Cairnvreckan, and ca' me laird or captain or honour. No; my sma' means, whilk are not aboon twenty thousand merk, have had the blessing of increase, but the pride of my heart has not increased with them; nor do I delight to be called captain, though I have the subscribed commission of that gospel-searching nobleman, the Earl of Glencairn, fa' whilk I am so designated. While I live I am and will be called Habakkuk Gilfillan, who will stand up for the standards of doctrine agreed on by the ance famous Kirk of Scotland, before she trafficked with the accursed Achan, while he has a plack in his purse or a drap o' bluid in his body.'

'Ah,' said the pedlar, 'I have seen your land about Mauchlin. A fertile spot! your lines have fallen in pleasant places! And siccan a breed o' cattle is not in ony laird's land in Scotland.'

'Ye say right,—ye say right, friend' retorted Gilfillan eagerly, for he was not inaccessible to flattery upon this subject,—'ye say right; they are the real Lancashire, and there's no the like o' them even at the mains of Kilmaurs'; and he then entered into a discussion of their excellences, to which our readers will probably be as indifferent as our hero. After this excursion the leader returned to his theological discussions, while the pedlar, less profound upon those mystic points, contented himself with groaning and expressing his edification at suitable intervals.

'What a blessing it would be to the puir blinded popish nations among whom I hae sojourned, to have siccan a light to their paths! I hae been as far as Muscovia in my sma' trading way, as a travelling merchant, and I hae been through France, and the Low Countries, and a' Poland, and maist feck o' Germany, and O! it would grieve your honour's soul to see the murmuring and the singing and massing that's in the kirk, and the piping that's in the quire, and the heathenish dancing and dicing upon the Sabbath!'

This set Gilfillan off upon the Book of Sports and the Covenant, and the Engagers, and the Protesters, and the Whiggamore's Raid, and the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and the Longer and Shorter Catechism, and the Excommunication at Torwood, and the slaughter of Archbishop Sharp. This last topic, again, led him into the lawfulness of defensive arms, on which subject he uttered much more sense than could have been expected from some other parts of his harangue, and attracted even Waverley's attention, who had hitherto been lost in his own sad reflections. Mr. Gilfillan then considered the lawfulness of a private man's standing forth as the avenger of public oppression, and as he was labouring with great earnestness the cause of Mas James Mitchell, who fired at the Archbishop of Saint Andrews some years before the prelate's assassination on Magus Muir, an incident occurred which interrupted his harangue.

The rays of the sun were lingering on the very verge of the horizon as the party ascended a hollow and somewhat steep path which led to the summit of a rising ground. The country was uninclosed, being part of a very extensive heath or common; but it was far from level, exhibiting in many places hollows filled with furze and broom; in others, little dingles of stunted brushwood. A thicket of the latter description crowned the hill up which the party ascended. The foremost of the band, being the stoutest and most active, had pushed on, and, having surmounted the ascent, were out of ken for the present. Gilfillan, with the pedlar and the small party who were Waverley's more immediate guard, were near the top of the ascent, and the remainder straggled after them at a considerable interval.

Such was the situation of matters when the pedlar, missing, as he said, a little doggie which belonged to him, began to halt and whistle for the animal. This signal, repeated more than once, gave offence to the rigour of his companion, the rather because it appeared to indicate inattention to the treasures of theological and controversial knowledge which were pouring out for his edification. He therefore signified gruffly that he could not waste his time in waiting for an useless cur.

'But if your honour wad consider the case of Tobit—'

'Tobit!' exclaimed Gilfillan, with great heat; 'Tobit and his dog baith are altogether heathenish and apocryphal, and none but a prelatist or a papist would draw them into question. I doubt I hae been mista'en in you, friend.'

'Very likely,' answered the pedlar, with great composure; 'but ne'ertheless, I shall take leave to whistle again upon puir Bawty.'

This last signal was answered in an unexpected manner; for six or eight stout Highlanders, who lurked among the copse and brushwood, sprung into the hollow way and began to lay about them with their claymores. Gilfillan, unappalled at this undesirable apparition, cried out manfully, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!' and, drawing his broadsword, would probably have done as much credit to the good old cause as any of its doughty champions at Drumclog, when, behold! the pedlar, snatching a musket from the person who was next him bestowed the butt of it with such emphasis on the head of his late instructor in the Cameronian creed that he was forthwith levelled to the ground. In the confusion which ensued the horse which bore our hero was shot by one of Gilfillan's party, as he discharged his firelock at random. Waverley fell with, and indeed under, the animal, and sustained some severe contusions. But he was almost instantly extricated from the fallen steed by two Highlanders, who, each seizing him by the arm, hurried him away from the scuffle and from the highroad. They ran with great speed, half supporting and half dragging our hero, who could, however, distinguish a few dropping shots fired about the spot which he had left. This, as he afterwards learned, proceeded from Gilfillan's party, who had now assembled, the stragglers in front and rear having joined the others. At their approach the Highlanders drew off, but not before they had rifled Gilfillan and two of his people, who remained on the spot grievously wounded. A few shots were exchanged betwixt them and the Westlanders; but the latter, now without a commander, and apprehensive of a second ambush, did not make any serious effort to recover their prisoner, judging it more wise to proceed on their journey to Stirling, carrying with them their wounded captain and comrades.

CHAPTER VIII

WAVERLEY IS STILL IN DISTRESS

The velocity, and indeed violence, with which Waverley was hurried along nearly deprived him of sensation; for the injury he had received from his fall prevented him from aiding himself so effectually as he might otherwise have done. When this was observed by his conductors, they called to their aid two or three others of the party, and, swathing our hero's body in one of their plaids, divided his weight by that means among them, and transported him at the same rapid rate as before, without any exertion of his own. They spoke little, and that in Gaelic; and did not slacken their pace till they had run nearly two miles, when they abated their extreme rapidity, but continued still to walk very fast, relieving each other occasionally.

Our hero now endeavoured to address them, but was only answered with 'Cha n'eil Beurl agam' i.e. 'I have no English,' being, as Waverley well knew, the constant reply of a Highlander when he either does not understand or does not choose to reply to an Englishman or Lowlander. He then mentioned the name of Vich Ian Vohr, concluding that he was indebted to his friendship for his rescue from the clutches of Gifted Gilfillan, but neither did this produce any mark of recognition from his escort.

The twilight had given place to moonshine when the party halted upon the brink of a precipitous glen, which, as partly enlightened by the moonbeams, seemed full of trees and tangled brushwood. Two of the Highlanders dived into it by a small foot-path, as if to explore its recesses, and one of them returning in a few minutes, said something to his companions, who instantly raised their burden and bore him, with great attention and care, down the narrow and abrupt descent. Notwithstanding their precautions, however, Waverley's person came more than once into contact, rudely enough, with the projecting stumps and branches which overhung the pathway.

At the bottom of the descent, and, as it seemed, by the side of a brook (for Waverley heard the rushing of a considerable body of water, although its stream was invisible in the darkness), the party again stopped before a small and rudely-constructed hovel. The door was open, and the inside of the premises appeared as uncomfortable and rude as its situation and exterior foreboded. There was no appearance of a floor of any kind; the roof seemed rent in several places; the walls were composed of loose stones and turf, and the thatch of branches of trees. The fire was in the centre, and filled the whole wigwam with smoke, which escaped as much through the door as by means of a circular aperture in the roof. An old Highland sibyl, the only inhabitant of this forlorn mansion, appeared busy in the preparation of some food. By the light which the fire afforded Waverley could discover that his attendants were not of the clan of Ivor, for Fergus was particularly strict in requiring from his followers that they should wear the tartan striped in the mode peculiar to their race; a mark of distinction anciently general through the Highlands, and still maintained by those Chiefs who were proud of their lineage or jealous of their separate and exclusive authority.

Edward had lived at Glennaquoich long enough to be aware of a distinction which he had repeatedly heard noticed, and now satisfied that he had no interest with his attendants, he glanced a disconsolate eye around the interior of the cabin. The only furniture, excepting a washing-tub and a wooden press, called in Scotland an ambry, sorely decayed, was a large wooden bed, planked, as is usual, all around, and opening by a sliding panel. In this recess the Highlanders deposited Waverley, after he had by signs declined any refreshment. His slumbers were broken and unrefreshing; strange visions passed before his eyes, and it required constant and reiterated efforts of mind to dispel them. Shivering, violent headache, and shooting pains in his limbs succeeded these symptoms; and in the morning it was evident to his Highland attendants or guard, for he knew not in which light to consider them, that Waverley was quite unfit to travel.

After a long consultation among themselves, six of the party left the hut with their arms, leaving behind an old and a young man. The former addressed Waverley, and bathed the contusions, which swelling and livid colour now made conspicuous. His own portmanteau, which the Highlanders had not failed to bring off, supplied him with linen, and to his great surprise was, with all its undiminished contents, freely resigned to his use. The bedding of his couch seemed clean and comfortable, and his aged attendant closed the door of the bed, for it had no curtain, after a few words of Gaelic, from which Waverley gathered that he exhorted him to repose. So behold our hero for a second time the patient of a Highland Esculapius, but in a situation much more uncomfortable than when he was the guest of the worthy Tomanrait.

The symptomatic fever which accompanied the injuries he had sustained did not abate till the third day, when it gave way to the care of his attendants and the strength of his constitution, and he could now raise himself in his bed, though not without pain. He observed, however, that there was a great disinclination on the part of the old woman who acted as his nurse, as well as on that of the elderly Highlander, to permit the door of the bed to be left open, so that he might amuse himself with observing their motions; and at length, after Waverley had repeatedly drawn open and they had as frequently shut the hatchway of his cage, the old gentleman put an end to the contest by securing it on the outside with a nail so effectually that the door could not be drawn till this exterior impediment was removed.

While musing upon the cause of this contradictory spirit in persons whose conduct intimated no purpose of plunder, and who, in all other points, appeared to consult his welfare and his wishes, it occurred to our hero that, during the worst crisis of his illness, a female figure, younger than his old Highland nurse, had appeared to flit around his couch. Of this, indeed, he had but a very indistinct recollection, but his suspicions were confirmed when, attentively listening, he often heard, in the course of the day, the voice of another female conversing in whispers with his attendant. Who could it be? And why should she apparently desire concealment? Fancy immediately aroused herself and turned to Flora Mac-Ivor. But after a short conflict between his eager desire to believe she was in his neighbourhood, guarding, like an angel of mercy, the couch of his sickness, Waverley was compelled to conclude that his conjecture was altogether improbable; since, to suppose she had left her comparatively safe situation at Glennaquoich to descend into the Low Country, now the seat of civil war, and to inhabit such a lurking-place as this, was a thing hardly to be imagined. Yet his heart bounded as he sometimes could distinctly hear the trip of a light female step glide to or from the door of the hut, or the suppressed sounds of a female voice, of softness and delicacy, hold dialogue with the hoarse inward croak of old Janet, for so he understood his antiquated attendant was denominated.

Having nothing else to amuse his solitude, he employed himself in contriving some plan to gratify his curiosity, in despite of the sedulous caution of Janet and the old Highland janizary, for he had never seen the young fellow since the first morning. At length, upon accurate examination, the infirm state of his wooden prison-house appeared to supply the means of gratifying his curiosity, for out of a spot which was somewhat decayed he was able to extract a nail. Through this minute aperture he could perceive a female form, wrapped in a plaid, in the act of conversing with Janet. But, since the days of our grandmother Eve, the gratification of inordinate curiosity has generally borne its penalty in disappointment. The form was not that of Flora, nor was the face visible; and, to crown his vexation, while he laboured with the nail to enlarge the hole, that he might obtain a more complete view, a slight noise betrayed his purpose, and the object of his curiosity instantly disappeared, nor, so far as he could observe, did she again revisit the cottage.

All precautions to blockade his view were from that time abandoned, and he was not only permitted but assisted to rise, and quit what had been, in a literal sense, his couch of confinement. But he was not allowed to leave the hut; for the young Highlander had now rejoined his senior, and one or other was constantly on the watch. Whenever Waverley approached the cottage door the sentinel upon duty civilly, but resolutely, placed himself against it and opposed his exit, accompanying his action with signs which seemed to imply there was danger in the attempt and an enemy in the neighbourhood. Old Janet appeared anxious and upon the watch; and Waverley, who had not yet recovered strength enough to attempt to take his departure in spite of the opposition of his hosts, was under the necessity of remaining patient. His fare was, in every point of view, better than he could have conceived, for poultry, and even wine, were no strangers to his table. The Highlanders never presumed to eat with him, and, unless in the circumstance of watching him, treated him with great respect. His sole amusement was

gazing from the window, or rather the shapeless aperture which was meant to answer the purpose of a window, upon a large and rough brook, which raged and foamed through a rocky channel, closely canopied with trees and bushes, about ten feet beneath the site of his house of captivity.

Upon the sixth day of his confinement Waverley found himself so well that he began to meditate his escape from this dull and miserable prison-house, thinking any risk which he might incur in the attempt preferable to the stupefying and intolerable uniformity of Janet's retirement. The question indeed occurred, whither he was to direct his course when again at his own disposal. Two schemes seemed practicable, yet both attended with danger and difficulty. One was to go back to Glennaquoich and join Fergus Mac-Ivor, by whom he was sure to be kindly received; and in the present state of his mind, the rigour with which he had been treated fully absolved him, in his own eyes, from his allegiance to the existing government. The other project was to endeavour to attain a Scottish seaport, and thence to take shipping for England. His mind wavered between these plans, and probably, if he had effected his escape in the manner he proposed, he would have been finally determined by the comparative facility by which either might have been executed. But his fortune had settled that he was not to be left to his option.

Upon the evening of the seventh day the door of the hut suddenly opened, and two Highlanders entered, whom Waverley recognised as having been a part of his original escort to this cottage. They conversed for a short time with the old man and his companion, and then made Waverley understand, by very significant signs, that he was to prepare to accompany them. This was a joyful communication. What had already passed during his confinement made it evident that no personal injury was designed to him; and his romantic spirit, having recovered during his repose much of that elasticity which anxiety, resentment, disappointment, and the mixture of unpleasant feelings excited by his late adventures had for a time subjugated, was now wearied with inaction. His passion for the wonderful, although it is the nature of such dispositions to be excited by that degree of danger which merely gives dignity to the feeling of the individual exposed to it, had sunk under the extraordinary and apparently insurmountable evils by which he appeared environed at Cairnvreckan. In fact, this compound of intense curiosity and exalted imagination forms a peculiar species of courage, which somewhat resembles the light usually carried by a miner—sufficiently competent, indeed, to afford him guidance and comfort during the ordinary perils of his labour, but certain to be extinguished should he encounter the more formidable hazard of earth damsps or pestiferous vapours. It was now, however, once more rekindled, and with a throbbing mixture of hope, awe, and anxiety, Waverley watched the group before him, as those who were just arrived snatched a hasty meal, and the others assumed their arms and made brief preparations for their departure.

As he sat in the smoky hut, at some distance from the fire, around which the others were crowded, he felt a gentle pressure upon his arm. He looked round; it was Alice, the daughter of Donald Bean Lean. She showed him a packet of papers in such a manner that the motion was remarked by no one else, put her finger for a second to her lips, and passed on, as if to assist old Janet in packing Waverley's clothes in his portmanteau. It was obviously her wish that he should not seem to recognise her, yet she repeatedly looked back at him, as an opportunity occurred of doing so unobserved, and when she saw that he remarked what she did, she folded the packet with great address and speed in one of his shirts, which she deposited in the portmanteau.

Here then was fresh food for conjecture. Was Alice his unknown warden, and was this maiden of the cavern the tutelar genius that watched his bed during his sickness? Was he in the hands of her father? and if so, what was his purpose? Spoil, his usual object, seemed in this case neglected; for not only Waverley's property was restored, but his purse, which might have tempted this professional plunderer, had been all along suffered to remain in his possession. All this perhaps the packet might explain; but it was plain from Alice's manner that she desired he should consult it in secret. Nor did she again seek his eye after she had satisfied herself that her manoeuvre was observed and understood. On the contrary, she shortly afterwards left the hut, and it was only as she tript out from the door, that, favoured by the obscurity, she gave Waverley a parting smile and nod of significance ere she vanished in the dark glen.

The young Highlander was repeatedly despatched by his comrades as if to collect intelligence. At length, when he had returned for the third or fourth time, the whole party arose and made signs to our hero to accompany them. Before his departure, however, he shook hands with old Janet, who had been so sedulous in his behalf, and added substantial marks of his gratitude for her attendance.

'God bless you! God prosper you, Captain Waverley!' said Janet, in good Lowland Scotch, though he had never hitherto heard her utter a syllable, save in Gaelic. But the impatience of his attendants prohibited his asking any explanation.

CHAPTER IX

A NOCTURNAL ADVENTURE

There was a moment's pause when the whole party had got out of the hut; and the Highlander who assumed the command, and who, in Waverley's awakened recollection, seemed to be the same tall figure who had acted as Donald Bean Lean's lieutenant, by whispers and signs imposed the strictest silence. He delivered to Edward a sword and steel pistol, and, pointing up the track, laid his hand on the hilt of his own claymore, as if to make him sensible they might have occasion to use force to make good their passage. He then placed himself at the head of the party, who moved up the pathway in single or Indian file, Waverley being placed nearest to their leader. He moved with great precaution, as if to avoid giving any alarm, and halted as soon as he came to the verge of the ascent. Waverley was soon sensible of the reason, for he heard at no great distance an English sentinel call out 'All's well.' The heavy sound sunk on the night-wind down the woody glen, and was answered by the echoes of its banks. A second, third, and fourth time the signal was repeated fainter and fainter, as if at a greater and greater distance. It was obvious that a party of soldiers were near, and upon their guard, though not sufficiently so to detect men skilful in every art of predatory warfare, like those with whom he now watched their ineffectual precautions.

When these sounds had died upon the silence of the night, the Highlanders began their march swiftly, yet with the most cautious silence. Waverley had little time, or indeed disposition, for observation, and could only discern that they passed at some distance from a large building, in the windows of which a light or two yet seemed to twinkle. A little farther on the leading Highlander snuffed the wind like a setting spaniel, and then made a signal to his party again to halt. He stooped down upon all fours, wrapped up in his plaid, so as to be scarce distinguishable from the heathy ground on which he moved, and advanced in this posture to reconnoitre. In a short time he returned, and dismissed his attendants excepting one; and, intimating to Waverley that he must imitate his cautious mode of proceeding, all three crept forward on hands and knees.

After proceeding a greater way in this inconvenient manner than was at all comfortable to his knees and shins, Waverley perceived the smell of smoke, which probably had been much sooner distinguished by the more acute nasal organs of his guide. It proceeded from the corner of a low and ruinous sheep-fold, the walls of which were made of loose stones, as is usual in Scotland. Close by this low wall the Highlander guided Waverley, and, in order probably to make him sensible of his danger, or perhaps to obtain the full credit of his own dexterity, he intimated to him, by sign and example, that he might raise his head so as to peep into the sheep-fold. Waverley did so, and beheld an outpost of four or five soldiers lying by their watch-fire. They were all asleep except the sentinel, who paced backwards and forwards with his firelock on his shoulder, which glanced red in the light of the fire as he crossed and re-crossed before it in his short walk, casting his eye frequently to that part of the heavens from which the moon, hitherto obscured by mist, seemed now about to make her appearance.

In the course of a minute or two, by one of those sudden changes of atmosphere incident to a mountainous country, a breeze arose and swept before it the clouds which had covered the horizon, and the night planet poured her full effulgence upon a wide and blighted heath, skirted indeed with copse-wood and stunted trees

in the quarter from which they had come, but open and bare to the observation of the sentinel in that to which their course tended. The wall of the sheep-fold indeed concealed them as they lay, but any advance beyond its shelter seemed impossible without certain discovery.

The Highlander eyed the blue vault, but far from blessing the useful light with Homer's, or rather Pope's benighted peasant, he muttered a Gaelic curse upon the unseasonable splendour of MacFarlane's *buat* (i.e. lantern) [Footnote: See Note 26]. He looked anxiously around for a few minutes, and then apparently took his resolution. Leaving his attendant with Waverley, after motioning to Edward to remain quiet, and giving his comrade directions in a brief whisper, he retreated, favoured by the irregularity of the ground, in the same direction and in the same manner as they had advanced. Edward, turning his head after him, could perceive him crawling on all fours with the dexterity of an Indian, availing himself of every bush and inequality to escape observation, and never passing over the more exposed parts of his track until the sentinel's back was turned from him. At length he reached the thickets and underwood which partly covered the moor in that direction, and probably extended to the verge of the glen where Waverley had been so long an inhabitant. The Highlander disappeared, but it was only for a few minutes, for he suddenly issued forth from a different part of the thicket, and, advancing boldly upon the open heath as if to invite discovery, he levelled his piece and fired at the sentinel. A wound in the arm proved a disagreeable interruption to the poor fellow's meteorological observations, as well as to the tune of 'Nancy Dawson,' which he was whistling. He returned the fire ineffectually, and his comrades, starting up at the alarm, advanced alertly towards the spot from which the first shot had issued. The Highlander, after giving them a full view of his person, dived among the thickets, for his *ruse de guerre* had now perfectly succeeded.

While the soldiers pursued the cause of their disturbance in one direction, Waverley, adopting the hint of his remaining attendant, made the best of his speed in that which his guide originally intended to pursue, and which now (the attention of the soldiers being drawn to a different quarter) was unobserved and unguarded. When they had run about a quarter of a mile, the brow of a rising ground which they had surmounted concealed them from further risk of observation. They still heard, however, at a distance the shouts of the soldiers as they hallooed to each other upon the heath, and they could also hear the distant roll of a drum beating to arms in the same direction. But these hostile sounds were now far in their rear, and died away upon the breeze as they rapidly proceeded.

When they had walked about half an hour, still along open and waste ground of the same description, they came to the stump of an ancient oak, which, from its relics, appeared to have been at one time a tree of very large size. In an adjacent hollow they found several Highlanders, with a horse or two. They had not joined them above a few minutes, which Waverley's attendant employed, in all probability, in communicating the cause of their delay (for the words 'Duncan Duroch' were often repeated), when Duncan himself appeared, out of breath indeed, and with all the symptoms of having run for his life, but laughing, and in high spirits at the success of the stratagem by which he had baffled his pursuers. This indeed Waverley could easily conceive might be a matter of no great difficulty to the active mountaineer, who was perfectly acquainted with the ground, and traced his course with a firmness and confidence to which his pursuers must have been strangers. The alarm which he excited seemed still to continue, for a dropping shot or two were heard at a great distance, which seemed to serve as an addition to the mirth of Duncan and his comrades.

The mountaineer now resumed the arms with which he had entrusted our hero, giving him to understand that the dangers of the journey were happily surmounted. Waverley was then mounted upon one of the horses, a change which the fatigue of the night and his recent illness rendered exceedingly acceptable. His portmanteau was placed on another pony, Duncan mounted a third, and they set forward at a round pace, accompanied by their escort. No other incident marked the course of that night's journey, and at the dawn of morning they attained the banks of a rapid river. The country around was at once fertile and romantic. Steep banks of wood were broken by corn-fields, which this year presented an abundant harvest, already in a great measure cut down.

On the opposite bank of the river, and partly surrounded by a winding of its stream, stood a large and massive castle, the half-ruined turrets of which were already glittering in the first rays of the sun. [Footnote: See Note 27.] It was in form an oblong square, of size sufficient to contain a large court in the centre. The towers at each angle of the square rose higher than the walls of the building, and were in their turn surmounted by turrets, differing in height and irregular in shape. Upon one of these a sentinel watched, whose bonnet and plaid, streaming in the wind, declared him to be a Highlander, as a broad white ensign, which floated from another tower, announced that the garrison was held by the insurgent adherents of the House of Stuart.

Passing hastily through a small and mean town, where their appearance excited neither surprise nor curiosity in the few peasants whom the labours of the harvest began to summon from their repose, the party crossed an ancient and narrow bridge of several arches, and, turning to the left up an avenue of huge old sycamores, Waverley found himself in front of the gloomy yet picturesque structure which he had admired at a distance. A huge iron-grated door, which formed the exterior defence of the gateway, was already thrown back to receive them; and a second, heavily constructed of oak and studded thickly with iron nails, being next opened, admitted them into the interior court-yard. A gentleman, dressed in the Highland garb and having a white cockade in his bonnet, assisted Waverley to dismount from his horse, and with much courtesy bid him welcome to the castle.

The governor, for so we must term him, having conducted Waverley to a half-ruinous apartment, where, however, there was a small camp-bed, and having offered him any refreshment which he desired, was then about to leave him.

'Will you not add to your civilities,' said Waverley, after having made the usual acknowledgment, 'by having the kindness to inform me where I am, and whether or not I am to consider myself as a prisoner?'

'I am not at liberty to be so explicit upon this subject as I could wish. Briefly, however, you are in the Castle of Doune, in the district of Menteith, and in no danger whatever.'

'And how am I assured of that?'

'By the honour of Donald Stewart, governor of the garrison, and lieutenant-colonel in the service of his Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward.' So saying, he hastily left the apartment, as if to avoid further discussion.

Exhausted by the fatigues of the night, our hero now threw himself upon the bed, and was in a few minutes fast asleep.

CHAPTER X

THE JOURNEY IS CONTINUED

Before Waverley awakened from his repose, the day was far advanced, and he began to feel that he had passed many hours without food. This was soon supplied in form of a copious breakfast, but Colonel Stewart, as if wishing to avoid the queries of his guest, did not again present himself. His compliments were, however, delivered by a servant, with an offer to provide anything in his power that could be useful to Captain Waverley on his journey, which he intimated would be continued that evening. To Waverley's further inquiries, the servant opposed the impenetrable barrier of real or affected ignorance and stupidity. He removed the table and provisions, and Waverley was again consigned to his own meditations.

As he contemplated the strangeness of his fortune, which seemed to delight in placing him at the disposal of others, without the power of directing his own motions, Edward's eye suddenly rested upon his portmanteau, which had been deposited in his apartment during his sleep. The mysterious appearance of Alice in the cottage of the glen immediately rushed upon his mind, and he was about to secure and examine the packet which she had deposited among his clothes, when the servant of Colonel Stewart again made his appearance, and took up the portmanteau upon his shoulders.

'May I not take out a change of linen, my friend?'

'Your honour sall get ane o' the Colonel's ain ruffled sarks, but this maun gang in the baggage-cart.'

And so saying, he very coolly carried off the portmanteau, without waiting further remonstrance, leaving our hero in a state where disappointment and indignation struggled for the mastery. In a few minutes he heard a cart rumble out of the rugged court-yard, and made no doubt that he was now dispossessed, for a space at least, if not for ever, of the only documents which seemed to promise some light upon the dubious events which had of late influenced his destiny. With such melancholy thoughts he had to beguile about four or five hours of solitude.

When this space was elapsed, the trampling of horse was heard in the court-yard, and Colonel Stewart soon after made his appearance to request his guest to take some further refreshment before his departure. The offer was accepted, for a late breakfast had by no means left our hero incapable of doing honour to dinner, which was now presented. The conversation of his host was that of a plain country gentleman, mixed with some soldier-like sentiments and expressions. He cautiously avoided any reference to the military operations or civil politics of the time; and to Waverley's direct inquiries concerning some of these points replied, that he was not at liberty to speak upon such topics.

When dinner was finished the governor arose, and, wishing Edward a good journey, said that, having been informed by Waverley's servant that his baggage had been sent forward, he had taken the freedom to supply him with such changes of linen as he might find necessary till he was again possessed of his own. With this compliment he disappeared. A servant acquainted Waverley an instant afterwards that his horse was ready.

Upon this hint he descended into the court-yard, and found a trooper holding a saddled horse, on which he mounted and sallied from the portal of Doune Castle, attended by about a score of armed men on horseback. These had less the appearance of regular soldiers than of individuals who had suddenly assumed arms from some pressing motive of unexpected emergency. Their uniform, which was blue and red, an affected imitation of that of French chasseurs, was in many respects incomplete, and sate awkwardly upon those who wore it. Waverley's eye, accustomed to look at a well-disciplined regiment, could easily discover that the motions and habits of his escort were not those of trained soldiers, and that, although expert enough in the management of their horses, their skill was that of huntsmen or grooms rather than of troopers. The horses were not trained to the regular pace so necessary to execute simultaneous and combined movements and formations; nor did they seem bitted (as it is technically expressed) for the use of the sword. The men, however, were stout, hardy-looking fellows, and might be individually formidable as irregular cavalry. The commander of this small party was mounted upon an excellent hunter, and, although dressed in uniform, his change of apparel did not prevent Waverley from recognising his old acquaintance, Mr. Falconer of Balmawhapple.

Now, although the terms upon which Edward had parted with this gentleman were none of the most friendly, he would have sacrificed every recollection of their foolish quarrel for the pleasure of enjoying once more the social intercourse of question and answer, from which he had been so long secluded. But apparently the remembrance of his defeat by the Baron of Bradwardine, of which Edward had been the unwilling cause, still rankled in the mind of the low-bred and yet proud laird. He carefully avoided giving the least sign of recognition, riding doggedly at the head of his men, who, though scarce equal in numbers to a sergeant's party, were denominated Captain Falconer's troop, being preceded by a trumpet, which sounded from time to time, and a standard, borne by Cornet Falconer, the laird's younger brother. The lieutenant, an elderly man, had much the air of a low sportsman and boon companion; an expression of dry humour predominated in his countenance over features of a vulgar cast, which indicated habitual intemperance. His cocked hat was set knowingly upon one side of his head, and while he whistled the 'Bob of Dumblain,' under the influence of half a mutchkin of brandy, he seemed to trot merrily forward, with a happy indifference to the state of the country, the conduct of the party, the end of the journey, and all other sublunary matters whatever.

From this wight, who now and then dropped alongside of his horse, Waverley hoped to acquire some information, or at least to beguile the way with talk.

'A fine evening, sir,' was Edward's salutation.

'Ow, ay, sir! a bra' night,' replied the lieutenant, in broad Scotch of the most vulgar description.

'And a fine harvest, apparently,' continued Waverley, following up his first attack.

'Ay, the aits will be got bravely in; but the farmers, deil burst them, and the corn-mongers will make the auld price gude against them as has horses till keep.'

'You perhaps act as quartermaster, sir?'

'Ay, quartermaster, riding-master, and lieutenant,' answered this officer of all work. 'And, to be sure, wha's fitter to look after the breaking and the keeping of the poor beasts than mysell, that bought and sold every ane o' them?'

'And pray, sir, if it be not too great a freedom, may I beg to know where we are going just now?'

'A fule's errand, I fear,' answered this communicative personage.

'In that case,' said Waverley, determined not to spare civility, 'I should have thought a person of your appearance would not have been found on the road.'

'Vera true, vera true, sir,' replied the officer, 'but every why has its wherefore. Ye maun ken, the laird there bought a' thir beasts frae me to munt his troop, and agreed to pay for them according to the necessities and prices of the time. But then he hadna the ready penny, and I hae been advised his bond will not be worth a boddle against the estate, and then I had a' my dealers to settle wi' at Martinmas; and so, as he very kindly offered me this commission, and as the auld Fifteen [Footnote: The Judges of the Supreme Court of Session in Scotland are proverbially termed among the country people, The Fifteen.] had never help me to my siller for sending out naigs against the government, why, conscience! sir, I thought my best chance for payment was e'en to GAE OUT [Footnote: See Note 28.] mysell; and ye may judge, sir, as I hae dealt a' my life in halters, I think na mickle o' putting my craig in peril of a Saint John-stone's tippet.'

'You are not, then, by profession a soldier?' said Waverley.

'Na, na; thank God,' answered this doughty partizan, 'I wasna bred at sae short a tether, I was brought up to hack and manger. I was bred a horse-couper, sir; and if I might live to see you at Whitson-tryst, or at Stagshawbank, or the winter fair at Hawick, and ye wanted a spanker that would lead the field, I'se be caution I would serve ye easy; for Jamie Jinker was ne'er the lad to impose upon a gentleman. Ye're a gentleman, sir, and should ken a horse's points; ye see that through—ganging thing that Balmawhapple's on; I solded her till him. She was bred out of Lick-the-ladle, that wan the king's plate at Caverton-Edge, by Duke Hamilton's White-Foot,' etc., etc., etc.

But as Jinker was entered full sail upon the pedigree of Balmawhapple's mare, having already got as far as great-grandsire and great-grand-dam, and while Waverley was watching for an opportunity to obtain from him intelligence of more interest, the noble captain checked his horse until they came up, and then, without directly appearing to notice Edward, said sternly to the genealogist, 'I thought, lieutenant, my orders were preceese, that no one should speak to the prisoner?'

The metamorphosed horse-dealer was silenced of course, and slunk to the rear, where he consoled himself by entering into a vehement dispute upon the price of hay with a farmer who had reluctantly followed his laird to the field rather than give up his farm, whereof the lease had just expired. Waverley was therefore once more consigned to silence, foreseeing that further attempts at conversation with any of the party would only give Balmawhapple a wished-for opportunity to display the insolence of authority, and the sulky spite of a temper naturally dogged, and rendered more so by habits of low indulgence and the incense of servile adulation.

In about two hours' time the party were near the Castle of Stirling, over whose battlements the union flag was brightened as it waved in the evening sun. To shorten his journey, or perhaps to display his importance and insult the English garrison, Balmawhapple, inclining to the right, took his route through the royal park, which reaches to and surrounds the rock upon which the fortress is situated.

With a mind more at ease Waverley could not have failed to admire the mixture of romance and beauty which renders interesting the scene through which he was now passing—the field which had been the scene of the tournaments of old—the rock from which the ladies beheld the contest, while each made vows for the success of some favourite knight—the towers of the Gothic church, where these vows might be paid—and, surmounting all, the fortress itself, at once a castle and palace, where valour received the prize from royalty, and knights and dames closed the evening amid the revelry of the dance, the song, and the feast. All these were objects fitted to arouse and interest a romantic imagination.

But Waverley had other objects of meditation, and an incident soon occurred of a nature to disturb meditation of any kind. Balmawhapple, in the pride of his heart, as he wheeled his little body of cavalry round the base of the Castle, commanded his trumpet to sound a flourish and his standard to be displayed. This insult produced apparently some sensation; for when the cavalcade was at such distance from the southern battery as to admit of a gun being depressed so as to bear upon them, a flash of fire issued from one of the embrasures upon the rock; and ere the report with which it was attended could be heard, the rushing sound of a cannon-ball passed over Balmawhapple's head, and the bullet, burying itself in the ground at a few yards' distance, covered him with the earth which it drove up. There was no need to bid the party trudge. In fact, every man, acting upon the impulse of the moment, soon brought Mr. Jinker's steeds to show their mettle, and the cavaliers, retreating with more speed than regularity, never took to a trot, as the lieutenant afterwards observed, until an intervening eminence had secured them from any repetition of so undesirable a compliment on the part of Stirling Castle. I must do Balmawhapple, however, the justice to say that he not only kept the rear of his troop, and laboured to maintain some order among them, but, in the height of his gallantry, answered the fire of the Castle by discharging one of his horse-pistols at the battlements; although, the distance being nearly half a mile, I could never learn that this measure of retaliation was attended with any particular effect.

The travellers now passed the memorable field of Bannockburn and reached the Torwood, a place glorious or terrible to the recollections of the Scottish peasant, as the feats of Wallace or the cruelties of Wude Willie Grime predominate in his recollection. At Falkirk, a town formerly famous in Scottish history, and soon to be again distinguished as the scene of military events of importance, Balmawhapple proposed to halt and repose for the evening. This was performed with very little regard to military discipline, his worthy quarter-master being chiefly solicitous to discover where the best brandy might be come at. Sentinels were deemed unnecessary, and the only vigils performed were those of such of the party as could procure liquor. A few resolute men might easily have cut off the detachment; but of the inhabitants some were favourable, many indifferent, and the rest overawed. So nothing memorable occurred in the course of the evening, except that Waverley's rest was sorely interrupted by the revellers hallooing forth their Jacobite songs, without remorse or mitigation of voice.

Early in the morning they were again mounted and on the road to Edinburgh, though the pallid visages of some of the troop betrayed that they had spent a night of sleepless debauchery. They halted at Linlithgow, distinguished by its ancient palace, which Sixty Years Since was entire and habitable, and whose venerable ruins, NOT QUITE SIXTY YEARS SINCE, very narrowly escaped the unworthy fate of being converted into a barrack for French prisoners. May repose and blessings attend the ashes of the patriotic statesman who, amongst his last services to Scotland, interposed to prevent this profanation!

As they approached the metropolis of Scotland, through a champaign and cultivated country, the sounds of war began to be heard. The distant yet distinct report of heavy cannon, fired at intervals, apprized Waverley that the work of destruction was going forward. Even Balmawhapple seemed moved to take some precautions, by sending an advanced party in front of his troop, keeping the main body in tolerable order, and moving steadily forward.

Marching in this manner they speedily reached an eminence, from which they could view Edinburgh stretching along the ridgy hill which slopes eastward from the Castle. The latter, being in a state of siege, or rather of blockade, by the northern insurgents, who had already occupied the town for two or three days, fired at intervals upon such parties of Highlanders as exposed themselves, either on the main street or elsewhere in the vicinity of the fortress. The morning being calm and fair, the effect of this dropping fire was to invest the Castle in wreaths of smoke, the edges of which dissipated slowly in the air, while the central veil was darkened ever and anon by fresh clouds poured forth from the battlements; the whole giving, by the partial concealment, an appearance of grandeur and gloom, rendered more terrific when Waverley reflected on the cause by which it was produced, and that each explosion might ring some brave man's knell.

Ere they approached the city the partial cannonade had wholly ceased. Balmawhapple, however, having in his recollection the unfriendly greeting which his troop had received from the battery at Stirling, had apparently no wish to tempt the forbearance of the artillery of the Castle. He therefore left the direct road, and, sweeping considerably to the southward so as to keep out of the range of the cannon, approached the ancient palace of Holyrood without having entered the walls of the city. He then drew up his men in front of that venerable pile, and delivered Waverley to the custody of a guard of Highlanders, whose officer conducted him into the interior of the building.

A long, low, and ill-proportioned gallery, hung with pictures, affirmed to be the portraits of kings, who, if they ever flourished at all, lived several hundred years before the invention of painting in oil colours, served as a sort of guard chamber or vestibule to the apartments which the adventurous Charles Edward now occupied in the palace of his ancestors. Officers, both in the Highland and Lowland garb, passed and repassed in haste, or loitered in the hall as if waiting for orders. Secretaries were engaged in making out passes, musters, and returns. All seemed busy, and earnestly intent upon something of importance; but Waverley was suffered to remain seated in the recess of a window, unnoticed by any one, in anxious reflection upon the crisis of his fate, which seemed now rapidly approaching.

CHAPTER XI

AN OLD AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

While he was deep sunk in his reverie, the rustle of tartans was heard behind him, a friendly arm clasped his shoulders, and a friendly voice exclaimed,

'Said the Highland prophet sooth? Or must second-sight go for nothing?'

Waverley turned, and was warmly embraced by Fergus Mac-Ivor. 'A thousand welcomes to Holyrood, once more possessed by her legitimate sovereign! Did I not say we should prosper, and that you would fall into the hands of the Philistines if you parted from us?'

'Dear Fergus!' said Waverley, eagerly returning his greeting. 'It is long since I have heard a friend's voice. Where is Flora?'

'Safe, and a triumphant spectator of our success.'

'In this place?' said Waverley.

'Ay, in this city at least,' answered his friend, 'and you shall see her; but first you must meet a friend whom you little think of, who has been frequent in his inquiries after you.'

Thus saying, he dragged Waverley by the arm out of the guard chamber, and, ere he knew where he was conducted, Edward found himself in a presence room, fitted up with some attempt at royal state.

A young man, wearing his own fair hair, distinguished by the dignity of his mien and the noble expression of his well-formed and regular features, advanced out of a circle of military gentlemen and Highland chiefs by whom he was surrounded. In his easy and graceful manners Waverley afterwards thought he could have discovered his high birth and rank, although the star on his breast and the embroidered garter at his knee had not appeared as its indications.

'Let me present to your Royal Highness,' said Fergus, bowing profoundly—

'The descendant of one of the most ancient and loyal families in England,' said the young Chevalier, interrupting him. 'I beg your pardon for interrupting you, my dear Mac-Ivor; but no master of ceremonies is necessary to present a Waverley to a Stuart.'

Thus saying, he extended his hand to Edward with the utmost courtesy, who could not, had he desired it, have avoided rendering him the homage which seemed due to his rank, and was certainly the right of his birth. 'I am sorry to understand, Mr. Waverley, that, owing to circumstances which have been as yet but ill

explained, you have suffered some restraint among my followers in Perthshire and on your march here; but we are in such a situation that we hardly know our friends, and I am even at this moment uncertain whether I can have the pleasure of considering Mr. Waverley as among mine.'

He then paused for an instant; but before Edward could adjust a suitable reply, or even arrange his ideas as to its purport, the Prince took out a paper and then proceeded:—'I should indeed have no doubts upon this subject if I could trust to this proclamation, set forth by the friends of the Elector of Hanover, in which they rank Mr. Waverley among the nobility and gentry who are menaced with the pains of high-treason for loyalty to their legitimate sovereign. But I desire to gain no adherents save from affection and conviction; and if Mr. Waverley inclines to prosecute his journey to the south, or to join the forces of the Elector, he shall have my passport and free permission to do so; and I can only regret that my present power will not extend to protect him against the probable consequences of such a measure. But,' continued Charles Edward, after another short pause, 'if Mr. Waverley should, like his ancestor, Sir Nigel, determine to embrace a cause which has little to recommend it but its justice, and follow a prince who throws himself upon the affections of his people to recover the throne of his ancestors or perish in the attempt, I can only say, that among these nobles and gentlemen he will find worthy associates in a gallant enterprise, and will follow a master who may be unfortunate, but, I trust, will never be ungrateful.'

The politic Chieftain of the race of Ivor knew his advantage in introducing Waverley to this personal interview with the royal adventurer. Unaccustomed to the address and manners of a polished court, in which Charles was eminently skilful, his words and his kindness penetrated the heart of our hero, and easily outweighed all prudential motives. To be thus personally solicited for assistance by a prince whose form and manners, as well as the spirit which he displayed in this singular enterprise, answered his ideas of a hero of romance; to be courted by him in the ancient halls of his paternal palace, recovered by the sword which he was already bending towards other conquests, gave Edward, in his own eyes, the dignity and importance which he had ceased to consider as his attributes. Rejected, slandered, and threatened upon the one side, he was irresistibly attracted to the cause which the prejudices of education and the political principles of his family had already recommended as the most just. These thoughts rushed through his mind like a torrent, sweeping before them every consideration of an opposite tendency,—the time, besides, admitted of no deliberation,—and Waverley, kneeling to Charles Edward, devoted his heart and sword to the vindication of his rights!

The Prince (for, although unfortunate in the faults and follies of his forefathers, we shall here and elsewhere give him the title due to his birth) raised Waverley from the ground and embraced him with an expression of thanks too warm not to be genuine. He also thanked Fergus Mac-Ivor repeatedly for having brought him such an adherent, and presented Waverley to the various noblemen, chieftains, and officers who were about his person as a young gentleman of the highest hopes and prospects, in whose bold and enthusiastic avowal of his cause they might see an evidence of the sentiments of the English families of rank at this important crisis. [Footnote: See Note 29.] Indeed, this was a point much doubted among the adherents of the house of Stuart; and as a well-founded disbelief in the cooperation of the English Jacobites kept many Scottish men of rank from his standard, and diminished the courage of those who had joined it, nothing could be more seasonable for the Chevalier than the open declaration in his favour of the representative of the house of Waverley-Honour, so long known as Cavaliers and Royalists. This Fergus had foreseen from the beginning. He really loved Waverley, because their feelings and projects never thwarted each other; he hoped to see him united with Flora, and he rejoiced that they were effectually engaged in the same cause. But, as we before hinted, he also exulted as a politician in beholding secured to his party a partizan of such consequence; and he was far from being insensible to the personal importance which he himself gained with the Prince from having so materially assisted in making the acquisition.

Charles Edward, on his part, seemed eager to show his attendants the value which he attached to his new adherent, by entering immediately, as in confidence, upon the circumstances of his situation. 'You have been secluded so much from intelligence, Mr. Waverley, from causes of which I am but indistinctly informed, that I presume you are even yet unacquainted with the important particulars of my present situation. You have, however, heard of my landing in the remote district of Moidart, with only seven attendants, and of the numerous chiefs and clans whose loyal enthusiasm at once placed a solitary adventurer at the head of a gallant army. You must also, I think, have learned that the commander-in-chief of the Hanoverian Elector, Sir John Cope, marched into the Highlands at the head of a numerous and well-appointed military force with the intention of giving us battle, but that his courage failed him when we were within three hours' march of each other, so that he fairly gave us the slip and marched northward to Aberdeen, leaving the Low Country open and undefended. Not to lose so favourable an opportunity, I marched on to this metropolis, driving before me two regiments of horse, Gardiner's and Hamilton's, who had threatened to cut to pieces every Highlander that should venture to pass Stirling; and while discussions were carrying forward among the magistracy and citizens of Edinburgh whether they should defend themselves or surrender, my good friend Lochiel (laying his hand on the shoulder of that gallant and accomplished chieftain) saved them the trouble of farther deliberation by entering the gates with five hundred Camerons. Thus far, therefore, we have done well; but, in the meanwhile, this doughty general's nerves being braced by the keen air of Aberdeen, he has taken shipping for Dunbar, and I have just received certain information that he landed there yesterday. His purpose must unquestionably be to march towards us to recover possession of the capital. Now there are two opinions in my council of war: one, that being inferior probably in numbers, and certainly in discipline and military appointments, not to mention our total want of artillery and the weakness of our cavalry, it will be safest to fall back towards the mountains, and there protract the war until fresh succours arrive from France, and the whole body of the Highland clans shall have taken arms in our favour. The opposite opinion maintains, that a retrograde movement, in our circumstances, is certain to throw utter discredit on our arms and undertaking; and, far from gaining us new partizans, will be the means of disheartening those who have joined our standard. The officers who use these last arguments, among whom is your friend Fergus Mac-Ivor, maintain that, if the Highlanders are strangers to the usual military discipline of Europe, the soldiers whom they are to encounter are no less strangers to their peculiar and formidable mode of attack; that the attachment and courage of the chiefs and gentlemen are not to be doubted; and that, as they will be in the midst of the enemy, their clansmen will as surely follow them; in fine, that having drawn the sword we should throw away the scabbard, and trust our cause to battle and to the God of battles. Will Mr. Waverley favour us with his opinion in these arduous circumstances?'

Waverley coloured high betwixt pleasure and modesty at the distinction implied in this question, and answered, with equal spirit and readiness, that he could not venture to offer an opinion as derived from military skill, but that the counsel would be far the most acceptable to him which should first afford him an opportunity to evince his zeal in his Royal Highness's service.

'Spoken like a Waverley!' answered Charles Edward; 'and that you may hold a rank in some degree corresponding to your name, allow me, instead of the captain's commission which you have lost, to offer you the brevet rank of major in my service, with the advantage of acting as one of my aides-de-camp until you can be attached to a regiment, of which I hope several will be speedily embodied.'

'Your Royal Highness will forgive me,' answered Waverley (for his recollection turned to Balmawhapple and his scanty troop), 'if I decline accepting any rank until the time and place where I may have interest enough to raise a sufficient body of men to make my command useful to your Royal Highness's service. In the meanwhile, I hope for your permission to serve as a volunteer under my friend Fergus Mac-Ivor.'

'At least,' said the Prince, who was obviously pleased with this proposal, 'allow me the pleasure of arming you after the Highland fashion.' With these words, he unbuckled the broadsword which he wore, the belt of which was plaited with silver, and the steel basket-hilt richly and curiously inlaid. 'The blade,' said the Prince, 'is a genuine Andrea Ferrara; it has been a sort of heirloom in our family; but I am convinced I put it into better hands than my own, and will add to it pistols of the same workmanship. Colonel Mac-Ivor, you must have much to say to your friend; I will detain you no longer from your private conversation; but remember we expect you both to attend us in the evening. It may be perhaps the last night we may enjoy in these halls, and as we go to the field with a clear conscience, we will spend the eve of battle merrily.'

Thus licensed, the Chief and Waverley left the presence-chamber.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY BEGINS TO BE CLEARED UP

'How do you like him?' was Fergus's first question, as they descended the large stone staircase.

'A prince to live and die under' was Waverley's enthusiastic answer.

'I knew you would think so when you saw him, and I intended you should have met earlier, but was prevented by your sprain. And yet he has his foibles, or rather he has difficult cards to play, and his Irish officers, [Footnote: See Note 30.] who are much about him, are but sorry advisers: they cannot discriminate among the numerous pretensions that are set up. Would you think it—I have been obliged for the present to suppress an earl's patent, granted for services rendered ten years ago, for fear of exciting the jealousy, forsooth, of C—and M—? But you were very right, Edward, to refuse the situation of aide-de-camp. There are two vacant, indeed, but Clanronald and Lochiel, and almost all of us, have requested one for young Aberchallader, and the Lowlanders and the Irish party are equally desirous to have the other for the master of F—. Now, if either of these candidates were to be superseded in your favour, you would make enemies. And then I am surprised that the Prince should have offered you a majority, when he knows very well that nothing short of lieutenant-colonel will satisfy others, who cannot bring one hundred and fifty men to the field. "But patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards!" It is all very well for the present, and we must have you properly equipped for the evening in your new costume; for, to say truth, your outward man is scarce fit for a court.'

'Why,' said Waverley, looking at his soiled dress, 'my shooting jacket has seen service since we parted; but that probably you, my friend, know as well or better than I.'

'You do my second-sight too much honour,' said Fergus. 'We were so busy, first with the scheme of giving battle to Cope, and afterwards with our operations in the Lowlands, that I could only give general directions to such of our people as were left in Perthshire to respect and protect you, should you come in their way. But let me hear the full story of your adventures, for they have reached us in a very partial and mutilated manner.'

Waverley then detailed at length the circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted, to which Fergus listened with great attention. By this time they had reached the door of his quarters, which he had taken up in a small paved court, retiring from the street called the Canongate, at the house of a buxom widow of forty, who seemed to smile very graciously upon the handsome young Chief, she being a person with whom good looks and good-humour were sure to secure an interest, whatever might be the party's "political opinions". Here Callum Beg received them with a smile of recognition. 'Callum,' said the Chief, 'call Shemus an Snachad' (James of the Needle). This was the hereditary tailor of Vich Ian Vohr. 'Shemus, Mr. Waverley is to wear the cath dath (battle colour, or tartan); his trews must be ready in four hours. You know the measure of a well-made man—two double nails to the small of the leg—'

'Eleven from haunch to heel, seven round the waist. I give your honour leave to hang Shemus, if there's a pair of sheers in the Highlands that has a baulder sneck than her's ain at the cumadh an truais' (shape of the trews).

'Get a plaid of Mac-Ivor tartan and sash,' continued the Chieftain, 'and a blue bonnet of the Prince's pattern, at Mr. Mouat's in the Crames. My short green coat, with silver lace and silver buttons, will fit him exactly, and I have never worn it. Tell Ensign Maccombich to pick out a handsome target from among mine. The Prince has given Mr. Waverley broadsword and pistols, I will furnish him with a dirk and purse; add but a pair of low-heeled shoes, and then, my dear Edward (turning to him), you will be a complete son of Ivor.'

These necessary directions given, the Chieftain resumed the subject of Waverley's adventures. 'It is plain,' he said, 'that you have been in the custody of Donald Bean Lean. You must know that, when I marched away my clan to join the Prince, I laid my injunctions on that worthy member of society to perform a certain piece of service, which done, he was to join me with all the force he could muster. But, instead of doing so, the gentleman, finding the coast clear, thought it better to make war on his own account, and has scoured the country, plundering, I believe, both friend and foe, under pretence of levying blackmail, sometimes as if by my authority, and sometimes (and be cursed to his consummate impudence) in his own great name! Upon my honour, if I live to see the cairn of Benmore again, I shall be tempted to hang that fellow! I recognise his hand particularly in the mode of your rescue from that canting rascal Gilfillan, and I have little doubt that Donald himself played the part of the pedlar on that occasion; but how he should not have plundered you, or put you to ransom, or availed himself in some way or other of your captivity for his own advantage, passes my judgment.'

'When and how did you hear the intelligence of my confinement?' asked Waverley.

'The Prince himself told me,' said Fergus, 'and inquired very minutely into your history. He then mentioned your being at that moment in the power of one of our northern parties—you know I could not ask him to explain particulars—and requested my opinion about disposing of you. I recommended that you should be brought here as a prisoner, because I did not wish to prejudice you farther with the English government, in case you pursued your purpose of going southward. I knew nothing, you must recollect, of the charge brought against you of aiding and abetting high treason, which, I presume, had some share in changing your original plan. That sullen, good-for-nothing brute, Balmawhapple, was sent to escort you from Doune, with what he calls his troop of horse. As to his behaviour, in addition to his natural antipathy to everything that resembles a gentleman, I presume his adventure with Bradwardine rankles in his recollection, the rather that I daresay his mode of telling that story contributed to the evil reports which reached your quondam regiment.'

'Very likely,' said Waverley; 'but now surely, my dear Fergus, you may find time to tell me something of Flora.'

'Why,' replied Fergus, 'I can only tell you that she is well, and residing for the present with a relation in this city. I thought it better she should come here, as since our success a good many ladies of rank attend our military court; and I assure you that there is a sort of consequence annexed to the near relative of such a person as Flora Mac-Ivor, and where there is such a jostling of claims and requests, a man must use every fair means to enhance his importance.'

There was something in this last sentence which grated on Waverley's feelings. He could not bear that Flora should be considered as conducing to her brother's preferment by the admiration which she must unquestionably attract; and although it was in strict correspondence with many points of Fergus's character, it shocked him as selfish, and unworthy of his sister's high mind and his own independent pride. Fergus, to whom such manoeuvres were familiar, as to one brought up at the French court, did not observe the unfavourable impression which he had unwarily made upon his friend's mind, and concluded by saying, 'that they could hardly see Flora before the evening, when she would be at the concert and ball with which the Prince's party were to be entertained. She and I had a quarrel about her not appearing to take leave of you. I am unwilling to renew it by soliciting her to receive you this morning; and perhaps my doing so might not only be ineffectual, but prevent your meeting this evening.'

While thus conversing, Waverley heard in the court, before the windows of the parlour, a well-known voice. 'I aver to you, my worthy friend,' said the speaker, 'that it is a total dereliction of military discipline; and were you not as it were a tyro, your purpose would deserve strong reprobation. For a prisoner of war is on no account to be coerced with fetters, or debinded in ergastulo, as would have been the case had you put this gentleman into the pit of the peel-house at Balmawhapple. I grant, indeed, that such a prisoner may for security be coerced in carcere, that is, in a public prison.'

The growling voice of Balmawhapple was heard as taking leave in displeasure, but the word 'land-louper' alone was distinctly audible. He had disappeared before Waverley reached the house in order to greet the worthy Baron of Bradwardine. The uniform in which he was now attired, a blue coat, namely, with gold lace, a scarlet waistcoat and breeches, and immense jack-boots, seemed to have added fresh stiffness and rigidity to his tall, perpendicular figure; and the consciousness of military command and authority had increased, in the same proportion, the self-importance of his demeanour and the dogmatism of his conversation.

He received Waverley with his usual kindness, and expressed immediate anxiety to hear an explanation of the circumstances attending the loss of his commission in Gardiner's dragoons; 'not,' he said, 'that he had the least apprehension of his young friend having done aught which could merit such ungenerous treatment as

he had received from government, but because it was right and seemly that the Baron of Bradwardine should be, in point of trust and in point of power, fully able to refute all calumnies against the heir of Waverley-Honour, whom he had so much right to regard as his own son.'

Fergus Mac-Ivor, who had now joined them, went hastily over the circumstances of Waverley's story, and concluded with the flattering reception he had met from the young Chevalier. The Baron listened in silence, and at the conclusion shook Waverley heartily by the hand and congratulated him upon entering the service of his lawful Prince. 'For,' continued he, 'although it has been justly held in all nations a matter of scandal and dishonour to infringe the sacramentum militare, and that whether it was taken by each soldier singly, whilk the Romans denominated per conjurationem, or by one soldier in name of the rest, yet no one ever doubted that the allegiance so sworn was discharged by the dimissio, or discharging of a soldier, whose case would be as hard as that of colliers, salters, and other adscripti glebes, or slaves of the soil, were it to be accounted otherwise. This is something like the brocard expressed by the learned Sanchez in his work "De Jure-jurando" which you have questionless consulted upon this occasion. As for those who have calumniated you by leasing-making, I protest to Heaven I think they have justly incurred the penalty of the "Memnonia Lex," also called "Lex Rhemnina," which is prelected upon by Tullius in his oration "In Verrem." I should have deemed, however, Mr. Waverley, that before destining yourself to any special service in the army of the Prince, ye might have inquired what rank the old Bradwardine held there, and whether he would not have been peculiarly happy to have had your services in the regiment of horse which he is now about to levy.' Edward eluded this reproach by pleading the necessity of giving an immediate answer to the Prince's proposal, and his uncertainty at the moment whether his friend the Baron was with the army or engaged upon service elsewhere.

This punctilio being settled, Waverley made inquiry after Miss Bradwardine, and was informed she had come to Edinburgh with Flora Mac-Ivor, under guard of a party of the Chieftain's men. This step was indeed necessary, Tully-Veolan having become a very unpleasant, and even dangerous, place of residence for an unprotected young lady, on account of its vicinity to the Highlands, and also to one or two large villages which, from aversion as much to the caterans as zeal for presbytery, had declared themselves on the side of government, and formed irregular bodies of partizans, who had frequent skirmishes with the mountaineers, and sometimes attacked the houses of the Jacobite gentry in the braes, or frontier betwixt the mountain and plain.

'I would propose to you,' continued the Baron, 'to walk as far as my quarters in the Luckenbooths, and to admire in your passage the High Street, whilk is, beyond a shadow of dubitation, finer than any street whether in London or Paris. But Rose, poor thing, is sorely discomposed with the firing of the Castle, though I have proved to her from Blondel and Coehorn, that it is impossible a bullet can reach these buildings; and, besides, I have it in charge from his Royal Highness to go to the camp, or leaguer of our army, to see that the men do *condamare vasa*, that is, truss up their bag and baggage for tomorrow's march.'

'That will be easily done by most of us,' said Mac-Ivor, laughing.

'Craving your pardon, Colonel Mac-Ivor, not quite so easily as ye seem to opine. I grant most of your folk left the Highlands expedited as it were, and free from the incumbrance of baggage; but it is unspeakable the quantity of useless sprechery which they have collected on their march. I saw one fellow of yours (craving your pardon once more) with a pier-glass upon his back.'

'Ay,' said Fergus, still in good-humour, 'he would have told you, if you had questioned him, "a ganging foot is aye getting." But come, my dear Baron, you know as well as I that a hundred Uhlans, or a single troop of Schmirschitz's Pandours, would make more havoc in a country than the knight of the mirror and all the rest of our clans put together.'

'And that is very true likewise,' replied the Baron; 'they are, as the heathen author says, *ferociore in aspectu, mitiores in actu*, of a horrid and grim visage, but more benign in demeanour than their physiognomy or aspect might infer. But I stand here talking to you two youngsters when I should be in the King's Park.'

'But you will dine with Waverley and me on your return? I assure you, Baron, though I can live like a Highlander when needs must, I remember my Paris education, and understand perfectly *faire la meilleure chere*.'

'And wha the deil doubts it,' quoth the Baron, laughing, 'when ye bring only the cookery and the gude toun must furnish the materials? Weel, I have some business in the toun too; but I'll join you at three, if the vivers can tarry so long.'

So saying, he took leave of his friends and went to look after the charge which had been assigned him.

CHAPTER XIII

A SOLDIER'S DINNER

James of the Needle was a man of his word when whisky was no party to the contract; and upon this occasion Callum Beg, who still thought himself in Waverley's debt, since he had declined accepting compensation at the expense of mine host of the Candlestick's person, took the opportunity of discharging the obligation, by mounting guard over the hereditary tailor of Sliochd nan Ivor; and, as he expressed himself, 'targed him tightly' till the finishing of the job. To rid himself of this restraint, Shemus's needle flew through the tartan like lightning; and as the artist kept chanting some dreadful skirmish of Fin Macoul, he accomplished at least three stitches to the death of every hero. The dress was, therefore, soon ready, for the short coat fitted the wearer, and the rest of the apparel required little adjustment.

Our hero having now fairly assumed the 'garb of old Gaul,' well calculated as it was to give an appearance of strength to a figure which, though tall and well-made, was rather elegant than robust, I hope my fair readers will excuse him if he looked at himself in the mirror more than once, and could not help acknowledging that the reflection seemed that of a very handsome young fellow. In fact, there was no disguising it. His light-brown hair—for he wore no periwig, notwithstanding the universal fashion of the time—became the bonnet which surmounted it. His person promised firmness and agility, to which the ample folds of the tartan added an air of dignity. His blue eye seemed of that kind,

Which melted in love, and which kindled in war;

and an air of bashfulness, which was in reality the effect of want of habitual intercourse with the world, gave interest to his features, without injuring their grace or intelligence.

'He's a pratty man, a very pratty man,' said Evan Dhu (now Ensign Maccombich) to Fergus's buxom landlady.

'He's vera weel,' said the Widow Flockhart, 'but no naething sae weel-far'd as your colonel, ensign.'

'I wasna comparing them,' quoth Evan, 'nor was I speaking about his being weel-favoured; but only that Mr. Waverley looks clean-made and deliver, and like a proper lad o' his quarters, that will not cry barley in a brulzie. And, indeed, he's gleg aneuch at the broadsword and target. I hae played wi' him mysell at Glennaquoich, and sae has Vich Ian Vohr, often of a Sunday afternoon.'

'Lord forgie ye, Ensign Maccombich,' said the alarmed Presbyterian; 'I'm sure the colonel wad never do the like o' that!'

'Hout! hout! Mrs. Flockhart,' replied the ensign, 'we're young blude, ye ken; and young saints, auld deils.'

'But will ye fight wi' Sir John Cope the morn, Ensign Maccombich?' demanded Mrs. Flockhart of her guest.

'Troth I'se ensure him, an he'll bide us, Mrs. Flockhart,' replied the Gael.

'And will ye face thae tearing chields, the dragoons, Ensign Maccombich?' again inquired the landlady.

'Claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan, Mrs. Flockhart, and the deevil tak the shortest nails.'

'And will the colonel venture on the bagganets himsell?'

'Ye may swear it, Mrs. Flockhart; the very first man will he be, by Saint Phedar.'

'Merciful goodness! and if he's killed among the redcoats!' exclaimed the soft-hearted widow.

'Troth, if it should sae befall, Mrs. Flockhart, I ken ane that will no be living to weep for him. But we maun a' live the day, and have our dinner; and there's Vich Ian Vohr has packed his dorch, and Mr. Waverley's wearied wi' majoring yonder afore the muckle pier-glass; and that grey auld stoor carle, the Baron o' Bradwardine that shot young Ronald of Ballenkeiroch, he's coming down the close wi' that droghling coghling bailie body they ca' Macwhupple, just like the Laird o' Kittlegab's French cook, wi' his turnspit doggie trindling ahint him, and I am as hungry as a gled, my bonny dow; sae bid Kate set on the broo', and do ye put on your pinners, for ye ken Vich Ian Vohr winna sit down till ye be at the head o' the table;—and dinna forget the pint bottle o' brandy, my woman.'

This hint produced dinner. Mrs. Flockhart, smiling in her weeds like the sun through a mist, took the head of the table, thinking within herself, perhaps, that she cared not how long the rebellion lasted that brought her into company so much above her usual associates. She was supported by Waverley and the Baron, with the advantage of the Chieftain vis-a-vis. The men of peace and of war, that is, Bailie Macwheeble and Ensign Maccombich, after many profound conges to their superiors and each other, took their places on each side of the Chieftain. Their fare was excellent, time, place, and circumstances considered, and Fergus's spirits were extravagantly high. Regardless of danger, and sanguine from temper, youth, and ambition, he saw in imagination all his prospects crowned with success, and was totally indifferent to the probable alternative of a soldier's grave. The Baron apologized slightly for bringing Macwheeble. They had been providing, he said, for the expenses of the campaign. 'And, by my faith,' said the old man, 'as I think this will be my last, so I just end where I began: I hae evermore found the sinews of war, as a learned author calls the *caisse militaire*, mair difficult to come by than either its flesh, blood, or bones.'

'What! have you raised our only efficient body of cavalry and got ye none of the louis-d'or out of the Doutelle [Footnote: The Doutelle was an armed vessel which brought a small supply of money and arms from France for the use of the insurgents.] to help you?'

'No, Glennaquoich; cleverer fellows have been before me.'

'That's a scandal,' said the young Highlander; 'but you will share what is left of my subsidy; it will save you an anxious thought tonight, and will be all one tomorrow, for we shall all be provided for, one way or other, before the sun sets.' Waverley, blushing deeply, but with great earnestness, pressed the same request.

'I thank ye baith, my good lads,' said the Baron, 'but I will not infringe upon your peculium. Bailie Macwheeble has provided the sum which is necessary.'

Here the Bailie shifted and fidgeted about in his seat, and appeared extremely uneasy. At length, after several preliminary hems, and much tautological expression of his devotion to his honour's service, by night or day, living or dead, he began to insinuate, 'that the banks had removed a' their ready cash into the Castle; that, nae doubt, Sandie Goldie, the silversmith, would do mickle for his honour; but there was little time to get the wadset made out; and, doubtless, if his honour Glennaquoich or Mr. Wauverley could accommodate—'

'Let me hear of no such nonsense, sir,' said the Baron, in a tone which rendered Macwheeble mute, 'but proceed as we accorded before dinner, if it be your wish to remain in my service.'

To this peremptory order the Bailie, though he felt as if condemned to suffer a transfusion of blood from his own veins into those of the Baron, did not presume to make any reply. After fidgeting a little while longer, however, he addressed himself to Glennaquoich, and told him, if his honour had mair ready siller than was sufficient for his occasions in the field, he could put it out at use for his honour in safe hands and at great profit at this time.

At this proposal Fergus laughed heartily, and answered, when he had recovered his breath—'Many thanks, Bailie; but you must know, it is a general custom among us soldiers to make our landlady our banker. Here, Mrs. Flockhart,' said he, taking four or five broad pieces out of a well-filled purse and tossing the purse itself, with its remaining contents, into her apron, 'these will serve my occasions; do you take the rest. Be my banker if I live, and my executor if I die; but take care to give something to the Highland caillachs [Footnote: Old women, on whom devolved the duty of lamenting for the dead, which the Irish call *keening*.] that shall cry the coronach loudest for the last Vich Ian Vohr.'

'It is the *testamentum militare*,' quoth the Baron, 'whilk, among the Romans, was privilegiate to be nuncupative.' But the soft heart of Mrs. Flockhart was melted within her at the Chieftain's speech; she set up a lamentable blubbering, and positively refused to touch the bequest, which Fergus was therefore obliged to resume.

'Well, then,' said the Chief, 'if I fall, it will go to the grenadier that knocks my brains out, and I shall take care he works hard for it.'

Bailie Macwheeble was again tempted to put in his oar; for where cash was concerned he did not willingly remain silent. 'Perhaps he had better carry the gowd to Miss Mac-Ivor, in case of mortality or accidents of war. It might tak the form of a mortis causa donation in the young leddie's favour, and—wad cost but the scrape of a pen to mak it out.'

'The young lady,' said Fergus, 'should such an event happen, will have other matters to think of than these wretched louis-d'or.'

'True—undeniable—there's nae doubt o' that; but your honour kens that a full sorrow—'

'Is endurable by most folk more easily than a hungry one? True, Bailie, very true; and I believe there may even be some who would be consoled by such a reflection for the loss of the whole existing generation. But there is a sorrow which knows neither hunger nor thirst; and poor Flora—' He paused, and the whole company sympathised in his emotion.

The Baron's thoughts naturally reverted to the unprotected state of his daughter, and the big tear came to the veteran's eye. 'If I fall, Macwheeble, you have all my papers and know all my affairs; be just to Rose.'

The Bailie was a man of earthly mould, after all; a good deal of dirt and dross about him, undoubtedly, but some kindly and just feelings he had, especially where the Baron or his young mistress would be concerned. He set up a lamentable howl. 'If that doleful day should come, while Duncan Macwheeble had a boddle it should be Miss Rose's. He wald scroll for a plack the sheet or she kenn'd what it was to want; if indeed a' the bonnie baronie o' Bradwardine and Tully-Veolan, with the fortalice and manor-place thereof (he kept sobbing and whining at every pause), tofts, crofts, mosses, muirs—outfield, infield—buildings—orchards—dove-cots—with the right of net and coble in the water and loch of Veolan—teinds, parsonage and vicarage—annexis, connexis—rights of pasturage—feul, feal and divot—parts, pendicles, and pertinents whatsoever—(here he had recourse to the end of his long cravat to wipe his eyes, which overflowed, in spite of him, at the ideas which this technical jargon conjured up)—all as more fully described in the proper evidents and titles thereof—and lying within the parish of Bradwardine and the shire of Perth—if, as aforesaid, they must a' pass from my master's child to Inch-Grabbit, wha's a Whig and a Hanoverian, and be managed by his doer, Jamie Howie, wha's no fit to be a birlieman, let be a bailie—'

The beginning of this lamentation really had something affecting, but the conclusion rendered laughter irresistible. 'Never mind, Bailie,' said Ensign Maccombich, 'for the gude auld times of rugging and riving (pulling and tearing) are come back again, an' Sneckus Mac-Snackus (meaning, probably, annexis, connexis), and a' the rest of your friends, maun gie place to the largest claymore.'

'And that claymore shall be ours, Bailie,' said the Chieftain, who saw that Macwheeble looked very blank at this intimation.

'We'll give them the metal our mountain affords,

Lillibulero, bullen a la,

And in place of broad-pieces, we'll pay with broadswords,

Lero, lero, etc.

With duns and with debts we will soon clear our score,

Lillibulero, etc.

For the man that's thus paid will crave payment no more,

Lero, lero, etc.

[Footnote: These lines, or something like them, occur in an old magazine of the period.]

But come, Bailie, be not cast down; drink your wine with a joyous heart; the Baron shall return safe and victorious to Tully-Veolan, and unite Killancureit's lairdship with his own, since the cowardly half-bred swine will not turn out for the Prince like a gentleman.'

'To be sure, they lie maist ewest,' said the Bailie, wiping his eyes, 'and should naturally fa' under the same factory.'

'And I,' proceeded the Chieftain, 'shall take care of myself, too; for you must know, I have to complete a good work here, by bringing Mrs. Flockhart into the bosom of the Catholic church, or at least half way, and that is to your Episcopal meeting-house. O Baron! if you heard her fine counter-tenor admonishing Kate and Matty in the morning, you, who understand music, would tremble at the idea of hearing her shriek in the psalmody of Haddo's Hole.'

'Lord forgie you, colonel, how ye rin on! But I hope your honours will tak tea before ye gang to the palace, and I maun gang and mask it for you.'

So saying, Mrs. Flockhart left the gentlemen to their own conversation, which, as might be supposed, turned chiefly upon the approaching events of the campaign.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BALL

Ensign MacCombich having gone to the Highland camp upon duty, and Bailie Macwheeble having retired to digest his dinner and Evan Dhu's intimation of martial law in some blind change-house, Waverley, with the Baron and the Chieftain, proceeded to Holyrood House. The two last were in full tide of spirits, and the Baron rallied in his way our hero upon the handsome figure which his new dress displayed to advantage. 'If you have any design upon the heart of a bonny Scotch lassie, I would premonish you, when you address her, to remember and quote the words of Virgilius:—

Nunc insanus amor duri me Martis in armis,

Tela inter media atque adversos detinet hostes;

whilk verses Robertson of Struan, Chief of the Clan Donnochy (unless the claims of Lude ought to be preferred primo loco), has thus elegantly rendered:—

For cruel love had gartan'd low my leg,

And clad my hurdies in a philabeg.

Although, indeed, ye wear the trews, a garment whilk I approve maist of the twa, as mair ancient and seemly.' 'Or rather,' said Fergus, 'hear my song:—

She wadna hae a Lowland laird,

Nor be an English lady;

But she's away with Duncan Grame,

And he's row'd her in his plaidy.'

By this time they reached the palace of Holyrood, and were announced respectively as they entered the apartments.

It is but too well known how many gentlemen of rank, education, and fortune took a concern in the ill-fated and desperate undertaking of 1745. The ladies, also, of Scotland very generally espoused the cause of the gallant and handsome young Prince, who threw himself upon the mercy of his countrymen rather like a hero of romance than a calculating politician. It is not, therefore, to be wondered that Edward, who had spent the greater part of his life in the solemn seclusion of Waverley-Honour, should have been dazzled at the liveliness and elegance of the scene now exhibited in the long deserted halls of the Scottish palace. The accompaniments, indeed, fell short of splendour, being such as the confusion and hurry of the time admitted; still, however, the general effect was striking, and, the rank of the company considered, might well be called brilliant.

It was not long before the lover's eye discovered the object of his attachment. Flora Mac-Ivor was in the act of returning to her seat, near the top of the room, with Rose Bradwardine by her side. Among much elegance and beauty, they had attracted a great degree of the public attention, being certainly two of the handsomest women present. The Prince took much notice of both, particularly of Flora, with whom he danced, a preference which she probably owed to her foreign education and command of the French and Italian languages.

When the bustle attending the conclusion of the dance permitted, Edward almost intuitively followed Fergus to the place where Miss Mac-Ivor was seated. The sensation of hope with which he had nursed his affection in absence of the beloved object seemed to vanish in her presence, and, like one striving to recover the particulars of a forgotten dream, he would have given the world at that moment to have recollected the grounds on which he had founded expectations which now seemed so delusive. He accompanied Fergus with downcast eyes, tingling ears, and the feelings of the criminal who, while the melancholy cart moves slowly through the crowds that have assembled to behold his execution, receives no clear sensation either from the noise which fills his ears or the tumult on which he casts his wandering look. Flora seemed a little—a very little—affected and discomposed at his approach. 'I bring you an adopted son of Ivor,' said Fergus.

'And I receive him as a second brother,' replied Flora.

There was a slight emphasis on the word, which would have escaped every ear but one that was feverish with apprehension. It was, however, distinctly marked, and, combined with her whole tone and manner, plainly intimated, 'I will never think of Mr. Waverley as a more intimate connexion.' Edward stopped, bowed, and looked at Fergus, who bit his lip, a movement of anger which proved that he also had put a sinister interpretation on the reception which his sister had given his friend. 'This, then, is an end of my day-dream!' Such was Waverley's first thought, and it was so exquisitely painful as to banish from his cheek every drop of blood.

'Good God!' said Rose Bradwardine, 'he is not yet recovered!'

These words, which she uttered with great emotion, were overheard by the Chevalier himself, who stepped hastily forward, and, taking Waverley by the hand, inquired kindly after his health, and added that he wished to speak with him. By a strong and sudden effort; which the circumstances rendered indispensable, Waverley recovered himself so far as to follow the Chevalier in silence to a recess in the apartment.

Here the Prince detained him some time, asking various questions about the great Tory and Catholic families of England, their connexions, their influence, and the state of their affections towards the house of Stuart. To these queries Edward could not at any time have given more than general answers, and it may be supposed that, in the present state of his feelings, his responses were indistinct even to confusion. The Chevalier smiled once or twice at the incongruity of his replies, but continued the same style of conversation, although he found himself obliged to occupy the principal share of it, until he perceived that Waverley had recovered his presence of mind. It is probable that this long audience was partly meant to further the idea which the Prince desired should be entertained among his followers, that Waverley was a character of political influence. But it appeared, from his concluding expressions, that he had a different and good-natured motive, personal to our hero, for prolonging the conference. 'I cannot resist the temptation,' he said, 'of boasting of my own discretion as a lady's confidant. You see, Mr. Waverley, that I know all, and I assure you I am deeply interested in the affair. But, my good young friend, you must put a more severe restraint upon your feelings. There are many here whose eyes can see as clearly as mine, but the prudence of whose tongues may not be equally trusted.'

So saying, he turned easily away and joined a circle of officers at a few paces' distance, leaving Waverley to meditate upon his parting expression, which, though not intelligible to him in its whole purport, was sufficiently so in the caution which the last word recommended. Making, therefore, an effort to show himself worthy of the interest which his new master had expressed, by instant obedience to his recommendation, he walked up to the spot where Flora and Miss Bradwardine were still seated, and having made his compliments to the latter, he succeeded, even beyond his own expectation, in entering into conversation upon general topics.

If, my dear reader, thou hast ever happened to take post-horses at—or at—(one at least of which blanks, or more probably both, you will be able to fill up from an inn near your own residence), you must have observed, and doubtless with sympathetic pain, the reluctant agony with which the poor jades at first apply their galled necks to the collars of the harness. But when the irresistible arguments of the post-boy have prevailed upon them to proceed a mile or two, they will become callous to the first sensation; and being warm in the harness, as the said post-boy may term it, proceed as if their withers were altogether unwrung. This simile so much corresponds with the state of Waverley's feelings in the course of this memorable evening, that I prefer it (especially as being, I trust, wholly original) to any more splendid illustration with which Byshe's 'Art of Poetry' might supply me.

Exertion, like virtue, is its own reward; and our hero had, moreover, other stimulating motives for persevering in a display of affected composure and indifference to Flora's obvious unkindness. Pride, which supplies its caustic as an useful, though severe, remedy for the wounds of affection, came rapidly to his aid. Distinguished by the favour of a prince; destined, he had room to hope, to play a conspicuous part in the revolution which awaited a mighty kingdom; excelling, probably, in mental acquirements, and equalling at least in personal accomplishments, most of the noble and distinguished persons with whom he was now ranked; young, wealthy, and high-born,—could he, or ought he, to droop beneath the frown of a capricious beauty?

O nymph, unrelenting and cold as thou art,

My bosom is proud as thine own.

With the feeling expressed in these beautiful lines (which, however, were not then written), [Footnote: They occur in Miss Seward's fine verses, beginning—"To thy rocks, stormy Lannow, adieu."] Waverley determined upon convincing Flora that he was not to be depressed by a rejection in which his vanity whispered that perhaps she did her own prospects as much injustice as his. And, to aid this change of feeling, there lurked the secret and unacknowledged hope that she might learn to prize his affection more highly, when she did not conceive it to be altogether within her own choice to attract or repulse it. There was a mystic tone of encouragement, also, in the Chevalier's words, though he feared they only referred to the wishes of Fergus in favour of an union between him and his sister. But the whole circumstances of time, place, and incident combined at once to awaken his imagination and to call upon him for a manly and decisive tone of conduct, leaving to fate to dispose of the issue. Should he appear to be the only one sad and disheartened on the eve of battle, how greedily would the tale be commented upon by the slander which had been already but too busy with his fame! Never, never, he internally resolved, shall my unprovoked enemies possess such an advantage over my reputation.

Under the influence of these mixed sensations, and cheered at times by a smile of intelligence and approbation from the Prince as he passed the group, Waverley exerted his powers of fancy, animation, and eloquence, and attracted the general admiration of the company. The conversation gradually assumed the tone best qualified for the display of his talents and acquisitions. The gaiety of the evening was exalted in character, rather than checked, by the approaching dangers of the morrow. All nerves were strung for the future, and prepared to enjoy the present. This mood of mind is highly favourable for the exercise of the powers of imagination, for poetry, and for that eloquence which is allied to poetry. Waverley, as we have elsewhere observed, possessed at times a wonderful flow of rhetoric; and on the present occasion, he touched more than once the higher notes of feeling, and then again ran off in a wild voluntary of fanciful mirth. He was supported and excited by kindred spirits, who felt the same impulse of mood and time; and even those of more cold and calculating habits were hurried along by the torrent. Many ladies declined the dance, which still went forward, and under various pretences joined the party to which the 'handsome young Englishman' seemed to have attached himself. He was presented to several of the first rank, and his manners, which for the present were altogether free from the bashful restraint by which, in a moment of less excitation, they were usually clouded, gave universal delight.

Flora Mac-Ivor appeared to be the only female present who regarded him with a degree of coldness and reserve; yet even she could not suppress a sort of wonder at talents which, in the course of their acquaintance, she had never seen displayed with equal brilliancy and impressive effect. I do not know whether she might not feel a momentary regret at having taken so decisive a resolution upon the addresses of a lover who seemed fitted so well to fill a high place in the highest stations of society. Certainly she had hitherto accounted among the incurable deficiencies of Edward's disposition the mauvaise honte which, as she had been educated in the first foreign circles, and was little acquainted with the shyness of English manners, was in her opinion too nearly related to timidity and imbecility of disposition. But if a passing wish occurred that Waverley could have rendered himself uniformly thus amiable and attractive, its influence was momentary; for circumstances had arisen since they met which rendered in her eyes the resolution she had formed respecting him final and irrevocable.

With opposite feelings Rose Bradwardine bent her whole soul to listen. She felt a secret triumph at the public tribute paid to one whose merit she had learned to prize too early and too fondly. Without a thought of jealousy, without a feeling of fear, pain, or doubt, and undisturbed by a single selfish consideration, she resigned herself to the pleasure of observing the general murmur of applause. When Waverley spoke, her ear was exclusively filled with his voice, when others answered, her eye took its turn of observation, and seemed to watch his reply. Perhaps the delight which she experienced in the course of that evening, though transient, and followed by much sorrow, was in its nature the most pure and disinterested which the human mind is capable of enjoying.

'Baron,' said the Chevalier, 'I would not trust my mistress in the company of your young friend. He is really, though perhaps somewhat romantic, one of the most fascinating young men whom I have ever seen.'

'And by my honour, sir,' replied the Baron, 'the lad can sometimes be as dowff as a sexagenary like myself. If your Royal Highness had seen him dreaming and dozing about the banks of Tully-Veolan like an hypochondriac person, or, as Burton's "Anatomia" hath it, a phrenesiatic or lethargic patient, you would wonder where he hath sae suddenly acquired all this fine sprack festivity and jocularly.'

'Truly,' said Fergus Mac-Ivor, 'I think it can only be the inspiration of the tartans; for, though Waverley be always a young fellow of sense and honour, I have hitherto often found him a very absent and inattentive companion.'

'We are the more obliged to him,' said the Prince, 'for having reserved for this evening qualities which even such intimate friends had not discovered. But come, gentlemen, the night advances, and the business of tomorrow must be early thought upon. Each take charge of his fair partner, and honour a small refreshment with your company.'

He led the way to another suite of apartments, and assumed the seat and canopy at the head of a long range of tables with an air of dignity, mingled with courtesy, which well became his high birth and lofty pretensions. An hour had hardly flown away when the musicians played the signal for parting so well known in Scotland. [Footnote: Which is, or was wont to be, the old air of 'Good-night and joy be wi' you a'.]

'Good-night, then,' said the Chevalier, rising; 'goodnight, and joy be with you! Good-night, fair ladies, who have so highly honoured a proscribed and banished Prince! Good-night, my brave friends; may the happiness we have this evening experienced be an omen of our return to these our paternal halls, speedily and in triumph, and of many and many future meetings of mirth and pleasure in the palace of Holyrood!'

When the Baron of Bradwardine afterwards mentioned this adieu of the Chevalier, he never failed to repeat, in a melancholy tone,

'Audiit, et voti Phoebus succedere partem

Mente dedit; partem volucres dispersit in auras;

which,' as he added, 'is weel rendered into English metre by my friend Bangour:—

Ae half the prayer wi' Phoebus grace did find,

The t'other half he whistled down the wind.'

CHAPTER XV

THE MARCH

The conflicting passions and exhausted feelings of Waverley had resigned him to late but sound repose. He was dreaming of Glennaquoich, and had transferred to the halls of Ian nan Chaistel the festal train which so lately graced those of Holyrood. The pibroch too was distinctly heard; and this at least was no delusion, for the 'proud step of the chief piper' of the 'chlain Mac-Ivor' was perambulating the court before the door of his Chieftain's quarters, and as Mrs. Flockhart, apparently no friend to his minstrelsy, was pleased to observe, 'garring the very stane-and-lime wa's dingle wi' his screeching.' Of course it soon became too powerful for Waverley's dream, with which it had at first rather harmonised.

The sound of Callum's brogues in his apartment (for Mac-Ivor had again assigned Waverley to his care) was the next note of parting. 'Winna yer honour bang up? Vich Ian Vohr and ta Prince are awa to the lang green glen ahint the clachan, tat they ca' the King's Park, [Footnote: The main body of the Highland army encamped, or rather bivouacked, in that part of the King's Park which lies towards the village of Duddingston.] and mony ane's on his ain shanks the day that will be carried on ither folk's ere night.'

Waverley sprung up, and, with Callum's assistance and instructions, adjusted his tartans in proper costume. Callum told him also, 'tat his leather dirlach wi' the lock on her was come frae Doune, and she was awa again in the wain wi' Vich Ian Vohr's walisie.'

By this periphrasis Waverley readily apprehended his portmanteau was intended. He thought upon the mysterious packet of the maid of the cavern, which seemed always to escape him when within his very grasp. But this was no time for indulgence of curiosity; and having declined Mrs. Flockhart's compliment of a MORNING, i.e. a matutinal dram, being probably the only man in the Chevalier's army by whom such a courtesy would have been rejected, he made his adieu and departed with Callum.

'Callum,' said he, as they proceeded down a dirty close to gain the southern skirts of the Canongate, 'what shall I do for a horse?'

'Ta deil ane ye maun think o',' said Callum. 'Vich Ian Vohr's marching on foot at the head o' his kin (not to say ta Prince, wha does the like), wi' his target on his shoulder; and ye maun e'en be neighbour-like.'

'And so I will, Callum, give me my target; so, there we are fixed. How does it look?'

'Like the bra' Highlander tat's painted on the board afore the mickle change-house they ca' Luckie Middlemass's,' answered Callum; meaning, I must observe, a high compliment, for in his opinion Luckie Middlemass's sign was an exquisite specimen of art. Waverley, however, not feeling the full force of this polite simile, asked him no further questions.

Upon extricating themselves from the mean and dirty suburbs of the metropolis, and emerging into the open air, Waverley felt a renewal of both health and spirits, and turned his recollection with firmness upon the events of the preceding evening, and with hope and resolution towards those of the approaching day.

When he had surmounted a small craggy eminence called St. Leonard's Hill, the King's Park, or the hollow between the mountain of Arthur's Seat and the rising grounds on which the southern part of Edinburgh is now built, lay beneath him, and displayed a singular and animating prospect. It was occupied by the army of the Highlanders, now in the act of preparing for their march. Waverley had already seen something of the kind at the hunting-match which he attended with Fergus Mac-Ivor; but this was on a scale of much greater magnitude, and incomparably deeper interest. The rocks, which formed the background of the scene, and the very sky itself, rang with the clang of the bagpipers, summoning forth, each with his appropriate pibroch, his chieftain and clan. The mountaineers, rousing themselves from their couch under the canopy of heaven with the hum and bustle of a confused and irregular multitude, like bees alarmed and arming in their hives, seemed to possess all the pliability of movement fitted to execute military manoeuvres. Their motions appeared spontaneous and confused, but the result was order and regularity; so that a general must have praised the conclusion, though a martinet might have ridiculed the method by which it was attained.

The sort of complicated medley created by the hasty arrangements of the various clans under their respective banners, for the purpose of getting into the order of march, was in itself a gay and lively spectacle. They had no tents to strike having generally, and by choice, slept upon the open field, although the autumn was now waning and the nights began to be frosty. For a little space, while they were getting into order, there was exhibited a changing, fluctuating, and confused appearance of waving tartans and floating plumes, and of banners displaying the proud gathering word of Clanronald, Gairn Coheriga (Gainsay who dares), Loch-Sloy, the watchword of the MacFarlanes; Forth, fortune, and fill the fetters, the motto of the Marquis of Tullibardine; Bydand, that of Lord Lewis Gordon, and the appropriate signal words and emblems of many other chieftains and clans.

At length the mixed and wavering multitude arranged themselves into a narrow and dusky column of great length, stretching through the whole extent of the valley. In the front of the column the standard of the Chevalier was displayed, bearing a red cross upon a white ground, with the motto Tandem Triumphans. The few cavalry, being chiefly Lowland gentry, with their domestic servants and retainers, formed the advanced guard of the army; and their standards, of which they had rather too many in respect of their numbers, were seen waving upon the extreme verge of the horizon. Many horsemen of this body, among whom Waverley accidentally remarked Balmawhapple and his lieutenant, Jinker (which last, however, had been reduced, with several others, by the advice of the Baron of Bradwardine, to the situation of what he called reformed officers, or reformadoes), added to the liveliness, though by no means to the regularity, of the scene, by galloping their horses as fast forward as the press would permit, to join their proper station in the van. The fascinations of the Circes of the High Street, and the potatoes of strength with which they had been drenched over night, had probably detained these heroes within the walls of Edinburgh somewhat later than was consistent with their morning duty. Of such loiterers, the prudent took the longer and circuitous, but more open, route to attain their place in the march, by keeping at some distance from the infantry, and making their way through the inclosures to the right, at the expense of leaping over or pulling down the drystone fences. The irregular appearance and vanishing of these small parties of horsemen, as well as the confusion occasioned by those who endeavoured, though generally without effect, to press to the front through the crowd of Highlanders, maugre their curses, oaths, and opposition, added to the picturesque wildness what it took from the military regularity of the scene.

While Waverley gazed upon this remarkable spectacle, rendered yet more impressive by the occasional discharge of cannon-shot from the Castle at the Highland guards as they were withdrawn from its vicinity to join their main body, Callum, with his usual freedom of interference, reminded him that Vich Ian Vohr's folk were nearly at the head of the column of march which was still distant, and that 'they would gang very fast after the cannon fired.' Thus admonished, Waverley walked briskly forward, yet often casting a glance upon the darksome clouds of warriors who were collected before and beneath him. A nearer view, indeed, rather diminished the effect impressed on the mind by the more distant appearance of the army. The leading men of each clan were well armed with broad-sword, target, and fusee, to which all added the dirk, and most the steel pistol. But these consisted of gentlemen, that is, relations of the chief, however distant, and who had an immediate title to his countenance and protection. Finer and hardier men could not have been selected out of any army in Christendom; while the free and independent habits which each possessed, and which each was yet so well taught to subject to the command of his chief, and the peculiar mode of discipline adopted in Highland warfare, rendered them equally formidable by their individual courage and high spirit, and from their rational conviction of the necessity of acting in unison, and of giving their national mode of attack the fullest opportunity of success.

But, in a lower rank to these, there were found individuals of an inferior description, the common peasantry of the Highland country, who, although they did not allow themselves to be so called, and claimed often, with apparent truth, to be of more ancient descent than the masters whom they served, bore, nevertheless, the livery of extreme penury, being indifferently accoutred, and worse armed, half naked, stunted in growth, and miserable in aspect. Each important clan had some of those Helots attached to them: thus, the MacCouls, though tracing their descent from Comhal, the father of Finn or Fingal, were a sort of Gibeonites, or hereditary servants to the Stewarts of Appin; the Macbeths, descended from the unhappy monarch of that name, were subjects to the Morays and clan Donnochy, or Robertsons of Athole; and many other examples might be given, were it not for the risk of hurting any pride of clanship which may yet be left, and thereby drawing a Highland tempest into the shop of my publisher. Now these same Helots, though forced into the field by the arbitrary authority of the chieftains under whom they hewed wood and drew water, were in general very sparingly fed, ill dressed, and worse armed. The latter circumstance was indeed owing chiefly to the general disarming act, which had been carried into effect ostensibly through the whole Highlands, although most of the chieftains contrived to elude its influence by retaining the weapons of their own immediate clansmen, and delivering up those of less value, which they collected from these inferior satellites. It followed, as a matter of course, that, as we have already hinted, many of these poor fellows were brought to the field in a very wretched condition.

From this it happened that, in bodies, the van of which were admirably well armed in their own fashion, the rear resembled actual banditti. Here was a pole-axe, there a sword without a scabbard; here a gun without a lock, there a scythe set straight upon a pole; and some had only their dirks, and bludgeons or stakes pulled out of hedges. The grim, uncombed, and wild appearance of these men, most of whom gazed with all the admiration of ignorance upon the most ordinary productions of domestic art, created surprise in the Lowlands, but it also created terror. So little was the condition of the Highlands known at that late period that the character and appearance of their population, while thus sallying forth as military adventurers, conveyed to the South-Country Lowlanders as much surprise as if an invasion of African Negroes or Esquimaux Indians had issued forth from the northern mountains of their own native country. It cannot therefore be wondered if Waverley, who had hitherto judged of the Highlanders generally from the samples which the policy of Fergus had from time to time exhibited, should have felt damped and astonished at the daring attempt of a body not then exceeding four thousand men, and of whom not above half the number, at the utmost, were armed, to change the fate and alter the dynasty of the British kingdoms.

As he moved along the column, which still remained stationary, an iron gun, the only piece of artillery possessed by the army which meditated so important a revolution, was fired as the signal of march. The Chevalier had expressed a wish to leave this useless piece of ordnance behind him; but, to his surprise, the Highland chiefs interposed to solicit that it might accompany their march, pleading the prejudices of their followers, who, little accustomed to artillery, attached a degree of absurd importance to this field-piece, and expected it would contribute essentially to a victory which they could only owe to their own muskets and broadswords. Two or three French artillerymen were therefore appointed to the management of this military engine, which was drawn along by a string of Highland ponies, and was, after all, only used for the purpose of firing signals. [Footnote: See Note 31.]

No sooner was its voice heard upon the present occasion than the whole line was in motion. A wild cry of joy from the advancing battalions rent the air, and was then lost in the shrill clangour of the bagpipes, as the sound of these, in their turn, was partially drowned by the heavy tread of so many men put at once into motion. The banners glittered and shook as they moved forward, and the horse hastened to occupy their station as the advanced guard, and to push on reconnoitring parties to ascertain and report the motions of the enemy. They vanished from Waverley's eye as they wheeled round the base of Arthur's Seat, under the remarkable ridge of basaltic rocks which fronts the little lake of Duddingston.

The infantry followed in the same direction, regulating their pace by another body which occupied a road more to the southward. It cost Edward some exertion of activity to attain the place which Fergus's followers occupied in the line of march.

CHAPTER XVI

AN INCIDENT GIVES RISE TO UNAVALING REFLECTIONS

When Waverley reached that part of the column which was filled by the clan of Mac-Ivor, they halted, formed, and received him with a triumphant flourish upon the bagpipes and a loud shout of the men, most of whom knew him personally, and were delighted to see him in the dress of their country and of their sept. 'You shout,' said a Highlander of a neighbouring clan to Evan Dhu, 'as if the Chieftain were just come to your head.'

'Mar e Bran is e a brathair, If it be not Bran, it is Bran's brother,' was the proverbial reply of Maccombich. [Footnote: Bran, the well-known dog of Fingal, is often the theme of Highland proverb as well as song.]

'O, then, it is the handsome Sassenach duinhe-wassel that is to be married to Lady Flora?'

'That may be, or it may not be; and it is neither your matter nor mine, Gregor.'

Fergus advanced to embrace the volunteer, and afford him a warm and hearty welcome; but he thought it necessary to apologize for the diminished numbers of his battalion (which did not exceed three hundred men) by observing he had sent a good many out upon parties.

The real fact, however, was, that the defection of Donald Bean Lean had deprived him of at least thirty hardy fellows, whose services he had fully reckoned upon, and that many of his occasional adherents had been recalled by their several chiefs to the standards to which they most properly owed their allegiance. The rival chief of the great northern branch, also, of his own clan had mustered his people, although he had not yet declared either for the government or for the Chevalier, and by his intrigues had in some degree diminished the force with which Fergus took the field. To make amends for these disappointments, it was universally admitted that the followers of Vich Ian Vohr, in point of appearance, equipment, arms, and dexterity in using them, equalled the most choice troops which followed the standard of Charles Edward. Old Ballenkeiroch acted as his major; and, with the other officers who had known Waverley when at Glennaquoich, gave our hero a cordial reception, as the sharer of their future dangers and expected honours.

The route pursued by the Highland army, after leaving the village of Duddingston, was for some time the common post-road betwixt Edinburgh and Haddington, until they crossed the Esk at Musselburgh, when, instead of keeping the low grounds towards the sea, they turned more inland, and occupied the brow of the eminence called Carberry Hill, a place already distinguished in Scottish history as the spot where the lovely Mary surrendered herself to her insurgent subjects. This direction was chosen because the Chevalier had received notice that the army of the government, arriving by sea from Aberdeen, had landed at Dunbar, and quartered the night before to the west of Haddington, with the intention of falling down towards the sea-side, and approaching Edinburgh by the lower coast-road. By keeping the height, which overhung that road in many places, it was hoped the Highlanders might find an opportunity of attacking them to advantage. The army therefore halted upon the ridge of Carberry Hill, both to refresh the soldiers and as a central situation from which their march could be directed to any point that the motions of the enemy might render most advisable. While they remained in this position a messenger arrived in haste to desire Mac-Ivor to come to the Prince, adding that their advanced post had had a skirmish with some of the enemy's cavalry, and that the Baron of Bradwardine had sent in a few prisoners.

Waverley walked forward out of the line to satisfy his curiosity, and soon observed five or six of the troopers who, covered with dust, had galloped in to announce that the enemy were in full march westward along the coast. Passing still a little farther on, he was struck with a groan which issued from a hovel. He approached the spot, and heard a voice, in the provincial English of his native county, which endeavoured, though frequently interrupted by pain, to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

The voice of distress always found a ready answer in our hero's bosom. He entered the hovel, which seemed to be intended for what is called, in the pastoral counties of Scotland, a smearing-house; and in its obscurity Edward could only at first discern a sort of red bundle; for those who had stripped the wounded man of his arms and part of his clothes had left him the dragoon-cloak in which he was enveloped.

'For the love of God,' said the wounded man, as he heard Waverley's step, 'give me a single drop of water!'

'You shall have it,' answered Waverley, at the same time raising him in his arms, bearing him to the door of the hut, and giving him some drink from his flask.

'I should know that voice,' said the man; but looking on Waverley's dress with a bewildered look—'no, this is not the young squire!'

This was the common phrase by which Edward was distinguished on the estate of Waverley-Honour, and the sound now thrilled to his heart with the thousand recollections which the well-known accents of his native country had already contributed to awaken. 'Houghton!' he said, gazing on the ghastly features which death was fast disfiguring, 'can this be you?'

'I never thought to hear an English voice again,' said the wounded man; 'they left me to live or die here as I could, when they found I would say nothing about the strength of the regiment. But, O squire! how could you stay from us so long, and let us be tempted by that fiend of the pit, Ruffin? we should have followed you through flood and fire, to be sure.'

'Ruffin! I assure you, Houghton, you have been vilely imposed upon.'

'I often thought so,' said Houghton, 'though they showed us your very seal; and so Tims was shot and I was reduced to the ranks.'

'Do not exhaust your strength in speaking,' said Edward; 'I will get you a surgeon presently.'

He saw Mac-Ivor approaching, who was now returning from headquarters, where he had attended a council of war, and hastened to meet him. 'Brave news!' shouted the Chief; 'we shall be at it in less than two hours. The Prince has put himself at the head of the advance, and, as he drew his sword, called out, "My friends, I have thrown away the scabbard." Come, Waverley, we move instantly.'

'A moment—a moment; this poor prisoner is dying; where shall I find a surgeon?'

'Why, where should you? We have none, you know, but two or three French fellows, who, I believe, are little better than *garçons apothecaires*.'

'But the man will bleed to death.'

'Poor fellow!' said Fergus, in a momentary fit of compassion; then instantly added, 'But it will be a thousand men's fate before night; so come along.'

'I cannot; I tell you he is a son of a tenant of my uncle's.'

'O, if he's a follower of yours he must be looked to; I'll send Callum to you; but *diaoul! ceade millia mottigheart*,' continued the impatient Chieftain, 'what made an old soldier like Bradwardine send dying men here to cumber us?'

Callum came with his usual alertness; and, indeed, Waverley rather gained than lost in the opinion of the Highlanders by his anxiety about the wounded man. They would not have understood the general philanthropy which rendered it almost impossible for Waverley to have passed any person in such distress; but, as apprehending that the sufferer was one of his *following* they unanimously allowed that Waverley's conduct was that of a kind and considerate chieftain, who merited the attachment of his people. In about a quarter of an hour poor Humphrey breathed his last, praying his young master, when he returned to Waverley-Honour, to be kind to old Job Houghton and his dame, and conjuring him not to fight with these wild petticoat-men against old England.

When his last breath was drawn, Waverley, who had beheld with sincere sorrow, and no slight tinge of remorse, the final agonies of mortality, now witnessed for the first time, commanded Callum to remove the body into the hut. This the young Highlander performed, not without examining the pockets of the defunct, which, however, he remarked had been pretty well spunged. He took the cloak, however, and proceeding with the provident caution of a spaniel hiding a bone, concealed it among some furze and carefully marked the spot, observing that, if he chanced to return that way, it would be an excellent rokelay for his auld mother Elspat.

It was by a considerable exertion that they regained their place in the marching column, which was now moving rapidly forward to occupy the high grounds above the village of Tranent, between which and the sea lay the purposed march of the opposite army.

This melancholy interview with his late sergeant forced many unavailing and painful reflections upon Waverley's mind. It was clear from the confession of the man that Colonel Gardiner's proceedings had been strictly warranted, and even rendered indispensable, by the steps taken in Edward's name to induce the soldiers of his troop to mutiny. The circumstance of the seal he now, for the first time, recollected, and that he had lost it in the cavern of the robber, Bean Lean. That the artful villain had secured it, and used it as the means of carrying on an intrigue in the regiment for his own purposes, was sufficiently evident; and Edward had now little doubt that in the packet placed in his portmanteau by his daughter he should find farther light upon his proceedings. In the meanwhile the repeated expostulation of Houghton—'Ah, squire, why did you leave us?' rung like a knell in his ears.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have indeed acted towards you with thoughtless cruelty. I brought you from your paternal fields, and the protection of a generous and kind landlord, and when I had subjected you to all the rigour of military discipline, I shunned to bear my own share of the burden, and wandered from the duties I had undertaken, leaving alike those whom it was my business to protect, and my own reputation, to suffer under the artifices of villainy. O, indolence and indecision of mind, if not in yourselves vices—to how much exquisite misery and mischief do you frequently prepare the way!'

CHAPTER XVII

THE EVE OF BATTLE

Although the Highlanders marched on very fast, the sun was declining when they arrived upon the brow of those high grounds which command an open and extensive plain stretching northward to the sea, on which are situated, but at a considerable distance from each other, the small villages of Seaton and Cockenzie, and the larger one of Preston. One of the low coastroads to Edinburgh passed through this plain, issuing upon it from the enclosures of Seaton House, and at the town or village of Preston again entering the denies of an enclosed country. By this way the English general had chosen to approach the metropolis, both as most commodious for his cavalry, and being probably of opinion that by doing so he would meet in front with the Highlanders advancing from Edinburgh in the opposite direction. In this he was mistaken; for the sound judgment of the Chevalier, or of those to whose advice he listened, left the direct passage free, but occupied the strong ground by which it was overlooked and commanded.

When the Highlanders reached the heights above the plain described, they were immediately formed in array of battle along the brow of the hill. Almost at the same instant the van of the English appeared issuing from among the trees and enclosures of Seaton, with the purpose of occupying the level plain between the high ground and the sea; the space which divided the armies being only about half a mile in breadth. Waverley could plainly see the squadrons of dragoons issue, one after another, from the defiles, with their videttes in front, and form upon the plain, with their front opposed to that of the Prince's army. They were followed by a train of field-pieces, which, when they reached the flank of the dragoons, were also brought into line and pointed against the heights. The march was continued by three or four regiments of infantry marching in open column, their fixed bayonets showing like successive hedges of steel, and their arms glancing like lightning, as, at a signal given, they also at once wheeled up, and were placed in direct opposition to the Highlanders. A second train of artillery, with another regiment of horse, closed the long march, and formed on the left flank of the infantry, the whole line facing southward.

While the English army went through these evolutions, the Highlanders showed equal promptitude and zeal for battle. As fast as the clans came upon the ridge which fronted their enemy, they were formed into line, so that both armies got into complete order of battle at the same moment. When this was accomplished, the Highlanders set up a tremendous yell, which was re-echoed by the heights behind them. The regulars, who were in high spirits, returned a loud shout of defiance, and fired one or two of their cannon upon an advanced post of the Highlanders. The latter displayed great earnestness to proceed instantly to the attack, Evan Dhu urging to Fergus, by way of argument, that 'the SIDIER ROY was tottering like an egg upon a staff, and that they had a' the vantage of the onset, for even a haggis (God bless her!) could charge down hill.'

But the ground through which the mountaineers must have descended, although not of great extent, was impracticable in its character, being not only marshy but intersected with walls of dry stone, and traversed in its whole length by a very broad and deep ditch, circumstances which must have given the musketry of the regulars dreadful advantages before the mountaineers could have used their swords, on which they were taught to rely. The authority of the commanders was therefore interposed to curb the impetuosity of the Highlanders, and only a few marksmen were sent down the descent to skirmish with the enemy's advanced posts and to reconnoitre the ground.

Here, then, was a military spectacle of no ordinary interest or usual occurrence. The two armies, so different in aspect and discipline, yet each admirably trained in its own peculiar mode of war, upon whose conflict the temporary fate at least of Scotland appeared to depend, now faced each other like two gladiators in the arena, each meditating upon the mode of attacking their enemy. The leading officers and the general's staff of each army could be distinguished in front of their lines, busied with spy-glasses to watch each other's motions, and occupied in despatching the orders and receiving the intelligence conveyed by the aides-de-camp and orderly men, who gave life to the scene by galloping along in different directions, as if the fate of the day depended upon the speed of their horses. The space between the armies was at times occupied by the partial and irregular contest of individual sharp-shooters, and a hat or bonnet was occasionally seen to fall, as a wounded man was borne off by his comrades. These, however, were but trifling skirmishes, for it suited the views of neither party to advance in that direction. From the neighbouring hamlets the peasantry cautiously showed themselves, as if watching the issue of the expected engagement; and at no great distance in the bay were two square-rigged vessels, bearing the English flag, whose tops and yards were crowded with less timid spectators.

When this awful pause had lasted for a short time, Fergus, with another chieftain, received orders to detach their clans towards the village of Preston, in order to threaten the right flank of Cope's army and compel him to a change of position. To enable him to execute these orders, the Chief of Glennaquoich occupied the church-yard of Tranent, a commanding situation, and a convenient place, as Evan Dhu remarked, 'for any gentleman who might have the misfortune to be killed, and chanced to be curious about Christian burial.' To check or dislodge this party, the English general detached two guns, escorted by a strong party of cavalry. They approached so near that Waverley could plainly recognise the standard of the troop he had formerly commanded, and hear the trumpets and kettle-drums sound the signal of advance which he had so often obeyed. He could hear, too, the well-known word given in the English dialect by the equally well-distinguished voice of the commanding officer, for whom he had once felt so much respect. It was at that instant, that, looking around him, he saw the wild dress and appearance of his Highland associates, heard their whispers in an uncouth and unknown language, looked upon his own dress, so unlike that which he had worn from his infancy, and wished to awake from what seemed at the moment a dream, strange, horrible, and unnatural. 'Good God!' he muttered, 'am I then a traitor to my country, a renegade to my standard, and a foe, as that poor dying wretch expressed himself, to my native England!'

Ere he could digest or smother the recollection, the tall military form of his late commander came full in view, for the purpose of reconnoitring. 'I can hit him now,' said Callum, cautiously raising his fusée over the wall under which he lay couched, at scarce sixty yards' distance.

Edward felt as if he was about to see a parricide committed in his presence; for the venerable grey hair and striking countenance of the veteran recalled the almost paternal respect with which his officers universally regarded him. But ere he could say 'Hold!' an aged Highlander who lay beside Callum Beg stopped his arm. 'Spare your shot,' said the seer, 'his hour is not yet come. But let him beware of to-morrow; I see his winding-sheet high upon his breast.'

Callum, flint to other considerations, was penetrable to superstition. He turned pale at the words of the *taishatr*, and recovered his piece. Colonel Gardiner, unconscious of the danger he had escaped, turned his horse round and rode slowly back to the front of his regiment.

By this time the regular army had assumed a new line, with one flank inclined towards the sea and the other resting upon the village of Preston; and, as similar difficulties occurred in attacking their new position, Fergus and the rest of the detachment were recalled to their former post. This alteration created the necessity of a corresponding change in General Cope's army, which was again brought into a line parallel with that of the Highlanders. In these manoeuvres on both sides the daylight was nearly consumed, and both armies prepared to rest upon their arms for the night in the lines which they respectively occupied.

'There will be nothing done to-night,' said Fergus to his friend Waverley; 'ere we wrap ourselves in our plaids, let us go see what the Baron is doing in the rear of the line.'

When they approached his post, they found the good old careful officer, after having sent out his night patrols and posted his sentinels, engaged in reading the Evening Service of the Episcopal Church to the remainder of his troop. His voice was loud and sonorous, and though his spectacles upon his nose, and the appearance of Saunders Sanderson, in military array, performing the functions of clerk, had something ludicrous, yet the circumstances of danger in which they stood, the military costume of the audience, and the appearance of their horses saddled and picqueted behind them, gave an impressive and solemn effect to the office of devotion.

'I have confessed to-day, ere you were awake,' whispered Fergus to Waverley; 'yet I am not so strict a Catholic as to refuse to join in this good man's prayers.'

Edward assented, and they remained till the Baron had concluded the service.

As he shut the book, 'Now, lads,' said he, 'have at them in the morning with heavy hands and light consciences.' He then kindly greeted Mac-Ivor and Waverley, who requested to know his opinion of their situation. Why, you know Tacitus saith, "In rebus bellicis maxime dominalur Fortuna," which is equiponderate with our vernacular adage, "Luck can maist in the mellee." But credit me, gentlemen, yon man is not a deacon o' his craft. He damps the spirits of the poor lads he commands by keeping them on the defensive, whilk of itself implies inferiority or fear. Now will they lie on their arms yonder as anxious and as ill at ease as a toad under a harrow, while our men will be quite fresh and blithe for action in the morning. Well, good-night. One thing troubles me, but if to-morrow goes well off, I will consult you about it, Glennaquoich.'

'I could almost apply to Mr. Bradwardine the character which Henry gives of Fluellen,' said Waverley, as his friend and he walked towards their bivouac:

'Though it appears a little out of fashion,

There is much care and valour in this "Scotchman."

'He has seen much service,' answered Fergus, 'and one is sometimes astonished to find how much nonsense and reason are mingled in his composition. I wonder what can be troubling his mind; probably something about Rose. Hark! the English are setting their watch.'

The roll of the drum and shrill accompaniment of the fifes swelled up the hill—died away—resumed its thunder—and was at length hushed. The trumpets and kettle-drums of the cavalry were next heard to perform the beautiful and wild point of war appropriated as a signal for that piece of nocturnal duty, and then finally sunk upon the wind with a shrill and mournful cadence.

The friends, who had now reached their post, stood and looked round them ere they lay down to rest. The western sky twinkled with stars, but a frost-mist, rising from the ocean, covered the eastern horizon, and rolled in white wreaths along the plain where the adverse army lay couched upon their arms. Their advanced posts were pushed as far as the side of the great ditch at the bottom of the descent, and had kindled large fires at different intervals, gleaming with obscure and hazy lustre through the heavy fog which encircled them with a doubtful halo.

The Highlanders, 'thick as leaves in Vallombrosa,' lay stretched upon the ridge of the hill, buried (excepting their sentinels) in the most profound repose. 'How many of these brave fellows will sleep more soundly before to-morrow night, Fergus!' said Waverley, with an involuntary sigh.

'You must not think of that,' answered Fergus, whose ideas were entirely military. 'You must only think of your sword, and by whom it was given. All other reflections are now TOO LATE.'

With the opiate contained in this undeniable remark Edward endeavoured to lull the tumult of his conflicting feelings. The Chieftain and he, combining their plaids, made a comfortable and warm couch. Callum, sitting down at their head (for it was his duty to watch upon the immediate person of the Chief), began a long mournful song in Gaelic, to a low and uniform tune, which, like the sound of the wind at a distance, soon lulled them to sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONFLICT

When Fergus Mac-Ivor and his friend had slept for a few hours, they were awakened and summoned to attend the Prince. The distant village clock was heard to toll three as they hastened to the place where he lay. He was already surrounded by his principal officers and the chiefs of clans. A bundle of pease-straw, which had been lately his couch, now served for his seat. Just as Fergus reached the circle, the consultation had broken up. 'Courage, my brave friends!' said the Chevalier, 'and each one put himself instantly at the head of his command; a faithful friend [Footnote: See Note 32.] has offered to guide us by a practicable, though narrow and circuitous, route, which, sweeping to our right, traverses the broken ground and morass, and enables us to gain the firm and open plain upon which the enemy are lying. This difficulty surmounted, Heaven and your good swords must do the rest.'

The proposal spread unanimous joy, and each leader hastened to get his men into order with as little noise as possible. The army, moving by its right from off the ground on which they had rested, soon entered the path through the morass, conducting their march with astonishing silence and great rapidity. The mist had not risen to the higher grounds, so that for some time they had the advantage of star-light. But this was lost as the stars faded before approaching day, and the head of the marching column, continuing its descent, plunged as it were into the heavy ocean of fog, which rolled its white waves over the whole plain, and over the sea by which it was bounded. Some difficulties were now to be encountered, inseparable from darkness, a narrow, broken, and marshy path, and the necessity of preserving union in the march. These, however, were less inconvenient to Highlanders, from their habits of life, than they would have been to any other troops, and they continued a steady and swift movement.

As the clan of Ivor approached the firm ground, following the track of those who preceded them, the challenge of a patrol was heard through the mist, though they could not see the dragoon by whom it was made—"Who goes there?"

'Hush!' cried Fergus, 'hush! let none answer, as he values his life; press forward'; and they continued their march with silence and rapidity.

The patrol fired his carbine upon the body, and the report was instantly followed by the clang of his horse's feet as he galloped off. 'Hylax in limine latrat,' said the Baron of Bradwardine, who heard the shot; 'that loon will give the alarm.'

The clan of Fergus had now gained the firm plain, which had lately borne a large crop of corn. But the harvest was gathered in, and the expanse was unbroken by tree, bush, or interruption of any kind. The rest of the army were following fast, when they heard the drums of the enemy beat the general. Surprise, however, had made no part of their plan, so they were not disconcerted by this intimation that the foe was upon his guard and prepared to receive them. It only hastened their dispositions for the combat, which were very simple.

The Highland army, which now occupied the eastern end of the wide plain, or stubble field, so often referred to, was drawn up in two lines, extending from the morass towards the sea. The first was destined to charge the enemy, the second to act as a reserve. The few horse, whom the Prince headed in person, remained between the two lines. The adventurer had intimated a resolution to charge in person at the head of his first line; but his purpose was deprecated by all around him, and he was with difficulty induced to abandon it.

Both lines were now moving forward, the first prepared for instant combat. The clans of which it was composed formed each a sort of separate phalanx, narrow in front, and in depth ten, twelve, or fifteen files, according to the strength of the following. The best-armed and best-born, for the words were synonymous, were placed in front of each of these irregular subdivisions. The others in the rear shouldered forward the front, and by their pressure added both physical impulse and additional ardour and confidence to those who were first to encounter the danger.

'Down with your plaid, Waverley,' cried Fergus, throwing off his own; 'we'll win silks for our tartans before the sun is above the sea.'

The clansmen on every side stript their plaids, prepared their arms, and there was an awful pause of about three minutes, during which the men, pulling off their bonnets, raised their faces to heaven and uttered a short prayer; then pulled their bonnets over their brows and began to move forward, at first slowly. Waverley felt his heart at that moment throb as it would have burst from his bosom. It was not fear, it was not ardour: it was a compound of both, a new and deeply energetic impulse that with its first emotion chilled and astounded, then fevered and maddened his mind. The sounds around him combined to exalt his enthusiasm; the pipes played, and the clans rushed forward, each in its own dark column. As they advanced they mended their pace, and the muttering sounds of the men to each other began to swell into a wild cry.

At this moment the sun, which was now risen above the horizon, dispelled the mist. The vapours rose like a curtain, and showed the two armies in the act of closing. The line of the regulars was formed directly fronting the attack of the Highlanders; it glittered with the appointments of a complete army, and was flanked by cavalry and artillery. But the sight impressed no terror on the assailants.

'Forward, sons of Ivor,' cried their Chief, 'or the Camerons will draw the first blood!' They rushed on with a tremendous yell.

The rest is well known. The horse, who were commanded to charge the advancing Highlanders in the flank, received an irregular fire from their fusees as they ran on and, seized with a disgraceful panic, wavered, halted, disbanded, and galloped from the field. The artillery men, deserted by the cavalry, fled after discharging their pieces, and the Highlanders, who dropped their guns when fired and drew their broadswords, rushed with headlong fury against the infantry.

It was at this moment of confusion and terror that Waverley remarked an English officer, apparently of high rank, standing, alone and unsupported, by a fieldpiece, which, after the flight of the men by whom it was wrought, he had himself levelled and discharged against the clan of Mac-Ivor, the nearest group of Highlanders within his aim. Struck with his tall, martial figure, and eager to save him from inevitable destruction, Waverley outstripped for an instant even the speediest of the warriors, and, reaching the spot first, called to him to surrender. The officer replied by a thrust with his sword, which Waverley received in his target, and in turning it aside the Englishman's weapon broke. At the same time the battle-axe of Dugald Mahony was in the act of descending upon the officer's head. Waverley intercepted and prevented the blow, and the officer, perceiving further resistance unavailing, and struck with Edward's generous anxiety for his safety, resigned the fragment of his sword, and was committed by Waverley to Dugald, with strict charge to use him well, and not to pillage his person, promising him, at the same time, full indemnification for the spoil.

On Edward's right the battle for a few minutes raged fierce and thick. The English infantry, trained in the wars in Flanders, stood their ground with great courage. But their extended files were pierced and broken in many places by the close masses of the clans; and in the personal struggle which ensued the nature of the Highlanders' weapons, and their extraordinary fierceness and activity, gave them a decided superiority over those who had been accustomed to trust much to their array and discipline, and felt that the one was broken and the other useless. Waverley, as he cast his eyes towards this scene of smoke and slaughter, observed Colonel Gardiner, deserted by his own soldiers in spite of all his attempts to rally them, yet spurring his horse through the field to take the command of a small body of infantry, who, with their backs arranged against the wall of his own park (for his house was close by the field of battle), continued a desperate and

unavailing resistance. Waverley could perceive that he had already received many wounds, his clothes and saddle being marked with blood. To save this good and brave man became the instant object of his most anxious exertions. But he could only witness his fall. Ere Edward could make his way among the Highlanders, who, furious and eager for spoil, now thronged upon each other, he saw his former commander brought from his horse by the blow of a scythe, and beheld him receive, while on the ground, more wounds than would have let out twenty lives. When Waverley came up, however, perception had not entirely fled. The dying warrior seemed to recognize Edward, for he fixed his eye upon him with an upbraiding, yet sorrowful, look, and appeared to struggle, for utterance. But he felt that death was dealing closely with him, and resigning his purpose, and folding his hands as if in devotion, he gave up his soul to his Creator. The look with which he regarded Waverley in his dying moments did not strike him so deeply at that crisis of hurry and confusion as when it recurred to his imagination at the distance of some time. [See Note 33.]

Loud shouts of triumph now echoed over the whole field. The battle was fought and won, and the whole baggage, artillery, and military stores of the regular army remained in possession of the victors. Never was a victory more complete. Scarce any escaped from the battle, excepting the cavalry, who had left it at the very onset, and even these were broken into different parties and scattered all over the country. So far as our tale is concerned, we have only to relate the fate of Balmawhapple, who, mounted on a horse as headstrong and stiff-necked as his rider, pursued the flight of the dragoons above four miles from the field of battle, when some dozen of the fugitives took heart of grace, turned round, and cleaving his skull with their broadswords, satisfied the world that the unfortunate gentleman had actually brains, the end of his life thus giving proof of a fact greatly doubted during its progress. His death was lamented by few. Most of those who knew him agreed in the pithy observation of Ensign Maccombich, that there 'was mair tint (lost) at Sheriff-Muir.' His friend, Lieutenant Jinker, bent his eloquence only to exculpate his favourite mare from any share in contributing to the catastrophe. 'He had tauld the laird a thousand times,' he said, 'that it was a burning shame to put a martingale upon the puir thing, when he would needs ride her wi' a curb of half a yard lang; and that he could na but bring himself (not to say her) to some mischief, by flinging her down, or otherwise; whereas, if he had had a wee bit rinnin ring on the snaffle, she wad ha' rein'd as cannily as a cadger's pownie.'

Such was the elegy of the Laird of Balmawhapple. [Footnote: See Note 34.]

CHAPTER XIX

AN UNEXPECTED EMBARRASSMENT

When the battle was over, and all things coming into order, the Baron of Bradwardine, returning from the duty of the day, and having disposed those under his command in their proper stations, sought the Chieftain of Glennaquoich and his friend Edward Waverley. He found the former busied in determining disputes among his clansmen about points of precedence and deeds of valour, besides sundry high and doubtful questions concerning plunder. The most important of the last respected the property of a gold watch, which had once belonged to some unfortunate English officer. The party against whom judgment was awarded consoled himself by observing, 'She (i.e. the watch, which he took for a living animal) died the very night Vich Ian Vohr gave her to Murdoch'; the machine, having, in fact, stopped for want of winding up.

It was just when this important question was decided that the Baron of Bradwardine, with a careful and yet important expression of countenance, joined the two young men. He descended from his reeking charger, the care of which he recommended to one of his grooms. 'I seldom ban, sir,' said he to the man; 'but if you play any of your hound's-foot tricks, and leave puir Berwick before he's sorted, to rin after spuilzie, deil be wi' me if I do not give your craig a thraw.' He then stroked with great complacency the animal which had borne him through the fatigues of the day, and having taken a tender leave of him—'Weel, my good young friends, a glorious and decisive victory,' said he; 'but these loons of troopers fled ower soon. I should have liked to have shown you the true points of the pralium equestre, or equestrian combat, whilk their cowardice has postponed, and which I hold to be the pride and terror of warfare. Weel—I have fought once more in this old quarrel, though I admit I could not be so far BEN as you lads, being that it was my point of duty to keep together our handful of horse. And no cavalier ought in any wise to begrudge honour that befalls his companions, even though they are ordered upon thrice his danger, whilk, another time, by the blessing of God, may be his own case. But, Glennaquoich, and you, Mr. Waverley, I pray ye to give me your best advice on a matter of mickle weight, and which deeply affects the honour of the house of Bradwardine. I crave your pardon, Ensign Maccombich, and yours, Inveraulhin, and yours, Edderalshendrach, and yours, sir.'

The last person he addressed was Ballenkeiroch, who, remembering the death of his son, loured on him with a look of savage defiance. The Baron, quick as lightning at taking umbrage, had already bent his brow when Glennaquoich dragged his major from the spot, and remonstrated with him, in the authoritative tone of a chieftain, on the madness of reviving a quarrel in such a moment.

'The ground is cumbered with carcasses,' said the old mountaineer, turning sullenly away; 'ONE MORE would hardly have been kenn'd upon it; and if it wasna for yourself, Vich Ian Vohr, that one should be Bradwardine's or mine.'

The Chief soothed while he hurried him away; and then returned to the Baron. 'It is Ballenkeiroch,' he said, in an under and confidential voice, 'father of the young man who fell eight years since in the unlucky affair at the mains.'

'Ah!' said the Baron, instantly relaxing the doubtful sternness of his features, 'I can take mickle frae a man to whom I have unhappily rendered sic a displeasure as that. Ye were right to apprise me, Glennaquoich; he may look as black as midnight at Martinmas ere Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine shall say he does him wrang. Ah! I have nae male lineage, and I should bear with one I have made childless, though you are aware the blood-wit was made up to your ain satisfaction by assythment, and that I have since expedited letters of slains. Weel, as I have said, I have no male issue, and yet it is needful that I maintain the honour of my house; and it is on that score I prayed ye for your peculiar and private attention.'

The two young men awaited to hear him, in anxious curiosity.

'I doubt na, lads,' he proceeded, 'but your education has been sae seen to that ye understand the true nature of the feudal tenures?'

Fergus, afraid of an endless dissertation, answered, 'Intimately, Baron,' and touched Waverley as a signal to express no ignorance.

'And ye are aware, I doubt not, that the holding of the barony of Bradwardine is of a nature alike honourable and peculiar, being blanch (which Craig opines ought to be Latinated blancum, or rather francum, a free holding) pro servitio detrahendi, seu exuendi, caligas regis post battalliam.' Here Fergus turned his falcon eye upon Edward, with an almost imperceptible rise of his eyebrow, to which his shoulders corresponded in the same degree of elevation. 'Now, twa points of dubitation occur to me upon this topic. First, whether this service, or feudal homage, be at any event due to the person of the Prince, the words being, per expressum, caligas REGIS, the boots of the king himself; and I pray your opinion anent that particular before we proceed farther.'

'Why, he is Prince Regent,' answered Mac-Ivor, with laudable composure of countenance; 'and in the court of France all the honours are rendered to the person of the Regent which are due to that of the King. Besides, were I to pull off either of their boots, I would render that service to the young Chevalier ten times more willingly than to his father.'

'Ay, but I talk not of personal predilections. However, your authority is of great weight as to the usages of the court of France; and doubtless the Prince, as alter ego, may have a right to claim the homagium of the great tenants of the crown, since all faithful subjects are commanded, in the commission of regency, to

respect him as the King's own person. Far, therefore, be it from me to diminish the lustre of his authority by withholding this act of homage, so peculiarly calculated to give it splendour; for I question if the Emperor of Germany hath his boots taken off by a free baron of the empire. But here lieth the second difficulty—the Prince wears no boots, but simply brogues and trews.'

This last dilemma had almost disturbed Fergus's gravity.

'Why,' said he, 'you know, Baron, the proverb tells us, "It's ill taking the breeks off a Highlandman," and the boots are here in the same predicament.'

'The word caligae, however,' continued the Baron, 'though I admit that, by family tradition, and even in our ancient evidents, it is explained "lie-boots," means, in its primitive sense, rather sandals; and Caius Caesar, the nephew and successor of Caius Tiberius, received the agnomen of Caligula, a caligulis sine caligis levioribus, quibus adolescentior usus fuerat in exercitu Germanici patris sui. And the caligae were also proper to the monastic bodies; for we read in an ancient glossarium upon the rule of Saint Benedict, in the Abbey of Saint Amand, that caligae were tied with latches.'

'That will apply to the brogues,' said Fergus.

'It will so, my dear Glennaquoich, and the words are express: Caligae, dicta sunt quia ligantur; nam socci non ligantur, sed tantum intromittuntur; that is, caligae are denominated from the ligatures wherewith they are bound; whereas socci, which may be analogous to our mules, whilk the English denominate slippers, are only slipped upon the feet. The words of the charter are also alternative, exuere seu detrahere; that is, to undo, as in the case of sandals or brogues, and to pull off, as we say vernacularly concerning boots. Yet I would we had more light; but I fear there is little chance of finding hereabout any erudite author de re vestiarum.'

'I should doubt it very much,' said the Chieftain, looking around on the straggling Highlanders, who were returning loaded with spoils of the slain, 'though the res vestiarum itself seems to be in some request at present.'

This remark coming within the Baron's idea of jocularity, he honoured it with a smile, but immediately resumed what to him appeared very serious business.

'Baillie Macwheeble indeed holds an opinion that this honorary service is due, from its very nature, si petatur tantum; only if his Royal Highness shall require of the great tenant of the crown to perform that personal duty; and indeed he pointed out the case in Dirleton's Doubts and Queries, Grippit versus Spicer, anent the eviction of an estate ob non solutum canonem; that is, for non-payment of a feu-duty of three pepper-corns a year, whilk were tax to be worth seven-eighths of a penny Scots, in whilk the defender was assoilzied. But I deem it safest, wi' your good favour, to place myself in the way of rendering the Prince this service, and to proffer performance thereof; and I shall cause the Bailie to attend with a schedule of a protest, whilk he has here prepared (taking out a paper), intimating, that if it shall be his Royal Highness's pleasure to accept of other assistance at pulling off his caligae (whether the same shall be rendered boots or brogues) save that of the said Baron of Bradwardine, who is in presence ready and willing to perform the same, it shall in no wise impinge upon or prejudice the right of the said Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine to perform the said service in future; nor shall it give any esquire, valet of the chamber, squire, or page, whose assistance it may please his Royal Highness to employ, any right, title, or ground for evicting from the said Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine the estate and barony of Bradwardine, and others held as aforesaid, by the due and faithful performance thereof.'

Fergus highly applauded this arrangement; and the Baron took a friendly leave of them, with a smile of contented importance upon his visage.

'Long live our dear friend the Baron,' exclaimed the Chief, as soon as he was out of hearing, 'for the most absurd original that exists north of the Tweed! I wish to heaven I had recommended him to attend the circle this evening with a boot-ketch under his arm. I think he might have adopted the suggestion if it had been made with suitable gravity.'

'And how can you take pleasure in making a man of his worth so ridiculous?'

'Begging pardon, my dear Waverley, you are as ridiculous as he. Why, do you not see that the man's whole mind is wrapped up in this ceremony? He has heard and thought of it since infancy as the most august privilege and ceremony in the world; and I doubt not but the expected pleasure of performing it was a principal motive with him for taking up arms. Depend upon it, had I endeavoured to divert him from exposing himself he would have treated me as an ignorant, conceited coxcomb, or perhaps might have taken a fancy to cut my throat; a pleasure which he once proposed to himself upon some point of etiquette not half so important, in his eyes, as this matter of boots or brogues, or whatever the caliga shall finally be pronounced by the learned. But I must go to headquarters, to prepare the Prince for this extraordinary scene. My information will be well taken, for it will give him a hearty laugh at present, and put him on his guard against laughing when it might be very mal-a-propos. So, au revoir, my dear Waverley.'

CHAPTER VII

THE ENGLISH PRISONER

The first occupation of Waverley, after he departed from the Chieftain, was to go in quest of the officer whose life he had saved. He was guarded, along with his companions in misfortune, who were very numerous, in a gentleman's house near the field of battle.

On entering the room where they stood crowded together, Waverley easily recognised the object of his visit, not only by the peculiar dignity of his appearance, but by the appendage of Dugald Mahony, with his battleaxe, who had stuck to him from the moment of his captivity as if he had been skewered to his side. This close attendance was perhaps for the purpose of securing his promised reward from Edward, but it also operated to save the English gentleman from being plundered in the scene of general confusion; for Dugald sagaciously argued that the amount of the salvage which he might be allowed would be regulated by the state of the prisoner when he should deliver him over to Waverley. He hastened to assure Waverley, therefore, with more words than he usually employed, that he had 'keepit ta sidier roy haill, and that he wasna a plack the waur since the fery moment when his honour forbad her to gie him a bit clamhewit wi' her Lochaber-axe.'

Waverley assured Dugald of a liberal recompense, and, approaching the English officer, expressed his anxiety to do anything which might contribute to his convenience under his present unpleasant circumstances.

'I am not so inexperienced a soldier, sir,' answered the Englishman, 'as to complain of the fortune of war. I am only grieved to see those scenes acted in our own island which I have often witnessed elsewhere with comparative indifference.'

'Another such day as this,' said Waverley, 'and I trust the cause of your regrets will be removed, and all will again return to peace and order.'

The officer smiled and shook his head. 'I must not forget my situation so far as to attempt a formal confutation of that opinion; but, notwithstanding your success and the valour which achieved it, you have undertaken a task to which your strength appears wholly inadequate.'

At this moment Fergus pushed into the press.

'Come, Edward, come along; the Prince has gone to Pinkie House for the night; and we must follow, or lose the whole ceremony of the caligae. Your friend, the Baron, has been guilty of a great piece of cruelty; he has insisted upon dragging Baillie Macwheeble out to the field of battle. Now, you must know, the Bailie's greatest horror is an armed Highlander or a loaded gun; and there he stands, listening to the Baron's instructions concerning the protest, ducking his head like a sea-gull at the report of every gun and pistol that our idle boys are firing upon the fields, and undergoing, by way of penance, at every symptom of flinching a severe rebuke from his patron, who would not admit the discharge of a whole battery of cannon, within point-blank distance, as an apology for neglecting a discourse in which the honour of his family is interested.'

'But how has Mr. Bradwardine got him to venture so far?' said Edward.

'Why, he had come as far as Musselburgh, I fancy, in hopes of making some of our wills; and the peremptory commands of the Baron dragged him forward to Preston after the battle was over. He complains of one or two of our ragamuffins having put him in peril of his life by presenting their pieces at him; but as they limited his ransom to an English penny, I don't think we need trouble the provost-marshal upon that subject. So come along, Waverley.'

'Waverley!' said the English officer, with great emotion; 'the nephew of Sir Everard Waverley, of——shire?'

'The same, sir,' replied our hero, somewhat surprised at the tone in which he was addressed.

'I am at once happy and grieved,' said the prisoner, 'to have met with you.'

'I am ignorant, sir,' answered Waverley, 'how I have deserved so much interest.'

'Did your uncle never mention a friend called Talbot?'

'I have heard him talk with great regard of such a person,' replied Edward; 'a colonel, I believe, in the army, and the husband of Lady Emily Blandeville; but I thought Colonel Talbot had been abroad.'

'I am just returned,' answered the officer; 'and being in Scotland, thought it my duty to act where my services promised to be useful. Yes, Mr. Waverley, I am that Colonel Talbot, the husband of the lady you have named; and I am proud to acknowledge that I owe alike my professional rank and my domestic happiness to your generous and noble-minded relative. Good God! that I should find his nephew in such a dress, and engaged in such a cause!'

'Sir,' said Fergus, haughtily, 'the dress and cause are those of men of birth and honour.'

'My situation forbids me to dispute your assertion,' said Colonel Talbot; 'otherwise it were no difficult matter to show that neither courage nor pride of lineage can gild a bad cause. But, with Mr. Waverley's permission and yours, sir, if yours also must be asked, I would willingly speak a few words with him on affairs connected with his own family.'

'Mr. Waverley, sir, regulates his own motions. You will follow me, I suppose, to Pinkie,' said Fergus, turning to Edward, 'when you have finished your discourse with this new acquaintance?' So saying, the Chief of Glennaquoich adjusted his plaid with rather more than his usual air of haughty assumption and left the apartment.

The interest of Waverley readily procured for Colonel Talbot the freedom of adjourning to a large garden belonging to his place of confinement. They walked a few paces in silence, Colonel Talbot apparently studying how to open what he had to say; at length he addressed Edward.

'Mr. Waverley, you have this day saved my life; and yet I would to God that I had lost it, ere I had found you wearing the uniform and cockade of these men.'

'I forgive your reproach, Colonel Talbot; it is well meant, and your education and prejudices render it natural. But there is nothing extraordinary in finding a man whose honour has been publicly and unjustly assailed in the situation which promised most fair to afford him satisfaction on his calumniators.'

'I should rather say, in the situation most likely to confirm the reports which they have circulated,' said Colonel Talbot, 'by following the very line of conduct ascribed to you. Are you aware, Mr. Waverley, of the infinite distress, and even danger, which your present conduct has occasioned to your nearest relatives?'

'Danger!'

'Yes, sir, danger. When I left England your uncle and father had been obliged to find bail to answer a charge of treason, to which they were only admitted by the exertion of the most powerful interest. I came down to Scotland with the sole purpose of rescuing you from the gulf into which you have precipitated yourself; nor can I estimate the consequences to your family of your having openly joined the rebellion, since the very suspicion of your intention was so perilous to them. Most deeply do I regret that I did not meet you before this last and fatal error.'

'I am really ignorant,' said Waverley, in a tone of reserve, 'why Colonel Talbot should have taken so much trouble on my account.'

'Mr. Waverley,' answered Talbot, 'I am dull at apprehending irony; and therefore I shall answer your words according to their plain meaning. I am indebted to your uncle for benefits greater than those which a son owes to a father. I acknowledge to him the duty of a son; and as I know there is no manner in which I can requite his kindness so well as by serving you, I will serve you, if possible, whether you will permit me or no. The personal obligation which you have this day laid me under (although, in common estimation, as great as one human being can bestow on another) adds nothing to my zeal on your behalf; nor can that zeal be abated by any coolness with which you may please to receive it.'

'Your intentions may be kind, sir,' said Waverley, drily; 'but your language is harsh, or at least peremptory.'

'On my return to England,' continued Colonel Talbot, 'after long absence, I found your uncle, Sir Everard Waverley, in the custody of a king's messenger, in consequence of the suspicion brought upon him by your conduct. He is my oldest friend—how often shall I repeat it?—my best benefactor! he sacrificed his own views of happiness to mine; he never uttered a word, he never harboured a thought, that benevolence itself might not have thought or spoken. I found this man in confinement, rendered harsher to him by his habits of life, his natural dignity of feeling, and—forgive me, Mr. Waverley—by the cause through which this calamity had come upon him. I cannot disguise from you my feelings upon this occasion; they were most painfully unfavorable to you. Having by my family interest, which you probably know is not inconsiderable, succeeded in obtaining Sir Everard's release, I set out for Scotland. I saw Colonel Gardiner, a man whose fate alone is sufficient to render this insurrection for ever execrable. In the course of conversation with him I found that, from late circumstances, from a reexamination of the persons engaged in the mutiny, and from his original good opinion of your character, he was much softened towards you; and I doubted not that, if I could be so fortunate as to discover you, all might yet be well. But this unnatural rebellion has ruined all. I have, for the first time in a long and active military life, seen Britons disgrace themselves by a panic flight, and that before a foe without either arms or discipline. And now I find the heir of my dearest friend—the son, I may say, of his affections—sharing a triumph for which he ought the first to have blushed. Why should I lament Gardiner? his lot was happy compared to mine!'

There was so much dignity in Colonel Talbot's manner, such a mixture of military pride and manly sorrow, and the news of Sir Everard's imprisonment was told in so deep a tone of feeling, that Edward stood mortified, abashed, and distressed in presence of the prisoner who owed to him his life not many hours before. He was not sorry when Fergus interrupted their conference a second time.

'His Royal Highness commands Mr. Waverley's attendance.' Colonel Talbot threw upon Edward a reproachful glance, which did not escape the quick eye of the Highland Chief. 'His immediate attendance,' he repeated, with considerable emphasis. Waverley turned again towards the Colonel.

'We shall meet again,' he said; 'in the meanwhile, every possible accommodation—'

'I desire none,' said the Colonel; 'let me fare like the meanest of those brave men who, on this day of calamity, have preferred wounds and captivity to flight; I would almost exchange places with one of those who have fallen to know that my words have made a suitable impression on your mind.'

'Let Colonel Talbot be carefully secured,' said Fergus to the Highland officer who commanded the guard over the prisoners; 'it is the Prince's particular command; he is a prisoner of the utmost importance.'

'But let him want no accommodation suitable to his rank,' said Waverley. 'Consistent always with secure custody,' reiterated Fergus. The officer signified his acquiescence in both commands, and Edward followed Fergus to the garden-gate, where Callum Beg, with three saddle-horses, awaited them. Turning his head, he saw Colonel Talbot reconducted to his place of confinement by a file of Highlanders; he lingered on the threshold of the door and made a signal with his hand towards Waverley, as if enforcing the language he had held towards him.

'Horses,' said Fergus, as he mounted, 'are now as plenty as blackberries; every man may have them for the catching. Come, let Callum adjust your stirrups and let us to Pinkie House [Footnote: Charles Edward took up his quarters after the battle at Pinkie House, adjoining to Musselburgh.] as fast as these ci-devant dragoon-horses choose to carry us.'

CHAPTER XXI

RATHER UNIMPORTANT

'I was turned back,' said Fergus to Edward, as they galloped from Preston to Pinkie House, 'by a message from the Prince. But I suppose you know the value of this most noble Colonel Talbot as a prisoner. He is held one of the best officers among the red-coats, a special friend and favourite of the Elector himself, and of that dreadful hero, the Duke of Cumberland, who has been summoned from his triumphs at Fontenoy to come over and devour us poor Highlanders alive. Has he been telling you how the bells of St. James's ring? Not "turn again, Whittington," like those of Bow, in the days of yore?'

'Fergus!' said Waverley, with a reproachful look.

'Nay, I cannot tell what to make of you,' answered the Chief of Mac-Ivor, 'you are blown about with every wind of doctrine. Here have we gained a victory unparalleled in history, and your behaviour is praised by every living mortal to the skies, and the Prince is eager to thank you in person, and all our beauties of the White Rose are pulling caps for you;—and you, the preux chevalier of the day, are stooping on your horse's neck like a butter-woman riding to market, and looking as black as a funeral!'

'I am sorry for poor Colonel Gardiner's death; he was once very kind to me.'

'Why, then, be sorry for five minutes, and then be glad again; his chance to-day may be ours to-morrow; and what does it signify? The next best thing to victory is honourable death; but it is a PIS-ALLER, and one would rather a foe had it than one's self.'

'But Colonel Talbot has informed me that my father and uncle are both imprisoned by government on my account.'

'We'll put in bail, my boy; old Andrew Ferrara [Footnote: See Note 10.] shall lodge his security; and I should like to see him put to justify it in Westminster Hall!'

'Nay, they are already at liberty, upon bail of a more civic disposition.'

'Then why is thy noble spirit cast down, Edward? Dost think that the Elector's ministers are such doves as to set their enemies at liberty at this critical moment if they could or durst confine and punish them? Assure thyself that either they have no charge against your relations on which they can continue their imprisonment, or else they are afraid of our friends, the jolly Cavaliers of old England. At any rate, you need not be apprehensive upon their account; and we will find some means of conveying to them assurances of your safety.'

Edward was silenced but not satisfied with these reasons. He had now been more than once shocked at the small degree of sympathy which Fergus exhibited for the feelings even of those whom he loved, if they did not correspond with his own mood at the time, and more especially if they thwarted him while earnest in a favourite pursuit. Fergus sometimes indeed observed that he had offended Waverley, but, always intent upon some favourite plan or project of his own, he was never sufficiently aware of the extent or duration of his displeasure, so that the reiteration of these petty offences somewhat cooled the volunteer's extreme attachment to his officer.

The Chevalier received Waverley with his usual favour, and paid him many compliments on his distinguished bravery. He then took him apart, made many inquiries concerning Colonel Talbot, and when he had received all the information which Edward was able to give concerning him and his connexions, he proceeded—'I cannot but think, Mr. Waverley, that since this gentleman is so particularly connected with our worthy and excellent friend, Sir Everard Waverley, and since his lady is of the house of Blandeville, whose devotion to the true and loyal principles of the Church of England is so generally known, the Colonel's own private sentiments cannot be unfavorable to us, whatever mask he may have assumed to accommodate himself to the times.'

'If I am to judge from the language he this day held to me, I am under the necessity of differing widely from your Royal Highness.'

'Well, it is worth making a trial at least. I therefore entrust you with the charge of Colonel Talbot, with power to act concerning him as you think most advisable; and I hope you will find means of ascertaining what are his real dispositions towards our Royal Father's restoration.'

'I am convinced,' said Waverley, bowing, 'that if Colonel Talbot chooses to grant his parole, it may be securely depended upon; but if he refuses it, I trust your Royal Highness will devolve on some other person than the nephew of his friend the task of laying him under the necessary restraint.'

'I will trust him with no person but you,' said the Prince, smiling, but peremptorily repeating his mandate; 'it is of importance to my service that there should appear to be a good intelligence between you, even if you are unable to gain his confidence in earnest. You will therefore receive him into your quarters, and in case he declines giving his parole, you must apply for a proper guard. I beg you will go about this directly. We return to Edinburgh tomorrow.'

Being thus remanded to the vicinity of Preston, Waverley lost the Baron of Bradwardine's solemn act of homage. So little, however, was he at this time in love with vanity, that he had quite forgotten the ceremony in which Fergus had laboured to engage his curiosity. But next day a formal 'Gazette' was circulated, containing a detailed account of the battle of Gladsmuir, as the Highlanders chose to denominate their victory. It concluded with an account of the court afterwards held by the Chevalier at Pinkie House, which contained this among other high-flown descriptive paragraphs:—

'Since that fatal treaty which annihilates Scotland as an independent nation, it has not been our happiness to see her princes receive, and her nobles discharge, those acts of feudal homage which, founded upon the splendid actions of Scottish valour, recall the memory of her early history, with the manly and chivalrous simplicity of the ties which united to the Crown the homage of the warriors by whom it was repeatedly upheld and defended. But on the evening of the 20th our memories were refreshed with one of those ceremonies which belong to the ancient days of Scotland's glory. After the circle was formed, Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine of that ilk, colonel in the service, etc., etc., etc., came before the Prince, attended by Mr. D. Macwheeble, the Bailie of his ancient barony of Bradwardine (who, we understand, has been lately named a commissary), and, under form of instrument, claimed permission to perform to the person of his Royal Highness, as representing his father, the service used and wont, for which, under a charter of Robert Bruce (of which the original was produced and inspected by the Masters of his Royal Highness's Chancery for the time being), the claimant held the barony of Bradwardine and lands of Tully-Veolan. His claim being admitted and registered, his Royal Highness having placed his foot upon a cushion, the Baron of Bradwardine, kneeling upon his right knee, proceeded to undo the latchet of the brogue, or low-heeled Highland shoe, which our gallant young hero wears in compliment to his brave followers. When this was performed, his Royal Highness declared the ceremony completed; and, embracing the gallant veteran, protested that nothing but compliance with an ordinance of Robert Bruce could have induced him to receive even the symbolical performance of a menial office from hands which had fought so bravely to put the crown upon the head of his father. The Baron of Bradwardine then took instruments in the hands of Mr. Commissary Macwheeble, bearing that all points and circumstances of the act of homage had been rite et solenniter acta et peracta; and a corresponding entry was made in the protocol of the Lord High Chamberlain and in the record of Chancery. We understand that it is in contemplation of his Royal Highness, when his Majesty's pleasure can be known, to raise Colonel Bradwardine to the peerage, by the title of Viscount Bradwardine of Bradwardine and Tully-Veolan, and that, in the meanwhile, his Royal Highness, in his father's name and authority, has been pleased to grant him an honourable augmentation to his paternal coat of arms, being a budget or boot-jack, disposed saltier-wise with a naked broadsword, to be borne in the dexter cantle of the shield; and, as an additional motto, on a scroll beneath, the words, "Draw and draw off."

'Were it not for the recollection of Fergus's raillery,' thought Waverley to himself, when he had perused this long and grave document, 'how very tolerably would all this sound, and how little should I have thought of connecting it with any ludicrous idea! Well, after all, everything has its fair as well as its seamy side; and truly I do not see why the Baron's boot-jack may not stand as fair in heraldry as the water-buckets, waggons, cart-wheels, plough-socks, shuttles, candlesticks, and other ordinaries, conveying ideas of anything save chivalry, which appear in the arms of some of our most ancient gentry.'

This, however, is an episode in respect to the principal story.

When Waverley returned to Preston and rejoined Colonel Talbot, he found him recovered from the strong and obvious emotions with which a concurrence of unpleasing events had affected him. He had regained his natural manner, which was that of an English gentleman and soldier, manly, open and generous, but not unsusceptible of prejudice against those of a different country, or who opposed him in political tenets. When Waverley acquainted Colonel Talbot with the Chevalier's purpose to commit him to his charge, 'I did not think to have owed so much obligation to that young gentleman,' he said, 'as is implied in this destination. I can at least cheerfully join in the prayer of the honest Presbyterian clergyman, that, as he has come among us seeking an earthly crown, his labours may be speedily rewarded with a heavenly one. [Footnote: The clergyman's name was Mac-Vicar. Protected by the cannon of the Castle, he preached every Sunday in the West Kirk while the Highlanders were in possession of Edinburgh, and it was in presence of some of the Jacobites that he prayed for Prince Charles Edward in the terms quoted in the text.] I shall willingly give my parole not to attempt an escape without your knowledge, since, in fact, it was to meet you that I came to Scotland; and I am glad it has happened even under this predicament. But I suppose we shall be but a short time together. Your Chevalier (that is a name we may both give to him), with his plaids and blue caps, will, I presume, be continuing his crusade southward?'

'Not as I hear; I believe the army makes some stay in Edinburgh to collect reinforcements.'

'And to besiege the Castle?' said Talbot, smiling sarcastically. 'Well, unless my old commander, General Preston, turn false metal, or the Castle sink into the North Loch, events which I deem equally probable, I think we shall have some time to make up our acquaintance. I have a guess that this gallant Chevalier has a design that I should be your proselyte; and, as I wish you to be mine, there cannot be a more fair proposal than to afford us fair conference together. But, as I spoke today under the influence of feelings I rarely give way to, I hope you will excuse my entering again upon controversy till we are somewhat better acquainted.'

CHAPTER XXII

INTRIGUES OF LOVE AND POLITICS

It is not necessary to record in these pages the triumphant entrance of the Chevalier into Edinburgh after the decisive affair at Preston. One circumstance, however, may be noticed, because it illustrates the high spirit of Flora Mac-Ivor. The Highlanders by whom the Prince was surrounded, in the license and extravagance of this joyful moment, fired their pieces repeatedly, and one of these having been accidentally loaded with ball, the bullet grazed the young lady's temple as she waved her handkerchief from a balcony. [Footnote: See Note 11.] Fergus, who beheld the accident, was at her side in an instant; and, on seeing that the wound was trifling, he drew his broadsword with the purpose of rushing down upon the man by whose carelessness she had incurred so much danger, when, holding him by the plaid, 'Do not harm the poor fellow,' she cried; 'for Heaven's sake, do not harm him! but thank God with me that the accident happened to Flora Mac-Ivor; for had it befallen a Whig, they would have pretended that the shot was fired on purpose.'

Waverley escaped the alarm which this accident would have occasioned to him, as he was unavoidably delayed by the necessity of accompanying Colonel Talbot to Edinburgh.

They performed the journey together on horseback, and for some time, as if to sound each other's feelings and sentiments, they conversed upon general and ordinary topics.

When Waverley again entered upon the subject which he had most at heart, the situation, namely, of his father and his uncle, Colonel Talbot seemed now rather desirous to alleviate than to aggravate his anxiety. This appeared particularly to be the case when he heard Waverley's history, which he did not scruple to confide to him.

'And so,' said the Colonel, 'there has been no malice prepense, as lawyers, I think, term it, in this rash step of yours; and you have been trepanned into the service of this Italian knight-errant by a few civil speeches from him and one or two of his Highland recruiting sergeants? It is sadly foolish, to be sure, but not nearly so bad as I was led to expect. However, you cannot desert, even from the Pretender, at the present moment; that seems impossible. But I have little doubt that, in the dissensions incident to this heterogeneous mass of wild and desperate men, some opportunity may arise, by availing yourself of which you may extricate yourself honourably from your rash engagement before the bubble burst. If this can be managed, I would have you go to a place of safety in Flanders which I shall point out. And I think I can secure your pardon from government after a few months' residence abroad.'

'I cannot permit you, Colonel Talbot,' answered Waverley, 'to speak of any plan which turns on my deserting an enterprise in which I may have engaged hastily, but certainly voluntarily, and with the purpose of abiding the issue.'

'Well,' said Colonel Talbot, smiling, 'leave me my thoughts and hopes at least at liberty, if not my speech. But have you never examined your mysterious packet?'

'It is in my baggage,' replied Edward; 'we shall find it in Edinburgh.'

In Edinburgh they soon arrived. Waverley's quarters had been assigned to him, by the Prince's express orders, in a handsome lodging, where there was accommodation for Colonel Talbot. His first business was to examine his portmanteau, and, after a very short search, out tumbled the expected packet. Waverley opened it eagerly. Under a blank cover, simply addressed to E. Waverley, Esq., he found a number of open letters. The uppermost were two from Colonel Gardiner addressed to himself. The earliest in date was a kind and gentle remonstrance for neglect of the writer's advice respecting the disposal of his time during his leave of absence, the renewal of which, he reminded Captain Waverley, would speedily expire. 'Indeed,' the letter proceeded, 'had it been otherwise, the news from abroad and my instructions from the War Office must have compelled me to recall it, as there is great danger, since the disaster in Flanders, both of foreign invasion and insurrection among the disaffected at home. I therefore entreat you will repair as soon as possible to the headquarters of the regiment; and I am concerned to add that this is still the more necessary as there is some discontent in your troop, and I postpone inquiry into particulars until I can have the advantage of your assistance.'

The second letter, dated eight days later, was in such a style as might have been expected from the Colonel's receiving no answer to the first. It reminded Waverley of his duty as a man of honour, an officer, and a Briton; took notice of the increasing dissatisfaction of his men, and that some of them had been heard to hint that their Captain encouraged and approved of their mutinous behaviour; and, finally, the writer expressed the utmost regret and surprise that he had not obeyed his commands by repairing to headquarters, reminded him that his leave of absence had been recalled, and conjured him, in a style in which paternal remonstrance was mingled with military authority, to redeem his error by immediately joining his regiment. 'That I may be certain,' concluded the letter, 'that this actually reaches you, I despatch it by Corporal Tims of your troop, with orders to deliver it into your own hand.'

Upon reading these letters Waverley, with great bitterness of feeling, was compelled to make the amende honorable to the memory of the brave and excellent writer; for surely, as Colonel Gardiner must have had every reason to conclude they had come safely to hand, less could not follow, on their being neglected, than that third and final summons, which Waverley actually received at Glennaquoich, though too late to obey it. And his being superseded, in consequence of his apparent neglect of this last command, was so far from being a harsh or severe proceeding, that it was plainly inevitable. The next letter he unfolded was from the major of the regiment, acquainting him that a report to the disadvantage of his reputation was public in the country, stating, that one Mr. Falconer of Ballihopple, or some such name, had proposed in his presence a treasonable toast, which he permitted to pass in silence, although it was so gross an affront to the royal family that a gentleman in company, not remarkable for his zeal for government, had never-the-less taken the matter up, and that, supposing the account true, Captain

Waverley had thus suffered another, comparatively unconcerned, to resent an affront directed against him personally as an officer, and to go out with the person by whom it was offered. The major concluded that no one of Captain Waverley's brother officers could believe this scandalous story, but that it was necessarily their joint opinion that his own honour, equally with that of the regiment, depended upon its being instantly contradicted by his authority, etc. etc. etc.

'What do you think of all this?' said Colonel Talbot, to whom Waverley handed the letters after he had perused them.

'Think! it renders thought impossible. It is enough to drive me mad.'

'Be calm, my young friend; let us see what are these dirty scrawls that follow.'

The first was addressed,—

'For Master W. Ruffin, These.'—

'Dear sur, sum of our yong guldins will not bite, thof I tuold them you shoed me the squoire's own seel. But Tims will deliver you the lettrs as desired, and tell ould Addem he gave them to squoir's bond, as to be sure yours is the same, and shall be ready for signal, and hoy for Hoy Church and Sachefrel, as fadur sings at harvestwhome. Yours, deer Sur,

'H. H.

'Poscriff.—Do'e tell squoire we longs to heer from him, and has dootings about his not writing himself, and Lifetenant Bottler is smoky.'

'This Ruffin, I suppose, then, is your Donald of the Cavern, who has intercepted your letters, and carried on a correspondence with the poor devil Houghton, as if under your authority?'

'It seems too true. But who can Addem be?'

'Possibly Adam, for poor Gardiner, a sort of pun on his name.'

The other letters were to the same purpose; and they soon received yet more complete light upon Donald Bean's machinations.

John Hodges, one of Waverley's servants, who had remained with the regiment and had been taken at Preston, now made his appearance. He had sought out his master with the purpose of again entering his service. From this fellow they learned that some time after Waverley had gone from the headquarters of the regiment, a pedlar, called Ruthven, Ruffin, or Rivane, known among the soldiers by the name of Wily Will, had made frequent visits to the town of Dundee. He appeared to possess plenty of money, sold his commodities very cheap, seemed always willing to treat his friends at the ale-house, and easily ingratiated himself with many of Waverley's troop, particularly Sergeant Houghton and one Tims, also a non-commissioned officer. To these he unfolded, in Waverley's name, a plan for leaving the regiment and joining him in the Highlands, where report said the clans had already taken arms in great numbers. The men, who had been educated as Jacobites, so far as they had any opinion at all, and who knew their landlord, Sir Everard, had always been supposed to hold such tenets, easily fell into the snare. That Waverley was at a distance in the Highlands was received as a sufficient excuse for transmitting his letters through the medium of the pedlar; and the sight of his well-known seal seemed to authenticate the negotiations in his name, where writing might have been dangerous. The cabal, however, began to take air, from the premature mutinous language of those concerned. Wily Will justified his appellation; for, after suspicion arose, he was seen no more. When the 'Gazette' appeared in which Waverley was superseded, great part of his troop broke out into actual mutiny, but were surrounded and disarmed by the rest of the regiment. In consequence of the sentence of a court-martial, Houghton and Tims were condemned to be shot, but afterwards permitted to cast lots for life. Houghton, the survivor, showed much penitence, being convinced, from the rebukes and explanations of Colonel Gardiner, that he had really engaged in a very heinous crime. It is remarkable that, as soon as the poor fellow was satisfied of this, he became also convinced that the instigator had acted without authority from Edward, saying, 'If it was dishonourable and against Old England, the squire could know nought about it; he never did, or thought to do, anything dishonourable, no more didn't Sir Everard, nor none of them afore him, and in that belief he would live and die that Ruffin had done it all of his own head.'

The strength of conviction with which he expressed himself upon this subject, as well as his assurances that the letters intended for Waverley had been delivered to Ruthven, made that revolution in Colonel Gardiner's opinion which he expressed to Talbot.

The reader has long since understood that Donald Bean Lean played the part of tempter on this occasion. His motives were shortly these. Of an active and intriguing spirit, he had been long employed as a subaltern agent and spy by those in the confidence of the Chevalier, to an extent beyond what was suspected even by Fergus Mac-Ivor, whom, though obliged to him for protection, he regarded with fear and dislike. To success in this political department he naturally looked for raising himself by some bold stroke above his present hazardous and precarious trade of rapine. He was particularly employed in learning the strength of the regiments in Scotland, the character of the officers, etc., and had long had his eye upon Waverley's troop as open to temptation. Donald even believed that Waverley himself was at bottom in the Stuart interest, which seemed confirmed by his long visit to the Jacobite Baron of Bradwardine. When, therefore, he came to his cave with one of Glennaquoich's attendants, the robber, who could never appreciate his real motive, which was mere curiosity, was so sanguine as to hope that his own talents were to be employed in some intrigue of consequence, under the auspices of this wealthy young Englishman. Nor was he undeceived by Waverley's neglecting all hints and openings afforded for explanation. His conduct passed for prudent reserve, and somewhat piqued Donald Bean, who, supposing himself left out of a secret where confidence promised to be advantageous, determined to have his share in the drama, whether a regular part were assigned him or not. For this purpose during Waverley's sleep he possessed himself of his seal, as a token to be used to any of the troopers whom he might discover to be possessed of the captain's confidence. His first journey to Dundee, the town where the regiment was quartered, undeceived him in his original supposition, but opened to him a new field of action. He knew there would be no service so well rewarded by the friends of the Chevalier as seducing a part of the regular army to his standard. For this purpose he opened the machinations with which the reader is already acquainted, and which form a clue to all the intricacies and obscurities of the narrative previous to Waverley's leaving Glennaquoich.

By Colonel Talbot's advice, Waverley declined detaining in his service the lad whose evidence had thrown additional light on these intrigues. He represented to him, that it would be doing the man an injury to engage him in a desperate undertaking, and that, whatever should happen, his evidence would go some length at least in explaining the circumstances under which Waverley himself had embarked in it. Waverley therefore wrote a short state of what had happened to his uncle and his father, cautioning them, however, in the present circumstances, not to attempt to answer his letter. Talbot then gave the young man a letter to the commander of one of the English vessels of war cruising in the frith, requesting him to put the bearer ashore at Berwick, with a pass to proceed to —shire. He was then furnished with money to make an expeditious journey, and directed to get on board the ship by means of bribing a fishing-boat, which, as they afterwards learned, he easily effected.

Tired of the attendance of Callum Beg, who, he thought, had some disposition to act as a spy on his motions, Waverley hired as a servant a simple Edinburgh swain, who had mounted the white cockade in a fit of spleen and jealousy, because Jenny Jop had danced a whole night with Corporal Bullock of the Fusileers.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTRIGUES OF SOCIETY AND LOVE

Colonel Talbot became more kindly in his demeanour towards Waverley after the confidence he had reposed in him, and, as they were necessarily much together, the character of the Colonel rose in Waverley's estimation. There seemed at first something harsh in his strong expressions of dislike and censure, although no one was in the general case more open to conviction. The habit of authority had also given his manners some peremptory hardness, notwithstanding the polish which they had received from his intimate acquaintance with the higher circles. As a specimen of the military character, he differed from all whom Waverley had as yet seen. The soldiership of the Baron of Bradwardine was marked by pedantry; that of Major Melville by a sort of martinet attention to the minutiae and technicalities of discipline, rather suitable to one who was to manœuvre a battalion than to him who was to command an army; the military spirit of Fergus was so much warped and blended with his plans and political views, that it was less that of a soldier than of a petty sovereign. But Colonel Talbot was in every point the English soldier. His whole soul was devoted to the service of his king and country, without feeling any pride in knowing the theory of his art with the Baron, or its practical minutiae with the Major, or in applying his science to his own particular plans of ambition, like the Chieftain of Glennaquoich. Added to this, he was a man of extended knowledge and cultivated taste, although strongly tinged, as we have already observed, with those prejudices which are peculiarly English.

The character of Colonel Talbot dawned upon Edward by degrees; for the delay of the Highlanders in the fruitless siege of Edinburgh Castle occupied several weeks, during which Waverley had little to do excepting to seek such amusement as society afforded. He would willingly have persuaded his new friend to become acquainted with some of his former intimates. But the Colonel, after one or two visits, shook his head, and declined farther experiment. Indeed he went farther, and characterised the Baron as the most intolerable formal pedant he had ever had the misfortune to meet with, and the Chief of Glennaquoich as a Frenchified Scotchman, possessing all the cunning and plausibility of the nation where he was educated, with the proud, vindictive, and turbulent humour of that of his birth. 'If the devil,' he said, 'had sought out an agent expressly for the purpose of embroiling this miserable country, I do not think he could find a better than such a fellow as this, whose temper seems equally active, supple, and mischievous, and who is followed, and implicitly obeyed, by a gang of such cut-throats as those whom you are pleased to admire so much.'

The ladies of the party did not escape his censure. He allowed that Flora Mac-Ivor was a fine woman, and Rose Bradwardine a pretty girl. But he alleged that the former destroyed the effect of her beauty by an affectation of the grand airs which she had probably seen practised in the mock court of St. Germain's. As for Rose Bradwardine, he said it was impossible for any mortal to admire such a little uninformed thing, whose small portion of education was as ill adapted to her sex or youth as if she had appeared with one of her father's old campaign-coats upon her person for her sole garment. Now much of this was mere spleen and prejudice in the excellent Colonel, with whom the white cockade on the breast, the white rose in the hair, and the Mac at the beginning of a name would have made a devil out of an angel; and indeed he himself jocularly allowed that he could not have endured Venus herself if she had been announced in a drawing-room by the name of Miss Mac-Jupiter.

Waverley, it may easily be believed, looked upon these young ladies with very different eyes. During the period of the siege he paid them almost daily visits, although he observed with regret that his suit made as little progress in the affections of the former as the arms of the Chevalier in subduing the fortress. She maintained with rigour the rule she had laid down of treating him with indifference, without either affecting to avoid him or to shun intercourse with him. Every word, every look, was strictly regulated to accord with her system, and neither the dejection of Waverley nor the anger which Fergus scarcely suppressed could extend Flora's attention to Edward beyond that which the most ordinary politeness demanded. On the other hand, Rose Bradwardine gradually rose in Waverley's opinion. He had several opportunities of remarking that, as her extreme timidity wore off, her manners assumed a higher character; that the agitating circumstances of the stormy time seemed to call forth a certain dignity of feeling and expression which he had not formerly observed; and that she omitted no opportunity within her reach to extend her knowledge and refine her taste.

Flora Mac-Ivor called Rose her pupil, and was attentive to assist her in her studies, and to fashion both her taste and understanding. It might have been remarked by a very close observer that in the presence of Waverley she was much more desirous to exhibit her friend's excellences than her own. But I must request of the reader to suppose that this kind and disinterested purpose was concealed by the most cautious delicacy, studiously shunning the most distant approach to affectation. So that it was as unlike the usual exhibition of one pretty woman affecting to proner another as the friendship of David and Jonathan might be to the intimacy of two Bond Street loungers. The fact is that, though the effect was felt, the cause could hardly be observed. Each of the ladies, like two excellent actresses, were perfect in their parts, and performed them to the delight of the audience; and such being the case, it was almost impossible to discover that the elder constantly ceded to her friend that which was most suitable to her talents.

But to Waverley Rose Bradwardine possessed an attraction which few men can resist, from the marked interest which she took in everything that affected him. She was too young and too inexperienced to estimate the full force of the constant attention which she paid to him. Her father was too abstractedly immersed in learned and military discussions to observe her partiality, and Flora Mac-Ivor did not alarm her by remonstrance, because she saw in this line of conduct the most probable chance of her friend securing at length a return of affection.

The truth is, that in her first conversation after their meeting Rose had discovered the state of her mind to that acute and intelligent friend, although she was not herself aware of it. From that time Flora was not only determined upon the final rejection of Waverley's addresses, but became anxious that they should, if possible, be transferred to her friend. Nor was she less interested in this plan, though her brother had from time to time talked, as between jest and earnest, of paying his suit to Miss Bradwardine. She knew that Fergus had the true continental latitude of opinion respecting the institution of marriage, and would not have given his hand to an angel unless for the purpose of strengthening his alliances and increasing his influence and wealth. The Baron's whim of transferring his estate to the distant heir-male, instead of his own daughter, was therefore likely to be an insurmountable obstacle to his entertaining any serious thoughts of Rose Bradwardine. Indeed, Fergus's brain was a perpetual workshop of scheme and intrigue, of every possible kind and description; while, like many a mechanic of more ingenuity than steadiness, he would often unexpectedly, and without any apparent motive, abandon one plan and go earnestly to work upon another, which was either fresh from the forge of his imagination or had at some former period been flung aside half finished. It was therefore often difficult to guess what line of conduct he might finally adopt upon any given occasion.

Although Flora was sincerely attached to her brother, whose high energies might indeed have commanded her admiration even without the ties which bound them together, she was by no means blind to his faults, which she considered as dangerous to the hopes of any woman who should found her ideas of a happy marriage in the peaceful enjoyment of domestic society and the exchange of mutual and engrossing affection. The real disposition of Waverley, on the other hand, notwithstanding his dreams of tented fields and military honour, seemed exclusively domestic. He asked and received no share in the busy scenes which were constantly going on around him, and was rather annoyed than interested by the discussion of contending claims, rights, and interests which often passed in his presence. All this pointed him out as the person formed to make happy a spirit like that of Rose, which corresponded with his own.

She remarked this point in Waverley's character one day while she sat with Miss Bradwardine. 'His genius and elegant taste,' answered Rose, 'cannot be interested in such trifling discussions. What is it to him, for example, whether the Chief of the Macindallaghers, who has brought out only fifty men, should be a colonel or a captain? and how could Mr. Waverley be supposed to interest himself in the violent altercation between your brother and young Corrinashian whether the post of honour is due to the eldest cadet of a clan or the youngest?'

'My dear Rose, if he were the hero you suppose him he would interest himself in these matters, not indeed as important in themselves, but for the purpose of mediating between the ardent spirits who actually do make them the subject of discord. You saw when Corrinashian raised his voice in great passion, and laid his hand upon his sword, Waverley lifted his head as if he had just awaked from a dream, and asked with great composure what the matter was.'

'Well, and did not the laughter they fell into at his absence of mind serve better to break off the dispute than anything he could have said to them?'

'True, my dear,' answered Flora; 'but not quite so creditably for Waverley as if he had brought them to their senses by force of reason.'

'Would you have him peacemaker general between all the gunpowder Highlanders in the army? I beg your pardon, Flora, your brother, you know, is out of the question; he has more sense than half of them. But can you think the fierce, hot, furious spirits of whose brawls we see much and hear more, and who terrify me out of my life every day in the world, are at all to be compared to Waverley?'

'I do not compare him with those uneducated men, my dear Rose. I only lament that, with his talents and genius, he does not assume that place in society for which they eminently fit him, and that he does not lend their full impulse to the noble cause in which he has enlisted. Are there not Lochiel, and P—, and M—, and G—, all men of the highest education as well as the first talents,—why will he not stoop like them to be alive and useful? I often believe his zeal is frozen by that proud cold-blooded Englishman whom he now lives with so much.'

'Colonel Talbot? he is a very disagreeable person, to be sure. He looks as if he thought no Scottish woman worth the trouble of handing her a cup of tea. But Waverley is so gentle, so well informed—'

'Yes,' said Flora, smiling, 'he can admire the moon and quote a stanza from Tasso.'

'Besides, you know how he fought,' added Miss Bradwardine.

'For mere fighting,' answered Flora, 'I believe all men (that is, who deserve the name) are pretty much alike; there is generally more courage required to run away. They have besides, when confronted with each other, a certain instinct for strife, as we see in other male animals, such as dogs, bulls, and so forth. But high and perilous enterprise is not Waverley's forte. He would never have been his celebrated ancestor Sir Nigel, but only Sir Nigel's eulogist and poet. I will tell you where he will be at home, my dear, and in his place—in the quiet circle of domestic happiness, lettered indolence, and elegant enjoyments of Waverley-Honour. And he will refit the old library in the most exquisite Gothic taste, and garnish its shelves with the rarest and most valuable volumes; and he will draw plans and landscapes, and write verses, and rear temples, and dig grottoes; and he will stand in a clear summer night in the colonnade before the hall, and gaze on the deer as they stray in the moonlight, or lie shadowed by the boughs of the huge old fantastic oaks; and he will repeat verses to his beautiful wife, who will hang upon his arm;—and he will be a happy man.'

And she will be a happy woman, thought poor Rose. But she only sighed and dropped the conversation.

CHAPTER XXIV

FERGUS A SUITOR

Waverley had, indeed, as he looked closer into the state of the Chevalier's court, less reason to be satisfied with it. It contained, as they say an acorn includes all the ramifications of the future oak, as many seeds of tracasserie and intrigue as might have done honour to the court of a large empire. Every person of consequence had some separate object, which he pursued with a fury that Waverley considered as altogether disproportioned to its importance. Almost all had their reasons for discontent, although the most legitimate was that of the worthy old Baron, who was only distressed on account of the common cause.

'We shall hardly,' said he one morning to Waverley when they had been viewing the Castle—'we shall hardly gain the obsidional crown, which you wot well was made of the roots or grain which takes root within the place besieged, or it may be of the herb woodbind, parietaria, or pellitory; we shall not, I say, gain it by this same blockade or leaguer of Edinburgh Castle.' For this opinion he gave most learned and satisfactory reasons, that the reader may not care to hear repeated.

Having escaped from the old gentleman, Waverley went to Fergus's lodgings by appointment, to await his return from Holyrood House. 'I am to have a particular audience to-morrow,' said Fergus to Waverley overnight, 'and you must meet me to wish me joy of the success which I securely anticipate.'

The morrow came, and in the Chief's apartment he found Ensign Maccombich waiting to make report of his turn of duty in a sort of ditch which they had dug across the Castle-hill and called a trench. In a short time the Chief's voice was heard on the stair in a tone of impatient fury: 'Callum! why, Callum Beg! Diaoul! He entered the room with all the marks of a man agitated by a towering passion; and there were few upon whose features rage produced a more violent effect. The veins of his forehead swelled when he was in such agitation; his nostril became dilated; his cheek and eye inflamed; and his look that of a demoniac. These appearances of half-suppressed rage were the more frightful because they were obviously caused by a strong effort to temper with discretion an almost ungovernable paroxysm of passion, and resulted from an internal conflict of the most dreadful kind, which agitated his whole frame of mortality.

As he entered the apartment he unbuckled his broadsword, and throwing it down with such violence that the weapon rolled to the other end of the room, 'I know not what,' he exclaimed, 'withholds me from taking a solemn oath that I will never more draw it in his cause. Load my pistols, Callum, and bring them hither instantly—instantly!' Callum, whom nothing ever startled, dismayed, or disconcerted, obeyed very coolly. Evan Dhu, upon whose brow the suspicion that his Chief had been insulted called up a corresponding storm, swelled in sullen silence, awaiting to learn where or upon whom vengeance was to descend.

'So, Waverley, you are there,' said the Chief, after a moment's recollection. 'Yes, I remember I asked you to share my triumph, and you have come to witness my disappointment we shall call it.' Evan now presented the written report he had in his hand, which Fergus threw from him with great passion. 'I wish to God,' he said, 'the old den would tumble down upon the heads of the fools who attack and the knaves who defend it! I see, Waverley, you think I am mad. Leave us, Evan, but be within call.'

'The Colonel's in an unco kippage,' said Mrs. Flockhart to Evan as he descended; 'I wish he may be weel,—the very veins on his brent brow are swelled like whipcord; wad he no tak something?'

'He usually lets blood for these fits,' answered the Highland ancient with great composure.

When this officer left the room, the Chieftain gradually reassumed some degree of composure. 'I know, Waverley,' he said, 'that Colonel Talbot has persuaded you to curse ten times a day your engagement with us; nay, never deny it, for I am at this moment tempted to curse my own. Would you believe it, I made this very morning two suits to the Prince, and he has rejected them both; what do you think of it?'

'What can I think,' answered Waverley, 'till I know what your requests were?' 'Why, what signifies what they were, man? I tell you it was I that made them—I to whom he owes more than to any three who have joined the standard; for I negotiated the whole business, and brought in all the Perthshire men when not one would have stirred. I am not likely, I think, to ask anything very unreasonable, and if I did, they might have stretched a point. Well, but you shall know all, now that I can draw my breath again with some freedom. You remember my earl's patent; it is dated some years back, for services then rendered; and certainly my merit has not been diminished, to say the least, by my subsequent behaviour. Now, sir, I value this bauble of a coronet as little as you can, or any philosopher on earth; for I hold that the chief of such a clan as the Sliochd nan Ivor is superior in rank to any earl in Scotland. But I had a particular reason for assuming this cursed title at this time. You must know that I learned accidentally that the Prince has been pressing that old foolish Baron of Bradwardine to disinherit his male heir, or nineteenth or twentieth cousin, who has taken a command in the Elector of Hanover's militia, and to settle his estate upon your pretty little friend Rose; and this, as being the command of his king and overlord, who may alter the destination of a fief at pleasure, the old gentleman seems well reconciled to.'

'And what becomes of the homage?'

'Curse the homage! I believe Rose is to pull off the queen's slipper on her coronation-day, or some such trash. Well, sir, as Rose Bradwardine would always have made a suitable match for me but for this idiotical predilection of her father for the heir-male, it occurred to me there now remained no obstacle unless that the Baron might expect his daughter's husband to take the name of Bradwardine (which you know would be impossible in my case), and that this might be evaded by my assuming the title to which I had so good a right, and which, of course, would supersede that difficulty. If she was to be also Viscountess Bradwardine in her own right after her father's demise, so much the better; I could have no objection.'

'But, Fergus,' said Waverley, 'I had no idea that you had any affection for Miss Bradwardine, and you are always sneering at her father.'

'I have as much affection for Miss Bradwardine, my good friend, as I think it necessary to have for the future mistress of my family and the mother of my children. She is a very pretty, intelligent girl, and is certainly of one of the very first Lowland families; and, with a little of Flora's instructions and forming, will make a very good figure. As to her father, he is an original, it is true, and an absurd one enough; but he has given such severe lessons to Sir Hew Halbert, that dear defunct the Laird of Balmawhapple, and others, that nobody dare laugh at him, so his absurdity goes for nothing. I tell you there could have been no earthly objection—none. I had settled the thing entirely in my own mind.'

'But had you asked the Baron's consent,' said Waverley, 'or Rose's?'

'To what purpose? To have spoke to the Baron before I had assumed my title would have only provoked a premature and irritating discussion on the subject of the change of name, when, as Earl of Glennaquoich, I had only to propose to him to carry his d—d bear and bootjack party per pale, or in a scutcheon of pretence, or in a separate shield perhaps—any way that would not blemish my own coat of arms. And as to Rose, I don't see what objection she could have made if her father was satisfied.'

'Perhaps the same that your sister makes to me, you being satisfied.'

Fergus gave a broad stare at the comparison which this supposition implied, but cautiously suppressed the answer which rose to his tongue. 'O, we should easily have arranged all that. So, sir, I craved a private interview, and this morning was assigned; and I asked you to meet me here, thinking, like a fool, that I should want your countenance as bride's-man. Well, I state my pretension—they are not denied; the promises so repeatedly made and the patent granted—they are acknowledged. But I propose, as a natural consequence, to assume the rank which the patent bestowed. I have the old story of the jealousy of C—and M—trumped up against me. I resist this pretext, and offer to procure their written acquiescence, in virtue of the date of my patent as prior to their silly claims; I assure you I would have had such a consent from them, if it had been at the point of the sword. And then out comes the real truth; and he dares to tell me to my face that my patent must be suppressed for the present, for fear of disgusting that rascally coward and faineant (naming the rival chief of his own clan), who has no better title to be a chieftain than I to be Emperor of China, and who is pleased to shelter his dastardly reluctance to come out, agreeable to his promise twenty times pledged, under a pretended jealousy of the Prince's partiality to me. And, to leave this miserable driveller without a pretence for his cowardice, the Prince asks it as a personal favour of me, forsooth, not to press my just and reasonable request at this moment. After this, put your faith in princes!'

'And did your audience end here?'

'End? O no! I was determined to leave him no pretence for his ingratitude, and I therefore stated, with all the composure I could muster,—for I promise you I trembled with passion,—the particular reasons I had for wishing that his Royal Highness would impose upon me any other mode of exhibiting my duty and devotion, as my views in life made what at any other time would have been a mere trifle at this crisis a severe sacrifice; and then I explained to him my full plan.'

'And what did the Prince answer?'

'Answer? why—it is well it is written, "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought!"—why, he answered that truly he was glad I had made him my confidant, to prevent more grievous disappointment, for he could assure me, upon the word of a prince, that Miss Bradwardine's affections were engaged, and he was under a particular promise to favour them. "So, my dear Fergus," said he, with his most gracious cast of smile, "as the marriage is utterly out of question, there need be no hurry, you know, about the earldom." And so he glided off and left me plante la.'

'And what did you do?'

'I'll tell you what I COULD have done at that moment—sold myself to the devil or the Elector, whichever offered the dearest revenge. However, I am now cool. I know he intends to marry her to some of his rascally Frenchmen or his Irish officers, but I will watch them close; and let the man that would supplant me look well to himself. Bisogna copirisi, Signor.'

After some further conversation, unnecessary to be detailed, Waverley took leave of the Chieftain, whose fury had now subsided into a deep and strong desire of vengeance, and returned home, scarce able to analyse the mixture of feelings which the narrative had awakened in his own bosom.

CHAPTER XXV

'TO ONE THING CONSTANT NEVER'

'I am the very child of caprice,' said Waverley to himself, as he bolted the door of his apartment and paced it with hasty steps. 'What is it to me that Fergus Mac-Ivor should wish to marry Rose Bradwardine? I love her not; I might have been loved by her perhaps; but rejected her simple, natural, and affecting attachment, instead of cherishing it into tenderness, and dedicated myself to one who will never love mortal man, unless old Warwick, the King-maker, should arise from the dead The Baron too—I would not have cared about his estate, and so the name would have been no stumbling-block. The devil might have taken the barren moors and drawn off the royal caligae for anything I would have minded. But, framed as she is for domestic affection and tenderness, for giving and receiving all those kind and quiet attentions which sweeten life to those who pass it together, she is sought by Fergus Mac-Ivor. He will not use her ill, to be sure; of that he is incapable. But he will neglect her after the first month; he will be too intent on subduing some rival chieftain or circumventing some favourite at court, on gaining some heathy hill and lake or adding to his bands some new troop of caterans, to inquire what she does, or how she amuses herself.

*And then will canker sorrow eat her bud,
And chase the native beauty from her cheek;
And she will look as hollow as a ghost,
And dim and meagre as an ague fit,
And so she'll die.*

And such a catastrophe of the most gentle creature on earth might have been prevented if Mr. Edward Waverley had had his eyes! Upon my word, I cannot understand how I thought Flora so much, that is, so very much, handsomer than Rose. She is taller indeed, and her manner more formed; but many people think Miss Bradwardine's more natural; and she is certainly much younger. I should think Flora is two years older than I am. I will look at them particularly this evening.' And with this resolution Waverley went to drink tea (as the fashion was Sixty Years Since) at the house of a lady of quality attached to the cause of the Chevalier, where he found, as he expected, both the ladies. All rose as he entered, but Flora immediately resumed her place and the conversation in which she was engaged. Rose, on the contrary, almost imperceptibly made a little way in the crowded circle for his advancing the corner of a chair. 'Her manner, upon the whole, is most engaging,' said Waverley to himself.

A dispute occurred whether the Gaelic or Italian language was most liquid, and best adapted for poetry; the opinion for the Gaelic, which probably might not have found supporters elsewhere, was here fiercely defended by seven Highland ladies, who talked at the top of their lungs, and screamed the company deaf with examples of Celtic euphonia. Flora, observing the Lowland ladies sneer at the comparison, produced some reasons to show that it was not altogether so absurd;

but Rose, when asked for her opinion, gave it with animation in praise of Italian, which she had studied with Waverley's assistance. "She has a more correct ear than Flora, though a less accomplished musician," said Waverley to himself. 'I suppose Miss Mac-Ivor will next compare Mac-Murrough nan Fonn to Ariosto!' Lastly, it so befell that the company differed whether Fergus should be asked to perform on the flute, at which he was an adept, or Waverley invited to read a play of Shakspeare; and the lady of the house good-humouredly undertook to collect the votes of the company for poetry or music, under the condition that the gentleman whose talents were not laid under contribution that evening should contribute them to enliven the next. It chanced that Rose had the casting vote. Now Flora, who seemed to impose it as a rule upon herself never to countenance any proposal which might seem to encourage Waverley, had voted for music, providing the Baron would take his violin to accompany Fergus. 'I wish you joy of your taste, Miss Mac-Ivor,' thought Edward, as they sought for his book. 'I thought it better when we were at Glennaquoich; but certainly the Baron is no great performer, and Shakspeare is worth listening to.'

'Romeo and Juliet' was selected, and Edward read with taste, feeling, and spirit several scenes from that play. All the company applauded with their hands, and many with their tears. Flora, to whom the drama was well known, was among the former; Rose, to whom it was altogether new, belonged to the latter class of admirers. 'She has more feeling too,' said Waverley, internally.

The conversation turning upon the incidents of the play and upon the characters, Fergus declared that the only one worth naming, as a man of fashion and spirit, was Mercutio. 'I could not,' he said, 'quite follow all his old-fashioned wit, but he must have been a very pretty fellow, according to the ideas of his time.'

'And it was a shame,' said Ensign Maccombich, who usually followed his Colonel everywhere, 'for that Tibbert, or Taggart, or whatever was his name, to stick him under the other gentleman's arm while he was redding the fray.'

The ladies, of course, declared loudly in favour of Romeo, but this opinion did not go undisputed. The mistress of the house and several other ladies severely reprobated the levity with which the hero transfers his affections from Rosalind to Juliet. Flora remained silent until her opinion was repeatedly requested, and then answered, she thought the circumstance objected to not only reconcilable to nature, but such as in the highest degree evinced the art of the poet. 'Romeo is described,' said she, 'as a young man peculiarly susceptible of the softer passions; his love is at first fixed upon a woman who could afford it no return; this he repeatedly tells you,—

From love's weak, childish bow she lives unharmed,
and again—

She hath forsworn to love.

Now, as it was impossible that Romeo's love, supposing him a reasonable being, could continue to subsist without hope, the poet has, with great art, seized the moment when he was reduced actually to despair to throw in his way an object more accomplished than her by whom he had been rejected, and who is disposed to repay his attachment. I can scarce conceive a situation more calculated to enhance the ardour of Romeo's affection for Juliet than his being at once raised by her from the state of drooping melancholy in which he appears first upon the scene to the ecstatic state in which he exclaims—

—come what sorrow can,

It cannot countervail the exchange of joy

That one short moment gives me in her sight.'

'Good now, Miss Mac-Ivor,' said a young lady of quality, 'do you mean to cheat us out of our prerogative? will you persuade us love cannot subsist without hope, or that the lover must become fickle if the lady is cruel? O fie! I did not expect such an unsentimental conclusion.'

'A lover, my dear Lady Betty,' said Flora, 'may, I conceive, persevere in his suit under very discouraging circumstances. Affection can (now and then) withstand very severe storms of rigour, but not a long polar frost of downright indifference. Don't, even with YOUR attractions, try the experiment upon any lover whose faith you value. Love will subsist on wonderfully little hope, but not altogether without it.'

'It will be just like Duncan Mac-Girdie's mare,' said Evan, 'if your ladyships please, he wanted to use her by degrees to live without meat, and just as he had put her on a straw a day the poor thing died!'

Evan's illustration set the company a-laughing, and the discourse took a different turn. Shortly afterwards the party broke up, and Edward returned home, musing on what Flora had said. 'I will love my Rosalind no more,' said he; 'she has given me a broad enough hint for that; and I will speak to her brother and resign my suit. But for a Juliet—would it be handsome to interfere with Fergus's pretensions? though it is impossible they can ever succeed; and should they miscarry, what then? why then alors comme alors.' And with this resolution of being guided by circumstances did our hero commit himself to repose.

CHAPTER XXVI

A BRAVE MAN IN SORROW

If my fair readers should be of opinion that my hero's levity in love is altogether unpardonable, I must remind them that all his griefs and difficulties did not arise from that sentimental source. Even the lyric poet who complains so feelingly of the pains of love could not forget, that at the same time he was 'in debt and in drink,' which, doubtless, were great aggravations of his distress. There were, indeed, whole days in which Waverley thought neither of Flora nor Rose Bradwardine, but which were spent in melancholy conjectures on the probable state of matters at Waverley-Honour, and the dubious issue of the civil contest in which he was pledged. Colonel Talbot often engaged him in discussions upon the justice of the cause he had espoused. 'Not,' he said, 'that it is possible for you to quit it at this present moment, for, come what will, you must stand by your rash engagement. But I wish you to be aware that the right is not with you; that you are fighting against the real interests of your country; and that you ought, as an Englishman and a patriot, to take the first opportunity to leave this unhappy expedition before the snowball melts.'

In such political disputes Waverley usually opposed the common arguments of his party, with which it is unnecessary to trouble the reader. But he had little to say when the Colonel urged him to compare the strength by which they had undertaken to overthrow the government with that which was now assembling very rapidly for its support. To this statement Waverley had but one answer: 'If the cause I have undertaken be perilous, there would be the greater disgrace in abandoning it.' And in his turn he generally silenced Colonel Talbot, and succeeded in changing the subject.

One night, when, after a long dispute of this nature, the friends had separated and our hero had retired to bed, he was awakened about midnight by a suppressed groan. He started up and listened; it came from the apartment of Colonel Talbot, which was divided from his own by a wainscotted partition, with a door of communication. Waverley approached this door and distinctly heard one or two deep-drawn sighs. What could be the matter? The Colonel had parted from him apparently in his usual state of spirits. He must have been taken suddenly ill. Under this impression he opened the door of communication very gently, and perceived the Colonel, in his night-gown, seated by a table, on which lay a letter and a picture. He raised his head hastily, as Edward stood uncertain whether to advance or retire, and Waverley perceived that his cheeks were stained with tears.

As if ashamed at being found giving way to such emotion, Colonel Talbot rose with apparent displeasure and said, with some sternness, 'I think, Mr. Waverley, my own apartment and the hour might have secured even a prisoner against—'

'Do not say INTRUSION, Colonel Talbot; I heard you breathe hard and feared you were ill; that alone could have induced me to break in upon you.'

'I am well,' said the Colonel, 'perfectly well.'

'But you are distressed,' said Edward; 'is there anything can be done?'

'Nothing, Mr. Waverley; I was only thinking of home, and some unpleasant occurrences there.'

'Good God, my uncle!' exclaimed Waverley.

'No, it is a grief entirely my own. I am ashamed you should have seen it disarm me so much; but it must have its course at times, that it may be at others more decently supported. I would have kept it secret from you; for I think it will grieve you, and yet you can administer no consolation. But you have surprised me,—I see you are surprised yourself,—and I hate mystery. Read that letter.'

The letter was from Colonel Talbot's sister, and in these words:—

'I received yours, my dearest brother, by Hodges. Sir E. W. and Mr. R. are still at large, but are not permitted to leave London. I wish to Heaven I could give you as good an account of matters in the square. But the news of the unhappy affair at Preston came upon us, with the dreadful addition that you were among the fallen. You know Lady Emily's state of health, when your friendship for Sir E. induced you to leave her. She was much harassed with the sad accounts from Scotland of the rebellion having broken out; but kept up her spirits, as, she said, it became your wife, and for the sake of the future heir, so long hoped for in vain. Alas, my dear brother, these hopes are now ended! Notwithstanding all my watchful care, this unhappy rumour reached her without preparation. She was taken ill immediately; and the poor infant scarce survived its birth. Would to God this were all! But although the contradiction of the horrible report by your own letter has greatly revived her spirits, yet Dr. — apprehends, I grieve to say, serious, and even dangerous, consequences to her health, especially from the uncertainty in which she must necessarily remain for some time, aggravated by the ideas she has formed of the ferocity of those with whom you are a prisoner.'

'Do therefore, my dear brother, as soon as this reaches you, endeavour to gain your release, by parole, by ransom, or any way that is practicable. I do not exaggerate Lady Emily's state of health; but I must not—dare not—suppress the truth. Ever, my dear Philip, your most affectionate sister,

'Lucy TALBOT.'

Edward stood motionless when he had perused this letter; for the conclusion was inevitable, that, by the Colonel's journey in quest of him, he had incurred this heavy calamity. It was severe enough, even in its irremediable part; for Colonel Talbot and Lady Emily, long without a family, had fondly exulted in the hopes which were now blasted. But this disappointment was nothing to the extent of the threatened evil; and Edward, with horror, regarded himself as the original cause of both.

Ere he could collect himself sufficiently to speak, Colonel Talbot had recovered his usual composure of manner, though his troubled eye denoted his mental agony.

'She is a woman, my young friend, who may justify even a soldier's tears.' He reached him the miniature, exhibiting features which fully justified the eulogium; 'and yet, God knows, what you see of her there is the least of the charms she possesses—possessed, I should perhaps say—but God's will be done.'

'You must fly—you must fly instantly to her relief. It is not—it shall not be too late.'

'Fly? how is it possible? I am a prisoner, upon parole.'

'I am your keeper; I restore your parole; I am to answer for you.'

'You cannot do so consistently with your duty; nor can I accept a discharge from you, with due regard to my own honour; you would be made responsible.'

'I will answer it with my head, if necessary,' said Waverley impetuously. 'I have been the unhappy cause of the loss of your child, make me not the murderer of your wife.'

'No, my dear Edward,' said Talbot, taking him kindly by the hand, 'you are in no respect to blame; and if I concealed this domestic distress for two days, it was lest your sensibility should view it in that light. You could not think of me, hardly knew of my existence, when I left England in quest of you. It is a responsibility, Heaven knows, sufficiently heavy for mortality, that we must answer for the foreseen and direct result of our actions; for their indirect and consequential operation the great and good Being, who alone can foresee the dependence of human events on each other, hath not pronounced his frail creatures liable.'

'But that you should have left Lady Emily,' said Waverley, with much emotion, 'in the situation of all others the most interesting to a husband, to seek a—'

'I only did my duty,' answered Colonel Talbot, calmly, 'and I do not, ought not, to regret it. If the path of gratitude and honour were always smooth and easy, there would be little merit in following it; but it moves often in contradiction to our interest and passions, and sometimes to our better affections. These are the trials of life, and this, though not the least bitter' (the tears came unbidden to his eyes), 'is not the first which it has been my fate to encounter. But we will talk of this to-morrow,' he said, wringing Waverley's hands. 'Good-night; strive to forget it for a few hours. It will dawn, I think, by six, and it is now past two. Good-night.'

Edward retired, without trusting his voice with a reply.

CHAPTER XXVII

EXERTION

When Colonel Talbot entered the breakfast-parlour next morning, he learned from Waverley's servant that our hero had been abroad at an early hour and was not yet returned. The morning was well advanced before he again appeared. He arrived out of breath, but with an air of joy that astonished Colonel Talbot.

'There,' said he, throwing a paper on the table, 'there is my morning's work. Alick, pack up the Colonel's clothes. Make haste, make haste.'

The Colonel examined the paper with astonishment. It was a pass from the Chevalier to Colonel Talbot, to repair to Leith, or any other port in possession of his Royal Highness's troops, and there to embark for England or elsewhere, at his free pleasure; he only giving his parole of honour not to bear arms against the house of Stuart for the space of a twelve-month.

'In the name of God,' said the Colonel, his eyes sparkling with eagerness, 'how did you obtain this?'

'I was at the Chevalier's levee as soon as he usually rises. He was gone to the camp at Duddingston. I pursued him thither, asked and obtained an audience—but I will tell you not a word more, unless I see you begin to pack.'

'Before I know whether I can avail myself of this passport, or how it was obtained?'

'O, you can take out the things again, you know. Now I see you busy, I will go on. When I first mentioned your name, his eyes sparkled almost as bright as yours did two minutes since. "Had you," he earnestly asked, "shown any sentiments favourable to his cause?" "Not in the least, nor was there any hope you would do so." His countenance fell. I requested your freedom. "Impossible," he said; "your importance as a friend and confidant of such and such personages made my request altogether extravagant." I told him my own story and yours; and asked him to judge what my feelings must be by his own. He has a heart, and a kind one, Colonel Talbot, you may say what you please. He took a sheet of paper and wrote the pass with his own hand. "I will not trust myself with my council," he said; "they will argue me out of what is right. I will not endure that a friend, valued as I value you, should be loaded with the painful reflections which must afflict you in case of further misfortune in Colonel Talbot's family; nor will I keep a brave enemy a prisoner under such circumstances. Besides," said he, "I think I can justify

myself to my prudent advisers by pleading the good effect such lenity will produce on the minds of the great English families with whom Colonel Talbot is connected."

'There the politician peeped out,' said the Colonel.

'Well, at least he concluded like a king's son: "Take the passport; I have added a condition for form's sake; but if the Colonel objects to it, let him depart without giving any parole whatever. I come here to war with men, but not to distress or endanger women."

'Well, I never thought to have been so much indebted to the Pretend—'

'To the Prince,' said Waverley, smiling.

'To the Chevalier,' said the Colonel; 'it is a good travelling name, and which we may both freely use. Did he say anything more?'

'Only asked if there was anything else he could oblige me in; and when I replied in the negative, he shook me by the hand, and wished all his followers were as considerate, since some friends of mine not only asked all he had to bestow, but many things which were entirely out of his power, or that of the greatest sovereign upon earth. Indeed, he said, no prince seemed, in the eyes of his followers, so like the Deity as himself, if you were to judge from the extravagant requests which they daily preferred to him.'

'Poor young gentleman,' said the Colonel, 'I suppose he begins to feel the difficulties of his situation. Well, dear Waverley, this is more than kind, and shall not be forgotten while Philip Talbot can remember anything. My life—pshaw—let Emily thank you for that; this is a favour worth fifty lives. I cannot hesitate on giving my parole in the circumstances; there it is (he wrote it out in form). And now, how am I to get off?'

'All that is settled: your baggage is packed, my horses wait, and a boat has been engaged, by the Prince's permission, to put you on board the Fox frigate. I sent a messenger down to Leith on purpose.'

'That will do excellently well. Captain Beaver is my particular friend; he will put me ashore at Berwick or Shields, from whence I can ride post to London; and you must entrust me with the packet of papers which you recovered by means of your Miss Bean Lean. I may have an opportunity of using them to your advantage. But I see your Highland friend, Glen — what do you call his barbarous name? and his orderly with him; I must not call him his orderly cut-throat any more, I suppose. See how he walks as if the world were his own, with the bonnet on one side of his head and his plaid puffed out across his breast! I should like now to meet that youth where my hands were not tied: I would tame his pride, or he should tame mine.'

'For shame, Colonel Talbot! you swell at sight of tartan as the bull is said to do at scarlet. You and Mac-Ivor have some points not much unlike, so far as national prejudice is concerned.'

The latter part of this discourse took place in the street. They passed the Chief, the Colonel and he sternly and punctiliously greeting each other, like two duellists before they take their ground. It was evident the dislike was mutual. 'I never see that surly fellow that dogs his heels,' said the Colonel, after he had mounted his horse, 'but he reminds me of lines I have somewhere heard—upon the stage, I think:—

Close behind him

Stalks sullen Bertram, like a sorcerer's fiend,

Pressing to be employed.

'I assure you, Colonel,' said Waverley, 'that you judge too harshly of the Highlanders.'

'Not a whit, not a whit; I cannot spare them a jot; I cannot bate them an ace. Let them stay in their own barren mountains, and puff and swell, and hang their bonnets on the horns of the moon, if they have a mind; but what business have they to come where people wear breeches, and speak an intelligible language? I mean intelligible in comparison to their gibberish, for even the Lowlanders talk a kind of English little better than the Negroes in Jamaica. I could pity the Pr——, I mean the, Chevalier himself, for having so many desperadoes about him. And they learn their trade so early. There is a kind of subaltern imp, for example, a sort of sucking devil, whom your friend Glena—— Glenamuck there, has sometimes in his train. To look at him, he is about fifteen years; but he is a century old in mischief and villainy. He was playing at quoits the other day in the court; a gentleman, a decent-looking person enough, came past, and as a quoit hit his shin, he lifted his cane; but my young bravo whips out his pistol, like Beau Clincher in the "Trip to the Jubilee," and had not a scream of Gardez l'eau from an upper window set all parties a-scrampering for fear of the inevitable consequences, the poor gentleman would have lost his life by the hands of that little cockatrice.'

'A fine character you'll give of Scotland upon your return, Colonel Talbot.'

'O, Justice Shallow,' said the Colonel, 'will save me the trouble—"Barren, barren, beggars all, beggars all. Marry, good air,"—and that only when you are fairly out of Edinburgh, and not yet come to Leith, as is our case at present.'

In a short time they arrived at the seaport.

The boat rock'd at the pier of Leith, Full loud the wind blew down the ferry; The ship rode at the Berwick Law.

'Farewell, Colonel; may you find all as you would wish it! Perhaps we may meet sooner than you expect; they talk of an immediate route to England.'

'Tell me nothing of that,' said Talbot; 'I wish to carry no news of your motions.'

'Simply, then, adieu. Say, with a thousand kind greetings, all that is dutiful and affectionate to Sir Everard and Aunt Rachel. Think of me as kindly as you can, speak of me as indulgently as your conscience will permit, and once more adieu.'

'And adieu, my dear Waverley; many, many thanks for your kindness. Unplaid yourself on the first opportunity. I shall ever think on you with gratitude, and the worst of my censure shall be, Que diable alloit-il faire dans cette galere?'

And thus they parted, Colonel Talbot going on board of the boat and Waverley returning to Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MARCH

It is not our purpose to intrude upon the province of history. We shall therefore only remind our readers that about the beginning of November the Young Chevalier, at the head of about six thousand men at the utmost, resolved to peril his cause on an attempt to penetrate into the centre of England, although aware of the mighty preparations which were made for his reception. They set forward on this crusade in weather which would have rendered any other troops incapable of marching, but which in reality gave these active mountaineers advantages over a less hardy enemy. In defiance of a superior army lying upon the Borders, under Field-Marshal Wade, they besieged and took Carlisle, and soon afterwards prosecuted their daring march to the southward.

As Colonel Mac-Ivor's regiment marched in the van of the clans, he and Waverley, who now equalled any Highlander in the endurance of fatigue, and was become somewhat acquainted with their language, were perpetually at its head. They marked the progress of the army, however, with very different eyes. Fergus, all air and fire, and confident against the world in arms, measured nothing but that every step was a yard nearer London. He neither asked, expected, nor desired any aid except that of the clans to place the Stuarts once more on the throne; and when by chance a few adherents joined the standard, he always considered

them in the light of new claimants upon the favours of the future monarch, who, he concluded, must therefore subtract for their gratification so much of the bounty which ought to be shared among his Highland followers.

Edward's views were very different. He could not but observe that in those towns in which they proclaimed James the Third, 'no man cried, God bless him.' The mob stared and listened, heartless, stupefied, and dull, but gave few signs even of that boisterous spirit which induces them to shout upon all occasions for the mere exercise of their most sweet voices. The Jacobites had been taught to believe that the north-western counties abounded with wealthy squires and hardy yeomen, devoted to the cause of the White Rose. But of the wealthier Tories they saw little. Some fled from their houses, some feigned themselves sick, some surrendered themselves to the government as suspected persons. Of such as remained, the ignorant gazed with astonishment, mixed with horror and aversion, at the wild appearance, unknown language, and singular garb of the Scottish clans. And to the more prudent their scanty numbers, apparent deficiency in discipline, and poverty of equipment seemed certain tokens of the calamitous termination of their rash undertaking. Thus the few who joined them were such as bigotry of political principle blinded to consequences, or whose broken fortunes induced them to hazard all on a risk so desperate.

The Baron of Bradwardine, being asked what he thought of these recruits, took a long pinch of snuff, and answered drily, 'that he could not but have an excellent opinion of them, since they resembled precisely the followers who attached themselves to the good King David at the cave of Adullam—videlicet, every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, which the vulgate renders bitter of soul; and doubtless,' he said, 'they will prove mighty men of their hands, and there is much need that they should, for I have seen many a sour look cast upon us.'

But none of these considerations moved Fergus. He admired the luxuriant beauty of the country, and the situation of many of the seats which they passed. 'Is Waverley-Honour like that house, Edward?'

'It is one-half larger.'

'Is your uncle's park as fine a one as that?'

'It is three times as extensive, and rather resembles a forest than a mere park.'

'Flora will be a happy woman.'

'I hope Miss Mac-Ivor will have much reason for happiness unconnected with Waverley-Honour.'

'I hope so too; but to be mistress of such a place will be a pretty addition to the sum total.'

'An addition, the want of which, I trust, will be amply supplied by some other means.'

'How,' said Fergus, stopping short and turning upon Waverley—'how am I to understand that, Mr. Waverley? Had I the pleasure to hear you aright?'

'Perfectly right, Fergus.'

'And am I to understand that you no longer desire my alliance and my sister's hand?'

'Your sister has refused mine,' said Waverley, 'both directly and by all the usual means by which ladies repress undesired attentions.'

'I have no idea,' answered the Chieftain, 'of a lady dismissing or a gentleman withdrawing his suit, after it has been approved of by her legal guardian, without giving him an opportunity of talking the matter over with the lady. You did not, I suppose, expect my sister to drop into your mouth like a ripe plum the first moment you chose to open it?'

'As to the lady's title to dismiss her lover, Colonel,' replied Edward, 'it is a point which you must argue with her, as I am ignorant of the customs of the Highlands in that particular. But as to my title to acquiesce in a rejection from her without an appeal to your interest, I will tell you plainly, without meaning to undervalue Miss Mac-Ivor's admitted beauty and accomplishments, that I would not take the hand of an angel, with an empire for her dowry, if her consent were extorted by the importunity of friends and guardians, and did not flow from her own free inclination.'

'An angel, with the dowry of an empire,' repeated Fergus, in a tone of bitter irony, 'is not very likely to be pressed upon a ——shire squire. But, sir,' changing his tone, 'if Flora Mac-Ivor have not the dowry of an empire, she is MY sister; and that is sufficient at least to secure her against being treated with anything approaching to levity.'

'She is Flora Mac-Ivor, sir,' said Waverley, with firmness, 'which to me, were I capable of treating ANY woman with levity, would be a more effectual protection.'

The brow of the Chieftain was now fully clouded; but Edward felt too indignant at the unreasonable tone which he had adopted to avert the storm by the least concession. They both stood still while this short dialogue passed, and Fergus seemed half disposed to say something more violent, but, by a strong effort, suppressed his passion, and, turning his face forward, walked sullenly on. As they had always hitherto walked together, and almost constantly side by side, Waverley pursued his course silently in the same direction, determined to let the Chief take his own time in recovering the good-humour which he had so unreasonably discarded, and firm in his resolution not to bate him an inch of dignity.

After they had marched on in this sullen manner about a mile, Fergus resumed the discourse in a different tone. 'I believe I was warm, my dear Edward, but you provoke me with your want of knowledge of the world. You have taken pet at some of Flora's prudery, or high-flying notions of loyalty, and now, like a child, you quarrel with the plaything you have been crying for, and beat me, your faithful keeper, because my arm cannot reach to Edinburgh to hand it to you. I am sure, if I was passionate, the mortification of losing the alliance of such a friend, after your arrangement had been the talk of both Highlands and Lowlands, and that without so much as knowing why or wherefore, might well provoke calmer blood than mine. I shall write to Edinburgh and put all to rights; that is, if you desire I should do so; as indeed I cannot suppose that your good opinion of Flora, it being such as you have often expressed to me, can be at once laid aside.'

'Colonel Mac-Ivor,' said Edward, who had no mind to be hurried farther or faster than he chose in a matter which he had already considered as broken off, 'I am fully sensible of the value of your good offices; and certainly, by your zeal on my behalf in such an affair, you do me no small honour. But as Miss Mac-Ivor has made her election freely and voluntarily, and as all my attentions in Edinburgh were received with more than coldness, I cannot, in justice either to her or myself, consent that she should again be harassed upon this topic. I would have mentioned this to you some time since, but you saw the footing upon which we stood together, and must have understood it. Had I thought otherwise I would have earlier spoken; but I had a natural reluctance to enter upon a subject so painful to us both.'

'O, very well, Mr. Waverley,' said Fergus, haughtily, 'the thing is at an end. I have no occasion to press my sister upon any man.'

'Nor have I any occasion to court repeated rejection from the same young lady,' answered Edward, in the same tone.

'I shall make due inquiry, however,' said the Chieftain, without noticing the interruption, 'and learn what my sister thinks of all this, we will then see whether it is to end here.'

'Respecting such inquiries, you will of course be guided by your own judgment,' said Waverley. 'It is, I am aware, impossible Miss Mac-Ivor can change her mind; and were such an un-supposable case to happen, it is certain I will not change mine. I only mention this to prevent any possibility of future misconstruction.'

Gladly at this moment would Mac-Ivor have put their quarrel to a personal arbitrement, his eye flashed fire, and he measured Edward as if to choose where he might best plant a mortal wound. But although we do not now quarrel according to the modes and figures of Caranza or Vincent Saviola, no one knew better than Fergus that there must be some decent pretext for a mortal duel. For instance, you may challenge a man for treading on your corn in a crowd, or for pushing you up to the wall, or for taking your seat in the theatre; but the modern code of honour will not permit you to found a quarrel upon your right of compelling a man to continue addresses to a female relative which the fair lady has already refused. So that Fergus was compelled to stomach this supposed affront until the whirligig of time, whose motion he promised himself he would watch most sedulously, should bring about an opportunity of revenge.

Waverley's servant always led a saddle-horse for him in the rear of the battalion to which he was attached, though his master seldom rode. But now, incensed at the domineering and unreasonable conduct of his late friend, he fell behind the column and mounted his horse, resolving to seek the Baron of Bradwardine, and request permission to volunteer in his troop instead of the Mac-Ivor regiment.

'A happy time of it I should have had,' thought he, after he was mounted, 'to have been so closely allied to this superb specimen of pride and self-opinion and passion. A colonel! why, he should have been a generalissimo. A petty chief of three or four hundred men! his pride might suffice for the Cham of Tartary—the

Grand Seignior—the Great Mogul! I am well free of him. Were Flora an angel, she would bring with her a second Lucifer of ambition and wrath for a brother-in-law.'

The Baron, whose learning (like Sancho's jests while in the Sierra Morena) seemed to grow mouldy for want of exercise, joyfully embraced the opportunity of Waverley's offering his service in his regiment, to bring it into some exertion. The good-natured old gentleman, however, laboured to effect a reconciliation between the two quondam friends. Fergus turned a cold ear to his remonstrances, though he gave them a respectful hearing; and as for Waverley, he saw no reason why he should be the first in courting a renewal of the intimacy which the Chieftain had so unreasonably disturbed. The Baron then mentioned the matter to the Prince, who, anxious to prevent quarrels in his little army, declared he would himself remonstrate with Colonel Mac-Ivor on the unreasonableness of his conduct. But, in the hurry of their march, it was a day or two before he had an opportunity to exert his influence in the manner proposed.

In the meanwhile Waverley turned the instructions he had received while in Gardiner's dragoons to some account, and assisted the Baron in his command as a sort of adjutant. 'Parmi les aveugles un borgne est roi,' says the French proverb; and the cavalry, which consisted chiefly of Lowland gentlemen, their tenants and servants, formed a high opinion of Waverley's skill and a great attachment to his person. This was indeed partly owing to the satisfaction which they felt at the distinguished English volunteer's leaving the Highlanders to rank among them; for there was a latent grudge between the horse and foot, not only owing to the difference of the services, but because most of the gentlemen, living near the Highlands, had at one time or other had quarrels with the tribes in their vicinity, and all of them looked with a jealous eye on the Highlanders' avowed pretensions to superior valour and utility in the Prince's service.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CONFUSION OF KING AGRAMANT'S CAMP

It was Waverley's custom sometimes to ride a little apart from the main body, to look at any object of curiosity which occurred on the march. They were now in Lancashire, when, attracted by a castellated old hall, he left the squadron for half an hour to take a survey and slight sketch of it. As he returned down the avenue he was met by Ensign Maccombich. This man had contracted a sort of regard for Edward since the day of his first seeing him at Tully-Veolan and introducing him to the Highlands. He seemed to loiter, as if on purpose to meet with our hero. Yet, as he passed him, he only approached his stirrup and pronounced the single word 'Beware!' and then walked swiftly on, shunning all further communication.

Edward, somewhat surprised at this hint, followed with his eyes the course of Evan, who speedily disappeared among the trees. His servant, Alick Polwarth, who was in attendance, also looked after the Highlander, and then riding up close to his master, said,—

'The ne'er be in me, sir, if I think you're safe among thae Highland rinthereouts.'

'What do you mean, Alick?' said Waverley.

'The Mac-Ivors, sir, hae gotten it into their heads that ye hae affronted their young leddy, Miss Flora; and I hae heard mae than ane say, they wadna tak muckle to mak a black-cock o' ye; and ye ken weel enough there's mony o' them wadna mind a bawbee the weising a ball through the Prince himsell, an the Chief gae them the wink, or whether he did or no, if they thought it a thing that would please him when it was dune.'

Waverley, though confident that Fergus Mac-Ivor was incapable of such treachery, was by no means equally sure of the forbearance of his followers. He knew that, where the honour of the Chief or his family was supposed to be touched, the happiest man would be he that could first avenge the stigma; and he had often heard them quote a proverb, 'That the best revenge was the most speedy and most safe.' Coupling this with the hint of Evan, he judged it most prudent to set spurs to his horse and ride briskly back to the squadron. Ere he reached the end of the long avenue, however, a ball whistled past him, and the report of a pistol was heard.

'It was that deevil's buckle, Callum Beg,' said Alick; 'I saw him whisk away through among the reises.'

Edward, justly incensed at this act of treachery, galloped out of the avenue, and observed the battalion of Mac-Ivor at some distance moving along the common in which it terminated. He also saw an individual running very fast to join the party; this he concluded was the intended assassin, who, by leaping an enclosure, might easily make a much shorter path to the main body than he could find on horseback. Unable to contain himself, he commanded Alick to go to the Baron of Bradwardine, who was at the head of his regiment about half a mile in front, and acquaint him with what had happened. He himself immediately rode up to Fergus's regiment. The Chief himself was in the act of joining them. He was on horseback, having returned from waiting on the Prince. On perceiving Edward approaching, he put his horse in motion towards him.

'Colonel Mac-Ivor,' said Waverley, without any farther salutation, 'I have to inform you that one of your people has this instant fired at me from a lurking-place.'

'As that,' answered Mac-Ivor, 'excepting the circumstance of a lurking-place, is a pleasure which I presently propose to myself, I should be glad to know which of my clansmen dared to anticipate me.'

'I shall certainly be at your command whenever you please; the gentleman who took your office upon himself is your page there, Callum Beg.'

'Stand forth from the ranks, Callum! Did you fire at Mr. Waverley?'

'No,' answered the unblushing Callum.

'You did,' said Alick Polwarth, who was already returned, having met a trooper by whom he despatched an account of what was going forward to the Baron of Bradwardine, while he himself returned to his master at full gallop, neither sparing the rowels of his spurs nor the sides of his horse. 'You did; I saw you as plainly as I ever saw the auld kirk at Coudingham.'

'You lie,' replied Callum, with his usual impenetrable obstinacy. The combat between the knights would certainly, as in the days of chivalry, have been preceded by an encounter between the squires (for Alick was a stout-hearted Merseman, and feared the bow of Cupid far more than a Highlander's dirk or claymore), but Fergus, with his usual tone of decision, demanded Callum's pistol. The cock was down, the pan and muzzle were black with the smoke; it had been that instant fired.

'Take that,' said Fergus, striking the boy upon the head with the heavy pistol-butt with his whole force—'take that for acting without orders, and lying to disguise it.' Callum received the blow without appearing to flinch from it, and fell without sign of life. 'Stand still, upon your lives!' said Fergus to the rest of the clan; 'I blow out the brains of the first man who interferes between Mr. Waverley and me.' They stood motionless; Evan Dhu alone showed symptoms of vexation and anxiety. Callum lay on the ground bleeding copiously, but no one ventured to give him any assistance. It seemed as if he had gotten his death-blow.

'And now for you, Mr. Waverley; please to turn your horse twenty yards with me upon the common.' Waverley complied; and Fergus, confronting him when they were a little way from the line of march, said, with great affected coolness, 'I could not but wonder, sir, at the fickleness of taste which you were pleased to express the other day. But it was not an angel, as you justly observed, who had charms for you, unless she brought an empire for her fortune. I have now an excellent commentary upon that obscure text.'

'I am at a loss even to guess at your meaning, Colonel Mac-Ivor, unless it seems plain that you intend to fasten a quarrel upon me.'

'Your affected ignorance shall not serve you, sir. The Prince—the Prince himself has acquainted me with your manoeuvres. I little thought that your engagements with Miss Bradwardine were the reason of your breaking off your intended match with my sister. I suppose the information that the Baron had altered the destination of his estate was quite a sufficient reason for slighting your friend's sister and carrying off your friend's mistress.'

'Did the Prince tell you I was engaged to Miss Bradwardine?' said Waverley. 'Impossible.'

'He did, sir,' answered Mac-Ivor; 'so, either draw and defend yourself or resign your pretensions to the lady.' 'This is absolute madness,' exclaimed Waverley, 'or some strange mistake!'

'O! no evasion! draw your sword!' said the infuriated Chieftain, his own already unsheathed.

'Must I fight in a madman's quarrel?'

'Then give up now, and forever, all pretensions to Miss Bradwardine's hand.'

'What title have you,' cried Waverley, utterly losing command of himself—'what title have you, or any man living, to dictate such terms to me?' And he also drew his sword.

At this moment the Baron of Bradwardine, followed by several of his troop, came up on the spur, some from curiosity, others to take part in the quarrel which they indistinctly understood had broken out between the Mac-Ivors and their corps. The clan, seeing them approach, put themselves in motion to support their Chieftain, and a scene of confusion commenced which seemed likely to terminate in bloodshed. A hundred tongues were in motion at once. The Baron lectured, the Chieftain stormed, the Highlanders screamed in Gaelic, the horsemen cursed and swore in Lowland Scotch. At length matters came to such a pass that the Baron threatened to charge the Mac-Ivors unless they resumed their ranks, and many of them, in return, presented their firearms at him and the other troopers. The confusion was privately fostered by old Ballenkeiroch, who made no doubt that his own day of vengeance was arrived, when, behold! a cry arose of 'Room! make way! place a Monseigneur! place a Monseigneur!' This announced the approach of the Prince, who came up with a party of Fitz-James's foreign dragoons that acted as his body-guard. His arrival produced some degree of order. The Highlanders reassumed their ranks, the cavalry fell in and formed squadron, and the Baron and Chieftain were silent.

The Prince called them and Waverley before him. Having heard the original cause of the quarrel through the villainy of Callum Beg, he ordered him into custody of the provost-marshal for immediate execution, in the event of his surviving the chastisement inflicted by his Chieftain. Fergus, however, in a tone betwixt claiming a right and asking a favour, requested he might be left to his disposal, and promised his punishment should be exemplary. To deny this might have seemed to encroach on the patriarchal authority of the Chieftains, of which they were very jealous, and they were not persons to be disobliged. Callum was therefore left to the justice of his own tribe.

The Prince next demanded to know the new cause of quarrel between Colonel Mac-Ivor and Waverley. There was a pause. Both gentlemen found the presence of the Baron of Bradwardine (for by this time all three had approached the Chevalier by his command) an insurmountable barrier against entering upon a subject where the name of his daughter must unavoidably be mentioned. They turned their eyes on the ground, with looks in which shame and embarrassment were mingled with displeasure. The Prince, who had been educated amongst the discontented and mutinous spirits of the court of St. Germain, where feuds of every kind were the daily subject of solicitude to the dethroned sovereign, had served his apprenticeship, as old Frederick of Prussia would have said, to the trade of royalty. To promote or restore concord among his followers was indispensable. Accordingly he took his measures.

'Monsieur de Beaujeu!'

'Monseigneur!' said a very handsome French cavalry officer who was in attendance.

'Ayez la bonte d'aligner ces montagnards la, ainsi que la cavalerie, s'il vous plait, et de les remettre a la marche. Vous parlez si bien l'Anglois, cela ne vous donneroit pas beaucoup de peine.'

'Ah! pas du tout, Monseigneur,' replied Mons. le Comte de Beaujeu, his head bending down to the neck of his little prancing highly-managed charger. Accordingly he puffed away, in high spirits and confidence, to the head of Fergus's regiment, although understanding not a word of Gaelic and very little English.

'Messieurs les sauvages Ecossois—dat is, gentilmans savages, have the goodness d'arranger vous.'

The clan, comprehending the order more from the gesture than the words, and seeing the Prince himself present, hastened to dress their ranks.

'Ah! ver well! dat is fort bien!' said the Count de Beaujeu. 'Gentilmans sauvages! mais, tres bien. Eh bien! Qu'est ce que vous appelez visage, Monsieur?' (to a lounging trooper who stood by him). 'Ah, oui! face. Je vous remercie, Monsieur. Gentilshommes, have de goodness to make de face to de right par file, dat is, by files. Marsh! Mais, tres bien; encore, Messieurs; il faut vous mettre a la marche. ... Marchez done, au nom de Dieu, parceque j'ai oublie le mot Anglois; mais vous etes des braves gens, et me comprenez tres bien.'

The Count next hastened to put the cavalry in motion. 'Gentilmans cavalry, you must fall in. Ah! par ma foi, I did not say fall off! I am a fear de little gross fat gentleman is moche hurt. Ah, mon Dieu! c'est le Commissaire qui nous a apporte les premieres nouvelles de ce maudit fracas. Je suis trop fache, Monsieur!'

But poor Macwheeble, who, with a sword stuck across him, and a white cockade as large as a pancake, now figured in the character of a commissary, being overturned in the bustle occasioned by the troopers hastening to get themselves in order in the Prince's presence, before he could rally his galloway, slunk to the rear amid the unrestrained laughter of the spectators.

'Eh bien, Messieurs, wheel to de right. Ah! dat is it! Eh, Monsieur de Bradwardine, ayez la bonte de vous mettre a la tete de votre regiment, car, par Dieu, je n'en puis plus!'

The Baron of Bradwardine was obliged to go to the assistance of Monsieur de Beaujeu, after he had fairly expended his few English military phrases. One purpose of the Chevalier was thus answered. The other he proposed was, that in the eagerness to hear and comprehend commands issued through such an indistinct medium in his own presence, the thoughts of the soldiers in both corps might get a current different from the angry channel in which they were flowing at the time.

Charles Edward was no sooner left with the Chieftain and Waverley, the rest of his attendants being at some distance, than he said, 'If I owed less to your disinterested friendship, I could be most seriously angry with both of you for this very extraordinary and causeless broil, at a moment when my father's service so decidedly demands the most perfect unanimity. But the worst of my situation is, that my very best friends hold they have liberty to ruin themselves, as well as the cause they are engaged in, upon the slightest caprice.'

Both the young men protested their resolution to submit every difference to his arbitration. 'Indeed,' said Edward, 'I hardly know of what I am accused. I sought Colonel Mac-Ivor merely to mention to him that I had narrowly escaped assassination at the hand of his immediate dependent, a dastardly revenge which I knew him to be incapable of authorising. As to the cause for which he is disposed to fasten a quarrel upon me, I am ignorant of it, unless it be that he accuses me, most unjustly, of having engaged the affections of a young lady in prejudice of his pretensions.'

'If there is an error,' said the Chieftain, 'it arises from a conversation which I held this morning with his Royal Highness himself.'

'With me?' said the Chevalier; 'how can Colonel Mac-Ivor have so far misunderstood me?'

He then led Fergus aside, and, after five minutes' earnest conversation, spurred his horse towards Edward. 'Is it possible—nay, ride up, Colonel, for I desire no secrets—is it possible, Mr. Waverley, that I am mistaken in supposing that you are an accepted lover of Miss Bradwardine? a fact of which I was by circumstances, though not by communication from you, so absolutely convinced that I alleged it to Vich Ian Vohr this morning as a reason why, without offence to him, you might not continue to be ambitious of an alliance which, to an unengaged person, even though once repulsed, holds out too many charms to be lightly laid aside.'

'Your Royal Highness,' said Waverley, 'must have founded on circumstances altogether unknown to me, when you did me the distinguished honour of supposing me an accepted lover of Miss Bradwardine. I feel the distinction implied in the supposition, but I have no title to it. For the rest, my confidence in my own merit is too justly slight to admit of my hoping for success in any quarter after positive rejection.'

The Chevalier was silent for a moment, looking steadily at them both, and then said, 'Upon my word, Mr. Waverley, you are a less happy man than I conceived I had very good reason to believe you. But now, gentlemen, allow me to be umpire in this matter, not as Prince Regent but as Charles Stuart, a brother adventurer with you in the same gallant cause. Lay my pretensions to be obeyed by you entirely out of view, and consider your own honour, and how far it is well or becoming to give our enemies the advantage and our friends the scandal of showing that, few as we are, we are not united. And forgive me if I add, that the names of the ladies who have been mentioned crave more respect from us all than to be made themes of discord.'

He took Fergus a little apart and spoke to him very earnestly for two or three minutes, and then returning to Waverley, said, 'I believe I have satisfied Colonel Mac-Ivor that his resentment was founded upon a misconception, to which, indeed, I myself gave rise; and I trust Mr. Waverley is too generous to harbour any recollection of what is past when I assure him that such is the case. You must state this matter properly to your clan, Vich Ian Vohr, to prevent a recurrence of their precipitate violence.' Fergus bowed. 'And now, gentlemen, let me have the pleasure to see you shake hands.'

They advanced coldly, and with measured steps, each apparently reluctant to appear most forward in concession. They did, however, shake hands, and parted, taking a respectful leave of the Chevalier.

Charles Edward [Footnote: See Note 12.] then rode to the head of the Mac-Ivors, threw himself from his horse, begged a drink out of old Ballenkeiroch's cantine, and marched about half a mile along with them, inquiring into the history and connexions of Sliochd nan Ivor, adroitly using the few words of Gaelic he possessed, and affecting a great desire to learn it more thoroughly. He then mounted his horse once more, and galloped to the Baron's cavalry, which was in front, halted them, and examined their accoutrements and state of discipline; took notice of the principal gentlemen, and even of the cadets; inquired after their ladies, and commended their horses; rode about an hour with the Baron of Bradwardine, and endured three long stories about Field-Marshal the Duke of Berwick.

'Ah, Beaujeu, mon cher ami,' said he, as he returned to his usual place in the line of march, 'que mon metier de prince errant est ennuyant, par fois. Mais, courage! c'est le grand jeu, apres tout.'

CHAPTER XXX

A SKIRMISH

The reader need hardly be reminded that, after a council of war held at Derby on the 5th of December, the Highlanders relinquished their desperate attempt to penetrate farther into England, and, greatly to the dissatisfaction of their young and daring leader, positively determined to return northward. They commenced their retreat accordingly, and, by the extreme celerity of their movements, outstripped the motions of the Duke of Cumberland, who now pursued them with a very large body of cavalry.

This retreat was a virtual resignation of their towering hopes. None had been so sanguine as Fergus Mac-Ivor; none, consequently, was so cruelly mortified at the change of measures. He argued, or rather remonstrated, with the utmost vehemence at the council of war; and, when his opinion was rejected, shed tears of grief and indignation. From that moment his whole manner was so much altered that he could scarcely have been recognised for the same soaring and ardent spirit, for whom the whole earth seemed too narrow but a week before. The retreat had continued for several days, when Edward, to his surprise, early on the 12th of December, received a visit from the Chieftain in his quarters, in a hamlet about half-way between Shap and Penrith.

Having had no intercourse with the Chieftain since their rupture, Edward waited with some anxiety an explanation of this unexpected visit; nor could he help being surprised, and somewhat shocked, with the change in his appearance. His eye had lost much of its fire; his cheek was hollow, his voice was languid, even his gait seemed less firm and elastic than it was wont; and his dress, to which he used to be particularly attentive, was now carelessly flung about him. He invited Edward to walk out with him by the little river in the vicinity; and smiled in a melancholy manner when he observed him take down and buckle on his sword.

As soon as they were in a wild sequestered path by the side of the stream, the Chief broke out—'Our fine adventure is now totally ruined, Waverley, and I wish to know what you intend to do;—nay, never stare at me, man. I tell you I received a packet from my sister yesterday, and, had I got the information it contains sooner, it would have prevented a quarrel which I am always vexed when I think of. In a letter written after our dispute, I acquainted her with the cause of it; and she now replies to me that she never had, nor could have, any purpose of giving you encouragement; so that it seems I have acted like a madman. Poor Flora! she writes in high spirits; what a change will the news of this unhappy retreat make in her state of mind!'

Waverley, who was really much affected by the deep tone of melancholy with which Fergus spoke, affectionately entreated him to banish from his remembrance any unkindness which had arisen between them, and they once more shook hands, but now with sincere cordiality. Fergus again inquired of Waverley what he intended to do. 'Had you not better leave this luckless army, and get down before us into Scotland, and embark for the Continent from some of the eastern ports that are still in our possession? When you are out of the kingdom, your friends will easily negotiate your pardon; and, to tell you the truth, I wish you would carry Rose Bradwardine with you as your wife, and take Flora also under your joint protection.'—Edward looked surprised.—'She loves you, and I believe you love her, though, perhaps, you have not found it out, for you are not celebrated for knowing your own mind very pointedly.' He said this with a sort of smile.

'How,' answered Edward, 'can you advise me to desert the expedition in which we are all embarked?'

'Embarked?' said Fergus; 'the vessel is going to pieces, and it is full time for all who can to get into the long-boat and leave her.'

'Why, what will other gentlemen do?' answered Waverley, 'and why did the Highland Chiefs consent to this retreat if it is so ruinous?'

'O,' replied Mac-Ivor, 'they think that, as on former occasions, the heading, hanging, and forfeiting will chiefly fall to the lot of the Lowland gentry; that they will be left secure in their poverty and their fastnesses, there, according to their proverb, "to listen to the wind upon the hill till the waters abate." But they will be disappointed; they have been too often troublesome to be so repeatedly passed over, and this time John Bull has been too heartily frightened to recover his good-humour for some time. The Hanoverian ministers always deserved to be hanged for rascals; but now, if they get the power in their hands,—as, sooner or later, they must, since there is neither rising in England nor assistance from France,—they will deserve the gallows as fools if they leave a single clan in the Highlands in a situation to be again troublesome to government. Ay, they will make root-and-branch-work, I warrant them.'

'And while you recommend flight to me,' said Edward,—'a counsel which I would rather die than embrace,—what are your own views?'

'O,' answered Fergus, with a melancholy air, 'my fate is settled. Dead or captive I must be before tomorrow.'

'What do you mean by that, my friend?' said Edward. 'The enemy is still a day's march in our rear, and if he comes up, we are still strong enough to keep him in check. Remember Gladsmuir.'

'What I tell you is true notwithstanding, so far as I am individually concerned.'

'Upon what authority can you found so melancholy a prediction?' asked Waverley.

'On one which never failed a person of my house. I have seen,' he said, lowering his voice, 'I have seen the Bodach Glas.'

'Bodach Glas?'

'Yes; have you been so long at Glennaquoich, and never heard of the Grey Spectre? though indeed there is a certain reluctance among us to mention him.'

'No, never.'

'Ah! it would have been a tale for poor Flora to have told you. Or, if that hill were Benmore, and that long blue lake, which you see just winding towards yon mountainous country, were Loch Tay, or my own Loch an Ri, the tale would be better suited with scenery. However, let us sit down on this knoll; even Saddleback and Ulswater will suit what I have to say better than the English hedgerows, enclosures, and farmhouses. You must know, then, that when my ancestor, Ian nan Chaistel, wasted Northumberland, there was associated with him in the expedition a sort of Southland Chief, or captain of a band of Lowlanders, called Halbert Hall. In their return through the Cheviots they quarrelled about the division of the great booty they had acquired, and came from words to blows. The Lowlanders were cut off to a man, and their chief fell the last, covered with wounds by the sword of my ancestor. Since that time his spirit has crossed the Vich Ian Vohr of the day when any great disaster was impending, but especially before approaching death. My father saw him twice, once before he was made prisoner at Sheriff-Muir, another time on the morning of the day on which he died.'

'How can you, my dear Fergus, tell such nonsense with a grave face?'

'I do not ask you to believe it; but I tell you the truth, ascertained by three hundred years' experience at least, and last night by my own eyes.'

'The particulars, for heaven's sake!' said Waverley, with eagerness.

'I will, on condition you will not attempt a jest on the subject. Since this unhappy retreat commenced I have scarce ever been able to sleep for thinking of my clan, and of this poor Prince, whom they are leading back like a dog in a string, whether he will or no, and of the downfall of my family. Last night I felt so feverish that I left my quarters and walked out, in hopes the keen frosty air would brace my nerves—I cannot tell how much I dislike going on, for I know you will hardly believe me. However—I crossed a small footbridge, and kept walking backwards and forwards, when I observed with surprise by the clear moonlight a tall figure in a grey plaid, such as shepherds wear in the south of Scotland, which, move at what pace I would, kept regularly about four yards before me.'

'You saw a Cumberland peasant in his ordinary dress, probably.'

'No; I thought so at first, and was astonished at the man's audacity in daring to dog me. I called to him, but received no answer. I felt an anxious throbbing at my heart, and to ascertain what I dreaded, I stood still and turned myself on the same spot successively to the four points of the compass. By Heaven, Edward, turn where I would, the figure was instantly before my eyes, at precisely the same distance! I was then convinced it was the Bodach Glas. My hair bristled and my knees shook. I manned myself, however, and determined to return to my quarters. My ghastly visitant glided before me (for I cannot say he walked) until he reached the footbridge; there he stopped and turned full round. I must either wade the river or pass him as close as I am to you. A desperate courage, founded on the belief that my death was near, made me resolve to make my way in despite of him. I made the sign of the cross, drew my sword, and uttered, "In the name of God, Evil Spirit, give place!" "Vich Ian Vohr," it said, in a voice that made my very blood curdle, "beware of to-morrow!" It seemed at that moment not half a yard from my sword's point; but the words were no sooner spoken than it was gone, and nothing appeared further to obstruct my passage. I got home and threw myself on my bed, where I spent a few hours heavily enough; and this morning, as no enemy was reported to be near us, I took my horse and rode forward to make up matters with you. I would not willingly fall until I am in charity with a wronged friend.'

Edward had little doubt that this phantom was the operation of an exhausted frame and depressed spirits, working on the belief common to all Highlanders in such superstitions. He did not the less pity Fergus, for whom, in his present distress, he felt all his former regard revive. With the view of diverting his mind from these gloomy images, he offered, with the Baron's permission, which he knew he could readily obtain, to remain in his quarters till Fergus's corps should come up, and then to march with them as usual. The Chief seemed much pleased, yet hesitated to accept the offer.

'We are, you know, in the rear, the post of danger in a retreat.'

'And therefore the post of honour.'

'Well,' replied the Chieftain, 'let Alick have your horse in readiness, in case we should be overmatched, and I shall be delighted to have your company once more.'

The rear-guard were late in making their appearance, having been delayed by various accidents and by the badness of the roads. At length they entered the hamlet. When Waverley joined the clan Mac-Ivor, arm-in-arm with their Chieftain, all the resentment they had entertained against him seemed blown off at once. Evan Dhu received him with a grin of congratulation; and even Callum, who was running about as active as ever, pale indeed, and with a great patch on his head, appeared delighted to see him.

'That gallows-bird's skull,' said Fergus, 'must be harder than marble; the lock of the pistol was actually broken.'

'How could you strike so young a lad so hard?' said Waverley, with some interest.

'Why, if I did not strike hard sometimes, the rascals would forget themselves.'

They were now in full march, every caution being taken to prevent surprise. Fergus's people, and a fine clan regiment from Badenoch, commanded by Cluny Mac-Pherson, had the rear. They had passed a large open moor, and were entering into the enclosures which surround a small village called Clifton. The winter sun had set, and Edward began to rally Fergus upon the false predictions of the Grey Spirit. 'The ides of March are not past,' said Mac-Ivor, with a smile; when, suddenly casting his eyes back on the moor, a large body of cavalry was indistinctly seen to hover upon its brown and dark surface. To line the enclosures facing the open ground and the road by which the enemy must move from it upon the village was the work of a short time. While these manoeuvres were accomplishing, night sunk down, dark and gloomy, though the moon was at full. Sometimes, however, she gleamed forth a dubious light upon the scene of action.

The Highlanders did not long remain undisturbed in the defensive position they had adopted. Favoured by the night, one large body of dismounted dragoons attempted to force the enclosures, while another, equally strong, strove to penetrate by the highroad. Both were received by such a heavy fire as disconcerted their ranks and effectually checked their progress. Unsatisfied with the advantage thus gained, Fergus, to whose ardent spirit the approach of danger seemed to restore all its elasticity, drawing his sword and calling out 'Claymore!' encouraged his men, by voice and example, to break through the hedge which divided them and rush down upon the enemy. Mingling with the dismounted dragoons, they forced them, at the sword-point, to fly to the open moor, where a considerable number were cut to pieces. But the moon, which suddenly shone out, showed to the English the small number of assailants, disordered by their own success. Two squadrons of horse moving to the support of their companions, the Highlanders endeavoured to recover the enclosures. But several of them, amongst others their brave Chieftain, were cut off and surrounded before they could effect their purpose. Waverley, looking eagerly for Fergus, from whom, as well as from the retreating body of his followers, he had been separated in the darkness and tumult, saw him, with Evan Dhu and Callum, defending themselves desperately against a dozen of horsemen, who were hewing at them with their long broadswords. The moon was again at that moment totally overclouded, and Edward, in the obscurity, could neither bring aid to his friends nor discover which way lay his own road to rejoin the rear-guard. After once or twice narrowly escaping being slain or made prisoner by parties of the cavalry whom he encountered in the darkness, he at length reached an enclosure, and, clambering over it, concluded himself in safety and on the way to the Highland forces, whose pipes he heard at some distance. For Fergus hardly a hope remained, unless that he might be made prisoner. Revolving his fate with sorrow and anxiety, the superstition of the Bodach Glas recurred to Edward's recollection, and he said to himself, with internal surprise 'What, can the devil speak truth?' [Footnote: See Note 13.]

CHAPTER XXXI

CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS

Edward was in a most unpleasant and dangerous situation. He soon lost the sound of the bagpipes; and, what was yet more unpleasant, when, after searching long in vain and scrambling through many enclosures, he at length approached the highroad, he learned, from the unwelcome noise of kettledrums and trumpets, that the English cavalry now occupied it, and consequently were between him and the Highlanders. Precluded, therefore, from advancing in a straight direction, he resolved to avoid the English military and endeavour to join his friends by making a circuit to the left, for which a beaten path, deviating from the main road in that direction, seemed to afford facilities. The path was muddy and the night dark and cold; but even these inconveniences were hardly felt amidst the apprehensions which falling into the hands of the King's forces reasonably excited in his bosom.

After walking about three miles, he at length reached a hamlet. Conscious that the common people were in general unfavourable to the cause he had espoused, yet desirous, if possible, to procure a horse and guide to Penrith, where he hoped to find the rear, if not the main body, of the Chevalier's army, he approached the alehouse of the place. There was a great noise within; he paused to listen. A round English oath or two, and the burden of a campaign song, convinced him the hamlet also was occupied by the Duke of Cumberland's soldiers. Endeavouring to retire from it as softly as possible, and blessing the obscurity which hitherto he had murmured against, Waverley groped his way the best he could along a small paling, which seemed the boundary of some cottage garden. As he reached the gate of this little enclosure, his outstretched hand was grasped by that of a female, whose voice at the same time uttered, 'Edward, is't thou, man?'

'Here is some unlucky mistake,' thought Edward, struggling, but gently, to disengage himself.

'Naen o' thy foun, now, man, or the red cwoats will hear thee; they hae been houlerying and poulerying every ane that past alehouse door this noight to make them drive their waggons and sick loike. Come into feyther's, or they'll do ho a mischief.'

'A good hint,' thought Waverley, following the girl through the little garden into a brick-paved kitchen, where she set herself to kindle a match at an expiring fire, and with the match to light a candle. She had no sooner looked on Edward than she dropped the light, with a shrill scream of 'O feyther, feyther!'

The father, thus invoked, speedily appeared—a sturdy old farmer, in a pair of leather breeches, and boots pulled on without stockings, having just started from his bed; the rest of his dress was only a Westmoreland statesman's robe-de-chambre—that is, his shirt. His figure was displayed to advantage by a candle which he bore in his left hand; in his right he brandished a poker.

'What hast ho here, wench?'

'O!' cried the poor girl, almost going off in hysterics, 'I thought it was Ned Williams, and it is one of the plaid-men.'

'And what was thee ganging to do wi' Ned Williams at this time o' noight?' To this, which was, perhaps, one of the numerous class of questions more easily asked than answered, the rosy-cheeked damsel made no reply, but continued sobbing and wringing her hands.

'And thee, lad, dost ho know that the dragoons be a town? dost ho know that, mon? ad, they'll sliver thee loike a turnip, mon.'

'I know my life is in great danger,' said Waverley, 'but if you can assist me, I will reward you handsomely. I am no Scotchman, but an unfortunate English gentleman.'

'Be ho Scot or no,' said the honest farmer, 'I wish thou hadst kept the other side of the hallan. But since thou art here, Jacob Jopson will betray no man's bluid; and the plaids were gay canny, and did not do so much mischief when they were here yesterday.' Accordingly, he set seriously about sheltering and refreshing our hero for the night. The fire was speedily rekindled, but with precaution against its light being seen from without. The jolly yeoman cut a rasher of bacon, which Cicely soon broiled, and her father added a swingeing tankard of his best ale. It was settled that Edward should remain there till the troops marched in the morning, then hire or buy a horse from the farmer, and, with the best directions that could be obtained, endeavour to overtake his friends. A clean, though coarse, bed received him after the fatigues of this unhappy day.

With the morning arrived the news that the Highlanders had evacuated Penrith, and marched off towards Carlisle; that the Duke of Cumberland was in possession of Penrith, and that detachments of his army covered the roads in every direction. To attempt to get through undiscovered would be an act of the most frantic temerity. Ned Williams (the right Edward) was now called to council by Cicely and her father. Ned, who perhaps did not care that his handsome namesake should remain too long in the same house with his sweetheart, for fear of fresh mistakes, proposed that Waverley, exchanging his uniform and plaid for the dress of the country, should go with him to his father's farm near Ullswater, and remain in that undisturbed retirement until the military movements in the country should have ceased to render his departure hazardous. A price was also agreed upon, at which the stranger might board with Farmer Williams if he thought proper, till he could depart with safety. It was of moderate amount; the distress of his situation, among this honest and simple-hearted race, being considered as no reason for increasing their demand.

The necessary articles of dress were accordingly procured, and, by following by-paths known to the young farmer, they hoped to escape any unpleasant rencontre. A recompense for their hospitality was refused peremptorily by old Jopson and his cherry-cheeked daughter; a kiss paid the one and a hearty shake of the hand the other. Both seemed anxious for their guest's safety, and took leave of him with kind wishes.

In the course of their route Edward, with his guide, traversed those fields which the night before had been the scene of action. A brief gleam of December's sun shone sadly on the broad heath, which, towards the spot where the great north-west road entered the enclosures of Lord Lonsdale's property, exhibited dead bodies of men and horses, and the usual companions of war, a number of carrion-crows, hawks, and ravens.

'And this, then, was thy last field,' said Waverley to himself, his eye filling at the recollection of the many splendid points of Fergus's character, and of their former intimacy, all his passions and imperfections forgotten—'here fell the last Vich Ian Vohr, on a nameless heath; and in an obscure night-skirmish was quenched that ardent spirit, who thought it little to cut a way for his master to the British throne! Ambition, policy, bravery, all far beyond their sphere, here learned the fate of mortals. The sole support, too, of a sister whose spirit, as proud and unbending, was even more exalted than thine own; here ended all thy hopes for Flora, and the long and valued line which it was thy boast to raise yet more highly by thy adventurous valour!'

As these ideas pressed on Waverley's mind, he resolved to go upon the open heath and search if, among the slain, he could discover the body of his friend, with the pious intention of procuring for him the last rites of sepulture. The timorous young man who accompanied him remonstrated upon the danger of the attempt, but Edward was determined. The followers of the camp had already stripped the dead of all they could carry away; but the country people, unused to scenes of blood, had not yet approached the field of action, though some stood fearfully gazing at a distance. About sixty or seventy dragoons lay slain within the first enclosure, upon the highroad, and on the open moor. Of the Highlanders, not above a dozen had fallen, chiefly those who, venturing too far on the moor, could not regain the strong ground. He could not find the body of Fergus among the slain. On a little knoll, separated from the others, lay the carcasses of three English dragoons, two horses, and the page Callum Beg, whose hard skull a trooper's broadsword had, at length, effectually cloven. It was possible his clan had carried off the body of Fergus; but it was also possible he had escaped, especially as Evan Dhu, who would never leave his Chief, was not found among the dead; or he might be prisoner, and the less formidable denunciation inferred from the appearance of the Bodach Glas might have proved the true one. The approach of a party sent for the purpose of compelling the country people to bury the dead, and who had already assembled several peasants for that purpose, now obliged Edward to rejoin his guide, who awaited him in great anxiety and fear under shade of the plantations.

After leaving this field of death, the rest of their journey was happily accomplished. At the house of Farmer Williams, Edward passed for a young kinsman, educated for the church, who was come to reside there till the civil tumults permitted him to pass through the country. This silenced suspicion among the kind and simple yeomanry of Cumberland, and accounted sufficiently for the grave manners and retired habits of the new guest. The precaution became more necessary than Waverley had anticipated, as a variety of incidents prolonged his stay at Fasthwaite, as the farm was called.

A tremendous fall of snow rendered his departure impossible for more than ten days. When the roads began to become a little practicable, they successively received news of the retreat of the Chevalier into Scotland; then, that he had abandoned the frontiers, retiring upon Glasgow; and that the Duke of Cumberland had formed the siege of Carlisle. His army, therefore, cut off all possibility of Waverley's escaping into Scotland in that direction. On the eastern border Marshal Wade, with a large force, was advancing upon Edinburgh; and all along the frontier, parties of militia, volunteers, and partizans were in arms to suppress

insurrection, and apprehend such stragglers from the Highland army as had been left in England. The surrender of Carlisle, and the severity with which the rebel garrison were threatened, soon formed an additional reason against venturing upon a solitary and hopeless journey through a hostile country and a large army, to carry the assistance of a single sword to a cause which seemed altogether desperate. In this lonely and secluded situation, without the advantage of company or conversation with men of cultivated minds, the arguments of Colonel Talbot often recurred to the mind of our hero. A still more anxious recollection haunted his slumbers—it was the dying look and gesture of Colonel Gardiner. Most devoutly did he hope, as the rarely occurring post brought news of skirmishes with various success, that it might never again be his lot to draw his sword in civil conflict. Then his mind turned to the supposed death of Fergus, to the desolate situation of Flora, and, with yet more tender recollection, to that of Rose Bradwardine, who was destitute of the devoted enthusiasm of loyalty, which to her friend hallowed and exalted misfortune. These reveries he was permitted to enjoy, undisturbed by queries or interruption; and it was in many a winter walk by the shores of Ullswater that he acquired a more complete mastery of a spirit tamed by adversity than his former experience had given him; and that he felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced. He was soon called upon to justify his pretensions by reason and philosophy.

CHAPTER XXXII

A JOURNEY TO LONDON

The family at Fastwaite were soon attached to Edward. He had, indeed, that gentleness and urbanity which almost universally attracts corresponding kindness; and to their simple ideas his learning gave him consequence, and his sorrows interest. The last he ascribed, evasively, to the loss of a brother in the skirmish near Clifton; and in that primitive state of society, where the ties of affection were highly deemed of, his continued depression excited sympathy, but not surprise.

In the end of January his more lively powers were called out by the happy union of Edward Williams, the son of his host, with Cicely Jopson. Our hero would not cloud with sorrow the festivity attending the wedding of two persons to whom he was so highly obliged. He therefore exerted himself, danced, sung, played at the various games of the day, and was the blithest of the company. The next morning, however, he had more serious matters to think of.

The clergyman who had married the young couple was so much pleased with the supposed student of divinity, that he came next day from Penrith on purpose to pay him a visit. This might have been a puzzling chapter had he entered into any examination of our hero's supposed theological studies; but fortunately he loved better to hear and communicate the news of the day. He brought with him two or three old newspapers, in one of which Edward found a piece of intelligence that soon rendered him deaf to every word which the Reverend Mr. Twigtythe was saying upon the news from the north, and the prospect of the Duke's speedily overtaking and crushing the rebels. This was an article in these, or nearly these words:—

'Died at his house, in Hill Street, Berkeley Square, upon the 10th inst., Richard Waverley, Esq., second son of Sir Giles Waverley of Waverley-Honour, etc. etc. He died of a lingering disorder, augmented by the unpleasant predicament of suspicion in which he stood, having been obliged to find bail to a high amount to meet an impending accusation of high-treason. An accusation of the same grave crime hangs over his elder brother, Sir Everard Waverley, the representative of that ancient family; and we understand the day of his trial will be fixed early in the next month, unless Edward Waverley, son of the deceased Richard, and heir to the Baronet, shall surrender himself to justice. In that case we are assured it is his Majesty's gracious purpose to drop further proceedings upon the charge against Sir Everard. This unfortunate young gentleman is ascertained to have been in arms in the Pretender's service, and to have marched along with the Highland troops into England. But he has not been heard of since the skirmish at Clifton, on the 18th December last.'

Such was this distracting paragraph. 'Good God!' exclaimed Waverley, 'am I then a parricide? Impossible! My father, who never showed the affection of a father while he lived, cannot have been so much affected by my supposed death as to hasten his own; no, I will not believe it, it were distraction to entertain for a moment such a horrible idea. But it were, if possible, worse than parricide to suffer any danger to hang over my noble and generous uncle, who has ever been more to me than a father, if such evil can be averted by any sacrifice on my part!'

While these reflections passed like the stings of scorpions through Waverley's sensorium, the worthy divine was startled in a long disquisition on the battle of Falkirk by the ghastliness which they communicated to his looks, and asked him if he was ill? Fortunately the bride, all smirk and blush, had just entered the room. Mrs. Williams was none of the brightest of women, but she was good-natured, and readily concluding that Edward had been shocked by disagreeable news in the papers, interfered so judiciously, that, without exciting suspicion, she drew off Mr. Twigtythe's attention, and engaged it until he soon after took his leave. Waverley then explained to his friends that he was under the necessity of going to London with as little delay as possible.

One cause of delay, however, did occur, to which Waverley had been very little accustomed. His purse, though well stocked when he first went to Tully-Veolan, had not been reinforced since that period; and although his life since had not been of a nature to exhaust it hastily, for he had lived chiefly with his friends or with the army, yet he found that, after settling with his kind landlord, he should be too poor to encounter the expense of travelling post. The best course, therefore, seemed to be to get into the great north road about Boroughbridge, and there take a place in the northern diligence, a huge old-fashioned tub, drawn by three horses, which completed the journey from Edinburgh to London (God willing, as the advertisement expressed it) in three weeks. Our hero, therefore, took an affectionate farewell of his Cumberland friends, whose kindness he promised never to forget, and tacitly hoped one day to acknowledge by substantial proofs of gratitude. After some petty difficulties and vexatious delays, and after putting his dress into a shape better befitting his rank, though perfectly plain and simple, he accomplished crossing the country, and found himself in the desired vehicle vis-a-vis to Mrs. Nosebag, the lady of Lieutenant Nosebag, adjutant and riding-master of the—dragoons, a jolly woman of about fifty, wearing a blue habit, faced with scarlet, and grasping a silver-mounted horse-whip.

This lady was one of those active members of society who take upon them faire lefrais de la conversation. She had just returned from the north, and informed Edward how nearly her regiment had cut the petticoat people into ribands at Falkirk, 'only somehow there was one of those nasty, awkward marshes, that they are never without in Scotland, I think, and so our poor dear little regiment suffered something, as my Nosebag says, in that unsatisfactory affair. You, sir, have served in the dragoons?' Waverley was taken so much at unawares that he acquiesced.

'O, I knew it at once; I saw you were military from your air, and I was sure you could be none of the foot-wobblers, as my Nosebag calls them. What regiment, pray?' Here was a delightful question. Waverley, however, justly concluded that this good lady had the whole army-list by heart; and, to avoid detection by adhering to truth, answered, 'Gardiner's dragoons, ma'am; but I have retired some time.'

'O aye, those as won the race at the battle of Preston, as my Nosebag says. Pray, sir, were you there?'

'I was so unfortunate, madam,' he replied, 'as to witness that engagement.'

'And that was a misfortune that few of Gardiner's stood to witness, I believe, sir—ha! ha! ha! I beg your pardon; but a soldier's wife loves a joke.'

'Devil confound you,' thought Waverley: 'what infernal luck has penned me up with this inquisitive hag!'

Fortunately the good lady did not stick long to one subject. 'We are coming to Ferrybridge now,' she said, 'where there was a party of OURS left to support the beadles, and constables, and justices, and these sort of creatures that are examining papers and stopping rebels, and all that.' They were hardly in the inn before

she dragged Waverley to the window, exclaiming, 'Yonder comes Corporal Bidoon, of our poor dear troop; he's coming with the constable man. Bidoon's one of my lambs, as Nosebag calls 'ern. Come, Mr.—a—a—pray, what's your name, sir?'

'Butler, ma'am,' said Waverley, resolved rather to make free with the name of a former fellow-officer than run the risk of detection by inventing one not to be found in the regiment.

'O, you got a troop lately, when that shabby fellow, Waverley, went over to the rebels? Lord, I wish our old cross Captain Crump would go over to the rebels, that Nosebag might get the troop! Lord, what can Bidoon be standing swinging on the bridge for? I'll be hanged if he a'nt hazy, as Nosebag says. Come, sir, as you and I belong to the service, we'll go put the rascal in mind of his duty.'

Waverley, with feelings more easily conceived than described, saw himself obliged to follow this doughty female commander. The gallant trooper was as like a lamb as a drunk corporal of dragoons, about six feet high, with very broad shoulders, and very thin legs, not to mention a great scar across his nose, could well be. Mrs. Nosebag addressed him with something which, if not an oath, sounded very like one, and commanded him to attend to his duty. 'You be d—d for a——,' commenced the gallant cavalier; but, looking up in order to suit the action to the words, and also to enforce the epithet which he meditated with an adjective applicable to the party, he recognised the speaker, made his military salaam, and altered his tone. 'Lord love your handsome face, Madam Nosebag, is it you? Why, if a poor fellow does happen to fire a slug of a morning, I am sure you were never the lady to bring him to harm.'

'Well, you rascallion, go, mind your duty; this gentleman and I belong to the service; but be sure you look after that shy cock in the slouched hat that sits in the corner of the coach. I believe he's one of the rebels in disguise.'

'D—n her gooseberry wig,' said the corporal, when she was out of hearing, 'that gimlet-eyed jade—mother adjutant, as we call her—is a greater plague to the regiment than provost-marshal, sergeant-major, and old Hubble-de-Shuff, the colonel, into the bargain. Come, Master Constable, let's see if this shy cock, as she calls him (who, by the way, was a Quaker from Leeds, with whom Mrs. Nosebag had had some tart argument on the legality of bearing arms), will stand godfather to a sup of brandy, for your Yorkshire ale is cold on my stomach.'

The vivacity of this good lady, as it helped Edward out of this scrape, was like to have drawn him into one or two others. In every town where they stopped she wished to examine the corps de garde, if there was one, and once very narrowly missed introducing Waverley to a recruiting-sergeant of his own regiment. Then she Captain'd and Butler'd him till he was almost mad with vexation and anxiety; and never was he more rejoiced in his life at the termination of a journey than when the arrival of the coach in London freed him from the attentions of Madam Nosebag.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHAT'S TO BE DONE NEXT?

It was twilight when they arrived in town; and having shaken off his companions, and walked through a good many streets to avoid the possibility of being traced by them, Edward took a hackney-coach and drove to Colonel Talbot's house, in one of the principal squares at the west end of the town. That gentleman, by the death of relations, had succeeded since his marriage to a large fortune, possessed considerable political interest, and lived in what is called great style.

When Waverley knocked at his door he found it at first difficult to procure admittance, but at length was shown into an apartment where the Colonel was at table. Lady Emily, whose very beautiful features were still pallid from indisposition, sat opposite to him. The instant he heard Waverley's voice, he started up and embraced him. 'Frank Stanley, my dear boy, how d'ye do? Emily, my love, this is young Stanley.'

The blood started to the lady's cheek as she gave Waverley a reception in which courtesy was mingled with kindness, while her trembling hand and faltering voice showed how much she was startled and discomposed. Dinner was hastily replaced, and while Waverley was engaged in refreshing himself, the Colonel proceeded—'I wonder you have come here, Frank; the Doctors tell me the air of London is very bad for your complaints. You should not have risked it. But I am delighted to see you, and so is Emily, though I fear we must not reckon upon your staying long.'

'Some particular business brought me up,' muttered Waverley.

'I supposed so, but I shan't allow you to stay long. Spontoon' (to an elderly military-looking servant out of livery), 'take away these things, and answer the bell yourself, if I ring. Don't let any of the other fellows disturb us. My nephew and I have business to talk of.'

When the servants had retired, 'In the name of God, Waverley, what has brought you here? It may be as much as your life is worth.'

'Dear Mr. Waverley,' said Lady Emily, 'to whom I owe so much more than acknowledgments can ever pay, how could you be so rash?'

'My father—my uncle—this paragraph,'—he handed the paper to Colonel Talbot.

'I wish to Heaven these scoundrels were condemned to be squeezed to death in their own presses,' said Talbot. 'I am told there are not less than a dozen of their papers now published in town, and no wonder that they are obliged to invent lies to find sale for their journals. It is true, however, my dear Edward, that you have lost your father; but as to this flourish of his unpleasant situation having grated upon his spirits and hurt his health—the truth is—for though it is harsh to say so now, yet it will relieve your mind from the idea of weighty responsibility—the truth then is, that Mr. Richard Waverley, through this whole business, showed great want of sensibility, both to your situation and that of your uncle; and the last time I saw him, he told me, with great glee, that, as I was so good as to take charge of your interests, he had thought it best to patch up a separate negotiation for himself, and make his peace with government through some channels which former connexions left still open to him.'

'And my uncle, my dear uncle?'

'Is in no danger whatever. It is true (looking at the date of the paper) there was a foolish report some time ago to the purport here quoted, but it is entirely false. Sir Everard is gone down to Waverley-Honour, freed from all uneasiness, unless upon your own account. But you are in peril yourself; your name is in every proclamation; warrants are out to apprehend you. How and when did you come here?'

Edward told his story at length, suppressing his quarrel with Fergus; for, being himself partial to Highlanders, he did not wish to give any advantage to the Colonel's national prejudice against them.

'Are you sure it was your friend Glen's foot-boy you saw dead in Clifton Moor?'

'Quite positive.'

'Then that little limb of the devil has cheated the gallows, for cut-throat was written in his face; though (turning to Lady Emily) it was a very handsome face too. But for you, Edward, I wish you would go down again to Cumberland, or rather I wish you had never stirred from thence, for there is an embargo in all the seaports, and a strict search for the adherents of the Pretender; and the tongue of that confounded woman will wag in her head like the clack of a mill, till somehow or other she will detect Captain Butler to be a feigned personage.'

'Do you know anything,' asked Waverley, 'of my fellow-traveller?'

'Her husband was my sergeant-major for six years; she was a buxom widow, with a little money; he married her, was steady, and got on by being a good drill. I must send Spontoon to see what she is about; he will find her out among the old regimental connections. To-morrow you must be indisposed, and keep your room

from fatigue. Lady Emily is to be your nurse, and Spontoon and I your attendants. You bear the name of a near relation of mine, whom none of my present people ever saw, except Spontoon, so there will be no immediate danger. So pray feel your head ache and your eyes grow heavy as soon as possible, that you may be put upon the sick-list; and, Emily, do you order an apartment for Frank Stanley, with all the attentions which an invalid may require.'

In the morning the Colonel visited his guest. 'Now,' said he, 'I have some good news for you. Your reputation as a gentleman and officer is effectually cleared of neglect of duty and accession to the mutiny in Gardiner's regiment. I have had a correspondence on this subject with a very zealous friend of yours, your Scottish parson, Morton; his first letter was addressed to Sir Everard; but I relieved the good Baronet of the trouble of answering it. You must know, that your free-booting acquaintance, Donald of the Cave, has at length fallen into the hands of the Philistines. He was driving off the cattle of a certain proprietor, called Killan—something or other—'

'Killancureit?'

'The same. Now the gentleman being, it seems, a great farmer, and having a special value for his breed of cattle, being, moreover, rather of a timid disposition, had got a party of soldiers to protect his property. So Donald ran his head unawares into the lion's mouth, and was defeated and made prisoner. Being ordered for execution, his conscience was assailed on the one hand by a Catholic priest, on the other by your friend Morton. He repulsed the Catholic chiefly on account of the doctrine of extreme unction, which this economical gentleman considered as an excessive waste of oil. So his conversion from a state of impenitence fell to Mr. Morton's share, who, I daresay, acquitted himself excellently, though I suppose Donald made but a queer kind of Christian after all. He confessed, however, before a magistrate, one Major Melville, who seems to have been a correct, friendly sort of person, his full intrigue with Houghton, explaining particularly how it was carried on, and fully acquitting you of the least accession to it. He also mentioned his rescuing you from the hands of the volunteer officer, and sending you, by orders of the Pret—Chevalier, I mean—as a prisoner to Doune, from whence he understood you were carried prisoner to Edinburgh. These are particulars which cannot but tell in your favour. He hinted that he had been employed to deliver and protect you, and rewarded for doing so; but he would not confess by whom, alleging that, though he would not have minded breaking any ordinary oath to satisfy the curiosity of Mr. Morton, to whose pious admonitions he owed so much, yet, in the present case he had been sworn to silence upon the edge of his dirk, [Footnote: See Note 38.] which, it seems, constituted, in his opinion, an inviolable obligation.'

'And what is become of him?'

'Oh, he was hanged at Stirling after the rebels raised the siege, with his lieutenant and four plaids besides; he having the advantage of a gallows more lofty than his friends.'

'Well, I have little cause either to regret or rejoice at his death; and yet he has done me both good and harm to a very considerable extent.'

'His confession, at least, will serve you materially, since it wipes from your character all those suspicions which gave the accusation against you a complexion of a nature different from that with which so many unfortunate gentlemen, now or lately in arms against the government, may be justly charged. Their treason—I must give it its name, though you participate in its guilt—is an action arising from mistaken virtue, and therefore cannot be classed as a disgrace, though it be doubtless highly criminal. Where the guilty are so numerous, clemency must be extended to far the greater number; and I have little doubt of procuring a remission for you, providing we can keep you out of the claws of justice till she has selected and gorged upon her victims; for in this, as in other cases, it will be according to the vulgar proverb, "First come, first served." Besides, government are desirous at present to intimidate the English Jacobites, among whom they can find few examples for punishment. This is a vindictive and timid feeling which will soon wear off, for of all nations the English are least blood-thirsty by nature. But it exists at present, and you must therefore be kept out of the way in the mean-time.'

Now entered Spontoon with an anxious countenance. By his regimental acquaintances he had traced out Madam Nosebag, and found her full of ire, fuss, and fidget at discovery of an impostor who had travelled from the north with her under the assumed name of Captain Butler of Gardiner's dragoons. She was going to lodge an information on the subject, to have him sought for as an emissary of the Pretender; but Spontoon (an old soldier), while he pretended to approve, contrived to make her delay her intention. No time, however, was to be lost: the accuracy of this good dame's description might probably lead to the discovery that Waverley was the pretended Captain Butler, an identification fraught with danger to Edward, perhaps to his uncle, and even to Colonel Talbot. Which way to direct his course was now, therefore, the question.

'To Scotland,' said Waverley.

'To Scotland?' said the Colonel; 'with what purpose? not to engage again with the rebels, I hope?'

'No; I considered my campaign ended when, after all my efforts, I could not rejoin them; and now, by all accounts, they are gone to make a winter campaign in the Highlands, where such adherents as I am would rather be burdensome than useful. Indeed, it seems likely that they only prolong the war to place the Chevalier's person out of danger, and then to make some terms for themselves. To burden them with my presence would merely add another party, whom they would not give up and could not defend. I understand they left almost all their English adherents in garrison at Carlisle, for that very reason. And on a more general view, Colonel, to confess the truth, though it may lower me in your opinion, I am heartily tired of the trade of war, and am, as Fletcher's Humorous Lieutenant says, "even as weary of this fighting—"

'Fighting! pooh, what have you seen but a skirmish or two? Ah! if you saw war on the grand scale—sixty or a hundred thousand men in the field on each side!'

'I am not at all curious, Colonel. "Enough," says our homely proverb, "is as good as a feast." The plumed troops and the big war used to enchant me in poetry, but the night marches, vigils, couches under the wintry sky, and such accompaniments of the glorious trade, are not at all to my taste in practice; then for dry blows, I had MY fill of fighting at Clifton, where I escaped by a hair's-breadth half a dozen times; and you, I should think—' He stopped.

'Had enough of it at Preston? you mean to say,' answered the Colonel, laughing; 'but 'tis my vocation, Hal.'

'It is not mine, though,' said Waverley; 'and having honourably got rid of the sword, which I drew only as a volunteer, I am quite satisfied with my military experience, and shall be in no hurry to take it up again.'

'I am very glad you are of that mind; but then what would you do in the north?'

'In the first place, there are some seaports on the eastern coast of Scotland still in the hands of the Chevalier's friends; should I gain any of them, I can easily embark for the Continent.'

'Good, your second reason?'

'Why, to speak the very truth, there is a person in Scotland upon whom I now find my happiness depends more than I was always aware, and about whose situation I am very anxious.'

'Then Emily was right, and there is a love affair in the case after all? And which of these two pretty Scotchwomen, whom you insisted upon my admiring, is the distinguished fair? not Miss Glen—I hope.'

'No.'

'Ah, pass for the other; simplicity may be improved, but pride and conceit never. Well, I don't discourage you; I think it will please Sir Everard, from what he said when I jested with him about it; only I hope that intolerable papa, with his brogue, and his snuff, and his Latin, and his insufferable long stories about the Duke of Berwick, will find it necessary hereafter to be an inhabitant of foreign parts. But as to the daughter, though I think you might find as fitting a match in England, yet if your heart be really set upon this Scotch rosebud, why the Baronet has a great opinion of her father and of his family, and he wishes much to see you married and settled, both for your own sake and for that of the three ermines passant, which may otherwise pass away altogether. But I will bring you his mind fully upon the subject, since you are debarred correspondence for the present, for I think you will not be long in Scotland before me.'

'Indeed! and what can induce you to think of returning to Scotland? No relenting longings towards the land of mountains and floods, I am afraid.'

'None, on my word; but Emily's health is now, thank God, reestablished, and, to tell you the truth, I have little hopes of concluding the business which I have at present most at heart until I can have a personal interview with his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief; for, as Fluellen says, "the duke doth love me well,

and I thank heaven I have deserved some love at his hands." I am now going out for an hour or two to arrange matters for your departure; your liberty extends to the next room, Lady Emily's parlour, where you will find her when you are disposed for music, reading, or conversation. We have taken measures to exclude all servants but Spontoon, who is as true as steel.'

In about two hours Colonel Talbot returned, and found his young friend conversing with his lady; she pleased with his manners and information, and he delighted at being restored, though but for a moment, to the society of his own rank, from which he had been for some time excluded.

'And now,' said the Colonel, 'hear my arrangements, for there is little time to lose. This youngster, Edward Waverley, alias Williams, alias Captain Butler, must continue to pass by his fourth ALIAS of Francis Stanley, my nephew; he shall set out to-morrow for the North, and the chariot shall take him the first two stages. Spontoon shall then attend him; and they shall ride post as far as Huntingdon; and the presence of Spontoon, well known on the road as my servant, will check all disposition to inquiry. At Huntingdon you will meet the real Frank Stanley. He is studying at Cambridge; but, a little while ago, doubtful if Emily's health would permit me to go down to the North myself, I procured him a passport from the secretary of state's office to go in my stead. As he went chiefly to look after you, his journey is now unnecessary. He knows your story; you will dine together at Huntingdon; and perhaps your wise heads may hit upon some plan for removing or diminishing the danger of your farther progress north-ward. And now (taking out a morocco case), let me put you in funds for the campaign.'

'I am ashamed, my dear Colonel—'

'Nay,' said Colonel Talbot, 'you should command my purse in any event; but this money is your own. Your father, considering the chance of your being attainted, left me his trustee for your advantage. So that you are worth above L15,000, besides Brere-Wood Lodge—a very independent person, I promise you. There are bills here for L200; any larger sum you may have, or credit abroad, as soon as your motions require it.'

The first use which occurred to Waverley of his newly acquired wealth was to write to honest Farmer Jopson, requesting his acceptance of a silver tankard on the part of his friend Williams, who had not forgotten the night of the eighteenth December last. He begged him at the same time carefully to preserve for him his Highland garb and accoutrements, particularly the arms, curious in themselves, and to which the friendship of the donors gave additional value. Lady Emily undertook to find some suitable token of remembrance likely to flatter the vanity and please the taste of Mrs. Williams; and the Colonel, who was a kind of farmer, promised to send the Ullswater patriarch an excellent team of horses for cart and plough. One happy day Waverley spent in London; and, travelling in the manner projected, he met with Frank Stanley at Huntingdon. The two young men were acquainted in a minute. 'I can read my uncle's riddle,' said Stanley; 'the cautious old soldier did not care to hint to me that I might hand over to you this passport, which I have no occasion for; but if it should afterwards come out as the rattle-pated trick of a young Cantab, cela ne tire a rien. You are therefore to be Francis Stanley, with this passport.' This proposal appeared in effect to alleviate a great part of the difficulties which Edward must otherwise have encountered at every turn; and accordingly he scrupled not to avail himself of it, the more especially as he had discarded all political purposes from his present journey, and could not be accused of furthering machinations against the government while travelling under protection of the secretary's passport. The day passed merrily away. The young student was inquisitive about Waverley's campaigns, and the manners of the Highlands, and Edward was obliged to satisfy his curiosity by whistling a pibroch, dancing a strathspey, and singing a Highland song. The next morning Stanley rode a stage northward with his new friend, and parted from him with great reluctance, upon the remonstrances of Spontoon, who, accustomed to submit to discipline, was rigid in enforcing it.

CHAPTER XXXIV DESOLATION

Waverley riding post, as was the usual fashion of the period, without any adventure save one or two queries, which the talisman of his passport sufficiently answered, reached the borders of Scotland. Here he heard the tidings of the decisive battle of Culloden. It was no more than he had long expected, though the success at Falkirk had thrown a faint and setting gleam over the arms of the Chevalier. Yet it came upon him like a shock, by which he was for a time altogether unmanned. The generous, the courteous, the noble-minded adventurer was then a fugitive, with a price upon his head; his adherents, so brave, so enthusiastic, so faithful, were dead, imprisoned, or exiled. Where, now, was the exalted and high-souled Fergus, if, indeed, he had survived the night at Clifton? Where the pure-hearted and primitive Baron of Bradwardine, whose foibles seemed foils to set off the disinterestedness of his disposition, the genuine goodness of his heart, and his unshaken courage? Those who clung for support to these fallen columns, Rose and Flora, where were they to be sought, and in what distress must not the loss of their natural protectors have involved them? Of Flora he thought with the regard of a brother for a sister; of Rose with a sensation yet more deep and tender. It might be still his fate to supply the want of those guardians they had lost. Agitated by these thoughts he precipitated his journey.

When he arrived in Edinburgh, where his inquiries must necessarily commence, he felt the full difficulty of his situation. Many inhabitants of that city had seen and known him as Edward Waverley; how, then, could he avail himself of a passport as Francis Stanley? He resolved, therefore, to avoid all company, and to move northward as soon as possible. He was, however, obliged to wait a day or two in expectation of a letter from Colonel Talbot, and he was also to leave his own address, under his feigned character, at a place agreed upon. With this latter purpose he sallied out in the dusk through the well-known streets, carefully shunning observation, but in vain: one of the first persons whom he met at once recognised him. It was Mrs. Flockhart, Fergus Mac-Ivor's good-humoured landlady.

'Gude guide us, Mr. Waverley, is this you? na, ye needna be feared for me. I wad betray nae gentleman in your circumstances. Eh, lack-a-day! lack-a-day! here's a change o' markets; how merry Colonel Mac-Ivor and you used to be in our house!' And the good-natured widow shed a few natural tears. As there was no resisting her claim of acquaintance, Waverley acknowledged it with a good grace, as well as the danger of his own situation. 'As it's near the darkening, sir, wad ye just step in by to our house and tak a dish o' tea? and I am sure if ye like to sleep in the little room, I wad tak care ye are no disturbed, and naebody wad ken ye; for Kate and Matty, the limmers, gaed aff wi' twa o' Hawley's dragoons, and I hae twa new queans instead o' them.'

Waverley accepted her invitation, and engaged her lodging for a night or two, satisfied he should be safer in the house of this simple creature than anywhere else. When he entered the parlour his heart swelled to see Fergus's bonnet, with the white cockade, hanging beside the little mirror.

'Ay,' said Mrs. Flockhart, sighing, as she observed the direction of his eyes, 'the puir Colonel bought a new ane just the day before they marched, and I winna let them tak that ane down, but just to brush it ilka day mysell; and whiles I look at it till I just think I hear him cry to Callum to bring him his bonnet, as he used to do when he was ganging out. It's unco silly—the neighbours ca' me a Jacobite, but they may say their say—I am sure it's no for that—but he was as kind-hearted a gentleman as ever lived, and as weel-fa'rd too. Oh, d'ye ken, sir, when he is to suffer?'

'Suffer! Good heaven! Why, where is he?'

'Eh, Lord's sake! d'ye no ken? The poor Hieland body, Dugald Mahony, cam here a while syne, wi' ane o' his arms cutt off, and a sair clour in the head—ye'll mind Dugald, he carried aye an axe on his shoulder—and he cam here just begging, as I may say, for something to eat. Aweel, he tauld us the Chief, as they ca'd him (but I aye ca' him the Colonel), and Ensign Maccombich, that ye mind weel, were ta'en somewhere beside the English border, when it was sae dark that his folk never missed him till it was ower late, and they were like to gang clean daft. And he said that little Callum Beg (he was a bauld mischievous callant that) and your honour were killed that same night in the tuilzie, and mony mae braw men. But he grat when he spak o' the Colonel, ye never saw the like. And now the word gangs the Colonel is to be tried, and to suffer wi' them that were ta'en at Carlisle.'

'And his sister?'

'Ay, that they ca'd the Lady Flora—weel, she's away up to Carlisle to him, and lives wi' some grand Papist lady thereabouts to be near him.'

'And,' said Edward, 'the other young lady?'

'Whilk other? I ken only of ae sister the Colonel had.'

'I mean Miss Bradwardine,' said Edward.

'Ou, ay; the laird's daughter' said his landlady. 'She was a very bonny lassie, poor thing, but far shyder than Lady Flora.'

'Where is she, for God's sake?'

'Ou, wha kens where ony o' them is now? puir things, they're sair ta'en doun for their white cockades and their white roses; but she gaed north to her father's in Perthshire, when the government troops cam back to Edinbro'. There was some prettymen amang them, and ane Major Whacker was quartered on me, a very ceevil gentleman,—but O, Mr. Waverley, he was naething sae weel fa'rd as the puir Colonel.'

'Do you know what is become of Miss Bradwardine's father?'

'The auld laird? na, naebody kens that. But they say he fought very hard in that bluidy battle at Inverness; and Deacon Clank, the whit-iron smith, says that the government folk are sair agane him for having been out twice; and troth he might hae ta'en warning, but there's nae Me like an auld fule. The puir Colonel was only out ance.'

Such conversation contained almost all the good-natured widow knew of the fate of her late lodgers and acquaintances; but it was enough to determine Edward, at all hazards, to proceed instantly to Tully-Veolan, where he concluded he should see, or at least hear, something of Rose. He therefore left a letter for Colonel Talbot at the place agreed upon, signed by his assumed name, and giving for his address the post-town next to the Baron's residence.

From Edinburgh to Perth he took post-horses, resolving to make the rest of his journey on foot; a mode of travelling to which he was partial, and which had the advantage of permitting a deviation from the road when he saw parties of military at a distance. His campaign had considerably strengthened his constitution and improved his habits of enduring fatigue. His baggage he sent before him as opportunity occurred.

As he advanced northward, the traces of war became visible. Broken carriages, dead horses, unroofed cottages, trees felled for palisades, and bridges destroyed or only partially repaired—all indicated the movements of hostile armies. In those places where the gentry were attached to the Stuart cause, their houses seemed dismantled or deserted, the usual course of what may be called ornamental labour was totally interrupted, and the inhabitants were seen gliding about, with fear, sorrow, and dejection on their faces.

It was evening when he approached the village of Tully-Veolan, with feelings and sentiments—how different from those which attended his first entrance! Then, life was so new to him that a dull or disagreeable day was one of the greatest misfortunes which his imagination anticipated, and it seemed to him that his time ought only to be consecrated to elegant or amusing study, and relieved by social or youthful frolic. Now, how changed! how saddened, yet how elevated was his character, within the course of a very few months! Danger and misfortune are rapid, though severe teachers. 'A sadder and a wiser man,' he felt in internal confidence and mental dignity a compensation for the gay dreams which in his case experience had so rapidly dissolved.

As he approached the village he saw, with surprise and anxiety, that a party of soldiers were quartered near it, and, what was worse, that they seemed stationary there. This he conjectured from a few tents which he beheld glimmering upon what was called the Common Moor. To avoid the risk of being stopped and questioned in a place where he was so likely to be recognised, he made a large circuit, altogether avoiding the hamlet, and approaching the upper gate of the avenue by a by-path well known to him. A single glance announced that great changes had taken place. One half of the gate, entirely destroyed and split up for firewood, lay in piles, ready to be taken away; the other swung uselessly about upon its loosened hinges. The battlements above the gate were broken and thrown down, and the carved bears, which were said to have done sentinel's duty upon the top for centuries, now, hurled from their posts, lay among the rubbish. The avenue was cruelly wasted. Several large trees were felled and left lying across the path; and the cattle of the villagers, and the more rude hoofs of dragoon horses, had poached into black mud the verdant turf which Waverley had so much admired.

Upon entering the court-yard, Edward saw the fears realised which these circumstances had excited. The place had been sacked by the King's troops, who, in wanton mischief, had even attempted to burn it; and though the thickness of the walls had resisted the fire, unless to a partial extent, the stables and out-houses were totally consumed. The towers and pinnacles of the main building were scorched and blackened; the pavement of the court broken and shattered, the doors torn down entirely, or hanging by a single hinge, the windows dashed in and demolished, and the court strewn with articles of furniture broken into fragments. The accessories of ancient distinction, to which the Baron, in the pride of his heart, had attached so much importance and veneration, were treated with peculiar contumely. The fountain was demolished, and the spring which had supplied it now flooded the court-yard. The stone basin seemed to be destined for a drinking-trough for cattle, from the manner in which it was arranged upon the ground. The whole tribe of bears, large and small, had experienced as little favour as those at the head of the avenue, and one or two of the family pictures, which seemed to have served as targets for the soldiers, lay on the ground in tatters. With an aching heart, as may well be imagined, Edward viewed this wreck of a mansion so respected. But his anxiety to learn the fate of the proprietors, and his fears as to what that fate might be, increased with every step. When he entered upon the terrace new scenes of desolation were visible. The balustrade was broken down, the walls destroyed, the borders overgrown with weeds, and the fruit-trees cut down or grubbed up. In one compartment of this old-fashioned garden were two immense horse-chestnut trees, of whose size the Baron was particularly vain; too lazy, perhaps, to cut them down, the spoilers, with malevolent ingenuity, had mined them and placed a quantity of gunpowder in the cavity. One had been shivered to pieces by the explosion, and the fragments lay scattered around, encumbering the ground it had so long shadowed. The other mine had been more partial in its effect. About one-fourth of the trunk of the tree was torn from the mass, which, mutilated and defaced on the one side, still spread on the other its ample and undiminished boughs. [Footnote: A pair of chestnut trees, destroyed, the one entirely and the other in part, by such a mischievous and wanton act of revenge, grew at Invergarry Castle, the fastness of MacDonald of Glengarry.]

Amid these general marks of ravage, there were some which more particularly addressed the feelings of Waverley. Viewing the front of the building thus wasted and defaced, his eyes naturally sought the little balcony which more properly belonged to Rose's apartment, her troisieme, or rather cinquieme, etage. It was easily discovered, for beneath it lay the stage-flowers and shrubs with which it was her pride to decorate it, and which had been hurled from the bartizan; several of her books were mingled with broken flower-pots and other remnants. Among these Waverley distinguished one of his own, a small copy of Ariosto, and gathered it as a treasure, though wasted by the wind and rain.

While, plunged in the sad reflections which the scene excited, he was looking around for some one who might explain the fate of the inhabitants, he heard a voice from the interior of the building singing, in well-remembered accents, an old Scottish song:—

*They came upon us in the night,
And brake my bower and slew my knight;
My servants a' for life did flee,
And left us in extremitie.*

*They slew my knight, to me sae dear;
They slew my knight, and drave his gear;
The moon may set, the sun may rise,
But a deadly sleep has closed his eyes.*

[Footnote: The first three couplets are from an old ballad, called the Border Widow's Lament.]

'Alas,' thought Edward, 'is it thou? Poor helpless being, art thou alone left, to gibber and moan, and fill with thy wild and unconnected scraps of minstrelsy the halls that protected thee?' He then called, first low, and then louder, 'Davie—Davie Gellatley!'

The poor simpleton showed himself from among the ruins of a sort of greenhouse, that once terminated what was called the terrace-walk, but at first sight of a stranger retreated, as if in terror. Waverley, remembering his habits, began to whistle a tune to which he was partial, which Davie had expressed great pleasure in listening to, and had picked up from him by the ear. Our hero's minstrelsy no more equalled that of Blondel than poor Davie resembled Coeur de Lion; but the melody had the same effect of producing recognition. Davie again stole from his lurking-place, but timidly, while Waverley, afraid of frightening him, stood making the most encouraging signals he could devise. 'It's his ghaist,' muttered Davie; yet, coming nearer, he seemed to acknowledge his living acquaintance. The poor fool himself appeared the ghost of what he had been. The peculiar dress in which he had been attired in better days showed only miserable rags of its whimsical finery, the lack of which was oddly supplied by the remnants of tapestried hangings, window-curtains, and shreds of pictures with which he had bedizened his

tatters. His face, too, had lost its vacant and careless air, and the poor creature looked hollow-eyed, meagre, half-starved, and nervous to a pitiable degree. After long hesitation, he at length approached Waverley with some confidence, stared him sadly in the face, and said, 'A' dead and gane—a' dead and gane.'

'Who are dead?' said Waverley, forgetting the incapacity of Davie to hold any connected discourse.

'Baron, and Bailie, and Saunders Saunderson, and Lady Rose that sang sae sweet—a' dead and gane—dead and gane;

But follow, follow me,

While glowworms light the lea,

I'll show ye where the dead should be—

Each in his shroud,

While winds pipe loud,

And the red moon peeps dim through the cloud.

Follow, follow me;

Brave should he be

That treads by night the dead man's lea.'

With these words, chanted in a wild and earnest tone, he made a sign to Waverley to follow him, and walked rapidly towards the bottom of the garden, tracing the bank of the stream which, it may be remembered, was its eastern boundary. Edward, over whom an involuntary shuddering stole at the import of his words, followed him in some hope of an explanation. As the house was evidently deserted, he could not expect to find among the ruins any more rational informer.

Davie, walking very fast, soon reached the extremity of the garden, and scrambled over the ruins of the wall that once had divided it from the wooded glen in which the old tower of Tully-Veolan was situated. He then jumped down into the bed of the stream, and, followed by Waverley, proceeded at a great pace, climbing over some fragments of rock and turning with difficulty round others. They passed beneath the ruins of the castle; Waverley followed, keeping up with his guide with difficulty, for the twilight began to fall. Following the descent of the stream a little lower, he totally lost him, but a twinkling light which he now discovered among the tangled copse-wood and bushes seemed a surer guide. He soon pursued a very uncouth path; and by its guidance at length reached the door of a wretched hut. A fierce barking of dogs was at first heard, but it stilled at his approach. A voice sounded from within, and he held it most prudent to listen before he advanced.

'Wha hast thou brought here, thou unsensy villain, thou?' said an old woman, apparently in great indignation. He heard Davie Gellatley in answer whistle a part of the tune by which he had recalled himself to the simpleton's memory, and had now no hesitation to knock at the door. There was a dead silence instantly within, except the deep growling of the dogs; and he next heard the mistress of the hut approach the door, not probably for the sake of undoing a latch, but of fastening a bolt. To prevent this Waverley lifted the latch himself.

In front was an old wretched-looking woman, exclaiming, 'Wha comes into folk's houses in this gate, at this time o' the night?' On one side, two grim and half-starved deer greyhounds laid aside their ferocity at his appearance, and seemed to recognise him. On the other side, half concealed by the open door, yet apparently seeking that concealment reluctantly, with a cocked pistol in his right hand and his left in the act of drawing another from his belt, stood a tall bony gaunt figure in the remnants of a faded uniform and a beard of three weeks' growth. It was the Baron of Bradwardine. It is unnecessary to add, that he threw aside his weapon and greeted Waverley with a hearty embrace.

CHAPTER XXXV

COMPARING OF NOTES

Thearon's story was short, when divested of the adages and commonplaces, Latin, English, and Scotch, with which his erudition garnished it. He insisted much upon his grief at the loss of Edward and of Glenaquoich, fought the fields of Falkirk and Culloden, and related how, after all was lost in the last battle, he had returned home, under the idea of more easily finding shelter among his own tenants and on his own estate than elsewhere. A party of soldiers had been sent to lay waste his property, for clemency was not the order of the day. Their proceedings, however, were checked by an order from the civil court. The estate, it was found, might not be forfeited to the crown to the prejudice of Malcolm Bradwardine of Inch-Grabbit, the heir-male, whose claim could not be prejudiced by the Baron's attainder, as deriving no right through him, and who, therefore, like other heirs of entail in the same situation, entered upon possession. But, unlike many in similar circumstances, the new laird speedily showed that he intended utterly to exclude his predecessor from all benefit or advantage in the estate, and that it was his purpose to avail himself of the old Baron's evil fortune to the full extent. This was the more ungenerous, as it was generally known that, from a romantic idea of not prejudicing this young man's right as heir-male, the Baron had refrained from settling his estate on his daughter.

This selfish injustice was resented by the country people, who were partial to their old master, and irritated against his successor. In the Baron's own words, 'The matter did not coincide with the feelings of the commons of Bradwardine, Mr. Waverley; and the tenants were slack and repugnant in payment of their mails and duties; and when my kinsman came to the village wi' the new factor, Mr. James Howie, to lift the rents, some wanchancy person—I suspect John Heatherblutter, the auld gamekeeper, that was out wi' me in the year fifteen—fired a shot at him in the gloaming, whereby he was so affrighted, that I may say with Tullius In Catilinam, "Abiit, evasit, erupit, effugit." He fled, sir, as one may say, incontinent to Stirling. And now he hath advertised the estate for sale, being himself the last substitute in the entail. And if I were to lament about sic matters, this would grieve me mair than its passing from my immediate possession, whilk, by the course of nature, must have happened in a few years; whereas now it passes from the lineage that should have possessed it in scecula saculorum. But God's will be done, humana perpessi sumus. Sir John of Bradwardine—Black Sir John, as he is called—who was the common ancestor of our house and the Inch-Grabbits, little thought such a person would have sprung from his loins. Mean time, he has accused me to some of the primates, the rulers for the time, as if I were a cut-throat, and an abettor of bravoos and assassins and coupe-jarrets. And they have sent soldiers here to abide on the estate, and hunt me like a partridge upon the mountains, as Scripture says of good King David, or like our valiant Sir William Wallace—not that I bring myself into comparison with either. I thought, when I heard you at the door, they had driven the auld deer to his den at last; and so I e'en proposed to die at bay, like a buck of the first head. But now, Janet, canna ye gie us something for supper?' 'Ou ay, sir, I'll brander the moor-fowl that John Heatherblutter brought in this morning; and ye see puir Davie's roasting the black hen's eggs. I daur say, Mr. Wauverley, ye never kend that a' the eggs that were sae weel roasted at supper in the Ha'-house were aye turned by our Davie? there's no the like o' him ony gate for powtering wi' his fingers amang the het peat-ashes and roasting eggs.' Davie all this while lay with his nose almost in the fire, nuzzling among the ashes, kicking his heels, mumbling to himself, turning the eggs as they lay in the hot embers, as if to confute the proverb, that 'there goes reason to roasting of eggs,' and justify the eulogium which poor Janet poured out upon

Him whom she loved, her idiot boy.

'Davie's no sae silly as folk tak him for, Mr. Wauverley; he wadna hae brought you here unless he had kend ye was a friend to his Honour; indeed the very dogs kend ye, Mr. Wauverley, for ye was aye kind to beast and body. I can tell you a story o' Davie, wi' his Honour's leave. His Honour, ye see, being under hiding in

thae sair times—the mair's the pity—he lies a' day, and whiles a' night, in the cove in the dern hag; but though it's a bielly eneugh bit, and the auld gudeman o' Corse-Cleugh has panged it wi' a kemple o' strae amaist, yet when the country's quiet, and the night very cauld, his Honour whiles creeps down here to get a warm at the ingle and a sleep among the blankets, and gangs awa in the morning. And so, ae morning, siccan a fright as I got! Twa unlucky red-coats were up for black-fishing, or some siccan ploy—for the neb o' them's never out o' mischief—and they just got a glisk o' his Honour as he gaed into the wood, and banged aff a gun at him. I out like a jer-falcon, and cried—"Wad they shoot an honest woman's poor innocent bairn?" And I fleyt at them, and threepit it was my son; and they damned and swuir at me that it was the auld rebel, as the villains ca'd his Honour; and Davie was in the wood, and heard the tuiizie, and he, just out o' his ain head, got up the auld grey mantle that his Honour had flung off him to gang the faster, and he cam out o' the very same bit o' the wood, majoring and looking about sae like his Honour, that they were clean beguiled, and thought they had letten aff their gun at crack-brained Sawney, as they ca' him; and they gae me saxpence, and twa saumon fish, to say naething about it. Na, na, Davie's no just like other folk, puir fallow; but he's no sae silly as folk tak him for. But, to be sure, how can we do eneugh for his Honour, when we and ours have lived on his ground this twa hundred years; and when he keepit my puir Jamie at school and college, and even at the Ha'-house, till he gaed to a better place; and when he saved me frae being ta'en to Perth as a witch—Lord forgi'e them that would touch sic a puir silly auld body!—and has maintained puir Davie at heck and manger maist feck o' his life?

Waverley at length found an opportunity to interrupt Janet's narrative by an inquiry after Miss Bradwardine.

'She's weel and safe, thank God! at the Duchran,' answered the Baron; 'the laird's distantly related to us, and more nearly to my chaplain, Mr. Rubrick; and, though he be of Whig principles, yet he's not forgetful of auld friendship at this time. The Bailie's doing what he can to save something out of the wreck for puir Rose; but I doubt, I doubt, I shall never see her again, for I maun lay my banes in some far country.'

'Hout na, your Honour,' said old Janet, 'ye were just as ill aff in the feifteen, and got the bonnie baronie back, an' a'. And now the eggs is ready, and the muir-cock's brandered, and there's ilk ane a trencher and some saut, and the heel o' the white loaf that cam frae the Bailie's, and there's plenty o' brandy in the greybeard that Luckie Maclearie sent down, and winna ye be suppered like princes?'

'I wish one Prince, at least, of our acquaintance may be no worse off,' said the Baron to Waverley, who joined him in cordial hopes for the safety of the unfortunate Chevalier.

They then began to talk of their future prospects. The Baron's plan was very simple. It was, to escape to France, where, by the interest of his old friends, he hoped to get some military employment, of which he still conceived himself capable. He invited Waverley to go with him, a proposal in which he acquiesced, providing the interest of Colonel Talbot should fail in procuring his pardon. Tacitly he hoped the Baron would sanction his addresses to Rose, and give him a right to assist him in his exile; but he forbore to speak on this subject until his own fate should be decided. They then talked of Glennaquoich, for whom the Baron expressed great anxiety, although, he observed, he was 'the very Achilles of Horatius Flaccus,—

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer; which,' he continued, 'has been thus rendered (vernacularly) by Struan Robertson:—

A fiery etter-cap, a fractious chiel,

As het as ginger, and as stieve as steel.'

Flora had a large and unqualified share of the good old man's sympathy.

It was now wearing late. Old Janet got into some kind of kennel behind the hallan; Davie had been long asleep and snoring between Ban and Buscar. These dogs had followed him to the hut after the mansion-house was deserted, and there constantly resided; and their ferocity, with the old woman's reputation of being a witch, contributed a good deal to keep visitors from the glen. With this view, Bailie Macwheeble provided Janet underhand with meal for their maintenance, and also with little articles of luxury for his patron's use, in supplying which much precaution was necessarily used. After some compliments, the Baron occupied his usual couch, and Waverley reclined in an easy chair of tattered velvet, which had once garnished the state bed-room of Tully-Veolan (for the furniture of this mansion was now scattered through all the cottages in the vicinity), and went to sleep as comfortably as if he had been in a bed of down.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MORE EXPLANATION

With the first dawn of day, old Janet was scuttling about the house to wake the Baron, who usually slept sound and heavily.

'I must go back,' he said to Waverley, 'to my cove; will you walk down the glen wi' me?' They went out together, and followed a narrow and entangled foot-path, which the occasional passage of anglers or wood-cutters had traced by the side of the stream. On their way the Baron explained to Waverley that he would be under no danger in remaining a day or two at Tully-Veolan, and even in being seen walking about, if he used the precaution of pretending that he was looking at the estate as agent or surveyor for an English gentleman who designed to be purchaser. With this view he recommended to him to visit the Bailie, who still lived at the factor's house, called Little Veolan, about a mile from the village, though he was to remove at next term. Stanley's passport would be an answer to the officer who commanded the military; and as to any of the country people who might recognise Waverley, the Baron assured him he was in no danger of being betrayed by them.

'I believe,' said the old man, 'half the people of the barony know that their poor auld laird is somewhere hereabout; for I see they do not suffer a single bairn to come here a bird-nesting; a practice whilk, when I was in full possession of my power as baron, I was unable totally to inhibit. Nay, I often find bits of things in my way, that the poor bodies, God help them! leave there, because they think they may be useful to me. I hope they will get a wiser master, and as kind a one as I was.'

A natural sigh closed the sentence; but the quiet equanimity with which the Baron endured his misfortunes had something in it venerable and even sublime. There was no fruitless repining, no turbid melancholy; he bore his lot, and the hardships which it involved, with a good-humored, though serious composure, and used no violent language against the prevailing party.

'I did what I thought my duty,' said the good old man, 'and questionless they are doing what they think theirs. It grieves me sometimes to look upon these blackened walls of the house of my ancestors; but doubtless officers cannot always keep the soldier's hand from depredation and spuilzie, and Gustavus Adolphus himself, as ye may read in Colonel Munro his "Expedition with the Worthy Scotch Regiment called Mackay's Regiment" did often permit it. Indeed I have myself seen as sad sights as Tully-Veolan now is when I served with the Marechal Duke of Berwick. To be sure we may say with Virgilius Maro, Fuimus Troes—and there's the end of an auld sang. But houses and families and men have a' stood lang eneugh when they have stood till they fall with honour; and now I hae gotten a house that is not unlike a domus ultima—they were now standing below a steep rock. 'We poor Jacobites,' continued the Baron, looking up, 'are now like the conies in Holy Scripture (which the great traveller Pococke calleth Jerboa), a feeble people, that make our abode in the rocks. So, fare you well, my good lad, till we meet at Janet's in the even; for I must get into my Patmos, which is no easy matter for my auld stiff limbs.'

With that he began to ascend the rock, striding, with the help of his hands, from one precarious footstep to another, till he got about half-way up, where two or three bushes concealed the mouth of a hole, resembling an oven, into which the Baron insinuated, first his head and shoulders, and then, by slow gradation, the

rest of his long body; his legs and feet finally disappearing, coiled up like a huge snake entering his retreat, or a long pedigree introduced with care and difficulty into the narrow pigeon-hole of an old cabinet. Waverley had the curiosity to clamber up and look in upon him in his den, as the lurking-place might well be termed. Upon the whole, he looked not unlike that ingenious puzzle called 'a reel in a bottle,' the marvel of children (and of some grown people too, myself for one), who can neither comprehend the mystery how it has got in or how it is to be taken out. The cave was very narrow, too low in the roof to admit of his standing, or almost of his sitting up, though he made some awkward attempts at the latter posture. His sole amusement was the perusal of his old friend Titus Livius, varied by occasionally scratching Latin proverbs and texts of Scripture with his knife on the roof and walls of his fortalice, which were of sandstone. As the cave was dry, and filled with clean straw and withered fern, 'it made,' as he said, coiling himself up with an air of snugness and comfort which contrasted strangely with his situation, 'unless when the wind was due north, a very passable gite for an old soldier.' Neither, as he observed, was he without sentries for the purpose of reconnoitring. Davie and his mother were constantly on the watch to discover and avert danger; and it was singular what instances of address seemed dictated by the instinctive attachment of the poor simpleton when his patron's safety was concerned.

With Janet, Edward now sought an interview. He had recognised her at first sight as the old woman who had nursed him during his sickness after his delivery from Gifted Gilfillan. The hut also, although a little repaired and somewhat better furnished, was certainly the place of his confinement; and he now recollected on the common moor of Tully-Veolan the trunk of a large decayed tree, called the try sting-tree, which he had no doubt was the same at which the Highlanders rendezvoused on that memorable night. All this he had combined in his imagination the night before; but reasons which may probably occur to the reader prevented him from catechising Janet in the presence of the Baron.

He now commenced the task in good earnest; and the first question was, Who was the young lady that visited the hut during his illness? Janet paused for a little; and then observed, that to keep the secret now would neither do good nor ill to anybody.

'It was just a leddy that hasna her equal in the world—Miss Rose Bradwardine!'

'Then Miss Rose was probably also the author of my deliverance,' inferred Waverley, delighted at the confirmation of an idea which local circumstances had already induced him to entertain.

'I wot weel, Mr. Wauverley, and that was she e'en; but sair, sair angry and affronted wad she hae been, puir thing, if she had thought ye had been ever to ken a word about the matter; for she gar'd me speak aye Gaelic when ye was in hearing, to mak ye trow we were in the Hielands. I can speak it weel eneugh, for my mother was a Hieland woman.'

A few more questions now brought out the whole mystery respecting Waverley's deliverance from the bondage in which he left Cairnvreckan. Never did music sound sweeter to an amateur than the drowsy tautology with which old Janet detailed every circumstance thrilled upon the ears of Waverley. But my reader is not a lover and I must spare his patience, by attempting to condense within reasonable compass the narrative which old Janet spread through a harangue of nearly two hours.

When Waverley communicated to Fergus the letter he had received from Rose Bradwardine by Davie Gellatley, giving an account of Tully-Veolan being occupied by a small party of soldiers, that circumstance had struck upon the busy and active mind of the Chieftain. Eager to distress and narrow the posts of the enemy, desirous to prevent their establishing a garrison so near him, and willing also to oblige the Baron—for he often had the idea of marriage with Rose floating through his brain—he resolved to send some of his people to drive out the red-coats and to bring Rose to Glennaquoich. But just as he had ordered Evan with a small party on this duty, the news of Cope's having marched into the Highlands, to meet and disperse the forces of the Chevalier ere they came to a head, obliged him to join the standard with his whole forces.

He sent to order Donald Bean to attend him; but that cautious freebooter, who well understood the value of a separate command, instead of joining, sent various apologies which the pressure of the times compelled Fergus to admit as current, though not without the internal resolution of being revenged on him for his procrastination, time and place convenient. However, as he could not amend the matter, he issued orders to Donald to descend into the Low Country, drive the soldiers from Tully-Veolan, and, paying all respect to the mansion of the Baron, to take his abode somewhere near it, for protection of his daughter and family, and to harass and drive away any of the armed volunteers or small parties of military which he might find moving about the vicinity. As this charge formed a sort of roving commission, which Donald proposed to interpret in the way most advantageous to himself, as he was relieved from the immediate terrors of Fergus, and as he had, from former secret services, some interest in the councils of the Chevalier, he resolved to make hay while the sun shone. He achieved without difficulty the task of driving the soldiers from Tully-Veolan; but, although he did not venture to encroach upon the interior of the family, or to disturb Miss Rose, being unwilling to make himself a powerful enemy in the Chevalier's army,

For well he knew the Baron's wrath was deadly;

yet he set about to raise contributions and exactions upon the tenantry, and otherwise to turn the war to his own advantage. Meanwhile he mounted the white cockade, and waited upon Rose with a pretext of great devotion for the service in which her father was engaged, and many apologies for the freedom he must necessarily use for the support of his people. It was at this moment that Rose learned, by open-mouthed fame, with all sorts of exaggeration, that Waverley had killed the smith at Cairnvreckan, in an attempt to arrest him; had been cast into a dungeon by Major Melville of Cairnvreckan, and was to be executed by martial law within three days. In the agony which these tidings excited she proposed to Donald Bean the rescue of the prisoner. It was the very sort of service which he was desirous to undertake, judging it might constitute a merit of such a nature as would make amends for any peccadilloes which he might be guilty of in the country. He had the art, however, pleading all the while duty and discipline, to hold off, until poor Rose, in the extremity of her distress, offered to bribe him to the enterprise with some valuable jewels which had been her mother's.

Donald Bean, who had served in France, knew, and perhaps over-estimated, the value of these trinkets. But he also perceived Rose's apprehensions of its being discovered that she had parted with her jewels for Waverley's liberation. Resolved this scruple should not part him and the treasure, he voluntarily offered to take an oath that he would never mention Miss Rose's share in the transaction; and, foreseeing convenience in keeping the oath and no probable advantage in breaking it, he took the engagement—in order, as he told his lieutenant, to deal handsomely by the young lady—in the only mode and form which, by a mental paction with himself, he considered as binding: he swore secrecy upon his drawn dirk. He was the more especially moved to this act of good faith by some attentions that Miss Bradwardine showed to his daughter Alice, which, while they gained the heart of the mountain damsel, highly gratified the pride of her father. Alice, who could now speak a little English, was very communicative in return for Rose's kindness, readily confided to her the whole papers respecting the intrigue with Gardiner's regiment, of which she was the depositary, and as readily undertook, at her instance, to restore them to Waverley without her father's knowledge. For 'they may oblige the bonnie young lady and the handsome young gentleman,' said Alice, 'and what use has my father for a whin bits o' scared paper?'

The reader is aware that she took an opportunity of executing this purpose on the eve of Waverley's leaving the glen.

How Donald executed his enterprise the reader is aware. But the expulsion of the military from Tully-Veolan had given alarm, and while he was lying in wait for Gilfillan, a strong party, such as Donald did not care to face, was sent to drive back the insurgents in their turn, to encamp there, and to protect the country. The officer, a gentleman and a disciplinarian, neither intruded himself on Miss Bradwardine, whose unprotected situation he respected, nor permitted his soldiers to commit any breach of discipline. He formed a little camp upon an eminence near the house of Tully-Veolan, and placed proper guards at the passes in the vicinity. This unwelcome news reached Donald Bean Lean as he was returning to Tully-Veolan. Determined, however, to obtain the guerdon of his labour, he resolved, since approach to Tully-Veolan was impossible, to deposit his prisoner in Janet's cottage, a place the very existence of which could hardly have been suspected even by those who had long lived in the vicinity, unless they had been guided thither, and which was utterly unknown to Waverley himself. This effected, he claimed and received his reward. Waverley's illness was an event which deranged all their calculations. Donald was obliged to leave the neighbourhood with his people, and to seek more free course for his adventures elsewhere. At Rose's entreaty, he left an old man, a herbalist, who was supposed to understand a little of medicine, to attend Waverley during his illness.

In the meanwhile, new and fearful doubts started in Rose's mind. They were suggested by old Janet, who insisted that, a reward having been offered for the apprehension of Waverley, and his own personal effects being so valuable, there was no saying to what breach of faith Donald might be tempted. In an agony of grief and terror, Rose took the daring resolution of explaining to the Prince himself the danger in which Mr. Waverley stood, judging that, both as a politician and a man of honour and humanity, Charles Edward would interest himself to prevent his falling into the hands of the opposite party. This letter she at first thought of sending anonymously, but naturally feared it would not in that case be credited. She therefore subscribed her name, though with reluctance and terror, and consigned it in charge to a young man, who at leaving his farm to join the Chevalier's army, made it his petition to her to have some sort of credentials to the adventurer, from whom he hoped to obtain a commission.

The letter reached Charles Edward on his descent to the Lowlands, and, aware of the political importance of having it supposed that he was in correspondence with the English Jacobites, he caused the most positive orders to be transmitted to Donald Bean Lean to transmit Waverley, safe and uninjured, in person or effects, to the governor of Doune Castle. The freebooter durst not disobey, for the army of the Prince was now so near him that punishment might have followed; besides, he was a politician as well as a robber, and was unwilling to cancel the interest created through former secret services by being refractory on this occasion. He therefore made a virtue of necessity, and transmitted orders to his lieutenant to convey Edward to Doune, which was safely accomplished in the mode mentioned in a former chapter. The governor of Doune was directed to send him to Edinburgh as a prisoner, because the Prince was apprehensive that Waverley, if set at liberty, might have resumed his purpose of returning to England, without affording him an opportunity of a personal interview. In this, indeed, he acted by the advice of the Chieftain of Glennaquoich, with whom it may be remembered the Chevalier communicated upon the mode of disposing of Edward, though without telling him how he came to learn the place of his confinement.

This, indeed, Charles Edward considered as a lady's secret; for although Rose's letter was couched in the most cautious and general terms, and professed to be written merely from motives of humanity and zeal for the Prince's service, yet she expressed so anxious a wish that she should not be known to have interfered, that the Chevalier was induced to suspect the deep interest which she took in Waverley's safety. This conjecture, which was well founded, led, however, to false inferences. For the emotion which Edward displayed on approaching Flora and Rose at the ball of Holyrood was placed by the Chevalier to the account of the latter; and he concluded that the Baron's views about the settlement of his property, or some such obstacle, thwarted their mutual inclinations. Common fame, it is true, frequently gave Waverley to Miss Mac-Ivor; but the Prince knew that common fame is very prodigal in such gifts; and, watching attentively the behaviour of the ladies towards Waverley, he had no doubt that the young Englishman had no interest with Flora, and was beloved by Rose Bradwardine. Desirous to bind Waverley to his service, and wishing also to do a kind and friendly action, the Prince next assailed the Baron on the subject of settling his estate upon his daughter. Mr. Bradwardine acquiesced; but the consequence was that Fergus was immediately induced to prefer his double suit for a wife and an earldom, which the Prince rejected in the manner we have seen. The Chevalier, constantly engaged in his own multiplied affairs, had not hitherto sought any explanation with Waverley, though often meaning to do so. But after Fergus's declaration he saw the necessity of appearing neutral between the rivals, devoutly hoping that the matter, which now seemed fraught with the seeds of strife, might be permitted to lie over till the termination of the expedition. When, on the march to Derby, Fergus, being questioned concerning his quarrel with Waverley, alleged as the cause that Edward was desirous of retracting the suit he had made to his sister, the Chevalier plainly told him that he had himself observed Miss Mac-Ivor's behaviour to Waverley, and that he was convinced Fergus was under the influence of a mistake in judging of Waverley's conduct, who, he had every reason to believe, was engaged to Miss Bradwardine. The quarrel which ensued between Edward and the Chieftain is, I hope, still in the remembrance of the reader. These circumstances will serve to explain such points of our narrative as, according to the custom of story-tellers, we deemed it fit to leave unexplained, for the purpose of exciting the reader's curiosity.

When Janet had once finished the leading facts of this narrative, Waverley was easily enabled to apply the clue which they afforded to other mazes of the labyrinth in which he had been engaged. To Rose Bradwardine, then, he owed the life which he now thought he could willingly have laid down to serve her. A little reflection convinced him, however, that to live for her sake was more convenient and agreeable, and that, being possessed of independence, she might share it with him either in foreign countries or in his own. The pleasure of being allied to a man of the Baron's high worth, and who was so much valued by his uncle Sir Everard, was also an agreeable consideration, had anything been wanting to recommend the match. His absurdities, which had appeared grotesquely ludicrous during his prosperity, seemed, in the sunset of his fortune, to be harmonised and assimilated with the noble features of his character, so as to add peculiarity without exciting ridicule. His mind occupied with such projects of future happiness, Edward sought Little Veolan, the habitation of Mr. Duncan Macwheeble.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Now is Cupid a child of conscience—he makes restitution.—SHAKSPEARE

Mr. Duncan MacWheeble, no longer Commissary or Bailie, though still enjoying the empty name of the latter dignity, had escaped proscription by an early secession from the insurgent party and by his insignificance.

Edward found him in his office, immersed among papers and accounts. Before him was a large bicker of oatmeal porridge, and at the side thereof a horn spoon and a bottle of two-penny. Eagerly running his eye over a voluminous law-paper, he from time to time shovelled an immense spoonful of these nutritive viands into his capacious mouth. A pot-bellied Dutch bottle of brandy which stood by intimated either that this honest limb of the law had taken his morning already, or that he meant to season his porridge with such digestive; or perhaps both circumstances might reasonably be inferred. His night-cap and morning-gown, had whilome been of tartan, but, equally cautious and frugal, the honest Bailie had got them dyed black, lest their original ill-omened colour might remind his visitors of his unlucky excursion to Derby. To sum up the picture, his face was daubed with snuff up to the eyes, and his fingers with ink up to the knuckles. He looked dubiously at Waverley as he approached the little green rail which fenced his desk and stool from the approach of the vulgar. Nothing could give the Bailie more annoyance than the idea of his acquaintance being claimed by any of the unfortunate gentlemen who were now so much more likely to need assistance than to afford profit. But this was the rich young Englishman; who knew what might be his situation? He was the Baron's friend too; what was to be done?

While these reflections gave an air of absurd perplexity to the poor man's visage, Waverley, reflecting on the communication he was about to make to him, of a nature so ridiculously contrasted with the appearance of the individual, could not help bursting out a-laughing, as he checked the propensity to exclaim with Syphax—

Cato's a proper person to intrust

A love-tale with.

As Mr. Macwheeble had no idea of any person laughing heartily who was either encircled by peril or oppressed by poverty, the hilarity of Edward's countenance greatly relieved the embarrassment of his own, and, giving him a tolerably hearty welcome to Little Veolan, he asked what he would choose for breakfast. His visitor had, in the first place, something for his private ear, and begged leave to bolt the door. Duncan by no means liked this precaution, which savoured of danger to be apprehended; but he could not now draw back.

Convinced he might trust this man, as he could make it his interest to be faithful, Edward communicated his present situation and future schemes to Macwheeble. The wily agent listened with apprehension when he found Waverley was still in a state of proscription; was somewhat comforted by learning that he had a passport; rubbed his hands with glee when he mentioned the amount of his present fortune; opened huge eyes when he heard the brilliancy of his future expectations; but when he expressed his intention to share them with Miss Rose Bradwardine, ecstasy had almost deprived the honest man of his senses. The Bailie started from his three-footed stool like the Pythoness from her tripod; flung his best wig out of the window, because the block on which it was placed stood in the way of his career; chucked his cap to the ceiling, caught it as it fell; whistled 'Tullochgorum'; danced a Highland fling with inimitable grace and agility, and then threw himself exhausted into a chair, exclaiming, 'Lady Wauverley! ten thousand a year the least penny! Lord preserve my poor understanding!'

'Amen with all my heart,' said Waverley, 'but now, Mr. Macwheeble, let us proceed to business.' This word had somewhat a sedative effect, but the Bailie's head, as he expressed himself, was still 'in the bees.' He mended his pen, however, marked half a dozen sheets of paper with an ample marginal fold, whipped down Dallas of St. Martin's 'Styles' from a shelf, where that venerable work roosted with Stair's 'Institutions,' Dirleton's 'Doubts,' Balfour's 'Practiques,' and a parcel of old account-books, opened the volume at the article Contract of Marriage, and prepared to make what he called a'sma' minute to prevent parties frae resiling.'

With some difficulty Waverley made him comprehend that he was going a little too fast. He explained to him that he should want his assistance, in the first place, to make his residence safe for the time, by writing to the officer at Tully-Veolan that Mr. Stanley, an English gentleman nearly related to Colonel Talbot, was upon a visit of business at Mr. Macwheeble's, and, knowing the state of the country, had sent his passport for Captain Foster's inspection. This produced a polite answer from the officer, with an invitation to Mr. Stanley to dine with him, which was declined (as may easily be supposed) under pretence of business.

Waverley's next request was, that Mr. Macwheeble would despatch a man and horse to—, the post-town at which Colonel Talbot was to address him, with directions to wait there until the post should bring a letter for Mr. Stanley, and then to forward it to Little Veolan with all speed. In a moment the Bailie was in search of his apprentice (or servitor, as he was called Sixty Years Since), Jock Scriver, and in not much greater space of time Jock was on the back of the white pony. 'Tak care ye guide him weel, sir, for he's aye been short in the wind since—ahem—Lord be gude to me! (in a low voice), I was gaun to come out wi'—since I rode whip and spur to fetch the Chevalier to redd Mr. Wauverley and Vich Ian Vohr; and an uncanny coup I gat for my pains. Lord forgie your honour! I might hae broken my neck; but troth it was in a venture, mae ways nor ane; but this maks amends for a'. Lady Wauverley! ten thousand a year! Lord be gude unto me!'

'But you forget, Mr. Macwheeble, we want the Baron's consent—the lady's—'

'Never fear, I'll be caution for them; I'll gie you my personal warrandice. Ten thousand a year! it dings Balmawhapple out and out—a year's rent's worth a' Balmawhapple, fee and life-rent! Lord make us thankful!'

To turn the current of his feelings, Edward inquired if he had heard anything lately of the Chieftain of Glennaquoich.

'Not one word,' answered Macwheeble, 'but that he was still in Carlisle Castle, and was soon to be panelled for his life. I dinna wish the young gentleman ill,' he said, 'but I hope that they that hae got him will keep him, and no let him back to this Hieland border to plague us wi' black-mail and a' manner o' violent, wrongous, and masterfu' oppression and spoliation, both by himself and others of his causing, sending, and hounding out; and he couldna tak care o' the siller when he had gotten it neither, but flung it a' into yon idle quean's lap at Edinburgh; but light come light gane. For my part, I never wish to see a kilt in the country again, nor a red-coat, nor a gun, for that matter, unless it were to shoot a paitrick; they're a' tarr'd wi' ae stick. And when they have done ye wrang, even when ye hae gotten decret of spuilzie, oppression, and violent profits against them, what better are ye? They hae na a plack to pay ye; ye need never extract it.'

With such discourse, and the intervening topics of business, the time passed until dinner, Macwheeble meanwhile promising to devise some mode of introducing Edward at the Duchran, where Rose at present resided, without risk of danger or suspicion; which seemed no very easy task, since the laird was a very zealous friend to government. The poultry-yard had been laid under requisition, and cockylecky and Scotch collops soon reeked in the Bailie's little parlour. The landlord's cork-screw was just introduced into the muzzle of a pint bottle of claret (cribbed possibly from the cellars of Tully-Veolan), when the sight of the grey pony passing the window at full trot induced the Bailie, but with due precaution, to place it aside for the moment. Enter Jock Scriver with a packet for Mr. Stanley; it is Colonel Talbot's seal, and Edward's fingers tremble as he undoes it. Two official papers, folded, signed, and sealed in all formality, drop out. They were hastily picked up by the Bailie, who had a natural respect for everything resembling a deed, and, glancing slyly on their titles, his eyes, or rather spectacles, are greeted with 'Protection by his Royal Highness to the person of Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine, Esq., of that ilk, commonly called Baron of Bradwardine, forfeited for his accession to the late rebellion.' The other proves to be a protection of the same tenor in favour of Edward Waverley, Esq. Colonel Talbot's letter was in these words:—

'My DEAR EDWARD,

'I am just arrived here, and yet I have finished my business; it has cost me some trouble though, as you shall hear. I waited upon his Royal Highness immediately on my arrival, and found him in no very good humour for my purpose. Three or four Scotch gentlemen were just leaving his levee. After he had expressed himself to me very courteously; "Would you think it," he said, "Talbot, here have been half a dozen of the most respectable gentlemen and best friends to government north of the Forth, Major Melville of Cairnvreckan, Rubrick of Duchran, and others, who have fairly wrung from me, by their downright importunity, a present protection and the promise of a future pardon for that stubborn old rebel whom they call Baron of Bradwardine. They allege that his high personal character, and the clemency which he showed to such of our people as fell into the rebels' hands, should weigh in his favour, especially as the loss of his estate is likely to be a severe enough punishment. Rubrick has undertaken to keep him at his own house till things are settled in the country; but it's a little hard to be forced in a manner to pardon such a mortal enemy to the House of Brunswick." This was no favourable moment for opening my business; however, I said I was rejoiced to learn that his Royal Highness was in the course of granting such requests, as it emboldened me to present one of the like nature in my own name. He was very angry, but I persisted; I mentioned the uniform support of our three votes in, the house, touched modestly on services abroad, though valuable only in his Royal Highness's having been pleased kindly to accept them, and founded pretty strongly on his own expressions of friendship and good-will. He was embarrassed, but obstinate. I hinted the policy of detaching, on all future occasions, the heir of such a fortune as your uncle's from the machinations of the disaffected. But I made no impression. I mentioned the obligations which I lay under to Sir Everard and to you personally, and claimed, as the sole reward of my services, that he would be pleased to afford me the means of evincing my gratitude. I perceived that he still meditated a refusal, and, taking my commission from my pocket, I said (as a last resource) that, as his Royal Highness did not, under these pressing circumstances, think me worthy of a favour which he had not scrupled to grant to other gentlemen whose services I could hardly judge more important than my own, I must beg leave to deposit, with all humility, my commission in his Royal Highness's hands, and to retire from the service. He was not prepared for this; he told me to take up my commission, said some handsome things of my services, and granted my request. You are therefore once more a free man, and I have promised for you that you will be a good boy in future, and remember what you owe to the lenity of government. Thus you see my prince can be as generous as yours. I do not pretend, indeed, that he confers a favour with all the foreign graces and compliments of your Chevalier errant; but he has a plain English manner, and the evident reluctance with which he grants your request indicates the sacrifice which he makes of his own inclination to your wishes. My friend, the adjutant-general, has procured me a duplicate of the Baron's protection (the original being in Major Melville's possession), which I send to you, as I know that if you can find him you will have pleasure in being the first to communicate the joyful intelligence. He will of course repair to the Duchran without loss of time, there to ride quarantine for a few weeks. As for you, I give you leave to escort him thither, and to stay a week there, as I understand a certain fair lady is in that quarter. And I have the pleasure to tell you that whatever progress you can make in her good graces will be highly agreeable to Sir Everard and Mrs. Rachel, who will never believe your views and prospects settled, and the three ermines passant in actual safety, until you present them with a Mrs. Edward Waverley. Now, certain love-affairs of my own—a good many years since—interrupted some measures which were then proposed in favour of the three ermines passant; so I am bound in honour to make them amends. Therefore make good use of your time, for, when your week is expired, it will be necessary that you go to London to plead your pardon in the law courts.

'Ever, dear Waverley, yours most truly, PHILIP TALBOT.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Happy's the wooing That's not long a doing.

When the first rapturous sensation occasioned by these excellent tidings had somewhat subsided, Edward proposed instantly to go down to the glen to acquaint the Baron with their import. But the cautious Bailie justly observed that, if the Baron were to appear instantly in public, the tenantry and villagers might become riotous in expressing their joy, and give offence to 'the powers that be,' a sort of persons for whom the Bailie always had unlimited respect. He therefore proposed that Mr. Waverley should go to Janet Gellatley's and bring the Baron up under cloud of night to Little Veolan, where he might once more enjoy the luxury of a good bed. In the meanwhile, he said, he himself would go to Captain Foster and show him the Baron's protection, and obtain his countenance for harbouring him that night, and he would have horses ready on the morrow to set him on his way to the Duchran along with Mr. Stanley, 'whilk denomination, I apprehend, your honour will for the present retain,' said the Bailie.

'Certainly, Mr. Macwheeble; but will you not go down to the glen yourself in the evening to meet your patron?'

'That I wad wi' a' my heart; and mickle obliged to your honour for putting me in mind o' my bounden duty. But it will be past sunset afore I get back frae the Captain's, and at these unsensy hours the glen has a bad name; there's something no that canny about auld Janet Gellatley. The Laird he'll no believe thae things, but he was aye ower rash and venturesome, and feared neither man nor deevil, an sae's seen o't. But right sure am I Sir George Mackenzie says, that no divine can doubt there are witches, since the Bible says thou shalt not suffer them to live; and that no lawyer in Scotland can doubt it, since it is punishable with death by our law. So there's baith law and gospel for it. An his honour winna believe the Leviticus, he might aye believe the Statute-book; but he may tak his ain way o't; it's a' ane to Duncan Macwheeble. However, I shall send to ask up auld Janet this e'en; it's best no to lightly them that have that character; and we'll want Davie to turn the spit, for I'll gar Eppie put down a fat goose to the fire for your honours to your supper.'

When it was near sunset Waverley hastened to the hut; and he could not but allow that superstition had chosen no improper locality, or unfit object, for the foundation of her fantastic terrors. It resembled exactly the description of Spenser:—

*There, in a gloomy hollow glen, she found
A little cottage built of sticks and reeds,
In homely wise, and wall'd with sods around,
In which a witch did dwell in loathly weeds,
And wilful want, all careless of her needs,
So choosing solitary to abide
Far from all neighbours, that her devilish deeds,
And hellish arts, from people she might hide,
And hurt far off, unknown, whomsoever she espied.*

He entered the cottage with these verses in his memory. Poor old Janet, bent double with age and bleared with peat-smoke, was tottering about the hut with a birch broom, muttering to herself as she endeavoured to make her hearth and floor a little clean for the reception of her expected guests. Waverley's step made her start, look up, and fall a-trembling, so much had her nerves been on the rack for her patron's safety. With difficulty Waverley made her comprehend that the Baron was now safe from personal danger; and when her mind had admitted that joyful news, it was equally hard to make her believe that he was not to enter again upon possession of his estate. 'It behoved to be,' she said, 'he wad get it back again; naeboddy wad be sae gripple as to tak his gear after they had gi'en him a pardon: and for that Inch-Grabbit, I could whiles wish mysell a witch for his sake, if I werena feared the Enemy wad tak me at my word.' Waverley then gave her some money, and promised that her fidelity should be rewarded. 'How can I be rewarded, sir, sae weel as just to see my auld maister and Miss Rose come back and bruik their ain?'

Waverley now took leave of Janet, and soon stood beneath the Baron's Patmos. At a low whistle he observed the veteran peeping out to reconnoitre, like an old badger with his head out of his hole. 'Ye hae come rather early, my good lad,' said he, descending; 'I question if the red-coats hae beat the tattoo yet, and we're not safe till then.'

'Good news cannot be told too soon,' said Waverley; and with infinite joy communicated to him the happy tidings. The old man stood for a moment in silent devotion, then exclaimed, 'Praise be to God! I shall see my bairn again.'

'And never, I hope, to part with her more,' said Waverley.

'I trust in God not, unless it be to win the means of supporting her; for my things are but in a bruckle state;—but what signifies world's gear?'

'And if,' said Waverley modestly, 'there were a situation in life which would put Miss Bradwardine beyond the uncertainty of fortune, and in the rank to which she was born, would you object to it, my dear Baron, because it would make one of your friends the happiest man in the world?' The Baron turned and looked at him with great earnestness. 'Yes,' continued Edward, 'I shall not consider my sentence of banishment as repealed unless you will give me permission to accompany you to the Duchran, and—'

The Baron seemed collecting all his dignity to make a suitable reply to what, at another time, he would have treated as the propounding a treaty of alliance between the houses of Bradwardine and Waverley. But his efforts were in vain; the father was too mighty for the Baron; the pride of birth and rank were swept away; in the joyful surprise a slight convulsion passed rapidly over his features, as he gave way to the feelings of nature, threw his arms around Waverley's neck, and sobbed out—'My son, my son! if I had been to search the world, I would have made my choice here.' Edward returned the embrace with great sympathy of feeling, and for a little while they both kept silence. At length it was broken by Edward. 'But Miss Bradwardine?'

'She had never a will but her old father's; besides, you are a likely youth, of honest principles and high birth; no, she never had any other will than mine, and in my proudest days I could not have wished a mair eligible espousal for her than the nephew of my excellent old friend, Sir Everard. But I hope, young man, ye deal na rashly in this matter? I hope ye hae secured the approbation of your ain friends and allies, particularly of your uncle, who is in loco parentis? Ah! we maun tak heed o' that.' Edward assured him that Sir Everard would think himself highly honoured in the flattering reception his proposal had met with, and that it had his entire approbation; in evidence of which he put Colonel Talbot's letter into the Baron's hand. The Baron read it with great attention. 'Sir Everard,' he said, 'always despised wealth in comparison of honour and birth; and indeed he hath no occasion to court the Diva Pecunia. Yet I now wish, since this Malcolm turns out such a parricide, for I can call him no better, as to think of alienating the family inheritance—I now wish (his eyes fixed on a part of the roof which was visible above the trees) that I could have left Rose the auld hurley-house and the riggs belonging to it. And yet,' said he, resuming more cheerfully, 'it's maybe as weel as it is; for, as Baron of Bradwardine, I might have thought it my duty to insist upon certain compliances respecting name and bearings, whilk now, as a landless laird wi' a tocherless daughter, no one can blame me for departing from.'

'Now, Heaven be praised!' thought Edward, 'that Sir Everard does not hear these scruples! The three ermines passant and rampant bear would certainly have gone together by the ears.' He then, with all the ardour of a young lover, assured the Baron that he sought for his happiness only in Rose's heart and hand, and thought himself as happy in her father's simple approbation as if he had settled an earldom upon his daughter.

They now reached Little Veolan. The goose was smoking on the table, and the Bailie brandished his knife and fork. A joyous greeting took place between him and his patron. The kitchen, too, had its company. Auld Janet was established at the ingle-nook; Davie had turned the spit to his immortal honour; and even Ban and Buscar, in the liberality of Macwheeble's joy, had been stuffed to the throat with food, and now lay snoring on the floor.

The next day conducted the Baron and his young friend to the Duchran, where the former was expected, in consequence of the success of the nearly unanimous application of the Scottish friends of government in his favour. This had been so general and so powerful that it was almost thought his estate might have been saved, had it not passed into the rapacious hands of his unworthy kinsman, whose right, arising out of the Baron's attainder, could not be affected by a pardon from the crown. The old gentleman, however, said, with his usual spirit, he was more gratified by the hold he possessed in the good opinion of his neighbours than he would have been in being rehabilitated and restored in integrum, had it been found practicable.'

We shall not attempt to describe the meeting of the father and daughter, loving each other so affectionately, and separated under such perilous circumstances. Still less shall we attempt to analyse the deep blush of Rose at receiving the compliments of Waverley, or stop to inquire whether she had any curiosity respecting the particular cause of his journey to Scotland at that period. We shall not even trouble the reader with the humdrum details of a courtship Sixty Years Since. It is enough to say that, under so strict a martinet as the Baron, all things were conducted in due form. He took upon himself, the morning after their arrival, the task of announcing the proposal of Waverley to Rose, which she heard with a proper degree of maiden timidity. Fame does, however, say that Waverley had the evening before found five minutes to apprise her of what was coming, while the rest of the company were looking at three twisted serpents which formed a jet d'eau in the garden.

My fair readers will judge for themselves; but, for my part, I cannot conceive how so important an affair could be communicated in so short a space of time; at least, it certainly took a full hour in the Baron's mode of conveying it.

Waverley was now considered as a received lover in all the forms. He was made, by dint of smirking and nodding on the part of the lady of the house, to sit next Miss Bradwardine at dinner, to be Miss Bradwardine's partner at cards. If he came into the room, she of the four Miss Rubricks who chanced to be next Rose was sure to recollect that her thimble or her scissors were at the other end of the room, in order to leave the seat nearest to Miss Bradwardine vacant for his occupation. And sometimes, if papa and mamma were not in the way to keep them on their good behaviour, the misses would titter a little. The old Laird of Duchran would also have his occasional jest, and the old lady her remark. Even the Baron could not refrain; but here Rose escaped every embarrassment but that of conjecture, for his wit was usually couched in a Latin quotation. The very footmen sometimes grinned too broadly, the maidservants giggled mayhap too loud, and a provoking air of intelligence seemed to pervade the whole family. Alice Bean, the pretty maid of the cavern, who, after her father's misfortune, as she called it, had attended Rose as fille-de-chambre, smiled and smirked with the best of them. Rose and Edward, however, endured all these little vexatious circumstances as other folks have done before and since, and probably contrived to obtain some indemnification, since they are not supposed, on the whole, to have been particularly unhappy during Waverley's six days' stay at the Duchran.

It was finally arranged that Edward should go to Waverley-Honour to make the necessary arrangements for his marriage, thence to London to take the proper measures for pleading his pardon, and return as soon as possible to claim the hand of his plighted bride. He also intended in his journey to visit Colonel Talbot; but, above all, it was his most important object to learn the fate of the unfortunate Chief of Glennaquoich; to visit him at Carlisle, and to try whether anything could be done for procuring, if not a pardon, a commutation at least, or alleviation, of the punishment to which he was almost certain of being condemned; and, in case of the worst, to offer the miserable Flora an asylum with Rose, or otherwise to assist her views in any mode which might seem possible. The fate of Fergus seemed hard to be averted. Edward had already striven to interest his friend, Colonel Talbot, in his behalf; but had been given distinctly to understand by his reply that his credit in matters of that nature was totally exhausted.

The Colonel was still in Edinburgh, and proposed to wait there for some months upon business confided to him by the Duke of Cumberland. He was to be joined by Lady Emily, to whom easy travelling and goat's whey were recommended, and who was to journey northward under the escort of Francis Stanley. Edward, therefore, met the Colonel at Edinburgh, who wished him joy in the kindest manner on his approaching happiness, and cheerfully undertook many commissions which our hero was necessarily obliged to delegate to his charge. But on the subject of Fergus he was inexorable. He satisfied Edward, indeed, that his interference would be unavailing; but, besides, Colonel Talbot owned that he could not conscientiously use any influence in favour of that unfortunate gentleman. 'Justice,' he said, 'which demanded some penalty of those who had wrapped the whole nation in fear and in mourning, could not perhaps have selected a fitter victim. He came to the field with the fullest light upon the nature of his attempt. He had studied and understood the subject. His father's fate could not intimidate him; the lenity of the laws which had restored to him his father's property and rights could not melt him. That he was brave, generous, and possessed many good qualities only rendered him the more dangerous; that he was enlightened and accomplished made his crime the less excusable; that he was an enthusiast in a wrong cause only made him the more fit to be its martyr. Above all, he had been the means of bringing many hundreds of men into the field who, without him, would never have broken the peace of the country.'

'I repeat it,' said the Colonel, 'though Heaven knows with a heart distressed for him as an individual, that this young gentleman has studied and fully understood the desperate game which he has played. He threw for life or death, a coronet or a coffin; and he cannot now be permitted, with justice to the country, to draw stakes because the dice have gone against him.'

Such was the reasoning of those times, held even by brave and humane men towards a vanquished enemy. Let us devoutly hope that, in this respect at least, we shall never see the scenes or hold the sentiments that were general in Britain Sixty Years Since.

CHAPTER XXXIX

To morrow? O that's sudden!—Spare him, spare him!—SHAKSPEARE

Edward, attended by his former servant Alick Polwarth, who had reentered his service at Edinburgh, reached Carlisle while the commission of Oyer and Terminer on his unfortunate associates was yet sitting. He had pushed forward in haste, not, alas! with the most distant hope of saving Fergus, but to see him for the last time. I ought to have mentioned that he had furnished funds for the defence of the prisoners in the most liberal manner, as soon as he heard that the day of trial was fixed. A solicitor and the first counsel accordingly attended; but it was upon the same footing on which the first physicians are usually summoned to the bedside of some dying man of rank—the doctors to take the advantage of some incalculable chance of an exertion of nature, the lawyers to avail themselves of the barely possible occurrence of some legal flaw. Edward pressed into the court, which was extremely crowded; but by his arriving from the north, and his extreme eagerness and agitation, it was supposed he was a relation of the prisoners, and people made way for him. It was the third sitting of the court, and there were two men at the bar. The verdict of GUILTY was already pronounced. Edward just glanced at the bar during the momentous pause which ensued. There was

no mistaking the stately form and noble features of Fergus Mac-Ivor, although his dress was squalid and his countenance tinged with the sickly yellow hue of long and close imprisonment. By his side was Evan Maccombich. Edward felt sick and dizzy as he gazed on them; but he was recalled to himself as the Clerk of Arraignment pronounced the solemn words: 'Fergus Mac-Ivor of Glennaquoich, otherwise called Vich Ian Vohr, and Evan Mac-Ivor, in the Dhu of Tarrascleugh, otherwise called Evan Dhu, otherwise called Evan Maccombich, or Evan Dhu MacCombich—you, and each of you, stand attainted of high treason. What have you to say for yourselves why the Court should not pronounce judgment against you, that you die according to law?'

Fergus, as the presiding Judge was putting on the fatal cap of judgment, placed his own bonnet upon his head, regarded him with a steadfast and stern look, and replied in a firm voice, 'I cannot let this numerous audience suppose that to such an appeal I have no answer to make. But what I have to say you would not bear to hear, for my defence would be your condemnation. Proceed, then, in the name of God, to do what is permitted to you. Yesterday and the day before you have condemned loyal and honourable blood to be poured forth like water. Spare not mine. Were that of all my ancestors in my veins, I would have perilled it in this quarrel.' He resumed his seat and refused again to rise.

Evan Maccombich looked at him with great earnestness, and, rising up, seemed anxious to speak; but the confusion of the court, and the perplexity arising from thinking in a language different from that in which he was to express himself, kept him silent. There was a murmur of compassion among the spectators, from the idea that the poor fellow intended to plead the influence of his superior as an excuse for his crime. The Judge commanded silence, and encouraged Evan to proceed. 'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour and the honourable Court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and no to trouble King George's government again, that only six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye mysell, to head or hang, and you may begin wi' me the very first man.'

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal. The Judge checked this indecency, and Evan, looking sternly around, when the murmur abated, 'If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing,' he said, 'because a poor man, such as me, thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman nor the honour of a gentleman.'

There was no farther inclination to laugh among the audience, and a dead silence ensued.

The Judge then pronounced upon both prisoners the sentence of the law of high treason, with all its horrible accompaniments. The execution was appointed for the ensuing day. 'For you, Fergus Mac-Ivor,' continued the Judge, 'I can hold out no hope of mercy. You must prepare against to-morrow for your last sufferings here, and your great audit hereafter.'

'I desire nothing else, my lord,' answered Fergus, in the same manly and firm tone.

The hard eyes of Evan, which had been perpetually bent on his Chief, were moistened with a tear. 'For you, poor ignorant man,' continued the Judge, 'who, following the ideas in which you have been educated, have this day given us a striking example how the loyalty due to the king and state alone is, from your unhappy ideas of clanship, transferred to some ambitious individual who ends by making you the tool of his crimes—for you, I say, I feel so much compassion that, if you can make up your mind to petition for grace, I will endeavour to procure it for you. Otherwise—'

'Grace me no grace,' said Evan; 'since you are to shed Vich Ian Vohr's blood, the only favour I would accept from you is to bid them loose my hands and gie me my claymore, and bide you just a minute sitting where you are!'

'Remove the prisoners,' said the Judge; 'his blood be upon his own head.'

Almost stupefied with his feelings, Edward found that the rush of the crowd had conveyed him out into the street ere he knew what he was doing. His immediate wish was to see and speak with Fergus once more. He applied at the Castle where his unfortunate friend was confined, but was refused admittance. 'The High Sheriff,' a non-commissioned officer said, 'had requested of the governor that none should be admitted to see the prisoner excepting his confessor and his sister.'

'And where was Miss Mac-Ivor?' They gave him the direction. It was the house of a respectable Catholic family near Carlisle.

Repulsed from the gate of the Castle, and not venturing to make application to the High Sheriff or Judges in his own unpopular name, he had recourse to the solicitor who came down in Fergus's behalf. This gentleman told him that it was thought the public mind was in danger of being debauched by the account of the last moments of these persons, as given by the friends of the Pretender; that there had been a resolution, therefore, to exclude all such persons as had not the plea of near kindred for attending upon them. Yet he promised (to oblige the heir of Waverley-Honour) to get him an order for admittance to the prisoner the next morning, before his irons were knocked off for execution.

'Is it of Fergus Mac-Ivor they speak thus,' thought Waverley, 'or do I dream? Of Fergus, the bold, the chivalrous, the free-minded, the lofty chieftain of a tribe devoted to him? Is it he, that I have seen lead the chase and head the attack, the brave, the active, the young, the noble, the love of ladies, and the theme of song,—is it he who is ironed like a malefactor, who is to be dragged on a hurdle to the common gallows, to die a lingering and cruel death, and to be mangled by the hand of the most outcast of wretches? Evil indeed was the spectre that boded such a fate as this to the brave Chief of Glennaquoich!'

With a faltering voice he requested the solicitor to find means to warn Fergus of his intended visit, should he obtain permission to make it. He then turned away from him, and, returning to the inn, wrote a scarcely intelligible note to Flora Mac-Ivor, intimating his purpose to wait upon her that evening. The messenger brought back a letter in Flora's beautiful Italian hand, which seemed scarce to tremble even under this load of misery. 'Miss Flora Mac-Ivor,' the letter bore, 'could not refuse to see the dearest friend of her dear brother, even in her present circumstances of unparalleled distress.'

When Edward reached Miss Mac-Ivor's present place of abode he was instantly admitted. In a large and gloomy tapestried apartment Flora was seated by a latticed window, sewing what seemed to be a garment of white flannel. At a little distance sat an elderly woman, apparently a foreigner, and of a religious order. She was reading in a book of Catholic devotion, but when Waverley entered laid it on the table and left the room. Flora rose to receive him, and stretched out her hand, but neither ventured to attempt speech. Her fine complexion was totally gone; her person considerably emaciated; and her face and hands as white as the purest statuary marble, forming a strong contrast with her sable dress and jet-black hair. Yet, amid these marks of distress there was nothing negligent or ill-arranged about her attire; even her hair, though totally without ornament, was disposed with her usual attention to neatness. The first words she uttered were, 'Have you seen him?'

'Alas, no,' answered Waverley, 'I have been refused admittance.'

'It accords with the rest,' she said; 'but we must submit. Shall you obtain leave, do you suppose?'

'For—for—tomorrow,' said Waverley; but muttering the last word so faintly that it was almost unintelligible.

'Ay, then or never,' said Flora, 'until'—she added, looking upward—'the time when, I trust, we shall all meet. But I hope you will see him while earth yet bears him. He always loved you at his heart, though—but it is vain to talk of the past.'

'Vain indeed!' echoed Waverley.

'Or even of the future, my good friend,' said Flora, 'so far as earthly events are concerned; for how often have I pictured to myself the strong possibility of this horrid issue, and tasked myself to consider how I could support my part; and yet how far has all my anticipation fallen short of the unimaginable bitterness of this hour!'

'Dear Flora, if your strength of mind—'

'Ay, there it is,' she answered, somewhat wildly; 'there is, Mr. Waverley, there is a busy devil at my heart that whispers—but it were madness to listen to it—that the strength of mind on which Flora prided herself has murdered her brother!'

'Good God! how can you give utterance to a thought so shocking?'

'Ay, is it not so? but yet it haunts me like a phantom; I know it is unsubstantial and vain; but it will be present; will intrude its horrors on my mind; will whisper that my brother, as volatile as ardent, would have divided his energies amid a hundred objects. It was I who taught him to concentrate them and to gage all on this dreadful and desperate cast. Oh that I could recollect that I had but once said to him, "He that striketh with the sword shall die by the sword"; that I had but once

said, "Remain at home; reserve yourself, your vassals, your life, for enterprises within the reach of man." But O, Mr. Waverley, I spurred his fiery temper, and half of his ruin at least lies with his sister!

The horrid idea which she had intimated, Edward endeavoured to combat by every incoherent argument that occurred to him. He recalled to her the principles on which both thought it their duty to act, and in which they had been educated.

'Do not think I have forgotten them,' she said, looking up with eager quickness; 'I do not regret his attempt because it was wrong!—O no! on that point I am armed—but because it was impossible it could end otherwise than thus.'

'Yet it did not always seem so desperate and hazardous as it was; and it would have been chosen by the bold spirit of Fergus whether you had approved it or no; your counsels only served to give unity and consistence to his conduct; to dignify, but not to precipitate, his resolution.' Flora had soon ceased to listen to Edward, and was again intent upon her needlework.

'Do you remember,' she said, looking up with a ghastly smile, 'you once found me making Fergus's bride-favours, and now I am sewing his bridal garment. Our friends here,' she continued, with suppressed emotion, 'are to give hallowed earth in their chapel to the bloody relics of the last Vich Ian Vohr. But they will not all rest together; no—his head!—I shall not have the last miserable consolation of kissing the cold lips of my dear, dear Fergus!'

The unfortunate Flora here, after one or two hysterical sobs, fainted in her chair. The lady, who had been attending in the ante-room, now entered hastily, and begged Edward to leave the room, but not the house.

When he was recalled, after the space of nearly half an hour, he found that, by a strong effort, Miss Mac-Ivor had greatly composed herself. It was then he ventured to urge Miss Bradwardine's claim to be considered as an adopted sister, and empowered to assist her plans for the future.

'I have had a letter from my dear Rose,' she replied, 'to the same purpose. Sorrow is selfish and engrossing, or I would have written to express that, even in my own despair, I felt a gleam of pleasure at learning her happy prospects, and at hearing that the good old Baron has escaped the general wreck. Give this to my dearest Rose; it is her poor Flora's only ornament of value, and was the gift of a princess.' She put into his hands a case containing the chain of diamonds with which she used to decorate her hair. 'To me it is in future useless. The kindness of my friends has secured me a retreat in the convent of the Scottish Benedictine nuns in Paris. Tomorrow—if indeed I can survive tomorrow—I set forward on my journey with this venerable sister. And now, Mr. Waverley, adieu! May you be as happy with Rose as your amiable dispositions deserve; and think sometimes on the friends you have lost. Do not attempt to see me again; it would be mistaken kindness.'

She gave him her hand, on which Edward shed a torrent of tears, and with a faltering step withdrew from the apartment, and returned to the town of Carlisle. At the inn he found a letter from his law friend intimating that he would be admitted to Fergus next morning as soon as the Castle gates were opened, and permitted to remain with him till the arrival of the Sheriff gave signal for the fatal procession.

CHAPTER XL

A darker departure is near, The death drum is muffled, and sable the bier—CAMPBELL

After a sleepless night, the first dawn of morning found Waverley on the esplanade in front of the old Gothic gate of Carlisle Castle. But he paced it long in every direction before the hour when, according to the rules of the garrison, the gates were opened and the draw-bridge lowered. He produced his order to the sergeant of the guard and was admitted.

The place of Fergus's confinement was a gloomy and vaulted apartment in the central part of the Castle; a huge old tower, supposed to be of great antiquity, and surrounded by outworks, seemingly of Henry VIII's time, or somewhat later. The grating of the large old-fashioned bars and bolts, withdrawn for the purpose of admitting Edward, was answered by the clash of chains, as the unfortunate Chieftain, strongly and heavily fettered, shuffled along the stone floor of his prison to fling himself into his friend's arms.

'My dear Edward,' he said, in a firm and even cheerful voice, 'this is truly kind. I heard of your approaching happiness with the highest pleasure. And how does Rose? and how is our old whimsical friend the Baron? Well, I trust, since I see you at freedom. And how will you settle precedence between the three ermines passant and the bear and boot-jack?'

'How, O how, my dear Fergus, can you talk of such things at such a moment!'

'Why, we have entered Carlisle with happier auspices, to be sure; on the 16th of November last, for example, when we marched in side by side, and hoisted the white flag on these ancient towers. But I am no boy, to sit down and weep because the luck has gone against me. I knew the stake which I risked; we played the game boldly and the forfeit shall be paid manfully. And now, since my time is short, let me come to the questions that interest me most—the Prince? has he escaped the bloodhounds?'

'He has, and is in safety.'

'Praised be God for that! Tell me the particulars of his escape.'

Waverley communicated that remarkable history, so far as it had then transpired, to which Fergus listened with deep interest. He then asked after several other friends; and made many minute inquiries concerning the fate of his own clansmen. They had suffered less than other tribes who had been engaged in the affair; for, having in a great measure dispersed and returned home after the captivity of their Chieftain, according to the universal custom of the Highlanders, they were not in arms when the insurrection was finally suppressed, and consequently were treated with less rigour. This Fergus heard with great satisfaction.

'You are rich,' he said, 'Waverley, and you are generous. When you hear of these poor Mac-Ivors being distressed about their miserable possessions by some harsh overseer or agent of government, remember you have worn their tartan and are an adopted son of their race, The Baron, who knows our manners and lives near our country, will apprise you of the time and means to be their protector. Will you promise this to the last Vich Ian Vohr?'

Edward, as may well be believed, pledged his word; which he afterwards so amply redeemed that his memory still lives in these glens by the name of the Friend of the Sons of Ivor.

'Would to God,' continued the Chieftain, 'I could bequeath to you my rights to the love and obedience of this primitive and brave race; or at least, as I have striven to do, persuade poor Evan to accept of his life upon their terms, and be to you what he has been to me, the kindest, the bravest, the most devoted—'

The tears which his own fate could not draw forth fell fast for that of his foster-brother.

'But,' said he, drying them, 'that cannot be. You cannot be to them Vich Ian Vohr; and these three magic words,' said he, half smiling, 'are the only Open Sesame to their feelings and sympathies, and poor Evan must attend his foster-brother in death, as he has done through his whole life.'

'And I am sure,' said Maccombich, raising himself from the floor, on which, for fear of interrupting their conversation, he had lain so still that, in the obscurity of the apartment, Edward was not aware of his presence—'I am sure Evan never desired or deserved a better end than just to die with his Chieftain.'

'And now,' said Fergus, 'while we are upon the subject of clanship—what think you now of the prediction of the Bodach Glas?' Then, before Edward could answer, 'I saw him again last night: he stood in the slip of moonshine which fell from that high and narrow window towards my bed. "Why should I fear him?" I thought; "to-morrow, long ere this time, I shall be as immaterial as he." "False spirit," I said, "art thou come to close thy walks on earth and to enjoy thy triumph in the fall of the last descendant of thine enemy?" The spectre seemed to beckon and to smile as he faded from my sight. What do you think of it? I asked the same question of the priest, who is a good and sensible man; he admitted that the church allowed that such apparitions were possible, but urged me not to permit my mind to dwell upon it, as imagination plays us such strange tricks. What do you think of it?'

'Much as your confessor,' said Waverley, willing to avoid dispute upon such a point at such a moment. A tap at the door now announced that good man, and Edward retired while he administered to both prisoners the last rites of religion, in the mode which the Church of Rome prescribes.

In about an hour he was re-admitted; soon after, a file of soldiers entered with a blacksmith, who struck the fetters from the legs of the prisoners.

'You see the compliment they pay to our Highland strength and courage; we have lain chained here like wild beasts, till our legs are cramped into palsy, and when they free us they send six soldiers with loaded muskets to prevent our taking the castle by storm!'

Edward afterwards learned that these severe precautions had been taken in consequence of a desperate attempt of the prisoners to escape, in which they had very nearly succeeded.

Shortly afterwards the drums of the garrison beat to arms. 'This is the last turn-out,' said Fergus, 'that I shall hear and obey. And now, my dear, dear Edward, ere we part let us speak of Flora—a subject which awakes the tenderest feeling that yet thrills within me.'

'We part not here!' said Waverley.

'O yes, we do; you must come no farther. Not that I fear what is to follow for myself,' he said proudly. 'Nature has her tortures as well as art, and how happy should we think the man who escapes from the throes of a mortal and painful disorder in the space of a short half hour? And this matter, spin it out as they will, cannot last longer. But what a dying man can suffer firmly may kill a living friend to look upon. This same law of high treason,' he continued, with astonishing firmness and composure, 'is one of the blessings, Edward, with which your free country has accommodated poor old Scotland; her own jurisprudence, as I have heard, was much milder. But I suppose one day or other—when there are no longer any wild Highlanders to benefit by its tender mercies—they will blot it from their records as levelling them with a nation of cannibals. The mummery, too, of exposing the senseless head—they have not the wit to grace mine with a paper coronet; there would be some satire in that, Edward. I hope they will set it on the Scotch gate though, that I may look, even after death, to the blue hills of my own country, which I love so dearly. The Baron would have added,

Moritur, et moriens dukes reminiscitur Argos.'

A bustle, and the sound of wheels and horses' feet, was now heard in the court-yard of the Castle. 'As I have told you why you must not follow me, and these sounds admonish me that my time flies fast, tell me how you found poor Flora.'

Waverley, with a voice interrupted by suffocating sensations, gave some account of the state of her mind.

'Poor Flora!' answered the Chief, 'she could have borne her own sentence of death, but not mine. You, Waverley, will soon know the happiness of mutual affection in the married state—long, long may Rose and you enjoy it!—but you can never know the purity of feeling which combines two orphans like Flora and me, left alone as it were in the world, and being all in all to each other from our very infancy. But her strong sense of duty and predominant feeling of loyalty will give new nerve to her mind after the immediate and acute sensation of this parting has passed away. She will then think of Fergus as of the heroes of our race, upon whose deeds she loved to dwell.'

'Shall she not see you then?' asked Waverley. 'She seemed to expect it.'

'A necessary deceit will spare her the last dreadful parting. I could not part with her without tears, and I cannot bear that these men should think they have power to extort them. She was made to believe she would see me at a later hour, and this letter, which my confessor will deliver, will apprise her that all is over.'

An officer now appeared and intimated that the High Sheriff and his attendants waited before the gate of the Castle to claim the bodies of Fergus Mac-Ivor and Evan Maccombich. 'I come,' said Fergus. Accordingly, supporting Edward by the arm and followed by Evan Dhu and the priest, he moved down the stairs of the tower, the soldiers bringing up the rear. The court was occupied by a squadron of dragoons and a battalion of infantry, drawn up in hollow square. Within their ranks was the sledge or hurdle on which the prisoners were to be drawn to the place of execution, about a mile distant from Carlisle. It was painted black, and drawn by a white horse. At one end of the vehicle sat the executioner, a horrid-looking fellow, as beseemed his trade, with the broad axe in his hand; at the other end, next the horse, was an empty seat for two persons. Through the deep and dark Gothic archway that opened on the drawbridge were seen on horseback the High Sheriff and his attendants, whom the etiquette betwixt the civil and military powers did not permit to come farther. 'This is well GOT UP for a closing scene,' said Fergus, smiling disdainfully as he gazed around upon the apparatus of terror. Evan Dhu exclaimed with some eagerness, after looking at the dragoons, 'These are the very chields that galloped off at Gladsmuir, before we could kill a dozen o' them. They look bold enough now, however.' The priest entreated him to be silent.

The sledge now approached, and Fergus, turning round, embraced Waverley, kissed him on each side of the face, and stepped nimbly into his place. Evan sat down by his side. The priest was to follow in a carriage belonging to his patron, the Catholic gentleman at whose house Flora resided. As Fergus waved his hand to Edward the ranks closed around the sledge, and the whole procession began to move forward. There was a momentary stop at the gateway, while the governor of the Castle and the High Sheriff went through a short ceremony, the military officer there delivering over the persons of the criminals to the civil power. 'God save King George!' said the High Sheriff. When the formality concluded, Fergus stood erect in the sledge, and, with a firm and steady voice, replied, 'God save King JAMES!' These were the last words which Waverley heard him speak.

The procession resumed its march, and the sledge vanished from beneath the portal, under which it had stopped for an instant. The dead march was then heard, and its melancholy sounds were mingled with those of a muffled peal tolled from the neighbouring cathedral. The sound of military music died away as the procession moved on; the sullen clang of the bells was soon heard to sound alone.

The last of the soldiers had now disappeared from under the vaulted archway through which they had been filing for several minutes; the court-yard was now totally empty, but Waverley still stood there as if stupefied, his eyes fixed upon the dark pass where he had so lately seen the last glimpse of his friend. At length a female servant of the governor's, struck with compassion, at the stupefied misery which his countenance expressed, asked him if he would not walk into her master's house and sit down? She was obliged to repeat her question twice ere he comprehended her, but at length it recalled him to himself. Declining the courtesy by a hasty gesture, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and, leaving the Castle, walked as swiftly as he could through the empty streets till he regained his inn, then rushed into an apartment and bolted the door.

In about an hour and a half, which seemed an age of unutterable suspense, the sound of the drums and fifes performing a lively air, and the confused murmur of the crowd which now filled the streets, so lately deserted, apprised him that all was finished, and that the military and populace were returning from the dreadful scene. I will not attempt to describe his sensations.

In the evening the priest made him a visit, and informed him that he did so by directions of his deceased friend, to assure him that Fergus Mac-Ivor had died as he lived, and remembered his friendship to the last. He added, he had also seen Flora, whose state of mind seemed more composed since all was over. With her and sister Theresa the priest proposed next day to leave Carlisle for the nearest seaport from which they could embark for France. Waverley forced on this good man a ring of some value and a sum of money to be employed (as he thought might gratify Flora) in the services of the Catholic church for the memory of his friend. 'Fun-garque inani munere,' he repeated, as the ecclesiastic retired. 'Yet why not class these acts of remembrance with other honours, with which affection in all sects pursues the memory of the dead?'

The next morning ere daylight he took leave of the town of Carlisle, promising to himself never again to enter its walls. He dared hardly look back towards the Gothic battlements of the fortified gate under which he passed, for the place is surrounded with an old wall. 'They're no there,' said Alick Polwarth, who guessed the cause of the dubious look which Waverley cast backward, and who, with the vulgar appetite for the horrible, was master of each detail of the butchery—'the heads are ower the Scotch yate, as they ca' it. It's a great pity of Evan Dhu, who was a very weel-meaning, good-natured man, to be a Hielandman; and indeed so was the Laird o' Glennaquoich too, for that matter, when he wasna in ane o' his tirrivies.'

CHAPTER XLI

DULCE DOMUM

The impression of horror with which Waverley left Carlisle softened by degrees into melancholy, a gradation which was accelerated by the painful yet soothing task of writing to Rose; and, while he could not suppress his own feelings of the calamity, he endeavoured to place it in a light which might grieve her without shocking her imagination. The picture which he drew for her benefit he gradually familiarised to his own mind, and his next letters were more cheerful, and referred to the prospects of peace and happiness which lay before them. Yet, though his first horrible sensations had sunk into melancholy, Edward had reached his native country before he could, as usual on former occasions, look round for enjoyment upon the face of nature.

He then, for the first time since leaving Edinburgh, began to experience that pleasure which almost all feel who return to a verdant, populous, and highly cultivated country from scenes of waste desolation or of solitary and melancholy grandeur. But how were those feelings enhanced when he entered on the domain so long possessed by his forefathers; recognised the old oaks of Waverley-Chace; thought with what delight he should introduce Rose to all his favourite haunts; beheld at length the towers of the venerable hall arise above the woods which embowered it, and finally threw himself into the arms of the venerable relations to whom he owed so much duty and affection!

The happiness of their meeting was not tarnished by a single word of reproach. On the contrary, whatever pain Sir Everard and Mrs. Rachel had felt during Waverley's perilous engagement with the young Chevalier, it assorted too well with the principles in which they had been brought up to incur reprobation, or even censure. Colonel Talbot also had smoothed the way with great address for Edward's favourable reception by dwelling upon his gallant behaviour in the military character, particularly his bravery and generosity at Preston; until, warmed at the idea of their nephew's engaging in single combat, making prisoner, and saving from slaughter so distinguished an officer as the Colonel himself, the imagination of the Baronet and his sister ranked the exploits of Edward with those of Wilibert, Hildebrand, and Nigel, the vaunted heroes of their line.

The appearance of Waverley, embrowned by exercise and dignified by the habits of military discipline, had acquired an athletic and hardy character, which not only verified the Colonel's narration, but surprised and delighted all the inhabitants of Waverley-Honour. They crowded to see, to hear him, and to sing his praises. Mr. Pembroke, who secretly extolled his spirit and courage in embracing the genuine cause of the Church of England, censured his pupil gently, nevertheless, for being so careless of his manuscripts, which indeed, he said, had occasioned him some personal inconvenience, as, upon the Baronet's being arrested by a king's messenger, he had deemed it prudent to retire to a concealment called 'The Priest's Hole,' from the use it had been put to in former days; where, he assured our hero, the butler had thought it safe to venture with food only once in the day, so that he had been repeatedly compelled to dine upon victuals either absolutely cold or, what was worse, only half warm, not to mention that sometimes his bed had not been arranged for two days together. Waverley's mind involuntarily turned to the Patmos of the Baron of Bradwardine, who was well pleased with Janet's fare and a few bunches of straw stowed in a cleft in the front of a sand-cliff; but he made no remarks upon a contrast which could only mortify his worthy tutor.

All was now in a bustle to prepare for the nuptials of Edward, an event to which the good old Baronet and Mrs. Rachel looked forward as if to the renewal of their own youth. The match, as Colonel Talbot had intimated, had seemed to them in the highest degree eligible, having every recommendation but wealth, of which they themselves had more than enough. Mr. Clippurse was therefore summoned to Waverley-Honour, under better auspices than at the commencement of our story. But Mr. Clippurse came not alone; for, being now stricken in years, he had associated with him a nephew, a younger vulture (as our English Juvenal, who tells the tale of Swallow the attorney, might have called him), and they now carried on business as Messrs. Clippurse and Hookem. These worthy gentlemen had directions to make the necessary settlements on the most splendid scale of liberality, as if Edward were to wed a peeress in her own right, with her paternal estate tacked to the fringe of her ermine.

But before entering upon a subject of proverbial delay, I must remind my reader of the progress of a stone rolled downhill by an idle truant boy (a pastime at which I was myself expert in my more juvenile years), it moves at first slowly, avoiding by inflection every obstacle of the least importance; but when it has attained its full impulse, and draws near the conclusion of its career, it smokes and thunders down, taking a rood at every spring, clearing hedge and ditch like a Yorkshire huntsman, and becoming most furiously rapid in its course when it is nearest to being consigned to rest for ever. Even such is the course of a narrative like that which you are perusing. The earlier events are studiously dwelt upon, that you, kind reader, may be introduced to the character rather by narrative than by the duller medium of direct description; but when the story draws near its close, we hurry over the circumstances, however important, which your imagination must have forestalled, and leave you to suppose those things which it would be abusing your patience to relate at length.

We are, therefore, so far from attempting to trace the dull progress of Messrs. Clippurse and Hookem, or that of their worthy official brethren who had the charge of suing out the pardons of Edward Waverley and his intended father-in-law, that we can but touch upon matters more attractive. The mutual epistles, for example, which were exchanged between Sir Everard and the Baron upon this occasion, though matchless specimens of eloquence in their way, must be consigned to merciless oblivion. Nor can I tell you at length how worthy Aunt Rachel, not without a delicate and affectionate allusion to the circumstances which had transferred Rose's maternal diamonds to the hands of Donald Bean Lean, stocked her casket with a set of jewels that a duchess might have envied. Moreover, the reader will have the goodness to imagine that Job Houghton and his dame were suitably provided for, although they could never be persuaded that their son fell otherwise than fighting by the young squire's side; so that Alick, who, as a lover of truth, had made many needless attempts to expound the real circumstances to them, was finally ordered to say not a word more upon the subject. He indemnified himself, however, by the liberal allowance of desperate battles, grisly executions, and raw-head and bloody-bone stories with which he astonished the servants' hall.

But although these important matters may be briefly told in narrative, like a newspaper report of a Chancery suit, yet, with all the urgency which Waverley could use, the real time which the law proceedings occupied, joined to the delay occasioned by the mode of travelling at that period, rendered it considerably more than two months ere Waverley, having left England, alighted once more at the mansion of the Laird of Duchran to claim the hand of his plighted bride.

The day of his marriage was fixed for the sixth after his arrival. The Baron of Bradwardine, with whom bridals, christenings, and funerals were festivals of high and solemn import, felt a little hurt that, including the family of the Duchran and all the immediate vicinity who had title to be present on such an occasion, there could not be above thirty persons collected. 'When he was married,' he observed, 'three hundred horse of gentlemen born, besides servants, and some score or two of Highland lairds, who never got on horseback, were present on the occasion.'

But his pride found some consolation in reflecting that, he and his son-in-law having been so lately in arms against government, it might give matter of reasonable fear and offence to the ruling powers if they were to collect together the kith, kin, and allies of their houses, arrayed in effeir of war, as was the ancient custom of Scotland on these occasions—'And, without dubitation,' he concluded with a sigh, 'many of those who would have rejoiced most freely upon these joyful espousals are either gone to a better place or are now exiles from their native land.'

The marriage took place on the appointed day. The Reverend Mr. Rubrick, kinsman to the proprietor of the hospitable mansion where it was solemnised, and chaplain to the Baron of Bradwardine, had the satisfaction to unite their hands; and Frank Stanley acted as bridesman, having joined Edward with that view soon after his arrival. Lady Emily and Colonel Talbot had proposed being present; but Lady Emily's health, when the day approached, was found inadequate to the journey. In amends it was arranged that Edward Waverley and his lady, who, with the Baron, proposed an immediate journey to Waverley-Honour, should in their way spend a few days at an estate which Colonel Talbot had been tempted to purchase in Scotland as a very great bargain, and at which he proposed to reside for some time.

This is no mine ain house, I ken by the bigging o't—Old Song.

The nuptial party travelled in great style. There was a coach and six after the newest pattern, which Sir Everard had presented to his nephew, that dazzled with its splendour the eyes of one half of Scotland; there was the family coach of Mr. Rubrick;—both these were crowded with ladies,—and there were gentlemen on horseback, with their servants, to the number of a round score. Nevertheless, without having the fear of famine before his eyes, Bailie Macwheeble met them in the road to entreat that they would pass by his house at Little Veolan. The Baron stared, and said his son and he would certainly ride by Little Veolan and pay their compliments to the Bailie, but could not think of bringing with them the 'haill comitatus nuptialis, or matrimonial procession.' He added, 'that, as he understood that the barony had been sold by its unworthy possessor, he was glad to see his old friend Duncan had regained his situation under the new Dominus, or proprietor.' The Bailie ducked, bowed, and fidgeted, and then again insisted upon his invitation; until the Baron, though rather piqued at the pertinacity of his instances, could not nevertheless refuse to consent without making evident sensations which he was anxious to conceal.

He fell into a deep study as they approached the top of the avenue, and was only startled from it by observing that the battlements were replaced, the ruins cleared away, and (most wonderful of all) that the two great stone bears, those mutilated Dagons of his idolatry, had resumed their posts over the gateway. 'Now this new proprietor,' said he to Edward, 'has shown mair gusto, as the Italians call it, in the short time he has had this domain, than that hound Malcolm, though I bred him here mysell, has acquired vita adhuc durante. And now I talk of hounds, is not yon Ban and Buscar who come scouping up the avenue with Davie Gellatley?'

'I vote we should go to meet them, sir,' said Waverley, 'for I believe the present master of the house is Colonel Talbot, who will expect to see us. We hesitated to mention to you at first that he had purchased your ancient patrimonial property, and even yet, if you do not incline to visit him, we can pass on to the Bailie's.'

The Baron had occasion for all his magnanimity. However, he drew a long breath, took a long snuff, and observed, since they had brought him so far, he could not pass the Colonel's gate, and he would be happy to see the new master of his old tenants. He alighted accordingly, as did the other gentlemen and ladies; he gave his arm to his daughter, and as they descended the avenue pointed out to her how speedily the 'Diva Pecunia of the Southron—their tutelary deity, he might call her—had removed the marks of spoliation.'

In truth, not only had the felled trees been removed, but, their stumps being grubbed up and the earth round them levelled and sown with grass, every mark of devastation, unless to an eye intimately acquainted with the spot, was already totally obliterated. There was a similar reformation in the outward man of Davie Gellatley, who met them, every now and then stopping to admire the new suit which graced his person, in the same colours as formerly, but bedizened fine enough to have served Touchstone himself. He danced up with his usual ungainly frolics, first to the Baron and then to Rose, passing his hands over his clothes, crying, 'Bra', bra' Davie,' and scarce able to sing a bar to an end of his thousand-and-one songs for the breathless extravagance of his joy. The dogs also acknowledged their old master with a thousand gambols. 'Upon my conscience, Rose,' ejaculated the Baron, 'the gratitude o' thae dumb brutes and of that puir innocent brings the tears into my auld een, while that schellum Malcolm—but I'm obliged to Colonel Talbot for putting my hounds into such good condition, and likewise for puir Davie. But, Rose, my dear, we must not permit them to be a life-rent burden upon the estate.'

As he spoke, Lady Emily, leaning upon the arm of her husband, met the party at the lower gate with a thousand welcomes. After the ceremony of introduction had been gone through, much abridged by the ease and excellent breeding of Lady Emily, she apologised for having used a little art to wile them back to a place which might awaken some painful reflections—'But as it was to change masters, we were very desirous that the Baron—'

'Mr. Bradwardine, madam, if you please,' said the old gentleman.

'—Mr. Bradwardine, then, and Mr. Waverley should see what we have done towards restoring the mansion of your fathers to its former state.'

The Baron answered with a low bow. Indeed, when he entered the court, excepting that the heavy stables, which had been burnt down, were replaced by buildings of a lighter and more picturesque appearance, all seemed as much as possible restored to the state in which he had left it when he assumed arms some months before. The pigeon-house was replenished; the fountain played with its usual activity, and not only the bear who predominated over its basin, but all the other bears whatsoever, were replaced on their several stations, and renewed or repaired with so much care that they bore no tokens of the violence which had so lately descended upon them. While these minutiae had been so needfully attended to, it is scarce necessary to add that the house itself had been thoroughly repaired, as well as the gardens, with the strictest attention to maintain the original character of both, and to remove as far as possible all appearance of the ravage they had sustained. The Baron gazed in silent wonder; at length he addressed Colonel Talbot—

'While I acknowledge my obligation to you, sir, for the restoration of the badge of our family, I cannot but marvel that you have nowhere established your own crest, whilk is, I believe, a mastiff, anciently called a talbot; as the poet has it,

A talbot strong, a sturdy tyke.

At least such a dog is the crest of the martial and renowned Earls of Shrewsbury, to whom your family are probably blood-relations.'

'I believe,' said the Colonel, smiling, 'our dogs are whelps of the same litter; for my part, if crests were to dispute precedence, I should be apt to let them, as the proverb says, "fight dog, fight bear."'

As he made this speech, at which the Baron took another long pinch of snuff, they had entered the house, that is, the Baron, Rose, and Lady Emily, with young Stanley and the Bailie, for Edward and the rest of the party remained on the terrace to examine a new greenhouse stocked with the finest plants. The Baron resumed his favourite topic—'However it may please you to derogate from the honour of your burget, Colonel Talbot, which is doubtless your humour, as I have seen in other gentlemen of birth and honour in your country, I must again repeat it as a most ancient and distinguished bearing, as well as that of my young friend Francis Stanley, which is the eagle and child.'

'The bird and bantling they call it in Derbyshire, sir,' said Stanley.

'Ye're a daft callant, sir,' said the Baron, who had a great liking to this young man, perhaps because he sometimes teased him—'Ye're a daft callant, and I must correct you some of these days,' shaking his great brown fist at him. 'But what I meant to say, Colonel Talbot, is, that yours is an ancient prosapia, or descent, and since you have lawfully and justly acquired the estate for you and yours which I have lost for me and mine, I wish it may remain in your name as many centuries as it has done in that of the late proprietor's.'

'That,' answered the Colonel, 'is very handsome, Mr. Bradwardine, indeed.'

'And yet, sir, I cannot but marvel that you, Colonel, whom I noted to have so much of the amor patritz when we met in Edinburgh as even to vilipend other countries, should have chosen to establish your Lares, or household gods, procul a patrice finibus, and in a manner to expatriate yourself.'

'Why really, Baron, I do not see why, to keep the secret of these foolish boys, Waverley and Stanley, and of my wife, who is no wiser, one old soldier should continue to impose upon another. You must know, then, that I have so much of that same prejudice in favour of my native country, that the sum of money which I advanced to the seller of this extensive barony has only purchased for me a box in—shire, called Brere-wood Lodge, with about two hundred and fifty acres of land, the chief merit of which is, that it is within a very few miles of Waverley-Honour.'

'And who, then, in the name of Heaven, has bought this property?'

'That,' said the Colonel, 'it is this gentleman's profession to explain.'

The Bailie, whom this reference regarded, and who had all this while shifted from one foot to another with great impatience, 'like a hen,' as he afterwards said, 'upon a het girdle'; and chuckling, he might have added, like the said hen in all the glory of laying an egg, now pushed forward. 'That I can, that I can, your honour,' drawing from his pocket a budget of papers, and untying the red tape with eagerness. 'Here is the disposition and assignation by Malcolm

Bradwardine of Inch-Grabbit, regularly signed and tested in terms of the statute, whereby, for a certain sum of sterling money presently contented and paid to him, he has disposed, alienated, and conveyed the whole estate and barony of Bradwardine, Tully-Veolan, and others, with the fortalice and manor-place—'

'For God's sake, to the point, sir; I have all that by heart,' said the Colonel.

'—To Cosmo Comyne Bradwardme, Esq.,' pursued the Bailie, 'his heirs and assignees, simply and irredeemably, to be held either a me vel de me—'

'Pray read short, sir.'

'On the conscience of an honest man, Colonel, I read as short as is consistent with style—under the burden and reservation always—'

'Mr. Macwheeble, this would outlast a Russian winter; give me leave. In short, Mr. Bradwardine, your family estate is your own once more in full property, and at your absolute disposal, but only burdened with the sum advanced to re-purchase it, which I understand is utterly disproportioned to its value.'

'An auld sang—an auld sang, if it please your honours,' cried the Bailie, rubbing his hands; 'look at the rental book.'

'—Which sum being advanced, by Mr. Edward Waverley, chiefly from the price of his father's property which I bought from him, is secured to his lady your daughter and her family by this marriage.'

'It is a catholic security,' shouted the Bailie, 'to Rose Comyne Bradwardine, alias Wauverley, in life-rent, and the children of the said marriage in fee; and I made up a wee bit minute of an antenuptial contract, intuitu matrimonij, so it cannot be subject to reduction hereafter, as a donation inter virum et uxorem.'

It is difficult to say whether the worthy Baron was most delighted with the restitution of his family property or with the delicacy and generosity that left him unfettered to pursue his purpose in disposing of it after his death, and which avoided as much as possible even the appearance of laying him under pecuniary obligation. When his first pause of joy and astonishment was over, his thoughts turned to the unworthy heir-male, who, he pronounced, had sold his birthright, like Esau, for a mess o' pottage.

'But wha cookit the parritch for him?' exclaimed the Bailie; 'I wad like to ken that;—wha but your honour's to command, Duncan Macwheeble? His honour, young Mr. Wauverley, put it a' into my hand frae the beginning—frae the first calling o' the summons, as I may say. I circumvented them—I played at bogle about the bush wi' them—I cajolled them; and if I havena gien Inch-Grabbit and Jamie Howie a bonnie begunk, they ken themselves. Him a writer! I didna gae slapdash to them wi' our young bra' bridegroom, to gar them baud up the market. Na, na; I scared them wi' our wild tenantry, and the Mac-Ivors, that are but ill settled yet, till they durstna on any errand whatsoever gang ower the doorstane after gloaming, for fear John Heatherblutter, or some siccan dare-the-deil, should tak a baff at them; then, on the other hand, I beflummed them wi' Colonel Talbot; wad they offer to keep up the price again' the Duke's friend? did they na ken wha was master? had they na seen enugh, by the sad example of mony a pair misguided unhappy body—'

'Who went to Derby, for example, Mr. Macwheeble?' said the Colonel to him aside.

'O whisht, Colonel, for the love o' God! let that flee stick i' the wa'. There were mony good folk at Derby; and it's ill speaking of halters—'with a sly cast of his eye toward the Baron, who was in a deep reverie.

Starting out of it at once, he took Macwheeble by the button and led him into one of the deep window recesses, whence only fragments of their conversation reached the rest of the party. It certainly related to stamp-paper and parchment; for no other subject, even from the mouth of his patron, and he once more an efficient one, could have arrested so deeply the Bailie's reverent and absorbed attention.

'I understand your honour perfectly; it can be dune as easy as taking out a decret in absence.'

'To her and him, after my demise, and to their heirs-male, but preferring the second son, if God shall bless them with two, who is to carry the name and arms of Bradwardine of that ilk, without any other name or armorial bearings whatsoever.'

'Tut, your honour!' whispered the Bailie, 'I'll mak a slight jotting the morn; it will cost but a charter of resignation in favorem; and I'll hae it ready for the next term in Exchequer.'

Their private conversation ended, the Baron was now summoned to do the honours of Tully-Veolan to new guests. These were Major Melville of Cairnvreckan and the Reverend Mr. Morton, followed by two or three others of the Baron's acquaintances, who had been made privy to his having again acquired the estate of his fathers. The shouts of the villagers were also heard beneath in the courtyard; for Saunders Saunderson, who had kept the secret for several days with laudable prudence, had unloosed his tongue upon beholding the arrival of the carriages. But, while Edward received Major Melville with politeness and the clergyman with the most affectionate and grateful kindness, his father-in-law looked a little awkward, as uncertain how he should answer the necessary claims of hospitality to his guests, and forward the festivity of his tenants. Lady Emily relieved him by intimating that, though she must be an indifferent representative of Mrs. Edward Waverley in many respects, she hoped the Baron would approve of the entertainment she had ordered in expectation of so many guests; and that they would find such other accommodations provided as might in some degree support the ancient hospitality of Tully-Veolan. It is impossible to describe the pleasure which this assurance gave the Baron, who, with an air of gallantry half appertaining to the stiff Scottish laird and half to the officer in the French service, offered his arm to the fair speaker, and led the way, in something between a stride and a minuet step, into the large dining parlour, followed by all the rest of the good company. By dint of Saunderson's directions and exertions, all here, as well as in the other apartments, had been disposed as much as possible according to the old arrangement; and where new movables had been necessary, they had been selected in the same character with the old furniture. There was one addition to this fine old apartment, however, which drew tears into the Baron's eyes. It was a large and spirited painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress, the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the background. It was taken from a spirited sketch, drawn while they were in Edinburgh by a young man of high genius, and had been painted on a full-length scale by an eminent London artist. Raeburn himself (whose 'Highland Chiefs' do all but walk out of the canvas) could not have done more justice to the subject; and the ardent, fiery, and impetuous character of the unfortunate Chief of Glennaquoich was finely contrasted with the contemplative, fanciful, and enthusiastic expression of his happier friend. Beside this painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration and deeper feelings. Men must, however, eat, in spite both of sentiment and vertu; and the Baron, while he assumed the lower end of the table, insisted that Lady Emily should do the honours of the head, that they might, he said, set a meet example to the YOUNG FOLK. After a pause of deliberation, employed in adjusting in his own brain the precedence between the Presbyterian kirk and Episcopal church of Scotland, he requested Mr. Morton, as the stranger, would crave a blessing, observing that Mr. Rubrick, who was at HOME, would return thanks for the distinguished mercies it had been his lot to experience. The dinner was excellent. Saunderson attended in full costume, with all the former domestics, who had been collected, excepting one or two, that had not been heard of since the affair of Culloden. The cellars were stocked with wine which was pronounced to be superb, and it had been contrived that the Bear of the Fountain, in the courtyard, should (for that night only) play excellent brandy punch for the benefit of the lower orders. When the dinner was over the Baron, about to propose a toast, cast a somewhat sorrowful look upon the sideboard, which, however, exhibited much of his plate, that had either been secreted or purchased by neighbouring gentlemen from the soldiery, and by them gladly restored to the original owner. "In the late times," he said, "those must be thankful who have saved life and land; yet when I am about to pronounce this toast, I cannot but regret an old heirloom, Lady Emily, a POCULUM POTATORIUM, Colonel Talbot—"

Here the Baron's elbow was gently touched by his major-domo, and, turning round, he beheld in the hands of Alexander ab Alexandro the celebrated cup of Saint Duthac, the Blessed Bear of Bradwardine! I question if the recovery of his estate afforded him more rapture. "By my honour," he said, "one might almost believe in brownies and fairies, Lady Emily, when your ladyship is in presence!"

"I am truly happy," said Colonel Talbot, "that, by the recovery of this piece of family antiquity, it has fallen within my power to give you some token of my deep interest in all that concerns my young friend Edward. But that you may not suspect Lady Emily for a sorceress, or me for a conjuror, which is no joke in Scotland, I must tell you that Frank Stanley, your friend, who has been seized with a tartan fever ever since he heard Edward's tales of old Scottish manners, happened to describe to us at second-hand this remarkable cup. My servant, Spontoon, who, like a true old soldier, observes everything and says little, gave me afterwards to understand that he thought he had seen the piece of plate Mr. Stanley mentioned in the possession of a certain Mrs. Nosebag, who, having been originally the helpmate of a pawnbroker, had found opportunity during the late unpleasant scenes in Scotland to trade a little in her old line, and so became the depositary of the

more valuable part of the spoil of half the army. You may believe the cup was speedily recovered; and it will give me very great pleasure if you allow me to suppose that its value is not diminished by having been restored through my means." A tear mingled with the wine which the Baron filled, as he proposed a cup of gratitude to Colonel Talbot, and *The Prosperity of the united Houses of Waverley-Honour and Bradwardine!* It only remains for me to say that, as no wish was ever uttered with more affectionate sincerity, there are few which, allowing for the necessary mutability of human events, have been upon the whole more happily fulfilled.

PART III
APPENDICES
THOMAS THE RYMER
CHAPTER I

The sun was nearly set behind the distant mountains of Liddesdale, when a few of the scattered and terrified inhabitants of the village of Hersildoun, which had four days before been burned by a predatory band of English Borderers, were now busied in repairing their ruined dwellings. One high tower in the centre of the village alone exhibited no appearance of devastation. It was surrounded with court walls, and the outer gate was barred and bolted. The bushes and brambles which grew around, and had even insinuated their branches beneath the gate, plainly showed that it must have been many years since it had been opened. While the cottages around lay in smoking ruins, this pile, deserted and desolate as it seemed to be, had suffered nothing from the violence of the invaders; and the wretched beings who were endeavouring to repair their miserable huts against nightfall, seemed to neglect the preferable shelter which it might have afforded them, without the necessity of labour.

Before the day had quite gone down, a knight, richly armed, and mounted upon an ambling hackney, rode slowly into the village. His attendants were a lady, apparently young and beautiful, who rode by his side upon a dappled palfrey; his squire, who carried his helmet and lance, and led his battle-horse, a noble steed, richly caparisoned. A page and four yeomen, bearing bows and quivers, short swords, and targets of a span breadth, completed his equipage, which, though small, denoted him to be a man of high rank.

He stopped and addressed several of the inhabitants whom curiosity had withdrawn from their labour to gaze at him; but at the sound of his voice, and still more on perceiving the St. George's Cross in the caps of his followers, they fled, with a loud cry that the Southrons were returned. The knight endeavoured to expostulate with the fugitives, who were chiefly aged men, women, and children; but their dread of the English name accelerated their flight, and in a few minutes, excepting the knight and his attendants, the place was deserted by all. He paced through the village to seek a shelter for the night, and despairing to find one either in the inaccessible tower or the plundered huts of the peasantry, he directed his course to the left hand, where he spied a small, decent habitation, apparently the abode of a man considerably above the common rank. After much knocking, the proprietor at length showed himself at the window, and speaking in the English dialect, with great signs of apprehension, demanded their business. The warrior replied that his quality was an English knight and baron, and that he was travelling to the court of the king of Scotland on affairs of consequence to both kingdoms.

"Pardon my hesitation, noble Sir Knight," said the old man, as he unbolted and unbarred his doors,—

"Pardon my hesitation, but we are here exposed to too many intrusions to admit of our exercising unlimited and unsuspecting hospitality. What I have is yours; and God send your mission may bring back peace and the good days of our old Queen Margaret!"

"Amen, worthy franklin," quoth the knight,—*"Did you know her?"*

"I came to this country in her train," said the franklin; "and the care of some of her jointure lands, which she devolved on me, occasioned my settling here."

"And how do you, being an Englishman," said the knight, "protect your life and property here, when one of your nation cannot obtain a single night's lodging, or a draught of water, were he thirsty?"

"Marry, noble sir," answered the franklin, "use, as they say, will make a man live in a lion's den; and as I settled here in a quiet time, and have never given cause of offence, I am respected by my neighbours, and even, as you see, by our forayers from England."

"I rejoice to hear it, and accept your hospitality. Isabella, my love, our worthy host will provide you a bed. My daughter, good franklin, is ill at ease. We will occupy your house till the Scottish king shall return from his Northern expedition. Meanwhile call me Lord Lacy of Chester."

The attendants of the baron, assisted by the franklin, were now busied in disposing of the horses and arranging the table for some refreshment for Lord Lacy and his fair companion. While they sat down to it, they were attended by their host and his daughter, whom custom did not permit to eat in their presence, and who afterwards withdrew to an outer chamber, where the squire and page (both young men of noble birth) partook of supper, and were accommodated with beds. The yeomen, after doing honour to the rustic cheer of Queen Margaret's bailiff, withdrew to the stable, and each, beside his favourite horse, snored away the fatigues of their journey. Early on the following morning the travellers were roused by a thundering knocking at the door of the house, accompanied with many demands for instant admission, in the roughest tone. The squire and page, of Lord Lacy, after buckling on their arms, were about to sally out to chastise these intruders, when the old host, after looking out at a private casement, contrived for reconnoitring his visitors, entreated them, with great signs of terror, to be quiet, if they did not mean that all in the house should be murdered. He then hastened to the apartment of Lord Lacy, whom he met dressed in a long furred gown and the knightly cap called a mortier, irritated at the noise, and demanding to know the cause which had disturbed the repose of the household.

"Noble sir," said the franklin, "one of the most formidable and bloody of the Scottish Border riders is at hand. He is never seen," added he, faltering with terror, "so far from the hills, but with some bad purpose, and the power of accomplishing it; so hold yourself to your guard, for—"

A loud crash here announced that the door was broken down, and the knight just descended the stair in time to prevent bloodshed betwixt his attendants and the intruders. They were three in number. Their chief was tall, bony, and athletic, his spare and muscular frame, as well as the hardness of his features, marked the course of his life to have been fatiguing and perilous. The effect of his appearance was aggravated by his dress, which consisted of a jack, or jacket, composed of thick buff leather, on which small plates of iron of a lozenge form were stitched, in such a manner as to overlap each other and form a coat of mail, which swayed with every motion of the wearer's body. This defensive armour covered a doublet of coarse gray cloth, and the Borderer had a few half-rusted plates of steel on his shoulders, a two-edged sword, with a dagger hanging beside it, in a buff belt; a helmet, with a few iron bars, to cover the face instead of a visor, and a lance of tremendous and uncommon length, completed his appointments. The looks of the man were as wild and rude as his attire; his keen black eyes never rested one moment fixed upon a single object, but constantly traversed all around, as if they ever sought some danger to oppose, some plunder to seize, or some insult to revenge. The latter seemed to be his present object, for, regardless of the dignified presence of Lord Lacy, he uttered the most incoherent threats against the owner of the house and his guests.

"We shall see—ay, marry shall we—if an English hound is to harbour and reset the Southrons here. Thank the Abbot of Melrose and the good Knight of Coldingnow that have so long kept me from your skirts. But those days are gone, by St. Mary, and you shall find it!"

It is probable the enraged Borderer would not have long continued to vent his rage in empty menaces, had not the entrance of the four yeomen, with their bows bent, convinced him that the force was not at this moment on his own side.

Lord Lacy now advanced towards him. "You intrude upon my privacy, soldier; withdraw yourself and Your followers. There is peace betwixt our nations, or my servants should chastise thy presumption."

"Such peace as ye give shall you have," answered the moss-trooper, first pointing with his lance towards the burned village, and then almost instantly levelling it against Lord Lacy. The squire drew his sword, and severed at one blow the steel head from the truncheon of the spear.

"Arthur Fitzherbert," said the baron, "that stroke has deferred thy knighthood for one year; never must that squire wear the spurs whose unbridled impetuosity can draw unbidden his sword in the presence of his master. Go hence, and think on what I have said."

The squire left the chamber abashed.

"It were vain," continued Lord Lacy, "to expect that courtesy from a mountain churl which even my own followers can forget. Yet before thou drawest thy brand," for the intruder laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword, "thou wilt do well to reflect that I came with a safe-conduct from thy king, and have no time to waste in brawls with such as thou."

"From my king,—from my king!" re-echoed the mountaineer. "I care not that rotten truncheon," striking the shattered spear furiously on the ground, "for the king of Fife and Lothian. But Habbay of Cessford will be here belive; and we shall soon know if he will permit an English churl to occupy his hostelry."

Having uttered these words, accompanied with a lowering glance from under his shaggy black eyebrows, he turned on his heel and left the house with his two followers; they mounted their horses, which they had tied to an outer fence, and vanished in an instant.

"Who is this discourteous ruffian?" said Lord Lacy to the franklin, who had stood in the most violent agitation during this whole scene.

"His name, noble lord, is Adam Kerr of the Moat, but he is commonly called by his companions the Black Rider of Cheviot. I fear, I fear, he comes hither for no good; but if the Lord of Cessford be near, he will not dare offer any unprovoked outrage."

"I have heard of that chief," said the baron; "let me know when he approaches. And do thou, Rodulph," to the eldest yeoman, "keep a strict watch. Adelbert," to the page, "attend to arm me." The page bowed, and the baron withdrew to the chamber of the lady Isabella, to explain the cause of the disturbance.

No more of the proposed tale was ever written; but the Author's purpose was that it should turn upon a fine legend of superstition which is current in the part of the Borders where he had his residence, where, in the reign of Alexander III. of Scotland, that renowned person, Thomas of Hersildoune, called the Rhymer, actually flourished. This personage, the Merlin of Scotland, and to whom some of the adventures which the British bards assigned to Merlin Caledonius, or the Wild, have been transferred by tradition, was, as is well known, a magician, as well as a poet and prophet. He is alleged still to live in the land of Faery, and is expected to return at some great convulsion of society, in which he is to act a distinguished part,—a tradition common to all nations, as the belief of the Mahomedans respecting their twelfth Imaum demonstrates.

Now, it chanced many years since that there lived on the Borders a jolly, rattling horse-cowper, who was remarkable for a reckless and fearless temper, which made him much admired, and a little dreaded, amongst his neighbours. One moonlight night, as he rode over Bowden Moor, on the west side of the Eildon Hills, the scene of Thomas the Rhymer's prophecies, and often mentioned in his story, having a brace of horses along with him which he had not been able to dispose of, he met a man of venerable appearance and singularly antique dress, who, to his great surprise, asked the price of his horses, and began to chaffer with him on the subject. To Canobie Dick—for so shall we call our Border dealer—a chap was a chap, and he would have sold a liaison to the devil himself, without minding his cloven hoof, and would have probably cheated Old Nick into the bargain. The stranger paid the price they agreed on; and all that puzzled Dick in the transaction was that the gild which he received was in unicorns, bonnet-pieces, and other ancient coins, which would have been invaluable to collectors, but were rather troublesome, in modern currency.

It was gold, however, and therefore Dick contrived to get better value for the coin than he perhaps gave to his customer. By the command of so good a merchant, he brought horses to the same slot more than once; the purchaser only stipulating that he should always come by night, and alone. I do not know whether it was from mere curiosity, or whether some hope of gain mixed with it, but after Dick had sold several horses in this way, he began to complain that dry-bargains were unlucky, and to hint that since his chap must live in the neighbourhood, he ought, in the courtesy of dealing, to treat him to half a mutchkin.

"You may see my dwelling if you will," said the stranger; "but if you lose courage at what you see there, you will rue it all your life."

Dicken, however, laughed the warning to scorn, and having alighted to secure his horse, he followed the stranger up a narrow foot-path, which led them up the hills to the singular eminence stuck betwixt the most southern and the centre peaks, and called, from its resemblance to such an animal in its form, the Lucken Hare. At the foot of this eminence, which is almost as famous for witch meetings as the neighbouring wind-mill of Kippilaw, Dick was somewhat startled to observe that his conductor entered the hill-side by a passage or cavern, of which he himself, though well acquainted with the spot, had never seen or heard.

"You may still return," said his guide, looking ominously back upon him; but Dick scorned to show the white feather, and on they went. They entered a very long range of stables; in every stall stood a coal-black horse; by every horse lay a knight in coal-black armour, with a drawn sword in his hand; but all were as silent, hoof and limb, as if they had been cut out of marble. A great number of torches lent a gloomy lustre to the hall, which, like those of the Caliph Vathek, was of large dimensions. At the upper end, however, they at length arrived, where a sword and horn lay on an antique table.

"He that shall sound that horn and draw that sword," said the stranger, who now intimated that he was the famous Thomas of Hersildoune, "shall, if his heart fail him not, be king over all broad Britain. So speaks the tongue that cannot lie. But all depends on courage, and much on your taking the sword or the horn first." Dick was much disposed to take the sword; but his bold spirit was quailed by the supernatural terrors of the hall, and he thought to unsheathe the sword first, might be construed into defiance, and give offence to the powers of the Mountain. He took the bugle with a trembling hand, and a feeble note, but loud enough to produce a terrible answer. Thunder rolled in stunning peals through the immense hall; horses and men started to life; the steeds snorted, stamped, grinned their bits, and tossed on high their heads; the warriors sprung to their feet, clashed their armour, and brandished their swords. Dick's terror was extreme at seeing the whole army, which had been so lately silent as the grave, in uproar, and about to rush on him. He dropped the horn, and made a feeble attempt to seize the enchanted sword; but at the same moment a voice pronounced aloud the mysterious words,—

*"Woe to the coward, that ever he was born,
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn!"*

At the same time a whirlwind of irresistible fury howled through the long hall, bore the unfortunate horse-jockey clear out of the mouth of the cavern, and precipitated him over a steep bank of loose stones, where the shepherds found him the next morning with just breath sufficient to tell his fearful tale, after concluding which he expired.

This legend, with several variations, is found in many parts of Scotland and England. The scene is sometimes laid in some favourite glen of the Highlands, sometimes in the deep coal-mines of Northumberland and Cumberland, which rim so far beneath the ocean. It is also to be found in Reginald Scott's book on Witchcraft, which was written in the sixteenth century. It would be in vain to ask what was the original of the tradition. The choice between the horn and sword may, perhaps, include as a moral that it is foolhardy to awaken danger before we have arms in our hands to resist it.

Although admitting of much poetical ornament, it is clear that this legend would have formed but an unhappy foundation for a prose story, and must have degenerated into a mere fairy tale. Dr. John Leyden has beautifully introduced the tradition in his "Scenes of Infancy":—

*"Mysterious Rhymer, doomed by fate's decree
Still to revisit Eildon's fated tree,
Where oft the swain, at dawn of Hallow-day,
Hears thy fleet barb with wild impatience neigh,—
Say, who is he, with summons long and high,
Shall bid the charmed sleep of ages fly,
Roll the long sound through Eildon's caverns vast,
While each dark warrior kindles at the blast,
The horn, the falchion, grasp with mighty hand,
And peal proud Arthur's march from Fairy-land?"*

In the same cabinet with the preceding fragment, the following occurred among other 'disjecta membra'. It seems to be an attempt at a tale of a different description from the last, but was almost instantly abandoned. The introduction points out the time of the composition to have been about the end of the eighteenth century.

THE LORD OF ENNERDALE

IN A FRAGMENT OF A LETTER FROM JOHN B _____, ESQ., OF THAT ILK, TO WILLIAM G _____, F.R.S.E.

"Fill a bumper," said the knight; "the ladies may spare us a little longer. Fill a bumper to the Archduke Charles."

The company did due honour to the toast of their landlord.

"The success of the archduke," said the muddy vicar, "will tend to further our negotiation at Paris; and if—"

"Pardon the interruption, Doctor," quoth a thin, emaciated figure, with somewhat of a foreign accent; "but why should you connect those events, unless to hope that the bravery and victories of our allies may supersede the necessity of a degrading treaty?"

"We begin to feel, Monsieur L'Abbe," answered the vicar, with some asperity, "that a Continental war entered into for the defence of an ally who was unwilling to defend himself, and for the restoration of a royal family, nobility, and priesthood who tamely abandoned their own rights, is a burden too much even for the resources of this country."

"And was the war, then, on the part of Great Britain," rejoined the Abbe, "a gratuitous exertion of generosity? Was there no fear of the wide-wasting spirit of innovation which had gone abroad? Did not the laity tremble for their property, the clergy for their religion, and every loyal heart for the Constitution? Was it not thought necessary to destroy the building which was on fire, ere the conflagration spread around the vicinity?"

"Yet if upon trial," said the doctor, "the walls were found to resist our utmost efforts, I see no great prudence in persevering in our labour amid the smouldering ruins."

"What, Doctor," said the baronet, "must I call to your recollection your own sermon on the late general fast? Did you not encourage us to hope that the Lord of Hosts would go forth with our armies, and that our enemies, who blasphemed him, should be put to shame?"

"It may please a kind father to chasten even his beloved children," answered the vicar.

"I think," said a gentleman near the foot of the table, "that the Covenanters made some apology of the same kind for the failure of their prophecies at the battle of Danbar, when their mutinous preachers compelled the prudent Lesley to go down against the Philistines in Gilgal."

The vicar fixed a scrutinizing and not a very complacent eye upon this intruder. He was a young man, of mean stature and rather a reserved appearance. Early and severe study had quenched in his features the gaiety peculiar to his age, and impressed upon them a premature cast of thoughtfulness. His eye had, however, retained its fire, and his gesture its animation. Had he remained silent, he would have been long unnoticed; but when he spoke, there was something in his manner which arrested attention.

"Who is this young man?" said the vicar, in a low voice, to his neighbour.

"A Scotchman called Maxwell, on a visit to Sir Henry," was the answer.

"I thought so, from his accent and his manner," said the vicar. It may be here observed that the Northern English retain rather more of the ancient hereditary aversion to their neighbors than their countrymen of the South. The interference of other disputants, each of whom urged his opinion with all the vehemence of wine and politics, rendered the summons to the drawing-room agreeable to the more sober part of the company.

The company dispersed by degrees, and at length the vicar and the young Scotchman alone remained, besides the baronet, his lady, daughters, and myself. The clergyman had not, it would seem, forgot the observation which ranked him with the false prophets of Dunbar, for he addressed Mr. Maxwell upon the first opportunity.

"Hem! I think, sir, you mentioned something about the civil wars of last century. You must be deeply skilled in them indeed, if you can draw any parallel betwixt those and the present evil days,—days which I am ready to maintain are the most gloomy that ever darkened the prospects of Britain."

"God forbid, Doctor, that I should draw a comparison between the present times and those you mention; I am too sensible of the advantages we enjoy over our ancestors. Faction and ambition have introduced division among us; but we are still free from the guilt of civil bloodshed, and from all the evils which flow from it. Our foes, sir, are not those of our own household; and while we continue united and firm, from the attacks of a foreign enemy, however artful, or however inveterate, we have, I hope, little to dread."

"Have you found anything curious, Mr. Maxwell, among the dusty papers?" said Sir Henry, who seemed to dread a revival of political discussion.

"My investigation amongst them led to reflection's which I have just now hinted," said Maxwell; "and I think they are pretty strongly exemplified by a story which I have been endeavouring to arrange from some of your family manuscripts."

"You are welcome to make what use of them you please," said Sir Henry; "they have been undisturbed for many a day, and I have often wished for some person as well skilled as you in these old pothooks, to tell me their meaning."

"Those I just mentioned," answered Maxwell, "relate to a piece of private history savouring not a little of the marvellous, and intimately connected with your family; if it is agreeable, I can read to you the anecdotes in the modern shape into which I have been endeavouring to throw them, and you can then judge of the value of the originals."

There was something in this proposal agreeable to all parties. Sir Henry had family pride, which prepared him to take an interest in whatever related to his ancestors. The ladies had dipped deeply into the fashionable reading of the present day. Lady Ratcliff and her fair daughters had climbed every pass, viewed every pine-shrouded ruin, heard every groan, and lifted every trap-door, in company with the noted heroine of "Udolpho." They had been heard, however, to observe that the famous incident of the Black Veil singularly resembled the ancient apologue of the Mountain in labour, so that they were unquestionably critics, as well as admirers. Besides all this, they had valorously mounted en croupe behind the ghostly horseman of Prague, through all his seven translators, and followed the footsteps of Moor through the forest of Bohemia. Moreover, it was even hinted (but this was a greater mystery than all the rest) that a certain performance, called the "Monk," in three neat volumes, had been seen by a prying eye, in the right-hand drawer of the Indian cabinet of Lady Ratcliff's dressing-room. Thus predisposed for wonders and signs, Lady Ratcliff and her nymphs drew their chairs round a large blazing wood-fire, and arranged themselves to listen to the tale. To that fire I also approached, moved thereunto partly by the inclemency of the season, and partly that my deafness, which you know, cousin, I acquired during my campaign under Prince Charles Edward, might be no obstacle to the gratification of my curiosity, which was awakened by what had any reference to the fate of such faithful followers of royalty as you well know the house of Ratcliff have ever been. To this wood-fire the vicar likewise drew near, and reclined himself conveniently in his chair, seemingly disposed to testify his disrespect for the narration and narrator by falling asleep as soon as he conveniently could. By the side of Maxwell (by the way, I cannot learn that he is in the least related to the Nithsdale family) was placed a small table and a couple of lights, by the assistance of which he read as follows:—

Journal of Jan Von Eulen.

On the 6th November, 1645, I, Jan Von Enlen, merchant in Rotterdam, embarked with my only daughter on board of the good vessel 'Vryheid,' of Amsterdam, in order to pass into the unhappy and disturbed kingdom of England.—7th November. A brisk gale; daughter sea-sick; myself unable to complete the calculation which I have begun, of the inheritance left by Jane Lansache, of Carlisle, my late dear wife's sister, the collection of which is the object of my voyage.—8th November. Wind still stormy and adverse; a horrid disaster nearly happened,—my dear child washed overboard as the vessel lurched to leeward.—Memorandum, to reward the young sailor who saved her, out of the first moneys which I can recover from the inheritance of her aunt Lansache.—9th November. Calm P.M. light breezes front N. N. W. I talked with the captain about the inheritance of my sister-in-law, Jane Lansache. He says he knows the principal subject, which will not exceed L1000 in value.—N. B. He is a cousin to a family of Petersons, which was the name of the husband of my sister-in-law; so there is room to hope it may be worth more than be reports.—10th November, 10 A.M. May God pardon all our sins! An English frigate, bearing the Parliament flag, has appeared in the offing, and gives chase.—11 A. M. She nears us every moment, and the captain of our vessel prepares to clear for action. May God again have mercy upon us!"

"Here," said Maxwell, "the journal with which I have opened the narration ends somewhat abruptly."

"I am glad of it," said Lady Ratcliff.

"But, Mr. Maxwell," said young Frank, Sir Henry's grandchild, "shall we not hear how the battle ended?"

I do not know, cousin, whether I have not formerly made you acquainted with the abilities of Frank Ratcliff. There is not a battle fought between the troops of the Prince and of the government, during the years 1745-46, of which he is not able to give an account. It is true, I have taken particular pains to fix the events of this important period upon his memory by frequent repetition.

"No, my dear," said Maxwell, in answer to young Frank Itatcliff,— "No, my dear, I cannot tell you the exact particulars of the engagement, but its consequences appear from the following letter, despatched by Garbonete Von Enlen, daughter of our journalist, to a relation in England, from whom she implored assistance. After some general account of the purpose of the voyage, and of the engagement, her narrative proceeds thus:—

"The noise of the cannon had hardly ceased, before the sounds of a language to me but half known, and the confusion on board our vessel, informed me that the captors had boarded us and taken possession of our vessel. I went on deck, where the first spectacle that met my eyes was a young man, mate of our vessel, who, though disfigured and covered with blood, was loaded with irons, and whom they were forcing over the side of the vessel into a boat. The two principal persons among our enemies appeared to be a man of a tall, thin figure, with a high-crowned hat and long neck band, and short-cropped head of hair, accompanied by a bluff, open-looking elderly man in a naval uniform. 'Yarely! yarely! pull away, my hearts,' said the latter, and the boat bearing the unlucky young man soon carried him on board the frigate. Perhaps you will blame me for mentioning this circumstance; but consider, my dear cousin, this man saved my life, and his fate, even when my own and my father's were in the balance, could not but affect me nearly.

"In the name of him who is jealous, even to slaying,' said the first—"

Cetera desunt.

**CONCLUSION OF THE ROMANCE OF MR. STRUTT OF
QUEEN-HOO HALL
CHAPTER IV**

A HUNTING PARTY.—AN ADVENTURE.—A DELIVERANCE

The next morning the bugles were sounded by daybreak in the court of Lord Boteler's mansion, to call the inhabitants from their slumbers, to assist in a splendid chase, with which the baron had resolved to entertain his neighbour Fitzallen and his noble visitor St. Clere. Peter Lanaret the falconer was in attendance, with falcons for the knights, and tiercelets for the ladies, if they should choose to vary their sport from hunting to hawking. Five stout yeomen keepers, with their attendants, called Bagged Robins, all meetly arrayed in Kendal green, with bugles and short hangers by their sides, and quarterstaves in their hands, led the slow-hounds, or brackets, by which the deer were to be put up. Ten brace of gallant greyhounds, each of which was fit to pluck down, singly, the tallest red deer, were led in leashes by as many of Lord Boteler's foresters. The pages, squires, and other attendants of feudal splendour, well attired in their best hunting-gear, upon horseback or foot, according to their rank,—with their boar-spears, long bows, and cross-bows, were in seemly waiting.

A numerous train of yeomen, called in the language of the times retainers, who yearly received a livery coat and a small pension for their attendance on such solemn occasions, appeared in cassocks of blue, bearing upon their arms the cognizance of the house of Boteler as a badge of their adherence. They were the tallest men of their hands that the neighbouring villages could supply, with every man his good buckler on his shoulder, and a bright burnished broadsword dangling from his leathern belt. On this occasion they acted as rangers for beating up the thickets and rousing the game. These attendants filled up the court of the castle, spacious as it was. On the green without, you might have seen the motley assemblage of peasantry convened by report of the splendid hunting, including most of our old acquaintances from Tewin, as well as the jolly partakers of good cheer at Hob Filcher's. Gregory the jester, it may well be guessed, had no great mind to exhibit himself in public after his recent disaster; but Oswald the steward, a great formalist in whatever concerned the public exhibition of his master's household state, had positively enjoined his attendance. "What," quoth he, "shall the house of the brave Lord Boteler, or such a brave day as this, be without a fool? Certes, the good Lord St. Clere and his fair lady sister might think our housekeeping as niggardly as that of their churlish kinsman at Gay Bowers, who sent his father's jester to the hospital, sold the poor sot's bells for hawk-jesses, and made a nightcap of his long-eared bonnet. And, sirrah, let me see thee fool handsomely,—speak squibs and crackers, instead of that dry, barren, musty gibing which thou hast used of late; or, by the bones! the porter shall have thee to his lodge, and cob thee with thine own wooden sword till thy skin is as motley as thy doublet."

To this stern injunction, Gregory made no reply, any more than to the courteous offer of old Albert Drawslot, the chief park-keeper, who proposed to blow vinegar in his nose, to sharpen his wit, as he had done that blessed morning to Bragger, the old hound, whose scent was failing. There was, indeed, little time for reply, for the bugles, after a lively flourish, were now silent, and Peretto, with his two attendant minstrels, stepping beneath the windows of the strangers' apartments, joined in the following roundelay, the deep voices of the rangers and falconers making up a chorus that caused the very battlements to ring again.

*Waken, lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day;
All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk and horse and hunting-spear
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."*

*Waken, lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray;
Springlets in the dawn are streaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming,
And foresters have busy been,
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay:
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."*

*Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the green-wood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."*

*Louder, louder chant the lay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay;"
Tell them, youth and mirth and glee
Run a course as well as we.
Time, stern huntsman, who can baulk,
Staunch as hound, and fleet as hawk?*

*Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.*

By the time this lay was finished, Lord Boteler, with his daughter and kinsman, Fitzallen of Harden, and other noble guests had mounted their palfreys, and the hunt set forward in due order. The huntsmen, having carefully observed the traces of a large stag on the preceding evening, were able, without loss of time, to conduct the company, by the marks which they had made upon the trees, to the side of the thicket in which, by the report of Drawslot, he had harboured all night. The horsemen spreading themselves along the side of the cover, waited until the keeper entered, leading his bandog, a large blood-hound tied in a leam or band, from which he takes his name.

But it befell this. A hart of the second year, which was in the same cover with the proper object of their pursuit, chanced to be unharboured first, and broke cover very near where the Lady Emma and her brother were stationed. An inexperienced varlet, who was nearer to them, instantly unloosed two tall greyhounds, who sprung after the fugitive with all the fleetness of the north wind. Gregory, restored a little to spirits by the enlivening scene around him, followed, encouraging the hounds with a loud shout,—[*Tailliers-hors*; in modern phrase, *Tally-ho*—]for which he had the hearty curses of the huntsman, as well as of the baron, who entered into the spirit of the chase with all the juvenile ardour of twenty. "May the foul fiend, booted and spurred, ride down his bawling throat, with a scythe at his girdle," quoth Albert Drawslot; "here have I been telling him that all the marks were those of a buck of the first head, and he has hollowed the hounds upon a velvet-headed knobbler! By Saint Hubert, if I break not his pate with my cross-bow, may I never cast off hound more! But to it, my lords and masters! the noble beast is here yet, and, thank the saints, we have enough of hounds."

The cover being now thoroughly beat by the attendants, the stag was compelled to abandon it, and trust to his speed for his safety. Three greyhounds were slipped upon him, whom he threw out, after running a couple of miles, by entering an extensive furzy brake which extended along the side of a hill. The horsemen soon came up, and casting off a sufficient number of slowhounds, sent them, with the prickers, into the cover, in order to chive the game from his strength. This object being accomplished, afforded another severe chase of several miles, in a direction almost circular, during which the poor animal tried every wile to get rid of his persecutors. He crossed and traversed all such dusty paths as were likely to retain the least scent of his footsteps; he laid himself close to the ground, drawing his feet under his belly, and clapping his nose close to the earth, lest he should be betrayed to the hounds by his breath and hoofs. When all was in vain, and he found the hounds coming fast in upon him, his own strength failing, his mouth embossed with foam, and the tears dropping from his eyes, he turned in despair upon his pursuers, who then stood at gaze, making an hideous clamour, and awaiting their two-footed auxiliaries. Of these, it chanced that the Lady Eleanor, taking more pleasure in the sport than Matilda, and being a less burden to her palfrey than the Lord Boteler, was the first who arrived at the spot, and taking a cross-bow from an attendant, discharged a bolt at the stag. When the infuriated animal felt himself wounded, he pushed frantically towards her from whom he had received the shaft, and Lady Eleanor might have had occasion to repent of her enterprise had not young Fitzallen, who had kept near her during the whole day, at that instant galloped briskly in, and ere the stag could change his object of assault, despatched him with his short hunting-sword.

Albert Drawslot, who had just come up in terror for the young lady's safety, broke out into loud encomiums upon Fitzallen's strength and gallantry. "By 'r Lady," said he, taking off his cap, and wiping his sun-burnt face with his sleeve, "well struck, and in good time! But now, boys, doff your bonnets, and sound the mort."

The sportsmen then sounded a treble mort and set up a general whoop, which, mingled with the yelping of the dogs, made the welkin ring again. The huntsman then offered his knife to Lord Boteler, that he might take the say of the deer; but the baron courteously insisted upon Fitzallen going through that ceremony. The Lady Matilda was now come up, with most of the attendants; and the interest of the chase being ended, it excited some surprise that neither St. Clere nor his sister made their appearance. The Lord Boteler commanded the horns again to sound the recheat, in hopes to call in the stragglers, and said to Fitzallen: "Methinks St. Clere, so distinguished for service in war, should have been more forward in the chase."

"I trow," said Peter Lanaret, "I know the reason of the noble lord's absence; for when that moon-calf, Gregory, hallooed the dogs upon the knobbler, and galloped like a green hilding, as he is, after them, I saw the Lady Emma's palfrey follow apace after that varlet, who should be trashed for overrunning, and I think her noble brother has followed her, lest she should come to harm. But here, by the rood, is Gregory to answer for himself."

At this moment Gregory entered the circle which had been formed round the deer, out of breath, and his face covered with blood. He kept for some time uttering inarticulate cries of "Harrow!" and "Wellaway!" and other exclamations of distress and terror, pointing all the while to a thicket at some distance from the spot where the deer had been killed.

"By my honour," said the baron, "I would gladly know who has dared to array the poor knave thus; and I trust he should dearly aby his outrecuidance, were he the best, save one, in England."

Gregory, who had now found more breath, cried, "Help, an ye be men! Save Lady Emma and her brother, whom they are murdering in Brockenhurst thicket."

This put all in motion. Lord Boteler hastily commanded a small party of his men to abide for the defence of the ladies, while he himself, Fitzallen, and the rest made what speed they could towards the thicket, guided by Gregory, who for that purpose was mounted behind Fabian. Pushing through a narrow path, the first object they encountered was a man of small stature lying on the ground, mastered and almost strangled by two dogs, which were instantly recognized to be those that had accompanied Gregory. A little farther was an open space, where lay three bodies of dead or wounded men; beside these was Lady Emma, apparently lifeless, her brother and a young forester bending over and endeavouring to recover her. By employing the usual remedies, this was soon accomplished; while Lord Boteler, astonished at such a scene, anxiously inquired at St. Clere the meaning of what he saw, and whether more danger was to be expected?

"For the present, I trust not," said the young warrior, who they now observed was slightly wounded; "but I pray you, of your nobleness, let the woods here be searched; for we were assaulted by four of these base assassins, and I see three only on the sward."

The attendants now brought forward the person whom they had rescued from the dogs, and Henry, with disgust, shame, and astonishment, recognized his kinsman, Gaston St. Clere. This discovery he communicated in a whisper to Lord Boteler, who commanded the prisoner to be conveyed to Queen-Hoo Hall and closely guarded; meanwhile he anxiously inquired of young St. Clere about his wound. "A scratch, a trifle!" cried Henry; "I am in less haste to bind it than to introduce to you one without whose aid that of the leech would have come too late. Where is he? Where is my brave deliverer?"

"Here, most noble lord," said Gregory, sliding from his palfrey and stepping forward, "ready to receive the guerdon which your bounty would heap on him."

"Truly, friend Gregory," answered the young warrior, "thou shalt not be forgotten; for thou didst run speedily and roar manfully for aid, without which, I think verily, we had not received it. But the brave forester who came to my rescue when these three ruffians had nigh overpowered me, where is he?"

Every one looked around; but though all had seen him on entering the thicket, he was not now to be found. They could only conjecture that he had retired during the confusion occasioned by the detention of Gaston. "Seek not for him," said the Lady Emma, who had now in some degree recovered her composure; "he will not be found of mortal, unless at his own season." The baron, convinced from this answer that her terror had, for the time, somewhat disturbed her reason, forebore to question her; and Matilda and Eleanor, to whom a message had been despatched with the result of this strange adventure, arriving, they took the Lady Emma between them, and all in a body returned to the castle. The distance was, however, considerable, and before reaching it they had another alarm. The prickers, who rode foremost in the troop, halted, and announced to the Lord Boteler, that they perceived advancing towards them a body of armed men. The followers of the baron were numerous, but they were arrayed for the chase, not for battle; and it was with great pleasure that he discerned, on the pennon of the advancing body of men-at-arms, instead of the cognizance of Gaston, as he had some reason to expect, the friendly bearings of Fitzosborne of Diggsweil, the same young lord who was present at the May-games with Fitzallen of Marden. The knight himself advanced, sheathed in armour, and, without raising his visor, informed Lord Boteler, that having heard of a base attempt made upon a part of his train by ruffianly assassins, he had mounted and armed a small party of his retainers, to escort them to Queen-Hoo Hall. Having received and accepted an invitation to attend them thither, they prosecuted their journey in confidence and security, and arrived safe at home without any further accident.

CHAPTER V
INVESTIGATION OF THE ADVENTURE OF THE HUNTING.—A DISCOVERY.
—GREGORY'S MANHOOD.—FATE OF GASTON ST. CLERE.—CONCLUSION.

So soon as they arrived at the princely mansion of Boteler, the Lady Emma craved permission to retire to her chamber, that she might compose her spirits after the terror she had undergone. Henry St. Clere, in a few words, proceeded to explain the adventure to the curious audience. "I had no sooner seen my sister's palfrey, in spite of her endeavours to the contrary, entering with spirit into the chase set on foot by the worshipful Gregory than I rode after to give her assistance. So long was the chase that when the greyhounds pulled down the knobbler, we were out of hearing of your bugles; and having rewarded and coupled the dogs, I gave them to be led by the jester, and we wandered in quest of our company, whom, it would seem, the sport had led in a different direction. At length, passing through the thicket where you found us, I was surprised by a cross-bow bolt whizzing past mine head. I drew my sword and rushed into the thicket, but was instantly assailed by two ruffians, while other two made towards my sister and Gregory. The poor knave fled, crying for help, pursued by my false kinsman, now your prisoner; and the designs of the other on my poor Emma (murderous no doubt) were prevented by the sudden apparition of a brave woodsman, who, after a short encounter, stretched the miscreant at his feet and came to my assistance. I was already slightly wounded, and nearly overlaid with odds. The combat lasted some time, for the caitiffs were both well armed, strong, and desperate; at length, however, we had each mastered our antagonist, when your retinue, my Lord Boteler, arrived to my relief. So ends in my story; but, on my knighthood, I would give an earl's ransom for an opportunity of thanking the gallant forester by whose aid I live to tell it."

"Fear not," said Lord Boteler; "he shall be found if this or the four adjacent counties hold him. And now Lord Fitzosborne will be pleased to doff the armour he has so kindly assumed for our sakes, and we will all bowne ourselves for the banquet."

When the hour of dinner approached, the Lady Matilda and her cousin visited the chamber of the fair Darcy. They found her in a composed but melancholy posture. She turned the discourse upon the misfortunes of her life, and hinted that having recovered her brother, and seeing him look forward to the society of one who would amply repay to him the loss of hers, she had thoughts of dedicating her remaining life to Heaven, by whose providential interference it had been so often preserved.

Matilda coloured deeply at something in this speech, and her cousin inveighed loudly against Emma's resolution. "Ah, my dear Lady Eleanor," replied she, "I have to-day witnessed what I cannot but judge a supernatural visitation, and to what end can it call me but to give myself to the altar? That peasant who guided me, to Baddow through the Park of Danbury, the same who appeared before me at different times and in different forms during that eventful journey,—that youth, whose features are imprinted on my memory, is the very individual forester who this day rescued us in the forest. I cannot be mistaken; and connecting these marvellous appearances with the spectre which I saw while at Gay Bowers, I cannot resist the conviction that Heaven has permitted my guardian angel to assume mortal shape for my relief and protection."

The fair cousins, after exchanging looks which implied a fear that her mind was wandering, answered her in soothing terms, and finally prevailed upon her to accompany them to the banqueting-hall. Here the first person they encountered was the Baron Fitzosborne of Diggswell, now divested of his armour; at the sight of whom the Lady Emma changed colour, and exclaiming, "It is the same!" sunk senseless into the arms of Matilda.

"She is bewildered by the terrors of the day," said Eleanor; "and we have done ill in obliging her to descend."

"And I," said Fitzosborne, "have done madly in presenting before her one whose presence must recall moments the most alarming in her life."

While the ladies supported Emma from the hall, Lord Boteler and St. Clere requested an explanation from Fitzosborne of the words he had used.

"Trust me, gentle lords," said the Baron of Diggswell, "ye shall have what ye demand, when I learn that Lady Emma Darcy has not suffered from my imprudence."

At this moment Lady Matilda, returning, said that her fair friend, on her recovery, had calmly and deliberately insisted that she had seen Fitzosborne before, in the most dangerous crisis of her life.

"I dread," said she, "her disordered mind connects all that her eye beholds with the terrible passages that she has witnessed."

"Nay," said Fitzosborne, "if noble St. Clere can pardon the unauthorized interest which, with the purest and most honourable intentions, I have taken in his sister's fate, it is easy for me to explain this mysterious impression."

He proceeded to say that, happening to be in the hostelry called the Griffin, near Baddow, while upon a journey in that country, he had met with the old nurse of the Lady Emma Darcy, who, being just expelled from Gay Bowers, was in the height of her grief and indignation, and made loud and public proclamation of Lady Emma's wrongs. From the description she gave of the beauty of her foster-child, as well as from the spirit of chivalry, Fitzosborne became interested in her fate. This interest was deeply enhanced when, by a bribe to Old Gaunt the Reve, he procured a view of the Lady Emma as she walked near the castle of Gay Bowers. The aged churl refused to give him access to the castle, yet dropped some hints, as if he thought the lady in danger, and wished she were well out of it. His master, he said, had heard she had a brother in life, and since that deprived him of all chance of gaining her domains by purchase, he, in short, Gaunt wished they were safely separated. "If any injury," quoth he, "should happen to the damsel here, it were ill for us all. I tried, by an innocent stratagem, to frighten her from the castle by introducing a figure through a trap-door and warning her, as if by a voice from the dead, to retreat from thence; but the giglet is wilful, and is running upon her fate."

Finding Gaunt, although covetous and communicative, too faithful a servant to his wicked master to take any active steps against his commands, Fitzosborne applied himself to old Ursely, whom he found more tractable. Through her he learned the dreadful plot Gaston had laid to rid himself of his kinswoman, and resolved to effect her deliverance. But aware of the delicacy of Emma's situation, he charged Ursely to conceal from her the interest he took in her distress, resolving to watch over her in disguise until he saw her in a place of safety. Hence the appearance he made before her in various dresses during her journey, in the course of which he was never far distant; and he had always four stout yeomen within hearing of his bugle, had assistance been necessary. When she was placed in safety at the lodge, it was Fitzosborne's intention to have prevailed upon his sisters to visit, and take her under their protection; but he found them absent from Diggswell, having gone to attend an aged relation who lay dangerously ill in a distant county. They did not return until the day before the May-games; and the other events followed too rapidly to permit Fitzosborne to lay any plan for introducing them to Lady Emma Darcy. On the day of the chase he resolved to preserve his romantic disguise and attend the Lady Emma as a forester, partly to have the pleasure of being near her, and partly to judge whether, according to an idle report in the country, she favoured his friend and comrade Fitzallen of Marden. This last motive, it may easily be believed, he did not declare to the company. After the skirmish with the ruffians, he waited till the baron and the hunters arrived, and then, still doubting the further designs of Gaston, hastened to his castle to arm the band which had escorted them to Queen-Hoo Hall.

Fitzosborne's story being finished, he received the thanks of all the company, particularly of St. Clere, who felt deeply the respectful delicacy with which he had conducted himself towards his sister. The lady was carefully informed of her obligations to him; and it is left to the well-judging reader whether even the raillery of Lady Eleanor made her regret that Heaven had only employed natural means for her security, and that the guardian angel was converted into a handsome, gallant, and enamoured knight.

The joy of the company in the hall extended itself to the buttery, where Gregory the jester narrated such feats of arms done by himself in the fray of the morning as might have shamed Bevis and Guy of Warwick. He was, according to his narrative, singled out for destruction by the gigantic baron himself, while he abandoned to meaner hands the destruction of St. Clere and Fitzosborne.

"But, certes," said he, "the foul paynim met his match; for, ever as he foined at me with his brand, I parried his blows with my bauble, and closing with him upon the third veny, threw him to the ground, and made him crycreant to an unarmed man."

"Tush, man!" said Drawslot, "thou forgettest thy best auxiliaries, the good greyhounds, Help and Holdfast! I warrant thee that when the humpbacked baron caught thee by the cowl, which he hath almost torn off, thou hadst been in a fair plight, had they not remembered an old friend and come in to the rescue. Why, man, I

found them fastened on him myself; and there was odd staving and stickling to make them 'ware haunch!' Their mouths were full of the flex, for I pulled a piece of the garment from their jaws. I warrant thee that when they brought him to ground, thou fledst like a frightened pricket."

"And as for Gregory's gigantic paynim," said Fabian, "why, he lies yonder in the guard-room, the very size, shape, and colour of a spider in a yewhedge."

"It is false!" said Gregory; "Colbrand the Dane was a dwarf to him."

"It is as true," returned Fabian, "as that the Tasker is to be married on Tuesday to pretty Margery. Gregory, thy sheet hath brought them between a pair of blankets."

"I care no more for such a gillflirt," said the Jester, "than I do for thy leasings. Marry, thou hop-o'-my-thumb, happy wouldst thou be could thy head reach the captive baron's girdle."

"By the Mass," said Peter Lanaret, "I will have one peep at this burly gallant;" and leaving the buttery, he went to the guard-room where Gaston St. Clere was confined. A man-at-arms, who kept sentinel on the strong studded door of the apartment, said he believed he slept; for that after raging, stamping, and uttering the most horrid imprecations, he had been of late perfectly still. The falconer gently drew back a sliding board, of a foot square, towards the top of the door, which covered a hole of the same size, strongly latticed, through which the warder, without opening the door, could look in upon his prisoner. From this aperture he beheld the wretched Gaston suspended by the neck, by his own girdle, to an iron ring in the side of his prison. He had clambered to it by means of the table on which his food had been placed; and in the agonies of shame and disappointed malice, had adopted this mode of ridding himself of a wretched life. He was found yet warm, but totally lifeless. A proper account of the manner of his death was drawn up and certified. He was buried that evening in the chapel of the castle, out of respect to his high birth; and the chaplain of Fitzallen of Marden, who said the service upon the occasion, preached, the next Sunday, an excellent sermon upon the text, "Radix malorum est cupiditas," which we have here transcribed.

.....

[Here the manuscript from which we have painfully transcribed, and frequently, as it were, translated this tale, for the reader's edification, is so indistinct and defaced that, excepting certain "howbeits," "nathlesses," "lo ye's!" etc. we can pick out little that is intelligible, saving that avarice is defined "a likourishness of heart after earthly things."] A little farther there seems to have been a gay account of Margery's wedding with Ralph the Tasker, the running at the quintain, and other rural games practised on the occasion. There are also fragments of a mock sermon preached by Gregory upon that occasion, as for example:—

"Mv dear cursed caitiffs, there was once a king, and he wedded a young old queen, and she had a child; and this child was sent to Solomon the Sage, praying he would give it the same blessing which he got from the witch of Endor when she bit him by the heel. Hereof speaks the worthy Dr. Radigundus Potator. Why should not Mass be said for all the roasted shoe souls served up in the king's dish on Saturday? For true it is that Saint Peter asked father Adam, as they journeyed to Camelot, an high, great, and doubtful question: 'Adam, Adam, why eated'st thou the apple without paring?'"

[This tirade of gibberish is literally taken or selected from a mock discourse pronounced by a professed jester, which occurs in an ancient manuscript in the Advocates' Library, the same from which the late ingenious Mr. Weber published the curious comic romance of the "Limiting of the Hare." It was introduced in compliance with Mr. Strutt's plan of rendering his tale an illustration of ancient manners. A similar burlesque sermon is pronounced by the Fool in Sir David Lindesay's satire of the "Three Estates." The nonsense and vulgar burlesque of that composition illustrate the ground of Sir Andrew, Aguecheek's eulogy on the exploits of the jester in "Twelfth Night," who, reserving his sharper jests for Sir Toby, had doubtless enough of the jargon of his calling to captivate the imbecility of his brother knight, who is made to exclaim: "In sooth, thou wast in very gracious fooling last night when thou spokest of Pigrogremitus, and of the vapours passing the equinoctials of Quenbus; 't was very good, i' faith!" It is entertaining to find commentators seeking to discover some meaning in the professional jargon of such a passage as this.]

With much goodly gibberish to the same effect, which display of Gregory's ready wit not only threw the whole company into convulsions of laughter, but made such an impression on Rose, the Potter's daughter, that it was thought it would be the jester's own fault if Jack was long without his Jill. Much pithy matter concerning the bringing the bride to bed, the loosing the bridegroom's points, the scramble which ensued for them, and the casting of the stocking, is also omitted, from its obscurity.

The following song, which has been since borrowed by the worshipful author of the famous "History of Fryar Bacon," has been with difficulty deciphered. It seems to have been sung on occasion of carrying home the bride.

BRIDAL SONG

To the tune of "I have been a Fiddler," etc.

And did you not hear of a mirth befall

*The morrow after a wedding-day,
And carrying a bride at home to dwell?
And away to Tewin, away, away!*

*The quintain was set, and the garlands were made,—
'T is pity old customs should ever decay;
And woe be to him that was horsed on a jade,
For he carried no credit away, away.*

*We met a consort of fiddle-de-dees;
We set them a cockhorse, and made them play
The winning of Bullen, and Upsey-fires,
And away to Tewin, away, away!*

*There was ne'er a lad in all the parish
That would go to the plough that day;
But on his fore-horse his wench he carries,
And away to Tewin, away, away!*

*The butler was quick, and the ale he did tap,
The maidens did make the chamber full gay;
The servants did give me a fuddling cup,
And I did carry 't away, away.*

*The smith of the town his liquor so took
That he was persuaded that the ground looked blue;
And I dare boldly be sworn on a book
Such smiths as he there 's but a few.*

*A posset was made, and the women did sip,
And simpering said they could eat no more;
Full many a maiden was laid on the lip,—
I'll say no more, but give o'er (give o'er).*

But what our fair readers will chiefly regret is the loss of three declarations of love: the first by St. Clore to Matilda, which, with the lady's answer, occupies fifteen closely written pages of manuscript. That of Fitzosborne to Emma is not much shorter; but the amours of Fitzallen and Eleanor, being of a less romantic cast, are closed in three pages only. The three noble couples were married in Queen-Hoo Hall upon the same day, being the twentieth Sunday after Easter. There is a prolix account of the marriage-feast, of which we can pick out the names of a few dishes, such as peterel, crane, sturgeon, swan, etc., with a profusion of wild-fowl and venison. We also see that a suitable song was produced by Peretto on the occasion, and that the bishop, who blessed the bridal beds which received the happy couples, was no niggard of his holy water, bestowing half a gallon upon each of the couches. We regret we cannot give these curiosities to the reader in detail, but we hope to expose the manuscript to abler antiquaries, so soon as it shall be framed and glazed by the ingenious artist who rendered that service to Mr. Ireland's Shakspeare manuscripts. And so (being unable to lay aside the style to which our pen is habituated), gentle reader, we bid thee heartily farewell.

ANECDOTE OF SCHOOL DAYS UPON WHICH MR. THOMAS SCOTT PROPOSED TO FOUND A TALE OF FICTION

It is well known in the South that there is little or no boxing at the Scottish schools. About forty or fifty years ago, however, a far more dangerous mode of fighting, in parties or factions, was permitted in the streets of Edinburgh, to the great disgrace of the police, and danger of the parties concerned. These parties were generally formed from the quarters of the town in which the combatants resided, those of a particular square or district fighting against those of an adjoining one. Hence it happened that the children of the higher classes were often pitted against those of the lower, each taking their side according to the residence of their friends. So far as I recollect, however, it was unmingled either with feelings of democracy or aristocracy, or, indeed, with malice or ill-will of any kind towards the opposite party. In fact, it was only a rough mode of play. Such contests were, however, maintained with great vigour with stones and sticks and fisticuffs, when one party dared to charge, and the other stood their ground. Of course mischief sometimes happened; boys are said to have been killed at these "bickers," as they were called, and serious accidents certainly took place, as many contemporaries can bear witness.

The Author's father residing in George Square, in the southern side of Edinburgh, the boys belonging to that family, with others in the square, were arranged into a sort of company, to which a lady of distinction presented a handsome set of colours. Now this company, or regiment, as a matter of course, was engaged in weekly warfare with the boys inhabiting the Crosscauseway, Bristo Street, the Potter Row,—in short, the neighbouring suburbs. These last were chiefly of the lower rank, but hardy loons, who threw stones to a hair's-breadth, and were very rugged antagonists at close quarters. The skirmish sometimes lasted for a whole evening, until one party or the other was victorious, when, if ours were successful, we drove the enemy to their quarters, and were usually chased back by the reinforcement of bigger lads who came to their assistance. If, on the contrary, we were pursued, as was often the case, into the precincts of our square, we were in our turn supported by our elder brothers, domestic servants, and similar auxiliaries.

It followed, from our frequent opposition to each other, that though not knowing the names of our enemies, we were yet well acquainted with their appearance, and had nicknames for the most remarkable of them. One very active and spirited boy might be considered as the principal leader in the cohort of the suburbs. He was, I suppose, thirteen or fourteen years old, finely made, tall, blue-eyed, with long fair hair, the very picture of a youthful Goth. This lad was always first in the charge, and last in the retreat,—the Achilles, at once, and Ajax of the Crosscauseway. He was too formidable to us not to have a cognomen, and, like that of a knight of old, it was taken from the most remarkable part of his dress, being a pair of old green livery breeches, which was the principal part of his clothing; for, like Pentapolin, according to Don Quixote's account, Green-Breeks, as we called him, always entered the battle with bare arms, legs, and feet.

It fell that once upon a time, when the combat was at the thickest, this plebeian champion headed a sudden charge so rapid and furious that all fled before him. He was several paces before his comrades, and had actually laid his hands on the patrician standard, when one of our party, whom some misjudging friend had intrusted with a couteau de chasse, or hanger, inspired with a zeal for the honour of the corps worthy of Major Sturgeon himself, struck poor Green-Breeks over the head with strength sufficient to cut him down. When this was seen, the casualty was so far beyond what had ever taken place before that both parties fled different ways, leaving poor Green-Breeks, with his bright hair plentifully dabbled in blood, to the care of the watchman, who (honest man) took care not to know who had done the mischief. The bloody hanger was flung into one of the Meadow ditches, and solemn secrecy was sworn on all hands; but the remorse and terror of the actor were beyond all bounds, and his apprehensions of the most dreadful character. The wounded hero was for a few days in the Infirmary, the case being only a trifling one. But though inquiry was strongly pressed on him, no argument could make him indicate the person from whom he had received the wound, though he must have been perfectly well known to him. When he recovered, and was dismissed, the author and his brothers opened a communication with him, through the medium of a popular gingerbread baker, of whom both parties were customers, in order to tender a subsidy in name of smart-money. The sum would excite ridicule were I to name it; but sure I am that the pockets of the noted Green-Breeks never held as much money of his own. He declined the remittance, saying that he would not sell his blood, but at the same time reprobated the idea of being an informer, which, he said, was "clam," i.e., base or mean. With much urgency, he accepted a pound of snuff for the use of some old woman—aunt, grandmother, or the like—with whom he lived. We did not become friends, for the bickers were more agreeable to both parties than any more pacific amusement; but we conducted them ever after under mutual assurances of the highest consideration for each other.

Such was the hero whom Mr. Thomas Scott proposed to carry to Canada and involve in adventures with the natives and colonists of that country. Perhaps the youthful generosity of the lad will not seem so great in the eyes of others as to those whom it was the means of screening from severe rebuke and punishment. But it seemed, to those concerned, to argue a nobleness of sentiment far beyond the pitch of most minds; and however obscurely the lad, who showed such a frame of noble spirit, may have lived or died, I cannot help being of opinion, that if fortune had placed him in circumstances calling for gallantry or generosity, the man would have fulfilled the promises of the boy. Long afterwards, when the story was told to my father, he censured us severely for not telling the truth at the time, that he might have attempted to be of use to the young man in entering on life. But our alarms for the consequences of the drawn sword, and the wound inflicted with such a weapon, were far too predominant at the time for such a pitch of generosity.

Perhaps I ought not to have inserted this schoolboy tale; but besides the strong impression made by the incident at the time, the whole accompaniments of the story are matters to me of solemn and sad recollection. Of all the little band who were concerned in those juvenile sports or brawls, I can scarce recollect a single survivor. Some left the ranks of mimic war to die in the active service of their country. Many sought distant lands, to return no more. Others, dispersed in different paths of life, "my dim eyes now seek for in vain." Of five brothers, all healthy and promising in a degree far beyond one whose infancy was visited by personal infirmity, and whose health after this period seemed long very precarious, I am, nevertheless, the only survivor. The best loved, and the best deserving to be loved, who had destined this incident to be the foundation of literary composition, died "before his day," in a distant and foreign land; and trifles assume an importance not their own, when connected with those who have been loved and lost.

BOOK XXIV
GUY MANNERING THE ASTROLOGER
PART I

CHAPTER I

*He could not deny that, looking round upon the dreary region,
and seeing nothing but bleak fields and naked trees, hills
obscured by fogs, and flats covered with inundations, he did
for some time suffer melancholy to prevail upon him, and
wished himself again safe at home.*

--'Travels of Will. Marvel,' IDLER, No. 49.

It was in the beginning of the month of November 17--when a young English gentleman, who had just left the university of Oxford, made use of the liberty afforded him to visit some parts of the north of England; and curiosity extended his tour into the adjacent frontier of the sister country. He had visited, on the day that opens our history, some monastic ruins in the county of Dumfries, and spent much of the day in making drawings of them from different points, so that, on mounting his horse to resume his journey, the brief and gloomy twilight of the season had already commenced. His way lay through a wide tract of black moss, extending for miles on each side and before him. Little eminences arose like islands on its surface, bearing here and there patches of corn, which even at this season was green, and sometimes a hut or farm-house, shaded by a willow or two and surrounded by large elder-bushes. These insulated dwellings communicated with each other by winding passages through the moss, impassable by any but the natives themselves. The public road, however, was tolerably well made and safe, so that the prospect of being benighted brought with it no real danger. Still it is uncomfortable to travel alone and in the dark through an unknown country; and there are few ordinary occasions upon which Fancy frets herself so much as in a situation like that of Mannering.

As the light grew faint and more faint, and the morass appeared blacker and blacker, our traveller questioned more closely each chance passenger on his distance from the village of Kippletringan, where he proposed to quarter for the night. His queries were usually answered by a counter-challenge respecting the place from whence he came. While sufficient daylight remained to show the dress and appearance of a gentleman, these cross interrogatories were usually put in the form of a case supposed, as, 'Ye'll hae been at the auld abbey o' Halycross, sir? there's mony English gentlemen gang to see that.'--Or, 'Your honour will become frae the house o' Pouderloupat?' But when the voice of the querist alone was distinguishable, the response usually was, 'Where are ye coming frae at sic a time o' night as the like o' this?'--or, 'Ye'll no be o' this country, freend?' The answers, when obtained, were neither very reconcilable to each other nor accurate in the information which they afforded. Kippletringan was distant at first 'a gey bit'; then the 'gey bit' was more accurately described as 'ablns three mile'; then the 'three mile' diminished into 'like a mile and a bittock'; then extended themselves into 'four mile or thereawa'; and, lastly, a female voice, having hushed a wailing infant which the spokeswoman carried in her arms, assured Guy Mannering, 'It was a weary lang gate yet to Kippletringan, and unco heavy road for foot passengers.' The poor hack upon which Mannering was mounted was probably of opinion that it suited him as ill as the female respondent; for he began to flag very much, answered each application of the spur with a groan, and stumbled at every stone (and they were not few) which lay in his road.

Mannering now grew impatient. He was occasionally betrayed into a deceitful hope that the end of his journey was near by the apparition of a twinkling light or two; but, as he came up, he was disappointed to find that the gleams proceeded from some of those farm-houses which occasionally ornamented the surface of the extensive bog. At length, to complete his perplexity, he arrived at a place where the road divided into two. If there had been light to consult the relics of a finger-post which stood there, it would have been of little avail, as, according to the good custom of North Britain, the inscription had been defaced shortly after its erection. Our adventurer was therefore compelled, like a knight-errant of old, to trust to the sagacity of his horse, which, without any demur, chose the left-hand path, and seemed to proceed at a somewhat livelier pace than before, affording thereby a hope that he knew he was drawing near to his quarters for the evening. This hope, however, was not speedily accomplished, and Mannering, whose impatience made every furlong seem three, began to think that Kippletringan was actually retreating before him in proportion to his advance.

It was now very cloudy, although the stars from time to time shed a twinkling and uncertain light. Hitherto nothing had broken the silence around him but the deep cry of the bog-blitter, or bull-of-the-bog, a large species of bittern, and the sighs of the wind as it passed along the dreary morass. To these was now joined the distant roar of the ocean, towards which the traveller seemed to be fast approaching. This was no circumstance to make his mind easy. Many of the roads in that country lay along the sea-beach, and were liable to be flooded by the tides, which rise with great height, and advance with extreme rapidity. Others were intersected with creeks and small inlets, which it was only safe to pass at particular times of the tide. Neither circumstance would have suited a dark night, a fatigued horse, and a traveller ignorant of his road. Mannering resolved, therefore, definitively to halt for the night at the first inhabited place, however poor, he might chance to reach, unless he could procure a guide to this unlucky village of Kippletringan.

A miserable hut gave him an opportunity to execute his purpose. He found out the door with no small difficulty, and for some time knocked without producing any other answer than a duet between a female and a cur-dog, the latter yelping as if he would have barked his heart out, the other screaming in chorus. By degrees the human tones predominated; but the angry bark of the cur being at the instant changed into a howl, it is probable something more than fair strength of lungs had contributed to the ascendancy.

'Sorrow be in your thrapple then!' these were the first articulate words, 'will ye no let me hear what the man wants, wi' your yaffing?'

'Am I far from Kippletringan, good dame?'

'Frae Kippletringan!!!' in an exalted tone of wonder, which we can but faintly express by three points of admiration. 'Ow, man! ye should hae hadden eassel to Kippletringan; ye maun gae back as far as the whaap, and baid the whaap till ye come to Ballenloan, and then--'

'This will never do, good dame! my horse is almost quite knocked up; can you not give me a night's lodgings?'

'Troth can I no; I am a lone woman, for James he's awa to Drumshourloch Fair with the year-aulds, and I daurna for my life open the door to ony o' your gang-there-out sort o' bodies.'

'But what must I do then, good dame? for I can't sleep here upon the road all night.'

'Troth, I kenna, unless ye like to gae down and speer for quarters at the Place. I'se warrant they'll tak ye in, whether ye be gentle or semple.'

'Simple enough, to be wandering here at such a time of night,' thought Mannering, who was ignorant of the meaning of the phrase; 'but how shall I get to the PLACE, as you call it?'

'Ye maun baid wessel by the end o' the loan, and take tent o' the jaw-hole.'

'O, if ye get to eassel and wessel again, I am undone! Is there nobody that could guide me to this Place? I will pay him handsomely.'

The word pay operated like magic. 'Jock, ye villain,' exclaimed the voice from the interior, 'are ye lying routing there, and a young gentleman seeking the way to the Place? Get up, ye fause loon, and show him the way down the muckle loaning. He'll show you the way, sir, and I'se warrant ye'll be weel put up; for they never turn awa naebody frae the door; and ye 'll be come in the canny moment, I'm thinking, for the laird's servant--that's no to say his body-servant, but the helper like--rade express by this e'en to fetch the houdie, and he just staid the drinking o' twa pints o' tippenny to tell us how my leddy was ta'en wi' her pains.'

'Perhaps,' said Mannering, 'at such a time a stranger's arrival might be inconvenient?'

'Hout, na, ye needna be blate about that; their house is muckle enugh, and decking time's aye canty time.'

By this time Jock had found his way into all the intricacies of a tattered doublet and more tattered pair of breeches, and sallied forth, a great white-headed, bare-legged, lubberly boy of twelve years old, so exhibited by the glimpse of a rush-light which his half-naked mother held in such a manner as to get a peep at the stranger without greatly exposing herself to view in return. Jock moved on westward by the end of the house, leading Mannering's horse by the bridle, and piloting with some dexterity along the little path which bordered the formidable jaw-hole, whose vicinity the stranger was made sensible of by means of more organs than one. His guide then dragged the weary hack along a broken and stony cart-track, next over a ploughed field, then broke down a slap, as he called it, in a drystone fence, and lugged the unresisting animal through the breach, about a rood of the simple masonry giving way in the splutter with which he passed. Finally, he led the way through a wicket into something which had still the air of an avenue, though many of the trees were felled. The roar of the ocean was now near and full, and the moon, which began to make her appearance, gleamed on a turreted and apparently a ruined mansion of considerable extent. Mannering fixed his eyes upon it with a disconsolate sensation.

'Why, my little fellow,' he said, 'this is a ruin, not a house?'

'Ah, but the lairds lived there langsyne; that's Ellangowan Auld Place. There's a hantle bogles about it; but ye needna be feared, I never saw ony mysell, and we're just at the door o' the New Place.'

Accordingly, leaving the ruins on the right, a few steps brought the traveller in front of a modern house of moderate size, at which his guide rapped with great importance. Mannering told his circumstances to the servant; and the gentleman of the house, who heard his tale from the parlour, stepped forward and welcomed the stranger hospitably to Ellangowan. The boy, made happy with half-a-crown, was dismissed to his cottage, the weary horse was conducted to a stall, and Mannering found himself in a few minutes seated by a comfortable supper, for which his cold ride gave him a hearty appetite.

CHAPTER II

*Comes me cranking in,
And cuts me from the best of all my land
A huge half-moon, a monstrous cantle, out*

Henry IV, Part 1.

The company in the parlour at Ellangowan consisted of the Laird and a sort of person who might be the village schoolmaster, or perhaps the minister's assistant; his appearance was too shabby to indicate the minister, considering he was on a visit to the Laird.

The Laird himself was one of those second-rate sort of persons that are to be found frequently in rural situations. Fielding has described one class as *feras consumere nati*; but the love of field-sports indicates a certain activity of mind, which had forsaken Mr. Bertram, if ever he possessed it. A good-humoured listlessness of countenance formed the only remarkable expression of his features, although they were rather handsome than otherwise. In fact, his physiognomy indicated the inanity of character which pervaded his life. I will give the reader some insight into his state and conversation before he has finished a long lecture to Mannering upon the propriety and comfort of wrapping his stirrup-irons round with a wisp of straw when he had occasion to ride in a chill evening.

Godfrey Bertram of Ellangowan succeeded to a long pedigree and a short rent-roll, like many lairds of that period. His list of forefathers ascended so high that they were lost in the barbarous ages of Galwegian independence, so that his genealogical tree, besides the Christian and crusading names of Godfreys, and Gilberts, and Dennises, and Rolands without end, bore heathen fruit of yet darker ages--Arths, and Knarths, and Donagilds, and Hanlons. In truth, they had been formerly the stormy chiefs of a desert but extensive domain, and the heads of a numerous tribe called Mac-Dingawaie, though they afterwards adopted the Norman surname of Bertram. They had made war, raised rebellions, been defeated, beheaded, and hanged, as became a family of importance, for many centuries. But they had gradually lost ground in the world, and, from being themselves the heads of treason and traitorous conspiracies, the Bertrams, or Mac-Dingawaies, of Ellangowan had sunk into subordinate accomplices. Their most fatal exhibitions in this capacity took place in the seventeenth century, when the foul fiend possessed them with a spirit of contradiction, which uniformly involved them in controversy with the ruling powers. They reversed the conduct of the celebrated Vicar of Bray, and adhered as tenaciously to the weaker side as that worthy divine to the stronger. And truly, like him, they had their reward.

Allan Bertram of Ellangowan, who flourished tempore Caroli primi, was, says my authority, Sir Robert Douglas, in his Scottish Baronage (see the title 'Ellangowan'), 'a steady loyalist, and full of zeal for the cause of His Sacred Majesty, in which he united with the great Marquis of Montrose and other truly zealous and honourable patriots, and sustained great losses in that behalf. He had the honour of knighthood conferred upon him by His Most Sacred Majesty, and was sequestered as a malignant by the parliament, 1642, and afterwards as a resolutioner in the year 1648.' These two cross-grained epithets of malignant and resolutioner cost poor Sir Allan one half of the family estate. His son Dennis Bertram married a daughter of an eminent fanatic who had a seat in the council of state, and saved by that union the remainder of the family property. But, as ill chance would have it, he became enamoured of the lady's principles as well as of her charms, and my author gives him this character: 'He was a man of eminent parts and resolution, for which reason he was chosen by the western counties one of the committee of noblemen and gentlemen to report their griefs to the privy council of Charles II. anent the coming in of the Highland host in 1678.' For undertaking this patriotic task he underwent a fine, to pay which he was obliged to mortgage half of the remaining moiety of his paternal property. This loss he might have recovered by dint of severe economy, but on the breaking out of Argyle's rebellion Dennis Bertram was again suspected by government, apprehended, sent to Dunnotar Castle on the coast of the Mearns, and there broke his neck in an attempt to escape from a subterranean habitation called the Whigs' Vault, in which he was confined with some eighty of the same persuasion. The apprizer therefore (as the holder of a mortgage was then called) entered upon possession, and, in the language of Hotspur, 'came me cranking in,' and cut the family out of another monstrous cantle of their remaining property.

Donohoe Bertram, with somewhat of an Irish name and somewhat of an Irish temper, succeeded to the diminished property of Ellangowan. He turned out of doors the Reverend Aaron Macbriar, his mother's chaplain (it is said they quarrelled about the good graces of a milkmaid); drank himself daily drunk with brimming healths to the king, council, and bishops; held orgies with the Laird of Lagg, Theophilus Oglethorpe, and Sir James Turner; and lastly, took his grey gelding and joined Clavers at Killiecrankie. At the skirmish of Dunkeld, 1689, he was shot dead by a Cameronian with a silver button (being supposed to have proof from the Evil One against lead and steel), and his grave is still called the Wicked Laird's Lair.

His son Lewis had more prudence than seems usually to have belonged to the family. He nursed what property was yet left to him; for Donohoe's excesses, as well as fines and forfeitures, had made another inroad upon the estate. And although even he did not escape the fatality which induced the Lairds of Ellangowan to interfere with politics, he had yet the prudence, ere he went out with Lord Kenmore in 1715, to convey his estate to trustees, in order to parry pains and penalties in case the Earl of Mar could not put down the Protestant succession. But Scylla and Charybdis--a word to the wise--he only saved his estate at expense of a lawsuit, which again subdivided the family property. He was, however, a man of resolution. He sold part of the lands, evacuated the old cattle, where the family lived in their decadence as a mouse (said an old farmer) lives under a flint. Pulling down part of these venerable ruins, he built with the stones a narrow house of three stories high, with a front like a grenadier's cap, having in the very centre a round window like the single eye of a Cyclops, two windows on each side, and a door in the middle, leading to a parlour and withdrawing-room full of all manner of cross lights.

This was the New Place of Ellangowan, in which we left our hero, better amused perhaps than our readers, and to this Lewis Bertram retreated, full of projects for re-establishing the prosperity of his family. He took some land into his own hand, rented some from neighbouring proprietors, bought and sold Highland cattle and Cheviot sheep, rode to fairs and trysts, fought hard bargains, and held necessity at the staff's end as well as he might. But what he gained in purse he lost in honour, for such agricultural and commercial negotiations were very ill looked upon by his brother lairds, who minded nothing but cock-fighting, hunting, coursing, and horse-racing, with now and then the alternative of a desperate duel. The occupations which he followed encroached, in their opinion, upon the article of Ellangowan's gentry, and he found it necessary gradually to estrange himself from their society, and sink into what was then a very ambiguous character, a gentleman farmer. In the midst of his schemes death claimed his tribute, and the scanty remains of a large property descended upon Godfrey Bertram, the present possessor, his only son.

The danger of the father's speculations was soon seen. Deprived of Laird Lewis's personal and active superintendence, all his undertakings miscarried, and became either abortive or perilous. Without a single spark of energy to meet or repel these misfortunes, Godfrey put his faith in the activity of another. He kept neither hunters nor hounds, nor any other southern preliminaries to ruin; but, as has been observed of his countrymen, he kept a man of business, who answered the purpose equally well. Under this gentleman's supervision small debts grew into large, interests were accumulated upon capitals, movable bonds became heritable, and law charges were heaped upon all; though Ellangowan possessed so little the spirit of a litigant that he was on two occasions charged to make payment of the expenses of a long lawsuit, although he had never before heard that he had such cases in court. Meanwhile his neighbours predicted his final ruin. Those of the higher rank, with some malignity, accounted him already a degraded brother. The lower classes, seeing nothing enviable in his situation, marked his embarrassments with more compassion. He was even a kind of favourite with them, and upon the division of a common, or the holding of a black-fishing or poaching court, or any similar occasion when they conceived themselves oppressed by the gentry, they were in the habit of saying to each other, 'Ah, if Ellangowan, honest man, had his ain that his forbears had afore him, he wadna see the puir folk trodden down this gait.' Meanwhile, this general good opinion never prevented their taking advantage of him on all possible occasions, turning their cattle into his parks, stealing his wood, shooting his game, and so forth, 'for the Laird, honest man, he'll never find it; he never minds what a puir body does.' Pedlars, gipsies, tinkers, vagrants of all descriptions, roosted about his outhouses, or harboured in his kitchen; and the Laird, who was 'nae nice body,' but a thorough gossip, like most weak men, found recompense for his hospitality in the pleasure of questioning them on the news of the country side.

A circumstance arrested Ellangowan's progress on the highroad to ruin. This was his marriage with a lady who had a portion of about four thousand pounds. Nobody in the neighbourhood could conceive why she married him and endowed him with her wealth, unless because he had a tall, handsome figure, a good set of features, a genteel address, and the most perfect good-humour. It might be some additional consideration, that she was herself at the reflecting age of twenty-eight, and had no near relations to control her actions or choice.

It was in this lady's behalf (confined for the first time after her marriage) that the speedy and active express, mentioned by the old dame of the cottage, had been despatched to Kippletringan on the night of Mannering's arrival.

Though we have said so much of the Laird himself, it still remains that we make the reader in some degree acquainted with his companion. This was Abel Sampson, commonly called, from his occupation as a pedagogue, Dominie Sampson. He was of low birth, but having evinced, even from his cradle, an uncommon seriousness of disposition, the poor parents were encouraged to hope that their bairn, as they expressed it, 'might wag his pow in a pulpit yet.' With an ambitious view to such a consummation, they pinched and pared, rose early and lay down late, ate dry bread and drank cold water, to secure to Abel the means of learning. Meantime, his tall, ungainly figure, his taciturn and grave manners, and some grotesque habits of swinging his limbs and screwing his visage while reciting his task, made poor Sampson the ridicule of all his school-companions. The same qualities secured him at Glasgow College a plentiful share of the same sort of notice. Half the youthful mob of 'the yards' used to assemble regularly to see Dominie Sampson (for he had already attained that honourable title) descend the stairs from the Greek class, with his lexicon under his arm, his long misshapen legs sprawling abroad, and keeping awkward time to the play of his immense shoulder-blades, as they raised and depressed the loose and threadbare black coat which was his constant and only wear. When he spoke, the efforts of the professor (professor of divinity though he was) were totally inadequate to restrain the inextinguishable laughter of the students, and sometimes even to repress his own. The long, sallow visage, the goggle eyes, the huge under-jaw, which appeared not to open and shut by an act of volition, but to be dropped and hoisted up again by some complicated machinery within the inner man, the harsh and dissonant voice, and the screech-owl notes to which it was exalted when he was exhorted to pronounce more distinctly,--all added fresh subject for mirth to the torn cloak and shattered shoe, which have afforded legitimate subjects of raillery against the poor scholar from Juvenal's time downward. It was never known that Sampson either exhibited irritability at this ill usage, or made the least attempt to retort upon his tormentors. He slunk from college by the most secret paths he could discover, and plunged himself into his miserable lodging, where, for eighteenpence a week, he was allowed the benefit of a straw mattress, and, if his landlady was in good humour, permission to study his task by her fire. Under all these disadvantages, he obtained a competent knowledge of Greek and Latin, and some acquaintance with the sciences.

In progress of time, Abel Sampson, probationer of divinity, was admitted to the privileges of a preacher. But, alas! partly from his own bashfulness, partly owing to a strong and obvious disposition to risibility which pervaded the congregation upon his first attempt, he became totally incapable of proceeding in his intended discourse, gasped, grinned, hideously rolled his eyes till the congregation thought them flying out of his head, shut the Bible, stumbled down the pulpit-stairs, trampling upon the old women who generally take their station there, and was ever after designated as a 'stickit minister.' And thus he wandered back to his own country, with blighted hopes and prospects, to share the poverty of his parents. As he had neither friend nor confidant, hardly even an acquaintance, no one had the means of observing closely how Dominie Sampson bore a disappointment which supplied the whole town with a week's sport. It would be endless even to mention the numerous jokes to which it gave birth, from a ballad called 'Sampson's Riddle,' written upon the subject by a smart young student of humanity, to the sly hope of the Principal that the fugitive had not, in imitation of his mighty namesake, taken the college gates along with him in his retreat.

To all appearance, the equanimity of Sampson was unshaken. He sought to assist his parents by teaching a school, and soon had plenty of scholars, but very few fees. In fact, he taught the sons of farmers for what they chose to give him, and the poor for nothing; and, to the shame of the former be it spoken, the pedagogue's gains never equalled those of a skilful ploughman. He wrote, however, a good hand, and added something to his pittance by copying accounts and writing letters for Ellangowan. By degrees, the Laird, who was much estranged from general society, became partial to that of Dominie Sampson. Conversation, it is true, was out of the question, but the Dominie was a good listener, and stirred the fire with some address. He attempted even to snuff the candles, but was unsuccessful, and relinquished that ambitious post of courtesy after having twice reduced the parlour to total darkness. So his civilities, thereafter, were confined to taking off his glass of ale in exactly the same time and measure with the Laird, and in uttering certain indistinct murmurs of acquiescence at the conclusion of the long and winding stories of Ellangowan.

On one of these occasions, he presented for the first time to Mannering his tall, gaunt, awkward, bony figure, attired in a threadbare suit of black, with a coloured handkerchief, not over clean, about his sinewy, scraggy neck, and his nether person arrayed in grey breeches, dark-blue stockings, clouted shoes, and small copper buckles.

Such is a brief outline of the lives and fortunes of those two persons in whose society Mannering now found himself comfortably seated.

*Do not the hist'ries of all ages
Relate miraculous presages
Of strange turns in the world's affairs,
Foreseen by astrologers, soothsayers,
Chaldeans, learned genethliacs,
And some that have writ almanacks?*

Hudibras.

The circumstances of the landlady were pleaded to Mannering, first, as an apology for her not appearing to welcome her guest, and for those deficiencies in his entertainment which her attention might have supplied, and then as an excuse for pressing an extra bottle of good wine. 'I cannot weel sleep,' said the Laird, with the anxious feelings of a father in such a predicament, 'till I hear she's gotten ower with it; and if you, sir, are not very sleepery, and would do me and the Dominie the honour to sit up wi' us, I am sure we shall not detain you very late. Luckie Howatson is very expeditious. There was ance a lass that was in that way; she did not live far from hereabouts--ye needna shake your head and groan, Dominie; I am sure the kirk dues were a' weel paid, and what can man do mair?--it was laid till her ere she had a sark ower her head; and the man that she since wadded does not think her a pin the waur for the misfortune. They live, Mr. Mannering, by the shoreside at Annan, and a mair decent, orderly couple, with six as fine bairns as ye would wish to see splash in a saltwater dub; and little curlie Godfrey--that's the eldest, the come o' will, as I may say--he's on board an excise yacht. I hae a cousin at the board of excise; that's Commissioner Bertram; he got his commissionership in the great contest for the county, that ye must have heard of, for it was appealed to the House of Commons. Now I should have voted there for the Laird of Balruddery; but ye see my father was a Jacobite, and out with Kenmore, so he never took the oaths; and I ken not weel how it was, but all that I could do and say, they keepit me off the roll, though my agent, that had a vote upon my estate, ranked as a good vote for auld Sir Thomas Kittlecourt. But, to return to what I was saying, Luckie Howatson is very expeditious, for this lass--'

Here the desultory and long-winded narrative of the Laird was interrupted by the voice of some one ascending the stairs from the kitchen story, and singing at full pitch of voice. The high notes were too shrill for a man, the low seemed too deep for a woman. The words, as far as Mannering could distinguish them, seemed to run thus:--

*Canny moment, lucky fit!
Is the lady lighter yet?
Be it lad, or be it lass,
Sign wi' cross and sain wi' mass.*

'It's Meg Merrilies, the gipsy, as sure as I am a sinner,' said Mr. Bertram. The Dominie groaned deeply, uncrossed his legs, drew in the huge splay foot which his former posture had extended, placed it perpendicularly, and stretched the other limb over it instead, puffing out between whiles huge volumes of tobacco smoke. 'What needs ye groan, Dominie? I am sure Meg's sangs do nae ill.'

'Nor good neither,' answered Dominie Sampson, in a voice whose untuneable harshness corresponded with the awkwardness of his figure. They were the first words which Mannering had heard him speak; and as he had been watching with some curiosity when this eating, drinking, moving, and smoking automaton would perform the part of speaking, he was a good deal diverted with the harsh timber tones which issued from him. But at this moment the door opened, and Meg Merrilies entered.

Her appearance made Mannering start. She was full six feet high, wore a man's great-coat over the rest of her dress, had in her hand a goodly sloethorn cudgel, and in all points of equipment, except her petticoats, seemed rather masculine than feminine. Her dark elf-locks shot out like the snakes of the gorgon between an old-fashioned bonnet called a bongrace, heightening the singular effect of her strong and weather-beaten features, which they partly shadowed, while her eye had a wild roll that indicated something like real or affected insanity.

'Aweel, Ellangowan,' she said, 'wad it no hae been a bonnie thing, an the leddy had been brought to bed, and me at the fair o' Drumshourloch, no kenning, nor dreaming a word about it? Wha was to hae keepit awa the worriecows, I trow? Ay, and the elves and gyre-carlings frae the bonnie bairn, grace be wi' it? Ay, or said Saint Colme's charm for its sake, the dear?' And without waiting an answer she began to sing--

*Trefoil, vervain, John's-wort, dill,
Hinders witches of their
will, Weel is them, that weel may
Fast upon Saint Andrew's day.*

*Saint Bride and her brat,
Saint Colme and his cat,
Saint Michael and his spear,
Keep the house frae reif and wear.*

This charm she sung to a wild tune, in a high and shrill voice, and, cutting three capers with such strength and agility as almost to touch the roof of the room, concluded, 'And now, Laird, will ye no order me a tass o' brandy?'

'That you shall have, Meg. Sit down yont there at the door and tell us what news ye have heard at the fair o' Drumshourloch.'

'Troth, Laird, and there was muckle want o' you, and the like o' you; for there was a whin bonnie lasses there, forbye mysell, and deil ane to gie them hansels.'

'Weel, Meg, and how many gipsies were sent to the tolbooth?'

'Troth, but three, Laird, for there were nae mair in the fair, bye mysell, as I said before, and I e'en gae them leg-bail, for there's nae ease in dealing wi' quarrelsome fowk. And there's Dunbog has warned the Red Rotten and John Young aff his grunds--black be his cast! he's nae gentleman, nor drap's bluid o' gentleman, wad grudge twa gangrel puir bodies the shelter o' a waste house, and the thistles by the roadside for a bit cuddy, and the bits o' rotten birk to boil their drap parritch wi'. Weel, there's Ane abune a'; but we'll see if the red cock craw not in his bonnie barn-yard ae morning before day-dawning.'

'Hush! Meg, hush! hush! that's not safe talk.'

'What does she mean?' said Mannering to Sampson, in an undertone.

'Fire-raising,' answered the laconic Dominie.

'Who, or what is she, in the name of wonder?'

'Harlot, thief, witch, and gipsy,' answered Sampson again.

'O troth, Laird,' continued Meg, during this by-talk, 'it's but to the like o' you ane can open their heart; ye see, they say Dunbog is nae mair a gentleman than the blunker that's biggit the bonnie house down in the howm. But the like o' you, Laird, that's a real gentleman for sae mony hundred years, and never hunds puir fowk aff your grund as if they were mad tykes, nane o' our fowk wad stir your gear if ye had as mony capons as there's leaves on the trysting-tree. And now some o' ye maun lay down your watch, and tell me the very minute o' the hour the wean's born, an I'll spae its fortune.'

'Ay, but, Meg, we shall not want your assistance, for here's a student from Oxford that kens much better than you how to spae its fortune; he does it by the stars.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Mannering, entering into the simple humour of his landlord, 'I will calculate his nativity according to the rule of the "triplicities," as recommended by Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Diocles, and Avicenna. Or I will begin ab hora questionis, as Haly, Messahala, Ganwehis, and Guido Bonatus have recommended.' One of Sampson's great recommendations to the favour of Mr. Bertram was, that he never detected the most gross attempt at imposition, so that the Laird, whose humble efforts at jocularities were chiefly confined to what were then called bites and bams, since denominated hoaxes and quizzes, had the fairest possible subject of wit in the unsuspecting Dominie. It is true, he never laughed, or joined in the laugh which his own simplicity afforded--nay, it is said, he never laughed but once in his life, and on that memorable occasion his landlady miscarried, partly through surprise at the event itself, and partly from terror at the hideous grimaces which attended this unusual cachinnation. The only effect which the discovery of such impositions produced upon this saturnine personage was, to extort an ejaculation of 'Prodigious!' or 'Very facetious!' pronounced syllabically, but without moving a muscle of his own countenance. On the present occasion, he turned a gaunt and ghastly stare upon the youthful astrologer, and seemed to doubt if he had rightly understood his answer to his patron.

'I am afraid, sir,' said Mannering, turning towards him, 'you may be one of those unhappy persons who, their dim eyes being unable to penetrate the starry spheres, and to discern therein the decrees of heaven at a distance, have their hearts barred against conviction by prejudice and misprision.'

'Truly,' said Sampson, 'I opine with Sir Isaac Newton, Knight, and umwhile master of his Majesty's mint, that the (pretended) science of astrology is altogether vain, frivolous, and unsatisfactory.' And here he reposed his oracular jaws.

'Really,' resumed the traveller, 'I am sorry to see a gentleman of your learning and gravity labouring under such strange blindness and delusion. Will you place the brief, the modern, and, as I may say, the vernacular name of Isaac Newton in opposition to the grave and sonorous authorities of Dariot, Bonatus, Ptolemy, Haly, Eztler, Dieterick, Naibob, Harfurt, Zael, Taustettor, Agrippa, Duretus, Maginus, Origen, and Argol? Do not Christians and Heathens, and Jews and Gentiles, and poets and philosophers, unite in allowing the starry influences?'

'Communis error--it is a general mistake,' answered the inflexible Dominie Sampson.

'Not so,' replied the young Englishman; 'it is a general and well-grounded belief.'

'It is the resource of cheaters, knaves, and cozeners,' said Sampson.

'Abusus non tollit usum.--The abuse of anything doth not abrogate the lawful use thereof.'

During this discussion Ellangowan was somewhat like a woodcock caught in his own springe. He turned his face alternately from the one spokesman to the other, and began, from the gravity with which Mannering plied his adversary, and the learning which he displayed in the controversy, to give him credit for being half serious. As for Meg, she fixed her bewildered eyes upon the astrologer, overpowered by a jargon more mysterious than her own.

Mannering pressed his advantage, and ran over all the hard terms of art which a tenacious memory supplied, and which, from circumstances hereafter to be noticed, had been familiar to him in early youth.

Signs and planets, in aspects sextile, quartile, trine, conjoined, or opposite; houses of heaven, with their cusps, hours, and minutes; almuten, almochoden, anabibazon, catabibazon; a thousand terms of equal sound and significance, poured thick and threefold upon the unshrinking Dominie, whose stubborn incredulity bore him out against the pelting of this pitiless storm.

At length the joyful announcement that the lady had presented her husband with a fine boy, and was (of course) as well as could be expected, broke off this intercourse. Mr. Bertram hastened to the lady's apartment, Meg Merrilies descended to the kitchen to secure her share of the groaning malt and the 'ken-no,' [Footnote: See Note i.] and Mannering, after looking at his watch, and noting with great exactness the hour and minute of the birth, requested, with becoming gravity, that the Dominie would conduct him to some place where he might have a view of the heavenly bodies.

The schoolmaster, without further answer, rose and threw open a door half sashed with glass, which led to an old-fashioned terrace-walk behind the modern house, communicating with the platform on which the ruins of the ancient castle were situated. The wind had arisen, and swept before it the clouds which had formerly obscured the sky. The moon was high, and at the full, and all the lesser satellites of heaven shone forth in cloudless effulgence. The scene which their light presented to Mannering was in the highest degree unexpected and striking.

We have observed, that in the latter part of his journey our traveller approached the sea-shore, without being aware how nearly. He now perceived that the ruins of Ellangowan Castle were situated upon a promontory, or projection of rock, which formed one side of a small and placid bay on the sea-shore. The modern mansion was placed lower, though closely adjoining, and the ground behind it descended to the sea by a small swelling green bank, divided into levels by natural terraces, on which grew some old trees, and terminating upon the white sand. The other side of the bay, opposite to the old castle, was a sloping and varied promontory, covered chiefly with copsewood, which on that favoured coast grows almost within water-mark. A fisherman's cottage peeped from among the trees. Even at this dead hour of night there were lights moving upon the shore, probably occasioned by the unloading a smuggling lugger from the Isle of Man which was lying in the bay. On the light from the sashed door of the house being observed, a halloo from the vessel of 'Ware hawk! Douse the glim!' alarmed those who were on shore, and the lights instantly disappeared.

It was one hour after midnight, and the prospect around was lovely. The grey old towers of the ruin, partly entire, partly broken, here bearing the rusty weather-stains of ages, and there partially mantled with ivy, stretched along the verge of the dark rock which rose on Mannering's right hand. In his front was the quiet bay, whose little waves, crisping and sparkling to the moonbeams, rolled successively along its surface, and dashed with a soft and murmuring ripple against the silvery beach. To the left the woods advanced far into the ocean, waving in the moonlight along ground of an undulating and varied form, and presenting those varieties of light and shade, and that interesting combination of glade and thicket, upon which the eye delights to rest, charmed with what it sees, yet curious to pierce still deeper into the intricacies of the woodland scenery. Above rolled the planets, each, by its own liquid orbit of light, distinguished from the inferior or more distant stars. So strangely can imagination deceive even those by whose volition it has been excited, that Mannering, while gazing upon these brilliant bodies, was half inclined to believe in the influence ascribed to them by superstition over human events. But Mannering was a youthful lover, and might perhaps be influenced by the feelings so exquisitely expressed by a modern poet:--

*For fable is Love's world, his home, his birthplace:
Delightedly dwells he 'mong fays, and talismans,
And spirits, and delightedly believes
Divinities, being himself divine
The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
Or forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and wat'ry depths--all these have vanish'd;
They live no longer in the faith of reason!
But still the heart doth need a language, still
Doth the old instinct bring back the old names.
And to yon starry world they now are gone,
Spirits or gods, that used to share this earth
With man as with their friend, and to the lover
Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky*

*Shoot influence down; and even at this day
'T is Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
And Venus who brings everything that's fair.*

Such musings soon gave way to others. 'Alas!' he muttered, 'my good old tutor, who used to enter so deep into the controversy between Heydon and Chambers on the subject of astrology, he would have looked upon the scene with other eyes, and would have seriously endeavoured to discover from the respective positions of these luminaries their probable effects on the destiny of the new-born infant, as if the courses or emanations of the stars superseded, or at least were co-ordinate with, Divine Providence. Well, rest be with him! he instilled into me enough of knowledge for erecting a scheme of nativity, and therefore will I presently go about it.' So saying, and having noted the position of the principal planetary bodies, Guy Mannering returned to the house. The Laird met him in the parlour, and, acquainting him with great glee that the boy was a fine healthy little fellow, seemed rather disposed to press further conviviality. He admitted, however, Mannering's plea of weariness, and, conducting him to his sleeping apartment, left him to repose for the evening.

CHAPTER IV

*Come and see' trust thine own eyes
A fearful sign stands in the house of life,
An enemy a fiend lurks close behind
The radiance of thy planet O be warned!*

COLERIDGE, from SCHILLER

The belief in astrology was almost universal in the middle of the seventeenth century; it began to waver and become doubtful towards the close of that period, and in the beginning of the eighteenth the art fell into general disrepute, and even under general ridicule. Yet it still retained many partizans even in the seats of learning. Grave and studious men were loath to relinquish the calculations which had early become the principal objects of their studies, and felt reluctant to descend from the predominating height to which a supposed insight into futurity, by the power of consulting abstract influences and conjunctions, had exalted them over the rest of mankind.

Among those who cherished this imaginary privilege with undoubting faith was an old clergyman with whom Mannering was placed during his youth. He wasted his eyes in observing the stars, and his brains in calculations upon their various combinations. His pupil, in early youth, naturally caught some portion of his enthusiasm, and laboured for a time to make himself master of the technical process of astrological research; so that, before he became convinced of its absurdity, William Lilly himself would have allowed him 'a curious fancy and piercing judgment in resolving a question of nativity.'

On the present occasion he arose as early in the morning as the shortness of the day permitted, and proceeded to calculate the nativity of the young heir of Ellangowan. He undertook the task *secundum artem*, as well to keep up appearances as from a sort of curiosity to know whether he yet remembered, and could practise, the imaginary science. He accordingly erected his scheme, or figure of heaven, divided into its twelve houses, placed the planets therein according to the ephemeris, and rectified their position to the hour and moment of the nativity. Without troubling our readers with the general prognostications which judicial astrology would have inferred from these circumstances, in this diagram there was one significator which pressed remarkably upon our astrologer's attention. Mars, having dignity in the cusp of the twelfth house, threatened captivity or sudden and violent death to the native; and Mannering, having recourse to those further rules by which diviners pretend to ascertain the vehemency of this evil direction, observed from the result that three periods would be particularly hazardous--his fifth, his tenth, his twenty-first year.

It was somewhat remarkable that Mannering had once before tried a similar piece of foolery at the instance of Sophia Wellwood, the young lady to whom he was attached, and that a similar conjunction of planetary influence threatened her with death or imprisonment in her thirty-ninth year. She was at this time eighteen; so that, according to the result of the scheme in both cases, the same year threatened her with the same misfortune that was presaged to the native or infant whom that night had introduced into the world. Struck with this coincidence, Mannering repeated his calculations; and the result approximated the events predicted, until at length the same month, and day of the month, seemed assigned as the period of peril to both.

It will be readily believed that, in mentioning this circumstance, we lay no weight whatever upon the pretended information thus conveyed. But it often happens, such is our natural love for the marvellous, that we willingly contribute our own efforts to beguile our better judgments. Whether the coincidence which I have mentioned was really one of those singular chances which sometimes happen against all ordinary calculations; or whether Mannering, bewildered amid the arithmetical labyrinth and technical jargon of astrology, had insensibly twice followed the same clue to guide him out of the maze; or whether his imagination, seduced by some point of apparent resemblance, lent its aid to make the similitude between the two operations more exactly accurate than it might otherwise have been, it is impossible to guess; but the impression upon his mind that the results exactly corresponded was vividly and indelibly strong.

He could not help feeling surprise at a coincidence so singular and unexpected. 'Does the devil mingle in the dance, to avenge himself for our trifling with an art said to be of magical origin? Or is it possible, as Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne admit, that there is some truth in a sober and regulated astrology, and that the influence of the stars is not to be denied, though the due application of it by the knaves who pretend to practise the art is greatly to be suspected?' A moment's consideration of the subject induced him to dismiss this opinion as fantastical, and only sanctioned by those learned men either because they durst not at once shock the universal prejudices of their age, or because they themselves were not altogether freed from the contagious influence of a prevailing superstition. Yet the result of his calculations in these two instances left so unpleasing an impression on his mind that, like Prospero, he mentally relinquished his art, and resolved, neither in jest nor earnest, ever again to practise judicial astrology.

He hesitated a good deal what he should say to the Laird of Ellangowan concerning the horoscope of his first-born; and at length resolved plainly to tell him the judgment which he had formed, at the same time acquainting him with the futility of the rules of art on which he had proceeded. With this resolution he walked out upon the terrace.

If the view of the scene around Ellangowan had been pleasing by moonlight, it lost none of its beauty by the light of the morning sun. The land, even in the month of November, smiled under its influence. A steep but regular ascent led from the terrace to the neighbouring eminence, and conducted Mannering to the front of the old castle. It consisted of two massive round towers projecting deeply and darkly at the extreme angles of a curtain, or flat wall, which united them, and thus protecting the main entrance, that opened through a lofty arch in the centre of the curtain into the inner court of the castle. The arms of the family, carved in freestone, frowned over the gateway, and the portal showed the spaces arranged by the architect for lowering the portcullis and raising the drawbridge. A rude farm-gate, made of young fir-trees nailed together, now formed the only safeguard of this once formidable entrance. The esplanade in front of the castle commanded a noble prospect.

The dreary scene of desolation through which Mannering's road had lain on the preceding evening was excluded from the view by some rising ground, and the landscape showed a pleasing alternation of hill and dale, intersected by a river, which was in some places visible, and hidden in others, where it rolled betwixt

deep and wooded banks. The spire of a church and the appearance of some houses indicated the situation of a village at the place where the stream had its junction with the ocean. The vales seemed well cultivated, the little inclosures into which they were divided skirting the bottom of the hills, and sometimes carrying their lines of straggling hedgerows a little way up the ascent. Above these were green pastures, tenanted chiefly by herds of black cattle, then the staple commodity of the country, whose distant low gave no unpleasing animation to the landscape. The remoter hills were of a sterner character, and, at still greater distance, swelled into mountains of dark heath, bordering the horizon with a screen which gave a defined and limited boundary to the cultivated country, and added at the same time the pleasing idea that it was sequestered and solitary. The sea-coast, which Mannering now saw in its extent, corresponded in variety and beauty with the inland view. In some places it rose into tall rocks, frequently crowned with the ruins of old buildings, towers, or beacons, which, according to tradition, were placed within sight of each other, that, in times of invasion or civil war, they might communicate by signal for mutual defence and protection. Ellangowan Castle was by far the most extensive and important of these ruins, and asserted from size and situation the superiority which its founders were said once to have possessed among the chiefs and nobles of the district. In other places the shore was of a more gentle description, indented with small bays, where the land sloped smoothly down, or sent into the sea promontories covered with wood.

A scene so different from what last night's journey had presaged produced a proportional effect upon Mannering. Beneath his eye lay the modern house--an awkward mansion, indeed, in point of architecture, but well situated, and with a warm, pleasant exposure. 'How happily,' thought our hero, 'would life glide on in such a retirement! On the one hand, the striking remnants of ancient grandeur, with the secret consciousness of family pride which they inspire; on the other, enough of modern elegance and comfort to satisfy every moderate wish. Here then, and with thee, Sophia!'

We shall not pursue a lover's day-dream any farther. Mannering stood a minute with his arms folded, and then turned to the ruined castle.

On entering the gateway, he found that the rude magnificence of the inner court amply corresponded with the grandeur of the exterior. On the one side ran a range of windows lofty and large, divided by carved mullions of stone, which had once lighted the great hall of the castle; on the other were various buildings of different heights and dates, yet so united as to present to the eye a certain general effect of uniformity of front. The doors and windows were ornamented with projections exhibiting rude specimens of sculpture and tracery, partly entire and partly broken down, partly covered by ivy and trailing plants, which grew luxuriantly among the ruins. That end of the court which faced the entrance had also been formerly closed by a range of buildings; but owing, it was said, to its having been battered by the ships of the Parliament under Deane, during the long civil war, this part of the castle was much more ruinous than the rest, and exhibited a great chasm, through which Mannering could observe the sea, and the little vessel (an armed lugger), which retained her station in the centre of the bay. [Footnote: The outline of the above description, as far as the supposed ruins are concerned, will be found somewhat to resemble the noble remains of Carlaverock Castle, six or seven miles from Dumfries, and near to Lochar Moss.] While Mannering was gazing round the ruins, he heard from the interior of an apartment on the left hand the voice of the gipsy he had seen on the preceding evening. He soon found an aperture through which he could observe her without being himself visible; and could not help feeling that her figure, her employment, and her situation conveyed the exact impression of an ancient sibyl.

She sate upon a broken corner-stone in the angle of a paved apartment, part of which she had swept clean to afford a smooth space for the evolutions of her spindle. A strong sunbeam through a lofty and narrow window fell upon her wild dress and features, and afforded her light for her occupation; the rest of the apartment was very gloomy. Equipt in a habit which mingled the national dress of the Scottish common people with something of an Eastern costume, she spun a thread drawn from wool of three different colours, black, white, and grey, by assistance of those ancient implements of housewifery now almost banished from the land, the distaff and spindle. As she spun, she sung what seemed to be a charm. Mannering, after in vain attempting to make himself master of the exact words of her song, afterwards attempted the following paraphrase of what, from a few intelligible phrases, he concluded to be its purport:--

*Twist ye, twine ye! even so
Mingle shades of joy and woe,
Hope, and fear, and peace, and strife,
In the thread of human life.*

*While the mystic twist is spinning,
And the infant's life beginning,
Dimly seen through twilight bending,
Lo, what varied shapes attending!*

*Passions wild, and Follies vain,
Pleasures soon exchanged for pain,
Doubt, and Jealousy, and Fear
In the magic dance appear.*

*Now they wax, and now they dwindle,
Whirling with the whirling spindle.
Twist ye, twine ye! even so
Mingle human bliss and woe.*

Ere our translator, or rather our free imitator, had arranged these stanzas in his head, and while he was yet hammering out a rhyme for DWINDLE, the task of the sibyl was accomplished, or her wool was expended. She took the spindle, now charged with her labours, and, undoing the thread gradually, measured it by casting it over her elbow and bringing each loop round between her forefinger and thumb. When she had measured it out, she muttered to herself--'A hank, but not a haill ane--the full years o' three score and ten, but thrice broken, and thrice to OOP (i.e. to unite); he'll be a lucky lad an he win through wi't.'

Our hero was about to speak to the prophetess, when a voice, hoarse as the waves with which it mingled, hallooed twice, and with increasing impatience--'Meg, Meg Merrilies! Gipsy--hag--tausend deyvils!'

'I am coming, I am coming, Captain,' answered Meg; and in a moment or two the impatient commander whom she addressed made his appearance from the broken part of the ruins.

He was apparently a seafaring man, rather under the middle size, and with a countenance bronzed by a thousand conflicts with the north-east wind. His frame was prodigiously muscular, strong, and thick-set; so that it seemed as if a man of much greater height would have been an inadequate match in any close personal conflict. He was hard-favoured, and, which was worse, his face bore nothing of the insouciance, the careless, frolicsome jollity and vacant curiosity, of a sailor on shore. These qualities, perhaps, as much as any others, contribute to the high popularity of our seamen, and the general good inclination which our society expresses towards them. Their gallantry, courage, and hardihood are qualities which excite reverence, and perhaps rather humble pacific landsmen in their presence; and neither respect nor a sense of humiliation are feelings easily combined with a familiar fondness towards those who inspire them. But the boyish frolics, the exulting high spirits, the unreflecting mirth of a sailor when enjoying himself on shore, temper the more formidable points of his character. There was nothing like these in this man's face; on the contrary, a surly and even savage scowl appeared to darken features which would have been harsh and unpleasant under any expression or modification. 'Where are you, Mother Deyvilson?' he said, with somewhat of a foreign accent, though speaking perfectly good English. 'Donner and blitzen! we have been staying this half-hour. Come, bless the good ship and the voyage, and be cursed to ye for a hag of Satan!'

At this moment he noticed Mannering, who, from the position which he had taken to watch Meg Merrilies's incantations, had the appearance of some one who was concealing himself, being half hidden by the buttress behind which he stood. The Captain, for such he styled himself, made a sudden and startled pause, and

thrust his right hand into his bosom between his jacket and waistcoat as if to draw some weapon. 'What cheer, brother? you seem on the outlook, eh?' Ere Mannering, somewhat struck by the man's gesture and insolent tone of voice, had made any answer, the gipsy emerged from her vault and joined the stranger. He questioned her in an undertone, looking at Mannering--'A shark alongside, eh?' She answered in the same tone of under-dialogue, using the cant language of her tribe--'Cut ben whids, and stow them; a gentry cove of the ken.' [Footnote: Meaning--Stop your uncivil language; that is a gentleman from the house below.] The fellow's cloudy visage cleared up. 'The top of the morning to you, sir; I find you are a visitor of my friend Mr. Bertram. I beg pardon, but I took you for another sort of a person.'

Mannering replied, 'And you, sir, I presume, are the master of that vessel in the bay?'

'Ay, ay, sir; I am Captain Dirk Hatteraick, of the Yungfrau Hagenslaapen, well known on this coast; I am not ashamed of my name, nor of my vessel--no, nor of my cargo neither for that matter.'

'I daresay you have no reason, sir.'

'Tausend donner, no; I'm all in the way of fair trade. Just loaded yonder at Douglas, in the Isle of Man--neat cogniac--real hyson and souchong--Mechlin lace, if you want any--right cogniac--we bumped ashore a hundred kegs last night.'

'Really, sir, I am only a traveller, and have no sort of occasion for anything of the kind at present.'

'Why, then, good-morning to you, for business must be minded--unless ye'll go aboard and take schnaps; you shall have a pouch-full of tea ashore. Dirk Hatteraick knows how to be civil.'

There was a mixture of impudence, hardihood, and suspicious fear about this man which was inexpressibly disgusting. His manners were those of a ruffian, conscious of the suspicion attending his character, yet aiming to bear it down by the affectation of a careless and hardy familiarity. Mannering briefly rejected his proffered civilities; and, after a surly good-morning, Hatteraick retired with the gipsy to that part of the ruins from which he had first made his appearance. A very narrow staircase here went down to the beach, intended probably for the convenience of the garrison during a siege. By this stair the couple, equally amiable in appearance and respectable by profession, descended to the sea-side. The soi-disant captain embarked in a small boat with two men, who appeared to wait for him, and the gipsy remained on the shore, reciting or singing, and gesticulating with great vehemence.

CHAPTER IV

*You have fed upon my seignories,
Dispark'd my parks, and fell'd my forest woods,
From mine own windows torn my household coat,
Razed out my impress, leaving me no sign,
Save men's opinions and my living blood,
To show the world I am a gentleman.*

Richard II.

When the boat which carried the worthy captain on board his vessel had accomplished that task, the sails began to ascend, and the ship was got under way. She fired three guns as a salute to the house of Ellangowan, and then shot away rapidly before the wind, which blew off shore, under all the sail she could crowd.

'Ay, ay,' said the Laird, who had sought Mannering for some time, and now joined him, 'there they go--there go the free-traders--there go Captain Dirk Hatteraick and the Yungfrau Hagenslaapen, half Manks, half Dutchman, half devil! run out the boltsprit, up mainsail, top and top-gallant sails, royals, and skyscrapers, and away--follow who can! That fellow, Mr. Mannering, is the terror of all the excise and custom-house cruisers; they can make nothing of him; he drubs them, or he distances them;--and, speaking of excise, I come to bring you to breakfast; and you shall have some tea, that--'

Mannering by this time was aware that one thought linked strangely on to another in the concatenation of worthy Mr. Bertram's ideas, *Like orient pearls at random strung;* and therefore, before the current of his associations had drifted farther from the point he had left, he brought him back by some inquiry about Dirk Hatteraick.

'O he's a--a--gude sort of blackguard fellow eneugh; naeboddy cares to trouble him--smuggler, when his guns are in ballast--privateer, or pirate, faith, when he gets them mounted. He has done more mischief to the revenue folk than ony rogue that ever came out of Ramsay.'

'But, my good sir, such being his character, I wonder he has any protection and encouragement on this coast.'

'Why, Mr. Mannering, people must have brandy and tea, and there's none in the country but what comes this way; and then there's short accounts, and maybe a keg or two, or a dozen pounds, left at your stable-door, instead of a d--d lang account at Christmas from Duncan Robb, the grocer at Kippletringan, who has aye a sum to make up, and either wants ready money or a short-dated bill. Now, Hatteraick will take wood, or he'll take bark, or he'll take barley, or he'll take just what's convenient at the time. I'll tell you a gude story about that. There was ance a laird--that's Macfie of Gudgeonford,--he had a great number of kain hens--that's hens that the tenant pays to the landlord, like a sort of rent in kind. They aye feed mine very ill; Luckie Finniston sent up three that were a shame to be seen only last week, and yet she has twelve bows sowing of victual; indeed her goodman, Duncan Finniston--that's him that's gone--(we must all die, Mr. Mannering, that's ower true)--and, speaking of that, let us live in the meanwhile, for here's breakfast on the table, and the Dominie ready to say the grace.'

The Dominie did accordingly pronounce a benediction, that exceeded in length any speech which Mannering had yet heard him utter. The tea, which of course belonged to the noble Captain Hatteraick's trade, was pronounced excellent. Still Mannering hinted, though with due delicacy, at the risk of encouraging such desperate characters. 'Were it but in justice to the revenue, I should have supposed--'

'Ah, the revenue lads--for Mr. Bertram never embraced a general or abstract idea, and his notion of the revenue was personified in the commissioners, surveyors, comptrollers, and riding officers whom he happened to know--'the revenue lads can look sharp eneugh out for themselves, no ane needs to help them; and they have a' the soldiers to assist them besides; and as to justice--you 'll be surprised to hear it, Mr. Mannering, but I am not a justice of peace!'

Mannering assumed the expected look of surprise, but thought within himself that the worshipful bench suffered no great deprivation from wanting the assistance of his good-humoured landlord. Mr. Bertram had now hit upon one of the few subjects on which he felt sore, and went on with some energy.

'No, sir, the name of Godfrey Bertram of Ellangowan is not in the last commission, though there's scarce a carle in the country that has a plough-gate of land, but what he must ride to quarter-sessions and write J.P. after his name. I ken fu' weel whom I am obliged to--Sir Thomas Kittlecourt as good as tell'd me he would sit in my skirts if he had not my interest at the last election; and because I chose to go with my own blood and third cousin, the Laird of Balruddery, they keepit me off the roll of freeholders; and now there comes a new nomination of justices, and I am left out! And whereas they pretend it was because I let David Mac-Guffog, the constable, draw the warrants, and manage the business his ain gate, as if I had been a nose o' wax, it's a main untruth; for I granted but seven warrants in my life, and the Dominie wrote every one of them--and if it had not been that unlucky business of Sandy Mac-Gruthar's, that the constables should have keepit twa or

three days up yonder at the auld castle, just till they could get conveniency to send him to the county jail--and that cost me eneugh o' siller. But I ken what Sir Thomas wants very weel--it was just sic and siclike about the seat in the kirk o' Kilmagirdle--was I not entitled to have the front gallery facing the minister, rather than Mac-Crosskie of Creochstone, the son of Deacon Mac-Crosskie, the Dumfries weaver?' Mannering expressed his acquiescence in the justice of these various complaints.

'And then, Mr. Mannering, there was the story about the road and the fauld-dike. I ken Sir Thomas was behind there, and I said plainly to the clerk to the trustees that I saw the cloven foot, let them take that as they like. Would any gentleman, or set of gentlemen, go and drive a road right through the corner of a fauld-dike and take away, as my agent observed to them, like twa roods of gude moorland pasture? And there was the story about choosing the collector of the cess--'

'Certainly, sir, it is hard you should meet with any neglect in a country where, to judge from the extent of their residence, your ancestors must have made a very important figure.'

'Very true, Mr. Mannering; I am a plain man and do not dwell on these things, and I must needs say I have little memory for them; but I wish ye could have heard my father's stories about the auld fights of the Mac-Dingawaies--that's the Bertrams that now is--wi' the Irish and wi' the Highlanders that came here in their berlings from Ilay and Cantire; and how they went to the Holy Land--that is, to Jerusalem and Jericho, wi' a' their clan at their heels--they had better have gaen to Jamaica, like Sir Thomas Kittlecourt's uncle--and how they brought hame relics like those that Catholics have, and a flag that's up yonder in the garret. If they had been casks of muscavado and puncheons of rum it would have been better for the estate at this day; but there's little comparison between the auld keep at Kittlecourt and the castle o' Ellangowan; I doubt if the keep's forty feet of front. But ye make no breakfast, Mr. Mannering; ye're no eating your meat; allow me to recommend some of the kipper. It was John Hay that catcht it, Saturday was three weeks, down at the stream below Hempseed ford,' etc. etc. etc.

The Laird, whose indignation had for some time kept him pretty steady to one topic, now launched forth into his usual roving style of conversation, which gave Mannering ample time to reflect upon the disadvantages attending the situation which an hour before he had thought worthy of so much envy. Here was a country gentleman, whose most estimable quality seemed his perfect good-nature, secretly fretting himself and murmuring against others for causes which, compared with any real evil in life, must weigh like dust in the balance. But such is the equal distribution of Providence. To those who lie out of the road of great afflictions are assigned petty vexations which answer all the purpose of disturbing their serenity; and every reader must have observed that neither natural apathy nor acquired philosophy can render country gentlemen insensible to the grievances which occur at elections, quarter-sessions, and meetings of trustees.

Curious to investigate the manners of the country, Mannering took the advantage of a pause in good Mr. Bertram's string of stories to inquire what Captain Hatteraick so earnestly wanted with the gipsy woman.

'O, to bless his ship, I suppose. You must know, Mr. Mannering, that these free-traders, whom the law calls smugglers, having no religion, make it all up in superstition; and they have as many spells and charms and nonsense--'

'Vanity and waur!' said the Dominie; 'it is a trafficking with the Evil One. Spells, periapts, and charms are of his device--choice arrows out of Apollyon's quiver.'

'Hold your peace, Dominie; ye're speaking for ever'--by the way, they were the first words the poor man had uttered that morning, excepting that he said grace and returned thanks--'Mr. Mannering cannot get in a word for ye! And so, Mr. Mannering, talking of astronomy and spells and these matters, have ye been so kind as to consider what we were speaking about last night?'

'I begin to think, Mr. Bertram, with your worthy friend here, that I have been rather jesting with edge-tools; and although neither you nor I, nor any sensible man, can put faith in the predictions of astrology, yet, as it has sometimes happened that inquiries into futurity, undertaken in jest, have in their results produced serious and unpleasant effects both upon actions and characters, I really wish you would dispense with my replying to your question.'

It was easy to see that this evasive answer only rendered the Laird's curiosity more uncontrollable. Mannering, however, was determined in his own mind not to expose the infant to the inconveniences which might have arisen from his being supposed the object of evil prediction. He therefore delivered the paper into Mr. Bertram's hand, and requested him to keep it for five years with the seal unbroken, until the month of November was expired. After that date had intervened he left him at liberty to examine the writing, trusting that, the first fatal period being then safely overpassed, no credit would be paid to its farther contents. This Mr. Bertram was content to promise, and Mannering, to ensure his fidelity, hinted at misfortunes which would certainly take place if his injunctions were neglected. The rest of the day, which Mannering, by Mr. Bertram's invitation, spent at Ellangowan, passed over without anything remarkable; and on the morning of that which followed the traveller mounted his palfrey, bade a courteous adieu to his hospitable landlord and to his clerical attendant, repeated his good wishes for the prosperity of the family, and then, turning his horse's head towards England, disappeared from the sight of the inmates of Ellangowan. He must also disappear from that of our readers, for it is to another and later period of his life that the present narrative relates.

CHAPTER VI

*Next, the Justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances--
And so he plays his part*

--As You Like It

When Mrs. Bertram of Ellangowan was able to hear the news of what had passed during her confinement, her apartment rung with all manner of gossiping respecting the handsome young student from Oxford who had told such a fortune by the stars to the young Laird, 'blessings on his dainty face.' The form, accent, and manners of the stranger were expatiated upon. His horse, bridle, saddle, and stirrups did not remain unnoticed. All this made a great impression upon the mind of Mrs. Bertram, for the good lady had no small store of superstition.

Her first employment, when she became capable of a little work, was to make a small velvet bag for the scheme of nativity which she had obtained from her husband. Her fingers itched to break the seal, but credulity proved stronger than curiosity; and she had the firmness to inclose it, in all its integrity, within two slips of parchment, which she sewed round it to prevent its being chafed. The whole was then put into the velvet bag aforesaid, and hung as a charm round the neck of the infant, where his mother resolved it should remain until the period for the legitimate satisfaction of her curiosity should arrive.

The father also resolved to do his part by the child in securing him a good education; and, with the view that it should commence with the first dawns of reason, Dominie Sampson was easily induced to renounce his public profession of parish schoolmaster, make his constant residence at the Place, and, in consideration of a sum not quite equal to the wages of a footman even at that time, to undertake to communicate to the future Laird of Ellangowan all the erudition which he had, and all the graces and accomplishments which--he had not indeed, but which he had never discovered that he wanted. In this arrangement the Laird found also his private advantage, securing the constant benefit of a patient auditor, to whom he told his stories when they were alone, and at whose expense he could break a sly jest when he had company.

About four years after this time a great commotion took place in the county where Ellangowan is situated.

Those who watched the signs of the times had long been of opinion that a change of ministry was about to take place; and at length, after a due proportion of hopes, fears, and delays, rumours from good authority and bad authority, and no authority at all; after some clubs had drank Up with this statesman and others Down with him; after riding, and running, and posting, and addressing, and counter-addressing, and proffers of lives and fortunes, the blow was at length struck, the administration of the day was dissolved, and parliament, as a natural consequence, was dissolved also.

Sir Thomas Kittlecourt, like other members in the same situation, posted down to his county, and met but an indifferent reception. He was a partizan of the old administration; and the friends of the new had already set about an active canvass in behalf of John Featherhead, Esq., who kept the best hounds and hunters in the shire. Among others who joined the standard of revolt was Gilbert Glossin, writer in—, agent for the Laird of Ellangowan. This honest gentleman had either been refused some favour by the old member, or, what is as probable, he had got all that he had the most distant pretension to ask, and could only look to the other side for fresh advancement. Mr. Glossin had a vote upon Ellangowan's property; and he was now determined that his patron should have one also, there being no doubt which side Mr. Bertram would embrace in the contest. He easily persuaded Ellangowan that it would be creditable to him to take the field at the head of as strong a party as possible; and immediately went to work, making votes, as every Scotch lawyer knows how, by splitting and subdividing the superiorities upon this ancient and once powerful barony. These were so extensive that, by dint of clipping and paring here, adding and eking there, and creating over-lords upon all the estate which Bertram held of the crown, they advanced at the day of contest at the head of ten as good men of parchment as ever took the oath of trust and possession. This strong reinforcement turned the dubious day of battle. The principal and his agent divided the honour; the reward fell to the latter exclusively. Mr. Gilbert Glossin was made clerk of the peace, and Godfrey Bertram had his name inserted in a new commission of justices, issued immediately upon the sitting of the parliament.

This had been the summit of Mr. Bertram's ambition; not that he liked either the trouble or the responsibility of the office, but he thought it was a dignity to which he was well entitled, and that it had been withheld from him by malice prepense. But there is an old and true Scotch proverb, 'Fools should not have chapping sticks'; that is, weapons of offence. Mr. Bertram was no sooner possessed of the judicial authority which he had so much longed for than he began to exercise it with more severity than mercy, and totally belied all the opinions which had hitherto been formed of his inert good-nature. We have read somewhere of a justice of peace who, on being nominated in the commission, wrote a letter to a bookseller for the statutes respecting his official duty in the following orthography--'Please send the ax relating to a gustus pease.' No doubt, when this learned gentleman had possessed himself of the axe, he hewed the laws with it to some purpose. Mr. Bertram was not quite so ignorant of English grammar as his worshipful predecessor; but Augustus Pease himself could not have used more indiscriminately the weapon unwarily put into his hand.

In good earnest, he considered the commission with which he had been entrusted as a personal mark of favour from his sovereign; forgetting that he had formerly thought his being deprived of a privilege, or honour, common to those of his rank was the result of mere party cabal. He commanded his trusty aid-de-camp, Dominie Sampson, to read aloud the commission; and at the first words, 'The King has been pleased to appoint'--'Pleased!' he exclaimed in a transport of gratitude; 'honest gentleman! I'm sure he cannot be better pleased than I am.'

Accordingly, unwilling to confine his gratitude to mere feelings or verbal expressions, he gave full current to the new-born zeal of office, and endeavoured to express his sense of the honour conferred upon him by an unmitigated activity in the discharge of his duty. New brooms, it is said, sweep clean; and I myself can bear witness that, on the arrival of a new housemaid, the ancient, hereditary, and domestic spiders who have spun their webs over the lower division of my bookshelves (consisting chiefly of law and divinity) during the peaceful reign of her predecessor, fly at full speed before the probationary inroads of the new mercenary. Even so the Laird of Ellangowan ruthlessly commenced his magisterial reform, at the expense of various established and superannuated pickers and stealers who had been his neighbours for half a century. He wrought his miracles like a second Duke Humphrey; and by the influence of the beadle's rod caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the palsied to labour. He detected poachers, black-fishers, orchard-breakers, and pigeon-shooters; had the applause of the bench for his reward, and the public credit of an active magistrate.

All this good had its rateable proportion of evil. Even an admitted nuisance of ancient standing should not be abated without some caution. The zeal of our worthy friend now involved in great distress sundry personages whose idle and mendicant habits his own lachesse had contributed to foster, until these habits had become irreclaimable, or whose real incapacity for exertion rendered them fit objects, in their own phrase, for the charity of all well-disposed Christians. The 'long-remembered beggar,' who for twenty years had made his regular rounds within the neighbourhood, received rather as an humble friend than as an object of charity, was sent to the neighbouring workhouse. The decrepit dame, who travelled round the parish upon a hand-barrow, circulating from house to house like a bad shilling, which every one is in haste to pass to his neighbour,--she, who used to call for her bearers as loud, or louder, than a traveller demands post-horses,--even she shared the same disastrous fate. The 'daft Jock,' who, half knave, half idiot, had been the sport of each succeeding race of village children for a good part of a century, was remitted to the county bridewell, where, secluded from free air and sunshine, the only advantages he was capable of enjoying, he pined and died in the course of six months. The old sailor, who had so long rejoiced the smoky rafters of every kitchen in the country by singing 'Captain Ward' and 'Bold Admiral Benbow,' was banished from the county for no better reason than that he was supposed to speak with a strong Irish accent. Even the annual rounds of the pedlar were abolished by the Justice, in his hasty zeal for the administration of rural police.

These things did not pass without notice and censure. We are not made of wood or stone, and the things which connect themselves with our hearts and habits cannot, like bark or lichen, be rent away without our missing them. The farmer's dame lacked her usual share of intelligence, perhaps also the self-applause which she had felt while distributing the awmous (alms), in shape of a gowpen (handful) of oatmeal, to the mendicant who brought the news. The cottage felt inconvenience from interruption of the petty trade carried on by the itinerant dealers. The children lacked their supply of sugarplums and toys; the young women wanted pins, ribbons, combs, and ballads; and the old could no longer barter their eggs for salt, snuff, and tobacco. All these circumstances brought the busy Laird of Ellangowan into discredit, which was the more general on account of his former popularity. Even his lineage was brought up in judgment against him. They thought 'naething of what the like of Greenside, or Burnville, or Viewforth might do, that were strangers in the country; but Ellangowan! that had been a name among them since the Mirk Monanday, and lang before--HIM to be grinding the puir at that rate! They ca'd his grandfather the Wicked Laird; but, though he was whiles fractious aneuch, when he got into roving company and had ta'en the drap drink, he would have scorned to gang on at this gate. Na, na, the muckle chumlay in the Auld Place reeked like a killogie in his time, and there were as mony puir folk riving at the banes in the court, and about the door, as there were gentles in the ha'. And the leddy, on ilka Christmas night as it came round, gae twelve siller pennies to ilka puir body about, in honour of the twelve apostles like. They were fond to ca' it papistrie; but I think our great folk might take a lesson frae the papists whiles. They gie another sort o' help to puir folk than just dinging down a saxpence in the brod on the Sabbath, and kilting, and scourging, and drumming them a' the sax days o' the week besides.'

Such was the gossip over the good twopenny in every ale-house within three or four miles of Ellangowan, that being about the diameter of the orbit in which our friend Godfrey Bertram, Esq., J. P., must be considered as the principal luminary. Still greater scope was given to evil tongues by the removal of a colony of gipsies, with one of whom our reader is somewhat acquainted, and who had for a great many years enjoyed their chief settlement upon the estate of Ellangowan.

CHAPTER VII

*Come, princes of the ragged regiment,
You of the blood! PRIGS, my most upright lord,*

*And these, what name or title e'er they bear,
JARKMAN, or PATRICO, CRANKE or CLAPPER-DUDGEON,
PRATER or ABRAM-MAN--I speak of all.*

Beggar's Bush.

Although the character of those gipsy tribes which formerly inundated most of the nations of Europe, and which in some degree still subsist among them as a distinct people, is generally understood, the reader will pardon my saying a few words respecting their situation in Scotland.

It is well known that the gipsies were at an early period acknowledged as a separate and independent race by one of the Scottish monarchs, and that they were less favourably distinguished by a subsequent law, which rendered the character of gipsy equal in the judicial balance to that of common and habitual thief, and prescribed his punishment accordingly. Notwithstanding the severity of this and other statutes, the fraternity prospered amid the distresses of the country, and received large accessions from among those whom famine, oppression, or the sword of war had deprived of the ordinary means of subsistence. They lost in a great measure by this intermixture the national character of Egyptians, and became a mingled race, having all the idleness and predatory habits of their Eastern ancestors, with a ferocity which they probably borrowed from the men of the north who joined their society. They travelled in different bands, and had rules among themselves, by which each tribe was confined to its own district. The slightest invasion of the precincts which had been assigned to another tribe produced desperate skirmishes, in which there was often much blood shed.

The patriotic Fletcher of Saltoun drew a picture of these banditti about a century ago, which my readers will peruse with astonishment:--

'There are at this day in Scotland (besides a great many poor families very meanly provided for by the church boxes, with others who, by living on bad food, fall into various diseases) two hundred thousand people begging from door to door. These are not only no way advantageous, but a very grievous burden to so poor a country. And though the number of them be perhaps double to what it was formerly, by reason of this present great distress, yet in all times there have been about one hundred thousand of those vagabonds, who have lived without any regard or subjection either to the laws of the land or even those of God and nature . . . No magistrate could ever discover, or be informed, which way one in a hundred of these wretches died, or that ever they were baptized. Many murders have been discovered among them; and they are not only a most unspeakable oppression to poor tenants (who, if they give not bread or some kind of provision to perhaps forty such villains in one day, are sure to be insulted by them), but they rob many poor people who live in houses distant from any neighbourhood. In years of plenty, many thousands of them meet together in the mountains, where they feast and riot for many days; and at country weddings, markets, burials, and other the like public occasions, they are to be seen, both man and woman, perpetually drunk, cursing, blaspheming, and fighting together.'

Notwithstanding the deplorable picture presented in this extract, and which Fletcher himself, though the energetic and eloquent friend of freedom, saw no better mode of correcting than by introducing a system of domestic slavery, the progress of time, and increase both of the means of life and of the power of the laws, gradually reduced this dreadful evil within more narrow bounds. The tribes of gipsies, jockies, or cairds--for by all these denominations such banditti were known--became few in number, and many were entirely rooted out. Still, however, a sufficient number remained to give, occasional alarm and constant vexation. Some rude handicrafts were entirely resigned to these itinerants, particularly the art of trencher-making, of manufacturing horn-spoons, and the whole mystery of the tinker. To these they added a petty trade in the coarse sorts of earthenware. Such were their ostensible means of livelihood. Each tribe had usually some fixed place of rendezvous, which they occasionally occupied and considered as their standing camp, and in the vicinity of which they generally abstained from depredation. They had even talents and accomplishments, which made them occasionally useful and entertaining. Many cultivated music with success; and the favourite fiddler or piper of a district was often to be found in a gipsy town. They understood all out-of-door sports, especially otter-hunting, fishing, or finding game. They bred the best and boldest terriers, and sometimes had good pointers for sale. In winter the women told fortunes, the men showed tricks of legerdemain; and these accomplishments often helped to while away a weary or stormy evening in the circle of the 'farmer's ha'. The wildness of their character, and the indomitable pride with which they despised all regular labour, commanded a certain awe, which was not diminished by the consideration that these strollers were a vindictive race, and were restrained by no check, either of fear or conscience, from taking desperate vengeance upon those who had offended them. These tribes were, in short, the pariahs of Scotland, living like wild Indians among European settlers, and, like them, judged of rather by their own customs, habits, and opinions, than as if they had been members of the civilised part of the community. Some hordes of them yet remain, chiefly in such situations as afford a ready escape either into a waste country or into another Jurisdiction. Nor are the features of their character much softened. Their numbers, however, are so greatly diminished that, instead of one hundred thousand, as calculated by Fletcher, it would now perhaps be impossible to collect above five hundred throughout all Scotland.

A tribe of these itinerants, to whom Meg Merrilies appertained, had long been as stationary as their habits permitted in a glen upon the estate of Ellangowan. They had there erected a few huts, which they denominated their 'city of refuge,' and where, when not absent on excursions, they harboured unmolested, as the crows that roosted in the old ash-trees around them. They had been such long occupants that they were considered in some degree as proprietors of the wretched shealings which they inhabited. This protection they were said anciently to have repaid by service to the Laird in war, or more frequently, by infesting or plundering the lands of those neighbouring barons with whom he chanced to be at feud. Latterly their services were of a more pacific nature. The women spun mittens for the lady, and knitted boot-hose for the Laird, which were annually presented at Christmas with great form. The aged sibyls blessed the bridal bed of the Laird when he married, and the cradle of the heir when born. The men repaired her ladyship's cracked china, and assisted the Laird in his sporting parties, wormed his dogs, and cut the ears of his terrier puppies. The children gathered nuts in the woods, and cranberries in the moss, and mushrooms on the pastures, for tribute to the Place. These acts of voluntary service, and acknowledgments of dependence, were rewarded by protection on some occasions, connivance on others, and broken victuals, ale, and brandy when circumstances called for a display of generosity; and this mutual intercourse of good offices, which had been carried on for at least two centuries, rendered the inhabitants of Derncleugh a kind of privileged retainers upon the estate of Ellangowan. 'The knaves' were the Laird's 'exceeding good friends'; and he would have deemed himself very ill used if his countenance could not now and then have borne them out against the law of the country and the local magistrate. But this friendly union was soon to be dissolved.

The community of Derncleugh, who cared for no rogues but their own, were wholly without alarm at the severity of the Justice's proceedings towards other itinerants. They had no doubt that he determined to suffer no mendicants or strollers in the country but what resided on his own property, and practised their trade by his immediate permission, implied or expressed. Nor was Mr. Bertram in a hurry to exert his newly-acquired authority at the expense of these old settlers. But he was driven on by circumstances.

At the quarter-sessions our new Justice was publicly upbraided by a gentleman of the opposite party in county politics, that, while he affected a great zeal for the public police, and seemed ambitious of the fame of an active magistrate, he fostered a tribe of the greatest rogues in the country, and permitted them to harbour within a mile of the house of Ellangowan. To this there was no reply, for the fact was too evident and well known. The Laird digested the taunt as he best could, and in his way home amused himself with speculations on the easiest method of ridding himself of these vagrants, who brought a stain upon his fair fame as a magistrate. Just as he had resolved to take the first opportunity of quarrelling with the pariahs of Derncleugh, a cause of provocation presented itself.

Since our friend's advancement to be a conservator of the peace, he had caused the gate at the head of his avenue, which formerly, having only one hinge, remained at all times hospitably open--he had caused this gate, I say, to be newly hung and handsomely painted. He had also shut up with paling, curiously twisted with furze, certain holes in the fences adjoining, through which the gipsy boys used to scramble into the plantations to gather birds' nests, the seniors of the village to make a short cut from one point to another, and the lads and lasses for evening rendezvous--all without offence taken or leave asked. But these halcyon days were now to have an end, and a minatory inscription on one side of the gate intimated 'prosecution according to law' (the painter had spelt it 'persecution'--l'un vaut bien l'autre) to all who should be found trespassing on these inclosures. On the other side, for uniformity's sake, was a precautionary

annunciation of spring-guns and man-traps of such formidable powers that, said the rubrick, with an emphatic nota bene--'if a man goes in they will break a horse's leg.'

In defiance of these threats, six well-grown gipsy boys and girls were riding cock-horse upon the new gate, and plaiting may-flowers, which it was but too evident had been gathered within the forbidden precincts. With as much anger as he was capable of feeling, or perhaps of assuming, the Laird commanded them to descend;--they paid no attention to his mandate: he then began to pull them down one after another;--they resisted, passively at least, each sturdy bronzed varlet making himself as heavy as he could, or climbing up as fast as he was dismounted.

The Laird then called in the assistance of his servant, a surly fellow, who had immediate recourse to his horsewhip. A few lashes sent the party a-scrampering; and thus commenced the first breach of the peace between the house of Ellangowan and the gipsies of Derncleugh.

The latter could not for some time imagine that the war was real; until they found that their children were horsewhipped by the grieve when found trespassing; that their asses were pointed by the ground-officer when left in the plantations, or even when turned to graze by the roadside, against the provision of the turnpike acts; that the constable began to make curious inquiries into their mode of gaining a livelihood, and expressed his surprise that the men should sleep in the hovels all day, and be abroad the greater part of the night.

When matters came to this point, the gipsies, without scruple, entered upon measures of retaliation. Ellangowan's hen-roosts were plundered, his linen stolen from the lines or bleaching-ground, his fishings poached, his dogs kidnapped, his growing trees cut or barked. Much petty mischief was done, and some evidently for the mischief's sake. On the other hand, warrants went forth, without mercy, to pursue, search for, take, and apprehend; and, notwithstanding their dexterity, one or two of the depredators were unable to avoid conviction. One, a stout young fellow, who sometimes had gone to sea a-fishing, was handed over to the captain of the impress service at D--; two children were soundly flogged, and one Egyptian matron sent to the house of correction.

Still, however, the gipsies made no motion to leave the spot which they had so long inhabited, and Mr. Bertram felt an unwillingness to deprive them of their ancient 'city of refuge'; so that the petty warfare we have noticed continued for several months, without increase or abatement of hostilities on either side.

CHAPTER VIII

*So the red Indian, by Ontario's side,
Nursed hardy on the brindled panther's hide,
As fades his swarthy race, with anguish sees
The white man's cottage rise beneath the trees;
He leaves the shelter of his native wood,
He leaves the murmur of Ohio's flood,
And forward rushing in indignant grief,
Where never foot has trod the fallen leaf,
He bends his course where twilight reigns sublime.
O'er forests silent since the birth of time.*

SCENES OF INFANCY.

In tracing the rise and progress of the Scottish Maroon war, we must not omit to mention that years had rolled on, and that little Harry Bertram, one of the hardiest and most lively children that ever made a sword and grenadier's cap of rushes, now approached his fifth revolving birthday. A hardihood of disposition, which early developed itself, made him already a little wanderer; he was well acquainted with every patch of lea ground and dingle around Ellangowan, and could tell in his broken language upon what baulks grew the bonniest flowers, and what copse had the ripest nuts. He repeatedly terrified his attendants by clambering about the ruins of the old castle, and had more than once made a stolen excursion as far as the gipsy hamlet.

On these occasions he was generally brought back by Meg Merrilies, who, though she could not be prevailed upon to enter the Place of Ellangowan after her nephew had been given up to the press-gang, did not apparently extend her resentment to the child. On the contrary, she often contrived to waylay him in his walks, sing him a gipsy song, give him a ride upon her jackass, and thrust into his pocket a piece of gingerbread or a red-cheeked apple. This woman's ancient attachment to the family, repelled and checked in every other direction, seemed to rejoice in having some object on which it could yet repose and expand itself. She prophesied a hundred times, 'that young Mr. Harry would be the pride o' the family, and there hadna been sic a sprout frae the auld aik since the death of Arthur Mac-Dingawaie, that was killed in the battle o' the Bloody Bay; as for the present stick, it was good for nothing but fire-wood.' On one occasion, when the child was ill, she lay all night below the window, chanting a rhyme which she believed sovereign as a febrifuge, and could neither be prevailed upon to enter the house nor to leave the station she had chosen till she was informed that the crisis was over.

The affection of this woman became matter of suspicion, not indeed to the Laird, who was never hasty in suspecting evil, but to his wife, who had indifferent health and poor spirits. She was now far advanced in a second pregnancy, and, as she could not walk abroad herself, and the woman who attended upon Harry was young and thoughtless, she prayed Dominie Sampson to undertake the task of watching the boy in his rambles, when he should not be otherwise accompanied. The Dominie loved his young charge, and was enraptured with his own success in having already brought him so far in his learning as to spell words of three syllables. The idea of this early prodigy of erudition being carried off by the gipsies, like a second Adam Smith,[Footnote: The father of Economical Philosophy was, when a child, actually carried off by gipsies, and remained some hours in their possession.] was not to be tolerated; and accordingly, though the charge was contrary to all his habits of life, he readily undertook it, and might be seen stalking about with a mathematical problem in his head, and his eye upon a child of five years old, whose rambles led him into a hundred awkward situations. Twice was the Dominie chased by a cross-grained cow, once he fell into the brook crossing at the stepping-stones, and another time was bogged up to the middle in the slough of Lochend, in attempting to gather a water-lily for the young Laird. It was the opinion of the village matrons who relieved Sampson on the latter occasion, 'that the Laird might as weel trust the care o' his bairn to a potatoe bogle'; but the good Dominie bore all his disasters with gravity and serenity equally imperturbable. 'Pro-di-gi-ous!' was the only ejaculation they ever extorted from the much-enduring man.

The Laird had by this time determined to make root-and-branch work with the Maroons of Derncleugh. The old servants shook their heads at his proposal, and even Dominie Sampson ventured upon an indirect remonstrance. As, however, it was couched in the oracular phrase, 'Ne moveas Camerinam,' neither the allusion, nor the language in which it was expressed, were calculated for Mr. Bertram's edification, and matters proceeded against the gipsies in form of law. Every door in the hamlet was chalked by the ground-officer, in token of a formal warning to remove at next term. Still, however, they showed no symptoms either of submission or of compliance. At length the term-day, the fatal Martinmas, arrived, and violent measures of ejection were resorted to. A strong posse of peace-officers, sufficient to render all resistance vain, charged the inhabitants to depart by noon; and, as they did not obey, the officers, in terms of their warrant, proceeded to unroof the cottages, and pull down the wretched doors and windows--a summary and effectual mode of ejection still practised in some remote parts of Scotland when a tenant proves refractory. The gipsies for a time beheld the work of destruction in sullen silence and inactivity; then set about saddling and

loading their asses, and making preparations for their departure. These were soon accomplished, where all had the habits of wandering Tartars; and they set forth on their journey to seek new settlements, where their patrons should neither be of the quorum nor custos rotulorum.

Certain qualms of feeling had deterred Ellangowan from attending in person to see his tenants expelled. He left the executive part of the business to the officers of the law, under the immediate direction of Frank Kennedy, a supervisor, or riding-officer, belonging to the excise, who had of late become intimate at the Place, and of whom we shall have more to say in the next chapter. Mr. Bertram himself chose that day to make a visit to a friend at some distance. But it so happened, notwithstanding his precautions, that he could not avoid meeting his late tenants during their retreat from his property.

It was in a hollow way, near the top of a steep ascent, upon the verge of the Ellangowan estate, that Mr. Bertram met the gipsy procession. Four or five men formed the advanced guard, wrapped in long loose great-coats that hid their tall slender figures, as the large slouched hats, drawn over their brows, concealed their wild features, dark eyes, and swarthy faces. Two of them carried long fowling-pieces, one wore a broadsword without a sheath, and all had the Highland dirk, though they did not wear that weapon openly or ostentatiously. Behind them followed the train of laden asses, and small carts or TUMBLERS, as they were called in that country, on which were laid the decrepit and the helpless, the aged and infant part of the exiled community. The women in their red cloaks and straw hats, the elder children with bare heads and bare feet, and almost naked bodies, had the immediate care of the little caravan. The road was narrow, running between two broken banks of sand, and Mr. Bertram's servant rode forward, smacking his whip with an air of authority, and motioning to the drivers to allow free passage to their betters. His signal was unattended to. He then called to the men who lounged idly on before, 'Stand to your beasts' heads, and make room for the Laird to pass.'

'He shall have his share of the road,' answered a male gipsy from under his slouched and large-brimmed hat, and without raising his face, 'and he shall have nae mair; the highway is as free to our cuddies as to his gelding.'

The tone of the man being sulky, and even menacing, Mr. Bertram thought it best to put his dignity in his pocket, and pass by the procession quietly, on such space as they chose to leave for his accommodation, which was narrow enough. To cover with an appearance of indifference his feeling of the want of respect with which he was treated, he addressed one of the men, as he passed him without any show of greeting, salute, or recognition--'Giles Baillie,' he said, 'have you heard that your son Gabriel is well?' (The question respected the young man who had been pressed.)

'If I had heard otherwise,' said the old man, looking up with a stern and menacing countenance, 'you should have heard of it too.' And he plodded on his way, tarrying no further question. [Footnote: This anecdote is a literal fact.] When the Laird had pressed on with difficulty among a crowd of familiar faces, which had on all former occasions marked his approach with the reverence due to that of a superior being, but in which he now only read hatred and contempt, and had got clear of the throng, he could not help turning his horse, and looking back to mark the progress of their march. The group would have been an excellent subject for the pencil of Calotte. The van had already reached a small and stunted thicket, which was at the bottom of the hill, and which gradually hid the line of march until the last stragglers disappeared.

His sensations were bitter enough. The race, it is true, which he had thus summarily dismissed from their ancient place of refuge, was idle and vicious; but had he endeavoured to render them otherwise? They were not more irregular characters now than they had been while they were admitted to consider themselves as a sort of subordinate dependents of his family; and ought the mere circumstance of his becoming a magistrate to have made at once such a change in his conduct towards them? Some means of reformation ought at least to have been tried before sending seven families at once upon the wide world, and depriving them of a degree of countenance which withheld them at least from atrocious guilt. There was also a natural yearning of heart on parting with so many known and familiar faces; and to this feeling Godfrey Bertram was peculiarly accessible, from the limited qualities of his mind, which sought its principal amusements among the petty objects around him. As he was about to turn his horse's head to pursue his journey, Meg Merrilies, who had lagged behind the troop, unexpectedly presented herself.

She was standing upon one of those high precipitous banks which, as we before noticed, overhung the road, so that she was placed considerably higher than Ellangowan, even though he was on horseback; and her tall figure, relieved against the clear blue sky, seemed almost of supernatural stature. We have noticed that there was in her general attire, or rather in her mode of adjusting it, somewhat of a foreign costume, artfully adopted perhaps for the purpose of adding to the effect of her spells and predictions, or perhaps from some traditional notions respecting the dress of her ancestors. On this occasion she had a large piece of red cotton cloth rolled about her head in the form of a turban, from beneath which her dark eyes flashed with uncommon lustre. Her long and tangled black hair fell in elf-locks from the folds of this singular head-gear. Her attitude was that of a sibyl in frenzy, and she stretched out in her right hand a sapling bough which seemed just pulled.

'I'll be d--d,' said the groom, 'if she has not been cutting the young ashes in the dukit park!' The Laird made no answer, but continued to look at the figure which was thus perched above his path.

'Ride your ways,' said the gipsy, 'ride your ways, Laird of Ellangowan; ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram! This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths; see if the fire in your ain parlour burn the blyther for that. Ye have riven the thack off seven cottar houses; look if your ain roof-tree stand the faster. Ye may stable your stirks in the shealings at Derncleugh; see that the hare does not couch on the hearthstane at Ellangowan. Ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram; what do ye glower after our folk for? There's thirty hearts there that wad hae wanted bread ere ye had wanted sunkets, and spent their life-blood ere ye had scratched your finger. Yes; there's thirty yonder, from the auld wife of an hundred to the babe that was born last week, that ye have turned out o' their bits o' bields, to sleep with the tod and the blackcock in the muirs! Ride your ways, Ellangowan. Our bairns are hinging at our weary backs; look that your braw cradle at hame be the fairer spread up; not that I am wishing ill to little Harry, or to the babe that's yet to be born--God forbid--and make them kind to the poor, and better folk than their father! And now, ride e'en your ways; for these are the last words ye'll ever hear Meg Merrilies speak, and this is the last reise that I'll ever cut in the bonny woods of Ellangowan.'

So saying, she broke the sapling she held in her hand, and flung it into the road. Margaret of Anjou, bestowing on her triumphant foes her keen-edged malediction, could not have turned from them with a gesture more proudly contemptuous. The Laird was clearing his voice to speak, and thrusting his hand in his pocket to find a half-crown; the gipsy waited neither for his reply nor his donation, but strode down the hill to overtake the caravan.

Ellangowan rode pensively home; and it was remarkable that he did not mention this interview to any of his family. The groom was not so reserved; he told the story at great length to a full audience in the kitchen, and concluded by swearing, that 'if ever the devil spoke by the mouth of a woman, he had spoken by that of Meg Merrilies that blessed day.'

CHAPTER IX

*Paint Scotland greeting ower her thrissle,
Her mutchkin stoup as toom's a whistle,
And d--n'd excisemen in a bustle,
Seizing a stell,
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel,
Or lampit shell*

During the period of Mr. Bertram's active magistracy, he did not forget the affairs of the revenue. Smuggling, for which the Isle of Man then afforded peculiar facilities, was general, or rather universal, all along the southwestern coast of Scotland. Almost all the common people were engaged in these practices; the gentry connived at them, and the officers of the revenue were frequently discountenanced in the exercise of their duty by those who should have protected them.

There was at this period, employed as a riding-officer or supervisor, in that part of the country a certain Francis Kennedy, already named in our narrative--a stout, resolute, and active man, who had made seizures to a great amount, and was proportionally hated by those who had an interest in the fair trade, as they called the pursuit of these contraband adventurers. This person was natural son to a gentleman of good family, owing to which circumstance, and to his being of a jolly, convivial disposition, and singing a good song, he was admitted to the occasional society of the gentlemen of the country, and was a member of several of their clubs for practising athletic games, at which he was particularly expert.

At Ellangowan Kennedy was a frequent and always an acceptable guest. His vivacity relieved Mr. Bertram of the trouble of thought, and the labour which it cost him to support a detailed communication of ideas; while the daring and dangerous exploits which he had undertaken in the discharge of his office formed excellent conversation. To all these revenue adventures did the Laird of Ellangowan seriously incline, and the amusement which he derived from Kennedy's society formed an excellent reason for countenancing and assisting the narrator in the execution of his invidious and hazardous duty.

'Frank Kennedy,' he said, 'was a gentleman, though on the wrang side of the blanket; he was connected with the family of Ellangowan through the house of Glengubbe. The last Laird of Glengubbe would have brought the estate into the Ellangowan line; but, happening to go to Harrigate, he there met with Miss Jean Hadaway--by the by, the Green Dragon at Harrigate is the best house of the twa--but for Frank Kennedy, he's in one sense a gentleman born, and it's a shame not to support him against these blackguard smugglers.'

After this league had taken place between judgment and execution, it chanced that Captain Dirk Hatteraick had landed a cargo of spirits and other contraband goods upon the beach not far from Ellangowan, and, confiding in the indifference with which the Laird had formerly regarded similar infractions of the law, he was neither very anxious to conceal nor to expedite the transaction. The consequence was that Mr. Frank Kennedy, armed with a warrant from Ellangowan, and supported by some of the Laird's people who knew the country, and by a party of military, poured down upon the kegs, bales, and bags, and after a desperate affray, in which severe wounds were given and received, succeeded in clapping the broad arrow upon the articles, and bearing them off in triumph to the next custom-house. Dirk Hatteraick vowed, in Dutch, German, and English, a deep and full revenge, both against the gauger and his abettors; and all who knew him thought it likely he would keep his word.

A few days after the departure of the gipsy tribe, Mr. Bertram asked his lady one morning at breakfast whether this was not little Harry's birthday.

'Five years auld exactly, this blessed day,' answered the lady; 'so we may look into the English gentleman's paper.'

Mr. Bertram liked to show his authority in trifles. 'No, my dear, not till to-morrow. The last time I was at quarter-sessions the sheriff told us that DIES--that dies inceptus--in short, you don't understand Latin, but it means that a term-day is not begun till it's ended.'

'That sounds like nonsense, my dear.'

'May be so, my dear; but it may be very good law for all that. I am sure, speaking of term-days, I wish, as Frank Kennedy says, that Whitsunday would kill Martinmas and be hanged for the murder; for there I have got a letter about that interest of Jenny Cairns's, and deil a tenant's been at the Place yet wi' a boddle of rent, nor will not till Candlemas. But, speaking of Frank Kennedy, I daresay he'll be here the day, for he was away round to Wigton to warn a king's ship that's lying in the bay about Dirk Hatteraick's lugger being on the coast again, and he'll be back this day; so we'll have a bottle of claret and drink little Harry's health.'

'I wish,' replied the lady, 'Frank Kennedy would let Dirk Hatteraick alone. What needs he make himself mair busy than other folk? Cannot he sing his sang, and take his drink, and draw his salary, like Collector Snail, honest man, that never fashes ony body? And I wonder at you, Laird, for meddling and making. Did we ever want to send for tea or brandy frae the borough-town when Dirk Hatteraick used to come quietly into the bay?'

'Mrs. Bertram, you know nothing of these matters. Do you think it becomes a magistrate to let his own house be made a receptacle for smuggled goods? Frank Kennedy will show you the penalties in the act, and ye ken yourself they used to put their run goods into the Auld Place of Ellangowan up by there.'

'Oh dear, Mr. Bertram, and what the waur were the wa's and the vault o' the auld castle for having a whin kegs o' brandy in them at an orra time? I am sure ye were not obliged to ken ony thing about it; and what the waur was the King that the lairds here got a soup o' drink and the ladies their drap o' tea at a reasonable rate?--it's a shame to them to pit such taxes on them!--and was na I much the better of these Flanders head and pinners that Dirk Hatteraick sent me a' the way from Antwerp? It will be lang or the King sends me ony thing, or Frank Kennedy either. And then ye would quarrel with these gipsies too! I expect every day to hear the barnyard's in a low.'

'I tell you once more, my dear, you don't understand these things--and there's Frank Kennedy coming galloping up the avenue.'

'Aweel! aweel! Ellangowan,' said the lady, raising her voice as the Laird left the room, 'I wish ye may understand them yourself, that's a'!'

From this nuptial dialogue the Laird joyfully escaped to meet his faithful friend, Mr. Kennedy, who arrived in high spirits. 'For the love of life, Ellangowan,' he said, 'get up to the castle! you'll see that old fox Dirk Hatteraick, and his Majesty's hounds in full cry after him.' So saying, he flung his horse's bridle to a boy, and ran up the ascent to the old castle, followed by the Laird, and indeed by several others of the family, alarmed by the sound of guns from the sea, now distinctly heard.

On gaining that part of the ruins which commanded the most extensive outlook, they saw a lugger, with all her canvass crowded, standing across the bay, closely pursued by a sloop of war, that kept firing upon the chase from her bows, which the lugger returned with her stern-chasers. 'They're but at long bowls yet,' cried Kennedy, in great exultation, 'but they will be closer by and by. D--n him, he's starting his cargo! I see the good Nantz pitching overboard, keg after keg! That's a d--d ungenteel thing of Mr. Hatteraick, as I shall let him know by and by. Now, now! they've got the wind of him! that's it, that's it! Hark to him! hark to him! Now, my dogs! now, my dogs! Hark to Ranger, hark!'

'I think,' said the old gardener to one of the maids, 'the ganger's fie,' by which word the common people express those violent spirits which they think a presage of death.

Meantime the chase continued. The lugger, being piloted with great ability, and using every nautical shift to make her escape, had now reached, and was about to double, the headland which formed the extreme point of land on the left side of the bay, when a ball having hit the yard in the slings, the mainsail fell upon the deck. The consequence of this accident appeared inevitable, but could not be seen by the spectators; for the vessel, which had just doubled the headland, lost steerage, and fell out of their sight behind the promontory. The sloop of war crowded all sail to pursue, but she had stood too close upon the cape, so that they were obliged to wear the vessel for fear of going ashore, and to make a large tack back into the bay, in order to recover sea-room enough to double the headland.

'They'll lose her, by-- cargo and lugger, one or both,' said Kennedy; 'I must gallop away to the Point of Warroch (this was the headland so often mentioned), and make them a signal where she has drifted to on the other side. Good-bye for an hour, Ellangowan; get out the gallon punch-bowl and plenty of lemons. I'll stand for the French article by the time I come back, and we'll drink the young Laird's health in a bowl that would swim the collector's yawl.' So saying, he mounted his horse and galloped off.

About a mile from the house, and upon the verge of the woods, which, as we have said, covered a promontory terminating in the cape called the Point of Warroch, Kennedy met young Harry Bertram, attended by his tutor, Dominie Sampson. He had often promised the child a ride upon his galloway; and, from singing, dancing, and playing Punch for his amusement, was a particular favourite. He no sooner came scampering up the path, than the boy loudly claimed his promise; and Kennedy, who saw no risk, in indulging him, and wished to tease the Dominie, in whose visage he read a remonstrance, caught up Harry from the ground, placed him before him, and continued his route; Sampson's 'Peradventure, Master Kennedy-' being lost in the clatter of his horse's feet. The pedagogue hesitated

a moment whether he should go after them; but Kennedy being a person in full confidence of the family, and with whom he himself had no delight in associating, 'being that he was addicted unto profane and scurrilous jests,' he continued his own walk at his own pace, till he reached the Place of Ellangowan.

The spectators from the ruined walls of the castle were still watching the sloop of war, which at length, but not without the loss of considerable time, recovered sea-room enough to weather the Point of Warroch, and was lost to their sight behind that wooded promontory. Some time afterwards the discharges of several cannon were heard at a distance, and, after an interval, a still louder explosion, as of a vessel blown up, and a cloud of smoke rose above the trees and mingled with the blue sky. All then separated on their different occasions, auguring variously upon the fate of the smuggler, but the majority insisting that her capture was inevitable, if she had not already gone to the bottom.

'It is near our dinner-time, my dear,' said Mrs. Bertram to her husband; 'will it be lang before Mr. Kennedy comes back?'

'I expect him every moment, my dear,' said the Laird; 'perhaps he is bringing some of the officers of the sloop with him.'

'My stars, Mr. Bertram! why did not ye tell me this before, that we might have had the large round table? And then, they're a' tired o' saut meat, and, to tell you the plain truth, a rump o' beef is the best part of your dinner. And then I wad have put on another gown, and ye wadna have been the waur o' a clean neck-cloth yoursell. But ye delight in surprising and hurrying one. I am sure I am no to bauld out for ever against this sort of going on; but when folk's missed, then they are moaned.'

'Pshaw, pshaw! deuce take the beef, and the gown, and table, and the neck-cloth! we shall do all very well. Where's the Dominie, John? (to a servant who was busy about the table) where's the Dominie and little Harry?'

'Mr. Sampson's been at hame these twa hours and mair, but I dinna think Mr. Harry cam hame wi' him.'

'Not come hame wi' him?' said the lady; 'desire Mr. Sampson to step this way directly.'

'Mr. Sampson,' said she, upon his entrance, 'is it not the most extraordinary thing in this world wide, that you, that have free up-putting--bed, board, and washing--and twelve pounds sterling a year, just to look after that boy, should let him out of your sight for twa or three hours?'

Sampson made a bow of humble acknowledgment at each pause which the angry lady made in her enumeration of the advantages of his situation, in order to give more weight to her remonstrance, and then, in words which we will not do him the injustice to imitate, told how Mr. Francis Kennedy 'had assumed spontaneously the charge of Master Harry, in despite of his remonstrances in the contrary.'

'I am very little obliged to Mr. Francis Kennedy for his pains,' said the lady, peevishly; 'suppose he lets the boy drop from his horse, and lames him? or suppose one of the cannons comes ashore and kills him? or suppose--'

'Or suppose, my dear,' said Ellangowan, 'what is much more likely than anything else, that they have gone aboard the sloop or the prize, and are to come round the Point with the tide?'

'And then they may be drowned,' said the lady.

'Verily,' said Sampson, 'I thought Mr. Kennedy had returned an hour since. Of a surety I deemed I heard his horse's feet.'

'That,' said John, with a broad grin, 'was Grizzel chasing the humble-cow out of the close.'

Sampson coloured up to the eyes, not at the implied taunt, which he would never have discovered, or resented if he had, but at some idea which crossed his own mind. 'I have been in an error,' he said; 'of a surety I should have tarried for the babe.' So saying, he snatched his bone-headed cane and hat, and hurried away towards Warroch wood faster than he was ever known to walk before or after.

The Laird lingered some time, debating the point with the lady. At length he saw the sloop of war again make her appearance; but, without approaching the shore, she stood away to the westward with all her sails set, and was soon out of sight. The lady's state of timorous and fretful apprehension was so habitual that her fears went for nothing with her lord and master; but an appearance of disturbance and anxiety among the servants now excited his alarm, especially when he was called out of the room, and told in private that Mr. Kennedy's horse had come to the stable door alone, with the saddle turned round below its belly and the reins of the bridle broken; and that a farmer had informed them in passing that there was a smuggling lugger burning like a furnace on the other side of the Point of Warroch, and that, though he had come through the wood, he had seen or heard nothing of Kennedy or the young Laird, 'only there was Dominie Sampson gaun rampaung about like mad, seeking for them.'

All was now bustle at Ellangowan. The Laird and his servants, male and female, hastened to the wood of Warroch. The tenants and cottagers in the neighbourhood lent their assistance, partly out of zeal, partly from curiosity. Boats were manned to search the sea-shore, which, on the other side of the Point, rose into high and indented rocks. A vague suspicion was entertained, though too horrible to be expressed, that the child might have fallen from one of these cliffs. The evening had begun to close when the parties entered the wood, and dispersed different ways in quest of the boy and his companion. The darkening of the atmosphere, and the hoarse sighs of the November wind through the naked trees, the rustling of the withered leaves which strewed the glades, the repeated halloos of the different parties, which often drew them together in expectation of meeting the objects of their search, gave a cast of dismal sublimity to the scene.

At length, after a minute and fruitless investigation through the wood, the searchers began to draw together into one body, and to compare notes. The agony of the father grew beyond concealment, yet it scarcely equalled the anguish of the tutor. 'Would to God I had died for him!' the affectionate creature repeated, in notes of the deepest distress. Those who were less interested rushed into a tumultuary discussion of chances and possibilities. Each gave his opinion, and each was alternately swayed by that of the others. Some thought the objects of their search had gone aboard the sloop; some that they had gone to a village at three miles' distance; some whispered they might have been on board the lugger, a few planks and beams of which the tide now drifted ashore.

At this instant a shout was heard from the beach, so loud, so shrill, so piercing, so different from every sound which the woods that day had rung to, that nobody hesitated a moment to believe that it conveyed tidings, and tidings of dreadful import. All hurried to the place, and, venturing without scruple upon paths which at another time they would have shuddered to look at, descended towards a cleft of the rock, where one boat's crew was already landed. 'Here, sirs, here! this way, for God's sake! this way! this way!' was the reiterated cry. Ellangowan broke through the throng which had already assembled at the fatal spot, and beheld the object of their terror. It was the dead body of Kennedy. At first sight he seemed to have perished by a fall from the rocks, which rose above the spot on which he lay in a perpendicular precipice of a hundred feet above the beach. The corpse was lying half in, half out of the water; the advancing tide, raising the arm and stirring the clothes, had given it at some distance the appearance of motion, so that those who first discovered the body thought that life remained. But every spark had been long extinguished.

'My bairn! my bairn!' cried the distracted father, 'where can he be?' A dozen mouths were opened to communicate hopes which no one felt. Some one at length mentioned--the gipsies! In a moment Ellangowan had reascended the cliffs, flung himself upon the first horse he met, and rode furiously to the huts at Derncleugh. All was there dark and desolate; and, as he dismounted to make more minute search, he stumbled over fragments of furniture which had been thrown out of the cottages, and the broken wood and thatch which had been pulled down by his orders. At that moment the prophecy, or anathema, of Meg Merrilies fell heavy on his mind. 'You have stripped the thatch from seven cottages; see that the roof-tree of your own house stand the surer!'

'Restore,' he cried, 'restore my bairn! bring me back my son, and all shall be forgot and forgiven!' As he uttered these words in a sort of frenzy, his eye caught a glimmering of light in one of the dismantled cottages; it was that in which Meg Merrilies formerly resided. The light, which seemed to proceed from fire, glimmered not only through the window, but also through the rafters of the hut where the roofing had been torn off.

He flew to the place; the entrance was bolted. Despair gave the miserable father the strength of ten men; he rushed against the door with such violence that it gave way before the momentum of his weight and force. The cottage was empty, but bore marks of recent habitation: there was fire on the hearth, a kettle, and some preparation for food. As he eagerly gazed around for something that might confirm his hope that his child yet lived, although in the power of those strange people, a man entered the hut.

It was his old gardener. 'O sir!' said the old man, 'such a night as this I trusted never to live to see! ye maun come to the Place directly!'

'Is my boy found? is he alive? have ye found Harry Bertram? Andrew, have ye found Harry Bertram?'

'No, sir; but--'

'Then he is kidnapped! I am sure of it, Andrew! as sure as that I tread upon earth! She has stolen him; and I will never stir from this place till I have tidings of my bairn!'

'O, but ye maun come hame, sir! ye maun come hame! We have sent for the Sheriff, and we'll seta watch here a' night, in case the gipsies return; but YOU--ye maun come hame, sir, for my lady's in the dead-thraw.'

Bertram turned a stupefied and unmeaning eye on the messenger who uttered this calamitous news; and, repeating the words 'in the dead-thraw!' as if he could not comprehend their meaning, suffered the old man to drag him towards his horse. During the ride home he only said, 'Wife and bairn baith--mother and son baith,--sair, sair to abide!'

It is needless to dwell upon the new scene of agony which awaited him. The news of Kennedy's fate had been eagerly and incautiously communicated at Ellangowan, with the gratuitous addition, that, doubtless, 'he had drawn the young Laird over the craig with him, though the tide had swept away the child's body; he was light, puir thing, and would flee farther into the surf.'

Mrs. Bertram heard the tidings; she was far advanced in her pregnancy; she fell into the pains of premature labour, and, ere Ellangowan had recovered his agitated faculties, so as to comprehend the full distress of his situation, he was the father of a female infant, and a widower.

CHAPTER X

*But see, his face is black and full of blood;
His eye-balls farther out than when he lived,
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man,
His hair uprear'd, his nostrils stretch'd with struggling,
His hands abroad display'd, as one that grasp'd
And tugg'd for life, and was by strength subdued*

Henry VI, Part II

The Sheriff-depute of the county arrived at Ellangowan next morning by daybreak. To this provincial magistrate the law of Scotland assigns judicial powers of considerable extent, and the task of inquiring into all crimes committed within his jurisdiction, the apprehension and commitment of suspected persons, and so forth. [Footnote: The Scottish sheriff discharges, on such occasions as that now mentioned, pretty much the same duty as a coroner.]

The gentleman who held the office in the shire of---at the time of this catastrophe was well born and well educated; and, though somewhat pedantic and professional in his habits, he enjoyed general respect as an active and intelligent magistrate. His first employment was to examine all witnesses whose evidence could throw light upon this mysterious event, and make up the written report, proces verbal, or precognition, as it is technically called, which the practice of Scotland has substituted for a coroner's inquest. Under the Sheriff's minute and skilful inquiry, many circumstances appeared which seemed incompatible with the original opinion that Kennedy had accidentally fallen from the cliffs. We shall briefly detail some of these.

The body had been deposited in a neighbouring fisher-hut, but without altering the condition in which it was found. This was the first object of the Sheriff's examination. Though fearfully crushed and mangled by the fall from such a height, the corpse was found to exhibit a deep cut in the head, which, in the opinion of a skilful surgeon, must have been inflicted by a broadsword or cutlass. The experience of this gentleman discovered other suspicious indications. The face was much blackened, the eyes distorted, and the veins of the neck swelled. A coloured handkerchief, which the unfortunate man had worn round his neck, did not present the usual appearance, but was much loosened, and the knot displaced and dragged extremely tight; the folds were also compressed, as if it had been used as a means of grappling the deceased, and dragging him perhaps to the precipice.

On the other hand, poor Kennedy's purse was found untouched; and, what seemed yet more extraordinary, the pistols which he usually carried when about to encounter any hazardous adventure were found in his pockets loaded. This appeared particularly strange, for he was known and dreaded by the contraband traders as a man equally fearless and dexterous in the use of his weapons, of which he had given many signal proofs. The Sheriff inquired whether Kennedy was not in the practice of carrying any other arms? Most of Mr. Bertram's servants recollected that he generally had a couteau de chasse, or short hanger, but none such was found upon the dead body; nor could those who had seen him on the morning of the fatal day take it upon them to assert whether he then carried that weapon or not.

The corpse afforded no other indicia respecting the fate of Kennedy; for, though the clothes were much displaced and the limbs dreadfully fractured, the one seemed the probable, the other the certain, consequences of such a fall. The hands of the deceased were clenched fast, and full of turf and earth; but this also seemed equivocal.

The magistrate then proceeded to the place where the corpse was first discovered, and made those who had found it give, upon the spot, a particular and detailed account of the manner in which it was lying. A large fragment of the rock appeared to have accompanied, or followed, the fall of the victim from the cliff above. It was of so solid and compact a substance that it had fallen without any great diminution by splintering; so that the Sheriff was enabled, first, to estimate the weight by measurement, and then to calculate, from the appearance of the fragment, what portion of it had been bedded into the cliff from which it had descended. This was easily detected by the raw appearance of the stone where it had not been exposed to the atmosphere. They then ascended the cliff, and surveyed the place from whence the stony fragment had fallen. It seemed plain, from the appearance of the bed, that the mere weight of one man standing upon the projecting part of the fragment, supposing it in its original situation, could not have destroyed its balance and precipitated it, with himself, from the cliff. At the same time, it appeared to have lain so loose that the use of a lever, or the combined strength of three or four men, might easily have hurled it from its position. The short turf about the brink of the precipice was much trampled, as if stamped by the heels of men in a mortal struggle, or in the act of some violent exertion. Traces of the same kind, less visibly marked, guided the sagacious investigator to the verge of the copsewood, which in that place crept high up the bank towards the top of the precipice.

With patience and perseverance they traced these marks into the thickest part of the copse, a route which no person would have voluntarily adopted, unless for the purpose of concealment. Here they found plain vestiges of violence and struggling, from space to space. Small boughs were torn down, as if grasped by some resisting wretch who was dragged forcibly along; the ground, where in the least degree soft or marshy, showed the print of many feet; there were vestiges also which might be those of human blood. At any rate it was certain that several persons must have forced their passage among the oaks, hazels, and underwood with which they were mingled; and in some places appeared traces as if a sack full of grain, a dead body, or something of that heavy and solid description, had been dragged along the ground. In one part of the thicket there was a small swamp, the clay of which was whitish, being probably mixed with marl. The back of Kennedy's coat appeared besmeared with stains of the same colour.

At length, about a quarter of a mile from the brink of the fatal precipice, the traces conducted them to a small open space of ground, very much trampled, and plainly stained with blood, although withered leaves had been strewn upon the spot, and other means hastily taken to efface the marks, which seemed obviously

to have been derived from a desperate affray. On one side of this patch of open ground was found the sufferer's naked hanger, which seemed to have been thrown into the thicket; on the other, the belt and sheath, which appeared to have been hidden with more leisurely care and precaution.

The magistrate caused the footprints which marked this spot to be carefully measured and examined. Some corresponded to the foot of the unhappy victim; some were larger, some less; indicating that at least four or five men had been busy around him. Above all, here, and here only, were observed the vestiges of a child's foot; and as it could be seen nowhere else, and the hard horse-track which traversed the wood of Warroch was contiguous to the spot, it was natural to think that the boy might have escaped in that direction during the confusion. But, as he was never heard of, the Sheriff, who made a careful entry of all these memoranda, did not suppress his opinion, that the deceased had met with foul play, and that the murderers, whoever they were, had possessed themselves of the person of the child Harry Bertram.

Every exertion was now made to discover the criminals. Suspicion hesitated between the smugglers and the gipsies. The fate of Dirk Hatteraick's vessel was certain. Two men from the opposite side of Warroch Bay (so the inlet on the southern side of the Point of Warroch is called) had seen, though at a great distance, the lugger drive eastward, after doubling the headland, and, as they judged from her manoeuvres, in a disabled state. Shortly after, they perceived that she grounded, smoked, and finally took fire. She was, as one of them expressed himself, 'in a light low' (bright flame) when they observed a king's ship, with her colours up, heave in sight from behind the cape. The guns of the burning vessel discharged themselves as the fire reached them; and they saw her at length blow up with a great explosion. The sloop of war kept aloof for her own safety; and, after hovering till the other exploded, stood away southward under a press of sail. The Sheriff anxiously interrogated these men whether any boats had left the vessel. They could not say, they had seen none; but they might have put off in such a direction as placed the burning vessel, and the thick smoke which floated landward from it, between their course and the witnesses' observation.

That the ship destroyed was Dirk Hatteraick's no one doubted. His lugger was well known on the coast, and had been expected just at this time. A letter from the commander of the king's sloop, to whom the Sheriff made application, put the matter beyond doubt; he sent also an extract from his log-book of the transactions of the day, which intimated their being on the outlook for a smuggling lugger, Dirk Hatteraick master, upon the information and requisition of Francis Kennedy, of his Majesty's excise service; and that Kennedy was to be upon the outlook on the shore, in case Hatteraick, who was known to be a desperate fellow, and had been repeatedly outlawed, should attempt to run his sloop aground. About nine o'clock A.M. they discovered a sail which answered the description of Hatteraick's vessel, chased her, and, after repeated signals to her to show colours and bring-to, fired upon her. The chase then showed Hamburg colours and returned the fire; and a running fight was maintained for three hours, when, just as the lugger was doubling the Point of Warroch, they observed that the main-yard was shot in the slings, and that the vessel was disabled. It was not in the power of the man-of-war's men for some time to profit by this circumstance, owing to their having kept too much in shore for doubling the headland. After two tacks, they accomplished this, and observed the chase on fire and apparently deserted. The fire having reached some casks of spirits, which were placed on the deck, with other combustibles, probably on purpose, burnt with such fury that no boats durst approach the vessel, especially as her shotted guns were discharging one after another by the heat. The captain had no doubt whatever that the crew had set the vessel on fire and escaped in their boats. After watching the conflagration till the ship blew up, his Majesty's sloop, the Shark, stood towards the Isle of Man, with the purpose of intercepting the retreat of the smugglers, who, though they might conceal themselves in the woods for a day or two, would probably take the first opportunity of endeavouring to make for this asylum. But they never saw more of them than is above narrated.

Such was the account given by William Pritchard, master and commander of his Majesty's sloop of war, Shark, who concluded by regretting deeply that he had not had the happiness to fall in with the scoundrels who had had the impudence to fire on his Majesty's flag, and with an assurance that, should he meet Mr. Dirk Hatteraick in any future cruise, he would not fail to bring him into port under his stern, to answer whatever might be alleged against him.

As, therefore, it seemed tolerably certain that the men on board the lugger had escaped, the death of Kennedy, if he fell in with them in the woods, when irritated by the loss of their vessel and by the share he had in it, was easily to be accounted for. And it was not improbable that to such brutal tempers, rendered desperate by their own circumstances, even the murder of the child, against whose father, as having become suddenly active in the prosecution of smugglers, Hatteraick was known to have uttered deep threats, would not appear a very heinous crime.

Against this hypothesis it was urged that a crew of fifteen or twenty men could not have lain hidden upon the coast, when so close a search took place immediately after the destruction of their vessel; or, at least, that if they had hid themselves in the woods, their boats must have been seen on the beach; that in such precarious circumstances, and when all retreat must have seemed difficult if not impossible, it was not to be thought that they would have all united to commit a useless murder for the mere sake of revenge. Those who held this opinion supposed either that the boats of the lugger had stood out to sea without being observed by those who were intent upon gazing at the burning vessel, and so gained safe distance before the sloop got round the headland; or else that, the boats being staved or destroyed by the fire of the Shark during the chase, the crew had obstinately determined to perish with the vessel. What gave some countenance to this supposed act of desperation was, that neither Dirk Hatteraick nor any of his sailors, all well-known men in the fair trade, were again seen upon that coast, or heard of in the Isle of Man, where strict inquiry was made. On the other hand, only one dead body, apparently that of a seaman killed by a cannon-shot, drifted ashore. So all that could be done was to register the names, description, and appearance of the individuals belonging to the ship's company, and offer a reward for the apprehension of them, or any one of them, extending also to any person, not the actual murderer, who should give evidence tending to convict those who had murdered Francis Kennedy.

Another opinion, which was also plausibly supported, went to charge this horrid crime upon the late tenants of Derncleugh. They were known to have resented highly the conduct of the Laird of Ellangowan towards them, and to have used threatening expressions, which every one supposed them capable of carrying into effect. The kidnapping the child was a crime much more consistent with their habits than with those of smugglers, and his temporary guardian might have fallen in an attempt to protect him. Besides, it was remembered that Kennedy had been an active agent, two or three days before, in the forcible expulsion of these people from Derncleugh, and that harsh and menacing language had been exchanged between him and some of the Egyptian patriarchs on that memorable occasion.

The Sheriff received also the depositions of the unfortunate father and his servant, concerning what had passed at their meeting the caravan of gipsies as they left the estate of Ellangowan. The speech of Meg Merrilies seemed particularly suspicious. There was, as the magistrate observed in his law language, *damnum minatum*--a damage, or evil turn, threatened--and *malum secutum*--an evil of the very kind predicted shortly afterwards following. A young woman, who had been gathering nuts in Warroch wood upon the fatal day, was also strongly of opinion, though she declined to make positive oath, that she had seen Meg Merrilies--at least a woman of her remarkable size and appearance--start suddenly out of a thicket; she said she had called to her by name, but, as the figure turned from her and made no answer, she was uncertain if it were the gipsy or her wraith, and was afraid to go nearer to one who was always reckoned, in the vulgar phrase, 'no canny.' This vague story received some corroboration from the circumstance of a fire being that evening found in the gipsy's deserted cottage. To this fact Ellangowan and his gardener bore evidence. Yet it seemed extravagant to suppose that, had this woman been accessory to such a dreadful crime, she would have returned, that very evening on which it was committed, to the place of all others where she was most likely to be sought after.

Meg Merrilies was, however, apprehended and examined. She denied strongly having been either at Derncleugh or in the wood of Warroch upon the day of Kennedy's death; and several of her tribe made oath in her behalf, that she had never quitted their encampment, which was in a glen about ten miles distant from Ellangowan. Their oaths were indeed little to be trusted to; but what other evidence could be had in the circumstances? There was one remarkable fact, and only one, which arose from her examination. Her arm appeared to be slightly wounded by the cut of a sharp weapon, and was tied up with a handkerchief of Harry Bertram's. But the chief of the horde acknowledged he had 'corrected her' that day with his whinger; she herself, and others, gave the same account of her hurt; and for the handkerchief, the quantity of linen stolen from Ellangowan during the last months of their residence on the estate easily accounted for it, without charging Meg with a more heinous crime.

It was observed upon her examination that she treated the questions respecting the death of Kennedy, or 'the gauger,' as she called him, with indifference; but expressed great and emphatic scorn and indignation at being supposed capable of injuring little Harry Bertram. She was long confined in jail, under the hope that something might yet be discovered to throw light upon this dark and bloody transaction. Nothing, however, occurred; and Meg was at length liberated, but under

sentence of banishment from the county as a vagrant, common thief, and disorderly person. No traces of the boy could ever be discovered; and at length the story, after making much noise, was gradually given up as altogether inexplicable, and only perpetuated by the name of 'The Gauger's Loup,' which was generally bestowed on the cliff from which the unfortunate man had fallen or been precipitated.

CHAPTER XI

ENTER TIME, AS CHORUS

*I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
Of good and bad; that make and unfold error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings Impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap.*

Winter's Tale.

Our narration is now about to make a large stride, and omit a space of nearly seventeen years; during which nothing occurred of any particular consequence with respect to the story we have undertaken to tell. The gap is a wide one; yet if the reader's experience in life enables him to look back on so many years, the space will scarce appear longer in his recollection than the time consumed in turning these pages.

It was, then, in the month of November, about seventeen years after the catastrophe related in the last chapter, that, during a cold and stormy night, a social group had closed around the kitchen-fire of the Gordon Arms at Kippletringan, a small but comfortable inn kept by Mrs. Mac-Candlish in that village. The conversation which passed among them will save me the trouble of telling the few events occurring during this chasm in our history, with which it is necessary that the reader should be acquainted.

Mrs. Mac-Candlish, throned in a comfortable easychair lined with black leather, was regaling herself and a neighbouring gossip or two with a cup of genuine tea, and at the same time keeping a sharp eye upon her domestics, as they went and came in prosecution of their various duties and commissions. The clerk and precentor of the parish enjoyed at a little distance his Saturday night's pipe, and aided its bland fumigation by an occasional sip of brandy and water. Deacon Bearcliff, a man of great importance in the village, combined the indulgence of both parties: he had his pipe and his tea-cup, the latter being laced with a little spirits. One or two clowns sat at some distance, drinking their twopenny ale.

'Are ye sure the parlour's ready for them, and the fire burning clear, and the chimney no smoking?' said the hostess to a chambermaid.

She was answered in the affirmative. 'Ane wadna be uncivil to them, especially in their distress,' said she, turning to the Deacon.

'Assuredly not, Mrs. Mac-Candlish; assuredly not. I am sure ony sma' thing they might want frae my shop, under seven, or eight, or ten pounds, I would book them as readily for it as the first in the country. Do they come in the auld chaise?'

'I daresay no,' said the precentor; 'for Miss Bertram comes on the white powny ilka day to the kirk--and a constant kirk-keeper she is--and it's a pleasure to hear her singing the psalms, winsome young thing.'

'Ay, and the young Laird of Hazlewood rides hame half the road wi' her after sermon,' said one of the gossips in company. 'I wonder how auld Hazlewood likes that.'

'I kenna how he may like it now,' answered another of the tea-drinkers; 'but the day has been when Ellangowan wad hae liked as little to see his daughter taking up with their son.'

'Ay, has been,' answered the first, with somewhat of emphasis.

'I am sure, neighbour Ovens,' said the hostess, 'the Hazlewoods of Hazlewood, though they are a very gude auld family in the county, never thought, till within these twa score o' years, of evening themselves till the Ellangowans. Wow, woman, the Bertrams of Ellangowan are the auld Dingawaies lang syne. There is a sang about ane o' them marrying a daughter of the King of Man; it begins--

Blythe Bertram's ta'en him ower the faem,

To wed a wife, and bring her hame--

I daur say Mr. Skreigh can sing us the ballant.'

'Gudewife,' said Skreigh, gathering up his mouth, and sipping his tiff of brandy punch with great solemnity, 'our talents were gien us to other use than to sing daft auld sangs sae near the Sabbath day.'

'Hout fie, Mr. Skreigh; I'se warrant I hae heard you sing a blythe sang on Saturday at e'en before now. But as for the chaise, Deacon, it hasna been out of the coach-house since Mrs. Bertram died, that's sixteen or seventeen years sin syne. Jock Jabos is away wi' a chaise of mine for them; I wonder he's no come back. It's pit mirk; but there's no an ill turn on the road but twa, and the brigg ower Warroch burn is safe eneugh, if he haud to the right side. But then there's Heavieside Brae, that's just a murder for post-cattle; but Jock kens the road brawly.'

A loud rapping was heard at the door.

'That's no them. I dinna hear the wheels. Grizzel, ye limmer, gang to the door.'

'It's a single gentleman,' whined out Grizzel; 'maun I take him into the parlour?'

'Foul be in your feet, then; it'll be some English rider. Coming without a servant at this time o' night! Has the hostler ta'en the horse? Ye may light a spunk o' fire in the red room.'

'I wish, ma'am,' said the traveller, entering the kitchen, 'you would give me leave to warm myself here, for the night is very cold.'

His appearance, voice, and manner produced an instantaneous effect in his favour. He was a handsome, tall, thin figure, dressed in black, as appeared when he laid aside his riding-coat; his age might be between forty and fifty; his cast of features grave and interesting, and his air somewhat military. Every point of his appearance and address bespoke the gentleman. Long habit had given Mrs. Mac-Candlish an acute tact in ascertaining the quality of her visitors, and proportioning her reception accordingly:--

To every guest the appropriate speech was made,

And every duty with distinction paid;

Respectful, easy, pleasant, or polite--

'Your honour's servant!' 'Mister Smith, good-night.'

On the present occasion she was low in her courtesy and profuse in her apologies. The stranger begged his horse might be attended to: she went out herself to school the hostler.

'There was never a prettier bit o' horse-flesh in the stable o' the Gordon Arms,' said the man, which information increased the landlady's respect for the rider. Finding, on her return, that the stranger declined to go into another apartment (which, indeed, she allowed, would be but cold and smoky till the fire bleezed up), she installed her guest hospitably by the fireside, and offered what refreshment her house afforded.

'A cup of your tea, ma'am, if you will favour me.'

Mrs. Mac-Candlish bustled about, reinforced her teapot with hyson, and proceeded in her duties with her best grace. 'We have a very nice parlour, sir, and everything very agreeable for gentlefolks; but it's bespoke the night for a gentleman and his daughter that are going to leave this part of the country; ane of my chaises is gane for them, and will be back forthwith. They're no sae weel in the world as they have been; but we're a' subject to ups and downs in this life, as your honour must needs ken,--but is not the tobacco-reek disagreeable to your honour?'

'By no means, ma'am; I am an old campaigner, and perfectly used to it. Will you permit me to make some inquiries about a family in this neighbourhood?'

The sound of wheels was now heard, and the landlady hurried to the door to receive her expected guests; but returned in an instant, followed by the postilion. 'No, they canna come at no rate, the Laird's sae ill.'

'But God help them,' said the landlady, 'the morn's the term, the very last day they can bide in the house; a' thing's to be roupit.'

'Weel, but they can come at no rate, I tell ye; Mr. Bertram canna be moved.'

'What Mr. Bertram?' said the stranger; 'not Mr. Bertram of Ellangowan, I hope?'

'Just e'en that same, sir; and if ye be a friend o' his, ye have come at a time when he's sair bested.'

'I have been abroad for many years,--is his health so much deranged?'

'Ay, and his affairs an' a',' said the Deacon; 'the creditors have entered into possession o' the estate, and it's for sale; and some that made the maist by him--I name nae names, but Mrs. Mac-Candlish kens wha I mean (the landlady shook her head significantly)--they're sairest on him e'en now. I have a sma' matter due myself, but I would rather have lost it than gane to turn the auld man out of his house, and him just dying.'

'Ay, but,' said the parish clerk, 'Factor Glossin wants to get rid of the auld Laird, and drive on the sale, for fear the heir-male should cast up upon them; for I have heard say, if there was an heir-male they couldna sell the estate for auld Ellangowan's debt.'

'He had a son born a good many years ago,' said the stranger; 'he is dead, I suppose?'

'Nae man can say for that,' answered the clerk mysteriously.

'Dead!' said the Deacon, 'I se warrant him dead lang syne; he hasna been heard o' these twenty years or thereby.'

'I wot weel it's no twenty years,' said the landlady; 'it's no abune seventeen at the outside in this very month. It made an unco noise ower a' this country; the bairn disappeared the very day that Supervisor Kennedy cam by his end. If ye kenn'd this country lang syne, your honour wad maybe ken Frank Kennedy the Supervisor. He was a heartsome pleasant man, and company for the best gentlemen in the county, and muckle mirth he's made in this house. I was young then, sir, and newly married to Bailie Mac-Candlish, that's dead and gone (a sigh); and muckle fun I've had wi' the Supervisor. He was a daft dog. O, an he could hae hauden aff the smugglers a bit! but he was aye venturesome. And so ye see, sir, there was a king's sloop down in Wigton Bay, and Frank Kennedy, he behoved to have her up to chase Dirk Hatteraick's lugger--ye'll mind Dirk Hatteraick, Deacon? I daresay ye may have dealt wi' him--(the Deacon gave a sort of acquiescent nod and humph). He was a daring chield, and he fought his ship till she blew up like peelings of ingans; and Frank Kennedy, he had been the first man to board, and he was flung like a quarter of a mile off, and fell into the water below the rock at Warroch Point, that they ca' the Gauger's Loup to this day.'

'And Mr. Bertram's child,' said the stranger, 'what is all this to him?'

'Ou, sir, the bairn aye held an unco wark wi' the Supervisor; and it was generally thought he went on board the vessel along wi' him, as bairns are aye forward to be in mischief.'

'No, no,' said the Deacon, 'ye're clean out there, Luckie; for the young Laird was stown away by a randy gipsy woman they ca'd Meg Merrilies--I mind her looks weel--in revenge for Ellangowan having gar'd her be drumm'd through Kippletringan for stealing a silver spoon.'

'If ye'll forgieme, Deacon,' said the precentor, 'ye're e'en as far wrang as the gudewife.'

'And what is your edition of the story, sir?' said the stranger, turning to him with interest.

'That's maybe no sae canny to tell,' said the precentor, with solemnity.

Upon being urged, however, to speak out, he preluded with two or three large puffs of tobacco-smoke, and out of the cloudy sanctuary which these whiffs formed around him delivered the following legend, having cleared his voice with one or two hems, and imitating, as near as he could, the eloquence which weekly thundered over his head from the pulpit.

'What we are now to deliver, my brethren,--hem--hem,--I mean, my good friends,--was not done in a corner, and may serve as an answer to witch-advocates, atheists, and misbelievers of all kinds. Ye must know that the worshipful Laird of Ellangowan was not so preceese as he might have been in clearing his land of witches (concerning whom it is said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"), nor of those who had familiar spirits, and consulted with divination, and sorcery, and lots, which is the fashion with the Egyptians, as they ca' themsells, and other unhappy bodies, in this our country. And the Laird was three years married without having a family; and he was sae left to himsell, that it was thought he held ower muckle troking and communing wi' that Meg Merrilies, wha was the maist notorious witch in a' Galloway and Dumfries-shire baith.'

'Aweel, I wot there's something in that,' said Mrs. Mac-Candlish; 'I've kenn'd him order her twa glasses o' brandy in this very house.'

'Aweel, gudewife, then the less I lee. Sae the lady was wi' bairn at last, and in the night when she should have been delivered there comes to the door of the ha' house--the Place of Ellangowan as they ca'd--an ancient man, strangely habited, and asked for quarters. His head, and his legs, and his arms were bare, although it was winter time o' the year, and he had a grey beard three-quarters lang. Weel, he was admitted; and when the lady was delivered, he craved to know the very moment of the hour of the birth, and he went out and consulted the stars. And when he came back he tell'd the Laird that the Evil One wad have power over the knave-bairn that was that night born, and he charged him that the babe should be bred up in the ways of piety, and that he should aye hae a godly minister at his elbow to pray W! the bairn and FOR him. And the aged man vanished away, and no man of this country ever saw mair o' him.'

'Now, that will not pass,' said the postilion, who, at a respectful distance, was listening to the conversation, 'begging Mr. Skreigh's and the company's pardon; there was no sae mony hairs on the warlock's face as there's on Letter-Gae's [Footnote: The precentor is called by Allan Ramsay, The letter-gae of haly rhyme.] ain at this moment, and he had as gude a pair o' boots as a man need streik on his legs, and gloves too; and I should understand boots by this time, I think.'

'Whisht, Jock,' said the landlady.

'Ay? and what do YE ken o' the matter, friend Jabos?' said the precentor, contemptuously.

'No muckle, to be sure, Mr. Skreigh, only that I lived within a penny-stane cast o' the head o' the avenue at Ellangowan, when a man cam jingling to our door that night the young Laird was born, and my mother sent me, that was a haffiin callant, to show the stranger the gate to the Place, which, if he had been sic a warlock, he might hae kenn'd himsell, ane wad think; and he was a young, weel-faured, weel-dressed lad, like an Englishman. And I tell ye he had as gude a hat, and boots, and gloves, as ony gentleman need to have. To be sure he DID gie an awesome glance up at the auld castle, and there WAS some spae-wark gaed on, I aye heard that; but as for his vanishing, I held the stirrup mysell when he gaed away, and he gied me a round half-crown. He was riding on a haick they ca'd Souple Sam, it belonged to the George at Dumfries; it was a blood-bay beast, very ill o' the spavin; I hae seen the beast baith before and since.'

'Aweel, aweel, Jock,' answered Mr. Skreigh, with a tone of mild solemnity, 'our accounts differ in no material particulars; but I had no knowledge that ye had seen the man. So ye see, my friends, that this soothsayer having prognosticated evil to the boy, his father engaged a godly minister to be with him morn and night.'

'Ay, that was him they ca'd Dominie Sampson,' said the postilion.

'He's but a dumb dog that,' observed the Deacon; 'I have heard that he never could preach five words of a sermon endlang, for as lang as he has been licensed.'

'Weel, but,' said the precentor, waving his hand, as if eager to retrieve the command of the discourse, 'he waited on the young Laird by night and day. Now it chanced, when the bairn was near five years auld, that the Laird had a sight of his errors, and determined to put these Egyptians aff his ground, and he caused them to remove; and that Frank Kennedy, that was a rough, swearing fellow, he was sent to turn them off. And he cursed and damned at them, and they swore at him; and that Meg Merrilies, that was the maist powerfu' with the Enemy of Mankind, she as gude as said she would have him, body and soul, before three days were ower his head. And I have it from a sure hand, and that's ane wha saw it, and that's John Wilson, that was the Laird's groom, that Meg appeared to the Laird as he was riding hame from Singleside, over Gibbie's know, and threatened him wi' what she wad do to his family; but whether it was Meg, or something waur in her likeness, for it seemed bigger than any mortal creature, John could not say.'

'Aweel,' said the postilion, 'it might be sae, I canna say against it, for I was not in the country at the time; but John Wilson was a blustering kind of chield, without the heart of a sprug.'

'And what was the end of all this?' said the stranger, with some impatience.

'Ou, the event and upshot of it was, sir,' said the precentor, 'that while they were all looking on, beholding a king's ship chase a smuggler, this Kennedy suddenly brake away frae them without any reason that could be descried--ropes nor tows wad not hae held him--and made for the wood of Warroch as fast as his beast could carry him; and by the way he met the young Laird and his governor, and he snatched up the bairn, and swore, if HE was bewitched, the bairn should have the same luck as him; and the minister followed as fast as he could, and almaist as fast as them, for he was wonderfully swift of foot, and he saw Meg the witch, or her master in her similitude, rise suddenly out of the ground, and claught the bairn suddenly out of the ganger's arms; and then he rampauged and drew his sword, for ye ken a fie man and a cusser fearsna the deil.'

'I believe that's very true,' said the postilion.

'So, sir, she grippit him, and clodded him like a stane from the sling ower the craigs of Warroch Head, where he was found that evening; but what became of the babe, frankly I cannot say. But he that was minister here then, that's now in a better place, had an opinion that the bairn was only conveyed to fairy-land for a season.'

The stranger had smiled slightly at some parts of this recital, but ere he could answer the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard, and a smart servant, handsomely dressed, with a cockade in his hat, bustled into the kitchen, with 'Make a little room, good people'; when, observing the stranger, he descended at once into the modest and civil domestic, his hat sunk down by his side, and he put a letter into his master's hands. 'The family at Ellangowan, sir, are in great distress, and unable to receive any visits.'

'I know it,' replied his master. 'And now, madam, if you will have the goodness to allow me to occupy the parlour you mentioned, as you are disappointed of your guests--'

'Certainly, sir,' said Mrs. Mac-Candlish, and hastened to light the way with all the imperative bustle which an active landlady loves to display on such occasions.

'Young man,' said the Deacon to the servant, filling a glass, 'ye'll no be the waur o' this, after your ride.'

'Not a feather, sir; thank ye, your very good health, sir.'

'And wha may your master be, friend?'

'What, the gentleman that was here? that's the famous Colonel Mannering, sir, from the East Indies.'

'What, him we read of in the newspapers?'

'Ay, ay, just the same. It was he relieved Cuddieburn, and defended Chingalore, and defeated the great Mahratta chief, Ram Jolli Bundleman. I was with him in most of his campaigns.'

'Lord safe us,' said the landlady; 'I must go see what he would have for supper; that I should set him down here!'

'O, he likes that all the better, mother. You never saw a plainer creature in your life than our old Colonel; and yet he has a spice of the devil in him too.'

The rest of the evening's conversation below stairs tending little to edification, we shall, with the reader's leave, step up to the parlour.

CHAPTER XII

*Reputation! that's man's idol
Set up against God, the Maker of all laws,
Who hath commanded us we should not kill,
And yet we say we must, for Reputation!
What honest man can either fear his own,
Or else will hurt another's reputation?
Fear to do base unworthy things is valour;
If they be done to us, to suffer them
Is valour too.*

BEN JONSON.

The Colonel was walking pensively up and down the parlour when the officious landlady reentered to take his commands. Having given them in the manner he thought would be most acceptable 'for the good of the house,' he begged to detain her a moment.

'I think,' he said, 'madam, if I understood the good people right, Mr. Bertram lost his son in his fifth year?'

'O ay, sir, there's nae doubt o' that, though there are mony idle clashes about the way and manner, for it's an auld story now, and everybody tells it, as we were doing, their ain way by the ingleside. But lost the bairn was in his fifth year, as your honour says, Colonel; and the news being rashly tell'd to the leddy, then great with child, cost her her life that samyn night; and the Laird never throve after that day, but was just careless of everything, though, when his daughter Miss Lucy grew up, she tried to keep order within doors; but what could she do, poor thing? So now they're out of house and hauld.'

'Can you recollect, madam, about what time of the year the child was lost?' The landlady, after a pause and some recollection, answered, 'she was positive it was about this season'; and added some local recollections that fixed the date in her memory as occurring about the beginning of November 17--.

The stranger took two or three turns round the room in silence, but signed to Mrs. Mac-Candlish not to leave it.

'Did I rightly apprehend,' he said, 'that the estate of Ellangowan is in the market?'

'In the market? It will be sell'd the morn to the highest bidder--that's no the morn, Lord help me! which is the Sabbath, but on Monday, the first free day; and the furniture and stocking is to be roupit at the same time on the ground. It's the opinion of the hail country that the sale has been shamefully forced on at this time, when there's sae little money stirring in Scotland wi' this weary American war, that somebody may get the land a bargain. Deil be in them, that I should say sae!--the good lady's wrath rising at the supposed injustice.

'And where will the sale take place?'

'On the premises, as the advertisement says; that's at the house of Ellangowan, your honour, as I understand it.'

'And who exhibits the title-deeds, rent-roll, and plan?'

'A very decent man, sir; the sheriff-substitute of the county, who has authority from the Court of Session. He's in the town just now, if your honour would like to see him; and he can tell you mair about the loss of the bairn than ony body, for the sheriff-depute (that's his principal, like) took much pains to come at the truth o' that matter, as I have heard.'

'And this gentleman's name is--'

'Mac-Morlan, sir; he's a man o' character, and weel spoken o'.'

'Send my compliments--Colonel Mannering's compliments to him, and I would be glad he would do me the pleasure of supping with me, and bring these papers with him; and I beg, good madam, you will say nothing of this to any one else.'

'Me, sir? ne'er a word shall I say. I wish your honour (a courtesy), or any honourable gentleman that's fought for his country (another courtesy), had the land, since the auld family maun quit (a sigh), rather than that wily scoundrel Glossin, that's risen on the ruin of the best friend he ever had. And now I think on't, I'll slip on my hood and pattens, and gang to Mr. Mac-Morlan mysell, he's at hame e'en now; it's hardly a step.'

'Do so, my good landlady, and many thanks; and bid my servant step here with my portfolio in the meantime.'

In a minute or two Colonel Mannering was quietly seated with his writing materials before him. We have the privilege of looking over his shoulder as he writes, and we willingly communicate its substance to our readers. The letter was addressed to Arthur Mervyn, Esq., of Mervyn Hall, Llanbraithwaite, Westmoreland. It contained some account of the writer's previous journey since parting with him, and then proceeded as follows:--

'And now, why will you still upbraid me with my melancholy, Mervyn? Do you think, after the lapse of twenty-five years, battles, wounds, imprisonment, misfortunes of every description, I can be still the same lively, unbroken Guy Mannering who climbed Skiddaw with you, or shot grouse upon Crossfell? That you, who have remained in the bosom of domestic happiness, experience little change, that your step is as light and your fancy as full of sunshine, is a blessed effect of health and temperament, cooperating with content and a smooth current down the course of life. But MY career has been one of difficulties and doubts and errors. From my infancy I have been the sport of accident, and, though the wind has often borne me into harbour, it has seldom been into that which the pilot destined. Let me recall to you--but the task must be brief--the odd and wayward fates of my youth, and the misfortunes of my manhood.

'The former, you will say, had nothing very appalling. All was not for the best; but all was tolerable. My father, the eldest son of an ancient but reduced family, left me with little, save the name of the head of the house, to the protection of his more fortunate brothers. They were so fond of me that they almost quarrelled about me. My uncle, the bishop, would have had me in orders, and offered me a living; my uncle, the merchant, would have put me into a counting-house, and proposed to give me a share in the thriving concern of Mannering and Marshall, in Lombard Street. So, between these two stools, or rather these two soft, easy, well-stuffed chairs of divinity and commerce, my unfortunate person slipped down, and pitched upon a dragoon saddle. Again, the bishop wished me to marry the niece and heiress of the Dean of Lincoln; and my uncle, the alderman, proposed to me the only daughter of old Sloethorn, the great wine-merchant, rich enough to play at span-counter with moidores and make thread-papers of bank-notes; and somehow I slipped my neck out of both nooses, and married--poor, poor Sophia Wellwood.

'You will say, my military career in India, when I followed my regiment there, should have given me some satisfaction; and so it assuredly has. You will remind me also, that if I disappointed the hopes of my guardians, I did not incur their displeasure; that the bishop, at his death, bequeathed me his blessing, his manuscript sermons, and a curious portfolio containing the heads of eminent divines of the church of England; and that my uncle, Sir Paul Mannering, left me sole heir and executor to his large fortune. Yet this availeth me nothing; I told you I had that upon my mind which I should carry to my grave with me, a perpetual aloes in the draught of existence. I will tell you the cause more in detail than I had the heart to do while under your hospitable roof. You will often hear it mentioned, and perhaps with different and unfounded circumstances. I will therefore speak it out; and then let the event itself, and the sentiments of melancholy with which it has impressed me, never again be subject of discussion between us.

'Sophia, as you well know, followed me to India. She was as innocent as gay; but, unfortunately for us both, as gay as innocent. My own manners were partly formed by studies I had forsaken, and habits of seclusion not quite consistent with my situation as commandant of a regiment in a country where universal hospitality is offered and expected by every settler claiming the rank of a gentleman. In a moment of peculiar pressure (you know how hard we were sometimes run to obtain white faces to countenance our line-of-battle), a young man named Brown joined our regiment as a volunteer, and, finding the military duty more to his fancy than commerce, in which he had been engaged, remained with us as a cadet. Let me do my unhappy victim justice: he behaved with such gallantry on every occasion that offered that the first vacant commission was considered as his due. I was absent for some weeks upon a distant expedition; when I returned I found this young fellow established quite as the friend of the house, and habitual attendant of my wife and daughter. It was an arrangement which displeased me in many particulars, though no objection could be made to his manners or character. Yet I might have been reconciled to his familiarity in my family, but for the suggestions of another. If you read over--what I never dare open--the play of "Othello," you will have some idea of what followed--I mean of my motives; my actions, thank God! were less reprehensible. There was another cadet ambitious of the vacant situation. He called my attention to what he led me to term coquetry between my wife and this young man. Sophia was virtuous, but proud of her virtue; and, irritated by my jealousy, she was so imprudent as to press and encourage an intimacy which she saw I disapproved and regarded with suspicion. Between Brown and me there existed a sort of internal dislike. He made an effort or two to overcome my prejudice; but, prepossessed as I was, I placed them to a wrong motive. Feeling himself repulsed, and with scorn, he desisted; and as he was without family and friends, he was naturally more watchful of the deportment of one who had both.

'It is odd with what torture I write this letter. I feel inclined, nevertheless, to protract the operation, just as if my doing so could put off the catastrophe which has so long embittered my life. But--it must be told, and it shall be told briefly.

'My wife, though no longer young, was still eminently handsome, and--let me say thus far in my own justification--she was fond of being thought so--I am repeating what I said before. In a word, of her virtue I never entertained a doubt; but, pushed by the artful suggestions of Archer, I thought she cared little for my peace of mind, and that the young fellow Brown paid his attentions in my despite, and in defiance of me. He perhaps considered me, on his part, as an oppressive aristocratic man, who made my rank in society and in the army the means of galling those whom circumstances placed beneath me. And if he discovered my silly jealousy, he probably considered the fretting me in that sore point of my character as one means of avenging the petty indignities to which I had it in my power to subject him. Yet an acute friend of mine gave a more harmless, or at least a less offensive, construction to his attentions, which he conceived to be meant for my daughter Julia, though immediately addressed to propitiate the influence of her mother. This could have been no very flattering or pleasing enterprise on the part of an obscure and nameless young man; but I should not have been offended at this folly as I was at the higher degree of presumption I suspected. Offended, however, I was, and in a mortal degree.

'A very slight spark will kindle a flame where everything lies open to catch it. I have absolutely forgot the proximate cause of quarrel, but it was some trifle which occurred at the card-table which occasioned high words and a challenge. We met in the morning beyond the walls and esplanade of the fortress which I then commanded, on the frontiers of the settlement. This was arranged for Brown's safety, had he escaped. I almost wish he had, though at my own expense; but he fell by the first fire. We strove to assist him; but some of these looties, a species of native banditti who were always on the watch for prey, poured in upon us. Archer and I gained our horses with difficulty, and cut our way through them after a hard conflict, in the course of which he received some desperate wounds. To complete the misfortunes of this miserable day, my wife, who suspected the design with which I left the fortress, had ordered her palanquin to follow me, and was alarmed and almost made prisoner by another troop of these plunderers. She was quickly released by a party of our cavalry; but I cannot disguise from myself that the incidents of this fatal morning gave a severe shock to health already delicate. The confession of Archer, who thought himself dying, that he had invented some circumstances, and for his purposes put the worst construction upon others, and the full explanation and exchange of forgiveness with me which this produced,

could not check the progress of her disorder. She died within about eight months after this incident, bequeathing me only the girl of whom Mrs. Mervyn is so good as to undertake the temporary charge. Julia was also extremely ill; so much so that I was induced to throw up my command and return to Europe, where her native air, time, and the novelty of the scenes around her have contributed to dissipate her dejection and restore her health.

'Now that you know my story, you will no longer ask me the reason of my melancholy, but permit me to brood upon it as I may. There is, surely, in the above narrative enough to embitter, though not to poison, the chalice which the fortune and fame you so often mention had prepared to regale my years of retirement.

'I could add circumstances which our old tutor would have quoted as instances of DAY FATALITY,--you would laugh were I to mention such particulars, especially as you know I put no faith in them. Yet, since I have come to the very house from which I now write, I have learned a singular coincidence, which, if I find it truly established by tolerable evidence, will serve as hereafter for subject of curious discussion. But I will spare you at present, as I expect a person to speak about a purchase of property now open in this part of the country. It is a place to which I have a foolish partiality, and I hope my purchasing may be convenient to those who are parting with it, as there is a plan for buying it under the value. My respectful compliments to Mrs. Mervyn, and I will trust you, though you boast to be so lively a young gentleman, to kiss Julia for me. Adieu, dear Mervyn.--Thine ever, GUY MANNERING.'

Mr. Mac-Morlan now entered the room. The well-known character of Colonel Mannering at once disposed this gentleman, who was a man of intelligence and probity, to be open and confidential. He explained the advantages and disadvantages of the property. 'It was settled,' he said, 'the greater part of it at least, upon heirs-male, and the purchaser would have the privilege of retaining in his hands a large proportion of the price, in case of the reappearance, within a certain limited term, of the child who had disappeared.'

'To what purpose, then, force forward a sale?' said Mannering. Mac-Morlan smiled. 'Ostensibly,' he answered, 'to substitute the interest of money instead of the ill-paid and precarious rents of an unimproved estate; but chiefly it was believed, to suit the wishes and views of a certain intended purchaser, who had become a principal creditor, and forced himself into the management of the affairs by means best known to himself, and who, it was thought, would find it very convenient to purchase the estate without paying down the price.'

Mannering consulted with Mr. Mac-Morlan upon the steps for thwarting this unprincipled attempt. They then conversed long on the singular disappearance of Harry Bertram upon his fifth birthday, verifying thus the random prediction of Mannering, of which, however, it will readily be supposed he made no boast. Mr. Mac-Morlan was not himself in office when that incident took place; but he was well acquainted with all the circumstances, and promised that our hero should have them detailed by the sheriff-depute himself, if, as he proposed, he should become a settler in that part of Scotland. With this assurance they parted, well satisfied with each other and with the evening's conference.

On the Sunday following, Colonel Mannering attended the parish church with great decorum. None of the Ellangowan family were present; and it was understood that the old Laird was rather worse than better. Jock Jabos, once more despatched for him, returned once more without his errand; but on the following day Miss Bertram hoped he might be removed.

CHAPTER XIII

*They told me, by the sentence of the law,
They had commission to seize all thy fortune.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale;
There was another, making villainous jests
At thy undoing; he had ta'en possession
Of all thy ancient most domestic ornaments.*

OTWAY.

Early next morning Mannering mounted his horse and, accompanied by his servant, took the road to Ellangowan. He had no need to inquire the way. A sale in the country is a place of public resort and amusement, and people of various descriptions streamed to it from all quarters.

After a pleasant ride of about an hour, the old towers of the ruin presented themselves in the landscape. The thoughts, with what different feelings he had lost sight of them so many years before, thronged upon the mind of the traveller. The landscape was the same; but how changed the feelings, hopes, and views of the spectator! Then life and love were new, and all the prospect was gilded by their rays. And now, disappointed in affection, sated with fame and what the world calls success, his mind, goaded by bitter and repentant recollection, his best hope was to find a retirement in which he might nurse the melancholy that was to accompany him to his grave. 'Yet why should an individual mourn over the instability of his hopes and the vanity of his prospects? The ancient chiefs who erected these enormous and massive towers to be the fortress of their race and the seat of their power,--could they have dreamed the day was to come when the last of their descendants should be expelled, a ruined wanderer, from his possessions! But Nature's bounties are unaltered. The sun will shine as fair on these ruins, whether the property of a stranger or of a sordid and obscure trickster of the abused law, as when the banners of the founder first waved upon their battlements.'

These reflections brought Mannering to the door of the house, which was that day open to all. He entered among others, who traversed the apartments, some to select articles for purchase, others to gratify their curiosity. There is something melancholy in such a scene, even under the most favourable circumstances. The confused state of the furniture, displaced for the convenience of being easily viewed and carried off by the purchasers, is disagreeable to the eye. Those articles which, properly and decently arranged, look creditable and handsome, have then a paltry and wretched appearance; and the apartments, stripped of all that render them commodious and comfortable, have an aspect of ruin and dilapidation. It is disgusting also to see the scenes of domestic society and seclusion thrown open to the gaze of the curious and the vulgar, to hear their coarse speculations and brutal jests upon the fashions and furniture to which they are unaccustomed,--a frolicsome humour much cherished by the whisky which in Scotland is always put in circulation on such occasions. All these are ordinary effects of such a scene as Ellangowan now presented; but the moral feeling, that in this case they indicated the total ruin of an ancient and honourable family, gave them treble weight and poignancy.

It was some time before Colonel Mannering could find any one disposed to answer his reiterated questions concerning Ellangowan himself. At length an old maidservant, who held her apron to her eyes as she spoke, told him 'the Laird was something better, and they hoped he would be able to leave the house that day. Miss Lucy expected the chaise every moment, and, as the day was fine for the time o'year, they had carried him in his easychair up to the green before the auld castle, to be out of the way of this unco spectacle.' Thither Colonel Mannering went in quest of him, and soon came in sight of the little group, which consisted of four persons. The ascent was steep, so that he had time to reconnoitre them as he advanced, and to consider in what mode he should make his address.

Mr. Bertram, paralytic and almost incapable of moving, occupied his easy-chair, attired in his nightcap and a loose camlet coat, his feet wrapped in blankets. Behind him, with his hands crossed on the cane upon which he rested, stood Dominie Sampson, whom Mannering recognised at once. Time had made no

change upon him, unless that his black coat seemed more brown, and his gaunt cheeks more lank, than when Mannering last saw him. On one side of the old man was a sylph-like form--a young woman of about seventeen, whom the Colonel accounted to be his daughter. She was looking from time to time anxiously towards the avenue, as if expecting the post-chaise; and between whiles busied herself in adjusting the blankets so as to protect her father from the cold, and in answering inquiries, which he seemed to make with a captious and querulous manner. She did not trust herself to look towards the Place, although the hum of the assembled crowd must have drawn her attention in that direction. The fourth person of the group was a handsome and genteel young man, who seemed to share Miss Bertram's anxiety, and her solicitude to soothe and accommodate her parent.

This young man was the first who observed Colonel Mannering, and immediately stepped forward to meet him, as if politely to prevent his drawing nearer to the distressed group. Mannering instantly paused and explained. 'He was,' he said, 'a stranger to whom Mr. Bertram had formerly shown kindness and hospitality; he would not have intruded himself upon him at a period of distress, did it not seem to be in some degree a moment also of desertion; he wished merely to offer such services as might be in his power to Mr. Bertram and the young lady.'

He then paused at a little distance from the chair. His old acquaintance gazed at him with lack-lustre eye, that intimated no tokens of recognition; the Dominie seemed too deeply sunk in distress even to observe his presence. The young man spoke aside with Miss Bertram, who advanced timidly, and thanked Colonel Mannering for his goodness; 'but,' she said, the tears gushing fast into her eyes, 'her father, she feared, was not so much himself as to be able to remember him.'

She then retreated towards the chair, accompanied by the Colonel. 'Father,' she said, 'this is Mr. Mannering, an old friend, come to inquire after you.'

'He's very heartily welcome,' said the old man, raising himself in his chair, and attempting a gesture of courtesy, while a gleam of hospitable satisfaction seemed to pass over his faded features; 'but, Lucy, my dear, let us go down to the house; you should not keep the gentleman here in the cold. Dominie, take the key of the wine-cooler. Mr. a--a--the gentleman will surely take something after his ride.'

Mannering was unspeakably affected by the contrast which his recollection made between this reception and that with which he had been greeted by the same individual when they last met. He could not restrain his tears, and his evident emotion at once attained him the confidence of the friendless young lady.

'Alas!' she said, 'this is distressing even to a stranger; but it may be better for my poor father to be in this way than if he knew and could feel all.'

A servant in livery now came up the path, and spoke in an undertone to the young gentleman--'Mr. Charles, my lady's wanting you yonder sadly, to bid for her for the black ebony cabinet; and Lady Jean Devorgoil is wi' her an' a'; ye maun come away directly.'

'Tell them you could not find me, Tom, or, stay,--say I am looking at the horses.'

'No, no, no,' said Lucy Bertram, earnestly; 'if you would not add to the misery of this miserable moment, go to the company directly. This gentleman, I am sure, will see us to the carriage.'

'Unquestionably, madam,' said Mannering, 'your young friend may rely on my attention.'

'Farewell, then,' said young Hazlewood, and whispered a word in her ear; then ran down the steep hastily, as if not trusting his resolution at a slower pace.

'Where's Charles Hazlewood running?' said the invalid, who apparently was accustomed to his presence and attentions; 'where's Charles Hazlewood running? what takes him away now?'

'He'll return in a little while,' said Lucy, gently.

The sound of voices was now heard from the ruins. The reader may remember there was a communication between the castle and the beach, up which the speakers had ascended.

'Yes, there's a plenty of shells and seaware for manure, as you observe; and if one inclined to build a new house, which might indeed be necessary, there's a great deal of good hewn stone about this old dungeon, for the devil here--'

'Good God!' said Miss Bertram hastily to Sampson, 't is that wretch Glossin's voice! If my father sees him, it will kill him outright!'

Sampson wheeled perpendicularly round, and moved with long strides to confront the attorney as he issued from beneath the portal arch of the ruin. 'Avoid ye!' he said, 'avoid ye! wouldst thou kill and take possession?'

'Come, come, Master Dominie Sampson,' answered Glossin insolently, 'if ye cannot preach in the pulpit, we'll have no preaching here. We go by the law, my good friend; we leave the gospel to you.'

The very mention of this man's name had been of late a subject of the most violent irritation to the unfortunate patient. The sound of his voice now produced an instantaneous effect. Mr. Bertram started up without assistance and turned round towards him; the ghastliness of his features forming a strange contrast with the violence of his exclamations.--'Out of my sight, ye viper! ye frozen viper, that I warmed, till ye stung me! Art thou not afraid that the walls of my father's dwelling should fall and crush thee limb and bone? Are ye not afraid the very lintels of the door of Ellangowan Castle should break open and swallow you up? Were ye not friendless, houseless, penniless, when I took ye by the hand; and are ye not expelling me--me and that innocent girl--friendless, houseless, and penniless, from the house that has sheltered us and ours for a thousand years?'

Had Glossin been alone, he would probably have slunk off; but the consciousness that a stranger was present, besides the person who came with him (a sort of land-surveyor), determined him to resort to impudence. The task, however, was almost too hard even for his effrontery--'Sir--sir--Mr. Bertram, sir, you should not blame me, but your own imprudence, sir--'

The indignation of Mannering was mounting very high. 'Sir,' he said to Glossin, 'without entering into the merits of this controversy, I must inform you that you have chosen a very improper place, time, and presence for it. And you will oblige me by withdrawing without more words.'

Glossin, being a tall, strong, muscular man, was not unwilling rather to turn upon the stranger, whom he hoped to bully, than maintain his wretched cause against his injured patron.--'I do not know who you are, sir,' he said, 'and I shall permit no man to use such d--d freedom with me.'

Mannering was naturally hot-tempered: his eyes flashed a dark light; he compressed his nether lip so closely that the blood sprung, and approaching Glossin--'Look you, sir,' he said, 'that you do not know me is of little consequence. _I_ KNOW YOU; and if you do not instantly descend that bank, without uttering a single syllable, by the Heaven that is above us you shall make but one step from the top to the bottom!'

The commanding tone of rightful anger silenced at once the ferocity of the bully. He hesitated, turned on his heel, and, muttering something between his teeth about unwillingness to alarm the lady, relieved them of his hateful company.

Mrs. Mac-Candlish's postilion, who had come up in time to hear what passed, said aloud, 'If he had stuck by the way, I would have lent him a heezie, the dirty scoundrel, as willingly as ever I pitched a boddle.'

He then stepped forward to announce that his horses were in readiness for the invalid and his daughter. But they were no longer necessary. The debilitated frame of Mr. Bertram was exhausted by this last effort of indignant anger, and when he sunk again upon his chair, he expired almost without a struggle or groan. So little alteration did the extinction of the vital spark make upon his external appearance that the screams of his daughter, when she saw his eye fix and felt his pulse stop, first announced his death to the spectators.

CHAPTER XIV

*The bell strikes one. We take no note of time
But from its loss. To give it then a tongue*

*Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke,
I feel the solemn sound.*

YOUNG.

The moral which the poet has rather quaintly deduced from the necessary mode of measuring time may be well applied to our feelings respecting that portion of it which constitutes human life. We observe the aged, the infirm, and those engaged in occupations of immediate hazard, trembling as it were upon the very brink of non-existence, but we derive no lesson from the precariousness of their tenure until it has altogether failed. Then, for a moment at least--

Our hopes and fears Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge Look down--on what? a fathomless abyss, A dark eternity, how surely ours!

The crowd of assembled gazers and idlers at Ellangowan had followed the views of amusement, or what they called business, which brought them there, with little regard to the feelings of those who were suffering upon that occasion. Few, indeed, knew anything of the family. The father, betwixt seclusion, misfortune, and imbecility, had drifted, as it were, for many years out of the notice of his contemporaries; the daughter had never been known to them. But when the general murmur announced that the unfortunate Mr. Bertram had broken his heart in the effort to leave the mansion of his forefathers, there poured forth a torrent of sympathy like the waters from the rock when stricken by the wand of the prophet. The ancient descent and unblemished integrity of the family were respectfully remembered; above all, the sacred veneration due to misfortune, which in Scotland seldom demands its tribute in vain, then claimed and received it.

Mr. Mac-Morlan hastily announced that he would suspend all farther proceedings in the sale of the estate and other property, and relinquish the possession of the premises to the young lady, until she could consult with her friends and provide for the burial of her father.

Glossin had cowered for a few minutes under the general expression of sympathy, till, hardened by observing that no appearance of popular indignation was directed his way, he had the audacity to require that the sale should proceed.

'I will take it upon my own authority to adjourn it,' said the Sheriff-substitute, 'and will be responsible for the consequences. I will also give due notice when it is again to go forward. It is for the benefit of all concerned that the lands should bring the highest price the state of the market will admit, and this is surely no time to expect it. I will take the responsibility upon myself.'

Glossin left the room and the house too with secrecy and despatch; and it was probably well for him that he did so, since our friend Jock Jabos was already haranguing a numerous tribe of bare-legged boys on the propriety of pelting him off the estate.

Some of the rooms were hastily put in order for the reception of the young lady, and of her father's dead body. Mannering now found his farther interference would be unnecessary, and might be misconstrued. He observed, too, that several families connected with that of Ellangowan, and who indeed derived their principal claim of gentility from the alliance, were now disposed to pay to their trees of genealogy a tribute which the adversity of their supposed relatives had been inadequate to call forth; and that the honour of superintending the funeral rites of the dead Godfrey Bertram (as in the memorable case of Homer's birthplace) was likely to be debated by seven gentlemen of rank and fortune, none of whom had offered him an asylum while living. He therefore resolved, as his presence was altogether useless, to make a short tour of a fortnight, at the end of which period the adjourned sale of the estate of Ellangowan was to proceed.

But before he departed he solicited an interview with the Dominie. The poor man appeared, on being informed a gentleman wanted to speak to him, with some expression of surprise in his gaunt features, to which recent sorrow had given an expression yet more grisly. He made two or three profound reverences to Mannering, and then, standing erect, patiently waited an explanation of his commands.

'You are probably at a loss to guess, Mr. Sampson,' said Mannering, 'what a stranger may have to say to you?'

'Unless it were to request that I would undertake to train up some youth in polite letters and humane learning; but I cannot--I cannot; I have yet a task to perform.'

'No, Mr. Sampson, my wishes are not so ambitious. I have no son, and my only daughter, I presume, you would not consider as a fit pupil.'

'Of a surety no,' replied the simple-minded Sampson. 'Nathless, it was I who did educate Miss Lucy in all useful learning, albeit it was the housekeeper who did teach her those unprofitable exercises of hemming and shaping.'

'Well, sir,' replied Mannering, 'it is of Miss Lucy I meant to speak. You have, I presume, no recollection of me?'

Sampson, always sufficiently absent in mind, neither remembered the astrologer of past years, nor even the stranger who had taken his patron's part against Glossin, so much had his friend's sudden death embroiled his ideas.

'Well, that does not signify,' pursued the Colonel; 'I am an old acquaintance of the late Mr. Bertram, able and willing to assist his daughter in her present circumstances. Besides, I have thoughts of making this purchase, and I should wish things kept in order about the place; will you have the goodness to apply this small sum in the usual family expenses?' He put into the Dominie's hand a purse containing some gold.

'Pro-di-gi-ous!' exclaimed Dominie Sampson. 'But if your honour would tarry--'

'Impossible, sir, impossible,' said Mannering, making his escape from him.

'Pro-di-gi-ous!' again exclaimed Sampson, following to the head of the stairs, still holding out the purse. 'But as touching this coined money--'

Mannering escaped downstairs as fast as possible.

'Pro-di-gi-ous!' exclaimed Dominie Sampson, yet the third time, now standing at the front door. 'But as touching this specie--'

But Mannering was now on horseback, and out of hearing. The Dominie, who had never, either in his own right or as trustee for another, been possessed of a quarter part of this sum, though it was not above twenty guineas, 'took counsel,' as he expressed himself, 'how he should demean himself with respect unto the fine gold' thus left in his charge. Fortunately he found a disinterested adviser in Mac-Morlan, who pointed out the most proper means of disposing of it for contributing to Miss Bertram's convenience, being no doubt the purpose to which it was destined by the bestower.

Many of the neighbouring gentry were now sincerely eager in pressing offers of hospitality and kindness upon Miss Bertram. But she felt a natural reluctance to enter any family for the first time as an object rather of benevolence than hospitality, and determined to wait the opinion and advice of her father's nearest female relation, Mrs. Margaret Bertram of Singleside, an old unmarried lady, to whom she wrote an account of her present distressful situation.

The funeral of the late Mr. Bertram was performed with decent privacy, and the unfortunate young lady was now to consider herself as but the temporary tenant of the house in which she had been born, and where her patience and soothing attentions had so long 'rocked the cradle of declining age.' Her communication with Mr. Mac-Morlan encouraged her to hope that she would not be suddenly or unkindly deprived of this asylum; but fortune had ordered otherwise.

For two days before the appointed day for the sale of the lands and estate of Ellangowan, Mac-Morlan daily expected the appearance of Colonel Mannering, or at least a letter containing powers to act for him. But none such arrived. Mr. Mac-Morlan waked early in the morning, walked over to the Post-office,--there were no letters for him. He endeavoured to persuade himself that he should see Colonel Mannering to breakfast, and ordered his wife to place her best china and prepare herself accordingly. But the preparations were in vain. 'Could I have foreseen this,' he said, 'I would have travelled Scotland over, but I would have found some one to bid against Glossin.' Alas! such reflections were all too late. The appointed hour arrived; and the parties met in the Masons' Lodge at Kippletringan, being the place fixed for the adjourned sale. Mac-Morlan spent as much time in preliminaries as decency would permit, and read over the articles of sale as slowly as if he had been reading his own death-warrant. He turned his eye every time the door of the room opened, with hopes which grew fainter and fainter. He listened to every noise in the street of the village, and endeavoured to distinguish in it the sound of hoofs or wheels. It was all in vain. A bright idea then occurred, that Colonel Mannering might have employed some other person in the transaction; he would not have wasted a moment's thought upon the want of confidence in himself which such a manoeuvre would have evinced. But this hope also was groundless. After a solemn pause, Mr. Glossin offered the upset price for the lands and barony of Ellangowan. No reply was made, and no competitor appeared; so, after a lapse of the usual interval by the running of a sand-glass, upon the intended purchaser entering the proper sureties, Mr. Mac-Morlan was obliged, in technical terms, to 'find and declare the sale lawfully completed, and to prefer the said Gilbert Glossin as the purchaser of the said lands and estate.' The honest writer refused to partake of a splendid entertainment with which Gilbert Glossin,

Esquire, now of Ellangowan, treated the rest of the company, and returned home in huge bitterness of spirit, which he vented in complaints against the fickleness and caprice of these Indian nabobs, who never knew what they would be at for ten days together. Fortune generously determined to take the blame upon herself, and cut off even this vent of Mac-Morlan's resentment.

An express arrived about six o'clock at night, 'very particularly drunk,' the maid-servant said, with a packet from Colonel Mannering, dated four days back, at a town about a hundred miles' distance from Kippletringan, containing full powers to Mr. Mac-Morlan, or any one whom he might employ, to make the intended purchase, and stating that some family business of consequence called the Colonel himself to Westmoreland, where a letter would find him, addressed to the care of Arthur Mervyn, Esq., of Mervyn Hall.

Mac-Morlan, in the transports of his wrath, flung the power of attorney at the head of the innocent maidservant, and was only forcibly withheld from horse-whipping the rascally messenger by whose sloth and drunkenness the disappointment had taken place.

CHAPTER XV

*My gold is gone, my money is spent,
My land now take it unto thee.
Give me thy gold, good John o' the Scales,
And thine for aye my land shall be.*

*Then John he did him to record draw.
And John he caste him a gods-pennie;
But for every pounce that John agreed,
The land, I wis, was well worth three.*

HEIR OF LINNE.

The Galwegian John o' the Scales was a more clever fellow than his prototype. He contrived to make himself heir of Linne without the disagreeable ceremony of 'telling down the good red gold.' Miss Bertram no sooner heard this painful, and of late unexpected, intelligence than she proceeded in the preparations she had already made for leaving the mansion-house immediately. Mr. Mac-Morlan assisted her in these arrangements, and pressed upon her so kindly the hospitality and protection of his roof, until she should receive an answer from her cousin, or be enabled to adopt some settled plan of life, that she felt there would be unkindness in refusing an invitation urged with such earnestness. Mrs. Mac-Morlan was a ladylike person, and well qualified by birth and manners to receive the visit, and to make her house agreeable to Miss Bertram. A home, therefore, and an hospitable reception were secured to her, and she went on with better heart to pay the wages and receive the adieu of the few domestics of her father's family.

Where there are estimable qualities on either side, this task is always affecting; the present circumstances rendered it doubly so. All received their due, and even a trifle more, and with thanks and good wishes, to which some added tears, took farewell of their young mistress. There remained in the parlour only Mr. Mac-Morlan, who came to attend his guest to his house, Dominie Sampson, and Miss Bertram. 'And now,' said the poor girl, 'I must bid farewell to one of my oldest and kindest friends. God bless you, Mr. Sampson, and requite to you all the kindness of your instructions to your poor pupil, and your friendship to him that is gone. I hope I shall often hear from you.' She slid into his hand a paper containing some pieces of gold, and rose, as if to leave the room.

Dominie Sampson also rose; but it was to stand aghast with utter astonishment. The idea of parting from Miss Lucy, go where she might, had never once occurred to the simplicity of his understanding. He laid the money on the table. 'It is certainly inadequate,' said Mac-Morlan, mistaking his meaning, 'but the circumstances--' Mr. Sampson waved his hand impatiently.--'It is not the lucre, it is not the lucre; but that I, that have ate of her father's loaf, and drank of his cup, for twenty years and more--to think that I am going to leave her, and to leave her in distress and dolour! No, Miss Lucy, you need never think it! You would not consent to put forth your father's poor dog, and would you use me waur than a messan? No, Miss Lucy Bertram, while I live I will not separate from you. I'll be no burden; I have thought how to prevent that. But, as Ruth said unto Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to depart from thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death do part thee and me."'

During this speech, the longest ever Dominie Sampson was known to utter, the affectionate creature's eyes streamed with tears, and neither Lucy nor Mac-Morlan could refrain from sympathising with this unexpected burst of feeling and attachment. 'Mr. Sampson,' said Mac-Morlan, after having had recourse to his snuff-box and handkerchief alternately, 'my house is large enough, and if you will accept of a bed there while Miss Bertram honours us with her residence, I shall think myself very happy, and my roof much favoured, by receiving a man of your worth and fidelity.' And then, with a delicacy which was meant to remove any objection on Miss Bertram's part to bringing with her this unexpected satellite, he added, 'My business requires my frequently having occasion for a better accountant than any of my present clerks, and I should be glad to have recourse to your assistance in that way now and then.'

'Of a surety, of a surety,' said Sampson eagerly; 'I understand book-keeping by double entry and the Italian method.'

Our postilion had thrust himself into the room to announce his chaise and horses; he tarried, unobserved, during this extraordinary scene, and assured Mrs. Mac-Candlish it was the most moving thing he ever saw; 'the death of the grey mare, puir hizzie, was naething till't.' This trifling circumstance afterwards had consequences of greater moment to the Dominie.

The visitors were hospitably welcomed by Mrs. Mac-Morlan, to whom, as well as to others, her husband intimated that he had engaged Dominie Sampson's assistance to disentangle some perplexed accounts, during which occupation he would, for convenience sake, reside with the family. Mr. Mac-Morlan's knowledge of the world induced him to put this colour upon the matter, aware that, however honourable the fidelity of the Dominie's attachment might be both to his own heart and to the family of Ellangowan, his exterior ill qualified him to be a squire of dames,' and rendered him, upon the whole, rather a ridiculous appendage to a beautiful young woman of seventeen.

Dominie Sampson achieved with great zeal such tasks as Mr. Mac-Morlan chose to entrust him with; but it was speedily observed that at a certain hour after breakfast he regularly disappeared, and returned again about dinner-time. The evening he occupied in the labour of the office. On Saturday he appeared before Mac-Morlan with a look of great triumph, and laid on the table two pieces of gold. 'What is this for, Dominie?' said Mac-Morlan.

'First to indemnify you of your charges in my behalf, worthy sir; and the balance for the use of Miss Lucy Bertram.'

'But, Mr. Sampson, your labour in the office much more than recompenses me; I am your debtor, my good friend.'

'Then be it all,' said the Dominie, waving his hand, 'for Miss Lucy Bertram's behoof.'

'Well, but, Dominie, this money--'

'It is honestly come by, Mr. Mac-Morlan; it is the bountiful reward of a young gentleman to whom I am teaching the tongues; reading with him three hours daily.'

A few more questions extracted from the Dominie that this liberal pupil was young Hazlewood, and that he met his preceptor daily at the house of Mrs. Mac-Candlish, whose proclamation of Sampson's disinterested attachment to the young lady had procured him this indefatigable and bounteous scholar. Mac-Morlan was much struck with what he heard. Dominie Sampson was doubtless a very good scholar, and an excellent man, and the classics were unquestionably very well worth reading; yet that a young man of twenty should ride seven miles and back again each day in the week, to hold this sort of TETE-A-TETE of three hours, was a zeal for literature to which he was not prepared to give entire credit. Little art was necessary to sift the Dominie, for the honest man's head never admitted any but the most direct and simple ideas. 'Does Miss Bertram know how your time is engaged, my good friend?' 'Surely not as yet. Mr. Charles recommended it should be concealed from her, lest she should scruple to accept of the small assistance arising from it; but,' he added, 'it would not be possible to conceal it long, since Mr. Charles proposed taking his lessons occasionally in this house.'

'O, he does!' said Mac-Morlan. 'Yes, yes, I can understand that better. And pray, Mr. Sampson, are these three hours entirely spent in construing and translating?' 'Doubtless, no; we have also colloquial intercourse to sweeten study: neque semper arcum tendit apollo.'

The querist proceeded to elicit from this Galloway Phoebus what their discourse chiefly turned upon.

'Upon our past meetings at Ellangowan; and, truly, I think very often we discourse concerning Miss Lucy, for Mr. Charles Hazlewood in that particular resembleth me, Mr. Mac-Morlan. When I begin to speak of her I never know when to stop; and, as I say (jocularly), she cheats us out of half our lessons.'

'O ho!' thought Mac-Morlan, 'sits the wind in that quarter? I've heard something like this before.'

He then began to consider what conduct was safest for his protegee, and even for himself; for the senior Mr. Hazlewood was powerful, wealthy, ambitious, and vindictive, and looked for both fortune and title in any connexion which his son might form. At length, having the highest opinion of his guest's good sense and penetration, he determined to take an opportunity, when they should happen to be alone, to communicate the matter to her as a simple piece of intelligence. He did so in as natural a manner as he could. 'I wish you joy of your friend Mr. Sampson's good fortune, Miss Bertram; he has got a pupil who pays him two guineas for twelve lessons of Greek and Latin.'

'Indeed! I am equally happy and surprised. Who can be so liberal? is Colonel Mannering returned?' 'No, no, not Colonel Mannering; but what do you think of your acquaintance, Mr. Charles Hazlewood? He talks of taking his lessons here; I wish we may have accommodation for him.'

Lucy blushed deeply. 'For Heaven's sake, no, Mr. Mac-Morlan, do not let that be; Charles Hazlewood has had enough of mischief about that already.'

'About the classics, my dear young lady?' wilfully seeming to misunderstand her; 'most young gentlemen have so at one period or another, sure enough; but his present studies are voluntary.'

Miss Bertram let the conversation drop, and her host made no effort to renew it, as she seemed to pause upon the intelligence in order to form some internal resolution.

The next day Miss Bertram took an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Sampson. Expressing in the kindest manner her grateful thanks for his disinterested attachment, and her joy that he had got such a provision, she hinted to him that his present mode of superintending Charles Hazlewood's studies must be so inconvenient to his pupil that, while that engagement lasted, he had better consent to a temporary separation, and reside either with his scholar or as near him as might be. Sampson refused, as indeed she had expected, to listen a moment to this proposition; he would not quit her to be made preceptor to the Prince of Wales. 'But I see,' he added, 'you are too proud to share my pittance; and peradventure I grow wearisome unto you.'

'No indeed; you were my father's ancient, almost his only, friend. I am not proud; God knows, I have no reason to be so. You shall do what you judge best in other matters; but oblige me by telling Mr. Charles Hazlewood that you had some conversation with me concerning his studies, and that I was of opinion that his carrying them on in this house was altogether impracticable, and not to be thought of.'

Dominie Sampson left her presence altogether crest-fallen, and, as he shut the door, could not help muttering the 'varium et mutabile' of Virgil. Next day he appeared with a very rueful visage, and tendered Miss Bertram a letter. 'Mr. Hazlewood,' he said, 'was to discontinue his lessons, though he had generously made up the pecuniary loss. But how will he make up the loss to himself of the knowledge he might have acquired under my instruction? Even in that one article of writing,--he was an hour before he could write that brief note, and destroyed many scrolls, four quills, and some good white paper. I would have taught him in three weeks a firm, current, clear, and legible hand; he should have been a calligrapher,--but God's will be done.'

The letter contained but a few lines, deeply regretting and murmuring against Miss Bertram's cruelty, who not only refused to see him, but to permit him in the most indirect manner to hear of her health and contribute to her service. But it concluded with assurances that her severity was vain, and that nothing could shake the attachment of Charles Hazlewood.

Under the active patronage of Mrs. Mac-Candlish, Sampson picked up some other scholars--very different indeed from Charles Hazlewood in rank, and whose lessons were proportionally unproductive. Still, however, he gained something, and it was the glory of his heart to carry it to Mr. Mac-Morlan weekly, a slight peculium only subtracted to supply his snuff-box and tobacco-pouch.

And here we must leave Kippletringan to look after our hero, lest our readers should fear they are to lose sight of him for another quarter of a century.

CHAPTER XVI

*Our Polly is a sad slut, nor heeds what we have taught her,
I wonder any man alive will ever rear a daughter,
For when she's drest with care and cost, all tempting, fine,
and gay,
As men should serve a cucumber, she flings herself away.*

Beggar's Opera.

After the death of Mr. Bertram, Mannering had set out upon a short tour, proposing to return to the neighbourhood of Ellangowan before the sale of that property should take place. He went, accordingly, to Edinburgh and elsewhere, and it was in his return towards the south-western district of Scotland, in which our scene lies, that, at a post-town about a hundred miles from Kippletringan, to which he had requested his friend, Mr. Mervyn, to address his letters, he received one from that gentleman which contained rather unpleasing intelligence. We have assumed already the privilege of acting a secretis to this gentleman, and therefore shall present the reader with an extract from this epistle.

'I beg your pardon, my dearest friend, for the pain I have given you in forcing you to open wounds so festering as those your letter referred to. I have always heard, though erroneously perhaps, that the attentions of Mr. Brown were intended for Miss Mannering. But, however that were, it could not be supposed that in your situation his boldness should escape notice and chastisement. Wise men say that we resign to civil society our natural rights of self-defence only on condition that the ordinances of law should protect us. Where the price cannot be paid, the resignation becomes void. For instance, no one supposes that I am not entitled to defend my purse and person against a highwayman, as much as if I were a wild Indian, who owns neither law nor magistracy. The question of resistance or

submission must be determined by my means and situation. But if, armed and equal in force, I submit to injustice and violence from any man, high or low, I presume it will hardly be attributed to religious or moral feeling in me, or in any one but a Quaker. An aggression on my honour seems to me much the same. The insult, however trifling in itself, is one of much deeper consequence to all views in life than any wrong which can be inflicted by a depredator on the highway, and to redress the injured party is much less in the power of public jurisprudence, or rather it is entirely beyond its reach. If any man chooses to rob Arthur Mervyn of the contents of his purse, supposing the said Arthur has not means of defence, or the skill and courage to use them, the assizes at Lancaster or Carlisle will do him justice by tucking up the robber; yet who will say I am bound to wait for this justice, and submit to being plundered in the first instance, if I have myself the means and spirit to protect my own property? But if an affront is offered to me, submission under which is to tarnish my character for ever with men of honour, and for which the twelve judges of England, with the chancellor to boot, can afford me no redress, by what rule of law or reason am I to be deterred from protecting what ought to be, and is, so infinitely dearer to every man of honour than his whole fortune? Of the religious views of the matter I shall say nothing, until I find a reverend divine who shall condemn self-defence in the article of life and property. If its propriety in that case be generally admitted, I suppose little distinction can be drawn between defence of person and goods and protection of reputation. That the latter is liable to be assailed by persons of a different rank in life, untainted perhaps in morals, and fair in character, cannot affect my legal right of self-defence. I may be sorry that circumstances have engaged me in personal strife with such an individual; but I should feel the same sorrow for a generous enemy who fell under my sword in a national quarrel. I shall leave the question with the casuists, however; only observing, that what I have written will not avail either the professed duellist or him who is the aggressor in a dispute of honour. I only presume to exculpate him who is dragged into the field by such an offence as, submitted to in patience, would forfeit for ever his rank and estimation in society.

'I am sorry you have thoughts of settling in Scotland, and yet glad that you will still be at no immeasurable distance, and that the latitude is all in our favour. To move to Westmoreland from Devonshire might make an East-Indian shudder; but to come to us from Galloway or Dumfries-shire is a step, though a short one, nearer the sun. Besides, if, as I suspect, the estate in view be connected with the old haunted castle in which you played the astrologer in your northern tour some twenty years since, I have heard you too often describe the scene with comic unction to hope you will be deterred from making the purchase. I trust, however, the hospitable gossiping Laird has not run himself upon the shallows, and that his chaplain, whom you so often made us laugh at, is still in rerum natura.

'And here, dear Mannering, I wish I could stop, for I have incredible pain in telling the rest of my story; although I am sure I can warn you against any intentional impropriety on the part of my temporary ward, Julia Mannering. But I must still earn my college nickname of Downright Dunstable. In one word, then, here is the matter.

'Your daughter has much of the romantic turn of your disposition, with a little of that love of admiration which all pretty women share less or more. She will besides, apparently, be your heiress; a trifling circumstance to those who view Julia with my eyes, but a prevailing bait to the specious, artful, and worthless. You know how I have jested with her about her soft melancholy, and lonely walks at morning before any one is up, and in the moonlight when all should be gone to bed, or set down to cards, which is the same thing. The incident which follows may not be beyond the bounds of a joke, but I had rather the jest upon it came from you than me.

'Two or three times during the last fortnight I heard, at a late hour in the night or very early in the morning, a flageolet play the little Hindu tune to which your daughter is so partial. I thought for some time that some tuneful domestic, whose taste for music was laid under constraint during the day, chose that silent hour to imitate the strains which he had caught up by the ear during his attendance in the drawing-room. But last night I sat late in my study, which is immediately under Miss Mannering's apartment, and to my surprise I not only heard the flageolet distinctly, but satisfied myself that it came from the lake under the window. Curious to know who serenaded us at that unusual hour, I stole softly to the window of my apartment. But there were other watchers than me. You may remember, Miss Mannering preferred that apartment on account of a balcony which opened from her window upon the lake. Well, sir, I heard the sash of her window thrown up, the shutters opened, and her own voice in conversation with some person who answered from below. This is not "Much ado about nothing"; I could not be mistaken in her voice, and such tones, so soft, so insinuating; and, to say the truth, the accents from below were in passion's tenderest cadence too,—but of the sense I can say nothing. I raised the sash of my own window that I might hear something more than the mere murmur of this Spanish rendezvous; but, though I used every precaution, the noise alarmed the speakers; down slid the young lady's casement, and the shutters were barred in an instant. The dash of a pair of oars in the water announced the retreat of the male person of the dialogue. Indeed, I saw his boat, which he rowed with great swiftness and dexterity, fly across the lake like a twelve-oared barge. Next morning I examined some of my domestics, as if by accident, and I found the gamekeeper, when making his rounds, had twice seen that boat beneath the house, with a single person, and had heard the flageolet. I did not care to press any farther questions, for fear of implicating Julia in the opinions of those of whom they might be asked. Next morning, at breakfast, I dropped a casual hint about the serenade of the evening before, and I promise you Miss Mannering looked red and pale alternately. I immediately gave the circumstance such a turn as might lead her to suppose that my observation was merely casual. I have since caused a watch-light to be burnt in my library, and have left the shutters open, to deter the approach of our nocturnal guest; and I have stated the severity of approaching winter, and the rawness of the fogs, as an objection to solitary walks. Miss Mannering acquiesced with a passiveness which is no part of her character, and which, to tell you the plain truth, is a feature about the business which I like least of all. Julia has too much of her own dear papa's disposition to be curbed in any of her humours, were there not some little lurking consciousness that it may be as prudent to avoid debate.

'Now my story is told, and you will judge what you ought to do. I have not mentioned the matter to my good woman, who, a faithful secretary to her sex's foibles, would certainly remonstrate against your being made acquainted with these particulars, and might, instead, take it into her head to exercise her own eloquence on Miss Mannering; a faculty which, however powerful when directed against me, its legitimate object, might, I fear, do more harm than good in the case supposed. Perhaps even you yourself will find it most prudent to act without remonstrating, or appearing to be aware of this little anecdote. Julia is very like a certain friend of mine; she has a quick and lively imagination, and keen feelings, which are apt to exaggerate both the good and evil they find in life. She is a charming girl, however, as generous and spirited as she is lovely. I paid her the kiss you sent her with all my heart, and she rapped my fingers for my reward with all hers. Pray return as soon as you can. Meantime rely upon the care of, yours faithfully, 'ARTHUR MERVYN.

'P.S.—You will naturally wish to know if I have the least guess concerning the person of the serenader. In truth, I have none. There is no young gentleman of these parts, who might be in rank or fortune a match for Miss Julia, that I think at all likely to play such a character. But on the other side of the lake, nearly opposite to Mervyn Hall, is a d--d cake-house, the resort of walking gentlemen of all descriptions—poets, players, painters, musicians—who come to rave, and recite, and madden about this picturesque land of ours. It is paying some penalty for its beauties, that they are the means of drawing this swarm of coxcombs together. But were Julia my daughter, it is one of those sort of fellows that I should fear on her account. She is generous and romantic, and writes six sheets a week to a female correspondent; and it's a sad thing to lack a subject in such a case, either for exercise of the feelings or of the pen. Adieu, once more. Were I to treat this matter more seriously than I have done, I should do injustice to your feelings; were I altogether to overlook it, I should discredit my own.'

The consequence of this letter was, that, having first despatched the faithless messenger with the necessary powers to Mr. Mac-Morlan for purchasing the estate of Ellangowan, Colonel Mannering turned his horse's head in a more southerly direction, and neither 'stinted nor staid' until he arrived at the mansion of his friend Mr. Mervyn, upon the banks of one of the lakes of Westmoreland.

CHAPTER XVII

Heaven first, in its mercy, taught mortals their letters,

*For ladies in limbo, and lovers in fetters,
Or some author, who, placing his persons before ye,
Un gallantly leaves them to write their own story.*

POPE, imitated.

When Mannering returned to England, his first object had been to place his daughter in a seminary for female education, of established character. Not, however, finding her progress in the accomplishments which he wished her to acquire so rapid as his impatience expected, he had withdrawn Miss Mannering from the school at the end of the first quarter. So she had only time to form an eternal friendship with Miss Matilda Marchmont, a young lady about her own age, which was nearly eighteen. To her faithful eye were addressed those formidable quires which issued forth from Mervyn Hall on the wings of the post while Miss Mannering was a guest there. The perusal of a few short extracts from these may be necessary to render our story intelligible.

FIRST EXTRACT

'Alas! my dearest Matilda, what a tale is mine to tell! Misfortune from the cradle has set her seal upon your unhappy friend. That we should be severed for so slight a cause--an ungrammatical phrase in my Italian exercise, and three false notes in one of Paisiello's sonatas! But it is a part of my father's character, of whom it is impossible to say whether I love, admire, or fear him the most. His success in life and in war, his habit of making every obstacle yield before the energy of his exertions, even where they seemed insurmountable--all these have given a hasty and peremptory cast to his character, which can neither endure contradiction nor make allowance for deficiencies. Then he is himself so very accomplished. Do you know, there was a murmur, half confirmed too by some mysterious words which dropped from my poor mother, that he possesses other sciences, now lost to the world, which enable the possessor to summon up before him the dark and shadowy forms of future events! Does not the very idea of such a power, or even of the high talent and commanding intellect which the world may mistake for it,--does it not, dear Matilda, throw a mysterious grandeur about its possessor? You will call this romantic; but consider I was born in the land of talisman and spell, and my childhood lulled by tales which you can only enjoy through the gauzy frippery of a French translation. O, Matilda, I wish you could have seen the dusky visages of my Indian attendants, bending in earnest devotion round the magic narrative, that flowed, half poetry, half prose, from the lips of the tale-teller! No wonder that European fiction sounds cold and meagre, after the wonderful effects which I have seen the romances of the East produce upon their hearers.'

SECOND EXTRACT

'You are possessed, my dear Matilda, of my bosom-secret, in those sentiments with which I regard Brown. I will not say his memory; I am convinced he lives, and is faithful. His addresses to me were countenanced by my deceased parent, imprudently countenanced perhaps, considering the prejudices of my father in favour of birth and rank. But I, then almost a girl, could not be expected surely to be wiser than her under whose charge nature had placed me. My father, constantly engaged in military duty, I saw but at rare intervals, and was taught to look up to him with more awe than confidence. Would to Heaven it had been otherwise! It might have been better for us all at this day!'

THIRD EXTRACT

'You ask me why I do not make known to my father that Brown yet lives, at least that he survived the wound he received in that unhappy duel, and had written to my mother expressing his entire convalescence, and his hope of speedily escaping from captivity. A soldier, that "in the trade of war has oft slain men," feels probably no uneasiness at reflecting upon the supposed catastrophe which almost turned me into stone. And should I show him that letter, does it not follow that Brown, alive and maintaining with pertinacity the pretensions to the affections of your poor friend for which my father formerly sought his life, would be a more formidable disturber of Colonel Mannering's peace of mind than in his supposed grave? If he escapes from the hands of these marauders, I am convinced he will soon be in England, and it will be then time to consider how his existence is to be disclosed to my father. But if, alas! my earnest and confident hope should betray me, what would it avail to tear open a mystery fraught with so many painful recollections? My dear mother had such dread of its being known, that I think she even suffered my father to suspect that Brown's attentions were directed towards herself, rather than permit him to discover their real object; and O, Matilda, whatever respect I owe to the memory of a deceased parent, let me do justice to a living one. I cannot but condemn the dubious policy which she adopted, as unjust to my father, and highly perilous to herself and me. But peace be with her ashes! her actions were guided by the heart rather than the head; and shall her daughter, who inherits all her weakness, be the first to withdraw the veil from her defects?'

FOURTH EXTRACT 'MERVYN HALL.

'If India be the land of magic, this, my dearest Matilda, is the country of romance. The scenery is such as nature brings together in her sublimest moods--sounding cataracts--hills which rear their scathed heads to the sky--lakes that, winding up the shadowy valleys, lead at every turn to yet more romantic recesses--rocks which catch the clouds of heaven. All the wildness of Salvator here, and there the fairy scenes of Claude. I am happy too in finding at least one object upon which my father can share my enthusiasm. An admirer of nature, both as an artist and a poet, I have experienced the utmost pleasure from the observations by which he explains the character and the effect of these brilliant specimens of her power. I wish he would settle in this enchanting land. But his views lie still farther north, and he is at present absent on a tour in Scotland, looking, I believe, for some purchase of land which may suit him as a residence. He is partial, from early recollections, to that country. So, my dearest Matilda, I must be yet farther removed from you before I am established in a home. And O how delighted shall I be when I can say, Come, Matilda, and be the guest of your faithful Julia!

'I am at present the inmate of Mr. and Mrs. Mervyn, old friends of my father. The latter is precisely a good sort of woman, ladylike and housewifely; but for accomplishments or fancy--good lack, my dearest Matilda, your friend might as well seek sympathy from Mrs. Teach'em;--you see I have not forgot school nicknames. Mervyn is a different--quite a different being from my father, yet he amuses and endures me. He is fat and good-natured, gifted with strong shrewd sense and some powers of humour; but having been handsome, I suppose, in his youth, has still some pretension to be a beau garcon, as well as an enthusiastic agriculturist. I delight to make him scramble to the tops of eminences and to the foot of waterfalls, and am obliged in turn to admire his turnips, his lucerne, and his timothy grass. He thinks me, I fancy, a simple romantic Miss, with some--the word will be out--beauty and some good-nature; and I hold that the gentleman has good taste for the female outside, and do not expect he should comprehend my sentiments farther. So he rallies, hands, and hobbles (for the dear creature has got the gout too), and tells old stories of high life, of which he has seen a great deal; and I listen, and smile, and look as pretty, as pleasant, and as simple as I can, and we do very well.

'But, alas! my dearest Matilda, how would time pass away, even in this paradise of romance, tenanted as it is by a pair assorting so ill with the scenes around them, were it not for your fidelity in replying to my uninteresting details? Pray do not fail to write three times a week at least; you can be at no loss what to say.'

FIFTH EXTRACT

'How shall I communicate what I have now to tell! My hand and heart still flutter so much, that the task of writing is almost impossible! Did I not say that he lived? did I not say I would not despair? How could you suggest, my dear Matilda, that my feelings, considering I had parted from him so young, rather arose from the warmth of my imagination than of my heart? O I was sure that they were genuine, deceitful as the dictates of our bosom so frequently are. But to my tale--let it be, my friend, the most sacred, as it is the most sincere, pledge of our friendship.

'Our hours here are early--earlier than my heart, with its load of care, can compose itself to rest. I therefore usually take a book for an hour or two after retiring to my own room, which I think I have told you opens to a small balcony, looking down upon that beautiful lake of which I attempted to give you a slight sketch. Mervyn Hall, being partly an ancient building, and constructed with a view to defence, is situated on the verge of the lake. A stone dropped from the projecting balcony plunges into water deep enough to float a skiff. I had left my window partly unbarred, that, before I went to bed, I might, according to my custom, look out and see the moonlight shining upon the lake. I was deeply engaged with that beautiful scene in the "Merchant of Venice" where two lovers, describing the stillness of a summer night, enhance on each other its charms, and was lost in the associations of story and of feeling which it awakens, when I heard upon the lake the

sound of a flageolet. I have told you it was Brown's favourite instrument. Who could touch it in a night which, though still and serene, was too cold, and too late in the year, to invite forth any wanderer for mere pleasure? I drew yet nearer the window, and hearkened with breathless attention; the sounds paused a space, were then resumed, paused again, and again reached my ear, ever coming nearer and nearer. At length I distinguished plainly that little Hindu air which you called my favourite. I have told you by whom it was taught me; the instrument, the tones, were his own! Was it earthly music, or notes passing on the wind, to warn me of his death?

'It was some time ere I could summon courage to step on the balcony; nothing could have emboldened me to do so but the strong conviction of my mind that he was still alive, and that we should again meet; but that conviction did embolden me, and I ventured, though with a throbbing heart. There was a small skiff with a single person. O, Matilda, it was himself! I knew his appearance after so long an absence, and through the shadow of the night, as perfectly as if we had parted yesterday, and met again in the broad sunshine! He guided his boat under the balcony, and spoke to me; I hardly knew what he said, or what I replied. Indeed, I could scarcely speak for weeping, but they were joyful tears. We were disturbed by the barking of a dog at some distance, and parted, but not before he had conjured me to prepare to meet him at the same place and hour this evening.

'But where and to what is all this tending? Can I answer this question? I cannot. Heaven, that saved him from death and delivered him from captivity, that saved my father, too, from shedding the blood of one who would not have blemished a hair of his head, that Heaven must guide me out of this labyrinth. Enough for me the firm resolution that Matilda shall not blush for her friend, my father for his daughter, nor my lover for her on whom he has fixed his affection.'

CHAPTER XVIII

Talk with a man out of a window!--a proper saying.

Much Ado about Nothing.

We must proceed with our extracts from Miss Mannering's letters, which throw light upon natural good sense, principle, and feelings, blemished by an imperfect education and the folly of a misjudging mother, who called her husband in her heart a tyrant until she feared him as such, and read romances until she became so enamoured of the complicated intrigues which they contain as to assume the management of a little family novel of her own, and constitute her daughter, a girl of sixteen, the principal heroine. She delighted in petty mystery and intrigue and secrets, and yet trembled at the indignation which these paltry manoeuvres excited in her husband's mind. Thus she frequently entered upon a scheme merely for pleasure, or perhaps for the love of contradiction, plunged deeper into it than she was aware, endeavoured to extricate herself by new arts, or to cover her error by dissimulation, became involved in meshes of her own weaving, and was forced to carry on, for fear of discovery, machinations which she had at first resorted to in mere wantonness.

Fortunately the young man whom she so imprudently introduced into her intimate society, and encouraged to look up to her daughter, had a fund of principle and honest pride which rendered him a safer intimate than Mrs. Mannering ought to have dared to hope or expect. The obscurity of his birth could alone be objected to him; in every other respect,

With prospects bright upon the world he came, Pure love of virtue, strong desire of fame, Men watched the way his lofty mind would take, And all foretold the progress he would make.

But it could not be expected that he should resist the snare which Mrs. Mannering's imprudence threw in his way, or avoid becoming attached to a young lady whose beauty and manners might have justified his passion, even in scenes where these are more generally met with than in a remote fortress in our Indian settlements. The scenes which followed have been partly detailed in Mannering's letter to Mr. Mervyn; and to expand what is there stated into farther explanation would be to abuse the patience of our readers.

We shall therefore proceed with our promised extracts from Miss Mannering's letters to her friend.

SIXTH EXTRACT

'I have seen him again, Matilda--seen him twice. I have used every argument to convince him that this secret intercourse is dangerous to us both; I even pressed him to pursue his views of fortune without farther regard to me, and to consider my peace of mind as sufficiently secured by the knowledge that he had not fallen under my father's sword. He answers--but how can I detail all he has to answer? He claims those hopes as his due which my mother permitted him to entertain, and would persuade me to the madness of a union without my father's sanction. But to this, Matilda, I will not be persuaded. I have resisted, I have subdued, the rebellious feelings which arose to aid his plea; yet how to extricate myself from this unhappy labyrinth in which fate and folly have entangled us both!

'I have thought upon it, Matilda, till my head is almost giddy; nor can I conceive a better plan than to make a full confession to my father. He deserves it, for his kindness is unceasing; and I think I have observed in his character, since I have studied it more nearly, that his harsher feelings are chiefly excited where he suspects deceit or imposition; and in that respect, perhaps, his character was formerly misunderstood by one who was dear to him. He has, too, a tinge of romance in his disposition; and I have seen the narrative of a generous action, a trait of heroism, or virtuous self-denial, extract tears from him which refused to flow at a tale of mere distress. But then Brown urges that he is personally hostile to him. And the obscurity of his birth, that would be indeed a stumbling-block. O, Matilda, I hope none of your ancestors ever fought at Poitiers or Agincourt! If it were not for the veneration which my father attaches to the memory of old Sir Miles Mannering, I should make out my explanation with half the tremor which must now attend it.'

SEVENTH EXTRACT

'I have this instant received your letter--your most welcome letter! Thanks, my dearest friend, for your sympathy and your counsels; I can only repay them with unbounded confidence.

'You ask me what Brown is by origin, that his descent should be so displeasing to my father. His story is shortly told. He is of Scottish extraction, but, being left an orphan, his education was undertaken by a family of relations settled in Holland. He was bred to commerce, and sent very early to one of our settlements in the East, where his guardian had a correspondent. But this correspondent was dead when he arrived in India, and he had no other resource than to offer himself as a clerk to a counting-house. The breaking out of the war, and the straits to which we were at first reduced, threw the army open to all young men who were disposed to embrace that mode of life; and Brown, whose genius had a strong military tendency, was the first to leave what might have been the road to wealth, and to choose that of fame. The rest of his history is well known to you; but conceive the irritation of my father, who despises commerce (though, by the way, the best part of his property was made in that honourable profession by my great-uncle), and has a particular antipathy to the Dutch--think with what ear he would be likely to receive proposals for his only child from Vanbeest Brown, educated for charity by the house of Vanbeest and Vanbruggen! O, Matilda, it will never do; nay, so childish am I, I hardly can help sympathising with his aristocratic feelings. Mrs. Vanbeest Brown! The name has little to recommend it, to be sure. What children we are!'

EIGHTH EXTRACT

'It is all over now, Matilda! I shall never have courage to tell my father; nay, most deeply do I fear he has already learned my secret from another quarter, which will entirely remove the grace of my communication, and ruin whatever gleam of hope I had ventured to connect with it. Yesternight Brown came as usual, and his flageolet on the lake announced his approach. We had agreed that he should continue to use this signal. These romantic lakes attract numerous visitors, who

indulge their enthusiasm in visiting the scenery at all hours, and we hoped that, if Brown were noticed from the house, he might pass for one of those admirers of nature, who was giving vent to his feelings through the medium of music. The sounds might also be my apology, should I be observed on the balcony. But last night, while I was eagerly enforcing my plan of a full confession to my father, which he as earnestly deprecated, we heard the window of Mr. Mervyn's library, which is under my room, open softly. I signed to Brown to make his retreat, and immediately reentered, with some faint hopes that our interview had not been observed.

'But, alas! Matilda, these hopes vanished the instant I beheld Mr. Mervyn's countenance at breakfast the next morning. He looked so provokingly intelligent and confidential, that, had I dared, I could have been more angry than ever I was in my life; but I must be on good behaviour, and my walks are now limited within his farm precincts, where the good gentleman can amble along by my side without inconvenience. I have detected him once or twice attempting to sound my thoughts, and watch the expression of my countenance. He has talked of the flageolet more than once, and has, at different times, made eulogiums upon the watchfulness and ferocity of his dogs, and the regularity with which the keeper makes his rounds with a loaded fowling-piece. He mentioned even man-traps and springguns. I should be loth to affront my father's old friend in his own house; but I do long to show him that I am my father's daughter, a fact of which Mr. Mervyn will certainly be convinced if ever I trust my voice and temper with a reply to these indirect hints. Of one thing I am certain--I am grateful to him on that account--he has not told Mrs. Mervyn. Lord help me, I should have had such lectures about the dangers of love and the night air on the lake, the risk arising from colds and fortune-hunters, the comfort and convenience of sack-whey and closed windows! I cannot help trifling, Matilda, though my heart is sad enough. What Brown will do I cannot guess. I presume, however, the fear of detection prevents his resuming his nocturnal visits. He lodges at an inn on the opposite shore of the lake, under the name, he tells me, of Dawson; he has a bad choice in names, that must be allowed. He has not left the army, I believe, but he says nothing of his present views,

'To complete my anxiety, my father is returned suddenly, and in high displeasure. Our good hostess, as I learned from a bustling conversation between her housekeeper and her, had no expectation of seeing him for a week; but I rather suspect his arrival was no surprise to his friend Mr. Mervyn. His manner to me was singularly cold and constrained, sufficiently so to have damped all the courage with which I once resolved to throw myself on his generosity. He lays the blame of his being discomposed and out of humour to the loss of a purchase in the south-west of Scotland on which he had set his heart; but I do not suspect his equanimity of being so easily thrown off its balance. His first excursion was with Mr. Mervyn's barge across the lake to the inn I have mentioned. You may imagine the agony with which I waited his return! Had he recognized Brown, who can guess the consequence! He returned, however, apparently without having made any discovery. I understand that, in consequence of his late disappointment, he means now to hire a house in the neighbourhood of this same Ellangowan, of which I am doomed to hear so much; he seems to think it probable that the estate for which he wishes may soon be again in the market. I will not send away this letter until I hear more distinctly what are his intentions.'

'I have now had an interview with my father, as confidential as, I presume, he means to allow me. He requested me to-day, after breakfast, to walk with him into the library; my knees, Matilda, shook under me, and it is no exaggeration to say I could scarce follow him into the room. I feared I knew not what. From my childhood I had seen all around him tremble at his frown. He motioned me to seat myself, and I never obeyed a command so readily, for, in truth, I could hardly stand. He himself continued to walk up and down the room. You have seen my father, and noticed, I recollect, the remarkably expressive cast of his features. His eyes are naturally rather light in colour, but agitation or anger gives them a darker and more fiery glance; he has a custom also of drawing in his lips when much moved, which implies a combat between native ardour of temper and the habitual power of self-command. This was the first time we had been alone since his return from Scotland, and, as he betrayed these tokens of agitation, I had little doubt that he was about to enter upon the subject I most dreaded.

'To my unutterable relief, I found I was mistaken, and that, whatever he knew of Mr. Mervyn's suspicions or discoveries, he did not intend to converse with me on the topic. Coward as I was, I was inexpressibly relieved, though, if he had really investigated the reports which may have come to his ear, the reality could have been nothing to what his suspicions might have conceived. But, though my spirits rose high at my unexpected escape, I had not courage myself to provoke the discussion, and remained silent to receive his commands.

"Julia," he said, "my agent writes me from Scotland that he has been able to hire a house for me, decently furnished, and with the necessary accommodation for my family; it is within three miles of that I had designed to purchase." Then he made a pause, and seemed to expect an answer.

"Whatever place of residence suits you, sir, must be perfectly agreeable to me."

"Umph! I do not propose, however, Julia, that you shall reside quite alone in this house during the winter."

"Mr. and Mrs. Mervyn," thought I to myself.--"Whatever company is agreeable to you, sir," I answered aloud.

"O, there is a little too much of this universal spirit of submission, an excellent disposition in action, but your constantly repeating the jargon of it puts me in mind of the eternal salaams of our black dependents in the East. In short, Julia, I know you have a relish for society, and I intend to invite a young person, the daughter of a deceased friend, to spend a few months with us."

"Not a governess, for the love of Heaven, papa!" exclaimed poor I, my fears at that moment totally getting the better of my prudence.

"No, not a governess, Miss Mannering," replied the Colonel, somewhat sternly, "but a young lady from whose excellent example, bred as she has been in the school of adversity, I trust you may learn the art to govern yourself."

'To answer this was trenching upon too dangerous ground, so there was a pause.

"Is the young lady a Scotchwoman, papa?"

"Yes"--drily enough.

"Has she much of the accent, sir?"

"Much of the devil!" answered my father hastily; "do you think I care about a's and aa's, and i's and ee's,? I tell you, Julia, I am serious in the matter. You have a genius for friendship, that is, for running up intimacies which you call such." (Was not this very harshly said, Matilda?) "Now I wish to give you an opportunity at least to make one deserving friend, and therefore I have resolved that this young lady shall be a member of my family for some months, and I expect you will pay to her that attention which is due to misfortune and virtue."

"Certainly, sir. Is my future friend red-haired?"

'He gave me one of his stern glances; you will say, perhaps, I deserved it; but I think the deuce prompts me with teasing questions on some occasions.

"She is as superior to you, my love, in personal appearance as in prudence and affection for her friends."

"Lord, papa, do you think that superiority a recommendation? Well, sir, but I see you are going to take all this too seriously; whatever the young lady may be, I am sure, being recommended by you, she shall have no reason to complain of my want of attention." After a pause--"Has she any attendant? because you know I must provide for her proper accommodation if she is without one."

"N--no--no, not properly an attendant; the chaplain who lived with her father is a very good sort of man, and I believe I shall make room for him in the house."

"Chaplain, papa? Lord bless us!"

"Yes, Miss Mannering, chaplain; is there anything very new in that word? Had we not a chaplain at the Residence, when we were in India?"

"Yes, papa, but you was a commandant then."

"So I will be now, Miss Mannering, in my own family at least."

"Certainly, sir. But will he read us the Church of England service?"

'The apparent simplicity with which I asked this question got the better of his gravity. "Come, Julia," he said, "you are a sad girl, but I gain nothing by scolding you. Of these two strangers, the young lady is one whom you cannot fail, I think, to love; the person whom, for want of a better term, I called chaplain, is a very worthy, and somewhat ridiculous personage, who will never find out you laugh at him if you don't laugh very loud indeed."

"Dear papa, I am delighted with that part of his character. But pray, is the house we are going to as pleasantly situated as this?"

"Not perhaps as much to your taste; there is no lake under the windows, and you will be under the necessity of having all your music within doors."

'This last coup de main ended the keen encounter of our wits, for you may believe, Matilda, it quelled all my courage to reply.

'Yet my spirits, as perhaps will appear too manifest from this dialogue, have risen insensibly, and, as it were, in spite of myself. Brown alive, and free, and in England! Embarrassment and anxiety I can and must endure. We leave this in two days for our new residence. I shall not fail to let you know what I think of these Scotch inmates, whom I have but too much reason to believe my father means to quarter in his house as a brace of honourable spies; a sort of female Rozenkrantz and reverend Guildenstern, one in tartan petticoats, the other in a cassock. What a contrast to the society I would willingly have secured to myself! I shall write instantly on my arriving at our new place of abode, and acquaint my dearest Matilda with the farther fates of--her

'JULIA MANNERING.'

CHAPTER XIX

*Which sloping hills around inclose,
Where many a beech and brown oak grows
Beneath whose dark and branching bowers
Its tides a far-fam'd river pours,
By natures beauties taught to please,
Sweet Tusculan of rural ease!*

WARTON.

Woodbourne, the habitation which Mannering, by Mr. Mac-Morlan's mediation, had hired for a season, was a large comfortable mansion, snugly situated beneath a hill covered with wood, which shrouded the house upon the north and east; the front looked upon a little lawn bordered by a grove of old trees; beyond were some arable fields, extending down to the river, which was seen from the windows of the house. A tolerable, though old-fashioned garden, a well-stocked dovecot, and the possession of any quantity of ground which the convenience of the family might require, rendered the place in every respect suitable, as the advertisements have it, 'for the accommodation of a genteel family.'

Here, then, Mannering resolved, for some time at least, to set up the staff of his rest. Though an East-Indian, he was not partial to an ostentatious display of wealth. In fact, he was too proud a man to be a vain one. He resolved, therefore, to place himself upon the footing of a country gentleman of easy fortune, without assuming, or permitting his household to assume, any of the faste which then was considered as characteristic of a nabob.

He had still his eye upon the purchase of Ellangowan, which Mac-Morlan conceived Mr. Glossin would be compelled to part with, as some of the creditors disputed his title to retain so large a part of the purchase-money in his own hands, and his power to pay it was much questioned. In that case Mac-Morlan was assured he would readily give up his bargain, if tempted with something above the price which he had stipulated to pay. It may seem strange that Mannering was so much attached to a spot which he had only seen once, and that for a short time, in early life. But the circumstances which passed there had laid a strong hold on his imagination. There seemed to be a fate which conjoined the remarkable passages of his own family history with those of the inhabitants of Ellangowan, and he felt a mysterious desire to call the terrace his own from which he had read in the book of heaven a fortune strangely accomplished in the person of the infant heir of that family, and corresponding so closely with one which had been strikingly fulfilled in his own. Besides, when once this thought had got possession of his imagination, he could not, without great reluctance, brook the idea of his plan being defeated, and by a fellow like Glossin. So pride came to the aid of fancy, and both combined to fortify his resolution to buy the estate if possible.

Let us do Mannering justice. A desire to serve the distressed had also its share in determining him. He had considered the advantage which Julia might receive from the company of Lucy Bertram, whose genuine prudence and good sense could so surely be relied upon. This idea had become much stronger since Mac-Morlan had confided to him, under the solemn seal of secrecy, the whole of her conduct towards young Hazlewood. To propose to her to become an inmate in his family, if distant from the scenes of her youth and the few whom she called friends, would have been less delicate; but at Woodbourne she might without difficulty be induced to become the visitor of a season, without being depressed into the situation of an humble companion. Lucy Bertram, with some hesitation, accepted the invitation to reside a few weeks with Miss Mannering. She felt too well that, however the Colonel's delicacy might disguise the truth, his principal motive was a generous desire to afford her his countenance and protection, which his high connexions, and higher character, were likely to render influential in the neighbourhood.

About the same time the orphan girl received a letter from Mrs. Bertram, the relation to whom she had written, as cold and comfortless as could well be imagined. It inclosed, indeed, a small sum of money, but strongly recommended economy, and that Miss Bertram should board herself in some quiet family, either at Kippletringan or in the neighbourhood, assuring her that, though her own income was very scanty, she would not see her kinswoman want. Miss Bertram shed some natural tears over this cold-hearted epistle; for in her mother's time this good lady had been a guest at Ellangowan for nearly three years, and it was only upon succeeding to a property of about L400 a year that she had taken farewell of that hospitable mansion, which otherwise might have had the honour of sheltering her until the death of its owner. Lucy was strongly inclined to return the paltry donation, which, after some struggles with avarice, pride had extorted from the old lady. But on consideration she contented herself with writing that she accepted it as a loan, which, she hoped in a short time to repay, and consulted her relative upon the invitation she had received from Colonel and Miss Mannering. This time the answer came in course of post, so fearful was Mrs. Bertram that some frivolous delicacy, or nonsense, as she termed it, might induce her cousin to reject such a promising offer, and thereby at the same time to leave herself still a burden upon her relations. Lucy, therefore, had no alternative, unless she preferred continuing a burden upon the worthy Mac-Morlans, who were too liberal to be rich. Those kinsfolk who formerly requested the favour of her company had of late either silently, or with expressions of resentment that she should have preferred Mac-Morlan's invitation to theirs, gradually withdrawn their notice.

The fate of Dominie Sampson would have been deplorable had it depended upon any one except Mannering, who was an admirer of originality, for a separation from Lucy Bertram would have certainly broken his heart. Mac-Morlan had given a full account of his proceedings towards the daughter of his patron. The answer was a request from Mannering to know whether the Dominie still possessed that admirable virtue of taciturnity by which he was so notably distinguished at Ellangowan. Mac-Morlan replied in the affirmative. 'Let Mr. Sampson know,' said the Colonel's next letter, 'that I shall want his assistance to catalogue and put in order the library of my uncle, the bishop, which I have ordered to be sent down by sea. I shall also want him to copy and arrange some papers. Fix his salary at what you think befitting. Let the poor man be properly dressed, and accompany his young lady to Woodbourne.'

Honest Mac-Morlan received this mandate with great joy, but pondered much upon executing that part of it which related to newly attiring the worthy Dominie. He looked at him with a scrutinising eye, and it was but too plain that his present garments were daily waxing more deplorable. To give him money, and bid him go and furnish himself, would be only giving him the means of making himself ridiculous; for when such a rare event arrived to Mr. Sampson as the purchase of new garments, the additions which he made to his wardrobe by the guidance of his own taste usually brought all the boys of the village after him for many days. On the other hand, to bring a tailor to measure him, and send home his clothes, as for a school-boy, would probably give offence. At length Mac-Morlan resolved to

consult Miss Bertram, and request her interference. She assured him that, though she could not pretend to superintend a gentleman's wardrobe, nothing was more easy than to arrange the Dominie's.

'At Ellangowan,' she said, 'whenever my poor father thought any part of the Dominie's dress wanted renewal, a servant was directed to enter his room by night, for he sleeps as fast as a dormouse, carry off the old vestment, and leave the new one; nor could any one observe that the Dominie exhibited the least consciousness of the change put upon him on such occasions.'

Mac-Morlan, in conformity with Miss Bertram's advice, procured a skilful artist, who, on looking at the Dominie attentively, undertook to make for him two suits of clothes, one black and one raven-grey, and even engaged that they should fit him--as well at least (so the tailor qualified his enterprise) as a man of such an out-of-the-way build could be fitted by merely human needles and shears. When this fashioner had accomplished his task, and the dresses were brought home, Mac-Morlan, judiciously resolving to accomplish his purpose by degrees, withdrew that evening an important part of his dress, and substituted the new article of raiment in its stead. Perceiving that this passed totally without notice, he next ventured on the waistcoat, and lastly on the coat. When fully metamorphosed, and arrayed for the first time in his life in a decent dress, they did observe that the Dominie seemed to have some indistinct and embarrassing consciousness that a change had taken place on his outward man. Whenever they observed this dubious expression gather upon his countenance, accompanied with a glance that fixed now upon the sleeve of his coat, now upon the knees of his breeches, where he probably missed some antique patching and darning, which, being executed with blue thread upon a black ground, had somewhat the effect of embroidery, they always took care to turn his attention into some other channel, until his garments, 'by the aid of use, cleaved to their mould.' The only remark he was ever known to make on the subject was, that 'the air of a town like Kippletringan seemed favourable unto wearing apparel, for he thought his coat looked almost as new as the first day he put it on, which was when he went to stand trial for his license as a preacher.'

When the Dominie first heard the liberal proposal of Colonel Mannering, he turned a jealous and doubtful glance towards Miss Bertram, as if he suspected that the project involved their separation; but when Mr. Mac-Morlan hastened to explain that she would be a guest at Woodbourne for some time, he rubbed his huge hands together, and burst into a portentous sort of chuckle, like that of the Afrite in the tale of 'The Caliph Vathek.' After this unusual explosion of satisfaction, he remained quite passive in all the rest of the transaction.

It had been settled that Mr. and Mrs. Mac-Morlan should take possession of the house a few days before Mannering's arrival, both to put everything in perfect order and to make the transference of Miss Bertram's residence from their family to his as easy and delicate as possible. Accordingly, in the beginning of the month of December the party were settled at Woodbourne.

CHAPTER XX

A gigantic genius fit to grapple with whole libraries

--BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

The appointed day arrived when the Colonel and Miss Mannering were expected at Woodbourne. The hour was fast approaching, and the little circle within doors had each their separate subjects of anxiety. Mac-Morlan naturally desired to attach to himself the patronage and countenance of a person of Mannering's wealth and consequence. He was aware, from his knowledge of mankind, that Mannering, though generous and benevolent, had the foible of expecting and exacting a minute compliance with his directions. He was therefore racking his recollection to discover if everything had been arranged to meet the Colonel's wishes and instructions, and, under this uncertainty of mind, he traversed the house more than once from the garret to the stables. Mrs. Mac-Morlan revolved in a lesser orbit, comprehending the dining-parlour, housekeeper's room, and kitchen. She was only afraid that the dinner might be spoiled, to the discredit of her housewifely accomplishments. Even the usual passiveness of the Dominie was so far disturbed that he twice went to the window which looked out upon the avenue, and twice exclaimed, 'Why tarry the wheels of their chariot?' Lucy, the most quiet of the expectants, had her own melancholy thoughts. She was now about to be consigned to the charge, almost to the benevolence, of strangers, with whose character, though hitherto very amiably, displayed, she was but imperfectly acquainted. The moments, therefore, of suspense passed anxiously and heavily.

At length the trampling of horses and the sound of wheels were heard. The servants, who had already arrived, drew up in the hall to receive their master and mistress, with an importance and EMPRESSEMENT which to Lucy, who had never been accustomed to society, or witnessed what is called the manners of the great, had something alarming. Mac-Morlan went to the door to receive the master and mistress of the family, and in a few moments they were in the drawing-room.

Mannering, who had travelled as usual on horseback, entered with his daughter hanging upon his arm. She was of the middle size, or rather less, but formed with much elegance; piercing dark eyes, and jet-black hair of great length, corresponded with the vivacity and intelligence of features in which were blended a little haughtiness, and a little bashfulness, a great deal of shrewdness, and some power of humorous sarcasm. 'I shall not like her,' was the result of Lucy Bertram's first glance; 'and yet; I rather think I shall,' was the thought excited by the second.

Miss Mannering was furred and mantled up to the throat against the severity of the weather; the Colonel in his military great-coat. He bowed to Mrs. Mac-Morlan, whom his daughter also acknowledged with a fashionable courtesy, not dropped so low as at all to incommode her person. The Colonel then led his daughter up to Miss Bertram, and, taking the hand of the latter, with an air of great kindness and almost paternal affection, he said, 'Julia, this is the young lady whom I hope our good friends have prevailed on to honour our house with a long visit. I shall be much gratified indeed if you can render Woodbourne as pleasant to Miss Bertram as Ellangowan was to me when I first came as a wanderer into this country.'

The young lady courtesied acquiescence, and took her new friend's hand. Mannering now turned his eye upon the Dominie, who had made bows since his entrance into the room, sprawling out his leg, and bending his back like an automaton, which continues to repeat the same movement until the motion is stopt by the artist. 'My good friend, Mr. Sampson,' said Mannering, introducing him to his daughter, and darting at the same time a reproving glance at the damsel, notwithstanding he had himself some disposition to join her too obvious inclination to risibility; 'this gentleman, Julia, is to put my books in order when they arrive, and I expect to derive great advantage from his extensive learning.'

'I am sure we are obliged to the gentleman, papa, and, to borrow a ministerial mode of giving thanks, I shall never forget the extraordinary countenance he has been pleased to show us. But, Miss Bertram,' continued she hastily, for her father's brows began to darken, 'we have travelled a good way; will you permit me to retire before dinner?'

This intimation dispersed all the company save the Dominie, who, having no idea of dressing but when he was to rise, or of undressing but when he meant to go to bed, remained by himself, chewing the cud of a mathematical demonstration, until the company again assembled in the drawing-room, and from thence adjourned to the dining-parlour.

When the day was concluded, Mannering took an opportunity to hold a minute's conversation with his daughter in private.

'How do you like your guests, Julia?'

'O, Miss Bertram of all things; but this is a most original parson; why, dear sir, no human being will be able to look at him without laughing.'

'While he is under my roof, Julia, every one must learn to do so.'

'Lord, papa, the very footmen could not keep their gravity!'

'Then let them strip off my livery,' said the Colonel, 'and laugh at their leisure. Mr. Sampson is a man whom I esteem for his simplicity and benevolence of character.'

'O, I am convinced of his generosity too,' said this lively lady; 'he cannot lift a spoonful of soup to his mouth without bestowing a share on everything round.'

'Julia, you are incorrigible; but remember I expect your mirth on this subject to be under such restraint that it shall neither offend this worthy man's feelings nor those of Miss Bertram, who may be more apt to feel upon his account than he on his own. And so, goodnight, my dear; and recollect that, though Mr. Sampson has certainly not sacrificed to the graces, there are many things in this world more truly deserving of ridicule than either awkwardness of manners or simplicity of character.'

In a day or two Mr. and Mrs. Mac-Morlan left Woodbourne, after taking an affectionate farewell of their late guest. The household were now settled in their new quarters. The young ladies followed their studies and amusements together. Colonel Mannering was agreeably surprised to find that Miss Bertram was well skilled in French and Italian, thanks to the assiduity of Dominie Sampson, whose labour had silently made him acquainted with most modern as well as ancient languages. Of music she knew little or nothing, but her new friend undertook to give her lessons, in exchange for which she was to learn from Lucy the habit of walking, and the art of riding, and the courage necessary to defy the season. Mannering was careful to substitute for their amusement in the evening such books as might convey some solid instruction with entertainment, and, as he read aloud with great skill and taste, the winter nights passed pleasantly away.

Society was quickly formed where there were so many inducements. Most of the families of the neighbourhood visited Colonel Mannering, and he was soon able to select from among them such as best suited his taste and habits. Charles Hazlewood held a distinguished place in his favour, and was a frequent visitor, not without the consent and approbation of his parents; for there was no knowing, they thought, what assiduous attention might produce, and the beautiful Miss Mannering, of high family, with an Indian fortune, was a prize worth looking after. Dazzled with such a prospect, they never considered the risk which had once been some object of their apprehension, that his boyish and inconsiderate fancy might form an attachment to the penniless Lucy Bertram, who had nothing on earth to recommend her but a pretty face, good birth, and a most amiable disposition. Mannering was more prudent. He considered himself acting as Miss Bertram's guardian, and, while he did not think it incumbent upon him altogether to check her intercourse with a young gentleman for whom, excepting in wealth, she was a match in every respect, he laid it under such insensible restraints as might prevent any engagement or ECLAIRCISSEMENT taking place until the young man should have seen a little more of life and of the world, and have attained that age when he might be considered as entitled to judge for himself in the matter in which his happiness was chiefly interested.

While these matters engaged the attention of the other members of the Woodbourne family, Dominie Sampson was occupied, body and soul, in the arrangement of the late bishop's library, which had been sent from Liverpool by sea, and conveyed by thirty or forty carts from the sea-port at which it was landed. Sampson's joy at beholding the ponderous contents of these chests arranged upon the floor of the large apartment, from whence he was to transfer them to the shelves, baffles all description. He grinned like an ogre, swung his arms like the sails of a wind-mill, shouted 'Prodigious' till the roof rung to his raptures. 'He had never,' he said, 'seen so many books together, except in the College Library'; and now his dignity and delight in being superintendent of the collection raised him, in his own opinion, almost to the rank of the academical librarian, whom he had always regarded as the greatest and happiest man on earth. Neither were his transports diminished upon a hasty examination of the contents of these volumes. Some, indeed, of BELLES LETTRES, poems, plays, or memoirs he tossed indignantly aside, with the implied censure of 'psha,' or 'frivolous'; but the greater and bulkier part of the collection bore a very different character. The deceased prelate, a divine of the old and deeply-learned cast, had loaded his shelves with volumes which displayed the antique and venerable attributes so happily described by a modern poet:--

*That weight of wood, with leathern coat o'erlaid,
Those ample clasps of solid metal made,
The close-press'd leaves unoped for many an age,
The dull red edging of the well-fill'd page,
On the broad back the stubborn ridges roll'd,
Where yet the title stands in tarnish'd gold.*

Books of theology and controversial divinity, commentaries, and polyglots, sets of the Fathers, and sermons which might each furnish forth ten brief discourses of modern date, books of science, ancient and modern, classical authors in their best and rarest forms--such formed the late bishop's venerable library, and over such the eye of Dominie Sampson gloated with rapture. He entered them in the catalogue in his best running hand, forming each letter with the accuracy of a lover writing a valentine, and placed each individually on the destined shelf with all the reverence which I have seen a lady pay to a jar of old china. With all this zeal his labours advanced slowly. He often opened a volume when halfway up the library steps, fell upon some interesting passage, and, without shifting his inconvenient posture, continued immersed in the fascinating perusal until the servant pulled him by the skirts to assure him that dinner waited. He then repaired to the parlour, bolted his food down his capacious throat in squares of three inches, answered ay and no at random to whatever question was asked at him, and again hurried back to the library, as soon as his napkin was removed, and sometimes with it hanging round his neck like a pinafore;--

How happily the days Of Thalaba went by!

And, having thus left the principal characters of our tale in a situation which, being sufficiently comfortable to themselves, is, of course, utterly uninteresting to the reader, we take up the history of a person who has as yet only been named, and who has all the interest that uncertainty and misfortune can give.

CHAPTER XXI

*What say'st thou, Wise One? that all powerful Love
Can fortune's strong impediments remove,
Nor is it strange that worth should wed to worth,
The pride of genius with the pride of birth.*

CRABBE.

V. Brown--I will not give at full length his thrice unhappy name--had been from infancy a ball for fortune to spurn at; but nature had given him that elasticity of mind which rises higher from the rebound. His form was tall, manly, and active, and his features corresponded with his person; for, although far from regular, they had an expression of intelligence and good-humour, and when he spoke, or was particularly animated, might be decidedly pronounced interesting. His manner indicated the military profession, which had been his choice, and in which he had now attained the rank of captain, the person who succeeded Colonel Mannering in his command having laboured to repair the injustice which Brown had sustained by that gentleman's prejudice against him. But this, as well as his liberation from captivity, had taken place after Mannering left India. Brown followed at no distant period, his regiment being recalled home. His first inquiry was after the

family of Mannering, and, easily learning their route northward, he followed it with the purpose of resuming his addresses to Julia. With her father he deemed he had no measures to keep; for, ignorant of the more venomous belief which had been instilled into the Colonel's mind, he regarded him as an oppressive aristocrat, who had used his power as a commanding officer to deprive him of the preferment due to his behaviour, and who had forced upon him a personal quarrel without any better reason than his attentions to a pretty young woman, agreeable to herself, and permitted and countenanced by her mother. He was determined, therefore, to take no rejection unless from the young lady herself, believing that the heavy misfortunes of his painful wound and imprisonment were direct injuries received from the father, which might dispense with his using much ceremony towards him. How far his scheme had succeeded when his nocturnal visit was discovered by Mr. Mervyn, our readers are already informed.

Upon this unpleasant occurrence Captain Brown absented himself from the inn in which he had resided under the name of Dawson, so that Colonel Mannering's attempts to discover and trace him were unavailing. He resolved, however, that no difficulties should prevent his continuing his enterprise while Julia left him a ray of hope. The interest he had secured in her bosom was such as she had been unable to conceal from him, and with all the courage of romantic gallantry he determined upon perseverance. But we believe the reader will be as well pleased to learn his mode of thinking and intention from his own communication to his special friend and confidant, Captain Delasserre, a Swiss gentleman who had a company in his regiment.

EXTRACT

'Let me hear from you soon, dear Delasserre. Remember, I can learn nothing about regimental affairs but through your friendly medium, and I long to know what has become of Ayre's court-martial, and whether Elliot gets the majority; also how recruiting comes on, and how the young officers like the mess. Of our kind friend the Lieutenant-Colonel I need ask nothing; I saw him as I passed through Nottingham, happy in the bosom of his family. What a happiness it is, Philip, for us poor devils, that we have a little resting-place between the camp and the grave, if we can manage to escape disease, and steel, and lead, and the effects of hard living. A retired old soldier is always a graceful and respected character. He grumbles a little now and then, but then his is licensed murmuring; were a lawyer, or a physician, or a clergyman to breathe a complaint of hard luck or want of preferment, a hundred tongues would blame his own incapacity as the cause. But the most stupid veteran that ever faltered out the thrice-told tale of a siege and a battle, and a cock and a bottle, is listened to with sympathy and reverence when he shakes his thin locks and talks with indignation of the boys that are put over his head. And you and I, Delasserre, foreigners both--for what am I the better that I was originally a Scotchman, since, could I prove my descent, the English would hardly acknowledge me a countryman?--we may boast that we have fought out our preferment, and gained that by the sword which we had not money to compass otherwise. The English are a wise people. While they praise themselves, and affect to undervalue all other nations, they leave us, luckily, trap-doors and back-doors open, by which we strangers, less favoured by nature, may arrive at a share of their advantages. And thus they are in some respects like a boastful landlord, who exalts the value and flavour of his six-years-old mutton, while he is delighted to dispense a share of it to all the company. In short, you, whose proud family, and I, whose hard fate, made us soldiers of fortune, have the pleasant recollection that in the British service, stop where we may upon our career, it is only for want of money to pay the turnpike, and not from our being prohibited to travel the road. If, therefore, you can persuade little Weischel to come into OURS, for God's sake let him buy the ensigncy, live prudently, mind his duty, and trust to the fates for promotion.

'And now, I hope you are expiring with curiosity to learn the end of my romance. I told you I had deemed it convenient to make a few days' tour on foot among the mountains of Westmoreland with Dudley, a young English artist with whom I have formed some acquaintance. A fine fellow this, you must know, Delasserre: he paints tolerably, draws beautifully, converses well, and plays charmingly on the flute; and, though thus well entitled to be a coxcomb of talent, is, in fact, a modest unpretending young man. On our return from our little tour I learned that the enemy had been reconnoitring. Mr. Mervyn's barge had crossed the lake, I was informed by my landlord, with the squire himself and a visitor.

""What sort of person, landlord?"

""Why, he was a dark officer-looking mon, at they called Colonel. Squoire Mervyn questioned me as close as I had been at 'sizes. I had guess, Mr. Dawson" (I told you that was my feigned name), "but I tould him nought of your vagaries, and going out a-laking in the mere a-noights, not I; an I can make no sport, I'se spoil none; and Squoire Mervyn's as cross as poy-crust too, mon; he's aye maundering an my guests but land beneath his house, though it be marked for the fourth station in the survey. Noa, noa, e'en let un smell things out o' themselves for Joe Hodges."

'You will allow there was nothing for it after this but paying honest Joe Hodges's bill and departing, unless I had preferred making him my confidant, for which I felt in no way inclined. Besides, I learned that our ci-devant Colonel was on full retreat for Scotland, carrying off poor Julia along with him. I understand from those who conduct the heavy baggage that he takes his winter quarters at a place called Woodbourne, in ---shire in Scotland. He will be all on the alert just now, so I must let him enter his entrenchments without any new alarm. And then, my good Colonel, to whom I owe so many grateful thanks, pray look to your defence.

'I protest to you, Delasserre, I often think there is a little contradiction enters into the ardour of my pursuit. I think I would rather bring this haughty insulting man to the necessity of calling his daughter Mrs. Brown than I would wed her with his full consent, and with the King's permission to change my name for the style and arms of Mannering, though his whole fortune went with them. There is only one circumstance that chills me a little: Julia is young and romantic. I would not willingly hurry her into a step which her riper years might disapprove; no--nor would I like to have her upbraid me, were it but with a glance of her eye, with having ruined her fortunes, far less give her reason to say, as some have not been slow to tell their lords, that, had I left her time for consideration, she would have been wiser and done better. No, Delasserre, this must not be. The picture presses close upon me, because I am aware a girl in Julia's situation has no distinct and precise idea of the value of the sacrifice she makes. She knows difficulties only by name; and, if she thinks of love and a farm, it is a ferme ornee, such as is only to be found in poetic description or in the park of a gentleman of twelve thousand a year. She would be ill prepared for the privations of that real Swiss cottage we have so often talked of, and for the difficulties which must necessarily surround us even before we attained that haven. This must be a point clearly ascertained. Although Julia's beauty and playful tenderness have made an impression on my heart never to be erased, I must be satisfied that she perfectly understands the advantages she foregoes before she sacrifices them for my sake.

'Am I too proud, Delasserre, when I trust that even this trial may terminate favourably to my wishes? Am I too vain when I suppose that the few personal qualities which I possess, with means of competence, however moderate, and the determination of consecrating my life to her happiness, may make amends for all I must call upon her to forego? Or will a difference of dress, of attendance, of style, as it is called, of the power of shifting at pleasure the scenes in which she seeks amusement--will these outweigh in her estimation the prospect of domestic happiness and the interchange of unabating affection? I say nothing of her father: his good and evil qualities are so strangely mingled that the former are neutralised by the latter; and that which she must regret as a daughter is so much blended with what she would gladly escape from, that I place the separation of the father and child as a circumstance which weighs little in her remarkable case. Meantime I keep up my spirits as I may. I have incurred too many hardships and difficulties to be presumptuous or confident in success, and I have been too often and too wonderfully extricated from them to be despondent.

'I wish you saw this country. I think the scenery would delight you. At least it often brings to my recollection your glowing descriptions of your native country. To me it has in a great measure the charm of novelty. Of the Scottish hills, though born among them, as I have always been assured, I have but an indistinct recollection. Indeed, my memory rather dwells upon the blank which my youthful mind experienced in gazing on the levels of the isle of Zealand, than on anything which preceded that feeling; but I am confident, from that sensation as well as from the recollections which preceded it, that hills and rocks have been familiar to me at an early period, and that, though now only remembered by contrast, and by the blank which I felt while gazing around for them in vain, they must have made an indelible impression on my infant imagination. I remember, when we first mounted that celebrated pass in the Mysore country, while most of the others felt only awe and astonishment at the height and grandeur of the scenery, I rather shared your feelings and those of Cameron, whose admiration of such wild rocks was blended with familiar love, derived from early association. Despite my Dutch education, a blue hill to me is as a friend, and a roaring torrent like the sound of a domestic song that hath soothed my infancy. I never felt the impulse so strongly as in this land of lakes and mountains, and nothing grieves me so much as that duty prevents your being with me in my numerous excursions among recesses. Some drawings I have attempted, but I succeed vilely. Dudley, on the contrary,

draws delightfully, with that rapid touch which seems like magic; while I labour and botch, and make this too heavy and that too light, and produce at last a base caricature. I must stick to the flageolet, for music is the only one of the fine arts which deigns to acknowledge me.

'Did you know that Colonel Mannering was a draughtsman? I believe not, for he scorned to display his accomplishments to the view of a subaltern. He draws beautifully, however. Since he and Julia left Mervyn Hall, Dudley was sent for there. The squire, it seems, wanted a set of drawings made up, of which Mannering had done the first four, but was interrupted by his hasty departure in his purpose of completing them. Dudley says he has seldom seen anything so masterly, though slight; and each had attached to it a short poetical description. Is Saul, you will say, among the prophets? Colonel Mannering write poetry! Why, surely this man must have taken all the pains to conceal his accomplishments that others do to display theirs. How reserved and unsociable he appeared among us! how little disposed to enter into any conversation which could become generally interesting! And then his attachment to that unworthy Archer, so much below him in every respect; and all this because he was the brother of Viscount Archerfield, a poor Scottish peer! I think, if Archer had longer survived the wounds in the affair of Cuddybora, he would have told something that might have thrown light upon the inconsistencies of this singular man's character. He repeated to me more than once, "I have that to say which will alter your hard opinion of our late Colonel." But death pressed him too hard; and if he owed me any atonement, which some of his expressions seemed to imply, he died before it could be made.

'I propose to make a further excursion through this country while this fine frosty weather serves, and Dudley, almost as good a walker as myself, goes with me for some part of the way. We part on the borders of Cumberland, when he must return to his lodgings in Marybone, up three pair of stairs, and labour at what he calls the commercial part of his profession. There cannot, he says, be such a difference betwixt any two portions of existence as between that in which the artist, if an enthusiast, collects the subjects of his drawings and that which must necessarily be dedicated to turning over his portfolio and exhibiting them to the provoking indifference, or more provoking criticism, of fashionable amateurs. "During the summer of my year," says Dudley, "I am as free as a wild Indian, enjoying myself at liberty amid the grandest scenes of nature; while during my winters and springs I am not only cabined, cribbed, and confined in a miserable garret, but condemned to as intolerable subservience to the humour of others, and to as indifferent company, as if I were a literal galley slave." I have promised him your acquaintance, Delasierre; you will be delighted with his specimens of art, and he with your Swiss fanaticism for mountains and torrents.

'When I lose Dudley's company, I am informed that I can easily enter Scotland by stretching across a wild country in the upper part of Cumberland; and that route I shall follow, to give the Colonel time to pitch his camp ere I reconnoitre his position. Adieu! Delasierre. I shall hardly find another opportunity of writing till I reach Scotland.'

CHAPTER XXII

*Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily bend the stile-a,
A merry heart goes all the day,
A sad one tires in a mile-a.*

--Winter's Tale.

Let the reader conceive to himself a clear frosty November morning, the scene an open heath, having for the background that huge chain of mountains in which Skiddaw and Saddleback are preeminent; let him look along that BLIND ROAD, by which I mean the track so slightly marked by the passengers' footsteps that it can but be traced by a slight shade of verdure from the darker heath around it, and, being only visible to the eye when at some distance, ceases to be distinguished while the foot is actually treading it; along this faintly-traced path advances the object of our present narrative. His firm step, his erect and free carriage, have a military air which corresponds well with his well-proportioned limbs and stature of six feet high. His dress is so plain and simple that it indicates nothing as to rank; it may be that of a gentleman who travels in this manner for his pleasure, or of an inferior person of whom it is the proper and usual garb. Nothing can be on a more reduced scale than his travelling equipment. A volume of Shakspeare in each pocket, a small bundle with a change of linen slung across his shoulders, an oaken cudgel in his hand, complete our pedestrian's accommodations, and in this equipage we present him to our readers.

Brown had parted that morning from his friend Dudley, and begun his solitary walk towards Scotland.

The first two or three miles were rather melancholy, from want of the society to which he had of late been accustomed. But this unusual mood of mind soon gave way to the influence of his natural good spirits, excited by the exercise and the bracing effects of the frosty air. He whistled as he went along, not 'from want of thought,' but to give vent to those buoyant feelings which he had no other mode of expressing. For each peasant whom he chanced to meet he had a kind greeting or a good-humoured jest; the hardy Cumbrians grinned as they passed, and said, 'That's a kind heart, God bless un!' and the market-girl looked more than once over her shoulder at the athletic form, which corresponded so well with the frank and blythe address of the stranger. A rough terrier dog, his constant companion, who rivalled his master in glee, scampered at large in a thousand wheels round the heath, and came back to jump up on him and assure him that he participated in the pleasure of the journey. Dr. Johnson thought life had few things better than the excitation produced by being whirled rapidly along in a post-chaise; but he who has in youth experienced the confident and independent feeling of a stout pedestrian in an interesting country, and during fine weather, will hold the taste of the great moralist cheap in comparison.

Part of Brown's view in choosing that unusual track which leads through the eastern wilds of Cumberland into Scotland, had been a desire to view the remains of the celebrated Roman Wall, which are more visible in that direction than in any other part of its extent. His education had been imperfect and desultory; but neither the busy scenes in which he had been engaged, nor the pleasures of youth, nor the precarious state of his own circumstances, had diverted him from the task of mental improvement. 'And this then is the Roman Wall,' he said, scrambling up to a height which commanded the course of that celebrated work of antiquity. 'What a people! whose labours, even at this extremity of their empire, comprehended such space, and were executed upon a scale of such grandeur! In future ages, when the science of war shall have changed, how few traces will exist of the labours of Vauban and Coehorn, while this wonderful people's remains will even then continue to interest and astonish posterity! Their fortifications, their aqueducts, their theatres, their fountains, all their public works, bear the grave, solid, and majestic character of their language; while our modern labours, like our modern tongues, seem but constructed out of their fragments.' Having thus moralised, he remembered that he was hungry, and pursued his walk to a small public-house, at which he proposed to get some refreshment.

The alehouse, for it was no better, was situated in the bottom of a little dell, through which trilled a small rivulet. It was shaded by a large ash tree, against which the clay-built shed that served the purpose of a stable was erected, and upon which it seemed partly to recline. In this shed stood a saddled horse, employed in eating his corn. The cottages in this part of Cumberland partake of the rudeness which characterises those of Scotland. The outside of the house promised little for the interior, notwithstanding the vaunt of a sign, where a tankard of ale voluntarily decanted itself into a tumbler, and a hieroglyphical scrawl below attempted to express a promise of 'good entertainment for man and horse.' Brown was no fastidious traveller: he stopped and entered the cabaret. [Footnote: See Note 2.]

The first object which caught his eye in the kitchen was a tall, stout, country-looking man in a large jockey great-coat, the owner of the horse which stood in the shed, who was busy discussing huge slices of cold boiled beef, and casting from time to time an eye through the window to see how his steed sped with his provender. A large tankard of ale flanked his plate of victuals, to which he applied himself by intervals. The good woman of the house was employed in baking.

The fire, as is usual in that country, was on a stone hearth, in the midst of an immensely large chimney, which had two seats extended beneath the vent. On one of these sat a remarkably tall woman, in a red cloak and slouched bonnet, having the appearance of a tinker or beggar. She was busily engaged with a short black tobacco-pipe.

At the request of Brown for some food, the landlady wiped with her mealy apron one corner of the deal table, placed a wooden trencher and knife and fork before the traveller, pointed to the round of beef, recommended Mr. Dinmont's good example, and finally filled a brown pitcher with her home-brewed. Brown lost no time in doing ample credit to both. For a while his opposite neighbour and he were too busy to take much notice of each other, except by a good-humoured nod as each in turn raised the tankard to his head. At length, when our pedestrian began to supply the wants of little Wasp, the Scotch store-farmer, for such was Mr. Dinmont, found himself at leisure to enter into conversation.

'A bonny terrier that, sir, and a fell chield at the vermin, I warrant him; that is, if he's been weel entered, for it a' lies in that.'

'Really, sir,' said Brown, 'his education has been somewhat neglected, and his chief property is being a pleasant companion.'

'Ay, sir? that's a pity, begging your pardon, it's a great pity that; beast or body, education should aye be minded. I have six terriers at hame, forbye twa couple of slow-hunds, five grews, and a wheen other dogs. There's auld Pepper and auld Mustard, and young Pepper and young Mustard, and little Pepper and little Mustard. I had them a' regularly entered, first wi' rottens, then wi' stots or weasels, and then wi' the tods and brocks, and now they fear naething that ever cam wi' a hairy skin on't.'

'I have no doubt, sir, they are thoroughbred; but, to have so many dogs, you seem to have a very limited variety of names for them?'

'O, that's a fancy of my ain to mark the breed, sir. The Deuke himsell has sent as far as Charlie's Hope to get ane o' Dandy Dinmont's Pepper and Mustard terriers. Lord, man, he sent Tam Hudson [Footnote: The real name of this veteran sportsman is now restored.] the keeper, and sicken a day as we had wi' the fougarts and the tods, and sicken a blythe gae-down as we had again e'en! Faith, that was a night!'

'I suppose game is very plenty with you?'

'Plenty, man! I believe there's mair hares than sheep on my farm; and for the moor-fowl or the grey-fowl, they lie as thick as doos in a dookit. Did ye ever shoot a blackcock, man?'

'Really I had never even the pleasure to see one, except in the museum at Keswick.'

'There now! I could guess that by your Southland tongue. It's very odd of these English folk that come here, how few of them has seen a blackcock! I'll tell you what--ye seem to be an honest lad, and if you'll call on me, on Dandy Dinmont, at Charlie's Hope, ye shall see a blackcock, and shoot a blackcock, and eat a blackcock too, man.'

'Why, the proof of the matter is the eating, to be sure, sir; and I shall be happy if I can find time to accept your invitation.'

'Time, man? what ails ye to gae hame wi' me the now? How d' ye travel?'

'On foot, sir; and if that handsome pony be yours, I should find it impossible to keep up with you.'

'No, unless ye can walk up to fourteen mile an hour. But ye can come ower the night as far as Riccarton, where there is a public; or if ye like to stop at Jockey Grieve's at the Heuch, they would be blythe to see ye, and I am just gaun to stop and drink a dram at the door wi' him, and I would tell him you're coming up. Or stay--gudewife, could ye lend this gentleman the gudeman's galloway, and I'll send it ower the Waste in the morning wi' the callant?'

The galloway was turned out upon the fell, and was swear to catch.--'Aweel, aweel, there's nae help for't, but come up the morn at ony rate. And now, gudewife, I maun ride, to get to the Liddel or it be dark, for your Waste has but a kittle character, ye ken yoursell.'

'Hout fie, Mr. Dinmont, that's no like you, to gie the country an ill name. I wot, there has been nane stirred in the Waste since Sawney Culloch, the travelling-merchant, that Rowley Overdees and Jock Penny suffered for at Carlisle twa years since. There's no ane in Bewcastle would do the like o' that now; we be a' true folk now.'

'Ay, Tib, that will be when the deil's blind; and his een's no sair yet. But hear ye, gudewife, I have been through maist feck o' Galloway and Dumfries-shire, and I have been round by Carlisle, and I was at the Staneshiebank Fair the day, and I would like ill to be rubbit sae near hame, so I'll take the gate.'

'Hae ye been in Dumfries and Galloway?' said the old dame who sate smoking by the fireside, and who had not yet spoken a word.

'Troth have I, gudewife, and a weary round I've had o't.'

'Then ye'll maybe ken a place they ca' Ellangowan?'

'Ellangowan, that was Mr. Bertram's? I ken the place weel eneugh. The Laird died about a fortnight since, as I heard.'

'Died!' said the old woman, dropping her pipe, and rising and coming forward upon the floor--'died? are you sure of that?'

'Troth, am I,' said Dinmont, 'for it made nae sma' noise in the country-side. He died just at the roup of the stocking and furniture; it stoppit the roup, and mony folk were disappointed. They said he was the last of an auld family too, and mony were sorry; for gude blude's scarcer in Scotland than it has been.'

'Dead!' replied the old woman, whom our readers have already recognised as their acquaintance Meg Merrilies--'dead! that quits a' scores. And did ye say he died without an heir?'

'Ay did he, gudewife, and the estate's sell'd by the same token; for they said they couldna have sell'd it if there had been an heir-male.'

'Sell'd!' echoed the gipsy, with something like a scream; 'and wha durst buy Ellangowan that was not of Bertram's blude? and wha could tell whether the bonny knave-bairn may not come back to claim his ain? wha durst buy the estate and the castle of Ellangowan?'

'Troth, gudewife, just ane o' thae writer chields that buys a' thing; they ca' him Glossin, I think.'

'Glossin! Gibbie Glossin! that I have carried in my creels a hundred times, for his mother wasna muckle better than mysell--he to presume to buy the barony of Ellangowan! Gude be wi' us; it is an awfu' world! I wished him ill; but no sic a downfa' as a' that neither. Wae's me! wae's me to think o't! She remained a moment silent but still opposing with her hand the farmer's retreat, who betwixt every question was about to turn his back, but good-humouredly stopped on observing the deep interest his answers appeared to excite.

'It will be seen and heard of--earth and sea will not hold their peace langer! Can ye say if the same man be now the sheriff of the county that has been sae for some years past?'

'Na, he's got some other birth in Edinburgh, they say; but gude day, gudewife, I maun ride.' She followed him to his horse, and, while he drew the girths of his saddle, adjusted the walise, and put on the bridle, still plied him with questions concerning Mr. Bertram's death and the fate of his daughter; on which, however, she could obtain little information from the honest farmer.

'Did ye ever see a place they ca' Derncleugh, about a mile frae the Place of Ellangowan?'

'I wot weel have I, gudewife. A wild-looking den it is, wi' a whin auld wa's o' shealings yonder; I saw it when I gaed ower the ground wi' ane that wanted to take the farm.'

'It was a blythe bit ancel' said Meg, speaking to herself. 'Did ye notice if there was an auld saugh tree that's maist blawn down, but yet its roots are in the earth, and it hangs ower the bit burn? Mony a day hae I wrought my stocking and sat on my sunkie under that saugh.'

'Hout, deil's i' the wife, wi' her saughs, and her sunkies, and Ellangowans. Godsake, woman, let me away; there's saxpence t' ye to buy half a mutchkin, instead o' clavering about thae auld-world stories.'

'Thanks to ye, gudeman; and now ye hae answered a' my questions, and never speired wherefore I asked them, I'll gie you a bit canny advice, and ye maunna speir what for neither. Tib Mumps will be out wi' the stirrup-dram in a gliffing. She'll ask ye whether ye gang ower Willie's Brae or through Conscowthart Moss; tell her ony ane ye like, but be sure (speaking low and emphatically) to tak the ane ye dinna tell her.' The farmer laughed and promised, and the gipsy retreated.

'Will you take her advice?' said Brown, who had been an attentive listener to this conversation.

'That will I no, the randy quean! Na, I had far rather Tib Mumps kenn'd which way I was gaun than her, though Tib's no muckle to lippen to neither, and I would advise ye on no account to stay in the house a' night.'

In a moment after Tib, the landlady, appeared with her stirrup-cup, which was taken off. She then, as Meg had predicted, inquired whether he went the hill or the moss road. He answered, the latter; and, having bid Brown good-bye, and again told him, 'he depended on seeing him at Charlie's Hope, the morn at latest,' he rode off at a round pace.

CHAPTER XXIII

Gallows and knock are too powerful on the highway

--Winter's Tale

The hint of the hospitable farmer was not lost on Brown. But while he paid his reckoning he could not avoid repeatedly fixing his eyes on Meg Merrilies. She was in all respects the same witch-like figure as when we first introduced her at Ellangowan Place. Time had grizzled her raven locks and added wrinkles to her wild features, but her height remained erect, and her activity was unimpaired. It was remarked of this woman, as of others of the same description, that a life of action, though not of labour, gave her the perfect command of her limbs and figure, so that the attitudes into which she most naturally threw herself were free, unconstrained, and picturesque. At present she stood by the window of the cottage, her person drawn up so as to show to full advantage her masculine stature, and her head somewhat thrown back, that the large bonnet with which her face was shrouded might not interrupt her steady gaze at Brown. At every gesture he made and every tone he uttered she seemed to give an almost imperceptible start. On his part, he was surprised to find that he could not look upon this singular figure without some emotion. 'Have I dreamed of such a figure?' he said to himself, 'or does this wild and singular-looking woman recall to my recollection some of the strange figures I have seen in our Indian pagodas?'

While he embarrassed himself with these discussions, and the hostess was engaged in rummaging out silver in change of half-a-guinea, the gipsy suddenly made two strides and seized Brown's hand. He expected, of course, a display of her skill in palmistry, but she seemed agitated by other feelings.

'Tell me,' she said, 'tell me, in the name of God, young man, what is your name, and whence you came?'

'My name is Brown, mother, and I come from the East Indies.'

'From the East Indies!' dropping his hand with a sigh; 'it cannot be then. I am such an auld fool, that everything I look on seems the thing I want maist to see. But the East Indies! that cannot be. Weel, be what ye will, ye hae a face and a tongue that puts me in mind of auld times. Good day; make haste on your road, and if ye see any of our folk, meddle not and make not, and they'll do you nae harm.'

Brown, who had by this time received his change, put a shilling into her hand, bade his hostess farewell, and, taking the route which the farmer had gone before, walked briskly on, with the advantage of being guided by the fresh hoof-prints of his horse. Meg Merrilies looked after him for some time, and then muttered to herself, 'I maun see that lad again; and I maun gang back to Ellangowan too. The Laird's dead! aweel, death pays a' scores; he was a kind man ance. The Sheriff's flitted, and I can keep canny in the bush; so there's no muckle hazard o' scouring the cramp-ring. I would like to see bonny Ellangowan again or I die.'

Brown meanwhile proceeded northward at a round pace along the moorish tract called the Waste of Cumberland. He passed a solitary house, towards which the horseman who preceded him had apparently turned up, for his horse's tread was evident in that direction. A little farther, he seemed to have returned again into the road. Mr. Dinmont had probably made a visit there either of business or pleasure. 'I wish,' thought Brown, 'the good farmer had staid till I came up; I should not have been sorry to ask him a few questions about the road, which seems to grow wilder and wilder.'

In truth, nature, as if she had designed this tract of country to be the barrier between two hostile nations, has stamped upon it a character of wildness and desolation. The hills are neither high nor rocky, but the land is all heath and morass; the huts poor and mean, and at a great distance from each other. Immediately around them there is generally some little attempt at cultivation; but a half-bred foal or two, straggling about with shackles on their hind legs, to save the trouble of inclosures, intimate the farmer's chief resource to be the breeding of horses. The people, too, are of a ruder and more inhospitable class than are elsewhere to be found in Cumberland, arising partly from their own habits, partly from their intermixture with vagrants and criminals, who make this wild country a refuge from justice. So much were the men of these districts in early times the objects of suspicion and dislike to their more polished neighbours, that there was, and perhaps still exists, a by-law of the corporation of Newcastle prohibiting any freeman of that city to take for apprentice a native of certain of these dales. It is pithily said, 'Give a dog an ill name and hang him'; and it may be added, if you give a man, or race of men, an ill name they are very likely to do something that deserves hanging. Of this Brown had heard something, and suspected more, from the discourse between the landlady, Dinmont, and the gipsy; but he was naturally of a fearless disposition, had nothing about him that could tempt the spoiler, and trusted to get through the Waste with daylight. In this last particular, however, he was likely to be disappointed. The way proved longer than he had anticipated, and the horizon began to grow gloomy just as he entered upon an extensive morass.

Choosing his steps with care and deliberation, the young officer proceeded along a path that sometimes sunk between two broken black banks of moss earth, sometimes crossed narrow but deep ravines filled with a consistence between mud and water, and sometimes along heaps of gravel and stones, which had been swept together when some torrent or waterspout from the neighbouring hills overflowed the marshy ground below. He began to ponder how a horseman could make his way through such broken ground; the traces of hoofs, however, were still visible; he even thought he heard their sound at some distance, and, convinced that Mr. Dinmont's progress through the morass must be still slower than his own, he resolved to push on, in hopes to overtake him and have the benefit of his knowledge of the country. At this moment his little terrier sprung forward, barking most furiously.

Brown quickened his pace, and, attaining the summit of a small rising ground, saw the subject of the dog's alarm. In a hollow about a gunshot below him a man whom he easily recognised to be Dinmont was engaged with two others in a desperate struggle. He was dismounted, and defending himself as he best could with the butt of his heavy whip. Our traveller hastened on to his assistance; but ere he could get up a stroke had levelled the farmer with the earth, and one of the robbers, improving his victory, struck him some merciless blows on the head. The other villain, hastening to meet Brown, called to his companion to come along, 'for that one's CONTENT,' meaning, probably, past resistance or complaint. One ruffian was armed with a cutlass, the other with a bludgeon; but as the road was pretty narrow, 'bar fire-arms,' thought Brown, 'and I may manage them well enough.' They met accordingly, with the most murderous threats on the part of the ruffians. They soon found, however, that their new opponent was equally stout and resolute; and, after exchanging two or three blows, one of them told him to 'follow his nose over the heath, in the devil's name, for they had nothing to say to him.'

Brown rejected this composition as leaving to their mercy the unfortunate man whom they were about to pillage, if not to murder outright; and the skirmish had just recommenced when Dinmont unexpectedly recovered his senses, his feet, and his weapon, and hastened to the scene of action. As he had been no easy antagonist, even when surprised and alone, the villains did not choose to wait his joining forces with a man who had singly proved a match for them both, but fled across the bog as fast as their feet could carry them, pursued by Wasp, who had acted gloriously during the skirmish, annoying the heels of the enemy, and repeatedly effecting a moment's diversion in his master's favour.

'Deil, but your dog's weel entered wi' the vermin now, sir!' were the first words uttered by the jolly farmer as he came up, his head streaming with blood, and recognised his deliverer and his little attendant.

'I hope, sir, you are not hurt dangerously?'

'O, deil a bit, my head can stand a gay clour; nae thanks to them, though, and mony to you. But now, hinney, ye maun help me to catch the beast, and ye maun get on behind me, for we maun off like whittrets before the whole clanjamfray be down upon us; the rest o' them will no be far off.' The galloway was, by good fortune, easily caught, and Brown made some apology for overloading the animal.

'Deil a fear, man,' answered the proprietor; 'Dumple could carry six folk, if his back was lang enough; but God's sake, haste ye, get on, for I see some folk coming through the slack yonder that it may be just as weel no to wait for.'

Brown was of opinion that this apparition of five or six men, with whom the other villains seemed to join company, coming across the moss towards them, should abridge ceremony; he therefore mounted Dumple en croupe, and the little spirited nag cantered away with two men of great size and strength as if they had been children of six years old. The rider, to whom the paths of these wilds seemed intimately known, pushed on at a rapid pace, managing with much dexterity to choose the safest route, in which he was aided by the sagacity of the galloway, who never failed to take the difficult passes exactly at the particular spot, and in the special manner, by which they could be most safely crossed. Yet, even with these advantages, the road was so broken, and they were so often thrown out of the direct course by various impediments, that they did not gain much on their pursuers. 'Never mind,' said the undaunted Scotchman to his companion, 'if we were ance by Withershins' Latch, the road's no near sae soft, and we'll show them fair play for't.'

They soon came to the place he named, a narrow channel, through which soaked, rather than flowed, a small stagnant stream, mantled over with bright green mosses. Dinmont directed his steed towards a pass where the water appeared to flow with more freedom over a harder bottom; but Dumple backed from the proposed crossing-place, put his head down as if to reconnoitre the swamp more nearly, stretching forward his fore-feet, and stood as fast as if he had been cut out of stone.

'Had we not better,' said Brown, 'dismount, and leave him to his fate; or can you not urge him through the swamp?'

'Na, na,' said his pilot, 'we maun cross Dumple at no rate, he has mair sense than mony a Christian.' So saying, he relaxed the reins, and shook them loosely. 'Come now, lad, take your ain way o't, let's see where ye'll take us through.'

Dumple, left to the freedom of his own will, trotted briskly to another part of the latch, less promising, as Brown thought, in appearance, but which the animal's sagacity or experience recommended as the safer of the two, and where, plunging in, he attained the other side with little difficulty.

'I'm glad we're out o' that moss,' said Dinmont, 'where there's mair stables for horses than change-houses for men; we have the Maiden-way to help us now, at any rate.' Accordingly, they speedily gained a sort of rugged causeway so called, being the remains of an old Roman road which traverses these wild regions in a due northerly direction. Here they got on at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour, Dumple seeking no other respite than what arose from changing his pace from canter to trot. 'I could gar him show mair action,' said his master, 'but we are twa lang-legged chields after a', and it would be a pity to stress Dumple; there wasna the like o' him at Staneshiebank Fair the day.'

Brown readily assented to the propriety of sparing the horse, and added that, as they were now far out of the reach of the rogues, he thought Mr. Dinmont had better tie a handkerchief round his head, for fear of the cold frosty air aggravating the wound.

'What would I do that for?' answered the hardy farmer, 'the best way's to let the blood barken upon the cut; that saves plasters, hinney.'

Brown, who in his military profession had seen a great many hard blows pass, could not help remarking, 'he had never known such severe strokes received with so much apparent indifference.'

'Hout tout, man! I would never be making a humdudgeon about a scart on the pow; but we'll be in Scotland in five minutes now, and ye maun gang up to Charlie's Hope wi' me, that's a clear case.'

Brown readily accepted the offered hospitality. Night was now falling when they came in sight of a pretty river winding its way through a pastoral country. The hills were greener and more abrupt than those which Brown had lately passed, sinking their grassy sides at once upon the river. They had no pretensions to magnificence of height, or to romantic shapes, nor did their smooth swelling slopes exhibit either rocks or woods. Yet the view was wild, solitary, and pleasingly rural. No inclosures, no roads, almost no tillage; it seemed a land which a patriarch would have chosen to feed his flocks and herds. The remains of here and there a dismantled and ruined tower showed that it had once harboured beings of a very different description from its present inhabitants; those freebooters, namely, to whose exploits the wars between England and Scotland bear witness.

Descending by a path towards a well-known ford, Dumple crossed the small river, and then, quickening his pace, trotted about a mile briskly up its banks, and approached two or three low thatched houses, placed with their angles to each other, with a great contempt of regularity. This was the farm-steading of Charlie's Hope, or, in the language of the country, 'the town.' A most furious barking was set up at their approach by the whole three generations of Mustard and Pepper, and a number of allies, names unknown. The farmer [Footnote: See Note 3.] made his well-known voice lustily heard to restore order; the door opened, and a half-dressed ewe-milker, who had done that good office, shut it in their faces, in order that she might run 'ben the house' to cry 'Mistress, mistress, it's the master, and another man wi' him.' Dumple, turned loose, walked to his own stable-door, and there pawed and whinnied for admission, in strains which were answered by his acquaintances from the interior. Amid this bustle Brown was fain to secure Wasp from the other dogs, who, with ardour corresponding more to their own names than to the hospitable temper of their owner, were much disposed to use the intruder roughly.

In about a minute a stout labourer was patting Dumple, and introducing him into the stable, while Mrs. Dinmont, a well-favoured buxom dame, welcomed her husband with unfeigned rapture. 'Eh, sirs! gudeman, ye hae been a weary while away!'

CHAPTER XXIV

*Liddell till now, except in Doric lays,
Tuned to her murmurs by her love-sick swains,
Unknown in song, though not a purer stream
Rolls towards the western main*

Art of Preserving Health.

The present store-farmers of the south of Scotland are a much more refined race than their fathers, and the manners I am now to describe have either altogether disappeared or are greatly modified. Without losing the rural simplicity of manners, they now cultivate arts unknown to the former generation, not only in the progressive improvement of their possessions but in all the comforts of life. Their houses are more commodious, their habits of life regulated so as better to keep pace with those of the civilised world, and the best of luxuries, the luxury of knowledge, has gained much ground among their hills during the last thirty years. Deep drinking, formerly their greatest failing, is now fast losing ground; and, while the frankness of their extensive hospitality continues the same, it is, generally speaking, refined in its character and restrained in its excesses.

'Deil's in the wife,' said Dandie Dinmont, shaking off his spouse's embrace, but gently and with a look of great affection; 'deil's in ye, Ailie; d'ye no see the stranger gentleman?'

Ailie turned to make her apology--'Troth, I was sae weel pleased to see the gudeman, that--but, gude gracious! what's the matter wi' ye baith?' for they were now in her little parlour, and the candle showed the streaks of blood which Dinmont's wounded head had plentifully imparted to the clothes of his companion as well as to his own. 'Ye've been fighting again, Dandie, wi' some o' the Bewcastle horse-coupers! Wow, man, a married man, wi' a bonny family like yours, should ken better what a father's life's worth in the warld'; the tears stood in the good woman's eyes as she spoke.

'Whisht! whisht! gudewife,' said her husband, with a smack that had much more affection than ceremony in it; 'never mind, never mind; there's a gentleman that will tell you that, just when I had ga'en up to Lourie Lowther's, and had bidden the drinking of twa cheerers, and gotten just in again upon the moss, and was whigging cannily awa hame, twa landloupers jumpit out of a peat-hag on me or I was thinking, and got me down, and knevelled me sair aneuch, or I could gar my whip walk about their lugs; and troth, gudewife, if this honest gentleman hadna come up, I would have gotten mair licks than I like, and lost mair siller than I could weel spare; so ye maun be thankful to him for it, under God.' With that he drew from his side-pocket a large greasy leather pocket-book, and bade the gudewife lock it up in her kist.

'God bless the gentleman, and e'en God bless him wi' a' my heart; but what can we do for him, but to gie him the meat and quarters we wadna refuse to the poorest body on earth--unless (her eye directed to the pocketbook, but with a feeling of natural propriety which made the inference the most delicate possible), unless there was any other way--' Brown saw, and estimated at its due rate, the mixture of simplicity and grateful generosity which took the downright way of expressing itself, yet qualified with so much delicacy; he was aware his own appearance, plain at best, and now torn and spattered with blood, made him an object of pity at least, and perhaps of charity. He hastened to say his name was Brown, a captain in the----regiment of cavalry, travelling for pleasure, and on foot, both from motives of independence and economy; and he begged his kind landlady would look at her husband's wounds, the state of which he had refused to permit him to examine. Mrs. Dinmont was used to her husband's broken heads more than to the presence of a captain of dragoons. She therefore glanced at a table-cloth not quite clean, and conned over her proposed supper a minute or two, before, patting her husband on the shoulder, she bade him sit down for 'a hard-headed loon, that was aye bringing himsell and other folk into collie-shangies.'

When Dandie Dinmont, after executing two or three caprioles, and cutting the Highland fling, by way of ridicule of his wife's anxiety, at last deigned to sit down and commit his round, black, shaggy bullet of a head to her inspection, Brown thought he had seen the regimental surgeon look grave upon a more trifling case. The gudewife, however, showed some knowledge of chirurgery; she cut away with her scissors the gory locks whose stiffened and coagulated clusters interfered with her operations, and clapped on the wound some lint besmeared with a vulnerary salve, esteemed sovereign by the whole dale (which afforded upon fair nights considerable experience of such cases); she then fixed her plaster with a bandage, and, spite of her patient's resistance, pulled over all a night-cap, to keep everything in its right place. Some contusions on the brow and shoulders she fomented with brandy, which the patient did not permit till the medicine had paid a heavy toll to his mouth. Mrs. Dinmont then simply, but kindly, offered her assistance to Brown.

He assured her he had no occasion for anything but the accommodation of a basin and towel.

'And that's what I should have thought of sooner,' she said; 'and I did think o't, but I durst na open the door, for there's a' the bairns, poor things, sae keen to see their father.'

This explained a great drumming and whining at the door of the little parlour, which had somewhat surprised Brown, though his kind landlady had only noticed it by fastening the bolt as soon as she heard it begin. But on her opening the door to seek the basin and towel (for she never thought of showing the guest to a separate room), a whole tide of white-headed urchins streamed in, some from the stable, where they had been seeing Duple, and giving him a welcome home with part of their four-hours scones; others from the kitchen, where they had been listening to old Elspeth's tales and ballads; and the youngest, half-naked, out of bed, all roaring to see daddy, and to inquire what he had brought home for them from the various fairs he had visited in his peregrinations. Our knight of the broken head first kissed and hugged them all round, then distributed whistles, penny-trumpets, and gingerbread, and, lastly, when the tumult of their joy and welcome got beyond bearing, exclaimed to his guest--'This is a' the gude-wife's fault, Captain; she will gie the bairns a' their ain way.'

'Me! Lord help me,' said Ailie, who at that instant entered with the basin and ewer, 'how can I help it? I have naething else to gie them, poor things!'

Dinmont then exerted himself, and, between coaxing, threats, and shoving, cleared the room of all the intruders excepting a boy and girl, the two eldest of the family, who could, as he observed, behave themselves 'distinctly.' For the same reason, but with less ceremony, all the dogs were kicked out excepting the venerable patriarchs, old Pepper and Mustard, whom frequent castigation and the advance of years had inspired with such a share of passive hospitality that, after mutual explanation and remonstrance in the shape of some growling, they admitted Wasp, who had hitherto judged it safe to keep beneath his master's chair, to a share of a dried-wedder's skin, which, with the wool uppermost and unshorn, served all the purposes of a Bristol hearth-rug.

The active bustle of the mistress (so she was called in the kitchen, and the gudewife in the parlour) had already signed the fate of a couple of fowls, which, for want of time to dress them otherwise, soon appeared reeking from the gridiron, or brander, as Mrs. Dinmont denominated it. A huge piece of cold beef-ham, eggs, butter, cakes, and barley-meal bannocks in plenty made up the entertainment, which was to be diluted with home-brewed ale of excellent quality and a case-bottle of brandy. Few soldiers would find fault with such cheer after a day's hard exercise and a skirmish to boot; accordingly Brown did great honour to the eatables. While the gudewife partly aided, partly instructed, a great stout servant girl, with cheeks as red as her top-knot, to remove the supper matters and supply sugar and hot water (which, in the damsel's anxiety to gaze upon an actual live captain, she was in some danger of forgetting), Brown took an opportunity to ask his host whether he did not repent of having neglected the gipsy's hint.

'Wha kens?' answered he; 'they're queer deevils; maybe I might just have 'scaped ae gang to meet the other. And yet I 'll no say that neither; for if that randy wife was coming to Charlie's Hope, she should have a pint bottle o' brandy and a pound o' tobacco to wear her through the winter. They're queer deevils; as my auld father used to say, they're warst where they're warst guided. After a', there's baith gude and ill about the gipsies.'

This, and some other desultory conversation, served as a 'shoeing-horn' to draw on another cup of ale and another 'cheerer,' as Dinmont termed it in his country phrase, of brandy and water. Brown then resolutely declined all further conviviality for that evening, pleading his own weariness and the effects of the skirmish, being well aware that it would have availed nothing to have remonstrated with his host on the danger that excess might have occasioned to his own raw wound and bloody coxcomb. A very small bed-room, but a very clean bed, received the traveller, and the sheets made good the courteous vaunt of the hostess, 'that they would be as pleasant as he could find any gate, for they were washed wi' the fairy-well water, and bleached on the bonny white gowans, and bittled by Nelly and herself, and what could woman, if she was a queen, do mair for them?'

They indeed rivalled snow in whiteness, and had, besides, a pleasant fragrance from the manner in which they had been bleached. Little Wasp, after licking his master's hand to ask leave, couched himself on the coverlet at his feet; and the traveller's senses were soon lost in grateful oblivion.

CHAPTER XXV

*Give ye, Britons, then,
Your sportive fury, pitiless to pour
Loose on the nightly robber of the fold.
Him from his craggy winding haunts unearth'd,
Let all the thunder of the chase pursue.*

THOMSON'S Seasons.

Brown rose early in the morning and walked out to look at the establishment of his new friend. All was rough and neglected in the neighbourhood of the house;--a paltry garden, no pains taken to make the vicinity dry or comfortable, and a total absence of all those little neatnesses which give the eye so much pleasure in looking at an English farm-house. There were, notwithstanding, evident signs that this arose only from want of taste or ignorance, not from poverty or the negligence which attends it. On the contrary, a noble cow-house, well filled with good milk-cows, a feeding-house, with ten bullocks of the most approved breed, a stable, with two good teams of horses, the appearance of domestics active, industrious, and apparently contented with their lot; in a word, an air of liberal though sluttish plenty indicated the wealthy fanner. The situation of the house above the river formed a gentle declivity, which relieved the inhabitants of the nuisances that might otherwise have stagnated around it. At a little distance was the whole band of children playing and building houses with peats around a huge doddered oak-tree, which was called Charlie's Bush, from some tradition respecting an old freebooter who had once inhabited the spot. Between the farm-house and the hill-pasture was a deep morass, termed in that country a slack; it had once been the defence of a fortalice, of which no vestiges now remained, but which was said to have been inhabited by the same doughty hero we have now alluded to. Brown endeavoured to make some acquaintance with the children, but 'the rogues fled from him like quicksilver,' though the two eldest stood peeping when they had got to some distance. The traveller then turned his course towards the hill, crossing the foresaid swamp by a range of stepping-stones, neither the broadest nor steadiest that could be imagined. He had not climbed far up the hill when he met a man descending.

He soon recognised his worthy host, though a 'maud,' as it is called, or a grey shepherd's plaid, supplied his travelling jockey-coat, and a cap, faced with wild-cat's fur, more comrhodiously covered his bandaged head than a hat would have done. As he appeared through the morning mist, Brown, accustomed to judge of men by their thewes and sinews, could not help admiring his height, the breadth of his shoulders, and the steady firmness of his step. Dinmont internally paid the same compliment to Brown, whose athletic form he now perused somewhat more at leisure than he had done formerly. After the usual greetings of the morning, the guest inquired whether his host found any inconvenient consequences from the last night's affray.

'I had maist forgotten't,' said the hardy Borderer; 'but I think this morning, now that I am fresh and sober, if you and I were at the Withershins' Latch, wi' ilka ane a gude oak souple in his hand, we wadna turn back, no for half a dizen o' yon scaff-raff.'

'But are you prudent, my good sir,' said Brown, 'not to take an hour or two's repose after receiving such severe contusions?'

'Confusions!' replied the farmer, laughing in derision. 'Lord, Captain, naething confuses my head. I ance jumped up and laid the dogs on the fox after I had tumbled from the tap o' Christenbury Craig, and that might have confused me to purpose. Na, naething confuses me, unless it be a screed o' drink at an orra time. Besides, I behooved to be round the hirsle this morning and see how the herds were coming on; they're apt to be negligent wi' their footballs, and fairs, and trysts, when ane's away. And there I met wi' Tarn o' Todshaw, and a wheen o' the rest o' the billies on the water side; they're a' for a fox-hunt this morning,--ye'll gang? I'll gie ye Dumble, and take the brood mare mysell.'

'But I fear I must leave you this morning, Mr. Dinmont,' replied Brown.

'The fient a bit o' that,' exclaimed the Borderer. 'I'll no part wi' ye at any rate for a fortnight mair. Na, na; we dinna meet sic friends as you on a Bewcastle moss every night.'

Brown had not designed his journey should be a speedy one; he therefore readily compounded with this hearty invitation by agreeing to pass a week at Charlie's Hope.

On their return to the house, where the goodwife presided over an ample breakfast, she heard news of the proposed fox-hunt, not indeed with approbation, but without alarm or surprise. 'Dand! ye're the auld man yet; naething will make ye take warning till ye're brought hame some day wi' your feet foremost.'

'Tut, lass!' answered Dandle, 'ye ken yoursell I am never a prin the waur o' my rambles.'

So saying, he exhorted Brown to be hasty in despatching his breakfast, as, 'the frost having given way, the scent would lie this morning primely.'

Out they sallied accordingly for Otterscope Scaurs, the farmer leading the way. They soon quitted the little valley, and involved themselves among hills as steep as they could be without being precipitous. The sides often presented gullies, down which, in the winter season, or after heavy rain, the torrents descended with great fury. Some dappled mists still floated along the peaks of the hills, the remains of the morning clouds, for the frost had broken up with a smart shower. Through these fleecy screens were seen a hundred little temporary streamlets, or rills, descending the sides of the mountains like silver threads. By small sheep-tracks along these steepes, over which Dinmont trotted with the most fearless confidence, they at length drew near the scene of sport, and began to see other men, both on horse and foot, making toward the place of rendezvous. Brown was puzzling himself to conceive how a fox-chase could take place among hills, where it was barely possible for a pony, accustomed to the ground, to trot along, but where, quitting the track for half a yard's breadth, the rider might be either bogged or precipitated down the bank. This wonder was not diminished when he came to the place of action.

They had gradually ascended very high, and now found themselves on a mountain-ridge, overhanging a glen of great depth, but extremely narrow. Here the sportsmen had collected, with an apparatus which would have shocked a member of the Pychely Hunt; for, the object being the removal of a noxious and destructive animal, as well as the pleasures of the chase, poor Reynard was allowed much less fair play than when pursued in form through an open country. The strength of his habitation, however, and the nature of the ground by which it was surrounded on all sides, supplied what was wanting in the courtesy of his pursuers. The sides of the glen were broken banks of earth and rocks of rotten stone, which sunk sheer down to the little winding stream below, affording here and there a tuft of scathed brushwood or a patch of furze. Along the edges of this ravine, which, as we have said, was very narrow, but of profound depth, the hunters on horse and foot ranged themselves; almost every farmer had with him at least a brace of large and fierce greyhounds, of the race of those deer-dogs which were formerly used in that country, but greatly lessened in size from being crossed with the common breed. The huntsman, a sort of provincial officer of the district, who receives a certain supply of meal, and a reward for every fox he destroys, was already at the bottom of the dell, whose echoes thundered to the chiding of two or three brace of foxhounds. Terriers, including the whole generation of Pepper and Mustard, were also in attendance, having been sent forward under the care of a shepherd. Mongrel, whelp, and cur of low degree filled up the burden of the chorus. The spectators on the brink of the ravine, or glen, held their greyhounds in leash in readiness to slip them at the fox as soon as the activity of the party below should force him to abandon his cover.

The scene, though uncouth to the eye of a professed sportsman, had something in it wildly captivating. The shifting figures on the mountain-ridge, having the sky for their background, appeared to move in the air. The dogs, impatient of their restraint, and maddened with the baying beneath, sprung here and there, and strained at the slips, which prevented them from joining their companions. Looking down, the view was equally striking. The thin mists were not totally dispersed in the glen, so that it was often through their gauzy medium that the eye strove to discover the motions of the hunters below. Sometimes a breath of wind made the scene visible, the blue rill glittering as it twined itself through its rude and solitary dell. They then could see the shepherds springing with fearless activity from one dangerous point to another, and cheering the dogs on the scent, the whole so diminished by depth and distance that they looked like pigmies. Again the mists close over them, and the only signs of their continued exertions are the halloos of the men and the clamours of the hounds, ascending as it were out of the bowels of the earth. When the fox, thus persecuted from one stronghold to another, was at length obl'ged to abandon his valley, and to break away for a more distant retreat, those who watched his motions from the top slipped their greyhounds, which, excelling the fox in swiftness, and equalling him in ferocity and spirit, soon brought the plunderer to his life's end.

In this way, without any attention to the ordinary rules and decorums of sport, but apparently as much to the gratification both of bipeds and quadrupeds as if all due ritual had been followed, four foxes were killed on this active morning; and even Brown himself, though he had seen the princely sports of India, and ridden a-tiger-hunting upon an elephant with the Nabob of Arcot, professed to have received an excellent morning's amusement. When the sport was given up for the day, most of the sportsmen, according to the established hospitality of the country, went to dine at Charlie's Hope.

During their return homeward Brown rode for a short time beside the huntsman, and asked him some questions concerning the mode in which he exercised his profession. The man showed an unwillingness to meet his eye, and a disposition to be rid of his company and conversation, for which Brown could not easily account. He was a thin, dark, active fellow, well framed for the hardy profession which he exercised. But his face had not the frankness of the jolly hunter; he was

down-looked, embarrassed, and avoided the eyes of those who looked hard at him. After some unimportant observations on the success of the day, Brown gave him a trifling gratuity, and rode on with his landlord. They found the goodwife prepared for their reception; the fold and the poultry-yard furnished the entertainment, and the kind and hearty welcome made amends for all deficiencies in elegance and fashion.

CHAPTER XXVI

*The Elliots and Armstrongs did convene,
They were a gallant company!*

Ballad of Johnnie Armstrong

Without noticing the occupations of an intervening day or two, which, as they consisted of the ordinary silvan amusements of shooting and coursing, have nothing sufficiently interesting to detain the reader, we pass to one in some degree peculiar to Scotland, which may be called a sort of salmon-hunting. This chase, in which the fish is pursued and struck with barbed spears, or a sort of long-shafted trident, called a waster, is much practised at the mouth of the Esk and in the other salmon rivers of Scotland. The sport is followed by day and night, but most commonly in the latter, when the fish are discovered by means of torches, or fire-grates, filled with blazing fragments of tar-barrels, which shed a strong though partial light upon the water. On the present occasion the principal party were embarked in a crazy boat upon a part of the river which was enlarged and deepened by the restraint of a mill-weir, while others, like the ancient Bacchanals in their gambols, ran along the banks, brandishing their torches and spears, and pursuing the salmon, some of which endeavoured to escape up the stream, while others, shrouding themselves under roots of trees, fragments of stones, and large rocks, attempted to conceal themselves from the researches of the fishermen. These the party in the boat detected by the slightest indications; the twinkling of a fin, the rising of an airbell, was sufficient to point out to these adroit sportsmen in what direction to use their weapon.

The scene was inexpressibly animating to those accustomed to it; but, as Brown was not practised to use the spear, he soon tired of making efforts which were attended with no other consequences than jarring his arms against the rocks at the bottom of the river, upon which, instead of the devoted salmon, he often bestowed his blow. Nor did he relish, though he concealed feelings which would not have been understood, being quite so near the agonies of the expiring salmon, as they lay flapping about in the boat, which they moistened with their blood. He therefore requested to be put ashore, and, from the top of a heugh or broken bank, enjoyed the scene much more to his satisfaction. Often he thought of his friend Dudley the artist, when he observed the effect produced by the strong red glare on the romantic banks under which the boat glided. Now the light diminished to a distant star that seemed to twinkle on the waters, like those which, according to the legends of the country, the water-kelpy sends for the purpose of indicating the watery grave of his victims. Then it advanced nearer, brightening and enlarging as it again approached, till the broad flickering flame rendered bank and rock and tree visible as it passed, tingeing them with its own red glare of dusky light, and resigning them gradually to darkness, or to pale moonlight, as it receded. By this light also were seen the figures in the boat, now holding high their weapons, now stooping to strike, now standing upright, bronzed by the same red glare into a colour which might have befitted the regions of Pandemonium.

Having amused himself for some time with these effects of light and shadow, Brown strolled homewards towards the farm-house, gazing in his way at the persons engaged in the sport, two or three of whom are generally kept together, one holding the torch, the others with their spears, ready to avail themselves of the light it affords to strike their prey. As he observed one man struggling with a very weighty salmon which he had speared, but was unable completely to raise from the water, Brown advanced close to the bank to see the issue of his exertions. The man who held the torch in this instance was the huntsman, whose sulky demeanour Brown had already noticed with surprise. 'Come here, sir! come here, sir! look at this ane! He turns up a side like a sow.' Such was the cry from the assistants when some of them observed Brown advancing.

'Ground the waster weel, man! ground the waster weel! Haud him down! Ye haena the pith o' a cat!' were the cries of advice, encouragement, and expostulation from those who were on the bank to the sportsman engaged with the salmon, who stood up to his middle in water, jingling among broken ice, struggling against the force of the fish and the strength of the current, and dubious in what manner he should attempt to secure his booty. As Brown came to the edge of the bank, he called out--'Hold up your torch, friend huntsman!' for he had already distinguished his dusky features by the strong light cast upon them by the blaze. But the fellow no sooner heard his voice, and saw, or rather concluded, it was Brown who approached him, than, instead of advancing his light, he let it drop, as if accidentally, into the water.

'The deil's in Gabriel!' said the spearman, as the fragments of glowing wood floated half-blazing, half-sparkling, but soon extinguished, down the stream. 'The deil's in the man! I'll never master him without the light; and a braver kipper, could I but land him, never reisted abune a pair o' cleeks.' [Footnote: See Note 4] Some dashed into the water to lend their assistance, and the fish, which was afterwards found to weigh nearly thirty pounds, was landed in safety.

The behaviour of the huntsman struck Brown, although he had no recollection of his face, nor could conceive why he should, as it appeared he evidently did, shun his observation. Could he be one of the footpads he had encountered a few days before? The supposition was not altogether improbable, although unwarranted by any observation he was able to make upon the man's figure and face. To be sure the villains wore their hats much slouched, and had loose coats, and their size was not in any way so peculiarly discriminated as to enable him to resort to that criterion. He resolved to speak to his host Dinmont on the subject, but for obvious reasons concluded it were best to defer the explanation until a cool hour in the morning.

The sportsmen returned loaded with fish, upwards of one hundred salmon having been killed within the range of their sport. The best were selected for the use of the principal farmers, the others divided among their shepherds, cottars, dependents, and others of inferior rank who attended. These fish, dried in the turf smoke of their cabins or shealings, formed a savoury addition to the mess of potatoes, mixed with onions, which was the principal part of their winter food. In the meanwhile a liberal distribution of ale and whisky was made among them, besides what was called a kettle of fish,--two or three salmon, namely, plunged into a cauldron and boiled for their supper. Brown accompanied his jolly landlord and the rest of his friends into the large and smoky kitchen, where this savoury mess reeked on an oaken table, massive enough to have dined Johnnie Armstrong and his merry-men. All was hearty cheer and huzza, and jest and clamorous laughter, and bragging alternately, and railery between whiles. Our traveller looked earnestly around for the dark countenance of the fox-hunter; but it was nowhere to be seen.

At length he hazarded a question concerning him. 'That was an awkward accident, my lads, of one of you, who dropped his torch in the water when his companion was struggling with the large fish.'

'Awkward!' returned a shepherd, looking up (the same stout young fellow who had speared the salmon); 'he deserved his paiks for't, to put out the light when the fish was on ane's witters! I'm weel convinced Gabriel drapped the roughies in the water on purpose; he doesna like to see ony body do a thing better than himsell.'

'Ay,' said another, 'he's sair shamed o' himsell, else he would have been up here the night; Gabriel likes a little o' the gude thing as weel as ony o' us.'

'Is he of this country?' said Brown.

'Na, na, he's been but shortly in office, but he's a fell hunter; he's frae down the country, some gate on the Dumfries side.'

'And what's his name, pray?'

'Gabriel.'

'But Gabriel what?'

'Oh, Lord kens that; we dinna mind folk's afternames muckle here, they run sae muckle into clans.'

'Ye see, sir,' said an old shepherd, rising, and speaking very slow, 'the folks hereabout are a' Armstrongs and Elliots.[Footnote: See Note 5] and sic like--two or three given names--and so, for distinction's sake, the lairds and farmers have the names of their places that they live at; as, for example, Tam o' Todshaw, Will o' the Flat, Hobbie o' Sorbietrees, and our good master here o' the Charlie's Hope. Aweel, sir, and then the inferior sort o' people, ye'll observe, are kend by sorts o' by-names some o' them, as Glaikeet Christie, and the Deuke's Davie, or maybe, like this lad Gabriel, by his employment; as, for example, Tod Gabbie, or Hunter Gabbie. He's no been lang here, sir, and I dinna think ony body kens him by ony other name. But it's no right to rin him doun ahint his back, for he's a fell fox-hunter, though he's maybe no just sae clever as some o' the folk hereawa wi' the waster.'

After some further desultory conversation, the superior sportsmen retired to conclude the evening after their own manner, leaving the others to enjoy themselves, unawed by their presence. That evening, like all those which Brown had passed at Charlie's Hope, was spent in much innocent mirth and conviviality. The latter might have approached to the verge of riot but for the good women; for several of the neighbouring mistresses (a phrase of a signification how different from what it bears in more fashionable life!) had assembled at Charlie's Hope to witness the event of this memorable evening. Finding the punch-bowl was so often replenished that there was some danger of their gracious presence being forgotten, they rushed in valorously upon the recreant revellers, headed by our good mistress Ailie, so that Venus speedily routed Bacchus. The fiddler and piper next made their appearance, and the best part of the night was gallantly consumed in dancing to their music.

An otter-hunt the next day, and a badger-baiting the day after, consumed the time merrily. I hope our traveller will not sink in the reader's estimation, sportsman though he may be, when I inform him that on this last occasion, after young Pepper had lost a fore-foot and Mustard the second had been nearly throttled, he begged, as a particular and personal favour of Mr. Dinmont, that the poor badger, who had made so gallant a defence, should be permitted to retire to his earth without farther molestation.

The farmer, who would probably have treated this request with supreme contempt had it come from any other person, was contented in Brown's case to express the utter extremity of his wonder. 'Weel,' he said, 'that's queer aneugh! But since ye take his part, deil a tyke shall meddle wi' him mair in my day. We 'll e'en mark him, and ca' him the Captain's brock; and I'm sure I'm glad I can do ony thing to oblige you,--but, Lord save us, to care about a brock!'

After a week spent in rural sport, and distinguished by the most frank attentions on the part of his honest landlord, Brown bade adieu to the banks of the Liddel and the hospitality of Charlie's Hope. The children, with all of whom he had now become an intimate and a favourite, roared manfully in full chorus at his departure, and he was obliged to promise twenty times that he would soon return and play over all their favourite tunes upon the flageolet till they had got them by heart. 'Come back again, Captain,' said one little sturdy fellow, 'and Jenny will be your wife.' Jenny was about eleven years old; she ran and hid herself behind her mammy.

'Captain, come back,' said a little fat roll-about girl of six, holding her mouth up to be kissed, 'and I'll be your wife my ainsell.'

'They must be of harder mould than I,' thought Brown, 'who could part from so many kind hearts with indifference.' The good dame too, with matron modesty, and an affectionate simplicity that marked the olden time, offered her cheek to the departing guest. 'It's little the like of us can do,' she said, 'little indeed; but yet, if there were but ony thing--'

'Now, my dear Mrs. Dinmont, you embolden me to make a request: would you but have the kindness to weave me, or work me, just such a grey plaid as the goodman wears?' He had learned the language and feelings of the country even during the short time of his residence, and was aware of the pleasure the request would confer.

'A tait o' woo' would be scarce among us,' said the goodwife, brightening, 'if ye shouldna hae that, and as gude a tweel as ever cam aff a pirn. I'll speak to Johnnie Goodsire, the weaver at the Castletown, the morn. Fare ye weel, sir! and may ye be just as happy yourself as ye like to see a' body else; and that would be a sair wish to some folk.'

I must not omit to mention that our traveller left his trusty attendant Wasp to be a guest at Charlie's Hope for a season. He foresaw that he might prove a troublesome attendant in the event of his being in any situation where secrecy and concealment might be necessary. He was therefore consigned to the care of the eldest boy, who promised, in the words of the old song, that he should have

A bit of his supper, a bit of his bed,

and that he should be engaged in none of those perilous pastimes in which the race of Mustard and Pepper had suffered frequent mutilation. Brown now prepared for his journey, having taken a temporary farewell of his trusty little companion.

There is an odd prejudice in these hills in favour of riding. Every farmer rides well, and rides the whole day. Probably the extent of their large pasture farms, and the necessity of surveying them rapidly, first introduced this custom; or a very zealous antiquary might derive it from the times of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' when twenty thousand horsemen assembled at the light of the beacon-fires. [Footnote: It would be affectation to alter this reference. But the reader will understand that it was inserted to keep up the author's incognito, as he was not likely to be suspected of quoting his own works. This explanation is also applicable to one or two similar passages, in this and the other novels, introduced for the same reason.] But the truth is undeniable; they like to be on horseback, and can be with difficulty convinced that any one chooses walking from other motives than those of convenience or necessity. Accordingly, Dinmont insisted upon mounting his guest and accompanying him on horseback as far as the nearest town in Dumfries-shire, where he had directed his baggage to be sent, and from which he proposed to pursue his intended journey towards Woodbourne, the residence of Julia Mannering.

Upon the way he questioned his companion concerning the character of the fox-hunter; but gained little information, as he had been called to that office while Dinmont was making the round of the Highland fairs. 'He was a shake-rag like fellow,' he said, 'and, he dared to say, had gipsy blood in his veins; but at ony rate he was nane o' the smaiks that had been on their quarters in the moss; he would ken them weel if he saw them again. There are some no bad folk among the gipsies too, to be sic a gang,' added Dandie; 'if ever I see that auld randle-tree of a wife again, I 'll gie her something to buy tobacco. I have a great notion she meant me very fair after a'.'

When they were about finally to part, the good farmer held Brown long by the hand, and at length said, 'Captain, the woo's sae weel up the year that it's paid a' the rent, and we have naething to do wi' the rest o' the siller when Ailie has had her new gown, and the bairns their bits o' duds. Now I was thinking of some safe hand to put it into, for it's ower muckle to ware on brandy and sugar; now I have heard that you army gentlemen can sometimes buy yourselfs up a step, and if a hundred or twa would help ye on such an occasion, the bit scrape o' your pen would be as good to me as the siller, and ye might just take yer ain time o' settling it; it wad be a great convenience to me.' Brown, who felt the full delicacy that wished to disguise the conferring an obligation under the show of asking a favour, thanked his grateful friend most heartily, and assured him he would have recourse to his purse without scruple should circumstances ever render it convenient for him. And thus they parted with many expressions of mutual regard.

CHAPTER XXVII

If thou hast any love of mercy in thee,

Turn me upon my face that I may die.

JOANNA BALLIE.

Our traveller hired a post-chaise at the place where he separated from Dinmont, with the purpose of proceeding to Kippletringan, there to inquire into the state of the family at Woodbourne, before he should venture to make his presence in the country known to Miss Mannering. The stage was a long one of eighteen or twenty miles, and the road lay across the country. To add to the inconveniences of the journey, the snow began to fall pretty quickly. The postilion, however, proceeded on his journey for a good many miles without expressing doubt or hesitation. It was not until the night was completely set in that he intimated his apprehensions whether he was in the right road. The increasing snow rendered this intimation rather alarming, for, as it drove full in the lad's face and lay whitening all around him, it served in two different ways to confuse his knowledge of the country, and to diminish the chance of his recovering the right track. Brown then himself got out and looked round, not, it may be well imagined, from any better hope than that of seeing some house at which he might make inquiry. But none appeared; he could therefore only tell the lad to drive steadily on. The road on which they were ran through plantations of considerable extent and depth, and the traveller therefore conjectured that there must be a gentleman's house at no great distance. At length, after struggling wearily on for about a mile, the post-boy stopped, and protested his horses would not budge a foot farther; 'but he saw,' he said, 'a light among the trees, which must proceed from a house; the only way was to inquire the road there.' Accordingly, he dismounted, heavily encumbered with a long great-coat and a pair of boots which might have rivalled in thickness the seven-fold shield of Ajax. As in this guise he was plodding forth upon his voyage of discovery, Brown's impatience prevailed, and, jumping out of the carriage, he desired the lad to stop where he was by the horses, and he would himself go to the house; a command which the driver most joyfully obeyed.

Our traveller groped along the side of the inclosure from which the light glimmered, in order to find some mode of approaching in that direction, and, after proceeding for some space, at length found a stile in the hedge, and a pathway leading into the plantation, which in that place was of great extent. This promised to lead to the light which was the object of his search, and accordingly Brown proceeded in that direction, but soon totally lost sight of it among the trees. The path, which at first seemed broad and well marked by the opening of the wood through which it winded, was now less easily distinguishable, although the whiteness of the snow afforded some reflected light to assist his search. Directing himself as much as possible through the more open parts of the wood, he proceeded almost a mile without either recovering a view of the light or seeing anything resembling a habitation. Still, however, he thought it best to persevere in that direction. It must surely have been a light in the hut of a forester, for it shone too steadily to be the glimmer of an ignis fatuus. The ground at length became broken and declined rapidly, and, although Brown conceived he still moved along what had once at least been a pathway, it was now very unequal, and the snow concealing those breaches and inequalities, the traveller had one or two falls in consequence. He began now to think of turning back, especially as the falling snow, which his impatience had hitherto prevented his attending to, was coming on thicker and faster.

Willing, however, to make a last effort, he still advanced a little way, when to his great delight he beheld the light opposite at no great distance, and apparently upon a level with him. He quickly found that this last appearance was deception, for the ground continued so rapidly to sink as made it obvious there was a deep dell, or ravine of some kind, between him and the object of his search. Taking every precaution to preserve his footing, he continued to descend until he reached the bottom of a very steep and narrow glen, through which winded a small rivulet, whose course was then almost choked with snow. He now found himself embarrassed among the ruins of cottages, whose black gables, rendered more distinguishable by the contrast with the whitened surface from which they rose, were still standing; the side-walls had long since given way to time, and, piled in shapeless heaps and covered with snow, offered frequent and embarrassing obstacles to our traveller's progress. Still, however, he persevered, crossed the rivulet, not without some trouble, and at length, by exertions which became both painful and perilous, ascended its opposite and very rugged bank, until he came on a level with the building from which the gleam proceeded.

It was difficult, especially by so imperfect a light, to discover the nature of this edifice; but it seemed a square building of small size, the upper part of which was totally ruinous. It had, perhaps, been the abode in former times of some lesser proprietor, or a place of strength and concealment, in case of need, for one of greater importance. But only the lower vault remained, the arch of which formed the roof in the present state of the building. Brown first approached the place from whence the light proceeded, which was a long narrow slit or loop-hole, such as usually are to be found in old castles. Impelled by curiosity to reconnoitre the interior of this strange place before he entered, Brown gazed in at this aperture. A scene of greater desolation could not well be imagined. There was a fire upon the floor, the smoke of which, after circling through the apartment, escaped by a hole broken in the arch above. The walls, seen by this smoky light, had the rude and waste appearance of a ruin of several centuries old at least. A cask or two, with some broken boxes and packages, lay about the place in confusion. But the inmates chiefly occupied Brown's attention. Upon a lair composed of straw, with a blanket stretched over it, lay a figure, so still that, except that it was not dressed in the ordinary habiliments of the grave, Brown would have concluded it to be a corpse. On a steadier view he perceived it was only on the point of becoming so, for he heard one or two of those low, deep, and hard-drawn sighs that precede dissolution when the frame is tenacious of life. A female figure, dressed in a long cloak, sate on a stone by this miserable couch; her elbows rested upon her knees, and her face, averted from the light of an iron lamp beside her, was bent upon that of the dying person. She moistened his mouth from time to time with some liquid, and between whiles sung, in a low monotonous cadence, one of those prayers, or rather spells, which, in some parts of Scotland and the north of England, are used by the vulgar and ignorant to speed the passage of a parting spirit, like the tolling of the bell in Catholic days. She accompanied this dismal sound with a slow rocking motion of her body to and fro, as if to keep time with her song.

The words ran nearly thus:--

*Wasted, weary, wherefore stay,
Wrestling thus with earth and clay?
From the body pass away.
Hark! the mass is singing.*

*From thee doff thy mortal weed,
Mary Mother be thy speed,
Saints to help thee at thy need.
Hark! the knell is ringing.*

*Fear not snow-drift driving fast,
Sleet, or hail, or levin blast.
Soon the shroud shall lap thee fast,
And the sleep be on thee cast
That shall ne'er know waking.*

*Haste thee, haste thee, to be gone,
Earth flits fast, and time draws on.
Gasp thy gasp, and groan thy groan,
Day is near the breaking.*

The songstress paused, and was answered by one or two deep and hollow groans, that seemed to proceed from the very agony of the mortal strife. 'It will not be,' she muttered to herself; 'he cannot pass away with that on his mind, it tethers him here--'

*Heaven cannot abide it,
Earth refuses to hide it.*

[Footnote: See Note 6.]

I must open the door'; and, rising, she faced towards the door of the apartment, observing heedfully not to turn back her head, and, withdrawing a bolt or two (for, notwithstanding the miserable appearance of the place, the door was cautiously secured), she lifted the latch, saying,

Open lock, end strife, Come death, and pass life.

Brown, who had by this time moved from his post, stood before her as she opened the door. She stepped back a pace, and he entered, instantly recognising, but with no comfortable sensation, the same gipsy woman whom he had met in Bewcastle. She also knew him at once, and her attitude, figure, and the anxiety of her countenance, assumed the appearance of the well-disposed ogress of a fairy tale, warning a stranger not to enter the dangerous castle of her husband. The first words she spoke (holding up her hands in a reproving manner) were, 'Said I not to ye, Make not, meddle not? Beware of the redding straik! [Footnote: The redding straik, namely, a blow received by a peacemaker who interferes betwixt two combatants, to red or separate them, is proverbially said to be the most dangerous blow a man can receive.] You are come to no house o' fair-strae death.' So saying, she raised the lamp and turned its light on the dying man, whose rude and harsh features were now convulsed with the last agony. A roll of linen about his head was stained with blood, which had soaked also through the blankets and the straw. It was, indeed, under no natural disease that the wretch was suffering. Brown started back from this horrible object, and, turning to the gipsy, exclaimed, 'Wretched woman, who has done this?'

'They that were permitted,' answered Meg Merrilies, while she scanned with a close and keen glance the features of the expiring man. 'He has had a sair struggle; but it's passing. I kenn'd he would pass when you came in. That was the death-ruckle; he's dead.'

Sounds were now heard at a distance, as of voices. 'They are coming,' said she to Brown; 'you are a dead man if ye had as mony lives as hairs.' Brown eagerly looked round for some weapon of defence. There was none near. He then rushed to the door with the intention of plunging among the trees, and making his escape by flight from what he now esteemed a den of murderers, but Merrilies held him with a masculine grasp. 'Here,' she said, 'here, be still and you are safe; stir not, whatever you see or hear, and nothing shall befall you.'

Brown, in these desperate circumstances, remembered this woman's intimation formerly, and thought he had no chance of safety but in obeying her. She caused him to couch down among a parcel of straw on the opposite side of the apartment from the corpse, covered him carefully, and flung over him two or three old sacks which lay about the place. Anxious to observe what was to happen, Brown arranged as softly as he could the means of peeping from under the coverings by which he was hidden, and awaited with a throbbing heart the issue of this strange and most unpleasant adventure. The old gipsy in the meantime set about arranging the dead body, composing its limbs, and straightening the arms by its side. 'Best to do this,' she muttered, 'ere he stiffen.' She placed on the dead man's breast a trencher, with salt sprinkled upon it, set one candle at the head and another at the feet of the body, and lighted both. Then she resumed her song, and awaited the approach of those whose voices had been heard without.

Brown was a soldier, and a brave one; but he was also a man, and at this moment his fears mastered his courage so completely that the cold drops burst out from every pore. The idea of being dragged out of his miserable concealment by wretches whose trade was that of midnight murder, without weapons or the slightest means of defence, except entreaties, which would be only their sport, and cries for help, which could never reach other ear than their own; his safety entrusted to the precarious compassion of a being associated with these felons, and whose trade of rapine and imposture must have hardened her against every human feeling--the bitterness of his emotions almost choked him. He endeavoured to read in her withered and dark countenance, as the lamp threw its light upon her features, something that promised those feelings of compassion which females, even in their most degraded state, can seldom altogether smother. There was no such touch of humanity about this woman. The interest, whatever it was, that determined her in his favour arose not from the impulse of compassion, but from some internal, and probably capricious, association of feelings, to which he had no clue. It rested, perhaps, on a fancied likeness, such as Lady Macbeth found to her father in the sleeping monarch. Such were the reflections that passed in rapid succession through Brown's mind as he gazed from his hiding-place upon this extraordinary personage. Meantime the gang did not yet approach, and he was almost prompted to resume his original intention of attempting an escape from the hut, and cursed internally his own irresolution, which had consented to his being cooped up where he had neither room for resistance nor flight.

Meg Merrilies seemed equally on the watch. She bent her ear to every sound that whistled round the old walls. Then she turned again to the dead body, and found something new to arrange or alter in its position. 'He's a bonny corpse,' she muttered to herself, 'and weel worth the streaking.' And in this dismal occupation she appeared to feel a sort of professional pleasure, entering slowly into all the minutiae, as if with the skill and feelings of a connoisseur. A long, dark-coloured sea-cloak, which she dragged out of a corner, was disposed for a pall. The face she left bare, after closing the mouth and eyes, and arranged the capes of the cloak so as to hide the bloody bandages, and give the body, as she muttered, 'a mair decent appearance.'

At once three or four men, equally ruffians in appearance and dress, rushed into the hut. 'Meg, ye limb of Satan, how dare you leave the door open?' was the first salutation of the party.

'And wha ever heard of a door being barred when a man was in the dead-thraw? how d'ye think the spirit was to get awa through bolts and bars like thae?'

'Is he dead, then?' said one who went to the side of the couch to look at the body.

'Ay, ay, dead enough,' said another; 'but here's what shall give him a rousing lykewake.' So saying, he fetched a keg of spirits from a corner, while Meg hastened to display pipes and tobacco. From the activity with which she undertook the task, Brown conceived good hope of her fidelity towards her guest. It was obvious that she wished to engage the ruffians in their debauch, to prevent the discovery which might take place if by accident any of them should approach too nearly the place of Brown's concealment.

CHAPTER XXVIII

*Nor board nor garner own we now,
Nor roof nor latched door,
Nor kind mate, bound, by holy vow,
To bless a good man's store
Noon lulls us in a gloomy den,
And night is grown our day;
Uprouse ye, then, my merry men!
And use it as ye may*

JOANNA BAILLIE.

Brown could now reckon his foes: they were five in number; two of them were very powerful men, who appeared to be either real seamen or strollers who assumed that character; the other three, an old man and two lads, were slighter made, and, from their black hair and dark complexion, seemed to belong to Meg's

tribe. They passed from one to another the cup out of which they drank their spirits. 'Here's to his good voyage!' said one of the seamen, drinking; 'a squally night he's got, however, to drift through the sky in.'

We omit here various execrations with which these honest gentlemen garnished their discourse, retaining only such of their expletives as are least offensive.

'A does not mind wind and weather; 'a has had many a north-easter in his day.'

'He had his last yesterday,' said another gruffly; 'and now old Meg may pray for his last fair wind, as she's often done before.'

'I'll pray for nane o' him,' said Meg, 'nor for you neither, you randy dog. The times are sair altered since I was a kinchen-mort. Men were men then, and fought other in the open field, and there was nae milling in the darkmans. And the gentry had kind hearts, and would have given baith lap and pannel to ony puir gipsy; and there was not one, from Johnnie Faa the upright man to little Christie that was in the panniers, would cloyed a dud from them. But ye are a' altered from the gude auld rules, and no wonder that you scour the cramp-ring and trine to the cheat sae often. Yes, ye are a' altered: you 'll eat the goodman's meat, drink his drink, sleep on the strammel in his barn, and break his house and cut his throat for his pains! There's blood on your hands, too, ye dogs, mair than ever came there by fair righting. See how ye'll die then. Lang it was ere he died; he strove, and strove sair, and could neither die nor live; but you--half the country will see how ye'll grace the woodie.'

The party set up a hoarse laugh at Meg's prophecy.

'What made you come back here, ye auld beldam?' said one of the gipsies; 'could ye not have staid where you were, and spaed fortunes to the Cumberland flats? Bing out and tour, ye auld devil, and see that nobody has scented; that's a' you're good for now.'

'Is that a' I am good for now?' said the indignant matron. 'I was good for mair than that in the great fight between our folk and Patrico Salmon's; if I had not helped you with these very fambles (holding up her hands), Jean Baillie would have frummagem'd you, ye feckless do-little!'

There was here another laugh at the expense of the hero who had received this amazon's assistance.

'Here, mother,' said one of the sailors, 'here's a cup of the right for you, and never mind that bully-huff.'

Meg drank the spirits, and, withdrawing herself from farther conversation, sat down before the spot where Brown lay hid, in such a posture that it would have been difficult for any one to have approached it without her rising. The men, however, showed no disposition to disturb her.

They closed around the fire and held deep consultation together; but the low tone in which they spoke, and the cant language which they used, prevented Brown from understanding much of their conversation. He gathered in general that they expressed great indignation against some individual. 'He shall have his gruel,' said one, and then whispered something very low into the ear of his comrade.

'I'll have nothing to do with that,' said the other.

'Are you turned hen-hearted, Jack?'

'No, by G-d, no more than yourself, but I won't. It was something like that stopped all the trade fifteen or twenty years ago. You have heard of the Loup?'

'I have heard HIM (indicating the corpse by a jerk of his head) tell about that job. G-d, how he used to laugh when he showed us how he fetched him off the perch!'

'Well, but it did up the trade for one while,' said Jack.

'How should that be?' asked the surly villain.

'Why,' replied Jack, 'the people got rusty about it, and would not deal, and they had bought so many brooms that--'

'Well, for all that,' said the other, 'I think we should be down upon the fellow one of these darkmans and let him get it well.'

'But old Meg's asleep now,' said another; 'she grows a driveller, and is afraid of her shadow. She'll sing out, some of these odd-come-shortlies, if you don't look sharp.'

'Never fear,' said the old gipsy man; 'Meg's true-bred; she's the last in the gang that will start; but she has some queer ways, and often cuts queer words.'

With more of this gibberish they continued the conversation, rendering it thus, even to each other, a dark obscure dialect, eked out by significant nods and signs, but never expressing distinctly, or in plain language, the subject on which it turned. At length one of them, observing Meg was still fast asleep, or appeared to be so, desired one of the lads 'to hand in the black Peter, that they might flick it open.' The boy stepped to the door and brought in a portmanteau, which Brown instantly recognised for his own. His thoughts immediately turned to the unfortunate lad he had left with the carriage. Had the ruffians murdered him? was the horrible doubt that crossed his mind. The agony of his attention grew yet keener, and while the villains pulled out and admired the different articles of his clothes and linen, he eagerly listened for some indication that might intimate the fate of the postilion. But the ruffians were too much delighted with their prize, and too much busied in examining its contents, to enter into any detail concerning the manner in which they had acquired it. The portmanteau contained various articles of apparel, a pair of pistols, a leathern case with a few papers, and some money, etc., etc. At any other time it would have provoked Brown excessively to see the unceremonious manner in which the thieves shared his property, and made themselves merry at the expense of the owner. But the moment was too perilous to admit any thoughts but what had immediate reference to self-preservation.

After a sufficient scrutiny into the portmanteau, and an equitable division of its contents, the ruffians applied themselves more closely to the serious occupation of drinking, in which they spent the greater part of the night. Brown was for some time in great hopes that they would drink so deep as to render themselves insensible, when his escape would have been an easy matter. But their dangerous trade required precautions inconsistent with such unlimited indulgence, and they stopped short on this side of absolute intoxication. Three of them at length composed themselves to rest, while the fourth watched. He was relieved in this duty by one of the others after a vigil of two hours. When the second watch had elapsed, the sentinel awakened the whole, who, to Brown's inexpressible relief, began to make some preparations as if for departure, bundling up the various articles which each had appropriated. Still, however, there remained something to be done. Two of them, after some rummaging which not a little alarmed Brown, produced a mattock and shovel; another took a pickaxe from behind the straw on which the dead body was extended. With these implements two of them left the hut, and the remaining three, two of whom were the seamen, very strong men, still remained in garrison.

After the space of about half an hour, one of those who had departed again returned, and whispered the others. They wrapped up the dead body in the sea cloak which had served as a pall, and went out, bearing it along with them. The aged sibyl then arose from her real or feigned slumbers. She first went to the door, as if for the purpose of watching the departure of her late inmates, then returned, and commanded Brown, in a low and stifled voice, to follow her instantly. He obeyed; but, on leaving the hut, he would willingly have repossessed himself of his money, or papers at least, but this she prohibited in the most peremptory manner. It immediately occurred to him that the suspicion of having removed anything of which he might repossess himself would fall upon this woman, by whom in all probability his life had been saved. He therefore immediately desisted from his attempt, contenting himself with seizing a cutlass, which one of the ruffians had flung aside among the straw. On his feet, and possessed of this weapon, he already found himself half delivered from the dangers which beset him. Still, however, he felt stiffened and cramped, both with the cold and by the constrained and unaltered position which he had occupied all night. But, as he followed the gipsy from the door of the hut, the fresh air of the morning and the action of walking restored circulation and activity to his benumbed limbs.

The pale light of a winter's morning was rendered more clear by the snow, which was lying all around, crisped by the influence of a severe frost. Brown cast a hasty glance at the landscape around him, that he might be able again to know the spot. The little tower, of which only a single vault remained, forming the dismal apartment in which he had spent this remarkable night, was perched on the very point of a projecting rock overhanging the rivulet. It was accessible only on one side, and that from the ravine or glen below. On the other three sides the bank was precipitous, so that Brown had on the preceding evening escaped more dangers than one; for, if he had attempted to go round the building, which was once his purpose, he must have been dashed to pieces. The dell was so narrow that the trees met in some places from the opposite sides. They were now loaded with snow instead of leaves, and thus formed a sort of frozen canopy over the rivulet beneath, which was marked by its darker colour, as it soaked its way obscurely through wreaths of snow. In one place, where the glen was a little wider, leaving a small piece of flat ground between the rivulet and the bank, were situated the ruins of the hamlet in which Brown had been involved on the preceding

evening. The ruined gables, the insides of which were japanned with turf-smoke, looked yet blacker contrasted with the patches of snow which had been driven against them by the wind, and with the drifts which lay around them.

Upon this wintry and dismal scene Brown could only at present cast a very hasty glance; for his guide, after pausing an instant as if to permit him to indulge his curiosity, strode hastily before him down the path which led into the glen. He observed, with some feelings of suspicion, that she chose a track already marked by several feet, which he could only suppose were those of the depredators who had spent the night in the vault. A moment's recollection, however, put his suspicions to rest. It was not to be thought that the woman, who might have delivered him up to her gang when in a state totally defenceless, would have suspended her supposed treachery until he was armed and in the open air, and had so many better chances of defence or escape. He therefore followed his guide in confidence and silence. They crossed the small brook at the same place where it previously had been passed by those who had gone before. The footmarks then proceeded through the ruined village, and from thence down the glen, which again narrowed to a ravine, after the small opening in which they were situated. But the gipsy no longer followed the same track; she turned aside, and led the way by a very rugged and uneven path up the bank which overhung the village. Although the snow in many places hid the pathway, and rendered the footing uncertain and unsafe, Meg proceeded with a firm and determined step, which indicated an intimate knowledge of the ground she traversed. At length they gained the top of the bank, though by a passage so steep and intricate that Brown, though convinced it was the same by which he had descended on the night before, was not a little surprised how he had accomplished the task without breaking his neck. Above, the country opened wide and uninclosed for about a mile or two on the one hand, and on the other were thick plantations of considerable extent.

Meg, however, still led the way along the bank of the ravine out of which they had ascended, until she heard beneath the murmur of voices. She then pointed to a deep plantation of trees at some distance. 'The road to Kippletringan,' she said, 'is on the other side of these inclosures. Make the speed ye can; there's mair rests on your life than other folk's. But you have lost all--stay.' She fumbled in an immense pocket, from which she produced a greasy purse--'Many's the awmous your house has gi'en Meg and hers; and she has lived to pay it back in a small degree;' and she placed the purse in his hand.

'The woman is insane,' thought Brown; but it was no time to debate the point, for the sounds he heard in the ravine below probably proceeded from the banditti.

'How shall I repay this money,' he said, 'or how acknowledge the kindness you have done me?'

'I hae twa boons to crave,' answered the sibyl, speaking low and hastily: 'one, that you will never speak of what you have seen this night; the other, that you will not leave this country till you see me again, and that you leave word at the Gordon Arms where you are to be heard of, and when I next call for you, be it in church or market, at wedding or at burial, Sunday or Saturday, mealtime or fasting, that ye leave everything else and come with me.'

'Why, that will do you little good, mother.'

'But 'twill do yoursell muckle, and that's what I'm thinking o'. I am not mad, although I have had enough to make me sae; I am not mad, nor doating, nor drunken. I know what I am asking, and I know it has been the will of God to preserve you in strange dangers, and that I shall be the instrument to set you in your father's seat again. Sae give me your promise, and mind that you owe your life to me this blessed night.'

'There's wildness in her manner, certainly,' thought Brown, 'and yet it is more like the wildness of energy than of madness.'--'Well, mother, since you do ask so useless and trifling a favour, you have my promise. It will at least give me an opportunity to repay your money with additions. You are an uncommon kind of creditor, no doubt, but--'

'Away, away, then!' said she, waving her hand. 'Think not about the goud, it's a' your ain; but remember your promise, and do not dare to follow me or look after me.' So saying, she plunged again into the dell, and descended it with great agility, the icicles and snow-wreaths showering down after her as she disappeared.

Notwithstanding her prohibition, Brown endeavoured to gain some point of the bank from which he might, unseen, gaze down into the glen; and with some difficulty (for it must be conceived that the utmost caution was necessary) he succeeded. The spot which he attained for this purpose was the point of a projecting rock, which rose precipitously from among the trees. By kneeling down among the snow and stretching his head cautiously forward, he could observe what was going on in the bottom of the dell. He saw, as he expected, his companions of the last night, now joined by two or three others. They had cleared away the snow from the foot of the rock and dug a deep pit, which was designed to serve the purpose of a grave. Around this they now stood, and lowered into it something wrapped in a naval cloak, which Brown instantly concluded to be the dead body of the man he had seen expire. They then stood silent for half a minute, as if under some touch of feeling for the loss of their companion. But if they experienced such, they did not long remain under its influence, for all hands went presently to work to fill up the grave; and Brown, perceiving that the task would be soon ended, thought it best to take the gipsy woman's hint and walk as fast as possible until he should gain the shelter of the plantation.

Having arrived under cover of the trees, his first thought was of the gipsy's purse. He had accepted it without hesitation, though with something like a feeling of degradation, arising from the character of the person by whom he was thus accommodated. But it relieved him from a serious though temporary embarrassment. His money, excepting a very few shillings, was in his portmanteau, and that was in possession of Meg's friends. Some time was necessary to write to his agent, or even to apply to his good host at Charlie's Hope, who would gladly have supplied him. In the meantime he resolved to avail himself of Meg's subsidy, confident he should have a speedy opportunity of replacing it with a handsome gratuity. 'It can be but a trifling sum,' he said to himself, 'and I daresay the good lady may have a share of my banknotes to make amends.'

With these reflections he opened the leathern purse, expecting to find at most three or four guineas. But how much was he surprised to discover that it contained, besides a considerable quantity of gold pieces, of different coinages and various countries, the joint amount of which could not be short of a hundred pounds, several valuable rings and ornaments set with jewels, and, as appeared from the slight inspection he had time to give them, of very considerable value.

Brown was equally astonished and embarrassed by the circumstances in which he found himself, possessed, as he now appeared to be, of property to a much greater amount than his own, but which had been obtained in all probability by the same nefarious means through which he had himself been plundered. His first thought was to inquire after the nearest justice of peace, and to place in his hands the treasure of which he had thus unexpectedly become the depositary, telling at the same time his own remarkable story. But a moment's consideration brought several objections to this mode of procedure. In the first place, by observing this course he should break his promise of silence, and might probably by that means involve the safety, perhaps the life, of this woman, who had risked her own to preserve his, and who had voluntarily endowed him with this treasure--a generosity which might thus become the means of her ruin. This was not to be thought of. Besides, he was a stranger, and for a time at least unprovided with means of establishing his own character and credit to the satisfaction of a stupid or obstinate country magistrate. 'I will think over the matter more maturely,' he said; 'perhaps there may be a regiment quartered at the county town, in which case my knowledge of the service and acquaintance with many officers of the army cannot fail to establish my situation and character by evidence which a civil judge could not sufficiently estimate. And then I shall have the commanding officer's assistance in managing matters so as to screen this unhappy madwoman, whose mistake or prejudice has been so fortunate for me. A civil magistrate might think himself obliged to send out warrants for her at once, and the consequence, in case of her being taken, is pretty evident. No, she has been upon honour with me if she were the devil, and I will be equally upon honour with her. She shall have the privilege of a court-martial, where the point of honour can qualify strict law. Besides, I may see her at this place, Kipple--Couple--what did she call it? and then I can make restitution to her, and e'en let the law claim its own when it can secure her. In the meanwhile, however, I cut rather an awkward figure for one who has the honour to bear his Majesty's commission, being little better than the receiver of stolen goods.'

With these reflections, Brown took from the gipsy's treasure three or four guineas, for the purpose of his immediate expenses, and, tying up the rest in the purse which contained them, resolved not again to open it until he could either restore it to her by whom it was given, or put it into the hands of some public functionary. He next thought of the cutlass, and his first impulse was to leave it in the plantation. But, when he considered the risk of meeting with these ruffians, he could not resolve on parting with his arms. His walking-dress, though plain, had so much of a military character as suited not amiss with his having such a weapon. Besides, though the custom of wearing swords by persons out of uniform had been gradually becoming antiquated, it was not yet so totally forgotten as to occasion any

particular remark towards those who chose to adhere to it. Retaining, therefore, his weapon of defence, and placing the purse of the gipsy in a private pocket, our traveller strode gallantly on through the wood in search of the promised highroad.

CHAPTER XXIX

*All school day's friendship childhood innocence'
We Hermia like two artificial gods
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song both in one key
As if our hands our sides, voices and minds
Had been incorporate*

A Midsummer Night's Dream

JULIA MANNERING TO MATILDA MARCHMONT

'How can you upbraid me, my dearest Matilda, with abatement in friendship or fluctuation in affection? Is it possible for me to forget that you are the chosen of my heart, in whose faithful bosom I have deposited every feeling which your poor Julia dares to acknowledge to herself? And you do me equal injustice in upbraiding me with exchanging your friendship for that of Lucy Bertram. I assure you she has not the materials I must seek for in a bosom confidante. She is a charming girl, to be sure, and I like her very much, and I confess our forenoon and evening engagements have left me less time for the exercise of my pen than our proposed regularity of correspondence demands. But she is totally devoid of elegant accomplishments, excepting the knowledge of French and Italian, which she acquired from the most grotesque monster you ever beheld, whom my father has engaged as a kind of librarian, and whom he patronises, I believe, to show his defiance of the world's opinion. Colonel Mannering seems to have formed a determination that nothing shall be considered as ridiculous so long as it appertains to or is connected with him. I remember in India he had picked up somewhere a little mongrel cur, with bandy legs, a long back, and huge flapping ears. Of this uncouth creature he chose to make a favourite, in despite of all taste and opinion; and I remember one instance which he alleged, of what he called Brown's petulance, was, that he had criticised severely the crooked legs and drooping ears of Bingo. On my word, Matilda, I believe he nurses his high opinion of this most awkward of all pedants upon a similar principle. He seats the creature at table, where he pronounces a grace that sounds like the scream of the man in the square that used to cry mackerel, flings his meat down his throat by shovelfuls, like a dustman loading his cart, and apparently without the most distant perception of what he is swallowing, then bleats forth another unnatural set of tones by way of returning thanks, stalks out of the room, and immerses himself among a parcel of huge worm-eaten folios that are as uncouth as himself! I could endure the creature well enough had I anybody to laugh at him along with me; but Lucy Bertram, if I but verge on the border of a jest affecting this same Mr. Sampson (such is the horrid man's horrid name), looks so piteous that it deprives me of all spirit to proceed, and my father knits his brow, flashes fire from his eye, bites his lip, and says something that is extremely rude and uncomfortable to my feelings.

'It was not of this creature, however, that I meant to speak to you, only that, being a good scholar in the modern as well as the ancient languages, he has contrived to make Lucy Bertram mistress of the former, and she has only, I believe, to thank her own good sense, or obstinacy, that the Greek, Latin (and Hebrew, for aught I know), were not added to her acquisitions. And thus she really has a great fund of information, and I assure you I am daily surprised at the power which she seems to possess of amusing herself by recalling and arranging the subjects of her former reading. We read together every morning, and I begin to like Italian much better than when we were teased by that conceited animal Cicipici. This is the way to spell his name, and not Chichipichi; you see I grow a connoisseur.

'But perhaps I like Miss Bertram more for the accomplishments she wants than for the knowledge she possesses. She knows nothing of music whatever, and no more of dancing than is here common to the meanest peasants, who, by the way, dance with great zeal and spirit. So that I am instructor in my turn, and she takes with great gratitude lessons from me upon the harpsichord; and I have even taught her some of La Pique's steps, and you know he thought me a promising scholar.

'In the evening papa often reads, and I assure you he is the best reader of poetry you ever heard; not like that actor who made a kind of jumble between reading and acting,—staring, and bending his brow, and twisting his face, and gesticulating as if he were on the stage and dressed out in all his costume. My father's manner is quite different; it is the reading of a gentleman, who produces effect by feeling, taste, and inflection of voice, not by action or mummery. Lucy Bertram rides remarkably well, and I can now accompany her on horseback, having become emboldened by example. We walk also a good deal in spite of the cold. So, upon the whole, I have not quite so much time for writing as I used to have.

'Besides, my love, I must really use the apology of all stupid correspondents, that I have nothing to say. My hopes, my fears, my anxieties about Brown are of a less interesting cast since I know that he is at liberty and in health. Besides, I must own I think that by this time the gentleman might have given me some intimation what he was doing. Our intercourse may be an imprudent one, but it is not very complimentary to me that Mr. Vanbeest Brown should be the first to discover that such is the case, and to break off in consequence. I can promise him that we might not differ much in opinion should that happen to be his, for I have sometimes thought I have behaved extremely foolishly in that matter. Yet I have so good an opinion of poor Brown, that I cannot but think there is something extraordinary in his silence.

'To return to Lucy Bertram. No, my dearest Matilda, she can never, never rival you in my regard, so that all your affectionate jealousy on that account is without foundation. She is, to be sure, a very pretty, a very sensible, a very affectionate girl, and I think there are few persons to whose consolatory friendship I could have recourse more freely in what are called the real evils of life. But then these so seldom come in one's way, and one wants a friend who will sympathise with distresses of sentiment as well as with actual misfortune. Heaven knows, and you know, my dearest Matilda, that these diseases of the heart require the balm of sympathy and affection as much as the evils of a more obvious and determinate character. Now Lucy Bertram has nothing of this kindly sympathy, nothing at all, my dearest Matilda. Were I sick of a fever, she would sit up night after night to nurse me with the most unrepining patience; but with the fever of the heart, which my Matilda has soothed so often, she has no more sympathy than her old tutor. And yet what provokes me is, that the demure monkey actually has a lover of her own, and that their mutual affection (for mutual I take it to be) has a great deal of complicated and romantic interest. She was once, you must know, a great heiress, but was ruined by the prodigality of her father and the villainy of a horrid man in whom he confided. And one of the handsomest young gentlemen in the country is attached to her; but, as he is heir to a great estate, she discourages his addresses on account of the disproportion of their fortune.

'But with all this moderation, and self-denial, and modesty, and so forth, Lucy is a sly girl. I am sure she loves young Hazlewood, and I am sure he has some guess of that, and would probably bring her to acknowledge it too if my father or she would allow him an opportunity. But you must know the Colonel is always himself in the way to pay Miss Bertram those attentions which afford the best indirect opportunities for a young gentleman in Hazlewood's situation. I would have my good papa take care that he does not himself pay the usual penalty of meddling folks. I assure you, if I were Hazlewood I should look on his compliments, his bowings, his cloakings, his shawlings, and his handings with some little suspicion; and truly I think Hazlewood does so too at some odd times. Then imagine what a silly figure your poor Julia makes on such occasions! Here is my father making the agreeable to my friend; there is young Hazlewood watching every word of her

lips, and every motion of her eye; and I have not the poor satisfaction of interesting a human being, not even the exotic monster of a parson, for even he sits with his mouth open, and his huge round goggling eyes fixed like those of a statue, admiring Mess Baartram!

'All this makes me sometimes a little nervous, and sometimes a little mischievous. I was so provoked at my father and the lovers the other day for turning me completely out of their thoughts and society, that I began an attack upon Hazlewood, from which it was impossible for him, in common civility, to escape. He insensibly became warm in his defence,--I assure you, Matilda, he is a very clever as well as a very handsome young man, and I don't think I ever remember having seen him to the same advantage,--when, behold, in the midst of our lively conversation, a very soft sigh from Miss Lucy reached my not ungratified ears. I was greatly too generous to prosecute my victory any farther, even if I had not been afraid of papa. Luckily for me, he had at that moment got into a long description of the peculiar notions and manners of a certain tribe of Indians who live far up the country, and was illustrating them by making drawings on Miss Bertram's work-patterns, three of which he utterly damaged by introducing among the intricacies of the pattern his specimens of Oriental costume. But I believe she thought as little of her own gown at the moment as of the Indian turbands and cummerbands. However, it was quite as well for me that he did not see all the merit of my little manoeuvre, for he is as sharp-sighted as a hawk, and a sworn enemy to the slightest shade of coquetry.

'Well, Matilda, Hazlewood heard this same half-audible sigh, and instantly repented his temporary attentions to such an unworthy object as your Julia, and, with a very comical expression of consciousness, drew near to Lucy's work-table. He made some trifling observation, and her reply was one in which nothing but an ear as acute as that of a lover, or a curious observer like myself, could have distinguished anything more cold and dry than usual. But it conveyed reproof to the self-accusing hero, and he stood abashed accordingly. You will admit that I was called upon in generosity to act as mediator. So I mingled in the conversation, in the quiet tone of an unobserving and uninterested third party, led them into their former habits of easy chat, and, after having served awhile as the channel of communication through which they chose to address each other, set them down to a pensive game at chess, and very dutifully went to tease papa, who was still busied with his drawings. The chess-players, you must observe, were placed near the chimney, beside a little work-table, which held the board and men, the Colonel at some distance, with lights upon a library table; for it is a large old-fashioned room, with several recesses, and hung with grim tapestry, representing what it might have puzzled the artist himself to explain.

"Is chess a very interesting game, papa?"

"I am told so," without honouring me with much of his notice.

"I should think so, from the attention Mr. Hazlewood and Lucy are bestowing on it."

'He raised his head hastily and held his pencil suspended for an instant. Apparently he saw nothing that excited his suspicions, for he was resuming the folds of a Mahratta's turban in tranquillity when I interrupted him with--"How old is Miss Bertram, sir?"

"How should I know, Miss? About your own age, I suppose."

"Older, I should think, sir. You are always telling me how much more decorously she goes through all the honours of the tea-table. Lord, papa, what if you should give her a right to preside once and for ever!"

"Julia, my dear," returned papa, "you are either a fool outright or you are more disposed to make mischief than I have yet believed you."

"Oh, my dear sir! put your best construction upon it; I would not be thought a fool for all the world."

"Then why do you talk like one?" said my father.

"Lord, sir, I am sure there is nothing so foolish in what I said just now. Everybody knows you are a very handsome man" (a smile was just visible), "that is, for your time of life" (the dawn was overcast), "which is far from being advanced, and I am sure I don't know why you should not please yourself, if you have a mind. I am sensible I am but a thoughtless girl, and if a graver companion could render you more happy--"

'There was a mixture of displeasure and grave affection in the manner in which my father took my hand, that was a severe reproof to me for trifling with his feelings. "Julia," he said, "I bear with much of your petulance because I think I have in some degree deserved it, by neglecting to superintend your education sufficiently closely. Yet I would not have you give it the rein upon a subject so delicate. If you do not respect the feelings of your surviving parent towards the memory of her whom you have lost, attend at least to the sacred claims of misfortune; and observe, that the slightest hint of such a jest reaching Miss Bertram's ears would at once induce her to renounce her present asylum, and go forth, without a protector, into a world she has already felt so unfriendly."

'What could I say to this, Matilda? I only cried heartily, begged pardon, and promised to be a good girl in future. And so here am I neutralised again, for I cannot, in honour or common good-nature, tease poor Lucy by interfering with Hazlewood, although she has so little confidence in me; and neither can I, after this grave appeal, venture again upon such delicate ground with papa. So I burn little rolls of paper, and sketch Turks' heads upon visiting cards with the blackened end--I assure you I succeeded in making a superb Hyder-Ally last night--and I jingle on my unfortunate harpsichord, and begin at the end of a grave book and read it backward. After all, I begin to be very much vexed about Brown's silence. Had he been obliged to leave the country, I am sure he would at least have written to me. Is it possible that my father can have intercepted his letters? But no, that is contrary to all his principles; I don't think he would open a letter addressed to me to-night, to prevent my jumping out of window to-morrow. What an expression I have suffered to escape my pen! I should be ashamed of it, even to you, Matilda, and used in jest. But I need not take much merit for acting as I ought to do. This same Mr. Vanbeest Brown is by no means so very ardent a lover as to hurry the object of his attachment into such inconsiderate steps. He gives one full time to reflect, that must be admitted. However, I will not blame him unheard, nor permit myself to doubt the manly firmness of a character which I have so often extolled to you. Were he capable of doubt, of fear, of the shadow of change, I should have little to regret.

'And why, you will say, when I expect such steady and unalterable constancy from a lover, why should I be anxious about what Hazlewood does, or to whom he offers his attentions? I ask myself the question a hundred times a day, and it only receives the very silly answer that one does not like to be neglected, though one would not encourage a serious infidelity.

'I write all these trifles because you say that they amuse you, and yet I wonder how they should. I remember, in our stolen voyages to the world of fiction, you always admired the grand and the romantic,--tales of knights, dwarfs, giants, and distressed damsels, oathsayers, visions, beckoning ghosts, and bloody hands; whereas I was partial to the involved intrigues of private life, or at farthest to so much only of the supernatural as is conferred by the agency of an Eastern genie or a beneficent fairy. YOU would have loved to shape your course of life over the broad ocean, with its dead calms and howling tempests, its tornadoes, and its billows mountain-high; whereas I should like to trim my little pinnacle to a brisk breeze in some inland lake or tranquil bay, where there was just difficulty of navigation sufficient to give interest and to require skill without any sensible degree of danger. So that, upon the whole, Matilda, I think you should have had my father, with his pride of arms and of ancestry, his chivalrous point of honour, his high talents, and his abstruse and mystic studies. You should have had Lucy Bertram too for your friend, whose fathers, with names which alike defy memory and orthography, ruled over this romantic country, and whose birth took place, as I have been indistinctly informed, under circumstances of deep and peculiar interest. You should have had, too, our Scottish residence, surrounded by mountains, and our lonely walks to haunted ruins. And I should have had, in exchange, the lawns and shrubs, and green-houses and conservatories, of Pine Park, with your good, quiet, indulgent aunt, her chapel in the morning, her nap after dinner, her hand at whist in the evening, not forgetting her fat coach-horses and fatter coachman. Take notice, however, that Brown is not included in this proposed barter of mine; his good-humour, lively conversation, and open gallantry suit my plan of life as well as his athletic form, handsome features, and high spirit would accord with a character of chivalry. So, as we cannot change altogether out and out, I think we must e'en abide as we're.'

PART II

CHAPTER I

I renounce your defiance; if you parley so roughly I'll

*barricade my gates against you. Do you see yon bay window?
Storm, I care not, serving the good Duke of Norfolk*

Merry Devil of Edmonton.

JULIA MANNERING to MATILDA MARCHMONT

'I rise from a sick-bed, my dearest Matilda, to communicate the strange and frightful scenes which have just passed. Alas! how little we ought to jest with futurity! I closed my letter to you in high spirits, with some flippancy remarks on your taste for the romantic and extraordinary in fictitious narrative. How little I expected to have had such events to record in the course of a few days! And to witness scenes of terror, or to contemplate them in description, is as different, my dearest Matilda, as to bend over the brink of a precipice holding by the frail tenure of a half-rooted shrub, or to admire the same precipice as represented in the landscape of Salvator. But I will not anticipate my narrative.

'The first part of my story is frightful enough, though it had nothing to interest my feelings. You must know that this country is particularly favourable to the commerce of a set of desperate men from the Isle of Man, which is nearly opposite. These smugglers are numerous, resolute, and formidable, and have at different times become the dread of the neighbourhood when any one has interfered with their contraband trade. The local magistrates, from timidity or worse motives, have become shy of acting against them, and impunity has rendered them equally daring and desperate. With all this my father, a stranger in the land, and invested with no official authority, had, one would think, nothing to do. But it must be owned that, as he himself expresses it, he was born when Mars was lord of his ascendant, and that strife and bloodshed find him out in circumstances and situations the most retired and pacific.

'About eleven o'clock on last Tuesday morning, while Hazlewood and my father were proposing to walk to a little lake about three miles' distance, for the purpose of shooting wild ducks, and while Lucy and I were busied with arranging our plan of work and study for the day, we were alarmed by the sound of horses' feet advancing very fast up the avenue. The ground was hardened by a severe frost, which made the clatter of the hoofs sound yet louder and sharper. In a moment two or three men, armed, mounted, and each leading a spare horse loaded with packages, appeared on the lawn, and, without keeping upon the road, which makes a small sweep, pushed right across for the door of the house. Their appearance was in the utmost degree hurried and disordered, and they frequently looked back like men who apprehended a close and deadly pursuit. My father and Hazlewood hurried to the front door to demand who they were, and what was their business. They were revenue officers, they stated, who had seized these horses, loaded with contraband articles, at a place about three miles off. But the smugglers had been reinforced, and were now pursuing them with the avowed purpose of recovering the goods, and putting to death the officers who had presumed to do their duty. The men said that, their horses being loaded, and the pursuers gaining ground upon them, they had fled to Woodbourne, conceiving that, as my father had served the King, he would not refuse to protect the servants of government when threatened to be murdered in the discharge of their duty.

'My father, to whom, in his enthusiastic feelings of military loyalty, even a dog would be of importance if he came in the King's name, gave prompt orders for securing the goods in the hall, arming the servants, and defending the house in case it should be necessary. Hazlewood seconded him with great spirit, and even the strange animal they call Sampson stalked out of his den, and seized upon a fowling-piece which my father had laid aside to take what they call a rifle-gun, with which they shoot tigers, etc., in the East. The piece went off in the awkward hands of the poor parson, and very nearly shot one of the excisemen. At this unexpected and involuntary explosion of his weapon, the Dominie (such is his nickname) exclaimed, "Prodigious!" which is his usual ejaculation when astonished. But no power could force the man to part with his discharged piece, so they were content to let him retain it, with the precaution of trusting him with no ammunition. This (excepting the alarm occasioned by the report) escaped my notice at the time, you may easily believe; but, in talking over the scene afterwards, Hazlewood made us very merry with the Dominie's ignorant but zealous valour.

'When my father had got everything into proper order for defence, and his people stationed at the windows with their firearms, he wanted to order us out of danger--into the cellar, I believe--but we could not be prevailed upon to stir. Though terrified to death, I have so much of his own spirit that I would look upon the peril which threatens us rather than hear it rage around me without knowing its nature or its progress. Lucy, looking as pale as a marble statue, and keeping her eyes fixed on Hazlewood, seemed not even to hear the prayers with which he conjured her to leave the front of the house. But in truth, unless the hall-door should be forced, we were in little danger; the windows being almost blocked up with cushions and pillows, and, what the Dominie most lamented, with folio volumes, brought hastily from the library, leaving only spaces through which the defenders might fire upon the assailants.

'My father had now made his dispositions, and we sat in breathless expectation in the darkened apartment, the men remaining all silent upon their posts, in anxious contemplation probably of the approaching danger. My father, who was quite at home in such a scene, walked from one to another and reiterated his orders that no one should presume to fire until he gave the word. Hazlewood, who seemed to catch courage from his eye, acted as his aid-de-camp, and displayed the utmost alertness in bearing his directions from one place to another, and seeing them properly carried into execution. Our force, with the strangers included, might amount to about twelve men.

'At length the silence of this awful period of expectation was broken by a sound which at a distance was like the rushing of a stream of water, but as it approached we distinguished the thick-beating clang of a number of horses advancing very fast. I had arranged a loophole for myself, from which I could see the approach of the enemy. The noise increased and came nearer, and at length thirty horsemen and more rushed at once upon the lawn. You never saw such horrid wretches! Notwithstanding the severity of the season, they were most of them stripped to their shirts and trowsers, with silk handkerchiefs knotted about their heads, and all well armed with carbines, pistols, and cutlasses. I, who am a soldier's daughter, and accustomed to see war from my infancy, was never so terrified in my life as by the savage appearance of these ruffians, their horses reeking with the speed at which they had ridden, and their furious exclamations of rage and disappointment when they saw themselves balked of their prey. They paused, however, when they saw the preparations made to receive them, and appeared to hold a moment's consultation among themselves. At length one of the party, his face blackened with gunpowder by way of disguise, came forward with a white handkerchief on the end of his carbine, and asked to speak with Colonel Mannerling. My father, to my infinite terror, threw open a window near which he was posted, and demanded what he wanted. "We want our goods, which we have been robbed of by these sharks," said the fellow; "and our lieutenant bids me say that, if they are delivered, we'll go off for this bout without clearing scores with the rascals who took them; but if not, we'll burn the house, and have the heart's blood of every one in it,"--a threat which he repeated more than once, graced by a fresh variety of imprecations, and the most horrid denunciations that cruelty could suggest.

"And which is your lieutenant?" said my father in reply.

"That gentleman on the grey horse," said the miscreant, "with the red handkerchief bound about his brow."

"Then be pleased to tell that gentleman that, if he and the scoundrels who are with him do not ride off the lawn this instant, I will fire upon them without ceremony." So saying, my father shut the window and broke short the conference.

'The fellow no sooner regained his troop than, with a loud hurra, or rather a savage yell, they fired a volley against our garrison. The glass of the windows was shattered in every direction, but the precautions already noticed saved the party within from suffering. Three such volleys were fired without a shot being returned from within. My father then observed them getting hatchets and crows, probably to assail the hall-door, and called aloud, "Let none fire but Hazlewood and me; Hazlewood, mark the ambassador." He himself aimed at the man on the grey horse, who fell on receiving his shot. Hazlewood was equally successful. He shot the spokesman, who had dismounted and was advancing with an axe in his hand. Their fall discouraged the rest, who began to turn round their horses; and a few shots fired at them soon sent them off, bearing along with them their slain or wounded companions. We could not observe that they suffered any farther loss. Shortly after their retreat a party of soldiers made their appearance, to my infinite relief. These men were quartered at a village some miles distant, and had marched on the first rumour of the skirmish. A part of them escorted the terrified revenue officers and their seizure to a neighbouring seaport as a place of safety, and at my earnest request two or three files remained with us for that and the following day, for the security of the house from the vengeance of these banditti.

'Such, dearest Matilda, was my first alarm. I must not forget to add that the ruffians left, at a cottage on the roadside, the man whose face was blackened with powder, apparently because he was unable to bear transportation. He died in about half an hour after. On examining the corpse, it proved to be that of a profligate boor in the neighbourhood, a person notorious as a poacher and smuggler. We received many messages of congratulation from the neighbouring families, and it was generally allowed that a few such instances of spirited resistance would greatly check the presumption of these lawless men. My father distributed rewards among his servants, and praised Hazlewood's courage and coolness to the skies. Lucy and I came in for a share of his applause, because we had stood fire with firmness, and had not disturbed him with screams or expostulations. As for the Dominie, my father took an opportunity of begging to exchange snuff-boxes with him. The honest gentleman was much flattered with the proposal, and extolled the beauty of his new snuff-box excessively. "It looked," he said, "as well as if it were real gold from Ophir." Indeed, it would be odd if it should not, being formed in fact of that very metal; but, to do this honest creature justice, I believe the knowledge of its real value would not enhance his sense of my father's kindness, supposing it, as he does, to be pinchbeck gilded. He has had a hard task replacing the folios which were used in the barricade, smoothing out the creases and dog's-ears, and repairing the other disasters they have sustained during their service in the fortification. He brought us some pieces of lead and bullets which these ponderous tomes had intercepted during the action, and which he had extracted with great care; and, were I in spirits, I could give you a comic account of his astonishment at the apathy with which we heard of the wounds and mutilation suffered by Thomas Aquinas or the venerable Chrysostom. But I am not in spirits, and I have yet another and a more interesting incident to communicate. I feel, however, so much fatigued with my present exertion that I cannot resume the pen till to-morrow. I will detain this letter notwithstanding, that you may not feel any anxiety upon account of your own
'JULIA MANNERING.'

CHAPTER II

*Here's a good world!
Knew you of this fair work?*

King John.

JULIA MANNERING to MATILDA MARCHMONT

'I must take up the thread of my story, my dearest Matilda, where I broke off yesterday.

'For two or three days we talked of nothing but our siege and its probable consequences, and dinned into my father's unwilling ears a proposal to go to Edinburgh, or at least to Dumfries, where there is remarkably good society, until the resentment of these outlaws should blow over. He answered with great composure that he had no mind to have his landlord's house and his own property at Woodbourne destroyed; that, with our good leave, he had usually been esteemed competent to taking measures for the safety or protection of his family; that, if he remained quiet at home, he conceived the welcome the villains had received was not of a nature to invite a second visit, but should he show any signs of alarm, it would be the sure way to incur the very risk which we were afraid of. Heartened by his arguments, and by the extreme indifference with which he treated the supposed danger, we began to grow a little bolder, and to walk about as usual. Only the gentlemen were sometimes invited to take their guns when they attended us, and I observed that my father for several nights paid particular attention to having the house properly secured, and required his domestics to keep their arms in readiness in case of necessity.

'But three days ago chanced an occurrence of a nature which alarmed me more by far than the attack of the smugglers.

'I told you there was a small lake at some distance from Woodbourne, where the gentlemen sometimes go to shoot wild-fowl. I happened at breakfast to say I should like to see this place in its present frozen state, occupied by skaters and curlers, as they call those who play a particular sort of game upon the ice. There is snow on the ground, but frozen so hard that I thought Lucy and I might venture to that distance, as the footpath leading there was well beaten by the repair of those who frequented it for pastime. Hazlewood instantly offered to attend us, and we stipulated that he should take his fowling-piece. He laughed a good deal at the idea of going a-shooting in the snow; but, to relieve our tremors, desired that a groom, who acts as gamekeeper occasionally, should follow us with his gun. As for Colonel Mannering, he does not like crowds or sights of any kind where human figures make up the show, unless indeed it were a military review, so he declined the party.

'We set out unusually early, on a fine, frosty, exhilarating morning, and we felt our minds, as well as our nerves, braced by the elasticity of the pure air. Our walk to the lake was delightful, or at least the difficulties were only such as diverted us,—a slippery descent, for instance, or a frozen ditch to cross, which made Hazlewood's assistance absolutely necessary. I don't think Lucy liked her walk the less for these occasional embarrassments.

'The scene upon the lake was beautiful. One side of it is bordered by a steep crag, from which hung a thousand enormous icicles all glittering in the sun; on the other side was a little wood, now exhibiting that fantastic appearance which the pine trees present when their branches are loaded with snow. On the frozen bosom of the lake itself were a multitude of moving figures, some flitting along with the velocity of swallows, some sweeping in the most graceful circles, and others deeply interested in a less active pastime, crowding round the spot where the inhabitants of two rival parishes contended for the prize at curling,—an honour of no small importance, if we were to judge from the anxiety expressed both by the players and bystanders. We walked round the little lake, supported by Hazlewood, who lent us each an arm. He spoke, poor fellow, with great kindness to old and young, and seemed deservedly popular among the assembled crowd. At length we thought of retiring.

'Why do I mention these trivial occurrences? Not, Heaven knows, from the interest I can now attach to them; but because, like a drowning man who catches at a brittle twig, I seize every apology for delaying the subsequent and dreadful part of my narrative. But it must be communicated: I must have the sympathy of at least one friend under this heart-rending calamity.

'We were returning home by a footpath which led through a plantation of firs. Lucy had quitted Hazlewood's arm; it is only the plea of absolute necessity which reconciles her to accept his assistance. I still leaned upon his other arm. Lucy followed us close, and the servant was two or three paces behind us. Such was our position, when at once, and as if he had started out of the earth, Brown stood before us at a short turn of the road! He was very plainly, I might say coarsely, dressed, and his whole appearance had in it something wild and agitated. I screamed between surprise and terror. Hazlewood mistook the nature of my alarm, and, when Brown advanced towards me as if to speak, commanded him haughtily to stand back, and not to alarm the lady. Brown replied, with equal asperity, he had no occasion to take lessons from him how to behave to that or any other lady. I rather believe that Hazlewood, impressed with the idea that he belonged to the band of smugglers, and had some bad purpose in view, heard and understood him imperfectly. He snatched the gun from the servant, who had come up on a line with us, and, pointing the muzzle at Brown, commanded him to stand off at his peril. My screams, for my terror prevented my rinding articulate language, only hastened the catastrophe. Brown, thus menaced, sprung upon Hazlewood, grappled with him, and had nearly succeeded in wrenching the fowling-piece from his grasp, when the gun went off in the struggle, and the contents were lodged in Hazlewood's shoulder, who instantly fell. I saw no more, for the whole scene reeled before my eyes, and I fainted away; but, by Lucy's report, the unhappy perpetrator of this action gazed a moment on the scene before him, until her screams began to alarm the people upon the lake, several of whom now came in sight. He then bounded over a hedge which divided the footpath from the plantation, and has not since been heard of. The servant made no attempt to stop or secure him, and the report he made of the matter to those who came up to us induced them rather to exercise their humanity in recalling me to life, than show their courage by pursuing a desperado, described by the groom as a man of tremendous personal strength, and completely armed.

'Hazlewood was conveyed home, that is, to Woodbourne, in safety; I trust his wound will prove in no respect dangerous, though he suffers much. But to Brown the consequences must be most disastrous. He is already the object of my father's resentment, and he has now incurred danger from the law of the country, as well as from the clamorous vengeance of the father of Hazlewood, who threatens to move heaven and earth against the author of his son's wound. How will he be able

to shroud himself from the vindictive activity of the pursuit? how to defend himself, if taken, against the severity of laws which, I am told, may even affect his life? and how can I find means to warn him of his danger? Then poor Lucy's ill-concealed grief, occasioned by her lover's wound, is another source of distress to me, and everything round me appears to bear witness against that indiscretion which has occasioned this calamity.

'For two days I was very ill indeed. The news that Hazlewood was recovering, and that the person who had shot him was nowhere to be traced, only that for certain he was one of the leaders of the gang of smugglers, gave me some comfort. The suspicion and pursuit being directed towards those people must naturally facilitate Brown's escape, and I trust has ere this ensured it. But patrols of horse and foot traverse the country in all directions, and I am tortured by a thousand confused and unauthenticated rumours of arrests and discoveries.

'Meanwhile my greatest source of comfort is the generous candour of Hazlewood, who persists in declaring that, with whatever intentions the person by whom he was wounded approached our party, he is convinced the gun went off in the struggle by accident, and that the injury he received was undesigned. The groom, on the other hand, maintains that the piece was wrenched out of Hazlewood's hands and deliberately pointed at his body, and Lucy inclines to the same opinion; I do not suspect them of wilful exaggeration, yet such is the fallacy of human testimony, for the unhappy shot was most unquestionably discharged unintentionally. Perhaps it would be the best way to confide the whole secret to Hazlewood; but he is very young, and I feel the utmost repugnance to communicate to him my folly. I once thought of disclosing the mystery to Lucy, and began by asking what she recollected of the person and features of the man whom we had so unfortunately met; but she ran out into such a horrid description of a hedgeruffian, that I was deprived of all courage and disposition to own my attachment to one of such appearance as she attributed to him. I must say Miss Bertram is strangely biassed by her prepossessions, for there are few handsomer men than poor Brown. I had not seen him for a long time, and even in his strange and sudden apparition on this unhappy occasion, and under every disadvantage, his form seems to me, on reflection, improved in grace and his features in expressive dignity. Shall we ever meet again? Who can answer that question? Write to me kindly, my dearest Matilda; but when did you otherwise? Yet, again, write to me soon, and write to me kindly. I am not in a situation to profit by advice or reproof, nor have I my usual spirits to parry them by raillery. I feel the terrors of a child who has in heedless sport put in motion some powerful piece of machinery; and, while he beholds wheels revolving, chains clashing, cylinders rolling around him, is equally astonished at the tremendous powers which his weak agency has called into action, and terrified for the consequences which he is compelled to await, without the possibility of averting them.

'I must not omit to say that my father is very kind and affectionate. The alarm which I have received forms a sufficient apology for my nervous complaints. My hopes are, that Brown has made his escape into the sister kingdom of England, or perhaps to Ireland or the Isle of Man. In either case he may await the issue of Hazlewood's wound with safety and with patience, for the communication of these countries with Scotland, for the purpose of justice, is not (thank Heaven) of an intimate nature. The consequences of his being apprehended would be terrible at this moment. I endeavour to strengthen my mind by arguing against the possibility of such a calamity. Alas! how soon have sorrows and fears, real as well as severe, followed the uniform and tranquil state of existence at which so lately I was disposed to repine! But I will not oppress you any longer with my complaints. Adieu, my dearest Matilda! 'JULIA MANNERING.'

CHAPTER III

*A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with
thine ears. See how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief.
Hark in thine ear: Change places; and, handy-dandy, which
is the justice, which is the thief?*

--King Lear.

Among those who took the most lively interest in endeavouring to discover the person by whom young Charles Hazlewood had been waylaid and wounded was Gilbert Glossin, Esquire, late writer in ----, now Laird of Ellangowan, and one of the worshipful commission of justices of the peace for the county of ----. His motives for exertion on this occasion were manifold; but we presume that our readers, from what they already know of this gentleman, will acquit him of being actuated by any zealous or intemperate love of abstract justice.

The truth was, that this respectable personage felt himself less at ease than he had expected, after his machinations put him in possession of his benefactor's estate. His reflections within doors, where so much occurred to remind him of former times, were not always the self-congratulations of successful stratagem. And when he looked abroad he could not but be sensible that he was excluded from the society of the gentry of the county, to whose rank he conceived he had raised himself. He was not admitted to their clubs, and at meetings of a public nature, from which he could not be altogether excluded, he found himself thwarted and looked upon with coldness and contempt. Both principle and prejudice cooperated in creating this dislike; for the gentlemen of the county despised him for the lowness of his birth, while they hated him for the means by which he had raised his fortune. With the common people his reputation stood still worse. They would neither yield him the territorial appellation of Ellangowan nor the usual compliment of Mr. Glossin: with them he was bare Glossin; and so incredibly was his vanity interested by this trifling circumstance, that he was known to give half-a-crown to a beggar because he had thrice called him Ellangowan in beseeching him for a penny. He therefore felt acutely the general want of respect, and particularly when he contrasted his own character and reception in society with those of Mr. Mac-Morlan, who, in far inferior worldly circumstances, was beloved and respected both by rich and poor, and was slowly but securely laying the foundation of a moderate fortune, with the general good-will and esteem of all who knew him.

Glossin, while he repined internally at what he would fain have called the prejudices and prepossessions of the country, was too wise to make any open complaint. He was sensible his elevation was too recent to be immediately forgotten, and the means by which he had attained it too odious to be soon forgiven. But time, thought he, diminishes wonder and palliates misconduct. With the dexterity, therefore, of one who made his fortune by studying the weak points of human nature, he determined to lie by for opportunities to make himself useful even to those who most disliked him; trusting that his own abilities, the disposition of country gentlemen to get into quarrels, when a lawyer's advice becomes precious, and a thousand other contingencies, of which, with patience and address, he doubted not to be able to avail himself, would soon place him in a more important and respectable light to his neighbours, and perhaps raise him to the eminence sometimes attained by a shrewd, worldly, bustling man of business, when, settled among a generation of country gentlemen, he becomes, in Burns's language, 'The tongue of the trump to them a'.

The attack on Colonel Mannerling's house, followed by the accident of Hazlewood's wound, appeared to Glossin a proper opportunity to impress upon the country at large the service which could be rendered by an active magistrate (for he had been in the commission for some time), well acquainted with the law, and no less so with the haunts and habits of the illicit traders. He had acquired the latter kind of experience by a former close alliance with some of the most desperate smugglers, in consequence of which he had occasionally acted, sometimes as a partner, sometimes as legal adviser, with these persons. But the connexion had been dropped many years; nor, considering how short the race of eminent characters of this description, and the frequent circumstances occur to make them retire from particular scenes of action, had he the least reason to think that his present researches could possibly compromise any old friend who might possess means of retaliation. The having been concerned in these practices abstractedly was a circumstance which, according to his opinion, ought in no respect to interfere with his now using his experience in behalf of the public, or rather to further his own private views. To acquire the good opinion and countenance of

Colonel Mannering would be no small object to a gentleman who was much disposed to escape from Coventry, and to gain the favour of old Hazlewood, who was a leading man in the county, was of more importance still. Lastly, if he should succeed in discovering, apprehending, and convicting the culprits, he would have the satisfaction of mortifying, and in some degree disparaging, Mac-Morlan, to whom, as sheriff-substitute of the county, this sort of investigation properly belonged, and who would certainly suffer in public opinion should the voluntary exertions of Glossin be more successful than his own.

Actuated by motives so stimulating, and well acquainted with the lower retainers of the law, Glossin set every spring in motion to detect and apprehend, if possible, some of the gang who had attacked Woodbourne, and more particularly the individual who had wounded Charles Hazlewood. He promised high rewards, he suggested various schemes, and used his personal interest among his old acquaintances who favoured the trade, urging that they had better make sacrifice of an understrapper or two than incur the odium of having favoured such atrocious proceedings. But for some time all these exertions were in vain. The common people of the country either favoured or feared the smugglers too much to afford any evidence against them. At length this busy magistrate obtained information that a man, having the dress and appearance of the person who had wounded Hazlewood, had lodged on the evening before the rencontre at the Gordon Arms in Kippletringan. Thither Mr. Glossin immediately went, for the purpose of interrogating our old acquaintance Mrs. Mac-Candlish.

The reader may remember that Mr. Glossin did not, according to this good woman's phrase, stand high in her books. She therefore attended his summons to the parlour slowly and reluctantly, and, on entering the room, paid her respects in the coldest possible manner. The dialogue then proceeded as follows:--

'A fine frosty morning, Mrs. Mac-Candlish.'

'Ay, sir; the morning's weel eneugh,' answered the landlady, drily.

'Mrs. Mac-Candlish, I wish to know if the justices are to dine here as usual after the business of the court on Tuesday?'

'I believe--I fancy sae, sir--as usual' (about to leave the room).

'Stay a moment, Mrs. Mac-Candlish; why, you are in a prodigious hurry, my good friend! I have been thinking a club dining here once a month would be a very pleasant thing.'

'Certainly, sir; a club of RESPECTABLE gentlemen.'

'True, true,' said Glossin, 'I mean landed proprietors and gentlemen of weight in the county; and I should like to set such a thing a-going.'

The short dry cough with which Mrs. Mac-Candlish received this proposal by no means indicated any dislike to the overture abstractedly considered, but inferred much doubt how far it would succeed under the auspices of the gentleman by whom it was proposed. It was not a cough negative, but a cough dubious, and as such Glossin felt it; but it was not his cue to take offence.

'Have there been brisk doings on the road, Mrs. Mac-Candlish? Plenty of company, I suppose?'

'Pretty weel, sir,--but I believe I am wanted at the bar.'

'No, no; stop one moment, cannot you, to oblige an old customer? Pray, do you remember a remarkably tall young man who lodged one night in your house last week?'

'Troth, sir, I canna weel say; I never take heed whether my company be lang or short, if they make a lang bill.'

'And if they do not, you can do that for them, eh, Mrs. Mac-Candlish? ha, ha, ha! But this young man that I inquire after was upwards of six feet high, had a dark frock, with metal buttons, light-brown hair unpowdered, blue eyes, and a straight nose, travelled on foot, had no servant or baggage; you surely can remember having seen such a traveller?'

'Indeed, sir,' answered Mrs. Mac-Candlish, bent on baffling his inquiries, 'I canna charge my memory about the matter; there's mair to do in a house like this, I trow, than to look after passengers' hair, or their een, or noses either.'

'Then, Mrs. Mac-Candlish, I must tell you in plain terms that this person is suspected of having been guilty of a crime; and it is in consequence of these suspicions that I, as a magistrate, require this information from you; and if you refuse to answer my questions, I must put you upon your oath.'

'Troth, sir, I am no free to swear; [Footnote: Some of the strict dissenters decline taking an oath before a civil magistrate.] we ay gaed to the Antiburgher meeting. It's very true, in Bailie Mac-Candlish's time (honest man) we keepit the kirk, whilk was most seemly in his station, as having office; but after his being called to a better place than Kippletringan I hae gaen back to worthy Maister Mac-Grainer. And so ye see, sir, I am no clear to swear without speaking to the minister, especially against ony sackless puir young thing that's gaun through the country, stranger and freendless like.'

'I shall relieve your scruples, perhaps, without troubling Mr. Mac-Grainer, when I tell you that this fellow whom I inquire after is the man who shot your young friend Charles Hazlewood.'

'Gudeness! wha could hae thought the like o' that o' him? Na, if it had been for debt, or e'en for a bit tuiizie wi' the gauger, the deil o' Nelly Mac-Candlish's tongue should ever hae wranged him. But if he really shot young Hazlewood--but I canna think it, Mr. Glossin; this will be some o' your skits now. I canna think it o' sae douce a lad; na, na, this is just some o' your auld skits. Ye'll be for having a horning or a caption after him.'

'I see you have no confidence in me, Mrs. Mac-Candlish; but look at these declarations, signed by the persons who saw the crime committed, and judge yourself if the description of the ruffian be not that of your guest.'

He put the papers into her hand, which she perused very carefully, often taking off her spectacles to cast her eyes up to heaven, or perhaps to wipe a tear from them, for young Hazlewood was an especial favourite with the good dame. 'Aweel, aweel,' she said, when she had concluded her examination, 'since it's e'en sae, I gie him up, the villain. But O, we are erring mortals! I never saw a face I liked better, or a lad that was mair douce and canny: I thought he had been some gentleman under trouble. But I gie him up, the villain! To shoot Charles Hazlewood, and before the young ladies, poor innocent things! I gie him up.'

'So you admit, then, that such a person lodged here the night before this vile business?'

'Troth did he, sir, and a' the house were taen wi' him, he was sic a frank, pleasant young man. It wasna for his spending, I'm sure, for he just had a mutton-chop and a mug of ale, and maybe a glass or twa o' wine; and I asked him to drink tea wi' mysell, and didna put that into the bill; and he took nae supper, for he said he was defeat wi' travel a' the night afore. I daresay now it had been on some hellicat errand or other.'

'Did you by any chance learn his name?'

'I wot weel did I,' said the landlady, now as eager to communicate her evidence as formerly desirous to suppress it. 'He tell'd me his name was Brown, and he said it was likely that an auld woman like a gipsy wife might be asking for him. Ay, ay! tell me your company, and I'll tell you wha ye are! O the villain! Aweel, sir, when he gaed away in the morning he paid his bill very honestly, and gae something to the chambermaid nae doubt; for Grizzy has naething frae me, by twa pair o' new shoo ilka year, and maybe a bit compliment at Hansel Monanday--' Here Glossin found it necessary to interfere and bring the good woman back to the point.

'Ou then, he just said, "If there comes such a person to inquire after Mr. Brown, you will say I am gone to look at the skaters on Loch Creeran, as you call it, and I will be back here to dinner." But he never came back, though I expected him sae faithfully that I gae a look to making the friar's chicken mysell, and to the crappitheads too, and that's what I dinna do for ordinary, Mr. Glossin. But little did I think what skating wark he was gaun about--to shoot Mr. Charles, the innocent lamb!'

Mr. Glossin having, like a prudent examiner, suffered his witness to give vent to all her surprise and indignation, now began to inquire whether the suspected person had left any property or papers about the inn.

'Troth, he put a parcel--a sma' parcel--under my charge, and he gave me some siller, and desired me to get him half-a-dozen ruffled sarks, and Peg Pasley's in hands wi' them e'en now; they may serve him to gang up the Lawnmarket [Footnote: The procession of the criminals to the gallows of old took that direction, moving, as the school-boy rhyme had it, Up the Lawnmarket, Down the West Bow, Up the lang ladder, And down the little tow.] in, the scoundrel! Mr. Glossin then demanded to see the packet, but here mine hostess demurred.

'She didna ken--she wad not say but justice should take its course--but when a thing was trusted to ane in her way, doubtless they were responsible; but she suld cry in Deacon Bearcliff, and if Mr. Glossin liked to tak an inventar o' the property, and gie her a receipt before the Deacon--or, what she wad like muckle better, an it could be sealed up and left in Deacon Bearcliff's hands--it wad mak her mind easy. She was for naething but justice on a' sides.'

Mrs. Mac-Candlish's natural sagacity and acquired suspicion being inflexible, Glossin sent for Deacon Bearcliff, to speak 'anent the villain that had shot Mr. Charles Hazlewood.' The Deacon accordingly made his appearance with his wig awry, owing to the hurry with which, at this summons of the Justice, he had exchanged it for the Kilmarnock cap in which he usually attended his customers. Mrs. Mac-Candlish then produced the parcel deposited with her by Brown, in which was found the gipsy's purse. On perceiving the value of the miscellaneous contents, Mrs. Mac-Candlish internally congratulated herself upon the precautions she had taken before delivering them up to Glossin, while he, with an appearance of disinterested candour, was the first to propose they should be properly inventoried, and deposited with Deacon Bearcliff, until they should be sent to the Crown-office. 'He did not,' he observed, 'like to be personally responsible for articles which seemed of considerable value, and had doubtless been acquired by the most nefarious practices.'

He then examined the paper in which the purse had been wrapt up. It was the back of a letter addressed to V. Brown, Esquire, but the rest of the address was torn away. The landlady, now as eager to throw light upon the criminal's escape as she had formerly been desirous of withholding it, for the miscellaneous contents of the purse argued strongly to her mind that all was not right,--Mrs. Mac-Candlish, I say, now gave Glossin to understand that her position and hostler had both seen the stranger upon the ice that day when young Hazlewood was wounded.

Our readers' old acquaintance Jock Jabos was first summoned, and admitted frankly that he had seen and conversed upon the ice that morning with a stranger, who, he understood, had lodged at the Gordon Arms the night before.

'What turn did your conversation take?' said Glossin.

'Turn? ou, we turned nae gate at a', but just keep it straight forward upon the ice like.'

'Well, but what did ye speak about?'

'Ou, he just asked questions like ony ither stranger,' answered the postilion, possessed, as it seemed, with the refractory and uncommunicative spirit which had left his mistress.

'But about what?' said Glossin.

'Ou, just about the folk that was playing at the curling, and about auld Jock Stevenson that was at the cock, and about the leddies, and sic like.'

'What ladies? and what did he ask about them, Jock?' said the interrogator.

'What leddies? Ou, it was Miss Jowlia Mannering and Miss Lucy Bertram, that ye ken fu' weel yoursell, Mr. Glossin; they were walking wi' the young Laird of Hazlewood upon the ice.'

'And what did you tell him about them?' demanded Glossin.

'Tut, we just said that was Miss Lucy Bertram of Ellangowan, that should ance have had a great estate in the country; and that was Miss Jowlia Mannering, that was to be married to young Hazlewood, see as she was hinging on his arm. We just spoke about our country clashes like; he was a very frank man.'

'Well, and what did he say in answer?'

'Ou, he just stared at the young leddies very keen-like, and asked if it was for certain that the marriage was to be between Miss Mannering and young Hazlewood; and I answered him that it was for positive and absolute certain, as I had an undoubted right to say sae; for my third cousin Jean Clavers (she's a relation o' your ain, Mr. Glossin, ye wad ken Jean lang syne?), she's sib to the houskeeper at Woodbourne, and she's tell'd me mair than ance that there was naething could be mair likely.'

'And what did the stranger say when you told him all this?' said Glossin.

'Say?' echoed the postilion, 'he said naething at a'; he just stared at them as they walked round the loch upon the ice, as if he could have eaten them, and he never took his ee aff them, or said another word, or gave another glance at the bonspiel, though there was the finest fun among the curlers ever was seen; and he turned round and gaed aff the loch by the kirkstile through Woodbourne fir-plantings, and we saw nae mair o' him.'

'Only think,' said Mrs. Mac-Candlish, 'what a hard heart he maun hae had, to think o' hurting the poor young gentleman in the very presence of the ledly he was to be married to!'

'O, Mrs. Mac-Candlish,' said Glossin, 'there's been many cases such as that on the record; doubtless he was seeking revenge where it would be deepest and sweetest.'

'God pity us!' said Deacon Bearcliff, 'we're puir frail creatures when left to ourselves! Ay, he forgot wha said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it."'

'Weel, aweel, sirs,' said Jabos, whose hard-headed and uncultivated shrewdness seemed sometimes to start the game when others beat the bush--'weel, weel, ye may be a' mista'en yet; I'll never believe that a man would lay a plan to shoot another wi' his ain gun. Lord help ye, I was the keeper's assistant down at the Isle mysell, and I'll uphau'd it the biggest man in Scotland shouldna take a gun frae me or I had weized the slugs through him, though I'm but sic a little feckless body, fit for naething but the outside o' a saddle and the fore-end o' a poschay; na, na, nae living man wad venture on that. I'll wad my best buckskins, and they were new coft at Kirkcudbright Fair, it's been a chance job after a'. But if ye hae naething mair to say to me, I am thinking I maun gang and see my beasts fed'; and he departed accordingly.

The hostler, who had accompanied him, gave evidence to the same purpose. He and Mrs. Mac-Candlish were then reinterrogated whether Brown had no arms with him on that unhappy morning. 'None,' they said, 'but an ordinary bit cutlass or hanger by his side.'

'Now,' said the Deacon, taking Glossin by the button (for, in considering this intricate subject, he had forgot Glossin's new accession of rank), 'this is but doubtfu' after a', Maister Gilbert; for it was not sae dooms likely that he would go down into battle wi' sic sma' means.'

Glossin extricated himself from the Deacon's grasp and from the discussion, though not with rudeness; for it was his present interest to buy golden opinions from all sorts of people. He inquired the price of tea and sugar, and spoke of providing himself for the year; he gave Mrs. Mac-Candlish directions to have a handsome entertainment in readiness for a party of five friends whom he intended to invite to dine with him at the Gordon Arms next Saturday week; and, lastly, he gave a half-crown to Jock Jabos, whom the hostler had deputed to hold his steed.

'Weel,' said the Deacon to Mrs. Mac-Candlish, as he accepted her offer of a glass of bitters at the bar, 'the deil's no sae ill as he's ca'd. It's pleasant to see a gentleman pay the regard to the business o' the county that Mr. Glossin does.'

'Ay, 'deed is't, Deacon,' answered the landlady; 'and yet I wonder our gentry leave their ain wark to the like o' him. But as lang as siller's current, Deacon, folk maunna look ower nicely at what king's head's on't.'

'I doubt Glossin will prove but shand after a', mistress,' said Jabos, as he passed through the little lobby beside the bar; 'but this is a gude half-crown ony way.'

CHAPTER IV

A man that apprehends death to be no more dreadful but as a drunken sleep, careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality, and

desperately mortal.

--Measure for Measure.

Glossin had made careful minutes of the information derived from these examinations. They threw little light upon the story, so far as he understood its purport; but the better-informed reader has received through means of this investigation an account of Brown's proceedings, between the moment when we left him upon his walk to Kippletringan and the time when, stung by jealousy, he so rashly and unhappily presented himself before Julia Mannering, and well-nigh brought to a fatal termination the quarrel which his appearance occasioned.

Glossin rode slowly back to Ellangowan, pondering on what he had heard, and more and more convinced that the active and successful prosecution of this mysterious business was an opportunity of ingratiating himself with Hazlewood and Mannering to be on no account neglected. Perhaps, also, he felt his professional acuteness interested in bringing it to a successful close. It was, therefore, with great pleasure that, on his return to his house from Kippletringan, he heard his servants announce hastily, 'that Mac-Guffog, the thief-taker, and twa or three concurrents, had a man in hands in the kitchen waiting for his honour.'

He instantly jumped from horseback, and hastened into the house. 'Send my clerk here directly, ye'll find him copying the survey of the estate in the little green parlour. Set things to rights in my study, and wheel the great leathern chair up to the writing-table; set a stool for Mr. Scrow. Scrow (to the clerk, as he entered the presence-chamber), hand down Sir George Mackenzie "On Crimes"; open it at the section "Vis Publica et Privata," and fold down a leaf at the passage "anent the bearing of unlawful weapons." Now lend me a hand off with my muckle-coat, and hang it up in the lobby, and bid them bring up the prisoner; I trow I'll sort him; but stay, first send up Mac-Guffog. Now, Mac-Guffog, where did ye find this chield?'

Mac-Guffog, a stout, bandy-legged fellow, with a neck like a bull, a face like a firebrand, and a most portentous squint of the left eye, began, after various contortions by way of courtesy to the Justice, to tell his story, eking it out by sundry sly nods and knowing winks, which appeared to bespeak an intimate correspondence of ideas between the narrator and his principal auditor. 'Your honour sees I went down to yon place that your honour spoke o', that's kept by her that your honour kens o', by the sea-side. So says she, "What are you wanting here? ye'll be come wi' a broom in your pocket frae Ellangowan?"--So says I, "Deil a broom will come frae there awa, for ye ken," says I, "his honour Ellangowan himsell in former times--"

'Well, well,' said Glossin, 'no occasion to be particular, tell the essentials.'

'Weel, so we sat niffering about some brandy that I said I wanted, till he came in.'

'Who?'

'He!' pointing with his thumb inverted to the kitchen, where the prisoner was in custody. 'So he had his griego wrapped close round him, and I judged he was not dry-handed; so I thought it was best to speak proper, and so he believed I was a Manks man, and I kept ay between him and her, for fear she had whistled. And then we began to drink about, and then I betted he would not drink out a quartern of Hollands without drawing breath, and then he tried it, and just then Slounging Jock and Dick Spur'em came in, and we clinked the darbies on him, took him as quiet as a lamb; and now he's had his bit sleep out, and is as fresh as a May gowan, to answer what your honour likes to speir.' This narrative, delivered with a wonderful quantity of gesture and grimace, received at the conclusion the thanks and praises which the narrator expected.

'Had he no arms?' asked the Justice.

'Ay, ay, they are never without barkers and slashers.'

'Any papers?'

'This bundle,' delivering a dirty pocket-book.

'Go downstairs then, Mac-Guffog, and be in waiting.' The officer left the room.

The clink of irons was immediately afterwards heard upon the stair, and in two or three minutes a man was introduced, handcuffed and fettered. He was thick, brawny, and muscular, and although his shagged and grizzled hair marked an age somewhat advanced, and his stature was rather low, he appeared, nevertheless, a person whom few would have chosen to cope with in personal conflict. His coarse and savage features were still flushed, and his eye still reeled under the influence of the strong potation which had proved the immediate cause of his seizure. But the sleep, though short, which Mac-Guffog had allowed him, and still more a sense of the peril of his situation, had restored to him the full use of his faculties. The worthy judge and the no less estimable captive looked at each other steadily for a long time without speaking. Glossin apparently recognised his prisoner, but seemed at a loss how to proceed with his investigation. At length he broke silence.--'Soh, Captain, this is you? you have been a stranger on this coast for some years.'

'Stranger?' replied the other. 'Strange enough, I think; for hold me der deyvil, if I been ever here before.'

'That won't pass, Mr. Captain.'

'That MUST pass, Mr. Justice, sapperment!'

'And who will you be pleased to call yourself, then, for the present,' said Glossin, 'just until I shall bring some other folks to refresh your memory concerning who you are, or at least who you have been?'

'What bin I? donner and blitzen! I bin Jans Jansen, from Cuxhaven; what sall Ich bin?'

Glossin took from a case which was in the apartment a pair of small pocket pistols, which he loaded with ostentatious care. 'You may retire,' said he to his clerk, 'and carry the people with you, Scrow; but wait in the lobby within call.'

The clerk would have offered some remonstrances to his patron on the danger of remaining alone with such a desperate character, although ironed beyond the possibility of active exertion, but Glossin waved him off impatiently. When he had left the room the Justice took two short turns through the apartment, then drew his chair opposite to the prisoner, so as to confront him fully, placed the pistols before him in readiness, and said in a steady voice, 'You are Dirk Hatteraick of Flushing, are you not?'

The prisoner turned his eye instinctively to the door, as if he apprehended some one was listening. Glossin rose, opened the door, so that from the chair in which his prisoner sate he might satisfy himself there was no eavesdropper within hearing, then shut it, resumed his seat, and repeated his question, 'You are Dirk Hatteraick, formerly of the Yungfrau Haagenslaapen, are you not?'

'Tousand deyvils! and if you know that, why ask me?' said the prisoner.

'Because I am surprised to see you in the very last place where you ought to be, if you regard your safety,' observed Glossin, coolly.

'Der deyvil! no man regards his own safety that speaks so to me!'

'What? unarmed, and in irons! well said, Captain!' replied Glossin, ironically. 'But, Captain, bullying won't do; you'll hardly get out of this country without accounting for a little accident that happened at Warroch Point a few years ago.'

Hatteraick's looks grew black as midnight.

'For my part,' continued Glossin, 'I have no particular wish to be hard upon an old acquaintance; but I must do my duty. I shall send you off to Edinburgh in a post-chaise and four this very day.'

'Poz donner! you would not do that?' said Hatteraick, in a lower and more humbled tone; 'why, you had the matter of half a cargo in bills on Vanbeest and Vanbruggen.'

'It is so long since, Captain Hatteraick,' answered Glossin, superciliously, 'that I really forget how I was recompensed for my trouble.'

'Your trouble? your silence, you mean.'

'It was an affair in the course of business,' said Glossin, 'and I have retired from business for some time.'

'Ay, but I have a notion that I could make you go steady about and try the old course again,' answered Dirk Hatteraick. 'Why, man, hold me der deyvil, but I meant to visit you and tell you something that concerns you.'

'Of the boy?' said Glossin, eagerly.

'Yaw, Mynheer,' replied the Captain, coolly.

'He does not live, does he?'

'As lifelich as you or I,' said Hatteraick.

'Good God! But in India?' exclaimed Glossin.

'No, tousand deyvils, here! on this dirty coast of yours,' rejoined the prisoner.

'But, Hatteraick, this,--that is, if it be true, which I do not believe,--this will ruin us both, for he cannot but remember your neat job; and for me, it will be productive of the worst consequences! It will ruin us both, I tell you.'

'I tell you,' said the seaman, 'it will ruin none but you; for I am done up already, and if I must strap for it, all shall out.'

'Zounds,' said the Justice impatiently, 'what brought you back to this coast like a madman?'

'Why, all the gelt was gone, and the house was shaking, and I thought the job was clayed over and forgotten,' answered the worthy skipper.

'Stay; what can be done?' said Glossin, anxiously. 'I dare not discharge you; but might you not be rescued in the way? Ay sure! a word to Lieutenant Brown, and I would send the people with you by the coast-road.'

'No, no! that won't do. Brown's dead, shot, laid in the locker, man; the devil has the picking of him.'

'Dead? shot? At Woodbourne, I suppose?' replied Glossin.

'Yaw, Mynheer.'

Glossin paused; the sweat broke upon his brow with the agony of his feelings, while the hard-featured miscreant who sat opposite coolly rolled his tobacco in his cheek and squirted the juice into the fire-grate. 'It would be ruin,' said Glossin to himself, 'absolute ruin, if the heir should reappear; and then what might be the consequence of conniving with these men? Yet there is so little time to take measures. Hark you, Hatteraick; I can't set you at liberty; but I can put you where you may set yourself at liberty, I always like to assist an old friend. I shall confine you in the old castle for to-night, and give these people double allowance of grog. MacGuffog will fall in the trap in which he caught you. The stancheons on the window of the strong room, as they call it, are wasted to pieces, and it is not above twelve feet from the level of the ground without, and the snow lies thick.'

'But the darbies,' said Hatteraick, looking upon his fetters.

'Hark ye,' said Glossin, going to a tool chest, and taking out a small file, 'there's a friend for you, and you know the road to the sea by the stairs.' Hatteraick shook his chains in ecstasy, as if he were already at liberty, and strove to extend his fettered hand towards his protector. Glossin laid his finger upon his lips with a cautious glance at the door, and then proceeded in his instructions. 'When you escape, you had better go to the Kaim of Derncleugh.'

'Donner! that howff is blown.'

'The devil! well, then, you may steal my skiff that lies on the beach there, and away. But you must remain snug at the Point of Warroch till I come to see you.'

'The Point of Warroch?' said Hatteraick, his countenance again falling; 'what, in the cave, I suppose? I would rather it were anywhere else; es spuckt da: they say for certain that he walks. But, donner and blitzen! I never shunned him alive, and I won't shun him dead. Strafe mich helle! it shall never be said Dirk Hatteraick feared either dog or devil! So I am to wait there till I see you?'

'Ay, ay,' answered Glossin, 'and now I must call in the men.' He did so accordingly.

'I can make nothing of Captain Jansen, as he calls himself, Mac-Guffog, and it's now too late to bundle him off to the county jail. Is there not a strong room up yonder in the old castle?'

'Ay is there, sir; my uncle the constable ance kept a man there for three days in auld Ellangowan's time. But there was an unco dust about it; it was tried in the Inner House afore the Feifteen.'

'I know all that, but this person will not stay there very long; it's only a makeshift for a night, a mere lock-up house till farther examination. There is a small room through which it opens; you may light a fire for yourselves there, and I 'll send you plenty of stuff to make you comfortable. But be sure you lock the door upon the prisoner; and, hark ye, let him have a fire in the strong room too, the season requires it. Perhaps he'll make a clean breast to-morrow.'

With these instructions, and with a large allowance of food and liquor, the Justice dismissed his party to keep guard for the night in the old castle, under the full hope and belief that they would neither spend the night in watching nor prayer.

There was little fear that Glossin himself should that night sleep over-sound. His situation was perilous in the extreme, for the schemes of a life of villainy seemed at once to be crumbling around and above him. He laid himself to rest, and tossed upon his pillow for a long time in vain. At length he fell asleep, but it was only to dream of his patron, now as he had last seen him, with the paleness of death upon his features, then again transformed into all the vigour and comeliness of youth, approaching to expel him from the mansion-house of his fathers. Then he dreamed that, after wandering long over a wild heath, he came at length to an inn, from which sounded the voice of revelry; and that when he entered the first person he met was Frank Kennedy, all smashed and gory, as he had lain on the beach at Warroch Point, but with a reeking punch-bowl in his hand. Then the scene changed to a dungeon, where he heard Dirk Hatteraick, whom he imagined to be under sentence of death, confessing his crimes to a clergyman. 'After the bloody deed was done,' said the penitent, 'we retreated into a cave close beside, the secret of which was known but to one man in the country; we were debating what to do with the child, and we thought of giving it up to the gipsies, when we heard the cries of the pursuers hallooing to each other. One man alone came straight to our cave, and it was that man who knew the secret; but we made him our friend at the expense of half the value of the goods saved. By his advice we carried off the child to Holland in our consort, which came the following night to take us from the coast. That man was--'

'No, I deny it! it was not I!' said Glossin, in half-uttered accents; and, struggling in his agony to express his denial more distinctly, he awoke.

It was, however, conscience that had prepared this mental phantasmagoria. The truth was that, knowing much better than any other person the haunts of the smugglers, he had, while the others were searching in different directions, gone straight to the cave, even before he had learned the murder of Kennedy, whom he expected to find their prisoner. He came upon them with some idea of mediation, but found them in the midst of their guilty terrors, while the rage which had hurried them on to murder began, with all but Hatteraick, to sink into remorse and fear. Glossin was then indigent and greatly in debt, but he was already possessed of Mr. Bertram's ear, and, aware of the facility of his disposition, he saw no difficulty in enriching himself at his expense, provided the heir-male were removed, in which case the estate became the unlimited property of the weak and prodigal father. Stimulated by present gain and the prospect of contingent advantage, he accepted the bribe which the smugglers offered in their terror, and connived at, or rather encouraged, their intention of carrying away the child of his benefactor who, if left behind, was old enough to have described the scene of blood which he had witnessed. The only palliative which the ingenuity of Glossin could offer to his conscience was, that the temptation was great, and came suddenly upon him, embracing as it were the very advantages on which his mind had so long rested, and promising to relieve him from distresses which must have otherwise speedily overwhelmed him. Besides, he endeavoured to think that self-preservation rendered his conduct necessary. He was, in some degree, in the power of the robbers, and pleaded hard with his conscience that, had he declined their offers, the assistance which he could have called for, though not distant, might not have arrived in time to save him from men who, on less provocation, had just committed murder.

Galled with the anxious forebodings of a guilty conscience, Glossin now arose and looked out upon the night. The scene which we have already described in the third chapter of this story, was now covered with snow, and the brilliant, though waste, whiteness of the land gave to the sea by contrast a dark and livid tinge. A landscape covered with snow, though abstractedly it may be called beautiful, has, both from the association of cold and barrenness and from its comparative infrequency, a wild, strange, and desolate appearance. Objects well known to us in their common state have either disappeared, or are so strangely varied and

disguised that we seem gazing on an unknown world. But it was not with such reflections that the mind of this bad man was occupied. His eye was upon the gigantic and gloomy outlines of the old castle, where, in a flanking tower of enormous size and thickness, glimmered two lights, one from the window of the strong room, where Hatteraick was confined, the other from that of the adjacent apartment, occupied by his keepers. 'Has he made his escape, or will he be able to do so? Have these men watched, who never watched before, in order to complete my ruin? If morning finds him there, he must be committed to prison; Mac-Morlan or some other person will take the matter up; he will be detected, convicted, and will tell all in revenge!'

While these racking thoughts glided rapidly through Glossin's mind, he observed one of the lights obscured, as by an opaque body placed at the window. What a moment of interest! 'He has got clear of his irons! he is working at the stanchions of the window! they are surely quite decayed, they must give way. O God! they have fallen outward, I heard them clink among the stones! the noise cannot fail to wake them. Furies seize his Dutch awkwardness! The light burns free again; they have torn him from the window, and are binding him in the room! No! he had only retired an instant on the alarm of the falling bars; he is at the window again, and the light is quite obscured now; he is getting out!'

A heavy sound, as of a body dropped from a height among the snow, announced that Hatteraick had completed his escape, and shortly after Glossin beheld a dark figure, like a shadow, steal along the whitened beach and reach the spot where the skiff lay. New cause for fear! 'His single strength will be unable to float her,' said Glossin to himself; 'I must go to the rascal's assistance. But no! he has got her off, and now, thank God, her sail is spreading itself against the moon; ay, he has got the breeze now; would to heaven it were a tempest, to sink him to the bottom!'

After this last cordial wish, he continued watching the progress of the boat as it stood away towards the Point of Warroch, until he could no longer distinguish the dusky sail from the gloomy waves over which it glided. Satisfied then that the immediate danger was averted, he retired with somewhat more composure to his guilty pillow.

CHAPTER V

*Why dost not comfort me, and help me out
From this unhallowed and blood-stained hole?*

Titus Andronicus.

On the next morning, great was the alarm and confusion of the officers when they discovered the escape of their prisoner. Mac-Guffog appeared before Glossin with a head perturbed with brandy and fear, and incurred a most severe reprimand for neglect of duty. The resentment of the Justice appeared only to be suspended by his anxiety to recover possession of the prisoner, and the thief-takers, glad to escape from his awful and incensed presence, were sent off in every direction (except the right one) to recover their prisoner, if possible. Glossin particularly recommended a careful search at the Kaim of Derncleugh, which was occasionally occupied under night by vagrants of different descriptions. Having thus dispersed his myrmidons in various directions, he himself hastened by devious paths through the wood of Warroch to his appointed interview with Hatteraick, from whom he hoped to learn at more leisure than last night's conference admitted the circumstances attending the return of the heir of Ellangowan to his native country.

With manoeuvres like those of a fox when he doubles to avoid the pack, Glossin strove to approach the place of appointment in a manner which should leave no distinct track of his course. 'Would to Heaven it would snow,' he said, looking upward, 'and hide these foot-prints. Should one of the officers light upon them, he would run the scent up like a bloodhound and surprise us. I must get down upon the sea-beach, and contrive to creep along beneath the rocks.'

And accordingly he descended from the cliffs with some difficulty, and scrambled along between the rocks and the advancing tide; now looking up to see if his motions were watched from the rocks above him, now casting a jealous glance to mark if any boat appeared upon the sea, from which his course might be discovered.

But even the feelings of selfish apprehension were for a time superseded, as Glossin passed the spot where Kennedy's body had been found. It was marked by the fragment of rock which had been precipitated from the cliff above, either with the body or after it. The mass was now encrusted with small shell-fish, and tasselled with tangle and seaweed; but still its shape and substance were different from those of the other rocks which lay scattered around. His voluntary walks, it will readily be believed, had never led to this spot; so that, finding himself now there for the first time after the terrible catastrophe, the scene at once recurred to his mind with all its accompaniments of horror. He remembered how, like a guilty thing, gliding from the neighbouring place of concealment, he had mingled with eagerness, yet with caution, among the terrified group who surrounded the corpse, dreading lest any one should ask from whence he came. He remembered, too, with what conscious fear he had avoided gazing upon that ghastly spectacle. The wild scream of his patron, 'My bairn! my bairn!' again rang in his ears. 'Good God!' he exclaimed, 'and is all I have gained worth the agony of that moment, and the thousand anxious fears and horrors which have since embittered my life! O how I wish that I lay where that wretched man lies, and that he stood here in life and health! But these regrets are all too late.'

Stifling, therefore, his feelings, he crept forward to the cave, which was so near the spot where the body was found that the smugglers might have heard from their hiding-place the various conjectures of the bystanders concerning the fate of their victim. But nothing could be more completely concealed than the entrance to their asylum. The opening, not larger than that of a fox-earth, lay in the face of the cliff directly behind a large black rock, or rather upright stone, which served at once to conceal it from strangers and as a mark to point out its situation to those who used it as a place of retreat. The space between the stone and the cliff was exceedingly narrow, and, being heaped with sand and other rubbish, the most minute search would not have discovered the mouth of the cavern without removing those substances which the tide had drifted before it. For the purpose of further concealment, it was usual with the contraband traders who frequented this haunt, after they had entered, to stuff the mouth with withered seaweed, loosely piled together as if carried there by the waves. Dirk Hatteraick had not forgotten this precaution.

Glossin, though a bold and hardy man, felt his heart throb and his knees knock together when he prepared to enter this den of secret iniquity, in order to hold conference with a felon, whom he justly accounted one of the most desperate and depraved of men. 'But he has no interest to injure me,' was his consolatory reflection. He examined his pocket-pistols, however, before removing the weeds and entering the cavern, which he did upon hands and knees. The passage, which at first was low and narrow, just admitting entrance to a man in a creeping posture, expanded after a few yards into a high arched vault of considerable width. The bottom, ascending gradually, was covered with the purest sand. Ere Glossin had got upon his feet, the hoarse yet suppressed voice of Hatteraick growled through the recesses of the cave:--

'Hagel und donner! be'st du?'

'Are you in the dark?'

'Dark? der deyvil! ay,' said Dirk Hatteraick; 'where should I have a glim?'

'I have brought light'; and Glossin accordingly produced a tinder-box and lighted a small lantern.

'You must kindle some fire too, for hold mich der deyvil, Ich bin ganz gefrorne!'

'It is a cold place, to be sure,' said Glossin, gathering together some decayed staves of barrels and pieces of wood, which had perhaps lain in the cavern since Hatteraick was there last.

'Cold? Snow-wasser and hagel! it's perdition; I could only keep myself alive by rambling up and down this d--d vault, and thinking about the merry rouses we have had in it.'

The flame then began to blaze brightly, and Hatteraick hung his bronzed visage and expanded his hard and sinewy hands over it, with an avidity resembling that of a famished wretch to whom food is exposed. The light showed his savage and stern features, and the smoke, which in his agony of cold he seemed to endure almost to suffocation, after circling round his head, rose to the dim and rugged roof of the cave, through which it escaped by some secret rents or clefts in the rock; the same doubtless that afforded air to the cavern when the tide was in, at which time the aperture to the sea was filled with water.

'And now I have brought you some breakfast,' said Glossin, producing some cold meat and a flask of spirits. The latter Hatteraick eagerly seized upon and applied to his mouth; and, after a hearty draught, he exclaimed with great rapture, 'Das schmeckt! That is good, that warms the liver!' Then broke into the fragment of a High-Dutch song,--

*Saufen Bier und Brantewein,
Schmeissen alle die Fenstern ein;
Ich bin liederlich,
Du bist liederlich;
Sind wir nicht liederlich Leute a?*

'Well said, my hearty Captain!' cried Glossin, endeavouring to catch the tone of revelry,--

*'Gin by pailfuls, wine in rivers,
Dash the window-glass to shivers!
For three wild lads were we, brave boys,
And three wild lads were we;
Thou on the land, and I on the sand,
And Jack on the gallows-tree!*

That's it, my bully-boy! Why, you're alive again now! And now let us talk about our business.'

'YOUR business, if you please,' said Hatteraick. 'Hagel and donner! mine was done when I got out of the bilboes.'

'Have patience, my good friend; I'll convince you our interests are just the same.'

Hatteraick gave a short dry cough, and Glossin, after a pause, proceeded.

'How came you to let the boy escape?'

'Why, fluch and blitzen! he was no charge of mine. Lieutenant Brown gave him to his cousin that's in the Middleburgh house of Vanbeest and Vanbruggen, and told him some goose's gazette about his being taken in a skirmish with the land-sharks; he gave him for a footboy. Me let him escape! the bastard kinchin should have walked the plank ere I troubled myself about him.'

'Well, and was he bred a foot-boy then?'

'Nein, nein; the kinchin got about the old man's heart, and he gave him his own name, and bred him up in the office, and then sent him to India; I believe he would have packed him back here, but his nephew told him it would do up the free trade for many a day if the youngster got back to Scotland.'

'Do you think the younker knows much of his own origin now?'

'Deyvil!' replied Hatteraick, 'how should I tell what he knows now? But he remembered something of it long. When he was but ten years old he persuaded another Satan's limb of an English bastard like himself to steal my lugger's khan--boat--what do you call it? to return to his country, as he called it; fire him! Before we could overtake them they had the skiff out of channel as far as the Deurloo; the boat might have been lost.'

'I wish to Heaven she had, with him in her!' ejaculated Glossin.

'Why, I was so angry myself that, sapperment! I did give him a tip over the side; but split him! the comical little devil swam like a duck; so I made him swim astern for a mile to teach him manners, and then took him in when he was sinking. By the knocking Nicholas I he'll plague you, now he's come over the herring-pond! When he was so high he had the spirit of thunder and lightning.'

'How did he get back from India?'

'Why, how should I know? The house there was done up; and that gave us a shake at Middleburgh, I think; so they sent me again to see what could be done among my old acquaintances here, for we held old stories were done away and forgotten. So I had got a pretty trade on foot within the last two trips; but that stupid hounds-foot schelm, Brown, has knocked it on the head again, I suppose, with getting himself shot by the colonel-man.'

'Why were not you with them?'

'Why, you see, sapperment! I fear nothing; but it was too far within land, and I might have been scented.'

'True. But to return to this youngster--'

'Ay, ay, donner and blitzen! HE'S your affair,' said the Captain.

'How do you really know that he is in this country?'

'Why, Gabriel saw him up among the hills.'

'Gabriel! who is he?'

'A fellow from the gipsies, that, about eighteen years since, was pressed on board that d--d fellow Pritchard's sloop-of-war. It was he came off and gave us warning that the Shark was coming round upon us the day Kennedy was done; and he told us how Kennedy had given the information. The gipsies and Kennedy had some quarrel besides. This Gab went to the East Indies in the same ship with your younker, and, sapperment! knew him well, though the other did not remember him. Gab kept out of his eye though, as he had served the States against England, and was a deserter to boot; and he sent us word directly, that we might know of his being here, though it does not concern us a rope's end.'

'So, then, really, and in sober earnest, he is actually in this country, Hatteraick, between friend and friend?' asked Glossin, seriously.

'Wetter and donner, yaw! What do you take me for?'

'For a bloodthirsty, fearless miscreant!' thought Glossin internally; but said aloud, 'And which of your people was it that shot young Hazlewood?'

'Sturmwetter!' said the Captain, 'do ye think we were mad? none of US, man. Gott! the country was too hot for the trade already with that d-d frolic of Brown's, attacking what you call Woodbourne House.'

'Why, I am told,' said Glossin, 'it was Brown who shot Hazlewood?'

'Not our lieutenant, I promise you; for he was laid six feet deep at Derncleugh the day before the thing happened. Tausend deyvils, man! do ye think that he could rise out of the earth to shoot another man?'

A light here began to break upon Glossin's confusion of ideas. 'Did you not say that the younker, as you call him, goes by the name of Brown?'

'Of Brown? yaw; Vanbeest Brown. Old Vanbeest Brown, of our Vanbeest and Vanbruggen, gave him his own name, he did.'

'Then,' said Glossin, rubbing his hands, 'it is he, by Heaven, who has committed this crime!'

'And what have we to do with that?' demanded Hatteraick.

Glossin paused, and, fertile in expedients, hastily ran over his project in his own mind, and then drew near the smuggler with a confidential air. 'You know, my dear Hatteraick, it is our principal business to get rid of this young man?'

'Umph!' answered Dirk Hatteraick.

'Not,' continued Glossin--'not that I would wish any personal harm to him--if--if we can do without. Now, he is liable to be seized upon by justice, both as bearing the same name with your lieutenant, who was engaged in that affair at Woodbourne, and for firing at young Hazlewood with intent to kill or wound.'

'Ay, ay,' said Dirk Hatteraick; 'but what good will that do you? He'll be loose again as soon as he shows himself to carry other colours.'

'True, my dear Dirk; well noticed, my friend Hatteraick! But there is ground enough for a temporary imprisonment till he fetch his proofs from England or elsewhere, my good friend. I understand the law, Captain Hatteraick, and I'll take it upon me, simple Gilbert Glossin of Ellangowan, justice of peace for the county of---, to refuse his bail, if he should offer the best in the country, until he is brought up for a second examination; now where d'ye think I'll incarcerate him?'

'Hagel and wetter! what do I care?'

'Stay, my friend; you do care a great deal. Do you know your goods that were seized and carried to Woodbourne are now lying in the custom-house at Portanferry? (a small fishing-town). Now I will commit this younker--'

'When you have caught him.'

'Ay, ay, when I have caught him; I shall not be long about that. I will commit him to the workhouse, or bridewell, which you know is beside the custom-house.'

'Yaw, the rasp-house; I know it very well.'

'I will take care that the redcoats are dispersed through the country; you land at night with the crew of your lugger, receive your own goods, and carry the younker Brown with you back to Flushing. Won't that do?'

'Ay, carry him to Flushing,' said the Captain, 'or--to America?'

'Ay, ay, my friend.'

'Or--to Jericho?'

'Psha! Wherever you have a mind.'

'Ay, or--pitch him overboard?'

'Nay, I advise no violence.'

'Nein, nein; you leave that to me. Sturmweather! I know you of old. But, hark ye, what am I, Dirk Hatteraick, to be the better of this?'

'Why, is it not your interest as well as mine?' said Glossin; 'besides, I set you free this morning.'

'YOU set me free! Donner and deyvil! I set myself free. Besides, it was all in the way of your profession, and happened a long time ago, ha, ha, ha!'

'Pshaw! pshaw! don't let us jest; I am not against making a handsome compliment; but it's your affair as well as mine.'

'What do you talk of my affair? is it not you that keep the younker's whole estate from him? Dirk Hatteraick never touched a stiver of his rents.'

'Hush! hush! I tell you it shall be a joint business.'

'Why, will ye give me half the kitt?'

'What, half the estate? D'ye mean we should set up house together at Ellangowan, and take the barony ridge about?'

'Sturmweather, no! but you might give me half the value--half the gelt. Live with you? nein. I would have a lusthaus of mine own on the Middleburgh dyke, and a blumengarten like a burgomaster's.'

'Ay, and a wooden lion at the door, and a painted sentinel in the garden, with a pipe in his mouth! But, hark ye, Hatteraick, what will all the tulips and flower-gardens and pleasure-houses in the Netherlands do for you if you are hanged here in Scotland?'

Hatteraick's countenance fell. 'Der deyvil! hanged!'

'Ay, hanged, mein Herr Captain. The devil can scarce save Dirk Hatteraick from being hanged for a murderer and kidnapper if the younker of Ellangowan should settle in this country, and if the gallant Captain chances to be caught here reestablishing his fair trade! And I won't say but, as peace is now so much talked of, their High Mightinesses may not hand him over to oblige their new allies, even if he remained in faderland.'

'Poz hagel, blitzten, and donner! I--I doubt you say true.'

'Not,' said Glossin, perceiving he had made the desired impression, 'not that I am against being civil'; and he slid into Hatteraick's passive hand a bank-note of some value.

'Is this all?' said the smuggler. 'You had the price of half a cargo for winking at our job, and made us do your business too.'

'But, my good friend, you forget: In this case you will recover all your own goods.'

'Ay, at the risk of all our own necks; we could do that without you.'

'I doubt that, Captain Hatteraick,' said Glossin, drily; 'because you would probably find a-dozen redcoats at the custom-house, whom it must be my business, if we agree about this matter, to have removed. Come, come, I will be as liberal as I can, but you should have a conscience.'

'Now strafe mich der deyfel! this provokes me more than all the rest! You rob and you murder, and you want me to rob and murder, and play the silver-cooper, or kidnapper, as you call it, a dozen times over, and then, hagel and windsturm! you speak to me of conscience! Can you think of no fairer way of getting rid of this unlucky lad?'

'No, mein Herr; but as I commit him to your charge--'

'To my charge! to the charge of steel and gunpowder! and--well, if it must be, it must; but you have a tolerably good guess what's like to come of it.'

'O, my dear friend, I trust no degree of severity will be necessary,' replied Glossin.

'Severity!' said the fellow, with a kind of groan, 'I wish you had had my dreams when I first came to this dog-hole, and tried to sleep among the dry seaweed. First, there was that d-d fellow there, with his broken back, sprawling as he did when I hurled the rock over a-top on him, ha, ha! You would have sworn he was lying on the floor where you stand, wriggling like a crushed frog, and then--'

'Nay, my friend,' said Glossin, interrupting him, 'what signifies going over this nonsense? If you are turned chicken-hearted, why, the game's up, that's all; the game's up with us both.'

'Chicken-hearted? no. I have not lived so long upon the account to start at last, neither for devil nor Dutchman.'

'Well, then, take another schnaps; the cold's at your heart still. And now tell me, are any of your old crew with you?'

'Nein; all dead, shot, hanged, drowned, and damned. Brown was the last. All dead but Gipsy Gab, and he would go off the country for a spill of money; or he'll be quiet for his own sake; or old Meg, his aunt, will keep him quiet for hers.'

'Which Meg?'

'Meg Merrilies, the old devil's limb of a gipsy witch.'

'Is she still alive?'

'Yaw.'

'And in this country?'

'And in this country. She was at the Kaim of Derncleugh, at Vanbeest Brown's last wake, as they call it, the other night, with two of my people, and some of her own blasted gipsies.'

'That's another breaker ahead, Captain! Will she not squeak, think ye?'

'Not she! she won't start; she swore by the salmon, [Footnote: The great and inavoidable oath of the strolling tribes.] if we did the kinchin no harm, she would never tell how the gauger got it. Why, man, though I gave her a wipe with my hanger in the heat of the matter, and cut her arm, and though she was so long after in trouble about it up at your borough-town there, der deyvil! old Meg was as true as steel.'

'Why, that's true, as you say,' replied Glossin. 'And yet if she could be carried over to Zealand, or Hamburg, or--or--anywhere else, you know, it were as well.'

Hatteraick jumped upright upon his feet, and looked at Glossin from head to heel. 'I don't see the goat's foot,' he said, 'and yet he must be the very deyvil! But Meg Merrilies is closer yet with the kobold than you are; ay, and I had never such weather as after having drawn her blood. Nein, nein, I 'll meddle with her no more; she's a witch of the fiend, a real deyvil's kind,--but that's her affair. Donner and wetter! I'll neither make nor meddle; that's her work. But for the rest--why, if I thought the trade would not suffer, I would soon rid you of the younker, if you send me word when he's under embargo.'

In brief and under tones the two worthy associates concerted their enterprise, and agreed at which of his haunts Hatteraick should be heard of. The stay of his lugger on the coast was not difficult, as there were no king's vessels there at the time.

CHAPTER VI

You are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bids you. Because we come to do you service, you think we are ruffians.

--Othello.

When Glossin returned home he found, among other letters and papers sent to him, one of considerable importance. It was signed by Mr. Protocol, an attorney in Edinburgh, and, addressing him as the agent for Godfrey Bertram, Esq., late of Ellangowan, and his representatives, acquainted him with the sudden death of Mrs. Margaret Bertram of Singleside, requesting him to inform his clients thereof, in case they should judge it proper to have any person present for their interest at opening the repositories of the deceased. Mr. Glossin perceived at once that the letter-writer was unacquainted with the breach which had taken place between him and his late patron. The estate of the deceased lady should by rights, as he well knew, descend to Lucy Bertram; but it was a thousand to one that the caprice of the old lady might have altered its destination. After running over contingencies and probabilities in his fertile mind, to ascertain what sort of personal advantage might accrue to him from this incident, he could not perceive any mode of availing himself of it, except in so far as it might go to assist his plan of recovering, or rather creating, a character, the want of which he had already experienced, and was likely to feel yet more deeply. 'I must place myself,' he thought, 'on strong ground, that, if anything goes wrong with Dirk Hatteraick's project, I may have prepossessions in my favour at least.' Besides, to do Glossin justice, bad as he was, he might feel some desire to compensate to Miss Bertram in a small degree, and in a case in which his own interest did not interfere with hers, the infinite mischief which he had occasioned to her family. He therefore resolved early the next morning to ride over to Woodbourne.

It was not without hesitation that he took this step, having the natural reluctance to face Colonel Mannering which fraud and villainy have to encounter honour and probity. But he had great confidence in his own savoir faire. His talents were naturally acute, and by no means confined to the line of his profession. He had at different times resided a good deal in England, and his address was free both from country rusticity and professional pedantry; so that he had considerable powers both of address and persuasion, joined to an unshaken effrontery, which he affected to disguise under plainness of manner. Confident, therefore, in himself, he appeared at Woodbourne about ten in the morning, and was admitted as a gentleman come to wait upon Miss Bertram.

He did not announce himself until he was at the door of the breakfast-parlour, when the servant, by his desire, said aloud--'Mr. Glossin, to wait upon Miss Bertram.' Lucy, remembering the last scene of her father's existence, turned as pale as death, and had well-nigh fallen from her chair. Julia Mannering flew to her assistance, and they left the room together. There remained Colonel Mannering, Charles Hazlewood, with his arm in a sling, and the Dominie, whose gaunt visage and wall-eyes assumed a most hostile aspect on recognising Glossin.

That honest gentleman, though somewhat abashed by the effect of his first introduction, advanced with confidence, and hoped he did not intrude upon the ladies. Colonel Mannering, in a very upright and stately manner, observed, that he did not know to what he was to impute the honour of a visit from Mr. Glossin.

'Hem! hem! I took the liberty to wait upon Miss Bertram, Colonel Mannering, on account of a matter of business.'

'If it can be communicated to Mr. Mac-Morlan, her agent, sir, I believe it will be more agreeable to Miss Bertram.'

'I beg pardon, Colonel Mannering,' said Glossin, making a wretched attempt at an easy demeanour; 'you are a man of the world; there are some cases in which it is most prudent for all parties to treat with principals.'

'Then,' replied Mannering, with a repulsive air, 'if Mr. Glossin will take the trouble to state his object in a letter, I will answer that Miss Bertram pays proper attention to it.'

'Certainly,' stammered Glossin; 'but there are cases in which a viva voce conference--Hem! I perceive--I know--Colonel Mannering has adopted some prejudices which may make my visit appear intrusive; but I submit to his good sense, whether he ought to exclude me from a hearing without knowing the purpose of my visit, or of how much consequence it may be to the young lady whom he honours with his protection.'

'Certainly, sir, I have not the least intention to do so,' replied the Colonel. 'I will learn Miss Bertram's pleasure on the subject, and acquaint Mr. Glossin, if he can spare time to wait for her answer.' So saying, he left the room.

Glossin had still remained standing in the midst of the apartment. Colonel Mannering had made not the slightest motion to invite him to sit, and indeed had remained standing himself during their short interview. When he left the room, however, Glossin seized upon a chair, and threw himself into it with an air between embarrassment and effrontery. He felt the silence of his companions disconcerting and oppressive, and resolved to interrupt it.

'A fine day, Mr. Sampson.'

The Dominie answered with something between an acquiescent grunt and an indignant groan.

'You never come down to see your old acquaintance on the Ellangowan property, Mr. Sampson. You would find most of the old stagers still stationary there. I have too much respect for the late family to disturb old residents, even under pretence of improvement. Besides, it's not my way, I don't like it; I believe, Mr. Sampson, Scripture particularly condemns those who oppress the poor, and remove landmarks.'

'Or who devour the substance of orphans,' subjoined the Dominie. 'Anathema, Maranatha!' So saying, he rose, shouldered the folio which he had been perusing, faced to the right about, and marched out of the room with the strides of a grenadier.

Mr. Glossin, no way disconcerted, or at least feeling it necessary not to appear so, turned to young Hazlewood, who was apparently busy with the newspaper.--'Any news, sir?' Hazlewood raised his eyes, looked at him, and pushed the paper towards him, as if to a stranger in a coffee-house, then rose, and was about to leave the room. 'I beg pardon, Mr. Hazlewood, but I can't help wishing you joy of getting so easily over that infernal accident.' This was answered by a sort of inclination of the head, as slight and stiff as could well be imagined. Yet it encouraged our man of law to proceed.--'I can promise you, Mr. Hazlewood, few people have taken the interest in that matter which I have done, both for the sake of the country and on account of my particular respect for your family, which has so high a stake in it; indeed, so very high a stake that, as Mr. Featherhead is 'turning old now, and as there's a talk, since his last stroke, of his taking the Chiltern Hundreds, it might be worth your while to look about you. I speak as a friend, Mr. Hazlewood, and as one who understands the roll; and if in going over it together--'

'I beg pardon, sir, but I have no views in which your assistance could be useful.'

'O, very well, perhaps you are right; it's quite time enough, and I love to see a young gentleman cautious. But I was talking of your wound. I think I have got a clue to that business--I think I have, and if I don't bring the fellow to condign punishment--!'

'I beg your pardon, sir, once more; but your zeal outruns my wishes. I have every reason to think the wound was accidental; certainly it was not premeditated. Against ingratitude and premeditated treachery, should you find any one guilty of them, my resentment will be as warm as your own.' This was Hazlewood's answer.

'Another rebuff,' thought Glossin; 'I must try him upon the other tack.' 'Right, sir; very nobly said! I would have no more mercy on an ungrateful man than I would on a woodcock. And now we talk of sport (this was a sort of diverting of the conversation which Glossin had learned from his former patron), I see you often carry a gun, and I hope you will be soon able to take the field again. I observe you confine yourself always to your own side of the Hazleshaws burn. I hope, my dear sir, you will make no scruple of following your game to the Ellangowan bank; I believe it is rather the best exposure of the two for woodcocks, although both are capital.'

As this offer only excited a cold and constrained bow, Glossin was obliged to remain silent, and was presently afterwards somewhat relieved by the entrance of Colonel Mannering.

'I have detained you some time, I fear, sir,' said he, addressing Glossin; 'I wished to prevail upon Miss Bertram to see you, as, in my opinion, her objections ought to give way to the necessity of hearing in her own person what is stated to be of importance that she should know. But I find that circumstances of recent occurrence, and not easily to be forgotten, have rendered her so utterly repugnant to a personal interview with Mr. Glossin that it would be cruelty to insist upon it; and she has deputed me to receive his commands, or proposal, or, in short, whatever he may wish to say to her.'

'Hem, hem! I am sorry, sir--I am very sorry, Colonel Mannering, that Miss Bertram should suppose--that any prejudice, in short--or idea that anything on my part--' 'Sir,' said the inflexible Colonel, 'where no accusation is made, excuses or explanations are unnecessary. Have you any objection to communicate to me, as Miss Bertram's temporary guardian, the circumstances which you conceive to interest her?'

'None, Colonel Mannering; she could not choose a more respectable friend, or one with whom I, in particular, would more anxiously wish to communicate frankly.'

'Have the goodness to speak to the point, sir, if you please.'

'Why, sir, it is not so easy all at once--but Mr. Hazlewood need not leave the room,--I mean so well to Miss Bertram that I could wish the whole world to hear my part of the conference.'

'My friend Mr. Charles Hazlewood will not probably be anxious, Mr. Glossin, to listen to what cannot concern him. And now, when he has left us alone, let me pray you to be short and explicit in what you have to say. I am a soldier, sir, somewhat impatient of forms and introductions.' So saying, he drew himself up in his chair and waited for Mr. Glossin's communication.

'Be pleased to look at that letter,' said Glossin, putting Protocol's epistle into Mannering's hand, as the shortest way of stating his business.

The Colonel read it and returned it, after pencilling the name of the writer in his memorandum-book. 'This, sir, does not seem to require much discussion. I will see that Miss Bertram's interest is attended to.'

'But, sir,--but, Colonel Mannering,' added Glossin, 'there is another matter which no one can explain but myself. This lady--this Mrs. Margaret Bertram, to my certain knowledge, made a general settlement of her affairs in Miss Lucy Bertram's favour while she lived with my old friend Mr. Bertram at Ellangowan. The Dominie--that was the name by which my deceased friend always called that very respectable man Mr. Sampson--he and I witnessed the deed. And she had full power at that time to make such a settlement, for she was in fee of the estate of Singleside even then, although it was life rented by an elder sister. It was a whimsical settlement of old Singleside's, sir; he pitted the two cats his daughters against each other, ha, ha, ha!'

'Well, sir,' said Mannering, without the slightest smile of sympathy, 'but to the purpose. You say that this lady had power to settle her estate on Miss Bertram, and that she did so?'

'Even so, Colonel,' replied Glossin. 'I think I should understand the law, I have followed it for many years; and, though I have given it up to retire upon a handsome competence, I did not throw away that knowledge which is pronounced better than house and land, and which I take to be the knowledge of the law, since, as our common rhyme has it,

'Tis most excellent,

To win the land that's gone and spent.

No, no, I love the smack of the whip; I have a little, a very little law yet, at the service of my friends.'

Glossin ran on in this manner, thinking he had made a favourable impression on Mannering. The Colonel, indeed, reflected that this might be a most important crisis for Miss Bertram's interest, and resolved that his strong inclination to throw Glossin out at window or at door should not interfere with it. He put a strong curb on his temper, and resolved to listen with patience at least, if without complacency. He therefore let Mr. Glossin get to the end of his self-congratulations, and then asked him if he knew where the deed was.

'I know--that is, I think--I believe I can recover it. In such cases custodiers have sometimes made a charge.'

'We won't differ as to that, sir,' said the Colonel, taking out his pocket-book.

'But, my dear sir, you take me so very short. I said SOME PERSONS MIGHT make such a claim, I mean for payment of the expenses of the deed, trouble in the affair, etc. But I, for my own part, only wish Miss Bertram and her friends to be satisfied that I am acting towards her with honour. There's the paper, sir! It would have been a satisfaction to me to have delivered it into Miss Bertram's own hands, and to have wished her joy of the prospects which it opens. But, since her prejudices on the subject are invincible, it only remains for me to transmit her my best wishes through you, Colonel Mannering, and to express that I shall willingly give my testimony in support of that deed when I shall be called upon. I have the honour to wish you a good morning, sir.'

This parting speech was so well got up, and had so much the tone of conscious integrity unjustly suspected, that even Colonel Mannering was staggered in his bad opinion. He followed him two or three steps, and took leave of him with more politeness (though still cold and formal) than he had paid during his visit. Glossin left the house half pleased with the impression he had made, half mortified by the stern caution and proud reluctance with which he had been received. 'Colonel Mannering might have had more politeness,' he said to himself. 'It is not every man that can bring a good chance of 400 Pounds a year to a penniless girl. Singleside must be up to 400 Pounds a year now; there's Reilageganbeg, Gillifidget, Loverless, Liealone, and the Spinster's Knowe--good 400 Pounds a year. Some people might have made their own of it in my place; and yet, to own the truth, after much consideration, I don't see how that is possible.'

Glossin was no sooner mounted and gone than the Colonel despatched a groom for Mr. Mac-Morlan, and, putting the deed into his hand, requested to know if it was likely to be available to his friend Lucy Bertram. Mac-Morlan perused it with eyes that sparkled with delight, snapped his fingers repeatedly, and at length exclaimed, 'Available! it's as tight as a glove; naeboddy could make better wark than Glossin, when he didna let down a steek on purpose. But (his countenance falling) the auld b---, that I should say so, might alter at pleasure!'

'Ah! And how shall we know whether she has done so?'

'Somebody must attend on Miss Bertram's part when the repositories of the deceased are opened.'

'Can you go?' said the Colonel.

'I fear I cannot,' replied Mac-Morlan; 'I must attend a jury trial before our court.'

'Then I will go myself,' said the Colonel; 'I'll set out to-morrow. Sampson shall go with me; he is witness to this settlement. But I shall want a legal adviser.'

'The gentleman that was lately sheriff of this county is high in reputation as a barrister; I will give you a card of introduction to him.'

'What I like about you, Mr. Mac-Morlan,' said the Colonel, 'is that you always come straight to the point. Let me have it instantly. Shall we tell Miss Lucy her chance of becoming an heiress?'

'Surely, because you must have some powers from her, which I will instantly draw out. Besides, I will be caution for her prudence, and that she will consider it only in the light of a chance.'

Mac-Morlan judged well. It could not be discerned from Miss Bertram's manner that she founded exulting hopes upon the prospect thus unexpectedly opening before her. She did, indeed, in the course of the evening ask Mr. Mac-Morlan, as if by accident, what might be the annual income of the Hazlewood property; but shall we therefore aver for certain that she was considering whether an heiress of four hundred a year might be a suitable match for the young Laird?

CHAPTER VII

Give me a cup of sack, to make mine eyes look red. For I must speak in passion, and I will do it in King Cambyse's vein.

--Henry IV, part I.

Mannerling, with Sampson for his companion, lost no time in his journey to Edinburgh. They travelled in the Colonel's post-chariot, who, knowing his companion's habits of abstraction, did not choose to lose him out of his own sight, far less to trust him on horseback, where, in all probability, a knavish stable-boy might with little address have contrived to mount him with his face to the tail. Accordingly, with the aid of his valet, who attended on horseback, he contrived to bring Mr. Sampson safe to an inn in Edinburgh--for hotels in those days there were none--without any other accident than arose from his straying twice upon the road. On one occasion he was recovered by Barnes, who understood his humour, when, after engaging in close colloquy with the schoolmaster of Moffat respecting a disputed quantity in Horace's 7th Ode, Book II, the dispute led on to another controversy concerning the exact meaning of the word malobathro in that lyric effusion. His second escapade was made for the purpose of visiting the field of Rullion Green, which was dear to his Presbyterian predilections. Having got out of the carriage for an instant, he saw the sepulchral monument of the slain at the distance of about a mile, and was arrested by Barnes in his progress up the Pentland Hills, having on both occasions forgot his friend, patron, and fellow-traveller as completely as if he had been in the East Indies. On being reminded that Colonel Mannerling was waiting for him, he uttered his usual ejaculation of 'Prodigious! I was oblivious,' and then strode back to his post. Barnes was surprised at his master's patience on both occasions, knowing by experience how little he brooked neglect or delay; but the Dominie was in every respect a privileged person. His patron and he were never for a moment in each other's way, and it seemed obvious that they were formed to be companions through life. If Mannerling wanted a particular book, the Dominie could bring it; if he wished to have accounts summed up or checked, his assistance was equally ready; if he desired to recall a particular passage in the classics, he could have recourse to the Dominie as to a dictionary; and all the while this walking statue was neither presuming when noticed nor sulky when left to himself. To a proud, shy, reserved man, and such in many respects was Mannerling, this sort of living catalogue and animated automaton had all the advantages of a literary dumb-waiter.

As soon as they arrived in Edinburgh, and were established at the George Inn, near Bristo Port, then kept by old Cockburn (I love to be particular), the Colonel desired the waiter to procure him a guide to Mr. Pleydell's, the advocate, for whom he had a letter of introduction from Mr. Mac-Morlan. He then commanded Barnes to have an eye to the Dominie, and walked forth with a chairman, who was to usher him to the man of law.

The period was near the end of the American war. The desire of room, of air, and of decent accommodation had not as yet made very much progress in the capital of Scotland. Some efforts had been made on the south side of the town towards building houses WITHIN THEMSELVES, as they are emphatically termed; and the New Town on the north, since so much extended, was then just commenced. But the great bulk of the better classes, and particularly those connected with the law, still lived in flats or dungeons of the Old Town. The manners also of some of the veterans of the law had not admitted innovation. One or two eminent lawyers still saw their clients in taverns, as was the general custom fifty years before; and although their habits were already considered as old-fashioned by the younger barristers, yet the custom of mixing wine and revelry with serious business was still maintained by those senior counsellors who loved the old road, either because it was such or because they had got too well used to it to travel any other. Among those praisers of the past time, who with ostentatious obstinacy affected the manners of a former generation, was this same Paulus Pleydell, Esq., otherwise a good scholar, an excellent lawyer, and a worthy man.

Under the guidance of his trusty attendant, Colonel Mannerling, after threading a dark lane or two, reached the High Street, then clanging with the voices of oyster-women and the bells of pye-men; for it had, as his guide assured him, just' chappit eight upon the Tron.' It was long since Mannerling had been in the street of a crowded metropolis, which, with its noise and clamour, its sounds of trade, of revelry, and of license, its variety of lights, and the eternally changing bustle of its hundred groups, offers, by night especially, a spectacle which, though composed of the most vulgar materials when they are separately considered, has, when they are combined, a striking and powerful effect on the imagination. The extraordinary height of the houses was marked by lights, which, glimmering irregularly along their front, ascended so high among the attics that they seemed at length to twinkle in the middle sky. This coup d'aeil, which still subsists in a certain degree, was then more imposing, owing to the uninterrupted range of buildings on each side, which, broken only at the space where the North Bridge joins the main street, formed a superb and uniform place, extending from the front of the Lucken-booths to the head of the Canongate, and corresponding in breadth and length to the uncommon height of the buildings on either side.

Mannerling had not much time to look and to admire. His conductor hurried him across this striking scene, and suddenly dived with him into a very steep paved lane. Turning to the right, they entered a scale staircase, as it is called, the state of which, so far as it could be judged of by one of his senses, annoyed Mannerling's delicacy not a little. When they had ascended cautiously to a considerable height, they heard a heavy rap at a door, still two stories above them. The door opened, and immediately ensued the sharp and worrying bark of a dog, the squalling of a woman, the screams of an assaulted cat, and the hoarse voice of a man, who cried in a most imperative tone, 'Will ye, Mustard? Will ye? down, sir, down!'

'Lord preserve us!' said the female voice, 'an he had worried our cat, Mr. Pleydell would ne'er hae forgien me!'

'Aweel, my doo, the cat's no a prin the waur. So he's no in, ye say?'

'Na, Mr. Pleydell's ne'er in the house on Saturday at e'en,' answered the female voice.

'And the morn's Sabbath too,' said the querist. 'I dinna ken what will be done.'

By this time Mannerling appeared, and found a tall, strong countryman, clad in a coat of pepper-and-salt-coloured mixture, with huge metal buttons, a glazed hat and boots, and a large horsewhip beneath his arm, in colloquy with a slipshod damsel, who had in one hand the lock of the door, and in the other a pail of whiting, or camstane, as it is called, mixed with water--a circumstance which indicates Saturday night in Edinburgh.

'So Mr. Pleydell is not at home, my good girl?' said Mannerling.

'Ay, sir, he's at hame, but he's no in the house; he's aye out on Saturday at e'en.'

'But, my good girl, I am a stranger, and my business express. Will you tell me where I can find him?'

'His honour,' said the chairman, 'will be at Clerihugh's about this time. Hersell could hae tell'd ye that, but she thought ye wanted to see his house.'

'Well, then, show me to this tavern. I suppose he will see me, as I come on business of some consequence?'

'I dinna ken, sir,' said the girl; 'he disna like to be disturbed on Saturdays wi' business; but he's aye civil to strangers.'

'I'll gang to the tavern too,' said our friend Dinmont, 'for I am a stranger also, and on business e'en sic like.'

'Na,' said the handmaiden, 'an he see the gentleman, he'll see the simple body too; but, Lord's sake, dinna say it was me sent ye there!'

'Atweel, I am a simple body, that's true, hinny, but I am no come to steal ony o' his skeel for naething,' said the farmer in his honest pride, and strutted away downstairs, followed by Mannering and the cadie. Mannering could not help admiring the determined stride with which the stranger who preceded them divided the press, shouldering from him, by the mere weight and impetus of his motion, both drunk and sober passengers. 'He'll be a Teviotdale tup tat ane,' said the chairman, 'tat's for keeping ta crown o' ta causeway tat gate; he'll no gang far or he'll get somebody to bell ta cat wi' him.'

His shrewd augury, however, was not fulfilled. Those who recoiled from the colossal weight of Dinmont, on looking up at his size and strength, apparently judged him too heavy metal to be rashly encountered, and suffered him to pursue his course unchallenged. Following in the wake of this first-rate, Mannering proceeded till the farmer made a pause, and, looking back to the chairman, said, 'I'm thinking this will be the close, friend.'

'Ay, ay,' replied Donald, 'tat's ta close.'

Dinmont descended confidently, then turned into a dark alley, then up a dark stair, and then into an open door. While he was whistling shrilly for the waiter, as if he had been one of his collie dogs, Mannering looked round him, and could hardly conceive how a gentleman of a liberal profession and good society should choose such a scene for social indulgence. Besides the miserable entrance, the house itself seemed paltry and half ruinous. The passage in which they stood had a window to the close, which admitted a little light during the daytime, and a villainous compound of smells at all times, but more especially towards evening. Corresponding to this window was a borrowed light on the other side of the passage, looking into the kitchen, which had no direct communication with the free air, but received in the daytime, at second hand, such straggling and obscure light as found its way from the lane through the window opposite. At present the interior of the kitchen was visible by its own huge fires--a sort of Pandemonium, where men and women, half undressed, were busied in baking, broiling, roasting oysters, and preparing devils on the gridiron; the mistress of the place, with her shoes slipshod, and her hair straggling like that of Megaera from under a round-eared cap, toiling, scolding, receiving orders, giving them, and obeying them all at once, seemed the presiding enchantress of that gloomy and fiery region.

Loud and repeated bursts of laughter from different quarters of the house proved that her labours were acceptable, and not unrewarded by a generous public. With some difficulty a waiter was prevailed upon to show Colonel Mannering and Dinmont the room where their friend learned in the law held his hebdomadal carousals. The scene which it exhibited, and particularly the attitude of the counsellor himself, the principal figure therein, struck his two clients with amazement.

Mr. Pleydell was a lively, sharp-looking gentleman, with a professional shrewdness in his eye, and, generally speaking, a professional formality in his manners. But this, like his three-tailed wig and black coat, he could slip off on a Saturday evening, when surrounded by a party of jolly companions, and disposed for what he called his altitudes. On the present occasion the revel had lasted since four o'clock, and at length, under the direction of a venerable compotator, who had shared the sports and festivity of three generations, the frolicsome company had begun to practise the ancient and now forgotten pastime of HIGH JINKS. This game was played in several different ways. Most frequently the dice were thrown by the company, and those upon whom the lot fell were obliged to assume and maintain for a time a certain fictitious character, or to repeat a certain number of fescennine verses in a particular order. If they departed from the characters assigned, or if their memory proved treacherous in the repetition, they incurred forfeits, which were either compounded for by swallowing an additional bumper or by paying a small sum towards the reckoning. At this sport the jovial company were closely engaged when Mannering entered the room.

Mr. Counsellor Pleydell, such as we have described him, was enthroned as a monarch in an elbow-chair placed on the dining-table, his scratch wig on one side, his head crowned with a bottle-slider, his eye leering with an expression betwixt fun and the effects of wine, while his court around him resounded with such crambo scraps of verse as these:--

Where is Gerunto now? and what's become of him? Gerunto's drowned because he could not swim, etc., etc.

Such, O Themis, were anciently the sports of thy Scottish children! Dinmont was first in the room. He stood aghast a moment, and then exclaimed, 'It's him, sure enough. Deil o' the like o' that ever I saw!'

At the sound of 'Mr. Dinmont and Colonel Mannering wanting to speak to you, sir,' Pleydell turned his head, and blushed a little when he saw the very genteel figure of the English stranger. He was, however, of the opinion of Falstaff, 'Out, ye villains, play out the play!' wisely judging it the better way to appear totally unconcerned. 'Where be our guards?' exclaimed this second Justinian; 'see ye not a stranger knight from foreign parts arrived at this our court of Holyrood, with our bold yeoman Andrew Dinmont, who has succeeded to the keeping of our royal flocks within the forest of Jedwood, where, thanks to our royal care in the administration of justice, they feed as safe as if they were within the bounds of Fife? Where be our heralds, our pursuivants, our Lyon, our Marchmont, our Carrick, and our Snowdown? Let the strangers be placed at our board, and regaled as beseemeth their quality and this our high holiday; to-morrow we will hear their tidings.'

'So please you, my liege, to-morrow's Sunday,' said one of the company.

'Sunday, is it? then we will give no offence to the assembly of the kirk; on Monday shall be their audience.'

Mannering, who had stood at first uncertain whether to advance or retreat, now resolved to enter for the moment into the whim of the scene, though internally fretting at Mac-Morlan for sending him to consult with a crack-brained humourist. He therefore advanced with three profound congees, and craved permission to lay his credentials at the feet of the Scottish monarch, in order to be perused at his best leisure. The gravity with which he accommodated himself to the humour of the moment, and the deep and humble inclination with which he at first declined, and then accepted, a seat presented by the master of the ceremonies, procured him three rounds of applause.

'Deil hae me, if they arena a' mad thegither!' said Dinmont, occupying with less ceremony a seat at the bottom of the table; 'or else they hae taen Yule before it comes, and are gaun a-guisarding.'

A large glass of claret was offered to Mannering, who drank it to the health of the reigning prince. 'You are, I presume to guess,' said the monarch, 'that celebrated Sir Miles Mannering, so renowned in the French wars, and may well pronounce to us if the wines of Gascony lose their flavour in our more northern realm.'

Mannering, agreeably flattered by this allusion to the fame of his celebrated ancestor, replied by professing himself only a distant relation of the preux chevalier, and added, 'that in his opinion the wine was superlatively good.'

'It's ower cauld for my stomach,' said Dinmont, setting down the glass--empty however.

'We will correct that quality,' answered King Paulus, the first of the name; 'we have not forgotten that the moist and humid air of our valley of Liddel inclines to stronger potations. Seneschal, let our faithful yeoman have a cup of brandy; it will be more german to the matter.'

'And now,' said Mannering, 'since we have unwarily intruded upon your majesty at a moment of mirthful retirement, be pleased to say when you will indulge a stranger with an audience on those affairs of weight which have brought him to your northern capital.'

The monarch opened Mac-Morlan's letter, and, running it hastily over, exclaimed with his natural voice and manner, 'Lucy Bertram of Ellangowan, poor dear lassie!'

'A forfeit! a forfeit!' exclaimed a dozen voices; 'his majesty has forgot his kingly character.'

'Not a whit! not a whit!' replied the king; 'I'll be judged by this courteous knight. May not a monarch love a maid of low degree? Is not King Cophetua and the Beggar-maid an adjudged case in point?'

'Professional! professional! another forfeit,' exclaimed the tumultuary nobility.

'Had not our royal predecessors,' continued the monarch, exalting his sovereign voice to drown these disaffected clamours,--'had they not their Jean Logies, their Bessie Carmichaels, their Oliphants, their Sandilands, and their Weirs, and shall it be denied to us even to name a maiden whom we delight to honour? Nay, then, sink state and perish sovereignty! for, like a second Charles V, we will abdicate, and seek in the private shades of life those pleasures which are denied to a throne.'

So saying, he flung away his crown, and sprung from his exalted station with more agility than could have been expected from his age, ordered lights and a wash-hand basin and towel, with a cup of green tea, into another room, and made a sign to Mannering to accompany him. In less than two minutes he washed his face

and hands, settled his wig in the glass, and, to Mannering's great surprise, looked quite a different man from the childish Bacchanal he had seen a moment before.

'There are folks,' he said, 'Mr. Mannering, before whom one should take care how they play the fool, because they have either too much malice or too little wit, as the poet says. The best compliment I can pay Colonel Mannering is to show I am not ashamed to expose myself before him; and truly I think it is a compliment I have not spared to-night on your good-nature. But what's that great strong fellow wanting?'

Dinmont, who had pushed after Mannering into the room, began with a scrape with his foot and a scratch of his head in unison. 'I am Dandie Dinmont, sir, of the Charlie's Hope--the Liddesdale lad; ye'll mind me? It was for me ye won yon grand plea.'

'What plea, you loggerhead?' said the lawyer. 'D'ye think I can remember all the fools that come to plague me?'

'Lord, sir, it was the grand plea about the grazing o' the Langtae Head!' said the farmer.

'Well, curse thee, never mind; give me the memorial and come to me on Monday at ten,' replied the learned counsel.

'But, sir, I haena got ony distinct memorial.'

'No memorial, man?' said Pleydell.

'Na, sir, nae memorial,' answered Dandie; 'for your honour said before, Mr. Pleydell, ye'll mind, that ye liked best to hear us hill-folk tell our ain tale by word o' mouth.'

'Beshrew my tongue, that said so!' answered the counsellor; 'it will cost my ears a dinning. Well, say in two words what you've got to say. You see the gentleman waits.'

'Ou, sir, if the gentleman likes he may play his ain spring first; it's a' ane to Dandie.'

'Now, you looby,' said the lawyer, 'cannot you conceive that your business can be nothing to Colonel Mannering, but that he may not choose to have these great ears of thine regaled with his matters?'

'Aweel, sir, just as you and he like, so ye see to my business,' said Dandie, not a whit disconcerted by the roughness of this reception. 'We're at the auld wark o' the marches again, Jock o' Dawston Cleugh and me. Ye see we march on the tap o' Touthop-rigg after we pass the Pomoragrains; for the Pomoragrains, and Slackenspool, and Bloodylaws, they come in there, and they belong to the Peel; but after ye pass Pomoragrains at a muckle great saucer-headed cutlugged stane that they ca' Charlie's Chuckie, there Dawston Cleugh and Charlie's Hope they march. Now, I say the march rins on the tap o' the hill where the wind and water shears; but Jock o' Dawston Cleugh again, he contravenes that, and says that it bauds down by the auld drove-road that gaes awa by the Knot o' the Gate ower to Keeldar Ward; and that makes an unco difference.'

'And what difference does it make, friend?' said Pleydell. 'How many sheep will it feed?'

'Ou, no mony,' said Dandie, scratching his head; 'it's lying high and exposed: it may feed a hog, or aiblins twa in a good year.'

'And for this grazing, which may be worth about five shillings a year, you are willing to throw away a hundred pound or two?'

'Na, sir, it's no for the value of the grass,' replied Dinmont; 'it's for justice.'

'My good friend,' said Pleydell, 'justice, like charity, should begin at home. Do you justice to your wife and family, and think no more about the matter.'

Dinmont still lingered, twisting his hat in his hand. 'It's no for that, sir; but I would like ill to be bragged wi' him; he threeps he'll bring a score o' witnesses and mair, and I'm sure there's as mony will swear for me as for him, folk that lived a' their days upon the Charlie's Hope, and wadna like to see the land lose its right.'

'Zounds, man, if it be a point of honour,' said the lawyer, 'why don't your landlords take it up?'

'I dinna ken, sir (scratching his head again); there's been nae election-dusts lately, and the lairds are unco neighbourly, and Jock and me canna get them to yoke thegither about it a' that we can say; but if ye thought we might keep up the rent--'

'No! no! that will never do,' said Pleydell. 'Confound you, why don't you take good cudgels and settle it?'

'Odd, sir,' answered the farmer, 'we tried that three times already, that's twice on the land and ance at Lockerby Fair. But I dinna ken; we're baith gey good at single-stick, and it couldna weel be judged.'

'Then take broadswords, and be d--d to you, as your fathers did before you,' said the counsel learned in the law.

'Aweel, sir, if ye think it wadna be again the law, it's a' ane to Dandie.'

'Hold! hold!' exclaimed Pleydell, 'we shall have another Lord Soulis' mistake. Pr'ythee, man, comprehend me; I wish you to consider how very trifling and foolish a lawsuit you wish to engage in.'

'Ay, sir?' said Dandie, in a disappointed tone. 'So ye winna take on wi' me, I'm doubting?'

'Me! not I. Go home, go home, take a pint and agree.' Dandie looked but half contented, and still remained stationary. 'Anything more, my friend?'

'Only, sir, about the succession of this leddy that's dead, auld Miss Margaret Bertram o' Singleside.'

'Ay, what about her?' said the counsellor, rather surprised.

'Ou, we have nae connexion at a' wi' the Bertrams,' said Dandie; 'they were grand folk by the like o' us; but Jean Liltup, that was auld Singleside's housekeeper, and the mother of these twa young ladies that are gane--the last o' them's dead at a ripe age, I trow--Jean Liltup came out o' Liddel water, and she was as near our connexion as second cousin to my mother's half-sister. She drew up wi' Singleside, nae doubt, when she was his housekeeper, and it was a sair vex and grief to a' her kith and kin. But he acknowledged a marriage, and satisfied the kirk; and now I wad ken frae you if we hae not some claim by law?'

'Not the shadow of a claim.'

'Aweel, we're nae puirer,' said Dandie; 'but she may hae thought on us if she was minded to make a testament. Weel, sir, I've said my say; I'se e'en wish you good-night, and--' putting his hand in his pocket.

'No, no, my friend; I never take fees on Saturday nights, or without a memorial. Away with you, Dandie.' And Dandie made his reverence and departed accordingly.

CHAPTER VIII

*But this poor farce has neither truth nor art
To please the fancy or to touch the heart
Dark but not awful dismal but yet mean,
With anxious bustle moves the cumbrous scene,
Presents no objects tender or profound,
But spreads its cold unmeaning gloom around*

Parish Register

'Your majesty,' said Mannering, laughing, 'has solemnised your abdication by an act of mercy and charity. That fellow will scarce think of going to law.'

'O, you are quite wrong,' said the experienced lawyer. 'The only difference is, I have lost my client and my fee. He'll never rest till he finds somebody to encourage him to commit the folly he has predetermined. No! no! I have only shown you another weakness of my character: I always speak truth of a Saturday night.'

'And sometimes through the week, I should think,' said Mannering, continuing the same tone.

'Why, yes; as far as my vocation will permit. I am, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest, when my clients and their solicitors do not make me the medium of conveying their double-distilled lies to the bench. But oportet vivere! it is a sad thing. And now to our business. I am glad my old friend Mac-Morlan has sent you to me; he is an active, honest, and intelligent man, long sheriff-substitute of the county of--under me, and still holds the office. He knows I have a regard for that unfortunate family of Ellangowan, and for poor Lucy. I have not seen her since she was twelve years old, and she was then a sweet pretty girl, under the management of a very silly father. But my interest in her is of an early date. I was called upon, Mr. Mannering, being then sheriff of that county, to investigate the particulars of a murder which had been committed near Ellangowan the day on which this poor child was born; and which, by a strange combination that I was unhappily not able to trace, involved the death or abstraction of her only brother, a boy of about five years old. No, Colonel, I shall never forget the misery of the house of Ellangowan that morning! the father half-distracted--the mother dead in premature travail--the helpless infant, with scarce any one to attend it, coming wawling and crying into this miserable world at such a moment of unutterable misery. We lawyers are not of iron, sir, or of brass, any more than you soldiers are of steel. We are conversant with the crimes and distresses of civil society, as you are with those that occur in a state of war, and to do our duty in either case a little apathy is perhaps necessary. But the devil take a soldier whose heart can be as hard as his sword, and his dam catch the lawyer who bronzes his bosom instead of his forehead! But come, I am losing my Saturday at e'en. Will you have the kindness to trust me with these papers which relate to Miss Bertram's business? and stay--to-morrow you'll take a bachelor's dinner with an old lawyer,--I insist upon it--at three precisely, and come an hour sooner. The old lady is to be buried on Monday; it is the orphan's cause, and we'll borrow an hour from the Sunday to talk over this business, although I fear nothing can be done if she has altered her settlement, unless perhaps it occurs within the sixty days, and then, if Miss Bertram can show that she possesses the character of heir-at-law, why--But, hark! my lieges are impatient of their interregnum. I do not invite you to rejoin us, Colonel; it would be a trespass on your complaisance, unless you had begun the day with us, and gradually glided on from wisdom to mirth, and from mirth to-to-to--extravagance. Good-night. Harry, go home with Mr. Mannering to his lodging. Colonel, I expect you at a little past two to-morrow.'

The Colonel returned to his inn, equally surprised at the childish frolics in which he had found his learned counsellor engaged, at the candour and sound sense which he had in a moment summoned up to meet the exigencies of his profession, and at the tone of feeling which he displayed when he spoke of the friendless orphan.

In the morning, while the Colonel and his most quiet and silent of all retainers, Dominie Sampson, were finishing the breakfast which Barnes had made and poured out, after the Dominie had scalded himself in the attempt, Mr. Pleydell was suddenly ushered in. A nicely dressed bob-wig, upon every hair of which a zealous and careful barber had bestowed its proper allowance of powder; a well-brushed black suit, with very clean shoes and gold buckles and stock-buckle; a manner rather reserved and formal than intrusive, but withal showing only the formality of manner, by no means that of awkwardness; a countenance, the expressive and somewhat comic features of which were in complete repose--all showed a being perfectly different from the choice spirit of the evening before. A glance of shrewd and piercing fire in his eye was the only marked expression which recalled the man of 'Saturday at e'en.'

'I am come,' said he, with a very polite address, 'to use my regal authority in your behalf in spirituals as well as temporals; can I accompany you to the Presbyterian kirk, or Episcopal meeting-house? Tros Tyriusve, a lawyer, you know, is of both religions, or rather I should say of both forms;--or can I assist in passing the fore-noon otherwise? You'll excuse my old-fashioned importunity, I was born in a time when a Scotchman was thought inhospitable if he left a guest alone a moment, except when he slept; but I trust you will tell me at once if I intrude.'

'Not at all, my dear sir,' answered Colonel Mannering. 'I am delighted to put myself under your pilotage. I should wish much to hear some of your Scottish preachers whose talents have done such honour to your country--your Blair, your Robertson, or your Henry; and I embrace your kind offer with all my heart. Only,' drawing the lawyer a little aside, and turning his eye towards Sampson, 'my worthy friend there in the reverie is a little helpless and abstracted, and my servant, Barnes, who is his pilot in ordinary, cannot well assist him here, especially as he has expressed his determination of going to some of your darker and more remote places of worship.'

The lawyer's eye glanced at Dominie Sampson. 'A curiosity worth preserving; and I'll find you a fit custodier. Here you, sir (to the waiter), go to Luckie Finlayson's in the Cowgate for Miles Macfin the cadie, he'll be there about this time, and tell him I wish to speak to him.'

The person wanted soon arrived. 'I will commit your friend to this man's charge,' said Pleydell; 'he'll attend him, or conduct him, wherever he chooses to go, with a happy indifference as to kirk or market, meeting or court of justice, or any other place whatever; and bring him safe home at whatever hour you appoint; so that Mr. Barnes there may be left to the freedom of his own will.'

This was easily arranged, and the Colonel committed the Dominie to the charge of this man while they should remain in Edinburgh.

'And now, sir, if you please, we shall go to the Grey-friars church, to hear our historian of Scotland, of the Continent, and of America.'

They were disappointed: he did not preach that morning. 'Never mind,' said the Counsellor, 'have a moment's patience and we shall do very well.'

The colleague of Dr. Robertson ascended the pulpit. [Footnote: This was the celebrated Doctor Erskine, a distinguished clergyman, and a most excellent man.] His external appearance was not prepossessing. A remarkably fair complexion, strangely contrasted with a black wig without a grain of powder; a narrow chest and a stooping posture; hands which, placed like props on either side of the pulpit, seemed necessary rather to support the person than to assist the gesticulation of the preacher; no gown, not even that of Geneva, a tumbled band, and a gesture which seemed scarce voluntary, were the first circumstances which struck a stranger. 'The preacher seems a very ungainly person,' whispered Mannering to his new friend.

'Never fear, he's the son of an excellent Scottish lawyer; [Footnote: The father of Doctor Erskine was an eminent lawyer, and his Institutes of the Law of Scotland are to this day the text-book of students of that science.] he'll show blood, I'll warrant him.'

The learned Counsellor predicted truly. A lecture was delivered, fraught with new, striking, and entertaining views of Scripture history, a sermon in which the Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland was ably supported, yet made the basis of a sound system of practical morals, which should neither shelter the sinner under the cloak of speculative faith or of peculiarity of opinion, nor leave him loose to the waves of unbelief and schism. Something there was of an antiquated turn of argument and metaphor, but it only served to give zest and peculiarity to the style of elocution. The sermon was not read: a scrap of paper containing the heads of the discourse was occasionally referred to, and the enunciation, which at first seemed imperfect and embarrassed, became, as the preacher warmed in his progress, animated and distinct; and although the discourse could not be quoted as a correct specimen of pulpit eloquence, yet Mannering had seldom heard so much learning, metaphysical acuteness, and energy of argument brought into the service of Christianity.

'Such,' he said, going out of the church, 'must have been the preachers to whose unfearing minds, and acute though sometimes rudely exercised talents, we owe the Reformation.'

'And yet that reverend gentleman,' said Pleydell, 'whom I love for his father's sake and his own, has nothing of the sour or pharisaical pride which has been imputed to some of the early fathers of the Calvinistic Kirk of Scotland. His colleague and he differ, and head different parties in the kirk, about particular points of church discipline; but without for a moment losing personal regard or respect for each other, or suffering malignity to interfere in an opposition steady, constant, and apparently conscientious on both sides.'

'And you, Mr. Pleydell, what do you think of their points of difference?'

'Why, I hope, Colonel, a plain man may go to heaven without thinking about them at all; besides, inter nos, I am a member of the suffering and Episcopal Church of Scotland--the shadow of a shade now, and fortunately so; but I love to pray where my fathers prayed before me, without thinking worse of the Presbyterian forms because they do not affect me with the same associations.' And with this remark they parted until dinner-time.

From the awkward access to the lawyer's mansion, Mannering was induced to form very moderate expectations of the entertainment which he was to receive. The approach looked even more dismal by daylight than on the preceding evening. The houses on each side of the lane were so close that the neighbours might have shaken hands with each other from the different sides, and occasionally the space between was traversed by wooden galleries, and thus entirely closed up. The stair, the scale-stair, was not well cleaned; and on entering the house Mannering was struck with the narrowness and meanness of the wainscotted passage. But the library, into which he was shown by an elderly, respectable-looking man-servant, was a complete contrast to these unpromising appearances. It was a well-proportioned room, hung with a portrait or two of Scottish characters of eminence, by Jamieson, the Caledonian Vandyke, and surrounded with books, the best editions of the best authors, and in particular an admirable collection of classics.

'These,' said Pleydell, 'are my tools of trade. A lawyer without history or literature is a mechanic, a mere working mason; if he possesses some knowledge of these, he may venture to call himself an architect.'

But Mannering was chiefly delighted with the view from the windows, which commanded that incomparable prospect of the ground between Edinburgh and the sea--the Firth of Forth, with its islands, the embayment which is terminated by the Law of North Berwick, and the varied shores of Fife to the northward, indenting with a hilly outline the clear blue horizon.

When Mr. Pleydell had sufficiently enjoyed the surprise of his guest, he called his attention to Miss Bertram's affairs. 'I was in hopes,' he said, 'though but faint, to have discovered some means of ascertaining her indefeasible right to this property of Singleside; but my researches have been in vain. The old lady was certainly absolute fiar, and might dispose of it in full right of property. All that we have to hope is, that the devil may not have tempted her to alter this very proper settlement. You must attend the old girl's funeral to-morrow, to which you will receive an invitation, for I have acquainted her agent with your being here on Miss Bertram's part; and I will meet you afterwards at the house she inhabited, and be present to see fair play at the opening of the settlement. The old cat had a little girl, the orphan of some relation, who lived with her as a kind of slavish companion. I hope she has had the conscience to make her independent, in consideration of the peine forte et dure to which she subjected her during her lifetime.'

Three gentlemen now appeared, and were introduced to the stranger. They were men of good sense, gaiety, and general information, so that the day passed very pleasantly over; and Colonel Mannering assisted, about eight o'clock at night, in discussing the landlord's bottle, which was, of course, a magnum. Upon his return to the inn he found a card inviting him to the funeral of Miss Margaret Bertram, late of Singleside, which was to proceed from her own house to the place of interment in the Greyfriars churchyard at one o'clock afternoon.

At the appointed hour Mannering went to a small house in the suburbs to the southward of the city, where he found the place of mourning indicated, as usual in Scotland, by two rueful figures with long black cloaks, white crapes and hat-bands, holding in their hands poles, adorned with melancholy streamers of the same description. By two other mutes, who, from their visages, seemed suffering under the pressure of some strange calamity, he was ushered into the dining-parlour of the defunct, where the company were assembled for the funeral.

In Scotland the custom, now disused in England, of inviting the relations of the deceased to the interment is universally retained. On many occasions this has a singular and striking effect, but it degenerates into mere empty form and grimace in cases where the defunct has had the misfortune to live unbeloved and die unlamented. The English service for the dead, one of the most beautiful and impressive parts of the ritual of the church, would have in such cases the effect of fixing the attention, and uniting the thoughts and feelings of the audience present in an exercise of devotion so peculiarly adapted to such an occasion. But according to the Scottish custom, if there be not real feeling among the assistants, there is nothing to supply the deficiency, and exalt or rouse the attention; so that a sense of tedious form, and almost hypocritical restraint, is too apt to pervade the company assembled for the mournful solemnity. Mrs. Margaret Bertram was unluckily one of those whose good qualities had attached no general friendship. She had no near relations who might have mourned from natural affection, and therefore her funeral exhibited merely the exterior trappings of sorrow.

Mannering, therefore, stood among this lugubrious company of cousins in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth degree, composing his countenance to the decent solemnity of all who were around him, and looking as much concerned on Mrs. Margaret Bertram's account as if the deceased lady of Singleside had been his own sister or mother. After a deep and awful pause, the company began to talk aside, under their breaths, however, and as if in the chamber of a dying person.

'Our poor friend,' said one grave gentleman, scarcely opening his mouth, for fear of deranging the necessary solemnity of his features, and sliding his whisper from between his lips, which were as little unclosed as possible--'our poor friend has died well to pass in the world.'

'Nae doubt,' answered the person addressed, with half-closed eyes; 'poor Mrs. Margaret was aye careful of the gear.'

'Any news to-day, Colonel Mannering?' said one of the gentlemen whom he had dined with the day before, but in a tone which might, for its impressive gravity, have communicated the death of his whole generation.

'Nothing particular, I believe, sir,' said Mannering, in the cadence which was, he observed, appropriated to the house of mourning.

'I understand,' continued the first speaker, emphatically, and with the air of one who is well informed--'I understand there IS a settlement.'

'And what does little Jenny Gibson get?'

'A hundred, and the auld repeater.'

'That's but sma' gear, puir thing; she had a sair time o't with the auld leddy. But it's ill waiting for dead folk's shoon.'

'I am afraid,' said the politician, who was close by Mannering, 'we have not done with your old friend Tippoo Sahib yet, I doubt he'll give the Company more plague; and I am told, but you'll know for certain, that East India Stock is not rising.'

'I trust it will, sir, soon.'

'Mrs. Margaret,' said another person, mingling in the conversation, 'had some India bonds. I know that, for I drew the interest for her; it would be desirable now for the trustees and legatees to have the Colonel's advice about the time and mode of converting them into money. For my part I think--but there's Mr. Mortcloke to tell us they are gaun to lift.'

Mr. Mortcloke the undertaker did accordingly, with a visage of professional length and most grievous solemnity, distribute among the pall-bearers little cards, assigning their respective situations in attendance upon the coffin. As this precedence is supposed to be regulated by propinquity to the defunct, the undertaker, however skilful a master of these lugubrious ceremonies, did not escape giving some offence. To be related to Mrs. Bertram was to be of kin to the lands of Singleside, and was a propinquity of which each relative present at that moment was particularly jealous. Some murmurs there were on the occasion, and our friend Dinmont gave more open offence, being unable either to repress his discontent or to utter it in the key properly modulated to the solemnity. 'I think ye might hae at least g'ien me a leg o' her to carry,' he exclaimed, in a voice considerably louder than propriety admitted. 'God! an it hadna been for the rigs o' land, I would hae gotten her a' to carry mysell, for as mony gentles as are here.'

A score of frowning and reproving brows were bent upon the unappalled yeoman, who, having given vent to his displeasure, stalked sturdily downstairs with the rest of the company, totally disregarding the censures of those whom his remarks had scandalised.

And then the funeral pomp set forth; saulies with their batons and gumphions of tarnished white crape, in honour of the well-preserved maiden fame of Mrs. Margaret Bertram. Six starved horses, themselves the very emblems of mortality, well cloaked and plumed, lugging along the hearse with its dismal emblazonry, crept in slow state towards the place of interment, preceded by Jamie Duff, an idiot, who, with weepers and cravat made of white paper, attended on every funeral, and followed by six mourning coaches, filled with the company. Many of these now gave more free loose to their tongues, and discussed with unrestrained earnestness the amount of the succession, and the probability of its destination. The principal expectants, however, kept a prudent silence, indeed ashamed to express hopes which might prove fallacious; and the agent or man of business, who alone knew exactly how matters stood, maintained a countenance of mysterious importance, as if determined to preserve the full interest of anxiety and suspense.

At length they arrived at the churchyard gates, and from thence, amid the gaping of two or three dozen of idle women with infants in their arms, and accompanied by some twenty children, who ran gambolling and screaming alongside of the sable procession, they finally arrived at the burial-place of the Singleside family. This

was a square enclosure in the Greyfriars churchyard, guarded on one side by a veteran angel without a nose, and having only one wing, who had the merit of having maintained his post for a century, while his comrade cherub, who had stood sentinel on the corresponding pedestal, lay a broken trunk among the hemlock, burdock, and nettles which grew in gigantic luxuriance around the walls of the mausoleum. A moss-grown and broken inscription informed the reader that in the year 1650 Captain Andrew Bertram, first of Singleside, descended of the very ancient and honourable house of Ellangowan, had caused this monument to be erected for himself and his descendants. A reasonable number of scythes and hour-glasses, and death's heads and cross-bones, garnished the following sprig of sepulchral poetry to the memory of the founder of the mausoleum:--

Nathaniel's heart, Bezaleel's hand
If ever any had, These boldly do I say had he,
Who lieth in this bed.

Here, then, amid the deep black fat loam into which her ancestors were now resolved, they deposited the body of Mrs. Margaret Bertram; and, like soldiers returning from a military funeral, the nearest relations who might be interested in the settlements of the lady urged the dog-cattle of the hackney coaches to all the speed of which they were capable, in order to put an end to farther suspense on that interesting topic.

CHAPTER IX

Die and endow a college or a cat.

POPE.

There is a fable told by Lucian, that while a troop of monkeys, well drilled by an intelligent manager, were performing a tragedy with great applause, the decorum of the whole scene was at once destroyed, and the natural passions of the actors called forth into very indecent and active emulation, by a wag who threw a handful of nuts upon the stage. In like manner, the approaching crisis stirred up among the expectants feelings of a nature very different from those of which, under the superintendence of Mr. Mortcloke, they had but now been endeavouring to imitate the expression. Those eyes which were lately devoutly cast up to heaven, or with greater humility bent solemnly upon earth, were now sharply and alertly darting their glances through shuttles, and trunks, and drawers, and cabinets, and all the odd corners of an old maiden lady's repositories. Nor was their search without interest, though they did not find the will of which they were in quest.

Here was a promissory note for 20 Pounds by the minister of the nonjuring chapel, interest marked as paid to Martinmas last, carefully folded up in a new set of words to the old tune of 'Over the Water to Charlie'; there was a curious love correspondence between the deceased and a certain Lieutenant O'Kean of a marching regiment of foot; and tied up with the letters was a document which at once explained to the relatives why a connexion that boded them little good had been suddenly broken off, being the Lieutenant's bond for two hundred pounds, upon which NO interest whatever appeared to have been paid. Other bills and bonds to a larger amount, and signed by better names (I mean commercially) than those of the worthy divine and gallant soldier, also occurred in the course of their researches, besides a hoard of coins of every size and denomination, and scraps of broken gold and silver, old earrings, hinges of cracked, snuff-boxes, mountings of spectacles, etc. etc. etc. Still no will made its appearance, and Colonel Mannering began full well to hope that the settlement which he had obtained from Glossin contained the ultimate arrangement of the old lady's affairs. But his friend Pleydell, who now came into the room, cautioned him against entertaining this belief.

'I am well acquainted with the gentleman,' he said, 'who is conducting the search, and I guess from his manner that he knows something more of the matter than any of us.'

Meantime, while the search proceeds, let us take a brief glance at one or two of the company who seem most interested.

Of Dinmont, who, with his large hunting-whip under his arm, stood poking his great round face over the shoulder of the homme d'affaires, it is unnecessary to say anything. That thin-looking oldish person, in a most correct and gentleman-like suit of mourning, is Mac-Casquil, formerly of Drumquag, who was ruined by having a legacy bequeathed to him of two shares in the Ayr bank. His hopes on the present occasion are founded on a very distant relationship, upon his sitting in the same pew with the deceased every Sunday, and upon his playing at cribbage with her regularly on the Saturday evenings, taking great care never to come off a winner. That other coarse-looking man, wearing his own greasy hair tied in a leathern cue more greasy still, is a tobacconist, a relation of Mrs. Bertram's mother, who, having a good stock in trade when the colonial war broke out, trebled the price of his commodity to all the world, Mrs. Bertram alone excepted, whose tortoise-shell snuff-box was weekly filled with the best rappee at the old prices, because the maid brought it to the shop with Mrs. Bertram's respects to her cousin Mr. Quid. That young fellow, who has not had the decency to put off his boots and buckskins, might have stood as forward as most of them in the graces of the old lady, who loved to look upon a comely young man; but it is thought he has forfeited the moment of fortune by sometimes neglecting her tea-table when solemnly invited, sometimes appearing there when he had been dining with blyther company, twice treading upon her cat's tail, and once affronting her parrot.

To Mannering the most interesting of the group was the poor girl who had been a sort of humble companion of the deceased, as a subject upon whom she could at all times exhortate her bad humour. She was for form's sake dragged into the room by the deceased's favourite female attendant, where, shrinking into a corner as soon as possible, she saw with wonder and affright the intrusive researches of the strangers amongst those recesses to which from childhood she had looked with awful veneration. This girl was regarded with an unfavourable eye by all the competitors, honest Dinmont only excepted; the rest conceived they should find in her a formidable competitor, whose claims might at least encumber and diminish their chance of succession. Yet she was the only person present who seemed really to feel sorrow for the deceased. Mrs. Bertram had been her protectress, although from selfish motives, and her capricious tyranny was forgotten at the moment, while the tears followed each other fast down the cheeks of her frightened and friendless dependent. 'There's ower muckle saut water there, Drumquag,' said the tobacconist to the ex-proprietor, 'to bode ither folk muckle gude. Folk seldom greet that gate but they ken what it's for.' Mr. Mac-Casquil only replied with a nod, feeling the propriety of asserting his superior gentry in presence of Mr. Pleydell and Colonel Mannering.

'Very queer if there suld be nae will after a', friend,' said Dinmont, who began to grow impatient, to the man of business.

'A moment's patience, if you please. She was a good and prudent woman, Mrs. Margaret Bertram--a good and prudent and well-judging woman, and knew how to choose friends and depositaries; she may have put her last will and testament, or rather her mortis causa settlement, as it relates to heritage, into the hands of some safe friend.'

'I'll bet a rump and dozen,' said Pleydell, whispering to the Colonel, 'he has got it in his own pocket.' Then addressing the man of law, 'Come, sir, we'll cut this short, if you please: here is a settlement of the estate of Singleside, executed several years ago, in favour of Miss Lucy Bertram of Ellangowan.' The company stared fearfully wild. 'You, I presume, Mr. Protocol, can inform us if there is a later deed?'

'Please to favour me, Mr. Pleydell'; and so saying, he took the deed out of the learned counsel's hand, and glanced his eye over the contents.

'Too cool,' said Pleydell, 'too cool by half; he has another deed in his pocket still.'

'Why does he not show it then, and be d-d to him!' said the military gentleman, whose patience began to wax threadbare.

'Why, how should I know?' answered the barrister; 'why does a cat not kill a mouse when she takes him? The consciousness of power and the love of teasing, I suppose. Well, Mr. Protocol, what say you to that deed?'

'Why, Mr. Pleydell, the deed is a well-drawn deed, properly authenticated and tested in forms of the statute.'

'But recalled or superseded by another of posterior date in your possession, eh?' said the Counsellor.

'Something of the sort, I confess, Mr. Pleydell,' rejoined the man of business, producing a bundle tied with tape, and sealed at each fold and ligation with black wax. 'That deed, Mr. Pleydell, which you produce and found upon, is dated 1st June 17--; but this (breaking the seals and unfolding the document slowly) is dated the 20th--no, I see it is the 21st--of April of this present year, being ten years posterior.'

'Marry, hang her, brock!' said the Counsellor, borrowing an exclamation from Sir Toby Belch; 'just the month in which Ellangowan's distresses became generally public. But let us hear what she has done.'

Mr. Protocol accordingly, having required silence, began to read the settlement aloud in a slow, steady, business-like tone. The group around, in whose eyes hope alternately awakened and faded, and who were straining their apprehensions to get at the drift of the testator's meaning through the mist of technical language in which the conveyance had involved it, might have made a study for Hogarth.

The deed was of an unexpected nature. It set forth with conveying and disposing all and whole the estate and lands of Singleside and others, with the lands of Loverless, Liealone, Spinster's Knowe, and heaven knows what beside, 'to and in favours of (here the reader softened his voice to a gentle and modest piano) Peter Protocol, clerk to the signet, having the fullest confidence in his capacity and integrity--these are the very words which my worthy deceased friend insisted upon my inserting--but in TRUST always (here the reader recovered his voice and style, and the visages of several of the hearers, which had attained a longitude that Mr. Mortcloke might have envied, were perceptibly shortened)--in TRUST always, and for the uses, ends, and purposes hereinafter mentioned.'

In these 'uses, ends, and purposes' lay the cream of the affair. The first was introduced by a preamble setting forth that the testatrix was lineally descended from the ancient house of Ellangowan, her respected great-grandfather, Andrew Bertram, first of Singleside, of happy memory, having been second son to Allan Bertram, fifteenth Baron of Ellangowan. It proceeded to state that Henry Bertram, son and heir of Godfrey Bertram, now of Ellangowan, had been stolen from his parents in infancy, but that she, the testatrix, WAS WELL ASSURED THAT HE WAS YET ALIVE IN FOREIGN PARTS, AND BY THE PROVIDENCE OF HEAVEN WOULD BE RESTORED TO THE POSSESSIONS OF HIS ANCESTORS, in which case the said Peter Protocol was bound and obliged, like as he bound and obliged himself, by acceptance of these presents, to denude himself of the said lands of Singleside and others, and of all the other effects thereby conveyed (excepting always a proper gratification for his own trouble), to and in favour of the said Henry Bertram, upon his return to his native country. And during the time of his residing in foreign parts, or in case of his never again returning to Scotland, Mr. Peter Protocol, the trustee, was directed to distribute the rents of the land, and interest of the other funds (deducting always a proper gratification for his trouble in the premises), in equal portions, among four charitable establishments pointed out in the will. The power of management, of letting leases, of raising and lending out money, in short, the full authority of a proprietor, was vested in this confidential trustee, and, in the event of his death, went to certain official persons named in the deed. There were only two legacies; one of a hundred pounds to a favourite waiting-maid, another of the like sum to Janet Gibson (whom the deed stated to have been supported by the charity of the testatrix), for the purpose of binding her an apprentice to some honest trade.

A settlement in mortmain is in Scotland termed a mortification, and in one great borough (Aberdeen, if I remember rightly) there is a municipal officer who takes care of these public endowments, and is thence called the Master of Mortifications. One would almost presume that the term had its origin in the effect which such settlements usually produce upon the kinsmen of those by whom they are executed. Heavy at least was the mortification which befell the audience who, in the late Mrs. Margaret Bertram's parlour, had listened to this unexpected destination of the lands of Singleside. There was a profound silence after the deed had been read over.

Mr. Pleydell was the first to speak. He begged to look at the deed, and, having satisfied himself that it was correctly drawn and executed, he returned it without any observation, only saying aside to Mannering, 'Protocol is not worse than other people, I believe; but this old lady has determined that, if he do not turn rogue, it shall not be for want of temptation.'

'I really think,' said Mr. Mac-Casquil of Drumquag, who, having gulped down one half of his vexation, determined to give vent to the rest--'I really think this is an extraordinary case! I should like now to know from Mr. Protocol, who, being sole and unlimited trustee, must have been consulted upon this occasion--I should like, I say, to know how Mrs. Bertram could possibly believe in the existence of a boy that a' the world kens was murdered many a year since?'

'Really, sir,' said Mr. Protocol, 'I do not conceive it is possible for me to explain her motives more than she has done herself. Our excellent deceased friend was a good woman, sir--a pious woman--and might have grounds for confidence in the boy's safety which are not accessible to us, sir.'

'Hout,' said the tobacconist, 'I ken very weel what were her grounds for confidence. There's Mrs. Rebecca (the maid) sitting there has tell'd me a hundred times in my ain shop, there was nae kenning how her leddy wad settle her affairs, for an auld gipsy witch wife at Gilsland had possessed her with a notion that the callant--Harry Bertram ca's she him?--would come alive again some day after a'. Ye'll no deny that, Mrs. Rebecca? though I dare to say ye forgot to put your mistress in mind of what ye promised to say when I gied ye mony a half-crown. But ye'll no deny what I am saying now, lass?'

'I ken naething at a' about it,' answered Rebecca, doggedly, and looking straight forward with the firm countenance of one not disposed to be compelled to remember more than was agreeable to her.

'Weel said, Rebecca! ye're satisfied wi' your ain share ony way,' rejoined the tobacconist.

The buck of the second-head, for a buck of the first-head he was not, had hitherto been slapping his boots with his switch-whip, and looking like a spoiled child that has lost its supper. His murmurs, however, were all vented inwardly, or at most in a soliloquy such as this--'I am sorry, by G-d, I ever plagued myself about her. I came here, by G-d, one night to drink tea, and I left King and the Duke's rider Will Hack. They were toasting a round of running horses; by G-d, I might have got leave to wear the jacket as well as other folk if I had carried it on with them; and she has not so much as left me that hundred!'

'We'll make the payment of the note quite agreeable,' said Mr. Protocol, who had no wish to increase at that moment the odium attached to his office. 'And now, gentlemen, I fancy we have no more to wait for here, and I shall put the settlement of my excellent and worthy friend on record to-morrow, that every gentleman may examine the contents, and have free access to take an extract; and'--he proceeded to lock up the repositories of the deceased with more speed than he had opened them--'Mrs. Rebecca, ye'll be so kind as to keep all right here until we can let the house; I had an offer from a tenant this morning, if such a thing should be, and if I was to have any management.'

Our friend Dinmont, having had his hopes as well as another, had hitherto sate sulky enough in the armchair formerly appropriated to the deceased, and in which she would have been not a little scandalised to have seen this colossal specimen of the masculine gender lolling at length. His employment had been rolling up into the form of a coiled snake the long lash of his horse-whip, and then by a jerk causing it to unroll itself into the middle of the floor. The first words he said when he had digested the shock contained a magnanimous declaration, which he probably was not conscious of having uttered aloud--'Weel, blude's thicker than water; she's welcome to the cheeses and the hams just the same.' But when the trustee had made the above-mentioned motion for the mourners to depart, and talked of the house being immediately let, honest Dinmont got upon his feet and stunned the company with this blunt question, 'And what's to come o' this poor lassie then, Jenny Gibson? Sae mony o'us as thought ourselfs sib to the family when the gear was parting, we may do something for her amang us surely.'

This proposal seemed to dispose most of the assembly instantly to evacuate the premises, although upon Mr. Protocol's motion they had lingered as if around the grave of their disappointed hopes. Drumquag said, or rather muttered, something of having a family of his own, and took precedence, in virtue of his gentle blood, to depart as fast as possible. The tobacconist sturdily stood forward and scouted the motion--'A little huzzie like that was weel eneugh provided for already; and Mr. Protocol at ony rate was the proper person to take direction of her, as he had charge of her legacy'; and after uttering such his opinion in a steady and decisive tone of voice, he also left the place. The buck made a stupid and brutal attempt at a jest upon Mrs. Bertram's recommendation that the poor girl should be taught some honest trade; but encountered a scowl from Colonel Mannering's darkening eye (to whom, in his ignorance of the tone of good society, he had looked for applause) that made him ache to the very backbone. He shuffled downstairs, therefore, as fast as possible.

Protocol, who was really a good sort of man, next expressed his intention to take a temporary charge of the young lady, under protest always that his so doing should be considered as merely eleemosynary; when Dinmont at length got up, and, having shaken his huge dreadnought great-coat, as a Newfoundland dog

does his shaggy hide when he comes out of the water, ejaculated, 'Weel, deil hae me then, if ye hae ony fash wi' her, Mr. Protocol, if she likes to gang hame wi' me, that is. Ye see, Ailie and me we're weel to pass, and we would like the lassies to hae a wee bit mair lair than oursells, and to be neighbour-like, that wad we. And ye see Jenny canna miss but to ken manners, and the like o' reading books, and sewing seams, having lived sae lang wi' a grand lady like Lady Singleside; or, if she disna ken ony thing about it, I'm jealous that our bairns will like her a' the better. And I'll take care o' the bits o' claes, and what spending siller she maun hae, so the hundred pound may rin on in your hands, Mr. Protocol, and I'll be adding something till't, till she'll maybe get a Liddesdale joe that wants something to help to buy the hirsel. What d'ye say to that, hinny? I'll take out a ticket for ye in the fly to Jethart; od, but ye maun take a powny after that o'er the Limestane Rig, deil a wheeled carriage ever gaed into Liddesdale. [Footnote: See Note I.] And I'll be very glad if Mrs. Rebecca comes wi' you, hinny, and stays a month or twa while ye're stranger like.'

While Mrs. Rebecca was curtsyng, and endeavouring to make the poor orphan girl curtsy instead of crying, and while Dandie, in his rough way, was encouraging them both, old Pleydell had recourse to his snuff-box. 'It's meat and drink to me now, Colonel,' he said, as he recovered himself, 'to see a clown like this. I must gratify him in his own way, must assist him to ruin himself; there's no help for it. Here, you Liddesdale--Dandie--Charlie's Hope--what do they call you?'

The farmer turned, infinitely gratified even by this sort of notice; for in his heart, next to his own landlord, he honoured a lawyer in high practice.

'So you will not be advised against trying that question about your marches?'

'No, no, sir; naeboddy likes to lose their right, and to be laughed at down the haill water. But since your honour's no agreeable, and is maybe a friend to the other side like, we maun try some other advocate.'

'There, I told you so, Colonel Mannering! Well, sir, if you must needs be a fool, the business is to give you the luxury of a lawsuit at the least possible expense, and to bring you off conqueror if possible. Let Mr. Protocol send me your papers, and I will advise him how to conduct your cause. I don't see, after all, why you should not have your lawsuits too, and your feuds in the Court of Session, as well as your forefathers had their manslaughters and fire-raising.'

'Very natural, to be sure, sir. We wad just take the auld gate as readily, if it werena for the law. And as the law binds us, the law should loose us. Besides, a man's aye the better thought o' in our country for having been afore the Feifteen.'

'Excellently argued, my friend! Away with you, and send your papers to me. Come, Colonel, we have no more to do here.'

'God, we'll ding Jock o' Dawston Cleugh now after a!' said Dinmont, slapping his thigh in great exultation.

CHAPTER X

*I am going to the parliament;
You understand this bag. If you have any business
Depending there be short, and let me hear it,
And pay your fees.*

Little French Lawyer

'Shall you be able to carry this honest fellow's cause for him?' said Mannering.

'Why, I don't know; the battle is not to the strong, but he shall come off triumphant over Jock of Dawston if we can make it out. I owe him something. It is the pest of our profession that we seldom see the best side of human nature. People come to us with every selfish feeling newly pointed and grinded; they turn down the very caulkers of their animosities and prejudices, as smiths do with horses' shoes in a white frost. Many a man has come to my garret yonder that I have at first longed to pitch out at the window, and yet at length have discovered that he was only doing as I might have done in his case, being very angry, and of course very unreasonable. I have now satisfied myself that, if our profession sees more of human folly and human roguery than others, it is because we witness them acting in that channel in which they can most freely vent themselves. In civilised society law is the chimney through which all that smoke discharges itself that used to circulate through the whole house, and put every one's eyes out; no wonder, therefore, that the vent itself should sometimes get a little sooty. But we will take care our Liddesdale man's cause is well conducted and well argued, so all unnecessary expense will be saved: he shall have his pine-apple at wholesale price.'

'Will you do me the pleasure,' said Mannering, as they parted, 'to dine with me at my lodgings? My landlord says he has a bit of red-deer venison and some excellent wine.'

'Venison, eh?' answered the Counsellor alertly, but presently added--'But no! it's impossible; and I can't ask you home neither. Monday's a sacred day; so's Tuesday; and Wednesday we are to be heard in the great teind case in presence, but stay--it's frosty weather, and if you don't leave town, and that venison would keep till Thursday--'

'You will dine with me that day?'

'Under certification.'

'Well, then, I will indulge a thought I had of spending a week here; and if the venison will not keep, why we will see what else our landlord can do for us.'

'O, the venison will keep,' said Pleydell; 'and now good-bye. Look at these two or three notes, and deliver them if you like the addresses. I wrote them for you this morning. Farewell, my clerk has been waiting this hour to begin a d-d information.' And away walked Mr. Pleydell with great activity, diving through closes and ascending covered stairs in order to attain the High Street by an access which, compared to the common route, was what the Straits of Magellan are to the more open but circuitous passage round Cape Horn.

On looking at the notes of introduction which Pleydell had thrust into his hand, Mannering was gratified with seeing that they were addressed to some of the first literary characters of Scotland. 'To David Hume, Esq.'

To John Home, Esq.' 'To Dr. Ferguson.' 'To Dr. Black.' 'To Lord Kaimes.' 'To Mr. Button.' 'To John Clerk, Esq., of Eldin.' 'To Adam Smith, Esq.' 'To Dr. Robertson.'

'Upon my word, my legal friend has a good selection of acquaintances; these are names pretty widely blown indeed. An East-Indian must rub up his faculties a little, and put his mind in order, before he enters this sort of society.'

Mannering gladly availed himself of these introductions; and we regret deeply it is not in our power to give the reader an account of the pleasure and information which he received in admission to a circle never closed against strangers of sense and information, and which has perhaps at no period been equalled, considering the depth and variety of talent which it embraced and concentrated.

Upon the Thursday appointed Mr. Pleydell made his appearance at the inn where Colonel Mannering lodged. The venison proved in high order, the claret excellent, and the learned counsel, a professed amateur in the affairs of the table, did distinguished honour to both. I am uncertain, however, if even the good cheer gave him more satisfaction than the presence of Dominie Sampson, from whom, in his own juridical style of wit, he contrived to extract great amusement both for himself and one or two friends whom the Colonel regaled on the same occasion. The grave and laconic simplicity of Sampson's answers to the insidious questions of the barrister placed the bonhomie of his character in a more luminous point of view than Mannering had yet seen it. Upon the same occasion he drew forth a strange quantity of miscellaneous and abstruse, though, generally speaking, useless learning. The lawyer afterwards compared his mind to the magazine

of a pawnbroker, stowed with goods of every description, but so cumbrously piled together, and in such total disorganisation, that the owner can never lay his hands upon any one article at the moment he has occasion for it.

As for the advocate himself, he afforded at least as much exercise to Sampson as he extracted amusement from him. When the man of law began to get into his altitudes, and his wit, naturally shrewd and dry, became more lively and poignant, the Dominie looked upon him with that sort of surprise with which we can conceive a tame bear might regard his future associate, the monkey, on their being first introduced to each other. It was Mr. Pleydell's delight to state in grave and serious argument some position which he knew the Dominie would be inclined to dispute. He then beheld with exquisite pleasure the internal labour with which the honest man arranged his ideas for reply, and tasked his inert and sluggish powers to bring up all the heavy artillery of his learning for demolishing the schismatic or heretical opinion which had been stated, when behold, before the ordnance could be discharged, the foe had quitted the post and appeared in a new position of annoyance on the Dominie's flank or rear. Often did he exclaim 'Prodigious!' when, marching up to the enemy in full confidence of victory, he found the field evacuated, and it may be supposed that it cost him no little labour to attempt a new formation. 'He was like a native Indian army,' the Colonel said, 'formidable by numerical strength and size of ordnance, but liable to be thrown into irreparable confusion by a movement to take them in flank.' On the whole, however, the Dominie, though somewhat fatigued with these mental exertions, made at unusual speed and upon the pressure of the moment, reckoned this one of the white days of his life, and always mentioned Mr. Pleydell as a very erudite and fa-ce-ti-ous person.

By degrees the rest of the party dropped off and left these three gentlemen together. Their conversation turned to Mrs. Bertram's settlements. 'Now what could drive it into the noddle of that old harridan,' said Pleydell, 'to disinherit poor Lucy Bertram under pretence of settling her property on a boy who has been so long dead and gone? I ask your pardon, Mr. Sampson, I forgot what an affecting case this was for you; I remember taking your examination upon it, and I never had so much trouble to make any one speak three words consecutively. You may talk of your Pythagoreans or your silent Brahmins, Colonel; go to, I tell you this learned gentleman beats them all in taciturnity; but the words of the wise are precious, and not to be thrown away lightly.'

'Of a surety,' said the Dominie, taking his blue-checkered handkerchief from his eyes, 'that was a bitter day with me indeed; ay, and a day of grief hard to be borne; but He giveth strength who layeth on the load.'

Colonel Mannering took this opportunity to request Mr. Pleydell to inform him of the particulars attending the loss of the boy; and the Counsellor, who was fond of talking upon subjects of criminal jurisprudence, especially when connected with his own experience, went through the circumstances at full length. 'And what is your opinion upon the result of the whole?'

'O, that Kennedy was murdered: it's an old case which has occurred on that coast before now, the case of Smuggler versus Exciseman.'

'What, then, is your conjecture concerning the fate of the child?'

'O, murdered too, doubtless,' answered Pleydell. 'He was old enough to tell what he had seen, and these ruthless scoundrels would not scruple committing a second Bethlehem massacre if they thought their interest required it.'

The Dominie groaned deeply, and ejaculated, 'Enormous!'

'Yet there was mention of gipsies in the business too, Counsellor,' said Mannering, 'and from what that vulgar-looking fellow said after the funeral--'

'Mrs. Margaret Bertram's idea that the child was alive was founded upon the report of a gipsy?' said Pleydell, catching at the half-spoken hint. 'I envy you the concatenation, Colonel; it is a shame to me not to have drawn the same conclusion. We'll follow this business up instantly. Here, hark ye, waiter, go down to Luckie Wood's in the Cowgate; ye'll find my clerk Driver; he'll be set down to high jinks by this time--for we and our retainers, Colonel, are exceedingly regular in our irregularities--tell him to come here instantly and I will pay his forfeits.'

'He won't appear in character, will he?' said Mannering.

'Ah! "no more of that, Hal, an thou lovest me,"' said Pleydell. 'But we must have some news from the land of Egypt, if possible. O, if I had but hold of the slightest thread of this complicated skein, you should see how I would unravel it! I would work the truth out of your Bohemian, as the French call them, better than a monitoire or a plainte de Tournelle; I know how to manage a refractory witness.'

While Mr. Pleydell was thus vaunting his knowledge of his profession, the waiter reentered with Mr. Driver, his mouth still greasy with mutton pies, and the froth of the last draught of twopenny yet unsubsidised on his upper lip, with such speed had he obeyed the commands of his principal. 'Driver, you must go instantly and find out the woman who was old Mrs. Margaret Bertram's maid. Inquire for her everywhere, but if you find it necessary to have recourse to Protocol, Quid the tobacconist, or any other of these folks, you will take care not to appear yourself, but send some woman of your acquaintance; I daresay you know enough that may be so condescending as to oblige you. When you have found her out, engage her to come to my chambers tomorrow at eight o'clock precisely.'

'What shall I say to make her forthcoming?' asked the aid-de-camp.

'Anything you choose,' replied the lawyer. 'Is it my business to make lies for you, do you think? But let her be in praesentia by eight o'clock, as I have said before.'

The clerk grinned, made his reverence, and exit.

'That's a useful fellow,' said the Counsellor; 'I don't believe his match ever carried a process. He'll write to my dictating three nights in the week without sleep, or, what's the same thing, he writes as well and correctly when he's asleep as when he's awake. Then he's such a steady fellow; some of them are always changing their ale-houses, so that they have twenty cadies sweating after them, like the bare-headed captains traversing the taverns of Eastcheap in search of Sir John Falstaff. But this is a complete fixture; he has his winter seat by the fire and his summer seat by the window in Luckie Wood's, betwixt which seats are his only migrations; there he's to be found at all times when he is off duty. It is my opinion he never puts off his clothes or goes to sleep; sheer ale supports him under everything. It is meat, drink, and cloth, bed, board, and washing.'

'And is he always fit for duty upon a sudden turnout? I should distrust it, considering his quarters.'

'O, drink, never disturbs him, Colonel; he can write for hours after he cannot speak. I remember being called suddenly to draw an appeal case. I had been dining, and it was Saturday night, and I had ill will to begin to it; however, they got me down to Clerihugh's, and there we sat birling till I had a fair tappit hen [Footnote: See Note 2.] under my belt, and then they persuaded me to draw the paper. Then we had to seek Driver, and it was all that two men could do to bear him in, for, when found, he was, as it happened, both motionless and speechless. But no sooner was his pen put between his fingers, his paper stretched before him, and he heard my voice, than he began to write like a scrivener; and, excepting that we were obliged to have somebody to dip his pen in the ink, for he could not see the standish, I never saw a thing scrolled more handsomely.'

'But how did your joint production look the next morning?' said the Colonel.

'Wheugh! capital! not three words required to be altered: [Footnote: See Note 3.] it was sent off by that day's post. But you'll come and breakfast with me tomorrow, and hear this woman's examination?'

'Why, your hour is rather early.'

'Can't make it later. If I were not on the boards of the Outer House precisely as the nine-hours' bell rings, there would be a report that I had got an apoplexy, and I should feel the effects of it all the rest of the session.'

'Well, I will make an exertion to wait upon you.'

Here the company broke up for the evening.

In the morning Colonel Mannering appeared at the Counsellor's chambers, although cursing the raw air of a Scottish morning in December. Mr. Pleydell had got Mrs. Rebecca installed on one side of his fire, accommodated her with a cup of chocolate, and was already deeply engaged in conversation with her. 'O no, I assure you, Mrs. Rebecca, there is no intention to challenge your mistress's will; and I give you my word of honour that your legacy is quite safe. You have deserved it by your conduct to your mistress, and I wish it had been twice as much.'

'Why, to be sure, sir, it's no right to mention what is said before ane; ye heard how that dirty body Quid cast up to me the bits o' compliments he gied me, and tell'd ower again ony loose cracks I might hae had wi' him; now if ane was talking loosely to your honour, there's nae saying what might come o't.'

'I assure you, my good Rebecca, my character and your own age and appearance are your security, if you should talk as loosely as an amatory poet.'

'Aweel, if your honour thinks I am safe--the story is just this. Ye see, about a year ago, or no just sae lang, my leddy was advised to go to Gilsland for a while, for her spirits were distressing her sair. Ellangowan's troubles began to be spoken o' publicly, and sair vexed she was; for she was proud o' her family. For Ellangowan himsell and her, they sometimes 'greed and some times no; but at last they didna 'gree at a' for twa or three year, for he was aye wanting to borrow siller, and that was what she couldna bide at no hand, and she was aye wanting it paid back again, and that the Laird he liked as little. So at last they were clean aff thegither. And then some of the company at Gilsland tells her that the estate was to be sell'd; and ye wad hae thought she had taen an ill will at Miss Lucy Bertram frae that moment, for mony a time she cried to me, "O Becky, O Becky, if that useless peenging thing o' a lassie there at Ellangowan, that canna keep her ne'er-do-weel father within bounds--if she had been but a lad-bairn they couldna hae sell'd the auld inheritance for that fool-body's debts"; and she would rin on that way till I was just wearied and sick to hear her ban the puir lassie, as if she wadna hae been a lad-bairn and keepit the land if it had been in her will to change her sect. And ae day at the spaw-well below the craig at Gilsland she was seeing a very bonny family o' bairns--they belonged to ane Mac-Crosky--and she broke out--"Is not it an odd like thing that iika waf carle in the country has a son and heir, and that the house of Ellangowan is without male succession?" There was a gipsy wife stood ahint and heard her, a muckle sture fearsome-looking wife she was as ever I set een on. "Wha is it," says she, "that dare say the house of Ellangowan will perish without male succession?" My mistress just turned on her; she was a high-spirited woman, and aye ready wi' an answer to a' body. "It's me that says it," says she, "that may say it with a sad heart." Wi' that the gipsy wife gripped till her hand--"I ken you weel eneugh," says she, "though ye kenna me. But as sure as that sun's in heaven, and as sure as that water's rinning to the sea, and as sure as there's an ee that sees and an ear that hears us baith, Harry Bertram, that was thought to perish at Warroch Point, never did die there. He was to have a weary weird o't till his ane-and-twentieth year, that was aye said o' him; but if ye live and I live, ye'll hear mair o' him this winter before the snaw lies twa days on the Dun of Singleside. I want nane o' your siller," she said, "to make ye think I am blearing your ee; fare ye weel till after Martinmas." And there she left us standing.'

'Was she a very tall woman?' interrupted Mannering.

'Had she black hair, black eyes, and a cut above the brow?' added the lawyer.

'She was the tallest woman I ever saw, and her hair was as black as midnight, unless where it was grey, and she had a scar abune the brow that ye might hae laid the lith of your finger in. Naebody that's seen her will ever forget her; and I am morally sure that it was on the ground o' what that gipsy-woman said that my mistress made her will, having taen a dislike at the young leddy o' Ellangowan. And she liked her far waur after she was obliged to send her L20; for she said Miss Bertram, no content wi' letting the Ellangowan property pass into strange hands, owing to her being a lass and no a lad, was coming, by her poverty, to be a burden and a disgrace to Singleside too. But I hope my mistress's is a good will for a' that, for it would be hard on me to lose the wee bit legacy; I served for little fee and bountith, weel I wot.'

The Counsellor relieved her fears on this head, then inquired after Jenny Gibson, and understood she had accepted Mr. Dinmont's offer. 'And I have done sae mysell too, since he was sae discreet as to ask me,' said Mrs. Rebecca; 'they are very decent folk the Dinmonts, though my lady didna dow to hear muckle about the friends on that side the house. But she liked the Charlie's Hope hams and the cheeses and the muir-fowl that they were aye sending, and the lamb's-wool hose and mittens--she liked them weel eneugh.'

Mr. Pleydell now dismissed Mrs. Rebecca. When she was gone, 'I think I know the gipsy-woman,' said the lawyer.

'I was just going to say the same,' replied Mannering.

'And her name,' said Pleydell--

'Is Meg Merrilies,' answered the Colonel.

'Are you avised of that?' said the Counsellor, looking at his military friend with a comic expression of surprise.

Mannering answered that he had known such a woman when he was at Ellangowan upwards of twenty years before; and then made his learned friend acquainted with all the remarkable particulars of his first visit there.

Mr. Pleydell listened with great attention, and then replied, 'I congratulated myself upon having made the acquaintance of a profound theologian in your chaplain; but I really did not expect to find a pupil of Albumazar or Messahala in his patron. I have a notion, however, this gipsy could tell us some more of the matter than she derives from astrology or second-sight. I had her through hands once, and could then make little of her, but I must write to Mac-Morlan to stir heaven and earth to find her out. I will gladly come to--shire myself to assist at her examination; I am still in the commission of the peace there, though I have ceased to be sheriff. I never had anything more at heart in my life than tracing that murder and the fate of the child. I must write to the sheriff of Roxburghshire too, and to an active justice of peace in Cumberland.'

'I hope when you come to the country you will make Woodbourne your headquarters?'

'Certainly; I was afraid you were going to forbid me. But we must go to breakfast now or I shall be too late.'

On the following day the new friends parted, and the Colonel rejoined his family without any adventure worthy of being detailed in these chapters.

CHAPTER XI

*Can no rest find me, no private place secure me,
But still my miseries like bloodhounds haunt me?
Unfortunate young man, which way now guides thee,
Guides thee from death? The country's laid around for thee.*

Women Pleased.

Our narrative now recalls us for a moment to the period when young Hazlewood received his wound. That accident had no sooner happened than the consequences to Miss Mannering and to himself rushed upon Brown's mind. From the manner in which the muzzle of the piece was pointed when it went off, he had no great fear that the consequences would be fatal. But an arrest in a strange country, and while he was unprovided with any means of establishing his rank and character, was at least to be avoided. He therefore resolved to escape for the present to the neighbouring coast of England, and to remain concealed there, if possible, until he should receive letters from his regimental friends, and remittances from his agent; and then to resume his own character, and offer to young Hazlewood and his friends any explanation or satisfaction they might desire. With this purpose he walked stoutly forward, after leaving the spot where the accident had happened, and reached without adventure the village which we have called Portanferry (but which the reader will in vain seek for under that name in the county map). A large open boat was just about to leave the quay, bound for the little seaport of Allonby, in Cumberland. In this vessel Brown embarked, and resolved to make that place his temporary abode, until he should receive letters and money from England.

In the course of their short voyage he entered into some conversation with the steersman, who was also owner of the boat, a jolly old man, who had occasionally been engaged in the smuggling trade, like most fishers on the coast. After talking about objects of less interest, Brown endeavoured to turn the discourse toward the Mannering family. The sailor had heard of the attack upon the house at Woodbourne, but disapproved of the smugglers' proceedings.

'Hands off is fair play; zounds, they'll bring the whole country down upon them. Na, na! when I was in that way I played at giff-gaff with the officers: here a cargo taen--vera weel, that was their luck; there another carried clean through, that was mine; na, na! hawks shouldna pike out hawks' een.'

'And this Colonel Mannerling?' said Brown.

'Troth, he's nae wise man neither, to interfere; no that I blame him for saving the gangers' lives, that was very right; but it wasna like a gentleman to be righting about the poor folk's pocks o' tea and brandy kegs. However, he's a grand man and an officer man, and they do what they like wi' the like o' us.'

'And his daughter,' said Brown, with a throbbing heart, 'is going to be married into a great family too, as I have heard?'

'What, into the Hazlewoods?'' said the pilot. 'Na, na, that's but idle clashes; every Sabbath day, as regularly as it came round, did the young man ride hame wi' the daughter of the late Ellangowan; and my daughter Peggy's in the service up at Woodbourne, and she says she's sure young Hazlewood thinks nae mair of Miss Mannerling than you do.'

Bitterly censuring his own precipitate adoption of a contrary belief, Brown yet heard with delight that the suspicions of Julia's fidelity, upon which he had so rashly acted, were probably void of foundation. How must he in the meantime be suffering in her opinion? or what could she suppose of conduct which must have made him appear to her regardless alike of her peace of mind and of the interests of their affection? The old man's connexion with the family at Woodbourne seemed to offer a safe mode of communication, of which he determined to avail himself.

'Your daughter is a maid-servant at Woodbourne? I knew Miss Mannerling in India, and, though I am at present in an inferior rank of life, I have great reason to hope she would interest herself in my favour. I had a quarrel unfortunately with her father, who was my commanding officer, and I am sure the young lady would endeavour to reconcile him to me. Perhaps your daughter could deliver a letter to her upon the subject, without making mischief between her father and her?'

The old man, a friend to smuggling of every kind, readily answered for the letter's being faithfully and secretly delivered; and, accordingly, as soon as they arrived at Allonby Brown wrote to Miss Mannerling, stating the utmost contrition for what had happened through his rashness, and conjuring her to let him have an opportunity of pleading his own cause, and obtaining forgiveness for his indiscretion. He did not judge it safe to go into any detail concerning the circumstances by which he had been misled, and upon the whole endeavoured to express himself with such ambiguity that, if the letter should fall into wrong hands, it would be difficult either to understand its real purport or to trace the writer. This letter the old man undertook faithfully to deliver to his daughter at Woodbourne; and, as his trade would speedily again bring him or his boat to Allonby, he promised farther to take charge of any answer with which the young lady might entrust him.

And now our persecuted traveller landed at Allonby, and sought for such accommodations as might at once suit his temporary poverty and his desire of remaining as much unobserved as possible. With this view he assumed the name and profession of his friend Dudley, having command enough of the pencil to verify his pretended character to his host of Allonby. His baggage he pretended to expect from Wigton; and keeping himself as much within doors as possible, awaited the return of the letters which he had sent to his agent, to Delasserre, and to his lieutenant-colonel. From the first he requested a supply of money; he conjured Delasserre, if possible, to join him in Scotland; and from the lieutenant-colonel he required such testimony of his rank and conduct in the regiment as should place his character as a gentleman and officer beyond the power of question. The inconvenience of being run short in his finances struck him so strongly that he wrote to Dinmont on that subject, requesting a small temporary loan, having no doubt that, being within sixty or seventy miles of his residence, he should receive a speedy as well as favourable answer to his request of pecuniary accommodation, which was owing, as he stated, to his having been robbed after their parting. And then, with impatience enough, though without any serious apprehension, he waited the answers of these various letters.

It must be observed, in excuse of his correspondents, that the post was then much more tardy than since Mr. Palmer's ingenious invention has taken place; and with respect to honest Dinmont in particular, as he rarely received above one letter a quarter (unless during the time of his being engaged in a law-suit, when he regularly sent to the post-town), his correspondence usually remained for a month or two sticking in the postmaster's window among pamphlets, gingerbread, rolls, or ballads, according to the trade which the said postmaster exercised. Besides, there was then a custom, not yet wholly obsolete, of causing a letter from one town to another, perhaps within the distance of thirty miles, perform a circuit of two hundred miles before delivery; which had the combined advantage of airing the epistle thoroughly, of adding some pence to the revenue of the post-office, and of exercising the patience of the correspondents. Owing to these circumstances Brown remained several days in Allonby without any answers whatever, and his stock of money, though husbanded with the utmost economy, began to wear very low, when he received by the hands of a young fisherman the following letter:--

'You have acted with the most cruel indiscretion; you have shown how little I can trust to your declarations that my peace and happiness are dear to you; and your rashness has nearly occasioned the death of a young man of the highest worth and honour. Must I say more? must I add that I have been myself very ill in consequence of your violence and its effects? And, alas! need I say still farther, that I have thought anxiously upon them as they are likely to affect you, although you have given me such slight cause to do so? The C. is gone from home for several days, Mr. H. is almost quite recovered, and I have reason to think that the blame is laid in a quarter different from that where it is deserved. Yet do not think of venturing here. Our fate has been crossed by accidents of a nature too violent and terrible to permit me to think of renewing a correspondence which has so often threatened the most dreadful catastrophe. Farewell, therefore, and believe that no one can wish your happiness more sincerely than

'J. M.'

This letter contained that species of advice which is frequently given for the precise purpose that it may lead to a directly opposite conduct from that which it recommends. At least so thought Brown, who immediately asked the young fisherman if he came from Portanferry.

'Ay,' said the lad; 'I am auld Willie Johnstone's son, and I got that letter frae my sister Peggy, that's laundry maid at Woodbourne.'

'My good friend, when do you sail?'

'With the tide this evening.'

'I'll return with you; but, as I do not desire to go to Portanferry, I wish you could put me on shore somewhere on the coast.'

'We can easily do that,' said the lad.

Although the price of provisions, etc., was then very moderate, the discharging his lodgings, and the expense of his living, together with that of a change of dress, which safety as well as a proper regard to his external appearance rendered necessary, brought Brown's purse to a very low ebb. He left directions at the post-office that his letters should be forwarded to Kippletringan, whither he resolved to proceed and reclaim the treasure which he had deposited in the hands of Mrs. MacCandlish. He also felt it would be his duty to assume his proper character as soon as he should receive the necessary evidence for supporting it, and, as an officer in the king's service, give and receive every explanation which might be necessary with young Hazlewood. 'If he is not very wrong-headed indeed,' he thought, 'he must allow the manner in which I acted to have been the necessary consequence of his own overbearing conduct.'

And now we must suppose him once more embarked on the Solway Firth. The wind was adverse, attended by some rain, and they struggled against it without much assistance from the tide. The boat was heavily laden with goods (part of which were probably contraband), and laboured deep in the sea. Brown, who had been bred a sailor, and was indeed skilled in most athletic exercises, gave his powerful and effectual assistance in rowing, or occasionally in steering the boat, and his advice in the management, which became the more delicate as the wind increased, and, being opposed to the very rapid tides of that coast, made the voyage perilous. At length, after spending the whole night upon the firth, they were at morning within sight of a beautiful bay upon the Scottish coast. The weather was now more mild. The snow, which had been for some time waning, had given way entirely under the fresh gale of the preceding night. The more distant hills, indeed, retained their snowy mantle, but all the open country was cleared, unless where a few white patches indicated that it had been drifted to an uncommon depth. Even under its wintry appearance the shore was highly interesting. The line of sea-coast, with all its varied curves, indentures, and embayments, swept away from the sight on either hand, in that varied, intricate, yet graceful and easy line which the eye loves so well to pursue. And it was no less relieved and varied in elevation than in outline by the different forms of the shore, the beach in some places being edged by steep rocks, and in others rising smoothly from the sands in easy and swelling slopes. Buildings of different kinds caught and reflected the wintry sunbeams of a December morning, and the woods, though now leafless, gave relief and variety to the landscape. Brown felt that lively and awakening interest which taste and sensibility always derive from the beauties of nature when

opening suddenly to the eye after the dulness and gloom of a night voyage. Perhaps--for who can presume to analyse that inexplicable feeling which binds the person born in a mountainous country to, his native hills--perhaps some early associations, retaining their effect long after the cause was forgotten, mingled in the feelings of pleasure with which he regarded the scene before him.

'And what,' said Brown to the boatman, 'is the name of that fine cape that stretches into the sea with its sloping banks and hillocks of wood, and forms the right side of the bay?'

'Warroch Point,' answered the lad.

'And that old castle, my friend, with the modern house situated just beneath it? It seems at this distance a very large building.'

'That's the Auld Place, sir; and that's the New Place below it. We'll land you there if you like.'

'I should like it of all things. I must visit that ruin before I continue my journey.'

'Ay, it's a queer auld bit,' said the fisherman; 'and that highest tower is a gude landmark as far as Ramsay in Man and the Point of Ayr; there was muckle fighting about the place lang syne.'

Brown would have inquired into farther particulars, but a fisherman is seldom an antiquary. His boatman's local knowledge was summed up in the information already given, 'that it was a grand landmark, and that there had been muckle fighting about the bit lang syne.'

'I shall learn more of it,' said Brown to himself, 'when I get ashore.'

The boat continued its course close under the point upon which the castle was situated, which frowned from the summit of its rocky site upon the still agitated waves of the bay beneath. 'I believe,' said the steersman, 'ye'll get ashore here as dry as ony gate. There's a place where their berlins and galleys, as they ca'd them, used to lie in lang syne, but it's no used now, because it's ill carrying gudes up the narrow stairs or ower the rocks. Whiles of a moonlight night I have landed articles there, though.'

While he thus spoke they pulled round a point of rock, and found a very small harbour, partly formed by nature, partly by the indefatigable labour of the ancient inhabitants of the castle, who, as the fisherman observed, had found it essential for the protection of their boats and small craft, though it could not receive vessels of any burden. The two points of rock which formed the access approached each other so nearly that only one boat could enter at a time. On each side were still remaining two immense iron rings, deeply morticed into the solid rock. Through these, according to tradition, there was nightly drawn a huge chain, secured by an immense padlock, for the protection of the haven and the armada which it contained. A ledge of rock had, by the assistance of the chisel and pickaxe, been formed into a sort of quay. The rock was of extremely hard consistence, and the task so difficult that, according to the fisherman, a labourer who wrought at the work might in the evening have carried home in his bonnet all the shivers which he had struck from the mass in the course of the day. This little quay communicated with a rude staircase, already repeatedly mentioned, which descended from the old castle. There was also a communication between the beach and the quay, by scrambling over the rocks.

'Ye had better land here,' said the lad, 'for the surf's running high at the Shellicoat Stane, and there will no be a dry thread amang us or we get the cargo out. Na! na! (in answer to an offer of money) ye have wrought for your passage, and wrought far better than ony o' us. Gude day to ye; I wuss ye weel.'

So saying, he pushed oil in order to land his cargo on the opposite side of the bay; and Brown, with a small bundle in his hand, containing the trifling stock of necessities which he had been obliged to purchase at Allonby, was left on the rocks beneath the ruin.

And thus, unconscious as the most absolute stranger, and in circumstances which, if not destitute, were for the present highly embarrassing, without the countenance of a friend within the circle of several hundred miles, accused of a heavy crime, and, what was as bad as all the rest, being nearly penniless, did the harassed wanderer for the first time after the interval of so many years approach the remains of the castle where his ancestors had exercised all but regal dominion.

CHAPTER XII

*Yes ye moss-green walls,
Ye towers defenceless, I revisit ye
Shame-stricken! Where are all your trophies now?
Your thronged courts, the revelry, the tumult,
That spoke the grandeur of my house, the homage
Of neighbouring barons?*

Mysterious Mother.

Entering the castle of Ellangowan by a postern doorway which showed symptoms of having been once secured with the most jealous care, Brown (whom, since he has set foot upon the property of his fathers, we shall hereafter call by his father's name of Bertram) wandered from one ruined apartment to another, surprised at the massive strength of some parts of the building, the rude and impressive magnificence of others, and the great extent of the whole. In two of these rooms, close beside each other, he saw signs of recent habitation. In one small apartment were empty bottles, half-gnawed bones, and dried fragments of bread. In the vault which adjoined, and which was defended by a strong door, then left open, he observed a considerable quantity of straw, and in both were the relics of recent fires. How little was it possible for Bertram to conceive that such trivial circumstances were closely connected with incidents affecting his prosperity, his honour, perhaps his life!

After satisfying his curiosity by a hasty glance through the interior of the castle, Bertram now advanced through the great gateway which opened to the land, and paused to look upon the noble landscape which it commanded. Having in vain endeavoured to guess the position of Woodbourne, and having nearly ascertained that of Kippletringan, he turned to take a parting look at the stately ruins which he had just traversed. He admired the massive and picturesque effect of the huge round towers, which, flanking the gateway, gave a double portion of depth and majesty to the high yet gloomy arch under which it opened. The carved stone escutcheon of the ancient family, bearing for their arms three wolves' heads, was hung diagonally beneath the helmet and crest, the latter being a wolf couchant pierced with an arrow. On either side stood as supporters, in full human size or larger, a salvage man PROPER, to use the language of heraldry, WREATHED AND CINCTURED, and holding in his hand an oak tree ERADICATED, that is, torn up by the roots.

'And the powerful barons who owned this blazonry,' thought Bertram, pursuing the usual train of ideas which flows upon the mind at such scenes--'do their posterity continue to possess the lands which they had laboured to fortify so strongly? or are they wanderers, ignorant perhaps even of the fame or power of their fore-fathers, while their hereditary possessions are held by a race of strangers? Why is it,' he thought, continuing to follow out the succession of ideas which the scene prompted--'why is it that some scenes awaken thoughts which belong as it were to dreams of early and shadowy recollection, such as my old Brahmin moonshie would have ascribed to a state of previous existence? Is it the visions of our sleep that float confusedly in our memory, and are recalled by the appearance of such real objects as in any respect correspond to the phantoms they presented to our imagination? How often do we find ourselves in society which we have never before met, and yet feel impressed with a mysterious and ill-defined consciousness that neither the scene, the speakers, nor the subject are

entirely new; nay, feel as if we could anticipate that part of the conversation which has not yet taken place! It is even so with me while I gaze upon that ruin; nor can I divest myself of the idea that these massive towers and that dark gateway, retiring through its deep-vaulted and ribbed arches, and dimly lighted by the courtyard beyond, are not entirely strange to me. Can it be that they have been familiar to me in infancy, and that I am to seek in their vicinity those friends of whom my childhood has still a tender though faint remembrance, and whom I early exchanged for such severe task-masters? Yet Brown, who, I think, would not have deceived me, always told me I was brought off from the eastern coast, after a skirmish in which my father was killed; and I do remember enough of a horrid scene of violence to strengthen his account.'

It happened that the spot upon which young Bertram chanced to station himself for the better viewing the castle was nearly the same on which his father had died. It was marked by a large old oak-tree, the only one on the esplanade, and which, having been used for executions by the barons of Ellangowan, was called the Justice Tree. It chanced, and the coincidence was remarkable, that Glossin was this morning engaged with a person whom he was in the habit of consulting in such matters concerning some projected repairs and a large addition to the house of Ellangowan, and that, having no great pleasure in remains so intimately connected with the grandeur of the former inhabitants, he had resolved to use the stones of the ruinous castle in his new edifice. Accordingly he came up the bank, followed by the land-surveyor mentioned on a former occasion, who was also in the habit of acting as a sort of architect in case of necessity. In drawing the plans, etc., Glossin was in the custom of relying upon his own skill. Bertram's back was towards them as they came up the ascent, and he was quite shrouded by the branches of the large tree, so that Glossin was not aware of the presence of the stranger till he was close upon him.

'Yes, sir, as I have often said before to you, the Old Place is a perfect quarry of hewn stone, and it would be better for the estate if it were all down, since it is only a den for smugglers.' At this instant Bertram turned short round upon Glossin at the distance of two yards only, and said--'Would you destroy this fine old castle, sir?'

His face, person, and voice were so exactly those of his father in his best days, that Glossin, hearing his exclamation, and seeing such a sudden apparition in the shape of his patron, and on nearly the very spot where he had expired, almost thought the grave had given up its dead! He staggered back two or three paces, as if he had received a sudden and deadly wound. He instantly recovered, however, his presence of mind, stimulated by the thrilling reflection that it was no inhabitant of the other world which stood before him, but an injured man whom the slightest want of dexterity on his part might lead to acquaintance with his rights, and the means of asserting them to his utter destruction. Yet his ideas were so much confused by the shock he had received that his first question partook of the alarm.

'In the name of God, how came you here?' said Glossin.

'How came I here?' repeated Bertram, surprised at the solemnity of the address; 'I landed a quarter of an hour since in the little harbour beneath the castle, and was employing a moment's leisure in viewing these fine ruins. I trust there is no intrusion?'

'Intrusion, sir? No, sir,' said Glossin, in some degree recovering his breath, and then whispered a few words into his companion's ear, who immediately left him and descended towards the house. 'Intrusion, sir? no, sir; you or any gentleman are welcome to satisfy your curiosity.'

'I thank you, sir,' said Bertram. 'They call this the Old Place, I am informed?'

'Yes, sir; in distinction to the New Place, my house there below.'

Glossin, it must be remarked, was, during the following dialogue, on the one hand eager to learn what local recollections young Bertram had retained of the scenes of his infancy, and on the other compelled to be extremely cautious in his replies, lest he should awaken or assist, by some name, phrase, or anecdote, the slumbering train of association. He suffered, indeed, during the whole scene the agonies which he so richly deserved; yet his pride and interest, like the fortitude of a North American Indian, manned him to sustain the tortures inflicted at once by the contending stings of a guilty conscience, of hatred, of fear, and of suspicion.

'I wish to ask the name, sir,' said Bertram, 'of the family to whom this stately ruin belongs.'

'It is my property, sir; my name is Glossin.'

'Glossin--Glossin?' repeated Bertram, as if the answer were somewhat different from what he expected. 'I beg your pardon, Mr. Glossin; I am apt to be very absent. May I ask if the castle has been long in your family?'

'It was built, I believe, long ago by a family called Mac-Dingawaie,' answered Glossin, suppressing for obvious reasons the more familiar sound of Bertram, which might have awakened the recollections which he was anxious to lull to rest, and slurring with an evasive answer the question concerning the endurance of his own possession.

'And how do you read the half-defaced motto, sir,' said Bertram, 'which is upon that scroll above the entablature with the arms?'

'I--I--I really do not exactly know,' replied Glossin.

'I should be apt to make it out, OUR RIGHT MAKES OUR MIGHT.'

'I believe it is something of that kind,' said Glossin.

'May I ask, sir,' said the stranger, 'if it is your family motto?'

'N--n--no--no--not ours. That is, I believe, the motto of the former people; mine is--mine is--in fact, I have had some correspondence with Mr. Cumming of the Lyon Office in Edinburgh about mine. He writes me the Glossins anciently bore for a motto, "He who takes it, makes it."'

'If there be any uncertainty, sir, and the case were mine,' said Bertram, 'I would assume the old motto, which seems to me the better of the two.'

Glossin, whose tongue by this time clove to the roof of his mouth, only answered by a nod.

'It is odd enough,' said Bertram, fixing his eye upon the arms and gateway, and partly addressing Glossin, partly as it were thinking aloud--'it is odd the tricks which our memory plays us. The remnants of an old prophecy, or song, or rhyme of some kind or other, return to my recollection on hearing that motto; stay--it is a strange jingle of sounds:--

The dark shall be light, And the wrong made right, When Bertram's right and Bertram's might Shall meet on---

I cannot remember the last line--on some particular height; HEIGHT is the rhyme, I am sure; but I cannot hit upon the preceding word.'

'Confound your memory,' muttered Glossin, 'you remember by far too much of it!'

'There are other rhymes connected with these early recollections,' continued the young man. 'Pray, sir, is there any song current in this part of the world respecting a daughter of the King of the Isle of Man eloping with a Scottish knight?'

'I am the worst person in the world to consult upon legendary antiquities,' answered Glossin.

'I could sing such a ballad,' said Bertram, 'from one end to another when I was a boy. You must know I left Scotland, which is my native country, very young, and those who brought me up discouraged all my attempts to preserve recollection of my native land, on account, I believe, of a boyish wish which I had to escape from their charge.'

'Very natural,' said Glossin, but speaking as if his utmost efforts were unable to unseal his lips beyond the width of a quarter of an inch, so that his whole utterance was a kind of compressed muttering, very different from the round, bold, bullying voice with which he usually spoke. Indeed, his appearance and demeanour during all this conversation seemed to diminish even his strength and stature; so that he appeared to wither into the shadow of himself, now advancing one foot, now the other, now stooping and wriggling his shoulders, now fumbling with the buttons of his waistcoat, now clasping his hands together; in short, he was the picture of a mean-spirited, shuffling rascal in the very agonies of detection. To these appearances Bertram was totally inattentive, being dragged on as it were by the current of his own associations. Indeed, although he addressed Glossin, he was not so much thinking of him as arguing upon the embarrassing state of his own feelings and recollection. 'Yes,' he said, 'I preserved my language among the sailors, most of whom spoke English, and when I could get into a corner by myself I used to sing all that song over from beginning to end; I have forgot it all now, but I remember the tune well, though I cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.'

He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel who, close beside a fine spring about halfway down the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen. She immediately took up the song:--

*'Are these the Links of Forth, she said,
Or are they the crooks of Dee,
Or the bonnie woods of Warroch Head
That I so fain would see?'*

'By heaven,' said Bertram, 'it is the very ballad! I must learn these words from the girl.'

'Confusion!' thought Glossin; 'if I cannot put a stop to this all will be out. O the devil take all ballads and ballad-makers and ballad-singers! and that d--d jade too, to set up her pipe!'--'You will have time enough for this on some other occasion,' he said aloud; 'at present' (for now he saw his emissary with two or three men coming up the bank)--'at present we must have some more serious conversation together.'

'How do you mean, sir?' said Bertram, turning short upon him, and not liking the tone which he made use of.

'Why, sir, as to that--I believe your name is Brown?' said Glossin. 'And what of that, sir?'

Glossin looked over his shoulder to see how near his party had approached; they were coming fast on. 'Vanbeest Brown? if I mistake not.'

'And what of that, sir?' said Bertram, with increasing astonishment and displeasure.

'Why, in that case,' said Glossin, observing his friends had now got upon the level space close beside them--'in that case you are my prisoner in the king's name!'

At the same time he stretched his hand towards Bertram's collar, while two of the men who had come up seized upon his arms; he shook himself, however, free of their grasp by a violent effort, in which he pitched the most pertinacious down the bank, and, drawing his cutlass, stood on the defensive, while those who had felt his strength recoiled from his presence and gazed at a safe distance. 'Observe,' he called out at the same time, 'that I have no purpose to resist legal authority; satisfy me that you have a magistrate's warrant, and are authorised to make this arrest, and I will obey it quietly; but let no man who loves his life venture to approach me till I am satisfied for what crime, and by whose authority, I am apprehended.'

Glossin then caused one of the officers show a warrant for the apprehension of Vanbeest Brown, accused of the crime of wilfully and maliciously shooting at Charles Hazlewood, younger of Hazlewood, with an intent to kill, and also of other crimes and misdemeanours, and which appointed him, having been so apprehended, to be brought before the next magistrate for examination. The warrant being formal, and the fact such as he could not deny, Bertram threw down his weapon and submitted himself to the officers, who, flying on him with eagerness corresponding to their former pusillanimity, were about to load him with irons, alleging the strength and activity which he had displayed as a justification of this severity. But Glossin was ashamed or afraid to permit this unnecessary insult, and directed the prisoner to be treated with all the decency, and even respect, that was consistent with safety. Afraid, however, to introduce him into his own house, where still further subjects of recollection might have been suggested, and anxious at the same time to cover his own proceedings by the sanction of another's authority, he ordered his carriage (for he had lately set up a carriage) to be got ready, and in the meantime directed refreshments to be given to the prisoner and the officers, who were consigned to one of the rooms in the old castle, until the means of conveyance for examination before a magistrate should be provided.

CHAPTER XIII

*Bring in the evidence.
Thou robed man of justice, take thy place,
And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,
Bench by his side; you are of the commission,
Sit you too.*

King Lear.

While the carriage was getting ready, Glossin had a letter to compose, about which he wasted no small time. It was to his neighbour, as he was fond of calling him, Sir Robert Hazlewood of Hazlewood, the head of an ancient and powerful interest in the county, which had in the decadence of the Ellangowan family gradually succeeded to much of their authority and influence. The present representative of the family was an elderly man, dotingly fond of his own family, which was limited to an only son and daughter, and stoically indifferent to the fate of all mankind besides. For the rest, he was honourable in his general dealings because he was afraid to suffer the censure of the world, and just from a better motive. He was presumptuously over-conceited on the score of family pride and importance, a feeling considerably enhanced by his late succession to the title of a Nova Scotia baronet; and he hated the memory of the Ellangowan family, though now a memory only, because a certain baron of that house was traditionally reported to have caused the founder of the Hazlewood family hold his stirrup until he mounted into his saddle. In his general deportment he was pompous and important, affecting a species of florid elocution, which often became ridiculous from his misarranging the triads and quaternions with which he loaded his sentences.

To this personage Glossin was now to write in such a conciliatory style as might be most acceptable to his vanity and family pride, and the following was the form of his note:--

'Mr. Gilbert Glossin (he longed to add of Ellangowan, but prudence prevailed, and he suppressed that territorial designation)--'Mr. Gilbert Glossin has the honour to offer his most respectful compliments to Sir Robert Hazlewood, and to inform him that he has this morning been fortunate enough to secure the person who wounded Mr. C. Hazlewood. As Sir Robert Hazlewood may probably choose to conduct the examination of this criminal himself, Mr. G. Glossin will cause the man to be carried to the inn at Kippletringan or to Hazlewood House, as Sir Robert Hazlewood may be pleased to direct. And, with Sir Robert Hazlewood's permission, Mr. G. Glossin will attend him at either of these places with the proofs and declarations which he has been so fortunate as to collect respecting this atrocious business.'

Addressed,

'Sir ROBERT HAZLEWOOD of Hazlewood, Bart. 'Hazlewood House, etc. etc.

'ELLN GN.

'Tuesday.'

This note he despatched by a servant on horseback, and having given the man some time to get ahead, and desired him to ride fast, he ordered two officers of justice to get into the carriage with Bertram; and he himself, mounting his horse, accompanied them at a slow pace to the point where the roads to Kippletringan and Hazlewood House separated, and there awaited the return of his messenger, in order that his farther route might be determined by the answer he should receive from the Baronet. In about half an hour, his servant returned with the following answer, handsomely folded, and sealed with the Hazlewood arms, having the Nova Scotia badge depending from the shield:--

'Sir Robert Hazlewood of Hazlewood returns Mr. G. Glossin's compliments, and thanks him for the trouble he has taken in a matter affecting the safety of Sir Robert's family. Sir R.H. requests Mr. G. G. will have the goodness to bring the prisoner to Hazlewood House for examination, with the other proofs or declarations which he mentions. And after the business is over, in case Mr. G.G. is not otherwise engaged, Sir R. and Lady Hazlewood request his company to dinner.'

Addressed,

'Mr. GILBERT GLOSSIN, etc. 'HAZLEWOOD HOUSE, Tuesday.'

'Soh!' thought Mr. Glossin, 'here is one finger in at least, and that I will make the means of introducing my whole hand. But I must first get clear of this wretched young fellow. I think I can manage Sir Robert. He is dull and pompous, and will be alike disposed to listen to my suggestions upon the law of the case and to assume the credit of acting upon them as his own proper motion. So I shall have the advantage of being the real magistrate, without the odium of responsibility.'

As he cherished these hopes and expectations, the carriage approached Hazlewood House through a noble avenue of old oaks, which shrouded the ancient abbey-resembling building so called. It was a large edifice, built at different periods, part having actually been a priory, upon the suppression of which, in the time of Queen Mary, the first of the family had obtained a gift of the house and surrounding lands from the crown. It was pleasantly situated in a large deer-park, on the banks of the river we have before mentioned. The scenery around was of a dark, solemn, and somewhat melancholy cast, according well with the architecture of the house. Everything appeared to be kept in the highest possible order, and announced the opulence and rank of the proprietor.

As Mr. Glossin's carriage stopped at the door of the hall, Sir Robert reconnoitred the new vehicle from the windows. According to his aristocratic feelings, there was a degree of presumption in this novus homo, this Mr. Gilbert Glossin, late writer in---, presuming to set up such an accommodation at all; but his wrath was mitigated when he observed that the mantle upon the panels only bore a plain cipher of G.G. This apparent modesty was indeed solely owing to the delay of Mr. Gumming of the Lyon Office, who, being at that time engaged in discovering and matriculating the arms of two commissaries from North America, three English-Irish peers, and two great Jamaica traders, had been more slow than usual in finding an escutcheon for the new Laird of Ellangowan. But his delay told to the advantage of Glossin in the opinion of the proud Baronet.

While the officers of justice detained their prisoner in a sort of steward's room, Mr. Glossin was ushered into what was called the great oak-parlour, a long room, panelled with well-varnished wainscot, and adorned with the grim portraits of Sir Robert Hazlewood's ancestry. The visitor, who had no internal consciousness of worth to balance that of meanness of birth, felt his inferiority, and by the depth of his bow and the obsequiousness of his demeanour showed that the Laird of Ellangowan was sunk for the time in the old and submissive habits of the quondam retainer of the law. He would have persuaded himself, indeed, that he was only humouring the pride of the old Baronet for the purpose of turning it to his own advantage, but his feelings were of a mingled nature, and he felt the influence of those very prejudices which he pretended to flatter.

The Baronet received his visitor with that condescending parade which was meant at once to assert his own vast superiority, and to show the generosity and courtesy with which he could waive it, and descend to the level of ordinary conversation with ordinary men. He thanked Glossin for his attention to a matter in which 'young Hazlewood' was so intimately concerned, and, pointing to his family pictures, observed, with a gracious smile, 'Indeed, these venerable gentlemen, Mr. Glossin, are as much obliged as I am in this case for the labour, pains, care, and trouble which you have taken in their behalf; and I have no doubt, were they capable of expressing themselves, would join me, sir, in thanking you for the favour you have conferred upon the house of Hazlewood by taking care, and trouble, sir, and interest in behalf of the young gentleman who is to continue their name and family.'

Thrice bowed Glossin, and each time more profoundly than before; once in honour of the knight who stood upright before him, once in respect to the quiet personages who patiently hung upon the wainscot, and a third time in deference to the young gentleman who was to carry on the name and family. Roturier as he was, Sir Robert was gratified by the homage which he rendered, and proceeded in a tone of gracious familiarity: 'And now, Mr. Glossin, my exceeding good friend, you must allow me to avail myself of your knowledge of law in our proceedings in this matter. I am not much in the habit of acting as a justice of the peace; it suits better with other gentlemen, whose domestic and family affairs require less constant superintendence, attention, and management than mine.'

Of course, whatever small assistance Mr. Glossin could render was entirely at Sir Robert Hazlewood's service; but, as Sir Robert Hazlewood's name stood high in the list of the faculty, the said Mr. Glossin could not presume to hope it could be either necessary or useful.

'Why, my good sir, you will understand me only to mean that I am something deficient in the practical knowledge of the ordinary details of justice business. I was indeed educated to the bar, and might boast perhaps at one time that I had made some progress in the speculative and abstract and abstruse doctrines of our municipal code; but there is in the present day so little opportunity of a man of family and fortune rising to that eminence at the bar which is attained by adventurers who are as willing to plead for John a' Nokes as for the first noble of the land, that I was really early disgusted with practice. The first case, indeed, which was laid on my table quite sickened me: it respected a bargain, sir, of tallow between a butcher and a candlemaker; and I found it was expected that I should grease my mouth not only with their vulgar names, but with all the technical terms and phrases and peculiar language of their dirty arts. Upon my honour, my good sir, I have never been able to bear the smell of a tallow-candle since.'

Pitying, as seemed to be expected, the mean use to which the Baronet's faculties had been degraded on this melancholy occasion, Mr. Glossin offered to officiate as clerk or assessor, or in any way in which he could be most useful. 'And with a view to possessing you of the whole business, and in the first place, there will, I believe, be no difficulty in proving the main fact, that this was the person who fired the unhappy piece. Should he deny it, it can be proved by Mr. Hazlewood, I presume?'

'Young Hazlewood is not at home to-day, Mr. Glossin.'

'But we can have the oath of the servant who attended him,' said the ready Mr. Glossin; 'indeed, I hardly think the fact will be disputed. I am more apprehensive that, from the too favourable and indulgent manner in which I have understood that Mr. Hazlewood has been pleased to represent the business, the assault may be considered as accidental, and the injury as unintentional, so that the fellow may be immediately set at liberty to do more mischief.'

'I have not the honour to know the gentleman who now holds the office of king's advocate,' replied Sir Robert, gravely; 'but I presume, sir--nay, I am confident, that he will consider the mere fact of having wounded young Hazlewood of Hazlewood, even by inadvertency, to take the matter in its mildest and gentlest, and in its most favourable and improbable, light, as a crime which will be too easily atoned by imprisonment, and as more deserving of deportation.'

'Indeed, Sir Robert,' said his assenting brother in justice, 'I am entirely of your opinion; but, I don't know how it is, I have observed the Edinburgh gentlemen of the bar, and even the officers of the crown, pique themselves upon an indifferent administration of justice, without respect to rank and family; and I should fear--'

'How, sir, without respect to rank and family? Will you tell me THAT doctrine can be held by men of birth and legal education? No, sir; if a trifle stolen in the street is termed mere pickery, but is elevated into sacrilege if the crime be committed in a church, so, according to the just gradations of society, the guilt of an injury is enhanced by the rank of the person to whom it is offered, done, or perpetrated, sir.'

Glossin bowed low to this declaration ex cathedra, but observed, that in the case of the very worst, and of such unnatural doctrines being actually held as he had already hinted, 'the law had another hold on Mr. Vanbeest Brown.'

'Vanbeest Brown! is that the fellow's name? Good God! that young Hazlewood of Hazlewood should have had his life endangered, the clavicle of his right shoulder considerably lacerated and dislodged, several large drops or slugs deposited in the acromion process, as the account of the family surgeon expressly bears, and all by an obscure wretch named Vanbeest Brown!'

'Why, really, Sir Robert, it is a thing which one can hardly bear to think of; but, begging ten thousand pardons for resuming what I was about to say, a person of the same name is, as appears from these papers (producing Dirk Hatteraick's pocket-book), mate to the smuggling vessel who offered such violence at Woodbourne, and I have no doubt that this is the same individual; which, however, your acute discrimination will easily be able to ascertain.'

'The same, my good sir, he must assuredly be; it would be injustice even to the meanest of the people to suppose there could be found among them TWO persons doomed to bear a name so shocking to one's ears as this of Vanbeest Brown.' 'True, Sir Robert; most unquestionably; there cannot be a shadow of doubt of it. But you see farther, that this circumstance accounts for the man's desperate conduct. You, Sir Robert, will discover the motive for his crime--you, I say, will

discover it without difficulty on your giving your mind to the examination; for my part, I cannot help suspecting the moving spring to have been revenge for the gallantry with which Mr. Hazlewood, with all the spirit of his renowned forefathers, defended the house at Woodbourne against this villain and his lawless companions.'

'I will inquire into it, my good sir,' said the learned Baronet. 'Yet even now I venture to conjecture that I shall adopt the solution or explanation of this riddle, enigma, or mystery which you have in some degree thus started. Yes! revenge it must be; and, good Heaven! entertained by and against whom? entertained, fostered, cherished against young Hazlewood of Hazlewood, and in part carried into effect, executed, and implemented by the hand of Vanbeest Brown! These are dreadful days indeed, my worthy neighbour (this epithet indicated a rapid advance in the Baronet's good graces)--days when the bulwarks of society are shaken to their mighty base, and that rank which forms, as it were, its highest grace and ornament is mingled and confused with the viler parts of the architecture. O, my good Mr. Gilbert Glossin, in my time, sir, the use of swords and pistols, and such honourable arms, was reserved by the nobility and gentry to themselves, and the disputes of the vulgar were decided by the weapons which nature had given them, or by cudgels cut, broken, or hewed out of the next wood. But now, sir, the clouted shoe of the peasant galls the kibe of the courtier. The lower ranks have their quarrels, sir, and their points of honour, and their revenges, which they must bring, forsooth, to fatal arbitrament. But well, well! it will last my time. Let us have in this fellow, this Vanbeest Brown, and make an end of him, at least for the present.'

CHAPTER XIV

*'Twas he
Gave heat unto the injury, which returned,
Like a petard ill lighted, into the bosom
Of him gave fire to't. Yet I hope his hurt
Is not so dangerous but he may recover*

Fair Maid of the Inn.

The prisoner was now presented before the two worshipful magistrates. Glossin, partly from some compunctious visitings, and partly out of his cautious resolution to suffer Sir Robert Hazlewood to be the ostensible manager of the whole examination, looked down upon the table, and busied himself with reading and arranging the papers respecting the business, only now and then throwing in a skilful catchword as prompter, when he saw the principal, and apparently most active, magistrate stand in need of a hint. As for Sir Robert Hazlewood, he assumed on his part a happy mixture of the austerity of the justice combined with the display of personal dignity appertaining to the baronet of ancient family.

'There, constables, let him stand there at the bottom of the table. Be so good as look me in the face, sir, and raise your voice as you answer the questions which I am going to put to you.'

'May I beg, in the first place, to know, sir, who it is that takes the trouble to interrogate me?' said the prisoner; 'for the honest gentlemen who have brought me here have not been pleased to furnish any information upon that point.'

'And pray, sir,' answered Sir Robert, 'what has my name and quality to do with the questions I am about to ask you?'

'Nothing, perhaps, sir,' replied Bertram; 'but it may considerably influence my disposition to answer them.'

'Why, then, sir, you will please to be informed that you are in presence of Sir Robert Hazlewood of Hazlewood, and another justice of peace for this county--that's all.'

As this intimation produced a less stunning effect upon the prisoner than he had anticipated, Sir Robert proceeded in his investigation with an increasing dislike to the object of it.

'Is your name Vanbeest Brown, sir?'

'It is,' answered the prisoner.

'So far well; and how are we to design you farther, sir?' demanded the Justice.

'Captain in his Majesty's---regiment of horse,' answered Bertram.

The Baronet's ears received this intimation with astonishment; but he was refreshed in courage by an incredulous look from Glossin, and by hearing him gently utter a sort of interjectional whistle, in a note of surprise and contempt. 'I believe, my friend,' said Sir Robert, 'we shall find for you, before we part, a more humble title.'

'If you do, sir,' replied his prisoner, 'I shall willingly submit to any punishment which such an imposture shall be thought to deserve.'

'Well, sir, we shall see,' continued Sir Robert. 'Do you know young Hazlewood of Hazlewood?'

'I never saw the gentleman who I am informed bears that name excepting once, and I regret that it was under very unpleasant circumstances.'

'You mean to acknowledge, then,' said the Baronet, 'that you inflicted upon young Hazlewood of Hazlewood that wound which endangered his life, considerably lacerated the clavicle of his right shoulder, and deposited, as the family surgeon declares, several large drops or slugs in the acromion process?'

'Why, sir,' replied Bertram, 'I can only say I am equally ignorant of and sorry for the extent of the damage which the young gentleman has sustained. I met him in a narrow path, walking with two ladies and a servant, and before I could either pass them or address them, this young Hazlewood took his gun from his servant, presented it against my body, and commanded me in the most haughty tone to stand back. I was neither inclined to submit to his authority nor to leave him in possession of the means to injure me, which he seemed disposed to use with such rashness. I therefore closed with him for the purpose of disarming him; and, just as I had nearly effected my purpose, the piece went off accidentally, and, to my regret then and since, inflicted upon the young gentleman a severer chastisement than I desired, though I am glad to understand it is like to prove no more than his unprovoked folly deserved.'

'And so, sir,' said the Baronet, every feature swoln with offended dignity, 'you, sir, admit, sir, that it was your purpose, sir, and your intention, sir, and the real jet and object of your assault, sir, to disarm young Hazlewood of Hazlewood of his gun, sir, or his fowling-piece, or his fuzee, or whatever you please to call it, sir, upon the king's highway, sir? I think this will do, my worthy neighbour! I think he should stand committed?'

'You are by far the best judge, Sir Robert,' said Glossin, in his most insinuating tone; 'but if I might presume to hint, there was something about these smugglers.'

'Very true, good sir. And besides, sir, you, Vanbeest Brown, who call yourself a captain in his Majesty's service, are no better or worse than a rascally mate of a smuggler!'

'Really, sir,' said Bertram, 'you are an old gentleman, and acting under some strange delusion, otherwise I should be very angry with you.'

'Old gentleman, sir! strange delusion, sir!' said Sir Robert, colouring with indignation. 'I protest and declare--Why, sir, have you any papers or letters that can establish your pretended rank and estate and commission?'

'None at present, sir,' answered Bertram; 'but in the return of a post or two---'

'And how do you, sir,' continued the Baronet, 'if you are a captain in his Majesty's service--how do you chance to be travelling in Scotland without letters of introduction, credentials, baggage, or anything belonging to your pretended rank, estate, and condition, as I said before?'

'Sir,' replied the prisoner, 'I had the misfortune to be robbed of my clothes and baggage.'

'Oho! then you are the gentleman who took a post-chaise from---to Kippletringan, gave the boy the slip on the road, and sent two of your accomplices to beat the boy and bring away the baggage?'

'I was, sir, in a carriage, as you describe, was obliged to alight in the snow, and lost my way endeavouring to find the road to Kippletringan. The landlady of the inn will inform you that on my arrival there the next day, my first inquiries were after the boy.'

'Then give me leave to ask where you spent the night, not in the snow, I presume? You do not suppose that will pass, or be taken, credited, and received?'

'I beg leave,' said Bertram, his recollection turning to the gipsy female and to the promise he had given her--'I beg leave to decline answering that question.'

'I thought as much,' said Sir Robert. 'Were you not during that night in the ruins of Derncleugh?--in the ruins of Derncleugh, sir?'

'I have told you that I do not intend answering that question,' replied Bertram.

'Well, sir, then you will stand committed, sir,' said Sir Robert, 'and be sent to prison, sir, that's all, sir. Have the goodness to look at these papers; are you the Vanbeest Brown who is there mentioned?'

It must be remarked that Glossin had shuffled among the papers some writings which really did belong to Bertram, and which had been found by the officers in the old vault where his portmanteau was ransacked.

'Some of these papers,' said Bertram, looking over them, 'are mine, and were in my portfolio when it was stolen from the post-chaise. They are memoranda of little value, and, I see, have been carefully selected as affording no evidence of my rank or character, which many of the other papers would have established fully. They are mingled with ship-accounts and other papers, belonging apparently to a person of the same name.'

'And wilt thou attempt to persuade me, friend,' demanded Sir Robert, 'that there are TWO persons in this country at the same time of thy very uncommon and awkwardly sounding name?'

'I really do not see, sir, as there is an old Hazlewood and a young Hazlewood, why there should not be an old and a young Vanbeest Brown. And, to speak seriously, I was educated in Holland, and I know that this name, however uncouth it may sound in British ears---'

Glossin, conscious that the prisoner was now about to enter upon dangerous ground, interfered, though the interruption was unnecessary, for the purpose of diverting the attention of Sir Robert Hazlewood, who was speechless and motionless with indignation at the presumptuous comparison implied in Bertram's last speech. In fact, the veins of his throat and of his temples swelled almost to bursting, and he sat with the indignant and disconcerted air of one who has received a mortal insult from a quarter to which he holds it unmeet and indecorous to make any reply. While, with a bent brow and an angry eye, he was drawing in his breath slowly and majestically, and puffing it forth again with deep and solemn exertion, Glossin stepped in to his assistance. 'I should think now, Sir Robert, with great submission, that this matter may be closed. One of the constables, besides the pregnant proof already produced, offers to make oath that the sword of which the prisoner was this morning deprived (while using it, by the way, in resistance to a legal warrant) was a cutlass taken from him in a fray between the officers and smugglers just previous to their attack upon Woodbourne. And yet,' he added, 'I would not have you form any rash construction upon that subject; perhaps the young man can explain how he came by that weapon.'

'That question, sir,' said Bertram, 'I shall also leave unanswered.'

'There is yet another circumstance to be inquired into, always under Sir Robert's leave,' insinuated Glossin. 'This prisoner put into the hands of Mrs. MacCandlish of Kippletringan a parcel containing a variety of gold coins and valuable articles of different kinds. Perhaps, Sir Robert, you might think it right to ask how he came by property of a description which seldom occurs?'

'You, sir, Mr. Vanbeest Brown, sir, you hear the question, sir, which the gentleman asks you?'

'I have particular reasons for declining to answer that question,' answered Bertram.

'Then I am afraid, sir,' said Glossin, who had brought matters to the point he desired to reach, 'our duty must lay us under the necessity to sign a warrant of committal.'

'As you please, sir,' answered Bertram; 'take care, however, what you do. Observe that I inform you that I am a captain in his Majesty's---regiment, and that I am just returned from India, and therefore cannot possibly be connected with any of those contraband traders you talk of; that my lieutenant-colonel is now at Nottingham, the major, with the officers of my corps, at Kingston-upon-Thames. I offer before you both to submit to any degree of ignominy if, within the return of the Kingston and Nottingham posts, I am not able to establish these points. Or you may write to the agent for the regiment if you please, and---'

'This is all very well, sir,' said Glossin, beginning to fear lest the firm expostulation of Bertram should make some impression on Sir Robert, who would almost have died of shame at committing such a solecism as sending a captain of horse to jail--'this is all very well, sir; but is there no person nearer whom you could refer to?'

'There are only two persons in this country who know anything of me,' replied the prisoner. 'One is a plain Liddesdale sheep-farmer, called Dinmont of Charlie's Hope; but he knows nothing more of me than what I told him, and what I now tell you.'

'Why, this is well enough, Sir Robert!' said Glossin. 'I suppose he would bring forward this thick-skulled fellow to give his oath of credulity, Sir Robert, ha, ha, ha!'

'And what is your other witness, friend?' said the Baronet.

'A gentleman whom I have some reluctance to mention because of certain private reasons, but under whose command I served some time in India, and who is too much a man of honour to refuse his testimony to my character as a soldier and gentleman.'

'And who is this doughty witness, pray, sir?' said Sir Robert, 'some half-pay quartermaster or sergeant, I suppose?'

'Colonel Guy Mannering, late of the---regiment, in which, as I told you, I have a troop.'

'Colonel Guy Mannering!' thought Glossin, 'who the devil could have guessed this?'

'Colonel Guy Mannering?' echoed the Baronet, considerably shaken in his opinion. 'My good sir,' apart to Glossin, 'the young man with a dreadfully plebeian name and a good deal of modest assurance has nevertheless something of the tone and manners and feeling of a gentleman, of one at least who has lived in good society; they do give commissions very loosely and carelessly and inaccurately in India. I think we had better pause till Colonel Mannering shall return; he is now, I believe, at Edinburgh.'

'You are in every respect the best judge, Sir Robert,' answered Glossin--'in every possible respect. I would only submit to you that we are certainly hardly entitled to dismiss this man upon an assertion which cannot be satisfied by proof, and that we shall incur a heavy responsibility by detaining him in private custody, without committing him to a public jail. Undoubtedly, however, you are the best judge, Sir Robert; and I would only say, for my own part, that I very lately incurred severe censure by detaining a person in a place which I thought perfectly secure, and under the custody of the proper officers. The man made his escape, and I have no doubt my own character for attention and circumspection as a magistrate has in some degree suffered. I only hint this: I will join in any step you, Sir Robert, think most advisable.' But Mr. Glossin was well aware that such a hint was of power sufficient to decide the motions of his self-important but not self-relying colleague. So that Sir Robert Hazlewood summed up the business in the following speech, which proceeded partly upon the supposition of the prisoner being really a gentleman, and partly upon the opposite belief that he was a villain and an assassin:--

'Sir, Mr. Vanbeest Brown--I would call you Captain Brown if there was the least reason or cause or grounds to suppose that you are a captain, or had a troop in the very respectable corps you mention, or indeed in any other corps in his Majesty's service, as to which circumstance I beg to be understood to give no positive, settled, or unalterable judgment, declaration, or opinion,--I say, therefore, sir, Mr. Brown, we have determined, considering the unpleasant predicament in which you now stand, having been robbed, as you say, an assertion as to which I suspend my opinion, and being possessed of much and valuable treasure, and of a brass-handled cutlass besides, as to your obtaining which you will favour us with no explanation,--I say, sir, we have determined and resolved and made up our minds to commit you to jail, or rather to assign you an apartment therein, in order that you may be forthcoming upon Colonel Mannering's return from Edinburgh.'

'With humble submission, Sir Robert,' said Glossin, 'may I inquire if it is your purpose to send this young gentleman to the county jail? For if that were not your settled intention, I would take the liberty to hint that there would be less hardship in sending him to the bridewell at Portanferry, where he can be secured without public exposure, a circumstance which, on the mere chance of his story being really true, is much to be avoided.'

'Why, there is a guard of soldiers at Portanferry, to be sure, for protection of the goods in the custom-house; and upon the whole, considering everything, and that the place is comfortable for such a place, I say, all things considered, we will commit this person, I would rather say authorise him to be detained, in the workhouse at Portanferry.'

The warrant was made out accordingly, and Bertram was informed he was next morning to be removed to his place of confinement, as Sir Robert had determined he should not be taken there under cloud of night, for fear of rescue. He was during the interval to be detained at Hazlewood House.

'It cannot be so hard as my imprisonment by the looties in India,' he thought; 'nor can it last so long. But the deuce take the old formal dunderhead, and his more sly associate, who speaks always under his breath; they cannot understand a plain man's story when it is told them.'

In the meanwhile Glossin took leave of the Baronet with a thousand respectful bows and cringing apologies for not accepting his invitation to dinner, and venturing to hope he might be pardoned in paying his respects to him, Lady Hazlewood, and young Mr. Hazlewood on some future occasion.

'Certainly, sir,' said the Baronet, very graciously. 'I hope our family was never at any time deficient in civility to our neighbours; and when I ride that way, good Mr. Glossin, I will convince you of this by calling at your house as familiarly as is consistent--that is, as can be hoped or expected.'

'And now,' said Glossin to himself, 'to find Dirk Hatteraick and his people, to get the guard sent off from the custom-house; and then for the grand cast of the dice. Everything must depend upon speed. How lucky that Mannerling has betaken himself to Edinburgh! His knowledge of this young fellow is a most perilous addition to my dangers.' Here he suffered his horse to slacken his pace. 'What if I should try to compound with the heir? It's likely he might be brought to pay a round sum for restitution, and I could give up Hatteraick. But no, no, no! there were too many eyes on me--Hatteraick himself, and the gipsy sailor, and that old hag. No, no! I must stick to my original plan.' And with that he struck his spurs against his horse's flanks, and rode forward at a hard trot to put his machines in motion.

CHAPTER XV

*A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive,
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for one alive
Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong,
Sometimes a place of rogues and thieves,
And honest men among*

Inscription on Edinburgh Tolbooth

Early on the following morning the carriage which had brought Bertram to Hazlewood House was, with his two silent and surly attendants, appointed to convey him to his place of confinement at Portanferry. This building adjoined to the custom-house established at that little seaport, and both were situated so close to the sea-beach that it was necessary to defend the back part with a large and strong rampart or bulwark of huge stones, disposed in a slope towards the surf, which often reached and broke upon them. The front was surrounded by a high wall, enclosing a small courtyard, within which the miserable inmates of the mansion were occasionally permitted to take exercise and air. The prison was used as a house of correction, and sometimes as a chapel of ease to the county jail, which was old, and far from being conveniently situated with reference to the Kippeltringan district of the county. Mac-Guffog, the officer by whom Bertram had at first been apprehended, and who was now in attendance upon him, was keeper of this palace of little-ease. He caused the carriage to be drawn close up to the outer gate, and got out himself to summon the warders. The noise of his rap alarmed some twenty or thirty ragged boys, who left off sailing their mimic sloops and frigates in the little pools of salt water left by the receding tide, and hastily crowded round the vehicle to see what luckless being was to be delivered to the prison-house out of 'Glossin's braw new carriage.' The door of the courtyard, after the heavy clanking of many chains and bars, was opened by Mrs. Mac-Guffog--an awful spectacle, being a woman for strength and resolution capable of maintaining order among her riotous inmates, and of administering the discipline of the house, as it was called, during the absence of her husband, or when he chanced to have taken an overdose of the creature. The growling voice of this Amazon, which rivalled in harshness the crashing music of her own bolts and bars, soon dispersed in every direction the little varlets who had thronged around her threshold, and she next addressed her amiable helpmate:--

'Be sharp, man, and get out the swell, canst thou not?'

'Hold your tongue and be d-d, you--,' answered her loving husband, with two additional epithets of great energy, but which we beg to be excused from repeating. Then addressing Bertram--'Come, will you get out, my handy lad, or must we lend you a lift?'

Bertram came out of the carriage, and, collared by the constable as he put his foot on the ground, was dragged, though he offered no resistance, across the threshold, amid the continued shouts of the little sansculottes, who looked on at such distance as their fear of Mrs. Mac-Guffog permitted. The instant his foot had crossed the fatal porch, the portress again dropped her chains, drew her bolts, and, turning with both hands an immense key, took it from the lock and thrust it into a huge side-pocket of red cloth.

Bertram was now in the small court already mentioned. Two or three prisoners were sauntering along the pavement, and deriving as it were a feeling of refreshment from the momentary glimpse with which the opening door had extended their prospect to the other side of a dirty street. Nor can this be thought surprising, when it is considered that, unless on such occasions, their view was confined to the grated front of their prison, the high and sable walls of the courtyard, the heaven above them, and the pavement beneath their feet--a sameness of landscape which, to use the poet's expression, 'lay like a load on the wearied eye,' and had fostered in some a callous and dull misanthropy, in others that sickness of the heart which induces him who is immured already in a living grave to wish for a sepulchre yet more calm and sequestered.

Mac-Guffog, when they entered the courtyard, suffered Bertram to pause for a minute and look upon his companions in affliction. When he had cast his eye around on faces on which guilt and despondence and low excess had fixed their stigma--upon the spendthrift, and the swindler, and the thief, the bankrupt debtor, the 'moping idiot, and the madman gay,' whom a paltry spirit of economy congregated to share this dismal habitation, he felt his heart recoil with inexpressible loathing from enduring the contamination of their society even for a moment.

'I hope, sir,' he said to the keeper, 'you intend to assign me a place of confinement apart?'

'And what should I be the better of that?'

'Why, sir, I can but be detained here a day or two, and it would be very disagreeable to me to mix in the sort of company this place affords.'

'And what do I care for that?'

'Why then, sir, to speak to your feelings,' said Bertram, 'I shall be willing to make you a handsome compliment for this indulgence.'

'Ay, but when, Captain? when and how? that's the question, or rather the two questions,' said the jailor.

'When I am delivered, and get my remittances from England,' answered the prisoner.

Mac-Guffog shook his head incredulously.

'Why, friend, you do not pretend to believe that I am really a malefactor?' said Bertram.

'Why, I no ken,' said the fellow; 'but if you ARE on the account, ye're nae sharp ane, that's the daylight o't.'

'And why do you say I am no sharp one?'

'Why, wha but a crack-brained greenhorn wad hae let them keep up the siller that ye left at the Gordon Arms?' said the constable. 'Deil fetch me, but I wad have had it out o' their wames! Ye had nae right to be strippit o' your money and sent to jail without a mark to pay your fees; they might have keepit the rest o' the articles for evidence. But why, for a blind bottle-head, did not ye ask the guineas? and I kept winking and nodding a' the time, and the donnert deevil wad never ance look my way!'

'Well, sir,' replied Bertram, 'if I have a title to have that property delivered up to me, I shall apply for it; and there is a good deal more than enough to pay any demand you can set up.'

'I dinna ken a bit about that,' said Mac-Guffog; 'ye may be here lang enough. And then the gieing credit maun be considered in the fees. But, however, as ye DO seem to be a chap by common, though my wife says I lose by my good-nature, if ye gie me an order for my fees upon that money I daresay Glossin will make it forthcoming; I ken something about an escape from Ellangowan. Ay, ay, he'll be glad to carry me through, and be neighbour-like.'

'Well, sir,' replied Bertram, 'if I am not furnished in a day or two otherwise, you shall have such an order.'

'Weel, weel, then ye shall be put up like a prince,' said Mac-Guffog. 'But mark ye me, friend, that we may have nae colly-shangie afterhend, these are the fees that I always charge a swell that must have his lib-ken to himself:--Thirty shillings a week for lodgings, and a guinea for garnish; half a guinea a week for a single bed; and I dinna get the whole of it, for I must gie half a crown out of it to Donald Laider that's in for sheep-stealing, that should sleep with you by rule, and he'll expect clean strae, and maybe some whisky beside. So I make little upon that.'

'Well, sir, go on.'

'Then for meat and liquor, ye may have the best, and I never charge abune twenty per cent ower tavern price for pleasing a gentleman that way; and that's little enough for sending in and sending out, and wearing the lassie's shoon out. And then if ye're dowie I will sit wi' you a gliff in the evening mysell, man, and help ye out wi' your bottle. I have drank mony a glass wi' Glossin, man, that did you up, though he's a justice now. And then I'se warrant ye'll be for fire thir cauld nights, or if ye want candle, that's an expensive article, for it's against the rules. And now I've tell'd ye the head articles of the charge, and I dinna think there's muckle mair, though there will aye be some odd expenses ower and abune.'

'Well, sir, I must trust to your conscience, if ever you happened to hear of such a thing; I cannot help myself.'

'Na, na, sir,' answered the cautious jailor, 'I'll no permit you to be saying that. I'm forcing naething upon ye; an ye dinna like the price, ye needna take the article. I force no man; I was only explaining what civility was. But if ye like to take the common run of the house, it's a' ane to me; I'll be saved trouble, that's a'.'

'Nay, my friend, I have, as I suppose you may easily guess, no inclination to dispute your terms upon such a penalty,' answered Bertram. 'Come, show me where I am to be, for I would fain be alone for a little while.'

'Ay, ay, come along then, Captain,' said the fellow, with a contortion of visage which he intended to be a smile; 'and I'll tell you now--to show you that I HAVE a conscience, as ye ca't--d--n me if I charge ye abune six-pence a day for the freedom o' the court, and ye may walk in't very near three hours a day, and play at pitch-and-toss and hand ba' and what not.'

With this gracious promise he ushered Bertram into the house, and showed him up a steep and narrow stone staircase, at the top of which was a strong door, clenched with iron and studded with nails. Beyond this door was a narrow passage or gallery, having three cells on each side, wretched vaults, with iron bed-frames and straw mattresses. But at the farther end was a small apartment of rather a more decent appearance, that is, having less the air of a place of confinement, since, unless for the large lock and chain upon the door, and the crossed and ponderous stanchions upon the window, it rather resembled the 'worst inn's worst room.' It was designed as a sort of infirmary for prisoners whose state of health required some indulgence; and, in fact, Donald Laider, Bertram's destined chum, had been just dragged out of one of the two beds which it contained, to try whether clean straw and whisky might not have a better chance to cure his intermitting fever. This process of ejection had been carried into force by Mrs. Mac-Guffog while her husband parleyed with Bertram in the courtyard, that good lady having a distinct presentiment of the manner in which the treaty must necessarily terminate. Apparently the expulsion had not taken place without some application of the strong hand, for one of the bed-posts of a sort of tent-bed was broken down, so that the tester and curtains hung forward into the middle of the narrow chamber, like the banner of a chieftain half-sinking amid the confusion of a combat.

'Never mind that being out o' sorts, Captain,' said Mrs. Mac-Guffog, who now followed them into the room; then, turning her back to the prisoner, with as much delicacy as the action admitted, she whipped from her knee her ferret garter, and applied it to splicing and fastening the broken bed-post; then used more pins than her apparel could well spare to fasten up the bed-curtains in festoons; then shook the bed-clothes into something like form; then flung over all a tattered patch-work quilt, and pronounced that things were now 'something purpose-like.' 'And there's your bed, Captain,' pointing to a massy four-posted hulk, which, owing to the inequality of the floor, that had sunk considerably (the house, though new, having been built by contract), stood on three legs, and held the fourth aloft as if pawing the air, and in the attitude of advancing like an elephant passant upon the panel of a coach,--'there's your bed and the blankets; but if ye want sheets, or bowster, or pillow, or ony sort o' nappery for the table, or for your hands, ye 'll hae to speak to me about it, for that's out o' the gudeman's line (Mac-Guffog had by this time left the room, to avoid, probably, any appeal which might be made to him upon this new exaction), and he never engages for ony thing like that.'

'In God's name,' said Bertram, 'let me have what is decent, and make any charge you please.'

'Aweel, aweel, that's sune settled; we'll no excise you neither, though we live sae near the custom-house. And I maun see to get you some fire and some dinner too, I'se warrant; but your dinner will be but a puir ane the day, no expecting company that would be nice and fashious.' So saying, and in all haste, Mrs. Mac-Guffog fetched a scuttle of live coals, and having replenished 'the rusty grate, unconscious of a fire' for months before, she proceeded with unwashed hands to arrange the stipulated bed-linen (alas, how different from Ailie Dinmont's!), and, muttering to herself as she discharged her task, seemed, in inveterate spleen of temper, to grudge even those accommodations for which she was to receive payment. At length, however, she departed, grumbling between her teeth, that 'she wad rather lock up a haill ward than be fiking about thae niff-naffy gentles that gae sae muckle fash wi' their fancies.'

When she was gone Bertram found himself reduced to the alternative of pacing his little apartment for exercise, or gazing out upon the sea in such proportions as could be seen from the narrow panes of his window, obscured by dirt and by close iron bars, or reading over the records of brutal wit and blackguardism which despair had scrawled upon the half-whitened walls. The sounds were as uncomfortable as the objects of sight; the sullen dash of the tide, which was now retreating, and the occasional opening and shutting of a door, with all its accompaniments of jarring bolts and creaking hinges, mingling occasionally with the dull monotony of the retiring ocean. Sometimes, too, he could hear the hoarse growl of the keeper, or the shriller strain of his helpmate, almost always in the tone of discontent, anger, or insolence. At other times the large mastiff chained in the courtyard answered with furious bark the insults of the idle loiterers who made a sport of incensing him.

At length the tedium of this weary space was broken by the entrance of a dirty-looking serving-wench, who made some preparations for dinner by laying a half-dirty cloth upon a whole-dirty deal table. A knife and fork, which had not been worn out by overcleaning, flanked a cracked delf plate; a nearly empty mustard-pot, placed on one side of the table, balanced a salt-cellar, containing an article of a greyish, or rather a blackish, mixture, upon the other, both of stoneware, and bearing too obvious marks of recent service. Shortly after, the same Hebe brought up a plate of beef-collops, done in the frying-pan, with a huge allowance of

grease floating in an ocean of lukewarm water; and, having added a coarse loaf to these savoury viands, she requested to know what liquors the gentleman chose to order. The appearance of this fare was not very inviting; but Bertram endeavoured to mend his commons by ordering wine, which he found tolerably good, and, with the assistance of some indifferent cheese, made his dinner chiefly off the brown loaf. When his meal was over the girl presented her master's compliments, and, if agreeable to the gentleman, he would help him to spend the evening. Bertram desired to be excused, and begged, instead of this gracious society, that he might be furnished with paper, pen, ink, and candles. The light appeared in the shape of one long broken tallow-candle, inclining over a tin candlestick coated with grease; as for the writing materials, the prisoner was informed that he might have them the next day if he chose to send out to buy them. Bertram next desired the maid to procure him a book, and enforced his request with a shilling; in consequence of which, after long absence, she reappeared with two odd volumes of the 'Newgate Calendar,' which she had borrowed from Sam Silverquill, an idle apprentice, who was imprisoned under a charge of forgery. Having laid the books on the table she retired, and left Bertram to studies which were not ill adapted to his present melancholy situation.

CHAPTER XVI

*But if thou shouldst be dragg'd in scorn
To yonder ignominious tree,
Thou shall not want one faithful friend
To share the cruel fates' decree.*

SHENSTONE.

Plunged in the gloomy reflections which were naturally excited by his dismal reading and disconsolate situation, Bertram for the first time in his life felt himself affected with a disposition to low spirits. 'I have been in worse situations than this too,' he said; 'more dangerous, for here is no danger; more dismal in prospect, for my present confinement must necessarily be short; more intolerable for the time, for here, at least, I have fire, food, and shelter. Yet, with reading these bloody tales of crime and misery in a place so corresponding to the ideas which they excite, and in listening to these sad sounds, I feel a stronger disposition to melancholy than in my life I ever experienced. But I will not give way to it. Begone, thou record of guilt and infamy!' he said, flinging the book upon the spare bed; 'a Scottish jail shall not break, on the very first day, the spirits which have resisted climate, and want, and penury, and disease, and imprisonment in a foreign land. I have fought many a hard battle with Dame Fortune, and she shall not beat me now if I can help it.'

Then bending his mind to a strong effort, he endeavoured to view his situation in the most favourable light. Delasserre must soon be in Scotland; the certificates from his commanding officer must soon arrive; nay, if Mannering were first applied to, who could say but the effect might be a reconciliation between them? He had often observed, and now remembered, that when his former colonel took the part of any one, it was never by halves, and that he seemed to love those persons most who had lain under obligation to him. In the present case a favour, which could be asked with honour and granted with readiness, might be the means of reconciling them to each other. From this his feelings naturally turned towards Julia; and, without very nicely measuring the distance between a soldier of fortune, who expected that her father's attestation would deliver him from confinement, and the heiress of that father's wealth and expectations, he was building the gayest castle in the clouds, and varnishing it with all the tints of a summer-evening sky, when his labour was interrupted by a loud knocking at the outer gate, answered by the barking of the gaunt half-starved mastiff which was quartered in the courtyard as an addition to the garrison. After much scrupulous precaution the gate was opened and some person admitted. The house-door was next unbarred, unlocked, and unchained, a dog's feet pattered upstairs in great haste, and the animal was heard scratching and whining at the door of the room. Next a heavy step was heard lumbering up, and Mac-Guffog's voice in the character of pilot--'This way, this way; take care of the step; that's the room.' Bertram's door was then unbolted, and to his great surprise and joy his terrier, Wasp, rushed into the apartment and almost devoured him with caresses, followed by the massy form of his friend from Charlie's Hope.

'Eh whow! Eh whow!' ejaculated the honest farmer, as he looked round upon his friend's miserable apartment and wretched accommodation--'What's this o't! what's this o't!'

'Just a trick of fortune, my good friend,' said Bertram, rising and shaking him heartily by the hand, 'that's all.'

'But what will be done about it? or what CAN be done about it?' said honest Dandie. 'Is't for debt, or what is't for?'

'Why, it is not for debt,' answered Bertram; 'and if you have time to sit down, I'll tell you all I know of the matter myself.'

'If I hae time?' said Dandie, with an accent on the word that sounded like a howl of derision. 'Ou, what the deevil am I come here for, man, but just ance errand to see about it? But ye'll no be the waur o' something to eat, I trow; it's getting late at e'en. I tell'd the folk at the Change, where I put up Duple, to send ower my supper here, and the chield Mac-Guffog is agreeable to let it in; I hae settled a' that. And now let's hear your story. Whisht, Wasp, man! wow, but he's glad to see you, poor thing!'

Bertram's story, being confined to the accident of Hazlewood, and the confusion made between his own identity and that of one of the smugglers who had been active in the assault of Woodbourne, and chanced to bear the same name, was soon told. Dinmont listened very attentively. 'Aweel,' he said, 'this suld be nae sic dooms desperate business surely; the lad's doing weel again that was hurt, and what signifies twa or three lead draps in his shoulder? if ye had putten out his ee it would hae been another case. But eh, as I wuss auld Sherra Pleydell was to the fore here! Od, he was the man for sorting them, and the queerest rough-spoken deevil too that ever ye heard!'

'But now tell me, my excellent friend, how did you find out I was here?'

'Od, lad, queerly eneugh,' said Dandie; 'but I'll tell ye that after we are done wi' our supper, for it will maybe no be sae weel to speak about it while that lang-lugged limmer o' a lass is gaun flisking in and out o' the room.'

Bertram's curiosity was in some degree put to rest by the appearance of the supper which his friend had ordered, which, although homely enough, had the appetising cleanliness in which Mrs. Mac-Guffog's cookery was so eminently deficient. Dinmont also, premising he had ridden the whole day since breakfast-time without tasting anything 'to speak of,' which qualifying phrase related to about three pounds of cold roast mutton which he had discussed at his mid-day stage--Dinmont, I say, fell stoutly upon the good cheer, and, like one of Homer's heroes, said little, either good or bad, till the rage of thirst and hunger was appeased. At length, after a draught of home-brewed ale, he began by observing, 'Aweel, aweel, that hen,' looking upon the lamentable relics of what had been once a large fowl, 'wasna a bad ane to be bred at a town end, though it's no like our barn-door chuckies at Charlie's Hope; and I am glad to see that this vexing job hasna taen awa your appetite, Captain.'

'Why, really, my dinner was not so excellent, Mr. Dinmont, as to spoil my supper.'

'I daresay no, I daresay no,' said Dandie. 'But now, hinny, that ye hae brought us the brandy, and the mug wi' the het water, and the sugar, and a' right, ye may steek the door, ye see, for we wad hae some o' our ain cracks.' The damsel accordingly retired and shut the door of the apartment, to which she added the precaution of drawing a large bolt on the outside.

As soon as she was gone Dandie reconnoitred the premises, listened at the key-hole as if he had been listening for the blowing of an otter, and, having satisfied himself that there were no eavesdroppers, returned to the table; and, making himself what he called a gey stiff cheerer, poked the fire, and began his story in an undertone of gravity and importance not very usual with him.

'Ye see, Captain, I had been in Edinbro' for twa or three days, looking after the burial of a friend that we hae lost, and maybe I suld hae had something for my ride; but there's disappointments in a' things, and wha can help the like o' that? And I had a wee bit law business besides, but that's neither here nor there. In short, I had got my matters settled, and hame I cam; and the morn awa to the muirs to see what the herds had been about, and I thought I might as weel gie a look to the Touthope Head, where Jock o' Dawston and me has the outcast about a march. Weel, just as I was coming upon the bit, I saw a man afore me that I kenn'd was nane o' our herds, and it's a wild bit to meet ony other body, so when I cam up to him it was Tod Gabriel, the fox-hunter. So I says to him, rather surprised like, "What are ye doing up amang the craws here, without your hounds, man? are ye seeking the fox without the dogs?" So he said, "Na, gudeman, but I wanted to see yourself."

"Ay," said I, "and ye'll be wanting eilding now, or something to pit ower the winter?"

"Na, na," quo' he, "it's no that I'm seeking; but ye tak an unco concern in that Captain Brown that was staying wi' you, d'ye no?"

"Troth do I, Gabriel," says I; "and what about him, lad?"

'Says he, "There's mair tak an interest in him than you, and some that I am bound to obey; and it's no just on my ain will that I'm here to tell you something about him that will no please you."

"Faith, naething will please me," quo' I, "that's no pleasing to him."

"And then," quo' he, "ye'll be ill-sorted to hear that he's like to be in the prison at Portanferry, if he disna tak a' the better care o' himsell, for there's been warrants out to tak him as soon as he comes ower the water frae Allonby. And now, gudeman, an ever ye wish him weel, ye maun ride down to Portanferry, and let nae grass grow at the nag's heels; and if ye find him in confinement, ye maun stay beside him night and day for a day or twa, for he'll want friends that hae baith heart and hand; and if ye neglect this ye'll never rue but ance, for it will be for a' your life."

"But, safe us, man," quo' I, "how did ye learn a' this? it's an unco way between this and Portanferry."

"Never ye mind that," quo' he, "them that brought us the news rade night and day, and ye maun be aff instantly if ye wad do ony gude; and sae I have naething mair to tell ye." Sae he sat himsell down and hirselled down into the glen, where it wad hae been ill following him wi' the beast, and I cam back to Charlie's Hope to tell the gudewife, for I was uncertain what to do. It wad look unco-like, I thought, just to be sent out on a hunt-the-gowk errand wi' a landlouper like that. But, Lord! as the gudewife set up her throat about it, and said what a shame it wad be if ye was to come to ony wrang, an I could help ye; and then in cam your letter that confirmed it. So I took to the kist, and out wi' the pickle notes in case they should be needed, and a' the bairns ran to saddle Dumble. By great luck I had taen the other beast to Edinbro', sae Dumble was as fresh as a rose. Sae aff I set, and Wasp wi' me, for ye wad really hae thought he kenn'd where I was gaun, puir beast; and here I am after a trot o' sixty mile or near by. But Wasp rade thirty o' them afore me on the saddle, and the puir doggie balanced itself as ane of the weans wad hae dune, whether I trotted or cantered.'

In this strange story Bertram obviously saw, supposing the warning to be true, some intimation of danger more violent and imminent than could be likely to arise from a few days' imprisonment. At the same time it was equally evident that some unknown friend was working in his behalf. 'Did you not say,' he asked Dinmont, 'that this man Gabriel was of gipsy blood?'

'It was e'en judged sae,' said Dinmont, 'and I think this maks it likely; for they aye ken where the gangs o' ilk ither are to be found, and they can gar news flee like a footba' through the country an they like. An' I forgot to tell ye, there's been an unco inquiry after the auld wife that we saw in Bewcastle; the Sheriff's had folk ower the Limestane Edge after her, and down the Hermitage and Liddel, and a' gates, and a reward offered for her to appear o' fifty pound sterling, nae less; and Justice Forster, he's had out warrants, as I am tell'd, in Cumberland; and an unco ranging and ripeing they have had a' gates seeking for her; but she'll no be taen wi' them unless she likes, for a' that.'

'And how comes that?' said Bertram.

'Ou, I dinna ken; I daur say it's nonsense, but they say she has gathered the fern-seed, and can gang ony gate she likes, like Jock the Giant-killer in the ballant, wi' his coat o' darkness and his shoon o' swiftness. Ony way she's a kind o' queen amang the gipsies; she is mair than a hundred year auld, folk say, and minds the coming in o' the moss-troopers in the troublesome times when the Stuarts were put awa. Sae, if she canna hide hersell, she kens them that can hide her weel enough, ye needna doubt that. Od, an I had kenn'd it had been Meg Merrilies yon night at Tibb Mumps's, I wad taen care how I crossed her.'

Bertram listened with great attention to this account, which tallied so well in many points with what he had himself seen of this gipsy sibyl. After a moment's consideration he concluded it would be no breach of faith to mention what he had seen at Derncleugh to a person who held Meg in such reverence as Dinmont obviously did. He told his story accordingly, often interrupted by ejaculations, such as, 'Weel, the like o' that now!' or, 'Na, deil an that's no something now!'

When our Liddesdale friend had heard the whole to an end, he shook his great black head--'Weel, I'll uphaud there's baith gude and ill amang the gipsies, and if they deal wi' the Enemy, it's a' their ain business and no ours. I ken what the streeking the corpse wad be, weel enough. Thae smuggler deevils, when ony o' them's killed in a fray, they'll send for a wife like Meg far enough to dress the corpse; od, it's a' the burial they ever think o'! and then to be put into the ground without ony decency, just like dogs. But they stick to it, that they'll be streekit, and hae an auld wife when they're dying to rhyme ower prayers, and ballants, and charms, as they ca' them, rather than they'll hae a minister to come and pray wi' them--that's an auld threep o' theirs; and I am thinking the man that died will hae been ane o' the folk that was shot when they burnt Woodbourne.'

'But, my good friend, Woodbourne is not burnt,' said Bertram.

'Weel, the better for them that bides in't,' answered the store-farmer. 'Od, we had it up the water wi' us that there wasna a stane on the tap o' anither. But there was fighting, ony way; I daur to say it would be fine fun! And, as I said, ye may take it on trust that that's been ane o' the men killed there, and that it's been the gipsies that took your pockmanky when they fand the chaise stickin' in the snaw; they wadna pass the like o' that, it wad just come to their hand like the bowl o' a pint stoup.'

'But if this woman is a sovereign among them, why was she not able to afford me open protection, and to get me back my property?'

'Ou, wha kens? she has muckle to say wi' them, but whiles they'll tak their ain way for a' that, when they're under temptation. And then there's the smugglers that they're aye leagued wi', she maybe couldna manage them sae weel. They're aye banded thegither; I've heard that the gipsies ken when the smugglers will come aff, and where they're to land, better than the very merchants that deal wi' them. And then, to the boot o' that, she's whiles cracked-brained, and has a bee in her head; they say that, whether her spaerings and fortune-tellings be true or no, for certain she believes in them a' hersell, and is aye guiding hersell by some queer prophecy or anither. So she disna aye gang the straight road to the well. But deil o' sic a story as yours, wi' glamour and dead folk and losing ane's gate, I ever heard out o' the tale-books! But whisht, I hear the keeper coming.'

Mac-Guffog accordingly interrupted their discourse by the harsh harmony of the bolts and bars, and showed his bloated visage at the opening door. 'Come, Mr. Dinmont, we have put off locking up for an hour to oblige ye; ye must go to your quarters.'

'Quarters, man? I intend to sleep here the night. There's a spare bed in the Captain's room.'

'It's impossible!' answered the keeper.

'But I say it IS possible, and that I winna stir; and there's a dram t' ye.'

Mac-Guffog drank off the spirits and resumed his objection. 'But it's against rule, sir; ye have committed nae malefaction.'

'I'll break your head,' said the sturdy Liddesdale man, 'if ye say ony mair about it, and that will be malefaction enough to entitle me to ae night's lodging wi' you, ony way.'

'But I tell ye, Mr. Dinmont,' reiterated the keeper, 'it's against rule, and I behoved to lose my post.'

'Weel, Mac-Guffog,' said Dandie, 'I hae just twa things to say. Ye ken wha I am weel eneugh, and that I wadna loose a prisoner.'

'And how do I ken that?' answered the jailor.

'Weel, if ye dinna ken that,' said the resolute farmer, 'ye ken this: ye ken ye're whiles obliged to be up our water in the way o' your business. Now, if ye let me stay quietly here the night wi' the Captain, I'll se pay ye double fees for the room; and if ye say no, ye shall hae the best sark-fu' o' sair banes that ever ye had in your life the first time ye set a foot by Liddel Moat!'

'Aweel, aweel, gudeman,' said Mac-Guffog, 'a wilfu' man maun hae his way; but if I am challenged for it by the justices, I ken wha sall bear the wyte,' and, having sealed this observation with a deep oath or two, he retired to bed, after carefully securing all the doors of the bridewell. The bell from the town steeple tolled nine just as the ceremony was concluded.

'Although it's but early hours,' said the farmer, who had observed that his friend looked somewhat pale and fatigued, 'I think we had better lie down, Captain, if ye're no agreeable to another cheerer. But troth, ye're nae glass-breaker; and neither am I, unless it be a screed wi' the neighbours, or when I'm on a ramble.'

Bertram readily assented to the motion of his faithful friend, but, on looking at the bed, felt repugnance to trust himself undressed to Mrs. Mac-Guffog's clean sheets.

'I'm muckle o' your opinion, Captain,' said Dandie. 'Od, this bed looks as if a' the colliers in Sanquhar had been in't thegither. But it'll no win through my muckle coat.' So saying, he flung himself upon the frail bed with a force that made all its timbers crack, and in a few moments gave audible signal that he was fast asleep. Bertram slipped off his coat and boots and occupied the other dormitory. The strangeness of his destiny, and the mysteries which appeared to thicken around him, while he seemed alike to be persecuted and protected by secret enemies and friends, arising out of a class of people with whom he had no previous connexion, for some time occupied his thoughts. Fatigue, however, gradually composed his mind, and in a short time he was as fast asleep as his companion. And in this comfortable state of oblivion we must leave them until we acquaint the reader with some other circumstances which occurred about the same period.

CHAPTER XVII

Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence? or why

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting?

Speak, I charge you.

Macbeth.

Upon the evening of the day when Bertram's examination had taken place, Colonel Mannering arrived at Woodbourne from Edinburgh. He found his family in their usual state, which probably, so far as Julia was concerned, would not have been the case had she learned the news of Bertram's arrest. But as, during the Colonel's absence, the two young ladies lived much retired, this circumstance fortunately had not reached Woodbourne. A letter had already made Miss Bertram acquainted with the downfall of the expectations which had been formed upon the bequest of her kinswoman. Whatever hopes that news might have dispelled, the disappointment did not prevent her from joining her friend in affording a cheerful reception to the Colonel, to whom she thus endeavoured to express the deep sense she entertained of his paternal kindness. She touched on her regret that at such a season of the year he should have made, upon her account, a journey so fruitless.

'That it was fruitless to you, my dear,' said the Colonel, 'I do most deeply lament; but for my own share, I have made some valuable acquaintances, and have spent the time I have been absent in Edinburgh with peculiar satisfaction; so that on that score there is nothing to be regretted. Even our friend the Dominie is returned thrice the man he was, from having sharpened his wits in controversy with the geniuses of the northern metropolis.'

'Of a surety,' said the Dominie, with great complacency, 'I did wrestle, and was not overcome, though my adversary was cunning in his art.'

'I presume,' said Miss Mannering, 'the contest was somewhat fatiguing, Mr. Sampson?'

'Very much, young lady; howbeit I girded up my loins and strove against him.'

'I can bear witness,' said the Colonel; 'I never saw an affair better contested. The enemy was like the Mahratta cavalry: he assailed on all sides, and presented no fair mark for artillery; but Mr. Sampson stood to his guns notwithstanding, and fired away, now upon the enemy and now upon the dust which he had raised. But we must not fight our battles over again to-night; to-morrow we shall have the whole at breakfast.'

The next morning at breakfast, however, the Dominie did not make his appearance. He had walked out, a servant said, early in the morning. It was so common for him to forget his meals that his absence never deranged the family. The housekeeper, a decent old-fashioned Presbyterian matron, having, as such, the highest respect for Sampson's theological acquisitions, had it in charge on these occasions to take care that he was no sufferer by his absence of mind, and therefore usually waylaid him on his return, to remind him of his sublunary wants, and to minister to their relief. It seldom, however, happened that he was absent from two meals together, as was the case in the present instance. We must explain the cause of this unusual occurrence.

The conversation which Mr. Pleydell had held with Mr. Mannering on the subject of the loss of Harry Bertram had awakened all the painful sensations which that event had inflicted upon Sampson. The affectionate heart of the poor Dominie had always reproached him that his negligence in leaving the child in the care of Frank Kennedy had been the proximate cause of the murder of the one, the loss of the other, the death of Mrs. Bertram, and the ruin of the family of his patron. It was a subject which he never conversed upon, if indeed his mode of speech could be called conversation at any time; but it was often present to his imagination. The sort of hope so strongly affirmed and asserted in Mrs. Bertram's last settlement had excited a corresponding feeling in the Dominie's bosom, which was exasperated into a sort of sickening anxiety by the discredit with which Pleydell had treated it. 'Assuredly,' thought Sampson to himself, 'he is a man of erudition, and well skilled in the weighty matters of the law; but he is also a man of humorous levity and inconsistency of speech, and wherefore should he pronounce ex cathedra, as it were, on the hope expressed by worthy Madam Margaret Bertram of Singleside?'

All this, I say, the Dominie THOUGHT to himself; for had he uttered half the sentence, his jaws would have ached for a month under the unusual fatigue of such a continued exertion. The result of these cogitations was a resolution to go and visit the scene of the tragedy at Warroch Point, where he had not been for many years; not, indeed, since the fatal accident had happened. The walk was a long one, for the Point of Warroch lay on the farther side of the Ellangowan property, which was interposed between it and Woodbourne. Besides, the Dominie went astray more than once, and met with brooks swollen into torrents by the melting of the snow, where he, honest man, had only the summer recollection of little trickling rills.

At length, however, he reached the woods which he had made the object of his excursion, and traversed them with care, muddling his disturbed brains with vague efforts to recall every circumstance of the catastrophe. It will readily be supposed that the influence of local situation and association was inadequate to produce conclusions different from those which he had formed under the immediate pressure of the occurrences themselves. 'With many a weary sigh, therefore, and many a groan,' the poor Dominie returned from his hopeless pilgrimage, and weariedly plodded his way towards Woodbourne, debating at times in his altered mind a question which was forced upon him by the cravings of an appetite rather of the keenest, namely, whether he had breakfasted that morning or no? It was

in this twilight humour, now thinking of the loss of the child, then involuntarily compelled to meditate upon the somewhat incongruous subject of hung beef, rolls, and butter, that his route, which was different from that which he had taken in the morning, conducted him past the small ruined tower, or rather vestige of a tower, called by the country people the Kaim of Derncleugh.

The reader may recollect the description of this ruin in the twenty-seventh chapter, as the vault in which young Bertram, under the auspices of Meg Merrilies, witnessed the death of Hatteraick's lieutenant. The tradition of the country added ghostly terrors to the natural awe inspired by the situation of this place, which terrors the gipsies who so long inhabited the vicinity had probably invented, or at least propagated, for their own advantage. It was said that, during the times of the Galwegian independence, one Hanlon Mac-Dingawaie, brother to the reigning chief, Knarh Mac-Dingawaie, murdered his brother and sovereign, in order to usurp the principality from his infant nephew, and that, being pursued for vengeance by the faithful allies and retainers of the house, who espoused the cause of the lawful heir, he was compelled to retreat, with a few followers whom he had involved in his crime, to this impregnable tower called the Kaim of Derucleugh, where he defended himself until nearly reduced by famine, when, setting fire to the place, he and the small remaining garrison desperately perished by their own swords, rather than fall into the hands of their exasperated enemies. This tragedy, which, considering the wild times wherein it was placed, might have some foundation in truth, was larded with many legends of superstition and diablerie, so that most of the peasants of the neighbourhood, if benighted, would rather have chosen to make a considerable circuit than pass these haunted walls. The lights, often seen around the tower, when used as the rendezvous of the lawless characters by whom it was occasionally frequented, were accounted for, under authority of these tales of witchery, in a manner at once convenient for the private parties concerned and satisfactory to the public.

Now it must be confessed that our friend Sampson, although a profound scholar and mathematician, had not travelled so far in philosophy as to doubt the reality of witchcraft or apparitions. Born, indeed, at a time when a doubt in the existence of witches was interpreted as equivalent to a justification of their infernal practices, a belief of such legends had been impressed upon the Dominie as an article indivisible from his religious faith, and perhaps it would have been equally difficult to have induced him to doubt the one as the other. With these feelings, and in a thick misty day, which was already drawing to its close, Dominie Sampson did not pass the Kaim of Derncleugh without some feelings of tacit horror.

What, then, was his astonishment when, on passing the door--that door which was supposed to have been placed there by one of the latter Lairds of Ellangowan to prevent presumptuous strangers from incurring the dangers of the haunted vault--that door, supposed to be always locked, and the key of which was popularly said to be deposited with the presbytery--that door, that very door, opened suddenly, and the figure of Meg Merrilies, well known, though not seen for many a revolving year, was placed at once before the eyes of the startled Dominie! She stood immediately before him in the footpath, confronting him so absolutely that he could not avoid her except by fairly turning back, which his manhood prevented him from thinking of.

'I kenn'd ye wad be here,' she said, with her harsh and hollow voice; 'I ken wha ye seek; but ye maun do my bidding.'

'Get thee behind me!' said the alarmed Dominie. 'Avoid ye! Conjuro te, scelestissima, nequissima, spurcissima, iniquissima atque miserrima, conjuro te!!!'

Meg stood her ground against this tremendous volley of superlatives, which Sampson hawked up from the pit of his stomach and hurled at her in thunder. 'Is the carl daft,' she said, 'wi' his glamour?'

'Conjuro,' continued the Dominie, 'abjuro, contestor atque viriliter impero tibi!'

'What, in the name of Sathan, are ye feared for, wi' your French gibberish, that would make a dog sick? Listen, ye stickit stibbler, to what I tell ye, or ye sail rue it while there's a limb o' ye hings to anither! Tell Colonel Mannering that I ken he's seeking me. He kens, and I ken, that the blood will be wiped out, and the lost will be found,

*And Bertram's right and Bertram's might
Shall meet on Ellangowan height.*

Hae, there's a letter to him; I was gaun to send it in another way. I canna write myself; but I hae them that will baith write and read, and ride and rin for me. Tell him the time's coming now, and the weird's dreed, and the wheel's turning. Bid him look at the stars as he has looked at them before. Will ye mind a' this?'

'Assuredly,' said the Dominie, 'I am dubious; for, woman, I am perturbed at thy words, and my flesh quakes to hear thee.'

'They'll do you nae ill though, and maybe muckle gude.'

'Avoid ye! I desire no good that comes by unlawful means.'

'Fule body that thou art,' said Meg, stepping up to him, with a frown of indignation that made her dark eyes flash like lamps from under her bent brows--'Fule body! if I meant ye wrang, couldna I clod ye ower that craig, and wad man ken how ye cam by your end mair than Frank Kennedy? Hear ye that, ye worricow?'

'In the name of all that is good,' said the Dominie, recoiling, and pointing his long pewter-headed walking cane like a javelin at the supposed sorceress--'in the name of all that is good, bide off hands! I will not be handled; woman, stand off, upon thine own proper peril! Desist, I say; I am strong; lo, I will resist!' Here his speech was cut short; for Meg, armed with supernatural strength (as the Dominie asserted), broke in upon his guard, put by a thrust which he made at her with his cane, and lifted him into the vault, 'as easily,' said he, 'as I could sway a Kitchen's Atlas.'

'Sit down there,' she said, pushing the half-throttled preacher with some violence against a broken chair--'sit down there and gather your wind and your senses, ye black barrow-tram o' the kirk that ye are. Are ye fou or fasting?'

'Fasting, from all but sin,' answered the Dominie, who, recovering his voice, and finding his exorcisms only served to exasperate the intractable sorceress, thought it best to affect complaisance and submission, inwardly conning over, however, the wholesome conjurations which he durst no longer utter aloud. But as the Dominie's brain was by no means equal to carry on two trains of ideas at the same time, a word or two of his mental exercise sometimes escaped and mingled with his uttered speech in a manner ludicrous enough, especially as the poor man shrunk himself together after every escape of the kind, from terror of the effect it might produce upon the irritable feelings of the witch.

Meg in the meanwhile went to a great black cauldron that was boiling on a fire on the floor, and, lifting the lid, an odour was diffused through the vault which, if the vapours of a witch's cauldron could in aught be trusted, promised better things than the hell-broth which such vessels are usually supposed to contain. It was, in fact, the savour of a goodly stew, composed of fowls, hares, partridges, and moor-game boiled in a large mess with potatoes, onions, and leeks, and from the size of the cauldron appeared to be prepared for half a dozen of people at least. 'So ye hae eat naething a' day?' said Meg, heaving a large portion of this mess into a brown dish and strewing it savourily with salt and pepper. [Footnote: See Note 4.]

'Nothing,' answered the Dominie, 'scelestissima!--that is, gudewife.'

'Hae then,' said she, placing the dish before him, 'there's what will warm your heart.'

'I do not hunger, malefica--that is to say, Mrs. Merrilies!' for he said unto himself, 'the savour is sweet, but it hath been cooked by a Canidia or an Erichthoe.'

'If ye dinna eat instantly and put some saul in ye, by the bread and the salt, I'll put it down your throat wi' the cutty spoon, scaulding as it is, and whether ye will or no. Gape, sinner, and swallow!'

Sampson, afraid of eye of newt, and toe of frog, tigers' chaudrons, and so forth, had determined not to venture; but the smell of the stew was fast melting his obstinacy, which flowed from his chops as it were in streams of water, and the witch's threats decided him to feed. Hunger and fear are excellent casuists.

'Saul,' said Hunger, 'feasted with the witch of Endor.' 'And,' quoth Fear, 'the salt which she sprinkled upon the food showeth plainly it is not a necromantic banquet, in which that seasoning never occurs.' 'And, besides,' says Hunger, after the first spoonful, 'it is savoury and refreshing viands.'

'So ye like the meat?' said the hostess.

'Yea,' answered the Dominie, 'and I give thee thanks, sceleratissima!--which means, Mrs. Margaret.'

'Aweel, eat your fill; but an ye kenn'd how it was gotten ye maybe wadna like it sae weel.' Sampson's spoon dropped in the act of conveying its load to his mouth.

'There's been mony a moonlight watch to bring a' that trade thegither,' continued Meg; 'the folk that are to eat that dinner thought little o' your game laws.'

'Is that all?' thought Sampson, resuming his spoon and shovelling away manfully; 'I will not lack my food upon that argument.'

'Now ye maun tak a dram?'

'I will,' quoth Sampson, 'conjuro te--that is, I thank you heartily,' for he thought to himself, in for a penny in for a pound; and he fairly drank the witch's health in a cupful of brandy. When he had put this copestone upon Meg's good cheer, he felt, as he said, 'mightily elevated, and afraid of no evil which could befall unto him.'

'Will ye remember my errand now?' said Meg Merrilies; 'I ken by the cast o' your ee that ye're anither man than when you cam in.'

'I will, Mrs. Margaret,' repeated Sampson, stoutly; 'I will deliver unto him the sealed epistle, and will add what you please to send by word of mouth.'

'Then I'll make it short,' says Meg. 'Tell him to look at the stars without fail this night, and to do what I desire him in that letter, as he would wish

That Bertram's right and Bertram's might

Should meet on Ellangowan height.

I have seen him twice when he saw na me; I ken when he was in this country first, and I ken what's brought him back again. Up an' to the gate! ye're ower lang here; follow me.'

Sampson followed the sibyl accordingly, who guided him about a quarter of a mile through the woods, by a shorter cut than he could have found for himself; then they entered upon the common, Meg still marching before him at a great pace, until she gained the top of a small hillock which overhung the road.

'Here,' she said, 'stand still here. Look how the setting sun breaks through yon cloud that's been darkening the lift a' day. See where the first stream o' light fa's: it's upon Donagild's round tower, the auldest tower in the Castle o' Ellangowan; that's no for naething! See as it's glooming to seaward abune yon sloop in the bay; that's no for naething neither. Here I stood on this very spot,' said she, drawing herself up so as not to lose one hair-breadth of her uncommon height, and stretching out her long sinewy arm and clenched hand--'here I stood when I tauld the last Laird o' Ellangowan what was coming on his house; and did that fa' to the ground? na, it hit even ower sair! And here, where I brake the wand of peace ower him, here I stand again, to bid God bless and prosper the just heir of Ellangowan that will sune be brought to his ain; and the best laird he shall be that Ellangowan has seen for three hundred years. I'll no live to see it, maybe; but there will be mony a blythe ee see it though mine be closed. And now, Abel Sampson, as ever ye lo'ed the house of Ellangowan, away wi' my message to the English Colonel, as if life and death were upon your haste!'

So saying, she turned suddenly from the amazed Dominie and regained with swift and long strides the shelter of the wood from which she had issued at the point where it most encroached upon the common. Sampson gazed after her for a moment in utter astonishment, and then obeyed her directions, hurrying to Woodbourne at a pace very unusual for him, exclaiming three times, 'Prodigious! prodigious! pro-di-gi-ous!'

CHAPTER XVIII

It is not madness

That I have utter'd, bring me to the test,

And I the matter will re-word, which madness

Would gambol from.

Hamlet.

As Mr. Sampson crossed the hall with a bewildered look, Mrs. Allan, the good housekeeper, who, with the reverent attention which is usually rendered to the clergy in Scotland, was on the watch for his return, sallied forth to meet him--'What's this o't now, Mr. Sampson, this is waur than ever! Ye'll really do yourself some injury wi' these lang fasts; naething's sae hurtful to the stomach, Mr. Sampson. If ye would but put some peppermint draps in your pocket, or let Barnes cut ye a sandwich.'

'Avoid thee!' quoth the Dominie, his mind running still upon his interview with Meg Merrilies, and making for the dining-parlour.

'Na, ye needna gang in there, the cloth's been removed an hour syne, and the Colonel's at his wine; but just step into my room, I have a nice steak that the cook will do in a moment.'

'Exorciso te!' said Sampson; 'that is, I have dined.'

'Dined! it's impossible; wha can ye hae dined wi', you that gangs out nae gate?'

'With Beelzebub, I believe,' said the minister.

'Na, then he's bewitched for certain,' said the housekeeper, letting go her hold; 'he's bewitched, or he's daft, and ony way the Colonel maun just guide him his ain gate. Wae's me! Hech, sirs! It's a sair thing to see learning bring folk to this!' And with this compassionate ejaculation she retreated into her own premises.

The object of her commiseration had by this time entered the dining-parlour, where his appearance gave great surprise. He was mud up to the shoulders, and the natural paleness of his hue was twice as cadaverous as usual, through terror, fatigue, and perturbation of mind.

'What on earth is the meaning of this, Mr. Sampson?' said Mannering, who observed Miss Bertram looking much alarmed for her simple but attached friend.

'Exorciso,' said the Dominie.

'How, sir?' replied the astonished Colonel.

'I crave pardon, honourable sir! but my wits---'

'Are gone a wool-gathering, I think; pray, Mr. Sampson, collect yourself, and let me know the meaning of all this.'

Sampson was about to reply, but finding his Latin formula of exorcism still came most readily to his tongue, he prudently desisted from the attempt, and put the scrap of paper which he had received from the gipsy into Mannering's hand, who broke the seal and read it with surprise. 'This seems to be some jest,' he said, 'and a very dull one.'

'It came from no jesting person,' said Mr. Sampson.

'From whom then did it come?' demanded Mannering.

The Dominie, who often displayed some delicacy of recollection in cases where Miss Bertram had an interest, remembered the painful circumstances connected with Meg Merrilies, looked at the young ladies, and remained silent. 'We will join you at the tea-table in an instant, Julia,' said the Colonel; 'I see that Mr. Sampson wishes to speak to me alone. And now they are gone, what, in Heaven's name, Mr. Sampson, is the meaning of all this?'

'It may be a message from Heaven,' said the Dominie, 'but it came by Beelzebub's postmistress. It was that witch, Meg Merrilies, who should have been burned with a tar-barrel twenty years since for a harlot, thief, witch, and gipsy.'

'Are you sure it was she?' said the Colonel with great interest.

'Sure, honoured sir? Of a truth she is one not to be forgotten, the like o' Meg Merrilies is not to be seen in any land.'

The Colonel paced the room rapidly, cogitating with himself. 'To send out to apprehend her; but it is too distant to send to Mac-Morlan, and Sir Robert Hazlewood is a pompous coxcomb; besides, the chance of not finding her upon the spot, or that the humour of silence that seized her before may again return. No, I will not, to save being thought a fool, neglect the course she points out. Many of her class set out by being impostors and end by becoming enthusiasts, or hold a kind of

darkling conduct between both lines, unconscious almost when they are cheating themselves or when imposing on others. Well, my course is a plain one at any rate; and if my efforts are fruitless, it shall not be owing to over-jealousy of my own character for wisdom.'

With this he rang the bell, and, ordering Barnes into his private sitting-room, gave him some orders, with the result of which the reader may be made hereafter acquainted.

We must now take up another adventure, which is also to be woven into the story of this remarkable day.

Charles Hazlewood had not ventured to make a visit at Woodbourne during the absence of the Colonel. Indeed, Mannering's whole behaviour had impressed upon him an opinion that this would be disagreeable; and such was the ascendancy which the successful soldier and accomplished gentleman had attained over the young man's conduct, that in no respect would he have ventured to offend him. He saw, or thought he saw, in Colonel Mannering's general conduct, an approbation of his attachment to Miss Bertram. But then he saw still more plainly the impropriety of any attempt at a private correspondence, of which his parents could not be supposed to approve, and he respected this barrier interposed betwixt them both on Mannering's account and as he was the liberal and zealous protector of Miss Bertram. 'No,' said he to himself, 'I will not endanger the comfort of my Lucy's present retreat until I can offer her a home of her own.'

With this valorous resolution, which he maintained although his horse, from constant habit, turned his head down the avenue of Woodbourne, and although he himself passed the lodge twice every day, Charles Hazlewood withstood a strong inclination to ride down just to ask how the young ladies were, and whether he could be of any service to them during Colonel Mannering's absence. But on the second occasion he felt the temptation so severe that he resolved not to expose himself to it a third time; and, contenting himself with sending hopes and inquiries and so forth to Woodbourne, he resolved to make a visit long promised to a family at some distance, and to return in such time as to be one of the earliest among Mannering's visitors who should congratulate his safe arrival from his distant and hazardous expedition to Edinburgh. Accordingly he made out his visit, and, having arranged matters so as to be informed within a few hours after Colonel Mannering reached home, he finally resolved to take leave of the friends with whom he had spent the intervening time, with the intention of dining at Woodbourne, where he was in a great measure domesticated; and this (for he thought much more deeply on the subject than was necessary) would, he flattered himself, appear a simple, natural, and easy mode of conducting himself.

Fate, however, of which lovers make so many complaints, was in this case unfavourable to Charles Hazlewood. His horse's shoes required an alteration, in consequence of the fresh weather having decidedly commenced. The lady of the house where he was a visitor chose to indulge in her own room till a very late breakfast hour. His friend also insisted on showing him a litter of puppies which his favourite pointer bitch had produced that morning. The colours had occasioned some doubts about the paternity--a weighty question of legitimacy, to the decision of which Hazlewood's opinion was called in as arbiter between his friend and his groom, and which inferred in its consequences which of the litter should be drowned, which saved. Besides, the Laird himself delayed our young lover's departure for a considerable time, endeavouring, with long and superfluous rhetoric, to insinuate to Sir Robert Hazlewood, through the medium of his son, his own particular ideas respecting the line of a meditated turnpike road. It is greatly to the shame of our young lover's apprehension that, after the tenth reiterated account of the matter, he could not see the advantage to be obtained by the proposed road passing over the Lang Hirst, Windy Knowe, the Goodhouse Park, Hailziecroft, and then crossing the river at Simon's Pool, and so by the road to Kippletringan; and the less eligible line pointed out by the English surveyor, which would go clear through the main enclosures at Hazlewood, and cut within a mile or nearly so of the house itself, destroying the privacy and pleasure, as his informer contended, of the grounds. In short, the adviser (whose actual interest was to have the bridge built as near as possible to a farm of his own) failed in every effort to attract young Hazlewood's attention until he mentioned by chance that the proposed line was favoured by 'that fellow Glossin,' who pretended to take a lead in the county. On a sudden young Hazlewood became attentive and interested; and, having satisfied himself which was the line that Glossin patronised, assured his friend it should not be his fault if his father did not countenance any other instead of that. But these various interruptions consumed the morning. Hazlewood got on horseback at least three hours later than he intended, and, cursing fine ladies, pointers, puppies, and turnpike acts of parliament, saw himself detained beyond the time when he could with propriety intrude upon the family at Woodbourne.

He had passed, therefore, the turn of the road which led to that mansion, only edified by the distant appearance of the blue smoke curling against the pale sky of the winter evening, when he thought he beheld the Dominie taking a footpath for the house through the woods. He called after him, but in vain; for that honest gentleman, never the most susceptible of extraneous impressions, had just that moment parted from Meg Merrilies, and was too deeply wrapt up in pondering upon her vaticinations to make any answer to Hazlewood's call. He was therefore obliged to let him proceed without inquiry after the health of the young ladies, or any other fishing question, to which he might by good chance have had an answer returned wherein Miss Bertram's name might have been mentioned. All cause for haste was now over, and, slackening the reins upon his horse's neck, he permitted the animal to ascend at his own leisure the steep sandy track between two high banks, which, rising to a considerable height, commanded at length an extensive view of the neighbouring country.

Hazlewood was, however, so far from eagerly looking forward to this prospect, though it had the recommendation that great part of the land was his father's, and must necessarily be his own, that his head still turned backward towards the chimneys of Woodbourne, although at every step his horse made the difficulty of employing his eyes in that direction become greater. From the reverie in which he was sunk he was suddenly roused by a voice, too harsh to be called female, yet too shrill for a man: 'What's kept you on the road sae lang? Maun ither folk do your wark?'

He looked up. The spokeswoman was very tall, had a voluminous handkerchief rolled round her head, grizzled hair flowing in elf-locks from beneath it, a long red cloak, and a staff in her hand, headed with a sort of spear-point; it was, in short, Meg Merrilies. Hazlewood had never seen this remarkable figure before; he drew up his reins in astonishment at her appearance, and made a full stop. 'I think,' continued she, 'they that hae taen interest in the house of Ellangowan suld sleep nane this night; three men hae been seeking ye, and you are gaun hame to sleep in your bed. D' ye think if the lad-bairn fa's, the sister will do weel? Na, na!'

'I don't understand you, good woman,' said Hazlewood. 'If you speak of Miss---, I mean of any of the late Ellangowan family, tell me what I can do for them.'

'Of the late Ellangowan family?' she answered with great vehemence--'of the LATE Ellangowan family! and when was there ever, or when will there ever be, a family of Ellangowan but bearing the gallant name of the bauld Bertrams?'

'But what do you mean, good woman?'

'I am nae good woman; a' the country kens I am bad eneugh, and baith they and I may be sorry eneugh that I am nae better. But I can do what good women canna, and daurna do. I can do what would freeze the blood o' them that is bred in biggit wa's for naething but to bind bairns' heads and to hap them in the cradle. Hear me: the guard's drawn off at the custom-house at Portanferry, and it's brought up to Hazlewood House by your father's orders, because he thinks his house is to be attacked this night by the smugglers. There's naebody means to touch his house; he has gude blood and gentle blood--I say little o' him for himsell--but there's naebody thinks him worth meddling wi'. Send the horsemen back to their post, cannily and quietly; see an they winna hae wark the night, ay will they: the guns will flash and the swords will glitter in the braw moon.'

'Good God! what do you mean?' said young Hazlewood; 'your words and manner would persuade me you are mad, and yet there is a strange combination in what you say.'

'I am not mad!' exclaimed the gipsy; 'I have been imprisoned for mad--scourged for mad--banished for mad--but mad I am not. Hear ye, Charles Hazlewood of Hazlewood: d'ye bear malice against him that wounded you?'

'No, dame, God forbid; my arm is quite well, and I have always said the shot was discharged by accident. I should be glad to tell the young man so himself.'

'Then do what I bid ye,' answered Meg Merrilies, 'and ye 'll do him mair gude than ever he did you ill; for if he was left to his ill-wishers he would be a bloody corpse ere morn, or a banished man; but there's Ane abune a'. Do as I bid you; send back the soldiers to Portanferry. There's nae mair fear o' Hazlewood House than there's o' Cruffel Fell.' And she vanished with her usual celerity of pace.

It would seem that the appearance of this female, and the mixture of frenzy and enthusiasm in her manner, seldom failed to produce the strongest impression upon those whom she addressed. Her words, though wild, were too plain and intelligible for actual madness, and yet too vehement and extravagant for sober-minded communication. She seemed acting under the influence of an imagination rather strongly excited than deranged; and it is wonderful how palpably the

difference in such cases is impressed upon the mind of the auditor. This may account for the attention with which her strange and mysterious hints were heard and acted upon. It is certain, at least, that young Hazlewood was strongly impressed by her sudden appearance and imperative tone. He rode to Hazlewood at a brisk pace. It had been dark for some time before he reached the house, and on his arrival there he saw a confirmation of what the sibyl had hinted.

Thirty dragoon horses stood under a shed near the offices, with their bridles linked together. Three or four soldiers attended as a guard, while others stamped up and down with their long broadswords and heavy boots in front of the house. Hazlewood asked a non-commissioned officer from whence they came.

'From Portanferry.'

'Had they left any guard there?'

'No; they had been drawn off by order of Sir Robert Hazlewood for defence of his house against an attack which was threatened by the smugglers.'

Charles Hazlewood instantly went in quest of his father, and, having paid his respects to him upon his return, requested to know upon what account he had thought it necessary to send for a military escort. Sir Robert assured his son in reply that, from the information, intelligence, and tidings which had been communicated to, and laid before him, he had the deepest reason to believe, credit, and be convinced that a riotous assault would that night be attempted and perpetrated against Hazlewood House by a set of smugglers, gipsies, and other desperadoes.

'And what, my dear sir,' said his son, 'should direct the fury of such persons against ours rather than any other house in the country?'

'I should rather think, suppose, and be of opinion, sir,' answered Sir Robert, 'with deference to your wisdom and experience, that on these occasions and times the vengeance of such persons is directed or levelled against the most important and distinguished in point of rank, talent, birth, and situation who have checked, interfered with, and discountenanced their unlawful and illegal and criminal actions or deeds.'

Young Hazlewood, who knew his father's foible, answered, that the cause of his surprise did not lie where Sir Robert apprehended, but that he only wondered they should think of attacking a house where there were so many servants, and where a signal to the neighbouring tenants could call in such strong assistance; and added, that he doubted much whether the reputation of the family would not in some degree suffer from calling soldiers from their duty at the custom-house to protect them, as if they were not sufficiently strong to defend themselves upon any ordinary occasion. He even hinted that, in case their house's enemies should observe that this precaution had been taken unnecessarily, there would be no end of their sarcasms.

Sir Robert Hazlewood was rather puzzled at this intimation, for, like most dull men, he heartily hated and feared ridicule. He gathered himself up and looked with a sort of pompous embarrassment, as if he wished to be thought to despise the opinion of the public, which in reality he dreaded.

'I really should have thought,' he said, 'that the injury which had already been aimed at my house in your person, being the next heir and representative of the Hazlewood family, failing me--I should have thought and believed, I say, that this would have justified me sufficiently in the eyes of the most respectable and the greater part of the people for taking such precautions as are calculated to prevent and impede a repetition of outrage.'

'Really, sir,' said Charles, 'I must remind you of what I have often said before, that I am positive the discharge of the piece was accidental.'

'Sir, it was not accidental,' said his father, angrily; 'but you will be wiser than your elders.'

'Really, sir,' replied Hazlewood, 'in what so intimately concerns myself---'

'Sir, it does not concern you but in a very secondary degree; that is, it does not concern you, as a giddy young fellow who takes pleasure in contradicting his father; but it concerns the country, sir, and the county, sir, and the public, sir, and the kingdom of Scotland, in so far as the interest of the Hazlewood family, sir, is committed and interested and put in peril, in, by, and through you, sir. And the fellow is in safe custody, and Mr. Glossin thinks---'

'Mr. Glossin, sir?'

'Yes, sir, the gentleman who has purchased Ellangowan; you know who I mean, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir,' answered the young man; 'but I should hardly have expected to hear you quote such authority. Why, this fellow--all the world knows him to be sordid, mean, tricking, and I suspect him to be worse. And you yourself, my dear sir, when did you call such a person a gentleman in your life before?'

'Why, Charles, I did not mean gentleman in the precise sense and meaning, and restricted and proper use, to which, no doubt, the phrase ought legitimately to be confined; but I meant to use it relatively, as marking something of that state to which he has elevated and raised himself; as designing, in short, a decent and wealthy and estimable sort of a person.'

'Allow me to ask, sir,' said Charles, 'if it was by this man's orders that the guard was drawn from Portanferry?'

'Sir,' replied the Baronet, 'I do apprehend that Mr. Glossin would not presume to give orders, or even an opinion, unless asked, in a matter in which Hazlewood House and the house of Hazlewood--meaning by the one this mansion-house of my family, and by the other, typically, metaphorically, and parabolically, the family itself,--I say, then, where the house of Hazlewood, or Hazlewood House, was so immediately concerned.'

'I presume, however, sir,' said the son, 'this Glossin approved of the proposal?'

'Sir,' replied his father, 'I thought it decent and right and proper to consult him as the nearest magistrate as soon as report of the intended outrage reached my ears; and although he declined, out of deference and respect, as became our relative situations, to concur in the order, yet he did entirely approve of my arrangement.'

At this moment a horse's feet were heard coming very fast up the avenue. In a few minutes the door opened, and Mr. Mac-Morlan presented himself. 'I am under great concern to intrude, Sir Robert, but---'

'Give me leave, Mr. Mac-Morlan,' said Sir Robert, with a gracious flourish of welcome; 'this is no intrusion, sir; for, your situation as sheriff-substitute calling upon you to attend to the peace of the county, and you, doubtless, feeling yourself particularly called upon to protect Hazlewood House, you have an acknowledged and admitted and undeniable right, sir, to enter the house of the first gentleman in Scotland uninvited--always presuming you to be called there by the duty of your office.'

'It is indeed the duty of my office,' said Mac-Morlan, who waited with impatience an opportunity to speak, 'that makes me an intruder.'

'No intrusion!' reiterated the Baronet, gracefully waving his hand.

'But permit me to say, Sir Robert,' said the sheriff-substitute, 'I do not come with the purpose of remaining here, but to recall these soldiers to Portanferry, and to assure you that I will answer for the safety of your house.'

'To withdraw the guard from Hazlewood House!' exclaimed the proprietor in mingled displeasure and surprise; 'and YOU will be answerable for it! And, pray, who are you, sir, that I should take your security and caution and pledge, official or personal, for the safety of Hazlewood House? I think, sir, and believe, sir, and am of opinion, sir, that if any one of these family pictures were deranged or destroyed or injured it would be difficult for me to make up the loss upon the guarantee which you so obligingly offer me.'

'In that case I shall be sorry for it, Sir Robert,' answered the downright Mac-Morlan; 'but I presume I may escape the pain of feeling my conduct the cause of such irreparable loss, as I can assure you there will be no attempt upon Hazlewood House whatever, and I have received information which induces me to suspect that the rumour was put afloat merely in order to occasion the removal of the soldiers from Portanferry. And under this strong belief and conviction I must exert my authority as sheriff and chief magistrate of police to order the whole, or greater part of them, back again. I regret much that by my accidental absence a good deal of delay has already taken place, and we shall not now reach Portanferry until it is late.'

As Mr. Mac-Morlan was the superior magistrate, and expressed himself peremptory in the purpose of acting as such, the Baronet, though highly offended, could only say, 'Very well, sir; it is very well. Nay, sir, take them all with you; I am far from desiring any to be left here, sir. We, sir, can protect ourselves, sir. But you will have the goodness to observe, sir, that you are acting on your own proper risk, sir, and peril, sir, and responsibility, sir, if anything shall happen or befall to Hazlewood House, sir, or the inhabitants, sir, or to the furniture and paintings, sir.'

'I am acting to the best of my judgment and information, Sir Robert,' said Mac-Morlan, 'and I must pray of you to believe so, and to pardon me accordingly. I beg you to observe it is no time for ceremony; it is already very late.'

But Sir Robert, without deigning to listen to his apologies, immediately employed himself with much parade in arming and arraying his domestics. Charles Hazlewood longed to accompany the military, which were about to depart for Portanferry, and which were now drawn up and mounted by direction and under the guidance of Mr. Mac-Morlan, as the civil magistrate. But it would have given just pain and offence to his father to have left him at a moment when he conceived himself and his mansion-house in danger. Young Hazlewood therefore gazed from a window with suppressed regret and displeasure, until he heard the officer give the word of command--'From the right to the front, by files, m-a-rch. Leading file, to the right wheel. Trot.' The whole party of soldiers then getting into a sharp and uniform pace, were soon lost among the trees, and the noise of the hoofs died speedily away in the distance.

CHAPTER XIX

*Wi' coulters and wi' forehammers
We garr'd the bars bang merrily,
Until we came to the inner prison,
Where Willie o' Kinmont he did lie.*

Old Border Ballad.

We return to Portanferry, and to Bertram and his honest-hearted friend, whom we left most innocent inhabitants of a place built for the guilty. The slumbers of the farmer were as sound as it was possible.

But Bertram's first heavy sleep passed away long before midnight, nor could he again recover that state of oblivion. Added to the uncertain and uncomfortable state of his mind, his body felt feverish and oppressed. This was chiefly owing to the close and confined air of the small apartment in which they slept. After enduring for some time the broiling and suffocating feeling attendant upon such an atmosphere, he rose to endeavour to open the window of the apartment, and thus to procure a change of air. Alas! the first trial reminded him that he was in jail, and that the building being contrived for security, not comfort, the means of procuring fresh air were not left at the disposal of the wretched inhabitants.

Disappointed in this attempt, he stood by the unmanageable window for some time. Little Wasp, though oppressed with the fatigue of his journey on the preceding day, crept out of bed after his master, and stood by him rubbing his shaggy coat against his legs, and expressing by a murmuring sound the delight which he felt at being restored to him. Thus accompanied, and waiting until the feverish feeling which at present agitated his blood should subside into a desire for warmth and slumber, Bertram remained for some time looking out upon the sea.

The tide was now nearly full, and dashed hoarse and near below the base of the building. Now and then a large wave reached even the barrier or bulwark which defended the foundation of the house, and was flung up on it with greater force and noise than those which only broke upon the sand. Far in the distance, under the indistinct light of a hazy and often overclouded moon, the ocean rolled its multitudinous complication of waves, crossing, bursting, and mingling with each other.

'A wild and dim spectacle,' said Bertram to himself, 'like those crossing tides of fate which have tossed me about the world from my infancy upwards. When will this uncertainty cease, and how soon shall I be permitted to look out for a tranquil home, where I may cultivate in quiet, and without dread and perplexity, those arts of peace from which my cares have been hitherto so forcibly diverted? The ear of Fancy, it is said, can discover the voice of sea-nymphs and tritons amid the bursting murmurs of the ocean; would that I could do so, and that some siren or Proteus would arise from these billows to unriddle for me the strange maze of fate in which I am so deeply entangled! Happy friend!' he said, looking at the bed where Dinmont had deposited his bulky person, 'thy cares are confined to the narrow round of a healthy and thriving occupation! Thou canst lay them aside at pleasure, and enjoy the deep repose of body and mind which wholesome labour has prepared for thee!'

At this moment his reflections were broken by little Wasp, who, attempting to spring up against the window, began to yelp and bark most furiously. The sounds reached Dinmont's ears, but without dissipating the illusion which had transported him from this wretched apartment to the free air of his own green hills. 'Hoy, Yarrow, man! far yaud, far yaud!' he muttered between his teeth, imagining, doubtless, that he was calling to his sheep-dog, and hounding him in shepherds' phrase against some intruders on the grazing. The continued barking of the terrier within was answered by the angry challenge of the mastiff in the courtyard, which had for a long time been silent, excepting only an occasional short and deep note, uttered when the moon shone suddenly from among the clouds. Now his clamour was continued and furious, and seemed to be excited by some disturbance distinct from the barking of Wasp, which had first given him the alarm, and which, with much trouble, his master had contrived to still into an angry note of low growling.

At last Bertram, whose attention was now fully awakened, conceived that he saw a boat upon the sea, and heard in good earnest the sound of oars and of human voices mingling with the dash of the billows. 'Some benighted fishermen,' he thought, 'or perhaps some of the desperate traders from the Isle of Man. They are very hardy, however, to approach so near to the custom-house, where there must be sentinels. It is a large boat, like a long-boat, and full of people; perhaps it belongs to the revenue service.' Bertram was confirmed in this last opinion by observing that the boat made for a little quay which ran into the sea behind the custom-house, and, jumping ashore one after another, the crew, to the number of twenty hands, glided secretly up a small lane which divided the custom-house from the bridewell, and disappeared from his sight, leaving only two persons to take care of the boat.

The dash of these men's oars at first, and latterly the suppressed sounds of their voices, had excited the wrath of the wakeful sentinel in the courtyard, who now exalted his deep voice into such a horrid and continuous din that it awakened his brute master, as savage a ban-dog as himself. His cry from a window, of 'How now, Tearum, what's the matter, sir? down, d--n ye, down!' produced no abatement of Tearum's vociferation, which in part prevented his master from hearing the sounds of alarm which his ferocious vigilance was in the act of challenging. But the mate of the two-legged Cerberus was gifted with sharper ears than her husband. She also was now at the window. 'B--t ye, gae down and let loose the dog,' she said; 'they're sporting the door of the custom-house, and the auld sap at Hazlewood House has ordered off the guard. But ye hae nae mair heart than a cat.' And down the Amazon sallied to perform the task herself, while her helpmate, more jealous of insurrection within doors than of storm from without, went from cell to cell to see that the inhabitants of each were carefully secured.

These latter sounds with which we have made the reader acquainted had their origin in front of the house, and were consequently imperfectly heard by Bertram, whose apartment, as we have already noticed, looked from the back part of the building upon the sea. He heard, however, a stir and tumult in the house, which did not seem to accord with the stern seclusion of a prison at the hour of midnight, and, connecting them with the arrival of an armed boat at that dead hour, could not but suppose that something extraordinary was about to take place. In this belief he shook Dinmont by the shoulder. 'Eh! Ay! Oh! Ailie, woman, it's no time to get up yet,' groaned the sleeping man of the mountains. More roughly shaken, however, he gathered himself up, shook his ears, and asked, 'In the name of Providence what's the matter?'

'That I can't tell you,' replied Bertram; 'but either the place is on fire or some extraordinary thing is about to happen. Are you not sensible of a smell of fire? Do you not hear what a noise there is of clashing doors within the house and of hoarse voices, murmurs, and distant shouts on the outside? Upon my word, I believe something very extraordinary has taken place. Get up, for the love of Heaven, and let us be on our guard.'

Dinmont rose at the idea of danger, as intrepid and undismayed as any of his ancestors when the beacon-light was kindled. 'Od, Captain, this is a queer place! they winna let ye out in the day, and they winna let ye sleep in the night. Deil, but it wad break my heart in a fortnight. But, Lordsake, what a racket they're making now! Od, I wish we had some light. Wasp, Wasp, whisht, hinny; whisht, my bonnie man, and let's hear what they're doing. Deil's in ye, will ye whisht?' They sought in vain among the embers the means of lighting their candle, and the noise without still continued. Dinmont in his turn had recourse to the window-- 'Lordsake, Captain! come here. Od, they hae broken the custom-house!'

Bertram hastened to the window, and plainly saw a miscellaneous crowd of smugglers, and blackguards of different descriptions, some carrying lighted torches, others bearing packages and barrels down the lane to the boat that was lying at the quay, to which two or three other fisher-boats were now brought round. They were loading each of these in their turn, and one or two had already put off to seaward. 'This speaks for itself,' said Bertram; 'but I fear something worse has happened. Do you perceive a strong smell of smoke, or is it my fancy?'

'Fancy?' answered Dinmont, 'there's a reek like a killogie. Od, if they burn the custom-house it will catch here, and we'll lunt like a tar-barrel a' thegither. Eh! it wad be fearsome to be burnt alive for naething, like as if ane had been a warlock! Mac-Guffog, hear ye!' roaring at the top of his voice; 'an ye wad ever hae a haill bane in your skin, let's out, man, let's out!'

The fire began now to rise high, and thick clouds of smoke rolled past the window at which Bertram and Dinmont were stationed. Sometimes, as the wind pleased, the dim shroud of vapour hid everything from their sight; sometimes a red glare illuminated both land and sea, and shone full on the stern and fierce figures who, wild with ferocious activity, were engaged in loading the boats. The fire was at length triumphant, and spouted in jets of flame out at each window of the burning building, while huge flakes of flaming materials came driving on the wind against the adjoining prison, and rolling a dark canopy of smoke over all the neighbourhood. The shouts of a furious mob resounded far and wide; for the smugglers in their triumph were joined by all the rabble of the little town and neighbourhood, now aroused and in complete agitation, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, some from interest in the free trade, and most from the general love of mischief and tumult natural to a vulgar populace.

Bertram began to be seriously anxious for their fate. There was no stir in the house; it seemed as if the jailor had deserted his charge, and left the prison with its wretched inhabitants to the mercy of the conflagration which was spreading towards them. In the meantime a new and fierce attack was heard upon the outer gate of the correction house, which, battered with sledge-hammers and crows, was soon forced. The keeper, as great a coward as a bully, with his more ferocious wife, had fled; their servants readily surrendered the keys. The liberated prisoners, celebrating their deliverance with the wildest yells of joy, mingled among the mob which had given them freedom.

In the midst of the confusion that ensued three or four of the principal smugglers hurried to the apartment of Bertram with lighted torches, and armed with cutlasses and pistols. 'Der deyvil,' said the leader, 'here's our mark!' and two of them seized on Bertram; but one whispered in his ear, 'Make no resistance till you are in the street.' The same individual found an instant to say to Dinmont--'Follow your friend, and help when you see the time come.'

In the hurry of the moment Dinmont obeyed and followed close. The two smugglers dragged Bertram along the passage, downstairs, through the courtyard, now illuminated by the glare of fire, and into the narrow street to which the gate opened, where in the confusion the gang were necessarily in some degree separated from each other. A rapid noise, as of a body of horse advancing, seemed to add to the disturbance. 'Hagel and wetter, what is that?' said the leader; 'keep together, kinder; look to the prisoner.' But in spite of his charge the two who held Bertram were the last of the party.

The sounds and signs of violence were heard in front. The press became furiously agitated, while some endeavoured to defend themselves, others to escape; shots were fired, and the glittering broadswords of the dragoons began to appear flashing above the heads of the rioters. 'Now,' said the warning whisper of the man who held Bertram's left arm, the same who had spoken before, 'shake off that fellow and follow me.'

Bertram, exerting his strength suddenly and effectually, easily burst from the grasp of the man who held his collar on the right side. The fellow attempted to draw a pistol, but was prostrated by a blow of Dinmont's fist, which an ox could hardly have received without the same humiliation. 'Follow me quick,' said the friendly partizan, and dived through a very narrow and dirty lane which led from the main street.

No pursuit took place. The attention of the smugglers had been otherwise and very disagreeably engaged by the sudden appearance of Mac-Morlan and the party of horse. The loud, manly voice of the provincial magistrate was heard proclaiming the Riot Act, and charging 'all those unlawfully assembled to disperse at their own proper peril.' This interruption would, indeed, have happened in time sufficient to have prevented the attempt, had not the magistrate received upon the road some false information which led him to think that the smugglers were to land at the bay of Ellangowan. Nearly two hours were lost in consequence of this false intelligence, which it may be no lack of charity to suppose that Glossin, so deeply interested in the issue of that night's daring attempt, had contrived to throw in Mac-Morlan's way, availing himself of the knowledge that the soldiers had left Hazlewood House, which would soon reach an ear so anxious as his.

In the meantime, Bertram followed his guide, and was in his turn followed by Dinmont. The shouts of the mob, the trampling of the horses, the dropping pistol-shots, sunk more and more faintly upon their ears, when at the end of the dark lane they found a post-chaise with four horses. 'Are you here, in God's name?' said the guide to the postilion who drove the leaders.

'Ay, troth am I,' answered Jock Jabos, 'and I wish I were ony gate else.'

'Open the carriage then. You, gentlemen, get into it; in a short time you'll be in a place of safety, and (to Bertram) remember your promise to the gipsy wife!'

Bertram, resolving to be passive in the hands of a person who had just rendered him such a distinguished piece of service, got into the chaise as directed. Dinmont followed; Wasp, who had kept close by them, sprung in at the same time, and the carriage drove off very fast. 'Have a care o' me,' said Dinmont, 'but this is the queerest thing yet! Od, I trust they'll no coup us. And then what's to come o' Dumble? I would rather be on his back than in the Deuke's coach, God bless him.'

Bertram observed, that they could not go at that rapid rate to any very great distance without changing horses, and that they might insist upon remaining till daylight at the first inn they stopped at, or at least upon being made acquainted with the purpose and termination of their journey, and Mr. Dinmont might there give directions about his faithful horse, which would probably be safe at the stables where he had left him. 'Aweel, aweel, e'en sae be it for Dandie. Od, if we were ance out o' this trindling kist o' a thing, I am thinking they wad find it hard wark to gar us gang ony gate but where we liked oursells.'

While he thus spoke the carriage, making a sudden turn, showed them through the left window the village at some distance, still widely beacons by the fire, which, having reached a store-house wherein spirits were deposited, now rose high into the air, a wavering column of brilliant light. They had not long time to admire this spectacle, for another turn of the road carried them into a close lane between plantations, through which the chaise proceeded in nearly total darkness, but with unabated speed.

CHAPTER XX

*The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better*

Tam o'Shanter.

We must now return to Woodbourne, which, it may be remembered, we left just after the Colonel had given some directions to his confidential servant. When he returned, his absence of mind, and an unusual expression of thought and anxiety upon his features, struck the ladies, whom he joined in the drawing-room. Mannering was not, however, a man to be questioned, even by those whom he most loved, upon the cause of the mental agitation which these signs expressed. The hour of tea arrived, and the party were partaking of that refreshment in silence when a carriage drove up to the door, and the bell announced the arrival of a visitor. 'Surely,' said Mannering, 'it is too soon by some hours.'

There was a short pause, when Barnes, opening the door of the saloon, announced Mr. Pleydell. In marched the lawyer, whose well-brushed black coat and well-powdered wig, together with his point ruffles, brown silk stockings, highly-varnished shoes, and gold buckles, exhibited the pains which the old gentleman had taken to prepare his person for the ladies' society. He was welcomed by Mannering with a hearty shake by the hand. 'The very man I wished to see at this moment!'

'Yes,' said the Counsellor, 'I told you I would take the first opportunity; so I have ventured to leave the court for a week in session time--no common sacrifice; but I had a notion I could be useful, and I was to attend a proof here about the same time. But will you not introduce me to the young ladies? Ah! there is one I should have known at once from her family likeness! Miss Lucy Bertram, my love, I am most happy to see you.' And he folded her in his arms, and gave her a hearty kiss on each side of the face, to which Lucy submitted in blushing resignation.

'On n'arrete pas dans un si beau chemin,' continued the gay old gentleman, and, as the Colonel presented him to Julia, took the same liberty with that fair lady's cheek. Julia laughed, coloured, and disengaged herself. 'I beg a thousand pardons,' said the lawyer, with a bow which was not at all professionally awkward; 'age and old fashions give privileges, and I can hardly say whether I am most sorry just now at being too well entitled to claim them at all, or happy in having such an opportunity to exercise them so agreeably.'

'Upon my word, sir,' said Miss Mannering, laughing, 'if you make such flattering apologies we shall begin to doubt whether we can admit you to shelter yourself under your alleged qualifications.'

'I can assure you, Julia,' said the Colonel, 'you are perfectly right. My friend the Counsellor is a dangerous person; the last time I had the pleasure of seeing him he was closeted with a fair lady who had granted him a tete-a-tete at eight in the morning.'

'Ay, but, Colonel,' said the Counsellor, 'you should add, I was more indebted to my chocolate than my charms for so distinguished a favour from a person of such propriety of demeanour as Mrs. Rebecca.'

'And that should remind me, Mr. Pleydell,' said Julia, 'to offer you tea; that is, supposing you have dined.'

'Anything, Miss Mannering, from your hands,' answered the gallant jurisconsult; 'yes, I have dined; that is to say, as people dine at a Scotch inn.'

'And that is indifferently enough,' said the Colonel, with his hand upon the bell-handle; 'give me leave to order something.'

'Why, to say truth,' replied Mr. Pleydell, 'I had rather not. I have been inquiring into that matter, for you must know I stopped an instant below to pull off my boot-hose, "a world too wide for my shrunk shanks," glancing down with some complacency upon limbs which looked very well for his time of life, 'and I had some conversation with your Barnes and a very intelligent person whom I presume to be the housekeeper; and it was settled among us, tota re perspecta,--I beg Miss Mannering's pardon for my Latin,--that the old lady should add to your light family supper the more substantial refreshment of a brace of wild ducks. I told her (always under deep submission) my poor thoughts about the sauce, which concurred exactly with her own; and, if you please, I would rather wait till they are ready before eating anything solid.'

'And we will anticipate our usual hour of supper,' said the Colonel.

'With all my heart,' said Pleydell, 'providing I do not lose the ladies' company a moment the sooner. I am of counsel with my old friend Burnet; [Footnote: See Note 5] I love the coena, the supper of the ancients, the pleasant meal and social glass that wash out of one's mind the cobwebs that business or gloom have been spinning in our brains all day.'

The vivacity of Mr. Pleydell's look and manner, and the quietness with which he made himself at home on the subject of his little epicurean comforts, amused the ladies, but particularly Miss Mannering, who immediately gave the Counsellor a great deal of flattering attention; and more pretty things were said on both sides during the service of the tea-table than we have leisure to repeat.

As soon as this was over, Mannering led the Counsellor by the arm into a small study which opened from the saloon, and where, according to the custom of the family, there were always lights and a good fire in the evening.

'I see,' said Mr. Pleydell, 'you have got something to tell me about the Ellangowan business. Is it terrestrial or celestial? What says my military Albumazar? Have you calculated the course of futurity? have you consulted your ephemerides, your almochoden, your almuten?'

'No, truly, Counsellor,' replied Mannering, 'you are the only Ptolemy I intend to resort to upon the present occasion. A second Prospero, I have broken my staff and drowned my book far beyond plummet depth. But I have great news notwithstanding. Meg Merrilies, our Egyptian sibyl, has appeared to the Dominie this very day, and, as I conjecture, has frightened the honest man not a little.'

'Indeed?'

'Ay, and she has done me the honour to open a correspondence with me, supposing me to be as deep in astrological mysteries as when we first met. Here is her scroll, delivered to me by the Dominie.'

Pleydell put on his spectacles. 'A vile greasy scrawl, indeed; and the letters are uncial or semi-uncial, as somebody calls your large text hand, and in size and perpendicularity resemble the ribs of a roasted pig; I can hardly make it out.'

'Read aloud,' said Mannering.

'I will try,' answered the Lawyer. "'YOU ARE A GOOD SEEKER, BUT A BAD FINDER; YOU SET YOURSELF TO PROP A FALLING HOUSE, BUT HAD A GEY GUESS IT WOULD RISE AGAIN. LEND YOUR HAND TO THE WORK THAT'S NEAR, AS YOU LENT YOUR EE TO THE WEIRD THAT WAS FAR. HAVE A CARRIAGE THIS NIGHT BY TEN O'CLOCK AT THE END OF THE CROOKED DYKES AT PORTANFERRY, AND LET IT BRING THE FOLK TO WOODBOURNE THAT SHALL ASK THEM, IF THEY BE THERE IN GOD'S NAME."--Stay, here follows some poetry--

*"DARK SHALL BE LIGHT,
AND WRONG DONE TO RIGHT,
WHEN BERTRAM'S RIGHT AND BERTRAM'S MIGHT
SHALL MEET ON ELLANGOWAN'S HEIGHT."*

A most mystic epistle truly, and closes in a vein of poetry worthy of the Cumaean sibyl. And what have you done?'

'Why,' said Mannering, rather reluctantly, 'I was loth to risk any opportunity of throwing light on this business. The woman is perhaps crazed, and these effusions may arise only from visions of her imagination; but you were of opinion that she knew more of that strange story than she ever told.'

'And so,' said Pleydell, 'you sent a carriage to the place named?'

'You will laugh at me if I own I did,' replied the Colonel.

'Who, I?' replied the Advocate. 'No, truly, I think it was the wisest thing you could do.'

'Yes,' answered Mannering, well pleased to have escaped the ridicule he apprehended; 'you know the worst is paying the chaise-hire. I sent a post-chaise and four from Kippletringan, with instructions corresponding to the letter; the horses will have a long and cold station on the outpost to-night if our intelligence be false.'

'Ay, but I think it will prove otherwise,' said the Lawyer. 'This woman has played a part till she believes it; or, if she be a thorough-paced impostor, without a single grain of self-delusion to qualify her knavery, still she may think herself bound to act in character; this I know, that I could get nothing out of her by the common modes of interrogation, and the wisest thing we can do is to give her an opportunity of making the discovery her own way. And now have you more to say, or shall we go to the ladies?'

'Why, my mind is uncommonly agitated,' answered the Colonel, 'and--but I really have no more to say; only I shall count the minutes till the carriage returns; but you cannot be expected to be so anxious.'

'Why, no; use is all in all,' said the more experienced lawyer; 'I am much interested certainly, but I think I shall be able to survive the interval, if the ladies will afford us some music.'

'And with the assistance of the wild ducks, by and by?' suggested Mannering.

'True, Colonel; a lawyer's anxiety about the fate of the most interesting cause has seldom spoiled either his sleep or digestion. [Footnote: See Note 6.] And yet I shall be very eager to hear the rattle of these wheels on their return, notwithstanding.'

So saying, he rose and led the way into the next room, where Miss Mannering, at his request, took her seat at the harpsichord, Lucy Bertram, who sung her native melodies very sweetly, was accompanied by her friend upon the instrument, and Julia afterwards performed some of Scarlatti's sonatas with great brilliancy. The old lawyer, scraping a little upon the violoncello, and being a member of the gentlemen's concert in Edinburgh, was so greatly delighted with this mode of spending the evening that I doubt if he once thought of the wild ducks until Barnes informed the company that supper was ready.

'Tell Mrs. Allan to have something in readiness,' said the Colonel; 'I expect--that is, I hope--perhaps some company may be here to-night; and let the men sit up, and do not lock the upper gate on the lawn until I desire you.'

'Lord, sir,' said Julia, 'whom can you possibly expect to-night?'

'Why, some persons, strangers to me, talked of calling in the evening on business,' answered her father, not without embarrassment, for he would have little brooked a disappointment which might have thrown ridicule on his judgment; 'it is quite uncertain.'

'Well, we shall not pardon them for disturbing our party,' said Julia, 'unless they bring as much good-humour and as susceptible hearts as my friend and admirer, for so he has dubbed himself, Mr. Pleydell.'

'Ah, Miss Julia,' said Pleydell, offering his arm with an air of gallantry to conduct her into the eating-room, 'the time has been, when I returned from Utrecht in the year 1738--'

'Pray don't talk of it,' answered the young lady; 'we like you much better as you are. Utrecht, in Heaven's name! I daresay you have spent all the intervening years in getting rid so completely of the effects of your Dutch education.'

'O forgive me, Miss Mannering,' said the Lawyer, 'the Dutch are a much more accomplished people in point of gallantry than their volatile neighbours are willing to admit. They are constant as clock-work in their attentions.'

'I should tire of that,' said Julia.

'Imperturbable in their good temper,' continued Pleydell.

'Worse and worse,' said the young lady.

'And then,' said the old beau garcon, 'although for six times three hundred and sixty-five days your swain has placed the capuchin round your neck, and the stove under your feet, and driven your little sledge upon the ice in winter, and your cabriolet through the dust in summer, you may dismiss him at once, without reason or apology, upon the two thousand one hundred and ninetyeth day, which, according to my hasty calculation, and without reckoning leap-years, will complete the cycle of the supposed adoration, and that without your amiable feelings having the slightest occasion to be alarmed for the consequences to those of Mynheer.'

'Well,' replied Julia, 'that last is truly a Dutch recommendation, Mr. Pleydell; crystal and hearts would lose all their merit in the world if it were not for their fragility.'

'Why, upon that point of the argument, Miss Mannering, it is as difficult to find a heart that will break as a glass that will not; and for that reason I would press the value of mine own, were it not that I see Mr. Sampson's eyes have been closed, and his hands clasped for some time, attending the end of our conference to begin the grace. And, to say the truth, the appearance of the wild ducks is very appetising.' So saying, the worthy Counsellor sat himself to table, and laid aside his gallantry for awhile to do honour to the good things placed before him. Nothing further is recorded of him for some time, excepting an observation that the ducks were roasted to a single turn, and that Mrs. Allan's sauce of claret, lemon, and cayenne was beyond praise.

'I see,' said Miss Mannering, 'I have a formidable rival in Mr. Pleydell's favour, even on the very first night of his avowed admiration.'

'Pardon me, my fair lady,' answered the Counsellor, 'your avowed rigour alone has induced me to commit the solecism of eating a good supper in your presence; how shall I support your frowns without reinforcing my strength? Upon the same principle, and no other, I will ask permission to drink wine with you.'

'This is the fashion of Utrecht also, I suppose, Mr. Pleydell?'

'Forgive me, madam,' answered the Counsellor; 'the French themselves, the patterns of all that is gallant, term their tavern-keepers restaurateurs, alluding, doubtless, to the relief they afford the disconsolate lover when bowed down to the earth by his mistress's severity. My own case requires so much relief that I must trouble you for that other wing, Mr. Sampson, without prejudice to my afterwards applying to Miss Bertram for a tart. Be pleased to tear the wing, sir, instead of cutting it off. Mr. Barnes will assist you, Mr. Sampson; thank you, sir; and, Mr. Barnes, a glass of ale, if you please.'

While the old gentleman, pleased with Miss Mannering's liveliness and attention, rattled away for her amusement and his own, the impatience of Colonel Mannering began to exceed all bounds. He declined sitting down at table, under pretence that he never eat supper; and traversed the parlour in which they were with hasty and impatient steps, now throwing up the window to gaze upon the dark lawn, now listening for the remote sound of the carriage advancing up the avenue. At length, in a feeling of uncontrollable impatience, he left the room, took his hat and cloak, and pursued his walk up the avenue, as if his so doing would hasten the approach of those whom he desired to see. 'I really wish,' said Miss Bertram, 'Colonel Mannering would not venture out after nightfall. You must have heard, Mr. Pleydell, what a cruel fright we had.'

'O, with the smugglers?' replied the Advocate; 'they are old friends of mine. I was the means of bringing some of them to justice a long time since, when sheriff of this county.'

'And then the alarm we had immediately afterwards,' added Miss Bertram, 'from the vengeance of one of these wretches.'

'When young Hazlewood was hurt; I heard of that too.'

'Imagine, my dear Mr. Pleydell,' continued Lucy, 'how much Miss Mannering and I were alarmed when a ruffian, equally dreadful for his great strength and the sternness of his features, rushed out upon us!'

'You must know, Mr. Pleydell,' said Julia, unable to suppress her resentment at this undesigned aspersion of her admirer, 'that young Hazlewood is so handsome in the eyes of the young ladies of this country that they think every person shocking who comes near him.'

'Oho!' thought Pleydell, who was by profession an observer of tones and gestures, 'there's something wrong here between my young friends.'--'Well, Miss Mannering, I have not seen young Hazlewood since he was a boy, so the ladies may be perfectly right; but I can assure you, in spite of your scorn, that if you want to see handsome men you must go to Holland; the prettiest fellow I ever saw was a Dutchman, in spite of his being called Vanbost, or Vanbuster, or some such barbarous name. He will not be quite so handsome now, to be sure.'

It was now Julia's turn to look a little out of countenance at the chance hit of her learned admirer, but that instant the Colonel entered the room. 'I can hear nothing of them yet,' he said; 'still, however, we will not separate. Where is Dominie Sampson?'

'Here, honoured sir.'

'What is that book you hold in your hand, Mr. Sampson?'

'It's even the learned De Lyra, sir. I would crave his honour Mr. Pleydell's judgment, always with his best leisure, to expound a disputed passage.'

'I am not in the vein, Mr. Sampson,' answered Pleydell; 'here's metal more attractive. I do not despair to engage these two young ladies in a glee or a catch, wherein I, even I myself, will adventure myself for the bass part. Hang De Lyra, man; keep him for a fitter season.'

The disappointed Dominie shut his ponderous tome, much marvelling in his mind how a person possessed of the lawyer's erudition could give his mind to these frivolous toys. But the Counsellor, indifferent to the high character for learning which he was trifling away, filled himself a large glass of Burgundy, and, after

preluding a little with a voice somewhat the worse for the wear, gave the ladies a courageous invitation to join in 'We be Three Poor Mariners,' and accomplished his own part therein with great eclat.

'Are you not withering your roses with sitting up so late, my young ladies?' said the Colonel.

'Not a bit, sir,' answered Julia; 'your friend Mr. Pleydell threatens to become a pupil of Mr. Sampson's to-morrow, so we must make the most of our conquest to-night.'

This led to another musical trial of skill, and that to lively conversation. At length, when the solitary sound of one o'clock had long since resounded on the ebon ear of night, and the next signal of the advance of time was close approaching, Mannering, whose impatience had long subsided into disappointment and despair, looked at his watch and said, 'We must now give them up,' when at that instant--But what then befell will require a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XXI

JUSTICE This does indeed confirm each circumstance

The gipsy told!

No orphan, nor without a friend art thou.

I am thy father, HERE'S thy mother, THERE

Thy uncle, THIS thy first cousin, and THESE

Are all thy near relations!

The Critic.

As Mannering replaced his watch, he heard a distant and hollow sound. 'It is a carriage for certain; no, it is but the sound of the wind among the leafless trees. Do come to the window, Mr. Pleydell.' The Counsellor, who, with his large silk handkerchief in his hand, was expatiating away to Julia upon some subject which he thought was interesting, obeyed the summons, first, however, wrapping the handkerchief round his neck by way of precaution against the cold air. The sound of wheels became now very perceptible, and Pleydell, as if he had reserved all his curiosity till that moment, ran out to the hall. The Colonel rung for Barnes to desire that the persons who came in the carriage might be shown into a separate room, being altogether uncertain whom it might contain. It stopped, however, at the door before his purpose could be fully explained. A moment after Mr. Pleydell called out, 'Here's our Liddesdale friend, I protest, with a strapping young fellow of the same calibre.' His voice arrested Dinmont, who recognised him with equal surprise and pleasure. 'Od, if it's your honour we'll a' be as right and tight as thack and rape can make us.'

But while the farmer stopped to make his bow, Bertram, dazzled with the sudden glare of light, and bewildered with the circumstances of his situation, almost unconsciously entered the open door of the parlour, and confronted the Colonel, who was just advancing towards it. The strong light of the apartment left no doubt of his identity, and he himself was as much confounded with the appearance of those to whom he so unexpectedly presented himself as they were by the sight of so utterly unlooked-for an object. It must be remembered that each individual present had their own peculiar reasons for looking with terror upon what seemed at first sight a spectral apparition. Mannering saw before him the man whom he supposed he had killed in India; Julia beheld her lover in a most peculiar and hazardous situation; and Lucy Bertram at once knew the person who had fired upon young Hazlewood. Bertram, who interpreted the fixed and motionless astonishment of the Colonel into displeasure at his intrusion, hastened to say that it was involuntary, since he had been hurried hither without even knowing whither he was to be transported.

'Mr. Brown, I believe!' said Colonel Mannering.

'Yes, sir,' replied the young man, modestly, but with firmness, 'the same you knew in India; and who ventures to hope, that what you did then know of him is not such as should prevent his requesting you would favour him with your attestation to his character as a gentleman and man of honour.'

'Mr. Brown, I have been seldom--never--so much surprised; certainly, sir, in whatever passed between us you have a right to command my favourable testimony.'

At this critical moment entered the Counsellor and Dinmont. The former beheld to his astonishment the Colonel but just recovering from his first surprise, Lucy Bertram ready to faint with terror, and Miss Mannering in an agony of doubt and apprehension, which she in vain endeavoured to disguise or suppress. 'What is the meaning of all this?' said he; 'has this young fellow brought the Gorgon's head in his hand? let me look at him. By Heaven!' he muttered to himself, 'the very image of old Ellangowan! Yes, the same manly form and handsome features, but with a world of more intelligence in the face. Yes! the witch has kept her word.'

Then instantly passing to Lucy, 'Look at that man, Miss Bertram, my dear; have you never seen any one like him?'

Lucy had only ventured one glance at this object of terror, by which, however, from his remarkable height and appearance, she at once recognised the supposed assassin of young Hazlewood, a conviction which excluded, of course, the more favourable association of ideas which might have occurred on a closer view.

'Don't ask me about him, sir,' said she, turning away her eyes; 'send him away, for Heaven's sake! we shall all be murdered!'

'Murdered! where's the poker?' said the Advocate in some alarm; 'but nonsense! we are three men besides the servants, and there is honest Liddesdale, worth half-a-dozen, to boot; we have the major vis upon our side. However, here, my friend Dandie--Davie--what do they call you? keep between that fellow and us for the protection of the ladies.'

'Lord! Mr. Pleydell,' said the astonished farmer, 'that's Captain Brown; d'ye no ken the Captain?'

'Nay, if he's a friend of yours we may be safe enough,' answered Pleydell; 'but keep near him.'

All this passed with such rapidity that it was over before the Dominie had recovered himself from a fit of absence, shut the book which he had been studying in a corner, and, advancing to obtain a sight of the strangers, exclaimed at once upon beholding Bertram, 'If the grave can give up the dead, that is my dear and honoured master!'

'We're right after all, by Heaven! I was sure I was right,' said the Lawyer; 'he is the very image of his father. Come, Colonel, what do you think of, that you do not bid your guest welcome? I think--I believe--I trust we're right; never saw such a likeness! But patience; Dominie, say not a word. Sit down, young gentleman.'

'I beg pardon, sir; if I am, as I understand, in Colonel Mannering's house, I should wish first to know if my accidental appearance here gives offence, or if I am welcome?'

Mannering instantly made an effort. 'Welcome? most certainly, especially if you can point out how I can serve you. I believe I may have some wrongs to repair towards you, I have often suspected so; but your sudden and unexpected appearance, connected with painful recollections, prevented my saying at first, as I now say, that whatever has procured me the honour of this visit, it is an acceptable one.'

Bertram bowed with an air of distant yet civil acknowledgment to the grave courtesy of Mannering.

'Julia, my love, you had better retire. Mr. Brown, you will excuse my daughter; there are circumstances which I perceive rush upon her recollection.'

Miss Mannering rose and retired accordingly; yet, as she passed Bertram, could not suppress the words, 'Infatuated! a second time!' but so pronounced as to be heard by him alone. Miss Bertram accompanied her friend, much surprised, but without venturing a second glance at the object of her terror. Some mistake she

saw there was, and was unwilling to increase it by denouncing the stranger as an assassin. He was known, she saw, to the Colonel, and received as a gentleman; certainly he either was not the person she suspected or Hazlewood was right in supposing the shot accidental.

The remaining part of the company would have formed no bad group for a skilful painter. Each was too much embarrassed with his own sensations to observe those of the others. Bertram most unexpectedly found himself in the house of one whom he was alternately disposed to dislike as his personal enemy and to respect as the father of Julia. Mannering was struggling between his high sense of courtesy and hospitality, his joy at finding himself relieved from the guilt of having shed life in a private quarrel, and the former feelings of dislike and prejudice, which revived in his haughty mind at the sight of the object against whom he had entertained them. Sampson, supporting his shaking limbs by leaning on the back of a chair, fixed his eyes upon Bertram with a staring expression of nervous anxiety which convulsed his whole visage. Dinmont, enveloped in his loose shaggy great-coat, and resembling a huge bear erect upon his hinder legs, stared on the whole scene with great round eyes that witnessed his amazement.

The Counsellor alone was in his element: shrewd, prompt, and active, he already calculated the prospect of brilliant success in a strange, eventful, and mysterious lawsuit, and no young monarch, flushed with hopes, and at the head of a gallant army, could experience more glee when taking the field on his first campaign. He bustled about with great energy, and took the arrangement of the whole explanation upon himself.

'Come, come, gentlemen, sit down; this is all in my province; you must let me arrange it for you. Sit down, my dear Colonel, and let me manage; sit down, Mr. Brown, aut quocunque alio nomine vocaris; Dominie, take your seat; draw in your chair, honest Liddesdale.'

'I dinna ken, Mr. Pleydell,' said Dinmont, looking at his dreadnought coat, then at the handsome furniture of the room; 'I had maybe better gang some gate else, and leave ye till your cracks, I'm no just that weel put on.'

The Colonel, who by this time recognised Dandie, immediately went up and bid him heartily welcome; assuring him that, from what he had seen of him in Edinburgh, he was sure his rough coat and thick-soled boots would honour a royal drawing-room.

'Na, na, Colonel, we're just plain up-the-country folk; but nae doubt I would fain hear o' ony pleasure that was gaun to happen the Captain, and I'm sure a' will gae right if Mr. Pleydell will take his bit job in hand.'

'You're right, Dandie; spoke like a Hieland [Footnote: It may not be unnecessary to tell southern readers that the mountainous country in the south western borders of Scotland is called Hieland, though totally different from the much more mountainous and more extensive districts of the north, usually called Highlands.] oracle; and now be silent. Well, you are all seated at last; take a glass of wine till I begin my catechism methodically. And now,' turning to Bertram, 'my dear boy, do you know who or what you are?'

In spite of his perplexity the catechumen could not help laughing at this commencement, and answered, 'Indeed, sir, I formerly thought I did; but I own late circumstances have made me somewhat uncertain.'

'Then tell us what you formerly thought yourself.'

'Why, I was in the habit of thinking and calling myself Vanbeest Brown, who served as a cadet or volunteer under Colonel Mannering, when he commanded the--regiment, in which capacity I was not unknown to him.'

'There,' said the Colonel, 'I can assure Mr. Brown of his identity; and add, what his modesty may have forgotten, that he was distinguished as a young man of talent and spirit.'

'So much the better, my dear sir,' said Mr. Pleydell; 'but that is to general character. Mr. Brown must tell us where he was born.'

'In Scotland, I believe, but the place uncertain.'

'Where educated?'

'In Holland, certainly.'

'Do you remember nothing of your early life before you left Scotland?'

'Very imperfectly; yet I have a strong idea, perhaps more deeply impressed upon me by subsequent hard usage, that I was during my childhood the object of much solicitude and affection. I have an indistinct remembrance of a good-looking man whom I used to call papa, and of a lady who was infirm in health, and who, I think, must have been my mother; but it is an imperfect and confused recollection. I remember too a tall, thin, kind-tempered man in black, who used to teach me my letters and walk out with me; and I think the very last time--'

Here the Dominie could contain no longer. While every succeeding word served to prove that the child of his benefactor stood before him, he had struggled with the utmost difficulty to suppress his emotions; but when the juvenile recollections of Bertram turned towards his tutor and his precepts he was compelled to give way to his feelings. He rose hastily from his chair, and with clasped hands, trembling limbs, and streaming eyes, called out aloud, 'Harry Bertram! look at me; was I not the man?'

'Yes!' said Bertram, starting from his seat as if a sudden light had burst in upon his mind; 'yes; that was my name! And that is the voice and the figure of my kind old master!'

The Dominie threw himself into his arms, pressed him a thousand times to his bosom in convulsions of transport which shook his whole frame, sobbed hysterically, and at length, in the emphatic language of Scripture, lifted up his voice and wept aloud. Colonel Mannering had recourse to his handkerchief; Pleydell made wry faces, and wiped the glasses of his spectacles; and honest Dinmont, after two loud blubbing explosions, exclaimed, 'Deil's in the man! he's garr'd me do that I haena done since my auld mither died.'

'Come, come,' said the Counsellor at last, 'silence in the court. We have a clever party to contend with; we must lose no time in gathering our information; for anything I know there may be something to be done before daybreak.'

'I will order a horse to be saddled if you please,' said the Colonel.

'No, no, time enough, time enough. But come, Dominie, I have allowed you a competent space to express your feelings. I must circumduce the term; you must let me proceed in my examination.'

The Dominie was habitually obedient to any one who chose to impose commands upon him: he sunk back into his chair, spread his chequered handkerchief over his face, to serve, as I suppose, for the Grecian painter's veil, and, from the action of his folded hands, appeared for a time engaged in the act of mental thanksgiving. He then raised his eyes over the screen, as if to be assured that the pleasing apparition had not melted into air; then again sunk them to resume his internal act of devotion, until he felt himself compelled to give attention to the Counsellor, from the interest which his questions excited.

'And now,' said Mr. Pleydell, after several minute inquiries concerning his recollection of early events--'and now, Mr. Bertram,--for I think we ought in future to call you by your own proper name--will you have the goodness to let us know every particular which you can recollect concerning the mode of your leaving Scotland?'

'Indeed, sir, to say the truth, though the terrible outlines of that day are strongly impressed upon my memory, yet somehow the very terror which fixed them there has in a great measure confounded and confused the details. I recollect, however, that I was walking somewhere or other, in a wood, I think--'

'O yes, it was in Warroch wood, my dear,' said the Dominie.

'Hush, Mr. Sampson,' said the Lawyer.

'Yes, it was in a wood,' continued Bertram, as long past and confused ideas arranged themselves in his reviving recollection; 'and some one was with me; this worthy and affectionate gentleman, I think.'

'O, ay, ay, Harry, Lord bless thee; it was even I myself.'

'Be silent, Dominie, and don't interrupt the evidence,' said Pleydell. 'And so, sir?' to Bertram.

'And so, sir,' continued Bertram, 'like one of the changes of a dream, I thought I was on horseback before my guide.'

'No, no,' exclaimed Sampson, 'never did I put my own limbs, not to say thine, into such peril.'

'On my word, this is intolerable! Look ye, Dominie, if you speak another word till I give you leave, I will read three sentences out of the Black Acts, whisk my cane round my head three times, undo all the magic of this night's work, and conjure Harry Bertram back again into Vanbeest Brown.'

'Honoured and worthy sir,' groaned out the Dominie, 'I humbly crave pardon; it was but verbum volans.'

'Well, nolens volens, you must hold your tongue,' said Pleydell.

'Pray, be silent, Mr. Sampson,' said the Colonel; 'it is of great consequence to your recovered friend that you permit Mr. Pleydell to proceed in his inquiries.'

'I am mute,' said the rebuked Dominie.

'On a sudden,' continued Bertram, 'two or three men sprung out upon us, and we were pulled from horseback. I have little recollection of anything else, but that I tried to escape in the midst of a desperate scuffle, and fell into the arms of a very tall woman who started from the bushes and protected me for some time; the rest is all confusion and dread, a dim recollection of a sea-beach and a cave, and of some strong potion which lulled me to sleep for a length of time. In short, it is all a blank in my memory until I recollect myself first an ill-used and half-starved cabin-boy aboard a sloop, and then a schoolboy in Holland, under the protection of an old merchant, who had taken some fancy for me.'

'And what account,' said Mr. Pleydell, 'did your guardian give of your parentage?'

'A very brief one,' answered Bertram, 'and a charge to inquire no farther. I was given to understand that my father was concerned in the smuggling trade carried on on the eastern coast of Scotland, and was killed in a skirmish with the revenue officers; that his correspondents in Holland had a vessel on the coast at the time, part of the crew of which were engaged in the affair, and that they brought me off after it was over, from a motive of compassion, as I was left destitute by my father's death. As I grew older there was much of this story seemed inconsistent with my own recollections, but what could I do? I had no means of ascertaining my doubts, nor a single friend with whom I could communicate or canvass them. The rest of my story is known to Colonel Mannering: I went out to India to be a clerk in a Dutch house; their affairs fell into confusion; I betook myself to the military profession, and, I trust, as yet I have not disgraced it.'

'Thou art a fine young fellow, I'll be bound for thee,' said Pleydell, 'and since you have wanted a father so long, I wish from my heart I could claim the paternity myself. But this affair of young Hazlewood--'

'Was merely accidental,' said Bertram. 'I was travelling in Scotland for pleasure, and, after a week's residence with my friend Mr. Dinmont, with whom I had the good fortune to form an accidental acquaintance--'

'It was my gude fortune that,' said Dinmont. 'Odd, my brains wad hae been knockit out by twa black-guards if it hadna been for his four quarters.'

'Shortly after we parted at the town of----I lost my baggage by thieves, and it was while residing at Kippletringan I accidentally met the young gentleman. As I was approaching to pay my respects to Miss Mannering, whom I had known in India, Mr. Hazlewood, conceiving my appearance none of the most respectable, commanded me rather haughtily to stand back, and so gave occasion to the fray, in which I had the misfortune to be the accidental means of wounding him. And now, sir, that I have answered all your questions--'

'No, no, not quite all,' said Pleydell, winking sagaciously; 'there are some interrogatories which I shall delay till to-morrow, for it is time, I believe, to close the sederunt for this night, or rather morning.'

'Well, then, sir,' said the young man, 'to vary the phrase, since I have answered all the questions which you have chosen to ask to-night, will you be so good as to tell me who you are that take such interest in my affairs, and whom you take me to be, since my arrival has occasioned such commotion?'

'Why, sir, for myself,' replied the Counsellor, 'I am Paulus Pleydell, an advocate at the Scottish bar; and for you, it is not easy to say distinctly who you are at present, but I trust in a short time to hail you by the title of Henry Bertram, Esq., representative of one of the oldest families in Scotland, and heir of Tailzie and provision to the estate of Ellangowan. Ay,' continued he, shutting his eyes and speaking to himself, 'we must pass over his father, and serve him heir to his grandfather Lewis, the entailer; the only wise man of his family, that I ever heard of.'

They had now risen to retire to their apartments for the night, when Colonel Mannering walked up to Bertram, as he stood astonished at the Counsellor's words. 'I give you joy,' he said, 'of the prospects which fate has opened before you. I was an early friend of your father, and chanced to be in the house of Ellangowan, as unexpectedly as you are now in mine, upon the very night in which you were born. I little knew this circumstance when--but I trust unkindness will be forgotten between us. Believe me, your appearance here as Mr. Brown, alive and well, has relieved me from most painful sensations; and your right to the name of an old friend renders your presence as Mr. Bertram doubly welcome.'

'And my parents?' said Bertram.

'Are both no more; and the family property has been sold, but I trust may be recovered. Whatever is wanted to make your right effectual I shall be most happy to supply.'

'Nay, you may leave all that to me,' said the Counsellor; "'t is my vocation, Hal; I shall make money of it.'

'I'm sure it's no for the like o'me,' observed Dinmont, 'to speak to you gentlefolks; but if siller would help on the Captain's plea, and they say nae plea gangs ain weel without it--'

'Except on Saturday night,' said Pleydell.

'Ay, but when your honour wadna take your fee ye wadna hae the cause neither, sae I'll ne'er fash you on a Saturday at e'en again. But I was saying, there's some siller in the spleuchan that's like the Captain's ain, for we've aye counted it such, baith Ailie and me.'

'No, no, Liddesdale; no occasion, no occasion whatever. Keep thy cash to stock thy farm.'

'To stock my farm? Mr. Pleydell, your honour kens mony things, but ye dinna ken the farm o' Charlie's Hope; it's sae weel stockit already that we sell maybe sax hundred pounds off it ilka year, flesh and fell the gither; na, na.'

'Can't you take another then?'

'I dinna ken; the Deuke's no that fond o' led farms, and he canna bide to put away the auld tenantry; and then I wadna like mysell to gang about whistling [Footnote: See Note 7.] and raising the rent on my neighbours.'

'What, not upon thy neighbour at Dawston--Devilstone--how d 'ye call the place?'

'What, on Jock o' Dawston? hout na. He's a camsteary chield, and fasheous about marches, and we've had some bits o' splores thegither; but deil o'meif I wad wrang Jock o' Dawston neither.'

'Thou'rt an honest fellow,' said the Lawyer; 'get thee to bed. Thou wilt sleep sounder, I warrant thee, than many a man that throws off an embroidered coat and puts on a laced nightcap. Colonel, I see you are busy with our enfant trouve. But Barnes must give me a summons of waking at seven to-morrow morning, for my servant's a sleepy-headed fellow; and I daresay my clerk Driver has had Clarence's fate, and is drowned by this time in a butt of your ale; for Mrs. Allan promised to make him comfortable, and she'll soon discover what he expects from that engagement. Good-night, Colonel; good-night, Dominie Sampson; good-night, Dinmont the Downright; good-night, last of all, to the new-found representative of the Bertrams, and the Mac-Dingawaies, the Knarths, the Arths, the Godfreys, the Dennises, and the Rolands, and, last and dearest title, heir of talzie and provision of the lands and barony of Ellangowan, under the settlement of Lewis Bertram, Esq., whose representative you are.'

And so saying, the old gentleman took his candle and left the room; and the company dispersed, after the Dominie had once more hugged and embraced his 'little Harry Bertram,' as he continued to call the young soldier of six feet high.

My imagination

*Carries no favour in it but Bertram's;
I am undone, there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away.*

--All's Well that Ends Well.

At the hour which he had appointed the preceding evening the indefatigable lawyer was seated by a good fire and a pair of wax candles, with a velvet cap on his head and a quilted silk nightgown on his person, busy arranging his memoranda of proofs and indications concerning the murder of Frank Kennedy. An express had also been despatched to Mr. Mac-Morlan, requesting his attendance at Woodbourne as soon as possible on business of importance. Dinmont, fatigued with the events of the evening before, and finding the accommodations of Woodbourne much preferable to those of Mac-Guffog, was in no hurry to rise. The impatience of Bertram might have put him earlier in motion, but Colonel Mannering had intimated an intention to visit him in his apartment in the morning, and he did not choose to leave it. Before this interview he had dressed himself, Barnes having, by his master's orders, supplied him with every accommodation of linen, etc., and now anxiously waited the promised visit of his landlord.

In a short time a gentle tap announced the Colonel, with whom Bertram held a long and satisfactory conversation. Each, however, concealed from the other one circumstance. Mannering could not bring himself to acknowledge the astrological prediction; and Bertram was, from motives which may be easily conceived, silent respecting his love for Julia. In other respects their intercourse was frank and grateful to both, and had latterly, upon the Colonel's part, even an approach to cordiality. Bertram carefully measured his own conduct by that of his host, and seemed rather to receive his offered kindness with gratitude and pleasure than to press for it with solicitation.

Miss Bertram was in the breakfast-parlour when Sampson shuffled in, his face all radiant with smiles--a circumstance so uncommon that Lucy's first idea was that somebody had been bantering him with an imposition, which had thrown him into this ecstasy. Having sate for some time rolling his eyes and gaping with his mouth like the great wooden head at Merlin's exhibition, he at length began--'And what do you think of him, Miss Lucy?'

'Think of whom, Mr. Sampson?' asked the young lady.

'Of Har--no--of him that you know about?' again demanded the Dominie.

'That I know about?' replied Lucy, totally at a loss to comprehend his meaning.

'Yes, the stranger, you know, that came last evening, in the post vehicle; he who shot young Hazelwood, ha, ha, ha!' burst forth the Dominie, with a laugh that sounded like neighing.

'Indeed, Mr. Sampson,' said his pupil, 'you have chosen a strange subject for mirth; I think nothing about the man, only I hope the outrage was accidental, and that we need not fear a repetition of it.'

'Accidental! ha, ha, ha!' again whinnied Sampson.

'Really, Mr. Sampson,' said Lucy, somewhat piqued, 'you are unusually gay this morning.'

'Yes, of a surety I am! ha, ha, ha! face-ti-ous, ho, ho, ha!'

'So unusually facetious, my dear sir,' pursued the young lady, 'that I would wish rather to know the meaning of your mirth than to be amused with its effects only.'

'You shall know it, Miss Lucy,' replied poor Abel. 'Do you remember your brother?'

'Good God, how can you ask me? No one knows better than you he was lost the very day I was born.'

'Very true, very true,' answered the Dominie, saddening at the recollection; 'I was strangely oblivious; ay, ay! too true. But you remember your worthy father?'

'How should you doubt it, Mr. Sampson? it is not so many weeks since--'

'True, true; ay, too true,' replied the Dominie, his Houyhnhnm laugh sinking into a hysterical giggle. 'I will be facetious no more under these remembrances; but look at that young man!'

Bertram at this instant entered the room. 'Yes, look at him well, he is your father's living image; and as God has deprived you of your dear parents--O, my children, love one another!'

'It is indeed my father's face and form,' said Lucy, turning very pale. Bertram ran to support her, the Dominie to fetch water to throw upon her face (which in his haste he took from the boiling tea-urn), when fortunately her colour, returning rapidly, saved her from the application of this ill-judged remedy. 'I conjure you to tell me, Mr. Sampson,' she said, in an interrupted yet solemn voice, 'is this my brother?'

'It is, it is! Miss Lucy, it is little Harry Bertram, as sure as God's sun is in that heaven!'

'And this is my sister?' said Bertram, giving way to all that family affection which had so long slumbered in his bosom for want of an object to expand itself upon.

'It is, it is!--it is Miss Lucy Bertram,' ejaculated Sampson, 'whom by my poor aid you will find perfect in the tongues of France and Italy, and even of Spain, in reading and writing her vernacular tongue, and in arithmetic and book-keeping by double and single entry. I say nothing of her talents of shaping and hemming and governing a household, which, to give every one their due, she acquired not from me but from the housekeeper; nor do I take merit for her performance upon stringed instruments, whereunto the instructions of an honourable young lady of virtue and modesty, and very facetious withal--Miss Julia Mannering--hath not meanly contributed. Suum cuique tribuito.'

'You, then,' said Bertram to his sister, 'are all that remains to me! Last night, but more fully this morning, Colonel Mannering gave me an account of our family misfortunes, though without saying I should find my sister here.'

'That,' said Lucy, 'he left to this gentleman to tell you--one of the kindest and most faithful of friends, who soothed my father's long sickness, witnessed his dying moments, and amid the heaviest clouds of fortune would not desert his orphan.'

'God bless him for it!' said Bertram, shaking the Dominie's hand; 'he deserves the love with which I have always regarded even that dim and imperfect shadow of his memory which my childhood retained.'

'And God bless you both, my dear children!' said Sampson; 'if it had not been for your sake I would have been contented--had Heaven's pleasure so been--to lay my head upon the turf beside my patron.'

'But I trust,' said Bertram--'I am encouraged to hope, we shall all see better days. All our wrongs shall be redressed, since Heaven has sent me means and friends to assert my right.'

'Friends indeed!' echoed the Dominie, 'and sent, as you truly say, by HIM to whom I early taught you to look up as the source of all that is good. There is the great Colonel Mannering from the Eastern Indies, a man of war from his birth upwards, but who is not the less a man of great erudition, considering his imperfect opportunities; and there is, moreover, the great advocate Mr. Pleydell, who is also a man of great erudition, but who descendeth to trifles unbecoming thereof; and there is Mr. Andrew Dinmont, whom I do not understand to have possession of much erudition, but who, like the patriarchs of old, is cunning in that which belongeth to flocks and herds; lastly, there is even I myself, whose opportunities of collecting erudition, as they have been greater than those of the aforesaid valuable persons, have not, if it becomes me to speak, been pretermitted by me, in so far as my poor faculties have enabled me to profit by them. Of a surety, little Harry, we must speedily resume our studies. I will begin from the foundation. Yes, I will reform your education upward from the true knowledge of English grammar even to that of the Hebrew or Chaldaic tongue.'

The reader may observe that upon this occasion Sampson was infinitely more profuse of words than he had hitherto exhibited himself. The reason was that, in recovering his pupil, his mind went instantly back to their original connexion, and he had, in his confusion of ideas, the strongest desire in the world to resume spelling lessons and half-text with young Bertram. This was the more ridiculous, as towards Lucy he assumed no such powers of tuition. But she had grown up under his eye, and had been gradually emancipated from his government by increase in years and knowledge, and a latent sense of his own inferior tact in manners, whereas his first ideas went to take up Harry pretty nearly where he had left him. From the same feelings of reviving authority he indulged himself in what was to him a profusion of language; and as people seldom speak more than usual without exposing themselves, he gave those whom he addressed plainly to understand that, while he deferred implicitly to the opinions and commands, if they chose to impose them, of almost every one whom he met with, it was under an internal conviction that in the article of *erudi-ti-on*, as he usually pronounced the word, he was infinitely superior to them all put together. At present, however, this intimation fell upon heedless ears, for the brother and sister were too deeply engaged in asking and receiving intelligence concerning their former fortunes to attend much to the worthy Dominie. When Colonel Mannering left Bertram he went to Julia's dressing-room and dismissed her attendant. 'My dear sir,' she said as he entered, 'you have forgot our vigils last night, and have hardly allowed me time to comb my hair, although you must be sensible how it stood on end at the various wonders which took place.'

'It is with the inside of your head that I have some business at present, Julia; I will return the outside to the care of your Mrs. Mincing in a few minutes.'

'Lord, papa,' replied Miss Mannering, 'think how entangled all my ideas are, and you to propose to comb them out in a few minutes! If Mincing were to do so in her department she would tear half the hair out of my head.'

'Well then, tell me,' said the Colonel, 'where the entanglement lies, which I will try to extricate with due gentleness?'

'O, everywhere,' said the young lady; 'the whole is a wild dream.'

'Well then, I will try to unriddle it.' He gave a brief sketch of the fate and prospects of Bertram, to which Julia listened with an interest which she in vain endeavoured to disguise. 'Well,' concluded her father, 'are your ideas on the subject more luminous?'

'More confused than ever, my dear sir,' said Julia. 'Here is this young man come from India, after he had been supposed dead, like Aboulfouaris the great voyager to his sister Canzade and his provident brother Hour. I am wrong in the story, I believe--Canzade was his wife; but Lucy may represent the one and the Dominie the other. And then this lively crack-brained Scotch lawyer appears like a pantomime at the end of a tragedy. And then how delightful it will be if Lucy gets back her fortune.'

'Now I think,' said the Colonel, 'that the most mysterious part of the business is, that Miss Julia Mannering, who must have known her father's anxiety about the fate of this young man Brown, or Bertram, as we must now call him, should have met him when Hazlewood's accident took place, and never once mentioned to her father a word of the matter, but suffered the search to proceed against this young gentleman as a suspicious character and assassin.'

Julia, much of whose courage had been hastily assumed to meet the interview with her father, was now unable to rally herself; she hung down her head in silence, after in vain attempting to utter a denial that she recollected Brown when she met him.

'No answer! Well, Julia,' continued her father, gravely but kindly, 'allow me to ask you, Is this the only time you have seen Brown since his return from India? Still no answer. I must then naturally suppose that it is not the first time. Still no reply. Julia Mannering, will you have the kindness to answer me? Was it this young man who came under your window and conversed with you during your residence at Mervyn Hall? Julia, I command--I entreat you to be candid.'

Miss Mannering raised her head. 'I have been, sir--I believe I am still--very foolish; and it is perhaps more hard upon me that I must meet this gentleman, who has been, though not the cause entirely, yet the accomplice, of my folly, in your presence.' Here she made a full stop.

'I am to understand, then,' said Mannering, 'that this was the author of the serenade at Mervyn Hall?'

There was something in this allusive change of epithet that gave Julia a little more courage. 'He was indeed, sir; and if I am very wrong, as I have often thought, I have some apology.'

'And what is that?' answered the Colonel, speaking quick, and with something of harshness.

'I will not venture to name it, sir; but (she opened a small cabinet, and put some letters into his hands) I will give you these, that you may see how this intimacy began, and by whom it was encouraged.'

Mannering took the packet to the window--his pride forbade a more distant retreat. He glanced at some passages of the letters with an unsteady eye and an agitated mind; his stoicism, however, came in time to his aid--that philosophy which, rooted in pride, yet frequently bears the fruits of virtue. He returned towards his daughter with as firm an air as his feelings permitted him to assume.

'There is great apology for you, Julia, as far as I can judge from a glance at these letters; you have obeyed at least one parent. Let us adopt a Scotch proverb the Dominie quoted the other day--"Let bygones be bygones, and fair play for the future." I will never upbraid you with your past want of confidence; do you judge of my future intentions by my actions, of which hitherto you have surely had no reason to complain. Keep these letters; they were never intended for my eye, and I would not willingly read more of them than I have done, at your desire and for your exculpation. And now, are we friends? Or rather, do you understand me?'

'O, my dear, generous father,' said Julia, throwing herself into his arms, 'why have I ever for an instant misunderstood you?'

'No more of that, Julia,' said the Colonel; 'we have both been to blame. He that is too proud to vindicate the affection and confidence which he conceives should be given without solicitation, must meet much, and perhaps deserved, disappointment. It is enough that one dearest and most regretted member of my family has gone to the grave without knowing me; let me not lose the confidence of a child who ought to love me if she really loves herself.'

'O, no danger, no fear!' answered Julia; 'let me but have your approbation and my own, and there is no rule you can prescribe so severe that I will not follow.'

'Well, my love,' kissing her forehead, 'I trust we shall not call upon you for anything too heroic. With respect to this young gentleman's addresses, I expect in the first place that all clandestine correspondence, which no young woman can entertain for a moment without lessening herself in her own eyes and in those of her lover--I request, I say, that clandestine correspondence of every kind may be given up, and that you will refer Mr. Bertram to me for the reason. You will naturally wish to know what is to be the issue of such a reference. In the first place, I desire to observe this young gentleman's character more closely than circumstances, and perhaps my own prejudices, have permitted formerly. I should also be glad to see his birth established. Not that I am anxious about his getting the estate of Ellangowan, though such a subject is held in absolute indifference nowhere except in a novel; but certainly Henry Bertram, heir of Ellangowan, whether possessed of the property of his ancestors or not, is a very different person from Vanbeest Brown, the son of nobody at all. His fathers, Mr. Pleydell tells me, are distinguished in history as following the banners of their native princes, while our own fought at Cressy and Poitiers. In short, I neither give nor withhold my approbation, but I expect you will redeem past errors; and, as you can now unfortunately only have recourse to ONE parent, that you will show the duty of a child by reposing that confidence in me which I will say my inclination to make you happy renders a filial debt upon your part.'

The first part of this speech affected Julia a good deal, the comparative merit of the ancestors of the Bertrams and Mannerings excited a secret smile, but the conclusion was such as to soften a heart peculiarly open to the feelings of generosity. 'No, my dear sir,' she said, extending her hand, 'receive my faith, that from this moment you shall be the first person consulted respecting what shall pass in future between Brown--I mean Bertram--and me; and that no engagement shall be undertaken by me excepting what you shall immediately know and approve of. May I ask if Mr. Bertram is to continue a guest at Woodbourne?'

'Certainly,' said the Colonel, 'while his affairs render it advisable.'

'Then, sir, you must be sensible, considering what is already past, that he will expect some reason for my withdrawing, I believe I must say the encouragement, which he may think I have given.'

'I expect, Julia,' answered Mannering, 'that he will respect my roof, and entertain some sense perhaps of the services I am desirous to render him, and so will not insist upon any course of conduct of which I might have reason to complain; and I expect of you that you will make him sensible of what is due to both.'

'Then, sir, I understand you, and you shall be implicitly obeyed.'

'Thank you, my love; my anxiety (kissing her) is on your account. Now wipe these witnesses from your eyes, and so to breakfast.'

CHAPTER XXIII

*And Sheriff I will engage my word to you,
That I will by to-morrow dinner time,
Send him to answer thee or any man,
For anything he shall be charged withal*

Henry IV Part I

When the several by-plays, as they may be termed, had taken place among the individuals of the Woodbourne family, as we have intimated in the preceding chapter, the breakfast party at length assembled, Dandie excepted, who had consulted his taste in viands, and perhaps in society, by partaking of a cup of tea with Mrs. Allan, just laced with two teaspoonfuls of cogniac, and reinforced with various slices from a huge round of beef. He had a kind of feeling that he could eat twice as much, and speak twice as much, with this good dame and Barnes as with the grand folk in the parlour. Indeed, the meal of this less distinguished party was much more mirthful than that in the higher circle, where there was an obvious air of constraint on the greater part of the assistants. Julia dared not raise her voice in asking Bertram if he chose another cup of tea. Bertram felt embarrassed while eating his toast and butter under the eye of Mannering. Lucy, while she indulged to the uttermost her affection for her recovered brother, began to think of the quarrel betwixt him and Hazlewood. The Colonel felt the painful anxiety natural to a proud mind when it deems its slightest action subject for a moment to the watchful construction of others. The Lawyer, while sedulously buttering his roll, had an aspect of unwonted gravity, arising perhaps from the severity of his morning studies. As for the Dominie, his state of mind was ecstatic! He looked at Bertram—he looked at Lucy—he whimpered—he sniggled—he grinned—he committed all manner of solecisms in point of form: poured the whole cream (no unlucky mistake) upon the plate of porridge which was his own usual breakfast, threw the slops of what he called his 'crowning dish of tea' into the sugar-dish instead of the slop-basin, and concluded with spilling the scalding liquor upon old Plato, the Colonel's favourite spaniel, who received the libation with a howl that did little honour to his philosophy.

The Colonel's equanimity was rather shaken by this last blunder. 'Upon my word, my good friend, Mr. Sampson, you forget the difference between Plato and Zenocrates.'

'The former was chief of the Academics, the latter of the Stoics,' said the Dominie, with some scorn of the supposition.

'Yes, my dear sir, but it was Zenocrates, not Plato, who denied that pain was an evil.'

'I should have thought,' said Pleydell, 'that very respectable quadruped which is just now limping out of the room upon three of his four legs was rather of the Cynic school.'

'Very well hit off. But here comes an answer from Mac-Morlan.'

It was unfavourable. Mrs. Mac-Morlan sent her respectful compliments, and her husband had been, and was, detained by some alarming disturbances which had taken place the preceding night at Portanferry, and the necessary investigation which they had occasioned.

'What's to be done now. Counsellor?' said the Colonel to Pleydell.

'Why, I wish we could have seen Mac-Morlan,' said the Counsellor, 'who is a sensible fellow himself, and would besides have acted under my advice. But there is little harm. Our friend here must be made *sui juris*. He is at present an escaped prisoner, the law has an awkward claim upon him; he must be placed *rectus in curia*, that is the first object; for which purpose, Colonel, I will accompany you in your carriage down to Hazlewood House. The distance is not great; we will offer our bail, and I am confident I can easily show Mr.—I beg his pardon—Sir Robert Hazlewood, the necessity of receiving it.'

'With all my heart,' said the Colonel; and, ringing the bell, gave the necessary orders. 'And what is next to be done?'

'We must get hold of Mac-Morlan, and look out for more proof.'

'Proof!' said the Colonel, 'the thing is as clear as daylight: here are Mr. Sampson and Miss Bertram, and you yourself at once recognise the young gentleman as his father's image; and he himself recollects all the very peculiar circumstances preceding his leaving this country. What else is necessary to conviction?'

'To moral conviction nothing more, perhaps,' said the experienced lawyer, 'but for legal proof a great deal. Mr. Bertram's recollections are his own recollections merely, and therefore are not evidence in his own favour. Miss Bertram, the learned Mr. Sampson, and I can only say, what every one who knew the late Ellangowan will readily agree in, that this gentleman is his very picture. But that will not make him Ellangowan's son and give him the estate.'

'And what will do so?' said the Colonel.

'Why, we must have a distinct probation. There are these gipsies; but then, alas! they are almost infamous in the eye of law, scarce capable of bearing evidence, and Meg Merrilies utterly so, by the various accounts which she formerly gave of the matter, and her impudent denial of all knowledge of the fact when I myself examined her respecting it.'

'What must be done then?' asked Mannering.

'We must try,' answered the legal sage, 'what proof can be got at in Holland among the persons by whom our young friend was educated. But then the fear of being called in question for the murder of the gauger may make them silent; or, if they speak, they are either foreigners or outlawed smugglers. In short, I see doubts.'

'Under favour, most learned and honoured sir,' said the Dominie, 'I trust HE who hath restored little Harry Bertram to his friends will not leave His own work imperfect.'

'I trust so too, Mr. Sampson,' said Pleydell; 'but we must use the means; and I am afraid we shall have more difficulty in procuring them than I at first thought. But a faint heart never won a fair lady; and, by the way (apart to Miss Mannering, while Bertram was engaged with his sister), there's a vindication of Holland for you! What smart fellows do you think Leyden and Utrecht must send forth, when such a very genteel and handsome young man comes from the paltry schools of Middleburgh?'

'Of a verity,' said the Dominie, jealous of the reputation of the Dutch seminary--'of a verity, Mr. Pleydell, but I make it known to you that I myself laid the foundation of his education.'

'True, my dear Dominie,' answered the Advocate, 'that accounts for his proficiency in the graces, without question. But here comes your carriage, Colonel. Adieu, young folks. Miss Julia, keep your heart till I come back again; let there be nothing done to prejudice my right whilst I am non valens agere.'

Their reception at Hazlewood House was more cold and formal than usual; for in general the Baronet expressed great respect for Colonel Mannering, and Mr. Pleydell, besides being a man of good family and of high general estimation, was Sir Robert's old friend. But now he seemed dry and embarrassed in his manner. 'He would willingly,' he said, 'receive bail, notwithstanding that the offence had been directly perpetrated, committed, and done against young Hazlewood of Hazlewood; but the young man had given himself a fictitious description, and was altogether that sort of person who should not be liberated, discharged, or let loose upon society; and therefore--'

'I hope, Sir Robert Hazlewood,' said the Colonel, 'you do not mean to doubt my word when I assure you that he served under me as cadet in India?'

'By no means or account whatsoever. But you call him a cadet; now he says, avers, and upholds that he was a captain, or held a troop in your regiment.'

'He was promoted since I gave up the command.'

'But you must have heard of it?'

'No. I returned on account of family circumstances from India, and have not since been solicitous to hear particular news from the regiment; the name of Brown, too, is so common that I might have seen his promotion in the "Gazette" without noticing it. But a day or two will bring letters from his commanding officer.'

'But I am told and informed, Mr. Pleydell,' answered Sir Robert, still hesitating, 'that he does not mean to abide by this name of Brown, but is to set up a claim to the estate of Ellangowan, under the name of Bertram.'

'Ay, who says that?' said the Counsellor.

'Or,' demanded the soldier, 'whoever says so, does that give a right to keep him in prison?'

'Hush, Colonel,' said the Lawyer; 'I am sure you would not, any more than I, countenance him if he prove an impostor. And, among friends, who informed you of this, Sir Robert?'

'Why, a person, Mr. Pleydell,' answered the Baronet, 'who is peculiarly interested in investigating, sifting, and clearing out this business to the bottom; you will excuse my being more particular.'

'O, certainly,' replied Pleydell; 'well, and he says--?'

'He says that it is whispered about among tinkers, gipsies, and other idle persons that there is such a plan as I mentioned to you, and that this young man, who is a bastard or natural son of the late Ellangowan, is pitched upon as the impostor from his strong family likeness.'

'And was there such a natural son, Sir Robert?' demanded the Counsellor.

'O, certainly, to my own positive knowledge. Ellangowan had him placed as cabin-boy or powder-monkey on board an armed sloop or yacht belonging to the revenue, through the interest of the late Commissioner Bertram, a kinsman of his own.'

'Well, Sir Robert,' said the Lawyer, taking the word out of the mouth of the impatient soldier, 'you have told me news. I shall investigate them, and if I find them true, certainly Colonel Mannerling and I will not countenance this young man. In the meanwhile, as we are all willing to make him forthcoming to answer all complaints against him, I do assure you, you will act most illegally, and incur heavy responsibility, if you refuse our bail.'

'Why, Mr. Pleydell,' said Sir Robert, who knew the high authority of the Counsellor's opinion, 'as you must know best, and as you promise to give up this young man--'

'If he proves an impostor,' replied the Lawyer, with some emphasis.

'Ay, certainly. Under that condition I will take your bail; though I must say an obliging, well-disposed, and civil neighbour of mine, who was himself bred to the law, gave me a hint or caution this morning against doing so. It was from him I learned that this youth was liberated and had come abroad, or rather had broken prison. But where shall we find one to draw the bail-bond?'

'Here,' said the Counsellor, applying himself to the bell, 'send up my clerk, Mr. Driver; it will not do my character harm if I dictate the needful myself.' It was written accordingly and signed, and, the Justice having subscribed a regular warrant for Bertram alias Brown's discharge, the visitors took their leave.

Each threw himself into his own corner of the post-chariot, and said nothing for some time. The Colonel first broke silence: 'So you intend to give up this poor young fellow at the first brush?'

'Who, I?' replied the Counsellor. 'I will not give up one hair of his head, though I should follow them to the court of last resort in his behalf; but what signified mooting points and showing one's hand to that old ass? Much better he should report to his prompter, Glossin, that we are indifferent or lukewarm in the matter. Besides, I wished to have a peep at the enemies' game.'

'Indeed!' said the soldier. 'Then I see there are stratagems in law as well as war. Well, and how do you like their line of battle?'

'Ingenious,' said Mr. Pleydell, 'but I think desperate; they are finessing too much, a common fault on such occasions.'

During this discourse the carriage rolled rapidly towards Woodbourne without anything occurring worthy of the reader's notice, excepting their meeting with young Hazlewood, to whom the Colonel told the extraordinary history of Bertram's reappearance, which he heard with high delight, and then rode on before to pay Miss Bertram his compliments on an event so happy and so unexpected.

We return to the party at Woodbourne. After the departure of Mannerling, the conversation related chiefly to the fortunes of the Ellangowan family, their domains, and their former power. 'It was, then, under the towers of my fathers,' said Bertram, 'that I landed some days since, in circumstances much resembling those of a vagabond! Its mouldering turrets and darksome arches even then awakened thoughts of the deepest interest, and recollections which I was unable to decipher. I will now visit them again with other feelings, and, I trust, other and better hopes.'

'Do not go there now,' said his sister. 'The house of our ancestors is at present the habitation of a wretch as insidious as dangerous, whose arts and villainy accomplished the ruin and broke the heart of our unhappy father.'

'You increase my anxiety,' replied her brother, 'to confront this miscreant, even in the den he has constructed for himself; I think I have seen him.'

'But you must consider,' said Julia, 'that you are now left under Lucy's guard and mine, and are responsible to us for all your motions, consider, I have not been a lawyer's mistress twelve hours for nothing, and I assure you it would be madness to attempt to go to Ellangowan just now. The utmost to which I can consent is, that we shall walk in a body to the head of the Woodbourne avenue, and from that perhaps we may indulge you with our company as far as a rising ground in the common, whence your eyes may be blessed with a distant prospect of those gloomy towers which struck so strongly your sympathetic imagination.'

The party was speedily agreed upon; and the ladies, having taken their cloaks, followed the route proposed, under the escort of Captain Bertram. It was a pleasant winter morning, and the cool breeze served only to freshen, not to chill, the fair walkers. A secret though unacknowledged bond of kindness combined the two ladies, and Bertram, now hearing the interesting accounts of his own family, now communicating his adventures in Europe and in India, repaid the pleasure which he received. Lucy felt proud of her brother, as well from the bold and manly turn of his sentiments as from the dangers he had encountered, and the spirit with which he had surmounted them. And Julia, while she pondered on her father's words, could not help entertaining hopes that the independent spirit which had seemed to her father presumption in the humble and plebeian Brown would have the grace of courage, noble bearing, and high blood in the far-descended heir of Ellangowan.

They reached at length the little eminence or knoll upon the highest part of the common, called Gibbie's Knowe--a spot repeatedly mentioned in this history as being on the skirts of the Ellangowan estate. It commanded a fair variety of hill and dale, bordered with natural woods, whose naked boughs at this season relieved the general colour of the landscape with a dark purple hue; while in other places the prospect was more formally intersected by lines of plantation, where the Scotch firs displayed their variety of dusky green. At the distance of two or three miles lay the bay of Ellangowan, its waves rippling under the influence of the western breeze. The towers of the ruined castle, seen high over every object in the neighbourhood, received a brighter colouring from the wintry sun.

'There,' said Lucy Bertram, pointing them out in the distance, 'there is the seat of our ancestors. God knows, my dear brother, I do not covet in your behalf the extensive power which the lords of these ruins are said to have possessed so long, and sometimes to have used so ill. But, O that I might see you in possession of such relics of their fortune as should give you an honourable independence, and enable you to stretch your hand for the protection of the old and destitute dependents of our family, whom our poor father's death--'

'True, my dearest Lucy,' answered the young heir of Ellangowan; 'and I trust, with the assistance of Heaven, which has so far guided us, and with that of these good friends, whom their own generous hearts have interested in my behalf, such a consummation of my hard adventures is now not unlikely. But as a soldier I must look with some interest upon that worm-eaten hold of ragged stone; and if this undermining scoundrel who is now in possession dare to displace a pebble of it--'

He was here interrupted by Dinmont, who came hastily after them up the road, unseen till he was near the party: 'Captain, Captain! ye're wanted. Ye're wanted by her ye ken o'.'

And immediately Meg Merrilies, as if emerging out of the earth, ascended from the hollow way and stood before them. 'I sought ye at the house,' she said, 'and found but him (pointing to Dinmont). But ye are right, and I was wrang; it is HERE we should meet, on this very spot, where my eyes last saw your father. Remember your promise and follow me.'

CHAPTER XXIV

*To hail the king in seemly sort
The ladie was full fain,
But King Arthur, all sore amazed,
No answer made again
'What wight art thou,' the ladie said,
'That will not speak to me?
Sir, I may chance to ease thy pain,
Though I be foul to see'*

The Marriage of Sir Gawaine.

The fairy bride of Sir Gawaine, while under the influence of the spell of her wicked step-mother, was more decrepit probably, and what is commonly called more ugly, than Meg Merrilies; but I doubt if she possessed that wild sublimity which an excited imagination communicated to features marked and expressive in their own peculiar character, and to the gestures of a form which, her sex considered, might be termed gigantic. Accordingly, the Knights of the Round Table did not recoil with more terror from the apparition of the loathly lady placed between 'an oak and a green holly,' than Lucy Bertram and Julia Mannering did from the appearance of this Galwegian sibyl upon the common of Ellangowan.

'For God's sake,' said Julia, pulling out her purse, 'give that dreadful woman something and bid her go away.'

'I cannot,' said Bertram; 'I must not offend her.'

'What keeps you here?' said Meg, exalting the harsh and rough tones of her hollow voice. 'Why do you not follow? Must your hour call you twice? Do you remember your oath? "Were it at kirk or market, wedding or burial,"--and she held high her skinny forefinger in a menacing attitude.

Bertram--turned round to his terrified companions. 'Excuse me for a moment; I am engaged by a promise to follow this woman.'

'Good Heavens! engaged to a madwoman?' said Julia.

'Or to a gipsy, who has her band in the wood ready to murder you!' said Lucy.

'That was not spoken like a bairn of Ellangowan,' said Meg, frowning upon Miss Bertram. 'It is the ill-doers are ill-dreaders.'

'In short, I must go,' said Bertram, 'it is absolutely necessary; wait for me five minutes on this spot.'

'Five minutes?' said the gipsy, 'five hours may not bring you here again.'

'Do you hear that?' said Julia; 'for Heaven's sake do not go!'

'I must, I must; Mr. Dinmont will protect you back to the house.'

'No,' said Meg, 'he must come with you; it is for that he is here. He maun take part wi' hand and heart; and weel his part it is, for redding his quarrel might have cost you dear.'

'Troth, Luckie, it's very true,' said the steady farmer; 'and ere I turn back frae the Captain's side I'll show that I haena forgotten 't.'

'O yes,' exclaimed both the ladies at once, 'let Mr. Dinmont go with you, if go you must, on this strange summons.'

'Indeed I must,' answered Bertram; 'but you see I am safely guarded. Adieu for a short time; go home as fast as you can.'

He pressed his sister's hand, and took a yet more affectionate farewell of Julia with his eyes. Almost stupefied with surprise and fear, the young ladies watched with anxious looks the course of Bertram, his companion, and their extraordinary guide. Her tall figure moved across the wintry heath with steps so swift, so long, and so steady that she appeared rather to glide than to walk. Bertram and Dinmont, both tall men, apparently scarce equalled her in height, owing to her longer dress and high head-gear. She proceeded straight across the common, without turning aside to the winding path by which passengers avoided the inequalities and little rills that traversed it in different directions. Thus the diminishing figures often disappeared from the eye, as they dived into such broken ground, and again ascended to sight when they were past the hollow. There was something frightful and unearthly, as it were, in the rapid and undeviating course which she pursued, undeterred by any of the impediments which usually incline a traveller from the direct path. Her way was as straight, and nearly as swift, as that of a bird through the air. At length they reached those thickets of natural wood which extended from the skirts of the common towards the glades and brook of Derncleugh, and were there lost to the view.

'This is very extraordinary,' said Lucy after a pause, and turning round to her companion; 'what can he have to do with that old hag?'

'It is very frightful,' answered Julia, 'and almost reminds me of the tales of sorceresses, witches, and evil genii which I have heard in India. They believe there in a fascination of the eye by which those who possess it control the will and dictate the motions of their victims. What can your brother have in common with that fearful woman that he should leave us, obviously against his will, to attend to her commands?'

'At least,' said Lucy, 'we may hold him safe from harm; for she would never have summoned that faithful creature Dinmont, of whose strength, courage, and steadiness Henry said so much, to attend upon an expedition where she projected evil to the person of his friend. And now let us go back to the house till the Colonel returns. Perhaps Bertram may be back first; at any rate, the Colonel will judge what is to be done.'

Leaning, then, upon each other's arm, but yet occasionally stumbling, between fear and the disorder of their nerves, they at length reached the head of the avenue, when they heard the tread of a horse behind. They started, for their ears were awake to every sound, and beheld to their great pleasure young Hazlewood. 'The Colonel will be here immediately,' he said; 'I galloped on before to pay my respects to Miss Bertram, with the sincerest congratulations upon the joyful event which has taken place in her family. I long to be introduced to Captain Bertram, and to thank him for the well-deserved lesson he gave to my rashness and indiscretion.'

'He has left us just now,' said Lucy, 'and in a manner that has frightened us very much.'

Just at that moment the Colonel's carriage drove up, and, on observing the ladies, stopped, while Mannering and his learned counsel alighted and joined them. They instantly communicated the new cause of alarm.

'Meg Merrilies again!' said the Colonel. 'She certainly is a most mysterious and unaccountable personage; but I think she must have something to impart to Bertram to which she does not mean we should be privy.'

'The devil take the bedlamite old woman,' said the Counsellor; 'will she not let things take their course, prout de lege, but must always be putting in her oar in her own way? Then I fear from the direction they took they are going upon the Ellangowan estate. That rascal Glossin has shown us what ruffians he has at his disposal; I wish honest Liddesdale maybe guard sufficient.'

'If you please,' said Hazlewood, 'I should be most happy to ride in the direction which they have taken. I am so well known in the country that I scarce think any outrage will be offered in my presence, and I shall keep at such a cautious distance as not to appear to watch Meg, or interrupt any communication which she may make.'

'Upon my word,' said Pleydell (aside), 'to be a sprig whom I remember with a whey face and a satchel not so very many years ago, I think young Hazlewood grows a fine fellow. I am more afraid of a new attempt at legal oppression than at open violence, and from that this young man's presence would deter both Glossin and his understrappers.--Hie away then, my boy; peer out--peer out, you 'll find them somewhere about Derncleugh, or very probably in Warroch wood.'

Hazlewood turned his horse. 'Come back to us to dinner, Hazlewood,' cried the Colonel. He bowed, spurred his horse, and galloped off.

We now return to Bertram and Dinmont, who continued to follow their mysterious guide through the woods and dingles between the open common and the ruined hamlet of Derncleugh. As she led the way she never looked back upon her followers, unless to chide them for loitering, though the sweat, in spite of the season, poured from their brows. At other times she spoke to herself in such broken expressions as these: 'It is to rebuild the auld house, it is to lay the corner-stone; and did I not warn him? I tell'd him I was born to do it, if my father's head had been the stepping-stane, let alane his. I was doomed--still I kept my purpose in the cage and in the stocks; I was banished--I kept it in an unco land; I was scourged, I was branded--my resolution lay deeper than scourge or red iron could reach;--and now the hour is come.'

'Captain,' said Dinmont, in a half whisper, 'I wish she binna uncanny! her words dinna seem to come in God's name, or like other folks'. Od, they threep in our country that there ARE sic things.'

'Don't be afraid, my friend,' whispered Bertram in return.

'Fear'd! fient a haet care I,' said the dauntless farmer; 'be she witch or deevil, it's a' ane to Dandie Dinmont.'

'Haud your peace, gudeman,' said Meg, looking sternly over her shoulder; 'is this a time or place for you to speak, think ye?'

'But, my good friend,' said Bertram, 'as I have no doubt in your good faith or kindness, which I have experienced, you should in return have some confidence in me; I wish to know where you are leading us.'

'There's but ae answer to that, Henry Bertram,' said the sibyl. 'I swore my tongue should never tell, but I never said my finger should never show. Go on and meet your fortune, or turn back and lose it: that's a' I hae to say.'

'Go on then,' answered Bertram; 'I will ask no more questions.'

They descended into the glen about the same place where Meg had formerly parted from Bertram. She paused an instant beneath the tall rock where he had witnessed the burial of a dead body and stamped upon the ground, which, notwithstanding all the care that had been taken, showed vestiges of having been recently moved. 'Here rests ane,' she said; 'he'll maybe hae neibours sune.'

She then moved up the brook until she came to the ruined hamlet, where, pausing with a look of peculiar and softened interest before one of the gables which was still standing, she said in a tone less abrupt, though as solemn as before, 'Do you see that blackit and broken end of a sheeling? There my kettle boiled for forty years; there I bore twelve buirdly sons and daughters. Where are they now? where are the leaves that were on that auld ash tree at Martinmas! The west wind has made it bare; and I'm stripped too. Do you see that saugh tree? it's but a blackened rotten stump now. I've sate under it mony a bonnie summer afternoon, when it hung its gay garlands ower the poppling water. I've sat there, and,' elevating her voice, 'I've held you on my knee, Henry Bertram, and sung ye sangs of the auld barons and their bloody wars. It will ne'er be green again, and Meg Merrilies will never sing sangs mair, be they blythe or sad. But ye'll no forget her, and ye'll gar big up the auld wa's for her sake? And let somebody live there that's ower gude to fear them of another warld. For if ever the dead came back amang the living, I'll be seen in this glen mony a night after these crazed banes are in the mould.'

The mixture of insanity and wild pathos with which she spoke these last words, with her right arm bare and extended, her left bent and shrouded beneath the dark red drapery of her mantle, might have been a study worthy of our Siddons herself. 'And now,' she said, resuming at once the short, stern, and hasty tone which was most ordinary to her, 'let us to the wark, let us to the wark.'

She then led the way to the promontory on which the Kaim of Derncleugh was situated, produced a large key from her pocket, and unlocked the door. The interior of this place was in better order than formerly. 'I have made things decent,' she said; 'I may be streekit here or night. There will be few, few at Meg's lykewake, for mony of our folk will blame what I hae done, and am to do!'

She then pointed to a table, upon which was some cold meat, arranged with more attention to neatness than could have been expected from Meg's habits. 'Eat,' she said--'eat; ye'll need it this night yet.'

Bertram, in complaisance, eat a morsel or two; and Dinmont, whose appetite was unabated either by wonder, apprehension, or the meal of the morning, made his usual figure as a trencherman. She then offered each a single glass of spirits, which Bertram drank diluted, and his companion plain.

'Will ye taste naething yoursell, Luckie?' said Dinmont.

'I shall not need it,' replied their mysterious hostess. 'And now,' she said, 'ye maun hae arms: ye maunna gang on dry-handed; but use them not rashly. Take captive, but save life; let the law hae its ain. He maun speak ere he die.'

'Who is to be taken? who is to speak?' said Bertram, in astonishment, receiving a pair of pistols which she offered him, and which, upon examining, he found loaded and locked.

'The flints are gude,' she said, 'and the powder dry; I ken this wark weel.'

Then, without answering his questions, she armed Dinmont also with a large pistol, and desired them to choose sticks for themselves out of a parcel of very suspicious-looking bludgeons which she brought from a corner. Bertram took a stout sapling, and Dandie selected a club which might have served Hercules himself. They then left the hut together, and in doing so Bertram took an opportunity to whisper to Dinmont, 'There's something inexplicable in all this. But we need not use these arms unless we see necessity and lawful occasion; take care to do as you see me do.'

Dinmont gave a sagacious nod, and they continued to follow, over wet and over dry, through bog and through fallow, the footsteps of their conductress. She guided them to the wood of Warroch by the same track which the late Ellangowan had used when riding to Derncleugh in quest of his child on the miserable evening of Kennedy's murder.

When Meg Merrilies had attained these groves, through which the wintry sea-wind was now whistling hoarse and shrill, she seemed to pause a moment as if to recollect the way. 'We maun go the precise track,' she said, and continued to go forward, but rather in a zigzag and involved course than according to her former steady and direct line of motion. At length she guided them through the mazes of the wood to a little open glade of about a quarter of an acre, surrounded by trees and bushes, which made a wild and irregular boundary. Even in winter it was a sheltered and snugly sequestered spot; but when arrayed in the verdure of spring, the earth sending forth all its wild flowers, the shrubs spreading their waste of blossom around it, and the weeping birches, which towered over the underwood, drooping their long and leafy fibres to intercept the sun, it must have seemed a place for a youthful poet to study his earliest sonnet, or a pair of lovers to exchange their first mutual avowal of affection. Apparently it now awakened very different recollections. Bertram's brow, when he had looked round the spot, became gloomy and embarrassed. Meg, after uttering to herself, 'This is the very spot!' looked at him with a ghastly side-glance--'D'ye mind it?'

'Yes!' answered Bertram, 'imperfectly I do.'

'Ay!' pursued his guide, 'on this very spot the man fell from his horse. I was behind that bourtree bush at the very moment. Sair, sair he strove, and sair he cried for mercy; but he was in the hands of them that never kenn'd the word! Now will I show you the further track; the last time ye travelled it was in these arms.'

She led them accordingly by a long and winding passage, almost overgrown with brushwood, until, without any very perceptible descent, they suddenly found themselves by the seaside. Meg then walked very fast on between the surf and the rocks, until she came to a remarkable fragment of rock detached from the rest. 'Here,' she said in a low and scarcely audible whisper--'here the corpse was found.'

'And the cave,' said Bertram, in the same tone, 'is close beside it; are you guiding us there?'

'Yes,' said the gipsy in a decided tone. 'Bend up both your hearts; follow me as I creep in; I have placed the fire-wood so as to screen you. Bide behind it for a gliff till I say, "The hour and the man are baith come"; then rin in on him, take his arms, and bind him till the blood burst frae his finger nails.'

'I will, by my soul,' said Henry, 'if he is the man I suppose--Jansen?'

'Ay, Jansen, Hatteraick, and twenty mair names are his.'

'Dinmont, you must stand by me now,' said Bertram, 'for this fellow is a devil.'

'Ye needna doubt that,' said the stout yeoman; 'but I wish I could mind a bit prayer or I creep after the witch into that hole that she's opening. It wad be a sair thing to leave the blessed sun and the free air, and gang and be killed like a tod that's run to earth, in a dungeon like that. But, my sooth, they will be hard-bitten terriers will worry Dandie; so, as I said, deil hae me if I baulk you.' This was uttered in the lowest tone of voice possible. The entrance was now open. Meg crept in upon her hands and knees, Bertram followed, and Dinmont, after giving a rueful glance toward the daylight, whose blessings he was abandoning, brought up the rear.

CHAPTER XXV

*Die, prophet! in thy speech;
For this, among the rest, was I ordained.*

Henry VI. Part III.

The progress of the Borderer, who, as we have said, was the last of the party, was fearfully arrested by a hand, which caught hold of his leg as he dragged his long limbs after him in silence and perturbation through the low and narrow entrance of the subterranean passage. The steel heart of the bold yeoman had well-nigh given way, and he suppressed with difficulty a shout, which, in the defenceless posture and situation which they then occupied, might have cost all their lives. He contented himself, however, with extricating his foot from the grasp of this unexpected follower. 'Be still,' said a voice behind him, releasing him; 'I am a friend--Charles Hazlewood.'

These words were uttered in a very low voice, but they produced sound enough to startle Meg Merrilies, who led the van, and who, having already gained the place where the cavern expanded, had risen upon her feet. She began, as if to confound any listening ear, to growl, to mutter, and to sing aloud, and at the same time to make a bustle among some brushwood which was now heaped in the cave.

'Here, beldam, deyvil's kind,' growled the harsh voice of Dirk Hatteraick from the inside of his den, 'what makest thou there?'

'Laying the roughies to keep the cauld wind frae you, ye desperate do-nae-good. Ye're e'en ower weel off, and wotsna; it will be otherwise soon.'

'Have you brought me the brandy, and any news of my people?' said Dirk Hatteraick.

'There's the flask for ye. Your people--dispersed, broken, gone, or cut to ribbands by the redcoats.'

'Der deyvil! this coast is fatal to me.'

'Ye may hae mair reason to say sae.'

While this dialogue went forward, Bertram and Dinmont had both gained the interior of the cave and assumed an erect position. The only light which illuminated its rugged and sable precincts was a quantity of wood burnt to charcoal in an iron grate, such as they use in spearing salmon by night. On these red embers Hatteraick from time to time threw a handful of twigs or splintered wood; but these, even when they blazed up, afforded a light much disproportioned to the extent of the cavern; and, as its principal inhabitant lay upon the side of the grate most remote from the entrance, it was not easy for him to discover distinctly objects which lay in that direction. The intruders, therefore, whose number was now augmented unexpectedly to three, stood behind the loosely-piled branches with little risk of discovery. Dinmont had the sense to keep back Hazlewood with one hand till he whispered to Bertram, 'A friend--young Hazlewood.'

It was no time for following up the introduction, and they all stood as still as the rocks around them, obscured behind the pile of brushwood, which had been probably placed there to break the cold wind from the sea, without totally intercepting the supply of air. The branches were laid so loosely above each other that, looking through them towards the light of the fire-grate, they could easily discover what passed in its vicinity, although a much stronger degree of illumination than it afforded would not have enabled the persons placed near the bottom of the cave to have descried them in the position which they occupied.

The scene, independent of the peculiar moral interest and personal danger which attended it, had, from the effect of the light and shade on the uncommon objects which it exhibited, an appearance emphatically dismal. The light in the fire-grate was the dark-red glare of charcoal in a state of ignition, relieved from time to time by a transient flame of a more vivid or duskier light, as the fuel with which Dirk Hatteraick fed his fire was better or worse fitted for his purpose. Now a dark cloud of stifling smoke rose up to the roof of the cavern, and then lighted into a reluctant and sullen blaze, which flashed wavering up the pillar of smoke, and was suddenly rendered brighter and more lively by some drier fuel, or perhaps some splintered fir-timber, which at once converted the smoke into flame. By such fitful irradiation they could see, more or less distinctly, the form of Hatteraick, whose savage and rugged cast of features, now rendered yet more ferocious by the circumstances of his situation and the deep gloom of his mind, assorted well with the rugged and broken vault, which rose in a rude arch over and around him. The form of Meg Merrilies, which stalked about him, sometimes in the light, sometimes partially obscured in the smoke or darkness, contrasted strongly with the sitting figure of Hatteraick as he bent over the flame, and from his stationary posture was constantly visible to the spectator, while that of the female flitted around, appearing or disappearing like a spectre.

Bertram felt his blood boil at the sight of Hatteraick. He remembered him well under the name of Jansen, which the smuggler had adopted after the death of Kennedy; and he remembered also that this Jansen, and his mate Brown, the same who was shot at Woodbourne, had been the brutal tyrants of his infancy. Bertram knew farther, from piecing his own imperfect recollections with the narratives of Mannering and Pleydell, that this man was the prime agent in the act of violence which tore him from his family and country, and had exposed him to so many distresses and dangers. A thousand exasperating reflections rose within his bosom; and he could hardly refrain from rushing upon Hatteraick and blowing his brains out.

At the same time this would have been no safe adventure. The flame, as it rose and fell, while it displayed the strong, muscular, and broad-chested frame of the ruffian, glanced also upon two brace of pistols in his belt, and upon the hilt of his cutlass: it was not to be doubted that his desperation was commensurate with his personal strength and means of resistance. Both, indeed, were inadequate to encounter the combined power of two such men as Bertram himself and his friend Dinmont, without reckoning their unexpected assistant Hazlewood, who was unarmed, and of a slighter make; but Bertram felt, on a moment's reflection, that there would be neither sense nor valour in anticipating the hangman's office, and he considered the importance of making Hatteraick prisoner alive. He therefore repressed his indignation, and awaited what should pass between the ruffian and his gipsy guide.

'And how are ye now?' said the harsh and discordant tones of his female attendant.' Said I not, it would come upon you--ay, and in this very cave, where ye harboured after the deed?'

'Wetter and sturm, ye hag!' replied Hatteraick, 'keep your deyvil's matins till they're wanted. Have you seen Glossin?'

'No,' replied Meg Merrilies; 'you've missed your blow, ye blood-spiller! and ye have nothing to expect from the tempter.'

'Hagel!' exclaimed the ruffian, 'if I had him but by the throat! And what am I to do then?'

'Do?' answered the gipsy; 'die like a man, or be hanged like a dog!'

'Hanged, ye hag of Satan! The hemp's not sown that shall hang me.'

'It's sown, and it's grown, and it's heckled, and it's twisted. Did I not tell ye, when ye wad take away the boy Harry Bertram, in spite of my prayers,--did I not say he would come back when he had dree'd his weird in foreign land till his twenty-first year? Did I not say the auld fire would burn down to a spark, but wad kindle again?'

'Well, mother, you did say so,' said Hatteraick, in a tone that had something of despair in its accents; 'and, donner and blitzen! I believe you spoke the truth. That younker of Ellangowan has been a rock ahead to me all my life! And now, with Glossin's cursed contrivance, my crew have been cut off, my boats destroyed, and I daresay the lugger's taken; there were not men enough left on board to work her, far less to fight her--a dredge-boat might have taken her. And what will the owners say? Hagel and sturm! I shall never dare go back again to Flushing.'

'You'll never need,' said the gipsy.

'What are you doing there,' said her companion; 'and what makes you say that?'

During this dialogue Meg was heaping some flax loosely together. Before answer to this question she dropped a firebrand upon the flax, which had been previously steeped in some spirituous liquor, for it instantly caught fire and rose in a vivid pyramid of the most brilliant light up to the very top of the vault. As it ascended Meg answered the ruffian's question in a firm and steady voice: 'BECAUSE THE HOUR'S COME, AND THE MAN.'

At the appointed signal Bertram and Dinmont sprung over the brushwood and rushed upon Hatteraick. Hazlewood, unacquainted with their plan of assault, was a moment later. The ruffian, who instantly saw he was betrayed, turned his first vengeance on Meg Merrilies, at whom he discharged a pistol. She fell with a piercing and dreadful cry between the shriek of pain and the sound of laughter when at its highest and most suffocating height. 'I kenn'd it would be this way,' she said.

Bertram, in his haste, slipped his foot upon the uneven rock which floored the cave--a fortunate stumble, for Hatteraick's second bullet whistled over him with so true and steady an aim that, had he been standing upright, it must have lodged in his brain. Ere the smuggler could draw another pistol, Dinmont closed with him, and endeavoured by main force to pinion down his arms. Such, however, was the wretch's personal strength, joined to the efforts of his despair, that, in spite of the gigantic force with which the Borderer grappled him, he dragged Dinmont through the blazing flax, and had almost succeeded in drawing a third pistol, which might have proved fatal to the honest farmer, had not Bertram, as well as Hazlewood, come to his assistance, when, by main force, and no ordinary exertion of it, they threw Hatteraick on the ground, disarmed him, and bound him. This scuffle, though it takes up some time in the narrative, passed in less than a single minute. When he was fairly mastered, after one or two desperate and almost convulsionary struggles, the ruffian lay perfectly still and silent. 'He's gaun to die game ony how,' said Dinmont; 'weel, I like him na the waur for that.'

This observation honest Dandie made while he was shaking the blazing flax from his rough coat and shaggy black hair, some of which had been singed in the scuffle. 'He is quiet now,' said Bertram; 'stay by him and do not permit him to stir till I see whether the poor woman be alive or dead.' With Hazlewood's assistance he raised Meg Merrilies.

'I kenn'd it would be this way,' she muttered, 'and it's e'en this way that it should be.'

The ball had penetrated the breast below the throat. It did not bleed much externally; but Bertram, accustomed to see gunshot wounds, thought it the more alarming. 'Good God! what shall we do for this poor woman?' said he to Hazlewood, the circumstances superseding the necessity of previous explanation or introduction to each other.

'My horse stands tied above in the wood,' said Hazlewood. 'I have been watching you these two hours. I will ride off for some assistants that may be trusted. Meanwhile, you had better defend the mouth of the cavern against every one until I return.' He hastened away. Bertram, after binding Meg Merrilies's wound as well as he could, took station near the mouth of the cave with a cocked pistol in his hand; Dinmont continued to watch Hatteraick, keeping a grasp like that of Hercules on his breast. There was a dead silence in the cavern, only interrupted by the low and suppressed moaning of the wounded female and by the hard breathing of the prisoner.

CHAPTER XXVI

*For though, seduced and led astray,
Thoust travell'd far and wander'd long,
Thy God hath seen thee all the way,
And all the turns that led thee wrong*

The Hall of Justice.

After the space of about three-quarters of an hour, which the uncertainty and danger of their situation made seem almost thrice as long, the voice of young Hazlewood was heard without. 'Here I am,' he cried, 'with a sufficient party.'

'Come in then,' answered Bertram, not a little pleased to find his guard relieved. Hazlewood then entered, followed by two or three countrymen, one of whom acted as a peace-officer. They lifted Hatteraick up and carried him in their arms as far as the entrance of the vault was high enough to permit them; then laid him on his back and dragged him along as well as they could, for no persuasion would induce him to assist the transportation by any exertion of his own. He lay as silent and inactive in their hands as a dead corpse, incapable of opposing, but in no way aiding, their operations. When he was dragged into daylight and placed erect upon his feet among three or four assistants who had remained without the cave, he seemed stupefied and dazzled by the sudden change from the darkness of his cavern. While others were superintending the removal of Meg Merrilies, those who remained with Hatteraick attempted to make him sit down upon a fragment of rock which lay close upon the high-water mark. A strong shuddering convulsed his iron frame for an instant as he resisted their purpose. 'Not there! Hagel! you would not make me sit THERE?'

These were the only words he spoke; but their import, and the deep tone of horror in which they were uttered, served to show what was passing in his mind.

When Meg Merrilies had also been removed from the cavern, with all the care for her safety that circumstances admitted, they consulted where she should be carried. Hazlewood had sent for a surgeon, and proposed that she should be lifted in the meantime to the nearest cottage. But the patient exclaimed with great earnestness, 'Na, na, na! to the Kaim o' Derncleugh--the Kaim o' Derncleugh; the spirit will not free itself o' the flesh but there.'

'You must indulge her, I believe,' said Bertram; 'her troubled imagination will otherwise aggravate the fever of the wound.'

They bore her accordingly to the vault. On the way her mind seemed to run more upon the scene which had just passed than on her own approaching death.

'There were three of them set upon him: I brought the twasome, but wha was the third? It would be HIMSELL, returned to work his ain vengeance!'

It was evident that the unexpected appearance of Hazlewood, whose person the outrage of Hatteraick left her no time to recognise, had produced a strong effect on her imagination. She often recurred to it. Hazlewood accounted for his unexpected arrival to Bertram by saying that he had kept them in view for some time by the direction of Mannering; that, observing them disappear into the cave, he had crept after them, meaning to announce himself and his errand, when his hand in the darkness encountering the leg of Dinmont had nearly produced a catastrophe, which, indeed, nothing but the presence of mind and fortitude of the bold yeoman could have averted.

When the gipsy arrived at the hut she produced the key; and when they entered, and were about to deposit her upon the bed, she said, in an anxious tone, 'Na, na! not that way--the feet to the east'; and appeared gratified when they reversed her posture accordingly, and placed her in that appropriate to a dead body.

'Is there no clergyman near,' said Bertram, 'to assist this unhappy woman's devotions?'

A gentleman, the minister of the parish, who had been Charles Hazlewood's tutor, had, with many others, caught the alarm that the murderer of Kennedy was taken on the spot where the deed had been done so many years before, and that a woman was mortally wounded. From curiosity, or rather from the feeling that his duty called him to scenes of distress, this gentleman had come to the Kaim of Derncleugh, and now presented himself. The surgeon arrived at the same time, and was about to probe the wound; but Meg resisted the assistance of either. 'It's no what man can do that will heal my body or save my spirit. Let me speak what I have to say, and then ye may work your will; I'll be nae hindrance. But where's Henry Bertram?' The assistants, to whom this name had been long a stranger, gazed upon each other. 'Yes!' she said, in a stronger and harsher tone, 'I said HENRY BERTRAM OF ELLANGOWAN. Stand from the light and let me see him.'

All eyes were turned towards Bertram, who approached the wretched couch. The wounded woman took hold of his hand. 'Look at him,' she said, 'all that ever saw his father or his grandfather, and bear witness if he is not their living image?' A murmur went through the crowd; the resemblance was too striking to be denied. 'And now hear me; and let that man,' pointing to Hatteraick, who was seated with his keepers on a sea-chest at some distance--'let him deny what I say if he can. That is Henry Bertram, son to Godfrey Bertram, umquhile of Ellangowan; that young man is the very lad-bairn that Dirk Hatteraick carried off from Warroch wood the day that he murdered the gauger. I was there like a wandering spirit, for I longed to see that wood or we left the country. I saved the bairn's life, and sair, sair I prigged and prayed they would leave him wi' me. But they bore him away, and he's been lang ower the sea, and now he's come for his ain, and what should withstand him? I swore to keep the secret till he was ane-an'-twenty; I kenn'd he behoved to dree his weird till that day cam. I keepit that oath which I took to them; but I made another vow to mysell, that if I lived to see the day of his return I would set him in his father's seat, if every step was on a dead man. I have keepit that oath too. I will be ae step mysell, he (pointing to Hatteraick) will soon be another, and there will be ane mair yet.'

The clergyman, now interposing, remarked it was a pity this deposition was not regularly taken and written down, and the surgeon urged the necessity of examining the wound, previously to exhausting her by questions. When she saw them removing Hatteraick, in order to clear the room and leave the surgeon to his operations, she called out aloud, raising herself at the same time upon the couch, 'Dirk Hatteraick, you and I will never meet again until we are before the judgment-seat; will ye own to what I have said, or will you dare deny it?' He turned his hardened brow upon her, with a look of dumb and inflexible defiance. 'Dirk Hatteraick, dare ye deny, with my blood upon your hands, one word of what my dying breath is uttering?' He looked at her with the same expression of hardihood and dogged stubbornness, and moved his lips, but uttered no sound. 'Then fareweel!' she said, 'and God forgive you! your hand has sealed my evidence. When I was in life I was the mad randy gipsy, that had been scourged and banished and branded; that had begged from door to door, and been hounded like a stray tyke from parish to parish; wha would hae minded HER tale? But now I am a dying woman, and my words will not fall to the ground, any more than the earth will cover my blood!'

She here paused, and all left the hut except the surgeon and two or three women. After a very short examination he shook his head and resigned his post by the dying woman's side to the clergyman.

A chaise returning empty to Kippletringan had been stopped on the highroad by a constable, who foresaw it would be necessary to convey Hatteraick to jail. The driver, understanding what was going on at Derncleugh, left his horses to the care of a blackguard boy, confiding, it is to be supposed, rather in the years and discretion of the cattle than in those of their keeper, and set off full speed to see, as he expressed himself, 'whaten a sort o' fun was gaun on.' He arrived just as the group of tenants and peasants, whose numbers increased every moment, satiated with gazing upon the rugged features of Hatteraick, had turned their attention towards Bertram. Almost all of them, especially the aged men who had seen Ellangowan in his better days, felt and acknowledged the justice of Meg Merrilies's appeal. But the Scotch are a cautious people: they remembered there was another in possession of the estate, and they as yet only expressed their feelings in low whispers to each other. Our friend Jock Jabos, the postilion, forced his way into the middle of the circle; but no sooner cast his eyes upon Bertram than he started back in amazement, with a solemn exclamation, 'As sure as there's breath in man, it's auld Ellangowan arisen from the dead!'

This public declaration of an unprejudiced witness was just the spark wanted to give fire to the popular feeling, which burst forth in three distinct shouts: 'Bertram for ever!' 'Long life to the heir of Ellangowan!' 'God send him his ain, and to live among us as his forebears did of yore!'

'I hae been seventy years on the land,' said one person.

'I and mine hae been seventy and seventy to that,' said another; 'I have a right to ken the glance of a Bertram.'

'I and mine hae been three hundred years here,' said another old man, 'and I sail sell my last cow, but I'll see the young Laird placed in his right.'

The women, ever delighted with the marvellous, and not less so when a handsome young man is the subject of the tale, added their shrill acclamations to the general all-hail. 'Blessings on him; he's the very picture o' his father! The Bertrams were aye the wale o' the country side!'

'Eh! that his puir mother, that died in grief and in doubt about him, had but lived to see this day!' exclaimed some female voices.

'But we'll help him to his ain, kimmers,' cried others; 'and before Glossin sail keep the Place of Ellangowan we'll howk him out o't wi' our nails!'

Others crowded around Dinmont, who was nothing both to tell what he knew of his friend, and to boast the honour which he had in contributing to the discovery. As he was known to several of the principal farmers present, his testimony afforded an additional motive to the general enthusiasm. In short, it was one of those moments of intense feeling when the frost of the Scottish people melts like a snow-wreath, and the dissolving torrent carries dam and dyke before it.

The sudden shouts interrupted the devotions of the clergyman; and Meg, who was in one of those dozing fits of stupefaction that precede the close of existence, suddenly started--'Dinna ye hear? dinna ye hear? He's owned! he's owned! I lived but for this. I am a sinfu' woman; but if my curse brought it down, my blessing has taen it off! And now I wad hae liked to hae said mair. But it canna be. Stay!--she continued, stretching her head towards the gleam of light that shot through the narrow slit which served for a window--'is he not there? Stand out o' the light, and let me look upon him ance mair. But the darkness is in my ain een,' she said, sinking back, after an earnest gaze upon vacuity; 'it's a' ended now,

Pass breath,

Come death!'

And, sinking back upon her couch of straw, she expired without a groan. The clergyman and the surgeon carefully noted down all that she had said, now deeply regretting they had not examined her more minutely, but both remaining morally convinced of the truth of her disclosure.

Hazlewood was the first to compliment Bertram upon the near prospect of his being restored to his name and rank in society. The people around, who now learned from Jabos that Bertram was the person who had wounded him, were struck with his generosity, and added his name to Bertram's in their exulting acclamations.

Some, however, demanded of the postilion how he had not recognised Bertram when he saw him some time before at Kippletringan. To which he gave the very natural answer--'Hout, what was I thinking about Ellangowan then? It was the cry that was rising e'en now that the young Laird was found, that put me on finding out the likeness. There was nae missing it ance ane was set to look for't.'

The obduracy of Hatteraick during the latter part of this scene was in some slight degree shaken. He was observed to twinkle with his eyelids; to attempt to raise his bound hands for the purpose of pulling his hat over his brow; to look angrily and impatiently to the road, as if anxious for the vehicle which was to remove him from the spot. At length Mr. Hazlewood, apprehensive that the popular ferment might take a direction towards the prisoner, directed he should be taken to the

post-chaise, and so removed to the town of Kippletringan, to be at Mr. Mac-Morlan's disposal; at the same time he sent an express to warn that gentleman of what had happened. 'And now,' he said to Bertram, 'I should be happy if you would accompany me to Hazlewood House; but as that might not be so agreeable just now as I trust it will be in a day or two, you must allow me to return with you to Woodbourne. But you are on foot.'--'O, if the young Laird would take my horse!'--'Or mine'--'Or mine,' said half-a-dozen voices.--'Or mine; he can trot ten mile an hour without whip or spur, and he's the young Laird's frae this moment, if he likes to take him for a herezeld, [Footnote: See Note 8.] as they ca'd it lang syne.' Bertram readily accepted the horse as a loan, and poured forth his thanks to the assembled crowd for their good wishes, which they repaid with shouts and vows of attachment.

While the happy owner was directing one lad to 'gae doun for the new saddle'; another, 'just to rin the beast ower wi' a dry wisp o' strae'; a third, 'to hie doun and borrow Dan Dunkieson's plated stirrups,' and expressing his regret 'that there was nae time to gie the nag a feed, that the young Laird might ken his mettle,' Bertram, taking the clergyman by the arm, walked into the vault and shut the door immediately after them. He gazed in silence for some minutes upon the body of Meg Merrilies, as it lay before him, with the features sharpened by death, yet still retaining the stern and energetic character which had maintained in life her superiority as the wild chieftainess of the lawless people amongst whom she was born. The young soldier dried the tears which involuntarily rose on viewing this wreck of one who might be said to have died a victim to her fidelity to his person and family. He then took the clergyman's hand and asked solemnly if she appeared able to give that attention to his devotions which befitted a departing person.

'My dear sir,' said the good minister, 'I trust this poor woman had remaining sense to feel and join in the import of my prayers. But let us humbly hope we are judged of by our opportunities of religious and moral instruction. In some degree she might be considered as an uninstructed heathen, even in the bosom of a Christian country; and let us remember that the errors and vices of an ignorant life were balanced by instances of disinterested attachment, amounting almost to heroism. To HIM who can alone weigh our crimes and errors against our efforts towards virtue we consign her with awe, but not without hope.'

'May I request,' said Bertram, 'that you will see every decent solemnity attended to in behalf of this poor woman? I have some property belonging to her in my hands; at all events I will be answerable for the expense. You will hear of me at Woodbourne.'

Dinmont, who had been furnished with a horse by one of his acquaintance, now loudly called out that all was ready for their return; and Bertram and Hazlewood, after a strict exhortation to the crowd, which was now increased to several hundreds, to preserve good order in their rejoicing, as the least ungoverned zeal might be turned to the disadvantage of the young Laird, as they termed him, took their leave amid the shouts of the multitude.

As they rode past the ruined cottages at Derncleugh, Dinmont said, 'I'm sure when ye come to your ain, Captain, ye'll no forget to bigg a bit cot-house there? Deil be in me but I wad do't mysell, an it werena in better hands. I wadna like to live in't, though, after what she said. Od, I wad put in auld Elspeth, the bedral's widow; the like o' them's used wi' graves and ghaists and thae things.'

A short but brisk ride brought them to Woodbourne. The news of their exploit had already flown far and wide, and the whole inhabitants of the vicinity met them on the lawn with shouts of congratulation. 'That you have seen me alive,' said Bertram to Lucy, who first ran up to him, though Julia's eyes even anticipated hers, 'you must thank these kind friends.'

With a blush expressing at once pleasure, gratitude, and bashfulness, Lucy curtsied to Hazlewood, but to Dinmont she frankly extended her hand. The honest farmer, in the extravagance of his joy, carried his freedom farther than the hint warranted, for he imprinted his thanks on the lady's lips, and was instantly shocked at the rudeness of his own conduct. 'Lord sake, madam, I ask your pardon,' he said. 'I forgot but ye had been a bairn o'my ain; the Captain's sae namely, he gars ane forget himsell.'

Old Pleydell now advanced. 'Nay, if fees like these are going,' he said--

'Stop, stop, Mr. Pleydell,' said Julia, 'you had your fees beforehand; remember last night.'

'Why, I do confess a retainer,' said the Barrister; 'but if I don't deserve double fees from both Miss Bertram and you when I conclude my examination of Dirk Hatteraick to-morrow--Gad, I will so supple him! You shall see, Colonel; and you, my saucy misses, though you may not see, shall hear.'

'Ay, that's if we choose to listen, Counsellor,' replied Julia.

'And you think,' said Pleydell, 'it's two to one you won't choose that? But you have curiosity that teaches you the use of your ears now and then.'

'I declare, Counsellor,' answered the lively damsel, 'that such saucy bachelors as you would teach us the use of our fingers now and then.'

'Reserve them for the harpsichord, my love,' said the Counsellor. 'Better for all parties.'

While this idle chat ran on, Colonel Mannering introduced to Bertram a plain good-looking man, in a grey coat and waistcoat, buckskin breeches, and boots. 'This, my dear sir, is Mr. Mac-Morlan.'

'To whom,' said Bertram, embracing him cordially, 'my sister was indebted for a home, when deserted by all her natural friends and relations.'

The Dominie then pressed forward, grinned, chuckled, made a diabolical sound in attempting to whistle, and finally, unable to stifle his emotions, ran away to empty the feelings of his heart at his eyes.

We shall not attempt to describe the expansion of heart and glee of this happy evening.

CHAPTER XXVII

*How like a hateful ape,
Detected grinning 'midst his pilfer'd hoard,
A cunning man appears, whose secret frauds
Are open'd to the day!*

Count Basil

There was a great movement at Woodbourne early on the following morning to attend the examination at Kippletringan. Mr. Pleydell, from the investigation which he had formerly bestowed on the dark affair of Kennedy's death, as well as from the general deference due to his professional abilities, was requested by Mr. Mac-Morlan and Sir Robert Hazlewood, and another justice of peace who attended, to take the situation of chairman and the lead in the examination. Colonel Mannering was invited to sit down with them. The examination, being previous to trial, was private in other respects.

The Counsellor resumed and reinterrogated former evidence. He then examined the clergyman and surgeon respecting the dying declaration of Meg Merrilies. They stated that she distinctly, positively, and repeatedly declared herself an eye-witness of Kennedy's death by the hands of Hatteraick and two or three of his crew; that her presence was accidental; that she believed their resentment at meeting him, when they were in the act of losing their vessel through the means of his information, led to the commission of the crime; that she said there was one witness of the murder, but who refused to participate in it, still alive--her nephew, Gabriel Faa; and she had hinted at another person who was an accessory after, not before, the fact; but her strength there failed her. They did not forget to mention her declaration that she had saved the child, and that he was torn from her by the smugglers for the purpose of carrying him to Holland. All these particulars were carefully reduced to writing.

Dirk Hatteraick was then brought in, heavily ironed; for he had been strictly secured and guarded, owing to his former escape. He was asked his name; he made no answer. His profession; he was silent. Several other questions were put, to none of which he returned any reply. Pleydell wiped the glasses of his spectacles and considered the prisoner very attentively. 'A very truculent-looking fellow,' he whispered to Mannering; 'but, as Dogberry says, I'll go cunningly to work with him. Here, call in Soles--Soles the shoemaker. Soles, do you remember measuring some footsteps imprinted on the mud at the wood of Warroch on--November 17--by my orders?' Soles remembered the circumstance perfectly. 'Look at that paper; is that your note of the measurement?' Soles verified the memorandum. 'Now, there stands a pair of shoes on that table; measure them, and see if they correspond with any of the marks you have noted there.' The shoemaker obeyed, and declared 'that they answered exactly to the largest of the footprints.'

'We shall prove,' said the Counsellor, aside to Mannering, 'that these shoes, which were found in the ruins at Derncleugh, belonged to Brown, the fellow whom you shot on the lawn at Woodbourne. Now, Soles, measure that prisoner's feet very accurately.'

Mannering observed Hatteraick strictly, and could notice a visible tremor. 'Do these measurements correspond with any of the footprints?'

The man looked at the note, then at his foot-rule and measure, then verified his former measurement by a second. 'They correspond,' he said, 'within a hair-breadth to a foot-mark broader and shorter than the former.'

Hatteraick's genius here deserted him. 'Der deyvil!' he broke out, 'how could there be a footmark on the ground, when it was a frost as hard as the heart of a Memel log?'

'In the evening, I grant you, Captain Hatteraick,' said Pleydell, 'but not in the forenoon. Will you favour me with information where you were upon the day you remember so exactly?'

Hatteraick saw his blunder, and again screwed up his hard features for obstinate silence. 'Put down his observation, however,' said Pleydell to the clerk.

At this moment the door opened, and, much to the surprise of most present, Mr. Gilbert Glossin made his appearance. That worthy gentleman had, by dint of watching and eavesdropping, ascertained that he was not mentioned by name in Meg Merrilies's dying declaration--a circumstance certainly not owing to any favourable disposition towards him, but to the delay of taking her regular examination, and to the rapid approach of death. He therefore supposed himself safe from all evidence but such as might arise from Hatteraick's confession; to prevent which he resolved to push a bold face and join his brethren of the bench during his examination. 'I shall be able,' he thought, 'to make the rascal sensible his safety lies in keeping his own counsel and mine; and my presence, besides, will be a proof of confidence and innocence. If I must lose the estate, I must; but I trust better things.'

He entered with a profound salutation to Sir Robert Hazlewood. Sir Robert, who had rather begun to suspect that his plebeian neighbour had made a cat's paw of him, inclined his head stiffly, took snuff, and looked another way.

'Mr. Corsand,' said Glossin to the other yokefellow of justice, 'your most humble servant.'

'Your humble servant, Mr. Glossin,' answered Mr. Corsand drily, composing his countenance *regis ad exemplar*, that is to say, after the fashion of the Baronet.

'Mac-Morlan, my worthy friend,' continued Glossin, 'how d' ye do; always on your duty?'

'Umph,' said honest Mac-Morlan, with little respect either to the compliment or salutation.

'Colonel Mannering (a low bow slightly returned), and Mr. Pleydell (another low bow), I dared not have hoped for your assistance to poor country gentlemen at this period of the session.'

Pleydell took snuff, and eyed him with a glance equally shrewd and sarcastic. 'I'll teach him,' he said aside to Mannering, 'the value of the old admonition, *Ne accesseris in consilium antequam voceris*.'

'But perhaps I intrude, gentlemen?' said Glossin, who could not fail to observe the coldness of his reception. 'Is this an open meeting?'

'For my part,' said Mr. Pleydell, 'so far from considering your attendance as an intrusion, Mr. Glossin, I was never so pleased in my life to meet with you; especially as I think we should, at any rate, have had occasion to request the favour of your company in the course of the day.'

'Well, then, gentlemen,' said Glossin, drawing his chair to the table, and beginning to bustle about among the papers, 'where are we? how far have we got? where are the declarations?'

'Clerk, give me all these papers,' said Mr. Pleydell. 'I have an odd way of arranging my documents, Mr. Glossin, another person touching them puts me out; but I shall have occasion for your assistance by and by.'

Glossin, thus reduced to inactivity, stole one glance at Dirk Hatteraick, but could read nothing in his dark scowl save malignity and hatred to all around. 'But, gentlemen,' said Glossin, 'is it quite right to keep this poor man so heavily ironed when he is taken up merely for examination?'

This was hoisting a kind of friendly signal to the prisoner. 'He has escaped once before,' said Mac-Morlan drily, and Glossin was silenced.

Bertram was now introduced, and, to Glossin's confusion, was greeted in the most friendly manner by all present, even by Sir Robert Hazlewood himself. He told his recollections of his infancy with that candour and caution of expression which afforded the best warrant for his good faith. 'This seems to be rather a civil than a criminal question,' said Glossin, rising; 'and as you cannot be ignorant, gentlemen, of the effect which this young person's pretended parentage may have on my patrimonial interest, I would rather beg leave to retire.'

'No, my good sir,' said Mr. Pleydell, 'we can by no means spare you. But why do you call this young man's claims pretended? I don't mean to fish for your defences against them, if you have any, but--'

'Mr. Pleydell,' replied Glossin, 'I am always disposed to act above-board, and I think I can explain the matter at once. This young fellow, whom I take to be a natural son of the late Ellangowan, has gone about the country for some weeks under different names, caballing with a wretched old mad-woman, who, I understand, was shot in a late scuffle, and with other tinkers, gipsies, and persons of that description, and a great brute farmer from Liddesdale, stirring up the tenants against their landlords, which, as Sir Robert Hazlewood of Hazlewood knows--'

'Not to interrupt you, Mr. Glossin,' said Pleydell, 'I ask who you say this young man is?'

'Why, I say,' replied Glossin, 'and I believe that gentleman (looking at Hatteraick) knows, that the young man is a natural son of the late Ellangowan, by a girl called Janet Lightoheel, who was afterwards married to Hewit the shipwright, that lived in the neighbourhood of Annan. His name is Godfrey Bertram Hewit, by which name he was entered on board the Royal Caroline excise yacht.'

'Ay?' said Pleydell, 'that is a very likely story! But, not to pause upon some difference of eyes, complexion, and so forth--be pleased to step forward, sir.' (A young seafaring man came forward.) 'Here,' proceeded the Counsellor, 'is the real Simon Pure; here's Godfrey Bertram Hewit, arrived last night from Antigua via Liverpool, mate of a West-Indian, and in a fair way of doing well in the world, although he came somewhat irregularly into it.'

While some conversation passed between the other justices and this young man, Pleydell lifted from among the papers on the table Hatteraick's old pocket-book. A peculiar glance of the smuggler's eye induced the shrewd lawyer to think there was something here of interest. He therefore continued the examination of the papers, laying the book on the table, but instantly perceived that the prisoner's interest in the research had cooled. 'It must be in the book still, whatever it is,' thought Pleydell; and again applied himself to the pocket-book, until he discovered, on a narrow scrutiny, a slit between the pasteboard and leather, out of which he drew three small slips of paper. Pleydell now, turning to Glossin, requested the favour that he would tell them if he had assisted at the search for the body of Kennedy and the child of his patron on the day when they disappeared.

'I did not--that is, I did,' answered the conscience-struck Glossin.

'It is remarkable though,' said the Advocate, 'that, connected as you were with the Ellangowan family, I don't recollect your being examined, or even appearing before me, while that investigation was proceeding?'

'I was called to London,' answered Glossin, 'on most important business the morning after that sad affair.'

'Clerk,' said Pleydell, 'minute down that reply. I presume the business, Mr. Glossin, was to negotiate these three bills, drawn by you on Messrs. Vanbeest and Vanbruggen, and accepted by one Dirk Hatteraick in their name on the very day of the murder. I congratulate you on their being regularly retired, as I perceive

they have been. I think the chances were against it.' Glossin's countenance fell. 'This piece of real evidence,' continued Mr. Pleydell, 'makes good the account given of your conduct on this occasion by a man called Gabriel Faa, whom we have now in custody, and who witnessed the whole transaction between you and that worthy prisoner. Have you any explanation to give?'

'Mr. Pleydell,' said Glossin, with great composure, 'I presume, if you were my counsel, you would not advise me to answer upon the spur of the moment to a charge which the basest of mankind seem ready to establish by perjury.'

'My advice,' said the Counsellor, 'would be regulated by my opinion of your innocence or guilt. In your case, I believe you take the wisest course; but you are aware you must stand committed?'

'Committed? for what, sir?' replied Glossin. 'Upon a charge of murder?'

'No; only as art and part of kidnapping the child.'

'That is a bailable offence.'

'Pardon me,' said Pleydell, 'it is plagium, and plagium is felony.'

'Forgive me, Mr. Pleydell, there is only one case upon record, Torrence and Waldie. They were, you remember, resurrection-women, who had promised to procure a child's body for some young surgeons. Being upon honour to their employers, rather than disappoint the evening lecture of the students, they stole a live child, murdered it, and sold the body for three shillings and sixpence. They were hanged, but for the murder, not for the plagium [Footnote: This is, in its circumstances and issue, actually a case tried and reported.]--Your civil law has carried you a little too far.'

'Well, sir, but in the meantime Mr. Mac-Morlan must commit you to the county jail, in case this young man repeats the same story. Officers, remove Mr. Glossin and Hatteraick, and guard them in different apartments.'

Gabriel, the gipsy, was then introduced, and gave a distinct account of his deserting from Captain Pritchard's vessel and joining the smugglers in the action, detailed how Dirk Hatteraick set fire to his ship when he found her disabled, and under cover of the smoke escaped with his crew, and as much goods as they could save, into the cavern, where they proposed to lie till nightfall. Hatteraick himself, his mate Vanbeest Brown, and three others, of whom the declarant was one, went into the adjacent woods to communicate with some of their friends in the neighbourhood. They fell in with Kennedy unexpectedly, and Hatteraick and Brown, aware that he was the occasion of their disasters, resolved to murder him. He stated that he had seen them lay violent hands on the officer and drag him through the woods, but had not partaken in the assault nor witnessed its termination; that he returned to the cavern by a different route, where he again met Hatteraick and his accomplices; and the captain was in the act of giving an account how he and Brown had pushed a huge crag over, as Kennedy lay groaning on the beach, when Glossin suddenly appeared among them. To the whole transaction by which Hatteraick purchased his secrecy he was witness. Respecting young Bertram, he could give a distinct account till he went to India, after which he had lost sight of him until he unexpectedly met with him in Liddesdale. Gabriel Faa farther stated that he instantly sent notice to his aunt Meg Merrilies, as well as to Hatteraick, who he knew was then upon the coast; but that he had incurred his aunt's displeasure upon the latter account. He concluded, that his aunt had immediately declared that she would do all that lay in her power to help young Ellangowan to his right, even if it should be by informing against Dirk Hatteraick; and that many of her people assisted her besides himself, from a belief that she was gifted with supernatural inspirations. With the same purpose, he understood his aunt had given to Bertram the treasure of the tribe, of which she had the custody. Three or four gipsies, by the express command of Meg Merrilies, mingled in the crowd when the custom-house was attacked, for the purpose of liberating Bertram, which he had himself effected. He said, that in obeying Meg's dictates they did not pretend to estimate their propriety or rationality, the respect in which she was held by her tribe precluding all such subjects of speculation. Upon farther interrogation, the witness added, that his aunt had always said that Harry Bertram carried that round his neck which would ascertain his birth. It was a spell, she said, that an Oxford scholar had made for him, and she possessed the smugglers with an opinion that to deprive him of it would occasion the loss of the vessel.

Bertram here produced a small velvet bag, which he said he had worn round his neck from his earliest infancy, and which he had preserved, first from superstitious reverence, and latterly from the hope that it might serve one day to aid in the discovery of his birth. The bag, being opened, was found to contain a blue silk case, from which was drawn a scheme of nativity. Upon inspecting this paper, Colonel Mannering instantly admitted it was his own composition; and afforded the strongest and most satisfactory evidence that the possessor of it must necessarily be the young heir of Ellangowan, by avowing his having first appeared in that country in the character of an astrologer.

'And now,' said Pleydell, 'make out warrants of commitment for Hatteraick and Glossin until liberated in due course of law. Yet,' he said, 'I am sorry for Glossin.'

'Now, I think,' said Mannering, 'he's incomparably the least deserving of pity of the two. The other's a bold fellow, though as hard as flint.'

'Very natural, Colonel,' said the Advocate, 'that you should be interested in the ruffian and I in the knave, that's all professional taste; but I can tell you Glossin would have been a pretty lawyer had he not had such a turn for the roguish part of the profession.'

'Scandal would say,' observed Mannering, 'he might not be the worse lawyer for that.'

'Scandal would tell a lie, then,' replied Pleydell, 'as she usually does. Law's like laudanum: it's much more easy to use it as a quack does than to learn to apply it like a physician.'

CHAPTER XXVIII

*Unfit to live or die--O marble heart!
After him, fellows, drag him to the block.*

Measure for Measure.

The jail at the county town of the shire of----was one of those old-fashioned dungeons which disgraced Scotland until of late years. When the prisoners and their guard arrived there, Hatteraick, whose violence and strength were well known, was secured in what was called the condemned ward. This was a large apartment near the top of the prison. A round bar of iron,[Footnote: See Note 9.] about the thickness of a man's arm above the elbow, crossed the apartment horizontally at the height of about six inches from the floor; and its extremities were strongly built into the wall at either end. Hatteraick's ankles were secured within shackles, which were connected by a chain, at the distance of about four feet, with a large iron ring, which travelled upon the bar we have described. Thus a prisoner might shuffle along the length of the bar from one side of the room to another, but could not retreat farther from it in any other direction than the brief length of the chain admitted. When his feet had been thus secured, the keeper removed his handcuffs and left his person at liberty in other respects. A pallet-bed was placed close to the bar of iron, so that the shackled prisoner might lie down at pleasure, still fastened to the iron bar in the manner described.

Hatteraick had not been long in this place of confinement before Glossin arrived at the same prison-house. In respect to his comparative rank and education, he was not ironed, but placed in a decent apartment, under the inspection of Mac-Guffog, who, since the destruction of the bridewell of Portanferry by the mob, had acted here as an under-turnkey. When Glossin was enclosed within this room, and had solitude and leisure to calculate all the chances against him and in his favour, he could not prevail upon himself to consider the game as desperate.

'The estate is lost,' he said, 'that must go; and, between Pleydell and Mac-Morlan, they'll cut down my claim on it to a trifle. My character--but if I get off with life and liberty I'll win money yet and varnish that over again. I knew not of the gauger's job until the rascal had done the deed, and, though I had some advantage by the contraband, that is no felony. But the kidnapping of the boy--there they touch me closer. Let me see. This Bertram was a child at the time; his evidence must be imperfect. The other fellow is a deserter, a gipsy, and an outlaw. Meg Merrilies, d-n her, is dead. These infernal bills! Hatteraick brought them with him, I suppose, to have the means of threatening me or extorting money from me. I must endeavour to see the rascal; must get him to stand steady; must persuade him to put some other colour upon the business.'

His mind teeming with schemes of future deceit to cover former villainy, he spent the time in arranging and combining them until the hour of supper. Mac-Guffog attended as turnkey on this occasion. He was, as we know, the old and special acquaintance of the prisoner who was now under his charge. After giving the turnkey a glass of brandy, and sounding him with one or two cajoling speeches, Glossin made it his request that he would help him to an interview with Dirk Hatteraick. 'Impossible! utterly impossible! it's contrary to the express orders of Mr. Mac-Morlan, and the captain (as the head jailor of a county jail is called in Scotland) would never forgie me.'

'But why should he know of it?' said Glossin, slipping a couple of guineas into Mac-Guffog's hand.

The turnkey weighed the gold and looked sharp at Glossin. 'Ay, ay, Mr. Glossin, ye ken the ways o' this place. Lookee, at lock-up hour I'll return and bring ye upstairs to him. But ye must stay a' night in his cell, for I am under needcessity to carry the keys to the captain for the night, and I cannot let you out again until morning; then I'll visit the wards half an hour earlier than usual, and ye may get out and be snug in your ain birth when the captain gangs his rounds.'

When the hour of ten had pealed from the neighbouring steeple Mac-Guffog came prepared with a small dark lantern. He said softly to Glossin, 'Slip your shoes off and follow me.' When Glossin was out of the door, Mac-Guffog, as if in the execution of his ordinary duty, and speaking to a prisoner within, called aloud, 'Good-night to you, sir,' and locked the door, clattering the bolts with much ostentatious noise. He then guided Glossin up a steep and narrow stair, at the top of which was the door of the condemned ward; he unbarred and unlocked it, and, giving Glossin the lantern, made a sign to him to enter, and locked the door behind him with the same affected accuracy.

In the large dark cell into which he was thus introduced Glossin's feeble light for some time enabled him to discover nothing. At length he could dimly distinguish the pallet-bed stretched on the floor beside the great iron bar which traversed the room, and on that pallet reposed the figure of a man. Glossin approached him.

'Dirk Hatteraick!'

'Donner and hagel! it is his voice,' said the prisoner, sitting up and clashing his fetters as he rose; 'then my dream is true! Begone, and leave me to myself; it will be your best.'

'What! my good friend,' said Glossin, 'will you allow the prospect of a few weeks' confinement to depress your spirit?'

'Yes,' answered the ruffian, sullenly, 'when I am only to be released by a halter! Let me alone; go about your business, and turn the lamp from my face!'

'Psha! my dear Dirk, don't be afraid,' said Glossin; 'I have a glorious plan to make all right.'

'To the bottomless pit with your plans!' replied his accomplice; 'you have planned me out of ship, cargo, and life; and I dreamt this moment that Meg Merrilies dragged you here by the hair and gave me the long clasped knife she used to wear; you don't know what she said. Sturmwitter! it will be your wisdom not to tempt me!'

'But, Hatteraick, my good friend, do but rise and speak to me,' said Glossin.

'I will not!' answered the savage, doggedly. 'You have caused all the mischief; you would not let Meg keep the boy; she would have returned him after he had forgot all.'

'Why, Hatteraick, you are turned driveller!'

'Wetter! will you deny that all that cursed attempt at Portanferry, which lost both sloop and crew, was your device for your own job?'

'But the goods, you know--'

'Curse the goods!' said the smuggler, 'we could have got plenty more; but, der deyvil! to lose the ship and the fine fellows, and my own life, for a cursed coward villain, that always works his own mischief with other people's hands! Speak to me no more; I'm dangerous.'

'But, Dirk--but, Hatteraick, hear me only a few words.'

'Hagel! nein.'

'Only one sentence.'

'Tousand curses! nein.'

'At least get up, for an obstinate Dutch brute!' said Glossin, losing his temper and pushing Hatteraick with his foot.

'Donner and blitzen!' said Hatteraick, springing up and grappling with him; 'you WILL have it then?'

Glossin struggled and resisted; but, owing to his surprise at the fury of the assault, so ineffectually that he fell under Hatteraick, the back part of his neck coming full upon the iron bar with stunning violence. The death-grapple continued. The room immediately below the condemned ward, being that of Glossin, was, of course, empty; but the inmates of the second apartment beneath felt the shock of Glossin's heavy fall, and heard a noise as of struggling and of groans. But all sounds of horror were too congenial to this place to excite much curiosity or interest.

In the morning, faithful to his promise, Mac-Guffog came. 'Mr. Glossin,' said he, in a whispering voice.

'Call louder,' answered Dirk Hatteraick.

'Mr. Glossin, for God's sake come away!'

'He'll hardly do that without help,' said Hatteraick.

'What are you chattering there for, Mac-Guffog?' called out the captain from below.

'Come away, for God's sake, Mr. Glossin!' repeated the turnkey.

At this moment the jailor made his appearance with a light. Great was his surprise, and even horror, to observe Glossin's body lying doubled across the iron bar, in a posture that excluded all idea of his being alive. Hatteraick was quietly stretched upon his pallet within a yard of his victim. On lifting Glossin it was found he had been dead for some hours. His body bore uncommon marks of violence. The spine where it joins the skull had received severe injury by his first fall. There were distinct marks of strangulation about the throat, which corresponded with the blackened state of his face. The head was turned backward over the shoulder, as if the neck had been wrung round with desperate violence. So that it would seem that his inveterate antagonist had fixed a fatal gripe upon the wretch's throat, and never quitted it while life lasted. The lantern, crushed and broken to pieces, lay beneath the body.

Mac-Morlan was in the town, and came instantly to examine the corpse. 'What brought Glossin here?' he said to Hatteraick.

'The devil!' answered the ruffian.

'And what did you do to him?'

'Sent him to hell before me!' replied the miscreant.

'Wretch,' said Mac-Morlan, 'you have crowned a life spent without a single virtue with the murder of your own miserable accomplice!'

'Virtue?' exclaimed the prisoner. 'Donner! I was always faithful to my shipowners--always accounted for cargo to the last stiver. Hark ye! let me have pen and ink and I'll write an account of the whole to our house, and leave me alone a couple of hours, will ye; and let them take away that piece of carrion, donnerwetter!'

Mac-Morlan deemed it the best way to humour the savage; he was furnished with writing materials and left alone. When they again opened the door it was found that this determined villain had anticipated justice. He had adjusted a cord taken from the truckle-bed, and attached it to a bone, the relic of his yesterday's dinner, which he had contrived to drive into a crevice between two stones in the wall at a height as great as he could reach, standing upon the bar. Having fastened the noose, he had the resolution to drop his body as if to fall on his knees, and to retain that posture until resolution was no longer necessary. The letter he had written

to his owners, though chiefly upon the business of their trade, contained many allusions to the youngster of Ellangowan, as he called him, and afforded absolute confirmation of all Meg Merrilies and her nephew had told.

To dismiss the catastrophe of these two wretched men, I shall only add, that Mac-Guffog was turned out of office, notwithstanding his declaration (which he offered to attest by oath), that he had locked Glossin safely in his own room upon the night preceding his being found dead in Dirk Hatteraick's cell. His story, however, found faith with the worthy Mr. Skriegh and other lovers of the marvellous, who still hold that the Enemy of Mankind brought these two wretches together upon that night by supernatural interference, that they might fill up the cup of their guilt and receive its meed by murder and suicide.

CHAPTER XXIX

To sum the whole--the close of all.

DEAN SWIFT.

As Glossin died without heirs, and without payment of the price, the estate of Ellangowan was again thrown upon the hands of Mr. Godfrey Bertram's creditors, the right of most of whom was, however, defeasible in case Henry Bertram should establish his character of heir of entail. This young gentleman put his affairs into the hands of Mr. Pleydell and Mr. Mac-Morlan, with one single proviso, that, though he himself should be obliged again to go to India, every debt justly and honourably due by his father should be made good to the claimant. Mannering, who heard this declaration, grasped him kindly by the hand, and from that moment might be dated a thorough understanding between them.

The hoards of Miss Margaret Bertram, and the liberal assistance of the Colonel, easily enabled the heir to make provision for payment of the just creditors of his father, while the ingenuity and research of his law friends detected, especially in the accounts of Glossin, so many overcharges as greatly diminished the total amount. In these circumstances the creditors did not hesitate to recognise Bertram's right, and to surrender to him the house and property of his ancestors. All the party repaired from Woodbourne to take possession, amid the shouts of the tenantry and the neighbourhood; and so eager was Colonel Mannering to superintend certain improvements which he had recommended to Bertram, that he removed with his family from Woodbourne to Ellangowan, although at present containing much less and much inferior accommodation.

The poor Dominie's brain was almost turned with joy on returning to his old habitation. He posted upstairs, taking three steps at once, to a little shabby attic, his cell and dormitory in former days, and which the possession of his much superior apartment at Woodbourne had never banished from his memory. Here one sad thought suddenly struck the honest man--the books! no three rooms in Ellangowan were capable to contain them. While this qualifying reflection was passing through his mind, he was suddenly summoned by Mannering to assist in calculating some proportions relating to a large and splendid house which was to be built on the site of the New Place of Ellangowan, in a style corresponding to the magnificence of the ruins in its vicinity. Among the various rooms in the plan, the Dominie observed that one of the largest was entitled THE LIBRARY; and close beside was a snug, well-proportioned chamber, entitled Mr. SAMPSON'S APARTMENT. 'Prodigious, prodigious, pro-di-gi-ous!' shouted the enraptured Dominie.

Mr. Pleydell had left the party for some time; but he returned, according to promise, during the Christmas recess of the courts. He drove up to Ellangowan when all the family were abroad but the Colonel, who was busy with plans of buildings and pleasure-grounds, in which he was well skilled, and took great delight.

'Ah ha!' said the Counsellor, 'so here you are! Where are the ladies? where is the fair Julia?'

'Walking out with young Hazlewood, Bertram, and Captain Delaserre, a friend of his, who is with us just now. They are gone to plan out a cottage at Derncleugh. Well, have you carried through your law business?'

'With a wet finger,' answered the lawyer, 'got our youngster's special service retoured into Chancery. We had him served heir before the macers.'

'Macers? who are they?'

'Why, it is a kind of judicial Saturnalia. You must know, that one of the requisites to be a macer, or officer in attendance upon our supreme court, is, that they shall be men of no knowledge.'

'Very well!'

'Now, our Scottish legislature, for the joke's sake I suppose, have constituted those men of no knowledge into a peculiar court for trying questions of relationship and descent, such as this business of Bertram, which often involve the most nice and complicated questions of evidence.'

'The devil they have! I should think that rather inconvenient,' said Mannering.

'O, we have a practical remedy for the theoretical absurdity. One or two of the judges act upon such occasions as prompters and assessors to their own doorkeepers. But you know what Cujacius says, "Multa sunt in moribus dissentanea, multa sine ratione." [Footnote: The singular inconsistency hinted at is now, in a great degree, removed.] However, this Saturnalian court has done our business; and a glorious batch of claret we had afterwards at Walker's. Mac-Morlan will stare when he sees the bill.'

'Never fear,' said the Colonel, 'we'll face the shock, and entertain the county at my friend Mrs. Mac-Candlish's to boot.'

'And choose Jock Jabos for your master of horse?' replied the lawyer.

'Perhaps I may.'

'And where is Dandie, the redoubted Lord of Liddesdale?' demanded the advocate.

'Returned to his mountains; but he has promised Julia to make a descent in summer, with the goodwife, as he calls her, and I don't know how many children.'

'O, the curly-headed varlets! I must come to play at Blind Harry and Hy Spy with them. But what is all this?' added Pleydell, taking up the plans. 'Tower in the centre to be an imitation of the Eagle Tower at Caernarvon--corps de logis--the devil! Wings--wings! Why, the house will take the estate of Ellangowan on its back and fly away with it!'

'Why, then, we must ballast it with a few bags of sicca rupees,' replied the Colonel.

'Aha! sits the wind there? Then I suppose the young dog carries off my mistress Julia?'

'Even so, Counsellor.'

'These rascals, the post-nati, get the better of us of the old school at every turn,' said Mr. Pleydell. 'But she must convey and make over her interest in me to Lucy.'

'To tell you the truth, I am afraid your flank will be turned there too,' replied the Colonel.

'Indeed?'

'Here has been Sir Robert Hazlewood,' said Mannering, 'upon a visit to Bertram, thinking and deeming and opining--'

'O Lord! pray spare me the worthy Baronet's triads!'

'Well, sir,' continued Mannering, 'to make short, he conceived that, as the property of Singleside lay like a wedge between two farms of his, and was four or five miles separated from Ellangowan, something like a sale or exchange or arrangement might take place, to the mutual convenience of both parties.'

'Well, and Bertram--'

'Why, Bertram replied, that he considered the original settlement of Mrs. Margaret Bertram as the arrangement most proper in the circumstances of the family, and that therefore the estate of Singleside was the property of his sister.'

'The rascal!' said Pleydell, wiping his spectacles. 'He'll steal my heart as well as my mistress. Et puis?'

'And then Sir Robert retired, after many gracious speeches; but last week he again took the field in force, with his coach and six horses, his laced scarlet waistcoat, and best bob-wig--all very grand, as the good-boy books say.'

'Ay! and what was his overture?'

'Why, he talked with great form of an attachment on the part of Charles Hazlewood to Miss Bertram.'

'Ay, ay; he respected the little god Cupid when he saw him perched on the Dun of Singleside. And is poor Lucy to keep house with that old fool and his wife, who is just the knight himself in petticoats?'

'No; we parried that. Singleside House is to be repaired for the young people, and to be called hereafter Mount Hazlewood.'

'And do you yourself, Colonel, propose to continue at Woodbourne?'

'Only till we carry these plans into effect. See, here's the plan of my bungalow, with all convenience for being separate and sulky when I please.'

'And, being situated, as I see, next door to the old castle, you may repair Donagild's tower for the nocturnal contemplation of the celestial bodies? Bravo, Colonel!'

'No, no, my dear Counsellor! Here ends THE ASTROLOGER.'

BOOK XXV
RED-GAUNTLET
LETTER I
DARSIE LATIMER TO ALAN FAIRFORD

DUMFRIES.

CUR ME EXANIMAS QUERELIS TUIS? In plain English, Why do you deafen me with your croaking? The disconsolate tone in which you bade me farewell at Noble House, [The first stage on the road from Edinburgh to Dumfries via Moffat.] and mounted your miserable hack to return to your law drudgery, still sounds in my ears. It seemed to say, 'Happy dog! you can ramble at pleasure over hill and dale, pursue every object of curiosity that presents itself, and relinquish the chase when it loses interest; while I, your senior and your better, must, in this brilliant season, return to my narrow chamber and my musty books.'

Such was the import of the reflections with which you saddened our parting bottle of claret, and thus I must needs interpret the terms of your melancholy adieu.

And why should this be so, Alan? Why the deuce should you not be sitting precisely opposite to me at this moment, in the same comfortable George Inn; thy heels on the fender, and thy juridical brow expanding its plications as a pun rose in your fancy? Above all, why, when I fill this very glass of wine, cannot I push the bottle to you, and say, 'Fairford, you are chased!' Why, I say, should not all this be, except because Alan Fairford has not the same true sense of friendship as Darsie Latimer, and will not regard our purses as common, as well as our sentiments?

I am alone in the world; my only guardian writes to me of a large fortune which will be mine when I reach the age of twenty-five complete; my present income is, thou knowest, more than sufficient for all my wants; and yet thou—traitor as thou art to the cause of friendship—dost deprive me of the pleasure of thy society, and submittest, besides, to self-denial on thine own part, rather than my wanderings should cost me a few guineas more! Is this regard for my purse, or for thine own pride? Is it not equally absurd and unreasonable, whichever source it springs from? For myself, I tell thee, I have, and shall have, more than enough for both. This same methodical Samuel Griffiths, of Ironmonger Lane, Guildhall, London, whose letter arrives as duly as quarter-day, has sent me, as I told thee, double allowance for this my twenty-first birthday, and an assurance, in his brief fashion, that it will be again doubled for the succeeding years, until I enter into possession of my own property. Still I am to refrain from visiting England until my twenty-fifth year expires; and it is recommended that I shall forbear all inquiries concerning my family, and so forth, for the present.

Were it not that I recollect my poor mother in her deep widow's weeds, with a countenance that never smiled but when she looked on me—and then, in such wan and woful sort, as the sun when he glances through an April cloud,—were it not, I say, that her mild and matron-like form and countenance forbid such a suspicion, I might think myself the son of some Indian director, or rich citizen, who had more wealth than grace, and a handful of hypocrisy to boot, and who was breeding up privately, and obscurely enriching, one of whose existence he had some reason to be ashamed. But, as I said before, I think on my mother, and am convinced as much as of the existence of my own soul, that no touch of shame could arise from aught in which she was implicated. Meantime, I am wealthy, and I am alone, and why does my friend scruple to share my wealth?

Are you not my only friend? and have you not acquired a right to share my wealth? Answer me that, Alan Fairford. When I was brought from the solitude of my mother's dwelling into the tumult of the Gaits' Class at the High School—when I was mocked for my English accent—salted with snow as a Southern—rolled in the gutter for a Saxon pock-pudding,—who, with stout arguments and stouter blows, stood forth my defender?—why, Alan Fairford. Who beat me soundly when I brought the arrogance of an only son, and of course a spoiled urchin, to the forms of the little republic?—why, Alan. And who taught me to smoke a cobbler, pin a losen, head a bicker, and hold the bannets?—[Break a window, head a skirmish with stones, and hold the bonnet, or handkerchief, which used to divide High School boys when fighting.] Alan, once more. If I became the pride of the Yards, and the dread of the hucksters in the High School Wynd, it was under thy patronage; and, but for thee, I had been contented with humbly passing through the Cowgate Port, without climbing over the top of it, and had never seen the KITTLE NINE-STEPS nearer than from Bareford's Parks. [A pass on the very brink of the Castle rock to the north, by which it is just possible for a goat, or a High School boy, to turn the corner of the building where it rises from the edge of the precipice. This was so favourite a feat with the 'hell and neck boys' of the higher classes, that at one time sentinels were posted to prevent its repetition. One of the nine-steps was rendered more secure because the climber could take hold of the root of a nettle, so precarious were the means of passing this celebrated spot. The manning the Cowgate Port, especially in snowball time, was also a choice amusement, as it offered an inaccessible station for the boys who used these missiles to the annoyance of the passengers. The gateway is now demolished; and probably most of its garrison lie as low as the fortress. To recollect that the author himself, however naturally disqualified, was one of those juvenile dreadnoughts, is a sad reflection to one who cannot now step over a brook without assistance.]

You taught me to keep my fingers off the weak, and to clench my fist against the strong—to carry no tales out of school—to stand forth like a true man—obey the stern order of a PANDE MANUM, and endure my pawmies without wincing, like one that is determined not to be the better for them. In a word, before I knew thee, I knew nothing.

At college it was the same. When I was incorrigibly idle, your example and encouragement roused me to mental exertion, and showed me the way to intellectual enjoyment. You made me an historian, a metaphysician (INVITA MINERVA)—nay, by Heaven! you had almost made an advocate of me, as well as of yourself. Yes, rather than part with you, Alan, I attended a weary season at the Scotch Law Class; a wearier at the Civil; and with what excellent advantage, my notebook, filled with caricatures of the professors and my fellow students, is it not yet extant to testify?

Thus far have I held on with thee untired;

and, to say truth, purely and solely that I might travel the same road with thee. But it will not do, Alan. By my faith, man, I could as soon think of being one of those ingenious traders who cheat little Master Jackies on the outside of the partition with tops, balls, bats, and battledores, as a member of the long-robed fraternity within, who impose on grown country gentlemen with bouncing brocards of law. [The Hall of the Parliament House of Edinburgh was, in former days, divided into two unequal portions by a partition, the inner side of which was consecrated to the use of the Courts of Justice and the gentlemen of the law; while the outer division was occupied by the stalls of stationers, toymen, and the like, as in a modern bazaar. From the old play of THE PLAIN DEALER, it seems such was formerly the case with Westminster Hall. Minos has now purified his courts in both cities from all traffic but his own.] Now, don't you read this to your worthy father, Alan—he loves me well enough, I know, of a Saturday night; but he thinks me but idle company for any other day of the week. And here, I suspect, lies your real objection to taking a ramble with me through the southern counties in this delicious weather. I know the good gentleman has hard thoughts of me for being so unsettled as to leave Edinburgh before the Session rises; perhaps, too, he quarrels a little—I will not say with my want of ancestry, but with my want of connexions. He reckons me a lone thing in this world, Alan, and so, in good truth, I am; and it seems a reason to him why you should not attach yourself to me, that I can claim no interest in the general herd.

Do not suppose I forget what I owe him, for permitting me to shelter for four years under his roof: My obligations to him are not the less, but the greater, if he never heartily loved me. He is angry, too, that I will not, or cannot, be a lawyer, and, with reference to you, considers my disinclination that way as PESSIMI EXEMPLI, as he might say.

But he need not be afraid that a lad of your steadiness will be influenced by such a reed shaken by the winds as I am. You will go on doubting with Dirleton, and resolving those doubts with Stewart, ['Sir John Nisbett of Dirleton's DOUBTS AND QUESTIONS UPON THE LAW, ESPECIALLY OF SCOTLAND,' and 'Sir James Stewart's DIRLETON'S DOUBTS AND QUESTIONS ON THE LAW OF SCOTLAND RESOLVED AND ANSWERED,' are works of authority in Scottish jurisprudence. As is generally the case, the doubts are held more in respect than the solution.] until the cramp speech [Till of late years, every advocate who catered at the Scottish bar made a Latin address to the Court, faculty, and audience, in set terms, and said a few words upon a text of the civil law, to show his Latinity and jurisprudence. He also wore his hat for a minute, in order to vindicate his right of being covered before the Court, which is said to have originated from the celebrated lawyer, Sir Thomas Hope, having two sons on the bench while he himself remained at the bar. Of late this ceremony has been dispensed with, as occupying the time of the Court unnecessarily. The entrant lawyer merely takes the oaths to government, and swears to maintain the rules and privileges of his

order.] has been spoken more SOLITO from the corner of the bench, and with covered head—until you have sworn to defend the liberties and privileges of the College of Justice—until the black gown is hung on your shoulders, and you are free as any of the Faculty to sue or defend. Then will I step forth, Alan, and in a character which even your father will allow may be more useful to you than had I shared this splendid termination of your legal studies. In a word, if I cannot be a counsel, I am determined to be a CLIENT, a sort of person without whom a lawsuit would be as dull as a supposed case. Yes, I am determined to give you your first fee. One can easily, I am assured, get into a lawsuit—it is only the getting out which is sometimes found troublesome;—and, with your kind father for an agent, and you for my counsel learned in the law, and the worshipful Master Samuel Griffiths to back me, a few sessions shall not tire my patience. In short, I will make my way into court, even if it should cost me the committing a DELICT, or at least a QUASI DELICT.—You see all is not lost of what Erskine wrote, and Wallace taught.

Thus far I have fooled it off well enough; and yet, Alan, all is not at ease within me. I am affected with a sense of loneliness, the more depressing, that it seems to me to be a solitude peculiarly my own. In a country where all the world have a circle of consanguinity, extending to sixth cousins at least, I am a solitary individual, having only one kind heart to throb in unison with my own. If I were condemned to labour for my bread, methinks I should less regard this peculiar species of deprivation. The necessary communication of master and servant would be at least a tie which would attach me to the rest of my kind—as it is, my very independence seems to enhance the peculiarity of my situation. I am in the world as a stranger in the crowded coffeehouse, where he enters, calls for what refreshment he wants, pays his bill, and is forgotten so soon as the waiter's mouth has pronounced his 'Thank ye, sir.'

I know your good father would term this SINNING MY MERCIES, [A peculiar Scottish phrase expressive of ingratitude for the favours of Providence.] and ask how I should feel if, instead of being able to throw down my reckoning, I were obliged to deprecate the resentment of the landlord for consuming that which I could not pay for. I cannot tell how it is; but, though this very reasonable reflection comes across me, and though I do confess that four hundred a year in possession, eight hundred in near prospect, and the L—d knows how many hundreds more in the distance, are very pretty and comfortable things, yet I would freely give one half of them to call your father father, though he should scold me for my idleness every hour of the day, and to call you brother, though a brother whose merits would throw my own so completely into the shade.

The faint, yet not improbable, belief has often come across me, that your father knows something more about my birth and condition than he is willing to communicate; it is so unlikely that I should be left in Edinburgh at six years old, without any other recommendation than the regular payment of my board to old M—, [Probably Mathieson, the predecessor of Dr. Adams, to whose memory the author and his contemporaries owe a deep debt of gratitude.] of the High School. Before that time, as I have often told you, I have but a recollection of unbounded indulgence on my mother's part, and the most tyrannical exertion of caprice on my own. I remember still how bitterly she sighed, how vainly she strove to soothe me, while, in the full energy of despotism, I roared like ten bull-calves, for something which it was impossible to procure for me. She is dead, that kind, that ill-rewarded mother! I remember the long faces—the darkened rooms—the black hangings—the mysterious impression made upon my mind by the hearse and mourning coaches, and the difficulty which I had to reconcile all this to the disappearance of my mother. I do not think I had before this event formed, any idea, of death, or that I had even heard of that final consummation of all that lives. The first acquaintance which I formed with it deprived me of my only relation.

A clergyman of venerable appearance, our only visitor, was my guide and companion in a journey of considerable length; and in the charge of another elderly man, substituted in his place, I know not how or why, I completed my journey to Scotland—and this is all I recollect.

I repeat the little history now, as I have a hundred times before, merely because I would wring some sense out of it. Turn, then, thy sharp, wire-drawing, lawyer-like ingenuity to the same task—make up my history as though thou wert shaping the blundering allegations of some blue-bonneted, hard-headed client, into a condescendence of facts and circumstances, and thou shalt be, not my Apollo—QUID TIBI CUM LYRA?—but my Lord Stair, [Celebrated as a Scottish lawyer.] Meanwhile, I have written myself out of my melancholy and blue devils, merely by prosing about them; so I will now converse half an hour with Roan Robin in his stall—the rascal knows me already, and snickers whenever I cross the threshold of the stable.

The black which you bestrode yesterday morning promises to be an admirable roadster, and ambled as easily with Sam and the portmanteau, as with you and your load of law-learning. Sam promises to be steady, and has hitherto been so. No long trial, you will say. He lays the blame of former inaccuracies on evil company—the people who were at the livery-stable were too seductive, I suppose—he denies he ever did the horse injustice—would rather have wanted his own dinner, he says. In this I believe him, as Roan Robin's ribs and coat show no marks of contradiction. However, as he will meet with no saints in the inns we frequent, and as oats are sometimes as speedily converted into ale as John Barleycorn himself, I shall keep a look-out after Master Sam. Stupid fellow! had he not abused my good nature, I might have chatted to him to keep my tongue in exercise; whereas now I must keep him at a distance.

Do you remember what Mr. Fairford said to me on this subject—it did not become my father's son to speak in that manner to Sam's father's son? I asked you what your father could possibly know of mine; and you answered, 'As much, you supposed, as he knew of Sam's—it was a proverbial expression.' This did not quite satisfy me; though I am sure I cannot tell why it should not. But I am returning to a fruitless and exhausted subject. Do not be afraid that I shall come back on this well-trodden yet pathless field of conjecture. I know nothing so useless, so utterly feeble and contemptible, as the groaning forth one's lamentations into the ears of our friends.

I would fain promise you that my letters shall be as entertaining as I am determined they shall be regular and well filled. We have an advantage over the dear friends of old, every pair of them. Neither David and Jonathan, nor Orestes and Pylades, nor Damon and Pythias—although, in the latter case particularly, a letter by post would have been very acceptable—ever corresponded together; for they probably could not write, and certainly had neither post nor franks to speed their effusions to each other; whereas yours, which you had from the old peer, being handled gently, and opened with precaution, may be returned to me again, and serve to make us free of his Majesty's post office, during the whole time of my proposed tour. [It is well known and remembered, that when Members of Parliament enjoyed the unlimited privilege of franking by the mere writing the name on the cover, it was extended to the most extraordinary occasions. One noble lord, to express his regard for a particular regiment, franked a letter for every rank and file. It was customary also to save the covers and return them, in order that the correspondence might be carried on as long as the envelopes could hold together.] Mercy upon us, Alan! what letters I shall have to send to you, with an account of all that I can collect, of pleasant or rare, in this wild-goose jaunt of mine! All I stipulate is that you do not communicate them to the SCOTS MAGAZINE; for though you used, in a left-handed way, to compliment me on my attainments in the lighter branches of literature, at the expense of my deficiency in the weightier matters of the law, I am not yet audacious enough to enter the portal which the learned Ruddiman so kindly opened for the acolytes of the Muses.—VALE SIS MEMOR MEI. D. L.

PS. Direct to the Post Office here. I shall leave orders to forward your letters wherever I may travel.

LETTER II ALAN FAIRFORD TO DARSIE LATIMER

NEGATUR, my dear Darsie—you have logic and law enough to understand the word of denial. I deny your conclusion. The premises I admit, namely, that when I mounted on that infernal hack, I might utter what seemed a sigh, although I deemed it lost amid the puffs and groans of the broken-winded brute, matchless in the complication of her complaints by any save she, the poor man's mare, renowned in song, that died

A mile aboon Dundee.

[Alluding, as all Scotsmen know, to the humorous old song:—

*'The auld man's mare's dead,
The puir man's mare's dead,
The auld man's mare's dead,
A mile aboon Dundee.'*

But credit me, Darsie, the sigh which escaped me, concerned thee more than myself, and regarded neither the superior mettle of your cavalry, nor your greater command of the means of travelling. I could certainly have cheerfully ridden with you for a few days; and assure yourself I would not have hesitated to tax your better filled purse for our joint expenses. But you know my father considers every moment taken from the law as a step down hill; and I owe much to his anxiety on my account, although its effects are sometimes troublesome. For example:

I found, on my arrival at the shop in Brown's Square, that the old gentleman had returned that very evening, impatient, it seems, of remaining a night out of the guardianship of the domestic Lares. Having this information from James, whose brow wore rather an anxious look on the occasion, I dispatched a Highland chairman to the livery stable with my Bucephalus, and slunk, with as little noise as might be, into my own den, where I began to mumble certain half-gnawed and not half-digested doctrines of our municipal code. I was not long seated, when my father's visage was thrust, in a peering sort of way, through the half-opened door; and withdrawn, on seeing my occupation, with a half-articulated HUMPH! which seemed to convey a doubt of the seriousness of my application. If it were so, I cannot condemn him; for recollection of thee occupied me so entirely during an hour's reading, that although Stair lay before me, and notwithstanding that I turned over three or four pages, the sense of his lordship's clear and perspicuous style so far escaped me, that I had the mortification to find my labour was utterly in vain.

Ere I had brought up my lee-way, James appeared with his summons to our frugal supper—radishes, cheese, and a bottle of the old ale—only two plates though—and no chair set for Mr. Darsie, by the attentive James Wilkinson. Said James, with his long face, lank hair, and very long pig-tail in its leathern strap, was placed, as usual, at the back of my father's chair, upright as a wooden sentinel at the door of a puppet-show. 'You may go down, James,' said my father; and exit Wilkinson.—What is to come next? thought I; for the weather is not clear on the paternal brow.

My boots encountered his first glance of displeasure, and he asked me, with a sneer, which way I had been riding. He expected me to answer, 'Nowhere,' and would then have been at me with his usual sarcasm, touching the humour of walking in shoes at twenty shillings a pair. But I answered with composure, that I had ridden out to dinner as far as Noble House. He started (you know his way) as if I had said that I had dined at Jericho; and as I did not choose to seem to observe his surprise, but continued munching my radishes in tranquillity, he broke forth in ire.

'To Noble House, sir! and what had you to do at Noble House, sir? Do you remember you are studying law, sir?—that your Scots law trials are coming on, sir?—that every moment of your time just now is worth hours at another time?—and have you leisure to go to Noble House, sir?—and to throw your books behind you for so many hours?—Had it been a turn in the meadows, or even a game at golf—but Noble House, sir!'

'I went so far with Darsie Latimer, sir, to see him begin his journey.'

'Darsie Latimer?' he replied in a softened tone—'Humph!—Well, I do not blame you for being kind to Darsie Latimer; but it would have done as much good if you had walked with him as far as the toll-bar, and then made your farewells—it would have saved horse-hire—and your reckoning, too, at dinner.'

'Latimer paid that, sir,' I replied, thinking to soften the matter; but I had much better have left it unspoken.

'The reckoning, sir!' replied my father. 'And did you sponge upon any man for a reckoning? Sir, no man should enter the door of a public-house without paying his lawing.'

'I admit the general rule, sir,' I replied; 'but this was a parting-cup between Darsie and me; and I should conceive it fell under the exception of DOCH AN DORROCH.'

'You think yourself a wit,' said my father, with as near an approach to a smile as ever he permits to gild the solemnity of his features; 'but I reckon you did not eat your dinner standing, like the Jews at their Passover? and it was decided in a case before the town-bailies of Cupar-Angus, when Luckie Simpson's cow had drunk up Luckie Jamieson's browst of ale while it stood in the door to cool, that there was no damage to pay, because the crummie drank without sitting down; such being the very circumstance constituting DOCH AN DORROCH, which is a standing drink, for which no reckoning is paid. Ha, sir! what says your advocateship (FIERI) to that? EXEPTIO FIRMAT REGULAM—But come, fill your glass, Alan; I am not sorry ye have shown this attention to Darsie Latimer, who is a good lad, as times go; and having now lived under my roof since he left the school, why, there is really no great matter in coming under this small obligation to him.'

As I saw my father's scruples were much softened by the consciousness of his superiority in the legal argument, I took care to accept my pardon as a matter of grace, rather than of justice; and only replied, we should feel ourselves duller of an evening, now that you were absent. I will give you my father's exact words in reply, Darsie. You know him so well, that they will not offend you; and you are also aware, that there mingles with the good man's preciseness and formality, a fund of shrewd observation and practical good sense.

'It is very true,' he said; 'Darsie was a pleasant companion-but over waggish, over waggish, Alan, and somewhat scatter-brained.—By the way, Wilkinson must get our ale bottled in English pints now, for a quart bottle is too much, night after night, for you and me, without his assistance.—But Darsie, as I was saying, is an arch lad, and somewhat light in the upper story—I wish him well through the world; but he has little solidity, Alan, little solidity.'

I scorn to desert an absent friend, Darsie, so I said for you a little more than my conscience warranted: but your defection from your legal studies had driven you far to leeward in my father's good opinion.

'Unstable as water, he shall not excel,' said my father; 'or, as the Septuagint hath it, EFUSA EST SICUT AQUA—NON CRESCAT. He goeth to dancing-houses, and readeth novels—SAT EST.'

I endeavoured to parry these texts by observing, that the dancing-houses amounted only to one night at La Pique's ball—the novels (so far as matter of notoriety, Darsie) to an odd volume of TOM JONES.

'But he danced from night to morning,' replied my father, 'and he read the idle trash, which the author should have been scourged for, at least twenty times over. It was never out of his hand.'

I then hinted, that in all probability your fortune was now so easy as to dispense with your prosecuting the law any further than you had done; and therefore you might think you had some title to amuse yourself. This was the least palatable argument of all.

'If he cannot amuse himself with the law,' said my father, snappishly 'it is the worse for him. If he needs not law to teach him to make a fortune, I am sure he needs it to teach him how to keep one; and it would better become him to be learning this, than to be scouring the country like a land-louper, going he knows not where, to see he knows not what, and giving treats at Noble House to fools like himself' (an angry glance at poor me), 'Noble House, indeed!' he repeated, with elevated voice and sneering tone, as if there were something offensive to him in the name, though I will venture to say that any place in which you had been extravagant enough to spend five shillings, would have stood as deep in his reprobation.

Mindful of your idea, that my father knows more of your real situation than he thinks proper to mention, I thought I would hazard a fishing observation. 'I did not see,' I said, 'how the Scottish law would be useful to a young gentleman whose fortune would seem to be vested in England.'—I really thought my father would have beat me.

'D'ye mean to come round me, sir, PER AMBAGES, as Counsellor Pest says? What is it to you where Darsie Latimer's fortune is vested, or whether he hath any fortune, aye or no? And what ill would the Scottish law do to him, though he had as much of it as either Stair or Bankton, sir? Is not the foundation of our municipal law the ancient code of the Roman Empire, devised at a time when it was so much renowned for its civil polity, sir, and wisdom? Go to your bed, sir, after your expedition to Noble House, and see that your lamp be burning and your book before you ere the sun peeps. ARS LONGA, VITA BREVIS—were it not a sin to call the divine science of the law by the inferior name of art.'

So my lamp did burn, dear Darsie, the next morning, though the owner took the risk of a domiciliary visitation, and lay snug in bed, trusting its glimmer might, without further inquiry, be received as sufficient evidence of his vigilance. And now, upon this the third morning after your departure, things are but little better; for though the lamp burns in my den, and VOET ON THE PANDECTS hath his wisdom spread open before me, yet as I only use him as a reading-desk on which to scribble this sheet of nonsense to Darsie Latimer, it is probable the vicinity will be of little furtherance to my studies.

And now, methinks, I hear thee call me an affected hypocritical varlet, who, living under such a system of distrust and restraint as my father chooses to govern by, nevertheless pretends not to envy you your freedom and independence.

Latimer, I will tell you no lies. I wish my father would allow me a little more exercise of my free will, were it but that I might feel the pleasure of doing what would please him of my own accord. A little more spare time, and a little more money to enjoy it, would, besides, neither misbecome my age nor my condition; and it is, I own, provoking to see so many in the same situation winging the air at freedom, while I sit here, caged up like a cobbler's linnet, to chant the same unvaried lesson from sunrise to sunset, not to mention the listening to so many lectures against idleness, as if I enjoyed or was making use of the means of amusement! But then I cannot at heart blame either the motive or the object of this severity. For the motive, it is and can only be my father's anxious, devoted, and unremitting affection and zeal for my improvement, with a laudable sense of the honour of the profession to which he has trained me.

As we have no near relations, the tie betwixt us is of even unusual closeness, though in itself one of the strongest which nature can form. I am, and have all along been, the exclusive object of my father's anxious hopes, and his still more anxious and engrossing fears; so what title have I to complain, although now and then these fears and hopes lead him to take a troublesome and incessant charge of all my motions? Besides, I ought to recollect, and, Darsie, I do recollect, that my father upon various occasions, has shown that he can be indulgent as well as strict. The leaving his old apartments in the Luckenbooths was to him like divorcing the soul from the body; yet Dr. R—— did but hint that the better air of this new district was more favourable to my health, as I was then suffering under the penalties of too rapid a growth, when he exchanged his old and beloved quarters, adjacent to the very Heart of Midlothian, for one of those new tenements (entire within themselves) which modern taste has so lately introduced. Instance also the inestimable favour which he conferred on me by receiving you into his house, when you had only the unpleasant alternative of remaining, though a grown-up lad, in the society of mere boys. [The diminutive and obscure place called Brown's Square, was hailed about the time of its erection as an extremely elegant improvement upon the style of designing and erecting Edinburgh residences. Each house was, in the phrase used by appraisers, 'finished within itself,' or, in the still newer phraseology, 'self-contained.' It was built about the year 1763-4; and the old part of the city being near and accessible, this square soon received many inhabitants, who ventured to remove to so moderate a distance from the High Street.] This was a thing so contrary to all my father's ideas of seclusion, of economy, and of the safety to my morals and industry, which he wished to attain, by preserving me from the society of other young people, that, upon my word, I am always rather astonished how I should have had the impudence to make the request, than that he should have complied with it.

Then for the object of his solicitude—Do not laugh, or hold up your hands, my good Darsie; but upon my word I like the profession to which I am in the course of being educated, and am serious in prosecuting the preliminary studies. The law is my vocation—in an especial, and, I may say, in an hereditary way, my vocation; for although I have not the honour to belong to any of the great families who form in Scotland, as in France, the noblesse of the robe, and with us, at least, carry their heads as high, or rather higher, than the noblesse of the sword,—for the former consist more frequently of the 'first-born of Egypt,'—yet my grandfather, who, I dare say, was a most excellent person, had the honour to sign a bitter protest against the Union, in the respectable character of town-clerk to the ancient Borough of Birlthegroat; and there is some reason—shall I say to hope, or to suspect?—that he may have been a natural son of a first cousin of the then Fairford of that ilk, who had been long numbered among the minor barons. Now my father mounted a step higher on the ladder of legal promotion, being, as you know as well as I do, an eminent and respected Writer to his Majesty's Signet; and I myself am destined to mount a round higher still, and wear the honoured robe which is sometimes supposed, like Charity, to cover a multitude of sins. I have, therefore, no choice but to climb upwards; since we have mounted thus high, or else to fall down at the imminent risk of my neck. So that I reconcile myself to my destiny; and while you, are looking from mountain peaks, at distant lakes and firths, I am, DE APICIBUS JURIS, consoling myself with visions of crimson and scarlet gowns—with the appendages of handsome cows, well lined with salary.

You smile, Darsie, MORE TUO, and seem to say it is little worth while to cozen one's self with such vulgar dreams; yours being, on the contrary, of a high and heroic character, bearing the same resemblance to mine, that a bench, covered with purple cloth and plentifully loaded with session papers, does to some Gothic throne, rough with barbaric pearl and gold. But what would you have?—SUA QUEMQUE TRAHIT VOLUPTAS. And my visions of preferment, though they may be as unsubstantial at present, are nevertheless more capable of being realized, than your aspirations after the Lord knows what. What says my father's proverb? 'Look to a gown of gold, and you will at least get a sleeve of it.' Such is my pursuit; but what dost thou look to? The chance that the mystery, as you call it, which at present overclouds your birth and connexions, will clear up into something inexpressibly and inconceivably brilliant; and this without any effort or exertion of your own, but purely by the goodwill of Fortune. I know the pride and naughtiness of thy heart, and sincerely do I wish that thou hadst more beatings to thank me for, than those which thou dost acknowledge so gratefully. Then had I thumped these Quixotical expectations out of thee, and thou hadst not, as now, conceived thyself to be the hero of some romantic history, and converted, in thy vain imaginations, honest Griffiths, citizen and broker, who never bestows more than the needful upon his quarterly epistles, into some wise Alexander or sage Alquife, the mystical and magical protector of thy peerless destiny. But I know not how it was, thy skull got harder, I think, and my knuckles became softer; not to mention that at length thou didst begin to show about thee a spark of something dangerous, which I was bound to respect at least, if I did not fear it.

And while I speak of this, it is not much amiss to advise thee to correct a little this cock-a-hoop courage of thine. I fear much that, like a hot-mettled horse, it will carry the owner into some scrape, out of which he will find it difficult to extricate himself, especially if the daring spirit which bore thee thither should chance to fail thee at a pinch. Remember, Darsie, thou art not naturally courageous; on the contrary, we have long since agreed that, quiet as I am, I have the advantage in this important particular. My courage consists, I think, in strength of nerves and constitutional indifference to danger; which, though it never pushes me on adventure, secures me in full use of my recollection, and tolerably complete self-possession, when danger actually arrives. Now, thine seems more what may be called intellectual courage; highness of spirit, and desire of distinction; impulses which render thee alive to the love of fame, and deaf to the apprehension of danger, until it forces itself suddenly upon thee. I own that, whether it is from my having caught my father's apprehensions, or that I have reason to entertain doubts of my own, I often think that this wildfire chase of romantic situation and adventure may lead thee into some mischief; and then what would become of Alan Fairford? They might make whom they pleased Lord Advocate or Solicitor-General, I should never have the heart to strive for it. All my exertions are intended to Vindicate myself one day in your eyes; and I think I should not care a farthing for the embroidered silk gown, more than for an old woman's apron, unless I had hopes that thou shouldst be walking the boards to admire, and perhaps to envy me.

That this may be the case, I prithee—beware! See not a Dulcinea, in every slipshod girl, who, with blue eyes, fair hair, a tattered plaid, and a willow-wand in her grip, drives out the village cows to the loaning. Do not think you will meet a gallant Valentine in every English rider, or an Orson in every Highland drover. View things as they are, and not as they may be magnified through thy teeming fancy. I have seen thee look at an old gravel pit, till thou madest out capes, and bays, and inlets, crags and precipices, and the whole stupendous scenery of the Isle of Feroe, in what was, to all ordinary eyes, a mere horse-pond. Besides, did I not once find thee gazing with respect at a lizard, in the attitude of one who looks upon a crocodile? Now this is, doubtless, so far a harmless exercise of your imagination; for the puddle cannot drown you, nor the Lilliputian alligator eat you up. But it is different in society, where you cannot mistake the character of those you converse with, or suffer your fancy to exaggerate their qualities, good or bad, without exposing yourself not only to ridicule, but to great and serious inconveniences. Keep guard, therefore, on your imagination, my dear Darsie; and let your old friend assure you, it is the point of your character most pregnant with peril to its good and generous owner. Adieu! let not the franks of the worthy peer remain unemployed; above all, SIS MEMOR MEI. A. F.

LETTER III
DARSIE LATIMER TO ALAN FAIRFORD

SHEPHERD'S BUSH.

I have received thine absurd and most conceited epistle. It is well for thee that, Lovelace and Belford-like, we came under a convention to pardon every species of liberty which we may take with each other; since, upon my word, there are some reflections in your last which would otherwise have obliged me to return forthwith to Edinburgh, merely to show you I was not what you took me for.

Why, what a pair of prigs hast thou made of us! I plunging into scrapes, without having courage to get out of them—thy sagacious self, afraid to put one foot before the other, lest it should run away from its companion; and so standing still like a post, out of mere faintness and coldness of heart, while all the world were driving full speed past thee. Thou a portrait-painter! I tell thee, Alan, I have seen a better seated on the fourth round of a ladder, and painting a bare-breeched Highlander, holding a pint-stoup as big as himself, and a booted Lowlander, in a bobwig, supporting a glass of like dimensions; the whole being designed to represent the sign of the Salutation.

How hadst thou the heart to represent thine own individual self, with all thy motions, like those of a great Dutch doll, depending on the pressure of certain springs, as duty, reflection, and the like; without the impulse of which, thou wouldst doubtless have me believe thou wouldst not budge an inch! But have I not seen Gravity out of his bed at midnight? and must I, in plain terms, remind thee of certain mad pranks? Thou hadst ever, with the gravest sentiments in thy mouth and the most starched reserve in thy manner, a kind of lumbering proclivity towards mischief, although with more inclination to set it a-going than address to carry it through; and I cannot but chuckle internally, when I think of having seen my most venerable monitor, the future president of some high Scottish court, puffing, blowing, and floundering, like a clumsy cart-horse in a bog where his efforts to extricate himself only plunged him deeper at every awkward struggle, till some one—I myself, for example—took compassion on the moaning monster, and dragged him out by mane and tail.

As for me, my portrait is, if possible, even more scandalously caricatured, I fail or quail in spirit at the upcome! Where canst thou show me the least symptom of the recreant temper, with which thou hast invested me (as I trust) merely to set off the solid and impassible dignity of thine own stupid indifference? If you ever saw me tremble, be assured that my flesh, like that of the old Spanish general, only quaked at the dangers into which my spirit was about to lead it. Seriously, Alan, this imputed poverty of spirit is a shabby charge to bring against your friend. I have examined myself as closely as I can, being, in very truth, a little hurt at your having such hard thoughts of me, and on my life I can see no reason for them. I allow you have, perhaps, some advantage of me in the steadiness and indifference of your temper; but I should despise myself, if I were conscious of the deficiency in courage which you seem willing enough to impute to me. However, I suppose, this ungracious hint proceeds from sincere anxiety for my safety; and so viewing it, I swallow it as I would do medicine from a friendly doctor, although I believed in my heart he had mistaken my complaint.

This offensive insinuation disposed of, I thank thee, Alan, for the rest of thy epistle. I thought I heard your good father pronouncing the word Noble House, with a mixture of contempt and displeasure, as if the very name of the poor little hamlet were odious to him, or as if you had selected, out of all Scotland, the very place at which you had no call to dine. But if he had had any particular aversion to that blameless village and very sorry inn, is it not his own fault that I did not accept the invitation of the Laird of Glengallacher, to shoot a buck in what he emphatically calls 'his country'? Truth is, I had a strong desire to have complied with his lairdship's invitation. To shoot a buck! Think how magnificent an idea to one who never shot anything but hedge-sparrows, and that with a horse-pistol purchased at a broker's stand in the Cowgate! You, who stand upon your courage, may remember that I took the risk of firing the said pistol for the first time, while you stood at twenty yards' distance; and that, when you were persuaded it would go off without bursting, forgetting all law but that of the biggest and strongest, you possessed yourself of it exclusively for the rest of the holidays. Such a day's sport was no complete introduction to the noble art of deer-stalking, as it is practised in the Highlands; but I should not have scrupled to accept honest Glengallacher's invitation, at the risk of firing a rifle for the first time, had it not been for the outcry which your father made at my proposal, in the full ardour of his zeal for King George, the Hanover succession, and the Presbyterian faith. I wish I had stood out, since I have gained so little upon his good opinion by submission. All his impressions concerning the Highlanders are taken from the recollections of the Forty-five, when he retreated from the West Port with his brother volunteers, each to the fortalice of his own separate dwelling, so soon as they heard the Adventurer was arrived with his clans as near them as Kirkliston. The flight of Falkirk—PARMA NON BENE SELECTA—in which I think your sire had his share with the undaunted western regiment, does not seem to have improved his taste for the company of the Highlanders; (quaere, Alan, dost thou derive the courage thou makest such boast of from an hereditary source?) and stories of Rob Roy Macgregor, and Sergeant Alan Mhor Cameron, have served to paint them in still more sable colours to his imagination. [Of Rob Roy we have had more than enough. Alan Cameron, commonly called Sergeant Mhor, a freebooter of the same period, was equally remarkable for strength, courage, and generosity.]

Now, from all I can understand, these ideas, as applied to the present state of the country, are absolutely chimerical. The Pretender is no more remembered in the Highlands than if the poor gentleman were gathered to his hundred and eight fathers, whose portraits adorn the ancient walls of Holyrood; the broadswords have passed into other hands; the targets are used to cover the butter churns; and the race has sunk, or is fast sinking, from ruffling bullies into tame cheaters. Indeed, it was partly my conviction that there is little to be seen in the north, which, arriving at your father's conclusions, though from different premisses, inclined my course in this direction, where perhaps I shall see as little.

One thing, however, I HAVE seen; and it was with pleasure the more indescribable, that I was debarred from treading the land which my eyes were permitted to gaze upon, like those of the dying prophet from top of Mount Pisgah,—I have seen, in a word, the fruitful shores of merry England; merry England! of which I boast myself a native, and on which I gaze, even while raging floods and unstable quicksands divide us, with the filial affection of a dutiful son.

Thou canst not have forgotten, Alan—for when didst thou ever forget what was interesting to thy friend?—that the same letter from my friend Griffiths, which doubled my income, and placed my motions at my own free disposal, contained a prohibitory clause, by which, reason none assigned, I was prohibited, as I respected my present safety and future fortunes, from visiting England; every other part of the British dominions, and a tour, if I pleased, on the Continent, being left to my own choice.—Where is the tale, Alan, of a covered dish in the midst of a royal banquet, upon which the eyes of every guest were immediately fixed, neglecting all the dainties with which the table was loaded? This cause of banishment from England—from my native country—from the land of the brave, and the wise, and the free—affects me more than I am rejoiced by the freedom and independence assigned to me in all other respects. Thus, in seeking this extreme boundary of the country which I am forbidden to tread, I resemble the poor tethered horse, which, you may have observed, is always grazing on the very verge of the circle to which it is limited by its halter.

Do not accuse me of romance for obeying this impulse towards the South; nor suppose that, to satisfy the imaginary longing of an idle curiosity, I am in any danger of risking the solid comforts of my present condition. Whoever has hitherto taken charge of my motions has shown me, by convincing proofs more weighty than the assurances which they have withheld, that my real advantage is their principal object. I should be, therefore, worse than a fool did I object to their authority, even when it seems somewhat capriciously exercised; for assuredly, at my age, I might—intrusted as I am with the care and management of myself in every other particular—expect that the cause of excluding me from England should be frankly and fairly stated for my own consideration and guidance. However, I will not grumble about the matter. I shall know the whole story one day, I suppose; and perhaps, as you sometimes surmise, I shall not find there is any mighty matter in it after all.

Yet one cannot help wondering—but plague on it, if I wonder any longer, my letter will be as full of wonders as one of Katterfelto's advertisements. I have a month's mind, instead of this damnable iteration of guesses and forebodings, to give thee the history of a little adventure which befell me yesterday; though I am sure you will, as usual, turn the opposite side of the spyglass on my poor narrative, and reduce, MORE TUO, to the most petty trivialities, the circumstance to which thou accusest me of giving undue consequence. Hang thee, Alan, thou art as unfit a confidant for a youthful gallant with some spice of imagination, as the old taciturn secretary of Facardin of Trebizond. Nevertheless, we must each perform our separate destinies. I am doomed to see, act, and tell; thou, like a Dutchman enclosed in the same diligence with a Gascon, to hear, and shrug thy shoulders.

Of Dumfries, the capital town of this county, I have but little to say, and will not abuse your patience by reminding you that it is built on the gallant river Nith, and that its churchyard, the highest place of the old town, commands an extensive and fine prospect. Neither will I take the traveller's privilege of inflicting upon you the whole history of Bruce poniarding the Red Comyn in the Church of the Dominicans at this place, and becoming a king and patriot because he had been a church-breaker and a murderer. The present Dumfriezers remember and justify the deed, observing it was only a papist church—in evidence whereof, its walls have been so completely demolished that no vestiges of them remain. They are a sturdy set of true-blue Presbyterians, these burghers of Dumfries; men after your father's own heart, zealous for the Protestant succession—the rather that many of the great families around are suspected to be of a different way of thinking, and shared, a great many of them, in the insurrection of the Fifteen, and some in the more recent business of the Forty-five. The town itself suffered in the latter era; for Lord Elcho, with a large party of the rebels, levied a severe contribution upon Dumfries, on account of the citizens having annoyed the rear of the Chevalier during his march into England.

Many of these particulars I learned from Provost C—, who, happening to see me in the market-place, remembered that I was an intimate of your father's, and very kindly asked me to dinner. Pray tell your father that the effects of his kindness to me follow me everywhere. I became tired, however, of this pretty town in the course of twenty-four hours, and crept along the coast eastwards, amusing myself with looking out for objects of antiquity, and sometimes making, or attempting to make, use of my new angling-rod. By the way, old Cotton's instructions, by which I hoped to qualify myself for one of the gentle society of anglers, are not worth a farthing for this meridian. I learned this by mere accident, after I had waited four mortal hours. I shall never forget an impudent urchin, a cowherd, about twelve years old, without either brogue or bonnet, barelegged, and with a very indifferent pair of breeches—how the villain grinned in scorn at my landing-net, my plummet, and the gorgeous jury of flies which I had assembled to destroy all the fish in the river. I was induced at last to lend the rod to the sneering scoundrel, to see what he would make of it; and he had not only half filled my basket in an hour, but literally taught me to kill two trouts with my own hand. This, and Sam having found the hay and oats, not forgetting the ale, very good at this small inn, first made me take the fancy of resting here for a day or two; and I have got my grinning blackguard of a piscator leave to attend on me, by paying sixpence a day for a herd-boy in his stead.

A notably clean Englishwoman keeps this small house, and my bedroom is sweetened with lavender, has a clean sash-window, and the walls are, moreover, adorned with ballads of Fair Rosamond and Cruel Barbara Allan. The woman's accent, though uncouth enough, sounds yet kindly in my ear; for I have never yet forgotten the desolate effect produced on my infant organs, when I heard on all sides your slow and broad northern pronunciation, which was to me the tone of a foreign land. I am sensible I myself have since that time acquired Scotch in perfection, and many a Scotticism withal. Still the sound of the English accentuation comes to my ears as the tones of a friend; and even when heard from the mouth of some wandering beggar, it has seldom failed to charm forth my mite. You Scotch, who are so proud of your own nationality, must make due allowance for that of other folks.

On the next morning I was about to set forth to the stream where I had commenced angler the night before, but was prevented by a heavy shower of rain from stirring abroad the whole forenoon; during all which time, I heard my varlet of a guide as loud with his blackguard jokes in the kitchen, as a footman in the shilling gallery; so little are modesty and innocence the inseparable companions of rusticity and seclusion.

When after dinner the day cleared, and we at length sallied out to the river side, I found myself subjected to a new trick on the part of my accomplished preceptor. Apparently, he liked fishing himself better than the trouble of instructing an awkward novice such as I; and in hopes of exhausting my patience, and inducing me to resign the rod, as I had done the preceding day, my friend contrived to keep me thrashing the water more than an hour with a pointless hook. I detected this trick at last, by observing the rogue grinning with delight when he saw a large trout rise and dash harmless away from the angle. I gave him a sound cuff, Alan; but the next moment was sorry, and, to make amends, yielded possession of the fishing-rod for the rest of the evening, he undertaking to bring me home a dish of trouts for my supper, in atonement for his offences.

Having thus got honourably rid of the trouble of amusing myself in a way I cared not for, I turned my steps towards the sea, or rather the Solway Firth which here separates the two sister kingdoms, and which lay at about a mile's distance, by a pleasant walk over sandy knells, covered with short herbage, which you call Links, and we English, Downs.

But the rest of my adventure would weary out my fingers, and must be deferred until to-morrow, when you shall hear from me, by way of continuation; and, in the meanwhile, to prevent over-hasty conclusions, I must just hint to you, we are but yet on the verge of the adventure which it is my purpose to communicate.

LETTER IV THE SAME TO THE SAME

SHEPHERD'S BUSH.

I mentioned in my last, that having abandoned my fishing-rod as an unprofitable implement, I crossed over the open downs which divided me from the margin of the Solway. When I reached the banks of the great estuary, which are here very bare and exposed, the waters had receded from the large and level space of sand, through which a stream, now feeble and fordable, found its way to the ocean. The whole was illuminated by the beams of the low and setting sun, who showed his ruddy front, like a warrior prepared for defence, over a huge battlemented and turreted wall of crimson and black clouds, which appeared like an immense Gothic fortress, into which the lord of day was descending. His setting rays glimmered bright upon the wet surface of the sands, and the numberless pools of water by which it was covered, where the inequality of the ground had occasioned their being left by the tide.

The scene was animated by the exertions of a number of horsemen, who were actually employed in hunting salmon. Aye, Alan, lift up your hands and eyes as you will, I can give their mode of fishing no name so appropriate; for they chased the fish at full gallop, and struck them with their barbed spears, as you see hunters spearing boars in the old tapestry. The salmon, to be sure, take the thing more quietly than the boars; but they are so swift in their own element, that to pursue and strike them is the task of a good horseman, with a quick eye, a determined hand, and full command both of his horse and weapon. The shouts of the fellows as they galloped up and down in the animating exercise—their loud bursts of laughter when any of their number caught a fall—and still louder acclamations when any of the party made a capital stroke with his lance—gave so much animation to the whole scene, that I caught the enthusiasm of the sport, and ventured forward a considerable space on the sands. The feats of one horseman, in particular, called forth so repeatedly the clamorous applause of his companions, that the very banks rang again with their shouts. He was a tall man, well mounted on a strong black horse, which he caused to turn and wind like a bird in the air, carried a longer spear than the others, and wore a sort of fur cap or bonnet, with a short feather in it, which gave him on the whole rather a superior appearance to the other fishermen. He seemed to hold some sort of authority among them, and occasionally directed their motions both by voice and hand: at which times I thought his gestures were striking, and his voice uncommonly sonorous and commanding.

The riders began to make for the shore, and the interest of the scene was almost over, while I lingered on the sands, with my looks turned to the shores of England, still gilded by the sun's last rays, and, as it seemed, scarce distant a mile from me. The anxious thoughts which haunt me began to muster in my bosom, and my feet slowly and insensibly approached the river which divided me from the forbidden precincts, though without any formed intention, when my steps were arrested by the sound of a horse galloping; and as I turned, the rider (the same fisherman whom I had formerly distinguished) called out to me, in an abrupt manner, 'Soho, brother! you are too late for Bowness to-night—the tide will make presently.'

I turned my head and looked at him without answering; for, to my thinking, his sudden appearance (or rather, I should say, his unexpected approach) had, amidst the gathering shadows and lingering light, something in it which was wild and ominous.

'Are you deaf?' he added—'or are you mad?—or have you a mind for the next world?'

'I am a stranger,' I answered, 'and had no other purpose than looking on at the fishing—I am about to return to the side I came from.'

'Best make haste then,' said he. 'He that dreams on the bed of the Solway, may wake in the next world. The sky threatens a blast that will bring in the waves three feet abreast.'

So saying, he turned his horse and rode off, while I began to walk back towards the Scottish shore, a little alarmed at what I had heard; for the tide advances with such rapidity upon these fatal sands, that well-mounted horsemen lay aside hopes of safety, if they see its white surge advancing while they are yet at a distance from the bank.

These recollections grew more agitating, and, instead of walking deliberately, I began a race as fast as I could, feeling, or thinking I felt, each pool of salt water through which I splashed, grow deeper and deeper. At length the surface of the sand did seem considerably more intersected with pools and channels full of water—either that the tide was really beginning to influence the bed of the estuary, or, as I must own is equally probable, that I had, in the hurry and confusion of my retreat, involved myself in difficulties which I had avoided in my more deliberate advance. Either way, it was rather an unpromising state of affairs, for the sands at the same time turned softer, and my footsteps, so soon as I had passed, were instantly filled with water. I began to have odd recollections concerning the snugness of your father's parlour, and the secure footing afforded by the pavement of Brown's Square and Scott's Close, when my better genius, the tall fisherman, appeared once more close to my side, he and his sable horse looming gigantic in the now darkening twilight.

'Are you mad?' he said, in the same deep tone which had before thrilled on my ear, 'or are you weary of your life? You will be presently amongst the quicksands.' I professed my ignorance of the way, to which he only replied, 'There is no time for prating—get up behind me.'

He probably expected me to spring from the ground with the activity which these Borderers have, by constant practice, acquired in everything relating to horsemanship; but as I stood irresolute, he extended his hand, and grasping mine, bid me place my foot on the toe of his boot, and thus raised me in a trice to the croupe of his horse. I was scarcely securely seated, ere he shook the reins of his horse, who instantly sprang forward; but annoyed, doubtless, by the unusual burden, treated us to two or three bounds, accompanied by as many flourishes of his hind heels. The rider sat like a tower, notwithstanding that the unexpected plunging of the animal threw me forward upon him. The horse was soon compelled to submit to the discipline of the spur and bridle, and went off at a steady hand gallop; thus shortening the devious, for it was by no means a direct path, by which the rider, avoiding the loose quicksands, made for the northern bank.

My friend, perhaps I may call him my preserver,—for, to a stranger, my situation was fraught with real danger,—continued to press on at the same speedy pace, but in perfect silence, and I was under too much anxiety of mind to disturb him with any questions. At length we arrived at a part of the shore with which I was utterly unacquainted, when I alighted and began to return in the best fashion I could my thanks for the important service which he had just rendered me.

The stranger only replied by an impatient 'pshaw!' and was about to ride off, and leave me to my own resources when I implored him to complete his work of kindness by directing me to Shepherd's Bush, which was, as I informed him, my home for the present.

'To Shepherd's Bush?' he said; 'it is but three miles but if you know not the land better than the sand, you may break your neck before you get there; for it is no road for a moping boy in a dark night; and, besides, there are the brook and the fens to cross.'

I was a little dismayed at this communication of such difficulties as my habits had not called on me to contend with. Once more the idea of thy father's fireside came across me; and I could have been well contented to have swapped the romance of my situation, together with the glorious independence of control which I possessed at the moment, for the comforts of that chimney-corner, though I were obliged to keep my eyes chained to Erskine's LARGER INSTITUTES.

I asked my new friend whether he could not direct me to any house of public entertainment for the night; and supposing it probable he was himself a poor man, I added, with the conscious dignity of a well-filled pocket-book, that I could make it worth any man's while to oblige me. The fisherman making no answer, I turned away from him with as gallant an appearance of indifference as I could command, and began to take, as I thought, the path which he had pointed out to me.

His deep voice immediately sounded after me to recall me. 'Stay, young man, stay—you have mistaken the road already.—I wonder your friends sent out such an inconsiderate youth, without some one wiser than himself to take care of him.'

'Perhaps they might not have done so,' said I, 'if I had any friends who cared about the matter.'

'Well, sir,' he said, 'it is not my custom to open my house to strangers, but your pinch is like to be a smart one; for, besides the risk from bad roads, fords, and broken ground, and the night, which looks both black and gloomy, there is bad company on the road sometimes—at least it has a bad name, and some have come to harm; so that I think I must for once make my rule give way to your necessity, and give you a night's lodging in my cottage.'

Why was it, Alan, that I could not help giving an involuntary shudder at receiving an invitation so seasonable in itself, and so suitable to my naturally inquisitive disposition? I easily suppressed this untimely sensation; and as I returned thanks, and expressed my hope that I should not disarrange, his family, I once more dropped a hint of my desire to make compensation for any trouble I might occasion. The man answered very coldly, 'Your presence will no doubt give me trouble, sir, but it is of a kind which your purse, cannot compensate; in a word, although I am content to receive you as my guest, I am no publican to call a reckoning.'

I begged his pardon, and, at his instance, once more seated myself behind him upon the good horse, which went forth steady as before—the moon, whenever she could penetrate the clouds, throwing the huge shadow of the animal, with its double burden, on the wild and bare ground over which we passed.

Thou mayst laugh till thou lettest the letter fall, if thou wilt, but it reminded me of the magician Atlantes on his hippogriff with a knight trussed up behind him, in the manner Ariosto has depicted that matter. Thou art I know, matter-of-fact enough to affect contempt of that fascinating and delicious poem; but think not that, to conform with thy bad taste, I shall forbear any suitable illustration which now or hereafter may occur to me.

On we went, the sky blackening around us, and the wind beginning to pipe such a wild and melancholy tune as best suited the hollow sounds of the advancing tide, which I could hear at a distance, like the roar of some immense monster defrauded of its prey.

At length, our course was crossed by a deep dell or dingle, such as they call in some parts of Scotland a den, and in others a cleuch or narrow glen. It seemed, by the broken glances which the moon continued to throw upon it, to be steep, precipitous, and full of trees, which are, generally speaking, rather scarce upon these shores. The descent by which we plunged into this dell was both steep and rugged, with two or three abrupt turnings; but neither danger nor darkness impeded the motion of the black horse, who seemed rather to slide upon his haunches, than to gallop down the pass, throwing me again on the shoulders of the athletic rider, who, sustaining no inconvenience by the circumstance, continued to press the horse forward with his heel, steadily supporting him at the same time by raising his bridle-hand, until we stood in safety at the bottom of the steep—not a little to my consolation, as, friend Alan, thou mayst easily conceive.

A very short advance up the glen, the bottom of which we had attained by this ugly descent, brought us in front of two or three cottages, one of which another blink of moonshine enabled me to rate as rather better than those of the Scottish peasantry in this part of the world; for the sashes seemed glazed, and there were what are called storm-windows in the roof, giving symptoms of the magnificence of a second story. The scene around was very interesting; for the cottages, and the yards or crofts annexed to them, occupied a haugh, or helm, of two acres, which a brook of some consequence (to judge from its roar) had left upon one side of the little glen while finding its course close to the farther bank, and which appeared to be covered and darkened with trees, while the level space beneath enjoyed such stormy smiles as the moon had that night to bestow.

I had little time for observation, for my companion's loud whistle, seconded by an equally loud halloo, speedily brought to the door of the principal cottage a man and a woman, together with two large Newfoundland dogs, the deep baying of which I had for some time heard. A yelping terrier or two, which had joined the concert, were silent at the presence of my conductor, and began to whine, jump up, and fawn upon him. The female drew back when she beheld a stranger; the man, who had a lighted lantern, advanced, and, without any observation, received the horse from my host, and led him, doubtless, to stable, while I followed my conductor into the house. When we had passed the HALLAN, [The partition which divides a Scottish cottage.] we entered a well-sized apartment, with a clean brick floor, where a fire blazed (much to my contentment) in the ordinary projecting sort of a chimney, common in Scottish houses. There were stone seats within the chimney; and ordinary utensils, mixed with fishing-spears, nets, and similar implements of sport, were hung around the walls of the place. The female who had first appeared at the door, had now retreated into a side apartment. She was presently followed by my guide, after he had silently motioned me to a seat; and their place was supplied by an elderly woman, in a grey stuff gown, with a check apron and toy, obviously a menial, though neater in her dress than is usual in her

apparent rank—an advantage which was counterbalanced by a very forbidding aspect. But the most singular part of her attire, in this very Protestant country, was a rosary, in which the smaller beads were black oak, and those indicating the PATER-NOSTER of silver, with a crucifix of the same metal.

This person made preparations for supper, by spreading a clean though coarse cloth over a large oaken table, placing trenchers and salt upon it, and arranging the fire to receive a gridiron. I observed her motions in silence; for she took no sort of notice of me, and as her looks were singularly forbidding, I felt no disposition to commence conversation.

When this duenna had made all preliminary arrangements, she took from the well-filled pouch of my conductor, which he had hung up by the door, one or two salmon, or GRILSES, as the smaller sort are termed, and selecting that which seemed best and in highest season, began to cut it into slices, and to prepare a GRILLADE; the savoury smell of which affected me so powerfully that I began sincerely to hope that no delay would intervene between the platter and the lip.

As this thought came across me, the man who had conducted the horse to the stable entered the apartment, and discovered to me a countenance yet more uninviting than that of the old crone who was performing with such dexterity the office of cook to the party. He was perhaps sixty years old; yet his brow was not much furrowed, and his jet-black hair was only grizzled, not whitened, by the advance of age. All his motions spoke strength unabated; and, though rather undersized, he had very broad shoulders, was square-made, thin-flanked, and apparently combined in his frame muscular strength and activity; the last somewhat impaired perhaps by years, but the first remaining in full vigour. A hard and harsh countenance—eyes far sunk under projecting eyebrows, which were grizzled like his hair—a wide mouth, furnished from ear to ear with its range of unimpaired teeth, of uncommon whiteness, and a size and breadth which might have become the jaws of an ogre, completed this delightful portrait. He was clad like a fisherman, in jacket and trousers of the blue cloth commonly used by seamen, and had a Dutch case-knife, like that of a Hamburg skipper, stuck into a broad buff belt, which seemed as if it might occasionally sustain weapons of a description still less equivocally calculated for violence.

This man gave me an inquisitive, and, as I thought, a sinister look upon entering the apartment; but without any further notice of me, took up the office of arranging the table, which the old lady had abandoned for that of cooking the fish, and, with more address than I expected from a person of his coarse appearance, placed two chairs at the head of the table, and two stools below; accommodating each seat to a cover, beside which he placed an allowance of barley-bread, and a small jug, which he replenished with ale from a large black jack. Three of these jugs were of ordinary earthenware, but the fourth, which he placed by the right-hand cover at, the upper end of the table, was a flagon of silver, and displayed armorial bearings. Beside this flagon he placed a salt-cellar of silver, handsomely wrought, containing salt of exquisite whiteness, with pepper and other spices. A sliced lemon was also presented on a small silver salver. The two large water-dogs, who seemed perfectly to understand the nature of the preparations, seated themselves one on each side of the table, to be ready to receive their portion of the entertainment. I never saw finer animals, or which seemed to be more influenced by a sense of decorum, excepting that they slobbered a little as the rich scent from the chimney was wafted past their noses. The small dogs ensconced themselves beneath the table.

I am aware that I am dwelling upon trivial and ordinary circumstances, and that perhaps I may weary out your patience in doing so. But conceive me alone in this strange place, which seemed, from the universal silence, to be the very temple of Harpocrates—remember that this is my first excursion from home—forget not that the manner in which I had been brought hither had the dignity of danger and something the air of an adventure, and that there was a mysterious incongruity in all I had hitherto witnessed; and you will not, I think, be surprised that these circumstances, though trifling, should force themselves on my notice at the time, and dwell in my memory afterwards.

That a fisher, who pursued the sport perhaps for his amusement as well as profit, should be well mounted and better lodged than the lower class of peasantry, had in it nothing surprising; but there was something about all that I saw which seemed to intimate that I was rather in the abode of a decayed gentleman, who clung to a few of the forms and observances of former rank, than in that of a common peasant, raised above his fellows by comparative opulence.

Besides the articles of plate which I have already noticed, the old man now lighted and placed on the table a silver lamp, or CRUISIE as the Scottish term it, filled with very pure oil, which in burning diffused an aromatic fragrance, and gave me a more perfect view of the cottage walls, which I had hitherto only seen dimly by the light of the fire. The BINK [The frame of wooden shelves placed in a Scottish kitchen for holding plates.] with its usual arrangement of pewter and earthenware, which was most strictly and critically clean, glanced back the flame of the lamp merrily from one side of the apartment. In a recess, formed by the small bow of a latticed window, was a large writing-desk of walnut-tree wood, curiously carved, above which arose shelves of the same, which supported a few books and papers. The opposite side of the recess contained (as far as I could discern, for it lay in shadow, and I could at any rate have seen it but imperfectly from the place where I was seated) one or two guns, together with swords, pistols, and other arms a collection which, in a poor cottage, and in a country so peaceful, appeared singular at least, if not even somewhat suspicious.

All these observations, you may suppose, were made much sooner than I have recorded, or you (if you have not skipped) have been able to read them. They were already finished, and I was considering how I should open some communication with the mute inhabitants of the mansion, when my conductor re-entered from the side-door by which he had made his exit.

He had now thrown off his rough riding-cap, and his coarse jockey-coat, and stood before me in a grey jerkin trimmed with black, which sat close to, and set off, his large and sinewy frame, and a pair of trousers of a lighter colour, cut as close to the body as they are used by Highlandmen. His whole dress was of finer cloth than that of the old man; and his linen, so minute was my observation, clean and unsullied. His shirt was without ruffles, and tied at the collar with a black ribbon, which showed his strong and muscular neck rising from it like that of an ancient Hercules. His head was small, with a large forehead, and well-formed ears. He wore neither peruke nor hair-powder; and his chestnut locks, curling close to his head like those of an antique statue, showed not the least touch of time, though the owner must have been at least fifty. His features were high and prominent in such a degree that one knew not whether to term them harsh or handsome. In either case, the sparkling grey eye, aquiline nose, and well-formed mouth, combined to render his physiognomy noble and expressive. An air of sadness, or severity, or of both, seemed to indicate a melancholy, and, at the same time, a haughty temper. I could not help running mentally over the ancient heroes, to whom I might assimilate the noble form and countenance before me. He was too young, and evinced too little resignation to his fate, to resemble Belisarius. Coriolanus, standing by the hearth of Tullus Aufidius, came nearer the mark; yet the gloomy and haughty look of the stranger had, perhaps, still more of Marius, seated among the ruins of Carthage.

While I was lost in these imaginations, my host stood by the fire, gazing on me with the same attention which I paid to him, until, embarrassed by his look, I was about to break silence at all hazards. But the supper, now placed upon the table, reminded me, by its appearance, of those wants which I had almost forgotten while I was gazing on the fine form of my conductor. He spoke at length, and I almost started at the deep rich tone of his voice, though what he said was but to invite me to sit down to the table. He himself assumed the seat of honour, beside which the silver flagon was placed, and beckoned to me to sit down beside him.

Thou knowest thy father's strict and excellent domestic discipline has trained me to bear the invocation of a blessing before we break the daily bread, for which we are taught to pray—I paused a moment, and, without designing to do so, I suppose my manner made him sensible of what I expected. The two domestics or inferiors, as I should have before observed, were already seated at the bottom of the table, when my host shot a glance of a very peculiar expression towards the old man, observing, with something approaching to a sneer, 'Cristal Nixon, say grace—the gentleman expects one.'

'The foul fiend shall be clerk, and say amen, when I turn chaplain,' growled out the party addressed, in tones which might have become the condition of a dying bear; 'if the gentleman is a whig, he may please himself with his own mummary. My faith is neither in word nor writ, but in barley-bread and brown ale.'

'Mabel Moffat,' said my guide, looking at the old woman, and raising his sonorous voice, probably because she was hard of hearing, 'canst thou ask a blessing upon our victuals?'

The old woman shook her head, kissed the cross which hung from her rosary, and was silent.

'Mabel will say grace for no heretic,' said the master of the house, with the same latent sneer on his brow and in his accent.

At the same moment, the side-door already mentioned opened, and the young woman (so she proved) whom I had first seen at the door of the cottage, advanced a little way into the room, then stopped bashfully, as if she had observed that I was looking at her, and asked the master of the house, 'if he had called?'

'Not louder than to make old Mabel hear me,' he replied; 'and yet,' be added, as she turned to retire, 'it is a shame a stranger should see a house where not one of the family can or will say a grace—do thou be our chaplain.'

The girl, who was really pretty, came forward with timid modesty, and, apparently unconscious that she was doing anything uncommon, pronounced the benediction in a silver-toned voice, and with affecting simplicity—her cheek colouring just so much as to show that on a less solemn occasion she would have felt more embarrassed.

Now, if thou expectest a fine description of this young woman, Alan Fairford, in order to entitle thee to taunt me with having found a Dulcinea in the inhabitant of a fisherman's cottage on the Solway Firth, thou shalt be disappointed; for, having said she seemed very pretty, and that she was a sweet and gentle-speaking creature, I have said all concerning her that I can tell thee. She vanished when the benediction was spoken.

My host, with a muttered remark on the cold of our ride, and the keen air of the Solway Sands, to which he did not seem to wish an answer, loaded my plate from Mabel's grillade, which, with a large wooden bowl of potatoes, formed our whole meal. A sprinkling from the lemon gave a much higher zest than the usual condiment of vinegar; and I promise you that whatever I might hitherto have felt, either of curiosity or suspicion, did not prevent me from making a most excellent supper, during which little passed betwixt me and my entertainer, unless that he did the usual honours of the table with courtesy, indeed, but without even the affectation of hearty hospitality, which those in his (apparent) condition generally affect on such occasions, even when they do not actually feel it. On the contrary, his manner seemed that of a polished landlord towards an unexpected and unwelcome guest, whom, for the sake of his own credit, he receives with civility, but without either goodwill or cheerfulness.

If you ask how I learned all this, I cannot tell you; nor, were I to write down at length the insignificant intercourse which took place between us, would it perhaps serve to justify these observations. It is sufficient to say, that in helping his dogs, which he did from time to time with great liberality, he seemed to discharge a duty much more pleasing to himself, than when he paid the same attention to his guest. Upon the whole, the result on my mind was as I tell it you.

When supper was over, a small case-bottle of brandy, in a curious frame of silver filigree, circulated to the guests. I had already taken a small glass of the liquor, and, when it had passed to Mabel and to Cristal and was again returned to the upper end of the table, I could not help taking the bottle in my hand, to look more at the armorial bearings which were chased with considerable taste on the silver framework. Encountering the eye of my entertainer, I instantly saw that my curiosity was highly distasteful; he frowned, bit his lip, and showed such uncontrollable signs of impatience, that, setting the bottle immediately down, I attempted some apology. To this he did not deign either to reply, or even to listen; and Cristal, at a signal from his master, removed the object of my curiosity, as well as the cup, upon which the same arms were engraved.

Then ensued an awkward pause, which I endeavoured to break by observing, that 'I feared my intrusion upon his hospitality had put his family to some inconvenience'.

'I hope you see no appearance of it, sir,' he replied, with cold civility. 'What inconvenience a family so retired as ours may suffer from receiving an unexpected guest is like to be trifling, in comparison of what the visitor himself sustains from want of his accustomed comforts. So far, therefore, as our connexion stands, our accounts stand clear.'

Notwithstanding this discouraging reply, I blundered on, as is usual in such cases, wishing to appear civil, and being, perhaps, in reality the very reverse. 'I was afraid,' I said, that my presence had banished one of the family' (looking at the side-door) 'from his table.'

'If,' he coldly replied, 'I meant the young woman whom I had seen in the apartment, he bid me observe that there was room enough at the table for her to have seated herself, and meat enough, such as it was, for her supper. I might, therefore, be assured, if she had chosen it, she would have supped with us.'

There was no dwelling on this or any other topic longer; for my entertainer, taking up the lamp, observed, that 'my wet clothes might reconcile me for the night to their custom of keeping early hours; that he was under the necessity of going abroad by peep of day to-morrow morning, and would call me up at the same time, to point out the way by which I was to return to the Shepherd's Bush.'

This left no opening for further explanation; nor was there room for it on the usual terms of civility; for, as he neither asked my name, nor expressed the least interest concerning my condition, I—the obliged person—had no pretence to trouble him with such inquiries on my part.

He took up the lamp, and led me through the side-door into a very small room, where a bed had been hastily arranged for my accommodation, and, putting down the lamp, directed me to leave my wet clothes on the outside of the door, that they might be exposed to the fire during the night. He then left me, having muttered something which was meant to pass for good night.

I obeyed his directions with respect to my clothes, the rather that, in despite of the spirits which I had drunk, I felt my teeth begin to chatter, and received various hints from an aguish feeling, that a town-bred youth, like myself, could not at once rush into all the hardihood of country sports with impunity. But my bed, though coarse and hard, was dry and clean; and I soon was so little occupied with my heats and tremors, as to listen with interest to a heavy foot, which seemed to be that of my landlord, traversing the boards (there was no ceiling, as you may believe) which roofed my apartment. Light, glancing through these rude planks, became visible as soon as my lamp was extinguished; and as the noise of the slow, solemn, and regular step continued, and I could distinguish that the person turned and returned as he reached the end of the apartment, it seemed clear to me that the walker was engaged in no domestic occupation, but merely pacing to and fro for his own pleasure. 'An odd amusement this,' I thought, 'for one who had been engaged at least a part of the preceding day in violent exercise, and who talked of rising by the peep of dawn on the ensuing morning.'

Meantime I heard the storm, which had been brewing during the evening, begin to descend with a vengeance; sounds as of distant-thunder (the noise of the more distant waves, doubtless, on the shore) mingled with the roaring of the neighbouring torrent, and with the crashing, groaning, and even screaming of the trees in the glen whose boughs were tormented by the gale. Within the house, windows clattered, and doors clapped, and the walls, though sufficiently substantial for a building of the kind, seemed to me to totter in the tempest.

But still the heavy steps perambulating the apartment over my head were distinctly heard amid the roar and fury of the elements. I thought more than once I even heard a groan; but I frankly own that, placed in this unusual situation, my fancy may have misled me. I was tempted several times to call aloud, and ask whether the turmoil around us did not threaten danger to the building which we inhabited; but when I thought of the secluded and unsocial master of the dwelling, who seemed to avoid human society, and to remain unperturbed amid the elemental war, it seemed that to speak to him at that moment would have been to address the spirit of the tempest himself, since no other being, I thought, could have remained calm and tranquil while winds and waters were thus raging around.

In process of time, fatigue prevailed over anxiety and curiosity. The storm abated, or my senses became deadened to its terrors, and I fell asleep ere yet the mysterious paces of my host had ceased to shake the flooring over my head.

It might have been expected that the novelty of my situation, although it did not prevent my slumbers, would have at least diminished their profoundness, and shortened their duration. It proved otherwise, however; for I never slept more soundly in my life, and only awoke when, at morning dawn, my landlord shook me by the shoulder, and dispelled some dream, of which, fortunately for you, I have no recollection, otherwise you would have been favoured with it, in hopes you might have proved a second Daniel upon the occasion.

'You sleep sound—' said his full deep voice; 'ere five years have rolled over your head, your slumbers will be lighter—unless ere then you are wrapped in the sleep which is never broken.'

'How!' said I, starting up in the bed; 'do you know anything of me—of my prospects—of my views in life?'

'Nothing,' he answered, with a grim smile; 'but it is evident you are entering upon the world young, inexperienced, and full of hopes, and I do but prophesy to you what I would to any one in your condition. But come; there lie your clothes—a brown crust and a draught of milk wait you, if you choose to break your fast; but you must make haste.'

'I must first,' I said, 'take the freedom to spend a few minutes alone, before beginning the ordinary works of the day.'

'Oh!—umph!—I cry your devotions pardon,' he replied, and left the apartment.

Alan, there is something terrible about this man.

I joined him, as I had promised, in the kitchen where we had supped overnight, where I found the articles which he had offered me for breakfast, without butter or any other addition.

He walked up and down while I partook of the bread and milk; and the slow measured weighty step seemed identified with those which I had heard last night. His pace, from its funereal slowness, seemed to keep time with some current of internal passion, dark, slow, and unchanged. 'We run and leap by the side of a lively and bubbling brook,' thought I, internally, 'as if we would run a race with it; but beside waters deep, slow, and lonely, our pace is sullen and silent as their course. What thoughts may be now corresponding with that furrowed brow, and bearing time with that heavy step?'

'If you have finished,' said he, looking up to me with a glance of impatience, as he observed that I ate no longer, but remained with my eyes fixed upon him, 'I wait to show you the way.'

We went out together, no individual of the family having been visible excepting my landlord. I was disappointed of the opportunity which I watched for of giving some gratuity to the domestics, as they seemed to be. As for offering any recompense to the master of the household, it seemed to me impossible to have attempted it.

What would I have given for a share of thy composure, who wouldst have thrust half a crown into a man's hand whose necessities seemed to crave it, conscious that you did right in making the proffer, and not caring sixpence whether you hurt the feelings of him whom you meant to serve! I saw thee once give a penny to a man with a long beard, who, from the dignity of his exterior, might have represented Solon. I had not thy courage, and therefore I made no tender to my mysterious host, although, notwithstanding his display of silver utensils, all around the house bespoke narrow circumstances, if not actual poverty.

We left the place together. But I hear thee murmur thy very new and appropriate ejaculation, OHE, JAM SATIS!—The rest for another time. Perhaps I may delay further communication till I learn how my favours are valued.

LETTER V

ALAN FAIRFORD TO DARSIE LATIMER

I have thy two last epistles, my dear Darsie, and expecting the third, have been in no hurry to answer them. Do not think my silence ought to be ascribed to my failing to take interest in them, for, truly, they excel (though the task was difficult) thy usual excellings. Since the moon-calf who earliest discovered the Pandemonium of Milton in an expiring wood-fire—since the first ingenious urchin who blew bubbles out of soap and water, thou, my best of friends, hast the highest knack at making histories out of nothing. Wert thou to plant the bean in the nursery-tale, thou wouldst make out, so soon as it began to germinate, that the castle of the giant was about to elevate its battlements on the top of it. All that happens to thee gets a touch of the wonderful and the sublime from thy own rich imagination. Didst ever see what artists call a Claude Lorraine glass, which spreads its own particular hue over the whole landscape which you see through it?—thou beholdest ordinary events just through such a medium.

I have looked carefully at the facts of thy last long letter, and they are just such as might have befallen any little truant of the High School, who had got down to Leith Sands, gone beyond the PRAWN-DUB, wet his hose and shoon, and, finally, had been carried home, in compassion, by some high-kilted fishwife, cursing all the while the trouble which the brat occasioned her.

I admire the figure which thou must have made, clinging for dear life behind the old fellow's back—thy jaws chattering with fear, thy muscles cramped with anxiety. Thy execrable supper of broiled salmon, which was enough to ensure the nightmare's regular visits for a twelvemonth, may be termed a real affliction; but as for the storm of Thursday last (such, I observe, was the date), it roared, whistled, howled, and bellowed, as fearfully amongst the old chimney-heads in the Candlemaker Row, as it could on the Solway shore, for the very wind of it—TESTE ME PER TOTAM NOCTEM VIGILANTE. And then in the morning again, when—Lord help you!—in your sentimental delicacy you bid the poor man adieu, without even tendering him half a crown for supper and lodging!

You laugh at me for giving a penny (to be accurate, though, thou shouldst have said sixpence) to an old fellow, whom thou, in thy high flight, wouldst have sent home supperless, because he was like Solon or Belisarius. But you forget that the affront descended like a benediction into the pouch of the old gaberlunzie, who overflowed in blessings upon the generous donor—long ere he would have thanked thee, Darsie, for thy barren veneration of his beard and his bearing. Then you laugh at my good father's retreat from Falkirk, just as if it were not time for a man to trudge when three or four mountain knaves, with naked claymores, and heels as light as their fingers, were scampering after him, crying FURINISH. You remember what he said himself when the Laird of Bucklivat told him that FURINISH signified 'stay a while'. 'What the devil,' he said, surprised out of his Presbyterian correctness by the unreasonableness of such a request under the circumstances, 'would the scoundrels have had me stop to have my head cut off?'

Imagine such a train at your own heels, Darsie, and ask yourself whether you would not exert your legs as fast as you did in flying from the Solway tide. And yet you impeach my father's courage. I tell you he has courage enough to do what is right, and to spurn what is wrong—courage enough to defend a righteous cause with hand and purse, and to take the part of the poor man against his oppressor, without fear of the consequences to himself. This is civil courage, Darsie; and it is of little consequence to most men in this age and country whether they ever possess military courage or no.

Do not think I am angry with you, though I thus attempt to rectify your opinions on my father's account. I am well aware that, upon the whole, he is scarce regarded with more respect by me than by thee. And, while I am in a serious humour, which it is difficult to preserve with one who is perpetually tempting me to laugh at him, pray, dearest Darsie, let not thy ardour for adventure carry thee into more such scrapes as that of the Solway Sands. The rest of the story is a mere imagination; but that stormy evening might have proved, as the clown says to Lear, 'a naughty night to swim in.'

As for the rest, if you can work mysterious and romantic heroes out of old cross-grained fishermen, why, I for one will reap some amusement by the metamorphosis. Yet hold! even there, there is some need of caution. This same female chaplain—thou sayest so little of her, and so much of every one else, that it excites some doubt in my mind. VERY PRETTY she is, it seems—and that is all thy discretion informs me of. There are cases in which silence implies other things than consent. Wert thou ashamed or afraid, Darsie, to trust thyself with the praises of the very pretty grace-sayer?—As I live, thou blushest! Why, do I not know thee an inveterate squire of dames? and have I not been in thy confidence? An elegant elbow, displayed when the rest of the figure was muffled in a cardinal, or a neat well-turned ankle and instep, seen by chance as its owner tripped up the Old Assembly Close, [Of old this almost deserted alley formed the most common access betwixt the High Street and the southern suburbs.] turned thy brain for eight days. Thou wert once caught if I remember rightly, with a single glance of a single matchless eye, which, when the fair owner withdrew her veil, proved to be single in the literal sense of the word. And, besides, were you not another time enamoured of a voice—a mere voice, that mingled in the psalmody at the Old Greyfriars' Church—until you discovered the proprietor of that dulcet organ to be Miss Dolly Macclizzard, who is both 'back and breast', as our saying goes?

All these things considered, and contrasted with thy artful silence on the subject of this grace-saying Nereid of thine, I must beg thee to be more explicit upon that subject in thy next, unless thou wouldst have me form the conclusion that thou thinkest more of her than thou carest to talk of.

You will not expect much news from this quarter, as you know the monotony of my life, and are aware it must at present be devoted to uninterrupted study. You have said a thousand times that I am only qualified to make my way by dint of plodding, and therefore plod I must.

My father seems to be more impatient of your absence than he was after your first departure. He is sensible, I believe, that our solitary meals want the light which your gay humour was wont to throw over them, and feels melancholy as men do when the light of the sun is no longer upon the landscape. If it is thus with him, thou mayst imagine it is much more so with me, and canst conceive how heartily I wish that thy frolic were ended, and thou once more our inmate.—

I resume my pen, after a few hours' interval, to say that an incident has occurred on which you will yourself be building a hundred castles in the air, and which even I, jealous as I am of such baseless fabrics, cannot but own affords ground for singular conjecture.

My father has of late taken me frequently along with him when he attends the courts, in his anxiety to see me properly initiated into the practical forms of business. I own I feel something on his account and my own from this over-anxiety, which, I dare say, renders us both ridiculous. But what signifies my repugnance? my father drags me up to his counsel learned in the law,—‘Are you quite ready to come on to-day, Mr. Crossbite?—This is my son, designed for the bar—I take the liberty to bring him with me to-day to the consultation, merely that he may see how these things are managed.’

Mr. Crossbite smiles and bows; as a lawyer smiles on the solicitor who employs him, and I dare say, thrusts his tongue into his cheek, and whispers into the first great wig that passes him, ‘What the d—! does old Fairford mean by letting loose his whelp on me?’

As I stood beside them, too much vexed at the childish part I was made to play to derive much information from the valuable arguments of Mr. Crossbite, I observed a rather elderly man, who stood with his eyes firmly bent on my father, as if he only waited an end of the business in which he was engaged, to address him. There was something, I thought, in the gentleman’s appearance which commanded attention. Yet his dress was not in the present taste, and though it had once been magnificent, was now antiquated and unfashionable. His coat was of branched velvet, with a satin lining, a waistcoat of violet-coloured silk, much embroidered; his breeches the same stuff as the coat. He wore square-toed shoes, with foretops, as they are called; and his silk stockings were rolled up over his knee, as you may have seen in pictures, and here and there on some of those originals who seem to pique themselves on dressing after the mode of Methuselah. A CHAPEAU BRAS and sword necessarily completed his equipment, which, though out of date, showed that it belonged to a man of distinction.

The instant Mr. Crossbite had ended what he had to say, this gentleman walked up to my father, with, ‘Your servant, Mr. Fairford—it is long since you and I met.’

My father, whose politeness, you know, is exact and formal, bowed, and hemmed, and was confused, and at length professed that the distance since they had met was so great, that though he remembered the face perfectly, the name, he was sorry to any, had—really—somehow—escaped his memory.

‘Have you forgot Herries of Birrenswork?’ said the gentleman, and my father bowed even more profoundly than before; though I think his reception of his old friend seemed to lose some of the respectful civility which he bestowed on him while his name was yet unknown. It now seemed to be something like the lip-courtesy which the heart would have denied had ceremony permitted.

My father, however, again bowed low, and hoped he saw him well.

‘So well, my good Mr. Fairford, that I come hither determined to renew my acquaintance with one or two old friends, and with you in the first place. I halt at my old resting place—you must dine with me to-day, at Paterson’s, at the head of the Horse Wynd—it is near your new fashionable dwelling, and I have business with you.’

My father excused himself respectfully, and not without embarrassment—‘he was particularly engaged at home.’

‘Then I will dine with you, man,’ said Mr. Herries of Birrenswork; ‘the few minutes you can spare me after dinner will suffice for my business; and I will not prevent you a moment from minding your own—I am no bottle-man.’

You have often remarked that my father, though a scrupulous observer of the rites of hospitality, seems to exercise them rather as a duty than as a pleasure; indeed, but for a conscientious wish to feed the hungry and receive the stranger, his doors would open to guests much seldomer than is the case. I never saw so strong an example of this peculiarity (which I should otherwise have said is caricatured in your description) as in his mode of homologating the self-given invitation of Mr. Herries. The embarrassed brow, and the attempt at a smile which accompanied his ‘We will expect the honour of seeing you in Brown Square at three o’clock,’ could not deceive any one, and did not impose upon the old laird. It was with a look of scorn that he replied, ‘I will relieve you then till that hour, Mr. Fairford;’ and his whole manner seemed to say, ‘It is my pleasure to dine with you, and I care not whether I am welcome or no.’

When he turned away, I asked my father who he was.

‘An unfortunate gentleman,’ was the reply.

‘He looks pretty well on his misfortunes,’ replied I. ‘I should not have suspected that so gay an outside was lacking a dinner.’

‘Who told you that he does?’ replied my father; ‘he is OMNI SUSPICIONE MAJOR, so far as worldly circumstances are concerned. It is to be hoped he makes a good use of them; though, if he does, it will be for the first time in his life.’

‘He has then been an irregular liver?’ insinuated I.

My father replied by that famous brocard with which he silences all unacceptable queries turning in the slightest degree upon the failings of our neighbours,—‘If we mend our own faults, Alan, we shall all of us have enough to do, without sitting in judgement upon other folks.’

Here I was again at fault; but rallying once more, I observed, he had the air of a man of high rank and family.

‘He is well entitled,’ said my father, ‘representing Herries of Birrenswork; a branch of that great and once powerful family of Herries, the elder branch whereof merged in the house of Nithesdale at the death of Lord Robin the Philosopher, Anno Domini sixteen hundred and sixty-seven.’

‘Has he still,’ said I, ‘his patrimonial estate of Birrenswork?’

‘No,’ replied my father; ‘so far back as his father’s time, it was a mere designation—the property being forfeited by Herbert Herries following his kinsman the Earl of Derwentwater to the Preston affair in 1715. But they keep up the designation, thinking, doubtless, that their claims may be revived in more favourable times for Jacobites and for popery; and folks who in no way partake of their fantastic capriccios do yet allow it to pass unchallenged, EX COMITATE, if not EX MISERICORDIA.—But were he the Pope and the Pretender both, we must get some dinner ready for him, since he has thought fit to offer himself. So hasten home, my lad, and tell Hannah, Cook Epps, and James Wilkinson, to do their best; and do thou look out a pint or two of Maxwell’s best—it is in the fifth bin—there are the keys of the wine-cellar. Do not leave them in the lock—you know poor James’s failing, though he is an honest creature under all other temptations—and I have but two bottles of the old brandy left—we must keep it for medicine, Alan.’

Away went I—made my preparations—the hour of dinner came, and so did Mr. Herries of Birrenswork.

If I had thy power of imagination and description, Darsie, I could make out a fine, dark, mysterious, Rembrandt-looking portrait of this same stranger, which should be as far superior to thy fisherman as a shirt of chain-mail is to a herring-net. I can assure you there is some matter for description about him; but knowing my own imperfections, I can only say, I thought him eminently disagreeable and ill-bred.—No, ILL-BRED is not the proper word on the contrary, he appeared to know the rules of good-breeding perfectly, and only to think that the rank of the company did not require that he should attend to them—a view of the matter infinitely more offensive than if his behaviour had been that of uneducated and proper rudeness. While my father said grace, the laird did all but whistle aloud; and when I, at my father’s desire, returned thanks, he used his toothpick, as if he had waited that moment for its exercise.

So much for Kirk—with King, matters went even worse. My father, thou knowest, is particularly full of deference to his guests; and in the present care, he seemed more than usually desirous to escape every cause of dispute. He so far compromised his loyalty as to announce merely ‘The King’ as his first toast after dinner, instead of the emphatic ‘King George’, which is his usual formula. Our guest made a motion with his glass, so as to pass it over the water-decanter which stood beside him, and added, ‘Over the water.’

My father coloured, but would not seem to hear this. Much more there was of careless and disrespectful in the stranger’s manner and tone of conversation; so that, though I know my father’s prejudices in favour of rank and birth, and though I am aware his otherwise masculine understanding has never entirely shaken off the slavish awe of the great which in his earlier days they had so many modes of commanding, still I could hardly excuse him for enduring so much insolence—such it seemed to be as this self-invited guest was disposed to offer to him at his own table.

One can endure a traveller in the same carriage, if he treads upon your toes by accident, or even through negligence; but it is very different when, knowing that they are rather of a tender description, he continues to pound away at them with his hoofs. In my poor opinion—and I am a man of peace—you can, in that case, hardly avoid a declaration of war.

I believe my father read my thoughts in my eye; for, pulling out his watch, he said; ‘Half-past four, Alan—you should be in your own room by this time—Birrenswork will excuse you.’

Our visitor nodded carelessly, and I had no longer any pretence to remain. But as I left the room, I heard this magnate of Nithesdale distinctly mention the name of Latimer. I lingered; but at length a direct hint from my father obliged me to withdraw; and when, an hour afterwards, I was summoned to partake of a cup of tea, our guest had departed. He had business that evening in the High Street, and could not spare time even to drink tea. I could not help saying, I considered his departure as a relief from incivility. 'What business has he to upbraid us,' I said, 'with the change of our dwelling from a more inconvenient to a better quarter of the town? What was it to him if we chose to imitate some of the conveniences or luxuries of an English dwelling-house, instead of living piled up above each other in flats? Have his patrician birth and aristocratic fortunes given him any right to censure those who dispose of the fruits of their own industry, according to their own pleasure?'

My father took a long pinch of snuff, and replied, 'Very well, Alan; very well indeed. I wish Mr. Crossbite or Counsellor Pest had heard you; they must have acknowledged that you have a talent for forensic elocution; and it may not be amiss to try a little declamation at home now and then, to gather audacity and keep yourself in breath. But touching the subject of this paraffle of words, it's not worth a pinch of tobacco. D'ye think that I care for Mr. Herries of Birrensworck more than any other gentleman who comes here about business, although I do not care to go tilting at his throat, because he speaks like a grey goose, as he is? But to say no more about him, I want to have Darsie Latimer's present direction; for it is possible I may have to write the lad a line with my own hand—and yet I do not well know—but give me the direction at all events.'

I did so, and if you have heard from my father accordingly, you know more, probably, about the subject of this letter than I who write it. But if you have not, then shall I have discharged a friend's duty, in letting you know that there certainly is something afloat between this disagreeable laird and my father, in which you are considerably interested.

Adieu! and although I have given thee a subject for waking dreams, beware of building a castle too heavy for the foundation; which, in the present instance, is barely the word Latimer occurring in a conversation betwixt a gentleman of Dumfriesshire and a W.S. of Edinburgh—CAETERA PRORSUS IGNORO.

LETTER VI DARSIE LATIMER TO ALAN FAIRFORD

(In continuation of Letters III and IV.)

I told thee I walked out into the open air with my grave and stern landlord. I could now see more perfectly than on the preceding night the secluded glen in which stood the two or three cottages which appeared to be the abode of him and his family.

It was so narrow, in proportion to its depth, that no ray of the morning sun was likely to reach it till it should rise high in the horizon. Looking up the dell, you saw a brawling brook issuing in foamy haste from a covert of underwood, like a race-horse impatient to arrive at the goal; and, if you gazed yet; more earnestly, you might observe part of a high waterfall glimmering through the foliage, and giving occasion, doubtless, to the precipitate speed of the brook. Lower down, the stream became more placid, and opened into a quiet piece of water which afforded a rude haven to two or three fishermen's boats, then lying high and dry on the sand, the tide being out. Two or three miserable huts could be seen beside this little haven, inhabited probably by the owners of the boats, but inferior in every respect to the establishment of mine host, though that was miserable enough.

I had but a minute or two to make these observations, yet during that space my companion showed symptoms of impatience, and more than once shouted, 'Cristal—Cristal Nixon,' until the old man of the preceding evening appeared at the door of one of the neighbouring cottages or outhouses, leading the strong black horse which I before commemorated, ready bridled and saddled. My conductor made Cristal a sign with his finger, and, turning from the cottage door, led the way up the steep path or ravine which connected the sequestered dell with the open country.

Had I been perfectly aware of the character of the road down which I had been hurried with so much impetuosity on the preceding evening, I greatly question if I should have ventured the descent; for it deserved no better name than the channel of a torrent, now in a good measure filled with water, that dashed in foam and fury into the dell, being swelled with the rains of the preceding night. I ascended this ugly path with some difficulty although on foot, and felt dizzy when I observed, from such traces as the rains had not obliterated, that the horse seemed almost to have slid down it upon his haunches the evening before.

My host threw himself on his horse's back, without placing a foot in the stirrup—passed me in the perilous ascent, against which he pressed his steed as if the animal had had the footing of a wild cat. The water and mud splashed from his heels in his reckless course, and a few bounds placed him on the top of the bank, where I presently joined him, and found the horse and rider standing still as a statue; the former panting and expanding his broad nostrils to the morning wind, the latter motionless, with his eye fixed on the first beams of the rising sun, which already began to peer above the eastern horizon and gild the distant mountains of Cumberland and Liddesdale.

He seemed in a reverie, from which he started at my approach, and, putting his horse in motion, led the way at a leisurely pace through a broken and sandy road, which traversed a waste, level, and uncultivated tract of downs, intermixed with morass, much like that in the neighbourhood of my quarters at Shepherd's Bush. Indeed, the whole open ground of this district, where it approaches the sea, has, except in a few favoured spots, the same uniform and dreary character.

Advancing about a hundred yards from the brink of the glen, we gained a still more extensive command of this desolate prospect, which seemed even more dreary, as contrasted with the opposite shores of Cumberland, crossed and intersected by ten thousand lines of trees growing in hedgerows, shaded with groves and woods of considerable extent, animated by hamlets and villas, from which thin clouds of smoke already gave sign of human life and human industry.

My conductor had extended his arm, and was pointing the road to Shepherd's Bush, when the step of a horse was heard approaching us. He looked sharply round, and having observed who was approaching, proceeded in his instructions to me, planting himself at the same time in the very middle of the path, which, at the place where we halted, had a slough on the one side and a sandbank on the other.

I observed that the rider who approached us slackened his horse's pace from a slow trot to a walk, as if desirous to suffer us to proceed, or at least to avoid passing us at a spot where the difficulty of doing so must have brought us very close to each other. You know my old failing, Alan, and that I am always willing to attend to anything in preference to the individual who has for the time possession of the conversation.

Agreeably to this amiable propensity, I was internally speculating concerning the cause of the rider keeping aloof from us, when my companion, elevating his deep voice so suddenly and so sternly as at once to recall my wandering thoughts, exclaimed, 'In the name of the devil, young man, do you think that others have no better use for their time than you have, that you oblige me to repeat the same thing to you three times over? Do you see, I say, yonder thing at a mile's distance, that looks like a finger-post, or rather like a gallows? I would it had a dreaming fool hanging upon it, as an example to all meditative moon-calves!—Yon gibbet-looking pole will guide you to the bridge, where you must pass the large brook; then proceed straight forwards, till several roads divide at a cairn. Plague on thee, thou art wandering again!

It is indeed quite true that at this moment the horseman approached us, and my attention was again called to him as I made way to let him pass. His whole exterior at once showed that he belonged to the Society of Friends, or, as the world and the world's law calls them, Quakers. A strong and useful iron-grey galloway showed, by its sleek and good condition, that the merciful man was merciful to his beast. His accoutrements were in the usual unostentatious but clean and servicable order which characterizes these sectaries. His long surtout of dark-grey superfine cloth descended down to the middle of his leg, and was buttoned up to his chin, to defend him against the morning air. As usual, his ample beaver hung down without button or loop, and shaded a comely and placid countenance, the gravity of which appeared to contain some seasoning of humour, and had nothing in common with the pinched puritanical air affected by devotees in general. The brow was open and free from wrinkles, whether of age or hypocrisy. The eye was clear, calm, and considerate, yet appeared to be disturbed by apprehension, not to say fear, as, pronouncing the usual salutation of, 'I wish thee a good morrow, friend,' he indicated, by turning his palfrey close to one side of

the path, a wish to glide past us with as little trouble as possible—just as a traveller would choose to pass a mastiff of whose peaceable intentions he is by no means confident.

But my friend, not meaning, perhaps, that he should get off so easily, put his horse quite across the path, so that, without plunging into the slough, or scrambling up the bank, the Quaker could not have passed him. Neither of these was an experiment without hazard greater than the passenger seemed willing to incur. He halted, therefore, as if waiting till my companion should make way for him; and, as they sat fronting each other, I could not help thinking that they might have formed no bad emblem of Peace and War; for although my conductor was unarmed, yet the whole of his manner, his stern look, and his upright seat on horseback, were entirely those of a soldier in undress. He accosted the Quaker in these words, 'So ho! friend Joshua, thou art early to the road this morning. Has the spirit moved thee and thy righteous brethren to act with some honesty, and pull down yonder tide-nets that keep the fish from coming up the river?'

'Surely, friend, not so,' answered Joshua, firmly, but good-humouredly at the same time; 'thou canst not expect that our own hands should pull down what our purses established. Thou killest the fish with spear, line, and coble-net; and we, with snares and with nets, which work by the ebb and the flow of the tide. Each doth what seems best in his eyes to secure a share of the blessing which Providence hath bestowed on the river, and that within his own bounds. I prithee seek no quarrel against us, for thou shalt have no wrong at our hand.'

'Be assured I will take none at the hand of any man, whether his hat be cocked or broad-brimmed,' answered the fisherman. 'I tell you in fair terms, Joshua Geddes, that you and your partners are using unlawful craft to destroy the fish in the Solway by stake-nets and wears; and that we, who fish fairly, and like men, as our fathers did, have daily and yearly less sport and less profit. Do not think gravity or hypocrisy can carry it off as you have done. The world knows you, and we know you. You will destroy the salmon which makes the livelihood of fifty poor families, and then wipe your mouth, and go to make a speech at meeting. But do not hope it will last thus. I give you fair warning, we will be upon you one morning soon, when we will not leave a stake standing in the pools of the Solway; and down the tide they shall every one go, and well if we do not send a lessee along with them.'

'Friend,' replied Joshua, with a constrained smile, 'but that I know thou dost not mean as thou sayst, I would tell thee we are under the protection of this country's laws; nor do we the less trust to obtain their protection, that our principles permit us not, by any act of violent resistance, to protect ourselves.'

'All villainous cant and cowardice,' exclaimed the fisherman, 'and assumed merely as a cloak to your hypocritical avarice.'

'Nay, say not cowardice, my friend,' answered the Quaker, 'since thou knowest there may be as much courage in enduring as in acting; and I will be judged by this youth, or by any one else, whether there is not more cowardice—even in the opinion of that world whose thoughts are the breath in thy nostrils—in the armed oppressor who doth injury, than in the defenceless and patient sufferer who endureth it with constancy.'

'I will change no more words with you on the subject,' said the fisherman, who, as if something moved at the last argument which Mr. Geddes had used, now made room for him to pass forward on his journey. 'Do not forget, however,' he added, 'that you have had fair warning, nor suppose that we will accept of fair words in apology for foul play. These nets of yours are unlawful—they spoil our fishings—we will have them down at all risks and hazards. I am a man of my word, friend Joshua.'

'I trust thou art,' said the Quaker; 'but thou art the rather bound to be cautious in rashly affirming what thou wilt never execute. For I tell thee, friend, that though there is as great a difference between thee and one of our people as there is between a lion and a sheep, yet I know and believe thou hast so much of the lion in thee, that thou wouldest scarce employ thy strength and thy rage upon that which professeth no means of resistance. Report says so much good of thee, at least, if it says little more.'

'Time will try,' answered the fisherman; 'and hark thee, Joshua, before we part I will put thee in the way of doing one good deed, which, credit me, is better than twenty moral speeches. Here is a stranger youth, whom Heaven has so scantily gifted with brains, that he will bewilder himself in the Sands, as he did last night, unless thou wilt kindly show him the way to Shepherd's Bush; for I have been in vain endeavouring to make him comprehend the road thither. Hast thou so much charity under thy simplicity, Quaker, as to do this good turn?'

'Nay, it is thou, friend,' answered Joshua, 'that dost lack charity, to suppose any one unwilling to do so simple a kindness.'

'Thou art right—I should have remembered it can cost thee nothing. Young gentlemen, this pious pattern of primitive simplicity will teach thee the right way to the Shepherd's Bush—aye, and will himself shear thee like a sheep, if you come to buying and selling with him.'

He then abruptly asked me, how long I intended to remain at Shepherd's Bush.

I replied, I was at present uncertain—as long probably, as I could amuse myself in the neighbourhood.

'You are fond of sport?' he added, in the same tone of brief inquiry.

I answered in the affirmative, but added, I was totally inexperienced.

'Perhaps if you reside here for some days,' he said, 'we may meet again, and I may have the chance of giving you a lesson.'

Ere I could express either thanks or assent, he turned short round with a wave of his hand by way of adieu, and rode back to the verge of the dell from which we had emerged together; and as he remained standing upon the banks, I could long hear his voice while he shouted down to those within its recesses.

Meanwhile the Quaker and I proceeded on our journey for some time in silence; he restraining his sober-minded steed to a pace which might have suited a much less active walker than myself, and looking on me from time to time with an expression of curiosity, mingled with benignity. For my part, I cared not to speak first. It happened I had never before been in company with one of this particular sect, and, afraid that in addressing him I might unwittingly infringe upon some of their prejudices or peculiarities, I patiently remained silent. At length he asked me, whether I had been long in the service of the laird, as men called him.

I repeated the words 'in his service?' with such an accent of surprise, as induced him to say, 'Nay, but, friend, I mean no offence; perhaps I should have said in his society—an inmate, I mean, in his house?'

'I am totally unknown to the person from whom we have just parted,' said I, 'and our connexion is only temporary. He had the charity to give me his guidance from the Sands, and a night's harbourage from the tempest. So our acquaintance began, and there it is likely to end; for you may observe that our friend is by no means apt to encourage familiarity.'

'So little so,' answered my companion, 'that thy case is, I think, the first in which I ever heard of his receiving any one into his house; that is, if thou hast really spent the night there.'

'Why should you doubt it?' replied I; 'there is no motive I can have to deceive you, nor is the object worth it.'

'Be not angry with me,' said the Quaker; 'but thou knowest that thine own people do not, as we humbly endeavour to do, confine themselves within the simplicity of truth, but employ the language of falsehood, not only for profit, but for compliment, and sometimes for mere diversion. I have heard various stories of my neighbour; of most of which I only believe a small part, and even then they are difficult to reconcile with each other. But this being the first time I ever heard of his receiving a stranger within his dwelling, made me express some doubts. I pray thee let them not offend thee.'

'He does not,' said I, 'appear to possess in much abundance the means of exercising hospitality, and so may be excused from offering it in ordinary cases.'

'That is to say, friend,' replied Joshua, 'thou hast supped ill, and perhaps breakfasted worse. Now my small tenement, called Mount Sharon, is nearer to us by two miles than thine inn; and although going thither may prolong thy walk, as taking thee of the straighter road to Shepherd's Bush, yet methinks exercise will suit thy youthful limbs, as well as a good plain meal thy youthful appetite. What sayst thou, my young acquaintance?'

'If it puts you not to inconvenience,' I replied; for the invitation was cordially given, and my bread and milk had been hastily swallowed, and in small quantity.

'Nay,' said Joshua, 'use not the language of compliment with those who renounce it. Had this poor courtesy been very inconvenient, perhaps I had not offered it.'

'I accept the invitation, then,' said I, 'in the same good spirit in which you give it.'

The Quaker smiled, reached me his hand, I shook it, and we travelled on in great cordiality with each other. The fact is, I was much entertained by contrasting in my own mind, the open manner of the kind-hearted Joshua Geddes, with the abrupt, dark, and lofty demeanour of my entertainer on the preceding evening. Both were blunt and unceremonious; but the plainness of the Quaker had the character of devotional simplicity, and was mingled with the more real kindness, as if

honest Joshua was desirous of atoning, by his sincerity, for the lack of external courtesy. On the contrary, the manners of the fisherman were those of one to whom the rules of good behaviour might be familiar, but who, either from pride or misanthropy, scorned to observe them. Still I thought of him with interest and curiosity, notwithstanding so much about him that was repulsive; and I promised myself, in the course of my conversation with the Quaker, to learn all that he knew on the subject. He turned the conversation, however, into a different channel, and inquired into my own condition of life, and views in visiting this remote frontier.

I only thought it necessary to mention my name, and add, that I had been educated to the law, but finding myself possessed of some independence, I had of late permitted myself some relaxation, and was residing at Shepherd's Bush to enjoy the pleasure of angling.

'I do thee no harm, young man,' said my new friend, 'in wishing thee a better employment for thy grave hours, and a more humane amusement (if amusement thou must have) for those of a lighter character.'

'You are severe, sir,' I replied. 'I heard you but a moment since refer yourself to the protection of the laws of the country—if there be laws, there must be lawyers to explain, and judges to administer them.'

Joshua smiled, and pointed to the sheep which were grazing on the downs over which we were travelling. 'Were a wolf,' he said, 'to come even now upon yonder flocks, they would crowd for protection, doubtless, around the shepherd and his dogs; yet they are bitten and harassed daily by the one, shorn, and finally killed and eaten by the other. But I say not this to shock you; for, though laws and lawyers are evils, yet they are necessary evils in this probationary state of society, till man shall learn to render unto his fellows that which is their due, according to the light of his own conscience, and through no other compulsion. Meanwhile, I have known many righteous men who have followed thy intended profession in honesty and uprightness of walk. The greater their merit, who walk erect in a path which so many find slippery.'

'And angling,' said I:—'you object to that also as an amusement, you who, if I understood rightly what passed between you and my late landlord, are yourself a proprietor of fisheries.'

'Not a proprietor,' he replied, 'I am only, in copartnery with others, a tacksman or lessee of some valuable salmon-fisheries a little down the coast. But mistake me not. The evil of angling, with which I class all sports, as they are called, which have the sufferings of animals for their end and object, does not consist in the mere catching and killing those animals with which the bounty of Providence hath stocked the earth for the good of man, but in making their protracted agony a principle of delight and enjoyment. I do indeed cause these fisheries to be conducted for the necessary taking, killing, and selling the fish; and, in the same way, were I a farmer, I should send my lambs to market. But I should as soon think of contriving myself a sport and amusement out of the trade of the butcher as out of that of the fisher.'

We argued the point no further; for though I thought his arguments a little too high-strained, yet as my mind acquitted me of having taken delight in aught but the theory of field-sports, I did not think myself called upon stubbornly to advocate a practice which had afforded me so little pleasure.

We had by this time arrived at the remains of an old finger-post, which my host had formerly pointed out as a landmark. Here, a ruinous wooden bridge, supported by long posts resembling crutches, served me to get across the water, while my new friend sought a ford a good way higher up, for the stream was considerably swelled.

As I paused for his rejoining me, I observed an angler at a little distance pouching trout after trout, as fast almost as he could cast his line; and I own, in spite of Joshua's lecture on humanity, I could not but envy his adroitness and success, so natural is the love of sport to our minds, or so easily are we taught to assimilate success in field-sports with ideas of pleasure, and with the praise due to address and agility. I soon recognized in the successful angler little Benjie, who had been my guide and tutor in that gentle art, as you have learned from my former letters. I called—I whistled—the rascal recognized me, and, starting like a guilty thing, seemed hesitating whether to approach or to run away; and when he determined on the former, it was to assail me with a loud, clamorous, and exaggerated report of the anxiety of all at the Shepherd's Bush for my personal safety; how my landlady had wept, how Sam and the ostler had not the heart to go to bed, but sat up all night drinking—and how he himself had been up long before daybreak to go in quest of me.

'And you were switching the water, I suppose,' said I, 'to discover my dead body?'

This observation produced a long 'Na—a—a' of acknowledged detection; but, with his natural impudence, and confidence in my good nature, he immediately added, 'that he thought I would like a fresh trout or twa for breakfast, and the water being in such a rare trim for the saumon raun, [The bait made of salmon-roe salted and preserved. In a swollen river, and about the month of October, it is a most deadly bait.] he couldna help taking a cast.'

While we were engaged in this discussion, the honest Quaker returned to the farther end of the wooden bridge to tell me he could not venture to cross the brook in its present state: but would be under the necessity to ride round by the stone bridge, which was a mile and a half higher up than his own house. He was about to give me directions how to proceed without him, and inquire for his sister, when I suggested to him that, if he pleased to trust his horse to little Benjie, the boy might carry him round by the bridge, while we walked the shorter and more pleasant road.

Joshua shook his head, for he was well acquainted with Benjie, who, he said, was the naughtiest varlet in the whole neighbourhood. Nevertheless, rather than part company, he agreed to put the pony under his charge for a short season, with many injunctions that he should not attempt to mount, but lead the pony (even Solomon) by the bridle, under the assurances of sixpence in case of proper demeanour, and penalty that if he transgressed the orders given him, 'verily he would be scourged.'

Promises cost Benjie nothing, and he showered them out wholesale; till the Quaker at length yielded up the bridle to him, repeating his charges, and enforcing them by holding up his forefinger. On my part, I called to Benjie to leave the fish he had taken at Mount Sharon, making, at the same time, an apologetic countenance to my new friend, not being quite aware whether the compliment would be agreeable to such a condemner of field-sports.

He understood me at once, and reminded me of the practical distinction betwixt catching the animals as an object of cruel and wanton sport, and eating them as lawful and gratifying articles of food, after they were killed. On the latter point he had no scruples; but, on the contrary, assured me that this brook contained the real red trout, so highly esteemed by all connoisseurs, and that, when eaten within an hour of their being caught, they had a peculiar firmness of substance and delicacy of flavour, which rendered them an agreeable addition to a morning meal, especially when earned, like ours, by early rising, and an hour or two's wholesome exercise.

But to thy alarm be it spoken, Alan, we did not come so far as the frying of our fish without further adventure. So it is only to spare thy patience, and mine own eyes, that I pull up for the present, and send thee the rest of my story in a subsequent letter.

LETTER VII

THE SAME TO THE SAME (In continuation.)

Little Benjie, with the pony, having been sent off on the left side of the brook, the Quaker and I sauntered on, like the cavalry and infantry of the same army occupying the opposite banks of a river, and observing the same line of march. But, while my worthy companion was assuring me of a pleasant greensward walk to his mansion, little Benjie, who had been charged to keep in sight, chose to deviate from the path assigned him, and, turning to the right, led his charge, Solomon, out of our vision.

'The villain means to mount him!' cried Joshua, with more vivacity than was consistent with his profession of passive endurance.

I endeavoured to appease his apprehensions, as he pushed on, wiping his brow with vexation, assuring him that, if the boy did mount, he would, for his own sake, ride gently.

'You do not know him,' said Joshua, rejecting all consolation; 'HE do anything gently!—no, he will gallop Solomon—he will misuse the sober patience of the poor animal who has borne me so long! Yes, I was given over to my own devices when I ever let him touch the bridle, for such a little miscreant there never was before him in this country.'

He then proceeded to expatiate on every sort of rustic enormity of which he accused Benjie. He had been suspected of snaring partridges—was detected by Joshua himself in liming singing-birds—stood fully charged with having worried several cats, by aid of a lurcher which attended him, and which was as lean, and ragged, and mischievous, as his master. Finally, Benjie stood accused of having stolen a duck, to hunt it with the said lurcher, which was as dexterous on water as on land. I chimed in with my friend, in order to avoid giving him further irritation, and declared I should be disposed, from my own experience, to give up Benjie as one of Satan's imps. Joshua Geddes began to censure the phrase as too much exaggerated, and otherwise unbecoming the mouth of a reflecting person; and, just as I was apologizing for it, as being a term of common parlance, we heard certain sounds on the opposite side of the brook, which seemed to indicate that Solomon and Benjie were at issue together. The sandhills behind which Benjie seemed to take his course, had concealed from us, as doubtless he meant they should, his ascent into the forbidden saddle, and, putting Solomon to his mettle, which he was seldom called upon to exert, they had cantered away together in great amity, till they came near to the ford from which the palfrey's legitimate owner had already turned back.

Here a contest of opinions took place between the horse and his rider. The latter, according to his instructions, attempted to direct Solomon towards the distant bridge of stone; but Solomon opined that the ford was the shortest way to his own stable. The point was sharply contested, and we heard Benjie gee-hupping, tchek-tcheking, and, above all, flogging in great style; while Solomon, who, docile in his general habits, was now stirred beyond his patience, made a great trampling and recalcitration; and it was their joint noise which we heard, without being able to see, though Joshua might too well guess, the cause of it.

Alarmed at these indications, the Quaker began to shout out, 'Benjie—thou varlet! Solomon—thou fool!' when the couple presented themselves in full drive, Solomon having now decidedly obtained the better of the conflict, and bringing his unwilling rider in high career down to the ford. Never was there anger changed so fast into humane fear, as that of my good companion. 'The varlet will be drowned!' he exclaimed—'a widow's son!—her only son!—and drowned!—let me go!—And he struggled with me stoutly as I hung upon him, to prevent him from plunging into the ford.

I had no fear whatever for Benjie; for the blackguard vermin, though he could not manage the refractory horse, stuck on his seat like a monkey. Solomon and Benjie scrambled through the ford with little inconvenience, and resumed their gallop on the other side.

It was impossible to guess whether on this last occasion Benjie was running off with Solomon, or Solomon with Benjie; but, judging from character and motives, I rather suspected the former. I could not help laughing as the rascal passed me, grinning betwixt terror and delight, perched on the very pommel of the saddle, and holding with extended arms by bridle and mane while Solomon, the bit secured between his teeth, and his head bored down betwixt his forelegs, passed his master in this unwonted guise as hard as he could pelt.

'The mischievous bastard!' exclaimed the Quaker, terrified out of his usual moderation of speech—'the doomed gallows-bird!—he will break Solomon's wind to a certainty.'

I prayed him to be comforted—assured, him a brushing gallop would do his favourite no harm and reminded him of the censure he had bestowed on me a minute before, for applying a harsh epithet to the boy.

But Joshua was not without his answer; 'Friend youth,' he said, 'thou didst speak of the lad's soul, which thou didst affirm belonged to the enemy, and of that thou couldst say nothing of thine own knowledge; on the contrary, I did but speak of his outward man, which will assuredly be suspended by a cord, if he mendeth not his manners. Men say that, young as he is, he is one of the laird's gang.'

'Of the laird's gang!' said I, repeating the words in surprise. 'Do you mean the person with whom I slept last night? I heard you call him the laird. Is he at the head of a gang?'

'Nay, I meant not precisely a gang,' said the Quaker, who appeared in his haste to have spoken more than he intended—a company, or party, I should have said; but thus it is, friend Latimer, with the wisest men when they permit themselves to be perturbed with passion, and speak as in a fever, or as with the tongue of the foolish and the forward. And although thou hast been hasty to mark my infirmity, yet I grieve not that thou hast been a witness to it, seeing that the stumbles of the wise may be no less a caution to youth and inexperience, than is the fall of the foolish.'

This was a sort of acknowledgement of what I had already begun to suspect—that my new friend's real goodness of disposition, joined to the acquired quietism of his religious sect, had been unable entirely to check the effervescence of a temper naturally warm and hasty.

Upon the present occasion, as if sensible he had displayed a greater degree of emotion than became his character, Joshua avoided further allusion to Benjie and Solomon, and proceeded to solicit my attention to the natural objects around us, which increased in beauty and interest, as, still conducted by the meanders of the brook, we left the common behind us, and entered a more cultivated and enclosed country, where arable and pasture ground was agreeably varied with groves and hedges. Descending now almost close to the stream, our course lay through a little gate, into a pathway kept with great neatness, the sides of which were decorated with trees and flowering shrubs of the hardier species; until, ascending by a gentle slope, we issued from the grove, and stood almost at once in front of a low but very neat building, of an irregular form; and my guide, shaking me cordially by the hand, made me welcome to Mount Sharon.

The wood through which we had approached this little mansion was thrown around it both on the north and north-west, but, breaking off into different directions, was intersected by a few fields well watered and sheltered. The house fronted to the south-east, and from thence the pleasure-ground, or, I should rather say, the gardens, sloped down to the water. I afterwards understood that the father of the present proprietor had a considerable taste for horticulture, which had been inherited by his son, and had formed these gardens, which, with their shaven turf, pleached alleys, wildernesses, and exotic trees and shrubs, greatly excelled anything of the kind which had been attempted in the neighbourhood.

If there was a little vanity in the complacent smile with which Joshua Geddes saw me gaze with delight on a scene so different from the naked waste we had that day traversed in company, it might surely be permitted to one who, cultivating and improving the beauties of nature, had found therein, as he said, bodily health, and a pleasing relaxation for the mind. At the bottom of the extended gardens the brook wheeled round in a wide semicircle, and was itself their boundary. The opposite side was no part of Joshua's domain, but the brook was there skirted by a precipitous rock of limestone, which seemed a barrier of nature's own erecting around his little Eden of beauty, comfort, and peace.

'But I must not let thee forget,' said the kind Quaker, 'amidst thy admiration of these beauties of our little inheritance, that thy breakfast has been a light one.'

So saying, Joshua conducted me to a small sashed door, opening under a porch amply mantled by honeysuckle and clematis, into a parlour of moderate size; the furniture of which, in plainness and excessive cleanliness, bore the characteristic marks of the sect to which the owner belonged.

Thy father's Hannah is generally allowed to be an exception to all Scottish housekeepers, and stands unparalleled for cleanliness among the women of Auld Reekie; but the cleanliness of Hannah is sluttishness compared to the scrupulous purifications of these people, who seem to carry into the minor decencies of life that conscientious rigour which they affect in their morals.

The parlour would have been gloomy, for the windows were small and the ceiling low; but the present proprietor had rendered it more cheerful by opening one end into a small conservatory, roofed with glass, and divided from the parlour by a partition of the same. I have never before seen this very pleasing manner of uniting the comforts of an apartment with the beauties of a garden, and I wonder it is not more practised by the great. Something of the kind is hinted at in a paper of the SPECTATOR.

As I walked towards the conservatory to view it more closely, the parlour chimney engaged my attention. It was a pile of massive stone, entirely out of proportion to the size of the apartment. On the front had once been an armorial scutcheon; for the hammer, or chisel, which had been employed to deface the shield or crest, had left uninjured the scroll beneath, which bore the pious motto, 'TRUST IN GOD.' Black-letter, you know, was my early passion, and the tombstones in the Greyfriars' churchyard early yielded up to my knowledge as a decipherer what little they could tell of the forgotten dead.

Joshua Geddes paused when he saw my eye fixed on this relic of antiquity. 'Thou canst read it?' he said.

I repeated the motto, and added, there seemed vestiges of a date.

'It should be 1537,' said he; 'for so long ago, at the least computation, did my ancestors, in the blinded times of Papistry, possess these lands, and in that year did they build their house.'

'It is an ancient descent,' said I, looking with respect upon the monument. 'I am sorry the arms have been defaced.'

It was perhaps impossible for my friend, Quaker as he was, to seem altogether void of respect for the pedigree which he began to recount to me, disclaiming all the while the vanity usually connected with the subject; in short, with the air of mingled melancholy, regret, and conscious dignity, with which Jack Fawkes used to tell us at college of his ancestor's unfortunate connexion with the Gunpowder Plot.

'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher,' thus harangued Joshua Geddes of Mount Sharon; 'if we ourselves are nothing in the sight of Heaven, how much less than nothing must be our derivation from rotten bones and mouldering dust, whose immortal spirits have long since gone to their private account? Yes, friend Latimer, my ancestors were renowned among the ravenous and bloodthirsty men who then dwelt in this vexed country; and so much were they famed for successful freebooting, robbery, and bloodshed, that they are said to have been called Geddes, as likening them to the fish called a Jack, Pike, or Luce, and in our country tongue, a GED—a goodly distinction truly for Christian men! Yet did they paint this shark of the fresh waters upon their shields, and these profane priests of a wicked idolatry, the empty boasters called heralds, who make engraven images of fishes, fowls, and four-footed beasts, that men may fall down and worship them, assigned the ged for the device and escutcheon of my fathers, and hewed it over their chimneys, and placed it above their tombs; and the men were elated in mind, and became yet more ged-like, slaying, leading into captivity, and dividing the spoil, until the place where they dwelt obtained the name of Sharing-Knowe, from the booty which was there divided amongst them and their accomplices. But a better judgement was given to my father's father, Philip Geddes, who, after trying to light his candle at some of the vain wildfires then held aloft at different meetings and steeple-houses, at length obtained a spark from the lamp of the blessed George Fox, who came into Scotland spreading light among darkness, as he himself hath written, as plentifully as fly the sparkles from the hoof of the horse which gallops swiftly along the stony road.'—Here the good Quaker interrupted himself with, 'And that is very true, I must go speedily to see after the condition of Solomon.'

A Quaker servant here entered the room with a tray, and inclining his head towards his master, but not after the manner of one who bows, said composedly, 'Thou art welcome home, friend Joshua, we expected thee not so early; but what hath befallen Solomon thy horse?'

'What hath befallen him, indeed?' said my friend; 'hath he not been returned hither by the child whom they call Benjie?'

'He hath,' said his domestic, 'but it was after a strange fashion; for he came hither at a swift and furious pace, and flung the child Benjie from his back, upon the heap of dung which is in the stable-yard.'

'I am glad of it,' said Joshua, hastily,—'glad of it, with all my heart and spirit! But stay, he is the child of the widow—hath the boy any hurt?'

'Not so' answered the servant, 'for he rose and fled swiftly.'

Joshua muttered something about a scourge, and then inquired after Solomon's present condition.

'He seetheth like a steaming cauldron,' answered the servant; 'and Bauldie, the lad, walketh him about the yard with a halter, lest he take cold.'

Mr. Geddes hastened to the stable-yard to view personally the condition of his favourite, and I followed to offer my counsel as a jockey. Don't laugh, Alan, sure I have jockeyship enough to assist a Quaker—in this unpleasing predicament.

The lad who was leading the horse seemed to be no Quaker, though his intercourse with the family had given him a touch of their prim sobriety of look and manner. He assured Joshua that his horse had received no injury, and I even hinted that the exercise would be of service to him. Solomon himself neighed towards his master, and rubbed his head against the good Quaker's shoulder, as if to assure him of his being quite well; so that Joshua returned in comfort to his parlour, where breakfast was now about to be displayed.

I have since learned that the affection of Joshua for his pony is considered as inordinate by some of his own sect; and that he has been much blamed for permitting it to be called by the name of Solomon, or any other name whatever; but he has gained so much respect and influence among them that they overlook these foibles.

I learned from him (whilst the old servant, Jehoiachim, entering and re-entering, seemed to make no end of the materials which he brought in for breakfast) that his grandfather Philip, the convert of George Fox, had suffered much from the persecution to which these harmless devotees were subjected on all sides during that intolerant period, and much of their family estate had been dilapidated. But better days dawned on Joshua's father, who, connecting himself by marriage with a wealthy family of Quakers in Lancashire, engaged successfully in various branches of commerce, and redeemed the remnants of the property, changing its name in sense, without much alteration of sound, from the Border appellation of Sharing-Knowe, to the evangelical appellation of Mount Sharon.

This Philip Geddes, as I before hinted, had imbibed the taste for horticulture and the pursuits of the florist, which are not uncommon among the peaceful sect he belonged to. He had destroyed the remnants of the old peel-house, substituting the modern mansion in its place; and while he reserved the hearth of his ancestors, in memory of their hospitality, as also the pious motto which they had chanced to assume, he failed not to obliterate the worldly and military emblems displayed upon the shield and helmet, together with all their blazonry.

In a few minutes after Mr. Geddes had concluded the account; of himself and his family, his sister Rachel, the only surviving member of it, entered the room. Her appearance is remarkably pleasing, and although her age is certainly thirty at least, she still retains the shape and motion of an earlier period. The absence of everything like fashion or ornament was, as usual, atoned for by the most perfect neatness and cleanliness of her dress; and her simple close cap was particularly suited to eyes which had the softness and simplicity of the dove's. Her features were also extremely agreeable, but had suffered a little through the ravages of that professed enemy to beauty, the small-pox; a disadvantage which was in part counterbalanced by a well-formed mouth, teeth like pearls, and a pleasing sobriety of smile, that seemed to wish good here and hereafter to every one she spoke to. You cannot make any of your vile inferences here, Alan, for I have given a full-length picture of Rachel Geddes; so that; you cannot say, in this case, as in the letter I have just received, that she was passed over as a subject on which I feared to dilate. More of this anon.

Well, we settled to our breakfast after a blessing, or rather an extempore prayer, which Joshua made upon the occasion, and which the spirit moved him to prolong rather more than I felt altogether agreeable. Then, Alan, there was such a dispatching of the good things of the morning as you have not witnessed since you have seen Darsie Latimer at breakfast. Tea and chocolate, eggs, ham, and pastry, not forgetting the broiled fish, disappeared with a celerity which seemed to astonish the good-humoured Quakers, who kept loading my plate with supplies, as if desirous of seeing whether they could, by any possibility, tire me out. One hint, however, I received, which put me in mind where I was. Miss Geddes had offered me some sweet-cake, which, at the moment, I declined; but presently afterwards, seeing it within my reach, I naturally enough helped myself to a slice, and had just; deposited it beside my plate, when Joshua, mine host, not with the authoritative air of Sancho's doctor, Tirteafuera, but in a very calm and quiet manner, lifted it away and replaced it on the dish, observing only, 'Thou didst refuse it before, friend Latimer.'

These good folks, Alan, make no allowance for what your good father calls the Aberdeen-man's privilege, of 'taking his word again;' or what the wise call second thoughts.

Bating this slight hint that I was among a precise generation, there was nothing in my reception that was peculiar—unless, indeed, I were to notice the solicitous and uniform kindness with which all the attentions of my new friends were seasoned, as if they were anxious to assure me that the neglect of worldly compliments interdicted by their sect, only served to render their hospitality more sincere. At length my hunger was satisfied, and the worthy Quaker, who, with looks of great good nature, had watched my progress, thus addressed his sister:—

'This young man, Rachel, hath last night sojourned in the tents of our neighbour whom men call the laird. I am sorry I had not met him the evening before, for our neighbour's hospitality is too unfrequently exercised to be well prepared with the means of welcome.'

'Nay, but, Joshua,' said Rachel, 'if our neighbour hath done a kindness, thou shouldst not grudge him the opportunity; and if our young friend hath fared ill for a night, he will the better relish what Providence may send him of better provisions.'

'And that he may do so at leisure,' said Joshua, 'we will pray him, Rachel, to tarry a day or twain with us: he is young, and is but now entering upon the world, and our habitation may, if he will, be like a resting-place, from which he may look abroad upon the pilgrimage which he must take, and the path which he has to travel.—What sayest thou, friend Latimer? We constrain not our friends to our ways, and thou art, I think, too wise to quarrel with us for following our own fashions; and if we should even give thee a word of advice, thou wilt not, I think, be angry, so that it is spoken in season.'

You know, Alan, how easily I am determined by anything resembling cordiality—and so, though a little afraid of the formality of my host and hostess, I accepted their invitation, provided I could get some messenger to send to Shepherd's Bush for my servant and portmanteau.

'Why, truly, friend,' said Joshua, 'thy outward frame would be improved by cleaner garments; but I will do thine errand myself to the Widow Gregson's house of reception, and send thy lad hither with thy clothes. Meanwhile, Rachel will show thee these little gardens, and then will put thee in some way of spending thy time usefully, till our meal calls us together at the second hour after noon. I bid thee farewell for the present, having some space to walk, seeing I must leave the animal Solomon to his refreshing rest.'

With these words, Mr. Joshua Geddes withdrew. Some ladies we have known would have felt, or at least affected, reserve or embarrassment, at being left to do the honours of the grounds to (it will be out, Alan)—a smart young fellow—an entire stranger. She went out for a few minutes, and returned in her plain cloak and bonnet, with her beaver gloves, prepared to act as my guide, with as much simplicity as if she had been to wait upon thy father. So forth I sallied with my fair Quakeress.

If the house at Mount Sharon be merely a plain and convenient dwelling, of moderate size and small pretensions, the gardens and offices, though not extensive, might rival an earl's in point of care and expense. Rachel carried me first to her own favourite resort, a poultry-yard, stocked with a variety of domestic fowls, of the more rare as well as the most ordinary kinds, furnished with every accommodation which may suit their various habits. A rivulet which spread into a pond for the convenience of the aquatic birds, trickled over gravel as it passed through the yards dedicated to the land poultry, which were thus amply supplied with the means they use for digestion.

All these creatures seemed to recognize the presence of their mistress, and some especial favourites hastened to her feet, and continued to follow her as far as their limits permitted. She pointed out their peculiarities and qualities, with the discrimination of one who had made natural history her study; and I own I never looked on barn-door fowls with so much interest before—at least until they were boiled or roasted. I could not help asking the trying question, how she could order the execution of any of the creatures of which she seemed so careful.

'It was painful,' she said, 'but it was according to the law of their being. They must die; but they knew not when death was approaching; and in making them comfortable while they lived, we contributed to their happiness as much as the conditions of their existence permitted to us.'

I am not quite of her mind, Alan. I do not believe either pigs or poultry would admit that the chief end of their being was to be killed and eaten. However, I did not press the argument, from which my Quaker seemed rather desirous to escape; for, conducting me to the greenhouse, which was extensive, and filled with the choicest plants, she pointed out an aviary which occupied the farther end, where, she said, she employed herself with attending the inhabitants, without being disturbed with any painful recollections concerning their future destination.

I will not trouble you with any account of the various hot-houses and gardens, and their contents. No small sum of money must have been expended in erecting and maintaining them in the exquisite degree of good order which they exhibited. The family, I understood, were connected with that of the celebrated Millar, and had imbibed his taste for flowers, and for horticulture. But instead of murdering botanical names, I will rather conduct you to the POLICY, or pleasure-garden, which the taste of Joshua or his father had extended on the banks betwixt the house and river. This also, in contradistinction to the prevailing simplicity, was ornamented in an unusual degree. There were various compartments, the connexion of which was well managed, and although the whole ground did not exceed five or six acres, it was so much varied as to seem four times larger. The space contained close alleys and open walks; a very pretty artificial waterfall; a fountain also, consisting of a considerable jet-d'eau, whose streams glittered in the sunbeams and exhibited a continual rainbow. There was a cabinet of verdure, as the French call it, to cool the summer heat, and there was a terrace sheltered from the north-east by a noble holly hedge, with all its glittering spears where you might have the full advantage of the sun in the clear frosty days of winter.

I know that you, Alan, will condemn all this as bad and antiquated; for, ever since Dodsley has described the Leasowes, and talked of Brown's imitations of nature and Horace Walpole's late Essay on Gardening, you are all for simple nature—condemn walking up and down stairs in the open air and declare for wood and wilderness. But NE QUID NIMIS. I would not deface a scene of natural grandeur or beauty, by the introduction of crowded artificial decorations; yet such may, I think, be very interesting, where the situation, in its natural state, otherwise has no particular charms.

So that when I have a country-house (who can say how soon?) you may look for grottoes, and cascades, and fountains; nay if you vex me by contradiction, perhaps I may go the length of a temple—so provoke me not, for you see of what enormities I am capable.

At any rate, Alan, had you condemned as artificial the rest of Friend Geddes's grounds, there is a willow walk by the very verge of the stream, so sad, so solemn, and so silent, that it must have commanded your admiration. The brook, restrained at the ultimate boundary of the grounds by a natural dam-dike or ledge of rocks, seemed, even in its present swollen state, scarcely to glide along: and the pale willow-trees, dropping their long branches into the stream, gathered around them little coronals of the foam that floated down from the more rapid stream above. The high rock, which formed the opposite bank of the brook, was seen dimly through the branches, and its pale and splintered front, garlanded with long streamers of briars and other creeping plants, seemed a barrier between the quiet path which we trod, and the toiling and bustling world beyond. The path itself, following the sweep of the stream, made a very gentle curve; enough, however, served by its inflection completely to hide the end of the walk until you arrived at it. A deep and sullen sound, which increased as you proceeded, prepared you for this termination, which was indeed only a plain root-seat, from which you looked on a fall of about six or seven feet, where the brook flung itself over the ledge of natural rock I have already mentioned, which there crossed its course.

The quiet and twilight seclusion of this walk rendered it a fit scene for confidential communing; and having nothing more interesting to say to my fair Quaker, I took the liberty of questioning her about the laird; for you are, or ought to be, aware, that next to discussing the affairs of the heart, the fair sex are most interested in those of their neighbours.

I did not conceal either my curiosity, or the check which it had received from Joshua, and I saw that my companion answered with embarrassment. 'I must not speak otherwise than truly,' she said; 'and therefore I tell thee, that my brother dislikes, and that I fear, the man of whom thou hast asked me. Perhaps we are both wrong—but he is a man of violence, and hath great influence over many, who, following the trade of sailors and fishermen, become as rude as the elements with which they contend. He hath no certain name among them, which is not unusual, their rude fashion being to distinguish each other by nicknames; and they have called him the Laird of the Lakes (not remembering there should be no one called Lord, save one only) in idle derision; the pools of salt water left by the tide among the sands being called the Lakes of Solway.'

'Has he no other revenue than he derives from these sands?' I asked.

'That I cannot answer,' replied Rachel; 'men say that he wants not money, though he lives like an ordinary fisherman, and that he imparts freely of his means to the poor around him. They intimate that he is a man of consequence, once deeply engaged in the unhappy affair of the rebellion, and even still too much in danger from the government to assume his own name. He is often absent from his cottage at Broken-burn-cliffs, for weeks and months.'

'I should have thought,' said I, 'that the government would scarce, at this time of day, be likely to proceed against any one even of the most obnoxious rebels. Many years have passed away'—

'It is true,' she replied; 'yet such persons may understand that their being connived at depends on their living in obscurity. But indeed there can nothing certain be known among these rude people. The truth is not in them—most of them participate in the unlawful trade betwixt these parts and the neighbouring shore of England; and they are familiar with every species of falsehood and deceit.'

'It is a pity,' I remarked, 'your brother should have neighbours of such a description, especially as I understand he is at some variance with them.'

'Where, when, and about what matter?' answered Miss Geddes, with an eager and timorous anxiety, which made me regret having touched on the subject.

I told her, in a way as little alarming as I could devise, the purport of what passed betwixt this Laird of the Lakes and her brother, at their morning's interview.

'You affright me much,' answered she; 'it is this very circumstance which has scared me in the watches of the night. When my brother Joshua withdrew from an active share in the commercial concerns of my father, being satisfied with the portion of worldly substance which he already possessed, there were one or two undertakings in which he retained an interest, either because his withdrawing might have been prejudicial to friends, or because he wished to retain some mode of occupying his time. Amongst the more important of these is a fishing station on the coast, where, by certain improved modes of erecting snares, opening at the advance of the tide, and shutting at the reflux, many more fish are taken than can be destroyed by those who, like the men of Broken-burn, use only the boat-net and spear, or fishing-rod. They complain of these tide-nets, as men call them, as an innovation, and pretend to a right to remove and destroy them by the strong hand. I fear me, this man of violence, whom they call the laird, will execute these his threats, which cannot be without both loss and danger to my brother.'

'Mr. Geddes,' said I, 'ought to apply to the civil, magistrate; there are soldiers at Dumfries who would be detached for his protection.'

'Thou speakest, friend Latimer,' answered the lady, 'as one who is still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. God forbid that we should endeavour to preserve nets of flax and stakes of wood, or the Mammon of gain which they procure for us, by the hands of men of war and at the risk of spilling human blood.'

'I respect your scruples,' I replied; 'but since such is your way of thinking, your brother ought to avert the danger by compromise or submission.'

'Perhaps it would be best,' answered Rachel; 'but what can I say? Even in the best-trained temper there may remain some leaven of the old Adam; and I know not whether it is this or a better spirit that maketh my brother Joshua determine, that though he will not resist force by force, neither will he yield up his right to mere threats, or encourage wrong to others by yielding to menaces. His partners, he says, confide in his steadiness: and that he must not disappoint them by yielding up their right for the fear of the threats of man, whose breath is in his nostrils.'

This observation convinced me that the spirit of the old sharers of the spoil was not utterly departed even from the bosom of the peaceful Quaker; and I could not help confessing internally that Joshua had the right, when he averred that there was as much courage in sufferance as in exertion.

As we approached the farther end of the willow walk, the sullen and continuous sound of the dashing waters became still more and more audible, and at length rendered it difficult for us to communicate with each other. The conversation dropped, but apparently my companion continued to dwell upon the apprehensions which it had excited. At the bottom of the walk we obtained a view of the cascade, where the swollen brook flung itself in foam and tumult over the natural barrier of rock, which seemed in vain to attempt to bar its course. I gazed with delight, and, turning to express my sentiment to my companion, I observed that she had folded her hands in an attitude of sorrowful resignation, which showed her thoughts were far from the scene which lay before her. When she saw that her abstraction was observed, she resumed her former placidity of manner; and having given me sufficient time to admire this termination of our sober and secluded walk, proposed that we should return to the house through her brother's farm. 'Even we Quakers, as we are called, have our little pride,' she said; 'and my brother Joshua would not forgive me, were I not to show thee the fields which he taketh delight to cultivate after the newest and best fashion; for which, I promise thee, he hath received much praise from good judges, as well as some ridicule from those who think it folly to improve on the customs of our ancestors.'

As she spoke, she opened a low door, leading through a moss and ivy-covered wall, the boundary of the pleasure-ground, into the open fields; through which we moved by a convenient path, leading, with good taste and simplicity, by stile and hedgerow, through pasturage, and arable, and woodland; so that in all ordinary weather, the good man might, without even soiling his shoes, perform his perambulation round the farm. There were seats also, on which to rest; and though not adorned with inscriptions, nor quite so frequent in occurrence as those mentioned in the account of the Leasowes, their situation was always chosen with respect to some distant prospect to be commanded, or some home-view to be enjoyed.

But what struck me most in Joshua's domain was the quantity and the tameness of the game. The hen partridge scarce abandoned the roost, at the foot of the hedge where she had assembled her covey, though the path went close beside her; and the hare, remaining on her form, gazed at us as we passed, with her full dark eye, or rising lazily and hopping to a little distance, stood erect to look at us with more curiosity than apprehension. I observed to Miss Geddes the extreme tameness of these timid and shy animals, and she informed me that their confidence arose from protection in the summer, and relief during the winter.

'They are pets,' she said, 'of my brother, who considers them as the better entitled to his kindness that they are a race persecuted by the world in general. He denieth himself,' she said, 'even the company of a dog, that these creatures may here at least enjoy undisturbed security. Yet this harmless or humane propensity, or humour, hath given offence,' she added, 'to our dangerous neighbours.'

She explained this, by telling me that my host of the preceding night was remarkable for his attachment to field-sports, which he pursued without much regard to the wishes of the individuals over whose property he followed them. The undefined mixture of respect and fear with which he was generally regarded induced most of the neighbouring land-holders to connive at what they would perhaps in another have punished as a trespass; but Joshua Geddes would not permit the intrusion of any one upon his premises, and as he had before offended several country neighbours, who, because he would neither shoot himself nor permit others to do so, compared him to the dog in the manger, so he now aggravated the displeasure which the Laird of the Lakes had already conceived against him, by positively debarring him from pursuing his sport over his grounds—'So that,' said Rachel Geddes, 'I sometimes wish our lot had been cast elsewhere than in these pleasant borders, where, if we had less of beauty around us, we might have had a neighbourhood of peace and, goodwill.'

We at length returned to the house, where Miss Geddes showed me a small study, containing a little collection of books, in two separate presses.

'These,' said she, pointing to the smaller press, 'will, if thou bestowest thy leisure upon them, do thee good; and these,' pointing to the other and larger cabinet, 'can, I believe, do thee little harm. Some of our people do indeed hold, that every writer who is not with us is against us; but brother Joshua is mitigated in his opinions, and correspondeth with our friend John Scot of Amwell, who hath himself constructed verses well approved of even in the world. I wish thee many good thoughts till our family meet at the hour of dinner.'

Left alone, I tried both collections; the first consisted entirely of religious and controversial tracts, and the latter formed a small selection of history and of moral writers, both in prose and verse.

Neither collection promising much amusement, thou hast, in these close pages, the fruits of my tediousness; and truly, I think, writing history (one's self being the subject) is as amusing as reading that of foreign countries, at any time.

Sam, still more drunk than sober, arrived in due time with my portmanteau, and enabled me to put my dress into order, better befitting this temple of cleanliness and decorum, where (to conclude) I believe I shall be a sojourner more days than one. [See Note 1.]

PS.—I have noted your adventure, as you home-bred youths may perhaps term it, concerning the visit of your doughty laird. We travellers hold such an incident no great consequence, though it may serve to embellish the uniform life of Brown's Square. But art thou not ashamed to attempt to interest one who is seeing the world at large, and studying human nature on a large scale, by so bald a narrative? Why, what does it amount to, after all, but that a Tory laird dined with a Whig lawyer? no very uncommon matter, especially as you state Mr. Herries to have lost the estate, though retaining the designation. The laird behaves with haughtiness and impertinence—nothing out of character in that: is NOT kicked down stairs, as he ought to have been, were Alan Fairford half the man that he would wish his friends to think him. Aye, but then, as the young lawyer, instead of showing his friend the door, chose to make use of it himself, he overheard the laird aforesaid ask the old lawyer concerning Darsie Latimer—no doubt earnestly inquiring after the handsome, accomplished inmate of his family, who has so lately made Themis his bow and declined the honour of following her farther. You laugh at me for my air-drawn castles; but confess, have they not surer footing, in general, than two words spoken by such a man as Herries? And yet—and yet—I would rally the matter off, Alan; but in dark nights even the glow-worm becomes an object of lustre, and to one plunged in my uncertainty and ignorance, the slightest gleam that promises intelligence is interesting. My life is like the

subterranean river in the Peak of Derby, visible only where it crosses the celebrated cavern. I am here, and this much I know; but where I have sprung from, or whither my course of life is like to tend, who shall tell me? Your father, too, seemed interested and alarmed, and talked of writing; would to Heaven he may!—I send daily to the post-town for letters.

LETTER VIII

ALAN FAIRFORD TO DARSIE LATIMER

Thou mayst clap thy wings and crow as thou pleasest. You go in search of adventures, but adventures come to me unsought for; and oh! in what a pleasing shape came mine, since it arrived in the form of a client—and a fair client to boot! What think you of that, Darsie! you who are such a sworn squire of dames? Will this not match my adventures with thine, that hunt salmon on horseback, and will it not, besides, eclipse the history of a whole tribe of Broadbrims?—But I must proceed methodically.

When I returned to-day from the College, I was surprised to see a broad grin distending the adust countenance of the faithful James Wilkinson, which, as the circumstance seldom happens above once a year, was matter of some surprise. Moreover, he had a knowing glance with his eye, which I should have as soon expected from a dumb-waiter—an article of furniture to which James, in his usual state, may be happily assimilated. 'What the devil is the matter, James?'

'The devil may be in the matter, for aught I ken,' said James, with another provoking grin; 'for here has been a woman calling for you, Maister Alan.'

'A woman calling for me?' said I in surprise; for you know well, that excepting old Aunt Peggy, who comes to dinner of a Sunday, and the still older Lady Bedrooket, who calls ten times a year for the quarterly payment of her jointure of four hundred merks, a female scarce approaches our threshold, as my father visits all his female clients at their own lodgings. James protested, however, that there had been a lady calling, and for me. 'As bonny a lass as I have seen,' added James, 'since I was in the Fusileers, and kept company with Peg Baxter.' Thou knowest all James's gay recollections go back to the period of his military service, the years he has spent in ours having probably been dull enough.

'Did the lady leave no name nor place of address?'

'No,' replied James; 'but she asked when you wad be at hame, and I appointed her for twelve o'clock, when the house wad be quiet, and your father at the Bank.'

'For shame, James! how can you think my father's being at home or abroad could be of consequence?—The lady is of course a decent person?'

'Ise uphau'd her that, sir—she is nane of your—WHEW'—(Here James supplied a blank with a low whistle)—'but I didna ken—my maister makes an unco wark if a woman comes here.'

I passed into my own room, not ill-pleased that my father was absent, notwithstanding I had thought it proper to rebuke James for having so contrived it, I disarranged my books, to give them the appearance of a graceful confusion on the table, and laying my foils (useless since your departure) across the mantelpiece, that the lady might see I was TAM MARTE QUAM MERCURIO—I endeavoured to dispose my dress so as to resemble an elegant morning deshabelle—gave my hair the general shade of powder which marks the gentleman—laid my watch and seals on the table, to hint that I understood the value of time;—and when I had made all these arrangements, of which I am a little ashamed when I think of them, I had nothing better to do than to watch the dial-plate till the index pointed to noon. Five minutes elapsed, which I allowed for variation of clocks—five minutes more rendered me anxious and doubtful—and five minutes more would have made me impatient.

Laugh as thou wilt; but remember, Darsie, I was a lawyer, expecting his first client—a young man, how strictly bred up I need not remind you, expecting a private interview with a young and beautiful woman. But ere the third term of five minutes had elapsed, the door-bell was heard to tinkle low and modestly, as if touched by some timid hand.

James Wilkinson, swift in nothing, is, as thou knowest, peculiarly slow in answering the door-bell; and I reckoned on five minutes good, ere his solemn step should have ascended the stair. Time enough, thought I, for a peep through the blinds, and was hastening to the window accordingly. But I reckoned without my host; for James, who had his own curiosity as well as I, was lying PERDU in the lobby, ready to open at the first tinkle; and there was, 'This way, ma'am—Yes, ma'am—The lady, Mr. Alan,' before I could get to the chair in which I proposed to be discovered, seated in all legal dignity. The consciousness of being half-caught in the act of peeping, joined to that native air of awkward bashfulness of which I am told the law will soon free me, kept me standing on the floor in some confusion; while the lady, disconcerted on her part, remained on the threshold of the room. James Wilkinson, who had his senses most about him, and was perhaps willing to prolong his stay in the apartment, busied himself in setting a chair for the lady, and recalled me to my good-breeding by the hint. I invited her to take possession of it, and bid James withdraw.

My visitor was undeniably a lady, and probably considerably above the ordinary rank—very modest, too, judging from the mixture of grace and timidity with which she moved, and at my entreaty sat down. Her dress was, I should suppose, both handsome and fashionable; but it was much concealed by a walking-cloak of green silk, fancifully embroidered; in which, though heavy for the season, her person was enveloped, and which, moreover, was furnished with a hood.

The devil take that hood, Darsie! for I was just able to distinguish that, pulled as it was over the face, it concealed from me, as I was convinced, one of the prettiest countenances I have seen, and which, from a sense of embarrassment, seemed to be crimsoned with a deep blush. I could see her complexion was beautiful—her chin finely turned—her lips coral—and her teeth rivals to ivory. But further the deponent sayeth not; for a clasp of gold, ornamented with it sapphire, closed the envious mantle under the incognita's throat, and the cursed hood concealed entirely the upper part of the face.

I ought to have spoken first, that is certain; but ere I could get my phrases well arranged, the young lady, rendered desperate I suppose by my hesitation opened the conversation herself.

'I fear I am an intruder, sir—I expected to meet an elderly gentleman.'

This brought me to myself. 'My father, madam, perhaps. But you inquired for Alan Fairford—my father's name is Alexander.'

'It is Mr. Alan Fairford, undoubtedly, with whom I wished to speak,' she said, with greater confusion; 'but I was told that he was advanced in life.'

'Some mistake, madam, I presume, betwixt my father and myself—our Christian names have the same initials, though the terminations are different. I—I—I would esteem it a most fortunate mistake if I could have the honour of supplying my father's place in anything that could be of service to you.'

'You are very obliging, sir,' A pause, during which she seemed undetermined whether to rise or sit still.

'I am just about to be called to the bar, madam,' said I, in hopes to remove her scruples to open her case to me; 'and if my advice or opinion could be of the slightest use, although I cannot presume to say that they are much to be depended upon, yet'—

The lady arose. 'I am truly sensible of your kindness, sir; and I have no doubt of your talents. I will be very plain with you—it is you whom I came to visit; although, now that we have met, I find it will be much better that I should commit my communication to writing.'

'I hope, madam, you will not be so cruel—so tantalizing, I would say. Consider, you are my first client—your business my first consultation—do not do me the displeasure of withdrawing your confidence because I am a few years younger than you seem to have expected. My attention shall make amends for my want of experience.'

'I have no doubt of either,' said the lady, in a grave tone, calculated to restrain the air of gallantry with which I had endeavoured to address her. 'But when you have received my letter you will find good reasons assigned why a written communication will best suit my purpose. I wish you, sir, a good morning.' And she left the apartment, her poor baffled counsel scraping, and bowing, and apologizing for anything that might have been disagreeable to her, although the front of my offence seems to be my having been discovered to be younger than my father.

The door was opened—out she went—walked along the pavement, turned down the close, and put the sun, I believe, into her pocket when she disappeared, so suddenly did dullness and darkness sink down on the square, when she was no longer visible. I stood for a moment as if I had been senseless, not recollecting

what a fund of entertainment I must have supplied to our watchful friends on the other side of the green. Then it darted on my mind that I might dog her, and ascertain at least who or what she was. Off I set—ran down the close, where she was no longer to be seen, and demanded of one of the dyer's lads whether he had seen a lady go down the close, or had observed which way she turned.

'A leddy!'—said the dyer, staring at me with his rainbow countenance. 'Mr. Alan, what takes you out, rinning like daft, without your hat?'

'The devil take my hat!' answered I, running back, however, in quest of it; snatched it up, and again sallied forth. But as I reached the head of the close once more, I had sense enough to recollect that all pursuit would be now in vain. Besides, I saw my friend, the journeyman dyer, in close confabulation with a pea-green personage of his own profession, and was conscious, like Scrub, that they talked of me, because they laughed consumedly. I had no mind, by a second sudden appearance, to confirm the report that Advocate Fairford was 'gaen daft,' which had probably spread from Campbell's Close-foot to the Meal-market Stairs; and so slunk back within my own hole again.

My first employment was to remove all traces of that elegant and fanciful disposition of my effects, from which I had hoped for so much credit; for I was now ashamed and angry at having thought an instant upon the mode of receiving a visit which had commenced so agreeably, but terminated in a manner so unsatisfactory. I put my folios in their places—threw the foils into the dressing-closet—tormenting myself all the while with the fruitless doubt, whether I had missed an opportunity or escaped a stratagem, or whether the young person had been really startled, as she seemed to intimate, by the extreme youth of her intended legal adviser. The mirror was not unnaturally called in to aid; and that cabinet-counsellor pronounced me rather short, thick-set, with a cast of features fitter, I trust, for the bar than the ball—not handsome enough for blushing virgins to pine for my sake, or even to invent sham cases to bring them to my chambers—yet not ugly enough either to scare those away who came on real business—dark, to be sure, but—NIGRI SUNT HYACINTHI—there are pretty things to be said in favour of that complexion.

At length—as common sense will get the better in all cases when a man will but give it fair play—I began to stand convicted in my own mind, as an ass before the interview, for having expected too much—an ass during the interview, for having failed to extract the lady's real purpose—and an especial ass, now that it was over, for thinking so much about it. But I can think of nothing else, and therefore I am determined to think of this to some good purpose.

You remember Murtough O'Hara's defence of the Catholic doctrine of confession; because, 'by his soul, his sins were always a great burden to his mind, till he had told them to the priest; and once confessed, he never thought more about them.' I have tried his receipt, therefore; and having poured my secret mortification into thy trusty ear, I will think no more about this maid of the mist,

Who, with no face, as 'twere, outfaced me.

—Four o'clock. Plague on her green mantle, she can be nothing better than a fairy; she keeps possession of my head yet! All during dinner-time I was terribly absent; but, luckily, my father gave the whole credit of my reverie to the abstract nature of the doctrine, VINCO VINCENTEM, ERGO VINCO TE; upon which brocard of law the professor this morning lectured. So I got an early dismissal to my own crib, and here am I studying, in one sense, VINCERE VINCENTEM, to get the better of the silly passion of curiosity—I think—I think it amounts to nothing else—which has taken such possession of my imagination, and is perpetually worrying me with the question—will she write or no? She will not—she will not! So says Reason, and adds, Why should she take the trouble to enter into correspondence with one who, instead of a bold, alert, prompt gallant, proved a chicken-hearted boy, and left her the whole awkwardness of explanation, which he should have met half-way? But then, says Fancy, she WILL write, for she was not a bit that sort of person whom you, Mr. Reason, in your wisdom, take her to be. She was disconcerted enough, without my adding to her distress by any impudent conduct on my part. And she will write, for—By Heaven, she HAS written, Darsie, and with a vengeance! Here is her letter, thrown into the kitchen by a caddie, too faithful to be bribed, either by money or whisky, to say more than that he received it, with sixpence, from an ordinary-looking woman, as he was plying on his station near the Cross.

'FOR ALAN FAIRFORD, ESQUIRE, BARRISTER. 'SIR,

'Excuse my mistake of to-day. I had accidentally learnt that Mr. Darsie Latimer had an intimate friend and associate in Mr. A. Fairford. When I inquired for such a person, he was pointed out to me at the Cross (as I think the Exchange of your city is called) in the character of a respectable elderly man—your father, as I now understand. On inquiry at Brown's Square, where I understood he resided, I used the full name of Alan, which naturally occasioned you the trouble of this day's visit. Upon further inquiry, I am led to believe that you are likely to be the person most active in the matter to which I am now about to direct your attention; and I regret much that circumstances, arising out of my own particular situation, prevent my communicating to you personally what I now apprise you of in this matter.

'Your friend, Mr. Darsie Latimer, is in a situation of considerable danger. You are doubtless aware that he has been cautioned not to trust himself in England. Now, if he has not absolutely transgressed this friendly injunction, he has at least approached as nearly to the menaced danger as he could do, consistently with the letter of the prohibition. He has chosen his abode in a neighbourhood very perilous to him; and it is only by a speedy return to Edinburgh, or at least by a removal to some more remote part of Scotland, that he can escape the machinations of those whose enmity he has to fear. I must speak in mystery, but my words are not the less certain; and, I believe, you know enough of your friend's fortunes to be aware that I could not write this much without being even more intimate with them than you are.

'If he cannot, or will not, take the advice here given, it is my opinion that you should join him, if possible, without delay, and use, by your personal presence and entreaty, the arguments which may prove ineffectual in writing. One word more, and I implore of your candour to take it as it is meant. No one supposes that Mr. Fairford's zeal in his friend's service needs to be quickened by mercenary motives. 'But report says, that Mr. Alan Fairford, not having yet entered on his professional career, may, in such a case as this, want the means, though he cannot want the inclination, to act with promptitude. The enclosed note Mr. Alan Fairford must be pleased to consider as his first professional emolument; and she who sends it hopes it will be the omen of unbounded success, though the fee comes from a hand so unknown as that of 'GREEN MANTLE'.

A bank-note of L20 was the enclosure, and the whole incident left me speechless with astonishment. I am not able to read over the beginning of my own letter, which forms the introduction to this extraordinary communication. I only know that, though mixed with a quantity of foolery (God knows very much different from my present feelings), it gives an account sufficiently accurate, of the mysterious person from whom this letter comes, and that I have neither time nor patience to separate the absurd commentary from the text, which it is so necessary you should know.

Combine this warning, so strangely conveyed, with the caution impressed on you by your London correspondent, Griffiths, against your visiting England—with the character of your Laird of the Solway Lakes—with the lawless habits of the people on that frontier country, where warrants are not easily executed owing to the jealousy entertained by either country of the legal interference of the other; remember, that even Sir John Fielding said to my father that he could never trace a rogue beyond the Briggend of Dumfries—think that the distinctions of Whig and Tory, Papist and Protestant, still keep that country in a loose and comparatively lawless state—think of all this, my dearest Darsie, and remember that, while at this Mount Sharon of yours, you are residing with a family actually menaced with forcible interference, and who, while their obstinacy provokes violence, are by principle bound to abstain from resistance.

Nay, let me tell you, professionally, that the legality of the mode of fishing practised by your friend Joshua is greatly doubted by our best lawyers; and that, if the stake-nets be considered as actually an unlawful obstruction raised in the channel of the estuary, an assembly of persons who shall proceed, VIA FACTI, to pull dawn and destroy them, would not, in the eye of the law, be esteemed guilty of a riot. So, by remaining where you are, YOU are likely to be engaged in a quarrel with which you have nothing to do, and thus to enable your enemies, whoever these may be, to execute, amid the confusion of a general hubbub, whatever designs they may have against your personal safety. Black-fishers, poachers, and smugglers are a sort of gentry that will not be much checked, either by your Quaker's texts, or by your chivalry. If you are Don Quixote enough to lay lance in rest, in defence of those of the stake-net, and of the sad-coloured garment, I pronounce you but a lost knight; for, as I said before, I doubt if these potent redressers of wrongs, the justices and constables, will hold themselves warranted to interfere. In a word, return, my dear Amadis; the adventure of the Solway-nets is not reserved for your worship. Come back, and I will be your faithful Sancho Panza upon a more hopeful quest. We will beat about together, in search of this Urganda, the Unknown She of the Green Mantle, who can read this, the riddle of thy fate, better than wise Eppie of Buckhaven, [Well known in the Chap-Book, called the History of Buckhaven.] or Cassandra herself.

I would fain trifle, Darsie; for, in debating with you, jests will sometimes go farther than arguments; but I am sick at heart and cannot keep the ball up. If you have a moment's regard for the friendship we have so often vowed to each other, let my wishes for once prevail over your own venturesome and romantic temper. I am quite serious in thinking that the information communicated to my father by this Mr. Herries, and the admonitory letter of the young lady, bear upon each other; and that, were you here, you might learn something from one or other, or from both, that; might throw light on your birth and parentage. You will not, surely, prefer an idle whim to the prospect which is thus held out to you?

I would, agreeably to the hint I have received in the young lady's letter (for I am confident that such is her condition), have ere now been with you to urge these things, instead of pouring them out upon paper. But you know that the day for my trials is appointed; I have already gone through the form of being introduced to the examiners, and have gotten my titles assigned me. All this should not keep me at home, but my father would view any irregularity upon this occasion as a mortal blow to the hopes which he has cherished most fondly during his life; viz. my being called to the bar with some credit. For my own part, I know there is no great difficulty in passing these formal examinations, else how have some of our acquaintance got through them? But, to my father, these formalities compose an august and serious solemnity, to which he has long looked forward, and my absenting myself at this moment would wellnigh drive him distracted. Yet I shall go altogether distracted myself, if I have not an instant assurance from you that you are hastening hither. Meanwhile I have desired Hannah to get your little crib into the best order possible. I cannot learn that my father has yet written to you; nor has he spoken more of his communication with Birrenswork; but when I let him have some inkling of the dangers you are at present incurring, I know my request that you will return immediately will have his cordial support. Another reason yet—I must give a dinner, as usual, upon my admission, to our friends; and my father, laying aside all his usual considerations of economy, has desired it may be in the best style possible. Come hither then, dear Darsie! or, I protest to you, I shall send examination, admission-dinner, and guests to the devil, and come, in person, to fetch you with a vengeance. Thine, in much anxiety, A. F.

LETTER IX
ALEXANDER FAIRFORD, W.S., TO MR. DARSIE LATIMER

DEAR MR. DARSIE,

Having been your FACTOR LOCO TUTORIS or rather, I ought to say, in correctness (since I acted without warrant from the court), your NEGOTIORUM GESTOR, that connexion occasions my present writing. And although having rendered an account of my intromissions, which have been regularly approved of, not only by yourself (whom I could not prevail upon to look at more than the docket and sum total), but also by the worthy Mr. Samuel Griffiths of London, being the hand through whom the remittances were made, I may, in some sense, be considered as to you FUNCTUS OFFICIO; yet to speak facetiously, I trust you will not hold me accountable as a vicious intromitter, should I still consider myself as occasionally interested in your welfare. My motives for writing, at this time, are twofold.

I have met with a Mr. Herries of Birrenswork, a gentleman of very ancient descent, but who hath in time past been in difficulties, nor do I know if his affairs are yet well redd. Birrenswork says that he believes he was very familiar with your father, whom he states to have been called Ralph Latimer of Langcote Hall, in Westmoreland; and he mentioned family affairs, which it may be of the highest importance to you to be acquainted with; but as he seemed to decline communicating them to me, I could not civilly urge him thereanent. Thus much I know, that Mr. Herries had his own share in the late desperate and unhappy matter of 1745, and was in trouble about it, although that is probably now over. Moreover, although he did not profess the Popish religion openly, he had an eye that way. And both of these are reasons why I have hesitated to recommend him to a youth who maybe hath not altogether so well founded his opinions concerning Kirk and State, that they might not be changed by some sudden wind of doctrine. For I have observed ye, Master Darsie, to be rather tintured with the old leaven of prelacy—this under your leave; and although God forbid that you should be in any manner disaffected to the Protestant Hanoverian line, yet ye have ever loved to hear the blawing, blazing stories which the Hieland gentlemen tell of those troublous times, which, if it were their will, they had better pretermitt, as tending rather to shame than to honour. It is come to me also by a sidewind, as I may say, that you have been neighbouring more than was needful among some of the pestilent sect of Quakers—a people who own neither priest nor king, nor civil magistrate, nor the fabric of our law, and will not depone either IN CIVILIBUS or CRIMINALIBUS, be the loss to the lieges what it may. Anent which heresies, it were good ye read 'The Snake in the Grass' or 'The Foot out of the Snare,' being both well-approved tracts, touching these doctrines.

Now, Mr. Darsie, ye are to judge for yourself whether ye can safely to your soul's weal remain longer among these Papists and Quakers—these defections on the right hand, and failings away on the left; and truly if you can confidently resist these evil examples of doctrine, I think ye may as well tarry in the bounds where ye are, until you see Mr. Herries of Birrenswork, who does assuredly know more of your matters than I thought had been communicated to any man in Scotland. I would fain have precognosced him myself on these affairs, but found him unwilling to speak out, as I have partly intimated before.

To call a new cause—I have the pleasure to tell you, that Alan has passed his private Scots Law examinations with good approbation—a great relief to my mind; especially as worthy Mr. Pest told me in my ear there was no fear of 'the callant', as he familiarly called him, which gives me great heart. His public trials, which are nothing in comparison save a mere form, are to take place, by order of the Honourable Dean of Faculty, on Wednesday first; and on Friday he puts on the gown, and gives a bit chack of dinner to his friends and acquaintances, as is, you know, the custom. Your company will be wished for there, Master Darsie, by more than him, which I regret to think is impossible to have, as well by your engagements, as that our cousin, Peter Fairford, comes from the West on purpose, and we have no place to offer him but your chamber in the wall. And, to be plain with you, after my use and wont, Master Darsie, it may be as well that Alan and you do not meet till he is hefted as it were to his new calling. You are a pleasant gentleman, and full of daffing, which may well become you, as you have enough (as I understand) to uphold your merry humour. If you regard the matter wisely, you would perchance consider that a man of substance should have a douce and staid demeanour; yet you are so far from growing grave and considerate with the increase of your annual income, that the richer you become, the merrier I think you grow. But this must be at your own pleasure, so far as you are concerned. Alan, however (overpassing my small savings), has the world to win; and louping and laughing, as you and he were wont to do, would soon make the powder flee out of his wig, and the pence out of his pocket. Nevertheless, I trust you will meet when you return from your rambles; for there is a time, as the wise man sayeth, for gathering, and a time for casting away; it is always the part of a man of sense to take the gathering time first. I remain, dear sir, your well-wishing friend; and obedient to command, ALEXANDER FAIRFORD.

PS.—Alan's Thesis is upon the title DE PERICULO ET COMMODO REI VENDITAE, and is a very pretty piece of Latinity.—Ross House, in our neighbourhood, is nearly finished, and is thought to excel Duff House in ornament.

LETTER X
DARSIE LATIMER TO ALAN FAIRFORD

The plot thickens, Alan. I have your letter, and also one from your father. The last makes it impossible for me to comply with the kind request which the former urges. No—I cannot be with you, Alan; and that, for the best of all reasons—I cannot and ought not to counteract your father's anxious wishes. I do not take it unkind of him that he desires my absence. It is natural that he should wish for his son what his son so well deserves—the advantage of a wiser and steadier companion than I seem to him. And yet I am sure I have often laboured hard enough to acquire that decency of demeanour which can no more be suspected of breaking bounds, than an owl of catching a butterfly.

But it was in vain that I have knitted my brows till I had the headache, in order to acquire the reputation of a grave, solid, and well-judging youth. Your father always has discovered, or thought that he discovered, a hare-brained eccentricity lying folded among the wrinkles of my forehead, which rendered me a perilous associate for the future counsellor and ultimate judge. Well, Corporal Nym's philosophy must be my comfort—'Things must be as they may.'—I cannot come to your father's house, where he wishes not to see me; and as to your coming hither,—by all that is dear to me, I vow that if you are guilty of such a piece of reckless folly—not to say undutiful cruelty, considering your father's thoughts and wishes—I will never speak to you again as long as I live! I am perfectly serious. And besides, your father, while he in a manner prohibits me from returning to Edinburgh, gives me the strongest reasons for continuing a little while longer in this country, by holding out the hope that I may receive from your old friend, Mr. Herries of Birrenswark, some particulars concerning my origin, with which that ancient recusant seems to be acquainted.

That gentleman mentioned the name of a family in Westmoreland, with which he supposes me connected. My inquiries here after such a family have been ineffectual, for the borderers, on either side, know little of each other. But I shall doubtless find some English person of whom to make inquiries, since the confounded fetterlock clapped on my movements by old Griffiths, prevents me repairing to England in person. At least, the prospect of obtaining some information is greater here than elsewhere; it will be an apology for my making a longer stay in this neighbourhood, a line of conduct which seems to have your father's sanction, whose opinion must be sounder than that of your wandering damoselle.

If the road were paved with dangers which leads to such a discovery, I cannot for a moment hesitate to tread it. But in fact there is no peril in the case. If the Tritons of the Solway shall proceed to pull down honest Joshua's tide-nets, I am neither Quixote enough in disposition, nor Goliath enough in person, to attempt their protection. I have no idea of attempting to prop a falling house by putting my shoulders against it. And indeed, Joshua gave me a hint that the company which he belongs to, injured in the way threatened (some of them being men who thought after the fashion of the world), would pursue the rioters at law, and recover damages, in which probably his own ideas of non-resistance will not prevent his participating. Therefore the whole affair will take its course as law will, as I only mean to interfere when it may be necessary to direct the course of the plaintiffs to thy chambers; and I request they may find thee intimate with all the Scottish statutes concerning salmon fisheries, from the LEX AQUARUM, downward.

As for the Lady of the Mantle, I will lay a wager that the sun so bedazzled thine eyes on that memorable morning, that everything thou didst look upon seemed green; and notwithstanding James Wilkinson's experience in the Fusileers, as well as his negative whistle, I will venture to hold a crown that she is but a what-shall-call-'um after all. Let not even the gold persuade you to the contrary. She may make a shift to cause you to disgorge that, and (immense spoil!) a session's fees to boot, if you look not all the sharper about you. Or if it should be otherwise, and if indeed there lurk some mystery under this visitation, credit me, it is one which thou canst not penetrate, nor can I as yet even attempt to explain it; since, if I prove mistaken, and mistaken I may easily be, I would be fain to creep into Phalaris's bull, were it standing before me ready heated, rather than be roasted with thy raillery. Do not tax me with want of confidence; for the instant I can throw any light on the matter thou shalt have it; but while I am only blundering about in the dark, I do not choose to call wise folks to see me, perchance, break my nose against a post. So if you marvel at this,

E'en marvel on till time makes all things plain.

In the meantime, kind Alan, let me proceed in my diurnal.

On the third or fourth day after my arrival at Mount Sharon, Time, that bald sexton to whom I have just referred you, did certainly limp more heavily along with me than he had done at first. The quaint morality of Joshua, and Huguenot simplicity of his sister, began to lose much of their raciness with their novelty, and my mode of life, by dint of being very quiet, began to feel abominably dull. It was, as thou say'st, as if the Quakers had put the sun in their pockets—all around was soft and mild, and even pleasant; but there was, in the whole routine, a uniformity, a want of interest, a helpless and hopeless languor, which rendered life insipid. No doubt, my worthy host and hostess felt none of this void, this want of excitement, which was becoming oppressive to their guest. They had their little round of occupations, charities, and pleasures; Rachel had her poultry-yard and conservatory, and Joshua his garden. Besides this, they enjoyed, doubtless, their devotional meditations; and, on the whole, time glided softly and imperceptibly on with them, though to me, who long for stream and cataract, it seemed absolutely to stand still. I meditated returning to Shepherd's Bush, and began to think, with some hankering, after little Benjie and the rod. The imp has ventured hither, and hovers about to catch a peep of me now and then; I suppose the little sharper is angling for a few more sixpences. But this would have been, in Joshua's eyes, a return of the washed sow to wallowing in the mire, and I resolved, while I remained his guest, to spare him so violent a shock to his prejudices. The next point was, to shorten the time of my proposed stay; but, alas! that I felt to be equally impossible. I had named a week; and however rashly my promise had been pledged, it must be held sacred, even according to the letter, from which the Friends permit no deviation.

All these considerations wrought me up to a kind of impatience yesterday evening; so that I snatched up my hat, and prepared for a sally beyond the cultivated farm and ornamented grounds of Mount Sharon, just as if I were desirous to escape from the realms of art, into those of free and unconstrained nature.

I was scarcely more delighted when I first entered this peaceful demesne, than I now was—such is the instability and inconsistency of human nature!—when I escaped from it to the open downs, which had formerly seemed so waste and dreary, The air I breathed felt purer and more bracing. The clouds, riding high upon a summer breeze, drove, in gay succession, over my head, now obscuring the sun, now letting its rays stream in transient flashes upon various parts of the landscape, and especially upon the broad mirror of the distant Firth of Solway.

I advanced on the scene with the light step of a liberated captive; and, like John Bunyan's Pilgrim, could have found in my heart to sing as I went on my way. It seemed as if my gaiety had accumulated while suppressed, and that I was, in my present joyous mood, entitled to expend the savings of the previous week. But just as I was about to uplift a merry stave, I heard, to my joyful surprise, the voices of three or more choristers, singing, with considerable success, the lively old catch,

For all our men were very very merry,

And all our men were drinking:

There were two men of mine,

Three men of thine,

And three that belonged to old Sir Thom o' Lyne;

As they went to the ferry, they were very very merry,

And all our men were drinking.'

[The original of this catch is to be found in Cowley's witty comedy of THE GUARDIAN, the first edition. It does not exist in the second and revised edition, called THE CUTTER OF COLEMAN STREET.

CAPTAIN BLADE. *Ha, ha, boys, another catch.*

AND ALL OUR MEN ARE VERY VERY MERRY,

AND ALL OUR MEN WERE DRINKING.

CUTTER. *ONE MAN OF MINE.*

DOGREL. *TWO MEN OF MINE.*

BLADE. *THREE MEN OF MINE.*

CUTTER. *AND ONE MAN OF MINE.*

OMNES. *AS WE WENT BY THE WAY WE WERE DRUNK, DRUNK, DAMNABLY*

DRUNK, AND ALL OUR MEN WERE VERY VERY MERRY, &c.

Such are the words, which are somewhat altered and amplified in the text. The play was acted in presence of Charles II, then Prince of Wales, in 1641. The catch in the text has been happily set to music.]

As the chorus ended, there followed a loud and hearty laugh by way of cheers. Attracted by sounds which were so congenial to my present feelings, I made towards the spot from which they came,—cautiously, however, for the downs, as had been repeatedly hinted to me, had no good name; and the attraction of the music, without rivalling that of the sirens in melody, might have been followed by similarly inconvenient consequences to an incautious amateur.

I crept on, therefore, trusting that the sinuosities of the ground, broken as it was into knells and sand-pits, would permit me to obtain a sight of the musicians before I should be observed by them. As I advanced, the old ditty was again raised. The voices seemed those of a man and two boys; they were rough, but kept good time, and were managed with too much skill to belong to the ordinary country people.

Jack looked at the sun, and cried, Fire, fire, fire;

Tom stabled his keffel in Birkendale mire;

Jem started a calf, and halloo'd for a stag;

Will mounted a gate-post instead of his nag:

For all our men were very very merry,

And all our men were drinking;

There were two men of mine,

Three men of thine,

And three that belonged to old Sir Thom o' Lyne;

As they went to the ferry, they were very very merry,

For all our men were drinking.

The voices, as they mixed in their several parts, and ran through them, untwisting and again entwining all the links of the merry old catch, seemed to have a little touch of the bacchanalian spirit which they celebrated, and showed plainly that the musicians were engaged in the same joyous revel as the MENYIE of old Sir Thom o' Lyne. At length I came within sight of them, three in number, where they sat cosily niched into what you might call a BUNKER, a little sand-pit, dry and snug, and surrounded by its banks, and a screen of whins in full bloom.

The only one of the trio whom I recognized as a personal acquaintance was the notorious little Benjie, who, having just finished his stave, was cramming a huge luncheon of pie-crust into his mouth with one hand, while in the other he held a foaming tankard, his eyes dancing with all the glee of a forbidden revel; and his features, which have at all times a mischievous archness of expression, confessing the full sweetness of stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret.

There was no mistaking the profession of the male and female, who were partners with Benjie in these merry doings. The man's long loose-bodied greatcoat (wrap-rascal as the vulgar term it), the fiddle-case, with its straps, which lay beside him, and a small knapsack which might contain his few necessities; a clear grey eye; features which, in contending with many a storm, had not lost a wild and, careless expression of glee, animated at present, when he was exercising for his own pleasure the arts which he usually practised for bread,—all announced one of those peripatetic followers of Orpheus whom the vulgar call a strolling fiddler. Gazing more attentively, I easily discovered that though the poor musician's eyes were open, their sense was shut, and that the ecstasy with which he turned them up to heaven only derived its apparent expression from his own internal emotions, but received no assistance from the visible objects around. Beside him sat his female companion, in a man's hat, a blue coat, which seemed also to have been an article of male apparel, and a red petticoat. She was cleaner, in person and in clothes, than such itinerants generally are; and, having been in her day a strapping BONA ROBA, she did not even yet neglect some attention to her appearance; wore a large amber necklace, and silver ear-rings, and had her laid fastened across her breast with a brooch of the same metal.

The man also looked clean, notwithstanding the meanness of his attire, and had a decent silk handkerchief well knotted about his throat, under which peeped a clean overlay. His beard, also, instead of displaying a grizzly stubble, unmowed for several days, flowed in thick and comely abundance over the breast, to the length of six inches, and mingled with his hair, which was but beginning to exhibit a touch of age. To sum up his appearance, the loose garment which I have described was secured around him by a large old-fashioned belt, with brass studs, in which hung a dirk, with a knife and fork, its usual accompaniments. Altogether, there was something more wild and adventurous-looking about the man than I could have expected to see in an ordinary modern crowder; and the bow which he now and then drew across the violin, to direct his little choir, was decidedly that of no ordinary performer.

You must understand that many of these observations were the fruits of after remark; for I had scarce approached so near as to get a distinct view of the party, when my friend Benjie's lurching attendant, which he calls by the appropriate name of Hemp, began to cock his tail and ears, and, sensible of my presence, flew, barking like a fury, to the place where I had meant to lie concealed till I heard another song. I was obliged, however, to jump on my feet, and intimidate Hemp, who would otherwise have bit me, by two sound kicks on the ribs, which sent him howling back to his master.

Little Benjie seemed somewhat dismayed at my appearance; but, calculating on my placability, and remembering, perhaps, that the ill-used Solomon was no palfrey of mine, he speedily affected great glee, and almost in one breath assured the itinerants that I was 'a grand gentleman, and had plenty of money, and was very kind to poor folk;' and informed me that this was 'Willie Steenson—Wandering Willie the best fiddler that ever kittled thairm with horse-hair.'

The woman rose and curtsied; and Wandering Willie sanctioned his own praises with a nod, and the ejaculation, 'All is true that the little boy says.'

I asked him if he was of this country.

'THIS country!' replied the blind man—'I am of every country in broad Scotland, and a wee bit of England to the boot. But yet I am, in some sense, of this country; for I was born within hearing of the roar of Solway. Will I give your honour a touch of the auld bread-winner?'

He preluded as he spoke, in a manner which really excited my curiosity; and then, taking the old tune of Galashiels for his theme, he graced it with a number of wild, complicated, and beautiful variations; during which it was wonderful to observe how his sightless face was lighted up under the conscious pride and heartfelt delight in the exercise of his own very considerable powers.

'What think you of that, now, for threescore and twa?'

I expressed my surprise and pleasure.

'A rant, man—an auld rant,' said Willie; 'naething like the music ye hae in your ballhouses and your playhouses in Edinbro'; but it's weel aneugh anes in a way at a dykeside. Here's another—it's no a Scotch tune, but it passes for ane—Oswald made it himself, I reckon—he has cheated mony ane, but he canna cheat Wandering Willie.'

He then played your favourite air of Roslin Castle, with a number of beautiful variations, some of which I am certain were almost extempore.

'You have another fiddle there, my friend,' said I—'Have you a comrade?' But Willie's ears were deaf, or his attention was still busied with the tune.

The female replied in his stead, 'O aye, sir—troth we have a partner—a gangrel body like oursells. No but my hinny might have been better if he had liked; for mony a bein nook in mony a brow house has been offered to my hinny Willie, if he wad but just bide still and play to the gentles.'

'Whisht, woman! whisht!' said the blind man, angrily, shaking his locks; 'dinna deave the gentleman wi' your havers. Stay in a house and play to the gentles!—strike up when my leddy pleases, and lay down the bow when my lord bids! Na, na, that's nae life for Willie. Look out, Maggie—peer out, woman, and see if ye can see Robin coming. Deil be in him! He has got to the lee-side of some smuggler's punch-bowl, and he wunna budge the night, I doubt.'

'That is your consort's instrument,' said I—'Will you give me leave to try my skill?' I slipped at the same time a shilling into the woman's hand.

'I dinna ken whether I dare trust Robin's fiddle to ye,' said Willie, bluntly. His wife gave him a twitch. 'Hout awa, Maggie,' he said in contempt of the hint; 'though the gentleman may hae gien ye siller, he may have nae bowhand for a' that, and I'll no trust Robin's fiddle wi' an ignoramus. But that's no sae muckle amiss,' he added, as I began to touch the instrument; 'I am thinking ye have some skill o' the craft.'

To confirm him in this favourable opinion, I began to execute such a complicated flourish as I thought must have turned Crowdero into a pillar of stone with envy and wonder. I scaled the top of the finger-board, to dive at once to the bottom—skipped with flying fingers, like Timotheus, from shift to shift—struck arpeggios and harmonic tones, but without exciting any of the astonishment which I had expected.

Willie indeed listened to me with considerable attention; but I was no sooner finished, than he immediately mimicked on his own instrument the fantastic complication of tones which I had produced, and made so whimsical a parody of my performance, that, although somewhat angry, I could not help laughing heartily, in which I was joined by Benjie, whose reverence for me held him under no restraint; while the poor dame, fearful, doubtless, of my taking offence at this familiarity, seemed divided betwixt her conjugal reverence for her Willie, and her desire to give him a hint for his guidance.

At length the old man stopped of his own accord, and, as if he had sufficiently rebuked me by his mimicry, he said, 'But for a' that, ye will play very weel wi' a little practice and some gude teaching. But ye maun learn to put the heart into it, man—to put the heart into it.'

I played an air in simpler taste, and received more decided approbation.

'That's something like it man. Od, ye are a clever birkie!'

The woman touched his coat again. 'The gentleman is a gentleman, Willie—ye maunna speak that gate to him, hinnie.'

'The deevil I maunna!' said Willie; 'and what for maunna I?—If he was ten gentles, he canna draw a bow like me, can he?'

'Indeed I cannot, my honest friend,' said I; 'and if you will go with me to a house hard by, I would be glad to have a night with you.'

Here I looked round, and observed Benjie smothering a laugh, which I was sure had mischief in it. I seized him suddenly by the ear, and made him confess that he was laughing at the thoughts of the reception which a fiddler was likely to get from the Quakers at Mount Sharon. I chuckled him from me, not sorry that his mirth had reminded me in time of what I had for the moment forgotten; and invited the itinerant to go with me to Shepherd's Bush, from which I proposed to send word to Mr. Geddes that I should not return home that evening. But the minstrel declined this invitation also. He was engaged for the night, he said, to a dance in the neighbourhood, and vented a round execration on the laziness or drunkenness of his comrade, who had not appeared at the place of rendezvous.

'I will go with you instead of him,' said I, in a sudden whim; 'and I will give you a crown to introduce me as your comrade.'

'YOU gang instead of Rob the Rambler! My certie, freend, ye are no blate!' answered Wandering Willie, in a tone which announced death to my frolic.

But Maggie, whom the offer of the crown had not escaped, began to open on that scent with a maundering sort of lecture. 'Oh Willie! hinny Willie, whan will ye learn to be wise? There's a crown to be win for naething but saying ae man's name instead of anither. And, wae's me! I hae just a shilling of this gentleman's gieing, and a boddle of my ain; and ye wunna, bend your will sae muckle as to take up the siller that's flung at your feet! Ye will die the death of a cadger's powney, in a wreath of drift! and what can I do better than lie down and die wi' you? for ye winna let me win siller to keep either you or mysell leevin.'

'Haud your nonsense tongue, woman,' said Willie, but less absolutely than before. 'Is he a real gentleman, or ane of the player-men?'

'I'se uphaud him a real gentleman,' said the woman.

'I'se uphaud ye ken little of the matter,' said Willie; 'let us see haud of your hand, neebor, gin ye like.'

I gave him my hand. He said to himself, 'Aye, aye, here are fingers that have seen canny service.' Then running his hand over my hair, my face, and my dress, he went on with his soliloquy; 'Aye, aye, muisted hair, braidclaith o' the best, and seenteen hundred linen on his back, at the least o' it. And how do you think, my braw birkie, that you are to pass for a tramping fiddler?'

'My dress is plain,' said I,—indeed I had chosen my most ordinary suit, out of compliment to my Quaker friends,—'and I can easily pass for a young farmer out upon a frolic. Come, I will double the crown I promised you.'

'Damn your crowns!' said the disinterested man of music. 'I would like to have a round wi' you, that's certain;—but a farmer, and with a hand that never held plough-stilt or pettle, that will never do. Ye may pass for a trades-lad from Dumfries, or a student upon the ramble, or the like o' that. But hark ye, lad; if ye expect to be ranting among the queans o' lasses where ye are gaun, ye will come by the waur, I can tell ye; for the fishers are wild chaps, and will bide nae taunts.'

I promised to be civil and cautious; and, to smoothe the good woman, I slipped the promised piece into her hand. The acute organs of the blind man detected this little manoeuvre.

'Are ye at it again wi' the siller, ye jaud? I'll be sworn ye wad rather hear ae twalpenney clink against another, than have a spring from Rory Dall, [Blind Rorie, a famous musician according to tradition.] if he was-coming alive again anes errand. Gang down the gate to Lucky Gregson's and get the things ye want, and bide there till ele'en hours in the morn; and if you see Robin, send him on to me.'

'Am I no gaun to the ploy, then?' said Maggie, in a disappointed tone.

'And what for should ye?' said her lord and master; 'to dance a' night, I'se warrant, and no to be fit to walk your tae's-length the morn, and we have ten Scots miles afore us? Na, na. Stable the steed, and pit your wife to bed, when there's night wark to do.'

'Aweel, aweel, Willie hinnie, ye ken best; but oh, take an unco care o' yoursell, and mind ye haena the blessing o' sight.'

'Your tongue gars me whiles tire of the blessing of hearing, woman,' replied Willie, in answer to this tender exhortation.

But I now put in for my interest. 'Hollo, good folks, remember that I am to send the boy to Mount Sharon, and if you go to the Shepherd's Bush, honest woman, how the deuce am I to guide the blind man where he is going? I know little or nothing of the country.'

'And ye ken mickle less of my hinnie, sir,' replied Maggie, 'that think he needs ony guiding; he's the best guide himsell that ye'll find between Criffell and Carlisle. Horse-road and foot-path, parish-road and kirk-road, high-road and cross-road, he kens ilka foot of ground in Nithsdale.'

'Aye, ye might have said in braid Scotland, gudewife,' added the fiddler. 'But gang your ways, Maggie, that's the first wise word ye hae spoke the day. I wish it was dark night, and rain, and wind, for the gentleman's sake, that I might show him there is whiles when ane had better want een than have them; for I am as true a guide by darkness as by daylight.'

Internally as well pleased that my companion was not put to give me this last proof of his skill, I wrote a note with a pencil, desiring Samuel to bring my horses at midnight, when I thought my frolic would be wellnigh over, to the place to which the bearer should direct him, and I sent little Benjie with an apology to the worthy Quakers.

As we parted in different directions, the good woman said, 'Oh, sir, if ye wad but ask Willie to tell ye ane of his tales to shorten the gate! He can speak like ony minister frae the pu'pit, and he might have been a minister himsell, but'—

'Haud your tongue, ye fule!' said Willie,—'But stay, Meg—gie me a kiss, ne maunna part in anger, neither.'—And thus our society separated.

[It is certain that in many cases the blind have, by constant exercise of their other organs, learned to overcome a defect which one would think incapable of being supplied. Every reader must remember the celebrated Blind Jack of Knaresborough, who lived by laying out roads.]

LETTER XI THE SAME TO THE SAME

You are now to conceive us proceeding in our different directions across the bare downs. Yonder flies little Benjie to the northward with Hemp scampering at his heels, both running as if for dear life so long as the rogue is within sight of his employer, and certain to take the walk very easy so soon as he is out of ken. Stepping westward, you see Maggie's tall form and high-crowned hat, relieved by the fluttering of her plaid upon the left shoulder, darkening as the distance diminishes her size and as the level sunbeams begin to sink upon the sea. She is taking her quiet journey to the Shepherd's Bush.

Then, stoutly striding over the lea, you have a full view of Darsie Latimer, with his new acquaintance, Wandering Willie, who, bating that he touched the ground now and then with his staff, not in a doubtful groping manner, but with the confident air of an experienced pilot, heaving the lead when he has the soundings by heart, walks as firmly and boldly as if he possessed the eyes of Argus. There they go, each with his violin slung at his back, but one of them at least totally ignorant whither their course is directed.

And wherefore did you enter so keenly into such a mad frolic? says my wise counsellor.—Why, I think, upon the whole, that as a sense of loneliness, and a longing for that kindness which is interchanged in society, led me to take up my temporary residence at Mount Sharon, the monotony of my life there, the quiet simplicity of the conversation of the Geddases, and the uniformity of their amusements and employments, wearied out my impatient temper, and prepared me for the first escapade which chance might throw in my way.

What would I have given that I could have procured that solemn grave visage of thine, to dignify this joke, as it has done full many a one of thine own! Thou hast so happy a knack of doing the most foolish things in the wisest manner, that thou mightst pass thy extravagances for rational actions, even in the eyes of Prudence herself.

From the direction which my guide observed, I began to suspect that the dell at Brokenburn was our probable destination; and it became important to me to consider whether I could, with propriety, or even perfect safety, intrude myself again upon the hospitality of my former host. I therefore asked Willie whether we were bound for the laird's, as folk called him.

'Do ye ken the laird?' said Willie, interrupting a sonata of Corelli, of which he had whistled several bars with great precision.

'I know the laird a little,' said I; 'and therefore I was doubting whether I ought to go to his town in disguise.'

'I should doubt, not a little only, but a great deal, before I took ye there, my chap,' said Wandering Willie; 'for I am thinking it wad be worth little less than broken banes baith to you and me. Na, na, chap, we are no ganging to the laird's, but to a blithe birling at the Brokenburn-foot, where there will be mony a braw lad and lass; and maybe there may be some of the laird's folks, for he never comes to sic splores himsell. He is all for fowling-piece and salmon-spear, now that pike and musket are out of the question.'

'He has been at soldier, then?' said I.

'I'll warrant him a soger,' answered Willie; 'but take my advice, and speer as little about him as he does about you. Best to let sleeping dogs lie. Better say naething about the laird, my man, and tell me instead, what sort of a chap ye are that are sae ready to cleik in with an auld gaberlunzie fiddler? Maggie says ye're gentle, but a shilling maks a' the difference that Maggie kens between a gentle and a semple, and your crowns wad mak ye a prince of the blood in her een. But I am ane that ken full weel that ye may wear good claithes, and have a saft hand, and yet that may come of idleness as weel as gentrice.'

I told him my name, with the same addition I had formerly given to Mr. Joshua Geddes; that I was a law-student, tired of my studies, and rambling about for exercise and amusement.

'And are ye in the wont of drawing up wi' a' the gangrel bodies that ye meet on the high-road, or find cowering in a sand-bunker upon the links?' demanded Willie.

'Oh, no; only with honest folks like yourself, Willie,' was my reply.

'Honest folks like me! How do ye ken whether I am honest, or what I am? I may be the deevil himsell for what ye ken; for he has power to come disguised like an angel of light; and besides he is a prime fiddler. He played a sonata to Corelli, ye ken.'

There was something odd in this speech, and the tone in which it was said. It seemed as if my companion was not always in his constant mind, or that he was willing to try if he could frighten me. I laughed at the extravagance of his language, however, and asked him in reply, if he was fool enough to believe that the foul fiend would play so silly a masquerade.

'Ye ken little about it—little about it,' said the old man, shaking his head and beard, and knitting his brows, 'I could tell ye something about that.'

What his wife mentioned of his being a tale-teller, as well as a musician, now occurred to me; and as you know I like tales of superstition, I begged to have a specimen of his talent as we went along.

'It is very true,' said the blind man, 'that when I am tired of scraping thairm or singing ballants, I whiles mak a tale serve the turn among the country bodies; and I have some fearsome anes, that make the auld carlines shake on the settle, and the bits o' bairns skirl on their minnies out frae their beds. But this that I am gaun to tell you was a thing that befell in our ain house in my father's time—that is, my father was then a hafflins callant; and I tell it to you that it may be a lesson to you, that are but a young, thoughtless chap, wha ye draw up wi' on a lonely road; for muckle was the dool and care that came o't to my gudesire.'

He commenced his tale accordingly, in a distinct narrative tone of voice which he raised and depressed with considerable skill; at times sinking almost into a whisper, and turning his clear but sightless eyeballs upon my face, as if it had been possible for him to witness the impression which his narrative made upon my features. I will not spare you a syllable of it, although it be of the longest; so I make a dash—and begin

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE.

Ye maun have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the sixteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet? He was knighted at Lonon court, wi' the king's ain sword; and being a redhot prelatist, he came down here, rampaung like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy (and of lunacy, for what I ken) to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was ay for the strong hand; and his name is kend as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor cave, could hide the puir hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth when they fand them, they didna mak muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck—it was just, 'Will ye tak the test?'—if not, 'Make ready—present—fire!'—and there lay the recusant.

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan—that he was proof against steel—and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstones from a hearth—that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gawns [A precipitous side of a mountain in Moffatdale.]—and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was, 'Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet!' He wasna a bad master to his ain folk, though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs caa'd those killing times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at any time.

Now you are to ken that my gudesire lived on Redgauntlet's grund—they ca' the place Primrose Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding days, and lang before. It was a pleasant bit; and I think the air is callerer and fresher there than anywhere else in the country. It's a' deserted now; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna see the plight the place was in; but that's a' wide o' the mark. There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, a rambling, rattling chiel' he had been in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at 'Hoopers and Girders'—a' Cumberland couldna touch him at 'Jockie Lattin'—and he had the finest finger for the back-lilt between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belong to some side or other. He had nae ill will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hoisting, watching and warding, he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some, that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kend a' the folks about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and ay gae my gudesire his gude word wi' the laird; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution, and it had like to have broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegether sae great as they feared, and other folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawling what they wad do with their auld enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower mony great folks dipped in the same doings, to mak a spick and span new warld. So Parliament passed it a' ower easy; and Sir Robert, bating that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. [The caution and moderation of King William III, and his principles of unlimited toleration, deprived the Cameronians of the opportunity they ardently desired, to retaliate the injuries which they had received during the reign of prelacy, and purify the land, as they called it, from the pollution of blood. They esteemed the Revolution, therefore, only a half measure, which neither comprehended the

rebuilding the Kirk in its full splendour, nor the revenge of the death of the Saints on their persecutors.] His revel was as loud, and his hall as weel lighted, as ever it had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the nonconformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behoved to be prompt to the rent-day, or else the laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body, that naeboddy cared to anger him; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on, made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came, there was a summons from the grund-officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behoved to flit. Sair wark he had to get the siller; but he was weel-freended, and at last he got the haill scraped thegither—a thousand merks—the maist of it was from a neighbour they ca'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod. Laurie had walth o' gear—could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare—and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution world, but he liked an orra sough of this world, and a tune on the pipes weel aneugh at a bytime; and abune a', he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose Knowe.

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the castle was, that Sir Robert had fretted himself into a fit of the gout, because he did not appear before twelve' o'clock. It wasna a'thegither for sake of the money, Dougal thought; but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour, and there sat the laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great, ill-favoured jackanape, that was a special pet of his; a cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played—ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching, and biting folk, specially before ill weather, or disturbances in the state. Sir Robert caa'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt; [A celebrated wizard, executed at Edinburgh for sorcery and other crimes.] and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himself in the room wi' naeboddy but the laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the major, a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great armed chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red laced coat, and the laird's wig on his head; and ay as Sir Robert girmed wi' pain, the jackanape girmed too, like a sheep's-head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faur'd, fearsome couple they were. The laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach; for he keepit up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready, and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horseback, and away after ony of the hill-folk he could get speerings of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna, gien to fear onything. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him; and a book of sculduddry sangs was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the Goodman of Primrose Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties. Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look, as if he would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows, that men saw the visible mark of a horseshoe in his forehead, deep dinted, as if it had been stamped there.

'Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle?' said Sir Robert. 'Zounds! if you are'—

My gudesire, with as gude acountenance as he could put on, made a leg, and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The laird drew it to him hastily—'Is it all here, Steenie, man?'

'Your honour will find it right,' said my gudesire.

'Here, Dougal,' said the laird, 'gie Steenie a tass of brandy downstairs, till I count the siller and write the receipt.'

But they werena weel out of the room, when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd the castle rock. Back ran Dougal—in flew the livery-men—yell on yell gied the laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdy-girdie—naeboddy to say 'come in,' or 'gae out.' Terribly the laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat; and Hell, hell, hell, and its flames, was ay the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swollen feet into the tub, he cried out it was burning; and folk say that it DID bubble and sparkle like a seething cauldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head, and said he had given him blood instead of burgundy; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet; the neist day. The jackanape they caa'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master; my gudesire's head was like to turn—he forgot baith siller and receipt, and downstairs he banged; but as he ran, the shrieks came faint and fainter; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the castle that the laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire, wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was that Dougal had seen the money-bag, and heard the laird speak of writing the receipt. The young laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh, to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never gree'd weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterwards sat in the last Scots Parliament and voted for the Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations—if his father could have come out of his grave, he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat nor grained, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now Dougal looked ay waur and waur when night was coming, and was ay the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais, whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they caa'd it, weel-a-day! The night before the funeral, Dougal could keep his awn counsel nae langer; he came down with his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took ae tass of brandy to himself, and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himself, he wasna lang for this world; for that, every night since Sir Robert's death, his silver call had sounded from the state chamber, just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime, to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said that being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower (for naeboddy cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse) he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty; for, 'though death breaks service,' said MacCallum, 'it shall never break my service to Sir Robert; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon.'

Hutcheon had nae will to the wark, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch; so down the carles sat ower a stoup of brandy, and Hutcheon, who was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible; but Dougal would hear naething but a blaud of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure enough the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it, and up got the twa auld serving-men, and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance; for there were torches in the room, which showed him the foul fiend, in his ain shape, sitting on the laird's coffin! Ower he cowped as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himself, he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer, raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gaen anes and ay; but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartizan, and among the auld chimneys and turrets where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogle-wark.

But when a' was ower, and the laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood against him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the castle, to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John, sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat, and a small wallring rapier by his side, instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundredweight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communing so often tauld ower, that I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the time. (In fact, Alan, my companion mimicked, with a good deal of humour, the flattering, conciliating tone of the tenant's address, and the hypocritical melancholy

of the laird's reply. His grandfather, he said, had, while he spoke, his eye fixed on the rental-book, as if it were a mastiff-dog that he was afraid would spring up and bite him).

'I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat, and the white loaf, and the braid lairdship. Your father was a kind man to friends and followers; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils when he had the gout.'

'Aye, Steenie,' quoth the laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, 'his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country; no time to set his house in order—weel prepared Godward, no doubt, which is the root of the matter—but left us behind a tangled heap to wind, Steenie.—Hem! hem! We maun go to business, Steenie; much to do, and little time to do it in.'

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday Book—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging tenants.

'Stephen,' said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of voice—'Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand—due at last term.'

STEPHEN. 'Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father.'

SIR JOHN. 'Ye took a receipt, then, doubtless, Stephen; and can produce it?'

STEPHEN. 'Indeed I hadna time, an it like your honour; for nae sooner had I set down the siller, and just as his honour, Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it, and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him.'

'That was unlucky,' said Sir John, after a pause. 'But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody, I want but a TALIS QUALIS evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man.'

STEPHEN. 'Troth, Sir John, there was naeboddy in the room but Dougal MacCallum the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master.

'Very unlucky again, Stephen,' said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. 'The man to whom ye paid the money is dead—and the man who witnessed the payment is dead too—and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this?'

STEPHEN. 'I dinna ken, your honour; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins; for, God help me! I had to borrow out of twenty purses; and I am sure that ilka man there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money.'

SIR JOHN. 'I have little doubt ye BORROWED the money, Steenie. It is the PAYMENT to my father that I want to have some proof of.'

STEPHEN. 'The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have taen it wi' him, maybe some of the family may have seen it.'

SIR JOHN. 'We will examine the servants, Stephen; that is but reasonable.'

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that they had ever seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room, and then said to my gudesire, 'Now, Steenie, ye see ye have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than ony other body, I beg, in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie; for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit.'

'The Lord forgie your opinion,' said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end—'I am an honest man.'

'So am I, Stephen,' said his honour; 'and so are all the folks in the house, I hope. But if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove.' He paused, and then added, mair sternly, 'If I understand your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character, by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding. Where do you suppose this money to be? I insist upon knowing.'

My gudesire saw everything look so muckle against him, that he grew nearly desperate—however, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

'Speak out, sirrah,' said the laird, assuming a look of his father's, a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry—it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow;—'Speak out, sir! I WILL know your thoughts;—do you suppose that I have this money?'

'Far be it frae me to say so,' said Stephen.

'Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?'

'I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent,' said my gudesire; 'and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof.'

'Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story,' said Sir John; 'I ask where you think it is—and demand a correct answer?'

'In HELL, if you will have my thoughts of it,' said my gudesire, driven to extremity, 'in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle.'

Down the stairs he ran (for the parlour was nae place for him after such a word) and he heard the laird swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast; as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor (him they ca'd Laurie Lapraik) to try if he could make onything out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the worst word in his wame—thief, beggar, and dyvour, were the safest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms, Laurie brought up the auld story of his dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Redgauntlet. My gudesire was, by this time, far beyond the bounds of patience, and, while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folks' flesh grue that heard them;—he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say.—I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell.—At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common, a little lonely change-house, that was keepit then by an ostler-wife, they suld hae caa'd her Tibbie Faw, and there puir Steenie cried for a mutchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite of meat, but he couldna think o't, nor would he take his foot out of the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholly at twa draughts, and named a toast at each:—the first was the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and might he never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller or tell him what came o't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld.

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring and flee, and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle. Upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, 'That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?' So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling trot. 'But his spunk's soon out of him, I think,' continued the stranger, 'and that is like mony a man's courage, that thinks he wad do great things till he come to the proof.'

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with 'Gude e'en to you, freend.'

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was ay beside him at the selfsame pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry, and, to say the truth, half feared.

'What is it that ye want with me, freend?' he said. 'If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell.'

'If you will tell me your grief,' said the stranger, 'I am one that, though I have been sair miscaa'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends.'

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart, mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

'It's a hard pinch,' said the stranger; 'but I think I can help you.'

'If you could lend the money, sir, and take a lang day—I ken nae other help on earth,' said my gudesire.

'But there may be some under the earth,' said the stranger. 'Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now, I can tell you, that your auld laird is disturbed in his grave by your curses, and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him, he will give you the receipt.'

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humoursome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides, he was bauld wi' brandy, and desperate wi' distress; and he said he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt. The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer courtyard, through the muckle faulding yetts and aneath the auld portcullis; and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be at Sir Robert's house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning, when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

'God!' said my gudesire, 'if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!'

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal MacCallum—just after his wont, too,—came to open the door, and said, 'Piper Steenie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you.'

My gudesire was like a man in a dream—he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, 'Ha! Dougal Driveower, are ye living? I thought ye had been dead.'

'Never fash yoursell wi' me,' said Dougal, 'but look to yoursell; and see ye tak naething frae ony body here, neither meat, drink, or siller, except just the receipt that is your ain.'

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kend to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling of red wine, and speaking blasphemy and sculduddry, as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blithest.

But, Lord take us in keeping, what a set of ghastly revellers they were that sat around that table! My gudesire kend mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell, with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall, with Cameron's blude on his hand; and wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dunbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy Advocate MacKenzie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. [See Note 2.] He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed, and sang, and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time; and their laugh passed into such wild sounds as made my gudesire's very nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers, that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of the Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattle-bag; and the wicked guardsmen in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites, that shed blood like water; and many a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich, and making them wickedder than they would be; grinding the poor to powder, when the rich had broken them to fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a' this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper to come to the board-head where he was sitting; his legs stretched out before him, and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broadsword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth—the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itself was not there—it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say as he came forward, 'Is not the major come yet?' And another answered, 'The jackanape will be here betimes the morn.' And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, 'Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?'

With much ado my father gat breath to say that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

'Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie,' said the appearance of Sir Robert—'Play us up "Weel hoddled, Luckie".'

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings, and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

'MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub,' said the fearfu' Sir Robert, 'bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him!'

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles. But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter was of steel, and heated to a white heat; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said he was faint and frightened, and had not wind aneugh to fill the bag.

'Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie,' said the figure; 'for we do little else here; and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting.'

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the king's messenger in hand while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie, at the Threave Castle, [The reader is referred for particulars to Pitscottie's HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.] and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink or make minstrelsy; but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it; and he was so stout-hearted by this time that he charged Sir Robert for conscience-sake (he had no power to say the holy name) and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocket-book the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. 'There is your receipt, ye pitiful cur; and for the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle.'

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire when Sir Robert roared aloud, 'Stop, though, thou sack-doudling son of a whore! I am not done with thee. HERE we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth, to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection.'

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenly, and he said aloud, 'I refer mysell to God's pleasure, and not to yours.'

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him; and he sank on the earth with such a sudden shock, that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there, he could not tell; but when he came to himsell, he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on grass and gravestone around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld laird; only the last letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through the mist to Redgauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the laird.

'Well, you dyvour bankrupt,' was the first word, 'have you brought me my rent?'

'No,' answered my gudesire, 'I have not; but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it.'

'Wow, sirrah? Sir Robert's receipt! You told me he had not given you one.'

'Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?'

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention; and at last, at the date, which my gudesire had not observed,—'FROM MY APPOINTED PLACE,' he read, 'THIS TWENTY-FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.'—'What! That is yesterday!—Villain, thou must have gone to hell for this!'

'I got it from your honour's father—whether he be in heaven or hell, I know not,' said Steenie.

'I will delate you for a warlock to the Privy Council!' said Sir John. 'I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!'

'I intend to delate mysell to the Presbytery,' said Steenie, 'and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel man like me.'

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it him from point to point, as I have told it you—word for word, neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly, 'Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making, to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a redhot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers wi' a redhot chanter. But yet it may be true, Steenie; and if the money cast up I shall not know what to think of it. But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle.'

'We were best ask Hutcheon,' said my gudesire; 'he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name.'

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them, that a ruinous turret, lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, and far above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

'There will I go immediately,' said Sir John; and he took (with what purpose, Heaven kens) one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and entered at the turret-door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist dang him back ower—bang gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch. A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is fund, and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra thing besides, that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had riped the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word and that he would hereafter be a good master to him to make amends.

'And now, Steenie,' said Sir John, 'although this vision of yours tend, on the whole, to my father's credit, as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions upon it, concerning his soul's health. So, I think, we had better lay the haill dirdum on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had taken ower muckle brandy to be very certain about onything; and, Steenie, this receipt' (his hand shook while he held it out),—'it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire.'

'Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent,' said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

'I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand,' said Sir John, 'and that on the spot. And, Steenie, if you can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this term downward, at an easier rent.'

'Mony thanks to your honour,' said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; 'doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of sommons of appointment whilk your honour's father'—

'Do not call the phantom my father!' said Sir John, interrupting him.

'Weel, then, the thing that was so like him,' said my gudesire; 'he spoke of my coming back to see him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience.'

'Aweel, then,' said Sir John, 'if you be so much distressed in mind, you may speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me.'

Wi' that, my father readily agreed that the receipt should be burnt, and the laird threw it into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum, wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.

My gudesire gaed down to the Manse, and the minister, when he had heard the story, said it was his real opinion that though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with dangerous matters, yet, as he had refused the devil's arles (for such was the offer of meat and drink) and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped, that if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his ain accord, lang foreswore baith the pipes and the brandy—it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day past, that he would so much as take the fiddle, or drink usquebaugh or tippeny.

Sir John made up his story about the jackanape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap that it was nane o' the auld Enemy that Dougal and my gudesire saw in the laird's room, but only that wanchancy creature, the major, capering on the coffin; and that, as to the blawing on the laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the laird himsell, if no better. But Heaven kens the truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife, after Sir John and her ain gudeman were baith in the moulds. And then my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgement or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his friends, for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock. [See Note 3.]

The shades of evening were growing thicker around us as my conductor finished his long narrative with this moral—'Ye see, birkie, it is nae chancy thing to tak a stranger traveller for a guide, when you are in an uncouth land.'

'I should not have made that inference,' said I. 'Your grandfather's adventure was fortunate for himself, whom it saved from ruin and distress; and fortunate for his landlord also, whom it prevented from committing a gross act of injustice.'

'Aye, but they had baith to sup the sauce o't sooner or later,' said Wandering Willie—'what was fristed wasna forgiven. Sir John died before he was much over three-score; and it was just like of a moment's illness. And for my gudesire, though he departed in fullness of life, yet there was my father, a yauld man of forty-five, fell down betwixt the stilts of his pleugh, and rase never again, and left nae bairn but me, a puir sightless, fatherless, motherless creature, could neither work nor want. Things gaed weel aneugh at first; for Sir Redwald Redgauntlet, the only son of Sir John, and the oye of auld Sir Robert, and, waes me! the last of the honourable house, took the farm aff our hands, and brought me into his household to have care of me. He liked music, and I had the best teachers baith England and Scotland could gie me. Mony a merry year was I wi' him; but waes me! he gaed out with other pretty men in the Forty-five—I'll say nae mair about it—My head never settled weel since I lost him; and if I say another word about it, deil a bar will I have the heart to play the night.—Look out, my gentle chap,' he resumed in a different tone, 'ye should see the lights at Brokenburn glen by this time.'

LETTER XII THE SAME TO THE SAME

*Tam Luter was their minstrel meet,
Gude Lord as he could lance,
He play'd sae shrill, and sang sae sweet,
Till Towsie took a trance.
Auld Lightfoot there he did forleet,
And counterfeited France;
He used himself as man discreet,
And up took Morrice danse sae loud,*

At Christ's Kirk on the Green that day.

KING JAMES I.

I continue to scribble at length, though the subject may seem somewhat deficient in interest. Let the grace of the narrative, therefore, and the concern we take in each other's matters, make amends for its tenuity. We fools of fancy who suffer ourselves, like Malvolio, to be cheated with our own visions, have, nevertheless, this advantage over the wise ones of the earth, that we have our whole stock of enjoyments under our own command, and can dish for ourselves an intellectual banquet with most moderate assistance from external objects. It is, to be sure, something like the feast which the Barmecide served up to Alnaschar; and we cannot expect to get fat upon such diet. But then, neither is there repletion nor nausea, which often succeed the grosser and more material revel. On the whole, I still pray, with the Ode to Castle Building—

Give me thy hope which sickens not the heart;

Give me thy wealth which has no wings to fly;

Give me the bliss thy visions can impart:

Thy friendship give me, warm in poverty!

And so, despite thy solemn smile and sapient shake of the head, I will go on picking such interest as I can out of my trivial adventures, even though that interest should be the creation of my own fancy; nor will I cease to indict on thy devoted eyes the labour of perusing the scrolls in which I shall record my narrative.

My last broke off as we were on the point of descending into the glen at Brokenburn, by the dangerous track which I had first travelled EN CROUPE, behind a furious horseman, and was now again to brave under the precarious guidance of a blind man.

It was now getting dark; but this was no inconvenience to my guide, who moved on, as formerly, with instinctive security of step, so that we soon reached the bottom, and I could see lights twinkling in the cottage which had been my place of refuge on a former occasion. It was not thither, however, that our course was directed. We left the habitation of the laird to the left, and turning down the brook, soon approached the small hamlet which had been erected at the mouth of the stream, probably on account of the convenience which it afforded as a harbour to the fishing-boats. A large, low cottage, full in our front, seemed highly illuminated; for the light not only glanced from every window and aperture in its frail walls, but was even visible from rents and fractures in the roof, composed of tarred shingles, repaired in part by thatch and divot.

While these appearances engaged my attention, that of my companion was attracted by a regular succession of sounds, like a bouncing on the floor, mixed with a very faint noise of music, which Willie's acute organs at once recognized and accounted for, while to me it was almost inaudible. The old man struck the earth with his staff in a violent passion. 'The whoreson fisher rabble! They have brought another violer upon my walk! They are such smuggling blackguards, that they must run in their very music; but I'll sort them waur than ony gauger in the country.—Stay—hark—it 's no a fiddle neither—it's the pipe and tabor bastard, Simon of Sowport, frae the Nicol Forest; but I'll pipe and tabor him!—Let me hae ance my left hand on his cravat, and ye shall see what my right will do. Come away, chap—come away, gentle chap—nae time to be picking and waling your steps.' And on he passed with long and determined strides, dragging me along with him.

I was not quite easy in his company; for, now that his minstrel pride was hurt, the man had changed from the quiet, decorous, I might almost say respectable person, which he seemed while he told his tale, into the appearance of a fierce, brawling, dissolute stroller. So that when he entered the large hut, where a great number of fishers, with their wives and daughters, were engaged in eating, drinking, and dancing, I was somewhat afraid that the impatient violence of my companion might procure us an indifferent reception.

But the universal shout of welcome with which Wandering Willie was received—the hearty congratulations—the repeated 'Here's t' ye, Willie!'—'Where hae ye been, ye blind deevil?' and the call upon him to pledge them—above all, the speed with which the obnoxious pipe and tabor were put to silence, gave the old man such effectual assurance of undiminished popularity and importance, as at once put his jealousy to rest, and changed his tone of offended dignity into one better fitted to receive such cordial greetings. Young men and women crowded round, to tell how much they were afraid some mischance had detained him, and how two or three young fellows had set out in quest of him.

'It was nae mischance, praised be Heaven,' said Willie, 'but the absence of the lazy loon Rob the Rambler, my comrade, that didna come to meet me on the Links; but I hae gotten a braw consort in his stead, worth a dozen of him, the unhanged blackguard.'

'And wha is't tou's gotten, Wullie, lad?' said half a score of voices, while all eyes were turned on your humble servant, who kept the best countenance he could, though not quite easy at becoming the centre to which all eyes were pointed.

'I ken him by his hemmed cravat,' said one fellow; 'it's Gil Hobson, the souple tailor frae Burgh. Ye are welcome to Scotland, ye prick-the-clout loon,' he said, thrusting forth a paw; much the colour of a badger's back, and of most portentous dimensions.

'Gil Hobson? Gil whoreson!' exclaimed Wandering Willie; 'it's a gentle chap that I judge to be an apprentice wi' auld Joshua Geddes, to the quaker-trade.'

'What trade be's that, man?' said he of the badger-coloured fist.

'Canting and lying,'—said Willie, which produced a thundering laugh; 'but I am teaching the callant a better trade, and that is, feasting and fiddling.'

Willie's conduct in thus announcing something like my real character, was contrary to compact; and yet I was rather glad he did so, for the consequence of putting a trick upon these rude and ferocious men, might, in case of discovery, have been dangerous to us both, and I was at the same time delivered from the painful effort to support a fictitious character. The good company, except perhaps one or two of the young women whose looks expressed some desire for better acquaintance, gave themselves no further trouble about me; but, while the seniors resumed their places near an immense bowl or rather reeking cauldron of brandy-punch, the younger arranged themselves on the floor and called loudly on Willie to strike up.

With a brief caution to me, to 'mind my credit, for fishers have ears, though fish have none,' Willie led off in capital style, and I followed, certainly not so as to disgrace my companion, who, every now and then, gave me a nod of approbation. The dances were, of course, the Scottish jigs, and reels, and 'twasome dances', with a strathspey or hornpipe for interlude; and the want of grace on the part of the performers was amply supplied by truth of ear, vigour and decision of step, and the agility proper to the northern performers. My own spirits rose with the mirth around me, and with old Willie's admirable execution, and frequent 'weel dune, gentle chap, yet;'—and, to confess the truth, I felt a great deal more pleasure in this rustic revel, than I have done at the more formal balls and concerts in your famed city, to which I have sometimes made my way. Perhaps this was because I was a person of more importance to the presiding matron of Brokenburn-foot, than I had the means of rendering myself to the far-famed Miss Nickie Murray, the patroness of your Edinburgh assemblies. The person I mean was a buxom dame of about thirty, her fingers loaded with many a silver ring, and three or four of gold; her ankles liberally displayed from under her numerous blue, white, and scarlet; short petticoats, and attired in hose of the finest and whitest lamb's-wool, which arose from shoes of Spanish cordwain, fastened with silver buckles. She took the lead in my favour, and declared, 'that the brave young gentleman should not weary himself to death wi' playing, but take the floor for a dance or twa.'

'And what's to come of me, Dame Martin?' said Willie.

'Come o' thee?' said the dame; 'mishanter on the auld beard o' ye! ye could play for twenty hours on end, and tire out the haill countryside wi' dancing before ye laid down your bow, saving for a by-drink or the like o' that.'

'In troth, dame,' answered Willie, 'ye are no sae far wrang; sae if my comrade is to take his dance, ye maun gie me my drink, and then bob it away like Madge of Middlebie.'

The drink was soon brought; but while Willie was partaking of it, a party entered the hut, which arrested my attention at once, and intercepted the intended gallantry with which I had proposed to present my hand to the fresh-coloured, well-made, white-ankled Thetis, who had obtained me manumission from my musical task.

This was nothing less than the sudden appearance of the old woman whom the laird had termed Mabel; Cristal Nixon, his male attendant; and the young person who had said grace to us when I supped with him.

This young person—Alan, thou art in thy way a bit of a conjurer—this young person whom I DID NOT describe, and whom you, for that very reason, suspected was not an indifferent object to me—is, I am sorry to say it, in very fact not so much so as in prudence she ought. I will not use the name of love on this occasion; for I have applied it too often to transient whims and fancies to escape your satire, should I venture to apply it now. For it is a phrase, I must confess, which I have used—a romancer would say, profaned—a little too often, considering how few years have passed over my head. But seriously, the fair chaplain of Brokenburn has been often in my head when she had no business there; and if this can give thee any clue for explaining my motives in lingering about the country, and assuming the character of Willie's companion, why, hang thee, thou art welcome to make use of it—a permission for which thou need'st not thank me much, as thou wouldst not have failed to assume it whether it were given or no.

Such being my feelings, conceive how they must have been excited, when, like a beam upon a cloud, I saw this uncommonly beautiful girl enter the apartment in which they were dancing; not, however, with the air of an equal, but that of a superior, come to grace with her presence the festival of her dependants. The old man and woman attended, with looks as sinister as hers were lovely, like two of the worst winter months waiting upon the bright-eyed May.

When she entered—wonder if thou wilt—she wore A GREEN MANTLE, such as thou hast described as the garb of thy fair client, and confirmed what I had partly guessed from thy personal description, that my chaplain and thy visitor were the same person. There was an alteration on her brow the instant she recognized me. She gave her cloak to her female attendant, and, after a momentary hesitation, as if uncertain whether to advance or retire, she walked into the room with dignity and composure, all making way, the men unbonneting, and the women curtsying respectfully, as she assumed a chair which was reverently placed for her accommodation, apart from others.

There was then a pause, until the bustling mistress of the ceremonies, with awkward but kindly courtesy, offered the young lady a glass of wine, which was at first declined, and at length only thus far accepted, that, bowing round to the festive company, the fair visitor wished them all health and mirth, and just touching the brim with her lip, replaced it on the salver. There was another pause; and I did not immediately recollect, confused as I was by this unexpected apparition, that it belonged to me to break it. At length a murmur was heard around me, being expected to exhibit,—nay, to lead down the dance,—in consequence of the previous conversation.

'Deil's in the fiddler lad,' was muttered from more quarters than one—'saw folk ever sic a thing as a shame-faced fiddler before?'

At length a venerable Triton, seconding his remonstrances with a hearty thump on my shoulder, cried out, 'To the floor—to the floor, and let us see how ye can fling—the lasses are a' waiting.'

Up I jumped, sprang from the elevated station which constituted our orchestra, and, arranging my ideas as rapidly as I could, advanced to the head of the room, and, instead of offering my hand to the white-footed Thetis aforesaid, I venturously made the same proposal to her of the Green Mantle.

The nymph's lovely eyes seemed to open with astonishment at the audacity of this offer; and, from the murmurs I heard around me, I also understood that it surprised, and perhaps offended, the bystanders. But after the first moment's emotion, she wreathed her neck, and drawing herself haughtily up, like one who was willing to show that she was sensible of the full extent of her own condescension, extended her hand towards me, like a princess gracing a squire of low degree.

There is affectation in all this, thought I to myself, if the Green Mantle has borne true evidence—for young ladies do not make visits, or write letters to counsel learned in the law, to interfere in the motions of those whom they hold as cheap as this nymph seems to do me; and if I am cheated by a resemblance of cloaks, still I am interested to show myself, in some degree, worthy of the favour she has granted with so much state and reserve. The dance to be performed was the old Scots Jig, in which you are aware I used to play no sorry figure at La Pique's, when thy clumsy movements used to be rebuked by raps over the knuckles with that great professor's fiddlestick. The choice of the tune was left to my comrade Willie, who, having finished his drink, feloniously struck up the well-known and popular measure,

Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,

And merrily danced the Quaker.

An astounding laugh arose at my expense, and I should have been annihilated, but that the smile which mantled on the lip of my partner, had a different expression from that of ridicule, and seemed to say, 'Do not take this to heart.' And I did not, Alan—my partner danced admirably, and I like one who was determined, if outshone, which I could not help, not to be altogether thrown into the shade.

I assure you our performance, as well as Willie's music, deserved more polished spectators and auditors; but we could not then have been greeted with such enthusiastic shouts of applause as attended while I handed my partner to her seat, and took my place by her side, as one who had a right to offer the attentions usual on such an occasion. She was visibly embarrassed, but I was determined not to observe her confusion, and to avail myself of the opportunity of learning whether this beautiful creature's mind was worthy of the casket in which nature had lodged it.

Nevertheless, however courageously I formed this resolution, you cannot but too well guess the difficulties I must needs have felt in carrying it into execution; since want of habitual intercourse with the charmers of the other sex has rendered me a sheepish cur, only one grain less awkward than thyself. Then she was so very beautiful, and assumed an air of so much dignity, that I was like to fall under the fatal error of supposing she should only be addressed with something very clever; and in the hasty raking which my brains underwent in this persuasion, not a single idea occurred that common sense did not reject as fustian on the one hand, or weary, flat, and stale criticism on the other. I felt as if my understanding were no longer my own, but was alternately under the dominion of Aldeborontiphoscophornio, and that of his facetious friend Rigdum-Funnidos. How did I envy at that moment our friend Jack Oliver, who produces with such happy complacence his fardel of small talk, and who, as he never doubts his own powers of affording amusement, passes them current with every pretty woman he approaches, and fills up the intervals of chat by his complete acquaintance with the exercise of the fan, the FLACON, and the other duties of the CAVALIERE SERVENTE. Some of these I attempted, but I suppose it was awkwardly; at least the Lady Green Mantle received them as a princess accepts the homage of a clown.

Meantime the floor remained empty, and as the mirth of the good meeting was somewhat checked, I ventured, as a DERNIER RESSORT, to propose a minuet. She thanked me, and told me haughtily enough, 'she was here to encourage the harmless pleasures of these good folks, but was not disposed to make an exhibition of her own indifferent dancing for their amusement.'

She paused a moment, as if she expected me to suggest something; and as I remained silent and rebuked, she bowed her head more graciously, and said, 'Not to affront you, however, a country-dance, if you please.'

What an ass was I, Alan, not to have anticipated her wishes! Should I not have observed that the ill-favoured couple, Mabel and Cristal, had placed themselves on each side of her seat, like the supporters of the royal arms? the man, thick, short, shaggy, and hirsute, as the lion; the female, skin-dried, tight-laced, long, lean, and hungry-faced, like the unicorn. I ought to have recollected, that under the close inspection of two such watchful salvages, our communication, while in repose, could not have been easy; that the period of dancing a minuet was not the very choicest time for conversation; but that the noise, the exercise, and the mazy confusion of a country-dance, where the inexperienced performers were every now and then running against each other, and compelling the other couples to stand still for a minute at a time, besides the more regular repose afforded by the intervals of the dance itself, gave the best possible openings for a word or two spoken in season, and without being liable to observation.

We had but just led down, when an opportunity of the kind occurred, and my partner said, with great gentleness and modesty, 'It is not perhaps very proper in me to acknowledge an acquaintance that is not claimed; but I believe I speak to Mr. Darsie Latimer?'

'Darsie Latimer was indeed the person that had now the honour and happiness'—

I would have gone on in the false gallop of compliment, but she cut me short. 'And why,' she said, 'is Mr. Latimer here, and in disguise, or at least assuming an office unworthy of a man of education?—I beg pardon,' she continued,—'I would not give you pain, but surely making, an associate of a person of that description'—

She looked towards my friend Willie, and was silent. I felt heartily ashamed of myself, and hastened to say it was an idle frolic, which want of occupation had suggested, and which I could not regret, since it had procured me the pleasure I at present enjoyed.

Without seeming to notice my compliment, she took the next opportunity to say, 'Will Mr. Latimer permit a stranger who wishes him well to ask, whether it is right that, at his active age, he should be in so far void of occupation, as to be ready to adopt low society for the sake of idle amusement?'

'You are severe, madam,' I answered; 'but I cannot think myself degraded by mixing with any society where I meet'—

Here I stopped short, conscious that I was giving my answer an unhandsome turn. The ARGUMENTUM AD HOMINEM, the last to which a polite man has recourse, may, however, be justified by circumstances, but seldom or never the ARGUMENTUM AD FOEMINAM.

She filled up the blank herself which I had left. 'Where you meet ME, I suppose you would say? But the case is different. I am, from my unhappy fate, obliged to move by the will of others, and to be in places which I would by my own will gladly avoid. Besides, I am, except for these few minutes, no participator of the revels—a spectator only, and attended by my servants. Your situation is different—you are here by choice, the partaker and minister of the pleasures of a class below you in education, birth, and fortunes. If I speak harshly, Mr. Latimer,' she added, with much sweetness of manner, 'I mean kindly.'

I was confounded by her speech, 'severe in youthful wisdom'; all of naive or lively, suitable to such a dialogue, vanished from my recollection, and I answered with gravity like her own, 'I am, indeed, better educated than these poor people; but you, madam, whose kind admonition I am grateful for, must know more of my condition than I do myself—I dare not say I am their superior in birth, since I know nothing of my own, or in fortunes, over which hangs an impenetrable cloud.'

'And why should your ignorance on these points drive you into low society and idle habits?' answered my female monitor. 'Is it manly to wait till fortune cast her beams upon you, when by exertion of your own energy you might distinguish yourself? Do not the pursuits of learning lie open to you—of manly ambition—of war? But no—not of war, that has already cost you too dear.'

'I will be what you wish me to be,' I replied with eagerness—'You have but to choose my path, and you shall see if I do not pursue it with energy, were it only because you command me.'

'Not because I command you,' said the maiden, 'but because reason, common sense, manhood, and, in one word, regard for your own safety, give the same counsel.'

'At least permit me to reply, that reason and sense never assumed a fairer form—of persuasion,' I hastily added; for she turned from me—nor did she give me another opportunity of continuing what I had to say till the next pause of the dance, when, determined to bring our dialogue to a point, I said, 'You mentioned manhood also, and in the same breath, personal danger. My ideas of manhood suggest that it is cowardice to retreat before dangers of a doubtful character. You, who appear to know so much of my fortunes that I might call you my guardian angel, tell me what these dangers are, that I may judge whether manhood calls on me to face or to fly them.'

She was evidently perplexed by this appeal.

'You make me pay dearly for acting as your humane adviser,' she replied at last: 'I acknowledge an interest in your fate, and yet I dare not tell you whence it arises; neither am I at liberty to say why, or from whom, you are in danger; but it is not less true that danger is near and imminent. Ask me no more, but, for your own sake, begone from this country. Elsewhere you are safe—here you do but invite your fate.'

'But am I doomed to bid thus farewell to almost the only human being who has showed an interest in my welfare? Do not say so—say that we shall meet again, and the hope shall be the leading star to regulate my course!'

'It is more than probable,' she said—'much more than probable, that we may never meet again. The help which I now render you is all that may be in my power; it is such as I should render to a blind man whom I might observe approaching the verge of a precipice; it ought to excite no surprise, and requires no gratitude.'

So saying, she again turned from me, nor did she address me until the dance was on the point of ending, when she said, 'Do not attempt to speak to or approach me again in the course of the night; leave the company as soon as you can, but not abruptly, and God be with you.'

I handed her to her seat, and did not quit the fair palm I held, without expressing my feelings by a gentle pressure. She coloured slightly, and withdrew her hand, but not angrily. Seeing the eyes of Cristal and Mabel sternly fixed on me, I bowed deeply, and withdrew from her; my heart saddening, and my eyes becoming dim in spite of me, as the shifting crowd hid us from each other.

It was my intention to have crept back to my comrade Willie, and resumed my bow with such spirit as I might, although, at the moment, I would have given half my income for an instant's solitude. But my retreat was cut off by Dame Martin, with the frankness—if it is not an inconsistent phrase—of rustic coquetry, that goes straight up to the point.

'Aye, lad, ye seem unco sune weary, to dance sae lightly? Better the nag that ambles a' the day, than him that makes a brattle for a mile, and then's dune wi' the road.'

This was a fair challenge, and I could not decline accepting it. Besides, I could see Dame Martin was queen of the revels; and so many were the rude and singular figures about me, that I was by no means certain whether I might not need some protection. I seized on her willing hand, and we took our places in the dance, where, if I did not acquit myself with all the accuracy of step and movement which I had before attempted, I at least came up to the expectations of my partner, who said, and almost swore, 'I was prime at it,' while, stimulated to her utmost exertions, she herself frisked like a kid, snapped her fingers like castanets, whooped like a Bacchanal, and bounded from the floor like a tennis-ball,—aye, till the colour of her garters was no particular mystery. She made the less secret of this, perhaps, that they were sky-blue, and fringed with silver.

The time has been that this would have been special fun; or rather, last night was the only time I can recollect these four years when it would not have been so; yet, at this moment, I cannot tell you how I longed to be rid of Dame Martin. I almost wished she would sprain one of those 'many-twinkling' ankles, which served her so alertly; and when, in the midst of her exuberant caprioling, I saw my former partner leaving the apartment, and with eyes, as I thought, turning towards me, this unwillingness to carry on the dance increased to such a point, that I was almost about to feign a sprain or a dislocation myself, in order to put an end to the performance. But there were around me scores of old women, all of whom looked as if they might have some sovereign recipe for such an accident; and, remembering Gil Blas, and his pretended disorder in the robber's cavern, I thought it as wise to play Dame Martin fair, and dance till she thought proper to dismiss me. What I did I resolved to do strenuously, and in the latter part of the exhibition I cut and sprang from the floor as high and as perpendicularly as Dame Martin herself; and received, I promise you, thunders of applause, for the common people always prefer exertion and agility to grace. At length Dame Martin could dance no more, and, rejoicing at my release, I led her to a seat, and took the privilege of a partner to attend her.

'Heh, sirs,' exclaimed Dame Martin, 'I am sair forfoughen! Troth! callant, I think ye hae been amaise the death o' me.'

I could only atone for the alleged offence by fetching her some refreshment, of which she readily partook.

'I have been lucky in my partners,' I said, 'first that pretty young lady, and then you, Mrs. Martin.'

'Hout wi' your fleeching,' said Dame Martin. 'Gae wa—gae wa, lad; dinna blaw in folk's lugs that gate; me and Miss Liliass even'd thegither! Na, na, lad—od, she is maybe four or five years younger than the like o' me,—bye and attour her gentle havings.'

'She is the laird's daughter?' said I, in as careless a tone of inquiry as I could assume.

'His daughter, man? Na, na, only his niece—and sib aneugh to him, I think.'

'Aye, indeed,' I replied; 'I thought she had borne his name?'

'She bears her ain name, and that's Liliass.'

'And has she no other name?' asked I.

'What needs she another till she gets a gudeman?' answered my Thetis, a little miffed perhaps—to use the women's phrase—that I turned the conversation upon my former partner, rather than addressed it to herself.

There was a little pause, which was interrupted by Dame Martin observing, 'They are standing up again.'

'True,' said I, having no mind to renew my late violent CAPRIOLE, and I must go help old Willie.'

Ere I could extricate myself, I heard poor Thetis address herself to a sort of merman in a jacket of seaman's blue, and a pair of trousers (whose hand, by the way, she had rejected at an earlier part of the evening) and intimate that she was now disposed to take a trip.

'Trip away, then, dearie,' said the vindictive man of the waters, without offering his hand; 'there,' pointing to the floor, 'is a roomy berth for you.'

Certain I had made one enemy, and perhaps two, I hastened to my original seat beside Willie, and began to handle my bow. But I could see that my conduct had made an unfavourable impression; the words, 'flory conceited chap,'—'hafflins gentle,' and at length, the still more alarming epithet of 'spy,' began to be buzzed about, and I was heartily glad when the apparition of Sam's visage at the door, who was already possessed of and draining a can of punch, gave me assurance that my means of retreat were at hand. I intimated as much to Willie, who probably had heard more of the murmurs of the company than I had, for he whispered, 'Aye, aye,—awa wi' ye—ower lang here—slide out canny—dinna let them see ye are on the tramp.'

I slipped half a guinea into the old man's hand, who answered, 'Truts pruts! nonsense but I 'se no refuse, trusting ye can afford it. Awa wi' ye—and if ony body stops ye, cry on me.'

I glided, by his advice, along the room as if looking for a partner, joined Sam, whom I disengaged with some difficulty from his can, and we left the cottage together in a manner to attract the least possible observation. The horses were tied in a neighbouring shed, and as the moon was up, and I was now familiar with the road, broken and complicated as it is, we soon reached the Shepherd's Bush, where the old landlady was sitting up waiting for us, under some anxiety of mind, to account for which she did not hesitate to tell me that some folks had gone to Brokenburn from her house, or neighbouring towns, that did not come so safe back again. 'Wandering Willie,' she said, 'was doubtless a kind of protection.'

Here Willie's wife, who was smoking in the chimney corner, took up the praises of her 'hinnie,' as she called him, and endeavoured to awaken my generosity afresh, by describing the dangers from which, as she was pleased to allege, her husband's countenance had assuredly been the means of preserving me. I was not, however, to be fooled out of more money at this time, and went to bed in haste, full of various cogitations.

I have since spent a couple of days betwixt Mount Sharon and this place, and betwixt reading, writing to thee this momentous history, forming plans for seeing the lovely Lillas, and—partly, I think, for the sake of contradiction—angling a little in spite of Joshua's scruples—though I am rather liking the amusement better as I begin to have some success in it.

And now, my dearest Alan, you are in full possession of my secret—let me as frankly into the recesses of your bosom. How do you feel towards this fair ignis fatuus, this lily of the desert? Tell me honestly; for however the recollection of her may haunt my own mind, my love for Alan Fairford surpasses the love of woman, I know, too, that when you DO love, it will be to

Love once and love no more.

A deep-consuming passion, once kindled in a breast so steady as yours, would never be extinguished but with life. I am of another and more volatile temper, and though I shall open your next with a trembling hand and uncertain heart, yet let it bring a frank confession that this fair unknown has made a deeper impression on your gravity than you reckoned for, and you will see I can tear the arrow from my own wound, barb and all. In the meantime, though I have formed schemes once more to see her, I will, you may rely on it, take no step for putting them into practice. I have refrained from this hitherto, and I give you my word of honour, I shall continue to do so; yet why should you need any further assurance from one who is so entirely yours as D.L.

PS.—I shall be on thorns till I receive your answer. I read, and re-read your letter, and cannot for my soul discover what your real sentiments are. Sometimes I think you write of her as one in jest—and sometimes I think that cannot be. Put me at ease as soon as possible.

LETTER XIII

ALAN FAIRFORD TO DARSIE LATIMER

I write on the instant, as you direct; and in a tragi-comic humour, for I have a tear in my eye and a smile on my cheek. Dearest Darsie, sure never a being but yourself could be so generous—sure never a being but yourself could be so absurd! I remember when you were a boy you wished to make your fine new whip a present to old Aunt Peggy, merely because she admired it; and now, with like unreflecting and inappropriate liberality, you would resign your beloved to a smoke-dried young sophister, who cares not one of the hairs which it is his occupation to split, for all the daughters of Eve. I in love with your Lillas—your Green Mantle—your unknown enchantress!—why I scarce saw her for five minutes, and even then only the tip of her chin was distinctly visible. She was well made, and the tip of her chin was of a most promising cast for the rest of the face; but, Heaven save you! she came upon business! and for a lawyer to fall in love with a pretty client on a single consultation, would be as wise as if he became enamoured of a particularly bright sunbeam which chanced for a moment to gild his bar-wig. I give you my word I am heart-whole and moreover, I assure you, that before I suffer a woman to sit near my heart's core, I must see her full face, without mask or mantle, aye, and know a good deal of her mind into the bargain. So never fret yourself on my account, my kind and generous Darsie; but, for your own sake, have a care and let not an idle attachment, so lightly taken up, lead you into serious danger.

On this subject I feel so apprehensive, that now when I am decorated with the honours of the gown, I should have abandoned my career at the very starting to come to you, but for my father having contrived to clog my heels with fetters of a professional nature. I will tell you the matter at length, for it is comical enough; and why should not you list to my juridical adventures, as well as I to those of your fiddling knight-errantry?

It was after dinner, and I was considering how I might best introduce to my father the private resolution I had formed to set off for Dumfriesshire, or whether I had not better run away at once, and plead my excuse by letter, when, assuming the peculiar look with which he communicates any of his intentions respecting me, that he suspects may not be altogether acceptable, 'Alan,' he said, 'ye now wear a gown—ye have opened shop, as we would say of a more mechanical profession; and, doubtless, ye think the floor of the courts is strewed with guineas, and that ye have only to stoop down to gather them?'

'I hope I am sensible, sir,' I replied, 'that I have some knowledge and practice to acquire, and must stoop for that in the first place.'

'It is well said,' answered my father; and, always afraid to give too much encouragement, added, 'Very well said, if it be well acted up to—Stoop to get knowledge and practice is the very word. Ye know very well, Alan, that in the other faculty who study the ARS MEDENDI, before the young doctor gets to the bedsides of palaces, he must, as they call it, walk the hospitals; and cure Lazarus of his sores, before he be admitted to prescribe for Dives, when he has gout or indigestion'—

'I am aware, sir, that'—

'Whisht—do not interrupt the court. Well—also the surgeons have a useful practice, by which they put their apprentices and tyrones to work; upon senseless dead bodies, to which, as they can do no good, so they certainly can do as little harm; while at the same time the tyro, or apprentice, gains experience, and becomes fit to whip off a leg or arm from a living subject, as cleanly as ye would slice an onion.'

'I believe I guess your meaning, sir,' answered I; 'and were it not for a very particular engagement'—

'Do not speak to me of engagements; but whisht—there is a good lad—and do not interrupt the court.'

My father, you know, is apt—be it said with all filial duty—to be a little prolix in his harangues. I had nothing for it but to lean back and listen.

'Maybe you think, Alan, because I have, doubtless, the management of some actions in dependence, whilk my worthy clients have intrusted me with, that I may think of airing them your way INSTANTER; and so setting you up in practice, so far as my small business or influence may go; and, doubtless, Alan, that is a day whilk I hope may come round. But then, before I give, as the proverb hath it, "My own fish-guts to my own sea-maws," I must, for the sake of my own character, be very sure that my sea-maw can pick them to some purpose. What say ye?'

'I am so far,' answered I, 'from wishing to get early into practice, sir, that I would willingly bestow a few days'—

'In further study, ye would say, Alan. But that is not the way either—ye must walk the hospitals—ye must cure Lazarus—ye must cut and carve on a departed subject, to show your skill.'

'I am sure,' I replied, 'I will undertake the cause of any poor man with pleasure, and bestow as much pains upon it as if it were a duke's; but for the next two or three days'—

'They must be devoted to close study, Alan—very close study indeed; for ye must stand primed for a hearing, IN PRESENTIA DOMINORUM, upon Tuesday next.'

'I, sir?' I replied in astonishment—'I have not opened my mouth in the Outer House yet!'

'Never mind the court of the Gentiles, man,' said my father; 'we will have you into the Sanctuary at once—over shoes, over boots.'

'But, sir, I should really spoil any cause thrust on me so hastily.'

'Ye cannot spoil it, Alan,' said my father, rubbing his hands with much complacency; 'that is the very cream of the business, man—it is just, as I said before, a subject upon which all the TYRONES have been trying their whittles for fifteen years; and as there have been about ten or a dozen agents concerned, and each took his own way, the case is come to that pass, that Stair or Amiston could not mend it; and I do not think even you, Alan, can do it much harm—ye may get credit by it, but ye can lose none.'

'And pray what is the name of my happy client, sir?' said I, ungraciously enough, I believe.

'It is a well-known name in the Parliament House,' replied my father. 'To say the truth, I expect him every moment; it is Peter Peebles.' [See Note 4.]

'Peter Peebles!' exclaimed I, in astonishment; 'he is an insane beggar—as poor as Job, and as mad as a March hare!'

'He has been pleaining in the court for fifteen years,' said my father, in a tone of commiseration, which seemed to acknowledge that this fact was enough to account for the poor man's condition both in mind and circumstances.

'Besides, sir,' I added, 'he is on the Poor's Roll; and you know there are advocates regularly appointed to manage those cases; and for me to presume to interfere'—

'Whisht, Alan!—never interrupt the court—all THAT is managed for ye like a tee'd ball' (my father sometimes draws his similes from his once favourite game of golf); 'you must know, Alan, that Peter's cause was to have been opened by young Dumtoustie—ye may ken the lad, a son of Dumtoustie of that ilk, member of Parliament for the county of—, and a nephew of the laird's younger brother, worthy Lord Bladderskate, which ye are aware sounds as like being akin to a peatship [Formerly, a lawyer, supposed to be under the peculiar patronage of any particular judge, was invidiously termed his PEAT or PET.] and a sheriffdom, as a sieve is sib to a riddle. Now, Peter Drudgeit, my lord's clerk, came to me this morning in the House, like ane bereft of his wits; for it seems that young Dumtoustie is ane of the Poor's lawyers, and Peter Peebles's process had been remitted to him of course. But so soon as the harebrained goose saw the pokes [Process-bags.] (as indeed, Alan, they are none of the least) he took fright, called for his nag, lap on, and away to the country is he gone; and so? said Peter, my lord is at his wit's end wi' vexation, and shame, to see his nevy break off the course at the very starting. "I'll tell you, Peter," said I, "were I my lord, and a friend or kinsman of mine should leave the town while the court was sitting, that kinsman, or be he what he liked, should never darken my door again." And then, Alan, I thought to turn the ball our own way; and I said that you were a gey sharp birkie, just off the irons, and if it would oblige my lord, and so forth, you would open Peter's cause on Tuesday, and make some handsome apology for the necessary absence of your learned friend, and the loss which your client and the court had sustained, and so forth. Peter lap at the proposition like a cock at a grossart; for, he said, the only chance was to get a new hand, that did not ken the charge he was taking upon him; for there was not a lad of two sessions' standing that was not dead-sick of Peter Peebles and his cause; and he advised me to break the matter gently to you at the first; but I told him you were, a good bairn, Alan, and had no will and pleasure in these matters but mine.'

What could I say, Darsie, in answer to this arrangement, so very well meant—so very vexatious at the same time? To imitate the defection and flight of young Dumtoustie, was at once to destroy my father's hopes of me for ever; nay, such is the keenness with which he regards all connected with his profession, it might have been a step to breaking his heart. I was obliged, therefore, to bow in sad acquiescence, when my father called to James Wilkinson to bring the two bits of pokes he would find on his table.

Exit James, and presently re-enters, bending under the load of two huge leathern bags, full of papers to the brim, and labelled on the greasy backs with the magic impress of the clerks of court, and the title, PEEBLES AGAINST PLAINSTANES. This huge mass was deposited on the table, and my father, with no ordinary glee in his countenance, began to draw out; the various bundles of papers, secured by none of your red tape or whipcord, but stout, substantial casts of tarred rope, such as might have held small craft at their moorings.

I made a last and desperate effort to get rid of the impending job. 'I am really afraid, sir, that this case seems so much complicated, and there is so little time to prepare, that we had better move the court to supersede it till next session.'

'How, sir?—how, Alan?' said my father—'Would you approbate and reprobate, sir? You have accepted the poor man's cause, and if you have not his fee in your pocket, it is because he has none to give you; and now would you approbate and reprobate in the same breath of your mouth? Think of your oath of office, Alan, and your duty to your father, my dear boy.'

Once more, what could I say? I saw from my father's hurried and alarmed manner, that nothing could vex him so much as failing in the point he had determined to carry, and once more intimated my readiness to do my best, under every disadvantage.

'Well, well, my boy,' said my father, 'the Lord will make your days long in the land, for the honour you have given to your father's grey hairs. You may find wiser advisers, Alan, but none that can wish you better.'

My father, you know, does not usually give way to expressions of affection, and they are interesting in proportion to their rarity. My eyes began to fill at seeing his glisten; and my delight at having given him such sensible gratification would have been unmixed but for the thoughts of you. These out of the question, I could have grappled with the bags, had they been as large as corn-sacks. But, to turn what was grave into farce, the door opened, and Wilkinson ushered in Peter Peebles.

You must have seen this original, Darsie, who, like others in the same predicament, continues to haunt the courts of justice, where he has made shipwreck of time, means, and understanding. Such insane paupers have sometimes seemed to me to resemble wrecks lying upon the shoals on the Goodwin Sands, or in Yarmouth Roads, warning other vessels to keep aloof from the banks on which they have been lost; or rather, such ruined clients are like scarecrows and potato-bogies, distributed through the courts to scare away fools from the scene of litigation.

The identical Peter wears a huge greatcoat threadbare and patched itself, yet carefully so disposed and secured by what buttons remain, and many supplementary pins, as to conceal the still more infirm state of his under garments. The shoes and stockings of a ploughman were, however, seen to meet at his knees with a pair of brownish, blackish breeches; a rusty-coloured handkerchief, that has been black in its day, surrounded his throat, and was an apology for linen. His hair, half grey, half black, escaped in elf-locks around a huge wig, made of tow, as it seemed to me, and so much shrunk that it stood up on the very top of his head; above which he plants, when covered, an immense cocked hat, which, like the chieftain's banner in an ancient battle, may be seen any sederunt day betwixt nine and ten, high towering above all the fluctuating and changeful scene in the Outer House, where his eccentricities often make him the centre of a group of petulant and teasing boys, who exercise upon him every art of ingenious torture. His countenance, originally that of a portly, comely burgess, is now emaciated with poverty and anxiety, and rendered wild by an insane lightness about the eyes; a withered and blighted skin and complexion; features begrimed with snuff, charged with the self-importance peculiar to insanity; and a habit of perpetually speaking to himself. Such was my unfortunate client; and I must allow, Darsie, that my profession had need to do a great deal of good, if, as is much to be feared, it brings many individuals to such a pass.

After we had been, with a good deal of form, presented to each other, at which time I easily saw by my father's manner that he was desirous of supporting Peter's character in my eyes, as much as circumstances would permit, 'Alan,' he said, 'this is the gentleman who has agreed to accept of you as his counsel, in place of young Dumtoustie.'

'Entirely out of favour to my old acquaintance your father, said Peter, with a benign and patronizing countenance, 'out of respect to your father, and my old intimacy with Lord Bladderskate. Otherwise, by the REGIAM MAJESTATEM! I would have presented a petition and complaint against Daniel Dumtoustie, Advocate, by name and surname—I would, by all the practiques!—I know the forms of process; and I am not to be trifled with.'

My father here interrupted my client, and reminded him that there was a good deal of business to do, as he proposed to give the young counsel an outline of the state of the conjoined process, with a view to letting him into the merits of the cause, disencumbered from the points of form. 'I have made a short abbreviate, Mr. Peebles,' said he; 'having sat up late last night, and employed much of this morning in wading through these papers, to save Alan some trouble, and I am now about to state the result.'

'I will state it myself,' said Peter, breaking in without reverence upon his solicitor.

'No, by no means,' said my father; 'I am your agent for the time.'

'Mine eleventh in number,' said Peter; 'I have a new one every year; I wish I could get a new coat as regularly.'

'Your agent for the time,' resumed my father; 'and you, who are acquainted with the forms, know that the client states the cause to the agent—the agent to the counsel!—'

'The counsel to the Lord Ordinary,' continued Peter, once set a-going, like the peal of an alarm clock, 'the Ordinary to the Inner House, the President to the Bench. It is just like the rope to the man, the man to the ox, the ox to the water, the water to the fire!—'

'Hush, for Heaven's sake, Mr. Peebles,' said my father, cutting his recitation short; 'time wears on—we must get to business—you must not interrupt the court, you know.—Hem, hem! From this abbreviate it appears!—'

'Before you begin,' said Peter Peebles 'I'll thank you to order me a morsel of bread and cheese, or some cauld meat, or broth, or the like alimentary provision; I was so anxious to see your son, that I could not eat a mouthful of dinner.'

Heartily glad, I believe, to have so good a chance of stopping his client's mouth effectually, my father ordered some cold meat; to which James Wilkinson, for the honour of the house, was about to add the brandy bottle, which remained on the sideboard, but, at a wink from my father, supplied its place with small beer. Peter charged the provisions with the rapacity of a famished lion; and so well did the diversion engage him, that though, while my father stated the case, he looked at him repeatedly, as if he meant to interrupt his statement, yet he always found more agreeable employment for his mouth, and returned to the cold beef with an avidity which convinced me he had not had such an opportunity for many a day of satiating his appetite. Omitting much formal phraseology, and many legal details, I will endeavour to give you, in exchange for your fiddler's tale, the history of a litigant, or rather, the history of his lawsuit.

'Peter Peebles and Paul Plainstones,' said my father, entered into partnership, in the year—, as mercers and linendrapers, in the Luckenbooths, and carried on a great line of business to mutual advantage. But the learned counsel needeth not to be told, SOCIETAS EST MATER DISCORDIARUM, partnership oft makes pleaship. The company being dissolved by mutual consent, in the year—, the affairs had to be wound up, and after certain attempts to settle the matter extra-judicially, it was at last brought into the court, and has branched out into several distinct processes, most of whilk have been conjoined by the Ordinary. It is to the state of these processes that counsel's attention is particularly directed. There is the original action of Peebles v. Plainstones, convening him for payment of 3000l., less or more, as alleged balance due by Plainstones. Secondly, there is a counter action, in which Plainstones is pursuer and Peebles defender, for 2500l., less or more, being balance alleged per contra, to be due by Peebles. Thirdly, Mr. Peeble's seventh agent advised an action of Compt and Reckoning at his instance, wherein what balance should prove due on either side might be fairly struck and ascertained. Fourthly, to meet the hypothetical case, that Peebles might be found liable in a balance to Plainstones, Mr. Wildgoose, Mr. Peebles's eighth agent, recommended a Multiplepinding, to bring all parties concerned into the field.'

My brain was like to turn at this account of lawsuit within lawsuit, like a nest of chip-boxes, with all of which I was expected to make myself acquainted.

'I understand,' I said, 'that Mr. Peebles claims a sum of money from Plainstones—how then can he be his debtor? and if not his debtor, how can he bring a Multiplepinding, the very summons of which sets forth, that the pursuer does owe certain monies, which he is desirous to pay by warrant of a judge?' [Multiplepinding is, I believe, equivalent to what is called in England a case of Double Distress.]

'Ye know little of the matter, I doubt, friend,' said Mr. Peebles; 'a Multiplepinding is the safest REMEDIUM JURIS in the whole; form of process. I have known it conjoined with a declarator of marriage.—Your beef is excellent,' he said to my father, who in vain endeavoured to resume his legal disquisition; 'but something highly powdered—and the twopenny is undeniable; but it is small swipes—small swipes—more of hop than malt—with your leave, I'll try your black bottle.'

My father started to help him with his own hand, and in due measure; but, infinitely to my amusement, Peter got possession of the bottle by the neck, and my father's ideas of hospitality were far too scrupulous to permit his attempting, by any direct means, to redeem it; so that Peter returned to the table triumphant, with his prey in his clutch.

'Better have a wine-glass, Mr. Peebles,' said my father, in an admonitory tone, 'you will find it pretty strong.'

'If the kirk is ower muckle, we can sing mass in the quire,' said Peter, helping himself in the goblet out of which he had been drinking the small beer. 'What is it, usquebaugh?—BRANDY, as I am an honest man! I had almost forgotten the name and taste of brandy. Mr. Fairford elder, your good health' (a mouthful of brandy), 'Mr. Alan Fairford, wishing you well through your arduous undertaking' (another go-down of the comfortable liquor). 'And now, though you have given a tolerable breviate of this great lawsuit, of whilk everybody has heard something that has walked the boards in the Outer House (here's to ye again, by way of interim decreet) yet ye have omitted to speak a word of the arrestments.'

'I was just coming to that point, Mr. Peebles.'

'Or of the action of suspension of the charge on the bill.'

'I was just coming to that.'

'Or the advocacy of the Sheriff-Court process.'

'I was just coming to it.'

'As Tweed comes to Melrose, I think,' said the litigant; and then filling his goblet about a quarter full of brandy, as if in absence of mind, 'Oh, Mr. Alan Fairford, ye are a lucky man to buckle to such a cause as mine at the very outset! it is like a specimen of all causes, man. By the Regiam, there is not a REMEDIUM JURIS in the practiques but ye'll find a spice o't. Here's to your getting weel through with it—Pshut—I am drinking naked spirits, I think. But if the heathen he ower strong, we'll christen him with the brewer' (here he added a little small beer to his beverage, paused, rolled his eyes, winked, and proceeded),—'Mr. Fairford—the action of assault and battery, Mr. Fairford, when I compelled the villain Plainstones to pull my nose within two steps of King Charles's statue, in the Parliament Close—there I had him in a hose-net. Never man could tell me how to shape that process—no counsel that ever solded mind could condescend and say whether it were best to proceed by way of petition and complaint, AD VINDICTAM PUBLICAM, with consent of his Majesty's advocate, or by action on the statute for battery PENDENTE LITE, whilk would be the winning my plea at once, and so getting a back-door out of court.—By the Regiam, that beef and brandy is unco het at my heart—I maun try the ale again' (sipped a little beer); 'and the ale's but cauld, I maun e'en put in the rest of the brandy.'

He was as good as his word, and proceeded in so loud and animated a style of elocution, thumping the table, drinking and snuffing alternately, that my father, abandoning all attempts to interrupt him, sat silent and ashamed, suffering, and anxious for the conclusion of the scene.

'And then to come back to my pet process of all—my battery and assault process, when I had the good luck to provoke him to pull my nose at the very threshold of the court, whilk was the very thing I wanted—Mr. Pest, ye ken him, Daddie Fairford? Old Pest was for making it out HAMESUCKEN, for he said the court might be said—said—ugh!—to be my dwelling-place. I dwell mair there than ony gate else, and the essence of hamesucken is to strike a man in his dwelling-place—mind that, young advocate—and so there's hope Plainstones may be hanged, as many has for a less matter; for, my lords,—will Pest say to the Justiciary bodies,—my lords, the Parliament House is Peebles' place of dwelling, says he—being COMMUNE FORUM, and COMMUNE FORUM EST COMMUNE

DOMICILIUM—Lass, fetch another glass of and score it—time to gae hame—by the practiques, I cannot find the jug—yet there's twa of them, I think. By the Regiam, Fairford—Daddie Fairford—lend us twal pennies to buy sneeshing, mine is done—Macer, call another cause.'

The box fell from his hands, and his body would at the same time have fallen from the chair, had not I supported him.

'This is intolerable,' said my father—'Call a chairman, James Wilkinson, to carry this degraded, worthless, drunken beast home.'

When Peter Peebles was removed from this memorable consultation, under the care of an able-bodied Celt, my father hastily bundled up the papers, as a showman, whose exhibition has miscarried, hastes to remove his booth. 'Here are my memoranda, Alan,' he said, in a hurried way; 'look them carefully over—compare them with the processes, and turn it in your head before Tuesday. Many a good speech has been made for a beast of a client; and hark ye, lad, hark ye—I never intended to cheat you of your fee when all was done, though I would have liked to have heard the speech first; but there is nothing like coming the horse before the journey. Here are five goud guineas in a silk purse—of your poor mother's netting, Alan—she would have been a blithe woman to have seen her young son with a gown on his back—but no more of that—be a good boy, and to the work like a tiger.'

I did set to work, Darsie; for who could resist such motives? With my father's assistance, I have mastered the details, confused as they are; and on Tuesday I shall plead as well for Peter Peebles as I could for a duke. Indeed, I feel my head so clear on the subject as to be able to write this long letter to you; into which, however, Peter and his lawsuit have insinuated themselves so far as to show you how much they at present occupy my thoughts. Once more, be careful of yourself, and mindful of me, who am ever thine, while ALAN FAIRFORD.

From circumstances, to be hereafter mentioned, it was long ere this letter reached the person to whom it was addressed.

PART II

CHAPTER I NARRATIVE

The advantage of laying before the reader, in the words of the actors themselves, the adventures which we must otherwise have narrated in our own, has given great popularity to the publication of epistolary correspondence, as practised by various great authors, and by ourselves in the preceding chapters. Nevertheless, a genuine correspondence of this kind (and Heaven forbid it should be in any respect sophisticated by interpolations of our own!) can seldom be found to contain all in which it is necessary to instruct the reader for his full comprehension of the story. Also it must often happen that various prolixities and redundancies occur in the course of an interchange of letters, which must hang as a dead weight on the progress of the narrative. To avoid this dilemma, some biographers have used the letters of the personages concerned, or liberal extracts from them, to describe particular incidents, or express the sentiments which they entertained; while they connect them occasionally with such portions of narrative, as may serve to carry on the thread of the story.

It is thus that the adventurous travellers who explore the summit of Mont Blanc now move on through the crumbling snowdrift so slowly, that their progress is almost imperceptible, and anon abridge their journey by springing over the intervening chasms which cross their path, with the assistance of their pilgrim-staves. Or, to make a briefer simile, the course of story-telling which we have for the present adopted, resembles the original discipline of the dragoons, who were trained to serve either on foot or horseback, as the emergencies of the service required. With this explanation, we shall proceed to narrate some circumstances which Alan Fairford did not, and could not, write to his correspondent.

Our reader, we trust, has formed somewhat approaching to a distinct idea of the principal characters who have appeared before him during our narrative; but in case our good opinion of his sagacity has been exaggerated, and in order to satisfy such as are addicted to the laudable practice of SKIPPING (with whom we have at times a strong fellow-feeling), the following particulars may not be superfluous.

Mr. Saunders Fairford, as he was usually called, was a man of business of the old school, moderate in his charges, economical and even niggardly in his expenditure, strictly honest in conducting his own affairs and those of his clients, but taught by long experience to be wary and suspicious in observing the motions of others. Punctual as the clock of Saint Giles tolled nine, the neat dapper form of the little hale old gentleman was seen at the threshold of the court hall, or at farthest, at the head of the Back Stairs, trimly dressed in a complete suit of snuff-coloured brown, with stockings of silk or woollen as, suited the weather; a bob-wig, and a small cocked hat; shoes blacked as Warren would have blacked them; silver shoe-buckles, and a gold stock-buckle. A nosegay in summer, and a sprig of holly in winter, completed his well-known dress and appearance. His manners corresponded with his attire, for they were scrupulously civil, and not a little formal. He was an elder of the kirk, and, of course, zealous for King George and the Government even to slaying, as he had showed by taking up arms in their cause. But then, as he had clients and connexions of business among families of opposite political tenets, he was particularly cautious to use all the conventional phrases which the civility of the time had devised, as an admissible mode of language betwixt the two parties. Thus he spoke sometimes of the Chevalier, but never either of the Prince, which would have been sacrificing his own principles, or of the Pretender, which would have been offensive to those of others. Again, he usually designated the Rebellion as the AFFAIR of 1745, and spoke of any one engaged in it as a person who had been OUT at a certain period. [OLD-FASHIONED SCOTTISH CIVILITY.—Such were literally the points of politeness observed in general society during the author's youth, where it was by no means unusual in a company assembled by chance, to find individuals who had borne arms on one side or other in the civil broils of 1745. Nothing, according to my recollection, could be more gentle and decorous than the respect these old enemies paid to each other's prejudices. But in this I speak generally. I have witnessed one or two explosions.] So that, on the whole, Mr. Fairford was a man much liked and respected on all sides, though his friends would not have been sorry if he had given a dinner more frequently, as his little cellar contained some choice old wine, of which, on such rare occasions he was no niggard.

The whole pleasure of this good old-fashioned man of method, besides that which he really felt in the discharge of his daily business, was the hope to see his son Alan, the only fruit of a union which death early dissolved, attain what in the father's eyes was the proudest of all distinctions—the rank and fame of a well-employed lawyer.

Every profession has its peculiar honours, and Mr. Fairford's mind was constructed upon so limited and exclusive a plan, that he valued nothing save the objects of ambition which his own presented. He would have shuddered at Alan's acquiring the renown of a hero, and laughed with scorn at the equally barren laurels of literature; it was by the path of the law alone that he was desirous to see him rise to eminence, and the probabilities of success or disappointment were the thoughts of his father by day, and his dream by night.

The disposition of Alan Fairford, as well as his talents, were such as to encourage his father's expectations. He had acuteness of intellect, joined to habits of long and patient study, improved no doubt by the discipline of his father's house; to which, generally speaking, he conformed with the utmost docility, expressing no wish for greater or more frequent relaxation than consisted with his father's anxious and severe restrictions. When he did indulge in any juvenile frolics, his father had the candour to lay the whole blame upon his more mercurial companion, Darsie Latimer.

This youth, as the reader must be aware, had been received as an inmate into the family of Mr. Fairford, senior, at a time when some of the delicacy of constitution which had abridged the life of his consort began to show itself in the son, and when the father was, of course, peculiarly disposed to indulge his slightest wish. That the young Englishman was able to pay a considerable board, was a matter of no importance to Mr. Fairford; it was enough that his presence seemed to make his son cheerful and happy. He was compelled to allow that 'Darsie was a fine lad, though unsettled,' and he would have had some difficulty in getting rid of him, and the apprehensions which his levities excited, had it not been for the voluntary excursion which gave rise to the preceding correspondence, and in which Mr. Fairford secretly rejoiced, as affording the means of separating Alan from his gay companion, at least until he should have assumed, and become accustomed to, the duties of his dry and laborious profession.

But the absence of Darsie was far from promoting the end which the elder Mr. Fairford had expected and desired. The young men were united by the closest bonds of intimacy; and the more so, that neither of them sought nor desired to admit any others into their society. Alan Fairford was averse to general company, from a disposition naturally reserved, and Darsie Latimer from a painful sense of his own unknown origin, peculiarly afflicting in a country where high and low are professed genealogists. The young men were all in all to each other; it is no wonder, therefore, that their separation was painful, and that its effects upon Alan

Fairford, joined to the anxiety occasioned by the tenor of his friend's letters, greatly exceeded what the senior had anticipated. The young man went through his usual duties, his studies, and the examinations to which he was subjected, but with nothing like the zeal and assiduity which he had formerly displayed; and his anxious and observant father saw but too plainly that his heart was with his absent comrade.

A philosopher would have given way to this tide of feeling, in hopes to have diminished its excess, and permitted the youths to have been some time together, that their intimacy might have been broken off by degrees; but Mr. Fairford only saw the more direct mode of continued restraint, which, however, he was desirous of veiling under some plausible pretext. In the anxiety which he felt on this occasion, he had held communication with an old acquaintance, Peter Drudgeit, with whom the reader is partly acquainted. 'Alan,' he said, 'was ance wud, and ay waur; and he was expecting every moment when he would start off in a wildgoose-chase after the callant Latimer; Will Sampson, the horse-hirer in Candlemaker Row, had given him a hint that Alan had been looking for a good hack, to go to the country for a few days. And then to oppose him downright—he could not but think on the way his poor mother was removed. Would to Heaven he was yoked to some tight piece of business, no matter whether well or ill paid, but some job that would hamshackle him at least until the courts rose, if it were but for decency's sake.'

Peter Drudgeit sympathized, for Peter had a son, who, reason or none, would needs exchange the torn and inky fustian sleeves for the blue jacket and white lapelle; and he suggested, as the reader knows, the engaging our friend Alan in the matter of Poor Peter Peebles, just opened by the desertion of young Dumtoustie, whose defection would be at the same time concealed; and this, Drudgeit said, 'would be felling two dogs with one stone.'

With these explanations, the reader will hold a man of the elder Fairford's sense and experience free from the hazardous and impatient curiosity with which boys fling a puppy into a deep pond, merely to see if the creature can swim. However confident in his son's talents, which were really considerable, he would have been very sorry to have involved him in the duty of pleading a complicated and difficult case, upon his very first appearance at the bar, had he not resorted to it as an effectual way to prevent the young man from taking a step which his habits of thinking represented as a most fatal one at his outset of life.

Between two evils, Mr. Fairford chose that which was in his own apprehension the least; and, like a brave officer sending forth his son to battle, rather chose he should die upon the breach, than desert the conflict with dishonour. Neither did he leave him to his own unassisted energies. Like Alpheus preceding Hercules, he himself encountered the Augean mass of Peter Peebles' law-matters. It was to the old man a labour of love to place in a clear and undistorted view the real merits of this case, which the carelessness and blunders of Peter's former solicitors had converted into a huge chaotic mass of unintelligible technicality; and such was his skill and industry, that he was able, after the severe toil of two or three days, to present to the consideration of the young counsel the principal facts of the case, in a light equally simple and comprehensible. With the assistance of a solicitor so affectionate and indefatigable, Alan Fairford was enabled, then the day of trial arrived, to walk towards the court, attended by his anxious yet encouraging parent, with some degree of confidence that he would lose no reputation upon this arduous occasion.

They were met at the door of the court by Poor Peter Peebles in his usual plenitude of wig and celsitude of hat. He seized on the young pleader like a lion on his prey. 'How is a' wi' you, Mr. Alan—how is a' wi' you, man? The awfu' day is come at last—a day that will be lang minded in this house. Poor Peter Peebles against Plainstones—conjoined proceases—Hearing in presence—stands for the Short Roll for this day—I have not been able to sleep for a week for thinking of it, and, I dare to say, neither has the Lord President himself—for such a cause!! But your father garr'd me tak a wee drap ower muckle of his pint bottle the other night; it's no right to mix brandy wi' business, Mr. Fairford. I would have been the waur o' liquor if I would have drank as muckle as you twa would have had me. But there's a time for a' things, and if ye will dine with me after the case is heard, or whilk is the same, or maybe better, 'LL gang my ways hame wi' YOU, and I winna object to a cheerfu' glass, within the bounds of moderation.'

Old Fairford shrugged his shoulders and hurried past the client, saw his son wrapped in the sable bombazine, which, in his eyes, was more venerable than an archbishop's lawn, and could not help fondly patting his shoulder, and whispering to him to take courage, and show he was worthy to wear it. The party entered the Outer Hall of the court, (once the place of meeting of the ancient Scottish Parliament), and which corresponds to the use of Westminster Hall in England, serving as a vestibule to the Inner House, as it is termed, and a place of dominion to certain sedentary personages called Lords Ordinary.

The earlier part of the morning was spent by old Fairford in reiterating his instructions to Alan, and in running from one person to another, from whom he thought he could still glean some grains of information, either concerning the point at issue, or collateral cases. Meantime, Poor Peter Peebles, whose shallow brain was altogether unable to bear the importance of the moment, kept as close to his young counsel as shadow to substance, affected now to speak loud, now to whisper in his ear, now to deck his ghastly countenance with wreathed smiles, now to cloud it with a shade of deep and solemn importance, and anon to contort it with the sneer of scorn and derision. These moods of the client's mind were accompanied with singular 'mockings and mowings,' fantastic gestures, which the man of rags and litigation deemed appropriate to his changes of countenance. Now he brandished his arm aloft, now thrust his fist straight out, as if to knock his opponent down. Now he laid his open palm on his bosom, and now hinging it abroad, he gallantly snapped his fingers in the air.

These demonstrations, and the obvious shame and embarrassment of Alan Fairford, did not escape the observation of the juvenile idlers in the hall. They did not, indeed, approach Peter with their usual familiarity, from some feeling of deference towards Fairford, though many accused him of conceit in presuming to undertake, at this early stage of his practice, a case of considerable difficulty. But Alan, notwithstanding this forbearance, was not the less sensible that he and his companion were the subjects of many a passing jest, and many a shout of laughter, with which that region at all times abounds.

At length the young counsel's patience gave way, and as it threatened to carry his presence of mind and recollection along with it, Alan frankly told his father, that unless he was relieved from the infliction of his client's personal presence and instructions, he must necessarily throw up his brief, and decline pleading the case.

'Hush, hush, my dear Alan,' said the old gentleman, almost at his own wit's end upon hearing this dilemma; 'dinna mind the silly ne'er-do-weel; we cannot keep the man from hearing his own cause, though he be not quite right in the head.'

'On my life, sir,' answered Alan, 'I shall be unable to go on, he drives everything out of my remembrance; and if I attempt to speak seriously of the injuries he has sustained, and the condition he is reduced to, how can I expect but that the very appearance of such an absurd scarecrow will turn it all into ridicule?'

'There is something in that,' said Saunders Fairford, glancing a look at Poor Peter, and then cautiously inserting his forefinger under his bob-wig, in order to rub his temple and aid his invention; 'he is no figure for the fore-bar to see without laughing; but how to get rid of him? To speak sense, or anything like it, is the last thing he will listen to. Stay, aye,—Alan, my darling, hae patience; I'll get him off on the instant, like a goffw' ba'.'

So saying, he hastened to his ally, Peter Drudgeit, who on seeing him with marks of haste in his gait, and care upon his countenance, clapped his pen behind his ear, with 'What's the stir now, Mr. Saunders? Is there aught wrang?'

'Here's a dollar, man,' said Mr. Saunders; 'now, or never, Peter, do me a good turn. Yonder's your namesake, Peter Peebles, will drive the swine through our bonny hanks of yarn; get him over to John's Coffeehouse, man—gie him his meridian—keep him there, drunk or sober, till the hearing is ower.' [The simile is obvious, from the old manufacture of Scotland, when the gudewife's thrift, as the yarn wrought in the winter was called, when laid down to bleach by the burn-side, was peculiarly exposed to the inroads of pigs, seldom well regulated about a Scottish farm-house.]

'Eneugh said,' quoth Peter Drudgeit, no way displeased with his own share in the service required, 'We'se do your bidding.'

Accordingly, the scribe was presently seen whispering in the ear of Peter Peebles, whose response came forth in the following broken form:—

'Leave the court for ae minute on this great day of judgement? not I, by the Reg—Eh! what? Brandy, did ye say—French brandy?—couldna ye fetch a stoup to the bar under your coat, man? Impossible? Nay, if it's clean impossible, and if we have an hour good till they get through the single bill and the summar-roll, I carena if I cross the close wi' you; I am sure I need something to keep my heart up this awful day; but I'll no stay above an instant—not above a minute of time—nor drink aboon a single gill.'

In a few minutes afterwards, the two Peters were seen moving through the Parliament Close (which new-fangled affectation has termed a Square), the triumphant Drudgeit leading captive the passive Peebles, whose legs conducted him towards the dramshop, while his reverted eyes were fixed upon the court. They dived

into the Cimmerian abysses of John's Coffeehouse, [See Note 5.] formerly the favourite rendezvous of the classical and genial Doctor Pitcairn, and were for the present seen no more.

Relieved from his tormentor, Alan Fairford had time to rally his recollections, which, in the irritation of his spirits, had nearly escaped him, and to prepare himself for a task, the successful discharge or failure in which must, he was aware, have the deepest influence upon his fortunes. He had pride, was not without a consciousness of talent, and the sense of his father's feelings upon the subject impelled him to the utmost exertion. Above all, he had that sort of self-command which is essential to success in every arduous undertaking, and he was constitutionally free from that feverish irritability by which those whose over-active imaginations exaggerate difficulties, render themselves incapable of encountering such when they arrive.

Having collected all the scattered and broken associations which were necessary, Alan's thoughts reverted to Dumfriesshire, and the precarious situation in which he feared his beloved friend had placed himself; and once and again he consulted his watch, eager to have his present task commenced and ended, that he might hasten to Darsie's assistance. The hour and moment at length arrived. The macer shouted, with all his well-remembered brazen strength of lungs, 'Poor Peter Peebles VERSUS Plainstones, PER Dumtoustie ET Tough!—Maister Da-a-niel Dumtoustie!' Dumtoustie answered not the summons, which, deep and swelling as it was, could not reach across the Queensferry; but our Maister Alan Fairford appeared in his place.

The court was very much crowded; for much amusement had been received on former occasions when Peter had volunteered his own oratory, and had been completely successful in routing the gravity of the whole procedure, and putting to silence, not indeed the counsel of the opposite party, but his own.

Both bench and audience seemed considerably surprised at the juvenile appearance of the young man who appeared in the room of Dumtoustie, for the purpose of opening this complicated and long depending process, and the common herd were disappointed at the absence of Peter the client, the Punchinello of the expected entertainment. The judges looked with a very favourable countenance on our friend Alan, most of them being acquainted, more or less, with so old a practitioner as his father, and all, or almost all, affording, from civility, the same fair play to the first pleading of a counsel, which the House of Commons yields to the maiden speech of one of its members.

Lord Bladderskate was an exception to this general expression of benevolence. He scowled upon Alan, from beneath his large, shaggy, grey eyebrows, just as if the young lawyer had been usurping his nephew's honours, instead of covering his disgrace; and, from feelings which did his lordship little honour, he privately hoped the young man would not succeed in the cause which his kinsman had abandoned.

Even Lord Bladderskate, however, was, in spite of himself, pleased with the judicious and modest tone in which Alan began his address to the court, apologizing for his own presumption, and excusing it by the sudden illness of his learned brother, for whom the labour of opening a cause of some difficulty and importance had been much more worthily designed. He spoke of himself as he really was, and of young Dumtoustie as what he ought to have been, taking care not to dwell on either topic a moment longer than was necessary. The old judge's looks became benign; his family pride was propitiated, and, pleased equally with the modesty and civility of the young man whom he had thought forward and officious, he relaxed the scorn of his features into an expression of profound attention; the highest compliment, and the greatest encouragement, which a judge can render to the counsel addressing him.

Having succeeded in securing the favourable attention of the court, the young lawyer, using the lights which his father's experience and knowledge of business had afforded him, proceeded with an address and clearness, unexpected from one of his years, to remove from the case itself those complicated formalities with which it had been loaded, as a surgeon strips from a wound the dressings which had been hastily wrapped round it, in order to proceed to his cure SECUNDUM ARTEM. Developed of the cumbrous and complicated technicalities of litigation, with which the perverse obstinacy of the client, the inconsiderate haste or ignorance of his agents, and the evasions of a subtle adversary, had invested the process, the cause of Poor Peter Peebles, standing upon its simple merits, was no bad subject for the declamation of a young counsel, nor did our friend Alan fail to avail himself of its strong points.

He exhibited his client as a simple-hearted, honest, well-meaning man, who, during a copartnership of twelve years, had gradually become impoverished, while his partner (his former clerk) having no funds but his share of the same business, into which he had been admitted without any advance of stock, had become gradually more and more wealthy.

'Their association,' said Alan, and the little flight was received with some applause, 'resembled the ancient story of the fruit which was carved with a knife poisoned on one side of the blade only, so that the individual to whom the envenomed portion was served, drew decay and death from what afforded savour and sustenance to the consumer of the other moiety.' He then plunged boldly into the MARE MAGNUM of accounpts between the parties; he pursued each false statement from the waste-book to the day-book, from the day-book to the bill-book, from the bill-book to the ledger; placed the artful interpolations and insertions of the fallacious Plainstones in array against each other, and against the fact; and availing himself to the utmost of his father's previous labours, and his own knowledge of accounpts, in which he had been sedulously trained, he laid before the court a clear and intelligible statement of the affairs of the copartnery, showing, with precision, that a large balance must, at the dissolution, have been due to his client, sufficient to have enabled him to have carried on business on his own account, and thus to have retained his situation in society as an independent and industrious tradesman. 'But instead of this justice being voluntarily rendered by the former clerk to his former master,—by the party obliged to his benefactor,—by one honest man to another,—his wretched client had been compelled to follow his quondam clerk, his present debtor, from court to court; had found his just claims met with well-invented but unfounded counter-claims, had seen his party shift his character of pursuer or defender, as often as Harlequin effects his transformations, till, in a chase so varied and so long, the unhappy litigant had lost substance, reputation, and almost the use of reason itself, and came before their lordships an object of thoughtless derision to the unreflecting, of compassion to the better-hearted, and of awful meditation to every one who considered that, in a country where excellent laws were administered by upright and incorruptible judges, a man might pursue an almost indisputable claim through all the mazes of litigation; lose fortune, reputation, and reason itself in the chase, and now come before the supreme court of his country in the wretched condition of his unhappy client, a victim to protracted justice, and to that hope delayed which sickens the heart.'

The force of this appeal to feeling made as much impression on the Bench as had been previously effected by the clearness of Alan's argument. The absurd form of Peter himself, with his tow-wig, was fortunately not present to excite any ludicrous emotion, and the pause that took place when the young lawyer had concluded his speech, was followed by a murmur of approbation, which the ears of his father drank in as the sweetest sounds that had ever entered them. Many a hand of gratulation was thrust out to his grasp, trembling as it was with anxiety, and finally with delight; his voice faltering as he replied, 'Aye, aye, I kend Alan was the lad to make a spoon or spoil a horn.' [Said of an adventurous gipsy, who resolves at all risks to convert a sheep's horn into a spoon.]

The counsel on the other side arose, an old practitioner, who had noted too closely the impression made by Alan's pleading not to fear the consequences of an immediate decision. He paid the highest compliments to his very young brother—'the Benjamin, as he would presume to call him, of the learned Faculty—said the alleged hardships of Mr. Peebles were compensated by his being placed in a situation where the benevolence of their lordships had assigned him gratuitously such assistance as he might not otherwise have obtained at a high price—and allowed his young brother had put many things in such a new point of view, that, although he was quite certain of his ability to refute them, he was honestly desirous of having a few hours to arrange his answer, in order to be able to follow Mr. Fairford from point to point. He had further to observe, there was one point of the case to which his brother, whose attention had been otherwise so wonderfully comprehensive, had not given the consideration which he expected; it was founded on the interpretation of certain correspondence which had passed betwixt the parties soon after the dissolution of the copartnery.'

The court having heard Mr. Tough, readily allowed him two days for preparing himself, hinting at the same time that he might find his task difficult, and affording the young counsel, with high encomiums upon the mode in which he had acquitted himself, the choice of speaking, either now or at the next calling of the cause, upon the point which Plainstones's lawyer had adverted to.

Alan modestly apologized for what in fact had been an omission very pardonable in so complicated a case, and professed himself instantly ready to go through that correspondence, and prove that it was in form and substance exactly applicable to the view of the case he had submitted to their lordships. He applied to his father, who sat behind him, to hand him, from time to time, the letters, in the order in which he meant to read and comment upon them.

Old Counsellor Tough had probably formed an ingenious enough scheme to blunt the effect of the young lawyer's reasoning, by thus obliging him to follow up a process of reasoning, clear and complete in itself, by a hasty and extemporary appendix. If so, he seemed likely to be disappointed; for Alan was well prepared on this as on other parts of the cause, and recommenced his pleading with a degree of animation which added force even to what he had formerly stated, and might perhaps have occasioned the old gentleman to regret his having again called him up, when his father, as he handed him the letters, put one into his hand which produced a singular effect on the pleader.

At the first glance, he saw that the paper had no reference to the affairs of Peter Peebles; but the first glance also showed him, what, even at that time, and in that presence, he could not help reading; and which, being read, seemed totally to disconcert his ideas. He stopped short in his harangue—gazed on the paper with a look of surprise and horror—uttered an exclamation, and flinging down the brief which he had in his hand, hurried out of court without returning a single word of answer to the various questions, 'What was the matter?'—"Was he taken unwell?"—"Should not a chair be called?" &c. &c. &c.

The elder Mr. Fairford, who remained seated, and looking as senseless as if he had been made of stone, was at length recalled to himself by the anxious inquiries of the judges and the counsel after his son's health. He then rose with an air, in which was mingled the deep habitual reverence in which he held the court, with some internal cause of agitation, and with difficulty mentioned something of a mistake—a piece of bad news—Alan, he hoped would be well enough to-morrow. But unable to proceed further, he clasped his hands together, exclaiming, 'My son! my son!' and left the court hastily, as if in pursuit of him.

'What's the matter with the auld bitch next?' [Tradition ascribes this whimsical style of language to the ingenious and philosophical Lord Kames.] said an acute metaphysical judge, though somewhat coarse in his manners, aside to his brethren. 'This is a daft cause, Bladderskate—first, it drives the poor man mad that aught it—then your nevoy goes daft with fright, and flies the pit—then this smart young hopeful is aff the hooks with too hard study, I fancy—and now auld Saunders Fairford is as lunatic as the best of them. What say ye till't, ye bitch?'

'Nothing, my lord,' answered Bladderskate, much too formal to admire the levities in which his philosophical brother sometimes indulged—"I say nothing, but pray to Heaven to keep our own wits."

'Amen, amen,' answered his learned brother; 'for some of us have but few to spare.'

The court then arose, and the audience departed, greatly wondering at the talent displayed by Alan Fairford at his first appearance in a case so difficult and so complicated, and assigning a hundred conjectural causes, each different from the others, for the singular interruption which had clouded his day of success. The worst of the whole was, that six agents, who had each come to the separate resolution of thrusting a retaining fee into Alan's hand as he left the court, shook their heads as they returned the money into their leathern pouches, and said, 'that the lad was clever, but they would like to see more of him before they engaged him in the way of business—they did not like his lowping away like a flea in a blanket.'

CHAPTER II

Had our friend Alexander Fairford known the consequences of his son's abrupt retreat from the court, which are mentioned in the end of the last chapter, it might have accomplished the prediction of the lively old judge, and driven him utterly distracted. As it was, he was miserable enough. His son had risen ten degrees higher in his estimation than ever by his display of juridical talents, which seemed to assure him that the applause of the judges and professors of the law, which, in his estimation, was worth that of all mankind besides, authorized to the fullest extent the advantageous estimate which even his parental partiality had been induced to form of Alan's powers. On the other hand, he felt that he was himself a little humbled, from a disguise which he had practised towards this son of his hopes and wishes.

The truth was, that on the morning of this eventful day, Mr. Alexander Fairford had received from his correspondent and friend, Provost Crosbie of Dumfries, a letter of the following tenor:

'DEAR SIR, 'Your respected favour of 25th ultimo, per favour of Mr. Darsie Latimer, reached me in safety, and I showed to the young gentleman such attention as he was pleased to accept of. The object of my present writing is twofold. First, the council are of opinion that you should now begin to stir in the thirlage cause; and they think they will be able, from evidence NOVITER REPERTUM, to enable you to amend your condescendence upon the use and wont of the burgh, touching the GRANA INVECTA ET ILLATA. So you will please consider yourself as authorized to speak to Mr. Pest, and lay before him the papers which you will receive by the coach. The council think that a fee of two guineas may be sufficient on this occasion, as Mr. Pest had three for drawing the original condescendence.

'I take the opportunity of adding that there has been a great riot among the Solway fishermen, who have destroyed, in a masterful manner, the stake-nets set up near the mouth of this river; and have besides attacked the house of Quaker Geddes, one of the principal partners of the Tide-net Fishing Company, and done a great deal of damage. Am sorry to add, young Mr. Latimer was in the fray and has not since been heard of. Murder is spoke of, but that may be a word of course. As the young gentleman has behaved rather oddly while in these parts, as in declining to dine with me more than once, and going about the country with strolling fiddlers and such-like, I rather hope that his present absence is only occasioned by a frolic; but as his servant has been making inquiries of me respecting his master, I thought it best to acquaint you in course of post. I have only to add that our sheriff has taken a precognition, and committed one or two of the rioters. If I can be useful in this matter, either by advertising for Mr. Latimer as missing, publishing a reward, or otherwise, I will obey your respected instructions, being your most obedient to command, 'WILLIAM CROSBIE.'

When Mr. Fairford received this letter, and had read it to an end,' his first idea was to communicate it to his son, that an express might be instantly dispatched, or a king's messenger sent with proper authority to search after his late guest.

The habits of the fishers were rude; as he well knew, though not absolutely sanguinary or ferocious; and there had been instances of their transporting persons who had interfered in their smuggling trade to the Isle of Man and elsewhere, and keeping them under restraint for many weeks. On this account, Mr. Fairford was naturally led to feel anxiety concerning the fate of his late inmate; and, at a less interesting moment, would certainly have set out himself, or licensed his son to go in pursuit of his friend.

But, alas! he was both a father and an agent. In the one capacity, he looked on his son as dearer to him than all the world besides; in the other, the lawsuit which he conducted was to him like an infant to its nurse, and the case of Poor Peter Peebles against Plainstones was, he saw, adjourned, perhaps SINE DIE, should this document reach the hands of his son. The mutual and enthusiastical affection betwixt the young men was well known to him; and he concluded that if the precarious state of Latimer were made known to Alan Fairford, it would render him not only unwilling, but totally unfit, to discharge the duty of the day to which the old gentleman attached such ideas of importance.

On mature reflection, therefore, he resolved, though not without some feelings of compunction, to delay communicating to his son the disagreeable intelligence which he had received, until the business of the day should be ended. The delay, he persuaded himself, could be of little consequence to Darsie Latimer, whose folly, he dared to say, had led him into some scrape which would meet an appropriate punishment in some accidental restraint, which would be thus prolonged for only a few hours longer. Besides, he would have time to speak to the sheriff of the county—perhaps to the King's Advocate—and set about the matter in a regular manner, or, as he termed it, as summing up the duties of a solicitor, to AGE AS ACCORDS. [A Scots law phrase, of no very determinate import, meaning, generally, to do what is fitting.]

The scheme, as we have seen, was partially successful, and was only ultimately defeated, as he confessed to himself with shame, by his own very unbusiness-like mistake of shuffling the provost's letter, in the hurry and anxiety of the morning, among some papers belonging to Peter Peebles's affairs, and then handing it to his son, without observing the blunder. He used to protest, even till the day of his death, that he never had been guilty of such an inaccuracy as giving a paper out of his hand without looking at the docketing, except on that unhappy occasion, when, of all others, he had such particular reason to regret his negligence.

Disturbed by these reflections, the old gentleman had, for the first time in his life, some disinclination, arising from shame and vexation, to face his own son; so that to protract for a little the meeting, which he feared would be a painful one, he went to wait upon the sheriff-depute, who he found had set off for Dumfries in great haste to superintend in person the investigation which had been set on foot by his substitute. This gentleman's clerk could say little on the subject of the riot, excepting that it had been serious, much damage done to property, and some personal violence offered to individuals; but, as far as he had yet heard, no lives lost on the spot.

Mr. Fairford was compelled to return home with this intelligence; and on inquiring at James Wilkinson where his son was, received for answer, that 'Maister Alan was in his own room, and very busy.'

'We must have our explanation over,' said Saunders Fairford to himself. 'Better a finger off, as ay wagging;' and going to the door of his son's apartment, he knocked at first gently—then more loudly—but received no answer. Somewhat alarmed at this silence, he opened the door of the chamber it was empty—clothes lay mixed in confusion with the law-books and papers, as if the inmate had been engaged in hastily packing for a journey. As Mr. Fairford looked around in alarm, his eye was arrested by a sealed letter lying upon his son's writing-table, and addressed to himself. It contained the following words:—

'MY DEAREST FATHER, 'You will not, I trust, be surprised, nor perhaps very much displeased, to learn that I am on my way to Dumfriesshire, to learn, by my own personal investigation, the present state of my dear friend, and afford him such relief as may be in my power, and which, I trust, will be effectual. I do not presume to reflect upon you, dearest sir, for concealing from me information of so much consequence to my peace of mind and happiness; but I hope your having done so will be, if not an excuse, at least some mitigation of my present offence, in taking a step of consequence without consulting your pleasure; and, I must further own, under circumstances which perhaps might lead to your disapprobation of my purpose. I can only say, in further apology, that if anything unhappy, which Heaven forbid! shall have occurred to the person who, next to yourself, is dearest to me in this world, I shall have on my heart, as a subject of eternal regret, that being in a certain degree warned of his danger and furnished with the means of obviating it, I did not instantly hasten to his assistance, but preferred giving my attention to the business of this unlucky morning. No view of personal distinction, nothing, indeed, short of your earnest and often expressed wishes, could have detained me in town till this day; and having made this sacrifice to filial duty, I trust you will hold me excused if I now obey the calls of friendship and humanity. Do not be in the least anxious on my account; I shall know, I trust, how to conduct myself with due caution in any emergence which may occur, otherwise my legal studies for so many years have been to little purpose. I am fully provided with money, and also with arms, in case of need; but you may rely on my prudence in avoiding all occasions of using the latter, short of the last necessity. God almighty bless you, my dearest father! and grant that you may forgive the first, and, I trust, the last act approaching towards premeditated disobedience, of which I either have now, or shall hereafter have, to accuse myself. I remain, till death, your dutiful and affectionate son, ALAN FAIRFORD.'

'P.S.—I shall write with the utmost regularity, acquainting you with my motions, and requesting your advice. I trust my stay will be very short, and I think it possible that I may bring back Darsie along with me.'

'The paper dropped from the old man's hand when he was thus assured of the misfortune which he apprehended. His first idea was to get a postchaise and pursue the fugitive; but he recollected that, upon the very rare occasions when Alan had shown himself indocile to the PATRIA POTESTAS, his natural ease and gentleness of disposition seemed hardened into obstinacy, and that now, entitled, as arrived at the years of majority and a member of the learned faculty, to direct his own motions, there was great doubt, whether, in the event of his overtaking his son, he might be able to prevail upon him to return back. In such a risk of failure he thought it wiser to desist from his purpose, especially as even his success in such a pursuit would give a ridiculous ECLAT to the whole affair, which could not be otherwise than prejudicial to his son's rising character.

Bitter, however, were Saunders Fairford's reflections, as again picking up the fatal scroll, he threw himself into his son's leathern easy-chair, and bestowed upon it a disjointed commentary, 'Bring back Darsie? little doubt of that—the bad shilling is sure enough to come back again. I wish Darsie no worse ill than that he were carried where the silly fool, Alan, should never see him again. It was an ill hour that he darkened my doors in, for, ever since that, Alan has given up his ain old-fashioned mother-wit for the tother's capernoited maggots and nonsense. Provided with money? you must have more than I know of, then, my friend, for I trow I kept you pretty short, for your own good. Can he have gotten more fees? or, does he think five guineas has neither beginning nor end? Arms! What would he do with arms, or what would any man do with them that is not a regular soldier under government, or else a thief-taker? I have had enough of arms, I trow, although I carried them for King George and the government. But this is a worse strait than Falkirk field yet. God guide us, we are poor inconsistent creatures! To think the lad should have made so able an appearance, and then bolted off this gate, after a glaiket ne'er-do-weel, like a hound upon a false scent! Las-a-day! it's a sore thing to see a stunkard cow kick down the pail when it's reaming fou. But, after all, it's an ill bird that defiles its ain nest. I must cover up the scandal as well as I can. What's the matter now, James?'

'A message, sir,' said James Wilkinson, 'from my Lord President; and he hopes Mr. Alan is not seriously indisposed.'

'From the Lord President? the Lord preserve us!—I'll send an answer this instant; bid the lad sit down, and ask him to drink, James. Let me see,' continued he, taking a sheet of gilt paper 'how we are to draw our answers.'

Ere his pen had touched the paper, James was in the room again.

'What now, James?'

'Lord Bladderskate's lad is come to ask how Mr. Alan is, as he left; the court'—

'Aye, aye, aye,' answered Saunders, bitterly; 'he has e'en made a moonlight flitting, like my lord's ain nevoy.'

'Shall I say sae, sir?' said James, who, as an old soldier, was literal in all things touching the service.

'The devil! no, no!—Bid the lad sit down and taste our ale. I will write his lordship an answer.'

Once more the gilt paper was resumed, and once more the door was opened by James.

'Lord —— sends his servitor to ask after Mr. Alan.'

'Oh, the deevil take their civility!' said poor Saunders, set him down to drink too—I will write to his lordship.'

'The lads will bide your pleasure, sir, as lang as I keep the bicker fou; but this ringing is like to wear out the bell, I think; there are they at it again.'

He answered the fresh summons accordingly, and came back to inform Mr. Fairford that the Dean of Faculty was below, inquiring for Mr. Alan. 'Will I set him down to drink, too?' said James.

'Will you be an idiot, sir?' said Mr. Fairford. 'Show Mr. Dean into the parlour.'

In going slowly downstairs, step by step, the perplexed man of business had time enough to reflect, that if it be possible to put a fair gloss upon a true story, the verity always serves the purpose better than any substitute which ingenuity can devise. He therefore told his learned visitor, that although his son had been incommoded by the heat of the court, and the long train of hard study, by day and night, preceding his exertions, yet he had fortunately so far recovered, as to be in condition to obey upon the instant a sudden summons which had called him to the country, on a matter of life and death.

'It should be a serious matter indeed that takes my young friend away at this moment,' said the good-natured dean. 'I wish he had stayed to finish his pleading, and put down old Tough. Without compliment, Mr. Fairford, it was as fine a first appearance as I ever heard. I should be sorry your son did not follow it up in a reply. Nothing like striking while the iron is hot.'

Mr. Saunders Fairford made a bitter grimace as he acquiesced in an opinion which was indeed decidedly his own; but he thought it most prudent to reply, 'that the affair which rendered his son Alan's presence in the country absolutely necessary, regarded the affairs of a young gentleman of great fortune, who was a particular friend of Alan's, and who never took any material step in his affairs without consulting his counsel learned in the law.'

'Well, well, Mr. Fairford, you know best,' answered the learned dean; 'if there be death or marriage in the case, a will or a wedding is to be preferred to all other business. I am happy Mr. Alan is so much recovered as to be able for travel, and wish you a very good morning.'

Having thus taken his ground to the Dean of Faculty, Mr. Fairford hastily wrote cards in answer to the inquiry of the three judges, accounting for Alan's absence in the same manner. These, being properly sealed and addressed, he delivered to James with directions to dismiss the particoloured gentry, who, in the meanwhile, had consumed a gallon of twopenny ale, while discussing points of law, and addressing each other by their masters' titles. [The Scottish judges are distinguished by the title of lord prefixed to their own temporal designation. As the ladies of these official dignitaries do not bear any share in their husbands' honours, they are distinguished only by their lords' family name. They were not always contented with this species of Salique law, which certainly is somewhat inconsistent. But their pretensions to title are said to have been long since repelled by James V, the sovereign who founded the College of Justice. 'I,' said he, 'made the caries lords, but who the devil made the carlines ladies?']

The exertion which these matters demanded, and the interest which so many persons of legal distinction appeared to have taken in his son, greatly relieved the oppressed spirit of Saunders Fairford, who continued, to talk mysteriously of the very important business which had interfered with his son's attendance during the brief remainder of the session. He endeavoured to lay the same unction to his own heart; but here the application was less fortunate, for his conscience told him that no end, however important, which could be achieved in Darsie Latimer's affairs, could be balanced against the reputation which Alan was like to forfeit by deserting the cause of Poor Peter Peebles.

In the meanwhile, although the haze which surrounded the cause, or causes, of that unfortunate litigant had been for a time dispelled by Alan's eloquence, like a fog by the thunder of artillery, yet it seemed once more to settle down upon the mass of litigation, thick as the palpable darkness of Egypt, at the very sound of Mr. Tough's voice, who, on the second day after Alan's departure, was heard in answer to the opening counsel. Deep-mouthed, long-breathed, and pertinacious, taking a pinch of snuff betwixt every sentence, which otherwise seemed interminable—the veteran pleader prosed over all the themes which had been treated so luminously by Fairford: he quietly and imperceptibly replaced all the rubbish which the other had cleared away, and succeeded in restoring the veil of obscurity and unintelligibility which had for many years darkened the case of Peebles against Plainstones; and the matter was once more hung up by a remit to an accountant, with instruction to report before answer. So different a result from that which the public had been led to expect from Alan's speech gave rise to various speculations.

The client himself opined, that it was entirely owing, first, to his own absence during the first day's pleading, being, as he said, deboshed with brandy, usquebaugh, and other strong waters, at John's Coffee-house, PER AMBAGES of Peter Drudgeit, employed to that effect by and through the device, counsel, and covyne of Saunders Fairford, his agent, or pretended agent. Secondly by the flight and voluntary desertion of the younger Fairford, the advocate; on account of which, he served both father and son with a petition and complaint against them, for malversation in office. So that the apparent and most probable issue of this cause seemed to menace the melancholy Mr. Saunders Fairford, with additional subject for plague and mortification; which was the more galling, as his conscience told him that the case was really given away, and that a very brief resumption of the former argument, with reference to the necessary authorities and points of evidence, would have enabled Alan, by the mere breath, as it were, of his mouth, to blow away the various cobwebs with which Mr. Tough had again invested the proceedings. But it went, he said, just like a decret in absence, and was lost for want of a contradictor.

In the meanwhile, nearly a week passed over without Mr. Fairford hearing a word directly from his son. He learned, indeed, by a letter from Mr. Crosbie, that the young counsellor had safely reached Dumfries, but had left that town upon some ulterior researches, the purpose of which he had not communicated. The old man, thus left to suspense, and to mortifying recollections, deprived also of the domestic society to which he had been habituated, began to suffer in body as well as in mind. He had formed the determination of setting out in person for Dumfriesshire, when, after having been dogged, peevish, and snappish to his clerks and domestics, to an unusual and almost intolerable degree, the acrimonious humours settled in a hissing-hot fit of the gout, which is a well-known tamer of the most froward spirits, and under whose discipline we shall, for the present, leave him, as the continuation of this history assumes, with the next division, a form somewhat different from direct narrative and epistolary correspondence, though partaking of the character of both.

CHAPTER III

JOURNAL OF DARSIE LATIMER (The following address is written on the inside of the envelope which contained the Journal.)

Into what hands soever these leaves may fall, they will instruct him, during a certain time at least, in the history of the life of an unfortunate young man, who, in the heart of a free country, and without any crime being laid to his charge, has been, and is, subjected to a course of unlawful and violent restraint. He who opens this letter, is therefore conjured to apply to the nearest magistrate, and, following such indications as the papers may afford, to exert himself for the relief of one, who, while he possesses every claim to assistance which oppressed innocence can give, has, at the same time, both the inclination and the means of being grateful to his deliverers. Or, if the person obtaining these letters shall want courage or means to effect the writer's release, he is, in that case, conjured, by every duty of a man to his fellow mortals, and of a Christian towards one who professes the same holy faith, to take the speediest measures for conveying them with speed and safety to the hands of Alan Fairford, Esq., Advocate, residing in the family of his father, Alexander Fairford, Esq., Writer to the Signet, Brown's Square, Edinburgh. He may be assured of a liberal reward, besides the consciousness of having discharged a real duty to humanity.

MY DEAREST ALAN, Feeling as warmly towards you in doubt and in distress, as I ever did in the brightest days of our intimacy, it is to you whom I address a history which may perhaps fall into very different hands. A portion of my former spirit descends to my pen when I write your name, and indulging the happy thought that you may be my deliverer from my present uncomfortable and alarming situation, as you have been my guide and counsellor on every former occasion, I will subdue the dejection which would otherwise overwhelm me. Therefore, as, Heaven knows, I have time enough to write, I will endeavour to pour my thoughts out, as fully and freely as of old, though probably without the same gay and happy levity.

If the papers should reach other hands than yours, still I will not regret this exposure of my feelings; for, allowing for an ample share of the folly incidental to youth and inexperience, I fear not that I have much to be ashamed of in my narrative; nay, I even hope that the open simplicity and frankness with which I am about to relate every singular and distressing circumstance, may prepossess even a stranger in my favour; and that, amid the multitude of seemingly trivial circumstances which I detail at length, a clue may be found to effect my liberation.

Another chance certainly remains—the Journal, as I may call it, may never reach the hands, either of the dear friend to whom it is addressed, or those of an indifferent stranger, but may become the prey of the persons by whom I am at present treated as a prisoner. Let it be so—they will learn from it little but what they already know; that, as a man and an Englishman, my soul revolts at the usage which I have received; that I am determined to essay every possible means to obtain my freedom; that captivity has not broken my spirit, and that, although they may doubtless complete their oppression by murder, I am still willing to bequeath my cause to the justice of my country. Undeterred, therefore, by the probability that my papers may be torn from me, and subjected to the inspection of one in particular, who, causelessly my enemy already, may be yet further incensed at me for recording the history of my wrongs, I proceed to resume the history of events which have befallen me since the conclusion of my last letter to my dear Alan Fairford, dated, if I mistake not, on the 5th day of this still current month of August.

Upon the night preceding the date of that letter, I had been present, for the purpose of an idle frolic, at a dancing party at the village of Brokenburn, about six miles from Dumfries; many persons must have seen me there, should the fact appear of importance sufficient to require investigation. I danced, played on the violin, and took part in the festivity till about midnight, when my servant, Samuel Owen, brought me my horses, and I rode back to a small inn called Shepherd's Bush, kept by Mrs. Gregson, which had been occasionally my residence for about a fortnight past. I spent the earlier part of the forenoon in writing a letter, which I have already mentioned, to you, my dear Alan, and which, I think, you must have received in safety. Why did I not follow your advice, so often given me? Why did I linger in the neighbourhood of a danger, of which a kind voice had warned me? These are now unavailing questions; I was blinded by a fatality, and remained, fluttering like a moth around the candle, until I have been scorched to some purpose.

The greater part of the day had passed, and time hung heavy on my hands. I ought, perhaps, to blush at recollecting what has been often objected to me by the dear friend to whom this letter is addressed, viz. the facility with which I have, in moments of indolence, suffered my motions to be, directed by any person who chanced to be near me, instead of taking the labour of thinking or deciding for myself. I had employed for some time, as a sort of guide and errand-boy, a lad named Benjamin, the son of one widow Coltherd, who lives near the Shepherd's Bush, and I cannot but remember that, upon several occasions, I had of late suffered him to possess more influence over my motions than at all became the difference of our age and condition. At present, he exerted himself to persuade me that it was the finest possible sport to see the fish taken out from the nets placed in the Solway at the reflux of the tide, and urged my going thither this evening so much, that, looking back on the whole circumstances, I cannot but think he had some especial motive for his conduct. These particulars I have mentioned, that if these papers fall into friendly hands, the boy may be sought after and submitted to examination.

His eloquence being unable to persuade me that I should take any pleasure in seeing the fruitless struggles of the fish when left in the nets and deserted by the tide, he artfully suggested, that Mr. and Miss Geddes, a respectable Quaker family well known in the neighbourhood and with whom I had contracted habits of intimacy, would possibly be offended if I did not make them an early visit. Both, he said, had been particularly inquiring the reasons of my leaving their house rather suddenly on the previous day. I resolved, therefore, to walk up to Mount Sharon and make my apologies; and I agreed to permit the boy to attend upon me, and wait my return from the house, that I might fish on my way homeward to Shepherd's Bush, for which amusement, he assured me, I would find the evening most favourable. I mention this minute circumstance, because I strongly suspect that this boy had a presentiment how the evening was to terminate with me, and entertained the selfish though childish wish of securing to himself an angling-rod which he had often admired, as a part of my spoils. I may do the boy wrong, but I had before remarked in him the peculiar art of pursuing the trifling objects of cupidity proper to his age, with the systematic address of much riper years.

When we had commenced our walk, I upbraided him with the coolness of the evening, considering the season, the easterly wind, and other circumstances, unfavourable for angling. He persisted in his own story, and made a few casts, as if to convince me of my error, but caught no fish; and, indeed, as I am now convinced, was much more intent on watching my motions than on taking any. When I ridiculed him once more on his fruitless endeavours, he answered with a sneering smile, that 'the trouts would not rise, because there was thunder in the air;' an intimation which, in one sense, I have found too true.

I arrived at Mount Sharon; was received by my friends there with their wonted kindness; and after being a little rallied on my having suddenly left them on the preceding evening, I agreed to make atonement by staying all night, and dismissed the lad who attended with my fishing-rod, to carry that information to Shepherd's Bush. It may be doubted whether he went thither, or in a different direction.

Between eight and nine o'clock, when it began to become dark, we walked on the terrace to enjoy the appearance of the firmament, glittering with ten million stars; to which a slight touch of early frost gave tenfold lustre. As we gazed on this splendid scene, Miss Geddes, I think, was the first to point out to our admiration a shooting or falling star, which, she said, drew a long train after it. Looking to the part of the heavens which she pointed out, I distinctly observed two successive sky-rockets arise and burst in the sky.

'These meteors,' said Mr. Geddes, in answer to his sister's observation, 'are not formed in heaven, nor do they bode any good to the dwellers upon earth.'

As he spoke, I looked to another quarter of the sky, and a rocket, as if a signal in answer to those which had already appeared, rose high from the earth, and burst apparently among the stars.

Mr. Geddes seemed very thoughtful for some minutes, and then said to his sister, 'Rachel, though it waxes late. I must go down to the fishing station, and pass the night in the overseer's room there.'

'Nay, then,' replied the lady, 'I am but too well assured that the sons of Belial are menacing these nets and devices. Joshua, art thou a man of peace, and wilt thou willingly and wittingly thrust thyself where thou mayst be tempted by the old man Adam within thee, to enter into debate and strife?'

'I am a man of peace, Rachel,' answered Mr. Geddes, 'even to the utmost extent which our friends can demand of humanity; and neither have I ever used, nor, with the help of God, will I at any future time employ, the arm of flesh to repel or to revenge injuries. But if I can, by mild reasons and firm conduct, save those rude men from committing a crime, and the property belonging to myself and others from sustaining damage, surely I do but the duty of a man and a Christian.'

With these words, he ordered his horse instantly; and his sister, ceasing to argue with him, folded her arms upon her bosom, and looked up to heaven with a resigned and yet sorrowful countenance.

These particulars may appear trivial; but it is better, in my present condition, to exert my faculties in recollecting the past, and in recording it, than waste them in vain and anxious anticipations of the future.

It would have been scarcely proper in me to remain in the house from which the master was thus suddenly summoned away; and I therefore begged permission to attend him to the fishing station, assuring his sister that I would be a guarantee for his safety.

That proposal seemed to give much pleasure to Miss Geddes. 'Let it be so, brother,' she said; 'and let the young man have the desire of his heart, that there may be a faithful witness to stand by thee in the hour of need, and to report how it shall fare with thee.'

'Nay, Rachel,' said the worthy man, 'thou art to blame in this, that to quiet thy apprehensions on my account, thou shouldst thrust into danger—if danger it shall prove to be—this youth, our guest; for whom, doubtless, in case of mishap, as many hearts will ache as may be afflicted on our account.'

'No, my good friend,' said I, taking Mr. Geddes's hand, 'I am not so happy as you suppose me. Were my span to be concluded this evening, few would so much as know that such a being had existed for twenty years on the face of the earth; and of these few, only one would sincerely regret me. Do not, therefore, refuse me the privilege attending you; and of showing, by so trifling an act of kindness, that if I have few friends, I am at least desirous to serve them.'

'Thou hast a kind heart, I warrant thee,' said Joshua Geddes, returning the pressure of my hand. 'Rachel, the young man shall go with me. Why should he not face danger, in order to do justice and preserve peace? There is that within me,' he added, looking upwards, and with a passing enthusiasm which I had not before observed and the absence of which perhaps rather belonged to the sect than to his own personal character—I say, I have that within which assures me, that though the ungodly may rage even like the storm of the ocean, they shall not have freedom to prevail against us.'

Having spoken thus, Mr. Geddes appointed a pony to be saddled for my use; and having taken a basket with some provisions, and a servant to carry back the horses for which there was no accommodation at the fishing station, we set off about nine o'clock at night, and after three-quarters of an hour's riding, arrived at our place of destination.

The station consists, or then consisted, of huts for four or five fishermen, a cooperage and shed, and a better sort of cottage at which the superintendent resided. We gave our horses to the servant, to be carried back to Mount Sharon; my companion expressing himself humanely anxious for their safety—and knocked at the door of the house. At first we only heard a barking of dogs; but these animals became quiet on snuffing beneath the door, and acknowledging the presence of friends. A hoarse voice then demanded, in rather unfriendly accents, who we were, and what we wanted and it was not; until Joshua named himself, and called upon his superintendent to open, that the latter appeared at the door of the hut, attended by three large dogs of the Newfoundland breed. He had a flambeau in his hand, and two large heavy ship-pistols stuck into his belt. He was a stout elderly man, who had been a sailor, as I learned, during the earlier part of his life, and was now much confided in by the Fishing Company, whose concerns he directed under the orders of Mr. Geddes.

'Thou didst not expect me to-night, friend Davies?' said my friend to the old man, who was arranging seats for us by the fire.

'No, Master Geddes,' answered he, 'I did not expect you, nor, to speak the truth, did I wish for you either.'

'These are plain terms: John Davies,' answered Mr. Geddes.

'Aye, aye, sir, I know your worship loves no holiday speeches.'

'Thou dost guess, I suppose, what brings us here so late, John Davies?' said Mr. Geddes.

'I do suppose, sir,' answered the superintendent, 'that it was because those d—d smuggling wreckers on the coast are showing their lights to gather their forces, as they did the night before they broke down the dam-dyke and weirs up the country; but if that same be the case, I wish once more you had stayed away, for your worship carries no fighting tackle aboard, I think; and there will be work for such ere morning, your worship.'

'Worship is due to Heaven only, John Davies,' said Geddes, 'I have often desired thee to desist from using that phrase to me.'

'I won't, then,' said John; 'no offence meant: But how the devil can a man stand picking his words, when he is just going to come to blows?'

'I hope not, John Davies,' said Joshua Geddes. 'Call in the rest of the men, that I may give them their instructions.'

'I may cry till doomsday Master Geddes, ere a soul answers—the cowardly lubbers have all made sail—the cooper, and all the rest of them, so soon as they heard the enemy were at sea. They have all taken to the long-boat, and left the ship among the breakers, except little Phil and myself—they have, by—!'

'Swear not at all, John Davies—thou art an honest man; and I believe, without an oath, that thy comrades love their own bones better than my goods and chattels. And so thou hast no assistance but little Phil against a hundred men or two?'

'Why, there are the dogs, your honour knows, Neptune and Thetis—and the puppy may do something; and then though your worship—I beg pardon—though your honour be no great fighter, this young gentleman may bear a hand.'

'Aye, and I see you are provided with arms,' said Mr. Geddes; 'let me see them.'

'Aye, aye, sir; here be a pair of buffers will bite as well as bark—these will make sure of two rogues at least. It would be a shame to strike without firing a shot. Take care, your honour, they are double-shotted.'

'Aye, John Davies, I will take care of them, throwing the pistols into a tub of water beside him; 'and I wish I could render the whole generation of them useless at the same moment.'

A deep shade of displeasure passed over John Davies's weatherbeaten countenance. 'Belike your honour is going to take the command yourself, then?' he said, after a pause. 'Why, I can be of little use now; and since your worship, or your honour, or whatever you are, means to strike quietly, I believe you will do it better without me than with me, for I am like enough to make mischief, I admit; but I'll never leave my post without orders.'

'Then you have mine, John Davies, to go to Mount Sharon directly, and take the boy Phil with you. Where is he?'

'He is on the outlook for these scums of the earth,' answered Davies; 'but it is to no purpose to know when they come, if we are not to stand to our weapons.'

'We will use none but those of sense and reason, John.'

'And you may just as well cast chaff against the wind, as speak sense and reason to the like of them.'

'Well, well, be it so,' said Joshua; 'and now, John Davies, I know thou art what the world calls a brave fellow, and I have ever found thee an honest one. And now I command you to go to Mount Sharon, and let Phil lie on the bank-side—see the poor boy hath a sea-cloak, though—and watch what happens there, and let him bring you the news; and if any violence shall be offered to the property there, I trust to your fidelity to carry my sister to Dumfries to the house of our friends the Corsacks, and inform the civil authorities of what mischief hath befallen.'

The old seaman paused a moment. 'It is hard lines for me,' he said, 'to leave your honour in tribulation; and yet, staying here, I am only like to make bad worse; and your honour's sister, Miss Rachel, must be looked to, that's certain; for if the rogues once get their hand to mischief, they will come to Mount Sharon after they have wasted and destroyed this here snug little roadstead, where I thought to ride at anchor for life.'

'Right, right, John Davies,' said Joshua Geddes; 'and best call the dogs with you.'

'Aye, aye, sir,' said the veteran, 'for they are something of my mind, and would not keep quiet if they saw mischief doing; so maybe they might come to mischief, poor dumb creatures. So God bless your honour—I mean your worship—I cannot bring my mouth to say fare you well. Here, Neptune, Thetis! come, dogs, come.'

So saying, and with a very crestfallen countenance, John Davies left the hut.

'Now there goes one of the best and most faithful creatures that ever was born,' said Mr. Geddes, as the superintendent shut the door of the cottage. 'Nature made him with a heart that would not have suffered him to harm a fly; but thou seest, friend Latimer, that as men arm their bull-dogs with spiked collars, and their game-cocks with steel spurs, to aid them in fight, so they corrupt, by education, the best and mildest natures, until fortitude and spirit become stubbornness and ferocity. Believe me, friend Latimer, I would as soon expose my faithful household dog to a vain combat with a herd of wolves, as yon trusty creature to the violence of the enraged multitude. But I need say little on this subject to thee, friend Latimer, who, I doubt not, art trained to believe that courage is displayed and honour attained, not by doing and suffering as becomes a man that which fate calls us to suffer and justice commands us to do, but because thou art ready to retort violence for violence, and considerest the lightest insult as a sufficient cause for the spilling of blood, nay, the taking of life. But, leaving these points of controversy to a more fit season, let us see what our basket of provision contains; for in truth, friend Latimer, I am one of those whom neither fear nor anxiety deprives of their ordinary appetite.'

We found the means of good cheer accordingly, which Mr. Geddes seemed to enjoy as much as if it had been eaten in a situation of perfect safety; nay, his conversation appeared to be rather more gay than on ordinary occasions. After eating our supper, we left the hut together, and walked for a few minutes on the banks of the sea. It was high water, and the ebb had not yet commenced. The moon shone broad and bright upon the placid face of the Solway Firth, and showed a slight ripple upon the stakes, the tops of which were just visible above the waves, and on the dark-coloured buoys which marked the upper edge of the enclosure of nets. At a much greater distance—for the estuary is here very wide—the line of the English coast was seen on the verge of the water, resembling one of those fog-banks on which mariners are said to gaze, uncertain whether it be land or atmospherical delusion.

'We shall be undisturbed for some hours,' said Mr. Geddes; 'they will not come down upon us: till the state of the tide permits them to destroy the tide-nets. Is it not strange to think that human passions will so soon transform such a tranquil scene as this into one of devastation and confusion?'

It was indeed a scene of exquisite stillness; so much so, that the restless waves of the Solway seemed, if not absolutely to sleep, at least to slumber; on the shore no night-bird was heard—the cock had not sung his first matins, and we ourselves walked more lightly than by day, as if to suit the sounds of our own paces to the serene tranquillity around us. At length, the plaintive cry of a dog broke the silence, and on our return to the cottage, we found that the younger of the three animals which had gone along with John Davies, unaccustomed, perhaps, to distant journeys, and the duty of following to heel, had strayed from the party, and, unable to rejoin them, had wandered back to the place of its birth.

'Another feeble addition to our feeble garrison,' said Mr. Geddes, as he caressed the dog, and admitted it into the cottage. 'Poor thing! as thou art incapable of doing any mischief, I hope thou wilt sustain none. At least thou mayst do us the good service of a sentinel, and permit us to enjoy a quiet repose, under the certainty that thou wilt alarm us when the enemy is at hand.'

There were two beds in the superintendent's room, upon which we threw ourselves. Mr. Geddes, with his happy equanimity of temper, was asleep in the first five minutes. I lay for some time in doubtful and anxious thoughts, watching the fire, and the motions of the restless dog, which, disturbed probably at the absence of John Davies, wandered from the hearth to the door and back again, then came to the bedside and licked my hands and face, and at length, experiencing no repulse to its advances, established itself at my feet, and went to sleep, an example which I soon afterwards followed.

The rage of narration, my dear Alan—for I will never relinquish the hope that what I am writing may one day reach your hands—has not forsaken me, even in my confinement, and the extensive though unimportant details into which I have been hurried, renders it necessary that I commence another sheet. Fortunately, my pygmy characters comprehend a great many words within a small space of paper.

CHAPTER IV

DARSIE LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

The morning was dawning, and Mr. Geddes and I myself were still sleeping soundly, when the alarm was given by my canine bedfellow, who first growled deeply at intervals, and at length bore more decided testimony to the approach of some enemy. I opened the door of the cottage, and perceived, at the distance of about two hundred yards, a small but close column of men, which I would have taken for a dark hedge, but that I could perceive it was advancing rapidly and in silence.

The dog flew towards them, but instantly ran howling back to me, having probably been chastised by a stick or a stone. Uncertain as to the plan of tactics or of treaty which Mr. Geddes might think proper to adopt, I was about to retire into the cottage, when he suddenly joined me at the door, and, slipping his arm through mine, said, 'Let us go to meet them manfully; we have done nothing to be ashamed of.—Friends,' he said, raising his voice as we approached them, 'who and what are you, and with what purpose are you here on my property?'

A loud cheer was the answer returned, and a brace of fiddlers who occupied the front of the march immediately struck up the insulting air, the words of which begin—

Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,

And merrily danced the Quaker.

Even at that moment of alarm, I think I recognized the tones of the blind fiddler, Will, known by the name of Wandering Willie, from his itinerant habits. They continued to advance swiftly and in great order, in their front

The fiery fiddlers playing martial airs;

when, coming close up, they surrounded us by a single movement, and there was a universal cry, 'Whoop, Quaker—whoop, Quaker! Here have we them both, the wet Quaker and the dry one.'

'Hang up the wet Quaker to dry, and wet the dry one with a ducking,' answered another voice.

'Where is the sea-otter, John Davies, that destroyed more fish than any seach upon Ailsa Craig?' exclaimed a third voice. 'I have an old crow to pluck with him, and a pock to put the feathers in.'

We stood perfectly passive; for, to have attempted resistance against more than a hundred men, armed with guns, fish-spears, iron-crows, spades, and bludgeons, would have been an act of utter insanity. Mr. Geddes, with his strong sonorous voice, answered the question about the superintendent in a manner the manly indifference of which compelled them to attend to him.

'John Davies,' he said, 'will, I trust, soon be at Dumfries'—

'To fetch down redcoats and dragoons against us, you canting old villain!'

A blow was, at the same time, levelled at my friend, which I parried by interposing the stick I had in my hand. I was instantly struck down, and have a faint recollection of hearing some crying, 'Kill the young spy!' and others, as I thought, interposing on my behalf. But a second blow on the head, received in the scuffle, soon deprived me of sense and consciousness, and threw me into it state of insensibility, from which I did not recover immediately. When I did come to myself, I was lying on the bed from which I had just risen before the fray, and my poor companion, the Newfoundland puppy, its courage entirely cowed by the tumult of the riot, had crept as close to me as it could, and lay trembling and whining, as if under the most dreadful terror. I doubted at first whether I had not dreamed of the tumult, until, as I attempted to rise, a feeling of pain and dizziness assured me that the injury I had sustained was but too real. I gathered together my senses listened—and heard at a distance the shouts of the rioters, busy, doubtless, in their work of devastation. I made a second effort to rise, or at least to turn myself, for I lay with my face to the wall of the cottage, but I found that my limbs were secured, and my motions effectually prevented—not indeed by cords, but by linen or cloth bandages swathed around my ankles, and securing my arms to my sides. Aware of my utterly captive condition, I groaned betwixt bodily pain and mental distress,

A voice by my bedside whispered, in a whining tone, 'Whisht a-ye, hinnie—Whisht a-ye; haud your tongue, like a gude bairn—ye have cost us dear aneugh already. My hinnie's clean gane now.'

Knowing, as I thought, the phraseology of the wife of the itinerant musician, I asked her where her husband was, and whether he had been hurt.

'Broken,' answered the dame, 'all broken to pieces; fit for naught but to be made spunks of—the best blood that was in Scotland.'

'Broken?—blood?—is your husband wounded; has there been bloodshed broken limbs?'

'Broken limbs I wish,' answered the beldam, 'that my hinnie had broken the best bane in his body, before he had broken his fiddle, that was the best blood in Scotland—it was a Cremony, for aught that I ken.'

'Pshaw—only his fiddle?' said I.

'I dinna ken what waur your honour could have wished him to do, unless he had broken his neck; and this is muckle the same to my hinnie Willie and me. Chaw, indeed! It is easy to say chaw, but wha is to gie us ony thing to chaw?—the bread-winner's gane, and we may e'en sit down and starve.'

'No, no,' I said, 'I will pay you for twenty such fiddles.'

'Twenty such! is that a' ye ken about it? the country hadna the like o't. But if your honour were to pay us, as nae doubt wad be to your credit here and hereafter, where are ye to get the siller?'

'I have enough of money,' said I, attempting to reach my hand towards my side-pocket; 'unloose these bandages, and I will pay you on the spot.'

This hint appeared to move her, and she was approaching the bedside, as I hoped, to liberate me from my bonds, when a nearer and more desperate shout was heard, as if the rioters were close by the hut.

'I daurna I daurna,' said the poor woman, 'they would murder me and my hinnie Willie baith, and they have misguided us aneugh already;—but if there is anything worldly I could do for your honour, leave out loosing ye?'

What she said recalled me to my bodily suffering. Agitation, and the effects of the usage I had received, had produced a burning thirst. I asked for a drink of water. 'Heaven Almighty forbid that Epps Ainslie should gie ony sick gentleman cauld well-water, and him in a fever. Na, na, hinnie, let me alane, I'll do better for ye than the like of that.'

'Give me what you will,' I replied; 'let it but be liquid and cool.'

The woman gave me a large horn accordingly, filled with spirits and water, which, without minute inquiry concerning the nature of its contents, I drained at a draught. Either the spirits taken in such a manner acted more suddenly than usual on my brain, or else there was some drug mixed with the beverage. I remember little after drinking it off, only that the appearance of things around me became indistinct; that the woman's form seemed to multiply itself, and to flit in various figures around me, bearing the same lineaments as she herself did. I remember also that the discordant noises and cries of those without the cottage seemed to die away in a hum like that with which a nurse hushes her babe. At length I fell into a deep sound sleep, or rather, a state of absolute insensibility.

I have reason to think this species of trance lasted for many hours; indeed, for the whole subsequent day and part of the night. It was not uniformly so profound, for my recollection of it is chequered with many dreams, all of a painful nature, but too faint and too indistinct to be remembered. At length the moment of waking came, and my sensations were horrible.

A deep sound, which, in the confusion of my senses, I identified with the cries of the rioters, was the first thing of which I was sensible; next, I became conscious that I was carried violently forward in some conveyance, with an unequal motion, which gave me much pain. My position was horizontal, and when I attempted to stretch my hands in order to find some mode of securing myself against this species of suffering, I found I was bound as before, and the horrible reality rushed on my mind that I was in the hands of those who had lately committed a great outrage on property, and were now about to kidnap, if not to murder me. I opened my eyes, it was to no purpose—all around me was dark, for a day had passed over during my captivity. A dispiriting sickness oppressed my head—my heart seemed on fire, while my feet and hands were chilled and benumbed with want of circulation. It was with the utmost difficulty that I at length, and gradually, recovered in a sufficient degree the power of observing external sounds and circumstances; and when I did so, they presented nothing consolatory.

Groping with my hands, as far as the bandages would permit, and receiving the assistance of some occasional glances of the moonlight, I became aware that the carriage in which I was transported was one of the light carts of the country, called TUMBLERS, and that a little attention had been paid to my accommodation, as I was laid upon some sacks covered with matting, and filled with straw. Without these, my condition would have been still more intolerable, for the vehicle, sinking now on one side, and now on the other, sometimes sticking absolutely fast and requiring the utmost exertions of the animal which drew it to put it once more in

motion, was subjected to jolts in all directions, which were very severe. At other times it rolled silently and smoothly over what seemed to be wet sand; and, as I heard the distant roar of the tide, I had little doubt that we were engaged in passing the formidable estuary which divides the two kingdoms.

There seemed to be at least five or six people about the cart, some on foot, others on horseback; the former lent assistance whenever it was in danger of upsetting, or sticking fast in the quicksand; the others rode before and acted as guides, often changing the direction of the vehicle as the precarious state of the passage required.

I addressed myself to the men around the cart, and endeavoured to move their compassion. I had harmed, I said, no one, and for no action in my life had deserved such cruel treatment, I had no concern whatever in the fishing station which had incurred their displeasure, and my acquaintance with Mr. Geddes was of a very late date. Lastly, and as my strongest argument, I endeavoured to excite their fears, by informing them that my rank in life would not permit me to be either murdered or secreted with impunity; and to interest their avarice, by the promises I made them of reward, if they would effect my deliverance. I only received a scornful laugh in reply to my threats; my promises might have done more, for the fellows were whispering together as if in hesitation, and I began to reiterate and increase my offers, when the voice of one of the horsemen, who had suddenly come up, enjoined silence to the men on foot, and, approaching the side of the cart, said to me, with a strong and determined voice, 'Young man, there is no personal harm designed to you. If you remain silent and quiet, you may reckon on good treatment; but if you endeavour to tamper with these men in the execution of their duty, I will take such measures for silencing you, as you shall remember the longest day you have to live.'

I thought I knew the voice which uttered these threats; but, in such a situation, my perceptions could not be supposed to be perfectly accurate. I was contented to reply, 'Whoever you are that speak to me, I entreat the benefit of the meanest prisoner, who is not to be subjected, legally to greater hardship than is necessary for the restraint of his person. I entreat that these bonds, which hurt me so cruelly, may be slackened at least, if not removed altogether.'

'I will slacken the belts,' said the former speaker; 'nay, I will altogether remove them, and allow you to pursue your journey in a more convenient manner, provided you will give me your word of honour that you will not attempt an escape?'

'NEVER!' I answered, with an energy of which despair alone could have rendered me capable—'I will never submit to loss of freedom a moment longer than I am subjected to it by force.'

'Enough,' he replied; 'the sentiment is natural; but do not on your side complain that I, who am carrying on an important undertaking, use the only means in my power for ensuring its success.'

I entreated to know what it was designed to do with me; but my conductor, in a voice of menacing authority, desired me to be silent on my peril; and my strength and spirits were too much exhausted to permit my continuing a dialogue so singular, even if I could have promised myself any good result by doing so.

It is proper here to add, that, from my recollections at the time, and from what has since taken place, I have the strongest possible belief that the man with whom I held this expostulation was the singular person residing at Brokenburn, in Dumfriesshire, and called by the fishers of that hamlet, the Laird of the Solway Lochs.

The cause for his inveterate persecution I cannot pretend even to guess at.

In the meantime, the cart was dragged heavily and wearily on, until the nearer roar of the advancing tide excited the apprehension of another danger. I could not mistake the sound, which I had heard upon another occasion, when it was only the speed of a fleet horse which saved me from perishing in the quicksands. Thou, my dear Alan, canst not but remember the former circumstances; and now, wonderful contrast! the very man, to the best of my belief, who then saved me from peril, was the leader of the lawless band who had deprived me of my liberty. I conjectured that the danger grew imminent; for I heard some words and circumstances which made me aware that a rider hastily fastened his own horse to the shafts of the cart in order to assist the exhausted animal which drew it, and the vehicle was now pulled forward at a faster pace, which the horses were urged to maintain by blows and curses. The men, however, were inhabitants of the neighbourhood; and I had strong personal reason to believe that one of them, at least, was intimately acquainted with all the depths and shallows of the perilous paths in which we were engaged. But they were in imminent danger themselves; and if so, as from the whispering and exertions to push on with the cart was much to be apprehended, there was little doubt that I should be left behind as a useless encumbrance, and that, while I was in a condition which rendered every chance of escape impracticable. These were awful apprehensions; but it pleased Providence to increase them to a point which my brain was scarcely able to endure.

As we approached very near to a black line, which, dimly visible as it was, I could make out to be the shore, we heard two or three sounds, which appeared to be the report of fire-arms. Immediately all was bustle among our party to get forward. Presently a fellow galloped up to us, crying out, 'Ware hawk! ware hawk! the land-sharks are out from Burgh, and Allonby Tom will lose his cargo if you do not bear a hand.'

Most of my company seemed to make hastily for the shore on receiving this intelligence. A driver was left with the cart; but at length, when, after repeated and hairbreadth escapes, it actually stuck fast in a slough or quicksand, the fellow, with an oath, cut the harness, and, as I presume, departed with the horses, whose feet I heard splashing over the wet sand and through the shallows, as he galloped off.

The dropping sound of fire-arms was still continued, but lost almost entirely in the thunder of the advancing surge. By a desperate effort I raised myself in the cart, and attained a sitting posture, which served only to show me the extent of my danger. There lay my native land—my own England—the land where I was born, and to which my wishes, since my earliest age, had turned with all the prejudices of national feeling—there it lay, within a furlong of the place where I yet was; that furlong, which an infant would have raced over in a minute, was yet a barrier effectual to divide me for ever from England and from life. I soon not only heard the roar of this dreadful torrent, but saw, by the fitful moonlight, the foamy crests of the devouring waves, as they advanced with the speed and fury of a pack of hungry wolves.

The consciousness that the slightest ray of hope, or power of struggling, was not left me, quite overcame the constancy which I had hitherto maintained. My eyes began to swim—my head grew giddy and mad with fear—I chattered and howled to the howling and roaring sea. One or two great waves already reached the cart, when the conductor of the party whom I have mentioned so often, was, as if by magic, at my side. He sprang from his horse into the vehicle, cut the ligatures which restrained me, and bade me get up and mount in the fiend's name.

Seeing I was incapable of obeying, he seized me as if I had been a child of six months old, threw me across the horse, sprang on behind, supporting with one hand, while he directed the animal with the other. In my helpless and painful posture, I was unconscious of the degree of danger which we incurred; but I believe at one time the horse was swimming, or nearly so; and that it was with difficulty that my stern and powerful assistant kept my head above water. I remember particularly the shock which I felt when the animal, endeavouring to gain the bank, reared, and very nearly fell back on his burden. The time during which I continued in this dreadful condition did not probably exceed two or three minutes, yet so strongly were they marked with horror and agony, that they seem to my recollection a much more considerable space of time.

When I had been thus snatched from destruction, I had only power to say to my protector,—or oppressor,—for he merited either name at my hand, 'You do not, then, design to murder me?'

He laughed as he replied, but it was a sort of laughter which I scarce desire to hear again,—'Else you think I had let the waves do the work? But remember, the shepherd saves his sheep from the torrent—is it to preserve its life?—Be silent, however, with questions or entreaties. What I mean to do, thou canst no more discover or prevent, than a man, with his bare palm, can scoop dry the Solway.'

I was too much exhausted to continue the argument; and, still numbed and torpid in all my limbs, permitted myself without reluctance to be placed on a horse brought for the purpose. My formidable conductor rode on the one side, and another person on the other, keeping me upright in the saddle. In this manner we travelled forward at a considerable rate, and by by-roads, with which my attendant seemed as familiar as with the perilous passages of the Solway.

At length, after stumbling through a labyrinth of dark and deep lanes, and crossing more than one rough and barren heath, we found ourselves on the edge of a highroad, where a chaise and four awaited, as it appeared, our arrival. To my great relief, we now changed our mode of conveyance; for my dizziness and

headache had returned in so strong a degree, that I should otherwise have been totally unable to keep my seat on horseback, even with the support which I received.

My doubted and dangerous companion signed to me to enter the carriage—the man who had ridden on the left side of my horse stepped in after me, and drawing up the blinds of the vehicle, gave the signal for instant departure.

I had obtained a glimpse of the countenance of my new companion, as by the aid of a dark lantern the drivers opened the carriage door, and I was wellnigh persuaded that I recognized in him the domestic of the leader of this party, whom I had seen at his house in Brokenburn on a former occasion. To ascertain the truth of my suspicion, I asked him whether his name was not Cristal Nixon.

'What is other folk's names to you,' he replied, gruffly, 'who cannot tell your own father and mother?'

'You know them, perhaps!' I exclaimed eagerly. 'You know them! and with that secret is connected the treatment which I am now receiving? It must be so, for in my life have I never injured any one. Tell me the cause of my misfortunes, or rather, help me to my liberty, and I will reward you richly.'

'Aye, aye,' replied my keeper; 'but what use to give you liberty, who know nothing how to use it like a gentleman, but spend your time with Quakers and fiddlers, and such like raff! If I was your—hem, hem, hem!'

Here Cristal stopped short, just on the point, as it appeared, when some information was likely to escape him. I urged him once more to be my friend, and promised him all the stock of money which I had about me, and it was not inconsiderable, if he would assist in my escape.

He listened, as if to a proposition which had some interest, and replied, but in a voice rather softer than before, 'Aye, but men do not catch old birds with chaff, my master. Where have you got the rhino you are so flush of?'

'I will give you earnest directly, and that in banknotes,' said I; but thrusting my hand into my side-pocket, I found my pocket-book was gone. I would have persuaded myself that it was only the numbness of my hands which prevented my finding it; but Cristal Nixon, who bears in his countenance that cynicism which is especially entertained with human misery, no longer suppressed his laughter.

'Oh, ho! my young master,' he said; 'we have taken good enough care you have not kept the means of bribing poor folk's fidelity. What, man, they have souls as well as other people, and to make them break trust is a deadly sin. And as for me, young gentleman, if you would fill Saint Mary's Kirk with gold, Cristal Nixon would mind it no more than so many chucky-stones.'

I would have persisted, were it but in hopes of his letting drop that which it concerned me to know, but he cut off further communication, by desiring me to lean back in the corner and go to sleep.

'Thou art cock-brained enough already,' he added, 'and we shall have thy young pate addled entirely, if you do not take some natural rest.'

I did indeed require repose, if not slumber; the draught which I had taken continued to operate, and, satisfied in my own mind that no attempt on my life was designed, the fear of instant death no longer combated the torpor which crept over me—I slept, and slept soundly, but still without refreshment.

When I awoke, I found myself extremely indisposed; images of the past, and anticipations of the future, floated confusedly through my brain. I perceived, however, that my situation was changed, greatly for the better. I was in a good bed, with the curtains drawn round it; I heard the lowered voice and cautious step of attendants, who seemed to respect my repose; it appeared as if I was in the hands either of friends, or of such as meant me no personal harm.

I can give but an indistinct account of two or three broken and feverish days which succeeded, but if they were chequered with dreams and visions of terror, other and more agreeable objects were also sometimes presented. Alan Fairford will understand me when I say, I am convinced I saw G.M. during this interval of oblivion. I had medical attendance, and was bled more than once. I also remember a painful operation performed on my head, where I had received a severe blow on the night of the riot. My hair was cut short, and the bone of the skull examined, to discover if the cranium had received any injury.

On seeing the physician, it would have been natural to have appealed to him on the subject of my confinement, and I remember more than once attempting to do so. But the fever lay like a spell upon my tongue, and when I would have implored the doctor's assistance, I rambled from the subject, and spoke I know not what nonsense. Some power, which I was unable to resist, seemed to impel me into a different course of conversation from what I intended, and though conscious, in some degree, of the failure, I could not mend it; and resolved, therefore, to be patient, until my capacity of steady thought and expression was restored to me with my ordinary health, which had sustained a severe shock from the vicissitudes to which I had been exposed. [See Note 6.]

CHAPTER V

DARSIE LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

Two or three days, perhaps more, perhaps less, had been spent in bed, where I was carefully attended, and treated, I believe, with as much judgement as the case required, and I was at length allowed to quit my bed, though not the chamber. I was now more able to make some observation on the place of my confinement.

The room, in appearance and furniture, resembled the best apartment in a farmer's house; and the window, two stories high, looked into a backyard, or court, filled with domestic poultry. There were the usual domestic offices about this yard. I could distinguish the brewhouse and the barn, and I heard, from a more remote building, the lowing of the cattle, and other rural sounds, announcing a large and well-stocked farm. These were sights and sounds qualified to dispel any apprehension of immediate violence. Yet the building seemed ancient and strong, a part of the roof was battlemented, and the walls were of great thickness; lastly, I observed, with some unpleasant sensations, that the windows of my chamber had been lately secured with iron stanchions, and that the servants who brought me victuals, or visited my apartment to render other menial offices, always locked the door when they retired.

The comfort and cleanliness of my chamber were of true English growth, and such as I had rarely seen on the other side of the Tweed; the very old wainscot, which composed the floor and the panelling of the room, was scrubbed with a degree of labour which the Scottish housewife rarely bestows on her most costly furniture.

The whole apartments appropriated to my use consisted of the bedroom, a small parlour adjacent, within which was a still smaller closet having a narrow window which seemed anciently to have been used as a shot-hole, admitting, indeed, a very moderate portion of light and air, but without its being possible to see anything from it except the blue sky, and that only by mounting on a chair. There were appearances of a separate entrance into this cabinet, besides that which communicated with the parlour, but it had been recently built up, as I discovered by removing a piece of tapestry which covered the fresh mason-work. I found some of my clothes here, with linen and other articles, as well as my writing-case, containing pen, ink, and paper, which enables me, at my leisure (which, God knows, is undisturbed enough) to make this record of my confinement. It may be well believed, however, that I do not trust to the security of the bureau, but carry the written sheets about my person, so that I can only be deprived of them by actual violence. I also am cautious to write in the little cabinet only, so that I can hear any person approach me through the other apartments, and have time enough to put aside my journal before they come upon me.

The servants, a stout country fellow and a very pretty milkmaid-looking lass, by whom I am attended, seem of the true Joan and Hedge school, thinking of little and desiring nothing beyond the very limited sphere of their own duties or enjoyments, and having no curiosity whatever about the affairs of others. Their behaviour to me in particular, is, at the same time, very kind and very provoking. My table is abundantly supplied, and they seem anxious to comply with my taste in that department. But whenever I make inquiries beyond 'what's for dinner', the brute of a lad baffles me by his ANAN, and his DUNNA KNAW, and if hard pressed, turns his back on me composedly, and leaves the room. The girl, too, pretends to be as simple as he; but an arch grin, which she cannot always suppress, seems to acknowledge that she understands perfectly well the game which she is playing, and is determined to keep me in ignorance. Both of them, and the wench in particular, treat me as they would do a spoiled child, and never directly refuse me anything which I ask, taking care, at the same time, not to

make their words good by effectually granting my request. Thus, if I desire to go out, I am promised by Dorcas that I shall walk in the park at night, and see the cows milked, just as she would propose such an amusement to a child. But she takes care never to keep her word, if it is in her power to do so.

In the meantime, there has stolen on me insensibly an indifference to my freedom—a carelessness about my situation, for which I am unable to account, unless it be the consequence of weakness and loss of blood. I have read of men who, immured as I am, have surprised the world by the address with which they have successfully overcome the most formidable obstacles to their escape; and when I have heard such anecdotes, I have said to myself, that no one who is possessed only of a fragment of freestone, or a rusty nail to grind down rivets and to pick locks, having his full leisure to employ in the task, need continue the inhabitant of a prison. Here, however, I sit, day after day, without a single effort to effect my liberation.

Yet my inactivity is not the result of despondency, but arises, in part at least, from feelings of a very different cast. My story, long a mysterious one, seems now upon the verge of some strange development; and I feel a solemn impression that I ought to wait the course of events, to struggle against which is opposing my feeble efforts to the high will of fate. Thou, my Alan, wilt treat as timidity this passive acquiescence, which has sunk down on me like a benumbing torpor; but if thou hast remembered by what visions my couch was haunted, and dost but think of the probability that I am in the vicinity, perhaps under the same roof with G.M., thou wilt acknowledge that other feelings than pusillanimity have tended in some degree to reconcile me to my fate.

Still I own it is unmanly to submit with patience to this oppressive confinement. My heart rises against it, especially when I sit down to record my sufferings in this journal, and I am determined, as the first step to my deliverance, to have my letters sent to the post-house. —

I am disappointed. When the girl Dorcas, upon whom I had fixed for a messenger, heard me talk of sending a letter, she willingly offered her services, and received the crown which I gave her (for my purse had not taken flight with the more valuable contents of my pocket-book) with a smile which showed her whole set of white teeth.

But when, with the purpose of gaining some intelligence respecting my present place of abode, I asked to which post-town she was to send or carry the letter, a stolid 'ANAN' showed me she was either ignorant of the nature of a post-office, or that, for the present, she chose to seem so.—'Simpleton!' I said, with some sharpness.

'O Lord, sir!' answered the girl, turning pale, which they always do when I show any sparks of anger, 'Don't put yourself in a passion—I'll put the letter in the post.

'What! and not know the name of the post-town?' said I, out of patience. 'How on earth do you propose to manage that?'

'La you there, good master. What need you frighten a poor girl that is no schollard, bating what she learned at the Charity School of Saint Bees?'

'Is Saint Bees far from this place, Dorcas? Do you send your letters there?' said I, in a manner as insinuating, and yet careless, as I could assume.

'Saint Bees! La, who but a madman—begging your honour's pardon—it's a matter of twenty years since fader lived at Saint Bees, which is twenty, or forty, or I dunna know not how many miles from this part, to the West, on the coast side; and I would not have left Saint Bees, but that fader'—

'Oh, the devil take your father!' replied I.

To which she answered, 'Nay, but thof your honour be a little how-come-so, you shouldn't damn folk's faders; and I won't stand to it, for one.'

'Oh, I beg you a thousand pardons—I wish your father no ill in the world—he was a very honest man in his way.'

'WAS an honest man!' she exclaimed; for the Cumbrians are, it would seem, like their neighbours the Scotch, ticklish on the point of ancestry,—'He IS a very honest man as ever led nag with halter on head to Staneshaw Bank Fair. Honest! He is a horse-couper.'

'Right, right,' I replied; 'I know it—I have heard of your father-as honest as any horse-couper of them all. Why, Dorcas, I mean to buy a horse of him.'

'Ah, your honour,' sighed Dorcas, 'he is the man to serve your honour well—if ever you should get round again—or thof you were a bit off the hooks, he would no more cheat you than'—

'Well, well, we will deal, my girl, you may depend on't. But tell me now, were I to give you a letter, what would you do to get it forward?'

'Why, put it into Squire's own bag that hangs in hall,' answered poor Dorcas. 'What else could I do? He sends it to Brampton, or to Carloisle, or where it pleases him, once a week, and that gate.'

'Ah!' said I; 'and I suppose your sweetheart John carries it?'

'Noa—disn't now—and Jan is no sweetheart of mine, ever since he danced at his mother's feast with Kitty Rutlege, and let me sit still; that a did.'

'It was most abominable in Jan, and what I could never have thought of him,' I replied.

'Oh, but a did though—a let me sit still on my seat, a did.'

'Well, well, my pretty May, you will get a handsomer fellow than Jan—Jan's not the fellow for you, I see that.'

'Noa, noa,' answered the damsel; 'but he is weel aneugh for a' that, mon. But I carena a button for him; for there is the miller's son, that suited me last Appleby Fair, when I went wi' oncle, is a gway canny lad as you will see in the sunshine.'

'Aye, a fine stout fellow. Do you think he would carry my letter to Carlisle?'

'To Carloisle! 'Twould be all his life is worth; he maun wait on clap and hopper, as they say. Odd, his father would brain him if he went to Carloisle, bating to wrestling for the belt, or sic loike. But I ha' more bachelors than him; there is the schoolmaster, can write almaist as weel as tou canst, mon.'

'Then he is the very man to take charge of a letter; he knows the trouble of writing one.'

'Aye, marry does he, an tou comest to that, mon; only it takes him four hours to write as mony lines. Tan, it is a great round hand loike, that one can read easily, and not loike your honour's, that are like midge's taes. But for ganging to Carloisle, he's dead foundered, man, as cripple as Eckie's mear.'

'In the name of God,' said I, 'how is it that you propose to get my letter to the post?'

'Why, just to put it into Squire's bag loike,' reiterated Dorcas; 'he sends it by Cristal Nixon to post, as you call it, when such is his pleasure.'

Here I was, then, not much edified by having obtained a list of Dorcas's bachelors; and by finding myself, with respect to any information which I desired, just exactly at the point where I set out. It was of consequence to me, however, to accustom, the girl to converse with me familiarly. If she did so, she could not always be on her guard, and something, I thought, might drop from her which I could turn to advantage.

'Does not the Squire usually look into his letter-bag, Dorcas?' said I, with as much indifference as I could assume.

'That a does,' said Dorcas; 'and a threw out a letter of mine to Raff Miller, because a said'—

'Well, well, I won't trouble him with mine,' said I, 'Dorcas; but, instead, I will write to himself, Dorcas. But how shall I address him?'

'Anan?' was again Dorcas's resource.

'I mean how is he called? What is his name?'

'Sure you honour should know best,' said Dorcas.

'I know? The devil! You drive me beyond patience.'

'Noa, noa! donna your honour go beyond patience—donna ye now,' implored the wench. 'And for his neame, they say he has mair nor ane in Westmoreland and on the Scottish side. But he is but seldom wi' us, excepting in the cocking season; and then we just call him Squoire loike; and so do my measter and dame.'

'And is he here at present?' said I.

'Not he, not he; he is a buck-hoonting, as they tell me, somewhere up the Patterdale way; but he comes and gangs like a flap of a whirlwind, or sic loike.'

I broke off the conversation, after forcing on Dorcas a little silver to buy ribbons, with which she was so much delighted that she exclaimed, 'God! Cristal Nixon may say his worst on thee; but thou art a civil gentleman for all him; and a quoit man wi' woman folk loike.'

There is no sense in being too quiet with women folk, so I added a kiss with my crown piece; and I cannot help thinking that I have secured a partisan in Dorcas. At least, she blushed, and pocketed her little compliment with one hand, while, with the other, she adjusted her cherry-coloured ribbons, a little disordered by the struggle it cost me to attain the honour of a salute.

As she unlocked the door to leave the apartment, she turned back, and looking on me with a strong expression of compassion, added the remarkable words, 'La—be'st mad or no, thou'se a mettled lad, after all.'

There was something very ominous in the sound of these farewell words, which seemed to afford me a clue to the pretext under which I was detained in confinement. My demeanour was probably insane enough, while I was agitated at once by the frenzy incident to the fever, and the anxiety arising from my extraordinary situation. But is it possible they can now establish any cause for confining me arising out of the state of my mind?

If this be really the pretext under which I am restrained from my liberty, nothing but the sedate correctness of my conduct can remove the prejudices which these circumstances may have excited in the minds of all who have approached me during my illness. I have heard—dreadful thought!—of men who, for various reasons, have been trepanned into the custody of the keepers of private madhouses, and whose brain, after years of misery, became at length unsettled, through irresistible sympathy with the wretched beings among whom they were classed. This shall not be my case, if, by strong internal resolution, it is in human nature to avoid the action of exterior and contagious sympathies.

Meantime I sat down to compose and arrange my thoughts, for my purposed appeal to my jailer—so I must call him—whom I addressed in the following manner; having at length, and after making several copies, found language to qualify the sense of resentment which burned in the first, drafts of my letter, and endeavoured to assume a tone more conciliating. I mentioned the two occasions on which he had certainly saved my life, when at the utmost peril; and I added, that whatever was the purpose of the restraint, now practised on me, as I was given to understand, by his authority, it could not certainly be with any view to ultimately injuring me. He might, I said, have mistaken me for some other person; and I gave him what account I could of my situation and education, to correct such an error. I supposed it next possible, that he might think me too weak for travelling, and not capable of taking care of myself; and I begged to assure him, that I was restored to perfect health, and quite able to endure the fatigue of a journey. Lastly, I reminded him, in firm though measured terms, that the restraint which I sustained was an illegal one, and highly punishable by the laws which protect the liberties of the subject. I ended by demanding that he would take me before a magistrate; or, at least, that he would favour me with a personal interview and explain his meaning with regard to me.

Perhaps this letter was expressed in a tone too humble for the situation of an injured man, and I am inclined to think so when I again recapitulate its tenor. But what could I do? I was in the power of one whose passions seem as violent as his means of gratifying them appear unbounded. I had reason, too, to believe (this to thee, Alan) that all his family did not approve of the violence of his conduct towards me; my object, in fine, was freedom, and who would not sacrifice much to attain it?

I had no means of addressing my letter excepting 'For the Squire's own hand.' He could be at no great distance, for in the course of twenty-four hours I received an answer. It was addressed to Darsie Latimer, and contained these words: 'You have demanded an interview with me. You have required to be carried before a magistrate. Your first wish shall be granted—perhaps the second also. Meanwhile, be assured that you are a prisoner for the time, by competent authority, and that such authority is supported by adequate power. Beware, therefore, of struggling with a force sufficient to crush you, but abandon yourself to that train of events by which we are both swept along, and which it is impossible that either of us can resist.'

These mysterious words were without signature of any kind, and left me nothing more important to do than to prepare myself for the meeting which they promised. For that purpose I must now break off, and make sure of the manuscript—so far as I can, in my present condition, be sure of anything—by concealing it within the lining of my coat, so as not to be found without strict search.

CHAPTER VI

LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

The important interview expected at the conclusion of my last took place sooner than I had calculated; for the very day I received the letter, and just when my dinner was finished, the squire, or whatever he is called, entered the room so suddenly that I almost thought I beheld an apparition. The figure of this man is peculiarly noble and stately, and his voice has that deep fullness of accent which implies unresisted authority. I had risen involuntarily as he entered; we gazed on each other for a moment in silence, which was at length broken by my visitor.

'You have desired to see me,' he said. 'I am here; if you have aught to say let me hear it; my time is too brief to be consumed in childish dumb-show.'

'I would ask of you,' said I, 'by what authority I am detained in this place of confinement, and for what purpose?'

'I have told you already,' said he, 'that my authority is sufficient, and my power equal to it; this is all which it is necessary for you at present to know.'

'Every British subject has a right to know why he suffers restraint,' I replied; 'nor can he be deprived of liberty without a legal warrant. Show me that by which you confine me thus.'

'You shall see more,' he said; 'you shall see the magistrate by whom it is granted, and that without a moment's delay.'

This sudden proposal fluttered and alarmed me; I felt, nevertheless, that I had the right cause, and resolved to plead it boldly, although I could well have desired a little further time for preparation. He turned, however, threw open the door of the apartment, and commanded me to follow him. I felt some inclination, when I crossed the threshold of my prison-chamber, to have turned and run for it; but I knew not where to find the stairs—had reason to think the outer doors would be secured and, to conclude, so soon as I had quitted the room to follow the proud step of my conductor, I observed that I was dogged by Cristal Nixon, who suddenly appeared within two paces of me, and with whose great personal strength, independent of the assistance he might have received from his master, I saw no chance of contending. I therefore followed, unresistingly and in silence; along one or two passages of much greater length than consisted with the ideas I had previously entertained of the size of the house. At length a door was flung open, and we entered a large, old-fashioned parlour, having coloured glass in the windows, oaken panelling on the wall, a huge grate, in which a large faggot or two smoked under an arched chimney-piece of stone which bore some armorial device, whilst the walls were adorned with the usual number of heroes in armour, with large wigs instead of helmets, and ladies in sacques, smelling to nosegays. Behind a long table, on which were several books, sat a smart underbred-looking man, wearing his own hair tied in a club, and who, from the quire of paper laid before him, and the pen which he handled at my entrance, seemed prepared to officiate as clerk. As I wish to describe these persons as accurately as possible, I may add, he wore a dark-coloured coat, corduroy breeches, and spatterdashes. At the upper end of the same table, in an ample easy-chair covered with black leather, reposed a fat personage, about fifty years old, who either was actually a country justice, or was well selected to represent such a character. His leathern breeches were faultless in make, his jockey boots spotless in the varnish, and a handsome and flourishing pair of boot-garters, as they are called, united the one part of his garments to the other; in fine, a richly-laced scarlet waistcoat and a purple coat set off the neat though corpulent figure of the little man, and threw an additional bloom upon his plethoric aspect. I suppose he had dined, for it was two hours past noon, and he was amusing himself, and aiding digestion, with a pipe of tobacco. There was an air of importance in his manner which corresponded to the rural dignity of his exterior, and a habit which he had of throwing out a number of interjectional sounds, uttered with a strange variety of intonation running from bass up to treble in a very extraordinary manner, or breaking off his sentences with a whiff of his pipe, seemed adopted to give an air of thought and mature deliberation to his opinions and decisions. Notwithstanding all this, Alan, it might be DOOTED, as our old Professor used to say, whether the Justice was anything more than an ass. Certainly, besides a great deference for the legal opinion of his clerk, which might be quite according to the order of things, he seemed to be wonderfully under the command of his brother squire, if squire either of them were, and indeed much more than was consistent with so much assumed consequence of his own.

'Ho—ha—aye—so—so—hum—humph—this is the young man, I suppose—hum—aye—seems sickly. Young gentleman, you may sit down.'

I used the permission given, for I had been much more reduced by my illness than I was aware of, and felt myself really fatigued, even by the few paces I had walked, joined to the agitation I suffered.

'And your name, young man, is—humph—aye—ha—what is it?'

'Darsie Latimer.'

'Right—aye—humph—very right. Darsie Latimer is the very thing—ha—aye—where do you come from?'

'From Scotland, sir,' I replied.

'A native of Scotland—a—humph—eh—how is it?'

'I am an Englishman by birth, sir.'

'Right—aye—yes, you are so. But pray, Mr. Darsie Latimer, have you always been called by that name, or have you any other?—Nick, write down his answers, Nick.'

'As far as I remember, I never bore any other,' was my answer.

'How, no? well, I should not have thought so, Hey, neighbour, would you?'

Here he looked towards the other squire, who had thrown himself into a chair; and, with his legs stretched out before him, and his arms folded on his bosom, seemed carelessly attending to what was going forward. He answered the appeal of the Justice by saying, that perhaps the young man's memory did not go back to a very early period.

'Ah—eh—ha—you hear the gentleman. Pray, how far may your memory be pleased to run back to?—umph?'

'Perhaps, sir, to the age of three years, or a little further.'

'And will you presume to say, sir,' said the squire, drawing himself suddenly erect in his seat, and exerting the strength of his powerful voice, 'that you then bore your present name?'

I was startled at the confidence with which this question was put, and in vain rummaged my memory for the means of replying. 'At least,' I said, 'I always remember being called Darsie; children, at that early age, seldom get more than their Christian name.'

'Oh, I thought so,' he replied, and again stretched himself on his seat, in the same lounging posture as before.

'So you were called Darsie in your infancy,' said the Justice; 'and—hum—aye—when did you first take the name of Latimer?'

'I did not take it, sir; it was given to me.'

'I ask you,' said the lord of the mansion, but with less severity in his voice than formerly, 'whether you can remember that you were ever called Latimer, until you had that name given you in Scotland?'

'I will be candid: I cannot recollect an instance that I was so called when in England, but neither can I recollect when the name was first given me; and if anything is to be founded on these queries and my answers, I desire my early childhood may be taken into consideration.'

'Hum—aye—yes,' said the Justice; 'all that requires consideration shall be duly considered. Young man—eh—I beg to know the name of your father and mother?'

This was galling a wound that has festered for years, and I did not endure the question so patiently as those which preceded it; but replied, 'I demand, in my turn, to know if I am before an English Justice of the Peace?'

'His worship, Squire Foxley, of Foxley Hall, has been of the quorum these twenty years,' said Master Nicholas.

'Then he ought to know, or you, sir, as his clerk, should inform him,' said I, 'that I am the complainer in this case, and that my complaint ought to be heard before I am subjected to cross-examination.'

'Humph—hoy—what, aye—there is something in that, neighbour,' said the poor Justice, who, blown about by every wind of doctrine, seemed desirous to attain the sanction of his brother squire.

'I wonder at you, Foxley,' said his firm-minded acquaintance; 'how can you render the young man justice unless you know who he is?'

'Ha—yes—egad, that's true,' said Mr. Justice Foxley; 'and now—looking into the matter more closely—there is, eh, upon the whole—nothing at all in what he says—so, sir, you must tell your father's name, and surname.'

'It is out of my power, sir; they are not known to me, since you must needs know so much of my private affairs.'

The Justice collected a great AFFLATUS in his cheeks, which puffed them up like those of a Dutch cherub, while his eyes seemed flying out of his head, from the effort with which he retained his breath. He then blew it forth with,—'Whew!—Hoom—poof—ha!—not know your parents, youngster?—Then I must commit you for a vagrant, I warrant you. OMNE IGNOTUM PRO TERRIBILI, as we used to say at Appleby school; that is, every one that is not known to the Justice; is a rogue and a vagabond. Ha!—aye, you may sneer, sir; but I question if you would have known the meaning of that Latin, unless I had told you.'

I acknowledged myself obliged for a new edition of the adage, and an interpretation which I could never have reached alone and unassisted. I then proceeded to state my case with greater confidence. The Justice was an ass, that was clear; but if was scarcely possible he could be so utterly ignorant as not to know what was necessary in so plain a case as mine. I therefore informed him of the riot which had been committed on the Scottish side of the Solway Firth, explained how I came to be placed in my present situation, and requested of his worship to set me at liberty. I pleaded my cause with as much earnestness as I could, casting an eye from time to time upon the opposite party, who seemed entirely indifferent to all the animation with which I accused him.

As for the Justice, when at length I had ceased, as really not knowing what more to say in a case so very plain, he replied, 'Ho—aye—aye—yes—wonderful! and so this is all the gratitude you show to this good gentleman for the great charge and trouble he hath had with respect to and concerning of you?'

'He saved my life, sir, I acknowledge, on one occasion certainly, and most probably on two; but his having done so gives him no right over my person. I am not, however, asking for any punishment or revenge; on the contrary, I am content to part friends with the gentleman, whose motives I am unwilling to suppose are bad, though his actions have been, towards me, unauthorized and violent.'

This moderation, Alan, thou wilt comprehend, was not entirely dictated by my feelings towards the individual of whom I complained; there were other reasons, in which regard for him had little share. It seemed, however, as if the mildness with which I pleaded my cause had more effect upon him than anything I had yet said. We were moved to the point of being almost out of countenance; and took snuff repeatedly, as if to gain time to stifle some degree of emotion.

But on Justice Foxley, on whom my eloquence was particularly designed to make impression, the result was much less favourable. He consulted in a whisper with Mr. Nicholas, his clerk—pshawed, hemmed, and elevated his eyebrows, as if in scorn of my supplication. At length, having apparently made up his mind, he leaned back in his chair, and smoked his pipe with great energy, with a look of defiance, designed to make me aware that all my reasoning was lost on him.

At length, when I stopped, more from lack of breath than want of argument, he opened his oracular jaws, and made the following reply, interrupted by his usual interjectional ejaculations, and by long volumes of smoke:—'Hem—aye—eh—poof. And, youngster, do you think Matthew Foxley, who has been one of the quorum for these twenty years, is to be come over with such trash as would hardly cheat an apple-woman? Poof—poof—eh! Why, man—eh—dost thou not know the charge is not aailable matter—and that—hum—aye—the greatest man—poof—the Baron of Graystock himself, must stand committed? and yet you pretend to have been kidnapped by this gentleman, and robbed of property, and what not; and—eh—poof—you would persuade me all you want is to get away from him? I do believe—eh—that it IS all you want. Therefore, as you are a sort of a slip-string gentleman, and—aye—hum—a kind of idle apprentice, and something cock-brained withal, as the honest folks of the house tell me—why, you must e'en remain under custody of your guardian, till your coming of age, or my Lord Chancellor's warrant, shall give you the management of your own affairs, which, if you can gather your brains again, you will even then not be—aye—hem—poof—in particular haste to assume.'

The time occupied by his worship's hums, and haws, and puffs of tobacco smoke, together with the slow and pompous manner in which he spoke, gave me a minute's space to collect my ideas, dispersed as they were by the extraordinary purport of this annunciation.

'I cannot conceive, sir,' I replied, 'by what singular tenure this person claims my obedience as a guardian; it is a barefaced imposture. I never in my life saw him, until I came unhappily to this country, about four weeks since.'

'Aye, sir—we—eh—know, and are aware—that—poof—you do not like to hear some folk's names; and that—eh—you understand me—there are things, and sounds, and matters, conversation about names, and suchlike, which put you off the hooks—which I have no humour to witness. Nevertheless, Mr. Darsie—or—

poof—Mr. Darsie Latimer—or—poof, poof—eh—aye, Mr. Darsie without the Latimer—you have acknowledged as much to-day as assures me you will best be disposed of under the honourable care of my friend here—all your confessions—besides that, poof—eh—I know him to be a most responsible person—a—hay—aye—most responsible and honourable person—Can you deny this?

'I know nothing of him,' I repeated; 'not even his name; and I have not, as I told you, seen him in the course of my whole life, till a few weeks since.'

'Will you swear to that?' said the singular man, who seemed to await the result of this debate, secure as a rattle-snake is of the prey which has once felt its fascination. And while he said these words in deep undertone, he withdrew his chair a little behind that of the Justice, so as to be unseen by him or his clerk, who sat upon the same side; while he bent on me a frown so portentous, that no one who has witnessed the look can forget it during the whole of his life. The furrows of the brow above the eyes became livid and almost black, and were bent into a semicircular, or rather elliptical form, above the junction of the eyebrows. I had heard such a look described in an old tale of DIABLERIE, which it was my chance to be entertained with not long since; when this deep and gloomy contortion of the frontal muscles was not unaptly described as forming the representation of a small horseshoe.

The tale, when told, awaked a dreadful vision of infancy, which the withering and blighting look now fixed on me again forced on my recollection, but with much more vivacity. Indeed, I was so much surprised, and, I must add, terrified, at the vague ideas which were awakened in my mind by this fearful sign, that I kept my eyes fixed on the face in which it was exhibited, as on a frightful vision; until, passing his handkerchief a moment across his countenance, this mysterious man relaxed at once the look which had for me something so appalling. 'The young man will no longer deny that he has seen me before,' said he to the Justice, in a tone of complacency; 'and I trust he will now be reconciled to my temporary guardianship, which may end better for him than he expects.'

'Whatever I expect,' I replied, summoning my scattered recollections together, 'I see I am neither to expect justice nor protection from this gentleman, whose office it is to render both to the lieges. For you, sir, how strangely you have wrought yourself into the fate of an unhappy young man or what interest you can pretend in me, you yourself only can explain. That I have seen you before is certain; for none can forget the look with which you seem to have the power of blighting those upon whom you cast it.'

The Justice seemed not very easy under this hint, 'Ha!—aye,' he said; 'it is time to be going, neighbour. I have a many miles to ride, and I care not to ride darkling in these parts. You and I, Mr. Nicholas, must be jogging.'

The Justice fumbled with his gloves, in endeavouring to draw them on hastily, and Mr. Nicholas bustled to get his greatcoat and whip. Their landlord endeavoured to detain them, and spoke of supper and beds. Both, pouring forth many thanks for his invitation, seemed as if they would much rather not, and Mr. Justice Foxley was making a score of apologies, with at least a hundred cautionary hems and eh-ehs, when the girl Dorcas burst into the room, and announced a gentleman on justice business.

'What gentleman?—and whom does he want?'

'He is cuome post on his ten toes,' said the wench; 'and on justice business to his worship loike. I'se uphald him a gentleman, for he speaks as good Latin as the schule-measter; but, lack-a-day! he has gotten a queer mop of a wig.'

The gentleman, thus announced and described, bounced into the room. But I have already written as much as fills a sheet of my paper, and my singular embarrassments press so hard on me that I have matter to fill another from what followed the intrusion of—my dear Alan—your crazy client—Poor Peter Peebles!

CHAPTER VII LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

Sheet 2.

I have rarely in my life, till the last alarming days, known what it was to sustain a moment's real sorrow. What I called such, was, I am now well convinced, only the weariness of mind which, having nothing actually present to complain of, turns upon itself and becomes anxious about the past and the future; those periods with which human life has so little connexion, that Scripture itself hath said, 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'

If, therefore, I have sometimes abused prosperity, by murmuring at my unknown birth and uncertain rank in society, I will make amends by bearing my present real adversity with patience and courage, and, if I can, even with gaiety. What can they—dare they-do to me? Foxley, I am persuaded, is a real Justice of Peace, and country gentleman of estate, though (wonderful to tell!) he is an ass notwithstanding; and his functionary in the drab coat must have a shrewd guess at the consequences of being accessory to an act of murder or kidnapping. Men invite not such witnesses to deeds of darkness. I have also—Alan, I have hopes, arising out of the family of the oppressor himself. I am encouraged to believe that G.M. is likely again to enter on the field. More I dare not here say; nor must I drop a hint which another eye than thine might be able to construe. Enough, my feelings are lighter than they have been; and, though fear and wonder are still around me, they are unable entirely to overcloud the horizon.

Even when I saw the spectral form of the old scarecrow of the Parliament House rush into the apartment where I had undergone so singular an examination, I thought of thy connexion with him, and could almost have parodied Lear—

Death!—nothing could have thus subdued nature

To such a lowness, but his 'learned lawyers.'

He was e'en as we have seen him of yore, Alan, when, rather to keep thee company than to follow my own bent, I formerly frequented the halls of justice. The only addition to his dress, in the capacity of a traveller, was a pair of boots, that seemed as if they might have seen the field of Sherifffmoor; so large and heavy that, tied as they were to the creature's wearied hams with large bunches of worsted tape of various colours, they looked as if he had been dragging them along, either for a wager or by way of penance.

Regardless of the surprised looks of the party on whom he thus intruded himself, Peter blundered into the middle of the apartment, with his head charged like a ram's in the act of butting, and saluted them thus:—

'Gude day to ye, gude day to your honours. Is't here they sell the fugie warrants?'

I observed that on his entrance, my friend—or enemy—drew himself back, and placed himself as if he would rather avoid attracting the observation of the new-comer. I did the same myself, as far as I was able; for I thought it likely that Mr. Peebles might recognize me, as indeed I was too frequently among the group of young juridical aspirants who used to amuse themselves by putting cases for Peter's solution, and playing him worse tricks; yet I was uncertain whether I had better avail myself of our acquaintance to have the advantage, such as it might be, of his evidence before the magistrate, or whether to make him, if possible, bearer of a letter which might procure me more effectual assistance. I resolved, therefore, to be guided by circumstances, and to watch carefully that nothing might escape me. I drew back as far as I could, and even reconnoitred the door and passage, to consider whether absolute escape might not be practicable. But there paraded Cristal Nixon, whose little black eyes, sharp as those of a basilisk, seemed, the instant when they encountered mine, to penetrate my purpose.

I sat down, as much out of sight of all parties as I could, and listened to the dialogue which followed—a dialogue how much more interesting to me than any I could have conceived, in which Peter Peebles was to be one of the dramatis personae!

'Is it here where ye sell the warrants—the fugies, ye ken?' said Peter.

'Hey—eh—what!' said Justice Foxley; 'what the devil does the fellow mean?—What would you have a warrant for?'

'It is to apprehend a young lawyer that is IN MEDITATIONE FUGAE; for he has ta'en my memorial and pleaded my cause, and a good fee I gave him, and as muckle brandy as he could drink that day at his father's house—he loes the brandy ower weel for sae youthful a creature.'

'And what has this drunken young dog of a lawyer done to you, that you are come to me—eh—ha? Has he robbed you? Not unlikely if he be a lawyer—eh—Nick—ha?' said Justice Foxley.

'He has robbed me of himself, sir,' answered Peter; 'of his help, comfort, aid, maintenance, and assistance, whilk, as a counsel to a client, he is bound to yield me RATIONE OFFICII—that is it, ye see. He has pouched my fee, and drucken a mutchkin of brandy, and now he's ower the march, and left my cause, half won half lost—as dead a heat as e'er was run ower the back-sands. Now, I was advised by some cunning laddies that are used to crack a bit law wi' me in the House, that the best thing I could do was to take heart o' grace and set out after him; so I have taken post on my ain shanks, forby a cast in a cart, or the like. I got wind of him in Dumfries, and now I have run him ower to the English side, and I want a fugie warrant against him.'

How did my heart throb at this information, dearest Alan! Thou art near me then, and I well know with what kind purpose; thou hast abandoned all to fly to my assistance; and no wonder that, knowing thy friendship and faith, thy sound sagacity and persevering disposition, 'my bosom's lord should now sit lightly on his throne'; that gaiety should almost involuntarily hover on my pen; and that my heart should beat like that of a general, responsive to the drums of his advancing ally, without whose help the battle must have been lost.

I did not suffer myself to be startled by this joyous surprise, but continued to bend my strictest attention to what followed among this singular party. That Poor Peter Peebles had been put on this wildgoose chase by some of his juvenile advisers in the Parliament House, he himself had intimated; but he spoke with much confidence, and the Justice, who seemed to have some secret apprehension of being put to trouble in the matter, and, as sometimes occurs on the English frontier, a jealousy lest the superior acuteness of their northern neighbours might overreach their own simplicity, turned to his clerk with a perplexed countenance. 'Eh—oh—Nick—d—n thee—Hast thou got nothing to say? This is more Scots law, I take it, and more Scotsmen.' (Here he cast a side-glance at the owner of the mansion, and winked to his clerk.) 'I would Solway were as deep as it is wide, and we had then some chance of keeping of them out.'

Nicholas conversed an instant aside with the supplicant, and then reported:—

'The man wants a border-warrant, I think; but they are only granted for debt—now he wants one to catch a lawyer.'

'And what for no?' answered Peter Peebles, doggedly; 'what for no, I would be glad to ken? If a day's labourer refuse to work, ye'll grant a warrant to gar him do out his daurg—if a wench quean rin away from her hairst, ye'll send her back to her heuck again—if sae mickle as a collier or a salter make a moonlight flitting, ye will cleek him by the back-spaul in a minute of time—and yet the damage canna amount to mair than a creelfu' of coals, and a forpit or twa of saut; and here is a chield taks leg from his engagement, and damages me to the tune of sax thousand punds sterling; that is, three thousand that I should win, and three thousand mair that I am like to lose; and you that ca' yourself a justice canna help a poor man to catch the rinaway? A bonny like justice I am like to get amang ye!'

'The fellow must be drunk,' said the clerk.

'Black fasting from all but sin,' replied the supplicant; 'I havena had mair than a mouthful of cauld water since I passed the Border, and deil a ane of ye is like to say to me, "Dog, will ye drink?"'

The Justice seemed moved by this appeal. 'Hem—tush, man,' replied he; 'thou speak'st to us as if thou wert in presence of one of thine own beggarly justices—get downstairs—get something to eat, man (with permission of my friend to make so free in his house), and a mouthful to drink, and I warrant we get ye such justice as will please ye.'

'I winna refuse your neighbourly offer,' said Poor Peter Peebles, making his bow; 'muckle grace be wi' your honour, and wisdom to guide you in this extraordinary cause.'

When I saw Peter Peebles about to retire from the room, I could not forbear an effort to obtain from him such evidence as might give me some credit with the Justice. I stepped forward, therefore, and, saluting him, asked him if he remembered me?

After a stare or two, and a long pinch of snuff, recollection seemed suddenly to dawn on Peter Peebles. 'Recollect ye!' he said; 'by my troth do I.—Haud him a grip, gentlemen!—constables, keep him fast! where that ill-deedie hempy is, ye are sure that Alan Fairford is not far off. Haud him fast, Master Constable; I charge ye wi' him, for I am mista'en if he is not at the bottom of this rinaway business. He was aye getting the silly callant Alan awa wi' gigs, and horse, and the like of that, to Roslin, and Prestonpans, and a' the idle gates he could think of. He's a rinaway apprentice, that ane.'

'Mr. Peebles,' I said, 'do not do me wrong. I am sure you can say no harm of me justly, but can satisfy these gentlemen, if you will, that I am a student of law in Edinburgh—Darsie Latimer by name.'

'Me satisfy! how can I satisfy the gentlemen,' answered Peter, 'that am sae far from being satisfied myself? I ken naething about your name, and can only testify, NIHIL NOVIT IN CAUSA.'

'A pretty witness you have brought forward in your favour,' said Mr. Foxley. 'But—ha—aye—I'll ask him a question or two. Pray, friend, will you take your oath to this youth being a runaway apprentice?'

'Sir,' said Peter, 'I will make oath to anything in reason; when a case comes to my oath it's a won cause: But I am in some haste to prie your worship's good cheer;' for Peter had become much more respectful in his demeanour towards the Justice since he had heard some intimation of dinner.

'You shall have—eh—hum—aye—a bellyful, if it be possible to fill it. First let me know if this young man be really what he pretends. Nick, make his affidavit.'

'Ow, he is just a wud harum-scarum creature, that wad never take to his studies; daft, sir, clean daft.'

'Deft!' said the Justice; 'what d'ye mean by deft—eh?'

'Just Fifish,' replied Peter; 'wowf—a wee bit by the East Nook or sae; it's a common case—the ae half of the world thinks the tither daft. I have met with folk in my day that thought I was daft mysell; and, for my part, I think our Court of Session clean daft, that have had the great cause of Peebles against Plainstones before them for this score of years, and have never been able to ding the bottom out of it yet.'

'I cannot make out a word of his cursed brogue,' said the Cumbrian justice; 'can you, neighbour—eh? What can he mean by DEFT?'

'He means MAD,' said the party appealed to, thrown off his guard by impatience of this protracted discussion.

'Ye have it—ye have it,' said Peter; 'that is, not clean skivvie, but—'

Here he stopped, and fixed his eye on the person he addressed with an air of joyful recognition.—'Aye, aye, Mr. Herries of Birrenswork, is this your ainsell in blood and bane? I thought ye had been hanged at Kennington Common, or Hairiebie, or some of these places, after the bonny ploy ye made in the Forty-five.'

'I believe you are mistaken, friend,' said Herries, sternly, with whose name and designation I was thus made unexpectedly acquainted.

'The deil a bit,' answered the undaunted Peter Peebles; 'I mind ye weel, for ye lodged in my house the great year of Forty-five, for a great year it was; the Grand Rebellion broke out, and my cause—the great cause—Peebles against Plainstones, ET PER CONTRA—was called in the beginning of the winter session, and would have been heard, but that there was a surcease of justice, with your plaids, and your piping, and your nonsense.'

'I tell you, fellow,' said Herries, yet more fiercely, 'you have confused me with some of the other furniture of your crazy pate.'

'Speak like a gentleman, sir,' answered Peebles; 'these are not legal phrases, Mr. Herries of Birrenswork. Speak in form of law, or I sall bid ye gude day, sir. I have nae pleasure in speaking to proud folk, though I am willing to answer anything in a legal way; so if you are for a crack about auld langsyne, and the splores that you and Captain Redgimlet used to breed in my house, and the girded cask of brandy that ye drank and ne'er thought of paying for it (not that I minded it muckle in thae days, though I have felt a lack of it sin syne), why I will waste an hour on ye at any time.—and where is Captain Redgimlet now? he was a wild chap, like yourself, though they arena sae keen after you poor bodies for these some years bygane; the heading and hanging is weel ower now—awful job—awful job—will ye try my sneeshing?'

He concluded his desultory speech by thrusting out his large bony paw, filled with a Scottish mull of huge dimensions, which Herries, who had been standing like one petrified by the assurance of this unexpected address, rejected with a contemptuous motion of his hand, which spilled some of the contents of the box.

'Aweel, aweel,' said Peter Peebles, totally unabashed by the repulse, 'e'en as ye like, a wilful man maun hae his way; but,' he added, stooping down and endeavouring to gather the spilled snuff from the polished floor, 'I canna afford to lose my sneeshing for a' that ye are gumble-foisted wi' me.'

My attention had been keenly awakened, during this extraordinary and unexpected scene. I watched, with as much attention as my own agitation permitted me to command, the effect produced on the parties concerned. It was evident that our friend, Peter Peebles, had unwarily let out something which altered the sentiments

of Justice Foxley and his clerk towards Mr. Herries, with whom, until he was known and acknowledged under that name, they had appeared to be so intimate. They talked with each other aside, looked at a paper or two which the clerk selected from the contents of a huge black pocket-book, and seemed, under the influence of fear and uncertainty, totally at a loss what line of conduct to adopt.

Herries made a different, and far more interesting figure. However little Peter Peebles might resemble the angel Ithuriel, the appearance of Herries, his high and scornful demeanour, vexed at what seemed detection yet fearless of the consequences, and regarding the whispering magistrate and his clerk with looks in which contempt predominated over anger or anxiety, bore, in my opinion, no slight resemblance to

the regal port

And faded splendour wan

with which the poet has invested the detected King of the powers of the air.

As he glanced round, with a look which he had endeavoured to compose to haughty indifference, his eye encountered mine, and, I thought, at the first glance sank beneath it. But he instantly rallied his natural spirit, and returned me one of those extraordinary looks, by which he could contort so strangely the wrinkles on his forehead. I started; but, angry at myself for my pusillanimity, I answered him by a look of the same kind, and catching the reflection of my countenance in a large antique mirror which stood before me, I started again at the real or imaginary resemblance which my countenance, at that moment, bore to that of Herries. Surely my fate is somehow strangely interwoven with that of this mysterious individual. I had no time at present to speculate upon the subject, for the subsequent conversation demanded all my attention.

The Justice addressed Herries, after a pause of about five minutes, in which, all parties seemed at some loss how to proceed. He spoke with embarrassment, and his faltering voice, and the long intervals which divided his sentences, seemed to indicate fear of him whom he addressed.

'Neighbour,' he said, 'I could not have thought this; or, if I—eh—DID think—in a corner of my own mind as it were—that you, I say—that you might have unluckily engaged in—eh—the matter of the Forty-five—there was still time to have forgot all that.'

'And is it so singular that a man should have been out in the Forty-five?' said Herries, with contemptuous composure;—'your father, I think, Mr. Foxley, was out with Derwentwater in the Fifteen.'

'And lost half of his estate,' answered Foxley, with more rapidity than usual; 'and was very near—hem—being hanged into the boot. But this is—another guess job—for—eh—Fifteen is not Forty-five; and my father had a remission, and you, I take it, have none.'

'Perhaps I have,' said Herries indifferently; 'or if I have not, I am but in the case of half a dozen others whom government do not think worth looking after at this time of day, so they give no offence or disturbance.'

'But you have given both, sir,' said Nicholas Faggot, the clerk, who, having some petty provincial situation, as I have since understood, deemed himself bound to be zealous for government, 'Mr. Justice Foxley cannot be answerable for letting you pass free, now your name and surname have been spoken plainly out. There are warrants out against you from the Secretary of State's office.'

'A proper allegation, Mr. Attorney! that, at the distance of so many years, the Secretary of State should trouble himself about the unfortunate relics of a ruined cause,' answered Mr. Herries.

'But if it be so,' said the clerk, who seemed to assume more confidence upon the composure of Herries's demeanour; 'and if cause has been given by the conduct of a gentleman himself, who hath been, it is alleged, raking up old matters, and mixing them with new subjects of disaffection—I say, if it be so, I should advise the party, in his wisdom, to surrender himself quietly into the lawful custody of the next Justice of Peace—Mr. Foxley, suppose—where, and by whom, the matter should be regularly inquired into. I am only putting a case,' he added, watching with apprehension the effect which his words were likely to produce upon the party to whom they were addressed.

'And were I to receive such advice,' said Herries, with the same composure as before—'putting the case, as you say, Mr. Faggot—I should request to see the warrant which countenanced such a scandalous proceeding.'

Mr. Nicholas, by way of answer, placed in his hand a paper, and seemed anxiously to expect the consequences which were to ensue. Mr. Herries looked it over with the same equanimity as before, and then continued, 'And were such a scrawl as this presented to me in my own house, I would throw it into the chimney, and Mr. Faggot upon the top of it.'

Accordingly, seconding the word with the action, he flung the warrant into the fire with one hand, and fixed the other, with a stern and irresistible grip, on the breast of the attorney, who, totally unable to contend with him, in either personal strength or mental energy, trembled like a chicken in the raven's clutch. He got off, however, for the fright; for Herries, having probably made him fully sensible of the strength of his grasp, released him, with a scornful laugh.

'Deforcement—spulzie-stouthrief—masterful rescue!' exclaimed Peter Peebles, scandalized at the resistance offered to the law in the person of Nicholas Faggot. But his shrill exclamations were drowned in the thundering voice of Herries, who, calling upon Cristal Nixon, ordered him to take the bawling fool downstairs, fill his belly, and then give him a guinea, and thrust him out of doors. Under such injunctions, Peter easily suffered himself to be withdrawn from the scene.

Herries then turned to the Justice, whose visage, wholly abandoned by the rubicund hue which so lately beamed upon it, hung out the same pale livery as that of his dismayed clerk. 'Old friend and acquaintance,' he said, 'you came here at my request on a friendly errand, to convince this silly young man of the right which I have over his person for the present. I trust you do not intend to make your visit the pretext of disquieting me about other matters? All the world knows that I have been living at large, in these northern counties, for some months, not to say years, and might have been apprehended at any time, had the necessities of the state required, or my own behaviour deserved it. But no English magistrate has been ungenerous enough to trouble a gentleman under misfortune, on account of political opinions and disputes which have been long ended by the success of the reigning powers. I trust, my good friend, you will not endanger yourself by taking any other view of the subject than you have done ever since we were acquainted?'

The Justice answered with more readiness, as well as more spirit than usual, 'Neighbour Ingoldsby—what you say—is—eh—in some sort true; and when you were coming and going at markets, horse-races, and cock-fights, fairs, hunts, and such-like—it was—eh—neither my business nor my wish to dispel—I say—to inquire into and dispel the mysteries which hung about you; for while you were a good companion in the field, and over a bottle now and then—I did not—eh—think it necessary to ask—into your private affairs. And if I thought you were—ahem—somewhat unfortunate in former undertakings, and enterprises, and connexions, which might cause you to live unsettledly and more private, I could have—eh—very little pleasure—to aggravate your case by interfering, or requiring explanations, which are often more easily asked than given. But when there are warrants and witnesses to names—and those names, christian and surname, belong to—eh—an attainted person—charged—I trust falsely—with—ahem-taking advantage of modern broils and heart-burnings to renew our civil disturbances, the case is altered; and I must—ahem—do my duty.'

The Justice, got on his feet as he concluded this speech, and looked as bold as he could. I drew close beside him and his clerk, Mr. Faggot, thinking the moment favourable for my own liberation, and intimated to Mr. Foxley my determination to stand by him. But Mr. Herries only laughed at the menacing posture which we assumed. 'My good neighbour,' said he, 'you talk of a witness. Is yon crazy beggar a fit witness in an affair of this nature?'

'But you do not deny that you are Mr. Herries of Birrenswork, mentioned in the Secretary of State's warrant?' said Mr. Foxley.

'How can I deny or own anything about it?' said Herries, with a sneer. 'There is no such warrant in existence now; its ashes, like the poor traitor whose doom it threatened, have been dispersed to the four winds of heaven. There is now no warrant in the world.'

'But you will not deny,' said the Justice, 'that you were the person named in it; and that—eh—your own act destroyed it?'

'I will neither deny my name nor my actions, Justice,' replied Mr. Herries, 'when called upon by competent authority to avow or defend them. But I will resist all impertinent attempts either to intrude into my private motives, or to control my person. I am quite well prepared to do so; and I trust that you, my good neighbour and brother sportsman, in your expostulation, and my friend Mr. Nicholas Faggot here, in his humble advice and petition that I should surrender myself, will consider yourselves as having amply discharged your duty to King George and government.'

The cold and ironical tone in which he made this declaration; the look and attitude, so nobly expressive of absolute confidence in his own superior strength and energy, seemed to complete the indecision which had already shown itself on the side of those whom he addressed.

The Justice looked to the clerk—the clerk to the Justice; the former HA'D, EH'D, without bringing forth an articulate syllable; the latter only said, 'As the warrant is destroyed, Mr. Justice, I presume you do not mean to proceed with the arrest?'

'Hum—aye—why, no—Nicholas—it would not be quite advisable—and as the Forty-five was an old affair—and—hem—as my friend here will, I hope, see his error—that is, if he has not seen it already—and renounce the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender—I mean no harm, neighbour—I think we—as we have no POSSE, or constables, or the like—should order our horses—and, in one word, look the matter over.'

'Judiciously resolved,' said the person whom this decision affected; 'but before you go, I trust you will drink and be friends?'

'Why,' said the Justice, rubbing his brow, 'our business has been—hem—rather a thirsty one.'

'Cristal Nixon,' said Mr. Herries, 'let us have a cool tankard instantly, large enough to quench the thirst of the whole commission.'

While Cristal was absent on this genial errand, there was a pause, of which I endeavoured to avail myself by bringing back the discourse to my own concerns. 'Sir,' I said to Justice Foxley, 'I have no direct business with your late discussion with Mr. Herries, only just thus far—You leave me, a loyal subject of King George, an unwilling prisoner in the hands of a person whom you have reason to believe unfriendly to the king's cause. I humbly submit that this is contrary to your duty as a magistrate, and that you ought to make Mr. Herries aware of the illegality of his proceedings, and take steps for my rescue, either upon the spot, or, at least, as soon as possible after you have left this case'—

'Young man,' said Mr. Justice Foxley, 'I would have you remember you are under the power, the lawful power—ahem—of your guardian.'

'He calls himself so, indeed,' I replied; 'but he has shown no evidence to establish so absurd a claim; and if he had, his circumstances, as an attainted traitor excepted from pardon, would void such a right if it existed. I do therefore desire you, Mr. Justice, and you, his clerk, to consider my situation, and afford me relief at your peril.'

'Here is a young fellow now,' said the Justice, with much-embarrassed looks, 'thinks that I carry the whole statute law of England in my head, and a POSSE COMITATUS to execute them in my pocket! Why, what good would my interference do?—but—hum—eh—I will speak to your guardian in your favour.'

He took Mr. Herries aside, and seemed indeed to urge something upon him with much earnestness; and perhaps such a species of intercession was all which, in the circumstances, I was entitled to expect from him.

They often looked at me as they spoke together; and as Cristal Nixon entered with a huge four-pottle tankard, filled with the beverage his master had demanded, Herries turned away from Mr. Foxley somewhat impatiently, saying with emphasis, 'I give you my word of honour, that you have not the slightest reason to apprehend anything on his account.' He then took up the tankard, and saying aloud in Gaelic, 'SLAINT AN REY,' [The King's health.] just tasted the liquor, and handed the tankard to Justice Foxley, who, to avoid the dilemma of pledging him to what might be the Pretender's health, drank to Mr. Herries's own, with much pointed solemnity, but in a draught far less moderate.

The clerk imitated the example of his principal, and I was fain to follow their example, for anxiety and fear are at least as thirsty as sorrow is said to be. In a word, we exhausted the composition of ale, sherry, lemon-juice, nutmeg, and other good things, stranded upon the silver bottom of the tankard the huge toast, as well as the roasted orange, which had whilom floated jollily upon the brim, and rendered legible Dr. Byrom's celebrated lines engraved thereon—

God bless the King!—God bless the Faith's defender!

God bless—No harm in blessing—the Pretender.

Who that Pretender is, and who that King,—

God bless us all!—is quite another thing.

I had time enough to study this effusion of the Jacobite muse, while the Justice was engaged in the somewhat tedious ceremony of taking leave. That of Mr. Faggot was less ceremonious; but I suspect something besides empty compliment passed betwixt him and Mr. Herries; for I remarked that the latter slipped a piece of paper into the hand of the former, which might perhaps be a little atonement for the rashness with which he had burnt the warrant, and imposed no gentle hand on the respectable minion of the law by whom it was exhibited; and I observed that he made this propitiation in such a manner as to be secret from the worthy clerk's principal.

When this was arranged, the party took leave of each other with much formality on the part of Squire Foxley, amongst whose adieus the following phrase was chiefly remarkable: 'I presume you do not intend to stay long in these parts?'

'Not for the present, Justice, you may be sure; there are good reasons to the contrary. But I have no doubt of arranging my affairs so that we shall speedily have sport together again.'

He went to wait upon the Justice to the courtyard; and, as he did so, commanded Cristal Nixon to see that I returned into my apartment. Knowing it would be to no purpose to resist or tamper with that stubborn functionary, I obeyed in silence, and was once more a prisoner in my former quarters.

CHAPTER VIII

LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

I spent more than an hour, after returning to the apartment which I may call my prison, in reducing to writing the singular circumstances which I had just witnessed. Methought I could now form some guess at the character of Mr. Herries, upon whose name and situation the late scene had thrown considerable light—one of those fanatical Jacobites, doubtless, whose arms, not twenty years since, had shaken the British throne, and some of whom, though their party daily diminished in numbers, energy, and power, retained still an inclination to renew the attempt they had found so desperate. He was indeed perfectly different from the sort of zealous Jacobites whom it had been my luck hitherto to meet with. Old ladies of family over their hyson, and grey-haired lairds over their punch, I had often heard utter a little harmless treason; while the former remembered having led down a dance with the Chevalier, and the latter recounted the feats they had performed at Preston, Clifton, and Falkirk.

The disaffection of such persons was too unimportant to excite the attention of government. I had heard, however, that there still existed partisans of the Stuart family of a more daring and dangerous description; men who, furnished with gold from Rome, moved, secretly and in disguise, through the various classes of society, and endeavoured to keep alive the expiring zeal of their party.

I had no difficulty in assigning an important post among this class of persons, whose agency and exertion are only doubted by those who look on the surface of things, to this Mr. Herries, whose mental energies, as well as his personal strength and activity, seemed to qualify him well to act so dangerous a part; and I knew that all along the Western Border, both in England and Scotland, there are so many nonjurors, that such a person may reside there with absolute safety, unless it becomes, in a very especial degree, the object of the government to secure his person; and which purpose, even then, might be disappointed by early intelligence, or, as in the case of Mr. Foxley, by the unwillingness of provincial magistrates to interfere in what is now considered an invidious pursuit of the unfortunate.

There have, however, been rumours lately, as if the present state of the nation or at least of some discontented provinces, agitated by a variety of causes but particularly by the unpopularity of the present administration, may seem to this species of agitators a favourable period for recommencing their intrigues; while, on the other hand, government may not, at such a crisis, be inclined to look upon them with the contempt which a few years ago would have been their most appropriate punishment.

That men should be found rash enough to throw away their services and lives in a desperate cause, is nothing new in history, which abounds with instances of similar devotion—that Mr. Herries is such an enthusiast is no less evident; but all this explains not his conduct towards me. Had he sought to make me a proselyte to his ruined cause, violence and compulsion were arguments very unlikely to prevail with any generous spirit. But even if such were his object, of what use to him could be the acquisition of a single reluctant partisan, who could bring only his own person to support any quarrel which he might adopt? He had claimed over me the rights of a guardian; he had more than hinted that I was in a state of mind which could not dispense with the authority of such a person. Was this man, so sternly desperate in his purpose—he who seemed willing to take on his own shoulders the entire support of a cause which had been ruinous to thousands—was he the person that had the power of deciding on my fate? Was it from him those dangers flowed, to secure me against which I had been educated under such circumstances of secrecy and precaution?

And if this was so, of what nature was the claim which he asserted?—Was it that of propinquity? And did I share the blood, perhaps the features, of this singular being?—Strange as it may seem, a thrill of awe, which shot across my mind at that instant, was not unmingled with a wild and mysterious feeling of wonder, almost amounting to pleasure. I remembered the reflection of my own face in the mirror at one striking moment during the singular interview of the day, and I hastened to the outward apartment to consult a glass which hung there, whether it were possible for my countenance to be again contorted into the peculiar frown which so much resembled the terrific look of Herries. But I folded my brows in vain into a thousand complicated wrinkles, and I was obliged to conclude, either that the supposed mark on my brow was altogether imaginary, or that it could not be called forth by voluntary effort; or, in fine, what seemed most likely, that it was such a resemblance as the imagination traces in the embers of a wood fire, or among the varied veins of marble, distinct at one time, and obscure or invisible at another, according as the combination of lines strikes the eye or impresses the fancy.

While I was moulding my visage like a mad player, the door suddenly opened, and the girl of the house entered. Angry and ashamed at being detected in my singular occupation, I turned round sharply, and, I suppose, chance produced the change on my features which I had been in vain labouring to call forth.

The girl started back, with her 'Don't ya look so now—don't ye, for love's sake—you be as like the ould squoire as—But here a comes,' she said, huddling away out of the room; 'and if you want a third, there is none but ould Harry, as I know of, that can match ye for a brent broo!'

As the girl muttered this exclamation, and hastened out of the room, Herries entered. He stopped on observing that I had looked again to the mirror, anxious to trace the look by which the wench had undoubtedly been terrified. He seemed to guess what was passing in my mind, for, as I turned towards him, he observed, 'Doubt not that it is stamped on your forehead—the fatal mark of our race; though it is not now so apparent as it will become when age and sorrow, and the traces of stormy passions and of bitter penitence, shall have drawn their furrows on your brow.'

'Mysterious man,' I replied, 'I know not of what you speak; your language is as dark as your purposes!'

'Sit down, then,' he said, 'and listen; thus far, at least, must the veil of which you complain be raised. When withdrawn, it will only display guilt and sorrow—guilt followed by strange penalty, and sorrow which Providence has entailed upon the posterity of the mourners.'

He paused a moment, and commenced his narrative, which he told with the air of one, who, remote as the events were which he recited, took still the deepest interest in them. The tone of his voice, which I have already described as rich and powerful, aided by its inflections the effects of his story, which I will endeavour to write down, as nearly as possible, in the very words which he used.

'It was not of late years that the English learned that their best chance of conquering their independent neighbours must be by introducing amongst them division and civil war. You need not be reminded of the state of thralldom to which Scotland was reduced by the unhappy wars betwixt the domestic factions of Bruce and Baliol, nor how, after Scotland had been emancipated from a foreign yoke by the conduct and valour of the immortal Bruce, the whole fruits of the triumphs of Bannockburn were lost in the dreadful defeats of Dupplin and Halidon; and Edward Baliol, the minion and feudatory of his namesake of England, seemed, for a brief season, in safe and uncontested possession of the throne so lately occupied by the greatest general and wisest prince in Europe. But the experience of Bruce had not died with him. There were many who had shared his martial labours, and all remembered the successful efforts by which, under circumstances as disadvantageous as those of his son, he had achieved the liberation of Scotland.

'The usurper, Edward Baliol, was feasting with a few of his favourite retainers in the castle of Annan, when he was suddenly surprised by a chosen band of insurgent patriots. Their chiefs were, Douglas, Randolph, the young Earl of Moray, and Sir Simon Fraser; and their success was so complete, that Baliol was obliged to fly for his life scarcely clothed, and on a horse which there was no leisure to saddle. It was of importance to seize his person, if possible, and his flight was closely pursued by a valiant knight of Norman descent, whose family had been long settled in the marches of Dumfriesshire. Their Norman appellation was Fitz-Aldin, but this knight, from the great slaughter which he had made of the Southron, and the reluctance which he had shown to admit them to quarter during the former war of that bloody period, had acquired the name of Redgauntlet, which he transmitted to his posterity'—

'Redgauntlet!' I involuntarily repeated.

'Yes, Redgauntlet,' said my alleged guardian, looking at me keenly; 'does that name recall any associations to your mind?'

'No,' I replied, 'except that I had lately heard it given to the hero of a supernatural legend.'

'There are many such current concerning the family,' he answered; and then proceeded in his narrative.

'Alberick Redgauntlet, the first of his house so termed, was, as may be supposed from his name, of a stern and implacable disposition, which had been rendered more so by family discord. An only son, now a youth of eighteen, shared so much the haughty spirit of his father, that he became impatient of domestic control, resisted paternal authority, and finally fled from his father's house, renounced his political opinions, and awakened his mortal displeasure by joining the adherents of Baliol. It was said that his father cursed, in his wrath, his degenerate offspring, and swore that if they met he should perish by his hand. Meantime, circumstances seemed to promise atonement for this great deprivation. The lady of Alberick Redgauntlet was again, after many years, in a situation which afforded her husband the hope of a more dutiful heir.

'But the delicacy and deep interest of his wife's condition did not prevent Alberick from engaging in the undertaking of Douglas and Moray. He had been the most forward in the attack of the castle, and was now foremost in the pursuit of Baliol, eagerly engaged in dispersing or cutting down the few daring followers who endeavoured to protect the usurper in his flight.

'As these were successively routed or slain, the formidable Redgauntlet, the mortal enemy of the House of Baliol, was within two lances' length of the fugitive Edward Baliol, in a narrow pass, when a youth, one of the last who attended the usurper in his flight, threw himself between them, received the shock of the pursuer, and was unhorsed and overthrown. The helmet rolled from his head, and the beams of the sun, then rising over the Solway, showed Redgauntlet the features of his disobedient son, in the livery, and wearing the cognizance, of the usurper.

'Redgauntlet beheld his son lying before his horse's feet; but he also saw Baliol, the usurper of the Scottish crown, still, as it seemed, within his grasp, and separated from him only by the prostrate body of his overthrown adherent. Without pausing to inquire whether young Edward was wounded, he dashed his spurs into his horse, meaning to leap over him, but was unhappily frustrated in his purpose. The steed made indeed a bound forward, but was unable to clear the body of the youth, and with its hind foot struck him in the forehead, as he was in the act of rising. The blow was mortal. It is needless to add, that the pursuit was checked, and Baliol escaped.

'Redgauntlet, ferocious as he is described, was yet overwhelmed with the thoughts of the crime he had committed. When he returned to his castle, it was to encounter new domestic sorrows. His wife had been prematurely seized with the pangs of labour upon hearing the dreadful catastrophe which had taken place. The birth of an infant boy cost her her life. Redgauntlet sat by her corpse for more than twenty-four hours without changing either feature or posture, so far as his terrified domestics could observe. The Abbot of Dundrennan preached consolation to him in vain. Douglas, who came to visit in his affliction a patriot of such distinguished zeal, was more successful in rousing his attention. He caused the trumpets to sound an English point of war in the courtyard, and Redgauntlet at once sprang to his arms, and seemed restored to the recollection which had been lost in the extent of his misery.

'From that moment, whatever he might feel inwardly, he gave way to no outward emotion. Douglas caused his infant to be brought; but even the iron-hearted soldiers were struck with horror to observe that, by the mysterious law of nature, the cause of his mother's death, and the evidence of his father's guilt, was stamped on the innocent face of the babe, whose brow was distinctly marked by the miniature resemblance of a horseshoe. Redgauntlet himself pointed it out to Douglas, saying, with a ghastly smile, "It should have been bloody."

'Moved, as he was, to compassion for his brother-in-arms, and steeled against all softer feelings by the habits of civil war, Douglas shuddered at this sight, and displayed a desire to leave the house which was doomed to be the scene of such horrors. As his parting advice, he exhorted Alberick Redgauntlet to make a pilgrimage to Saint Ninian's of Whiteherne, then esteemed a shrine of great sanctity; and departed with a precipitation which might have aggravated, had that been possible, the forlorn state of his unhappy friend. But that seems to have been incapable of admitting any addition. Sir Alberick caused the bodies of his slaughtered son and the mother to be laid side by side in the ancient chapel of his house, after he had used the skill of a celebrated surgeon of that time to embalm them; and it was said that for many weeks he spent; some hours nightly in the vault where they reposed.

'At length he undertook the proposed pilgrimage to Whiteherne, where he confessed himself for the first time since his misfortune, and was shrived by an aged monk, who afterwards died in the odour of sanctity. It is said that it was then foretold to the Redgauntlet, that on account of his unshaken patriotism his family should continue to be powerful amid the changes of future times; but that, in detestation of his unrelenting cruelty to his own issue, Heaven had decreed that the valour of his race should always be fruitless, and that the cause which they espoused should never prosper.

'Submitting to such penance as was there imposed, Sir Alberick went, it is thought, on a pilgrimage either to Rome, or to the Holy Sepulchre itself. He was universally considered as dead; and it was not till thirteen years afterwards, that in the great battle of Durham, fought between David Bruce and Queen Philippa of England, a knight, bearing a horseshoe for his crest, appeared in the van of the Scottish army, distinguishing himself by his reckless and desperate valour; who being at length overpowered and slain, was finally discovered to be the brave and unhappy Sir Alberick Redgauntlet.'

'And has the fatal sign,' said I, when Herries had ended his narrative, 'descended on all the posterity of this unhappy house?'

'It has been so handed down from antiquity, and is still believed,' said Herries. 'But perhaps there is, in the popular evidence, something of that fancy which creates what it sees. Certainly, as other families have peculiarities by which they are distinguished, this of Redgauntlet is marked in most individuals by a singular indenture of the forehead, supposed to be derived from the son of Alberick, their ancestor, and brother to the unfortunate Edward, who had perished in so piteous a manner. It is certain there seems to have been a fate upon the House of Redgauntlet, which has been on the losing side in almost all the civil broils which have divided the kingdom of Scotland from David Bruce's days, till the late valiant and unsuccessful attempt of the Chevalier Charles Edward.'

He concluded with a deep sigh, as one whom the subject had involved in a train of painful reflections.

'And am I then,' I exclaimed, 'descended from this unhappy race? Do you belong to it? And if so, why do I sustain restraint and hard usage at the hands of a relation?'

'Inquire no further for the present,' he said. 'The line of conduct which I am pursuing towards you is dictated, not by choice but by necessity. You were withdrawn from the bosom of your family and the care of your legal guardian, by the timidity and ignorance of a doting mother, who was incapable of estimating the arguments or feelings of those who prefer honour and principle to fortune, and even to life. The young hawk, accustomed only to the fostering care of its dam, must be tamed by darkness and sleeplessness, ere it is trusted on the wing for the purposes of the falconer.'

I was appalled at this declaration, which seemed to threaten a long continuance, and a dangerous termination, of my captivity. I deemed it best, however, to show some spirit, and at the same time to mingle a tone of conciliation. 'Mr. Herries,' I said '(if I call you rightly by that name), let us speak upon this matter without the tone of mystery and fear in which you seem inclined to envelop it. I have been long, alas! deprived of the care of that affectionate mother to whom you allude—long under the charge of strangers—and compelled to form my own resolutions upon the reasoning of my own mind. Misfortune—early deprivation—has given me the privilege of acting for myself; and constraint shall not deprive me of an Englishman's best privilege.'

'The true cant of the day,' said Herries, in a tone of scorn. 'The privilege of free action belongs to no mortal—we are tied down by the fetters of duty—our mortal path is limited by the regulations of honour—our most indifferent actions are but meshes of the web of destiny by which we are all surrounded.'

He paced the room rapidly, and proceeded in a tone of enthusiasm which, joined to some other parts of his conduct, seems to intimate an over-excited imagination, were it not contradicted by the general tenor of his speech and conduct.

'Nothing,' he said, in an earnest yet melancholy voice—'nothing is the work of chance—nothing is the consequence of free-will—the liberty of which the Englishman boasts gives as little real freedom to its owner as the despotism, of an Eastern sultan permits to his slave. The usurper, William of Nassau, went forth to hunt, and thought, doubtless, that it was by an act of his own royal pleasure that the horse of his murdered victim was prepared for his kingly sport. But Heaven had other views; and before the sun was high, a stumble of that very animal over an obstacle so inconsiderable as a mole-hillock, cost the haughty rider his life and his usurped crown. Do you think an inclination of the rein could have avoided that trifling impediment? I tell you, it crossed his way as inevitably as all the long chain of Caucasus could have done. Yes, young man, in doing and suffering, we play but the part allotted by Destiny, the manager of this strange drama, stand bound to act no more than is prescribed, to say no more than is set down for us; and yet we mouth about free-will and freedom of thought and action, as if Richard must not die, or Richmond conquer, exactly where the Author has decreed it shall be so!'

He continued to pace the room after this speech, with folded arms and downcast looks; and the sound of his steps and tone of his voice brought to my remembrance, that I had heard this singular person, when I met him on a former occasion, uttering such soliloquies in his solitary chamber. I observed that, like other Jacobites, in his inveteracy against the memory of King William, he had adopted the party opinion, that the monarch, on the day he had his fatal accident, rode upon a horse once the property of the unfortunate Sir John Friend, executed for high treason in 1698.

It was not my business to aggravate, but, if possible, rather to soothe him in whose power I was so singularly placed. When I conceived that the keenness of his feelings had in some degree subsided, I answered him as follows:—'I will not—indeed I feel myself incompetent to argue a question of such metaphysical subtlety, as that which involves the limits betwixt free-will and predestination. Let us hope we may live honestly and die hopefully, without being obliged to form a decided opinion upon a point so far beyond our comprehension.'

'Wisely resolved,' he interrupted, with a sneer—'there came a note from some Geneva, sermon.'

'But,' I proceeded, 'I call your attention to the fact that I, as well as you, am acted upon by impulses, the result either of my own free will, or the consequences of the part which is assigned to me by destiny. These may be—nay, at present they are—in direct contradiction to those by which you are actuated; and how shall we decide which shall have precedence?—YOU perhaps feel yourself destined to act as my jailer. I feel myself, on the contrary, destined to attempt and effect my escape. One of us must be wrong, but who can say which errs till the event has decided betwixt us?'

'I shall feel myself destined to have recourse to severe modes of restraint,' said he, in the same tone of half jest, half earnest which I had used.

'In that case,' I answered, 'it will be my destiny to attempt everything for my freedom.'

'And it may be mine, young man,' he replied, in a deep and stern tone, 'to take care that you should rather die than attain your purpose.'

This was speaking out indeed, and I did not allow him to go unanswered. 'You threaten me in vain,' said I; 'the laws of my country will protect me; or whom they cannot protect, they will avenge.'

I spoke this firmly, and he seemed for a moment silenced; and the scorn with which he at last answered me, had something of affectation in it.

'The laws!' he said; 'and what, stripling, do you know of the laws of your country? Could you learn jurisprudence under a base-born blotter of parchment, such as Saunders Fairford; or from the empty pedantic coxcomb, his son, who now, forsooth, writer himself advocate? When Scotland was herself, and had her own king and legislature, such plebeian cubs, instead of being called to the bar of her supreme courts, would scarce have been admitted to the honour of bearing a sheepskin process-bag.'

Alan, I could not bear this, but answered indignantly, that he knew not the worth and honour from which he was detracting.

'I know as much of these Fairfords as I do of you,' he replied.

'As much,' said I, 'and as little; for you can neither estimate their real worth nor mine. I know you saw them when last in Edinburgh.'

'Ha!' he exclaimed, and turned on me an inquisitive look.

'It is true,' said I; 'you cannot deny it; and having thus shown you that I know something of your motions, let me warn you I have modes of communication with which you are not acquainted. Oblige me not to use them to your prejudice.'

'Prejudice me!' he replied. 'Young man, I smile at, and forgive your folly. Nay, I will tell you that of which you are not aware, namely, that it was from letters received from these Fairfords that I first suspected, what the result of my visit to them confirmed, that you were the person whom I had sought for years.'

'If you learned this,' said I, 'from the papers which were about my person on the night when I was under the necessity of becoming your guest at Brokenburn, I do not envy your indifference to the means of acquiring information. It was dishonourable to—'

'Peace, young man,' said Herries, more calmly than I might have expected; 'the word dishonour must not be mentioned as in conjunction with my name. Your pocket-book was in the pocket of your coat, and did not escape the curiosity of another, though it would have been sacred from mine. My servant, Cristal Nixon, brought me the intelligence after you were gone. I was displeased with the manner in which he had acquired his information; but it was not the less my duty to ascertain its truth, and for that purpose I went to Edinburgh. I was in hopes to persuade Mr. Fairford to have entered into my views; but I found him too much prejudiced to permit me to trust him. He is a wretched, yet a timid slave of the present government, under which our unhappy country is dishonourably enthralled; and it would have been altogether unfit and unsafe to have entrusted him with the secret either of the right which I possess to direct your actions, or of the manner in which I purpose to exercise it.'

I was determined to take advantage of his communicative humour, and obtain, if possible, more light upon his purpose. He seemed most accessible to being piqued on the point of honour, and I resolved to avail myself, but with caution, of his sensibility upon that topic. 'You say,' I replied, 'that you are not friendly to indirect practices, and disapprove of the means by which your domestic obtained information of my name and quality—Is it honourable to avail yourself of that knowledge which is dishonourably obtained?'

'It is boldly asked,' he replied; 'but, within certain necessary limits, I dislike not boldness of expostulation. You have, in this short conference, displayed more character and energy than I was prepared to expect. You will, I trust, resemble a forest plant, which has indeed, by some accident, been brought up in the greenhouse, and thus rendered delicate and effeminate, but which regains its native firmness and tenacity when exposed for a season to the winter air. I will answer your question plainly. In business, as in war, spies and informers are necessary evils, which all good men detest; but which yet all prudent men must use, unless they mean to fight and act blindfold. But nothing can justify the use of falsehood and treachery in our own person.'

'You said to the elder Mr. Fairford,' continued I, with the same boldness, which I began to find was my best game, 'that I was the son of Ralph Latimer of Langcote Hall? How do you reconcile this with your late assertion that my name is not Latimer?'

He coloured as he replied, 'The doting old fool lied; or perhaps mistook my meaning. I said, that gentleman might be your father. To say truth, I wished you to visit England, your native country; because, when you might do so, my rights over you would revive.'

This speech fully led me to understand a caution which had been often impressed upon me, that, if I regarded my safety, I should not cross the southern Border; and I cursed my own folly, which kept me fluttering like a moth around the candle, until I was betrayed into the calamity with which I had dallied. 'What are those rights,' I said, 'which you claim over me? To what end do you propose to turn them?'

'To a weighty one, you may be certain,' answered Mr. Herries; 'but I do not, at present, mean to communicate to you either its nature or extent. You may judge of its importance, when, in order entirely to possess myself of your person, I condescended to mix myself with the fellows who destroyed the fishing station of yon wretched Quaker. That I held him in contempt, and was displeased at the greedy devices with which he ruined a manly sport, is true enough; but, unless as it favoured my designs on you, he might have, for me, maintained his stake-nets till Solway should cease to ebb and flow.'

'Alas!' I said, 'it doubles my regret to have been the unwilling cause of misfortune to an honest and friendly man.'

'Do not grieve for that,' said Herries; 'honest Joshua is one of those who, by dint of long prayers, can possess themselves of widow's houses—he will quickly repair his losses. When he sustains any mishap, he and the other canters set it down as a debt against Heaven, and, by way of set-off, practise rogueries without compunction, till the they make the balance even, or incline it to the winning side. Enough of this for the present.—I must immediately shift my quarters; for, although I do not fear the over-zeal of Mr. Justice Foxley or his clerk will lead them to any extreme measure, yet that mad scoundrel's unhappy recognition of me may make it more serious for them to connive at me, and I must not put their patience to an over severe trial. You must prepare to attend me, either as a captive or a companion; if as the latter, you must give your parole of honour to attempt no escape. Should you be so ill advised as to break your word once pledged, be assured that I will blow your brains out without a moment's scruple.'

'I am ignorant of your plans and purposes,' I replied, 'and cannot but hold them dangerous. I do not mean to aggravate my present situation by any unavailing resistance to the superior force which detains me; but I will not renounce the right of asserting my natural freedom should it favourable opportunity occur. I will, therefore, rather be your prisoner than your confederate.'

'That is spoken fairly,' he said; 'and yet not without the canny caution of one brought up in the Gude Town of Edinburgh. On my part, I will impose no unnecessary hardship upon you; but, on the contrary, your journey shall be made as easy as is consistent with your being kept safely. Do you feel strong enough to ride on horseback as yet, or would you prefer a carriage? The former mode of travelling is best adapted to the country through which we are to travel, but you are at liberty to choose between them.'

I said, 'I felt my strength gradually returning, and that I should much prefer travelling on horseback. A carriage,' I added, 'is so close'—

'And so easily guarded,' replied Herries, with a look as if he would have penetrated my very thoughts,—'that, doubtless, you think horseback better calculated for an escape.'

'My thoughts are my own,' I answered; 'and though you keep my person prisoner, these are beyond your control.'

'Oh, I can read the book,' he said, 'without opening the leaves. But I would recommend to you to make no rash attempt, and it will be my care to see that you have no power to make any that is likely to be effectual. Linen, and all other necessities for one in your circumstances, are amply provided, Cristal Nixon will act as your valet,—I should rather, perhaps, say, your FEMME DE CHAMBRE. Your travelling dress you may perhaps consider as singular; but it is such as the circumstances require; and, if you object to use the articles prepared for your use, your mode of journeying will be as personally unpleasant as that which conducted you hither.—Adieu—We now know each other better than we did—it will not be my fault if the consequences of further intimacy be not a more favourable mutual opinion.'

He then left me, with a civil good night, to my own reflections, and only turned back to say that we should proceed on our journey at daybreak next morning, at furthest; perhaps earlier, he said; but complimented me by supposing that, as I was a sportsman, I must always be ready for a sudden start.

We are then at issue, this singular man and myself. His personal views are to a certain point explained. He has chosen an antiquated and desperate line of politics, and he claims, from some pretended tie of guardianship or relationship, which he does not deign to explain but which he seems to have been able to pass current on a silly country Justice and his knavish clerk, a right to direct and to control my motions. The danger which awaited me in England, and which I might have escaped had I remained in Scotland, was doubtless occasioned by the authority of this man. But what my poor mother might fear for me as a child—what my English friend, Samuel Griffiths, endeavoured to guard against during my youth and nonage, is now, it seems, come upon me; and, under a legal pretext, I am detained in what must be a most illegal manner, by a person, foe, whose own political immunities have been forfeited by his conduct. It matters not—my mind is made up neither persuasion nor threats shall force me into the desperate designs which this man meditates. Whether I am of the trifling consequence which my life hitherto seems to intimate, or whether I have (as would appear from my adversary's conduct) such importance, by birth or fortune, as may make me a desirable acquisition to a political faction, my resolution is taken in either case. Those who read this journal, if it shall be perused by impartial eyes, shall judge of

me truly; and if they consider me as a fool in encountering danger unnecessarily, they shall have no reason to believe me a coward or a turncoat, when I find myself engaged in it. I have been bred in sentiments of attachment to the family on the throne and in these sentiments I will live and die. I have, indeed, some idea that Mr. Herries has already discovered that I am made of different and more unmanageable metal than he had at first believed. There were letters from my dear Alan Fairford, giving a ludicrous account of my instability of temper, in the same pocket-book, which, according to the admission of my pretended guardian, fell under the investigation of his domestic during the night I passed at Brokenburn, where, as I now recollect, my wet clothes, with the contents of my pockets, were, with the thoughtlessness of a young traveller, committed too rashly to the care of a strange servant. And my kind friend and hospitable landlord, Mr. Alexander Fairford, may also, and with justice, have spoken of my levities to this man. But he shall find he has made a false estimate upon these plausible grounds, since— I must break off for the present.

CHAPTER IX LATIMER'S JOURNAL, IN CONTINUATION

There is at length a halt—at length I have gained so much privacy as to enable me to continue my journal. It has become a sort of task of duty to me, without the discharge of which I do not feel that the business of the day is performed. True, no friendly eye may ever look upon these labours, which have amused the solitary hours of an unhappy prisoner. Yet, in the meanwhile, the exercise of the pen seems to act as a sedative upon my own agitated thoughts and tumultuous passions. I never lay it down but I rise stronger in resolution, more ardent in hope. A thousand vague fears, wild expectations, and indigested schemes, hurry through one's thoughts in seasons of doubt and of danger. But by arresting them as they flit across the mind, by throwing them on paper, and even by that mechanical act compelling ourselves to consider them with scrupulous and minute attention, we may perhaps escape becoming the dupes of our own excited imagination; just as a young horse is cured of the vice of starting by being made to stand still and look for some time without any interruption at the cause of its terror.

There remains but one risk, which is that of discovery. But besides the small characters, in which my residence in Mr. Fairford's house enabled me to excel, for the purpose of transferring as many scroll sheets as possible to a huge sheet of stamped paper, I have, as I have elsewhere intimated, had hitherto the comfortable reflection that if the record of my misfortunes should fall into the hands of him by whom they are caused, they would, without harming any one, show him the real character and disposition of the person who has become his prisoner—perhaps his victim. Now, however, that other names, and other characters, are to be mingled with the register of my own sentiments, I must take additional care of these papers, and keep them in such a manner that, in case of the least hazard of detection, I may be able to destroy them at a moment's notice. I shall not soon or easily forget the lesson I have been taught, by the prying disposition which Cristal Nixon, this man's agent and confederate, manifested at Brokenburn, and which proved the original cause of my sufferings.

My laying aside the last sheet of my journal hastily was occasioned by the unwonted sound of a violin, in the farmyard beneath my windows. It will not appear surprising to those who have made music their study, that, after listening to a few notes, I became at once assured that the musician was no other than the itinerant, formerly mentioned as present at the destruction of Joshua Geddes's stake-nets, the superior delicacy and force of whose execution would enable me to swear to his bow amongst a whole orchestra. I had the less reason to doubt his identity, because he played twice over the beautiful Scottish air called Wandering Willie; and I could not help concluding that he did so for the purpose of intimating his own presence, since what the French called the *nom de guerre* of the performer was described by the tune.

Hope will catch at the most feeble twig for support in extremity. I knew this man, though deprived of sight, to be bold, ingenious, and perfectly capable of acting as a guide. I believed I had won his goodwill, by having, in a frolic, assumed the character of his partner; and I remembered that in a wild, wandering, and disorderly course of life, men, as they become loosened from the ordinary bonds of civil society, hold those of comradeship more closely sacred; so that honour is sometimes found among thieves, and faith and attachment in such as the law has termed vagrants. The history of Richard Coeur de Lion and his minstrel, Blondel, rushed, at the same time, on my mind, though I could not even then suppress a smile at the dignity of the example when applied to a blind fiddler and myself. Still there was something in all this to awaken a hope that, if I could open a correspondence with this poor violer, he might be useful in extricating me from my present situation.

His profession furnished me with some hope that this desired communication might be attained; since it is well known that, in Scotland, where there is so much national music, the words and airs of which are generally known, there is a kind of freemasonry amongst performers, by which they can, by the mere choice of a tune, express a great deal to the hearers. Personal allusions are often made in this manner, with much point and pleasantry; and nothing is more usual at public festivals, than that the air played to accompany a particular health or toast, is made the vehicle of compliment, of wit, and sometimes of satire. [Every one must remember instances of this festive custom, in which the adaptation of the tune to the toast was remarkably felicitous. Old Neil Gow, and his son Nathaniel, were peculiarly happy on such occasions.]

While these things passed through my mind rapidly, I heard my friend beneath recommence, for the third time, the air from which his own name had been probably adopted, when he was interrupted by his rustic auditors.

'If thou canst play no other spring but that, mon, ho hadst best put up ho's pipes and be jogging. Squoire will be back anon, or Master Nixon, and we'll see who will pay poiper then.'

Oho, thought I, if I have no sharper ears than those of my friends Jan and Dorcas to encounter, I may venture an experiment upon them; and, as most expressive of my state of captivity, I sang two or three lines of the 137th Psalm—

By Babel's streams we sat and wept.

The country people listened with attention, and when I ceased, I heard them whisper together in tones of commiseration, 'Lack-a-day, poor soul! so pretty a man to be beside his wits!'

'An he be that gate,' said Wandering Willie, in a tone calculated to reach my ears, 'I ken naething will raise his spirits like a spring.' And he struck up, with great vigour and spirit, the lively Scottish air, the words of which instantly occurred to me—

Oh whistle and I'll come t'ye, my lad,

Oh whistle and I'll come t'ye, my lad;

Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,

Oh whistle and I'll come t'ye, my lad.

I soon heard a clattering noise of feet in the courtyard, which I concluded to be Jan and Dorcas dancing a jig in their Cumberland wooden clogs. Under cover of this din, I endeavoured to answer Willie's signal by whistling, as loud as I could—

Come back again and loe me

When a' the lave are gane.

He instantly threw the dancers out, by changing his air to

There's my thumb, I'll ne'er beguile thee.

I no longer doubted that a communication betwixt us was happily established, and that, if I had an opportunity of speaking to the poor musician, I should find him willing to take my letter to the post, to invoke the assistance of some active magistrate, or of the commanding-officer of Carlisle Castle, or, in short, to do whatever else I could point out, in the compass of his power, to contribute to my liberation. But to obtain speech of him, I must have run the risk of alarming the suspicions of Dorcas, if not of her yet more stupid Corydon. My ally's blindness prevented his receiving any communication by signs from the window—even if I could have ventured to make them, consistently with prudence—so that notwithstanding the mode of intercourse we had adopted was both circuitous and peculiarly liable to

misapprehension, I saw nothing I could do better than to continue it, trusting my own and my correspondent's acuteness in applying to the airs the meaning they were intended to convey. I thought of singing the words themselves of some significant song, but feared I might, by doing so, attract suspicion. I endeavoured, therefore, to intimate my speedy departure from my present place of residence, by whistling the well-known air with which festive parties in Scotland usually conclude the dance:—

*Good night and joy be wi' ye a',
For here nae langer maun I stay;
There's neither friend nor foe, of mine
But wishes that I were away.*

It appeared that Willie's powers of intelligence were much more active than mine, and that, like a deaf person accustomed to be spoken to by signs, he comprehended, from the very first notes, the whole meaning I intended to convey; and he accompanied me in the air with his violin, in such a manner as at once to show he understood my meaning, and to prevent my whistling from being attended to.

His reply was almost immediate, and was conveyed in the old martial air of 'Hey, Johnnie lad, cock up your beaver.' I ran over the words, and fixed on the following stanza, as most applicable to my circumstances:—

*Cock up your beaver, and cock it fu' sprush;
We'll over the Border and give them a brush;
There's somebody there we'll teach better behaviour,
Hey, Johnnie lad, cock up your beaver.*

If these sounds alluded, as I hope they do, to the chance of assistance from my Scottish friends, I may indeed consider that a door is open to hope and freedom. I immediately replied with:—

*My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.*

*Farewell to the Highlands! farewell to the North!
The birth-place of valour, the cradle of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.*

Willie instantly played, with a degree of spirit which might have awakened hope in Despair herself, if Despair could be supposed to understand Scotch music, the fine old Jacobite air,

*For a' that, and a' that,
And twice as much as a' that.*

I next endeavoured to intimate my wish to send notice of my condition to my friends; and, despairing to find an air sufficiently expressive of my purpose, I ventured to sing a verse, which, in various forms, occurs so frequently in old ballads—

*Whare will I get a bonny boy
That will win hose and shoon:
That will gae down to Durisdeer,
And bid my merry men come?*

He drowned the latter part of the verse by playing, with much emphasis,

Kind Robin loes me.

Of this, though I ran over the verses of the song in my mind, I could make nothing; and before I could contrive any mode of intimating my uncertainty, a cry arose in the courtyard that Cristal Nixon was coming. My faithful Willie was obliged to retreat; but not before he had half played, half hummed, by way of farewell,

*Leave thee—leave thee, lad—
I'll never leave thee;
The stars shall gae withershins
Ere I will leave thee.*

I am thus, I think, secure of one trusty adherent in my misfortunes; and, however whimsical it may be to rely much on a man of his idle profession and deprived of sight withal, it is deeply impressed on my mind that his services may be both useful and necessary. There is another quarter from which I look for succour, and which I have indicated to thee, Alan, in more than one passage of my journal. Twice, at the early hour of daybreak, I have seen the individual alluded to in the court of the farm, and twice she made signs of recognition in answer to the gestures by which I endeavoured to make her comprehend my situation; but on both occasions she pressed her finger on her lips, as expressive of silence and secrecy.

The manner in which G.M. entered upon the scene for the first time, seems to assure me of her goodwill, so far as her power may reach; and I have many reasons to believe it is considerable. Yet she seemed hurried and frightened during the very transitory moments of our interview, and I think was, upon the last occasion, startled by the entrance of some one into the farmyard, just as she was on the point of addressing me. You must not ask whether I am an early riser, since such objects are only to be seen at daybreak; and although I have never again seen her, yet I have reason to think she is not distant. It was but three nights ago, that, worn out by the uniformity of my confinement, I had manifested more symptoms of despondence than I had before exhibited, which I conceive may have attracted the attention of the domestics, through whom the circumstance might transpire. On the next morning, the following lines lay on my table; but how conveyed there, I cannot tell. The hand in which they were written is a beautiful Italian manuscript:—

*As lords their labourers' hire delay,
Fate quits our toil with hopes to come,
Which, if far short of present pay,
Still, owns a debt and names a sum.*

*Quit not the pledge, frail sufferer, then,
Although a distant date be given;
Despair is treason towards man,
And blasphemy to Heaven.*

That these lines were written with the friendly purpose of inducing me to keep up my spirits, I cannot doubt; and I trust the manner in which I shall conduct myself may show that the pledge is accepted.

The dress is arrived in which it seems to be my self-elected guardian's pleasure that I shall travel; and what does it prove to be?—A skirt, or upper-petticoat of camlet, like those worn by country ladies of moderate rank when on horseback, with such a riding-mask as they frequently use on journeys to preserve their eyes and complexion from the sun and dust, and sometimes, it is suspected, to enable then to play off a little coquetry. From the gayer mode of employing the mask,

however, I suspect I shall be precluded; for instead of being only pasteboard, covered with black velvet, I observe with anxiety that mine is thickened with a plate of steel, which, like Quixote's visor, serves to render it more strong and durable.

This apparatus, together with a steel clasp for securing the mask behind me with a padlock, gave me fearful recollections of the unfortunate being, who, never being permitted to lay aside such a visor, acquired the well-known historical epithet of the Man in the Iron Mask. I hesitated a moment whether I should, so far submit to the acts of oppression designed against me as to assume this disguise, which was, of course, contrived to aid their purposes. But when I remembered Mr. Herries's threat, that I should be kept close prisoner in a carriage, unless I assumed the dress which should be appointed for me; and I considered the comparative degree of freedom which I might purchase by wearing the mask and female dress as easily and advantageously purchased. Here, therefore, I must pause for the present, and await what the morning may bring forth.

[To carry on the story from the documents before us, we think it proper here to drop the journal of the captive Darsie Latimer, and adopt, instead, a narrative of the proceedings of Alan Fairford in pursuit of his friend, which forms another series in this history.]

CHAPTER X NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD

The reader ought, by this time, to have formed some idea of the character of Alan Fairford. He had a warmth of heart which the study of the law and of the world could not chill, and talents which they had rendered unusually acute. Deprived of the personal patronage enjoyed by most of his contemporaries, who assumed the gown under the protection of their aristocratic alliances and descents, he early saw that he should have that to achieve for himself which fell to them as a right of birth. He laboured hard in silence and solitude, and his labours were crowned with success. But Alan doted on his friend Darsie, even more than he loved his profession, and, as we have seen, threw everything aside when he thought Latimer in danger; forgetting fame and fortune, and hazarding even the serious displeasure of his father, to rescue him whom he loved with an elder brother's affection. Darsie, though his parts were more quick and brilliant than those of his friend, seemed always to the latter a being under his peculiar charge, whom he was called upon to cherish and protect in cases where the youth's own experience was unequal to the exigency; and now, when, the fate of Latimer seeming worse than doubtful, Alan's whole prudence and energy were to be exerted in his behalf, an adventure which might have seemed perilous to most youths of his age had no terrors for him. He was well acquainted with the laws of his country, and knew how to appeal to them; and, besides his professional confidence, his natural disposition was steady, sedate, persevering, and undaunted. With these requisites he undertook a quest which, at that time, was not unattended with actual danger, and had much in it to appal a more timid disposition.

Fairford's first inquiry concerning his friend was of the chief magistrate of Dumfries, Provost Crosbie, who had sent the information of Darsie's disappearance. On his first application, he thought he discerned in the honest dignitary a desire to get rid of the subject. The provost spoke of the riot at the fishing station as an 'outbreak among those lawless loons the fishermen, which concerned the sheriff,' he said, 'more than us poor town council bodies, that have enough to do to keep peace within burgh, amongst such a set of commoners as the town are plagued with.'

'But this is not all, Provost Crosbie,' said Mr. Alan Fairford; 'A young gentleman of rank and fortune has disappeared amongst their hands—you know him. My father gave him a letter to you—Mr. Darsie Latimer.'

'Lack-a-day, yes! lack-a-day, yes!' said the provost; 'Mr. Darsie Latimer—he dined at my house—I hope he is well?'

'I hope so too,' said Alan, rather indignantly; 'but I desire more certainty on that point. You yourself wrote my father that he had disappeared.'

'Troth, yes, and that is true,' said the provost. 'But did he not go back to his friends in Scotland? it was not natural to think he would stay here.'

'Not unless he is under restraint,' said Fairford, surprised at the coolness with which the provost seemed to take up the matter.

'Rely on it, sir,' said Mr. Crosbie, 'that if he has not returned to his friends in Scotland, he must have gone to his friends in England.'

'I will rely on no such thing,' said Alan; 'if there is law or justice in Scotland, I will have the thing cleared to the very bottom.'

'Reasonable, reasonable,' said the provost, 'so far as is possible; but you know I have no power beyond the ports of the burgh.'

'But you are in the commission besides, Mr. Crosbie; a justice of peace for the county.'

'True, very true—that is,' said the cautious magistrate, 'I will not say but my name may stand on the list, but I cannot remember that I have ever qualified.' [By taking the oaths to government.]

'Why, in that case,' said young Fairford, 'there are ill-natured people might doubt your attachment to the Protestant line, Mr. Crosbie.'

'God forbid, Mr. Fairford! I who have done and suffered in the Forty-five. I reckon the Highlandmen did me damage to the amount of 100l. Scots, forby all they ate and drank—no, no, sir, I stand beyond challenge; but as for plaguing myself with county business, let them that aught the mare shoe the mare. The commissioners of supply would see my back broken before they would help me in the burgh's work, and all the world kens the difference of the weight between public business in burgh and landward. What are their riots to me? have we not riots enough of our own?—But I must be getting ready, for the council meets this forenoon. I am blithe to see your father's son on the causeway of our ancient burgh, Mr. Alan Fairford. Were you a twelve-month aulder, we would make a burgess of you, man. I hope you will come and dine with me before you go away. What think you of to-day at two o'clock—just a roasted chucky and a drappit egg?'

Alan Fairford resolved that his friend's hospitality should not, as it seemed the inviter intended, put a stop to his queries. 'I must delay you for a moment,' he said, 'Mr. Crosbie; this is a serious affair; a young gentleman of high hopes, my own dearest friend, is missing—you cannot think it will be passed over slightly, if a man of your high character and known zeal for the government do not make some active inquiry. Mr. Crosbie, you are my father's friend, and I respect you as such—but to others it will have a bad appearance.'

The withers of the provost were not unwrung; he paced the room in much tribulation, repeating, 'But what can I do, Mr. Fairford? I warrant your friend casts up again—he will come back again, like the ill shilling—he is not the sort of gear that tynes—a hellicat boy, running through the country with a blind fiddler and playing the fiddle to a parcel of blackguards, who can tell where the like of him may have scampered to?'

'There are persons apprehended, and in the jail of the town, as I understand from the sheriff-substitute,' said Mr. Fairford; 'you must call them before you, and inquire what they know of this young gentleman.'

'Aye, aye—the sheriff-depute did commit some poor creatures, I believe—wretched ignorant fishermen bodies, that had been quarrelling with Quaker Geddes and his stake-nets, whilk, under favour of your gown be it spoken, Mr. Fairford, are not over and above lawful, and the town clerk thinks that they may be lawfully removed VIA FACTI—but that is by the by. But, sir, the creatures were a' dismissed for want of evidence; the Quaker would not swear to them, and what could the sheriff and me do but just let them loose? Come awa, cheer up, Master Alan, and take a walk till dinner-time—I must really go to the council.'

'Stop a moment, provost,' said Alan; 'I lodge a complaint before you as a magistrate, and you will find it serious to slight it over. You must have these men apprehended again.'

'Aye, aye—easy said; but catch them that can,' answered the provost; 'they are ower the march by this time, or by the point of Cairn.—Lord help ye! they are a kind of amphibious deevils, neither land nor water beasts neither English nor Scots—neither county nor stewartry, as we say—they are dispersed like so much quicksilver. You may as well try to whistle a sealgh out of the Solway, as to get hold of one of them till all the fray is over.'

'Mr. Crosbie, this will not do,' answered the young counsellor; 'there is a person of more importance than such wretches as you describe concerned in this unhappy business—I must name to you a certain Mr. Herries.'

He kept his eye on the provost as he uttered the name, which he did rather at a venture, and from the connexion which that gentleman, and his real or supposed niece, seemed to have with the fate of Darsie Latimer, than from any distinct cause of suspicion which he entertained. He thought the provost seemed embarrassed, though he showed much desire to assume an appearance of indifference, in which he partly succeeded.

'Herries!' he said—'What Herries?—There are many of that name—not so many as formerly, for the old stocks are wearing out; but there is Herries of Heathgill, and Herries of Auchintulloch, and Herries'—

'To save you further trouble, this person's designation is Herries of Birrenswork.'

'Of Birrenswork?' said Mr. Crosbie; 'I have you now, Mr. Alan. Could you not as well have said, the Laird of Redgauntlet?'

Fairford was too wary to testify any surprise at this identification of names, however unexpected. 'I thought,' said he, 'he was more generally known by the name of Herries. I have seen and been in company with him under that name, I am sure.'

'Oh aye; in Edinburgh, belike. You know Redgauntlet was unfortunate a great while ago, and though he was maybe not deeper in the mire than other folk, yet, for some reason or other, he did not get so easily out.'

'He was attainted, I understand; and has no remission,' said Fairford.

The cautious provost only nodded, and said, 'You may guess, therefore, why it is so convenient he should hold his mother's name, which is also partly his own, when he is about Edinburgh. To bear his proper name might be accounted a kind of flying in the face of government, ye understand. But he has been long connived at—the story is an old story—and the gentleman has many excellent qualities, and is of a very ancient and honourable house—has cousins among the great folk—counts kin with the advocate and with the sheriff—hawks, you know, Mr. Alan, will not pike out hawks' een—he is widely connected—my wife is a fourth cousin of Redgauntlet's.'

HINC ILLAE LACHRYMAE! thought Alan Fairford to himself; but the hint presently determined him to proceed by soft means and with caution. 'I beg you to understand,' said Fairford, 'that in the investigation I am about to make, I design no harm to Mr. Herries, or Redgauntlet—call him what you will. All I wish is, to ascertain the safety of my friend. I know that he was rather foolish in once going upon a mere frolic, in disguise, to the neighbourhood of this same gentleman's house. In his circumstances, Mr. Redgauntlet may have misinterpreted the motives, and considered Darsie Latimer as a spy. His influence, I believe, is great among the disorderly people you spoke of but now?'

The provost answered with another sagacious shake of his head, that would have done honour to Lord Burleigh in the CRITIC.

'Well, then,' continued Fairford, 'is it not possible that, in the mistaken belief that Mr. Latimer was a spy, he may, upon such suspicion, have caused him to be carried off and confined somewhere? Such things are done at elections, and on occasions less pressing than when men think their lives are in danger from an informer.'

'Mr. Fairford,' said the provost, very earnestly, 'I scarce think such a mistake possible; or if, by any extraordinary chance, it should have taken place, Redgauntlet, whom I cannot but know well, being as I have said my wife's first cousin (fourth cousin, I should say) is altogether incapable of doing anything harsh to the young gentleman—he might send him ower to Ailsay for a night or two, or maybe land him on the north coast of Ireland, or in Islay, or some of the Hebrides; but depend upon it, he is incapable of harming a hair of his head.'

'I am determined not to trust to that, provost,' answered Fairford firmly; 'and I am a good deal surprised at your way of talking so lightly of such an aggression on the liberty of the subject. You are to consider, and Mr. Herries or Mr. Redgauntlet's friends would do very well also to consider, how it would sound in the ears of an English Secretary of State, that an attainted traitor (for such is this gentleman) has not only ventured to take up his abode in this realm—against the king of which he has been in arms—but is suspected of having proceeded, by open force and violence, against the person of one of the lieges, a young man who is neither without friends nor property to secure his being righted.'

The provost looked at the young counsellor with a face in which distrust, alarm, and vexation seemed mingled. 'A fashious job,' he said at last, 'a fashious job; and it will be dangerous meddling with it. I should like ill to see your father's son turn informer against an unfortunate gentleman.'

'Neither do I mean it,' answered Alan, 'provided that unfortunate gentleman and his friends give me a quiet opportunity of securing my friend's safety. If I could speak with Mr. Redgauntlet, and hear his own explanation, I should probably be satisfied. If I am forced, to denounce him to government, it will be in his new capacity of a kidnapper. I may not be able, nor is it my business, to prevent his being recognized in his former character of an attainted person, excepted from the general pardon.'

'Master Fairford,' said the provost, 'would ye ruin the poor innocent gentleman on an idle suspicion?'

'Say no more of it, Mr. Crosbie; my line of conduct is determined—unless that suspicion is removed.'

'Weel, sir,' said the provost, 'since so it be, and since you say that you do not seek to harm Redgauntlet personally, I'll ask a man to dine with us to-day that kens as much about his matters as most folk. You must think, Mr. Alan Fairford, though Redgauntlet be my wife's near relative, and though, doubtless, I wish him weel, yet I am not the person who is like to be intrusted with his incomings and outgoings. I am not a man for that—I keep the kirk, and I abhor Popery—I have stood up for the House of Hanover, and for liberty and property—I carried arms, sir, against the Pretender, when three of the Highlandmen's baggage-carts were stopped at Ecclefechan; and I had an especial loss of a hundred pounds'—

'Scots,' interrupted Fairford. 'You forget you told me all this before.'

'Scots or English, it was too much for me to lose,' said the provost; so you see I am not a person to pack or peel with Jacobites, and such unfreemen as poor Redgauntlet.'

'Granted, granted, Mr. Crosbie; and what then?' said Alan Fairford.

'Why, then, it follows, that if I am to help you at this pinch, if cannot be by and through my ain personal knowledge, but through some fitting agent or third person.'

'Granted again,' said Fairford. 'And pray who may this third person be?'

'Wha but Pate Maxwell of Summertrees—him they call Pate-in-Peril.'

'An old Forty-five man, of course?' said Fairford.

'Ye may swear that,' replied the provost—'as black a Jacobite as the auld leaven can make him; but a sonsy, merry companion, that none of us think it worth while to break wi' for all his brags and his clavers. You would have thought, if he had had but his own way at Derby, he would have marched Charlie Stuart through between Wade and the Duke, as a thread goes through the needle's ee, and seated him in Saint James's before you could have said haud your hand. But though he is a windy body when he gets on his auld-worl'd stories, he has mair gumption in him than most people—knows business, Mr. Alan, being bred to the law; but never took the gown, because of the oaths, which kept more folk out then than they do now—the more's the pity.'

'What! are you sorry, provost, that Jacobitism is upon the decline?' said Fairford.

'No, no,' answered the provost—'I am only sorry for folks losing the tenderness of conscience which they used to have. I have a son breeding to the bar, Mr. Fairford; and, no doubt, considering my services and sufferings, I might have looked for some bit postie to him; but if the muckle tykes come in—I mean a' these Maxwells, and Johnstones, and great lairds, that the oaths used to keep out lang syne—the bits o' messan doggies, like my son, and maybe like your father's son, Mr. Alan, will be sair put to the wall.'

'But to return to the subject, Mr. Crosbie,' said Fairford, 'do you really think it likely that this Mr. Maxwell will be of service in this matter?'

'It's very like he may be, for he is the tongue of the trump to the whole squad of them,' said the provost; 'and Redgauntlet, though he will not stick at times to call him a fool, takes more of his counsel than any man's else that I am aware of. If Fate can bring him to a communing, the business is done. He's a sharp chield, Pate-in-Peril.'

'Pate-in-Peril!' repeated Alan; 'a very singular name.'

'Aye, and it was in as queer a way he got it; but I'll say naething about that,' said the provost, 'for fear of forestalling his market; for ye are sure to hear it once at least, however oftener, before the punch-bowl gives place to the teapot.—And now, fare ye weel; for there is the council-bell clinking in earnest; and if I am not there before it jows in, Bailie Laurie will be trying some of his manoeuvres.'

The provost, repeating his expectation of seeing Mr. Fairford at two o'clock, at length effected his escape from the young counsellor, and left him at a considerable loss how to proceed. The sheriff, it seems, had returned to Edinburgh, and he feared to find the visible repugnance of the provost to interfere with this Laird of Birrenswork, or Redgauntlet, much stronger amongst the country gentlemen, many of whom were Catholics as well as Jacobites, and most others unwilling to quarrel with kinsmen and friends, by prosecuting with severity political offences which had almost run a prescription.

To collect all the information in his power, and not to have recourse to the higher authorities until he could give all the light of which the case was capable, seemed the wiser proceeding in a choice of difficulties. He had some conversation with the procurator-fiscal, who, as well as the provost, was an old correspondent of his father. Alan expressed to that officer a purpose of visiting Brokenburn, but was assured by him, that it would be a step attended with much danger to his own person, and altogether fruitless; that the individuals who had been ringleaders in the riot were long since safely sheltered in their various lurking-holes in the Isle of Man, Cumberland, and elsewhere; and that those who might remain would undoubtedly commit violence on any who visited their settlement with the purpose of inquiring into the late disturbances.

There were not the same objections to his hastening to Mount Sharon, where he expected to find the latest news of his friend; and there was time enough to do so, before the hour appointed for the provost's dinner. Upon the road, he congratulated himself on having obtained one point of almost certain information. The person who had in a manner forced himself upon his father's hospitality, and had appeared desirous to induce Darsie Latimer to visit England, against whom, too, a sort of warning had been received from an individual connected with and residing in his own family, proved to be a promoter of the disturbance in which Darsie had disappeared.

What could be the cause of such an attempt on the liberty of an inoffensive and amiable man? It was impossible it could be merely owing to Redgauntlet's mistaking Darsie for a spy; for though that was the solution which Fairford had offered to the provost, he well knew that, in point of fact, he himself had been warned by his singular visitor of some danger to which his friend was exposed, before such suspicion could have been entertained; and the injunctions received by Latimer from his guardian, or him who acted as such, Mr. Griffiths of London, pointed to the same thing. He was rather glad, however, that he had not let Provost Crosbie into his secret further than was absolutely necessary; since it was plain that the connexion of his wife with the suspected party was likely to affect his impartiality as a magistrate.

When Alan Fairford arrived at Mount Sharon, Rachel Geddes hastened to meet him, almost before the servant could open the door. She drew back in disappointment when she beheld a stranger, and said, to excuse her precipitation, that 'she had thought it was her brother Joshua returned from Cumberland.'

'Mr. Geddes is then absent from home?' said Fairford, much disappointed in his turn.

'He hath been gone since yesterday, friend,' answered Rachel, once more composed to the quietude which characterizes her sect, but her pale cheek and red eye giving contradiction to her assumed equanimity.

'I am,' said Fairford, hastily, 'the particular friend of a young man not unknown to you, Miss Geddes—the friend of Darsie Latimer—and am come hither in the utmost anxiety, having understood from Provost Crosbie, that he had disappeared in the night when a destructive attack was made upon the fishing-station of Mr. Geddes.'

'Thou dost afflict me, friend, by thy inquiries,' said Rachel, more affected than before; 'for although the youth was like those of the worldly generation, wise in his own conceit, and lightly to be moved by the breath of vanity, yet Joshua loved him, and his heart clave to him as if he had been his own son. And when he himself escaped from the sons of Belial, which was not until they had tired themselves with reviling, and with idle reproach, and the jests of the scoffer, Joshua, my brother, returned to them once and again, to give ransom for the youth called Darsie Latimer, with offers of money and with promise of remission, but they would not hearken to him. Also, he went before the head judge, whom men call the sheriff, and would have told him of the youth's peril; but he would in no way hearken to him unless he would swear unto the truth of his words, which thing he might not do without sin, seeing it is written, Swear not at all—also, that our conversation shall be yea or nay. Therefore, Joshua returned to me disconsolate, and said, "Sister Rachel, this youth hath run into peril for my sake; assuredly I shall not be guiltless if a hair of his head be harmed, seeing I have sinned in permitting him to go with me to the fishing station when such evil was to be feared. Therefore, I will take my horse, even Solomon, and ride swiftly into Cumberland, and I will make myself friends with Mammon of Unrighteousness, among the magistrates of the Gentiles, and among their mighty men; and it shall come to pass that Darsie Latimer shall be delivered, even if it were at the expense of half my substance." And I said, "Nay, my brother, go not, for they will but scoff at and revile thee; but hire with thy silver one of the scribes, who are eager as hunters in pursuing their prey, and he shall free Darsie Latimer from the men of violence by his cunning, and thy soul shall be guiltless of evil towards the lad." But he answered and said, "I will not be controlled in this matter." And he is gone forth and hath not returned, and I fear me that he may never return; for though he be peaceful, as becometh one who holds all violence as offence against his own soul, yet neither the floods of water, nor the fear of the snare, nor the drawn sword of the adversary brandished in the path, will overcome his purpose. Wherefore the Solway may swallow him up, or the sword of the enemy may devour him—nevertheless, my hope is better in Him who directeth all things, and ruleth over the waves of the sea, and overruleth the devices of the wicked, and who can redeem us even as a bird from the fowler's net.'

This was all that Fairford could learn from Miss Geddes; but he heard with pleasure that the good Quaker, her brother, had many friends among those of his own profession in Cumberland, and without exposing himself to so much danger as his sister seemed to apprehend, he trusted he might be able to discover some traces of Darsie Latimer. He himself rode back to Dumfries, having left with Miss Geddes his direction in that place, and an earnest request that she would forward thither whatever information she might obtain from her brother.

On Fairford's return to Dumfries, he employed the brief interval which remained before dinner-time, in writing an account of what had befallen Latimer and of the present uncertainty of his condition, to Mr. Samuel Griffiths, through whose hands the remittances for his friend's service had been regularly made, desiring he would instantly acquaint him with such parts of his history as might direct him in the search which he was about to institute through the border counties, and which he pledged himself not to give up until he had obtained news of his friend, alive or dead. The young lawyer's mind felt easier when he had dispatched this letter. He could not conceive any reason why his friend's life should be aimed at; he knew Darsie had done nothing by which his liberty could be legally affected; and although, even of late years, there had been singular histories of men, and women also, who had been trepanned, and concealed in solitudes and distant islands in order to serve some temporary purpose, such violences had been chiefly practised by the rich on the poor, and by the strong on the feeble; whereas, in the present case, this Mr. Herries, or Redgauntlet, being amenable, for more reasons than one, to the censure of the law, must be the weakest in any struggle in which it could be appealed to. It is true, that his friendly anxiety whispered that the very cause which rendered this oppressor less formidable, might make him more desperate. Still, recalling his language, so strikingly that of the gentleman, and even of the man of honour, Alan Fairford concluded, that though, in his feudal pride, Redgauntlet might venture on the deeds of violence exercised by the aristocracy in other times, he could not be capable of any action of deliberate atrocity. And in these convictions he went to dine with Provost Crosbie, with a heart more at ease than might have been expected. [See Note 7.]

CHAPTER XI

NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

Five minutes had elapsed after the town clock struck two, before Alan Fairford, who had made a small detour to put his letter into the post-house, reached the mansion of Mr. Provost Crosbie, and was at once greeted by the voice of that civic dignitary, and the rural dignitary his visitor, as by the voices of men impatient for their dinner.

'Come away, Mr. Fairford—the Edinburgh time is later than ours,' said the provost.

And, 'Come away, young gentleman,' said the laird; 'I remember your father weel at the Cross thirty years ago—I reckon you are as late in Edinburgh as at London, four o'clock hours—eh?'

'Not quite so degenerate,' replied Fairford; 'but certainly many Edinburgh people are so ill-advised as to postpone their dinner till three, that they may have full time to answer their London correspondents.'

'London correspondents!' said Mr. Maxwell; 'and pray what the devil have the people of Auld Reekie to do with London correspondents?' [Not much in those days, for within my recollection the London post; was brought north in a small mail-cart; and men are yet as live who recollect when it came down with only one single letter for Edinburgh, addressed to the manager of the British Linen Company.]

'The tradesmen must have their goods,' said Fairford.

'Can they not buy our own Scottish manufactures, and pick their customers pockets in a more patriotic manner?'

'Then the ladies must have fashions,' said Fairford.

'Can they not busk the plaid over their heads, as their mothers did? A tartan screen, and once a year a new cockernony from Paris, should serve a countess. But ye have not many of them left, I think—Mareschal, Airley, Winton, Vemyss, Balmerino, all passed and gone—aye, aye, the countesses and ladies of quality will scarce take up too much of your ball-room floor with their quality hoops nowadays.'

'There is no want of crowding, however, sir,' said Fairford; 'they begin to talk of a new Assembly room.'

'A new Assembly room!' said the old Jacobite laird—'Umph—I mind quartering three hundred men in the old Assembly room [I remember hearing this identical answer given by an old Highland gentleman of the Forty-Five, when he heard of the opening of the New Assembly Rooms in George Street.]—But come, come—I'll ask no more questions—the answers all smell of new lords new lands, and do but spoil my appetite, which were a pity, since here comes Mrs. Crosbie to say our mutton's ready.'

It was even so. Mrs. Crosbie had been absent, like Eve, 'on hospitable cares intent,' a duty which she did not conceive herself exempted from, either by the dignity of her husband's rank in the municipality, or the splendour of her Brussels silk gown, or even by the more highly prized lustre of her birth; for she was born a Maxwell, and allied, as her husband often informed his friends, to several of the first families in the county. She had been handsome, and was still a portly, good-looking woman of her years; and though her peep into the kitchen had somewhat heightened her complexion, it was no more than a modest touch of rouge might have done.

The provost was certainly proud of his lady, nay, some said he was afraid of her; for of the females of the Redgauntlet family there went a rumour, that, ally where they would, there was a grey mare as surely in the stables of their husbands, as there is a white horse in Wouvermans' pictures. The good dame, too, was supposed to have brought a spice of politics into Mr. Crosbie's household along with her; and the provost's enemies at the council-table of the burgh used to observe that he uttered there many a bold harangue against the Pretender, and in favour of King George and government, of which he dared not have pronounced a syllable in his own bedchamber; and that, in fact, his wife's predominating influence had now and then occasioned his acting, or forbearing to act, in a manner very different from his general professions of zeal for Revolution principles. If this was in any respect true, it was certain, on the other hand, that Mrs. Crosbie, in all external points, seemed to acknowledge the 'lawful sway and right supremacy' of the head of the house, and if she did not in truth reverence her husband, she at least seemed to do so.

This stately dame received Mr. Maxwell (a cousin of course) with cordiality, and Fairford with civility; answering at the same time with respect, to the magisterial complaints of the provost, that dinner was just coming up. 'But since you changed poor Peter MacAlpin, that used to take care of the town-clock, my dear, it has never gone well a single day.'

'Peter MacAlpin, my dear,' said the provost, 'made himself too busy for a person in office, and drunk healths and so forth, which it became no man to drink or to pledge, far less one that is in point of office a servant of the public, I understand that he lost the music bells in Edinburgh, for playing "Ower the Water to Charlie," upon the tenth of June. He is a black sheep, and deserves no encouragement.'

'Not a bad tune though, after all,' said Summertrees; and, turning to the window, he half hummed, half whistled, the air in question, then sang the last verse aloud:

*'Oh I loe weel my Charlie's name,
Though some there be that abhor him;
But oh to see the deil gang hame
Wi' a' the Whigs before him!
Over the water, and over the sea,
And over the water to Charlie;
Come weal, come woe, we'll gather and go,
And live or die with Charlie.'*

Mrs. Crosbie smiled furtively on the laird, wearing an aspect at the same time of deep submission; while the provost, not choosing to hear his visitor's ditty, took a turn through the room, in unquestioned dignity and independence of authority.

'Aweel, aweel, my dear,' said the lady, with a quiet smile of submission, 'ye ken these matters best, and you will do your pleasure—they are far above my hand—only, I doubt if ever the town-clock will go right, or your meals be got up so regular as I should wish, till Peter MacAlpin gets his office back again. The body's auld, and can neither work nor want, but he is the only hand to set a clock.'

It may be noticed in passing, that notwithstanding this prediction, which, probably, the fair Cassandra had the full means of accomplishing, it was not till the second council day thereafter that the misdemeanours of the Jacobite clock-keeper were passed over, and he was once more restored to his occupation of fixing the town's time, and the provost's dinner-hour.

Upon the present occasion the dinner passed pleasantly away. Summertrees talked and jested with the easy indifference of a man who holds himself superior to his company. He was indeed an important person, as was testified by his portly appearance; his hat laced with POINT D'ESPAGNE; his coat and waistcoat once richly embroidered, though now almost threadbare; the splendour of his solitaire, and laced ruffles, though the first was sorely creased, and the other sullied; not to forget the length of his silver-hilted rapier. His wit, or rather humour, bordered on the sarcastic, and intimated a discontented man; and although he showed no displeasure when the provost attempted a repartee, yet it seemed that he permitted it upon mere sufferance, as a fencing-master, engaged with a pupil, will sometimes permit the tyro to hit him, solely by way of encouragement. The laird's own jests, in the meanwhile, were eminently successful, not only with the provost and his lady, but with the red-cheeked and red-ribboned servant-maid who waited at table, and who could scarce perform her duty with propriety, so effectual were the explosions of Summertrees. Alan Fairford alone was unmoved among all this mirth; which was the less wonderful, that, besides the important subject which occupied his thoughts, most of the laird's good things consisted in sly allusions to little parochial or family incidents, with which the Edinburgh visitor was totally unacquainted: so that the laughter of the party sounded in his ear like the idle crackling of thorns under the pot, with this difference, that they did not accompany or second any such useful operation as the boiling thereof.

Fairford was glad when the cloth was withdrawn; and when Provost Crosbie (not without some points of advice from his lady touching the precise mixture of the ingredients) had accomplished the compounding of a noble bowl of punch, at which the old Jacobite's eyes seemed to glisten, the glasses were pushed round it, filled, and withdrawn each by its owner, when the provost emphatically named the toast, 'The King,' with an important look to Fairford, which seemed to say, You can have no doubt whom I mean, and therefore there is no occasion to particularize the individual.

Summertrees repeated the toast, with a sly wink to the lady, while Fairford drank his glass in silence.

'Well, young advocate,' said the landed proprietor, 'I am glad to see there is some shame, if there is little honesty, left in the Faculty. Some of your black gowns, nowadays, have as little of the one as of the other.'

'At least, sir,' replied Mr. Fairford, 'I am so much of a lawyer as not willingly to enter into disputes which I am not retained to support—it would be but throwing away both time and argument.'

'Come, come,' said the lady, 'we will have no argument in this house about Whig or Tory—the provost kens what he maun SAY, and I ken what he should THINK; and for a' that has come and gane yet, there may be a time coming when honest men may say what they think, whether they be provosts or not.'

'D'ye hear that, provost?' said Summertrees; 'your wife's a witch, man; you should nail a horseshoe on your chamber door—Ha, ha, ha!'

This sally did not take quite so well as former efforts of the laird's wit. The lady drew up, and the provost said, half aside, 'The sooth bourd is nae bourd. [The true joke is no joke.] You will find the horseshoe hissing hot, Summertrees.'

'You can speak from experience, doubtless, provost,' answered the laird; 'but I crave pardon—I need not tell Mrs. Crosbie that I have all respect for the auld and honourable House of Redgauntlet.'

'And good reason ye have, that are sae sib to them,' quoth the lady, 'and kend weel baith them that are here, and them that are gane.'

'In troth, and ye may say sae, madam,' answered the laird; 'for poor Harry Redgauntlet, that suffered at Carlisle, was hand and glove with me; and yet we parted on short leave-taking.'

'Aye, Summertrees,' said the provost; 'that was when you played Cheat-the-woodie, and gat the by-name of Pate-in-Peril. I wish you would tell the story to my young friend here. He likes weel to hear of a sharp trick, as most lawyers do.'

'I wonder at your want of circumspection, provost,' said the laird,—much after the manner of a singer when declining to sing the song that is quivering upon his tongue's very end. 'Ye should mind there are some auld stories that cannot be ripped up again with entire safety to all concerned. TACE is Latin for a candle.'

'I hope,' said the lady, 'you are not afraid of anything being said out of this house to your prejudice, Summertrees? I have heard the story before; but the oftener I hear it, the more wonderful I think it.'

'Yes, madam; but it has been now a wonder of more than nine days, and it is time it should be ended,' answered Maxwell.

Fairford now thought it civil to say, 'that he had often heard of Mr. Maxwell's wonderful escape, and that nothing could be more agreeable to him than to hear the right version of it.'

But Summertrees was obdurate, and refused to take up the time of the company with such 'auld-world nonsense.'

'Weel, weel,' said the provost, 'a wilful man maun hae his way. What do your folk in the country think about the disturbances that are beginning to spunk out in the colonies?'

'Excellent, sir, excellent. When things come to the worst; they will mend; and to the worst they are coming. But as to that nonsense ploy of mine, if ye insist on hearing the particulars,'—said the laird, who began to be sensible that the period of telling his story gracefully was gliding fast away.

'Nay,' said the provost, 'it was not for myself, but this young gentlemen.'

'Aweel, what for should I not pleasure the young gentlemen? I'll just drink to honest folk at hame and abroad, and deil ane else. And then—but you have heard it before, Mrs. Crosbie?'

'Not so often as to think it tiresome, I assure ye,' said the lady; and without further preliminaries, the laird addressed Alan Fairford.

'Ye have heard of a year they call the FORTY-FIVE, young gentleman; when the Southrons' heads made their last acquaintance with Scottish claymores? There was a set of rampaging chields in the country then that they called rebels—I never could find out what for—Some men should have been wi' them that never came, provost—Skye and the Bush aboon Traquair for that, ye ken.—Weel, the job was settled at last. Cloured crowns were plenty, and raxed necks came into fashion. I dinna mind very weel what I was doing, swaggering about the country with dirk and pistol at my belt for five or six months, or thereaway; but I had a weary waking out of a wild dream. When did I find myself on foot in a misty morning, with my hand, just for fear of going astray, linked into a handcuff, as they call it, with poor Harry Redgauntlet's fastened into the other; and there we were, trudging along, with about a score more that had thrust their horns ower deep in the bog, just like ourselves, and a sergeant's guard of redcoats, with twa file of dragoons, to keep all quiet, and give us heart to the road. Now, if this mode of travelling was not very pleasant, the object did not particularly recommend it; for, you understand, young man, that they did not trust these poor rebel bodies to be tried by juries of their ain kindly countrymen, though ane would have thought they would have found Whigs enough in Scotland to hang us all; but they behoved to trounce us away to be tried at Carlisle, where the folk had been so frightened, that had you brought a whole Highland clan at once into the court, they would have put their hands upon their een, and cried, "hang them a'," just to be quit of them.'

'Aye, aye,' said the provost, 'that was a snell law, I grant ye.'

'Snell!' said the wife, 'snell! I wish they that passed it had the jury I would recommend them to!'

'I suppose the young lawyer thinks it all very right,' said Summertrees, looking at Fairford—'an OLD lawyer might have thought otherwise. However, the cudgel was to be found to beat the dog, and they chose a heavy one. Well, I kept my spirits better than my companion, poor fellow; for I had the luck to have neither wife nor child to think about, and Harry Redgauntlet had both one and t'other.—You have seen Harry, Mrs. Crosbie?'

'In troth have I,' said she, with the sigh which we give to early recollections, of which the object is no more. 'He was not so tall as his brother, and a gentler lad every way. After he married the great English fortune, folk called him less of a Scottishman than Edward.'

'Folk lee'd, then,' said Summertrees; 'poor Harry was none of your bold-speaking, ranting reivers, that talk about what they did yesterday, or what they will do to-morrow; it was when something was to do at the moment that you should have looked at Harry Redgauntlet. I saw him at Culloden, when all was lost, doing more than twenty of these bleezing braggarts, till the very soldiers that took him cried not to hurt him—for all somebody's orders, provost—for he was the bravest fellow of them all. Weel, as I went by the side of Harry, and felt him raise my hand up in the mist of the morning, as if he wished to wipe his eye—for he had not that freedom without my leave—my very heart was like to break for him, poor fellow. In the meanwhile, I had been trying and trying to make my hand as fine as a lady's, to see if I could slip it out of my iron wristband. You may think,' he said, laying his broad bony hand on the table, 'I had work enough with such a shoulder-of-mutton fist; but if you observe, the shackle-bones are of the largest, and so they were obliged to keep the handcuff wide; at length I got my hand slipped out, and slipped in again; and poor Harry was sae deep in his ain thoughts, I could not make him sensible what I was doing.'

'Why not?' said Alan Fairford, for whom the tale began to have some interest.

'Because there was an unchancy beast of a dragoon riding close beside us on the other side; and if I had let him into my confidence as well as Harry, it would not have been long before a pistol-ball slapped through my bonnet.—Well, I had little for it but to do the best I could for myself; and, by my conscience, it was time, when the gallows was staring me in the face. We were to halt for breakfast at Moffat. Well did I know the moors we were marching over, having hunted and hawked on every acre of ground in very different times. So I waited, you see, till I was on the edge of Errickstone-brae—Ye ken the place they call the Marquis's Beef-stand, because the Annandale loons used to put their stolen cattle in there?'

Fairford intimated his ignorance,

'Ye must have seen it as ye came this way; it looks as if four hills were laying their heads together, to shut out daylight from the dark hollow space between them. A d—d deep, black, blackguard-looking abyss of a hole it is, and goes straight down from the roadside, as perpendicular as it can do, to be a heathery brae. At the bottom, there is a small bit of a brook, that you would think could hardly find, its way out from the hills that are so closely jammed round it.'

'A bad pass, indeed,' said Alan.

'You may say that,' continued the laird. 'Bad as it was, sir, it was my only chance; and though my very flesh creeped when I thought what a rumble I was going to get, yet I kept my heart up all the same. And so, just when we came on the edge of this Beef-stand of the Johnstones, I slipped out my hand from the handcuff, cried to Harry Gauntlet, 'Follow me!'—whisked under the belly of the dragoon horse—flung my plaid round me with the speed of lightning—threw myself on my side, for there was no keeping my feet, and down the brae hurled I, over heather and fern, and blackberries, like a barrel down Chalmer's Close, in Auld Reekie. G—, sir, I never could help laughing when I think how the scoundrel redcoats must have been bumbazed; for the mist being, as I said, thick, they had little notion, I

take it, that they were on the verge of such a dilemma. I was half way down—for rowing is faster wark than rinnin—ere they could get at their arms; and then it was flash, flash, flash—rap, rap, rap—from the edge of the road; but my head was too jumbled to think anything either of that or the hard knocks I got among the stones. I kept my senses thegither, whilk has been thought wonderful by all that ever saw the place; and I helped myself with my hands as gallantly as I could, and to the bottom I came. There I lay for half a moment; but the thoughts of a gallows is worth all the salts and scent-bottles in the world for bringing a man to himself. Up I sprang, like a four-year-auld colt. All the hills were spinning round with me, like so many great big humming-tops. But there was nae time to think of that neither; more especially as the mist had risen a little with the firing. I could see the villains, like sae mony craws on the edge of the brae; and I reckon that they saw me; for some of the loons were beginning to crawl down the hill, but liker auld wives in their red cloaks, coming frae a field preaching, than such a souple lad as I was. Accordingly, they soon began to stop and load their pieces. Good-e'en to you, gentlemen, thought I, if that is to be the gate of it. If you have any further word with me, you maun come as far as Carriefraw-gauns. And so off I set, and never buck went faster ower the braes than I did; and I never stopped till I had put three waters, reasonably deep, as the season was rainy, half a dozen mountains, and a few thousand acres of the worst moss and ling in Scotland, betwixt me and my friends the redcoats.'

'It was that job which got you the name of Pate-in-Peril,' said the provost, filling the glasses, and exclaiming with great emphasis, while his guest, much animated with the recollections which the exploit excited, looked round with an air of triumph for sympathy and applause,—'Here is to your good health; and may you never put your neck in such a venture again.' [The escape of a Jacobite gentleman while on the road to Carlisle to take his trial for his share in the affair of 1745, took place at Errickstane-brae, in the singular manner ascribed to the Laird of Summertrees in the text. The author has seen in his youth the gentleman to whom the adventure actually happened. The distance of time makes some indistinctness of recollection, but it is believed the real name was MacEwen or MacMillan.]

'Humph!—I do not know,' answered Summertrees. 'I am not like to be tempted with another opportunity—[An old gentleman of the author's name was engaged in the affair of 1715, and with some difficulty was saved from the gallows by the intercession of the Duchess of Buccleugh and Monmouth. Her Grace, who maintained a good deal of authority over her clan, sent for the object of her intercession, and warning him of the risk which he had run, and the trouble she had taken on his account, wound up her lecture by intimating that in case of such disloyalty again, he was not to expect her interest in his favour. 'An it please your Grace,' said the stout old Tory, 'I fear I am too old to see another opportunity.'] Yet who knows?' And then he made a deep pause.

'May I ask what became of your friend, sir?' said Alan Fairford.

'Ah, poor Harry!' said Summertrees. 'I'll tell you what, sir, it takes time to make up one's mind to such a venture, as my friend the provost calls it; and I was told by Neil Maclean,—who was next file to us, but had the luck to escape the gallows by some sleight-of-hand trick or other,—that, upon my breaking off, poor Harry stood like one motionless, although all our brethren in captivity made as much tumult as they could, to distract the attention of the soldiers. And run he did at last; but he did not know the ground, and either from confusion, or because he judged the descent altogether perpendicular, he fled up the hill to the left, instead of going down at once, and so was easily pursued and taken. If he had followed my example, he would have found enough among the shepherds to hide him, and feed him, as they did me, on bearmeal scenes and braxy mutton, till better days came round again.' [BRAXY MUTTON.—The flesh of sheep that has died of disease, not by the hand of the butcher. In pastoral countries it is used as food with little scruple.]

'He suffered then for his share in the insurrection?' said Alan.

'You may swear that,' said Summertrees. 'His blood was too red to be spared when that sort of paint was in request. He suffered, sir, as you call it—that is, he was murdered in cold blood, with many a pretty fellow besides. Well, we may have our day next—what is fristed is not forgiven—they think us all dead and buried—but—Here he filled his glass, and muttering some indistinct denunciations, drank it off, and assumed his usual manner, which had been a little disturbed towards the end of the narrative.

'What became of Mr. Redgauntlet's child?' said Fairford.

MISTER Redgauntlet! He was Sir Henry Redgauntlet, as his son, if the child now lives, will be Sir Arthur—I called him Harry from intimacy, and Redgauntlet, as the chief of his name—His proper style was Sir Henry Redgauntlet.'

'His son, therefore, is dead?' said Alan Fairford. 'It is a pity so brave a line should draw to a close.'

'He has left a brother,' said Summertrees, 'Edward Hugh Redgauntlet, who has now the representation of the family. And well it is; for though he be unfortunate in many respects, he will keep up the honour of the house better than a boy bred up amongst these bitter Whigs, the relations of his elder brother Sir Henry's lady. Then they are on no good terms with the Redgauntlet line—bitter Whigs they are in every sense. It was a runaway match betwixt Sir Henry and his lady. Poor thing, they would not allow her to see him when in confinement—they had even the meanness to leave him without pecuniary assistance; and as all his own property was seized upon and plundered, he would have wanted common necessities, but for the attachment of a fellow who was a famous fiddler—a blind man—I have seen him with Sir Henry myself, both before the affair broke out and while it was going on. I have heard that he fiddled in the streets of Carlisle, and carried what money he got to his master, while he was confined in the castle.'

'I do not believe a word of it,' said Mrs. Crosbie, kindling with indignation. 'A Redgauntlet would have died twenty times before he had touched a fiddler's wages.'

'Hout fye—hout fye—all nonsense and pride,' said the Laird of Summertrees. 'Scornful dogs will eat dirty puddings, cousin Crosbie—ye little ken what some of your friends were obliged to do yon time for a sopp of brose, or a bit of bannock. G—d, I carried a cutler's wheel for several weeks, partly for need, and partly for disguise—there I went bizz—bizz—whizz—zizz, at every auld wife's door; and if ever you want your shears sharpened, Mrs. Crosbie, I am the lad to do it for you, if my wheel was but in order.'

'You, must ask my leave first,' said the provost; 'for I have been told you had some queer fashions of taking a kiss instead of a penny, if you liked your customer.'

'Come, come, provost,' said the lady; rising, 'if the maut gets abune the meal with you, it is time for me to take myself away—And you will come to my room, gentlemen, when you want a cup of tea.'

Alan Fairford was not sorry for the lady's departure. She seemed too much alive to the honour of the house of Redgauntlet, though only a fourth cousin, not to be alarmed by the inquiries which he proposed to make after the whereabouts of its present head. Strange confused suspicions arose in his mind, from his imperfect recollection of the tale of Wandering Willie, and the idea forced itself upon him that his friend Darsie Latimer might be the son of the unfortunate Sir Henry. But before indulging in such speculations, the point was to discover what had actually become of him. If he were in the hands of his uncle, might there not exist some rivalry in fortune, or rank, which might induce so stern a man as Redgauntlet to use unfair measures towards a youth whom he would find himself unable to mould to his purpose? He considered these points in silence, during several revolutions of the glasses as they wheeled in galaxy round the bowl, waiting until the provost, agreeably to his own proposal, should mention the subject, for which he had expressly introduced him to Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees.

Apparently the provost had forgot his promise, or at least was in no great haste to fulfil it. He debated with great earnestness upon the Stamp Act, which was then impending over the American colonies, and upon other political subjects of the day, but said not a word of Redgauntlet. Alan soon saw that the investigation he meditated must advance, if at all, on his own special motion, and determined to proceed accordingly.

Acting upon this resolution, he took the first opportunity afforded by a pause in the discussion of colonial politics, to say, 'I must remind you, Provost Crosbie, of your kind promise to procure some intelligence upon the subject I am so anxious about.'

'Gadso!' said the provost, after a moment's hesitation, 'it is very true.—Mr. Maxwell, we wish to consult you on a piece of important business. You must know indeed I think you must have heard, that the fishermen at Brokenburn, and higher up the Solway, have made a raid upon Quaker Geddes's stake-nets, and levelled all with the sands.'

'In troth I heard it, provost, and I was glad to hear the scoundrels had so much pluck left as to right themselves against a fashion which would make the upper heritors a sort of clocking-hens, to hatch the fish that folk below them were to catch and eat.'

'Well, sir,' said Alan, 'that is not the present point. But a young friend of mine was with Mr. Geddes at the time this violent procedure took place, and he has not since been heard of. Now, our friend, the provost, thinks that you may be able to advise'—

Here he was interrupted by the provost and Summertrees speaking out both at once, the first endeavouring to disclaim all interest in the question, and the last to evade giving an answer.

'Me think!' said the provost; 'I never thought twice about it, Mr. Fairford; it was neither fish, nor flesh, nor salt herring of mine.'

'And I "able to advise"' said Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees; 'what the devil can I advise you to do, excepting to send the bellman through the town to cry your lost sheep, as they do spaniel dogs or stray ponies?'

'With your pardon,' said Alan, calmly, but resolutely, 'I must ask a more serious answer.'

'Why, Mr. Advocate,' answered Summertrees, 'I thought it was your business to give advice to the lieges, and not to take it from poor stupid country gentlemen.'

'If not exactly advice, it is sometimes our duty to ask questions, Mr. Maxwell.'

'Aye, sir, when you have your bag-wig and your gown on, we must allow you the usual privilege of both gown and petticoat, to ask what questions you please. But when you are out of your canonicals, the case is altered. How come you, sir, to suppose that I have any business with this riotous proceeding, or should know more than you do what happened there? the question proceeds on an uncivil supposition.'

'I will explain,' said Alan, determined to give Mr. Maxwell no opportunity of breaking off the conversation. 'You are an intimate of Mr. Redgauntlet—he is accused of having been engaged in this affray, and of having placed under forcible restraint the person of my friend, Darsie Latimer, a young man of property and consequence, whose fate I am here for the express purpose of investigating. This is the plain state of the case; and all parties concerned,—your friend, in particular,—will have reason to be thankful for the temperate manner in which it is my purpose to conduct the matter, if I am treated with proportionate frankness.'

'You have misunderstood me,' said Maxwell, with a tone changed to more composure; 'I told you I was the friend of the late Sir Henry Redgauntlet, who was executed, in 1745, at Hairbie, near Carlisle, but I know no one who at present bears the name of Redgauntlet.'

'You know Mr. Herries of Birrenswark,' said Alan, smiling, 'to whom the name of Redgauntlet belongs?'

Maxwell darted a keen reproachful look towards the provost, but instantly smoothed his brow, and changed his tone to that of confidence and candour.

'You must not be angry, Mr. Fairford, that the poor persecuted nonjurors are a little upon the QUI VIVE when such clever young men as you are making inquiries after us. I myself now, though I am quite out of the scrape, and may cock my hat at the Cross as I best like, sunshine or moonshine, have been yet so much accustomed to walk with the lap of my cloak cast over my face, that, faith, if a redcoat walk suddenly up to me, I wish for my wheel and whetstone again for a moment. Now Redgauntlet, poor fellow, is far worse off—he is, you may have heard, still under the lash of the law,—the mark of the beast is still on his forehead, poor gentleman,—and that makes us cautious—very cautious, which I am sure there is no occasion to be towards you, as no one of your appearance and manners would wish to trepan a gentleman under misfortune.'

'On the contrary, sir,' said Fairford, 'I wish to afford Mr. Redgauntlet's friends an opportunity to get him out of the scrape, by procuring the instant liberation of my friend Darsie Latimer. I will engage that if he has sustained no greater bodily harm than a short confinement, the matter may be passed over quietly, without inquiry; but to attain this end, so desirable for the man who has committed a great and recent infraction of the laws, which he had before grievously offended, very speedy reparation of the wrong must be rendered.'

Maxwell seemed lost in reflection, and exchanged a glance or two, not of the most comfortable or congratulatory kind, with his host the provost. Fairford rose and walked about the room, to allow them an opportunity of conversing together; for he was in hopes that the impression he had visibly made upon Summertrees was likely to ripen into something favourable to his purpose. They took the opportunity, and engaged in whispers to each other, eagerly and reproachfully on the part of the laird, while the provost answered in an embarrassed and apologetical tone. Some broken words of the conversation reached Fairford, whose presence they seemed to forget, as he stood at the bottom of the room, apparently intent upon examining the figures upon a fine Indian screen, a present to the provost from his brother, captain of a vessel in the Company's service. What he overheard made it evident that his errand, and the obstinacy with which he pursued it, occasioned altercation between the whisperers.

Maxwell at length let out the words, 'A good fright; and so send him home with his tail scalded, like a dog that has come a-privateering on strange premises.'

The provost's negative was strongly interposed—"Not to be thought of"—'making bad worse'—"my situation"—'my utility'—"you cannot conceive how obstinate—just like his father".

They then whispered more closely, and at length the provost raised his drooping crest, and spoke in a cheerful tone. 'Come, sit down to your glass, Mr. Fairford; we have laid our heads together, and you shall see it will not be our fault if you are not quite pleased, and Mr. Darsie Latimer let loose to take his fiddle under his neck again. But Summertrees thinks it will require you to put yourself into some bodily risk, which maybe you may not be so keen of.'

'Gentlemen,' said Fairford, 'I will not certainly shun any risk by which my object may be accomplished; but I bind it on your consciences—on yours, Mr. Maxwell, as a man of honour and a gentleman; and on yours, provost, as a magistrate and a loyal subject, that you do not mislead me in this matter.'

'Nay, as for me,' said Summertrees, 'I will tell you the truth at once, and fairly own that I can certainly find you the means of seeing Redgauntlet, poor man; and that I will do, if you require it, and conjure him also to treat you as your errand requires; but poor Redgauntlet is much changed—indeed, to say truth, his temper never was the best in the world; however, I will warrant you from any very great danger.'

'I will warrant myself from such,' said Fairford, 'by carrying a proper force with me.'

'Indeed,' said Summertrees, 'you will, do no such thing; for, in the first place, do you think that we will deliver up the poor fellow into the hands of the Philistines, when, on the contrary, my only reason for furnishing you with the clue I am to put into your hands, is to settle the matter amicably on all sides? And secondly, his intelligence is so good, that were you coming near him with soldiers, or constables, or the like, I shall answer for it, you will never lay salt on his tail.'

Fairford mused for a moment. He considered that to gain sight of this man, and knowledge of his friend's condition, were advantages to be purchased at every personal risk; and he saw plainly, that were he to take the course most safe for himself, and call in the assistance of the law, it was clear he would either be deprived of the intelligence necessary to guide him, or that Redgauntlet would be apprised of his danger, and might probably leave the country, carrying his captive along with him. He therefore repeated, 'I put myself on your honour, Mr. Maxwell; and I will go alone to visit your friend. I have little doubt I shall find him amenable to reason; and that I shall receive from him a satisfactory account of Mr. Latimer.'

'I have little doubt that you will,' said Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees; 'but still I think it will be only in the long run, and after having sustained some delay and inconvenience. My warrandice goes no further.'

'I will take it as it is given,' said Alan Fairford. 'But let me ask, would it not be better, since you value your friend's safety so highly and surely would not willingly compromise mine, that the provost or you should go with me to this man, if he is within any reasonable distance, and try to make him hear reason?'

'Me!—I will not go my foot's length,' said the provost; and that, Mr. Alan, you may be well assured of. Mr. Redgauntlet is my wife's fourth cousin, that is undeniable; but were he the last of her kin and mine both, it would ill befit my office to be communing with rebels.'

'Aye, or drinking with nonjurors,' said Maxwell, filling his glass. 'I would as soon expect; to have met Claverhouse at a field-preaching. And as for myself, Mr. Fairford, I cannot go, for just the opposite reason. It would be INFRA DIG. in the provost of this most flourishing and loyal town to associate with Redgauntlet; and for me it would be NOSCITUR A SOCIO. There would be post to London, with the tidings that two such Jacobites as Redgauntlet and I had met on a braeside—the Habeas Corpus would be suspended—Fame would sound a charge from Carlisle to the Land's End—and who knows but the very wind of the rumour might blow my estate from between my fingers, and my body over Errickstane-brae again? No, no; bide a gliff—I will go into the provost's closet, and write a letter to Redgauntlet, and direct you how to deliver it.'

'There is pen and ink in the office,' said the provost, pointing to the door of an inner apartment, in which he had his walnut-tree desk and east-country cabinet.

'A pen that can write, I hope?' said the old laird.

'It can write and spell baith in right hands,' answered the provost, as the laird retired and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER XII
NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

The room was no sooner deprived of Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees's presence, than the provost looked very warily above, beneath, and around the apartment, hitched his chair towards that of his remaining guest, and began to speak in a whisper which could not have startled 'the smallest mouse that creeps on floor.'

'Mr. Fairford,' said he, 'you are a good lad; and, what is more, you are my auld friend your father's son. Your father has been agent for this burgh for years, and has a good deal to say with the council; so there have been a sort of obligations between him and me; it may have been now on this side and now on that; but obligations there have been. I am but a plain man, Mr. Fairford; but I hope you understand me?'

'I believe you mean me well, provost; and I am sure,' replied Fairford, 'you can never better show your kindness than on this occasion.'

'That's it—that's the very point I would be at, Mr. Alan,' replied the provost; 'besides, I am, as becomes well my situation, a stanch friend to kirk and king, meaning this present establishment in church and state; and so, as I was saying, you may command my best—advice.'

'I hope for your assistance and co-operation also,' said the youth.

'Certainly, certainly,' said the wary magistrate. 'Well, now, you see one may love the kirk, and yet not ride on the rigging of it; and one may love the king, and yet not be cramming him eternally down the throat of the unhappy folk that may chance to like another king better. I have friends and connexions among them, Mr. Fairford, as your father may have clients—they are flesh and blood like ourselves, these poor Jacobite bodies—sons of Adam and Eve, after all; and therefore—I hope you understand me?—I am a plain-spoken man.'

'I am afraid I do not quite understand you,' said Fairford; 'and if you have anything to say to me in private, my dear provost, you had better come quickly out with it, for the Laird of Summertrees must finish his letter in a minute or two.'

'Not a bit, man—Pate is a lang-headed fellow, but his pen does not clear the paper as his greyhound does the Tinwald-furs. I gave him a wipe about that, if you noticed; I can say anything to Pate-in-Peril—Indeed, he is my wife's near kinsman.'

'But your advice, provost,' said Alan, who perceived that, like a shy horse, the worthy magistrate always started off from his own purpose just when he seemed approaching to it.

'Weel, you shall have it in plain terms, for I am a plain man. Ye see, we will suppose that any friend like yourself were in the deepest hole of the Nith, sand making a sprattle for your life. Now, you see, such being the case, I have little chance of helping you, being a fat, short-armed man, and no swimmer, and what would be the use of my jumping in after you?'

'I understand you, I think,' said Alan Fairford. 'You think that Darsie Latimer is in danger of his life?'

'Me!—I think nothing about it, Mr. Alan; but if he were, as I trust he is not, he is nae drap's blood akin to you, Mr. Alan.'

'But here your friend, Summertrees,' said the young lawyer, 'offers me a letter to this Redgauntlet of yours—What say you to that?'

'Me!' ejaculated the provost, 'me, Mr. Alan? I say neither buff nor sty to it—But ye dinna ken what it is to look a Redgauntlet in the face;—better try my wife, who is but a fourth cousin, before ye venture on the laird himself—just say something about the Revolution, and see what a look she can gie you.'

I shall leave you to stand all the shots from that battery, provost,' replied Fairford. 'But speak out like a man—Do you think Summertrees means fairly by me?'

'Fairly—he is just coming—fairly? I am a plain man, Mr. Fairford—but ye said FAIRLY?'

'I do so,' replied Alan, 'and it is of importance to me to know, and to you to tell me if such is the case; for if you do not, you may be an accomplice to murder before the fact, and that under circumstances which may bring it near to murder under trust.'

'Murder!—who spoke of murder?' said the provost; no danger of that, Mr. Alan—only, if I were you—to speak my plain mind—Here he approached his mouth to the ear of the young lawyer, and, after another acute pang of travail, was safely delivered of his advice in the following abrupt words:—'Take a keek into Pate's letter before ye deliver it.'

Fairford started, looked the provost hard in the face, and was silent; while Mr. Crosbie, with the self-approbation of one who has at length brought himself to the discharge of a great duty, at the expense of a considerable sacrifice, nodded and winked to Alan, as if enforcing his advice; and then swallowing a large glass of punch, concluded, with the sigh of a man released from a heavy burden, 'I am a plain man, Mr. Fairford.'

'A plain man?' said Maxwell, who entered the room at that moment, with the letter in his hand,—"Provost, I never heard you make use of the word but when you had some sly turn of your own to work out.'

The provost looked silly enough, and the Laird of Summertrees directed a keen and suspicious glance upon Alan Fairford, who sustained it with professional intrepidity.—There was a moment's pause.

'I was trying,' said the provost, 'to dissuade our young friend from his wildgoose expedition.'

'And I,' said Fairford, 'am determined to go through with it. Trusting myself to you, Mr. Maxwell, I conceive that I rely, as I before said, on the word of a gentleman.'

'I will warrant you,' said Maxwell, 'from all serious consequences—some inconveniences you must look to suffer.'

'To these I shall be resigned,' said Fairford, 'and stand prepared to run my risk.'

'Well then,' said Summertrees, 'you must go—'

'I will leave you to yourselves, gentlemen,' said the provost, rising; 'when you have done with your crack, you will find me at my wife's tea-table.'

'And a more accomplished old woman never drank catlap,' said Maxwell, as he shut the door; 'the last word has him, speak it who will—and yet because he is a whillywhaw body, and has a plausible tongue of his own, and is well enough connected, and especially because nobody could ever find out whether he is Whig or Tory, this is the third time they have made him provost!—But to the matter in hand. This letter, Mr. Fairford,' putting a sealed one into his hand, 'is addressed, you observe, to Mr. H—of B—, and contains your credentials for that gentlemen, who is also known by his family name of Redgauntlet, but less frequently addressed by it, because it is mentioned something invidiously in a certain Act of Parliament. I have little doubt he will assure you of your friend's safety, and in a short time place him at freedom—that is, supposing him under present restraint. But the point is, to discover where he is—and, before you are made acquainted with this necessary part of the business, you must give me your assurance of honour that you will acquaint no one, either by word or letter, with the expedition which you now propose to yourself.'

'How, sir?' answered Alan; 'can you expect that I will not take the precaution of informing some person of the route I am about to take, that in case of accident it may be known where I am, and with what purpose I have gone thither?'

'And can you expect,' answered Maxwell, in the same tone, 'that I am to place my friend's safety, not merely in your hands, but in those of any person you may choose to confide in, and who may use the knowledge to his destruction? Na—na—I have pledged my word for your safety, and you must give me yours to be private in the matter—giff-gaff, you know.'

Alan Fairford could not help thinking that this obligation to secrecy gave a new and suspicious colouring to the whole transaction; but, considering that his friend's release might depend upon his accepting the condition, he gave it in the terms proposed, and with the purpose of abiding by it.

'And now, sir,' he said, 'whither am I to proceed with this letter? Is Mr. Herries at Brokenburn?'

'He is not; I do not think he will come thither again until the business of the stake-nets be hushed up, nor would I advise him to do so—the Quakers, with all their demureness, can bear malice as long as other folk; and though I have not the prudence of Mr. Provost, who refuses to ken where his friends are concealed during adversity, lest, perchance, he should be asked to contribute to their relief, yet I do not think it necessary or prudent to inquire into Redgauntlet's wanderings, poor man, but wish to remain at perfect freedom to answer, if asked at, that I ken nothing of the matter. You must, then, go to old Tom Trumbull's at Annan,—Tam

Turnpenny, as they call him,—and he is sure either to know where Redgauntlet is himself, or to find some one who can give a shrewd guess. But you must attend that old Turnpenny will answer no question on such a subject without you give him the passport, which at present you must do, by asking him the age of the moon; if he answers, "Not light enough to land a cargo," you are to answer, "Then plague on Aberdeen Almanacks," and upon that he will hold free intercourse with you. And now, I would advise you to lose no time, for the parole is often changed—and take care of yourself among these moonlight lads, for laws and lawyers do not stand very high in their favour.'

'I will set out this instant,' said the young barrister; 'I will but bid the provost and Mrs. Crosbie farewell, and then get on horseback so soon as the ostler of the George Inn can saddle him;—as for the smugglers, I am neither gauger nor supervisor, and, like the man who met the devil, if they have nothing to say to me, I have nothing to say to them.'

'You are a mettled young man,' said Summertrees, evidently with increasing goodwill, on observing an alertness and contempt of danger, which perhaps he did not expect from Alan's appearance and profession,—a very mettled young fellow indeed! and it is almost a pity'—Here he stopped abort.

'What is a pity?' said Fairford.

'It is almost a pity that I cannot go with you myself, or at least send a trusty guide.'

They walked together to the bedchamber of Mrs. Crosbie, for it was in that asylum that the ladies of the period dispensed their tea, when the parlour was occupied by the punch-bowl.

'You have been good bairns to-night, gentlemen,' said Mrs. Crosbie; 'I am afraid, Summertrees, that the provost has given you a bad browst; you are not used to quit the lee-side of the punch-bowl in such a hurry. I say nothing to you, Mr. Fairford, for you are too young a man yet for stoup and bicker; but I hope you will not tell the Edinburgh fine folk that the provost has scrimped you of your cogie, as the sang says?'

'I am much obliged for the provost's kindness, and yours, madam,' replied Alan; 'but the truth is, I have still a long ride before me this evening and the sooner I am on horse-back the better.'

'This evening?' said the provost, anxiously; 'had you not better take daylight with you to-morrow morning?'

'Mr. Fairford will ride as well in the cool of the evening,' said Summertrees, taking the word out of Alan's mouth.

The provost said no more, nor did his wife ask any questions, nor testify any surprise at the suddenness of their guest's departure.

Having drunk tea, Alan Fairford took leave with the usual ceremony. The Laird of Summertrees seemed studious to prevent any further communication between him and the provost, and remained lounging on the landing-place of the stair while they made their adieus—heard the provost ask if Alan proposed a speedy return, and the latter reply that his stay was uncertain, and witnessed the parting shake of the hand, which, with a pressure more warm than usual, and a tremulous, 'God bless and prosper you!' Mr. Crosbie bestowed on his young friend. Maxwell even strolled with Fairford as far as the George, although resisting all his attempts at further inquiry into the affairs of Redgauntlet, and referring him to Tom Trumbull, alias Turnpenny, for the particulars which he might find it necessary to inquire into.

At length Alan's hack was produced—an animal long in neck, and high in bone, accoutred with a pair of saddle-bags containing the rider's travelling wardrobe. Proudly surmounting his small stock of necessities, and no way ashamed of a mode of travelling which a modern Mr. Silvertongue would consider as the last of degradations, Alan Fairford took leave of the old Jacobite, Pate-in-Peril, and set forward on the road to the loyal burgh of Annan. His reflections during his ride were none of the most pleasant. He could not disguise from himself that he was venturing rather too rashly into the power of outlawed and desperate persons; for with such only, a man in the situation of Redgauntlet could be supposed to associate. There were other grounds for apprehension, Several marks of intelligence betwixt Mrs. Crosbie and the Laird of Summertrees had not escaped Alan's acute observation; and it was plain that the provost's inclinations towards him, which he believed to be sincere and good, were not firm enough to withstand the influence of this league between his wife and friend. The provost's adieus, like Macbeth's amen, had stuck in his throat, and seemed to intimate that he apprehended more than he dared give utterance to.

Laying all these matters together, Alan thought, with no little anxiety on the celebrated lines of Shakespeare,

— A drop,

That in the ocean seeks another drop, &c.

But pertinacity was a strong feature in the young lawyer's character. He was, and always had been, totally unlike the 'horse hot at hand,' who tires before noon through his own over eager exertions in the beginning of the day. On the contrary, his first efforts seemed frequently inadequate to accomplishing his purpose, whatever that for the time might be; and it was only as the difficulties of the task increased, that his mind seemed to acquire the energy necessary to combat and subdue them. If, therefore, he went anxiously forward upon his uncertain and perilous expedition, the reader must acquit him of all idea, even in a passing thought, of the possibility of abandoning his search, and resigning Darsie Latimer to his destiny.

A couple of hours' riding brought him to the little town of Annan, situated on the shores of the Solway, between eight and nine o'clock. The sun had set, but the day was not yet ended; and when he had alighted and seen his horse properly cared for at the principal inn of the place, he was readily directed to Mr. Maxwell's friend, old Tom Trumbull, with whom everybody seemed well acquainted. He endeavoured to fish out from the lad that acted as a guide, something of this man's situation and profession; but the general expressions of 'a very decent man'—'a very honest body'—'weel to pass in the world,' and such like, were all that could be extracted from him; and while Fairford was following up the investigation with closer interrogatories, the lad put an end to them by knocking at the door of Mr. Trumbull, whose decent dwelling was a little distance from the town, and considerably nearer to the sea. It was one of a little row of houses running down to the waterside, and having gardens and other accommodations behind. There was heard within the uplifting of a Scottish psalm; and the boy saying, 'They are at exercise, sir,' gave intimation they might not be admitted till prayers were over.

When, however, Fairford repeated the summons with the end of his whip, the singing ceased, and Mr. Trumbull himself, with his psalm-book in his hand, kept open by the insertion of his forefinger between the leaves, came to demand the meaning of this unseasonable interruption.

Nothing could be more different than his whole appearance seemed to be from the confidant of a desperate man, and the associate of outlaws in their unlawful enterprises. He was a tall, thin, bony figure, with white hair combed straight down on each side of his face, and an iron-grey hue of complexion; where the lines, or rather, as Quin said of Macklin, the cordage, of his countenance were so sternly adapted to a devotional and even ascetic expression, that they left no room for any indication of reckless daring or sly dissimulation. In short, Trumbull appeared a perfect specimen of the rigid old Covenanter, who said only what he thought right, acted on no other principle but that of duty, and, if he committed errors, did so under the full impression that he was serving God rather than man.

'Do you want me, sir?' he said to Fairford, whose guide had slunk to the rear, as if to escape the rebuke of the severe old man,—'We were engaged, and it is the Saturday night.'

Alan Fairford's preconceptions were so much deranged by this man's appearance and manner, that he stood for a moment bewildered, and would as soon have thought of giving a cant password to a clergyman descending from the pulpit, as to the respectable father of a family just interrupted in his prayers for and with the objects of his care. Hastily concluding Mr. Maxwell had passed some idle jest on him, or rather that he had mistaken the person to whom he was directed, he asked if he spoke to Mr. Trumbull.

'To Thomas Trumbull,' answered the old man—'What may be your business, sir?' And he glanced his eye to the book he held in his hand, with a sigh like that of a saint desirous of dissolution.

'Do you know Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees?' said Fairford.

'I have heard of such a gentleman in the country-side, but have no acquaintance with him,' answered Mr. Trumbull; 'he is, as I have heard, a Papist; for the whore that sitteth on the seven hills ceaseth not yet to pour forth the cup of her abomination on these parts.'

'Yet he directed me hither, my good friend,' said Alan. 'Is there another of your name in this town of Annan?'

'None,' replied Mr. Trumbull, 'since my worthy father was removed; he was indeed a shining light.—I wish you good even, sir.'

'Stay one single instant,' said Fairford; 'this is a matter of life and death.'

'Not more than the casting the burden of our sins where they should be laid,' said Thomas Trumbull, about to shut the door in the inquirer's face.

'Do you know,' said Alan Fairford, 'the Laird of Redgauntlet?'

'Now Heaven defend me from treason and rebellion!' exclaimed Trumbull. 'Young gentleman, you are importunate. I live here among my own people, and do not consort with Jacobites and mass-mongers.'

He seemed about to shut the door, but did NOT shut it, a circumstance which did not escape Alan's notice.

'Mr. Redgauntlet is sometimes,' he said, 'called Herries of Birrenwork; perhaps you may know him under that name.'

'Friend, you are uncivil,' answered Mr. Trumbull; 'honest men have enough to do to keep one name undefiled. I ken nothing about those who have two. Good even to you, friend.'

He was now about to slam the door in his visitor's face without further ceremony, when Alan, who had observed symptoms that the name of Redgauntlet did not seem altogether so indifferent to him as he pretended, arrested his purpose by saying, in a low voice, 'At least you can tell me what age the moon is?'

The old man started, as if from a trance, and before answering, surveyed the querist with a keen penetrating glance, which seemed to say, 'Are you really in possession of this key to my confidence, or do you speak from mere accident?'

To this keen look of scrutiny, Fairford replied by a smile of intelligence.

The iron muscles of the old man's face did not, however, relax, as he dropped, in a careless manner, the countersign, 'Not light enough to land a cargo.'

'Then plague of all Aberdeen Almanacks!'

'And plague of all fools that waste time,' said Thomas Trumbull, 'Could you not have said as much at first? And standing wasting time, and encouraging; lookers-on, in the open street too? Come in by—in by.'

He drew his visitor into the dark entrance of the house, and shut the door carefully; then putting his head into an apartment which the murmurs within announced to be filled with the family, he said aloud, 'A work of necessity and mercy—Malachi, take the book—You will sing six double verses of the hundred and nineteen—and you may lecture out of the Lamentations. And, Malachi,'—this he said in an undertone,—'see you give them a creed of doctrine that will last them till I come back; or else these inconsiderate lads will be out of the house, and away to the publics, wasting their precious time, and, it may be, putting themselves in the way of missing the morning tide.'

An inarticulate answer from within intimated Malachi's acquiescence in the commands imposed; and, Mr. Trumbull, shutting the door, muttered something about fast bind, fast find, turned the key, and put it into his pocket; and then bidding his visitor have a care of his steps, and make no noise, he led him through the house, and out at a back-door, into a little garden. Here a plaited alley conducted them, without the possibility of their being seen by any neighbour, to a door in the garden-wall, which being opened, proved to be a private entrance into a three-stalled stable; in one of which was a horse, that whinnied on their entrance. 'Hush, hush!' cried the old man, and presently seconded his exhortations to silence by throwing a handful of corn into the manger, and the horse soon converted his acknowledgement of their presence into the usual sound of munching and grinding his provender.

As the light was now failing fast, the old man, with much more alertness than might have been expected from the rigidity of his figure, closed the window-shutters in an instant, produced phosphorus and matches, and lighted a stable-lantern, which he placed on the corn-bin, and then addressed Fairford. 'We are private here, young man; and as some time has been wasted already, you will be so kind as to tell me what is your errand. Is it about the way of business, or the other job?'

'My business with you, Mr. Trumbull, is to request you will find me the means of delivering this letter, from Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees to the Laird of Redgauntlet.'

'Humph—fashious job! Pate Maxwell will still be the auld man—always Pate-in-Peril—Craig-in-Peril, for what I know. Let me see the letter from him.'

He examined it with much care, turning it up and down, and looking at the seal very attentively. 'All's right, I see; it has the private mark for haste and speed. I bless my Maker that I am no great man, or great man's fellow; and so I think no more of these passages than just to help them forward in the way of business. You are an utter stranger in these parts, I warrant?'

Fairford answered in the affirmative.

'Aye—I never saw them make a wiser choice—I must call some one to direct you what to do—Stay, we must go to him, I believe. You are well recommended to me, friend, and doubtless trusty; otherwise you may see more than I would like to show, or am in the use of showing in the common line of business.'

Saying this, he placed his lantern on the ground, beside the post of one of the empty stalls, drew up a small spring bolt which secured it to the floor, and then forcing the post to one side, discovered a small trap-door. 'Follow me,' he said, and dived into the subterranean descent to which this secret aperture gave access.

Fairford plunged after him, not without apprehensions of more kinds than one, but still resolved to prosecute the adventure.

The descent, which was not above six feet, led to a very narrow passage, which seemed to have been constructed for the precise purpose of excluding every one who chanced to be an inch more in girth than was his conductor. A small vaulted room, of about eight feet square, received them at the end of this lane. Here Mr. Trumbull left Fairford alone, and returned for an instant, as he said, to shut his concealed trap-door.

Fairford liked not his departure, as it left him in utter darkness; besides that his breathing was much affected by a strong and stifling smell of spirits, and other articles of a savour more powerful than agreeable to the lungs. He was very glad, therefore, when he heard the returning steps of Mr. Trumbull, who, when once more by his side, opened a strong though narrow door in the wall, and conveyed Fairford into an immense magazine of spirit-casks, and other articles of contraband trade.

There was a small, light at the end of this range of well-stocked subterranean vaults, which, upon a low whistle, began to flicker and move towards them. An undefined figure, holding a dark lantern, with the light averted, approached them, whom Mr. Trumbull thus addressed:—'Why were you not at worship, Job; and this Saturday at e'en?'

'Swanston was loading the JENNY, sir; and I stayed to serve out the article.'

'True—a work of necessity, and in the way of business. Does the JUMPING JENNY sail this tide?'

'Aye, aye, sir; she sails for'—

'I did not ask you WHERE she sailed for, Job,' said the old gentleman, interrupting him. 'I thank my Maker, I know nothing of their incomings or outgoings. I sell my article fairly and in the ordinary way of business; and I wash my hands of everything else. But what I wished to know is, whether the gentleman called the Laird of the Solway Lakes is on the other side of the Border even now?'

'Aye, aye,' said Job, 'the laird is something in my own line, you know—a little contraband or so, There is a statute for him—But no matter; he took the sands after the splore at the Quaker's fish-traps yonder; for he has a leal heart, the laird, and is always true to the country-side. But avast—is all snug here?'

So saying, he suddenly turned on Alan Fairford the light side of the lantern he carried, who, by the transient gleam which it threw in passing on the man who bore it, saw a huge figure, upwards of six feet high, with a rough hairy cap on his head, and a set of features corresponding to his bulky frame. He thought also he observed pistols at his belt.

'I will answer for this gentleman,' said Mr. Trumbull; 'he must be brought to speech of the laird.'

'That will be kittle steering,' said the subordinate personage; 'for I understood that the laird and his folk were no sooner on the other side than the land-sharks were on them, and some mounted lobsters from Carlisle; and so they were obliged to split and squander. There are new brooms out to sweep the country of them, they say; for the brush was a hard one; and they say there was a lad drowned;—he was not one of the laird's gang, so there was the less matter.'

'Peace! prithee, peace, Job Rutledge,' said honest, pacific Mr. Trumbull. 'I wish thou couldst remember, man, that I desire to know nothing of your roars and splores, your brooms and brushes. I dwell here among my own people; and I sell my commodity to him who comes in the way of business; and so wash my hands of all consequences, as becomes a quiet subject and an honest man. I never take payment, save in ready money.'

'Aye, aye,' muttered he with the lantern, 'your worship, Mr. Trumbull, understands that in the way of business.'

'Well, I hope you will one day know, Job,' answered Mr. Trumbull,—'the comfort of a conscience void of offence, and that fears neither gauger nor collector, neither excise nor customs. The business is to pass this gentleman to Cumberland upon earnest business, and to procure him speech with the Laird of the Solway Lakes—I suppose that can be done? Now I think Nanty Ewart, if he sails with the brig this morning tide, is the man to set him forward.'

'Aye, aye, truly is he,' said Job; 'never man knew the Border, dale and fell, pasture and ploughland, better than Nanty; and he can always bring him to the laird, too, if you are sure the gentleman's right. But indeed that's his own look-out; for were he the best man in Scotland, and the chairman of the d—d Board to boot, and had fifty men at his back, he were as well not visit the laird for anything but good. As for Nanty, he is word and blow, a d—d deal fiercer than Cristie Nixon that they keep such a din about. I have seen them both tried, by'—

Fairford now found himself called upon to say something; yet his feelings, upon finding himself thus completely in the power of a canting hypocrite, and of his retainer, who had so much the air of a determined ruffian, joined to the strong and abominable fume which they snuffed up with indifference, while it almost deprived him of respiration, combined to render utterance difficult. He stated, however, that he had no evil intentions towards the laird, as they called him, but was only the bearer of a letter to him on particular business, from Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees.

'Aye, aye,' said Job, 'that may be well enough; and if Mr. Trumbull is satisfied that the service is right, why, we will give you a cast in the JUMPING JENNY this tide, and Nanty Ewart will put you on a way of finding the laird, I warrant you.'

'I may for the present return, I presume, to the inn where I left my horse?' said Fairford.

'With pardon,' replied Mr. Trumbull, 'you have been ower far ben with us for that; but Job will take you to a place where you may sleep rough till he calls you. I will bring you what little baggage you can need—for those who go on such errands must not be dainty. I will myself see after your horse, for a merciful man is merciful to his beast—a matter too often forgotten in our way of business.'

'Why, Master Trumbull,' replied Job, 'you know that when we are chased, it's no time to shorten sail, and so the boys do ride whip and spur.' He stopped in his speech, observing the old man had vanished through the door by which he had entered—'That's always the way with old Turnpenny,' he said to Fairford; 'he cares for nothing of the trade but the profit—now, d—me, if I don't think the fun of it is better worth while. But come along, my fine chap; I must stow you away in safety until it is time to go aboard.'

CHAPTER XIII NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

Fairford followed his gruff guide among a labyrinth of barrels and puncheons, on which he had more than once like to have broken his nose, and from thence into what, by the glimpse of the passing lantern upon a desk and writing materials, seemed to be a small office for the dispatch of business. Here there appeared no exit; but the smuggler, or smuggler's ally, availing himself of a ladder, removed an old picture, which showed a door about seven feet from the ground, and Fairford, still following Job, was involved in another tortuous and dark passage, which involuntarily reminded him of Peter Peebles's lawsuit. At the end of this labyrinth, when he had little guess where he had been conducted, and was, according to the French phrase, totally DESORIENTE, Job suddenly set down the lantern, and availing himself of the flame to light two candles which stood on the table, asked if Alan would choose anything to eat, recommending, at all events, a slug of brandy to keep out the night air. Fairford declined both, but inquired after his baggage.

'The old master will take care of that himself,' said Job Rutledge; and drawing back in the direction in which he had entered, he vanished from the farther end of the apartment, by a mode which the candles, still shedding an imperfect light, gave Alan no means of ascertaining. Thus the adventurous young lawyer was left alone in the apartment to which he had been conducted by so singular a passage.

In this condition, it was Alan's first employment to survey, with some accuracy, the place where he was; and accordingly, having trimmed the lights, he walked slowly round the apartment, examining its appearance and dimensions. It seemed to be such a small dining-parlour as is usually found in the house of the better class of artisans, shopkeepers, and such persons, having a recess at the upper end, and the usual furniture of an ordinary description. He found a door, which he endeavoured to open, but it was locked on the outside. A corresponding door on the same side of the apartment admitted him into a closet, upon the front shelves of which were punch-bowls, glasses, tea-cups, and the like, while on one side was hung a horseman's greatcoat of the coarsest materials, with two great horse-pistols peeping out of the pocket, and on the floor stood a pair of well-spattered jack-boots, the usual equipment of the time, at least for long journeys.

Not greatly liking the contents of the closet, Alan Fairford shut the door, and resumed his scrutiny round the walls of the apartment, in order to discover the mode of Job Rutledge's retreat. The secret passage was, however, too artificially concealed, and the young lawyer had nothing better to do than to meditate on the singularity of his present situation. He had long known that the excise laws had occasioned an active contraband trade betwixt Scotland and England, which then, as now, existed, and will continue to exist until the utter abolition of the wretched system which establishes an inequality of duties betwixt the different parts of the same kingdom; a system, be it said in passing, mightily resembling the conduct of a pugilist, who should tie up one arm that he might fight the better with the other. But Fairford was unprepared for the expensive and regular establishments by which the illicit traffic was carried on, and could not have conceived that the capital employed in it should have been adequate to the erection of these extensive buildings, with all their contrivances for secrecy of communication. He was musing on these circumstances, not without some anxiety for the progress of his own journey, when suddenly, as he lifted his eyes, he discovered old Mr. Trumbull at the upper end of the apartment, bearing in one hand a small bundle, in the other his dark lantern, the light of which, as he advanced, he directed full upon Fairford's countenance.

Though such an apparition was exactly what he expected, yet he did not see the grim, stern old man present himself thus suddenly without emotion; especially when he recollected, what to a youth of his pious education was peculiarly shocking, that the grizzled hypocrite was probably that instant arisen from his knees to Heaven, for the purpose of engaging in the mysterious transactions of a desperate and illegal trade.

The old man, accustomed to judge with ready sharpness of the physiognomy of those with whom he had business, did not fail to remark something like agitation in Fairford's demeanour. 'Have ye taken the rue?' said he. 'Will ye take the sheaf from the mare, and give up the venture?'

'Never!' said Fairford, firmly, stimulated at once by his natural spirit, and the recollection of his friend; 'never, while I have life and strength to follow it out!'

'I have brought you,' said Trumbull, 'a clean shirt, and some stockings, which is all the baggage you can conveniently carry, and I will cause one of the lads lend you a horseman's coat, for it is ill sailing or riding without one; and, touching your valise, it will be as safe in my poor house, were it full of the gold of Ophir, as if it were in the depth of the mine.' 'I have no doubt of it,' said Fairford.

'And now,' said Trumbull, again, 'I pray you to tell me by what name I am to name you to Nanty (which is Antony) Ewart?'

'By the name of Alan Fairford,' answered the young lawyer.

'But that,' said Mr. Trumbull, in reply, 'is your own proper name and surname.'

'And what other should I give?' said the young man; 'do you think I have any occasion for an alias? And, besides, Mr. Trumbull,' added Alan, thinking a little raillery might intimate confidence of spirit, 'you blessed yourself, but a little while since, that you had no acquaintance with those who defiled their names so far as to be obliged to change them.'

'True, very true,' said Mr. Trumbull; 'nevertheless, young man, my grey hairs stand unreprieved in this matter; for, in my line of business, when I sit under my vine and my fig-tree, exchanging the strong waters of the north for the gold which is the price thereof, I have, I thank Heaven, no disguises to keep with any man, and wear my own name of Thomas Trumbull, without any chance that the same may be polluted. Whereas, thou, who art to journey in miry ways, and amongst a strange people, mayst do well to have two names, as thou hast two shirts, the one to keep the other clean.'

Here he emitted a chuckling grunt, which lasted for two vibrations of the pendulum exactly, and was the only approach towards laughter in which old Turnpenny, as he was nicknamed, was ever known to indulge.

'You are witty, Mr. Trumbull,' said Fairford; 'but jests are no arguments—I shall keep my own name.'

'At your own pleasure,' said the merchant; 'there is but one name which,' &c. &c. &c.

We will not follow the hypocrite through the impious cant which he added, in order to close the subject.

Alan followed him, in silent abhorrence, to the recess in which the beaufet was placed, and which was so artificially made as to conceal another of those traps with which the whole building abounded. This concealment admitted them to the same winding passage by which the young lawyer had been brought thither. The path which they now took amid these mazes, differed from the direction in which he had been guided by Rutledge. It led upwards, and terminated beneath a garret window. Trumbull opened it, and with more agility than his age promised, clambered out upon the leads. If Fairford's journey had been hitherto in a stifled and subterranean atmosphere, it was now open, lofty, and airy enough; for he had to follow his guide over leads and slates, which the old smuggler traversed with the dexterity of a cat. It is true, his course was facilitated by knowing exactly where certain stepping-places and holdfasts were placed, of which Fairford could not so readily avail himself; but, after a difficult and somewhat perilous progress along the roofs of two or three houses, they at length descended by a skylight into a garret room, and from thence by the stairs into a public-house; for such it appeared, by the ringing of bells, whistling for waiters and attendance, bawling of 'House, house, here!' chorus of sea songs, and the like noises.

Having descended to the second story, and entered a room there in which there was a light, old Mr. Trumbull rang the bell of the apartment thrice, with an interval betwixt each, during which he told deliberately the number twenty. Immediately after the third ringing the landlord appeared, with stealthy step, and an appearance of mystery on his buxom visage. He greeted Mr. Trumbull, who was his landlord as it proved, with great respect, and expressed some surprise at seeing him so late, as he termed it, 'on Saturday e'en.'

'And I, Robin Hastie,' said the landlord to the tenant, am more surprised than pleased, to hear sae muckle din in your house, Robie, so near the honourable Sabbath; and I must mind you that it is contravening the terms of your tack, whilk stipulates that you should shut your public on Saturday at nine o'clock, at latest.'

'Yes, sir,' said Robin Hastie, no way alarmed at the gravity of the rebuke, 'but you must take tent that I have admitted naebody but you, Mr. Trumbull (who by the way admitted yourself), since nine o'clock for the most of the folk have been here for several hours about the lading, and so on, of the brig. It is not full tide yet, and I cannot put the men out into the street. If I did, they would go to some other public, and their souls would be nane the better, and my purse muckle the waur; for how am I to pay the rent if I do not sell the liquor?'

'Nay, then,' said Thomas Trumbull, 'if it is a work of necessity, and in the honest independent way of business, no doubt there is balm in Gilead. But prithee, Robin, wilt thou see if Nanty Ewart be, as is most likely, amongst these unhappy toppers; and if so, let him step this way cannily, and speak to me and this young gentleman. And it's dry talking, Robin—you must minister to us a bowl of punch—ye ken my gage.'

'From a mutchkin to a gallon, I ken your honour's taste, Mr. Thomas Trumbull,' said mine host; 'and ye shall hang me over the signpost if there be a drap mair lemon or a curn less sugar than just suits you. There are three of you—you will be for the auld Scots peremptory pint-stoup for the success of the voyage?' [The Scottish pint of liquid measure comprehends four English measures of the same denomination. The jest is well known of my poor countryman, who, driven to extremity by the raillery of the Southern, on the small denomination of the Scottish coin, at length answered, 'Aye, aye! But the deil tak them that has the LEAST PINT-STOUP.']

'Better pray for it than drink for it, Robin,' said Mr. Trumbull. 'Yours is a dangerous trade, Robin; it hurts mony a ane—baith host and guest. But ye will get the blue bowl, Robin—the blue bowl—that will sloken all their drouth, and prevent the sinful repetition of whipping for an eke of a Saturday at e'en. Aye, Robin, it is a pity of Nanty Ewart—Nanty likes the turning up of his little finger unco weel, and we maunna stint him, Robin, so as we leave him sense to steer by.'

'Nanty Ewart could steer through the Pentland Firth though he were as drunk as the Baltic Ocean,' said Robin Hastie; and instantly tripping downstairs, he speedily returned with the materials for what he called his BROWST, which consisted of two English quarts of spirits, in a huge blue bowl, with all the ingredients for punch in the same formidable proportion. At the same time he introduced Mr. Antony or Nanty Ewart, whose person, although he was a good deal flustered with liquor, was different from what Fairford expected. His dress was what is emphatically termed the shabby genteel—a frock with tarnished lace—a small cocked hat, ornamented in a similar way—a scarlet waistcoat, with faded embroidery, breeches of the same, with silver knee-bands, and he wore a smart hanger and a pair of pistols in a sullied swordbelt.

'Here I come, patron,' he said, shaking hands with Mr. Trumbull. 'Well, I see you have got some grog aboard.'

'It is not my custom, Mr. Ewart,' said the old gentleman, 'as you well know, to become a chamberer or carouser thus late on Saturday at e'en; but I wanted to recommend to your attention a young friend of ours, that is going upon a something particular journey, with a letter to our friend the Laird from Pate-in-Peril, as they call him.'

'Aye—indeed?—he must be in high trust for so young a gentleman. I wish you joy, sir,' bowing to Fairford. 'By'r lady, as Shakespeare says, you are bringing up a neck for a fair end. Come, patron, we will drink to Mr. What-shall-call-um. What is his name? Did you tell me? And have I forgot it already.'

'Mr. Alan Fairford,' said Trumbull.

'Aye, Mr. Alan Fairford—a good name for a fair trader—Mr. Alan Fairford; and may he be long withheld from the topmost round of ambition, which I take to be the highest round of a certain ladder.'

While he spoke, he seized the punch-ladle, and began to fill the glasses. But Mr. Trumbull arrested his hand, until he had, as he expressed himself, sanctified the liquor by a long grace; during the pronouncement of which he shut indeed his eyes, but his nostrils became dilated, as if he were snuffing up the fragrant beverage with peculiar complacency.

When the grace was at length over, the three friends sat down to their beverage, and invited Alan Fairford to partake. Anxious about his situation, and disgusted as he was with his company, he craved, and with difficulty obtained permission, under the allegation of being fatigued, heated, and the like, to stretch himself on a couch which was in the apartment, and attempted at least to procure some rest before high-water, when the vessel was to sail.

He was at length permitted to use his freedom, and stretched himself on the couch, having his eyes for some time fixed on the jovial party he had left, and straining his ears to catch if possible a little of their conversation. This he soon found was to no purpose for what did actually reach his ears was disguised so completely by the use of cant words and the thieves-latin called slang, that even when he caught the words, he found himself as far as ever from the sense of their conversation. At length he fell asleep.

It was after Alan had slumbered for three or four hours, that he was wakened by voices bidding him rise up and prepare to be jogging. He started up accordingly, and found himself in presence of the same party of boon companions; who had just dispatched their huge bowl of punch. To Alan's surprise, the liquor had made but little innovation on the brains of men who were accustomed to drink at all hours, and in the most inordinate quantities. The landlord indeed spoke a little thick, and the texts of Mr. Thomas Trumbull stumbled on his tongue; but Nanty was one of those toppers, who, becoming early what bon vivants term flustered, remain whole nights and days at the same point of intoxication; and, in fact, as they are seldom entirely sober, can be as rarely seen absolutely drunk. Indeed, Fairford, had he not known how Ewart had been engaged whilst he himself was asleep, would almost have sworn when he awoke, that the man was more sober than when he first entered the room.

He was confirmed in this opinion when they descended below, where two or three sailors and ruffian-looking fellows awaited their commands. Ewart took the whole direction upon himself, gave his orders with briefness and precision, and looked to their being executed with the silence and celerity which that peculiar crisis required. All were now dismissed for the brig, which lay, as Fairford was given to understand, a little farther down the river, which is navigable for vessels of light burden till almost within a mile of the town.

When they issued from the inn, the landlord bid them goodbye. Old Trumbull walked a little way with them, but the air had probably considerable effect on the state of his brain; for after reminding Alan Fairford that the next day was the honourable Sabbath, he became extremely excursive in an attempt to exhort him to keep it holy. At length, being perhaps sensible that he was becoming unintelligible, he thrust a volume into Fairford's hand—hiccuping at the same time—'Good book—good book—fine hymn-book—fit for the honourable Sabbath, whilk awaits us to-morrow morning.' Here the iron tongue of time told five from the town steeple of Annan, to the further confusion of Mr. Trumbull's already disordered ideas. 'Aye? Is Sunday come and gone already? Heaven be praised! Only it is a marvel the afternoon is sae dark for the time of the year—Sabbath has slipped ower quietly, but we have reason to bless ourselfs it has not been altogether misemployed. I heard little of the preaching—a cauld moralist, I doubt, served that out—but, eh—the prayer—I mind it as if I had said the words myself.' Here he repeated one or two petitions, which were probably a part of his family devotions, before he was summoned forth to what he called the way of business. 'I never remember a Sabbath pass so cannily off in my life.' Then he recollected himself a little, and said to Alan, 'You may read that book, Mr. Fairford, to-morrow, all the same, though it be Monday; for, you see, it was Saturday when we were thegither, and now it's Sunday and it's dark night—so the Sabbath has slipped clean away through our fingers like water through a sieve, which abideth not; and we have to begin again to-morrow morning, in the weariful, base, mean, earthly employments, whilk are unworthy of an immortal spirit—always excepting the way of business.'

Three of the fellows were now returning to the town, and, at Ewart's command, they cut short the patriarch's exhortation, by leading him back to his own residence. The rest of the party then proceeded to the brig, which only waited their arrival to get under weigh and drop down the river. Nanty Ewart betook himself to steering the brig, and the very touch of the helm seemed to dispel the remaining influence of the liquor which he had drunk, since, through a troublesome and intricate channel, he was able to direct the course of his little vessel with the most perfect accuracy and safety.

Alan Fairford, for some time, availed himself of the clearness of the summer morning to gaze on the dimly seen shores betwixt which they glided, becoming less and less distinct as they receded from each other, until at length, having adjusted his little bundle by way of pillow, and wrapped around him the greatcoat with which old Trumbull had equipped him, he stretched himself on the deck, to try to recover the slumber out of which he had been awakened. Sleep had scarce begun to settle on his eyes, ere he found something stirring about his person. With ready presence of mind he recollected his situation, and resolved to show no alarm until the purpose of this became obvious; but he was soon relieved from his anxiety, by finding it was only the result of Nanty's attention to his comfort, who was wrapping around him, as softly as he could, a great boatcloak, in order to defend him from the morning air.

'Thou art but a cockerel,' he muttered, 'but 'twere pity thou wert knocked off the perch before seeing a little more of the sweet and sour of this world—though, faith, if thou hast the usual luck of it, the best way were to leave thee to the chance of a seasoning fever.'

These words, and the awkward courtesy with which the skipper of the little brig tucked the sea-coat round Fairford, gave him a confidence of safety which he had not yet thoroughly possessed. He stretched himself in more security on the hard planks, and was speedily asleep, though his slumbers were feverish and unrefreshing.

It has been elsewhere intimated that Alan Fairford inherited from his mother a delicate constitution, with a tendency to consumption; and, being an only child, with such a cause for apprehension, care, to the verge of effeminacy, was taken to preserve him from damp beds, wet feet, and those various emergencies to which the Caledonian boys of much higher birth, but more active habits, are generally accustomed. In man, the spirit sustains the constitutional weakness, as in the winged tribes the feathers bear aloft the body. But there is a bound to these supporting qualities; and as the pinions of the bird must at length grow weary, so the VIS ANIMI of the human struggler becomes broken down by continued fatigue.

When the voyager was awakened by the light of the sun now riding high in heaven, he found himself under the influence of an almost intolerable headache, with heat, thirst, shooting across the back and loins, and other symptoms intimating violent cold, accompanied with fever. The manner in which he had passed the preceding day and night, though perhaps it might have been of little consequence to most young men, was to him, delicate in constitution and nurture, attended with bad and even perilous consequences. He felt this was the case, yet would fain have combated the symptoms of indisposition, which, indeed, he imputed chiefly to sea-sickness. He sat up on deck, and looked on the scene around, as the little vessel, having borne down the Solway Firth, was beginning, with a favourable northerly breeze, to bear away to the southward, crossing the entrance of the Wampool river, and preparing to double the most northerly point of Cumberland.

But Fairford felt annoyed with deadly sickness, as well as by pain of a distressing and oppressive character; and neither Criffel, rising in majesty on the one hand, nor the distant yet more picturesque outline of Skiddaw and Glaramara upon the other, could attract his attention in the manner in which it was usually fixed by beautiful scenery, and especially that which had in it something new as well as striking. Yet it was not in Alan Fairford's nature to give way to despondence, even when seconded by pain. He had recourse, in the first place, to his pocket; but instead of the little Sallust he had brought with him, that the perusal of a classical author might help to pass away a heavy hour, he pulled out the supposed hymn-book with which he had been presented a few hours before, by that temperate and scrupulous person, Mr. Thomas Trumbull, ALIAS Turnpenny. The volume was bound in sable, and its exterior might have become a psalter. But what was Alan's astonishment to read on the title page the following words:—'Merry Thoughts for Merry Men; or Mother Midnight's Miscellany for the Small Hours;' and turning over the leaves, he was disgusted with profligate tales, and more profligate songs, ornamented with figures corresponding in infamy with the letterpress.

'Good God!' he thought, 'and did this hoary reprobate summon his family together, and, with such a disgraceful pledge of infamy in his bosom, venture to approach the throne of his Creator? It must be so; the book is bound after the manner of those dedicated to devotional subjects, and doubtless the wretch, in his intoxication, confounded the books he carried with him, as he did the days of the week.' Seized with the disgust with which the young and generous usually regard the vices of advanced life, Alan, having turned the leaves of the book over in hasty disdain, flung it from him, as far as he could, into the sea. He then had recourse to the Sallust, which he had at first sought for in vain. As he opened the book, Nanty Ewart, who had been looking over his shoulder, made his own opinion heard.

'I think now, brother, if you are so much scandalized at a little piece of sculduddery, which, after all, does nobody any harm, you had better have given it to me than have flung it into the Solway.'

'I hope, sir,' answered Fairford, civilly, 'you are in the habit of reading better books.'

'Faith,' answered Nanty, 'with help of a little Geneva text, I could read my Sallust as well as you can;' and snatching the book from Alan's hand, he began to read, in the Scottish accent:—"*IGITUR EX DIVITIIS JUVENTUTEM LUXURIA ATQUE AVARITIA CUM SUPERBILI INVASERE: RAPERE, CONSUMERE; SUA PARVI PENDERE, ALIENA CUPERE; PUDOREM, AMICITIAM, PUDICITIAM, DIVINA ATQUE HUMANA PROMISCUA, NIHIL PENSI NEQUE MODERATI HABERE.*"

[The translation of the passage is thus given by Sir Henry Steuart of Allanton:—'The youth, taught to look up to riches as the sovereign good, became apt pupils in the school of Luxury. Rapacity and profusion went hand in hand. Careless of their own fortunes, and eager to possess those of others, shame and remorse, modesty and moderation, every principle gave way.'—WORKS OF SALLUST, WITH ORIGINAL ESSAYS, vol. ii. p.17.]—There is a slap in the face now, for an honest fellow that has been buccaneering! Never could keep a groat of what he got, or hold his fingers from what belonged to another, said you? Fie, fie, friend Crispus, thy morals are as crabbed and austere as thy style—the one has as little mercy as the other has grace. By my soul, it is unhandsome to make personal reflections on an old acquaintance, who seeks a little civil intercourse with you after nigh twenty years' separation. On my soul, Master Sallust deserves to float on the Solway better than Mother Midnight herself.'

'Perhaps, in some respects, he may merit better usage at our hands,' said Alan; 'for if he has described vice plainly, it seems to have been for the purpose of rendering it generally abhorred.'

'Well,' said the seaman, 'I have heard of the Sortes Virgilianae, and I dare say the Sortes Sallustianae are as true every tittle. I have consulted honest Crispus on my own account, and have had a cuff for my pains. But now see, I open the book on your behalf, and behold what occurs first to my eye!—Lo you there—"CATILINA ... OMNIUM FLAGITOSORUM ATQUE FACINOROSORUM CIRCUM SE HABEBAT." And then again—"ETIAM SI QUIS A CULPA VACUUS IN AMICITIAM EJUS INCIDIDERAT QUOTIDIANO USU PAR SIMILISQUE CAETERIS EFFICIEBATUR." [After enumerating the evil qualities of Catiline's associates, the author adds, 'If it happened that any as yet uncontaminated by vice were fatally drawn into his friendship, the effects of intercourse and snares artfully spread, subdued every scruple, and early assimilated them to their conductors.'—Ibidem, p. 19.] That is what I call plain speaking on the part of the old Roman, Mr. Fairford. By the way, that is a capital name for a lawyer.

'Lawyer as I am,' said Fairford, 'I do not understand your innuendo.'

'Nay, then,' said Ewart, 'I can try it another way, as well as the hypocritical old rascal Turnpenny himself could do. I would have you to know that I am well acquainted with my Bible-book, as well as with my friend Sallust.' He then, in a snuffing and canting tone, began to repeat the Scriptural text—"DAVID THEREFORE DEPARTED THENCE, AND WENT TO THE CAVE OF ADULLAM. AND EVERY ONE THAT WAS IN DISTRESS, AND EVERY ONE THAT WAS IN DEBT, AND EVERY ONE THAT WAS DISCONTENTED, GATHERED THEMSELVES TOGETHER UNTO HIM, AND HE BECAME A CAPTAIN OVER THEM." What think you of that?' he said, suddenly changing his manner. 'Have I touched you now, sir?'

'You are as far off as ever,' replied Fairford.

'What the devil! and you a repeating frigate between Summertrees and the laird! Tell that to the marines—the sailors won't believe it. But you are right to be cautious, since you can't say who are right, who not. But you look ill; it's but the cold morning air. Will you have a can of flip, or a jorum of hot rumbo? or will you splice the mainbrace' (showing a spirit-flask). 'Will you have a quid—or a pipe—or a cigar?—a pinch of snuff, at least, to clear your brains and sharpen your apprehension?'

Fairford rejected all these friendly propositions.

'Why, then,' continued Ewart, 'if you will do nothing for the free trade, I must patronize it myself.'

So saying, he took a large glass of brandy.

'A hair of the dog that bit me,' he continued,—'of the dog that will worry me one day soon; and yet, and be d—d to me for an idiot, I must always have hint at my throat. But, says the old catch'—Here he sang, and sang well—

'Let's drink—let's drink—while life we have;

We'll find but cold drinking, cold drinking in the grave.

All this,' he continued, 'is no charm against the headache. I wish I had anything that could do you good. Faith, and we have tea and coffee aboard! I'll open a chest or a bag, and let you have some in an instant. You are at the age to like such catlap better than better stuff.'

Fairford thanked him, and accepted his offer of tea.

Nanty Ewart was soon heard calling about, 'Break open yon chest—take out your capful, you bastard of a powder-monkey; we may want it again. No sugar? all used up for grog, say you? knock another loaf to pieces, can't ye? and get the kettle boiling, ye hell's baby, in no time at all!'

By dint of these energetic proceedings he was in a short time able to return to the place where his passenger lay sick and exhausted, with a cup, or rather a canful, of tea; for everything was on a large scale on board of the JUMPING JENNY. Alan drank it eagerly, and with so much appearance of being refreshed that Nanty Ewart swore he would have some too, and only laced it, as his phrase went, with a single glass of brandy. [See Note 8.]

CHAPTER XIV NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

We left Alan Fairford on the deck of the little smuggling brig, in that disconsolate situation, when sickness and nausea, attack a heated and fevered frame, and an anxious mind. His share of sea-sickness, however, was not so great as to engross his sensations entirely, or altogether to divert his attention from what was passing around. If he could not delight in the swiftness and agility with which the 'little frigate' walked the waves, or amuse himself by noticing the beauty of the sea-views around him, where the distant Skiddaw raised his brow, as if in defiance of the clouded eminence of Criffel, which lorded it over the Scottish side of the estuary, he had spirits and composure enough to pay particular attention to the master of the vessel, on whose character his own safety in all probability was dependent.

Nanty Ewart had now given the helm to one of his people, a bald-pated, grizzled old fellow, whose whole life had been spent in evading the revenue laws, with now and then the relaxation of a few months' imprisonment, for deforcing officers, resisting seizures, and the like offences.

Nanty himself sat down by Fairford, helped him to his tea, with such other refreshments as he could think of, and seemed in his way sincerely desirous to make his situation as comfortable as things admitted. Fairford had thus an opportunity to study his countenance and manners more closely.

It was plain, Ewart, though a good seaman, had not been bred upon that element. He was a reasonably good scholar, and seemed fond of showing it by recurring to the subject of Sallust and Juvenal; while, on the other hand, sea-phrases seldom chequered his conversation. He had been in person what is called a smart little man; but the tropical sun had burnt his originally fair complexion to a dusty red; and the bile which was diffused through his system, had stained it with a yellowish black—what ought to have been the white part of his eyes, in particular, had a hue as deep as the topaz. He was very thin, or rather emaciated, and his countenance, though still indicating alertness and activity, showed a constitution exhausted with excessive use of his favourite stimulus.

'I see you look at me hard,' said he to Fairford. 'Had you been an officer of the d—d customs, my terriers' backs would have been up. He opened his breast, and showed Alan a pair of pistols disposed between his waistcoat and jacket, placing his finger at the same time upon the cock of one of them. 'But come, you are an honest fellow, though you're a close one. I dare say you think me a queer customer; but I can tell you, they that see the ship leave harbour know little of the seas she is to sail through. My father, honest old gentleman, never would have thought to see me master of the JUMPING JENNY.'

Fairford said, it seemed very clear indeed that Mr. Ewart's education was far superior to the line he at present occupied.

'Oh, Criffel to Solway Moss!' said the other. Why, man, I should have been an expounder of the word, with a wig like a snow-wreath, and a stipend like—like—like a hundred pounds a year, I suppose. I can spend thrice as much as that, though, being such as I am. Here he sang a scrap of an old Northumbrian ditty, mimicking the burr of the natives of that county:—

'Willy Foster's gone to sea,

Siller buckles at his knee,

He'll come back and marry me—

Canny Willy Foster.'

'I have no doubt,' said Fairford, 'your present occupation is more lucrative; 'but I should have thought the Church might have been more'—

He stopped, recollecting that it was not his business to say anything disagreeable.

'More respectable, you mean, I suppose?' said Ewart, with a sneer, and squirting the tobacco-juice through his front teeth; then was silent for a moment, and proceeded in a tone of candour which some internal touch of conscience dictated. 'And so it would, Mr. Fairford—and happier, too, by a thousand degrees—though I have had my pleasures too. But there was my father (God bless the old man!) a true chip of the old Presbyterian block, walked his parish like a captain on the quarterdeck, and was always ready to do good to rich and poor—Off went the laird's hat to the minister, as fast as the poor man's bonnet. When the eye saw him—Pshaw! what have I to do with that now?—Yes, he was, as Virgil hath it, "VIR SAPIENTIA ET PIETATE GRAVIS." But he might have been the wiser

man, had he kept me at home, when he sent me at nineteen to study Divinity at the head of the highest stair in the Covenant Close. It was a cursed mistake in the old gentleman. What though Mrs. Cantrips of Kittlebasket (for she wrote herself no less) was our cousin five times removed, and took me on that account to board and lodging at six shillings instead of seven shillings a week? it was a d—d bad saving, as the case proved. Yet her very dignity might have kept me in order; for she never read a chapter excepting out of a Cambridge Bible, printed by Daniel, and bound in embroidered velvet. I think I see it at this moment! And on Sundays, when we had a quart of twopenny ale, instead of butter-milk, to our porridge, it was always served up in a silver posset-dish. Also she used silver-mounted spectacles, whereas even my father's were cased in mere horn. These things had their impression at first, but we get used to grandeur by degrees. Well, sir!—Gad, I can scarce get on with my story—it sticks in my throat—must take a trifle to wash it down. Well, this dame had a daughter—Jess Cantrips, a black-eyed, bouncing wench—and, as the devil would have it, there was the d—d five-story stair—her foot was never from it, whether I went out or came home from the Divinity Hall. I would have eschewed her, sir—I would, on my soul; for I was as innocent a lad as ever came from Lammermuir; but there was no possibility of escape, retreat, or flight, unless I could have got a pair of wings, or made use of a ladder seven stories high, to scale the window of my attic. It signifies little talking—you may suppose how all this was to end—I would have married the girl, and taken my chance—I would, by Heaven! for she was a pretty girl, and a good girl, till she and I met; but you know the old song, "Kirk would not let us be." A gentleman, in my case, would have settled the matter with the kirk-treasurer for a small sum of money; but the poor stibbler, the penniless dominie, having married his cousin of Kittlebasket, must next have proclaimed her frailty to the whole parish, by mounting the throne of Presbyterian penance, and proving, as Othello says, "his love a whore," in face of the whole congregation.

'In this extremity I dared not stay where I was, and so thought to go home to my father. But first I got Jack Radaway, a lad from the same parish, and who lived in the same infernal stair, to make some inquiries how the old gentleman had taken the matter. I soon, by way of answer, learned, to the great increase of my comfortable reflections, that the good old man made as much clamour as if such a thing as a man's eating his wedding dinner without saying grace had never happened since Adam's time. He did nothing for six days but cry out, "Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory is departed from my house!" and on the seventh he preached a sermon, in which he enlarged on this incident as illustrative of one of the great occasions for humiliation, and causes of national defection. I hope the course he took comforted himself—I am sure it made me ashamed to show my nose at home. So I went down to Leith, and, exchanging my hoddin grey coat of my mother's spinning for such a jacket as this, I entered my name at the rendezvous as an able-bodied landsman, and sailed with the tender round to Plymouth, where they were fitting out a squadron for the West Indies. There I was put aboard the FEARNOUGHT, Captain Daredevil—among whose crew I soon learned to fear Satan (the terror of my early youth) as little as the toughest Jack on board. I had some qualms at first, but I took the remedy' (tapping the case-bottle) 'which I recommend to you, being as good for sickness of the soul as for sickness of the stomach—What, you won't?—very well, I must, then—here is to ye.'

'You would, I am afraid, find your education of little use in your new condition?' said Fairford.

'Pardon me, sir,' resumed the captain of the JUMPING JENNY; 'my handful of Latin, and small pinch of Greek, were as useless as old junk, to be sure; but my reading, writing and accompting, stood me in good stead, and brought me forward; I might have been schoolmaster—aye, and master, in time; but that valiant liquor, rum, made a conquest of me rather too often, and so, make what sail I could, I always went to leeward. We were four years broiling in that blasted climate, and I came back at last with a little prize-money. I always had thoughts of putting things to rights in the Covenant Close, and reconciling myself to my father. I found out Jack Hadaway, who was TUPTOWING away with a dozen of wretched boys, and a fine string of stories he had ready to regale my ears withal. My father had lectured on what he called "my falling away," for seven Sabbaths, when, just as his parishioners began to hope that the course was at an end, he was found dead in his bed on the eighth Sunday morning. Jack Hadaway assured me, that if I wished to atone for my errors, by undergoing the fate of the first martyr, I had only to go to my native village, where the very stones of the street would rise up against me as my father's murderer. Here was a pretty item—well, my tongue clove to my mouth for an hour, and was only able at last to utter the name of Mrs. Cantrips. Oh, this was a new theme for my Job's comforter. My sudden departure—my father's no less sudden death—had prevented the payment of the arrears of my board and lodging—the landlord was a haberdasher, with a heart as rotten as the muslin wares he dealt in. Without respect to her age or gentle kin, my Lady Kittlebasket was ejected from her airy habitation—her porridge-pot, silver posset-dish, silver-mounted spectacles, and Daniel's Cambridge Bible, sold, at the Cross of Edinburgh, to the caddie who would bid highest for them, and she herself driven to the workhouse, where she got in with difficulty, but was easily enough lifted out, at the end of the month, as dead as her friends could desire. Merry tidings this to me, who had been the d—d' (he paused a moment) 'ORIGO MALI—Gad, I think my confession would sound better in Latin than in English! 'But the best jest was behind—I had just power to stammer out something about Jess—by my faith he HAD an answer! I had taught Jess one trade, and, like a prudent girl, she had found out another for herself; unluckily, they were both contraband, and Jess Cantrips, daughter of the Lady Kittlebasket, had the honour to be transported to the plantations, for street-walking and pocket-picking, about six months before I touched shore.'

He changed the bitter tone of affected pleasantry into an attempt to laugh, then drew his swarthy hand across his swarthy eyes, and said in a more natural accent, 'Poor Jess!'

There was a pause—until Fairford, pitying the poor man's state of mind, and believing he saw something in him that, but for early error and subsequent profligacy, might have been excellent and noble, helped on the conversation by asking, in a tone of commiseration, how he had been able to endure such a load of calamity. 'Why, very well,' answered the seaman; 'exceedingly well—like a tight ship in a brisk gale. Let me recollect. I remember thanking Jack, very composedly, for the interesting and agreeable communication; I then pulled out my canvas pouch, with my hoard of moldores, and taking out two pieces, I bid Jack keep the rest till I came back, as I was for a cruise about Auld Reekie. The poor devil looked anxiously, but I shook him by the hand, and ran downstairs, in such confusion of mind, that notwithstanding what I had heard, I expected to meet Jess at every turning.

It was market-day, and the usual number of rogues and fools were assembled at the Cross. I observed everybody looked strange on me, and I thought some laughed. I fancy I had been making queer faces enough, and perhaps talking to myself. When I saw myself used in this manner, I held out my clenched fists straight before me, stooped my head, and, like a ram when he makes his race, darted off right down the street, scattering groups of weatherbeaten lairds and periwigged burghesses, and bearing down all before me. I heard the cry of "Seize the madman!" echoed, in Celtic sounds, from the City Guard, with "Ceaze ta matman!"—but pursuit and opposition were in vain. I pursued my career; the smell of the sea, I suppose, led me to Leith, where, soon after, I found myself walking very quietly on the shore, admiring the tough round and sound cordage of the vessels, and thinking how a loop, with a man at the end of one of them, would look, by way of tassel.

'I was opposite to the rendezvous, formerly my place of refuge—in I bolted—found one or two old acquaintances, made half a dozen new ones—drank for two days—was put aboard the tender—off to Portsmouth—then landed at the Haslar hospital in a fine hissing-hot fever. Never mind—I got better—nothing can kill me—the West Indies were my lot again, for since I did not go where I deserved in the next world, I had something as like such quarters as can be had in this—black devils for inhabitants—flames and earthquakes, and so forth, for your element. Well, brother, something or other I did or said—I can't tell what—How the devil should I, when I was as drunk as David's sow, you know? But I was punished, my lad—made to kiss the wench that never speaks but when she scolds, and that's the gunner's daughter, comrade. Yes, the minister's son of no matter where—has the cat's scratch on his back! This roused me, and when we were ashore with the boat, I gave three inches of the dirk, after a stout tussle, to the fellow I blamed most, and took the bush for it. There were plenty of wild lads then along shore—and, I don't care who knows—I went on the account, look you—sailed under the black flag and marrow-bones—was a good friend to the sea, and an enemy to all that sailed on it.'

Fairford, though uneasy in his mind at finding himself, a lawyer, so close to a character so lawless, thought it best, nevertheless, to put a good face on the matter, and asked Mr. Ewart, with as much unconcern as he could assume, 'whether he was fortunate as a rover?'

'No, no—d—n it, no,' replied Nanty; 'the devil a crumb of butter was ever churned that would stick upon my bread. There was no order among us—he that was captain to-day, was swabber to-morrow; and as for plunder—they say old Avery, and one or two close hunks, made money; but in my time, all went as it came; and reason good, for if a fellow had saved five dollars, his throat would have been cut in his hammock. And then it was a cruel, bloody work.—Pah,—we'll say no more about it. I broke with them at last, for what they did on board of a bit of a snow—no matter what it was bad enough, since it frightened me—I took French

leave, and came in upon the proclamation, so I am free of all that business. And here I sit, the skipper of the JUMPING JENNY—a nutshell of a thing, but goes through the water like a dolphin. If it were not for yon hypocritical scoundrel at Annan, who has the best end of the profit, and takes none of the risk, I should be well enough—as well as I want to be. Here is no lack of my best friend,—touching his case-bottle;—'but, to tell you a secret, he and I have got so used to each other, I begin to think he is like a professed joker, that makes your sides sore with laughing if you see him but now and then; but if you take up house with him, he can only make your head stupid. But I warrant the old fellow is doing the best he can for me, after all.'

'And what may that be?' said Fairford.

'He is KILLING me,' replied Nanty Ewart; 'and I am only sorry he is so long about it.'

So saying he jumped on his feet, and, tripping up and down the deck, gave his orders with his usual clearness and decision, notwithstanding the considerable quantity of spirits which he had contrived to swallow while recounting his history.

Although far from feeling well, Fairford endeavoured to rouse himself and walk to the head of the brig, to enjoy the beautiful prospect, as well as to take some note of the course which the vessel held. To his great surprise, instead of standing across to the opposite shore from which she had departed, the brig was going down the Firth, and apparently steering into the Irish Sea. He called to Nanty Ewart, and expressed his surprise at the course they were pursuing, and asked why they did not stand straight across the Firth for some port in Cumberland.

'Why, this is what I call a reasonable question, now,' answered Nanty; 'as if a ship could go as straight to its port as a horse to the stable, or a free-trader could sail the Solway as securely as a King's cutter! Why, I'll tell ye, brother—if I do not see a smoke on Bowness, that is the village upon the headland yonder, I must stand out to sea for twenty-four hours at least, for we must keep the weather-gage if there are hawks abroad.'

'And if you do see the signal of safety, Master Ewart, what is to be done then?'

'Why then, and in that case, I must keep off till night, and then run you, with the kegs and the rest of the lumber, ashore at Skinburness,'

'And then I am to meet with this same laird whom I have the letter for?' continued Fairford.

'That,' said Ewart, 'is thereafter as it may be; the ship has its course—the fair trader has his port—but it is not easy to say where the laird may be found. But he will be within twenty miles of us, off or on—and it will be my business to guide you to him.'

Fairford could not withstand the passing impulse of terror which crossed him, when thus reminded that he was so absolutely in the power of a man, who, by his own account, had been a pirate, and who was at present, in all probability, an outlaw as well as a contraband trader. Nanty Ewart guessed the cause of his involuntary shuddering.

'What the devil should I gain,' he said, 'by passing so poor a card as you are? Have I not had ace of trumps in my hand, and did I not play it fairly? Aye, I say the JUMPING JENNY can run in other ware as well as kegs. Put SIGMA and TAU to Ewart, and see how that will spell—D'ye take me now?'

'No indeed,' said Fairford; 'I am utterly ignorant of what you allude to.'

'Now, by Jove!' said Nanty Ewart, 'thou art either the deepest or the shallowest fellow I ever met with—or you are not right after all. I wonder where Summertrees could pick up such a tender along-shore. Will you let me see his letter?'

Fairford did not hesitate to gratify his wish, which, he was aware, he could not easily resist. The master of the JUMPING JENNY looked at the direction very attentively, then turned the letter to and fro, and examined each flourish of the pen, as if he were judging of a piece of ornamented manuscript; then handled it back to Fairford, without a single word of remark.

'Am I right now?' said the young lawyer.

'Why, for that matter,' answered Nanty, 'the letter is right, sure enough; but whether you are right or not, is your own business rather than mine.' And, striking upon a flint with the back of a knife, he kindled a cigar as thick as his finger, and began to smoke away with great perseverance.

Alan Fairford continued to regard him with a melancholy feeling, divided betwixt the interest he took in the unhappy man, and a not unnatural apprehension for the issue of his own adventure.

Ewart, notwithstanding the stupefying nature of his pastime, seemed to guess what was working in his passenger's mind; for, after they had remained some time engaged in silently observing each other, he suddenly dashed his cigar on the deck, and said to him, 'Well then, if you are sorry for me, I am sorry for you. D—n me, if I have cared a button for man or mother's son, since two years since when I had another peep of Jack Hadaway. 'The fellow was got as fat as a Norway whale—married to a great Dutch-built quean that had brought him six children. I believe he did not know me, and thought I was come to rob his house; however, I made up a poor face, and told him who I was. Poor Jack would have given me shelter and clothes, and began to tell me of the moidores that were in bank, when I wanted them. Egad, he changed his note when I told him what my life had been, and only wanted to pay me my cash and get rid of me. I never saw so terrified a visage. I burst out a-laughing in his face, told him it was all a humbug, and that the moidores were all his own, henceforth and for ever, and so ran off. I caused one of our people send him a bag of tea and a keg of brandy, before I left—poor Jack! I think you are the second person these ten years, that has cared a tobacco-stopper for Nanty Ewart.'

'Perhaps, Mr. Ewart,' said Fairford, 'you live chiefly with men too deeply interested for their own immediate safety, to think much upon the distress of others?'

'And with whom do you yourself consort, I pray?' replied Nanty, smartly. 'Why, with plotters, that can make no plot to better purpose than their own hanging; and incendiaries, that are snapping the flint upon wet tinder. You'll as soon raise the dead as raise the Highlands—you'll as soon get a grunt from a dead sow as any comfort from Wales or Cheshire. You think because the pot is boiling, that no scum but yours can come uppermost—I know better, by—. All these rackets and riots that you think are trending your way have no relation at all to your interest; and the best way to make the whole kingdom friends again at once, would be the alarm of such an undertaking as these mad old fellows are trying to launch into.'

'I really am not in such secrets as you seem to allude to,' said Fairford; and, determined at the same time to avail himself as far as possible of Nanty's communicative disposition, he added, with a smile, 'And if I were, I should not hold it prudent to make them much the subject of conversation. But I am sure, so sensible a man as Summertrees and the laird may correspond together without offence to the state.'

'I take you, friend—I take you,' said Nanty Ewart, upon whom, at length, the liquor and tobacco-smoke began to make considerable innovation. 'As to what gentlemen may or may not correspond about, why we may premit the question, as the old professor used to say at the Hall; and as to Summertrees, I will say nothing, knowing him to be an old fox. But I say that this fellow the laird is a firebrand in the country; that he is stirring up all the honest fellows who should be drinking their brandy quietly, by telling them stories about their ancestors and the Forty-five; and that he is trying to turn all waters into his own mill-dam, and to set his sails to all winds. And because the London people are roaring about for some pinches of their own, he thinks to win them to his turn with a wet finger. And he gets encouragement from some, because they want a spell of money from him; and from others, because they fought for the cause once and are ashamed to go back; and others, because they have nothing to lose; and others, because they are discontented fools. But if he has brought you, or any one, I say not whom, into this scrape, with the hope of doing any good, he's a d—d decoy-duck, and that's all I can say for him; and you are geese, which is worse than being decoy-ducks, or lame-ducks either. And so here is to the prosperity of King George the Third, and the true Presbyterian religion, and confusion to the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender! I'll tell you what, Mr. Fairbairn, I am but tenth owner of this bit of a craft, the JUMPING JENNY—but tenth owner and must sail her by my owners' directions. But if I were whole owner, I would not have the brig be made a ferry-boat for your Jacobitical, old-fashioned Popish riff-raff, Mr. Fairport—I would not, by my soul; they should walk the plank, by the gods, as I have seen better men do when I sailed under the What-d'ye-callum colours. But being contraband goods, and on board my vessel, and I with my sailing orders in my hand, why, I am to forward them as directed—I say, John Roberts, keep her up a bit with the helm.—and so, Mr. Fairweather, what I do is—as the d—d villain Turnpenny says—all in the way of business.'

He had been speaking with difficulty for the last five minutes, and now at length dropped on the deck, fairly silenced by the quantity of spirits which he had swallowed, but without having showed any glimpse of the gaiety, or even of the extravagance, of intoxication.

The old sailor stepped forward and flung a sea-cloak over the slumberer's shoulders, and added, looking at Fairford, 'Pity of him he should have this fault; for without it, he would have been as clever a fellow as ever trod a plank with ox leather.'

'And what are we to do now?' said Fairford.

'Stand off and on, to be sure, till we see the signal, and then obey orders.'

So saying, the old man turned to his duty, and left the passenger to amuse himself with his own meditations. Presently afterward a light column of smoke was seen rising from the little headland.

'I can tell you what we are to do now, master,' said the sailor. 'We'll stand out to sea, and then run in again with the evening tide, and make Skinburness; or, if there's not light, we can run into the Wampool river, and put you ashore about Kirkbride or Leaths, with the long-boat.'

Fairford, unwell before, felt this destination condemned him to an agony of many hours, which his disordered stomach and aching head were ill able to endure. There was no remedy, however, but patience, and the recollection that he was suffering in the cause of friendship. As the sun rose high, he became worse; his sense of smell appeared to acquire a morbid degree of acuteness, for the mere purpose of inhaling and distinguishing all the various odours with which he was surrounded, from that of pitch to all the complicated smells of the hold. His heart, too, throbbed under the heat, and he felt as if in full progress towards a high fever.

The seamen, who were civil and attentive considering their calling, observed his distress, and one contrived to make an awning out of an old sail, while another compounded some lemonade, the only liquor which their passenger could be prevailed upon to touch. After drinking it off, he obtained, but could not be said to enjoy, a few hours of troubled slumber.

CHAPTER XV

NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

Alan Fairford's spirit was more ready to encounter labour than his frame was adequate to support it. In spite of his exertions, when he awoke, after five or six hours' slumber, he found that he was so much disabled by dizziness in his head and pains in his limbs, that he could not raise himself without assistance. He heard with some pleasure that they were now running right for the Wampool river, and that he would be put on shore in a very short time. The vessel accordingly lay to, and presently showed a weft in her ensign, which was hastily answered by signals from on shore. Men and horses were seen to come down the broken path which leads to the shore; the latter all properly tackled for carrying their loading. Twenty fishing barks were pushed afloat at once, and crowded round the brig with much clamour, laughter, cursing, and jesting. Amidst all this apparent confusion there was the essential regularity. Nanty Ewart again walked his quarter-deck as if he had never tasted spirits in his life, issued the necessary orders with precision, and saw them executed with punctuality. In half an hour the loading of the brig was in a great measure disposed in the boats; in a quarter of an hour more, it was landed on the beach, and another interval of about the same duration was sufficient to distribute it on the various strings of packhorses which waited for that purpose, and which instantly dispersed, each on its own proper adventure. More mystery was observed in loading the ship's boat with a quantity of small barrels, which seemed to contain ammunition. This was not done until the commercial customers had been dismissed; and it was not until this was performed that Ewart proposed to Alan, as he lay stunned with pain and noise, to accompany him ashore.

It was with difficulty that Fairford could get over the side of the vessel, and he could not seat himself on the stern of the boat without assistance from the captain and his people. Nanty Ewart, who saw nothing in this worse than an ordinary fit of sea-sickness, applied the usual topics of consolation. He assured his passenger that he would be quite well by and by, when he had been half an hour on terra firma, and that he hoped to drink a can and smoke a pipe with him at Father Crackenthorp's, for all that he felt a little out of the way for riding the wooden horse.

'Who is Father Crackenthorp?' said Fairford, though scarcely able to articulate the question.

'As honest a fellow as is of a thousand,' answered Nanty.

'Ah, how much good brandy he and I have made little of in our day! By my soul, Mr. Fairbird, he is the prince of skinkers, and the father of the free trade—not a stingy hypocritical devil like old Turnpenny Skinflint, that drinks drunk on other folk's cost, and thinks it sin when he has to pay for it—but a real hearty old cock;—the sharks have been at and about him this many a day, but Father Crackenthorp knows how to trim his sails—never a warrant but he hears of it before the ink's dry. He is BONUS SOCIUS with headborough and constable. The king's exchequer could not bribe a man to inform against him. If any such rascal were to cast up, why, he would miss his ears next morning, or be sent to seek them in the Solway. He is a statesman, [A small landed proprietor.] though he keeps a public; but, indeed, that is only for convenience and to excuse his having cellarage and folk about him; his wife's a canny woman—and his daughter Doll too. Gad, you'll be in port there till you get round again; and I'll keep my word with you, and bring you to speech of the laird.

Gad, the only trouble I shall have is to get you out of the house; for Doll is a rare wench, and my dame a funny old one, and Father Crackenthorp the rarest companion! He'll drink you a bottle of rum or brandy without starting, but never wet his lips with the nasty Scottish stuff that the canting old scoundrel Turnpenny has brought into fashion. He is a gentleman, every inch of him, old Crackenthorp; in his own way, that is; and besides, he has a share in the JUMPING JENNY, and many a moonlight outfit besides. He can give Doll a pretty penny, if he likes the tight fellow that would turn in with her for life.'

In the midst of this prolonged panegyric on Father Crackenthorp, the boat touched the beach, the rowers backed their oars to keep her afloat, whilst the other fellows lumped into the surf, and, with the most rapid dexterity, began to hand the barrels ashore.

'Up with them higher on the beach, my hearties,' exclaimed Nanty Ewart—'High and dry—high and dry—this gear will not stand wetting. Now, out with our spare hand here—high and dry with him too. What's that?—the galloping of horse! Oh, I hear the jingle of the packsaddles—they are our own folk.'

By this time all the boat's load was ashore, consisting of the little barrels; and the boat's crew, standing to their arms, ranged themselves in front, waiting the advance of the horses which came clattering along the beach. A man, overgrown with corpulence, who might be distinguished in the moonlight panting with his own exertions, appeared at the head of the cavalcade, which consisted of horses linked together, and accommodated with packsaddles, and chains for securing the kegs which made a dreadful clattering.

'How now, Father Crackenthorp?' said Ewart—'Why this hurry with your horses? We mean to stay a night with you, and taste your old brandy, and my dame's homebrewed. The signal is up, man, and all is right.'

'All is wrong, Captain Nanty,' cried the man to whom he spoke; 'and you are the lad that is like to find it so, unless you bundle off—there are new brooms bought at Carlisle yesterday to sweep the country of you and the like of you—so you were better be jogging inland.

'How many rogues are the officers? If not more than ten, I will make fight.'

'The devil you will!' answered Crackenthorp. 'You were better not, for they have the bloody-backed dragoons from Carlisle with them.'

'Nay, then,' said Nanty, 'we must make sail. Come, Master Fairlord, you must mount and ride. He does not hear me—he has fainted, I believe—What the devil shall I do? Father Crackenthorp, I must leave this young fellow with you till the gale blows out—hark ye—goes between the laird and the t'other old one; he can neither ride nor walk—I must send him up to you.'

'Send him up to the gallows!' said Crackenthorp; 'there is Quartermaster Thwacker, with twenty men, up yonder; an he had not some kindness for Doll, I had never got hither for a start—but you must get off, or they will be here to seek us, for his orders are woundy particular; and these kegs contain worse than whisky—a hanging matter, I take it.'

'I wish they were at the bottom of Wampool river, with them they belong to,' said Nanty Ewart. 'But they are part of cargo; and what to do with the poor young fellow—'

'Why, many a better fellow has roughed it on the grass with a cloak o'er him,' said Crackenthorp. 'If he hath a fever, nothing is so cooling as the night air.'

'Yes, he would be cold enough in the morning, no doubt; but it's a kind heart and shall not cool so soon if I can help it,' answered the captain of the JUMPING JENNY.

'Well, captain, an ye will risk your own neck for another man's, why not take him to the old girls at Fairladies?'

'What, the Miss Arthurets! The Papist jades! But never mind; it will do—I have known them take in a whole sloop's crew that were stranded on the sands.'

'You may run some risk, though, by turning up to Fairladies; for I tell you they are all up through the country.'

'Never mind—I may chance to put some of them down again,' said Nanty, cheerfully. 'Come, lads, bustle to your tackle. Are you all loaded?'

'Aye, aye, captain; we will be ready in a jiffy,' answered the gang.

'D—n your captains! Have you a mind to have me hanged if I am taken? All's hail-fellow, here.'

'A sup at parting,' said Father Crackenthorp, extending a flask to Nanty Ewart.

'Not the twentieth part of a drop,' said Nanty. 'No Dutch courage for me—my heart is always high enough when there's a chance of fighting; besides, if I live drunk, I should like to die sober. Here, old Jephson—you are the best-natured brute amongst them—get the lad between us on a quiet horse, and we will keep him upright, I warrant.'

As they raised Fairford from the ground, he groaned heavily, and asked faintly where they were taking him to.

'To a place where you will be as snug and quiet as a mouse in his hole,' said Nanty, 'if so be that we can get you there safely. Good-bye, Father Crackenthorp—poison the quartermaster, if you can.'

The loaded horses then sprang forward at a hard trot, following each other in a line, and every second horse being mounted by a stout fellow in a smock frock, which served to conceal the arms with which most of these desperate men were provided. Ewart followed in the rear of the line, and, with the occasional assistance of old Jephson, kept his young charge erect in the saddle. He groaned heavily from time to time; and Ewart, more moved with compassion for his situation than might have been expected from his own habits, endeavoured to amuse him and comfort him, by some account of the place to which they were conveying him—his words of consolation being, however, frequently interrupted by the necessity of calling to his people, and many of them being lost amongst the rattling of the barrels, and clinking of the tackle and small chains by which they are secured on such occasions.

'And you see, brother, you will be in safe quarters at Fairladies—good old scrambling house—good old maids enough, if they were not Papists,—Hollo, you Jack Lowther; keep the line, can't ye, and shut your rattle-trap, you broth of a—? And so, being of a good family, and having enough, the old lasses have turned a kind of saints, and nuns, and so forth. The place they live in was some sort of nun-shop long ago, as they have them still in Flanders; so folk call them the Vestals of Fairladies—that may be, or may not be; and I care not whether it be or no.—Blinkinsop, hold your tongue, and be d—d!—And so, betwixt great alms and good dinners, they are well thought of by rich and poor, and their trucking with Papists is looked over. There are plenty of priests, and stout young scholars, and such-like, about the house it's a hive of them. More shame that government send dragoons out after a few honest fellows that bring the old women of England a drop of brandy, and let these ragamuffins smuggle in as much papistry and—Hark!—was that a whistle? No, it's only a plover. You, Jem Collier, keep a look-out ahead—we'll meet them at the High Whins, or Brothole bottom, or nowhere. Go a furlong ahead, I say, and look sharp.—These Misses Arthurets feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and such-like acts—which my poor father used to say were filthy rags, but he dressed himself out with as many of them as most folk.—D—n that stumbling horse! Father Crackenthorp should be d—d himself for putting an honest fellow's neck in such jeopardy.'

Thus, and with much more to the same purpose, Nanty ran on, increasing, by his well-intended annoyance, the agony of Alan Fairford, who, tormented by a racking pain along the back and loins, which made the rough trot of the horse torture to him, had his aching head still further rended and split by the hoarse voice of the sailor, close to his ear. Perfectly passive, however, he did not even essay to give any answer; and indeed his own bodily distress was now so great and engrossing, that to think of his situation was impossible, even if he could have mended it by doing so.

Their course was inland; but in what direction, Alan had no means of ascertaining. They passed at first over heaths and sandy downs; they crossed more than one brook, or beck, as they are called in that country—some of them of considerable depth—and at length reached a cultivated country, divided, according to the English fashion of agriculture, into very small fields or closes, by high banks, overgrown with underwood, and surmounted by hedge-row trees, amongst which winded a number of impracticable and complicated lanes, where the boughs projecting from the embankments on each side, intercepted the light of the moon, and endangered the safety of the horsemen. But through this labyrinth the experience of the guides conducted them without a blunder, and without even the slackening of their pace. In many places, however, it was impossible for three men to ride abreast; and therefore the burden of supporting Alan Fairford fell alternately to old Jephson and to Nanty; and it was with much difficulty that they could keep him upright in his saddle.

At length, when his powers of sufferance were quite worn out, and he was about to implore them to leave him to his fate in the first cottage or shed—or under a haystack or a hedge—or anywhere, so he was left at ease, Collier, who rode ahead, passed back the word that they were at the avenue to Fairladies—'Was he to turn up?'

Committing the charge of Fairford to Jephson, Nanty dashed up to the head of the troop, and gave his orders.—'Who knows the house best?'

'Sam Skelton's a Catholic,' said Lowther.

'A d—d bad religion,' said Nanty, of whose Presbyterian education a hatred of Popery seemed to be the only remnant. 'But I am glad there is one amongst us, anyhow. You, Sam, being a Papist, know Fairladies and the old maidens I dare say; so do you fall out of the line, and wait here with me; and do you, Collier, carry on to Walinford bottom, then turn down the beck till you come to the old mill, and Goodman Grist the Miller, or old Peel-the-Causeway, will tell you where to stow; but I will be up with you before that.'

The string of loaded horses then struck forward at their former pace, while Nanty, with Sam Skelton, waited by the roadside till the rear came up, when Jephson and Fairford joined them, and, to the great relief of the latter, they began to proceed at an easier pace than formerly, suffering the gang to precede them, till the clatter and clang attending their progress began to die away in the distance. They had not proceeded a pistol-shot from the place where they parted, when a short turning brought them in front of an old mouldering gateway, whose heavy pinnacles were decorated in the style of the seventeenth century, with clumsy architectural ornaments; several of which had fallen down from decay, and lay scattered about, no further care having been taken than just to remove them out of the direct approach to the avenue. The great stone pillars, glimmering white in the moonlight, had some fanciful resemblance to supernatural apparitions, and the air of neglect all around, gave an uncomfortable idea of the habitation to those who passed its avenue.

'There used to be no gate here,' said Skelton, finding their way unexpectedly stopped.

'But there is a gate now, and a porter too,' said a rough voice from within. 'Who be you, and what do you want at this time of night?'

'We want to come to speech of the ladies—of the Misses Arthuret,' said Nanty; 'and to ask lodging for a sick man.'

'There is no speech to be had of the Miss Arthurets at this time of night, and you may carry your sick man to the doctor,' answered the fellow from within, gruffly; 'for as sure as there is savour in salt, and scent in rosemary, you will get no entrance—put your pipes up and be jogging on.'

'Why, Dick Gardener,' said Skelton, 'be thou then turned porter?'

'What, do you know who I am?' said the domestic sharply.

'I know you, by your by-word,' answered the other; 'What, have you forgot little Sam Skelton, and the brock in the barrel?'

'No, I have not forgotten you,' answered the acquaintance of Sam Skelton; 'but my orders are peremptory to let no one up the avenue this night, and therefore—'

'But we are armed, and will not be kept back,' said Nanty. 'Hark ye, fellow, were it not better for you to take a guinea and let us in, than to have us break the door first, and thy pate afterwards? for I won't see my comrade die at your door be assured of that.'

'Why, I dunna know,' said the fellow; 'but what cattle were those that rode by in such hurry?'

'Why, some of our folk from Bowness, Stoniecultrum, and thereby,' answered Skelton; 'Jack Lowther, and old Jephson, and broad Will Lamplugh, and such like.'

'Well,' said Dick Gardener, 'as sure as there is savour in salt, and scent in rosemary, I thought it had been the troopers from Carlisle and Wigton, and the sound brought my heart to my mouth.'

'Had thought thou wouldst have known the clatter of a cask from the clash of a broadsword, as well as e'er a quaffer in Cumberland,' said Skelton.

'Come, brother, less of your jaw and more of your legs, if you please,' said Nanty; 'every moment we stay is a moment lost. Go to the ladies, and tell them that Nanty Ewart, of the JUMPING JENNY, has brought a young gentleman, charged with letters from Scotland to a certain gentleman of consequence in Cumberland—that the soldiers are out, and the gentleman is very ill and if he is not received at Fairladies he must be left either to die at the gate, or to be taken, with all his papers about him, by the redcoats.'

Away ran Dick Gardener with this message; and, in a few minutes, lights were seen to flit about, which convinced Fairford, who was now, in consequence of the halt, a little restored to self-possession, that they were traversing the front of a tolerably large mansion-house.

'What if thy friend, Dick Gardener, comes not back again?' said Jephson to Skelton.

'Why, then,' said the person addressed, 'I shall owe him just such a licking as thou, old Jephson, had from Dan Cooke, and will pay as duly and truly as he did.'

The old man was about to make an angry reply, when his doubts were silenced by the return of Dick Gardener, who announced that Miss Arthuret was coming herself as far as the gateway to speak with them.

Nanty Ewart cursed in a low tone the suspicions of old maids and the churlish scruples of Catholics, that made so many obstacles to helping a fellow creature, and wished Miss Arthuret a hearty rheumatism or toothache as the reward of her excursion; but the lady presently appeared, to cut short further grumbling. She was attended by a waiting-maid with a lantern, by means of which she examined the party on the outside, as closely as the imperfect light, and the spars of the newly-erected gate, would permit.

'I am sorry we have disturbed you so late, Madam Arthuret,' said Nanty; 'but the case is this'—

'Holy Virgin,' said she, 'why do you speak so loud? Pray, are you not the captain of the SAINTE GENEVIEVE?'

'Why, aye, ma'am,' answered Ewart, 'they call the brig so at Dunkirk, sure enough; but along shore here, they call her the JUMPING JENNY.'

'You brought over the holy Father Buonaventure, did you not?'

'Aye, aye, madam, I have brought over enough of them black cattle,' answered Nanty. 'Fie! fie! friend,' said Miss Arthuret; 'it is a pity that the saints should commit these good men to a heretic's care.'

'Why, no more they would, ma'am,' answered Nanty, 'could they find a Papist lubber that knew the coast as I do; then I am trusty as steel to owners, and always look after cargo—live lumber, or dead flesh, or spirits, all is one to me; and your Catholics have such d—d large hoods, with pardon, ma'am, that they can sometimes hide two faces under them. But here is a gentleman dying, with letters about him from the Laird of Summertrees to the Laird of the Lochs, as they call him, along Solway, and every minute he lies here is a nail in his coffin.'

'Saint Mary! what shall we do?' said Miss Arthuret; 'we must admit him, I think, at all risks. You, Richard Gardener, help one of these men to carry the gentleman up to the Place; and you, Selby, see him lodged at the end of the long gallery. You are a heretic, captain, but I think you are trusty, and I know you have been trusted—but if you are imposing on me'—

'Not I, madam—never attempt to impose on ladies of your experience—my practice that way has been all among the young ones. Come, cheerly, Mr. Fairford—you will be taken good care of—try to walk.'

Alan did so; and, refreshed by his halt, declared himself able to walk to the house with the sole assistance of the gardener.

'Why, that's hearty. Thank thee, Dick, for lending him thine arm'—and Nanty slipped into his hand the guinea he had promised.—'Farewell, then, Mr. Fairford, and farewell, Madam Arthuret, for I have been too long here.'

So saying, he and his two companions threw themselves on horseback, and went off at a gallop. Yet, even above the clatter of their hoofs did the incorrigible Nanty hollo out the old ballad—

*A lovely lass to a friar came,
To confession a-morning early;—
'In what, my dear, are you to blame?
Come tell me most sincerely?'
'Alas! my fault I dare not name—
But my lad he loved me dearly.'*

'Holy Virgin!' exclaimed Miss Seraphina, as the unhallowed sounds reached her ears; 'what profane heathens be these men, and what frights and pinches we be put to among them! The saints be good to us, what a night has this been!—the like never seen at Fairladies. Help me to make fast the gate, Richard, and thou shalt come down again to wait on it, lest there come more unwelcome visitors—Not that you are unwelcome, young gentleman, for it is sufficient that you need such assistance as we can give you, to make you welcome to Fairladies—only, another time would have done as well—but, hem! I dare say it is all for the best. The avenue is none of the smoothest, sir, look to your feet. Richard Gardener should have had it mown and levelled, but he was obliged to go on a pilgrimage to Saint Winifred's Well, in Wales.' (Here Dick gave a short dry cough, which, as if he had found it betrayed some internal feeling a little at variance with what the lady said, he converted into a muttered SANCTA WINIFREDA, ORA PRO NOBIS. Miss Arthuret, meantime, proceeded) 'We never interfere with our servants' vows or penances, Master Fairford—I know a very worthy father of your name, perhaps a relation—I say, we never interfere with our servants' vows. Our Lady forbid they should not know some difference between our service and a heretic's.—Take care, sir, you will fall if you have not a care. Alas! by night and day there are many stumbling-blocks in our paths!'

With more talk to the same purpose, all of which tended to show a charitable and somewhat silly woman with a strong inclination to her superstitious devotion, Miss Arthuret entertained her new guest, as, stumbling at every obstacle which the devotion of his guide, Richard, had left in the path, he at last, by ascending some stone steps decorated on the side with griffins, or some such heraldic anomalies, attained a terrace extending in front of the Place of Fairladies; an old-fashioned gentleman's house of some consequence, with its range of notched gable-ends and narrow windows, relieved by here and there an old turret about the size of a pepper-box. The door was locked during the brief absence of the mistress; a dim light glimmered through the sashed door of the hall, which opened beneath a huge stone porch, loaded with jessamine and other creepers. All the windows were dark as pitch.

Miss Arthuret tapped at the door. 'Sister, sister Angelica.' 'Who is there?' was answered from within; 'is it you, sister Seraphina?'

'Yes, yes, undo the door; do you not know my voice?'

'No doubt, sister,' said Angelica, undoing bolt and bar; 'but you know our charge, and the enemy is watchful to surprise us—INCEDIT SICUT LEO VORANS, saith the breviary. Whom have you brought here? Oh, sister, what have you done?'

'It is a young man,' said Seraphina, hastening to interrupt her sister's remonstrance, 'a relation, I believe, of our worthy Father Fairford; left at the gate by the captain of that blessed vessel the SAINTE GENEVIEVE—almost dead—and charged with dispatches to'—

She lowered her voice as she mumbled over the last words.

'Nay, then, there is no help,' said Angelica; 'but it is unlucky.'

During this dialogue between the vestals of Fairladies, Dick Gardener deposited his burden in a chair, where the young lady, after a moment of hesitation, expressing a becoming reluctance to touch the hand of a stranger, put her finger and thumb upon Fairford's wrist, and counted his pulse.

'There is fever here, sister,' she said; 'Richard must call Ambrose, and we must send some of the febrifuge.'

Ambrose arrived presently, a plausible and respectable-looking old servant, bred in the family, and who had risen from rank to rank in the Arthuret service till he was become half-physician, half-almoner, half-butler, and entire governor; that is, when the Father Confessor, who frequently eased him of the toils of

government, chanced to be abroad. Under the direction, and with the assistance of this venerable personage, the unlucky Alan Fairford was conveyed to a decent apartment at the end of a long gallery, and, to his inexpressible relief, consigned to a comfortable bed. He did not attempt to resist the prescription of Mr. Ambrose, who not only presented him with the proposed draught, but proceeded so far as to take a considerable quantity of blood from him, by which last operation he probably did his patient much service.

CHAPTER XVI

NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD, CONTINUED

On the next morning, when Fairford awoke, after no very refreshing slumbers, in which were mingled many wild dreams of his father and of Darsie Latimer,—of the damsel in the green mantle and the vestals of Fairladies,—of drinking small beer with Nanty Ewart and being immersed in the Solway with the JUMPING JENNY,—he found himself in no condition to dispute the order of Mr. Ambrose, that he should keep his bed, from which, indeed, he could not have raised himself without assistance. He became sensible that his anxiety, and his constant efforts for some days past, had been too much for his health, and that, whatever might be his impatience, he could not proceed in his undertaking until his strength was re-established.

In the meanwhile, no better quarters could have been found for an invalid. The attendants spoke under their breath, and moved only on tiptoe—nothing was done unless PAR ORDONNANCE DU MEDECIN. Aesculapius reigned paramount in the premises at Fairladies. Once a day, the ladies came in great state to wait upon him and inquire after his health, and it was then that; Alan's natural civility, and the thankfulness which he expressed for their timely and charitable assistance, raised him considerably in their esteem. He was on the third day removed to a better apartment than that in which he had been at first accommodated. When he was permitted to drink a glass of wine, it was of the first quality; one of those curious old-fashioned cobwebbed bottles being produced on the occasion, which are only to be found in the crypts of old country-seats, where they may have lurked undisturbed for more than half a century.

But however delightful a residence for an invalid, Fairladies, as its present inmate became soon aware, was not so agreeable to a convalescent. When he dragged himself to the window so soon as he could crawl from bed, behold it was closely grated, and commanded no view except of a little paved court. This was nothing remarkable, most old Border houses having their windows so secured. But then Fairford observed, that whosoever entered or left the room always locked the door with great care and circumspection; and some proposals which he made to take a walk in the gallery, or even in the garden, were so coldly received, both by the ladies and their prime minister, Mr. Ambrose, that he saw plainly such an extension of his privileges as a guest would not be permitted.

Anxious to ascertain whether this excessive hospitality would permit him his proper privilege of free agency, he announced to this important functionary, with grateful thanks for the care with which he had been attended, his purpose to leave Fairladies next morning, requesting only, as a continuance of the favours with which he had been loaded, the loan of a horse to the next town; and, assuring Mr. Ambrose that his gratitude would not be limited by such, a trifle, he slipped three guineas into his hand, by way of seconding his proposal. The fingers of that worthy domestic closed as naturally upon the honorarium, as if a degree in the learned faculty had given him a right to clutch it; but his answer concerning Alan's proposed departure was at first evasive, and when he was pushed, it amounted to a peremptory assurance that he could not be permitted to depart to-morrow; it was as much as his life was worth, and his ladies would not authorize it.

'I know best what my own life is worth,' said Alan; 'and I do not value it in comparison to the business which requires my instant attention.'

Receiving still no satisfactory answer from Mr. Ambrose, Fairford thought it best to state his resolution to the ladies themselves, in the most measured, respectful, and grateful terms; but still such as expressed a firm determination to depart on the morrow, or next day at farthest. After some attempts to induce him to stay, on the alleged score of health, which were so expressed that he was convinced they were only used to delay his departure, Fairford plainly told them that he was entrusted with dispatches of consequence to the gentleman known by the name of Herries, Redgauntlet, and the Laird of the Lochs; and that it was matter of life and death to deliver them early.

'I dare say, Sister Angelica,' said the elder Miss Arthuret, that the gentleman is honest; and if he is really a relation of Father Fairford, we can run no risk.'

'Jesu Maria!' exclaimed the younger. 'Oh, fie, Sister Seraphina! Fie, fie!—"VADE RETRO—get thee behind me!"

'Well, well; but, sister—Sister Angelica—let me speak with you in the gallery.'

So out the ladies rustled in their silks and tissues, and it was a good half-hour ere they rustled in again, with importance and awe on their countenances.

'To tell you the truth, Mr. Fairford, the cause of our desire to delay you is—there is a religious gentleman in this house at present'—

'A most excellent person indeed'—said the sister Angelica.

'An anointed of his Master!' echoed Seraphina,—'and we should be glad that, for conscience' sake, you would hold some discourse with him before your departure.'

'Oho!' thought Fairford, 'the murder is out—here is a design of conversion! I must not affront the good ladies, but I shall soon send off the priest, I think.' He then answered aloud, 'that he should be happy to converse with any friend of theirs—that in religious matters he had the greatest respect for every modification of Christianity, though, he must say, his belief was made up to that in which he had been educated; nevertheless, if his seeing the religious person they recommended could in the least show his respect'—

'It is not quite that,' said Sister Seraphina, 'although I am sure the day is too short to hear him—Father Buonaventure, I mean—speak upon the concerns of our souls; but'—

'Come, come, Sister Seraphina,' said the younger, 'it is needless to talk so much about it. His—his Eminence—I mean Father Buonaventure—will himself explain what he wants this gentleman to know.'

'His Eminence!' said Fairford, surprised—'is this gentleman so high in the Catholic Church? The title is given only to Cardinals, I think.'

'He is not a Cardinal as yet,' answered Seraphina; 'but I assure you, Mr. Fairford, he is as high in rank as he is eminently endowed with good gifts, and'—

'Come away,' said Sister Angelica. 'Holy Virgin, how you do talk! What has Mr. Fairford to do with Father Buonaventure's rank? Only, sir, you will remember that the Father has been always accustomed to be treated with the most profound deference; indeed'—

'Come away, sister,' said Sister Seraphina, in her turn; 'who talks now, I pray you? Mr. Fairford will know how to comport himself.'

'And we had best both leave the room,' said the younger lady, 'for here his Eminence comes.'

She lowered her voice to a whisper as she pronounced the last words; and as Fairford was about to reply, by assuring her that any friend of hers should be treated by him with all the ceremony he could expect, she imposed silence on him, by holding up her finger.

A solemn and stately step was now heard in the gallery; it might have proclaimed the approach not merely of a bishop or cardinal, but of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. Nor could the sound have been more respectfully listened to by the two ladies, had it announced that the Head of the Church was approaching in person. They drew themselves, like sentinels on duty, one on each side of the door by which the long gallery communicated with Fairford's apartment, and stood there immovable, and with countenances expressive of the deepest reverence.

The approach of Father Buonaventure was so slow, that Fairford had time to notice all this, and to marvel in his mind what wily and ambitious priest could have contrived to subject his worthy but simple-minded hostesses to such superstitious trammels. Father Buonaventure's entrance and appearance in some degree accounted for the whole.

He was a man of middle life, about forty or upwards; but either care, or fatigue, or indulgence, had brought on the appearance of premature old age, and given to his fine features a cast of seriousness or even sadness. A noble countenance, however, still remained; and though his complexion was altered, and wrinkles stamped upon his brow in many a melancholy fold, still the lofty forehead, the full and well-opened eye, and the well-formed nose, showed how handsome in better days he must have been. He was tall, but lost the advantage of his height by stooping; and the cane which he wore always in his hand, and occasionally

used, as well as his slow though majestic gait, seemed to intimate that his form and limbs felt already some touch of infirmity. The colour of his hair could not be discovered, as, according to the fashion, he wore a periwig. He was handsomely, though gravely dressed in a secular habit, and had a cockade in his hat; circumstances which did not surprise Fairford, who knew that a military disguise was very often assumed by the seminary priests, whose visits to England, or residence there, subjected them to legal penalties.

As this stately person entered the apartment, the two ladies facing inward, like soldiers on their post when about to salute a superior officer, dropped on either hand of the father a curtsy so profound that the hoop petticoats which performed the feat seemed to sink down to the very floor, nay, through it, as if a trap-door had opened for the descent of the dames who performed this act of reverence.

The father seemed accustomed to such homage, profound as it was; he turned his person a little way first towards one sister, and then towards the other, while, with a gracious inclination of his person, which certainly did not amount to a bow, he acknowledged their curtsy. But he passed forward without addressing them, and seemed by doing so to intimate that their presence in the apartment was unnecessary.

They accordingly glided out of the room, retreating backwards, with hands clasped and eyes cast upwards, as if imploring blessings on the religious man whom they venerated so highly. The door of the apartment was shut after them, but not before Fairford had perceived that there were one or two men in the gallery, and that, contrary to what he had before observed, the door, though shut, was not locked on the outside.

'Can the good souls apprehend danger from me to this god of their idolatry?' thought Fairford. But he had no time to make further observations, for the stranger had already reached the middle of his apartment.

Fairford rose to receive him respectfully, but as he fixed his eyes on the visitor, he thought that the father avoided his looks. His reasons for remaining incognito were cogent enough to account for this, and Fairford hastened to relieve him, by looking downwards in his turn; but when again he raised his face, he found the broad light eye of the stranger so fixed on him that he was almost put out of countenance by the steadiness of his gaze. During this time they remained standing.

'Take your seat, sir,' said the father; 'you have been an invalid.'

He spoke with the tone of one who desires an inferior to be seated in his presence, and his voice was full and melodious.

Fairford, somewhat surprised to find himself overawed by the airs of superiority, which could be only properly exercised towards one over whom religion gave the speaker influence, sat down at his bidding, as if moved by springs, and was at a loss how to assert the footing of equality on which he felt that they ought to stand. The stranger kept the advantage which he had obtained.

'Your name, sir, I am informed, is Fairford?' said the father.

Alan answered by a bow.

'Called to the Scottish bar,' continued his visitor, 'There is, I believe, in the West, a family of birth and rank called Fairford of Fairford.'

Alan thought this a strange observation from a foreign ecclesiastic, as his name intimated Father Buonaventure to be; but only answered he believed there was such, a family.

'Do you count kindred with them, Mr. Fairford?' continued the inquirer.

'I have not the honour to lay such a claim,' said Fairford.

'My father's industry has raised his family from a low and obscure situation—I have no hereditary claim to distinction of any kind. May I ask the cause of these inquiries?'

'You will learn it presently,' said Father Buonaventure, who had given a dry and dissatisfied HEM at the young man's acknowledging a plebeian descent. He then motioned to him to be silent, and proceeded with his queries.

'Although not of condition, you are, doubtless, by sentiments and education, a man of honour and a gentleman?'

'I hope so, sir,' said Alan, colouring with displeasure. 'I have not been accustomed to have it questioned.'

'Patience, young man,' said the unperturbed querist—'we are on serious business, and no idle etiquette must prevent its being discussed seriously. You are probably aware that you speak to a person proscribed by the severe and unjust laws of the present government?'

'I am aware of the statute 1700, chapter 3,' said Alan, 'banishing from the realm priests and trafficking Papists, and punishing by death, on summary conviction, any such person who being so banished may return. But I have no means of knowing you, sir, to be one of those persons; and I think your prudence may recommend to you to keep your own counsel.'

'It is sufficient, sir; and I have no apprehensions of disagreeable consequences from your having seen me in this house,' said the priest.

'Assuredly no,' said Alan. 'I consider myself as indebted for my life to the mistresses of Fairladies; and it would be a vile requital on my part to pry into or make known what I may have seen or heard under this hospitable roof. If I were to meet the Pretender himself in such a situation, he should, even at the risk of a little stretch to my loyalty, be free from any danger from my indiscretion.'

'The Pretender!' said the priest, with some angry emphasis; but immediately softened his tone and added, 'No doubt, however, that person is a pretender; and some people think his pretensions are not ill founded. But, before running into politics, give me leave to say, that I am surprised to find a gentleman of your opinions in habits of intimacy with Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees and Mr. Redgauntlet, and the medium of conducting the intercourse betwixt them.'

'Pardon me, sir,' replied Alan Fairford; 'I do not aspire to the honour of being reputed their confidant or go-between. My concern with those gentlemen is limited to one matter of business, dearly interesting to me, because it concerns the safety—perhaps the life—of my dearest friend.'

'Would you have any objection to entrust me with the cause of your journey?' said Father Buonaventure. 'My advice may be of service to you, and my influence with one or both these gentlemen is considerable.'

Fairford hesitated a moment, and, hastily revolving all circumstances, concluded that he might perhaps receive some advantage from propitiating this personage; while, on the other hand, he endangered nothing by communicating to him the occasion of his journey. He, therefore, after stating shortly that he hoped Mr. Buonaventure would render him the same confidence which he required on his part, gave a short account of Darsie Latimer—of the mystery which hung over his family—and of the disaster which had befallen him. Finally, of his own resolution to seek for his friend, and to deliver him, at the peril of his own life.

The Catholic priest, whose manner it seemed to be to avoid all conversation which did not arise from his own express motion, made no remarks upon what he had heard, but only asked one or two abrupt questions, where Alan's narrative appeared less clear to him; then rising from his seat, he took two turns through the apartment, muttering between his teeth, with emphasis, the word 'madman!' But apparently he was in the habit of keeping all violent emotions under restraint; for he presently addressed Fairford with the most perfect indifference.

'If,' said he, 'you thought you could do so without breach of confidence, I wish you would have the goodness to show me the letter of Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees. I desire to look particularly at the address.'

Seeing no cause to decline this extension of his confidence, Alan, without hesitation, put the letter into his hand. Having turned it round as old Trumbull and Nanty Ewart had formerly done, and, like them, having examined the address with much minuteness, he asked whether he had observed these words, pointing to a pencil-writing upon the under side of the letter. Fairford answered in the negative, and, looking at the letter, read with surprise, 'CAVE NE LITERAS BELLEROPHONTIS ADFERRES'; a caution which coincided so exactly with the provost's admonition, that he would do well to inspect the letter of which he was bearer, that he was about to spring up and attempt an escape, he knew not wherefore, or from whom.

'Sit still, young man,' said the father, with the same tone of authority which reigned in his whole manner, although mingled with stately courtesy. 'You are in no danger—my character shall be a pledge for your safety. By whom do you suppose these words have been written?'

Fairford could have answered, 'By Nanty Ewart,' for he remembered seeing that person scribble something with a pencil, although he was not well enough to observe with accuracy where or upon what. But not knowing what suspicions, or what worse consequences the seamen's interest in his affairs might draw upon him, he judged it best to answer that he knew not the hand.

Father Buonaventure was again silent for a moment or two, which he employed in surveying the letter with the strictest attention; then stepped to the window, as if to examine the address and writing of the envelope with the assistance of a stronger light, and Alan Fairford beheld him, with no less amazement than high displeasure, coolly and deliberately break the seal, open the letter, and peruse the contents.

'Stop, sir, hold!' he exclaimed, so soon as his astonishment permitted him to express his resentment in words; 'by what right do you dare'—

'Peace, young gentleman,' said the father, repelling him with a wave of his hand; 'be assured I do not act without warrant—nothing can pass betwixt Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Redgauntlet that I am not fully entitled to know.'

'It may be so,' said Alan, extremely angry; 'but though you may be these gentlemen's father confessor, you are not mine; and in breaking the seal of a letter entrusted to my care, you have done me'—

'No injury, I assure you,' answered the unperturbed priest; 'on the contrary, it may be a service.'

'I desire no advantage at such a rate, or to be obtained in such a manner,' answered Fairford; 'restore me the letter instantly, or'—

'As you regard your own safety,' said the priest, 'forbear all injurious expressions, and all menacing gestures. I am not one who can be threatened or insulted with impunity; and there are enough within hearing to chastise any injury or affront offered to me, in case I may think it unbecoming to protect or avenge myself with my own hand.'

In saying this, the father assumed an air of such fearlessness and calm authority, that the young lawyer, surprised and overawed, forbore, as he had intended, to snatch the letter from his hand, and confined himself to bitter complaints of the impropriety of his conduct, and of the light in which he himself must be placed to Redgauntlet should he present him a letter with a broken seal.

'That,' said Father Buonaventure, 'shall be fully cared for. I will myself write to Redgauntlet, and enclose Maxwell's letter, provided always you continue to desire to deliver it, after perusing the contents.'

He then restored the letter to Fairford, and, observing that he hesitated to peruse it, said emphatically, 'Read it, for it concerns you.'

This recommendation, joined to what Provost Crosbie had formerly recommended, and to the warning which he doubted not that Nanty intended to convey by his classical allusion, decided Fairford's resolution. 'If these correspondents,' he thought, 'are conspiring against my person, I have a right to counterplot them; self-preservation, as well as my friend's safety, require that I should not be too scrupulous.'

So thinking, he read the letter, which was in the following words:—

'DEAR RUGGED AND DANGEROUS, 'Will you never cease meriting your old nick-name? You have springed your dottrel, I find, and what is the consequence?—why, that there will be hue and cry after you presently. The bearer is a pert young lawyer, who has brought a formal complaint against you, which, luckily, he has preferred in a friendly court. Yet, favourable as the judge was disposed to be, it was with the utmost difficulty that cousin Jenny and I could keep him to his tackle. He begins to be timid, suspicious, and untractable, and I fear Jenny will soon bend her brows on him in vain. I know not what to advise—the lad who carries this is a good lad—active for his friend—and I have pledged my honour he shall have no personal ill-usage. Pledged my honour, remark these words, and remember I can be rugged and dangerous as well, as my neighbours. But I have not ensured him against a short captivity, and as he is a stirring active fellow, I see no remedy but keeping him out of the way till this business of the good Father B—— is safely blown over, which God send it were!—Always thine, even should I be once more CRAIG-IN-PERIL.'

'What think you, young man, of the danger you have been about to encounter so willingly?'

'As strangely,' replied Alan Fairford, 'as of the extraordinary means which you have been at present pleased to use for the discovery of Mr. Maxwell's purpose.'

'Trouble not yourself to account for my conduct,' said the father; 'I have a warrant for what I do, and fear no responsibility. But tell me what is your present purpose.'

'I should not perhaps name it to you, whose own safety may be implicated.'

'I understand you,' answered the father; 'you would appeal to the existing government? That can at no rate be permitted—we will rather detain you at Fairladies by compulsion.'

'You will probably,' said Fairford, 'first weigh the risk of such a proceeding in a free country.'

'I have incurred more formidable hazard,' said the priest, smiling; 'yet I am willing to find a milder expedient. Come; let us bring the matter to a compromise.' And he assumed a conciliating graciousness of manner, which struck Fairford as being rather too condescending for the occasion; 'I presume you will be satisfied to remain here in seclusion for a day or two longer, provided I pass my solemn word to you that you shall meet with the person whom you seek after—meet with him in perfect safety, and, I trust, in good health, and be afterwards both at liberty to return to Scotland, or dispose of yourselves as each of you may be minded?'

'I respect the VERBUM SACERDOTIS as much as can reasonably be expected from a Protestant,' answered Fairford; 'but methinks, you can scarce expect me to repose so much confidence in the word of an unknown person as is implied in the guarantee which you offer me.'

'I am not accustomed, sir,' said the father, in a very haughty tone, 'to have my word disputed. But,' he added, while the angry hue passed from his cheek, after a moment's reflection, 'you know me not, and ought to be excused. I will repose more confidence in your honour than you seem willing to rest upon mine; and, since we are so situated that one must rely upon the other's faith, I will cause you to be set presently at liberty, and furnished with the means of delivering your letter as addressed, provided that now, knowing the contents, you think it safe for yourself to execute the commission.'

Alan Fairford paused. 'I cannot see,' he at length replied, 'how I can proceed with respect to the accomplishment of my sole purpose, which is the liberation of my friend, without appealing to the law and obtaining the assistance of a magistrate. If I present this singular letter of Mr. Maxwell, with the contents of which I have become so unexpectedly acquainted, I shall only share his captivity.'

'And if you apply to a magistrate, young man, you will bring ruin on these hospitable ladies, to whom, in all human probability, you owe your life. You cannot obtain a warrant for your purpose, without giving a clear detail of all the late scenes through which you have passed. A magistrate would oblige you to give a complete account of yourself, before arming you with his authority against a third party; and in giving such an account, the safety of these ladies will necessarily be compromised. A hundred spies have had, and still have, their eyes upon this mansion; but God will protect his own.'—He crossed himself devoutly, and then proceeded,—'You can take an hour to think of your best plan, and I will pledge myself to forward it thus far, provided it be not asking you to rely more on my word than your prudence can warrant. You shall go to Redgauntlet,—I name him plainly, to show my confidence in you,—and you shall deliver him this letter of Mr. Maxwell's, with one from me, in which I will enjoin him to set your friend at liberty, or at least to make no attempts upon your own person, either by detention or otherwise. If you can trust me thus far,' he said, with a proud emphasis on the words 'I will on my side see you depart from this place with the most perfect confidence that you will not return armed with powers to drag its inmates to destruction. You are young and inexperienced—bred to a profession also which sharpens suspicion, and gives false views of human nature. I have seen much of the world, and have known better than most men how far mutual confidence is requisite in managing affairs of consequence.'

He spoke with an air of superiority, even of authority, by which Fairford, notwithstanding his own internal struggles, was silenced and overawed so much, that it was not till the father had turned to leave the apartment that he found words to ask him what the consequences would be, should he decline to depart on the terms proposed.

'You must then, for the safety of all parties, remain for some days an inhabitant of Fairladies, where we have the means of detaining you, which self-preservation will in that case compel us to make use of. Your captivity will be short; for matters cannot long remain as they are. The cloud must soon rise, or it must sink upon us for ever. BENEDICITE!'

With these words he left the apartment.

Fairford, upon his departure, felt himself much at a loss what course to pursue. His line of education, as well as his father's tenets in matters of church and state, had taught him a holy horror for Papists, and a devout belief in whatever had been said of the Punic faith of Jesuits, and of the expedients of mental reservation by

which the Catholic priests in general were supposed to evade keeping faith with heretics. Yet there was something of majesty, depressed indeed and overclouded, but still grand and imposing, in the manner and words of Father Buonaventure, which it was difficult to reconcile with those preconceived opinions which imputed subtlety and fraud to his sect and order. Above all, Alan was aware that if he accepted not his freedom upon the terms offered him, he was likely to be detained by force; so that, in every point of view, he was a gainer by accepting them.

A qualm, indeed, came across him, when he considered, as a lawyer, that this father was probably, in the eye of law, a traitor; and that there was an ugly crime on the Statute Book, called misprision of treason. On the other hand, whatever he might think or suspect, he could not take upon him to say that the man was a priest, whom he had never seen in the dress of his order, or in the act of celebrating mass; so that he felt himself at liberty to doubt of that respecting which he possessed no legal proof. He therefore arrived at the conclusion, that he would do well to accept his liberty, and proceed to Redgauntlet under the guarantee of Father Buonaventure, which he scarce doubted would be sufficient to save him from personal inconvenience. Should he once obtain speech of that gentleman, he felt the same confidence as formerly, that he might be able to convince him of the rashness of his conduct, should he not consent to liberate Darsie Latimer. At all events, he should learn where his friend was, and how circumstanced.

Having thus made up his mind, Alan waited anxiously for the expiration of the hour which had been allowed him for deliberation. He was not kept on the tenter-hooks of impatience an instant longer than the appointed moment arrived, for, even as the clock struck, Ambrose appeared at the door of the gallery, and made a sign that Alan should follow him. He did so, and after passing through some of the intricate avenues common in old houses, was ushered into a small apartment, commodiously fitted up, in which he found Father Buonaventure reclining on a couch, in the attitude of a man exhausted by fatigue or indisposition. On a small table beside him, a silver embossed salver sustained a Catholic book of prayer, a small flask of medicine, a cordial, and a little tea-cup of old china. Ambrose did not enter the room—he only bowed profoundly, and closed the door with the least possible noise, so soon as Fairford had entered.

'Sit down, young man,' said the father, with the same air of condescension which had before surprised, and rather offended Fairford. 'You have been ill, and I know too well by my own case that indisposition requires indulgence. Have you,' he continued, so soon as he saw him seated, 'resolved to remain, or to depart?'

'To depart,' said Alan, 'under the agreement that you will guarantee my safety with the extraordinary person who has conducted himself in such a lawless manner toward my friend, Darsie Latimer.'

'Do not judge hastily, young man,' replied the father. 'Redgauntlet has the claims of a guardian over his ward, in respect to the young gentleman, and a right to dictate his place of residence, although he may have been injudicious in selecting the means by which he thinks to enforce his authority.'

'His situation as an attainted person abrogates such rights,' said Fairford, hastily.

'Surely,' replied the priest, smiling at the young lawyer's readiness; 'in the eye of those who acknowledge the justice of the attainer—but that do not I. However, sir, here is the guarantee—look at its contents, and do not again carry the letters of Uriah.'

Fairford read these words:—

'GOOD FRIEND, 'We send you hither a young man desirous to know the situation of your ward, since he came under your paternal authority, and hopeful of dealing with you for having your relative put at large. This we recommend to your prudence, highly disapproving, at the same time, of any force or coercion when such can be avoided, and wishing, therefore, that the bearer's negotiation may be successful. At all rates, however, the bearer hath our pledged word for his safety and freedom, which, therefore, you are to see strictly observed, as you value our honour and your own. We further wish to converse with you, with as small loss of time as may be, having matters of the utmost confidence to impart. For this purpose we desire you to repair hither with all haste, and thereupon we bid you heartily farewell. P. B.'

'You will understand, sir,' said the father, when he saw that Alan had perused his letter, 'that, by accepting charge of this missive, you bind yourself to try the effect of it before having recourse to any legal means, as you term them, for your friend's release.'

'There are a few ciphers added to this letter,' said Fairford, when he had perused the paper attentively, '—may I inquire what their import is?'

'They respect my own affairs,' answered the father, briefly; 'and have no concern whatever with yours.'

'It seems to me, however,' replied Alan, 'natural to suppose'—

'Nothing must be supposed incompatible with my honour,' replied the priest, interrupting him; 'when such as I am confer favours, we expect that they shall be accepted with gratitude, or declined with thankful respect—not questioned or discussed.'

'I will accept your letter, then,' said Fairford, after a minute's consideration, 'and the thanks you expect shall be most liberally paid, if the result answer what you teach me to expect.'

'God only commands the issue,' said Father Buonaventure. 'Man uses means. You understand that, by accepting this commission, you engage yourself in honour to try the effect of my letter upon Mr. Redgauntlet, before you have recourse to informations or legal warrants?'

'I hold myself bound, as a man of good faith and honour, to do so,' said Fairford.

'Well, I trust you,' said the father. 'I will now tell you that an express, dispatched by me last night, has, I hear, brought Redgauntlet to a spot many miles nearer this place, where he will not find it safe to attempt any violence on your friend, should he be rash enough to follow the advice of Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees rather than my commands. We now understand each other.'

He extended his hand towards Alan, who was about to pledge his faith in the usual form by grasping it with his own, when the father drew back hastily. Ere Alan had time to comment upon this repulse, a small side-door, covered with tapestry, was opened; the hangings were drawn aside, and a lady, as if by sudden apparition, glided into the apartment. It was neither of the Misses Arthuret, but a woman in the prime of life, and in the full-blown expansion of female beauty, tall, fair, and commanding in her aspect. Her locks, of paly gold, were taught to fall over a brow, which, with the stately glance of the large, open, blue eyes, might have become Juno herself; her neck and bosom were admirably formed, and of a dazzling whiteness. She was rather inclined to EMBONPOINT, but not more than became her age, of apparently thirty years. Her step was that of a queen, but it was of Queen Vashti, not Queen Esther—the bold and commanding, not the retiring beauty.

Father Buonaventure raised himself on the couch, angrily, as if displeased by this intrusion. 'How now, madam,' he said, with some sternness; 'why have we the honour of your company?'

'Because it is my pleasure,' answered the lady, composedly.

'Your pleasure, madam!' he repeated in the same angry tone.

'My pleasure, sir,' she continued, 'which always keeps exact pace with my duty. I had heard you were unwell—let me hope it is only business which produces this seclusion.'

'I am well,' he replied; 'perfectly well, and I thank you for your care—but we are not alone, and this young man'—

'That young man?' she said, bending her large and serious eye on Alan Fairford, as if she had been for the first time aware of his presence, '—may I ask who he is?'

'Another time, madam; you shall learn his history after he is gone. His presence renders it impossible for me to explain further.'

'After he is gone may be too late,' said the lady; 'and what is his presence to me, when your safety is at stake? He is the heretic lawyer whom those silly fools, the Arthurets, admitted into this house at a time when they should have let their own father knock at the door in vain, though the night had been a wild one. You will not surely dismiss him?'

'Your own impatience can alone make that step perilous,' said the father; 'I have resolved to take it—do not let your indiscreet zeal, however excellent its motive, add any unnecessary risk to the transaction.'

'Even so?' said the lady, in a tone of reproach, yet mingled with respect and apprehension. 'And thus you will still go forward, like a stag upon the hunter's snares, with undoubting confidence, after all that has happened?'

'Peace, madam,' said Father Buonaventure, rising up; 'be silent, or quit the apartment; my designs do not admit of female criticism.'

To this peremptory command the lady seemed about to make a sharp reply; but she checked herself, and pressing her lips strongly together, as if to secure the words from bursting from them which were already formed upon her tongue, she made a deep reverence, partly as it seemed in reproach, partly in respect, and left the room as suddenly as she had entered it.

The father looked disturbed at this incident, which he seemed sensible could not but fill Fairford's imagination with an additional throng of bewildering suspicions; he bit his lip and muttered something to himself as he walked through the apartment; then suddenly turned to his visitor with a smile of much sweetness, and a countenance in which every rougher expression was exchanged for those of courtesy and kindness.

'The visit we have been just honoured with, my young friend, has given you,' he said, 'more secrets to keep than I would have wished you burdened with. The lady is a person of condition—of rank and fortune—but nevertheless is so circumstanced that the mere fact of her being known to be in this country would occasion many evils. I should wish you to observe secrecy on this subject, even to Redgauntlet or Maxwell, however much I trust them in all that concerns my own affairs.'

'I can have no occasion,' replied Fairford, 'for holding any discussion with these gentlemen, or with any others, on the circumstance which I have just witnessed—it could only have become the subject of my conversation by mere accident, and I will now take care to avoid the subject entirely.'

'You will do well, sir, and I thank you,' said the father, throwing much dignity into the expression of obligation which he meant to convey. 'The time may perhaps come when you will learn what it is to have obliged one of my condition. As to the lady, she has the highest merit, and nothing can be said of her justly which would not redound to her praise. Nevertheless—in short, sir, we wander at present as in a morning mist—the sun will, I trust, soon rise and dispel it, when all that now seems mysterious will be fully revealed—or it will sink into rain,' he added, in a solemn tone, 'and then explanation will be of little consequence.—Adieu, sir; I wish you well.'

He made a graceful obeisance, and vanished through the same side-door by which the lady had entered; and Alan thought he heard their voices high in dispute in the adjoining apartment.

Presently afterwards, Ambrose entered, and told him that a horse and guide waited him beneath the terrace.

'The good Father Buonaventure,' added the butler, 'has been graciously pleased to consider your situation, and desired me to inquire whether you have any occasion for a supply of money?'

'Make my respects to his reverence,' answered Fairford, 'and assure him I am provided in that particular. I beg you also to make my acknowledgements to the Misses Arthuret, and assure them that their kind hospitality, to which I probably owe my life, shall be remembered with gratitude as long as that life lasts. You yourself, Mr. Ambrose, must accept of my kindest thanks for your skill and attention.'

Mid these acknowledgements they left the house, descended the terrace, and reached the spot where the gardener, Fairford's old acquaintance, waited for him, mounted upon one horse and leading another.

Bidding adieu to Ambrose, our young lawyer mounted, and rode down the avenue, often looking back to the melancholy and neglected dwelling in which he had witnessed such strange scenes, and musing upon the character of its mysterious inmates, especially the noble and almost regal-seeming priest, and the beautiful but capricious dame, who, if she was really Father Buonaventure's penitent, seemed less docile to the authority of the church than, as Alan conceived, the Catholic discipline permitted. He could not indeed help being sensible that the whole deportment of these persons differed much from his preconceived notions of a priest and devotee. Father Buonaventure, in particular, had more natural dignity and less art and affectation in his manner, than accorded with the idea which Calvinists were taught to entertain of that wily and formidable person, a Jesuitical missionary.

While reflecting on these things, he looked back so frequently at the house, that Dick Gardener, a forward, talkative fellow, who began to tire of silence, at length said to him, 'I think you will know Fairladies when you see it again, sir?'

'I dare say I shall, Richard,' answered Fairford good-humouredly. 'I wish I knew as well where I am to go next. But you can tell me, perhaps?'

'Your worship should know better than I,' said Dick Gardener; 'nevertheless, I have a notion you are going where all you Scotsmen should be sent, whether you will or no.'

'Not to the devil, I hope, good Dick?' said Fairford.

'Why, no. That is a road which you may travel as heretics; but as Scotsmen, I would only send you three-fourths of the way—and that is back to Scotland again—always craving your honour's pardon.'

'Does our journey lie that way?' said Fairford.

'As far as the waterside,' said Richard. 'I am to carry you to old Father Crackenthorp's, and then you are within a spit and a stride of Scotland, as the saying is. But mayhap you may think twice of going thither, for all that; for Old England is fat feeding-ground for north-country cattle.'

CHAPTER XVII

NARRATIVE OF DARSIE LATIMER

Our history must now, as the old romancers wont to say, 'leave to tell' of the quest of Alan Fairford, and instruct our readers of the adventures which befell Darsie Latimer, left as he was in the precarious custody of his self-named tutor, the Laird of the Lochs of Solway, to whose arbitrary pleasure he found it necessary for the present to conform himself.

In consequence of this prudent resolution, and although he did not assume such a disguise without some sensations of shame and degradation, Darsie permitted Cristal Nixon to place over his face, and secure by a string, one of those silk masks which ladies frequently wore to preserve their complexions, when exposed to the air during long journeys on horseback. He remonstrated somewhat more vehemently against the long riding-skirt, which converted his person from the waist into the female guise, but was obliged to concede this point also.

The metamorphosis was then complete; for the fair reader must be informed, that in those rude times, the ladies, when they honoured the masculine dress by assuming any part of it, wore just such hats, coats, and waistcoats as the male animals themselves made use of, and had no notion of the elegant compromise betwixt male and female attire, which has now acquired, *PAR EXCELLENCE*, the name of a *HABIT*. Trolloping things our mothers must have looked, with long square-cut coats, lacking collars, and with waistcoats plentifully supplied with a length of pocket, which hung far downwards from the middle. But then they had some advantage from the splendid colours, lace, and gay embroidery which masculine attire then exhibited; and, as happens in many similar instances, the finery of the materials made amends for the want of symmetry and grace of form in the garments themselves. But this is a digression.

In the court of the old mansion, half manor-place, half farm-house, or rather a decayed manor-house, converted into an abode for a Cumberland tenant, stood several saddled horses. Four or five of them were mounted by servants or inferior retainers, all of whom were well armed with sword, pistol, and carbine. But two had riding furniture for the use of females—the one being accoutred with a side-saddle, the other with a pillion attached to the saddle.

Darsie's heart beat quicker within him; he easily comprehended that one of these was intended for his own use; and his hopes suggested that the other was designed for that of the fair Green Mantle, whom, according to his established practice, he had adopted for the queen of his affections, although his opportunities of holding communication with her had not exceeded the length of a silent supper on one occasion, and the going down a country-dance on another. This, however, was no unwonted mood of passion with Darsie Latimer, upon whom Cupid was used to triumph only in the degree of a Mahratta conqueror, who overruns a province with the rapidity of lightning, but finds it impossible to retain it beyond a very brief space. Yet this new love was rather more serious than the scarce skinned-up wounds which his friend Fairford used to ridicule. The damsel had shown a sincere interest in his behalf; and the air of mystery with which that interest was veiled, gave her, to his lively imagination, the character of a benevolent and protecting spirit, as much as that of a beautiful female.

At former times, the romance attending his short-lived attachments had been of his own creating, and had disappeared as soon as ever he approached more closely to the object with which he had invested it. On the present occasion, it really flowed from external circumstances, which might have interested less susceptible feelings, and an imagination less lively than that of Darsie Latimer, young, inexperienced, and enthusiastic as he was.

He watched, therefore, anxiously to whose service the palfrey bearing the lady's saddle was destined. But ere any female appeared to occupy it, he was himself summoned to take his seat on the pillion behind Cristal Nixon, amid the grins of his old acquaintance Jan who helped him to horse, and the unrestrained laughter of Cicely, who displayed on the occasion a case of teeth which might have rivalled ivory.

Latimer was at an age when being an object of general ridicule even to clowns and milkmaids was not a matter of indifference, and he longed heartily to have laid his horse-whip across Jan's shoulders. That, however, was a solacement of his feelings which was not at the moment to be thought of; and Cristal Nixon presently put an end to his unpleasant situation, by ordering the riders to go on. He himself kept the centre of the troop, two men riding before and two behind him, always, as it seemed to Darsie, having their eye upon him, to prevent any attempt to escape. He could see from time to time, when the straight line of the road, or the advantage of an ascent permitted him, that another troop of three or four riders followed them at about a quarter of a mile's distance, amongst whom he could discover the tall form of Redgauntlet, and the powerful action of his gallant black horse. He had little doubt that Green Mantle made one of the party, though he was unable to distinguish her from the others.

In this manner they travelled from six in the morning until nearly ten of the clock, without Darsie exchanging a word with any one; for he loathed the very idea of entering into conversation with Cristal Nixon, against whom he seemed to feel an instinctive aversion; nor was that domestic's saturnine and sullen disposition such as to have encouraged advances, had he thought of making them.

At length the party halted for the purpose of refreshment; but as they had hitherto avoided all villages and inhabited places upon their route, so they now stopped at one of those large ruinous Dutch barns, which are sometimes found in the fields, at a distance from the farm-houses to which they belong. Yet in this desolate place some preparations had been made for their reception. There were in the end of the barn racks filled with provender for the horses, and plenty of provisions for the party were drawn from the trusses of straw, under which the baskets that contained them had been deposited. The choicest of these were selected and arranged apart by Cristal Nixon, while the men of the party threw themselves upon the rest, which he abandoned to their discretion. In a few minutes afterwards the rearward party arrived and dismounted, and Redgauntlet himself entered the barn with the green-mantled maiden by his side. He presented her to Darsie with these words:—

'It is time you two should know each other better. I promised you my confidence, Darsie, and the time is come for reposing it. But first we will have our breakfast; and then, when once more in the saddle, I will tell you that which it is necessary that you should know. Salute Lillas, Darsie.'

The command was sudden, and surprised Latimer, whose confusion was increased by the perfect ease and frankness with which Lillas offered at once her cheek and her hand, and pressing his as she rather took it than gave her own, said very frankly, 'Dearest Darsie, how rejoiced I am that our uncle has at last permitted us to become acquainted!'

Darsie's head turned round; and it was perhaps well that Redgauntlet called on him to sit down, as even that movement served to hide his confusion. There is an old song which says—

—when ladies are willing,

A man can but look like a fool;

And on the same principle Darsie Latimer's looks at this unexpected frankness of reception, would have formed an admirable vignette for illustrating the passage. 'Dearest Darsie,' and such a ready, nay, eager salute of lip and hand! It was all very gracious, no doubt—and ought to have been received with much gratitude; but, constituted as our friend's temper was, nothing could be more inconsistent with his tone of feeling. If a hermit had proposed to him to club for a pot of beer, the illusion of his reverend sanctity could not have been dispelled more effectually than the divine qualities of Green Mantle faded upon the ill-imagined frank-heartedness of poor Lillas. Vexed with her forwardness, and affronted at having once more cheated himself, Darsie could hardly help muttering two lines of the song we have already quoted:

The fruit that must fall without shaking

Is rather too mellow for me.

And yet it was pity for her too—she was a very pretty young woman—his fancy had scarcely overrated her in that respect—and the slight derangement of the beautiful brown locks which escaped in natural ringlets from under her riding-hat, with the bloom which exercise had brought into her cheek, made her even more than usually fascinating. Redgauntlet modified the sternness of his look when it was turned towards her, and in addressing her, used a softer tone than his usual deep bass. Even the grim features of Cristal Nixon relaxed when he attended on her, and it was then, if ever, that his misanthropical visage expressed some sympathy with the rest of humanity.

'How can she,' thought Latimer, 'look so like an angel, yet be so mere a mortal after all? How could so much seeming modesty have so much forwardness of manner, when she ought to have been most reserved? How can her conduct be reconciled to the grace and ease of her general deportment?'

The confusion of thoughts which occupied Darsie's imagination, gave to his looks a disordered appearance, and his inattention to the food which was placed before him, together with his silence and absence of mind, induced Lillas solicitously to inquire, whether he did not feel some return of the disorder under which he had suffered so lately. This led Mr. Redgauntlet, who seemed also lost in his own contemplations, to raise his eyes, and join in the same inquiry with some appearance of interest. Latimer explained to both that he was perfectly well.

'It is well it is so,' answered Redgauntlet; 'for we have that before us which will brook no delay from indisposition—we have not, as Hotspur says, leisure to be sick.'

Lillas, on her part, endeavoured to prevail upon Darsie to partake of the food which she offered him, with a kindly and affectionate courtesy corresponding to the warmth of the interest she had displayed at their meeting; but so very natural, innocent, and pure in its character, that it would have been impossible for the vainest coxcomb to have mistaken it for coquetry, or a desire of captivating a prize so valuable as his affection. Darsie, with no more than the reasonable share of self-opinion common to most youths when they approach twenty-one, knew not how to explain her conduct.

Sometimes he was tempted to think that his own merits had, even during the short intervals when they had seen each other, secured such a hold of the affections of a young person who had probably been bred up in ignorance of the world and its forms that she was unable to conceal her partiality. Sometimes he suspected that she acted by her guardian's order, who, aware that he, Darsie, was entitled to a considerable fortune, might have taken this bold stroke to bring about a marriage betwixt him and so near a relative.

But neither of these suppositions was applicable to the character of the parties. Miss Lillas's manners, however soft and natural, displayed in their ease and versatility considerable acquaintance with the habits of the world, and in the few words she said during the morning repast, there were mingled a shrewdness and good sense, which could scarce belong to a miss capable of playing the silly part of a love-smitten maiden so broadly. As for Redgauntlet, with his stately bearing, his fatal frown, his eye of threat and of command, it was impossible, Darsie thought, to suspect him of a scheme having private advantage for its object; he could as soon have imagined Cassius picking Caesar's pocket, instead of drawing his poniard on the dictator.

While he thus mused, unable either to eat, drink, or answer to the courtesy of Lillas, she soon ceased to speak to him, and sat silent as himself.

They had remained nearly an hour in their halting-place, when Redgauntlet said aloud, 'Look out, Cristal Nixon. If we hear nothing from Fairladies, we must continue our journey.'

Cristal went to the door, and presently returned and said to his master, in a voice as harsh as his features, 'Gilbert Gregson is coming, his horse as white with foam as if a fiend had ridden him.'

Redgauntlet threw from him the plate on which he had been eating, and hastened towards the door of the barn, which the courier at that moment entered; a smart jockey with a black velvet hunting-cap, and a broad belt drawn tight round his waist, to which was secured his express-bag. The variety of mud with which he was splashed from cap to spur showed he had had a rough and rapid ride. He delivered a letter to Mr. Redgauntlet, with an obeisance, and then retired to the end of the barn, where the other attendants were sitting or lying upon the straw, in order to get some refreshment.

Redgauntlet broke the letter open with haste, and read it with anxious and discomposed looks. On a second perusal, his displeasure seemed to increase, his brow darkened, and was distinctly marked with the fatal sign peculiar to his family and house. Darsie had never before observed his frown bear such a close resemblance to the shape which tradition assigned it.

Redgauntlet held out the open letter with one hand, and struck it with the forefinger of the other, as, in a suppressed and displeased tone, he said to Cristal Nixon, 'Countermanded—ordered northward once more! 'Northward, when all our hopes lie to the south—a second Derby direction, when we turned our back on glory, and marched in quest of ruin!'

Cristal Nixon took the letter and ran it over, then returned it to his master with the cold observation, 'A female influence predominates.'

'But it shall predominate no longer,' said Redgauntlet; 'it shall wane as ours rises in the horizon. Meanwhile, I will on before—and you, Cristal, will bring the party to the place assigned in the letter. You may now permit the young persons to have unreserved communication together; only mark that you watch the young man closely enough to prevent his escape, if he should be idiot enough to attempt it, but not approaching so close as to watch their free conversation.'

'I care naught about their conversation,' said Nixon, surlily.

'You hear my commands, Lillas,' said the laird, turning to the young lady. 'You may use my permission and authority to explain so much of our family matters as you yourself know. At our next meeting I will complete the task of disclosure, and I trust I shall restore one Redgauntlet more to the bosom of our ancient family. Let Latimer, as he calls himself, have a horse to himself; he must for some time retain his disguise.—My horse—my horse!'

In two minutes they heard him ride off from the door of the barn, followed at speed by two of the armed men of his party.

The commands of Cristal Nixon, in the meanwhile, put all the remainder of the party in motion, but the laird himself was long out of sight ere they were in readiness to resume their journey. When at length they set out, Darsie was accommodated with a horse and side-saddle, instead of being obliged to resume his place on the pillion behind the detestable Nixon. He was obliged, however, to retain his riding-skirt, and to reassume his mask. Yet, notwithstanding this disagreeable circumstance, and although he observed that they gave him the heaviest and slowest horse of the party, and that, as a further precaution against escape, he was closely watched on every side, yet riding in company with the pretty Lillas was an advantage which overbalanced these inconveniences.

It is true that this society, to which that very morning he would have looked forward as a glimpse of heaven, had, now that it was thus unexpectedly indulged, something much less rapturous than he had expected.

It was in vain that, in order to avail himself of a situation so favourable for indulging his romantic disposition, he endeavoured to coax back, if I may so express myself, that delightful dream of ardent and tender passion; he felt only such a confusion of ideas at the difference between the being whom he had imagined, and her with whom he was now in contact, that it seemed to him like the effect of witchcraft. What most surprised him was, that this sudden flame should have died away so rapidly, notwithstanding that the maiden's personal beauty was even greater than he had expected—her demeanour, unless it should be deemed over kind towards himself, as graceful and becoming as he could have fancied if, even in his gayest dreams. It were judging hardly of him to suppose that the mere belief of his having attracted her affections more easily than he expected was the cause of his ungratefully undervaluing a prize too lightly won, or that his transient passion played around his heart with the hitting radiance of a wintry sunbeam flashing against an icicle, which may brighten it for a moment, but cannot melt it. Neither of these was precisely the ease, though such fickleness of disposition might also have some influence in the change.

The truth is, perhaps, the lover's pleasure, like that of the hunter, is in the chase; and that the brightest beauty loses half its merit, as the fairest flower its perfume, when the willing hand can reach it too easily. There must be doubt—there must be danger—there must be difficulty; and if, as the poet says, the course of ardent affection never does run smooth, it is perhaps because, without some intervening obstacle, that which is called the romantic passion of love, in its high poetical character and colouring can hardly have an existence—any more than there can be a current in a river without the stream being narrowed by steep banks, or checked by opposing rocks.

Let not those, however, who enter into a union for life without those embarrassments which delight a Darsie Latimer, or a Lydia Languish, and which are perhaps necessary to excite an enthusiastic passion in breasts more firm than theirs, augur worse of their future happiness because their own alliance is formed under calmer auspices. Mutual esteem, an intimate knowledge of each other's character, seen, as in their case, undisguised by the mists of too partial passion—a suitable proportion of parties in rank and fortune, in taste and pursuits—are more frequently found in a marriage of reason, than in a union of romantic attachment; where the imagination, which probably created the virtues and accomplishments with which it invested the beloved object, is frequently afterwards employed in magnifying the mortifying consequences of its own delusion, and exasperating all the stings of disappointment. Those who follow the banners of Reason are like the well-disciplined battalion, which, wearing a more sober uniform and making a less dazzling show than the light troops commanded by imagination, enjoy more safety, and even more honour, in the conflicts of human life. All this, however, is foreign to our present purpose.

Uncertain in what manner to address her whom he had been lately so anxious to meet with, and embarrassed by a TETE-A-TETE to which his own timid inexperience, gave some awkwardness, the party had proceeded more than a hundred yards before Darsie assumed courage to accost, or even to look at, his companion. Sensible, however, of the impropriety of his silence, he turned to speak to her; and observing that, although she wore her mask, there was something like disappointment and dejection in her manner, he was moved by self-reproach for his own coldness, and hastened to address her in the kindest tone he could assume.

'You must think me cruelly deficient in gratitude, Miss Lillas, that I have been thus long in your company, without thanking you for the interest which you have deigned to take in my unfortunate affairs?'

'I am glad you have at length spoken,' she said, 'though I owe it more coldly than I expected. MISS Lillas! DEIGN to take interest! In whom, dear Darsie, CAN I take interest but in you; and why do you put this barrier of ceremony betwixt us, whom adverse circumstances have already separated for such a length of time?'

Darsie was again confounded at the extra candour, if we may use the term, of this frank avowal. 'One must love partridge very well,' thought he, 'to accept it when thrown in one's face—if this is not plain speaking, there is no such place as downright Dunstable in being!'

Embarrassed with these reflections, and himself of a nature fancifully, almost fastidiously, delicate, he could only in reply stammer forth an acknowledgement of his companion's goodness, and his own gratitude. She answered in a tone partly sorrowful and partly impatient, repeating, with displeased emphasis, the only distinct words he had been able to bring forth—'Goodness—gratitude!—O Darsie! should these be the phrases between you and me? Alas! I am too sure you are displeased with me, though I cannot even guess on what account. Perhaps you think I have been too free in venturing upon my visit to your friend. But then remember, it was in your behalf, and that I knew no better way to put you on your guard against the misfortunes and restraint which you have been subjected to, and are still enduring.'

'Dear Lady'—said Darsie, rallying his recollection, and suspicious of some error in apprehension,—a suspicion which his mode of address seemed at once to communicate to Lillas, for she interrupted him,—

'LADY! dear LADY! For whom, or for what, in Heaven's name, do you take me, that you address me so formally?'

Had the question been asked in that enchanted hall in fairyland, where all interrogations must be answered with absolute sincerity, Darsie had certainly replied, that he took her for the most frank-hearted and ultra-liberal lass that had ever lived since Mother Eve eat the pippin without paring. But as he was still on middle-earth, and free to avail himself of a little polite deceit, he barely answered that he believed he had the honour of speaking to the niece of Mr. Redgauntlet.

'Surely,' she replied; 'but were it not as easy for you to have said, to your own only sister?'

Darsie started in his saddle, as if he had received a pistol-shot.

'My sister!' he exclaimed.

'And you did NOT know it, then?' said she. 'I thought your reception of me was cold and indifferent!'

A kind and cordial embrace took place betwixt the relatives; and so light was Darsie's spirit, that he really felt himself more relieved, by getting quit of the embarrassments of the last half-hour, during which he conceived himself in danger of being persecuted by the attachment of a forward girl, than disappointed by the vanishing of so many day-dreams as he had been in the habit of encouraging during the time when the green-mantled maiden was goddess of his idolatry. He had been already flung from his romantic Pegasus, and was too happy at length to find himself with bones unbroken, though with his back on the ground. He was, besides, with all his whims and follies, a generous, kind-hearted youth, and was delighted to acknowledge so beautiful and amiable a relative, and to assure her in the warmest terms of his immediate affection and future protection, so soon as they should be extricated from their present situation. Smiles and tears mingled on Liliass's cheeks, like showers and sunshine in April weather.

'Out on me,' she said, 'that I should be so childish as to cry at what makes me so sincerely happy! since, God knows, family-love is what my heart has most longed after, and to which it has been most a stranger. My uncle says that you and I, Darsie, are but half Redgauntlets, and that the metal of which our father's family was made, has been softened to effeminacy in our mother's offspring.'

'Alas!' said Darsie, 'I know so little of our family story, that I almost doubted that I belonged to the House of Redgauntlet, although the chief of the family himself intimated so much to me.'

'The chief of the family!' said Liliass. 'You must know little of your own descent indeed, if you mean my uncle by that expression. You yourself, my dear Darsie, are the heir and representative of our ancient House, for our father was the elder brother—that brave and unhappy Sir Henry Darsie Redgauntlet, who suffered at Carlisle in the year 1746. He took the name of Darsie, in conjunction with his own, from our mother, heiress to a Cumberland family of great wealth and antiquity, of whose large estates you are the undeniable heir, although those of your father have been involved in the general doom of forfeiture. But all this must be necessarily unknown to you.'

'Indeed I hear it for the first time in my life,' answered Darsie.

'And you knew not that I was your sister?' said Liliass. 'No wonder you received me so coldly. What a strange, wild, forward young person you must have thought me—mixing myself in the fortunes of a stranger whom I had only once spoken to—corresponding with him by signs—Good Heaven! what can you have supposed me?'

'And how should I have come to the knowledge of our connexion?' said Darsie. 'You are aware I was not acquainted with it when we danced together at Brokenburn.'

'I saw that with concern, and fain I would have warned you,' answered Liliass; 'but I was closely watched, and before I could find or make an opportunity of coming to a full explanation with you on a subject so agitating, I was forced to leave the room. What I did say was, you may remember, a caution to leave the southern border, for I foresaw what has since happened. But since my uncle has had you in his power, I never doubted he had communicated to you our whole family history.'

'He has left me to learn it from you, Liliass; and assure yourself that I will hear it with more pleasure from your lips than from his. I have no reason to be pleased with his conduct towards me.'

'Of that,' said Liliass, 'you will judge better when you have heard what I have to tell you,' and she began her communication in the following manner.

CHAPTER XVIII

NARRATIVE OF DARSIE LATIMER, CONTINUED

'The House of Redgauntlet,' said the young lady, 'has for centuries been supposed to lie under a doom, which has rendered vain their courage, their talents, their ambition, and their wisdom. Often making a figure in history, they have been ever in the situation of men striving against both wind and tide, who distinguish themselves by their desperate exertions of strength, and their persevering endurance of toil, but without being able to advance themselves upon their course by either vigour or resolution. They pretend to trace this fatality to a legendary history, which I may tell you at a less busy moment.'

Darsie intimated that he had already heard the tragic story of Sir Alberick Redgauntlet.

'I need only say, then,' proceeded Liliass, 'that our father and uncle felt the family doom in its full extent. They were both possessed of considerable property, which was largely increased by our father's marriage, and were both devoted to the service of the unhappy House of Stuart; but (as our mother at least supposed) family considerations might have withheld her husband from joining openly in the affair of 1745, had not the high influence which the younger brother possessed over the elder, from his more decided energy of character, hurried him along with himself into that undertaking.'

'When, therefore, the enterprise came to the fatal conclusion which bereaved our father of his life and consigned his brother to exile, Lady Redgauntlet fled from the north of England, determined to break off all communication with her late husband's family, particularly his brother, whom she regarded as having, by their insane political enthusiasm, been the means of his untimely death; and determined that you, my brother, an infant, and that I, to whom she had just given birth, should be brought up as adherents of the present dynasty. Perhaps she was too hasty in this determination—too timidly anxious to exclude, if possible, from the knowledge of the very spot where we existed, a relation so nearly connected with us as our father's only brother. But you must make allowance for what she had suffered. See, brother,' she said, pulling her glove off, 'these five blood-specks on my arm are a mark by which mysterious Nature has impressed, on an unborn infant, a record of its father's violent death and its mother's miseries.' [Several persons have brought down to these days the impressions which Nature had thus recorded, when they were yet babes unborn. One lady of quality, whose father was long under sentence of death previous to the Rebellion, was marked on the back of the neck by the sign of a broad axe. Another whose kinsmen had been slain in battle and died on the scaffold to the number of seven, bore a child spattered on the right shoulder and down the arm with scarlet drops, as if of blood. Many other instances might be quoted.]

'You were not, then, born when my father suffered?' said Darsie.

'Alas, no!' she replied; 'nor were you a twelvemonth old. It was no wonder that my mother, after going through such scenes of agony, became irresistibly anxious for the sake of her children—of her son in particular; the more especially as the late Sir Henry, her husband, had, by a settlement of his affairs, confided the custody of the persons of her children, as well as the estates which descended to them, independently of those which fell under his forfeiture, to his brother Hugh, in whom he placed unlimited confidence.'

'But my mother had no reason to fear the operation of such a deed, conceived in favour of an attainted man,' said Darsie.

'True,' replied Liliass; 'but our uncle's attainder might have been reversed, like that of so many other persons, and our mother, who both feared and hated him, lived in continual terror that this would be the case, and that she should see the author, as she thought him, of her husband's death come armed with legal powers, and in a capacity to use them for the purpose of tearing her children from her protection. Besides, she feared, even in his incapacitated condition, the adventurous and pertinacious spirit of her brother-in-law, Hugh Redgauntlet, and felt assured that he would make some attempt to possess himself of the persons of the children. On the other hand, our uncle, whose proud disposition might, perhaps, have been soothed by the offer of her confidence, revolted against the distrustful and suspicious manner in which Lady Darsie Redgauntlet acted towards him. She basely abused, he said, the unhappy circumstances in which he was placed, in order to deprive him of his natural privilege of protecting and educating the infants, whom nature and law, and the will of their father, had committed to his charge, and he swore solemnly he would not submit to such an injury. Report of his threats was made to Lady Redgauntlet, and tended to increase those fears which proved but too well founded. While you and I, children at that time of two or three years old, were playing together in a walled orchard, adjacent to our mother's residence which she had fixed somewhere in Devonshire, my uncle suddenly scaled the wall with several men, and I was snatched up; and carried off to a boat

which waited for them. My mother, however, flew to your rescue, and as she seized on and held you fast, my uncle could not, as he has since told me, possess himself of your person, without using unmanly violence to his brother's widow. Of this he was incapable; and, as people began to assemble upon my mother's screaming, he withdrew, after darting upon you and her one of those fearful looks, which, it is said, remain with our family, as a fatal bequest of Sir Alberick, our ancestor.'

'I have some recollection of the scuffle which you mention,' said Darsie; 'and I think it was my uncle himself (since my uncle he is) who recalled the circumstance to my mind on a late occasion. I can now account for the guarded seclusion under which my poor mother lived—for her frequent tears, her starts of hysterical alarm, and her constant and deep melancholy. Poor lady! what a lot was hers, and what must have been her feelings when it approached to a close!'

'It was then that she adopted,' said Lillas, 'every precaution her ingenuity could suggest, to keep your very existence concealed from the person whom she feared—nay, from yourself; for she dreaded, as she is said often to have expressed herself, that the wildfire blood of Redgauntlet would urge you to unite your fortunes to those of your uncle, who was well known still to carry on political intrigues, which most other persons had considered as desperate. It was also possible that he, as well as others, might get his pardon, as government showed every year more lenity towards the remnant of the Jacobites, and then he might claim the custody of your person, as your legal guardian. Either of these events she considered as the direct road to your destruction.'

'I wonder she had not claimed the protection of Chancery for me,' said Darsie; 'or confided me to the care of some powerful friend.'

'She was on indifferent terms with her relations, on account of her marriage with our father,' said Lillas, 'and trusted more to secreting you from your uncle's attempts, than to any protection which law might afford against them. Perhaps she judged unwisely, but surely not unnaturally, for one rendered irritable by so many misfortunes and so many alarms. Samuel Griffiths, an eminent banker, and a worthy clergyman now dead were, I believe, the only persons whom she intrusted with the execution of her last will; and my uncle believes that she made them both swear to observe profound secrecy concerning your birth and pretensions, until you should come to the age of majority, and, in the meantime, to breed you up in the most private way possible, and that which was most likely to withdraw you from my uncle's observation.'

'And I have no doubt,' said Darsie, 'that betwixt change of name and habitation, they might have succeeded perfectly, but for the accident—lucky or unlucky, I know not which to term it—which brought me to Brokenburn, and into contact with Mr. Redgauntlet. I see also why I was warned against England, for in England—'

'In England alone, if I understand rightly,' said Miss Redgauntlet, 'the claims of your uncle to the custody of your person could have been enforced, in case of his being replaced in the ordinary rights of citizenship, either by the lenity of the government or by some change in it. In Scotland, where you possess no property, I understand his authority might; have been resisted, and measures taken to put you under the protection of the law. But, pray, think it not unlucky that you have taken the step of visiting Brokenburn—I feel confident that the consequences must be ultimately fortunate, for have they not already brought us into contact with each other?'

So saying, she held out her hand to her brother, who grasped it with a fondness of pressure very different from the manner in which they first clasped hands that morning. There was a moment's pause, while the hearts of both were overflowing with a feeling of natural affection, to which circumstances had hitherto rendered them strangers.

At length Darsie broke silence; 'I am ashamed,' he said, 'my dearest Lillas, that I have suffered you to talk so long about matters concerning myself only, while I remain ignorant of your story, and your present situation.'

'The former is none of the most interesting, nor the latter the most safe or agreeable,' answered Lillas; 'but now, my dearest brother, I shall have the inestimable support of your countenance and affection; and were I but sure that we could weather the formidable crisis which I find so close at hand, I should have little apprehensions for the future.'

'Let me know,' said Darsie, 'what our present situation is; and rely upon my utmost exertions both in your defence and my own. For what reason can my uncle desire to detain me a prisoner? If in mere opposition to the will of my mother, she has long been no more; and I see not why he should wish, at so much trouble and risk, to interfere with the free will of one, to whom a few months will give a privilege of acting for himself, with which he will have no longer any pretence to interfere.'

'My dearest Arthur,' answered Lillas—'for that name, as well as Darsie, properly belongs to you—it is the leading feature in my uncle's character, that he has applied every energy of his powerful mind to the service of the exiled family of Stuart. The death of his brother, the dilapidation of his own fortunes, have only added to his hereditary zeal for the House of Stuart a deep and almost personal hatred against the present reigning family. He is, in short, a political enthusiast of the most dangerous character, and proceeds in his agency with as much confidence, as if he felt himself the very Atlas who is alone capable of supporting a sinking cause.'

'And where or how did you, my Lillas, educated, doubtless, under his auspices, learn to have a different view of such subjects?'

'By a singular chance,' replied Lillas, 'in the nunnery where my uncle placed me. Although the abbess was a person exactly after his own heart, my education as a pensioner devolved much on an excellent old mother who had adopted the tenets of the Jansenists, with perhaps a still further tendency towards the reformed doctrines, than those of Port Royal. The mysterious secrecy with which she inculcated these tenets, gave them charms to my young mind, and I embraced them the rather that they were in direct opposition to the doctrines of the abbess, whom I hated so much for her severity, that I felt a childish delight in setting her control at defiance, and contradicting in my secret soul all that I was openly obliged to listen to with reverence. Freedom of religious opinion brings on, I suppose, freedom of political creed; for I had no sooner renounced the Pope's infallibility, than I began to question the doctrine of hereditary and indefeasible right. In short, strange as it may seem, I came out of a Parisian convent, not indeed an instructed Whig and Protestant, but with as much inclination to be so as if I had been bred up, like you, within the Presbyterian sound of Saint Giles's chimes.'

'More so, perhaps,' replied Darsie; 'for the nearer the church—the proverb is somewhat musty. But how did these liberal opinions of yours agree with the very opposite prejudices of my uncle?'

'They would have agreed like fire and water,' answered Lillas, 'had I suffered mine to become visible; but as that would have subjected me to constant reproach and upbraiding, or worse, I took great care to keep my own secret; so that occasional censures for coldness, and lack of zeal for the good cause, were the worst I had to undergo; and these were bad enough.'

'I applaud your caution,' said Darsie.

'You have reason,' replied his sister; 'but I got so terrible a specimen of my uncle's determination of character, before I had been acquainted with him for much more than a week, that it taught me at what risk I should contradict his humour. I will tell you the circumstances; for it will better teach you to appreciate the romantic and resolved nature of his character, than anything which I could state of his rashness and enthusiasm.'

'After I had been many a long year at the convent, I was removed from thence, and placed with a meagre old Scottish lady of high rank, the daughter of an unfortunate person whose head had in the year 1715 been placed on Temple Bar. She subsisted on a small pension from the French Court, aided by an occasional gratuity from the Stuarts; to which the annuity paid for my board formed a desirable addition. She was not ill-tempered, nor very covetous—neither beat me nor starved me—but she was so completely trammelled by rank and prejudices, so awfully profound in genealogy, and so bitterly keen, poor lady, in British, politics, that I sometimes thought it pity that the Hanoverians, who murdered, as she used to tell me, her poor dear father, had left his dear daughter in the land of the living. Delighted, therefore, was I, when my uncle made his appearance, and abruptly announced his purpose of conveying me to England. My extravagant joy at the idea of leaving Lady Rachel Rougedragon was somewhat qualified by observing the melancholy look, lofty demeanour, and commanding tone of my near relative. He held more communication with me on the journey, however, than consisted with his taciturn demeanour in general, and seemed anxious to ascertain my tone of character, and particularly in point of courage. Now, though I am a tamed Redgauntlet, yet I have still so much of our family spirit as enables me to be as composed in danger as most of my sex; and upon two occasions in the course of our journey—a threatened attack by banditti, and the overturn of our

carriage—I had the fortune so to conduct myself, as to convey to my uncle a very favourable idea of my intrepidity. Probably this encouraged him to put in execution the singular scheme which he had in agitation.

'Ere we reached London we changed our means of conveyance, and altered the route by which we approached the city, more than once; then, like a hare which doubles repeatedly at some distance from the seat she means to occupy, and at last leaps into her form from a distance so great as she can clear by a spring, we made a forced march, and landed in private and obscure lodgings in a little old street in Westminster, not far from the Cloisters.

'On the morning of the day on which we arrived my uncle went abroad, and did not return for some hours. Meantime I had no other amusement than to listen to the tumult of noises which succeeded each other, or reigned in confusion together during the whole morning. Paris I had thought the most noisy capital in the world, but Paris seemed midnight silence compared to London. Cannon thundered near and at a distance—drums, trumpets, and military music of every kind, rolled, flourished, and pierced the clouds, almost without intermission. To fill up the concert, bells pealed incessantly from a hundred steeples. The acclamations of an immense multitude were heard from time to time, like the roaring of a mighty ocean, and all this without my being able to glean the least idea of what was going on, for the windows of our apartment looked upon a waste backyard, which seemed totally deserted. My curiosity became extreme, for I was satisfied, at length, that it must be some festival of the highest order which called forth these incessant sounds.

'My uncle at length returned, and with him a man of an exterior singularly unprepossessing. I need not describe him to you, for—do not look round—he rides behind us at this moment.'

'That respectable person, Mr. Cristal Nixon, I suppose?' said Darsie.

'The same,' answered Lilius; 'make no gesture, that may intimate we are speaking of him.'

Darsie signified that he understood her, and she pursued her relation.

'They were both in full dress, and my uncle, taking a bundle from Nixon, said to me, "Lilius, I am come to carry you to see a grand ceremony—put on as hastily as you can the dress you will find in that parcel, and prepare to attend me." I found a female dress, splendid and elegant, but somewhat bordering upon the antique fashion. It might be that of England, I thought, and I went to my apartment full of curiosity, and dressed myself with all speed.

'My uncle surveyed me with attention—"She may pass for one of the flower-girls," he said to Nixon, who only answered with a nod.

'We left the house together, and such was their knowledge of the lanes, courts, and bypaths, that though there was the roar of a multitude in the broad streets, those which we traversed were silent and deserted; and the strollers whom we met, tired of gazing upon gayer figures, scarcely honoured us with a passing look, although, at any other time, we should, among these vulgar suburbs, have attracted a troublesome share of observation. We crossed at length a broad street, where many soldiers were on guard, while others, exhausted with previous duty, were eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping beside their piled arms.

"One day, Nixon," whispered my uncle, "we will make these redcoated gentry stand to their muskets more watchfully."

"Or it will be the worse for them," answered his attendant, in a voice as unpleasant as his physiognomy.

'Unquestioned and unchallenged by any one, we crossed among the guards; and Nixon tapped thrice at a small postern door in a huge ancient building, which was straight before us. It opened, and we entered without my perceiving by whom we were admitted. A few dark and narrow passages at length conveyed us into an immense Gothic hall, the magnificence of which baffles my powers of description.

'It was illuminated by ten thousand wax lights, whose splendour at first dazzled my eyes, coming as we did from these dark and secret avenues. But when my sight began to become steady, how shall I describe what I beheld? Beneath were huge ranges of tables, occupied by princes and nobles in their robes of state—high officers of the crown, wearing their dresses and badges of authority—reverend prelates and judges, the sages of the church and law, in their more sombre, yet not less awful robes—with others whose antique and striking costume announced their importance, though I could not even guess who they might be. But at length the truth burst on me at once—it was, and the murmurs around confirmed it, the Coronation Feast. At a table above the rest, and extending across the upper end of the hall, sat enthroned the youthful sovereign himself, surrounded by the princes of the blood, and other dignitaries, and receiving the suit and homage of his subjects. Heralds and pursuivants, blazing in their fantastic yet splendid armorial habits, and pages of honour, gorgeously arrayed in the garb of other days, waited upon the princely banqueters. In the galleries with which this spacious hall was surrounded, shone all, and more than all, that my poor imagination could conceive, of what was brilliant in riches, or captivating in beauty. Countless rows of ladies, whose diamonds, jewels, and splendid attire were their least powerful charms, looked down from their lofty seats on the rich scene beneath, themselves forming a show as dazzling and as beautiful as that of which they were spectators. Under these galleries, and behind the banqueting tables, were a multitude of gentlemen, dressed as if to attend a court, but whose garb, although rich enough to have adorned a royal drawing room, could not distinguish them in such a high scene as this. Amongst these we wandered for a few minutes, undistinguished and unregarded. I saw several young persons dressed as I was, so was under no embarrassment from the singularity of my habit, and only rejoiced, as I hung on my uncle's arm, at the magical splendour of such a scene, and at his goodness for procuring me the pleasure of beholding it.

'By and by, I perceived that my uncle had acquaintances among those who were under the galleries, and seemed, like ourselves, to be mere spectators of the solemnity. They recognized each other with a single word, sometimes only with a grip of the hand-exchanged some private signs, doubtless—and gradually formed a little group, in the centre of which we were placed.

"Is it not a grand sight, Lilius?" said my uncle. "All the noble, and all the wise, and all the wealthy of Britain, are there assembled."

"It is indeed," said I, "all that my mind could have fancied of regal power and splendour."

"Girl," he whispered,—and my uncle can make his whispers as terribly emphatic as his thundering voice or his blighting look—"all that is noble and worthy in this fair land are there assembled—but it is to bend like slaves and sycophants before the throne of a new usurper."

'I looked at him, and the dark hereditary frown of our unhappy ancestor was black upon his brow.

"For God's sake," I whispered, "consider where we are."

"Fear nothing," he said; "we are surrounded by friends." As he proceeded, his strong and muscular frame shook with suppressed agitation. "See," he said, "yonder bends Norfolk, renegade to his Catholic faith; there stoops the Bishop of —, traitor to the Church of England; and,—shame of shames! yonder the gigantic form of Errol bows his head before the grandson of his father's murderer! But a sign shall be seen this night amongst them—MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, shall be read on these walls, as distinctly as the spectral handwriting made them visible on those of Belshazzar!"

"For God's sake," said I, dreadfully alarmed, "it is impossible you can meditate violence in such a presence!"

"None is intended, fool," he answered, "nor can the slightest mischance happen, provided you will rally your boasted courage, and obey my directions. But do it coolly and quickly, for there are a hundred lives at stake."

"Alas! what—can I do?" I asked in the utmost terror.

"Only be prompt to execute my bidding," said he; "it is but to lift a glove—Here, hold this in your hand—throw the train of your dress over it, be firm, composed, and ready—or, at all events, I step forward myself."

"If there is no violence designed," I said, taking, mechanically, the iron glove he put into my hand.

"I could not conceive his meaning; but, in the excited state of mind in which I beheld him, I was convinced that disobedience on my part would lead to some wild explosion. I felt, from the emergency of the occasion, a sudden presence of mind, and resolved to do anything that might avert violence and bloodshed. I was not long held in suspense. A loud flourish of trumpets and the voice of heralds were mixed with the clatter of horses' hoofs, while a champion, armed at all points like those I had read of in romances, attended by squires, pages, and the whole retinue of chivalry, pranced forward, mounted upon a barbed steed. His challenge, in defiance of all who dared impeach the title of the new sovereign, was recited aloud—once, and again."

"Rush in at the third sounding," said my uncle to me; "bring me the parader's gage, and leave mine in lieu of it."

'I could not see how this was to be done, as we were surrounded by people on all sides. But, at the third sounding of the trumpets, a lane opened as if by word of command, betwixt me and the champion, and my uncle's voice said, "Now, Lilius, NOW!"

'With a swift and yet steady step, and with a presence of mind for which I have never since been able to account, I discharged the perilous commission. I was hardly seen, I believe, as I exchanged the pledges of battle, and in an instant retired. "Nobly done, my girl!" said my uncle, at whose side I found myself, shrouded as I was before, by the interposition of the bystanders. "Cover our retreat, gentlemen," he whispered to those around him.

'Room was made for us to approach the wall, which seemed to open, and we were again involved in the dark passages through which we had formerly passed. In a small anteroom, my uncle stopped, and hastily muffling me in a mantle which was lying there, we passed the guards—threaded the labyrinth of empty streets and courts, and reached our retired lodgings without attracting the least attention.'

'I have often heard,' said Darsie, 'that a female, supposed to be a man in disguise,—and yet, Lillas, you do not look very masculine,—had taken up the champion's gauntlet at the present king's coronation, and left in its place a gage of battle, with a paper, offering to accept the combat, provided a fair field should be allowed for it. I have hitherto considered it as an idle tale. I little thought how nearly I was interested in the actors of a scene so daring. How could you have courage to go through with it?' [See Note 9.]

'Had I had leisure for reflection,' answered his sister, 'I should have refused, from a mixture of principle and of fear. But, like many people who do daring actions, I went on because I had not time to think of retreating. The matter was little known, and it is said the king had commanded that it should not be further inquired into;—from prudence, as I suppose, and lenity, though my uncle chooses to ascribe the forbearance of the Elector of Hanover, as he calls him, sometimes to pusillanimity, and sometimes to a presumptuous scorn of the faction who opposes his title.'

'And have your subsequent agencies under this frantic enthusiast,' said Darsie, 'equalled this in danger?'

'No—nor in importance,' replied Lillas; 'though I have witnessed much of the strange and desperate machinations, by which, in spite of every obstacle, and in contempt of every danger, he endeavours to awaken the courage of a broken party. I have traversed, in his company, all England and Scotland, and have visited the most extraordinary and contrasted scenes; now lodging at the castles of the proud gentry of Cheshire and Wales, where the retired aristocrats, with opinions as antiquated as their dwellings and their manners, still continue to nourish Jacobitical principles; and the next week, perhaps, spent among outlawed smugglers, or Highland banditti. I have known my uncle often act the part of a hero, and sometimes that of a mere vulgar conspirator, and turn himself, with the most surprising flexibility, into all sorts of shapes to attract proselytes to his cause.'

'Which, in the present day,' said Darsie, 'he finds, I presume, no easy task.'

'So difficult,' said Lillas, 'that, I believe, he has, at different times, disgusted with the total falling away of some friends, and the coldness of others, been almost on the point of resigning his undertaking. How often I have I known him affect an open brow and a jovial manner, joining in the games of the gentry, and even in the sports of the common people, in order to invest himself with a temporary degree of popularity; while, in fact, his heart was bursting to witness what he called the degeneracy of the times, the decay of activity among the aged, and the want of zeal in the rising generation. After the day has been spent in the hardest exercise, he has spent the night in pacing his solitary chamber, bewailing the downfall of the cause, and wishing for the bullet of Dundee or the axe of Balmerino.'

'A strange delusion,' said Darsie; 'and it is wonderful that it does not yield to the force of reality.'

'Ah, but,' replied Lillas, 'realities of late have seemed to flatter his hopes. The general dissatisfaction with the peace—the unpopularity of the minister, which has extended itself even to the person of his master—the various uproars which have disturbed the peace of the metropolis, and a general state of disgust and disaffection, which seems to affect the body of the nation, have given unwonted encouragement to the expiring hopes of the Jacobites, and induced many, both at the Court of Rome, and, if it can be called so, of the Pretender, to lend a more favourable ear than they had hitherto done to the insinuations of those who, like my uncle, hope, when hope is lost to all but themselves. Nay, I really believe that at this moment they meditate some desperate effort. My uncle has been doing all in his power, of late, to conciliate the affections of those wild communities that dwell on the Solway, over whom our family possessed a seigniorial interest before the forfeiture, and amongst whom, on the occasion of 1745, our unhappy father's interest, with his own, raised a considerable body of men. But they are no longer willing to obey his summons; and, as one apology among others, they allege your absence as their natural head and leader. This has increased his desire to obtain possession of your person, and, if he possibly can, to influence your mind, so as to obtain your authority to his proceedings.'

'That he shall never obtain,' answered Darsie; 'my principles and my prudence alike forbid such a step. Besides, it would be totally unavailing to his purpose. Whatever these people may pretend, to evade your uncle's importunities, they cannot, at this time of day, think of subjecting their necks again to the feudal yoke, which was effectually broken by the act of 1748, abolishing vassalage and hereditary jurisdictions.'

'Aye, but that my uncle considers as the act of a usurping government,' said Lillas.

'Like enough he may think so,' answered her brother, 'for he is a superior, and loses his authority by, the enactment. But the question is, what the vassals will think of it who have gained their freedom from feudal slavery, and have now enjoyed that freedom for many years? However, to cut the matter short, if five hundred men would rise at the wagging of my finger, that finger shall not be raised in a cause which I disapprove of, and upon that my uncle may reckon.'

'But you may temporize,' said Lillas, upon whom the idea of her uncle's displeasure made evidently a strong impression,—'you may temporize, as most of the gentry in this country do, and let the bubble burst of itself; for it is singular how few of them venture to oppose my uncle directly. I entreat you to avoid direct collision with him. To hear you, the head of the House of Redgauntlet, declare against the family of Stuart, would either break his heart, or drive him to some act of desperation.'

'Yes, but, Lillas, you forget that the consequences of such an act of complaisance might be, that the House of Redgauntlet and I might lose both our heads at one blow.'

'Alas!' said she, 'I had forgotten that danger. I have grown familiar with perilous intrigues, as the nurses in a pest-house are said to become accustomed to the air around them, till they forget even that it is noisome.'

'And yet,' said Darsie, 'if I could free myself from him without coming to an open rupture. Tell me, Lillas, do you think it possible that he can have any immediate attempt in view?'

'To confess the truth,' answered Lillas, 'I cannot doubt that he has. There has been an unusual bustle among the Jacobites of late. They have hopes, as I told you, from circumstances unconnected with their own strength. Just before you came to the country, my uncle's desire to find you out became, if possible, more eager than ever—he talked of men to be presently brought together, and of your name and influence for raising them. At this very time your first visit to Brokenburn took place. A suspicion arose in my uncle's mind, that you might be the youth he sought, and it was strengthened by papers and letters which the rascal Nixon did not hesitate to take from your pocket. Yet a mistake might have occasioned a fatal explosion; and my uncle therefore posted to Edinburgh to follow out the clue he had obtained, and fished enough of information from old Mr. Fairford to make him certain that you were the person he sought. Meanwhile, and at the expense of some personal and perhaps too bold exertion, I endeavoured, through your friend young Fairford, to put you on your guard.'

'Without success,' said Darsie, blushing under his mask when he recollected how he had mistaken his sister's meaning.

'I do not wonder that my warning was fruitless,' said she; 'the thing was doomed to be. Besides, your escape would have been difficult. You were dogged the whole time you were at the Shepherd's Bush and at Mount Sharon, by a spy who scarcely ever left you.'

'The wretch, little Benjie!' exclaimed Darsie. 'I will wring the monkey's neck round, the first time we meet.'

'It was he indeed who gave constant information of your motions to Cristal Nixon,' said Lillas.

'And Cristal Nixon—I owe him, too, a day's work in harvest,' said Darsie; 'for I am mistaken if he was not the person that struck me down when I was made prisoner among the rioters.'

'Like enough; for he has a head and hand for any villany. My uncle was very angry about it; for though the riot was made to have an opportunity of carrying you off in the confusion, as well as to put the fishermen at variance with the public law, it would have been his last thought to have injured a hair of your head. But Nixon has insinuated himself into all my uncle's secrets, and some of these are so dark and dangerous, that though there are few things he would not dare, I doubt if he dare quarrel with him. And yet I know that of Cristal would move my uncle to pass his sword through his body.'

'What is it, for Heaven's sake?', said Darsie. 'I have a particular desire for wishing to know.'

'The old, brutal desperado, whose face and mind are a libel upon human nature, has had the insolence to speak to his master's niece as one whom he was at liberty to admire; and when I turned on him with the anger and contempt he merited, the wretch grumbled out something, as if he held the destiny of our family in his hand.'

'I thank you, Liliass,' said Darsie, eagerly,—'I thank you with all my heart for this communication. I have blamed myself as a Christian man for the indescribable longing I felt from the first moment I saw that rascal, to send a bullet through his head; and now you have perfectly accounted for and justified this very laudable wish. I wonder my uncle, with the powerful sense you describe him to be possessed of, does not see through such a villain.'

'I believe he knows him to be capable of much evil,' answered Liliass—'selfish, obdurate, brutal, and a man-hater. But then he conceives him to possess the qualities most requisite for a conspirator—undaunted courage, imperturbable coolness and address, and inviolable fidelity. In the last particular he may be mistaken. I have heard Nixon blamed for the manner in which our poor father was taken after Cullogen.'

'Another reason for my innate aversion,' said Darsie, but I will be on my guard with him.'

'See, he observes us closely,' said Liliass. 'What a thing is conscience! He knows we are now speaking of him, though he cannot have heard a word that we have said.'

It seemed as if she had guessed truly; for Cristal Nixon at that moment rode up to them, and said, with an affectation of jocularity, which sat very ill on his sullen features, 'Come, young ladies, you have had time enough for your chat this morning, and your tongues, I think, must be tired. We are going to pass a village, and I must beg you to separate—you, Miss Liliass, to ride a little behind—and you, Mrs., or Miss, or Master, whichever you choose to be called, to be jogging a little before.'

Liliass checked her horse without speaking, but not until she had given her brother an expressive look, recommending caution; to which he replied by a signal indicating that he understood and would comply with her request.

CHAPTER XIX

NARRATIVE OF DARSIE LATIMER, CONTINUED

Left to his solitary meditations, Darsie (for we will still term Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that ilk by the name to which the reader is habituated) was surprised not only at the alteration of his own state and condition, but at the equanimity with which he felt himself disposed to view all these vicissitudes.

His fever—fit of love had departed like a morning's dream, and left nothing behind but a painful sense of shame, and a resolution to be more cautious ere he again indulged in such romantic visions. His station in society was changed from that of a wandering, unowned youth, in whom none appeared to take an interest excepting the strangers by whom he had been educated, to the heir of a noble house, possessed of such influence and such property, that it seemed as if the progress or arrest of important political events were likely to depend upon his resolution. Even this sudden elevation, the more than fulfilment of those wishes which had haunted him ever since he was able to form a wish on the subject, was contemplated by Darsie, volatile as his disposition was, without more than a few thrills of gratified vanity.

It is true, there were circumstances in his present situation to counterbalance such high advantages. To be a prisoner in the hands of a man so determined as his uncle, was no agreeable consideration, when he was calculating how he might best dispute his pleasure and refuse to join him in the perilous enterprise which he seemed to meditate. Outlawed and desperate himself, Darsie could not doubt that his uncle was surrounded by men capable of anything—that he was restrained by no personal considerations—and therefore what degree of compulsion he might apply to his brother's son, or in what manner he might feel at liberty to punish his contumacy, should he disavow the Jacobite cause, must depend entirely upon the limits of his own conscience; and who was to answer for the conscience of a heated enthusiast who considers opposition to the party he has espoused, as treason to the welfare of his country? After a short interval, Cristal Nixon was pleased to throw some light upon the subject which agitated him.

When that grim satellite rode up without ceremony close to Darsie's side, the latter felt his very flesh creep with abhorrence, so little was he able to endure his presence, since the story of Liliass had added to his instinctive hatred of the man.

His voice, too, sounded like that of a screech-owl, as he said, 'So, my young cock of the north, you now know it all, and no doubt are blessing your uncle for stirring you up to such an honourable action.'

'I will acquaint my uncle with my sentiments on the subject, before I make them known to any one else,' said Darsie, scarcely prevailing on his tongue to utter even these few words in a civil manner.

'Umph,' murmured Cristal betwixt his teeth. 'Close as wax, I see; and perhaps not quite so pliable. But take care, my pretty youth,' he added, scornfully; 'Hugh Redgauntlet will prove a rough colt-breaker—he will neither spare whipcord nor spur-rowel, I promise you.'

'I have already said, Mr. Nixon, answered Darsie, 'that I will canvass those matters of which my sister has informed me, with my uncle himself, and with no other person.'

'Nay, but a word of friendly advice would do you no harm, young master,' replied Nixon. 'Old Redgauntlet is apter at a blow than a word—likely to bite before he barks—the true man for giving Scarborough warning, first knock you down, then bid you stand. So, methinks, a little kind warning as to consequences were not amiss, lest they come upon you unawares.'

'If the warning is really kind, Mr. Nixon,' said the young man, 'I will hear it thankfully; and indeed, if otherwise, I must listen to it whether I will or no, since I have at present no choice of company or of conversation.'

'Nay, I have but little to say,' said Nixon, affecting to give to his sullen and dogged manner the appearance of an honest bluntness; 'I am as little apt to throw away words as any one. But here is the question—Will you join heart and hand with your uncle, or no?'

'What if I should say Aye?' said Darsie, determined, if possible, to conceal his resolution from this man.

'Why, then,' said Nixon, somewhat surprised at the readiness of his answer, 'all will go smooth, of course—you will take share in this noble undertaking, and, when it succeeds, you will exchange your open helmet for an earl's coronet perhaps.'

'And how if it fails?' said Darsie.

'Thereafter as it may be,' said Nixon; 'they who play at bowls must meet with rubbers.'

'Well, but suppose, then, I have some foolish tenderness for my windpipe, and that when my uncle proposes the adventure to me I should say No—how then, Mr. Nixon?'

'Why, then, I would have you look to yourself, young master. There are sharp laws in France against refractory pupils—LETTRES DE CACHET are easily come by when such men as we are concerned with interest themselves in the matter.'

'But we are not in France,' said poor Darsie, through whose blood ran a cold shivering at the idea of a French prison.

'A fast-sailing lugger will soon bring you there though, snug stowed under hatches, like a cask of moonlight.'

'But the French are at peace with us,' said Darsie, 'and would not dare'—

'Why, who would ever hear of you?' interrupted Nixon; 'do you imagine that a foreign court would call you up for judgement, and put the sentence of imprisonment in the COURRIER DE L'EUROPE, as they do at the Old Bailey? No, no, young gentleman—the gates of the Bastille, and of Mont Saint Michel, and the Castle of Vincennes, move on d—d easy hinges when they let folk in—not the least jar is heard. There are cool cells there for hot heads—as calm, and quiet, and dark, as you could wish in Bedlam—and the dismissal comes when the carpenter brings the prisoner's coffin, and not sooner.'

'Well, Mr. Nixon,' said Darsie, affecting a cheerfulness which he was far from feeling, 'mine is a hard case—a sort of hanging choice, you will allow—since I must either offend our own government here and run the risk of my life for doing so, or be doomed to the dungeons of another country, whose laws I have never offended since I have never trod its soil—Tell me what you would do if you were in my place.

'I'll tell you that when I am there,' said Nixon, and, checking his horse, fell back to the rear of the little party.

'It is evident,' thought the young man, 'that the villain believes me completely noosed, and perhaps has the ineffable impudence to suppose that my sister must eventually succeed to the possessions which have occasioned my loss of freedom, and that his own influence over the destinies of our unhappy family may secure him possession of the heiress; but he shall perish by my hand first!—I must now be on the alert to make my escape, if possible, before I am forced on shipboard. Blind Willie will not, I think, desert me without an effort on my behalf, especially if he has learned that I am the son of his late unhappy patron. What a change is mine! Whilst I possessed neither rank nor fortune, I lived safely and unknown, under the protection of the kind and respectable friends whose hearts Heaven had moved towards me. Now that I am the head of an honourable house, and that enterprises of the most daring character await my decision, and retainers and vassals seem ready to rise at my beck, my safety consists chiefly in the attachment of a blind stroller!'

While he was revolving these things in his mind, and preparing himself for the interview with his uncle which could not but be a stormy one, he saw Hugh Redgauntlet come riding slowly back to meet them without any attendants. Cristal Nixon rode up as he approached, and, as they met, fixed on him a look of inquiry.

'The fool, Crackenthorp,' said Redgauntlet, 'has let strangers into his house. Some of his smuggling comrades, I believe; we must ride slowly to give him time to send them packing.'

'Did you see any of your friends?' said Cristal.

'Three, and have letters from many more. They are unanimous on the subject you wot of—and the point must be conceded to them, or, far as the matter has gone, it will go no further.'

'You will hardly bring the father to stoop to his flock,' said Cristal, with a sneer.

'He must and shall!' answered Redgauntlet, briefly. 'Go to the front, Cristal—I would speak with my nephew. I trust, Sir Arthur Redgauntlet, you are satisfied with the manner in which I have discharged my duty to your sister?'

'There can be no fault found to her manners or sentiments,' answered Darsie; 'I am happy in knowing a relative so amiable.'

'I am glad of it,' answered Mr. Redgauntlet. 'I am no nice judge of women's qualifications, and my life has been dedicated to one great object; so that since she left France she has had but little opportunity of improvement. I have subjected her, however, as little as possible to the inconveniences and privations of my wandering and dangerous life. From time to time she has resided for weeks and months with families of honour and respectability, and I am glad that she has, in, your opinion, the manners and behaviour which become her birth.'

Darsie expressed himself perfectly satisfied, and there was a little pause, which Redgauntlet broke by solemnly addressing his nephew.

'For you, my nephew, I also hoped to have done much. The weakness and timidity of your mother sequestered you from my care, or it would have been my pride and happiness to have trained up the son of my unhappy brother in those paths of honour in which our ancestors have always trod.'

'Now comes the storm,' thought Darsie to himself, and began to collect his thoughts, as the cautious master of a vessel furls his sails and makes his ship snug when he discerns the approaching squall.

'My mother's conduct in respect to me might be misjudged,' he said, 'but it was founded on the most anxious affection.'

'Assuredly,' said his uncle, 'and I have no wish to reflect on her memory, though her mistrust has done so much injury, I will not say to me, but to the cause of my unhappy country. Her scheme was, I think, to have made you that wretched pettifogging being, which they still continue to call in derision by the once respectable name of a Scottish Advocate; one of those mongrel things that must creep to learn the ultimate decision of his causes to the bar of a foreign court, instead of pleading before the independent and august Parliament of his own native kingdom.'

'I did prosecute the study of law for a year or two,' said Darsie, 'but I found I had neither taste nor talents for the science.'

'And left it with scorn, doubtless,' said Mr. Redgauntlet. 'Well, I now hold up to you, my dearest nephew, a more worthy object of ambition. Look eastward—do you see a monument standing on yonder plain, near a hamlet?'

Darsie replied that he did,

'The hamlet is called Burgh-upon-Sands, and yonder monument is erected to the memory of the tyrant Edward I. The just hand of Providence overtook him on that spot, as he was leading his bands to complete the subjugation of Scotland whose civil dissensions began under his accursed policy. The glorious career of Bruce might have been stopped in its outset; the field of Bannockburn might have remained a bloodless turf, if God had not removed, in the very crisis, the crafty and bold tyrant who had so long been Scotland's scourge. Edward's grave is the cradle of our national freedom. It is within sight of that great landmark of our liberty that I have to propose to you an undertaking, second in honour and importance to none since the immortal Bruce stabbed the Red Comyn, and grasped with his yet bloody hand the independent crown of Scotland.'

He paused for an answer; but Darsie, overawed by the energy of his manner, and unwilling to commit himself by a hasty explanation, remained silent.

'I will not suppose,' said Hugh Redgauntlet, after a pause, 'that you are either so dull as not to comprehend the import of my words—or so dastardly as to be dismayed by my proposal—or so utterly degenerate from the blood and sentiments of your ancestors, as not to feel my summons as the horse hears the war-trumpet.'

'I will not pretend to misunderstand you, sir,' said Darsie; 'but an enterprise directed against a dynasty now established for three reigns requires strong arguments, both in point of justice and of expediency, to recommend it to men of conscience and prudence.'

'I will not,' said Redgauntlet, while his eyes sparkled with anger, '—I will not hear you speak a word against the justice of that enterprise, for which your oppressed country calls with the voice of a parent, entreating her children for aid—or against that noble revenge which your father's blood demands from his dishonoured grave. His skull is yet standing over the Rikargate, [The northern gate of Carlisle was long garnished with the heads of the Scottish rebels executed in 1746.] and even its bleak and mouldered jaws command you to be a man. I ask you, in the name of God and of your country, will you draw your sword and go with me to Carlisle, were it but to lay your father's head, now the perch of the obscene owl and carrion crow and the scoff of every ribald clown, in consecrated earth as befits his long ancestry?'

Darsie, unprepared to answer an appeal urged with so much passion, and not doubting a direct refusal would cost him his liberty or life, was again silent.

'I see,' said his uncle, in a more composed tone, 'that it is not deficiency of spirit, but the grovelling habits of a confined education, among the poor-spirited class you were condemned to herd with, that keeps you silent. You scarce yet believe yourself a Redgauntlet; your pulse has not yet learned the genuine throb that answers to the summons of honour and of patriotism.'

'I trust,' replied Darsie, at last, 'that I shall never be found indifferent to the call of either; but to answer them with effect—even were I convinced that they now sounded in my ear—I must see some reasonable hope of success in the desperate enterprise in which you would involve me. I look around me, and I see a settled government—an established authority—a born Briton on the throne—the very Highland mountaineers, upon whom alone the trust of the exiled family reposed, assembled into regiments which act under the orders of the existing dynasty. [The Highland regiments were first employed by the celebrated Earl of Chatham, who assumed to himself no small degree of praise for having called forth to the support of the country and the government, the valour which had been too often directed against both.] France has been utterly dismayed by the tremendous lessons of the last war, and will hardly provoke another. All without and within the kingdom is adverse to encountering a hopeless struggle, and you alone, sir, seem willing to undertake a desperate enterprise.'

'And would undertake it were it ten times more desperate; and have agitated it when ten times the obstacles were interposed. Have I forgot my brother's blood? Can I—dare I even now repeat the Pater Noster, since my enemies and the murderers remain unforgiven? Is there an art I have not practised—a privation to

which I have not submitted, to bring on the crisis, which I now behold arrived? Have I not been a vowed and a devoted man, forgoing every comfort of social life, renouncing even the exercise of devotion unless when I might name in prayer my prince and country, submitting to everything to make converts to this noble cause? Have I done all this, and shall I now stop short?' Darsie was about to interrupt him, but he pressed his hand affectionately upon his shoulder, and enjoining, or rather imploring, silence, 'Peace,' he said, 'heir of my ancestors' fame—heir of all my hopes and wishes. Peace, son of my slaughtered brother! I have sought for thee, and mourned for thee, as a mother for an only child. Do not let me again lose you in the moment when you are restored to my hopes. Believe me, I distrust so much my own impatient temper, that I entreat you, as the dearest boon, do naught to awaken it at this crisis.'

Darsie was not sorry to reply that his respect for the person of his relation would induce him to listen to all which he had to apprise him of, before he formed any definite resolution upon the weighty subjects of deliberation which he proposed to him.

'Deliberation!' repeated Redgauntlet, impatiently; 'and yet it is not ill said. I wish there had been more warmth in thy reply, Arthur; but I must recollect, were an eagle bred in a falcon's mew and hooded like a reclaimed hawk, he could not at first gaze steadily on the sun. Listen to me, my dearest Arthur. The state of this nation no more implies prosperity, than the florid colour of a feverish patient is a symptom of health. All is false and hollow. The apparent success of Chatham's administration has plunged the country deeper in debt than all the barren acres of Canada are worth, were they as fertile as Yorkshire—the dazzling lustre of the victories of Minden and Quebec have been dimmed by the disgrace of the hasty peace—by the war, England, at immense expense, gained nothing but honour, and that she has gratuitously resigned. Many eyes, formerly cold and indifferent, are now looking towards the line of our ancient and rightful monarchs, as the only refuge in the approaching storm—the rich are alarmed—the nobles are disgusted—the populace are inflamed—and a band of patriots, whose measures are more safe than their numbers are few, have resolved to set up King Charles's standard.'

'But the military,' said Darsie—'how can you, with a body of unarmed and disorderly insurgents, propose to encounter a regular army. The Highlanders are now totally disarmed.'

'In a great measure, perhaps,' answered Redgauntlet; 'but the policy which raised the Highland regiments has provided for that. We have already friends in these corps; nor can we doubt for a moment what their conduct will be when the white cockade is once more mounted. The rest of the standing army has been greatly reduced since the peace; and we reckon confidently on our standard being joined by thousands of the disbanded troops.'

'Alas!' said Darsie, 'and is it upon such vague hopes as these, the inconstant humour of a crowd or of a disbanded soldiery, that men of honour are invited to risk their families, their property, their life?'

'Men of honour, boy,' said Redgauntlet, his eyes glancing with impatience, 'set life, property, family, and all at stake, when that honour commands it! We are not now weaker than when seven men, landing in the wilds of Moidart, shook the throne of the usurper till it tottered—won two pitched fields, besides overrunning one kingdom and the half of another, and, but for treachery, would have achieved what their venturous successors are now to attempt in their turn.'

'And will such an attempt be made in serious earnest?' said Darsie. 'Excuse me, my uncle, if I can scarce believe a fact so extraordinary. Will there really be found men of rank and consequence sufficient to renew the adventure of 1745?'

'I will not give you my confidence by halves, Sir Arthur,' replied his uncle—'Look at that scroll—what say you to these names?—Are they not the flower of the western shires—of Wales of Scotland?'

'The paper contains indeed the names of many that are great and noble,' replied Darsie, after perusing it; 'but—'

'But what?' asked his uncle, impatiently; 'do you doubt the ability of those nobles and gentlemen to furnish the aid in men and money at which they are rated?'

'Not their ability certainly,' said Darsie, 'for of that I am no competent judge; but I see in this scroll the name of Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that ilk, rated at a hundred men and upwards—I certainly am ignorant how he is to redeem that pledge.'

'I will be responsible for the men,' replied Hugh Redgauntlet.

'But, my dear uncle,' added Darsie, 'I hope for your sake that the other individuals whose names are here written, have had more acquaintance with your plan than I have been indulged with.'

'For thee and thine I can be myself responsible,' said Redgauntlet; 'for if thou hast not the courage to head the force of thy house, the leading shall pass to other hands, and thy inheritance shall depart from thee like vigour and verdure from a rotten branch. For these honourable persons, a slight condition there is which they annex to their friendship—something so trifling that it is scarce worthy of mention. This boon granted to them by him who is most interested, there is no question they will take the field in the manner there stated.'

Again Darsie perused the paper, and felt himself still less inclined to believe that so many men of family and fortune were likely to embark in an enterprise so fatal. It seemed as if some rash plotter had put down at a venture the names of all whom common report tainted with Jacobitism; or if it was really the act of the individuals named, he suspected that they must be aware of some mode of excusing themselves from compliance with its purport. It was impossible, he thought, that Englishmen, of large fortune, who had failed to join Charles when he broke into England at the head of a victorious army, should have the least thoughts of encouraging a descent when circumstances were so much less propitious. He therefore concluded the enterprise would fall to pieces of itself, and that his best way was, in the meantime, to remain silent, unless the actual approach of a crisis (which might, however, never arrive) should compel him to give a downright refusal to his uncle's proposition; and if, in the interim, some door for escape should be opened, he resolved within himself not to omit availing himself of it.

Hugh Redgauntlet watched his nephew's looks for some time, and then, as if arriving from some other process of reasoning at the same conclusion, he said, 'I have told you, Sir Arthur, that I do not urge your immediate accession to my proposal; indeed the consequences of a refusal would be so dreadful to yourself, so destructive to all the hopes which I have nursed, that I would not risk, by a moment's impatience, the object of my whole life. Yes, Arthur, I have been a self-denying hermit at one time—at another, the apparent associate of outlaws and desperadoes—at another, the subordinate agent of men whom I felt in every way my inferiors—not for any selfish purpose of my own, no, not even to win for myself the renown of being the principal instrument in restoring my king and freeing my country. My first wish on earth is for that restoration and that freedom—my next, that my nephew, the representative of my house and of the brother of my love, may have the advantage and the credit of all my efforts in the good cause. But,' he added, darting on Darsie one of his withering frowns, 'if Scotland and my father's house cannot stand and flourish together, then perish the very name of Redgauntlet! perish the son of my brother, with every recollection of the glories of my family, of the affections of my youth, rather than my country's cause should be injured in the tithing of a barley-corn! The spirit of Sir Alberick is alive within me at this moment,' he continued, drawing up his stately form and sitting erect in his saddle, while he pressed his finger against his forehead; 'and if you yourself crossed my path in opposition, I swear, by the mark that darkens my brow, that a new deed should be done—a new doom should be deserved!'

He was silent, and his threats were uttered in a tone of voice so deeply resolute, that Darsie's heart sank within him, when he reflected on the storm of passion which he must encounter, if he declined to join his uncle in a project to which prudence and principle made him equally adverse. He had scarce any hope left but in temporizing until he could make his escape, and resolved to avail himself for that purpose of the delay which his uncle seemed not unwilling to grant. The stern, gloomy look of his companion became relaxed by degrees, and presently afterwards he made a sign to Miss Redgauntlet to join the party, and began a forced conversation on ordinary topics; in the course of which Darsie observed that his sister seemed to speak under the most cautious restraint, weighing every word before she uttered it, and always permitting her uncle to give the tone to the conversation, though of the most trifling kind. This seemed to him (such an opinion had he already entertained of his sister's good sense and firmness) the strongest proof he had yet received of his uncle's peremptory character, since he saw it observed with so much deference by a young person whose sex might have given her privileges, and who seemed by no means deficient either in spirit or firmness.

The little cavalcade was now approaching the house of Father Crackenthorp, situated, as the reader knows, by the side of the Solway, and not far distant from a rude pier, near which lay several fishing-boats, which frequently acted in a different capacity. The house of the worthy publican was also adapted to the various occupations which he carried on, being a large scrambling assemblage of cottages attached to a house of two stories, roofed with flags of sandstone—the original mansion, to which the extensions of Mr. Crackenthorp's trade had occasioned his making many additions. Instead of the single long watering-trough which usually

distinguishes the front of the English public-house of the second class, there were three conveniences of that kind, for the use, as the landlord used to say, of the troop-horses when the soldiers came to search his house; while a knowing leer and a nod let you understand what species of troops he was thinking of. A huge ash-tree before the door, which had reared itself to a great size and height, in spite of the blasts from the neighbouring Solway, overshadowed, as usual, the ale-bench, as our ancestors called it, where, though it was still early in the day, several fellows, who seemed to be gentlemen's servants, were drinking beer and smoking. One or two of them wore liveries which seemed known to Mr. Redgauntlet, for he muttered between his teeth, 'Fools, fools! were they on a march to hell, they must have their rascals in livery with them, that the whole world might know who were going to be damned.'

As he thus muttered, he drew bridle before the door of the place, from which several other lounging guests began to issue, to look with indolent curiosity as usual, upon an ARRIVAL.

Redgauntlet sprang from his horse, and assisted his niece to dismount; but, forgetting, perhaps, his nephew's disguise, he did not pay him the attention which his female dress demanded.

The situation of Darsie was indeed something awkward; for Cristal Nixon, out of caution perhaps to prevent escape, had muffled the extreme folds of the riding-skirt with which he was accoutred, around his ankles and under his feet, and there secured it with large corking-pins. We presume that gentlemen-cavaliers may sometimes cast their eyes to that part of the person of the fair equestrians whom they chance occasionally to escort; and if they will conceive their own feet, like Darsie's, muffled in such a labyrinth of folds and amplitude of robe, as modesty doubtless induces the fair creatures to assume upon such occasions, they will allow that, on a first attempt, they might find some awkwardness in dismounting. Darsie, at least, was in such a predicament, for, not receiving adroit assistance from the attendant of Mr. Redgauntlet, he stumbled as he dismounted from the horse, and might have had a bad fall, had it not been broken by the gallant interposition of a gentleman, who probably was, on his part, a little surprised at the solid weight of the distressed fair one whom he had the honour to receive in his embrace. But what was his surprise to that of Darsie, when the hurry of the moment and of the accident, permitted him to see that it was his friend Alan Fairford in whose arms he found himself! A thousand apprehensions rushed on him, mingled with the full career of hope and joy, inspired by the unexpected appearance of his beloved friend at the very crisis, it seemed, of his fate.

He was about to whisper in his ear, cautioning him at the same time to be silent; yet he hesitated for a second or two to effect his purpose, since, should Redgauntlet take the alarm from any sudden exclamation on the part of Alan, there was no saying what consequences might ensue.

Ere he could decide what was to be done, Redgauntlet, who had entered the house, returned hastily, followed by Cristal Nixon. 'I'll release you of the charge of this young lady, sir,' he said, haughtily, to Alan Fairford, whom he probably did not recognize.

'I had no desire to intrude, sir,' replied Alan; 'the lady's situation seemed to require assistance—and—but have I not the honour to speak to Mr. Herries of Birrenswork?'

'You are mistaken, sir,' said Redgauntlet, turning short off, and making a sign with his hand to Cristal, who hurried Darsie, however unwillingly, into the house, whispering in his ear, 'Come, miss, let us have no making of acquaintance from the windows. Ladies of fashion must be private. Show us a room, Father Crackenthorp.'

So saying, he conducted Darsie into the house, interposing at the same time his person betwixt the supposed young lady and the stranger of whom he was suspicious, so as to make communication by signs impossible. As they entered, they heard the sound of a fiddle in the stone-floored and well-sanded kitchen, through which they were about to follow their corpulent host, and where several people seemed engaged in dancing to its strains.

'D—n thee,' said Nixon to Crackenthorp, 'would you have the lady go through all the mob of the parish? Hast thou no more private way to our sitting-room?'

'None that is fit for my travelling,' answered the landlord, laying his hand on his portly stomach. 'I am not Tom Turnpenny, to creep like a lizard through keyholes.'

So saying, he kept moving on through the revellers in the kitchen; and Nixon, holding Darsie by his arm, as if to offer the lady support but in all probability to frustrate any effort at escape, moved through the crowd, which presented a very motley appearance, consisting of domestic servants, country fellows, seamen, and other idlers, whom Wandering Willie was regaling with his music.

To pass another friend without intimation of his presence would have been actual pusillanimity; and just when they were passing the blind man's elevated seat, Darsie asked him with some emphasis, whether he could not play a Scottish air? The man's face had been the instant before devoid of all sort of expression, going through his performance like a clown through a beautiful country, too much accustomed to consider it as a task, to take any interest in the performance, and, in fact, scarce seeming to hear the noise that he was creating. In a word, he might at the time have made a companion to my friend Wilkie's inimitable blind crowder. But with Wandering Willie this was only an occasional and a rare fit of dullness, such as will at times creep over all the professors of the fine arts, arising either from fatigue, or contempt of the present audience, or that caprice which so often tempts painters and musicians and great actors, in the phrase of the latter, to walk through their part, instead of exerting themselves with the energy which acquired their fame. But when the performer heard the voice of Darsie, his countenance became at once illuminated, and showed the complete mistake of those who suppose that the principal point of expression depends upon the eyes. With his face turned to the point from which the sound came, his upper lip a little curved, and quivering with agitation, and with a colour which surprise and pleasure had brought at once into his faded cheek, he exchanged the humdrum hornpipe which he had been sawing out with reluctant and lazy bow, for the fine Scottish air,

You're welcome, Charlie Stuart,

which flew from his strings as if by inspiration and after a breathless pause of admiration among the audience, was received with a clamour of applause, which seemed to show that the name and tendency, as well as the execution of the tune, was in the highest degree acceptable to all the party assembled.

In the meantime, Cristal Nixon, still keeping hold of Darsie, and following the landlord, forced his way with some difficulty through the crowded kitchen, and entered a small apartment on the other side of it, where they found Lilius Redgauntlet already seated. Here Nixon gave way to his suppressed resentment, and turning sternly on Crackenthorp, threatened him with his master's severest displeasure, because things were in such bad order to receive his family, when he had given such special advice that he desired to be private. But Father Crackenthorp was not a man to be brow-beaten.

'Why, brother Nixon, thou art angry this morning,' he replied; 'hast risen from thy wrong side, I think. You know, as well as I, that most of this mob is of the squire's own making—gentlemen that come with their servants, and so forth, to meet him in the way of business, as old Tom Turnpenny says—the very last that came was sent down with Dick Gardener from Fairladies.'

'But the blind scraping scoundrel yonder,' said Nixon, 'how dared you take such a rascal as that across your threshold at such a time as this? If the squire should dream you have a thought of peaching—I am only speaking for your good, Father Crackenthorp.'

'Why, look ye, brother Nixon,' said Crackenthorp, turning his quid with great composure, 'the squire is a very worthy gentleman, and I'll never deny it; but I am neither his servant nor his tenant, and so he need send me none of his orders till he hears I have put on his livery. As for turning away folk from my door, I might as well plug up the ale-tap, and pull down the sign—and as for peaching, and such like, the squire will find the folk here are as honest to the full as those he brings with him.'

'How, you impudent lump of tallow,' said Nixon, 'what do you mean by that?'

'Nothing,' said Crackenthorp, 'but that I can tour out as well as another—you understand me—keep good lights in my upper story—know a thing or two more than most folk in this country. If folk will come to my house on dangerous errands, egad they shall not find Joe Crackenthorp a cat's-paw. I'll keep myself clear, you may depend on it, and let every man answer for his own actions—that's my way. Anything wanted, Master Nixon?'

'No—yes—begone!' said Nixon, who seemed embarrassed with the landlord's contumacy, yet desirous to conceal the effect it produced on him.

The door was no sooner closed on Crackenthorp, than Miss Redgauntlet, addressing Nixon, commanded him to leave the room and go to his proper place.

'How, madam?' said the fellow sullenly, yet with an air of respect, 'Would you have your uncle pistol me for disobeying his orders?'

'He may perhaps pistol you for some other reason, if you do not obey mine,' said Lilius, composedly.

'You abuse your advantage over me, madam—I really dare not go—I am on guard over this other miss here; and if I should desert my post, my life were not worth five minutes' purchase.'

'Then know your post, sir,' said Lilius, 'and watch on the outside of the door. You have no commission to listen to our private conversation, I suppose? Begone, sir, without further speech or remonstrance, or I will tell my uncle that which you would have reason to repent he should know.'

The fellow looked at her with a singular expression of spite, mixed with deference. 'You abuse your advantages, madam,' he said, 'and act as foolishly in doing so as I did in affording you such a hank over me. But you are a tyrant; and tyrants have commonly short reigns.'

So saying, he left the apartment.

'The wretch's unparalleled insolence,' said Lilius to her brother, 'has given me one great advantage over him. For knowing that my uncle would shoot him with as little remorse as a woodcock, if he but guessed at his brazen-faced assurance towards me, he dares not since that time assume, so far as I am concerned, the air of insolent domination which the possession of my uncle's secrets, and the knowledge of his most secret plans, have led him to exert over others of his family.'

'In the meantime,' said Darsie, 'I am happy to see that the landlord of the house does not seem so devoted to him as I apprehended; and this aids the hope of escape which I am nourishing for you and for myself. O Lilius! the truest of friends, Alan Fairford, is in pursuit of me, and is here at this moment. Another humble, but, I think, faithful friend, is also within these dangerous walls.'

Lilius laid her finger on her lips, and pointed to the door. Darsie took the hint, lowered his voice, and informed her in whispers of the arrival of Fairford, and that he believed he had opened a communication with Wandering Willie. She listened with the utmost interest, and had just begun to reply, when a loud noise was heard in the kitchen, caused by several contending voices, amongst which Darsie thought he could distinguish that of Alan Fairford.

Forgetting how little his own condition permitted him to become the assistant of another, Darsie flew to the door of the room, and finding it locked and bolted on the outside, rushed against it with all his force, and made the most desperate efforts to burst it open, notwithstanding the entreaties of his sister that he would compose himself and recollect the condition in which he was placed. But the door, framed to withstand attacks from excisemen, constables, and other personages, considered as worthy to use what are called the king's keys, [In common parlance, a crowbar and hatchet.] 'and therewith to make lockfast places open and patent,' set his efforts at defiance. Meantime the noise continued without, and we are to give an account of its origin in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XX

NARRATIVE OF DARSIE LATIMER, CONTINUED

Joe Crackenthorp's public-house had never, since it first reared its chimneys on the banks of the Solway, been frequented by such a miscellaneous group of visitors as had that morning become its guests. Several of them were persons whose quality seemed much superior to their dresses and modes of travelling. The servants who attended them contradicted the inferences to be drawn from the garb of their masters, and, according to the custom of the knights of the rainbow, gave many hints that they were not people to serve any but men of first-rate consequence. These gentlemen, who had come thither chiefly for the purpose of meeting with Mr. Redgauntlet, seemed moody and anxious, conversed and walked together apparently in deep conversation, and avoided any communication with the chance travellers whom accident brought that morning to the same place of resort.

As if Fate had set herself to confound the plans of the Jacobite conspirators, the number of travellers was unusually great, their appearance respectable, and they filled the public tap-room of the inn, where the political guests had already occupied most of the private apartments.

Amongst others, honest Joshua Geddes had arrived, travelling, as he said, in the sorrow of the soul, and mourning for the fate of Darsie Latimer as he would for his first-born child. He had skirted the whole coast of the Solway, besides making various trips into the interior, not shunning, on such occasions, to expose himself to the laugh of the scorner, nay, even to serious personal risk, by frequenting the haunts of smugglers, horse-jockeys, and other irregular persons, who looked on his intrusion with jealous eyes, and were apt to consider him as an exciseman in the disguise of a Quaker. All this labour and peril, however, had been undergone in vain. No search he could make obtained the least intelligence of Latimer, so that he began to fear the poor lad had been spirited abroad—for the practice of kidnapping was then not infrequent, especially on the western coasts of Britain—if indeed he had escaped a briefer and more bloody fate.

With a heavy heart, he delivered his horse, even Solomon, into the hands of the ostler, and walking into the inn, demanded from the landlord breakfast and a private room. Quakers, and such hosts as old Father Crackenthorp, are no congenial spirits; the latter looked askew over his shoulder, and replied, 'If you would have breakfast here, friend, you are like to eat it where other folk eat theirs.'

'And wherefore can I not,' said the Quaker, 'have an apartment to myself, for my money?'

'Because, Master Jonathan, you must wait till your betters be served, or else eat with your equals.'

Joshua Geddes argued the point no further, but sitting quietly down on the seat which Crackenthorp indicated to him, and calling for a pint of ale, with some bread, butter, and Dutch cheese, began to satisfy the appetite which the morning air had rendered unusually alert.

While the honest Quaker was thus employed, another stranger entered the apartment, and sat down near to the table on which his victuals were placed. He looked repeatedly at Joshua, licked his parched and chopped lips as he saw the good Quaker masticate his bread and cheese, and sucked up his thin chops when Mr. Geddes applied the tankard to his mouth, as if the discharge of these bodily functions by another had awakened his sympathies in an uncontrollable degree. At last, being apparently unable to withstand his longings, he asked, in a faltering tone, the huge landlord, who was tramping through the room in all corpulent impatience, whether he could have a plack-pie?'

'Never heard of such a thing, master,' said the landlord, and was about to trudge onward; when the guest, detaining him, said, in a strong Scottish tone, 'Ya will maybe have nae whey then, nor buttermilk, nor ye couldna exhibit a souter's clod?'

'Can't tell what ye are talking about, master,' said Crackenthorp.

'Then ye will have nae breakfast that will come within 'the compass of a shilling Scots?'

'Which is a penny sterling,' answered Crackenthorp, with a sneer. 'Why, no, Sawney, I can't say as we have—we can't afford it; But you shall have a bellyful for love, as we say in the bull-ring.'

'I shall never refuse a fair offer,' said the poverty-stricken guest; 'and I will say that for the English, if they were deils, that they are a ceeveleesed people to gentlemen that are under a cloud.'

'Gentlemen!—humph!' said Crackenthorp—'not a blue-cap among them but halts upon that foot.' Then seizing on a dish which still contained a huge cantle of what had been once a princely mutton pasty, he placed it on the table before the stranger, saying, 'There, master gentleman; there is what is worth all the black pies, as you call them, that were ever made of sheep's head.'

'Sheep's head is a gude thing, for a' that,' replied the guest; but not being spoken so loud as to offend his hospitable entertainer, the interjection might pass for a private protest against the scandal thrown out against the standing dish of Caledonia.

This premised, he immediately began to transfer the mutton and pie-crust from his plate to his lips, in such huge gobbets, as if he was refreshing after a three days' fast, and laying in provisions against a whole Lent to come.

Joshua Geddes in his turn gazed on him with surprise, having never, he thought, beheld such a gaunt expression of hunger in the act of eating. 'Friend,' he said, after watching him for some minutes, 'if thou gorgest thyself in this fashion, thou wilt assuredly choke. Wilt thou not take a draught out of my cup to help down all that dry meat?'

'Troth,' said the stranger, stopping and looking at the friendly propounder, 'that's nae bad overture, as they say in the General Assembly. I have heard waur motions than that frae wiser counsel.'

Mr. Geddes ordered a quart of home-brewed to be placed before our friend Peter Peebles; for the reader must have already conceived that this unfortunate litigant was the wanderer in question.

The victim of Themis had no sooner seen the flagon, than he seized it with the same energy which he had displayed in operating upon the pie—puffed off the froth with such emphasis, that some of it lighted on Mr. Geddes's head—and then said, as if with it sudden recollection of what was due to civility, 'Here's to ye, friend. What! are ye ower grand to give me an answer, or are ye dull o' hearing?'

'I prithee drink thy liquor, friend,' said the good Quaker; 'thou meanest it in civility, but we care not for these idle fashions.'

'What! ye are a Quaker, are ye?' said Peter; and without further ceremony reared the flagon to his head, from which he withdrew it not while a single drop of 'barley-broo' remained. 'That's done you and me muckle gude,' he said, sighing as he set down his pot; 'but twa mutchkins o' yill between twa folk is a drappie ower little measure. What say ye to anither pot? or shall we cry in a blithe Scots pint at ance? The yill is no amiss.'

'Thou mayst call for what thou wilt on thine own charges, friend,' said Geddes; 'for myself, I willingly contribute to the quenching of thy natural thirst; but I fear it were no such easy matter to relieve thy acquired and artificial drought.'

'That is to say, in plain terms, ye are for withdrawing your caution with the folk of the house? You Quaker folk are but fause comforters; but since ye have garred me drink sae muckle cauld yill—me that am no used to the like of it in the forenoon—I think ye might as weel have offered me a glass of brandy or usquabae—I'm nae nice body—I can drink onything that's wet and toothsome.'

'Not a drop at my cost, friend,' quoth Geddes. 'Thou art an old man, and hast perchance a heavy and long journey before thee. Thou art, moreover, my countryman, as I judge from thy tongue; and I will not give thee the means of dishonouring thy grey hairs in a strange land.'

'Grey hairs, neighbour!' said Peter, with a wink to the bystanders, whom this dialogue began to interest, and who were in hopes of seeing the Quaker played off by the crazed beggar, for such Peter Peebles appeared to be. 'Grey hairs! The Lord mend your eyesight, neighbour, that disna ken grey hairs frae a tow wig!'

This jest procured a shout of laughter, and, what was still more acceptable than dry applause, a man who stood beside called out, 'Father Crackenthorp, bring a nipperkin of brandy. I'll bestow a dram on this fellow, were it but for that very word.'

The brandy was immediately brought by a wench who acted as barmaid; and Peter, with a grin of delight, filled a glass, quaffed it off, and then saying, 'God bless me! I was so unmannerly as not to drink to ye—I think the Quaker has smitten me wi' his ill-bred havings,'—he was about to fill another, when his hand was arrested by his new friend; who said at the same time, 'No, no, friend—fair play's a jewel—time about, if you please.' And filling a glass for himself, emptied it as gallantly as Peter could have done. 'What say you to that, friend?' he continued, addressing the Quaker.

'Nay, friend,' answered Joshua, 'it went down thy throat, not mine; and I have nothing to say about what concerns me not; but if thou art a man of humanity, thou wilt not give this poor creature the means of debauchery. Bethink thee that they will spurn him from the door, as they would do a houseless and masterless dog, and that he may die on the sands or on the common. And if he has through thy means been rendered incapable of helping himself, thou shalt not be innocent of his blood.'

'Faith, Broadbrim, I believe thou art right, and the old gentleman in the flaxen jazy shall have no more of the comforter. Besides, we have business in hand to-day, and this fellow, for as mad as he looks, may have a nose on his face after all. Hark ye, father,—what is your name, and what brings you into such an out-of-the-way corner?'

'I am not just free to condescend on my name,' said Peter; 'and as for my business—there is a wee dribble of brandy in the stoup—it would be wrang to leave it to the lass—it is learning her bad usages.'

'Well, thou shalt have the brandy, and be d—d to thee, if thou wilt tell me what you are making here.'

'Seeking a young advocate chap that they ca' Alan Fairford, that has played me a slippery trick, and ye maun ken a' about the cause,' said Peter.

'An advocate, man!' answered the captain of the JUMPING JENNY—for it was he, and no other, who had taken compassion on Peter's drought; 'why, Lord help thee, thou art on the wrong side of the Firth to seek advocates, whom I take to be Scottish lawyers, not English.'

'English lawyers, man!' exclaimed Peter, 'the deil a lawyer's in a' England.'

'I wish from my soul it were true,' said Ewart; 'but what the devil put that in your head?'

'Lord, man, I got a grip of one of their attorneys in Carlisle, and he tauld me that there wasna a lawyer in England ony mair than himsell that kend the nature of a multiple-poining! And when I told him how this loopy lad, Alan Fairford, had served me, he said I might bring an action on the case—just as if the case hadna as mony actions already as one case can weel carry. By my word, it is a gude case, and muckle has it borne, in its day, of various procedure—but it's the barley-pickle breaks the naig's back, and wi' my consent it shall not hae ony mair burden laid upon it.'

'But this Alan Fairford?' said Nanty—'come—sip up the drop of brandy, man, and tell me some more about him, and whether you are seeking him for good or for harm.'

'For my ain gude, and for his harm, to be sure,' said Peter. 'Think of his having left my cause in the dead-thraw between the tyneing and the winning, and capering off into Cumberland here, after a wild loup-the-tether lad they ca' Darsie Latimer.'

'Darsie Latimer!' said Mr. Geddes, hastily; 'do you know anything of Darsie Latimer?'

'Maybe I do, and maybe I do not,' answered Peter; 'I am no free to answer every body's interrogatory, unless it is put judicially, and by form of law—specially where folk think so much of a caup of sour yill, or a thimblefu' of brandy. But as for this gentleman, that has shown himself a gentleman at breakfast, and will show himself a gentleman at the meridian, I am free to condescend upon any points in the cause that may appear to bear upon the question at issue.'

'Why, all I want to know from you, my friend, is, whether you are seeking to do this Mr. Alan Fairford good or harm; because if you come to do him good, I think you could maybe get speech of him—and if to do him harm, I will take the liberty to give you a cast across the Firth, with fair warning not to come back on such an errand, lest maybe come of it.'

The manner and language of Ewart were such that Joshua Geddes resolved to keep cautious silence, till he could more plainly discover whether he was likely to aid or impede him in his researches after Darsie Latimer. He therefore determined to listen attentively to what should pass between Peter and the seaman, and to watch for an opportunity of questioning the former, so soon as he should be separated from his new acquaintance.

'I wad by no means,' said Peter Peebles, 'do any substantial harm to the poor lad Fairford, who has had mony a gowd guinea of mine, as weel as his father before him; but I wad hae him brought back to the minding of my business and his ain; and maybe I wadna insist further in my action of damages against him, than for refunding the fees, and for some annual rent on the principal sum due frae the day on which he should have recovered it for me, plack and bawbee, at the great advising; for ye are aware, that is the least that I can ask NOMINE DAMNI; and I have nae thought to break down the lad bodily a'thegither—we maun live and let live—forgie and forget.'

'The deuce take me, friend Broadbrim,' said Nanty Ewart, looking to the Quaker, 'if I can make out what this old scarecrow means. If I thought it was fitting that Master Fairford should see him, why perhaps it is a matter that could be managed. Do you know anything about the old fellow?—you seemed to take some charge of him just now.'

'No more than I should have done by any one in distress,' said Geddes, not sorry to be appealed to; 'but I will try what I can do to find out who he is, and what he is about in this country. But are we not a little too public in this open room?'

'It's well thought of,' said Nanty; and at his command the barmaid ushered the party into a side-booth, Peter attending them in the instinctive hope that there would be more liquor drunk among them before parting. They had scarce sat down in their new apartment, when the sound of a violin was heard in the room which they had just left.

'I'll awa back yonder,' said Peter, rising up again; 'yon's the sound of a fiddle, and when there is music, there's ay something ganging to eat or drink.'

'I am just going to order something here,' said the Quaker; 'but in the meantime, have you any objection, my good friend, to tell us your name?'

'None in the world, if you are wanting to drink to me by name and surname,' answered Peebles; 'but, otherwise, I would rather evite your interrogatories.'

'Friend,' said the Quaker, 'it is not for thine own health, seeing thou hast drunk enough already—however—here, handmaiden—bring me a gill of sherry.'

'Sherry's but shilpit drink, and a gill's a sma' measure for twa gentlemen to crack ower at their first acquaintance. But let us see your sneaking gill of sherry,' said Poor Peter, thrusting forth his huge hand to seize on the diminutive pewter measure, which, according to the fashion of the time, contained the generous liquor freshly drawn from the butt.

'Nay, hold, friend,' said Joshua, 'thou hast not yet told me what name and surname I am to call thee by.'

'D—d sly in the Quaker,' said Nanty, apart, 'to make him pay for his liquor before he gives it him. Now, I am such a fool, that I should have let him get too drunk to open his mouth, before I thought of asking him a question.'

'My name is Peter Peebles, then,' said the litigant, rather sulkily, as one who thought his liquor too sparingly meted out to him; 'and what have you to say to that?'

'Peter Peebles?' repeated Nanty Ewart and seemed to muse upon something which the words brought to his remembrance, while the Quaker pursued his examination.

'But I prithee, Peter Peebles, what is thy further designation? Thou knowest, in our country, that some men are distinguished by their craft and calling, as cordwainers, fishers, weavers, or the like, and some by their titles as proprietors of land (which savours of vanity)—now, how may you be distinguished from others of the same name?'

'As Peter Peebles of the great plea of Poor Peter Peebles against Plainstones, ET PER CONTRA—if I am laird of naething else, I am ay a DOMINUS LITIS.'

'It's but a poor lairdship, I doubt,' said Joshua.

'Pray, Mr. Peebles,' said Nanty, interrupting the conversation abruptly, 'were not you once a burgess of Edinburgh?'

'WAS I a burgess!' said Peter indignantly, 'and AM I not a burgess even now? I have done nothing to forfeit my right, I trow—once provost and ay my lord.'

'Well, Mr. Burgess, tell me further, have you not some property in the Gude Town?' continued Ewart.

'Troth have I—that is, before my misfortunes, I had twa or three bonny bits of mailings among the closes and wynds, forby the shop and the story abune it. But Plainstones has put me to the causeway now. Never mind though, I will be upsides with him yet.'

'Had not you once a tenement in the Covenant Close?' again demanded Nanty.

'You have hit it, lad, though ye look not like a Covenanter,' said Peter; 'we'll drink to its memory—(Hout! the heart's at the mouth o' that ill-faur'd bit stoup already!)—it brought a rent, reckoning from the crawstep to the groundsill, that ye might ca' fourteen pund a year, forby the laigh cellar that was let to Lucky Littleworth.'

'And do you not remember that you had a poor old lady for your tenant, Mrs. Cantrips of Kittlebasket?' said Nanty, suppressing his emotion with difficulty.

'Remember! G—d, I have gude cause to remember her,' said Peter, 'for she turned a dyvour on my hands, the auld besom! and after a' that the law could do to make me satisfied and paid, in the way of poinding and distrenzieing and sae forth, as the law will, she ran awa to the charity workhouse, a matter of twenty pund Scots in my debt—it's a great shame and oppression that charity workhouse, taking in bankrupt dyvours that canna, pay their honest creditors.'

'Methinks, friend,' said the Quaker, 'thine own rags might teach thee compassion for other people's nakedness.'

'Rags!' said Peter, taking Joshua's words literally; 'does ony wise body put on their best coat when they are travelling, and keeping company with Quakers, and such other cattle as the road affords?'

'The old lady DIED, I have heard,' said Nanty, affecting a moderation which was belied by accents that faltered with passion.

'She might live or die, for what I care,' answered Peter the Cruel; 'what business have folk to do to live that canna live as law will, and satisfy their just and lawful creditors?'

'And you—you that are now yourself trodden down in the very kennel, are you not sorry for what you have done? Do you not repent having occasioned the poor widow woman's death?'

'What for should I repent?' said Peter; 'the law was on my side—a decreet of the bailies, followed by poinding, and an act of warding—a suspension intended, and the letters found orderly proceeded. I followed the auld rudas through twa courts—she cost me mair money than her lugs were worth.'

'Now, by Heaven!' said Nanty, 'I would give a thousand guineas, if I had them, to have you worth my beating! Had you said you repented, it had been between God and your conscience; but to hear you boast of your villany—Do you think it little to have reduced the aged to famine, and the young to infamy—to have caused the death of one woman, the ruin of another, and to have driven a man to exile and despair? By Him that made me, I can scarce keep hands off you!'

'Off me? I defy ye!' said Peter. 'I take this honest man to witness that if ye stir the neck of my collar, I will have my action for stouthreif, spulzie, oppression, assault and battery. Here's a bra' din, indeed, about an auld wife gaun to the grave, a young limmer to the close-heads and causeway, and a sticket stibbler [A student of divinity who has not been able to complete his studies on theology.] to the sea instead of the gallows!'

'Now, by my soul,' said Nanty, 'this is too much! and since you can feel no otherwise, I will try if I cannot beat some humanity into your head and shoulders.'

He drew his hanger as he spoke, and although Joshua, who had in vain endeavoured to interrupt the dialogue to which he foresaw a violent termination, now threw himself between Nanty and the old litigant, he could not prevent the latter from receiving two or three sound slaps over the shoulder with the flat side of the weapon.

Poor Peter Peebles, as inglorious in his extremity as he had been presumptuous in bringing it on, now ran and roared, and bolted out of the apartment and house itself, pursued by Nanty, whose passion became high in proportion to his giving way to its dictates, and by Joshua, who still interfered at every risk, calling upon Nanty to reflect on the age and miserable circumstances of the offender, and upon Poor Peter to stand and place himself under his protection. In front of the house, however, Peter Peebles found a more efficient protector than the worthy Quaker.

CHAPTER XXI

NARRATIVE OF ALAN FAIRFORD

Our readers may recollect that Fairford had been conducted by Dick Gardener from the house of Fairladies to the inn of old Father Crackenthorp, in order, as he had been informed by the mysterious Father Buonaventure, that he might have the meeting which he desired with Mr. Redgauntlet, to treat with him for the liberty of his friend Darsie. His guide, by the special direction of Mr. Ambrose, had introduced him into the public-house by a back-door, and recommended to the landlord to accommodate him with a private apartment, and to treat him with all civility; but in other respects to keep his eye on him, and even to secure his person, if he saw any reason to suspect him to be a spy. He was not, however, subjected to any direct restraint, but was ushered into an apartment where he was requested to await the arrival of the gentleman with whom he wished to have an interview, and who, as Crackenthorp assured, him with a significant nod, would be certainly there in the course of an hour. In the meanwhile, he recommended to him, with another significant sign, to keep his apartment, 'as there were people in the house who were apt to busy themselves about other folk's matters.'

Alan Fairford complied with the recommendation, so long as he thought it reasonable; but when, among a large party riding up to the house, he discerned Redgauntlet, whom he had seen under the name of Mr. Herries of Birrenswork, and whom, by his height and strength, he easily distinguished from the rest, he thought it proper to go down to the front of the house, in hopes that, by more closely reconnoitring the party, he might discover if his friend Darsie was among them.

The reader is aware that, by doing so, he had an opportunity of breaking Darsie's fall from his side-saddle, although his disguise and mask prevented his recognizing his friend. It may be also recollected that while Nixon hurried Miss Redgauntlet and her brother into the house, their uncle, somewhat chafed at an

unexpected and inconvenient interruption, remained himself in parley with Fairford, who had already successively addressed him by the names of Herries and Redgauntlet; neither of which, any more than the acquaintance of the young lawyer, he seemed at the moment willing to acknowledge, though an air of haughty indifference, which he assumed, could not conceal his vexation and embarrassment.

'If we must needs be acquainted, sir,' he said at last—'for which I am unable to see any necessity, especially as I am now particularly disposed to be private—I must entreat you will tell me at once what you have to say, and permit me to attend to matters of more importance.'

'My introduction,' said Fairford, 'is contained in this letter.—(Delivering that of Maxwell.)—I am convinced that, under whatever name it may be your pleasure for the present to be known, it is into your hands, and yours only, that it should be delivered.'

Redgauntlet turned the letter in his hand—then read the contents then again looked upon the letter, and sternly observed, 'The seal of the letter has been broken. Was this the case, sir, when it was delivered into your hand?'

Fairford despised a falsehood as much as any man,—unless, perhaps, as Tom Turnpenny might have said, 'in the way of business.' He answered readily and firmly, 'The seal was whole when the letter was delivered to me by Mr. Maxwell of Summertrees.'

'And did you dare, sir, to break the seal of a letter addressed to me?' said Redgauntlet, not sorry, perhaps, to pick a quarrel upon a point foreign to the tenor of the epistle.

'I have never broken the seal of any letter committed to my charge,' said Alan; 'not from fear of those to whom such letter might be addressed, but from respect to myself.'

'That is well worded,' said Redgauntlet; 'and yet, young Mr. Counsellor, I doubt whether your delicacy prevented your reading my letter, or listening to the contents as read by some other person after it was opened.'

'I certainly did hear the contents read over,' said Fairford; 'and they were such as to surprise me a good deal.'

'Now that,' said Redgauntlet, 'I hold to be pretty much the same, IN FORO CONSCIENTIAE, as if you had broken the seal yourself. I shall hold myself excused from entering upon further discourse with a messenger so faithless; and you may thank yourself if your journey has been fruitless.'

'Stay, sir,' said Fairford; 'and know that I became acquainted with the contents of the paper without my consent—I may even say, against my will; for Mr. Buonaventure'—

'Who?' demanded Redgauntlet, in a wild and alarmed manner—'WHOM was it you named?'

'Father Buonaventure,' said Alan,—'a Catholic priest, as I apprehend, whom I saw at the Misses Arthuret's house, called Fairladies.'

'Misses Arthuret!—Fairladies!—A Catholic priest!—Father Buonaventure!' said Redgauntlet, repeating the words of Alan with astonishment.—'Is it possible that human rashness can reach such a point of infatuation? Tell me the truth, I conjure you, sir. I have the deepest interest to know whether this is more than an idle legend, picked up from hearsay about the country. You are a lawyer, and know the risk incurred by the Catholic clergy, whom the discharge of their duty sends to these bloody shores.'

'I am a lawyer, certainly,' said Fairford; 'but my holding such a respectable condition in life warrants that I am neither an informer nor a spy. Here is sufficient evidence that I have seen Father Buonaventure.'

He put Buonaventure's letter into Redgauntlet's hand, and watched his looks closely while he read it. 'Double-dyed infatuation!' he muttered, with looks in which sorrow, displeasure, and anxiety were mingled. "'Save me from the indiscretion of my friends," says the Spaniard; "I can save myself from the hostility of my enemies."'

He then read the letter attentively, and for two or three minutes was lost in thought, while some purpose of importance seemed to have gathered and sit brooding upon his countenance. He held up his finger towards his satellite, Cristal Nixon, who replied to his signal with a prompt nod; and with one or two of the attendants approached Fairford in such a manner as to make him apprehensive they were about to lay hold of him.

At this moment a noise was heard from within of the house, and presently rushed forth Peter Peebles, pursued by Nanty Ewart with his drawn hanger, and the worthy Quaker, who was endeavouring to prevent mischief to others, at some risk of bringing it on himself.

A wilder and yet a more absurd figure can hardly be imagined, than that of Poor Peter clattering along as fast as his huge boots would permit him, and resembling nothing so much as a flying scarecrow; while the thin emaciated form of Nanty Ewart, with the hue of death on his cheek, and the fire of vengeance glancing from his eye, formed a ghastly contrast with the ridiculous object of his pursuit.

Redgauntlet threw himself between them. 'What extravagant folly is this?' he said. 'Put up your weapon, captain. Is this a time to indulge in drunken brawls, or is such a miserable object as that a fitting antagonist for a man of courage?'

'I beg pardon,' said the captain, sheathing his weapon—'I was a little bit out of the way, to be sure; but to know the provocation, a man must read my heart, and that I hardly dare to do myself. But the wretch is safe from me. Heaven has done its own vengeance on us both.'

While he spoke in this manner, Peter Peebles, who had at first crept behind Redgauntlet in bodily fear, began now to reassume his spirits. Pulling his protector by the sleeve, 'Mr. Herries—Mr. Herries,' he whispered, eagerly, 'ye have done me mair than ae gude turn, and if ye will but do me anither at this dead pinch, I'll forgie the girded keg of brandy that you and Captain Sir Harry Redgimlet drank out yon time. Ye sall hae an ample discharge and renunciation, and, though I should see you walking at the Cross of Edinburgh, or standing at the bar of the Court of Justiciary, no the very thumbikins themselves should bring to my memory that ever I saw you in arms yon day.'

He accompanied this promise by pulling so hard at Redgauntlet's cloak, that he at last turned round. 'Idiot! speak in a word what you want.'

'Aweel, aweel. In a word, then,' said Peter Peebles, 'I have a warrant on me to apprehend that man that stands there, Alan Fairford by name, and advocate by calling. I bought it from Maister Justice Foxley's clerk, Maister Nicholas Faggot, wi' the guinea that you gied me.'

'Ha!' said Redgauntlet, 'hast thou really such a warrant? let me see it. Look sharp that no one escape, Cristal Nixon.'

Peter produced a huge, greasy, leathern pocketbook, too dirty to permit its original colour to be visible, filled with scrolls of notes, memorials to counsel, and Heaven knows what besides. From amongst this precious mass he culled forth a paper, and placed it in the hands of Redgauntlet, or Herries, as he continued to call him, saying, at the same time, 'It's a formal and binding warrant, proceeding on my affidavy made, that the said Alan Fairford, being lawfully engaged in my service, had slipped the tether and fled over the Border, and was now lurking there and thereabouts, to elude and evite the discharge of his bounden duty to me; and therefore granting warrant to constables and others, to seek for, take, and apprehend him, that he may be brought before the Honourable Justice Foxley for examination, and, if necessary, for commitment. Now, though a' this be fairly set down, as I tell ye, yet where am I to get an officer to execute this warrant in sic a country as this, where swords and pistols flee out at a word's speaking, and folk care as little for the peace of King George as the peace of Auld King Coul? There's that drunken skipper, and that wet Quaker, enticed me into the public this morning, and because I wadna gie them' as much brandy as wad have made them blind-drunk, they baith fell on me, and were in the way of guiding me very ill.'

While Peter went on in this manner, Redgauntlet glanced his eye over the warrant, and immediately saw that it must be a trick passed by Nicholas Faggot, to cheat the poor insane wretch out of his solitary guinea. But the Justice had actually subscribed it, as he did whatever his clerk presented to him, and Redgauntlet resolved to use it for his own purposes.

Without making any direct answer, therefore, to Peter Peebles, he walked up gravely to Fairford, who had waited quietly for the termination of a scene in which he was not a little surprised to find his client, Mr. Peebles, a conspicuous actor.

'Mr. Fairford,' said Redgauntlet, 'there are many reasons which might induce me to comply with the request, or rather the injunctions, of the excellent Father Buonaventure, that I should communicate with you upon the present condition of my ward, whom you know under the name of Darsie Latimer; but no man is better aware than you that the law must be obeyed, even in contradiction to our own feelings; now this poor man has obtained a warrant for carrying you before a magistrate, and, I am afraid, there is a necessity of your yielding to it, although to the postponement of the business which you may have with me.'

'A warrant against me!' said Alan, indignantly; 'and at that poor miserable wretch's instance?—why, this is a trick, a mere and most palpable trick.'

'It may be so,' replied Redgauntlet, with great equanimity; 'doubtless you know best; only the writ appears regular, and with that respect for the law which has been,' he said, with hypocritical formality, 'a leading feature of my character through life, I cannot dispense with giving my poor aid to the support of a legal warrant. Look at it yourself, and be satisfied it is no trick of mine.'

Fairford ran over the affidavit and the warrant, and then exclaimed once more, that it was an impudent imposition, and that he would hold those who acted upon such a warrant liable in the highest damages. 'I guess at your motive, Mr. Redgauntlet,' he said, 'for acquiescing in so ridiculous a proceeding. But be assured you will find that, in this country, one act of illegal violence will not be covered or atoned for by practising another. You cannot, as a man of sense and honour, pretend to say you regard this as a legal warrant.'

'I am no lawyer, sir,' said Redgauntlet; 'and pretend not to know what is or is not law—the warrant is quite formal, and that is enough for me.'

'Did ever any one hear,' said Fairford, 'of an advocate being compelled to return to his task, like a collier or a salter [See Note 10.] who has deserted his master?'

'I see no reason why he should not,' said Redgauntlet, dryly, 'unless on the ground that the services of the lawyer are the most expensive and least useful of the two.'

'You cannot mean this in earnest,' said Fairford; 'you cannot really mean to avail yourself of so poor a contrivance, to evade the word pledged by your friend, your ghostly father, in my behalf. I may have been a fool for trusting it too easily, but think what you must be if you can abuse my confidence in this manner. I entreat you to reflect that this usage releases me from all promises of secrecy or connivance at what I am apt to think are very dangerous practices, and that'—

'Hark ye, Mr. Fairford,' said Redgauntlet; 'I must here interrupt you for your own sake. One word of betraying what you may have seen, or what you may have suspected, and your seclusion is like to have either a very distant or a very brief termination; in either case a most undesirable one. At present, you are sure of being at liberty in a very few days—perhaps much sooner.'

'And my friend,' said Alan Fairford, 'for whose sake I have run myself into this danger, what is to become of him? Dark and dangerous man!' he exclaimed, raising his voice, 'I will not be again cajoled by deceitful promises'—

'I give you my honour that your friend is well,' interrupted Redgauntlet; 'perhaps I may permit you to see him, if you will but submit with patience to a fate which is inevitable.'

But Alan Fairford, considering his confidence as having been abused, first by Maxwell, and next by the priest, raised his voice, and appealed to all the king's lieges within hearing, against the violence with which he was threatened. He was instantly seized on by Nixon and two assistants, who, holding down his arms, and endeavouring to stop his mouth, were about to hurry him away.

The honest Quaker, who had kept out of Redgauntlet's presence, now came boldly forward.

'Friend,' said he, 'thou dost more than thou canst answer. Thou knowest me well, and thou art aware that in me thou hast a deeply injured neighbour, who was dwelling beside thee in the honesty and simplicity of his heart.'

'Tush, Jonathan,' said Redgauntlet; 'talk not to me, man; it is neither the craft of a young lawyer, nor the SIMPLICITY of an old hypocrite, can drive me from my purpose.'

'By my faith,' said the captain, coming forward in his turn, 'this is hardly fair, general; and I doubt,' he added, 'whether the will of my owners can make me a party to such proceedings. Nay, never fumble with your sword-hilt, but out with it like a man, if you are for a tilting.' He unsheathed his hanger, and continued—'I will neither see my comrade Fairford, nor the old Quaker, abused. D——n all warrants, false or true—curse the justice—confound the constable!—and here stands little Nanty Ewart to make good what he says against gentle and simple, in spite of horse-shoe or horse-radish either.'

The cry of 'Down with all warrants!' was popular in the ears of the militia of the inn, and Nanty Ewart was no less so. Fishers, ostlers, seamen, smugglers, began to crowd to the spot. Crackenthorp endeavoured in vain to mediate. The attendants of Redgauntlet began to handle their firearms; but their master shouted to them to forbear, and, unsheathing his sword as quick as lightning, he rushed on Ewart in the midst of his bravado, and struck his weapon from his hand with such address and force, that it flew three yards from him. Closing with him at the same moment, he gave him a severe fall, and waved his sword over his head, to show he was absolutely at his mercy.

'There, you drunken vagabond,' he said, 'I give you your life—you are no bad fellow if you could keep from brawling among your friends. But we all know Nanty Ewart,' he said to the crowd around, with a forgiving laugh, which, joined to the awe his prowess had inspired, entirely confirmed their wavering allegiance.

They shouted, 'The laird for ever!' while poor Nanty, rising from the earth, on whose lap he had been stretched so rudely, went in quest of his hanger, lifted it, wiped it, and, as he returned the weapon to the scabbard, muttered between his teeth, 'It is true they say of him, and the devil will stand his friend till his hour come; I will cross him no more.'

So saying, he slunk from the crowd, cowed and disheartened by his defeat.

'For you, Joshua Geddes,' said Redgauntlet, approaching the Quaker, who, with lifted hands and eyes, had beheld the scene of violence, 'I shall take the liberty to arrest thee for a breach of the peace, altogether unbecoming thy pretended principles; and I believe it will go hard with thee both in a court of justice and among thine own Society of Friends, as they call themselves, who will be but indifferently pleased to see the quiet tenor of their hypocrisy insulted by such violent proceedings.'

'I violent!' said Joshua; 'I do aught unbecoming the principles of the Friends! I defy thee, man, and I charge thee, as a Christian, to forbear vexing my soul with such charges: it is grievous enough to me to have seen violences which I was unable to prevent.'

'O Joshua, Joshua!' said Redgauntlet, with a sardonic smile; 'thou light of the faithful in the town of Dumfries and the places adjacent, wilt thou thus fall away from the truth? Hast thou not, before us all, attempted to rescue a man from the warrant of law? Didst thou not encourage that drunken fellow to draw his weapon—and didst thou not thyself flourish thy cudgel in the cause? Think'st thou that the oaths of the injured Peter Peebles, and the conscientious Cristal Nixon, besides those of such gentlemen as look on this strange scene, who not only put on swearing as a garment, but to whom, in Custom House matters, oaths are literally meat and drink,—dost thou not think, I say, that these men's oaths will go further than thy Yea and Nay in this matter?'

'I will swear to anything,' said Peter. 'All is fair when it comes to an oath AD LITEM.'

'You do me foul wrong,' said the Quaker, undismayed by the general laugh. 'I encouraged no drawing of weapons, though I attempted to move an unjust man by some use of argument—I brandished no cudgel, although it may be that the ancient Adam struggled within me, and caused my hand to grasp mine oaken staff firmer than usual, when I saw innocence borne down with violence. But why talk I what is true and just to thee, who hast been a man of violence from thy youth upwards? Let me rather speak to thee such language as thou canst comprehend. Deliver these young men up to me,' he said, when he had led Redgauntlet a little apart from the crowd, 'and I will not only free thee from the heavy charge of damages which thou hast incurred by thine outrage upon my property, but I will add ransom for them and for myself. What would it profit thee to do the youths wrong, by detaining them in captivity?'

'Mr. Geddes,' said Redgauntlet, in a tone more respectful than he had hitherto used to the Quaker, 'your language is disinterested, and I respect the fidelity of your friendship. Perhaps we have mistaken each other's principles and motives; but if so, we have not at present time for explanation. Make yourself easy. I hope to raise your friend Darsie Latimer to a pitch of eminence which you will witness with pleasure;—nay, do not attempt to answer me. The other young man shall suffer restraint a few days, probably only a few hours,—it is not more than due for his pragmatism in what concerned him not. Do you, Mr. Geddes, be so prudent as to take your horse and leave this place, which is growing every moment more unfit for the abode of a man of peace. You may wait the event in safety at Mount Sharon.'

'Friend,' replied Joshua, 'I cannot comply with thy advice; I will remain here, even as thy prisoner, as thou didst but now threaten, rather than leave the youth who hath suffered by and through me and my misfortunes, in his present state of doubtful safety. Wherefore I will not mount my steed Solomon; neither will I turn his head towards Mount Sharon, until I see an end of this matter.'

'A prisoner, then, you must be,' said Redgauntlet. 'I have no time to dispute the matter further with you. But tell me for what you fix your eyes so attentively on yonder people of mine.'

'To speak the truth,' said the Quaker, 'I admire to behold among them a little wretch of a boy called Benjie, to whom I think Satan has given the power of transporting himself wheresoever mischief is going forward; so that it may be truly said, there is no evil in this land wherein he hath not a finger, if not a whole hand.'

The boy, who saw their eyes fixed on him as they spoke, seemed embarrassed, slid rather desirous of making his escape; but at a signal from Redgauntlet he advanced, assuming the sheepish look and rustic manner with which the jackanapes covered much acuteness and roguery.

'How long have you been with the party, sirrah?' said Redgauntlet.

'Since the raid on the stake-nets,' said Benjie, with his finger in his mouth.

'And what made you follow us?'

'I dauredna stay at hame for the constables,' replied the boy.

'And what have you been doing all this time?'

'Doing, sir? I dinna ken what ye ca' doing—I have been doing naething,' said Benjie; then seeing something in Redgauntlet's eye which was not to be trifled with, he added, 'Naething but waiting on Maister Cristal Nixon.'

'Hum!—aye—indeed?' muttered Redgauntlet. 'Must Master Nixon bring his own retinue into the field? This must be seen to.'

He was about to pursue his inquiry, when Nixon himself came to him with looks of anxious haste, 'The Father is come,' he whispered, 'and the gentlemen are getting together in the largest room of the house, and they desire to see you. Yonder is your nephew, too, making a noise like a man in Bedlam.'

'I will look to it all instantly,' said Redgauntlet. 'Is the Father lodged as I directed?'

Cristal nodded.

'Now, then, for the final trial,' said Redgauntlet. He folded his hands—looked upwards—crossed himself—and after this act of devotion (almost the first which any one had observed him make use of) he commanded Nixon to keep good watch—have his horses and men ready for every emergence—look after the safe custody of the prisoners—but treat them at the same time well and civilly. And, these orders given, he darted hastily into the house.

CHAPTER XXII NARRATIVE CONTINUED

Redgauntlet's first course was to the chamber of his nephew. He unlocked the door, entered the apartment, and asked what he wanted, that he made so much noise.

'I want my liberty,' said Darsie, who had wrought himself up to a pitch of passion in which his uncle's wrath had lost its terrors. 'I desire my liberty, and to be assured of the safety of my beloved friend, Alan Fairford, whose voice I heard but now.'

'Your liberty shall be your own within half an hour from this period—your friend shall be also set at freedom in due time—and you yourself be permitted to have access to his place of confinement.'

'This does not satisfy me,' said Darsie; 'I must see my friend instantly; he is here, and he is here endangered on my account only—I have heard violent exclamations—the clash of swords. You will gain no point with me unless I have ocular demonstration of his safety.'

'Arthur—dearest nephew,' answered Redgauntlet, 'drive me not mad! Thine own fate—that of thy house—that of thousands—that of Britain herself, are at this moment in the scales; and you are only occupied about the safety of a poor insignificant pettifogger!'

'He has sustained injury at your hands, then?' said Darsie, fiercely. 'I know he has; but if so, not even our relationship shall protect you.'

'Peace, ungrateful and obstinate fool!' said Redgauntlet. Yet stay—will you be satisfied if you see this Alan Fairford, the bundle of bombazine—this precious friend of yours—well and sound? Will you, I say, be satisfied with seeing him in perfect safety without attempting to speak to or converse with him?' Darsie signified his assent. 'Take hold of my arm, then,' said Redgauntlet; 'and do you, niece Liliass, take the other; and beware; Sir Arthur, how you bear yourself.'

Darsie was compelled to acquiesce, sufficiently aware that his uncle would permit him no interview with a friend whose influence would certainly be used against his present earnest wishes, and in some measure contented with the assurance of Fairford's personal safety.

Redgauntlet led them through one or two passages (for the house, as we have before said, was very irregular, and built at different times) until they entered an apartment, where a man with shouldered carabine kept watch at the door, but readily turned the key for their reception. In this room they found Alan Fairford and the Quaker, apparently in deep conversation with each other. They looked up as Redgauntlet and his party entered; and Alan pulled off his hat and made a profound reverence, which the young lady, who recognized him,—though, masked as she was, he could not know her,—returned with some embarrassment, arising probably from the recollection of the bold step she had taken in visiting him.

Darsie longed to speak, but dared not. His uncle only said, 'Gentlemen, I know you are as anxious on Mr. Darsie Latimer's account as he is upon yours. I am commissioned by him to inform you, that he is as well as you are—I trust you will all meet soon. Meantime, although I cannot suffer you to be at large, you shall be as well treated as is possible under your temporary confinement.'

He passed on, without pausing to hear the answers which the lawyer and the Quaker were hastening to prefer; and only waving his hand by way of adieu, made his exit, with the real and the seeming lady whom he had under his charge, through a door at the upper end of the apartment, which was fastened and guarded like that by which they entered.

Redgauntlet next led the way into a very small room; adjoining which, but divided by a partition, was one of apparently larger dimensions; for they heard the trampling of the heavy boots of the period, as if several persons were walking to and fro and conversing in low and anxious whispers.

'Here,' said Redgauntlet to his nephew, as he disencumbered him from the riding-skirt and the mask, 'I restore you to yourself, and trust you will lay aside all effeminate thoughts with this feminine dress. Do not blush at having worn a disguise to which kings and heroes have been reduced. It is when female craft or female cowardice find their way into a manly bosom, that he who entertains these sentiments should take eternal shame to himself for thus having resembled womankind. Follow me, while Liliass remains here. I will introduce you to those whom I hope to see associated with you in the most glorious cause that hand ever drew sword in.'

Darsie paused. 'Uncle,' he said, 'my person is in your hands; but remember, my will is my own. I will not be hurried into any resolution of importance. Remember what I have already said—what I now repeat—that I will take no step of importance but upon conviction.'

'But canst thou be convinced, thou foolish boy, without hearing and understanding the grounds on which we act?'

So saying he took Darsie by the arm, and walked with him to the next room—a large apartment, partly filled with miscellaneous articles of commerce, chiefly connected with contraband trade; where, among bales and barrels, sat, or walked to and fro, several gentlemen, whose manners and looks seemed superior to the plain riding dresses which they wore.

There was a grave and stern anxiety upon their countenances, when, on Redgauntlet's entrance, they drew from their separate coteries into one group around him, and saluted him with a formality which had something in it of ominous melancholy. As Darsie looked around the circle, he thought he could discern in it few traces of that adventurous hope which urges men upon desperate enterprises; and began to believe that the conspiracy would dissolve of itself, without the necessity of his placing himself in direct opposition to so violent a character as his uncle, and incurring the hazard with which such opposition must be attended.

Mr. Redgauntlet, however, did not, or would not, see any such marks of depression of spirit amongst his coadjutors, but met them with cheerful countenance, and a warm greeting of welcome. 'Happy to meet you here, my lord,' he said, bowing low to a slender young man. 'I trust you come with the pledges of your noble father, of B—, and all that loyal house.—Sir Richard, what news in the west? I am told you had two hundred men on foot to have joined when the fatal retreat from Derby was commenced. When the White Standard is again displayed, it shall not be turned back so easily, either by the force of its enemies, or the falsehood of its friends.—Doctor Grumball, I bow to the representative of Oxford, the mother of learning and loyalty.—Penguinion, you Cornish chough, has this good wind blown you north?—Ah, my brave Cambro-Britons, when was Wales last in the race of honour?'

Such and such-like compliments he dealt around, which were in general answered by silent bows; but when he saluted one of his own countrymen by the name of MacKellar, and greeted Maxwell of Summertrees by that of Pate-in-Peril, the latter replied, 'that if Pate were not a fool, he would be Pate-in-Safety;' and the former, a thin old gentle-man, in tarnished embroidery, said bluntly, 'Aye, troth, Redgauntlet, I am here just like yourself; I have little to lose—they that took my land the last time, may take my life this; and that is all I care about it.'

The English gentlemen, who were still in possession of their paternal estates, looked doubtfully on each other, and there was something whispered among them of the fox which had lost his tail.

Redgauntlet hastened to address them. 'I think, my lords and gentlemen,' he said, 'that I can account for something like sadness which has crept upon an assembly gathered together for so noble a purpose. Our numbers seem, when thus assembled, too small and inconsiderable to shake the firm-seated usurpation of a half-century. But do not count us by what we are in thew and muscle, but by what our summons can do among our countrymen. In this small party are those who have power to raise battalions, and those who have wealth to pay them. And do not believe our friends who are absent are cold or indifferent to the cause. Let us once light the signal, and it will be hailed by all who retain love for the Stuart, and by all—a more numerous body—who hate the Elector. Here I have letters from'—

Sir Richard Glendale interrupted the speaker. 'We all confide, Redgauntlet, in your valour and skill—we admire your perseverance; and probably nothing short of your strenuous exertions, and the emulation awakened by your noble and disinterested conduct, could have brought so many of us, the scattered remnant of a disheartened party, to meet together once again in solemn consultation; for I take it, gentlemen,' he said, looking round, 'this is only a consultation.'

'Nothing more,' said the young lord.

'Nothing more,' said Doctor Grumball, shaking his large academical peruke.

And, 'Only a consultation,' was echoed by the others.

Redgauntlet bit his lip. 'I had hopes,' he said, 'that the discourses I have held with most of you, from time to time, had ripened into more maturity than your words imply, and that we were here to execute as well as to deliberate; and for this we stand prepared. I can raise five hundred men with my whistle.'

'Five hundred men!' said one of the Welsh squires; 'Cot bless us! and pray you, what cood could five hundred men do?'

'All that the priming does for the cannon, Mr. Meredith,' answered Redgauntlet; 'it will enable us to seize Carlisle, and you know what our friends have engaged for in that case.'

'Yes—but,' said the young nobleman, 'you must not hurry us on too fast, Mr. Redgauntlet; we are all, I believe, as sincere and truehearted in this business as you are, but we will not be driven forward blindfold. We owe caution to ourselves and our families, as well as to those whom we are empowered to represent on this occasion.'

'Who hurries you, my lord? Who is it that would drive this meeting forward blindfold? I do not understand your lordship,' said Redgauntlet.

'Nay,' said Sir Richard Glendale, 'at least do not let us fall under our old reproach of disagreeing among ourselves. What my lord means, Redgauntlet, is, that we have this morning heard it is uncertain whether you could even bring that body of men whom you count upon; your countryman, Mr. MacKellar, seemed, just before you came in, to doubt whether your people would rise in any force, unless you could produce the authority of your nephew.'

'I might ask,' said Redgauntlet, 'what right MacKellar, or any one, has to doubt my being able to accomplish what I stand pledged for? But our hopes consist in our unity. Here stands my nephew. Gentlemen, I present to you my kinsman, Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that ilk.'

'Gentlemen,' said Darsie, with a throbbing bosom, for he felt the crisis a very painful one, 'Allow me to say, that I suspend expressing my sentiments on the important subject under discussion until I have heard those of the present meeting.'

'Proceed in your deliberations, gentlemen,' said Redgauntlet; 'I will show my nephew such reasons for acquiescing in the result, as will entirely remove any scruples which may hang around his mind.'

Dr. Grumball now coughed, 'shook his ambrosial curls,' and addressed the assembly.

'The principles of Oxford,' he said, 'are well understood, since she was the last to resign herself to the Arch-Usurper,—since she has condemned, by her sovereign authority, the blasphemous, atheistical, and anarchical tenets of Locke, and other deluders of the public mind. Oxford will give men, money and countenance, to the cause of the rightful monarch. But we have, been often deluded by foreign powers, who have availed themselves of our zeal to stir up civil dissensions, in Britain, not for the advantage of our blessed though banished monarch, but to stir up disturbances by which they might profit, while we, their tools, are sure to be ruined. Oxford, therefore, will not rise, unless our sovereign comes in person to claim our allegiance, in which case, God forbid we should refuse him our best obedience.'

'It is a very cood advice,' said Mr. Meredith.

'In troth,' said Sir Richard Glendale, 'it is the very keystone of our enterprise, and the only condition upon which I myself and others could ever have dreamt of taking up arms. No insurrection which has not Charles Edward himself at its head, will, ever last longer than till a single foot company of redcoats march to disperse it.'

'This is my own opinion, and that of all my family,' said the young nobleman already mentioned; 'and I own I am somewhat surprised at being summoned to attend a dangerous rendezvous such as this, before something certain could have been stated to us on this most important preliminary point.'

'Pardon me, my lord,' said Redgauntlet; 'I have not been so unjust either to myself or my friends—I had no means of communicating to our distant confederates (without the greatest risk of discovery) what is known to some of my honourable friends. As courageous, and as resolved, as when, twenty years since, he threw himself into the wilds of Moidart, Charles Edward has instantly complied with the wishes of his faithful subjects. Charles Edward is in this country—Charles Edward is in this house!—Charles Edward waits but your present decision, to receive the homage of those who have ever called themselves his loyal liegemen. He that would now turn his coat, and change his note, must do so under the eye of his sovereign.'

There was a deep pause. Those among the conspirators whom mere habit, or a desire of preserving consistency, had engaged in the affair, now saw with terror their retreat cut off; and others, who at a distance had regarded the proposed enterprise as hopeful, trembled when the moment of actually embarking in it was thus unexpectedly and almost inevitably precipitated.

'How now, my lords and gentlemen!' said Redgauntlet; 'is it delight and rapture that keep you thus silent? where are the eager welcomes that should be paid to your rightful king, who a second time confides his person to the care of his subjects, undeterred by the hairbreadth escapes and severe privations of his former expedition? I hope there is no gentleman here that is not ready to redeem, in his prince's presence, the pledge of fidelity which he offered in his absence.'

'I, at least,' said the young nobleman resolutely, and laying his hand on his sword, 'will not be that coward. If Charles is come to these shores, I will be the first to give him welcome, and to devote my life and fortune to his service.'

'Before Cot,' said Mr. Meredith, 'I do not see that Mr. Redgauntlet has left us anything else to do.'

'Stay,' said Summertrees, 'there is yet one other question. Has he brought any of those Irish rapparees with him, who broke the neck of our last glorious affair?'

'Not a man of them,' said Redgauntlet.

'I trust,' said Dr. Grumball, 'that there are no Catholic priests in his company. I would not intrude on the private conscience of my sovereign, but, as an unworthy son of the Church of England, it is my duty to consider her security.'

'Not a Popish dog or cat is there, to bark or mew about his Majesty,' said Redgauntlet. 'Old Shaftesbury himself could not wish a prince's person more secure from Popery—which may not be the worst religion in the world, notwithstanding. Any more doubts, gentlemen? can no more plausible reasons be discovered for postponing the payment of our duty, and discharge of our oaths and engagements? Meantime your king waits your declaration—by my faith he hath but a frozen reception!'

'Redgauntlet,' said Sir Richard Glendale, calmly, 'your reproaches shall not goad me into anything of which my reason disapproves. That I respect my engagement as much as you do, is evident, since I am here, ready to support it with the best blood in my veins. But has the king really come hither entirely unattended?'

'He has no man with him but young ——, as aide de camp, and a single valet de chambre.'

'No MAN—but, Redgauntlet, as you are a gentleman, has he no woman with him?'

Redgauntlet cast his eyes on the ground and replied, 'I am sorry to say—he has.'

The company looked at each other, and remained silent for a moment. At length Sir Richard proceeded. 'I need not repeat to you, Mr. Redgauntlet, what is the well-grounded opinion of his Majesty's friends concerning that most unhappy connexion there is but one sense and feeling amongst us upon the subject. I must conclude that our humble remonstrances were communicated by you, sir, to the king?'

'In the same strong terms in which they were couched,' replied Redgauntlet. 'I love his Majesty's cause more than I fear his displeasure.'

'But, apparently, our humble expostulation has produced no effect. This lady, who has crept into his bosom, has a sister in the Elector of Hanover's court, and yet we are well assured that our most private communication is placed in her keeping.'

'VARIUM ET MUTABILE SEMPER FEMINA,' said Dr. Grumball.

'She puts his secrets into her work-bag,' said Maxwell; 'and out they fly whenever she opens it. If I must hang, I would wish it to be in somewhat a better rope than the string of a lady's hussey.'

'Are you, too, turning dastard, Maxwell?' said Redgauntlet, in a whisper.

'Not I,' said Maxwell; 'let us fight for it, and let them win and wear us; but to be betrayed by a brimstone like that'—

'Be temperate, gentlemen,' said Redgauntlet; 'the foible of which you complain so heavily has always been that of kings and heroes; which I feel strongly confident the king will surmount, upon the humble entreaty of his best servants, and when he sees them ready to peril their all in his cause, upon the slight condition of his resigning the society of a female favourite, of whom I have seen reason to think he hath been himself for some time wearied. But let us not press upon him rashly with our well-meant zeal. He has a princely will as becomes his princely birth, and we, gentlemen, who are royalists, should be the last to take advantage of circumstances to limit its exercise. I am as much surprised and hurt as you can be, to find that he has made her the companion of this journey, increasing every chance of treachery and detection. But do not let us insist upon a sacrifice so humiliating, while he has scarce placed a foot upon the beach of his kingdom. Let us act generously by our sovereign; and when we have shown what we will do for him, we shall be able, with better face, to state what it is we expect him to concede.'

'Indeed, I think it is but a pity,' said MacKellar, 'when so many pretty gentlemen are got together, that they should part without the flash of a sword among them.'

'I should be of that gentleman's opinion,' said Lord ——, 'had I nothing to lose but my life; but I frankly own, that the conditions on which our family agreed to join having been, in this instance, left unfulfilled, I will not peril the whole fortunes of our house on the doubtful fidelity of an artful woman.'

'I am sorry to see your lordship,' said Redgauntlet, 'take a course which is more likely to secure your house's wealth than to augment its honours.'

'How am I to understand your language, sir?' said the young nobleman, haughtily.

'Nay, gentlemen,' said Dr Grumball, interposing, 'do not let friends quarrel; we are all zealous for the cause—but truly, although I know the license claimed by the great in such matters, and can, I hope, make due allowance, there is, I may say, an indecorum in a prince who comes to claim the allegiance of the Church of England, arriving on such an errand with such a companion—SI NON CASTE, CAUTE TAMEN.'

'I wonder how the Church of England came to be so heartily attached to his merry old namesake,' said Redgauntlet.

Sir Richard Glendale then took up the question, as one whose authority and experience gave him right to speak with much weight.

'We have no leisure for hesitation,' he said; 'it is full time that we decide what course we are to hold. I feel as much as you, Mr. Redgauntlet, the delicacy of capitulating with our sovereign in his present condition. But I must also think of the total ruin of the cause, the confiscation and bloodshed which will take place among his adherents, and all through the infatuation with which he adheres to a woman who is the pensionary of the present minister, as she was for years Sir Robert Walpole's. Let his Majesty send her back to the continent, and the sword on which I now lay my hand shall instantly be unsheathed, and, I trust, many hundred others at the same moment.'

The other persons present testified their unanimous acquiescence in what Sir Richard Glendale had said.

'I see you have taken your resolutions, gentlemen,' said Redgauntlet; 'unwisely I think, because I believe that, by softer and more generous proceedings, you would have been more likely to carry a point which I think as desirable as you do. But what is to be done if Charles should refuse, with the inflexibility of his grandfather, to comply with this request of yours? Do you mean to abandon him to his fate?'

'God forbid!' said Sir Richard, hastily; 'and God forgive you, Mr. Redgauntlet, for breathing such a thought. No! I for one will, with all duty and humility, see him safe back to his vessel, and defend him with my life against whosoever shall assail him. But when I have seen his sails spread, my next act will be to secure, if I can, my own safety, by retiring to my house; or, if I find our engagement, as is too probable, has taken wind, by surrendering myself to the next Justice of Peace, and giving security that hereafter I shall live quiet, and submit to the ruling powers.'

Again the rest of the persons present intimated their agreement in opinion with the speaker.

'Well, gentlemen,' said Redgauntlet, 'it is not for me to oppose the opinion of every one; and I must do you the justice to say, that the king has, in the present instance, neglected a condition of your agreement which was laid before him in very distinct terms. The question now is, who is to acquaint him with the result of this conference; for I presume you would not wait on him in a body to make the proposal that he should dismiss a person from his family as the price of your allegiance.'

'I think Mr. Redgauntlet should make the explanation, said Lord—. 'As he has, doubtless, done justice to our remonstrances by communicating them to the king, no one can, with such propriety and force, state the natural and inevitable consequence of their being neglected.'

'Now, I think,' said Redgauntlet, 'that those who make the objection should state it, for I am confident the king will hardly believe, on less authority than that of the heir of the loyal House of B—, that he is the first to seek an evasion of his pledge to join him.'

'An evasion, sir!' repeated Lord ——, fiercely, 'I have borne too much from you already, and this I will not endure. Favour me with your company to the downs.'

Redgauntlet laughed scornfully, and was about to follow the fiery young man, when Sir Richard again interposed. 'Are we to exhibit,' he said, 'the last symptoms of the dissolution of our party, by turning our swords against each other? Be patient, Lord ——; in such conferences as this, much must pass unquestioned which might brook challenge elsewhere. There is a privilege of party as of parliament—men cannot, in emergency, stand upon picking phrases. Gentlemen, if you will extend your confidence in me so far, I will wait upon his Majesty, and I hope my Lord —— and Mr. Redgauntlet will accompany me. I trust the explanation of this unpleasant matter will prove entirely satisfactory, and that we shall find ourselves at liberty to render our homage to our sovereign without reserve, when I for one will be the first to peril all in his just quarrel.'

Redgauntlet at once stepped forward. 'My lord,' he said, 'if my zeal made me say anything in the slightest degree offensive, I wish it unsaid, and ask your pardon. A gentleman can do no more.'

'I could not have asked Mr. Redgauntlet to do so much,' said the young nobleman, willingly accepting the hand which Redgauntlet offered. 'I know no man living from whom I could take so much reproof without a sense of degradation as from himself.'

'Let me then hope, my lord, that you will go with Sir Richard and me to the presence. Your warm blood will heat our zeal—our colder resolves will temper yours. The young lord smiled, and shook his head. 'Alas! Mr. Redgauntlet,' he said, 'I am ashamed to say, that in zeal you surpass us all. But I will not refuse this mission, provided you will permit Sir Arthur, your nephew, also to accompany us.'

'My nephew?' said Redgauntlet, and seemed to hesitate, then added, 'Most certainly. I trust,' he said, looking at Darsie, 'he will bring to his prince's presence such sentiments as fit the occasion.'

It seemed however to Darsie, that his uncle would rather have left him behind, had he not feared that he might in that case have been influenced by, or might perhaps himself influence, the unresolved confederates with whom he must have associated during his absence.

'I will go,' said Redgauntlet, 'and request admission.'

In a moment after he returned, and without speaking, motioned for the young nobleman to advance. He did so, followed by Sir Richard Glendale and Darsie, Redgauntlet himself bringing up the rear. A short passage, and a few steps, brought them to the door of the temporary presence-chamber, in which the Royal Wanderer was to receive their homage. It was the upper loft of one of those cottages which made additions to the old inn, poorly furnished, dusty, and in disorder; for, rash as the enterprise might be considered, they had been still careful not to draw the attention of strangers by any particular attentions to the personal accommodation of the prince. He was seated, when the deputies, as they might be termed, of his remaining adherents entered; and as he rose, and came forward and bowed, in acceptance of their salutation, it was with a dignified courtesy which at once supplied whatever was deficient in external pomp, and converted the wretched garret into a saloon worthy of the occasion.

It is needless to add that he was the same personage already introduced in the character of Father Buonaventure, by which name he was distinguished at Fairladies. His dress was not different from what he then wore, excepting that he had a loose riding-coat of camlet, under which he carried an efficient cut-and-thrust sword, instead of his walking rapier, and also a pair of pistols.

Redgauntlet presented to him successively the young Lord ——, and his kinsman, Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet, who trembled as, bowing and kissing his hand, he found himself surprised into what might be construed an act of high treason, which yet he saw no safe means to avoid.

Sir Richard Glendale seemed personally known to Charles Edward, who received him with a mixture of dignity and affection, and seemed to sympathize with the tears which rushed into that gentleman's eyes as he bade his Majesty welcome to his native kingdom.

'Yes, my good Sir Richard,' said the unfortunate prince in a tone melancholy, yet resolved, 'Charles Edward is with his faithful friends once more—not, perhaps, with his former gay hopes which undervalued danger, but with the same determined contempt of the worst which can befall him, in claiming his own rights and those of his country.'

'I rejoice, sire—and yet, alas! I must also grieve, to see you once more on the British shores,' said Sir Richard Glendale, and stopped short—a tumult of contradictory feelings preventing his further utterance.

'It is the call of my faithful and suffering people which alone could have induced me to take once more the sword in my hand. For my own part, Sir Richard, when I have reflected how many of my loyal and devoted friends perished by the sword and by proscription, or died indigent and neglected in a foreign land, I have often, sworn that no view to my personal aggrandizement should again induce me to agitate a title which has cost my followers so dear. But since so many men of worth and honour conceive the cause of England and Scotland to be linked with that of Charles Stuart, I must follow their brave example, and, laying aside all other considerations, once more stand forward as their deliverer. I am, however, come hither upon your invitation; and as you are so completely acquainted with circumstances to which my absence must necessarily have rendered me a stranger, I must be a mere tool in the hands of my friends. I know well I never can refer myself implicitly to more loyal hearts or wiser heads, than Herries Redgauntlet, and Sir Richard Glendale. Give me your advice, then, how we are to proceed, and decide upon the fate of Charles Edward.'

Redgauntlet looked at Sir Richard, as if to say, 'Can you press any additional or unpleasant condition at a moment like this?' And the other shook his head and looked down, as if his resolution was unaltered, and yet as feeling all the delicacy of the situation.

There was a silence, which was broken by the unfortunate representative of an unhappy dynasty, with some appearance of irritation. 'This is strange, gentlemen,' he said; 'you have sent for me from the bosom of my family, to head an adventure of doubt and danger; and when I come, your own minds seem to be still irresolute. I had not expected this on the part of two such men.'

'For me, sire,' said Redgauntlet, 'the steel of my sword is not truer than the temper of my mind.'

'My Lord ——'s and mine are equally so,' said Sir Richard; 'but you had in charge, Mr. Redgauntlet, to convey our request to his Majesty, coupled with certain conditions.'

'And I discharged my duty to his Majesty and to you,' said Redgauntlet.

'I looked at no condition, gentlemen,' said their king, with dignity, 'save that which called me here to assert my rights in person. That I have fulfilled at no common risk. Here I stand to keep my word, and I expect of you to be true to yours.'

'There was, or should have been, something more than that in our proposal, please your Majesty,' said Sir Richard. 'There was a condition annexed to it.'

'I saw it not,' said Charles, interrupting him. 'Out of tenderness towards the noble hearts of whom I think so highly, I would neither see nor read anything which could lessen them in my love and my esteem. Conditions can have no part betwixt prince and subject.'

'Sire,' said Redgauntlet, kneeling on one knee, 'I see from Sir Richard's countenance he deems it my fault that your Majesty seems ignorant of what your subjects desired that I should communicate to your Majesty. For Heaven's sake! for the sake of all my past services and sufferings, leave not such a stain upon my honour! The note, Number D, of which this is a copy, referred to the painful subject to which Sir Richard again directs your attention.'

'You press upon me, gentlemen,' said the prince, colouring highly, 'recollections, which, as I hold them most alien to your character, I would willingly have banished from my memory. I did not suppose that my loyal subjects would think so poorly of me, as to use my depressed circumstances as a reason for forcing themselves into my domestic privacies, and stipulating arrangements with their king regarding matters in which the meanest minds claim the privilege of thinking for themselves. In affairs of state and public policy, I will ever be guided as becomes a prince, by the advice of my wisest counsellors; in those which regard my private affections and my domestic arrangements, I claim the same freedom of will which I allow to all my subjects, and without which a crown were less worth wearing than a beggar's bonnet.'

'May it please your Majesty,' said Sir Richard Glendale, 'I see it must be my lot to speak unwilling truths; but believe me, I do so with as much profound respect as deep regret. It is true, we have called you to head a mighty undertaking, and that your Majesty, preferring honour to safety, and the love of your country to your own ease, has condescended to become our leader. But we also pointed out as a necessary and indispensable preparatory step to the achievement of our purpose—and, I must say, as a positive condition of our engaging in it—that an individual, supposed,—I presume not to guess how truly,—to have your Majesty's more intimate confidence, and believed, I will not say on absolute proof but upon the most pregnant suspicion, to be capable of betraying that confidence to the Elector of Hanover, should be removed from your royal household and society.'

'This is too insolent, Sir Richard!' said Charles Edward. 'Have you inveigled me into your power to bait me in this unseemly manner? And you, Redgauntlet, why did you suffer matters to come to such a point as this, without making me more distinctly aware what insults were to be practised on me?'

'My gracious prince,' said Redgauntlet, 'I am so far to blame in this, that I did not think so slight an impediment as that of a woman's society could have really interrupted an undertaking of this magnitude. I am a plain man, sire, and speak but bluntly; I could not have dreamt but what, within the first five minutes of this interview, either Sir Richard and his friends would have ceased to insist upon a condition so ungrateful to your Majesty, or that your Majesty would have sacrificed

this unhappy attachment to the sound advice, or even to the over-anxious suspicions, of so many faithful subjects. I saw no entanglement in such a difficulty which on either side might not have been broken through like a cobweb.'

'You were mistaken, sir,' said Charles Edward, 'entirely mistaken—as much so as you are at this moment, when you think in your heart my refusal to comply with this insolent proposition is dictated by a childish and romantic passion for an individual, I tell you, sir, I could part with that person to-morrow, without an instant's regret—that I have had thoughts of dismissing her from my court, for reasons known to myself; but that I will never betray my rights as a sovereign and a man, by taking this step to secure the favour of any one, or to purchase that allegiance which, if you owe it to me at all, is due to me as my birthright.'

'I am sorry for this,' said Redgauntlet; 'I hope both your Majesty and Sir Richard will reconsider your resolutions, or forbear this discussion, in a conjuncture so pressing. I trust your Majesty will recollect that you are on hostile ground; that our preparations cannot have so far escaped notice as to permit us now with safety to retreat from our purpose; insomuch, that it is with the deepest anxiety of heart I foresee even danger to your own royal person, unless you can generously give your subjects the satisfaction, which Sir Richard seems to think they are obstinate in demanding.'

'And deep indeed your anxiety ought to be,' said the prince. 'Is it in these circumstances of personal danger in which you expect to overcome a resolution, which is founded on a sense of what is due to me as a man or a prince? If the axe and scaffold were ready before the windows of Whitehall, I would rather tread the same path with my great-grandfather, than concede the slightest point in which my honour is concerned.'

He spoke these words with a determined accent, and looked around him on the company, all of whom (excepting Darsie, who saw, he thought, a fair period to a most perilous enterprise) seemed in deep anxiety and confusion. At length, Sir Richard spoke in a solemn and melancholy tone. 'If the safety,' he said, 'of poor Richard Glendale were alone concerned in this matter, I have never valued my life enough to weigh it against the slightest point of your Majesty's service. But I am only a messenger—a commissioner, who must execute my trust, and upon whom a thousand voices will cry, Curse and woe, if I do it not with fidelity. All of your adherents, even Redgauntlet himself, see certain ruin to this enterprise—the greatest danger to your Majesty's person—the utter destruction of all your party and friends, if they insist not on the point, which, unfortunately, your Majesty is so unwilling to concede. I speak it with a heart full of anguish—with a tongue unable to utter my emotions—but it must be spoken—the fatal truth—that if your royal goodness cannot yield to us a boon which we hold necessary to our security and your own, your Majesty with one word disarms ten thousand men, ready to draw their swords in your behalf; or, to speak yet more plainly, you annihilate even the semblance of a royal party in Great Britain.'

'And why do you not add,' said the prince, scornfully, 'that the men who have been ready to assume arms in my behalf, will atone for their treason to the Elector, by delivering me up to the fate for which so many proclamations have destined me? Carry my head to St. James's, gentlemen; you will do a more acceptable and a more honourable action, than, having inveigled me into a situation which places me so completely in your power, to dishonour yourselves by propositions which dishonour me.'

'My God, sire!' exclaimed Sir Richard, clasping his hands together, in impatience, 'of what great and inexpiable crime can your Majesty's ancestors have 'been guilty, that they have been punished by the infliction of judicial blindness on their whole generation!—Come, my Lord ——, we must to our friends.'

'By your leave, Sir Richard,' said the young nobleman, 'not till we, have learned what measures can be taken for his Majesty's personal safety.'

'Care not for me, young man,' said Charles Edward; 'when I was in the society of Highland robbers and cattle-drovers, I was safer than I now hold myself among the representatives of the best blood in England. Farewell, gentlemen—I will shift for myself.'

'This must never be,' said Redgauntlet. 'Let me that brought you to the point of danger, at least provide for your safe retreat.'

So saying, he hastily left the apartment, followed by his nephew. The Wanderer, averting his eyes from Lord —— and Sir Richard Glendale, threw himself into a seat at the upper end of the apartment, while they, in much anxiety, stood together, at a distance from him, and conversed in whispers.

CHAPTER XXIII NARRATIVE CONTINUED

When Redgauntlet left the room, in haste and discomposure, the first person he met on the stair, and indeed so close by the door of the apartment that Darsie thought he must have been listening there, was his attendant Nixon.

'What the devil do you here?' he said, abruptly and sternly.

'I wait your orders,' said Nixon. 'I hope all's right!—excuse my zeal.'

'All is wrong, sir. Where is the seafaring fellow—Ewart—what do you call him?'

'Nanty Ewart, sir. I will carry your commands,' said Nixon.

'I will deliver them myself to him,' said Redgauntlet; call him hither.'

'But should your honour leave the presence?' said Nixon, still lingering.

"Sdeath, sir, do you prate to me?" said Redgauntlet, bending his brows. 'I, sir, transact my own business; you, I am told, act by a ragged deputy.'

Without further answer, Nixon departed, rather disconcerted, as it seemed to Darsie.

'That dog turns insolent and lazy,' said Redgauntlet; but I must bear with him for a while.'

A moment after, Nixon returned with Ewart.

'Is this the smuggling fellow?' demanded Redgauntlet. Nixon nodded.

'Is he sober now? he was brawling anon.'

'Sober enough for business,' said Nixon.

'Well then, hark ye, Ewart;—man your boat with your best hands, and have her by the pier—get your other fellows on board the brig—if you have any cargo left, throw it overboard; it shall be all paid, five times over—and be ready for a start to Wales or the Hebrides, or perhaps for Sweden or Norway.'

Ewart answered sullenly enough, 'Aye, aye, sir.'

'Go with him, Nixon,' said Redgauntlet, forcing himself to speak with some appearance of cordiality to the servant with whom he was offended; 'see he does his duty.'

Ewart left the house sullenly, followed by Nixon. The sailor was just in that species of drunken humour which made him jealous, passionate, and troublesome, without showing any other disorder than that of irritability. As he walked towards the beach he kept muttering to himself, but in such a tone that his companion lost not a word, 'Smuggling fellow—Aye, smuggler—and, start your cargo into the sea—and be ready to start for the Hebrides, or Sweden—or the devil, I suppose. Well, and what if I said in answer—Rebel, Jacobite—traitor; I'll make you and your d——d confederates walk the plank—I have seen better men do it—half a score of a morning—when I was across the Line.'

'D—d unhandsome terms those Redgauntlet used to you, brother,' said Nixon.

'Which do you mean?' said Ewart, starting, and recollecting himself. 'I have been at my old trade of thinking aloud, have I?'

'No matter,' answered Nixon, 'none but a friend heard you. You cannot have forgotten how Redgauntlet disarmed you this morning.'

'Why, I would bear no malice about that—only he is so cursedly high and saucy,' said Ewart.

'And then,' said Nixon, 'I know you for a true-hearted Protestant.'

'That I am, by G—,' said Ewart. 'No, the Spaniards could never get my religion from me.'

'And a friend to King George, and the Hanover line of succession,' said Nixon, still walking and speaking very slow.

'You may swear I am, excepting in the way of business, as Turnpenny says. I like King George, but I can't afford to pay duties.'

'You are outlawed, I believe,' said Nixon.

'Am I?—faith, I believe I am,' said Ewart. 'I wish I were INLAWED again with all my heart. But come along, we must get all ready for our peremptory gentleman, I suppose.'

'I will teach you a better trick,' said Nixon. 'There is a bloody pack of rebels yonder.'

'Aye, we all know that,' said the smuggler; 'but the snowball's melting, I think.'

'There is some one yonder, whose head is worth—thirty thousand—pounds—of sterling money,' said Nixon, pausing between each word, as if to enforce the magnificence of the sum.

'And what of that?' said Ewart, quickly.

'Only that, instead of lying by the pier with your men on their oars, if you will just carry your boat on board just now, and take no notice of any signal from the shore, by G—d, Nanty Ewart. I will make a man of you for life!'

'Oh ho! then the Jacobite gentry are not so safe as they think themselves?' said Nanty.

'In an hour or two,' replied Nixon, 'they will be made safer in Carlisle Castle.'

'The devil they will!' said Ewart; 'and you have been the informer, I suppose?'

'Yes; I have been ill paid for my service among the Redgauntlets—have scarce got dog's wages—and been treated worse than ever dog was used. I have the old fox and his cubs in the same trap now, Nanty; and we'll see how a certain young lady will look then. You see I am frank with you, Nanty.'

'And I will be as frank with you,' said the smuggler. 'You are a d—d old scoundrel—traitor to the man whose bread you eat! Me help to betray poor devils, that have been so often betrayed myself! Not if they were a hundred Popes, Devils, and Pretenders. I will back and tell them their danger—they are part of cargo—regularly invoiced—put under my charge by the owners—I'll back!—'

'You are not stark mad?' said Nixon, who now saw he had miscalculated in supposing Nanty's wild ideas of honour and fidelity could be shaken even by resentment, or by his Protestant partialities. 'You shall not go back—it is all a joke.'

'I'll back to Redgauntlet, and see whether it is a joke he will laugh at.'

'My life is lost if you do,' said Nixon—'hear reason.'

They were in a clump or cluster of tall furze at the moment they were speaking, about half-way between the pier and the house, but not in a direct line, from which Nixon, whose object it was to gain time, had induced Ewart to diverge insensibly.

He now saw the necessity of taking a desperate resolution. 'Hear reason,' he said; and added, as Nanty still endeavoured to pass him, 'Or else hear this!' discharging a pocket-pistol into the unfortunate man's body.

Nanty staggered, but kept his feet. 'It has cut my back-bone asunder,' he said; 'you have done me the last good office, and I will not die ungrateful.'

As he uttered the last words, he collected his remaining strength, stood firm for an instant, drew his hanger, and, fetching a stroke with both hands, cut Cristal Nixon down. The blow, struck with all the energy of a desperate and dying man, exhibited a force to which Ewart's exhausted frame might have seemed inadequate;—it cleft the hat which the wretch wore, though secured by a plate of iron within the lining, bit deep into his skull, and there left a fragment of the weapon, which was broke by the fury of the blow.

One of the seamen of the lugger, who strolled up attracted by the firing of the pistol, though being a small one the report was very trifling, found both the unfortunate men stark dead. Alarmed at what he saw, which he conceived to have been the consequence of some unsuccessful engagement betwixt his late commander and a revenue officer (for Nixon chanced not to be personally known to him) the sailor hastened back to the boat, in order to apprise his comrades of Nanty's fate, and to advise them to take off themselves and the vessel.

Meantime Redgauntlet, having, as we have seen, dispatched Nixon for the purpose of securing a retreat for the unfortunate Charles, in case of extremity, returned to the apartment where he had left the Wanderer. He now found him alone.

'Sir Richard Glendale,' said the unfortunate prince, 'with his young friend, has gone to consult their adherents now in the house. Redgauntlet, my friend, I will not blame you for the circumstances in which I find myself, though I am at once placed in danger, and rendered contemptible. But you ought to have stated to me more strongly the weight which these gentlemen attached to their insolent proposition. You should have told me that no compromise would have any effect—that they desire not a prince to govern them, but one, on the contrary, over whom they were to exercise restraint on all occasions, from the highest affairs of the state, down to the most intimate and private concerns of his own privacy, which the most ordinary men desire to keep secret and sacred from interference.'

'God knows,' said Redgauntlet, in much agitation, 'I acted for the best when I pressed your Majesty to come hither—I never thought that your Majesty, at such a crisis, would have scrupled, when a kingdom was in view, to sacrifice an attachment, which'—

'Peace, sir!' said Charles; 'it is not for you to estimate my feelings upon such a subject.'

Redgauntlet coloured high, and bowed profoundly. 'At least,' he resumed, 'I hoped that some middle way might be found, and it shall—and must.—Come with me, nephew. We will to these gentlemen, and I am confident I will bring back heart-stirring tidings.'

'I will do much to comply with them, Redgauntlet. I am loath, having again set my foot on British land, to quit it without a blow for my right. But this which they demand of me is a degradation, and compliance is impossible.'

Redgauntlet, followed by his nephew, the unwilling spectator of this extraordinary scene, left once more the apartment of the adventurous Wanderer, and was met on the top of the stairs by Joe Crackenthorp. 'Where are the other gentlemen?' he said.

'Yonder, in the west barrack,' answered Joe; 'but Master Ingoldsby,'—that was the name by which Redgauntlet was most generally known in Cumberland,—'I wish to say to you that I must put yonder folk together in one room.'

'What folk?' said Redgauntlet, impatiently.

'Why, them prisoner stranger folk, as you bid Cristal Nixon look after. Lord love you! this is a large house enow, but we cannot have separate lock-ups for folk, as they have in Newgate or in Bedlam. Yonder's a mad beggar, that is to be a great man when he wins a lawsuit, Lord help him!—Yonder's a Quaker and a lawyer charged with a riot; and, ecod, I must make one key and one lock keep them, for we are chokeful, and you have sent off old Nixon that could have given one some help in this confusion. Besides, they take up every one a room, and call for naughts on earth,—excepting the old man, who calls lustily enough,—but he has not a penny to pay shot.'

'Do as thou wilt with them,' said Redgauntlet, who had listened impatiently to his statement; 'so thou dost but keep them from getting out and making some alarm in the country, I care not.'

'A Quaker and a lawyer!' said Darsie. 'This must be Fairford and Geddes.—Uncle, I must request of you'—

'Nay, nephew,' interrupted Redgauntlet, 'this is no time for asking questions. You shall yourself decide upon their fate in the course of an hour—no harm whatever is designed them.'

So saying, he hurried towards the place where the Jacobite gentlemen were holding their council, and Darsie followed him, in the hope that the obstacle which had arisen to the prosecution of their desperate adventure would prove insurmountable and spare him the necessity of a dangerous and violent rupture with his uncle. The discussions among them were very eager; the more daring part of the conspirators, who had little but life to lose, being desirous to proceed at all hazards; while the others, whom a sense of honour and a hesitation to disavow long-cherished principles had brought forward, were perhaps not ill satisfied to have a fair apology for declining an adventure, into which they had entered with more of reluctance than zeal.

Meanwhile Joe Crackenthorp, availing himself of the hasty permission attained from Redgauntlet, proceeded to assemble in one apartment those whose safe custody had been thought necessary; and, without much considering the propriety of the matter, he selected for the common place of confinement, the room

which Lillas had, since her brother's departure, occupied alone. It had a strong lock, and was double-hinged, which probably led to the preference assigned to it, as a place of security.

Into this, Joe, with little ceremony, and a good deal of noise, introduced the Quaker and Fairford; the first descanting on the immorality, the other on the illegality, of his proceedings; and he turned a deaf ear both to the one and the other. Next he pushed in, almost in headlong fashion, the unfortunate litigant, who, having made some resistance at the threshold, had received a violent thrust in consequence, and came rushing forward, like a ram in the act of charging, with such impetus as must have carried him to the top of the room, and struck the cocked hat which sat perched on the top of his tow wig against Miss Redgauntlet's person, had not the honest Quaker interrupted his career by seizing him by the collar, and bringing him to a stand. 'Friend,' said he, with the real good-breeding which so often subsists independently of ceremony, 'thou art no company for that young person; she is, thou seest, frightened at our being so suddenly thrust in hither; and although that be no fault of ours, yet it will become us to behave civilly towards her. Wherefore come thou with me to this window, and I will tell thee what it concerns thee to know.'

'And what for should I no speak to the Leddy, friend?' said Peter, who was now about half seas over. 'I have spoke to leddies before now, man. What for should she be frightened at me? I am nae bogle, I ween. What are ye pooin' me that gate for? Ye will rive my coat, and I will have a good action for having myself made SARTUM ATQUE TECTUM at your expenses.'

Notwithstanding this threat, Mr. Geddes, whose muscles were as strong as his judgement was sound and his temper sedate, led Poor Peter under the sense of a control against which he could not struggle, to the farther corner of the apartment, where, placing him, whether he would or no, in a chair, he sat down beside him, and effectually prevented his annoying the young lady, upon whom he had seemed bent upon conferring the delights of his society.

If Peter had immediately recognized his counsel learned in the law, it is probable that not even the benevolent efforts of the Quaker could have kept him in a state of restraint; but Fairford's back was turned towards his client, whose optics, besides being somewhat dazzled with ale and brandy, were speedily engaged in contemplating a half-crown which Joshua held between his finger and his thumb, saying, at the same time, 'Friend, thou art indigent and improvident. This will, well employed, procure thee sustentation of nature for more than a single day; and I will bestow it on thee if thou wilt sit here and keep me company; for neither thou nor I, friend, are fit company for ladies.'

'Speak for yourself, friend,' said Peter, scornfully; 'I was ay kend to be agreeable to the fair sex; and when I was in business I served the ladies wi' anither sort of decorum than Plainstones, the d—d awkward scoundrel! It was one of the articles of dittay between us.'

'Well, but, friend,' said the Quaker, who observed that the young lady still seemed to fear Peter's intrusion, 'I wish to hear thee speak about this great lawsuit of thine, which has been matter of such celebrity.'

'Celebrity! Ye may swear that,' said Peter, for the string was touched to which his crazy imagination always vibrated. 'And I dinna wonder that folk that judge things by their outward grandeur, should think me something worth their envying. It's very true that it is grandeur upon earth to hear ane's name thunnered out along the long-arched roof of the Outer House,—"Poor Peter Peebles against Plainstones ET PER CONTRA;" a' the best lawyers in the house fleeing like eagles to the prey; some because they are in the cause, and some because they want to be thought engaged (for there are tricks in other trades by selling muslins)—to see the reporters mending their pens to take down the debate—the Lords themselves pooin' in their chairs, like folk sitting down to a gude dinner, and crying on the clerks for parts and pendicles of the process, who, puir bodies, can do little mair than cry on their closet-keepers to help them. To see a' this,' continued Peter, in a tone of sustained rapture, 'and to ken that naething will be said or dune amang a' thae grand folk, for maybe the feck of three hours, saving what concerns you and your business—Oh, man, nae wonder that ye judge this to be earthly glory! And yet, neighbour, as I was saying, there be unco drawbacks—I whiles think of my bit house, where dinner, and supper, and breakfast, used to come without the crying for, just as if fairies had brought it—and the gude bed at e'en—and the needfu' penny in the pouch. And then to see a' ane's worldly substance capering in the air in a pair of weighbauks, now up, now down, as the breath of judge or counsel inclines it for pursuer or defender,—troth, man, there are times I rue having ever begun the plea wark, though, maybe, when ye consider the renown and credit I have by it, ye will hardly believe what I am saying.'

'Indeed, friend,' said Joshua, with a sigh, 'I am glad thou hast found anything in the legal contention which compensates thee for poverty and hunger; but I believe, were other human objects of ambition looked upon as closely, their advantages would be found as chimerical as those attending thy protracted litigation.'

'But never mind, friend,' said Peter, 'I'll tell you the exact state of the conjunct processes, and make you sensible that I can bring mysell round with a wet finger, now I have my finger and my thumb on this loup-the-dike loon, the lad Fairford.'

Alan Fairford was in the act of speaking to the masked lady (for Miss Redgauntlet had retained her riding vizard) endeavouring to assure her, as he perceived her anxiety, of such protection as he could afford, when his own name, pronounced in a loud tone, attracted his attention. He looked round, and seeing Peter Peebles, as hastily turned to avoid his notice, in which he succeeded, so earnest was Peter upon his colloquy with one of the most respectable auditors whose attention he had ever been able to engage. And by this little motion, momentary as it was, Alan gained an unexpected advantage; for while he looked round, Miss Lillas, I could never ascertain why, took the moment to adjust her mask, and did it so awkwardly, that when her companion again turned his head, he recognized as much of her features as authorized him to address her as his fair client, and to press his offers of protection and assistance with the boldness of a former acquaintance. Lillas Redgauntlet withdrew the mask from her crimsoned cheek. 'Mr. Fairford,' she said, in a voice almost inaudible, 'you have the character of a young gentleman of sense and generosity; but we have already met in one situation which you must think singular; and I must be exposed to misconstruction, at least, for my forwardness, were it not in a cause in which my dearest affections were concerned.'

'Any interest in my beloved friend Darsie Latimer,' said Fairford, stepping a little back, and putting a marked restraint upon his former advances, 'gives me a double right to be useful to'—He stopped short.

'To his sister, your goodness would say,' answered Lillas.

'His sister, madam!' replied Alan, in the extremity of astonishment—'Sister, I presume, in affection only?'

'No, sir; my dear brother Darsie and I are connected by the bonds of actual relationship; and I am not sorry to be the first to tell this to the friend he most values.'

Fairford's first thought was on the violent passion which Darsie had expressed towards the fair unknown. 'Good God!' he exclaimed, 'how did he bear the discovery?'

'With resignation, I hope,' said Lillas, smiling. 'A more accomplished sister he might easily have come by, but scarcely could have found one who could love him more than I do.'

'I meant—I only meant to say,' said the young counsellor, his presence of mind failing him for an instant—'that is, I meant to ask where Darsie Latimer is at this moment.'

'In this very house, and under the guardianship of his uncle, whom I believe you knew as a visitor of your father, under the name of Mr. Herries of Birrenswork.'

'Let me hasten to him,' said Fairford; 'I have sought him through difficulties and dangers—I must see him instantly.'

'You forget you are a prisoner,' said the young lady.

'True—true; but I cannot be long detained—the cause alleged is too ridiculous.'

'Alas!' said Lillas, 'our fate—my brother's and mine, at least—must turn on the deliberations perhaps of less than an hour. For you, sir, I believe and apprehend nothing; but some restraint; my uncle is neither cruel nor unjust, though few will go further in the cause which he has adopted.'

'Which is that of the Pretend'—

'For God's sake speak lower!' said Lillas, approaching her hand, as if to stop him. 'The word may cost you your life. You do not know—indeed you do not—the terrors of the situation in which we at present stand, and in which I fear you also are involved by your friendship for my brother.'

'I do not indeed know the particulars of our situation,' said Fairford; 'but, be the danger what it may, I shall not grudge my share of it for the sake of my friend; or,' he added, with more timidity, 'of my friend's sister. Let me hope,' he said, 'my dear Miss Latimer, that my presence may be of some use to you; and that it may be so, let me entreat a share of your confidence, which I am conscious I have otherwise no right to ask.'

He led her, as he spoke, towards the recess of the farther window of the room, and observing to her that, unhappily, he was particularly exposed to interruption from the mad old man whose entrance had alarmed her, he disposed of Darsie Latimer's riding-skirt, which had been left in the apartment, over the back of two chairs, forming thus a sort of screen, behind which he ensconced himself with the maiden of the green mantle; feeling at the moment, that the danger in which he was placed was almost compensated by the intelligence which permitted those feelings towards her to revive, which justice to his friend had induced him to stifle in the birth.

The relative situation of adviser and advised, of protector and protected, is so peculiarly suited to the respective condition of man and woman, that great progress towards intimacy is often made in very short space; for the circumstances call for confidence on the part of the gentleman, and forbid coyness on that of the lady, so that the usual barriers against easy intercourse are at once thrown down.

Under these circumstances, securing themselves as far as possible from observation, conversing in whispers, and seated in a corner, where they were brought into so close contact that their faces nearly touched each other, Fairford heard from Lilius Redgauntlet the history of her family, particularly of her uncle; his views upon her brother, and the agony which she felt, lest at that very moment he might succeed in engaging Darsie in some desperate scheme, fatal to his fortune and perhaps to his life.

Alan Fairford's acute understanding instantly connected what he had heard with the circumstances he had witnessed at Fairladies. His first thought was, to attempt, at all risks, his instant escape, and procure assistance powerful enough to crush, in the very cradle, a conspiracy of such a determined character. This he did not consider as difficult; for, though the door was guarded on the outside, the window, which was not above ten feet from the ground, was open for escape, the common on which it looked was unenclosed, and profusely covered with furze. There would, he thought, be little difficulty in effecting his liberty, and in concealing his course after he had gained it.

But Lilius exclaimed against this scheme. Her uncle, she said, was a man who, in his moments of enthusiasm, knew neither remorse nor fear. He was capable of visiting upon Darsie any injury which he might conceive Fairford had rendered him—he was her near kinsman also, and not an unkind one, and she deprecated any effort, even in her brother's favour, by which his life must be exposed to danger. Fairford himself remembered Father Buonaventure, and made little question but that he was one of the sons of the old Chevalier de Saint George; and with feelings which, although contradictory of his public duty, can hardly be much censured, his heart recoiled from being the agent by whom the last scion of such a long line of Scottish princes should be rooted up. He then thought of obtaining an audience, if possible, of this devoted person, and explaining to him the utter hopelessness of his undertaking, which he judged it likely that the ardour of his partisans might have concealed from him. But he relinquished this design as soon as formed. He had no doubt, that any light which he could throw on the state of the country, would come too late to be serviceable to one who was always reported to have his own full share of the hereditary obstinacy which had cost his ancestors so dear, and who, in drawing the sword, must have thrown from him the scabbard.

Lilius suggested the advice which, of all others, seemed most suited to the occasion, that, yielding, namely, to the circumstances of their situation, they should watch carefully when Darsie should obtain any degree of freedom, and endeavour to open a communication with him, in which case their joint flight might be effected, and without endangering the safety of any one.

Their youthful deliberation had nearly fixed in this point, when Fairford, who was listening to the low sweet whispering tones of Lilius Redgauntlet, rendered yet more interesting by some slight touch of foreign accent, was startled by a heavy hand which descended with full weight on his shoulder, while the discordant voice of Peter Peebles, who had at length broke loose from the well-meaning Quaker, exclaimed in the ear of his truant counsel—'Aha, lad! I think ye are caught—An' so ye are turned chamber-counsel, are ye? And ye have drawn up wi' clients in scarfs and hoods? But bide a wee, billie, and see if I dinna sort ye when my petition and complaint comes to be discussed, with or without answers, under certification.'

Alan Fairford had never more difficulty in his life to subdue a first emotion, than he had to refrain from knocking down the crazy blockhead who had broken in upon him at such a moment. But the length of Peter's address gave him time, fortunately perhaps for both parties, to reflect on the extreme irregularity of such a proceeding. He stood silent, however, with vexation, while Peter went on.

'Weel, my bonnie man, I see ye are thinking shame o' yoursell, and nae great wonder. Ye maun leave this quean—the like of her is ower light company for you. I have heard honest Mr. Pest say, that the gown grees ill wi' the petticoat. But come awa hame to your puir father, and I'll take care of you the hail gate, and keep you company, and deil a word we will speak about, but just the state of the conjoined processes of the great cause of Poor Peter Peebles against Plainstones.'

'If thou canst; endure to hear as much of that suit, friend,' said the Quaker, 'as I have heard out of mere compassion for thee, I think verily thou wilt soon be at the bottom of the matter, unless it be altogether bottomless.'

Fairford shook off, rather indignantly, the large bony hand which Peter had imposed upon his shoulder, and was about to say something peevish, upon so unpleasant and insolent a mode of interruption, when the door opened, a treble voice saying to the sentinel, 'I tell you I maun be in, to see if Mr. Nixon's here;' and little Benjie thrust in his mop-head and keen black eyes. Ere he could withdraw it, Peter Peebles sprang to the door, seized on the boy by the collar, and dragged him forward into the room.

'Let me see it,' he said, 'ye ne'er-do-weel limb of Satan—I'll gar you satisfy the production, I trow—I'll hae first and second diligence against you, ye deevil's buckie!'

'What dost thou want?' said the Quaker, interfering; 'why dost thou frighten the boy, friend Peebles?'

'I gave the bastard a penny to buy me snuff,' said the pauper, 'and he has rendered no account of his intromissions; but I'll gar him as gude.'

So saying, he proceeded forcibly to rifle the pockets of Benjie's ragged jacket of one or two snares for game, marbles, a half-bitten apple, two stolen eggs (one of which Peter broke in the eagerness of his research), and various other unconsidered trifles, which had not the air of being very honestly come by. The little rascal, under this discipline, bit and struggled like a fox-cub, but, like that vermin, uttered neither cry nor complaint, till a note, which Peter tore from his bosom, flew as far as Lilius Redgauntlet, and fell at her feet. It was addressed to C. N.

'It is for the villain Nixon.' she said to Alan Fairford; 'open it without scruple; that boy is his emissary; we shall now see what the miscreant is driving at.'

Little Benjie now gave up all further struggle, and suffered Peebles to take from him, without resistance, a shilling, out of which Peter declared he would pay himself principal and interest, and account for the balance. The boy, whose attention seemed fixed on something very different, only said, 'Maister Nixon will murder me!'

Alan Fairford did not hesitate to read the little scrap of paper, on which was written, 'All is prepared—keep them in play until I come up. You may depend on your reward.—C. C.'

'Alas, my uncle—my poor uncle!' said Lilius; 'this is the result of his confidence. Methinks, to give him instant notice of his confidant's treachery, is now the best service we can render all concerned—if they break up their undertaking, as they must now do, Darsie will be at liberty.'

In the same breath, they were both at the half-opened door of the room, Fairford entreating to speak with the Father Buonaventure, and Lilius, equally vehemently, requesting a moment's interview with her uncle. While the sentinel hesitated what to do, his attention was called to a loud noise at the door, where a crowd had been assembled in consequence of the appalling cry, that the enemy were upon them, occasioned, as it afterwards proved, by some stragglers having at length discovered the dead bodies of Nanty Ewart and of Nixon.

Amid the confusion occasioned by this alarming incident, the sentinel ceased to attend, to his duty; and accepting Alan Fairford's arm, Lilius found no opposition in penetrating even to the inner apartment, where the principal persons in the enterprise, whose conclave had been disturbed by this alarming incident, were now assembled in great confusion, and had been joined by the Chevalier himself.

'Only a mutiny among these smuggling scoundrels,' said Redgauntlet.

ONLY a mutiny, do you say?' said Sir Richard Glendale; 'and the lugger, the last hope of escape for,—he looked towards Charles,—stands out to sea under a press of sail!'

'Do not concern yourself about me,' said the unfortunate prince; 'this is not the worst emergency in which it has been my lot to stand; and if it were, I fear it not. Shift for yourselves, my lords and gentlemen.'

'No, never!' said the young Lord ———. 'Our only hope now is in an honourable resistance.'

'Most true,' said Redgauntlet; 'let despair renew the union amongst us which accident disturbed. I give my voice for displaying the royal banner instantly, and—How now!' he concluded, sternly, as Lillas, first soliciting his attention by pulling his cloak, put into his hand the scroll, and added, it was designed for that of Nixon. Redgauntlet read—and, dropping it on the ground, continued to stare upon the spot where it fell, with raised hands and fixed eyes. Sir Richard Glendale lifted the fatal paper, read it, and saying, 'Now all is indeed over,' handed it to Maxwell, who said aloud, 'Black Colin Campbell, by G—d! I heard he had come post from London last night.'

As if in echo to his thoughts, the violin of the blind man was heard, playing with spirit, The Campbells are coming,' a celebrated clan-march.

'The Campbells are coming in earnest,' said MacKellar; they are upon us with the whole battalion from Carlisle.'

There was a silence of dismay, and two or three of the company began to drop out of the room.

Lord ——— spoke with the generous spirit of a young English nobleman. 'If we have been fools, do not let us be cowards. We have one here more precious than us all, and come hither on our warranty—let us save him at least.'

'True, most true,' answered Sir Richard Glendale. 'Let the king be first cared for.'

'That shall be my business,' said Redgauntlet 'if we have but time to bring back the brig, all will be well—I will instantly dispatch a party in a fishing skiff to bring her to.' He gave his commands to two or three of the most active among his followers. 'Let him be once on board,' he said, 'and there are enough of us to stand to arms and cover his retreat.'

'Right, right,' said Sir Richard, 'and I will look to points which can be made defensible; and the old powder-plot boys could not have made a more desperate resistance than we shall. Redgauntlet,' continued he, 'I see some of our friends are looking pale; but methinks your nephew has more mettle in his eye now than when we were in cold deliberation, with danger at a distance.'

'It is the way of our house,' said Redgauntlet; 'our courage ever kindles highest on the losing side. I, too, feel that the catastrophe I have brought on must not be survived by its author. Let me first,' he said, addressing Charles, 'see your Majesty's sacred person in such safety as can now be provided for it, and then'—

'You may spare all considerations concerning me, gentlemen,' again repeated Charles; 'yon mountain of Criffel shall fly as soon as I will.'

Most threw themselves at his feet with weeping and entreaty; some one or two slunk in confusion from the apartment, and were heard riding off. Unnoticed in such a scene, Darsie, his sister, and Fairford, drew together, and held each other by the hands, as those who, when a vessel is about to founder in the storm, determine to take their chance of life and death together.

Amid this scene of confusion, a gentleman, plainly dressed in a riding-habit, with a black cockade in his hat, but without any arms except a COUTEAU-DE-CHASSE, walked into the apartment without ceremony. He was a tall, thin, gentlemanly man, with a look and bearing decidedly military. He had passed through their guards, if in the confusion they now maintained any, without stop or question, and now stood, almost unarmed, among armed men, who nevertheless, gazed on him as on the angel of destruction.

'You look coldly on me, gentlemen,' he said. 'Sir Richard Glendale—my Lord ———, we were not always such strangers. Ha, Pate-in-Peril, how is it with you? and you, too, Ingoldsby—I must not call you by any other name—why do you receive an old friend so coldly? But you guess my errand.'

'And are prepared for it, general,' said Redgauntlet; 'we are not men to be penned up like sheep for the slaughter.'

'Pshaw! you take it too seriously—let me speak but one word with you.'

'No words can shake our purpose,' said Redgauntlet, were your whole command, as I suppose is the case, drawn round the house.'

'I am certainly not unsupported,' said the general; 'but if you would hear me—'

'Hear ME, sir,' said the Wanderer, stepping forward; 'I suppose I am the mark you aim at—I surrender myself willingly, to save these gentlemen's danger—let this at least avail in their favour.'

An exclamation of 'Never, never!' broke from the little body of partisans, who threw themselves round the unfortunate prince, and would have seized or struck down Campbell, had it not been that he remained with his arms folded, and a look, rather indicating impatience because they would not hear him, than the least apprehension of violence at their hand.

At length he obtained a moment's silence. 'I do not,' he said, 'know this gentleman'—(making a profound bow to the unfortunate prince)—'I do not wish to know him; it is a knowledge which would suit neither of us.'

'Our ancestors, nevertheless, have been well acquainted,' said Charles, unable to suppress, even at that hour of dread and danger, the painful recollections of fallen royalty.

'In one word, General Campbell,' said Redgauntlet, 'is it to be peace or war? You are a man of honour, and we can trust you.'

'I thank you, sir,' said the general; 'and I reply, that the answer to your question rests with yourself. Come, do not be fools, gentlemen; there was perhaps no great harm meant or intended by your gathering together in this obscure corner, for a bear-bait or a cock-fight, or whatever other amusement you may have intended, but it was a little imprudent, considering how you stand with government, and it has occasioned some anxiety. Exaggerated accounts of your purpose have been laid before government by the information of a traitor in your own counsels; and I was sent down post to take the command of a sufficient number of troops, in case these calumnies should be found to have any real foundation. I have come here, of course, sufficiently supported both with cavalry and infantry, to do whatever might be necessary; but my commands are—and I am sure they agree with my inclination—to make no arrests, nay, to make no further inquiries of any kind, if this good assembly will consider their own interest so far as to give up their immediate purpose, and return quietly home to their own houses.'

'What!—all?' exclaimed Sir Richard Glendale—'all, without exception?'

'ALL, without one single exception' said the general; 'such are my orders. If you accept my terms, say so, and make haste; for things may happen to interfere with his Majesty's kind purposes towards you all.'

'Majesty's kind purposes!' said the Wanderer. 'Do I hear you aright, sir?'

'I speak the king's very words, from his very lips,' replied the general. "'I will," said his Majesty, "deserve the confidence of my subjects by reposing my security in the fidelity of the millions who acknowledge my title—in the good sense and prudence of the few who continue, from the errors of education, to disown it." His Majesty will not even believe that the most zealous Jacobites who yet remain can nourish a thought of exciting a civil war, which must be fatal to their families and themselves, besides spreading bloodshed and ruin through a peaceful land. He cannot even believe of his kinsman, that he would engage brave and generous though mistaken men, in an attempt which must ruin all who have escaped former calamities; and he is convinced, that, did curiosity or any other motive lead that person to visit this country, he would soon see it was his wisest course to return to the continent; and his Majesty compassionates his situation too much to offer any obstacle to his doing so.'

'Is this real?' said Redgauntlet. 'Can you mean this? Am I—are all, are any of these gentlemen at liberty, without interruption, to embark in yonder brig, which, I see, is now again approaching the shore?'

'You, sir—all—any of the gentlemen present,' said the general,—'all whom the vessel can contain, are at liberty to embark uninterrupted by me; but I advise none to go off who have not powerful reasons unconnected with the present meeting, for this will be remembered against no one.'

'Then, gentlemen,' said Redgauntlet, clasping his hands together as the words burst from him, 'the cause is lost for ever!'

General Campbell turned away to the window, as if to avoid hearing what they said. Their consultation was but momentary; for the door of escape which thus opened was as unexpected as the exigence was threatening.

'We have your word of honour for our protection,' said Sir Richard Glendale, 'if we dissolve our meeting in obedience to your summons?'

'You have, Sir Richard,' answered the general.

'And I also have your promise,' said Redgauntlet, 'that I may go on board yonder vessel, with any friend whom I may choose to accompany me?'

Not only that, Mr. Ingoldsby—or I WILL call you Mr. Redgauntlet once more—you may stay in the offing for a tide, until you are joined by any person who may remain at Fairladies. After that, there will be a sloop of war on the station, and I need not say your condition will then become perilous.'

'Perilous it should not be, General Campbell,' said Redgauntlet, 'or more perilous to others than to us, if others thought as I do even in this extremity.'

'You forget yourself, my friend,' said the unhappy Adventurer; you forget that the arrival of this gentleman only puts the cope-stone on our already adopted resolution to abandon our bull-fight or by whatever other wild name this headlong enterprise may be termed. I bid you farewell, unfriendly friends—I bid you farewell,' (bowing to the general) 'my friendly foe—I leave this strand as I landed upon it, alone and to return no more!'

'Not alone,' said Redgauntlet, 'while there is blood in the veins of my father's son.'

'Not alone,' said the other gentlemen present, stung with feelings which almost overpowered the better reasons under which they had acted. 'We will not disown our principles, or see your person endangered.'

'If it be only your purpose to see the gentleman to the beach,' said General Campbell, 'I will myself go with you. My presence among you, unarmed, and in your power, will be a pledge of my friendly intentions, and will overawe, should such be offered, any interruption on the part of officious persons.'

'Be it so,' said the Adventurer, with the air of a prince to a subject, not of one who complied with the request of an enemy too powerful to be resisted.

They left the apartment—they left the house—an unauthenticated and dubious, but appalling, sensation of terror had already spread itself among the inferior retainers, who had so short time before strutted, and bustled, and thronged the doorway and the passages. A report had arisen, of which the origin could not be traced, of troops advancing towards the spot in considerable numbers; and men who, for one reason or other, were most of them amenable to the arm of power, had either shrunk into stables or corners, or fled the place entirely. There was solitude on the landscape excepting the small party which now moved towards the rude pier, where a boat lay manned, agreeably to Redgauntlet's orders previously given.

The last heir of the Stuarts leant on Redgauntlet's arm as they walked towards the beach; for the ground was rough, and he no longer possessed the elasticity of limb and of spirit which had, twenty years before, carried him over many a Highland hill as light as one of their native deer. His adherents followed, looking on the ground, their feelings struggling against the dictates of their reason.

General Campbell accompanied them with an air of apparent ease and indifference, but watching, at the same time, and no doubt with some anxiety, the changing features of those who acted in this extraordinary scene.

Darsie and his sister naturally followed their uncle, whose violence they no longer feared, while his character attracted their respect, and Alan Fairford attended them from interest in their fate, unnoticed in a party where all were too much occupied with their own thoughts and feelings, as well as with the impending crisis, to attend to his presence.

Half-way betwixt the house and the beach, they saw the bodies of Nanty Ewart and Cristal Nixon blackening in the sun.

'That was your informer?' said Redgauntlet, looking back to General Campbell, who only nodded his assent.

'Caitiff wretch!' exclaimed Redgauntlet;—'and yet the name were better bestowed on the fool who could be misled by thee.'

'That sound broadsword cut,' said the general, 'has saved us the shame of rewarding a traitor.'

They arrived at the place of embarkation. The prince stood a moment with folded arms, and looked around him in deep silence. A paper was then slipped into his hands—he looked at it, and said, 'I find the two friends I have left at Fairladies are apprised of my destination, and propose to embark from Bowness. I presume this will not be an infringement of the conditions under which you have acted?'

'Certainly not,' answered General Campbell; 'they shall have all facility to join you.'

'I wish, then,' said Charles, 'only another companion. Redgauntlet, the air of this country is as hostile to you as it is to me. These gentlemen have made their peace, or rather they have done nothing to break it. But you—come you and share my home where chance shall cast it. We shall never see these shores again; but we will talk of them, and of our disconcerted bull-fight.'

'I follow you, sire, through life,' said Redgauntlet, 'as I would have followed you to death. Permit me one moment.'

The prince then looked round, and seeing the abashed countenances of his other adherents bent upon the ground, he hastened to say, 'Do not think that you, gentlemen, have obliged me less because your zeal was mingled with prudence, entertained, I am sure, more on my own account and on that of your country, than from selfish apprehensions.'

He stepped from one to another, and, amid sobs and bursting tears, received the adieus of the last remnant which had hitherto supported his lofty pretensions, and addressed them individually with accents of tenderness and affection.

The general drew a little aloof, and signed to Redgauntlet to speak with him while this scene proceeded. 'It is now all over,' he said, 'and Jacobite will be henceforward no longer a party name. When you tire of foreign parts, and wish to make your peace, let me know. Your restless zeal alone has impeded your pardon hitherto.'

'And now I shall not need it,' said Redgauntlet. 'I leave England for ever; but I am not displeased that you should hear my family adieus.—Nephew, come hither. In presence of General Campbell, I tell you, that though to breed you up in my own political opinions has been for many years my anxious wish, I am now glad that it could not be accomplished. You pass under the service of the reigning monarch without the necessity of changing your allegiance—a change, however,' he added, looking around him, which sits more easy on honourable men than I could have anticipated; but some wear the badge of their loyalty on their sleeve, and others in the heart. You will, from henceforth, be uncontrolled master of all the property of which forfeiture could not deprive your father—of all that belonged to him—excepting this, his good sword' (laying his hand on the weapon he wore), 'which shall never fight for the House of Hanover; and as my hand will never draw weapon more, I shall sink it forty fathoms deep in the wide ocean. Bless you, young man! If I have dealt harshly with you, forgive me. I had set my whole desires on one point,—God knows, with no selfish purpose; and I am justly punished by this final termination of my views, for having been too little scrupulous in the means by which I pursued them.—Niece, farewell, and may God bless you also!'

'No, sir,' said Lilius, seizing his hand eagerly. 'You have been hitherto my protector,—you are now in sorrow, let me be your attendant and your comforter in exile.'

'I thank you, my girl, for your unmerited affection; but it cannot and must not be. The curtain here falls between us. I go to the house of another. If I leave it before I quit the earth, it shall be only for the House of God. Once more, farewell both! The fatal doom,' he said, with a melancholy smile, 'will, I trust, now depart from the House of Redgauntlet, since its present representative has adhered to the winning side. I am convinced he will not change it, should it in turn become the losing one.'

The unfortunate Charles Edward had now given his last adieus to his downcast adherents. He made a sign with his hand to Redgauntlet, who came to assist him into the skiff. General Campbell also offered his assistance, the rest appearing too much affected by the scene which had taken place to prevent him.

'You are not sorry, general, to do me this last act of courtesy,' said the Chevalier; 'and, on my part, I thank you for it. You have taught me the principle on which men on the scaffold feel forgiveness and kindness even for their executioner. Farewell!'

They were seated in the boat, which presently pulled off from the land. The Oxford divine broke out into a loud benediction, in terms which General Campbell was too generous to criticize at the time, or to remember afterwards;—nay, it is said, that, Whig and Campbell as he was, he could not help joining in the universal Amen! which resounded from the shore.

BOOK XXVI
MR. CHRYSTAL CROFTANGRY
CHAPTER I. MR. CHRYSTAL CROFTANGRY'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF
Sic itur ad astra.

"This is the path to heaven." Such is the ancient motto attached to the armorial bearings of the Canongate, and which is inscribed, with greater or less propriety, upon all the public buildings, from the church to the pillory, in the ancient quarter of Edinburgh which bears, or rather once bore, the same relation to the Good Town that Westminster does to London, being still possessed of the palace of the sovereign, as it formerly was dignified by the residence of the principal nobility and gentry. I may therefore, with some propriety, put the same motto at the head of the literary undertaking by which I hope to illustrate the hitherto undistinguished name of Chrystal Croftangry.

The public may desire to know something of an author who pitches at such height his ambitious expectations. The gentle reader, therefore—for I am much of Captain Bobadil's humour, and could to no other extend myself so far—the GENTLE reader, then, will be pleased to understand that I am a Scottish gentleman of the old school, with a fortune, temper, and person, rather the worse for wear. I have known the world for these forty years, having written myself man nearly since that period—and I do not think it is much mended. But this is an opinion which I keep to myself when I am among younger folk, for I recollect, in my youth, quizzing the Sexagenarians who carried back their ideas of a perfect state of society to the days of laced coats and triple ruffles, and some of them to the blood and blows of the Forty-five. Therefore I am cautious in exercising the right of censorship, which is supposed to be acquired by men arrived at, or approaching, the mysterious period of life, when the numbers of seven and nine multiplied into each other, form what sages have termed the Grand Climacteric.

Of the earlier part of my life it is only necessary to say, that I swept the boards of the Parliament-House with the skirts of my gown for the usual number of years during which young Lairds were in my time expected to keep term—got no fees—laughed, and made others laugh—drank claret at Bayle's, Fortune's, and Walker's—and ate oysters in the Covenant Close.

Becoming my own master, I flung my gown at the bar-keeper, and commenced gay man on my own account. In Edinburgh, I ran into all the expensive society which the place then afforded. When I went to my house in the shire of Lanark, I emulated to the utmost the expenses of men of large fortune, and had my hunters, my first-rate pointers, my game-cocks, and feeders. I can more easily forgive myself for these follies, than for others of a still more blamable kind, so indifferently cloaked over, that my poor mother thought herself obliged to leave my habitation, and betake herself to a small inconvenient jointure-house, which she occupied till her death. I think, however, I was not exclusively to blame in this separation, and I believe my mother afterwards condemned herself for being too hasty. Thank God, the adversity which destroyed the means of continuing my dissipation, restored me to the affections of my surviving parent.

My course of life could not last. I ran too fast to run long; and when I would have checked my career, I was perhaps too near the brink of the precipice. Some mishaps I prepared by my own folly, others came upon me unawares. I put my estate out to nurse to a fat man of business, who smothered the babe he should have brought back to me in health and strength, and, in dispute with this honest gentleman, I found, like a skilful general, that my position would be most judiciously assumed by taking it up near the Abbey of Holyrood. [See Note 1.—Holyrood.] It was then I first became acquainted with the quarter, which my little work will, I hope, render immortal, and grew familiar with those magnificent wilds, through which the Kings of Scotland once chased the dark-brown deer, but which were chiefly recommended to me in those days, by their being inaccessible to those metaphysical persons, whom the law of the neighbouring country terms John Doe and Richard Roe. In short, the precincts of the palace are now best known as being a place of refuge at any time from all pursuit for civil debt.

Dire was the strife betwixt my quondam doer and myself; during which my motions were circumscribed, like those of some conjured demon, within a circle, which, "beginning at the northern gate of the King's Park, thence running northwards, is bounded on the left by the King's garden-wall, and the gutter, or kennel, in a line wherewith it crosses the High Street to the Watergate, and passing through the sewer, is bounded by the walls of the Tennis Court and Physic Gardens, etc. It then follows the wall of the churchyard, joins the north west wall of St Ann's Yards, and going east to the clackmill-house, turns southward to the turnstile in the King's Park wall, and includes the whole King's Park within the Sanctuary."

These limits, which I abridge from the accurate Maitland, once marked the Girth, or Asylum, belonging to the Abbey of Holyrood, and which, being still an appendage to the royal palace, has retained the privilege of an asylum for civil debt. One would think the space sufficiently extensive for a man to stretch his limbs in, as, besides a reasonable proportion of level ground (considering that the scene lies in Scotland), it includes within its precincts the mountain of Arthur's Seat and the rocks and pasture land called Salisbury Crags. But yet it is inexpressible how, after a certain time had elapsed, I used to long for Sunday, which permitted me to extend my walk without limitation. During the other six days of the week I felt a sickness of heart, which, but for the speedy approach of the hebdomadal day of liberty, I could hardly have endured. I experienced the impatience of a mastiff who tugs in vain to extend the limits which his chain permits.

Day after day I walked by the side of the kennel which divides the Sanctuary from the unprivileged part of the Canongate; and though the month was July, and the scene the old town of Edinburgh, I preferred it to the fresh air and verdant turf which I might have enjoyed in the King's Park, or to the cool and solemn gloom of the portico which surrounds the palace. To an indifferent person either side of the gutter would have seemed much the same, the houses equally mean, the children as ragged and dirty, the carmen as brutal—the whole forming the same picture of low life in a deserted and impoverished quarter of a large city. But to me the gutter or kennel was what the brook Kidron was to Shimei: death was denounced against him should he cross it, doubtless because it was known to his wisdom who pronounced the doom that, from the time the crossing the stream was debarred, the devoted man's desire to transgress the precept would become irresistible, and he would be sure to draw down on his head the penalty which he had already justly incurred by cursing the anointed of God. For my part, all Elysium seemed opening on the other side of the kennel; and I envied the little blackguards, who, stopping the current with their little dam-dykes of mud, had a right to stand on either side of the nasty puddle which best pleased them. I was so childish as even to make an occasional excursion across, were it only for a few yards, and felt the triumph of a schoolboy, who, trespassing in an orchard, hurries back again with a fluttering sensation of joy and terror, betwixt the pleasure of having executed his purpose and the fear of being taken or discovered.

I have sometimes asked myself what I should have done in case of actual imprisonment, since I could not bear without impatience a restriction which is comparatively a mere trifle; but I really could never answer the question to my own satisfaction. I have all my life hated those treacherous expedients called MEZZO-TERMINI, and it is possible with this disposition I might have endured more patiently an absolute privation of liberty than the more modified restrictions to which my residence in the Sanctuary at this period subjected me. If, however, the feelings I then experienced were to increase in intensity according to the difference between a jail and my actual condition, I must have hanged myself, or pined to death—there could have been no other alternative.

Amongst many companions who forgot and neglected me, of course, when my difficulties seemed to be inextricable, I had one true friend; and that friend was a barrister, who knew the laws of his country well, and tracing them up to the spirit of equity and justice in which they originate, had repeatedly prevented, by his benevolent and manly exertions, the triumphs of selfish cunning over simplicity and folly. He undertook my cause, with the assistance of a solicitor of a character similar to his own. My quondam doer had ensconced himself chin-deep among legal trenches, hornworks, and covered ways; but my two protectors shelled him out of his defences, and I was at length a free man, at liberty to go or stay wheresoever my mind listed.

I left my lodgings as hastily as if it had been a pest-house. I did not even stop to receive some change that was due to me on settling with my landlady, and I saw the poor woman stand at her door looking after my precipitate flight, and shaking her head as she wrapped the silver which she was counting for me in a separate piece of paper, apart from the store in her own moleskin purse. An honest Highlandwoman was Janet MacEvoy, and deserved a greater remuneration, had I possessed the power of bestowing it. But my eagerness of delight was too extreme to pause for explanation with Janet. On I pushed through the groups of children, of whose sports I had been so often a lazy, lounging spectator. I sprung over the gutter as if it had been the fatal Styx, and I a ghost, which, eluding Pluto's authority, was making its escape from Limbo lake. My friend had difficulty to restrain me from running like a madman up the street; and in spite of his kindness and hospitality, which soothed me for a day or two, I was not quite happy until I found myself aboard of a Leith smack, and, standing down the Firth with a fair wind, might snap my fingers at the retreating outline of Arthur's Seat, to the vicinity of which I had been so long confined.

It is not my purpose to trace my future progress through life. I had extricated myself, or rather had been freed by my friends, from the brambles and thickets of the law; but, as befell the sheep in the fable, a great part of my fleece was left behind me. Something remained, however: I was in the season for exertion, and, as my good mother used to say, there was always life for living folk. Stern necessity gave my manhood that prudence which my youth was a stranger to. I faced danger, I endured fatigue, I sought foreign climates, and proved that I belonged to the nation which is proverbially patient of labour and prodigal of life. Independence, like liberty to Virgil's shepherd, came late, but came at last, with no great affluence in its train, but bringing enough to support a decent appearance for the rest of my life, and to induce cousins to be civil, and gossips to say, "I wonder whom old Croft will make his heir? He must have picked up something, and I should not be surprised if it prove more than folk think of."

My first impulse when I returned home was to rush to the house of my benefactor, the only man who had in my distress interested himself in my behalf. He was a snuff-taker, and it had been the pride of my heart to save the IPSA CORPORA of the first score of guineas I could hoard, and to have them converted into as tasteful a snuff-box as Rundell and Bridge could devise. This I had thrust for security into the breast of my waistcoat, while, impatient to transfer it to the person for whom it was destined, I hastened to his house in Brown Square. When the front of the house became visible a feeling of alarm checked me. I had been long absent from Scotland; my friend was some years older than I; he might have been called to the congregation of the just. I paused, and gazed on the house as if I had hoped to form some conjecture from the outward appearance concerning the state of the family within. I know not how it was, but the lower windows being all closed, and no one stirring, my sinister forebodings were rather strengthened. I regretted now that I had not made inquiry before I left the inn where I alighted from the mail-coach. But it was too late; so I hurried on, eager to know the best or the worst which I could learn.

The brass-plate bearing my friend's name and designation was still on the door, and when it was opened the old domestic appeared a good deal older, I thought, than he ought naturally to have looked, considering the period of my absence. "Is Mr. Sommerville at home?" said I, pressing forward.

"Yes, sir," said John, placing himself in opposition to my entrance, "he is at home, but—"

"But he is not in," said I. "I remember your phrase of old, John. Come, I will step into his room, and leave a line for him."

John was obviously embarrassed by my familiarity. I was some one, he saw, whom he ought to recollect. At the same time it was evident he remembered nothing about me.

"Ay, sir, my master is in, and in his own room, but—"

I would not hear him out, but passed before him towards the well-known apartment. A young lady came out of the room a little disturbed, as it seemed, and said,

"John, what is the matter?"

"A gentleman, Miss Nelly, that insists on seeing my master."

"A very old and deeply-indebted friend," said I, "that ventures to press myself on my much-respected benefactor on my return from abroad."

"Alas, sir," replied she, "my uncle would be happy to see you, but—"

At this moment something was heard within the apartment like the falling of a plate, or glass, and immediately after my friend's voice called angrily and eagerly for his niece. She entered the room hastily, and so did I. But it was to see a spectacle, compared with which that of my benefactor stretched on his bier would have been a happy one.

The easy-chair filled with cushions, the extended limbs swathed in flannel, the wide wrapping-gown and nightcap, showed illness; but the dimmed eye, once so replete with living fire—the blabber lip, whose dilation and compression used to give such character to his animated countenance—the stammering tongue, that once poured forth such floods of masculine eloquence, and had often swayed the opinion of the sages whom he addressed,—all these sad symptoms evinced that my friend was in the melancholy condition of those in whom the principle of animal life has unfortunately survived that of mental intelligence. He gazed a moment at me, but then seemed insensible of my presence, and went on—he, once the most courteous and well-bred—to babble unintelligible but violent reproaches against his niece and servant, because he himself had dropped a teacup in attempting to place it on a table at his elbow. His eyes caught a momentary fire from his irritation; but he struggled in vain for words to express himself adequately, as, looking from his servant to his niece, and then to the table, he laboured to explain that they had placed it (though it touched his chair) at too great a distance from him.

The young person, who had naturally a resigned Madonna-like expression of countenance, listened to his impatient chiding with the most humble submission, checked the servant, whose less delicate feelings would have entered on his justification, and gradually, by the sweet and soft tone of her voice, soothed to rest the spirit of causeless irritation.

She then cast a look towards me, which expressed, "You see all that remains of him whom you call friend." It seemed also to say, "Your longer presence here can only be distressing to us all."

"Forgive me, young lady," I said, as well as tears would permit; "I am a person deeply obliged to your uncle. My name is Croftangry."

"Lord! and that I should not hae minded ye, Maister Croftangry," said the servant. "Ay, I mind my master had muckle fash about your job. I hae heard him order in fresh candles as midnight chappit, and till't again. Indeed, ye had aye his gude word, Mr. Croftangry, for a' that folks said about you."

"Hold your tongue, John," said the lady, somewhat angrily; and then continued, addressing herself to me, "I am sure, sir, you must be sorry to see my uncle in this state. I know you are his friend. I have heard him mention your name, and wonder he never heard from you." A new cut this, and it went to my heart. But she continued, "I really do not know if it is right that any should—If my uncle should know you, which I scarce think possible, he would be much affected, and the doctor says that any agitation—But here comes Dr. — to give his own opinion."

Dr. — entered. I had left him a middle-aged man. He was now an elderly one; but still the same benevolent Samaritan, who went about doing good, and thought the blessings of the poor as good a recompense of his professional skill as the gold of the rich.

He looked at me with surprise, but the young lady said a word of introduction, and I, who was known to the doctor formerly, hastened to complete it. He recollected me perfectly, and intimated that he was well acquainted with the reasons I had for being deeply interested in the fate of his patient. He gave me a very melancholy account of my poor friend, drawing me for that purpose a little apart from the lady. "The light of life," he said, "was trembling in the socket; he scarcely expected it would ever leap up even into a momentary flash, but more was impossible." He then stepped towards his patient, and put some questions, to which the poor invalid, though he seemed to recognize the friendly and familiar voice, answered only in a faltering and uncertain manner.

The young lady, in her turn, had drawn back when the doctor approached his patient. "You see how it is with him," said the doctor, addressing me. "I have heard our poor friend, in one of the most eloquent of his pleadings, give a description of this very disease, which he compared to the tortures inflicted by Mezentius when he chained the dead to the living. The soul, he said, is imprisoned in its dungeon of flesh, and though retaining its natural and unalienable properties, can no more exert them than the captive enclosed within a prison-house can act as a free agent. Alas! to see HIM, who could so well describe what this malady was in others, a prey himself to its infirmities! I shall never forget the solemn tone of expression with which he summed up the incapacities of the paralytic—the deafened ear, the dimmed eye, the crippled limbs—in the noble words of Juvenal,—

"Omni

Membrorum damno major, dementia, quae nec

Nomina servorum, nec vultum agnoscit amici."

As the physician repeated these lines, a flash of intelligence seemed to revive in the invalid's eye—sunk again—again struggled, and he spoke more intelligibly than before, and in the tone of one eager to say something which he felt would escape him unless said instantly. "A question of death-bed, a question of death-bed, doctor—a reduction EX CAPITE LECTI—Withering against Wilibus—about the MORBUS SONTICUS. I pleaded the cause for the pursuer—I, and—and—why, I shall forget my own name—I, and—he that was the wittiest and the best-humoured man living—"

The description enabled the doctor to fill up the blank, and the patient joyfully repeated the name suggested. "Ay, ay," he said, "just he—Harry—poor Harry—" The light in his eye died away, and he sunk back in his easy-chair.

"You have now seen more of our poor friend, Mr. Croftangry," said the physician, "than I dared venture to promise you; and now I must take my professional authority on me, and ask you to retire. Miss Sommerville will, I am sure, let you know if a moment should by any chance occur when her uncle can see you." What could I do? I gave my card to the young lady, and taking my offering from my bosom—"if my poor friend," I said, with accents as broken almost as his own, "should ask where this came from, name me, and say from the most obliged and most grateful man alive. Say, the gold of which it is composed was saved by grains at a time, and was hoarded with as much avarice as ever was a miser's. To bring it here I have come a thousand miles; and now, alas, I find him thus!" I laid the box on the table, and was retiring with a lingering step. The eye of the invalid was caught by it, as that of a child by a glittering toy, and with infantine impatience he faltered out inquiries of his niece. With gentle mildness she repeated again and again who I was, and why I came, etc. I was about to turn, and hasten from a scene so painful, when the physician laid his hand on my sleeve. "Stop," he said, "there is a change."

There was, indeed, and a marked one. A faint glow spread over his pallid features—they seemed to gain the look of intelligence which belongs to vitality—his eye once more kindled—his lip coloured—and drawing himself up out of the listless posture he had hitherto maintained, he rose without assistance. The doctor and the servant ran to give him their support. He waved them aside, and they were contented to place themselves in such a position behind as might ensure against accident, should his newly-acquired strength decay as suddenly as it had revived.

"My dear Croftangry," he said, in the tone of kindness of other days, "I am glad to see you returned. You find me but poorly; but my little niece here and Dr. — are very kind. God bless you, my dear friend! We shall not meet again till we meet in a better world."

I pressed his extended hand to my lips—I pressed it to my bosom—I would fain have flung myself on my knees; but the doctor, leaving the patient to the young lady and the servant, who wheeled forward his chair, and were replacing him in it, hurried me out of the room. "My dear sir," he said, "you ought to be satisfied; you have seen our poor invalid more like his former self than he has been for months, or than he may be perhaps again until all is over. The whole Faculty could not have assured such an interval. I must see whether anything can be derived from it to improve the general health. Pray, begone." The last argument hurried me from the spot, agitated by a crowd of feelings, all of them painful.

When I had overcome the shock of this great disappointment, I renewed gradually my acquaintance with one or two old companions, who, though of infinitely less interest to my feelings than my unfortunate friend, served to relieve the pressure of actual solitude, and who were not perhaps the less open to my advances that I was a bachelor somewhat stricken in years, newly arrived from foreign parts, and certainly independent, if not wealthy.

I was considered as a tolerable subject of speculation by some, and I could not be burdensome to any. I was therefore, according to the ordinary rule of Edinburgh hospitality, a welcome guest in several respectable families. But I found no one who could replace the loss I had sustained in my best friend and benefactor. I wanted something more than mere companionship could give me, and where was I to look for it? Among the scattered remnants of those that had been my gay friends of yore? Alas!

"Many a lad I loved was dead,

And many a lass grown old."

Besides, all community of ties between us had ceased to exist, and such of former friends as were still in the world held their life in a different tenor from what I did.

Some had become misers, and were as eager in saving sixpence as ever they had been in spending a guinea. Some had turned agriculturists; their talk was of oxen, and they were only fit companions for graziers. Some stuck to cards, and though no longer deep gamblers, rather played small game than sat out. This I particularly despised. The strong impulse of gaming, alas! I had felt in my time. It is as intense as it is criminal; but it produces excitement and interest, and I can conceive how it should become a passion with strong and powerful minds. But to dribble away life in exchanging bits of painted pasteboard round a green table for the piddling concern of a few shillings, can only be excused in folly or superannuation. It is like riding on a rocking-horse, where your utmost exertion never carries you a foot forward; it is a kind of mental treadmill, where you are perpetually climbing, but can never rise an inch. From these hints, my readers will perceive I am incapacitated for one of the pleasures of old age, which, though not mentioned by Cicero, is not the least frequent resource in the present day—the club-room, and the snug hand at whist.

To return to my old companions. Some frequented public assemblies, like the ghost of Beau Nash, or any other beau of half a century back, thrust aside by tittering youth, and pitied by those of their own age. In fine, some went into devotion, as the French term it, and others, I fear, went to the devil; a few found resources in science and letters; one or two turned philosophers in a small way, peeped into microscopes, and became familiar with the fashionable experiments of the day; some took to reading, and I was one of them.

Some grains of repulsion towards the society around me—some painful recollections of early faults and follies—some touch of displeasure with living mankind—inclined me rather to a study of antiquities, and particularly those of my own country. The reader, if I can prevail on myself to continue the present work, will probably be able to judge in the course of it whether I have made any useful progress in the study of the olden times.

I owed this turn of study, in part, to the conversation of my kind man of business, Mr. Fairscribe, whom I mentioned as having seconded the efforts of my invaluable friend in bringing the cause on which my liberty and the remnant of my property depended to a favourable decision. He had given me a most kind reception on my return. He was too much engaged in his profession for me to intrude on him often, and perhaps his mind was too much trammelled with its details to permit his being willingly withdrawn from them. In short, he was not a person of my poor friend Sommerville's expanded spirit, and rather a lawyer of the ordinary class of formalists; but a most able and excellent man. When my estate was sold! he retained some of the older title-deeds, arguing, from his own feelings, that they would be of more consequence to the heir of the old family than to the new purchaser. And when I returned to Edinburgh, and found him still in the exercise of the profession to which he was an honour, he sent to my lodgings the old family Bible, which lay always on my father's table, two or three other mouldy volumes, and a couple of sheepskin bags full of parchments and papers, whose appearance was by no means inviting.

The next time I shared Mr. Fairscribe's hospitable dinner, I failed not to return him due thanks for his kindness, which acknowledgment, indeed, I proportioned rather to the idea which I knew he entertained of the value of such things, than to the interest with which I myself regarded them. But the conversation turning on my family, who were old proprietors in the Upper Ward of Clydesdale, gradually excited some interest in my mind and when I retired to my solitary parlour, the first thing I did was to look for a pedigree or sort of history of the family or House of Croftangry, once of that ilk, latterly of Glentanner. The discoveries which I made shall enrich the next chapter.

CHAPTER II. IN WHICH MR. CROFTANGRY CONTINUES HIS STORY.

"What's property, dear Swift? I see it alter

From you to me, from me to Peter Walter."

"Croftangry—Croftandrew—Croftanridge—Croftandgrey for sa mony wise hath the name been spellit—is weel known to be ane house of grit antiquity; and it is said that King Milcolumb, or Malcolm, being the first of our Scottish princes quha removit across the Firth of Forth, did reside and occupy ane palace at Edinburgh, and had there ane valziant man, who did him man-service by keeping the croft, or corn-land, which was tilled for the convenience of the King's household, and was thence callit Croft-an-ri, that is to say, the King his croft; quhilk place, though now coverit with biggings, is to this day called Croftangry, and lyeth near to the royal palace. And whereas that some of those who bear this auld and honourable name may take scorn that it ariseth from the tilling of the ground, quhilk men account a slavish occupation, yet we ought to honour the pleugh and spade, seeing we all derive our being from our father Adam, whose lot it became to cultivate the earth, in respect of his fall and transgression.

"Also we have witness, as weel in holy writt as in profane history, of the honour in quhilk husbandrie was held of old, and how prophets have been taken from the pleugh, and great captains raised up to defend their ain countries, sic as Cincinnatus, and the like, who fought not the common enemy with the less valiancy that their alms had been exercised in halding the stilts of the pleugh, and their bellicose skill in driving of yaulds and owsen.

"Likewise there are sindry honorable families, quhilk are now of our native Scottish nobility, and have clombe higher up the brae of preferment than what this house of Croftangry hath done, quhilk shame not to carry in their warlike shield and insignia of dignity the tools and implements the quhilk their first forefathers exercised in labouring the croft-rig, or, as the poet Virgilius calleth it eloquently, in subduing the soil, and no doubt this ancient house of Croftangry, while it continued to be called of that ilk, produced many worshipful and famous patriots, of quhom I now praetermit the names; it being my purpose, if God shall spare me life for sic ane pious officium, or duty, to resume the first part of my narrative touching the house of Croftangry, when I can set down at length the evidents and historical witness anent the facts which I shall allege, seeing that words, when they are unsupported by proofs, are like seed sown on the naked rocks, or like an house biggit on the flitting and faithless sands."

Here I stopped to draw breath; for the style of my grandsire, the inditer of this goodly matter, was rather lengthy, as our American friends say. Indeed, I reserve the rest of the piece until I can obtain admission to the Bannatine Club, [This Club, of which the Author of Waverley has the honour to be President, was instituted in February 1823, for the purpose of printing and publishing works illustrative of the history, literature, and antiquities of Scotland. It continues to prosper, and has already rescued from oblivion many curious materials of Scottish history.] when I propose to throw off an edition, limited according to the rules of that erudite Society, with a facsimile of the manuscript, emblazonry of the family arms surrounded by their quartering, and a handsome disclamation of family pride, with HAEC NOS NOVIMUS ESSE NIHIL, or VIX EA NOSTRA VOCO.

In the meantime, to speak truth, I cannot but suspect that, though my worthy ancestor puffed vigorously to swell up the dignity of his family, we had never, in fact, risen above the rank of middling proprietors. The estate of Glentanner came to us by the intermarriage of my ancestor with Tib Sommeril, termed by the southrons Sommerville, a daughter of that noble house, but, I fear, on what my great-grandsire calls "the wrong side of the blanket." [The ancient Norman family of the Sommersvilles came into this island with William the Conqueror, and established one branch in Gloucestershire, another in Scotland. After the lapse of seven hundred years, the remaining possessions of these two branches were united in the person of the late Lord Sommerville, on the death of his English kinsman, the well-known author of "The Chase."] Her husband, Gilbert, was killed fighting, as the INQUISITIO POST MORTEM has it, "SUB VEXILLO REGIS, APUD PRAELIUM JUXTA BRANXTON, LIE FLODDDEN-FIELD."

We had our share in other national misfortunes—were forfeited, like Sir John Colville of the Dale, for following our betters to the field of Langside; and in the contentious times of the last Stewarts we were severely fined for harbouring and resetting intercommuned ministers, and narrowly escaped giving a martyr to the Calendar of the Covenant, in the person of the father of our family historian. He "took the sheaf from the mare," however, as the MS. expresses it, and agreed to accept of the terms of pardon offered by Government, and sign the bond in evidence he would give no further ground of offence. My grandsire glosses over his father's backsliding as smoothly as he can, and comforts himself with ascribing his want of resolution to his unwillingness to wreck the ancient name and family, and to permit his lands and lineage to fall under a doom of forfeiture.

"And indeed," said the venerable compiler, "as, praised be God, we seldom meet in Scotland with these belly-gods and voluptuaries, whilk are unnatural enough to devour their patrimony bequeathed to them by their forbears in chambering and wantonness, so that they come, with the prodigal son, to the husks and the swine-trough; and as I have the less to dreid the existence of such unnatural Neroes in mine own family to devour the substance of their own house like brute beasts out of mere gluttonie and Epicurishnesse, so I need only warn mine descendants against over-hastily meddling with the mutations in state and in religion, which have been near-hand to the bringing this poor house of Croftangry to perdition, as we have shown more than once. And albeit I would not that my successors sat still altogether when called on by their duty to Kirk and King, yet I would have them wait till stronger and walthier men than themselves were up, so that either they may have the better chance of getting through the day, or, failing of that, the conquering party having some fatter quarry to live upon, may, like gorged hawks, spare the smaller game."

There was something in this conclusion which at first reading piqued me extremely, and I was so unnatural as to curse the whole concern, as poor, bald, pitiful trash, in which a silly old man was saying a great deal about nothing at all. Nay, my first impression was to thrust it into the fire, the rather that it reminded me, in no very flattering manner, of the loss of the family property, to which the compiler of the history was so much attached, in the very manner which he most severely reprobated. It even seemed to my aggrieved feelings that his unprescient gaze on futurity, in which he could not anticipate the folly of one of his descendants, who should throw away the whole inheritance in a few years of idle expense and folly, was meant as a personal incivility to myself, though written fifty or sixty years before I was born.

A little reflection made me ashamed of this feeling of impatience, and as I looked at the even, concise, yet tremulous hand in which the manuscript was written, I could not help thinking, according to an opinion I have heard seriously maintained, that something of a man's character may be conjectured from his handwriting. That neat but crowded and constrained small-hand argued a man of a good conscience, well-regulated passions, and, to use his own phrase, an upright walk in life; but it also indicated narrowness of spirit, inveterate prejudice, and hinted at some degree of intolerance, which, though not natural to the disposition, had arisen out of a limited education. The passages from Scripture and the classics, rather profusely than happily introduced, and written in a half-text character to mark their importance, illustrated that peculiar sort of pedantry which always considers the argument as gained if secured by a quotation. Then the flourished capital letters, which ornamented the commencement of each paragraph, and the names of his family and of his ancestors whenever these occurred in the page, do they not express forcibly the pride and sense of importance with which the author undertook and accomplished his task? I persuaded myself the whole was so complete a portrait of the man, that it would not have been a more undutiful act to have defaced his picture, or even to have disturbed his bones in his coffin, than to destroy his manuscript. I thought, for a moment, of presenting it to Mr. Fairscribe; but that confounded passage about the prodigal and swine-trough—I settled at last it was as well to lock it up in my own bureau, with the intention to look at it no more.

But I do not know how it was, that the subject began to sit nearer my heart than I was aware of, and I found myself repeatedly engaged in reading descriptions of farms which were no longer mine, and boundaries which marked the property of others. A love of the NATALE SOLUM, if Swift be right in translating these words, "family estate," began to awaken in my bosom—the recollections of my own youth adding little to it, save what was connected with field-sports. A career of pleasure is unfavourable for acquiring a taste for natural beauty, and still more so for forming associations of a sentimental kind, connecting us with the inanimate objects around us.

I had thought little about my estate while I possessed and was wasting it, unless as affording the rude materials out of which a certain inferior race of creatures, called tenants, were bound to produce (in a greater quantity than they actually did) a certain return called rent, which was destined to supply my expenses. This was my general view of the matter. Of particular places, I recollected that Garval Hill was a famous piece of rough upland pasture for rearing young colts, and teaching them to throw their feet; that Minion Burn had the finest yellow trout in the country; that Seggy-cleugh was unequalled for woodcocks; that Bengibbert Moors afforded excellent moorfowl-shooting; and that the clear, bubbling fountain called the Harper's Well was the best recipe in the world on the morning after a HARD-GO with my neighbour fox-hunters. Still, these ideas recalled, by degrees, pictures of which I had since learned to appreciate the merit—scenes of silent loneliness, where extensive moors, undulating into wild hills, were only disturbed by the whistle of the plover or the crow of the heathcock; wild ravines creeping up into mountains, filled with natural wood, and which, when traced downwards along the path formed by shepherds and nutters, were found gradually to enlarge and deepen, as each formed a channel to its own brook, sometimes bordered by steep banks of earth, often with the more romantic boundary of naked rocks or cliffs crested with oak, mountain ash, and hazel—all gratifying the eye the more that the scenery was, from the bare nature of the country around, totally unexpected.

I had recollections, too, of fair and fertile holms, or level plains, extending between the wooded banks and the bold stream of the Clyde, which, coloured like pure amber, or rather having the hue of the pebbles called Cairngorm, rushes over sheets of rock and beds of gravel, inspiring a species of awe from the few and faithless fords which it presents, and the frequency of fatal accidents, now diminished by the number of bridges. These alluvial holms were frequently bordered by triple and quadruple rows of large trees, which gracefully marked their boundary, and dipped their long arms into the foaming stream of the river. Other places I

remembered, which had been described by the old huntsman as the lodge of tremendous wild-cats, or the spot where tradition stated the mighty stag to have been brought to bay, or where heroes, whose might was now as much forgotten, were said to have been slain by surprise, or in battle.

It is not to be supposed that these finished landscapes became visible before the eyes of my imagination, as the scenery of the stage is disclosed by the rising of the curtain. I have said that I had looked upon the country around me, during the hurried and dissipated period of my life, with the eyes, indeed, of my body, but without those of my understanding. It was piece by piece, as a child picks out its lesson, that I began to recollect the beauties of nature which had once surrounded me in the home of my forefathers. A natural taste for them must have lurked at the bottom of my heart, which awakened when I was in foreign countries, and becoming by degrees a favourite passion, gradually turned its eyes inwards, and ransacked the neglected stores which my memory had involuntarily recorded, and, when excited, exerted herself to collect and to complete.

I began now to regret more bitterly than ever the having fooled away my family property, the care and improvement of which I saw might have afforded an agreeable employment for my leisure, which only went to brood on past misfortunes, and increase useless repining. "Had but a single farm been reserved, however small," said I one day to Mr. Fairscribe, "I should have had a place I could call my home, and something that I could call business."

"It might have been managed," answered Fairscribe; "and for my part, I inclined to keep the mansion house, mains, and some of the old family acres together; but both Mr. — and you were of opinion that the money would be more useful."

"True, true, my good friend," said I; "I was a fool then, and did not think I could incline to be Glentanner with L200 or L300 a year, instead of Glentanner with as many thousands. I was then a haughty, pettish, ignorant, dissipated, broken-down Scottish laird; and thinking my imaginary consequence altogether ruined, I cared not how soon, or how absolutely, I was rid of everything that recalled it to my own memory, or that of others."

"And now it is like you have changed your mind?" said Fairscribe. "Well, fortune is apt to circumduce the term upon us; but I think she may allow you to revise your condescendence."

"How do you mean, my good friend?"

"Nay," said Fairscribe, "there is ill luck in averring till one is sure of his facts. I will look back on a file of newspapers, and to-morrow you shall hear from me. Come, help yourself—I have seen you fill your glass higher."

"And shall see it again," said I, pouring out what remained of our bottle of claret; "the wine is capital, and so shall our toast be—"To your fireside, my good friend."

And now we shall go beg a Scots song without foreign graces from my little siren, Miss Katie."

The next day, accordingly, I received a parcel from Mr. Fairscribe with a newspaper enclosed, among the advertisements of which one was marked with a cross as requiring my attention. I read, to my surprise:—

"DESIRABLE ESTATE FOR SALE.

"By order of the Lords of Council and Session, will be exposed to sale in the New Sessions House of Edinburgh, on Wednesday, the 25th November, 18—, all and whole the lands and barony of Glentanner, now called Castle Treddles, lying in the Middle Ward of Clydesdale, and shire of Lanark, with the teinds, parsonage and vicarage, fishings in the Clyde, woods, mosses, moors, and pasturages," etc., etc.

The advertisement went on to set forth the advantages of the soil, situation, natural beauties, and capabilities of improvement, not forgetting its being a freehold estate, with the particular polypos capacity of being sliced up into two, three, or, with a little assistance, four freehold qualifications, and a hint that the county was likely to be eagerly contested between two great families. The upset price at which "the said lands and barony and others" were to be exposed was thirty years' purchase of the proven rental, which was about a fourth more than the property had fetched at the last sale. This, which was mentioned, I suppose, to show the improvable character of the land, would have given another some pain. But let me speak truth of myself in good as in evil—it pained not me. I was only angry that Fairscribe, who knew something generally of the extent of my funds, should have tantalized me by sending me information that my family property was in the market, since he must have known that the price was far out of my reach.

But a letter dropped from the parcel on the floor, which attracted my eye, and explained the riddle. A client of Mr. Fairscribe's, a moneyed man, thought of buying Glentanner, merely as an investment of money—it was even unlikely he would ever see it; and so the price of the whole being some thousand pounds beyond what cash he had on hand, this accommodating Dives would gladly take a partner in the sale for any detached farm, and would make no objection to its including the most desirable part of the estate in point of beauty, provided the price was made adequate. Mr. Fairscribe would take care I was not imposed on in the matter, and said in his card he believed, if I really wished to make such a purchase, I had better go out and look at the premises, advising me, at the same time, to keep a strict incognito—an advice somewhat superfluous, since I am naturally of a retired and reserved disposition.

CHAPTER III. MR. CROFTANGRY, INTER ALIA, REVISITS GLENTANNER.

Then sing of stage-coaches,

And fear no reproaches

For riding in one;

But daily be jogging,

Whilst, whistling and flogging,

Whilst, whistling and flogging,

The coachman drives on. FARQUHAR.

Disguised in a grey surtout which had seen service, a white castor on my head, and a stout Indian cane in my hand, the next week saw me on the top of a mail-coach driving to the westward.

I like mail-coaches, and I hate them. I like them for my convenience; but I detest them for setting the whole world a-gadding, instead of sitting quietly still minding their own business, and preserving the stamp of originality of character which nature or education may have impressed on them. Off they go, jingling against each other in the rattling vehicle till they have no more variety of stamp in them than so many smooth shillings—the same even in their Welsh wigs and greatcoats, each without more individuality than belongs to a partner of the company, as the waiter calls them, of the North Coach.

Worthy Mr. Piper, best of contractors who ever furnished four frampal jades for public use, I bless you when I set out on a journey myself; the neat coaches under your contract render the intercourse, from Johnnie Groat's House to Ladykirk and Cornhill Bridge, safe, pleasant, and cheap. But, Mr. Piper, you who are a shrewd arithmetician, did it never occur to you to calculate how many fools' heads, which might have produced an idea or two in the year, if suffered to remain in quiet, get effectually addled by jolting to and fro in these flying chariots of yours; how many decent countrymen become conceited bumpkins after a cattle-show dinner in the capital, which they could not have attended save for your means; how many decent country parsons return critics and spouters, by way of importing the newest taste from Edinburgh? And how will your conscience answer one day for carrying so many bonny lasses to barter modesty for conceit and levity at the metropolitan Vanity Fair?

Consider, too, the low rate to which you reduce human intellect. I do not believe your habitual customers have their ideas more enlarged than one of your coach-horses. They KNOWS the road, like the English postilion, and they know nothing besides. They date, like the carriers at Gadshill, from the death of Robin Ostler; [See Act II. Scene 1 of the First Part of Shakespeare's Henry IV.] the succession of guards forms a dynasty in their eyes; coachmen are their ministers of state; and an upset is to them a greater incident than a change of administration. Their only point of interest on the road is to save the time, and see whether the coach keeps the hour. This is surely a miserable degradation of human intellect. Take my advice, my good sir, and disinterestedly contrive that once or twice a quarter

your most dexterous whip shall overturn a coachful of these superfluous travellers, IN TERROREM to those who, as Horace says, "delight in the dust raised by your chariots."

Your current and customary mail-coach passenger, too, gets abominably selfish, schemes successfully for the best seat, the freshest egg, the right cut of the sirloin. The mode of travelling is death to all the courtesies and kindnesses of life, and goes a great way to demoralize the character, and cause it to retrograde to barbarism. You allow us excellent dinners, but only twenty minutes to eat them. And what is the consequence? Bashful beauty sits on the one side of us, timid childhood on the other; respectable, yet somewhat feeble, old age is placed on our front; and all require those acts of politeness which ought to put every degree upon a level at the convivial board. But have we time—we the strong and active of the party—to perform the duties of the table to the more retired and bashful, to whom these little attentions are due? The lady should be pressed to her chicken, the old man helped to his favourite and tender slice, the child to his tart. But not a fraction of a minute have we to bestow on any other person than ourselves; and the PRUT-PRUT—TUT-TUT of the guard's discordant note summons us to the coach, the weaker party having gone without their dinner, and the able-bodied and active threatened with indigestion, from having swallowed victuals like a Lei'stershire clown bolting bacon.

On the memorable occasion I am speaking of I lost my breakfast, sheerly from obeying the commands of a respectable-looking old lady, who once required me to ring the bell, and another time to help the tea-kettle. I have some reason to think she was literally an OLD-STAGER, who laughed in her sleeve at my complaisance; so that I have sworn in my secret soul revenge upon her sex, and all such errant damsels of whatever age and degree whom I may encounter in my travels. I mean all this without the least ill-will to my friend the contractor, who, I think, has approached as near as any one is like to do towards accomplishing the modest wish of the Amatus and Amata of the Peri Bathous,—

*"Ye gods, annihilate but time and space,
And make two lovers happy."*

I intend to give Mr. P. his full revenge when I come to discuss the more recent enormity of steamboats; meanwhile, I shall only say of both these modes of conveyance, that—

"There is no living with them or without them."

I am, perhaps, more critical on the—mail-coach on this particular occasion, that I did not meet all the respect from the worshipful company in his Majesty's carriage that I think I was entitled to. I must say it for myself that I bear, in my own opinion at least, not a vulgar point about me. My face has seen service, but there is still a good set of teeth, an aquiline nose, and a quick, grey eye, set a little too deep under the eyebrow; and a cue of the kind once called military may serve to show that my civil occupations have been sometimes mixed with those of war. Nevertheless, two idle young fellows in the vehicle, or rather on the top of it, were so much amused with the deliberation which I used in ascending to the same place of eminence, that I thought I should have been obliged to pull them up a little. And I was in no good-humour at an unsuppressed laugh following my descent when set down at the angle, where a cross road, striking off from the main one, led me towards Glentanner, from which I was still nearly five miles distant.

It was an old-fashioned road, which, preferring ascents to sloughs, was led in a straight line over height and hollow, through moor and dale. Every object around me; as I passed them in succession, reminded me of old days, and at the same time formed the strongest contrast with them possible. Unattended, on foot, with a small bundle in my hand, deemed scarce sufficient good company for the two shabby-genteels with whom I had been lately perched on the top of a mail-coach, I did not seem to be the same person with the young prodigal, who lived with the noblest and gayest in the land, and who, thirty years before, would, in the same country, have, been on the back of a horse that had been victor for a plate, or smoking aloof in his travelling chaise-and-four. My sentiments were not less changed than my condition. I could quite well remember that my ruling sensation in the days of heady youth was a mere schoolboy's eagerness to get farthest forward in the race in which I had engaged; to drink as many bottles as —; to be thought as good a judge of a horse as —; to have the knowing cut of —'s jacket. These were thy gods, O Israel!

Now I was a mere looker-on; seldom an unmoved, and sometimes an angry spectator, but still a spectator only, of the pursuits of mankind. I felt how little my opinion was valued by those engaged in the busy turmoil, yet I exercised it with the profusion of an old lawyer retired from his profession, who thrusts himself into his neighbour's affairs, and gives advice where it is not wanted, merely under pretence of loving the crack of the whip.

I came amid these reflections to the brow of a hill, from which I expected to see Glentanner, a modest-looking yet comfortable house, its walls covered with the most productive fruit-trees in that part of the country, and screened from the most stormy quarters of the horizon by a deep and ancient wood, which overhung the neighbouring hill. The house was gone; a great part of the wood was felled; and instead of the gentlemanlike mansion, shrouded and embosomed among its old hereditary trees, stood Castle Treddles, a huge lumping four-square pile of freestone, as bare as my nail, except for a paltry edging of decayed and lingering exotics, with an impoverished lawn stretched before it, which, instead of boasting deep green tapestry, enamelled with daisies and with crowsfoot and cowslips, showed an extent of nakedness, raked, indeed, and levelled, but where the sown grasses had failed with drought, and the earth, retaining its natural complexion, seemed nearly as brown and bare as when it was newly dug up.

The house was a large fabric, which pretended to its name of Castle only from the front windows being finished in acute Gothic arches (being, by the way, the very reverse of the castellated style), and each angle graced with a turret about the size of a pepper-box. In every other respect it resembled a large town-house, which, like a fat burgess, had taken a walk to the country on a holiday, and climbed to the top of all eminence to look around it. The bright red colour of the freestone, the size of the building, the formality of its shape, and awkwardness of its position, harmonized as ill with the sweeping Clyde in front, and the bubbling brook which danced down on the right, as the fat civic form, with bushy wig, gold-headed cane, maroon-coloured coat, and mottled silk stockings, would have accorded with the wild and magnificent scenery of Corehouse Linn.

I went up to the house. It was in that state of desertion which is perhaps the most unpleasant to look on, for the place was going to decay without having been inhabited. There were about the mansion, though deserted, none of the slow mouldering touches of time, which communicate to buildings, as to the human frame, a sort of reverence, while depriving them of beauty and of strength. The disconcerted schemes of the Laird of Castle Treddles had resembled fruit that becomes decayed without ever having ripened. Some windows broken, others patched, others blocked up with deals, gave a disconsolate air to all around, and seemed to say, "There Vanity had purposed to fix her seat, but was anticipated by Poverty."

To the inside, after many a vain summons, I was at length admitted by an old labourer. The house contained every contrivance for luxury and accommodation. The kitchens were a model; and there were hot closets on the office staircase, that the dishes might not cool, as our Scottish phrase goes, between the kitchen and the hall. But instead of the genial smell of good cheer, these temples of Comus emitted the damp odour of sepulchral vaults, and the large cabinets of cast-iron looked like the cages of some feudal Bastille. The eating room and drawing-room, with an interior boudoir, were magnificent apartments, the ceiling was fretted and adorned with stucco-work, which already was broken in many places, and looked in others damp and mouldering; the wood panelling was shrunk and warped, and cracked; the doors, which had not been hung for more than two years, were, nevertheless, already swinging loose from their hinges. Desolation, in short, was where enjoyment had never been; and the want of all the usual means to preserve was fast performing the work of decay.

The story was a common one, and told in a few words. Mr. Treddles, senior, who bought the estate, was a cautious, money-making person. His son, still embarked in commercial speculations, desired at the same time to enjoy his opulence and to increase it. He incurred great expenses, amongst which this edifice was to be numbered. To support these he speculated boldly, and unfortunately; and thus the whole history is told, which may serve for more places than Glentanner.

Strange and various feelings ran through my bosom as I loitered in these deserted apartments, scarce hearing what my guide said to me about the size and destination of each room. The first sentiment, I am ashamed to say, was one of gratified spite. My patrician pride was pleased that the mechanic, who had not thought the house of the Croftangrys sufficiently good for him, had now experienced a fall in his turn. My next thought was as mean, though not so malicious. "I have had the better of this fellow," thought I. "If I lost the estate, I at least spent the price; and Mr. Treddles has lost his among paltry commercial engagements."

"Wretch!" said the secret voice within, "darest thou exult in thy shame? Recollect how thy youth and fortune was wasted in those years, and triumph not in the enjoyment of an existence which levelled thee with the beasts that perish. Bethink thee how this poor man's vanity gave at least bread to the labourer, peasant, and citizen; and his profuse expenditure, like water spilt on the ground, refreshed the lowly herbs and plants where it fell. But thou! Whom hast thou enriched during thy career of extravagance, save those brokers of the devil—vintners, panders, gamblers, and horse-jockeys?" The anguish produced by this self-reproof was so strong that I put my hand suddenly to my forehead, and was obliged to allege a sudden megrim to my attendant, in apology for the action, and a slight groan with which it was accompanied.

I then made an effort to turn my thoughts into a more philosophical current, and muttered half aloud, as a charm to lull any more painful thoughts to rest,—

*"NUNC AGER UMBRENI SUB NOMINE, NUPER OFELLI
DICTUS ERIT NULLI PROPRIUS; SED CEDIT IN USUM
NUNC MIHI, NUNC ALII. QUOCIRCA VIVITE FORTES,
FORTIAQUE ADVERSIS OPPONITE PECTORA REBUS."*

[Horace Sat. II Lib. 2. The meaning will be best conveyed to the English reader in Pope's imitation:—

*"What's property, dear Swift? You see it alter
From you to me, from me to Peter Walter;
Or in a mortgage prove a lawyer's share;
Or in a jointure vanish from the heir."*

*"Shades, that to Bacon could retreat afford,
Become the portion of a booby lord;
And Helmsley, once proud Buckingham's delight,
Slides to a scrivener and city knight.
Let lands and houses have what lords they will,
Let us be fix'd, and our own masters still."*

In my anxiety to fix the philosophical precept in my mind, I recited the last line aloud, which, joined to my previous agitation, I afterwards found became the cause of a report that a mad schoolmaster had come from Edinburgh, with the idea in his head of buying Castle Treddles.

As I saw my companion was desirous of getting rid of me, I asked where I was to find the person in whose hands were left the map of the estate, and other particulars connected with the sale. The agent who had this in possession, I was told, lived at the town of —, which I was informed, and indeed knew well, was distant five miles and a bittock, which may pass in a country where they are less lavish of their land for two or three more. Being somewhat afraid of the fatigue of walking so far, I inquired if a horse or any sort of carriage was to be had, and was answered in the negative.

"But," said my cicerone, "you may halt a blink till next morning at the Treddles Arms, a very decent house, scarce a mile off."

"A new house, I suppose?" replied I.

"No, it's a new public, but it's an auld house; it was aye the Leddy's jointure-house in the Croftangry folk's time. But Mr. Treddles has fitted it up for the convenience of the country, poor man, he was a public-spirited man when he had the means."

"Duntarkin a public-house!" I exclaimed.

"Ay!" said the fellow, surprised at my naming the place by its former title; "ye'll hae been in this country before, I'm thinking?"

"Long since," I replied. "And there is good accommodation at the what-d'ye-call-'em arms, and a civil landlord?" This I said by way of saying something, for the man stared very hard at me.

"Very decent accommodation. Ye'll no be for fashing wi' wine, I'm thinking; and there's walth o' porter, ale, and a drap gude whisky" (in an undertone)—"Fairntosh—if you call get on the lee-side of the gudewife—for there is nae gudeman. They ca' her Christie Steele."

I almost started at the sound. Christie Steele! Christie Steele was my mother's body-servant, her very right hand, and, between ourselves, something like a viceroy over her. I recollected her perfectly; and though she had in former times been no favourite of mine, her name now sounded in my ear like that of a friend, and was the first word I had heard somewhat in unison with the associations around me. I sallied from Castle Treddles, determined to make the best of my way to Duntarkin, and my cicerone hung by me for a little way, giving loose to his love of talking—an opportunity which, situated as he was, the seneschal of a deserted castle, was not likely to occur frequently.

"Some folk think," said my companion, "that Mr. Treddles might as weel have put my wife as Christie Steele into the Treddles Arms; for Christie had been aye in service, and never in the public line, and so it's like she is ganging back in the world, as I hear. Now, my wife had keptit a victualling office."

"That would have been an advantage, certainly," I replied.

"But I am no sure that I wad ha' looten Eppie take it, if they had put it in her offer."

"That's a different consideration."

"Ony way, I wadna ha' liked to have offended Mr. Treddles. He was a wee toustie when you rubbed him again the hair; but a kind, weel-meaning man."

I wanted to get rid of this species of chat, and finding myself near the entrance of a footpath which made a short cut to Duntarkin, I put half a crown into my guide's hand, bade him good-evening, and plunged into the woods.

"Hout, sir—fie, sir—no from the like of you. Stay, sir, ye wunna find the way that gate.—Odd's mercy, he maun ken the gate as weel as I do mysel'. Weel, I wad like to ken wha the chield is."

Such were the last words of my guide's drowsy, uninteresting tone of voice and glad to be rid of him, I strode out stoutly, in despite of large stones, briers, and BAD STEPS, which abounded in the road I had chosen. In the interim, I tried as much as I could, with verses from Horace and Prior, and all who have lauded the mixture of literary with rural life, to call back the visions of last night and this morning, imagining myself settled in same detached farm of the estate of Glentanner,—

*"Which sloping hills around enclose—
Where many a birch and brown oak grows,"*

when I should have a cottage with a small library, a small cellar, a spare bed for a friend, and live more happy and more honoured than when I had the whole barony. But the sight of Castle Treddles had disturbed all my own castles in the air. The realities of the matter, like a stone plashed into a limpid fountain, had destroyed the reflection of the objects around, which, till this act of violence, lay slumbering on the crystal surface, and I tried in vain to re-establish the picture which had been so rudely broken. Well, then, I would try it another way. I would try to get Christie Steele out of her PUBLIC, since she was not striving in it, and she who had been my mother's governante should be mine. I knew all her faults, and I told her history over to myself.

She was grand-daughter, I believe—at least some relative—of the famous Covenanter of the name, whom Dean Swift's friend, Captain Creighton, shot on his own staircase in the times of the persecutions; [See Note 2.—Steele a Covenanter, shot by Captain Creighton.] and had perhaps derived from her native stock much both of its good and evil properties. No one could say of her that she was the life and spirit of the family, though in my mother's time she directed all family affairs. Her look was austere and gloomy, and when she was not displeased with you, you could only find it out by her silence. If there was cause for complaint, real or imaginary, Christie was loud enough. She loved my mother with the devoted attachment of a younger sister; but she was as jealous of her favour to any one else

as if she had been the aged husband of a coquettish wife, and as severe in her reprehensions as an abbess over her nuns. The command which she exercised over her was that, I fear, of a strong and determined over a feeble and more nervous disposition and though it was used with rigour, yet, to the best of Christie Steele's belief, she was urging her mistress to her best and most becoming course, and would have died rather than have recommended any other. The attachment of this woman was limited to the family of Croftangry; for she had few relations, and a dissolute cousin, whom late in life she had taken as a husband, had long left her a widow.

To me she had ever a strong dislike. Even from my early childhood she was jealous, strange as it may seem, of my interest in my mother's affections. She saw my foibles and vices with abhorrence, and without a grain of allowance; nor did she pardon the weakness of maternal affection even when, by the death of two brothers, I came to be the only child of a widowed parent. At the time my disorderly conduct induced my mother to leave Glentanner, and retreat to her jointure-house, I always blamed Christie Steele for having influenced her resentment and prevented her from listening to my vows of amendment, which at times were real and serious, and might, perhaps, have accelerated that change of disposition which has since, I trust, taken place. But Christie regarded me as altogether a doomed and predestinated child of perdition, who was sure to hold on my course, and drag downwards whosoever might attempt to afford me support.

Still, though I knew such had been Christie's prejudices against me in other days, yet I thought enough of time had since passed away to destroy all of them. I knew that when, through the disorder of my affairs, my mother underwent some temporary inconvenience about money matters, Christie, as a thing of course, stood in the gap, and having sold a small inheritance which had descended to her, brought the purchase money to her mistress, with a sense of devotion as deep as that which inspired the Christians of the first age, when they sold all they had, and followed the apostles of the church. I therefore thought that we might, in old Scottish phrase, "let by-gones be by-gones," and begin upon a new account. Yet I resolved, like a skilful general, to reconnoitre a little before laying down any precise scheme of proceeding, and in the interim I determined to preserve my incognito.

CHAPTER IV. MR. CROFTANGRY BIDS ADIEU TO CLYDESDALE.

Alas, how changed from what it once had been!

'Twas now degraded to a common inn. GAY.

An hour's brisk walking, or thereabouts, placed me in front of Duntarkin, which had also, I found, undergone considerable alterations, though it had not been altogether demolished like the principal mansion. An inn-yard extended before the door of the decent little jointure-house, even amidst the remnants of the holly hedges which had screened the lady's garden. Then a broad, raw-looking, new-made road intruded itself up the little glen, instead of the old horseway, so seldom used that it was almost entirely covered with grass. It is a great enormity, of which gentlemen trustees on the highways are sometimes guilty, in adopting the breadth necessary for an avenue to the metropolis, where all that is required is an access to some sequestered and unpopulous district. I do not say anything of the expense—that the trustees and their constituents may settle as they please. But the destruction of silvan beauty is great when the breadth of the road is more than proportioned to the vale through which it runs, and lowers, of course, the consequence of any objects of wood or water, or broken and varied ground, which might otherwise attract notice and give pleasure. A bubbling rannel by the side of one of those modern Appian or Flaminian highways is but like a kennel; the little hill is diminished to a hillock—the romantic hillock to a molehill, almost too small for sight.

Such an enormity, however, had destroyed the quiet loneliness of Duntarkin, and intruded its breadth of dust and gravel, and its associations of pochays and mail-coaches, upon one of the most sequestered spots in the Middle Ward of Clydesdale. The house was old and dilapidated, and looked sorry for itself, as if sensible of a derogation; but the sign was strong and new, and brightly painted, displaying a heraldic shield (three shuttles in a field diapre), a web partly unfolded for crest, and two stout giants for supporters, each one holding a weaver's beam proper. To have displayed this monstrous emblem on the front of the house might have hazarded bringing down the wall, but for certain would have blocked up one or two windows. It was therefore established independent of the mansion, being displayed in an iron framework, and suspended upon two posts, with as much wood and iron about it as would have builded a brig; and there it hung, creaking, groaning, and screaming in every blast of wind, and frightening for five miles' distance, for aught I know, the nests of thrushes and linnets, the ancient denizens of the little glen.

When I entered the place I was received by Christie Steele herself, who seemed uncertain whether to drop me in the kitchen, or usher me into a separate apartment, as I called for tea, with something rather more substantial than bread and butter, and spoke of supping and sleeping, Christie at last inducted me into the room where she herself had been sitting, probably the only one which had a fire, though the month was October. This answered my plan; and as she was about to remove her spinning-wheel, I begged she would have the goodness to remain and make my tea, adding that I liked the sound of the wheel, and desired not to disturb her housewife thrift in the least.

"I dinna ken, sir," she replied, in a dry, REVECHE tone, which carried me back twenty years, "I am nane of thae heartsome landleddies that can tell country cracks, and make themsel's agreeable, and I was ganging to put on a fire for you in the Red Room; but if it is your will to stay here, he that pays the lawing maun choose the lodging."

I endeavoured to engage her in conversation; but though she answered, with a kind of stiff civility, I could get her into no freedom of discourse, and she began to look at her wheel and at the door more than once, as if she meditated a retreat. I was obliged, therefore, to proceed to some special questions; that might have interest for a person whose ideas were probably of a very bounded description.

I looked round the apartment, being the same in which I had last seen my poor mother. The author of the family history, formerly mentioned, had taken great credit to himself for the improvements he had made in this same jointure-house of Duntarkin, and how, upon his marriage, when his mother took possession of the same as her jointure-house, "to his great charges and expenses he caused box the walls of the great parlour" (in which I was now sitting), "empanel the same, and plaster the roof, finishing the apartment with ane concave chimney, and decorating the same with pictures, and a barometer and thermometer." And in particular, which his good mother used to say she prized above all the rest, he had caused his own portraiture be limned over the mantelpiece by a skilful hand. And, in good faith, there he remained still, having much the visage which I was disposed to ascribe to him on the evidence of his handwriting,—grim and austere, yet not without a cast of shrewdness and determination; in armour, though he never wore it, I fancy; one hand on an open book, and one resting on the hilt of his sword, though I dare say his head never ached with reading, nor his limbs with fencing.

"That picture is painted on the wood, madam," said I.

"Ay, sir, or it's like it would not have been left there; they look a' they could."

"Mr. Treddles's creditors, you mean?" said I.

"Na," replied she dryly, "the creditors of another family, that sweepit cleaner than this poor man's, because I fancy there was less to gather."

"An older family, perhaps, and probably more remembered and regretted than later possessors?"

Christie here settled herself in her seat, and pulled her wheel towards her. I had given her something interesting for her thoughts to dwell upon, and her wheel was a mechanical accompaniment on such occasions, the revolutions of which assisted her in the explanation of her ideas.

"Mair regretted—mair missed? I liked ane of the auld family very weel, but I winna say that for them a'. How should they be mair missed than the Treddleses? The cotton mill was such a thing for the country! The mair bairns a cottar body had the better; they would make their awn keep frae the time they were five years auld, and a widow wi' three or four bairns was a wealthy woman in the time of the Treddleses."

"But the health of these poor children, my good friend—their education and religious instruction—"

"For health," said Christie, looking gloomily at me, "ye maun ken little of the world, sir, if ye dinna ken that the health of the poor man's body, as well as his youth and his strength, are all at the command of the rich man's purse. There never was a trade so unhealthy yet but men would fight to get wark at it for twa pennies a

day aboon the common wage. But the bairns were reasonably weel cared for in the way of air and exercise, and a very responsible youth heard them their Carritch, and gied them lessons in Reedimadeasy ["Reading made Easy," usually so pronounced in Scotland.] Now, what did they ever get before? Maybe on a winter day they wad be called out to beat the wood for cocks or siclike; and then the starving weans would maybe get a bite of broken bread, and maybe no, just as the butler was in humour—that was a' they got."

"They were not, then, a very kind family to the poor, these old possessors?" said I, somewhat bitterly; for I had expected to hear my ancestors' praises recorded, though I certainly despaired of being regaled with my own.

"They werena ill to them, sir, and that is aye something. They were just decent bien bodies; ony poor creature that had face to beg got an awmous, and welcome—they that were shamefaced gaed by, and twice as welcome. But they keepit an honest walk before God and man, the Croftangrys, and, as I said before, if they did little good, they did as little ill. They lifted their rents, and spent them; called in their kain and ate them; gaed to the kirk of a Sunday; bowed civilly if folk took aff their bannets as they gaed by, and lookit as black as sin at them that keepit them on."

"These are their arms that you have on the sign?"

"What! on the painted board that is skirling and groaning at the door? Na, these are Mr. Treddles's arms though they look as like legs as arms. Ill pleased I was at the fule thing, that cost as muckle as would hae repaired the house from the wa' stane to the rigging-tree. But if I am to bide here, I'll hae a decent board wi' a punch bowl on it."

"Is there a doubt of your staying here, Mrs. Steele?"

"Dinna Mistress me," said the cross old woman, whose fingers were now plying their thrift in a manner which indicated nervous irritation; "there was nae luck in the land since Luckie turned Mistress, and Mistress my Leddy. And as for staying here, if it concerns you to ken, I may stay if I can pay a hundred pund sterling for the lease, and I may flit if I canna, and so gude e'en to you, Christie,"—and round went the wheel with much activity.

"And you like the trade of keeping a public-house?"

"I can scarce say that," she replied. "But worthy Mr. Prendergast is clear of its lawfulness; and I hae gotten used to it, and made a decent living, though I never make out a fause reckoning, or give ony one the means to disorder reason in my house."

"Indeed!" said I; "in that case, there is no wonder you have not made up the hundred pounds to purchase the lease."

"How do you ken," said she sharply, "that I might not have had a hundred pounds of my ain fee? If I have it not, I am sure it is my ain faut. And I wunna ca' it faut neither, for it gaed to her wha was weel entitled to a' my service." Again she pulled stoutly at the flax, and the wheel went smartly round.

"This old gentleman," said I, fixing my eye on the painted panel, "seems to have had HIS arms painted as well as Mr. Treddles—that is, if that painting in the corner be a scutcheon."

"Ay, ay—cushion, just sae. They maun a' hae their cushions—there's sma' gentry without that—and so the arms, as they ca' them, of the house of Glentanner may be seen on an auld stane in the west end of the house. But to do them justice; they didna propale sae muckle about them as poor Mr. Treddles did—it's like they were better used to them."

"Very likely. Are there any of the old family in life, goodwife?"

"No," she replied; then added; after a moment's hesitation, "Not that I know of"—and the wheel, which had intermitted, began again to revolve.

"Gone abroad, perhaps?" I suggested.

She now looked up, and faced me. "No, sir. There were three sons of the last laird of Glentanner, as he was then called. John and William were hopeful young gentlemen, but they died early—one of a decline brought on by the mizzles, the other lost his life in a fever. It would hae been lucky for mony ane that Chrystal had gane the same gate."

"Oh, he must have been the young spendthrift that sold the property? Well, but you should you have such an ill-will against him; remember necessity has no law. And then, goodwife, he was not more culpable than Mr. Treddles, whom you are so sorry for."

"I wish I could think sae, sir, for his mother's sake. But Mr. Treddles was in trade, and though he had no preceese right to do so, yet there was some warrant for a man being expensive that imagined he was making a mint of money. But this unhappy lad devoured his patrimony, when he kenned that he was living like a ratten in a Dunlap cheese, and diminishing his means at a' hands. I canna bide to think on't." With this she broke out into a snatch of a ballad, but little of mirth was there either in the tone or the expression:—

*"For he did spend, and make an end
Of gear that his forefathers wan;
Of land and ware he made him bare,
So speak nae mair of the auld gudeman."*

"Come, dame," said I, "it is a long lane that has no turning. I will not keep from you that I have heard something of this poor fellow, Chrystal Croftangry. He has sown his wild oats, as they say, and has settled into a steady, respectable man."

"And wha tell'd ye that tidings?" said she, looking sharply at me.

"Not, perhaps, the best judge in the world of his character, for it was himself, dame."

"And if he tell'd you truth, it was a virtue he did not aye use to practise," said Christie.

"The devil!" said I, considerably nettled; "all the world held him to be a man of honour."

"Ay, ay! he would hae shot onybody wi' his pistols and his guns that had evened him to be a liar. But if he promised to pay an honest tradesman the next term-day, did he keep his word then? And if he promised a puir, silly lass to make gude her shame, did he speak truth then? And what is that but being a liar, and a black-hearted, deceitful liar to boot?"

My indignation was rising, but I strove to suppress it; indeed, I should only have afforded my tormentor a triumph by an angry reply. I partly suspected she began to recognize me, yet she testified so little emotion that I could not think my suspicion well founded. I went on, therefore, to say, in a tone as indifferent as I could command, "Well, goodwife, I see you will believe no good of this Chrystal of yours, till he comes back and buys a good farm on the estate, and makes you his housekeeper."

The old woman dropped her thread, folded her hands, as she looked up to heaven with a face of apprehension. "The Lord," she exclaimed, "forbid! The Lord in His mercy forbid! O sir! if you really know this unlucky man, persuade him to settle where folk ken the good that you say he has come to, and dinna ken the evil of his former days. He used to be proud enough—O dinna let him come here, even for his own sake. He used once to have some pride."

Here she once more drew the wheel close to her, and began to pull at the flax with both hands. "Dinna let him come here, to be looked down upon by ony that may be left of his auld reiving companions, and to see the decent folk that he looked over his nose at look over their noses at him, baith at kirk and market. Dinna let him come to his ain country, to be made a tale about when ony neighbour points him out to another, and tells what he is, and what he was, and how he wrecked a dainty estate, and brought harlots to the door-cheek of his father's house, till he made it nae residence for his mother; and how it had been foretauld by a servant of his ain house that he was a ne'er-do-weel and a child of perdition, and how her words were made good, and—"

"Stop there, goodwife, if you please," said I; "you have said as much as I can well remember, and more than it may be safe to repeat. I can use a great deal of freedom with the gentleman we speak of; but I think, were any other person to carry him half of your message, I would scarce ensure his personal safety. And now, as I see the night is settled to be a fine one, I will walk on to —, where I must meet a coach to-morrow as it passes to Edinburgh."

So saying, I paid my moderate reckoning, and took my leave, without being able to discover whether the prejudiced and hard-hearted old woman did, or did not, suspect the identity of her guest with the Chrystal Croftangry against whom she harboured so much dislike.

The night was fine and frosty, though, when I pretended to see what its character was, it might have rained like the deluge. I only made the excuse to escape from old Christie Steele. The horses which run races in the Corso at Rome without any riders, in order to stimulate their exertion, carry each his own spurs namely, small balls of steel, with sharp, projecting spikes, which are attached to loose straps of leather, and, flying about in the violence of the agitation, keep the horse to his speed by pricking him as they strike against his flanks. The old woman's reproaches had the same effect on me, and urged me to a rapid pace, as if it had been possible to escape from my own recollections. In the best days of my life, when I won one or two hard walking matches, I doubt if I ever walked so fast as I did betwixt the Treddles Arms and the borough town for which I was bound. Though the night was cold, I was warm enough by the time I got to my inn; and it required a refreshing draught of porter, with half an hour's repose, ere I could determine to give no further thought to Christie and her opinions than those of any other vulgar, prejudiced old woman. I resolved at last to treat the thing EN BAGATELLE, and calling for writing materials, I folded up a cheque for L100, with these lines on the envelope:—

*"Chrystal, the ne'er-do-weel,
Child destined to the deil,
Sends this to Christie Steele."*

And I was so much pleased with this new mode of viewing the subject, that I regretted the lateness of the hour prevented my finding a person to carry the letter express to its destination.

"But with the morning cool reflection came."

I considered that the money, and probably more, was actually due by me on my mother's account to Christie, who had lent it in a moment of great necessity, and that the returning it in a light or ludicrous manner was not unlikely to prevent so touchy and punctilious a person from accepting a debt which was most justly her due, and which it became me particularly to see satisfied. Sacrificing, then, my triad with little regret (for it looked better by candlelight, and through the medium of a pot of porter, than it did by daylight, and with bohea for a menstruum), I determined to employ Mr. Fairscribe's mediation in buying up the lease of the little inn, and conferring it upon Christie in the way which should make it most acceptable to her feelings. It is only necessary to add that my plan succeeded, and that Widow Steele even yet keeps the Treddles Arms. Do not say, therefore, that I have been disingenuous with you, reader; since, if I have not told all the ill of myself I might have done, I have indicated to you a person able and willing to supply the blank, by relating all my delinquencies as well as my misfortunes. In the meantime I totally abandoned the idea of redeeming any part of my paternal property, and resolved to take Christie Steele's advice, as young Norval does Glenalvon's, "although it sounded harshly."

CHAPTER V. MR. CROFTANGRY SETTLES IN THE CANONGATE.

*If you will know my house,
'Tis at the tuft of olives here hard by. AS YOU LIKE IT.*

By a revolution of humour which I am unable to account for, I changed my mind entirely on my plans of life, in consequence of the disappointment, the history of which fills the last chapter. I began to discover that the country would not at all suit me; for I had relinquished field-sports, and felt no inclination whatever to farming, the ordinary vocation of country gentlemen. Besides that, I had no talent for assisting either candidate in case of an expected election, and saw no amusement in the duties of a road trustee, a commissioner of supply, or even in the magisterial functions of the bench. I had begun to take some taste for reading; and a domiciliation in the country must remove me from the use of books, excepting the small subscription library, in which the very book which you want is uniformly sure to be engaged.

I resolved, therefore, to make the Scottish metropolis my regular resting-place, reserving to myself to take occasionally those excursions which, spite of all I have said against mail-coaches, Mr. Piper has rendered so easy. Friend of our life and of our leisure, he secures by dispatch against loss of time, and by the best of coaches, cattle, and steadiest of drivers, against hazard of limb, and wafts us, as well as our letters, from Edinburgh to Cape Wrath in the penning of a paragraph. When my mind was quite made up to make Auld Reekie my headquarters, reserving the privilege of EXPLORING in all directions, I began to explore in good earnest for the purpose of discovering a suitable habitation. "And whare trew ye I gaed?" as Sir Pertinax says. Not to George's Square—nor to Charlotte Square—nor to the old New Town—nor to the new New Town—nor to the Calton Hill. I went to the Canongate, and to the very portion of the Canongate in which I had formerly been immured, like the errant knight, prisoner in some enchanted castle, where spells have made the ambient air impervious to the unhappy captive, although the organs of sight encountered no obstacle to his free passage.

Why I should have thought of pitching my tent here I cannot tell. Perhaps it was to enjoy the pleasures of freedom where I had so long endured the bitterness of restraint, on the principle of the officer who, after he had retired from the army, ordered his servant to continue to call him at the hour or parade, simply that he might have the pleasure of saying, "D—n the parade!" and turning to the other side to enjoy his slumbers. Or perhaps I expected to find in the vicinity some little old-fashioned house, having somewhat of the RUS IN URBE which I was ambitious of enjoying. Enough: I went, as aforesaid, to the Canongate.

I stood by the kennel, of which I have formerly spoken, and, my mind being at ease, my bodily organs were more delicate. I was more sensible than heretofore, that, like the trade of Pompey in MEASURE FOR MEASURE,—it did in some sort—pah an ounce of civet, good apothecary! Turning from thence, my steps naturally directed themselves to my own humble apartment, where my little Highland landlady, as dapper and as tight as ever, (for old women wear a hundred times better than the hard-wrought seniors of the masculine sex), stood at the door, TEEDLING to herself a Highland song as she shook a table napkin over the fore-stair, and then proceeded to fold it up neatly for future service.

"How do you, Janet?"

"Thank ye, good sir," answered my old friend, without looking at me; "but ye might as weel say Mrs. MacEvoy, for she is na a'body's Shanet—umph."

"You must be MY Janet, though, for all that. Have you forgot me? Do you not remember Chrystal Croftangry?"

The light, kind-hearted creature threw her napkin into the open door, skipped down the stair like a fairy, three steps at once, seized me by the hands—both hands—jumped up, and actually kissed me. I was a little ashamed; but what swain, of somewhere inclining to sixty could resist the advances of a fair contemporary? So we allowed the full degree of kindness to the meeting—HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE—and then Janet entered instantly upon business. "An ye'll gae in, man, and see your auld lodgings, nae doubt and Shanet will pay ye the fifteen shillings of change that ye ran away without, and without bidding Shanet good day. But never mind" (nodding good-humouredly), "Shanet saw you were carried for the time."

By this time we were in my old quarters, and Janet, with her bottle of cordial in one hand and the glass in the other, had forced on me a dram of usquebaugh, distilled with saffron and other herbs, after some old-fashioned Highland receipt. Then was unfolded, out of many a little scrap of paper, the reserved sum of fifteen shillings, which Janet had treasured for twenty years and upwards.

"Here they are," she said, in honest triumph, "just the same I was holding out to ye when ye ran as if ye had been fey. Shanet has had siller, and Shanet has wanted siller, mony a time since that. And the gauger has come, and the factor has come, and the butcher and baker—Cot bless us just like to tear poor auld Shanet to pieces; but she took good care of Mr. Croftangry's fifteen shillings."

"But what if I had never come back, Janet?"

"Och, if Shanet had heard you were dead, she would hae gien it to the poor of the chapel, to pray for Mr. Croftangry," said Janet, crossing herself, for she was a Catholic, "You maybe do not think it would do you cood, but the blessing of the poor can never do no harm."

I agreed heartily in Janet's conclusion; and as to have desired her to consider the hoard as her own property would have been an indelicate return to her for the uprightness of her conduct, I requested her to dispose of it as she had proposed to do in the event of my death—that is, if she knew any poor people of merit to whom it might be useful.

"Ower mony of them," raising the corner of her checked apron to her eyes—"e'en ower mony of them, Mr. Croftangry. Och, ay. 'There is the puir Highland creatures frae Glenshee, that cam down for the harvest, and are lying wi' the fever—five shillings to them; and half a crown to Bessie MacEvoy, whose coodman, puir creature, died of the frost, being a shairman, for a' the whisky he could drink to keep it out o' his stamoch; and—"

But she suddenly interrupted the bead-roll of her proposed charities, and assuming a very sage look, and primming up her little chattering mouth, she went on in a different tone—"But och, Mr. Croftangry, bethink ye whether ye will not need a' this siller yoursel', and maybe look back and think lang for ha'en kiven it away, whilk is a creat sin to forthink a wark o' charity, and also is unlucky, and moreover is not the thought of a shentleman's son like yoursel', dear. And I say this, that ye may think a bit, for your mother's son kens that ye are no so careful as you should be of the gear, and I hae tauld ye of it before, jewel."

I assured her I could easily spare the money, without risk of future repentance; and she went on to infer that in such a case "Mr. Croftangry had grown a rich man in foreign parts, and was free of his troubles with messengers and sheriff-officers, and siclike scum of the earth, and Shanet MacEvoy's mother's daughter be a blithe woman to hear it. But if Mr. Croftangry was in trouble, there was his room, and his ped, and Shanet to wait on him, and tak payment when it was quite convenient."

I explained to Janet my situation, in which she expressed unqualified delight. I then proceeded to inquire into her own circumstances, and though she spoke cheerfully and contentedly, I could see they were precarious. I had paid more than was due; other lodgers fell into an opposite error, and forgot to pay Janet at all. Then, Janet being ignorant of all indirect modes of screwing money out of her lodgers, others in the same line of life, who were sharper than the poor, simple Highland woman, were enabled to let their apartments cheaper in appearance, though the inmates usually found them twice as dear in the long run.

As I had already destined my old landlady to be my house-keeper and governante, knowing her honesty, good-nature, and, although a Scotchwoman, her cleanliness and excellent temper (saving the short and hasty expressions of anger which Highlanders call a FUFF), I now proposed the plan to her in such a way as was likely to make it most acceptable. Very acceptable as the proposal was, as I could plainly see, Janet, however, took a day to consider upon it; and her reflections against our next meeting had suggested only one objection, which was singular enough.

"My honour," so she now termed me, "would pe for biding in some fine street apout the town. Now Shanet wad ill like to live in a place where polish, and sheriffs, and bailiffs, and sie thieves and trash of the world, could tak puir shentlemen by the throat, just because they wanted a wheen dollars in the sporran. She had lived in the bonny glen of Tomanthoullick. Cot, an ony of the vermint had come there, her father wad hae wared a shot on them, and he could hit a buck within as mony measured yards as e'er a man of his clan. And the place here was so quiet frae them, they durst na put their nose ower the gutter. Shanet owed nobody a bodle, but she couldna pide to see honest folk and pretty shentlemen forced away to prison whether they would or no; and then, if Shanet was to lay her tangs ower ane of the ragamuffins' heads, it would be, maybe, that the law would gi'ed a hard name."

One thing I have learned in life—never to speak sense when nonsense will answer the purpose as well. I should have had great difficulty to convince this practical and disinterested admirer and vindicator of liberty, that arrests seldom or never were to be seen in the streets of Edinburgh; and to satisfy her of their justice and necessity would have been as difficult as to convert her to the Protestant faith. I therefore assured her my intention, if I could get a suitable habitation, was to remain in the quarter where she at present dwelt. Janet gave three skips on the floor, and uttered as many short, shrill yells of joy. Yet doubt almost instantly returned, and she insisted on knowing what possible reason I could have for making my residence where few lived, save those whose misfortunes drove them thither. It occurred to me to answer her by recounting the legend of the rise of my family, and of our deriving our name from a particular place near Holyrood Palace. This, which would have appeared to most people a very absurd reason for choosing a residence, was entirely satisfactory to Janet MacEvoy.

"Och, nae doubt! if it was the land of her fathers, there was nae mair to be said. Put it was queer that her family estate should just lie at the town tail, and covered with houses, where the King's cows—Cot bless them, hide and horn—used to craze upon. It was strange changes." She mused a little, and then added: "Put it is something better wi' Croftangry when the changes is frae the field to the habited place, and not from the place of habitation to the desert; for Shanet, her nainsell, kent a glen where there were men as weel as there may be in Croftangry, and if there werena altogether sae mony of them, they were as good men in their tartan as the others in their broadcloth. And there were houses, too; and if they were not biggit with stane and lime, and lofted like the houses at Croftangry, yet they served the purpose of them that lived there, and mony a brow bonnet, and mony a silk snood and comely white curch, would come out to gang to kirk or chapel on the Lord's day, and little bairns toddling after. And now—Och, Och, Ohellany, Ohonari! the glen is desolate, and the brow snoods and bonnets are gane, and the Saxon's house stands dull and lonely, like the single bare-breasted rock that the falcon builds on—the falcon that drives the heath-bird frae the glen."

Janet, like many Highlanders, was full of imagination, and, when melancholy themes came upon her, expressed herself almost poetically, owing to the genius of the Celtic language in which she thought, and in which, doubtless, she would have spoken, had I understood Gaelic. In two minutes the shade of gloom and regret had passed from her good-humoured features, and she was again the little, busy, prating, important old woman, undisputed owner of one flat of a small tenement in the Abbey Yard, and about to be promoted to be housekeeper to an elderly bachelor gentleman, Chrystal Croftangry, Esq.

It was not long before Janet's local researches found out exactly the sort of place I wanted, and there we settled. Janet was afraid I would not be satisfied, because it is not exactly part of Croftangry; but I stopped her doubts by assuring her it had been part and pendicle thereof in my forefather's time, which passed very well.

I do not intend to possess any one with an exact knowledge of my lodging; though, as Bobadil says, "I care not who knows it, since the cabin is convenient." But I may state in general, that it is a house "within itself," or, according to a newer phraseology in advertisements, SELF-CONTAINED, has a garden of near half an acre, and a patch of ground with trees in front. It boasts five rooms and servants' apartments—looks in front upon the palace, and from behind towards the hill and crags of the King's Park. Fortunately, the place had a name, which, with a little improvement, served to countenance the legend which I had imposed on Janet, and would not, perhaps have been sorry if I had been able to impose on myself. It was called Littlecroft; we have dubbed it Little Croftangry, and the men of letters belonging to the Post Office have sanctioned the change, and deliver letters so addressed. Thus I am to all intents and purposes Chrystal Croftangry of that ilk.

My establishment consists of Janet, an under maid-servant, and a Highland wench for Janet to exercise her Gaelic upon, with a handy lad who can lay the cloth, and take care, besides, of a pony, on which I find my way to Portobello sands, especially when the cavalry have a drill; for, like an old fool as I am, I have not altogether become indifferent to the tramp of horses and the flash of weapons, of which, though no professional soldier, it has been my fate to see something in my youth. For wet mornings I have my book; is it fine weather? I visit, or I wander on the Craggs, as the humour dictates. My dinner is indeed solitary, yet not quite so neither; for though Andrew waits, Janet—or, as she is to all the world but her master and certain old Highland gossips, Mrs. MacEvoy—attends, bustles about, and desires to see everything is in first-rate order, and to tell me, Cot pless us, the wonderful news of the palace for the day. When the cloth is removed, and I light my cigar, and begin to husband a pint of port, or a glass of old whisky and water, it is the rule of the house that Janet takes a chair at some distance, and nods or works her stocking, as she may be disposed—ready to speak, if I am in the talking humour, and sitting quiet as a mouse if I am rather inclined to study a book or the newspaper. At six precisely she makes my tea, and leaves me to drink it; and then occurs an interval of time which most old bachelors find heavy on their hands. The theatre is a good occasional resource, especially if Will Murray acts, or a bright star of eminence shines forth; but it is distant, and so are one or two public societies to which I belong. Besides, these evening walks are all incompatible with the elbow-chair feeling, which desires some employment that may divert the mind without fatiguing the body.

Under the influence of these impressions, I have sometimes thought of this literary undertaking. I must have been the Bonassus himself to have mistaken myself for a genius; yet I have leisure and reflections like my neighbours. I am a borderer, also, between two generations, and can point out more, perhaps, than others of those fading traces of antiquity which are daily vanishing; and I know many a modern instance and many an old tradition, and therefore I ask—

"What ails me, I may not as well as they

*Rake up some threadbare tales, that mouldering lay
In chimney corners, wont by Christmas fires
To read and rock to sleep our ancient sires?
No man his threshold better knows, than I
Brute's first arrival and first victory,
Saint George's sorrel and his cross of blood,
Arthur's round board and Caledonian wood."*

No shop is so easily set up as an antiquary's. Like those of the lowest order of pawnbrokers, a commodity of rusty iron, a bay or two of hobnails, a few odd shoe-buckles, cashiered kail-pots, and fire-irons declared incapable of service, are quite sufficient to set him up. If he add a sheaf or two of penny ballads and broadsides, he is a great man—an extensive trader. And then, like the pawnbrokers aforesaid, if the author understands a little legerdemain, he may, by dint of a little picking and stealing, make the inside of his shop a great deal richer than the out, and be able to show you things which cause those who do not understand the antiquarian trick of clean conveyance to wonder how the devil he came by them.

It may be said that antiquarian articles interest but few customers, and that we may bawl ourselves as rusty as the wares we deal in without any one asking; the price of our merchandise. But I do not rest my hopes upon this department of my labours only. I propose also to have a corresponding shop for Sentiment, and Dialogues, and Disquisition, which may captivate the fancy of those who have no relish, as the established phrase goes, for pure antiquity—a sort of greengrocer's stall erected in front of my ironmongery wares, garlanding the rusty memorials of ancient times with cresses, cabbages, leeks, and water purpy.

As I have some idea that I am writing too well to be understood, I humble myself to ordinary language, and aver, with becoming modesty, that I do think myself capable of sustaining a publication of a miscellaneous nature, as like to the Spectator or the Guardian, the Mirror or the Lounger, as my poor abilities may be able to accomplish. Not that I have any purpose of imitating Johnson, whose general learning and power of expression I do not deny, but many of whose Ramblers are little better than a sort of pageant, where trite and obvious maxims are made to swagger in lofty and mystic language, and get some credit only because they are not easily understood. There are some of the great moralist's papers which I cannot peruse without thinking on a second-rate masquerade, where the best-known and least-esteemed characters in town march in as heroes, and sultans, and so forth, and, by dint of tawdry dresses, get some consideration until they are found out. It is not, however, prudent to commence with throwing stones, just when I am striking out windows of my own.

I think even the local situation of Little Croftangry may be considered as favourable to my undertaking. A nobler contrast there can hardly exist than that of the huge city, dark with the smoke of ages, and groaning with the various sounds of active industry or idle revel, and the lofty and craggy hill, silent and solitary as the grave—one exhibiting the full tide of existence, pressing and precipitating itself forward with the force of an inundation; the other resembling some time-worn anchorite, whose life passes as silent and unobserved as the slender rill which escapes unheard, and scarce seen, from the fountain of his patron saint. The city resembles the busy temple, where the modern Comus and Mammon hold their court, and thousands sacrifice ease, independence, and virtue itself at their shrine; the misty and lonely mountain seems as a throne to the majestic but terrible Genius of feudal times, when the same divinities dispensed coronets and domains to those who had heads to devise and arms to execute bold enterprises.

I have, as it were, the two extremities of the moral world at my threshold. From the front door a few minutes' walk brings me into the heart of a wealthy and populous city; as many paces from my opposite entrance place me in a solitude as complete as Zimmerman could have desired. Surely, with such aids to my imagination, I may write better than if I were in a lodging in the New Town or a garret in the old. As the Spaniard says, "VIAMOS—CARACCO!"

I have not chosen to publish periodically, my reason for which was twofold. In the first place, I don't like to be hurried, and have had enough of duns in an early part of my life to make me reluctant to hear of or see one, even in the less awful shape of a printer's devil. But, secondly, a periodical paper is not easily extended in circulation beyond the quarter in which it is published. This work, if published in fugitive numbers, would scarce, without a high pressure on the part of the bookseller, be raised above the Netherbow, and never could be expected to ascend to the level of Princes Street. Now, I am ambitious that my compositions, though having their origin in this Valley of Holyrood, should not only be extended into those exalted regions I have mentioned, but also that they should cross the Forth, astonish the long town of Kirkcaldy, enchant the skippers and colliers of the East of Fife, venture even into the classic arcades of St. Andrews, and travel as much farther to the north as the breath of applause will carry their sails. As for a southward direction, it is not to be hoped for in my fondest dreams. I am informed that Scottish literature, like Scottish whisky, will be presently laid under a prohibitory duty. But enough of this. If any reader is dull enough not to comprehend the advantages which, in point of circulation, a compact book has over a collection of fugitive numbers, let him try the range of a gun loaded with hail-shot against that of the same piece charged with an equal weight of lead consolidated in a single bullet.

Besides, it was of less consequence that I should have published periodically, since I did not mean to solicit or accept of the contributions of friends, or the criticisms of those who may be less kindly disposed. Notwithstanding the excellent examples which might be quoted, I will establish no begging-box, either under the name of a lion's head or an ass's. What is good or ill shall be mine own, or the contribution of friends to whom I may have private access. Many of my voluntary assistants might be cleverer than myself, and then I should have a brilliant article appear among my chiller effusions, like a patch of lace on a Scottish cloak of Galashiels grey. Some might be worse, and then I must reject them, to the injury of the feelings of the writer, or else insert them, to make my own darkness yet more opaque and palpable. "Let every herring," says our old-fashioned proverb, "hang by his own head."

One person, however, I may distinguish, as she is now no more, who, living to the utmost term of human life, honoured me with a great share of her friendship—as, indeed, we were blood-relatives in the Scottish sense—Heaven knows how many degrees removed—and friends in the sense of Old England. I mean the late excellent and regretted Mrs. Bethune Baliol. But as I design this admirable picture of the olden time for a principal character in my work, I will only say here that she knew and approved of my present purpose; and though she declined to contribute to it while she lived, from a sense of dignified retirement, which she thought became her age, sex, and condition in life, she left me some materials for carrying on my proposed work which I coveted when I heard her detail them in conversation, and which now, when I have their substance in her own handwriting, I account far more valuable than anything I have myself to offer. I hope the mentioning her name in conjunction with my own will give no offence to any of her numerous friends, as it was her own express pleasure that I should employ the manuscripts which she did me the honour to bequeath me in the manner in which I have now used them. It must be added, however, that in most cases I have disguised names, and in some have added shading and colouring to bring out the narrative.

Much of my materials, besides these, are derived from friends, living or dead. The accuracy of some of these may be doubtful, in which case I shall be happy to receive, from sufficient authority, the correction of the errors which must creep into traditional documents. The object of the whole publication is to throw some light on the manners of Scotland as they were, and to contrast them occasionally with those of the present day. My own opinions are in favour of our own times in many respects, but not in so far as affords means for exercising the imagination or exciting the interest which attaches to other times. I am glad to be a writer or a reader in 1826, but I would be most interested in reading or relating what happened from half a century to a century before. We have the best of it. Scenes in which our ancestors thought deeply, acted fiercely, and died desperately, are to us tales to divert the tedium of a winter's evening, when we are engaged to no party, or beguile a summer's morning, when it is too scorching to ride or walk.

Yet I do not mean that my essays and narratives should be limited to Scotland. I pledge myself to no particular line of subjects, but, on the contrary, say with Burns—

*"Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon."*

I have only to add, by way of postscript to these preliminary chapters, that I have had recourse to Moliere's recipe, and read my manuscript over to my old woman, Janet MacEvoy.

The dignity of being consulted delighted Janet; and Wilkie, or Allan, would have made a capital sketch of her, as she sat upright in her chair, instead of her ordinary lounging posture, knitting her stocking systematically, as if she meant every twist of her thread and inclination of the wires to bear burden to the cadence of my voice. I am afraid, too, that I myself felt more delight than I ought to have done in my own composition, and read a little more oratorically than I should have ventured to do before an auditor of whose applause I was not so secure. And the result did not entirely encourage my plan of censorship. Janet did indeed seriously incline to the account of my previous life, and bestowed some Highland maledictions, more emphatic than courteous, on Christie Steele's reception of a "shentlemans in distress," and of her own mistress's house too. I omitted for certain reasons, or greatly abridged, what related to her-self. But when I came to treat of my general views in publication, I saw poor Janet was entirely thrown out, though, like a jaded hunter, panting, puffing, and short of wind, she endeavoured at least to keep up with the chase. Or, rather, her perplexity made her look all the while like a deaf person ashamed of his infirmity, who does not understand a word you are saying, yet desires you to believe that he does understand you, and who is extremely jealous that you suspect his incapacity. When she saw that some remark was necessary, she resembled exactly in her criticism the devotee who pitched on the "sweet word Mesopotamia" as the most edifying note which she could bring away from a sermon. She indeed hastened to bestow general praise on what she said was all "very fine;" but chiefly dwelt on what I, had said about Mr. Timmerman, as she was pleased to call the German philosopher, and supposed he must be of the same descent with the Highland clan of M'Intyre, which signifies Son of the Carpenter. "And a fery honourable name too—Shanet's own mither was a M'Intyre."

In short, it was plain the latter part of my introduction was altogether lost on poor Janet; and so, to have acted up to Moliere's system, I should have cancelled the whole, and written it anew. But I do not know how it is. I retained, I suppose, some tolerable opinion of my own composition, though Janet did not comprehend it, and felt loath to retrench those Delilahs of the imagination, as Dryden calls them, the tropes and figures of which are caviar to the multitude. Besides, I hate rewriting as much as Falstaff did paying back—it is a double labour. So I determined with myself to consult Janet, in future, only on such things as were within the limits of her comprehension, and hazard my arguments and my rhetoric on the public without her imprimatur. I am pretty sure she will "applaud it done." and in such narratives as come within her range of thought and feeling I shall, as I first intended, take the benefit of her unsophisticated judgment, and attend to it deferentially—that is, when it happens not to be in peculiar opposition to my own; for, after all, I say with Almanzor,—

"Know that I alone am king of me."

The reader has now my who and my whereabouts, the purpose of the work, and the circumstances under which it is undertaken. He has also a specimen of the author's talents, and may judge for himself, and proceed, or send back the volume to the bookseller, as his own taste shall determine.

CHAPTER VI. MR. CROFTANGRY'S ACCOUNT OF MRS. BETHUNE BALIOL.

The moon, were she earthly, no nobler. CORIOLANUS.

When we set out on the jolly voyage of life, what a brave fleet there is around us, as, stretching our finest canvas to the breeze, all "shipshape and Bristol fashion," pennons flying, music playing, cheering each other as we pass, we are rather amused than alarmed when some awkward comrade goes right ashore for want of pilotage! Alas! when the voyage is well spent, and we look about us, toil-worn mariners, how few of our ancient consorts still remain in sight; and they, how torn and wasted, and, like ourselves, struggling to keep as long as possible off the fatal shore, against which we are all finally drifting!

I felt this very trite but melancholy truth in all its force the other day, when a packet with a black seal arrived, containing a letter addressed to me by my late excellent friend Mrs. Martha Bethune Baliol, and marked with the fatal indorsation, "To be delivered according to address, after I shall be no more." A letter from her executors accompanied the packet, mentioning that they had found in her will a bequest to me of a painting of some value, which she stated would just fit the space above my cupboard, and fifty guineas to buy a ring. And thus I separated, with all the kindness which we had maintained for many years, from a friend, who, though old enough to have been the companion of my mother, was yet, in gaiety of spirits and admirable sweetness of temper, capable of being agreeable, and even animating society, for those who write themselves in the vaward of youth, an advantage which I have lost for these five-and-thirty years. The contents of the packet I had no difficulty in guessing, and have partly hinted at them in the last chapter. But to instruct the reader in the particulars, and at the same time to indulge myself with recalling the virtues and agreeable qualities of my late friend, I will give a short sketch of her manners and habits.

Mrs. Martha Bethune Baliol was a person of quality and fortune, as these are esteemed in Scotland. Her family was ancient, and her connections honourable. She was not fond of specially indicating her exact age, but her juvenile recollections stretched backwards till before the eventful year 1745, and she remembered the Highland clans being in possession of the Scottish capital, though probably only as an indistinct vision. Her fortune, independent by her father's bequest, was rendered opulent by the death of more than one brave brother, who fell successively in the service of their country, so that the family estates became vested in the only surviving child of the ancient house of Bethune Baliol. My intimacy was formed with the excellent lady after this event, and when she was already something advanced in age.

She inhabited, when in Edinburgh, where she regularly spent the winter season, one of those old hotels which, till of late, were to be found in the neighbourhood of the Canongate and of the Palace of Holyrood House, and which, separated from the street, now dirty and vulgar, by paved courts and gardens of some extent, made amends for an indifferent access, by showing something of aristocratic state and seclusion when you were once admitted within their precincts. They have pulled her house down; for, indeed, betwixt building and burning, every ancient monument of the Scottish capital is now likely to be utterly demolished. I pause on the recollections of the place, however; and since nature has denied a pencil when she placed a pen in my hand, I will endeavour to make words answer the purpose of delineation.

Baliol's Lodging, so was the mansion named, reared its high stack of chimneys, among which were seen a turret or two, and one of those small projecting platforms called bartizans, above the mean and modern buildings which line the south side of the Canongate, towards the lower end of that street, and not distant from the Palace. A PORTE COCHERE, having a wicket for foot passengers, was, upon due occasion, unfolded by a lame old man, tall, grave, and thin, who tenanted a hovel beside the gate, and acted as porter. To this office he had been promoted by my friend's charitable feelings for an old soldier, and partly by an idea that his head, which was a very fine one, bore some resemblance to that of Garrick in the character of Lusignan. He was a man saturnine, silent, and slow in his proceedings, and would never open the PORTE COCHERE to a hackney coach, indicating the wicket with his finger as the proper passage for all who came in that obscure vehicle, which was not permitted to degrade with its ticketed presence the dignity of Baliol's Lodging. I do not think this peculiarity would have met with his lady's approbation, any more than the occasional partiality of Lusignan, or, as mortals called him, Archie Macready, to a dram. But Mrs. Martha Bethune Baliol, conscious that, in case of conviction, she could never have prevailed upon herself to dethrone the King of Palestine from the stone bench on which he sat for hours knitting his stocking, refused, by accrediting the intelligence, even to put him upon his trial, well judging that he would observe more wholesome caution if he conceived his character unsuspected, than if he were detected, and suffered to pass unpunished. For after all, she said, it would be cruel to dismiss an old Highland soldier for a peccadillo so appropriate to his country and profession.

The stately gate for carriages, or the humble accommodation for foot-passengers, admitted into a narrow and short passage running between two rows of lime-trees, whose green foliage during the spring contrasted strangely with the swart complexion of the two walls by the side of which they grew. This access led to the front of the house, which was formed by two gable ends, notched, and having their windows adorned with heavy architectural ornaments. They joined each other at right angles; and a half circular tower, which contained the entrance and the staircase, occupied the point of junction, and rounded the acute angle. One of other two sides of the little court, in which there was just sufficient room to turn a carriage, was occupied by some low buildings answering the purpose of offices; the other, by a parapet surrounded by a highly-ornamented iron railing, twined round with honeysuckle and other parasitical shrubs, which permitted the eye to peep into a pretty suburban garden, extending down to the road called the South Back of the Canongate, and boasting a number of old trees, many flowers, and

even some fruit. We must not forget to state that the extreme cleanliness of the courtyard was such as intimated that mop and pail had done their utmost in that favoured spot to atone for the general dirt and dinginess of the quarter where the premises were situated.

Over the doorway were the arms of Bethune and Baliol, with various other devices, carved in stone. The door itself was studded with iron nails, and formed of black oak; an iron rasp, as it was called, was placed on it, instead of a knocker, for the purpose of summoning the attendants. [See Note 3.—Iron Rasp.] He who usually appeared at the summons was a smart lad, in a handsome livery, the son of Mrs. Martha's gardener at Mount Baliol. Now and then a servant girl, nicely but plainly dressed, and fully accoutred with stockings and shoes, would perform this duty; and twice or thrice I remember being admitted by Beauffet himself, whose exterior looked as much like that of a clergyman of rank as the butler of a gentleman's family. He had been valet-de-chambre to the last Sir Richard Bethune Baliol, and was, a person highly trusted by the present lady. A full stand, as it is called in Scotland, of garments of a dark colour, gold buckles in his shoes and at the knees of his breeches, with his hair regularly dressed and powdered, announced him to be a domestic of trust and importance. His mistress used to say of him,—

"He is sad and civil,

And suits well for a servant with my fortunes."

As no one can escape scandal, some said that Beauffet made a rather better thing of the place than the modesty of his old-fashioned wages would, unassisted, have amounted to. But the man was always very civil to me. He had been long in the family, had enjoyed legacies, and lain by a something of his own, upon which he now enjoys ease with dignity, in as far as his newly-married wife, Tibbie Shortacres, will permit him.

The Lodging—dearest reader, if you are tired, pray pass over the next four or five pages—was not by any means so large as its external appearance led people to conjecture. The interior accommodation was much cut up by cross walls and long passages, and that neglect of economizing space which characterizes old Scottish architecture. But there was far more room than my old friend required, even when she had, as was often the case, four or five young cousins under her protection; and I believe much of the house was unoccupied. Mrs. Bethune Baliol never, in my presence, showed herself so much offended as once with a meddling person who advised her to have the windows of these supernumerary apartments built up to save the tax. She said in ire that, while she lived, the light of God should visit the house of her fathers; and while she had a penny, king and country should have their due. Indeed, she was punctiliously loyal, even in that most staggering test of loyalty, the payment of imposts. Mr. Beauffet told me he was ordered to offer a glass of wine to the person who collected the income tax, and that the poor man was so overcome by a reception so unwontedly generous, that he had well-nigh fainted on the spot.

You entered by a matted anteroom into the eating-parlour, filled with old-fashioned furniture, and hung with family portraits, which, excepting one of Sir Bernard Bethune, in James the Sixth's time, said to be by Jameson, were exceedingly frightful. A saloon, as it was called, a long, narrow chamber, led out of the dining-parlour, and served for a drawing-room. It was a pleasant apartment, looking out upon the south flank of Holyrood House, the gigantic slope of Arthur's Seat, and the girdle of lofty rocks called Salisbury Crag; objects so rudely wild, that the mind can hardly conceive them to exist in the vicinage of a populous metropolis. [The Rev. Mr. Bowles derives the name of these crags, as of the Episcopal city in the west of England, from the same root, both, in his opinion, which he very ably defends and illustrates, having been the sites of Druidical temples.] The paintings of the saloon came from abroad, and had some of them much merit. To see the best of them, however, you must be admitted into the very PENETRALIA of the temple, and allowed to draw the tapestry at the upper end of the saloon, and enter Mrs. Martha's own special dressing-room. This was a charming apartment, of which it would be difficult to describe the form, it had so many recesses which were filled up with shelves of ebony and cabinets of japan and ormolu—some for holding books, of which Mrs. Martha had an admirable collection, some for a display of ornamental china, others for shells and similar curiosities. In a little niche, half screened by a curtain of crimson silk, was disposed a suit of tilting armour of bright steel inlaid with silver, which had been worn on some memorable occasion by Sir Bernard Bethune, already mentioned; while over the canopy of the niche hung the broadsword with which her father had attempted to change the fortunes of Britain in 1715, and the spontoon which her elder brother bore when he was leading on a company of the Black Watch at Fontenoy. [The well-known original designation of the gallant 42nd Regiment. Being the first corps raised for the royal service in the Highlands, and allowed to retain their national garb, they were thus named from the contrast which their dark tartans furnished to the scarlet and white of the other regiments.]

There were some Italian and Flemish pictures of admitted authenticity, a few genuine bronzes, and other objects of curiosity, which her brothers or herself had picked up while abroad. In short, it was a place where the idle were tempted to become studious, the studious to grow idle where the grave might find matter to make them gay, and the gay subjects for gravity.

That it might maintain some title to its name, I must not forget to say that the lady's dressing-room exhibited a superb mirror, framed in silver filigree work; a beautiful toilette, the cover of which was of Flanders lace; and a set of boxes corresponding in materials and work to the frame of the mirror.

This dressing apparatus, however, was mere matter of parade. Mrs. Martha Bethune Baliol always went through the actual duties of the toilette in an inner apartment, which corresponded with her sleeping-room by a small detached staircase. There were, I believe, more than one of those TURNPIKE STAIRS, as they were called, about the house, by which the public rooms, all of which entered through each other, were accommodated with separate and independent modes of access. In the little boudoir we have described, Mrs. Martha Baliol had her choicest meetings. She kept early hours; and if you went in the morning, you must not reckon that space of day as extending beyond three o'clock, or four at the utmost. These vigilant habits were attended with some restraint on her visitors, but they were indemnified by your always finding the best society and the best information which were to be had for the day in the Scottish capital. Without at all affecting the blue stocking, she liked books. They amused her; and if the authors were persons of character, she thought she owed them a debt of civility, which she loved to discharge by personal kindness. When she gave a dinner to a small party, which she did now and then, she had the good nature to look for, and the good luck to discover, what sort of people suited each other best, and chose her company as Duke Theseus did his hounds,—

"Matched in mouth like bells,

Each under each,"

[Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, Act IV. Sc. I.]

so that every guest could take his part in the cry, instead of one mighty Tom of a fellow, like Dr. Johnson, silencing all besides by the tremendous depth of his diapason. On such occasions she afforded CHERE EXQUISE; and every now and then there was some dish of French, or even Scottish derivation, which, as well as the numerous assortment of VINS EXTRAORDINAIRES produced by Mr. Beauffet, gave a sort of antique and foreign air to the entertainment, which rendered it more interesting.

It was a great thing to be asked to such parties; and not less so to be invited to the early CONVERSAZIONE, which, in spite of fashion, by dint of the best coffee, the finest tea, and CHASSE CAFE that would have called the dead to life, she contrived now and then to assemble in her saloon already mentioned, at the unnatural hour of eight in the evening. At such time the cheerful old lady seemed to enjoy herself so much in the happiness of her guests that they exerted themselves in turn to prolong her amusement and their own; and a certain charm was excited around, seldom to be met with in parties of pleasure, and which was founded on the general desire of every one present to contribute something to the common amusement.

But although it was a great privilege to be admitted to wait on my excellent friend in the morning, or be invited to her dinner or evening parties, I prized still higher the right which I had acquired, by old acquaintance, of visiting Baliol's Lodging upon the chance of finding its venerable inhabitant preparing for tea, just about six o'clock in the evening. It was only to two or three old friends that she permitted this freedom; nor was this sort of chance-party ever allowed to extend itself beyond five in number. The answer to those who came later announced that the company was filled up for the evening, which had the double effect of making those who waited on Mrs. Bethune Baliol in this unceremonious manner punctual in observing her hour, and of adding the zest of a little difficulty to the enjoyment of the party.

It more frequently happened that only one or two persons partook of this refreshment on the same evening; or, supposing the case of a single gentleman, Mrs. Martha, though she did not hesitate to admit him to her boudoir, after the privilege of the French and the old Scottish school, took care, as she used to say, to

prescribe all possible propriety, by commanding the attendance of her principal female attendant, Mrs. Alice Lambskin, who might, from the gravity and dignity of her appearance, have sufficed to matronize a whole boarding-school, instead of one maiden lady of eighty and upwards. As the weather permitted, Mrs. Alice sat duly remote from the company in a FAUTEUIL behind the projecting chimney-piece, or in the embrasure of a window, and prosecuted in Carthusian silence, with indefatigable zeal, a piece of embroidery, which seemed no bad emblem of eternity.

But I have neglected all this while to introduce my friend herself to the reader—at least so far as words can convey the peculiarities by which her appearance and conversation were distinguished.

A little woman, with ordinary features and an ordinary form, and hair which in youth had no decided colour, we may believe Mrs. Martha when she said of herself that she was never remarkable for personal charms; a modest admission, which was readily confirmed by certain old ladies, her contemporaries, who, whatever might have been the youthful advantages which they more than hinted had been formerly their own share, were now in personal appearance, as well as in everything else, far inferior to my accomplished friend. Mrs. Martha's features had been of a kind which might be said to wear well; their irregularity was now of little consequence, animated, as they were, by the vivacity of her conversation. Her teeth were excellent, and her eyes, although inclining to grey, were lively, laughing, and undimmed by time. A slight shade of complexion, more brilliant than her years promised, subjected my friend amongst strangers to the suspicion of having stretched her foreign habits as far as the prudent touch of the rouge. But it was a calumny; for when telling or listening to an interesting and affecting story, I have seen her colour come and go as if it played on the cheek of eighteen.

Her hair, whatever its former deficiencies was now the most beautiful white that time could bleach, and was disposed with some degree of pretension, though in the simplest manner possible, so as to appear neatly smoothed under a cap of Flanders lace, of an old-fashioned but, as I thought, of a very handsome form, which undoubtedly has a name, and I would endeavour to recur to it, if I thought it would make my description a bit more intelligible. I think I have heard her say these favourite caps had been her mother's, and had come in fashion with a peculiar kind of wig used by the gentlemen about the time of the battle of Ramillies. The rest of her dress was always rather costly and distinguished, especially in the evening. A silk or satin gown of some colour becoming her age, and of a form which, though complying to a certain degree with the present fashion, had always a reference to some more distant period, was garnished with triple ruffles. Her shoes had diamond buckles, and were raised a little at heel, an advantage which, possessed in her youth, she alleged her size would not permit her to forego in her old age. She always wore rings, bracelets, and other ornaments of value, either for the materials or the workmanship; nay, perhaps she was a little profuse in this species of display. But she wore them as subordinate matters, to which the habits of being constantly in high life rendered her indifferent; she wore them because her rank required it, and thought no more of them as articles of finery than a gentleman dressed for dinner thinks of his clean linen and well-brushed coat, the consciousness of which embarrasses the rustic beau on a Sunday.

Now and then, however, if a gem or ornament chanced to be noticed for its beauty or singularity, the observation usually led the way to an entertaining account of the manner in which it had been acquired, or the person from whom it had descended to its present possessor. On such and similar occasions my old friend spoke willingly, which is not uncommon; but she also, which is more rare, spoke remarkably well, and had in her little narratives concerning foreign parts or former days, which formed an interesting part of her conversation, the singular art of dismissing all the usual protracted tautology respecting time, place, and circumstances which is apt to settle like a mist upon the cold and languid tales of age, and at the same time of bringing forward, dwelling upon, and illustrating those incidents and characters which give point and interest to the story.

She had, as we have hinted, travelled a good deal in foreign countries; for a brother, to whom she was much attached, had been sent upon various missions of national importance to the Continent, and she had more than once embraced the opportunity of accompanying him. This furnished a great addition to the information which she could supply, especially during the last war, when the Continent was for so many years hermetically sealed against the English nation. But, besides, Mrs. Bethune Baliol visited different countries, not in the modern fashion, when English travel in caravans together, and see in France and Italy little besides the same society which they might have enjoyed at home. On the contrary, she mingled when abroad with the natives of those countries she visited, and enjoyed at once the advantage of their society, and the pleasure of comparing it with that of Britain.

In the course of her becoming habituated with foreign manners, Mrs. Bethune Baliol had, perhaps, acquired some slight tincture of them herself. Yet I was always persuaded that the peculiar vivacity of look and manner—the pointed and appropriate action with which she accompanied what she said—the use of the gold and gemmed TABATIERE, or rather, I should say, BONBONNIERE (for she took no snuff, and the little box contained only a few pieces of candled angelica, or some such ladylike sweetmeat), were of real old-fashioned Scottish growth, and such as might have graced the tea-table of Susannah, Countess of Eglinton, the patroness of Allan Ramsay [See Note 4.—Countess of Eglinton.], or of the Hon. Mrs. Colonel Ogilvy, who was another mirror by whom the Maidens of Auld Reekie were required to dress themselves. Although well acquainted with the customs of other countries, her manners had been chiefly formed in her own, at a time when great folk lived within little space and when the distinguished names of the highest society gave to Edinburgh the ECLAT which we now endeavour to derive from the unbounded expense and extended circle of our pleasures.

I was more confirmed in this opinion by the peculiarity of the dialect which Mrs. Baliol used. It was Scottish—decidedly Scottish—often containing phrases and words little used in the present day. But then her tone and mode of pronunciation were as different from the usual accent of the ordinary Scotch PATOIS, as the accent of St. James's is from that of Billingsgate. The vowels were not pronounced much broader than in the Italian language, and there was none of the disagreeable drawl which is so offensive to southern ears. In short, it seemed to be the Scottish as spoken by the ancient Court of Scotland, to which no idea of vulgarity could be attached; and the lively manners and gestures with which it was accompanied were so completely in accord with the sound of the voice and the style of talking, that I cannot assign them a different origin. In long derivation, perhaps the manner of the Scottish court might have been originally formed on that of France, to which it had certainly some affinity; but I will live and die in the belief that those of Mrs. Baliol, as pleasing as they were peculiar, came to her by direct descent from the high dames who anciently adorned with their presence the royal halls of Holyrood.

CHAPTER VII. MRS. BALIOL ASSISTS MR. CROFTANGRY IN HIS LITERARY

SPECULATIONS.

Such as I have described Mrs. Bethune Baliol, the reader will easily believe that, when I thought of the miscellaneous nature of my work, I rested upon the information she possessed, and her communicative disposition, as one of the principal supports of my enterprise. Indeed, she by no means disapproved of my proposed publication, though expressing herself very doubtful how far she could personally assist it—a doubt which might be, perhaps, set down to a little ladylike coquetry, which required to be sued for the boon she was not unwilling to grant. Or, perhaps, the good old lady, conscious that her unusual term of years must soon draw to a close, preferred bequeathing the materials in the shape of a legacy, to subjecting them to the judgment of a critical public during her lifetime.

Many a time I used, in our conversations of the Canongate, to resume my request of assistance, from a sense that my friend was the most valuable depository of Scottish traditions that was probably now to be found. This was a subject on which my mind was so much made up that, when I heard her carry her description of manners so far back beyond her own time, and describe how Fletcher of Salton spoke, how Graham of Claverhouse danced, what were the jewels worn by the famous Duchess of Lauderdale, and how she came by them, I could not help telling her I thought her some fairy, who cheated us by retaining the appearance of a mortal of our own day, when, in fact, she had witnessed the revolutions of centuries. She was much diverted when I required her to take some solemn oath that she had not danced at the balls given by Mary of Este, when her unhappy husband occupied Holyrood in a species of honourable banishment; [The Duke of York afterwards James II., frequently resided in Holyrood House when his religion rendered him an object of suspicion to the English Parliament.] or asked whether she could not recollect Charles the Second when he came to Scotland in 1650, and did not possess some slight recollections of the bold usurper who drove him beyond the Forth.

"BEAU COUSIN," she said, laughing, "none of these do I remember personally, but you must know there has been wonderfully little change on my natural temper from youth to age. From which it follows, cousin, that, being even now something too young in spirit for the years which Time has marked me in his calendar, I was, when a girl, a little too old for those of my own standing, and as much inclined at that period to keep the society of elder persons, as I am now disposed to

admit the company of gay young fellows of fifty or sixty like yourself, rather than collect about me all the octogenarians. Now, although I do not actually come from Elfland, and therefore cannot boast any personal knowledge of the great personages you enquire about, yet I have seen and heard those who knew them well, and who have given me as distinct an account of them as I could give you myself of the Empress Queen, or Frederick of Prussia; and I will frankly add," said she, laughing and offering her BONBONNIERE, "that I HAVE heard so much of the years which immediately succeeded the Revolution, that I sometimes am apt to confuse the vivid descriptions fixed on my memory by the frequent and animated recitation of others, for things which I myself have actually witnessed. I caught myself but yesterday describing to Lord M—the riding of the last Scottish Parliament, with as much minuteness as if I had seen it, as my mother did, from the balcony in front of Lord Moray's Lodging in the Canongate."

"I am sure you must have given Lord M—a high treat."

"I treated him to a hearty laugh, I believe," she replied; "but it is you, you vile seducer of youth, who lead me into such follies. But I will be on my guard against my own weakness. I do not well know if the Wandering Jew is supposed to have a wife, but I should be sorry a decent middle-aged Scottish gentlewoman should be suspected of identity with such a supernatural person."

"For all that, I must torture you a little more, MA BELLE COUSINE, with my interrogatories; for how shall I ever turn author unless on the strength of the information which you have so often procured me on the ancient state of manners?"

"Stay, I cannot allow you to give your points of enquiry a name so very venerable, if I am expected to answer them. Ancient is a term for antediluvians. You may catechise me about the battle of Flodden, or ask particulars about Bruce and Wallace, under pretext of curiosity after ancient manners; and that last subject would wake my Baliol blood, you know."

"Well, but, Mrs. Baliol, suppose we settle our era: you do not call the accession of James the Sixth to the kingdom of Britain very ancient?"

"Umph! no, cousin; I think I could tell you more of that than folk nowadays remember. For instance, that as James was trooping towards England, bag and baggage, his journey was stopped near Cockenzie by meeting the funeral of the Earl of Winton, the old and faithful servant and follower of his ill-fated mother, poor Mary! It was an ill omen for the INFARE, and so was seen of it, cousin." [See Note 5.—Earl of Winton.]

I did not choose to prosecute this subject, well knowing Mrs. Bethune Baliol did not like to be much pressed on the subject of the Stewarts, whose misfortunes she pitied, the rather that her father had espoused their cause. And yet her attachment to the present dynasty being very sincere, and even ardent, more especially as her family had served his late Majesty both in peace and war, she experienced a little embarrassment in reconciling her opinions respecting the exiled family with those she entertained for the present. In fact, like many an old Jacobite, she was contented to be somewhat inconsistent on the subject, comforting herself that NOW everything stood as it ought to do, and that there was no use in looking back narrowly on the right or wrong of the matter half a century ago.

"The Highlands," I suggested, "should furnish you with ample subjects of recollection. You have witnessed the complete change of that primeval country, and have seen a race not far removed from the earliest period of society melted down into the great mass of civilization; and that could not happen without incidents striking in themselves, and curious as chapters in the history of the human race."

"It is very true," said Mrs. Baliol; "one would think it should have struck the observers greatly, and yet it scarcely did so. For me, I was no Highlander myself, and the Highland chiefs of old, of whom I certainly knew several, had little in their manners to distinguish them from the Lowland gentry, when they mixed in society in Edinburgh, and assumed the Lowland dress. Their peculiar character was for the clansmen at home; and you must not imagine that they swaggered about in plaids and broadswords at the Cross, or came to the Assembly Rooms in bonnets and kilts."

"I remember," said I, "that Swift, in his Journal, tells Stella he had dined in the house of a Scots nobleman, with two Highland chiefs, whom he had found as well-bred men as he had ever met with." [Extract of Journal to Stella.—"I dined to-day (12th March 1712) with Lord Treasurer and two gentlemen of the Highlands of Scotland, yet very polite men." SWIFT'S WORKS, VOL. III. p.7. EDIN. 1824.]

"Very likely," said my friend. "The extremes of society approach much more closely to each other than perhaps the Dean of Saint Patrick's expected. The savage is always to a certain degree polite. Besides, going always armed, and having a very punctilious idea of their own gentility and consequence, they usually behaved to each other and to the Lowlanders with a good deal of formal politeness, which sometimes even procured them the character of insincerity."

"Falsehood belongs to an early period of society, as well as the deferential forms which we style politeness," I replied. "A child does not see the least moral beauty in truth until he has been flogged half a dozen times. It is so easy, and apparently so natural, to deny what you cannot be easily convicted of, that a savage as well as a child lies to excuse himself almost as instinctively as he raises his hand to protect his head. The old saying, 'Confess and be hanged,' carries much argument in it. I observed a remark the other day in old Birrel. He mentions that M'Gregor of Glenstrae and some of his people had surrendered themselves to one of the Earls of Argyle, upon the express condition that they should be conveyed safe into England. The Maccallum Mhor of the day kept the word of promise, but it was only to the ear. He indeed sent his captives to Berwick, where they had an airing on the other side of the Tweed; but it was under the custody of a strong guard, by whom they were brought back to Edinburgh, and delivered to the executioner. This, Birrel calls keeping a Highlandman's promise." [See Note 6.—M'Gregor of Glenstrae.]

"Well," replied Mrs. Baliol, "I might add that many of the Highland chiefs whom I knew in former days had been brought up in France, which might improve their politeness, though perhaps it did not amend their sincerity. But considering that, belonging to the depressed and defeated faction in the state, they were compelled sometimes to use dissimulation, you must set their uniform fidelity to their friends; against their occasional falsehood to their enemies, and then you will not judge poor John Highlandman too severely. They were in a state of society where bright lights are strongly contrasted with deep shadows."

"It is to that point I would bring you, MA BELLE COUSINE; and therefore they are most proper subjects for composition."

"And you want to turn composer, my good friend, and set my old tales to some popular tune? But there have been too many composers, if that be the word, in the field before. The Highlands WERE indeed a rich mine; but they have, I think, been fairly wrought out, as a good tune is grinded into vulgarity when it descends to the hurdy-gurdy and the barrel-organ."

"If it be really tune," I replied, "it will recover its better qualities when it gets into the hands of better artists."

"Umph!" said Mrs. Baliol, tapping her box, "we are happy in our own good opinion this evening, Mr. Croftangry. And so you think you can restore the gloss to the tartan which it has lost by being dragged through so many fingers?"

"With your assistance to procure materials, my dear lady, much, I think, may be done."

"Well, I must do my best, I suppose, though all I know about the Gael is but of little consequence. Indeed, I gathered it chiefly from Donald MacLeish."

"And who might Donald MacLeish be?"

"Neither bard nor sennachie, I assure you, nor monk nor hermit, the approved authorities for old traditions. Donald was as good a postilion as ever drove a chaise and pair between Glencroe and Inverary. I assure you, when I give you my Highland anecdotes, you will hear much of Donald MacLeish. He was Alice Lambskin's beau and mine through a long Highland tour."

"But when am I to possess these anecdotes? you answer me as Harley did poor Prior—

'Let that be done which Mat doth say—

Yea, quoth the Earl, but not to-day.'"

"Well, MON BEAU COUSIN, if you begin to remind me of my cruelty, I must remind you it has struck nine on the Abbey clock, and it is time you were going home to Little Croftangry. For my promise to assist your antiquarian researches, be assured I will one day keep it to the utmost extent. It shall not be a Highlandman's promise, as your old citizen calls it."

I by this time suspected the purpose of my friend's procrastination; and it saddened my heart to reflect that I was not to get the information which I desired, excepting in the shape of a legacy. I found accordingly, in the packet transmitted to me after the excellent lady's death, several anecdotes respecting the

Highlands, from which I have selected that which follows, chiefly on account of its possessing great power over the feelings of my critical housekeeper, Janet M'Evoy, who wept most bitterly when I read it to her.

It is, however, but a very simple tale, and may have no interest for persons beyond Janet's rank of life or understanding.

CHAPTER IIX

PREFACE TO THE DAUGHTER OF THE SURGEON

Indite, my muse indite,
Subpoena'd is thy lyre,
The praises to requite
Which rules of court require.

PROBATIONARY ODES.

The concluding a literary undertaking, in whole or in part, is, to the inexperienced at least, attended with an irritating titillation, like that which attends on the healing of a wound—a prurient impatience, in short, to know what the world in general, and friends in particular, will say to our labours. Some authors, I am told, profess an oyster-like indifference upon this subject; for my own part, I hardly believe in their sincerity. Others may acquire it from habit; but, in my poor opinion, a neophyte like myself must be for a long time incapable of such *sang froid*.

Frankly, I was ashamed to feel how childishly I felt on the occasion. No person could have said prettier things than myself upon the importance of stoicism concerning the opinion of others, when their applause or censure refers to literary character only; and I had determined to lay my work before the public, with the same unconcern with which the ostrich lays her eggs in the sand, giving herself no farther trouble concerning the incubation, but leaving to the atmosphere to bring forth the young, or otherwise, as the climate shall serve. But though an ostrich in theory, I became in practice a poor hen, who has no sooner made her deposit, but she runs cackling about, to call the attention of every one to the wonderful work which she has performed.

As soon as I became possessed of my first volume, neatly stitched up and boarded, my sense of the necessity of communicating with some one became ungovernable. Janet was inexorable, and seemed already to have tired of my literary confidence; for whenever I drew near the subject, after evading it as long as she could, she made, under some pretext or other, a bodily retreat to the kitchen or the cockloft, her own peculiar and inviolate domains. My publisher would have been a natural resource; but he understands his business too well, and follows it too closely, to desire to enter into literary discussions, wisely considering, that he who has to sell books has seldom leisure to read them. Then my acquaintance, now that I have lost Mrs. Bethune Baliol, are of that distant and accidental kind, to whom I had not face enough to communicate the nature of my uneasiness, and who probably would only have laughed at me had I made any attempt to interest them in my labours.

Reduced thus to a sort of despair, I thought of my friend and man of business, Mr. Fairscribe. His habits, it was true, were not likely to render him indulgent to light literature, and, indeed, I had more than once noticed his daughters, and especially my little songstress, whip into her reticule what looked very like a circulating library volume, as soon as her father entered the room. Still he was not only my assured, but almost my only friend, and I had little doubt that he would take an interest in the volume for the sake of the author, which the work itself might fail to inspire. I sent him, therefore, the book, carefully sealed up, with an intimation that I requested the favour of his opinion upon the contents, of which I affected to talk in the depreciatory style, which calls for point-blank contradiction, if your correspondent possess a grain of civility.

This communication took place on a Monday, and I daily expected (what I was ashamed to anticipate by volunteering my presence, however sure of a welcome) an invitation to eat an egg, as was my friend's favourite phrase, or a card to drink tea with Misses Fairscribe, or a provocation to breakfast, at least, with my hospitable friend and benefactor, and to talk over the contents of my enclosure. But the hours and days passed on from Monday till Saturday, and I had no acknowledgment whatever that my packet had reached its destination. "This is very unlike my good friend's punctuality," thought I; and having again and again vexed James, my male attendant, by a close examination concerning the time, place, and delivery, I had only to strain my imagination to conceive reasons for my friend's silence. Sometimes I thought that his opinion of the work had proved so unfavourable that he was averse to hurt my feelings by communicating it—sometimes, that, escaping his hands to whom it was destined, it had found its way into his writing-chamber, and was become the subject of criticism to his smart clerks and conceited apprentices. "Sdeath!" thought I, "if I were sure of this, I would"—

"And what would you do?" said Reason, after a few moment's reflection. "You are ambitious of introducing your book into every writing and reading-chamber in Edinburgh, and yet you take fire at the thoughts of its being criticised by Mr. Fairscribe's young people? Be a little consistent—for shame!"

"I will be consistent," said I, doggedly; "but for all that, I will call on Mr. Fairscribe this evening."

I hastened my dinner, donn'd my great-coat (for the evening threatened rain,) and went to Mr. Fairscribe's house. The old domestic opened the door cautiously, and before I asked the question, said, "Mr. Fairscribe is at home, sir; but it is Sunday night." Recognising, however, my face and voice, he opened the door wider, admitted me, and conducted me to the parlour, where I found Mr. Fairscribe and the rest of his family engaged in listening to a sermon by the late Mr. Walker of Edinburgh, [Footnote: Robert Walker, the colleague and rival of Dr. Hugh Blair, in St. Giles's Church Edinburgh] which was read by Miss Catherine with unusual distinctness, simplicity, and judgment. Welcomed as a friend of the house, I had nothing for it but to take my seat quietly, and making a virtue of necessity, endeavour to derive my share of the benefit arising from an excellent sermon. But I am afraid Mr. Walker's force of logic and precision of expression were somewhat lost upon me. I was sensible I had chosen an improper time to disturb Mr. Fairscribe, and when the discourse was ended, I rose to take my leave, somewhat hastily, I believe. "A cup of tea, Mr. Croftangry?" said the young lady. "You will wait and take part of a Presbyterian supper?" said Mr. Fairscribe.—"Nine o'clock—I make it a point of keeping my father's hours on Sunday at e'en. Perhaps Dr.——(naming an excellent clergyman) may look in."

I made my apology for declining his invitation; and I fancy my unexpected appearance, and hasty retreat, had rather surprised my friend, since, instead of accompanying me to the door, he conducted me into his own apartment.

"What is the matter," he said, "Mr. Croftangry? This is not a night for secular business, but if any thing sudden or extraordinary has happened"—

"Nothing in the world," said I, forcing myself upon confession, as the best way of clearing myself out of the scrape,— "only—only I sent you a little parcel, and as you are so regular in acknowledging letters and communications, I—I thought it might have miscarried—that's all."

My friend laughed heartily, as if he saw into and enjoyed my motives and my confusion. "Safe?—it came safe enough," he said. "The wind of the world always blows its vanities into haven. But this is the end of the session, when I have little time to read any thing printed except Inner-House papers; yet if you will take your kail with us next Saturday, I will glance over your work, though I am sure I am no competent judge of such matters."

With this promise I was fain to take my leave, not without half persuading myself that if once the phlegmatic lawyer began my lucubrations, he would not be able to rise from them till he had finished the perusal, nor to endure an interval betwixt his reading the last page, and requesting an interview with the author.

No such marks of impatience displayed themselves. Time, blunt or keen, as my friend Joanna says, swift or leisurely, held his course; and on the appointed Saturday, I was at the door precisely as it struck four. The dinner hour, indeed, was five punctually; but what did I know but my friend might want half an hour's conversation with me before that time? I was ushered into an empty drawing-room, and, from a needle-book and work-basket hastily abandoned, I had some reason to think I interrupted my little friend, Miss Katie, in some domestic labour more praiseworthy than elegant. In this critical age, filial piety must hide herself in a closet, if she has a mind to darn her father's linen.

Shortly after, I was the more fully convinced that I had been too early an intruder when a wench came to fetch away the basket, and recommend to my courtesies a red and green gentleman in a cage, who answered all my advances by croaking out, "You're a fool—you're a fool, I tell you!" until, upon my word, I began to think the creature was in the right. At last my friend arrived, a little overheated. He had been taking a turn at golf, to prepare him for "colloquy sublime." And wherefore not? since the game, with its variety of odds, lengths, bunkers, tee'd balls, and so on, may be no inadequate representation of the hazards attending literary pursuits. In particular, those formidable buffets, which make one ball spin through the air like a rifle-shot, and strike another down into the very earth it is

placed upon, by the mal-adroitness, or the malicious purpose of the player—what are they but parallels to the favourable or depreciating notices of the reviewers, who play at golf with the publications of the season, even as Altisidora, in her approach to the gates of the infernal regions, saw the devils playing at racket with the new books of Cervantes' days.

Well, every hour has its end. Five o'clock came, and my friend, with his daughters, and his handsome young son, who, though fairly buckled to the desk, is every now and then looking over his shoulder at a smart uniform, set seriously about satisfying the corporeal wants of nature; I, stimulated by a nobler appetite after fame, wished that the touch of a magic wand could, without all the ceremony of picking and choosing, carving and slicing, masticating and swallowing, have transported a *quantum sufficit* of the good things on my friend's hospitable board, into the stomachs of those who surrounded it, to be there at leisure converted into chyle, while their thoughts were turned on higher matters. At length all was over. But the young ladies sat still, and talked of the music of the Freischutz, for nothing else was then thought of; so we discussed the wild hunter's song, and the tame hunter's song, &c. &c., in all which my young friends were quite at home. Luckily for me, all this horning and hooping drew on some allusion to the Seventh Hussars, which gallant regiment, I observe, is a more favourite theme with both Miss Catherine and her brother than with my old friend, who presently looked at his watch, and said something significantly to Mr. James about office hours. The youth got up with the ease of a youngster that would be thought a man of fashion rather than of business, and endeavoured, with some success, to walk out of the room, as if the locomotion was entirely voluntary; Miss Catherine and her sisters left us at the same time, and now, thought I, my trial comes on.

Reader, did you ever, in the course of your life, cheat the courts of justice and lawyers, by agreeing to refer a dubious and important question to the decision of a mutual friend? If so, you may have remarked the relative change which the arbiter undergoes in your estimation, when raised, though by your own free choice, from an ordinary acquaintance, whose opinions were of as little consequence to you as yours to him, into a superior personage, on whose decision your fate must depend *pro tanto*, as my friend Mr. Fairscribe would say. His looks assume a mysterious if not a minatory expression; his hat has a loftier air, and his wig, if he wears one, a more formidable buckle.

I felt, accordingly, that my good friend Fairscribe, on the present occasion, had acquired something of a similar increase of consequence. But a week since, he had, in my opinion, been indeed an excellent-meaning man, perfectly competent to every thing within his own profession, but immured, at the same time, among its forms and technicalities, and as incapable of judging of matters of taste as any mighty Goth whatsoever, of or belonging to the ancient Senate-House of Scotland. But what of that? I had made him my judge by my own election; and I have often observed, that an idea of declining such a reference, on account of his own consciousness of incompetency, is, as it perhaps ought to be, the last which occurs to the referee himself. He that has a literary work subjected to his judgment by the author, immediately throws his mind into a critical attitude, though the subject be one which he never before thought of. No doubt the author is well qualified to select his own judge, and why should the arbiter whom he has chosen doubt his own talents for condemnation or acquittal, since he has been doubtless picked out by his friend, from his indubitable reliance on their competence? Surely, the man who wrote the production is likely to know the person best qualified to judge of it.

Whilst these thoughts crossed my brain, I kept my eyes fixed on my good friend, whose motions appeared unusually tardy to me, while he ordered a bottle of particular claret, decanted it with scrupulous accuracy with his own hand, caused his old domestic to bring a saucer of olives, and chips of toasted bread, and thus, on hospitable thoughts intent, seemed to me to adjourn the discussion which I longed to bring on, yet feared to precipitate.

"He is dissatisfied," thought I, "and is ashamed to show it, afraid doubtless of hurting my feelings. What had I to do to talk to him about any thing save charters and sasines?—Stay, he is going to begin."

"We are old fellows now, Mr. Croftangry," said my landlord: "scarcely so fit to take a poor quart of claret between us, as we would have been in better days to take a pint, in the old Scottish liberal acceptance of the phrase. Maybe you would have liked me to have kept James to help us. But if it is not a holyday or so, I think it is best he should observe office hours."

Here the discourse was about to fall. I relieved it by saying, Mr. James was at the happy time of life, when he had better things to do than to sit over the bottle. "I suppose," said I, "your son is a reader."

"Um—yes—James may be called a reader in a sense; but I doubt there is little solid in his studies—poetry and plays, Mr. Croftangry, all nonsense—they set his head a-gadding after the army, when he should be minding his business."

"I suppose, then, that romances do not find much more grace in your eyes than dramatic and poetical compositions?"

"Deil a bit, deil a bit, Mr. Croftangry, nor historical productions either. There is too much fighting in history, as if men only were brought into this world to send one another out of it. It nourishes false notions of our being, and chief and proper end, Mr. Croftangry."

Still all this was general, and I became determined to bring our discourse to a focus. "I am afraid, then, I have done very ill to trouble you with my idle manuscripts, Mr. Fairscribe; but you must do me the justice to remember, that I had nothing better to do than to amuse myself by writing the sheets I put into your hands the other day. I may truly plead—

'I left no calling for this idle trade.'

"I cry your mercy, Mr. Croftangry," said my old friend, suddenly recollecting—"yes, yes, I have been very rude; but I had forgotten entirely that you had taken a spell yourself at that idle man's trade."

"I suppose," replied I, "you, on your side, have been too *busy* a man to look at my poor Chronicles?"

"No, no," said my friend, "I am not so bad as that neither. I have read them bit by bit, just as I could get a moment's time, and I believe, I shall very soon get through them."

"Well, my good friend?" said I, interrogatively.

And "Well, Mr. Croftangry," cried he, "I really think you have got over the ground very tolerably well. I have noted down here two or three bits of things, which I presume to be errors of the press, otherwise it might be alleged, perhaps, that you did not fully pay that attention to the grammatical rules, which one would desire to see rigidly observed."

I looked at my friend's notes, which, in fact, showed, that in one or two grossly obvious passages, I had left uncorrected such solecisms in grammar.

"Well, well, I own my fault; but, setting apart these casual errors, how do you like the matter and the manner of what I have been writing, Mr. Fairscribe?"

"Why," said my friend, pausing, with more grave and important hesitation than I thanked him for, "there is not much to be said against the manner. The style is terse and intelligible, Mr. Croftangry, very intelligible; and that I consider as the first point in every thing that is intended to be understood. There are, indeed, here and there some flights and fancies, which I comprehended with difficulty; but I got to your meaning at last. There are people that are like ponies; their judgments cannot go fast, but they go sure."

"That is a pretty clear proposition, my friend; but then how did you like the meaning when you did get at it? or was that like some ponies, too difficult to catch, and, when caught, not worth the trouble?"

"I am far from saying that, my dear sir, in respect it would be downright uncivil; but since you ask my opinion, I wish you could have thought about something more appertaining to civil policy, than all this bloody work about shooting and dirking, and downright hanging. I am told it was the Germans who first brought in such a practice of choosing their heroes out of the Porteous Roll; [Footnote: List of criminal indictments, so termed in Scotland.] but, by my faith, we are like to be upsides with them. The first was, as I am credibly informed, Mr. Scholar, as they call him; a scholar-like piece of work he has made of it, with his robbers and thieves."

"Schiller," said I, "my dear sir, let it be Schiller."

"Schiller, or what you like," said Mr. Fairscribe; "I found the book where I wish I had found a better one, and that is, in Kate's work-basket. I sat down, and, like an old fool, began to read; but there, I grant, you have the better of Schiller, Mr. Croftangry."

"I should be glad, my dear sir, that you really think I have *approached* that admirable author; even your friendly partiality ought not to talk of my having *excelled* him."

"But I do say you have excelled him, Mr. Croftangry, in a most material particular. For surely a book of amusement should be something that one can take up and lay down at pleasure; and I can say justly, I was never at the least loss to put aside these sheets of yours when business came in the way. But, faith, this Schiller, sir, does not let you off so easily. I forgot one appointment on particular business, and I wilfully broke through another, that I might stay at home and finish his confounded book, which, after all, is about two brothers, the greatest rascals I ever heard of. The one, sir, goes near to murder his own father, and the other (which you would think still stranger) sets about to debauch his own wife."

"I find, then, Mr. Fairscribe, that you have no taste for the romance of real life—no pleasure in contemplating those spirit-rousing impulses, which force men of fiery passions upon great crimes and great virtues?"

"Why, as to that, I am not just so sure. But then to mend the matter," continued the critic, "you have brought in Highlanders into every story, as if you were going back again, *velis et remis*, into the old days of Jacobitism. I must speak my plain mind, Mr. Croftangry. I cannot tell what innovations in Kirk and State may now be proposed, but our fathers were friends to both, as they were settled at the glorious Revolution, and liked a tartan plaid as little as they did a white surplice. I wish to Heaven, all this tartan fever bode well to the Protestant succession and the Kirk of Scotland."

"Both too well settled, I hope, in the minds of the subject," said I, "to be affected by old remembrances, on which we look back as on the portraits of our ancestors, without recollecting, while we gaze on them, any of the feuds by which the originals were animated while alive. But most happy should I be to light upon any topic to supply the place of the Highlands, Mr. Fairscribe. I have been just reflecting that the theme is becoming a little exhausted, and your experience may perhaps supply"——

"Ha, ha, ha!—*my* experience supply!" interrupted Mr. Fairscribe, with a laugh of derision;—"why, you might as well ask my son James's experience to supply a case" about thirlage. No, no, my good friend, I have lived by the law, and in the law, all my life; and when you seek the impulses that make soldiers desert and shoot their sergeants and corporals, and Highland drovers dirk English graziers, to prove themselves men of fiery passions, it is not to a man like me you should come. I could tell you some tricks of my own trade, perhaps, and a queer story or two of estates that have been lost and recovered. But, to tell you the truth, I think you might do with your Muse of Fiction, as you call her, as many an honest man does with his own sons in flesh and blood."

"And how is that, my dear sir?"

"Send her to India, to be sure. That is the true place for a Scot to thrive in; and if you carry your story fifty years back, as there is nothing to hinder you, you will find as much shooting and stabbing there as ever was in the wild Highlands. If you want rogues, as they are so much in fashion with you, you have that gallant caste of adventurers, who laid down their consciences at the Cape of Good Hope as they went out to India, and forgot to take them up again when they returned. Then, for great exploits, you have in the old history of India, before Europeans were numerous there, the most wonderful deeds, done by the least possible means, that perhaps the annals of the world can afford."

"I know it," said I, kindling at the ideas his speech inspired. "I remember in the delightful pages of Orme, the interest which mingles in his narratives, from the very small number of English which are engaged. Each officer of a regiment becomes known to you by name, nay, the non-commissioned officers and privates acquire an individual share of interest. They are distinguished among the natives like the Spaniards among the Mexicans. What do I say? They are like Homer's demigods among the warring mortals. Men, like Clive and Caillaud, influenced great events, like Jove himself. Inferior officers are like Mars or Neptune; and the sergeants and corporals might well pass for demigods. Then the various religious costumes, habits, and manners of the people of Hindustan,—the patient Hindhu, the warlike Rajahpoot, the haughty Moslemah, the savage and vindictive Malay—Glorious and unbounded subjects! The only objection is, that I have never been there, and know nothing at all about them."

"Nonsense, my good friend. You will tell us about them all the better that you know nothing of what you are saying; and come, we'll finish the bottle, and when Katie (her sisters go to the assembly) has given us tea, she will tell you the outline of the story of poor Menie Gray, whose picture you will see in the drawing-room, a distant relation of my father's, who had, however, a handsome part of cousin Menie's succession. There are none living that can be hurt by the story now, though it was thought best to smother it up at the time, as indeed even the whispers about it led poor cousin Menie to live very retired. I mind her well when a child. There was something very gentle, but rather tiresome, about poor cousin Menie."

When we came into the drawing-room, my friend pointed to a picture which I had before noticed, without, however, its having attracted more than a passing look; now I regarded it with more attention. It was one of those portraits of the middle of the eighteenth century, in which artists endeavoured to conquer the stiffness of hoops and brocades; by throwing a fancy drapery around the figure, with loose folds like a mantle or dressing gown, the stays, however, being retained, and the bosom displayed in a manner which shows that our mothers, like their daughters, were as liberal of their charms as the nature of the dress might permit. To this, the well-known style of the period, the features and form of the individual added, at first sight, little interest. It represented a handsome woman of about thirty, her hair wound simply about her head, her features regular, and her complexion fair. But on looking more closely, especially after having had a hint that the original had been the heroine of a tale, I could observe a melancholy sweetness in the countenance that seemed to speak of woes endured, and injuries sustained, with that resignation which women can and do sometimes display under the insults and ingratitude of those on whom they have bestowed their affections.

"Yes, she was an excellent and an ill-used woman," said Mr. Fairscribe, his eye fixed like mine on the picture—"She left our family not less, I dare say, than five thousand pounds, and I believe she died worth four times that sum; but it was divided among the nearest of kin, which was all fair."

"But her history, Mr. Fairscribe," said I—"to judge from her look, it must have been a melancholy one."

"You may say that, Mr. Croftangry. Melancholy enough, and extraordinary enough too—But," added he, swallowing in haste a cup of the tea which was presented to him, "I must away to my business—we cannot be gowfling all the morning, and telling old stories all the afternoon. Katie knows all the outs and the ins of cousin Menie's adventures as well as I do, and when she has given you the particulars, then I am at your service, to condescend more articulately upon dates or particulars."

Well, here was I, a gay old bachelor, left to hear a love tale from my young friend Katie Fairscribe, who, when she is not surrounded by a bevy of gallants, at which time, to my thinking, she shows less to advantage, is as pretty, well-behaved, and unaffected a girl as you see tripping the new walks of Prince's Street or Heriot Row. Old bachelorship so decided as mine has its privileges in such a *tete-a-tete*, providing you are, or can seem for the time, perfectly good-humoured and attentive, and do not ape the manners of your younger years, in attempting which you will only make yourself ridiculous. I don't pretend to be so indifferent to the company of a pretty young woman as was desired by the poet, who wished to sit beside his mistress—

—"As unconcern'd as when

Her infant beauty could begot

Nor happiness nor pain."

On the contrary, I can look on beauty and innocence, as something of which I know and esteem the value, without the desire or hope to make them my own. A young lady can afford to talk with an old stager like me without either artifice or affectation; and we may maintain a species of friendship, the more tender, perhaps, because we are of different sexes, yet with which that distinction has very little to do.

Now, I hear my wisest and most critical neighbour remark, "Mr. Croftangry is in the way of doing a foolish thing. He is well to pass—Old Fairscribe knows to a penny what he is worth, and Miss Katie, with all her airs, may like the old brass that buys the new pan. I thought Mr. Croftangry was looking very cadgy when he came in to play a rubber with us last night. Poor gentleman, I am sure I should be sorry to see him make a fool of himself."

Spare your compassion, dear madam, there is not the least danger. The *beaux yeux de ma casette* are not brilliant enough to make amends for the spectacles which must supply the dimness of my own. I am a little deaf, too, as you know to your sorrow when we are partners; and if I could get a nymph to marry me with all these imperfections, who the deuce would marry Janet McEvoy? and from Janet McEvoy Chrystal Croftangry will not part.

Miss Katie Fairscribe gave me the tale of Menie Gray with much taste and simplicity, not attempting to suppress the feelings, whether of grief or resentment, which justly and naturally arose from the circumstances of the tale. Her father afterwards confirmed the principal outlines of the story, and furnished me with some

additional circumstances, which Miss Katie had suppressed or forgotten. Indeed, I have learned on this occasion, what old Lintot meant when he told Pope, that he used to propitiate the critics of importance, when he had a work in the press, by now and then letting them see a sheet of the blotted proof, or a few leaves of the original manuscript. Our mystery of authorship has something about it so fascinating, that if you admit any one, however little he may previously have been disposed to such studies, into your confidence, you will find that he considers himself as a party interested, and, if success follows, will think himself entitled to no inconsiderable share of the praise.

The reader has seen that no one could have been naturally less interested than was my excellent friend Fairscribe in my lucubrations, when I first consulted him on the subject; but since he has contributed a subject to the work, he has become a most zealous coadjutor; and half-ashamed, I believe, yet half-proud of the literary stock-company, in which he has got a share, he never meets me without jogging my elbow, and dropping some mysterious hints, as, "I am saying—when will you give us any more of yon?"—or, "Yon's not a bad narrative—I like yon."

Pray Heaven the reader may be of his opinion.

CHAPTER IX CONCLUSION

If you tell a good jest,
And please all the rest,
Comes Dingley, and asks you, "What was it?"
And before she can know,
Away she will go
To seek an old rag in the closet.
Dean Swift.

While I was inditing the goodly matter which my readers have just perused, I might be said to go through a course of breaking-in to stand criticism, like a shooting-pony to stand fire. By some of those venial breaches of confidence, which always take place on the like occasions, my private flirtations with the Muse of Fiction became a matter whispered in Miss Fairscribe's circle, some ornaments of which were, I suppose, highly interested in the progress of the affair, while others "really thought Mr. Chrystal Croftangry might have had more wit at his time of day." Then came the sly intimation, the oblique remark, all that sugar-lipped raillery which is fitted for the situation of a man about to do a foolish thing, whether it be to publish or to marry, and that accompanied with the discreet nods and winks of such friends as are in the secret, and the obliging eagerness of others to know all about it.

At length the affair became so far public, that I was induced to face a tea-party with my manuscript in my pocket, looking as simple and modest as any gentleman of a certain age need to do upon such an occasion. When tea had been carried round, handkerchiefs and smelling bottles prepared, I had the honour of reading the Surgeon's Daughter for the entertainment of the evening. It went off excellently; my friend Mr. Fairscribe, who had been seduced from his desk to join the literary circle, only fell asleep twice, and readily recovered his attention by help of his snuff-box. The ladies were politely attentive, and when the cat, or the dog, or a next neighbour, tempted an individual to relax, Katie Fairscribe was on the alert, like an active whipper-in, with look, touch, or whisper, to recall them to a sense of what was going on. Whether Miss Katie was thus active merely to enforce the literary discipline of her coterie, or whether she was really interested by the beauties of the piece, and desirous to enforce them on others, I will not venture to ask, in case I should end in liking the girl—and she is really a pretty one. Better than wisdom would warrant, either for my sake or hers.

I must own, my story here and there flagged a good deal; perhaps there were faults in my reading, for while I should have been attending to nothing but how to give the words effect as they existed, I was feeling the chilling consciousness, that they might have been, and ought to have been, a great deal better. However, we kindled up at last when we got to the East Indies, although on the mention of tigers, an old lady, whose tongue had been impatient for an hour, broke in with, "I wonder if Mr. Croftangry ever heard the story of Tiger Tullideph?" and had nearly inserted the whole narrative as an episode in my tale. She was, however, brought to reason, and the subsequent mention of shawls, diamonds, turbans, and cummerbands, had their usual effect in awakening the imaginations of the fair auditors. At the extinction of the faithless lover in a way so horribly new, I had, as indeed I expected, the good fortune to excite that expression of painful interest which is produced by drawing in the breath through the compressed lips; nay, one Miss of fourteen actually screamed.

At length my task was ended, and the fair circle rained odours upon me, as they pelt beaux at the Carnival with sugar-plums, and drench them with scented spices. There was "Beautiful," and "Sweetly interesting," and "O Mr. Croftangry," and "How much obliged," and "What a delightful evening," and "O Miss Katie, how could you keep such a secret so long?" While the dear souls were thus smothering me with rose leaves, the merciless old lady carried them all off by a disquisition upon shawls, which she had the impudence to say, arose entirely out of my story. Miss Katie endeavoured to stop the flow of her eloquence in vain; she threw all other topics out of the field, and from the genuine Indian, she made a digression to the imitation shawls now made at Paisley, out of real Thibet wool, not to be known from the actual Country shawl, except by some inimitable cross-stitch in the border. "It is well," said the old lady, wrapping herself up in a rich Kashmere, "that there is some way of knowing a thing that cost fifty guineas from an article that is sold for five; but I venture to say there are not one out of ten thousand that would understand the difference."

The politeness of some of the fair ladies would now have brought back the conversation to the forgotten subject of our meeting. "How could you, Mr. Croftangry, collect all these hard words about India?—you were never there?"—"No, madam, I have not had that advantage; but, like the imitative operatives of Paisley, I have composed my shawl by incorporating into the woof a little Thibet wool, which my excellent friend and neighbour, Colonel Mackerris, one of the best fellows who ever trode a Highland moor, or dived into an Indian jungle, had the goodness to supply me with."

My rehearsal, however, though not absolutely and altogether to my taste, has prepared me in some measure for the less tempered and guarded sentence of the world. So a man must learn to encounter a foil before he confronts a sword; and to take up my original simile, a horse must be accustomed to a *feu de joie*, before you can ride him against a volley of balls. Well, Corporal Nym's philosophy is not the worst that has been preached, "Things must be as they may." If my lucubrations give pleasure, I may again require the attention of the courteous reader; if not, here end the Chronicles of the Canongate.

BOOK XXVII
THE HIGHLAND WIDOW
CHAPTER I.

*It wound as near as near could be,
But what it is she cannot tell;
On the other side it seemed to be
Of the huge broad-breasted old oak-tree.* COLERIDGE.

Mrs. Bethune Baliol's memorandum begins thus:—

It is five-and-thirty, or perhaps nearer forty years ago, since, to relieve the dejection of spirits occasioned by a great family loss sustained two or three months before, I undertook what was called the short Highland tour. This had become in some degree fashionable; but though the military roads were excellent, yet the accommodation was so indifferent that it was reckoned a little adventure to accomplish it. Besides, the Highlands, though now as peaceable as any part of King George's dominions, was a sound which still carried terror, while so many survived who had witnessed the insurrection of 1745; and a vague idea of fear was impressed on many as they looked from the towers of Stirling northward to the huge chain of mountains, which rises like a dusky rampart to conceal in its recesses a people whose dress, manners, and language differed still very much from those of their Lowland countrymen. For my part, I come of a race not greatly subject to apprehensions arising from imagination only. I had some Highland relatives; know several of their families of distinction; and though only having the company of my bower-maiden, Mrs. Alice Lambskin, I went on my journey fearless.

But then I had a guide and cicerone, almost equal to Greatheart in the Pilgrim's Progress, in no less a person than Donald MacLeish, the postilion whom I hired at Stirling, with a pair of able-bodied horses, as steady as Donald himself, to drag my carriage, my duenna, and myself, wheresoever it was my pleasure to go.

Donald MacLeish was one of a race of post-boys whom, I suppose, mail-coaches and steamboats have put out of fashion. They were to be found chiefly at Perth, Stirling, or Glasgow, where they and their horses were usually hired by travellers, or tourists, to accomplish such journeys of business or pleasure as they might have to perform in the land of the Gael. This class of persons approached to the character of what is called abroad a CONDUCTEUR; or might be compared to the sailing-master on board a British ship of war, who follows out after his own manner the course which the captain commands him to observe. You explained to your postilion the length of your tour, and the objects you were desirous it should embrace; and you found him perfectly competent to fix the places of rest or refreshment, with due attention that those should be chosen with reference to your convenience, and to any points of interest which you might desire to visit.

The qualifications of such a person were necessarily much superior to those of the "first ready," who gallops thrice-a-day over the same ten miles. Donald MacLeish, besides being quite alert at repairing all ordinary accidents to his horses and carriage, and in making shift to support them, where forage was scarce, with such substitutes as bannocks and cakes, was likewise a man of intellectual resources. He had acquired a general knowledge of the traditional stories of the country which he had traversed so often; and if encouraged (for Donald was a man of the most decorous reserve), he would willingly point out to you the site of the principal clan-battles, and recount the most remarkable legends by which the road, and the objects which occurred in travelling it, had been distinguished. There was some originality in the man's habits of thinking and expressing himself, his turn for legendary lore strangely contrasting with a portion of the knowing shrewdness belonging to his actual occupation, which made his conversation amuse the way well enough.

Add to this, Donald knew all his peculiar duties in the country which he traversed so frequently. He could tell, to a day, when they would "be killing" lamb at Tyndrum or Glenuilt; so that the stranger would have some chance of being fed like a Christian; and knew to a mile the last village where it was possible to procure a wheaten loaf for the guidance of those who were little familiar with the Land of Cakes. He was acquainted with the road every mile, and could tell to an inch which side of a Highland bridge was passable, which decidedly dangerous. [This is, or was at least, a necessary accomplishment. In one of the most beautiful districts of the Highlands was, not many years since, a bridge bearing this startling caution, "Keep to the right side, the left being dangerous."] In short, Donald MacLeish was not only our faithful attendant and steady servant, but our humble and obliging friend; and though I have known the half-classical cicerone of Italy, the talkative French valet-de-place, and even the muleteer of Spain, who piques himself on being a maize-eater, and whose honour is not to be questioned without danger, I do not think I have ever had so sensible and intelligent a guide.

Our motions were of course under Donald's direction; and it frequently happened, when the weather was serene, that we preferred halting to rest his horses even where there was no established stage, and taking our refreshment under a crag, from which leaped a waterfall, or beside the verge of a fountain, enamelled with verdant turf and wild-flowers. Donald had an eye for such spots, and though he had, I dare say, never read Gil Blas or Don Quixote, yet he chose such halting-places as Le Sage or Cervantes would have described. Very often, as he observed the pleasure I took in conversing with the country people, he would manage to fix our place of rest near a cottage, where there was some old Gael whose broadsword had blazed at Falkirk or Preston, and who seemed the frail yet faithful record of times which had passed away. Or he would contrive to quarter us, as far as a cup of tea went, upon the hospitality of some parish minister of worth and intelligence, or some country family of the better class, who mingled with the wild simplicity of their original manners, and their ready and hospitable welcome, a sort of courtesy belonging to a people, the lowest of whom are accustomed to consider themselves as being, according to the Spanish phrase, "as good gentlemen as the king, only not quite so rich."

To all such persons Donald MacLeish was well known, and his introduction passed as current as if we had brought letters from some high chief of the country. Sometimes it happened that the Highland hospitality, which welcomed us with all the variety of mountain fare, preparations of milk and eggs, and girdle-cakes of various kinds, as well as more substantial dainties, according to the inhabitant's means of regaling the passenger, descended rather too exuberantly on Donald MacLeish in the shape of mountain dew. Poor Donald! he was on such occasions like Gideon's fleece—moist with the noble element, which, of course, fell not on us. But it was his only fault, and when pressed to drink DOCH-AN-DORROCH to my ladyship's good health, it would have been ill taken to have refused the pledge; nor was he willing to do such discourtesy. It was, I repeat, his only fault. Nor had we any great right to complain; for if it rendered him a little more talkative, it augmented his ordinary share of punctilious civility, and he only drove slower, and talked longer and more pompously, than when he had not come by a drop of usquebaugh. It was, we remarked, only on such occasions that Donald talked with an air of importance of the family of MacLeish; and we had no title to be scrupulous in censuring a foible, the consequences of which were confined within such innocent limits.

We became so much accustomed to Donald's mode of managing us, that we observed with some interest the art which he used to produce a little agreeable surprise, by concealing from us the spot where he proposed our halt to be made, when it was of an unusual and interesting character. This was so much his wont that, when he made apologies at setting off for being obliged to stop in some strange, solitary place till the horses should eat the corn which he brought on with them for that purpose, our imagination used to be on the stretch to guess what romantic retreat he had secretly fixed upon for our noontide baiting-place.

We had spent the greater part of the morning at the delightful village of Dalmally, and had gone upon the lake under the guidance of the excellent clergyman who was then incumbent at Glenorquhy, [This venerable and hospitable gentleman's name was MacIntyre.] and had heard a hundred legends of the stern chiefs of Loch Awe, Duncan with the thrum bonnet, and the other lords of the now mouldering towers of Kilchurn. [See Note 7.—Loch Awe.] Thus it was later than usual when we set out on our journey, after a hint or two from Donald concerning the length of the way to the next stage, as there was no good halting-place between Dalmally and Oban.

Having bid adieu to our venerable and kind cicerone, we proceeded on our tour, winding round the tremendous mountain called Cruachan Ben, which rushes down in all its majesty of rocks and wilderness on the lake, leaving only a pass, in which, notwithstanding its extreme strength, the warlike clan of MacDougal of Lorn were almost destroyed by the sagacious Robert Bruce. That King, the Wellington of his day, had accomplished, by a forced march, the unexpected manoeuvre of forcing a body of troops round the other side of the mountain, and thus placed them in the flank and in the rear of the men of Lorn, whom at the same time, he attacked in front. The great number of cairns yet visible as you descend the pass on the westward side shows the extent of the vengeance which Bruce exhausted on his inveterate and personal enemies. I am, you know, the sister of soldiers, and it has since struck me forcibly that the manoeuvre which

Donald described, resembled those of Wellington or of Bonaparte. He was a great man Robert Bruce, even a Baliol must admit that; although it begins now to be allowed that his title to the crown was scarce so good as that of the unfortunate family with whom he contended. But let that pass. The slaughter had been the greater, as the deep and rapid river Awe is disgorged from the lake just in the rear of the fugitives, and encircles the base of the tremendous mountain; so that the retreat of the unfortunate fleers was intercepted on all sides by the inaccessible character of the country, which had seemed to promise them defence and protection. [See Note 8.—Battle betwixt the armies of the Bruce and MacDougal of Lorn.]

Musing, like the Irish lady in the song, "upon things which are long enough a-gone," [This is a line from a very pathetic ballad which I heard sung by one of the young ladies of Edgeworthstown in 1825. I do not know that it has been printed.] we felt no impatience at the slow and almost creeping pace with which our conductor proceeded along General Wade's military road, which never or rarely condescends to turn aside from the steepest ascent, but proceeds right up and down hill, with the indifference to height and hollow, steep or level, indicated by the old Roman engineers. Still, however, the substantial excellence of these great works—for such are the military highways in the Highlands—deserved the compliment of the poet, who, whether he came from our sister kingdom, and spoke in his own dialect, or whether he supposed those whom he addressed might have some national pretension to the second sight, produced the celebrated couplet,—

*"Had you but seen these roads BEFORE they were made,
You would hold up your hands and bless General Wade."*

Nothing, indeed, can be more wonderful than to see these wildernesses penetrated and pervious in every quarter by broad accesses of the best possible construction, and so superior to what the country could have demanded for many centuries for any pacific purpose of commercial intercourse. Thus the traces of war are sometimes happily accommodated to the purposes of peace. The victories of Bonaparte have been without results but his road over the Simplon will long be the communication betwixt peaceful countries, who will apply to the ends of commerce and friendly intercourse that gigantic work, which was formed for the ambitious purpose of warlike invasion.

While we were thus stealing along, we gradually turned round the shoulder of Ben Cruachan, and descending the course of the foaming and rapid Awe, left behind us the expanse of the majestic lake which gives birth to that impetuous river. The rocks and precipices which stooped down perpendicularly on our path on the right hand exhibited a few remains of the wood which once clothed them, but which had in later times been felled to supply, Donald MacLeish informed us, the iron foundries at the Bunawe. This made us fix our eyes with interest on one large oak, which grew on the left hand towards the river. It seemed a tree of extraordinary magnitude and picturesque beauty, and stood just where there appeared to be a few roods of open ground lying among huge stones, which had rolled down from the mountain. To add to the romance of the situation, the spot of clear ground extended round the foot of a proud-browed rock, from the summit of which leaped a mountain stream in a fall of sixty feet, in which it was dissolved into foam and dew. At the bottom of the fall the rivulet with difficulty collected, like a routed general, its dispersed forces, and, as if tamed by its descent, found a noiseless passage through the heath to join the Awe.

I was much struck with the tree and waterfall, and wished myself nearer them; not that I thought of sketch-book or portfolio—for in my younger days misses were not accustomed to black-lead pencils, unless they could use them to some good purpose—but merely to indulge myself with a closer view. Donald immediately opened the chaise door, but observed it was rough walking down the brae, and that I would see the tree better by keeping the road for a hundred yards farther, when it passed closer to the spot, for which he seemed, however, to have no predilection. "He knew," he said, "a far bigger tree than that nearer Bunawe, and it was a place where there was flat ground for the carriage to stand, which it could jimply do on these braes; but just as my leddyship liked."

My ladyship did choose rather to look at the fine tree before me than to pass it by in hopes of a finer; so we walked beside the carriage till we should come to a point, from which, Donald assured us, we might, without scrambling, go as near the tree as we chose, "though he wadna advise us to go nearer than the highroad."

There was something grave and mysterious in Donald's sun-browned countenance when he gave us this intimation, and his manner was so different from his usual frankness, that my female curiosity was set in motion. We walked on the whilst, and I found the tree, of which we had now lost sight by the intervention of some rising ground, was really more distant than I had at first supposed. "I could have sworn now," said I to my cicerone, "that yon tree and waterfall was the very place where you intended to make a stop to-day."

"The Lord forbid!" said Donald hastily.

"And for what, Donald? Why should you be willing to pass so pleasant a spot?"

"It's ower near Dalmally, my leddy, to corn the beasts; it would bring their dinner ower near their breakfast, poor things. An' besides, the place is not canny."

"Oh! then the mystery is out. There is a bogle or a brownie, a witch or a gyre-carlin, a bodach or a fairy, in the case?"

"The ne'er a bit, my leddy—ye are clean aff the road, as I may say. But if your leddyship will just hae patience, and wait till we are by the place and out of the glen, I'll tell ye all about it. There is no much luck in speaking of such things in the place they chanced in."

I was obliged to suspend my curiosity, observing, that if I persisted in twisting the discourse one way while Donald was twining it another, I should make his objection, like a hempen cord, just so much the tougher. At length the promised turn of the road brought us within fifty paces of the tree which I desired to admire, and I now saw to my surprise, that there was a human habitation among the cliffs which surrounded it. It was a hut of the least dimensions, and most miserable description that I ever saw even in the Highlands. The walls of sod, or DIVOT, as the Scotch call it, were not four feet high; the roof was of turf, repaired with reeds and sedges; the chimney was composed of clay, bound round by straw ropes; and the whole walls, roof, and chimney, were alike covered with the vegetation of house-leek, rye-grass, and moss common to decayed cottages formed of such materials. There was not the slightest vestige of a kale-yard, the usual accompaniment of the very worst huts; and of living things we saw nothing, save a kid which was browsing on the roof of the hut, and a goat, its mother, at some distance, feeding betwixt the oak and the river Awe.

"What man," I could not help exclaiming, "can have committed sin deep enough to deserve such a miserable dwelling!"

"Sin enough," said Donald MacLeish, with a half-suppressed groan; "and God he knoweth, misery enough too. And it is no man's dwelling neither, but a woman's."

"A woman's!" I repeated, "and in so lonely a place! What sort of a woman can she be?"

"Come this way, my leddy, and you may judge that for yourself," said Donald. And by advancing a few steps, and making a sharp turn to the left, we gained a sight of the side of the great broad-breasted oak, in the direction opposed to that in which we had hitherto seen it.

"If she keeps her old wont, she will be there at this hour of the day," said Donald; but immediately became silent, and pointed with his finger, as one afraid of being overheard. I looked, and beheld, not without some sense of awe, a female form seated by the stem of the oak, with her head drooping, her hands clasped, and a dark-coloured mantle drawn over her head, exactly as Judah is represented in the Syrian medals as seated under her palm-tree. I was infected with the fear and reverence which my guide seemed to entertain towards this solitary being, nor did I think of advancing towards her to obtain a nearer view until I had cast an enquiring look on Donald; to which he replied in a half whisper, "She has been a fearfu' bad woman, my leddy."

"Mad woman, said you," replied I, hearing him imperfectly; "then she is perhaps dangerous?"

"No—she is not mad," replied Donald; "for then it may be she would be happier than she is; though when she thinks on what she has done, and caused to be done, rather than yield up a hair-breadth of her ain wicked will, it is not likely she can be very well settled. But she neither is mad nor mischievous; and yet, my leddy, I think you had best not go nearer to her." And then, in a few hurried words, he made me acquainted with the story which I am now to tell more in detail. I heard the narrative with a mixture of horror and sympathy, which at once impelled me to approach the sufferer, and speak to her the words of comfort, or rather of pity, and at the same time made me afraid to do so.

This indeed was the feeling with which she was regarded by the Highlanders in the neighbourhood, who looked upon Elspat MacTavish, or the Woman of the Tree, as they called her, as the Greeks considered those who were pursued by the Furies, and endured the mental torment consequent on great criminal actions. They regarded such unhappy beings as Orestes and OEdipus, as being less the voluntary perpetrators of their crimes than as the passive instruments by which the terrible decrees of Destiny had been accomplished; and the fear with which they beheld them was not unmingled with veneration.

I also learned further from Donald MacLeish, that there was some apprehension of ill luck attending those who had the boldness to approach too near, or disturb the awful solitude of a being so unutterably miserable—that it was supposed that whosoever approached her must experience in some respect the contagion of her wretchedness.

It was therefore with some reluctance that Donald saw me prepare to obtain a nearer view of the sufferer, and that he himself followed to assist me in the descent down a very rough path. I believe his regard for me conquered some ominous feelings in his own breast, which connected his duty on this occasion with the presaging fear of lame horses, lost lynch-pins, overturns, and other perilous chances of the postilion's life.

I am not sure if my own courage would have carried me so close to Elspat had he not followed. There was in her countenance the stern abstraction of hopeless and overpowering sorrow, mixed with the contending feelings of remorse, and of the pride which struggled to conceal it. She guessed, perhaps, that it was curiosity, arising out of her uncommon story, which induced me to intrude on her solitude; and she could not be pleased that a fate like hers had been the theme of a traveller's amusement. Yet the look with which she regarded me was one of scorn instead of embarrassment. The opinion of the world and all its children could not add or take an iota from her load of misery; and, save from the half smile that seemed to intimate the contempt of a being rapt by the very intensity of her affliction above the sphere of ordinary humanities, she seemed as indifferent to my gaze, as if she had been a dead corpse or a marble statue.

Elspat was above the middle stature. Her hair, now grizzled, was still profuse, and it had been of the most decided black. So were her eyes, in which, contradicting the stern and rigid features of her countenance, there shone the wild and troubled light that indicates an unsettled mind. Her hair was wrapt round a silver bodkin with some attention to neatness, and her dark mantle was disposed around her with a degree of taste, though the materials were of the most ordinary sort.

After gazing on this victim of guilt and calamity till I was ashamed to remain silent, though uncertain how I ought to address her, I began to express my surprise at her choosing such a desert and deplorable dwelling. She cut short these expressions of sympathy, by answering in a stern voice, without the least change of countenance or posture, "Daughter of the stranger, he has told you my story." I was silenced at once, and felt how little all earthly accommodation must seem to the mind which had such subjects as hers for rumination. Without again attempting to open the conversation, I took a piece of gold from my purse, (for Donald had intimated she lived on alms), expecting she would at least stretch her hand to receive it. But she neither accepted nor rejected the gift; she did not even seem to notice it, though twenty times as valuable, probably, as was usually offered. I was obliged to place it on her knee, saying involuntarily, as I did so, "May God pardon you and relieve you!" I shall never forget the look which she cast up to Heaven, nor the tone in which she exclaimed, in the very words of my old friend John Home,—

"My beautiful—my brave!"

It was the language of nature, and arose from the heart of the deprived mother, as it did from that gifted imaginative poet while furnishing with appropriate expressions the ideal grief of Lady Randolph.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, I'm come to the Low Country,

Och, och, ohonochie,

Without a penny in my pouch

To buy a meal for me.

I was the proudest of my clan,

Long, long may I repine;

And Donald was the bravest man,

And Donald he was mine. OLD SONG.

Elspat had enjoyed happy days, though her age had sunk into hopeless and inconsolable sorrow and distress. She was once the beautiful and happy wife of Hamish MacTavish, for whom his strength and feats of prowess had gained the title of MacTavish Mhor. His life was turbulent and dangerous, his habits being of the old Highland stamp which esteemed it shame to want anything that could be had for the taking. Those in the Lowland line who lay near him, and desired to enjoy their lives and property in quiet, were contented to pay him a small composition, in name of protection money, and comforted themselves with the old proverb that it was better to "fleece the deil than fight him." Others, who accounted such composition dishonourable, were often surprised by MacTavish Mhor and his associates and followers, who usually inflicted an adequate penalty, either in person or property, or both. The creagh is yet remembered in which he swept one hundred and fifty cows from Monteith in one drove; and how he placed the laird of Ballybught naked in a slough, for having threatened to send for a party of the Highland Watch to protect his property.

Whatever were occasionally the triumphs of this daring cateran, they were often exchanged for reverses; and his narrow escapes, rapid flights, and the ingenious stratagems with which he extricated himself from imminent danger, were no less remembered and admired than the exploits in which he had been successful. In weal or woe, through every species of fatigue, difficulty, and danger, Elspat was his faithful companion. She enjoyed with him the fits of occasional prosperity; and when adversity pressed them hard, her strength of mind, readiness of wit, and courageous endurance of danger and toil, are said often to have stimulated the exertions of her husband.

Their morality was of the old Highland cast—faithful friends and fierce enemies. The Lowland herds and harvests they accounted their own, whenever they had the means of driving off the one or of seizing upon the other; nor did the least scruple on the right of property interfere on such occasions. Hamish Mhor argued like the old Cretan warrior:

"My sword, my spear, my shaggy shield,

They make me lord of all below;

For he who dreads the lance to wield,

Before my shaggy shield must bow.

His lands, his vineyards, must resign,

And all that cowards have is mine."

But those days of perilous, though frequently successful depredation, began to be abridged after the failure of the expedition of Prince Charles Edward. MacTavish Mhor had not sat still on that occasion, and he was outlawed, both as a traitor to the state and as a robber and cateran. Garrisons were now settled in many places where a red-coat had never before been seen, and the Saxon war-drum resounded among the most hidden recesses of the Highland mountains. The fate of MacTavish became every day more inevitable; and it was the more difficult for him to make his exertions for defence or escape, that Elspat, amid his evil days, had increased his family with an infant child, which was a considerable encumbrance upon the necessary rapidity of their motions.

At length the fatal day arrived. In a strong pass on the skirts of Ben Crunchan, the celebrated MacTavish Mhor was surprised by a detachment of the Sidier Roy. [The Red Soldier.] His wife assisted him heroically, charging his piece from time to time; and as they were in possession of a post that was nearly unassailable, he might have perhaps escaped if his ammunition had lasted. But at length his balls were expended, although it was not until he had fired off most of the silver buttons from his waistcoat; and the soldiers, no longer deterred by fear of the unerring marksman, who had slain three and wounded more of their number, approached his stronghold, and, unable to take him alive, slew him after a most desperate resistance.

All this Elspat witnessed and survived; for she had, in the child which relied on her for support, a motive for strength and exertion. In what manner she maintained herself it is not easy to say. Her only ostensible means of support were a flock of three or four goats, which she fed wherever she pleased on the mountain

pastures, no one challenging the intrusion. In the general distress of the country, her ancient acquaintances had little to bestow; but what they could part with from their own necessities, they willingly devoted to the relief of others. From Lowlanders she sometimes demanded tribute, rather than requested alms. She had not forgotten she was the widow of MacTavish Mhor, or that the child who trotted by her knee might, such were her imaginations, emulate one day the fame of his father, and command the same influence which he had once exerted without control. She associated so little with others, went so seldom and so unwillingly from the wildest recesses of the mountains, where she usually dwelt with her goats, that she was quite unconscious of the great change which had taken place in the country around her—the substitution of civil order for military violence, and the strength gained by the law and its adherents over those who were called in Gaelic song, "the stormy sons of the sword." Her own diminished consequence and straitened circumstances she indeed felt, but for this the death of MacTavish Mhor was, in her apprehension, a sufficing reason; and she doubted not that she should rise to her former state of importance when Hamish Bean (or fair-haired James) should be able to wield the arms of his father. If, then, Elspat was repelled, rudely when she demanded anything necessary for her wants, or the accommodation of her little flock, by a churlish farmer, her threats of vengeance, obscurely expressed, yet terrible in their tenor, used frequently to extort, through fear of her maledictions, the relief which was denied to her necessities; and the trembling goodwife, who gave meal or money to the widow of MacTavish Mhor, wished in her heart that the stern old carlin had been burnt on the day her husband had his due.

Years thus ran on, and Hamish Bean grew up—not, indeed, to be of his father's size or strength, but to become an active, high-spirited, fair-haired youth, with a ruddy cheek, an eye like an eagle's, and all the agility, if not all the strength, of his formidable father, upon whose history and achievements his mother dwelt, in order to form her son's mind to a similar course of adventures. But the young see the present state of this changeful world more keenly than the old. Much attached to his mother, and disposed to do all in his power for her support, Hamish yet perceived, when he mixed with the world, that the trade of the cateran was now alike dangerous and discreditable, and that if he were to emulate his father's progress, it must be in some other line of warfare more consonant to the opinions of the present day.

As the faculties of mind and body began to expand, he became more sensible of the precarious nature of his situation, of the erroneous views of his mother, and her ignorance respecting the changes of the society with which she mingled so little. In visiting friends and neighbours, he became aware of the extremely reduced scale to which his parent was limited, and learned that she possessed little or nothing more than the absolute necessities of life, and that these were sometimes on the point of failing. At times his success in fishing and the chase was able to add something to her subsistence; but he saw no regular means of contributing to her support, unless by stooping to servile labour, which, if he himself could have endured it, would, he knew, have been like a death's-wound to the pride of his mother.

Elspat, meanwhile, saw with surprise that Hamish Bean, although now tall and fit for the field, showed no disposition to enter on his father's scene of action. There was something of the mother at her heart, which prevented her from urging him in plain terms to take the field as a cateran, for the fear occurred of the perils into which the trade must conduct him; and when she would have spoken to him on the subject, it seemed to her heated imagination as if the ghost of her husband arose between them in his bloody tartans, and laying his finger on his lips, appeared to prohibit the topic. Yet she wondered at what seemed his want of spirit, sighed as she saw him from day to day lounging about in the long-skirted Lowland coat which the legislature had imposed upon the Gael instead of their own romantic garb, and thought how much nearer he would have resembled her husband had he been clad in the belted plaid and short hose, with his polished arms gleaming at his side.

Besides these subjects for anxiety, Elspat had others arising from the engrossing impetuosity of her temper. Her love of MacTavish Mhor had been qualified by respect and sometimes even by fear, for the cateran was not the species of man who submits to female government; but over his son she had exerted, at first during childhood, and afterwards in early youth, an imperious authority, which gave her maternal love a character of jealousy. She could not bear when Hamish, with advancing life, made repeated steps towards independence, absented himself from her cottage at such season and for such length of time as he chose, and seemed to consider, although maintaining towards her every possible degree of respect and kindness, that the control and responsibility of his actions rested on himself alone. This would have been of little consequence, could she have concealed her feelings within her own bosom; but the ardour and impatience of her passions made her frequently show her son that she conceived herself neglected and ill-used. When he was absent for any length of time from her cottage without giving intimation of his purpose, her resentment on his return used to be so unreasonable, that it naturally suggested to a young man fond of independence, and desirous to amend his situation in the world, to leave her, even for the very purpose of enabling him to provide for the parent whose egotistical demands on his filial attention tended to confine him to a desert, in which both were starving in hopeless and helpless indigence.

Upon one occasion, the son having been guilty of some independent excursion, by which the mother felt herself affronted and disobliged, she had been more than usually violent on his return, and awakened in Hamish a sense of displeasure, which clouded his brow and cheek. At length, as she persevered in her unreasonable resentment, his patience became exhausted, and taking his gun from the chimney corner, and muttering to himself the reply which his respect for his mother prevented him from speaking aloud, he was about to leave the hut which he had but barely entered.

"Hamish," said his mother, "are you again about to leave me?" But Hamish only replied by looking at and rubbing the lock of his gun.

"Ay, rub the lock of your gun," said his parent bitterly. "I am glad you have courage enough to fire it? though it be but at a roe-deer." Hamish started at this undeserved taunt, and cast a look of anger at her in reply. She saw that she had found the means of giving him pain.

"Yes," she said, "look fierce as you will at an old woman, and your mother; it would be long ere you bent your brow on the angry countenance of a bearded man."

"Be silent, mother, or speak of what you understand," said Hamish, much irritated, "and that is of the distaff and the spindle."

"And was it of spindle and distaff that I was thinking when I bore you away on my back through the fire of six of the Saxon soldiers, and you a wailing child? I tell you, Hamish, I know a hundredfold more of swords and guns than ever you will; and you will never learn so much of noble war by yourself, as you have seen when you were wrapped up in my plaid."

"You are determined, at least, to allow me no peace at home, mother; but this shall have an end," said Hamish, as, resuming his purpose of leaving the hut, he rose and went towards the door.

"Stay, I command you," said his mother—"stay! or may the gun you carry be the means of your ruin! may the road you are going be the track of your funeral!"

"What makes you use such words, mother?" said the young man, turning a little back; "they are not good, and good cannot come of them. Farewell just now! we are too angry to speak together—farewell! It will be long ere you see me again." And he departed, his mother, in the first burst of her impatience, showering after him her maledictions, and in the next invoking them on her own head, so that they might spare her son's. She passed that day and the next in all the vehemence of impotent and yet unrestrained passion, now entreating Heaven, and such powers as were familiar to her by rude tradition, to restore her dear son, "the calf of her heart;" now in impatient resentment, meditating with what bitter terms she should rebuke his filial disobedience upon his return, and now studying the most tender language to attach him to the cottage, which, when her boy was present, she would not, in the rapture of her affection, have exchanged for the apartments of Taymouth Castle.

Two days passed, during which, neglecting even the slender means of supporting nature which her situation afforded, nothing but the strength of a frame accustomed to hardships and privations of every kind could have kept her in existence, notwithstanding the anguish of her mind prevented her being sensible of her personal weakness. Her dwelling at this period was the same cottage near which I had found her, but then more habitable by the exertions of Hamish, by whom it had been in a great measure built and repaired.

It was on the third day after her son had disappeared, as she sat at the door rocking herself, after the fashion of her countrywomen when in distress, or in pain, that the then unwonted circumstance occurred of a passenger being seen on the highroad above the cottage. She cast but one glance at him. He was on horseback, so that it could not be Hamish; and Elspat cared not enough for any other being on earth to make her turn her eyes towards him a second time. The stranger, however, paused opposite to her cottage, and dismounting from his pony, led it down the steep and broken path which conducted to her door.

"God bless you, Elspat MacTavish!" She looked at the man as he addressed her in her native language, with the displeased air of one whose reverie is interrupted; but the traveller went on to say, "I bring you tidings of your son Hamish." At once, from being the most uninteresting object, in respect to Elspat, that could exist, the form of the stranger became awful in her eyes, as that of a messenger descended from heaven, expressly to pronounce upon her death or life. She started from her seat, and with hands convulsively clasped together, and held up to Heaven, eyes fixed on the stranger's countenance, and person stooping forward to him, she looked those inquiries which her faltering tongue could not articulate. "Your son sends you his dutiful remembrance, and this," said the messenger, putting into Elspat's hand a small purse containing four or five dollars.

"He is gone! he is gone!" exclaimed Elspat; "he has sold himself to be the servant of the Saxons, and I shall never more behold him! Tell me, Miles MacPhadraick—for now I know you—is it the price of the son's blood that you have put into the mother's hand?"

"Now, God forbid!" answered MacPhadraick, who was a tacksman, and had possession of a considerable tract of ground under his chief, a proprietor who lived about twenty miles off—"God forbid I should do wrong, or say wrong, to you, or to the son of MacTavish Mhor! I swear to you by the hand of my chief that your son is well, and will soon see you; and the rest he will tell you himself." So saying, MacPhadraick hastened back up the pathway, gained the road, mounted his pony, and rode upon his way.

CHAPTER III.

Elspat MacTavish remained gazing on the money as if the impress of the coin could have conveyed information how it was procured.

"I love not this MacPhadraick," she said to herself. "It was his race of whom the Bard hath spoken, saying, Fear them not when their words are loud as the winter's wind, but fear them when they fall on you like the sound of the thrush's song. And yet this riddle can be read but one way: My son hath taken the sword to win that, with strength like a man, which churls would keep him from with the words that frighten children." This idea, when once it occurred to her, seemed the more reasonable, that MacPhadraick, as she well knew, himself a cautious man, had so far encouraged her husband's practices as occasionally to buy cattle of MacTavish, although he must have well known how they were come by, taking care, however, that the transaction was so made as to be accompanied with great profit and absolute safety. Who so likely as MacPhadraick to indicate to a young cateran the glen in which he could commence his perilous trade with most prospect of success? Who so likely to convert his booty into money? The feelings which another might have experienced on believing that an only son had rushed forward on the same path in which his father had perished, were scarce known to the Highland mothers of that day. She thought of the death of MacTavish Mhor as that of a hero who had fallen in his proper trade of war, and who had not fallen unavenged. She feared less for her son's life than for his dishonour. She dreaded, on his account, the subjection to strangers, and the death-sleep of the soul which is brought on by what she regarded as slavery.

The moral principle which so naturally and so justly occurs to the mind of those who have been educated under a settled government of laws that protect the property of the weak against the incursions of the strong, was to poor Elspat a book sealed and a fountain closed. She had been taught to consider those whom they call Saxons as a race with whom the Gael were constantly at war; and she regarded every settlement of theirs within the reach of Highland incursion as affording a legitimate object of attack and plunder. Her feelings on this point had been strengthened and confirmed, not only by the desire of revenge for the death of her husband, but by the sense of general indignation entertained, not unjustly, through the Highlands of Scotland, on account of the barbarous and violent conduct of the victors after the battle of Culloden. Other Highland clans, too, she regarded as the fair objects of plunder, when that was possible, upon the score of ancient enmities and deadly feuds.

The prudence that might have weighed the slender means which the times afforded for resisting the efforts of a combined government, which had, in its less compact and established authority, been unable to put down the ravages of such lawless caterans as MacTavish Mhor, was unknown to a solitary woman whose ideas still dwelt upon her own early times. She imagined that her son had only to proclaim himself his father's successor in adventure and enterprise, and that a force of men, as gallant as those who had followed his father's banner, would crowd around to support it when again displayed. To her Hamish was the eagle who had only to soar aloft and resume his native place in the skies, without her being able to comprehend how many additional eyes would have watched his flight—how many additional bullets would have been directed at his bosom. To be brief, Elspat was one who viewed the present state of society with the same feelings with which she regarded the times that had passed away. She had been indigent, neglected, oppressed since the days that her husband had no longer been feared and powerful, and she thought that the term of her ascendance would return when her son had determined to play the part of his father. If she permitted her eye to glance farther into futurity, it was but to anticipate that she must be for many a day cold in the grave, with the coronach of her tribe cried duly over her, before her fair-haired Hamish could, according to her calculation, die with his hand on the basket-hilt of the red claymore. His father's hair was grey, ere, after a hundred dangers, he had fallen with his arms in his hands. That she should have seen and survived the sight was a natural consequence of the manners of that age. And better it was—such was her proud thought—that she had seen him so die, than to have witnessed his departure from life in a smoky hovel on a bed of rotten straw like an over-worn hound, or a bullock which died of disease. But the hour of her young, her brave Hamish, was yet far distant. He must succeed—he must conquer—like his father. And when he fell at length—for she anticipated for him no bloodless death—Elspat would ere then have lain long in the grave, and could neither see his death-struggle nor mourn over his grave-sod.

With such wild notions working in her brain, the spirit of Elspat rose to its usual pitch, or, rather, to one which seemed higher. In the emphatic language of Scripture, which in that idiom does not greatly differ from her own, she arose, she washed and changed her apparel, and ate bread, and was refreshed.

She longed eagerly for the return of her son, but she now longed not with the bitter anxiety of doubt and apprehension. She said to herself that much must be done ere he could in these times arise to be an eminent and dreaded leader. Yet when she saw him again, she almost expected him at the head of a daring band, with pipes playing and banners flying, the noble tartans fluttering free in the wind, in despite of the laws which had suppressed, under severe penalties, the use of the national garb and all the appurtenances of Highland chivalry. For all this, her eager imagination was content only to allow the interval of some days.

From the moment this opinion had taken deep and serious possession of her mind, her thoughts were bent upon receiving her son at the head of his adherents in the manner in which she used to adorn her hut for the return of his father.

The substantial means of subsistence she had not the power of providing, nor did she consider that of importance. The successful caterans would bring with them herds and flocks. But the interior of her hut was arranged for their reception, the usquebaugh was brewed or distilled in a larger quantity than it could have been supposed one lone woman could have made ready. Her hut was put into such order as might, in some degree, give it the appearance of a day of rejoicing. It was swept and decorated, with boughs of various kinds, like the house of a Jewess upon what is termed the Feast of the Tabernacles. The produce of the milk of her little flock was prepared in as great variety of forms as her skill admitted, to entertain her son and his associates whom she, expected to receive along with him.

But the principal decoration, which she sought with the greatest toil, was the cloud-berry, a scarlet fruit, which is only found on very high hills; and these only in small quantities. Her husband, or perhaps one of his forefathers, had chosen this as the emblem of his family, because it seemed at once to imply, by its scarcity, the smallness of their clan, and, by the places in which it was found, the ambitious height of their pretensions.

For the time that these simple preparations of welcome endured, Elspat was in a state of troubled happiness. In fact, her only anxiety was that she might be able to complete all that she could do to welcome Hamish and the friends who she supposed must have attached themselves to his band, before they should arrive and find her unprovided for their reception.

But when such efforts as she could make had been accomplished, she once more had nothing left to engage her save the trifling care of her goats; and when these had been attended to, she had only to review her little preparations, renew such as were of a transitory nature, replace decayed branches and fading boughs, and then to sit down at her cottage-door and watch the road as it ascended on the one side from the banks of the Awe, and on the other wound round the heights of the mountain, with such a degree of accommodation to hill and level as the plan of the military engineer permitted. While so occupied, her imagination,

anticipating the future from recollections of the past, formed out of the morning mist or the evening cloud the wild forms of an advancing band, which were then called "Sidier Dhu" (dark soldiers), dressed in their native tartan, and so named to distinguish them from the scarlet ranks of the British army. In this occupation she spent many hours of each morning and evening.

CHAPTER IV.

It was in vain that Elspat's eyes surveyed the distant path by the earliest light of the dawn and the latest glimmer of the twilight. No rising dust awakened the expectation of nodding plumes or flashing arms. The solitary traveller trudged listlessly along in his brown lowland greatcoat, his tartans dyed black or purple, to comply with or evade the law which prohibited their being worn in their variegated hues. The spirit of the Gael, sunk and broken by the severe though perhaps necessary laws, that proscribed the dress and arms which he considered as his birthright, was intimidated by his drooping head and dejected appearance. Not in such depressed wanderers did Elspat recognise the light and free step of her son, now, as she concluded, regenerated from every sign of Saxon thralldom. Night by night, as darkness came, she removed from her unclosed door, to throw herself on her restless pallet, not to sleep, but to watch. The brave and the terrible, she said, walk by night. Their steps are heard in darkness, when all is silent save the whirlwind and the cataract. The timid deer comes only forth when the sun is upon the mountain's peak, but the bold wolf walks in the red light of the harvest-moon. She reasoned in vain; her son's expected summons did not call her from the lowly couch where she lay dreaming of his approach. Hamish came not.

"Hope deferred," saith the royal sage, "maketh the heart sick;" and strong as was Elspat's constitution, she began to experience that it was unequal to the toils to which her anxious and immoderate affection subjected her, when early one morning the appearance of a traveller on the lonely mountain-road, revived hopes which had begun to sink into listless despair. There was no sign of Saxon subjugation about the stranger. At a distance she could see the flutter of the belted-plaid that drooped in graceful folds behind him, and the plume that, placed in the bonnet, showed rank and gentle birth. He carried a gun over his shoulder, the claymore was swinging by his side with its usual appendages, the dirk, the pistol, and the SPORRAN MOLLACH. [The goat-skin pouch, worn by the Highlanders round their waist.] Ere yet her eye had scanned all these particulars, the light step of the traveller was hastened, his arm was waved in token of recognition—a moment more, and Elspat held in her arms her darling son, dressed in the garb of his ancestors, and looking, in her maternal eyes, the fairest among ten thousand!

The first outpouring of affection it would be impossible to describe. Blessings mingled with the most endearing epithets which her energetic language affords in striving to express the wild rapture of Elspat's joy. Her board was heaped hastily with all she had to offer, and the mother watched the young soldier, as he partook of the refreshment, with feelings how similar to, yet how different from, those with which she had seen him draw his first sustenance from her bosom!

When the tumult of joy was appeased, Elspat became anxious to know her son's adventures since they parted, and could not help greatly censuring his rashness for traversing the hills in the Highland dress in the broad sunshine, when the penalty was so heavy, and so many red soldiers were abroad in the country.

"Fear not for me, mother," said Hamish, in a tone designed to relieve her anxiety, and yet somewhat embarrassed; "I may wear the BREACAN [That which is variegated—that is, the tartan.] at the gate of Fort-Augustus, if I like it."

"Oh, be not too daring, my beloved Hamish, though it be the fault which best becomes thy father's son—yet be not too daring! Alas! they fight not now as in former days, with fair weapons and on equal terms, but take odds of numbers and of arms, so that the feeble and the strong are alike levelled by the shot of a boy. And do not think me unworthy to be called your father's widow and your mother because I speak thus; for God knoweth, that, man to man, I would peril thee against the best in Breadalbane, and broad Lorn besides."

"I assure you, my dearest mother," replied Hamish, "that I am in no danger. But have you seen MacPhadraick, mother? and what has he said to you on my account?"

"Silver he left me in plenty, Hamish; but the best of his comfort was that you were well, and would see me soon. But beware of MacPhadraick, my son; for when he called himself the friend of your father, he better loved the most worthless stirk in his herd than he did the life-blood of MacTavish Mhor. Use his services, therefore, and pay him for them, for it is thus we should deal with the unworthy; but take my counsel, and trust him not."

Hamish could not suppress a sigh, which seemed to Elspat to intimate that the caution came too late. "What have you done with him?" she continued, eager and alarmed. "I had money of him, and he gives not that without value; he is none of those who exchange barley for chaff. Oh, if you repent you of your bargain, and if it be one which you may break off without disgrace to your truth or your manhood, take back his silver, and trust not to his fair words."

"It may not be, mother," said Hamish; "I do not repent my engagement, unless that it must make me leave you soon."

"Leave me! how leave me? Silly boy, think you I know not what duty belongs to the wife or mother of a daring man? Thou art but a boy yet; and when thy father had been the dread of the country for twenty years, he did not despise my company and assistance, but often said my help was worth that of two strong gillies."

"It is not on that score, mother, but since I must leave the country—"

"Leave the country!" replied his mother, interrupting him. "And think you that I am like a bush, that is rooted to the soil where it grows, and must die if carried elsewhere? I have breathed other winds than these of Ben Cruachan. I have followed your father to the wilds of Ross and the impenetrable deserts of Y Mac Y Mhor. Tush, man! my limbs, old as they are, will bear me as far as your young feet can trace the way."

"Alas, mother," said the young man, with a faltering accent, "but to cross the sea—"

"The sea! who am I that I should fear the sea? Have I never been in a birling in my life—never known the Sound of Mull, the Isles of Treshornish, and the rough rocks of Harris?"

"Alas, mother, I go far—far from all of these. I am enlisted in one of the new regiments, and we go against the French in America."

"Enlisted!" uttered the astonished mother—"against MY will—without MY consent! You could not! you would not!" Then rising up, and assuming a posture of almost imperial command, "Hamish, you DARED not!"

"Despair, mother, dares everything," answered Hamish, in a tone of melancholy resolution. "What should I do here, where I can scarce get bread for myself and you, and when the times are growing daily worse? Would you but sit down and listen, I would convince you I have acted for the best."

With a bitter smile Elspat sat down, and the same severe ironical expression was on her features, as, with her lips firmly closed, she listened to his vindication.

Hamish went on, without being disconcerted by her expected displeasure. "When I left you, dearest mother, it was to go to MacPhadraick's house; for although I knew he is crafty and worldly, after the fashion of the Sassenach, yet he is wise, and I thought how he would teach me, as it would cost him nothing, in which way I could mend our estate in the world."

"Our estate in the world!" said Elspat, losing patience at the word; "and went you to a base fellow with a soul no better than that of a cowherd, to ask counsel about your conduct? Your father asked none, save of his courage and his sword."

"Dearest mother," answered Hamish, "how shall I convince you that you live in this land of our fathers as if our fathers were yet living? You walk as it were in a dream, surrounded by the phantoms of those who have been long with the dead. When my father lived and fought, the great respected the man of the strong right hand, and the rich feared him. He had protection from Macallum Mhor, and from Caberfae, and tribute from meaner men. [Caberfae—ANGLICE, the Stag's-head, the Celtic designation for the arms of the family of the high Chief of Seaforth.] That is ended, and his son would only earn a disgraceful and unpitied death by the practices which gave his father credit and power among those who wear the breacan. The land is conquered; its lights are quenched—Glengarry, Lochiel, Perth, Lord Lewis, all the high chiefs are dead or in exile. We may mourn for it, but we cannot help it. Bonnet, broadsword, and sporran—power, strength, and wealth, were all lost on Drummossie Muir."

"It is false!" said Elspat, fiercely; "you and such like dastardly spirits are quelled by your own faint hearts, not by the strength of the enemy; you are like the fearful waterfowl, to whom the least cloud in the sky seems the shadow of the eagle."

"Mother," said Hamish proudly, "lay not faint heart to my charge. I go where men are wanted who have strong arms and bold hearts too. I leave a desert, for a land where I may gather fame."

"And you leave your mother to perish in want, age, and solitude," said Elspat, essaying successively every means of moving a resolution which she began to see was more deeply rooted than she had at first thought.

"Not so, neither," he answered; "I leave you to comfort and certainty, which you have yet never known. Barcaldine's son is made a leader, and with him I have enrolled myself. MacPhadraick acts for him, and raises men, and finds his own in doing it."

"That is the truest word of the tale, were all the rest as false as hell," said the old woman, bitterly.

"But we are to find our good in it also," continued Hamish; "for Barcaldine is to give you a shieling in his wood of Letter-findreight, with grass for your goats, and a cow, when you please to have one, on the common; and my own pay, dearest mother, though I am far away, will do more than provide you with meal, and with all else you can want. Do not fear for me. I enter a private gentleman; but I will return, if hard fighting and regular duty can deserve it, an officer, and with half a dollar a day."

"Poor child!" replied Elspat, in a tone of pity mingled with contempt, "and you trust MacPhadraick?"

"I might mother," said Hamish, the dark red colour of his race crossing his forehead and cheeks, "for MacPhadraick knows the blood which flows in my veins, and is aware, that should he break trust with you, he might count the days which could bring Hamish back to Breadalbane, and number those of his life within three suns more. I would kill him at his own hearth, did he break his word with me—I would, by the great Being who made us both!"

The look and attitude of the young soldier for a moment overawed Elspat; she was unused to see him express a deep and bitter mood, which reminded her so strongly of his father. But she resumed her remonstrances in the same taunting manner in which she had commenced them.

"Poor boy!" she said; "and you think that at the distance of half the world your threats will be heard or thought of! But, go—go—place your neck under him of Hanover's yoke, against whom every true Gael fought to the death. Go, disown the royal Stewart, for whom your father, and his fathers, and your mother's fathers, have crimsoned many a field with their blood. Go, put your head under the belt of one of the race of Dermid, whose children murdered—Yes," she added, with a wild shriek, "murdered your mother's fathers in their peaceful dwellings in Glencoe! Yes," she again exclaimed, with a wilder and shriller scream, "I was then unborn, but my mother has told me—and I attended to the voice of MY mother—well I remember her words! They came in peace, and were received in friendship—and blood and fire arose, and screams and murder!" [See Note 9.—Massacre of Glencoe.]

"Mother," answered Hamish, mournfully, but with a decided tone, "all that I have thought over. There is not a drop of the blood of Glencoe on the noble hand of Barcaldine; with the unhappy house of Glenlyon the curse remains, and on them God hath avenged it."

"You speak like the Saxon priest already," replied his mother; "will you not better stay, and ask a kirk from Macallum Mhor, that you may preach forgiveness to the race of Dermid?"

"Yesterday was yesterday," answered Hamish, "and to-day is to-day. When the clans are crushed and confounded together, it is well and wise that their hatreds and their feuds should not survive their independence and their power. He that cannot execute vengeance like a man, should not harbour useless enmity like a craven. Mother, young Barcaldine is true and brave. I know that MacPhadraick counselled him that he should not let me take leave of you, lest you dissuaded me from my purpose; but he said, 'Hamish MacTavish is the son of a brave man, and he will not break his word.' Mother, Barcaldine leads an hundred of the bravest of the sons of the Gael in their native dress, and with their fathers' arms—heart to heart—shoulder to shoulder. I have sworn to go with him. He has trusted me, and I will trust him."

At this reply, so firmly and resolutely pronounced, Elspat remained like one thunderstruck, and sunk in despair. The arguments which she had considered so irresistibly conclusive, had recoiled like a wave from a rock. After a long pause, she filled her son's quagh, and presented it to him with an air of dejected deference and submission.

"Drink," she said, "to thy father's roof-tree, ere you leave it for ever; and tell me—since the chains of a new King, and of a new chief, whom your fathers knew not save as mortal enemies, are fastened upon the limbs of your father's son—tell me how many links you count upon them?"

Hamish took the cup, but looked at her as if uncertain of her meaning. She proceeded in a raised voice. "Tell me," she said, "for I have a right to know, for how many days the will of those you have made your masters permits me to look upon you? In other words, how many are the days of my life? for when you leave me, the earth has nought besides worth living for!"

"Mother," replied Hamish MacTavish, "for six days I may remain with you; and if you will set out with me on the fifth, I will conduct you in safety to your new dwelling. But if you remain here, then I will depart on the seventh by daybreak—then, as at the last moment, I MUST set out for Dunbarton, for if I appear not on the eighth day, I am subject to punishment as a deserter, and am dishonoured as a soldier and a gentleman."

"Your father's foot," she answered, "was free as the wind on the heath—it were as vain to say to him, where goest thou? as to ask that viewless driver of the clouds, wherefore blowest thou? Tell me under what penalty thou must—since go thou must, and go thou wilt—return to thy thralldom?"

"Call it not thralldom, mother; it is the service of an honourable soldier—the only service which is now open to the son of MacTavish Mhor."

"Yet say what is the penalty if thou shouldst not return?" replied Elspat.

"Military punishment as a deserter," answered Hamish, writhing, however, as his mother failed not to observe, under some internal feelings, which she resolved to probe to the uttermost.

"And that," she said, with assumed calmness, which her glancing eye disowned, "is the punishment of a disobedient hound, is it not?"

"Ask me no more, mother," said Hamish; "the punishment is nothing to one who will never deserve it."

"To me it is something," replied Elspat, "since I know better than thou, that where there is power to inflict, there is often the will to do so without cause. I would pray for thee, Hamish, and I must know against what evils I should beseech Him who leaves none unguarded, to protect thy youth and simplicity."

"Mother," said Hamish, "it signifies little to what a criminal may be exposed, if a man is determined not to be such. Our Highland chiefs used also to punish their vassals, and, as I have heard, severely. Was it not Lachlan MacIain, whom we remember of old, whose head was struck off by order of his chieftain for shooting at the stag before him?"

"Ay," said Elspat, "and right he had to lose it, since he dishonoured the father of the people even in the face of the assembled clan. But the chiefs were noble in their ire; they punished with the sharp blade, and not with the baton. Their punishments drew blood, but they did not infer dishonour. Canst thou say, the same for the laws under whose yoke thou hast placed thy freeborn neck?"

"I cannot, mother—I cannot," said Hamish mournfully. "I saw them punish a Sassenach for deserting as they called it, his banner. He was scourged—I own it—scourged like a hound who has offended an imperious master. I was sick at the sight—I confess it. But the punishment of dogs is only for those worse than dogs, who know not how to keep their faith."

"To this infamy, however, thou hast subjected thyself, Hamish," replied Elspat, "if thou shouldst give, or thy officers take, measure of offence against thee. I speak no more to thee on thy purpose. Were the sixth day from this morning's sun my dying day, and thou wert to stay to close mine eyes, thou wouldst run the risk of being lashed like a dog at a post—yes! unless thou hadst the gallant heart to leave me to die alone, and upon my desolate hearth, the last spark of thy father's fire, and of thy forsaken mother's life, to be extinguished together!"—Hamish traversed the hut with an impatient and angry pace.

"Mother," he said at length, "concern not yourself about such things. I cannot be subjected to such infamy, for never will I deserve it; and were I threatened with it, I should know how to die before I was so far dishonoured."

"There spoke the son of the husband of my heart!" replied Elspat, and she changed the discourse, and seemed to listen in melancholy acquiescence, when her son reminded her how short the time was which they were permitted to pass in each other's society, and entreated that it might be spent without useless and unpleasant recollections respecting the circumstances under which they must soon be separated.

Elspat was now satisfied that her son, with some of his father's other properties, preserved the haughty masculine spirit which rendered it impossible to divert him from a resolution which he had deliberately adopted. She assumed, therefore, an exterior of apparent submission to their inevitable separation; and if she now and then broke out into complaints and murmurs, it was either that she could not altogether suppress the natural impetuosity of her temper, or because she had the wit to consider that a total and unreserved acquiescence might have seemed to her son constrained and suspicious, and induced him to watch and defeat the means by which she still hoped to prevent his leaving her. Her ardent though selfish affection for her son, incapable of being qualified by a regard for the true interests of the unfortunate object of her attachment, resembled the instinctive fondness of the animal race for their offspring; and diving little farther into futurity than one of the inferior creatures, she only felt that to be separated from Hamish was to die.

In the brief interval permitted them, Elspat exhausted every art which affection could devise, to render agreeable to him the space which they were apparently to spend with each other. Her memory carried her far back into former days, and her stores of legendary history, which furnish at all times a principal amusement of the Highlander in his moments of repose, were augmented by an unusual acquaintance with the songs of ancient bards, and traditions of the most approved seannachies and tellers of tales. Her officious attentions to her son's accommodation, indeed, were so unremitted as almost to give him pain, and he endeavoured quietly to prevent her from taking so much personal toil in selecting the blooming heath for his bed, or preparing the meal for his refreshment. "Let me alone, Hamish," she would reply on such occasions; "you follow your own will in departing from your mother, let your mother have hers in doing what gives her pleasure while you remain."

So much she seemed to be reconciled to the arrangements which he had made in her behalf, that she could hear him speak to her of her removing to the lands of Green Colin, as the gentleman was called, on whose estate he had provided her an asylum. In truth, however, nothing could be farther from her thoughts. From what he had said during their first violent dispute, Elspat had gathered that, if Hamish returned not by the appointed time permitted by his furlough, he would incur the hazard of corporal punishment. Were he placed within the risk of being thus dishonoured, she was well aware that he would never submit to the disgrace by a return to the regiment where it might be inflicted. Whether she looked to any farther probable consequences of her unhappy scheme cannot be known; but the partner of MacTavish Mhor, in all his perils and wanderings, was familiar with an hundred instances of resistance or escape, by which one brave man, amidst a land of rocks, lakes, and mountains, dangerous passes, and dark forests, might baffle the pursuit of hundreds. For the future, therefore, she feared nothing; her sole engrossing object was to prevent her son from keeping his word with his commanding officer.

With this secret purpose, she evaded the proposal which Hamish repeatedly made, that they should set out together to take possession of her new abode; and she resisted it upon grounds apparently so natural to her character that her son was neither alarmed nor displeased. "Let me not," she said, "in the same short week, bid farewell to my only son, and to the glen in which I have so long dwelt. Let my eye, when dimmed with weeping for thee, still look around, for a while at least, upon Loch Awe and on Ben Cruachan."

Hamish yielded the more willingly to his mother's humour in this particular, that one or two persons who resided in a neighbouring glen, and had given their sons to Barcaldine's levy, were also to be provided for on the estate of the chieftain, and it was apparently settled that Elspat was to take her journey along with them when they should remove to their new residence. Thus, Hamish believed that he had at once indulged his mother's humour, and ensured her safety and accommodation. But she nourished in her mind very different thoughts and projects.

The period of Hamish's leave of absence was fast approaching, and more than once he proposed to depart, in such time as to ensure his gaining easily and early Dunbarton, the town where were the head-quarters of his regiment. But still his mother's entreaties, his own natural disposition to linger among scenes long dear to him, and, above all, his firm reliance in his speed and activity, induced him to protract his departure till the sixth day, being the very last which he could possibly afford to spend with his mother, if indeed he meant to comply with the conditions of his furlough.

CHAPTER V.

But for your son, believe it—oh, believe it—

Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,

If not most mortal to him. CORIOLANUS.

On the evening which preceded his proposed departure, Hamish walked down to the river with his fishing-rod, to practise in the Awe, for the last time, a sport in which he excelled, and to find, at the same time, the means for making one social meal with his mother on something better than their ordinary cheer. He was as successful as usual, and soon killed a fine salmon. On his return homeward an incident befell him, which he afterwards related as ominous, though probably his heated imagination, joined to the universal turn of his countrymen for the marvellous, exaggerated into superstitious importance some very ordinary and accidental circumstance.

In the path which he pursued homeward, he was surprised to observe a person, who, like himself, was dressed and armed after the old Highland fashion. The first idea that struck him was, that the passenger belonged to his own corps, who, levied by government, and bearing arms under royal authority, were not amenable for breach of the statutes against the use of the Highland garb or weapons. But he was struck on perceiving, as he mended his pace to make up to his supposed comrade, meaning to request his company for the next day's journey, that the stranger wore a white cockade, the fatal badge which was proscribed in the Highlands. The stature of the man was tall, and there was something shadowy in the outline, which added to his size; and his mode of motion, which rather resembled gliding than walking, impressed Hamish with superstitious fears concerning the character of the being which thus passed before him in the twilight. He no longer strove to make up to the stranger, but contented himself with keeping him in view, under the superstition common to the Highlanders, that you ought neither to intrude yourself on such supernatural apparitions as you may witness, nor avoid their presence, but leave it to themselves to withhold or extend their communication, as their power may permit, or the purpose of their commission require.

Upon an elevated knoll by the side of the road, just where the pathway turned down to Elspat's hut, the stranger made a pause, and seemed to await Hamish's coming up. Hamish, on his part, seeing it was necessary he should pass the object of his suspicion, mustered up his courage, and approached the spot where the stranger had placed himself; who first pointed to Elspat's hut, and made, with arm and head, a gesture prohibiting Hamish to approach it, then stretched his hand to the road which led to the southward, with a motion which seemed to enjoin his instant departure in that direction. In a moment afterwards the plaided form was gone—Hamish did not exactly say vanished, because there were rocks and stunted trees enough to have concealed him; but it was his own opinion that he had seen the spirit of MacTavish Mhor, warning him to commence his instant journey to Dunbarton, without waiting till morning, or again visiting his mother's hut.

In fact, so many accidents might arise to delay his journey, especially where there were many ferries, that it became his settled purpose, though he could not depart without bidding his mother adieu, that he neither could nor would abide longer than for that object; and that the first glimpse of next day's sun should see him many miles advanced towards Dunbarton. He descended the path, therefore, and entering the cottage, he communicated, in a hasty and troubled voice, which indicated mental agitation, his determination to take his instant departure. Somewhat to his surprise, Elspat appeared not to combat his purpose, but she urged him to take some refreshment ere he left her for ever. He did so hastily, and in silence, thinking on the approaching separation, and scarce yet believing it would take place without a final struggle with his mother's fondness. To his surprise, she filled the quaigh with liquor for his parting cup.

"Go," she said, "my son, since such is thy settled purpose; but first stand once more on thy mother's hearth, the flame on which will be extinguished long ere thy foot shall again be placed there."

"To your health, mother!" said Hamish; "and may we meet again in happiness, in spite of your ominous words."

"It were better not to part," said his mother, watching him as he quaffed the liquor, of which he would have held it ominous to have left a drop.

"And now," she said, muttering the words to herself, "go—if thou canst go."

"Mother," said Hamish, as he replaced on the table the empty quaigh, "thy drink is pleasant to the taste, but it takes away the strength which it ought to give."

"Such is its first effect, my son," replied Elspat. "But lie down upon that soft heather couch, shut your eyes but for a moment, and, in the sleep of an hour, you shall have more refreshment than in the ordinary repose of three whole nights, could they be blended into one."

"Mother," said Hamish, upon whose brain the potion was now taking rapid effect, "give me my bonnet—I must kiss you and begone—yet it seems as if my feet were nailed to the floor."

"Indeed," said his mother, "you will be instantly well, if you will sit down for half an hour—but half an hour. It is eight hours to dawn, and dawn were time enough for your father's son to begin such a journey."

"I must obey you, mother—I feel I must," said Hamish inarticulately; "but call me when the moon rises."

He sat down on the bed, reclined back, and almost instantly was fast asleep. With the throbbing glee of one who has brought to an end a difficult and troublesome enterprise, Elspat proceeded tenderly to arrange the plaid of the unconscious slumberer, to whom her extravagant affection was doomed to be so fatal, expressing, while busied in her office, her delight, in tones of mingled tenderness and triumph. "Yes," she said, "calf of my heart, the moon shall arise and set to thee, and so shall the sun; but not to light thee from the land of thy fathers, or tempt thee to serve the foreign prince or the feudal enemy! To no son of Dermid shall I be delivered, to be fed like a bondswoman; but he who is my pleasure and my pride shall be my guard and my protector. They say the Highlands are changed; but I see Ben Cruachan rear his crest as high as ever into the evening sky; no one hath yet herded his kine on the depths of Loch Awe; and yonder oak does not yet bend like a willow. The children of the mountains will be such as their fathers, until the mountains themselves shall be levelled with the strath. In these wild forests, which used to support thousands of the brave, there is still surely subsistence and refuge left for one aged woman, and one gallant youth of the ancient race and the ancient manners."

While the misjudging mother thus exulted in the success of her stratagem, we may mention to the reader that it was founded on the acquaintance with drugs and simples which Elspat, accomplished in all things belonging to the wild life which she had led, possessed in an uncommon degree, and which she exercised for various purposes. With the herbs, which she knew how to select as well as how to distil, she could relieve more diseases than a regular medical person could easily believe. She applied some to dye the bright colours of the tartan; from others she compounded draughts of various powers, and unhappily possessed the secret of one which was strongly soporific. Upon the effects of this last concoction, as the reader doubtless has anticipated, she reckoned with security on delaying Hamish beyond the period for which his return was appointed; and she trusted to his horror for the apprehended punishment to which he was thus rendered liable, to prevent him from returning at all.

Sound and deep, beyond natural rest, was the sleep of Hamish MacTavish on that eventful evening, but not such the repose of his mother. Scarce did she close her eyes from time to time, but she awakened again with a start, in the terror that her son had arisen and departed; and it was only on approaching his couch, and hearing his deep-drawn and regular breathing, that she reassured herself of the security of the repose in which he was plunged.

Still, dawning, she feared, might awaken him, notwithstanding the unusual strength of the potion with which she had drugged his cup. If there remained a hope of mortal man accomplishing the journey, she was aware that Hamish would attempt it, though he were to die from fatigue upon the road. Animated by this new fear, she studied to exclude the light, by stopping all the crannies and crevices through which, rather than through any regular entrance, the morning beams might find access to her miserable dwelling; and this in order to detain amid its wants and wretchedness the being on whom, if the world itself had been at her disposal, she would have joyfully conferred it.

Her pains were bestowed unnecessarily. The sun rose high above the heavens, and not the fleetest stag in Breadalbane, were the hounds at his heels, could have sped, to save his life, so fast as would have been necessary to keep Hamish's appointment. Her purpose was fully attained—her son's return within the period assigned was impossible. She deemed it equally impossible, that he would ever dream of returning, standing, as he must now do, in the danger of an infamous punishment. By degrees, and at different times, she had gained from him a full acquaintance with the predicament in which he would be placed by failing to appear on the day appointed, and the very small hope he could entertain of being treated with lenity.

It is well known, that the great and wise Earl of Chatham prided himself on the scheme, by which he drew together for the defence of the colonies those hardy Highlanders, who, until his time, had been the objects of doubt, fear, and suspicion, on the part of each successive administration. But some obstacles occurred, from the peculiar habits and temper of this people, to the execution of his patriotic project. By nature and habit, every Highlander was accustomed to the use of arms, but at the same time totally unaccustomed to, and impatient of, the restraints imposed by discipline upon regular troops. They were a species of militia, who had no conception of a camp as their only home. If a battle was lost, they dispersed to save themselves, and look out for the safety of their families; if won, they went back to their glens to hoard up their booty, and attend to their cattle and their farms. This privilege of going and coming at pleasure, they would not be deprived of even by their chiefs, whose authority was in most other respects so despotic. It followed as a matter of course, that the new-levied Highland recruits could scarce be made to comprehend the nature of a military engagement, which compelled a man to serve in the army longer than he pleased; and perhaps, in many instances, sufficient care was not taken at enlisting to explain to them the permanency of the engagement which they came under, lest such a disclosure should induce them to change their mind. Desertions were therefore become numerous from the newly-raised regiment, and the veteran general who commanded at Dunbarton saw no better way of checking them than by causing an unusually severe example to be made of a deserter from an English corps. The young Highland regiment was obliged to attend upon the punishment, which struck a people, peculiarly jealous of personal honour, with equal horror and disgust, and not unnaturally indisposed some of them to the service. The old general, however, who had been regularly bred in the German wars, stuck to his own opinion, and gave out in orders that the first Highlander who might either desert, or fail to appear at the expiry of his furlough, should be brought to the halberds, and punished like the culprit whom they had seen in that condition. No man doubted that General — would keep his word rigorously whenever severity was required, and Elspat, therefore, knew that her son, when he perceived that due compliance with his orders was impossible, must at the same time consider the degrading punishment denounced against his defection as inevitable, should he place himself within the general's power. [See Note 10.—Fidelity of the Highlanders.]

When noon was well passed, new apprehensions came on the mind of the lonely woman. Her son still slept under the influence of the draught; but what if, being stronger than she had ever known it administered, his health or his reason should be affected by its potency? For the first time, likewise, notwithstanding her high ideas on the subject of parental authority, she began to dread the resentment of her son, whom her heart told her she had wronged. Of late, she had observed that his temper was less docile, and his determinations, especially upon this late occasion of his enlistment, independently formed, and then boldly carried through. She remembered the stern wilfulness of his father when he accounted himself ill-used, and began to dread that Hamish, upon finding the deceit she had put upon him, might resent it even to the extent of cutting her off, and pursuing his own course through the world alone. Such were the alarming and yet the reasonable apprehensions which began to crowd upon the unfortunate woman, after the apparent success of her ill-advised stratagem.

It was near evening when Hamish first awoke, and then he was far from being in the full possession either of his mental or bodily powers. From his vague expressions and disordered pulse, Elspat at first experienced much apprehension; but she used such expedients as her medical knowledge suggested, and in the course of the night she had the satisfaction to see him sink once more into a deep sleep, which probably carried off the greater part of the effects of the drug, for about sunrising she heard him arise, and call to her for his bonnet. This she had purposely removed, from a fear that he might awaken and depart in the night-time, without her knowledge.

"My bonnet—my bonnet," cried Hamish; "it is time to take farewell. Mother, your drink was too strong—the sun is up—but with the next morning I will still see the double summit of the ancient Dun. My bonnet—my bonnet, mother; I must be instant in my departure." These expressions made it plain that poor Hamish was

unconscious that two nights and a day had passed since he had drained the fatal quag, and Elspat had now to venture on what she felt as the almost perilous, as well as painful, task of explaining her machinations.

"Forgive me, my son," she said, approaching Hamish, and taking him by the hand with an air of deferential awe, which perhaps she had not always used to his father, even when in his moody fits.

"Forgive you, mother!—for what?" said Hamish, laughing; "for giving me a dram that was too strong, and which my head still feels this morning, or for hiding my bonnet to keep me an instant longer? Nay, do YOU forgive ME. Give me the bonnet, and let that be done which now must be done. Give me my bonnet, or I go without it; surely I am not to be delayed by so trifling a want as that—I, who have gone for years with only a strap of deer's hide to tie back my hair. Trifle not, but give it me, or I must go bareheaded, since to stay is impossible."

"My son," said Elspat, keeping fast hold of his hand, "what is done cannot be recalled. Could you borrow the wings of yonder eagle, you would arrive at the Dun too late for what you purpose—too soon for what awaits you there. You believe you see the sun rising for the first time since you have seen him set; but yesterday beheld him climb Ben Cruachan, though your eyes were closed to his light."

Hamish cast upon his mother a wild glance of extreme terror, then instantly recovering himself, said, "I am no child to be cheated out of my purpose by such tricks as these. Farewell, mother! each moment is worth a lifetime."

"Stay," she said, "my dear, my deceived son, run not on infamy and ruin. Yonder I see the priest upon the high-road on his white horse. Ask him the day of the month and week; let him decide between us."

With the speed of an eagle, Hamish darted up the acclivity, and stood by the minister of Glenorquhy, who was pacing out thus early to administer consolation to a distressed family near Bunawe.

The good man was somewhat startled to behold an armed Highlander, then so unusual a sight, and apparently much agitated, stop his horse by the bridle, and ask him with a faltering voice the day of the week and month. "Had you been where you should have been yesterday, young man," replied the clergyman, "you would have known that it was God's Sabbath; and that this is Monday, the second day of the week, and twenty-first of the month."

"And this is true?" said Hamish.

"As true," answered the surprised minister, "as that I yesterday preached the word of God to this parish. What ails you, young man?—are you sick?—are you in your right mind?"

Hamish made no answer, only repeated to himself the first expression of the clergyman, "Had you been where you should have been yesterday," and so saying, he let go the bridle, turned from the road, and descended the path towards the hut, with the look and pace of one who was going to execution. The minister looked after him with surprise; but although he knew the inhabitant of the hovel, the character of Elspat had not invited him to open any communication with her, because she was generally reputed a Papist, or rather one indifferent to all religion, except some superstitious observances which had been handed down from her parents. On Hamish the Reverend Mr. Tyrie had bestowed instructions when he was occasionally thrown in his way; and if the seed fell among the brambles and thorns of a wild and uncultivated disposition, it had not yet been entirely checked or destroyed. There was something so ghastly in the present expression of the youth's features that the good man was tempted to go down to the hovel, and inquire whether any distress had befallen the inhabitants, in which his presence might be consoling and his ministry useful. Unhappily he did not persevere in this resolution, which might have saved a great misfortune, as he would have probably become a mediator for the unfortunate young man; but a recollection of the wild moods of such Highlanders as had been educated after the old fashion of the country, prevented his interesting himself in the widow and son of the far-dreaded robber, MacTavish Mhor, and he thus missed an opportunity, which he afterwards sorely repented, of doing much good.

When Hamish MacTavish entered his mother's hut, it was only to throw himself on the bed he had left, and exclaiming, "Undone, undone!" to give vent, in cries of grief and anger, to his deep sense of the deceit which had been practised on him, and of the cruel predicament to which he was reduced.

Elspat was prepared for the first explosion of her son's passion, and said to herself, "It is but the mountain torrent, swelled by the thunder shower. Let us sit and rest us by the bank; for all its present tumult, the time will soon come when we may pass it dryshod." She suffered his complaints and his reproaches, which were, even in the midst of his agony, respectful and affectionate, to die away without returning any answer; and when, at length, having exhausted all the exclamations of sorrow which his language, copious in expressing the feelings of the heart, affords to the sufferer, he sunk into a gloomy silence, she suffered the interval to continue near an hour ere she approached her son's couch.

"And now," she said at length, with a voice in which the authority of the mother was qualified by her tenderness, "have you exhausted your idle sorrows, and are you able to place what you have gained against what you have lost? Is the false son of Dermid your brother, or the father of your tribe, that you weep because you cannot bind yourself to his belt, and become one of those who must do his bidding? Could you find in yonder distant country the lakes and the mountains that you leave behind you here? Can you hunt the deer of Breadalbane in the forests of America, or will the ocean afford you the silver-scaled salmon of the Awe? Consider, then, what is your loss, and, like a wise man, set it against what you have won."

"I have lost all, mother," replied Hamish, "since I have broken my word, and lost my honour. I might tell my tale, but who, oh, who would believe me?" The unfortunate young man again clasped his hands together, and, pressing them to his forehead, hid his face upon the bed.

Elspat was now really alarmed, and perhaps wished the fatal deceit had been left unattempted. She had no hope or refuge saving in the eloquence of persuasion, of which she possessed no small share, though her total ignorance of the world as it actually existed rendered its energy unavailing. She urged her son, by every tender epithet which a parent could bestow, to take care for his own safety.

"Leave me," she said, "to baffle your pursuers. I will save your life—I will save your honour. I will tell them that my fair-haired Hamish fell from the Corrie Dhu (black precipice) into the gulf, of which human eye never beheld the bottom. I will tell them this, and I will fling your plaid on the thorns which grow on the brink of the precipice, that they may believe my words. They will believe, and they will return to the Dun of the double-crest; for though the Saxon drum can call the living to die, it cannot recall the dead to their slavish standard. Then will we travel together far northward to the salt lakes of Kintail, and place glens and mountains betwixt us and the sons of Dermid. We will visit the shores of the dark lake; and my kinsmen—for was not my mother of the children of Kenneth, and will they not remember us with the old love?—my kinsmen will receive us with the affection of the olden time, which lives in those distant glens, where the Gael still dwell in their nobleness, unmingled with the churl Saxons, or with the base brood that are their tools and their slaves."

The energy of the language, somewhat allied to hyperbole, even in its most ordinary expressions, now seemed almost too weak to afford Elspat the means of bringing out the splendid picture which she presented to her son of the land in which she proposed to him to take refuge. Yet the colours were few with which she could paint her Highland paradise. "The hills," she said, "were higher and more magnificent than those of Breadalbane—Ben Cruachan was but a dwarf to Skooroora. The lakes were broader and larger, and abounded not only with fish, but with the enchanted and amphibious animal which gives oil to the lamp. [The seals are considered by the Highlanders as enchanted princes.] The deer were larger and more numerous; the white-tusked boar, the chase of which the brave loved best, was yet to be roused in those western solitudes; the men were nobler, wiser, and stronger than the degenerate brood who lived under the Saxon banner. The daughters of the land were beautiful, with blue eyes and fair hair, and bosoms of snow; and out of these she would choose a wife for Hamish, of blameless descent, spotless fame, fixed and true affection, who should be in their summer bothy as a beam of the sun, and in their winter abode as the warmth of the needful fire."

Such were the topics with which Elspat strove to soothe the despair of her son, and to determine him, if possible, to leave the fatal spot, on which he seemed resolved to linger. The style of her rhetoric was poetical, but in other respects resembled that which, like other fond mothers, she had lavished on Hamish, while a child or a boy, in order to gain his consent to do something he had no mind to; and she spoke louder, quicker, and more earnestly, in proportion as she began to despair of her words carrying conviction.

On the mind of Hamish her eloquence made no impression. He knew far better than she did the actual situation of the country, and was sensible that, though it might be possible to hide himself as a fugitive among more distant mountains, there was now no corner in the Highlands in which his father's profession could be practised, even if he had not adopted, from the improved ideas of the time when he lived, the opinion that the trade of the cateran was no longer the road to honour and distinction. Her words were therefore poured into regardless ears, and she exhausted herself in vain in the attempt to paint the regions of her mother's kinsmen in such terms as might tempt Hamish to accompany her thither. She spoke for hours, but she spoke in vain. She could extort no answer, save groans and sighs and ejaculations, expressing the extremity of despair.

At length, starting on her feet, and changing the monotonous tone in which she had chanted, as it were, the praises of the province of refuge, into the short, stern language of eager passion—"I am a fool," she said, "to spend my words upon an idle, poor-spirited, unintelligent boy, who crouches like a hound to the lash. Wait here, and receive your taskmasters, and abide your chastisement at their hands; but do not think your mother's eyes will behold it. I could not see it and live. My eyes have looked often upon death, but never upon dishonour. Farewell, Hamish! We never meet again."

She dashed from the hut like a lapwing, and perhaps for the moment actually entertained the purpose which she expressed, of parting with her son for ever. A fearful sight she would have been that evening to any who might have met her wandering through the wilderness like a restless spirit, and speaking to herself in language which will endure no translation. She rambled for hours, seeking rather than shunning the most dangerous paths. The precarious track through the morass, the dizzy path along the edge of the precipice or by the banks of the gulfing river, were the roads which, far from avoiding, she sought with eagerness, and traversed with reckless haste. But the courage arising from despair was the means of saving the life which (though deliberate suicide was rarely practised in the Highlands) she was perhaps desirous of terminating. Her step on the verge of the precipice was firm as that of the wild goat. Her eye, in that state of excitement, was so keen as to discern, even amid darkness, the perils which noon would not have enabled a stranger to avoid.

Elspat's course was not directly forward, else she had soon been far from the bothy in which she had left her son. It was circuitous, for that hut was the centre to which her heartstrings were chained, and though she wandered around it, she felt it impossible to leave the vicinity. With the first beams of morning she returned to the hut. Awhile she paused at the wattled door, as if ashamed that lingering fondness should have brought her back to the spot which she had left with the purpose of never returning; but there was yet more of fear and anxiety in her hesitation—of anxiety, lest her fair-haired son had suffered from the effects of her potion—of fear, lest his enemies had come upon him in the night. She opened the door of the hut gently, and entered with noiseless step. Exhausted with his sorrow and anxiety, and not entirely relieved perhaps from the influence of the powerful opiate, Hamish Bean again slept the stern, sound sleep by which the Indians are said to be overcome during the interval of their torments. His mother was scarcely sure that she actually discerned his form on the bed, scarce certain that her ear caught the sound of his breathing. With a throbbing heart, Elspat went to the fireplace in the centre of the hut, where slumbered, covered with a piece of turf, the glimmering embers of the fire, never extinguished on a Scottish hearth until the indwellers leave the mansion for ever.

"Feeble greishogh," [Greishogh, a glowing ember.] she said, as she lighted, by the help of a match, a splinter of bog pine which was to serve the place of a candle—"weak greishogh, soon shalt thou be put out for ever, and may Heaven grant that the life of Elspat MacTavish have no longer duration than thine!"

While she spoke she raised the blazing light towards the bed, on which still lay the prostrate limbs of her son, in a posture that left it doubtful whether he slept or swooned. As she advanced towards him, the light flashed upon his eyes—he started up in an instant, made a stride forward with his naked dirk in his hand, like a man armed to meet a mortal enemy, and exclaimed, "Stand off!—on thy life, stand off!"

"It is the word and the action of my husband," answered Elspat; "and I know by his speech and his step the son of MacTavish Mhor."

"Mother," said Hamish, relapsing from his tone of desperate firmness into one of melancholy expostulation—"oh, dearest mother, wherefore have you returned hither?"

"Ask why the hind comes back to the fawn," said Elspat, "why the cat of the mountain returns to her lodge and her young. Know you, Hamish, that the heart of the mother only lives in the bosom of the child."

"Then will it soon cease to throb," said Hamish, "unless it can beat within a bosom that lies beneath the turf. Mother, do not blame me. If I weep, it is not for myself but for you; for my sufferings will soon be over, but yours—oh, who but Heaven shall set a boundary to them?"

Elspat shuddered and stepped backward, but almost instantly resumed her firm and upright position and her dauntless bearing.

"I thought thou wert a man but even now," she said, "and thou art again a child. Harken to me yet, and let us leave this place together. Have I done thee wrong or injury? if so, yet do not avenge it so cruelly. See, Elspat MacTavish, who never kneeled before even to a priest, falls prostrate before her own son, and craves his forgiveness." And at once she threw herself on her knees before the young man, seized on his hand, and kissing it an hundred times, repeated as often, in heart-breaking accents, the most earnest entreaties for forgiveness. "Pardon," she exclaimed, "pardon, for the sake of your father's ashes—pardon, for the sake of the pain with which I bore thee, the care with which I nurtured thee!—Hear it, Heaven, and behold it, Earth—the mother asks pardon of her child, and she is refused!"

It was in vain that Hamish endeavoured to stem this tide of passion, by assuring his mother, with the most solemn asseverations, that he forgave entirely the fatal deceit which she had practised upon him.

"Empty words," she said, "idle protestations, which are but used to hide the obduracy of your resentment. Would you have me believe you, then leave the hut this instant, and retire from a country which every hour renders more dangerous. Do this, and I may think you have forgiven me; refuse it, and again I call on moon and stars, heaven and earth, to witness the unrelenting resentment with which you prosecute your mother for a fault, which, if it be one, arose out of love to you."

"Mother," said Hamish, "on this subject you move me not. I will fly before no man. If Barcaldine should send every Gael that is under his banner, here, and in this place, will I abide them; and when you bid me fly, you may as well command yonder mountain to be loosened from its foundations. Had I been sure of the road by which they are coming hither, I had spared them the pains of seeking me; but I might go by the mountain, while they perchance came by the lake. Here I will abide my fate; nor is there in Scotland a voice of power enough to bid me stir from hence, and be obeyed."

"Here, then, I also stay," said Elspat, rising up and speaking with assumed composure. "I have seen my husband's death—my eyelids shall not grieve to look on the fall of my son. But MacTavish Mhor died as became the brave, with his good sword in his right hand; my son will perish like the bullock that is driven to the shambles by the Saxon owner who had bought him for a price."

"Mother," said the unhappy young man, "you have taken my life. To that you have a right, for you gave it; but touch not my honour! It came to me from a brave train of ancestors, and should be sullied neither by man's deed nor woman's speech. What I shall do, perhaps I myself yet know not; but tempt me no farther by reproachful words—you have already made wounds more than you can ever heal."

"It is well, my son," said Elspat, in reply. "Expect neither farther complaint nor remonstrance from me; but let us be silent, and wait the chance which Heaven shall send us."

The sun arose on the next morning, and found the bothy silent as the grave. The mother and son had arisen, and were engaged each in their separate task—Hamish in preparing and cleaning his arms with the greatest accuracy, but with an air of deep dejection. Elspat, more restless in her agony of spirit, employed herself in making ready the food which the distress of yesterday had induced them both to dispense with for an unusual number of hours. She placed it on the board before her son so soon as it was prepared, with the words of a Gaelic poet, "Without daily food, the husbandman's ploughshare stands still in the furrow; without daily food, the sword of the warrior is too heavy for his hand. Our bodies are our slaves, yet they must be fed if we would have their service. So spake in ancient days the Blind Bard to the warriors of Fion."

The young man made no reply, but he fed on what was placed before him, as if to gather strength for the scene which he was to undergo. When his mother saw that he had eaten what sufficed him, she again filled the fatal quaigh, and proffered it as the conclusion of the repast. But he started aside with a convulsive gesture, expressive at once of fear and abhorrence.

"Nay, my son," she said, "this time surely, thou hast no cause of fear."

"Urge me not, mother," answered Hamish—"or put the leprous toad into a flagon, and I will drink; but from that accursed cup, and of that mind-destroying potion, never will I taste more!"

"At your pleasure, my son," said Elspat, haughtily, and began, with much apparent assiduity, the various domestic tasks which had been interrupted during the preceding day. Whatever was at her heart, all anxiety seemed banished from her looks and demeanour. It was but from an over-activity of bustling exertion that it might have been perceived, by a close observer, that her actions were spurred by some internal cause of painful excitement; and such a spectator, too, might also have observed how often she broke off the snatches of songs or tunes which she hummed, apparently without knowing what she was doing, in order to cast a hasty glance from the door of the hut. Whatever might be in the mind of Hamish, his demeanour was directly the reverse of that adopted by his mother. Having finished the task of cleaning and preparing his arms, which he arranged within the hut, he sat himself down before the door of the bothy, and watched the opposite hill, like the fixed sentinel who expects the approach of an enemy. Noon found him in the same unchanged posture, and it was an hour after that period, when his mother, standing beside him, laid her hand on his shoulder, and said, in a tone indifferent, as if she had been talking of some friendly visit, "When dost thou expect them?"

"They cannot be here till the shadows fall long to the eastward," replied Hamish; "that is, even supposing the nearest party, commanded by Sergeant Allan Breack Cameron, has been commanded hither by express from Dunbarton, as it is most likely they will."

"Then enter beneath your mother's roof once more; partake the last time of the food which she has prepared; after this, let them come, and thou shalt see if thy mother is an useless encumbrance in the day of strife. Thy hand, practised as it is, cannot fire these arms so fast as I can load them; nay, if it is necessary, I do not myself fear the flash or the report, and my aim has been held fatal."

"In the name of Heaven, mother, meddle not with this matter!" said Hamish. "Allan Breack is a wise man and a kind one, and comes of a good stem. It may be, he can promise for our officers that they will touch me with no infamous punishment; and if they offer me confinement in the dungeon, or death by the musket, to that I may not object."

"Alas, and wilt thou trust to their word, my foolish child? Remember the race of Dermid were ever fair and false; and no sooner shall they have gyves on thy hands, than they will strip thy shoulders for the scourge."

"Save your advice, mother," said Hamish, sternly; "for me, my mind is made up."

But though he spoke thus, to escape the almost persecuting urgency of his mother, Hamish would have found it, at that moment, impossible to say upon what course of conduct he had thus fixed. On one point alone he was determined—namely, to abide his destiny, be what it might, and not to add to the breach of his word, of which he had been involuntarily rendered guilty, by attempting to escape from punishment. This act of self-devotion he conceived to be due to his own honour and that of his countrymen. Which of his comrades would in future be trusted, if he should be considered as having broken his word, and betrayed the confidence of his officers? and whom but Hamish Bean MacTavish would the Gael accuse for having verified and confirmed the suspicions which the Saxon General was well known to entertain against the good faith of the Highlanders? He was, therefore, bent firmly to abide his fate. But whether his intention was to yield himself peaceably into the bands of the party who should come to apprehend him, or whether he purposed, by a show of resistance, to provoke them to kill him on the spot, was a question which he could not himself have answered. His desire to see Barcaldine, and explain the cause of his absence at the appointed time, urged him to the one course; his fear of the degrading punishment, and of his mother's bitter upbraidings, strongly instigated the latter and the more dangerous purpose. He left it to chance to decide when the crisis should arrive; nor did he tarry long in expectation of the catastrophe.

Evening approached; the gigantic shadows of the mountains streamed in darkness towards the east, while their western peaks were still glowing with crimson and gold. The road which winds round Ben Cruachan was fully visible from the door of the bothy, when a party of five Highland soldiers, whose arms glanced in the sun, wheeled suddenly into sight from the most distant extremity, where the highway is hidden behind the mountain. One of the party walked a little before the other four, who marched regularly and in files, according to the rules of military discipline. There was no dispute, from the firelocks which they carried, and the plaids and bonnets which they wore, that they were a party of Hamish's regiment, under a non-commissioned officer; and there could be as little doubt of the purpose of their appearance on the banks of Loch Awe.

"They come briskly forward"—said the widow of MacTavish Mhor;—"I wonder how fast or how slow some of them will return again! But they are five, and it is too much odds for a fair field. Step back within the hut, my son, and shoot from the loophole beside the door. Two you may bring down ere they quit the highroad for the footpath—there will remain but three; and your father, with my aid, has often stood against that number."

Hamish Bean took the gun which his mother offered, but did not stir from the door of the hut. He was soon visible to the party on the highroad, as was evident from their increasing their pace to a run—the files, however, still keeping together like coupled greyhounds, and advancing with great rapidity. In far less time than would have been accomplished by men less accustomed to the mountains, they had left the highroad, traversed the narrow path, and approached within pistol-shot of the bothy, at the door of which stood Hamish, fixed like a statue of stone, with his firelock in his band, while his mother, placed behind him, and almost driven to frenzy by the violence of her passions, reproached him in the strongest terms which despair could invent, for his want of resolution and faintness of heart. Her words increased the bitter gall which was arising in the young man's own spirit, as he observed the unfriendly speed with which his late comrades were eagerly making towards him, like hounds towards the stag when he is at bay. The untamed and angry passions which he inherited from father and mother, were awakened by the supposed hostility of those who pursued him; and the restraint under which these passions had been hitherto held by his sober judgment began gradually to give way. The sergeant now called to him, "Hamish Bean MacTavish, lay down your arms and surrender."

"Do YOU stand, Allan Breack Cameron, and command your men to stand, or it will be the worse for us all."

"Halt, men," said the sergeant, but continuing himself to advance. "Hamish, think what you do, and give up your gun; you may spill blood, but you cannot escape punishment."

"The scourge—the scourge—my son, beware the scourge!" whispered his mother.

"Take heed, Allan Breack," said Hamish. "I would not hurt you willingly, but I will not be taken unless you can assure me against the Saxon lash."

"Fool!" answered Cameron, "you know I cannot. Yet I will do all I can. I will say I met you on your return, and the punishment will be light; but give up your musket—Come on, men."

Instantly he rushed forward, extending his arm as if to push aside the young man's levelled firelock. Elspat exclaimed, "Now, spare not your father's blood to defend your father's hearth!" Hamish fired his piece, and Cameron dropped dead. All these things happened, it might be said, in the same moment of time. The soldiers rushed forward and seized Hamish, who, seeming petrified with what he had done, offered not the least resistance. Not so his mother, who, seeing the men about to put handcuffs on her son, threw herself on the soldiers with such fury, that it required two of them to hold her, while the rest secured the prisoner.

"Are you not an accursed creature," said one of the men to Hamish, "to have slain your best friend, who was contriving, during the whole march, how he could find some way of getting you off without punishment for your desertion?"

"Do you hear THAT, mother?" said Hamish, turning himself as much towards her as his bonds would permit; but the mother heard nothing, and saw nothing. She had fainted on the floor of her hut. Without waiting for her recovery, the party almost immediately began their homeward march towards Dunbarton, leading along with them their prisoner. They thought it necessary, however, to stay for a little space at the village of Dalmally, from which they despatched a party of the inhabitants to bring away the body of their unfortunate leader, while they themselves repaired to a magistrate, to state what had happened, and require his instructions as to the farther course to be pursued. The crime being of a military character, they were instructed to march the prisoner to Dunbarton without delay. The swoon of the mother of Hamish lasted for a length of time—the longer perhaps that her constitution, strong as it was, must have been much exhausted by her previous agitation of three days' endurance. She was roused from her stupor at length by female voices, which cried the coronach, or lament for the dead, with clapping of hands and loud exclamations; while the melancholy note of a lament, appropriate to the clan Cameron, played on the bagpipe, was heard from time to time.

Elspat started up like one awakened from the dead, and without any accurate recollection of the scene which had passed before her eyes. There were females in the hut who were swathing the corpse in its bloody plaid before carrying it from the fatal spot. "Women," she said, starting up and interrupting their chant at once and their labour—"Tell me, women, why sing you the dirge of MacDhonnill Dhu in the house of MacTavish Mhor?"

"She-wolf, be silent with thine ill-omened yell," answered one of the females, a relation of the deceased, "and let us do our duty to our beloved kinsman. There shall never be coronach cried, or dirge played, for thee or thy bloody wolf-burd. [Wolf-brood—that is, wolf-cub.] The ravens shall eat him from the gibbet, and the foxes and wild-cats shall tear thy corpse upon the hill. Cursed be he that would sain [Bless.] your bones, or add a stone to your cairn!"

"Daughter of a foolish mother," answered the widow of MacTavish Mhor, "know that the gibbet with which you threaten us is no portion of our inheritance. For thirty years the Black Tree of the Law, whose apples are dead men's bodies, hungered after the beloved husband of my heart; but he died like a brave man, with the sword in his hand, and defrauded it of its hopes and its fruit."

"So shall it not be with thy child, bloody sorceress," replied the female mourner, whose passions were as violent as those of Elspat herself. "The ravens shall tear his fair hair to line their nests, before the sun sinks beneath the Treshornish islands."

These words recalled to Elspat's mind the whole history of the last three dreadful days. At first she stood fixed, as if the extremity of distress had converted her into stone; but in a minute, the pride and violence of her temper, outbraved as she thought herself on her own threshold, enabled her to reply, "Yes, insulting hag, my fair-haired boy may die, but it will not be with a white hand. It has been dyed in the blood of his enemy, in the best blood of a Cameron—remember that; and when you lay your dead in his grave, let it be his best epitaph that he was killed by Hamish Bean for essaying to lay hands on the son of MacTavish Mhor on his own threshold. Farewell—the shame of defeat, loss, and slaughter remain with the clan that has endured it!"

The relative of the slaughtered Cameron raised her voice in reply; but Elspat, disdaining to continue the oburgation, or perhaps feeling her grief likely to overmaster her power of expressing her resentment, had left the hut, and was walking forth in the bright moonshine.

The females who were arranging the corpse of the slaughtered man hurried from their melancholy labour to look after her tall figure as it glided away among the cliffs. "I am glad she is gone," said one of the younger persons who assisted. "I would as soon dress a corpse when the great fiend himself—God sain us!—stood visibly before us, as when Elspat of the Tree is amongst us. Ay, ay, even overmuch intercourse hath she had with the enemy in her day."

"Silly woman," answered the female who had maintained the dialogue with the departed Elspat, "thinkest thou that there is a worse fiend on earth, or beneath it, than the pride and fury of an offended woman, like yonder bloody-minded hag? Know that blood has been as familiar to her as the dew to the mountain daisy. Many and many a brave man has she caused to breathe their last for little wrong they had done to her or theirs. But her hough-sinews are cut, now that her wolf-burd must, like a murderer as he is, make a murderer's end."

Whilst the women thus discoursed together, as they watched the corpse of Allan Breack Cameron, the unhappy cause of his death pursued her lonely way across the mountain. While she remained within sight of the bothy, she put a strong constraint on herself, that by no alteration of pace or gesture she might afford to her enemies the triumph of calculating the excess of her mental agitation, nay, despair. She stalked, therefore, with a slow rather than a swift step, and, holding herself upright, seemed at once to endure with firmness that woe which was passed, and bid defiance to that which was about to come. But when she was beyond the sight of those who remained in the hut, she could no longer suppress the extremity of her agitation. Drawing her mantle wildly round her, she stopped at the first knoll, and climbing to its summit, extended her arms up to the bright moon, as if accusing heaven and earth for her misfortunes, and uttered scream on scream, like those of an eagle whose nest has been plundered of her brood. Awhile she vented her grief in these inarticulate cries, then rushed on her way with a hasty and unequal step, in the vain hope of overtaking the party which was conveying her son a prisoner to Dunbarton. But her strength, superhuman as it seemed, failed her in the trial; nor was it possible for her, with her utmost efforts, to accomplish her purpose.

Yet she pressed onward, with all the speed which her exhausted frame could exert. When food became indispensable, she entered the first cottage. "Give me to eat," she said. "I am the widow of MacTavish Mhor—I am the mother of Hamish MacTavish Bean,—give me to eat, that I may once more see my fair-haired son." Her demand was never refused, though granted in many cases with a kind of struggle between compassion and aversion in some of those to whom she applied, which was in others qualified by fear. The share she had had in occasioning the death of Allan Breack Cameron, which must probably involve that of her own son, was not accurately known; but, from a knowledge of her violent passions and former habits of life, no one doubted that in one way or other she had been the cause of the catastrophe, and Hamish Bean was considered, in the slaughter which he had committed, rather as the instrument than as the accomplice of his mother.

This general opinion of his countrymen was of little service to the unfortunate Hamish. As his captain, Green Colin, understood the manners and habits of his country, he had no difficulty in collecting from Hamish the particulars accompanying his supposed desertion, and the subsequent death of the non-commissioned officer. He felt the utmost compassion for a youth, who had thus fallen a victim to the extravagant and fatal fondness of a parent. But he had no excuse to plead which could rescue his unhappy recruit from the doom which military discipline and the award of a court-martial denounced against him for the crime he had committed.

No time had been lost in their proceedings, and as little was interposed betwixt sentence and execution. General — had determined to make a severe example of the first deserter who should fall into his power, and here was one who had defended himself by main force, and slain in the affray the officer sent to take him into custody. A fitter subject for punishment could not have occurred, and Hamish was sentenced to immediate execution. All which the interference of his captain in his favour could procure was that he should die a soldier's death; for there had been a purpose of executing him upon the gibbet.

The worthy clergyman of Glenorquhy chanced to be at Dunbarton, in attendance upon some church courts, at the time of this catastrophe. He visited his unfortunate parishioner in his dungeon, found him ignorant indeed, but not obstinate, and the answers which he received from him, when conversing on religious topics, were such as induced him doubly to regret that a mind naturally pure and noble should have remained unhappily so wild and uncultivated.

When he ascertained the real character and disposition of the young man, the worthy pastor made deep and painful reflections on his own shyness and timidity, which, arising out of the evil fame that attached to the lineage of Hamish, had restrained him from charitably endeavouring to bring this strayed sheep within the great fold. While the good minister blamed his cowardice in times past, which had deterred him from risking his person, to save, perhaps, an immortal soul, he resolved no longer to be governed by such timid counsels, but to endeavour, by application to his officers, to obtain a reprieve, at least, if not a pardon, for the criminal, in whom he felt so unusually interested, at once from his docility of temper and his generosity of disposition.

Accordingly the divine sought out Captain Campbell at the barracks within the garrison. There was a gloomy melancholy on the brow of Green Colin, which was not lessened, but increased, when the clergyman stated his name, quality, and errand. "You cannot tell me better of the young man than I am disposed to believe," answered the Highland officer; "you cannot ask me to do more in his behalf than I am of myself inclined, and have already endeavoured to do. But it is all in vain. General — is half a Lowlander, half an Englishman. He has no idea of the high and enthusiastic character which in these mountains often brings exalted virtues in contact with great crimes, which, however, are less offences of the heart than errors of the understanding. I have gone so far as to tell him, that in this young man he was putting to death the best and the bravest of my company, where all, or almost all, are good and brave. I explained to him by what strange delusion the culprit's apparent desertion was occasioned, and how little his heart was accessory to the crime which his hand unhappily committed. His answer was, 'These are Highland visions, Captain Campbell, as unsatisfactory and vain as those of the second sight. An act of gross desertion may, in any case, be palliated under the plea of intoxication; the murder of an officer may be as easily coloured over with that of temporary insanity. The example must be made, and if it has fallen on a man otherwise a good recruit, it will have the greater effect.' Such being the general's unalterable purpose," continued Captain Campbell, with a sigh, "be it your care, reverend sir, that your penitent prepare by break of day tomorrow for that great change which we shall all one day be subjected to."

"And for which," said the clergyman, "may God prepare us all, as I in my duty will not be wanting to this poor youth!"

Next morning, as the very earliest beams of sunrise saluted the grey towers which crown the summit of that singular and tremendous rock, the soldiers of the new Highland regiment appeared on the parade, within the Castle of Dunbarton, and having fallen into order, began to move downward by steep staircases, and

narrow passages towards the external barrier-gate, which is at the very bottom of the rock. The wild wailings of the pibroch were heard at times, interchanged with the drums and fifes, which beat the Dead March.

The unhappy criminal's fate did not, at first, excite that general sympathy in the regiment which would probably have arisen had he been executed for desertion alone. The slaughter of the unfortunate Allan Breack had given a different colour to Hamish's offence; for the deceased was much beloved, and besides belonged to a numerous and powerful clan, of whom there were many in the ranks. The unfortunate criminal, on the contrary, was little known to, and scarcely connected with, any of his regimental companions. His father had been, indeed, distinguished for his strength and manhood; but he was of a broken clan, as those names were called who had no chief to lead them to battle.

It would have been almost impossible in another case to have turned out of the ranks of the regiment the party necessary for execution of the sentence; but the six individuals selected for that purpose, were friends of the deceased, descended, like him, from the race of MacDhonnail Dhu; and while they prepared for the dismal task which their duty imposed, it was not without a stern feeling of gratified revenge. The leading company of the regiment began now to defile from the barrier-gate, and was followed by the others, each successively moving and halting according to the orders of the adjutant, so as to form three sides of an oblong square, with the ranks faced inwards. The fourth, or blank side of the square, was closed up by the huge and lofty precipice on which the Castle rises. About the centre of the procession, bare-headed, disarmed, and with his hands bound, came the unfortunate victim of military law. He was deadly pale, but his step was firm and his eye as bright as ever. The clergyman walked by his side; the coffin, which was to receive his mortal remains, was borne before him. The looks of his comrades were still, composed, and solemn. They felt for the youth, whose handsome form and manly yet submissive deportment had, as soon as he was distinctly visible to them, softened the hearts of many, even of some who had been actuated by vindictive feelings.

The coffin destined for the yet living body of Hamish Bean was placed at the bottom of the hollow square, about two yards distant from the foot of the precipice, which rises in that place as steep as a stone wall to the height of three or four hundred feet. Thither the prisoner was also led, the clergyman still continuing by his side, pouring forth exhortations of courage and consolation, to which the youth appeared to listen with respectful devotion. With slow, and, it seemed, almost unwilling steps, the firing party entered the square, and were drawn up facing the prisoner, about ten yards distant. The clergyman was now about to retire. "Think, my son," he said, "on what I have told you, and let your hope be rested on the anchor which I have given. You will then exchange a short and miserable existence here for a life in which you will experience neither sorrow nor pain. Is there aught else which you can entrust to me to execute for you?"

The youth looked at his sleeve buttons. They were of gold, booty perhaps which his father had taken from some English officer during the civil wars. The clergyman disengaged them from his sleeves.

"My mother!" he said with some effort—"give them to my poor mother! See her, good father, and teach her what she should think of all this. Tell her Hamish Bean is more glad to die than ever he was to rest after the longest day's hunting. Farewell, sir—farewell!"

The good man could scarce retire from the fatal spot. An officer afforded him the support of his arm. At his last look towards Hamish, he beheld him alive and kneeling on the coffin; the few that were around him had all withdrawn. The fatal word was given, the rock rung sharp to the sound of the discharge, and Hamish, falling forward with a groan, died, it may be supposed, without almost a sense of the passing agony.

Ten or twelve of his own company then came forward, and laid with solemn reverence the remains of their comrade in the coffin, while the Dead March was again struck up, and the several companies, marching in single files, passed the coffin one by one, in order that all might receive from the awful spectacle the warning which it was peculiarly intended to afford. The regiment was then marched off the ground, and reascended the ancient cliff, their music, as usual on such occasions, striking lively strains, as if sorrow, or even deep thought, should as short a while as possible be the tenant of the soldier's bosom.

At the same time the small party, which we before mentioned, bore the bier of the ill-fated Hamish to his humble grave, in a corner of the churchyard of Dunbarton, usually assigned to criminals. Here, among the dust of the guilty, lies a youth, whose name, had he survived the ruin of the fatal events by which he was hurried into crime, might have adorned the annals of the brave.

The minister of Glenorquhy left Dunbarton immediately after he had witnessed the last scene of this melancholy catastrophe. His reason acquiesced in the justice of the sentence, which required blood for blood, and he acknowledged that the vindictive character of his countrymen required to be powerfully restrained by the strong curb of social law. But still he mourned over the individual victim. Who may arraign the bolt of Heaven when it bursts among the sons of the forest? yet who can refrain from mourning when it selects for the object of its blighting aim the fair stem of a young oak, that promised to be the pride of the dell in which it flourished? Musing on these melancholy events, noon found him engaged in the mountain passes, by which he was to return to his still distant home.

Confident in his knowledge of the country, the clergyman had left the main road, to seek one of those shorter paths, which are only used by pedestrians, or by men, like the minister, mounted on the small, but sure-footed, hardy, and sagacious horses of the country. The place which he now traversed was in itself gloomy and desolate, and tradition had added to it the terror of superstition, by affirming it was haunted by an evil spirit, termed CLOGHT-DEARG—that is, Redmantle—who at all times, but especially at noon and at midnight, traversed the glen, in enmity both to man and the inferior creation, did such evil as her power was permitted to extend to, and afflicted with ghastly terrors those whom she had not license otherwise to hurt.

The minister of Glenorquhy had set his face in opposition to many of these superstitions, which he justly thought were derived from the dark ages of Popery, perhaps even from those of paganism, and unfit to be entertained or believed by the Christians of an enlightened age. Some of his more attached parishioners considered him as too rash in opposing the ancient faith of their fathers; and though they honoured the moral intrepidity of their pastor, they could not avoid entertaining and expressing fears that he would one day fall a victim to his temerity, and be torn to pieces in the glen of the Cloght-dearg, or some of those other haunted wilds, which he appeared rather to have a pride and pleasure in traversing alone, on the days and hours when the wicked spirits were supposed to have especial power over man and beast.

These legends came across the mind of the clergyman, and, solitary as he was, a melancholy smile shaded his cheek, as he thought of the inconsistency of human nature, and reflected how many brave men, whom the yell of the pibroch would have sent headlong against fixed bayonets, as the wild bull rushes on his enemy, might have yet feared to encounter those visionary terrors, which he himself, a man of peace, and in ordinary perils no way remarkable for the firmness of his nerves, was now risking without hesitation.

As he looked around the scene of desolation, he could not but acknowledge, in his own mind, that it was not ill chosen for the haunt of those spirits, which are said to delight in solitude and desolation. The glen was so steep and narrow that there was but just room for the meridian sun to dart a few scattered rays upon the gloomy and precarious stream which stole through its recesses, for the most part in silence, but occasionally murmuring sullenly against the rocks and large stones which seemed determined to bar its further progress. In winter, or in the rainy season, this small stream was a foaming torrent of the most formidable magnitude, and it was at such periods that it had torn open and laid bare the broad-faced and huge fragments of rock which, at the season of which we speak, hid its course from the eye, and seemed disposed totally to interrupt its course. "Undoubtedly," thought the clergyman, "this mountain rivulet, suddenly swelled by a waterspout or thunderstorm, has often been the cause of those accidents which, happening in the glen called by her name, have been ascribed to the agency of the Cloght-dearg."

Just as this idea crossed his mind, he heard a female voice exclaim, in a wild and thrilling accent, "Michael Tyrie! Michael Tyrie!" He looked round in astonishment, and not without some fear. It seemed for an instant, as if the evil being, whose existence he had disowned, was about to appear for the punishment of his incredulity. This alarm did not hold him more than an instant, nor did it prevent his replying in a firm voice, "Who calls? and where are you?"

"One who journeys in wretchedness, between life and death," answered the voice; and the speaker, a tall female, appeared from among the fragments of rocks which had concealed her from view.

As she approached more closely, her mantle of bright tartan, in which the red colour much predominated, her stature, the long stride with which she advanced, and the writhen features and wild eyes which were visible from under her curch, would have made her no inadequate representative of the spirit which gave name to the valley. But Mr. Tyrie instantly knew her as the Woman of the Tree, the widow of MacTavish Mhor, the now childless mother of Hamish Bean. I am not sure

whether the minister would not have endured the visitation of the Cloght-dearg herself, rather than the shock of Elspat's presence, considering her crime and her misery. He drew up his horse instinctively, and stood endeavouring to collect his ideas, while a few paces brought her up to his horse's head.

"Michael Tyrie," said she, "the foolish women of the Clachan [The village; literally, the stones.] hold thee as a god—be one to me, and say that my son lives. Say this, and I too will be of thy worship; I will bend my knees on the seventh day in thy house of worship, and thy God shall be my God."

"Unhappy woman," replied the clergyman, "man forms not pactions with his Maker as with a creature of clay like himself. Thinkest thou to chaffer with Him, who formed the earth, and spread out the heavens, or that thou canst offer aught of homage or devotion that can be worth acceptance in his eyes? He hath asked obedience, not sacrifice; patience under the trials with which He afflicts us, instead of vain bribes, such as man offers to his changeful brother of clay, that he may be moved from his purpose."

"Be silent, priest!" answered the desperate woman; "speak not to me the words of thy white book. Elspat's kindred were of those who crossed themselves and knelt when the sacring bell was rung, and she knows that atonement can be made on the altar for deeds done in the field. Elspat had once flocks and herds, goats upon the cliffs, and cattle in the strath. She wore gold around her neck and on her hair—thick twists, as those worn by the heroes of old. All these would she have resigned to the priest—all these; and if he wished for the ornaments of a gentle lady, or the sporran of a high chief, though they had been great as Macallum Mhor himself, MacTavish Mhor would have procured them, if Elspat had promised them. Elspat is now poor, and has nothing to give. But the Black Abbot of Inchaffray would have bidden her scourge her shoulders, and macerate her feet by pilgrimage; and he would have granted his pardon to her when he saw that her blood had flowed, and that her flesh had been torn. These were the priests who had indeed power even with the most powerful; they threatened the great men of the earth with the word of their mouth, the sentence of their book, the blaze of their torch, the sound of their sacring bell. The mighty bent to their will, and unloosed at the word of the priests those whom they had bound in their wrath, and set at liberty, unharmed, him whom they had sentenced to death, and for whose blood they had thirsted. These were a powerful race, and might well ask the poor to kneel, since their power could humble the proud. But you!—against whom are ye strong, but against women who have been guilty of folly, and men who never wore sword? The priests of old were like the winter torrent which fills this hollow valley, and rolls these massive rocks against each other as easily as the boy plays with the ball which he casts before him. But you!—you do but resemble the summer-stricken stream, which is turned aside by the rushes, and stemmed by a bush of sedges. Woe worth you, for there is no help in you!"

The clergyman was at no loss to conceive that Elspat had lost the Roman Catholic faith without gaining any other, and that she still retained a vague and confused idea of the composition with the priesthood, by confession, alms, and penance, and of their extensive power, which, according to her notion, was adequate, if duly propitiated, even to effecting her son's safety. Compassionating her situation, and allowing for her errors and ignorance, he answered her with mildness.

"Alas, unhappy woman! Would to God I could convince thee as easily where thou oughtest to seek, and art sure to find, consolation, as I can assure you with a single word, that were Rome and all her priesthood once more in the plenitude of their power, they could not, for largesse or penance, afford to thy misery an atom of aid or comfort—Elspat MacTavish, I grieve to tell you the news."

"I know them without thy speech," said the unhappy woman. "My son is doomed to die."

"Elspat," resumed the clergyman, "he WAS doomed, and the sentence has been executed."

The hapless mother threw her eyes up to heaven, and uttered a shriek so unlike the voice of a human being, that the eagle which soared in middle air answered it as she would have done the call of her mate.

"It is impossible!" she exclaimed—"it is impossible! Men do not condemn and kill on the same day! Thou art deceiving me. The people call thee holy—hast thou the heart to tell a mother she has murdered her only child?"

"God knows," said the priest, the tears falling fast from his eyes, "that were it in my power, I would gladly tell better tidings. But these which I bear are as certain as they are fatal. My own ears heard the death-shot, my own eyes beheld thy son's death—thy son's funeral. My tongue bears witness to what my ears heard and my eyes saw."

The wretched female clasped her hands close together, and held them up towards heaven like a sibyl announcing war and desolation, while, in impotent yet frightful rage, she poured forth a tide of the deepest imprecations. "Base Saxon churl!" she exclaimed—"vile hypocritical juggler! May the eyes that looked tamely on the death of my fair-haired boy be melted in their sockets with ceaseless tears, shed for those that are nearest and most dear to thee! May the ears that heard his death-knell be dead hereafter to all other sounds save the screech of the raven, and the hissing of the adder! May the tongue that tells me of his death and of my own crime, be withered in thy mouth—or better, when thou wouldst pray with thy people, may the Evil One guide it, and give voice to blasphemies instead of blessings, until men shall fly in terror from thy presence, and the thunder of heaven be launched against thy head, and stop for ever thy cursing and accursed voice! Begone, with this malison! Elspat will never, never again bestow so many words upon living man."

She kept her word. From that day the world was to her a wilderness, in which she remained without thought, care, or interest, absorbed in her own grief, indifferent to every thing else.

With her mode of life, or rather of existence, the reader is already as far acquainted as I have the power of making him. Of her death, I can tell him nothing. It is supposed to have happened several years after she had attracted the attention of my excellent friend Mrs. Bethune Baliol. Her benevolence, which was never satisfied with dropping a sentimental tear, when there was room for the operation of effective charity, induced her to make various attempts to alleviate the condition of this most wretched woman. But all her exertions could only render Elspat's means of subsistence less precarious—a circumstance which, though generally interesting even to the most wretched outcasts, seemed to her a matter of total indifference. Every attempt to place any person in her hut to take charge of her miscarried, through the extreme resentment with which she regarded all intrusion on her solitude, or by the timidity of those who had been pitched upon to be inmates with the terrible Woman of the Tree. At length, when Elspat became totally unable (in appearance at least) to turn herself on the wretched settle which served her for a couch, the humanity of Mr. Tyrie's successor sent two women to attend upon the last moments of the solitary, which could not, it was judged, be far distant, and to avert the possibility that she might perish for want of assistance or food, before she sunk under the effects of extreme age or mortal malady.

It was on a November evening, that the two women appointed for this melancholy purpose arrived at the miserable cottage which we have already described. Its wretched inmate lay stretched upon the bed, and seemed almost already a lifeless corpse, save for the wandering of the fierce dark eyes, which rolled in their sockets in a manner terrible to look upon, and seemed to watch with surprise and indignation the motions of the strangers, as persons whose presence was alike unexpected and unwelcome. They were frightened at her looks; but, assured in each other's company, they kindled a fire, lighted a candle, prepared food, and made other arrangements for the discharge of the duty assigned them.

The assistants agreed they should watch the bedside of the sick person by turns; but, about midnight, overcome by fatigue, (for they had walked far that morning), both of them fell fast asleep. When they awoke, which was not till after the interval of some hours, the hut was empty, and the patient gone. They rose in terror, and went to the door of the cottage, which was latched as it had been at night. They looked out into the darkness, and called upon their charge by her name. The night-raven screamed from the old oak-tree, the fox howled on the hill, the hoarse waterfall replied with its echoes; but there was no human answer. The terrified women did not dare to make further search till morning should appear; for the sudden disappearance of a creature so frail as Elspat, together with the wild tenor of her history, intimidated them from stirring from the hut. They remained, therefore, in dreadful terror, sometimes thinking they heard her voice without, and at other times, that sounds of a different description were mingled with the mournful sigh of the night-breeze, or the dashing of the cascade. Sometimes, too, the latch rattled, as if some frail and impotent hand were in vain attempting to lift it, and ever and anon they expected the entrance of their terrible patient, animated by supernatural strength, and in the company, perhaps, of some being more dreadful than herself. Morning came at length. They sought brake, rock, and thicket in vain. Two hours after daylight, the minister himself appeared, and, on the report of the watchers, caused the country to be alarmed, and a general and exact search to be made through the whole neighbourhood of the cottage and the oak-tree. But it was all in vain. Elspat MacTavish was never found, whether dead or alive; nor could there ever be traced the slightest circumstance to indicate her fate.

The neighbourhood was divided concerning the cause of her disappearance. The credulous thought that the evil spirit, under whose influence she seemed to have acted, had carried her away in the body; and there are many who are still unwilling, at untimely hours, to pass the oak-tree, beneath which, as they allege, she may still be seen seated according to her wont. Others less superstitious supposed, that had it been possible to search the gulf of the Corri Dhu, the profound deeps of the lake, or the whelming eddies of the river, the remains of Elspat MacTavish might have been discovered—as nothing was more natural, considering her state of body and mind, than that she should have fallen in by accident, or precipitated herself intentionally, into one or other of those places of sure destruction. The clergyman entertained an opinion of his own. He thought that, impatient of the watch which was placed over her, this unhappy woman's instinct had taught her, as it directs various domestic animals, to withdraw herself from the sight of her own race, that the death-struggle might take place in some secret den, where, in all probability, her mortal relics would never meet the eyes of mortals. This species of instinctive feeling seemed to him of a tenor with the whole course of her unhappy life, and most likely to influence her when it drew to a conclusion.

End of THE HIGHLAND WIDOW.

MR. CROFTANGRY INTRODUCES ANOTHER TALE.

Together both on the high lawns appeared.

Under the opening eyelids of the morn

They drove afield. ELEGY ON LYCIDAS.

I have sometimes wondered why all the favourite occupations and pastimes of mankind go to the disturbance of that happy state of tranquillity, that OTIUM, as Horace terms it, which he says is the object of all men's prayers, whether preferred from sea or land; and that the undisturbed repose, of which we are so tenacious, when duty or necessity compels us to abandon it, is precisely what we long to exchange for a state of excitation, as soon as we may prolong it at our own pleasure. Briefly, you have only to say to a man, "Remain at rest," and you instantly inspire the love of labour. The sportsman toils like his gamekeeper, the master of the pack takes as severe exercise as his whipper-in, the statesman or politician drudges more than the professional lawyer; and, to come to my own case, the volunteer author subjects himself to the risk of the painful criticism, and the assured certainty of mental and manual labour, just as completely as his needy brother, whose necessities compel him to assume the pen.

These reflections have been suggested by an announcement on the part of Janet, "that the little Gillie-whitefoot was come from the printing-office."

"Gillie-blackfoot you should call him, Janet," was my response, "for he is neither more nor less than an imp of the devil, come to torment me for COPY, for so the printers call a supply of manuscript for the press."

"Now, Cot forgie your honour," said Janet; "for it is no like your ainsell to give such names to a faitherless bairn."

"I have got nothing else to give him, Janet; he must wait a little."

"Then I have got some breakfast to give the bit gillie," said Janet; "and he can wait by the fireside in the kitchen, till your honour's ready; and cood enough for the like of him, if he was to wait your honour's pleasure all day."

"But, Janet," said I to my little active superintendent, on her return to the parlour, after having made her hospitable arrangements, "I begin to find this writing our Chronicles is rather more tiresome than I expected, for here comes this little fellow to ask for manuscript—that is, for something to print—and I have got none to give him."

"Your honour can be at nae loss. I have seen you write fast and fast enough; and for subjects, you have the whole Highlands to write about, and I am sure you know a hundred tales better than that about Hamish MacTavish, for it was but about a young cateran and an auld carlin, when all's done; and if they had burned the rudas quean for a witch, I am thinking, may be they would not have tyned their coals—and her to gar her ne'er-do-weel son shoot a gentleman Cameron! I am third cousin to the Camerons mysel'—my blood warms to them. And if you want to write about deserters, I am sure there were deserters enough on the top of Arthur's Seat, when the MacRaas broke out, and on that woeful day beside Leith Pier—ohonari!"—

Here Janet began to weep, and to wipe her eyes with her apron. For my part, the idea I wanted was supplied, but I hesitated to make use of it. Topics, like times, are apt to become common by frequent use. It is only an ass like Justice Shallow, who would pitch upon the over-scutched tunes, which the carmen whistled, and try to pass them off as his FANCIES and his GOOD-NIGHTS. Now, the Highlands, though formerly a rich mine for original matter, are, as my friend Mrs. Bethune Balliol warned me, in some degree worn out by the incessant labour of modern romancers and novelists, who, finding in those remote regions primitive habits and manners, have vainly imagined that the public can never tire of them; and so kilted Highlanders are to be found as frequently, and nearly of as genuine descent, on the shelves of a circulating library, as at a Caledonian ball. Much might have been made at an earlier time out of the history of a Highland regiment, and the singular revolution of ideas which must have taken place in the minds of those who composed it, when exchanging their native hills for the battle-fields of the Continent, and their simple, and sometimes indolent domestic habits for the regular exertions demanded by modern discipline. But the market is forestalled. There is Mrs. Grant of Laggan, has drawn the manners, customs, and superstitions of the mountains in their natural unsophisticated state; [Letters from the Mountains, 3 vols.—Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders—The Highlanders, and other Poems, etc.] and my friend, General Stewart of Garth, [The gallant and amiable author of the History of the Highland Regiments, in whose glorious services his own share had been great, went out Governor of St Lucia in 1828, and died in that island on the 18th of December 1829,—no man more regretted, or perhaps by a wider circle of friends and acquaintance.] in giving the real history of the Highland regiments, has rendered any attempt to fill up the sketch with fancy-colouring extremely rash and precarious. Yet I, too, have still a lingering fancy to add a stone to the cairn; and without calling in imagination to aid the impressions of juvenile recollection, I may just attempt to embody one or two scenes illustrative of the Highland character, and which belong peculiarly to the Chronicles of the Canongate, to the grey-headed eld of whom they are as familiar as to Chrystal Croftangry. Yet I will not go back to the days of clanship and claymores. Have at you, gentle reader, with a tale of Two Drovers. An oyster may be crossed in love, says the gentle Tilburina—and a drover may be touched on a point of honour, says the Chronicler of the Canongate.

BOOK IIXXX
THE ANTIQUARY
PART I

CHAPTER FIRST.

*Go call a coach, and let a coach be called,
And let the man who calleth be the caller;
And in his calling let him nothing call,
But Coach! Coach! Coach! O for a coach, ye gods!
Chrononhotonthologos.*

It was early on a fine summer's day, near the end of the eighteenth century, when a young man, of genteel appearance, journeying towards the north-east of Scotland, provided himself with a ticket in one of those public carriages which travel between Edinburgh and the Queensferry, at which place, as the name implies, and as is well known to all my northern readers, there is a passage-boat for crossing the Firth of Forth. The coach was calculated to carry six regular passengers, besides such interlopers as the coachman could pick up by the way, and intrude upon those who were legally in possession. The tickets, which conferred right to a seat in this vehicle, of little ease, were dispensed by a sharp-looking old dame, with a pair of spectacles on a very thin nose, who inhabited a "laigh shop," *anglice*, a cellar, opening to the High Street by a straight and steep stair, at the bottom of which she sold tape, thread, needles, skeins of worsted, coarse linen cloth, and such feminine gear, to those who had the courage and skill to descend to the profundity of her dwelling, without falling headlong themselves, or throwing down any of the numerous articles which, piled on each side of the descent, indicated the profession of the trader below.

The written hand-bill, which, pasted on a projecting board, announced that the Queensferry Diligence, or Hawes Fly, departed precisely at twelve o'clock on Tuesday, the fifteenth July 17—, in order to secure for travellers the opportunity of passing the Firth with the flood-tide, lied on the present occasion like a bulletin; for although that hour was pealed from Saint Giles's steeple, and repeated by the Tron, no coach appeared upon the appointed stand. It is true, only two tickets had been taken out, and possibly the lady of the subterranean mansion might have an understanding with her Automedon, that, in such cases, a little space was to be allowed for the chance of filling up the vacant places—or the said Automedon might have been attending a funeral, and be delayed by the necessity of stripping his vehicle of its lugubrious trappings—or he might have staid to take a half-mutchkin extraordinary with his crony the hostler—or—in short, he did not make his appearance.

The young gentleman, who began to grow somewhat impatient, was now joined by a companion in this petty misery of human life—the person who had taken out the other place. He who is bent upon a journey is usually easily to be distinguished from his fellow-citizens. The boots, the great-coat, the umbrella, the little bundle in his hand, the hat pulled over his resolved brows, the determined importance of his pace, his brief answers to the salutations of lounging acquaintances, are all marks by which the experienced traveller in mail-coach or diligence can distinguish, at a distance, the companion of his future journey, as he pushes onward to the place of rendezvous. It is then that, with worldly wisdom, the first comer hastens to secure the best berth in the coach for himself, and to make the most convenient arrangement for his baggage before the arrival of his competitors. Our youth, who was gifted with little prudence, of any sort, and who was, moreover, by the absence of the coach, deprived of the power of availing himself of his priority of choice, amused himself, instead, by speculating upon the occupation and character of the personage who was now come to the coach office.

He was a good-looking man of the age of sixty, perhaps older,—but his hale complexion and firm step announced that years had not impaired his strength or health. His countenance was of the true Scottish cast, strongly marked, and rather harsh in features, with a shrewd and penetrating eye, and a countenance in which habitual gravity was enlivened by a cast of ironical humour. His dress was uniform, and of a colour becoming his age and gravity; a wig, well dressed and powdered, surmounted by a slouched hat, had something of a professional air. He might be a clergyman, yet his appearance was more that of a man of the world than usually belongs to the kirk of Scotland, and his first ejaculation put the matter beyond question.

He arrived with a hurried pace, and, casting an alarmed glance towards the dial-plate of the church, then looking at the place where the coach should have been, exclaimed, "Deil's in it—I am too late after all!"

The young man relieved his anxiety, by telling him the coach had not yet appeared. The old gentleman, apparently conscious of his own want of punctuality, did not at first feel courageous enough to censure that of the coachman. He took a parcel, containing apparently a large folio, from a little boy who followed him, and, patting him on the head, bid him go back and tell Mr. B——, that if he had known he was to have had so much time, he would have put another word or two to their bargain,—then told the boy to mind his business, and he would be as thriving a lad as ever dusted a duodecimo. The boy lingered, perhaps in hopes of a penny to buy marbles; but none was forthcoming. Our senior leaned his little bundle upon one of the posts at the head of the staircase, and, facing the traveller who had first arrived, waited in silence for about five minutes the arrival of the expected diligence.

At length, after one or two impatient glances at the progress of the minute-hand of the clock, having compared it with his own watch, a huge and antique gold repeater, and having twitched about his features to give due emphasis to one or two peevish pshawes, he hailed the old lady of the cavern.

"Good woman,—what the d—I is her name?—Mrs. Macleuchar!"

Mrs. Macleuchar, aware that she had a defensive part to sustain in the encounter which was to follow, was in no hurry to hasten the discussion by returning a ready answer.

"Mrs. Macleuchar,—Good woman" (with an elevated voice)—then apart, "Old doited hag, she's as deaf as a post—I say, Mrs. Macleuchar!"

"I am just serving a customer.—Indeed, hinny, it will no be a bodle cheaper than I tell ye."

"Woman," reiterated the traveller, "do you think we can stand here all day till you have cheated that poor servant wench out of her half-year's fee and bountith?"

"Cheated!" retorted Mrs. Macleuchar, eager to take up the quarrel upon a defensible ground; "I scorn your words, sir: you are an uncivil person, and I desire you will not stand there, to slander me at my ain stair-head."

"The woman," said the senior, looking with an arch glance at his destined travelling companion, "does not understand the words of action.—Woman," again turning to the vault, "I arraign not thy character, but I desire to know what is become of thy coach?"

"What's your wull?" answered Mrs. Macleuchar, relapsing into deafness.

"We have taken places, ma'am," said the younger stranger, "in your diligence for Queensferry"—"Which should have been half-way on the road before now," continued the elder and more impatient traveller, rising in wrath as he spoke: "and now in all likelihood we shall miss the tide, and I have business of importance on the other side—and your cursed coach!"

"The coach?—Gude guide us, gentlemen, is it no on the stand yet?" answered the old lady, her shrill tone of expostulation sinking into a kind of apologetic whine.

"Is it the coach ye hae been waiting for?"

"What else could have kept us broiling in the sun by the side of the gutter here, you—you faithless woman, eh?"

Mrs. Macleuchar now ascended her trap stair (for such it might be called, though constructed of stone), until her nose came upon a level with the pavement; then, after wiping her spectacles to look for that which she well knew was not to be found, she exclaimed, with well-feigned astonishment, "Gude guide us—saw ever onybody the like o' that?"

"Yes, you abominable woman," vociferated the traveller, "many have seen the like of it, and all will see the like of it that have anything to do with your trolloping sex;" then pacing with great indignation before the door of the shop, still as he passed and repassed, like a vessel who gives her broadside as she comes abreast of a hostile fortress, he shot down complaints, threats, and reproaches, on the embarrassed Mrs. Macleuchar. He would take a post-chaise—he would call a

hackney coach—he would take four horses—he must—he would be on the north side, to-day—and all the expense of his journey, besides damages, direct and consequential, arising from delay, should be accumulated on the devoted head of Mrs. Macleuchar.

There, was something so comic in his pettish resentment, that the younger traveller, who was in no such pressing hurry to depart, could not help being amused with it, especially as it was obvious, that every now and then the old gentleman, though very angry, could not help laughing at his own vehemence. But when Mrs. Macleuchar began also to join in the laughter, he quickly put a stop to her ill-timed merriment.

"Woman," said he, "is that advertisement thine?" showing a bit of crumpled printed paper: "Does it not set forth, that, God willing, as you hypocritically express it, the Hawes Fly, or Queensferry Diligence, would set forth to-day at twelve o'clock; and is it not, thou falsest of creatures, now a quarter past twelve, and no such fly or diligence to be seen?—Dost thou know the consequence of seducing the lieges by false reports?—dost thou know it might be brought under the statute of leasing-making? Answer—and for once in thy long, useless, and evil life, let it be in the words of truth and sincerity,—hast thou such a coach?—is it *in rerum natura*?—or is this base annunciation a mere swindle on the incautious to beguile them of their time, their patience, and three shillings of sterling money of this realm?—Hast thou, I say, such a coach? ay or no?"

"O dear, yes, sir; the neighbours ken the diligence weel, green picked oat wi' red—three yellow wheels and a black ane."

"Woman, thy special description will not serve—it may be only a lie with a circumstance."

"O, man, man!" said the overwhelmed Mrs. Macleuchar, totally exhausted at having been so long the butt of his rhetoric, "take back your three shillings, and make me quit o' ye."

"Not so fast, not so fast, woman—Will three shillings transport me to Queensferry, agreeably to thy treacherous program?—or will it requite the damage I may sustain by leaving my business undone, or repay the expenses which I must disburse if I am obliged to tarry a day at the South Ferry for lack of tide?—Will it hire, I say, a pinnacle, for which alone the regular price is five shillings?"

Here his argument was cut short by a lumbering noise, which proved to be the advance of the expected vehicle, pressing forward with all the dispatch to which the broken-winded jades that drew it could possibly be urged. With ineffable pleasure, Mrs. Macleuchar saw her tormentor deposited in the leathern convenience; but still, as it was driving off, his head thrust out of the window reminded her, in words drowned amid the rumbling of the wheels, that, if the diligence did not attain the Ferry in time to save the flood-tide, she, Mrs. Macleuchar, should be held responsible for all the consequences that might ensue.

The coach had continued in motion for a mile or two before the stranger had completely repossessed himself of his equanimity, as was manifested by the doleful ejaculations, which he made from time to time, on the too great probability, or even certainty, of their missing the flood-tide. By degrees, however, his wrath subsided; he wiped his brows, relaxed his frown, and, undoing the parcel in his hand, produced his folio, on which he gazed from time to time with the knowing look of an amateur, admiring its height and condition, and ascertaining, by a minute and individual inspection of each leaf, that the volume was uninjured and entire from title-page to colophon. His fellow-traveller took the liberty of inquiring the subject of his studies. He lifted up his eyes with something of a sarcastic glance, as if he supposed the young querist would not relish, or perhaps understand, his answer, and pronounced the book to be Sandy Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale*,* a book illustrative of the Roman remains in Scotland.

* Note B. Sandy Gordon's *Itinerarium*.

The querist, unappalled by this learned title, proceeded to put several questions, which indicated that he had made good use of a good education, and, although not possessed of minute information on the subject of antiquities, had yet acquaintance enough with the classics to render him an interested and intelligent auditor when they were enlarged upon. The elder traveller, observing with pleasure the capacity of his temporary companion to understand and answer him, plunged, nothing loath, into a sea of discussion concerning urns, vases, votive, altars, Roman camps, and the rules of castrametation.

The pleasure of this discourse had such a dulcifying tendency, that, although two causes of delay occurred, each of much more serious duration than that which had drawn down his wrath upon the unlucky Mrs. Macleuchar, our =Antiquary= only bestowed on the delay the honour of a few episodical poohs and pshaws, which rather seemed to regard the interruption of his disquisition than the retardation of his journey.

The first of these stops was occasioned by the breaking of a spring, which half an hour's labour hardly repaired. To the second, the Antiquary was himself accessory, if not the principal cause of it; for, observing that one of the horses had cast a fore-foot shoe, he apprized the coachman of this important deficiency. "It's Jamie Martingale that furnishes the naigs on contract, and uphauks them," answered John, "and I am not entitled to make any stop, or to suffer prejudice by the like of these accidents."

"And when you go to—I mean to the place you deserve to go to, you scoundrel,—who do you think will uphold *you* on contract? If you don't stop directly and carry the poor brute, to the next smithy, I'll have you punished, if there's a justice of peace in Mid-Lothian;" and, opening the coach-door, out he jumped, while the coachman obeyed his orders, muttering, that "if the gentlemen lost the tide now, they could not say but it was their ain fault, since he was willing to get on."

I like so little to analyze the complication of the causes which influence actions, that I will not venture to ascertain whether our Antiquary's humanity to the poor horse was not in some degree aided by his desire of showing his companion a Pict's camp, or Round-about, a subject which he had been elaborately discussing, and of which a specimen, "very curious and perfect indeed," happened to exist about a hundred yards distant from the spot where this interruption took place. But were I compelled to decompose the motives of my worthy friend (for such was the gentleman in the sober suit, with powdered wig and slouched hat), I should say, that, although he certainly would not in any case have suffered the coachman to proceed while the horse was unfit for service, and likely to suffer by being urged forward, yet the man of whipcord escaped some severe abuse and reproach by the agreeable mode which the traveller found out to pass the interval of delay.

So much time was consumed by these interruptions of their journey, that when they descended the hill above the Hawes (for so the inn on the southern side of the Queensferry is denominated), the experienced eye of the Antiquary at once discerned, from the extent of wet sand, and the number of black stones and rocks, covered with sea-weed, which were visible along the skirts of the shore, that the hour of tide was past. The young traveller expected a burst of indignation; but whether, as Croaker says in "The Good-natured Man," our hero had exhausted himself in fretting away his misfortunes beforehand, so that he did not feel them when they actually arrived, or whether he found the company in which he was placed too congenial to lead him to repine at anything which delayed his journey, it is certain that he submitted to his lot with much resignation.

"The d—!s in the diligence and the old hag, it belongs to!—Diligence, quoth I? Thou shouldst have called it the Sloth—Fly, quoth she? why, it moves like a fly through a glue-pot, as the Irishman says. But, however, time and tide tarry for no man, and so, my young friend, we'll have a snack here at the Hawes, which is a very decent sort of a place, and I'll be very happy to finish the account I was giving you of the difference between the mode of entrenching *castra stativa* and *castra aestiva*, things confounded by too many of our historians. Lack-a-day, if they had ta'en the pains to satisfy their own eyes, instead of following each other's blind guidance!—Well! we shall be pretty comfortable at the Hawes; and besides, after all, we must have dined somewhere, and it will be pleasanter sailing with the tide of ebb and the evening breeze."

In this Christian temper of making the best of all occurrences, our travellers alighted at the Hawes.

CHAPTER SECOND.

*Sir, they do scandal me upon the road here!
A poor quotidian rack of mutton roasted
Dry to be grated! and that driven down
With beer and butter-milk, mingled together.
It is against my freehold, my inheritance.*

Wine is the word that glads the heart of man,
And mine's the house of wine. Sack, says my bush,
Be merry and drink Sherry, that's my posie.
Ben Jonson's New Inn.

As the senior traveller descended the crazy steps of the diligence at the inn, he was greeted by the fat, gouty, pursy landlord, with that mixture of familiarity and respect which the Scotch innkeepers of the old school used to assume towards their more valued customers.

"Have a care o' us, Monkbarns (distinguishing him by his territorial epithet, always most agreeable to the ear of a Scottish proprietor), is this you? I little thought to have seen your honour here till the summer session was ower."

"Ye donnard auld deevil," answered his guest, his Scottish accent predominating when in anger though otherwise not particularly remarkable,—"ye donnard auld crippled idiot, what have I to do with the session, or the geese that flock to it, or the hawks that pick their pinions for them?"

"Troth, and that's true," said mine host, who, in fact, only spoke upon a very general recollection of the stranger's original education, yet would have been sorry not to have been supposed accurate as to the station and profession of him, or any other occasional guest—"That's very true,—but I thought ye had some law affair of your ain to look after—I have ane mysell—a ganging plea that my father left me, and his father afore left to him. It's about our back-yard—ye'll maybe hae heard of it in the Parliament-house, Hutchison against Mackitchinson—it's a weel-kenn'd plea—its been four times in afore the fifteen, and deil ony thing the wisest o' them could make o't, but just to send it out again to the outer-house.—O it's a beautiful thing to see how lang and how carefully justice is considered in this country!"

"Hold your tongue, you fool," said the traveller, but in great good-humour, "and tell us what you can give this young gentleman and me for dinner."

"Ou, there's fish, nae doubt,—that's sea-trout and caller haddocks," said Mackitchinson, twisting his napkin; "and ye'll be for a mutton-chop, and there's cranberry tarts, very weel preserved, and—and there's just ony thing else ye like."

"Which is to say, there is nothing else whatever? Well, well, the fish and the chop, and the tarts, will do very well. But don't imitate the cautious delay that you praise in the courts of justice. Let there be no remits from the inner to the outer house, hear ye me?"

"Na, na," said Mackitchinson, whose long and heedful perusal of volumes of printed session papers had made him acquainted with some law phrases—"the dinner shall be served *quam primum* and that *peremptorie*." And with the flattering laugh of a promising host, he left them in his sanded parlour, hung with prints of the Four Seasons.

As, notwithstanding his pledge to the contrary, the glorious delays of the law were not without their parallel in the kitchen of the inn, our younger traveller had an opportunity to step out and make some inquiry of the people of the house concerning the rank and station of his companion. The information which he received was of a general and less authentic nature, but quite sufficient to make him acquainted with the name, history, and circumstances of the gentleman, whom we shall endeavour, in a few words, to introduce more accurately to our readers.

Jonathan Oldenbuck, or Oldinbuck, by popular contraction Oldbuck, of Monkbarns, was the second son of a gentleman possessed of a small property in the neighbourhood of a thriving seaport town on the north-eastern coast of Scotland, which, for various reasons, we shall denominate Fairport. They had been established for several generations, as landholders in the county, and in most shires of England would have been accounted a family of some standing. But the shire of—was filled with gentlemen of more ancient descent and larger fortune. In the last generation, also, the neighbouring gentry had been almost uniformly Jacobites, while the proprietors of Monkbarns, like the burghers of the town near which they were settled, were steady assertors of the Protestant succession. The latter had, however, a pedigree of their own, on which they prided themselves as much as those who despised them valued their respective Saxon, Norman, or Celtic genealogies. The first Oldenbuck, who had settled in their family mansion shortly after the Reformation, was, they asserted, descended from one of the original printers of Germany, and had left his country in consequence of the persecutions directed against the professors of the Reformed religion. He had found a refuge in the town near which his posterity dwelt, the more readily that he was a sufferer in the Protestant cause, and certainly not the less so, that he brought with him money enough to purchase the small estate of Monkbarns, then sold by a dissipated laird, to whose father it had been gifted, with other church lands, on the dissolution of the great and wealthy monastery to which it had belonged. The Oldenbucks were therefore, loyal subjects on all occasions of insurrection; and, as they kept up a good intelligence with the borough, it chanced that the Laird of Monkbarns, who flourished in 1745, was provost of the town during that ill-fated year, and had exerted himself with much spirit in favour of King George, and even been put to expenses on that score, which, according to the liberal conduct of the existing government towards their friends, had never been repaid him. By dint of solicitation, however, and borough interest, he contrived to gain a place in the customs, and, being a frugal, careful man, had found himself enabled to add considerably to his paternal fortune. He had only two sons, of whom, as we have hinted, the present laird was the younger, and two daughters, one of whom still flourished in single blessedness, and the other, who was greatly more juvenile, made a love-match with a captain in the *Forty-twa*, who had no other fortune but his commission and a Highland pedigree. Poverty disturbed a union which love would otherwise have made happy, and Captain M'Intyre, in justice to his wife and two children, a boy and girl, had found himself obliged to seek his fortune in the East Indies. Being ordered upon an expedition against Hyder Ally, the detachment to which he belonged was cut off, and no news ever reached his unfortunate wife, whether he fell in battle, or was murdered in prison, or survived in what the habits of the Indian tyrant rendered a hopeless captivity. She sunk under the accumulated load of grief and uncertainty, and left a son and daughter to the charge of her brother, the existing Laird of Monkbarns.

The history of that proprietor himself is soon told. Being, as we have said, a second son, his father destined him to a share in a substantial mercantile concern, carried on by some of his maternal relations. From this Jonathan's mind revolted in the most irreconcilable manner. He was then put apprentice to the profession of a writer, or attorney, in which he profited so far, that he made himself master of the whole forms of feudal investitures, and showed such pleasure in reconciling their incongruities, and tracing their origin, that his master had great hope he would one day be an able conveyancer. But he halted upon the threshold, and, though he acquired some knowledge of the origin and system of the law of his country, he could never be persuaded to apply it to lucrative and practical purposes. It was not from any inconsiderate neglect of the advantages attending the possession of money that he thus deceived the hopes of his master. "Were he thoughtless or light-headed, or *rei suae prodigus*," said his instructor, "I would know what to make of him. But he never pays away a shilling without looking anxiously after the change, makes his sixpence go farther than another lad's half-crown, and wilt ponder over an old black-letter copy of the acts of parliament for days, rather than go to the golf or the change-house; and yet he will not bestow one of these days on a little business of routine, that would put twenty shillings in his pocket—a strange mixture of frugality and industry, and negligent indolence—I don't know what to make of him."

But in process of time his pupil gained the means of making what he pleased of himself; for his father having died, was not long survived by his eldest son, an arrant fisher and fowler, who departed this life, in consequence of a cold caught in his vocation, while shooting ducks in the swamp called Kittlefittingmoss, notwithstanding his having drunk a bottle of brandy that very night to keep the cold out of his stomach. Jonathan, therefore, succeeded to the estate, and with it to the means of subsisting without the hated drudgery of the law. His wishes were very moderate; and as the rent of his small property rose with the improvement of the country, it soon greatly exceeded his wants and expenditure; and though too indolent to make money, he was by no means insensible to the pleasure of beholding it accumulate. The burghers of the town near which he lived regarded him with a sort of envy, as one who affected to divide himself from their rank in society, and whose studies and pleasures seemed to them alike incomprehensible. Still, however, a sort of hereditary respect for the Laird of Monkbarns, augmented by the knowledge of his being a ready-money man, kept up his consequence with this class of his neighbours. The country gentlemen were generally above him in fortune, and beneath him in intellect, and, excepting one with whom he lived in habits of intimacy, had little intercourse with Mr. Oldbuck of Monkbarns. He, had, however, the usual resources, the company of the clergyman, and of the doctor, when he chose to request it, and also his own pursuits and pleasures, being in correspondence with most of the virtuosi of his time, who, like himself, measured decayed entrenchments, made plans of ruined castles, read illegible inscriptions, and wrote essays on medals in the proportion of twelve pages to each letter of the legend. Some habits of hasty irritation he had contracted, partly, it was said in the borough of Fairport, from an early disappointment in love in virtue of which he had commenced misogynist, as he called it, but yet more by the obsequious attention paid to him by his maiden sister and his orphan niece, whom he had trained to consider him as the greatest man upon earth, and whom

he used to boast of as the only woman he had ever seen who were well broke in and bitted to obedience; though, it must be owned, Miss Grizzy Oldbuck was sometimes apt to *jibb* when he pulled the reins too tight. The rest of his character must be gathered from the story, and we dismiss with pleasure the tiresome task of recapitulation.

During the time of dinner, Mr. Oldbuck, actuated by the same curiosity which his fellow-traveller had entertained on his account, made some advances, which his age and station entitled him to do in a more direct manner, towards ascertaining the name, destination, and quality of his young companion.

His name, the young gentleman said, was Lovel.

"What! the cat, the rat, and Lovel our dog? Was he descended from King Richard's favourite?"

"He had no pretensions," he said, "to call himself a whelp of that litter; his father was a north-of-England gentleman. He was at present travelling to Fairport (the town near to which Monkbarns was situated), and, if he found the place agreeable, might perhaps remain there for some weeks."

"Was Mr. Lovel's excursion solely for pleasure?"

"Not entirely."

"Perhaps on business with some of the commercial people of Fairport?"

"It was partly on business, but had no reference to commerce."

Here he paused; and Mr. Oldbuck, having pushed his inquiries as far as good manners permitted, was obliged to change the conversation. The Antiquary, though by no means an enemy to good cheer, was a determined foe to all unnecessary expense on a journey; and upon his companion giving a hint concerning a bottle of port wine, he drew a direful picture of the mixture, which, he said, was usually sold under that denomination, and affirming that a little punch was more genuine and better suited for the season, he laid his hand upon the bell to order the materials. But Mackitchinson had, in his own mind, settled their beverage otherwise, and appeared bearing in his hand an immense double quart bottle, or magnum, as it is called in Scotland, covered with saw-dust and cobwebs, the warrants of its antiquity.

"Punch!" said he, catching that generous sound as he entered the parlour, "the deil a drap punch ye'se get here the day, Monkbarns, and that ye may lay your account wi'."

"What do you mean, you impudent rascal?"

"Ay, ay, it's nae matter for that—but do you mind the trick ye served me the last time ye were here!"

"I trick you!"

"Ay, just yoursell, Monkbarns. The Laird o' Tamlowrie and Sir Gilbert Grizzlecleuch, and Auld Rossballoh, and the Bailie, were just setting in to make an afternoon o't, and you, wi' some o' your auld-warld stories, that the mind o' man canna resist, whirl'd them to the back o' beyont to look at the auld Roman camp—Ah, sir!" turning to Lovel, "he wad wile the bird aff the tree wi' the tales he tells about folk lang syne—and did not I lose the drinking o' sax pints o' gude claret, for the deil ane wad hae stirred till he had seen that out at the least?"

"D'ye hear the impudent scoundrel!" said Monkbarns, but laughing at the same time; for the worthy landlord, as he used to boast, know the measure of a guest's foot as well as e'er a souter on this side Solway; "well, well, you may send us in a bottle of port."

"Port! na, na! ye maun leave port and punch to the like o' us, it's claret that's fit for you lairds; and, I dare say, nane of the folk ye speak so much o' ever drank either of the twa."

"Do you hear how absolute the knave is? Well, my young friend, we must for once prefer the *Falernian* to the *vile Sabinum*."

The ready landlord had the cork instantly extracted, decanted the wine into a vessel of suitable capaciousness, and, declaring it *perfumed* the very room, left his guests to make the most of it.

Mackitchinson's wine was really good, and had its effect upon the spirits of the elder guest, who told some good stories, cut some sly jokes, and at length entered into a learned discussion concerning the ancient dramatists; a ground on which he found his new acquaintance so strong, that at length he began to suspect he had made them his professional study. "A traveller partly for business and partly for pleasure?—why, the stage partakes of both; it is a labour to the performers, and affords, or is meant to afford, pleasure to the spectators. He seems, in manner and rank, above the class of young men who take that turn; but I remember hearing them say, that the little theatre at Fairport was to open with the performance of a young gentleman, being his first appearance on any stage.—If this should be thee, Lovel!—Lovel? yes, Lovel or Belville are just the names which youngsters are apt to assume on such occasions—on my life, I am sorry for the lad."

Mr. Oldbuck was habitually parsimonious, but in no respects mean; his first thought was to save his fellow-traveller any part of the expense of the entertainment, which he supposed must be in his situation more or less inconvenient. He therefore took an opportunity of settling privately with Mr. Mackitchinson. The young traveller remonstrated against his liberality, and only acquiesced in deference to his years and respectability.

The mutual satisfaction which they found in each other's society induced Mr. Oldbuck to propose, and Lovel willingly to accept, a scheme for travelling together to the end of their journey. Mr. Oldbuck intimated a wish to pay two-thirds of the hire of a post-chaise, saying, that a proportional quantity of room was necessary to his accommodation; but this Mr. Lovel resolutely declined. Their expense then was mutual, unless when Lovel occasionally slipt a shilling into the hand of a growling postilion; for Oldbuck, tenacious of ancient customs, never extended his guerdon beyond eighteen-pence a stage. In this manner they travelled, until they arrived at Fairport* about two o'clock on the following day.

* [The "Fairport" of this novel is supposed to refer to the town of * Arbroath, in Forfarshire, and "Musselcrag," *post*, to the fishing village of * Auchmithie, in the same county.]

Lovel probably expected that his travelling companion would have invited him to dinner on his arrival; but his consciousness of a want of ready preparation for unexpected guests, and perhaps some other reasons, prevented Oldbuck from paying him that attention. He only begged to see him as early as he could make it convenient to call in a forenoon, recommended him to a widow who had apartments to let, and to a person who kept a decent ordinary; cautioning both of them apart, that he only knew Mr. Lovel as a pleasant companion in a post-chaise, and did not mean to guarantee any bills which he might contract while residing at Fairport. The young gentleman's figure and manners; not to mention a well-furnished trunk, which soon arrived by sea, to his address at Fairport, probably went as far in his favour as the limited recommendation of his fellow-traveller.

CHAPTER THIRD.

*He had a routh o' auld nick-nackets,
Rusty aim caps, and jinglin-jackets,
Would held the Loudons three in tackets,
A towmond gude;
And parritch-pats, and auld sayt-backets,
Afore the flude.
Burns.*

After he had settled himself in his new apartments at Fairport, Mr. Lovel bethought him of paying the requested visit to his fellow-traveller. He did not make it earlier, because, with all the old gentleman's good-humour and information, there had sometimes glanced forth in his language and manner towards him an air of superiority, which his companion considered as being fully beyond what the difference of age warranted. He therefore waited the arrival of his baggage from

Edinburgh, that he might arrange his dress according to the fashion of the day, and make his exterior corresponding to the rank in society which he supposed or felt himself entitled to hold.

It was the fifth day after his arrival, that, having made the necessary inquiries concerning the road, he went forth to pay his respects at Monkbarons. A footpath leading over a heathy hill, and through two or three meadows, conducted him to this mansion, which stood on the opposite side of the hill aforesaid, and commanded a fine prospect of the bay and shipping. Secluded from the town by the rising ground, which also screened it from the north-west wind, the house had a solitary, and sheltered appearance. The exterior had little to recommend it. It was an irregular old-fashioned building, some part of which had belonged to a grange, or solitary farm-house, inhabited by the bailiff, or steward, of the monastery, when the place was in possession of the monks. It was here that the community stored up the grain, which they received as ground-rent from their vassals; for, with the prudence belonging to their order, all their conventional revenues were made payable in kind, and hence, as the present proprietor loved to tell, came the name of Monkbarons. To the remains of the bailiff's house, the succeeding lay inhabitants had made various additions in proportion to the accommodation required by their families; and, as this was done with an equal contempt of convenience within and architectural regularity without, the whole bore the appearance of a hamlet which had suddenly stood still when in the act of leading down one of Amphion's, or Orpheus's, country dances. It was surrounded by tall clipped hedges of yew and holly, some of which still exhibited the skill of the *topiarian* artist,* and presented curious arm-chairs, towers, and the figures of Saint George and the Dragon.

* *Ars Topiaria*, the art of clipping yew-hedges into fantastic figures. A Latin poem, entitled *Ars Topiaria*, contains a curious account of the process.

The taste of Mr. Oldbuck did not disturb these monuments of an art now unknown, and he was the less tempted so to do, as it must necessarily have broken the heart of the old gardener. One tall embowering holly was, however, sacred from the shears; and, on a garden seat beneath its shade, Lovel beheld his old friend with spectacles on nose, and pouch on side, busily employed in perusing the London Chronicle, soothed by the summer breeze through the rustling leaves, and the distant dash of the waves as they rippled upon the sand.

Mr. Oldbuck immediately rose, and advanced to greet his travelling acquaintance with a hearty shake of the hand. "By my faith," said he, "I began to think you had changed your mind, and found the stupid people of Fairport so tiresome, that you judged them unworthy of your talents, and had taken French leave, as my old friend and brother-antiquary Mac-Cribb did, when he went off with one of my Syrian medals."

"I hope, my good sir, I should have fallen under no such imputation."

"Quite as bad, let me tell you, if you had stolen yourself away without giving me the pleasure of seeing you again. I had rather you had taken my copper Otho himself.—But come, let me show you the way into my *sanctum sanctorum*—my cell I may call it, for, except two idle hussies of womankind," (by this contemptuous phrase, borrowed from his brother-antiquary, the cynic Anthony a-Wood, Mr. Oldbuck was used to denote the fair sex in general, and his sister and niece in particular), "that, on some idle pretext of relationship, have established themselves in my premises, I live here as much a Coenobite as my predecessor, John o' the Girnell, whose grave I will show you by and by."

Thus speaking the old gentleman led the way through a low door; but before entrance, suddenly stopped short to point out some vestiges of what he called an inscription, and, shaking his head as he pronounced it totally illegible, "Ah! if you but knew, Mr. Lovel, the time and trouble that these mouldering traces of letters have cost me! No mother ever travailed so for a child—and all to no purpose—although I am almost positive that these two last marks imply the figures, or letters, LV, and may give us a good guess at the real date of the building, since we know, *aliunde*, that it was founded by Abbot Waldimir about the middle of the fourteenth century—and, I profess, I think that centre ornament might be made out by better eyes than mine."

"I think," answered Lovel, willing to humour the old man, "it has something the appearance of a mitre."

"I protest you are right! you are right! it never struck me before—see what it is to have younger eyes—A mitre—a mitre—it corresponds in every respect."

The resemblance was not much nearer than that of Polonius's cloud to a whale, or an owzel; it was sufficient, however, to set the Antiquary's brains to work. "A mitre, my dear sir," continued he, as he led the way through a labyrinth of inconvenient and dark passages, and accompanied his disquisition with certain necessary cautions to his guest—"A mitre, my dear sir, will suit our abbot as well as a bishop—he was a mitred abbot, and at the very top of the roll—take care of these three steps—I know Mac-Cribb denies this, but it is as certain as that he took away my Antigonus, no leave asked—you'll see the name of the Abbot of Trotcosey, *Abbas Trottocosiensis*, at the head of the rolls of parliament in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—there is very little light here, and these cursed womankind always leave their tubs in the passage—now take, care of the corner—ascend twelve steps, and ye are safe!"

Mr. Oldbuck had by this time attained the top of the winding stair which led to his own apartment, and opening a door, and pushing aside a piece of tapestry with which it was covered, his first exclamation was, "What are you about here, you sluts?" A dirty barefooted chambermaid threw down her duster, detected in the heinous fact of arranging the *sanctum sanctorum*, and fled out of an opposite door from the face of her incensed master. A genteel-looking young woman, who was superintending the operation, stood her ground, but with some timidity.

"Indeed, uncle, your room was not fit to be seen, and I just came to see that Jenny laid everything down where she took it up."

"And how dare you, or Jenny either, presume to meddle with my private matters?" (Mr. Oldbuck hated *putting to rights* as much as Dr. Orkborne, or any other professed student.) "Go, sew your sampler, you monkey, and do not let me find you here again, as you value your ears.—I assure you, Mr. Lovel, that the last inroad of these pretended friends to cleanliness was almost as fatal to my collection as Hudibras's visit to that of Sidrophel; and I have ever since missed

*My copperplate, with almanacks
Engraved upon't and other knacks
My moon-dial, with Napier's bones,
And several constellation Stones;
My flea, my morpeon, and punaise,
I purchased for my proper ease.*

And so forth, as old Butler has it."

The young lady, after courtesying to Lovel, had taken the opportunity to make her escape during this enumeration of losses. "You'll be poisoned here with the volumes of dust they have raised," continued the Antiquary; "but I assure you the dust was very ancient, peaceful, quiet dust, about an hour ago, and would have remained so for a hundred years, had not these gipsies disturbed it, as they do everything else in the world."

It was indeed some time before Lovel could, through the thick atmosphere, perceive in what sort of den his friend had constructed his retreat. It was a lofty room of middling size, obscurely lighted by high narrow latticed windows. One end was entirely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited in space for the number of volumes placed upon them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two or three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and the tables, amid a chaos of maps, engraving, scraps of parchment, bundles of papers, pieces of old armour, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets. Behind Mr. Oldbuck's seat (which was an ancient leathern-covered easy-chair, worn smooth by constant use) was a huge oaken cabinet, decorated at each corner with Dutch cherubs, having their little duck-wings displayed, and great jolter-headed visages placed between them. The top of this cabinet was covered with busts, and Roman lamps and paterae, intermingled with one or two bronze figures. The walls of the apartment were partly clothed with grim old tapestry, representing the memorable story of Sir Gawaine's wedding, in which full justice was done to the ugliness of the Lothely Lady; although, to judge from his own looks, the gentle knight had less reason to be disgusted with the match on account of disparity of outward favour, than the romancer has given us to understand. The rest of the room was panelled, or wainscotted, with black oak, against which hung two or three portraits in armour, being characters in Scottish history, favourites of Mr. Oldbuck, and as many in tie-wigs and laced coats, staring representatives of his own ancestors. A large old-fashioned oaken table was covered with a profusion of papers, parchments, books, and nondescript trinkets and gewgaws, which seemed to have little to recommend them, besides rust and the antiquity which it indicates. In the midst of this wreck of ancient books and utensils, with a gravity equal to Marius among the ruins of Carthage, sat a large black cat, which, to a superstitious

eye, might have presented the *genius loci*, the tutelary demon of the apartment. The floor, as well as the table and chairs, was overflowed by the same *mare magnum* of miscellaneous trumpery, where it would have been as impossible to find any individual article wanted, as to put it to any use when discovered.

Amid this medley, it was no easy matter to find one's way to a chair, without stumbling over a prostrate folio, or the still more awkward mischance of overturning some piece of Roman or ancient British pottery. And, when the chair was attained, it had to be disencumbered, with a careful hand, of engravings which might have received damage, and of antique spurs and buckles, which would certainly have occasioned it to any sudden occupant. Of this the Antiquary made Lovel particularly aware, adding, that his friend, the Rev. Doctor Heavysterne from the Low Countries, had sustained much injury by sitting down suddenly and incautiously on three ancient calthrops, or *craw-taes*, which had been lately dug up in the bog near Bannockburn, and which, dispersed by Robert Bruce to lacerate the feet of the English chargers, came thus in process of time to endamage the sitting part of a learned professor of Utrecht.

Having at length fairly settled himself, and being nothing loath to make inquiry concerning the strange objects around him, which his host was equally ready, as far as possible, to explain, Lovel was introduced to a large club, or bludgeon, with an iron spike at the end of it, which, it seems, had been lately found in a field on the Monkbarns property, adjacent to an old burying-ground. It had mightily the air of such a stick as the Highland reapers use to walk with on their annual peregrinations from their mountains; but Mr. Oldbuck was strongly tempted to believe, that, as its shape was singular, it might have been one of the clubs with which the monks armed their peasants in lieu of more martial weapons,—whence, he observed, the villains were called *Colve-carles*, or *Kolb-kerls*, that is, *Clavigeri*, or club-bearers. For the truth of this custom, he quoted the chronicle of Antwerp and that of St. Martin; against which authorities Lovel had nothing to oppose, having never heard of them till that moment.

Mr. Oldbuck next exhibited thumb-screws, which had given the Covenanters of former days the cramp in their joints, and a collar with the name of a fellow convicted of theft, whose services, as the inscription bore, had been adjudged to a neighbouring baron, in lieu of the modern Scottish punishment, which, as Oldbuck said, sends such culprits to enrich England by their labour, and themselves by their dexterity. Many and various were the other curiosities which he showed;—but it was chiefly upon his books that he prided himself, repeating, with a complacent air, as he led the way to the crowded and dusty shelves, the verses of old Chaucer—

*For he would rather have, at his bed-head,
A twenty books, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle, or his philosophy,
Than robes rich, rebeck, or saltery.*

This pithy motto he delivered, shaking his head, and giving each guttural the true Anglo-Saxon enunciation, which is now forgotten in the southern parts of this realm.

The collection was indeed a curious one, and might well be envied by an amateur. Yet it was not collected at the enormous prices of modern times, which are sufficient to have appalled the most determined as well as earliest bibliomaniac upon record, whom we take to have been none else than the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha, as, among other slight indications of an infirm understanding, he is stated, by his veracious historian, Cid Hamet Benengeli, to have exchanged fields and farms for folios and quartos of chivalry. In this species of exploit, the good knight-errant has been imitated by lords, knights, and squires of our own day, though we have not yet heard of any that has mistaken an inn for a castle, or laid his lance in rest against a windmill. Mr. Oldbuck did not follow these collectors in such excess of expenditure; but, taking a pleasure in the personal labour of forming his library, saved his purse at the expense of his time and toil. He was no encourager of that ingenious race of peripatetic middle-men, who, trafficking between the obscure keeper of a stall and the eager amateur, make their profit at once of the ignorance of the former, and the dear-bought skill and taste of the latter. When such were mentioned in his hearing, he seldom failed to point out how necessary it was to arrest the object of your curiosity in its first transit, and to tell his favourite story of Snuffy Davie and Caxton's Game at Chess.—"Davy Wilson," he said, "commonly called Snuffy Davy, from his inveterate addiction to black rappee, was the very prince of scouts for searching blind alleys, cellars, and stalls for rare volumes. He had the scent of a slow-hound, sir, and the snap of a bull-dog. He would detect you an old black-letter ballad among the leaves of a law-paper, and find an *editio princeps* under the mask of a school Corderius. Snuffy Davy bought the Game of Chess, 1474, the first book ever printed in England, from a stall in Holland, for about two groschen, or twopence of our money. He sold it to Osborne for twenty pounds, and as many books as came to twenty pounds more. Osborne resold this inimitable windfall to Dr. Askew for sixty guineas. At Dr. Askew's sale," continued the old gentleman, kindling as he spoke, "this inestimable treasure blazed forth in its full value, and was purchased by Royalty itself for one hundred and seventy pounds!—Could a copy now occur, Lord only knows," he ejaculated, with a deep sigh and lifted-up hands—"Lord only knows what would be its ransom; and yet it was originally secured, by skill and research, for the easy equivalent of two-pence sterling. * Happy, thrice happy, Snuffy Davie!—and blessed were the times when thy industry could be so rewarded!

* This bibliomaniacal anecdote is literally true; and David Wilson, the author need not tell his brethren of the Roxburghe and Bannatyne Clubs, was a real personage.

"Even I, sir," he went on, "though far inferior in industry and discernment and presence of mind, to that great man, can show you a few—a very few things, which I have collected, not by force of money, as any wealthy man might,—although, as my friend Lucian says, he might chance to throw away his coin only to illustrate his ignorance,—but gained in a manner that shows I know something of the matter. See this bundle of ballads, not one of them later than 1700, and some of them an hundred years older. I wheedled an old woman out of these, who loved them better than her psalm-book. Tobacco, sir, snuff, and the Complete Syren, were the equivalent! For that, mutilated copy of the Complaynt of Scotland, I sat out the drinking of two dozen bottles of strong ale with the late learned proprietor, who, in gratitude, bequeathed it to me by his last will. These little Elzevirs are the memoranda and trophies of many a walk by night and morning through the Cowgate, the Canongate, the Bow, St. Mary's Wynd,—wherever, in fine, there were to be found brokers and trokers, those miscellaneous dealers in things rare and curious. How often have I stood haggling on a halfpenny, lest, by a too ready acquiescence in the dealer's first price, he should be led to suspect the value I set upon the article!—how have I trembled, lest some passing stranger should chop in between me and the prize, and regarded each poor student of divinity that stopped to turn over the books at the stall, as a rival amateur, or prowling bookseller in disguise!—And then, Mr. Lovel, the sly satisfaction with which one pays the consideration, and pockets the article, affecting a cold indifference, while the hand is trembling with pleasure!—Then to dazzle the eyes of our wealthier and emulous rivals by showing them such a treasure as this" (displaying a little black smoked book about the size of a primer); "to enjoy their surprise and envy, shrouding meanwhile, under a veil of mysterious consciousness, our own superior knowledge and dexterity these, my young friend, these are the white moments of life, that repay the toil, and pains, and sedulous attention, which our profession, above all others, so peculiarly demands!"

Lovel was not a little amused at hearing the old gentleman run on in this manner, and, however incapable of entering into the full merits of what he beheld, he admired, as much as could have been expected, the various treasures which Oldbuck exhibited. Here were editions esteemed as being the first, and there stood those scarcely less regarded as being the last and best; here was a book valued because it had the author's final improvements, and there another which (strange to tell!) was in request because it had them not. One was precious because it was a folio, another because it was a duodecimo; some because they were tall, some because they were short; the merit of this lay in the title-page—of that in the arrangement of the letters in the word *Finis*. There was, it seemed, no peculiar distinction, however trifling or minute, which might not give value to a volume, providing the indispensable quality of scarcity, or rare occurrence, was attached to it.

Not the least fascinating was the original broadside,—the Dying Speech, Bloody Murder, or Wonderful Wonder of Wonders,—in its primary tattered guise, as it was hawked through the streets, and sold for the cheap and easy price of one penny, though now worth the weight of that penny in gold. On these the Antiquary dilated with transport, and read, with a rapturous voice, the elaborate titles, which bore the same proportion to the contents that the painted signs without a showman's booth do to the animals within. Mr. Oldbuck, for example, piqued himself especially in possessing an *unique* broadside, entitled and called "Strange and Wonderful News from Chipping-Norton, in the County of Oxon, of certain dreadful Apparitions which were seen in the Air on the 26th of July 1610, at Half an

Hour after Nine o'Clock at Noon, and continued till Eleven, in which Time was seen Appearances of several flaming Swords, strange Motions of the superior Orbs; with the unusual Sparkling of the Stars, with their dreadful Continuations; With the Account of the Opening of the Heavens, and strange Appearances therein disclosing themselves, with several other prodigious Circumstances not heard of in any Age, to the great Amazement of the Beholders, as it was communicated in a Letter to one Mr. Colley, living in West Smithfield, and attested by Thomas Brown, Elizabeth Greenaway, and Anne Gutheridge, who were Spectators of the dreadful Apparitions: And if any one would be further satisfied of the Truth of this Relation, let them repair to Mr. Nightingale's at the Bear Inn, in West Smithfield, and they may be satisfied.**

* Of this thrice and four times rare broadside, the author possesses an exemplar.

"You laugh at this," said the proprietor of the collection, "and I forgive you. I do acknowledge that the charms on which we doat are not so obvious to the eyes of youth as those of a fair lady; but you will grow wiser, and see more justly, when you come to wear spectacles.—Yet stay, I have one piece of antiquity, which you, perhaps, will prize more highly."

So saying, Mr. Oldbuck unlocked a drawer, and took out a bundle of keys, then pulled aside a piece of the tapestry which concealed the door of a small closet, into which he descended by four stone steps, and, after some tinkling among bottles and cans, produced two long-stalked wine-glasses with bell mouths, such as are seen in Teniers' pieces, and a small bottle of what he called rich racy canary, with a little bit of diet cake, on a small silver server of exquisite old workmanship.

"I will say nothing of the server," he remarked, "though it is said to have been wrought by the old mad Florentine, Benvenuto Cellini. But, Mr. Lovel, our ancestors drank sack—you, who admire the drama, know where that's to be found.—Here's success to your exertions at Fairport, sir!"

"And to you, sir, and an ample increase to your treasure, with no more trouble on your part than is just necessary to make the acquisitions valuable."

After a libation so suitable to the amusement in which they had been engaged, Lovel rose to take his leave, and Mr. Oldbuck prepared to give him his company a part of the way, and show him something worthy of his curiosity on his return to Fairport.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

*The pawkie auld carle cam ower the lea,
Wi' mony good-e'ens and good-morrows to me,
Saying, Kind Sir, for your courtesy,
Will ye lodge a silly puir man?
The Gaberlunzie Man.*

Our two friends moved through a little orchard, where the aged apple-trees, well loaded with fruit, showed, as is usual in the neighbourhood of monastic buildings, that the days of the monks had not always been spent in indolence, but often dedicated to horticulture and gardening. Mr. Oldbuck failed not to make Lovel remark, that the planters of those days were possessed of the modern secret of preventing the roots of the fruit-trees from penetrating the till, and compelling them to spread in a lateral direction, by placing paving-stones beneath the trees when first planted, so as to interpose between their fibres and the subsoil. "This old fellow," he said, "which was blown down last summer, and still, though half reclined on the ground, is covered with fruit, has been, as you may see, accommodated with such a barrier between his roots and the unkindly till. That other tree has a story:—the fruit is called the Abbot's Apple; the lady of a neighbouring baron was so fond of it, that she would often pay a visit to Monkbarrow, to have the pleasure of gathering it from the tree. The husband, a jealous man, belike, suspected that a taste so nearly resembling that of Mother Eve prognosticated a similar fall. As the honour of a noble family is concerned, I will say no more on the subject, only that the lands of Lochard and Cringlecut still pay a fine of six bolls of barley annually, to atone the guilt of their audacious owner, who intruded himself and his worldly suspicions upon the seclusion of the Abbot and his penitent.—Admire the little belfry rising above the ivy-mantled porch—there was here a *hospitium*, *hospitale*, or *hospitamentum* (for it is written all these various ways in the old writings and evidents), in which the monks received pilgrims. I know our minister has said, in the Statistical Account, that the *hospitium* was situated either in the lands of Haltweary or upon those of Half-starvet; but he is incorrect, Mr. Lovel—that is the gate called still the Palmer's Port, and my gardener found many hewn stones, when he was trenching the ground for winter celery, several of which I have sent as specimens to my learned friends, and to the various antiquarian societies of which I am an unworthy member. But I will say no more at present; I reserve something for another visit, and we have an object of real curiosity before us."

While he was thus speaking, he led the way briskly through one or two rich pasture-meadows, to an open heath or common, and so to the top of a gentle eminence. "Here," he said, "Mr. Lovel, is a truly remarkable spot."

"It commands a fine view," said his companion, looking around him.

"True: but it is not for the prospect I brought you hither; do you see nothing else remarkable?—nothing on the surface of the ground?"

"Why, yes; I do see something like a ditch, indistinctly marked."

"Indistinctly!—pardon me, sir, but the indistinctness must be in your powers of vision. Nothing can be more plainly traced—a proper *agger* or *vallum*, with its corresponding ditch or *fossa*. Indistinctly! why, Heaven help you, the lassie, my niece, as light-headed a goose as womankind affords, saw the traces of the ditch at once. Indistinct!—why, the great station at Ardoch, or that at Burnswark in Annandale, may be clearer, doubtless, because they are stative forts, whereas this was only an occasional encampment. Indistinct!—why, you must suppose that fools, boors, and idiots, have ploughed up the land, and, like beasts and ignorant savages, have thereby obliterated two sides of the square, and greatly injured the third; but you see, yourself, the fourth side is quite entire!"

Lovel endeavoured to apologize, and to explain away his ill-timed phrase, and pleaded his inexperience. But he was not at once quite successful. His first expression had come too frankly and naturally not to alarm the Antiquary, and he could not easily get over the shock it had given him.

"My dear sir," continued the senior, "your eyes are not inexperienced: you know a ditch from level ground, I presume, when you see them? Indistinct! why, the very common people, the very least boy that can herd a cow, calls it the Kaim of Kinprunes; and if that does not imply an ancient camp, I am ignorant what does."

Lovel having again acquiesced, and at length lulled to sleep the irritated and suspicious vanity of the Antiquary, he proceeded in his task of cicerone. "You must know," he said, "our Scottish antiquaries have been greatly divided about the local situation of the final conflict between Agricola and the Caledonians; some contend for Ardoch in Strathallan, some for Innerpeffry, some for the Raedykes in the Mearns, and some are for carrying the scene of action as far north as Blair in Athole. Now, after all this discussion," continued the old gentleman, with one of his slyest and most complacent looks, "what would you think, Mr. Lovel,—I say, what would you think,—if the memorable scene of conflict should happen to be on the very spot called the Kaim of Kinprunes, the property of the obscure and humble individual who now speaks to you?" Then, having paused a little, to suffer his guest to digest a communication so important, he resumed his disquisition in a higher tone. "Yes, my good friend, I am indeed greatly deceived if this place does not correspond with all the marks of that celebrated place of action. It was near to the Grampian mountains—lo! yonder they are, mixing and contending with the sky on the skirts of the horizon! It was *in conspectu classis*—in sight of the Roman fleet; and would any admiral, Roman or British, wish a fairer bay to ride in than that on your right hand? It is astonishing how blind we professed antiquaries sometimes are! Sir Robert Sibbald, Saunders Gordon, General Roy, Dr. Stokely,—why, it escaped all of them. I was unwilling to say a word about it till I had secured the ground, for it belonged to auld Johnnie Howie, a bonnet-laird* hard by, and many a communing we had before he and I could agree.

* A bonnet-laird signifies a petty proprietor, wearing the dress, along with the habits of a yeoman.

At length—I am almost ashamed to say it—but I even brought my mind to give acre for acre of my good corn-land for this barren spot. But then it was a national concern; and when the scene of so celebrated an event became my own, I was overpaid.—Whose patriotism would not grow warmer, as old Johnson says, on the plains of Marathon? I began to trench the ground, to see what might be discovered; and the third day, sir, we found a stone, which I have transported to

Monkbarns, in order to have the sculpture taken off with plaster of Paris; it bears a sacrificing vessel, and the letters A. D. L. L. which may stand, without much violence, for *Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*."

"Certainly, sir; for the Dutch Antiquaries claim Caligula as the founder of a light-house, on the sole authority of the letters C. C. P. F., which they interpret *Caius Caligula Pharum Fecit*."

"True, and it has ever been recorded as a sound exposition. I see we shall make something of you even before you wear spectacles, notwithstanding you thought the traces of this beautiful camp indistinct when you first observed them."

"In time, sir, and by good instruction"—

"—You will become more apt—I doubt it not. You shall peruse, upon your next visit to Monkbarns, my trivial Essay upon Castrametation, with some particular Remarks upon the Vestiges of Ancient Fortifications lately discovered by the Author at the Kaim of Kinprunes. I think I have pointed out the infallible touchstone of supposed antiquity. I premise a few general rules on that point, on the nature, namely, of the evidence to be received in such cases. Meanwhile be pleased to observe, for example, that I could press into my service Claudian's famous line,

Ille Caledoniis posuit qui castra pruinis.

For *pruinis*, though interpreted to mean *hoar frosts*, to which I own we are somewhat subject in this north-eastern sea-coast, may also signify a locality, namely, *Prunes*; the *Castra Pruinis posita* would therefore be the Kaim of Kinprunes. But I waive this, for I am sensible it might be laid hold of by cavillers as carrying down my *Castra* to the time of Theodosius, sent by Valentinian into Britain as late as the year 367, or thereabout. No, my good friend, I appeal to people's eye-sight. Is not here the Decuman gate? and there, but for the ravage of the horrid plough, as a learned friend calls it, would be the Praetorian gate. On the left hand you may see some slight vestiges of the *porta sinistra*, and on the right, one side of the *porta dextra* wellnigh entire. Here, then, let us take our stand, on this tumulus, exhibiting the foundation of ruined buildings,—the central point—the *praetorium*, doubtless, of the camp. From this place, now scarce to be distinguished but by its slight elevation and its greener turf from the rest of the fortification, we may suppose Agricola to have looked forth on the immense army of Caledonians, occupying the declivities of yon opposite hill,—the infantry rising rank over rank, as the form of ground displayed their array to its utmost advantage,—the cavalry and *covinari*, by which I understand the charioteers—another guise of folks from your Bond-street four-in-hand men, I trow—scouring the more level space below—

—See, then, Lovel—See—

See that huge battle moving from the mountains!

Their gilt coats shine like dragon scales;—their march

Like a rough tumbling storm.—See them, and view them,

And then see Rome no more!—

Yes, my dear friend, from this stance it is probable—nay, it is nearly certain, that Julius Agricola beheld what our Beaumont has so admirably described!—From this very Praetorium"—

A voice from behind interrupted his ecstatic description—"Praetorian here, Praetorian there, I mind the bigging o't."

Both at once turned round, Lovel with surprise, and Oldbuck with mingled surprise and indignation, at so uncivil an interruption. An auditor had stolen upon them, unseen and unheard, amid the energy of the Antiquary's enthusiastic declamation, and the attentive civility of Lovel. He had the exterior appearance of a mendicant. A slouched hat of huge dimensions; a long white beard which mingled with his grizzled hair; an aged but strongly marked and expressive countenance, hardened, by climate and exposure, to a right brick-dust complexion; a long blue gown, with a pewter badge on the right arm; two or three wallets, or bags, slung across his shoulder, for holding the different kinds of meal, when he received his charity in kind from those who were but a degree richer than himself:—all these marked at once a beggar by profession, and one of that privileged class which are called in Scotland the King's Bedesmen, or, vulgarly, Blue-Gowns.

"What is that you say, Edie?" said Oldbuck, hoping, perhaps, that his ears had betrayed their duty—"what were you speaking about!"

"About this bit bourock, your honour," answered the undaunted Edie; "I mind the bigging o't."

"The devil you do! Why, you old fool, it was here before you were born, and will be after you are hanged, man!"

"Hanged or drowned, here or awa, dead or alive, I mind the bigging o't."

"You—you—you—," said the Antiquary, stammering between confusion and anger, "you strolling old vagabond, what the devil do you know about it?"

"Ou, I ken this about it, Monkbarns—and what profit have I for telling ye a lie?—I just ken this about it, that about twenty years syne, I, and a wheen hallenshakers like mysell, and the mason-lads that built the lang dike that gaes down the loaning, and twa or three herds maybe, just set to wark, and built this bit thing here that ye ca' the—the—Praetorian, and a' just for a bield at auld Aiken Drum's bridal, and a bit blithe gae-down wi' had in't, some sair rainy weather. Mair by token, Monkbarns, if ye howk up the bourock, as ye seem to have began, yell find, if ye hae not fund it already, a stane that ane o' the mason-callants cut a ladle on to have a bourd at the bridegroom, and he put four letters on't, that's A. D. L. L.—Aiken Drum's Lang Ladle—for Aiken was ane o' the kale-suppers o' Fife."

"This," thought Lovel to himself, "is a famous counterpart to the story of *Keip on this syde*." He then ventured to steal a glance at our Antiquary, but quickly withdrew it in sheer compassion. For, gentle reader, if thou hast ever beheld the visage of a damsel of sixteen, whose romance of true love has been blown up by an untimely discovery, or of a child of ten years, whose castle of cards has been blown down by a malicious companion, I can safely aver to you, that Jonathan Oldbuck of Monkbarns looked neither more wise nor less disconcerted.

"There is some mistake about this," he said, abruptly turning away from the mendicant.

"Deil a bit on my side o' the wa'," answered the sturdy beggar; "I never deal in mistakes, they aye bring mischances.—Now, Monkbarns, that young gentleman, that's wi' your honour, thinks little of a carle like me; and yet, I'll wager I'll tell him whar he was yestreen at the gloamin, only he maybe wadna like to hae't spoken o' in company."

Lovel's soul rushed to his cheeks, with the vivid blush of two-and-twenty.

"Never mind the old rogue," said Mr. Oldbuck; "don't suppose I think the worse of you for your profession; they are only prejudiced fools and coxcombs that do so. You remember what old Tully says in his oration, *pro Archia poeta*, concerning one of your confraternity—*quis nostrum tam anino agresti ac duro fuit—ut—ut—I forget the Latin—the meaning is, which of us was so rude and barbarous as to remain unmoved at the death of the great Roscius, whose advanced age was so far from preparing us for his death, that we rather hoped one so graceful, so excellent in his art, ought to be exempted from the common lot of mortality? So the Prince of Orators spoke of the stage and its professor.*"

The words of the old man fell upon Lovel's ears, but without conveying any precise idea to his mind, which was then occupied in thinking by what means the old beggar, who still continued to regard him with a countenance provokingly sly and intelligent, had contrived to thrust himself into any knowledge of his affairs. He put his hand in his pocket as the readiest mode of intimating his desire of secrecy, and securing the concurrence of the person whom he addressed; and while he bestowed on him an alms, the amount of which rather bore proportion to his fears than to his charity, looked at him with a marked expression, which the mendicant, a physiognomist by profession, seemed perfectly to understand.—"Never mind me, sir—I am no tale-pyete; but there are mair een in the world than mine," answered he as he pocketed Lovel's bounty, but in a tone to be heard by him alone, and with an expression which amply filled up what was left unspoken. Then turning to Oldbuck—"I am awa' to the manse, your honour. Has your honour any word there, or to Sir Arthur, for I'll come in by Knockwinnock Castle again e'en?"

Oldbuck started as from a dream; and, in a hurried tone, where vexation strove with a wish to conceal it, paying, at the same time, a tribute to Edie's smooth, greasy, unlined hat, he said, "Go down, go down to Monkbarns—let them give you some dinner—Or stay; if you do go to the manse, or to Knockwinnock, ye need say nothing about that foolish story of yours."

"Who, I?" said the mendicant—"Lord bless your honour, naeboddy sall ken a word about it frae me, mair than if the bit bourock had been there since Noah's flood. But, Lord, they tell me your honour has gien Johnnie Howie acre for acre of the laigh crofts for this heathery knowe! Now, if he has really imposed the bourock on ye for an ancient wark, it's my real opinion the bargain will never haud gude, if you would just bring down your heart to try it at the law, and say that he beguiled ye."

"Provoking scoundrell!" muttered the indignant Antiquary between his teeth—"I'll have the hangman's lash and his back acquainted for this." And then, in a louder tone,—"Never mind, Edie—it is all a mistake."

"Troth, I am thinking sae," continued his tormentor, who seemed to have pleasure in rubbing the galled wound, "troth, I aye thought sae; and it's no sae lang since I said to Luckie Gemmers, Never think you, luckie' said I, that his honour Monkbarns would hae done sic a daft-like thing as to gie grund weel worth fifty shillings an acre, for a mailing that would be dear o'a pund Scots. Na, na, 'quo' I, depend upon't the lard's been imposed upon wi that wily do-little deevil, Johnnie Howie.' But Lord haud a care o' us, sirs, how can that be, 'quo' she again, when the laird's sae book-learned, there's no the like o' him in the country side, and Johnnie Howie has hardly sense enugh to ca' the cows out o' his kale-yard?' Aweel, aweel, 'quo' I, but ye'll hear he's circumvented him with some of his auld-world stories,—for ye ken, laird, yon other time about the bodle that ye thought was an auld coin"—

"Go to the devil!" said Oldbuck; and then in a more mild tone, as one that was conscious his reputation lay at the mercy of his antagonist, he added—"Away with you down to Monkbarns, and when I come back, I'll send ye a bottle of ale to the kitchen."

"Heaven reward your honour!" This was uttered with the true mendicant whine, as, setting his pike-staff before him, he began to move in the direction of Monkbarns.—"But did your honour," turning round, "ever get back the siller ye gae to the travelling packman for the bodle?"

"Curse thee, go about thy business!"

"Aweel, aweel, sir, God bless your honour! I hope ye'll ding Johnnie Howie yet, and that I'll live to see it." And so saying, the old beggar moved off, relieving Mr. Oldbuck of recollections which were anything rather than agreeable.

"Who is this familiar old gentleman?" said Lovel, when the mendicant was out of hearing.

"O, one of the plagues of the country—I have been always against poor's-rates and a work-house—I think I'll vote for them now, to have that scoundrel shut up. O, your old-remembered guest of a beggar becomes as well acquainted with you as he is with his dish—as intimate as one of the beasts familiar to man which signify love, and with which his own trade is especially conversant. Who is he?—why, he has gone the vole— has been soldier, ballad-singer, travelling tinker, and is now a beggar. He is spoiled by our foolish gentry, who laugh at his jokes, and rehearse Edie Ochiltree's good thing's as regularly as Joe Miller's."

"Why, he uses freedom apparently, which is the soul of wit," answered Lovel.

"O ay, freedom enough," said the Antiquary; "he generally invents some damned improbable lie or another to provoke you, like that nonsense he talked just now—not that I'll publish my tract till I have examined the thing to the bottom."

"In England," said Lovel, "such a mendicant would get a speedy check."

"Yes, your churchwardens and dog-whips would make slender allowance for his vein of humour! But here, curse him! he is a sort of privileged nuisance—one of the last specimens of the old fashioned Scottish mendicant, who kept his rounds within a particular space, and was the news-carrier, the minstrel, and sometimes the historian of the district. That rascal, now, knows more old ballads and traditions than any other man in this and the four next parishes. And after all," continued he, softening as he went on describing Edie's good gifts, "the dog has some good humour. He has borne his hard fate with unbroken spirits, and it's cruel to deny him the comfort of a laugh at his betters. The pleasure of having quizzed me, as you gay folk would call it, will be meat and drink to him for a day or two. But I must go back and look after him, or he will spread his d—d nonsensical story over half the country."*

* Note C. Praetorium.

So saying our heroes parted, Mr. Oldbuck to return to his *hospitium* at Monkbarns, and Lovel to pursue his way to Fairport, where he arrived without farther adventure.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

Launcelot Gobbo. Mark me now:

Now will I raise the waters.

Merchant of Venice.

The theatre at Fairport had opened, but no Mr. Lovel appeared on the boards, nor was there anything in the habits or deportment of the young gentleman so named, which authorised Mr. Oldbuck's conjecture that his fellow-traveller was a candidate for the public favour. Regular were the Antiquary's inquiries at an old-fashioned barber who dressed the only three wigs in the parish which, in defiance of taxes and times, were still subjected to the operation of powdering and frizzling, and who for that purpose divided his time among the three employers whom fashion had yet left him; regular, I say, were Mr. Oldbuck's inquiries at this personage concerning the news of the little theatre at Fairport, expecting every day to hear of Mr. Lovel's appearance; on which occasion the old gentleman had determined to put himself to charges in honour of his young friend, and not only to go to the play himself, but to carry his womankind along with him. But old Jacob Caxon conveyed no information which warranted his taking so decisive a step as that of securing a box.

He brought information, on the contrary, that there was a young man residing at Fairport, of whom the *town* (by which he meant all the gossips, who, having no business of their own, fill up their leisure moments by attending to that of other people) could make nothing. He sought no society, but rather avoided that which the apparent gentleness of his manners, and some degree of curiosity, induced many to offer him. Nothing could be more regular, or less resembling an adventurer, than his mode of living, which was simple, but so completely well arranged, that all who had any transactions with him were loud in their approbation.

"These are not the virtues of a stage-struck hero," thought Oldbuck to himself; and, however habitually pertinacious in his opinions, he must have been compelled to abandon that which he had formed in the present instance, but for a part of Caxon's communication. "The young gentleman," he said, "was sometimes heard speaking to himself, and rampaging about in his room, just as if he was ane o' the player folk."

Nothing, however, excepting this single circumstance, occurred to confirm Mr. Oldbuck's supposition; and it remained a high and doubtful question, what a well-informed young man, without friends, connections, or employment of any kind, could have to do as a resident at Fairport. Neither port wine nor whist had apparently any charms for him. He declined dining with the mess of the volunteer cohort which had been lately embodied, and shunned joining the convivialities of either of the two parties which then divided Fairport, as they did more important places. He was too little of an aristocrat to join the club of Royal True Blues, and too little of a democrat to fraternise with an affiliated society of the *soi-disant* Friends of the People, which the borough had also the happiness of possessing. A coffee-room was his detestation; and, I grieve to say it, he had as few sympathies with the tea-table.—In short, since the name was fashionable in novel-writing, and that is a great while ago, there was never a Master Lovel of whom so little positive was known, and who was so universally described by negatives.

One negative, however, was important—nobody knew any harm of Lovel. Indeed, had such existed, it would have been speedily made public; for the natural desire of speaking evil of our neighbour could in his case have been checked by no feelings of sympathy for a being so unsocial. On one account alone he fell somewhat under suspicion. As he made free use of his pencil in his solitary walks, and had drawn several views of the harbour, in which the signal tower, and even the four-gun battery, were introduced, some zealous friends of the public sent abroad a whisper, that this mysterious stranger must certainly be a French spy. The Sheriff paid his respects to Mr. Lovel accordingly; but in the interview which followed, it would seem that he had entirely removed that magistrate's suspicions, since he not only suffered him to remain undisturbed in his retirement, but it was credibly reported, sent him two invitations to dinner-parties, both

which were civilly declined. But what the nature of the explanation was, the magistrate kept a profound secret, not only from the public at large, but from his substitute, his clerk, his wife and his two daughters, who formed his privy council on all questions of official duty.

All these particulars being faithfully reported by Mr. Caxon to his patron at Monkbarns, tended much to raise Lovel in the opinion of his former fellow-traveller. "A decent sensible lad," said he to himself, "who scorns to enter into the fooleries and nonsense of these idiot people at Fairport—I must do something for him—I must give him a dinner;—and I will write Sir Arthur to come to Monkbarns to meet him. I must consult my womankind."

Accordingly, such consultation having been previously held, a special messenger, being no other than Caxon himself, was ordered to prepare for a walk to Knockwinnock Castle with a letter, "For the honoured Sir Arthur Wardour, of Knockwinnock, Bart." The contents ran thus:

"Dear Sir Arthur,

"On Tuesday the 17th curt. *stilo novo*, I hold a coenobitical symposion at Monkbarns, and pray you to assist thereat, at four o'clock precisely. If my fair enemy, Miss Isabel, can and will honour us by accompanying you, my womankind will be but too proud to have the aid of such an auxiliary in the cause of resistance to awful rule and right supremacy. If not, I will send the womankind to the manse for the day. I have a young acquaintance to make known to you, who is touched with some strain of a better spirit than belongs to these giddy-paced times—reveres his elders, and has a pretty notion of the classics—and, as such a youth must have a natural contempt for the people about Fairport, I wish to show him some rational as well as worshipful society.—I am, Dear Sir Arthur, etc. etc. etc."

"Fly with this letter, Caxon," said the senior, holding out his missive, *signatum atque sigillatum*, "fly to Knockwinnock, and bring me back an answer. Go as fast as if the town-council were met and waiting for the provost, and the provost was waiting for his new-powdered wig."

"Ah sir," answered the messenger, with a deep sigh, "thae days hae lang gane by. Deil a wig has a provost of Fairport worn sin' auld Provost Jervie's time—and he had a quean of a servant-lass that dressed it herself, wi' the doup o' a candle and a drudging-box. But I hae seen the day, Monkbarns, when the town-council of Fairport wad hae as soon wanted their town-clerk, or their gill of brandy ower-head after the haddies, as they wad hae wanted ilk ane a weel-favoured, sonsy, decent periwig on his pow. Hegh, sirs! nae wonder the commons will be discontent and rise against the law, when they see magistrates and bailies, and deacons, and the provost himsell, wi' heads as bald and as bare as ane o' my blocks!"

"And as well furnished within, Caxon. But away with you!—you have an excellent view of public affairs, and, I dare say, have touched the cause of our popular discontent as closely as the provost could have done himself. But away with you, Caxon!"

And off went Caxon upon his walk of three miles—

He hobbled—but his heart was good!

Could he go faster than he could?—

While he is engaged in his journey and return, it may not be impertinent to inform the reader to whose mansion he was bearing his embassy.

We have said that Mr. Oldbuck kept little company with the surrounding gentlemen, excepting with one person only. This was Sir Arthur Wardour, a baronet of ancient descent, and of a large but embarrassed fortune. His father, Sir Anthony, had been a Jacobite, and had displayed all the enthusiasm of that party, while it could be served with words only. No man squeezed the orange with more significant gesture; no one could more dexterously intimate a dangerous health without coming under the penal statutes; and, above all, none drank success to the cause more deeply and devoutly. But, on the approach of the Highland army in 1745, it would appear that the worthy baronet's zeal became a little more moderate just when its warmth was of most consequence. He talked much, indeed, of taking the field for the rights of Scotland and Charles Stuart; but his demi-pique saddle would suit only one of his horses; and that horse could by no means be brought to stand fire. Perhaps the worshipful owner sympathized in the scruples of this sagacious quadruped, and began to think, that what was so much dreaded by the horse could not be very wholesome for the rider. At any rate, while Sir Anthony Wardour talked, and drank, and hesitated, the Sturdy provost of Fairport (who, as we before noticed, was the father of our Antiquary) sallied from his ancient burgh, heading a body of whig-burghers, and seized at once, in the name of George II., upon the Castle of Knockwinnock, and on the four carriage-horses, and person of the proprietor. Sir Anthony was shortly after sent off to the Tower of London by a secretary of state's warrant, and with him went his son, Arthur, then a youth. But as nothing appeared like an overt act of treason, both father and son were soon set at liberty, and returned to their own mansion of Knockwinnock, to drink healths five fathoms deep, and talk of their sufferings in the royal cause. This became so much a matter of habit with Sir Arthur, that, even after his father's death, the non-juring chaplain used to pray regularly for the restoration of the rightful sovereign, for the downfall of the usurper, and for deliverance from their cruel and bloodthirsty enemies; although all idea of serious opposition to the House of Hanover had long mouldered away, and this treasonable liturgy was kept up rather as a matter of form than as conveying any distinct meaning. So much was this the case, that, about the year 1770, upon a disputed election occurring in the county, the worthy knight fairly gulped down the oaths of abjuration and allegiance, in order to serve a candidate in whom he was interested;—thus renouncing the heir for whose restoration he weekly petitioned Heaven, and acknowledging the usurper whose dethronement he had never ceased to pray for. And to add to this melancholy instance of human inconsistency, Sir Arthur continued to pray for the House of Stuart even after the family had been extinct, and when, in truth, though in his theoretical loyalty he was pleased to regard them as alive, yet, in all actual service and practical exertion, he was a most zealous and devoted subject of George III.

In other respects, Sir Arthur Wardour lived like most country gentlemen in Scotland, hunted and fished—gave and received dinners—attended races and county meetings—was a deputy-lieutenant and trustee upon turnpike acts. But, in his more advanced years, as he became too lazy or unwieldy for field-sports, he supplied them by now and then reading Scottish history; and, having gradually acquired a taste for antiquities, though neither very deep nor very correct, he became a crony of his neighbour, Mr. Oldbuck of Monkbarns, and a joint-labourer with him in his antiquarian pursuits.

There were, however, points of difference between these two humourists, which sometimes occasioned discord. The faith of Sir Arthur, as an antiquary, was boundless, and Mr. Oldbuck (notwithstanding the affair of the Praetorium at the Kaim of Kinprunes) was much more scrupulous in receiving legends as current and authentic coin. Sir Arthur would have deemed himself guilty of the crime of leze-majesty had he doubted the existence of any single individual of that formidable head-roll of one hundred and four kings of Scotland, received by Boethius, and rendered classical by Buchanan, in virtue of whom James VI. claimed to rule his ancient kingdom, and whose portraits still frown grimly upon the walls of the gallery of Holyrood. Now Oldbuck, a shrewd and suspicious man, and no respecter of divine hereditary right, was apt to cavil at this sacred list, and to affirm, that the procession of the posterity of Fergus through the pages of Scottish history, was as vain and unsubstantial as the gleamy pageant of the descendants of Banquo through the cavern of Hecate.

Another tender topic was the good fame of Queen Mary, of which the knight was a most chivalrous assertor, while the esquire impugned it, in spite both of her beauty and misfortunes. When, unhappily, their conversation turned on yet later times, motives of discord occurred in almost every page of history. Oldbuck was, upon principle, a staunch Presbyterian, a ruling elder of the kirk, and a friend to revolution principles and Protestant succession, while Sir Arthur was the very reverse of all this. They agreed, it is true, in dutiful love and allegiance to the sovereign who now fills* the throne; but this was their only point of union.

* The reader will understand that this refers to the reign of our late gracious Sovereign, George the Third.

It therefore often happened, that bickerings hot broke out between them, in which Oldbuck was not always able to suppress his caustic humour, while it would sometimes occur to the Baronet that the descendant of a German printer, whose sires had "sought the base fellowship of paltry burghers," forgot himself, and took an unlicensed freedom of debate, considering the rank and ancient descent of his antagonist. This, with the old feud of the coach-horses, and the seizure of his manor-place and tower of strength by Mr. Oldbuck's father, would at times rush upon his mind, and inflame at once his cheeks and his arguments. And, lastly, as Mr. Oldbuck thought his worthy friend and compeer was in some respects little better than a fool, he was apt to come more near communicating to him that unfavourable opinion, than the rules of modern politeness warrant. In such cases they often parted in deep dudgeon, and with something like a resolution to forbear each other's company in future:

But with the morning calm reflection came; and as each was sensible that the society of the other had become, through habit, essential to his comfort, the breach was speedily made up between them. On such occasions, Oldbuck, considering that the Baronet's pettishness resembled that of a child, usually showed his superior sense by compassionately making the first advances to reconciliation. But it once or twice happened that the aristocratic pride of the far-descended

knight took a flight too offensive to the feelings of the representative of the typographer. In these cases, the breach between these two originals might have been immortal, but for the kind exertion and interposition of the Baronet's daughter, Miss Isabella Wardour, who, with a son, now absent upon foreign and military service, formed his whole surviving family. She was well aware how necessary Mr. Oldbuck was to her father's amusement and comfort, and seldom failed to interpose with effect, when the office of a mediator between them was rendered necessary by the satirical shrewdness of the one, or the assumed superiority of the other. Under Isabella's mild influence, the wrongs of Queen Mary were forgotten by her father, and Mr. Oldbuck forgave the blasphemy which reviled the memory of King William. However, as she used in general to take her father's part playfully in these disputes, Oldbuck was wont to call Isabella his fair enemy, though in fact he made more account of her than any other of her sex, of whom, as we have seen, he, was no admirer.

There existed another connection betwixt these worthies, which had alternately a repelling and attractive influence upon their intimacy. Sir Arthur always wished to borrow; Mr. Oldbuck was not always willing to lend. Mr. Oldbuck, per contra, always wished to be repaid with regularity; Sir Arthur was not always, nor indeed often, prepared to gratify this reasonable desire; and, in accomplishing an arrangement between tendencies so opposite, little *miffs* would occasionally take place. Still there was a spirit of mutual accommodation upon the whole, and they dragged on like dogs in couples, with some difficulty and occasional snarling, but without absolutely coming to a stand-still or throttling each other.

Some little disagreement, such as we have mentioned, arising out of business, or politics, had divided the houses of Knockwinnock and Monkbarns, when the emissary of the latter arrived to discharge his errand. In his ancient Gothic parlour, whose windows on one side looked out upon the restless ocean, and, on the other, upon the long straight avenue, was the Baronet seated, now turning over the leaves of a folio, now casting a weary glance where the sun quivered on the dark-green foliage and smooth trunks of the large and branching limes with which the avenue was planted. At length, sight of joy! a moving object is seen, and it gives rise to the usual inquiries, Who is it? and what can be his errand? The old whitish-grey coat, the hobbling gait, the hat half-slouched, half-cocked, announced the forlorn maker of periwigs, and left for investigation only the second query. This was soon solved by a servant entering the parlour,—“A letter from Monkbarns, Sir Arthur.”

Sir Arthur took the epistle with a due assumption of consequential dignity.

“Take the old man into the kitchen, and let him get some refreshment,” said the young lady, whose compassionate eye had remarked his thin grey hair and wearied gait.

“Mr. Oldbuck, my love, invites us to dinner on Tuesday the 17th,” said the Baronet, pausing;—“he really seems to forget that he has not of late conducted himself so civilly towards me as might have been expected.”

“Dear sir, you have so many advantages over poor Mr. Oldbuck, that no wonder it should put him a little out of humour; but I know he has much respect for your person and your conversation;—nothing would give him more pain than to be wanting in any real attention.”

“True, true, Isabella; and one must allow for the original descent;—something of the German boorishness still flows in the blood; something of the whiggish and perverse opposition to established rank and privilege. You may observe that he never has any advantage of me in dispute, unless when he avails himself of a sort of pettifogging intimacy with dates, names, and trifling matters of fact—a tiresome and frivolous accuracy of memory, which is entirely owing to his mechanical descent.”

“He must find it convenient in historical investigation, I should think, sir?” said the young lady.

“It leads to an uncivil and positive mode of disputing; and nothing seems more unreasonable than to hear him impugn even Bellenden's rare translation of Hector Boece, which I have the satisfaction to possess, and which is a black-letter folio of great value, upon the authority of some old scrap of parchment which he has saved from its deserved destiny of being cut up into tailor's measures. And besides, that habit of minute and troublesome accuracy leads to a mercantile manner of doing business, which ought to be beneath a landed proprietor whose family has stood two or three generations. I question if there's a dealer's clerk in Fairport that can sum an account of interest better than Monkbarns.”

“But you'll accept his invitation, sir?”

“Why, ye—yes; we have no other engagement on hand, I think. Who can the young man be he talks of?—he seldom picks up new acquaintance; and he has no relation that I ever heard of.”

“Probably some relation of his brother-in-law Captain M'Intyre.”

“Very possibly—yes, we will accept—the M'Intyres are of a very ancient Highland family. You may answer his card in the affirmative, Isabella; I believe I have, no leisure to be *Dear Sirring* myself.”

So this important matter being adjusted, Miss Wardour intimated “her own and Sir Arthur's compliments, and that they would have the honour of waiting upon Mr. Oldbuck. Miss Wardour takes this opportunity to renew her hostility with Mr. Oldbuck, on account of his late long absence from Knockwinnock, where his visits give so much pleasure.” With this *placebo* she concluded her note, with which old Caxon, now refreshed in limbs and wind, set out on his return to the Antiquary's mansion.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

*Moth. By Woden, God of Saxons,
From whence comes Wensday, that is, Wodnesday,
Truth is a thing that I will ever keep
Unto thy lke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre—
Cartwright's Ordinary.*

Our young friend Lovel, who had received a corresponding invitation, punctual to the hour of appointment, arrived at Monkbarns about five minutes before four o'clock on the 17th of July. The day had been remarkably sultry, and large drops of rain had occasionally fallen, though the threatened showers had as yet passed away.

Mr. Oldbuck received him at the Palmer's-port in his complete brown suit, grey silk stockings, and wig powdered with all the skill of the veteran Caxon, who having smelt out the dinner, had taken care not to finish his job till the hour of eating approached.

“You are welcome to my symposion, Mr. Lovel. And now let me introduce you to my Clogdogdo's, as Tom Otter calls them—my unlucky and good-for-nothing womankind—*malae bestiae*, Mr. Lovel.”

“I shall be disappointed, sir, if I do not find the ladies very undeserving of your satire.”

“Tilley-valley, Mr. Lovel,—which, by the way, one commentator derives from *tittivillitium*, and another from *talley-ho*—but tilley-valley, I say—a truce with your politeness. You will find them but samples of womankind—But here they be, Mr. Lovel. I present to you in due order, my most discreet sister Griselda, who disdains the simplicity, as well as patience annexed to the poor old name of Grizzel; and my most exquisite niece Maria, whose mother was called Mary, and sometimes Molly.”

The elderly lady rustled in silks and satins, and bore upon her head a structure resembling the fashion in the ladies' memorandum-book for the year 1770—a superb piece of architecture, not much less than a modern Gothic castle, of which the curls might represent the turrets, the black pins the *chevaux de frise*, and the lappets the banners.

The face, which, like that of the ancient statues of Vesta, was thus crowned with towers, was large and long, and peaked at nose and chin, and bore, in other respects, such a ludicrous resemblance to the physiognomy of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, that Lovel, had they not appeared at once, like Sebastian and Viola in the last scene of the "Twelfth Night," might have supposed that the figure before him was his old friend masquerading in female attire. An antique flowered silk gown graced the extraordinary person to whom belonged this unparalleled *tête*, which her brother was wont to say was fitter for a turban for Mahound or Termagant, than a head-gear for a reasonable creature, or Christian gentlewoman. Two long and bony arms were terminated at the elbows by triple blond ruffles, and being, folded saltire-ways in front of her person, and decorated with long gloves of a bright vermilion colour, presented no bad resemblance to a pair of gigantic lobsters. High-heeled shoes, and a short silk cloak, thrown in easy negligence over her shoulders, completed the exterior of Miss Griselda Oldbuck.

Her niece, the same whom Lovel had seen transiently during his first visit, was a pretty young woman, genteelly dressed according to the fashion of the day, with an air of *espieglerie* which became her very well, and which was perhaps derived from the caustic humour peculiar to her uncle's family, though softened by transmission.

Mr. Lovel paid his respects to both ladies, and was answered by the elder with the prolonged courtesy of 1760, drawn from the righteous period,

*When folks conceived a grace
Of half an hour's space,
And rejoiced in a Friday's capon,*

and by the younger with a modern reverence, which, like the festive benediction of a modern divine, was of much shorter duration.

While this salutation was exchanging, Sir Arthur, with his fair daughter hanging upon his arm, having dismissed his chariot, appeared at the garden door, and in all due form paid his respects to the ladies.

"Sir Arthur," said the Antiquary, "and you, my fair foe, let me make known to you my young friend Mr. Lovel, a gentleman who, during the scarlet-fever which is epidemic at present in this our island, has the virtue and decency to appear in a coat of a civil complexion. You see, however, that the fashionable colour has mustered in his cheeks which appears not in his garments. Sir Arthur, let me present to you a young gentleman, whom your farther knowledge will find grave, wise, courtly, and scholar-like, well seen, deeply read, and thoroughly grounded in all the hidden mysteries of the green-room and stage, from the days of Davie Lindsay down to those of Dibdin—he blushes again, which is a sign of grace."

"My brother," said Miss Griselda, addressing Lovel, "has a humorous way of expressing himself, sir; nobody thinks anything of what Monkbarns says—so I beg you will not be so confused for the matter of his nonsense; but you must have had a warm walk beneath this broiling sun—would you take anything?—a glass of balm-wine?"

Ere Lovel could answer, the Antiquary interposed. "Aroint thee, witch! wouldst thou poison my guests with thy infernal decoctions? Dost thou not remember how it fared with the clergyman whom you seduced to partake of that deceitful beverage?"

"O fy, fy, brother!—Sir Arthur, did you ever hear the like?—he must have everything his ain way, or he will invent such stories—But there goes Jenny to ring the old bell to tell us that the dinner is ready."

Rigid in his economy, Mr. Oldbuck kept no male servant. This he disguised under the pretext that the masculine sex was too noble to be employed in those acts of personal servitude, which, in all early periods of society, were uniformly imposed on the female. "Why," would he say, "did the boy, Tam Rintherout, whom, at my wise sister's instigation, I, with equal wisdom, took upon trial—why did he pilfer apples, take birds' nests, break glasses, and ultimately steal my spectacles, except that he felt that noble emulation which swells in the bosom of the masculine sex, which has conducted him to Flanders with a musket on his shoulder, and doubtless will promote him to a glorious halbert, or even to the gallows? And why does this girl, his full sister, Jenny Rintherout, move in the same vocation with safe and noiseless step—shod, or unshod—soft as the pace of a cat, and docile as a spaniel—Why? but because she is in her vocation. Let them minister to us, Sir Arthur,—let them minister, I say,—it's the only thing they are fit for. All ancient legislators, from Lycurgus to Mahommed, corruptly called Mahomet, agree in putting them in their proper and subordinate rank, and it is only the crazy heads of our old chivalrous ancestors that erected their Dulcineas into despotic princesses."

Miss Wardour protested loudly against this ungallant doctrine; but the bell now rung for dinner.

"Let me do all the offices of fair courtesy to so fair an antagonist," said the old gentleman, offering his arm. "I remember, Miss Wardour, Mahommed (vulgarly Mahomet) had some hesitation about the mode of summoning his Moslemah to prayer. He rejected bells as used by Christians, trumpets as the summons of the Guebres, and finally adopted the human voice. I have had equal doubt concerning my dinner-call. Gongs, now in present use, seemed a newfangled and heathenish invention, and the voice of the female womankind I rejected as equally shrill and dissonant; wherefore, contrary to the said Mahommed, or Mahomet, I have resumed the bell. It has a local propriety, since it was the conventual signal for spreading the repast in their refectory, and it has the advantage over the tongue of my sister's prime minister, Jenny, that, though not quite so loud and shrill, it ceases ringing the instant you drop the bell-rope: whereas we know, by sad experience, that any attempt to silence Jenny, only wakes the sympathetic chime of Miss Oldbuck and Mary M'Intyre to join in chorus."

With this discourse he led the way to his dining-parlour, which Lovel had not yet seen;—it was wainscotted, and contained some curious paintings. The dining-table was attended by Jenny; but an old superintendent, a sort of female butler, stood by the sideboard, and underwent the burden of bearing several reproofs from Mr. Oldbuck, and inuendos, not so much marked, but not less cutting, from his sister.

The dinner was such as suited a professed antiquary, comprehending many savoury specimens of Scottish viands, now disused at the tables of those who affect elegance. There was the relishing Solan goose, whose smell is so powerful that he is never cooked within doors. Blood-raw he proved to be on this occasion, so that Oldbuck half threatened to throw the greasy sea-fowl at the head of the negligent housekeeper, who acted as priestess in presenting this odoriferous offering. But, by good-hap, she had been most fortunate in the hotch-potch, which was unanimously pronounced to be inimitable. "I knew we should succeed here," said Oldbuck exultingly, "for Davie Dibble, the gardener (an old bachelor like myself), takes care the rascally women do not dishonour our vegetables. And here is fish and sauce, and crappit-heads—I acknowledge our womankind excel in that dish—it procures them the pleasure of scolding, for half an hour at least, twice a-week, with auld Maggy Mucklebackit, our fish-wife. The chicken-pie, Mr. Lovel, is made after a recipe bequeathed to me by my departed grandmother of happy memory—And if you will venture on a glass of wine, you will find it worthy of one who professes the maxim of King Alphonso of Castile,—Old wood to burn—old books to read—old wine to drink—and old friends, Sir Arthur—ay, Mr. Lovel, and young friends too, to converse with."

"And what news do you bring us from Edinburgh, Monkbarns?" said Sir Arthur; "how wags the world in Auld Reekie?"

"Mad, Sir Arthur, mad—irretrievably frantic—far beyond dipping in the sea, shaving the crown, or drinking hellebore. The worst sort of frenzy, a military frenzy, hath possessed man, woman, and child."

"And high time, I think," said Miss Wardour, "when we are threatened with invasion from abroad and insurrection at home."

"O, I did not doubt you would join the scarlet host against me—women, like turkeys, are always subdued by a red rag—But what says Sir Arthur, whose dreams are of standing armies and German oppression?"

"Why, I say, Mr. Oldbuck," replied the knight, "that so far as I am capable of judging, we ought to resist *cum toto corpore regni*—as the phrase is, unless I have altogether forgotten my Latin—an enemy who comes to propose to us a Whiggish sort of government, a republican system, and who is aided and abetted by a sort of fanatics of the worst kind in our own bowels. I have taken some measures, I assure you, such as become my rank in the community; for I have directed the constables to take up that old scoundrelly beggar, Edie Ochiltree, for spreading disaffection against church and state through the whole parish. He said plainly to old Caxon, that Willie Howie's Kilmarnock cowl covered more sense than all the three wigs in the parish—I think it is easy to make out that inuendo—But the rogue shall be taught better manners."

"O no, my dear sir," exclaimed Miss Wardour, "not old Edie, that we have known so long;—I assure you no constable shall have my good graces that executes such a warrant."

"Ay, there it goes," said the Antiquary; "you, to be a staunch Tory, Sir Arthur, have nourished a fine sprig of Whiggery in your bosom—Why, Miss Wardour is alone sufficient to control a whole quarter-session—a quarter-session? ay, a general assembly or convocation to boot—a Boadicea she—an Amazon, a Zenobia."

"And yet, with all my courage, Mr. Oldbuck, I am glad to hear our people are getting under arms."

"Under arms, Lord love thee! didst thou ever read the history of Sister Margaret, which flowed from a head, that, though now old and somedele grey, has more sense and political intelligence than you find now-a-days in the whole synod? Dost thou remember the Nurse's dream in that exquisite work, which she recounts in such agony to Hubble Bubble?—When she would have taken up a piece of broad-cloth in her vision, lo! it exploded like a great iron cannon; when she put out her hand to save a pirl, it perked up in her face in the form of a pistol. My own vision in Edinburgh has been something similar. I called to consult my lawyer; he was clothed in a dragoon's dress, belted and casqued, and about to mount a charger, which his writing-clerk (habited as a sharp-shooter) walked to and fro before his door. I went to scold my agent for having sent me to advise with a madman; he had stuck into his head the plume, which in more sober days he wielded between his fingers, and figured as an artillery officer. My mercer had his spontoon in his hand, as if he measured his cloth by that implement, instead of a legitimate yard. The banker's clerk, who was directed to sum my cash-account, blundered it three times, being disordered by the recollection of his military *tellings-off* at the morning-drill. I was ill, and sent for a surgeon—

*He came—but valour so had fired his eye,
And such a falchion glittered on his thigh,
That, by the gods, with such a load of steel,
I thought he came to murder,—not to heal.*

I had recourse to a physician, but he also was practising a more wholesale mode of slaughter than that which his profession had been supposed at all times to open to him. And now, since I have returned here, even our wise neighbours of Fairport have caught the same valiant humour. I hate a gun like a hurt wild duck—I detest a drum like a quaker;—and they thunder and rattle out yonder upon the town's common, so that every volley and roll goes to my very heart."

"Dear brother, dinna speak that gate o' the gentlemen volunteers—I am sure they have a most becoming uniform—Weel I wot they have been wet to the very skin twice last week—I met them marching in terribly doukit, an mony a sair hoast was amang them—And the trouble they take, I am sure it claims our gratitude."

"And I am sure," said Miss M'Intyre, "that my uncle sent twenty guineas to help out their equipments."

"It was to buy liquorice and sugar-candy," said the cynic, "to encourage the trade of the place, and to refresh the throats of the officers who had bawled themselves hoarse in the service of their country."

"Take care, Monkbarns! we shall set you down among the black-nebs by and by."

"No Sir Arthur—a tame grumbler I. I only claim the privilege of croaking in my own corner here, without uniting my throat to the grand chorus of the marsh—*Ni quito Rey, ni pongo Rey*—I neither make king nor mar king, as Sancho says, but pray heartily for our own sovereign, pay scot and lot, and grumble at the exciseman—But here comes the ewe-milk cheese in good time; it is a better digestive than politics."

When dinner was over, and the decanters placed on the table, Mr. Oldbuck proposed the King's health in a bumper, which was readily acceded to both by Lovel and the Baronet, the Jacobitism of the latter being now a sort of speculative opinion merely,—the shadow of a shade.

After the ladies had left the apartment, the landlord and Sir Arthur entered into several exquisite discussions, in which the younger guest, either on account of the abstruse erudition which they involved, or for some other reason, took but a slender share, till at length he was suddenly started out of a profound reverie by an unexpected appeal to his judgment.

"I will stand by what Mr. Lovel says; he was born in the north of England, and may know the very spot."

Sir Arthur thought it unlikely that so young a gentleman should have paid much attention to matters of that sort.

"I am avised of the contrary," said Oldbuck.

"How say you, Mr. Lovel?—speak up for your own credit, man."

Lovel was obliged to confess himself in the ridiculous situation of one alike ignorant of the subject of conversation and controversy which had engaged the company for an hour.

"Lord help the lad, his head has been wool-gathering!—I thought how it would be when the womankind were admitted—no getting a word of sense out of a young fellow for six hours after.—Why, man, there was once a people called the Piks"—

"More properly *Picts*," interrupted the Baronet.

"I say the *Pikar, Pihar, Piochtar, Piaghter, or Peughtar*," vociferated Oldbuck; "they spoke a Gothic dialect"—

"Genuine Celtic," again asseverated the knight.

"Gothic! Gothic! I'll go to death upon it!" counter-asseverated the squire.

"Why, gentlemen," said Lovel, "I conceive that is a dispute which may be easily settled by philologists, if there are any remains of the language."

"There is but one word," said the Baronet, "but, in spite of Mr. Oldbuck's pertinacity, it is decisive of the question."

"Yes, in my favour," said Oldbuck: "Mr. Lovel, you shall be judge—I have the learned Pinkerton on my side."

"I, on mine, the indefatigable and erudite Chalmers."

"Gordon comes into my opinion."

"Sir Robert Sibbald holds mine."

"Innes is with me!" vociferated Oldbuck.

"Riston has no doubt!" shouted the Baronet.

"Truly, gentlemen," said Lovel, "before you muster your forces and overwhelm me with authorities, I should like to know the word in dispute."

"*Benva*!" said both the disputants at once.

"Which signifies *caput valli*," said Sir Arthur.

"The head of the wall," echoed Oldbuck.

There was a deep pause.—"It is rather a narrow foundation to build a hypothesis upon," observed the arbiter.

"Not a whit, not a whit," said Oldbuck; "men fight best in a narrow ring—an inch is as good as a mile for a home-thrust."

"It is decidedly Celtic," said the Baronet; "every hill in the Highlands begins with *Ben*."

"But what say you to *Val*, Sir Arthur; is it not decidedly the Saxon *wall*?"

"It is the Roman *vallum*," said Sir Arthur;—"the Picts borrowed that part of the word."

"No such thing; if they borrowed anything, it must have been your *Ben*, which they might have from the neighbouring Britons of Strath Cluyd."

"The Piks, or Picts," said Lovel, "must have been singularly poor in dialect, since, in the only remaining word of their vocabulary, and that consisting only of two syllables, they have been confessedly obliged to borrow one of them from another language; and, methinks, gentlemen, with submission, the controversy is not unlike that which the two knights fought, concerning the shield that had one side white and the other black. Each of you claim one-half of the word, and seem to resign the other. But what strikes me most, is the poverty of the language which has left such slight vestiges behind it."

"You are in an error," said Sir Arthur; "it was a copious language, and they were a great and powerful people; built two steeples—one at Brechin, one at Abernethy. The Pictish maidens of the blood-royal were kept in Edinburgh Castle, thence called *Castrum Puellarum*."

"A childish legend," said Oldbuck, "invented to give consequence to trumpery womankind. It was called the Maiden Castle, *quasi lucus a non lucendo*, because it resisted every attack, and women never do."

"There is a list of the Pictish kings," persisted Sir Arthur, "well authenticated from Crenthemnachcryme (the date of whose reign is somewhat uncertain) down to Drusterstone, whose death concluded their dynasty. Half of them have the Celtic patronymic Macprefixed—Mac, *id est filius*;—what do you say to that, Mr. Oldbuck? There is Drust Macmorachin, Trynel Maclachlin (first of that ancient clan, as it may be judged), and Gormach Macdonald, Alpin Macmetegus, Drust Mactallargam" (here he was interrupted by a fit of coughing)—"ugh, ugh, ugh—Golarge Macchan—ugh, ugh—Macchanan—ugh—Macchananail, Kenneth—ugh—ugh—Macferedith, Eachan Macfungus—and twenty more, decidedly Celtic names, which I could repeat, if this damned cough would let me."

"Take a glass of wine, Sir Arthur, and drink down that bead-roll of unbaptized jargon, that would choke the devil—why, that last fellow has the only intelligible name you have repeated—they are all of the tribe of Macfungus—mushroom monarchs every one of them; sprung up from the fumes of conceit, folly, and falsehood, fermenting in the brains of some mad Highland seannachie."

"I am surprised to hear you, Mr. Oldbuck: you know, or ought to know, that the list of these potentates was copied by Henry Maule of Melguin, from the Chronicles of Loch Leven and St. Andrews, and put forth by him in his short but satisfactory history of the Picts, printed by Robert Freebairn of Edinburgh, and sold by him at his shop in the Parliament Close, in the year of God seventeen hundred and five, or six, I am not precisely certain which—but I have a copy at home that stands next to my twelvemo copy of the Scots Acts, and ranges on the shelf with them very well. What say you to that, Mr. Oldbuck?"

"Say?—why, I laugh at Harry Maule and his history," answered Oldbuck, "and thereby comply with his request, of giving it entertainment according to its merits."

"Do not laugh at a better man than yourself," said Sir Arthur, somewhat scornfully.

"I do not conceive I do, Sir Arthur, in laughing either at him or his history."

"Henry Maule of Melgum was a gentleman, Mr. Oldbuck."

"I presume he had no advantage of me in *that* particular," replied the Antiquary, somewhat tartly.

"Permit me, Mr. Oldbuck—he was a gentleman of high family, and ancient descent, and therefore"—

"The descendant of a Westphalian printer should speak of him with deference? Such may be your opinion, Sir Arthur—it is not mine. I conceive that my descent from that painful and industrious typographer, Wolfbrand Oldenbuck, who, in the month of December 1493, under the patronage, as the colophon tells us, of Sebaldu Scheyter and Sebastian Kammermaister, accomplished the printing of the great Chronicle of Nuremberg—I conceive, I say, that my descent from that great restorer of learning is more creditable to me as a man of letters, than if I had numbered in my genealogy all the brawling, bullet-headed, iron-fisted, old Gothic barons since the days of Crenthemnachcryme—not one of whom, I suppose, could write his own name."

"If you mean the observation as a sneer at my ancestry," said the knight, with an assumption of dignified superiority and composure, "I have the pleasure to inform you, that the name of my ancestor, Gamelyn de Guardover, Miles, is written fairly with his own hand in the earliest copy of the Ragman-roll."

"Which only serves to show that he was one of the earliest who set the mean example of submitting to Edward I. What have, you to say for the stainless loyalty of your family, Sir Arthur, after such a backsliding as that?"

"It's enough, sir," said Sir Arthur, starting up fiercely, and pushing back his chair; "I shall hereafter take care how I honour with my company one who shows himself so ungrateful for my condescension."

"In that you will do as you find most agreeable, Sir Arthur;—I hope, that as I was not aware of the extent of the obligation which you have done me by visiting my poor house, I may be excused for not having carried my gratitude to the extent of servility."

"Mighty well—mighty well, Mr. Oldbuck—I wish you a good evening—Mr. a—a—a—Shovel—I wish you a very good evening."

Out of the parlour door flounced the incensed Sir Arthur, as if the spirit of the whole Round Table inflamed his single bosom, and traversed with long strides the labyrinth of passages which conducted to the drawing-room.

"Did you ever hear such an old tup-headed ass?" said Oldbuck, briefly apostrophizing Lovel. "But I must not let him go in this mad-like way neither."

So saying, he pushed off after the retreating Baronet, whom he traced by the clang of several doors which he opened in search of the apartment for tea, and slammed with force behind him at every disappointment. "You'll do yourself a mischief," roared the Antiquary; "*Qui ambulat in tenebris, nescit quo vadit*—You'll tumble down the back-stair."

Sir Arthur had now got involved in darkness, of which the sedative effect is well known to nurses and governesses who have to deal with pettish children. It retarded the pace of the irritated Baronet, if it did not abate his resentment, and Mr. Oldbuck, better acquainted with the *locale*, got up with him as he had got his grasp upon the handle of the drawing-room door.

"Stay a minute, Sir Arthur," said Oldbuck, opposing his abrupt entrance; "don't be quite so hasty, my good old friend. I was a little too rude with you about Sir Gamelyn—why, he is an old acquaintance of mine, man, and a favourite; he kept company with Bruce and Wallace—and, I'll be sworn on a black-letter Bible, only subscribed the Ragman-roll with the legitimate and justifiable intention of circumventing the false Southern—'twas right Scottish craft, my good knight—hundreds did it. Come, come, forget and forgive—confess we have given the young fellow here a right to think us two testy old fools."

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck," said Sir Arthur with much majesty.

"A-well, a-well—a wilful man must have his way."

With that the door opened, and into the drawing-room marched the tall gaunt form of Sir Arthur, followed by Lovel and Mr. Oldbuck, the countenances of all the three a little discomposed.

"I have been waiting for you, sir," said Miss Wardour, "to propose we should walk forward to meet the carriage, as the evening is so fine."

Sir Arthur readily assented to this proposal, which suited the angry mood in which he found himself; and having, agreeable to the established custom in cases of pet, refused the refreshment of tea and coffee, he tucked his daughter under his arm; and after taking a ceremonious leave of the ladies, and a very dry one of Oldbuck—off he marched.

"I think Sir Arthur has got the black dog on his back again," said Miss Oldbuck.

"Black dog!—black devil!—he's more absurd than womankind—What say you, Lovel?—Why, the lad's gone too."

"He took his leave, uncle, while Miss Wardour was putting on her things; but I don't think you observed him."

"The devil's in the people! This is all one gets by fussing and bustling, and putting one's self out of one's way in order to give dinners, besides all the charges they are put to!—O Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia!" said he, taking up a cup of tea in the one hand, and a volume of the Rambler in the other,—for it was his regular custom to read while he was eating or drinking in presence of his sister, being a practice which served at once to evince his contempt for the society of womankind, and his resolution to lose no moment of instruction,—"O Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia! well hast thou spoken—No man should presume to say, This shall be a day of happiness."

Oldbuck proceeded in his studies for the best part of an hour, uninterrupted by the ladies, who each, in profound silence, pursued some female employment. At length, a light and modest tap was heard at the parlour door. "Is that you, Caxon?—come in, come in, man."

The old man opened the door, and thrusting in his meagre face, thatched with thin grey locks, and one sleeve of his white coat, said in a subdued and mysterious tone of voice, "I was wanting to speak to you, sir."

"Come in then, you old fool, and say what you have got to say."

"I'll maybe frighten the ladies," said the ex-friseur.

"Frighten!" answered the Antiquary,— "what do you mean?—never mind the ladies. Have you seen another ghaist at the Humlock-knowe?"

"Na, sir—it's no a ghaist this turn," replied Caxon;—"but I'm no easy in my mind."

"Did you ever hear of any body that was?" answered Oldbuck;—"what reason has an old battered powder-puff like you to be easy in your mind, more than all the rest of the world besides?"

"It's no for mysell, sir; but it threatens an awfu' night; and Sir Arthur, and Miss Wardour, poor thing"—

"Why, man, they must have met the carriage at the head of the loaning, or thereabouts; they must be home long ago."

"Na, sir; they didna gang the road by the turnpike to meet the carriage, they gaed by the sands."

The word operated like electricity on Oldbuck. "The sands!" he exclaimed; "impossible!"

"Ou, sir, that's what I said to the gardener; but he says he saw them turn down by the Mussel-craig. In troth, says I to him, an that be the case, Davie, I am misdoubting"—

"An almanac! an almanac!" said Oldbuck, starting up in great alarm—"not that bauble!" flinging away a little pocket almanac which his niece offered him.—"Great God! my poor dear Miss Isabella!—Fetch me instantly the Fairport Almanac."—It was brought, consulted, and added greatly to his agitation. "I'll go myself—call the gardener and ploughman—bid them bring ropes and ladders—bid them raise more help as they come along—keep the top of the cliffs, and halloo down to them—I'll go myself."

"What is the matter?" inquired Miss Oldbuck and Miss M'Intyre.

"The tide!—the tide!" answered the alarmed Antiquary.

"Had not Jenny better—but no, I'll run myself," said the younger lady, partaking in all her uncle's terrors—"I'll run myself to Saunders Mucklebackit, and make him get out his boat."

"Thank you, my dear, that's the wisest word that has been spoken yet—Run! run!—To go by the sands!" seizing his hat and cane; "was there ever such madness heard of!"

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

—Pleased awhile to view

*The watery waste, the prospect wild and new;
The now receding waters gave them space,
On either side, the growing shores to trace
And then returning, they contract the scene,
Till small and smaller grows the walk between.*
Crabbe.

The information of Davie Dibble, which had spread such general alarm at Monkbarns, proved to be strictly correct. Sir Arthur and his daughter had set out, according to their first proposal, to return to Knockwinnock by the turnpike road; but when they reached the head of the loaning, as it was called, or great lane, which on one side made a sort of avenue to the house of Monkbarns, they discerned, a little way before them, Lovel, who seemed to linger on the way as if to give him an opportunity to join them. Miss Wardour immediately proposed to her father that they should take another direction; and, as the weather was fine, walk home by the sands, which, stretching below a picturesque ridge of rocks, afforded at almost all times a pleasanter passage between Knockwinnock and Monkbarns than the high-road.

Sir Arthur acquiesced willingly. "It would be unpleasant," he said, "to be joined by that young fellow, whom Mr. Oldbuck had taken the freedom to introduce them to." And his old-fashioned politeness had none of the ease of the present day which permits you, if you have a mind, to *cut* the person you have associated with for a week, the instant you feel or suppose yourself in a situation which makes it disagreeable to own him. Sir Arthur only stipulated, that a little ragged boy, for the guerdon of one penny sterling, should run to meet his coachman, and turn his equipage back to Knockwinnock.

When this was arranged, and the emissary despatched, the knight and his daughter left the high-road, and following a wandering path among sandy hillocks, partly grown over with furze and the long grass called bent, soon attained the side of the ocean. The tide was by no means so far out as they had computed but this gave them no alarm;—there were seldom ten days in the year when it approached so near the cliffs as not to leave a dry passage. But, nevertheless, at periods of spring-tide, or even when the ordinary flood was accelerated by high winds, this road was altogether covered by the sea; and tradition had recorded several fatal accidents which had happened on such occasions. Still, such dangers were considered as remote and improbable; and rather served, with other legends, to amuse the hamlet fireside, than to prevent any one from going between Knockwinnock and Monkbarns by the sands.

As Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour paced along, enjoying the pleasant footing afforded by the cool moist hard sand, Miss Wardour could not help observing that the last tide had risen considerably above the usual water-mark. Sir Arthur made the same observation, but without its occurring to either of them to be alarmed at the circumstance. The sun was now resting his huge disk upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendour gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapours, forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple, some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid colouring of the clouds amidst which he was setting. Nearer to the beach the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver, that imperceptibly, yet rapidly, gained upon the sand.

With a mind employed in admiration of the romantic scene, or perhaps on some more agitating topic, Miss Wardour advanced in silence by her father's side, whose recently offended dignity did not stoop to open any conversation. Following the windings of the beach, they passed one projecting point of headland or rock after another, and now found themselves under a huge and continued extent of the precipices by which that iron-bound coast is in most places defended. Long projecting reefs of rock, extending under water and only evincing their existence by here and there a peak entirely bare, or by the breakers which foamed over those that were partially covered, rendered Knockwinnock bay dreaded by pilots and ship-masters. The crags which rose between the beach and the mainland, to the height of two or three hundred feet, afforded in their crevices shelter for unnumbered sea-fowl, in situations seemingly secured by their dizzy height from the rapacity of man. Many of these wild tribes, with the instinct which sends them to seek the land before a storm arises, were now winging towards their nests with the shrill and dissonant clang which announces disquietude and fear. The disk of the sun became almost totally obscured ere he had altogether sunk below the horizon, and an early and lurid shade of darkness blotted the serene twilight of a summer evening. The wind began next to arise; but its wild and moaning sound was heard for some time, and its effects became visible on the bosom of the sea, before the gale was felt on shore. The mass of waters, now dark and threatening, began to lift itself in larger ridges, and sink in deeper furrows, forming waves that rose high in foam upon the breakers, or burst upon the beach with a sound resembling distant thunder.

Appalled by this sudden change of weather, Miss Wardour drew close to her father, and held his arm fast. "I wish," at length she said, but almost in a whisper, as if ashamed to express her increasing apprehensions, "I wish we had kept the road we intended, or waited at Monkbarns for the carriage."

Sir Arthur looked round, but did not see, or would not acknowledge, any signs of an immediate storm. They would reach Knockwinnock, he said, long before the tempest began. But the speed with which he walked, and with which Isabella could hardly keep pace, indicated a feeling that some exertion was necessary to accomplish his consolatory prediction.

They were now near the centre of a deep but narrow bay or recess, formed by two projecting capes of high and inaccessible rock, which shot out into the sea like the horns of a crescent;—and neither durst communicate the apprehension which each began to entertain, that, from the unusually rapid advance of the tide, they might be deprived of the power of proceeding by doubling the promontory which lay before them, or of retreating by the road which brought them thither.

As they thus pressed forward, longing doubtless to exchange the easy curving line, which the sinuosities of the bay compelled them to adopt, for a straighter and more expeditious path, Sir Arthur observed a human figure on the beach advancing to meet them. "Thank God," he exclaimed, "we shall get round Halket-head!—that person must have passed it;" thus giving vent to the feeling of hope, though he had suppressed that of apprehension.

"Thank God, indeed!" echoed his daughter, half audibly, half internally, as expressing the gratitude which she strongly felt.

The figure which advanced to meet them made many signs, which the haze of the atmosphere, now disturbed by wind and by a drizzling rain, prevented them from seeing or comprehending distinctly.—Some time before they met, Sir Arthur could recognise the old blue-gowned beggar, Edie Ochiltree. It is said that even the brute creation lay aside their animosities and antipathies when pressed by an instant and common danger. The beach under Halket-head, rapidly diminishing in extent by the encroachments of a spring-tide and a north-west wind, was in like manner a neutral field, where even a justice of peace and a strolling mendicant might meet upon terms of mutual forbearance.

"Turn back! turn back!" exclaimed the vagrant; "why did ye not turn when I waved to you?"

"We thought," replied Sir Arthur, in great agitation, "we thought we could get round Halket-head."

"Halket-head!—the tide will be running on Halket-head by this time like the Fall of Fyers!—it was a' I could do to get round it twenty minutes since—it was coming in three feet abreast. We will maybe get back by Bally-burgh Ness Point yet. The Lord help us!—it's our only chance. We can but try."

"My God, my child!—" "My father! my dear father!" exclaimed the parent and daughter, as, fear lending them strength and speed, they turned to retrace their steps, and endeavoured to double the point, the projection of which formed the southern extremity of the bay.

"I heard ye were here frae the bit callant ye sent to meet your carriage," said the beggar, as he trudged stoutly on a step or two behind Miss Wardour; "and I couldna bide to think o' the dainty young leddy's peril, that has aye been kind to ilka forlorn heart that cam near her. Sae I lookit at the lift and the rin o' the tide, till I settled it that if I could get down time eneugh to gie you warning, we wad do weel yet. But I doubt, I doubt, I have been beguiled! for what mortal ee ever saw sic a race as the tide is risening e'en now? See, yonder's the Ratton's Skerry—he aye held his neb abune the water in my day—but he's aneath it now."

Sir Arthur cast a look in the direction in which the old man pointed. A huge rock, which in general, even in spring-tides, displayed a hulk like the keel of a large vessel, was now quite under water, and its place only indicated by the boiling and breaking of the eddying waves which encountered its submarine resistance.

"Mak haste, mak haste, my bonny leddy," continued the old man—"mak haste, and we may do yet! Take haud o' my arm—an auld and frail arm it's now, but it's been in as sair stress as this is yet. Take haud o' my arm, my winsome leddy! D'ye see yon wee black speck amang the wallowing waves yonder? This morning it was as high as the mast o' a brig—it's sma' eneugh now—but, while I see as muckle black about it as the crown o' my hat, I winna believe but we'll get round the Ballyburgh Ness, for a' that's come and gane yet."

Isabella, in silence, accepted from the old man the assistance which Sir Arthur was less able to afford her. The waves had now encroached so much upon the beach, that the firm and smooth footing which they had hitherto had on the sand must be exchanged for a rougher path close to the foot of the precipice, and in some places even raised upon its lower ledges. It would have been utterly impossible for Sir Arthur Wardour, or his daughter, to have found their way along these shelves without the guidance and encouragement of the beggar, who had been there before in high tides, though never, he acknowledged, "in sae awsome a night as this."

It was indeed a dreadful evening. The howling of the storm mingled with the shrieks of the sea-fowl, and sounded like the dirge of the three devoted beings, who, pent between two of the most magnificent, yet most dreadful objects of nature—a raging tide and an insurmountable precipice—toiled along their painful and dangerous path, often lashed by the spray of some giant billow, which threw itself higher on the beach than those that had preceded it. Each minute did their enemy gain ground perceptibly upon them! Still, however, loth to relinquish the last hopes of life, they bent their eyes on the black rock pointed out by Ochiltree. It was yet distinctly visible among the breakers, and continued to be so, until they came to a turn in their precarious path, where an intervening projection of rock hid it from their sight. Deprived of the view of the beacon on which they had relied, they now experienced the double agony of terror and suspense. They struggled forward, however; but, when they arrived at the point from which they ought to have seen the crag, it was no longer visible: the signal of safety was lost among a thousand white breakers, which, dashing upon the point of the promontory, rose in prodigious sheets of snowy foam, as high as the mast of a first-rate man-of-war, against the dark brow of the precipice.

The countenance of the old man fell. Isabella gave a faint shriek, and, "God have mercy upon us!" which her guide solemnly uttered, was piteously echoed by Sir Arthur—"My child! my child!—to die such a death!"

"My father! my dear father!" his daughter exclaimed, clinging to him—"and you too, who have lost your own life in endeavouring to save ours!"

"That's not worth the counting," said the old man. "I hae lived to be weary o' life; and here or yonder—at the back o' a dyke, in a wreath o' snaw, or in the wame o' a wave, what signifies how the auld gaberlunzie dies?"

"Good man," said Sir Arthur, "can you think of nothing?—of no help?—I'll make you rich—I'll give you a farm—I'll"—

"Our riches will be soon equal," said the beggar, looking out upon the strife of the waters—"they are sae already; for I hae nae land, and you would give your fair bounds and barony for a square yard of rock that would be dry for twal hours."

While they exchanged these words, they paused upon the highest ledge of rock to which they could attain; for it seemed that any further attempt to move forward could only serve to anticipate their fate. Here, then, they were to await the sure though slow progress of the raging element, something in the situation of the martyrs of the early church, who, exposed by heathen tyrants to be slain by wild beasts, were compelled for a time to witness the impatience and rage by which the animals were agitated, while awaiting the signal for undoing their grates, and letting them loose upon the victims.

Yet even this fearful pause gave Isabella time to collect the powers of a mind naturally strong and courageous, and which rallied itself at this terrible juncture.

"Must we yield life," she said, "without a struggle? Is there no path, however dreadful, by which we could climb the crag, or at least attain some height above the tide, where we could remain till morning, or till help comes? They must be aware of our situation, and will raise the country to relieve us."

Sir Arthur, who heard, but scarcely comprehended, his daughter's question, turned, nevertheless, instinctively and eagerly to the old man, as if their lives were in his gift. Ochiltree paused—"I was a bauld craigsman," he said, "ance in my life, and mony a kittywake's and lungie's nest hae I harried up amang thae very black rocks; but it's lang, lang syne, and nae mortal could speel them without a rope—and if I had ane, my ee-sight, and my footstep, and my hand-grip, hae a' failed mony a day sinsyne—And then, how could I save *you*? But there was a path here ance, though maybe, if we could see it, ye would rather bide where we are—His name be praised!" he ejaculated suddenly, "there's ane coming down the crag e'en now!"—Then, exalting his voice, he hilloa'd out to the daring adventurer such instructions as his former practice, and the remembrance of local circumstances, suddenly forced upon his mind:—"Ye're right!—ye're right!—that gate—that gate!—fasten the rope weel round Crummies-horn, that's the muckle black stane—cast twa plies round it—that's it!—now, weize yoursell a wee easel-ward—a wee mair yet to thatither stane—we ca'd it the Cat's-lug—there used to be the root o' an aik tree there—that will do!—canny now, lad—canny now—tak tent and tak time—Lord bless ye, tak time—Vera weel!—Now ye maun get to Bessy's apron, that's the muckle braid flat blue stane—and then, I think, wi' your help and the tow tegither, I'll win at ye, and then we'll be able to get up the young leddy and Sir Arthur."

The adventurer, following the directions of old Edie, flung him down the end of the rope, which he secured around Miss Wardour, wrapping her previously in his own blue gown, to preserve her as much as possible from injury. Then, availing himself of the rope, which was made fast at the other end, he began to ascend the face of the crag—a most precarious and dizzy undertaking, which, however, after one or two perilous escapes, placed him safe on the broad flat stone beside our friend Lovel. Their joint strength was able to raise Isabella to the place of safety which they had attained. Lovel then descended in order to assist Sir Arthur, around whom he adjusted the rope; and again mounting to their place of refuge, with the assistance of old Ochiltree, and such aid as Sir Arthur himself could afford, he raised himself beyond the reach of the billows.

The sense of reprieve from approaching and apparently inevitable death, had its usual effect. The father and daughter threw themselves into each other's arms, kissed and wept for joy, although their escape was connected with the prospect of passing a tempestuous night upon a precipitous ledge of rock, which scarce

afforded footing for the four shivering beings, who now, like the sea-fowl around them, clung there in hopes of some shelter from the devouring element which raged beneath. The spray of the billows, which attained in fearful succession the foot of the precipice, overflowing the beach on which they so lately stood, flew as high as their place of temporary refuge; and the stunning sound with which they dashed against the rocks beneath, seemed as if they still demanded the fugitives in accents of thunder as their destined prey. It was a summer night, doubtless; yet the probability was slender, that a frame so delicate as that of Miss Wardour should survive till morning the drenching of the spray; and the dashing of the rain, which now burst in full violence, accompanied with deep and heavy gusts of wind, added to the constrained and perilous circumstances of their situation.

"The lassie!—the puir sweet, lassie!" said the old man: "mony such a night have I weathered at hame and abroad, but, God guide us, how can she ever win through it!"

His apprehension was communicated in smothered accents to Lovel; for with the sort of freemasonry by which bold and ready spirits correspond in moments of danger, and become almost instinctively known to each other, they had established a mutual confidence.—"I'll climb up the cliff again," said Lovel—"there's daylight enough left to see my footing; I'll climb up, and call for more assistance."

"Do so, do so, for Heaven's sake!" said Sir Arthur eagerly.

"Are ye mad?" said the mendicant: "Francie o' Fowlsheugh, and he was the best craigsman that ever speel'd heugh (mair by token, he brake his neck upon the Dunbuy of Slaines), wodna hae ventured upon the Halket-head craigs after sun-down—It's God's grace, and a great wonder besides, that ye are not in the middle o' that roaring sea wi' what ye hae done already—I didna think there was the man left alive would hae come down the craigs as ye did. I question an I could hae done it mysell, at this hoar and in this weather, in the youngest and yaldest of my strength—But to venture up again—it's a mere and a clear tempting o' Providence."

"I have no fear," answered Lovel; "I marked all the stations perfectly as I came down, and there is still light enough left to see them quite well—I am sure I can do it with perfect safety. Stay here, my good friend, by Sir Arthur and the young lady."

"Dell be in my feet then," answered the bedesman sturdily; "if ye gang, I'll gang too; for between the twa o' us, we'll hae mair than wark enOUGH to get to the tap o' the heugh."

"No, no—stay you here and attend to Miss Wardour—you see Sir Arthur is quite exhausted."

"Stay yoursell then, and I'll gae," said the old man;—"let death spare the green corn and take the ripe."

"Stay both of you, I charge you," said Isabella, faintly; "I am well, and can spend the night very well here—I feel quite refreshed." So saying, her voice failed her—she sunk down, and would have fallen from the crag, had she not been supported by Lovel and Ochiltree, who placed her in a posture half sitting, half reclining, beside her father, who, exhausted by fatigue of body and mind so extreme and unusual, had already sat down on a stone in a sort of stupor.

"It is impossible to leave them," said Lovel—"What is to be done?—Hark! hark!—did I not hear a halloo?"

"The skreigh of a Tammie Norie," answered Ochiltree—"I ken the skirl weel."

"No, by Heaven!" replied Lovel, "it was a human voice."

A distant hail was repeated, the sound plainly distinguishable among the various elemental noises, and the clang of the sea-mews by which they were surrounded. The mendicant and Lovel exerted their voices in a loud halloo, the former waving Miss Wardour's handkerchief on the end of his staff to make them conspicuous from above. Though the shouts were repeated, it was some time before they were in exact response to their own, leaving the unfortunate sufferers uncertain whether, in the darkening twilight and increasing storm, they had made the persons who apparently were traversing the verge of the precipice to bring them assistance, sensible of the place in which they had found refuge. At length their halloo was regularly and distinctly answered, and their courage confirmed, by the assurance that they were within hearing, if not within reach, of friendly assistance.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully on the confined deep;
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear.
King Lear.*

The shout of human voices from above was soon augmented, and the gleam of torches mingled with those lights of evening which still remained amidst the darkness of the storm. Some attempt was made to hold communication between the assistants above and the sufferers beneath, who were still clinging to their precarious place of safety; but the howling of the tempest limited their intercourse to cries as inarticulate as those of the winged denizens of the crag, which shrieked in chorus, alarmed by the reiterated sound of human voices, where they had seldom been heard.

On the verge of the precipice an anxious group had now assembled. Oldbuck was the foremost and most earnest, pressing forward with unwonted desperation to the very brink of the crag, and extending his head (his hat and wig secured by a handkerchief under his chin) over the dizzy height, with an air of determination which made his more timorous assistants tremble.

"Haud a care, haud a care, Monkbarns!" cried Caxon, clinging to the skirts of his patron, and withholding him from danger as far as his strength permitted—"God's sake, haud a care!—Sir Arthur's drowned already, and an ye fa' over the cleugh too, there will be but ae wig left in the parish, and that's the minister's."

"Mind the peak there," cried Mucklebackit, an old fisherman and smuggler—"mind the peak—Steenie, Steenie Wilks, bring up the tackle—I'll se warrant we'll sune heave them on board, Monkbarns, wad ye but stand out o' the gate."

"I see them," said Oldbuck—"I see them low down on that flat stone—Hilli-hilloa, hilli-ho-a!"

"I see them mysell weel enOUGH," said Mucklebackit; "they are sitting down yonder like hoodie-craws in a mist; but d'yo think ye'll help them wi' skirling that gate like an auld skart before a flaw o' weather?—Steenie, lad, bring up the mast—Od, I'll se hae them up as we used to bouse up the kegs o' gin and brandy lang syne—Get up the pickaxe, make a step for the mast—make the chair fast with the rattlin—haul taught and belay!"

The fishers had brought with them the mast of a boat, and as half of the country fellows about had now appeared, either out of zeal or curiosity, it was soon sunk in the ground, and sufficiently secured. A yard across the upright mast, and a rope stretched along it, and reeved through a block at each end, formed an extempore crane, which afforded the means of lowering an arm-chair, well secured and fastened, down to the flat shelf on which the sufferers had roosted. Their joy at hearing the preparations going on for their deliverance was considerably qualified when they beheld the precarious vehicle by means of which they were to be conveyed to upper air. It swung about a yard free of the spot which they occupied, obeying each impulse of the tempest, the empty air all around it, and depending upon the security of a rope, which, in the increasing darkness, had dwindled to an almost imperceptible thread. Besides the hazard of committing a human being to the vacant atmosphere in such a slight means of conveyance, there was the fearful danger of the chair and its occupant being dashed, either by the wind or the vibrations of the cord, against the rugged face of the precipice. But to diminish the risk as much as possible, the experienced seaman had let down with the chair another line, which, being attached to it, and held by the persons beneath, might serve by way of gy, as Mucklebackit expressed it, to render its descent in some measure steady and regular. Still, to commit one's self in such a vehicle, through a howling tempest of wind and rain, with a beetling precipice above and a raging abyss below, required that courage which despair alone can inspire. Yet, wild as the sounds and sights of danger were, both above, beneath, and around, and doubtful and dangerous as the mode of escaping appeared to be, Lovel and the old mendicant agreed, after a moment's consultation, and after

the former, by a sudden strong pull, had, at his own imminent risk, ascertained the security of the rope, that it would be best to secure Miss Wardour in the chair, and trust to the tenderness and care of those above for her being safely craned up to the top of the crag.

"Let my father go first," exclaimed Isabella; "for God's sake, my friends, place him first in safety!"

"It cannot be, Miss Wardour," said Lovel;—"your life must be first secured—the rope which bears your weight may"—

"I will not listen to a reason so selfish!"

"But ye maun listen to it, my bonnie lassie," said Ochiltree, "for a' our lives depend on it—besides, when ye get on the tap o' the heugh yonder, ye can gie them a round guess o' what's ganging on in this Patmos o' ours—and Sir Arthur's far by that, as I'm thinking."

Struck with the truth of this reasoning, she exclaimed, "True, most true; I am ready and willing to undertake the first risk—What shall I say to our friends above?"

"Just to look that their tackle does not graze on the face o' the crag, and to let the chair down and draw it up hooly and fairly;—we will halloo when we are ready." With the sedulous attention of a parent to a child, Lovel bound Miss Wardour with his handkerchief, neckcloth, and the mendicant's leathern belt, to the back and arms of the chair, ascertaining accurately the security of each knot, while Ochiltree kept Sir Arthur quiet. "What are ye doing wi' my bairn?—what are ye doing?—She shall not be separated from me—Isabel, stay with me, I command you!"

"Lordsake, Sir Arthur, haud your tongue, and be thankful to God that there's wiser folk than you to manage this job," cried the beggar, worn out by the unreasonable exclamations of the poor Baronet.

"Farewell, my father!" murmured Isabella—"farewell, my—my friends!" and shutting her eyes, as Edie's experience recommended, she gave the signal to Lovel, and he to those who were above. She rose, while the chair in which she sate was kept steady by the line which Lovel managed beneath. With a beating heart he watched the flutter of her white dress, until the vehicle was on a level with the brink of the precipice.

"Canny now, lads, canny now!" exclaimed old Mucklebackit, who acted as commodore; "swerve the yard a bit—Now—there! there she sits safe on dry land."

A loud shout announced the successful experiment to her fellow-sufferers beneath, who replied with a ready and cheerful halloo. Monkbarns, in his ecstasy of joy, stripped his great-coat to wrap up the young lady, and would have pulled off his coat and waistcoat for the same purpose, had he not been withheld by the cautious Caxon. "Haud a care o' us! your honour will be killed wi' the hoast—ye'll no get out o'your night-cowl this fortnight—and that will suit us unco ill.—Na, na—there's the chariot down by; let twa o' the folk carry the young leddy there."

"You're right," said the Antiquary, readjusting the sleeves and collar of his coat, "you're right, Caxon; this is a naughty night to swim in.—Miss Wardour, let me convey you to the chariot."

"Not for worlds till I see my father safe."

In a few distinct words, evincing how much her resolution had surmounted even the mortal fear of so agitating a hazard, she explained the nature of the situation beneath, and the wishes of Lovel and Ochiltree.

"Right, right, that's right too—I should like to see the son of Sir Gamelyn de Guardover on dry land myself—I have a notion he would sign the abjuration oath, and the Ragman-roll to boot, and acknowledge Queen Mary to be nothing better than she should be, to get alongside my bottle of old port that he ran away from, and left scarce begun. But he's safe now, and here a' comes"—(for the chair was again lowered, and Sir Arthur made fast in it, without much consciousness on his own part)—"here a' comes—Bowse away, my boys! canny wi' him—a pedigree of a hundred links is hanging on a tenpenny tow—the whole barony of Knockwinnock depends on three plies of hemp—*respice finem, respice funem*—look to your end—look to a rope's end.—Welcome, welcome, my good old friend, to firm land, though I cannot say to warm land or to dry land. A cord for ever against fifty fathom of water, though not in the sense of the base proverb—a fico for the phrase,—better *sus. per funem*, than *sus. per coll.*"

While Oldbuck ran on in this way, Sir Arthur was safely wrapped in the close embraces of his daughter, who, assuming that authority which the circumstances demanded, ordered some of the assistants to convey him to the chariot, promising to follow in a few minutes, She lingered on the cliff, holding an old countryman's arm, to witness probably the safety of those whose dangers she had shared.

"What have we here?" said Oldbuck, as the vehicle once more ascended—"what patched and weather-beaten matter is this?" Then as the torches illumed the rough face and grey hairs of old Ochiltree,— "What! is it thou?—Come, old Mocker, I must needs be friends with thee—but who the devil makes up your party besides?"

"Ane that's weel worth ony twa o' us, Monkbarns;—it's the young stranger lad they ca' Lovel—and he's behaved this blessed night as if he had three lives to rely on, and was willing to waste them a' rather than endanger ither folk's. Ca' hooly, sirs, as ye, wad win an auld man's blessing!—mind there's naeboddy below now to haud the gy—Hae a care o' the Cat's-lug corner—bide weel aff Crummie's-horn!"

"Have a care indeed," echoed Oldbuck. "What! is it my *rara avis*—my black swan—my phoenix of companions in a post-chaise?—take care of him, Mucklebackit."

"As muckle care as if he were a graybeard o' brandy; and I canna take mair if his hair were like John Harlowe's.—Yo ho, my hearts! bowse away with him!"

Lovel did, in fact, run a much greater risk than any of his precursors. His weight was not sufficient to render his ascent steady amid such a storm of wind, and he swung like an agitated pendulum at the mortal risk of being dashed against the rocks. But he was young, bold, and active, and, with the assistance of the beggar's stout piked staff, which he had retained by advice of the proprietor, contrived to bear himself from the face of the precipice, and the yet more hazardous projecting cliffs which varied its surface. Tossed in empty space, like an idle and unsubstantial feather, with a motion that agitated the brain at once with fear and with dizziness, he retained his alertness of exertion and presence of mind; and it was not until he was safely grounded upon the summit of the cliff, that he felt temporary and giddy sickness. As he recovered from a sort of half swoon, he cast his eyes eagerly around. The object which they would most willingly have sought, was already in the act of vanishing. Her white garment was just discernible as she followed on the path which her father had taken. She had lingered till she saw the last of their company rescued from danger, and until she had been assured by the hoarse voice of Mucklebackit, that "the callant had come off wi' unbrizzed banes, and that he was but in a kind of dwam." But Lovel was not aware that she had expressed in his fate even this degree of interest,—which, though nothing more than was due to a stranger who had assisted her in such an hour of peril, he would have gladly purchased by braving even more imminent danger than he had that evening been exposed to. The beggar she had already commanded to come to Knockwinnock that night. He made an excuse.—"Then to-morrow let me see you."

The old man promised to obey. Oldbuck thrust something into his hand—Ochiltree looked at it by the torchlight, and returned it—"Na, na! I never tak gowd—besides, Monkbarns, ye wad maybe be rueing it the morn." Then turning to the group of fishermen and peasants—"Now, sirs, wha will gie me a supper and some clean pease-strae?"

"I," "and I," "and I," answered many a ready voice.

"Aweel, since sae it is, and I can only sleep in ae barn at ance, I'll gae down with Saunders Mucklebackit—he has aye a soup o' something comfortable about his begging—and, bairns, I'll maybe live to put ilka ane o' ye in mind some ither night that ye hae promised me quarters and my awmous;" and away he went with the fisherman.

Oldbuck laid the band of strong possession on Lovel—"Deil a stride ye's go to Fairport this night, young man—you must go home with me to Monkbarns. Why, man, you have been a hero—a perfect Sir William Wallace, by all accounts. Come, my good lad, take hold of my arm;—I am not a prime support in such a wind—but Caxon shall help us out—Here, you old idiot, come on the other side of me.—And how the deil got you down to that infernal Bessy's-apron, as they call it? Bess, said they? Why, curse her, she has spread out that vile pennon or banner of womankind, like all the rest of her sex, to allure her votaries to death and headlong ruin."

"I have been pretty well accustomed to climbing, and I have long observed fowlers practise that pass down the cliff."

"But how, in the name of all that is wonderful, came you to discover the danger of the pettish Baronet and his far more deserving daughter?"

"I saw them from the verge of the precipice."

"From the verge!—umph—And what possessed you *dumosa pendere procul de rupe?*—though *dumosa* is not the appropriate epithet—what the deil, man, tempted ye to the verge of the craig?"

"Why—I like to see the gathering and growling of a coming storm—or, in your own classical language, Mr. Oldbuck, *suave mari magno*—and so forth—but here we reach the turn to Fairport. I must wish you good-night."

"Not a step, not a pace, not an inch, not a shathmont, as I may say,—the meaning of which word has puzzled many that think themselves antiquaries. I am clear we should read *salmon-length* for *shathmont's-length*. You are aware that the space allotted for the passage of a salmon through a dam, dike, or weir, by statute, is the length within which a full-grown pig can turn himself round. Now I have a scheme to prove, that, as terrestrial objects were thus appealed to for ascertaining submarine measurement, so it must be supposed that the productions of the water were established as gauges of the extent of land.—Shathmont—salmont—you see the close alliance of the sounds; dropping out two *h*'s, and a *t*, and assuming an *l*, makes the whole difference—I wish to heaven no antiquarian derivation had demanded heavier concessions."

"But, my dear sir, I really must go home—I am wet to the skin."

"Shalt have my night-gown, man, and slippers, and catch the antiquarian fever as men do the plague, by wearing infected garments. Nay, I know what you would be at—you are afraid to put the old bachelor to charges. But is there not the remains of that glorious chicken-pie—which, *meo arbitrio*, is better cold than hot—and that bottle of my oldest port, out of which the silly brain-sick Baronet (whom I cannot pardon, since he has escaped breaking his neck) had just taken one glass, when his infirm noddle went a wool-gathering after Gamelyn de Guardover?"

So saying he dragged Lovel forward, till the Palmer's-port of Monkbarns received them. Never, perhaps, had it admitted two pedestrians more needing rest for Monkbarns's fatigue had been in a degree very contrary to his usual habits, and his more young and robust companion had that evening undergone agitation of mind which had harassed and wearied him even more than his extraordinary exertions of body.

CHAPTER NINTH.

*"Be brave," she cried, "you yet may be our guest,
Our haunted room was ever held the best.
If, then, your valour can the sight sustain
Of rustling curtains and the clinking chain
If your courageous tongue have powers to talk,
When round your bed the horrid ghost shall walk
If you dare ask it why it leaves its tomb,
I'll see your sheets well air'd, and show the Room."
True Story.*

They reached the room in which they had dined, and were clamorously welcomed by Miss Oldbuck.

"Where's the younger womankind?" said the Antiquary.

"Indeed, brother, amang a' the steery, Maria wadna be guided by me she set away to the Halket-craig-head—I wonder ye didna see her."

"Eh!—what—what's that you say, sister?—did the girl go out in a night like this to the Halket-head?—Good God! the misery of the night is not ended yet!"

"But ye winna wait, Monkbarns—ye are so imperative and impatient"—

"Tittle-tattle, woman," said the impatient and agitated Antiquary, "where is my dear Mary?"

"Just where ye suld be yoursell, Monkbarns—up-stairs, and in her warm bed."

"I could have sworn it," said Oldbuck laughing, but obviously much relieved—"I could have sworn it;—the lazy monkey did not care if we were all drowned together. Why did you say she went out?"

"But ye wadna wait to hear out my tale, Monkbarns—she gaed out, and she came in again with the gardener sae sune as she saw that nane o' ye were clodded ower the Craig, and that Miss Wardour was safe in the chariot; she was hame a quarter of an hour syne, for it's now ganging ten—sair droukit was she, puir thing, sae I e'en put a glass o' sherry in her water-gruel."

"Right, Grizel, right—let womankind alone for coddling each other. But hear me, my venerable sister—start not at the word venerable; it implies many praiseworthy qualities besides age; though that too is honourable, albeit it is the last quality for which womankind would wish to be honoured—But perpend my words: let Lovel and me have forthwith the relics of the chicken-pie, and the reversion of the port."

"The chicken-pie! the port!—ou dear! brother—there was but a wheen banes, and scarce a drap o' the wine."

The Antiquary's countenance became clouded, though he was too well bred to give way, in the presence of a stranger, to his displeased surprise at the disappearance of the viands on which he had reckoned with absolute certainty. But his sister understood these looks of ire. "Ou dear! Monkbarns, what's the use of making a wark?"

"I make no wark, as ye call it, woman."

"But what's the use o' looking sae glum and glunch about a pickle banes?—an ye will hae the truth, ye maun ken the minister came in, worthy man—sair distressed he was, nae doubt, about your precarious situation, as he ca'd it (for ye ken how weel he's gifted wi' words), and here he wad bide till he could hear wi' certainty how the matter was likely to gang wi' ye a'—He said fine things on the duty of resignation to Providence's will, worthy man! that did he."

Oldbuck replied, catching the same tone, "Worthy man!—he cared not how soon Monkbarns had devolved on an heir-female, I've a notion;—and while he was occupied in this Christian office of consolation against impending evil, I reckon that the chicken-pie and my good port disappeared?"

"Dear brother, how can you speak of sic frivolities, when you have had sic an escape from the craig?"

"Better than my supper has had from the minister's *craig*, Grizzle—it's all discussed, I suppose?"

"Hout, Monkbarns, ye speak as if there was nae mair meat in the house—wad ye not have had me offer the honest man some slight refreshment after his walk frae the manse?"

Oldbuck half-whistled, half-hummed, the end of the old Scottish ditty,

*O, first they eated the white puddings,
And then they eated the black, O,
And thought the gudeman unto himsell,
The deil clink down wi' that, O!*

His sister hastened to silence his murmurs, by proposing some of the relies of the dinner. He spoke of another bottle of wine, but recommended in preference a glass of brandy which was really excellent. As no entreaties could prevail on Lovel to indue the velvet night-cap and branched morning-gown of his host, Oldbuck, who pretended to a little knowledge of the medical art, insisted on his going to bed as soon as possible, and proposed to despatch a messenger (the indefatigable Caxon) to Fairport early in the morning, to procure him a change of clothes.

This was the first intimation Miss Oldbuck had received that the young stranger was to be their guest for the night; and such was the surprise with which she was struck by a proposal so uncommon, that, had the superincumbent weight of her head-dress, such as we before described, been less preponderant, her grey locks must have started up on end, and hurled it from its position.

"Lord haud a care o' us!" exclaimed the astounded maiden.

"What's the matter now, Grizel?"

"Wad ye but just speak a moment, Monkbarns?"

"Speak!—what should I speak about? I want to get to my bed—and this poor young fellow—let a bed be made ready for him instantly."

"A bed?—The Lord preserve us!" again ejaculated Grizel.

"Why, what's the matter now?—are there not beds and rooms enough in the house?—was it not an ancient *hospitium*, in which, I am warranted to say, beds were nightly made down for a score of pilgrims?"

"O dear, Monkbarns! wha kens what they might do lang syne?—but in our time—beds—ay, troth, there's beds enow sic as they are—and rooms enow too—but ye ken yoursell the beds haena been sleepit in, Lord kens the time, nor the rooms aired.—If I had kenn'd, Mary and me might hae gaen down to the manse—Miss Beckie is aye fond to see us—(and sae is the minister, brother)—But now, gude save us!"—

"Is there not the Green Room, Grizel?"

"Troth is there, and it is in decent order too, though naebody has sleepit there since Dr. Heavysterne, and"—

"And what?"

"And what! I am sure ye ken yoursell what a night he had—ye wadna expose the young gentleman to the like o' that, wad ye?"

Lovel interfered upon hearing this altercation, and protested he would far rather walk home than put them to the least inconvenience—that the exercise would be of service to him—that he knew the road perfectly, by night or day, to Fairport—that the storm was abating, and so forth—adding all that civility could suggest as an excuse for escaping from a hospitality which seemed more inconvenient to his host than he could possibly have anticipated. But the howling of the wind, and the pattering of the rain against the windows, with his knowledge of the preceding fatigues of the evening, must have prohibited Oldbuck, even had he entertained less regard for his young friend than he really felt, from permitting him to depart. Besides, he was piqued in honour to show that he himself was not governed by womankind—"Sit ye down, sit ye down, sit ye down, man," he reiterated;—"an ye part so, I would I might never draw a cork again, and here comes out one from a prime bottle of—strong ale—right *anno domini*—none of your Wassia Quassia decoctions, but brewed of Monkbarns barley—John of the Girnel never drew a better flagon to entertain a wandering minstrel, or palmer, with the freshest news from Palestine.—And to remove from your mind the slightest wish to depart, know, that if you do so, your character as a gallant knight is gone for ever. Why, 'tis an adventure, man, to sleep in the Green Room at Monkbarns.—Sister, pray see it got ready—And, although the bold adventurer, Heavysterne, dree'd pain and dolour in that charmed apartment, it is no reason why a gallant knight like you, nearly twice as tall, and not half so heavy, should not encounter and break the spell."

"What! a haunted apartment, I suppose?"

"To be sure, to be sure—every mansion in this country of the slightest antiquity has its ghosts and its haunted chamber, and you must not suppose us worse off than our neighbours. They are going, indeed, somewhat out of fashion. I have seen the day, when if you had doubted the reality of a ghost in an old manor-house you ran the risk of being made a ghost yourself, as Hamlet says.—Yes, if you had challenged the existence of Redcowl in the Castle of Glenstirym, old Sir Peter Pepperbrand would have had ye out to his court-yard, made you betake yourself to your weapon, and if your trick of fence were not the better, would have stuck you like a paddock, on his own baronial midden—stead. I once narrowly escaped such an affray—but I humbled myself, and apologised to Redcowl; for, even in my younger days, I was no friend to the *monomachia*, or duel, and would rather walk with Sir Priest than with Sir Knight—I care not who knows so much of my valour. Thank God, I am old now, and can indulge my irritabilities without the necessity of supporting them by cold steel."

Here Miss Oldbuck re-entered, with a singularly sage expression of countenance.—"Mr. Lovel's bed's ready, brother—clean sheets—weel aired—a spunk of fire in the chimney—I am sure, Mr. Lovel," (addressing him), "it's no for the trouble—and I hope you will have a good night's rest—But"—

"You are resolved," said the Antiquary, "to do what you can to prevent it."

"Me?—I am sure I have said naething, Monkbarns."

"My dear madam," said Lovel, "allow me to ask you the meaning of your obliging anxiety on my account."

"Ou, Monkbarns does not like to hear of it—but he kens himsell that the room has an ill name. It's weel minded that it was there auld Rab Tull the town-clerk was sleeping when he had that marvellous communication about the grand law-plea between us and the feuars at the Mussel-craig. —It had cost a hantle siller, Mr. Lovel; for law-pleas were no carried on without siller lang syne mair than they are now—and the Monkbarns of that day—our gudesire, Mr. Lovel, as I said before—was like to be waured afore the Session for want of a paper—Monkbarns there kens weel what paper it was, but I'se warrant he'll no help me out wi' my tale—but it was a paper of great significance to the plea, and we were to be waured for want o't. Aweel, the cause was to come on before the fifteen—in presence, as they ca't—and auld Rab Tull, the town-clerk, he cam ower to make a last search for the paper that was wanting, before our gudesire gaed into Edinburgh to look after his plea—so there was little time to come and gang on. He was but a doited snuffy body, Rab, as I've heard—but then he was the town-clerk of Fairport, and the Monkbarns heritors aye employed him on account of their connection wi' the burgh, ye ken."

"Sister Grizel, this is abominable," interrupted Oldbuck; "I vow to Heaven ye might have raised the ghosts of every abbot of Trotcosey, since the days of Waldimir, in the time you have been detailing the introduction to this single spectre.—Learn to be succinct in your narrative.—Imitate the concise style of old Aubrey, an experienced ghost-seer, who entered his memoranda on these subjects in a terse business-like manner; *exempli gratia*—At Cirencester, 5th March, 1670, was an apparition.—Being demanded whether good spirit or bad, made no answer, but instantly disappeared with a curious perfume, and a melodious twang!—*Vide* his Miscellanies, p. eighteen, as well as I can remember, and near the middle of the page."

"O, Monkbarns, man! do ye think everybody is as book-learned as yoursell?—But ye like to gar folk look like fools—ye can do that to Sir Arthur, and the minister his very sell."

"Nature has been beforehand with me, Grizel, in both these instances, and in another which shall be nameless—but take a glass of ale, Grizel, and proceed with your story, for it waxes late."

"Jenny's just warming your bed, Monkbarns, and ye maun e'en wait till she's done.—Weel, I was at the search that our gudesire, Monkbarns that then was, made wi' auld Rab Tull's assistance;—but ne'er-be-licket could they find that was to their purpose. And sae after they had touzled out mony a leather poke-full o' papers, the town-clerk had his drap punch at e'en to wash the dust out of his throat—we never were glass-breakers in this house, Mr. Lovel, but the body had got sic a trick of sippling and tippling wi' the bailies and deacons when they met (which was amaisht ilka night) concerning the common gude o' the burgh, that he couldna weel sleep without it—But his punch he gat, and to bed he gaed; and in the middle of the night he got a fearfu' wakening!—he was never just himsell after it, and he was stricken wi' the dead palsy that very day four years. He thought, Mr. Lovel, that he heard the curtains o' his bed fissil, and out he lookit, fancying, puir man, it might hae been the cat—But he saw—God hae a care o' us! it gars my flesh aye creep, though I hae tauld the story twenty times—he saw a weel-fa'ard auld gentleman standing by his bedside, in the moonlight, in a queer-fashioned dress, wi' mony a button and band-string about it, and that part o' his garments which it does not become a ledly to particulareeze, was baith side and wide, and as mony plies o't as of ony Hamburg skipper's—He had a beard too, and whiskers turned upwards on his upper-lip, as lang as baudrons!—and mony mair particulars there were that Rab Tull tauld o', but they are forgotten now—it's an auld story. Aweel, Rab was a just-living man for a country writer—and he was less feared than maybe might just hae been expected; and he asked in the name o' goodness what the apparition wanted—and the spirit answered in an unknown tongue. Then Rab said he tried him wi' Erse, for he cam in his youth frae the braes of Glenlivat—but it wadna do. Aweel, in this strait, he bethought him of the twa or three words o' Latin that he used in making out the town's deeds, and he had nae sooner tried the spirit wi' that, than out cam sic a blatter o' Latin about his lugs, that poor Rab Tull, wha was nae great scholar, was clean overwhelmed. Od, but he was a bauld body, and he minded the Latin name for the deed that he was wanting. It was something about a cart, I fancy, for the ghaist cried aye, *Carter, carter*—"

"*Carta*, you transformer of languages!" cried Oldbuck;—"if my ancestor had learned no other language in the other world, at least he would not forget the Latinity for which he was so famous while in this."

"Weel, weel, *carta* be it then, but they ca'd it *carter* that tell'd me the story. It cried aye *carta*, if sae be that it was *carta*, and made a sign to Rab to follow it. Rab Tull keepit a Highland heart, and banged out o' bed, and till some of his readiest claes—and he did follow the thing up stairs and down stairs to the place we ca' the high dow-cot—a sort of a little tower in the corner of the auld house, where there was a Rickle o' useless boxes and trunks—and there the ghaist gae Rab a kick wi' the tae foot, and a kick wi' the tother, to that very auld east-country tabernacle of a cabinet that my brother has standing beside his library table, and then disappeared like a fuff o' tobacco, leaving Rab in a very pitiful condition."

"*Tenues secessit in auras*," quoth Oldbuck. "Marry, sir, *mansit odor*—But, sure enough, the deed was there found in a drawer of this forgotten repository, which contained many other curious old papers, now properly labelled and arranged, and which seemed to have belonged to my ancestor, the first possessor of Monkbarns. The deed, thus strangely recovered, was the original Charter of Erection of the Abbey, Abbey Lands, and so forth, of Trotcosey, comprehending Monkbarns and others, into a Lordship of Regality in favour of the first Earl of Glengibber, a favourite of James the Sixth. It is subscribed by the King at Westminster, the seventeenth day of January, A. D. one thousand six hundred and twelve—thirteen. It's not worth while to repeat the witnesses' names."

"I would rather," said Lovel with awakened curiosity, "I would rather hear your opinion of the way in which the deed was discovered."

"Why, if I wanted a patron for my legend, I could find no less a one than Saint Augustine, who tells the story of a deceased person appearing to his son, when sued for a debt which had been paid, and directing him where, to find the discharge."

*Note D. Mr. Rutherford's dream.

But I rather opine with Lord Bacon, who says that imagination is much akin to miracle-working faith. There was always some idle story of the room being haunted by the spirit of Aldobrand Oldenbuck, my great-great-great-grandfather—it's a shame to the English language that, we have not a less clumsy way of expressing a relationship of which we have occasion to think and speak so frequently. He was a foreigner, and wore his national dress, of which tradition had preserved an accurate description; and indeed there is a print of him, supposed to be by Reginald Elstracke, pulling the press with his own hand, as it works off the sheets of his scarce edition of the Augsburg Confession. He was a chemist as well as a good mechanic, and either of these qualities in this country was at that time sufficient to constitute a white witch at least. This superstitious old writer had heard all this, and probably believed it, and in his sleep the image and idea of my ancestor recalled that of his cabinet, which, with the grateful attention to antiquities and the memory of our ancestors not unusually met with, had been pushed into the pigeon-house to be out of the way—Add a *quantum sufficit* of exaggeration, and you have a key to the whole mystery."

"O brother! brother! but Dr. Heavysterne, brother—whose sleep was so sore broken, that he declared he wadna pass another night in the Green Room to get all Monkbarns, so that Mary and I were forced to yield our"—

"Why, Grizel, the doctor is a good, honest, pudding-headed German, of much merit in his own way, but fond of the mystical, like many of his countrymen. You and he had a traffic the whole evening in which you received tales of Mesmer, Shropfer, Cagliostro, and other modern pretenders to the mystery of raising spirits, discovering hidden treasure, and so forth, in exchange for your legends of the green bedchamber;—and considering that the *Illustrissimus* ate a pound and a half of Scotch collops to supper, smoked six pipes, and drank ale and brandy in proportion, I am not surprised at his having a fit of the night-mare. But everything is now ready. Permit me to light you to your apartment, Mr. Lovel—I am sure you have need of rest—and I trust my ancestor is too sensible of the duties of hospitality to interfere with the repose which you have so well merited by your manly and gallant behaviour."

So saying, the Antiquary took up a bedroom candlestick of massive silver and antique form, which, he observed, was wrought out of the silver found in the mines of the Harz mountains, and had been the property of the very personage who had supplied them with a subject for conversation. And having so said, he led the way through many a dusky and winding passage, now ascending, and anon descending again, until he came to the apartment destined for his young guest.

CHAPTER TENTH.

*When midnight o'er the moonless skies
Her pall of transient death has spread,
When mortals sleep, when spectres rise,
And none are wakeful but the dead;
No bloodless shape my way pursues,
No sheeted ghost my couch annoys,
Visions more sad my fancy views,—
Visions of long departed joys.*

W. R. Spenser.

When they reached the Green Room, as it was called, Oldbuck placed the candle on the toilet table, before a huge mirror with a black japanned frame, surrounded by dressing-boxes of the same, and looked around him with something of a disturbed expression of countenance. "I am seldom in this apartment," he said, "and never without yielding to a melancholy feeling—not, of course, on account of the childish nonsense that Grizel was telling you, but owing to circumstances of an early and unhappy attachment. It is at such moments as these, Mr. Lovel, that we feel the changes of time. The same objects are before us—those inanimate things which we have gazed on in wayward infancy and impetuous youth, in anxious and scheming manhood—they are permanent and the same; but when we look upon them in cold unfeeling old age, can we, changed in our temper, our pursuits, our feelings—changed in our form, our limbs, and our strength,—can we be ourselves called the same? or do we not rather look back with a sort of wonder upon our former selves, as being separate and distinct from what we now are? The philosopher who appealed from Philip inflamed with wine to Philip in his hours of sobriety, did not choose a judge so different, as if he had appealed from Philip in his youth to Philip in his old age. I cannot but be touched with the feeling so beautifully expressed in a poem which I have heard repeated:*

*Probably Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads had not as yet been published.

*My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.*

*Thus fares it still in our decay;
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what time takes away,
Than what he leaves behind.*

Well, time cures every wound, and though the scar may remain and occasionally ache, yet the earliest agony of its recent infliction is felt no more."—So saying, he shook Lovel cordially by the hand, wished him good-night, and took his leave.

Step after step Lovel could trace his host's retreat along the various passages, and each door which he closed behind him fell with a sound more distant and dead. The guest, thus separated from the living world, took up the candle and surveyed the apartment.

The fire blazed cheerfully. Mrs. Grizel's attention had left some fresh wood, should he choose to continue it, and the apartment had a comfortable, though not a lively appearance. It was hung with tapestry, which the looms of Arras had produced in the sixteenth century, and which the learned typographer, so often mentioned, had brought with him as a sample of the arts of the Continent. The subject was a hunting-piece; and as the leafy boughs of the forest-trees, branching over the tapestry, formed the predominant colour, the apartment had thence acquired its name of the Green Chamber. Grim figures in the old Flemish dress, with slashed doublets covered with ribbands, short cloaks, and trunk-hose, were engaged in holding grey-hounds, or stag-hounds, in the leash, or cheering them upon the objects of their game. Others, with boar-spears, swords, and old-fashioned guns, were attacking stags or boars whom they had brought to bay. The branches of the woven forest were crowded with fowls of various kinds, each depicted with its proper plumage. It seemed as if the prolific and rich invention of old Chaucer had animated the Flemish artist with its profusion, and Oldbuck had accordingly caused the following verses, from that ancient and excellent poet, to be embroidered in Gothic letters, on a sort of border which he had added to the tapestry:-

*Lo! here be oaks grete, streight as a line,
Under the which the grass, so fresh of line,
Be'th newly sprung—at eight foot or nine.
Everich tree well from his fellow grew,
With branches broad laden with leaves new,
That sprongen out against the sonne sheene,
Some golden red and some a glad bright green.*

And in another canton was the following similar legend:—

*And many an hart and many an hind,
Was both before me, and behind.
Of fawns, sownders, bucks and does,
Was full the wood and many roes,
And many squirrels that ysate
High on the trees and nuts ate.*

The bed was of a dark and faded green, wrought to correspond with the tapestry, but by a more modern and less skilful hand. The large and heavy stuff-bottomed chairs, with black ebony backs, were embroidered after the same pattern, and a lofty mirror, over the antique chimney-piece, corresponded in its mounting with that on the old-fashioned toilet.

"I have heard," muttered Lovel, as he took a cursory view of the room and its furniture, "that ghosts often chose the best room in the mansion to which they attached themselves; and I cannot disapprove of the taste of the disembodied printer of the Augsburg Confession." But he found it so difficult to fix his mind upon the stories which had been told him of an apartment with which they seemed so singularly to correspond, that he almost regretted the absence of those agitated feelings, half fear half curiosity, which sympathise with the old legends of awe and wonder, from which the anxious reality of his own hopeless passion at present detached him. For he now only felt emotions like those expressed in the lines,—

*Ah! cruel maid, how hast thou changed
The temper of my mind!
My heart, by thee from all estranged,
Becomes like thee unkind.*

He endeavoured to conjure up something like the feelings which would, at another time, have been congenial to his situation, but his heart had no room for these vagaries of imagination. The recollection of Miss Wardour, determined not to acknowledge him when compelled to endure his society, and evincing her purpose to escape from it, would have alone occupied his imagination exclusively. But with this were united recollections more agitating if less painful,—her hair-breadth escape—the fortunate assistance which he had been able to render her—Yet what was his requital? She left the cliff while his fate was yet doubtful—while it was uncertain whether her preserver had not lost the life which he had exposed for her so freely. Surely gratitude, at least, called for some little interest in his fate—But no—she could not be selfish or unjust—it was no part of her nature. She only desired to shut the door against hope, and, even in compassion to him, to extinguish a passion which she could never return.

But this lover-like mode of reasoning was not likely to reconcile him to his fate, since the more amiable his imagination presented Miss Wardour, the more inconsolable he felt he should be rendered by the extinction of his hopes. He was, indeed, conscious of possessing the power of removing her prejudices on some points; but, even in extremity, he determined to keep the original determination which he had formed, of ascertaining that she desired an explanation, ere he intruded one upon her. And, turn the matter as he would, he could not regard his suit as desperate. There was something of embarrassment as well as of grave surprise in her look when Oldbuck presented him—and, perhaps, upon second thoughts, the one was assumed to cover the other. He would not relinquish a pursuit which had already cost him such pains. Plans, suiting the romantic temper of the brain that entertained them, chased each other through his head, thick and irregular as the motes of the sun-beam, and, long after he had laid himself to rest, continued to prevent the repose which he greatly needed. Then, wearied by the uncertainty and difficulties with which each scheme appeared to be attended, he bent up his mind to the strong effort of shaking off his love, "like dew-drops from the lion's mane," and resuming those studies and that career of life which his unrequited affection had so long and so fruitlessly interrupted. In this last resolution he endeavoured to fortify himself by every argument which pride, as well as reason, could suggest. "She shall not suppose," he said, "that, presuming on an accidental service to her or to her father, I am desirous to intrude myself upon that notice, to which, personally, she considered me as having no title. I will see her no more. I will return to the land which, if it affords none fairer, has at least many as fair, and less haughty than Miss Wardour. Tomorrow I will bid adieu to these northern shores, and to her who is as cold and relentless as her climate." When he had for some time brooded over this sturdy resolution, exhausted nature at length gave way, and, despite of wrath, doubt, and anxiety, he sank into slumber.

It is seldom that sleep, after such violent agitation, is either sound or refreshing. Lovel's was disturbed by a thousand baseless and confused visions. He was a bird—he was a fish—or he flew like the one, and swam like the other,—qualities which would have been very essential to his safety a few hours before. Then Miss Wardour was a syren, or a bird of Paradise; her father a triton, or a sea-gull; and Oldbuck alternately a porpoise and a cormorant. These agreeable imaginations were varied by all the usual vagaries of a feverish dream;—the air refused to bear the visionary, the water seemed to burn him—the rocks felt like down pillows as he was dashed against them—whatever he undertook, failed in some strange and unexpected manner—and whatever attracted his attention, underwent, as he attempted to investigate it, some wild and wonderful metamorphosis, while his mind continued all the while in some degree conscious of the delusion, from which it in vain struggled to free itself by awaking;—feverish symptoms all, with which those who are haunted by the night-hag, whom the learned call Ephialtes, are but too well acquainted. At length these crude phantasmata arranged themselves into something more regular, if indeed the imagination of Lovel, after he awoke (for it was by no means the faculty in which his mind was least rich), did not gradually, insensibly, and unintentionally, arrange in better order the scene of which his sleep presented, it may be, a less distinct outline. Or it is possible that his feverish agitation may have assisted him in forming the vision.

Leaving this discussion to the learned, we will say, that after a succession of wild images, such as we have above described, our hero, for such we must acknowledge him, so far regained a consciousness of locality as to remember where he was, and the whole furniture of the Green Chamber was depicted to his slumbering eye. And here, once more, let me protest, that if there should be so much old-fashioned faith left among this shrewd and sceptical generation, as to suppose that what follows was an impression conveyed rather by the eye than by the imagination, I do not impugn their doctrine. He was, then, or imagined himself, broad awake in the Green Chamber, gazing upon the flickering and occasional flame which the unconsumed remnants of the faggots sent forth, as, one by one, they fell down upon the red embers, into which the principal part of the boughs to which they belonged had crumbled away. Insensibly the legend of

Aldobrand Oldenbuck, and his mysterious visits to the inmates of the chamber, awoke in his mind, and with it, as we often feel in dreams, an anxious and fearful expectation, which seldom fails instantly to summon up before our mind's eye the object of our fear. Brighter sparkles of light flashed from the chimney, with such intense brilliancy as to enlighten all the room. The tapestry waved wildly on the wall, till its dusky forms seemed to become animated. The hunters blew their horns—the stag seemed to fly, the boar to resist, and the hounds to assail the one and pursue the other; the cry of deer, mangled by throttling dogs—the shouts of men, and the clatter of horses' hoofs, seemed at once to surround him—while every group pursued, with all the fury of the chase, the employment in which the artist had represented them as engaged. Lovel looked on this strange scene devoid of wonder (which seldom intrudes itself upon the sleeping fancy), but with an anxious sensation of awful fear. At length an individual figure among the tissued huntsmen, as he gazed upon them more fixedly, seemed to leave the arras and to approach the bed of the slumberer. As he drew near, his figure appeared to alter. His bugle-horn became a brazen clasped volume; his hunting-cap changed to such a furred head-gear as graces the burgomasters of Rembrandt; his Flemish garb remained but his features, no longer agitated with the fury of the chase, were changed to such a state of awful and stern composure, as might best portray the first proprietor of Monkbarns, such as he had been described to Lovel by his descendants in the course of the preceding evening. As this metamorphosis took place, the hubbub among the other personages in the arras disappeared from the imagination of the dreamer, which was now exclusively bent on the single figure before him. Lovel strove to interrogate this awful person in the form of exorcism proper for the occasion; but his tongue, as is usual in frightful dreams, refused its office, and clung, palsied, to the roof of his mouth. Aldobrand held up his finger, as if to impose silence upon the guest who had intruded on his apartment, and began deliberately to unclasp the venerable, volume which occupied his left hand. When it was unfolded, he turned over the leaves hastily for a short space, and then raising his figure to its full dimensions, and holding the book aloft in his left hand, pointed to a passage in the page which he thus displayed. Although the language was unknown to our dreamer, his eye and attention were both strongly caught by the line which the figure seemed thus to press upon his notice, the words of which appeared to blaze with a supernatural light, and remained riveted upon his memory. As the vision shut his volume, a strain of delightful music seemed to fill the apartment—Lovel started, and became completely awake.

The music, however, was still in his ears, nor ceased till he could distinctly follow the measure of an old Scottish tune. He sat up in bed, and endeavoured to clear his brain of the phantoms which had disturbed it during this weary night. The beams of the morning sun streamed through the half-closed shutters, and admitted a distinct light into the apartment. He looked round upon the hangings,—but the mixed groups of silken and worsted huntsmen were as stationary as tenter-hooks could make them, and only trembled slightly as the early breeze, which found its way through an open crevice of the latticed window, glided along their surface. Lovel leapt out of bed, and, wrapping himself in a morning-gown, that had been considerably laid by his bedside, stepped towards the window, which commanded a view of the sea, the roar of whose billows announced it still disquieted by the storm of the preceding evening, although the morning was fair and serene. The window of a turret, which projected at an angle with the wall, and thus came to be very near Lovel's apartment, was half-open, and from that quarter he heard again the same music which had probably broken short his dream. With its visionary character it had lost much of its charms—it was now nothing more than an air on the harpsichord, tolerably well performed—such is the caprice of imagination as affecting the fine arts. A female voice sung, with some taste and great simplicity, something between a song and a hymn, in words to the following effect:—

*"Why sitt'st thou by that ruin'd hall,
Thou aged carle so stern and grey?
Dost thou its former pride recall,
Or ponder how it passed away?"*

*"Know'st thou not me!" the Deep Voice cried,
"So long enjoyed, so oft misused—
Alternate, in thy fickle pride,
Desired, neglected, and accused?"*

*"Before my breath, like, blazing flax,
Man and his marvels pass away;
And changing empires wane and wax,
Are founded, flourish and decay."*

*"Redeem mine hours—the space is brief—
While in my glass the sand-grains shiver,
And measureless thy joy or grief,
When Time and thou shalt part for ever!"*

While the verses were yet singing, Lovel had returned to his bed; the train of ideas which they awakened was romantic and pleasing, such as his soul delighted in, and, willingly adjourning till more broad day the doubtful task of determining on his future line of conduct, he abandoned himself to the pleasing languor inspired by the music, and fell into a sound and refreshing sleep, from which he was only awakened at a late hour by old Caxon, who came creeping into the room to render the offices of a valet-de-chambre.

"I have brushed your coat, sir," said the old man, when he perceived Lovel was awake; "the callant brought it frae Fairport this morning, for that ye had on yesterday is scanty feasily dry, though it's been a' night at the kitchen fire; and I hae cleaned your shoon. I doubt ye'll no be wanting me to tie your hair, for" (with a gentle sigh) "a' the young gentlemen wear crops now; but I hae the curling tangs here to gie it a bit turn ower the brow, if ye like, before ye gae down to the leddies."

Lovel, who was by this time once more on his legs, declined the old man's professional offices, but accompanied the refusal with such a douceur as completely sweetened Caxon's mortification.

"It's a pity he disna get his hair tied and pouthered," said the ancient friseur, when he had got once more into the kitchen, in which, on one pretence or other, he spent three parts of his idle time—that is to say, of his *whole* time—"it's a great pity, for he's a comely young gentleman."

"Hout awa, ye auld gowk," said Jenny Rintherout, "would ye creesh his bonny brown hair wi' your nasty ulyie, and then moust it like the auld minister's wig? Ye'll be for your breakfast, I se warrant?—hae, there's a soup parritch for ye—it will set ye better tae be slaistering at them and the lapper-milk than meddling wi' Mr. Lovel's head—ye wad spoil the maist natural and beautifae head o' hair in a' Fairport, baith burgh and county."

The poor barber sighed over the disrespect into which his art had so universally fallen, but Jenny was a person too important to offend by contradiction; so, sitting quietly down in the kitchen, he digested at once his humiliation, and the contents of a bicker which held a Scotch pint of substantial oatmeal porridge.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

*Sometimes he thinks that Heaven this pageant sent,
And ordered all the pageants as they went;
Sometimes that only 'twas wild Fancy's play,—
The loose and scattered relics of the day.*

We must now request our readers to adjourn to the breakfast parlour of Mr. Oldbuck, who, despising the modern slops of tea and coffee, was substantially regaling himself, *more majorum*, with cold roast-beef, and a glass of a sort of beverage called *mum*—a species of fat ale, brewed from wheat and bitter herbs, of which the present generation only know the name by its occurrence in revenue acts of parliament, coupled with cider, perry, and other excisable commodities. Lovel, who was seduced to taste it, with difficulty refrained from pronouncing it detestable, but *did* refrain, as he saw he should otherwise give great offence to his host, who had the liquor annually prepared with peculiar care, according to the approved recipe bequeathed to him by the so-often mentioned Aldobrand Oldenbuck. The hospitality of the ladies offered Lovel a breakfast more suited to modern taste, and while he was engaged in partaking of it, he was assailed by indirect inquiries concerning the manner in which he had passed the night.

"We canna compliment Mr. Lovel on his looks this morning, brother—but he winna condescend on any ground of disturbance he has had in the night time. I am certain he looks very pale, and when he came here he was as fresh as a rose."

"Why, sister, consider this rose of yours has been knocked about by sea and wind all yesterday evening, as if he had been a bunch of kelp or tangle, and how the devil would you have him retain his colour?"

"I certainly do still feel somewhat fatigued," said Lovel, "notwithstanding the excellent accommodations with which your hospitality so amply supplied me."

"Ah, sir!" said Miss Oldbuck looking at him with a knowing smile, or what was meant to be one, "ye'll not allow of any inconvenience, out of civility to us."

"Really, madam," replied Lovel, "I had no disturbance; for I cannot term such the music with which some kind fairy favoured me."

"I doubted Mary wad waken you wi' her skreighing; she dinna ken I had left open a chink of your window, for, forbye the ghaist, the Green Room disna vent weel in a high wind—But I am judging ye heard mair than Mary's lilt yestreen. Weel, men are hardy creatures—they can gae through wi' a' thing. I am sure, had I been to undergo ony thing of that nature,—that's to say that's beyond nature—I would hae skreigh'd out at once, and raised the house, be the consequence what liket—and, I dare say, the minister wad hae done as mickle, and sae I hae tauld him,—I ken naebody but my brother, Monkbarns himsell, wad gae through the like o't, if, indeed, it binna you, Mr. Lovel."

"A man of Mr. Oldbuck's learning, madam," answered the questioned party, "would not be exposed to the inconvenience sustained by the Highland gentleman you mentioned last night."

"Ay, ay—ye understand now where the difficulty lies. Language? he has ways o' his ain wad banish a' thae sort o' worricows as far as the hindermost parts of Gideon" (meaning possibly Midian), "as Mr. Blattergowl says—only ane widna be uncivil to ane's forbear, though he be a ghaist. I am sure I will try that receipt of yours, brother, that ye showed me in a book, if onybody is to sleep in that room again, though I think, in Christian charity, ye should rather fit up the matted-room—it's a wee damp and dark, to be sure, but then we hae sae seldom occasion for a spare bed."

"No, no, sister;—dampness and darkness are worse than spectres—ours are spirits of light, and I would rather have you try the spell."

"I will do that blythely, Monkbarns, an I had the ingredients, as my cookery book ca's them—There was *vervain* and *dill*—I mind that—Davie Dibble will ken about them, though, maybe, he'll gie them Latin names—and Peppercorn, we hae walth o' them, for"—

"Hypericon, thou foolish woman!" thundered Oldbuck; "d'ye suppose you're making a haggis—or do you think that a spirit, though he be formed of air, can be expelled by a receipt against wind?—This wise Grizel of mine, Mr. Lovel, recollects (with what accuracy you may judge) a charm which I once mentioned to her, and which, happening to hit her superstitious noddle, she remembers better than anything tending to a useful purpose, I may chance to have said for this ten years. But many an old woman besides herself"—

"Auld woman, Monkbarns!" said Miss Oldbuck, roused something above her usual submissive tone; "ye really are less than civil to me."

"Not less than just, Grizel: however, I include in the same class many a sounding name, from Jamblichus down to Aubrey, who have wasted their time in devising imaginary remedies for non-existing diseases.—But I hope, my young friend, that, charmed or uncharmed—secured by the potency of Hypericon,

With vervain and with dill,

That hinder witches of their will,

or left disarmed and defenceless to the inroads of the invisible world, you will give another night to the terrors of the haunted apartment, and another day to your faithful and feal friends."

"I heartily wish I could, but"—

"Nay, but me no *buts*—I have set my heart upon it."

"I am greatly obliged, my dear sir, but"—

"Look ye there, now—*but* again!—I hate *but*; I know no form of expression in which he can appear, that is amiable, excepting as a *butt* of sack. But is to me a more detestable combination of letters than *no* itself. *No* is a surly, honest fellow—speaks his mind rough and round at once. *But* is a sneaking, evasive, half-bred, exceptuous sort of a conjunction, which comes to pull away the cup just when it is at your lips—

—it does allay

The good precedent—fie upon but yet!

But yet is as a jailor to bring forth

Some monstrous malefactor."

"Well, then," answered Lovel, whose motions were really undetermined at the moment, "you shall not connect the recollection of my name with so churlish a particle. I must soon think of leaving Fairport, I am afraid—and I will, since you are good enough to wish it, take this opportunity of spending another day here."

"And you shall be rewarded, my boy. First, you shall see John o' the Girmel's grave, and then we'll walk gently along the sands, the state of the tide being first ascertained (for we will have no more Peter Wilkins' adventures, no more Glum and Gawrie work), as far as Knockwinnock Castle, and inquire after the old knight and my fair foe—which will but be barely civil, and then"—

"I beg pardon, my dear sir; but, perhaps, you had better adjourn your visit till to-morrow—I am a stranger, you know."

"And are, therefore, the more bound to show civility, I should suppose. But I beg your pardon for mentioning a word that perhaps belongs only to a collector of antiquities—I am one of the old school,

When courtiers galloped o'er four counties

The ball's fair partner to behold,

And humbly hope she caught no cold."

"Why, if—if—if you thought it would be expected—but I believe I had better stay."

"Nay, nay, my good friend, I am not so old-fashioned as to press you to what is disagreeable, neither—it is sufficient that I see there is some *remora*, some cause of delay, some mid impediment, which I have no title to inquire into. Or you are still somewhat tired, perhaps;—I warrant I find means to entertain your intellects without fatiguing your limbs—I am no friend to violent exertion myself—a walk in the garden once a-day is exercise, enough for any thinking being—none but a fool or a fox-hunter would require more. Well, what shall we set about?—my Essay on Castrametation—but I have that in *petto* for our afternoon cordial;—or I will show you the controversy upon Ossian's Poems between Mac-Cribb and me. I hold with the acute Orcadian—he with the defenders of the authenticity;—the controversy began in smooth, oily, lady-like terms, but is now waxing more sour and eager as we get on—it already partakes somewhat of old Scaliger's style. I fear the rogue will get some scent of that story of Ochiltree's—but at worst, I have a hard repartee for him on the affair of the abstracted Antigonus—I will show you his last epistle and the scroll of my answer—egad, it is a trimmer!"

So saying, the Antiquary opened a drawer, and began rummaging among a quantity of miscellaneous papers, ancient and modern. But it was the misfortune of this learned gentleman, as it may be that of many learned and unlearned, that he frequently experienced, on such occasions, what Harlequin calls *l'embaras des richesses*; in other words, the abundance of his collection often prevented him from finding the article he sought for. "Curse the papers!—I believe," said Oldbuck,

as he shuffled them to and fro—"I believe they make themselves wings like grasshoppers, and fly away bodily—but here, in the meanwhile, look at that little treasure." So saying, he put into his hand a case made of oak, fenced at the corner with silver roses and studs—"Pr'ythee, undo this button," said he, as he observed Lovel fumbling at the clasp. He did so,—the lid opened, and discovered a thin quarto, curiously bound in black shagreen—"There, Mr. Lovel—there is the work I mentioned to you last night—the rare quarto of the Augsburg Confession, the foundation at once and the bulwark of the Reformation drawn up by the learned and venerable Melancthon, defended by the Elector of Saxony, and the other valiant hearts who stood up for their faith, even against the front of a powerful and victorious emperor, and imprinted by the scarcely less venerable and praiseworthy Aldobrand Oldenbuck, my happy progenitor, during the yet more tyrannical attempts of Philip II. to suppress at once civil and religious liberty. Yes, sir—for printing this work, that eminent man was expelled from his ungrateful country, and driven to establish his household gods even here at Monkbarns, among the ruins of papal superstition and domination.—Look upon his venerable effigies, Mr. Lovel, and respect the honourable occupation in which it presents him, as labouring personally at the press for the diffusion of Christian and political knowledge.—And see here his favourite motto, expressive of his independence and self-reliance, which scorned to owe anything to patronage that was not earned by desert—expressive also of that firmness of mind and tenacity of purpose recommended by Horace. He was indeed a man who would have stood firm, had his whole printing-house, presses, fonts, forms, great and small pica, been shivered to pieces around him—Read, I say, his motto,—for each printer had his motto, or device, when that illustrious art was first practised. My ancestor's was expressed, as you see, in the Teutonic phrase, *Kunst macht Gunst*—that is, skill, or prudence, in availing ourselves of our natural talents and advantages, will compel favour and patronage, even where it is withheld from prejudice or ignorance." "And that," said Lovel, after a moment's thoughtful silence—"that, then, is the meaning of these German words?"

"Unquestionably. You perceive the appropriate application to a consciousness of inward worth, and of eminence in a useful and honourable art.—Each printer in those days, as I have already informed you, had his device, his impresa, as I may call it, in the same manner as the doughty chivalry of the age, who frequented tilt and tournament. My ancestor boasted as much in his, as if he had displayed it over a conquered field of battle, though it betokened the diffusion of knowledge, not the effusion of blood. And yet there is a family tradition which affirms him to have chosen it from a more romantic circumstance."

"And what is that said to have been, my good sir?" inquired his young friend.

"Why, it rather encroaches on my respected predecessor's fame for prudence and wisdom—*Sed semel insanivimus omnes*—everybody has played the fool in their turn. It is said, my ancestor, during his apprenticeship with the descendant of old Faust, whom popular tradition hath sent to the devil under the name of Faustus, was attracted by a paltry slip of womankind, his master's daughter, called Bertha—they broke rings, or went through some idiotical ceremony, as is usual on such idle occasions as the plighting of a true-love troth, and Aldobrand set out on his journey through Germany, as became an honest *hand-werker*; for such was the custom of mechanics at that time, to make a tour through the empire, and work at their trade for a time in each of the most eminent towns, before they finally settled themselves for life. It was a wise custom; for, as such travellers were received like brethren in each town by those of their own handicraft, they were sure, in every case, to have the means either of gaining or communicating knowledge. When my ancestor returned to Nuremburg, he is said to have found his old master newly dead, and two or three gallant young suitors, some of them half-starved sprigs of nobility forsooth, in pursuit of the *Yung-fraw* Bertha, whose father was understood to have bequeathed her a dowry which might weigh against sixteen armorial quarters. But Bertha, not a bad sample of womankind, had made a vow she would only marry that man who would work her father's press. The skill, at that time, was as rare as wonderful; besides that the expedient rid her at once of most of her *gentle* suitors, who would have as soon wielded a conjuring wand as a composing stick. Some of the more ordinary typographers made the attempt: but none were sufficiently possessed of the mystery—But I tire you."

"By no means; pray, proceed, Mr. Oldbuck—I listen with uncommon interest."

"Ah! it is all folly. However—Aldobrand arrived in the ordinary dress, as we would say, of a journeyman printer—the same in which he had traversed Germany, and conversed with Luther, Melancthon, Erasmus, and other learned men, who disdained not his knowledge, and the power he possessed of diffusing it, though hid under a garb so homely. But what appeared respectable in the eyes of wisdom, religion, learning, and philosophy, seemed mean, as might readily be supposed, and disgusting, in those of silly and affected womankind, and Bertha refused to acknowledge her former lover, in the torn doublet, skin cap, clouted shoes, and leathern apron, of a travelling handicraftsman or mechanic. He claimed his privilege, however, of being admitted to a trial; and when the rest of the suitors had either declined the contest, or made such work as the devil could not read if his pardon depended on it, all eyes were bent on the stranger. Aldobrand stepped gracefully forward, arranged the types without omission of a single letter, hyphen, or comma, imposed them without deranging a single space, and pulled off the first proof as clear and free from errors, as if it had been a triple revise! All applauded the worthy successor of the immortal Faustus—the blushing maiden acknowledged her error in trusting to the eye more than the intellect—and the elected bridegroom thenceforward chose for his impress or device the appropriate words, *Skill wins favour*."—But what is the matter with you?—you are in a brown study! Come, I told you this was but trumpery conversation for thinking people—and now I have my hand on the Ossianic Controversy."

"I beg your pardon," said Lovel; "I am going to appear very silly and changeable in your eyes, Mr. Oldbuck—but you seemed to think Sir Arthur might in civility expect a call from me?"

"Psha! psha! I can make your apology; and if you must leave us so soon as you say, what signifies how you stand in his honours good graces?—And I warn you that the Essay on Castrametation is something prolix, and will occupy the time we can spare after dinner, so you may lose the Ossianic Controversy if we do not dedicate this morning to it. We will go out to my ever-green bower, my sacred holly-tree yonder, and have it *fronde super viridi*.

Sing heigh-ho! heigh-ho! for the green holly,

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

But, egad," continued the old gentleman, "when I look closer at you, I begin to think you may be of a different opinion. Amen with all my heart—I quarrel with no man's hobby, if he does not run it a tilt against mine, and if he does—let him beware his eyes. What say you?—in the language of the world and worldlings base, if you can condescend to so mean a sphere, shall we stay or go?"

"In the language of selfishness, then, which is of course the language of the world—let us go by all means."

"Amen, amen, quo' the Earl Marshall," answered Oldbuck, as he exchanged his slippers for a pair of stout walking shoes, with *cutikins*, as he called them, of black cloth. He only interrupted the walk by a slight deviation to the tomb of John o' the Girnle, remembered as the last bailiff of the abbey who had resided at Monkbarns. Beneath an old oak-tree upon a hillock, sloping pleasantly to the south, and catching a distant view of the sea over two or three rich enclosures, and the Mussel-crag, lay a moss-grown stone, and, in memory of the departed worthy, it bore an inscription, of which, as Mr. Oldbuck affirmed (though many doubted), the defaced characters could be distinctly traced to the following effect:—

Here lyeth John o' ye Girnlell;

Erth has ye nit, and heuen ye kinnell.

In hys tyme ilk wyfe's hennis clokit,

Ilka gud mann's herth wi' bairnis was stokit.

He deled a boll o' bear in firlottis fyve,

Four for ye halie kirke, and ane for puir menn's wyvis.

"You see how modest the author of this sepulchral commendation was;—he tells us that honest John could make five firlots, or quarters, as you would say, out of the boll, instead of four,—that he gave the fifth to the wives of the parish, and accounted for the other four to the abbot and CHAPTER—that in his time the wives' hens always laid eggs—and devil thank them, if they got one-fifth of the abbey rents; and that honest men's hearths were never unblest with offspring—an addition to the miracle, which they, as well as I, must have considered as perfectly unaccountable. But come on—leave we Jock o' the Girnle, and let us jog on to the yellow sands, where the sea, like a repulsed enemy, is now retreating from the ground on which he gave us battle last night."

Thus saying, he led the way to the sands. Upon the links or downs close to them, were seen four or five huts inhabited by fishers, whose boats, drawn high upon the beach, lent the odoriferous vapours of pitch melting under a burning sun, to contend with those of the offals of fish and other nuisances usually collected round Scottish cottages. Undisturbed by these complicated steams of abomination, a middle-aged woman, with a face which had defied a thousand storms, sat mending a net at the door of one of the cottages. A handkerchief close bound about her head, and a coat which had formerly been that of a man, gave her a masculine air, which was increased by her strength, uncommon stature, and harsh voice. "What are ye for the day, your honour?" she said, or rather screamed, to Oldbuck; "caller haddocks and whittings—a bannock-fluke and a cock-padle."

"How much for the bannock-fluke and cock-padle?" demanded the Antiquary.

"Four white shillings and saxepece," answered the Naiad.

"Four devils and six of their imps!" retorted the Antiquary; "do you think I am mad, Maggie?"

"And div ye think," rejoined the virago, setting her arms akimbo, "that my man and my sons are to gae to the sea in weather like yestreen and the day—sic a sea as it's yet outby—and get naething for their fish, and be misca'd into the bargain, Monkbarns? It's no fish ye're buying—it's men's lives."

"Well, Maggie, I'll bid you fair—I'll bid you a shilling for the fluke and the cock-padle, or sixpence separately—and if all your fish are as well paid, I think your man, as you call him, and your sons, will make a good voyage."

"Deil gin their boat were knockit against the Bell-Rock rather! it wad be better, and the bonnier voyage o' the twa. A shilling for thae twa bonnie fish! Od, that's ane indeed!"

"Well, well, you old beldam, carry your fish up to Monkbarns, and see what my sister will give you for them."

"Na, na, Monkbarns, deil a fit—I'll rather deal wi' yoursell; for though you're near enough, yet Miss Grizel has an unco close grip—I'll gie ye them" (in a softened tone) "for three-and-saxepece."

"Eighteen-pence, or nothing!"

"Eighteen-pence!!!" (in a loud tone of astonishment, which declined into a sort of rueful whine, when the dealer turned as if to walk away)—"Yell no be for the fish then?"—(then louder, as she saw him moving off)—"I'll gie ye them—and—and—and a half-a-dozen o' partans to make the sauce, for three shillings and a dram."

"Half-a-crown then, Maggie, and a dram."

"Aweel, your honour maun hae't your ain gate, nae doubt; but a dram's worth siller now—the distilleries is no working."

"And I hope they'll never work again in my time," said Oldbuck.

"Ay, ay—it's easy for your honour, and the like o' you gentle-folks to say sae, that hae stouth and routh, and fire and fending and meat and claith, and sit dry and canny by the fireside—but an ye wanted fire, and meat, and dry claes, and were deeing o' cauld, and had a sair heart, whilk is warst ava', wi' just tippence in your pouch, wadna ye be glad to buy a dram wi't, to be eiding and claes, and a supper and heart's ease into the bargain, till the morn's morning?"

"It's even too true an apology, Maggie. Is your goodman off to sea this morning, after his exertions last night?"

"In troth is he, Monkbarns; he was awa this morning by four o'clock, when the sea was working like barm wi' yestreen's wind, and our bit coble dancing in't like a cork."

"Well, he's an industrious fellow. Carry the fish up to Monkbarns."

"That I will—or I'll send little Jenny, she'll rin faster; but I'll ca' on Miss Grizy for the dram mysell, and say ye sent me."

A nondescript animal, which might have passed for a mermaid, as it was paddling in a pool among the rocks, was summoned ashore by the shrill screams of its dam; and having been made decent, as her mother called it, which was performed by adding a short red cloak to a petticoat, which was at first her sole covering, and which reached scantily below her knee, the child was dismissed with the fish in a basket, and a request on the part of Monkbarns that they might be prepared for dinner. "It would have been long," said Oldbuck, with much self-complacency, "ere my womankind could have made such a reasonable bargain with that old skin-flint, though they sometimes wrangle with her for an hour together under my study window, like three sea-gulls screaming and sputtering in a gale of wind. But come, wend we on our way to Knockwinnock."

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

*Beggar?—the only freeman of your commonwealth;
Free above Scot-free, that observe no laws,
Obey no governor, use no religion
But what they draw from their own ancient custom,
Or constitute themselves, yet they are no rebels.
Brome.*

With our reader's permission, we will outstep the slow, though sturdy pace of the Antiquary, whose halts, as he, turned round to his companion at every moment to point out something remarkable in the landscape, or to enforce some favourite topic more emphatically than the exercise of walking permitted, delayed their progress considerably.

Notwithstanding the fatigues and dangers of the preceding evening, Miss Wardour was able to rise at her usual hour, and to apply herself to her usual occupations, after she had first satisfied her anxiety concerning her father's state of health. Sir Arthur was no farther indisposed than by the effects of great agitation and unusual fatigue, but these were sufficient to induce him to keep his bedchamber.

To look back on the events of the preceding day, was, to Isabella, a very displeasing retrospect. She owed her life, and that of her father, to the very person by whom, of all others, she wished least to be obliged, because she could hardly even express common gratitude towards him without encouraging hopes which might be injurious to them both. "Why should it be my fate to receive such benefits, and conferred at so much personal risk, from one whose romantic passion I have so unceasingly laboured to discourage? Why should chance have given him this advantage over me? and why, oh why, should a half-subdued feeling in my own bosom, in spite of my sober reason, almost rejoice that he has attained it?"

While Miss Wardour thus taxed herself with wayward caprice, she, beheld advancing down the avenue, not her younger and more dreaded preserver, but the old beggar who had made such a capital figure in the melodrama of the preceding evening.

She rang the bell for her maid-servant. "Bring the old man up stairs."

The servant returned in a minute or two—"He will come up at no rate, madam;—he says his clouted shoes never were on a carpet in his life, and that, please God, they never shall.—Must I take him into the servants' hall?"

"No; stay, I want to speak with him—Where is he?" for she had lost sight of him as he approached the house.

"Sitting in the sun on the stone-bench in the court, beside the window of the flagged parlour."

"Bid him stay there—I'll come down to the parlour, and speak with him at the window."

She came down accordingly, and found the mendicant half-seated, half-reclining, upon the bench beside the window. Edie Ochiltree, old man and beggar as he was, had apparently some internal consciousness of the favourable, impressions connected with his tall form, commanding features, and long white beard and hair. It used to be remarked of him, that he was seldom seen but in a posture which showed these personal attributes to advantage. At present, as he lay half-reclined, with his wrinkled yet ruddy cheek, and keen grey eye turned up towards the sky, his staff and bag laid beside him, and a cast of homely wisdom and sarcastic irony in the expression of his countenance, while he gazed for a moment around the court-yard, and then resumed his former look upward, he might

have been taken by an artist as the model of an old philosopher of the Cynic school, musing upon the frivolity of mortal pursuits, and the precarious tenure of human possessions, and looking up to the source from which aught permanently good can alone be derived. The young lady, as she presented her tall and elegant figure at the open window, but divided from the court-yard by a grating, with which, according to the fashion of ancient times, the lower windows of the castle were secured, gave an interest of a different kind, and might be supposed, by a romantic imagination, an imprisoned damsel communicating a tale of her duration to a palmer, in order that he might call upon the gallantry of every knight whom he should meet in his wanderings, to rescue her from her oppressive thralldom.

After Miss Wardour had offered, in the terms she thought would be most acceptable, those thanks which the beggar declined as far beyond his merit, she began to express herself in a manner which she supposed would speak more feelingly to his apprehension. "She did not know," she said, "what her father intended particularly to do for their preserver, but certainly it would be something that would make him easy for life; if he chose to reside at the castle, she would give orders"—

The old man smiled, and shook his head. "I wad be baith a grievance and a disgrace to your fine servants, my leddy, and I have never been a disgrace to onybody yet, that I ken of."

"Sir Arthur would give strict orders"—

"Ye're very kind—I doubtna, I doubtna; but there are some things a master can command, and some he canna—I daresay he wad gar them keep hands aff me—(and troth, I think they wad hardly venture on that ony gate)—and he wad gar them gie me my soup parritch and bit meat. But trow ye that Sir Arthur's command could forbid the gibe o' the tongue or the blink o' the ee, or gar them gie me my food wi' the look o' kindness that gars it digest sae weel, or that he could make them forbear a' the slights and taunts that hurt ane's spirit mair nor downright misca'ing?—Besides, I am the idlest auld carle that ever lived; I downa be bound down to hours o' eating and sleeping; and, to speak the honest truth, I wad be a very bad example in ony weel regulated family."

"Well, then, Edie, what do you think of a neat cottage and a garden, and a daily dole, and nothing to do but to dig a little in your garden when you pleased yourself?"

"And how often wad that be, trow ye, my leddy? maybe no ance atween Candlemas and Yule and if a' thing were done to my hand, as if I was Sir Arthur himsell, I could never bide the staying still in ae place, and just seeing the same joists and couples aboon my head night after night.—And then I have a queer humour o' my ain, that sets a strolling beggar weel enough, whase word naebody minds—but ye ken Sir Arthur has odd sort o' ways—and I wad be jesting or scorning at them—and ye wad be angry, and then I wad be just fit to hang mysell."

"O, you are a licensed man," said Isabella; "we shall give you all reasonable scope: So you had better be ruled, and remember your age."

"But I am no that sair failed yet," replied the mendicant. "Od, ance I gat a wee souped yestreen, I was as yauld as an eel. And then what wad a' the country about do for want o' auld Edie Ochiltree, that brings news and country cracks frae ae farm-steading to anither, and gingerbread to the lasses, and helps the lads to mend their fiddles, and the gudewives to clout their pans, and plaits rush-swords and grenadier caps for the weans, and busks the laird's flees, and has skill o' cow-ills and horse-ills, and kens mair auld sangs and tales than a' the barony besides, and gars ilka body laugh wherever he comes? Troth, my leddy, I canna lay down my vocation; it would be a public loss."

"Well, Edie, if your idea of your importance is so strong as not to be shaken by the prospect of independence"—

"Na, na, Miss—it's because I am mair independent as I am," answered the old man; "I beg nae mair at ony single house than a meal o' meat, or maybe but a mouthfou o't—if it's refused at ae place, I get it at anither—sae I canna be said to depend on onybody in particular, but just on the country at large."

"Well, then, only promise me that you will let me know should you ever wish to settle as you turn old, and more incapable of making your usual rounds; and, in the meantime, take this."

"Na, na, my leddy: I downa take muckle siller at ance—it's against our rule; and—though it's maybe no civil to be repeating the like o' that—they say that siller's like to be scarce wi' Sir Arthur himsell, and that he's run himsell out o' thought wi' his honkings and minings for lead and copper yonder."

Isabella had some anxious anticipations to the same effect, but was shocked to hear that her father's embarrassments were such public talk; as if scandal ever failed to stoop upon so acceptable a quarry as the failings of the good man, the decline of the powerful, or the decay of the prosperous.—Miss Wardour sighed deeply—"Well, Edie, we have enough to pay our debts, let folks say what they will, and requiting you is one of the foremost—let me press this sum upon you."

"That I might be robbed and murdered some night between town and town? or, what's as bad, that I might live in constant apprehension o't?—I am no"—(lowering his voice to a whisper, and looking keenly around him)—"I am no that clean unprovided for neither; and though I should die at the back of a dyke, they'll find as muckle quilted in this auld blue gown as will bury me like a Christian, and gie the lads and lasses a blythe lykwake too; sae there's the gaberlunzie's burial provided for, and I need nae mair. Were the like o' me ever to change a note, wha the deil d'ye think wad be sic fules as to gie me charity after that?—it wad flee through the country like wildfire, that auld Edie suld hae done siccan a like thing, and then, I'se warrant, I might grane my heart out or onybody wad gie me either a bane or a bodle."

"Is there nothing, then, that I can do for you?"

"Ou ay—I'll aye come for my awmous as usual,—and whiles I wad be fain o' a pickle sneeshin, and ye maun speak to the constable and ground-officer just to owerlook me; and maybe ye'll gie a gude word for me to Sandie Netherstanes, the miller, that he may chain up his muckle dog—I wadna hae him to hurt the puir beast, for it just does its office in barking at a gaberlunzie like me. And there's ae thing maybe mair,—but ye'll think it's very bald o' the like o' me to speak o't."

"What is it, Edie?—if it respects you it shall be done if it is in my power."

"It respects yoursell, and it is in your power, and I maun come out wi't. Ye are a bonny young leddy, and a gude ane, and maybe a weel-tochered ane—but dinna ye sneer awa the lad Lovel, as ye did a while sinsyne on the walk beneath the Briery-bank, when I saw ye baith, and heard ye too, though ye saw nae me. Be canny wi' the lad, for he loes ye weel, and it's to him, and no to anything I could hae done for you, that Sir Arthur and you wan ower yestreen."

He uttered these words in a low but distinct tone of voice; and without waiting for an answer, walked towards a low door which led to the apartments of the servants, and so entered the house.

Miss Wardour remained for a moment or two in the situation in which she had heard the old man's last extraordinary speech, leaning, namely, against the bars of the window; nor could she determine upon saying even a single word, relative to a subject so delicate, until the beggar was out of sight. It was, indeed, difficult to determine what to do. That her having had an interview and private conversation with this young and unknown stranger, should be a secret possessed by a person of the last class in which a young lady would seek a confidant, and at the mercy of one who was by profession gossip-general to the whole neighbourhood, gave her acute agony. She had no reason, indeed, to suppose that the old man would wilfully do anything to hurt her feelings, much less to injure her; but the mere freedom of speaking to her upon such a subject, showed, as might have been expected, a total absence of delicacy; and what he might take it into his head to do or say next, that she was pretty sure so professed an admirer of liberty would not hesitate to do or say without scruple. This idea so much hurt and vexed her, that she half-wished the officious assistance of Lovel and Ochiltree had been absent upon the preceding evening.

While she was in this agitation of spirits, she suddenly observed Oldbuck and Lovel entering the court. She drew instantly so far back from the window, that she could without being seen, observe how the Antiquary paused in front of the building, and pointing to the various scutcheons of its former owners, seemed in the act of bestowing upon Lovel much curious and erudite information, which, from the absent look of his auditor, Isabella might shrewdly guess was entirely thrown away. The necessity that she should take some resolution became instant and pressing;—she rang, therefore, for a servant, and ordered him to show the visitors to the drawing-room, while she, by another staircase, gained her own apartment, to consider, ere she made her appearance, what line of conduct were fittest for her to pursue. The guests, agreeably to her instructions, were introduced into the room where company was usually received.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

—The time was that I hated thee,
And yet it is not that I bear thee love.
Thy company, which erst was irksome to me,
I will endure—
But do not look for further recompense.
As You Like It.

Miss Isabella Wardour's complexion was considerably heightened, when, after the delay necessary to arrange her ideas, she presented herself in the drawing-room.

"I am glad you are come, my fair foe," said the Antiquary greeting her with much kindness, "for I have had a most refractory, or at least negligent auditor, in my young friend here, while I endeavoured to make him acquainted with the history of Knockwinnock Castle. I think the danger of last night has mazed the poor lad. But you, Miss Isabel,—why, you look as if flying through the night air had been your natural and most congenial occupation; your colour is even better than when you honoured my *hospitium* yesterday. And Sir Arthur—how fares my good old friend?"

"Indifferently well, Mr. Oldbuck; but I am afraid, not quite able to receive your congratulations, or to pay—to pay—Mr. Lovel his thanks for his unparalleled exertions."

"I dare say not—A good down pillow for his good white head were more meet than a couch so churlish as Bessy's-apron, plague on her!"

"I had no thought of intruding," said Lovel, looking upon the ground, and speaking with hesitation and suppressed emotion; "I did not—did not mean to intrude upon Sir Arthur or Miss Wardour the presence of one who—who must necessarily be unwelcome—as associated, I mean, with painful reflections."

"Do not think my father so unjust and ungrateful," said Miss Wardour. "I dare say," she continued, participating in Lovel's embarrassment—"I dare say—I am certain—that my father would be happy to show his gratitude—in any way—that is, which Mr. Lovel could consider it as proper to point out."

"Why the deuce," interrupted Oldbuck, "what sort of a qualification is that?—On my word, it reminds me of our minister, who, choosing, like a formal old fop as he is, to drink to my sister's inclinations, thought it necessary to add the saving clause, Provided, madam, they be virtuous. Come, let us have no more of this nonsense—I dare say Sir Arthur will bid us welcome on some future day. And what news from the kingdom of subterranean darkness and airy hope?—What says the swart spirit of the mine? Has Sir Arthur had any good intelligence of his adventure lately in Glen-Withershins?"

Miss Wardour shook her head—"But indifferent, I fear, Mr. Oldbuck; but there lie some specimens which have lately been sent down."

"Ah! my poor dear hundred pounds, which Sir Arthur persuaded me to give for a share in that hopeful scheme, would have bought a porter's load of mineralogy—But let me see them."

And so saying, he sat down at the table in the recess, on which the mineral productions were lying, and proceeded to examine them, grumbling and pshawing at each which he took up and laid aside.

In the meantime, Lovel, forced as it were by this secession of Oldbuck, into a sort of *tete-a-tete* with Miss Wardour, took an opportunity of addressing her in a low and interrupted tone of voice. "I trust Miss Wardour will impute, to circumstances almost irresistible, this intrusion of a person who has reason to think himself—so unacceptable a visitor."

"Mr. Lovel," answered Miss Wardour, observing the same tone of caution, "I trust you will not—I am sure you are incapable of abusing the advantages given to you by the services you have rendered us, which, as they affect my father, can never be sufficiently acknowledged or repaid. Could Mr. Lovel see me without his own peace being affected—could he see me as a friend—as a sister—no man will be—and, from all I have ever heard of Mr. Lovel, ought to be, more welcome but"—

Oldbuck's anathema against the preposition *but* was internally echoed by Lovel. "Forgive me if I interrupt you, Miss Wardour; you need not fear my intruding upon a subject where I have been already severely repressed;—but do not add to the severity of repelling my sentiments the rigour of obliging me to disavow them."

"I am much embarrassed, Mr. Lovel," replied the young lady, "by your—I would not willingly use a strong word—your romantic and hopeless pertinacity. It is for yourself I plead, that you would consider the calls which your country has upon your talents—that you will not waste, in an idle and fanciful indulgence of an ill-placed predilection, time, which, well redeemed by active exertion, should lay the foundation of future distinction. Let me entreat that you would form a manly resolution"—

"It is enough, Miss Wardour;—I see plainly that"—

"Mr. Lovel, you are hurt—and, believe me, I sympathize in the pain which I inflict; but can I, in justice to myself, in fairness to you, do otherwise? Without my father's consent, I never will entertain the addresses of any one, and how totally impossible it is that he should countenance the partiality with which you honour me, you are yourself fully aware; and, indeed"—

"No, Miss Wardour," answered Lovel, in a tone of passionate entreaty; "do not go farther—is it not enough to crush every hope in our present relative situation?—do not carry your resolutions farther—why urge what would be your conduct if Sir Arthur's objections could be removed?"

"It is indeed vain, Mr. Lovel," said Miss Wardour, "because their removal is impossible; and I only wish, as your friend, and as one who is obliged to you for her own and her father's life, to entreat you to suppress this unfortunate attachment—to leave a country which affords no scope for your talents, and to resume the honourable line of the profession which you seem to have abandoned."

"Well, Miss Wardour, your wishes shall be obeyed;—have patience with me one little month, and if, in the course of that space, I cannot show you such reasons for continuing my residence at Fairport, as even you shall approve of, I will bid adieu to its vicinity, and, with the same breath, to all my hopes of happiness."

"Not so, Mr. Lovel; many years of deserved happiness, founded on a more rational basis than your present wishes, are, I trust, before you. But it is full time, to finish this conversation. I cannot force you to adopt my advice—I cannot shut the door of my father's house against the preserver of his life and mine; but the sooner Mr. Lovel can teach his mind to submit to the inevitable disappointment of wishes which have been so rashly formed, the more highly he will rise in my esteem—and, in the meanwhile, for his sake as well as mine, he must excuse my putting an interdict upon conversation on a subject so painful."

A servant at this moment announced that Sir Arthur desired to speak to Mr. Oldbuck in his dressing-room.

"Let me show you the way," said Miss Wardour, who apparently dreaded a continuation of her *tete-a-tete* with Lovel, and she conducted the Antiquary accordingly to her father's apartment.

Sir Arthur, his legs swathed in flannel, was stretched on the couch. "Welcome, Mr. Oldbuck," he said; "I trust you have come better off than I have done from the inclemency of yesterday evening?"

"Truly, Sir Arthur, I was not so much exposed to it—I kept *terra firma*—you fairly committed yourself to the cold night-air in the most literal of all senses. But such adventures become a gallant knight better than a humble esquire,—to rise on the wings of the night-wind—to dive into the bowels of the earth. What news from our subterranean Good Hope!—the *terra incognita* of Glen-Withershins?"

"Nothing good as yet," said the Baronet, turning himself hastily, as if stung by a pang of the gout; "but Dousterswivel does not despair."

"Does he not?" quoth Oldbuck; "I do though, under his favour. Why, old Dr. H—n told me, when I was in Edinburgh, that we should never find copper enough, judging from the specimens I showed him, to make a pair of sixpenny knee-buckles—and I cannot see that those samples on the table below differ much in quality."

* Probably Dr. Hutton, the celebrated geologist.

"The learned doctor is not infallible, I presume?"

"No; but he is one of our first chemists; and this tramping philosopher of yours—this Dousterswivel—is, I have a notion, one, of those learned adventurers described by Kirchner, *Artem habent sine arte, partem sine parte, quorum medium est mentiri, vita eorum mendicatum ire*; that is to say, Miss Wardour"—

"It is unnecessary to translate," said Miss Wardour—"I comprehend your general meaning; but I hope Mr. Dousterswivel will turn out a more trustworthy character."

"I doubt it not a little," said the Antiquary,— "and we are a foul way out if we cannot discover this infernal vein that he has prophesied about these two years."

"You have no great interest in the matter, Mr. Oldbuck," said the Baronet.

"Too much, too much, Sir Arthur; and yet, for the sake of my fair foe here, I would consent to lose it all so you had no more on the venture."

There was a painful silence of a few moments, for Sir Arthur was too proud to acknowledge the downfall of his golden dreams, though he could no longer disguise to himself that such was likely to be the termination of the adventure. "I understand," he at length said, "that the young gentleman, to whose gallantry and presence of mind we were so much indebted last night, has favoured me with a visit—I am distressed that I am unable to see him, or indeed any one, but an old friend like you, Mr. Oldbuck."

A declination of the Antiquary's stiff backbone acknowledged the preference.

"You made acquaintance with this young gentleman in Edinburgh, I suppose?"

Oldbuck told the circumstances of their becoming known to each other.

"Why, then, my daughter is an older acquaintance, of Mr. Lovel than you are," said the Baronet.

"Indeed! I was not aware of that," answered Oldbuck somewhat surprised.

"I met Mr. Lovel," said Isabella, slightly colouring, "when I resided this last spring with my aunt, Mrs. Wilmot."

"In Yorkshire?—and what character did he bear then, or how was he engaged?" said Oldbuck,— "and why did not you recognise him when I introduced you?"

Isabella answered the least difficult question, and passed over the other—"He had a commission in the army, and had, I believe, served with reputation; he was much respected, as an amiable and promising young man."

"And pray, such being the case," replied the Antiquary, not disposed to take one reply in answer to two distinct questions, "why did you not speak to the lad at once when you met him at my house? I thought you had less of the paltry pride of womankind about you, Miss Wardour."

"There was a reason for it," said Sir Arthur with dignity; "you know the opinions—prejudices, perhaps you will call them—of our house concerning purity of birth. This young gentleman is, it seems, the illegitimate son of a man of fortune; my daughter did not choose to renew their acquaintance till she should know whether I approved of her holding any intercourse with him."

"If it had been with his mother instead of himself," answered Oldbuck, with his usual dry causticity of humour, "I could see an excellent reason for it. Ah, poor lad! that was the cause, then, that he seemed so absent and confused while I explained to him the reason of the bend of bastardy upon the shield yonder under the corner turret!"

"True," said the Baronet, with complacency—"it is the shield of Malcolm the Usurper, as he is called. The tower which he built is termed, after him, Malcolm's Tower, but more frequently Misticot's Tower, which I conceive to be a corruption for *Misbegot*. He is denominated, in the Latin pedigree of our family, *Milcolumbus Nothus*; and his temporary seizure of our property, and most unjust attempt to establish his own illegitimate line in the estate of Knockwinnock, gave rise to such family feuds and misfortunes, as strongly to found us in that horror and antipathy to defiled blood and illegitimacy which has been handed down to me from my respected ancestry."

"I know the story," said Oldbuck, "and I was telling it to Lovel this moment, with some of the wise maxims and consequences which it has engrafted on your family politics. Poor fellow! he must have been much hurt: I took the wavering of his attention for negligence, and was something piqued at it, and it proves to be only an excess of feeling. I hope, Sir Arthur, you will not think the less of your life because it has been preserved by such assistance?"

"Nor the less of my assistant either," said the Baronet; "my doors and table shall be equally open to him as if he had descended of the most unblemished lineage."

"Come, I am glad of that—he'll know where he can get a dinner, then, if he wants one. But what views can he have in this neighbourhood? I must catechise him; and if I find he wants it—or, indeed, whether he does or not—he shall have my best advice." As the Antiquary made this liberal promise, he took his leave of Miss Wardour and her father, eager to commence operations upon Mr. Lovel. He informed him abruptly that Miss Wardour sent her compliments, and remained in attendance on her father, and then, taking him by the arm, he led him out of the castle.

Knockwinnock still preserved much of the external attributes of a baronial castle. It had its drawbridge, though now never drawn up, and its dry moat, the sides of which had been planted with shrubs, chiefly of the evergreen tribes. Above these rose the old building, partly from a foundation of red rock scarped down to the sea-beach, and partly from the steep green verge of the moat. The trees of the avenue have been already mentioned, and many others rose around of large size,—as if to confute the prejudice that timber cannot be raised near to the ocean. Our walkers paused, and looked back upon the castle, as they attained the height of a small knoll, over which lay their homeward road; for it is to be supposed they did not tempt the risk of the tide by returning along the sands. The building flung its broad shadow upon the tufted foliage of the shrubs beneath it, while the front windows sparkled in the sun. They were viewed by the gazers with very different feelings. Lovel, with the fond eagerness of that passion which derives its food and nourishment from trifles, as the chameleon is said to live on the air, or upon the invisible insects which it contains, endeavoured to conjecture which of the numerous windows belonged to the apartment now graced by Miss Wardour's presence. The speculations of the Antiquary were of a more melancholy cast, and were partly indicated by the ejaculation of *cito peritura!* as he turned away from the prospect. Lovel, roused from his reverie, looked at him as if to inquire the meaning of an exclamation so ominous. The old man shook his head.

"Yes, my young friend," said he, "I doubt greatly—and it wrings my heart to say it—this ancient family is going fast to the ground!"

"Indeed!" answered Lovel—"you surprise me greatly."

"We harden ourselves in vain," continued the Antiquary, pursuing his own train of thought and feeling—"we harden ourselves in vain to treat with the indifference they deserve, the changes of this trumpery whirligig world. We strive ineffectually to be the self-sufficing invulnerable being, the *teres atque rotundus* of the poet;—the stoical exemption which philosophy affects to give us over the pains and vexations of human life, is as imaginary as the state of mystical quietism and perfection aimed at by some crazy enthusiasts."

"And Heaven forbid that it should be otherwise!" said Lovel, warmly—"Heaven forbid that any process of philosophy were capable so to sear and indurate our feelings, that nothing should agitate them but what arose instantly and immediately out of our own selfish interests! I would as soon wish my hand to be as callous as horn, that it might escape an occasional cut or scratch, as I would be ambitious of the stoicism which should render my heart like a piece of the nether millstone."

The Antiquary regarded his youthful companion with a look half of pity, half of sympathy, and shrugged up his shoulders as he replied—"Wait, young man—wait till your bark has been battered by the storm of sixty years of mortal vicissitude: you will learn by that time, to reef your sails, that she may obey the helm;—or, in the language of this world, you will find distresses enough, endured and to endure, to keep your feelings and sympathies in full exercise, without concerning yourself more in the fate of others than you cannot possibly avoid."

"Well, Mr. Oldbuck, it may be so;—but as yet I resemble you more in your practice than in your theory, for I cannot help being deeply interested in the fate of the family we have just left."

"And well you may," replied Oldbuck. "Sir Arthur's embarrassments have of late become so many and so pressing, that I am surprised you have not heard of them. And then his absurd and expensive operations carried on by this High-German landlouser, Dousterswivel!"—

"I think I have seen that person, when, by some rare chance, I happened to be in the coffee-room at Fairport;—a tall, beetle-browed, awkward-built man, who entered upon scientific subjects, as it appeared to my ignorance at least, with more assurance than knowledge—was very arbitrary in laying down and asserting his opinions, and mixed the terms of science with a strange jargon of mysticism. A simple youth whispered me that he was an *Illumine'*, and carried on an intercourse with the invisible world."

"O, the same—the same. He has enough of practical knowledge to speak scholarly and wisely to those of whose intelligence he stands in awe; and, to say the truth, this faculty, joined to his matchless impudence, imposed upon me for some time when I first knew him. But I have since understood, that when he is among fools and womankind, he exhibits himself as a perfect charlatan—talks of the *magisterium*—of sympathies and antipathies—of the cabala—of the divining-rod—and all the trumpery with which the Rosicrucians cheated a darker age, and which, to our eternal disgrace, has in some degree revived in our own. My friend Heavysterne knew this fellow abroad, and unintentionally (for he, you must know, is, God bless the mark! a sort of believer) let me into a good deal of his real character. Ah! were I caliph for a day, as Honest Abon Hassan wished to be, I would scourge me these jugglers out of the commonwealth with rods of scorpions. They debauch the spirit of the ignorant and credulous with mystical trash, as effectually as if they had besotted their brains with gin, and then pick their pockets with the same facility. And now has this strolling blackguard and mountebank put the finishing blow to the ruin of an ancient and honourable family!"

"But how could he impose upon Sir Arthur to any ruinous extent?"

"Why, I don't know. Sir Arthur is a good honourable gentleman; but, as you may see from his loose ideas concerning the Pikish language, he is by no means very strong in the understanding. His estate is strictly entailed, and he has been always an embarrassed man. This rapparee promised him mountains of wealth, and an English company was found to advance large sums of money—I fear on Sir Arthur's guarantee. Some gentlemen—I was ass enough to be one—took small shares in the concern, and Sir Arthur himself made great outlay; we were trained on by specious appearances and more specious lies; and now, like John Bunyan, we awake, and behold it is a dream!"

"I am surprised that you, Mr. Oldbuck, should have encouraged Sir Arthur by your example."

"Why," said Oldbuck, dropping his large grizzled eyebrow, "I am something surprised and ashamed at it myself; it was not the lucre of gain—nobody cares less for money (to be a prudent man) than I do—but I thought I might risk this small sum. It will be expected (though I am sure I cannot see why) that I should give something to any one who will be kind enough to rid me of that slip of womankind, my niece, Mary M'Intyre; and perhaps it may be thought I should do something to get that jackanapes, her brother, on in the army. In either case, to treble my venture, would have helped me out. And besides, I had some idea that the Phoenicians had in former times wrought copper in that very spot. That cunning scoundrel, Dousterswivel, found out my blunt side, and brought strange tales (d—n him) of appearances of old shafts, and vestiges of mining operations, conducted in a manner quite different from those of modern times; and I—in short, I was a fool, and there is an end. My loss is not much worth speaking about; but Sir Arthur's engagements are, I understand, very deep, and my heart aches for him and the poor young lady who must share his distress."

Here the conversation paused, until renewed in the next CHAPTER.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

*If I may trust the flattering eye of sleep,
My dreams presage some joyful news at hand:
My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne,
And all this day, an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.
Romeo and Juliet.*

The account of Sir Arthur's unhappy adventure had led Oldbuck somewhat aside from his purpose of catechising Lovel concerning the cause of his residence at Fairport. He was now, however, resolved to open the subject. "Miss Wardour was formerly known to you, she tells me, Mr. Lovel?"

"He had had the pleasure," Lovel answered, "to see her at Mrs. Wilmot's, in Yorkshire."

"Indeed! you never mentioned that to me before, and you did not accost her as an old acquaintance."

"I—I did not know," said Lovel, a good deal embarrassed, "it was the same lady, till we met; and then it was my duty to wait till she should recognise me."

"I am aware of your delicacy: the knight's a punctilious old fool, but I promise you his daughter is above all nonsensical ceremony and prejudice. And now, since you have, found a new set of friends here, may I ask if you intend to leave Fairport as soon as you proposed?"

"What if I should answer your question by another," replied Lovel, "and ask you what is your opinion of dreams?"

"Of dreams, you foolish lad!—why, what should I think of them but as the deceptions of imagination when reason drops the reins? I know no difference betwixt them and the hallucinations of madness—the unguided horses run away with the carriage in both cases, only in the one the coachman is drunk, and in the other he slumbers. What says our Marcus Tullius—*Si insanorum visis fides non est habenda, cur credatur somnientium visis, quae multo etiam perturbatiora sunt, non intelligo.*"

"Yes, sir; but Cicero also tells us, that as he who passes the whole day in darting the javelin must sometimes hit the mark, so, amid the cloud of nightly dreams, some may occur consonant to future events."

"Ay—that is to say, *you* have hit the mark in your own sage opinion? Lord! Lord! how this world is given to folly! Well, I will allow for once the Oneirocritical science—I will give faith to the exposition of dreams, and say a Daniel hath arisen to interpret them, if you can prove to me that that dream of yours has pointed to a prudent line of conduct."

"Tell me, then," answered Lovel, "why when I was hesitating whether to abandon an enterprise, which I have perhaps rashly undertaken, I should last night dream I saw your ancestor pointing to a motto which encouraged me to perseverance?—why should I have thought of those words which I cannot remember to have heard before, which are in a language unknown to me, and which yet conveyed, when translated, a lesson which I could so plainly apply to my own circumstances?"

The Antiquary burst into a fit of laughing. "Excuse me, my young friend—but it is thus we silly mortals deceive ourselves, and look out of doors for motives which originate in our own wilful will. I think I can help out the cause of your vision. You were so abstracted in your contemplations yesterday after dinner, as to pay little attention to the discourse between Sir Arthur and me, until we fell upon the controversy concerning the Piks, which terminated so abruptly;—but I remember producing to Sir Arthur a book printed by my ancestor, and making him observe the motto; your mind was bent elsewhere, but your ear had mechanically received and retained the sounds, and your busy fancy, stirred by Grizel's legend I presume, had introduced this scrap of German into your dream. As for the waking wisdom which seized on so frivolous a circumstance as an apology for persevering in some course which it could find no better reason to justify, it is exactly one of those juggling tricks which the sagest of us play off now and then, to gratify our inclination at the expense of our understanding."

"I own it," said Lovel, blushing deeply;—"I believe you are right, Mr. Oldbuck, and I ought to sink in your esteem for attaching a moment's consequence to such a frivolity;—but I was tossed by contradictory wishes and resolutions, and you know how slight a line will tow a boat when afloat on the billows, though a cable would hardly move her when pulled up on the beach."

"Right, right," exclaimed the Antiquary. "Fall in my opinion!—not a whit—I love thee the better, man;—why, we have story for story against each other, and I can think with less shame on having exposed myself about that cursed Praetorium—though I am still convinced Agricola's camp must have been somewhere in this

neighbourhood. And now, Lovel, my good lad, be sincere with me—What make you from Wittenberg?—why have you left your own country and professional pursuits, for an idle residence in such a place as Fairport? A truant disposition, I fear."

"Even so," replied Lovel, patiently submitting to an interrogatory which he could not well evade. "Yet I am so detached from all the world, have so few in whom I am interested, or who are interested in me, that my very state of destitution gives me independence. He whose good or evil fortune affects himself alone, has the best right to pursue it according to his own fancy."

"Pardon me, young man," said Oldbuck, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, and making a full halt—"sufflamina—a little patience, if you please. I will suppose that you have no friends to share or rejoice in your success in life—that you cannot look back to those to whom you owe gratitude, or forward to those to whom you ought to afford protection; but it is no less incumbent on you to move steadily in the path of duty—for your active exertions are due not only to society, but in humble gratitude to the Being who made you a member of it, with powers to serve yourself and others."

"But I am unconscious of possessing such powers," said Lovel, somewhat impatiently. "I ask nothing of society but the permission of walking innocuously through the path of life, without jostling others, or permitting myself to be jostled. I owe no man anything—I have the means of maintaining, myself with complete independence; and so moderate are my wishes in this respect, that even these means, however limited, rather exceed than fall short of them."

"Nay, then," said Oldbuck, removing his hand, and turning again to the road, "if you are so true a philosopher as to think you have money enough, there's no more to be said—I cannot pretend to be entitled to advise you;—you have attained the *acme*'—the summit of perfection. And how came Fairport to be the selected abode of so much self-denying philosophy? It is as if a worshipper of the true religion had set up his staff by choice among the multifarious idolaters of the land of Egypt. There is not a man in Fairport who is not a devoted worshipper of the Golden Calf—the mammon of unrighteousness. Why, even I, man, am so infected by the bad neighbourhood, that I feel inclined occasionally to become an idolater myself."

"My principal amusements being literary," answered Lovel, "and circumstances which I cannot mention having induced me, for a time at least, to relinquish the military service, I have pitched on Fairport as a place where I might follow my pursuits without any of those temptations to society which a more elegant circle might have presented to me."

"Aha!" replied Oldbuck, knowingly,—"I begin to understand your application of my ancestor's motto. You are a candidate for public favour, though not in the way I first suspected,—you are ambitious to shine as a literary character, and you hope to merit favour by labour and perseverance?"

Lovel, who was rather closely pressed by the inquisitiveness of the old gentleman, concluded it would be best to let him remain in the error which he had gratuitously adopted.

"I have been at times foolish enough," he replied, "to nourish some thoughts of the kind."

"Ah, poor fellow! nothing can be more melancholy; unless, as young men sometimes do, you had fancied yourself in love with some trumpery specimen of womankind, which is indeed, as Shakspeare truly says, pressing to death, whipping, and hanging all at once."

He then proceeded with inquiries, which he was sometimes kind enough to answer himself. For this good old gentleman had, from his antiquarian researches, acquired a delight in building theories out of premises which were often far from affording sufficient ground for them; and being, as the reader must have remarked, sufficiently opinionative, he did not readily brook being corrected, either in matter of fact or judgment, even by those who were principally interested in the subjects on which he speculated. He went on, therefore, chalking out Lovel's literary career for him.

"And with what do you propose to commence your debut as a man of letters?—But I guess—poetry—poetry—the soft seducer of youth. Yes! there is an acknowledging modesty of confusion in your eye and manner. And where lies your vein?—are you inclined to soar to the higher regions of Parnassus, or to flutter around the base of the hill?"

"I have hitherto attempted only a few lyrical pieces," said Lovel.

"Just as I supposed—pruning your wing, and hopping from spray to spray. But I trust you intend a bolder flight. Observe, I would by no means recommend your persevering in this unprofitable pursuit—but you say you are quite independent of the public caprice?"

"Entirely so," replied Lovel.

"And that you are determined not to adopt a more active course of life?"

"For the present, such is my resolution," replied the young man.

"Why, then, it only remains for me to give you my best advice and assistance in the object of your pursuit. I have myself published two essays in the Antiquarian Repository,—and therefore am an author of experience, There was my Remarks on Hearne's edition of Robert of Gloucester, signed *Scrutator*; and the other signed *Indagator*, upon a passage in Tacitus. I might add, what attracted considerable notice at the time, and that is my paper in the Gentleman's Magazine, upon the inscription of OElia Lelia, which I subscribed *OEdipus*. So you see I am not an apprentice in the mysteries of author-craft, and must necessarily understand the taste and temper of the times. And now, once more, what do you intend to commence with?"

"I have no instant thoughts of publishing."

"Ah! that will never do; you must have the fear of the public before your eyes in all your undertakings. Let us see now: A collection of fugitive pieces; but no—your fugitive poetry is apt to become stationary with the bookseller. It should be something at once solid and attractive—none of your romances or anomalous novelties—I would have you take high ground at once. Let me see: What think you of a real epic?—the grand old-fashioned historical poem which moved through twelve or twenty-four books. We'll have it so—I'll supply you with a subject—The battle between the Caledonians and Romans—The Caledoniad; or, Invasion Repelled;—let that be the title—it will suit the present taste, and you may throw in a touch of the times."

"But the invasion of Agricola was *not* repelled."

"No; but you are a poet—free of the corporation, and as little bound down to truth or probability as Virgil himself—You may defeat the Romans in spite of Tacitus."

"And pitch Agricola's camp at the Kaim of—what do you call it," answered Lovel, "in defiance of Edie Ochiltree?"

"No more of that, an thou lovest me—And yet, I dare say, ye may unwittingly speak most correct truth in both instances, in despite of the *toga* of the historian and the blue gown of the mendicant."

"Gallantly counselled!—Well, I will do my best—your kindness will assist me with local information."

"Will I not, man?—why, I will write the critical and historical notes on each canto, and draw out the plan of the story myself. I pretend to some poetical genius, Mr. Lovel, only I was never able to write verses."

"It is a pity, sir, that you should have failed in a qualification somewhat essential to the art."

"Essential?—not a whit—it is the mere mechanical department. A man may be a poet without measuring spondee and dactyls like the ancients, or clashing the ends of lines into rhyme like the moderns, as one may be an architect though unable to labour like a stone-mason—Dost think Palladio or Vitruvius ever carried a hod?"

"In that case, there should be two authors to each poem—one to think and plan, another to execute."

"Why, it would not be amiss; at any rate, we'll make the experiment;—not that I would wish to give my name to the public—assistance from a learned friend might be acknowledged in the preface after what flourish your nature will—I am a total stranger to authorial vanity."

Lovel was much entertained by a declaration not very consistent with the eagerness wherewith his friend seemed to catch at an opportunity of coming before the public, though in a manner which rather resembled stepping up behind a carriage than getting into one. The Antiquary was indeed uncommonly delighted; for, like many other men who spend their lives in obscure literary research, he had a secret ambition to appear in print, which was checked by cold fits of diffidence, fear of criticism, and habits of indolence and procrastination. "But," thought he, "I may, like a second Teucer, discharge my shafts from behind the shield of my ally; and, admit that he should not prove to be a first-rate poet, I am in no shape answerable for his deficiencies, and the good notes may very probably help off an indifferent text. But he is—he must be a good poet; he has the real Parnassian abstraction—seldom answers a question till it is twice repeated—drinks his tea

scalding, and eats without knowing what he is putting into his mouth. This is the real *aestus*, the *awen* of the Welsh bards, the *divinus afflatus* that transports the poet beyond the limits of sublunary things. His visions, too, are very symptomatic of poetic fury—I must recollect to send Caxon to see he puts out his candle to-night—poets and visionaries are apt to be negligent in that respect." Then, turning to his companion, he expressed himself aloud in continuation—

"Yes, my dear Lovel, you shall have full notes; and, indeed, think we may introduce the whole of the Essay on Castrametation into the appendix—it will give great value to the work. Then we will revive the good old forms so disgracefully neglected in modern times. You shall invoke the Muse—and certainly she ought to be propitious to an author who, in an apostatizing age, adheres with the faith of Abdiel to the ancient form of adoration.—Then we must have a vision—in which the Genius of Caledonia shall appear to Galgacus, and show him a procession of the real Scottish monarchs:—and in the notes I will have a hit at Boethius—No; I must not touch that topic, now that Sir Arthur is likely to have vexation enough besides—but I'll annihilate Ossian, Macpherson, and Mac-Cribb."

"But we must consider the expense of publication," said Lovel, willing to try whether this hint would fall like cold water on the blazing zeal of his self-elected coadjutor.

"Expense!" said Mr. Oldbuck, pausing, and mechanically fumbling in his pocket—"that is true;—I would wish to do something—but you would not like to publish by subscription?"

"By no means," answered Lovel.

"No, no!" gladly acquiesced the Antiquary—"it is not respectable. I'll tell you what: I believe I know a bookseller who has a value for my opinion, and will risk print and paper, and I will get as many copies sold for you as I can."

"O, I am no mercenary author," answered Lovel, smiling; "I only wish to be out of risk of loss."

"Hush! hush! we'll take care of that—throw it all on the publishers. I do long to see your labours commenced. You will choose blank verse, doubtless?—it is more grand and magnificent for an historical subject; and, what concerneth you, my friend, it is, I have an idea, more easily written."

This conversation brought them to Monkbarns, where the Antiquary had to undergo a chiding from his sister, who, though no philosopher, was waiting to deliver a lecture to him in the portico. "Guide us, Monkbarns! are things no dear enough already, but ye maun be raising the very fish on us, by giving that randy, Luckie Mucklebackit, just what she likes to ask?"

"Why, Grizel," said the sage, somewhat abashed at this unexpected attack, "I thought I made a very fair bargain."

"A fair bargain! when ye gied the limmer a full half o' what she seekit!—An ye will be a wife-carle, and buy fish at your ain hands, ye suld never bid muckle mair than a quarter. And the impudent quean had the assurance to come up and seek a dram—But I trow, Jenny and I sorted her!"

"Truly," said Oldbuck (with a sly look to his companion), "I think our estate was gracious that kept us out of hearing of that controversy.—Well, well, Grizel, I was wrong for once in my life *ultra crepidam*—I fairly admit. But hang expenses!—care killed a cat—we'll eat the fish, cost what it will.—And then, Lovel, you must know I pressed you to stay here to-day, the rather because our cheer will be better than usual, yesterday having been a *gaude' day*—I love the reversion of a feast better than the feast itself. I delight in the *analecta*, the *collectanea*, as I may call them, of the preceding day's dinner, which appear on such occasions—And see, there is Jenny going to ring the dinner-bell."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

Be this letter delivered with haste—haste—post-haste!

Ride, villain, ride,—for thy life—for thy life—for thy life.

Ancient Indorsation of Letters of Importance.

Leaving Mr. Oldbuck and his friend to enjoy their hard bargain of fish, we beg leave to transport the reader to the back-parlour of the post-master's house at Fairport, where his wife, he himself being absent, was employed in assorting for delivery the letters which had come by the Edinburgh post. This is very often in country towns the period of the day when gossips find it particularly agreeable to call on the man or woman of letters, in order, from the outside of the epistles, and, if they are not belied, occasionally from the inside also, to amuse themselves with gleaning information, or forming conjectures about the correspondence and affairs of their neighbours. Two females of this description were, at the time we mention, assisting, or impeding, Mrs. Mailsetter in her official duty.

"Eh, preserve us, sirs!" said the butcher's wife, "there's ten—eleven—twall letters to Tennant and Co.—thae folk do mair business than a' the rest o' the burgh."

"Ay; but see, lass," answered the baker's lady, "there's twa o' them faulded unco square, and sealed at the tae side—I doubt there will be protested bills in them."

"Is there ony letters come yet for Jenny Caxon?" inquired the woman of joints and giblets; "the lieutenant's been awa three weeks."

"Just ane on Tuesday was a week," answered the dame of letters.

"Wast a ship-letter?" asked the Fornerina.

"In troth wast."

"It wad be frae the lieutenant then," replied the mistress of the rolls, somewhat disappointed—"I never thought he wad hae lookit ower his shouther after her."

"Od, here's another," quoth Mrs. Mailsetter. "A ship-letter—post-mark, Sunderland." All rushed to seize it.—"Na, na, leddies," said Mrs. Mailsetter, interfering; "I hae had eneugh o' that wark—Ken ye that Mr. Mailsetter got an unco rebuke frae the secretary at Edinburgh, for a complaint that was made about the letter of Aily Bisset's that ye opened, Mrs. Shortcake?"

"Me opened!" answered the spouse of the chief baker of Fairport; "ye ken yoursell, madam, it just cam open o' free will in my hand—what could I help it?—folk suld seal wi' better wax."

"Weel I wot that's true, too," said Mrs. Mailsetter, who kept a shop of small wares, "and we have got some that I can honestly recommend, if ye ken onybody wanting it. But the short and the lang o't is, that we'll lose the place gin there's ony mair complaints o' the kind."

"Hout, lass—the provost will take care o' that."

"Na, na, I'll neither trust to provost nor bailier" said the postmistress,— "but I wad aye be obliging and neighbourly, and I'm no again your looking at the outside of a letter neither—See, the seal has an anchor on't—he's done't wi' ane o' his buttons, I'm thinking."

"Show me! show me!" quoth the wives of the chief butcher and chief baker; and threw themselves on the supposed love-letter, like the weird sisters in Macbeth upon the pilot's thumb, with curiosity as eager and scarcely less malignant. Mrs. Heukbane was a tall woman—she held the precious epistle up between her eyes and the window. Mrs. Shortcake, a little squat personage, strained and stood on tiptoe to have her share of the investigation.

"Ay, it's frae him, sure eneugh," said the butcher's lady;—"I can read Richard Taffril on the corner, and it's written, like John Thomson's wallet, frae end to end."

"Haud it lower down, madam," exclaimed Mrs. Shortcake, in a tone above the prudential whisper which their occupation required—"haud it lower down—Div ye think naebody can read hand o' writ but yoursell?"

"Whist, whist, sirs, for God's sake!" said Mrs. Mailsetter, "there's somebody in the shop,"—then aloud—"Look to the customers, Baby!"—Baby answered from without in a shrill tone—"It's naebody but Jenny Caxon, ma'am, to see if there's ony letters to her."

"Tell her," said the faithful postmistress, winking to her compeers, "to come back the morn at ten o'clock, and I'll let her ken—we havena had time to sort the mail letters yet—she's aye in sic a hurry, as if her letters were o' mair consequence than the best merchant's o' the town."

Poor Jenny, a girl of uncommon beauty and modesty, could only draw her cloak about her to hide the sigh of disappointment and return meekly home to endure for another night the sickness of the heart occasioned by hope delayed.

"There's something about a needle and a pole," said Mrs. Shortcake, to whom her taller rival in gossiping had at length yielded a peep at the subject of their curiosity.

"Now, that's downright shameful," said Mrs. Heukbane, "to scorn the poor silly gait of a lassie after he's keepit company wi' her sae lang, and had his will o' her, as I make nae doubt he has."

"It's but ower muckle to be doubted," echoed Mrs. Shortcake;—"to cast up to her that her father's a barber and has a pole at his door, and that she's but a manty-maker hersell! Hout fy for shame!"

"Hout tout, leddies," cried Mrs. Mailsetter, "ye're clean wrang—It's a line out o' ane o' his sailors' sangs that I have heard him sing, about being true like the needle to the pole."

"Weel, weel, I wish it may be sae," said the charitable Dame Heukbane,—"but it disna look weel for a lassie like her to keep up a correspondence wi' ane o' the king's officers."

"I'm no denying that," said Mrs. Mailsetter; "but it's a great advantage to the revenue of the post-office thae love-letters. See, here's five or six letters to Sir Arthur Wardour—maist o' them sealed wi' wafers, and no wi' wax. There will be a downcome, there, believe me."

"Ay; they will be business letters, and no frae ony o' his grand friends, that seals wi' their coats of arms, as they ca' them," said Mrs. Heukbane;—"pride will hae a fa'—he hasna settled his account wi' my gudeman, the deacon, for this twalmonth—he's but slink, I doubt."

"Nor wi' huz for sax months," echoed Mrs. Shortcake—"He's but a brunt crust."

"There's a letter," interrupted the trusty postmistress, "from his son, the captain, I'm thinking—the seal has the same things wi' the Knockwinnock carriage. He'll be coming hame to see what he can save out o' the fire."

The baronet thus dismissed, they took up the esquire—"Twa letters for Monkbnarns—they're frae some o' his learned friends now; see sae close as they're written, down to the very seal—and a' to save sending a double letter—that's just like Monkbnarns himsell. When he gets a frank he fills it up exact to the weight of an unce, that a carvy-seed would sink the scale—but he's neer a grain abune it. Weel I wot I wad be broken if I were to gie sic weight to the folk that come to buy our pepper and brimstone, and suchlike sweetmeats."

"He's a shabby body the laird o' Monkbnarns," said Mrs. Heukbane; "he'll make as muckle about buying a forequarter o' lamb in August as about a back sey o' beef. Let's taste another drop of the sinning" (perhaps she meant *cinnamon*) "waters, Mrs. Mailsetter, my dear. Ah, lasses! an ye had kend his brother as I did—mony a time he wad slip in to see me wi' a brace o' wild deukes in his pouch, when my first gudeman was awa at the Falkirk tryst—weel, weel—we'se no speak o' that e'enow."

"I winna say ony ill o'this Monkbnarns," said Mrs. Shortcake; "his brother neer brought me ony wild-deukes, and this is a douce honest man; we serve the family wi' bread, and he settles wi' huz ilka week—only he was in an unco kippage when we sent him a book instead o' the *nick-sticks*,* whilk, he said, were the true ancient way o' counting between tradesmen and customers; and sae they are, nae doubt."

* Note E. Nick-sticks.

"But look here, lasses," interrupted Mrs. Mailsetter, "here's a sight for sair e'en! What wad ye gie to ken what's in the inside o' this letter? This is new corn—I haena seen the like o' this—For William Lovel, Esquire, at Mrs. Hadoway's, High Street, Fairport, by Edinburgh, N. B. This is just the second letter he has had since he was here."

"Lord's sake, let's see, lass!—Lord's sake, let's see!—that's him that the hale town kens naething about—and a weel-fa'ard lad he is; let's see, let's see!" Thus ejaculated the two worthy representatives of mother Eve.

"Na, na, sirs," exclaimed Mrs. Mailsetter; "haud awa—bide aff, I tell you; this is nane o' your fourpenny cuts that we might make up the value to the post-office amang ourselves if ony mischance befell it;—the postage is five-and-twenty shillings—and here's an order frae the Secretary to forward it to the young gentleman by express, if he's no at hame. Na, na, sirs, bide aff;—this maunna be roughly guided."

"But just let's look at the outside o't, woman."

Nothing could be gathered from the outside, except remarks on the various properties which philosophers ascribe to matter,—length, breadth, depth, and weight. The packet was composed of strong thick paper, imperviable by the curious eyes of the gossips, though they stared as if they would burst from their sockets. The seal was a deep and well-cut impression of arms, which defied all tampering.

"Od, lass," said Mrs. Shortcake, weighing it in her hand, and wishing, doubtless, that the too, too solid wax would melt and dissolve itself, "I wad like to ken what's in the inside o' this, for that Lovel dings a' that ever set foot on the plainstanes o' Fairport—naebody kens what to make o' him."

"Weel, weel, leddies," said the postmistress, "we'se sit down and crack about it.—Baby, bring ben the tea-water—Muckle obliged to ye for your cookies, Mrs. Shortcake—and we'll steek the shop, and cry ben Baby, and take a hand at the cartes till the gudeman comes hame—and then we'll try your braw veal sweetbread that ye were so kind as send me, Mrs. Heukbane."

"But winna ye first send awa Mr. Lovel's letter?" said Mrs. Heukbane.

"Troth I kenna wha to send wi't till the gudeman comes hame, for auld Caxon tell'd me that Mr. Lovel stays a' the day at Monkbnarns—he's in a high fever, wi' pu'ing the laird and Sir Arthur out o' the sea."

"Silly auld doited carles!" said Mrs. Shortcake; "what gar'd them gang to the douking in a night like yestreen!"

"I was gi'en to understand it was auld Edie that saved them," said Mrs. Heukbane—"Edie Ochiltree, the Blue-Gown, ye ken; and that he pu'd the hale three out of the auld fish-pound, for Monkbnarns had threepit on them to gang in till't to see the wark o' the monks lang syne."

"Hout, lass, nonsense!" answered the postmistress; "I'll tell ye, a' about it, as Caxon tell'd it to me. Ye see, Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour, and Mr. Lovel, suld hae dined at Monkbnarns—"

"But, Mrs. Mailsetter," again interrupted Mrs. Heukbane, "will ye no be for sending awa this letter by express?—there's our powny and our callant hae gane express for the office or now, and the powny hasna gane abune thirty mile the day;—Jock was sorting him up as I came ower by."

"Why, Mrs. Heukbane," said the woman of letters, pursing up her mouth, "ye ken my gudeman likes to ride the expresses himsell—we maun gie our ain fish-guts to our ain sea-maws—it's a red half-guinea to him every time he munts his mear; and I dare say he'll be in sune—or I dare to say, it's the same thing whether the gentleman gets the express this night or early next morning."

"Only that Mr. Lovel will be in town before the express gaes aff," said Mrs. Heukbane; "and where are ye then, lass? But ye ken yere ain ways best."

"Weel, weel, Mrs. Heukbane," answered Mrs. Mailsetter, a little out of humour, and even out of countenance, "I am sure I am never against being neighbour-like, and living and letting live, as they say; and since I hae been sic a fule as to show you the post-office order—ou, nae doubt, it maun be obeyed. But I'll no need your callant, mony thanks to ye—I'll send little Davie on your powny, and that will be just five-and-threepence to ilka ane o' us, ye ken."

"Davie! the Lord help ye, the bairn's no ten year auld; and, to be plain wi' ye, our powny reists a bit, and it's dooms sweer to the road, and naebody can manage him but our Jock."

"I'm sorry for that," answered the postmistress, gravely; "it's like we maun wait then till the gudeman comes hame, after a'—for I wadna like to be responsible in trusting the letter to sic a callant as Jock—our Davie belongs in a manner to the office."

"Aweel, aweel, Mrs. Mailsetter, I see what ye wad be at—but an ye like to risk the bairn, I'll risk the beast."

Orders were accordingly given. The unwilling pony was brought out of his bed of straw, and again equipped for service—Davie (a leathern post-bag strapped across his shoulders) was perched upon the saddle, with a tear in his eye, and a switch in his hand. Jock good-naturedly led the animal out of town, and, by the crack of his whip, and the whoop and halloo of his too well-known voice, compelled it to take the road towards Monkbnarns.

Meanwhile the gossips, like the sibyls after consulting their leaves, arranged and combined the information of the evening, which flew next morning through a hundred channels, and in a hundred varieties, through the world of Fairport. Many, strange, and inconsistent, were the rumours to which their communications and conjectures gave rise. Some said Tennant and Co. were broken, and that all their bills had come back protested—others that they had got a great contract from

Government, and letters from the principal merchants at Glasgow, desiring to have shares upon a premium. One report stated, that Lieutenant Taffril had acknowledged a private marriage with Jenny Caxon—another, that he had sent her a letter upbraiding her with the lowness of her birth and education, and bidding her an eternal adieu. It was generally rumoured that Sir Arthur Wardour's affairs had fallen into irretrievable confusion, and this report was only doubted by the wise, because it was traced to Mrs. Mailsetter's shop,—a source more famous for the circulation of news than for their accuracy. But all agreed that a packet from the Secretary of State's office, had arrived, directed for Mr. Lovel, and that it had been forwarded by an orderly dragoon, despatched from the head-quarters at Edinburgh, who had galloped through Fairport without stopping, except just to inquire the way to Monkbarns. The reason of such an extraordinary mission to a very peaceful and retired individual, was variously explained. Some said Lovel was an emigrant noble, summoned to head an insurrection that had broken out in La Vendee—others that he was a spy—others that he was a general officer, who was visiting the coast privately—others that he was a prince of the blood, who was travelling *incognito*.

Meanwhile the progress of the packet which occasioned so much speculation, towards its destined owner at Monkbarns, had been perilous and interrupted. The bearer, Davie Mailsetter, as little resembling a bold dragoon as could well be imagined, was carried onwards towards Monkbarns by the pony, so long as the animal had in his recollection the crack of his usual instrument of chastisement, and the shout of the butcher's boy. But feeling how Davie, whose short legs were unequal to maintain his balance, swung to and fro upon his back, the pony began to disdain further compliance with the intimations he had received. First, then, he slackened his pace to a walk. This was no point of quarrel between him and his rider, who had been considerably discomposed by the rapidity of his former motion, and who now took the opportunity of his abated pace to gnaw a piece of gingerbread, which had been thrust into his hand by his mother in order to reconcile this youthful emissary of the post-office to the discharge of his duty. By and by, the crafty pony availed himself of this surcease of discipline to twitch the rein out of Davies hands, and applied himself to browse on the grass by the side of the lane. Sorely astounded by these symptoms of self-willed rebellion, and afraid alike to sit or to fall, poor Davie lifted up his voice and wept aloud. The pony, hearing this pudder over his head, began apparently to think it would be best both for himself and Davie to return from whence they came, and accordingly commenced a retrograde movement towards Fairport. But, as all retreats are apt to end in utter rout, so the steed, alarmed by the boy's cries, and by the flapping of the reins, which dangled about his forefeet—finding also his nose turned homeward, began to set off at a rate which, if Davie kept the saddle (a matter extremely dubious), would soon have presented him at Heukbane's stable-door,—when, at a turn of the road, an intervening auxiliary, in the shape of old Edie Ochiltree, caught hold of the rein, and stopped his farther proceeding. "Wha's aught ye, callant? whaten a gate's that to ride?"

"I canna help it!" blubbered the express; "they ca' me little Davie."

"And where are ye gaun?"

"I'm gaun to Monkbarns wi' a letter."

"Stirra, this is no the road to Monkbarns."

But Davie could oinly answer the expostulation with sighs and tears.

Old Edie was easily moved to compassion where childhood was in the case.—"I wasna gaun that gate," he thought, "but it's the best o' my way o' life that I canna be weel out o' my road. They'll gie me quarters at Monkbarns readily enough, and I'll e'en hirkle awa there wi' the wean, for it will knock its hams out, puir thing, if there's no somebody to guide the pony.—Sae ye hae a letter, hinney? will ye let me see't?"

"I'm no gaun to let naeboddy see the letter," sobbed the boy, "till I gie't to Mr. Lovel, for I am a faithfu' servant o' the office—if it werena for the powny."

"Very right, my little man," said Ochiltree, turning the reluctant pony's head towards Monkbarns; "but we'll guide him atween us, if he's no a' the sweerer."

Upon the very height of Kinprunes, to which Monkbarns had invited Lovel after their dinner, the Antiquary, again reconciled to the once degraded spot, was expatiating upon the topics the scenery afforded for a description of Agricola's camp at the dawn of morning, when his eye was caught by the appearance of the mendicant and his protegee. "What the devil!—here comes Old Edie, bag and baggage, I think."

The beggar explained his errand, and Davie, who insisted upon a literal execution of his commission by going on to Monkbarns, was with difficulty prevailed upon to surrender the packet to its proper owner, although he met him a mile nearer than the place he had been directed to. "But my minnie said, I maun be sure to get twenty shillings and five shillings for the postage, and ten shillings and sixpence for the express—there's the paper."

"Let me see—let me see," said Oldbuck, putting on his spectacles, and examining the crumpled copy of regulations to which Davie appealed. "Express, per man and horse, one day, not to exceed ten shillings and sixpence. One day? why, it's not an hour—Man and horse? why, 'tis a monkey on a starved cat!"

"Father had hae come himsell," said Davie, "on the muckle red mear, an ye wad hae bidden till the morn's night."

"Four-and-twenty hours after the regular date of delivery! You little cockatrice egg, do you understand the art of imposition so early?"

"Hout Monkbarns! dinna set your wit against a bairn," said the beggar; "mind the butcher risked his beast, and the wife her wean, and I am sure ten and sixpence isna ower muckle. Ye didna gang sae near wi' Johnnie Howie, when"—

Lovel, who, sitting on the supposed *Praetorium*, had glanced over the contents of the packet, now put an end to the altercation by paying Davies demand; and then turning to Mr. Oldbuck, with a look of much agitation, he excused himself from returning with him to Monkbarns that evening.—"I must instantly go to Fairport, and perhaps leave it on a moment's notice;—your kindness, Mr. Oldbuck, I can never forget."

"No bad news, I hope?" said the Antiquary.

"Of a very chequered complexion," answered his friend. "Farewell—in good or bad fortune I will not forget your regard."

"Nay, nay—stop a moment. If—if—" (making an effort)—"if there be any pecuniary inconvenience—I have fifty—or a hundred guineas at your service—till—till Whitsunday—or indeed as long as you please."

"I am much obliged, Mr. Oldbuck, but I am amply provided," said his mysterious young friend. "Excuse me—I really cannot sustain further conversation at present. I will write or see you, before I leave Fairport—that is, if I find myself obliged to go."

So saying, he shook the Antiquary's hand warmly, turned from him, and walked rapidly towards the town, "staying no longer question."

"Very extraordinary indeed!" said Oldbuck;—"but there's something about this lad I can never fathom; and yet I cannot for my heart think ill of him neither. I must go home and take off the fire in the Green Room, for none of my womankind will venture into it after twilight."

"And how am I to win hame?" blubbered the disconsolate express.

"It's a fine night," said the Blue-Gown, looking up to the skies; "I had as gude gang back to the town, and take care o' the wean."

"Do so, do so, Edie," and rummaging for some time in his huge waistcoat pocket till he found the object of his search, the Antiquary added, "there's sixpence to ye to buy sneeshin."

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

"I am bewitched with the rogue's company. If the rascal has not given me medicines to make me love him, I'll be hanged; it could not be else. I have drunk medicines."

Second Part of Henry IV.

Regular for a fortnight were the inquiries of the Antiquary at the veteran Caxon, whether he had heard what Mr. Lovel was about; and as regular were Caxon's answers, "that the town could learn naething about him whatever, except that he had received anither muckle letter or twa frae the south, and that he was never seen on the plainstanes at a'."

"How does he live, Caxon?"

"Ou, Mrs. Hadoway just dresses him a beefsteak or a muttonchop, or makes him some Friar's chicken, or just what she likes hersell, and he eats it in the little red parlour off his bedroom. She canna get him to say that he likes ae thing better than anither; and she makes him tea in a morning, and he settles honourably wi' her every week."

"But does he never stir abroad?"

"He has clean g'ien up walking, and he sits a' day in his room reading or writing; a hantle letters he has written, but he wadna put them into our post-house, though Mrs. Hadoway offered to carry them hersell, but sent them a' under ae cover to the sheriff; and it's Mrs. Mailsetter's belief, that the sheriff sent his groom to put them into the post-office at Tannonburgh; it's my puir thought, that he jaloused their looking into his letters at Fairport; and weel had he need, for my puir daughter Jenny"—

"Tut, don't plague me with your womankind, Caxon. About this poor young lad.—Does he write nothing but letters?"

"Ou, ay—hale sheets o' other things, Mrs. Hadoway says. She wishes muckle he could be gotten to take a walk; she thinks he's but looking very puirly, and his appetite's clean gane; but he'll no hear o' ganging ower the door-stane—him that used to walk sae muckle too."

"That's wrong—I have a guess what he's busy about; but he must not work too hard neither. I'll go and see him this very day—he's deep, doubtless, in the Caledoniad."

Having formed this manful resolution, Mr. Oldbuck equipped himself for the expedition with his thick walking-shoes and gold-headed cane, muttering the while the words of Falstaff which we have chosen for the motto of this CHAPTER; for the Antiquary was himself rather surprised at the degree of attachment which he could not but acknowledge be entertained for this stranger. The riddle was notwithstanding easily solved. Lovel had many attractive qualities, but he won our Antiquary's heart by being on most occasions an excellent listener.

A walk to Fairport had become somewhat of an adventure with Mr. Oldbuck, and one which he did not often care to undertake. He hated greetings in the market-place; and there were generally loiterers in the streets to persecute him, either about the news of the day, or about some petty pieces of business. So, on this occasion, he had no sooner entered the streets of Fairport, than it was "Good-morrow, Mr. Oldbuck—a sight o' you's gude, for sair een: what d'ye think of the news in the Sun the day?—they say the great attempt will be made in a fortnight."

"I wish to the Lord it were made and over, that I might hear no more about it."

"Monkbarns, your honour," said the nursery and seedsman, "I hope the plants gied satisfaction?—and if ye wanted ony flower-roots fresh frae Holland, or" (this in a lower key) "an anker or twa o' Cologne gin, ane o' our brigs cam in yestreen."

"Thank ye, thank ye,—no occasion at present, Mr. Crabtree," said the Antiquary, pushing resolutely onward.

"Mr. Oldbuck," said the town-clerk (a more important person, who came in front and ventured to stop the old gentleman), "the provost, understanding you were in town, begs on no account that you'll quit it without seeing him; he wants to speak to ye about bringing the water frae the Fairwell-spring through a part o' your lands."

"What the deuce!—have they nobody's land but mine to cut and carve on?—I won't consent, tell them."

"And the provost," said the clerk, going on, without noticing the rebuff, "and the council, wad be agreeable that you should hae the auld stones at Donagild's chapel, that ye was wussing to hae."

"Eh!—what?—Oho! that's another story—Well, well, I'll call upon the provost, and we'll talk about it."

"But ye maun speak your mind on't forthwith, Monkbarns, if ye want the stones; for Deacon Harlewalls thinks the carved through-stanes might be put with advantage on the front of the new council-house—that is, the twa cross-legged figures that the callants used to ca' Robin and Bobbin, ane on ilka door-cheek; and the other stane, that they ca'd Ailie Dailie, abune the door. It will be very tastefu', the Deacon says, and just in the style of modern Gothic."

"Lord deliver me from this Gothic generation!" exclaimed the Antiquary,—"*A monument of a knight-templar on each side of a Grecian porch, and a Madonna on the top of it!—O crimini!*"—Well, tell the provost I wish to have the stones, and we'll not differ about the water-course. It's lucky I happened to come this way to-day."

They parted mutually satisfied; but the wily clerk had most reason to exult in the dexterity he had displayed, since the whole proposal of an exchange between the monuments (which the council had determined to remove as a nuisance, because they encroached three feet upon the public road), and the privilege of conveying the water to the burgh through the estate of Monkbarns, was an idea which had originated with himself upon the pressure of the moment.

Through these various entanglements, Monkbarns (to use the phrase by which he was distinguished in the country) made his way at length to Mrs. Hadoway's. This good woman was the widow of a late clergyman at Fairport, who had been reduced by her husband's untimely death, to that state of straitened and embarrassed circumstances in which the widows of the Scotch clergy are too often found. The tenement which she occupied, and the furniture of which she was possessed, gave her the means of letting a part of her house; and as Lovel had been a quiet, regular, and profitable lodger, and had qualified the necessary intercourse which they had together with a great deal of gentleness and courtesy, Mrs. Hadoway, not, perhaps, much used to such kindly treatment, had become greatly attached to her lodger, and was profuse in every sort of personal attention which circumstances permitted her to render him. To cook a dish somewhat better than ordinary for "the poor young gentleman's dinner," to exert her interest with those who remembered her husband, or loved her for her own sake and his, in order to procure scarce vegetables, or something which her simplicity supposed might tempt her lodger's appetite, was a labour in which she delighted, although she anxiously concealed it from the person who was its object. She did not adopt this secrecy of benevolence to avoid the laugh of those who might suppose that an oval face and dark eyes, with a clear brown complexion, though belonging to a woman of five-and-forty, and enclosed within a widow's close-drawn pinnars, might possibly still aim at making conquests; for, to say truth, such a ridiculous suspicion having never entered into her own head, she could not anticipate its having birth in that of any one else. But she concealed her attentions solely out of delicacy to her guest, whose power of repaying them she doubted as much as she believed in his inclination to do so, and in his being likely to feel extreme pain at leaving any of her civilities unrequited. She now opened the door to Mr. Oldbuck, and her surprise at seeing him brought tears into her eyes, which she could hardly restrain.

"I am glad to see you, sir—I am very glad to see you. My poor gentleman is, I am afraid, very unwell; and oh, Mr. Oldbuck, he'll see neither doctor, nor minister, nor writer! And think what it would be, if, as my poor Mr. Hadoway used to say, a man was to die without advice of the three learned faculties!"

"Greatly better than with them," grumbled the cynical Antiquary. "I tell you, Mrs. Hadoway, the clergy live by our sins, the medical faculty by our diseases, and the law gentry by our misfortunes."

"O fie, Monkbarns!—to hear the like o' that frae you!—But yell walk up and see the poor young lad?—Hegh sirs? sae young and weel-favoured—and day by day he has eat less and less, and now he hardly touches anything, only just pits a bit on the plate to make fashion—and his poor cheek has turned every day thinner and paler, sae that he now really looks as auld as me, that might be his mother—no that I might be just that neither, but something very near it."

"Why does he not take some exercise?" said Oldbuck.

"I think we have persuaded him to do that, for he has bought a horse from Gibbie Golightly, the galloping groom. A gude judge o' horse-flesh Gibbie tauld our lass that he was—for he offered him a beast he thought wad answer him weel eneugh, as he was a bookish man, but Mr. Lovel wadna look at it, and bought ane might serve the Master o' Morphie—they keep it at the Graeme's Arms, ower the street;—and he rode out yesterday morning and this morning before breakfast—But winna ye walk up to his room?"

"Presently, presently. But has he no visitors?"

"O dear, Mr. Oldbuck, not ane; if he wadna receive them when he was weel and sprightly, what chance is there of onybody in Fairport looking in upon him now?"

"Ay, ay, very true,—I should have been surprised had it been otherwise—Come, show me up stairs, Mrs. Hadoway, lest I make a blunder, and go where I should not."

The good landlady showed Mr. Oldbuck up her narrow staircase, warning him of every turn, and lamenting all the while that he was laid under the necessity of mounting up so high. At length she gently tapped at the door of her guest's parlour. "Come in," said Lovel; and Mrs. Hadoway ushered in the Laird of Monkbarns. The little apartment was neat and clean, and decently furnished—ornamented, too, by such relics of her youthful arts of sempstress-ship as Mrs. Hadoway had retained; but it was close, overheated, and, as it appeared to Oldbuck, an unwholesome situation for a young person in delicate health,—an observation which ripened his resolution touching a project that had already occurred to him in Lovel's behalf. With a writing-table before him, on which lay a quantity of books and papers, Lovel was seated on a couch, in his night-gown and slippers. Oldbuck was shocked at the change which had taken place in his personal appearance. His cheek and brow had assumed a ghastly white, except where a round bright spot of hectic red formed a strong and painful contrast, totally different from the general cast of hale and hardy complexion which had formerly overspread and somewhat embrowned his countenance. Oldbuck observed, that the dress he wore belonged to a deep mourning suit, and a coat of the same colour hung on a chair near to him. As the Antiquary entered, Lovel arose and came forward to welcome him.

"This is very kind," he said, shaking him by the hand, and thanking him warmly for his visit—"this is very kind, and has anticipated a visit with which I intended to trouble you. You must know I have become a horseman lately."

"I understand as much from Mrs. Hadoway—I only hope, my good young friend, you have been fortunate in a quiet horse. I myself inadvertently bought one from the said Gibbie Golightly, which brute ran two miles on end with me after a pack of hounds, with which I had no more to do than the last year's snow; and after affording infinite amusement, I suppose, to the whole hunting field, he was so good as to deposit me in a dry ditch—I hope yours is a more peaceful beast?"

"I hope, at least, we shall make our excursions on a better plan of mutual understanding."

"That is to say, you think yourself a good horseman?"

"I would not willingly," answered Lovel, "confess myself a very bad one."

"No—all you young fellows think that would be equal to calling yourselves tailors at once—But have you had experience? for, *crede experto*, a horse in a passion is no joker."

"Why, I should be sorry to boast myself as a great horseman; but when I acted as aide-de-camp to Sir—in the cavalry action at—, last year, I saw many better cavaliers than myself dismounted."

"Ah! you have looked in the face of the grisly god of arms then?—you are acquainted with the frowns of Mars armipotent? That experience fills up the measure of your qualifications for the epopea! The Britons, however, you will remember, fought in chariots—*covinari* is the phrase of Tacitus;—you recollect the fine description of their dashing among the Roman infantry, although the historian tells us how ill the rugged face of the ground was calculated for equestrian combat; and truly, upon the whole, what sort of chariots could be driven in Scotland anywhere but on turnpike roads, has been to me always matter of amazement. And well now—has the Muse visited you?—have you got anything to show me?"

"My time," said Lovel, with a glance at his black dress, "has been less pleasantly employed."

"The death of a friend?" said the Antiquary.

"Yes, Mr. Oldbuck—of almost the only friend I could ever boast of possessing."

"Indeed? Well, young man," replied his visitor, in a tone of seriousness very different from his affected gravity, "be comforted. To have lost a friend by death while your mutual regard was warm and unchilled, while the tear can drop unembittered by any painful recollection of coldness or distrust or treachery, is perhaps an escape from a more heavy dispensation. Look round you—how few do you see grow old in the affections of those with whom their early friendships were formed! Our sources of common pleasure gradually dry up as we journey on through the vale of Bacha, and we hew out to ourselves other reservoirs, from which the first companions of our pilgrimage are excluded;—jealousies, rivalries, envy, intervene to separate others from our side, until none remain but those who are connected with us rather by habit than predilection, or who, allied more in blood than in disposition, only keep the old man company in his life, that they may not be forgotten at his death—

Haec data poena diu viventibus.

Ah, Mr. Lovel! if it be your lot to reach the chill, cloudy, and comfortless evening of life, you will remember the sorrows of your youth as the light shadowy clouds that intercepted for a moment the beams of the sun when it was rising. But I cram these words into your ears against the stomach of your sense."

"I am sensible of your kindness," answered the youth; "but the wound that is of recent infliction must always smart severely, and I should be little comforted under my present calamity—forgive me for saying so—by the conviction that life had nothing in reserve for me but a train of successive sorrows. And permit me to add, you, Mr. Oldbuck, have least reason of many men to take so gloomy a view of life. You have a competent and easy fortune—are generally respected—may, in your own phrase, *vacare musis*, indulge yourself in the researches to which your taste addicts you; you may form your own society without doors—and within you have the affectionate and sedulous attention of the nearest relatives."

"Why, yes—the womankind, for womankind, are, thanks to my training, very civil and tractable—do not disturb me in my morning studies—creep across the floor with the stealthy pace of a cat, when it suits me to take a nap in my easy-chair after dinner or tea. All this is very well; but I want something to exchange ideas with—something to talk to."

"Then why do you not invite your nephew, Captain M'Intyre, who is mentioned by every one as a fine spirited young fellow, to become a member of your family?"

"Who?" exclaimed Monkbarns, "my nephew Hector?—the Hotspur of the North? Why, Heaven love you, I would as soon invite a firebrand into my stackyard. He's an Almanzor, a Chamont—has a Highland pedigree as long as his claymore, and a claymore as long as the High Street of Fairport, which he unsheathed upon the surgeon the last time he was at Fairport. I expect him here one of these days; but I will keep him at staff's end, I promise you. He an inmate of my house! to make my very chairs and tables tremble at his brawls. No, no—I'll none of Hector M'Intyre. But hark ye, Lovel;—you are a quiet, gentle-tempered lad; had not you better set up your staff at Monkbarns for a month or two, since I conclude you do not immediately intend to leave this country?—I will have a door opened out to the garden—it will cost but a trifle—there is the space for an old one which was condemned long ago—by which said door you may pass and repass into the Green Chamber at pleasure, so you will not interfere with the old man, nor he with you. As for your fare, Mrs. Hadoway tells me you are, as she terms it, very moderate of your mouth, so you will not quarrel with my humble table. Your washing"—

"Hold, my dear Mr. Oldbuck," interposed Lovel, unable to repress a smile; "and before your hospitality settles all my accommodations, let me thank you most sincerely for so kind an offer—it is not at present in my power to accept of it; but very likely, before I bid adieu to Scotland, I shall find an opportunity to pay you a visit of some length."

Mr. Oldbuck's countenance fell. "Why, I thought I had hit on the very arrangement that would suit us both,—and who knows what might happen in the long run, and whether we might ever part? Why, I am master of my acres, man—there is the advantage of being descended from a man of more sense than pride—they cannot oblige me to transmit my goods chattels, and heritages, any way but as I please. No string of substitute heirs of entail, as empty and unsubstantial as the morsels of paper strung to the train of a boy's kite, to cumber my flights of inclination, and my humours of predilection. Well,—I see you won't be tempted at present—but Caledonia goes on I hope?"

"O certainly," said Lovel; "I cannot think of relinquishing a plan so hopeful."

"It is indeed," said the Antiquary, looking gravely upward,—for, though shrewd and acute enough in estimating the variety of plans formed by others, he had a very natural, though rather disproportioned good opinion of the importance of those which originated with himself—"it is indeed one of those undertakings which, if achieved with spirit equal to that which dictates its conception, may redeem from the charge of frivolity the literature of the present generation."

Here he was interrupted by a knock at the room door, which introduced a letter for Mr. Lovel. The servant waited, Mrs. Hadoway said, for an answer. "You are concerned in this matter, Mr. Oldbuck," said Lovel, after glancing over the billet, and handing it to the Antiquary as he spoke.

It was a letter from Sir Arthur Wardour, couched in extremely civil language, regretting that a fit of the gout had prevented his hitherto showing Mr. Lovel the attentions to which his conduct during a late perilous occasion had so well entitled him—apologizing for not paying his respects in person, but hoping Mr. Lovel would dispense with that ceremony, and be a member of a small party which proposed to visit the ruins of Saint Ruth's priory on the following day, and afterwards to dine and spend the evening at Knockwinnock Castle. Sir Arthur concluded with saying, that he had sent to request the Monkbarns family to join the party of pleasure which he thus proposed. The place of rendezvous was fixed at a turnpike-gate, which was about an equal distance from all the points from which the company were to assemble.

"What shall we do?" said Lovel, looking at the Antiquary, but pretty certain of the part he would take.

"Go, man—we'll go, by all means. Let me see—it will cost a post-chaise though, which will hold you and me, and Mary M'Intyre, very well—and the other womankind may go to the manse—and you can come out in the chaise to Monkbarns, as I will take it for the day."

"Why, I rather think I had better ride."

"True, true, I forgot your Bucephalus. You are a foolish lad, by the by, for purchasing the brute outright; you should stick to eighteenpence a side, if you will trust any creature's legs in preference to your own."

"Why, as the horse's have the advantage of moving considerably faster, and are, besides, two pair to one, I own I incline"—

"Enough said—enough said—do as you please. Well then, I'll bring either Grizel or the minister, for I love to have my full pennyworth out of post-horses—and we meet at Tirlingen turnpike on Friday, at twelve o'clock precisely."—And with this agreement the friends separated.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

*Of seats they tell, where priests, 'mid tapers dim,
Breathed the warm prayer, or tuned the midnight hymn
To scenes like these the fainting soul retired;
Revenge and Anger in these cells expired:
By Pity soothed, Remorse lost half her fears,
And softened Pride dropped penitential tears.
Crabbe's Borough.*

The morning of Friday was as serene and beautiful as if no pleasure party had been intended; and that is a rare event, whether in novel-writing or real life. Lovel, who felt the genial influence of the weather, and rejoiced at the prospect of once more meeting with Miss Wardour, trotted forward to the place of rendezvous with better spirits than he had for some time enjoyed. His prospects seemed in many respects to open and brighten before him—and hope, although breaking like the morning sun through clouds and showers, appeared now about to illuminate the path before him. He was, as might have been expected from this state of spirits, first at the place of meeting,—and, as might also have been anticipated, his looks were so intently directed towards the road from Knockwinnock Castles that he was only apprized of the arrival of the Monkbarns division by the gee-hupping of the postilion, as the post-chaise lumbered up behind him. In this vehicle were pent up, first, the stately figure of Mr. Oldbuck himself; secondly, the scarce less portly person of the Reverend Mr. Blattergowl, minister of Trotcosey, the parish in which Monkbarns and Knockwinnock were both situated. The reverend gentleman was equipped in a buzz wig, upon the top of which was an equilateral cocked hat. This was the paragon of the three yet remaining wigs of the parish, which differed, as Monkbarns used to remark, like the three degrees of comparison—Sir Arthur's ramifies being the positive, his own bob-wig the comparative, and the overwhelming grizzle of the worthy clergyman figuring as the superlative. The superintendent of these antique garnitures, deeming, or affecting to deem, that he could not well be absent on an occasion which assembled all three together, had seated himself on the board behind the carriage, "just to be in the way in case they wanted a touch before the gentlemen sat down to dinner." Between the two massive figures of Monkbarns and the clergyman was stuck, by way of bodkin, the slim form of Mary M'Intyre, her aunt having preferred a visit to the manse, and a social chat with Miss Beckie Blattergowl, to investigating the ruins of the priory of Saint Ruth.

As greetings passed between the members of the Monkbarns party and Mr. Lovel, the Baronet's carriage, an open barouche, swept onward to the place of appointment, making, with its smoking bays, smart drivers, arms, blazoned panels, and a brace of outriders, a strong contrast with the battered vehicle and broken-winded hacks which had brought thither the Antiquary and his followers. The principal seat of the carriage was occupied by Sir Arthur and his daughter. At the first glance which passed betwixt Miss Wardour and Lovel, her colour rose considerably;—but she had apparently made up her mind to receive him as a friend, and only as such, and there was equal composure and courtesy in the mode of her reply to his fluttered salutation. Sir Arthur halted the barouche to shake his preserver kindly by the hand, and intimate the pleasure he had on this opportunity of returning him his personal thanks; then mentioned to him, in a tone of slight introduction, "Mr. Dousterswivel, Mr. Lovel."

Lovel took the necessary notice of the German adept, who occupied the front seat of the carriage, which is usually conferred upon dependants or inferiors. The ready grin and supple inclination with which his salutation, though slight, was answered by the foreigner, increased the internal dislike which Lovel had already conceived towards him; and it was plain, from the lower of the Antiquary's shaggy eye-brow, that he too looked with displeasure on this addition to the company. Little more than distant greeting passed among the members of the party, until, having rolled on for about three miles beyond the place at which they met, the carriages at length stopped at the sign of the Four Horse-shoes, a small hedge inn, where Caxon humbly opened the door, and let down the step of the hack-chaise, while the inmates of the barouche were, by their more courtly attendants, assisted to leave their equipage.

Here renewed greetings passed: the young ladies shook hands; and Oldbuck, completely in his element, assisted himself as guide and cicerone at the head of the party, who were now to advance on foot towards the object of their curiosity. He took care to detain Lovel close beside him as the best listener of the party, and occasionally glanced a word of explanation and instruction to Miss Wardour and Mary M'Intyre, who followed next in order. The Baronet and the clergyman he rather avoided, as he was aware both of them conceived they understood such matters as well, or better than he did; and Dousterswivel, besides that he looked on him as a charlatan, was so nearly connected with his apprehended loss in the stock of the mining company, that he could not abide the sight of him. These two latter satellites, therefore, attended upon the orb of Sir Arthur, to whom, moreover, as the most important person of the society, they were naturally induced to attach themselves.

It frequently happens that the most beautiful points of Scottish scenery lie hidden in some sequestered dell, and that you may travel through the country in every direction without being aware of your vicinity to what is well worth seeing, unless intention or accident carry you to the very spot. This is particularly the case in the country around Fairport, which is, generally speaking, open, unenclosed, and bare. But here and there the progress of rills, or small rivers, has formed dells, glens, or as they are provincially termed, *dens*, on whose high and rocky banks trees and shrubs of all kinds find a shelter, and grow with a luxuriant profusion, which is the more gratifying, as it forms an unexpected contrast with the general face of the country. This was eminently the case with the approach to the ruins of Saint Ruth, which was for some time merely a sheep-track, along the side of a steep and bare hill. By degrees, however, as this path descended, and winded round the hillside, trees began to appear, at first singly, stunted, and blighted, with locks of wool upon their trunks, and their roots hollowed out into recesses, in which the sheep love to repose themselves—a sight much more gratifying to the eye of an admirer of the picturesque than to that of a planter or forester. By and by the trees formed groups, fringed on the edges, and filled up in the middle, by thorns and hazel bushes; and at length these groups closed so much together, that although a broad glade opened here and there under their boughs, or a small patch of bog or heath occurred which had refused nourishment to the seed which they sprinkled round, and consequently remained open and waste, the scene might on the whole be termed decidedly woodland. The sides of the valley

began to approach each other more closely; the rush of a brook was heard below, and between the intervals afforded by openings in the natural wood, its waters were seen hurling clear and rapid under their silvan canopy.

Oldbuck now took upon himself the full authority of cicerone, and anxiously directed the company not to go a foot-breadth off the track which he pointed out to them, if they wished to enjoy in full perfection what they came to see. "You are happy in me for a guide, Miss Wardour," exclaimed the veteran, waving his hand and head in cadence as he repeated with emphasis,

*I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bower from side to side.* *

* (Milton's *Comus*.)

Ah! deuce take it!—that spray of a bramble has demolished all Caxon's labours, and nearly canted my wig into the stream—so much for recitations, *hors de propos*."

"Never mind, my dear sir," said Miss Wardour; "you have your faithful attendant ready to repair such a disaster when it happens, and when you appear with it as restored to its original splendour, I will carry on the quotation:

*So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames on the forehead"—**

* (*Lycidas*.)

"O! enough, enough!" answered Oldbuck; "I ought to have known what it was to give you advantage over me—But here is what will stop your career of satire, for you are an admirer of nature, I know." In fact, when they had followed him through a breach in a low, ancient, and ruinous wall, they came suddenly upon a scene equally unexpected and interesting.

They stood pretty high upon the side of the glen, which had suddenly opened into a sort of amphitheatre to give room for a pure and profound lake of a few acres extent, and a space of level ground around it. The banks then arose everywhere steeply, and in some places were varied by rocks—in others covered with the copse, which run up, feathering their sides lightly and irregularly, and breaking the uniformity of the green pasture-ground.—Beneath, the lake discharged itself into the huddling and tumultuous brook, which had been their companion since they had entered the glen. At the point at which it issued from "its parent lake," stood the ruins which they had come to visit. They were not of great extent; but the singular beauty, as well as the wild and sequestered character of the spot on which they were situated, gave them an interest and importance superior to that which attaches itself to architectural remains of greater consequence, but placed near to ordinary houses, and possessing less romantic accompaniments. The eastern window of the church remained entire, with all its ornaments and tracery work; and the sides, upheld by flying buttresses whose airy support, detached from the wall against which they were placed, and ornamented with pinnacles and carved work, gave a variety and lightness to the building. The roof and western end of the church were completely ruinous; but the latter appeared to have made one side of a square, of which the ruins of the conventual buildings formed other two, and the gardens a fourth. The side of these buildings which overhung the brook, was partly founded on a steep and precipitous rock; for the place had been occasionally turned to military purposes, and had been taken with great slaughter during Montrose's wars. The ground formerly occupied by the garden was still marked by a few orchard trees. At a greater distance from the buildings were detached oaks and elms and chestnuts, growing singly, which had attained great size. The rest of the space between the ruins and the hill was a close-cropt sward, which the daily pasture of the sheep kept in much finer order than if it had been subjected to the scythe and broom. The whole scene had a repose, which was still and affecting without being monotonous. The dark, deep basin, in which the clear blue lake reposed, reflecting the water lilies which grew on its surface, and the trees which here and there threw their arms from the banks, was finely contrasted with the haste and tumult of the brook which broke away from the outlet, as if escaping from confinement and hurried down the glen, wheeling around the base of the rock on which the ruins were situated, and brawling in foam and fury with every shelve and stone which obstructed its passage. A similar contrast was seen between the level green meadow, in which the ruins were situated, and the large timber-trees which were scattered over it, compared with the precipitous banks which arose at a short distance around, partly fringed with light and feathery underwood, partly rising in steeps clothed with purple heath, and partly more abruptly elevated into fronts of grey rock, chequered with lichen, and with those hardy plants which find root even in the most arid crevices of the crags.

"There was the retreat of learning in the days of darkness, Mr. Lovell!" said Oldbuck,—around whom the company had now grouped themselves while they admired the unexpected opening of a prospect so romantic;—"there reposed the sages who were aweary of the world, and devoted either to that which was to come, or to the service of the generations who should follow them in this. I will show you presently the library;—see that stretch of wall with square-shafted windows—there it existed, stored, as an old manuscript in my possession assures me, with five thousand volumes. And here I might well take up the lamentation of the learned Leland, who, regretting the downfall of the conventual libraries, exclaims, like Rachel weeping for her children, that if the Papal laws, decrees, decretals, clementines, and other such drugs of the devil—yea, if Heytesburg's sophisms, Porphyry's universals, Aristotle's logic, and Dunse's divinity, with such other lousy legerdemains (begging your pardon, Miss Wardour) and fruits of the bottomless pit,—had leaped out of our libraries, for the accommodation of grocers, candlemakers, soap-sellers, and other worldly occupiers, we might have been therewith contented. But to put our ancient chronicles, our noble histories, our learned commentaries, and national muniments, to such offices of contempt and subjection, has greatly degraded our nation, and showed ourselves dishonoured in the eyes of posterity to the utmost stretch of time—O negligence most unfriendly to our land!"

"And, O John Knox" said the Baronet, "through whose influence, and under whose auspices, the patriotic task was accomplished!"

The Antiquary, somewhat in the situation of a woodcock caught in his own springe, turned short round and coughed, to excuse a slight blush as he mustered his answer—"as to the Apostle of the Scottish Reformation"—

But Miss Wardour broke in to interrupt a conversation so dangerous. "Pray, who was the author you quoted, Mr. Oldbuck?"

"The learned Leland, Miss Wardour, who lost his senses on witnessing the destruction of the conventual libraries in England."

"Now, I think," replied the young lady, "his misfortune may have saved the rationality of some modern antiquaries, which would certainly have been drowned if so vast a lake of learning had not been diminished by draining."

"Well, thank Heaven, there is no danger now—they have hardly left us a spoonful in which to perform the dire feat."

So saying, Mr. Oldbuck led the way down the bank, by a steep but secure path, which soon placed them on the verdant meadow where the ruins stood. "There they lived," continued the Antiquary, "with nought to do but to spend their time in investigating points of remote antiquity, transcribing manuscripts, and composing new works for the information of posterity."

"And," added the Baronet, "in exercising the rites of devotion with a pomp and ceremonial worthy of the office of the priesthood."

"And if Sir Arthur's excellence will permit," said the German, with a low bow, "the monksh might also make de vary curious experiment in deir laboraties, both in chemistry and *magia naturalis*."

"I think," said the clergyman, "they would have enough to do in collecting the teinds of the parsonage and vicarage of three good parishes."

"And all," added Miss Wardour, nodding to the Antiquary, "without interruption from womankind."

"True, my fair foe," said Oldbuck; "this was a paradise where no Eve was admitted, and we may wonder the rather by what chance the good fathers came to lose it."

With such criticisms on the occupations of those by whom the ruins had been formerly possessed, they wandered for some time from one moss-grown shrine to another, under the guidance of Oldbuck, who explained, with much plausibility, the ground-plan of the edifice, and read and expounded to the company the various mouldering inscriptions which yet were to be traced upon the tombs of the dead, or under the vacant niches of the sainted images.

"What is the reason," at length Miss Wardour asked the Antiquary, "why tradition has preserved to us such meagre accounts of the inmates of these stately edifices, raised with such expense of labour and taste, and whose owners were in their times personages of such awful power and importance? The meanest tower of a freebooting baron or squire who lived by his lance and broadsword, is consecrated by its appropriate legend, and the shepherd will tell you with accuracy the names and feats of its inhabitants;—but ask a countryman concerning these beautiful and extensive remains—these towers, these arches, and buttresses, and shafted windows, reared at such cost,—three words fill up his answer—they were made up by the monks lang syne."

The question was somewhat puzzling. Sir Arthur looked upward, as if hoping to be inspired with an answer—Oldbuck shoved back his wig—the clergyman was of opinion that his parishioners were too deeply impressed with the true presbyterian doctrine to preserve any records concerning the papistical cumberers of the land, offshoots as they were of the great overshadowing tree of iniquity, whose roots are in the bowels of the seven hills of abomination—Lovel thought the question was best resolved by considering what are the events which leave the deepest impression on the minds of the common people—"These," he contended, "were not such as resemble the gradual progress of a fertilizing river, but the headlong and precipitous fury of some portentous flood. The eras by which the vulgar compute time, have always reference to some period of fear and tribulation, and they date by a tempest, an earthquake, or burst of civil commotion. When such are the facts most alive, in the memory of the common people, we cannot wonder," he concluded, "that the ferocious warrior is remembered, and the peaceful abbots are abandoned to forgetfulness and oblivion."

"If you pleashe, gentlemen and ladies, and ashking pardon of Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour, and this worthy clergymansh, and my goot friend Mr. Oldenbuck, who is my countrymansh, and of goot young Mr. Lofel also, I think it is all owing to de hand of glory."

"The hand of what?" exclaimed Oldbuck.

"De hand of glory, my goot Master Oldenbuck, which is a vary great and terrible secrets—which de monksh used to conceal their treasures when they were triven from their cloisters by what you call de Reform."

"Ay, indeed! tell us about that," said Oldbuck, "for these are secrets worth knowing."

"Why, my goot Master Oldenbuck, you will only laugh at me—But de hand of glory is vary well known in de countries where your worthy progenitors did live—and it is hand cut off from a dead man, as has been hanged for murther, and dried very nice in de shmoke of juniper wood; and if you put a little of what you call yew wid your juniper, it will not be any better—that is, it will not be no worse—then you do take something of de fatsh of de bear, and of de badger, and of de great eber, as you call de grand boar, and of de little sucking child as has not been christened (for dat is very essentials), and you do make a candle, and put it into de hand of glory at de proper hour and minute, with de proper ceremonish, and he who seeksh for treasuresh shall never find none at all."

"I dare take my corporal oath of that conclusion," said the Antiquary. "And was it the custom, Mr. Dousterswivel, in Westphalia, to make use of this elegant candelabrum?"

"Always, Mr. Oldenbuck, when you did not want nobody to talk of nothing you wash doing about—And the monksh always did this when they did hide their church-plates, and their great chalices, and de rings, wid very preshious shtones and jewels."

"But, notwithstanding, you knights of the Rosy Cross have means, no doubt, of breaking the spell, and discovering what the poor monks have put themselves to so much trouble to conceal?"

"Ah! goot Mr. Oldenbuck," replied the adept, shaking his head mysteriously, "you was very hard to believe; but if you had seen de great huge pieces of de plate so massive, Sir Arthur,—so fine fashion, Miss Wardour—and de silver cross dat we did find (dat was Schroepfer and my ownself) for de Herr Freygraf, as you call de Baron Von Blunderhaus, I do believe you would have believed then."

"Seeing is believing indeed. But what was your art—what was your mystery, Mr. Dousterswivel?"

"Aha, Mr. Oldenbuck! dat is my little secret, mine goot sir—you sall forgife me that I not tell that. But I will tell you dere are various ways—yes, indeed, dere is de dream dat you dream tree times—dat is a vary goot way."

"I am glad of that," said Oldbuck; "I have a friend" (with a side-glance to Lovel) "who is peculiarly favoured by the visits of Queen Mab."

"Den dere is de sympathies, and de antipathies, and de strange properties and virtues natural of divers herb, and of de little divining-rod."

"I would gladly rather see some of these wonders than hear of them," said Miss Wardour.

"Ah, but, my much-honoured young lady, this is not de time or de way to do de great wonder of finding all de church's plate and treasure; but to oblige you, and Sir Arthur my patron, and de reverend clergymans, and goot Mr. Oldenbuck, and young Mr. Lofel, who is a very goot young gentleman also, I will show you dat it is possible, a vary possible, to discover de spring, of water, and de little fountain hidden in de ground, without any mattock, or spade, or dig at all."

"Umph!" quoth the Antiquary, "I have heard of that conundrum. That will be no very productive art in our country;—you should carry that property to Spain or Portugal, and turn it to good account."

"Ah! my goot Master Oldenbuck, dere is de Inquisition and de Auto-da-fe—they would burn me, who am but a simple philosopher, for one great conjurer."

"They would cast away their coals then," said Oldbuck; "but," continued he, in a whisper to Lovel, "were they to pillory him for one of the most impudent rascals that ever wagged a tongue, they would square the punishment more accurately with his deserts. But let us see: I think he is about to show us some of his legerdemain."

In truth, the German was now got to a little copse-thicket at some distance from the ruins, where he affected busily to search for such a wand as would suit the purpose of his mystery: and after cutting and examining, and rejecting several, he at length provided himself with a small twig of hazel terminating in a forked end, which he pronounced to possess the virtue proper for the experiment that he was about to exhibit. Holding the forked ends of the wand, each between a finger and thumb, and thus keeping the rod upright, he proceeded to pace the ruined aisles and cloisters, followed by the rest of the company in admiring procession. "I believe dere was no waters here," said the adept, when he had made the round of several of the buildings, without perceiving any of those indications which he pretended to expect—"I believe those Scotch monksh did find de water too cool for de climate, and always drank de goot comfortable, Rhinewine. But, aha!—see there!" Accordingly, the assistants observed the rod to turn in his fingers, although he pretended to hold it very tight.—"Dere is water here about, sure enough," and, turning this way and that way, as the agitation of the divining-rod seemed to increase or diminish, he at length advanced into the midst of a vacant and roofless enclosure which had been the kitchen of the priory, when the rod twisted itself so as to point almost straight downwards. "Here is de place," said the adept, "and if you do not find de water here, I will give you all leave to call me an impudent knave."

"I shall take that license," whispered the Antiquary to Lovel, "whether the water is discovered or no."

A servant, who had come up with a basket of cold refreshments, was now despatched to a neighbouring forester's hut for a mattock and pick-axe. The loose stones and rubbish being removed from the spot indicated by the German, they soon came to the sides of a regularly-built well; and when a few feet of rubbish were cleared out by the assistance of the forester and his sons, the water began to rise rapidly, to the delight of the philosopher, the astonishment of the ladies, Mr. Blattergowl, and Sir Arthur, the surprise of Lovel, and the confusion of the incredulous Antiquary. He did not fail, however, to enter his protest in Lovers ear against the miracle. "This is a mere trick," he said; "the rascal had made himself sure of the existence of this old well, by some means or other, before he played off this mystical piece of jugglery. Mark what he talks of next. I am much mistaken if this is not intended as a prelude to some more serious fraud. See how the rascal assumes consequence, and plumes himself upon the credit of his success, and how poor Sir Arthur takes in the tide of nonsense which he is delivering to him as principles of occult science!"

"You do see, my goot patron, you do see, my goot ladies, you do see, worthy Dr. Bladderhowl, and even Mr. Lofel and Mr. Oldenbuck may see, if they do will to see, how art has no enemy at all but ignorance. Look at this little slip of hazel nuts—it is fit for nothing at all but to whip de little child"—("I would choose a cat and

nine tails for your occasions," whispered Oldbuck apart)—"and you put it in the hands of a philosopher—paf! it makes de grand discovery. But this is nothing, Sir Arthur,—nothing at all, worthy Dr. Botherhowl—nothing at all, ladies—nothing at all, young Mr. Lofel and goot Mr. Oldenbuck, to what art can do. Ah! if dere was any man that had de spirit and de courage, I would show him better things than de well of water—I would show him"—

"And a little money would be necessary also, would it not?" said the Antiquary.

"Bah! one trifle, not worth talking about, maight be necessaries," answered the adept.

"I thought as much," rejoined the Antiquary, drily; "and I, in the meanwhile, without any divining-rod, will show you an excellent venison pasty, and a bottle of London particular Madeira, and I think that will match all that Mr. Dousterswivel's art is like to exhibit."

The feast was spread *fronde super viridi*, as Oldbuck expressed himself, under a huge old tree called the Prior's Oak, and the company, sitting down around it, did ample honour to the contents of the basket.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

*As when a Gryphon through the wilderness,
With winged course, o'er hill and moory dale,
Pursues the Arimasbian, who by stealth
Had from his wakeful custody purloined
The guarded gold: So eagerly the Fiend—
Paradise Lost.*

When their collation was ended, Sir Arthur resumed the account of the mysteries of the divining-rod, as a subject on which he had formerly conversed with Dousterswivel. "My friend Mr. Oldbuck will now be prepared, Mr. Dousterswivel, to listen with more respect to the stories you have told us of the late discoveries in Germany by the brethren of your association."

"Ah, Sir Arthur, that was not a thing to speak to those gentlemen, because it is want of credulity—what you call faith—that spoils the great enterprise."

"At least, however, let my daughter read the narrative she has taken down of the story of Martin Waldeck."

"Ah! that was vary true story—but Miss Wardour, she is so sly and so witty, that she has made it just like one romance—as well as Goethe or Wieland could have done it, by mine honest wort."

"To say the truth, Mr. Dousterswivel," answered Miss Wardour, "the romantic predominated in the legend so much above the probable, that it was impossible for a lover of fairyland like me to avoid lending a few touches to make it perfect in its kind. But here it is, and if you do not incline to leave this shade till the heat of the day has somewhat declined, and will have sympathy with my bad composition, perhaps Sir Arthur or Mr. Oldbuck will read it to us."

"Not I," said Sir Arthur; "I was never fond of reading aloud."

"Nor I," said Oldbuck, "for I have forgot my spectacles. But here is Lovel, with sharp eyes and a good voice; for Mr. Blattergowl, I know, never reads anything, lest he should be suspected of reading his sermons."

The task was therefore imposed upon Lovel, who received, with some trepidation, as Miss Wardour delivered, with a little embarrassment, a paper containing the lines traced by that fair hand, the possession of which he coveted as the highest blessing the earth could offer to him. But there was a necessity of suppressing his emotions; and after glancing over the manuscript, as if to become acquainted with the character, he collected himself, and read the company the following tale:—

The Fortunes of Martin Waldeck.</h3

The solitudes of the Harz forest in Germany, but especially the mountains called Blocksberg, or rather Brockenberg, are the chosen scenes for tales of witches, demons, and apparitions.

*[The outline of this story is taken from the German, though the Author
is at present unable to say in which of the various collections of the
popular legends in that language the original is to be found.]*

The occupation of the inhabitants, who are either miners or foresters, is of a kind that renders them peculiarly prone to superstition, and the natural phenomena which they witness in pursuit of their solitary or subterranean profession, are often set down by them to the interference of goblins or the power of magic. Among the various legends current in that wild country, there is a favourite one, which supposes the Harz to be haunted by a sort of tutelary demon, in the shape of a wild man, of huge stature, his head wreathed with oak leaves, and his middle cinctured with the same, bearing in his hand a pine torn up by the roots. It is certain that many persons profess to have seen such a form traversing, with huge strides, in a line parallel to their own course, the opposite ridge of a mountain, when divided from it by a narrow glen; and indeed the fact of the apparition is so generally admitted, that modern scepticism has only found refuge by ascribing it to optical deception. *

*The shadow of the person who sees the phantom, being reflected upon a cloud of mist, like the image of the magic lantern upon a white sheet, is supposed to have formed the apparition.

In elder times, the intercourse of the demon with the inhabitants was more familiar, and, according to the traditions of the Harz, he was wont, with the caprice usually ascribed to these earth-born powers, to interfere with the affairs of mortals, sometimes for their weal, sometimes for their wo. But it was observed that even his gifts often turned out, in the long run, fatal to those on whom they were bestowed, and it was no uncommon thing for the pastors, in their care of their flocks, to compose long sermons, the burden whereof was a warning against having any intercourse, direct or indirect, with the Harz demon. The fortunes of Martin Waldeck have been often quoted by the aged to their giddy children, when they were heard to scoff at a danger which appeared visionary.

A travelling capuchin had possessed himself of the pulpit of the thatched church at a little hamlet called *Morgenbrodt*, lying in the Harz district, from which he declaimed against the wickedness of the inhabitants, their communication with fiends, witches, and fairies, and, in particular, with the woodland goblin of the Harz. The doctrines of Luther had already begun to spread among the peasantry (for the incident is placed under the reign of Charles V.), and they laughed to scorn the zeal with which the venerable man insisted upon his topic. At length, as his vehemence increased with opposition, so their opposition rose in proportion to his vehemence. The inhabitants did not like to hear an accustomed quiet demon, who had inhabited the Brockenberg for so many ages, summarily confounded with Baal-peor, Ashtaroth, and Beelzebub himself, and condemned without reprieve to the bottomless Tophet. The apprehensions that the spirit might avenge himself on them for listening to such an illiberal sentence, added to their national interest in his behalf. A travelling friar, they said, that is here to-day and away to-morrow, may say what he pleases: but it is we, the ancient and constant inhabitants of the country, that are left at the mercy of the insulted demon, and must, of course, pay for all. Under the irritation occasioned by these reflections, the peasants from injurious language betook themselves to stones, and having pebbled the priest pretty handsomely, they drove him out of the parish to preach against demons elsewhere.

Three young men, who had been present and assisting on this occasion were upon their return to the hut where they carried on the laborious and mean occupation of preparing charcoal for the smelting furnaces. On the way, their conversation naturally turned upon the demon of the Harz and the doctrine of the capuchin. Max and George Waldeck, the two elder brothers, although they allowed the language of the capuchin to have been indiscreet and worthy of censure, as presuming to determine upon the precise character and abode of the spirit, yet contended it was dangerous, in the highest degree, to accept of his gifts, or hold any communication with him. He was powerful, they allowed, but wayward and capricious, and those who had intercourse with him seldom came to a good end. Did he not give the brave knight, Ecbert of Rabenwald, that famous black steed, by means of which he vanquished all the champions at the great tournament at

Bremen? and did not the same steed afterwards precipitate itself with its rider into an abyss so steep and fearful, that neither horse nor man were ever seen more? Had he not given to Dame Gertrude Trodden a curious spell for making butter come? and was she not burnt for a witch by the grand criminal judge of the Electorate, because she availed herself of his gift? But these, and many other instances which they quoted, of mischance and ill-luck ultimately attending on the apparent benefits conferred by the Harz spirit, failed to make any impression upon Martin Waldeck, the youngest of the brothers.

Martin was youthful, rash, and impetuous; excelling in all the exercises which distinguish a mountaineer, and brave and undaunted from his familiar intercourse with the dangers that attend them. He laughed at the timidity of his brothers. "Tell me not of such folly," he said; "the demon is a good demon—he lives among us as if he were a peasant like ourselves—haunts the lonely crags and recesses of the mountains like a huntsman or goatherd—and he who loves the Harz forest and its wild scenes cannot be indifferent to the fate of the hardy children of the soil. But, if the demon were as malicious as you would make him, how should he derive power over mortals, who barely avail themselves of his gifts, without binding themselves to submit to his pleasure? When you carry your charcoal to the furnace, is not the money as good that is paid you by blaspheming Blaize, the old reprobate overseer, as if you got it from the pastor himself? It is not the goblins gifts which can endanger you, then, but it is the use you shall make of them that you must account for. And were the demon to appear to me at this moment, and indicate to me a gold or silver mine, I would begin to dig away even before his back were turned,—and I would consider myself as under protection of a much Greater than he, while I made a good use of the wealth he pointed out to me."

To this the elder brother replied, that wealth ill won was seldom well spent; while Martin presumptuously declared, that the possession of all the treasures of the Harz would not make the slightest alteration on his habits, morals, or character.

His brother entreated Martin to talk less wildly upon the subject, and with some difficulty contrived to withdraw his attention, by calling it to the consideration of the approaching boar-chase. This talk brought them to their hut, a wretched wigwam, situated upon one side of a wild, narrow, and romantic dell, in the recesses of the Brockenberg. They released their sister from attending upon the operation of charring the wood, which requires constant attention, and divided among themselves the duty of watching it by night, according to their custom, one always waking, while his brothers slept.

Max Waldeck, the eldest, watched during the first two hours of the night, and was considerably alarmed by observing, upon the opposite bank of the glen, or valley, a huge fire surrounded by some figures that appeared to wheel around it with antic gestures. Max at first bethought him of calling up his brothers; but recollecting the daring character of the youngest, and finding it impossible to wake the elder without also disturbing Martin—conceiving also what he saw to be an illusion of the demon, sent perhaps in consequence of the venturous expressions used by Martin on the preceding evening, he thought it best to betake himself to the safeguard of such prayers as he could murmur over, and to watch in great terror and annoyance this strange and alarming apparition. After blazing for some time, the fire faded gradually away into darkness, and the rest of Max's watch was only disturbed by the remembrance of its terrors.

George now occupied the place of Max, who had retired to rest. The phenomenon of a huge blazing fire, upon the opposite bank of the glen, again presented itself to the eye of the watchman. It was surrounded as before by figures, which, distinguished by their opaque forms, being between the spectator and the red glaring light, moved and fluctuated around it as if engaged in some mystical ceremony. George, though equally cautious, was of a bolder character than his elder brother. He resolved to examine more nearly the object of his wonder; and, accordingly after crossing the rivulet which divided the glen, he climbed up the opposite bank, and approached within an arrow's flight of the fire, which blazed apparently with the same fury as when he first witnessed it.

The appearance, of the assistants who surrounded it resembled those phantoms which are seen in a troubled dream, and at once confirmed the idea he had entertained from the first, that they did not belong to the human world. Amongst these strange unearthly forms, George Waldeck distinguished that of a giant overgrown with hair, holding an uprooted fir in his hand, with which, from time to time, he seemed to stir the blazing fire, and having no other clothing than a wreath of oak leaves around his forehead and loins. George's heart sunk within him at recognising the well-known apparition of the Harz demon, as he had been often described to him by the ancient shepherds and huntsmen who had seen his form traversing the mountains. He turned, and was about to fly; but upon second thoughts, blaming his own cowardice, he recited mentally the verse of the Psalmist, "All good angels, praise the Lord!" which is in that country supposed powerful as an exorcism, and turned himself once more towards the place where he had seen the fire. But it was no longer visible.

The pale moon alone enlightened the side of the valley; and when George, with trembling steps, a moist brow, and hair bristling upright under his collier's cap, came to the spot on which the fire had been so lately visible, marked as it was by a scathed oak-tree, there appeared not on the heath the slightest vestiges of what he had seen. The moss and wild flowers were unscorched, and the branches of the oak-tree, which had so lately appeared enveloped in wreaths of flame and smoke, were moist with the dews of midnight.

George returned to his hut with trembling steps, and, arguing like his elder brother, resolved to say nothing of what he had seen, lest he should awake in Martin that daring curiosity which he almost deemed to be allied with impiety.

It was now Martin's turn to watch. The household cock had given his first summons, and the night was well-nigh spent. Upon examining the state of the furnace in which the wood was deposited in order to its being *coked* or *charred*, he was surprised to find that the fire had not been sufficiently maintained; for in his excursion and its consequences, George had forgot the principal object of his watch. Martin's first thought was to call up the slumberers; but observing that both his brothers slept unwontedly deep and heavily, he respected their repose, and set himself to supply the furnace with fuel without requiring their aid. What he heaped upon it was apparently damp and unfit for the purpose, for the fire seemed rather to decay than revive. Martin next went to collect some boughs from a stack which had been carefully cut and dried for this purpose; but, when he returned, he found the fire totally extinguished. This was a serious evil, and threatened them with loss of their trade for more than one day. The vexed and mortified watchman set about to strike a light in order to rekindle the fire but the tinder was moist, and his labour proved in this respect also ineffectual. He was now about to call up his brothers, for circumstances seemed to be pressing, when flashes of light glimmered not only through the window, but through every crevice of the rudely built hut, and summoned him to behold the same apparition which had before alarmed the successive watches of his brethren. His first idea was, that the Muhlheraussers, their rivals in trade, and with whom they had had many quarrels, might have encroached upon their bounds for the purpose of pirating their wood; and he resolved to awake his brothers, and be revenged on them for their audacity. But a short reflection and observation on the gestures and manner of those who seemed to "work in the fire," induced him to dismiss this belief, and although rather sceptical in such matters, to conclude that what he saw was a supernatural phenomenon. "But be they men or fiends," said the undaunted forester, "that busy themselves yonder with such fantastical rites and gestures, I will go and demand a light to rekindle our furnace." He, relinquished at the same time the idea of awaking his brethren. There was a belief that such adventures as he was about to undertake were accessible only to one person at a time; he feared also that his brothers, in their scrupulous timidity, might interfere to prevent his pursuing the investigation he had resolved to commence; and, therefore, snatching his boar-spear from the wall, the undaunted Martin Waldeck set forth on the adventure alone.

With the same success as his brother George, but with courage far superior, Martin crossed the brook, ascended the hill, and approached so near the ghostly assembly, that he could recognise, in the presiding figure, the attributes of the Harz demon. A cold shuddering assailed him for the first time in his life; but the recollection that he had at a distance dared and even courted the intercourse which was now about to take place, confirmed his staggering courage; and pride supplying what he wanted in resolution, he advanced with tolerable firmness towards the fire, the figures which surrounded it appearing still more wild, fantastical, and supernatural, the more near he approached to the assembly. He was received with a loud shout of discordant and unnatural laughter, which, to his stunned ears, seemed more alarming than a combination of the most dismal and melancholy sounds that could be imagined. "Who art thou?" said the giant, compressing his savage and exaggerated features into a sort of forced gravity, while they were occasionally agitated by the convulsion of the laughter which he seemed to suppress.

"Martin Waldeck, the forester," answered the hardy youth;—"and who are you?"

"The King of the Waste and of the Mine," answered the spectre;—"and why hast thou dared to encroach on my mysteries?"

"I came in search of light to rekindle my fire," answered Martin, hardily, and then resolutely asked in his turn, "What mysteries are those that you celebrate here?"

"We celebrate," answered the complaisant demon, "the wedding of Hermes with the Black Dragon—But take thy fire that thou camest to seek, and begone! no mortal may look upon us and live."

The peasant struck his spear-point into a large piece of blazing wood, which he heaved up with some difficulty, and then turned round to regain his hut, the shouts of laughter being renewed behind him with treble violence, and ringing far down the narrow valley. When Martin returned to the hut, his first care, however much astonished with what he had seen, was to dispose the kindled coal among the fuel so as might best light the fire of his furnace; but after many efforts, and all exertions of bellows and fire-prong, the coal he had brought from the demon's fire became totally extinct without kindling any of the others. He turned about, and observed the fire still blazing on the hill, although those who had been busied around it had disappeared. As he conceived the spectre had been jesting with him, he gave way to the natural hardihood of his temper, and, determining to see the adventure to an end, resumed the road to the fire, from which, unopposed by the demon, he brought off in the same manner a blazing piece of charcoal, but still without being able to succeed in lighting his fire. Impunity having increased his rashness, he resolved upon a third experiment, and was as successful as before in reaching the fire; but when he had again appropriated a piece of burning coal, and had turned to depart, he heard the harsh and supernatural voice which had before accosted him, pronounce these words, "Dare not return hither a fourth time!"

The attempt to kindle the fire with this last coal having proved as ineffectual as on the former occasions, Martin relinquished the hopeless attempt, and flung himself on his bed of leaves, resolving to delay till the next morning the communication of his supernatural adventure to his brothers. He was awakened from a heavy sleep into which he had sunk, from fatigue of body and agitation of mind, by loud exclamations of surprise and joy. His brothers, astonished at finding the fire extinguished when they awoke, had proceeded to arrange the fuel in order to renew it, when they found in the ashes three huge metallic masses, which their skill (for most of the peasants in the Harz are practical mineralogists) immediately ascertained to be pure gold.

It was some damp upon their joyful congratulations when they learned from Martin the mode in which he had obtained this treasure, to which their own experience of the nocturnal vision induced them to give full credit. But they were unable to resist the temptation of sharing in their brother's wealth. Taking now upon him as head of the house, Martin Waldeck bought lands and forests, built a castle, obtained a patent of nobility, and, greatly to the indignation of the ancient aristocracy of the neighbourhood, was invested with all the privileges of a man of family. His courage in public war, as well as in private feuds, together with the number of retainers whom he kept in pay, sustained him for some time against the odium which was excited by his sudden elevation, and the arrogance of his pretensions.

And now it was seen in the instance of Martin Waldeck, as it has been in that of many others, how little mortals can foresee the effect of sudden prosperity on their own disposition. The evil propensities in his nature, which poverty had checked and repressed, ripened and bore their unhallowed fruit under the influence of temptation and the means of indulgence. As Deep calls unto Deep, one bad passion awakened another the fiend of avarice invoked that of pride, and pride was to be supported by cruelty and oppression. Waldeck's character, always bold and daring but rendered harsh and assuming by prosperity, soon made him odious, not to the nobles only, but likewise to the lower ranks, who saw, with double dislike, the oppressive rights of the feudal nobility of the empire so remorselessly exercised by one who had risen from the very dregs of the people. His adventure, although carefully concealed, began likewise to be whispered abroad, and the clergy already stigmatized as a wizard and accomplice of fiends, the wretch, who, having acquired so huge a treasure in so strange a manner, had not sought to sanctify it by dedicating a considerable portion to the use of the church. Surrounded by enemies, public and private, tormented by a thousand feuds, and threatened by the church with excommunication, Martin Waldeck, or, as we must now call him, the Baron von Waldeck, often regretted bitterly the labours and sports of his unenvied poverty. But his courage failed him not under all these difficulties, and seemed rather to augment in proportion to the danger which darkened around him, until an accident precipitated his fall.

A proclamation by the reigning Duke of Brunswick had invited to a solemn tournament all German nobles of free and honourable descent; and Martin Waldeck, splendidly armed, accompanied by his two brothers, and a gallantly-equipped retinue, had the arrogance to appear among the chivalry of the province, and demand permission to enter the lists. This was considered as filling up the measure of his presumption. A thousand voices exclaimed, "We will have no cinder-sifter mingle in our games of chivalry." Irritated to frenzy, Martin drew his sword and hewed down the herald, who, in compliance with the general outcry, opposed his entry into the lists. An hundred swords were unsheathed to avenge what was in those days regarded as a crime only inferior to sacrilege or regicide. Waldeck, after defending himself like a lion, was seized, tried on the spot by the judges of the lists, and condemned, as the appropriate punishment for breaking the peace of his sovereign, and violating the sacred person of a herald-at-arms, to have his right hand struck from his body, to be ignominiously deprived of the honour of nobility, of which he was unworthy, and to be expelled from the city. When he had been stripped of his arms, and sustained the mutilation imposed by this severe sentence, the unhappy victim of ambition was abandoned to the rabble, who followed him with threats and outcries levelled alternately against the necromancer and oppressor, which at length ended in violence. His brothers (for his retinue were fled and dispersed) at length succeeded in rescuing him from the hands of the populace, when, satiated with cruelty, they had left him half dead through loss of blood, and through the outrages he had sustained. They were not permitted, such was the ingenious cruelty of their enemies, to make use of any other means of removing him, excepting such a collier's cart as they had themselves formerly used, in which they deposited their brother on a truss of straw, scarcely expecting to reach any place of shelter ere death should release him from his misery.

When the Waldecks, journeying in this miserable manner, had approached the verge of their native country, in a hollow way, between two mountains, they perceived a figure advancing towards them, which at first sight seemed to be an aged man. But as he approached, his limbs and stature increased, the cloak fell from his shoulders, his pilgrim's staff was changed into an uprooted pine-tree, and the gigantic figure of the Harz demon passed before them in his terrors. When he came opposite to the cart which contained the miserable Waldeck, his huge features dilated into a grin of unutterable contempt and malignity, as he asked the sufferer, "How like you the fire my coals have kindled?" The power of motion, which terror suspended in his two brothers, seemed to be restored to Martin by the energy of his courage. He raised himself on the cart, bent his brows, and, clenching his fist, shook it at the spectre with a ghastly look of hate and defiance. The goblin vanished with his usual tremendous and explosive laugh, and left Waldeck exhausted with this effort of expiring nature.

The terrified brethren turned their vehicle toward the towers of a convent, which arose in a wood of pine-trees beside the road. They were charitably received by a bare-footed and long-bearded capuchin, and Martin survived only to complete the first confession he had made since the day of his sudden prosperity, and to receive absolution from the very priest whom, precisely on that day three years, he had assisted to pelt out of the hamlet of Morgenbrodt. The three years of precarious prosperity were supposed to have a mysterious correspondence with the number of his visits to the spectral fire upon the bill.

The body of Martin Waldeck was interred in the convent where he expired, in which his brothers, having assumed the habit of the order, lived and died in the performance of acts of charity and devotion. His lands, to which no one asserted any claim, lay waste until they were reassumed by the emperor as a lapsed fief, and the ruins of the castle, which Waldeck had called by his own name, are still shunned by the miner and forester as haunted by evil spirits. Thus were the miseries attendant upon wealth, hastily attained and ill employed, exemplified in the fortunes of Martin Waldeck.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

*Here has been such a stormy encounter
Betwixt my cousin Captain, and this soldier,
About I know not what!—nothing, indeed;
Competitions, degrees, and comparatives
Of soldiership!—
A Faire Qurrell.*

The attentive audience gave the fair transcriber of the foregoing legend the thanks which politeness required. Oldbuck alone curled up his nose, and observed, that Miss Wardour's skill was something like that of the alchemists, for she had contrived to extract a sound and valuable moral out of a very trumpery and ridiculous legend. "It is the fashion, as I am given to understand, to admire those extravagant fictions—for me,

—I bear an English heart,

Unused at ghosts and rattling bones to start."

"Under your favour, my goot Mr. Oldenbuck," said the German, "Miss Wardour has turned de story, as she does every thing as she touches, very pretty indeed; but all the history of de Harz goblin, and how he walks among de desolate mountains wid a great fir-tree for his walking cane, and wid de great green bush around his head and his waist—that is as true as I am an honest man."

"There is no disputing any proposition so well guaranteed," answered the Antiquary, drily. But at this moment the approach of a stranger cut short the conversation.

The new comer was a handsome young man, about five-and-twenty, in a military undress, and bearing, in his look and manner, a good deal of the martial profession—nay, perhaps a little more than is quite consistent with the ease of a man of perfect good-breeding, in whom no professional habit ought to predominate. He was at once greeted by the greater part of the company. "My dear Hector!" said Miss M'Intyre, as she rose to take his hand—

"Hector, son of Priam, whence comest thou?" said the Antiquary.

"From Fife, my liege," answered the young soldier, and continued, when he had politely saluted the rest of the company, and particularly Sir Arthur and his daughter—"I learned from one of the servants, as I rode towards Monkbarns to pay my respects to you, that I should find the present company in this place, and I willingly embrace the opportunity to pay my respects to so many of my friends at once."

"And to a new one also, my trusty Trojan," said Oldbuck. "Mr. Lovel, this is my nephew, Captain M'Intyre—Hector, I recommend Mr. Lovel to your acquaintance."

The young soldier fixed his keen eye upon Lovel, and paid his compliment with more reserve than cordiality and as our acquaintance thought his coldness almost supercilious, he was equally frigid and haughty in making the necessary return to it; and thus a prejudice seemed to arise between them at the very commencement of their acquaintance.

The observations which Lovel made during the remainder of this pleasure party did not tend to reconcile him with this addition to their society. Captain M'Intyre, with the gallantry to be expected from his age and profession, attached himself to the service of Miss Wardour, and offered her, on every possible opportunity, those marks of attention which Lovel would have given the world to have rendered, and was only deterred from offering by the fear of her displeasure. With forlorn dejection at one moment, and with irritated susceptibility at another, he saw this handsome young soldier assume and exercise all the privileges of a *cavaliere servente*. He handed Miss Wardour's gloves, he assisted her in putting on her shawl, he attached himself to her in the walks, had a hand ready to remove every impediment in her path, and an arm to support her where it was rugged or difficult; his conversation was addressed chiefly to her, and, where circumstances permitted, it was exclusively so. All this, Lovel well knew, might be only that sort of egotistical gallantry which induces some young men of the present day to give themselves the air of engrossing the attention of the prettiest women in company, as if the others were unworthy of their notice. But he thought he observed in the conduct of Captain M'Intyre something of marked and peculiar tenderness, which was calculated to alarm the jealousy of a lover. Miss Wardour also received his attentions; and although his candour allowed they were of a kind which could not be repelled without some strain of affectation, yet it galled him to the heart to witness that she did so.

The heart-burning which these reflections occasioned proved very indifferent seasoning to the dry antiquarian discussions with which Oldbuck, who continued to demand his particular attention, was unremittingly persecuting him; and he underwent, with fits of impatience that amounted almost to loathing, a course of lectures upon monastic architecture, in all its styles, from the massive Saxon to the florid Gothic, and from that to the mixed and composite architecture of James the First's time, when, according to Oldbuck, all orders were confounded, and columns of various descriptions arose side by side, or were piled above each other, as if symmetry had been forgotten, and the elemental principles of art resolved into their primitive confusion. "What can be more cutting to the heart than the sight of evils," said Oldbuck, in rapturous enthusiasm, "which we are compelled to behold, while we do not possess the power of remedying them?" Lovel answered by an involuntary groan. "I see, my dear young friend, and most congenial spirit, that you feel these enormities almost as much as I do. Have you ever approached them, or met them, without longing to tear, to deface, what is so dishonourable?"

"Dishonourable!" echoed Lovel—"in what respect dishonourable?"

"I mean, disgraceful to the arts."

"Where? how?"

"Upon the portico, for example, of the schools of Oxford, where, at immense expense, the barbarous, fantastic, and ignorant architect has chosen to represent the whole five orders of architecture on the front of one building."

By such attacks as these, Oldbuck, unconscious of the torture he was giving, compelled Lovel to give him a share of his attention,—as a skilful angler, by means of his line, maintains an influence over the most frantic movements of his agonized prey.

They were now on their return to the spot where they had left the carriages; and it is inconceivable how often, in the course of that short walk, Lovel, exhausted by the unceasing prosing of his worthy companion, mentally bestowed on the devil, or any one else that would have rid him of hearing more of them, all the orders and disorders of architecture which had been invented or combined from the building of Solomon's temple downwards. A slight incident occurred, however, which sprinkled a little patience on the heat of his distemperature.

Miss Wardour, and her self-elected knight companion, rather preceded the others in the narrow path, when the young lady apparently became desirous to unite herself with the rest of the party, and, to break off her *tête-à-tête* with the young officer, fairly made a pause until Mr. Oldbuck came up. "I wished to ask you a question, Mr. Oldbuck, concerning the date of these interesting ruins."

It would be doing injustice to Miss Wardour's *savoir faire*, to suppose she was not aware that such a question would lead to an answer of no limited length. The Antiquary, starting like a war-horse at the trumpet sound, plunged at once into the various arguments for and against the date of 1273, which had been assigned to the priory of St. Ruth by a late publication on Scottish architectural antiquities. He raked up the names of all the priors who had ruled the institution, of the nobles who had bestowed lands upon it, and of the monarchs who had slept their last sleep among its roofless courts. As a train which takes fire is sure to light another, if there be such in the vicinity, the Baronet, catching at the name of one of his ancestors which occurred in Oldbuck's disquisition, entered upon an account of his wars, his conquests, and his trophies; and worthy Dr. Blattergowl was induced, from the mention of a grant of lands, *cum decimis inclusis tam vicariis quam garbalibus, et nunquam antea separatis*, to enter into a long explanation concerning the interpretation given by the Teind Court in the consideration of such a clause, which had occurred in a process for localising his last augmentation of stipend. The orators, like three racers, each pressed forward to the goal, without much regarding how each crossed and jostled his competitors. Mr. Oldbuck harangued, the Baronet declaimed, Mr. Blattergowl prosed and laid down the law, while the Latin forms of feudal grants were mingled with the jargon of blazonry, and the yet more barbarous phraseology of the Teind Court of Scotland. "He was," exclaimed Oldbuck, speaking of the Prior Adhemar, "indeed an exemplary prelate; and, from his strictness of morals, rigid execution of penance, joined to the charitable disposition of his mind, and the infirmities endured by his great age and ascetic habits"—

Here he chanced to cough, and Sir Arthur burst in, or rather continued—"was called popularly Hell-in-Harness; he carried a shield, gules with a sable fess, which we have since disused, and was slain at the battle of Vernoi, in France, after killing six of the English with his own"—

"Decreet of certification," proceeded the clergyman, in that prolonged, steady, prosing tone, which, however overpowered at first by the vehemence of competition, promised, in the long run, to obtain the ascendancy in this strife of narrators;—"Decreet of certification having gone out, and parties being held as confessed, the proof seemed to be held as concluded, when their lawyer moved to have it opened up, on the allegation that they had witnesses to bring forward, that they had been in the habit of carrying the ewes to lamb on the teind-free land; which was a mere evasion, for"—

But here the Baronet and Mr. Oldbuck having recovered their wind, and continued their respective harangues, the three *strands* of the conversation, to speak the language of a rope-work, were again twined together into one undistinguishable string of confusion.

Yet, howsoever uninteresting this piebald jargon might seem, it was obviously Miss Wardour's purpose to give it her attention, in preference to yielding Captain M'Intyre an opportunity of renewing their private conversation. So that, after waiting for a little time with displeasure, ill concealed by his haughty features, he left her to enjoy her bad taste, and taking his sister by the arm, detained her a little behind the rest of the party.

"So I find, Mary, that your neighbour has neither become more lively nor less learned during my absence."

"We lacked your patience and wisdom to instruct us, Hector."

"Thank you, my dear sister. But you have got a wiser, if not so lively an addition to your society, than your unworthy brother—Pray, who is this Mr. Lovel, whom our old uncle has at once placed so high in his good graces?—he does not use to be so accessible to strangers."

"Mr. Lovel, Hector, is a very gentleman-like young man."

"Ay,—that is to say, he bows when he comes into a room, and wears a coat that is whole at the elbows."

"No, brother; it says a great deal more. It says that his manners and discourse express the feelings and education of the higher class."

"But I desire to know what is his birth and his rank in society, and what is his title to be in the circle in which I find him domesticated?"

"If you mean, how he comes to visit at Monkbarns, you must ask my uncle, who will probably reply, that he invites to his own house such company as he pleases; and if you mean to ask Sir Arthur, you must know that Mr. Lovel rendered Miss Wardour and him a service of the most important kind."

"What! that romantic story is true, then?—And pray, does the valorous knight aspire, as is befitting on such occasions, to the hand of the young lady whom he redeemed from peril? It is quite in the rule of romance, I am aware; and I did think that she was uncommonly dry to me as we walked together, and seemed from time to time as if she watched whether she was not giving offence to her gallant cavalier."

"Dear Hector," said his sister, "if you really continue to nourish any affection for Miss Wardour"—

"If, Mary?—what an *if* was there!"

"—I own I consider your perseverance as hopeless."

"And why hopeless, my sage sister?" asked Captain M'Intyre: "Miss Wardour, in the state of her father's affairs, cannot pretend to much fortune;—and, as to family, I trust that of M'Intyre is not inferior."

"But, Hector," continued his sister, "Sir Arthur always considers us as members of the Monkbarns family."

"Sir Arthur may consider what he pleases," answered the Highlander scornfully; "but any one with common sense will consider that the wife takes rank from the husband, and that my father's pedigree of fifteen unblemished descents must have ennobled my mother, if her veins had been filled with printer's ink."

"For God's sake, Hector," replied his anxious sister, "take care of yourself! a single expression of that kind, repeated to my uncle by an indiscreet or interested eavesdropper, would lose you his favour for ever, and destroy all chance of your succeeding to his estate."

"Be it so," answered the heedless young man; "I am one of a profession which the world has never been able to do without, and will far less endure to wait for half a century to come; and my good old uncle may tack his good estate and his plebeian name to your apron-string if he pleases, Mary, and you may wed this new favourite of his if you please, and you may both of you live quiet, peaceable, well-regulated lives, if it pleases Heaven. My part is taken—I'll fawn on no man for an inheritance which should be mine by birth."

Miss M'Intyre laid her hand on her brother's arm, and entreated him to suppress his vehemence. "Who," she said, "injures or seeks to injure you, but your own hasty temper?—what dangers are you defying, but those you have yourself conjured up?—Our uncle has hitherto been all that is kind and paternal in his conduct to us, and why should you suppose he will in future be otherwise than what he has ever been, since we were left as orphans to his care?"

"He is an excellent old gentleman, I must own," replied M'Intyre, "and I am enraged at myself when I chance to offend him; but then his eternal harangues upon topics not worth the spark of a flint—his investigations about invalidated pots and pans and tobacco-stoppers past service—all these things put me out of patience. I have something of Hotspur in me, sister, I must confess."

"Too much, too much, my dear brother! Into how many risks, and, forgive me for saying, some of them little creditable, has this absolute and violent temper led you! Do not let such clouds darken the time you are now to pass in our neighbourhood, but let our old benefactor see his kinsman as he is—generous, kind, and lively, without being rude, headstrong, and impetuous."

"Well," answered Captain M'Intyre, "I am schooled—good-manners be my speed! I'll do the civil thing by your new friend—I'll have some talk with this Mr. Lovel."

With this determination, in which he was for the time perfectly sincere, he joined the party who were walking before them. The treble disquisition was by this time ended; and Sir Arthur was speaking on the subject of foreign news, and the political and military situation of the country, themes upon which every man thinks himself qualified to give an opinion. An action of the preceding year having come upon the *tapis*, Lovel, accidentally mingling in the conversation, made some assertion concerning it, of the accuracy of which Captain M'Intyre seemed not to be convinced, although his doubts were politely expressed.

"You must confess yourself in the wrong here, Hector," said his uncle, "although I know no man less willing to give up an argument; but you were in England at the time, and Mr. Lovel was probably concerned in the affair."

"I am speaking to a military man, then?" said M'Intyre; "may I inquire to what regiment Mr. Lovel belongs?"—Mr. Lovel gave him the number of the regiment. "It happens strangely that we should never have met before, Mr. Lovel. I know your regiment very well, and have served along with them at different times."

A blush crossed Lovel's countenance. "I have not lately been with my regiment," he replied; "I served the last campaign upon the staff of General Sir——."

"Indeed! that is more wonderful than the other circumstance!—for although I did not serve with General Sir——, yet I had an opportunity of knowing the names of the officers who held situations in his family, and I cannot recollect that of Lovel."

At this observation Lovel again blushed so deeply as to attract the attention of the whole company, while, a scornful laugh seemed to indicate Captain M'Intyre's triumph. "There is something strange in this," said Oldbuck to himself; "but I will not readily give up my phoenix of post-chaise companions—all his actions, language, and bearing, are those of a gentleman."

Lovel in the meanwhile had taken out his pocket-book, and selecting a letter, from which he took off the envelope, he handed it to M'Intyre. "You know the General's hand, in all probability—I own I ought not to show these exaggerated expressions of his regard and esteem for me." The letter contained a very handsome compliment from the officer in question for some military service lately performed. Captain M'Intyre, as he glanced his eye over it, could not deny that it was written in the General's hand, but drily observed, as he returned it, that the address was wanting. "The address, Captain M'Intyre," answered Lovel, in the same tone, "shall be at your service whenever you choose to inquire after it!"

"I certainly shall not fail to do so," rejoined the soldier.

"Come, come," exclaimed Oldbuck, "what is the meaning of all this? Have we got Hiren here?—We'll have no swaggering youngsters. Are you come from the wars abroad, to stir up domestic strife in our peaceful land? Are you like bull-dog puppies, forsooth, that when the bull, poor fellow, is removed from the ring, fall to brawl among themselves, worry each other, and bite honest folk's shins that are standing by?"

Sir Arthur trusted, he said, the young gentlemen would not so far forget themselves as to grow warm upon such a trifling subject as the back of a letter.

Both the disputants disclaimed any such intention, and, with high colour and flashing eyes, protested they were never so cool in their lives. But an obvious damp was cast over the party;—they talked in future too much by the rule to be sociable, and Lovel, conceiving himself the object of cold and suspicious looks from the rest of the company, and sensible that his indirect replies had given them permission to entertain strange opinions respecting him, made a gallant determination to sacrifice the pleasure he had proposed in spending the day at Knockwinnock.

He affected, therefore, to complain of a violent headache, occasioned by the heat of the day, to which he had not been exposed since his illness, and made a formal apology to Sir Arthur, who, listening more to recent suspicion than to the gratitude due for former services, did not press him to keep his engagement more than good-breeding exactly demanded.

When Lovel took leave of the ladies, Miss Wardour's manner seemed more anxious than he had hitherto remarked it. She indicated by a glance of her eye towards Captain M'Intyre, perceptible only by Lovel, the subject of her alarm, and hoped, in a voice greatly under her usual tone, it was not a less pleasant engagement which deprived them of the pleasure of Mr. Lovel's company. "No engagement had intervened," he assured her; "it was only the return of a complaint by which he had been for some time occasionally attacked."

"The best remedy in such a case is prudence, and I—every friend of Mr. Lovel's will expect him to employ it."

Lovel bowed low and coloured deeply, and Miss Wardour, as if she felt that she had said too much, turned and got into the carriage. Lovel had next to part with Oldbuck, who, during this interval, had, with Caxon's assistance, been arranging his disordered periwig, and brushing his coat, which exhibited some marks of the rude path they had traversed. "What, man!" said Oldbuck, "you are not going to leave us on account of that foolish Hector's indiscreet curiosity and vehemence? Why, he is a thoughtless boy—a spoiled child from the time he was in the nurse's arms—he threw his coral and bells at my head for refusing him a bit of sugar; and you have too much sense to mind such a shrewish boy: *aequam servare mentem* is the motto of our friend Horace. I'll school Hector by and by, and put it all to rights." But Lovel persisted in his design of returning to Fairport.

The Antiquary then assumed a graver tone.—"Take heed, young man, to your present feelings. Your life has been given you for useful and valuable purposes, and should be reserved to illustrate the literature of your country, when you are not called upon to expose it in her defence, or in the rescue of the innocent. Private war, a practice unknown to the civilised ancients, is, of all the absurdities introduced by the Gothic tribes, the most gross, impious, and cruel. Let me hear no more of these absurd quarrels, and I will show you the treatise upon the duello, which I composed when the town-clerk and provost Mucklewhame chose to assume the privileges of gentlemen, and challenged each other. I thought of printing my Essay, which is signed *Pacificator*; but there was no need, as the matter was taken up by the town-council of the borough."

"But I assure you, my dear sir, there is nothing between Captain M'Intyre and me that can render such respectable interference necessary."

"See it be so; for otherwise, I will stand second to both parties."

So saying, the old gentleman got into the chaise, close to which Miss M'Intyre had detained her brother, upon the same principle that the owner of a quarrelsome dog keeps him by his side to prevent his fastening upon another. But Hector contrived to give her precaution the slip, for, as he was on horseback, he lingered behind the carriages until they had fairly turned the corner in the road to Knockwinnock, and then, wheeling his horse's head round, gave him the spur in the opposite direction.

A very few minutes brought him up with Lovel, who, perhaps anticipating his intention, had not put his horse beyond a slow walk, when the clatter of hoofs behind him announced Captain M'Intyre. The young soldier, his natural heat of temper exasperated by the rapidity of motion, reined his horse up suddenly and violently by Lovel's side, and touching his hat slightly, inquired, in a very haughty tone of voice, "What am I to understand, sir, by your telling me that your address was at my service?"

"Simply, sir," replied Lovel, "that my name is Lovel, and that my residence is, for the present, Fairport, as you will see by this card."

"And is this all the information you are disposed to give me?"

"I see no right you have to require more."

"I find you, sir, in company with my sister," said the young soldier, "and I have a right to know who is admitted into Miss M'Intyre's society."

"I shall take the liberty of disputing that right," replied Lovel, with a manner as haughty as that of the young soldier;—"you find me in society who are satisfied with the degree of information on my affairs which I have thought proper to communicate, and you, a mere stranger, have no right to inquire further."

"Mr. Lovel, if you served as you say you have"—

"If!" interrupted Lovel,—"*if* I have served as *I* say I have?"

"Yes, sir, such is my expression—*if* you have so served, you must know that you owe me satisfaction either in one way or other."

"If that be your opinion, I shall be proud to give it to you, Captain M'Intyre, in the way in which the word is generally used among gentlemen."

"Very well, sir," rejoined Hector, and, turning his horse round, galloped off to overtake his party.

His absence had already alarmed them, and his sister, having stopped the carriage, had her neck stretched out of the window to see where he was.

"What is the matter with you now?" said the Antiquary, "riding to and fro as your neck were upon the wager—why do you not keep up with the carriage?"

"I forgot my glove, sir," said Hector.

"Forgot your glove!—I presume you meant to say you went to throw it down—But I will take order with you, my young gentleman—you shall return with me this night to Monkbarrow." So saying, he bid the postilion go on.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

—If you fail Honour here,
Never presume to serve her any more;
Bid farewell to the integrity of arms;
And the honourable name of soldier
Fall from you, like a shivered wreath of laurel
By thunder struck from a desertlesse forehead.
A Faire Quarrell.

Early the next morning, a gentleman came to wait upon Mr. Lovel, who was up and ready to receive him. He was a military gentleman, a friend of Captain M'Intyre's, at present in Fairport on the recruiting service. Lovel and he were slightly known to each other. "I presume, sir," said Mr. Lesley (such was the name of the visitor), "that you guess the occasion of my troubling you so early?"

"A message from Captain M'Intyre, I presume?"

"The same. He holds himself injured by the manner in which you declined yesterday to answer certain inquiries which he conceived himself entitled to make respecting a gentleman whom he found in intimate society with his family."

"May I ask, if you, Mr. Lesley, would have inclined to satisfy interrogatories so haughtily and unceremoniously put to you?"

"Perhaps not;—and therefore, as I know the warmth of my friend M'Intyre on such occasions, I feel very desirous of acting as peacemaker. From Mr. Lovel's very gentleman-like manners, every one must strongly wish to see him repel all that sort of dubious calumny which will attach itself to one whose situation is not fully explained. If he will permit me, in friendly conciliation, to inform Captain M'Intyre of his real name, for we are led to conclude that of Lovel is assumed"—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I cannot admit that inference."

"—Or at least," said Lesley, proceeding, "that it is not the name by which Mr. Lovel has been at all times distinguished—if Mr. Lovel will have the goodness to explain this circumstance, which, in my opinion, he should do in justice to his own character, I will answer for the amicable arrangement of this unpleasant business."

"Which is to say, Mr. Lesley, that if I condescend to answer questions which no man has a right to ask, and which are now put to me under penalty of Captain M'Intyre's resentment, Captain M'Intyre will condescend to rest satisfied? Mr. Lesley, I have just one word to say on this subject—I have no doubt my secret, if I had one, might be safely entrusted to your honour, but I do not feel called upon to satisfy the curiosity of any one. Captain M'Intyre met me in society which of itself was a warrant to all the world, and particularly ought to be such to him, that I was a gentleman. He has, in my opinion, no right to go any further, or to inquire the pedigree, rank, or circumstances, of a stranger, who, without seeking any intimate connection with him, or his, chances to dine with his uncle, or walk in company with his sister."

"In that case, Captain M'Intyre requests you to be informed, that your farther visits at Monkbarns, and all connection with Miss M'Intyre, must be dropt, as disagreeable to him."

"I shall certainly," said Lovel, "visit Mr. Oldbuck when it suits me, without paying the least respect to his nephew's threats or irritable feelings. I respect the young lady's name too much (though nothing can be slighter than our acquaintance) to introduce it into such a discussion."

"Since that is your resolution, sir," answered Lesley, "Captain M'Intyre requests that Mr. Lovel, unless he wishes to be announced as a very dubious character, will favour him with a meeting this evening, at seven, at the thorn-tree in the little valley close by the ruins of St. Ruth."

"Most unquestionably, I will wait upon him. There is only one difficulty—I must find a friend to accompany me, and where to seek one on this short notice, as I have no acquaintance in Fairport—I will be on the spot, however—Captain M'Intyre may be assured of that."

Lesley had taken his hat, and was as far as the door of the apartment, when, as if moved by the peculiarity of Lovel's situation, he returned, and thus addressed him: "Mr. Lovel, there is something so singular in all this, that I cannot help again resuming the argument. You must be yourself aware at this moment of the inconvenience of your preserving an incognito, for which, I am convinced, there can be no dishonourable reason. Still, this mystery renders it difficult for you to procure the assistance of a friend in a crisis so delicate—nay, let me add, that many persons will even consider it as a piece of Quixotry in M'Intyre to give you a meeting, while your character and circumstances are involved in such obscurity."

"I understand your innuendo, Mr. Lesley," rejoined Lovel; and though I might be offended at its severity, I am not so, because it is meant kindly. But, in my opinion, he is entitled to all the privileges of a gentleman, to whose charge, during the time he has been known in the society where he happens to move, nothing can be laid that is unhandsome or unbecoming. For a friend, I dare say I shall find some one or other who will do me that good turn; and if his experience be less than I could wish, I am certain not to suffer through that circumstance when you are in the field for my antagonist."

"I trust you will not," said Lesley; "but as I must, for my own sake, be anxious to divide so heavy a responsibility with a capable assistant, allow me to say, that Lieutenant Taffril's gun-brig is come into the roadstead, and he himself is now at old Caxon's, where he lodges. I think you have the same degree of acquaintance with him as with me, and, as I am sure I should willingly have rendered you such a service were I not engaged on the other side, I am convinced he will do so at your first request."

"At the thorn-tree, then, Mr. Lesley, at seven this evening—the arms, I presume, are pistols?"

"Exactly. M'Intyre has chosen the hour at which he can best escape from Monkbarns—he was with me this morning by five, in order to return and present himself before his uncle was up. Good-morning to you, Mr. Lovel." And Lesley left the apartment.

Lovel was as brave as most men; but none can internally regard such a crisis as now approached, without deep feelings of awe and uncertainty. In a few hours he might be in another world to answer for an action which his calmer thought told him was unjustifiable in a religious point of view, or he might be wandering about in the present like Cain, with the blood of his brother on his head. And all this might be saved by speaking a single word. Yet pride whispered, that to speak that word now, would be ascribed to a motive which would degrade him more low than even the most injurious reasons that could be assigned for his silence. Every one, Miss Wardour included, must then, he thought, account him a mean dishonoured poltroon, who gave to the fear of meeting Captain M'Intyre the explanation he had refused to the calm and handsome expostulations of Mr. Lesley. M'Intyre's insolent behaviour to himself personally, the air of pretension which he assumed towards Miss Wardour, and the extreme injustice, arrogance, and incivility of his demands upon a perfect stranger, seemed to justify him in repelling his rude investigation. In short, he formed the resolution which might have been expected from so young a man,—to shut the eyes, namely, of his calmer reason, and follow the dictates of his offended pride. With this purpose he sought Lieutenant Taffril.

The lieutenant received him with the good breeding of a gentleman and the frankness of a sailor, and listened with no small surprise to the detail which preceded his request that he might be favoured with his company at his meeting with Captain M'Intyre. When he had finished, Taffril rose up and walked through his apartment once or twice. "This is a most singular circumstance," he said, "and really"—

"I am conscious, Mr. Taffril, how little I am entitled to make my present request, but the urgency of circumstances hardly leaves me an alternative."

"Permit me to ask you one question," asked the sailor;—"is there anything of which you are ashamed in the circumstances which you have declined to communicate."

"Upon my honour, no; there is nothing but what, in a very short time, I trust I may publish to the whole world."

"I hope the mystery arises from no false shame at the lowness of your friends perhaps, or connections?"

"No, on my word," replied Lovel.

"I have little sympathy for that folly," said Taffril—"indeed I cannot be supposed to have any; for, speaking of my relations, I may be said to have come myself from before the mast, and I believe I shall very soon form a connection, which the world will think low enough, with a very amiable girl, to whom I have been attached since we were next-door neighbours, at a time when I little thought of the good fortune which has brought me forward in the service."

"I assure you, Mr. Taffril," replied Lovel, "whatever were the rank of my parents, I should never think of concealing it from a spirit of petty pride. But I am so situated at present, that I cannot enter on the subject of my family with any propriety."

"It is quite enough," said the honest sailor—"give me your hand; I'll see you as well through this business as I can, though it is but an unpleasant one after all—But what of that? our own honour has the next call on us after our country;—you are a lad of spirit, and I own I think Mr. Hector M'Intyre, with his long pedigree and his airs of family, very much of a jackanapes. His father was a soldier of fortune as I am a sailor—he himself, I suppose, is little better, unless just as his uncle pleases; and whether one pursues fortune by land, or sea, makes no great difference, I should fancy."

"None in the universe, certainly," answered Lovel.

"Well," said his new ally, "we will dine together and arrange matters for this rencounter. I hope you understand the use of the weapon?"

"Not particularly," Lovel replied.

"I am sorry for that—M'Intyre is said to be a marksman."

"I am sorry for it also," said Lovel, "both for his sake and my own: I must then, in self-defence, take my aim as well as I can."

"Well," added Taffril, "I will have our surgeon's mate on the field—a good clever young fellow at caulking a shot-hole. I will let Lesley, who is an honest fellow for a landsman, know that he attends for the benefit of either party. Is there anything I can do for you in case of an accident?"

"I have but little occasion to trouble you," said Lovel. "This small billet contains the key of my escritoir, and my very brief secret. There is one letter in the escritoir" (digesting a temporary swelling of the heart as he spoke), "which I beg the favour of you to deliver with your own hand."

"I understand," said the sailor. "Nay, my friend, never be ashamed for the matter—an affectionate heart may overflow for an instant at the eyes, if the ship were clearing for action; and, depend on it, whatever your injunctions are, Dan Taffril will regard them like the bequest of a dying brother. But this is all stuff;—we must get our things in fighting order, and you will dine with me and my little surgeon's mate, at the Graeme's-Arms over the way, at four o'clock."

"Agreed," said Lovel.

"Agreed," said Taffril; and the whole affair was arranged.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and the shadow of the solitary thorn-tree was lengthening upon the short greensward of the narrow valley, which was skirted by the woods that closed around the ruins of St. Ruth. *

*[Supposed to have been suggested by the old Abbey of Arbroath in * Forfarshire.]

Lovel and Lieutenant Taffril, with the surgeon, came upon the ground with a purpose of a nature very uncongenial to the soft, mild, and pacific character of the hour and scene. The sheep, which during the ardent heat of the day had sheltered in the breaches and hollows of the gravelly bank, or under the roots of the aged and stunted trees, had now spread themselves upon the face of the hill to enjoy their evening's pasture, and bleated, to each other with that melancholy sound which at once gives life to a landscape, and marks its solitude.—Taffril and Lovel came on in deep conference, having, for fear of discovery, sent their horses back to the town by the Lieutenant's servant. The opposite party had not yet appeared on the field. But when they came upon the ground, there sat upon the roots of the old thorn a figure as vigorous in his decay as the moss-grown but strong and contorted boughs which served him for a canopy. It was old Ochiltree. "This is embarrassing enough," said Lovel:—"How shall we get rid of this old fellow?"

"Here, father Adam," cried Taffril, who knew the mendicant of yore—"here's half-a-crown for you. You must go to the Four Horse-shoes yonder—the little inn, you know, and inquire for a servant with blue and yellow livery. If he is not come, you'll wait for him, and tell him we shall be with his master in about an hour's time. At any rate, wait there till we come back,—and—Get off with you—Come, come, weigh anchor."

"I thank ye for your awmous," said Ochiltree, pocketing the piece of money; "but I beg your pardon, Mr. Taffril—I canna gang your errand e'en now."

"Why not, man? what can hinder you?"

"I wad speak a word wi' young Mr. Lovel."

"With me?" answered Lovel: "what would you say with me? Come, say on, and be brief."

The mendicant led him a few paces aside. "Are ye indebted anything to the Laird o' Monkbarns?"

"Indebted!—no, not I—what of that?—what makes you think so?"

"Ye maun ken I was at the shirra's the day; for, God help me, I gang about a' gates like the troubled spirit; and wha suld come whirling there in a post-chaise, but Monkbarns in an unco carfuffle—now, it's no a little thing that will make his honour take a chaise and post-horse twa days rinnin'."

"Well, well; but what is all this to me?"

"Ou, ye'se hear, ye'se hear. Weel, Monkbarns is closeted wi' the shirra whatever puir folk may be left thereout—ye needna doubt that—the gentlemen are aye unco civil amang themselfs."

"For heaven's sake, my old friend"—

"Canna ye bid me gang to the deevil at ance, Mr. Lovel? it wad be mair purpose fa'ard than to speak o' heaven in that impatient gate."

"But I have private business with Lieutenant Taffril here."

"Weel, weel, a' in gude time," said the beggar—"I can use a little wee bit freedom wi' Mr. Daniel Taffril;—mony's the peery and the tap I worked for him langsyne, for I was a worker in wood as weel as a tinkler."

"You are either mad, Adam, or have a mind to drive me mad."

"Nane o' the twa," said Edie, suddenly changing his manner from the protracted drawl of the mendicant to a brief and decided tone. "The shirra sent for his clerk, and as the lad is rather light o' the tongue, I fand it was for drawing a warrant to apprehend you—I thought it had been on a *fugie* warrant for debt; for a' body kens the laird likes naebody to pit his hand in his pouch—But now I may haud my tongue, for I see the M'Intyre lad and Mr. Lesley coming up, and I guess that Monkbarns's purpose was very kind, and that yours is muckle waur than it should be."

The antagonist now approached, and saluted with the stern civility which befitted the occasion. "What has this old fellow to do here?" said M'Intyre.

"I am an auld fallow," said Edie, "but I am also an auld soldier o' your father's, for I served wi' him in the 42d."

"Serve where you please, you have no title to intrude on us," said M'Intyre, "or"—and he lifted his cane *in terrorem*, though without the idea of touching the old man.

But Ochiltree's courage was roused by the insult. "Haud down your switch, Captain M'Intyre! I am an auld soldier, as I said before, and I'll take muckle frae your father's son; but no a touch o' the wand while my pike-staff will haud thegither."

"Well, well, I was wrong—I was wrong," said M'Intyre; "here's a crown for you—go your ways—what's the matter now?"

The old man drew himself up to the full advantage of his uncommon height, and in despite of his dress, which indeed had more of the pilgrim than the ordinary beggar, looked from height, manner, and emphasis of voice and gesture, rather like a grey palmer or eremite preacher, the ghostly counsellor of the young men who were around him, than the object of their charity. His speech, indeed, was as homely as his habit, but as bold and uncereemonious as his erect and dignified demeanour. "What are ye come here for, young men?" he said, addressing himself to the surprised audience; "are ye come amongst the most lovely works of God to break his laws? Have ye left the works of man, the houses and the cities that are but clay and dust, like those that built them—and are ye come here among the peaceful hills, and by the quiet waters, that will last whiles aught earthly shall endure, to destroy each other's lives, that will have but an unco short time, by the course of nature, to make up a lang account at the close o't? O sirs! hae ye brothers, sisters, fathers, that hae tended ye, and mothers that hae travailed for ye, friends that hae ca'd ye like a piece o' their ain heart? and is this the way ye tak to make them childless and brotherless and friendless? Ohon! it's an ill feight whar he that wins has the warst o't. Think on't, bairns. I'm a puir man—but I'm an auld man too—and what my poverty takes awa frae the weight o' my counsel, grey hairs and a truthfu' heart should add it twenty times. Gang hame, gang hame, like gude lads—the French will be ower to harry us ane o' thae days, and ye'll hae feighting enough, and maybe auld Edie will hirple out himsell if he can get a feal-dyke to lay his gun ower, and may live to tell you whilk o' ye does the best where there's a good cause afore ye."

There was something in the undaunted and independent manner, hardy sentiment, and manly rude elocution of the old man, that had its effect upon the party, and particularly on the seconds, whose pride was uninterested in bringing the dispute to a bloody arbitrament, and who, on the contrary, eagerly watched for an opportunity to recommend reconciliation.

"Upon my word, Mr. Lesley," said Taffril, "old Adam speaks like an oracle. Our friends here were very angry yesterday, and of course very foolish;—today they should be cool, or at least we must be so in their behalf. I think the word should be forget and forgive on both sides,—that we should all shake hands, fire these foolish crackers in the air, and go home to sup in a body at the Graeme's-Arms."

"I would heartily recommend it," said Lesley; "for, amidst a great deal of heat and irritation on both sides, I confess myself unable to discover any rational ground of quarrel."

"Gentlemen," said M'Intyre, very coldly, "all this should have been thought of before. In my opinion, persons that have carried this matter so far as we have done, and who should part without carrying it any farther, might go to supper at the Graeme's-Arms very joyously, but would rise the next morning with reputations as ragged as our friend here, who has obliged us with a rather unnecessary display of his oratory. I speak for myself, that I find myself bound to call upon you to proceed without more delay."

"And I," said Lovel, "as I never desired any, have also to request these gentlemen to arrange preliminaries as fast as possible."

"Bairns! bairns!" cried old Ochiltree; but perceiving he was no longer attended to—"Madmen, I should say—but your blood be on your heads!" And the old man drew off from the ground, which was now measured out by the seconds, and continued muttering and talking to himself in sullen indignation, mixed with anxiety, and with a strong feeling of painful curiosity. Without paying farther attention to his presence or remonstrances, Mr. Lesley and the Lieutenant made the necessary arrangements for the duel, and it was agreed that both parties should fire when Mr. Lesley dropped his handkerchief.

The fatal sign was given, and both fired almost in the same moment. Captain M'Intyre's ball grazed the side of his opponent, but did not draw blood. That of Lovel was more true to the aim; M'Intyre reeled and fell. Raising himself on his arm, his first exclamation was, "It is nothing—it is nothing—give us the other pistols." But

in an instant he said, in a lower tone, "I believe I have enough—and what's worse, I fear I deserve it. Mr. Lovel, or whatever your name is, fly and save yourself—Bear all witness, I provoked this matter." Then raising himself again on his arm, he added, "Shake hands, Lovel—I believe you to be a gentleman—forgive my rudeness, and I forgive you my death—My poor sister!"

The surgeon came up to perform his part of the tragedy, and Lovel stood gazing on the evil of which he had been the active, though unwilling cause, with a dizzy and bewildered eye. He was roused from his trance by the grasp of the mendicant. "Why stand you gazing on your deed?—What's doomed is doomed—what's done is past recalling. But awa, awa, if ye wad save your young blood from a shameful death—I see the men out by yonder that are come ower late to part ye—but, out and alack! sune eneugh, and ower sune, to drag ye to prison."

"He is right—he is right," exclaimed Taffril; "you must not attempt to get on the high-road—get into the wood till night. My brig will be under sail by that time, and at three in the morning, when the tide will serve, I shall have the boat waiting for you at the Mussel-crag. Away-away, for Heaven's sake!"

"O yes! fly, fly!" repeated the wounded man, his words faltering with convulsive sobs.

"Come with me," said the mendicant, almost dragging him off; "the Captain's plan is the best—I'll carry ye to a place where ye might be concealed in the meantime, were they to seek ye 'wi' sleuth-hounds."

"Go, go," again urged Lieutenant Taffril—"to stay here is mere madness."

"It was worse madness to have come hither," said Lovel, pressing his hand—"But farewell!" And he followed Ochiltree into the recesses of the wood.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

—*The Lord Abbot had a soul*

Subtile and quick, and searching as the fire;

By magic stairs he went as deep as hell,

And if in devils' possession gold be kept,

He brought some sure from thence—'tis hid in caves,

Known, save to me, to none.—

The Wonder of a Kingdome.

Lovel almost mechanically followed the beggar, who led the way with a hasty and steady pace, through bush and bramble, avoiding the beaten path, and often turning to listen whether there were any sounds of pursuit behind them. They sometimes descended into the very bed of the torrent, sometimes kept a narrow and precarious path, that the sheep (which, with the sluttish negligence towards property of that sort universal in Scotland, were allowed to stray in the copse) had made along the very verge of its overhanging banks. From time to time Lovel had a glance of the path which he had traversed the day before in company with Sir Arthur, the Antiquary, and the young ladies. Dejected, embarrassed, and occupied by a thousand inquietudes, as he then was, what would he now have given to regain the sense of innocence which alone can counter-balance a thousand evils! "Yet, then," such was his hasty and involuntary reflection, "even then, guiltless and valued by all around me, I thought myself unhappy. What am I now, with this young man's blood upon my hands?—the feeling of pride which urged me to the deed has now deserted me, as the actual fiend himself is said to do those whom he has tempted to guilt." Even his affection for Miss Wardour sunk for the time before the first pangs of remorse, and he thought he could have encountered every agony of slighted love to have had the conscious freedom from blood-guiltiness which he possessed in the morning.

These painful reflections were not interrupted by any conversation on the part of his guide, who threaded the thicket before him, now holding back the sprays to make his path easy, now exhorting him to make haste, now muttering to himself, after the custom of solitary and neglected old age, words which might have escaped Lovel's ear even had he listened to them, or which, apprehended and retained, were too isolated to convey any connected meaning,—a habit which may be often observed among people of the old man's age and calling.

At length, as Lovel, exhausted by his late indisposition, the harrowing feelings by which he was agitated, and the exertion necessary to keep up with his guide in a path so rugged, began to flag and fall behind, two or three very precarious steps placed him on the front of a precipice overhung with brushwood and copse. Here a cave, as narrow in its entrance as a fox-earth, was indicated by a small fissure in the rock, screened by the boughs of an aged oak, which, anchored by its thick and twisted roots in the upper part of the cleft, flung its branches almost straight outward from the cliff, concealing it effectually from all observation. It might indeed have escaped the attention even of those who had stood at its very opening, so uninviting was the portal at which the beggar entered. But within, the cavern was higher and more roomy, cut into two separate branches, which, intersecting each other at right angles, formed an emblem of the cross, and indicated the abode of an anchorite of former times. There are many caves of the same kind in different parts of Scotland. I need only instance those of Gorton, near Rosslyn, in a scene well known to the admirers of romantic nature.

The light within the eave was a dusky twilight at the entrance, which failed altogether in the inner recesses. "Few folks ken o' this place," said the old man; "to the best o' my knowledge, there's just twa living by mysell, and that's Jingling Jock and the Lang Linker. I have had mony a thought, that when I fand mysell auld and forfairn, and no able to enjoy God's blessed air ony langer, I wad drag mysell here wi' a pickle ait-meal; and see, there's a bit bonny dropping well that popples that self-same gate simmer and winter;—and I wad e'en streek mysell out here, and abide my removal, like an auld dog that trails its useless ugsome carcass into some bush or bracken no to gie living things a scunner wi' the sight o't when it's dead—Ay, and then, when the dogs barked at the lone farm-stead, the gudewife wad cry, Whisht, stirra, that'll be auld Edie, and the bits o' weans wad up, puir things, and toddle to the door to pu' in the auld Blue-Gown that mends a' their bonny-dies—But there wad be nae mair word o' Edie, I trow."

He then led Lovel, who followed him unresistingly, into one of the interior branches of the cave. "Here," he said, "is a bit turnpike-stair that gaes up to the auld kirk abune. Some folks say this place was howkit out by the monks lang syne to hide their treasure in, and some said that they used to bring things into the abbey this gate by night, that they durstna sae weel hae brought in by the main port and in open day—And some said that ane o' them turned a saint (or aiblins wad hae had folk think sae), and settled him down in this Saint Ruth's cell, as the auld folks aye ca'd it, and garr'd big the stair, that he might gang up to the kirk when they were at the divine service. The Laird o' Monkbarns wad hae a hantle to say about it, as he has about maist things, if he ken'd only about the place. But whether it was made for man's devices or God's service, I have seen ower muckle sin done in it in my day, and far ower muckle have I been partaker of—ay, even here in this dark cove. Mony a gudewife's been wondering what for the red cock didna craw her up in the morning, when he's been roasting, puir fallow, in this dark hole—And, ohon! I wish that and the like o' that had been the warst o't! Whiles they wad hae heard the din we were making in the very bowels o' the earth, when Sanders Aikwood, that was forester in thae days, the father o' Ringan that now is, was gaun daundering about the wood at e'en, to see after the Laird's game and whiles he wad hae seen a glance o' the light frae the door o' the cave, flaughtering against the hazels on the other bank;—and then siccan stories as Sanders had about the worricows and gyre-carlins that haunted about the auld wa's at e'en, and the lights that he had seen, and the cries that he had heard, when there was nae mortal e'e open but his ain; and eh! as he wad thrum them ower and ower to the like o' me ayont the ingle at e'en, and as I wad gie the auld silly carle grane for grane, and tale for tale, though I ken'd muckle better about it than ever he did. Ay, ay—they were daft days thae;—but they were a' vanity, and waur,—and it's fitting that they wha hae led a light and evil life, and abused charity when they were young, suld aiblins come to lack it when they are auld."

While Ochiltree was thus recounting the exploits and tricks of his earlier life, with a tone in which glee and compunction alternately predominated, his unfortunate auditor had sat down upon the hermit's seat, hewn out of the solid rock, and abandoned himself to that lassitude, both of mind and body, which generally follows a course of events that have agitated both. The effect of his late indisposition, which had much weakened his system, contributed to this lethargic despondency. "The puir bairn!" said auld Edie, "an he sleeps in this damp hole, he'll maybe wauken nae mair, or catch some sair disease. It's no the same to him as to the like o'

us, that can sleep ony gate an anes our wames are fu'. Sit up, Maister Lovel, lad! After a's come and gane, I dare say the captain-lad will do weel eneugh—and, after a', ye are no the first that has had this misfortune. I hae seen mony a man killed, and helped to kill them mysell, though there was nae quarrel between us—and if it isna wrang to kill folk we have nae quarrel wi', just because they wear another sort of a cockade, and speak a foreign language, I canna see but a man may have excuse for killing his ain mortal foe, that comes armed to the fair field to kill him. I dinna say it's right—God forbid—or that it isna sinfu' to take away what ye canna restore, and that's the breath of man, whilk is in his nostrils; but I say it is a sin to be forgiven if it's repented of. Sinfu' men are we a'; but if ye wad believe an auld grey sinner that has seen the evil o' his ways, there is as much promise atween the twa boards o' the Testament as wad save the warst o' us, could we but think sae."

With such scraps of comfort and of divinity as he possessed, the mendicant thus continued to solicit and compel the attention of Lovel, until the twilight began to fade into night. "Now," said Ochiltree, "I will carry ye to a mair convenient place, where I hae sat mony a time to hear the howlit crying out of the ivy tod, and to see the moonlight come through the auld windows o' the ruins. There can be naeboddy come here after this time o' night; and if they hae made ony search, thae blackguard shirra'-officers and constables, it will hae been ower lang syne. Od, they are as great cowards as ither folk, wi' a' their warrants and king's keys*—I hae gien some o' them a gliff in my day, when they were coming rather ower near me—But, lauded be grace for it! they canna stir me now for ony waur than an auld man and a beggar, and my badge is a gude protection; and then Miss Isabella Wardour is a tower o' strength, ye ken"—(Lovel sighed)—"Aweel, dinna be cast down—bowls may a' row right yet—gie the lassie time to ken her mind. She's the wale o' the country for beauty, and a gude friend o' mine—I gang by the bridewell as safe as by the kirk on a Sabbath—deil ony o' them daur hurt a hair o' auld Edie's head now; I keep the crown o' the causey when I gae to the borough, and rub shouthers wi' a bailie wi' as little concern as an he were a brock."

* The king's keys are, in law phrase, the crow-bars and hammers used to force doors and locks, in execution of the king's warrant.

While the mendicant spoke thus, he was busied in removing a few loose stones in one angle of the eave, which obscured the entrance of the staircase of which he had spoken, and led the way into it, followed by Lovel in passive silence.

"The air's free eneugh," said the old man; "the monks took care o' that, for they werena a lang-breathed generation, I reckon; they hae contrived queer tirlie-wirlie holes, that gang out to the open air, and keep the stair as caller as a kail-blade."

Lovel accordingly found the staircase well aired, and, though narrow, it was neither ruinous nor long, but speedily admitted them into a narrow gallery contrived to run within the side wall of the chancel, from which it received air and light through apertures ingeniously hidden amid the florid ornaments of the Gothic architecture.

"This secret passage ance gaed round great part o' the biggin," said the beggar, "and through the wa' o' the place I've heard Monkbarns ca' the Refractory" [meaning probably *Refractory*], "and so awa to the Prior's ain house. It's like he could use it to listen what the monks were saying at meal-time,—and then he might come ben here and see that they were busy skreighing awa wi' the psalms down below there; and then, when he saw a' was right and tight, he might step awa and fetch in a bonnie lass at the cove yonder—for they were queer hands the monks, unless mony lees is made on them. But our folk were at great pains lang syne to big up the passage in some parts, and pu' it down in others, for fear o' some uncanny body getting into it, and finding their way down to the cove: it wad hae been a fashious job that—by my certie, some o' our necks wad hae been ewking."

They now came to a place where the gallery was enlarged into a small circle, sufficient to contain a stone seat. A niche, constructed exactly before it, projected forward into the chancel, and as its sides were latticed, as it were, with perforated stone-work, it commanded a full view of the chancel in every direction, and was probably constructed, as Edie intimated, to be a convenient watch-tower, from which the superior priest, himself unseen, might watch the behaviour of his monks, and ascertain, by personal inspection, their punctual attendance upon those rites of devotion which his rank exempted him from sharing with them. As this niche made one of a regular series which stretched along the wall of the chancel, and in no respect differed from the rest when seen from below, the secret station, screened as it was by the stone figure of St. Michael and the dragon, and the open tracery around the niche, was completely hid from observation. The private passage, confined to its pristine breadth, had originally continued beyond this seat; but the jealous precautions of the vagabonds who frequented the cave of St. Ruth had caused them to build it carefully up with hewn stones from the ruin.

"We shall be better here," said Edie, seating himself on the stone bench, and stretching the lappet of his blue gown upon the spot, when he motioned Lovel to sit down beside him—"we shall be better here than down below; the air's free and mild, and the savour of the wallflowers, and siccan shrubs as grow on thae ruined wa's, is far mair refreshing than the damp smell down below yonder. They smell sweetest by night-time thae flowers, and they're maist aye seen about rained buildings. Now, Maister Lovel, can ony o' you scholars gie a gude reason for that?"

Lovel replied in the negative.

"I am thinking," resumed the beggar, "that they'll be, like mony folk's gude gifts, that often seem maist gracious in adversity—or maybe it's a parable, to teach us no to slight them that are in the darkness of sin and the decay of tribulation, since God sends odours to refresh the mirkest hour, and flowers and pleasant bushes to clothe the ruined buildings. And now I wad like a wise man to tell me whether Heaven is maist pleased wi' the sight we are looking upon—thae pleasant and quiet lang streaks o' moonlight that are lying sae still on the floor o' this auld kirk, and glancing through the great pillars and stanchions o' the carved windows, and just dancing like on the leaves o' the dark ivy as the breath o' wind shakes it—I wonder whether this is mair pleasing to Heaven than when it was lighted up wi' lamps, and candles nae doubt, and roughies,* and wi' the mirth and the frankincense that they speak of in the Holy Scripture, and wi' organs assuredly, and men and women singers, and sackbuts, and dulcimers, and a' instruments o' music—I wonder if that was acceptable, or whether it is of these grand parafile o' ceremonies that holy writ says, It is an abomination to me.

* Links, or torches.

I am thinking, Maister Lovel, if twa puir contrite spirits like yours and mine fand grace to make our petition"—

Here Lovel laid his hand eagerly on the mendicant's arm, saying,—"Hush! I heard some one speak."

"I am dull o' hearing," answered Edie, in a whisper, "but we're surely safe here—where was the sound?"

Lovel pointed to the door of the chancel, which, highly ornamented, occupied the west end of the building, surmounted by the carved window, which let in a flood of moonlight over it.

"They can be nane o' our folk," said Edie in the same low and cautious tone; "there's but twa o' them kens o' the place, and they're mony a mile off, if they are still bound on their weary pilgrimage. I'll never think it's the officers here at this time o' night. I am nae believer in auld wives' stories about ghaists, though this is gey like a place for them—But mortal, or of the other world, here they come!—twa men and a light."

And in very truth, while the mendicant spoke, two human figures darkened with their shadows the entrance of the chancel—which had before opened to the moonlit meadow beyond, and the small lantern which one of them displayed, glimmered pale in the clear and strong beams of the moon, as the evening star does among the lights of the departing day. The first and most obvious idea was, that, despite the asseverations of Edie Ochiltree, the persons who approached the ruins at an hour so uncommon must be the officers of justice in quest of Lovel. But no part of their conduct confirmed the suspicion. A touch and a whisper from the old man warned Lovel that his best course was to remain quiet, and watch their motions from their present place of concealment. Should anything appear to render retreat necessary, they had behind them the private stair-case and cavern, by means of which they could escape into the wood long before any danger of close pursuit. They kept themselves, therefore, as still as possible, and observed with eager and anxious curiosity every accent and motion of these nocturnal wanderers.

After conversing together some time in whispers, the two figures advanced into the middle of the chancel; and a voice, which Lovel at once recognised, from its tone and dialect, to be that of Dousterswivel, pronounced in a louder but still a smothered tone, "Indeed, mine goot sir, dere cannot be one finer hour nor season for dis great purpose. You shall see, mine goot sir, dat it is all one bibble-babble dat Mr. Oldenbuck says, and dat he knows no more of what he speaks than one

little child. Mine soul! he expects to get as rich as one Jew for his poor dirty one hundred pounds, which I care no more about, by mine honest wort, than I care for an hundred stivers. But to you, my most munificent and reverend patron, I will show all de secrets dat art can show—ay, de secret of de great Pymander."

"That other ane," whispered Edie, "maun be, according to a' likelihood, Sir Arthur Wardour—I ken naebody but himsell wad come here at this time at e'en wi' that German blackguard;—ane wad think he's bewitched him—he gars him e'en trow that chalk is cheese. Let's see what they can be doing."

This interruption, and the low tone in which Sir Arthur spoke, made Lovel lose all Sir Arthur's answer to the adept, excepting the last three emphatic words, "Very great expense;" to which Dousterswivel at once replied—"Expenses!—to be sure—dere must be de great expenses. You do not expect to reap before you do sow de seed: de expense is de seed—de riches and de mine of goot metal, and now de great big chests of plate, they are de crop—vary goot crop too, on mine wort. Now, Sir Arthur, you have sowed this night one little seed of ten guineas like one pinch of snuff, or so big; and if you do not reap de great harvest—dat is, de great harvest for de little pinch of seed, for it must be proportions, you must know—then never call one honest man, Herman Dousterswivel. Now you see, mine patron—for I will not conceal mine secret from you at all—you see this little plate of silver; you know de moon measureth de whole zodiack in de space of twenty-eight day—every shild knows dat. Well, I take a silver plate when she is in her fifteenth mansion, which mansion is in de head of *Libra*, and I engrave upon one side de worts, [Shedbarschemoth Schartachan]—dat is, de Emblems of de Intelligence of de moon—and I make this picture like a flying serpent with a turkey-cock's head—vary well. Then upon this side I make de table of de moon, which is a square of nine, multiplied into itself, with eighty-one numbers on every side, and diameter nine—dere it is done very proper. Now I will make dis avail me at de change of every quarter-moon dat I shall find by de same proportions of expenses I lay out in de suffumigations, as nine, to de product of nine multiplied into itself—But I shall find no more to-night as maybe two or drie times nine, because dere is a thwarting power in de house of ascendancy."

"But, Dousterswivel," said the simple Baronet, "does not this look like magic?—I am a true though unworthy son of the Episcopal church, and I will have nothing to do with the foul fiend."

"Bah! bah!—not a bit magic in it at all—not a bit—It is all founded on de planetary influence, and de sympathy and force of numbers. I will show you much finer dan dis. I do not say dere is not de spirit in it, because of de suffumigation; but, if you are not afraid, he shall not be invisible."

"I have no curiosity to see him at all," said the Baronet, whose courage seemed, from a certain quaver in his accent, to have taken a fit of the ague.

"Dat is great pity," said Dousterswivel; "I should have liked to show you de spirit dat guard dis treasure like one fierce watchdog—but I know how to manage him;—you would not care to see him?"

"Not at all," answered the Baronet, in a tone of feigned indifference; "I think we have but little time."

"You shall pardon me, my patron; it is not yet twelve, and twelve precise is just our planetary hours; and I could show you de spirit vary well, in de meanwhile, just for pleasure. You see I would draw a pentagon within a circle, which is no trouble at all, and make my suffumigation within it, and dere we would be like in one strong castle, and you would hold de sword while I did say de needful worts. Den you should see de solid wall open like de gate of ane city, and den—let me see—ay, you should see first one stag pursued by three black greyhounds, and they should pull him down as they do at de elector's great hunting-match; and den one ugly, little, nasty black negro should appear and take de stag from them—and paf—all should be gone; den you should hear horns winded dat all de ruins should ring—mine wort, they should play fine hunting piece, as goot as him you call'd Fischer with his oboi; vary well—den comes one herald, as we call Ernhold, winding his horn—and den come de great Peolph, called de mighty Hunter of de North, mounted on hims black steed. But you would not care to see all this?"*

* Note F. Witchcraft.

"Why, I am not afraid," answered the poor Baronet,—"if—that is—does anything—any great mischiefs, happen on such occasions?"

"Bah! mischiefs? no!—sometimes if de circle be no quite just, or de beholder be de frightened coward, and not hold de sword firm and straight towards him, de Great Hunter will take his advantage, and drag him exorcist out of de circle and throttle him. Dat does happens."

"Well then, Dousterswivel, with every confidence in my courage and your skill, we will dispense with this apparition, and go on to the business of the night."

"With all mine heart—it is just one thing to me—and now it is de time—hold you de sword till I kindle de little what you call chip."

Dousterswivel accordingly set fire to a little pile of chips, touched and prepared with some bituminous substance to make them burn fiercely; and when the flame was at the highest, and lightened, with its shortlived glare, all the ruins around, the German flung in a handful of perfumes which produced a strong and pungent odour. The exorcist and his pupil both were so much affected as to cough and sneeze heartily; and, as the vapour floated around the pillars of the building, and penetrated every crevice, it produced the same effect on the beggar and Lovel.

"Was that an echo?" said the Baronet, astonished at the sternutation which resounded from above; "or"—drawing close to the adept, "can it be the spirit you talked of, ridiculing our attempt upon his hidden treasures?"

"N—n—no," muttered the German, who began to partake of his pupil's terrors, "I hope not."

Here a violent of sneezing, which the mendicant was unable to suppress, and which could not be considered by any means as the dying fall of an echo, accompanied by a grunting half-smothered cough, confounded the two treasure-seekers. "Lord have mercy on us!" said the Baronet.

"*Alle guten Geister loben den Herrn!*" ejaculated the terrified adept. "I was begun to think," he continued, after a moment's silence, "that this would be de bestermost done in de day-light—we was bestermost to go away just now."

"You juggling villain!" said the Baronet, in whom these expressions awakened a suspicion that overcame his terrors, connected as it was with the sense of desperation arising from the apprehension of impending ruin—"you juggling mountebank! this is some legerdmain trick of yours to get off from the performance of your promise, as you have so often done before. But, before Heaven! I will this night know what I have trusted to when I suffered you to fool me on to my ruin! Go on, then—come fairy, come fiend, you shall show me that treasure, or confess yourself a knave and an impostor, or, by the faith of a desperate and ruined man, I'll send you where you shall see spirits enough."

The treasure-finder, trembling between his terror for the supernatural beings by whom he supposed himself to be surrounded, and for his life, which seemed to be at the mercy of a desperate man, could only bring out, "Mine patron, this is not the allerbestmost usage. Consider, mine honoured sir, that de spirits"—

Here Edie, who began to enter into the humour of the scene, uttered an extraordinary howl, being an exaltation and a prolongation of the most deplorable whine in which he was accustomed to solicit charity.

Dousterswivel flung himself on his knees—"Dear Sir Arthurs, let us go, or let me go!"

"No, you cheating scoundrell!" said the knight, unsheathing the sword which he had brought for the purposes of the exorcism, "that shift shall not serve you—Monkbarns warned me long since of your juggling pranks—I will see this treasure before you leave this place, or I will have you confess yourself an impostor, or, by Heaven, I'll run this sword through you, though all the spirits of the dead should rise around us!"

"For de lofe of Heaven be patient, mine honoured patron, and you shall hafe all de treasure as I knows of—yes, you shall indeed—But do not speak about de spirits—it makes dem angry."

Edie Ochiltree here prepared himself to throw in another groan, but was restrained by Lovel, who began to take a more serious interest, as he observed the earnest and almost desperate demeanour of Sir Arthur. Dousterswivel, having at once before his eyes the fear of the foul fiend, and the violence of Sir Arthur, played his part of a conjuror extremely ill, hesitating to assume the degree of confidence necessary to deceive the latter, lest it should give offence to the invisible cause of his alarm. However, after rolling his eyes, muttering and sputtering German exorcisms, with contortions of his face and person, rather flowing from the impulse of terror than of meditated fraud, he at length proceeded to a corner of the building where a flat stone lay upon the ground, bearing upon its surface the effigy of an armed warrior in a recumbent posture carved in bas-relief. He muttered to Sir Arthur, "Mine patrons, it is here—Got save us all!"

Sir Arthur, who, after the first moment of his superstitious fear was over, seemed to have bent up all his faculties to the pitch of resolution necessary to carry on the adventure, lent the adept his assistance to turn over the stone, which, by means of a lever that the adept had provided, their joint force with difficulty effected.

No supernatural light burst forth from below to indicate the subterranean treasury, nor was there any apparition of spirits, earthly or infernal. But when Dousterswivel had, with great trepidation, struck a few strokes with a mattock, and as hastily thrown out a shovelful or two of earth (for they came provided with the tools necessary for digging), something was heard to ring like the sound of a falling piece of metal, and Dousterswivel, hastily catching up the substance which produced it, and which his shovel had thrown out along with the earth, exclaimed, "On mine dear wort, mine patrons, dis is all—it is indeed; I mean all we can do to-night,"—and he gazed round him with a cowering and fearful glance, as if to see from what corner the avenger of his imposture was to start forth.

"Let me see it," said Sir Arthur; and then repeated, still more sternly, "I will be satisfied—I will judge by mine own eyes." He accordingly held the object to the light of the lantern. It was a small case, or casket,—for Lovel could not at the distance exactly discern its shape, which, from the Baronet's exclamation as he opened it, he concluded was filled with coin. "Ay," said the Baronet, "this is being indeed in good luck! and if it omens proportional success upon a larger venture, the venture shall be made. That six hundred of Goldieword's, added to the other incumbent claims, must have been ruin indeed. If you think we can parry it by repeating this experiment—suppose when the moon next changes,—I will hazard the necessary advance, come by it how I may."

"Oh, mine good patrons, do not speak about all dat," said Dousterswivel, "as just now, but help me to put de shtone to de rights, and let us begone our own ways." And accordingly, so soon as the stone was replaced, he hurried Sir Arthur, who was now resigned once more to his guidance, away from a spot, where the German's guilty conscience and superstitious fears represented goblins as lurking behind each pillar with the purpose of punishing his treachery.

"Saw onybody e'er the like o' that!" said Edie, when they had disappeared like shadows through the gate by which they had entered—"saw ony creature living e'er the like o' that!—But what can we do for that puir doited deevil of a knight-baronet? Od, he showed muckle mair spunk, too, than I thought had been in him—I thought he wad hae sent cauld iron through the vagabond—Sir Arthur wasna half sae bauld at Bessie's-apron yon night—but then, his blood was up even now, and that makes an unco difference. I hae seen mony a man wad hae felled another an anger him, that wadna muckle hae liked a clink against Crummies-horn yon time. But what's to be done?"

"I suppose," said Lovel, "his faith in this fellow is entirely restored by this deception, which, unquestionably, he had arranged beforehand."

"What! the siller?—Ay, ay—trust him for that—they that hide ken best where to find. He wants to wile him out o' his last guinea, and then escape to his ain country, the land-louper. I wad likeit weel just to hae come in at the clipping-time, and gien him a lounder wi' my pike-staff; he wad hae taen it for a bennison frae some o' the auld dead abbots. But it's best no to be rash; sticking disna gang by strength, but by the guiding o' the gally. I'se be upsides wi' him ae day."

"What if you should inform Mr. Oldbuck?" said Lovel.

"Ou, I dinna ken—Monkbarns and Sir Arthur are like, and yet they're no like neither. Monkbarns has whiles influence wi' him, and whiles Sir Arthur cares as little about him as about the like o' me. Monkbarns is no that ower wise himsell, in some things;—he wad believe a bodle to be an auld Roman coin, as he ca's it, or a ditch to be a camp, upon ony leasing that idle folk made about it. I hae garr'd him trow mony a queer tale mysell, gude forgie me. But wi' a' that, he has unco little sympathy wi' ither folks; and he's snell and dure enough in casting up their nonsense to them, as if he had nane o' his ain. He'll listen the hale day, an yell tell him about tales o' Wallace, and Blind Harry, and Davie Lindsay; but ye maunna speak to him about ghaists or fairies, or spirits walking the earth, or the like o' that;—he had amaist flung auld Caxon out o' the window (and he might just as weel hae flung awa his best wig after him), for threeping he had seen a ghaist at the humlock-knowe. Now, if he was taking it up in this way, he wad set up the tother's birse, and maybe do mair ill nor gude—he's done that twice or thrice about thae mine-warks; ye wad thought Sir Arthur had a pleasure in gaun on wi' them the deeper, the mair he was warned against it by Monkbarns."

"What say you then," said Lovel, "to letting Miss Wardour know the circumstance?"

"Ou, puir thing, how could she stop her father doing his pleasure?—and, besides, what wad it help? There's a sough in the country about that six hundred pounds, and there's a writer chield in Edinburgh has been driving the spur-rowels o' the law up to the head into Sir Arthur's sides to gar him pay it, and if he canna, he maun gang to jail or flee the country. He's like a desperate man, and just catches at this chance as a' he has left, to escape utter perdition; so what signifies plaguing the puir lassie about what canna be helped? And besides, to say the truth, I wadna like to tell the secret o' this place. It's unco convenient, ye see yoursell, to hae a hiding-hole o' ane's ain; and though I be out o' the line o' needing ane e'en now, and trust in the power o' grace that I'll neer do onything to need ane again, yet naeboddy kens what temptation ane may be gien ower to—and, to be brief, I downa bide the thought of anybody kennin about the place;—they say, keep a thing seven year, an' yell aye find a use for't—and maybe I may need the cove, either for mysell, or for some ither body."

This argument, in which Edie Ochiltree, notwithstanding his scraps of morality and of divinity, seemed to take, perhaps from old habit, a personal interest, could not be handsomely controverted by Lovel, who was at that moment reaping the benefit of the secret of which the old man appeared to be so jealous.

This incident, however, was of great service to Lovel, as diverting his mind from the unhappy occurrence of the evening, and considerably rousing the energies which had been stupefied by the first view of his calamity. He reflected that it by no means necessarily followed that a dangerous wound must be a fatal one—that he had been hurried from the spot even before the surgeon had expressed any opinion of Captain M'Intyre's situation—and that he had duties on earth to perform, even should the very worst be true, which, if they could not restore his peace of mind or sense of innocence, would furnish a motive for enduring existence, and at the same time render it a course of active benevolence.—Such were Lovel's feelings, when the hour arrived when, according to Edie's calculation—who, by some train or process of his own in observing the heavenly bodies, stood independent of the assistance of a watch or time-keeper—it was fitting they should leave their hiding-place, and betake themselves to the seashore, in order to meet Lieutenant Taffril's boat according to appointment.

They retreated by the same passage which had admitted them to the prior's secret seat of observation, and when they issued from the grotto into the wood, the birds which began to chirp, and even to sing, announced that the dawn was advanced. This was confirmed by the light and amber clouds that appeared over the sea, as soon as their exit from the copse permitted them to view the horizon.—Morning, said to be friendly to the muses, has probably obtained this character from its effect upon the fancy and feelings of mankind. Even to those who, like Lovel, have spent a sleepless and anxious night, the breeze of the dawn brings strength and quickening both of mind and body. It was, therefore, with renewed health and vigour that Lovel, guided by the trusty mendicant, brushed away the dew as he traversed the downs which divided the Den of St. Ruth, as the woods surrounding the ruins were popularly called, from the sea-shore.

The first level beam of the sun, as his brilliant disk began to emerge from the ocean, shot full upon the little gun-brig which was lying-to in the offing—close to the shore the boat was already waiting, Taffril himself, with his naval cloak wrapped about him, seated in the stern. He jumped ashore when he saw the mendicant and Lovel approach, and, shaking the latter heartily by the hand, begged him not to be cast down. "M'Intyre's wound," he said, "was doubtful, but far from desperate." His attention had got Lovel's baggage privately sent on board the brig; "and," he said, "he trusted that, if Lovel chose to stay with the vessel, the penalty of a short cruise would be the only disagreeable consequence of his rencontre. As for himself, his time and motions were a good deal at his own disposal, he said, excepting the necessary obligation of remaining on his station."

"We will talk of our farther motions," said Lovel, "as we go on board."

Then turning to Edie, he endeavoured to put money into his hand. "I think," said Edie, as he tendered it back again, "the hale folk here have either gane daft, or they hae made a vow to rain my trade, as they say ower muckle water drowns the miller. I hae had mair gowd offered me within this twa or three weeks than I ever saw in my life afore. Keep the siller, lad—yell hae need o't, I'se warrant ye, and I hae nane my claes is nae great things, and I get a blue gown every year, and as mony siller groats as the king, God bless him, is years auld—you and I serve the same master, ye ken, Captain Taffril; there's rigging provided for—and my meat and drink I get for the asking in my rounds, or, at an orra time, I can gang a day without it, for I make it a rule never to pay for nane;—so that a' the siller I need is just to buy tobacco and sneeshin, and maybe a dram at a time in a cauld day, though I am nae dram-drinker to be a gaberlunzie;—sae take back your gowd, and just gie me a lily-white shilling."

Upon these whims, which he imagined intimately connected with the honour of his vagabond profession, Edie was flint and adamant, not to be moved by rhetoric or entreaty; and therefore Lovel was under the necessity of again pocketing his intended bounty, and taking a friendly leave of the mendicant by shaking him by the hand, and assuring him of his cordial gratitude for the very important services which he had rendered him, recommending, at the same time, secrecy as to

what they had that night witnessed.—"Ye needna doubt that," said Ochiltree; "I never tell'd tales out o' yon cove in my life, though mony a queer thing I hae seen in't."

The boat now put off. The old man remained looking after it as it made rapidly towards the brig under the impulse of six stout rowers, and Lovel beheld him again wave his blue bonnet as a token of farewell ere he turned from his fixed posture, and began to move slowly along the sands as if resuming his customary perambulations.

PART II

CHAPTER FIRST.

*Wiser Raymondus, in his closet pent,
Laughs at such danger and adventurement
When half his lands are spent in golden smoke,
And now his second hopeful glasse is broke,
But yet, if haply his third furnace hold,
Devoteth all his pots and pans to gold.**

* The author cannot remember where these lines are to be found: perhaps in Bishop Hall's Satires. [They occur in Book iv. Satire iii.]

About a week after the adventures commemorated in our last CHAPTER, Mr. Oldbuck, descending to his breakfast-parlour, found that his womankind were not upon duty, his toast not made, and the silver jug, which was wont to receive his libations of mum, not duly aired for its reception.

"This confounded hot-brained boy!" he said to himself; "now that he begins to get out of danger, I can tolerate this life no longer. All goes to sixes and sevens—an universal saturnalia seems to be proclaimed in my peaceful and orderly family. I ask for my sister—no answer. I call, I shout—I invoke my inmates by more names than the Romans gave to their deities—at length Jenny, whose shrill voice I have heard this half-hour lilting in the Tartarean regions of the kitchen, condescends to hear me and reply, but without coming up stairs, so the conversation must be continued at the top of my lungs."—Here he again began to hollow aloud—

"Jenny, where's Miss Oldbuck?"

"Miss Grizzy's in the captain's room."

"Umph!—I thought so—and where's my niece?"

"Miss Mary's making the captain's tea."

"Umph! I supposed as much again—and where's Caxon?"

"Awa to the town about the captain's fowling-gun, and his setting-dog."

"And who the devil's to dress my periwig, you silly jade?—when you knew that Miss Wardour and Sir Arthur were coming here early after breakfast, how could you let Caxon go on such a Tomfool's errand?"

"Me! what could I hinder him?—your honour wadna hae us contradict the captain e'en now, and him maybe deeing?"

"Dying!" said the alarmed Antiquary,—"eh! what? has he been worse?"

"Na, he's no nae waur than I ken of."*

* It is, I believe, a piece of free-masonry, or a point of conscience, among the Scottish lower orders, never to admit that a patient is doing better. The closest approach to recovery which they can be brought to allow, is, that the pairty inquired after is "Nae waur."

"Then he must be better—and what good is a dog and a gun to do here, but the one to destroy all my furniture, steal from my larder, and perhaps worry the cat, and the other to shoot somebody through the head. He has had gunning and pistolling enough to serve him one while, I should think."

Here Miss Oldbuck entered the parlour, at the door of which Oldbuck was carrying on this conversation, he bellowing downward to Jenny, and she again screaming upward in reply.

"Dear brother," said the old lady, "ye'll cry yoursell as hoarse as a corbie—is that the way to skreigh when there's a sick person in the house?"

"Upon my word, the sick person's like to have all the house to himself,— I have gone without my breakfast, and am like to go without my wig; and I must not, I suppose, presume to say I feel either hunger or cold, for fear of disturbing the sick gentleman who lies six rooms off, and who feels himself well enough to send for his dog and gun, though he knows I detest such implements ever since our elder brother, poor Williewald, marched out of the world on a pair of damp feet, caught in the Kittlefitting-moss. But that signifies nothing; I suppose I shall be expected by and by to lend a hand to carry Squire Hector out upon his litter, while he indulges his sportsmanlike propensities by shooting my pigeons, or my turkeys—I think any of the *ferae naturae* are safe from him for one while."

Miss M'Intyre now entered, and began to her usual morning's task of arranging her uncle's breakfast, with the alertness of one who is too late in setting about a task, and is anxious to make up for lost time. But this did not avail her. "Take care, you silly womankind—that mum's too near the fire—the bottle will burst; and I suppose you intend to reduce the toast to a cinder as a burnt-offering for Juno, or what do you call her—the female dog there, with some such Pantheon kind of a name, that your wise brother has, in his first moments of mature reflection, ordered up as a fitting inmate of my house (I thank him), and meet company to aid the rest of the womankind of my household in their daily conversation and intercourse with him."

"Dear uncle, don't be angry about the poor spaniel; she's been tied up at my brother's lodgings at Fairport, and she's broke her chain twice, and came running down here to him; and you would not have us beat the faithful beast away from the door?—it moans as if it had some sense of poor Hector's misfortune, and will hardly stir from the door of his room."

"Why," said his uncle, "they said Caxon had gone to Fairport after his dog and gun."

"O dear sir, no," answered Miss M'Intyre, "it was to fetch some dressings that were wanted, and Hector only wished him to bring out his gun, as he was going to Fairport at any rate."

"Well, then, it is not altogether so foolish a business, considering what a mess of womankind have been about it—Dressings, quotha?—and who is to dress my wig?—But I suppose Jenny will undertake"—continued the old bachelor, looking at himself in the glass—"to make it somewhat decent. And now let us set to breakfast—with what appetite we may. Well may I say to Hector, as Sir Isaac Newton did to his dog Diamond, when the animal (I detest dogs) flung down the taper among calculations which had occupied the philosopher for twenty years, and consumed the whole mass of materials—Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the mischief thou hast done!"

"I assure you, sir," replied his niece, "my brother is quite sensible of the rashness of his own behaviour, and allows that Mr. Lovel behaved very handsomely."

"And much good that will do, when he has frightened the lad out of the country! I tell thee, Mary, Hector's understanding, and far more that of femininity, is inadequate to comprehend the extent of the loss which he has occasioned to the present age and to posterity—*aureum quidem opus*—a poem on such a subject, with notes illustrative of all that is clear, and all that is dark, and all that is neither dark nor clear, but hovers in dusky twilight in the region of Caledonian antiquities. I would have made the Celtic panegyrists look about them. Fingal, as they conceitedly term Fin-Mac-Coul, should have disappeared before my search, rolling himself in his cloud like the spirit of Loda. Such an opportunity can hardly again occur to an ancient and grey-haired man; and to see it lost by the madcap spleen of a hot-headed boy! But I submit—Heaven's will be done!"

Thus continued the Antiquary to *maunder*, as his sister expressed it, during the whole time of breakfast, while, despite of sugar and honey, and all the comforts of a Scottish morning tea-table, his reflections rendered the meal bitter to all who heard them. But they knew the nature of the man. "Monkbarns's bark," said Miss Griselda Oldbuck, in confidential intercourse with Miss Rebecca Blattergow, "is muckle waur than his bite."

In fact, Mr. Oldbuck had suffered in mind extremely while his nephew was in actual danger, and now felt himself at liberty, upon his returning health, to indulge in complaints respecting the trouble he had been put to, and the interruption of his antiquarian labours. Listened to, therefore, in respectful silence, by his niece and

sister, he unloaded his discontent in such grumblings as we have rehearsed, venting many a sarcasm against womankind, soldiers, dogs, and guns, all which implements of noise, discord, and tumult, as he called them, he professed to hold in utter abomination.

This expectoration of spleen was suddenly interrupted by the noise of a carriage without, when, shaking off all sullenness at the sound, Oldbuck ran nimbly up stairs and down stairs, for both operations were necessary ere he could receive Miss Wardour and her father at the door of his mansion.

A cordial greeting passed on both sides. And Sir Arthur, referring to his previous inquiries by letter and message, requested to be particularly informed of Captain M'Intyre's health.

"Better than he deserves," was the answer—"better than he deserves, for disturbing us with his vixen brawls, and breaking God's peace and the King's."

"The young gentleman," Sir Arthur said, "had been imprudent; but he understood they were indebted to him for the detection of a suspicious character in the young man Lovel."

"No more suspicious than his own," answered the Antiquary, eager in his favourites defence;—"the young gentleman was a little foolish and headstrong, and refused to answer Hector's impertinent interrogatories—that is all. Lovel, Sir Arthur, knows how to choose his confidants better—Ay, Miss Wardour, you may look at me—but it is very true;—it was in my bosom that he deposited the secret cause of his residence at Fairport; and no stone should have been left unturned on my part to assist him in the pursuit to which he had dedicated himself."

On hearing this magnanimous declaration on the part of the old Antiquary, Miss Wardour changed colour more than once, and could hardly trust her own ears. For of all confidants to be selected as the depository of love affairs,—and such she naturally supposed must have been the subject of communication,—next to Edie Ochiltree, Oldbuck seemed the most uncouth and extraordinary; nor could she sufficiently admire or fret at the extraordinary combination of circumstances which thus threw a secret of such a delicate nature into the possession of persons so unfitted to be entrusted with it. She had next to fear the mode of Oldbuck's entering upon the affair with her father, for such, she doubted not, was his intention. She well knew that the honest gentleman, however vehement in his prejudices, had no great sympathy with those of others, and she had to fear a most unpleasant explosion upon an *eclaircissement* taking place between them. It was therefore with great anxiety that she heard her father request a private interview, and observed Oldbuck readily arise and show the way to his library. She remained behind, attempting to converse with the ladies of Monkbarns, but with the distracted feelings of Macbeth, when compelled to disguise his evil conscience by listening and replying to the observations of the attendant thanes upon the storm of the preceding night, while his whole soul is upon the stretch to listen for the alarm of murder, which he knows must be instantly raised by those who have entered the sleeping apartment of Duncan. But the conversation of the two virtuosi turned on a subject very different from that which Miss Wardour apprehended.

"Mr. Oldbuck," said Sir Arthur, when they had, after a due exchange of ceremonies, fairly seated themselves in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Antiquary,—“you, who know so much of my family matters, may probably be surprised at the question I am about to put to you."

"Why, Sir Arthur, if it relates to money, I am very sorry, but"—

"It does relate to money matters, Mr. Oldbuck."

"Really, then, Sir Arthur," continued the Antiquary, "in the present state of the money-market—and stocks being so low"—

"You mistake my meaning, Mr. Oldbuck," said the Baronet; "I wished to ask your advice about laying out a large sum of money to advantage."

"The devil!" exclaimed the Antiquary; and, sensible that his involuntary ejaculation of wonder was not over and above civil, he proceeded to qualify it by expressing his joy that Sir Arthur should have a sum of money to lay out when the commodity was so scarce. "And as for the mode of employing it," said he, pausing, "the funds are low at present, as I said before, and there are good bargains of land to be had. But had you not better begin by clearing off encumbrances, Sir Arthur?—There is the sum in the personal bond—and the three notes of hand," continued he, taking out of the right-hand drawer of his cabinet a certain red memorandum-book, of which Sir Arthur, from the experience of former frequent appeals to it, abhorred the very sight—"with the interest thereon, amounting altogether to—let me see"—

"To about a thousand pounds," said Sir Arthur, hastily; "you told me the amount the other day."

"But there's another term's interest due since that, Sir Arthur, and it amounts (errors excepted) to eleven hundred and thirteen pounds, seven shillings, five pennies, and three-fourths of a penny sterling—But look over the summation yourself."

"I daresay you are quite right, my dear sir," said the Baronet, putting away the book with his hand, as one rejects the old-fashioned civility that presses food upon you after you have eaten till you nauseate—"perfectly right, I dare say; and in the course of three days or less you shall have the full value—that is, if you choose to accept it in bullion."

"Bullion! I suppose you mean lead. What the deuce! have we hit on the vein then at last? But what could I do with a thousand pounds' worth, and upwards, of lead? The former abbots of Trotcosey might have roofed their church and monastery with it indeed—but for me"—

"By bullion," said the Baronet, "I mean the precious metals,—gold and silver."

"Ay! indeed?—and from what Eldorado is this treasure to be imported?"

"Not far from hence," said Sir Arthur, significantly. "And naow I think of it, you shall see the whole process, on one small condition."

"And what is that?" craved the Antiquary.

"Why, it will be necessary for you to give me your friendly assistance, by advancing one hundred pounds or thereabouts."

Mr. Oldbuck, who had already been grasping in idea the sum, principal and interest, of a debt which he had long regarded as wellnigh desperate, was so much astounded at the tables being so unexpectedly turned upon him, that he could only re-echo, in an accent of wo and surprise, the words, "Advance one hundred pounds!"

"Yes, my good sir," continued Sir Arthur; "but upon the best possible security of being repaid in the course of two or three days."

There was a pause—either Oldbuck's nether jaw had not recovered its position, so as to enable him to utter a negative, or his curiosity kept him silent.

"I would not propose to you," continued Sir Arthur, "to oblige me thus far, if I did not possess actual proofs of the reality of those expectations which I now hold out to you. And I assure you, Mr. Oldbuck, that in entering fully upon this topic, it is my purpose to show my confidence in you, and my sense of your kindness on many former occasions."

Mr. Oldbuck professed his sense of obligation, but carefully avoided committing himself by any promise of farther assistance.

"Mr. Dousterswivel," said Sir Arthur, "having discovered"—

Here Oldbuck broke in, his eyes sparkling with indignation. "Sir Arthur, I have so often warned you of the knavery of that rascally quack, that I really wonder you should quote him to me."

"But listen—listen," interrupted Sir Arthur in his turn, "it will do you no harm. In short, Dousterswivel persuaded me to witness an experiment which he had made in the ruins of St. Ruth—and what do you think we found?"

"Another spring of water, I suppose, of which the rogue had beforehand taken care to ascertain the situation and source."

"No, indeed—a casket of gold and silver coins—here they are."

With that, Sir Arthur drew from his pocket a large ram's horn, with a copper cover, containing a considerable quantity of coins, chiefly silver, but with a few gold pieces intermixed. The Antiquary's eyes glistened as he eagerly spread them out on the table.

"Upon my word—Scotch, English, and foreign coins, of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and some of them *rari—et rariores—etiam rarissimi!* Here is the bonnet-piece of James V., the unicorn of James II.,—ay, and the gold festoon of Queen Mary, with her head and the Dauphin's. And these were really found in the ruins of St. Ruth?"

"Most assuredly—my own eyes witnessed it."

"Well," replied Oldbuck; "but you must tell me the when—the where—the how."

"The when," answered Sir Arthur, "was at midnight the last full moon—the where, as I have told you, in the ruins of St. Ruth's priory—the how, was by a nocturnal experiment of Dousterswivel, accompanied only by myself."

"Indeed!" said Oldbuck; "and what means of discovery did you employ?"

"Only a simple suffumigation," said the Baronet, "accompanied by availing ourselves of the suitable planetary hour."

"Simple suffumigation? simple nonsensification—planetary hour? planetary fiddlestick! *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. My dear Sir Arthur, that fellow has made a gull of you above ground and under ground, and he would have made a gull of you in the air too, if he had been by when you was craned up the devil's turnpike yonder at Halket-head—to be sure the transformation would have been then peculiarly *apropos*."

"Well, Mr. Oldbuck, I am obliged to you for your indifferent opinion of my discernment; but I think you will give me credit for having seen what I say I saw."

"Certainly, Sir Arthur," said the Antiquary,—"to this extent at least, that I know Sir Arthur Wardour will not say he saw anything but what he *thought* he saw."

"Well, then," replied the Baronet, "as there is a heaven above us, Mr. Oldbuck, I saw, with my own eyes, these coins dug out of the chancel of St. Ruth at midnight. And as to Dousterswivel, although the discovery be owing to his science, yet, to tell the truth, I do not think he would have had firmness of mind to have gone through with it if I had not been beside him."

"Ay! indeed?" said Oldbuck, in the tone used when one wishes to hear the end of a story before making any comment.

"Yes truly," continued Sir Arthur—"I assure you I was upon my guard—we did hear some very uncommon sounds, that is certain, proceeding from among the ruins."

"Oh, you did?" said Oldbuck; "an accomplice hid among them, I suppose?"

"Not a jot," said the Baronet;—"the sounds, though of a hideous and preternatural character, rather resembled those of a man who sneezes violently than any other—one deep groan I certainly heard besides; and Dousterswivel assures me that he beheld the spirit Peolphan, the Great Hunter of the North—(look for him in your Nicolaus Remigius, or Petrus Thyracus, Mr. Oldbuck)—who mimicked the motion of snuff-taking and its effects."

"These indications, however singular as proceeding from such a personage, seem to have been *apropos* to the matter," said the Antiquary; "for you see the case, which includes these coins, has all the appearance of being an old-fashioned Scottish snuff-mill. But you persevered, in spite of the terrors of this sneezing goblin?"

"Why, I think it probable that a man of inferior sense or consequence might have given way; but I was jealous of an imposture, conscious of the duty I owed to my family in maintaining my courage under every contingency, and therefore I compelled Dousterswivel, by actual and violent threats, to proceed with what he was about to do;—and, sir, the proof of his skill and honesty is this parcel of gold and silver pieces, out of which I beg you to select such coins or medals as will best suit your collection."

"Why, Sir Arthur, since you are so good, and on condition you will permit me to mark the value according to Pinkerton's catalogue and appreciation, against your account in my red book, I will with pleasure select"—

"Nay," said Sir Arthur Wardour, "I do not mean you should consider them as anything but a gift of friendship and least of all would I stand by the valuation of your friend Pinkerton, who has impugned the ancient and trustworthy authorities upon which, as upon venerable and moss-grown pillars, the credit of Scottish antiquities reposed."

"Ay, ay," rejoined Oldbuck, "you mean, I suppose, Mair and Boece, the Jachin and Boaz, not of history but of falsification and forgery. And notwithstanding all you have told me, I look on your friend Dousterswivel to be as apocryphal as any of them."

"Why then, Mr. Oldbuck," said Sir Arthur, "not to awaken old disputes, I suppose you think, that because I believe in the ancient history of my country, I have neither eyes nor ears to ascertain what modern events pass before me?"

"Pardon me, Sir Arthur," rejoined the Antiquary; "but I consider all the affectation of terror which this worthy gentleman, your coadjutor, chose to play off, as being merely one part of his trick or mystery. And with respect to the gold or silver coins, they are so mixed and mingled in country and date, that I cannot suppose they could be any genuine hoard, and rather suppose them to be, like the purses upon the table of Hudibras's lawyer—

—*Money placed for show,
Like nest-eggs, to make clients lay,
And for his false opinions pay.*—

It is the trick of all professions, my dear Sir Arthur. Pray, may I ask you how much this discovery cost you?"

"About ten guineas."

"And you have gained what is equivalent to twenty in actual bullion, and what may be perhaps worth as much more to such fools as ourselves, who are willing to pay for curiosity. This was allowing you a tempting profit on the first hazard, I must needs admit. And what is the next venture he proposes?"

"An hundred and fifty pounds;—I have given him one-third part of the money, and I thought it likely you might assist me with the balance."

"I should think that this cannot be meant as a parting blow—is not of weight and importance sufficient; he will probably let us win this hand also, as sharpers manage a raw gamester.—Sir Arthur, I hope you believe I would serve you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Oldbuck; I think my confidence in you on these occasions leaves no room to doubt that."

"Well, then, allow me to speak to Dousterswivel. If the money can be advanced usefully and advantageously for you, why, for old neighbourhood's sake, you shall not want it but if, as I think, I can recover the treasure for you without making such an advance, you will, I presume, have no objection!"

"Unquestionably, I can have none whatsoever."

"Then where is Dousterswivel?" continued the Antiquary.

"To tell you the truth, he is in my carriage below; but knowing your prejudice against him"—

"I thank Heaven, I am not prejudiced against any man, Sir Arthur: it is systems, not individuals, that incur my reprobation." He rang the bell. "Jenny, Sir Arthur and I offer our compliments to Mr. Dousterswivel, the gentleman in Sir Arthur's carriage, and beg to have the pleasure of speaking with him here."

Jenny departed and delivered her message. It had been by no means a part of the project of Dousterswivel to let Mr. Oldbuck into his supposed mystery. He had relied upon Sir Arthur's obtaining the necessary accommodation without any discussion as to the nature of the application, and only waited below for the purpose of possessing himself of the deposit as soon as possible, for he foresaw that his career was drawing to a close. But when summoned to the presence of Sir Arthur and Mr. Oldbuck, he resolved gallantly to put confidence in his powers of impudence, of which, the reader may have observed, his natural share was very liberal.

CHAPTER SECOND.

—*And this Doctor,
Your sooty smoky-bearded compeer, he
Will close you so much gold in a bolt's head,
And, on a turn, convey in the stead another
With sublimed mercury, that shall burst i' the heat,
And all fly out in fumo.—
The Alchemist.*

"How do you do, goot Mr. Oldenbuck? and I do hope your young gentleman, Captain M'Intyre, is getting better again? Ach! it is a bat business when young gentlemens will put lead balls into each other's body."

"Lead adventures of all kinds are very precarious, Mr. Dousterswivel; but I am happy to learn," continued the Antiquary, "from my friend Sir Arthur, that you have taken up a better trade, and become a discoverer of gold."

"Ach, Mr. Oldenbuck, mine goot and honoured patron should not have told a word about dat little matter; for, though I have all reliance—yes, indeed, on goot Mr. Oldenbuck's prudence and discretion, and his great friendship for Sir Arthur Wardour—yet, my heavens! it is an great ponderous secret."

"More ponderous than any of the metal we shall make by it, I fear," answered Oldbuck.

"Dat is just as you shall have de faith and de patience for de grand experiment—If you join wid Sir Arthur, as he is put one hundred and fifty—see, here is one fifty in your dirty Fairport bank-note—you put one other hundred and fifty in de dirty notes, and you shall have de pure gold and silver, I cannot tell how much."

"Nor any one for you, I believe," said the Antiquary. "But, hark you, Mr. Dousterswivel: Suppose, without troubling this same sneezing spirit with any farther fumigations, we should go in a body, and having fair day-light and our good consciences to befriend us, using no other conjuring implements than good substantial pick-axes and shovels, fairly trench the area of the chancel in the ruins of St. Ruth, from one end to the other, and so ascertain the existence of this supposed treasure, without putting ourselves to any farther expense—the ruins belong to Sir Arthur himself, so there can be no objection—do you think we shall succeed in this way of managing the matter?"

"Bah!—you will not find one copper thimble—But Sir Arthur will do his pleasure. I have showed him how it is possible—very possible—to have de great sum of money for his occasions—I have showed him de real experiment. If he likes not to believe, goot Mr. Oldenbuck, it is nothing to Herman Dousterswivel—he only loses de money and de gold and de silvers—dat is all."

Sir Arthur Wardour cast an intimidated glance at Oldbuck who, especially when present, held, notwithstanding their frequent difference of opinion, no ordinary influence over his sentiments. In truth, the Baronet felt, what he would not willingly have acknowledged, that his genius stood rebuked before that of the Antiquary. He respected him as a shrewd, penetrating, sarcastic character—feared his satire, and had some confidence in the general soundness of his opinions. He therefore looked at him as if desiring his leave before indulging his credulity. Dousterswivel saw he was in danger of losing his dupe, unless he could make some favourable impression on the adviser.

"I know, my goot Mr. Oldenbuck, it is one vanity to speak to you about de spirit and de goblin. But look at this curious horn;—I know, you know de curiosity of all de countries, and how de great Oldenburgh horn, as they keep still in the Museum at Copenhagen, was given to de Duke of Oldenburgh by one female spirit of de wood. Now I could not put one trick on you if I were willing—you who know all de curiosity so well—and dere it is de horn full of coins;—if it had been a box or case, I would have said nothing."

"Being a horn," said Oldbuck, "does indeed strengthen your argument. It was an implement of nature's fashioning, and therefore much used among rude nations, although, it may be, the metaphorical horn is more frequent in proportion to the progress of civilisation. And this present horn," he continued, rubbing it upon his sleeve, "is a curious and venerable relic, and no doubt was intended to prove a *cornucopia*, or horn of plenty, to some one or other; but whether to the adept or his patron, may be justly doubted."

"Well, Mr. Oldenbuck, I find you still hard of belief—but let me assure you, de monksh understood de *magisterium*."

"Let us leave talking of the *magisterium*, Mr. Dousterswivel, and think a little about the magistrate. Are you aware that this occupation of yours is against the law of Scotland, and that both Sir Arthur and myself are in the commission of the peace?"

"Mine heaven! and what is dat to de purpose when I am doing you all de goot I can?"

"Why, you must know that when the legislature abolished the cruel laws against witchcraft, they had no hope of destroying the superstitious feelings of humanity on which such chimeras had been founded; and to prevent those feelings from being tampered with by artful and designing persons, it is enacted by the ninth of George the Second, chap. 5, that whosoever shall pretend, by his alleged skill in any occult or crafty science, to discover such goods as are lost, stolen or concealed, he shall suffer punishment by pillory and imprisonment, as a common cheat and impostor."

"And is dat de laws?" asked Dousterswivel, with some agitation.

"Thyself shall see the act," replied the Antiquary.

"Den, gentlemens, I shall take my leave of you, dat is all; I do not like to stand on your what you call pillory—it is very bad way to take de air, I think; and I do not like your prisons no more, where one cannot take de air at all."

"If such be your taste, Mr. Dousterswivel," said the Antiquary, "I advise you to stay where you are, for I cannot let you go, unless it be in the society of a constable; and, moreover, I expect you will attend us just now to the ruins of St. Ruth, and point out the place where you propose to find this treasure."

"Mine heaven, Mr. Oldenbuck! what usage is this to your old friend, when I tell you so plain as I can speak, dat if you go now, you will not get so much treasure as one poor shabby sixpence?"

"I will try the experiment, however, and you shall be dealt with according to its success,—always with Sir Arthur's permission."

Sir Arthur, during this investigation, had looked extremely embarrassed, and, to use a vulgar but expressive phrase, chop-fallen. Oldbuck's obstinate disbelief led him strongly to suspect the imposture of Dousterswivel, and the adept's mode of keeping his ground was less resolute than he had expected. Yet he did not entirely give him up.

"Mr. Oldbuck," said the Baronet, "you do Mr. Dousterswivel less than justice. He has undertaken to make this discovery by the use of his art, and by applying characters descriptive of the Intelligences presiding over the planetary hour in which the experiment is to be made; and you require him to proceed, under pain of punishment, without allowing him the use of any of the preliminaries which he considers as the means of procuring success."

"I did not say that exactly—I only required him to be present when we make the search, and not to leave us during the interval. I fear he may have some intelligence with the Intelligences you talk of, and that whatever may be now hidden at Saint Ruth may disappear before we get there."

"Well, gentlemens," said Dousterswivel, sullenly, "I will make no objections to go along with you but I tell you beforehand, you shall not find so much of anything as shall be worth your going twenty yard from your own gate."

"We will put that to a fair trial," said the Antiquary; and the Baronet's equipage being ordered, Miss Wardour received an intimation from her father, that she was to remain at Monkbarns until his return from an airing. The young lady was somewhat at a loss to reconcile this direction with the communication which she supposed must have passed between Sir Arthur and the Antiquary; but she was compelled, for the present, to remain in a most unpleasant state of suspense.

The journey of the treasure-seekers was melancholy enough. Dousterswivel maintained a sulkily silence, brooding at once over disappointed expectation and the risk of punishment; Sir Arthur, whose golden dreams had been gradually fading away, surveyed, in gloomy prospect, the impending difficulties of his situation; and Oldbuck, who perceived that his having so far interfered in his neighbours affairs gave the Baronet a right to expect some actual and efficient assistance, sadly pondered to what extent it would be necessary to draw open the strings of his purse. Thus each being wrapped in his own unpleasant ruminations, there was

hardly a word said on either side, until they reached the Four Horse-shoes, by which sign the little inn was distinguished. They procured at this place the necessary assistance and implements for digging, and, while they were busy about these preparations, were suddenly joined by the old beggar, Edie Ochiltree.

"The Lord bless your honour," began the Blue-Gown, with the genuine mendicant whine, "and long life to you!—weel pleased am I to hear that young Captain McIntyre is like to be on his legs again sune—Think on your poor bedesman the day."

"Aha, old true-penny!" replied the Antiquary. "Why, thou hast never come to Monkbarns since thy perils by rock and flood—here's something for thee to buy snuff,"—and, fumbling for his purse, he pulled out at the same time the horn which enclosed the coins.

"Ay, and there's something to pit it in," said the mendicant, eyeing the ram's horn—"that loom's an auld acquaintance o' mine. I could take my aith to that sneeshing-mull amang a thousand—I carried it for mony a year, till I niffered it for this tin ane wi' auld George Glen, the dammer and sinker, when he took a fancy till't doun at Glen-Withershins yonder."

"Ay! indeed?" said Oldbuck;—"so you exchanged it with a miner? but I presume you never saw it so well filled before"—and opening it, he showed the coins.

"Troth, ye may swear that, Monkbarns: when it was mine it neer had abune the like o' saxpenny worth o' black rappee in't at ance. But I reckon ye'll be gaun to mak an antic o't, as ye hae dune wi' mony an orra thing besides. Od, I wish anybody wad mak an antic o' me; but mony ane will find worth in roused bits o' capper and horn and airn, that care unco little about an auld carle o' their ain country and kind."

"You may now guess," said Oldbuck, turning to Sir Arthur, "to whose good offices you were indebted the other night. To trace this cornucopia of yours to a miner, is bringing it pretty near a friend of ours—I hope we shall be as successful this morning, without paying for it."

"And whare is your honours gaun the day," said the mendicant, "wi' a' your picks and shules?—Od, this will be some o' your tricks, Monkbarns: ye'll be for whirling some o' the auld monks doun by yonder out o' their graves afore they hear the last call—but, wi' your leave, I'll follow ye at ony rate, and see what ye mak o't."

The party soon arrived at the ruins of the priory, and, having gained the chancel, stood still to consider what course they were to pursue next. The Antiquary, meantime, addressed the adept.

"Pray, Mr. Dousterswivel, what is your advice in this matter? Shall we have most likelihood of success if we dig from east to west, or from west to east?—or will you assist us with your triangular vial of May-dew, or with your divining-rod of witches-hazel?—or will you have the goodness to supply us with a few thumping blustering terms of art, which, if they fail in our present service, may at least be useful to those who have not the happiness to be bachelors, to still their brawling children withal?"

"Mr. Oldenbuck," said Dousterswivel, doggedly, "I have told you already that you will make no good work at all, and I will find some way of mine own to thank you for your civilities to me—yes, indeed."

"If your honours are thinking of tirling the floor," said old Edie, "and wad but take a pair body's advice, I would begin below that muckle stane that has the man there streekit out upon his back in the midst o't."

"I have some reason for thinking favourably of that plan myself," said the Baronet.

"And I have nothing to say against it," said Oldbuck: "it was not unusual to hide treasure in the tombs of the deceased—many instances might be quoted of that from Bartholinus and others."

The tombstone, the same beneath which the coins had been found by Sir Arthur and the German, was once more forced aside, and the earth gave easy way to the spade.

"It's travell'd earth that," said Edie, "it howks gae eithly—I ken it weel, for ance I wrought a simmer wi' auld Will Winnet, the bedral, and howkit mair graves than ane in my day; but I left him in winter, for it was unco cald wark; and then it cam a green Yule, and the folk died thick and fast—for ye ken a green Yule makes a fat kirkyard; and I never dowed to bide a hard turn o' wark in my life—sae aff I gaed, and left Will to delve his last dwellings by himsell for Edie."

The diggers were now so far advanced in their labours as to discover that the sides of the grave which they were clearing out had been originally secured by four walls of freestone, forming a parallelogram, for the reception, probably, of the coffin.

"It is worth while proceeding in our labours," said the Antiquary to Sir Arthur, "were it but for curiosity's sake. I wonder on whose sepulchre they have bestowed such uncommon pains."

"The arms on the shield," said Sir Arthur, and sighed as he spoke it, "are the same with those on Misticot's tower, supposed to have been built by Malcolm the usurper. No man knew where he was buried, and there is an old prophecy in our family, that bodes us no good when his grave shall be discovered."

"I wot," said the beggar, "I have often heard that when I was a bairn—

If Malcolm the Misticot's grave were fun',

The lands of Knockwinnock were lost and won."

Oldbuck, with his spectacles on his nose, had already knelt down on the monument, and was tracing, partly with his eye, partly with his finger, the mouldered devices upon the effigy of the deceased warrior. "It is the Knockwinnock arms, sure enough," he exclaimed, "quarterly with the coat of Wardour."

"Richard, called the red-handed Wardour, married Sybil Knockwinnock, the heiress of the Saxon family, and by that alliance," said Sir Arthur, "brought the castle and estate into the name of Wardour, in the year of God 1150."

"Very true, Sir Arthur; and here is the baton-sinister, the mark of illegitimacy, extended diagonally through both coats upon the shield. Where can our eyes have been, that they did not see this curious monument before?"

"Na, whare was the through-stane, that it didna come before our een till e'enow?" said Ochiltree; "for I hae ken'd this auld kirk, man and bairn, for saxty lang years, and I neer noticed it afore; and it's nae sic mote neither, but what ane might see it in their parritch."

All were now induced to tax their memory as to the former state of the ruins in that corner of the chancel, and all agreed in recollecting a considerable pile of rubbish which must have been removed and spread abroad in order to make the tomb visible. Sir Arthur might, indeed, have remembered seeing the monument on the former occasion, but his mind was too much agitated to attend to the circumstance as a novelty.

While the assistants were engaged in these recollections and discussions, the workmen proceeded with their labour. They had already dug to the depth of nearly five feet, and as the flinging out the soil became more and more difficult, they began at length to tire of the job.

"We're doun to the till now," said one of them, "and the neer a coffin or onything else is here—some cunninger chiel's been afore us, I reckon,"—and the labourer scrambled out of the grave.

"Hout, lad," said Edie, getting down in his room—"let me try my hand for an auld bedral;—ye're gude seekers, but ill finders."

So soon as he got into the grave, he struck his pike-staff forcibly down; it encountered resistance in its descent, and the beggar exclaimed, like a Scotch schoolboy when he finds anything, "Nae halvers and quarters—hale o' mine ain and 'nane o' my neighbour's."

Everybody, from the dejected Baronet to the sullen adept, now caught the spirit of curiosity, crowded round the grave, and would have jumped into it, could its space have contained them. The labourers, who had begun to flag in their monotonous and apparently hopeless task, now resumed their tools, and plied them with all the ardour of expectation. Their shovels soon grated upon a hard wooden surface, which, as the earth was cleared away, assumed the distinct form of a chest, but greatly smaller than that of a coffin. Now all hands were at work to heave it out of the grave, and all voices, as it was raised, proclaimed its weight and augured its value. They were not mistaken.

When the chest or box was placed on the surface, and the lid forced up by a pickaxe, there was displayed first a coarse canvas cover, then a quantity of oakum, and beneath that a number of ingots of silver. A general exclamation hailed a discovery so surprising and unexpected. The Baronet threw his hands and eyes up to heaven, with the silent rapture of one who is delivered from inexpressible distress of mind. Oldbuck, almost unable to credit his eyes, lifted one piece of silver after another. There was neither inscription nor stamp upon them, excepting one, which seemed to be Spanish. He could have no doubt of the purity and great value of the treasure before him. Still, however, removing piece by piece, he examined row by row, expecting to discover that the lower layers were of inferior

value; but he could perceive no difference in this respect, and found himself compelled to admit, that Sir Arthur had possessed himself of bullion to the value, perhaps of a thousand pounds sterling. Sir Arthur now promised the assistants a handsome recompense for their trouble, and began to busy himself about the mode of conveying this rich windfall to the Castle of Knockwinnock, when the adept, recovering from his surprise, which had equalled that exhibited by any other individual of the party, twitched his sleeve, and having offered his humble congratulations, turned next to Oldbuck with an air of triumph.

"I did tell you, my goot friend, Mr. Oldenbuck, dat I was to seek opportunity to thank you for your civility; now do you not think I have found out vary goot way to return thank?"

"Why, Mr. Dousterswivel, do you pretend to have had any hand in our good success?—you forget you refused us all aid of your science, man; and you are here without your weapons that should have fought the battle which you pretend to have gained in our behalf: you have used neither charm, lamen, sigil, talisman, spell, crystal, pentacle, magic mirror, nor geomantic figure. Where be your periapts, and your abracadabras man? your Mayfern, your vervain,

Your toad, your crow, your dragon, and your panther,

Your sun, your moon, your firmament, your adrop,

Your Lato, Azoch, Zernich, Chibrit, Heautarit,

With all your broths, your menstrues, your materials,

Would burst a man to name?—

Ah! rare Ben Jonson! long peace to thy ashes for a scourge of the quacks of thy day!—who expected to see them revive in our own?"

The answer of the adept to the Antiquary's tirade we must defer to our next CHAPTER.

CHAPTER THIRD.

Clause.—You now shall know the king o' the beggars' treasure:—

Yes—ere to-morrow you shall find your harbour

Here,—fail me not, for if I live I'll fit you.

The Beggar's Bush.

The German, determined, it would seem, to assert the vantage-ground on which the discovery had placed him, replied with great pomp and stateliness to the attack of the Antiquary.

"Maister Oldenbuck, all dis may be very witty and comedy, but I have nothing to say—nothing at all—to people dat will not believe deir own eye-sights. It is vary true dat I ave not any of de things of de art, and it makes de more wonder what I has done dis day. But I would ask of you, mine honoured and goot and generous patron, to put your hand into your right-hand waistcoat pocket, and show me what you shall find dere."

Sir Arthur obeyed his direction, and pulled out the small plate of silver which he had used under the adept's auspices upon the former occasion. "It is very true," said Sir Arthur, looking gravely at the Antiquary; "this is the graduated and calculated sigil by which Mr. Dousterswivel and I regulated our first discovery."

"Pshaw! pshaw! my dear friend," said Oldbuck, "you are too wise to believe in the influence of a trumpery crown-piece, beat out thin, and a parcel of scratches upon it. I tell thee, Sir Arthur, that if Dousterswivel had known where to get this treasure himself, you would not have been lord of the least share of it."

"In troth, please your honour," said Edie, who put in his word on all occasions, "I think, since Mr. Dunkerswivel has had sae muckle merit in discovering a' the gear, the least ye can do is to gie him that o't that's left behind for his labour; for doubtless he that kend where to find sae muckle will hae nae difficulty to find mair."

Dousterswivel's brow grew very dark at this proposal of leaving him to his "ain purchase," as Ochiltree expressed it; but the beggar, drawing him aside, whispered a word or two in his ear, to which he seemed to give serious attention,

Meanwhile Sir Arthur, his heart warm with his good fortune, said aloud, "Never mind our friend Monkbarns, Mr. Dousterswivel, but come to the Castle to-morrow, and I'll convince you that I am not ungrateful for the hints you have given me about this matter—and the fifty Fairport dirty notes, as you call them, are heartily at your service. Come, my lads, get the cover of this precious chest fastened up again."

But the cover had in the confusion fallen aside among the rubbish, or the loose earth which had been removed from the grave—in short, it was not to be seen.

"Never mind, my good lads, tie the tarpaulin over it, and get it away to the carriage.—Monkbarns, will you walk? I must go back your way to take up Miss Wardour."

"And, I hope, to take up your dinner also, Sir Arthur, and drink a glass of wine for joy of our happy adventure. Besides, you should write about the business to the Exchequer, in case of any interference on the part of the Crown. As you are lord of the manor, it will be easy to get a deed of gift, should they make any claim. We must talk about it, though."

"And I particularly recommend silence to all who are present," said Sir Arthur, looking round. All bowed and professed themselves dumb.

"Why, as to that," said Monkbarns, "recommending secrecy where a dozen of people are acquainted with the circumstance to be concealed, is only putting the truth in masquerade, for the story will be circulated under twenty different shapes. But never mind—we will state the true one to the Barons, and that is all that is necessary."

"I incline to send off an express to-night," said the Baronet.

"I can recommend your honour to a sure hand," said Ochiltree; "little Davie Mailsetter, and the butcher's reisting powny."

"We will talk over the matter as we go to Monkbarns," said Sir Arthur. "My lads" (to the work-people), "come with me to the Four Horse-shoes, that I may take down all your names.—Dousterswivel, I won't ask you to go down to Monkbarns, as the laird and you differ so widely in opinion; but do not fail to come to see me to-morrow."

Dousterswivel growled out an answer, in which the words, "duty,"—"mine honoured patron,"—and "wait upon Sir Arthurs,"—were alone distinguishable; and after the Baronet and his friend had left the ruins, followed by the servants and workmen, who, in hope of reward and whisky, joyfully attended their leader, the adept remained in a brown study by the side of the open grave.

"Who was it as could have thought this?" he ejaculated unconsciously. "Mine heiligkeit! I have heard of such things, and often spoken of such things—but, sapperment! I never, thought to see them! And if I had gone but two or dree feet deeper down in the earth—mein himmel! it had been all mine own—so much more as I have been muddling about to get from this fool's man."

Here the German ceased his soliloquy, for, raising his eyes, he encountered those of Edie Ochiltree, who had not followed the rest of the company, but, resting as usual on his pike-staff, had planted himself on the other side of the grave. The features of the old man, naturally shrewd and expressive almost to an appearance of knavery, seemed in this instance so keenly knowing, that even the assurance of Dousterswivel, though a professed adventurer, sunk beneath their glances. But he saw the necessity of an e'claircissement, and, rallying his spirits, instantly began to sound the mendicant on the occurrences of the day. "Goot Maister Edies Ochiltrees"—

"Edie Ochiltree, nae maister—your puir bedesman and the king's," answered the Blue-Gown.

"Awell den, goot Edie, what do you think of all dis?"

"I was just thinking it was very kind (for I darena say very simple) o' your honour to gie thae twa rich gentles, wha hae lands and lairdships, and siller without end, this grand pose o' silver and treasure (three times tried in the fire, as the Scripture expresses it), that might hae made yoursell and ony twa or three honest bodies beside, as happy and content as the day was lang."

"Indeed, Edie, mine honest friends, dat is very true; only I did not know, dat is, I was not sure, where to find the gelt myself."

"What! was it not by your honours advice and counsel that Monkbarns and the Knight of Knockwinnock came here then?"

"Aha—yes; but it was by another circumstance. I did not know dat dey would have found de treasure, mine friend; though I did guess, by such a tintamarre, and cough, and sneeze, and groan, among de spirit one other night here, dat there might be treasure and bullion hereabout. Ach, mein himmel! the spirit will hone and groan over his gelt, as if he were a Dutch Burgomaster counting his dollars after a great dinner at the Stadthaus."

"And do you really believe the like o' that, Mr. Dusterdeevil!—a skeelfu' man like you—hout fie!"

"Mein friend," answered the adept, foreed by circumstances to speak something nearer the truth than he generally used to do, "I believed it no more than you and no man at all, till I did hear them hone and moan and groan myself on de oder night, and till I did this day see de cause, which was an great chest all full of de pure silver from Mexico—and what would you ave nae think den?"

"And what wad ye gie to ony ane," said Edie, "that wad help ye to sic another kistfu' o' silver!"

"Give?—mein himmel!—one great big quarter of it."

"Now if the secret were mine," said the mendicant, "I wad stand out for a half; for you see, though I am but a puir ragged body, and couldna carry silver or gowd to sell for fear o' being taen up, yet I could find mony folk would pass it awa for me at unco muckle easier profit than ye're thinking on."

"Ach, himmel!—Mein goot friend, what was it I said?—I did mean to say you should have de tree quarter for your half, and de one quarter to be my fair half."

"No, no, Mr. Dusterdeevil, we will divide equally what we find, like brother and brother. Now, look at this board that I just flung into the dark aisle out o' the way, while Monkbarns was glowering ower a' the silver yonder. He's a sharp chiel Monkbarns—I was glad to keep the like o' this out o' his sight. Ye'll maybe can read the character better than me—I am nae that book learned, at least I'm no that muckle in practice."

With this modest declaration of ignorance, Ochiltree brought forth from behind a pillar the cover of the box or chest of treasure, which, when forced from its hinges, had been carelessly flung aside during the ardour of curiosity to ascertain the contents which it concealed, and had been afterwards, as it seems, secreted by the mendicant. There was a word and a number upon the plank, and the beggar made them more distinct by spitting upon his ragged blue handkerchief, and rubbing off the clay by which the inscription was obscured. It was in the ordinary black letter.

"Can ye mak ought o't?" said Edie to the adept.

"S," said the philosopher, like a child getting his lesson in the primer—"S, T, A, R, C, H,—*Starch!*—dat is what de woman-washers put into de neckerchers, and de shirt collar."

"Search!" echoed Ochiltree; "na, na, Mr. Dusterdeevil, ye are mair of a conjuror than a clerk—it's *search*, man, *search*—See, there's the Ye clear and distinct."

"Aha! I see it now—it is *search—number one*. Mein himmel! then there must be a *number two*, mein goot friend: for *search* is what you call to seek and dig, and this is but *number one!* Mine wort, there is one great big prize in de wheel for us, goot Maister Ochiltree."

"Aweel, it may be sae; but we canna howk fort enow—we hae nae shules, for they hae taen them a' awa—and it's like some o' them will be sent back to fling the earth into the hole, and mak a' things trig again. But an ye'll sit down wi' me a while in the wood, I'll satisfy your honour that ye hae just lighted on the only man in the country that could hae tauld about Malcolm Misticot and his hidden treasure—But first we'll rub out the letters on this board, for fear it tell tales."

And, by the assistance of his knife, the beggar erased and defaced the characters so as to make them quite unintelligible, and then daubed the board with clay so as to obliterate all traces of the erasure.

Dousterswivel stared at him in ambiguous silence. There was an intelligence and alacrity about all the old man's movements, which indicated a person that could not be easily overreached, and yet (for even rogues acknowledge in some degree the spirit of precedence) our adept felt the disgrace of playing a secondary part, and dividing winnings with so mean an associate. His appetite for gain, however, was sufficiently sharp to overpower his offended pride, and though far more an impostor than a dupe, he was not without a certain degree of personal faith even in the gross superstitions by means of which he imposed upon others. Still, being accustomed to act as a leader on such occasions, he felt humiliated at feeling himself in the situation of a vulture marshalled to his prey by a carrion-crow.—"Let me, however, hear this story to an end," thought Dousterswivel, "and it will be hard if I do not make mine account in it better as Maister Edie Ochiltrees makes proposes."

The adept, thus transformed into a pupil from a teacher of the mystic art, followed Ochiltree in passive acquiescence to the Prior's Oak—a spot, as the reader may remember, at a short distance from the ruins, where the German sat down, and silence waited the old man's communication.

"Maister Dustandsniveel," said the narrator, "it's an unco while since I heard this business treated anent;—for the lairds of Knockwinnock, neither Sir Arthur, nor his father, nor his grandfather—and I mind a wee bit about them a'—liked to hear it spoken about; nor they dinna like it yet—But nae matter; ye may be sure it was clattered about in the kitchen, like onything else in a great house, though it were forbidden in the ha'—and sae I hae heard the circumstance rehearsed by auld servants in the family; and in thir present days, when things o' that auld-worl'd sort arena keepit in mind round winter fire-sides as they used to be, I question if there's onybody in the country can tell the tale but mysel—aye out-taken the laird though, for there's a parchment book about it, as I have heard, in the charter-room at Knockwinnock Castle."

"Well, all dat is vary well—but get you on with your stories, mine goot friend," said Dousterswivel.

"Aweel, ye see," continued the mendicant, "this was a job in the auld times o' rugging and riving through the hale country, when it was ilka ane for himsell, and God for us a'—when nae man wanted property if he had strength to take it, or had it langer than he had power to keep it. It was just he ower her, and she ower him, whichever could win upmost, a' through the east country here, and nae doubt through the rest o' Scotland in the self and same manner."

"Sae in these days Sir Richard Wardour came into the land, and that was the first o' the name ever was in this country. There's been mony o' them sin' syne; and the maist, like him they ca'd Hell-in-Harness, and the rest o' them, are sleeping down in yon ruins. They were a proud dour set o' men, but unco brave, and aye stood up for the weel o' the country, God sain them a'—there's no muckle popery in that wish. They ca'd them the Norman Wardours, though they cam frae the south to this country. So this Sir Richard, that they ca'd Red-hand, drew up wi' the auld Knockwinnock o' that day—for then they were Knockwinnocks of that ilk—and wad fain marry his only daughter, that was to have the castle and the land. Laith, laith was the lass—(Sybil Knockwinnock they ca'd her that tauld me the tale)—laith, laith was she to gie into the match, for she had fa'en a wee ower thick wi' a cousin o' her ain that her father had some ill-will to; and sae it was, that after she had been married to Sir Richard jimp four months—for marry him she maun, it's like—ye'll no hinder her gieing them a present o' a bonny knave bairn. Then there was siccan a ca'-thro', as the like was never seen; and she's be burnt, and he's be slain, was the best words o' their mouths. But it was a' sowdered up again some gait, and the bairn was sent awa, and bred up near the Highlands, and grew up to be a fine wanle fallow, like mony ane that comes o' the wrang side o' the blanket; and Sir Richard wi' the Red-hand, he had a fair offspring o' his ain, and a was lound and quiet till his head was laid in the ground. But then down came Malcolm Misticot—(Sir Arthur says it should be *Misbegot*, but they aye ca'd him Misticot that spoke o't lang syne)—down cam this Malcolm, the love-begot, frae Glen-isla, wi' a string o' lang-legged Highlanders at his heels, that's aye ready for onybody's mischief, and he threeps the castle and lands are his ain as his mother's eldest son, and turns a' the Wardours out to the hill. There was a sort of fighting and blude-spilling about it, for the gentles took different sides; but Malcolm had the uppermost for a lang time, and keepit the Castle of Knockwinnock, and strengthened it, and built that muckle tower that they ca' Misticot's tower to this day."

"Mine goot friend, old Mr. Edie Ochiltree." interrupted the German, "this is all as one like de long histories of a baron of sixteen quarters in mine countries; but I would as rather hear of de silver and gold."

"Why, ye see," continued the mendicant, "this Malcolm was weel helped by an uncle, a brother o' his father's, that was Prior o' St. Ruth here; and muckle treasure they gathered between them, to secure the succession of their house in the lands of Knockwinnock. Folk said that the monks in thae days had the art of multiplying metals—at ony rate, they were very rich. At last it came to this, that the young Wardour, that was Red-hand's son, challenged Misticot to fight with him in the lists as they ca'd them—that's no lists or tailor's runds and selvedges o' claith, but a palin'-thing they set up for them to fight in like game-cocks. Aweel,

Misticot was beaten, and at his brother's mercy—but he wadna touch his life, for the blood of Knockwinnock that was in baith their veins: so Malcolm was compelled to turn a monk, and he died soon after in the priory, of pure despite and vexation. Naeboddy ever kenn'd whare his uncle the prior earded him, or what he did wi' his gowd and silver, for he stood on the right o' halie kirk, and wad gie nae account to onybody. But the prophecy gat abroad in the country, that whenever Misticot's grave was fund out, the estate of Knockwinnock should be lost and won."

"Ach! mine goot old friend, Maister Edie, and dat is not so very unlikely, if Sir Arthurs will quarrel wit his goot friends to please Mr. Oldenbuck.—And so you do tink dat dis golds and silvers belonged to goot Mr. Malcolm Mishdigoat?"

"Troth do I, Mr. Dousterdeevil."

"And you do believe dat dere is more of dat sorts behind?"

"By my certie do I—How can it be otherwise?—*Search—No. I*—that is as muckle as to say, search and ye'll find number twa. Besides, yon kist is only silver, and I aye heard that' Misticot's pose had muckle yellow gowd in't."

"Den, mine goot friends," said the adept, jumping up hastily, "why do we not set about our little job directly?"

"For twa gude reasons," answered the beggar, who quietly kept his sitting posture;—"first, because, as I said before, we have naething to dig wi', for they hae taen awa the picks and shules; and, secondly, because there will be a wheen idle gowks coming to glower at the hole as lang as it is daylight, and maybe the laird may send somebody to fill it up—and ony way we wad be catched. But if you will meet me on this place at twal o'clock wi' a dark lantern, I'll hae tools ready, and we'll gang quietly about our job our twa sells, and naeboddy the wiser for't."

"Be—be—but, mine goot friend," said Dousterswivel, from whose recollection his former nocturnal adventure was not to be altogether erased, even by the splendid hopes which Edie's narrative held forth, "it is not so goot or so safe, to be about goot Maister Mishdigoat's grabe at dat time of night—you have forgot how I told you de spirits did hone and mone dere. I do assure you, dere is disturbance dere."

"If ye're afraid of ghaists," answered the mendicant, coolly, "I'll do the job mysell, and bring your share o' the siller to ony place you like to appoint."

"No—no—mine excellent old Mr. Edie,—too much trouble for you—I will not have dat—I will come mysell—and it will be bettermost; for, mine old friend, it was I, Herman Dousterswivel, discovered Maister Mishdigoat's grave when I was looking for a place as to put away some little trumpery coins, just to play one little trick on my dear friend Sir Arthur, for a little sport and pleasures. Yes, I did take some what you call rubbish, and did discover Maister Mishdigoat's own monumentsh—It's like dat he meant I should be his heirs—so it would not be civility in me not to come mineself for mine inheritance."

"At twal o'clock, then," said the mendicant, "we meet under this tree. I'll watch for a while, and see that naeboddy meddles wi' the grave—it's only saying the laird's forbade it—then get my bit supper frae Ringan the poinder up by, and leave to sleep in his barn; and I'll slip out at night, and neer be mist."

"Do so, mine goot Maister Edie, and I will meet you here on this very place, though all de spirits should moan and sneeze deir very brains out."

So saying he shook hands with the old man, and with this mutual pledge of fidelity to their appointment, they separated for the present.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

*—See thou shake the bags
Of hoarding abbots; angels imprisoned
Set thou at liberty—
Bell, book, and candle, shall not drive me back,
If gold and silver beckon to come on.
King John.*

The night set in stormy, with wind and occasional showers of rain. "Eh, sirs," said the old mendicant, as he took his place on the sheltered side of the large oak-tree to wait for his associate—"Eh, sirs, but human nature's a wilful and wilyard thing!—Is it not an unco lucre o' gain wad bring this Dousterdive out in a blast o' wind like this, at twal o'clock at night, to thir wild gousty wa's?—and amna I a bigger fule than himsell to bide here waiting for him?"

Having made these sage reflections, he wrapped himself close in his cloak, and fixed his eye on the moon as she waded amid the stormy and dusky clouds, which the wind from time to time drove across her surface. The melancholy and uncertain gleams that she shot from between the passing shadows fell full upon the rifted arches and shafted windows of the old building, which were thus for an instant made distinctly visible in their ruinous state, and anon became again a dark, undistinguished, and shadowy mass. The little lake had its share of these transient beams of light, and showed its waters broken, whitened, and agitated under the passing storm, which, when the clouds swept over the moon, were only distinguished by their sullen and murmuring plash against the beach. The wooded glen repeated, to every successive gust that hurried through its narrow trough, the deep and various groan with which the trees replied to the whirlwind, and the sound sunk again, as the blast passed away, into a faint and passing murmur, resembling the sighs of an exhausted criminal after the first pangs of his torture are over. In these sounds, superstition might have found ample gratification for that State of excited terror which she fears and yet loves. But such feeling is made no part of Ochiltree's composition. His mind wandered back to the scenes of his youth.

"I have kept guard on the outposts baith in Germany and America," he said to himself, "in mony a waur night than this, and when I ken'd there was maybe a dozen o' their riflemen in the thicket before me. But I was aye gleg at my duty—naeboddy ever catched Edie sleeping."

As he muttered thus to himself, he instinctively shouldered his trusty pike-staff, assumed the port of a sentinel on duty, and, as a step advanced towards the tree, called, with a tone assorting better with his military reminiscences than his present state—"Stand! who goes there?"

"De devil, goot Edie," answered Dousterswivel, "why does you speak so loud as a baarenhauter, or what you call a factionary—I mean a sentinel?"

"Just because I thought I was a sentinel at that moment," answered the mendicant. "Here's an awsome night! Hae ye brought the lantern and a pock for the siller?"

"Ay-ay, mine goot friend," said the German, "here it is—my pair of what you call saddlebag; one side will be for you, one side for me;—I will put dem on my horse to save you de trouble, as you are old man."

"Have you a horse here, then?" asked Edie Ochiltree.

"O yes, mine friend—tied yonder by de stile," responded the adept.

"Weel, I hae just ae word to the bargain—there sall nane o' my gear gang on your beast's back."

"What was it as you would be afraid of?" said the foreigner.

"Only of losing sight of horse, man, and money," again replied the gaberlunzie.

"Does you know dat you make one gentlemen out to be one great rogue?"

"Mony gentlemen," replied Ochiltree, "can make that out for themselves— But what's the sense of quarrelling?—If ye want to gang on, gang on—if no—I'll gae back to the gude ait-straw in Ringan Aikwood's barn that I left wi' right ill-will e'now, and I'll pit back the pick and shule whar I got them."

Dousterswivel deliberated a moment, whether, by suffering Edie to depart, he might not secure the whole of the expected wealth for his own exclusive use. But the want of digging implements, the uncertainty whether, if he had them, he could clear out the grave to a sufficient depth without assistance, and, above all, the reluctance which he felt, owing to the experience of the former night, to venture alone on the terrors of Misticot's grave, satisfied him the attempt would be hazardous. Endeavouring, therefore, to assume his usual cajoling tone, though internally incensed, he begged "his goot friend Maister Edie Ochiltrees would lead the way, and assured him of his acquiescence in all such an excellent friend could propose."

"Aweel, aweel, then," said Edie, "tak gude care o' your feet among the lang grass and the loose stones. I wish we may get the light keepit in neist, wi' this fearsome wind—but there's a blink o' moonlight at times."

Thus saying, old Edie, closely accompanied by the adept, led the way towards the ruins, but presently made a full halt in front of them.

"Ye're a learned man, Mr. Dousterdeevil, and ken muckle o' the marvellous works o' nature—Now, will ye tell me ae thing?—D'ye believe in ghaists and spirits that walk the earth?—d'ye believe in them, ay or no?"

"Now, goot Mr. Edie," whispered Dousterswivel, in an expostulatory tone of voice, "is this a times or a places for such a questions?"

"Indeed is it, baith the tane and the t'other, Mr. Dustanshovel; for I maun fairly tell ye, there's reports that auld Misticot walks. Now this wad be an uncanny night to meet him in, and wha kens if he wad be ower weel pleased wi' our purpose of visiting his pose?"

"*Alle guten Geister*"—muttered the adept, the rest of the conjuration being lost in a tremulous warble of his voice,—"*I do desires you not to speak so, Mr. Edie; for, from all I heard dat one other night, I do much believes*"—

"Now I," said Ochiltree, entering the chancel, and flinging abroad his arm with an air of defiance, "I wadna gie the crack o' my thumb for him were he to appear at this moment: he's but a disembodied spirit, as we are embodied anes."

"For the lofe of heavens," said Dousterswivel, "say nothing at all neither about somebodies or nobodies!"

"Aweel," said the beggar (expanding the shade of the lantern), "here's the stane, and, spirit or no spirit, I'se be a wee bit deeper in the grave;" and he jumped into the place from which the precious chest had that morning been removed. After striking a few strokes, he tired, or affected to tire, and said to his companion, "I'm auld and failed now, and canna keep at it—time about's fair play, neighbour; ye maun get in and tak the shule a bit, and shule out the loose earth, and then I'll tak turn about wi' you."

Dousterswivel accordingly took the place which the beggar had evacuated, and toiled with all the zeal that awakened avarice, mingled with the anxious wish to finish the undertaking and leave the place as soon as possible, could inspire in a mind at once greedy, suspicious, and timorous.

Edie, standing much at his ease by the side of the hole, contented himself with exhorting his associate to labour hard. "My certie! few ever wrought for siccan a day's wage; an it be but—say the tenth part o' the size o' the kist, No. I., it will double its value, being filled wi' gowd instead of silver. Od, ye work as if ye had been bred to pick and shule—ye could win your round half-crown ilka day. Tak care o' your tae wi' that stane!" giving a kick to a large one which the adept had heaved out with difficulty, and which Edie pushed back again to the great annoyance of his associate's shins.

Thus exhorted by the mendicant, Dousterswivel struggled and laboured among the stones and stiff clay, toiling like a horse, and internally blaspheming in German. When such an unhallowed syllable escaped his lips, Edie changed his battery upon him.

"O dinna swear! dinna swear! Wha kens whals listening!—Eh! gude guide us, what's yon!—Hout, it's just a branch of ivy flightering awa frae the wa'; when the moon was in, it lookit unco like a dead man's arm wi' a taper in't—I thought it was Misticot himsell. But never mind, work you away—fling the earth weel up by out o' the gate—Od, if ye're no as clean a worker at a grave as Win Winnet himsell! What gars ye stop now?—ye're just at the very bit for a chance."

"Stop!" said the German, in a tone of anger and disappointment, "why, I am down at de rocks dat de cursed ruins (God forgife me!) is founded upon."

"Weel," said the beggar, "that's the likeliest bit of ony. It will be but a muckle through-stane laid down to kiver the gowd—tak the pick till't, and pit mair strength, man—ae gude down-right devvel will split it, I'se warrant ye—Ay, that will do Od, he comes on wi' Wallace's straits!"

In fact, the adept, moved by Edie's exhortations, fetched two or three desperate blows, and succeeded in breaking, not indeed that against which he struck, which, as he had already conjectured, was the solid rock, but the implement which he wielded, jarring at the same time his arms up to the shoulder-blades.

"Hurra, boys!—there goes Ringan's pick-axe!" cried Edie "it's a shame o' the Fairport folk to sell siccan frail gear. Try the shule—at it again, Mr. Dusterdeevil."

The adept, without reply, scrambled out of the pit, which was now about six feet deep, and addressed his associate in a voice that trembled with anger. "Does you know, Mr. Edies Ochiltrees, who it is you put off your gibes and your jests upon?"

"Brawly, Mr. Dusterdeevil—brawly do I ken ye, and has done mony a day; but there's nae jesting in the case, for I am wearying to see ae our treasures; we should hae had baith ends o' the pockmanky filled by this time—I hope it's bowk enough to haud a' the gear?"

"Look you, you base old person," said the incensed philosopher, "if you do put another jest upon me, I will cleave your skull-piece with this shovels!"

"And whare wad my hands and my pike-staff be a' the time?" replied Edie, in a tone that indicated no apprehension. "Hout, tout, Maister Dusterdeevil, I haena lived sae lang in the world neither, to be shuled out o't that gate. What ails ye to be cankered, man, wi' your friends? I'll wager I'll find out the treasure in a minute;" and he jumped into the pit, and took up the spade.

"I do swear to you," said the adept, whose suspicions were now fully awake, "that if you have played me one big trick, I will give you one big beating, Mr. Edies."

"Hear till him now!" said Ochiltree, "he kens how to gar folk find out the gear—Od, I'm thinking he's been drilled that way himsell some day."

At this insinuation, which alluded obviously to the former scene betwixt himself and Sir Arthur, the philosopher lost the slender remnant of patience he had left, and being of violent passions, heaved up the truncheon of the broken mattock to discharge it upon the old man's head. The blow would in all probability have been fatal, had not he at whom it was aimed exclaimed in a stern and firm voice, "Shame to ye, man!—do ye think Heaven or earth will suffer ye to murder an auld man that might be your father?—Look behind ye, man!"

Dousterswivel turned instinctively, and beheld, to his utter astonishment, a tall dark figure standing close behind him. The apparition gave him no time to proceed by exorcism or otherwise, but having instantly recourse to the *voie de fait*, took measure of the adept's shoulders three or four times with blows so substantial, that he fell under the weight of them, and remained senseless for some minutes between fear and stupefaction. When he came to himself, he was alone in the ruined chancel, lying upon the soft and damp earth which had been thrown out of Misticot's grave. He raised himself with a confused sensation of anger, pain, and terror, and it was not until he had sat upright for some minutes, that he could arrange his ideas sufficiently to recollect how he came there, or with what purpose. As his recollection returned, he could have little doubt that the bait held out to him by Ochiltree, to bring him to that solitary spot, the sarcasms by which he had provoked him into a quarrel, and the ready assistance which he had at hand for terminating it in the manner in which it had ended, were all parts of a concerted plan to bring disgrace and damage on Herman Dousterswivel. He could hardly suppose that he was indebted for the fatigue, anxiety, and beating which he had undergone, purely to the malice of Edie Ochiltree singly, but concluded that the mendicant had acted a part assigned to him by some person of greater importance. His suspicions hesitated between Oldbuck and Sir Arthur Wardour. The former had been at no pains to conceal a marked dislike of him—but the latter he had deeply injured; and although he judged that Sir Arthur did not know the extent of his wrongs towards him, yet it was easy to suppose he had gathered enough of the truth to make him desirous of revenge. Ochiltree had alluded to at least one circumstance which the adept had every reason to suppose was private between Sir Arthur and himself, and therefore must have been learned from the former. The language of Oldbuck also intimated a conviction of his knavery, which Sir Arthur heard without making any animated defence. Lastly, the way in which Dousterswivel supposed the Baronet to have exercised his revenge, was not inconsistent with the practice of other countries with which the adept was better acquainted than with those of North Britain. With him, as with many bad men, to suspect an injury, and to nourish the purpose of revenge, was one and the same movement. And before Dousterswivel had fairly recovered his legs, he had mentally sworn the ruin of his benefactor, which, unfortunately, he possessed too much the power of accelerating.

But although a purpose of revenge floated through his brain, it was no time to indulge such speculations. The hour, the place, his own situation, and perhaps the presence or near neighbourhood of his assailants, made self-preservation the adept's first object. The lantern had been thrown down and extinguished in the scuffle. The wind, which formerly howled so loudly through the aisles of the ruin, had now greatly fallen, lulled by the rain, which was descending very fast. The moon, from the same cause, was totally obscured, and though Dousterswivel had some experience of the ruins, and knew that he must endeavour to regain the eastern door of the chancel, yet the confusion of his ideas was such, that he hesitated for some time ere he could ascertain in what direction he was to seek it. In this perplexity, the suggestions of superstition, taking the advantage of darkness and his evil conscience, began again to present themselves to his disturbed

imagination. "But bah!" quoth he valiantly to himself, "it is all nonsense all one part of de damn big trick and imposture. Devil! that one thick-skulled Scotch Baronet, as I have led by the nose for five year, should cheat Herman Dousterswivel!"

As he had come to this conclusion, an incident occurred which tended greatly to shake the grounds on which he had adopted it. Amid the melancholy *sough* of the dying wind, and the plash of the rain-drops on leaves and stones, arose, and apparently at no great distance from the listener, a strain of vocal music so sad and solemn, as if the departed spirits of the churchmen who had once inhabited these deserted ruins were mourning the solitude and desolation to which their hallowed precincts had been abandoned. Dousterswivel, who had now got upon his feet, and was groping around the wall of the chancel, stood rooted to the ground on the occurrence of this new phenomenon. Each faculty of his soul seemed for the moment concentrated in the sense of hearing, and all rushed back with the unanimous information, that the deep, wild, and prolonged chant which he now heard, was the appropriate music of one of the most solemn dirges of the Church of Rome. Why performed in such a solitude, and by what class of choristers, were questions which the terrified imagination of the adept, stirred with all the German superstitions of nixies, oak-kings, wer-wolves, hobgoblins, black spirits and white, blue spirits and grey, durst not even attempt to solve.

Another of his senses was soon engaged in the investigation. At the extremity of one of the transepts of the church, at the bottom of a few descending steps, was a small iron-grated door, opening, as far as he recollected, to a sort of low vault or sacristy. As he cast his eye in the direction of the sound, he observed a strong reflection of red light glimmering through these bars, and against the steps which descended to them. Dousterswivel stood a moment uncertain what to do; then, suddenly forming a desperate resolution, he moved down the aisle to the place from which the light proceeded.

Fortified with the sign of the cross, and as many exorcisms as his memory could recover, he advanced to the grate, from which, unseen, he could see what passed in the interior of the vault. As he approached with timid and uncertain steps, the chant, after one or two wild and prolonged cadences, died away into profound silence. The grate, when he reached it, presented a singular spectacle in the interior of the sacristy. An open grave, with four tall flambeaus, each about six feet high, placed at the four corners—a bier, having a corpse in its shroud, the arms folded upon the breast, rested upon tressels at one side of the grave, as if ready to be interred—a priest, dressed in his cope and stole, held open the service book—another churchman in his vestments bore a holy-water sprinkler, and two boys in white surplices held censers with incense—a man, of a figure once tall and commanding, but now bent with age or infirmity, stood alone and nearest to the coffin, attired in deep mourning—such were the most prominent figures of the group. At a little distance were two or three persons of both sexes, attired in long mourning hoods and cloaks; and five or six others in the same lugubrious dress, still farther removed from the body, around the walls of the vault, stood ranged in motionless order, each bearing in his hand a huge torch of black wax. The smoky light from so many flambeaus, by the red and indistinct atmosphere which it spread around, gave a hazy, dubious, and as it were phantom-like appearance to the outlines of this singular apparition. The voice of the priest—loud, clear, and sonorous—now recited, from the breviary which he held in his hand, those solemn words which the ritual of the Catholic church has consecrated to the rendering of dust to dust. Meanwhile, Dousterswivel, the place, the hour, and the surprise considered, still remained uncertain whether what he saw was substantial, or an unearthly representation of the rites to which in former times these walls were familiar, but which are now rarely practised in Protestant countries, and almost never in Scotland. He was uncertain whether to abide the conclusion of the ceremony, or to endeavour to regain the chancel, when a change in his position made him visible through the grate to one of the attendant mourners. The person who first espied him indicated his discovery to the individual who stood apart and nearest the coffin, by a sign, and upon his making a sign in reply, two of the group detached themselves, and, gliding along with noiseless steps, as if fearing to disturb the service, unlocked and opened the grate which separated them from the adept. Each took him by an arm, and exerting a degree of force, which he would have been incapable of resisting had his fear permitted him to attempt opposition, they placed him on the ground in the chancel, and sat down, one on each side of him, as if to detain him. Satisfied he was in the power of mortals like himself, the adept would have put some questions to them; but while one pointed to the vault, from which the sound of the priest's voice was distinctly heard, the other placed his finger upon his lips in token of silence, a hint which the German thought it most prudent to obey. And thus they detained him until a loud Alleluia, pealing through the deserted arches of St. Ruth, closed the singular ceremony which it had been his fortune to witness.

When the hymn had died away with all its echoes, the voice of one of the sable personages under whose guard the adept had remained, said, in a familiar tone and dialect, "Dear sirs, Mr. Dousterswivel, is this you? could not ye have let us ken an ye had wussed till hae been present at the ceremony?—My lord couldna tak it weel your coming blinking and jinking in, in that fashion."

"In de name of all dat is gootness, tell me what you are?" interrupted the German in his turn.

"What I am? why, wha should I be but Ringan Aikwood, the Knockwinnock poinder?—and what are ye doing here at this time o' night, unless ye were come to attend the leddy's burial?"

"I do declare to you, mine goot Poinder Aikwood," said the German, raising himself up, "that I have been this vary nights murdered, robbed, and put in fears of my life."

"Robbed! wha wad do sic a deed here?—Murdered! od ye speak pretty blithe for a murdered man—Put in fear! what put you in fear, Mr. Dousterswivel?"

"I will tell you, Maister Poinder Aikwood Ringan, just dat old miscreant dog villain blue-gown, as you call Edie Ochiltrees."

"I'll neer believe that," answered Ringan;—"Edie was ken'd to me, and my father before me, for a true, loyal, and sooth-fast man; and, mair by token, he's sleeping up yonder in our barn, and has been since ten at e'en—Sae touch ye wha liket, Mr. Dousterswivel, and whether onybody touched ye or no, I'm sure Edie's sackless."

"Maister Ringan Aikwood Poinders, I do not know what you call sackless,— but let alone all de oils and de soot dat you say he has, and I will tell you I was dis night robbed of fifty pounds by your oil and sooty friend, Edies Ochiltree; and he is no more in your barn even now dan I ever shall be in de kingdom of heafen."

"Weel, sir, if ye will gae up wi' me, as the burial company has dispersed, we'se mak ye down a bed at the lodge, and we'se see if Edie's at the barn. There was twa wild-looking chaps left the auld kirk when we were coming up wi' the corpse, that's certain; and the priest, wha likes ill that ony heretics should look on at our church ceremonies, sent twa o' the riding saulies after them; sae we'll hear a' about it frae them."

Thus speaking, the kindly apparition, with the assistance of the mute personage, who was his son, disencumbered himself of his cloak, and prepared to escort Dousterswivel to the place of that rest which the adept so much needed.

"I will apply to the magistrates to-morrow," said the adept; "oder, I will have de law put in force against all the peoples."

While he thus muttered vengeance against the cause of his injury, he tottered from among the ruins, supporting himself on Ringan and his son, whose assistance his state of weakness rendered very necessary.

When they were clear of the priory, and had gained the little meadow in which it stands, Dousterswivel could perceive the torches which had caused him so much alarm issuing in irregular procession from the ruins, and glancing their light, like that of the *ignis fatuus*, on the banks of the lake. After moving along the path for some short space with a fluctuating and irregular motion, the lights were at once extinguished.

"We aye put out the torches at the Halie-cross Well on sic occasions," said the forester to his guest. And accordingly no farther visible sign of the procession offered itself to Dousterswivel, although his ear could catch the distant and decreasing echo of horses' hoofs in the direction towards which the mourners had bent their course.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

*O weel may the boatie row
And better may she speed,
And weel may the boatie row*

*That earns the bairnies' bread!
The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows fu' weel,
And lightsome be their life that bear
The merlin and the creel!
Old Ballad.*

We must now introduce our reader to the interior of the fisher's cottage mentioned in CHAPTER eleventh of this edifying history. I wish I could say that its inside was well arranged, decently furnished, or tolerably clean. On the contrary, I am compelled to admit, there was confusion,—there was dilapidation,—there was dirt good store. Yet, with all this, there was about the inmates, Luckie Mucklebackit and her family, an appearance of ease, plenty, and comfort, that seemed to warrant their old sluttish proverb, "The clartier the cosier." A huge fire, though the season was summer, occupied the hearth, and served at once for affording light, heat, and the means of preparing food. The fishing had been successful, and the family, with customary improvidence, had, since unlading the cargo, continued an unremitting operation of broiling and frying that part of the produce reserved for home consumption, and the bones and fragments lay on the wooden trenchers, mingled with morsels of broken bannocks and shattered mugs of half-drunk beer. The stout and athletic form of Maggie herself, bustling here and there among a pack of half-grown girls and younger children, of whom she chuckled one now here and another now there, with an exclamation of "Get out o' the gate, ye little sorrow!" was strongly contrasted with the passive and half-stupified look and manner of her husband's mother, a woman advanced to the last stage of human life, who was seated in her wonted chair close by the fire, the warmth of which she coveted, yet hardly seemed to be sensible of—now muttering to herself, now smiling vacantly to the children as they pulled the strings of her *toy* or close cap, or twitched her blue checked apron. With her distaff in her bosom, and her spindle in her hand, she plied lazily and mechanically the old-fashioned Scottish thrift, according to the old-fashioned Scottish manner. The younger children, crawling among the feet of the elder, watched the progress of grannies spindle as it twisted, and now and then ventured to interrupt its progress as it danced upon the floor in those vagaries which the more regulated spinning-wheel has now so universally superseded, that even the fated Princess in the fairy tale might roam through all Scotland without the risk of piercing her hand with a spindle, and dying of the wound. Late as the hour was (and it was long past midnight), the whole family were still on foot, and far from proposing to go to bed; the dame was still busy broiling car-cakes on the girdle, and the elder girl, the half-naked mermaid elsewhere commemorated, was preparing a pile of Findhorn haddocks (that is, haddocks smoked with green wood), to be eaten along with these relishing provisions.

While they were thus employed, a slight tap at the door, accompanied with the question, "Are ye up yet, sirs?" announced a visitor. The answer, "Ay, ay,—come your ways ben, hinny," occasioned the lifting of the latch, and Jenny Rintherout, the female domestic of our Antiquary, made her appearance.

"Ay, ay," exclaimed the mistress of the family—"Hegh, sirs! can this be you, Jenny?—a sight o' you's gude for sair een, lass."

"O woman, we've been sae ta'en up wi' Captain Hector's wound up by, that I havena had my fit out ower the door this fortnight; but he's better now, and auld Caxon sleeps in his room in case he wanted onything. Sae, as soon as our auld folk gaed to bed, I e'en snodded my head up a bit, and left the house-door on the latch, in case onybody should be wanting in or out while I was awa, and just cam down the gate to see an there was ony cracks amang ye."

"Ay, ay," answered Luckie Mucklebackit, "I see you hae gotten a' your braws on; ye're looking about for Steenie now—but he's no at hame the night; and ye'll no do for Steenie, lass—a feckless thing like you's no fit to mainteen a man."

"Steenie will no do for me," retorted Jenny, with a toss of her head that might have become a higher-born damsel; "I maun hae a man that can mainteen his wife."

"Ou ay, hinny—thae's your landward and burrows-town notions. My certie!—fisherwives ken better—they keep the man, and keep the house, and keep the siller too, lass."

"A wheen poor drudges ye are," answered the nymph of the land to the nymph of the sea. "As sune as the keel o' the coble touches the sand, deil a bit mair will the lazy fisher loons work, but the wives maun kilt their coats, and wade into the surf to tak the fish ashore. And then the man casts aff the wat and puts on the dry, and sits down wi' his pipe and his gill-stoup ahint the ingle, like ony auld houdie, and neer a turn will he do till the coble's afloat again! And the wife she maun get the scull on her back, and awa wi' the fish to the next burrows-town, and scauld and ban wi'ilka wife that will scauld and ban wi'her till it's sauld—and that's the gait fisher-wives live, puir slaving bodies."

"Slaves?—gae wa', lass!—ca' the head o' the house slaves? little ye ken about it, lass. Show me a word my Saunders daur speak, or a turn he daur do about the house, without it be just to tak his meat, and his drink, and his diversion, like ony o' the weans. He has mair sense than to ca' anything about the bigging his ain, frae the roof-tree down to a crackit trencher on the bink. He kens weel enough wha feeds him, and cleeds him, and keeps a' tight, thack and rape, when his coble is jowing awa in the Firth, puir fallow. Na, na, lass!—them that sell the goods guide the purse—them that guide the purse rule the house. Show me ane o' yer bits o' farmer-bodies that wad let their wife drive the stock to the market, and ca' in the debts. Na, na."

"Aweel, aweel, Maggie, ilka land has its ain lauch—But where's Steenie the night, when a's come and gane? And where's the gudeman?"*

* Note G. Gynecocracy.

"I hae putten the gudeman to his bed, for he was e'en sair forfain; and Steenie's awa out about some barns-breaking wi' the auld gaberlunzie, Edie Ochiltree: they'll be in sune, and ye can sit doun."

"Troth, gudewife" (taking a seat), "I haena that muckle time to stop—but I maun tell ye about the news. Yell hae heard o' the muckle kist o' gowd that Sir Arthur has fund down by at St. Ruth?—He'll be grander than ever now—he'll no can haud down his head to sneeze, for fear o' seeing his shoon."

"Ou ay—a' the country's heard o' that; but auld Edie says that they ca' it ten times mair than ever was o't, and he saw them howk it up. Od, it would be lang or a puir body that needed it got sic a windfa'."

"Na, that's sure enough.—And yell hae heard o' the Countess o' Glenallan being dead and lying in state, and how she's to be buried at St. Ruth's as this night fa's, wi' torch-light; and a' the popist servants, and Ringan Aikwood, that's a papist too, are to be there, and it will be the grandest show ever was seen."

"Troth, hinny," answered the Nereid, "if they let naebody but papists come there, it'll no be muckle o' a show in this country, for the auld harlot, as honest Mr. Blattergowl ca's her, has few that drink o' her cup o' enchantments in this corner o' our chosen lands.—But what can ail them to bury the auld carlin (a rudas wife she was) in the night-time?—I dare say our gudemither will ken."

Here she exalted her voice, and exclaimed twice or thrice, "Gudemither! gudemither!" but, lost in the apathy of age and deafness, the aged sibyl she addressed continued plying her spindle without understanding the appeal made to her.

"Speak to your grandmither, Jenny—Od, I wad rather hail the coble half a mile aff, and the nor-wast wind whistling again in my teeth."

"Grannie," said the little mermaid, in a voice to which the old woman was better accustomed, "minnie wants to ken what for the Glenallan folk aye bury by candle-light in the ruing of St. Ruth!"

The old woman paused in the act of twirling the spindle, turned round to the rest of the party, lifted her withered, trembling, and clay-coloured hand, raised up her ashen-hued and wrinkled face, which the quick motion of two light-blue eyes chiefly distinguished from the visage of a corpse, and, as if catching at any touch of association with the living world, answered, "What gars the Glenallan family inter their dead by torchlight, said the lassie?—Is there a Glenallan dead e'en now?"

"We might be a' dead and buried too," said Maggie, "for onything ye wad ken about it;"—and then, raising her voice to the stretch of her mother-in-law's comprehension, she added,

"It's the auld Countess, gudemither."

"And is she ca'd hame then at last?" said the old woman, in a voice that seemed to be agitated with much more feeling than belonged to her extreme old age, and the general indifference and apathy of her manner—"is she then called to her last account after her lang race o' pride and power?—O God, forgie her!"

"But minnie was asking ye," resumed the lesser querist, "what for the Glenallan family aye bury their dead by torch-light?"

"They hae aye dune sae," said the grandmother, "since the time the Great Earl fell in the sair battle o' the Harlaw, when they say the coronach was cried in ae day from the mouth of the Tay to the Buck of the Cabrach, that ye wad hae heard nae other sound but that of lamentation for the great folks that had fa'en fighting against Donald of the Isles. But the Great Earl's mither was living—they were a doughty and a dour race, the women o' the house o' Glenallan—and she wad hae nae coronach cried for her son, but had him laid in the silence o' midnight in his place o' rest, without either drinking the dirge, or crying the lament. She said he had killed enow that day he died, for the widows and daughters o' the Highlanders he had slain to cry the coronach for them they had lost, and for her son too; and sae she laid him in his grave wi' dry eyes, and without a groan or a wail. And it was thought a proud word o' the family, and they aye stickit by it—and the mair in the latter times, because in the night-time they had mair freedom to perform their popish ceremonies by darkness and in secrecy than in the daylight—at least that was the case in my time; they wad hae been disturbed in the day-time baith by the law and the commons of Fairport—they may be owerlooked now, as I have heard: the warlds changed—I whiles hardly ken whether I am standing or sitting, or dead or living."

And looking round the fire, as if in a state of unconscious uncertainty of which she complained, old Elspeth relapsed into her habitual and mechanical occupation of twirling the spindle.

"Eh, sirs!" said Jenny Rintherout, under her breath to her gossip, "it's awsome to hear your gudemither break out in that gait—it's like the dead speaking to the living."

"Ye're no that far wrang, lass; she minds naething o' what passes the day—but set her on auld tales, and she can speak like a prent buke. She kens mair about the Glenallan family than maist folk—the gudeman's father was their fisher mony a day. Ye maun ken the papists make a great point o' eating fish—it's nae bad part o' their religion that, whatever the rest is—I could aye sell the best o' fish at the best o' prices for the Countess's ain table, grace be wi' her! especially on a Friday—But see as our gudemither's hands and lips are ganging—now it's working in her head like barm—she'll speak enugh the night. Whiles she'll no speak a word in a week, unless it be to the bits o' bairns."

"Hegh, Mrs. Mucklebackit, she's an awsome wife!" said Jenny in reply. "D'ye think she's a'thegither right? Folk say she downa gang to the kirk, or speak to the minister, and that she was ance a papist but since her gudeman's been dead, naebody kens what she is. D'ye think yoursell that she's no uncanny?"

"Canny, ye silly tawpie! think ye ae auld wife's less canny than anither? unless it be Alison Breck—I really couldna in conscience swear for her; I have kent the boxes she set fill'd wi' partans, when"—

"Whisht, wisht, Maggie," whispered Jenny—"your gudemither's gaun to speak again."

"Wasna there some ane o' ye said," asked the old sibyl, "or did I dream, or was it revealed to me, that Joscelind, Lady Glenallan, is dead, an' buried this night?"

"Yes, gudemither," screamed the daughter-in-law, "it's e'en sae."

"And e'en sae let it be," said old Elspeth; "she's made mony a sair heart in her day—ay, e'en her ain son's—is he living yet?"

"Ay, he's living yet; but how lang he'll live—however, dinna ye mind his coming and asking after you in the spring, and leaving siller?"

"It may be sae, Magge—I dinna mind it—but a handsome gentleman he was, and his father before him. Eh! if his father had lived, they might hae been happy folk! But he was gane, and the lady carried it in—ower and out-ower wi' her son, and garr'd him trow the thing he never suld hae trowed, and do the thing he has repented a' his life, and will repent still, were his life as lang as this lang and wearisome ane o' mine."

"O what was it, grannie?"—and "What was it, gudemither?"—and "What was it, Luckie Elspeth?" asked the children, the mother, and the visitor, in one breath.

"Never ask what it was," answered the old sibyl, "but pray to God that ye arena left to the pride and wilfu'ness o' your ain hearts: they may be as powerful in a cabin as in a castle—I can bear a sad witness to that. O that weary and fearfu' night! will it never gang out o' my auld head!—Eh! to see her lying on the floor wi' her lang hair dreeping wi' the salt water!—Heaven will avenge on a' that had to do wi't. Sirs! is my son out wi' the coble this windy e'en?"

"Na, na, mither—nae coble can keep the sea this wind; he's sleeping in his bed out-ower yonder ahint the hallan."

"Is Steenie out at sea then?"

"Na, grannie—Steenie's awa out wi' auld Edie Ochiltree, the gaberlunzie; maybe they'll be gaun to see the burial."

"That canna be," said the mother of the family; "we kent naething o't till Jock Rand cam in, and tauld us the Aikwoods had warning to attend—they keep thae things unco private—and they were to bring the corpse a' the way frae the Castle, ten miles off, under cloud o' night. She has lain in state this ten days at Glenallan House, in a grand chamber a' hung wi' black, and lighted wi' wax cannle."

"God assoilzie her!" ejaculated old Elspeth, her head apparently still occupied by the event of the Countess's death; "she was a hard-hearted woman, but she's gaen to account for it a', and His mercy is infinite—God grant she may find it sae!" And she relapsed into silence, which she did not break again during the rest of the evening.

"I wonder what that auld daft beggar carle and our son Steenie can be doing out in sic a nicht as this," said Maggie Mucklebackit; and her expression of surprise was echoed by her visitor. "Gang awa, ane o' ye, hinnies, up to the heugh head, and gie them a cry in case they're within hearing; the car-cakes will be burnt to a cinder."

The little emissary departed, but in a few minutes came running back with the loud exclamation, "Eh, Minnie! eh, grannie! there's a white bogle chasing twa black anes down the heugh."

A noise of footsteps followed this singular annunciation, and young Steenie Mucklebackit, closely followed by Edie Ochiltree, bounced into the hut. They were panting and out of breath. The first thing Steenie did was to look for the bar of the door, which his mother reminded him had been broken up for fire-wood in the hard winter three years ago; "for what use," she said, "had the like o' them for bars?"

"There's naebody chasing us," said the beggar, after he had taken his breath: "we're e'en like the wicked, that flee when no one pursueth."

"Troth, but we were chased," said Steenie, "by a spirit or something little better."

"It was a man in white on horseback," said Edie, "for the soft grund that wadna bear the beast, flung him about, I wot that weel; but I didna think my auld legs could have brought me aff as fast; I ran amaisht as fast as if I had been at Prestonpans."*

* [This refers to the flight of the government forces at the battle of Prestonpans, 1745.]

"Hout, ye daft gowks!" said Luckie Mucklebackit, "it will hae been some o' the riders at the Countess's burial."

"What!" said Edie, "is the auld Countess buried the night at St. Ruth's? Ou, that wad be the lights and the noise that scarr'd us awa; I wish I had ken'd—I wad hae stude them, and no left the man yonder—but they'll take care o' him. Ye strike ower hard, Steenie I doubt ye foundered the chield."

"Neer a bit," said Steenie, laughing; "he has braw broad shouthers, and I just took measure o' them wi' the stang. Od, if I hadna been something short wi' him, he wad hae knockit your auld hams out, lad."

"Weel, an I win clear o' this scrape," said Edie, "I'll tempt Providence nae mair. But I canna think it an unlawfu' thing to pit a bit trick on sic a landlouping scoundrel, that just lives by tricking honest folk."

"But what are we to do with this?" said Steenie, producing a pocket-book.

"Od guide us, man," said Edie in great alarm, "what garr'd ye touch the gear? a very leaf o' that pocket-book wad be enugh to hang us baith."

"I dinna ken," said Steenie; "the book had fa'en out o' his pocket, I fancy, for I fand it amang my feet when I was graping about to set him on his logs again, and I just pat it in my pouch to keep it safe; and then came the tramp of horse, and you cried, Rin, rin, and I had nae mair thought o' the book."

"We maun get it back to the loon some gait or other; ye had better take it yoursell, I think, wi' peep o' light, up to Ringan Aikwood's. I wadna for a hundred pounds it was fund in our hands."

Steenie undertook to do as he was directed.

"A bonny night ye hae made o't, Mr. Steenie," said Jenny Rintherout, who, impatient of remaining so long unnoticed, now presented herself to the young fisherman—"A bonny night ye hae made o't, tramping about wi' gaberlunzies, and getting yoursell hunted wi' worricows, when ye suld be sleeping in your bed, like your father, honest man."

This attack called forth a suitable response of rustic raillery from the young fisherman. An attack was now commenced upon the car-cakes and smoked fish, and sustained with great perseverance by assistance of a bicker or two of twopenny ale and a bottle of gin. The mendicant then retired to the straw of an out-house adjoining,—the children had one by one crept into their nests,—the old grandmother was deposited in her flock-bed,—Steenie, notwithstanding his preceding fatigue, had the gallantry to accompany Miss Rintherout to her own mansion, and at what hour he returned the story saith not,—and the matron of the family, having laid the gathering-coal upon the fire, and put things in some sort of order, retired to rest the last of the family.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

—Many great ones

*Would part with half their states, to have the plan
And credit to beg in the first style.*

Beggar's Bush.

Old Edie was stirring with the lark, and his first inquiry was after Steenie and the pocket-book. The young fisherman had been under the necessity of attending his father before daybreak, to avail themselves of the tide, but he had promised that, immediately on his return, the pocket-book, with all its contents, carefully wrapped up in a piece of sail-cloth, should be delivered by him to Ringan Aikwood, for Dousterswivel, the owner.

The matron had prepared the morning meal for the family, and, shouldering her basket of fish, tramped sturdily away towards Fairport. The children were idling round the door, for the day was fair and sun-shiney. The ancient grandame, again seated on her wicker-chair by the fire, had resumed her eternal spindle, wholly unmoved by the yelling and screaming of the children, and the scolding of the mother, which had preceded the dispersion of the family. Edie had arranged his various bags, and was bound for the renewal of his wandering life, but first advanced with due courtesy to take his leave of the ancient crone.

"Gude day to ye, cummer, and mony ane o' them. I will be back about the fore-end o' har'st, and I trust to find ye baith hail and fere."

"Pray that ye may find me in my quiet grave," said the old woman, in a hollow and sepulchral voice, but without the agitation of a single feature.

"Ye're auld, cummer, and sae am I mysell; but we maun abide His will— we'll no be forgotten in His good time."

"Nor our deeds neither," said the crone: "what's dune in the body maun be answered in the spirit."

"I wot that's true; and I may weel tak the tale hame to mysell, that hae led a misruled and roving life. But ye were aye a canny wife. We're a' frail—but ye canna hae sae muckle to bow ye down."

"Less than I might have had—but mair, O far mair, than wad sink the stoutest brig e'er sailed out o' Fairport harbour!—Didna somebody say yestreen—at least sae it is borne in on my mind, but auld folk hae weak fancies—did not somebody say that Joscelind, Countess of Glenallan, was departed frae life?"

"They said the truth whae'er said it," answered old Edie; "she was buried yestreen by torch-light at St. Ruth's, and I, like a fule, gat a gliff wi' seeing the lights and the riders."

"It was their fashion since the days of the Great Earl that was killed at Harlaw;—they did it to show scorn that they should die and be buried like other mortals; the wives o' the house of Glenallan wailed nae wail for the husband, nor the sister for the brother.—But is she e'en ca'd to the lang account?"

"As sure," answered Edie, "as we maun a' abide it."

"Then I'll unlade my mind, come o't what will."

This she spoke with more alacrity than usually attended her expressions, and accompanied her words with an attitude of the hand, as if throwing something from her. She then raised up her form, once tall, and still retaining the appearance of having been so, though bent with age and rheumatism, and stood before the beggar like a mummy animated by some wandering spirit into a temporary resurrection. Her light-blue eyes wandered to and fro, as if she occasionally forgot and again remembered the purpose for which her long and withered hand was searching among the miscellaneous contents of an ample old-fashioned pocket. At length she pulled out a small chip-box, and opening it, took out a handsome ring, in which was set a braid of hair, composed of two different colours, black and light brown, twined together, encircled with brilliants of considerable value.

"Gudeman," she said to Ochiltree, "as ye wad e'er deserve mercy, ye maun gang my errand to the house of Glenallan, and ask for the Earl."

"The Earl of Glenallan, cummer! ou, he winna see ony o' the gentles o' the country, and what likelihood is there that he wad see the like o' an auld gaberlunzie?"

"Gang your ways and try;—and tell him that Elspeth o' the Craighburnfoot—he'll mind me best by that name—maun see him or she be relieved frae her lang pilgrimage, and that she sends him that ring in token of the business she wad speak o'."

Ochiltree looked on the ring with some admiration of its apparent value, and then carefully replacing it in the box, and wrapping it in an old ragged handkerchief, he deposited the token in his bosom.

"Weel, gudewife," he said, "I'll do your bidding, or it's no be my fault. But surely there was never sic a braw propine as this sent to a yerl by an auld fishwife, and through the hands of a gaberlunzie beggar."

With this reflection, Edie took up his pike-staff, put on his broad-brimmed bonnet, and set forth upon his pilgrimage. The old woman remained for some time standing in a fixed posture, her eyes directed to the door through which her ambassador had departed. The appearance of excitement, which the conversation had occasioned, gradually left her features; she sank down upon her accustomed seat, and resumed her mechanical labour of the distaff and spindle, with her wonted air of apathy.

Edie Ochiltree meanwhile advanced on his journey. The distance to Glenallan was ten miles, a march which the old soldier accomplished in about four hours. With the curiosity belonging to his idle trade and animated character, he tortured himself the whole way to consider what could be the meaning of this mysterious errand with which he was entrusted, or what connection the proud, wealthy, and powerful Earl of Glenallan could have with the crimes or penitence of an old doting woman, whose rank in life did not greatly exceed that of her messenger. He endeavoured to call to memory all that he had ever known or heard of the Glenallan family, yet, having done so, remained altogether unable to form a conjecture on the subject. He knew that the whole extensive estate of this ancient and powerful family had descended to the Countess, lately deceased, who inherited, in a most remarkable degree, the stern, fierce, and unbending character which had distinguished the house of Glenallan since they first figured in Scottish annals. Like the rest of her ancestors, she adhered zealously to the Roman Catholic faith, and was married to an English gentleman of the same communion, and of large fortune, who did not survive their union two years. The Countess was, therefore, left an early widow, with the uncontrolled management of the large estates of her two sons. The elder, Lord Geraldin, who was to succeed to the title and fortune of Glenallan, was totally dependent on his mother during her life. The second, when he came of age, assumed the name and arms of his father, and took possession of his estate, according to the provisions of the Countess's marriage-settlement. After this period, he chiefly resided in England, and paid very few and brief visits to his mother and brother; and these at length were altogether dispensed with, in consequence of his becoming a convert to the reformed religion. But even before this mortal offence was given to its mistress, his residence at Glenallan offered few inducements to a gay young man like Edward Geraldin Neville, though its gloom and seclusion seemed to suit the retired and melancholy habits of his elder brother. Lord Geraldin, in the outset of life, had been a young man of accomplishment and hopes. Those who knew him upon his travels entertained the highest expectations of his future career. But such fair dawns are often strangely overcast. The young nobleman returned to Scotland, and after living about a year in his mother's society at Glenallan House, he seemed to have adopted all the stern gloom and melancholy of her character. Excluded from politics by the incapacities attached to those of his religion, and from all lighter

avocation as by choice, Lord Geraldin led a life of the strictest retirement. His ordinary society was composed of the clergyman of his communion, who occasionally visited his mansion; and very rarely, upon stated occasions of high festival, one or two families who still professed the Catholic religion were formally entertained at Glenallan House. But this was all; their heretic neighbours knew nothing of the family whatever; and even the Catholics saw little more than the sumptuous entertainment and solemn parade which was exhibited on those formal occasions, from which all returned without knowing whether most to wonder at the stern and stately demeanour of the Countess, or the deep and gloomy dejection which never ceased for a moment to cloud the features of her son. The late event had put him in possession of his fortune and title, and the neighbourhood had already begun to conjecture whether gaiety would revive with independence, when those who had some occasional acquaintance with the interior of the family spread abroad a report, that the Earl's constitution was undermined by religious austerities, and that in all probability he would soon follow his mother to the grave. This event was the more probable, as his brother had died of a lingering complaint, which, in the latter years of his life, had affected at once his frame and his spirits; so that heralds and genealogists were already looking back into their records to discover the heir of this ill-fated family, and lawyers were talking with gleesome anticipation, of the probability of a "great Glenallan cause."

As Edie Ochiltree approached the front of Glenallan House,* an ancient building of great extent, the most modern part of which had been designed by the celebrated Inigo Jones, he began to consider in what way he should be most likely to gain access for delivery of his message; and, after much consideration, resolved to send the token to the Earl by one of the domestics.

* [Supposed to represent Glammis Castle, in Forfarshire, with which the Author was well acquainted.]

With this purpose he stopped at a cottage, where he obtained the means of making up the ring in a sealed packet like a petition, addressed, *Forr his hounor the Yerl of Glenllan—These*. But being aware that missives delivered at the doors of great houses by such persons as himself, do not always make their way according to address, Edie determined, like an old soldier, to reconnoitre the ground before he made his final attack. As he approached the porter's lodge, he discovered, by the number of poor ranked before it, some of them being indigent persons in the vicinity, and others itinerants of his own begging profession,—that there was about to be a general dole or distribution of charity.

"A good turn," said Edie to himself, "never goes unrewarded—I'll maybe get a good awmous that I wad hae missed but for trotting on this auld wife's errand."

Accordingly, he ranked up with the rest of this ragged regiment, assuming a station as near the front as possible,—a distinction due, as he conceived, to his blue gown and badge, no less than to his years and experience; but he soon found there was another principle of precedence in this assembly, to which he had not adverted.

"Are ye a triple man, friend, that ye press forward sae bauldly?—I'm thinking no, for there's nae Catholics wear that badge."

"Na, na, I am no a Roman," said Edie.

"Then shank yoursell awa to the double folk, or single folk, that's the Episcopal or Presbyterians yonder: it's a shame to see a heretic hae sic a lang white beard, that would do credit to a hermit."

Ochiltree, thus rejected from the society of the Catholic mendicants, or those who called themselves such, went to station himself with the paupers of the communion of the church of England, to whom the noble donor allotted a double portion of his charity. But never was a poor occasional conformist more roughly rejected by a High-church congregation, even when that matter was furiously agitated in the days of good Queen Anne.

"See to him wi' his badge!" they said;—"he hears ane o' the king's Presbyterian chaplains sough out a sermon on the morning of every birth-day, and now he would pass himsell for ane o' the Episcopal church! Na, na!—we'll take care o' that."

Edie, thus rejected by Rome and Prelacy, was fain to shelter himself from the laughter of his brethren among the thin group of Presbyterians, who had either disdained to disguise their religious opinions for the sake of an augmented dole, or perhaps knew they could not attempt the imposition without a certainty of detection.

The same degree of precedence was observed in the mode of distributing the charity, which consisted in bread, beef, and a piece of money, to each individual of all the three classes. The almoner, an ecclesiastic of grave appearance and demeanour, superintended in person the accommodation of the Catholic mendicants, asking a question or two of each as he delivered the charity, and recommending to their prayers the soul of Joscelind, late Countess of Glenallan, mother of their benefactor. The porter, distinguished by his long staff headed with silver, and by the black gown tufted with lace of the same colour, which he had assumed upon the general mourning in the family, overlooked the distribution of the dole among the prelatists. The less-favoured kirk-folk were committed to the charge of an aged domestic.

As this last discussed some disputed point with the porter, his name, as it chanced to be occasionally mentioned, and then his features, struck Ochiltree, and awakened recollections of former times. The rest of the assembly were now retiring, when the domestic, again approaching the place where Edie still lingered, said, in a strong Aberdeenshire accent, "Fat is the auld feel-body deeing, that he canna gang away, now that he's gotten baith meat and siller?"

"Francis Macraw," answered Edie Ochiltree, "d'ye no mind Fontenoy, and keep thegither front and rear?"

"Ohon! ohon!" cried Francie, with a true north-country yell of recognition, "naebody could hae said that word but my auld front-rank man, Edie Ochiltree! But I'm sorry to see ye in sic a peer state, man."

"No sae ill aff as ye may think, Francis. But I'm laith to leave this place without a crack wi' you, and I kenna when I may see you again, for your folk dinna mak Protestants welcome, and that's ae reason that I hae never been here before."

"Fusht, fusht," said Francie, "let that flee stick i' the wa'—when the dirt's dry it will rub out;—and come you awa wi' me, and I'll gie ye something better than that beef bane, man."

Having then spoke a confidential word with the porter (probably to request his connivance), and having waited until the almoner had returned into the house with slow and solemn steps, Francie Macraw introduced his old comrade into the court of Glenallan House, the gloomy gateway of which was surmounted by a huge scutcheon, in which the herald and undertaker had mingled, as usual, the emblems of human pride and of human nothingness,—the Countess's hereditary coat-of-arms, with all its numerous quarterings, disposed in a lozenge, and surrounded by the separate shields of her paternal and maternal ancestry, intermingled with scythes, hour glasses, skulls, and other symbols of that mortality which levels all distinctions. Conducting his friend as speedily as possible along the large paved court, Macraw led the way through a side-door to a small apartment near the servants' hall, which, in virtue of his personal attendance upon the Earl of Glenallan, he was entitled to call his own. To produce cold meat of various kinds, strong beer, and even a glass of spirits, was no difficulty to a person of Francis's importance, who had not lost, in his sense of conscious dignity, the keen northern prudence which recommended a good understanding with the butler. Our mendicant envoy drank ale, and talked over old stories with his comrade, until, no other topic of conversation occurring, he resolved to take up the theme of his embassy, which had for some time escaped his memory.

"He had a petition to present to the Earl," he said;—for he judged it prudent to say nothing of the ring, not knowing, as he afterwards observed, how far the manners of a single soldier* might have been corrupted by service in a great house.

* A single soldier means, in Scotch, a private soldier.

"Hout, tout, man," said Francie, "the Earl will look at nae petitions— but I can gie't to the almoner."

"But it relates to some secret, that maybe my lord wad like best to see't himsell."

"I'm jeedging that's the very reason that the almoner will be for seeing it the first and foremost."

"But I hae come a' this way on purpose to deliver it, Francis, and ye really maun help me at a pinch."

"Neer speed then if I dinna," answered the Aberdeenshire man: "let them be as cankered as they like, they can but turn me awa, and I was just thinking to ask my discharge, and gang down to end my days at Inverurie."

With this doughty resolution of serving his friend at all ventures, since none was to be encountered which could much inconvenience himself, Francie Macraw left the apartment. It was long before he returned, and when he did, his manner indicated wonder and agitation.

"I am nae seer gin ye be Edie Ochiltree o' Carrick's company in the Forty-twa, or gin ye be the deil in his likeness!"

"And what makes ye speak in that gait?" demanded the astonished mendicant.

"Because my lord has been in sic a distress and surprise as I neer saw a man in my life. But he'll see you—I got that job cookit. He was like a man awa frae himsell for mony minutes, and I thought he wad hae swarv't a'thegither,—and fan he cam to himsell, he asked fae brought the packet—and fat trow ye I said?"

"An auld soger," says Edie—"that does likeliest at a gentle's door; at a farmer's it's best to say ye're an auld tinkler, if ye need ony quarters, for maybe the gudewife will hae something to souther."

"But I said neer ane o' the twa," answered Francis; "my lord cares as little about the tane as the tother—for he's best to them that can souther up our sins. Sae I e'en said the bit paper was brought by an auld man wi' a long fite beard—he might be a capeechin freer for fat I ken'd, for he was dressed like an auld palmer. Sae ye'll be sent up for fanever he can find mettle to face ye."

"I wish I was weel through this business," thought Edie to himself; "mony folk surmise that the Earl's no very right in the judgment, and wha can say how far he may be offended wi' me for taking upon me sae muckle?"

But there was now no room for retreat—a bell sounded from a distant part of the mansion, and Macraw said, with a smothered accent, as if already in his master's presence, "That's my lord's bell!—follow me, and step lightly and cannily, Edie."

Edie followed his guide, who seemed to tread as if afraid of being overheard, through a long passage, and up a back stair, which admitted them into the family apartments. They were ample and extensive, furnished at such cost as showed the ancient importance and splendour of the family. But all the ornaments were in the taste of a former and distant period, and one would have almost supposed himself traversing the halls of a Scottish nobleman before the union of the crowns. The late Countess, partly from a haughty contempt of the times in which she lived, partly from her sense of family pride, had not permitted the furniture to be altered or modernized during her residence at Glenallan House. The most magnificent part of the decorations was a valuable collection of pictures by the best masters, whose massive frames were somewhat tarnished by time. In this particular also the gloomy taste of the family seemed to predominate. There were some fine family portraits by Vandyke and other masters of eminence; but the collection was richest in the Saints and Martyrdoms of Domenichino, Velasquez, and Murillo, and other subjects of the same kind, which had been selected in preference to landscapes or historical pieces. The manner in which these awful, and sometimes disgusting, subjects were represented, harmonized with the gloomy state of the apartments,—a circumstance which was not altogether lost on the old man, as he traversed them under the guidance of his quondam fellow-soldier. He was about to express some sentiment of this kind, but Francie imposed silence on him by signs, and opening a door at the end of the long picture-gallery, ushered him into a small antechamber hung with black. Here they found the almoner, with his ear turned to a door opposite that by which they entered, in the attitude of one who listens with attention, but is at the same time afraid of being detected in the act.

The old domestic and churchman started when they perceived each other. But the almoner first recovered his recollection, and advancing towards Macraw, said, under his breath, but with an authoritative tone, "How dare you approach the Earl's apartment without knocking? and who is this stranger, or what has he to do here?—Retire to the gallery, and wait for me there."

"It's impossible just now to attend your reverence," answered Macraw, raising his voice so as to be heard in the next room, being conscious that the priest would not maintain the alteration within hearing of his patron,—“the Earl's bell has rung."

He had scarce uttered the words, when it was rung again with greater violence than before; and the ecclesiastic, perceiving further expostulation impossible, lifted his finger at Macraw, with a menacing attitude, as he left the apartment.

"I tell'd ye sae," said the Aberdeen man in a whisper to Edie, and then proceeded to open the door near which they had observed the chaplain stationed.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

—*This ring.*—

*This little ring, with necromantic force,
Has raised the ghost of pleasure to my fears,
Conjured the sense of honour and of love
Into such shapes, they fright me from myself.*

The Fatal Marriage.

The ancient forms of mourning were observed in Glenallan House, notwithstanding the obduracy with which the members of the family were popularly supposed to refuse to the dead the usual tribute of lamentation. It was remarked, that when she received the fatal letter announcing the death of her second, and, as was once believed, her favourite son, the hand of the Countess did not shake, nor her eyelid twinkle, any more than upon perusal of a letter of ordinary business. Heaven only knows whether the suppression of maternal sorrow, which her pride commanded, might not have some effect in hastening her own death. It was at least generally supposed that the apoplectic stroke, which so soon afterwards terminated her existence, was, as it were, the vengeance of outraged Nature for the restraint to which her feelings had been subjected. But although Lady Glenallan forebore the usual external signs of grief, she had caused many of the apartments, amongst others her own and that of the Earl, to be hung with the exterior trappings of woe.

The Earl of Glenallan was therefore seated in an apartment hung with black cloth, which waved in dusky folds along its lofty walls. A screen, also covered with black baize, placed towards the high and narrow window, intercepted much of the broken light which found its way through the stained glass, that represented, with such skill as the fourteenth century possessed, the life and sorrows of the prophet Jeremiah. The table at which the Earl was seated was lighted with two lamps wrought in silver, shedding that unpleasant and doubtful light which arises from the mingling of artificial lustre with that of general daylight. The same table displayed a silver crucifix, and one or two clasped parchment books. A large picture, exquisitely painted by Spagnoletto, represented the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and was the only ornament of the apartment.

The inhabitant and lord of this disconsolate chamber was a man not past the prime of life, yet so broken down with disease and mental misery, so gaunt and ghastly, that he appeared but a wreck of manhood; and when he hastily arose and advanced towards his visitor, the exertion seemed almost to overpower his emaciated frame. As they met in the midst of the apartment, the contrast they exhibited was very striking. The hale cheek, firm step, erect stature, and undaunted presence and bearing of the old mendicant, indicated patience and content in the extremity of age, and in the lowest condition to which humanity can sink; while the sunken eye, pallid cheek, and tottering form of the nobleman with whom he was confronted, showed how little wealth, power, and even the advantages of youth, have to do with that which gives repose to the mind, and firmness to the frame.

The Earl met the old man in the middle of the room, and having commanded his attendant to withdraw into the gallery, and suffer no one to enter the antechamber till he rung the bell, awaited, with hurried yet fearful impatience, until he heard first the door of his apartment, and then that of the antechamber, shut and fastened by the spring-bolt. When he was satisfied with this security against being overheard, Lord Glenallan came close up to the mendicant, whom he probably mistook for some person of a religious order in disguise, and said, in a hasty yet faltering tone, "In the name of all our religion holds most holy, tell me, reverend father, what am I to expect from a communication opened by a token connected with such horrible recollections?"

The old man, appalled by a manner so different from what he had expected from the proud and powerful nobleman, was at a loss how to answer, and in what manner to undeceive him. "Tell me," continued the Earl, in a tone of increasing trepidation and agony—"tell me, do you come to say that all that has been done to expiate guilt so horrible, has been too little and too trivial for the offence, and to point out new and more efficacious modes of severe penance?—I will not blench from it, father—let me suffer the pains of my crime here in the body, rather than hereafter in the spirit!"

Edie had now recollection enough to perceive, that if he did not interrupt the frankness of Lord Glenallan's admissions, he was likely to become the confidant of more than might be safe for him to know. He therefore uttered with a hasty and trembling voice—"Your lordship's honour is mistaken—I am not of your persuasion, nor a clergyman, but, with all reverence, only your Edie Ochiltree, the king's bedesman and your honour's."

This explanation he accompanied by a profound bow after his manner, and then, drawing himself up erect, rested his arm on his staff, threw back his long white hair, and fixed his eyes upon the Earl, as he waited for an answer.

"And you are not then," said Lord Glenallan, after a pause of surprise—"You are not then a Catholic priest?"

"God forbid!" said Edie, forgetting in his confusion to whom he was speaking; "I am only the king's bedesman and your honour's, as I said before."

The Earl turned hastily away, and paced the room twice or thrice, as if to recover the effects of his mistake, and then, coming close up to the mendicant, he demanded, in a stern and commanding tone, what he meant by intruding himself on his privacy, and from whence he had got the ring which he had thought proper to send him. Edie, a man of much spirit, was less daunted at this mode of interrogation than he had been confused by the tone of confidence in which the Earl had opened their conversation. To the reiterated question from whom he had obtained the ring, he answered composedly, "From one who was better known to the Earl than to him."

"Better known to me, fellow?" said Lord Glenallan: "what is your meaning?—explain yourself instantly, or you shall experience the consequence of breaking in upon the hours of family distress."

"It was auld Elspeth Mucklebackit that sent me here," said the beggar, "in order to say"—

"You dote, old man!" said the Earl; "I never heard the name—but this dreadful token reminds me"—

"I mind now, my lord," said Ochiltree, "she tauld me your lordship would be mair familiar wi' her, if I ca'd her Elspeth o' the Craighburnfoot—she had that name when she lived on your honour's land, that is, your honour's worshipful mother's that was then—Grace be wi' her!"

"Ay," said the appalled nobleman, as his countenance sunk, and his cheek assumed a hue yet more cadaverous; "that name is indeed written in the most tragic page of a deplorable history. But what can she desire of me? Is she dead or living?"

"Living, my lord; and entreats to see your lordship before she dies, for she has something to communicate that hangs upon her very soul, and she says she canna flit in peace until she sees you."

"Not until she sees me!—what can that mean? But she is doting with age and infirmity. I tell thee, friend, I called at her cottage myself, not a twelvemonth since, from a report that she was in distress, and she did not even know my face or voice."

"If your honour wad permit me," said Edie, to whom the length of the conference restored a part of his professional audacity and native talkativeness—"if your honour wad but permit me, I wad say, under correction of your lordship's better judgment, that auld Elspeth's like some of the ancient ruined strengths and castles that ane sees among the hills. There are mony parts of her mind that appear, as I may say, laid waste and decayed, but then there's parts that look the steever, and the stronger, and the grander, because they are rising just like to fragments among the ruins o' the rest. She's an awful woman."

"She always was so," said the Earl, almost unconsciously echoing the observation of the mendicant; "she always was different from other women—likiest perhaps to her who is now no more, in her temper and turn of mind.—She wishes to see me, then?"

"Before she dies," said Edie, "she earnestly entreats that pleasure."

"It will be a pleasure to neither of us," said the Earl, sternly, "yet she shall be gratified. She lives, I think, on the sea-shore to the southward of Fairport?"

"Just between Monkbarns and Knockwinnoch Castle, but nearer to Monkbarns. Your lordship's honour will ken the laird and Sir Arthur, doubtless?"

A stare, as if he did not comprehend the question, was Lord Glenallan's answer. Edie saw his mind was elsewhere, and did not venture to repeat a query which was so little german to the matter.

"Are you a Catholic, old man?" demanded the Earl.

"No, my lord," said Ochiltree stoutly; for the remembrance of the unequal division of the dole rose in his mind at the moment; "I thank Heaven I am a good Protestant."

"He who can conscientiously call himself *good*, has indeed reason to thank Heaven, be his form of Christianity what it will—But who is he that shall dare to do so!"

"Not I," said Edie; "I trust to beware of the sin of presumption."

"What was your trade in your youth?" continued the Earl.

"A soldier, my lord; and mony a sair day's kemping I've seen. I was to have been made a sergeant, but"—

"A soldier! then you have slain and burnt, and sacked and spoiled?"

"I winna say," replied Edie, "that I have been better than my neighbours;—it's a rough trade—war's sweet to them that never tried it."

"And you are now old and miserable, asking from precarious charity the food which in your youth you tore from the hand of the poor peasant?"

"I am a beggar, it is true, my lord; but I am nae just sae miserable neither. For my sins, I hae had grace to repent of them, if I might say sae, and to lay them where they may be better borne than by me; and for my food, naebody grudges an auld man a bit and a drink—Sae I live as I can, and am contented to die when I am ca'd upon."

"And thus, then, with little to look back upon that is pleasant or praiseworthy in your past life—with less to look forward to on this side of eternity, you are contented to drag out the rest of your existence? Go, begone! and in your age and poverty and weariness, never envy the lord of such a mansion as this, either in his sleeping or waking moments—Here is something for thee."

The Earl put into the old man's hand five or six guineas. Edie would perhaps have stated his scruples, as upon other occasions, to the amount of the benefaction, but the tone of Lord Glenallan was too absolute to admit of either answer or dispute. The Earl then called his servant—"See this old man safe from the castle—let no one ask him any questions—and you, friend, begone, and forget the road that leads to my house."

"That would be difficult for me," said Edie, looking at the gold which he still held in his hand, "that would be e'en difficult, since your honour has gien me such gade cause to remember it."

Lord Glenallan stared, as hardly comprehending the old man's boldness in daring to bandy words with him, and, with his hand, made him another signal of departure, which the mendicant instantly obeyed.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

*For he was one in all their idle sport,
And like a monarch, ruled their little court
The pliant bow he formed, the flying ball,
The bat, the wicket, were his labours all.
Crabbe's Village.*

Francis Macraw, agreeably to the commands of his master, attended the mendicant, in order to see him fairly out of the estate, without permitting him to have conversation, or intercourse, with any of the Earl's dependents or domestics. But, judiciously considering that the restriction did not extend to himself, who was the person entrusted with the convoy, he used every measure in his power to extort from Edie the nature of his confidential and secret interview with Lord Glenallan. But Edie had been in his time accustomed to cross-examination, and easily evaded those of his quondam comrade. "The secrets of grit folk," said Ochiltree within

himself, "are just like the wild beasts that are shut up in cages. Keep them hard and fast sneaked up, and it's a' very weel or better—but ance let them out, they will turn and rend you. I mind how ill Dugald Gunn cam aff for letting loose his tongue about the Major's leddy and Captain Bandilier."

Francis was therefore foiled in his assaults upon the fidelity of the mendicant, and, like an indifferent chess-player, became, at every unsuccessful movement, more liable to the counter-checks of his opponent.

"Sae ye uphould ye had nae particulars to say to my lord but about yer ain matters?"

"Ay, and about the wee bits o' things I had brought frae abroad," said Edie. "I ken'd you popist folk are unco set on the relics that are fetched frae far-kirks and sae forth."

"Troth, my Lord maun be turned feel outright," said the domestic, "an he puts himsell into sic a carfuffle, for onything ye could bring him, Edie."

"I doubtna ye may say true in the main, neighbour," replied the beggar, "but maybe he's had some hard play in his younger days, Francis, and that whiles unsettles folk sair."

"Troth, Edie, and ye may say that—and since it's like yell neer come back to the estate, or, if ye dee, that ye'll no find me there, I'll e'en tell you he had a heart in his young time sae wrecked and rent, that it's a wonder it hasna broken outright lang afore this day."

"Ay, say ye sae?" said Ochiltree; "that maun hae been about a woman, I reckon?"

"Troth, and ye hae guessed it," said Francie—"jeest a cusin o' his nain—Miss Eveline Neville, as they suld hae ca'd her;—there was a sough in the country about it, but it was hushed up, as the grandees were concerned;—it's mair than twenty years syne—ay, it will be three-and-twenty."

"Ay, I was in America then," said the mendicant, "and no in the way to hear the country clashes."

"There was little clash about it, man," replied Macraw; "he liked this young leddy, ana suld hae married her, but his mother fand it out, and then the deil gaed o'er Jock Webster. At last, the peer lass clodded hersell o'er the scaur at the Craighburnfoot into the sea, and there was an end o't."

"An end o't wi' the puir leddy," said the mendicant, "but, as I reckon, nae end o't wi' the yerl."

"Nae end o't till his life makes an end," answered the Aberdonian.

"But what for did the auld Countess forbid the marriage?" continued the persevering querist.

"Fat for!—she maybe didna weel ken for fat hersell, for she gar'd a' bow to her bidding, right or wrang—But it was ken'd the young leddy was inclined to some o' the heresies of the country—mair by token, she was sib to him nearer than our Church's rule admits of. Sae the leddy was driven to the desperate act, and the yerl has never since held his head up like a man."

"Weel away!" replied Ochiltree:—"it's e'en queer I neer heard this tale afore."

"It's e'en queer that ye heard it now, for deil ane o' the servants durst hae spoken o't had the auld Countess been living. Eh, man, Edie! but she was a trimmer—it wad hae taen a skeely man to hae squared wi' her!—But she's in her grave, and we may loose our tongues a bit fan we meet a friend.—But fare ye weel, Edie—I maun be back to the evening-service. An' ye come to Inverurie maybe sax months awa, dinna forget to ask after Francie Macraw."

What one kindly pressed, the other as firmly promised; and the friends having thus parted, with every testimony of mutual regard, the domestic of Lord Glenallan took his road back to the seat of his master, leaving Ochiltree to trace onward his habitual pilgrimage.

It was a fine summer evening, and the world—that is, the little circle which was all in all to the individual by whom it was trodden, lay before Edie Ochiltree, for the choosing of his night's quarters. When he had passed the less hospitable domains of Glenallan, he had in his option so many places of refuge for the evening, that he was nice, and even fastidious in the choice. Ailie Sim's public was on the road-side about a mile before him, but there would be a parcel of young fellows there on the Saturday night, and that was a bar to civil conversation. Other "gudemen and gudewives," as the farmers and their dames are termed in Scotland, successively presented themselves to his imagination. But one was deaf, and could not hear him; another toothless, and could not make him hear; a third had a cross temper; and a fourth an ill-natured house-dog. At Monkbarns or Knockwinnock he was sure of a favourable and hospitable reception; but they lay too distant to be conveniently reached that night.

"I dinna ken how it is," said the old man, "but I am nicer about my quarters this night than ever I mind having been in my life. I think, having seen a' the braws yonder, and finding out ane may be happier without them, has made me proud o' my ain lot—But I wuss it bode me gude, for pride goeth before destruction. At any rate, the warst barn e'er man lay in wad be a pleasanter abode than Glenallan House, wi' a' the pictures and black velvet, and silver bonny-wawlies belonging to it—Sae I'll e'en settle at ance, and put in for Ailie Sims."

As the old man descended the hill above the little hamlet to which he was bending his course, the setting sun had relieved its inmates from their labour, and the young men, availing themselves of the fine evening, were engaged in the sport of long-bowls on a patch of common, while the women and elders looked on. The shout, the laugh, the exclamations of winners and losers, came in blended chorus up the path which Ochiltree was descending, and awakened in his recollection the days when he himself had been a keen competitor, and frequently victor, in games of strength and agility. These remembrances seldom fail to excite a sigh, even when the evening of life is cheered by brighter prospects than those of our poor mendicant. "At that time of day," was his natural reflection, "I would have thought as little about ony auld palmering body that was coming down the edge of Kinblythemont, as ony o' thae stalwart young chiefs does e'enow about auld Edie Ochiltree."

He was, however, presently cheered, by finding that more importance was attached to his arrival than his modesty had anticipated. A disputed cast had occurred between the bands of players, and as the gauger favoured the one party, and the schoolmaster the other, the matter might be said to be taken up by the higher powers. The miller and smith, also, had espoused different sides, and, considering the vivacity of two such disputants, there was reason to doubt whether the strife might be amicably terminated. But the first person who caught a sight of the mendicant exclaimed, "Ah! here comes auld Edie, that kens the rules of a' country games better than ony man that ever drave a bowl, or threw an axle-tree, or putted a stane either;—let's hae nae quarrelling, callants—we'll stand by auld Edie's judgment."

Edie was accordingly welcomed, and installed as umpire, with a general shout of gratulation. With all the modesty of a Bishop to whom the mitre is proffered, or of a new Speaker called to the chair, the old man declined the high trust and responsibility with which it was proposed to invest him, and, in requital for his self-denial and humility, had the pleasure of receiving the reiterated assurances of young, old, and middle-aged, that he was simply the best qualified person for the office of arbiter "in the haill country-side." Thus encouraged, he proceeded gravely to the execution of his duty, and, strictly forbidding all aggravating expressions on either side, he heard the smith and gauger on one side, the miller and schoolmaster on the other, as junior and senior counsel. Edie's mind, however, was fully made up on the subject before the pleading began; like that of many a judge, who must nevertheless go through all the forms, and endure in its full extent the eloquence and argumentation of the Bar. For when all had been said on both sides, and much of it said over oftener than once, our senior, being well and ripely advised, pronounced the moderate and healing judgment, that the disputed cast was a drawn one, and should therefore count to neither party. This judicious decision restored concord to the field of players; they began anew to arrange their match and their bets, with the clamorous mirth usual on such occasions of village sport, and the more eager were already stripping their jackets, and committing them, with their coloured handkerchiefs, to the care of wives, sisters, and mistresses. But their mirth was singularly interrupted.

On the outside of the group of players began to arise sounds of a description very different from those of sport—that sort of suppressed sigh and exclamation, with which the first news of calamity is received by the hearers, began to be heard indistinctly. A buzz went about among the women of "Eh, sirs! sae young and sae suddenly summoned!"—It then extended itself among the men, and silenced the sounds of sportive mirth.

All understood at once that some disaster had happened in the country, and each inquired the cause at his neighbour, who knew as little as the querist. At length the rumour reached, in a distinct shape, the ears of Edie Ochiltree, who was in the very centre of the assembly. The boat of Mucklebackit, the fisherman whom we have so often mentioned, had been swamped at sea, and four men had perished, it was affirmed, including Mucklebackit and his son. Rumour had in this, however, as in other cases, gone beyond the truth. The boat had indeed been upset; but Stephen, or, as he was called, Steenie Mucklebackit, was the only man

who had been drowned. Although the place of his residence and his mode of life removed the young man from the society of the country folks, yet they failed not to pause in their rustic mirth to pay that tribute to sudden calamity which it seldom fails to receive in cases of infrequent occurrence. To Ochiltree, in particular, the news came like a knell, the rather that he had so lately engaged this young man's assistance in an affair of sportive mischief; and though neither loss nor injury was designed to the German adept, yet the work was not precisely one in which the latter hours of life ought to be occupied. Misfortunes never come alone. While Ochiltree, pensively leaning upon his staff, added his regrets to those of the hamlet which bewailed the young man's sudden death, and internally blamed himself for the transaction in which he had so lately engaged him, the old man's collar was seized by a peace-officer, who displayed his baton in his right hand, and exclaimed, "In the king's name."

The gauger and schoolmaster united their rhetoric, to prove to the constable and his assistant that he had no right to arrest the king's bedesman as a vagrant; and the mute eloquence of the miller and smith, which was vested in their clenched fists, was prepared to give Highland bail for their arbiter; his blue gown, they said, was his warrant for travelling the country.

"But his blue gown," answered the officer, "is nae protection for assault, robbery, and murder; and my warrant is against him for these crimes."

"Murder!" said Edie, "murder! wha did I e'er murder?"

"Mr. German Doustercivil, the agent at Glen-Withershins mining-works."

"Murder Doustersnive!—hout, he's living, and life-like, man."

"Nae thanks to you if he be; he had a sair struggle for his life, if a' be true he tells, and ye maun answer for't at the bidding of the law."

The defenders of the mendicant shrunk back at hearing the atrocity of the charges against him, but more than one kind hand thrust meat and bread and pence upon Edie, to maintain him in the prison, to which the officers were about to conduct him.

"Thanks to ye! God bless ye a', bairns!—I've gotten out o' mony a snare when I was waur deserving o' deliverance—I shall escape like a bird from the fowler. Play out your play, and never mind me—I am mair grieved for the puir lad that's gane, than for aught they can do to me."

Accordingly, the unresisting prisoner was led off, while he mechanically accepted and stored in his wallets the alms which poured in on every hand, and ere he left the hamlet, was as deep-laden as a government victualler. The labour of bearing this accumulating burden was, however, abridged, by the officer procuring a cart and horse to convey the old man to a magistrate, in order to his examination and committal.

The disaster of Steenie, and the arrest of Edie, put a stop to the sports of the village, the pensive inhabitants of which began to speculate upon the vicissitudes of human affairs, which had so suddenly consigned one of their comrades to the grave, and placed their master of the revels in some danger of being hanged. The character of Doustersnive being pretty generally known, which was in his case equivalent to being pretty generally detested, there were many speculations upon the probability of the accusation being malicious. But all agreed, that if Edie Ochiltree behaved in all events to suffer upon this occasion, it was a great pity he had not better merited his fate by killing Doustersnive outright.

CHAPTER NINTH

*Who is he?—One that for the lack of land
Shall fight upon the water—he hath challenged
Formerly the grand whale; and by his titles
Of Leviathan, Behemoth, and so forth.
He tilted with a sword-fish—Marry, sir,
Th' aquatic had the best—the argument
Still galls our champion's breech.
Old Play.*

"And the poor young fellow, Steenie Mucklebackit, is to be buried this morning," said our old friend the Antiquary, as he exchanged his quilted night-gown for an old-fashioned black coat in lieu of the snuff-coloured vestment which he ordinarily wore, "and, I presume, it is expected that I should attend the funeral?"

"Ou, ay," answered the faithful Caxon, officiously brushing the white threads and specks from his patron's habit. "The body, God help us! was sae broken against the rocks that they're fain to hurry the burial. The sea's a kittle cast, as I tell my daughter, puir thing, when I want her to get up her spirits; the sea, says I, Jenny, is as uncertain a calling"—

"As the calling of an old periwig-maker, that's robbed of his business by crops and the powder-tax. Caxon, thy topics of consolation are as ill chosen as they are foreign to the present purpose. *Quid mihi cum faemina?* What have I to do with thy womankind, who have enough and to spare of mine own?—I pray of you again, am I expected by these poor people to attend the funeral of their son?"

"Ou, doubtless, your honour is expected," answered Caxon; "weel I wot ye are expected. Ye ken, in this country ilka gentleman is wussed to be sae civil as to see the corpse aff his grounds; ye needna gang higher than the loan-head—it's no expected your honour suld leave the land; it's just a Kelso convoy, a step and a half ower the doorstone."

"A Kelso convoy!" echoed the inquisitive Antiquary, "and why a Kelso convoy more than any other?"

"Dear sir," answered Caxon, "how should I ken? it's just a by-word."

"Caxon," answered Oldbuck, "thou art a mere periwig-maker—Had I asked Ochiltree the question, he would have had a legend ready made to my hand."

"My business," replied Caxon, with more animation than he commonly displayed, "is with the outside of your honour's head, as ye are accustomed to say."

"True, Caxon, true; and it is no reproach to a thatcher that he is not an upholsterer."

He then took out his memorandum-book and wrote down "Kelso convoy—said to be a step and a half over the threshold. Authority—Caxon.—*Quaere*— Whence derived? *Mem.* To write to Dr. Graysteel upon the subject."

Having made this entry, he resumed—"And truly, as to this custom of the landlord attending the body of the peasant, I approve it, Caxon. It comes from ancient times, and was founded deep in the notions of mutual aid and dependence between the lord and cultivator of the soil. And herein I must say, the feudal system—(as also in its courtesy towards womankind, in which it exceeded)—herein, I say, the feudal usages mitigated and softened the sternness of classical times. No man, Caxon, ever heard of a Spartan attending the funeral of a Helot—yet I dare be sworn that John of the Girmel—ye have heard of him, Caxon?"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Caxon; "naeboddy can hae been lang in your honour's company without hearing of that gentleman."

"Well," continued the Antiquary, "I would bet a trifle there was not a *kolb kerl*, or bondsman, or peasant, *ascriptus glebae*, died upon the monks' territories down here, but John of the Girmel saw them fairly and decently interred."

"Ay, but if it like your honour, they say he had mair to do wi' the births than the burials. Ha! ha! ha!" with a gleeful chuckle.

"Good, Caxon, very good!—why, you shine this morning."

"And besides," added Caxon, slyly, encouraged by his patron's approbation, "they say, too, that the Catholic priests in thae times gat something for ganging about to burials."

"Right, Caxon! right as my glove! By the by, I fancy that phrase comes from the custom of pledging a glove as the signal of irrefragable faith— right, I say, as my glove, Caxon—but we of the Protestant ascendancy have the more merit in doing that duty for nothing, which cost money in the reign of that empress of superstition, whom Spenser, Caxon, terms in his allegorical phrase,

—The daughter of that woman blind,

Abessa, daughter of Corecca slow—

But why talk I of these things to thee?—my poor Lovel has spoiled me, and taught me to speak aloud when it is much the same as speaking to myself. Where's my nephew, Hector M'Intyre?"

"He's in the parlour, sir, wi' the leddies."

"Very well," said the Antiquary, "I will betake me thither."

"Now, Monkbarns," said his sister, on his entering the parlour, "ye maunna be angry."

"My dear uncle!" began Miss M'Intyre.

"What's the meaning of all this?" said Oldbuck, in alarm of some impending bad news, and arguing upon the supplicating tone of the ladies, as a fortress apprehends an attack from the very first flourish of the trumpet which announces the summons—"what's all this?—what do you bespeak my patience for?"

"No particular matter, I should hope, sir," said Hector, who, with his arm in a sling, was seated at the breakfast table;—"however, whatever it may amount to I am answerable for it, as I am for much more trouble that I have occasioned, and for which I have little more than thanks to offer."

"No, no! heartily welcome, heartily welcome—only let it be a warning to you," said the Antiquary, "against your fits of anger, which is a short madness—*Ira furor brevis*—but what is this new disaster?"

"My dog, sir, has unfortunately thrown down"—

"If it please Heaven, not the lachrymatory from Clochnaben!" interjected Oldbuck.

"Indeed, uncle," said the young lady, "I am afraid—it was that which stood upon the sideboard—the poor thing only meant to eat the pat of fresh butter."

"In which she has fully succeeded, I presume, for I see that on the table is salted. But that is nothing—my lachrymatory, the main pillar of my theory on which I rested to show, in despite of the ignorant obstinacy of Mac-Cribb, that the Romans had passed the defiles of these mountains, and left behind them traces of their arts and arms, is gone—annihilated—reduced to such fragments as might be the shreds of a broken-flowerpot!

—Hector, I love thee,

But never more be officer of mine."

"Why, really, sir, I am afraid I should make a bad figure in a regiment of your raising."

"At least, Hector, I would have you despatch your camp train, and travel *expeditus*, or *relictis impedimentis*. You cannot conceive how I am annoyed by this beast—she commits burglary, I believe, for I heard her charged with breaking into the kitchen after all the doors were locked, and eating up a shoulder of mutton."

"—(Our readers, if they chance to remember Jenny Rintherout's precaution of leaving the door open when she went down to the fisher's cottage, will probably acquit poor Juno of that aggravation of guilt which the lawyers call a *claustrum fregit*, and which makes the distinction between burglary and privately stealing.)

"I am truly sorry, sir," said Hector, "that Juno has committed so much disorder; but Jack Muirhead, the breaker, was never able to bring her under command. She has more travel than any bitch I ever knew, but"—

"Then, Hector, I wish the bitch would travel herself out of my grounds."

"We will both of us retreat to-morrow, or to-day, but I would not willingly part from my mother's brother in unkindness about a paltry pipkin."

"O brother! brother!" ejaculated Miss M'Intyre, in utter despair at this vituperative epithet.

"Why, what would you have me call it?" continued Hector; "it was just such a thing as they use in Egypt to cool wine, or sherbet, or water;—I brought home a pair of them—I might have brought home twenty."

"What!" said Oldbuck, "shaped such as that your dog threw down?"

"Yes, sir, much such a sort of earthen jar as that which was on the sideboard. They are in my lodgings at Fairport; we brought a parcel of them to cool our wine on the passage—they answer wonderfully well. If I could think they would in any degree repay your loss, or rather that they could afford you pleasure, I am sure I should be much honoured by your accepting them."

"Indeed, my dear boy, I should be highly gratified by possessing them. To trace the connection of nations by their usages, and the similarity of the implements which they employ, has been long my favourite study. Everything that can illustrate such connections is most valuable to me."

"Well, sir, I shall be much gratified by your acceptance of them, and a few trifles of the same kind. And now, am I to hope you have forgiven me?"

"O, my dear boy, you are only thoughtless and foolish."

"But Juno—she is only thoughtless too, I assure you—the breaker tells me she has no vice or stubbornness."

"Well, I grant Juno also a free pardon—conditioned, that you will imitate her in avoiding vice and stubbornness, and that henceforward she banish herself forth of Monkbarns parlour."

"Then, uncle," said the soldier, "I should have been very sorry and ashamed to propose to you anything in the way of expiation of my own sins, or those of my follower, that I thought *worth* your acceptance; but now, as all is forgiven, will you permit the orphan-nephew, to whom you have been a father, to offer you a trifle, which I have been assured is really curious, and which only the cross accident of my wound has prevented my delivering to you before? I got it from a French savant, to whom I rendered some service after the Alexandria affair."

The captain put a small ring-case into the Antiquary's hands, which, when opened, was found to contain an antique ring of massive gold, with a cameo, most beautifully executed, bearing a head of Cleopatra. The Antiquary broke forth into unrepressed ecstasy, shook his nephew cordially by the hand, thanked him an hundred times, and showed the ring to his sister and niece, the latter of whom had the tact to give it sufficient admiration; but Miss Griselda (though she had the same affection for her nephew) had not address enough to follow the lead.

"It's a bonny thing," she said, "Monkbarns, and, I dare say, a valuable; but it's out o'my way—ye ken I am nae judge o' sic matters."

"There spoke all Fairport in one voice!" exclaimed Oldbuck "it is the very spirit of the borough has infected us all; I think I have smelled the smoke these two days, that the wind has stuck, like a *remora*, in the north-east—and its prejudices fly farther than its vapours. Believe me, my dear Hector, were I to walk up the High Street of Fairport, displaying this inestimable gem in the eyes of each one I met, no human creature, from the provost to the town-crier, would stop to ask me its history. But if I carried a bale of linen cloth under my arm, I could not penetrate to the Horsemarket ere I should be overwhelmed with queries about its precise texture and price. Oh, one might parody their brutal ignorance in the words of Gray:

Weave the warp and weave the woof,

The winding-sheet of wit and sense,

Dull garment of defensive proof,

'Gainst all that doth not gather pence."

The most remarkable proof of this peace-offering being quite acceptable was, that while the Antiquary was in full declamation, Juno, who held him in awe, according to the remarkable instinct by which dogs instantly discover those who like or dislike them, had peeped several times into the room, and encountering nothing very forbidding in his aspect, had at length presumed to introduce her full person; and finally, becoming bold by impunity, she actually ate up Mr. Oldbuck's toast, as, looking first at one then at another of his audience, he repeated, with self-complacency,

"Weave the warp and weave the woof,—"

"You remember the passage in the Fatal Sisters, which, by the way, is not so fine as in the original—But, hey-day! my toast has vanished!—I see which way—Ah, thou type of womankind! no wonder they take offence at thy generic appellation!"—(So saying, he shook his fist at Juno, who scoured out of the parlour.)—

"However, as Jupiter, according to Homer, could not rule Juno in heaven, and as Jack Muirhead, according to Hector M'Intyre, has been equally unsuccessful on earth, I suppose she must have her own way." And this mild censure the brother and sister justly accounted a full pardon for Juno's offences, and sate down well pleased to the morning meal.

When breakfast was over, the Antiquary proposed to his nephew to go down with him to attend the funeral. The soldier pleaded the want of a mourning habit.

"O, that does not signify—your presence is all that is requisite. I assure you, you will see something that will entertain—no, that's an improper phrase—but that will interest you, from the resemblances which I will point out betwixt popular customs on such occasions and those of the ancients."

"Heaven forgive me!" thought M'Intyre;—"I shall certainly misbehave, and lose all the credit I have so lately and accidentally gained."

When they set out, schooled as he was by the warning and entreating looks of his sister, the soldier made his resolution strong to give no offence by evincing inattention or impatience. But our best resolutions are frail, when opposed to our predominant inclinations. Our Antiquary,—to leave nothing unexplained, had commenced with the funeral rites of the ancient Scandinavians, when his nephew interrupted him, in a discussion upon the "age of hills," to remark that a large sea-gull, which flitted around them, had come twice within shot. This error being acknowledged and pardoned, Oldbuck resumed his disquisition.

"These are circumstances you ought to attend to and be familiar with, my dear Hector; for, in the strange contingencies of the present war which agitates every corner of Europe, there is no knowing where you may be called upon to serve. If in Norway, for example, or Denmark, or any part of the ancient Scania, or Scandinavia, as we term it, what could be more convenient than to have at your fingers' ends the history and antiquities of that ancient country, the *officina gentium*, the mother of modern Europe, the nursery of those heroes,

Stern to inflict, and stubborn to endure,

Who smiled in death?—

How animating, for example, at the conclusion of a weary march, to find yourself in the vicinity of a Runic monument, and discover that you have pitched your tent beside the tomb of a hero!"

"I am afraid, sir, our mess would be better supplied if it chanced to be in the neighbourhood of a good poultry-yard."

"Alas, that you should say so! No wonder the days of Cressy and Agincourt are no more, when respect for ancient valour has died away in the breasts of the British soldiery."

"By no means, sir—by no manner of means. I dare say that Edward and Henry, and the rest of these heroes, thought of their dinner, however, before they thought of examining an old tombstone. But I assure you, we are by no means insensible to the memoir of our fathers' fame; I used often of an evening to get old Rory MALpin to sing us songs out of Ossian about the battles of Fingal and Lamon Mor, and Magnus and the Spirit of Muirartach."

"And did you believe," asked the aroused Antiquary, "did you absolutely believe that stuff of Macpherson's to be really ancient, you simple boy?"

"Believe it, sir?—how could I but believe it, when I have heard the songs sung from my infancy?"

"But not the same as Macpherson's English Ossian—you're not absurd enough to say that, I hope?" said the Antiquary, his brow darkening with wrath.

But Hector stoutly abode the storm; like many a sturdy Celt, he imagined the honour of his country and native language connected with the authenticity of these popular poems, and would have fought knee-deep, or forfeited life and land, rather than have given up a line of them. He therefore undauntedly maintained, that Rory MALpin could repeat the whole book from one end to another;—and it was only upon cross-examination that he explained an assertion so general, by adding "At least, if he was allowed whisky enough, he could repeat as long as anybody would hearken to him."

"Ay, ay," said the Antiquary; "and that, I suppose, was not very long."

"Why, we had our duty, sir, to attend to, and could not sit listening all night to a piper."

"But do you recollect, now," said Oldbuck, setting his teeth firmly together, and speaking without opening them, which was his custom when contradicted—"Do you recollect, now, any of these verses you thought so beautiful and interesting—being a capital judge, no doubt, of such things?"

"I don't pretend to much skill, uncle; but it's not very reasonable to be angry with me for admiring the antiquities of my own country more than those of the Harolds, Harfagers, and Hacos you are so fond of."

"Why, these, sir—these mighty and unconquered Goths—*were* your ancestors! The bare-breeched Celts whom they subdued, and suffered only to exist, like a fearful people, in the crevices of the rocks, were but their Mancipia and Serfs!"

Hector's brow now grew red in his turn. "Sir," he said, "I don't understand the meaning of Mancipia and Serfs, but I conceive that such names are very improperly applied to Scotch Highlanders: no man but my mother's brother dared to have used such language in my presence; and I pray you will observe, that I consider it as neither hospitable, handsome, kind, nor generous usage towards your guest and your kinsman. My ancestors, Mr. Oldbuck"—

"Were great and gallant chiefs, I dare say, Hector; and really I did not mean to give you such immense offence in treating a point of remote antiquity, a subject on which I always am myself cool, deliberate, and unimpassioned. But you are as hot and hasty, as if you were Hector and Achilles, and Agamemnon to boot."

"I am sorry I expressed myself so hastily, uncle, especially to you, who have been so generous and good. But my ancestors"—

"No more about it, lad; I meant them no affront—none."

"I'm glad of it, sir; for the house of M'Intyre"—

"Peace be with them all, every man of them," said the Antiquary. "But to return to our subject—Do you recollect, I say, any of those poems which afforded you such amusement?"

"Very hard this," thought M'Intyre, "that he will speak with such glee of everything which is ancient, excepting my family."—Then, after some efforts at recollection, he added aloud, "Yes, sir,—I think I do remember some lines; but you do not understand the Gaelic language."

"And will readily excuse hearing it. But you can give me some idea of the sense in our own vernacular idiom?"

"I shall prove a wretched interpreter," said M'Intyre, running over the original, well garnished with *aghies*, *aughs*, and *oughs*, and similar gutturals, and then coughing and hawking as if the translation stuck in his throat. At length, having premised that the poem was a dialogue between the poet Oisín, or Ossian, and Patrick, the tutelary Saint of Ireland, and that it was difficult, if not impossible, to render the exquisite felicity of the first two or three lines, he said the sense was to this purpose:

"Patrick the psalm-singer,

Since you will not listen to one of my stories,

Though you never heard it before,

I am sorry to tell you

You are little better than an ass"—

"Good! good!" exclaimed the Antiquary; "but go on. Why, this is, after all, the most admirable fooling—I dare say the poet was very right. What says the Saint?"

"He replies in character," said M'Intyre; "but you should hear MALpin sing the original. The speeches of Ossian come in upon a strong deep bass—those of Patrick are upon a tenor key."

"Like MALpin's drone and small pipes, I suppose," said Oldbuck. "Well? Pray go on."

"Well then, Patrick replies to Ossian:

Upon my word, son of Fingal,

While I am warbling the psalms,

The clamour of your old women's tales

Disturbs my devotional exercises."

"Excellent!—why, this is better and better. I hope Saint Patrick sung better than Blattergow's precentor, or it would be hang—choice between the poet and psalmist. But what I admire is the courtesy of these two eminent persons towards each other. It is a pity there should not be a word of this in Macpherson's translation."

"If you are sure of that," said M'Intyre, gravely, "he must have taken very unwarrantable liberties with his original."

"It will go near to be thought so shortly—but pray proceed."

"Then," said M'Intyre, "this is the answer of Ossian:

*Dare you compare your psalms,
You son of a—"*

"Son of a what?" exclaimed Oldbuck.

"It means, I think," said the young soldier, with some reluctance, "son of a female dog:

*Do you compare your psalms,
To the tales of the bare-arm'd Fenians"*

"Are you sure you are translating that last epithet correctly, Hector?"

"Quite sure, sir," answered Hector, doggedly.

"Because I should have thought the nudity might have been quoted as existing in a different part of the body."

Disdaining to reply to this insinuation, Hector proceeded in his recitation:

"I shall think it no great harm

To wring your bald head from your shoulders—

But what is that yonder?" exclaimed Hector, interrupting himself.

"One of the herd of Proteus," said the Antiquary—"a *phoca*, or seal, lying asleep on the beach."

Upon which M'Intyre, with the eagerness of a young sportsman, totally forgot both Ossian, Patrick, his uncle, and his wound, and exclaiming—"I shall have her! I shall have her!" snatched the walking-stick out of the hand of the astonished Antiquary, at some risk of throwing him down, and set off at full speed to get between the animal and the sea, to which element, having caught the alarm, she was rapidly retreating.

Not Sancho, when his master interrupted his account of the combatants of Pentapoli with the naked arm, to advance in person to the charge of the flock of sheep, stood more confounded than Oldbuck at this sudden escapade of his nephew.

"Is the devil in him," was his first exclamation, "to go to disturb the brute that was never thinking of him!"—Then elevating his voice, "Hector—nephew—fool—let alone the *Phoca*—let alone the *Phoca*!— they bite, I tell you, like furies. He minds me no more than a post. There—there they are at it—Gad, the *Phoca* has the best of it! I am glad to see it," said he, in the bitterness of his heart, though really alarmed for his nephew's safety—"I am glad to see it, with all my heart and spirit."

In truth, the seal, finding her retreat intercepted by the light-footed soldier, confronted him manfully, and having sustained a heavy blow without injury, she knitted her brows, as is the fashion of the animal when incensed, and making use at once of her fore-paws and her unwieldy strength, wrenched the weapon out of the assailant's hand, overturned him on the sands, and scuttled away into the sea, without doing him any farther injury. Captain M'Intyre, a good deal out of countenance at the issue of his exploit, just rose in time to receive the ironical congratulations of his uncle, upon a single combat worthy to be commemorated by Ossian himself, "since," said the Antiquary, "your magnanimous opponent has fled, though not upon eagle's wings, from the foe that was low—Egad, she wallowed away with all the grace of triumph, and has carried my stick off also, by way of *spolia opima*."

M'Intyre had little to answer for himself, except that a Highlander could never pass a deer, a seal, or a salmon, where there was a possibility of having a trial of skill with them, and that he had forgot one of his arms was in a sling. He also made his fall an apology for returning back to Monkbarns, and thus escape the farther raillery of his uncle, as well as his lamentations for his walking-stick.

"I cut it," he said, "in the classic woods of Hawthornden, when I did not expect always to have been a bachelor—I would not have given it for an ocean of seals—O Hector! Hector!—thy namesake was born to be the prop of Troy, and thou to be the plague of Monkbarns!"

CHAPTER TENTH.

*Tell me not of it, friend—when the young weep,
Their tears are luke-warm brine;—from your old eyes
Sorrow falls down like hail-drops of the North,
Chilling the furrows of our withered cheeks,
Cold as our hopes, and hardened as our feeling—
Theirs, as they fall, sink sightless—ours recoil,
Heap the fair plain, and bleaken all before us.
Old Play.*

The Antiquary, being now alone, hastened his pace, which had been retarded by these various discussions, and the rencontre which had closed them, and soon arrived before the half-dozen cottages at Mussel-crag. They had now, in addition to their usual squalid and uncomfortable appearance, the melancholy attributes of the house of mourning. The boats were all drawn up on the beach; and, though the day was fine, and the season favourable, the chant, which is used by the fishers when at sea, was silent, as well as the prattle of the children, and the shrill song of the mother, as she sits mending her nets by the door. A few of the neighbours, some in their antique and well-saved suits of black, others in their ordinary clothes, but all bearing an expression of mournful sympathy with distress so sudden and unexpected, stood gathered around the door of Mucklebackit's cottage, waiting till "the body was lifted." As the Laird of Monkbarns approached, they made way for him to enter, doffing their hats and bonnets as he passed, with an air of melancholy courtesy, and he returned their salutes in the same manner.

In the inside of the cottage was a scene which our Wilkie alone could have painted, with that exquisite feeling of nature that characterises his enchanting productions.

The body was laid in its coffin within the wooden bedstead which the young fisher had occupied while alive. At a little distance stood the father, whose rugged weather-beaten countenance, shaded by his grizzled hair, had faced many a stormy night and night-like day. He was apparently revolving his loss in his mind, with that strong feeling of painful grief peculiar to harsh and rough characters, which almost breaks forth into hatred against the world, and all that remain in it, after the beloved object is withdrawn. The old man had made the most desperate efforts to save his son, and had only been withheld by main force from renewing them at a moment when, without the possibility of assisting the sufferer, he must himself have perished. All this apparently was boiling in his recollection. His glance was directed sidelong towards the coffin, as to an object on which he could not stedfastly look, and yet from which he could not withdraw his eyes. His answers to the necessary questions which were occasionally put to him, were brief, harsh, and almost fierce. His family had not yet dared to address to him a word, either of sympathy or consolation. His masculine wife, virago as she was, and absolute mistress of the family, as she justly boasted herself, on all ordinary occasions, was, by this great loss, terrified into silence and submission, and compelled to hide from her husband's observation the bursts of her female sorrow. As he had rejected food ever since the disaster had happened, not daring herself to approach him, she had that morning, with affectionate artifice, employed the youngest and favourite child to present her husband with some nourishment. His first action was to put it from him with an angry violence that frightened the child; his next, to snatch up the boy and devour him with kisses. "Yell be a bra' fallow, an ye be spared, Patie,—but ye'll never—never can be—what he was to me!—He has sailed the coble wi' me since he was ten years auld, and there wasna the like o' him drew a net betwixt this and Buchan-ness.—They say folks maun submit—I will try."

And he had been silent from that moment until compelled to answer the necessary questions we have already noticed. Such was the disconsolate state of the father.

In another corner of the cottage, her face covered by her apron, which was flung over it, sat the mother—the nature of her grief sufficiently indicated by the wringing of her hands, and the convulsive agitation of the bosom, which the covering could not conceal. Two of her gossips, officiously whispering into her ear the commonplace topic of resignation under irremediable misfortune, seemed as if they were endeavouring to stun the grief which they could not console.

The sorrow of the children was mingled with wonder at the preparations they beheld around them, and at the unusual display of wheaten bread and wine, which the poorest peasant, or fisher, offers to the guests on these mournful occasions; and thus their grief for their brother's death was almost already lost in admiration of the splendour of his funeral.

But the figure of the old grandmother was the most remarkable of the sorrowing group. Seated on her accustomed chair, with her usual air of apathy, and want of interest in what surrounded her, she seemed every now and then mechanically to resume the motion of twirling her spindle; then to look towards her bosom for the distaff, although both had been laid aside. She would then cast her eyes about, as if surprised at missing the usual implements of her industry, and appear struck by the black colour of the gown in which they had dressed her, and embarrassed by the number of persons by whom she was surrounded. Then, finally, she would raise her head with a ghastly look, and fix her eyes upon the bed which contained the coffin of her grandson, as if she had at once, and for the first time, acquired sense to comprehend her inexpressible calamity. These alternate feelings of embarrassment, wonder, and grief, seemed to succeed each other more than once upon her torpid features. But she spoke not a word—neither had she shed a tear—nor did one of the family understand, either from look or expression, to what extent she comprehended the uncommon bustle around her. Thus she sat among the funeral assembly like a connecting link between the surviving mourners and the dead corpse which they bewailed—a being in whom the light of existence was already obscured by the encroaching shadows of death.

When Oldbuck entered this house of mourning, he was received by a general and silent inclination of the head, and, according to the fashion of Scotland on such occasions, wine and spirits and bread were offered round to the guests. Elspeth, as these refreshments were presented, surprised and startled the whole company by motioning to the person who bore them to stop; then, taking a glass in her hand, she rose up, and, as the smile of dotage played upon her shrivelled features, she pronounced, with a hollow and tremulous voice, "Wishing a' your healths, sirs, and often may we hae such merry meetings!"

All shrunk from the ominous pledge, and set down the untasted liquor with a degree of shuddering horror, which will not surprise those who know how many superstitions are still common on such occasions among the Scottish vulgar. But as the old woman tasted the liquor, she suddenly exclaimed with a sort of shriek, "What's this?—this is wine—how should there be wine in my son's house?—Ay," she continued with a suppressed groan, "I mind the sorrowful cause now," and, dropping the glass from her hand, she stood a moment gazing fixedly on the bed in which the coffin of her grandson was deposited, and then sinking gradually into her seat, she covered her eyes and forehead with her withered and pallid hand.

At this moment the clergyman entered the cottage. Mr. Blattergowl, though a dreadful proser, particularly on the subject of augmentations, localities, teinds, and overtures in that session of the General Assembly, to which, unfortunately for his auditors, he chanced one year to act as moderator, was nevertheless a good man, in the old Scottish presbyterian phrase, God-ward and man-ward. No divine was more attentive in visiting the sick and afflicted, in catechising the youth, in instructing the ignorant, and in reproving the erring. And hence, notwithstanding impatience of his prolixity and prejudices, personal or professional, and notwithstanding, moreover, a certain habitual contempt for his understanding, especially on affairs of genius and taste, on which Blattergowl was apt to be diffuse, from his hope of one day fighting his way to a chair of rhetoric or belles lettres,—notwithstanding, I say, all the prejudices excited against him by these circumstances, our friend the Antiquary looked with great regard and respect on the said Blattergowl, though I own he could seldom, even by his sense of decency and the remonstrances of his womankind, be *hounded out*, as he called it, to hear him preach. But he regularly took shame to himself for his absence when Blattergowl came to Monkbarns to dinner, to which he was always invited of a Sunday, a mode of testifying his respect which the proprietor probably thought fully as agreeable to the clergyman, and rather more congenial to his own habits.

To return from a digression which can only serve to introduce the honest clergyman more particularly to our readers, Mr. Blattergowl had no sooner entered the hut, and received the mute and melancholy salutations of the company whom it contained, than he edged himself towards the unfortunate father, and seemed to endeavour to slide in a few words of condolence or of consolation. But the old man was incapable as yet of receiving either; he nodded, however, gruffly, and shook the clergyman's hand in acknowledgment of his good intentions, but was either unable or unwilling to make any verbal reply.

The minister next passed to the mother, moving along the floor as slowly, silently, and gradually, as if he had been afraid that the ground would, like unsafe ice, break beneath his feet, or that the first echo of a footstep was to dissolve some magic spell, and plunge the hut, with all its inmates, into a subterranean abyss. The tenor of what he had said to the poor woman could only be judged by her answers, as, half-stifled by sobs ill-repressed, and by the covering which she still kept over her countenance, she faintly answered at each pause in his speech—"Yes, sir, yes!—Ye're very gude—ye're very gude!—Nae doubt, nae doubt!—It's our duty to submit!—But, oh dear! my poor Steenie! the pride o' my very heart, that was sae handsome and comely, and a help to his family, and a comfort to us a', and a pleasure to a' that lookit on him!—Oh, my bairn! my bairn! my bairn! what for is thou lying there!—and eh! what for am I left to greet for ye!"

There was no contending with this burst of sorrow and natural affection. Oldbuck had repeated recourse to his snuff-box to conceal the tears which, despite his shrewd and caustic temper, were apt to start on such occasions. The female assistants whimpered, the men held their bonnets to their faces, and spoke apart with each other. The clergyman, meantime, addressed his ghostly consolation to the aged grandmother. At first she listened, or seemed to listen, to what he said, with the apathy of her usual unconsciousness. But as, in pressing this theme, he approached so near to her ear that the sense of his words became distinctly intelligible to her, though unheard by those who stood more distant, her countenance at once assumed that stern and expressive cast which characterized her intervals of intelligence. She drew up her head and body, shook her head in a manner that showed at least impatience, if not scorn of his counsel, and waved her hand slightly, but with a gesture so expressive, as to indicate to all who witnessed it a marked and disdainful rejection of the ghostly consolation proffered to her. The minister stepped back as if repulsed, and, by lifting gently and dropping his hand, seemed to show at once wonder, sorrow, and compassion for her dreadful state of mind. The rest of the company sympathized, and a stifled whisper went through them, indicating how much her desperate and determined manner impressed them with awe, and even horror.

In the meantime, the funeral company was completed, by the arrival of one or two persons who had been expected from Fairport. The wine and spirits again circulated, and the dumb show of greeting was anew interchanged. The grandame a second time took a glass in her hand, drank its contents, and exclaimed, with a sort of laugh,—"Ha! ha! I hae tasted wine twice in ae day—Whan did I that before, think ye, cummers?—Never since"—and the transient glow vanishing from her countenance, she set the glass down, and sunk upon the settle from whence she had risen to snatch at it.

As the general amazement subsided, Mr. Oldbuck, whose heart bled to witness what he considered as the errings of the enfeebled intellect struggling with the torpid chill of age and of sorrow, observed to the clergyman that it was time to proceed with the ceremony. The father was incapable of giving directions, but the nearest relation of the family made a sign to the carpenter, who in such cases goes through the duty of the undertaker, to proceed in his office. The creak of the screw-nails presently announced that the lid of the last mansion of mortality was in the act of being secured above its tenant. The last act which separates us for ever, even from the mortal relies of the person we assemble to mourn, has usually its effect upon the most indifferent, selfish, and hard-hearted. With a spirit of contradiction, which we may be pardoned for esteeming narrow-minded, the fathers of the Scottish kirk rejected, even on this most solemn occasion, the form of an address to the Divinity, lest they should be thought to give countenance to the rituals of Rome or of England. With much better and more liberal judgment, it is the present practice of most of the Scottish clergymen to seize this opportunity of offering a prayer, and exhortation, suitable to make an impression upon the living, while they are yet in the very presence of the relics of him whom they have but lately seen such as they themselves, and who now is such as they must in their time become. But this decent and praiseworthy practice was not adopted at the time of which I am treating, or at least, Mr. Blattergowl did not act upon it, and the ceremony proceeded without any devotional exercise.

The coffin, covered with a pall, and supported upon hand-spikes by the nearest relatives, now only waited the father to support the head, as is customary. Two or three of these privileged persons spoke to him, but he only answered by shaking his hand and his head in token of refusal. With better intention than judgment, the friends, who considered this as an act of duty on the part of the living, and of decency towards the deceased, would have proceeded to enforce their request, had not Oldbuck interfered between the distressed father and his well-meaning tormentors, and informed them, that he himself, as landlord and master to the deceased, "would carry his head to the grave." In spite of the sorrowful occasion, the hearts of the relatives swelled within them at so marked a distinction on the part of the laird; and old Alison Breck, who was present among other fish-women, swore almost aloud, "His honour Monkbarns should never want sax warp of oysters in the season" (of which fish he was understood to be fond), "if she should gang to sea and dredge for them hersell, in the foulest wind that ever blew." And such is the temper of the Scottish common people, that, by this instance of compliance with their customs, and respect for their persons, Mr. Oldbuck gained more popularity than by all the sums which he had yearly distributed in the parish for purposes of private or general charity.

The sad procession now moved slowly forward, preceded by the beadles, or saulies, with their batons,—miserable-looking old men, tottering as if on the edge of that grave to which they were marshalling another, and clad, according to Scottish guise, with threadbare black coats, and hunting-caps decorated with rusty crape. Monkbarns would probably have remonstrated against this superfluous expense, had he been consulted; but, in doing so, he would have given more offence than he gained popularity by condescending to perform the office of chief-mourner. Of this he was quite aware, and wisely withheld rebuke, where rebuke and advice would have been equally unavailing. In truth, the Scottish peasantry are still infected with that rage for funeral ceremonial, which once distinguished the grandees of the kingdom so much, that a sumptuary law was made by the Parliament of Scotland for the purpose of restraining it; and I have known many in the lowest stations, who have denied themselves not merely the comforts, but almost the necessities of life, in order to save such a sum of money as might enable their surviving friends to bury them like Christians, as they termed it; nor could their faithful executors be prevailed upon, though equally necessitous, to turn to the use and maintenance of the living the money vainly wasted upon the interment of the dead.

The procession to the churchyard, at about half-a-mile's distance, was made with the mournful solemnity usual on these occasions,—the body was consigned to its parent earth,—and when the labour of the gravediggers had filled up the trench, and covered it with fresh sod, Mr. Oldbuck, taking his hat off, saluted the assistants, who had stood by in melancholy silence, and with that adieu dispersed the mourners.

The clergyman offered our Antiquary his company to walk homeward; but Mr. Oldbuck had been so much struck with the deportment of the fisherman and his mother, that, moved by compassion, and perhaps also, in some degree, by that curiosity which induces us to seek out even what gives us pain to witness, he preferred a solitary walk by the coast, for the purpose of again visiting the cottage as he passed.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

*What is this secret sin, this untold tale,
That art cannot extract, nor penance cleanse?
—Her muscles hold their place;
Nor discomposed, nor formed to steadiness,
No sudden flushing, and no faltering lip.—
Mysterious Mother.*

The coffin had been borne from the place where it rested. The mourners, in regular gradation, according to their rank or their relationship to the deceased, had filed from the cottage, while the younger male children were led along to totter after the bier of their brother, and to view with wonder a ceremonial which they could hardly comprehend. The female gossips next rose to depart, and, with consideration for the situation of the parents, carried along with them the girls of the family, to give the unhappy pair time and opportunity to open their hearts to each other and soften their grief by communicating it. But their kind intention was without effect. The last of them had darkened the entrance of the cottage, as she went out, and drawn the door softly behind her, when the father, first ascertaining by a hasty glance that no stranger remained, started up, clasped his hands wildly above his head, uttered a cry of the despair which he had hitherto repressed, and, in all the impotent impatience of grief, half rushed half staggered forward to the bed on which the coffin had been deposited, threw himself down upon it, and smothering, as it were, his head among the bed-clothes, gave vent to the full passion of his sorrow. It was in vain that the wretched mother, terrified by the vehemence of her husband's affliction—affliction still more fearful as agitating a man of hardened manners and a robust frame—suppressed her own sobs and tears, and, pulling him by the skirts of his coat, implored him to rise and remember, that, though one was removed, he had still a wife and children to comfort and support. The appeal came at too early a period of his anguish, and was totally unattended to; he continued to remain prostrate, indicating, by sobs so bitter and violent, that they shook the bed and partition against which it rested, by clenched hands which grasped the bed-clothes, and by the vehement and convulsive motion of his legs, how deep and how terrible was the agony of a father's sorrow.

"O, what a day is this! what a day is this!" said the poor mother, her womanish affliction already exhausted by sobs and tears, and now almost lost in terror for the state in which she beheld her husband—"O, what an hour is this! and naebody to help a poor lone woman—O, gudemither, could ye but speak a word to him!—wad ye but bid him be comforted!"

To her astonishment, and even to the increase of her fear, her husband's mother heard and answered the appeal. She rose and walked across the floor without support, and without much apparent feebleness, and standing by the bed on which her son had extended himself, she said, "Rise up, my son, and sorrow not for him that is beyond sin and sorrow and temptation. Sorrow is for those that remain in this vale of sorrow and darkness—I, wha dinna sorrow, and wha canna sorrow for ony ane, hae maist need that ye should a' sorrow for me."

The voice of his mother, not heard for years as taking part in the active duties of life, or offering advice or consolation, produced its effect upon her son. He assumed a sitting posture on the side of the bed, and his appearance, attitude, and gestures, changed from those of angry despair to deep grief and dejection. The grandmother retired to her nook, the mother mechanically took in her hand her tattered Bible, and seemed to read, though her eyes were drowned with tears. They were thus occupied, when a loud knock was heard at the door.

"Hegh, sirs!" said the poor mother, "wha is that can be coming in that gate e'enow?—They canna hae heard o' our misfortune, I'm sure."

The knock being repeated, she rose and opened the door, saying querulously, "Whatna gait's that to disturb a sorrowfu' house?"

A tall man in black stood before her, whom she instantly recognised to be Lord Glenallan. "Is there not," he said, "an old woman lodging in this or one of the neighbouring cottages, called Elspeth, who was long resident at Craighburnfoot of Glenallan?"

"It's my gudemither, my lord," said Margaret; "but she canna see onybody e'enow—Ohon! we're dreeing a sair weird—we hae had a heavy dispensation!"

"God forbid," said Lord Glenallan, "that I should on light occasion disturb your sorrow;—but my days are numbered—your mother-in-law is in the extremity of age, and, if I see her not to-day, we may never meet on this side of time."

"And what," answered the desolate mother, "wad ye see at an auld woman, broken down wi' age and sorrow and heartbreak? Gentle or semple shall not darken my door the day my bairn's been carried out a corpse."

While she spoke thus, indulging the natural irritability of disposition and profession, which began to mingle itself with her grief when its first uncontrolled bursts were gone by, she held the door about one-third part open, and placed herself in the gap, as if to render the visitor's entrance impossible. But the voice of her husband was heard from within—"Wha's that, Maggie? what for are ye steaking them out?—let them come in; it doesna signify an auld rope's end wha comes in or wha gaes out o' this house frae this time forward."

The woman stood aside at her husband's command, and permitted Lord Glenallan to enter the hut. The dejection exhibited in his broken frame and emaciated countenance, formed a strong contrast with the effects of grief, as they were displayed in the rude and weatherbeaten visage of the fisherman, and the masculine features of his wife. He approached the old woman as she was seated on her usual settle, and asked her, in a tone as audible as his voice could make it, "Are you Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot of Glenallan?"

"Wha is it that asks about the unhallowed residence of that evil woman?" was the answer returned to his query.

"The unhappy Earl of Glenallan."

"Earl!—Earl of Glenallan!"

"He who was called William Lord Geraldin," said the Earl; "and whom his mother's death has made Earl of Glenallan."

"Open the bole," said the old woman firmly and hastily to her daughter-in-law, "open the bole wi' speed, that I may see if this be the right Lord Geraldin—the son of my mistress—him that I received in my arms within the hour after he was born—him that has reason to curse me that I didna smother him before the hour was past!"

The window, which had been shut in order that a gloomy twilight might add to the solemnity of the funeral meeting, was opened as she commanded, and threw a sudden and strong light through the smoky and misty atmosphere of the stifling cabin. Falling in a stream upon the chimney, the rays illuminated, in the way that Rembrandt would have chosen, the features of the unfortunate nobleman, and those of the old sibyl, who now, standing upon her feet, and holding him by one hand, peered anxiously in his features with her light-blue eyes, and holding her long and withered fore-finger within a small distance of his face, moved it slowly as if to trace the outlines and reconcile what she recollected with that she now beheld. As she finished her scrutiny, she said, with a deep sigh, "It's a sair—sair change; and wha's fault is it?—but that's written down where it will be remembered—it's written on tablets of brass with a pen of steel, where all is recorded that is done in the flesh.—And what," she said after a pause, "what is Lord Geraldin seeking from a poor auld creature like me, that's dead already, and only belongs sae far to the living that she isna yet laid in the moulds?"

"Nay," answered Lord Glenallan, "in the name of Heaven, why was it that you requested so urgently to see me?—and why did you back your request by sending a token which you knew well I dared not refuse?"

As he spoke thus, he took from his purse the ring which Edie Ochiltree had delivered to him at Glenallan House. The sight of this token produced a strange and instantaneous effect upon the old woman. The palsy of fear was immediately added to that of age, and she began instantly to search her pockets with the tremulous and hasty agitation of one who becomes first apprehensive of having lost something of great importance;—then, as if convinced of the reality of her fears, she turned to the Earl, and demanded, "And how came ye by it then?—how came ye by it? I thought I had kept it sae securely—what will the Countess say?"

"You know," said the Earl, "at least you must have heard, that my mother is dead."

"Dead! are ye no imposing upon me? has she left a' at last, lands and lordship and lineages?"

"All, all," said the Earl, "as mortals must leave all human vanities."

"I mind now," answered Elspeth—"I heard of it before but there has been sic distress in our house since, and my memory is sae muckle impaired— But ye are sure your mother, the Lady Countess, is gane hame?"

The Earl again assured her that her former mistress was no more.

"Then," said Elspeth, "it shall burden my mind nae langer!—When she lived, wha dared to speak what it would hae displeased her to hae had noised abroad? But she's gane—and I will confess all."

Then turning to her son and daughter-in-law, she commanded them imperatively to quit the house, and leave Lord Geraldin (for so she still called him) alone with her. But Maggie Mucklebackit, her first burst of grief being over, was by no means disposed in her own house to pay passive obedience to the commands of her mother-in-law, an authority which is peculiarly obnoxious to persons in her rank of life, and which she was the more astonished at hearing revived, when it seemed to have been so long relinquished and forgotten.

"It was an unco thing," she said, in a grumbling tone of voice,—for the rank of Lord Glenallan was somewhat imposing—"it was an unco thing to bid a mother leave her ain house wi' the tear in her ee, the moment her eldest son had been carried a corpse out at the door o't."

The fisherman, in a stubborn and sullen tone, added to the same purpose. "This is nae day for your auld-world stories, mother. My lord, if he be a lord, may ca' some other day—or he may speak out what he has gotten to say if he likes it; there's nane here will think it worth their while to listen to him or you either. But neither for laird or loon, gentle or semple, will I leave my ain house to pleasure onybody on the very day my poor"—

Here his voice choked, and he could proceed no farther; but as he had risen when Lord Glenallan came in, and had since remained standing, he now threw himself doggedly upon a seat, and remained in the sullen posture of one who was determined to keep his word.

But the old woman, whom this crisis seemed to repossess in all those powers of mental superiority with which she had once been eminently gifted, arose, and advancing towards him, said, with a solemn voice, "My son, as ye wad shun hearing of your mother's shame—as ye wad not willingly be a witness of her guilt—as ye wad deserve her blessing and avoid her curse, I charge ye, by the body that bore and that nursed ye, to leave me at freedom to speak with Lord Geraldin, what nae mortal ears but his ain maun listen to. Obey my words, that when ye lay the moulds on my head—and, oh that the day were come!—ye may remember this hour without the reproach of having disobeyed the last earthly command that ever your mother wared on you."

The terms of this solemn charge revived in the fisherman's heart the habit of instinctive obedience in which his mother had trained him up, and to which he had submitted implicitly while her powers of exacting it remained entire. The recollection mingled also with the prevailing passion of the moment; for, glancing his eye at the bed on which the dead body had been laid, he muttered to himself, "*He never disobeyed me, in reason or out o' reason, and what for should I vex her?*" Then, taking his reluctant spouse by the arm, he led her gently out of the cottage, and latched the door behind them as he left it.

As the unhappy parents withdrew, Lord Glenallan, to prevent the old woman from relapsing into her lethargy, again pressed her on the subject of the communication which she proposed to make to him.

"Ye will have it sune enough," she replied;—"my mind's clear enough now, and there is not—I think there is not—a chance of my forgetting what I have to say. My dwelling at Craighburnfoot is before my een, as it were present in reality:—the green bank, with its selvidge, just where the burn met wi' the sea—the twa little barks, wi' their sails furled, lying in the natural cove which it formed—the high cliff that joined it with the pleasure-grounds of the house of Glenallan, and hung right ower the stream—Ah! yes—I may forget that I had a husband and have lost him—that I hae but ane alive of our four fair sons—that misfortune upon misfortune has devoured our ill-gotten wealth—that they carried the corpse of my son's eldest-born frae the house this morning—But I never can forget the days I spent at bonny Craighburnfoot!"

"You were a favourite of my mother," said Lord Glenallan, desirous to bring her back to the point, from which she was wandering.

"I was, I was,—ye needna mind me o' that. She brought me up abune my station, and wi' knowledge mair than my fellows—but, like the tempter of auld, wi' the knowledge of gude she taught me the knowledge of evil."

"For God's sake, Elspeth," said the astonished Earl, "proceed, if you can, to explain the dreadful hints you have thrown out! I well know you are confidant to one dreadful secret, which should split this roof even to hear it named—but speak on farther."

"I will," she said—"I will!—just bear wi' me for a little;"—and again she seemed lost in recollection, but it was no longer tinged with imbecility or apathy. She was now entering upon the topic which had long loaded her mind, and which doubtless often occupied her whole soul at times when she seemed dead to all around her. And I may add, as a remarkable fact, that such was the intense operation of mental energy upon her physical powers and nervous system, that, notwithstanding her infirmity of deafness, each word that Lord Glenallan spoke during this remarkable conference, although in the lowest tone of horror or agony, fell as full and distinct upon Elspeth's ear as it could have done at any period of her life. She spoke also herself clearly, distinctly, and slowly, as if anxious that the

intelligence she communicated should be fully understood; concisely at the same time, and with none of the verbiage or circumlocutory additions natural to those of her sex and condition. In short, her language bespoke a better education, as well as an uncommonly firm and resolved mind, and a character of that sort from which great virtues or great crimes may be naturally expected. The tenor of her communication is disclosed in the following CHAPTER.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

*Remorse—she neer forsakes us—
A bloodhound staunch—she tracks our rapid step
Through the wild labyrinth of youthful frenzy,
Unheard, perchance, until old age hath tamed us
Then in our lair, when Time hath chilled our joints,
And maimed our hope of combat, or of flight,
We hear her deep-mouthed bay, announcing all
Of wrath, and wo, and punishment that bides us.
Old Play.*

"I need not tell you," said the old woman, addressing the Earl of Glenallan, "that I was the favourite and confidential attendant of Josceldind, Countess of Glenallan, whom God assoilzie!"—(here she crossed herself)—"and I think farther, ye may not have forgotten that I shared her regard for many years. I returned it by the maist sincere attachment, but I fell into disgrace frae a trifling act of disobedience, reported to your mother by ane that thought, and she wasna wrang, that I was a spy upon her actions and yours."

"I charge thee, woman," said the Earl, in a voice trembling with passion, "name not her name in my hearing!"

"I must," returned the penitent firmly and calmly, "or how can you understand me?"

The Earl leaned upon one of the wooden chairs of the hut, drew his hat over his face, clenched his hands together, set his teeth like one who summons up courage to undergo a painful operation, and made a signal to her to proceed.

"I say, then," she resumed, "that my disgrace with my mistress was chiefly owing to Miss Eveline Neville, then bred up in Glenallan House as the daughter of a cousin-german and intimate friend of your father that was gane. There was muckle mystery in her history,—but wha dared to inquire farther than the Countess liked to tell?—All in Glenallan House loved Miss Neville—all but twa, your mother and mysel—we baith hated her."

"God! for what reason, since a creature so mild, so gentle, so formed to inspire affection, never walked on this wretched world?"

"It may hae been sae," rejoined Elspeth, "but your mother hated a' that cam of your father's family—a' but himsell. Her reasons related to strife which fell between them soon after her marriage; the particulars are naething to this purpose. But oh! doubly did she hate Eveline Neville when she perceived that there was a growing kindness atween you and that unfortunate young leddy! Ye may mind that the Countess's dislike didna gang farther at first than just showing o' the cauld shouter—at least it wasna seen farther; but at the lang run it brak out into such downright violence that Miss Neville was even fain to seek refuge at Knockwinnoch Castle with Sir Arthur's leddy, wha (God sain her!) was then wi' the living."

"You rend my heart by recalling these particulars—But go on,—and may my present agony be accepted as additional penance for the involuntary crime!"

"She had been absent some months," continued Elspeth, "when I was ae night watching in my hut the return of my husband from fishing, and shedding in private those bitter tears that my proud spirit wrung frae me whenever I thought on my disgrace. The sneck was drawn, and the Countess your mother entered my dwelling. I thought I had seen a spectre, for even in the height of my favour, this was an honour she had never done me, and she looked as pale and ghastly as if she had risen from the grave. She sat down, and wrung the draps from her hair and cloak,—for the night was drizzling, and her walk had been through the plantations, that were a' loaded with dew. I only mention these things that you may understand how weel that night lives in my memory,—and weel it may. I was surprised to see her, but I durstna speak first, mair than if I had seen a phantom—Na, I durst not, my lord, I that hae seen mony sights of terror, and never shook at them. Sae, after a silence, she said, Elspeth Cheyne (for she always gave me my maiden name), are not ye the daughter of that Reginald Cheyne who died to save his master, Lord Glenallan, on the field of Sheriffmuir?' And I answered her as proudly as hersell nearly—As sure as you are the daughter of that Earl of Glenallan whom my father saved that day by his own death."

Here she made a deep pause.

"And what followed?—what followed?—For Heaven's sake, good woman—But why should I use that word?—Yet, good or bad, I command you to tell me."

"And little I should value earthly command," answered Elspeth, "were there not a voice that has spoken to me sleeping and waking, that drives me forward to tell this sad tale. Aweel, my Lord—the Countess said to me, My son loves Eveline Neville—they are agreed—they are plighted: should they have a son, my right over Glenallan merges—I sink from that moment from a Countess into a miserable stipendiary dowager, I who brought lands and vassals, and high blood and ancient fame, to my husband, I must cease to be mistress when my son has an heir-male. But I care not for that—had he married any but one of the hated Nevilles, I had been patient. But for them—that they and their descendants should enjoy the right and honours of my ancestors, goes through my heart like a two-edged dirk. And this girl—I detest her!—And I answered, for my heart kindled at her words, that her hate was equalled by mine."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the Earl, in spite of his determination to preserve silence—"wretched woman! what cause of hate could have arisen from a being so innocent and gentle?"

"I hated what my mistress hated, as was the use with the liege vassals of the house of Glenallan; for though, my Lord, I married under my degree, yet an ancestor of yours never went to the field of battle, but an ancestor of the frail, demented, auld, useless wretch wha now speaks with you, carried his shield before him. But that was not a'," continued the beldam, her earthly and evil passions rekindling as she became heated in her narration—"that was not a'; I hated Miss Eveline Neville for her ain sake, I brought her frae England, and, during our whole journey, she gecked and scorned at my northern speech and habit, as her southland leddies and kimmers had done at the boarding-school, as they cald it"—(and, strange as it may seem, she spoke of an affront offered by a heedless school-girl without intention, with a degree of inveteracy which, at such a distance of time, a mortal offence would neither have authorized or excited in any well-constituted mind)—"Yes, she scorned and jested at me—but let them that scorn the tartan fear the dirk!"

She paused, and then went on—"But I deny not that I hated her mair than she deserved. My mistress, the Countess, persevered and said, Elspeth Cheyne, this unruly boy will marry with the false English blood. Were days as they have been, I could throw her into the Massymore* of Glenallan, and fetter him in the Keep of Strathbonnel.

* *Massa-mora*, an ancient name for a dungeon, derived from the Moorish language, perhaps as far back as the time of the Crusades.

But these times are past, and the authority which the nobles of the land should exercise is delegated to quibbling lawyers and their baser dependants. Hear me, Elspeth Cheyne! if you are your father's daughter as I am mine, I will find means that they shall not marry. She walks often to that cliff that overhangs your dwelling to look for her lover's boat—(ye may remember the pleasure ye then took on the sea, my Lord)—let him find her forty fathom lower than he expects!—Yes! ye may stare and frown and clench your hand; but, as sure as I am to face the only Being I ever feared—and, oh that I had feared him mair!—these were your mother's words. What avails it to me to lie to you?—But I wadna consent to stain my hand with blood.—Then she said, By the religion of our holy Church they are ower *sibb* thegither. But I expect nothing but that both will become heretics as well as disobedient reprobates;—that was her addition to that argument. And then, as the fiend is ever ower busy wi' brains like mine, that are subtle beyond their use and station, I was unhappily permitted to add—But they might be brought to think themselves sae *sibb* as no Christian law will permit their wedlock."

Here the Earl of Glenallan echoed her words, with a shriek so piercing as almost to rend the roof of the cottage.—"Ah! then Eveline Neville was not the—the"—"The daughter, ye would say, of your father?" continued Elspeth. "No—be it a torment or be it a comfort to you—ken the truth, she was nae mair a daughter of your father's house than I am."

"Woman, deceive me not!—make me not curse the memory of the parent I have so lately laid in the grave, for sharing in a plot the most cruel, the most infernal"—"Bethink ye, my Lord Geraldin, ere ye curse the memory of a parent that's gane, is there none of the blood of Glenallan living, whose faults have led to this dreadful catastrophe?"

"Mean you my brother?—he, too, is gone," said the Earl.

"No," replied the sibyl, "I mean yourself, Lord Geraldin. Had you not transgressed the obedience of a son by wedding Eveline Neville in secret while a guest at Knockwinnock, our plot might have separated you for a time, but would have left at least your sorrows without remorse to canker them. But your ain conduct had put poison in the weapon that we threw, and it pierced you with the mair force because ye cam rushing to meet it. Had your marriage been a proclaimed and acknowledged action, our stratagem to throw an obstacle into your way that couldna be got ower, neither wad nor could hae been practised against ye."

"Great Heaven!" said the unfortunate nobleman—"it is as if a film fell from my obscured eyes! Yes, I now well understand the doubtful hints of consolation thrown out by my wretched mother, tending indirectly to impeach the evidence of the horrors of which her arts had led me to believe myself guilty."

"She could not speak mair plainly," answered Elspeth, "without confessing her ain fraud,—and she would have submitted to be torn by wild horses, rather than unfold what she had done; and if she had still lived, so would I for her sake. They were stout hearts the race of Glenallan, male and female, and sae were a' that in auld times cried their gathering-word of *Clochnaben*—they stood shouter to shouter—nae man parted frae his chief for love of gold or of gain, or of right or of wrang. The times are changed, I hear, now."

The unfortunate nobleman was too much wrapped up in his own confused and distracted reflections, to notice the rude expressions of savage fidelity, in which, even in the latest ebb of life, the unhappy author of his misfortunes seemed to find a stern and stubborn source of consolation.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I am then free from a guilt the most horrible with which man can be stained, and the sense of which, however involuntary, has wrecked my peace, destroyed my health, and bowed me down to an untimely grave. Accept," he fervently uttered, lifting his eyes upwards, "accept my humble thanks! If I live miserable, at least I shall not die stained with that unnatural guilt!—And thou—proceed if thou hast more to tell—proceed, while thou hast voice to speak it, and I have powers to listen."

"Yes," answered the beldam, "the hour when you shall hear, and I shall speak, is indeed passing rapidly away. Death has crossed your brow with his finger, and I find his grasp turning every day colder at my heart. Interrupt me nae mair with exclamations and groans and accusations, but hear my tale to an end! And then—if ye be indeed sic a Lord of Glenallan as I hae heard of in *my* day—make your merry-men gather the thorn, and the brier, and the green hollin, till they heap them as high as the house-riggin', and burn! burn! burn! the auld witch Elspeth, and a' that can put ye in mind that sic a creature ever crawled upon the land!"

"Go on," said the Earl, "go on—I will not again interrupt you."

He spoke in a half-suffocated yet determined voice, resolved that no irritability on his part should deprive him of this opportunity of acquiring proofs of the wonderful tale he then heard. But Elspeth had become exhausted by a continuous narration of such unusual length; the subsequent part of her story was more broken, and though still distinctly intelligible in most parts, had no longer the lucid conciseness which the first part of her narrative had displayed to such an astonishing degree. Lord Glenallan found it necessary, when she had made some attempts to continue her narrative without success, to prompt her memory by demanding—"What proofs she could propose to bring of the truth of a narrative so different from that which she had originally told?"

"The evidence," she replied, "of Eveline Neville's real birth was in the Countess's possession, with reasons for its being for some time kept private;—they may yet be found, if she has not destroyed them, in the left hand drawer of the ebony cabinet that stood in the dressing-room. These she meant to suppress for the time, until you went abroad again, when she trusted, before your return, to send Miss Neville back to her ain country, or to get her settled in marriage."

"But did you not show me letters of my father's, which seemed to me, unless my senses altogether failed me in that horrible moment, to avow his relationship to—to the unhappy?"—

"We did; and, with my testimony, how could you doubt the fact, or her either? But we suppressed the true explanation of these letters, and that was, that your father thought it right the young leddy should pass for his daughter for a while, on account o'some family reasons that were among them."

"But wherefore, when you learned our union, was this dreadful artifice persisted in?"

"It wasna," she replied, "till Lady Glenallan had communicated this fause tale, that she suspected ye had actually made a marriage—nor even then did you avow it sae as to satisfy her whether the ceremony had in verity passed atween ye or no—But ye remember, O ye canna but remember weel, what passed in that awfu' meeting!"

"Woman! you swore upon the gospels to the fact which you now disavow."

"I did,—and I wad hae taen a yet mair holy pledge on it, if there had been ane—I wad not hae spared the blood of my body, or the guilt of my soul, to serve the house of Glenallan."

"Wretch! do you call that horrid perjury, attended with consequences yet more dreadful—do you esteem that a service to the house of your benefactors?"

"I served her, wha was then the head of Glenallan, as she required me to serve her. The cause was between God and her conscience—the manner between God and mine—She is gane to her account, and I maun follow. Have I tauld you a'?"

"No," answered Lord Glenallan—"you have yet more to tell—you have to tell me of the death of the angel whom your perjury drove to despair, stained, as she thought herself, with a crime so horrible. Speak truth—was that dreadful—was that horrible incident"—he could scarcely articulate the words—"was it as reported? or was it an act of yet further, though not more atrocious cruelty, inflicted by others?"

"I understand you," said Elspeth. "But report spoke truth;—our false witness was indeed the cause, but the deed was her ain distracted act. On that fearfu' disclosure, when ye rushed frae the Countess's presence and saddled your horse, and left the castle like a fire-flaught, the Countess hadna yet discovered your private marriage; she hadna fund out that the union, which she had framed this awfu' tale to prevent, had e'en taen place. Ye fled from the house as if the fire o' Heaven was about to fa' upon it, and Miss Neville, atween reason and the want o't, was put under sure ward. But the ward sleep't, and the prisoner waked—the window was open—the way was before her—there was the cliff, and there was the sea!—O, when will I forget that!"

"And thus died," said the Earl, "even so as was reported?"

"No, my lord. I had gane out to the cove—the tide was in, and it flowed, as ye'll remember, to the foot o' that cliff—it was a great convenience that for my husband's trade—Where am I wandering?—I saw a white object dart frae the tap o' the cliff like a sea-maw through the mist, and then a heavy flash and sparkle of the waters showed me it was a human creature that had fa'en into the waves. I was bold and strong, and familiar with the tide. I rushed in and grasped her gown, and drew her out and carried her on my shoulters—I could hae carried twa sic then—carried her to my hut, and laid her on my bed. Neighbours cam and brought help; but the words she uttered in her ravings, when she got back the use of speech, were such, that I was fain to send them awa, and get up word to Glenallan House. The Countess sent down her Spanish servant Teresa—if ever there was a fiend on earth in human form, that woman was ane. She and I were to watch the unhappy leddy, and let no other person approach.—God knows what Teresa's part was to hae been—she tauld it not to me—but Heaven took the conclusion in its ain hand. The poor leddy! she took the pangs of travail before her time, bore a male child, and died in the arms of me—of her mortal enemy! Ay, ye may weep—she was a sightly creature to see to—but think ye, if I didna mourn her then, that I can mourn her now? Na, na, I left Teresa wi' the dead corpse and new-born babe, till I gaed up to take the Countess's commands what was to be done. Late as it was, I ca'd her up, and she gar'd me ca' up your brother"—

"My brother?"

"Yes, Lord Geraldin, e'en your brother, that some said she aye wished to be her heir. At ony rate, he was the person maist concerned in the succession and heritage of the house of Glenallan."

"And is it possible to believe, then, that my brother, out of avarice to grasp at my inheritance, would lend himself to such a base and dreadful stratagem?"

"Your mother believed it," said the old beldam with a fiendish laugh—"it was nae plot of my making; but what they did or said I will not say, because I did not hear. Lang and sair they consulted in the black wainscot dressing-room; and when your brother passed through the room where I was waiting, it seemed to me (and I have often thought sae since syne) that the fire of hell was in his cheek and een. But he had left some of it with his mother, at ony rate. She entered the room like a woman demented, and the first words she spoke were, Elspeth Cheyne, did you ever pull a new-budded flower?' I answered, as ye may believe, that I often had. Then,' said she, ye will ken the better how to blight the spurious and heretical blossom that has sprung forth this night to disgrace my father's noble house—See here;—(and she gave me a golden bodkin)—nothing but gold must shed the blood of Glenallan. This child is already as one of the dead, and since thou and Teresa alone ken that it lives, let it be dealt upon as ye will answer to me!' and she turned away in her fury, and left me with the bodkin in my hand.—Here it is; that and the ring of Miss Neville, are a' I hae preserved of my ill-gotten gear—for muckle was the gear I got. And weel hae I keepit the secret, but no for the gowd or gear either."

Her long and bony hand held out to Lord Glenallan a gold bodkin, down which in fancy he saw the blood of his infant trickling.

"Wretch! had you the heart?"

"I kenna if I could hae had it or no. I returned to my cottage without feeling the ground that I trode on; but Teresa and the child were gane— a' that was alive was gane—naething left but the lifeless corpse."

"And did you never learn my infant's fate?"

"I could but guess. I have tauld ye your mother's purpose, and I ken Teresa was a fiend. She was never mair seen in Scotland, and I have heard that she returned to her ain land. A dark curtain has fa'en ower the past, and the few that witnessed ony part of it could only surmise something of seduction and suicide. You yourself"—

"I know—I know it all," answered the Earl.

"You indeed know all that I can say—And now, heir of Glenallan, can you forgive me?"

"Ask forgiveness of God, and not of man," said the Earl, turning away.

"And how shall I ask of the pure and unstained what is denied to me by a sinner like mysell? If I hae sinned, hae I not suffered?—Hae I had a day's peace or an hour's rest since these lang wet locks of hair first lay upon my pillow at Craighurnfoot?—Has not my house been burned, wi' my bairn in the cradle?—Have not my boats been wrecked, when a' others weather'd the gale?—Have not a' that were near and dear to me dree'd penance for my sin?—Has not the fire had its share o' them—the winds had their part—the sea had her part?—And oh!" she added, with a lengthened groan, looking first upwards towards Heaven, and then bending her eyes on the floor—"O that the earth would take her part, that's been lang lang wearying to be joined to it!"

Lord Glenallan had reached the door of the cottage, but the generosity of his nature did not permit him to leave the unhappy woman in this state of desperate reprobation. "May God forgive thee, wretched woman," he said, "as sincerely as I do!—Turn for mercy to Him who can alone grant mercy, and may your prayers be heard as if they were mine own!—I will send a religious man."

"Na, na—nae priest! nae priest!" she ejaculated; and the door of the cottage opening as she spoke, prevented her from proceeding.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

*Still in his dead hand clenched remain the strings
That thrill his father's heart—e'en as the limb,
Lopped off and laid in grave, retains, they tell us,
Strange commerce with the mutilated stump,
Whose nerves are twinging still in maimed existence.
Old Play.*

The Antiquary, as we informed the reader in the end of the thirty-first CHAPTER, [tenth] had shaken off the company of worthy Mr. Blattergowl, although he offered to entertain him with an abstract of the ablest speech he had ever known in the teind court, delivered by the procurator for the church in the remarkable case of the parish of Gatherem. Resisting this temptation, our senior preferred a solitary path, which again conducted him to the cottage of Mucklebackit. When he came in front of the fisherman's hut, he observed a man working intently, as if to repair a shattered boat which lay upon the beach, and going up to him was surprised to find it was Mucklebackit himself. "I am glad," he said in a tone of sympathy—"I am glad, Saunders, that you feel yourself able to make this exertion."

"And what would ye have me to do," answered the fisher gruffly, "unless I wanted to see four children starve, because ane is drowned? It's weel wi' you gentles, that can sit in the house wi' handkerchers at your een when ye lose a friend; but the like o' us maun to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as my hammer."

Without taking more notice of Oldbuck, he proceeded in his labour; and the Antiquary, to whom the display of human nature under the influence of agitating passions was never indifferent, stood beside him, in silent attention, as if watching the progress of the work. He observed more than once the man's hard features, as if by the force of association, prepare to accompany the sound of the saw and hammer with his usual symphony of a rude tune, hummed or whistled,—and as often a slight twitch of convulsive expression showed, that ere the sound was uttered, a cause for suppressing it rushed upon his mind. At length, when he had patched a considerable rent, and was beginning to mend another, his feelings appeared altogether to derange the power of attention necessary for his work. The piece of wood which he was about to nail on was at first too long; then he sawed it off too short, then chose another equally ill adapted for the purpose. At length, throwing it down in anger, after wiping his dim eye with his quivering hand, he exclaimed, "There is a curse either on me or on this auld black bitch of a boat, that I have hauled up high and dry, and patched and clouted sae mony years, that she might drown my poor Steenie at the end of them, an' be d—d to her!" and he flung his hammer against the boat, as if she had been the intentional cause of his misfortune. Then recollecting himself, he added, "Yet what needs ane be angry at her, that has neither soul nor sense?—though I am no that muckle better mysell. She's but a rickle o' auld rotten deals nailed thegither, and warped wi' the wind and the sea—and I am a dour carle, battered by foul weather at sea and land till I am maist as senseless as hersell. She maun be mended though again the morning tide—that's a thing o' necessity."

Thus speaking, he went to gather together his instruments, and attempt to resume his labour,—but Oldbuck took him kindly by the arm. "Come, come," he said, "Saunders, there is no work for you this day—I'll send down Shavings the carpenter to mend the boat, and he may put the day's work into my account—and you had better not come out to-morrow, but stay to comfort your family under this dispensation, and the gardener will bring you some vegetables and meal from Monkbarns."

"I thank ye, Monkbarns," answered the poor fisher; "I am a plain-spoken man, and hae little to say for mysell; I might hae learned fairer fashions frae my mither lang syne, but I never saw muckle gude they did her; however, I thank ye. Ye were aye kind and neighbourly, whatever folk says o' your being near and close; and I hae often said, in thae times when they were ganging to raise up the puir folk against the gentles—I hae often said, neer a man should steer a hair touching to Monkbarns while Steenie and I could wag a finger—and so said Steenie too. And, Monkbarns, when ye laid his head in the grave (and mony thanks for the respect), ye, saw the moults laid on an honest lad that likit you weel, though he made little phrase about it."

Oldbuck, beaten from the pride of his affected cynicism, would not willingly have had any one by on that occasion to quote to him his favourite maxims of the Stoic philosophy. The large drops fell fast from his own eyes, as he begged the father, who was now melted at recollecting the bravery and generous sentiments of his son, to forbear useless sorrow, and led him by the arm towards his own home, where another scene awaited our Antiquary.

As he entered, the first person whom he beheld was Lord Glenallan. Mutual surprise was in their countenances as they saluted each other—with haughty reserve on the part of Mr. Oldbuck, and embarrassment on that of the Earl.

"My Lord Glenallan, I think?" said Mr. Oldbuck.

"Yes—much changed from what he was when he knew Mr. Oldbuck."

"I do not mean," said the Antiquary, "to intrude upon your lordship—I only came to see this distressed family."

"And you have found one, sir, who has still greater claims on your compassion."

"My compassion? Lord Glenallan cannot need my compassion. If Lord Glenallan could need it, I think he would hardly ask it."

"Our former acquaintance," said the Earl—

"Is of such ancient date, my lord—was of such short duration, and was connected with circumstances so exquisitely painful, that I think we may dispense with renewing it."

So saying, the Antiquary turned away, and left the hut; but Lord Glenallan followed him into the open air, and, in spite of a hasty "Good morning, my lord," requested a few minutes' conversation, and the favour of his advice in an important matter.

"Your lordship will find many more capable to advise you, my lord, and by whom your intercourse will be deemed an honour. For me, I am a man retired from business and the world, and not very fond of raking up the past events of my useless life;—and forgive me if I say, I have particular pain in reverting to that period of it when I acted like a fool, and your lordship like"—He stopped short.

"Like a villain, you would say," said Lord Glenallan—"for such I must have appeared to you."

"My lord—my lord, I have no desire to hear your shrift," said the Antiquary.

"But, sir, if I can show you that I am more sinned against than sinning—that I have been a man miserable beyond the power of description, and who looks forward at this moment to an untimely grave as to a haven of rest, you will not refuse the confidence which, accepting your appearance at this critical moment as a hint from Heaven, I venture thus to press on you."

"Assuredly, my lord, I shall shun no longer the continuation of this extraordinary interview."

"I must then recall to you our occasional meetings upwards of twenty years since at Knockwinnock Castle,—and I need not remind you of a lady who was then a member of that family."

"The unfortunate Miss Eveline Neville, my lord; I remember it well."

"Towards whom you entertained sentiments"—

"Very different from those with which I before and since have regarded her sex. Her gentleness, her docility, her pleasure in the studies which I pointed out to her, attached my affections more than became my age though that was not then much advanced—or the solidity of my character. But I need not remind your lordship of the various modes in which you indulged your gaiety at the expense of an awkward and retired student, embarrassed by the expression of feelings so new to him, and I have no doubt that the young lady joined you in the well-deserved ridicule—it is the way of womankind. I have spoken at once to the painful circumstances of my addresses and their rejection, that your lordship may be satisfied everything is full in my memory, and may, so far as I am concerned, tell your story without scruple or needless delicacy."

"I will," said Lord Glenallan. "But first let me say, you do injustice to the memory of the gentlest and kindest, as well as to the most unhappy of women, to suppose she could make a jest of the honest affection of a man like you. Frequently did she blame me, Mr. Oldbuck, for indulging my levity at your expense—may I now presume you will excuse the gay freedoms which then offended you?—my state of mind has never since laid me under the necessity of apologizing for the inadvertencies of a light and happy temper."

"My lord, you are fully pardoned," said Mr. Oldbuck. "You should be aware, that, like all others, I was ignorant at the time that I placed myself in competition with your lordship, and understood that Miss Neville was in a state of dependence which might make her prefer a competent independence and the hand of an honest man—But I am wasting time—I would I could believe that the views entertained towards her by others were as fair and honest as mine!"

"Mr. Oldbuck, you judge harshly."

"Not without cause, my lord. When I only, of all the magistrates of this county—having neither, like some of them, the honour to be connected with your powerful family—nor, like others, the meanness to fear it,—when I made some inquiry into the manner of Miss Neville's death—I shake you, my lord, but I must be plain—I do own I had every reason to believe that she had met most unfair dealing, and had either been imposed upon by a counterfeit marriage, or that very strong measures had been adopted to stifle and destroy the evidence of a real union. And I cannot doubt in my own mind, that this cruelty on your lordship's part, whether coming of your own free will, or proceeding from the influence of the late Countess, hurried the unfortunate young lady to the desperate act by which her life was terminated."

"You are deceived, Mr. Oldbuck, into conclusions which are not just, however naturally they flow from the circumstances. Believe me, I respected you even when I was most embarrassed by your active attempts to investigate our family misfortunes. You showed yourself more worthy of Miss Neville than I, by the spirit with which you persisted in vindicating her reputation even after her death. But the firm belief that your well-meant efforts could only serve to bring to light a story too horrible to be detailed, induced me to join my unhappy mother in schemes to remove or destroy all evidence of the legal union which had taken place between Eveline and myself. And now let us sit down on this bank,—for I feel unable to remain longer standing,—and have the goodness to listen to the extraordinary discovery which I have this day made."

They sat down accordingly; and Lord Glenallan briefly narrated his unhappy family history—his concealed marriage—the horrible invention by which his mother had designed to render impossible that union which had already taken place. He detailed the arts by which the Countess, having all the documents relative to Miss Neville's birth in her hands, had produced those only relating to a period during which, for family reasons, his father had consented to own that young lady as his natural daughter, and showed how impossible it was that he could either suspect or detect the fraud put upon him by his mother, and vouched by the oaths of her attendants, Teresa and Elspeth. "I left my paternal mansion," he concluded, "as if the furies of hell had driven me forth, and travelled with frantic velocity I knew not whither. Nor have I the slightest recollection of what I did or whither I went, until I was discovered by my brother. I will not trouble you with an account of my sick-bed and recovery, or how, long afterwards, I ventured to inquire after the sharer of my misfortunes, and heard that her despair had found a dreadful remedy for all the ills of life. The first thing that roused me to thought was hearing of your inquiries into this cruel business; and you will hardly wonder, that, believing what I did believe, I should join in those expedients to stop your investigation, which my brother and mother had actively commenced. The information which I gave them concerning the circumstances and witnesses of our private marriage enabled them to baffle your zeal. The clergyman, therefore, and witnesses, as persons who had acted in the matter only to please the powerful heir of Glenallan, were accessible to his promises and threats, and were so provided for, that they had no objections to leave this country for another. For myself, Mr. Oldbuck," pursued this unhappy man, "from that moment I considered myself as blotted out of the book of the living, and as having nothing left to do with this world. My mother tried to reconcile me to life by every art—even by intimations which I can now interpret as calculated to produce a doubt of the horrible tale she herself had fabricated. But I construed all she said as the fictions of maternal affection. I will forbear all reproach. She is no more—and, as her wretched associate said, she knew not how the dart was poisoned, or how deep it must sink, when she threw it from her hand. But, Mr. Oldbuck, if ever, during these twenty years, there crawled upon earth a living being deserving of your pity, I have been that man. My food has not nourished me—my sleep has not refreshed me—my devotions have not comforted me—all that is cheering and necessary to man has been to me converted into poison. The rare and limited intercourse which I have held with others has been most odious to me. I felt as if I were bringing the

contamination of unnatural and inexpressible guilt among the gay and the innocent. There have been moments when I had thoughts of another description—to plunge into the adventures of war, or to brave the dangers of the traveller in foreign and barbarous climates—to mingle in political intrigue, or to retire to the stern seclusion of the anchorites of our religion;—all these are thoughts which have alternately passed through my mind, but each required an energy, which was mine no longer, after the withering stroke I had received. I vegetated on as I could in the same spot—fancy, feeling, judgment, and health, gradually decaying, like a tree whose bark has been destroyed,—when first the blossoms fade, then the boughs, until its state resembles the decayed and dying trunk that is now before you. Do you now pity and forgive me?"

"My lord," answered the Antiquary, much affected, "my pity—my forgiveness, you have not to ask, for your dismal story is of itself not only an ample excuse for whatever appeared mysterious in your conduct, but a narrative that might move your worst enemies (and I, my lord, was never of the number) to tears and to sympathy. But permit me to ask what you now mean to do, and why you have honoured me, whose opinion can be of little consequence, with your confidence on this occasion?"

"Mr. Oldbuck," answered the Earl, "as I could never have foreseen the nature of that confession which I have heard this day, I need not say that I had no formed plan of consulting you, or any one, upon affairs the tendency of which I could not even have suspected. But I am without friends, unused to business, and, by long retirement, unacquainted alike with the laws of the land and the habits of the living generation; and when, most unexpectedly, I find myself immersed in the matters of which I know least, I catch, like a drowning man, at the first support that offers. You are that support, Mr. Oldbuck. I have always heard you mentioned as a man of wisdom and intelligence—I have known you myself as a man of a resolute and independent spirit;—and there is one circumstance," said he, "which ought to combine us in some degree—our having paid tribute to the same excellence of character in poor Eveline. You offered yourself to me in my need, and you were already acquainted with the beginning of my misfortunes. To you, therefore, I have recourse for advice, for sympathy, for support."

"You shall seek none of them in vain, my lord," said Oldbuck, "so far as my slender ability extends;—and I am honoured by the preference, whether it arises from choice, or is prompted by chance. But this is a matter to be ripely considered. May I ask what are your principal views at present?"

"To ascertain the fate of my child," said the Earl, "be the consequences what they may, and to do justice to the honour of Eveline, which I have only permitted to be suspected to avoid discovery of the yet more horrible taint to which I was made to believe it liable."

"And the memory of your mother?"

"Must bear its own burden," answered the Earl with a sigh: "better that she were justly convicted of deceit, should that be found necessary, than that others should be unjustly accused of crimes so much more dreadful."

"Then, my lord," said Oldbuck, "our first business must be to put the information of the old woman, Elspeth, into a regular and authenticated form."

"That," said Lord Glenallan, "will be at present, I fear, impossible. She is exhausted herself, and surrounded by her distressed family. To-morrow, perhaps, when she is alone—and yet I doubt, from her imperfect sense of right and wrong, whether she would speak out in any one's presence but my own. I am too sorely fatigued."

"Then, my lord," said the Antiquary, whom the interest of the moment elevated above points of expense and convenience, which had generally more than enough of weight with him, "I would propose to your lordship, instead of returning, fatigued as you are, so far as to Glenallan House, or taking the more uncomfortable alternative of going to a bad inn at Fairport, to alarm all the busybodies of the town—I would propose, I say, that you should be my guest at Monkbarns for this night. By to-morrow these poor people will have renewed their out-of-doors vocation—for sorrow with them affords no respite from labour,—and we will visit the old woman Elspeth alone, and take down her examination."

After a formal apology for the encroachment, Lord Glenallan agreed to go with him, and underwent with patience in their return home the whole history of John of the Girnel, a legend which Mr. Oldbuck was never known to spare any one who crossed his threshold.

The arrival of a stranger of such note, with two saddle-horses and a servant in black, which servant had holsters on his saddle-bow, and a coronet upon the holsters, created a general commotion in the house of Monkbarns. Jenny Rintherout, scarce recovered from the hysterics which she had taken on hearing of poor Steenie's misfortune, chased about the turkeys and poultry, cackled and screamed louder than they did, and ended by killing one-half too many. Miss Griselda made many wise reflections on the hot-headed wilfulness of her brother, who had occasioned such devastation, by suddenly bringing in upon them a papist nobleman. And she ventured to transmit to Mr. Blattergowl some hint of the unusual slaughter which had taken place in the *basse-cour*, which brought the honest clergyman to inquire how his friend Monkbarns had got home, and whether he was not the worse of being at the funeral, at a period so near the ringing of the bell for dinner, that the Antiquary had no choice left but to invite him to stay and bless the meat. Miss M'Intyre had on her part some curiosity to see this mighty peer, of whom all had heard, as an eastern caliph or sultan is heard of by his subjects, and felt some degree of timidity at the idea of encountering a person, of whose unsocial habits and stern manners so many stories were told, that her fear kept at least pace with her curiosity. The aged housekeeper was no less flustered and hurried in obeying the numerous and contradictory commands of her mistress, concerning preserves, pastry and fruit, the mode of marshalling and dishing the dinner, the necessity of not permitting the melted butter to run to oil, and the danger of allowing Juno—who, though formally banished from the parlour, failed not to maraud about the out-settlements of the family—to enter the kitchen.

The only inmate of Monkbarns who remained entirely indifferent on this momentous occasion was Hector M'Intyre, who cared no more for an Earl than he did for a commoner, and who was only interested in the unexpected visit, as it might afford some protection against his uncle's displeasure, if he harboured any, for his not attending the funeral, and still more against his satire upon the subject of his gallant but unsuccessful single combat with the *phoca*, or seal.

To these, the inmates of his household, Oldbuck presented the Earl of Glenallan, who underwent, with meek and subdued civility, the prosing speeches of the honest divine, and the lengthened apologies of Miss Griselda Oldbuck, which her brother in vain endeavoured to abridge. Before the dinner hour, Lord Glenallan requested permission to retire a while to his chamber. Mr. Oldbuck accompanied his guest to the Green Room, which had been hastily prepared for his reception. He looked around with an air of painful recollection.

"I think," at length he observed, "I think, Mr. Oldbuck, that I have been in this apartment before."

"Yes, my lord," answered Oldbuck, "upon occasion of an excursion hither from Knockwinnock—and since we are upon a subject so melancholy, you may perhaps remember whose taste supplied these lines from Chaucer, which now form the motto of the tapestry."

"I guess", said the Earl, "though I cannot recollect. She excelled me, indeed, in literary taste and information, as in everything else; and it is one of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, Mr. Oldbuck, that a creature so excellent in mind and body should have been cut off in so miserable a manner, merely from her having formed a fatal attachment to such a wretch as I am."

Mr. Oldbuck did not attempt an answer to this burst of the grief which lay ever nearest to the heart of his guest, but, pressing Lord Glenallan's hand with one of his own, and drawing the other across his shaggy eyelashes, as if to brush away a mist that intercepted his sight, he left the Earl at liberty to arrange himself previous to dinner.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

—Life, with you,

Glows in the brain and dances in the arteries;

'Tis like the wine some joyous guest hath quaffed,

That glads the heart and elevates the fancy:

Mine is the poor residuum of the cup,

Vapid, and dull, and tasteless, only soiling,
With its base dregs, the vessel that contains it.
Old Play.

"Now, only think what a man my brother is, Mr. Blattergowl, for a wise man and a learned man, to bring this Yerl into our house without speaking a word to a body! And there's the distress of thae Mucklebackits—we canna get a fin o' fish—and we hae nae time to send ower to Fairport for beef, and the mutton's but new killed—and that silly fliskmahoy, Jenny Rintherout, has taen the exies, and done naething but laugh and greet, the skirl at the tail o' the guffaw, for twa days successfully—and now we maun ask that strange man, that's as grand and as grave as the Yerl himsell, to stand at the sideboard! and I canna gang into the kitchen to direct onything, for he's hovering there, making some pousowdie* for my Lord, for he doesna eat like ither folk neither—And how to sort the strange servant man at dinner time—I am sure, Mr. Blattergowl, a'thegither, it passes my judgment."

* *Pousowdie*,—Miscellaneous mess.

"Truly, Miss Griselda," replied the divine, "Monkbarns was inconsiderate. He should have taen a day to see the invitation, as they do wi' the titular's condescendence in the process of valuation and sale. But the great man could not have come on a sudden to ony house in this parish where he could have been better served with *vivers*—that I must say—and also that the steam from the kitchen is very gratifying to my nostrils;—and if ye have ony household affairs to attend to, Mrs. Griselda, never make a stranger of me—I can amuse mysell very weel with the larger copy of Erskine's Institutes."

And taking down from the window-seat that amusing folio, (the Scottish Coke upon Littleton), he opened it, as if instinctively, at the tenth title of Book Second, "of Teinds or Tythes," and was presently deeply wrapped up in an abstruse discussion concerning the temporality of benefices.

The entertainment, about which Miss Oldbuck expressed so much anxiety, was at length placed upon the table; and the Earl of Glenallan, for the first time since the date of his calamity, sat at a stranger's board, surrounded by strangers. He seemed to himself like a man in a dream, or one whose brain was not fully recovered from the effects of an intoxicating potion. Relieved, as he had that morning been, from the image of guilt which had so long haunted his imagination, he felt his sorrows as a lighter and more tolerable load, but was still unable to take any share in the conversation that passed around him. It was, indeed, of a cast very different from that which he had been accustomed to. The bluntness of Oldbuck, the tiresome apologetic harangues of his sister, the pedantry of the divine, and the vivacity of the young soldier, which savoured much more of the camp than of the court, were all new to a nobleman who had lived in a retired and melancholy state for so many years, that the manners of the world seemed to him equally strange and unpleasing. Miss McIntyre alone, from the natural politeness and unpretending simplicity of her manners, appeared to belong to that class of society to which he had been accustomed in his earlier and better days.

Nor did Lord Glenallan's deportment less surprise the company. Though a plain but excellent family-dinner was provided (for, as Mr. Blattergowl had justly said, it was impossible to surprise Miss Griselda when her larder was empty), and though the Antiquary boasted his best port, and assimilated it to the Falernian of Horace, Lord Glenallan was proof to the allurements of both. His servant placed before him a small mess of vegetables, that very dish, the cooking of which had alarmed Miss Griselda, arranged with the most minute and scrupulous neatness. He ate sparingly of these provisions; and a glass of pure water, sparkling from the fountain-head, completed his repast. Such, his servant said, had been his lordship's diet for very many years, unless upon the high festivals of the Church, or when company of the first rank were entertained at Glenallan House, when he relaxed a little in the austerity of his diet, and permitted himself a glass or two of wine. But at Monkbarns, no anchorite could have made a more simple and scanty meal.

The Antiquary was a gentleman, as we have seen, in feeling, but blunt and careless in expression, from the habit of living with those before whom he had nothing to suppress. He attacked his noble guest without scruple on the severity of his regimen.

"A few half-cold greens and potatoes—a glass of ice-cold water to wash them down—antiquity gives no warrant for it, my lord. This house used to be accounted a *hospitium*, a place of retreat for Christians; but your lordship's diet is that of a heathen Pythagorean, or Indian Bramin—nay, more severe than either, if you refuse these fine apples."

"I am a Catholic, you are aware," said Lord Glenallan, wishing to escape from the discussion, "and you know that our church"——

"Lays down many rules of mortification," proceeded the dauntless Antiquary; "but I never heard that they were quite so rigorously practised—Bear witness my predecessor, John of the Girdle, or the jolly Abbot, who gave his name to this apple, my lord."

And as he pared the fruit, in spite of his sister's "O fie, Monkbarns!" and the prolonged cough of the minister, accompanied by a shake of his huge wig, the Antiquary proceeded to detail the intrigue which had given rise to the fame of the abbot's apple with more slyness and circumstantiality than was at all necessary. His jest (as may readily be conceived) missed fire, for this anecdote of conventual gallantry failed to produce the slightest smile on the visage of the Earl. Oldbuck then took up the subject of Ossian, Macpherson, and Mac-Cribb; but Lord Glenallan had never so much as heard of any of the three, so little conversant had he been with modern literature. The conversation was now in some danger of flagging, or of falling into the hands of Mr. Blattergowl, who had just pronounced the formidable word, "teind-free," when the subject of the French Revolution was started—a political event on which Lord Glenallan looked with all the prejudiced horror of a bigoted Catholic and zealous aristocrat. Oldbuck was far from carrying his detestation of its principles to such a length.

"There were many men in the first Constituent Assembly," he said, "who held sound Whiggish doctrines, and were for settling the Constitution with a proper provision for the liberties of the people. And if a set of furious madmen were now in possession of the government, it was," he continued, "what often happened in great revolutions, where extreme measures are adopted in the fury of the moment, and the State resembles an agitated pendulum which swings from side to side for some time ere it can acquire its due and perpendicular station. Or it might be likened to a storm or hurricane, which, passing over a region, does great damage in its passage, yet sweeps away stagnant and unwholesome vapours, and repays, in future health and fertility, its immediate desolation and ravage."

The Earl shook his head; but having neither spirit nor inclination for debate, he suffered the argument to pass uncontested.

This discussion served to introduce the young soldier's experiences; and he spoke of the actions in which he, had been engaged, with modesty, and at the same time with an air of spirit and zeal which delighted the Earl, who had been bred up, like others of his house, in the opinion that the trade of arms was the first duty of man, and believed that to employ them against the French was a sort of holy warfare.

"What would I give," said he apart to Oldbuck, as they rose to join the ladies in the drawing-room, "what would I give to have a son of such spirit as that young gentleman!—He wants something of address and manner, something of polish, which mixing in good society would soon give him; but with what zeal and animation he expresses himself—how fond of his profession—how loud in the praise of others—how modest when speaking of himself!"

"Hector is much obliged to you, my lord," replied his uncle, gratified, yet not so much so as to suppress his consciousness of his own mental superiority over the young soldier; "I believe in my heart nobody ever spoke half so much good of him before, except perhaps the sergeant of his company, when was wheedling a Highland recruit to enlist with him. He is a good lad notwithstanding, although he be not quite the hero your lordship supposes him, and although my commendations rather attest the kindness than the vivacity of his character. In fact, his high spirit is a sort of constitutional vehemence, which attends him in everything he sets about, and is often very inconvenient to his friends. I saw him to-day engage in an animated contest with a *phoca*, or seal (*sealgh*, our people more properly call them, retaining the Gothic guttural *gh*), with as much vehemence as if he had fought against Dumourier—Marry, my lord, the *phoca* had the better, as the said Dumourier had of some other folks. And he'll talk with equal if not superior rapture of the good behaviour of a pointer bitch, as of the plan of a campaign."

"He shall have full permission to sport over my grounds," said the Earl, "if he is so fond of that exercise."

"You will bind him to you, my lord," said Monkbarns, "body and soul: give him leave to crack off his birding-piece at a poor covey of partridges or moor-fowl, and he's yours for ever—I will enchant him by the intelligence. But O, my lord, that you could have seen my phoenix Love!—the very prince and chieftain of the youth of this age; and not destitute of spirit neither—I promise you he gave my termagant kinsman a *quid pro quo*—a Rowland for his Oliver, as the vulgar say, alluding to the two celebrated Paladins of Charlemagne."

After coffee, Lord Glenallan requested a private interview with the Antiquary, and was ushered to his library.

"I must withdraw you from your own amiable family," he said, "to involve you in the perplexities of an unhappy man. You are acquainted with the world, from which I have long been banished; for Glenallan House has been to me rather a prison than a dwelling, although a prison which I had neither fortitude nor spirit to break from."

"Let me first ask your lordship," said the Antiquary, "what are your own wishes and designs in this matter?"

"I wish most especially," answered Lord Glenallan, "to declare my luckless marriage, and to vindicate the reputation of the unhappy Eveline—that is, if you see a possibility of doing so without making public the conduct of my mother."

"*Suum cuique tribuito*," said the Antiquary; "do right to everyone. The memory of that unhappy young lady has too long suffered, and I think it might be cleared without further impeaching that of your mother, than by letting it be understood in general that she greatly disapproved and bitterly opposed the match. All—forgive me, my lord—all who ever heard of the late Countess of Glenallan, will learn that without much surprise."

"But you forget one horrible circumstance, Mr. Oldbuck," said the Earl, in an agitated voice.

"I am not aware of it," replied the Antiquary.

"The fate of the infant—its disappearance with the confidential attendant of my mother, and the dreadful surmises which may be drawn from my conversation with Elspeth."

"If you would have my free opinion, my lord," answered Mr. Oldbuck, "and will not catch too rapidly at it as matter of hope, I would say that it is very possible the child yet lives. For thus much I ascertained, by my former inquiries concerning the event of that deplorable evening, that a child and woman were carried that night from the cottage at the Craighburnfoot in a carriage and four by your brother Edward Geraldin Neville, whose journey towards England with these companions I traced for several stages. I believed then it was a part of the family compact to carry a child whom you meant to stigmatize with illegitimacy, out of that country where chance might have raised protectors and proofs of its rights. But I now think that your brother, having reason, like yourself, to believe the child stained with shame yet more indelible, had nevertheless withdrawn it, partly from regard to the honour of his house, partly from the risk to which it might have been exposed in the neighbourhood of the Lady Glenallan."

As he spoke, the Earl of Glenallan grew extremely pale, and had nearly fallen from his chair.—The alarmed Antiquary ran hither and thither looking for remedies; but his museum, though sufficiently well filled with a vast variety of useless matters, contained nothing that could be serviceable on the present or any other occasion. As he posted out of the room to borrow his sister's salts, he could not help giving a constitutional growl of chagrin and wonder at the various incidents which had converted his mansion, first into an hospital for a wounded duellist, and now into the sick chamber of a dying nobleman. "And yet," said he, "I have always kept aloof from the soldiery and the peerage. My *coenobitium* has only next to be made a lying-in hospital, and then, I trow, the transformation will be complete."

When he returned with the remedy, Lord Glenallan was much better. The new and unexpected light which Mr. Oldbuck had thrown upon the melancholy history of his family had almost overpowered him. "You think, then, Mr. Oldbuck—for you are capable of thinking, which I am not—you think, then, that it is possible—that is, not impossible—my child may yet live?"

"I think," said the Antiquary, "it is impossible that it could come to any violent harm through your brother's means. He was known to be a gay and dissipated man, but not cruel nor dishonourable; nor is it possible, that, if he had intended any foul play, he would have placed himself so forward in the charge of the infant, as I will prove to your lordship he did."

So saying, Mr. Oldbuck opened a drawer of the cabinet of his ancestor Aldobrand, and produced a bundle of papers tied with a black ribband, and labelled,—Examinations, etc., taken by Jonathan Oldbuck, J. P., upon the 18th of February, 17—; a little under was written, in a small hand, *Eheu Evelina!* The tears dropped fast from the Earl's eyes, as he endeavoured, in vain, to unfasten the knot which secured these documents.

"Your lordship," said Mr. Oldbuck, "had better not read these at present. Agitated as you are, and having much business before you, you must not exhaust your strength. Your brother's succession is now, I presume, your own, and it will be easy for you to make inquiry among his servants and retainers, so as to hear where the child is, if, fortunately, it shall be still alive."

"I dare hardly hope it," said the Earl, with a deep sigh. "Why should my brother have been silent to me?"

"Nay, my lord, why should he have communicated to your lordship the existence of a being whom you must have supposed the offspring of"—

"Most true—there is an obvious and a kind reason for his being silent. If anything, indeed, could have added to the horror of the ghastly dream that has poisoned my whole existence, it must have been the knowledge that such a child of misery existed."

"Then," continued the Antiquary, "although it would be rash to conclude, at the distance of more than twenty years, that your son must needs be still alive because he was not destroyed in infancy, I own I think you should instantly set on foot inquiries."

"It shall be done," replied Lord Glenallan, catching eagerly at the hope held out to him, the first he had nourished for many years;—"I will write to a faithful steward of my father, who acted in the same capacity under my brother Neville—But, Mr. Oldbuck, I am not my brother's heir."

"Indeed!—I am sorry for that, my lord—it is a noble estate, and the ruins of the old castle of Neville's-Burgh alone, which are the most superb relics of Anglo-Norman architecture in that part of the country, are a possession much to be coveted. I thought your father had no other son or near relative."

"He had not, Mr. Oldbuck," replied Lord Glenallan; "but my brother adopted views in politics, and a form of religion, alien from those which had been always held by our house. Our tempers had long differed, nor did my unhappy mother always think him sufficiently observant to her. In short, there was a family quarrel, and my brother, whose property was at his own free disposal, availed himself of the power vested in him to choose a stranger for his heir. It is a matter which never struck me as being of the least consequence—for if worldly possessions could alleviate misery, I have enough and to spare. But now I shall regret it, if it throws any difficulty in the way of our inquiries—and I bethink me that it may; for in case of my having a lawful son of my body, and my brother dying without issue, my father's possessions stood entailed upon my son. It is not therefore likely that this heir, be he who he may, will afford us assistance in making a discovery which may turn out so much to his own prejudice."

"And in all probability the steward your lordship mentions is also in his service," said the Antiquary.

"It is most likely; and the man being a Protestant—how far it is safe to entrust him"—

"I should hope, my lord," said Oldbuck gravely, "that a Protestant may be as trustworthy as a Catholic. I am doubly interested in the Protestant faith, my lord. My ancestor, Aldobrand Oldenbuck, printed the celebrated Confession of Augsburg, as I can show by the original edition now in this house."

"I have not the least doubt of what you say, Mr. Oldbuck," replied the Earl, "nor do I speak out of bigotry or intolerance; but probably the Protestant steward will favour the Protestant heir rather than the Catholic—if, indeed, my son has been bred in his father's faith—or, alas! if indeed he yet lives."

"We must look close into this," said Oldbuck, "before committing ourselves. I have a literary friend at York, with whom I have long corresponded on the subject of the Saxon horn that is preserved in the Minster there; we interchanged letters for six years, and have only as yet been able to settle the first line of the inscription. I will write forthwith to this gentleman, Dr. Dryasdust, and be particular in my inquiries concerning the character, etc., of your brother's heir, of the gentleman employed in his affairs, and what else may be likely to further your lordship's inquiries. In the meantime your lordship will collect the evidence of the marriage, which I hope can still be recovered?"

"Unquestionably," replied the Earl: "the witnesses, who were formerly withdrawn from your research, are still living. My tutor, who solemnized the marriage, was provided for by a living in France, and has lately returned to this country as an emigrant, a victim of his zeal for loyalty, legitimacy, and religion."

"That's one lucky consequence of the French, revolution, my lord—you must allow that, at least," said Oldbuck: "but no offence; I will act as warmly in your affairs as if I were of your own faith in politics and religion. And take my advice—If you want an affair of consequence properly managed, put it into the hands of an antiquary; for as they are eternally exercising their genius and research upon trifles, it is impossible they can be baffled in affairs of importance;—use makes

perfect—and the corps that is most frequently drilled upon the parade, will be most prompt in its exercise upon the day of battle. And, talking upon that subject, I would willingly read to your lordship, in order to pass away the time betwixt and supper"—

"I beg I may not interfere with family arrangements," said Lord Glenallan, "but I never taste anything after sunset."

"Nor I either, my lord," answered his host, "notwithstanding it is said to have been the custom of the ancients. But then I dine differently from your lordship, and therefore am better enabled to dispense with those elaborate entertainments which my womankind (that is, my sister and niece, my lord) are apt to place on the table, for the display rather of their own house-wifery than the accommodation of our wants. However, a broiled bone, or a smoked haddock, or an oyster, or a slice of bacon of our own curing, with a toast and a tankard—or something or other of that sort, to close the orifice of the stomach before going to bed, does not fall under my restriction, nor, I hope, under your lordship's."

"My no-supper is literal, Mr. Oldbuck; but I will attend you at your meal with pleasure."

"Well, my lord," replied the Antiquary, "I will endeavour to entertain your ears at least, since I cannot banquet your palate. What I am about to read to your lordship relates to the upland glens."

Lord Glenallan, though he would rather have recurred to the subject of his own uncertainties, was compelled to make a sign of rueful civility and acquiescence. The Antiquary, therefore, took out his portfolio of loose sheets, and after premising that the topographical details here laid down were designed to illustrate a slight essay upon castrametation, which had been read with indulgence at several societies of Antiquaries, he commenced as follows: "The subject, my lord, is the hill-fort of Quickens-bog, with the site of which your lordship is doubtless familiar—it is upon your store-farm of Mantanner, in the barony of Clochnaben."

"I think I have heard the names of these places," said the Earl, in answer to the Antiquary's appeal.

"Heard the name? and the farm brings him six hundred a-year—O Lord!"

Such was the scarce-subdued ejaculation of the Antiquary. But his hospitality got the better of his surprise, and he proceeded to read his essay with an audible voice, in great glee at having secured a patient, and, as he fondly hoped, an interested hearer.

"Quickens-bog may at first seem to derive its name from the plant *Quicken*, by which, *Scottice*, we understand couch-grass, dog-grass, or the *Triticum repens* of Linnaeus, and the common English monosyllable *Bog*, by which we mean, in popular language, a marsh or morass—in Latin, *Palus*. But it may confound the rash adopters of the more obvious etymological derivations, to learn that the couch-grass or dog-grass, or, to speak scientifically, the *Triticum repens* of Linnaeus, does not grow within a quarter of a mile of this castrum or hill-fort, whose ramparts are uniformly clothed with short verdant turf; and that we must seek a bog or *palus* at a still greater distance, the nearest being that of Gird-the-mear, a full half-mile distant. The last syllable, *bog*, is obviously, therefore, a mere corruption of the Saxon *Burgh*, which we find in the various transmutations of *Burgh*, *Burrow*, *Brough*, *Bruff*, *Buff*, and *Boff*, which last approaches very near the sound in question—since, supposing the word to have been originally *borgh*, which is the genuine Saxon spelling, a slight change, such as modern organs too often make upon ancient sounds, will produce first *Bogh*, and then, *elisa H*, or compromising and sinking the guttural, agreeable to the common vernacular practice, you have either *Boff* or *Bog* as it happens. The word *Quickens* requires in like manner to be altered,—decomposed, as it were,—and reduced to its original and genuine sound, ere we can discern its real meaning. By the ordinary exchange of the *Qu* into *Wh*, familiar to the rudest tyro who has opened a book of old Scottish poetry, we gain either *Whilkens*, or *Whichensborgh*—put we may suppose, by way of question, as if those who imposed the name, struck with the extreme antiquity of the place, had expressed in it an interrogation, To whom did this fortress belong?—Or, it might be *Whackens-burgh*, from the Saxon *Whacken*, to strike with the hand, as doubtless the skirmishes near a place of such apparent consequence must have legitimated such a derivation," etc. etc. etc.

I will be more merciful to my readers than Oldbuck was to his guest; for, considering his opportunities of gaining patient attention from a person of such consequence as Lord Glenallan were not many, he used, or rather abused, the present to the uttermost.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

*Crabbed age and youth
 Cannot live together:—
 Youth is full of pleasance,
 Age is full of care;
 Youth like summer morn,
 Age like winter weather;
 Youth like summer brave,
 Age like winter bare.
 Shakspeare.*

In the morning of the following day, the Antiquary, who was something of a sluggard, was summoned from his bed a full hour earlier than his custom by Caxon. "What's the matter now?" he exclaimed, yawning and stretching forth his hand to the huge gold repeater, which, bedded upon his India silk handkerchief, was laid safe by his pillow—"what's the matter now, Caxon?—it can't be eight o'clock yet."

"Na, sir,—but my lord's man sought me out, for he fancies me your honour's valley-de-sham,—and sae I am, there's nae doubt o't, baith your honour's and the minister's—at least ye hae nae other that I ken o'—and I gie a help to Sir Arthur too, but that's mair in the way o' my profession."

"Well, well—never mind that," said the Antiquary—"happy is he that is his own valley-de-sham, as you call it—But why disturb my morning's rest?"

"Ou, sir, the great man's been up since peep o' day, and he's steered the town to get awa an express to fetch his carriage, and it will be here briefly, and he wad like to see your honour afore he gaes awa."

"Gadso!" ejaculated Oldbuck, "these great men use one's house and time as if they were their own property. Well, it's once and away. Has Jenny come to her senses yet, Caxon?"

"Troth, sir, but just middling," replied the barber; "she's been in a swither about the jocolate this morning, and was like to hae toomed it a' out into the slap-bason, and drank it hersell in her ecstasies—but she's won ower wi't, wi' the help o' Miss M'Intyre."

"Then all my womankind are on foot and scrambling, and I must enjoy my quiet bed no longer, if I would have a well-regulated house—Lend me my gown. And what are the news at Fairport?"

"Ou, sir, what can they be about but this grand news o' my lord," answered the old man, "that hasna been ower the door-stane, they threep to me, for this twenty years—this grand news of his coming to visit your honour?"

"Aha!" said Monkbarns; "and what do they say of that, Caxon?"

"Deed, sir, they hae various opinions. Thae fallows, that are the democraws, as they ca' them, that are again' the king and the law, and hairpowder and dressing o' gentlemen's wigs—a wheen blackguards—they say he's come down to speak wi' your honour about bringing down his hill lads and Highland tenantry to break up the meetings of the Friends o' the People;—and when I said your honour never meddled wi' the like o' sic things where there was like to be straiks and bloodshed, they said, if ye didna, your nevoy did, and that he was weel ken'd to be a kingsman that wad fight knee-deep, and that ye were the head and he was the hand, and that the Yerl was to bring out the men and the siller."

"Come," said the Antiquary, laughing—"I am glad the war is to cost me nothing but counsel."

"Na, na," said Caxon—"naebody thinks your honour wad either fight yoursell, or gie ony feck o' siller to ony side o' the question."

"Umph! well, that's the opinion of the democraws, as you call them—What say the rest o' Fairport?"

"In troth," said the candid reporter, "I canna say it's muckle better. Captain Coquet, of the volunteers—that's him that's to be the new collector,—and some of the other gentlemen of the Blue and a' Blue Club, are just saying it's no right to let popists, that hae sae many French friends as the Yerl of Glenallan, gang through the country, and—but your honour will maybe be angry?"

"Not I, Caxon," said Oldbuck; "fire away as if you were Captain Coquet's whole platoon—I can stand it."

"Weel then, they say, sir, that as ye didna encourage the petition about the peace, and wadna petition in favour of the new tax, and as you were again' bringing in the yeomanry at the meal mob, but just for settling the folk wi' the constables—they say ye're no a gude friend to government; and that thae sort o' meetings between sic a powerfu' man as the Yerl, and sic a wise man as you,—Od they think they suld be lookit after; and some say ye should baith be shankit aff till Edinburgh Castle."

"On my word," said the Antiquary, "I am infinitely obliged to my neighbours for their good opinion of me! And so I, that have never interfered with their bickerings, but to recommend quiet and moderate measures, am given up on both sides as a man very likely to commit high treason, either against King or People?—Give me my coat, Caxon—give me my coat;—it's lucky I live not in their report. Have you heard anything of Taffril and his vessel?"

Caxon's countenance fell.—"Na, sir, and the winds hae been high, and this is a fearfu' coast to cruise on in thae eastern gales,—the headlands rin sae far out, that a veshel's embayed afore I could sharp a razor; and then there's nae harbour or city of refuge on our coast—a' craigs and breakers;—a veshel that rins ashore wi' us flees asunder like the powther when I shake the pluff—and it's as ill to gather ony o't again. I aye tell my daughter thae things when she grows wearied for a letter frae Lieutenant Taffril—It's aye an apology for him. Ye sudna blame him, says I, hinny, for ye little ken what may hae happened."

"Ay, ay, Caxon, thou art as good a comforter as a valet-de-chambre.—Give me a white stock, man,—dye think I can go down with a handkerchief about my neck when I have company?"

"Dear sir, the Captain says a three-nookit hankercher is the maist fashionable overlay, and that stocks belang to your honour and me that are auld world folk. I beg pardon for mentioning us twa thegither, but it was what he said."

"The Captain's a puppy, and you are a goose, Caxon."

"It's very like it may be sae," replied the acquiescent barber: "I am sure your honour kens best."

Before breakfast, Lord Glenallan, who appeared in better spirits than he had evinced in the former evening, went particularly through the various circumstances of evidence which the exertions of Oldbuck had formerly collected; and pointing out the means which he possessed of completing the proof of his marriage, expressed his resolution instantly to go through the painful task of collecting and restoring the evidence concerning the birth of Eveline Neville, which Elspeth had stated to be in his mother's possession.

"And yet, Mr. Oldbuck," he said, "I feel like a man who receives important tidings ere he is yet fully awake, and doubt whether they refer to actual life, or are not rather a continuation of his dream. This woman—this Elspeth,—she is in the extremity of age, and approaching in many respects to dotage. Have I not—it is a hideous question—have I not been hasty in the admission of her present evidence, against that which she formerly gave me to a very—very different purpose?"

Mr. Oldbuck paused a moment, and then answered with firmness—"No, my lord; I cannot think you have any reason to suspect the truth of what she has told you last, from no apparent impulse but the urgency of conscience. Her confession was voluntary, disinterested, distinct, consistent with itself, and with all the other known circumstances of the case. I would lose no time, however, in examining and arranging the other documents to which she has referred; and I also think her own statement should be taken down, if possible in a formal manner. We thought of setting about this together. But it will be a relief to your lordship, and moreover have a more impartial appearance, were I to attempt the investigation alone in the capacity of a magistrate. I will do this—at least I will attempt it, so soon as I shall see her in a favourable state of mind to undergo an examination."

Lord Glenallan wrung the Antiquary's hand in token of grateful acquiescence. "I cannot express to you," he said, "Mr. Oldbuck, how much your countenance and cooperation in this dark and most melancholy business gives me relief and confidence. I cannot enough applaud myself for yielding to the sudden impulse which impelled me, as it were, to drag you into my confidence, and which arose from the experience I had formerly of your firmness in discharge of your duty as a magistrate, and as a friend to the memory of the unfortunate. Whatever the issue of these matters may prove,—and I would fain hope there is a dawn breaking on the fortunes of my house, though I shall not live to enjoy its light,—but whatsoever be the issue, you have laid my family and me under the most lasting obligation."

"My lord," answered the Antiquary, "I must necessarily have the greatest respect for your lordship's family, which I am well aware is one of the most ancient in Scotland, being certainly derived from Aymer de Geraldin, who sat in parliament at Perth, in the reign of Alexander II., and who by the less vouched, yet plausible tradition of the country, is said to have been descended from the Marmor of Clochnaben. Yet, with all my veneration for your ancient descent, I must acknowledge that I find myself still more bound to give your lordship what assistance is in my limited power, from sincere sympathy with your sorrows, and detestation at the frauds which have so long been practised upon you.—But, my lord, the matin meal is, I see, now prepared—Permit me to show your lordship the way through the intricacies of my *cenobitium*, which is rather a combination of cells, jostled oddly together, and piled one upon the top of the other, than a regular house. I trust you will make yourself some amends for the spare diet of yesterday."

But this was no part of Lord Glenallan's system. Having saluted the company with the grave and melancholy politeness which distinguished his manners, his servant placed before him a slice of toasted bread, with a glass of fair water, being the fare on which he usually broke his fast. While the morning's meal of the young soldier and the old Antiquary was despatched in much more substantial manner, the noise of wheels was heard.

"Your lordship's carriage, I believe," said Oldbuck, stepping to the window. "On my word, a handsome *quadriga*,—for such, according to the best *scholium*, was the *vox signata* of the Romans for a chariot which, like that of your lordship, was drawn by four horses."

"And I will venture to say," cried Hector, eagerly gazing from the window, "that four handsomer or better-matched bays never were put in harness—What fine forehands!—what capital chargers they would make!— Might I ask if they are of your lordship's own breeding?"

"I—I—rather believe so," said Lord Glenallan; "but I have been so negligent of my domestic matters, that I am ashamed to say I must apply to Calvert" (looking at the domestic).

"They are of your lordship's own breeding," said Calvert, "got by Mad Tom out of Jemina and Yarico, your lordship's brood mares."

"Are there more of the set?" said Lord Glenallan.

"Two, my lord,—one rising four, the other five off this grass, both very handsome."

"Then let Dawkins bring them down to Monkbarns to-morrow," said the Earl—"I hope Captain M'Intyre will accept them, if they are at all fit for service."

Captain M'Intyre's eyes sparkled, and he was profuse in grateful acknowledgments; while Oldbuck, on the other hand, seizing the Earl's sleeve, endeavoured to intercept a present which boded no good to his corn-chest and hay-loft.

"My lord—my lord—much obliged—much obliged—But Hector is a pedestrian, and never mounts on horseback in battle—he is a Highland soldier, moreover, and his dress ill adapted for cavalry service. Even Macpherson never mounted his ancestors on horseback, though he has the impudence to talk of their being car-borne—and that, my lord, is what is running in Hector's head—it is the vehicular, not the equestrian exercise, which he envies—

Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum

Collegisse juvat.

His noddle is running on a curricule, which he has neither money to buy, nor skill to drive if he had it; and I assure your lordship, that the possession of two such quadrupeds would prove a greater scrape than any of his duels, whether with human foe or with my friend the *phoca*."

"You must command us all at present, Mr. Oldbuck," said the Earl politely; "but I trust you will not ultimately prevent my gratifying my young friend in some way that may afford him pleasure."

"Anything useful, my lord," said Oldbuck, "but no *curriculum*—I protest he might as rationally propose to keep a *quadriga* at once—And now I think of it, what is that old post-chaise from Fairport come jingling here for?—I did not send for it."

"I did, sir," said Hector, rather sulkily, for he was not much gratified by his uncle's interference to prevent the Earl's intended generosity, nor particularly inclined to relish either the disparagement which he cast upon his skill as a charioteer, or the mortifying allusion to his bad success in the adventures of the duel and the seal. "You did, sir?" echoed the Antiquary, in answer to his concise information. "And pray, what may be your business with a post-chaise? Is this splendid equipage—this *biga*, as I may call it—to serve for an introduction to a *quadriga* or a *curriculum*?"

"Really, sir," replied the young soldier, "if it be necessary to give you such a specific explanation, I am going to Fairport on a little business."

"Will you permit me to inquire into the nature of that business, Hector?" answered his uncle, who loved the exercise of a little brief authority over his relative. "I should suppose any regimental affairs might be transacted by your worthy deputy the sergeant—an honest gentleman, who is so good as to make Monkbarns his home since his arrival among us—I should, I say, suppose that he may transact any business of yours, without your spending a day's pay on two dog-horses, and such a combination of rotten wood, cracked glass, and leather—such a skeleton of a post-chaise, as that before the door."

"It is not regimental business, sir, that calls me; and, since you insist upon knowing, I must inform you Caxon has brought word this morning that old Ochiltree, the beggar, is to be brought up for examination to-day, previous to his being committed for trial; and I'm going to see that the poor old fellow gets fair play—that's all."

"Ay?—I heard something of this, but could not think it serious. And pray, Captain Hector, who are so ready to be every man's second on all occasions of strife, civil or military, by land, by water, or on the sea-beach, what is your especial concern with old Edie Ochiltree?"

"He was a soldier in my father's company, sir," replied Hector; "and besides, when I was about to do a very foolish thing one day, he interfered to prevent me, and gave me almost as much good advice, sir, as you could have done yourself."

"And with the same good effect, I dare be sworn for it—eh, Hector?— Come, confess it was thrown away."

"Indeed it was, sir; but I see no reason that my folly should make me less grateful for his intended kindness."

"Bravo, Hector! that's the most sensible thing I ever heard you say. But always tell me your plans without reserve,—why, I will go with you myself, man. I am sure the old fellow is not guilty, and I will assist him in such a scrape much more effectually than you can do. Besides, it will save thee half-a-guinea, my lad—a consideration which I heartily pray you to have more frequently before your eyes."

Lord Glenallan's politeness had induced him to turn away and talk with the ladies, when the dispute between the uncle and nephew appeared to grow rather too animated to be fit for the ear of a stranger, but the Earl mingled again in the conversation when the placable tone of the Antiquary expressed amity. Having received a brief account of the mendicant, and of the accusation brought against him, which Oldbuck did not hesitate to ascribe to the malice of Dousterswivel, Lord Glenallan asked, whether the individual in question had not been a soldier formerly?—He was answered in the affirmative.

"Had he not," continued his Lordship, "a coarse blue coat, or gown, with a badge?—was he not a tall, striking-looking old man, with grey beard and hair, who kept his body remarkably erect, and talked with an air of ease and independence, which formed a strong contrast to his profession?"

"All this is an exact picture of the man," refused Oldbuck.

"Why, then," continued Lord Glenallan, "although I fear I can be of no use to him in his present condition, yet I owe him a debt of gratitude for being the first person who brought me some tidings of the utmost importance. I would willingly offer him a place of comfortable retirement, when he is extricated from his present situation."

"I fear, my lord," said Oldbuck, "he would have difficulty in reconciling his vagrant habits to the acceptance of your bounty, at least I know the experiment has been tried without effect. To beg from the public at large he considers as independence, in comparison to drawing his whole support from the bounty of an individual. He is so far a true philosopher, as to be a contemner of all ordinary rules of hours and times. When he is hungry he eats; when thirsty he drinks; when weary he sleeps; and with such indifference with respect to the means and appliances about which we make a fuss, that I suppose he was never ill dined or ill lodged in his life. Then he is, to a certain extent, the oracle of the district through which he travels—their genealogist, their newsman, their master of the revels, their doctor at a pinch, or their divine;—I promise you he has too many duties, and is too zealous in performing them, to be easily bribed to abandon his calling. But I should be truly sorry if they sent the poor light-hearted old man to lie for weeks in a jail. I am convinced the confinement would break his heart."

Thus finished the conference. Lord Glenallan, having taken leave of the ladies, renewed his offer to Captain M'Intyre of the freedom of his manors for sporting, which was joyously accepted.

"I can only add," he said, "that if your spirits are not liable to be damped by dull company, Glenallan House is at all times open to you. On two days of the week, Friday and Saturday, I keep my apartment, which will be rather a relief to you, as you will be left to enjoy the society of my almoner, Mr. Gladsmoor, who is a scholar and a man of the world."

Hector, his heart exulting at the thoughts of ranging through the preserves of Glenallan House, and over the well-protected moors of Clochnaben—nay, joy of joys! the deer-forest of Strath-Bonnel—made many acknowledgements of the honour and gratitude he felt. Mr. Oldbuck was sensible of the Earl's attention to his nephew; Miss M'Intyre was pleased because her brother was gratified; and Miss Griselda Oldbuck looked forward with glee to the potting of whole bags of moorfowl and black-game, of which Mr. Blattergowl was a professed admirer. Thus,— which is always the case when a man of rank leaves a private family where he has studied to appear obliging,—all were ready to open in praise of the Earl as soon as he had taken his leave, and was wheeled off in his chariot by the four admired bays. But the panegyric was cut short, for Oldbuck and his nephew deposited themselves in the Fairport hack, which, with one horse trotting, and the other urged to a canter, creaked, jingled, and hobbled towards that celebrated seaport, in a manner that formed a strong contrast to the rapidity and smoothness with which Lord Glenallan's equipage had seemed to vanish from their eyes.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

*Yes! I love justice well—as well as you do—
But since the good dame's blind, she shall excuse me
If, time and reason fitting, I prove dumb;—
The breath I utter now shall be no means
To take away from me my breath in future.*

Old Play.

By dint of charity from the town's-people in aid of the load of provisions he had brought with him into durance, Edie Ochiltree had passed a day or two's confinement without much impatience, regretting his want of freedom the less, as the weather proved broken and rainy.

"The prison," he said, "wasna sae dooms bad a place as it was ca'd. Ye had aye a good roof ower your head to fend aff the weather, and, if the windows werena glazed, it was the mair airy and pleasant for the summer season. And there were folk enow to crack wi', and he had bread enough to eat, and what need he fash himsell about the rest o't?"

The courage of our philosophical mendicant began, however, to abate, when the sunbeams shone fair on the rusty bars of his grated dungeon, and a miserable linnet, whose cage some poor debtor had obtained permission to attach to the window, began to greet them with his whistle.

"Ye're in better spirits than I am," said Edie, addressing the bird, "for I can neither whistle nor sing for thinking o' the bonny burnsidies and green shaws that I should hae been dandering beside in weather like this. But hae—there's some crumbs t'ye, an ye are sae merry; and troth ye hae some reason to sing an ye kent it, for your cage comes by nae faut o' your ain, and I may thank mysell that I am closed up in this weary place."

Ochiltree's soliloquy was disturbed by a peace-officer, who came to summon him to attend the magistrate. So he set forth in awful procession between two poor creatures, neither of them so stout as he was himself, to be conducted into the presence of inquisitorial justice. The people, as the aged prisoner was led along by

his decrepit guards, exclaimed to each other, "Eh! see sic a grey-haired man as that is, to have committed a highway robbery, wi' ae fit in the gravel!"—And the children congratulated the officers, objects of their alternate dread and sport, Puggie Orrock and Jock Ormston, on having a prisoner as old as themselves.

Thus marshalled forward, Edie was presented (by no means for the first time) before the worshipful Bailie Littlejohn, who, contrary to what his name expressed, was a tall portly magistrate, on whom corporation crusts had not been conferred in vain. He was a zealous loyalist of that zealous time, somewhat rigorous and peremptory in the execution of his duty, and a good deal inflated with the sense of his own power and importance;—otherwise an honest, well-meaning, and useful citizen.

"Bring him in! bring him in!" he exclaimed. "Upon my word these are awful and unnatural times! the very bedesmen and retainers of his Majesty are the first to break his laws. Here has been an old Blue-Gown committing robbery—I suppose the next will reward the royal charity which supplies him with his garb, pension, and begging license, by engaging in high-treason, or sedition at least—But bring him in."

Edie made his obeisance, and then stood, as usual, firm and erect, with the side of his face turned a little upward, as if to catch every word which the magistrate might address to him. To the first general questions, which respected only his name and calling, the mendicant answered with readiness and accuracy; but when the magistrate, having caused his clerk to take down these particulars, began to inquire whereabouts the mendicant was on the night when Dousterswivel met with his misfortune, Edie demurred to the motion. "Can ye tell me now, Bailie, you that understands the law, what gude will it do me to answer ony o' your questions?"

"Good?—no good certainly, my friend, except that giving a true account of yourself, if you are innocent, may entitle me to set you at liberty."

"But it seems mair reasonable to me now, that you, Bailie, or anybody that has anything to say against me, should prove my guilt, and no to be bidding me prove my innocence."

"I don't sit here," answered the magistrate, "to dispute points of law with you. I ask you, if you choose to answer my question, whether you were at Ringan Aikwood, the forester's, upon the day I have specified?"

"Really, sir, I dinna feel myself called on to remember," replied the cautious bedesman.

"Or whether, in the course of that day or night," continued the magistrate, "you saw Steven, or Steenie, Mucklebackit?—you knew him, I suppose?"

"O, brawlie did I ken Steenie, puir fallow," replied the prisoner;—"but I canna condeshend on ony particular time I have seen him lately."

"Were you at the ruins of St. Ruth any time in the course of that evening?"

"Bailie Littlejohn," said the mendicant, "if it be your honour's pleasure, we'll cut a lang tale short, and I'll just tell ye, I am no minded to answer ony o' thae questions—I'm ower auld a traveller to let my tongue bring me into trouble."

"Write down," said the magistrate, "that he declines to answer all interrogatories, in respect that by telling the truth he might be brought to trouble."

"Na, na," said Ochiltree, "I'll no hae that set down as ony part o' my answer—but I just meant to say, that in a' my memory and practice, I never saw ony gude come o' answering idle questions."

"Write down," said the Bailie, "that, being acquainted with judicial interrogatories by long practice, and having sustained injury by answering questions put to him on such occasions, the declarant refuses."

"Na, na, Bailie," reiterated Edie, "ye are no to come in on me that gait neither."

"Dictate the answer yourself then, friend," said the magistrate, "and the clerk will take it down from your own mouth."

"Ay, ay," said Edie—"that's what I ca' fair play; I'se do that without loss o' time. Sae, neighbour, ye may just write down, that Edie Ochiltree, the declarant, stands up for the liberty—na, I maunna say that neither—I am nae liberty-boy—I hae fought again' them in the riots in Dublin—besides, I have ate the King's bread mony a day. Stay, let me see. Ay—write that Edie Ochiltree, the Blue-Gown, stands up for the prerogative—(see that ye spell that word right—it's a lang ane)—for the prerogative of the subjects of the land, and winna answer a single word that sall be asked at him this day, unless he sees a reason fort. Put down that, young man."

"Then, Edie," said the magistrate, "since you will give no information on the subject, I must send you back to prison till you shall be delivered in due course of law."

"Aweel, sir, if it's Heaven's will and man's will, nae doubt I maun submit," replied the mendicant. "I hae nae great objection to the prison, only that a body canna win out o't; and if it wad please you as weel, Bailie, I wad gie you my word to appear afore the Lords at the Circuit, or in ony other coart ye like, on ony day ye are pleased to appoint."

"I rather think, my good friend," answered Bailie Littlejohn, "your word might be a slender security where your neck may be in some danger. I am apt to think you would suffer the pledge to be forfeited. If you could give me sufficient security, indeed"—

At this moment the Antiquary and Captain M'Intyre entered the apartment.—"Good morning to you, gentlemen," said the magistrate; "you find me toiling in my usual vocation—looking after the iniquities of the people—labouring for the *respublica*, Mr. Oldbuck—serving the King our master, Captain M'Intyre,—for I suppose you know I have taken up the sword?"

"It is one of the emblems of justice, doubtless," answered the Antiquary;—"but I should have thought the scales would have suited you better, Bailie, especially as you have them ready in the warehouse."

"Very good, Monkbarns—excellent! But I do not take the sword up as justice, but as a soldier—indeed I should rather say the musket and bayonet—there they stand at the elbow of my gouty chair, for I am scarce fit for drill yet—a slight touch of our old acquaintance *podagra*; I can keep my feet, however, while our sergeant puts me through the manual. I should like to know, Captain M'Intyre, if he follows the regulations correctly—he brings us but awkwardly to the *present*." And he hobbled towards his weapon to illustrate his doubts and display his proficiency.

"I rejoice we have such zealous defenders, Bailie," replied Mr. Oldbuck; "and I dare say Hector will gratify you by communicating his opinion on your progress in this new calling. Why, you rival the Hecate' of the ancients, my good sir—a merchant on the Mart, a magistrate in the Townhouse, a soldier on the Links—*quid non pro patria*? But my business is with the justice; so let commerce and war go slumber."

"Well, my good sir," said the Bailie, "and what commands have you for me?"

"Why, here's an old acquaintance of mine, called Edie Ochiltree, whom some of your myrmidons have mewed up in jail on account of an alleged assault on that fellow Dousterswivel, of whose accusation I do not believe one word."

The magistrate here assumed a very grave countenance. "You ought to have been informed that he is accused of robbery, as well as assault—a very serious matter indeed; it is not often such criminals come under my cognizance."

"And," replied Oldbuck, "you are tenacious of the opportunity of making the very most of such as occur. But is this poor old man's case really so very bad?"

"It is rather out of rule," said the Bailie—"but as you are in the commission, Monkbarns, I have no hesitation to show you Dousterswivel's declaration, and the rest of the precognition." And he put the papers into the Antiquary's hands, who assumed his spectacles, and sat down in a corner to peruse them.

The officers, in the meantime, had directions to remove their prisoner into another apartment; but before they could do so, M'Intyre took an opportunity to greet old Edie, and to slip a guinea into his hand.

"Lord bless your honour!" said the old man; "it's a young soldier's gift, and it should surely thrive wi' an auld ane. I'se no refuse it, though it's beyond my rules; for if they steek me up here, my friends are like enugh to forget me—out o'sight out o'mind, is a true proverb; and it wadna be creditable for me, that am the king's bedesman, and entitled to beg by word of mouth, to be fishing for bawbees out at the jail window wi' the fit o' a stocking, and a string." As he made this observation he was conducted out of the apartment.

Mr. Dousterswivel's declaration contained an exaggerated account of the violence he had sustained, and also of his loss.

"But what I should have liked to have asked him," said Monkbarns, "would have been his purpose in frequenting the ruins of St. Ruth, so lonely a place, at such an hour, and with such a companion as Edie Ochiltree. There is no road lies that way, and I do not conceive a mere passion for the picturesque would carry the

German thither in such a night of storm and wind. Depend upon it, he has been about some roguery, and in all probability hath been caught in a trap of his own setting—*Nec lex justitior ulla.*"

The magistrate allowed there was something mysterious in that circumstance, and apologized for not pressing Dousterswivel, as his declaration was voluntarily emitted. But for the support of the main charge, he showed the declaration of the Aikwoods concerning the state in which Dousterswivel was found, and establishing the important fact that the mendicant had left the barn in which he was quartered, and did not return to it again. Two people belonging to the Fairport undertaker, who had that night been employed in attending the funeral of Lady Glenallan, had also given declarations, that, being sent to pursue two suspicious persons who left the ruins of St. Ruth as the funeral approached, and who, it was supposed, might have been pillaging some of the ornaments prepared for the ceremony, they had lost and regained sight of them more than once, owing to the nature of the ground, which was unfavourable for riding, but had at length fairly lodged them both in Mucklebackit's cottage. And one of the men added, that "he, the declarant, having dismounted from his horse, and gone close up to the window of the hut, he saw the old Blue-Gown and young Steenie Mucklebackit, with others, eating and drinking in the inside, and also observed the said Steenie Mucklebackit show a pocket-book to the others;—and declarant has no doubt that Ochiltree and Steenie Mucklebackit were the persons whom he and his comrade had pursued, as above mentioned." And being interrogated why he did not enter the said cottage, declares, "he had no warrant so to do; and that as Mucklebackit and his family were understood to be rough-handed folk, he, the declarant, had no desire to meddle or make with their affairs, *Causa scientiae patet.* All which he declares to be truth," etc.

"What do you say to that body of evidence against your friend?" said the magistrate, when he had observed the Antiquary had turned the last leaf.

"Why, were it in the case of any other person, I own I should say it looked, *prima facie*, a little ugly; but I cannot allow anybody to be in the wrong for beating Dousterswivel—Had I been an hour younger, or had but one single flash of your warlike genius, Bailie, I should have done it myself long ago. He is *nebulo nebulonum*, an impudent, fraudulent, mendacious quack, that has cost me a hundred pounds by his roguery, and my neighbour Sir Arthur, God knows how much. And besides, Bailie, I do not hold him to be a sound friend to Government."

"Indeed?" said Bailie Littlejohn; "if I thought that, it would alter the question considerably."

"Right—for, in beating him," observed Oldbuck, "the bedesman must have shown his gratitude to the king by thumping his enemy; and in robbing him, he would only have plundered an Egyptian, whose wealth it is lawful to spoil. Now, suppose this interview in the ruins of St. Ruth had relation to politics,—and this story of hidden treasure, and so forth, was a bribe from the other side of the water for some great man, or the funds destined to maintain a seditious club?"

"My dear sir," said the magistrate, catching at the idea, "you hit my very thoughts! How fortunate should I be if I could become the humble means of sifting such a matter to the bottom!—Don't you think we had better call out the volunteers, and put them on duty?"

"Not just yet, while *podagra* deprives them of an essential member of their body. But will you let me examine Ochiltree?"

"Certainly; but you'll make nothing of him. He gave me distinctly to understand he knew the danger of a judicial declaration on the part of an accused person, which, to say the truth, has hanged many an honest man than he is."

"Well, but, Bailie," continued Oldbuck, "you have no objection to let me try him?"

"None in the world, Monkbarns. I hear the sergeant below—I'll rehearse the manual in the meanwhile. Baby, carry my gun and bayonet down to the room below—it makes less noise there when we ground arms." And so exit the martial magistrate, with his maid behind him bearing his weapons.

"A good squire that wench for a gouty champion," observed Oldbuck.—"Hector, my lad, hook on, hook on—Go with him, boy—keep him employed, man, for half-an-hour or so—butter him with some warlike terms—praise his dress and address."

Captain M'Intyre, who, like many of his profession, looked down with infinite scorn on those citizen soldiers who had assumed arms without any professional title to bear them, rose with great reluctance, observing that he should not know what to say to Mr. Littlejohn; and that to see an old gouty shop-keeper attempting the exercise and duties of a private soldier, was really too ridiculous.

"It may be so, Hector," said the Antiquary, who seldom agreed with any person in the immediate proposition which was laid down—"it may possibly be so in this and some other instances; but at present the country resembles the suitors in a small-debt court, where parties plead in person, for lack of cash to retain the professed heroes of the bar. I am sure in the one case we never regret the want of the acuteness and eloquence of the lawyers; and so, I hope, in the other, we may manage to make shift with our hearts and muskets, though we shall lack some of the discipline of you martinets."

"I have no objection, I am sure, sir, that the whole world should fight if they please, if they will but allow me to be quiet," said Hector, rising with dogged reluctance.

"Yes, you are a very quiet personage indeed," said his uncle, "whose ardour for quarrelling cannot pass so much as a poor *phoca* sleeping upon the beach!"

But Hector, who saw which way the conversation was tending, and hated all allusions to the foil he had sustained from the fish, made his escape before the Antiquary concluded the sentence.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

*Well, well, at worst, 'tis neither theft nor coinage,
Granting I knew all that you charge me with.
What though the tomb hath borne a second birth,
And given the wealth to one that knew not on't,
Yet fair exchange was never robbery,
Far less pure bounty—
Old Play.*

The Antiquary, in order to avail himself of the permission given him to question the accused party, chose rather to go to the apartment in which Ochiltree was detained, than to make the examination appear formal by bringing him again into the magistrate's office. He found the old man seated by a window which looked out on the sea; and as he gazed on that prospect, large tears found their way, as if unconsciously, to his eye, and from thence trickled down his cheeks and white beard. His features were, nevertheless, calm and composed, and his whole posture and mien indicated patience and resignation. Oldbuck had approached him without being observed, and roused him out of his musing by saying kindly, "I am sorry, Edie, to see you so much cast down about this matter."

The mendicant started, dried his eyes very hastily with the sleeve of his gown, and endeavouring to recover his usual tone of indifference and jocularly, answered, but with a voice more tremulous than usual, "I might weel hae judged, Monkbarns, it was you, or the like o' you, was coming in to disturb me—for it's ae great advantage o' prisons and courts o' justice, that ye may greet your een out an ye like, and nane o' the folk that's concerned about them will ever ask you what it's for."

"Well, Edie," replied Oldbuck, "I hope your present cause of distress is not so bad but it may be removed."

"And I had hoped, Monkbarns," answered the mendicant, in a tone of reproach, "that ye had ken'd me better than to think that this bit trifling trouble o' my ain wad bring tears into my auld een, that hae seen far different kind o' distress.—Na, na!—But here's been the puir lass, Caxon's daughter, seeking comfort, and has gotten unco little—there's been nae speerings o' Taffril's gunbrig since the last gale; and folk report on the key that a king's ship had struck on the Reef of Rattray, and a' hands lost—God forbid! for as sure as you live, Monkbarns, the puir lad Lovel, that ye liked sae weel, must have perished."

"God forbid indeed!" echoed the Antiquary, turning pale—"I would rather Monkbarns House were on fire. My poor dear friend and coadjutor! I will down to the quay instantly."

"I'm sure ye'll learn naething mair than I hae tauld ye, sir," said Ochiltree, "for the officer-folk here were very civil (that is, for the like o' them), and lookit up ae their letters and authorities, and could throw nae light on't either ae way or another."

"It can't be true! it shall not be true!" said the Antiquary, "And I won't believe it if it were!—Taffril's an excellent sea man, and Lovel (my poor Lovel!) has all the qualities of a safe and pleasant companion by land or by sea—one, Edie, whom, from the ingenuousness of his disposition, I would choose, did I ever go a sea-voyage (which I never do, unless across the ferry), *fragilem mecum solvere phaselum*, to be the companion of my risk, as one against whom the elements could nourish no vengeance. No, Edie, it is not, and cannot be true—it is a fiction of the idle jade Rumour, whom I wish hanged with her trumpet about her neck, that serves only with its screech-owl tones to fright honest folks out of their senses.—Let me know how you got into this scrape of your own."

"Are ye axing me as a magistrate, Monkbarns, or is it just for your ain satisfaction!"

"For my own satisfaction solely," replied the Antiquary.

"Put up your pocket-book and your keelyvine pen then, for I downa speak out an ye hae writing materials in your hands—they're a scour to unlearned folk like me—Od, ane o' the clerks in the neist room will clink down, in black and white, as muckle as wad hang a man, before ane kens what he's saying."

Monkbarns complied with the old man's humour, and put up his memorandum-book.

Edie then went with great frankness through the part of the story already known to the reader, informing the Antiquary of the scene which he had witnessed between Dousterswivel and his patron in the ruins of St. Ruth, and frankly confessing that he could not resist the opportunity of decoying the adept once more to visit the tomb of Misticot, with the purpose of taking a comic revenge upon him for his quackery. He had easily persuaded Steenie, who was a bold thoughtless young fellow, to engage in the frolic along with him, and the jest had been inadvertently carried a great deal farther than was designed. Concerning the pocket-book, he explained that he had expressed his surprise and sorrow as soon as he found it had been inadvertently brought off: and that publicly, before all the inmates of the cottage, Steenie had undertaken to return it the next day, and had only been prevented by his untimely fate.

The Antiquary pondered a moment, and then said, "Your account seems very probable, Edie, and I believe it from what I know of the parties. But I think it likely that you know a great deal more than you have thought it proper to tell me, about this matter of the treasure trove—I suspect you have acted the part of the Lar Familiaris in Plautus—a sort of Brownie, Edie, to speak to your comprehension, who watched over hidden treasures.—I do bethink me you were the first person we met when Sir Arthur made his successful attack upon Misticot's grave, and also that when the labourers began to flag, you, Edie, were again the first to leap into the trench, and to make the discovery of the treasure. Now you must explain all this to me, unless you would have me use you as ill as Euclio does Staphyla in the *Aulularia*."

"Lordsake, sir," replied the mendicant, "what do I ken about your Howlowlaria?—it's mair like a dog's language than a man's."

"You knew, however, of the box of treasure being there?" continued Oldbuck.

"Dear sir," answered Edie, assuming a countenance of great simplicity, "what likelihood is there o'that? d'ye think sae puir an auld creature as me wad hae kend o' sic a like thing without getting some gude out o't?—and ye wot weel I sought nane and gat nane, like Michael Scott's man. What concern could I hae wi't?"

"That's just what I want you to explain to me," said Oldbuck; "for I am positive you knew it was there."

"Your honour's a positive man, Monkbarns—and, for a positive man, I must needs allow ye're often in the right."

"You allow, then, Edie, that my belief is well founded?"

Edie nodded acquiescence.

"Then please to explain to me the whole affair from beginning to end," said the Antiquary.

"If it were a secret o' mine, Monkbarns," replied the beggar, "ye suldna ask twice; for I hae aye said ahint your back, that for a' the nonsense maggots that ye whiles take into your head, ye are the maist wise and discreet o' a' our country gentles. But I've een be open-hearted wi' you, and tell you that this is a friend's secret, and that they suld draw me wi' wild horses, or saw me asunder, as they did the children of Ammon, sooner than I would speak a word mair about the matter, excepting this, that there was nae ill intended, but muckle gude, and that the purpose was to serve them that are worth twenty hundred o' me. But there's nae law, I trow, that makes it a sin to ken where ither folles siller is, if we didna pit hand til't ourself?"

Oldbuck walked once or twice up and down the room in profound thought, endeavouring to find some plausible reason for transactions of a nature so mysterious—but his ingenuity was totally at fault. He then placed himself before the prisoner.

"This story of yours, friend Edie, is an absolute enigma, and would require a second OEdipus to solve it—who OEdipus was, I will tell you some other time if you remind me—However, whether it be owing to the wisdom or to the maggots with which you compliment me, I am strongly disposed to believe that you have spoken the truth, the rather that you have not made any of those obtestations of the superior powers, which I observe you and your comrades always make use of when you mean to deceive folks." (Here Edie could not suppress a smile.) "If, therefore, you will answer me one question, I will endeavour to procure your liberation."

"If ye'll let me hear the question," said Edie, with the caution of a canny Scotchman, "I'll tell you whether I'll answer it or no."

"It is simply," said the Antiquary, "Did Dousterswivel know anything about the concealment of the chest of bullion?"

"He, the ill-fa'ard loon!" answered Edie, with much frankness of manner— "there wad hae been little speerings o't had Dustansnive! ken'd it was there—it wad hae been butter in the black dog's hause."

"I thought as much," said Oldbuck. "Well, Edie, if I procure your freedom, you must keep your day, and appear to clear me of the bail-bond, for these are not times for prudent men to incur forfeitures, unless you can point out another *Aulam auri plenam quadrilbrem*—another *Search, No. I.*"

"Ah!" said the beggar, shaking his head, "I doubt the bird's flown that laid thae golden eggs—for I winna ca' her goose, though that's the gait it stands in the story-buick—But I'll keep my day, Monkbarns; ye'se no loss a penny by me—And troth I wad fain be out again, now the weather's fine—and then I hae the best chance o' hearing the first news o' my friends."

"Well, Edie, as the bouncing and thumping beneath has somewhat ceased, I presume Bailie Littlejohn has dismissed his military preceptor, and has retired from the labours of Mars to those of Themis—I will have some conversation with him—But I cannot and will not believe any of those wretched news you were telling me."

"God send your honour may be right!" said the mendicant, as Oldbuck left the room.

The Antiquary found the magistrate, exhausted with the fatigues of the drill, reposing in his gouty chair, humming the air, "How merrily we live that soldiers be!" and between each bar comforting himself with a spoonful of mock-turtle soup. He ordered a similar refreshment for Oldbuck, who declined it, observing, that, not being a military man, he did not feel inclined to break his habit of keeping regular hours for meals—"Soldiers like you, Bailie, must snatch their food as they find means and time. But I am sorry to hear ill news of young Taffril's brig."

"Ah, poor fellow!" said the bailie, "he was a credit to the town—much distinguished on the first of June."

"But," said Oldbuck, "I am shocked to hear you talk of him in the preterite tense."

"Troth, I fear there may be too much reason for it, Monkbarns;—and yet let us hope the best. The accident is said to have happened in the Rattray reef of rocks, about twenty miles to the northward, near Dirlenalan Bay—I have sent to inquire about it—and your nephew run out himself as if he had been flying to get the Gazette of a victory."

Here Hector entered, exclaiming as he came in, "I believe it's all a damned lie—I can't find the least authority for it, but general rumour."

"And pray, Mr. Hector," said his uncle, "if it had been true, whose fault would it have been that Lovel was on board?"

"Not mine, I am sure," answered Hector; "it would have been only my misfortune."

"Indeed!" said his uncle, "I should not have thought of that."

"Why, sir, with all your inclination to find me in the wrong," replied the young soldier, "I suppose you will own my intention was not to blame in this case. I did my best to hit Lovel, and if I had been successful, 'tis clear my scrape would have been his, and his scrape would have been mine."

"And whom or what do you intend to hit now, that you are lugging with you that leathern magazine there, marked Gunpowder?"

"I must be prepared for Lord Glenallan's moors on the twelfth, sir," said M'Intyre.

"Ah, Hector! thy great *chasse*, as the French call it, would take place best—

Omne cum Proteus pecus agitare altos

Visere montes—

Could you meet but with a martial *phoca*, instead of an unwarlike heath-bird."

"The devil take the seal, sir, or *phoca*, if you choose to call it so! It's rather hard one can never hear the end of a little piece of folly like that."

"Well, well," said Oldbuck, "I am glad you have the grace to be ashamed of it—as I detest the whole race of Nimrods, I wish them all as well matched. Nay, never start off at a jest, man—I have done with the *phoca*—though, I dare say, the Bailie could tell us the value of seal-skins just now."

"They are up," said the magistrate, "they are well up—the fishing has been unsuccessful lately."

"We can bear witness to that," said the tormenting Antiquary, who was delighted with the hank this incident had given him over the young sportsman: One word more, Hector, and

We'll hang a seal-skin on thy recreant limbs.

Aha, my boy! Come, never mind it; I must go to business.—Bailie, a word with you: you must take bail—moderate bail, you understand—for old Ochiltree's appearance."

"You don't consider what you ask," said the Bailie; "the offence is assault and robbery."

"Hush! not a word about it," said the Antiquary. "I gave you a hint before—I will possess you more fully hereafter—I promise you, there is a secret."

"But, Mr. Oldbuck, if the state is concerned, I, who do the whole drudgery business here, really have a title to be consulted, and until I am—"

"Hush! hush!" said the Antiquary, winking and putting his finger to his nose,—"you shall have the full credit, the entire management, whenever matters are ripe. But this is an obstinate old fellow, who will not hear of two people being as yet let into his mystery, and he has not fully acquainted me with the clew to Dousterswivel's devices."

"Aha! so we must tip that fellow the alien act, I suppose?"

"To say truth, I wish you would."

"Say no more," said the magistrate; "it shall forthwith be done—he shall be removed *tanquam suspect*—I think that's one of your own phrases, Monkbarns?"

"It is classical, Bailie—you improve."

"Why, public business has of late pressed upon me so much, that I have been obliged to take my foreman into partnership. I have had two several correspondences with the Under Secretary of State—one on the proposed tax on Riga hemp-seed, and the other on putting down political societies. So you might as well communicate to me as much as you know of this old fellow's discovery of a plot against the state."

"I will, instantly, when I am master of it," replied Oldbuck—"I hate the trouble of managing such matters myself. Remember, however, I did not say decidedly a plot against the state I only say I hope to discover, by this man's means, a foul plot."

"If it be a plot at all, there must be treason in it, or sedition at least," said the Bailie—"Will you bail him for four hundred merks?"

"Four hundred merks for an old Blue-Gown! Think on the act 1701 regulating bail-bonds!—Strike off a cipher from the sum—I am content to bail him for forty merks."

"Well, Mr. Oldbuck, everybody in Fairport is always willing to oblige you—and besides, I know that you are a prudent man, and one that would be as unwilling to lose forty, as four hundred merks. So I will accept your bail, *meo periculo*—what say you to that law phrase again? I had it from a learned counsel. I will vouch it, my lord, he said, *meo periculo*."

"And I will vouch for Edie Ochiltree, *meo periculo*, in like manner," said Oldbuck. "So let your clerk draw out the bail-bond, and I will sign it."

When this ceremony had been performed, the Antiquary communicated to Edie the joyful tidings that he was once more at liberty, and directed him to make the best of his way to Monkbarns House, to which he himself returned with his nephew, after having perfected their good work.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

Full of wise saws and modern instances.

As You Like It.

"I wish to Heaven, Hector," said the Antiquary, next morning after breakfast, "you would spare our nerves, and not be keeping snapping that arquebuss of yours."

"Well, sir, I'm sure I'm sorry to disturb you," said his nephew, still handling his fowling-piece;—"but it's a capital gun—it's a Joe Manton, that cost forty guineas."

"A fool and his money are soon parted, nephew—there is a Joe Miller for your Joe Manton," answered the Antiquary; "I am glad you have so many guineas to throw away."

"Every one has their fancy, uncle,—you are fond of books."

"Ay, Hector," said the uncle, "and if my collection were yours, you would make it fly to the gunsmith, the horse-market, the dog-breaker,—*Coemptos undique nobiles libros—mutare loricis Iberis*."

"I could not use your books, my dear uncle," said the young soldier, "that's true; and you will do well to provide for their being in better hands. But don't let the faults of my head fall on my heart—I would not part with a Cordery that belonged to an old friend, to get a set of horses like Lord Glenallan's."

"I don't think you would, lad—I don't think you would," said his softening relative. "I love to tease you a little sometimes; it keeps up the spirit of discipline and habit of subordination—You will pass your time happily here having me to command you, instead of Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,' as Milton has it; and instead of the French," he continued, relapsing into his ironical humour, "you have the *Gens humida ponti*—for, as Virgil says,

Sternunt se somno diversae in littore phocae;

which might be rendered,

Here phocae slumber on the beach,

Within our Highland Hector's reach.

Nay, if you grow angry, I have done. Besides, I see old Edie in the court-yard, with whom I have business. Good-bye, Hector—Do you remember how she splashed into the sea like her master Proteus, *et se jactu dedit aequor in altum*?"

M'Intyre,—waiting, however, till the door was shut,—then gave way to the natural impatience of his temper.

"My uncle is the best man in the world, and in his way the kindest; but rather than hear any more about that cursed *phoca*, as he is pleased to call it, I would exchange for the West Indies, and never see his face again."

Miss M'Intyre, gratefully attached to her uncle, and passionately fond of her brother, was, on such occasions, the usual envoy of reconciliation. She hastened to meet her uncle on his return, before he entered the parlour.

"Well, now, Miss Womankind, what is the meaning of that imploring countenance?—has Juno done any more mischief?"

"No, uncle; but Juno's master is in such fear of your joking him about the seal—I assure you, he feels it much more than you would wish;—it's very silly of him, to be sure; but then you can turn everybody so sharply into ridicule"—

"Well, my dear," answered Oldbuck, propitiated by the compliment, "I will rein in my satire, and, if possible, speak no more of the *phoca*—I will not even speak of sealing a letter, but say *umph*, and give a nod to you when I want the wax-light—I am not *monitoribus asper*, but, Heaven knows, the most mild, quiet, and easy of human beings, whom sister, niece, and nephew, guide just as best pleases them."

With this little panegyric on his own docility, Mr. Oldbuck entered the parlour, and proposed to his nephew a walk to the Mussel-crag. "I have some questions to ask of a woman at Mucklebackit's cottage," he observed, "and I would willingly have a sensible witness with me—so, for fault of a better, Hector, I must be contented with you."

"There is old Edie, sir, or Caxon—could not they do better than me?" answered M'Intyre, feeling somewhat alarmed at the prospect of a long *tete-a-tete* with his uncle.

"Upon my word, young man, you turn me over to pretty companions, and I am quite sensible of your politeness," replied Mr. Oldbuck. "No, sir, I intend the old Blue-Gown shall go with me—not as a competent witness, for he is, at present, as our friend Bailie Littlejohn says (blessings on his learning!) *tanquam suspectus*, and you are *suspicio major*, as our law has it."

"I wish I were a major, sir," said Hector, catching only the last, and, to a soldier's ear, the most impressive word in the sentence,— "but, without money or interest, there is little chance of getting the step."

"Well, well, most doughty son of Priam," said the Antiquary, "be ruled by your friends, and there's no saying what may happen—Come away with me, and you shall see what may be useful to you should you ever sit upon a court-martial, sir."

"I have been on many a regimental court-martial, sir," answered Captain M'Intyre. "But here's a new cane for you."

"Much obliged, much obliged."

"I bought it from our drum-major," added M'Intyre, "who came into our regiment from the Bengal army when it came down the Red Sea. It was cut on the banks of the Indus, I assure you."

"Upon my word, 'tis a fine ratan, and well replaces that which the *ph*— Bah! what was I going to say?"

The party, consisting of the Antiquary, his nephew, and the old beggar, now took the sands towards Mussel-crag—the former in the very highest mood of communicating information, and the others, under a sense of former obligation, and some hope for future favours, decently attentive to receive it. The uncle and nephew walked together, the mendicant about a step and a half behind, just near enough for his patron to speak to him by a slight inclination of his neck, and without the trouble of turning round. (Petrie, in his Essay on Good-breeding, dedicated to the magistrates of Edinburgh, recommends, upon his own experience, as tutor in a family of distinction, this attitude to all led captains, tutors, dependants, and bottle-holders of every description.) Thus escorted, the Antiquary moved along full of his learning, like a lordly man of war, and every now and then yawing to starboard and larboard to discharge a broadside upon his followers.

"And so it is your opinion," said he to the mendicant, "that this windfall—this *arca auri*, as Plautus has it, will not greatly avail Sir Arthur in his necessities?"

"Unless he could find ten times as much," said the beggar, "and that I am sair doubtful of;—I heard Puggie Orrock, and the tother thief of a sheriff-officer, or messenger, speaking about it—and things are ill aff when the like o' them can speak crouselly about any gentleman's affairs. I doubt Sir Arthur will be in stane wa's for debt, unless there's swift help and certain."

"You speak like a fool," said the Antiquary.—"Nephew, it is a remarkable thing, that in this happy country no man can be legally imprisoned for debt."

"Indeed, sir?" said M'Intyre; "I never knew that before—that part of our law would suit some of our mess well."

"And if they arena confined for debt," said Ochiltree, "what is't that tempts sae mony puir creatures to bide in the tolbooth o' Fairport yonder?—they a' say they were put there by their creditors—Od! they maun like it better than I do, if they're there o' free will."

"A very natural observation, Edie, and many of your betters would make the same; but it is founded entirely upon ignorance of the feudal system. Hector, be so good as to attend, unless you are looking out for another—Ahem!" (Hector compelled himself to give attention at this hint.) "And you, Edie, it may be useful to you *reram cognoscere causas*. The nature and origin of warrant for caption is a thing *haud alienum a Scaevolae studiis*.—You must know then, once more, that nobody can be arrested in Scotland for debt."

"I haena muckle concern wi' that, Monkbarns," said the old man, "for naebody wad trust a bodle to a gaberlunzie."

"I pr'ythee, peace, man—As a compulsitor, therefore, of payment, that being a thing to which no debtor is naturally inclined, as I have too much reason to warrant from the experience I have had with my own,—we had first the letters of four forms, a sort of gentle invitation, by which our sovereign lord the king, interesting himself, as a monarch should, in the regulation of his subjects' private affairs, at first by mild exhortation, and afterwards by letters of more strict enjoinder and more hard compulsion—What do you see extraordinary about that bird, Hector?—it's but a seamaw."

"It's a pictarnie, sir," said Edie.

"Well, what an if it were—what does that signify at present?—But I see you're impatient; so I will waive the letters of four forms, and come to the modern process of diligence.—You suppose, now, a man's committed to prison because he cannot pay his debt? Quite otherwise: the truth is, the king is so good as to interfere at the request of the creditor, and to send the debtor his royal command to do him justice within a certain time—fifteen days, or six, as the case may be. Well, the man resists and disobeys: what follows? Why, that he be lawfully and rightfully declared a rebel to our gracious sovereign, whose command he has disobeyed, and that by three blasts of a horn at the market-place of Edinburgh, the metropolis of Scotland. And he is then legally imprisoned, not on account of any civil debt, but because of his ungrateful contempt of the royal mandate. What say you to that, Hector?—there's something you never knew before."*

* The doctrine of Monkbarns on the origin of imprisonment for civil debt in Scotland, may appear somewhat whimsical, but was referred to, and admitted to be correct, by the Bench of the Supreme Scottish Court, on 5th December 1828, in the case of *Thom v. Black*. In fact, the Scottish law is in this particular more jealous of the personal liberty of the subject than any other code in Europe.

"No, uncle; but, I own, if I wanted money to pay my debts, I would rather thank the king to send me some, than to declare me a rebel for not doing what I could not do."

"Your education has not led you to consider these things," replied his uncle; "you are incapable of estimating the elegance of the legal fiction, and the manner in which it reconciles that duress, which, for the protection of commerce, it has been found necessary to extend towards refractory debtors, with the most scrupulous attention to the liberty of the subject."

"I don't know, sir," answered the unenlightened Hector; "but if a man must pay his debt or go to jail, it signifies but little whether he goes as a debtor or a rebel, I should think. But you say this command of the king's gives a license of so many days—Now, egad, were I in the scrape, I would beat a march and leave the king and the creditor to settle it among themselves before they came to extremities."

"So wad I," said Edie; "I wad gie them leg-bail to a certainty."

"True," replied Monkbarns; "but those whom the law suspects of being unwilling to abide her formal visit, she proceeds with by means of a shorter and more uncereemonious call, as dealing with persons on whom patience and favour would be utterly thrown away."

"Ay," said Ochiltree, "that will be what they ca' the fugie-warrants—I hae some skeel in them. There's Border-warrants too in the south country, unco rash uncanny things;—I was taen up on ane at Saint James's Fair, and keepit in the auld kirk at Kelso the hail day and night; and a cauld goustie place it was, I'se assure ye.—But whatna wife's this, wi' her creel on her back? It's puir Maggie hersell, I'm thinking."

It was so. The poor woman's sense of her loss, if not diminished, was become at least mitigated by the inevitable necessity of attending to the means of supporting her family; and her salutation to Oldbuck was made in an odd mixture between the usual language of solicitation with which she plied her customers, and the tone of lamentation for her recent calamity.

"How's a' wi' ye the day, Monkbarns? I havena had the grace yet to come down to thank your honour for the credit ye did puir Steenie, wi' laying his head in a rath grave, puir fallow. "—Here she whimpered and wiped her eyes with the corner of her blue apron—"But the fishing comes on no that ill, though the gudeman hasna had the heart to gang to sea himsell—Atweel I would fain tell him it wad do him gude to put hand to wark—but I'm maist fear'd to speak to him—and it's an unco thing to hear ane o' us speak that gate o' a man—However, I hae some dainty caller haddies, and they sall be but three shillings the dozen, for I hae nae pith to drive a bargain ennow, and maun just tak what ony Christian body will gie, wi' few words and nae flyting."

"What shall we do, Hector?" said Oldbuck, pausing: "I got into disgrace with my womankind for making a bad bargain with her before. These maritime animals, Hector, are unlucky to our family."

"Pooh, sir, what would you do?—give poor Maggie what she asks, or allow me to send a dish of fish up to Monkbarns."

And he held out the money to her; but Maggie drew back her hand. "Na, na, Captain; ye're ower young and ower free o' your siller—ye should never tak a fish-wife's first bode; and troth I think maybe a flyte wi' the auld housekeeper at Monkbarns, or Miss Grizel, would do me some gude—And I want to see what that hellicate quean Jenny Ritherout's doing—folk said she wasna weel—She'll be vexing hersell about Steenie, the silly tawpie, as if he wad ever hae lookit ower his shouther at the like o'her!—Weel, Monkbarns, they're braw caller haddies, and they'll bid me unco little indeed at the house if ye want crappit-heads the day."

And so on she paced with her burden,—grief, gratitude for the sympathy of her betters, and the habitual love of traffic and of gain, chasing each other through her thoughts.

"And now that we are before the door of their hut," said Ochiltree, "I wad fain ken, Monkbarns, what has gar'd ye plague yoursell wi' me a' this length? I tell ye sincerely I hae nae pleasure in ganging in there. I downa bide to think how the young hae fa'en on a' sides o' me, and left me an useless auld stump wi' hardly a green leaf on't."

"This old woman," said Oldbuck, "sent you on a message to the Earl of Glenallan, did she not?"

"Ay!" said the surprised mendicant; "how ken ye that sae weel?"

"Lord Glenallan told me himself," answered the Antiquary; "so there is no delation—no breach of trust on your part; and as he wishes me to take her evidence down on some important family matters, I chose to bring you with me, because in her situation, hovering between dotage and consciousness, it is possible that your voice and appearance may awaken trains of recollection which I should otherwise have no means of exciting. The human mind—what are you about, Hector?"

"I was only whistling for the dog, sir," replied the Captain "she always roves too wide—I knew I should be troublesome to you."

"Not at all, not at all," said Oldbuck, resuming the subject of his disquisition—"the human mind is to be treated like a skein of ravelled silk, where you must cautiously secure one free end before you can make any progress in disentangling it."

"I ken naething about that," said the gaberlunzie; "but an my auld acquaintance be hersell, or anything like hersell, she may come to wind us a pirn. It's fearsome baith to see and hear her when she wampishes about her arms, and gets to her English, and speaks as if she were a prent book, let a-be an auld fisher's wife. But, indeed, she had a grand education, and was muckle taen out afore she married an unco bit beneath hersell. She's aulder than me by half a score years—but I mind weel enough they made as muckle wark about her making a half-merk marriage wi' Simon Mucklebackit, this Saunders's father, as if she had been ane o' the gentry. But she got into favour again, and then she lost it again, as I hae heard her son say, when he was a muckle chield; and then they got muckle siller, and left the Countess's land, and settled here. But things never throve wi' them. Howsomever, she's a weel-educate woman, and an she win to her English, as I hae heard her do at an orra time, she may come to fickle us a'."

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

*Life ebbs from such old age, unmarked and silent,
As the slow neap-tide leaves yon stranded galley.—
Late she rocked merrily at the least impulse
That wind or wave could give; but now her keel
Is settling on the sand, her mast has ta'en
An angle with the sky, from which it shifts not.
Each wave receding shakes her less and less,
Till, bedded on the strand, she shall remain
Useless as motionless.
Old Play.*

As the Antiquary lifted the latch of the hut, he was surprised to hear the shrill tremulous voice of Elspeth chanting forth an old ballad in a wild and doleful recitative.

*"The herring loves the merry moonlight,
The mackerel loves the wind,
But the oyster loves the dredging sang,
For they come of a gentle kind."*

A diligent collector of these legendary scraps of ancient poetry, his foot refused to cross the threshold when his ear was thus arrested, and his hand instinctively took pencil and memorandum-book. From time to time the old woman spoke as if to the children—"Oh ay, hinnie, whisht! whisht! and I'll begin a bonnier ane than that—

*"Now haud your tongue, baith wife and carle,
And listen, great and sma',
And I will sing of Glenallan's Earl
That fought on the red Harlaw."*

*"The cronach's cried on Bennachie,
And doun the Don and a',
And hieland and lawland may mournfu' be
For the sair field of Harlaw.—"*

I dinna mind the neist verse weel—my memory's failed, and theres unco thoughts come ower me—God keep us frae temptation!"

Here her voice sunk in indistinct muttering.

"It's a historical ballad," said Oldbuck, eagerly, "a genuine and undoubted fragment of minstrelsy! Percy would admire its simplicity—Ritson could not impugn its authenticity."

"Ay, but it's a sad thing," said Ochiltree, "to see human nature sae far ower taen as to be skirling at auld sangs on the back of a loss like hers."

"Hush! hush!" said the Antiquary—"she has gotten the thread of the story again. "—And as he spoke, she sung—

*"They saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They hae bridled a hundred black,*

*With a chafron of steel on each horse's head,
And a good knight upon his back. "—*

"Chafron!" exclaimed the Antiquary,—*"equivalent, perhaps, to cheveron;—the word's worth a dollar,"—and down it went in his red book.*

*"They hadna ridden a mile, a mile,
A mile, but barely ten,
When Donald came branking down the brae
Wi' twenty thousand men.*

*"Their tartans they were waving wide,
Their glaives were glancing clear,
Their pibrochs rung frae side to side,
Would deafen ye to hear.*

*"The great Earl in his stirrups stood
That Highland host to see:
Now here a knight that's stout and good
May prove a jeopardie:*

*"What wouldst thou do, my squire so gay,
That rides beside my reyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl the day,
And I were Roland Cheyne?*

*"To turn the rein were sin and shame,
To fight were wondrous peril,
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl?"*

Ye maun ken, hinnie, that this Roland Cheyne, for as poor and auld as I sit in the chimney-neuk, was my forbear, and an awfu' man he was that day in the fight, but specially after the Earl had fa'en, for he blamed himsell for the counsel he gave, to fight before Mar came up wi' Mearns, and Aberdeen, and Angus." Her voice rose and became more animated as she recited the warlike counsel of her ancestor—

*"Were I Glenallan's Earl this tide,
And ye were Roland Cheyne,
The spur should be in my horse's side,
And the bridle upon his mane.*

*"If they hae twenty thousand blades,
And we twice ten times ten,
Yet they hae but their tartan plaids,
And we are mail-clad men.*

*"My horse shall ride through ranks sae rude,
As through the moorland fern,
Then neer let the gentle Norman blude
Grow cauld for Highland kerne."*

"Do you hear that, nephew?" said Oldbuck;—"you observe your Gaelic ancestors were not held in high repute formerly by the Lowland warriors."

"I hear," said Hector, "a silly old woman sing a silly old song. I am surprised, sir, that you, who will not listen to Ossian's songs of Selma, can be pleased with such trash. I vow, I have not seen or heard a worse halfpenny ballad; I don't believe you could match it in any pedlar's pack in the country. I should be ashamed to think that the honour of the Highlands could be affected by such doggrel."—"And, tossing up his head, he snuffed the air indignantly.

Apparently the old woman heard the sound of their voices; for, ceasing her song, she called out, "Come in, sirs, come in—good-will never halted at the door-stane."

They entered, and found to their surprise Elspeth alone, sitting "ghastly on the hearth," like the personification of Old Age in the Hunter's song of the Owl,* "wrinkled, tattered, vile, dim-eyed, discoloured, torpid."

* See Mrs. Grant on the Highland Superstitions, vol. ii. p. 260, for this fine translation from the Gaelic.

"They're a' out," she said, as they entered; "but an ye will sit a blink, somebody will be in. If ye hae business wi' my gude-daughter, or my son, they'll be in belyve,—I never speak on business mysell. Bairns, gie them seats—the bairns are a' gane out, I trow,"—looking around her;—"I was crooning to keep them quiet a wee while since; but they hae cruppen out some gate. Sit down, sirs, they'll be in belyve;" and she dismissed her spindle from her hand to twirl upon the floor, and soon seemed exclusively occupied in regulating its motion, as unconscious of the presence of the strangers as she appeared indifferent to their rank or business there.

"I wish," said Oldbuck, "she would resume that canticle, or legendary fragment. I always suspected there was a skirmish of cavalry before the main battle of the Harlaw."*

* Note H. Battle of Harlaw.

"If your honour pleases," said Edie, "had ye not better proceed to the business that brought us a' here? I'll engage to get ye the sang ony time."

"I believe you are right, Edie—*Do manus*—I submit. But how shall we manage? She sits there the very image of dotage. Speak to her, Edie—try if you can make her recollect having sent you to Glenallan House."

Edie rose accordingly, and, crossing the floor, placed himself in the same position which he had occupied during his former conversation with her. "I'm fain to see ye looking sae weel, cummer; the mair, that the black ox has tramped on ye since I was aneath your roof-tree."

"Ay," said Elspeth; but rather from a general idea of misfortune, than any exact recollection of what had happened,—*"there has been distress amang us of late—I wonder how younger folk bide it—I bide it ill. I canna hear the wind whistle, and the sea roar, but I think I see the coble whombl'd keel up, and some o' them struggling in the waves!—Eh, sirs; sic weary dreams as folk hae between sleeping and waking, before they win to the lang sleep and the sound! I could amaist think whiles my son, or else Steenie, my oe, was dead, and that I had seen the burial. Isna that a queer dream for a daft auld carline? What for should ony o' them dee before me?—it's out o' the course o' nature, ye ken."*

"I think you'll make very little of this stupid old woman," said Hector,—who still nourished, perhaps, some feelings of the dislike excited by the disparaging mention of his countrymen in her lay—"I think you'll make but little of her, sir; and it's wasting our time to sit here and listen to her dotage."

"Hector," said the Antiquary, indignantly, "if you do not respect her misfortunes, respect at least her old age and grey hairs: this is the last stage of existence, so finely treated by the Latin poet—

—*Omni*

*Membrorum damno major dementia, quae nec
Nomina, servorum, nec vultus agnoscit amici,
Cum queis preterita coenavit nocte, nec illos
Quos genuit, quos eduxit."*

"That's Latin!" said Elspeth, rousing herself as if she attended to the lines, which the Antiquary recited with great pomp of diction—"that's Latin!" and she cast a wild glance around her—"Has there a priest fund me out at last?"

"You see, nephew, her comprehension is almost equal to your own of that fine passage."

"I hope you think, sir, that I knew it to be Latin as well as she did?"

"Why, as to that—But stay, she is about to speak."

"I will have no priest—none," said the beldam, with impotent vehemence; "as I have lived I will die—none shall say that I betrayed my mistress, though it were to save my soul!"

"That bespoke a foul conscience," said the mendicant;—"I wuss she wad mak a clean breast, an it were but for her sake;" and he again assailed her.

"Weel, gudewife, I did your errand to the Yerl."

"To what Earl? I ken nae Earl;—I ken'd a Countess ance—I wish to Heaven I had never ken'd her! for by that acquaintance, neighbour, their cam,"— and she counted her withered fingers as she spoke "first Pride, then Malice, then Revenge, then False Witness; and Murder tirl'd at the door-pin, if he camna ben. And werena thae pleasant guests, think ye, to take up their quarters in ae woman's heart? I trow there was routh o' company."

"But, cummer," continued the beggar, "it wasna the Countess of Glenallan I meant, but her son, him that was Lord Geraldin."

"I mind it now," she said; "I saw him no that langsyne, and we had a heavy speech thegither. Eh, sirs! the comely young lord is turned as auld and frail as I am: it's muckle that sorrow and heartbreak, and crossing of true love, will do wi' young blood. But suldna his mither hae lookit to that hersell?—we were but to do her bidding, ye ken. I am sure there's naeboddy can blame me—he wasna my son, and she was my mistress. Ye ken how the rhyme says—I hae maist forgotten how to sing, or else the tune's left my auld head—

*"He turn'd him right and round again,
Said, Scorn na at my mither;
Light loves I may get mony a ane,
But minnie neer anither."*

Then he was but of the half blude, ye ken, and her's was the right Glenallan after a'. Na, na, I maun never maen doing and suffering for the Countess Joscelyn—never will I maen for that."

Then drawing her flax from the distaff, with the dogged air of one who is resolved to confess nothing, she resumed her interrupted occupation.

"I hae heard," said the mendicant, taking his cue from what Oldbuck had told him of the family history—"I hae heard, cummer, that some ill tongue suld hae come between the Earl, that's Lord Geraldin, and his young bride."

"Ill tongue?" she said in hasty alarm; "and what had she to fear frae an ill tongue?—she was gude and fair eneugh—at least a' body said sae. But had she keepit her ain tongue aff ither folk, she might hae been living like a ledddy for a' that's come and gane yet."

"But I hae heard say, gudewife," continued Ochiltree, "there was a clatter in the country, that her husband and her were ower sibb when they married."

"Wha durst speak o' that?" said the old woman hastily; "wha durst say they were married?—wha ken'd o' that?—Not the Countess—not I. If they wedded in secret, they were severed in secret—They drank of the fountains of their ain deceit."

"No, wretched beldam!" exclaimed Oldbuck, who could keep silence no longer, "they drank the poison that you and your wicked mistress prepared for them."

"Ha, ha!" she replied, "I aye thought it would come to this. It's but sitting silent when they examine me—there's nae torture in our days; and if there is, let them rend me!—It's ill o' the vassal's mouth that betrays the bread it eats."

"Speak to her, Edie," said the Antiquary; "she knows your voice, and answers to it most readily."

"We shall mak naething mair out o' her," said Ochiltree. "When she has clinkit hersell down that way, and faulded her arms, she winna speak a word, they say, for weeks thegither. And besides, to my thinking, her face is sair changed since we cam in. However, I'll try her ance mair to satisfy your honour.—So ye canna keep in mind, cummer, that your auld mistress, the Countess Joscelyn, has been removed?"

"Removed!" she exclaimed; for that name never failed to produce its usual effect upon her; "then we maun a' follow—a' maun ride when she is in the saddle. Tell them to let Lord Geraldin ken we're on before them. Bring my hood and scarf—ye wadna hae me gang in the carriage wi' my ledddy, and my hair in this fashion?"

She raised her shrivelled arms, and seemed busied like a woman who puts on her cloak to go abroad, then dropped them slowly and stiffly; and the same idea of a journey still floating apparently through her head, she proceeded, in a hurried and interrupted manner,—"Call Miss Neville—What do you mean by Lady Geraldin? I said Eveline Neville, not Lady Geraldin—there's no Lady Geraldin; tell her that, and bid her change her wet gown, and no' look sae pale. Bairn! what should she do wi' a bairn?—maidens hae nane, I trow.—Teresa—Teresa—my lady calls us!—Bring a candle;—the grand staircase is as mirk as a Yule midnight—We are coming, my lady!"—With these words she sunk back on the settle, and from thence sidelong to the floor. *

* Note I. Elspeth's death.

Edie ran to support her, but hardly got her in his arms, before he said,

"It's a' ower—she has passed away even with that last word."

"Impossible," said Oldbuck, hastily advancing, as did his nephew. But nothing was more certain. She had expired with the last hurried word that left her lips; and all that remained before them were the mortal relics of the creature who had so long struggled with an internal sense of concealed guilt, joined to all the distresses of age and poverty.

"God grant that she be gane to a better place!" said Edie, as he looked on the lifeless body; "but oh! there was something lying hard and heavy at her heart. I have seen mony a ane dee, baith in the field o' battle, and a fair-strae death at hame; but I wad rather see them a' ower again, as sic a fearfu' flitting as hers!"

"We must call in the neighbours," said Oldbuck, when he had somewhat recovered his horror and astonishment, "and give warning of this additional calamity. I wish she could have been brought to a confession. And, though of far less consequence, I could have wished to transcribe that metrical fragment. But Heaven's will must be done!"

They left the hut accordingly, and gave the alarm in the hamlet, whose matrons instantly assembled to compose the limbs and arrange the body of her who might be considered as the mother of their settlement. Oldbuck promised his assistance for the funeral.

"Your honour," said Alison Breck, who was next in age to the deceased, "suld send down something to us for keeping up our hearts at the lykewake, for a' Saunders's gin, puir man, was drucken out at the burial o' Steenie, and we'll no get mony to sit dry-lipped aside the corpse. Elspeth was unco clever in her young days, as I can mind right weel, but there was aye a word o' her no being that chancy. Ane suldna speak ill o' the dead—mair by token, o' ane's cummer and neighbour—but there was queer things said about a ledddy and a bairn or she left the Craighburnfoot. And sae, in gude troth, it will be a puir lykewake, unless your honour sends us something to keep us cracking."

"You shall have some whisky," answered Oldbuck, "the rather that you have preserved the proper word for that ancient custom of watching the dead. You observe, Hector, this is genuine Teutonic, from the Gothic *Leichnam*, a corpse. It is quite erroneously called *Late-wake*, though Brand favours that modern corruption and derivation."

"I believe," said Hector to himself, "my uncle would give away Monkbarns to any one who would come to ask it in genuine Teutonic! Not a drop of whisky would the old creatures have got, had their president asked it for the use of the *Late-wake*."

While Oldbuck was giving some farther directions, and promising assistance, a servant of Sir Arthur's came riding very hard along the sands, and stopped his horse when he saw the Antiquary. "There had something," he said, "very particular happened at the Castle"—(he could not, or would not, explain what)—"and Miss Wardour had sent him off express to Monkbarns, to beg that Mr. Oldbuck would come to them without a moment's delay."

"I am afraid," said the Antiquary, "his course also is drawing to a close. What can I do?"

"Do, sir?" exclaimed Hector, with his characteristic impatience,— "get on the horse, and turn his head homeward—you will be at Knockwinnock Castle in ten minutes."

"He is quite a free goer," said the servant, dismounting to adjust the girths and stirrups,— "he only pulls a little if he feels a dead weight on him."

"I should soon be a dead weight off him, my friend," said the Antiquary.— "What the devil, nephew, are you weary of me? or do you suppose me weary of my life, that I should get on the back of such a Bucephalus as that? No, no, my friend, if I am to be at Knockwinnock to-day, it must be by walking quietly forward on my own feet, which I will do with as little delay as possible. Captain M'Intyre may ride that animal himself, if he pleases."

"I have little hope I could be of any use, uncle, but I cannot think of their distress without wishing to show sympathy at least—so I will ride on before, and announce to them that you are coming.—I'll trouble you for your spurs, my friend."

"You will scarce need them, sir," said the man, taking them off at the same time, and buckling them upon Captain M'Intyre's heels, "he's very frank to the road."

Oldbuck stood astonished at this last act of temerity, "are you mad, Hector?" he cried, "or have you forgotten what is said by Quintus Curtius, with whom, as a soldier, you must needs be familiar,—*Nobilis equus umbra quidem virgae regitur; ignavus ne calcari quidem excitari potest*; which plainly shows that spurs are useless in every case, and, I may add, dangerous in most."

But Hector, who cared little for the opinion of either Quintus Curtius or of the Antiquary, upon such a topic, only answered with a heedless "Never fear—never fear, sir."

*With that he gave his able horse the head,
And, bending forward, struck his armed heels
Against the panting sides of his poor jade,
Up to the rowel-head; and starting so,
He seemed in running to devour the way,
Staying no longer question.*

"There they go, well matched," said Oldbuck, looking after them as they started—"a mad horse and a wild boy, the two most unruly creatures in Christendom! and all to get half an hour sooner to a place where nobody wants him; for I doubt Sir Arthur's griefs are beyond the cure of our light horseman. It must be the villany of Dousterswivel, for whom Sir Arthur has done so much; for I cannot help observing, that, with some natures, Tacitus's maxim holdeth good: *Beneficia eo usque laeta sunt dum videntur exsolvi posse; ubi multum antevenere, pro gratia odium redditur*,—from which a wise man might take a caution, not to oblige any man beyond the degree in which he may expect to be requited, lest he should make his debtor a bankrupt in gratitude."

Murmuring to himself such scraps of cynical philosophy, our Antiquary paced the sands towards Knockwinnock; but it is necessary we should outstrip him, for the purpose of explaining the reasons of his being so anxiously summoned thither.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

*So, while the Goose, of whom the fable told,
Incumbent, brooded o'er her eggs of gold,
With hand outstretched, impatient to destroy,
Stole on her secret nest the cruel Boy,
Whose gripe rapacious changed her splendid dream,
—For wings vain fluttering, and for dying scream.
The Loves of the Sea-weeds.*

From the time that Sir Arthur Wardour had become possessor of the treasure found in Misticot's grave, he had been in a state of mind more resembling ecstasy than sober sense. Indeed, at one time his daughter had become seriously apprehensive for his intellect; for, as he had no doubt that he had the secret of possessing himself of wealth to an unbounded extent, his language and carriage were those of a man who had acquired the philosopher's stone. He talked of buying contiguous estates, that would have led him from one side of the island to the other, as if he were determined to brook no neighbour save the sea. He corresponded with an architect of eminence, upon a plan of renovating the castle of his forefathers on a style of extended magnificence that might have rivalled that of Windsor, and laying out the grounds on a suitable scale. Troops of liveried menials were already, in fancy, marshalled in his halls, and—for what may not unbounded wealth authorize its possessor to aspire to?—the coronet of a marquis, perhaps of a duke, was glittering before his imagination. His daughter—to what matches might she not look forward? Even an alliance with the blood-royal was not beyond the sphere of his hopes. His son was already a general—and he himself whatever ambition could dream of in its wildest visions.

In this mood, if any one endeavoured to bring Sir Arthur down to the regions of common life, his replies were in the vein of Ancient Pistol—

*A fico for the world, and worldlings base
I speak of Africa and golden joys!*

The reader may conceive the amazement of Miss Wardour, when, instead of undergoing an investigation concerning the addresses of Lovel, as she had expected from the long conference of her father with Mr. Oldbuck, upon the morning of the fated day when the treasure was discovered, the conversation of Sir Arthur announced an imagination heated with the hopes of possessing the most unbounded wealth. But she was seriously alarmed when Dousterswivel was sent for to the Castle, and was closeted with her father—his mishap condoled with—his part taken, and his loss compensated. All the suspicions which she had long entertained respecting this man became strengthened, by observing his pains to keep up the golden dreams of her father, and to secure for himself, under various pretexts, as much as possible out of the windfall which had so strangely fallen to Sir Arthur's share.

Other evil symptoms began to appear, following close on each other. Letters arrived every post, which Sir Arthur, as soon as he had looked at the directions, flung into the fire without taking the trouble to open them. Miss Wardour could not help suspecting that these epistles, the contents of which seemed to be known to her father by a sort of intuition, came from pressing creditors. In the meanwhile, the temporary aid which he had received from the treasure dwindled fast away. By far the greater part had been swallowed up by the necessity of paying the bill of six hundred pounds, which had threatened Sir Arthur with instant distress. Of the rest, some part was given to the adept, some wasted upon extravagances which seemed to the poor knight fully authorized by his full-blown hopes,—and some went to stop for a time the mouths of such claimants as, being weary of fair promises, had become of opinion with Harpagon, that it was necessary to touch something substantial. At length circumstances announced but too plainly, that it was all expended within two or three days after its discovery; and there appeared no

prospect of a supply. Sir Arthur, naturally impatient, now taxed Dousterswivel anew with breach of those promises through which he had hoped to convert all his lead into gold. But that worthy gentleman's turn was now served; and as he had grace enough to wish to avoid witnessing the fall of the house which he had undermined, he was at the trouble of bestowing a few learned terms of art upon Sir Arthur, that at least he might not be tormented before his time. He took leave of him, with assurances that he would return to Knockwinnock the next morning, with such information as would not fail to relieve Sir Arthur from all his distresses. "For, since I have consulted in such matters, I ave never," said Mr. Herman Dousterswivel, "approached so near de *arcanum*, what you call de great mystery,—de Panchresta—de Polychresta—I do know as much of it as Pelaso de Taranta, or Basilius—and either I will bring you in two and tree days de No. III. of Mr. Mishdigoat, or you shall call me one knave myself, and never look me in de face again no more at all."

The adept departed with this assurance, in the firm resolution of making good the latter part of the proposition, and never again appearing before his injured patron. Sir Arthur remained in a doubtful and anxious state of mind. The positive assurances of the philosopher, with the hard words Panchresta, Basilius, and so forth, produced some effect on his mind. But he had been too often deluded by such jargon, to be absolutely relieved of his doubt, and he retired for the evening into his library, in the fearful state of one who, hanging over a precipice, and without the means of retreat, perceives the stone on which he rests gradually parting from the rest of the crag, and about to give way with him.

The visions of hope decayed, and there increased in proportion that feverish agony of anticipation with which a man, educated in a sense of consequence, and possessed of opulence,—the supporter of an ancient name, and the father of two promising children,—foresaw the hour approaching which should deprive him of all the splendour which time had made familiarly necessary to him, and send him forth into the world to struggle with poverty, with rapacity, and with scorn. Under these dire forebodings, his temper, exhausted by the sickness of delayed hope, became peevish and fretful, and his words and actions sometimes expressed a reckless desperation, which alarmed Miss Wardour extremely. We have seen, on a former occasion, that Sir Arthur was a man of passions lively and quick, in proportion to the weakness of his character in other respects; he was unused to contradiction, and if he had been hitherto, in general, good-humoured and cheerful, it was probably because the course of his life had afforded no such frequent provocation as to render his irritability habitual.

On the third morning after Dousterswivel's departure, the servant, as usual, laid on the breakfast table the newspaper and letters of the day. Miss Wardour took up the former to avoid the continued ill-humour of her father, who had wrought himself into a violent passion, because the toast was over-browned.

"I perceive how it is," was his concluding speech on this interesting subject,—"*my servants, who have had their share of my fortune, begin to think there is little to be made of me in future. But while I am the scoundrel's master I will be so, and permit no neglect—no, nor endure a hair's-breadth diminution of the respect I am entitled to exact from them.*"

"I am ready to leave your honour's service this instant," said the domestic upon whom the fault had been charged, "as soon as you order payment of my wages."

Sir Arthur, as if stung by a serpent, thrust his hand into his pocket, and instantly drew out the money which it contained, but which was short of the man's claim.

"What money have you got, Miss Wardour?" he said, in a tone of affected calmness, but which concealed violent agitation.

Miss Wardour gave him her purse; he attempted to count the bank notes which it contained, but could not reckon them. After twice miscounting the sum, he threw the whole to his daughter, and saying, in a stern voice, "Pay the rascal, and let him leave the house instantly!" he strode out of the room.

The mistress and servant stood alike astonished at the agitation and vehemence of his manner.

"I am sure, ma'am, if I had thought I was particularly wrang, I wadna hae made ony answer when Sir Arthur challenged me. I hae been lang in his service, and he has been a kind master, and you a kind mistress, and I wad like ill ye should think I wad start for a hasty word. I am sure it was very wrang o' me to speak about wages to his honour, when maybe he has something to vex him. I had nae thoughts o' leaving the family in this way."

"Go down stair, Robert," said his mistress—"something has happened to fret my father—go down stairs, and let Alick answer the bell."

When the man left the room, Sir Arthur re-entered, as if he had been watching his departure. "What's the meaning of this?" he said hastily, as he observed the notes lying still on the table—"Is he not gone? Am I neither to be obeyed as a master or a father?"

"He is gone to give up his charge to the housekeeper, sir,—I thought there was not such instant haste."

"There *is* haste, Miss Wardour," answered her father, interrupting her;—"What I do henceforth in the house of my forefathers, must be done speedily, or never."

He then sate down, and took up with a trembling hand the basin of tea prepared for him, protracting the swallowing of it, as if to delay the necessity of opening the post-letters which lay on the table, and which he eyed from time to time, as if they had been a nest of adders ready to start into life and spring upon him.

"You will be happy to hear," said Miss Wardour, willing to withdraw her father's mind from the gloomy reflections in which he appeared to be plunged, "you will be happy to hear, sir, that Lieutenant Taffril's gun-brig has got safe into Leith Roads—I observe there had been apprehensions for his safety—I am glad we did not hear them till they were contradicted."

"And what is Taffril and his gun-brig to me?"

"Sir!" said Miss Wardour in astonishment; for Sir Arthur, in his ordinary state of mind, took a fidgety sort of interest in all the gossip of the day and country.

"I say," he repeated in a higher and still more impatient key, "what do I care who is saved or lost? It's nothing to me, I suppose?"

"I did not know you were busy, Sir Arthur; and thought, as Mr. Taffril is a brave man, and from our own country, you would be happy to hear"—

"Oh, I am happy—as happy as possible—and, to make you happy too, you shall have some of my good news in return." And he caught up a letter. "It does not signify which I open first—they are all to the same tune."

He broke the seal hastily, ran the letter over, and then threw it to his daughter. "Ay—I could not have lighted more happily!—this places the copestone."

Miss Wardour, in silent terror, took up the letter. "Read it—read it aloud!" said her father; "it cannot be read too often; it will serve to break you in for other good news of the same kind."

She began to read with a faltering voice, "Dear Sir."

"He *dears* me too, you see, this impudent drudge of a writer's office, who, a twelvemonth since, was not fit company for my second table—I suppose I shall be dear Knight' with him by and by."

"Dear Sir," resumed Miss Wardour; but, interrupting herself, "I see the contents are unpleasant, sir—it will only vex you my reading them aloud."

"If you will allow me to know my own pleasure, Miss Wardour, I entreat you to go on—I presume, if it were unnecessary, I should not ask you to take the trouble."

"Having been of late taken into copartnery," continued Miss Wardour, reading the letter, "by Mr. Gilbert Greenhorn, son of your late correspondent and man of business, Girnigo Greenhorn, Esq., writer to the signet, whose business I conducted as parliament-house clerk for many years, which business will in future be carried on under the firm of Greenhorn and Grinderson (which I memorandum for the sake of accuracy in addressing your future letters), and having had of late favours of yours, directed to my aforesaid partner, Gilbert Greenhorn, in consequence of his absence at the Lamberton races, have the honour to reply to your said favours."

"You see my friend is methodical, and commences by explaining the causes which have procured me so modest and elegant a correspondent. Go on—I can bear it."

And he laughed that bitter laugh which is perhaps the most fearful expression of mental misery. Trembling to proceed, and yet afraid to disobey, Miss Wardour continued to read—"I am for myself and partner, sorry we cannot oblige you by looking out for the sums you mention, or applying for a suspension in the case of Goldiebirds' bond, which would be more inconsistent, as we have been employed to act as the said Goldiebirds' procurators and attorneys, in which capacity we have taken out a charge of horning against you, as you must be aware by the schedule left by the messenger, for the sum of four thousand seven hundred and fifty-six pounds five shillings and sixpence one-fourth of a penny sterling, which, with annual-rent and expenses effeiring, we presume will be settled during the currency of the charge, to prevent further trouble. Same time, I am under the necessity to observe our own account, amounting to seven hundred and sixty-nine pounds ten shillings and sixpence, is also due, and settlement would be agreeable; but as we hold your rights, title-deeds, and documents in hypothec, shall have no objection to give reasonable time—say till the next money term. I am, for myself and partner, concerned to add, that Messrs. Goldiebirds' instructions to us are

to proceed *peremptorie* and *sine mora*, of which I have the pleasure to advise you, to prevent future mistakes, reserving to ourselves otherwise to age' as accords. I am, for self and partner, dear sir, your obliged humble servant, Gabriel Grinderson, for Greenhorn and Grinderson."

"Ungrateful villain!" said Miss Wardour.

"Why, no—it's in the usual rule, I suppose; the blow could not have been perfect if dealt by another hand—it's all just as it should be," answered the poor Baronet, his affected composure sorely belied by his quivering lip and rolling eye—"But here's a postscript I did not notice—come, finish the epistle."

"I have to add (not for self but partner) that Mr. Greenhorn will accommodate you by taking your service of plate, or the bay horses, if sound in wind and limb, at a fair appreciation, in part payment of your accompt."

"G—d confound him!" said Sir Arthur, losing all command of himself at this condescending proposal: "his grandfather shod my father's horses, and this descendant of a scoundrelly blacksmith proposes to swindle me out of mine! But I will write him a proper answer."

And he sat down and began to write with great vehemence, then stopped and read aloud:—"Mr. Gilbert Greenhorn,—in answer to two letters of a late date, I received a letter from a person calling himself Grinderson, and designing himself as your partner. When I address any one, I do not usually expect to be answered by deputy—I think I have been useful to your father, and friendly and civil to yourself, and therefore am now surprised—And yet," said he, stopping short, "why should I be surprised at that or anything else? or why should I take up my time in writing to such a scoundrel?—I shan't be always kept in prison, I suppose; and to break that puppy's bones when I get out, shall be my first employment."

"In prison, sir?" said Miss Wardour, faintly.

"Ay, in prison to be sure. Do you make any question about that? Why, Mr. what's his name's fine letter for self and partner seems to be thrown away on you, or else you have got four thousand so many hundred pounds, with the due proportion of shillings, pence, and half-pence, to pay that aforesaid demand, as he calls it."

"I, sir? O if I had the means!—But where's my brother?—why does he not come, and so long in Scotland? He might do something to assist us."

"Who, Reginald?—I suppose he's gone with Mr. Gilbert Greenhorn, or some such respectable person, to the Lamberton races—I have expected him this week past; but I cannot wonder that my children should neglect me as well as every other person. But I should beg your pardon, my love, who never either neglected or offended me in your life."

And kissing her cheek as she threw her arms round his neck, he experienced that consolation which a parent feels, even in the most distressed state, in the assurance that he possesses the affection of a child.

Miss Wardour took the advantage of this revulsion of feeling, to endeavour to soothe her father's mind to composure. She reminded him that he had many friends.

"I had many once," said Sir Arthur; "but of some I have exhausted their kindness with my frantic projects; others are unable to assist me—others are unwilling. It is all over with me. I only hope Reginald will take example by my folly."

"Should I not send to Monkbarns, sir?" said his daughter.

"To what purpose? He cannot lend me such a sum, and would not if he could, for he knows I am otherwise drowned in debt; and he would only give me scraps of misanthropy and quaint ends of Latin."

"But he is shrewd and sensible, and was bred to business, and, I am sure, always loved this family."

"Yes, I believe he did. It is a fine pass we are come to, when the affection of an Oldbuck is of consequence to a Wardour! But when matters come to extremity, as I suppose they presently will—it may be as well to send for him. And now go take your walk, my dear—my mind is more composed than when I had this cursed disclosure to make. You know the worst, and may daily or hourly expect it. Go take your walk—I would willingly be alone for a little while."

When Miss Wardour left the apartment, her first occupation was to avail herself of the half permission granted by her father, by despatching to Monkbarns the messenger, who, as we have already seen, met the Antiquary and his nephew on the sea-beach.

Little recking, and indeed scarce knowing, where she was wandering, chance directed her into the walk beneath the Briery Bank, as it was called. A brook, which in former days had supplied the castle-moat with water, here descended through a narrow dell, up which Miss Wardour's taste had directed a natural path, which was rendered neat and easy of ascent, without the air of being formally made and preserved. It suited well the character of the little glen, which was overhung with thickets and underwood, chiefly of larch and hazel, intermixed with the usual varieties of the thorn and brier. In this walk had passed that scene of explanation between Miss Wardour and Lovel which was overheard by old Edie Ochiltree. With a heart softened by the distress which approached her family, Miss Wardour now recalled every word and argument which Lovel had urged in support of his suit, and could not help confessing to herself, it was no small subject of pride to have inspired a young man of his talents with a passion so strong and disinterested. That he should have left the pursuit of a profession in which he was said to be rapidly rising, to bury himself in a disagreeable place like Fairport, and brood over an unrequited passion, might be ridiculed by others as romantic, but was naturally forgiven as an excess of affection by the person who was the object of his attachment. Had he possessed an independence, however moderate, or ascertained a clear and undisputed claim to the rank in society he was well qualified to adorn, she might now have had it in her power to offer her father, during his misfortunes, an asylum in an establishment of her own. These thoughts, so favourable to the absent lover, crowded in, one after the other, with such a minute recapitulation of his words, looks, and actions, as plainly intimated that his former repulse had been dictated rather by duty than inclination. Isabella was musing alternately upon this subject, and upon that of her father's misfortunes, when, as the path winded round a little hillock covered with brushwood, the old Blue-Gown suddenly met her.

With an air as if he had something important and mysterious to communicate, he doffed his bonnet, and assumed the cautious step and voice of one who would not willingly be overheard. "I hae been wishing muckle to meet wi' your leddyship—for ye ken I darena come to the house for Dousterswivel."

"I heard indeed," said Miss Wardour, dropping an alms into the bonnet—"I heard that you had done a very foolish, if not a very bad thing, Edie—and I was sorry to hear it."

"Hout, my bonny leddy—fulish? A' the world's fules—and how should auld Edie Ochiltree be aye wise?—And for the evil—let them wha deal wi' Dousterswivel tell whether he gat a grain mair than his deserts."

"That may be true, Edie, and yet," said Miss Wardour, "you may have been very wrong."

"Weel, weel, we'se no dispute that e'ennow—it's about yoursell I'm gaun to speak. Div ye ken what's hanging ower the house of Knockwinnock?"

"Great distress, I fear, Edie," answered Miss Wardour; "but I am surprised it is already so public."

"Public!—Sweepclean, the messenger, will be there the day wi' a' his tackle. I ken it frae ane o' his concurents, as they ca' them, that's warned to meet him; and they'll be about their wark belyve; whare they clip, there needs nae kame—they shear close enuegh."

"Are you sure this bad hour, Edie, is so very near?—come, I know, it will."

"It's e'en as I tell you, leddy. But dinna be cast down—there's a heaven ower your head here, as weel as in that fearful night atween the Ballyburghness and the Halket-head. D'ye think He, wha rebuked the waters, canna protect you against the wrath of men, though they be armed with human authority?"

"It is indeed all we have to trust to."

"Ye dinna ken—ye dinna ken: when the night's darkest, the dawn's nearest. If I had a gude horse, or could ride him when I had him, I reckon there wad be help yet. I trusted to hae gotten a cast wi' the Royal Charlotte, but she's coupit yonder, it's like, at Kittlebrig. There was a young gentleman on the box, and he behaved to drive; and Tam Sang, that suld hae mair sense, he behaved to let him, and the daft callant couldna tak the turn at the corner o' the brig; and od! he took the curbstane, and he's whomled her as I wad whomle a toom bicker—it was a luck I hadna gotten on the tap o' her. Sae I came down atween hope and despair, to see if ye wad send me on."

"And, Edie—where would ye go?" said the young lady.

"To Tannonburgh, my leddy" (which was the first stage from Fairport, but a good deal nearer to Knockwinnock), "and that without delay—it's a' on your ain business."

"Our business, Edie? Alas! I give you all credit for your good meaning; but"—

"There's nae *buts* about it, my leddy, for gang I maun," said the persevering Blue-Gown.

"But what is it that you would do at Tannonburgh?—or how can your going there benefit my father's affairs?"

"Indeed, my sweet leddy," said the gaberlunzie, "ye maun just trust that bit secret to auld Edie's grey pow, and ask nae questions about it. Certainly if I wad hae wared my life for you yon night, I can hae nae reason to play an ill pliskie t'ye in the day o' your distress."

"Well, Edie, follow me then," said Miss Wardour, "and I will try to get you sent to Tannonburgh."

"Mak haste then, my bonny leddy—mak haste, for the love o' goodness!"—and he continued to exhort her to expedition until they reached the Castle.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

*Let those go see who will—I like it not—
For, say he was a slave to rank and pomp,
And all the nothings he is now divorced from
By the hard doom of stern necessity:
Yet it is sad to mark his altered brow,
Where Vanity adjusts her flimsy veil
O'er the deep wrinkles of repentant anguish.
Old Play.*

When Miss Wardour arrived in the court of the Castle, she was apprized by the first glance that the visit of the officers of the law had already taken place. There was confusion, and gloom and sorrow, and curiosity among the domestics, while the retainers of the law went from place to place, making an inventory of the goods and chattels falling under their warrant of distress, or poinding, as it is called in the law of Scotland. Captain M'Intyre flew to her, as, struck dumb with the melancholy conviction of her father's ruin, she paused upon the threshold of the gateway.

"Dear Miss Wardour," he said, "do not make yourself uneasy; my uncle is coming immediately, and I am sure he will find some way to clear the house of these rascals."

"Alas! Captain M'Intyre, I fear it will be too late."

"No," answered Edie, impatiently—"could I but get to Tannonburgh. In the name of Heaven, Captain, contrive some way to get me on, and ye'll do this poor ruined family the best day's doing that has been done them since Redhand's days—for as sure as e'er an auld saw came true, Knockwinnock house and land will be lost and won this day."

"Why, what good can you do, old man?" said Hector.

But Robert, the domestic with whom Sir Arthur had been so much displeased in the morning, as if he had been watching for an opportunity to display his zeal, stepped hastily forward and said to his mistress, "If you please, ma'am, this auld man, Ochiltree, is very skeely and auld-farrant about mony things, as the diseases of cows and horse, and sic like, and I am sure be disna want to be at Tannonburgh the day for naething, since he insists on't this gate; and, if your leddyship pleases, I'll drive him there in the taxed-cart in an hour's time. I wad fain be of some use—I could bite my very tongue out when I think on this morning."

"I am obliged to you, Robert," said Miss Wardour; "and if you really think it has the least chance of being useful"—

"In the name of God," said the old man, "yoke the cart, Robie, and if I am no o' some use, less or mair, I'll gie ye leave to fling me ower Kittlebrig as ye come back again. But, O man, haste ye, for time's precious this day."

Robert looked at his mistress as she retired into the house, and seeing he was not prohibited, flew to the stable-yard, which was adjacent to the court, in order to yoke the carriage; for, though an old beggar was the personage least likely to render effectual assistance in a case of pecuniary distress, yet there was among the common people of Edie's circle, a general idea of his prudence and sagacity, which authorized Robert's conclusion that he would not so earnestly have urged the necessity of this expedition had he not been convinced of its utility. But so soon as the servant took hold of a horse to harness him for the taxed-cart, an officer touched him on the shoulder—"My friend, you must let that beast alone—he's down in the schedule."

"What!" said Robert, "am I not to take my master's horse to go my young leddy's errand?"

"You must remove nothing here," said the man of office, "or you will be liable for all consequences."

"What the devil, sir," said Hector, who having followed to examine Ochiltree more closely on the nature of his hopes and expectations, already began to bristle like one of the terriers of his own native mountains, and sought but a decent pretext for venting his displeasure, "have you the impudence to prevent the young lady's servant from obeying her orders?"

There was something in the air and tone of the young soldier, which seemed to argue that his interference was not likely to be confined to mere expostulation; and which, if it promised finally the advantages of a process of battery and deforcement, would certainly commence with the unpleasant circumstances necessary for founding such a complaint. The legal officer, confronted with him of the military, grasped with one doubtful hand the greasy bludgeon which was to enforce his authority, and with the other produced his short official baton, tipped with silver, and having a movable ring upon it—"Captain M'Intyre,—Sir, I have no quarrel with you,—but if you interrupt me in my duty, I will break the wand of peace, and declare myself deforced."

"And who the devil cares," said Hector, totally ignorant of the words of judicial action, "whether you declare yourself divorced or married? And as to breaking your wand, or breaking the peace, or whatever you call it, all I know is, that I will break your bones if you prevent the lad from harnessing the horses to obey his mistress's orders."

"I take all who stand here to witness," said the messenger, "that I showed him my blazon, and explained my character. He that will to Cupar maun to Cupar,"—and he slid his enigmatical ring from one end of the baton to the other, being the appropriate symbol of his having been forcibly interrupted in the discharge of his duty. Honest Hector, better accustomed to the artillery of the field than to that of the law, saw this mystical ceremony with great indifference; and with like unconcern beheld the messenger sit down to write out an execution of deforcement. But at this moment, to prevent the well-meaning hot-headed Highlander from running the risk of a severe penalty, the Antiquary arrived puffing and blowing, with his handkerchief crammed under his hat, and his wig upon the end of his stick.

"What the deuce is the matter here?" he exclaimed, hastily adjusting his head-gear; "I have been following you in fear of finding your idle loggerhead knocked against one rock or other, and here I find you parted with your Bucephalus, and quarrelling with Sweepclean. A messenger, Hector, is a worse foe than a *phoca*, whether it be the *phoca barbata*, or the *phoca vitulina* of your late conflict."

"D—n the *phoca*, sir," said Hector, "whether it be the one or the other—I say d—n them both particularly! I think you would not have me stand quietly by and see a scoundrel like this, because he calls himself a king's messenger, forsooth—(I hope the king has many better for his meanest errands)—insult a young lady of family and fashion like Miss Wardour?"

"Rightly argued, Hector," said the Antiquary; "but the king, like other people, has now and then shabby errands, and, in your ear, must have shabby fellows to do them. But even supposing you unacquainted with the statutes of William the Lion, in which *capite quarto versu quinto*, this crime of deforcement is termed *despectus Domini Regis*—a contempt, to wit, of the king himself, in whose name all legal diligence issues,—could you not have inferred, from the

information I took so much pains to give you to-day, that those who interrupt officers who come to execute letters of caption, are *tanquam participes criminis rebellionis*? seeing that he who aids a rebel, is himself, *quodammodo*, an accessory to rebellion—But I'll bring you out of this scrape."

He then spoke to the messenger, who, upon his arrival, had laid aside all thoughts of making a good by-job out of the deforcement, and accepted Mr. Oldbuck's assurances that the horse and taxed-cart should be safely returned in the course of two or three hours.

"Very well, sir," said the Antiquary, "since you are disposed to be so civil, you shall have another job in your own best way—a little cast of state politics—a crime punishable *per Legem Juliam*, Mr. Sweepclean—Hark thee hither."

And after a whisper of five minutes, he gave him a slip of paper, on receiving which, the messenger mounted his horse, and, with one of his assistants, rode away pretty sharply. The fellow who remained seemed to delay his operations purposely, proceeded in the rest of his duty very slowly, and with the caution and precision of one who feels himself overlooked by a skilful and severe inspector.

In the meantime, Oldbuck, taking his nephew by the arm, led him into the house, and they were ushered into the presence of Sir Arthur Wardour, who, in a flutter between wounded pride, agonized apprehension, and vain attempts to disguise both under a show of indifference, exhibited a spectacle of painful interest.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Oldbuck—always happy to see my friends in fair weather or foul," said the poor Baronet, struggling not for composure, but for gaiety—an affectation which was strongly contrasted by the nervous and protracted grasp of his hand, and the agitation of his whole demeanour—"I am happy to see you. You are riding, I see—I hope in this confusion your horses are taken good care of—I always like to have my friend's horses looked after—Egad! they will have all my care now, for you see they are like to leave me none of my own—he! he! he! eh, Mr. Oldbuck?"

This attempt at a jest was attended by a hysterical giggle, which poor Sir Arthur intended should sound as an indifferent laugh.

"You know I never ride, Sir Arthur," said the Antiquary.

"I beg your pardon; but sure I saw your nephew arrive on horseback a short time since. We must look after officers' horses, and his was as handsome a grey charger as I have seen."

Sir Arthur was about to ring the bell, when Mr. Oldbuck said, "My nephew came on your own grey horse, Sir Arthur."

"Mine!" said the poor Baronet; "mine was it? then the sun had been in my eyes. Well, I'm not worthy having a horse any longer, since I don't know my own when I see him."

"Good Heaven!" thought Oldbuck, "how is this man altered from the formal stolidity of his usual manner!—he grows wanton under adversity—*Sed pereunti mille figurae*."—He then proceeded aloud—"Sir Arthur, we must necessarily speak a little on business."

"To be sure," said Sir Arthur; "but it was so good that I should not know the horse I have ridden these five years—ha! ha! ha!"

"Sir Arthur," said the Antiquary, "don't let us waste time which is precious; we shall have, I hope, many better seasons for jesting—*desipere in loco* is the maxim of Horace. I more than suspect this has been brought on by the villany of Dousterswivel."

"Don't mention his name, sir!" said Sir Arthur; and his manner entirely changed from a fluttered affectation of gaiety to all the agitation of fury; his eyes sparkled, his mouth foamed, his hands were clenched—"don't mention his name, sir," he vociferated, "unless you would see me go mad in your presence! That I should have been such a miserable dolt—such an infatuated idiot—such a beast endowed with thrice a beast's stupidity, to be led and driven and spur-galled by such a rascal, and under such ridiculous pretences!—Mr. Oldbuck, I could tear myself when I think of it."

"I only meant to say," answered the Antiquary, "that this fellow is like to meet his reward; and I cannot but think we shall frighten something out of him that may be of service to you. He has certainly had some unlawful correspondence on the other side of the water."

"Has he?—has he?—has he indeed?—then d—n the house-hold goods, horses, and so forth—I will go to prison a happy man, Mr. Oldbuck. I hope in heaven there's a reasonable chance of his being hanged?"

"Why, pretty fair," said Oldbuck, willing to encourage this diversion, in hopes it might mitigate the feelings which seemed like to upset the poor man's understanding; "honest men have stretched a rope, or the law has been sadly cheated—But this unhappy business of yours—can nothing be done? Let me see the charge."

He took the papers; and, as he read them, his countenance grew hopelessly dark and disconsolate. Miss Wardour had by this time entered the apartment, and fixing her eyes on Mr. Oldbuck, as if she meant to read her fate in his looks, easily perceived, from the change in his eye, and the dropping of his nether-jaw, how little was to be hoped.

"We are then irremediably ruined, Mr. Oldbuck?" said the young lady.

"Irremediably?—I hope not—but the instant demand is very large, and others will, doubtless, pour in."

"Ay, never doubt that, Monkbarns," said Sir Arthur; "where the slaughter is, the eagles will be gathered together. I am like a sheep which I have seen fall down a precipice, or drop down from sickness—if you had not seen a single raven or hooded crow for a fortnight before, he will not lie on the heather ten minutes before half-a-dozen will be picking out his eyes (and he drew his hand over his own), and tearing at his heartstrings before the poor devil has time to die. But that d—d long-scented vulture that dogged me so long—you have got him fast, I hope?"

"Fast enough," said the Antiquary; "the gentleman wished to take the wings of the morning, and bolt in the what d'ye call it,—the coach and four there. But he would have found twigs limed for him at Edinburgh. As it is, he never got so far, for the coach being overturned—as how could it go safe with such a Jonah?—he has had an infernal tumble, is carried into a cottage near Kittlebrig, and to prevent all possibility of escape, I have sent your friend Sweepclean to bring him back to Fairport *in nomine regis*, or to act as his sick-nurse at Kittlebrig, as is most fitting. And now, Sir Arthur, permit me to have some conversation with you on the present unpleasant state of your affairs, that we may see what can be done for their extrication;" and the Antiquary led the way into the library, followed by the unfortunate gentleman.

They had been shut up together for about two hours, when Miss Wardour interrupted them with her cloak on as if prepared for a journey. Her countenance was very pale, yet expressive of the composure which characterized her disposition.

"The messenger is returned, Mr. Oldbuck."

"Returned?—What the devil! he has not let the fellow go?"

"No—I understand he has carried him to confinement; and now he is returned to attend my father, and says he can wait no longer."

A loud wrangling was now heard on the staircase, in which the voice of Hector predominated. "You an officer, sir, and these ragamuffins a party! a parcel of beggarly tailor fellows—tell yourselves off by nine, and we shall know your effective strength."

The grumbling voice of the man of law was then heard indistinctly muttering a reply, to which Hector retorted—"Come, come, sir, this won't do;—march your party, as you call them, out of this house directly, or I'll send you and them to the right about presently."

"The devil take Hector," said the Antiquary, hastening to the scene of action; "his Highland blood is up again, and we shall have him fighting a duel with the bailiff. Come, Mr. Sweepclean, you must give us a little time—I know you would not wish to hurry Sir Arthur."

"By no means, sir," said the messenger, putting his hat off, which he had thrown on to testify defiance of Captain M'Intyre's threats; "but your nephew, sir, holds very uncivil language, and I have borne too much of it already; and I am not justified in leaving my prisoner any longer after the instructions I received, unless I am to get payment of the sums contained in my diligence." And he held out the caption, pointing with the awful truncheon, which he held in his right hand, to the formidable line of figures jotted upon the back thereof.

Hector, on the other hand, though silent from respect to his uncle, answered this gesture by shaking his clenched fist at the messenger with a frown of Highland wrath.

"Foolish boy, be quiet," said Oldbuck, "and come with me into the room—the man is doing his miserable duty, and you will only make matters worse by opposing him.—I fear, Sir Arthur, you must accompany this man to Fairport; there is no help for it in the first instance—I will accompany you, to consult what further can be done—My nephew will escort Miss Wardour to Monkbnarns, which I hope she will make her residence until these unpleasant matters are settled."

"I go with my father, Mr. Oldbuck," said Miss Wardour firmly—"I have prepared his clothes and my own—I suppose we shall have the use of the carriage?"

"Anything in reason, madam," said the messenger; "I have ordered it out, and it's at the door—I will go on the box with the coachman—I have no desire to intrude—but two of the concurrents must attend on horseback."

"I will attend too," said Hector, and he ran down to secure a horse for himself.

"We must go then," said the Antiquary.

"To jail," said the Baronet, sighing involuntarily. "And what of that?" he resumed, in a tone affectedly cheerful—"it is only a house we can't get out of, after all—Suppose a fit of the gout, and Knockwinnock would be the same—Ay, ay, Monkbnarns—we'll call it a fit of the gout without the d—d pain."

But his eyes swelled with tears as he spoke, and his faltering accent marked how much this assumed gaiety cost him. The Antiquary wrung his hand, and, like the Indian Banians, who drive the real terms of an important bargain by signs, while they are apparently talking of indifferent matters, the hand of Sir Arthur, by its convulsive return of the grasp, expressed his sense of gratitude to his friend, and the real state of his internal agony.—They stepped slowly down the magnificent staircase—every well-known object seeming to the unfortunate father and daughter to assume a more prominent and distinct appearance than usual, as if to press themselves on their notice for the last time.

At the first landing-place, Sir Arthur made an agonized pause; and as he observed the Antiquary look at him anxiously, he said with assumed dignity—"Yes, Mr. Oldbuck, the descendant of an ancient line—the representative of Richard Redhand and Gamelyn de Guardover, may be pardoned a sigh when he leaves the castle of his fathers thus poorly escorted. When I was sent to the Tower with my late father, in the year 1745, it was upon a charge becoming our birth—upon an accusation of high treason, Mr. Oldbuck;—we were escorted from Highgate by a troop of life-guards, and committed upon a secretary of state's warrant; and now, here I am, in my old age, dragged from my household by a miserable creature like that" (pointing to the messenger), "and for a paltry concern of pounds, shillings, and pence."

"At least," said Oldbuck, "you have now the company of a dutiful daughter, and a sincere friend, if you will permit me to say so, and that may be some consolation, even without the certainty that there can be no hanging, drawing, or quartering, on the present occasion. But I hear that choleric boy as loud as ever. I hope to God he has got into no new broil!—it was an accursed chance that brought him here at all."

In fact, a sudden clamour, in which the loud voice and somewhat northern accent of Hector was again preeminently distinguished, broke off this conversation. The cause we must refer to the next CHAPTER.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

*Fortune, you say, flies from us—She but circles,
Like the fleet sea-bird round the fowler's skiff,—
Lost in the mist one moment, and the next
Brushing the white sail with her whiter wing,
As if to court the aim.—Experience watches,
And has her on the wheel—
Old Play.*

The shout of triumph in Hector's warlike tones was not easily distinguished from that of battle. But as he rushed up stairs with a packet in his hand, exclaiming, "Long life to an old soldier! here comes Edie with a whole budget of good news!" it became obvious that his present cause of clamour was of an agreeable nature. He delivered the letter to Oldbuck, shook Sir Arthur heartily by the hand, and wished Miss Wardour joy, with all the frankness of Highland congratulation. The messenger, who had a kind of instinctive terror for Captain M'Intyre, drew towards his prisoner, keeping an eye of caution on the soldier's motions.

"Don't suppose I shall trouble myself about you, you dirty fellow," said the soldier; "there's a guinea for the fright I have given you; and here comes an old *forty-two* man, who is a fitter match for you than I am."

The messenger (one of those dogs who are not too scornful to eat dirty puddings) caught in his hand the guinea which Hector chucked at his face; and abode warily and carefully the turn which matters were now to take. All voices meanwhile were loud in inquiries, which no one was in a hurry to answer.

"What is the matter, Captain M'Intyre?" said Sir Arthur.

"Ask old Edie," said Hector;—"I only know all's safe and well."

"What is all this, Edie?" said Miss Wardour to the mendicant.

"Your leddyship maun ask Monkbnarns, for he has gotten the yepistolary correspondensh."

"God save the king!" exclaimed the Antiquary at the first glance at the contents of his packet, and, surprised at once out of decorum, philosophy, and phlegm, he skimmed his cocked hat in the air, from which it descended not again, being caught in its fall by a branch of the chandelier. He next, looking joyously round, laid a grasp on his wig, which he perhaps would have sent after the beaver, had not Edie stopped his hand, exclaiming "Lordsake! he's gaun gyte!—mind Caxon's no here to repair the damage."

Every person now assailed the Antiquary, clamouring to know the cause of so sudden a transport, when, somewhat ashamed of his rapture, he fairly turned tail, like a fox at the cry of a pack of hounds, and ascending the stair by two steps at a time, gained the upper landing-place, where, turning round, he addressed the astonished audience as follows:—

"My good friends, *favete linguis*—To give you information, I must first, according to logicians, be possessed of it myself; and, therefore, with your leaves, I will retire into the library to examine these papers—Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour will have the goodness to step into the parlour—Mr. Sweepclean, *secede paulisper*, or, in your own language, grant us a supersedere of diligence for five minutes—Hector, draw off your forces, and make your bear-garden flourish elsewhere—and, finally, be all of good cheer till my return, which will be *instanter*."

The contents of the packet were indeed so little expected, that the Antiquary might be pardoned, first his ecstasy, and next his desire of delaying to communicate the intelligence they conveyed, until it was arranged and digested in his own mind.

Within the envelope was a letter addressed to Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq. of Monkbnarns, of the following purport:—

"Dear Sir,—To you, as my father's proved and valued friend, I venture to address myself, being detained here by military duty of a very pressing nature. You must by this time be acquainted with the entangled state of our affairs; and I know it will give you great pleasure to learn, that I am as fortunately as unexpectedly placed in a situation to give effectual assistance for extricating them. I understand Sir Arthur is threatened with severe measures by persons who acted formerly as his agents; and, by advice of a creditable man of business here, I have procured the enclosed writing, which I understand will stop their proceedings until their claim shall be legally discussed, and brought down to its proper amount. I also enclose bills to the amount of one thousand pounds to pay any other pressing demands, and request of your friendship to apply them according to your discretion. You will be surprised I give you this trouble, when it would seem more natural to address my father directly in his own affairs. But I have yet had no assurance that his eyes are opened to the character of a person against whom you have often, I know, warned him, and whose baneful influence has been the occasion of these distresses. And as I owe the means of relieving Sir Arthur to the generosity of a matchless friend, it is my duty to take the most certain measures for the supplies being devoted to the purpose for which they were destined,—and

I know your wisdom and kindness will see that it is done. My friend, as he claims an interest in your regard, will explain some views of his own in the enclosed letter. The state of the post-office at Fairport being rather notorious, I must send this letter to Tannonburgh; but the old man Ochiltree, whom particular circumstances have recommended as trustworthy, has information when the packet is likely to reach that place, and will take care to forward it. I expect to have soon an opportunity to apologize in person for the trouble I now give, and have the honour to be your very faithful servant,
"Reginald Gamelyn Wardour." "Edinburgh, 6th August, 179-."

The Antiquary hastily broke the seal of the enclosure, the contents of which gave him equal surprise and pleasure. When he had in some measure composed himself after such unexpected tidings, he inspected the other papers carefully, which all related to business—put the bills into his pocket-book, and wrote a short acknowledgment to be despatched by that day's post, for he was extremely methodical in money matters—and lastly, fraught with all the importance of disclosure, he descended to the parlour.

"Sweepclean," said he, as he entered, to the officer who stood respectfully at the door, "you must sweep yourself clean out of Knockwinnock Castle, with all your followers, tag-rag and bob-tail. Seest thou this paper, man?"

"A sist on a bill o' suspension," said the messenger, with a disappointed look;—"I thought it would be a queer thing if ultimate diligence was to be done against sic a gentleman as Sir Arthur—Weel, sir, I'll go my ways with my party—And who's to pay my charges?"

"They who employed thee," replied Oldbuck, "as thou full well dost know.—But here comes another express: this is a day of news, I think."

This was Mr. Mailsetter on his mare from Fairport, with a letter for Sir Arthur, another to the messenger, both of which, he said, he was directed to forward instantly. The messenger opened his, observing that Greenhorn and Grinderson were good enough men for his expenses, and here was a letter from them desiring him to stop the diligence. Accordingly, he immediately left the apartment, and staying no longer than to gather his posse together, he did then, in the phrase of Hector, who watched his departure as a jealous mastiff eyes the retreat of a repulsed beggar, evacuate Flanders.

Sir Arthur's letter was from Mr. Greenhorn, and a curiosity in its way. We give it, with the worthy Baronet's comments.

"Sir—[Oh! I am dear sir no longer; folks are only dear to Messrs. Greenhorn and Grinderson when they are in adversity]—Sir, I am much concerned to learn, on my return from the country, where I was called on particular business [a bet on the sweepstakes, I suppose], that my partner had the impropriety, in my absence, to undertake the concerns of Messrs. Goldiebirds in preference to yours, and had written to you in an unbecoming manner. I beg to make my most humble apology, as well as Mr. Grindersons—[come, I see he can write for himself and partner too]—and trust it is impossible you can think me forgetful of, or ungrateful for, the constant patronage which my family [his family! curse him for a puppy!] have uniformly experienced from that of Knockwinnock. I am sorry to find, from an interview I had this day with Mr. Wardour, that he is much irritated, and, I must own, with apparent reason. But in order to remedy as much as in me lies the mistake of which he complains [pretty mistake, indeed! to clap his patron into jail], I have sent this express to discharge all proceedings against your person or property; and at the same time to transmit my respectful apology. I have only to add, that Mr. Grinderson is of opinion, that if restored to your confidence, he could point out circumstances connected with Messrs. Goldiebirds' present claim which would greatly reduce its amount [so, so, willing to play the rogue on either side]; and that there is not the slightest hurry in settling the balance of your accompt with us; and that I am, for Mr. G. as well as myself, Dear Sir [O ay, he has written himself into an approach to familiarity], your much obliged and most humble servant,
"Gilbert Greenhorn."

"Well said, Mr. Gilbert Greenhorn," said Monkbarns; "I see now there is some use in having two attorneys in one firm. Their movements resemble those of the man and woman in a Dutch baby-house. When it is fair weather with the client, out comes the gentleman partner to fawn like a spaniel; when it is foul, forth bolts the operative brother to pin like a bull-dog. Well, I thank God that my man of business still wears an equilateral cocked hat, has a house in the Old Town, is as much afraid of a horse as I am myself, plays at golf of a Saturday, goes to the kirk of a Sunday, and, in respect he has no partner, hath only his own folly to apologize for."

"There are some writers very honest fellows," said Hector; "I should like to hear any one say that my cousin, Donald M'Intyre, Strathtudlem's seventh son (the other six are in the army), is not as honest a fellow"—

"No doubt, no doubt, Hector, all the M'Intyres are so; they have it by patent, man—But I was going to say, that in a profession where unbounded trust is necessarily reposed, there is nothing surprising that fools should neglect it in their idleness, and tricksters abuse it in their knavery. But it is the more to the honour of those (and I will vouch for many) who unite integrity with skill and attention, and walk honourably upright where there are so many pitfalls and stumbling-blocks for those of a different character. To such men their fellow citizens may safely entrust the care of protecting their patrimonial rights, and their country the more sacred charge of her laws and privileges."

"They are best aff, however, that hae least to do with them," said Ochiltree, who had stretched his neck into the parlour door; for the general confusion of the family not having yet subsided, the domestics, like waves after the fall of a hurricane, had not yet exactly regained their due limits, but were roaming wildly through the house.

"Aha, old Truepenny, art thou there?" said the Antiquary. "Sir Arthur, let me bring in the messenger of good luck, though he is but a lame one. You talked of the raven that scented out the slaughter from afar; but here's a blue pigeon (somewhat of the oldest and toughest, I grant) who smelled the good news six or seven miles off, flew thither in the taxed-cart, and returned with the olive branch."

"Ye owe it o' to puir Robie that drave me;—puir fallow," said the beggar, "he doubts he's in disgrace wi' my leddy and Sir Arthur."

Robert's repentant and bashful face was seen over the mendicant's shoulder.

"In disgrace with me?" said Sir Arthur—"how so?"—for the irritation into which he had worked himself on occasion of the toast had been long forgotten. "O, I recollect—Robert, I was angry, and you were wrong;—go about your work, and never answer a master that speaks to you in a passion."

"Nor any one else," said the Antiquary; "for a soft answer turneth away wrath."

"And tell your mother, who is so ill with the rheumatism, to come down to the housekeeper to-morrow," said Miss Wardour, "and we will see what can be of service to her."

"God bless your leddyship," said poor Robert, "and his honour Sir Arthur, and the young laird, and the house of Knockwinnock in a' its branches, far and near!—it's been a kind and gude house to the puir this mony hundred years."

"There"—said the Antiquary to Sir Arthur—"we won't dispute—but there you see the gratitude of the poor people naturally turns to the civil virtues of your family. You don't hear them talk of Redhand, or Hell-in-Harness. For me, I must say, *Odi accipitrem qui semper vivit in armis*—so let us eat and drink in peace, and be joyful, Sir Knight."

A table was quickly covered in the parlour, where the party sat joyously down to some refreshment. At the request of Oldbuck, Edie Ochiltree was permitted to sit by the sideboard in a great leathern chair, which was placed in some measure behind a screen.

"I accede to this the more readily," said Sir Arthur, "because I remember in my fathers days that chair was occupied by Ailshie Gourlay, who, for aught I know, was the last privileged fool, or jester, maintained by any family of distinction in Scotland."

"Aweel, Sir Arthur," replied the beggar, who never hesitated an instant between his friend and his jest, "mony a wise man sits in a fule's seat, and mony a fule in a wise man's, especially in families o' distinction."

Miss Wardour, fearing the effect of this speech (however worthy of Ailsbie Gourlay, or any other privileged jester) upon the nerves of her father, hastened to inquire whether ale and beef should not be distributed to the servants and people whom the news had assembled round the Castle.

"Surely, my love," said her father; "when was it ever otherwise in our families when a siege had been raised?"

"Ay, a siege laid by Saunders Sweepclean the bailiff, and raised by Edie Ochiltree the gaberlunzie, *par nobile fratrum*," said Oldbuck, "and well pitted against each other in respectability. But never mind, Sir Arthur— these are such sieges and such reliefs as our time of day admits of—and our escape is not less worth commemorating in a glass of this excellent wine—Upon my credit, it is Burgundy, I think."

"Were there anything better in the cellar," said Miss Wardour, "it would be all too little to regale you after your friendly exertions."

"Say you so?" said the Antiquary: "why, then, a cup of thanks to you, my fair enemy, and soon may you be besieged as ladies love best to be, and sign terms of capitulation in the chapel of Saint Winnox!"

Miss Wardour blushed—Hector coloured, and then grew pale.

Sir Arthur answered, "My daughter is much obliged to you, Monkbarns; but unless you'll accept of her yourself, I really do not know where a poor knight's daughter is to seek for an alliance in these mercenary times."

"Me, mean ye, Sir Arthur? No, not I! I will claim privilege of the duello, and, as being unable to encounter my fair enemy myself, I will appear by my champion—But of this matter hereafter. What do you find in the papers there, Hector, that you hold your head down over them as if your nose were bleeding?"

"Nothing particular, sir; but only that, as my arm is now almost quite well, I think I shall relieve you of my company in a day or two, and go to Edinburgh. I see Major Neville is arrived there. I should like to see him."

"Major whom?" said his uncle.

"Major Neville, sir," answered the young soldier.

"And who the devil is Major Neville?" demanded the Antiquary.

"O, Mr. Oldbuck," said Sir Arthur, "you must remember his name frequently in the newspapers—a very distinguished young officer indeed. But I am happy to say that Mr. M'Intyre need not leave Monkbarns to see him, for my son writes that the Major is to come with him to Knockwinnock, and I need not say how happy I shall be to make the young gentlemen acquainted,—unless, indeed, they are known to each other already."

"No, not personally," answered Hector, "but I have had occasion to hear a good deal of him, and we have several mutual friends—your son being one of them. But I must go to Edinburgh; for I see my uncle is beginning to grow tired of me, and I am afraid"—

"That you will grow tired of him?" interrupted Oldbuck,— "I fear that's past praying for. But you have forgotten that the ecstatic twelfth of August approaches, and that you are engaged to meet one of Lord Glenallan's gamekeepers, God knows where, to persecute the peaceful feathered creation."

"True, true, uncle—I had forgot that," exclaimed the volatile Hector; "but you said something just now that put everything out of my head."

"An it like your honours," said old Edie, thrusting his white head from behind the screen, where he had been plentifully regaling himself with ale and cold meat—"an it like your honours, I can tell ye something that will keep the Captain wi' us amais as weel as the pouting—Hear ye na the French are coming?"

"The French, you blockhead?" answered Oldbuck—"Bah!"

"I have not had time," said Sir Arthur Wardour, "to look over my lieutenancy correspondence for the week—indeed, I generally make a rule to read it only on Wednesdays, except in pressing cases,—for I do everything by method; but from the glance I took of my letters, I observed some alarm was entertained."

"Alarm?" said Edie, "troth there's alarm, for the provost's gar'd the beacon light on the Halket-head be sorted up (that suld hae been sorted half a year syne) in an unco hurry, and the council hae named nae less a man than auld Caxon himsell to watch the light. Some say it was out o' compliment to Lieutenant Taffril,—for it's neist to certain that he'll marry Jenny Caxon,—some say it's to please your honour and Monkbarns that wear wigs—and some say there's some auld story about a periwig that ane o' the bailies got and neer paid for—Onyway, there he is, sitting cockit up like a skart upon the tap o' the craig, to skirl when foul weather comes."

"On mine honour, a pretty warder," said Monkbarns; "and what's my wig to do all the while?"

"I asked Caxon that very question," answered Ochiltree, "and he said he could look in ilka morning, and gie't a touch afore he gaed to his bed, for there's another man to watch in the day-time, and Caxon says he'll friz your honour's wig as weel sleeping as wauking."

This news gave a different turn to the conversation, which ran upon national defence, and the duty of fighting for the land we live in, until it was time to part. The Antiquary and his nephew resumed their walk homeward, after parting from Knockwinnock with the warmest expressions of mutual regard, and an agreement to meet again as soon as possible.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

*Nay, if she love me not, I care not for her:
Shall I look pale because the maiden blooms
Or sigh because she smiles, and smiles on others
Not I, by Heaven!—I hold my peace too dear,
To let it, like the plume upon her cap,
Shake at each nod that her caprice shall dictate.*

Old Play.

"Hector," said his uncle to Captain M'Intyre, in the course of their walk homeward, "I am sometimes inclined to suspect that, in one respect, you are a fool."

"If you only think me so in *one* respect, sir, I am sure you do me more grace than I expected or deserve."

"I mean in one particular *par excellence*," answered the Antiquary. "I have sometimes thought that you have cast your eyes upon Miss Wardour."

"Well, sir," said M'Intyre, with much composure.

"Well, sir," echoed his uncle—"Deuce take the fellow! he answers me as if it were the most reasonable thing in the world, that he, a captain in the army, and nothing at all besides, should marry the daughter of a baronet."

"I presume to think, sir," said the young Highlander, "there would be no degradation on Miss Wardour's part in point of family."

"O, Heaven forbid we should come on that topic!—No, no, equal both—both on the table-land of gentility, and qualified to look down on every *roturier* in Scotland."

"And in point of fortune we are pretty even, since neither of us have got any," continued Hector. "There may be an error, but I cannot plead guilty to presumption."

"But here lies the error, then, if you call it so," replied his uncle: "she won't have you, Hector."

"Indeed, sir?"

"It is very sure, Hector; and to make it double sure, I must inform you that she likes another man. She misunderstood some words I once said to her, and I have since been able to guess at the interpretation she put on them. At the time I was unable to account for her hesitation and blushing; but, my poor Hector, I now understand them as a death-signal to your hopes and pretensions. So I advise you to beat your retreat and draw off your forces as well as you can, for the fort is too well garrisoned for you to storm it."

"I have no occasion to beat any retreat, uncle," said Hector, holding himself very upright, and marching with a sort of dogged and offended solemnity; "no man needs to retreat that has never advanced. There are women in Scotland besides Miss Wardour, of as good family"—

"And better taste," said his uncle; "doubtless there are, Hector; and though I cannot say but that she is one of the most accomplished as well as sensible girls I have seen, yet I doubt, much of her merit would be cast away on you. A showy figure, now, with two cross feathers above her noddle—one green, one blue; who would wear a riding-habit of the regimental complexion, drive a gig one day, and the next review the regiment on the grey trotting pony which dragged that vehicle, *hoc erat in votis*;—these are the qualities that would subdue you, especially if she had a taste for natural history, and loved a specimen of a *phoca*."

"It's a little hard, sir," said Hector, "I must have that cursed seal thrown into my face on all occasions—but I care little about it—and I shall not break my heart for Miss Wardour. She is free to choose for herself, and I wish her all happiness."

"Magnanimously resolved, thou prop of Troy! Why, Hector, I was afraid of a scene. Your sister told me you were desperately in love with Miss Wardour."

"Sir," answered the young man, "you would not have me desperately in love with a woman that does not care about me?"

"Well, nephew," said the Antiquary, more seriously, "there is doubtless much sense in what you say; yet I would have given a great deal, some twenty or twenty-five years since, to have been able to think as you do."

"Anybody, I suppose, may think as they please on such subjects," said Hector.

"Not according to the old school," said Oldbuck; "but, as I said before, the practice of the modern seems in this case the most prudential, though, I think, scarcely the most interesting. But tell me your ideas now on this prevailing subject of an invasion. The cry is still, They come."

Hector, swallowing his mortification, which he was peculiarly anxious to conceal from his uncle's satirical observation, readily entered into a conversation which was to turn the Antiquary's thoughts from Miss Wardour and the seal. When they reached Monkbarns, the communicating to the ladies the events which had taken place at the castle, with the counter-information of how long dinner had waited before the womankind had ventured to eat it in the Antiquary's absence, averted these delicate topics of discussion.

The next morning the Antiquary arose early, and, as Caxon had not yet made his appearance, he began mentally to feel the absence of the petty news and small talk of which the ex-peruquier was a faithful reporter, and which habit had made as necessary to the Antiquary as his occasional pinch of snuff, although he held, or affected to hold, both to be of the same intrinsic value. The feeling of vacuity peculiar to such a deprivation, was alleviated by the appearance of old Ochiltree, sauntering beside the clipped yew and holly hedges, with the air of a person quite at home. Indeed, so familiar had he been of late, that even Juno did not bark at him, but contented herself with watching him with a close and vigilant eye. Our Antiquary stepped out in his night-gown, and instantly received and returned his greeting.

"They are coming now, in good earnest, Monkbarns. I just cam frae Fairport to bring ye the news, and then I'll step away back again. The Search has just come into the bay, and they say she's been chased by a French fleet."

"The Search?" said Oldbuck, reflecting a moment. "Oho!"

"Ay, ay, Captain Taffril's gun-brig, the Search."

"What? any relation to *Search, No. II.*?" said Oldbuck, catching at the light which the name of the vessel seemed to throw on the mysterious chest of treasure.

The mendicant, like a man detected in a frolic, put his bonnet before his face, yet could not help laughing heartily.—"The deil's in you, Monkbarns, for garring odds and evens meet. Wha thought ye wad hae laid that and that thegither? Od, I am clean catch'd now."

"I see it all," said Oldbuck, "as plain as the legend on a medal of high preservation—the box in which the' bullion was found belonged to the gun-brig, and the treasure to my phoenix?"—(Edie nodded assent),—"and was buried there that Sir Arthur might receive relief in his difficulties?"

"By me," said Edie, "and twa o' the brig's men—but they didna ken its contents, and thought it some bit smuggling concern o' the Captain's. I watched day and night till I saw it in the right hand; and then, when that German deevil was glowering at the lid o' the kist (they liked mutton weel that licked where the yowe lay), I think some Scottish deevil put it into my head to play him yon ither cantrip. Now, ye see, if I had said mair or less to Bailie Littlejohn, I behoved till hae come out wi' a' this story; and vexed would Mr. Lovel hae been to have it brought to light—sae I thought I would stand to onything rather than that."

"I must say he has chosen his confidant well," said Oldbuck, "though somewhat strangely."

"I'll say this for mysell, Monkbarns," answered the mendicant, "that I am the fittest man in the haill country to trust wi' siller, for I neither want it, nor wish for it, nor could use it if I had it. But the lad hadna muckle choice in the matter, for he thought he was leaving the country for ever (I trust he's mistaen in that though); and the night was set in when we learned, by a strange chance, Sir Arthur's sair distress, and Lovel was obliged to be on board as the day dawned. But five nights afterwards the brig stood into the bay, and I met the boat by appointment, and we buried the treasure where ye fand it."

"This was a very romantic, foolish exploit," said Oldbuck: "why not trust me, or any other friend?"

"The blood o' your sister's son," replied Edie, "was on his hands, and him maybe dead outright—what time had he to take counsel?—or how could he ask it of you, by onybody?"

"You are right. But what if Dousterswivel had come before you?"

"There was little fear o' his coming there without Sir Arthur: he had gotten a sair gliff the night afore, and never intended to look near the place again, unless he had been brought there sting and ling. He ken'd weel the first pose was o' his ain hiding, and how could he expect a second? He just havered on about it to make the mair o' Sir Arthur."

"Then how," said Oldbuck, "should Sir Arthur have come there unless the German had brought him?"

"Umph!" answered Edie drily. "I had a story about Misticot wad hae brought him forty miles, or you either. Besides, it was to be thought he would be for visiting the place he fand the first siller in—he ken'd na the secret o' that job. In short, the siller being in this shape, Sir Arthur in utter difficulties, and Lovel determined he should never ken the hand that helped him,—for that was what he insisted maist upon,—we couldna think o' a better way to fling the gear in his gate, though we simmered it and wintered it e'er sae lang. And if by ony queer mischance Doustercivil had got his claws on't, I was instantly to hae informed you or the Sheriff o' the haill story."

"Well, notwithstanding all these wise precautions, I think your contrivance succeeded better than such a clumsy one deserved, Edie. But how the deuce came Lovel by such a mass of silver ingots?"

"That's just what I canna tell ye—But they were put on board wi' his things at Fairport, it's like, and we stowed them into ane o' the ammunition-boxes o' the brig, baith for concealment and convenience of carriage."

"Lord!" said Oldbuck, his recollection recurring to the earlier part of his acquaintance with Lovel; "and this young fellow, who was putting hundreds on so strange a hazard, I must be recommending a subscription to him, and paying his bill at the Ferry! I never will pay any person's bill again, that's certain.—And you kept up a constant correspondence with Lovel, I suppose?"

"I just gat ae bit scrape o' a pen frae him, to say there wad, as yesterday fell, be a packet at Tannonburgh, wi' letters o' great consequence to the Knockwinnock folk; for they jaloused the opening of our letters at Fairport—And that's a's true; I hear Mrs. Mailsetter is to lose her office for looking after other folk's business and neglecting her ain."

"And what do you expect now, Edie, for being the adviser, and messenger, and guard, and confidential person in all these matters?"

"Deil haet do I expect—excepting that a' the gentles will come to the gaberlunzie's burial; and maybe ye'll carry the head yoursell, as ye did puir Steenie Mucklebackit's.—What trouble was't to me? I was ganging about at ony rate—Oh, but I was blythe when I got out of Prison, though; for I thought, what if that weary letter should come when I am closed up here like an oyster, and a' should gang wrang for want o't? and whiles I thought I maun mak a clean breast and tell you a' about it; but then I couldna weel do that without contravening Mr. Lovel's positive orders; and I reckon he had to see somebody at Edinburgh afore he could do what he wussed to do for Sir Arthur and his family."

"Well, and to your public news, Edie—So they are still coming are they?"

"Troth they say sae, sir; and there's come down strict orders for the forces and volunteers to be alert; and there's a clever young officer to come here forthwith, to look at our means o' defence—I saw the Bailies lass cleaning his belts and white breeks—I gae her a hand, for ye maun think she wasna ower clever at it, and sae I gat a' the news for my pains."

"And what think you, as an old soldier?"

"Troth I kenna—an they come so mony as they speak o', they'll be odds against us. But there's mony yauld chields amang thae volunteers; and I mauna say muckle about them that's no weel and no very able, because I am something that gate mysel—but we'se do our best."

"What! so your martial spirit is rising again, Edie?"

Even in our ashes glow their wonted fires!

I would not have thought you, Edie, had so much to fight for?"

"Me no muckle to fight for, sir?—isna there the country to fight for, and the burnsides that I gang daundering beside, and the hearths o'the gudewives that gie me my bit bread, and the bits o' weans that come toddling to play wi' me when I come about a landward town?—Deil!" he continued, grasping his pike-staff with great emphasis, "an I had as gude pith as I hae gude-will, and a gude cause, I should gie some o' them a day's kemping."

"Bravo, bravo, Edie! The country's in little ultimate danger, when the beggar's as ready to fight for his dish as the laird for his land."

Their further conversation reverted to the particulars of the night passed by the mendicant and Lovel in the ruins of St. Ruth; by the details of which the Antiquary was highly amused.

"I would have given a guinea," he said, "to have seen the scoundrelly German under the agonies of those terrors, which it is part of his own quackery to inspire into others; and trembling alternately for the fury of his patron, and the apparition of some hobgoblin."

"Troth," said the beggar, "there was time for him to be cowed; for ye wad hae thought the very spirit of Hell-in-Harness had taken possession o' the body o' Sir Arthur. But what will come o' the land-louper?"

"I have had a letter this morning, from which I understand he has acquitted you of the charge he brought against you, and offers to make such discoveries as will render the settlement of Sir Arthur's affairs a more easy task than we apprehended—So writes the Sheriff; and adds, that he has given some private information of importance to Government, in consideration of which, I understand he will be sent back to play the knave in his own country."

"And a' the bonny engines, and wheels, and the coves, and sheughs, doun at Glenwithershins yonder, what's to come o' them?" said Edie.

"I hope the men, before they are dispersed, will make a bonfire of their gimcracks, as an army destroy their artillery when forced to raise a siege. And as for the holes, Edie, I abandon them as rat-traps, for the benefit of the next wise men who may choose to drop the substance to snatch at a shadow."

"Hech, sirs! guide us a'! to burn the engines? that's a great waste—Had ye na better try to get back part o' your hundred pounds wi' the sale o' the materials?" he continued, with a tone of affected condolence.

"Not a farthing," said the Antiquary, peevishly, taking a turn from him, and making a step or two away. Then returning, half-smiling at his own pettishness, he said, "Get thee into the house, Edie, and remember my counsel, never speak to me about a mine, nor to my nephew Hector about a *phoca*, that is a sealgh, as you call it."

"I maun be ganging my ways back to Fairport," said the wanderer; "I want to see what they're saying there about the invasion;—but I'll mind what your honour says, no to speak to you about a sealgh, or to the Captain about the hundred pounds that you gied to Douster"—

"Confound thee!—I desired thee not to mention that to me."

"Dear me!" said Edie, with affected surprise; "weel, I thought there was naething but what your honour could hae studden in the way o' agreeable conversation, unless it was about the Praetorian yonder, or the bodle that the packman sauld to ye for an auld coin."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" said the Antiquary, turning from him hastily, and retreating into the house.

The mendicant looked after him a moment, and with a chuckling laugh, such as that with which a magpie or parrot applauds a successful exploit of mischief, he resumed once more the road to Fairport. His habits had given him a sort of restlessness, much increased by the pleasure he took in gathering news; and in a short time he had regained the town which he left in the morning, for no reason that he knew himself, unless just to "hae a bit crack wi' Monkbarns."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

Red glared the beacon on Pownell

On Skiddaw there were three;

The bugle horn on moor and fell

Was heard continually.

James Hogg.

The watch who kept his watch on the hill, and looked towards Birnam, probably conceived himself dreaming when he first beheld the fated grove put itself into motion for its march to Dunsinane. Even so old Caxon, as perched in his hut, he qualified his thoughts upon the approaching marriage of his daughter, and the dignity of being father-in-law to Lieutenant Taffril, with an occasional peep towards the signal-post with which his own corresponded, was not a little surprised by observing a light in that direction. He rubbed his eyes, looked again, adjusting his observation by a cross-staff which had been placed so as to bear upon the point. And behold, the light increased, like a comet to the eye of the astronomer, "with fear of change perplexing nations."

"The Lord preserve us!" said Caxon, "what's to be done now? But there will be wiser heads than mine to look to that, sae I'se e'en fire the beacon."

And he lighted the beacon accordingly, which threw up to the sky a long wavering train of light, startling the sea-fowl from their nests, and reflected far beneath by the reddening billows of the sea. The brother warders of Caxon being equally diligent, caught, and repeated his signal. The lights glanced on headlands and capes and inland hills, and the whole district was alarmed by the signal of invasion. *

* Note J. Alarms of Invasion.

Our Antiquary, his head wrapped warm in two double night-caps, was quietly enjoying his repose, when it was suddenly broken by the screams of his sister, his niece, and two maid-servants.

"What the devil is the matter?" said he, starting up in his bed—"womankind in my room at this hour of night!—are ye all mad?"

"The beacon, uncle!" said Miss M'Intyre.

"The French coming to murder us!" screamed Miss Griselda.

"The beacon! the beacon!—the French! the French!—murder! murder! and waur than murder!"—cried the two handmaidens, like the chorus of an opera.

"The French?" said Oldbuck, starting up—"get out of the room, womankind that you are, till I get my things on—And hark ye, bring me my sword."

"Whilk o' them, Monkbarns?" cried his sister, offering a Roman falchion of brass with the one hand, and with the other an Andrea Ferrara without a handle.

"The langest, the langest," cried Jenny Rintherout, dragging in a two-handed sword of the twelfth century.

"Womankind," said Oldbuck in great agitation, "be composed, and do not give way to vain terror—Are you sure they are come?"

"Sure, sure!" exclaimed Jenny—"ower sure!—a' the sea fencibles, and the land fencibles, and the volunteers and yeomanry, are on fit, and driving to Fairport as hard as horse and man can gang—and auld Mucklebackit's gane wi' the lave—muckle gude he'll do!—Hech, sirs!—*he'll* be missed the morn wha wad hae served king and country weel!"

"Give me," said Oldbuck, "the sword which my father wore in the year forty-five—it hath no belt or baldrick—but we'll make shift."

So saying he thrust the weapon through the cover of his breeches pocket. At this moment Hector entered, who had been to a neighbouring height to ascertain whether the alarm was actual.

"Where are your arms, nephew?" exclaimed Oldbuck—"where is your double-barrelled gun, that was never out of your hand when there was no occasion for such vanities?"

"Pooh! pooh! sir," said Hector, "who ever took a fowling-piece on action? I have got my uniform on, you see—I hope I shall be of more use if they will give me a command than I could be with ten double-barrels. And you, sir, must get to Fairport, to give directions for quartering and maintaining the men and horses, and preventing confusion."

"You are right, Hector,—I believe I shall do as much with my head as my hand too. But here comes Sir Arthur Wardour, who, between ourselves, is not fit to accomplish much either one way or the other."

Sir Arthur was probably of a different opinion; for, dressed in his lieutenant uniform, he was also on the road to Fairport, and called in his way to take Mr. Oldbuck with him, having had his original opinion of his sagacity much confirmed by late events. And in spite of all the entreaties of the womankind that the Antiquary would stay to garrison Monkbarrow, Mr. Oldbuck, with his nephew, instantly accepted Sir Arthur's offer.

Those who have witnessed such a scene can alone conceive the state of bustle in Fairport. The windows were glancing with a hundred lights, which, appearing and disappearing rapidly, indicated the confusion within doors. The women of lower rank assembled and clamoured in the market-place. The yeomanry, pouring from their different glens, galloped through the streets, some individually, some in parties of five or six, as they had met on the road. The drums and fifes of the volunteers beating to arms, were blended with the voice of the officers, the sound of the bugles, and the tolling of the bells from the steeple. The ships in the harbour were lit up, and boats from the armed vessels added to the bustle, by landing men and guns destined to assist in the defence of the place. This part of the preparations was superintended by Taffrail with much activity. Two or three light vessels had already slipped their cables and stood out to sea, in order to discover the supposed enemy.

Such was the scene of general confusion, when Sir Arthur Wardour, Oldbuck, and Hector, made their way with difficulty into the principal square, where the town-house is situated. It was lighted up, and the magistracy, with many of the neighbouring gentlemen, were assembled. And here, as upon other occasions of the like kind in Scotland, it was remarkable how the good sense and firmness of the people supplied almost all the deficiencies of inexperience.

The magistrates were beset by the quarter-masters of the different corps for billets for men and horses. "Let us," said Bailie Littlejohn, "take the horses into our warehouses, and the men into our parlours—share our supper with the one, and our forage with the other. We have made ourselves wealthy under a free and paternal government, and now is the time to show we know its value."

A loud and cheerful acquiescence was given by all present, and the substance of the wealthy, with the persons of those of all ranks, were unanimously devoted to the defence of the country.

Captain McIntyre acted on this occasion as military adviser and aide-de-camp to the principal magistrate, and displayed a degree of presence of mind, and knowledge of his profession, totally unexpected by his uncle, who, recollecting his usual *insouciance* and impetuosity, gazed at him with astonishment from time to time, as he remarked the calm and steady manner in which he explained the various measures of precaution that his experience suggested, and gave directions for executing them. He found the different corps in good order, considering the irregular materials of which they were composed, in great force of numbers and high confidence and spirits. And so much did military experience at that moment overbalance all other claims to consequence, that even old Edie, instead of being left, like Diogenes at Sinope, to roll his tub when all around were preparing for defence, had the duty assigned him of superintending the serving out of the ammunition, which he executed with much discretion.

Two things were still anxiously expected—the presence of the Glenallan volunteers, who, in consideration of the importance of that family, had been formed into a separate corps, and the arrival of the officer before announced, to whom the measures of defence on that coast had been committed by the commander-in-chief, and whose commission would entitle him to take upon himself the full disposal of the military force.

At length the bugles of the Glenallan yeomanry were heard, and the Earl himself, to the surprise of all who knew his habits and state of health, appeared at their head in uniform. They formed a very handsome and well-mounted squadron, formed entirely out of the Earl's Lowland tenants, and were followed by a regiment of five hundred men, completely equipped in the Highland dress, whom he had brought down from the upland glens, with their pipes playing in the van. The clean and serviceable appearance of this band of feudal dependants called forth the admiration of Captain McIntyre; but his uncle was still more struck by the manner in which, upon this crisis, the ancient military spirit of his house seemed to animate and invigorate the decayed frame of the Earl, their leader. He claimed, and obtained for himself and his followers, the post most likely to be that of danger, displayed great alacrity in making the necessary dispositions, and showed equal acuteness in discussing their propriety. Morning broke in upon the military councils of Fairport, while all concerned were still eagerly engaged in taking precautions for their defence.

At length a cry among the people announced, "There's the brave Major Neville come at last, with another officer;" and their post-chaise and four drove into the square, amidst the huzzas of the volunteers and inhabitants. The magistrates, with their assessors of the lieutenancy, hastened to the door of their town-house to receive him; but what was the surprise of all present, but most especially that of the Antiquary, when they became aware, that the handsome uniform and military cap disclosed the person and features of the pacific Lovel! A warm embrace, and a hearty shake of the hand, were necessary to assure him that his eyes were doing him justice. Sir Arthur was no less surprised to recognise his son, Captain Wardour, in Lovel's, or rather Major Neville's company. The first words of the young officers were a positive assurance to all present, that the courage and zeal which they had displayed were entirely thrown away, unless in so far as they afforded an acceptable proof of their spirit and promptitude.

"The watchman at Halket-head," said Major Neville, "as we discovered by an investigation which we made in our route hither, was most naturally misled by a bonfire which some idle people had made on the hill above Glenwithershins, just in the line of the beacon with which his corresponded."

Oldbuck gave a conscious look to Sir Arthur, who returned it with one equally sheepish, and a shrug of the shoulders.

"It must have been the machinery which we condemned to the flames in our wrath," said the Antiquary, plucking up heart, though not a little ashamed of having been the cause of so much disturbance—"The devil take Dousterswivel with all my heart!—I think he has bequeathed us a legacy of blunders and mischief, as if he had lighted some train of fireworks at his departure. I wonder what cracker will go off next among our shins. But yonder comes the prudent Caxon.—Hold up your head, you ass—your betters must bear the blame for you—And here, take this what-d'ye-call it"—(giving him his sword)—"I wonder what I would have said yesterday to any man that would have told me I was to stick such an appendage to my tail."

Here he found his arm gently pressed by Lord Glenallan, who dragged him into a separate apartment. "For God's sake, who is that young gentleman who is so strikingly like"—

"Like the unfortunate Eveline," interrupted Oldbuck. "I felt my heart warm to him from the first, and your lordship has suggested the very cause."

"But who—who is he?" continued Lord Glenallan, holding the Antiquary with a convulsive grasp.

"Formerly I would have called him Lovel, but now he turns out to be Major Neville."

"Whom my brother brought up as his natural son—whom he made his heir—Gracious Heaven! the child of my Eveline!"

"Hold, my lord—hold!" said Oldbuck, "do not give too hasty way to such a presumption;—what probability is there?"

"Probability? none! There is certainty! absolute certainty! The agent I mentioned to you wrote me the whole story—I received it yesterday, not sooner. Bring him, for God's sake, that a father's eyes may bless him before he departs."

"I will; but for your own sake and his, give him a few moments for preparation."

And, determined to make still farther investigation before yielding his entire conviction to so strange a tale, he sought out Major Neville, and found him expediting the necessary measures for dispersing the force which had been assembled.

"Pray, Major Neville, leave this business for a moment to Captain Wardour and to Hector, with whom, I hope, you are thoroughly reconciled" (Neville laughed, and shook hands with Hector across the table), "and grant me a moment's audience."

"You have a claim on me, Mr. Oldbuck, were my business more urgent," said Neville, "for having passed myself upon you under a false name, and rewarding your hospitality by injuring your nephew."

"You served him as he deserved," said Oldbuck—"though, by the way, he showed as much good sense as spirit to-day—Egad! if he would rub up his learning, and read Caesar and Polybus, and the *Stratagemata Polyæni*, I think he would rise in the army—and I will certainly lend him a lift."

"He is heartily deserving of it," said Neville; "and I am glad you excuse me, which you may do the more frankly, when you know that I am so unfortunate as to have no better right to the name of Neville, by which I have been generally distinguished, than to that of Lovel, under which you knew me."

"Indeed! then, I trust, we shall find out one for you to which you shall have a firm and legal title."

"Sir!—I trust you do not think the misfortune of my birth a fit subject"—

"By no means, young man," answered the Antiquary, interrupting him;—"I believe I know more of your birth than you do yourself—and, to convince you of it, you were educated and known as a natural son of Geraldin Neville of Neville's-Burgh, in Yorkshire, and I presume, as his destined heir?"

"Pardon me—no such views were held out to me. I was liberally educated, and pushed forward in the army by money and interest; but I believe my supposed father long entertained some ideas of marriage, though he never carried them into effect."

"You say your *supposed* father?—What leads you to suppose Mr. Geraldin Neville was not your real father?"

"I know, Mr. Oldbuck, that you would not ask these questions on a point of such delicacy for the gratification of idle curiosity. I will therefore tell you candidly, that last year, while we occupied a small town in French Flanders, I found in a convent, near which I was quartered, a woman who spoke remarkably good English—She was a Spaniard—her name Teresa D'Acunha. In the process of our acquaintance, she discovered who I was, and made herself known to me as the person who had charge of my infancy. She dropped more than one hint of rank to which I was entitled, and of injustice done to me, promising a more full disclosure in case of the death of a lady in Scotland, during whose lifetime she was determined to keep the secret. She also intimated that Mr. Geraldin Neville was not my father. We were attacked by the enemy, and driven from the town, which was pillaged with savage ferocity by the republicans. The religious orders were the particular objects of their hate and cruelty. The convent was burned, and several nuns perished—among others Teresa; and with her all chance of knowing the story of my birth: tragic by all accounts it must have been."

"*Raro antecedentem scelestum*, or, as I may here say, *scelestam*," said Oldbuck, "*deseruit poena*—even Epicureans admitted that. And what did you do upon this?"

"I remonstrated with Mr. Neville by letter, and to no purpose. I then obtained leave of absence, and threw myself at his feet, conjuring him to complete the disclosure which Teresa had begun. He refused, and, on my importunity, indignantly upbraided me with the favours he had already conferred. I thought he abused the power of a benefactor, as he was compelled to admit he had no title to that of a father, and we parted in mutual displeasure. I renounced the name of Neville, and assumed that under which you knew me. It was at this time, when residing with a friend in the north of England who favoured my disguise, that I became acquainted with Miss Wardour, and was romantic enough to follow her to Scotland. My mind wavered on various plans of life, when I resolved to apply once more to Mr. Neville for an explanation of the mystery of my birth. It was long ere I received an answer; you were present when it was put into my hands. He informed me of his bad state of health, and conjured me, for my own sake, to inquire no farther into the nature of his connection with me, but to rest satisfied with his declaring it to be such and so intimate, that he designed to constitute me his heir. When I was preparing to leave Fairport to join him, a second express brought me word that he was no more. The possession of great wealth was unable to suppress the remorseful feelings with which I now regarded my conduct to my benefactor, and some hints in his letter appearing to intimate there was on my birth a deeper stain than that of ordinary illegitimacy, I remembered certain prejudices of Sir Arthur."

"And you brooded over these melancholy ideas until you were ill, instead of coming to me for advice, and telling me the whole story?" said Oldbuck.

"Exactly; then came my quarrel with Captain M'Intyre, and my compelled departure from Fairport and its vicinity."

"From love and from poetry—Miss Wardour and the Caledoniad?"

"Most true."

"And since that time you have been occupied, I suppose, with plans for Sir Arthur's relief?"

"Yes, sir; with the assistance of Captain Wardour at Edinburgh."

"And Edie Ochiltree here—you see I know the whole story. But how came you by the treasure?"

"It was a quantity of plate which had belonged to my uncle, and was left in the custody of a person at Fairport. Some time before his death he had sent orders that it should be melted down. He perhaps did not wish me to see the Glenallan arms upon it."

"Well, Major Neville—or let me say, Lovel, being the name in which I rather delight—you must, I believe, exchange both of your *alias*'s for the style and title of the Honourable William Geraldin, commonly called Lord Geraldin."

The Antiquary then went through the strange and melancholy circumstances concerning his mother's death.

"I have no doubt," he said, "that your uncle wished the report to be believed, that the child of this unhappy marriage was no more—perhaps he might himself have an eye to the inheritance of his brother—he was then a gay wild young man—But of all intentions against your person, however much the evil conscience of Elspeth might lead her to inspect him from the agitation in which he appeared, Teresa's story and your own fully acquit him. And now, my dear sir, let me have the pleasure of introducing a son to a father."

We will not attempt to describe such a meeting. The proofs on all sides were found to be complete, for Mr. Neville had left a distinct account of the whole transaction with his confidential steward in a sealed packet, which was not to be opened until the death of the old Countess; his motive for preserving secrecy so long appearing to have been an apprehension of the effect which the discovery, fraught with so much disgrace, must necessarily produce upon her haughty and violent temper.

In the evening of that day, the yeomanry and volunteers of Glenallan drank prosperity to their young master. In a month afterwards Lord Geraldin was married to Miss Wardour, the Antiquary making the lady a present of the wedding ring—a massy circle of antique chasing, bearing the motto of Aldobrand Oldenbuck, *Kunst macht gunst*.

Old Edie, the most important man that ever wore a blue gown, bows away easily from one friend's house to another, and boasts that he never travels unless on a sunny day. Latterly, indeed, he has given some symptoms of becoming stationary, being frequently found in the corner of a snug cottage between Monkbarns and Knockwinnock, to which Caxon retreated upon his daughter's marriage, in order to be in the neighbourhood of the three parochial wigs, which he continues to keep in repair, though only for amusement. Edie has been heard to say, "This is a gey bein place, and it's a comfort to hae sic a corner to sit in in a bad day." It is thought, as he grows stiffer in the joints, he will finally settle there.

The bounty of such wealthy patrons as Lord and Lady Geraldin flowed copiously upon Mrs. Hadoway and upon the Mucklebackits. By the former it was well employed, by the latter wasted. They continue, however, to receive it, but under the administration of Edie Ochiltree; and they do not accept it without grumbling at the channel through which it is conveyed.

Hector is rising rapidly in the army, and has been more than once mentioned in the Gazette, and rises proportionally high in his uncle's favour; and what scarcely pleases the young soldier less, he has also shot two seals, and thus put an end to the Antiquary's perpetual harping upon the story of the *phoca*. People talk of a marriage between Miss M'Intyre and Captain Wardour; but this wants confirmation.

The Antiquary is a frequent visitor at Knockwinnock and Glenallan House, ostensibly for the sake of completing two essays, one on the mail-shirt of the Great Earl, and the other on the left-hand gauntlet of Hell-in-Harness. He regularly inquires whether Lord Geraldin has commenced the Caledoniad, and shakes his head at the answers he receives. *En attendant*, however, he has completed his notes, which, we believe, will be at the service of any one who chooses to make them public without risk or expense to THE ANTIQUARY.

BOOK XXIX
THE 2 DROVERS
CHAPTER I

It was the day after Doune Fair when my story commences. It had been a brisk market. Several dealers had attended from the northern and midland counties in England, and English money had flown so merrily about as to gladden the hearts of the Highland farmers. Many large droves were about to set off for England, under the protection of their owners, or of the topsmen whom they employed in the tedious, laborious, and responsible office of driving the cattle for many hundred miles, from the market where they had been purchased, to the fields or farmyards where they were to be fattened for the shambles.

The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war. It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion. They are required to know perfectly the drove-roads, which lie over the wildest tracts of the country, and to avoid as much as possible the highways, which distress the feet of the bullocks, and the turnpikes, which annoy the spirit of the drover; whereas on the broad green or grey track which leads across the pathless moor, the herd not only move at ease and without taxation, but, if they mind their business, may pick up a mouthful of food by the way. At night the drovers usually sleep along with their cattle, let the weather be what it will; and many of these hardy men do not once rest under a roof during a journey on foot from Lochaber to Lincolnshire. They are paid very highly, for the trust reposed in them is of the last importance, as it depends on their prudence, vigilance, and honesty whether the cattle reach the final market in good order, and afford a profit to the grazier. But as they maintain themselves at their own expense, they are especially economical in that particular. At the period we speak of, a Highland drover was victualled for his long and toilsome journey with a few handfulls of oatmeal and two or three onions, renewed from time to time, and a ram's horn filled with whisky, which he used regularly, but sparingly, every night and morning. His dirk, or SKENE-DHU, (that is, black-knife), so worn as to be concealed beneath the arm, or by the folds of the plaid, was his only weapon, excepting the cudgel with which he directed the movements of the cattle. A Highlander was never so happy as on these occasions. There was a variety in the whole journey, which exercised the Celt's natural curiosity and love of motion. There were the constant change of place and scene, the petty adventures incidental to the traffic, and the intercourse with the various farmers, graziers, and traders, intermingled with occasional merry-makings, not the less acceptable to Donald that they were void of expense. And there was the consciousness of superior skill; for the Highlander, a child amongst flocks, is a prince amongst herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd's slothful life, so that he feels himself nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian.

Of the number who left Doune in the morning, and with the purpose we have described, not a GLUNAMIE of them all cocked his bonnet more briskly, or gartered his tartan hose under knee over a pair of more promising SPIOGS, (legs), than did Robin Oig M'Combich, called familiarly Robin Oig, that is young, or the Lesser, Robin. Though small of stature, as the epithet Oig implies, and not very strongly limbed, he was as light and alert as one of the deer of his mountains. He had an elasticity of step which, in the course of a long march, made many a stout fellow envy him; and the manner in which he busked his plaid and adjusted his bonnet argued a consciousness that so smart a John Highlandman as himself would not pass unnoticed among the Lowland lasses. The ruddy cheek, red lips, and white teeth set off a countenance which had gained by exposure to the weather a healthful and hardy rather than a rugged hue. If Robin Oig did not laugh, or even smile frequently—as, indeed, is not the practice among his countrymen—his bright eyes usually gleamed from under his bonnet with an expression of cheerfulness ready to be turned into mirth.

The departure of Robin Oig was an incident in the little town, in and near which he had many friends, male and female. He was a topping person in his way, transacted considerable business on his own behalf, and was entrusted by the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that district. He might have increased his business to any extent had he condescended to manage it by deputy; but except a lad or two, sister's sons of his own, Robin rejected the idea of assistance, conscious, perhaps, how much his reputation depended upon his attending in person to the practical discharge of his duty in every instance. He remained, therefore, contented with the highest premium given to persons of his description, and comforted himself with the hopes that a few journeys to England might enable him to conduct business on his own account, in a manner becoming his birth. For Robin Oig's father, Lachlan M'Combich (or SON OF MY FRIEND, his actual clan surname being M'Gregor), had been so called by the celebrated Rob Roy, because of the particular friendship which had subsisted between the grandsire of Robin and that renowned cateran. Some people even said that Robin Oig derived his Christian name from one as renowned in the wilds of Loch Lomond as ever was his namesake Robin Hood in the precincts of merry Sherwood. "Of such ancestry," as James Boswell says, "who would not be proud?" Robin Oig was proud accordingly; but his frequent visits to England and to the Lowlands had given him tact enough to know that pretensions which still gave him a little right to distinction in his own lonely glen, might be both obnoxious and ridiculous if preferred elsewhere. The pride of birth, therefore, was like the miser's treasure—the secret subject of his contemplation, but never exhibited to strangers as a subject of boasting.

Many were the words of gratulation and good-luck which were bestowed on Robin Oig. The judges commended his drove, especially Robin's own property, which were the best of them. Some thrust out their snuff-mulls for the parting pinch, others tendered the DOCH-AN-DORRACH, or parting cup. All cried, "Good-luck travel out with you and come home with you. Give you luck in the Saxon market—brave notes in the LEABHAR-DHU," (black pocket-book), "and plenty of English gold in the SPORRAN" (pouch of goat-skin).

The bonny lasses made their adieus more modestly, and more than one, it was said, would have given her best brooch to be certain that it was upon her that his eye last rested as he turned towards the road.

Robin Oig had just given the preliminary "HOO-HOO!" to urge forward the loiterers of the drove, when there was a cry behind him:—

"Stay, Robin—bide a blink. Here is Janet of Tomahourich—auld Janet, your father's sister."

"Plague on her, for an auld Highland witch and spæwif," said a farmer from the Carse of Stirling; "she'll cast some of her cantrips on the cattle."

"She canna do that," said another sapient of the same profession. "Robin Oig is no the lad to leave any of them without tying Saint Mungo's knot on their tails, and that will put to her speed the best witch that ever flew over Dimayet upon a broomstick."

It may not be indifferent to the reader to know that the Highland cattle are peculiarly liable to be TAKEN, or infected, by spells and witchcraft, which judicious people guard against by knitting knots of peculiar complexity on the tuft of hair which terminates the animal's tail.

But the old woman who was the object of the farmer's suspicion seemed only busied about the drover, without paying any attention to the drove. Robin, on the contrary, appeared rather impatient of her presence.

"What auld-world fancy," he said, "has brought you so early from the ingle-side this morning, Muhme? I am sure I bid you good-even, and had your God-speed, last night."

"And left me more siller than the useless old woman will use till you come back again, bird of my bosom," said the sibyl. "But it is little I would care for the food that nourishes me, or the fire that warms me, or for God's blessed sun itself, if aught but weel should happen to the grandson of my father. So let me walk the DEASIL round you, that you may go safe out into the far foreign land, and come safe home."

Robin Oig stopped, half embarrassed, half laughing, and signing to those around that he only complied with the old woman to soothe her humour. In the meantime, she traced around him, with wavering steps, the propitiation, which some have thought has been derived from the Druidical mythology. It consists, as is well known, in the person who makes the DEASIL walking three times round the person who is the object of the ceremony, taking care to move according to the course of the sun. At once, however, she stopped short, and exclaimed, in a voice of alarm and horror, "Grandson of my father, there is blood on your hand."

"Hush, for God's sake, aunt!" said Robin Oig. "You will bring more trouble on yourself with this TAISHATARAGH" (second sight) "than you will be able to get out of for many a day."

The old woman only repeated, with a ghastly look, "There is blood on your hand, and it is English blood. The blood of the Gael is richer and redder. Let us see—let us—"

Ere Robin Oig could prevent her, which, indeed, could only have been by positive violence, so hasty and peremptory were her proceedings, she had drawn from his side the dirk which lodged in the folds of his plaid, and held it up, exclaiming, although the weapon gleamed clear and bright in the sun, "Blood, blood—Saxon blood again. Robin Oig M'Combich, go not this day to England!"

"Pruitt, trutt," answered Robin Oig, "that will never do neither—it would be next thing to running the country. For shame, Muhme—give me the dirk. You cannot tell by the colour the difference betwixt the blood of a black bullock and a white one, and you speak of knowing Saxon from Gaelic blood. All men have their blood from Adam, Muhme. Give me my skene-dhu, and let me go on my road. I should have been half way to Stirling brig by this time. Give me my dirk, and let me go."

"Never will I give it to you," said the old woman—"Never will I quit my hold on your plaid—unless you promise me not to wear that unhappy weapon."

The women around him urged him also, saying few of his aunt's words fell to the ground; and as the Lowland farmers continued to look moodily on the scene, Robin Oig determined to close it at any sacrifice.

"Well, then," said the young drover, giving the scabbard of the weapon to Hugh Morrison, "you Lowlanders care nothing for these freats. Keep my dirk for me. I cannot give it you, because it was my father's; but your drove follows ours, and I am content it should be in your keeping, not in mine.—Will this do, Muhme?"

"It must," said the old woman—"that is, if the Lowlander is mad enough to carry the knife."

The strong Westlandman laughed aloud.

"Goodwife," said he, "I am Hugh Morrison from Glenae, come of the Manly Morrisons of auld lang syne, that never took short weapon against a man in their lives. And neither needed they. They had their broadswords, and I have this bit supple"—showing a formidable cudgel; "for dirking ower the board, I leave that to John Highlandman.—Ye needna snort, none of you Highlanders, and you in especial, Robin. I'll keep the bit knife, if you are feared for the auld spaewife's tale, and give it back to you whenever you want it."

Robin was not particularly pleased with some part of Hugh Morrison's speech; but he had learned in his travels more patience than belonged to his Highland constitution originally, and he accepted the service of the descendant of the Manly Morrisons without finding fault with the rather depreciating manner in which it was offered. "If he had not had his morning in his head, and been but a Dumfriesshire hog into the boot, he would have spoken more like a gentleman. But you cannot have more of a sow than a grumph. It's shame my father's knife should ever slash a haggis for the like of him." Thus saying, (but saying it in Gaelic), Robin drove on his cattle, and waved farewell to all behind him. He was in the greater haste, because he expected to join at Falkirk a comrade and brother in profession, with whom he proposed to travel in company. Robin Oig's chosen friend was a young Englishman, Harry Wakefield by name, well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. He was nearly six feet high, gallantly formed to keep the rounds at Smithfield, or maintain the ring at a wrestling match; and although he might have been overmatched, perhaps, among the regular professors of the Fancy, yet, as a yokel or rustic, or a chance customer, he was able to give a bellyful to any amateur of the pugilistic art. Doncaster races saw him in his glory, betting his guinea, and generally successfully; nor was there a main fought in Yorkshire, the feeders being persons of celebrity, at which he was not to be seen if business permitted. But though a SPRACK lad, and fond of pleasure and its haunts, Harry Wakefield was steady, and not the cautious Robin Oig M'Combich himself was more attentive to the main chance. His holidays were holidays indeed; but his days of work were dedicated to steady and persevering labour. In countenance and temper, Wakefield was the model of Old England's merry yeomen, whose clothyard shafts, in so many hundred battles, asserted her superiority over the nations, and whose good sabres, in our own time, are her cheapest and most assured defence. His mirth was readily excited; for, strong in limb and constitution, and fortunate in circumstances, he was disposed to be pleased with every thing about him, and such difficulties as he might occasionally encounter were, to a man of his energy, rather matter of amusement than serious annoyance. With all the merits of a sanguine temper, our young English drover was not without his defects. He was irascible, sometimes to the verge of being quarrelsome; and perhaps not the less inclined to bring his disputes to a pugilistic decision, because he found few antagonists able to stand up to him in the boxing ring. It is difficult to say how Harry Wakefield and Robin Oig first became intimates, but it is certain a close acquaintance had taken place betwixt them, although they had apparently few common subjects of conversation or of interest, so soon as their talk ceased to be of bullocks. Robin Oig, indeed, spoke the English language rather imperfectly upon any other topics but stots and kyloes, and Harry Wakefield could never bring his broad Yorkshire tongue to utter a single word of Gaelic. It was in vain Robin spent a whole morning, during a walk over Minch Moor, in attempting to teach his companion to utter, with true precision, the shibboleth LLHU, which is the Gaelic for a calf. From Traquair to Murder Cairn, the hill rung with the discordant attempts of the Saxon upon the unmanageable monosyllable, and the heartfelt laugh which followed every failure. They had, however, better modes of awakening the echoes; for Wakefield could sing many a ditty to the praise of Moll, Susan, and Cicely, and Robin Oig had a particular gift at whistling interminable pibrochs through all their involutions, and what was more agreeable to his companion's southern ear, knew many of the northern airs, both lively and pathetic, to which Wakefield learned to pipe a bass. Thus, though Robin could hardly have comprehended his companion's stories about horse-racing, and cock-fighting, or fox-hunting, and although his own legends of clan-fights and CREAGHS, varied with talk of Highland goblins and fairy folk, would have been caviare to his companion, they contrived, nevertheless to find a degree of pleasure in each other's company, which had for three years back induced them to join company and travel together, when the direction of their journey permitted. Each, indeed, found his advantage in this companionship; for where could the Englishman have found a guide through the Western Highlands like Robin Oig M'Combich? and when they were on what Harry called the RIGHT side of the Border, his patronage, which was extensive, and his purse, which was heavy, were at all times at the service of his Highland friend, and on many occasions his liberality did him genuine yeoman's service.

CHAPTER II

Were ever two such loving friends!—

How could they disagree?

Oh, thus it was, he loved him dear,

And thought how to requite him,

And having no friend left but he,

He did resolve to fight him. DUKE UPON DUKE.

The pair of friends had traversed with their usual cordiality the grassy wilds of Liddesdale, and crossed the opposite part of Cumberland, emphatically called The Waste. In these solitary regions the cattle under the charge of our drovers derived their subsistence chiefly by picking their food as they went along the drove-road, or sometimes by the tempting opportunity of a START AND OWERLOUP, or invasion of the neighbouring pasture, where an occasion presented itself. But now the scene changed before them. They were descending towards a fertile and enclosed country, where no such liberties could be taken with impunity, or without a previous arrangement and bargain with the possessors of the ground. This was more especially the case, as a great northern fair was upon the eve of taking place, where both the Scotch and English drover expected to dispose of a part of their cattle, which it was desirable to produce in the market rested and in good order. Fields were therefore difficult to be obtained, and only upon high terms. This necessity occasioned a temporary separation betwixt the two friends, who went to bargain, each as he could, for the separate accommodation of his herd. Unhappily it chanced that both of them, unknown to each other, thought of bargaining for the ground they wanted on the property of a country gentleman of some fortune, whose estate lay in the neighbourhood. The English drover applied to the bailiff on the property, who was known to him. It chanced that the Cumbrian Squire, who had entertained some suspicions of his manager's honesty, was taking occasional measures to ascertain how far they were well founded, and had desired that any enquiries about his enclosures, with a view to occupy them for a temporary purpose, should be referred to himself. As however, Mr. Ireby had gone the day before upon a journey of some miles distance to the northward, the bailiff chose to consider the check upon his full powers as for the time removed, and concluded that he should best consult his master's interest, and perhaps his own, in making an agreement with Harry Wakefield. Meanwhile, ignorant of what his comrade was doing, Robin Oig, on his side, chanced to be overtaken by a good-looking smart little man upon a pony, most knowingly hogged and cropped, as was then the fashion, the rider wearing tight leather breeches, and long-necked bright spurs. This cavalier asked one or two pertinent questions about markets and the price of stock. So Robin, seeing him a well-judging civil gentleman,

took the freedom to ask him whether he could let him know if there was any grass-land to be let in that neighbourhood, for the temporary accommodation of his drove. He could not have put the question to more willing ears. The gentleman of the buckskins was the proprietor, with whose bailiff Harry Wakefield had dealt, or was in the act of dealing.

"Thou art in good luck, my canny Scot," said Mr. Ireby, "to have spoken to me, for I see thy cattle have done their day's work, and I have at my disposal the only field within three miles that is to be let in these parts."

"The drove can be gang two, three, four miles very pratty weel indeed"—said the cautious Highlander; "put what would his honour be axing for the peasts be the head, if she was to tak the park for twa or three days?"

"We won't differ, Sawney, if you let me have six stots for winterers, in the way of reason."

"And which peasts wad your honour be for having?"

"Why—let me see—the two black—the dun one—yon doddy—him with the twisted horn—the brockit—How much by the head?"

"Ah," said Robin, "your honour is a shudge—a real shudge. I couldna have set off the pest six peasts petter mysel'—me that ken them as if they were my pairns, pur things."

"Well, how much per head, Sawney?" continued Mr. Ireby.

"It was high markets at Doune and Falkirk," answered Robin.

And thus the conversation proceeded, until they had agreed on the PRIX JUSTE for the bullocks, the Squire throwing in the temporary accommodation of the enclosure for the cattle into the boot, and Robin making, as he thought, a very good bargain, provided the grass was but tolerable. The Squire walked his pony alongside of the drove, partly to show him the way, and see him put into possession of the field, and partly to learn the latest news of the northern markets.

They arrived at the field, and the pasture seemed excellent. But what was their surprise when they saw the bailiff quietly inducting the cattle of Harry Wakefield into the grassy Goshen which had just been assigned to those of Robin Oig M'Combich by the proprietor himself! Squire Ireby set spurs to his horse, dashed up to his servant, and learning what had passed between the parties, briefly informed the English drover that his bailiff had let the ground without his authority, and that he might seek grass for his cattle wherever he would, since he was to get none there. At the same time he rebuked his servant severely for having transgressed his commands, and ordered him instantly to assist in ejecting the hungry and weary cattle of Harry Wakefield, which were just beginning to enjoy a meal of unusual plenty, and to introduce those of his comrade, whom the English drover now began to consider as a rival.

The feelings which arose in Wakefield's mind would have induced him to resist Mr. Ireby's decision; but every Englishman has a tolerably accurate sense of law and justice, and John Fleecebumpkin, the bailiff, having acknowledged that he had exceeded his commission, Wakefield saw nothing else for it than to collect his hungry and disappointed charge, and drive them on to seek quarters elsewhere. Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, "Take it all, man—take it all; never make two bites of a cherry. Thou canst talk over the gentry, and blear a plain man's eye. Out upon you, man. I would not kiss any man's dirty latches for leave to bake in his oven."

Robin Oig, sorry but not surprised at his comrade's displeasure, hastened to entreat his friend to wait but an hour till he had gone to the Squire's house to receive payment for the cattle he had sold, and he would come back and help him to drive the cattle into some convenient place of rest, and explain to him the whole mistake they had both of them fallen into. But the Englishman continued indignant: "Thou hast been selling, hast thou? Ay, ay; thou is a cunning lad for kenning the hours of bargaining. Go to the devil with thyself, for I will ne'er see thy fause loon's visage again—thou should be ashamed to look me in the face."

"I am ashamed to look no man in the face," said Robin Oig, something moved; "and, moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will bide at the Clachan down yonder."

"Mayhap you had as well keep away," said his comrade; and turning his back on his former friend, he collected his unwilling associates, assisted by the bailiff, who took some real and some affected interest in seeing Wakefield accommodated.

After spending some time in negotiating with more than one of the neighbouring farmers, who could not, or would not, afford the accommodation desired, Henry Wakefield at last, and in his necessity, accomplished his point by means of the landlord of the alehouse at which Robin Oig and he had agreed to pass the night, when they first separated from each other. Mine host was content to let him turn his cattle on a piece of barren moor, at a price little less than the bailiff had asked for the disputed enclosure; and the wretchedness of the pasture, as well as the price paid for it, were set down as exaggerations of the breach of faith and friendship of his Scottish crony. This turn of Wakefield's passions was encouraged by the bailiff, (who had his own reasons for being offended against poor Robin, as having been the unwitting cause of his falling into disgrace with his master), as well as by the innkeeper, and two or three chance guests, who stimulated the drover in his resentment against his quondam associate—some from the ancient grudge against the Scots, which, when it exists anywhere, is to be found lurking in the Border counties, and some from the general love of mischief, which characterises mankind in all ranks of life, to the honour of Adam's children be it spoken. Good John Barleycorn also, who always heightens and exaggerates the prevailing passions, be they angry or kindly, was not wanting in his offices on this occasion, and confusion to false friends and hard masters was pledged in more than one tankard.

In the meanwhile Mr. Ireby found some amusement in detaining the northern drover at his ancient hall. He caused a cold round of beef to be placed before the Scot in the butler's pantry, together with a foaming tankard of home-brewed, and took pleasure in seeing the hearty appetite with which these unwonted edibles were discussed by Robin Oig M'Combich. The Squire himself lighting his pipe, compounded between his patrician dignity and his love of agricultural gossip, by walking up and down while he conversed with his guest.

"I passed another drove," said the Squire, "with one of your countrymen behind them. They were something less beasts than your drove—doddies most of them. A big man was with them. None of your kilts, though, but a decent pair of breeches. D'ye know who he may be?"

"Hout aye; that might, and would be Hughie Morrison. I didna think he could hae been sae weel up. He has made a day on us; but his Argyleshires will have wearied shanks. How far was he behind?"

"I think about six or seven miles," answered the Squire, "for I passed them at the Christenbury Crag, and I overtook you at the Hollan Bush. If his beasts be leg-weary, he will be maybe selling bargains."

"Na, na, Hughie Morrison is no the man for pargains—ye maun come to some Highland body like Robin Oig hersel' for the like of these. Put I maun be wishing you goot night, and twenty of them, let alane ane, and I maun down to the Clachan to see if the lad Harry Waakfelt is out of his humdudgeons yet."

The party at the alehouse were still in full talk, and the treachery of Robin Oig still the theme of conversation, when the supposed culprit entered the apartment. His arrival, as usually happens in such a case, put an instant stop to the discussion of which he had furnished the subject, and he was received by the company assembled with that chilling silence which, more than a thousand exclamations, tells an intruder that he is unwelcome. Surprised and offended, but not appalled by the reception which he experienced, Robin entered with an undaunted and even a haughty air, attempted no greeting, as he saw he was received with none, and placed himself by the side of the fire, a little apart from a table at which Harry Wakefield, the bailiff, and two or three other persons, were seated. The ample Cumbrian kitchen would have afforded plenty of room, even for a larger separation.

Robin thus seated, proceeded to light his pipe, and call for a pint of twopenny.

"We have no twopence ale," answered Ralph Heskett the landlord; "but as thou find'st thy own tobacco, it's like thou mayst find thy own liquor too—it's the wont of thy country, I wot."

"Shame, Goodman," said the landlady, a blithe, bustling housewife, hastening herself to supply the guest with liquor. "Thou knowest well enow what the strange man wants, and it's thy trade to be civil, man. Thou shouldst know, that if the Scot likes a small pot, he pays a sure penny."

Without taking any notice of this nuptial dialogue, the Highlander took the flagon in his hand, and addressing the company generally, drank the interesting toast of "Good markets" to the party assembled.

"The better that the wind blew fewer dealers from the north," said one of the farmers, "and fewer Highland runts to eat up the English meadows."

"Saul of my pody, put you are wrang there, my friend," answered Robin, with composure; "it is your fat Englishmen that eat up our Scots cattle, puir things."

"I wish there was a summat to eat up their drovers," said another; "a plain Englishman canna make bread within a kenning of them."

"Or an honest servant keep his master's favour but they will come sliding in between him and the sunshine," said the bailiff.

"If these pe jokes," said Robin Oig, with the same composure, "there is ower mony jokes upon one man."

"It is no joke, but downright earnest," said the bailiff. "Harkye, Mr. Robin Ogg, or whatever is your name, it's right we should tell you that we are all of one opinion, and that is, that you, Mr. Robin Ogg, have behaved to our friend Mr. Harry Wakefield here, like a raff and a blackguard."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," answered Robin, with great composure; "and you are a set of very pretty judges, for whose prains or pehaviour I wad not gie a pinch of sneeshing. If Mr. Harry Waakfelt kens where he is wranged, he kens where he may be righted."

"He speaks truth," said Wakefield, who had listened to what passed, divided between the offence which he had taken at Robin's late behaviour, and the revival of his habitual feelings of regard.

He now rose, and went towards Robin, who got up from his seat as he approached, and held out his hand.

"That's right, Harry—go it—serve him out," resounded on all sides—"tip him the nailer—show him the mill."

"Hold your peace all of you, and be—," said Wakefield; and then addressing his comrade, he took him by the extended hand, with something alike of respect and defiance. "Robin," he said, "thou hast used me ill enough this day; but if you mean, like a frank fellow, to shake hands, and take a tussle for love on the sod, why I'll forgie thee, man, and we shall be better friends than ever."

"And would it not pe petter to pe cood friends without more of the matter?" said Robin; "we will be much petter friendships with our panes hale than proken."

Harry Wakefield dropped the hand of his friend, or rather threw it from him.

"I did not think I had been keeping company for three years with a coward."

"Coward belongs to none of my name," said Robin, whose eyes began to kindle, but keeping the command of his temper. "It was no coward's legs or hands, Harry Waakfelt, that drew you out of the fords of Frew, when you was drifting ower the plack rock, and every eel in the river expected his share of you."

"And that is true enough, too," said the Englishman, struck by the appeal.

"Adzooks!" exclaimed the bailiff—"sure Harry Wakefield, the nattiest lad at Whitson Tryste, Wooler Fair, Carlisle Sands, or Stagshaw Bank, is not going to show white feather? Ah, this comes of living so long with kilts and bonnets—men forget the use of their daddles."

"I may teach you, Master Fleecebumpkin, that I have not lost the use of mine," said Wakefield and then went on. "This will never do, Robin. We must have a turn-up, or we shall be the talk of the country-side. I'll be d—d if I hurt thee—I'll put on the gloves gin thou like. Come, stand forward like a man."

"To be peaten like a dog," said Robin; "is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I'll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language."

A general cry of "No, no—no law, no lawyer! a bellyful and be friends," was echoed by the bystanders.

"But," continued Robin, "if I am to fight, I have no skill to fight like a jackanapes, with hands and nails."

"How would you fight then?" said his antagonist; "though I am thinking it would be hard to bring you to the scratch anyhow."

"I would fight with proadswords, and sink point on the first plood drawn—like a gentlemans."

A loud shout of laughter followed the proposal, which indeed had rather escaped from poor Robin's swelling heart, than been the dictate of his sober judgment.

"Gentleman, quotha!" was echoed on all sides, with a shout of unextinguishable laughter; "a very pretty gentleman, God wot.—Canst get two swords for the gentleman to fight with, Ralph Heskett?"

"No, but I can send to the armoury at Carlisle, and lend them two forks, to be making shift with in the meantime."

"Tush, man," said another, "the bonny Scots come into the world with the blue bonnet on their heads, and dirk and pistol at their belt."

"Best send post," said Mr. Fleecebumpkin, "to the Squire of Corby Castle, to come and stand second to the GENTLEMAN."

In the midst of this torrent of general ridicule, the Highlander instinctively griped beneath the folds of his plaid,

"But it's better not," he said in his own language. "A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility!"

"Make room, the pack of you," he said, advancing to the door.

But his former friend interposed his sturdy bulk, and opposed his leaving the house; and when Robin Oig attempted to make his way by force, he hit him down on the floor, with as much ease as a boy bowls down a nine-pin.

"A ring, a ring!" was now shouted, until the dark rafters, and the hams that hung on them, trembled again, and the very platters on the BINK clattered against each other. "Well done, Harry"—"Give it him home, Harry"—"Take care of him now—he sees his own blood!"

Such were the exclamations, while the Highlander, starting from the ground, all his coldness and caution lost in frantic rage, sprung at his antagonist with the fury, the activity, and the vindictive purpose of an incensed tiger-cat. But when could rage encounter science and temper? Robin Oig again went down in the unequal contest; and as the blow was necessarily a severe one, he lay motionless on the floor of the kitchen. The landlady ran to offer some aid, but Mr. Fleecebumpkin would not permit her to approach.

"Let him alone," he said, "he will come to within time, and come up to the scratch again. He has not got half his broth yet."

"He has got all I mean to give him, though," said his antagonist, whose heart began to relent towards his old associate; "and I would rather by half give the rest to yourself, Mr. Fleecebumpkin, for you pretend to know a thing or two, and Robin had not art enough even to peel before setting to, but fought with his plaid dangle about him.—Stand up, Robin, my man! All friends now; and let me hear the man that will speak a word against you, or your country, for your sake."

Robin Oig was still under the dominion of his passion, and eager to renew the onset; but being withheld on the one side by the peacemaking Dame Heskett, and on the other, aware that Wakefield no longer meant to renew the combat, his fury sunk into gloomy sullenness.

"Come, come, never grudge so much at it, man," said the brave-spirited Englishman, with the placability of his country; "shake hands, and we will be better friends than ever."

"Friends!" exclaimed Robin Oig with strong emphasis—"friends! Never. Look to yourself, Harry Waakfelt."

"Then the curse of Cromwell on your proud Scots stomach, as the man says in the play, and you may do your worst, and be d—d; for one man can say nothing more to another after a tussle, than that he is sorry for it."

On these terms the friends parted. Robin Oig drew out, in silence, a piece of money, threw it on the table, and then left the alehouse. But turning at the door, he shook his hand at Wakefield, pointing with his forefinger upwards, in a manner which might imply either a threat or a caution. He then disappeared in the moonlight.

Some words passed after his departure, between the bailiff, who piqued himself on being a little of a bully, and Harry Wakefield, who, with generous inconsistency, was now not indisposed to begin a new combat in defence of Robin Oig's reputation, "although he could not use his daddles like an Englishman, as it did not come natural to him." But Dame Heskett prevented this second quarrel from coming to a head by her peremptory interference. "There should be no more fighting in her house," she said; "there had been too much already.—And you, Mr. Wakefield, may live to learn," she added, "what it is to make a deadly enemy out of a good friend."

"Pshaw, dame! Robin Oig is an honest fellow, and will never keep malice."

"Do not trust to that; you do not know the dour temper of the Scots, though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot."

"And so is well seen on her daughter," said Ralph Heskett.

This nuptial sarcasm gave the discourse another turn. Fresh customers entered the tap-room or kitchen, and others left it. The conversation turned on the expected markets, and the report of prices from different parts both of Scotland and England. Treaties were commenced, and Harry Wakefield was lucky enough to find a chap for a part of his drove, and at a very considerable profit—an event of consequence more than sufficient to blot out all remembrances of the unpleasant scuffle in the earlier part of the day. But there remained one party from whose mind that recollection could not have been wiped away by the possession of every head of cattle betwixt Esk and Eden.

This was Robin Oig M'Combich. "That I should have had no weapon," he said, "and for the first time in my life! Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk. The dirk—ha! the English blood! My Muhme's word! When did her word fall to the ground?"

The recollection of the fatal prophecy confirmed the deadly intention which instantly sprang up in his mind.

"Ha! Morrison cannot be many miles behind; and if it were an hundred, what then?"

His impetuous spirit had now a fixed purpose and motive of action, and he turned the light foot of his country towards the wilds, through which he knew, by Mr. Ireby's report, that Morrison was advancing. His mind was wholly engrossed by the sense of injury—injury sustained from a friend; and by the desire of vengeance on one whom he now accounted his most bitter enemy. The treasured ideas of self-importance and self-opinion—of ideal birth and quality, had become more precious to him, (like the hoard to the miser) because he could only enjoy them in secret. But that hoard was pillaged—the idols which he had secretly worshipped had been desecrated and profaned. Insulted, abused, and beaten, he was no longer worthy, in his own opinion, of the name he bore, or the lineage which he belonged to. Nothing was left to him—nothing but revenge; and as the reflection added a galling spur to every step, he determined it should be as sudden and signal as the offence.

When Robin Oig left the door of the alehouse, seven or eight English miles at least lay betwixt Morrison and him. The advance of the former was slow, limited by the sluggish pace of his cattle; the latter left behind him stubble-field and hedgerow, crag and dark heath, all glittering with frost-rime in the broad November moonlight, at the rate of six miles an hour. And now the distant lowing of Morrison's cattle is heard; and now they are seen creeping like moles in size and slowness of motion on the broad face of the moor; and now he meets them—passes them, and stops their conductor.

"May good betide us," said the Westlander. "Is this you, Robin M'Combich, or your wraith?"

"It is Robin Oig M'Combich," answered the Highlander, "and it is not. But never mind that, put pe giving me the skene-dhu."

"What! you are for back to the Highlands! The devil! Have you selt all off before the fair? This beats all for quick markets!"

"I have not sold—I am not going north—maype I will never go north again. Give me pack my dirk, Hugh Morrison, or there will pe words between us."

"Indeed, Robin, I'll be better advised before I gie it back to you; it is a wanchancy weapon in a Highlandman's hand, and I am thinking you will be about some harms-breaking."

"Pruitt, trutt! let me have my weapon," said Robin Oig impatiently.

"Hooly and fairly," said his well-meaning friend. "I'll tell you what will do better than these dirking doings. Ye ken Highlander, and Lowlander, and Border-men are a' ae man's bairns when you are over the Scots dyke. See, the Eskdale callants, and fighting Charlie of Liddesdale, and the Lockerby lads, and the four Dandies of Lustruther, and a wheen mair grey plaids, are coming up behind; and if you are wranged, there is the hand of a Manly Morrison, we'll see you righted, if Carlisle and Stanwix baith took up the feud."

"To tell you the truth," said Robin Oig, desirous of eluding the suspicions of his friend, "I have enlisted with a party of the Black Watch, and must march off to-morrow morning."

"Enlisted! Were you mad or drunk? You must buy yourself off. I can lend you twenty notes, and twenty to that, if the drove sell."

"I thank you—thank ye, Hughie; but I go with good-will the gate that I am going. So the dirk, the dirk!"

"There it is for you then, since less wunna serve. But think on what I was saying. Waes me, it will be sair news in the braes of Balquidder that Robin Oig M'Combich should have run an ill gate, and ta'en on."

"Ill news in Balquidder, indeed!" echoed poor Robin. "But Cot speed you, Hughie, and send you good marcats. Ye winna meet with Robin Oig again, either at tryste or fair."

So saying, he shook hastily the hand of his acquaintance, and set out in the direction from which he had advanced, with the spirit of his former pace.

"There is something wrang with the lad," muttered the Morrison to himself; "but we will maybe see better into it the morn's morning."

But long ere the morning dawned, the catastrophe of our tale had taken place. It was two hours after the affray had happened, and it was totally forgotten by almost every one, when Robin Oig returned to Heskett's inn. The place was filled at once by various sorts of men, and with noises corresponding to their character. There were the grave low sounds of men engaged in busy traffic, with the laugh, the song, and the riotous jest of those who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. Among the last was Harry Wakefield, who, amidst a grinning group of smock-frocks, hobnailed shoes, and jolly English physiognomies, was trolling forth the old ditty,—

*"What though my name be Roger,
Who drives the plough and cart—"*

when he was interrupted by a well-known voice saying in a high and stern voice, marked by the sharp Highland accent, "Harry Waakfelt—if you be a man stand up!"

"What is the matter?—what is it?" the guests demanded of each other.

"It is only a d—d Scotsman," said Fleecebumpkin, who was by this time very drunk, "whom Harry Wakefield helped to his broth to-day, who is now come to have HIS CAULD KAIL het again."

"Harry Waakfelt," repeated the same ominous summons, "stand up, if you be a man!"

There is something in the tone of deep and concentrated passion, which attracts attention and imposes awe, even by the very sound. The guests shrunk back on every side, and gazed at the Highlander as he stood in the middle of them, his brows bent, and his features rigid with resolution.

"I will stand up with all my heart, Robin, my boy, but it shall be to shake hands with you, and drink down all unkindness. It is not the fault of your heart, man, that you don't know how to clench your hands."

By this time he stood opposite to his antagonist, his open and unsuspecting look strangely contrasted with the stern purpose, which gleamed wild, dark, and vindictive in the eyes of the Highlander.

"'Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl."

"I can fight," answered Robin Oig sternly, but calmly, "and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me to-day how the Saxon churls fight; I show you now how the Highland Dunnie-wassel fights."

He seconded the word with the action, and plunged the dagger, which he suddenly displayed, into the broad breast of the English yeoman, with such fatal certainty and force that the hilt made a hollow sound against the breast-bone, and the double-edged point split the very heart of his victim. Harry Wakefield fell and expired with a single groan. His assassin next seized the bailiff by the collar, and offered the bloody poniard to his throat, whilst dread and surprise rendered the man incapable of defence.

"It were very just to lay you peside him," he said, "but the blood of a pase pickthank shall never mix on my father's dirk, with that of a brave man."

As he spoke, he cast the man from him with so much force that he fell on the floor, while Robin, with his other hand, threw the fatal weapon into the blazing turf-fire.

"There," he said, "take me who likes—and let fire cleanse blood if it can."

The pause of astonishment still continuing, Robin Oig asked for a peace-officer, and a constable having stepped out, he surrendered himself to his custody.

"A bloody night's work you have made of it," said the constable.

"Your own fault," said the Highlander. "Had you kept his hands off me two hours since, he would have been now as well and merry as he was two minutes since."

"It must be sorely answered," said the peace-officer.

"Never you mind that—death pays all debts; it will pay that too."

The horror of the bystanders began now to give way to indignation, and the sight of a favourite companion murdered in the midst of them, the provocation being, in their opinion, so utterly inadequate to the excess of vengeance, might have induced them to kill the perpetrator of the deed even upon the very spot. The constable, however, did his duty on this occasion, and with the assistance of some of the more reasonable persons present, procured horses to guard the prisoner to Carlisle, to abide his doom at the next assizes. While the escort was preparing, the prisoner neither expressed the least interest, nor attempted the slightest reply. Only, before he was carried from the fatal apartment, he desired to look at the dead body, which, raised from the floor, had been deposited upon the large table (at the head of which Harry Wakefield had presided but a few minutes before, full of life, vigour, and animation), until the surgeons should examine the mortal wound. The face of the corpse was decently covered with a napkin. To the surprise and horror of the bystanders, which displayed itself in a general AH! drawn through clenched teeth and half-shut lips, Robin Oig removed the cloth, and gazed with a mournful but steady eye on the lifeless visage, which had been so lately animated that the smile of good-humoured confidence in his own strength, of conciliation at once and contempt towards his enemy, still curled his lip. While those present expected that the wound, which had so lately flooded the apartment with gore, would send forth fresh streams at the touch of the homicide, Robin Oig replaced the covering with the brief exclamation, "He was a pretty man!"

My story is nearly ended. The unfortunate Highlander stood his trial at Carlisle. I was myself present, and as a young Scottish lawyer, or barrister at least, and reputed a man of some quality, the politeness of the Sheriff of Cumberland offered me a place on the bench. The facts of the case were proved in the manner I have related them; and whatever might be at first the prejudice of the audience against a crime so un-English as that of assassination from revenge, yet when the rooted national prejudices of the prisoner had been explained, which made him consider himself as stained with indelible dishonour, when subjected to personal violence—when his previous patience, moderation, and endurance were considered—the generosity of the English audience was inclined to regard his crime as the wayward aberration of a false idea of honour rather than as flowing from a heart naturally savage, or perverted by habitual vice. I shall never forget the charge of the venerable judge to the jury, although not at that time liable to be much affected either by that which was eloquent or pathetic.

"We have had," he said, "in the previous part of our duty" (alluding to some former trials), "to discuss crimes which infer disgust and abhorrence, while they call down the well-merited vengeance of the law. It is now our still more melancholy task to apply its salutary though severe enactments to a case of a very singular character, in which the crime (for a crime it is, and a deep one) arose less out of the malevolence of the heart, than the error of the understanding—less from any idea of committing wrong, than from an unhappily perverted notion of that which is right. Here we have two men, highly esteemed, it has been stated, in their rank of life, and attached, it seems, to each other as friends, one of whose lives has been already sacrificed to a punctilio, and the other is about to prove the vengeance of the offended laws; and yet both may claim our commiseration at least, as men acting in ignorance of each other's national prejudices, and unhappily misguided rather than voluntarily erring from the path of right conduct.

"In the original cause of the misunderstanding, we must in justice give the right to the prisoner at the bar. He had acquired possession of the enclosure, which was the object of competition, by a legal contract with the proprietor, Mr. Ireby; and yet, when accosted with reproaches undeserved in themselves, and galling, doubtless, to a temper at least sufficiently susceptible of passion, he offered notwithstanding, to yield up half his acquisition, for the sake of peace and good neighbourhood, and his amicable proposal was rejected with scorn. Then follows the scene at Mr. Heskett the publican's, and you will observe how the stranger was treated by the deceased, and, I am sorry to observe, by those around, who seem to have urged him in a manner which was aggravating in the highest degree. While he asked for peace and for composition, and offered submission to a magistrate, or to a mutual arbiter, the prisoner was insulted by a whole company, who seem on this occasion to have forgotten the national maxim of 'fair play;' and while attempting to escape from the place in peace, he was intercepted, struck down, and beaten to the effusion of his blood.

"Gentlemen of the jury, it was with some impatience that I heard my learned brother who opened the case for the crown give an unfavourable turn to the prisoner's conduct on this occasion. He said the prisoner was afraid to encounter his antagonist in fair fight, or to submit to the laws of the ring; and that therefore, like a cowardly Italian, he had recourse to his fatal stiletto, to murder the man whom he dared not meet in manly encounter. I observed the prisoner shrink from this part of the accusation with the abhorrence natural to a brave man; and as I would wish to make my words impressive when I point his real crime, I must secure his opinion of my impartiality by rebutting everything that seems to me a false accusation. There can be no doubt that the prisoner is a man of resolution—too much resolution. I wish to Heaven that he had less—or, rather that he had had a better education to regulate it.

"Gentlemen, as to the laws my brother talks of, they may be known in the bull-ring, or the bear-garden, or the cock-pit, but they are not known here. Or, if they should be so far admitted as furnishing a species of proof that no malice was intended in this sort of combat, from which fatal accidents do sometimes arise, it can only be so admitted when both parties are IN PARI CASU, equally acquainted with, and equally willing to refer themselves to, that species of arbitrament. But will it be contended that a man of superior rank and education is to be subjected, or is obliged to subject himself, to this coarse and brutal strife, perhaps in opposition to a younger, stronger, or more skilful opponent? Certainly even the pugilistic code, if founded upon the fair play of Merry Old England, as my brother alleges it to be, can contain nothing so preposterous. And, gentlemen of the jury, if the laws would support an English gentleman, wearing, we will suppose, his sword, in defending himself by force against a violent personal aggression of the nature offered to this prisoner, they will not less protect a foreigner and a stranger, involved in the same unpleasing circumstances. If, therefore, gentlemen of the jury, when thus pressed by a VIS MAJOR, the object of obloquy to a whole company, and of direct violence from one at least, and, as he might reasonably apprehend, from more, the panel had produced the weapon which his countrymen, as we are informed, generally carry about their persons, and the same unhappy circumstance had ensued which you have heard detailed in evidence, I could not in my conscience have asked from you a verdict of murder. The prisoner's personal defence might indeed, even in that case, have gone more or less beyond the MODERAMEN INCULPATAE TUTELAE, spoken of by lawyers; but the punishment incurred would have been that of manslaughter, not of murder. I beg leave to add that I should have thought this milder species of charge was demanded in the case supposed, notwithstanding the statute of James I. cap. 8, which takes the case of slaughter by stabbing with a short weapon, even without MALICE PREPENSE, out of the benefit of clergy. For this statute of stabbing, as it is termed, arose out of a temporary cause; and as the real guilt is the same, whether the slaughter be committed by the dagger, or by sword or pistol, the benignity of the modern law places them all on the same, or nearly the same, footing.

"But, gentlemen of the jury, the pinch of the case lies in the interval of two hours interposed betwixt the reception of the injury and the fatal retaliation. In the heat of affray and CHAUDE MELEE, law, compassionating the infirmities of humanity, makes allowance for the passions which rule such a stormy moment—for the sense of present pain, for the apprehension of further injury, for the difficulty of ascertaining with due accuracy the precise degree of violence which is necessary to protect the person of the individual, without annoying or injuring the assailant more than is absolutely necessary. But the time necessary to walk twelve miles, however speedily performed, was an interval sufficient for the prisoner to have recollected himself; and the violence with which he carried his purpose into effect, with so many circumstances of deliberate determination, could neither be induced by the passion of anger, nor that of fear. It was the purpose and the act of predetermined revenge, for which law neither can, will, nor ought to have sympathy or allowance.

"It is true, we may repeat to ourselves, in alleviation of this poor man's unhappy action, that his case is a very peculiar one. The country which he inhabits was, in the days of many now alive, inaccessible to the laws, not only of England, which have not even yet penetrated thither, but to those to which our neighbours of Scotland are subjected, and which must be supposed to be, and no doubt actually are, founded upon the general principles of justice and equity which pervade every civilized country. Amongst their mountains, as among the North American Indians, the various tribes were wont to make war upon each other, so that each man was obliged to go armed for his own protection. These men, from the ideas which they entertained of their own descent and of their own consequence, regarded themselves as so many cavaliers or men-at-arms, rather than as the peasantry of a peaceful country. Those laws of the ring, as my brother terms them,

were unknown to the race of warlike mountaineers; that decision of quarrels by no other weapons than those which nature has given every man must to them have seemed as vulgar and as preposterous as to the NOBLESSE of France. Revenge, on the other hand, must have been as familiar to their habits of society as to those of the Cherokees or Mohawks. It is indeed, as described by Bacon, at bottom a kind of wild untutored justice; for the fear of retaliation must withhold the hands of the oppressor where there is no regular law to check daring violence. But though all this may be granted, and though we may allow that, such having been the case of the Highlands in the days of the prisoner's fathers, many of the opinions and sentiments must still continue to influence the present generation, it cannot, and ought not, even in this most painful case, to alter the administration of the law, either in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, or in mine. The first object of civilisation is to place the general protection of the law, equally administered, in the room of that wild justice which every man cut and carved for himself, according to the length of his sword and the strength of his arm. The law says to the subjects, with a voice only inferior to that of the Deity, 'Vengeance is mine.' The instant that there is time for passion to cool, and reason to interpose, an injured party must become aware that the law assumes the exclusive cognisance of the right and wrong betwixt the parties, and opposes her inviolable buckler to every attempt of the private party to right himself. I repeat that this unhappy man ought personally to be the object rather of our pity than our abhorrence, for he failed in his ignorance, and from mistaken notions of honour. But his crime is not the less that of murder, gentlemen, and, in your high and important office, it is your duty so to find. Englishmen have their angry passions as well as Scots; and should this man's action remain unpunished, you may unsheath, under various pretences, a thousand daggers betwixt the Land's-End and the Orkneys."

The venerable Judge thus ended what, to judge by his apparent emotion, and by the tears which filled his eyes, was really a painful task. The jury, according to his instructions, brought in a verdict of Guilty; and Robin Oig M'Combich, ALIAS McGregor, was sentenced to death, and left for execution, which took place accordingly. He met his fate with great firmness, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. "I give a life for the life I took," he said, "and what can I do more?" [See Note 11.—Robert Donn's Poems.]

BOOK XXX
THE DAUGHTER OF THE SURGEON
CHAPTER THE FIRST.

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,
And hovering Death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show;
In Misery's darkest caverns known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die;
No summons mock'd by cold delay,
No petty gains disclaim'd by pride,
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

The exquisitely beautiful portrait which the Rambler has painted of his friend Levett, well describes Gideon Gray, and many other village doctors, from whom Scotland reaps more benefit, and to whom she is perhaps more ungrateful than to any other class of men, excepting her schoolmasters.

Such a rural man of medicine is usually the inhabitant of some pretty borough or village, which forms the central point of his practice. But, besides attending to such cases as the village may afford, he is day and night at the service of every one who may command his assistance within a circle of forty miles in diameter, untraversed by roads in many directions, and including moors, mountains, rivers, and lakes. For late and dangerous journeys through an inaccessible country for services of the most essential kind, rendered at the expense, or risk at least, of his own health and life, the Scottish village doctor receives at best a very moderate recompense, often one which is totally inadequate, and very frequently none whatever. He has none of the ample resources proper to the brothers of the profession in an English town. The burgesses of a Scottish borough are rendered, by their limited means of luxury, inaccessible to gout, surfeits, and all the comfortable chronic diseases which are attendant on wealth and indolence. Four years, or so, of abstemiousness, enable them to stand an election dinner; and there is no hope of broken heads among a score or two of quiet electors, who settle the business over a table. There the mothers of the state never make a point of pouring, in the course of every revolving year, a certain quantity of doctor's stuff through the bowels of their beloved children. Every old woman, from the Townhead to the Townfit, can prescribe a dose of salts, or spread a plaster; and it is only when a fever or a palsy renders matters serious, that the assistance of the doctor is invoked by his neighbours in the borough.

But still the man of science cannot complain of inactivity or want of practice. If he does not find patients at his door, he seeks them through a wide circle. Like the ghostly lover of Burger's Leonora, he mounts at midnight and traverses in darkness, paths which, to those less accustomed to them, seem formidable in daylight, through straits where the slightest aberration would plunge him into a morass, or throw him over a precipice, on to cabins which his horse might ride over without knowing they lay in his way, unless he happened to fall through the roofs. When he arrives at such a stately termination of his journey, where his services are required, either to bring a wretch into the world, or prevent one from leaving it, the scene of misery is often such, that, far from touching the hard-saved shillings which are gratefully offered to him, he bestows his medicines as well as his attendance—for charity. I have heard the celebrated traveller Mungo Park, who had experienced both courses of life, rather give the preference to travelling as a discoverer in Africa, than to wandering by night and day the wilds of his native land in the capacity of a country medical practitioner. He mentioned having once upon a time rode forty miles, sat up all night, and successfully assisted a woman under influence of the primitive curse, for which his sole remuneration was a roasted potato and a draught of buttermilk. But his was not the heart which grudged the labour that relieved human misery. In short, there is no creature in Scotland that works harder and is more poorly requited than the country doctor, unless perhaps it may be his horse. Yet the horse is, and indeed must be, hardy, active, and indefatigable, in spite of a rough coat and indifferent condition; and so you will often find in his master, under an unpromising and blunt exterior, professional skill and enthusiasm, intelligence, humanity, courage, and science.

Mr. Gideon Gray, surgeon in the village of Middlemas, situated in one of the midland counties of Scotland, led the rough, active, and ill-rewarded course of life which we have endeavoured to describe. He was a man between forty and fifty, devoted to his profession, and of such reputation in the medical world, that he had been more than once, as opportunities occurred, advised to exchange Middlemas and its meagre circle of practice, for some of the larger towns in Scotland, or for Edinburgh itself. This advice he had always declined. He was a plain blunt man, who did not love restraint, and was unwilling to subject himself to that which was exacted in polite society. He had not himself found out, nor had any friend hinted to him, that a slight touch of the cynic, in manner and habits, gives the physician, to the common eye, an air of authority which greatly tends to enlarge his reputation. Mr. Gray, or, as the country people called him, Doctor Gray, (he might hold the title by diploma for what I know, though he only claimed the rank of Master of Arts,) had few wants, and these were amply supplied by a professional income which generally approached two hundred pounds a year, for which, upon an average, he travelled about five thousand miles on horseback in the course of the twelve months. Nay, so liberally did this revenue support himself and his ponies, called Pestle and Mortar, which he exercised alternately, that he took a damsel to share it, Jean Watson, namely, the cherry-cheeked daughter of an honest farmer, who being herself one of twelve children who had been brought up on an income of fourscore pounds a year, never thought there could be poverty in more than double the sum; and looked on Gray, though now termed by irreverent youth the Old Doctor, as a very advantageous match. For several years they had no children, and it seemed as if Doctor Gray, who had so often assisted the efforts of the goddess Lucina, was never to invoke her in his own behalf. Yet his domestic roof was, on a remarkable occasion, decreed to be the scene where the goddess's art was required.

Late of an autumn evening three old women might be observed plying their aged limbs through the single street of the village at Middlemas towards the honoured door, which, fenced off from the vulgar causeway, was defended by a broken paling, enclosing two slips of ground, half arable, half overrun with an abortive attempt at shrubbery. The door itself was blazoned with the name of Gideon Gray, M. A. Surgeon, &c. &c. Some of the idle young fellows, who had been a minute or two before loitering at the other end of the street before the door of the alehouse, (for the pretended inn deserved no better name,) now accompanied the old dames with shouts of laughter, excited by their unwonted agility; and with bets on the winner, as loudly expressed as if they had been laid at the starting post of Middlemas races. "Half a mutchkin on Luckie Simson!"—"Auld Peg Tamson against the field!"—"Mair speed, Alison Jaup, ye'll tak the wind out of them yet!"—"Canny against the hill, lasses, or we may have a burstern auld earline amang ye!" These, and a thousand such gibes, rent the air, without being noticed, or even heard, by the anxious racers, whose object of contention seemed to be, which should first reach the Doctor's door.

"Guide us, Doctor, what can be the matter now?" said Mrs. Gray, whose character was that of a good-natured simpleton; "Here's Peg Tamson, Jean Simson, and Alison Jaup, running a race on the hie street of the burgh!"

The Doctor, who had but the moment before hung his wet great-coat before the fire, (for he was just dismounted from a long journey,) hastened down stairs, arguing some new occasion for his services, and happy, that, from, the character of the messengers, it was likely to be within burgh, and not landward.

He had just reached the door as Luckie Simson, one of the racers, arrived in the little area before it. She had got the start, and kept it, but at the expense, for the time, of her power of utterance; for when she came in presence of the Doctor, she stood blowing like a grampus, her loose toy flying back from her face, making the most violent effort to speak, but without the power of uttering a single intelligible word. Peg Thompson whipped in before her.

"The leddy, sir, the leddy!"

"Instant help, instant help!"—screamed rather than uttered, Alison Jaup; while Luckie Simson, who had certainly won the race, found words to claim the prize which had set them all in motion.

"And I hope, sir, you will recommend me to be the sick-nurse; I was here to bring you the tidings lang before ony o' thae lazy queans."

Loud were the counter-protestations of the two competitors, and loud the laugh of the idle *loons* who listened at a little distance.

"Hold your tongue, ye flying fools," said the Doctor; "and you, ye idle rascals, if I come out among you." So saying, he smacked his long-lashed whip with great emphasis, producing much the effect of the celebrated *Quos ego* of Neptune in the first *AEneid*.—"And now," said the Doctor, "where, or who, is this lady?"

The question was scarce necessary; for a plain carriage, with four horses, came at a foot's pace towards the door of the Doctor's house, and the old women, now more at their ease, gave the Doctor to understand, that the gentleman thought the accommodation of the Swan Inn totally unfit for his lady's rank and condition, and had, by their advice, (each claiming the merit of the suggestion,) brought her here, to experience the hospitality of the *west room*;—a spare apartment, in which Doctor Gray occasionally accommodated such patients, as he desired to keep for a space of time under his own eye.

There were two persons only in the vehicle. The one, a gentleman in a riding dress, sprung out, and having received from the Doctor an assurance that the lady would receive tolerable accommodation in his house, he lent assistance to his companion to leave the carriage, and with great apparent satisfaction, saw her safely deposited in a decent sleeping apartment, and under the respectable charge of the Doctor and his lady, who assured him once more of every species of attention. To bind their promise more firmly, the stranger slipped a purse of twenty guineas (for this story chanced in the golden age) into the hand of the Doctor, as an earnest of the most liberal recompense, and requested he would spare no expense in providing all that was necessary or desirable for a person in the lady's condition, and for the helpless being to whom she might immediately be expected to give birth. He then said he would retire to the inn, where he begged a message might instantly acquaint him with the expected change in the lady's situation.

"She is of rank," he said, "and a foreigner; let no expense be spared. We designed to have reached Edinburgh, but were forced to turn off the road by an accident." Once more he said, "Let no expense be spared, and manage that she may travel as soon as possible."

"That," said the Doctor, "is past my control. Nature must not be hurried, and she avenges herself of every attempt to do so."

"But art," said the stranger, "can do much," and he proffered a second purse, which seemed as heavy as the first.

"Art," said the Doctor, "may be recompensed, but cannot be purchased. You have already paid me more than enough to take the utmost care I can of your lady; should I accept more money, it could only be for promising, by implication at least, what is beyond my power to perform. Every possible care shall be taken of your lady, and that affords the best chance of her being speedily able to travel. Now, go you to the inn, sir, for I may be instantly wanted, and we have not yet provided either an attendant for the lady, or a nurse for the child; but both shall be presently done."

"Yet a moment, Doctor—what languages do you understand?"

"Latin and French I can speak indifferently, and so as to be understood; and I read a little Italian."

"But no Portuguese or Spanish?" continued the stranger.

"No, sir."

"That is unlucky. But you may make her understand you by means of French. Take notice, you are to comply with her request in everything—if you want means to do so, you may apply to me."

"May I ask, sir, by what name the lady is to be?"

"It is totally indifferent," said the stranger, interrupting the question; "You shall know it at more leisure."

So saying, he threw his ample cloak about him, turning himself half round to assist the operation, with an air which the Doctor would have found it difficult to imitate, and walked down the street to the little inn. Here he paid and dismissed the postilions, and shut himself up in an apartment, ordering no one to be admitted till the Doctor should call.

The Doctor, when he returned to his patient's apartment, found his wife in great surprise, which, as is usual with persons of her character, was not unmixed with fear and anxiety.

"She cannot speak a word like a Christian being," said Mrs. Gray.

"I know it," said the Doctor.

"But she threeps to keep on a black fause-face, and skirls if we offer to take it away."

"Well then, let her wear it—What harm will it do?"

"Harm, Doctor!" Was ever honest woman brought to bed with a fause-face on?"

"Seldom, perhaps. But, Jean, my dear, those who are not quite honest must be brought to bed all the same as those who are, and we are not to endanger the poor thing's life by contradicting her whims at present."

Approaching the sick woman's bed, he observed that she indeed wore a thin silk mask, of the kind which do such uncommon service in the elder comedy; such as women of rank still wore in travelling, but certainly never in the situation of this poor lady. It would seem she had sustained importunity on the subject, for when she saw the Doctor, she put her hand to her face, as if she was afraid he would insist on pulling off the vizard.

He hastened to say, in tolerable French, that her will should be a law to them in every respect, and that she was at perfect liberty to wear the mask till it was her pleasure to lay it aside. She understood him; for she replied, by a very imperfect attempt, in the same language, to express her gratitude for the permission, as she seemed to regard it, of retaining her disguise.

The Doctor proceeded to other arrangements; and, for the satisfaction of those readers who may love minute information, we record, that Luckie Simson, the first in the race, carried as a prize the situation of sick-nurse beside the delicate patient; that Peg Thomson was permitted the privilege of recommending her good-daughter, Bet Jamieson, to be wet-nurse; and an *oe*, or grandchild, of Luckie Jaup was hired to assist in the increased drudgery of the family; the Doctor thus, like a practised minister, dividing among his trusty adherents such good things as fortune placed at his disposal.

About one in the morning the Doctor made his appearance at the Swan Inn, and acquainted the stranger gentleman, that he wished him joy of being the father of a healthy boy, and that the mother was, in the usual phrase, as well as could be expected.

The stranger heard the news with seeming satisfaction, and then exclaimed, "He must be christened, Doctor! he must be christened instantly!"

"There can be no hurry for that," said the Doctor.

"We think otherwise," said the stranger, cutting his argument short. "I am a Catholic, Doctor, and as I may be obliged to leave this place before the lady is able to travel, I desire to see my child received into the pale of the Church. There is, I understand, a Catholic priest in this wretched place?"

"There is a Catholic gentleman, sir, Mr. Goodriche, who is reported to be in orders."

"I commend your caution, Doctor," said the stranger; "it is dangerous to be too positive on any subject. I will bring that same Mr. Goodriche to your house to-morrow."

Gray hesitated for a moment. "I am a Presbyterian Protestant, sir," he said, "a friend to the constitution as established in Church and State, as I have a good right, having drawn his Majesty's pay, God bless him, for four years, as surgeon's mate in the Cameronian regiment, as my regimental Bible and commission can testify. But although I be bound especially to abhor all trafficking or trinketing with Papists, yet I will not stand in the way of a tender conscience. Sir, you may call with Mr. Goodriche, when you please, at my house; and undoubtedly, you being, as I suppose, the father of the child, you will arrange matters as you please; only, I do not desire to be though an abettor or countenancer of any part of the Popish ritual."

"Enough, sir," said the stranger haughtily, "we understand each other."

The next day he appeared at the Doctor's house with Mr. Goodriche, and two persons understood to belong to that reverend gentleman's communion. The party were shut up in an apartment with the infant, and it may be presumed that the solemnity of baptism was administered to the unconscious being, thus strangely

launched upon the world. When the priest and witnesses had retired, the strange gentleman informed Mr. Gray, that, as the lady had been pronounced unfit for travelling for several days, he was himself about to leave the neighbourhood, but would return thither in the space of ten days, when he hoped to find his companion able to leave it.

"And by what name are we to call the child and mother?"

"The infant's name is Richard."

"But it must have some surname—so must the lady—She cannot reside in my house, yet be without a name."

"Call them by the name of your town here—Middlemas, I think it is?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Middlemas is the name of the mother, and Richard Middlemas of the child—and I am Matthew Middlemas, at your service. This," he continued, "will provide Mrs. Middlemas in every thing she may wish to possess—or assist her in case of accidents." With that he placed L100 in Mr. Gray's hand, who rather scrupled receiving it, saying, "He supposed the lady was qualified to be her own purse-bearer."

"The worst in the world, I assure you, Doctor," replied the stranger. "If she wished to change that piece of paper, she would scarce know how many guineas she should receive for it. No, Mr. Gray, I assure you you will find Mrs. Middleton—Middlemas—what did I call her—as ignorant of the affairs of this world as any one you have met with in your practice: So you will please to be her treasurer and administrator for the time, as for a patient that is incapable to look after her own affairs."

This was spoke, as it struck Dr. Gray, in rather a haughty and supercilious manner. The words intimated nothing in themselves, more than the same desire of preserving incognito, which might be gathered from all the rest of the stranger's conduct; but the manner seemed to say, "I am not a person to be questioned by any one—what I say must be received without comment, how little soever you may believe or understand it." It strengthened Gray in his opinion, that he had before him a case either of seduction, or of private marriage, betwixt persons of the very highest rank; and the whole bearing, both of the lady and the gentleman, confirmed his suspicions. It was not in his nature to be troublesome or inquisitive, but he could not fail to see that the lady wore no marriage-ring; and her deep sorrow, and perpetual tremor, seemed to indicate an unhappy creature, who had lost the protection of parents, without acquiring a legitimate right to that of a husband. He was therefore somewhat anxious when Mr. Middlemas, after a private conference of some length with the lady, bade him farewell. It is true, he assured him of his return within ten days, being the very shortest space which Gray could be prevailed upon to assign for any prospect of the lady being moved with safety.

"I trust in Heaven that he will return," said Gray to himself, "but there is too much mystery about all this, for the matter being a plain and well-meaning transaction. If he intends to treat this poor thing, as many a poor girl has been used before, I hope that my house will not be the scene in which he chooses to desert her. The leaving the money has somewhat a suspicious aspect, and looks as if my friend were in the act of making some compromise with his conscience. Well—I must hope the best. Meantime, my path plainly is to do what I can for the poor lady's benefit."

Mr. Gray visited his patient shortly after Mr. Middlemas's departure—as soon, indeed, as he could be admitted. He found her in violent agitation. Gray's experience dictated the best mode of relief and tranquillity. He caused her infant to be brought to her. She wept over it for a long time, and the violence of her agitation subsided under the influence of parental feelings, which, from her appearance of extreme youth, she must have experienced for the first time.

The observant physician could, after this paroxysm, remark that his patient's mind was chiefly occupied in computing the passage of the time, and anticipating the period when the return of her husband—if husband he was—might be expected. She consulted almanacks, enquired concerning distances, though so cautiously as to make it evident she desired to give no indication of the direction of her companion's journey, and repeatedly compared, her watch with those of others; exercising, it was evident, all that delusive species of mental arithmetic by which mortals attempt to accelerate the passage of Time while they calculate his progress. At other times she wept anew over her child, which was by all judges pronounced as goodly an infant as needed to be seen; and Gray sometimes observed that she murmured sentences to the unconscious infant, not only the words, but the very sound and accents of which were strange to him, and which, in particular, he knew not to be Portuguese.

Mr. Goodriche, the Catholic priest, demanded access to her upon one occasion. She at first declined his visit, but afterwards received it, under the idea, perhaps, that he might have news from Mr. Middlemas, as he called himself. The interview was a very short one, and the priest left the lady's apartment in displeasure, which his prudence could scarce disguise from Mr. Gray. He never returned, although the lady's condition would have made his attentions and consolations necessary, had she been a member of the Catholic Church.

Our Doctor began at length to suspect his fair guest was a Jewess, who had yielded up her person and affections to one of a different religion; and the peculiar style of her beautiful countenance went to enforce this opinion. The circumstance made no difference to Gray, who saw only her distress and desolation, and endeavoured to remedy both to the utmost of his power. He was, however, desirous to conceal it from his wife, and the others around the sick person, whose prudence and liberality of thinking might be more justly doubted. He therefore so regulated her diet, that she could not be either offended, or brought under suspicion, by any of the articles forbidden by the Mosaic law being presented to her. In other respects than what concerned her health or convenience, he had but little intercourse with her.

The space passed within which the stranger's return to the borough had been so anxiously expected by his female companion. The disappointment occasioned by his non-arrival was manifested in the convalescent by inquietude, which was at first mingled with peevishness, and afterwards with doubt and fear. When two or three days had passed without message or letter of any kind, Gray himself became anxious, both on his own account and the poor lady's, lest the stranger should have actually entertained the idea of deserting this defenceless and probably injured woman. He longed to have some communication with her, which might enable him to judge what enquiries could be made, or what else was most fitting to be done. But so imperfect was the poor young woman's knowledge of the French language, and perhaps so unwilling she herself to throw any light on her situation, that every attempt of this kind proved abortive. When Gray asked questions concerning any subject which appeared to approach to explanation, he observed she usually answered him by shaking her head, in token of not understanding what he said; at other times by silence and with tears, and sometimes referring him to *Monsieur*.

For *Monsieur's* arrival, then, Gray began to become very impatient, as that which alone could put an end to a disagreeable species of mystery, which the good company of the borough began now to make the principal subject of their gossip; some blaming Gray for taking foreign *landloupers* [Footnote: Strollers.] into his house, on the subject of whose morals the most serious doubts might be entertained; others envying the "bonny hand" the doctor was like to make of it, by having disposal of the wealthy stranger's travelling funds; a circumstance which could not be well concealed from the public, when the honest man's expenditure for trifling articles of luxury came far to exceed its ordinary bounds.

The conscious probity of the honest Doctor enabled him to despise this sort of tittle-tattle, though the secret knowledge of its existence could not be agreeable to him. He went his usual rounds with his usual perseverance, and waited with patience until time should throw light on the subject and history of his lodger. It was now the fourth week after her confinement, and the recovery of the stranger might be considered as perfect, when Gray, returning from one of his ten-mile visits, saw a post-chaise and four horses at the door. "This man has returned," he said, "and my suspicions have done him less than justice." With that he spurred his horse, a signal which the trusty steed obeyed the more readily, as its progress was in the direction of the stable door. But when, dismounting, the Doctor hurried into his own house, it seemed to him, that the departure as well as the arrival of this distressed lady was destined to bring confusion to his peaceful dwelling. Several idlers had assembled about his door, and two or three had impudently thrust themselves forward almost into the passage, to listen to a confused altercation which was heard from within.

The Doctor hastened forward, the foremost of the intruders retreating in confusion on his approach, while he caught the tones of his wife's voice, raised to a pitch which he knew, by experience, boded no good; for Mrs. Gray, good-humoured and tractable in general, could sometimes perform the high part in a matrimonial duet. Having much more confidence in his wife's good intentions than her prudence, he lost no time in pushing into the parlour, to take the matter into his own

hands. Here he found his helpmate at the head of the whole militia of the sick lady's apartment, that is, wet nurse, and sick nurse, and girl of all work, engaged in violent dispute with two strangers. The one was a dark-featured elderly man, with an eye of much sharpness and severity of expression, which now seemed partly quenched by a mixture of grief and mortification. The other, who appeared actively sustaining the dispute with Mrs. Gray, was a stout, bold-looking, hard-faced person, armed with pistols, of which he made rather an unnecessary and ostentatious display.

"Here is my husband, sir," said Mrs. Gray, in a tone of triumph, for she had the grace to believe the Doctor one of the greatest men living,— "Here is the Doctor—let us see what you will say now."

"Why just what I said before, ma'am," answered the man, "which is, that my warrant must be obeyed. It is regular, ma'am, regular."

So saying, he struck the forefinger of his right hand against a paper which he held towards Mrs. Gray with his left.

"Address yourself to me, if you please, sir," said the Doctor, seeing that he ought to lose no time in removing the cause into the proper court. "I am the master of this house, sir, and I wish to know the cause of this visit."

"My business is soon told," said the man. "I am a king's messenger, and this lady has treated me as if I was a baron-bailie's officer."

"That is not the question, sir," replied the Doctor. "If you are a king's messenger, where is your warrant, and what do you propose to do here?" At the same time he whispered the little wench to call Mr. Lawford, the town-clerk, to come thither as fast as he possibly could. The good-daughter of Peg Thomson started off with an activity worthy of her mother-in-law.

"There is my warrant," said the official, "and you may satisfy yourself."

"The shameless loon dare not tell the Doctor his errand," said Mrs. Gray exultingly.

"A bonny errand it is," said old Lucky Simson, "to carry away a lying-in woman as a gled [Footnote: Or Kite.] would do a clocking-hen."

"A woman no a month delivered"—echoed the nurse Jamieson.

"Twenty-four days eight hours and seven minutes to a second," said Mrs. Gray.

The Doctor having looked over the warrant, which was regular, began to be afraid that the females of his family, in their zeal for defending the character of their sex, might be stirred up into some sudden fit of mutiny, and therefore commanded them to be silent.

"This," he said, "is a warrant for arresting the bodies of Richard Tresham, and of Zilia de Moncada on account of high treason. Sir, I have served his Majesty, and this is not a house in which traitors are harboured. I know nothing of any of these two persons, nor have I ever heard even their names."

"But the lady whom you have received into your family," said the messenger, "is Zilia de Moncada, and here stands her father, Matthias de Moncada, who will make oath to it."

"If this be true," said Mr. Gray, looking towards the alleged officer, "you have taken a singular duty on you. It is neither my habit to deny my own actions, nor to oppose the laws of the land. There is a lady in this house slowly recovering from confinement, having become under this roof the mother of a healthy child. If she be the person described in this warrant, and this gentleman's daughter, I must surrender her to the laws of the country."

Here the Esculapian militia were once more in motion.

"Surrender, Dr. Gray! It's a shame to hear you speak, and you that lives by women and weans, abuse your other means!" so exclaimed his fair better part.

"I wonder to hear the Doctor!" said the younger nurse; "there's no a wife in the town would believe it o' him."

"I aye thought the Doctor was a man till this moment," said Luckie Simson; "but I believe him now to be an auld wife, little baulder than mysell; and I dinna wonder that poor Mrs. Gray"—

"Hold your peace, you foolish woman," said the Doctor. "Do you think this business is not bad enough already, that you are making it worse with your senseless claver? [Footnote: Tattling].—Gentlemen, this is a very sad case. Here is a warrant for a high crime against a poor creature, who is little fit to be removed from one house to another, much more dragged to a prison. I tell you plainly, that I think the execution of this arrest may cause her death. It is your business, sir, if you be really her father, to consider what you can do to soften this matter, rather than drive it on."

"Better death than dishonour," replied the stern-looking old man, with a voice as harsh as his aspect; "and you, messenger," he continued, "look what you do, and execute the warrant at your peril."

"You hear," said the man, appealing to the Doctor himself, "I must have immediate access to the lady."

"In a lucky time," said Mr. Gray, "here comes the town-clerk.—You are very welcome, Mr. Lawford. Your opinion here is much wanted as a man of law, as well as of sense and humanity. I was never more glad to see you in all my life."

He then rapidly stated the case; and the messenger, understanding the new-comer to be a man of some authority, again exhibited his warrant.

"This is a very sufficient and valid warrant, Dr. Gray," replied the man of law. "Nevertheless, if you are disposed to make oath, that instant removal would be unfavourable to the lady's health, unquestionably she must remain here, suitably guarded."

"It is not so much the mere act of locomotion which I am afraid of," said the surgeon; "but I am free to depone, on soul and conscience, that the shame and fear of her father's anger, and the sense of the affront of such an arrest, with terror for its consequences, may occasion violent and dangerous illness—even death itself."

"The father must see the daughter, though they may have quarrelled," said Mr. Lawford; "the officer of justice must execute his warrant though it should frighten the criminal to death; these evils are only contingent, not direct and immediate consequences. You must give up the lady, Mr. Gray, though your hesitation is very natural."

"At least, Mr. Lawford, I ought to be certain that the person in my house is the party they search for."

"Admit me to her apartment," replied the man whom the messenger termed Moncada.

The messenger, whom the presence of Lawford had made something more placid, began to become impudent once more. He hoped, he said, by means of his female prisoner, to acquire the information necessary to apprehend the more guilty person. If more delays were thrown in his way, that information might come too late, and he would make all who were accessory to such delay responsible for the consequences.

"And I," said Mr. Gray, "though I were to be brought to the gallows for it, protest, that this course may be the murder of my patient.—Can bail not be taken, Mr. Lawford?"

"Not in cases of high treason," said the official person; and then continued in a confidential tone, "Come, Mr. Gray, we all know you to be a person well affected to our Royal Sovereign King George and the Government; but you must not push this too far, lest you bring yourself into trouble, which every body in Middlemas would be sorry for. The forty-five has not been so far gone by, but we can remember enough of warrants of high treason—ay, and ladies of quality committed upon such charges. But they were all favourably dealt with—Lady Ogilvy, Lady Macintosh, Flora Macdonald, and all. No doubt this gentleman knows what he is doing, and has assurances of the young lady's safety—So you must jouk and let the jaw gae by, as we say."

"Follow me, then, gentleman," said Gideon, "and you shall see the young lady;" and then, his strong features working with emotion at anticipation of the distress which he was about to inflict, he led the way up the small staircase, and opening the door, said to Moncada, who had followed him, "This is your daughter's only place of refuge, in which I am, alas! too weak to be her protector. Enter, sir, if your conscience will permit you."

The stranger turned on him a scowl, into which it seemed as if he would willingly have thrown the power of the fabled basilisk. Then stepping proudly forward, he stalked into the room. He was followed by Lawford and Gray at a little distance. The messenger remained in the doorway. The unhappy young woman had heard the disturbance, and guessed the cause too truly. It is possible she might even have seen the strangers on their descent from the carriage. When they entered the room, she was on her knees, beside an easy chair, her face in a silk wrapper that was hung over it. The man called Moncada uttered a single word; by the accent it might have been something equivalent to *wretch*; but none knew its import. The female gave a convulsive shudder, such as that by which a half-dying soldier is affected on receiving a second wound. But, without minding her emotion, Moncada seized her by the arm, and with little gentleness raised her to her feet, on which she seemed to stand only because she was supported by his strong grasp. He then pulled from her face the mask which she had hitherto worn. The poor

creature still endeavoured to shroud her face, by covering it with her left hand, as the manner in which she was held prevented her from using the aid of the right. With little effort her father secured that hand also, which indeed was of itself far too little to serve the purpose of concealment, and showed her beautiful face, burning with blushes and covered with tears.

"You, Alcalde, and you, Surgeon," he said to Lawford and Gray, with a foreign action and accent, "this woman is my daughter, the same Zilia Moncada who is signal'd in that protocol. Make way, and let me carry her where her crimes may be atoned for."

"Are you that person's daughter?" said Lawford to the lady.

"She understands no English," said Gray; and addressing his patient in French, conjured her to let him know whether she was that man's daughter or not, assuring her of protection if the fact were otherwise. The answer was murmured faintly, but was too distinctly intelligible—"He was her father."

All farther title of interference seemed now ended. The messenger arrested his prisoner, and, with some delicacy, required the assistance of the females to get her conveyed to the carriage in waiting.

Gray again interfered.—"You will not," he said, "separate the mother and the infant?"

Zilia de Moncada heard the question, (which, being addressed to the father, Gray had inconsiderately uttered in French,) and it seemed as if it recalled to her recollection the existence of the helpless creature to which she had given birth, forgotten for a moment amongst the accumulated horrors of her father's presence. She uttered a shriek, expressing poignant grief, and turned her eyes on her father with the most intense supplication.

"To the parish with the bastard!"—said Moncada; while the helpless mother sunk lifeless into the arms of the females, who had now gathered round her.

"That will not pass, sir," said Gideon.—"If you are father to that lady, you must be grandfather to the helpless child; and you must settle in some manner for its future provision, or refer us to some responsible person."

Moncada looked towards Lawford, who expressed himself satisfied of the propriety of what Gray said.

"I object not to pay for whatever the wretched child may require," said he; "and if you, sir," addressing Gray, "choose to take charge of him, and breed him up, you shall have what will better your living."

The Doctor was about to refuse a charge so uncivilly offered; but after a moment's reflection, he replied, "I think so indifferently of the proceedings I have witnessed, and of those concerned in them, that if the mother desires that I should retain the charge of this child, I will not refuse to do so."

Moncada spoke to his daughter, who was just beginning to recover from her swoon, in the same language in which he had at first addressed her. The proposition which he made seemed highly acceptable, as she started from the arms of the females, and, advancing to Gray, seized his hand, kissed it, bathed it in her tears, and seemed reconciled, even in parting with her child, by the consideration, that the infant was to remain under his guardianship.

"Good, kind man," she said in her indifferent French, "you have saved both mother and child."

The father, meanwhile, with mercantile deliberation, placed in Mr. Lawford's hands notes and bills to the amount of a thousand pounds, which he stated was to be vested for the child's use, and advanced in such portions as his board and education might require. In the event of any correspondence on his account being necessary, as in case of death or the like, he directed that communication should be made to Signor Matthias Moncada, under cover to a certain banking house in London.

"But beware," he said to Gray, "how you trouble me about these concerns, unless in case of absolute necessity."

"You need not fear, sir," replied Gray; "I have seen nothing to-day which can induce me to desire a more intimate correspondence with you than may be indispensable."

While Lawford drew up a proper minute of this transaction, by which he himself and Gray were named trustees for the child, Mr. Gray attempted to restore to the lady the balance of the considerable sum of money which Tresham (if such was his real name) had formally deposited with him. With every species of gesture, by which hands, eyes, and even feet, could express rejection, as well as in her own broken French, she repelled the reimbursement, while she entreated that Gray would consider the money as his own property; and at the same time forced upon him a ring set with brilliants, which seemed of considerable value. The father then spoke to her a few stern words, which she heard with an air of mingled agony and submission.

"I have given her a few minutes to see and weep over the miserable being which has been the seal of her dishonour," said the stern father. "Let us retire and leave her alone.—You," to the messenger, "watch the door of the room on the outside."

Gray, Lawford, and Moncada, retired to the parlour accordingly, where they waited in silence, each busied with his own reflections, till, within the space of half an hour, they received information that the lady was ready to depart.

"It is well," replied Moncada; "I am glad she has yet sense enough left to submit to that which needs must be."

So saying, he ascended the stair, and returned leading down his daughter, now again masked and veiled. As she passed Gray, she uttered the words—"My child, my child!" in a tone of unutterable anguish; then entered the carriage, which was drawn up as close to the door of the doctor's house as the little enclosure would permit. The messenger, mounted on a led horse, and accompanied by a servant and assistant, followed the carriage, which drove rapidly off, taking the road which leads to Edinburgh. All who had witnessed this strange scene, now departed to make their conjectures, and some to count their gains; for money had been distributed among the females who had attended on the lady, with so much liberality, as considerably to reconcile them to the breach of the rights of womanhood inflicted by the precipitate removal of the patient.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

The last cloud of dust which the wheels of the carriage had raised was dissipated, when dinner, which claims a share of human thoughts even in the midst of the most marvellous and affecting incidents, recurred to those of Mrs. Gray.

"Indeed, Doctor, you will stand glowering out of the window till some other patient calls for you, and then have to set off without your dinner;—and I hope Mr. Lawford will take pot-luck with us, for it is just his own hour; and indeed we had something rather better than ordinary for this poor lady—lamb and spinage, and a veal Florentine."

The surgeon started as from a dream, and joined in his wife's hospitable request, to which Lawford willingly assented.

We will suppose the meal finished, a bottle of old and generous Antigua upon the table, and a modest little punch-bowl, judiciously replenished for the accommodation of the Doctor and his guest. Their conversation naturally turned on the strange scene which they had witnessed, and the Townclerk took considerable merit for his presence of mind.

"I am thinking, Doctor," said he, "you might have brewed a bitter browst to yourself if I had not come in as I did."

"Troth, and it might very well so be," answered Gray; "for, to tell you the truth, when I saw yonder fellow vapouring with his pistols among the woman-folk in my own house, the old Cameronian spirit began to rise in me, and little thing would have made me cleek to the poker."

"Hoot, hoot! that would never have done. Na, na," said the man of law, "this was a case where a little prudence was worth all the pistols and pokers in the world."

"And that was just what I thought when I sent to you, Clerk Lawford," said the Doctor.

"A wiser man he could not have called on to a difficult case," added Mrs. Gray, as she sat with her work at a little distance from the table.

"Thanks t'ye, and here's t'ye, my good neighbour," answered the scribe; "will you not let me help you to another glass of punch, Mrs. Gray?" This being declined, he proceeded. "I am jalousing that the messenger and his warrant were just brought in to prevent any opposition. Ye saw how quietly he behaved after I had laid down the law—I'll never believe the lady is in any risk from him. But the father is a dour chield; depend upon it, he has bred up the young filly on the curb-rein, and that has made the poor thing start off the course. I should not be surprised that he took her abroad, and shut her up in a convent."

"Hardly," replied Doctor Gray, "if it be true, as I suspect, that both the father and daughter are of the Jewish persuasion."

"A Jew!" said Mrs. Gray; "and have I been taking a' this fyke about a Jew?—I thought she seemed to gie a scunner at the eggs and bacon that Nurse Simson spoke about to her. But I thought Jews had aye had lang beards, and yon man's face is just like one of our ain folk's—I have seen the Doctor with a langer beard himsell, when he has not had leisure to shave."

"That might have been Mr. Moncada's case," said Lawford, "for he seemed to have had a hard journey. But the Jews are often very respectable people, Mrs. Gray—they have no territorial property, because the law is against them there, but they have a good hank in the money market—plenty of stock in the funds, Mrs. Gray, and, indeed, I think this poor young woman is better with her ain father, though he be a Jew and a dour chield into the bargain, than she would have been with the loon that wranged her, who is, by your account, Dr. Gray, baith a papist and a rebel. The Jews are well attached to government; they hate the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender, as much as any honest man among ourselves."

"I cannot admire either of the gentlemen," said Gideon. "But it is but fair to say, that I saw Mr. Moncada when he was highly incensed, and to all appearance not without reason. Now, this other man Tresham, if that be his name, was haughty to me, and I think something careless of the poor young woman, just at the time when he owed her most kindness, and me some thankfulness. I am, therefore, of your opinion, Clerk Lawford, that the Christian is the worse bargain of the two."

"And you think of taking care of this wean yourself, Doctor? That is what I call the good Samaritan."

"At cheap cost. Clerk; the child, if it lives, has enough to bring it up decently, and set it out in life, and I can teach it an honourable and useful profession. It will be rather an amusement than a trouble to me, and I want to make some remarks on the childish diseases, which, with God's blessing, the child must come through under my charge; and since Heaven has sent us no children"——

"Hoot, hoot!" said the Town-Clerk, "you are in ower great hurry now—you have na been sae lang married yet.—Mrs. Gray, dinna let my daffing chase you away—we will be for a dish of tea believe, for the Doctor and I are nae glass-breakers."

Four years after this conversation took place, the event happened, at the possibility of which the Town-Clerk had hinted; and Mrs. Gray presented her husband with an infant daughter. But good and evil are strangely mingled in this sublunary world. The fulfilment of his anxious longing for posterity was attended with the loss of his simple and kind-hearted wife; one of the most heavy blows which fate could inflict on poor Gideon, and, his house was made desolate even by the event which had promised for months before to add new comforts to its humble roof. Gray felt the shock as men of sense and firmness feel a decided blow, from the effects of which they never hope again fully to raise themselves. He discharged the duties of his profession with the same punctuality as ever, was easy, and even to appearance, cheerful in his intercourse with society; but the sunshine of existence was gone. Every morning he missed the affectionate charges which recommended to him to pay attention to his own health while he was labouring to restore that blessing to his patients. Every evening, as he returned from his weary round, it was without the consciousness of a kind and affectionate reception from one eager to tell, and interested to hear, all the little events of the day. His whistle, which used to arise clear and strong so soon as Middlemas steeple was in view, was now for ever silenced, and the rider's head drooped, while the tired horse, lacking the stimulus of his master's hand and voice, seemed to shuffle along as if it experienced a share of his despondency. There were times when he was so much dejected as to be unable to endure even the presence of his little Menie, in whose infant countenance he could trace the lineaments of the mother, of whose loss she had been the innocent and unconscious cause. "Had it not been for this poor child"—he would think; but, instantly aware that the sentiment was sinful, he would snatch the infant to his breast, and load it with caresses—then hastily desire it to be removed from the parlour.

The Mahometans have a fanciful idea, that the true believer, in his passage to Paradise, is under the necessity of passing barefooted over a bridge composed of red-hot iron. But on this occasion, all the pieces of paper which the Moslem has preserved during his life, lest some holy thing being written upon them might be profaned, arrange themselves between his feet and the burning metal, and so save him from injury. In the same manner, the effects of kind and benevolent actions are sometimes found, even in this world, to assuage the pangs of subsequent afflictions.

Thus, the greatest consolation which poor Gideon could find after his heavy deprivation, was in the frolic fondness of Richard Middlemas, the child who was in so singular a manner thrown upon his charge. Even at this early age he was eminently handsome. When silent or out of humour, his dark eyes and striking countenance presented some recollections of the stern character imprinted on the features of his supposed father; but when he was gay and happy, which was much more frequently the case, these clouds were exchanged for the most frolicsome, mirthful expression, that ever dwelt on the laughing and thoughtless aspect of a child. He seemed to have a tact beyond his years in discovering and conforming to the peculiarities of human character. His nurse, one prime object of Richard's observance, was Nurse Jamieson, or, as she was more commonly called for brevity, and *par excellence*, Nurse. This was the person who had brought him up from infancy. She had lost her own child, and soon after her husband, and being thus a lone woman, had, as used to be common in Scotland, remained a member of Dr. Gray's family. After the death of his wife, she gradually obtained the principal superintendence of the whole household; and being an honest and capable manager, was a person of very great importance in the family.

She was bold in her temper, violent in her feelings, and, as often happens with those in her condition, was as much attached to Richard Middlemas, whom she had once nursed at her bosom, as if he had been her own son. This affection the child repaid by all the tender attentions of which his age was capable.

Little Dick was also distinguished by the fondest and kindest attachment to his guardian and benefactor Dr. Gray. He was officious in the right time and place, quiet as a lamb when his patron seemed inclined to study or to muse, active and assiduous to assist or divert him whenever it seemed to be wished, and, in choosing his opportunities, he seemed to display an address far beyond his childish years.

As time passed on, this pleasing character seemed to be still more refined. In everything like exercise or amusement, he was the pride and the leader of the boys of the place, over the most of whom his strength and activity gave him a decided superiority. At school his abilities were less distinguished, yet he was a favourite with the master, a sensible and useful teacher.

"Richard is not swift," he used to say to his patron, Dr. Gray, "but then he is sure; and it is impossible not to be pleased with a child who is so very desirous to give satisfaction."

Young Middlemas's grateful affection to his patron seemed to increase with the expanding of his faculties, and found a natural and pleasing mode of displaying itself in his attentions to little Menie [Footnote: Marion.] Gray. Her slightest hint was Richard's law, and it was in vain that he was summoned forth by a hundred shrill voices to take the lead in hye-spye, or at foot-ball, if it was little Menie's pleasure that he should remain within, and build card-houses for her amusement. At other times he would take the charge of the little damsel entirely under his own care, and be seen wandering with her on the borough common, collecting wild flowers, or knitting caps made of bulrushes. Menie was attached to Dick Middlemas, in proportion to his affectionate assiduities; and the father saw with pleasure every new mark of attention to his child on the part of his protege.

During the time that Richard was silently advancing from a beautiful child into a fine boy, and approaching from a fine boy to the time when he must be termed a handsome youth, Mr. Gray wrote twice a-year with much regularity to Mr. Moncada, through the channel that gentleman had pointed out. The benevolent man thought, that if the wealthy grandfather could only see his relative, of whom any family might be proud, he would be unable to persevere in his resolution of treating as an outcast one so nearly connected with him in blood, and so interesting in person and disposition. He thought it his duty, therefore, to keep open the slender and oblique communication with the boy's maternal grandfather, as that which might, at some future period, lead to a closer connexion. Yet the correspondence could not, in other respects, be agreeable to a man of spirit like Mr. Gray. His own letters were as short as possible, merely rendering an account of his ward's expenses, including a moderate board to himself, attested by Mr. Lawford, his co-trustee; and intimating Richard's state of health, and his progress in education, with a few words of brief but warm eulogy upon his goodness of head and heart. But the answers he received were still shorter. "Mr. Moncada," such was their usual tenor, "acknowledges Mr. Gray's letter of such a date, notices the contents, and requests Mr. Gray to persist in the plan which he has hitherto prosecuted on the subject of their correspondence." On occasions where extraordinary expenses seemed likely to be incurred, the remittances were made with readiness.

That day fortnight after Mrs. Gray's death, fifty pounds were received, with a note, intimating that it was designed to put the child R. M. into proper mourning. The writer had added two or three words, desiring that the surplus should be at Mr. Gray's disposal, to meet the additional expenses of this period of calamity; but Mr.

Moncada had left the phrase unfinished, apparently in despair of turning it suitably into English. Gideon, without farther investigation, quietly added the sum to the account of his ward's little fortune, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Lawford,—who, aware that he was rather a loser than a gainer by the boy's residence in his house, was desirous that his friend should not omit an opportunity of recovering some part of his expenses on that score. But Gray was proof against all remonstrances.

As the boy advanced towards his fourteenth year, Dr. Gray wrote a more elaborate account of his ward's character, acquirements, and capacity. He added that he did this for the purpose of enabling Mr. Moncada to judge how the young man's future education should be directed. Richard, he observed, was arrived at the point where education, losing its original and general character, branches off into different paths of knowledge, suitable to particular professions, and when it was therefore become necessary to determine which of them it was his pleasure that young Richard should be trained for; and he would, on his part, do all he could to carry Mr. Moncada's wishes into execution, since the amiable qualities of the boy made him as dear to him, though but a guardian, as he could have been to his own father.

The answer, which arrived in the course of a week or ten days, was fuller than usual, and written in the first person.—"Mr. Gray," such was the tenor, "our meeting has been under such circumstances as could not make us favourably known to each other at the time. But I have the advantage of you, since, knowing your motives for entertaining an indifferent opinion of me, I could respect them, and you at the same time; whereas you, unable to comprehend the motives—I say, you, being unacquainted with the infamous treatment I had received, could not understand the reasons that I have for acting as I have done. Deprived, sir, by the act of a villain, of my child, and she despoiled of honour, I cannot bring myself to think of beholding the creature, however innocent, whose look must always remind me of hatred and of shame. Keep the poor child by you—educate him to your own profession, but take heed that he looks no higher than to fill such a situation in life as you yourself worthily occupy, or some other line of like importance. For the condition of a farmer, a country lawyer, a medical practitioner, or some such retired course of life, the means of outfit and education shall be amply supplied. But I must warn him and you, that any attempt to intrude himself on me further than I may especially permit, will be attended with the total forfeiture of my favour and protection. So, having made known my mind to you, I expect you will act accordingly."

The receipt of this letter determined Gideon to have some explanation with the boy himself, in order to learn if he had any choice among the professions thus opened to him; convinced at the same time, from his docility of temper, that he would refer the selection to his (Dr. Gray's) better judgment.

He had previously, however, the unpleasing task of acquainting Richard Middlemas with the mysterious circumstances attending his birth, of which he presumed him to be entirely ignorant, simply because he himself had never communicated them, but had let the boy consider himself as the orphan child of a distant relation. But though the Doctor himself was silent, he might have remembered that Nurse Jamieson had the handsome enjoyment of her tongue, and was disposed to use it liberally.

From a very early period, Nurse Jamieson, amongst the variety of legendary lore which she instilled into her foster-son, had not forgotten what she called the awful season of his coming into the world—the personable appearance of his father, a grand gentleman, who looked as if the whole world lay at his feet—the beauty of his mother, and the terrible blackness of the mask which she wore, her een that glanced like diamonds, and the diamonds she wore on her fingers, that could be compared to nothing but her own een, the fairness of her skin, and the colour of her silk rokelay, with much proper stuff to the same purpose. Then she expatiated on the arrival of his grandfather, and the awful man, armed with pistol, dirk, and claymore, (the last weapons existed only in Nurse's imagination,) the very Ogre of a fairy tale—then all the circumstances of the carrying off his mother, while bank-notes were flying about the house like screeds of brown paper, and gold guineas were as plenty as chuckie-stanes. All this, partly to please and interest the boy, partly to indulge her own talent for amplification, Nurse told with so many additional circumstances, and gratuitous commentaries, that the real transaction, mysterious and odd as it certainly was sunk into tameness before the Nurse's edition, like humble prose contrasted with the boldest nights of poetry.

To hear all this did Richard seriously incline, and still more was he interested with the idea of his valiant father coming for him unexpectedly at the head of a gallant regiment, with music playing and colours flying, and carrying his son away on the most beautiful pony eyes ever beheld; Or his mother, bright as the day, might suddenly appear in her coach-and-six, to reclaim her beloved child; or his repentant grandfather, with his pockets stuffed out with banknotes, would come to atone for his past cruelty, by heaping his neglected grandchild with unexpected wealth. Sure was Nurse Jamieson, "that it wanted but a blink of her bairn's bonny ee to turn their hearts, as Scripture sayeth; and as strange things had been, as they should come a'thegither to the town at the same time, and make such a day as had never been seen in Middlemas; and then her bairn would never be called by that Lowland name of Middlemas any more, which sounded as if it had been gathered out of the town gutter, but would be called Galatian [Footnote: Galatian is a name of a person famous in Christmas gambols.], or Sir William Wallace, or Robin Hood, or after some other of the great princes named in story-books."

Nurse Jamieson's history of the past, and prospects of the future, were too flattering not to excite the most ambitious visions in the mind of a boy, who naturally felt a strong desire of rising in the world, and was conscious of possessing the powers necessary to his advancement. The incidents of his birth resembled those he found commemorated in the tales which he read or listened to; and there seemed no reason why his own adventures should not have a termination corresponding to those of such veracious histories. In a word, while good Doctor Gray imagined that his pupil was dwelling in utter ignorance of his origin, Richard was meditating upon nothing else than the time and means by which he anticipated his being extricated from the obscurity of his present condition, and enabled to assume the rank, to which, in his own opinion, he was entitled by birth.

So stood the feelings of the young man, when, one day after dinner, the Doctor snuffing the candle, and taking from his pouch the great leathern pocketbook in which he deposited particular papers, with a small supply of the most necessary and active medicines, he took from it Mr. Moncada's letter, and requested Richard Middlemas's serious attention, while he told him some circumstances concerning himself, which it greatly imported him to know. Richard's dark eyes flashed fire—the blood flushed his broad and well-formed forehead—the hour of explanation was at length come. He listened to the narrative of Gideon Gray, which, the reader may believe, being altogether divested of the gilding which Nurse Jamieson's imagination had bestowed upon it, and reduced to what mercantile men termed the *needful*, exhibited little more than the tale of a child of shame, deserted by its father and mother, and brought up on the reluctant charity of a more distant relation, who regarded him as the living though unconscious evidence of the disgrace of his family, and would more willingly have paid for the expenses of his funeral, than that of the food which was grudgingly provided for him. "Temple and tower," a hundred flattering edifices of Richard's childish imagination, went to the ground at once, and the pain which attended their demolition was rendered the more acute, by a sense of shame that he should have nursed such reveries. He remained while Gideon continued his explanation, in a dejected posture, his eyes fixed on the ground, and the veins of his forehead swoln with contending passions.

"And now, my dear Richard," said the good surgeon, "you must think what you can do for yourself, since your grandfather leaves you the choice of three honourable professions, by any of which, well and wisely prosecuted, you may become independent if not wealthy, and respectable if not great. You will naturally desire a little time for consideration."

"Not a minute," said the boy, raising his head, and looking boldly at his guardian. "I am a free-born Englishman, and will return to England if I think fit."

"A free-born fool you are,"—said Gray; "you were born, as I think, and no one can know better than I do, in the blue room of Stevenlaw's Land, in the Town-head of Middlemas, if you call that being a free-born Englishman."

"But Tom Hillary,"—this was an apprentice of Clerk Lawford, who had of late been a great friend and adviser of young Middlemas—"Tom Hillary says that I am a free-born Englishman, notwithstanding, in right of my parents."

"Pooh, child! what do we know of your parents?—But what has your being an Englishman to do with the present question?"

"Oh, Doctor!" answered the boy bitterly, "you know we from the south side of Tweed cannot scramble so hard as you do. The Scots are too moral, and too prudent, and too robust, for a poor pudding-eater to live amongst them, whether as a parson, or as a lawyer, or as a doctor—with your pardon, sir."

"Upon my life, Dick," said Gray, "this Tom Hillary will turn your brain. What is the meaning of all this trash?"

"Tom Hillary says that the parson lives by the sins of the people, the lawyer by their distresses, and the doctor by their diseases—always asking your pardon, sir."

"Tom Hillary," replied the Doctor, "should be drummed out of the borough. A whipper-snapper of an attorney's apprentice, run away from Newcastle! If I hear him talking so, I'll teach him to speak with more reverence of the learned professions. Let me hear no more of Tom Hillary whom you have seen far too much of lately. Think a little, like a lad of sense, and tell me what answer I am to give to Mr. Moncada."

"Tell him," said the boy, the tone of affected sarcasm laid aside, and that of injured pride substituted in its room, "Tell him that my soul revolts at the obscure lot he recommends to me. I am determined to enter my father's profession, the army, unless my grandfather chooses to receive me into his house, and place me in his own line of business."

"Yes, and make you his partner, I suppose, and acknowledge you for his heir?" said Dr. Gray; "a thing extremely likely to happen, no doubt, considering the way in which he has brought you up all along, and the terms in which he now writes concerning you."

"Then, sir, there is one thing which I can demand of you," replied the boy. "There is a large sum of money in your hands belonging to me; and since it is consigned to you for my use, I demand you should make the necessary advances to procure a commission in the army—account to me for the balance—and so, with thanks for past favours, I will give you no trouble in future."

"Young man," said the Doctor, gravely, "I am very sorry to see that your usual prudence and good humour are not proof against the disappointment of some idle expectations which you had not the slightest reason to entertain. It is very true that there is a sum, which, in spite of various expenses, may still approach to a thousand pounds or better, which remains in my hands for your behoof. But I am bound to dispose of it according to the will of the donor; and at any rate, you are not entitled to call for it until you come to years of discretion; a period from which you are six years distant, according to law, and which, in one sense, you will never reach at all, unless you alter your present unreasonable crotchets. But come, Dick, this is the first time I have seen you in so absurd a humour, and you have many things, I own, in your situation to apologize for impatience even greater than you have displayed. But you should not turn your resentment on me, that am no way in fault. You should remember that I was your earliest and only friend, and took charge of you when every other person forsook you."

"I do not thank you for it," said Richard, giving way to a burst of uncontrolled passion. "You might have done better for me had you pleased."

"And in what manner, you ungrateful boy?" said Gray, whose composure was a little ruffled.

"You might have flung me under the wheels of their carriages as they drove off, and have let them trample on the body of their child, as they have done on his feelings."

So saying, he rushed out of the room, and shut the door behind him with great violence, leaving his guardian astonished at his sudden and violent change of temper and manner.

"What the deuce can have possessed him? Ah, well. High-spirited, and disappointed in some follies which that Tom Hillary has put into his head. But his is a case for anodynes, and shall be treated accordingly."

While the Doctor formed this good-natured resolution, young Middlemas rushed to Nurse Jamieson's apartment, where poor Menie, to whom his presence always gave holyday feelings, hastened to exhibit, for his admiration, a new doll, of which she had made the acquisition. No one, generally, was more interested in Menie's amusements than Richard; but at present, Richard, like his celebrated namesake, was not i'the vein. He threw off the little damsel so carelessly, almost so rudely, that the doll flew out of Menie's hand, fell on the hearth-stone, and broke its waxen face. The rudeness drew from Nurse Jamieson a rebuke, even although the culprit was her darling.

"Hout awa', Richard—that wasna like yourself, to guide Miss Menie that gate.—Haud your tongue, Miss Menie, and I'll soon mend the baby's face."

But if Menie cried, she did not cry for the doll; and while the tears flowed silently down her cheeks, she sat looking at Dick Middlemas with a childish face of fear, sorrow, and wonder. Nurse Jamieson was soon diverted from her attention to Menie Gray's distresses, especially as she did not weep aloud, and her attention became fixed on the altered countenance, red eyes, and swoln features of her darling foster-child. She instantly commenced an investigation into the cause of his distress, after the usual inquisitorial manner of matrons of her class. "What is the matter wi' my bairn?" and "Wha has been vexing my bairn?" with similar questions, at last extorted this reply:

"I am not your bairn—I am no one's bairn—no one's son. I am an outcast from my family, and belong to no one. Dr. Gray has told me so himself."

"And did he cast up to my bairn that he was a bastard?—troth he was na blate—my certie, your father was a better man than ever stood on the Doctor's shanks—a handsome grand gentleman, with an ee like a gled's, and a step like a Highland piper."

Nurse Jamieson had got on a favourite topic, and would have expatiated long enough, for she was a professed admirer of masculine beauty, but there was something which displeased the boy in her last smile; so he cut the conversation short, by asking whether she knew exactly how much money his grandfather had left with Dr. Gray for his maintenance. "She could not say—didna ken—an awfu' sum it was to pass out of ae man's hand—She was sure it wasna less than ae hundred pounds, and it might weel be twa." In short, she knew nothing about the matter; "but she was sure Dr. Gray would count to him to the last farthing; for everybody kend that he was a just man where siller was concerned. However, if her bairn wanted to ken mair about it, to be sure the Town-clerk could tell him all about it."

Richard Middlemas arose and left the apartment, without saying more. He went immediately to visit the old Town-clerk, to whom he had made himself acceptable, as, indeed, he had done to most of the dignitaries about the burgh. He introduced the conversation by the proposal which had been made to him for choosing a profession, and, after speaking of the mysterious circumstances of his birth, and the doubtful prospects which lay before him, he easily led the Town-clerk into conversation as to the amount of the funds, and heard the exact state of the money in his guardian's hands, which corresponded with the information he had already received. He next sounded the worthy scribe on the possibility of his going into the army; but received a second confirmation of the intelligence Mr. Gray had given him; being informed that no part of the money could be placed at his disposal till he was of age; and then not without the especial consent of both his guardians, and particularly that of his master. He therefore took leave of the Town-clerk, who, much approving the cautious manner in which he spoke, and his prudent selection of an adviser at this important crisis of his life, intimated to him, that should he choose the law, he would himself receive him into his office, upon a very moderate apprentice-fee, and would part with Tom Hillary to make room for him, as the lad was "rather pragmatikal, and plagued him with speaking about his English practice, which they had nothing to do with on this side of the Border—the Lord be thanked!"

Middlemas thanked him for his kindness, and promised to consider his kind offer, in case he should determine upon following the profession of the law.

From Tom Hillary's master, Richard went to Tom Hillary himself, who chanced then to be in the office. He was a lad about twenty, as smart as small, but distinguished for the accuracy with which he dressed his hair, and the splendour of a laced hat and embroidered waistcoat, with which he graced the church of Middlemas on Sundays. Tom Hillary had been bred an attorney's clerk in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but, for some reason or other, had found it more convenient of late years to reside in Scotland, and was recommended to the Town-clerk of Middlemas, by the accuracy and beauty with which he transcribed the records of the burgh. It is not improbable that the reports concerning the singular circumstances of Richard Middlemas's birth, and the knowledge that he was actually possessed of a considerable sum of money, induced Hillary, though so much his senior, to admit the lad to his company, and enrich his youthful mind with some branches of information, which in that retired corner, his pupil might otherwise have been some time in attaining. Amongst these were certain games at cards and dice, in which the pupil paid, as was reasonable, the price of initiation by his losses to his instructor. After a long walk with this youngster, whose advice, like the unwise son of the wisest of men, he probably valued more than that of his more aged counsellors, Richard Middlemas returned to his lodgings in Stevenlaw's Land, and went to bed sad and supperless.

The next morning Richard arose with the sun, and his night's rest appeared to have had its frequent effect, in cooling the passions and correcting the understanding. Little Menie was the first person to whom he made the *amende honorable*; and a much smaller propitiation than the new doll with which he presented her would have been accepted as an atonement for a much greater offence. Menie was one of those pure spirits, to whom a state of unkindness, if the estranged person has been a friend, is a state of pain, and the slightest advance of her friend and protector was sufficient to regain all her childish confidence and affection.

The father did not prove more inexorable than Menie had done. Mr. Gray, indeed, thought he had good reason to look cold upon Richard at their next meeting, being not a little hurt at the ungrateful treatment which he had received on the preceding evening. But Middlemas disarmed him at once, by frankly pleading that he had suffered his mind to be carried away by the supposed rank and importance of his parents, into an idle conviction that he was one day to share them. The letter of his grandfather, which condemned him to banishment and obscurity for life, was, he acknowledged, a very severe blow; and it was with deep sorrow that he reflected, that the irritation of his disappointment had led him to express himself in a manner far short of the respect and reverence of one who owed Mr. Gray the duty and affection of a son, and ought to refer to his decision every action of his life. Gideon, propitiated by an admission so candid, and made with so much humility, readily dismissed his resentment, and kindly enquired of Richard, whether he had bestowed any reflection upon the choice of profession which had been subjected to him; offering, at the same time, to allow him all reasonable time to make up his mind.

On this subject. Richard Middlemas answered with the same promptitude and candour.—"He had," he said, "in order to forming his opinion more safely, consulted with his friend, the Town-clerk." The Doctor nodded approbation. "Mr. Lawford had, indeed, been most friendly, and had even offered to take him into his own office. But if his father and benefactor would permit him to study, under his instructions, the noble art in which he himself enjoyed such a deserved reputation, the mere hope that he might by-and-by be of some use to Mr. Gray in his business, would greatly overbalance every other consideration. Such a course of education, and such a use of professional knowledge when he had acquired it, would be a greater spur to his industry than the prospect even of becoming Town-clerk of Middlemas in his proper person."

As the young man expressed it to be his firm and unalterable choice, to study medicine under his guardian, and to remain a member of his family, Dr. Gray informed Mr. Moncada of the lad's determination; who, to testify his approbation, remitted to the Doctor the sum of L100 as apprentice fee, a sum nearly three times as much as Gray's modesty had hinted at as necessary.

Shortly after, when Dr. Gray and the Town-clerk met at the small club of the burgh, their joint theme was the sense and steadiness of Richard Middlemas.

"Indeed," said the Town-clerk, "he is such a friendly and disinterested boy, that I could not get him to accept a place in my office, for fear he should be thought to be pushing himself forward at the expense of Tam Hillary."

"And, indeed, Clerk," said Gray, "I have sometimes been afraid that he kept too much company with that Tam Hillary of yours; but twenty Tam Hillaries would not corrupt Dick Middlemas."

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

Dick was come to high renown

Since he commenced physician;

Tom was held by all the town

The better politician.

TOM AND DICK.

At the same period when Dr. Gray took under his charge his youthful lodger Richard Middlemas, he received proposals from the friends of one Adam Hartley, to receive him also as an apprentice. The lad was the son of a respectable farmer on the English side of the Border, who educating his eldest son to his own occupation, desired to make his second a medical man, in order to avail himself of the friendship of a great man, his landlord, who had offered to assist his views in life, and represented a doctor or surgeon as the sort of person to whose advantage his interest could be most readily applied. Middlemas and Hartley were therefore associated in their studies. In winter they were boarded in Edinburgh, for attending the medical classes which were necessary for taking their degree. Three or four years thus passed on, and, from being mere boys, the two medical aspirants shot up into young men, who, being both very good-looking, well dressed, well bred, and having money in their pockets, became personages of some importance in the little town of Middlemas, where there was scarce any thing that could be termed an aristocracy, and in which beaux were scarce and belles were plenty.

Each of the two had his especial partizans; for though the young men themselves lived in tolerable harmony together, yet, as usual in such cases, no one could approve of one of them, without at the same time comparing him with, and asserting his superiority over his companion.

Both were gay, fond of dancing, and sedulous attendants on the *practeezings*, as he called them, of Mr. McFittoch, a dancing master, who, itinerant during the summer, became stationary in the winter season, and afforded the youth of Middlemas the benefit of his instructions at the rate of twenty lessons for five shillings sterling. On these occasions, each of Dr. Gray's pupils had his appropriate praise. Hartley danced with most spirit—Middlemas with a better grace. Mr. McFittoch would have turned out Richard against the country-side in the minuets, and wagered the thing dearest to him in the world, (and that was his kit,) upon his assured superiority; but he admitted Hartley was superior to him in hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels.

In dress, Hartley was most expensive, perhaps because his father afforded him better means of being so; but his clothes were neither so tasteful when new, nor so well preserved when they began to grow old, as those of Richard Middlemas. Adam Hartley was sometimes fine, at other times rather slovenly, and on the former occasions looked rather too conscious of his splendour. His chum was at all times regularly neat and well dressed; while at the same time he had an air of good-breeding, which made him appear always at ease; so that his dress, whatever it was, seemed to be just what he ought to have worn at the time.

In their persons there was a still more strongly marked distinction. Adam Hartley was full middle size, stout, and well limbed; and an open English countenance, of the genuine Saxon mould, showed itself among chestnut locks, until the hair-dresser destroyed them. He loved the rough exercises of wrestling, boxing, leaping, and quarterstaff, and frequented, when he could obtain leisure, the bull-baitings and foot-ball matches, by which the burgh was sometimes enlivened.

Richard, on the contrary, was dark, like his father and mother, with high features, beautifully formed, but exhibiting something of a foreign character; and his person was tall and slim, though muscular and active. His address and manners must have been natural to him, for they were, in elegance and ease, far beyond any example which he could have found in his native burgh. He learned the use of the small-sword while in Edinburgh, and took lessons from a performer at the theatre, with the purpose of refining his mode of speaking. He became also an amateur of the drama, regularly attending the playhouse, and assuming the tone of a critic in that and other lighter departments of literature. To fill up the contrast, so far as taste was concerned, Richard was a dexterous and successful angler—Adam, a bold and unerring shot. Their efforts to surpass each other in supplying Dr. Gray's table, rendered his housekeeping much preferable to what it had been on former occasions; and, besides, small presents of fish and game are always agreeable amongst the inhabitants of a country town, and contributed to increase the popularity of the young sportsmen.

While the burgh was divided, for lack of better subject of disputation, concerning the comparative merits of Dr. Gray's two apprentices, he himself was sometimes chosen the referee. But in this, as on other matters, the Doctor was cautious. He said the lads were both good lads, and would be useful men in the profession, if their heads were not carried with the notice which the foolish people of the burgh took of them, and the parties of pleasure that were so often taking them away from their business. No doubt it was natural for him to feel more confidence in Hartley, who came of ken'd folk, and was very near as good as a born Scotsman. But if he did feel such a partiality, he blamed himself for it, since the stranger child, so oddly cast upon his hands, had peculiar good right to such patronage and affection as he had to bestow; and truly the young man himself seemed so grateful, that it was impossible for him to hint the slightest wish, that Dick Middlemas did not hasten to execute.

There were persons in the burgh of Middlemas who were indiscreet enough to suppose that Miss Menie must be a better judge than any other person of the comparative merits of these accomplished personages, respecting which the public opinion was generally divided. No one even of her greatest intimates ventured to put the question to her in precise terms; but her conduct was narrowly observed, and the critics remarked, that to Adam Hartley her attentions were given more freely and frankly. She laughed with him, chatted with him, and danced with him; while to Dick Middlemas her conduct was more shy and distant. The premises seemed certain, but the public were divided in the conclusions which were to be drawn from them.

It was not possible for the young men to be the subject of such discussions without being sensible that they existed; and thus, contrasted together by the little society in which they moved, they must have been made of better than ordinary clay, if they had not themselves entered by degrees into the spirit of the controversy, and considered themselves as rivals for public applause.

Nor is it to be forgotten, that Menie Gray was by this time shot up into one of the prettiest young women, not of Middlemas only, but of the whole county, in which the little burgh is situated. This, indeed, had been settled by evidence, which could not be esteemed short of decisive. At the time of the races, there were usually assembled in the burgh some company of the higher classes from the country around, and many of the sober burghers mended their incomes, by letting their apartments, or taking in lodgers of quality for the busy week. All the rural thanes and thanesses attended on these occasions; and such was the number of cocked hats and silken trains, that the little town seemed for a time totally to have changed its inhabitants. On this occasion persons of a certain quality only were permitted to attend upon the nightly balls which were given in the old Town-house, and the line of distinction excluded Mr. Gray's family.

The aristocracy, however, used their privileges with some feelings of deference to the native beaux and belles of the burgh, who were thus doomed to hear the fiddles nightly, without being permitted to dance to them. One evening in the race-week, termed the Hunter's ball, was dedicated to general amusement, and liberated from the usual restrictions of etiquette. On this occasion all the respectable families in the town were invited to share the amusement of the evening, and to wonder at the finery, and be grateful for the condescension, of their betters. This was especially the case with the females, for the number of invitations to the gentlemen of the town was much more limited. Now, at this general muster, the beauty of Miss Gray's face and person had placed her, in the opinion of all competent judges, decidedly at the head of all the belles present, saving those with whom, according to the ideas of the place, it would hardly have been decent to compare her.

The Laird of the ancient and distinguished house of Louponheight did not hesitate to engage her hand during the greater part of the evening; and his mother, renowned for her stern assertion of the distinctions of rank, placed the little plebeian beside her at supper, and was heard to say, that the surgeon's daughter behaved very prettily indeed, and seemed to know perfectly well where and what she was. As for the young Laird himself, he capered so high, and laughed so uproariously, as to give rise to a rumour, that he was minded to "shoot madly from his sphere," and to convert the village Doctor's daughter into a lady of his own ancient name.

During this memorable evening, Middlemas and Hartley, who had found room in the music gallery, witnessed the scene, and, as it would seem, with very different feelings. Hartley was evidently annoyed by the excess of attention which the gallant Laird of Louponheight, stimulated by the influence of a couple of bottles of claret, and by the presence of a partner who danced remarkably well, paid to Miss Menie Gray. He saw from his lofty stand all the dumb show of gallantry, with the comfortable feelings of a famishing creature looking upon a feast which he is not permitted to share, and regarded every extraordinary frisk of the jovial Laird, as the same might have been looked upon by a gouty person, who apprehended that the dignity was about to descend on his toes. At length, unable to restrain his emotion, he left the gallery and returned no more.

Far different was the demeanour of Middlemas. He seemed gratified and elevated by the attention which was generally paid to Miss Gray, and by the admiration she excited. On the valiant Laird of Louponheight he looked with indescribable contempt, and amused himself with pointing out to the burgh dancing-master, who acted *pro tempore* as one of the band, the frolicsome bounds and pirouettes, in which that worthy displayed a great deal more of vigour than of grace.

"But ye shouldna laugh sae loud, Master Dick," said the master of capers; "he hasna had the advantage of a real gracefu' teacher, as ye have had; and troth, if he listed to tak some lessons, I think I could make some hand of his feet, for he is a souple chield, and has a gallant instep of his ain; and sic a laced hat hasna been seen on the causeway of Middlemas this mony a day.—Ye are standing laughing there, Dick Middlemas; I would have you be sure he does not cut you out with your bonny partner yonder."

"He be——!" Middlemas was beginning a sentence which he could not have concluded with strict attention to propriety, when the master of the band summoned McFittoch to his post, by the following ireful expostulation:—"What are ye about, sir? Mind your bow-hand. How the deil d'ye think three fiddles is to keep down a bass, if yin o' them stands girming and gabbling as ye're doing? Play up, sir!"

Dick Middlemas, thus reduced to silence, continued, from his lofty station, like one of the gods of the Epicureans, to survey what passed below, without the gaieties which he witnessed being able to excite more than a smile, which seemed, however, rather to indicate a good-humoured contempt for what was passing, than a benevolent sympathy with the pleasures of others.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

Now hold thy tongue, Billy Bewick, he said,

Of peaceful talking: let me be;

But if thou art a man, as I think thou art,

Come ower the dyke and fight with me.

BORDER MINSTRELSY.

On the morning after this gay evening, the two young men were labouring together in a plot of ground behind Stevenlaw's Land, which the Doctor had converted into a garden, where he raised, with a view to pharmacy as well as botany, some rare plants, which obtained the place from the vulgar the sounding name of the Physic Garden. [Footnote: The Botanic Garden is so termed by the vulgar of Edinburgh.] Mr. Gray's pupils readily complied with his wishes, that they would take some care of this favourite spot, to which both contributed their labours, after which Hartley used to devote himself to the cultivation of the kitchen garden, which he had raised into this respectability from a spot not excelling a common kail-yard, while Richard Middleman did his utmost to decorate with flowers and shrubs a sort of arbour, usually called Miss Menie's bower.

At present they were both in the botanic patch of the garden, when Dick Middlemas asked Hartley why he had left the ball so soon the evening before?

"I should rather ask you," said Hartley, "what pleasure you felt in staying there?—I tell you, Dick, it is a shabby low place this Middlemas of ours. In the smallest burgh in England, every decent freeholder would have been asked if the Member gave a ball."

"What, Hartley!" said his companion, "are you, of all men, a candidate for the honour of mixing with the first-born of the earth? Mercy on us! How will canny Northumberland [throwing a true northern accent on the letter R] acquit himself? Methinks I see thee in thy pea-green suit, dancing a jig with the honourable Miss Maddie MacFudgeon, while chiefs and thanes around laugh as they would do at a hog in armour!"

"You don't, or perhaps you won't, understand me," said Hartley. "I am not such a fool as to desire to be hail-fellow-well-met with these fine folks—I care as little for them as they do for me. But as they do not choose to ask us to dance, I don't see what business they have with our partners."

"Partners, said you!" answered Middlemas; "I don't think Menie is very often yours."

"As often as I ask her," answered Hartley, rather haughtily.

"Ay? Indeed?—I did not think that.—And hang me, if I think so yet," said Middlemas, with the same sarcastic tone. "I tell thee, Adam, I will bet you a bowl of punch, that Miss Gray will not dance with you the next time you ask her. All I stipulate, is to know the day."

"I will lay no bets about Miss Gray," said Hartley; "her father is my master, and I am obliged to him—I think I should act very scurvily, if I were to make her the subject of any idle debate betwixt you and me."

"Very right," replied Middlemas; "you should finish one quarrel before you begin another. Pray, saddle your pony, ride up to the gate of Louponheight Castle, and defy the Baron to mortal combat, for having presumed to touch the fair hand of Menie Gray."

"I wish you would leave Miss Gray's name out of the question, and take your defiances to your fine folks in your own name, and see what they will say to the surgeon's apprentice."

"Speak for yourself, if you please, Mr. Adam Hartley. I was not born a clown like some folks, and should care little, if I saw it fit, to talk to the best of them at the ordinary, and make myself understood too."

"Very likely," answered Hartley, losing patience: "you are one of themselves, you know—Middlemas of that ilk."

"You scoundrell!" said Richard, advancing on him in fury, his taunting humour entirely changed into rage.

"Stand back," said Hartley, "or you will come by the worst; if you will break rude jests, you must put up with rough answers."

"I will have satisfaction for this insult, by Heaven!"

"Why so you shall, if you insist on it," said Hartley; "but better, I think, to say no more about the matter. We have both spoken what would have been better left unsaid. I was in the wrong to say what I said to you, although you did provoke me. And now I have given you as much satisfaction as a reasonable man can ask."

"Sir," repeated Middlemas, "the satisfaction which I demand, is that of a gentleman—the Doctor has a pair of pistols."

"And a pair of mortars also, which are heartily at your service, gentlemen," said Mr. Gray, coming forward from behind a yew hedge, where he had listened to the whole or greater part of this dispute. "A fine story it would be of my apprentices shooting each other with my own pistols! Let me see either of you fit to treat a gunshot wound, before you think of inflicting one. Go, you are both very foolish boys, and I cannot take it kind of either of you to bring the name of my daughter into such disputes as these. Hark ye, lads, ye both owe me, I think, some portion of respect, and even of gratitude—it will be a poor return, if instead of living quietly with this poor motherless girl, like brothers with a sister, you should oblige me to increase my expense, and abridge my comfort, by sending my child from me, for the few months that you are to remain here. Let me see you shake hands, and let us have no more of this nonsense."

While their master spoke in this manner, both the young men stood before him in the attitude of self-convicted criminals. At the conclusion of his rebuke, Hartley turned frankly round, and, offered his hand to his companion, who accepted it, but after a moment's hesitation. There was nothing farther passed on the subject, but the lads never resumed the same sort of intimacy which had existed betwixt them in their earlier acquaintance. On the contrary, avoiding every connexion not absolutely required by their situation, and abridging as much as possible even their indispensable intercourse in professional matters, they seemed as much estranged from each other as two persons residing in the same small house had the means of being.

As for Menie Gray, her father did not appear to entertain the least anxiety upon her account, although from his frequent and almost daily absence from home, she was exposed to constant intercourse with two handsome young men, both, it might be supposed, ambitious of pleasing her more than most parents would have deemed entirely prudent. Nor was Nurse Jamieson,—her menial situation, and her excessive partiality for her foster-son, considered,—altogether such a matron as could afford her protection. Gideon, however, knew that his daughter possessed, in its fullest extent, the upright and pure integrity of his own character, and that never father had less reason to apprehend that a daughter should deceive his confidence; and justly secure of her principles, he overlooked the danger to which he exposed her feelings and affections.

The intercourse betwixt Menie and the young men seemed now of a guarded kind on all sides. Their meeting was only at meals, and Miss Gray was at pains, perhaps by her father's recommendation, to treat them with the same degree of attention. This, however, was no easy matter; for Hartley became so retiring, cold, and formal, that it was impossible for her to sustain any prolonged intercourse with him; whereas Middlemas, perfectly at his ease, sustained his part as formerly upon all occasions that occurred, and without appearing to press his intimacy assiduously, seemed nevertheless to retain the complete possession of it.

The time drew nigh at length when the young men, freed from the engagements of their indentures, must look to play their own independent part in the world. Mr. Gray informed Richard Middlemas that he had written pressingly upon the subject to Moncada, and that more than once, but had not yet received an answer; nor did he presume to offer his own advice, until the pleasure of his grandfather should be known. Richard seemed to endure this suspense with more patience than the Doctor thought belonged naturally to his character. He asked no questions—stated no conjectures—showed no anxiety, but seemed to await with patience the turn which events should take. "My young gentleman," thought Mr. Gray, "has either fixed on some course in his own mind, or he is about to be more tractable than some points of his character have led me to expect."

In fact, Richard had made an experiment on this inflexible relative, by sending Mr. Moncada a letter full of duty, and affection, and gratitude, desiring to be permitted to correspond with him in person, and promising to be guided in every particular by his will. The answer to this appeal was his own letter returned, with a note from the bankers whose cover had been used, saying, that any future attempt to intrude on Mr. Moncada, would put a final period to their remittances.

While things were in this situation in Stevenlaw's Land, Adam Hartley one evening, contrary to his custom for several months, sought a private interview with his fellow-apprentice. He found him in the little arbour, and could not omit observing, that Dick Middlemas, on his appearance, shoved into his bosom a small packet, as if afraid of its being seen, and snatching up a hoe, began to work with great devotion, like one who wished to have it thought that his whole soul was in his occupation.

"I wished to speak with you, Mr. Middlemas," said Hartley; "but I fear I interrupt you."

"Not in the least," said the other, laying down his hoe; "I was only scratching up the weeds which the late showers have made rush up so numerously. I am at your service."

Hartley proceeded to the arbour, and seated himself. Richard imitated his example, and seemed to wait for the proposed communication.

"I have had an interesting communication with Mr. Gray"—said Hartley, and there stopped, like one who finds himself entering upon a difficult task.

"I hope the explanation has been satisfactory?" said Middlemas.

"You shall judge.—Doctor Gray was pleased to say something to me very civil about my proficiency in the duties of our profession; and, to my great astonishment, asked me, whether, as he was now becoming old, I had any particular objection to continue in my present situation, but with some pecuniary advantages, for two years longer; at the end of which he promised to me that I should enter into partnership with him."

"Mr. Gray is an undoubted judge," said Middlemas, "what person will best suit him as a professional assistant. The business may be worth £200 a-year, and an active assistant might go nigh to double it, by riding Strath-Devan and the Carse. No great subject for division after all, Mr. Hartley."

"But," continued Hartley, "that is not all. The Doctor says—he proposes—in short, if I can render myself agreeable, in the course of these two years, to Miss Menie Gray, he proposes, that when they terminate, I should become his son as well as his partner."

As he spoke, he kept his eye fixed on Richard's face, which was for a moment, strongly agitated; but instantly recovering, he answered, in a tone where pique and offended pride vainly endeavoured to disguise themselves under an affectation of indifference. "Well, Master Adam, I cannot but wish you joy of the patriarchal arrangement. You have served five years for a professional diploma—a sort of Leah, that privilege of killing and curing. Now you begin a new course of servitude for a lovely Rachel. Undoubtedly—perhaps it is rude in me to ask—but undoubtedly you have accepted so flattering an arrangement?"

"You cannot but recollect there was a condition annexed," said Hartley, gravely.

"That of rendering yourself acceptable to a girl you have known for so many years?" said Middlemas with a half-suppressed sneer. "No great difficulty in that, I should think, for such a person as Mr. Hartley, with Doctor Gray's favour to back him. No, no—there could be no great obstacle there."

"Both you and I know the contrary, Mr. Middlemas," said Hartley, very seriously.

"I know?—How should I know any thing more than yourself about the state of Miss Gray's inclinations?" said Middlemas. "I am sure we have had equal access to know them."

"Perhaps so; but some know better how to avail themselves of opportunities. Mr. Middlemas, I have long suspected that you have had the inestimable advantages of possessing Miss Gray's affections, and"—

"I?" interrupted Middlemas; "you are jesting, or you are jealous. You do yourself less, and me more, than justice; but the compliment is so great, that I am obliged to you for the mistake."

"That you may know," answered Hartley, "I do not speak either by guess, or from what you call jealousy, I tell you frankly, that Menie Gray herself told me the state of her affections. I naturally communicated to her the discourse I had with her father. I told her I was but too well convinced that at the present moment I did not possess that interest in her heart, which alone might entitle me to request her acquiescence in the views which her father's goodness held out to me; but I

entreated her not at once to decide against me, but give me an opportunity to make way in her affections, if possible, trusting that time, and the services which I should render to her father, might have an ultimate effect in my favour."

"A most natural and modest request. But what did the young lady say in reply?"

"She is a noble-hearted girl, Richard Middlemas; and for her frankness alone, even without her beauty and her good sense, deserves an emperor. I cannot express the graceful modesty with which she told me, that she knew too well the kindness, as she was pleased to call it, of my heart, to expose me to the protracted pain of an unrequited passion. She candidly informed me that she had been long engaged to you in secret—that you had exchanged portraits;—and though without her father's consent she would never become yours, yet she felt it impossible that she should ever so far change her sentiments as to afford the most distant prospect of success to another."

"Upon my word," said Middlemas, "she has been extremely candid indeed, and I am very much obliged to her!"

"And upon my honest word, Mr. Middlemas," returned Hartley, "you do Miss Gray the greatest injustice—nay, you are ungrateful to her, if you are displeased at her making this declaration. She loves you as a woman loves the first object of her affection—she loves you better"—He stopped, and Middlemas completed the sentence.

"Better than I deserve, perhaps?—Faith, it may well be so, and I love her dearly in return. But after all, you know, the secret was mine as well as hers, and it would have been better that she had consulted me before making it public."

"Mr. Middlemas," said Hartley, earnestly, "if the least of this feeling, on your part, arises from the apprehension that your secret is less safe because it is in my keeping, I can assure you that such is my grateful sense of Miss Gray's goodness, in communicating, to save me pain, an affair of such delicacy to herself and you, that wild horses should tear me limb from limb before they forced a word of it from my lips."

"Nay, nay, my dear friend," said Middlemas, with a frankness of manner indicating a cordiality that had not existed between them for some time, "you must allow me to be a little jealous in my turn. Your true lover cannot have a title to the name, unless he be sometimes unreasonable; and somehow, it seems odd she should have chosen for a confidant one whom I have often thought a formidable rival; and yet I am so far from being displeased, that I do not know that the dear sensible girl could after all have made a better choice. It is time that the foolish coldness between us should be ended, as you must be sensible that its real cause lay in our rivalry. I have much need of good advice, and who can give it to me better than the old companion, whose soundness of judgment I have always envied, even when some injudicious friends have given me credit for quicker parts?"

Hartley accepted Richard's proffered hand, but without any of the buoyancy of spirit with which it was offered.

"I do not intend," he said, "to remain many days in this place, perhaps not very many hours. But if, in the meanwhile, I can benefit you, by advice or otherwise, you may fully command me. It is the only mode in which I can be of service to Menie Gray."

"Love my mistress, love me; a happy *pendant* to the old proverb, Love me, love my dog. Well, then, for Menie Gray's sake, if not for Dick Middlemas's, (plague on that vulgar tell-tale name,) will you, that are a stander-by, tell us, who are the unlucky players, what you think of this game of ours?"

"How can you ask such a question, when the field lies so fair before you? I am sure that Dr. Gray would retain you as his assistant upon the same terms which he proposed to me. You are the better match, in all worldly respects, for his daughter, having some capital to begin the world with."

"All true—but methinks Mr. Gray has showed no great predilection for me in this matter."

"If he has done injustice to your indisputable merit," said Hartley, dryly, "the preference of his daughter has more than atoned for it."

"Unquestionably; and dearly, therefore, do I love her; otherwise, Adam, I am not a person to grasp at the leavings of other people."

"Richard," replied Hartley, "that pride of yours, if you do not check it, will render you both ungrateful and miserable. Mr. Gray's ideas are most friendly. He told me plainly that his choice of me as an assistant, and as a member of his family, had been a long time balanced by his early affection for you, until he thought he had remarked in you a decisive discontent with such limited prospects as his offer contained, and a desire to go abroad into the world, and push, as it is called, your fortune. He said, that although it was very probable that you might love his daughter well enough to relinquish these ambitious ideas for her sake, yet the demons of Ambition and Avarice would return after the exorciser Love had exhausted the force of his spells, and then he thought he would have just reason to be anxious for his daughter's happiness."

"By my faith, the worthy senior speaks scholarly and wisely," answered Richard—"I did not think he had been so clear-sighted. To say the truth, but for the beautiful Menie Gray, I should feel like a mill-horse, walking my daily round in this dull country, while other gay rovers are trying how the world will receive them. For instance, where do you yourself go?"

"A cousin of my mother's commands a ship in the Company's service. I intend to go with him as surgeon's mate. If I like the sea service, I will continue in it; if not, I will enter some other line." This Hartley said with a sigh.

"To India!" answered Richard; "Happy dog—to India! You may well bear with equanimity all disappointments sustained on this side of the globe. Oh, Delhi! oh, Golconda! have your names no power to conjure down idle recollections?—India, where gold is won by steel; where a brave man cannot pitch his desire for fame and wealth so high, but that he may realize it, if he have fortune to his friend? Is it possible that the bold adventurer can fix his thoughts on you, and still be dejected at the thoughts that a bonny blue-eyed lass looked favourably on a less lucky fellow than himself? Can this be?"

"Less lucky?" said Hartley. "Can you, the accepted lover of Menie Gray, speak in that tone, even though it be in jest!"

"Nay, Adam," said Richard, "don't be angry with me, because, being thus far successful, I rate my good fortune not quite so rapturously as perhaps you do, who have missed the luck of it. Your philosophy should tell you, that the object which we attain, or are sure of attaining, loses, perhaps, even by that very certainty, a little of the extravagant and ideal value, which attached to it while the object of feverish hopes and aguish fears. But for all that, I cannot live without my sweet Menie. I would wed her to-morrow, with all my soul, without thinking a minute on the clog which so early a marriage would fasten on our heels. But to spend two additional years in this infernal wilderness, cruising after crowns and half-crowns, when worse men are making lacs and crores of rupees—It is a sad falling off, Adam. Counsel me, my friend,—can you not suggest some mode of getting off from these two years of destined dulness?"

"Not I," replied Hartley, scarce repressing his displeasure; "and if I could induce Dr. Gray to dispense with so reasonable a condition, I should be very sorry to do so. You are but twenty-one, and if such a period of probation was, in the Doctor's prudence, judged necessary for me, who am full two years older, I have no idea that he will dispense with it in yours."

"Perhaps not," replied Middlemas; "but do you not think that these two, or call them three, years of probation, had better be spent in India, where much may be done in a little while, than here, where nothing can be done save just enough to get salt to our broth, or broth to our salt? Methinks I have a natural turn for India, and so I ought. My father was a soldier, by the conjecture of all who saw him, and gave me a love of the sword, and an arm to use one. My mother's father was a rich trafficker, who loved wealth, I warrant me, and knew how to get it. This petty two hundred a-year, with its miserable and precarious possibilities, to be shared with the old gentleman, sounds in the ears of one like me, who have the world for the winning, and a sword to cut my way through it, like something little better than a decent kind of beggary. Menie is in herself a gem—a diamond—I admit it. But then, one would not set such a precious jewel in lead or popper, but in pure gold; ay, and add a circlet of brilliants to set it off with. Be a good fellow, Adam, and undertake the setting my project in proper colours before the Doctor. I am sure, the wisest thing for him and Menie both, is to permit me to spend this short time of probation in the land of cowries. I am sure my heart will be there at any rate, and while I am bleeding some bumpkin for an inflammation, I shall be in fancy relieving some nabob, or rajahpoot, of his plethora of wealth. Come—will you assist, will you be auxiliary? Ten chances but you plead your own cause, man, for I may be brought up by a sabre, or a bow-string, before I make my pack up; then your road to Menie will be free and open, and, as you will be possessed of the situation of comforter *ex officio*, you may take her 'with the tear in her ee,' as old saws advise."

"Mr. Richard Middlemas," said Hartley, "I wish it were possible for me to tell you, in the few words which I intend to bestow on you, whether I pity you or despise you, the most. Heaven has placed happiness, competence, and content within your power, and you are willing to cast them away, to gratify ambition and avarice."

Were I to give any advice on this subject either to Dr. Gray or his daughter, it would be to break of all connexion with a man, who, however clever by nature, may soon show himself a fool, and however honestly brought up, may also, upon temptation, prove himself a villain.—You may lay aside the sneer, which is designed to be a sarcastic smile. I will not attempt to do this, because I am convinced that my advice would be of no use, unless it could come unattended with suspicion of my motives. I will hasten my departure from this house, that we may not meet again; and I will leave it to God Almighty to protect honesty and innocence against the dangers which must attend vanity and folly." So saying, he turned contemptuously from the youthful votary of ambition, and left the garden.

"Stop," said Middlemas, struck with the picture which had been held up to his conscience—"Stop, Adam Hartley, and I will confess to you"—But his words were uttered in a faint and hesitating manner, and either never reached Hartley's ear, or failed in changing his purpose of departure.

When he was out of the garden, Middlemas began to recall his usual boldness of disposition—"Had he staid a moment longer," he said, "I would have turned Papist, and made him my ghostly confessor. The yeomanly churl!—I would give something to know how he has got such a hank over me. What are Menie Gray's engagements to him? She has given him his answer, and what right has he to come betwixt her and me? If old Moncada had done a grandfather's duty, and made suitable settlements on me, this plan of marrying the sweet girl, and settling here in her native place, might have done well enough. But to live the life of the poor drudge her father—to be at the command and call of every boor for twenty miles round!—why, the labours of a higgler, who travels scores of miles to barter pins, ribbons, snuff and tobacco, against the housewife's private stock of eggs, mort-skins, and tallow, is more profitable, less laborious, and faith I think, equally respectable. No, no,—unless I can find wealth nearer home, I will seek it where every one can have it for the gathering; and so I will down to the Swan Inn, and hold a final consultation with my friend."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

The friend whom Middlemas expected to meet at the Swan, was a person already mentioned in this history by the name of Tom Hillary, bred an attorney's clerk in the ancient town of Novum Castrum—*doctus utriusque juris*, as far as a few months in the service of Mr. Lawford, Town-clerk of Middlemas, could render him so. The last mention that we made of this gentleman, was when his gold-laced hat veiled its splendour before the fresher mounted beavers of the 'prentices of Dr. Gray. That was now about five years since, and it was within six months that he had made his appearance in Middlemas, a very different sort of personage from that which he seemed at his departure.

He was now called Captain; his dress was regimental, and his language martial. He appeared to have plenty of cash, for he not only, to the great surprise of the parties, paid certain old debts, which he had left unsettled behind him, and that notwithstanding his having, as his old practice told him, a good defence of prescription, but even sent the minister a guinea, to the assistance of the parish poor. These acts of justice and benevolence were bruited abroad greatly to the honour of one, who, so long absent, had neither forgotten his just debts, nor hardened his heart against the cries of the needy. His merits were thought the higher, when it was understood he had served the Honourable East India Company—that wonderful company of merchants, who may indeed, with the strictest propriety, be termed princes. It was about the middle of the eighteenth century, and the directors in Leadenhall Street were silently laying the foundation of that immense empire, which afterwards rose like an exhalation, and now astonishes Europe, as well as Asia, with its formidable extent, and stupendous strength. Britain had now begun to lend a wondering ear to the account of battles fought, and cities won, in the East; and was surprised by the return of individuals who had left their native country as adventurers, but now reappeared there surrounded by Oriental wealth and Oriental luxury, which dimmed even the splendour of the most wealthy of the British nobility. In this new-found El Dorada, Hillary had, it seems, been a labourer, and, if he told truth, to some purpose, though he was far from having completed the harvest which he meditated. He spoke, indeed, of making investments, and, as a mere matter of fancy, he consulted his old master, Clerk Lawford, concerning the purchase of a moorland farm of three thousand acres, for which he would be content to give three or four thousand guineas, providing the game was plenty, and the trouting in the brook such as had been represented by advertisement. But he did not wish to make any extensive landed purchase at present. It was necessary to keep up his interest in Leadenhall Street; and in that view, it would be impolitic to part with his India stock and India bonds. In short, it was folly to think of settling on a poor thousand or twelve hundred a year, when one was in the prime of life, and had no liver complaint; and so he was determined to double the Cape once again, ere he retired to the chimney corner for life. All he wished was, to pick up a few clever fellows for his regiment, or rather for his own company; and as in all his travels he had never seen finer fellows than about Middlemas, he was willing to give them the preference in completing his levy. In fact, it was making men of them at once, for a few white faces never failed to strike terror into these black rascals; and then, not to mention the good things that were going at the storming of a Pettah, or the plundering of a Pagoda, most of these tawny dogs carried so much treasure about their persons, that a won battle was equal to a mine of gold to the victors.

The natives of Middlemas listened to the noble Captain's marvels with different feelings, as their temperaments were saturnine or sanguine. But none could deny that such things had been; and, as the narrator was known to be a bold dashing fellow, possessed of some abilities, and according to the general opinion, not likely to be withheld by any peculiar scruples of conscience, there was no giving any good reason why Hillary should not have been as successful as others in the field, which India, agitated as it was by war and intestine disorders, seemed to offer to every enterprising adventurer. He was accordingly received by his old acquaintances at Middlemas rather with the respect due to his supposed wealth, than in a manner corresponding with his former humble pretensions.

Some of the notables of the village did indeed keep aloof. Among these, the chief was Dr. Gray, who was an enemy to every thing that approached to fanfaronade, and knew enough of the world to lay it down as a sort of general rule, that he who talks a great deal of fighting is seldom a brave soldier, and he who always speaks about wealth is seldom a rich man at bottom. Clerk Lawford was also shy, notwithstanding his *communings* with Hillary upon the subject of his intended purchase. The coolness of the Captain's old employer towards him was by some supposed to arise out of certain circumstances attending their former connexion; but as the Clerk himself never explained what these were, it is unnecessary to make any conjectures upon the subject.

Richard Middlemas very naturally renewed his intimacy with his former comrade, and it was from Hillary's conversation, that he had adopted the enthusiasm respecting India, which we have heard him express. It was indeed impossible for a youth, at once inexperienced in the world, and possessed of a most sanguine disposition, to listen without sympathy to the glowing descriptions of Hillary, who, though only a recruiting captain, had all the eloquence of a recruiting sergeant. Palaces rose like mushrooms in his descriptions; groves of lofty trees, and aromatic shrubs unknown to the chilly soils of Europe, were tenanted by every object of the chase, from the royal tiger down to the jackal. The luxuries of a natch, and the peculiar Oriental beauty of the enchantresses who perfumed their voluptuous Eastern domes, for the pleasure of the haughty English conquerors, were no less attractive than the battles and sieges on which the Captain at other times expatiated. Not a stream did he mention but flowed over sands of gold, and not a palace that was inferior to those of the celebrated Fata Morgana. His descriptions seemed steeped in odours, and his every phrase perfumed in ottar of roses. The interviews at which these descriptions took place, often ended in a bottle of choicer wine than the Swan Inn afforded, with some other appendages of the table, which the Captain, who was a *bon-vivant*, had procured from Edinburgh. From this good cheer Middlemas was doomed to retire to the homely evening meal of his master, where not all the simple beauties of Menie were able to overcome his disgust at the coarseness of the provisions, or his unwillingness to answer questions concerning the diseases of the wretched peasants who were subjected to his inspection.

Richard's hopes of being acknowledged by his father had long since vanished, and the rough repulse and subsequent neglect on the part of Moncada, had satisfied him that his grandfather was inexorable, and that neither then, nor at any future time, did he mean to realize the visions which Nurse Jamieson's splendid figments had encouraged him to entertain. Ambition, however, was not lulled to sleep, though it was no longer nourished by the same hopes which had at first awakened it. The Indian Captain's lavish oratory supplied the themes which had been at first derived from the legends of the nursery; the exploits of a Lawrence and a Clive, as well as the magnificent opportunities of acquiring wealth to which these exploits opened the road, disturbed the slumbers of the young adventurer. There was nothing to counteract these except his love for Menie Gray, and the engagements into which it had led him. But his addresses had been paid to Menie as much for the gratification of his vanity, as from any decided passion for that innocent and guileless being. He was desirous of carrying off the prize, for which Hartley, whom he never loved, had the courage to contend with him. Then Menie Gray had been beheld with admiration by men his superiors in rank and fortune, but with whom his ambition incited him to dispute the prize. No doubt, though urged to play the gallant at first rather from vanity than any other cause, the

frankness and modesty with which his suit was admitted, made their natural impression on his heart. He was grateful to the beautiful creature, who acknowledged the superiority of his person and accomplishments, and fancied himself as devotedly attached to her, as her personal charms and mental merits would have rendered any one who was less vain or selfish than her lover. Still his passion for the surgeon's daughter ought not, he prudentially determined, to bear more than its due weight in a case so very important as the determining his line of life; and this he smoothed over to his conscience, by repeating to himself, that Menie's interest was as essentially concerned as his own, in postponing their marriage to the establishment of his fortune. How many young couples had been ruined by a premature union!

The contemptuous conduct of Hartley in their last interview, had done something to shake his comrade's confidence in the truth of this reasoning, and to lead him to suspect that he was playing a very sordid and unmanly part, in trifling with the happiness of this amiable and unfortunate young woman. It was in this doubtful humour that he repaired to the Swan Inn, where he was anxiously expected by his friend the Captain.

When they were comfortably seated over a bottle of Paxarete, Middlemas began, with characteristic caution, to sound his friend about the ease or difficulty with which an individual, desirous of entering the Company's service, might have an opportunity of getting a commission. If Hillary had answered truly, he would have replied, that it was extremely easy; for, at that time, the East India service presented no charms to that superior class of people who have since struggled for admittance under its banners. But the worthy Captain replied, that though, in the general case, it might be difficult for a young man to obtain a commission, without serving for some years as a cadet, yet, under his own protection, a young man entering his regiment, and fitted for such a situation, might be sure of an ensigncy, if not a lieutenantcy, as soon as ever they set foot in India. "If you, my dear fellow," continued he, extending his hand to Middlemas, "would think of changing sheep-head broth and haggis for mulagatawny and curry, I can only say, that though it is indispensable that you should enter the service at first simply as a cadet, yet, by—; you should live like a brother on the passage with me; and no sooner were we through the surf at Madras, than I would put you in the way of acquiring both wealth and glory. You have, I think, some trifle of money—a couple of thousands or so?"

"About a thousand or twelve hundred," said Richard, affecting the indifference of his companion, but feeling privately humbled by the scantiness of his resources. "It is quite as much as you will find necessary for the outfit and passage," said his adviser; "and, indeed, if you had not a farthing, it would be the same thing; for if I once say to a friend, I'll help you, Tom Hillary is not the man to start for fear of the cowries. However, it is as well you have something of a capital of your own to begin upon."

"Yes," replied the proselyte. "I should not like to be a burden on any one. I have some thoughts, to tell you the truth, to marry before I leave Britain; and in that case, you know, cash will be necessary, whether my wife goes out with us, or remains behind, till she hear how luck goes with me. So, after all, I may have to borrow a few hundreds of you."

"What the devil is that you say, Dick, about marrying and giving in marriage?" replied his friend. "What can put it into the head of a gallant young fellow like you, just rising twenty-one, and six feet high on your stocking-soles, to make a slave of yourself for life? No, no, Dick, that will never do. Remember the old song,

'Bachelor Bluff, bachelor Bluff,

Hey for a heart that is rugged and tough!"

"Ay, ay, that sounds very well," replied Middlemas; "but then one must shake off a number of old recollections."

"The sooner the better, Dick; old recollections are like old clothes, and should be sent off by wholesale; they only take up room in one's wardrobe, and it would be old-fashioned to wear them. But you look grave upon it. Who the devil is it that has made such a hole in your heart?"

"Pshaw!" answered Middlemas, "I'm sure you must remember—Menie—my master's daughter."

"What, Miss Green, the old pottercarrier's daughter?—a likely girl enough, I think."

"My master is a surgeon," said Richard, "not an apothecary, and his name is Gray."

"Ay, ay, Green or Gray—what does it signify? He sells his own drugs, I think, which we in the south call being a pottercarrier. The girl is a likely girl enough for a Scottish ball-room. But is she up to any thing? Has she any *nouz*?"

"Why, she is a sensible girl, save in loving me," answered Richard; "and that, as Benedict says, is no proof of her wisdom, and no great argument of her folly."

"But has she spirit—spunk—dash—a spice of the devil about her?"

"Not a penny-weight—the kindest, simplest, and most manageable of human beings," answered the lover.

"She won't do then," said the monitor, in a decisive tone. "I am sorry for it, Dick: but she will never do. There are some women in the world that can bear their share in the bustling life we live in India—ay, and I have known some of them drag forward husbands that would otherwise have stuck fast in the mud till the day of judgment. Heaven knows how they paid the turnpikes they pushed them through! But these were none of your simple Susans, that think their eyes are good for nothing but to look at their husbands, or their fingers but to sew baby-clothes. Depend on it, you must give up your matrimony, or your views of preferment. If you wilfully tie a clog round your throat, never think of running a race; but do not suppose that your breaking off with the lass will make any very terrible catastrophe. A scene there may be at parting; but you will soon forget her among the native girls, and she will fall in love with Mr. Tapeitout, the minister's assistant and successor. She is not goods for the Indian market, I assure you."

Among the capricious weaknesses of humanity, that one is particularly remarkable which inclines us to esteem persons and things not by their real value, or even by our own judgment, so much as by the opinion of others, who are often very incompetent judges. Dick Middlemas had been urged forward, in his suit to Menie Gray, by his observing how much her partner, a booby laird, had been captivated by her; and she was now lowered in his esteem, because an impudent low-lived coxcomb had presumed to talk of her with disparagement. Either of these worthy gentlemen would have been as capable of enjoying the beauties of Homer, as judging of the merits of Menie Gray.

Indeed the ascendancy which this bold-talking, promise-making soldier had acquired over Dick Middlemas, wilful as he was in general, was of a despotic nature; because the Captain, though greatly inferior in information and talent to the youth whose opinions he swayed, had skill in suggesting those tempting views of rank and wealth, to which Richard's imagination had been from childhood most accessible. One promise he exacted from Middlemas, as a condition of the services which he was to render him—it was absolute silence on the subject of his destination for India, and the views upon which it took place. "My recruits," said the Captain, "have been all marched off for the depot at the Isle of Wight; and I want to leave Scotland, and particularly this little burgh, without being worried to death, of which I must despair, should it come to be known that I can provide young griffins, as we call them, with commissions. Gad, I should carry off all the first-born of Middlemas as cadets, and none are so scrupulous as I am about making promises. I am as trusty as a Trojan for that; and you know I cannot do that for every one which I would for an old friend like Dick Middlemas."

Dick promised secrecy, and it was agreed that the two friends should not even leave the burgh in company, but that the Captain should set off first, and his recruit should join him at Edinburgh, where his enlistment might be attested; and then they were to travel together to town, and arrange matters for their Indian voyage.

Notwithstanding the definitive arrangement which was thus made for his departure, Middlemas thought from time to time with anxiety and regret about quitting Menie Gray, after the engagement which had passed between them. The resolution was taken, however; the blow was necessarily to be struck; and her ungrateful lover, long since determined against the life of domestic happiness, which he might have enjoyed had his views been better regulated, was now occupied with the means, not indeed of breaking off with her entirely, but of postponing all thoughts of their union until the success of his expedition to India.

He might have spared himself all anxiety on this last subject. The wealth of that India to which he was bound would not have bribed Menie Gray to have left her father's roof against her father's commands; still less when, deprived of his two assistants, he must be reduced to the necessity of continued exertion in his declining life, and therefore might have accounted himself altogether deserted, had his daughter departed from him at the same time. But though it would have been her unalterable determination not to accept any proposal of an immediate union of their fortunes, Menie could not, with all a lover's power of self-deception, succeed in persuading herself to be satisfied with Richard's conduct towards her. Modesty, and a becoming pride, prevented her from seeming to notice, but could

not prevent her from bitterly feeling, that her lover was preferring the pursuits of ambition to the humble lot which he might have shared with her, and which promised content at least, if not wealth.

"If he had loved me as he pretended," such was the unwilling conviction that rose on her mind, "my father would surely not have ultimately refused him the same terms which he held out to Hartley. His objections would have given way to my happiness, nay, to Richard's importunities, which would have removed his suspicions of the unsettled cast of his disposition. But I fear—I fear Richard hardly thought the terms proposed were worthy of his acceptance. Would it not have been natural too, that he should have asked me, engaged as we stand to each other, to have united our faith before his quitting Europe, when I might either have remained here with my father, or accompanied him to India, in quest of that fortune which he is so eagerly pushing for? It would have been wrong—very wrong—in me to have consented to such a proposal, unless my father had authorised it; but surely it would have been natural that Richard should have offered it? Alas! men do not know how to love like women! Their attachment is only one of a thousand other passions and predilections,—they are daily engaged in pleasures which blunt their feelings, and in business which distracts them. We—we sit at home to weep, and to think how coldly our affections are repaid!"

The time was now arrived at which Richard Middlemas had a right to demand the property vested in the hands of the Town-clerk and Doctor Gray. He did so, and received it accordingly. His late guardian naturally enquired what views he had formed in entering on life? The imagination, of the ambitious aspirant saw in this simple question a desire, on the part of the worthy man, to offer, and perhaps press upon him, the same proposal which he had made to Hartley. He hastened, therefore, to answer dryly, that he had some hopes held out to him which he was not at liberty to communicate; but that the instant he reached London, he would write to the guardian of his youth, and acquaint him with the nature of his prospects, which he was happy to say were rather of a pleasing character.

Gideon, who supposed that at this critical period of his life, the father, or grandfather, of the young man might perhaps have intimated a disposition to open some intercourse with him, only replied,—"You have been the child of mystery, Richard; and as you came to me, so you leave me. Then, I was ignorant from whence you came, and now, I know not whither you are, going. It is not, perhaps, a very favourable point in your horoscope, that every thing connected with you is a secret. But as I shall always think with kindness on him whom I have known so long, so when you remember the old man, you ought not to forget that he has done his duty to you, to the extent of his means and power, and taught you that noble profession, by means of which, wherever your lot casts you, you may always gain your bread, and alleviate at the same time, the distresses of your fellow creatures." Middlemas was excited by the simple kindness of his master, and poured forth his thanks with the greater profusion, that he was free from the terror of the emblematical collar and chain, which a moment before seemed to glisten in the hand of his guardian, and gape to enclose his neck.

"One word more," said Mr. Gray, producing a small ring-case. "This valuable ring was forced upon me by your unfortunate mother. I have no right to it, having been amply paid for my services; and I only accepted it with the purpose of keeping it for you till this moment should arrive. It may be useful, perhaps, should there occur any question about your identity."

"Thanks, once more, my more than father, for this precious relic, which, may indeed be useful. You shall be repaid, if India has diamonds left."

"India, and diamonds!" said Gray. "Is your head turned, child?"

"I mean," stammered Middlemas, "if London has any Indian diamonds."

"Pooh! you foolish lad," answered Gray, "how should you buy diamonds, or what should I do with them, if you gave me ever so many? Get you gone with you while I am angry."—The tears were glistening in the old man's eyes—"If I get pleased with you again, I shall not know how to part with you."

The parting of Middlemas with poor Menie was yet more affecting. Her sorrow revived in his mind all the liveliness of a first love, and he redeemed his character for sincere attachment, by not only imploring an instant union, but even going so far as to propose renouncing his more splendid prospects, and sharing Mr. Gray's humble toil, if by doing so he could secure his daughter's hand. But though there was consolation in this testimony of her lover's faith, Menie Gray was not so unwise as to accept of sacrifices which might afterwards have been repented of.

"No, Richard," she said, "it seldom ends happily when people alter, in a moment of agitated feeling, plans which might have been adopted under mature deliberation. I have long seen that your views were extended far beyond so humble a station as this place affords promise of. It is natural they should do so, considering that the circumstances of your birth seemed connected with riches and with rank. Go, then, seek that riches and rank. It is possible your mind may be changed in the pursuit, and if so, think no more about Menie Gray. But if it should be otherwise, we may meet again, and do not believe for a moment that there can be a change in Menie Gray's feelings towards you."

At this interview, much more was said than it is necessary to repeat, much more thought than was actually said. Nurse Jamieson, in whose chamber it took place, folded her *bairns*, as she called them, in her arms, and declared that Heaven had made them for each other, and that she would not ask of Heaven to live beyond the day when she should see them bridegroom and bride.

At length it became necessary that the parting scene should end; and Richard Middlemas, mounting a horse which he had hired for the journey, set off for Edinburgh, to which metropolis he had already forwarded his heavy baggage. Upon the road the idea more than once occurred to him, that even, yet he had better return to Middlemas, and secure his happiness by uniting himself at once to Menie Gray, and to humble competence. But from the moment that he rejoined his friend Hillary at their appointed place of rendezvous, he became ashamed even to hint at any change of purpose; and his late excited feelings were forgotten, unless in so far as they confirmed his resolution, that as soon as he had attained a certain portion of wealth and consequence, he would haste to share them with Menie Gray. Yet his gratitude to her father did not appear to have slumbered, if we may judge from the gift of a very handsome cornelian seal, set in gold, and bearing engraved upon it Gules, a lion rampant within a bordure Or, which was carefully despatched to Stevenlaw's Land, Middlemas, with a suitable letter. Menie knew the hand-writing and watched her father's looks as he read it, thinking, perhaps, that it had turned on a different topic. Her father pshawed and poohed a good deal when he had finished the billet, and examined the seal.

"Dick Middlemas," he said, "is but a fool after all, Menie. I am sure I am not like to forget him, that he should send me a token of remembrance; add if he would be so absurd, could he not have sent me the improved lithotomical apparatus? And what have I, Gideon Gray, to do with the arms of my Lord Gray?—No, no,—my old silver stamp, with the double G upon it, will serve my turn—But put the bonnie dye [Footnote: "Pretty Toy"] away, Menie, my dear—it was kindly meant at any rate." The reader cannot doubt that the seal was safely and carefully preserved.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

A lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid

Numbers of all diseased.

MILTON.

After the Captain had finished his business, amongst which he did not forget to have his recruit regularly attested, as a candidate for glory in the service of the Honourable East India Company, the friends left Edinburgh. From thence they got a passage by sea to Newcastle, where Hillary had also some regimental affairs to transact, before he joined his regiment. At Newcastle the Captain had the good luck to find a small brig, commanded by an old acquaintance and school-fellow, which was just about to sail for the Isle of Wight. "I have arranged for our passage with him," he said to Middlemas—"for when you are at the depot, you can learn a little of your duty, which cannot be so well taught on board of ship, and then I will find it easier to have you promoted."

"Do you mean," said Richard, "that I am to stay at the Isle of Wight all the time that you are jiggling it away in London?"

"Ay, indeed do I," said his comrade, "and it's best for you too; whatever business you have in London, I can do it for you as well, or something better than yourself."

"But I choose to transact my own business myself, Captain Hillary," said Richard.

"Then you ought to have remained your own master, Mr. Cadet Middlemas. At present you are an enlisted recruit of the Honourable East India Company; I am your officer, and should you hesitate to follow me aboard, why, you foolish fellow, I could have you sent on board in hand-cuffs."

This was jestingly spoken; but yet there was something in the tone which hurt Middlemas's pride and alarmed his fears. He had observed of late, that his friend, especially when in company of others, talked to him with an air of command or superiority, difficult to be endured, and yet so closely allied to the freedom often exercised betwixt two intimates, that he could not find any proper mode of rebuffing, or resenting it. Such manifestations of authority were usually followed by an instant renewal of their intimacy; but in the present case that did not so speedily ensue.

Middlemas, indeed, consented to go with his companion to the Isle of Wight, perhaps because if he should quarrel with him, the whole plan of his Indian voyage, and all the hopes built upon it, must fall to the ground. But he altered his purpose of intrusting his comrade with his little fortune, to lay out as his occasions might require, and resolved himself to overlook the expenditure of his money, which, in the form of Bank of England notes, was safely deposited in his travelling trunk. Captain Hillary, finding that some hint he had thrown out on this subject was disregarded, appeared to think no more about it.

The voyage was performed with safety and celerity; and having coasted the shores of that beautiful island, which he who once sees never forgets, through whatever part of the world his future path may lead him, the vessel was soon anchored off the little town of Ryde; and, as the waves were uncommonly still, Richard felt the sickness diminish, which, for a considerable part of the passage, had occupied his attention more than any thing else.

The master of the brig, in honour to his passengers, and affection to his old school-fellow, had formed an awning upon deck, and proposed to have the pleasure of giving them a little treat before they left his vessel. Lobscous, sea-pie, and other delicacies of a naval description, had been provided in a quantity far disproportionate to the number of the guests. But the punch which succeeded was of excellent quality, and portentously strong. Captain Hillary pushed it round, and insisted upon his companion taking his full share in the merry bout, the rather that, as he facetiously said, there had been some dryness between them, which good liquor would be sovereign in removing. He renewed, with additional splendours, the various panoramic scenes of India and Indian adventures, which had first excited the ambition of Middlemas, and assured him, that even if he should not be able to get him a commission instantly, yet a short delay would only give him time to become better acquainted with his military duties; and Middlemas was too much elevated by the liquor he had drank to see any difficulty which could oppose itself to his fortunes. Whether those who shared in the computation were more seasoned toppers—whether Middlemas drank more than they—or whether, as he himself afterwards suspected, his cup had been drugged, like those of King Duncan's body-guard, it is certain that, on this occasion, he passed with unusual rapidity, through all the different phases of the respectable state of drunkenness—laughed, sung, whooped, and hallooed, was maudlin in his fondness, and frantic in his wrath, and at length fell into a fast and imperturbable sleep.

The effect of the liquor displayed itself, as usual, in a hundred wild dreams of parched deserts, and of serpents whose bite inflicted the most intolerable thirst—of the suffering of the Indian on the death-stake—and the torments of the infernal regions themselves; when at length he awakened, and it appeared that the latter vision was in fact realized. The sounds which had at first influenced his dreams, and at length broken his slumbers, were of the most horrible, as well as the most melancholy description. They came from the ranges of pallet-beds, which were closely packed together in a species of military hospital, where a burning fever was the prevalent complaint. Many of the patients were under the influence of a high delirium, during which they shouted, shrieked, laughed, blasphemed, and uttered the most horrible imprecations. Others, sensible of their condition, bewailed it with low groans, and some attempts at devotion, which showed their ignorance of the principles, and even the forms of religion. Those who were convalescent talked ribaldry in a loud tone, or whispered to each other in cant language, upon schemes which, as far as a passing phrase could be understood by a novice, had relation to violent and criminal exploits.

Richard Middlemas's astonishment was equal to his horror. He had but one advantage over the poor wretches with whom he was classed, and it was in enjoying the luxury of a pallet to himself—most of the others being occupied by two unhappy beings. He saw no one who appeared to attend to the wants, or to heed the complaints, of the wretches around him, or to whom he could offer any appeal against his present situation. He looked for his clothes, that he might arise and extricate himself from this den of horrors; but his clothes were nowhere to be seen, nor did he see his portmanteau, or sea-chest. It was much to be apprehended he would never see them more.

Then, but too late, he remembered the insinuations which had passed current respecting his friend the Captain, who was supposed to have been discharged by Mr. Lawford, on account of some breach of trust in the Town-Clerk's service. But that he should have trepanned the friend who had reposed his whole confidence in him—that he should have plundered him of his fortune, and placed him in this house of pestilence, with the hope that death might stifle his tongue—were iniquities not to have been, anticipated, even if the worst of these reports were true.

But Middlemas resolved not to be awanting to himself. This place must be visited by some officer, military or medical, to whom he would make an appeal, and alarm his fears at least, if he could not awaken his conscience. While he revolved these distracting thoughts, tormented at the same time by a burning thirst which he had no means of satisfying, he endeavoured to discover if, amongst those stretched upon the pallets nearest him, he could not discern some one likely to enter into conversation with him, and give him some information about the nature and customs of this horrid place. But the bed nearest him was occupied by two fellows, who, although to judge from their gaunt cheeks, hollow eyes, and ghastly looks, they were apparently recovering from the disease, and just rescued from the jaws of death, were deeply engaged in endeavouring to cheat each other of a few half-pence at a game of cribbage, mixing the terms of the game with oaths not loud but deep; each turn of luck being hailed by the winner as well as the loser with execrations, which seemed designed to blight both body and soul, now used as the language of triumph, and now as reproaches against fortune.

Next to the gamblers was a pallet, occupied indeed by two bodies, but only one of which was living—the other sufferer had been recently relieved from his agony.

"He is dead—he is dead!" said the wretched survivor.

"Then do you die too, and be d—d," answered one of the players, "and then there will be a pair of you, as Pugg says."

"I tell you he is growing stiff and cold," said the poor wretch—"the dead is no bed-fellow for the living—For God's sake help to rid me of the corpse."

"Ay, and get the credit of having *done* him—as may be the case with, yourself, friend—for he had some two or three hogs about him"—

"You know you took the last rap from his breeches-pocket not an hour ago," expostulated the poor convalescent—"But help me to take the body out of the bed, and I will not tell the *jigger-dubber* that you have been beforehand with him."

"You tell the *jigger-dubber*!" answered the cribbage player. "Such another word, and I will twist your head round till your eyes look at the drummer's handwriting on your back. Hold your peace, and don't bother our game with your gammon, or I will make you as mute as your bedfellow."

The unhappy wretch, exhausted, sunk back beside his hideous companion, and the usual jargon of the game, interlarded with execrations, went on as before. From this specimen of the most obdurate indifference, contrasted with the last excess of misery, Middlemas became satisfied how little could be made of an appeal to the humanity of his fellow-sufferers. His heart sunk within him, and the thoughts of the happy and peaceful home, which he might have called his own, rose before his over-heated fancy, with a vividness of perception that bordered upon insanity. He saw before him the rivulet which wanders through the burgh-muir of Middlemas, where he had so often set little mills for the amusement of Menie while she was a child. One draught of it would have been worth all the diamonds of the East, which of late he had worshipped with such devotion; but that draught was denied to him as to Tantalus.

Rallying his senses from this passing illusion, and knowing enough of the practice of the medical art, to be aware of the necessity of preventing his ideas from wandering if possible, he endeavoured to recollect that he was a surgeon, and, after all, should not have the extreme fear for the interior of a military hospital, which its horrors might inspire into strangers to the profession. But though he strove, by such recollections, to rally his spirits, he was not the less aware of the difference betwixt the condition of a surgeon, who might have attended such a place in the course of his duty, and a poor inhabitant, who was at once a patient and a prisoner.

A footstep was now heard in the apartment, which seemed to silence all the varied sounds of woe that filled it. The cribbage party hid their cards, and ceased their oaths; other wretches, whose complaints had arisen to frenzy, left off their wild exclamations and entreaties for assistance. Agony softened her shriek, Insanity hushed its senseless clamours, and even Death seemed desirous to stifle his parting groan in the presence of Captain Seelencoop. This official was the superintendent, or, as the miserable inhabitants termed him, the Governor of the Hospital. He had all the air of having been originally a turnkey in some ill-regulated jail—a stout, short, bandy-legged man, with one eye, and a double portion of ferocity in that which remained. He wore an old-fashioned tarnished

uniform, which did not seem to have been made for him; and the voice in which this minister of humanity addressed the sick, was that of a boatswain, shouting in the midst of a storm. He had pistols and a cutlass in his belt; for his mode of administration being such as provoked even hospital patients to revolt, his life had been more than once in danger amongst them. He was followed by two assistants, who carried hand-cuffs and strait-jackets.

As Seelencoop made his rounds, complaint and pain were hushed, and the flourish of the bamboo, which he bore in his hand, seemed powerful as the wand of a magician to silence all complaint and remonstrance.

"I tell you the meat is as sweet as a nosegay—and for the bread, it's good enough, and too good, for a set of lubbers, that lie shamming Abraham, and consuming the Right Honourable Company's victuals—I don't speak to them that are really sick, for God knows I am always for humanity."

"If that be the case, sir," said Richard Middlemas, whose lair the Captain had approached, while he was thus answering the low and humble complaints of those by whose bed-side he passed—"if that be the case, sir, I hope your humanity will make you attend to what I say."

"And—who the devil are you?" said the Governor, turning on him his single eye of fire, while a sneer gathered on his harsh features, which were so well qualified to express it.

"My name is Middlemas—I come from Scotland, and have been sent here by some strange mistake. I am neither a private soldier, nor am I indisposed, more than by the heat of this cursed place."

"Why then, friend, all I have to ask you is, whether you are an attested recruit or not?"

"I was attested at Edinburgh," said Middlemas, "but"—

"But what the devil would you have then?—you are enlisted—the Captain and the Doctor sent you here—surely they know best whether you are private or officer, sick or well."

"But I was promised," said Middlemas, "promised by Tom Hillary"—

"Promised, were you? Why, there is not a man here that has not been promised something by somebody or another, or perhaps has promised something to himself. This is the land of promise, my smart fellow, but you know it is India that must be the land of performance. So, good morning to you. The Doctor will come his rounds presently and put you all to rights."

"Stay but one moment—one moment only—I have been robbed."

"Robbed! look you there now," said the Governor—"everybody that comes here has been robbed.—Egad, I am the luckiest fellow in Europe—other people in my line have only thieves and blackguards upon their hands; but none come to my ken but honest, decent, unfortunate gentlemen, that have been robbed!"

"Take care how you treat this so lightly, sir," said Middlemas; "I have been robbed of a thousand pounds."

Here Governor Seelencoop's gravity was totally overcome, and his laugh was echoed by several of the patients, either because they wished to curry favour with the superintendent, or from the feeling which influences evil spirits to rejoice in the tortures of those who are sent to share their agony.

"A thousand pounds!" exclaimed Captain Seelencoop, as he recovered his breath,—"*Come, that's a good one—I like a fellow that does not make two bites of a cherry—why, there is not a cull in the ken that pretends to have lost more than a few hogs, and here is a servant to the Honourable Company that has been robbed of a thousand pounds! Well done, Mr. Tom of Ten Thousand—you're a credit to the house, and to the service, and so good morning to you.*"

He passed on, and Richard, starting up in a storm of anger and despair, found, as he would have called after him, that his voice, betwixt thirst and agitation, refused its office. "Water, water!" he said, laying hold, at the same time, of one of the assistants who followed Seelencoop by the sleeve. The fellow looked carelessly round; there was a jug stood by the side of the cribbage players, which he reached to Middlemas, bidding him, "Drink and be d——d."

The man's back was no sooner turned, than the gamester threw himself from his own bed into that of Middlemas, and grasping firm hold of the arm of Richard, ere he could carry the vessel to his head, swore he should not have his booze. It may be readily conjectured, that the pitcher thus anxiously and desperately reclaimed, contained something better than the pure element. In fact, a large proportion of it was gin. The jug was broken in the struggle, and the liquor spilt. Middlemas dealt a blow to the assailant, which was amply and heartily repaid, and a combat would have ensued, but for the interference of the superintendent and his assistants, who, with a dexterity that showed them well acquainted with such emergencies, clapped a straight-waistcoat upon each of the antagonists. Richard's efforts at remonstrance only procured him a blow from Captain Seelencoop's rattan, and a tender admonition to hold his tongue, if he valued a whole skin.

Irritated at once by sufferings of the mind and of the body, tormented by raging thirst, and by the sense of his own dreadful situation, the mind of Richard Middlemas seemed to be on the point of becoming unsettled. He felt an insane desire to imitate and reply to the groans, oaths, and ribaldry, which, as soon as the superintendent quitted the hospital, echoed around him. He longed, though he struggled against the impulse, to vie in curses with the reprobate, and in screams with the maniac. But his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, his mouth itself seemed choked with ashes; there came upon him a dimness of sight, a rushing sound in his ears, and the powers of life were for a time suspended.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

A wise physician, skill'd our wounds to heal,
Is more than armies to the common weal.

POPE'S *Homer*.

As Middlemas returned to his senses, he was sensible that his blood felt more cool; that the feverish throb of his pulsation was diminished; that the ligatures on his person were removed, and his lungs performed their functions more freely. One assistant was binding up a vein, from which a considerable quantity of blood had been taken; another, who had just washed the face of the patient, was holding aromatic vinegar to his nostrils. As he began to open his eyes, the person who had just completed the bandage, said in Latin, but in a very low tone, and without raising his head, "Annon sis Ricardus ille Middlemas, ex civitate Middlemassiense? Responde in lingua Latina."

"Sum ille miserrimus," replied Richard, again shutting his eyes; for, strange as it may seem, the voice of his comrade Adam Hartley, though his presence might be of so much consequence in this emergency, conveyed a pang to his wounded pride. He was conscious of unkindly, if not hostile, feelings towards his old companion; he remembered the tone of superiority which he used to assume over him, and thus to lie stretched at his feet, and in a manner at his mercy, aggravated his distress, by the feelings of the dying chieftain, "Earl Percy sees my fall." This was, however, too unreasonable an emotion to subsist above a minute. In the next, he availed himself of the Latin language, with which both were familiar, (for in that time the medical studies at the celebrated University of Edinburgh were, in a great measure, conducted in Latin,) to tell in a few words his own folly, and the villany of Hillary.

"I must be gone instantly," said Hartley—"Take courage—I trust to be able to assist you. In the meantime, take food and physic from none but my servant, who you see holds the sponge in his hand. You are in a place where a man's life has been taken for the sake of his gold sleeve-buttons."

"Stay yet a moment," said Middlemas—"Let me remove this temptation from my dangerous neighbours."

He drew a small packet from his under waistcoat, and put it into Hartley's hands.

"If I die," he said, "be my heir. You deserve her better than I."

All answer was prevented by the hoarse voice of Seelencoop.

"Well, Doctor, will you carry through your patient?"

"Symptoms are dubious yet," said the Doctor—"That was an alarming swoon. You must have him carried into the private ward, and my young man shall attend him."

"Why, if you command it, Doctor, needs must;—but I can tell you there is a man we both know, that has a thousand reasons at least for keeping him in the public ward."

"I know nothing of your thousand reasons," said Hartley; "I can only tell you that this young fellow is as well-limbed and likely a lad as the Company have among their recruits. It is my business to save him for their service, and if he dies by your neglecting what I direct, depend upon it I will not allow the blame to lie at my door. I will tell the General the charge I have given you."

"The General!" said Seelencoop, much embarrassed—"Tell the General?—ay, about his health. But you will not say any thing about what he may have said in his light-headed fits? My eyes! if you listen to what feverish patients say when the tantivy is in their brain, your back will soon break with tale-bearing, for I will warrant you plenty of them to carry."

"Captain Seelencoop," said the Doctor, "I do not meddle with your department in the hospital; my advice to you is, not to trouble yourself with mine. I suppose, as I have a commission in the service, and have besides a regular diploma as a physician, I know when my patient is light-headed or otherwise. So do you let the man be carefully looked after, at your peril."

Thus saying, he left the hospital, but not till, under pretext of again consulting the pulse, he pressed the patient's hand, as if to assure him once more of his exertions for his liberation.

"My eyes!" muttered Seelencoop, "this cockerel crows gallant, to come from a Scotch roost; but I would know well enough how to fetch the youngster off the perch, if it were not for the cure he has done on the General's pickaninies."

Enough of this fell on Richard's ear to suggest hopes of deliverance, which were increased when he was shortly afterwards removed to a separate ward, a place much more decent in appearance, and inhabited only by two patients, who seemed petty officers. Although sensible that he had no illness, save that weakness which succeeds violent agitation, he deemed it wisest to suffer himself still to be treated as a patient, in consideration that he should thus remain under his comrade's superintendence. Yet while preparing to avail himself of Hartley's good offices, the prevailing reflection of his secret bosom was the ungrateful sentiment, "Had Heaven no other means of saving me than by the hands of him I like least on the face of the earth?"

Meanwhile, ignorant of the ungrateful sentiments of his comrade, and indeed wholly indifferent how he felt towards him, Hartley proceeded in doing him such service as was in his power, without any other object than the discharge of his own duty as a man and as a Christian. The manner in which he became qualified to render his comrade assistance, requires some short explanation.

Our story took place at a period, when the Directors of the East India Company, with that hardy and persevering policy which has raised to such a height the British Empire in the East, had determined to send a large reinforcement of European troops to the support of their power in India, then threatened by the kingdom of Mysore, of which the celebrated Hyder Ali had usurped the government, after dethroning his master. Considerable difficulty was found in obtaining recruits for that service. Those who might have been otherwise disposed to be soldiers, were afraid of the climate, and of the species of banishment which the engagement implied; and doubted also how far the engagements of the Company might be faithfully observed towards them, when they were removed from the protection of the British laws. For these and other reasons, the military service of the King was preferred, and that of the Company could only procure the worst recruits, although their zealous agents scrupled not to employ the worst means. Indeed the practice of kidnapping, or crimping, as it is technically called, was at that time general, whether for the colonies, or even for the King's troops; and as the agents employed in such transactions must be of course entirely unscrupulous, there was not only much villany committed in the direct prosecution of the trade, but it gave rise incidentally to remarkable cases of robbery, and even murder. Such atrocities were of course concealed from the authorities for whom the levies were made, and the necessity of obtaining soldiers made men, whose conduct was otherwise unexceptionable, cold in looking closely into the mode in which their recruiting service was conducted.

The principal depot of the troops which were by these means assembled, was in the Isle of Wight, where the season proving unhealthy, and the men themselves being many of them of a bad habit of body, a fever of a malignant character broke out amongst them, and speedily crowded with patients the military hospital, of which Mr. Seelencoop, himself an old and experienced crimp and kidnapper, had obtained the superintendence. Irregularities began to take place also among the soldiers who remained healthy, and the necessity of subjecting them to some discipline before they sailed was so evident, that several officers of the Company's naval service expressed their belief that otherwise there would be dangerous mutinies on the passage.

To remedy the first of these evils, the Court of Directors sent down to the island several of their medical servants, amongst whom was Hartley, whose qualifications had been amply certified by a medical board, before which he had passed an examination, besides his possessing a diploma from the University of Edinburgh as M. D.

To enforce the discipline of their soldiers, the Court committed full power to one of their own body, General Witherington. The General was an officer who had distinguished himself highly in their service. He had returned from India five or six years before, with a large fortune, which he had rendered much greater by an advantageous marriage with a rich heiress. The General and his lady went little into society, but seemed to live entirely for their infant family, those in number being three, two boys and a girl. Although he had retired from the service, he willingly undertook the temporary charge committed to him, and taking a house at a considerable distance from the town of Ryde, he proceeded to enrol the troops into separate bodies, appoint officers of capacity to each, and by regular training and discipline, gradually to bring them into something resembling good order. He heard their complaints of ill usage in the articles of provisions and appointments, and did them upon all occasions the strictest justice, save that he was never known to restore one recruit to his freedom from the service, however unfairly or even illegally his attestation might have been obtained.

"It is none of my business," said General Witherington, "how you became soldiers,—soldiers I found you, and soldiers I will leave you. But I will take especial care, that as soldiers you shall have every thing, to a penny or a pin's head, that you are justly entitled to." He went to work without fear or favour, reported many abuses to the Board of Directors, had several officers, commissaries, &c. removed from the service, and made his name as great a terror to the peculators at home, as it had been to the enemies of Britain in Hindostan.

Captain Seelencoop, and his associates in the hospital department, heard and trembled, fearing that their turn should come next; but the General, who elsewhere examined all with his own eyes, showed a reluctance to visit the hospital in person. Public report industriously imputed this to fear of infection. Such was certainly the motive; though it was not fear for his own safety that influenced General Witherington, but he dreaded lest he should carry the infection home to the nursery, on which he doated. The alarm of his lady was yet more unreasonably sensitive: she would scarcely suffer the children to walk abroad, if the wind but blew from the quarter where the hospital was situated.

But Providence baffles the precautions of mortals. In a walk across the fields, chosen as the most sheltered and sequestered, the children, with their train of Eastern and European attendants, met a woman who carried a child that was recovering from the small-pox. The anxiety of the father, joined to some religious scruples on the mother's part, had postponed inoculation, which was then scarcely come into general use. The infection caught like a quick-match, and ran like wildfire through all those in the family who had not previously had the disease. One of the General's children, the second boy, died, and two of the Ayas, or black female servants, had the same fate. The hearts of the father and mother would have been broken for the child they had lost, had not their grief been suspended by anxiety for the fate of those who lived, and who were confessed to be in imminent danger. They were like persons distracted, as the symptoms of the poor patients appeared gradually to resemble more nearly that of the child already lost.

While the parents were in this agony of apprehension, the General's principal servant, a native of Northumberland like himself, informed him one morning that there was a young man from the same county among the hospital doctors, who had publicly blamed the mode of treatment observed towards the patients, and spoken of another which he had seen practised with eminent success.

"Some impudent quack," said the General, "who would force himself into business by bold assertions. Doctor Tourniquet and Doctor Lancelot are men of high reputation."

"Do not mention their reputation," said the mother, with a mother's impatience, "did they not let my sweet Reuben die? What avails the reputation of the physician, when the patient perisheth?"

"If his honour would but see Doctor Hartley," said Winter, turning half towards the lady, then turning back again to his master. "He is a very decent young man, who, I am sure, never expected what he said to reach your honour's ears;—and he is a native of Northumberland."

"Send a servant with a led horse," said the General; "let the young man come hither instantly."

It is well known, that the ancient mode of treating the small-pox was to refuse to the patient every thing which Nature urged him to desire; and, in particular, to confine him to heated rooms, beds loaded with blankets, and spiced wine, when Nature called for cold water and fresh air. A different mode of treatment had of late been adventured upon by some practitioners, who preferred reason to authority, and Gideon Gray had followed it for several years with extraordinary success.

When General Witherington saw Hartley, he was startled at his youth; but when he heard him modestly, but with confidence, state the difference of the two modes of treatment, and the rationale of his practice, he listened with the most serious attention. So did his lady, her streaming eyes turning from Hartley to her husband, as if to watch what impression the arguments of the former were making upon the latter. General Witherington was silent for a few minutes after Hartley had finished his exposition, and seemed buried in profound reflection. "To treat a fever," he said, "in a manner which tends to produce one, seems indeed to be adding fuel to fire."

"It is—it is," said the lady. "Let us trust this young man, General Witherington. We shall at least give our darlings the comforts of the fresh air and cold water, for which they are pining."

But the General remained undecided. "Your reasoning," he said to Hartley, "seems plausible; but still it is only hypothesis. What can you show to support your theory, in opposition to the general practice?"

"My own observation," replied the young man. "Here is a memorandum-book of medical cases which I have witnessed. It contains twenty cases of small-pox, of which eighteen were recoveries."

"And the two others?" said the General.

"Terminated fatally," replied Hartley; "we can as yet but partially disarm this scourge of the human race."

"Young man," continued the General, "were I to say that a thousand gold mohrs were yours in case my children live under your treatment, what have you to peril in exchange?"

"My reputation," answered Hartley, firmly.

"And you could warrant on your reputation the recovery of your patients?"

"God forbid I should be presumptuous! But I think I could warrant my using those means, which, with God's blessing, afford the fairest chance of a favourable result."

"Enough—you are modest and sensible, as well as bold, and I will trust you."

The lady, on whom Hartley's words and manner had made a great impression, and who was eager to discontinue a mode of treatment which subjected the patients to the greatest pain and privation, and had already proved unfortunate, eagerly acquiesced, and Hartley was placed in full authority in the sick room.

Windows were thrown open, fires reduced or discontinued, loads of bed-clothes removed, cooling drinks superseded mulled wine and spices. The sick-nurses cried out murder. Doctors Tourniquet and Lancelot retired in disgust, menacing something like a general pestilence, in vengeance of what they termed rebellion against the neglect of the aphorisms of Hippocrates. Hartley proceeded quietly and steadily, and the patients got into a fair road of recovery.

The young Northumbrian was neither conceited nor artful; yet, with all his plainness of character, he could not but know the influence which a successful physician obtains over the parents of the children whom he has saved from the grave, and especially before the cure is actually completed. He resolved to use this influence in behalf of his old companion, trusting that the military tenacity of General Witherington would give way on consideration of the obligation so lately conferred upon him.

On his way to the General's house, which was at present his constant place of residence, he examined the package which Middlemas had put into his hand. It contained the picture of Menie Gray, plainly set, and the ring, with brilliants, which Doctor Gray had given to Richard, as his mother's last gift. The first of these tokens extracted from honest Hartley a sigh, perhaps a tear of sad remembrance. "I fear," he said, "she has not chosen worthily; but she shall be happy, if I can make her so."

Arrived at the residence of General Witherington, our Doctor went first to the sick apartment, and then carried to their parents the delightful account, that the recovery of the children might be considered as certain.

"May the God of Israel bless thee, young man!" said the lady, trembling with emotion; "thou hast wiped the tear from the eye of the despairing mother. And yet—alas! alas! still it must flow when I think of my cherub Reuben.—Oh! Mr. Hartley, why did we not know you a week sooner!—my darling had not then died."

"God gives and takes away, my lady," answered Hartley; "and you must remember that two are restored to you out of three. It is far from certain, that the treatment I have used towards the convalescents would have brought through their brother; for the case, as reported to me, was of a very inveterate description."

"Doctor," said Witherington, his voice testifying more emotion than he usually or willingly gave way to, "you can comfort the sick in spirit as well as the sick in body. But it is time we settle our wager. You betted your reputation, which remains with you, increased by all the credit due to your eminent success, against a thousand gold mohrs, the value of which you will find in that pocketbook."

"General Witherington," said Hartley, "you are wealthy, and entitled to be generous—I am poor, and not entitled to decline whatever may be, even in a liberal sense, a compensation for my professional attendance. But there is a bound to extravagance, both in giving and accepting; and I must not hazard the newly acquired reputation with which you flatter me, by giving room to have it said, that I fleeced the parents, when their feelings were all afloat with anxiety for their children.—Allow me to divide this large sum; one half I will thankfully retain, as a most liberal recompense for my labour; and if you still think you owe me any thing, let me have it in the advantage of your good opinion and countenance."

"If I acquiesce in your proposal, Doctor Hartley," said the General, reluctantly receiving back a part of the contents of the pocketbook, "it is because I hope to serve you with my interest, even better than with my purse."

"And indeed, sir," replied Hartley, "it was upon your interest that I am just about to make a small claim."

The General and his lady spoke both in the same breath, to assure him his boon was granted before asked.

"I am not so sure of that," said Hartley; "for it respects a point on which I have heard say, that your Excellency is rather inflexible—the discharge of a recruit."

"My duty makes me so," replied the General—"You know the sort of fellows that we are obliged to content ourselves with—they get drunk—grow pot-valiant—enlist over-night, and repent next morning. If I am to dismiss all those who pretend to have been trepanned, we should have few volunteers remain behind. Every one has some idle story of the promises of a swaggering sergeant Kite—it is impossible to attend to them. But let me hear yours, however."

"Mine is a very singular case. The party has been robbed of a thousand pounds."

"A recruit for this service possessing a thousand pounds! My dear Doctor, depend upon it, the fellow has gulled you. Bless my heart, would a man who had a thousand pounds think of enlisting as a private sentinel?"

"He had no such thoughts," answered Hartley. "He was persuaded by the rogue whom he trusted, that he was to have a commission."

"Then his friend must have been Tom Hillary, or the devil; for no other could possess so much cunning and impudence. He will certainly find his way to the gallows at last. Still this story of the thousand pounds seems a touch even beyond Tom Hillary. What reason have you to think that this fellow ever had such a sum of money?"

"I have the best reason to know it for certain," answered Hartley; "he and I served our time together, under the same excellent master; and when he came of age, not liking the profession which he had studied, and obtaining possession of his little fortune, he was deceived by the promises of this same Hillary."

"Who has had him locked up in our well-ordered hospital yonder?" said the General.

"Even so, please your Excellency," replied Hartley; "not, I think, to cure him of any complaint, but to give him the opportunity of catching one, which would silence all enquiries."

"The matter shall be closely looked into. But how miserably careless the young man's friends must have been to let a raw lad go into the world with such a companion and guide as Tom Hillary, and such a sum as a thousand pounds in his pocket. His parents had better have knocked him on the head. It certainly was not done like canny Northumberland, as my servant Winter calls it."

"The youth must indeed have had strangely hard-hearted, or careless parents," said Mrs. Witherington, in accents of pity.

"He never knew them, madam," said Hartley; "there was a mystery on the score of his birth. A cold, unwilling, and almost unknown hand, dealt him out his portion when he came of lawful age, and he was pushed into the world like a bark forced from shore, without rudder, compass, or pilot."

Here General Witherington involuntarily looked to his lady, while, guided by a similar impulse, her looks were turned upon him. They exchanged a momentary glance of deep and peculiar meaning, and then the eyes of both were fixed on the ground.

"Were you brought up in Scotland?" said the lady, addressing herself, in a faltering voice, to Hartley—"And what was your master's name?"

"I served my apprenticeship with Mr. Gideon Gray of the town of Middlemas," said Hartley.

"Middlemas! Gray?" repeated the lady, and fainted away.

Hartley offered the succours of his profession; the husband flew to support her head, and the instant that Mrs. Witherington began to recover, he whispered to her, in a tone betwixt entreaty and warning, "Zilia, beware—beware!"

Some imperfect sounds which she had begun to frame, died away upon her tongue.

"Let me assist you to your dressing-room, my love," said her obviously anxious husband.

She arose with the action of an automaton, which moves at a touch of a spring, and half hanging upon her husband, half dragging herself on by her own efforts, had nearly reached the door of the room, when Hartley following, asked if he could be of any service.

"No, sir," said the General, sternly; "this is no case for a stranger's interference; when you are wanted I will send for you."

Hartley stepped back on receiving a rebuff in a tone so different from that which General Witherington had used towards him in their previous intercourse, and felt disposed for the first time, to give credit to public report, which assigned to that gentleman, with several good qualities, the character of a very proud and haughty man. Hitherto, he thought, I have seen him tamed by sorrow and anxiety, now the mind is regaining its natural tension. But he must in decency interest himself for this unhappy Middlemas.

The General returned into the apartment a minute or two afterwards, and addressed Hartley in his usual tone of politeness, though apparently still under great embarrassment, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal.

"Mrs. Witherington is better," he said, "and will be glad to see you before dinner. You dine with us, I hope?"

Hartley bowed.

"Mrs. Witherington is rather subject to this sort of nervous fits, and she has been much harassed of late by grief and apprehension. When she recovers from them it is a few minutes before she can collect her ideas, and during such intervals—to speak very confidentially to you, my dear Doctor Hartley—she speaks sometimes about imaginary events which have never happened, and sometimes about distressing occurrences in an early period of life. I am not, therefore, willing that any one but myself, or her old attendant Mrs. Lopez, should be with her on such occasions."

Hartley admitted that a certain degree of light-headedness was often the consequence of nervous fits.

The General proceeded. "As to this young man—this friend of yours—this Richard Middlemas—did you not call him so?"

"Not that I recollect," answered Hartley; "but your Excellency has hit upon his name."

"That is odd enough—Certainly you said something about Middlemas?" replied General Witherington.

"I mentioned the name of the town," said Hartley.

"Ay, and I caught it up as the name of the recruit—I was indeed occupied at the moment by my anxiety about my wife. But this Middlemas, since such is his name, is a wild young fellow, I suppose?"

"I should do him wrong to say so, your Excellency. He may have had his follies like other young men; but his conduct has, so far as I know, been respectable; but, considering we lived in the same house, we were not very intimate."

"That is bad—I should have liked him—that is—it would have been happy for him to have had a friend like you. But I suppose you studied too hard for him. He would be a soldier, ha?—Is he good-looking?"

"Remarkably so," replied Hartley; "and has a very prepossessing manner."

"Is his complexion dark or fair?" asked the General.

"Rather uncommonly dark," said Hartley,—"darker, if I may use the freedom, than your Excellency's."

"Nay, then, he must be a black ouzel, indeed!—Does he understand languages?"

"Latin and French tolerably well."

"Of course he cannot fence or dance?"

"Pardon me, sir, I am no great judge; but Richard is reckoned to do both with uncommon skill."

"Indeed!—Sum this up, and it sounds well. Handsome, accomplished in exercises, moderately learned, perfectly well-bred, not unreasonably wild. All this comes too high for the situation of a private sentinel. He must have a commission, Doctor—entirely for your sake."

"Your Excellency is generous."

"It shall be so; and I will find means to make Tom Hillary disgorge his plunder, unless he prefers being hanged, a fate he has long deserved. You cannot go back to the Hospital to-day. You dine with us, and you know Mrs. Witherington's fears of infection; but to-morrow find out your friend. Winter shall see him equipped with every thing needful. Tom Hillary shall repay advances, you know; and he must be off with the first detachment of the recruits, in the Middlesex Indiaman, which sails from the Downs on Monday fortnight; that is, if you think him fit for the voyage. I dare say the poor fellow is sick of the Isle of Wight."

"Your Excellency will permit the young man to pay his respects to you before his departure?"

"To what purpose, sir?" said the General hastily and peremptorily; but instantly added, "You are right—I should like to see him. Winter shall let him know the time, and take horses to fetch him hither. But he must have been out of the Hospital for a day or two; so the sooner you can set him at liberty the better. In the meantime, take him to your own lodgings, Doctor; and do not let him form any intimacies with the officers, or any others, in this place, where he may light on another Hillary."

Had Hartley been as well acquainted as the reader with the circumstances of young Middlemas's birth, he might have drawn decisive conclusions from the behaviour of General Witherington, while his comrade was the topic of conversation. But as Mr. Gray and Middlemas himself were both silent on the subject, he knew little of it but from general report, which his curiosity had never induced him to scrutinize minutely. Nevertheless, what he did apprehend interested him so much, that he resolved upon trying a little experiment, in which he thought there could be no great harm. He placed on his finger the remarkable ring intrusted to his care by Richard Middlemas, and endeavoured to make it conspicuous in approaching Mrs. Witherington; taking care, however, that this occurred during her husband's absence. Her eyes had no sooner caught a sight of the gem, than they became riveted to it, and she begged a nearer sight of it, as strongly resembling one which she had given to a friend. Taking the ring from his finger, and placing it in her emaciated hand, Hartley informed her it was the property of the friend in whom he had just been endeavouring to interest the General. Mrs. Witherington retired in great emotion, but next day summoned Hartley to a private interview, the particulars of which, so far as are necessary to be known, shall be afterwards related.

On the succeeding day after these important discoveries, Middlemas, to his great delight, was rescued from his seclusion in the Hospital, and transferred to his comrade's lodgings in the town of Ryde, of which Hartley himself was a rare inmate; the anxiety of Mrs. Witherington detaining him at the General's house, long after his medical attendance might have been dispensed with.

Within two or three days a commission arrived for Richard Middlemas, as a lieutenant in the service of the East India Company. Winter, by his master's orders, put the wardrobe of the young officer on a suitable footing; while Middlemas, enchanted at finding himself at once emancipated from his late dreadful difficulties, and placed under the protection of a man of such importance as the General, obeyed implicitly the hints transmitted to him by Hartley, and enforced by Winter, and abstained from going into public, or forming acquaintances with any one. Even Hartley himself he saw seldom; and, deep as were his obligations, he did not perhaps greatly regret the absence of one whose presence always affected him with a sense of humiliation and abasement.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

The evening before he was to sail for the Downs, where the Middlesex lay ready to weigh anchor, the new lieutenant was summoned by Winter to attend him to the General's residence, for the purpose of being introduced to his patron, to thank him at once, and to bid him farewell. On the road, the old man took the liberty of schooling his companion concerning the respect which he ought to pay to his master, "who was, though a kind and generous man as ever came from Northumberland, extremely rigid in punctiliously exacting the degree of honour which was his due."

While they were advancing towards the house, the General and his wife expected their arrival with breathless anxiety. They were seated in a superb drawing-room, the General behind a large chandelier, which, shaded opposite to his face, threw all the light to the other side of the table, so that he could observe any person placed there, without becoming the subject of observation in turn. On a heap of cushions, wrapped in a glittering drapery of gold and silver muslins, mingled with shawls, a luxury which was then a novelty in Europe, sat, or rather reclined, his lady, who, past the full meridian of beauty, retained charms enough to distinguish her as one who had been formerly a very fine woman, though her mind seemed occupied by the deepest emotion.

"Zilia," said her husband, "you are unable for what you have undertaken—take my advice—retire—you shall know all and everything that passes—but retire. To what purpose should you cling to the idle wish of beholding for a moment a being whom you can never again look upon?"

"Alas," answered the lady, "and is not your declaration that I shall never see him more, a sufficient reason that I should wish to see him now—should wish to imprint on my memory the features and the form which I am never again to behold while we are in the body? Do not, my Richard, be more cruel than was my poor father, even when his wrath was in its bitterness. He let me look upon my infant, and its cherub face dwelt with me, and was my comfort among the years of unutterable sorrow in which my youth wore away."

"It is enough, Zilia—you have desired this boon—I have granted it—and, at whatever risk, my promise shall be kept. But think how much depends on this fatal secret—your rank and estimation in society—my honour interested that that estimation should remain uninjured. Zilia, the moment that the promulgation of such a secret gives prudes and scandalmongers a right to treat you with scorn, will be fraught with unutterable misery, perhaps with bloodshed and death, should a man dare to take up the rumour."

"You shall be obeyed, my husband," answered Zilia, "in all that the frailness of nature will permit. But oh, God of my fathers, of what clay hast thou fashioned us poor mortals, who dread so much the shame which follows sin, yet repent so little for the sin itself!" In a minute afterwards steps were heard—the door opened—Winter announced Lieutenant Middlemas, and the unconscious son stood before his parents.

Witherington started involuntarily up, but immediately constrained himself to assume the easy deportment with which a superior receives a dependent, and which, in his own case, was usually mingled with a certain degree of hauteur. The mother had less command of herself. She, too, sprung up, as if with the intention of throwing herself on the neck of her son, for whom she had travailed and sorrowed. But the warning glance of her husband arrested her as if by magic, and she remained standing, with her beautiful head and neck somewhat advanced, her hands clasped together, and extended forward in the attitude of motion, but motionless, nevertheless, as a marble statue, to which the sculptor has given all the appearance of life, but cannot impart its powers. So strange a gesture and posture might have excited the young officer's surprise; but the lady stood in the shade, and he was so intent in looking upon his patron, that he was scarce even conscious of Mrs. Witherington's presence.

"I am happy in this opportunity," said Middlemas, observing that the General did not speak, "to return my thanks to General Witherington, to whom they never can be sufficiently paid."

The sound of his voice, though uttering words so indifferent, seemed to dissolve the charm which kept his mother motionless. She sighed deeply, relaxed the rigidity of her posture, and sunk back on the cushions from which she had started up. Middlemas turned a look towards her at the sound of the sigh, and the rustling of her drapery. The General hastened to speak.

"My wife, Mr. Middlemas, has been unwell of late—your friend, Mr. Hartley, might mention it to you—an affection of the nerves."

Mr. Middlemas was, of course, sorry and concerned.

"We have had distress in our family, Mr. Middlemas, from the ultimate and heart-breaking consequences of which we have escaped by the skill of your friend, Mr. Hartley. We will be happy if it is in our power to repay a part of our obligations in service to his friend and protege, Mr. Middlemas."

"I am only acknowledged as *his* protege, then," *thought* Richard; but he *said*, "Every one must envy his friend in having had the distinguished good fortune to be of use to General Witherington and his family."

"You have received your commission, I presume. Have you any particular wish or desire respecting your destination?"

"No, may it please your Excellency," answered Middlemas. "I suppose Hartley would tell your Excellency my unhappy state—that I am an orphan, deserted by the parents who cast me on the wide world, an outcast about whom nobody knows or cares, except to desire that I should wander far enough, and live obscurely enough, not to disgrace them by their connexion with me."

Zilia wrung her hands as he spoke, and drew her muslin veil closely around her head as if to exclude the sounds which excited her mental agony.

"Mr. Hartley was not particularly communicative about your affairs," said the General; "nor do I wish to give you the pain of entering into them. What I desire to know is, if you are pleased with your destination to Madras?"

"Perfectly, please your Excellency—anywhere, so that there is no chance of meeting the villain Hillary."

"Oh! Hillary's services are too necessary in the purlieus of St. Giles's, the Lowlights of Newcastle, and such like places, where human carrion can be picked up, to be permitted to go to India. However, to show you the knave has some grace, there are the notes of which you were robbed. You will find them the very same paper which you lost, except a small sum which the rogue had spent, but which a friend has made up, in compassion for your sufferings." Richard Middlemas sunk on one knee, and kissed the hand which restored him to independence.

"Pshaw!" said the General, "you are a silly young man;" but he withdrew not his hand from his caresses. This was one of the occasions on which Dick Middlemas could be oratorical.

"O, my more than father," he said, "how much greater a debt do I owe to you than to the unnatural parents, who brought me into this world by their sin, and deserted me through their cruelty!"

Zilia, as she heard these cutting words, flung back her veil, raising it on both hands till it floated behind her like a mist, and then giving a faint groan, sunk down in a swoon. Pushing Middlemas from him with a hasty movement, General Witherington flew to his lady's assistance, and carried her in his arms, as if she had been a child, into the anteroom, where an old servant waited with the means of restoring suspended animation, which the unhappy husband too truly anticipated might be useful. These were hastily employed, and succeeded in calling the sufferer to life, but in a state of mental emotion that was dreadful.

Her mind was obviously impressed by the last words which her son had uttered.—"Did you hear him, Richard," she exclaimed, in accents terribly loud, considering the exhausted state of her strength—"Did you hear the words? It was Heaven speaking our condemnation by the voice of our own child. But do not fear, my Richard, do not weep! I will answer the thunder of Heaven with its own music."

She flew to a harpsichord which stood in the room, and, while the servant and master gazed on each other, as if doubting whether her senses were about to leave her entirely, she wandered over the keys, producing a wilderness of harmony, composed of passages recalled by memory, or combined by her own musical talent, until at length her voice and instrument united in one of those magnificent hymns in which her youth had praised her Maker, with voice and harp, like the Royal Hebrew who composed it. The tear ebbed insensibly from the eyes which she turned upwards—her vocal tones, combining with those of the instrument, rose to a pitch of brilliancy seldom attained by the most distinguished performers, and then sunk into a dying cadence, which fell, never again to rise,—for the songstress had died with her strain.

The horror of the distracted husband may be conceived, when all efforts to restore life proved totally ineffectual. Servants were despatched for medical men—Hartley, and every other who could be found. The General precipitated himself into the apartment they had so lately left, and in his haste ran, against Middlemas, who, at the sound of the music from the adjoining apartment, had naturally approached nearer to the door, and surprised and startled by the sort of clamour, hasty steps, and confused voices which ensued, had remained standing there, endeavouring to ascertain the cause of so much disorder.

The sight of the unfortunate young man awakened the General's stormy passions to frenzy. He seemed to recognise his son only as the cause of his wife's death. He seized him by the collar, and shook him violently as he dragged him into the chamber of mortality.

"Come hither," he said, "thou for whom a life of lowest obscurity was too mean a fate—come hither, and look on the parents whom thou hast so much envied—whom thou hast so often cursed. Look at that pale emaciated form, a figure of wax, rather than flesh and blood—that is thy mother—that is the unhappy Zilia Moncada, to whom thy birth was the source of shame and misery, and to whom thy ill-omened presence has now brought death itself. And behold me"—he pushed the lad from him, and stood up erect, looking wellnigh in gesture and figure the apostate spirit he described—"Behold me," he said; "see you not my hair streaming with sulphur, my brow scathed with lightning? I am the Arch-Fiend—I am the father whom you seek—I am the accursed Richard Tresham, the seducer of Zilia, and the father of her murderer!"

Hartley entered while this horrid scene was passing. All attention to the deceased, he instantly saw, would be thrown away; and understanding, partly from Winter, partly from the tenor of the General's frantic discourse, the nature of the disclosure which had occurred, he hastened to put an end, if possible, to the frightful and scandalous scene which had taken place. Aware how delicately the General felt on the subject of reputation, he assailed him with remonstrances on such conduct, in presence of so many witnesses. But the mind had ceased to answer to that once powerful keynote.

"I care not if the whole world hear my sin and my punishment," said Witherington. "It shall not be again said of me, that I fear shame more than I repent sin. I feared shame only for Zilia, and Zilia is dead!"

"But her memory, General—spare the memory of your wife, in which the character of your children is involved."

"I have no children!" said the desperate and violent man. "My Reuben is gone to Heaven, to prepare a lodging for the angel who has now escaped from the earth in a flood of harmony, which can only be equalled where she is gone. The other two cherubs will not survive their mother. I shall be, nay, I already feel myself, a childless man."

"Yet I am your son," replied Middlemas, in a tone sorrowful, but at the same time tinged with sullen resentment—"Your son by your wedded wife. Pale as she lies there, I call upon you both to acknowledge my rights, and all who are present to bear witness to them."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the maniac father, "canst thou think of thine own sordid rights in the midst of death and frenzy? My son?—thou art the fiend who has occasioned my wretchedness in this world, and who will share my eternal misery in the next. Hence from my sight, and my curse go with thee!"

His eyes fixed on the ground, his arms folded on his breast, the haughty and dogged spirit of Middlemas yet seemed to meditate reply. But Hartley, Winter, and other bystanders interfered, and forced him from the apartment. As they endeavoured to remonstrate with him, he twisted himself out of their grasp, ran to the stables, and seizing the first saddled horse that he found, out of many that had been in haste got ready to seek for assistance, he threw himself on its back, and rode furiously off. Hartley was about to mount and follow him; but Winter and the other domestics threw themselves around him, and implored him not to desert their unfortunate master, at a time when the influence which he had acquired over him might be the only restraint on the violence of his passions.

"He had a *coup de soleil* in India," whispered Winter, "and is capable of any thing in his fits. These cowards cannot control him, and I am old and feeble."

Satisfied that General Witherington was a greater object of compassion than Middlemas, whom besides he had no hope of overtaking, and who he believed was safe in his own keeping, however violent might be his present emotions, Hartley returned where the greater emergency demanded his immediate care.

He found the unfortunate General contending with the domestics, who endeavoured to prevent his making his way to the apartment where his children slept, and exclaiming furiously—"Rejoice, my treasures—rejoice!—He has fled, who would proclaim your father's crime, and your mother's dishonour!—He has fled, never to return, whose life has been the death of one parent, and the ruin of another!—Courage, my children, your father is with you—he will make his way to you through a hundred obstacles!"

The domestics, intimidated and undecided, were giving way to him, when Adam Hartley approached, and placing himself before the unhappy man, fixed his eye firmly on the General's, while he said in a low but stern voice—"Madman, would you kill your children?"

The General seemed staggered in his resolution, but still attempted to rush past him. But Hartley, seizing him by the collar of his coat on each side, "You are my prisoner," he said; "I command you to follow me."

"Ha! prisoner, and for high treason? Dog, thou hast met thy death!"

The distracted man drew a poniard from his bosom, and Hartley's strength and resolution might not perhaps have saved his life, had not Winter mastered the General's right hand, and contrived to disarm him.

"I am your prisoner, then," he said; "use me civilly—and let me see my wife and children."

"You shall see them to-morrow," said Hartley; "follow us instantly, and without the least resistance."

General Witherington followed like a child, with the air of one who is suffering for a cause in which he glories.

"I am not ashamed of my principles," he said—"I am willing to die for my king."

Without exciting his frenzy, by contradicting the fantastic idea which occupied his imagination, Hartley continued to maintain over his patient the ascendancy he had acquired. He caused him to be led to his apartment, and beheld him suffer himself to be put to bed. Administering then a strong composing draught, and causing a servant to sleep in the room, he watched the unfortunate man till dawn of morning.

General Witherington awoke in his full senses, and apparently conscious of his real situation, which he testified by low groans, sobs, and tears. When Hartley drew near his bedside, he knew him perfectly, and said, "Do not fear me—the fit is over—leave me now, and see after yonder unfortunate. Let him leave Britain as soon as possible, and go where his fate calls him, and where we can never meet more. Winter knows my ways, and will take care of me."

Winter gave the same advice. "I can answer," he said, "for my master's security at present; but in Heaven's name, prevent his ever meeting again, with that obdurate young man!"

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

"Well, then, the world's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

When Adam Hartley arrived at his lodgings in the sweet little town of Ryde, his first enquiries were after his comrade. He had arrived last night late, man and horse all in a foam. He made no reply to any questions about supper or the like, but snatching a candle, ran up stairs into his apartment, and shut and double-locked the door. The servants only supposed, that, being something intoxicated, he had ridden hard, and was unwilling to expose himself.

Hartley went to the door of his chamber, not without some apprehensions; and after knocking and calling more than once, received at length the welcome return, "Who is there?"

On Hartley announcing himself, the door opened, and Middlemas appeared, well dressed, and with his hair arranged and powdered; although, from the appearance of the bed, it had not been slept in on the preceding night, and Richard's countenance, haggard and ghastly, seemed to bear witness to the same fact. It was, however, with an affectation of indifference that he spoke.

"I congratulate you on your improvement in worldly knowledge, Adam. It is just the time to desert the poor heir, and to stick by him that is in immediate possession of the wealth."

"I staid last night at General Witherington's," answered Hartley, "because he is extremely ill."

"Tell him to repent of his sins, then," said Richard. "Old Gray used to say, a doctor had as good a title to give ghostly advice as a parson. Do you remember Doctor Dulberry, the minister, calling him an interloper? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"I am surprised at this style of language from one in your circumstances."

"Why, ay," said Middlemas, with a bitter smile—"it would be difficult to most men to keep up their spirits, after gaining and losing father, mother, and a good inheritance, all in the same day. But I had always a turn for philosophy."

"I really do not understand you, Mr. Middlemas."

"Why, I found my parents yesterday, did I not?" answered the young man. "My mother, as you know, had waited but that moment to die, and my father to become distracted; and I conclude both were contrived purposely to cheat me of my inheritance, as he has taken up such a prejudice against me."

"Inheritance?" repeated Hartley, bewildered by Richard's calmness, and half suspecting that the insanity of the father was hereditary in the family. "In Heaven's name, recollect yourself, and get rid of these hallucinations. What inheritance are you dreaming of?"

"That of my mother, to be sure, who must have inherited old Moncada's wealth—and to whom should it descend, save to her children?—I am the eldest of them—that fact cannot be denied."

"But consider, Richard—recollect yourself."

"I do," said Richard; "and what then?"

"Then you cannot but remember," said Hartley, "that unless there was a will in your favour, your birth prevents you from inheriting."

"You are mistaken, sir, I am legitimate.—Yonder sickly brats, whom you rescued from the grave, are not more legitimate than I am.—Yes! our parents could not allow the air of Heaven to breathe on them—me they committed to the winds and the waves—I am nevertheless their lawful child, as well as their puling offspring of advanced age and decayed health. I saw them, Adam—Winter showed the nursery to me while they were gathering courage to receive me in the drawing-room. There they lay, the children of predilection, the riches of the East expended that they might sleep soft and wake in magnificence. I, the eldest brother—the heir—I stood beside their bed in the borrowed dress which I had so lately exchanged for the rags of an hospital. Their couches breathed the richest perfumes, while I was reeking from a pest-house; and I—I repeat it—the heir, the produce of their earliest and best love, was thus treated. No wonder that my look was that of a basilisk."

"You speak as if you were possessed with an evil spirit," said Hartley; "or else you labour under a strange delusion."

"You think those only are legally married over whom a drowsy parson has read the ceremony from a dog's-eared prayer-book? It may be so in your English law—but Scotland makes Love himself the priest. A vow betwixt a fond couple, the blue heaven alone witnessing, will protect a confiding girl against the perjury of a fickle swain, as much as if a Dean had performed the rites in the loftiest cathedral in England. Nay, more; if the child of love be acknowledged by the father at the time when he is baptized—if he present the mother to strangers of respectability as his wife, the laws of Scotland will not allow him to retract the justice which has, in these actions, been done to the female whom he has wronged, or the offspring of their mutual love. This General Tresham, or Witherington, treated my unhappy mother as his wife before Gray and others, quartered her as such in the family of a respectable man, gave her the same name by which he himself chose to pass for the time. He presented me to the priest as his lawful offspring; and the law of Scotland, benevolent to the helpless child, will not allow him now to disown what he so formally admitted. I know my rights, and am determined to claim them."

"You do not then intend to go on board the Middlesex? Think a little—You will lose your voyage and your commission."

"I will save my birth-right," answered Middlemas. "When I thought of going to India, I knew not my parents, or how to make good the rights which I had through them. That riddle is solved. I am entitled to at least a third of Moncada's estate, which, by Winter's account, is considerable. But for you, and your mode of treating the small-pox, I should have had the whole. Little did I think, when old Gray was likely to have his wig pulled off, for putting out fires, throwing open windows, and exploding whisky and water, that the new system of treating the small-pox was to cost me so many thousand pounds."

"You are determined then," said Hartley, "on this wild course?"

"I know my rights, and am determined to make them available," answered the obstinate youth.

"Mr. Richard Middlemas, I am sorry for you."

"Mr. Adam Hartley, I beg to know why I am honoured by your sorrow."

"I pity you," answered Hartley, "both for the obstinacy of selfishness, which can think of wealth after the scene you saw last night, and for the idle vision which leads you to believe that you can obtain possession of it."

"Selfish!" cried Middlemas; "why, I am a dutiful son, labouring to clear the memory of a calumniated mother—And am I a visionary?—Why, it was to this hope that I awakened, when old Moncada's letter to Gray, devoting me to perpetual obscurity, first roused me to a sense of my situation, and dispelled the dreams of my childhood. Do you think that I would ever have submitted to the drudgery which I shared with you, but that, by doing so, I kept in view the only traces of these unnatural parents, by means of which I proposed to introduce myself to their notice, and, if necessary, enforce the rights of a legitimate child? The silence and death of Moncada broke my plans, and it was then only I reconciled myself to the thoughts of India."

"You were very young to have known so much of the Scottish law, at the time when we were first acquainted," said Hartley. "But I can guess your instructor."

"No less authority than Tom Hillary's," replied Middlemas. "His good counsel on that head is a reason why I do not now prosecute him to the gallows."

"I judged as much," replied Hartley; "for I heard him, before I left Middlemas, debating the point with Mr. Lawford; and I recollect perfectly, that he stated the law to be such as you now lay down."

"And what said Lawford in answer?" demanded Middlemas.

"He admitted," replied Hartley, "that in circumstances where the case was doubtful, such presumptions of legitimacy might be admitted. But he said they were liable to be controlled by positive and precise testimony, as, for instance, the evidence of the mother declaring the illegitimacy of the child."

"But there can exist none such in my case," said Middlemas hastily, and with marks of alarm.

"I will not deceive you, Mr. Middlemas, though I fear I cannot help giving you pain. I had yesterday a long conference with your mother, Mrs. Witherington, in which she acknowledged you as her son, but a son born before marriage. This express declaration will, therefore, put an end to the suppositions on which you ground your hopes. If you please, you may hear the contents of her declaration, which I have in her own handwriting."

"Confusion! is the cup to be for ever dashed from my lips?" muttered Richard; but recovering his composure, by exertion of the self-command, of which he possessed so large a portion, he desired Hartley to proceed with his communication. Hartley accordingly proceeded to inform him of the particulars preceding his birth, and those which followed after it; while Middlemas, seated on a sea-chest, listened with inimitable composure to a tale which went to root up the flourishing hopes of wealth which he had lately so fondly entertained.

Zilia Moncada was the only child of a Portuguese Jew of great wealth, who had come to London, in prosecution of his commerce. Among the few Christians who frequented his house, and occasionally his table, was Richard Tresham, a gentleman of a high Northumbrian family, deeply engaged in the service of Charles Edward during his short invasion, and though holding a commission in the Portuguese service, still an object of suspicion to the British government, on account of his well-known courage and Jacobitical principles. The high-bred elegance of this gentleman, together with his complete acquaintance with the Portuguese

language and manners, had won the intimacy of old Moncada, and, alas! the heart of the inexperienced Zilia, who, beautiful as an angel, had as little knowledge of the world and its wickedness as the lamb that is but a week old.

Tresham made his proposals to Moncada, perhaps in a manner which too evidently showed that he conceived the high-born Christian was degrading himself in asking an alliance with the wealthy Jew. Moncada rejected his proposals, forbade him his house, but could not prevent the lovers from meeting in private. Tresham made a dishonourable use of the opportunities which the poor Zilia so incautiously afforded, and the consequence was her ruin. The lover, however, had every purpose of righting the injury which he had inflicted, and, after various plans of secret marriage, which were rendered abortive by the difference of religion, and other circumstances, flight for Scotland was determined on. The hurry of the journey, the fear and anxiety to which Zilia was subjected, brought on her confinement several weeks before the usual time, so that they were compelled to accept of the assistance and accommodation offered by Mr. Gray. They had not been there many hours ere Tresham heard, by the medium of some sharp-sighted or keen-eared friend, that there were warrants out against him for treasonable practices. His correspondence with Charles Edward had become known to Moncada during the period of their friendship; he betrayed it in vengeance to the British cabinet, and warrants were issued, in which, at Moncada's request, his daughter's name was included. This might be of use, he apprehended, to enable him to separate his daughter from Tresham, should he find the fugitives actually married. How far he succeeded, the reader already knows, as well as the precautions which he took to prevent the living evidence of his child's frailty from being known to exist. His daughter he carried with him, and subjected her to severe restraint, which her own reflections rendered doubly bitter. It would have completed his revenge, had the author of Zilia's misfortunes been brought to the scaffold for his political offences. But Tresham skulked among his friends in the Highlands, and escaped until the affair blew over.

He afterwards entered into the East India Company's service, under his mother's name of Witherington, which concealed the Jacobite and rebel, until these terms were forgotten. His skill in military affairs soon raised him to riches and eminence. When he returned to Britain, his first enquiries were after the family of Moncada. His fame, his wealth, and the late conviction that his daughter never would marry any but him who had her first love, induced the old man to give that encouragement to General Witherington, which he had always denied to the poor and outlawed Major Tresham; and the lovers, after having been fourteen years separated, were at length united in wedlock.

General Witherington eagerly concurred in the earnest wish of his father-in-law, that every remembrance of former events should be buried, by leaving the fruit of the early and unhappy intrigue suitably provided for, but in a distant and obscure situation. Zilia thought far otherwise. Her heart longed, with a mother's longing, towards the object of her first maternal tenderness, but she dared not place herself in opposition at once to the will of her father, and the decision of her husband. The former, his religious prejudices much effaced by his long residence in England, had given consent that she should conform to the established religion of her husband and her country,—the latter, haughty as we have described him, made it his pride to introduce the beautiful convert among his high-born kindred. The discovery of her former frailty would have proved a blow to her respectability, which he dreaded like death; and it could not long remain a secret from his wife, that in consequence of a severe illness in India, even his reason became occasionally shaken by anything which violently agitated his feelings. She had, therefore, acquiesced in patience and silence in the course of policy which Moncada had devised, and which her husband anxiously and warmly approved. Yet her thoughts, even when their marriage was blessed with other offspring, anxiously reverted to the banished and outcast child, who had first been clasped to the maternal bosom.

All these feelings, "subdued and cherished long," were set afloat in full tide by the unexpected discovery of this son, redeemed from a lot of extreme misery, and placed before his mother's imagination in circumstances so disastrous.

It was in vain that her husband had assured her that he would secure the young man's prosperity, by his purse and his interest. She could not be satisfied, until she had herself done something to alleviate the doom of banishment to which her eldest-born was thus condemned. She was the more eager to do so, as she felt the extreme delicacy of her health, which was undermined by so many years of secret suffering.

Mrs. Witherington was, in conferring her maternal bounty, naturally led to employ the agency of Hartley, the companion of her son, and to whom, since the recovery of her younger children, she almost looked up as to a tutelar deity. She placed in his hands a sum of £2000, which she had at her own unchallenged disposal, with a request, uttered in the fondest and most affectionate terms, that it might be applied to the service of Richard Middlemas in the way Hartley should think most useful to him. She assured him of further support, as it should be needed; and a note to the following purport was also intrusted him, to be delivered when and where the prudence of Hartley should judge it proper to confide to him the secret of his birth.

"Oh, Benoni! Oh, child of my sorrow!" said this interesting document, "why should the eyes of thy unhappy mother be about to obtain permission to look on thee, since her arms were denied the right to fold thee to her bosom? May the God of Jews and of Gentiles watch over thee, and guard thee! May he remove, in his good time, the darkness which rolls between me and the beloved of my heart—the first fruit of my unhappy, nay, unhallowed affection. Do not—do not, my beloved!—think thyself a lonely exile, while thy mother's prayers arise for thee at sunrise and at sunset, to call down every blessing on thy head—to invoke every power in thy protection and defence. Seek not to see me—Oh, why must I say so!—But let me humble myself in the dust, since it is my own sin, my own folly, which I must blame!—but seek not to see or speak with me—it might be the death of both. Confide thy thoughts to the excellent Hartley, who hath been the guardian angel of us all—even as the tribes of Israel had each their guardian angel. What thou shalt wish, and he shall advise in thy behalf, shall be done, if in the power of a mother—And the love of a mother! Is it bounded by seas, or can deserts and distance measure its limits? Oh, child of my sorrow! Oh, Benoni! let thy spirit be with mine, as mine is with thee." Z. M.

All these arrangements being completed, the unfortunate lady next insisted with her husband that she should be permitted to see her son in that parting interview which terminated so fatally. Hartley, therefore, now discharged as her executor, the duty intrusted to him as her confidential agent.

"Surely," he thought, as, having finished his communication, he was about to leave the apartment, "surely the demons of Ambition and Avarice will unclothe the talons which they have fixed upon this man, at a charm like this."

And indeed Richard's heart had been formed of the nether millstone, had he not been duly affected by these first and last tokens of his mother's affection. He leant his head upon a table, and his tears flowed plentifully. Hartley left him undisturbed for more than an hour, and on his return found him in nearly the same attitude in which he had left him.

"I regret to disturb you at this moment," he said, "but I have still a part of my duty to discharge. I must place in your possession the deposit which your mother made in my hands—and I must also remind you that time flies fast, and that you have scarce an hour or two to determine whether you will prosecute your Indian voyage, under the new view of circumstances which I have opened to you."

Middlemas took the bills which his mother had bequeathed him. As he raised his head, Hartley could observe that his face was stained with tears. Yet he counted over the money with mercantile accuracy; and though he assumed the pen for the purpose of writing a discharge with an air of inconsolable dejection, yet he drew it up in good set terms, like one who had his senses much at his command.

"And now," he said, in a mournful voice, "give me my mother's narrative."

Hartley almost started, and answered hastily, "You have the poor lady's letter, which was addressed to yourself—the narrative is addressed to me. It is my warrant for disposing of a large sum of money—it concerns the rights of third parties, and I cannot part with it."

"Surely, surely it were better to deliver it into my hands, were it but to weep over it," answered Middlemas. "My fortune, Hartley, has been very cruel. You see that my parents purposed to have made me their undoubted heir; yet their purpose was disappointed by accident. And now my mother comes with well-intended fondness, and while she means to advance my fortune, furnishes evidence to destroy it.—Come, come, Hartley—you must be conscious that my mother wrote those details entirely for my information. I am the rightful owner, and insist on having them."

"I am sorry I must insist on refusing your demand," answered Hartley, putting the papers in his pocket. "You ought to consider, that if this communication has destroyed the idle and groundless hopes which you have indulged in, it has, at the same time, more than trebled your capital; and that if there are some hundreds

or thousands in the world richer than yourself, there are many millions not half so well provided. Set a brave spirit, then, against your fortune, and do not doubt your success in life."

His words seemed to sink into the gloomy mind of Middlemas. He stood silent for a moment, and then answered with a reluctant and insinuating voice,—

"My dear Hartley, we have long been companions—you can have neither pleasure nor interest in ruining my hopes—you may find some in forwarding them. Moncada's fortune will enable me to allow five thousand pounds to the friend who should aid me in my difficulties."

"Good morning to you, Mr. Middlemas," said Hartley, endeavouring to withdraw.

"One moment—one moment," said Middlemas, holding his friend by the button at the same time, "I meant to say ten thousand—and—and—marry whomsoever you like—I will not be your hindrance."

"You are a villain!" said Hartley, breaking from him, "and I always thought you so."

"And you," answered Middlemas, "are a fool, and I never thought you better. Off he goes—Let him—the game has been played and lost—I must hedge my bets: India must be my back-play."

All was in readiness for his departure. A small vessel and a favouring gale conveyed him and several other military gentlemen to the Downs, where the Indiaman, which was to transport them from Europe, lay ready for their reception.

His first feelings were sufficiently disconsolate. But accustomed from his infancy to conceal his internal thoughts, he appeared in the course of a week the gayest and best bred passenger who ever dared the long and weary space betwixt Old England and her Indian possessions. At Madras, where the sociable feelings of the resident inhabitants give ready way to enthusiasm in behalf of any stranger of agreeable qualities, he experienced that warm hospitality which distinguishes the British character in the East.

Middlemas was well received in company, and in the way of becoming an indispensable guest at every entertainment in the place, when the vessel, on board of which Hartley acted as surgeon's mate, arrived at the same settlement. The latter would not, from his situation, have been entitled to expect much civility and attention; but this disadvantage was made up by his possessing the most powerful introductions from General Witherington, and from other persons of weight in Leadenhall Street, the General's friends, to the principal inhabitants in the settlement. He found himself once more, therefore, moving in the same sphere with Middlemas, and under the alternative of living with him on decent and distant terms, or of breaking off with him altogether.

The first of these courses might perhaps have been the wisest; but the other was most congenial to the blunt and plain character of Hartley, who saw neither propriety nor comfort in maintaining a show of friendly intercourse, to conceal hate, contempt, and mutual dislike.

The circle at Fort St. George was much more restricted at that time than it has been since. The coldness of the young men did not escape notice; it transpired that they had been once intimates and fellow-students; yet it was now found that they hesitated at accepting invitations to the same parties. Rumour assigned many different and incompatible reasons for this deadly breach, to which Hartley gave no attention whatever, while Lieutenant Middlemas took care to countenance those which represented the cause of the quarrel most favourably to himself.

"A little bit of rivalry had taken place," he said, when pressed by gentlemen for an explanation; "he had only had the good luck to get further in the good graces of a fair lady than his friend Hartley, who had made a quarrel of it, as they saw. He thought it very silly to keep up spleen, at such a distance of time and space. He was sorry, more for the sake of the strangeness of the appearance of the thing than any thing else, although his friend had really some very good points about him."

While these whispers were working their effect in society, they did not prevent Hartley from receiving the most flattering assurances of encouragement and official promotion from the Madras government as opportunity should arise. Soon after, it was intimated to him that a medical appointment of a lucrative nature in a remote settlement was conferred on him, which removed him for some time from Madras and its neighbourhood.

Hartley accordingly sailed on his distant expedition; and it was observed, that after his departure, the character of Middlemas, as if some check had been removed, began to display itself in disagreeable colours. It was noticed that this young man, whose manners were so agreeable and so courteous during the first months after his arrival in India, began now to show symptoms of a haughty and overbearing spirit. He had adopted, for reasons which the reader may conjecture, but which appeared to be mere whim, at Fort St. George, the name of Tresham, in addition to that by which he had hitherto been distinguished, and in this he persisted with an obstinacy, which belonged more to the pride than the craft of his character. The Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment, an old cross-tempered martinet, did not choose to indulge the Captain (such was now the rank of Middlemas) in this humour.

"He knew no officer," he said, "by any name save that which he bore in his commission," and he Middlemass'd the Captain on all occasions.

One fatal evening, the Captain was so much provoked, as to intimate peremptorily, "that he knew his own name best."

"Why, Captain Middlemas," replied the Colonel, "it is not every child that knows its own father, so how can every man be so sure of his own name?"

The bow was drawn at a venture, but the shaft found the rent in the armour, and stung deeply. In spite of all the interposition which could be attempted, Middlemas insisted on challenging the Colonel, who could be persuaded to no apology.

"If Captain Middlemas," he said, "thought the cap fitted, he was welcome to wear it."

The result was a meeting, in which, after the parties had exchanged shots, the seconds tendered their mediation. It was rejected by Middlemas, who, at the second fire, had the misfortune to kill his commanding officer. In consequence, he was obliged to fly from the British settlements; for, being universally blamed for having pushed the quarrel to extremity, there was little doubt that the whole severity of military discipline would be exercised upon the delinquent. Middlemas, therefore, vanished from Fort St. George, and, though the affair had made much noise at the time, was soon no longer talked of. It was understood, in general, that he had gone to seek that fortune at the court of some native prince, which he could no longer hope for in the British settlements.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

Three years passed away after the fatal encounter mentioned in the last Chapter, and Doctor Hartley returning from his appointed mission, which was only temporary, received encouragement to settle in Madras in a medical capacity; and upon having done so, soon had reason to think he had chosen a line in which he might rise to wealth and reputation. His practice was not confined to his countrymen, but much sought after among the natives, who, whatever may be their prejudices against the Europeans in other respects, universally esteem their superior powers in the medical profession. This lucrative branch of practice rendered it necessary that Hartley should make the Oriental languages his study, in order to hold communication with his patients without the intervention of an interpreter. He had enough of opportunities to practise as a linguist, for, in acknowledgment, as he used jocularly to say, of the large fees of the wealthy Moslemah and Hindoos, he attended the poor of all nations gratis, whenever he was called upon.

It so chanced, that one evening he was hastily summoned by a message from the Secretary of the Government, to attend a patient of consequence. "Yet he is, after all, only a Fakir," said the message. "You will find him at the tomb of Cara Razi, the Mahomedan saint and doctor, about one coss from the fort. Enquire for him by the name of Barak el Hadgi. Such a patient promises no fees; but we know how little you care about the pagodas; and, besides, the Government is your paymaster on this occasion."

"That is the last matter to be thought on," said Hartley, and instantly repaired in his palanquin to the place pointed out to him.

The tomb of the Owliah, or Mahomedan Saint, Cara Razi, was a place held in much reverence by every good Mussulman. It was situated in the centre of a grove of mangos and tamarind-trees, and was built of red stone, having three domes, and minarets at every corner. There was a court in front, as usual, around which were cells constructed for the accommodation of the Fakirs who visited the tomb from motives of devotion, and made a longer or shorter residence there as they thought proper, subsisting upon the alms which the Faithful never fail to bestow on them in exchange for the benefit of their prayers. These devotees were engaged day and night in reading verses of the Koran before the tomb, which was constructed of white marble, inscribed with sentences from the book of the Prophet, and with the various titles conferred by the Koran upon the Supreme Being. Such a sepulchre, of which there are many, is, with its appendages and

attendants, respected during wars and revolutions, and no less by Feringis, (Franks, that is,) and Hindoos, than by Mahomedans themselves. The Fakirs, in return, act as spies for all parties, and are often employed in secret missions of importance.

Complying with the Mahomedan custom, our friend Hartley laid aside his shoes at the gates of the holy precincts, and avoiding to give offence by approaching near to the tomb, he went up to the principal Moullah, or priest who was distinguishable by the length of his beard, and the size of the large wooden beads, with which the Mahomedans, like the Catholics, keep register of their prayers. Such a person, venerable by his age, sanctity of character, and his real or supposed contempt of worldly pursuits and enjoyments, is regarded as the head of an establishment of this kind.

The Moullah is permitted by his situation to be more communicative with strangers than his younger brethren, who in the present instance remained with their eyes fixed on the Koran, muttering their recitations without noticing the European, or attending to what he said, as he enquired at their superior for Barak el Hadgi. The Moullah was seated on the earth, from which he did not arise, or show any mark of reverence; nor did he interrupt the tale of his beads, which he continued to count assiduously while Hartley was speaking. When he finished, the old man raised his eyes, and looked at him with an air of distraction, as if he was endeavouring to recollect what he had been saying; he at length pointed to one of the cells, and resumed his devotions like one who felt impatient of whatever withdrew his attention from his sacred duties, were it but for an instant.

Hartley entered the cell indicated, with the usual salutation of Salam Alaikum. His patient lay on a little carpet in a corner of the small white-washed cell. He was a man of about forty, dressed in the black robe of his order, very much torn and patched. He wore a high conical cap of Tartarian felt, and had round his neck the string of black beads belonging to his order. His eyes and posture indicated suffering, which he was enduring with stoical patience.

"Salam Alaikum," said Hartley; "you are in pain, my father?"—a title which he gave rather to the profession than to the years of the person he addressed.

"*Salam Alaikum bema sebastem*," answered the Fakir; "Well is it for you that you have suffered patiently. The book saith, such shall be the greeting of the angels to those who enter paradise."

The conversation being thus opened, the physician proceeded to enquire into the complaints of the patient, and to prescribe what he thought advisable. Having done this, he was about to retire, when, to his great surprise, the Fakir tendered him a ring of some value.

"The wise," said Hartley, declining the present, and at the same time paying a suitable compliment to the Fakir's cap and robe,— "the wise of every country are brethren. My left hand takes no guerdon of my right."

"A Feringi can then refuse gold?" said the Fakir. "I thought they took it from every hand, whether pure as that of an Houri, or leprous like Gehazi's—even as the hungry dog reckoneth not whether the flesh he eateth be of the camel of the prophet Saleth, or of the ass of Degial—on whose head be curses!"

"The book says," replied Hartley, "that it is Allah who closes and who enlarges the heart. Frank and Mussulman are all alike moulded by his pleasure."

"My brother hath spoken wisely," answered the patient. "Welcome the disease, if it bring thee acquainted with a wise physician. For what saith the poet—'It is well to have fallen to the earth, if while grovelling there thou shalt discover a diamond.'"

The physician made repeated visits to his patient, and continued to do so even after the health of El Hadgi was entirely restored. He had no difficulty in discerning in him one of those secret agents frequently employed by Asiatic Sovereigns. His intelligence, his learning, above all, his versatility and freedom from prejudices of every kind, left no doubt of Barak's possessing the necessary qualifications for conducting such delicate negotiations; while his gravity of habit and profession could not prevent his features from expressing occasionally a perception of humour, not usually seen in devotees of his class.

Barak el Hadgi talked often, amidst their private conversations, of the power and dignity of the Nawaub of Mysore; and Hartley had little doubt that he came from the Court of Hyder Ali, on some secret mission, perhaps for achieving a more solid peace betwixt that able and sagacious Prince and the East India Company's Government,—that which existed for the time being regarded on both parts as little more than a hollow and insincere truce. He told many stories to the advantage of this Prince, who certainly was one of the wisest that Hindostan could boast; and amidst great crimes, perpetrated to gratify his ambition, displayed many instances of princely generosity, and, what was a little more surprising, of even-handed justice.

On one occasion, shortly before Barak el Hadgi left Madras, he visited the Doctor, and partook of his sherbet, which he preferred to his own, perhaps because a few glasses of rum or brandy were usually added to enrich the compound. It might be owing to repeated applications to the jar which contained this generous fluid, that the Pilgrim became more than usually frank in his communications, and not contented with praising his Nawaub with the most hyperbolic eloquence, he began to insinuate the influence which he himself enjoyed with the Invincible, the Lord and Shield of the Faith of the Prophet.

"Brother of my soul," he said, "do but think if thou needest aught that the all-powerful Hyder Ali Khan Bohander can give; and then use not the intercession of those who dwell in palaces, and wear jewels in their turbans, but seek the cell of thy brother at the Great City, which is Seringapatam. And the poor Fakir, in his torn cloak, shall better advance thy suit with the Nawaub [for Hyder did not assume the title of Sultann] than they who sit upon seats of honour in the Divan."

With these and sundry other expressions of regard, he exhorted Hartley to come into the Mysore, and look upon the face of the Great Prince, whose glance inspired wisdom, and whose nod conferred wealth, so that Folly or Poverty could not appear before him. He offered at the same time to requite the kindness which Hartley had evinced to him, by showing him whatever was worthy the attention of a sage in the land of Mysore.

Hartley was not reluctant to promise to undertake the proposed journey, if the continuance of good understanding betwixt their governments should render it practicable, and in reality looked forward to the possibility of such an event with a good deal of interest. The friends parted with mutual good wishes, after exchanging in the Oriental fashion, such gifts as became sages, to whom knowledge was to be supposed dearer than wealth. Barak el Hadgi presented Hartley with a small quantity of the balsam of Mecca, very hard to be procured in an unadulterated form, and gave him at the same time a passport in a peculiar character, which he assured him would be respected by every officer of the Nawaub, should his friend be disposed to accomplish his visit to the Mysore. "The head of him who should disrespect this safe-conduct," he said, "shall not be more safe than that of the barley-stalk which the reaper has grasped in his hand."

Hartley requited these civilities by the present of a few medicines little used in the East, but such as he thought might, with suitable directions, be safely intrusted to a man so intelligent as his Moslem friend.

It was several months after Barak had returned to the interior of India, that Hartley was astonished by an unexpected rencounter.

The ships from Europe had but lately arrived, and had brought over their usual cargo of boys longing to be commanders, and young women without any purpose of being married, but whom a pious duty to some brother, some uncle, or other male relative, brought to India to keep his house, until they should find themselves unexpectedly in one of their own. Dr. Hartley happened to attend a public breakfast given on this occasion by a gentleman high in the service. The roof of his friend had been recently enriched by a consignment of three nieces, whom the old gentleman, justly attached to his quiet hookah, and, it was said, to a pretty girl of colour, desired to offer to the public, that he might have the fairest chance to get rid of his new guests as soon as possible. Hartley, who was thought a fish worth casting a fly for, was contemplating this fair investment, with very little interest, when he heard one of the company say to another in a low voice,—

"Angels and ministers! there is our old acquaintance, the Queen of Sheba, returned upon our hands like unsaleable goods."

Hartley looked in the same direction with the two who were speaking, and his eye was caught by a Semiramis-looking person, of unusual stature and amplitude, arrayed in a sort of riding-habit, but so formed, and so looped and gallooned with lace, as made it resemble the upper tunic of a native chief. Her robe was composed of crimson silk, rich with flowers of gold. She wore wide trowsers of light blue silk, a fine scarlet shawl around her waist, in which was stuck a creeze with a richly ornamented handle. Her throat and arms were loaded with chains and bracelets, and her turban, formed of a shawl similar to that worn around her waist, was decorated by a magnificent aigrette, from which a blue ostrich plume flowed in one direction, and a red one in another. The brow, of European complexion, on which this tiara rested, was too lofty for beauty, but seemed made for command; the aquiline nose retained its form, but the cheeks were a little sunken, and the complexion so very brilliant, as to give strong evidence that the whole countenance had undergone a thorough repair since the lady had left her couch. A black female slave, richly dressed, stood behind her with a chowry, or cow's tail, having a silver handle, which she used to keep off the flies. From the mode in which she was addressed by those who spoke to her, this lady appeared a person of too much importance to be affronted or neglected, and yet one with whom none desired further communication than the occasion seemed in propriety to demand.

She did not, however, stand in need of attention. The well-known captain of an East Indian vessel lately arrived from Britain was sedulously polite to her; and two or three gentlemen, whom Hartley knew to be engaged in trade, tended upon her as they would have done upon the safety of a rich argosy.

"For Heaven's sake, what is that for a Zenobia?" said Hartley, to the gentleman whose whisper had first attracted his attention to this lofty dame.

"Is it possible you do not know the Queen of Sheba?" said the person of whom he enquired, no way both to communicate the information demanded. "You must know, then, that she is the daughter of a Scotch emigrant, who lived and died at Pondicherry, a sergeant in Lally's regiment. She managed to marry a partisan officer named Montreville, a Swiss or Frenchman, I cannot tell which. After the surrender of Pondicherry, this hero and heroine—But hey—what the devil are you thinking of?—If you stare at her that way, you will make a scene; for she will think nothing of scolding you across the table."

But without attending to his friend's remonstrances, Hartley bolted from the table at which he sat, and made his way, with something less than the decorum which the rules of society enjoin, towards the place where the lady in question was seated.

"The Doctor is surely mad this morning"—said his friend Major Mercer to old Quartermaster Calder.

Indeed, Hartley was not perhaps strictly in his senses; for looking at the Queen of Sheba as he listened to Major Mercer, his eye fell on a light female form beside her, so placed as if she desired to be eclipsed by the bulky form and flowing robes we have described, and to his extreme astonishment, he recognised the friend of his childhood, the love of his youth—Menie Gray herself!

To see her in India was in itself astonishing. To see her apparently under such strange patronage, greatly increased his surprise. To make his way to her, and address her, seemed the natural and direct mode of satisfying the feelings which her appearance excited.

His impetuosity was, however, checked, when, advancing close upon Miss Gray and her companion, he observed that the former, though she looked at him, exhibited not the slightest token of recognition, unless he could interpret as such, that she slightly touched her upper lip with her fore-finger, which, if it happened otherwise than by mere accident, might be construed to mean, "Do not speak to me just now." Hartley, adopting such an interpretation, stood stock still, blushing deeply; for he was aware that he made for the moment but a silly figure.

He was the rather convinced of this, when, with a voice which in the force of its accents corresponded with her commanding air, Mrs. Montreville addressed him in English, which savoured slightly of a Swiss patois,—"You have come to us very fast, sir, to say nothing at all. Are you sure you did not get your tongue stolen by de way?"

"I thought I had seen an old friend in that lady, madam," stammered Hartley, "but it seems I am mistaken."

"The good people do tell me that you are one Doctors Hartley, sir. Now, my friend and I do not know Doctors Hartley at all."

"I have not the presumption to pretend to your acquaintance, madam, but him"—

Here Menie repeated the sign in such a manner, that though it was only momentary, Hartley could not misunderstand its purpose; he therefore changed the end of his sentence, and added, "But I have only to make my bow, and ask pardon for my mistake."

He retired back accordingly among the company, unable to quit the room, and enquiring at those whom he considered as the best newsmongers for such information as—"Who is that stately-looking woman, Mr. Butler?"

"Oh, the Queen of Sheba, to be sure."

"And who is that pretty girl, who sits beside her?"

"Or rather behind her," answered Butler, a military chaplain; "faith, I cannot say—Pretty did you call her?" turning his opera-glass that way—"Yes, faith, she is pretty—very pretty—Gad, she shoots her glances as smartly from behind the old pile yonder, as Teucer from behind Ajax Telamon's shield."

"But who is she, can you tell me?"

"Some fair-skinned speculation of old Montreville's, I suppose, that she has got either to toady herself, or take in some of her black friends with.—Is it possible you have never heard of old Mother Montreville?"

"You know I have been so long absent from Madras"—

"Well," continued Butler, "this lady is the widow of a Swiss officer in the French service, who after the surrender of Pondicherry, went off into the interior, and commenced soldier on his own account. He got possession of a fort, under pretence of keeping it for some simple Rajah or other; assembled around him a parcel of desperate vagabonds, of every colour in the rainbow; occupied a considerable territory, of which he raised the duties in his own name, and declared for independence. But Hyder Naig understood no such interloping proceedings, and down he came, besieged the fort and took it, though some pretend it was betrayed to him by this very woman. Be that as it may, the poor Swiss was found dead on the ramparts. Certain it is, she received large sums of money, under pretence of paying off her troops, surrendering of hill-forts, and Heaven knows what besides. She was permitted also to retain some insignia of royalty; and, as she was wont to talk of Hyder as the Eastern Solomon, she generally became known by the title of Queen of Sheba. She leaves her court when she pleases, and has been as far as Fort St. George before now. In a word, she does pretty much as she likes. The great folks here are civil to her, though they look on her as little better than a spy. As to Hyder, it is supposed he has ensured her fidelity by borrowing the greater part of her treasures, which prevents her from daring to break with him—besides other causes that smack of scandal of another sort."

"A singular story," replied Hartley to his companion, while his heart dwelt on the question, How it was possible that the gentle and simple Menie Gray should be in the train of such a character as this adventuress?

"But Butler has not told you the best of it," said Major Mercer, who by this time came round to finish his own story. "Your old acquaintance, Mr. Tresham, or Mr. Middlemas, or whatever else he chooses to be called, has been complimented by a report, that he stood very high in the good graces of this same Boadicea. He certainly commanded some troops which she stills keeps on foot, and acted at their head in the Nawaub's service, who craftily employed him in whatever could render him odious to his countrymen. The British prisoners were intrusted to his charge, and, to judge by what I felt myself, the devil might take a lesson from him in severity."

"And was he attached to, or connected with, this woman?"

"So Mrs. Rumour told us in our dungeon. Poor Jack Ward had the bastinado for celebrating their merits in a parody on the playhouse song,

'Sure such a pair were never seen,

So aptly formed to meet by nature.'"

Hartley could listen no longer. The fate of Menie Gray, connected with such a man and such a woman, rushed on his fancy in the most horrid colours, and he was struggling through the throng to get to some place where he might collect his ideas, and consider what could be done for her protection, when a black attendant touched his arm, and at the same time slipped a card into his hand. It bore, "Miss Gray, Mrs. Montreville's, at the house of Ram Sing Cottah, in the Black Town." On the reverse was written with a pencil, "Eight in the morning."

This intimation of her residence implied, of course, a permission, nay, an invitation, to wait upon her at the hour specified. Hartley's heart beat at the idea of seeing her once more, and still more highly at the thought of being able to serve her. At least, he thought, if there is danger near her, as is much to be suspected, she shall not want a counsellor, or, if necessary, a protector. Yet, at the same time, he felt the necessity of making himself better acquainted with the circumstances of her case, and the persons with whom she seemed connected. Butler and Mercer had both spoke to their disparagement; but Butler was a little of a coxcomb, and Mercer a great deal of a gossip. While he was considering what credit was due to their testimony, he was unexpectedly encountered by a gentleman of his own profession, a military surgeon, who had had the misfortune to have been in Hyder's prison, till set at freedom by the late pacification. Mr. Esdale, for so he was called, was generally esteemed a rising man, calm, steady, and deliberate in forming his opinions. Hartley found it easy to turn the subject on the Queen of Sheba, by asking whether her Majesty was not somewhat of an adventuress.

"On my word, I cannot say," answered Esdale, smiling; "we are all upon the adventure in India, more or less; but I do not see that the Begum Montreville is more so than the rest."

"Why, that Amazonian dress and manner," said Hartley, "savour a little of the *picaresca*."

"You must not," said Esdale, "expect a woman who has commanded soldiers, and may again, to dress and look entirely like an ordinary person. But I assure you, that even at this time of day, if she wished to marry, she might easily find a respectable match."

"Why, I heard that she had betrayed her husband's fort to Hyder."

"Ay, that is a specimen of Madras gossip. The fact is, that she defended the place long after her husband fell, and afterwards surrendered it by capitulation. Hyder, who piques himself on observing the rules of justice, would not otherwise have admitted her to such intimacy."

"Yes, I have heard," replied Hartley, "that their intimacy was rather of the closest."

"Another calumny, if you mean any scandal," answered Esdale. "Hyder is too zealous a Mahomedan to entertain a Christian mistress; and, besides, to enjoy the sort of rank which is yielded to a woman in her condition, she must refrain, in appearance at least, from all correspondence in the way of gallantry. Just so they said that the poor woman had a connexion with poor Middlemas of the —— regiment."

"And was that also a false report?" said Hartley, in breathless anxiety.

"On my soul, I believe it was," answered Mr. Esdale. "They were friends, Europeans in an Indian court, and therefore intimate; but I believe nothing more. By the by, though, I believe there was some quarrel between Middlemas, poor fellow, and you; yet I am sure that you will be glad to hear there is a chance of his affair being made up."

"Indeed!" was again the only word which Hartley could utter.

"Ay, indeed," answered Esdale. "The duel is an old story now; and it must be allowed that poor Middlemas, though he was rash in that business, had provocation."

"But his desertion—his accepting of command under Hyder—his treatment of our prisoners—How can all these be passed over?" replied Hartley.

"Why, it is possible—I speak to you as a cautious man, and in confidence—that he may do us better service in Hyder's capital, or Tippoo's camp, than he could have done if serving with his own regiment. And then, for his treatment of prisoners, I am sure I can speak nothing but good of him in that particular. He was obliged to take the office, because those that serve Hyder Naig must do or die. But he told me himself—and I believe him—that he accepted the office chiefly because, while he made a great bullying at us before the black fellows, he could privately be of assistance to us. Some fools could not understand this, and answered him with abuse and lampoons; and he was obliged to punish them, to avoid suspicion. Yes, yes, I and others can prove he was willing to be kind, if men would give him leave. I hope to thank him at Madras one day soon—All this in confidence—Good-morrow to you."

Distracted by the contradictory intelligence he had received, Hartley went next to question old Captain Capstern, the Captain of the Indiaman, whom he had observed in attendance upon the Begum Montreville. On enquiring after that commander's female passengers, he heard a pretty long catalogue of names, in which that he was so much interested in did not occur. On closer enquiry, Capstern recollected that Menie Gray, a young Scotchwoman, had come out under charge of Mrs. Duffer, the master's wife. "A good decent girl," Capstern said, "and kept the mates and guinea-pigs at a respectable distance. She came out," he believed, "to be a sort of female companion, or upper servant in Madame Montreville's family. Snug berth enough," he concluded, "if she can find the length of the old girl's foot."

This was all that could be made of Capstern; so Hartley was compelled to remain in a state of uncertainty until the next morning, when an explanation might be expected with Menie Gray in person.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

The exact hour assigned found Hartley at the door of the rich native merchant, who, having some reasons for wishing to oblige the Begum Montreville, had relinquished, for her accommodation and that of her numerous retinue, almost the whole of his large and sumptuous residence in the Black Town of Madras, as that district of the city is called which the natives occupy.

A domestic, at the first summons, ushered the visitor into an apartment, where he expected to be joined by Miss Gray. The room opened on one side into a small garden or parterre, filled with the brilliant-coloured flowers of Eastern climates; in the midst of which the waters of a fountain rose upwards in a sparkling jet, and fell back again into a white marble cistern.

A thousand dizzy recollections thronged on the mind of Hartley, whose early feelings towards the companion of his youth, if they had slumbered during distance and the various casualties of a busy life, were revived when he found himself placed so near her, and in circumstances which interested from their unexpected occurrence and mysterious character. A step was heard—the door opened—a female appeared—but it was the portly form of Madame de Montreville.

"What do you please to want, sir?" said the lady; "that is, if you have found your tongue this morning, which you had lost yesterday."

"I proposed myself the honour of waiting upon the young person, whom I saw in your excellency's company yesterday morning," answered Hartley, with assumed respect. "I have had long the honour of being known to her in Europe, and I desire to offer my services to her in India."

"Much obliged—much obliged; but Miss Gray is gone out, and does not return for one or two days. You may leave your commands with me."

"Pardon me, madam," replied Hartley; "but I have some reason to hope you may be mistaken in this matter—And here comes the lady herself."

"How is this, my dear?" said Mrs. Montreville, with unruffled front, to Menie, as she entered; "are you not gone out for two or three days, as I tell this gentleman?—*mais c'est egal*—it is all one thing. You will say, How d'ye do, and good-bye, to Monsieur, who is so polite as to come to ask after our healths, and as he sees us both very well, he will go away home again."

"I believe, madam," said Miss Gray, with appearance of effort, "that I must speak with this gentleman for a few minutes in private, if you will permit me."

"That is to say, get you gone? but I do not allow that—I do not like private conversation between young man and pretty young woman; *cela n'est pas honnete*. It cannot be in my house."

"I may be out of it, then, madam," answered Miss Gray, not pettishly nor pertly, but with the utmost simplicity.—"Mr. Hartley, will you step into that garden?—and, you, madam, may observe us from the window, if it be the fashion of the country to watch so closely."

As she spoke this she stepped through a lattice-door into the garden, and with an air so simple, that she seemed as if she wished to comply with her patroness's ideas of decorum, though they appeared strange to her. The Queen of Sheba, notwithstanding her natural assurance, was disconcerted by the composure of Miss Gray's manner, and left the room, apparently in displeasure. Menie turned back to the door which opened into the garden, and said in the same manner as before, but with less nonchalance,—

"I am sure I would not willingly break through the rules of a foreign country; but I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of speaking to so old a friend,—if indeed," she added, pausing and looking at Hartley, who was much embarrassed, "it be as much pleasure to Mr. Hartley as it is to me."

"It would have been," said Hartley, scarce knowing what he said—"it must be a pleasure to me in every circumstance—But this extraordinary meeting—But your father"—

Menie Gray's handkerchief was at her eyes.—"He is gone, Mr. Hartley. After he was left unassisted, his toilsome business became too much for him—he caught a cold which hung about him, as you know he was the last to attend to his own complaints, till it assumed a dangerous, and, finally, a fatal character. I distress you, Mr. Hartley, but it becomes you well to be affected. My father loved you dearly."

"Oh, Miss Gray!" said Hartley, "it should not have been thus with my excellent friend at the close of his useful and virtuous life—Alas, wherefore—the question bursts from me involuntarily—wherefore could you not have complied with his wishes?—wherefore"—

"Do not ask me," said she, stopping the question which was on his lips; "we are not the formers of our own destiny. It is painful to talk on such a subject; but for once, and for ever, let me tell you that I should have done Mr. Hartley wrong, if, even to secure his assistance to my father, I had accepted his hand, while my wayward affections did not accompany the act."

"But wherefore do I see you here, Menie?—Forgive me, Miss Gray, my tongue as well as my heart turns back to long-forgotten scenes—But why here?—why with this woman?"

"She is not, indeed, every thing that I expected," answered Menie; "but I must not be prejudiced by foreign manners, after the step I have taken—She is, besides, attentive, and generous in her way, and I shall soon"—she paused a moment, and then added, "be under better protection."

"That of Richard Middlemas?" said Hartley with a faltering voice.

"I ought not, perhaps, to answer the question," said Menie; "but I am a bad dissembler, and those whom I trust, I trust entirely. You have guessed right, Mr. Hartley," she added,—colouring a good deal, "I have come hither to unite my fate to that of your old comrade."

"It is, then, just as I feared!" exclaimed Hartley.

"And why should Mr. Hartley fear?" said Menie Gray. "I used to think you too generous—surely the quarrel which occurred long since ought not to perpetuate suspicion and resentment."

"At least, if the feeling of resentment remained in my own bosom, it would be the last I should intrude upon you, Miss Gray," answered Hartley. "But it is for you, and for you alone, that I am watchful.—This person—this gentleman whom you mean to intrust with your happiness—do you know where he is—and in what service?"

"I know both, more distinctly perhaps than Mr. Hartley can do. Mr. Middlemas has erred greatly, and has been severely punished. But it was not in the time of his exile and sorrow, that she who has plighted her faith to him should, with the flattering world, turn her back upon him. Besides, you have, doubtless, not heard of his hopes of being restored to his country and his rank?"

"I have," answered Hartley, thrown off his guard; "but I see not how he can deserve it, otherwise than by becoming a traitor to his new master, and thus rendering himself even more unworthy of confidence than I hold him to be at this moment."

"It is well that he hears you not," answered Menie Gray, resenting, with natural feeling, the imputation on her lover. Then instantly softening her tone she added, "My voice ought not to aggravate, but to soothe your quarrel. Mr. Hartley, I plight my word to you that you do Richard wrong."

She said these words with affected calmness, suppressing all appearance of that displeasure, of which she was evidently sensible, upon this depreciation of a beloved object.

Hartley compelled himself to answer in the same strain.

"Miss Gray," he said, "your actions and motives will always be those of an angel; but let me entreat you to view this most important matter with the eyes of worldly wisdom and prudence. Have you well weighed the risks attending the course which you are taking in favour of a man, who,—nay, I will not again offend you—who may, I hope, deserve your favour?"

"When I wished to see you in this manner, Mr. Hartley, and declined a communication in public, where we could have had less freedom of conversation, it was with the view of telling you every thing. Some pain I thought old recollections might give, but I trusted it would be momentary; and, as I desire to retain your friendship, it is proper I should show that I still deserve it. I must then first tell you my situation after my father's death. In the world's opinion we were always poor, you know; but in the proper sense I had not known what real poverty was, until I was placed in dependence upon a distant relation of my poor father, who made our relationship a reason for casting upon me all the drudgery of her household, while she would not allow that it gave me a claim to countenance, kindness, or anything but the relief of my most pressing wants. In these circumstances I received from Mr. Middlemas a letter, in which he related his fatal duel, and its consequences. He had not dared to write to me to share his misery—Now, when he was in a lucrative situation, under the patronage of a powerful prince, whose wisdom knew how to prize and protect such Europeans as entered his service—now, when he had every prospect of rendering our government such essential service by his interest with Hyder Ali, and might eventually nourish hopes of being permitted to return and stand his trial for the death of his commanding officer—now, he pressed me to come to India, and share his reviving fortunes, by accomplishing the engagement into which we had long ago entered. A considerable sum of money accompanied this letter. Mrs. Duffer was, pointed out as a respectable woman, who would protect me during the passage. Mrs. Montreville, a lady of rank, having large possessions and high interest in the Mysore, would receive me on my arrival at Fort St. George, and conduct me safely to the dominions of Hyder. It was farther recommended, that, considering the peculiar situation of Mr. Middlemas, his name should be concealed in the transaction, and that the ostensible cause of my voyage should be to fill an office in that lady's family—What was I to do?—My duty to my poor father was ended, and my other friends considered the proposal as too advantageous to be rejected. The references given, the sum of money lodged, were considered as putting all scruples out of the question, and my immediate protectress and kinswoman was so earnest that I should accept of the offer made me, as to intimate that she would not encourage me to stand in my own light, by continuing to give me shelter and food, (she gave me little more,) if I was foolish enough to refuse compliance."

"Sordid wretch!" said Hartley, "how little did she deserve such a charge!"

"Let me speak a proud word, Mr. Hartley, and then you will not perhaps blame my relations so much. All their persuasions, and even their threats, would have failed in inducing me to take a step, which has an appearance, at least, to which I found it difficult to reconcile myself. But I had loved Middlemas—I love him still—why should I deny it?—and I have not hesitated to trust him. Had it not been for the small still voice which reminded me of my engagements, I had maintained more stubbornly the pride of womanhood, and, as you would perhaps have recommended, I might have expected, at least, that my lover should have come to Britain in person, and might have had the vanity to think," she added, smiling faintly, "that if I were worth having, I was worth fetching."

"Yet now—even now," answered Hartley, "be just to yourself while you are generous to your lover.—Nay, do not look angrily, but hear me. I doubt the propriety of your being under the charge of this unsexed woman, who can no longer be termed a European. I have interest enough with females of the highest rank in the settlement—this climate is that of generosity and hospitality—there is not one of them, who, knowing your character and history, will not desire to have you in her society, and under her protection, until your lover shall be able to vindicate his title to your hand in the face of the world.—I myself will be no cause of suspicion to him, or of inconvenience to you, Menie. Let me but have your consent to the arrangement I propose, and the same moment that sees you under honourable and unsuspected protection, I will leave Madras, not to return till your destiny is in one way or other permanently fixed."

"No, Hartley," said Miss Gray. "It may, it must be, friendly in you thus to advise me; but it would be most base in me to advance my own affairs at the expense of your prospects. Besides, what would this be but taking the chance of contingencies, with the view of sharing poor Middlemas's fortunes, should they prove prosperous, and casting him off, should they be otherwise? Tell me only, do you, of your own positive knowledge, aver that you consider this woman as an unworthy and unfit protectress for so young a person as I am?"

"Of my own knowledge I can say nothing; nay, I must own, that reports differ even concerning Mrs. Montreville's character. But surely the mere suspicion"——

"The mere suspicion, Mr. Hartley, can have no weight with me, considering that I can oppose to it the testimony of the man with whom I am willing to share my future fortunes. You acknowledge the question is but doubtful, and should not the assertion of him of whom I think so highly decide my belief in a doubtful matter? What, indeed, must he be, should this Madame Montreville be other than he represented her?"

"What must he be, indeed!" thought Hartley internally, but his lips uttered not the words. He looked down in a deep reverie, and at length started from it at the words of Miss Gray.

"It is time to remind you, Mr. Hartley, that we must needs part. God bless and preserve you."

"And you, dearest Menie," exclaimed Hartley as he sunk on one knee, and pressed to his lips the hand which she held out to him. "God bless you!—you must deserve blessing. God protect you!—you must need protection.—Oh, should things prove different from what you hope, send for me instantly, and if man can aid you, Adam Hartley will!"

He placed in her hand a card containing his address. He then rushed from the apartment. In the hall he met the lady of the mansion, who made him a haughty reverence in token of adieu, while a native servant of the upper class, by whom she was attended, made a low and reverential salam.

Hartley hastened from the Black Town, more satisfied than before that some deceit was about to be practised towards Menie Gray—more determined than ever to exert himself for her preservation; yet more completely perplexed, when he began to consider the doubtful character of the danger to which she might be exposed, and the scanty means of protection which she had to oppose to it.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

As Hartley left the apartment in the house of Ram Sing Cottah by one mode of exit, Miss Gray retired by another, to an apartment destined for her private use. She, too, had reason for secret and anxious reflection, since all her love for Middlemas, and her full confidence in his honour, could not entirely conquer her doubts concerning the character of the person whom he had chosen for her temporary protectress. And yet she could not rest these doubts upon any thing distinctly conclusive; it was rather a dislike of her patroness's general manners, and a disgust at her masculine notions and expressions, that displeased her, than any thing else.

Meantime, Madame Montreville, followed by her black domestic, entered the apartment where Hartley and Menie had just parted. It appeared from the conversation which follows, that they had from some place of concealment overheard the dialogue we have narrated in the former chapter.

"It is good luck, Sadoc," said the lady, "that there is in this world the great fool."

"And the great villain," answered Sadoc, in good English, but in a most sullen tone.

"This woman, now," continued the lady, "is what in Frangistan you call an angel."

"Ay, and I have seen those in Hindostan you may well call devil."

"I am sure that this—how you call him—Hartley, is a meddling devil. For what has he to do? She will not have any of him. What is his business who has her? I wish we were well up the Ghauts again, my dear Sadoc."

"For my part," answered the slave, "I am half determined never to ascend the Ghauts more. Hark you, Adela, I begin to sicken of the plan we have laid. This creature's confiding purity—call her angel or woman, as you will—makes my practices appear too vile, even in my own eyes. I feel myself unfit to be your companion farther in the daring paths which you pursue. Let us part, and part friends."

"Amen, coward. But the woman remains with me," answered the Queen of Sheba. [Footnote: In order to maintain uninjured the tone of passion throughout this dialogue, it has been judged expedient to discard, in the Language of the Begum, the *patois* of Madame Munreville.]

"With thee!" replied the seeming black—"never. No, Adela. She is under the shadow of the British flag, and she shall experience its protection."

"Yes—and what protection will it afford to you yourself?" retorted the Amazon. "What if I should clap my hands, and command a score of my black servants to bind you like a sheep, and then send word to the Governor of the Presidency that one Richard Middlemas, who had been guilty of mutiny, murder, desertion, and serving of the enemy against his countrymen, is here, at Ram Sing Cottah's house, in the disguise of a black servant?" Middlemas covered his face with his hands, while Madame Montreville proceeded to load him with reproaches.—"Yes," she said, "slave and son of a slave! Since you wear the dress of my household, you shall obey me as fully as the rest of them, otherwise,—whips, fetters,—the scaffold, renegade,—the gallows, murderer! Dost thou dare to reflect on the abyss of misery from which I raised thee, to share my wealth and my affections? Dost thou not remember that the picture of this pale, cold, unimpassioned girl was then so indifferent to thee, that thou didst sacrifice it as a tribute due to the benevolence of her who relieved thee, to the affection of her who, wretch as thou art, condescended to love thee?"

"Yes, fell woman," answered Middlemas, "but was it I who encouraged the young tyrant's outrageous passion for a portrait, or who formed the abominable plan of placing the original within his power?"

"No—for to do so required brain and wit. But it was thine, flimsy villain, to execute the device which a bolder genius planned; it was thine to entice the woman to this foreign shore, under pretence of a love, which, on thy part, cold-blooded miscreant, never had existed."

"Peace, screech-owl!" answered Middlemas, "nor drive me to such madness as may lead me to forget thou art a woman."

"A woman, dastard! Is this thy pretext for sparing me?—what, then, art thou, who tremblest at a woman's looks, a woman's words?—I am a woman, renegade, but one who wears a dagger, and despises alike thy strength and thy courage. I am a woman who has looked on more dying men than thou hast killed deer and antelopes. Thou must traffic for greatness?—thou hast thrust thyself like a five-years' child, into the rough sports of men, and wilt only be borne down and crushed for thy pains. Thou wilt be a double traitor, forsooth—betray thy betrothed to the Prince, in order to obtain the means of betraying the Prince to the English, and thus gain thy pardon from thy countrymen. But me thou shalt not betray. I will not be made the tool of thy ambition—I will not give thee the aid of my treasures and my soldiers, to be sacrificed at last to this northern icicle. No, I will watch thee as the fiend watches the wizard. Show but a symptom of betraying me while we are here, and I denounce thee to the English, who might pardon the successful villain, but not him who can only offer prayers for his life, in place of useful services. Let me see thee flinch when we are beyond the Ghauts, and the Nawaub shall know thy intrigues with the Nizam and the Mahrattas, and thy resolution to deliver up Bangalore to the English, when the imprudence of Tippoo shall have made thee Killedar. Go where thou wilt, slave, thou shalt find me thy mistress."

"And a fair though an unkind one," said the counterfeit Sadoc, suddenly changing his tone to an affectation of tenderness. "It is true I pity this unhappy woman; true I would save her if I could—but most unjust to suppose I would in any circumstances prefer her to my Nourjehan, my light of the world, my Mootee Mahul, my pearl of the palace"——

"All false coin and empty compliment," said the Begum. "Let me hear, in two brief words, that you leave this woman to my disposal."

"But not to be interred alive under your seat, like the Circassian of whom you were jealous," said Middlemas, shuddering.

"No, fool; her lot shall not be worse than that of being the favourite of a prince. Hast thou, fugitive and criminal as thou art, a better fate to offer her?"

"But," replied Middlemas, blushing even through his base disguise at the consciousness of his abject conduct, "I will have no force on her inclinations."

"Such truce she shall have as the laws of the Zenana allow," replied the female tyrant. "A week is long enough for her to determine whether she will be the willing mistress of a princely and generous lover."

"Ay," said Richard, "and before that week expires"——He stopped short.

"What will happen before the week expires?" said the Begum Montreville.

"No matter—nothing of consequence. I leave the woman's fate with you."

"Tis well—we march to-night on our return, so soon as the moon rises Give orders to our retinue."

"To hear is to obey," replied the seeming slave, and left the apartment.

The eyes of the Begum remained fixed on the door through which he had passed. "Villain—double-dyed villain!" she said, "I see thy drift; thou wouldst betray Tippoo, in policy alike and in love. But me thou canst betray.—Ho, there, who waits? Let a trusty messenger be ready to set off instantly with letters, which I will presently make ready. His departure must be a secret to every one.—And now shall this pale phantom soon know her destiny, and learn what it is to have rivalled Adela Montreville."

While the Amazonian Princess meditated plans of vengeance against her innocent rival and the guilty lover, the latter plotted as deeply for his own purposes. He had waited until such brief twilight as India enjoys rendered his disguise complete, then set out in haste for the part of Madras inhabited by the Europeans, or, as it is termed, Fort St. George.

"I will save her yet," he said; "ere Tippoo can seize his prize, we will raise around his ears a storm which would drive the God of War from the arms of the Goddess of Beauty. The trap shall close its fangs upon this Indian tiger, ere he has time to devour the bait which enticed him into the snare."

While Middlemas cherished these hopes, he approached the Residency. The sentinel on duty stopped him, as of course, but he was in possession of the counter-sign, and entered without opposition. He rounded the building in which the President of the Council resided, an able and active, but unconscientious man, who, neither in his own affairs, nor in those of the Company, was supposed to embarrass himself much about the means which he used to attain his object. A tap at a small postern gate was answered by a black slave, who admitted Middlemas to that necessary appurtenance of every government, a back stair, which, in its turn, conducted him to the office of the Bramin Paupiah, the Dubash, or steward of the great man, and by whose means chiefly he communicated with the native courts, and carried on many mysterious intrigues, which he did not communicate to his brethren at the council-board.

It is perhaps justice to the guilty and unhappy Middlemas to suppose, that if the agency of a British officer had been employed, he might have been induced to throw himself on his mercy, might have explained the whole of his nefarious bargain with Tippoo, and, renouncing his guilty projects of ambition, might have turned his whole thoughts upon saving Menie Gray, ere she was transported beyond the reach of British protection. But the thin dusky form which stood before him, wrapped in robes of muslin embroidered with gold, was that of Paupiah, known as a master-counsellor of dark projects, an Oriental Machiavel, whose premature wrinkles were the result of many an intrigue, in which the existence of the poor, the happiness of the rich, the honour of men, and the chastity of women, had been sacrificed without scruple, to attain some private or political advantage. He did not even enquire by what means the renegade Briton proposed to acquire that influence with Tippoo which might enable him to betray him—he only desired to be assured that the fact was real.

"You speak at the risk of your head, if you deceive Paupiah, or make Paupiah the means of deceiving his master. I know, so does all Madras, that the Nawaub has placed his young son, Tippoo, as Vice-Regent of his newly-conquered territory of Bangalore, which Hyder hath lately added to his dominions. But that Tippoo should bestow the government of that important place on an apostate Feringi, seems more doubtful."

"Tippoo is young," answered Middlemas, "and to youth the temptation of the passions is what a lily on the surface of the lake is to childhood—they will risk life to reach it, though, when obtained, it is of little value. Tippoo has the cunning of his father and his military talents, but he lacks his cautious wisdom."

"Thou speakest truth—but when thou art Governor of Bangalore, hast thou forces to hold the place till thou art relieved by the Mahrattas, or by the British?"

"Doubt it not—the soldiers of the Begum Mootee Mahul, whom the Europeans call Montreville, are less hers than mine. I am myself her Bukshee, [General,] and her Sirdars are at my devotion. With these I could keep Bangalore for two months, and the British army may be before it in a week. What do you risk by advancing General Smith's army nearer to the frontier?"

"We risk a settled peace with Hyder," answered Paupiah, "for which he has made advantageous offers. Yet I say not but thy plan may be most advantageous. Thou sayest Tippoo's treasures are in the fort?"

"His treasures and his Zenana; I may even be able to secure his person."

"That were a goodly pledge," answered the Hindoo minister.

"And you consent that the treasures shall be divided to the last rupee, as in the scroll?"

"The share of Paupiah's master is too small," said the Bramin; "and the name of Paupiah is unnoticed."

"The share of the Begum may be divided between Paupiah and his master," answered Middlemas.

"But the Begum will expect her proportion," replied Paupiah.

"Let me alone to deal with her," said Middlemas. "Before the blow is struck, she shall not know of our private treaty, and afterwards her disappointment will be of little consequence. And now, remember my stipulations—my rank to be restored—my full pardon to be granted."

"Ay," replied Paupiah, cautiously, "should you succeed. But were you to betray what has here passed, I will find the dagger of a Lootie which shall reach thee, wert thou sheltered under the folds of the Nawaub's garment. In the meantime, take this missive, and when you are in possession of Bangalore, despatch it to General Smith, whose division shall have orders to approach as near the frontiers of Mysore as may be, without causing suspicion."

Thus parted this worthy pair; Paupiah to report to his principal the progress of these dark machinations, Middlemas to join the Begum, on her return to the Mysore. The gold and diamonds of Tippoo, the importance which he was about to acquire, the ridding himself at once of the capricious authority of the irritable Tippoo, and the troublesome claims of the Begum, were such agreeable subjects of contemplation, that he scarcely thought of the fate of his European victim,—unless to salve his conscience with the hope that the sole injury she could sustain might be the alarm of a few days, during the course of which he would acquire the means of delivering her from the tyrant, in whose Zenana she was to remain a temporary prisoner. He resolved, at the same time, to abstain from seeing her till the moment he could afford her protection, justly considering the danger which his whole plan might incur, if he again awakened the jealousy of the Begum. This he trusted was now asleep; and, in the course of their return to Tippoo's camp, near Bangalore, it was his study to soothe this ambitious and crafty female by blandishments, intermingled with the more splendid prospects of wealth and power to be opened to them both, as he pretended, by the success of his present enterprise. [Footnote: It is scarce necessary to say, that such things could only be acted in the earlier period of our Indian settlements, when the check of the Directors was imperfect, and that of the crown did not exist. My friend Mr. Fairscribe is of opinion, that there is an anachronism in the introduction of Paupiah, the Bramin Dubash of the English governor.—C. C.]

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

It appears that the jealous and tyrannical Begum did not long suspend her purpose of agonizing her rival by acquainting her with her intended fate. By prayers or rewards, Menie Gray prevailed on a servant of Ram Sing Cottah, to deliver to Hartley the following distracted note:—

"All is true your fears foretold—He has delivered me up to a cruel woman, who threatens to sell me to the tyrant, Tippoo. Save me if you can—if you have not pity, or cannot give me aid, there is none left upon earth.—M. G."

The haste with which Dr. Hartley sped to the Fort, and demanded an audience of the Governor, was defeated by the delays interposed by Paupiah.

It did not suit the plans of this artful Hindoo, that any interruption should be opposed to the departure of the Begum and her favourite, considering how much the plans of the last corresponded with his own. He affected incredulity on the charge, when Hartley complained of an Englishwoman being detained in the train of the Begum against her consent, treated the complaint of Miss Gray as the result of some female quarrel unworthy of particular attention, and when at length he took some steps for examining further into the matter, he contrived they should be so tardy, that the Begum and her retinue were far beyond the reach of interruption.

Hartley let his indignation betray him into reproaches against Paupiah, in which his principal was not spared. This only served to give the impassable Bramin a pretext for excluding him from the Residency, with a hint, that if his language continued to be of such an imprudent character, he might expect to be removed from Madras, and stationed at some hillfort or village among the mountains, where his medical knowledge would find full exercise in protecting himself and others from the unhealthiness of the climate.

As he retired, bursting with ineffectual indignation, Esdale was the first person whom Hartley chanced to meet with, and to him, stung with impatience, he communicated what he termed the infamous conduct of the Governor's Dubash, connived at, as he had but too much reason to suppose, by the Governor himself; exclaiming against the want of spirit which they betrayed, in abandoning a British subject to the fraud of renegades, and the force of a tyrant.

Esdale listened with that sort of anxiety which prudent men betray when they feel themselves like to be drawn into trouble by the discourse of an imprudent friend.

"If you desire to be personally righted in this matter," said he at length, "you must apply to Leadenhall Street, where I suspect—betwixt ourselves—complaints are accumulating fast, both against Paupiah and his master."

"I care for neither of them," said Hartley; "I need no personal redress—I desire none—I only want succour for Menie Gray."

"In that case," said Esdale, "you have only one resource—you must apply to Hyder himself"—

"To Hyder—to the usurper—the tyrant?"

"Yes, to this usurper and tyrant," answered Esdale, "you must be contented to apply. His pride is, to be thought a strict administrator of justice; and perhaps he may on this, as on other occasions, choose to display himself in the light of an impartial magistrate."

"Then I go to demand justice at his footstool," said Hartley.

"Not so fast, my dear Hartley," answered his friend; "first consider the risk. Hyder is just by reflection, and perhaps from political considerations; but by temperament, his blood is as unruly as ever beat under a black skin, and if you do not find him in the vein of judging, he is likely enough to be in that of killing. Stakes and bowstrings are as frequently in his head as the adjustment of the scales of justice."

"No matter—I will instantly present myself at his Durbar. The Governor cannot for very shame refuse me letters of credence."

"Never think of asking them," said his more experienced friend; "it would cost Paupiah little to have them so worded as to induce Hyder to rid our sable Dubash, at once and for ever, of the sturdy free-spoken Dr. Adam Hartley. A Vakeel, or messenger of government, sets out to-morrow for Seringapatam; contrive to join him on the road, his passport will protect you both. Do you know none of the chiefs about Hyder's person?"

"None, excepting his late emissary to this place, Barak el Hadgi," answered Hartley.

"His support," said Esdale, "although only a Fakir, may be as effectual as that of persons of more essential consequence. And, to say the truth, where the caprice of a despot is the question in debate, there is no knowing upon what it is best to reckon.—Take my advice, my dear Hartley, leave this poor girl to her fate. After all, by placing yourself in an attitude of endeavouring to save her, it is a hundred to one that you only ensure your own destruction."

Hartley shook his head, and bade Esdale hastily farewell; leaving him in the happy and self-applauding state of mind proper to one who has given the best advice possible to a friend, and may conscientiously wash his hands of all consequences.

Having furnished himself with money, and with the attendance of three trusty native servants, mounted like himself on Arab horses, and carrying with them no tent, and very little baggage, the anxious Hartley lost not a moment in taking the road to Mysore, endeavouring, in the meantime, by recollecting every story he had ever heard of Hyder's justice and forbearance, to assure himself that he should find the Nawaub disposed to protect a helpless female, even against, the future heir of his empire.

Before he crossed the Madras territory, he overtook the Vakeel, or messenger of the British Government, of whom Esdale had spoken. This man, accustomed for a sum of money to permit adventurous European traders who desired to visit Hyder's capital, to share his protection, passport, and escort, was not disposed to refuse the same good office to a gentleman of credit at Madras; and, propitiated by an additional gratuity, undertook to travel as speedily as possible. It was a journey which was not prosecuted without much fatigue and considerable danger, as they had to traverse a country frequently exposed to all the evils of war, more especially when they approached the Ghauts, those tremendous mountain-passes which descend from the table-land of Mysore, and through which the mighty streams that arise in the centre of the Indian peninsula, find their way to the ocean.

The sun had set ere the party reached the foot of one of these perilous passes, up which lay the road to Seringapatam. A narrow path, which in summer resembled an empty water-course, winding upwards among immense rocks and precipices, was at one time completely overshadowed by dark groves of teak-trees, and at another, found its way beside impenetrable jungles, the habitation of jackals and tigers.

By means of this unsocial path the travellers threaded their way in silence,—Hartley, whose impatience kept him before the Vakeel, eagerly enquiring when the moon would enlighten the darkness, which, after the sun's disappearance, closed fast around them. He was answered by the natives according to their usual mode of expression, that the moon was in her dark side, and that he was not to hope to behold her bursting through a cloud to illuminate the thickets and strata of black and slaty rocks, amongst which they were winding. Hartley had therefore no resource, save to keep his eye steadily fixed on the lighted match of the Sowar, or horseman, who rode before him, which, for sufficient reasons, was always kept in readiness to be applied to the priming of the matchlock. The vidette, on his part, kept a watchful eye on the Dowrah, a guide supplied at the last village, who, having got more than halfway from his own house, was much to be suspected of meditating how to escape the trouble of going further. [Footnote: In every village the Dowrah, or Guide, is an official person, upon the public establishment, and receives a portion of the harvest or other revenue, along with the Smith, the Sweeper, and the Barber. As he gets nothing from the travellers whom it is his office to conduct, he never scruples to shorten his own journey and prolong theirs by taking them to the nearest village, without reference to the most direct line of route, and sometimes deserts them entirely. If the regular Dowrah is sick or absent, no wealth can procure a substitute.]

The Dowrah, on the other hand, conscious of the lighted match and loaded gun behind him, hollowed from time to time to show that he was on his duty, and to accelerate the march of the travellers. His cries were answered by an occasional ejaculation of Ulla from the black soldiers, who closed the rear, and who were meditating on former adventures, the plundering of a *Kaffila*, (party of travelling merchants,) or some such exploit, or perhaps reflecting that a tiger, in the neighboring jungle, might be watching patiently for the last of the party, in order to spring upon him, according to his usual practice.

The sun, which appeared almost as suddenly as it had left them, served to light the travellers in the remainder of the ascent, and called forth from the Mahomedans belonging to the party the morning prayer of Alla Akber, which resounded in long notes among the rocks and ravines, and they continued with better advantage their forced march until the pass opened upon a boundless extent of jungle, with a single high mud fort rising through the midst of it. Upon this plain rapine and war had suspended the labours of industry, and the rich vegetation of the soil had in a few years converted a fertile champaign country into an almost impenetrable thicket. Accordingly, the banks of a small nullah, or brook, were covered with the footmarks of tigers and other animals of prey.

Here the travellers stopped to drink, and to refresh themselves and their horses; and it was near this spot that Hartley saw a sight which forced him to compare the subject which engrossed his own thoughts, with the distress that had afflicted another.

At a spot not far distant from the brook, the guide called their attention to a most wretched looking man, overgrown with hair, who was seated on the skin of a tiger. His body was covered with mud and ashes, his skin sunburnt, his dress a few wretched tatters. He appeared not to observe the approach of the strangers, neither moving nor speaking a word, but remaining with his eyes fixed on a small and rude tomb, formed of the black slate stones which lay around, and exhibiting a small recess for a lamp. As they approached the man, and placed before him a rupee or two, and some rice, they observed that a tiger's skull and bones lay beside him, with a sabre almost consumed by rust.

While they gazed on this miserable object, the guide acquainted them with his tragical history. Sadhu Sing had been a Sipahsee, or soldier, and freebooter of course, the native and the pride of a half-ruined village which they had passed on the preceding day. He was betrothed to the daughter of a Sipahsee, who served in the mud fort which they saw at a distance rising above the jungle. In due time, Sadhu, with his friends, came for the purpose of the marriage, and to bring home the bride. She was mounted on a Tadoo, a small horse belonging to the country, and Sadhu and his friends preceded her on foot, in all their joy and pride. As they approached the nullah near which the travellers were resting, there was heard a dreadful roar, accompanied by a shriek of agony. Sadhu Sing, who instantly turned, saw no trace of his bride, save that her horse ran wild in one direction, whilst in the other the long grass and reeds of the jungle were moving like the ripple of the ocean, when distorted by the course of a shark holding its way near the surface. Sadhu drew his sabre and rushed forward in that direction; the rest of the party remained motionless until roused by a short roar of agony. They then plunged into the jungle with their drawn weapons, where they speedily found Sadhu Sing holding in his arms the lifeless corpse of his bride, where a little farther lay the body of the tiger, slain by such a blow over the neck as desperation itself could alone have discharged.—The brideless bridegroom would permit none to interfere with his sorrow. He dug a grave for his Mora, and erected over it the rude tomb they saw, and never afterwards left the spot. The beasts of prey themselves seemed to respect or dread the extremity of his sorrow. His friends brought him food and water from the nullah, but he neither smiled nor showed any mark of acknowledgment, unless when they brought him flowers to deck the grave of Mora. Four or five years, according to the guide, had passed away, and there Sadhu Sing still remained among the trophies of his grief and his vengeance, exhibiting all the symptoms of advanced age, though still in the prime of youth. The tale hastened the travellers from their resting-place; the Vakeel because it reminded him of the dangers of the jungle, and Hartley because it coincided too well with the probable fate of his beloved, almost within the grasp of a more formidable tiger than that whose skeleton lay beside Sadhu Sing.

It was at the mud fort already mentioned that the travellers received the first accounts of the progress of the Begum and her party, by a Peon (or foot-soldier) who had been in their company, but was now on his return to the coast. They had travelled, he said, with great speed, until they ascended the Ghauts, where they were joined by a party of the Begum's own forces; and he and others, who had been brought from Madras as a temporary escort, were paid and dismissed to their homes. After this, he understood it was the purpose of the Begum Mootee Mahul, to proceed by slow marches and frequent halts, to Bangalore, the vicinity of which place she did not desire to reach until Prince Tippoo, with whom she desired an interview, should have returned from an expedition towards Vandicotta, in which he had lately been engaged.

From the result of his anxious enquiries, Hartley had reason to hope, that though Seringapatam was seventy-five miles more to the eastward than Bangalore, yet, by using diligence, he might have time to throw himself at the feet of Hyder, and beseech his interposition, before the meeting betwixt Tippoo and the Begum

should decide the fate of Menie Gray. On the other hand, he trembled as the Peon told him that the Begum's Bukshee, or General, who had travelled to Madras with her in disguise, had now assumed the dress and character belonging to his rank, and it was expected he was to be honoured by the Mahomedan Prince with some high office of dignity. With still deeper anxiety, he learned that a palanquin, watched with sedulous care by the slaves of Oriental jealousy, contained, it was whispered, a Feringi, or Frankish woman, beautiful as a Houri, who had been brought from England by the Begum, as a present to Tippoo. The deed of villany was therefore in full train to be accomplished; it remained to see whether by diligence on Hartley's side, its course could be interrupted.

When this eager vindicator of betrayed innocence arrived in the capital of Hyder, it may be believed that he consumed no time in viewing the temple of the celebrated Vishnoo, or in surveying the splendid Gardens called Loll-bang, which were the monument of Hyder's magnificence, and now hold his mortal remains. On the contrary, he was no sooner arrived in the city, than he hastened to the principal Mosque, having no doubt that he was there most likely to learn some tidings of Barak el Hadgi. He approached accordingly the sacred spot, and as to enter it would have cost a Feringi his life, he employed the agency of a devout Mussulman to obtain information concerning the person whom he sought. He was not long in learning that the Fakir Barak was within the Mosque, as he had anticipated, busied with his holy office of reading passages from the Koran, and its most approved commentators. To interrupt him in his devout task was impossible, and it was only by a high bribe that he could prevail on the same Moslem whom he had before employed, to slip into the sleeve of the holy man's robe a paper containing his name, and that of the Khan in which the Vakeel had taken up his residence. The agent brought back for answer, that the Fakir, immersed, as was to be expected, in the holy service which he was in the act of discharging, had paid no visible attention to the symbol of intimation which the Feringi Sahib [European gentleman] had sent to him. Distracted with the loss of time, of which each moment was precious, Hartley next endeavoured to prevail on the Mussulman to interrupt the Fakir's devotions with a verbal message; but the man was indignant at the very proposal.

"Dog of a Christian!" he said, "what art thou and thy whole generation, that Barak el Hadgi should lose a divine thought for the sake of an infidel like thee?"

Exasperated beyond self-possession, the unfortunate Hartley was now about to intrude upon the precincts of the Mosque in person, in hopes of interrupting the formal prolonged recitation which issued from its recesses, when an old man laid his hand on his shoulder, and prevented him from a rashness which might have cost him his life, saying, at the same time, "You are a Sahib Angrezie, [English gentleman:] I have been a Telinga [a private soldier] in the Company's service, and have eaten their salt. I will do your errand for you to the Fakir Barak el Hadgi."

So saying, he entered the Mosque, and presently returned with the Fakir's answer, in these enigmatical words:—"He who would see the sun rise must watch till the dawn."

With this poor subject of consolation, Hartley retired to his inn, to meditate on the futility of the professions of the natives, and to devise some other mode of finding access to Hyder than that which he had hitherto trusted to. On this point, however, he lost all hope, being informed by his late fellow-traveller, whom he found at the Khan, that the Nawaub was absent from the city on a secret expedition, which might detain him for two or three days. This was the answer which the Vakeel himself had received from the Dewan, with a farther intimation, that he must hold himself ready, when he was required, to deliver his credentials to Prince Tippoo, instead of the Nawaub; his business being referred to the former, in a way not very promising for the success of his mission.

Hartley was now nearly thrown into despair. He applied to more than one officer supposed to have credit with the Nawaub, but the slightest hint of the nature of his business seemed to strike all with terror. Not one of the persons he applied to would engage in the affair, or even consent to give it a hearing; and the Dewan plainly told him, that to engage in opposition to Prince Tippoo's wishes, was the ready way to destruction, and exhorted him to return to the coast. Driven almost to distraction by his various failures, Hartley betook himself in the evening to the Khan. The call of the Muezzins thundering from the minarets, had invited the faithful to prayers, when a black servant, about fifteen years old, stood before Hartley, and pronounced these words, deliberately, and twice over,—*"Thus says Barak el Hadgi, the watcher in the Mosque: He that would see the sun rise, let him turn towards the east."* He then left the caravanserai; and it may be well supposed that Hartley, starting from the carpet on which he had lain down to repose himself, followed his youthful guide with renewed vigour and palpitating hope.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

'Twas the hour when rites unholy
Call'd each Paynim voice to prayer,
And the star that faded slowly,
Left to dews the freshened air.

Day his sultry fires had wasted,
Calm and cool the moonbeams shone;
To the Vizier's lofty palace
One bold Christian came alone.

THOMAS CAMPBELL. *Quoted from memory.*

The twilight darkened into night so fast, that it was only by his white dress that Hartley could discern his guide, as he tripped along the splendid Bazaar of the city. But the obscurity was so far favourable, that it prevented the inconvenient attention which the natives might otherwise have bestowed upon the European in his native dress, a sight at that time very rare in Seringapatam.

The various turnings and windings through which he was conducted, ended at a small door in a wall, which, from the branches that hung over it, seemed to surround a garden or grove.

The postern opened on a tap from his guide, and the slave having entered, Hartley prepared to follow, but stepped back as a gigantic African brandished at his head a scimeter three fingers broad. The young slave touched his countryman with a rod which he held in his hand, and it seemed as if the touch disabled the giant, whose arm and weapon sunk instantly. Hartley entered without farther opposition, and was now in a grove of mango-trees, through which an infant moon was twinkling faintly amid the murmur of waters, the sweet song of the nightingale, and the odours of the rose, yellow jasmine, orange and citron flowers, and Persian narcissus. Huge domes and arches, which were seen imperfectly in the quivering light, seemed to intimate the neighbourhood of some sacred edifice, where the Fakir had doubtless taken up his residence.

Hartley pressed on with as much haste as he could, and entered a side-door and narrow vaulted passage, at the end of which was another door. Here his guide stopped, but pointed and made indications that the European should enter. Hartley did so, and found himself in a small cell, such as we have formerly described, wherein sate Barak el Hadgi, with another Fakir, who, to judge from the extreme dignity of a white beard, which ascended up to his eyes on each side, must be a man of great sanctity, as well as importance.

Hartley pronounced the usual salutation of Salam Alaikum in the most modest and deferential tone; but his former friend was so far from responding in their former strain of intimacy, that, having consulted the eye of his older companion, he barely pointed to a third carpet, upon which the stranger seated himself cross-legged, after the country fashion, and a profound silence prevailed for the space of several minutes. Hartley knew the Oriental customs too well to endanger the success of his suit by precipitation. He waited an intimation to speak. At length it came, and from Barak.

"When the pilgrim Barak," he said, "dwelt at Madras, he had eyes and a tongue; but now he is guided by those of his father, the holy Scheik Hali ben Khaledoun, the superior of his convent."

This extreme humility Hartley thought inconsistent with the affectation of possessing superior influence, which Barak had shown while at the Presidency; but exaggeration of their own consequence is a foible common to all who find themselves in a land of strangers. Addressing the senior Fakir, therefore, he told him in as few words as possible the villanous plot which was laid to betray Menie Gray into the hands of the Prince Tippoo. He made his suit for the reverend father's intercession with the Prince himself, and with his father the Nawaub, in the most persuasive terms. The Fakir listened to him with an inflexible and immovable

aspect, similar to that with which a wooden saint regards his eager supplicants. There was a second pause, when, after resuming his pleading more than once, Hartley was at length compelled to end it for want of matter.

The silence was broken by the elder Fakir, who, after shooting a glance at his younger companion by a turn of the eye, without the least alteration of the position of the head and body, said, "The unbeliever has spoken like a poet. But does he think that the Nawaub Khan Hyder Ali Behauder will contest with his son Tippoo the victorious, the possession of an infidel slave?"

Hartley received at the same time a side glance from Barak, as if encouraging him to plead his own cause. He suffered a minute to elapse, and then replied,—

"The Nawaub is in the place of the Prophet, a judge over the low as well as high. It is written, that when the Prophet decided a controversy between the two sparrows concerning a grain of rice, his wife Fatima said to him, 'Doth the Missionary of Allah well to bestow his time in distributing justice on a matter so slight, and between such despicable litigants?'—'Know, woman,' answered the Prophet, 'that the sparrows and the grain of rice are the creation of Allah. They are not worth more than thou hast spoken; but justice is a treasure of inestimable price, and it must be imparted by him who holdeth power to all who require it at his hand. The Prince doth the will of Allah, who gives it alike in small matters as in great, and to the poor as well as the powerful. To the hungry bird, a grain of rice is as a chaplet of pearls to a sovereign.'—I have spoken."

"Bismallah!—Praised be God! he hath spoken like a Moullah," said the elder Fakir, with a little more emotion, and some inclination of his head towards Barak, for on Hartley he scarcely deigned even to look.

"The lips have spoken it which cannot lie," replied Barak, and there was again a pause.

It was once more broken by Scheick Hali, who, addressing himself directly to Hartley, demanded of him, "Hast thou heard, Feringi, of aught of treason meditated by this Kafr [infidel] against the Nawaub Behander?"

"Out of a traitor cometh treason," said Hartley, "but, to speak after my knowledge, I am not conscious of such design."

"There is truth in the words of him," said the Fakir, "who accuseth not his enemy save on his knowledge. The things thou hast spoken shall be laid before the Nawaub; and as Allah and he will, so shall the issue be. Meantime, return to thy Khan, and prepare to attend the Vakeel of thy government, who is to travel with dawn to Bangalore, the strong, the happy, the holy city. Peace be with thee!—Is it not so, my son?"

Barak, to whom this appeal was made, replied, "Even as my father hath spoken."

Hartley had no alternative but to arise and take his leave with the usual phrase, "Salam—God's peace be with you!"

His youthful guide, who waited his return without, conducted him once more to his Khan, through by-paths which he could not have found out without pilotage. His thoughts were in the mean time strongly engaged on his late interview. He knew the Moslem men of religion were not implicitly to be trusted. The whole scene might be a scheme of Barak, to get rid of the trouble of patronizing a European in a delicate affair; and he determined to be guided by what should seem to confirm or discredit the intimation which he had received.

On his arrival at the Khan, he found the Vakeel of the British government in a great bustle, preparing to obey directions transmitted to him by the Nawaub's Dewan, or treasurer, directing him to depart the next morning with break of day for Bangalore.

He expressed great discontent at the order, and when Hartley intimated his purpose of accompanying him, seemed to think him a fool for his pains, hinting the probability that Hyder meant to get rid of them both by means of the freebooters, through whose countries they were to pass with such a feeble escort. This fear gave way to another, when the time of departure came, at which moment there rode up about two hundred of the Nawaub's native cavalry. The Sirdar who commanded these troops behaved with civility, and stated that he was directed to attend upon the travellers, and to provide for their safety and convenience on the journey; but his manner was reserved and distant, and the Vakeel insisted that the force was intended to prevent their escape, rather than for their protection. Under such unpleasant auspices, the journey between Seringapatam and Bangalore was accomplished in two days and part of a third, the distance being nearly eighty miles.

On arriving in view of this fine and populous city, they found an encampment already established within a mile of its walls. It occupied a tope or knoll, covered with trees, and looked full on the gardens which Tippoo had created in one quarter of the city. The rich pavilions of the principal persons flamed with silk and gold; and spears with gilded points, or poles supporting gold knobs, displayed numerous little banners inscribed with the name of the Prophet. This was the camp of the Begum Mootee Mahul, who, with a small body of her troops, about two hundred men, was waiting the return of Tippoo under the walls of Bangalore. Their private motives for desiring a meeting the reader is acquainted with; to the public the visit of the Begum had only the appearance of an act of deference, frequently paid by inferior and subordinate princes to the patrons whom they depend upon.

These facts ascertained, the Sirdar of the Nawaub took up his own encampment within sight of that of the Begum, but at about half a mile's distance, despatching to the city a messenger to announce to the Prince Tippoo, as soon as he should arrive, that he had come hither with the English Vakeel.

The bustle of pitching a few tents was soon over, and Hartley, solitary and sad, was left to walk under the shade of two or three mango-trees, and looking to the displayed streamers of the Begum's encampment, to reflect that amid these insignia of Mahomedanism Menie Gray remained, destined by a profligate and treacherous lover to the fate of slavery to a heathen tyrant. The consciousness of being in her vicinity added to the bitter pangs with which Hartley contemplated her situation, and reflected how little chance there appeared of his being able to rescue her from it by the mere force of reason and justice, which was all he could oppose to the selfish passions of a voluptuous tyrant. A lover of romance might have meditated some means of effecting her release by force or address; but Hartley, though a man of courage, had no spirit of adventure, and would have regarded as desperate any attempt of the kind.

His sole gleam of comfort arose from the impression which he had apparently made upon the elder Fakir, which he could not help hoping might be of some avail to him. But on one thing he was firmly resolved, and that was not to relinquish the cause he had engaged in whilst a grain of hope remained. He had seen in his own profession a quickening and a revival of life in the patient's eye, even when glazed apparently by the hand of Death; and he was taught confidence amidst moral evil by his success in relieving that which was physical only.

While Hartley was thus meditating, he was roused to attention by a heavy firing of artillery from the high bastions of the town; and turning his eyes in that direction, he could see advancing, on the northern side of Bangalore, a tide of cavalry, riding tumultuously forward, brandishing their spears in all different attitudes, and pressing their horses to a gallop. The clouds of dust which attended this vanguard, for such it was, combined with the smoke of the guns, did not permit Hartley to see distinctly the main body which followed; but the appearance of howdahed elephants and royal banners dimly seen through the haze, plainly intimated the return of Tippoo to Bangalore; while shouts, and irregular discharges of musketry, announced the real or pretended rejoicing of the inhabitants. The city gates received the living torrent, which rolled towards them; the clouds of smoke and dust were soon dispersed, and the horizon was restored to serenity and silence.

The meeting between persons of importance, more especially of royal rank, is a matter of very great consequence in India, and generally much address is employed to induce the person receiving the visit, to come as far as possible to meet the visitor. From merely rising up, or going to the edge of the carpet, to advancing to the gate of the palace, to that of the city, or, finally, to a mile or two on the road, is all subject to negotiation. But Tippoo's impatience to possess the fair European induced him to grant on this occasion a much greater degree of courtesy than the Begum had dared to expect, and he appointed his garden, adjacent to the city walls, and indeed included within the precincts of the fortifications, as the place of their meeting; the hour noon, on the day succeeding his arrival; for the natives seldom move early in the morning, or before having broken their fast. This was intimated to the Begum's messenger by the Prince in person, as, kneeling before him, he presented the *mizzar*, (a tribute consisting of three, five, or seven gold Mohurs, always an odd number,) and received in exchange a *khelaut*, or dress of honour. The messenger, in return, was eloquent in describing the importance of his mistress, her devoted veneration for the Prince, the pleasure which she experienced on the prospect of their motakul, or meeting, and concluded with a more modest compliment to his own extraordinary talents, and the confidence which the Begum reposed in him. He then departed; and orders were given that on the next day all should be in readiness for the *Sowarree*, a grand procession, when the Prince was to receive the Begum as his honoured guest at his pleasure-house in the gardens.

Long before the appointed hour, the rendezvous of Fakirs, beggars, and idlers, before the gate of the palace, intimated the excited expectations of those who usually attend processions; while a more urgent set of mendicants, the courtiers, were hastening thither, on horses or elephants, as their means afforded, always in a hurry to show their zeal, and with a speed proportioned to what they hoped or feared.

At noon precisely, a discharge of cannon, placed in the outer courts, as also of match-locks and of small swivels, carried by camels, (the poor animals shaking their long ears at every discharge,) announced that Tippoo had mounted his elephant. The solemn and deep sound of the naggra, or state drum, borne upon an elephant, was then heard like the distant discharge of artillery, followed by a long roll of musketry, and was instantly answered by that of numerous trumpets and tom-toms, (or common drums,) making a discordant, but yet a martial din. The noise increased as the procession traversed the outer courts of the palace in succession, and at length issued from the gates, having at their head the Chobdars, bearing silver sticks and clubs, and shouting, at the pitch of their voices, the titles and the virtues of Tippoo, the great, the generous, the invincible—strong as Rustan, just as Noushirvan—with a short prayer for his continued health.

After these came a confused body of men on foot, bearing spears, match-locks, and banners, and intermixed with horsemen, some in complete shirts of mail, with caps of steel under their turbans, some in a sort of defensive armour, consisting of rich silk dresses, rendered sabre proof by being stuffed with cotton. These champions preceded the Prince, as whose body guards they acted. It was not till after this time that Tippoo raised his celebrated Tiger-regiment, disciplined and armed according to the European fashion. Immediately before the Prince came, on a small elephant, A hard-faced, severe-looking man, by office the distributor of alms, which he flung in showers of small copper money among the Fakirs and beggars, whose scrambles to collect them seemed to augment their amount; while the grim-looking agent of Mahomedan charity, together with his elephant, which marched with half angry eyes, and its trunk curled upwards, seemed both alike ready to chastise those whom poverty should render too importunate.

Tippoo himself next appeared, richly apparelled, and seated on an elephant, which, carrying its head above all the others in the procession, seemed proudly conscious of superior dignity. The howdah, or seat which the Prince occupied, was of silver, embossed and gilt, having behind a place for a confidential servant, who waved the great chowry, or cow-tail, to keep off the flies; but who could also occasionally perform the task of spokesman, being well versed in all terms of flattery and compliment. The caparisons of the royal elephant were of scarlet cloth, richly embroidered with gold. Behind Tippoo came the various courtiers and officers of the household, mounted chiefly on elephants, all arrayed in their most splendid attire, and exhibiting the greatest pomp.

In this manner the procession advanced down the principal street of the town, to the gate of the royal gardens. The houses were ornamented by broad cloth, silk shawls, and embroidered carpets of the richest colours, displayed from the verandahs and windows; even the meanest hut was adorned with some piece of cloth, so that the whole street had a singularly rich and gorgeous appearance.

This splendid procession having entered the royal gardens, approached, through a long avenue of lofty trees, a chabootra, or platform of white marble, canopied by arches of the same material, which occupied the centre. It was raised four or five feet from the ground, covered with white cloth and Persian carpets. In the centre of the platform was the musnud, or state cushion of the prince, six feet square, composed of crimson velvet, richly embroidered. By special grace, a small low cushion was placed on the right of the Prince, for the occupation of the Begum. In front of this platform was a square tank, or pond of marble, four feet deep, and filled to the brim, with water as clear as crystal, having a large jet or fountain in the middle, which threw up a column of it to the height of twenty feet.

The Prince Tippoo had scarcely dismounted from his elephant, and occupied the musnod, or throne of cushions, when the stately form of the Begum was seen advancing to the place of rendezvous. The elephant being left at the gate of the gardens opening into the country, opposite to that by which the procession of Tippoo had entered, she was carried in an open litter, richly ornamented with silver, and borne on the shoulders of six black slaves. Her person was as richly attired as silks and gems could accomplish.

Richard Middlemas, as the Begum's General or Bukshee, walked nearest to her litter, in a dress as magnificent in itself as it was remote from all European costume, being that of a Banka, or Indian courtier. His turban was of rich silk and gold, twisted very hard and placed on one side of his head, its ends hanging down on the shoulder. His mustaches were turned and curled, and his eyelids stained with antimony. The vest was of gold brocade, with a cummerband, or sash, around his waist, corresponding to his turban. He carried in his hand a large sword, sheathed in a scabbard of crimson velvet, and wore around his middle a broad embroidered sword-belt. What thoughts he had under this gay attire, and the bold bearing which corresponded to it, it would be fearful to unfold. His least detestable hopes were perhaps those which tended to save Menie Gray, by betraying the Prince who was about to confide in him, and the Begum, at whose intercession Tippoo's confidence was to be reposed.

The litter stopped as it approached the tank, on the opposite side of which the Prince was seated on his musnud. Middlemas assisted the Begum to descend, and led her, deeply veiled with silver muslin, towards the platform of marble. The rest of the retinue of the Begum followed in their richest and most gaudy attire, all males, however; nor was there a symptom of woman being in her train, except that a close litter, guarded by twenty black slaves, having their sabres drawn, remained at some distance in a thicket of flowering shrubs.

When Tippoo Saib, through the dim haze which hung over the Waterfall, discerned the splendid train of the Begum advancing, he arose from his musnud, so as to receive her near the foot of his throne, and exchanged greetings with her upon the pleasure of meeting, and enquiries after their mutual health. He then conducted her to the cushion placed near to his own, while his courtiers anxiously showed their politeness in accommodating those of the Begum with places upon the carpets around, where they all sat down cross-legged—Richard Middlemas occupying a conspicuous situation.

The people of inferior note stood behind, and amongst them was the Sirdar of Hyder Ali, with Hartley and the Madras Vakeel. It would be impossible to describe the feelings with which Hartley recognized the apostate Middlemas and the Amazonian Mrs. Montreville. The sight of them worked up his resolution to make an appeal against them in full Durbar, to the justice which Tippoo was obliged to render to all who should complain of injuries. In the meanwhile, the Prince, who had hitherto spoken in a low voice, while acknowledging, it is to be supposed, the service and the fidelity of the Begum, now gave the sign to his attendant, who said, in an elevated tone, "Wherefore, and to requite these services, the mighty Prince, at the request of the mighty Begum, Mootee Mahul, beautiful as the moon, and wise as the daughter of Giamschid, had decreed to take into his service the Bukshee of her armies, and to invest him, as one worthy of all confidence, with the keeping of his beloved capital of Bangalore."

The voice of the crier had scarce ceased, when it was answered by one as loud, which sounded from the crowd of bystanders, "Cursed is he who maketh the robber Leik his treasurer, or trusteth the lives of Moslemah to the command of an apostate!"

With unutterable satisfaction, yet with trembling doubt and anxiety, Hartley traced the speech to the elder Fakir, the companion of Barak. Tippoo seemed not to notice the interruption, which passed for that of some mad devotee, to whom the Moslem princes permit great freedoms. The Durbar, therefore, recovered from their surprise; and, in answer to the proclamation, united in the shout of applause which is expected to attend every annunciation of the royal pleasure.

Their acclamation had no sooner ceased than Middlemas arose, bent himself before the musnud, and, in a set speech, declared his unworthiness of such high honour as had now been conferred, and his zeal for the Prince's service. Something remained to be added, but his speech faltered, his limbs shook, and his tongue seemed to refuse its office.

The Begum started from her seat, though contrary to etiquette, and said, as if to supply the deficiency in the speech of her officer, "My slave would say, that in acknowledgment of so great an honour conferred on my Bukshee, I am so void of means, that I can only pray your Highness will deign to accept a lily from Frangistan, to plant within the recesses of the secret garden of thy pleasures. Let my lord's guards carry yonder litter to the Zenana."

A female scream—was heard, as, at the signal from Tippoo, the guards of his seraglio advanced to receive the closed litter from the attendants of the Begum. The voice of the old Fakir was heard louder and sterner than before.—"Cursed is the Prince who barter justice for lust! He shall die in the gate by the sword of the stranger."

"This is too insolent!" said Tippoo. "Drag forward that Fakir, and cut his robe into tatters on his back with your chabouks." [Footnote: Long whips.]

But a scene ensued like that in the hall of Seyd. All who attempted to obey the command of the incensed despot fell back from the Fakir, as they would from the Angel of Death. He flung his cap and fictitious beard on the ground, and the incensed countenance of Tippoo was subdued in an instant, when he encountered the

stern and awful eye of his father. A sign dismissed him from the throne, which Hyder himself ascended, while the official menials hastily disrobed him of his tattered cloak, and flung on him a robe of regal splendour, and placed on his head a jewelled turban. The Durbar rung with acclamations to Hyder Ali Khan Behauder, "the good, the wise, the discoverer of hidden things, who cometh into the Divan like the sun bursting from the clouds."

The Nawaub at length signed for silence, and was promptly obeyed. He looked majestically around him, and at length bent his look upon Tippoo, whose downcast eyes, as he stood before the throne with his arms folded on his bosom, were strongly contrasted with the haughty air of authority which he had worn but a moment before. "Thou hast been willing," said the Nawaub, "to barter the safety of thy capital for the possession of a white slave. But the beauty of a fair woman caused Solomon ben David to stumble in his path; how much more, then, should the son of Hyder Naig remain firm under temptation!—That men may see clearly, we must remove the light which dazzles them. Yonder Feringi woman must be placed at my disposal."

"To hear is to obey," replied Tippoo, while the deep gloom on his brow showed what his forced submission cost his proud and passionate spirit. In the hearts of the courtiers present reigned the most eager curiosity to see the *denouement* of the scene, but not a trace of that wish was suffered to manifest itself on features accustomed to conceal all internal sensations. The feelings of the Begum were hidden under her veil; while, in spite of a bold attempt to conceal his alarm, the perspiration stood in large drops on the brow of Richard Middlemas. The next words of the Nawaub sounded like music in the ear of Hartley.

"Carry the Feringi woman to the tent of the Sirdar Belash Cassim, [the chief to whom Hartley had been committed.] Let her be tended in all honour, and let him prepare to escort her, with the Vakeel and the Hakim Hartley, to the Payeen-Ghaut, [the country beneath the passes,] answering for their safety with his head." The litter was on its road to the Sirdar's tents ere the Nawaub had done speaking. "For thee, Tippoo," continued Hyder, "I am not come hither to deprive thee of authority, or to disgrace thee before the Durbar. Such things as thou hast promised to this Feringi, proceed to make them good. The sun calleth not back the splendour which he lends to the moon; and the father obscures not the dignity which he has conferred on the son. What thou hast promised, that do thou proceed to make good."

The ceremony of investiture was therefore recommenced, by which the Prince Tippoo conferred on Middlemas the important government of the city of Bangalore, probably with the internal resolution, that since he was himself deprived of the fair European, he would take an early opportunity to remove the new Killedar from his charge; while Middlemas accepted it with the throbbing hope that he might yet outwit both father and son. The deed of investiture was read aloud—the robe of honour was put upon the newly created Killedar, and a hundred voices, while they blessed the prudent choice of Tippoo, wished the governor good fortune, and victory over his enemies.

A horse was led forward as the Prince's gift. It was a fine steed of the Cuttyawar breed, high-crested, with broad hind-quarters; he was of a white colour, but had the extremity of his tail and mane stained red. His saddle was red velvet, the bridle and crupper studded—with gilded knobs. Two attendants on lesser horses led this prancing animal, one holding the lance, and the other the long spear of their patron. The horse was shown to the applauding courtiers, and withdrawn in order to be led in state through the streets, while the new Killedar should follow on the elephant, another present usual on such an occasion, which was next made to advance, that the world might admire the munificence of the Prince.

The huge animal approached the platform, shaking his large wrinkled head, which he raised and sunk, as if impatient, and curling upwards his trunk from time to time, as if to show the gulf of his tongueless mouth. Gracefully retiring with the deepest obeisance, the Killedar, well pleased the audience was finished, stood by the neck of the elephant, expecting the conductor of the animal would make him kneel down, that he might ascend the gilded howdah, which awaited his occupancy.

"Hold, Feringi," said Hyder. "Thou hast received all that, was promised thee by the bounty of Tippoo. Accept now what is the fruit of the justice of Hyder."

As he spoke, he signed with his finger, and the driver of the elephant instantly conveyed to the animal the pleasure of the Nawaub. Curling his long trunk around the neck of the ill-fated European, the monster suddenly threw the wretch prostrate before him, and stamping his huge shapeless foot upon his breast, put an end at once to his life, and to his crimes. The cry which the victim uttered was mimicked by the roar of the monster, and a sound like an hysterical laugh mingling with a scream, which rung from under the veil of the Begum. The elephant once more raised his trunk aloft, and gaped fearfully.

The courtiers preserved a profound silence; but Tippoo, upon whose muslin robe a part of the victim's blood had spirted, held it up to the Nawaub, exclaiming in a sorrowful, yet resentful tone,—"Father—father—was it thus my promise should have been kept?"

"Know, foolish boy," said Hyder Ali, "that the carrion which lies there was in a plot to deliver Bangalore to the Feringis and the Mahrattas. This Begum [she started when she heard herself named] has given us warning of the plot, and has so merited her pardon for having originally concurred in it,—whether altogether out of love to us we will not too curiously enquire.—Hence with that lump of bloody clay, and let the Hakim Hartley and the English Vakeel come before me."

They were brought forward,—while some of the attendants flung sand upon the bloody traces, and others removed the crushed corpse.

"Hakim," said Hyder, "thou shalt return with the Feringi woman, and with gold to compensate her injuries,—wherein the Begum, as is fitting, shall contribute a share. Do thou say to thy nation, Hyder Ali acts justly." The Nawaub then inclined himself graciously to Hartley, and then turning to the Vakeel, who appeared much discomposed, "You have brought to me," he said, "words of peace,—while your masters meditated a treacherous war. It is not upon such as you that my vengeance ought to alight. But tell the Kafr [or infidel] Paupiah and his unworthy master, that Hyder Ali sees too clearly to suffer to be lost by treason the advantages he has gained by war. Hitherto I have been in the Carnatic as a mild Prince—in future I will be a destroying tempest! Hitherto I have made inroads as a compassionate and merciful conqueror—hereafter I will be the messenger whom Allah sends to the kingdoms which he visits in judgment!"

It is well known how dreadfully the Nawaub kept this promise, and how he and his son afterwards sunk before the discipline and bravery of the Europeans. The scene of just punishment which he so faithfully exhibited might be owing to his policy, his internal sense of right, and to the ostentation of displaying it before an Englishman of sense and intelligence, or to all of these motives mingled together—but in what proportions it is not for us to distinguish.

Hartley reached the coast in safety with his precious charge, rescued from a dreadful fate when she was almost beyond hope. But the nerves and constitution of Menie Gray had received a shock from which she long suffered severely, and never entirely recovered. The principal ladies of the settlement, moved by the singular tale of her distress, received her with the utmost kindness, and exercised towards her the most attentive and affectionate hospitality. The Nawaub, faithful to his promise, remitted to her a sum of no less than ten thousand gold Mohurs, extorted, as was surmised, almost entirely from the hoards of the Begum Mootee Mahul, or Montreville. Of the fate of that adventuress nothing was known for certainty; but her forts and government were taken into Hyder's custody, and report said, that, her power being abolished and her consequence lost, she died by poison, either taken by herself, or administered by some other person.

It might be thought a natural conclusion of the history of Menie Gray, that she should have married Hartley, to whom she stood much indebted for his heroic interference in her behalf. But her feelings were too much and too painfully agitated, her health too much shattered, to permit her to entertain thoughts of a matrimonial connexion, even with the acquaintance of her youth, and the champion of her freedom. Time might have removed these obstacles, but not two years, after their adventures in Mysore, the gallant and disinterested Hartley fell a victim to his professional courage, in withstanding the progress of a contagious distemper, which he at length caught, and under which he sunk. He left a considerable part of the moderate fortune which he had acquired to Menie Gray, who, of course, did not want for many advantageous offers of a matrimonial character. But she respected the memory of Hartley too much, to subdue in behalf of another the reasons which induced her to refuse the hand which he had so well deserved—nay, it may be thought, had so fairly won.

She returned to Britain—what seldom occurs—unmarried though wealthy; and, settling in her native village, appeared to find her only pleasure in acts of benevolence which seemed to exceed the extent of her fortune, had not her very retired life been taken into consideration. Two or three persons with whom she was intimate, could trace in her character that generous and disinterested simplicity and affection, which were the ground-work of her character. To the world at large her habits seemed those of the ancient Roman matron, which is recorded on her tomb in these four words,

DOMUM MANSIT—LANAM FECIT.

BOOK XXXI
THE WELL OF ST. RONAN
Chapter 1
An Old-World Landlady.

*But to make up my tale,
She breweth good ale,
And thereof maketh sale.*

SKELTON.

Although few, if any, of the countries of Europe, have increased so rapidly in wealth and cultivation as Scotland during the last half century, Sultan Mahmoud's owls might nevertheless have found in Caledonia, at any term within that flourishing period, their dowerly of ruined villages. Accident or local advantages have, in many instances, transferred the inhabitants of ancient hamlets, from the situations which their predecessors chose with more respect to security than convenience, to those in which their increasing industry and commerce could more easily expand itself; and hence places which stand distinguished in Scottish history, and which figure in David M'Pherson's excellent historical map,^{E11} can now only be discerned from the wild moor by the verdure which clothes their site, or, at best, by a few scattered ruins, resembling pinfolds, which mark the spot of their former existence.

The little village of St. Ronan's, though it had not yet fallen into the state of entire oblivion we have described, was, about twenty years since, fast verging towards it. The situation had something in it so romantic, that it provoked the pencil of every passing tourist; and we will endeavour, therefore, to describe it in language which can scarcely be less intelligible than some of their sketches, avoiding, however, for reasons which seem to us of weight, to give any more exact indication of the site, than that it is on the southern side of the Forth, and not above thirty miles distant from the English frontier.

A river of considerable magnitude pours its streams through a narrow vale, varying in breadth from two miles to a fourth of that distance, and which, being composed of rich alluvial soil, is, and has long been, enclosed, tolerably well inhabited, and cultivated with all the skill of Scottish agriculture. Either side of this valley is bounded by a chain of hills, which, on the right in particular, may be almost termed mountains. Little brooks arising in these ridges, and finding their way to the river, offer each its own little vale to the industry of the cultivator. Some of them bear fine large trees, which have as yet escaped the axe, and upon the sides of most there are scattered patches and fringes of natural copsewood, above and around which the banks of the stream arise, somewhat desolate in the colder months, but in summer glowing with dark purple heath, or with the golden lustre of the broom and gorse. This is a sort of scenery peculiar to those countries, which abound, like Scotland, in hills and in streams, and where the traveller is ever and anon discovering in some intricate and unexpected recess, a simple and silvan beauty, which pleases him the more, that it seems to be peculiarly his own property as the first discoverer.

In one of these recesses, and so near its opening as to command the prospect of the river, the broader valley, and the opposite chain of hills, stood, and, unless neglect and desertion have completed their work, still stands, the ancient and decayed village of St. Ronan's. The site was singularly picturesque, as the straggling street of the village ran up a very steep hill, on the side of which were clustered, as it were, upon little terraces, the cottages which composed the place, seeming, as in the Swiss towns on the Alps, to rise above each other towards the ruins of an old castle, which continued to occupy the crest of the eminence, and the strength of which had doubtless led the neighbourhood to assemble under its walls for protection. It must, indeed, have been a place of formidable defence, for, on the side opposite to the town, its walls rose straight up from the verge of a tremendous and rocky precipice, whose base was washed by Saint Ronan's burn, as the brook was entitled. On the southern side, where the declivity was less precipitous, the ground had been carefully levelled into successive terraces, which ascended to the summit of the hill, and were, or rather had been, connected by staircases of stone, rudely ornamented. In peaceful periods these terraces had been occupied by the gardens of the Castle, and in times of siege they added to its security, for each commanded the one immediately below it, so that they could be separately and successively defended, and all were exposed to the fire from the place itself — a massive square tower of the largest size, surrounded, as usual, by lower buildings, and a high embattled wall. On the northern side arose a considerable mountain, of which the descent that lay between the eminence on which the Castle was situated seemed a detached portion, and which had been improved and deepened by three successive huge trenches. Another very deep trench was drawn in front of the main entrance from the east, where the principal gateway formed the termination of the street, which, as we have noticed, ascended from the village, and this last defence completed the fortifications of the tower.

In the ancient gardens of the Castle, and upon all sides of it excepting the western, which was precipitous, large old trees had found root, mantling the rock and the ancient and ruinous walls with their dusky verdure, and increasing the effect of the shattered pile which towered up from the centre.

Seated on the threshold of this ancient pile, where the "proud porter" had in former days "rear'd himself,"² a stranger had a complete and commanding view of the decayed village, the houses of which, to a fanciful imagination, might seem as if they had been suddenly arrested in hurrying down the precipitous hill, and fixed as if by magic in the whimsical arrangement which they now presented. It was like a sudden pause in one of Amphion's country-dances, when the huts which were to form the future Thebes were jigging it to his lute. But, with such an observer, the melancholy excited by the desolate appearance of the village soon overcame all the lighter frolics of the imagination. Originally constructed on the humble plan used in the building of Scotch cottages about a century ago, the greater part of them had been long deserted; and their fallen roofs, blackened gables, and ruinous walls, showed Desolation's triumph over Poverty. On some huts the rafters, varnished with soot, were still standing, in whole or in part, like skeletons, and a few, wholly or partially covered with thatch, seemed still inhabited, though scarce habitable; for the smoke of the peat-fires, which prepared the humble meal of the indwellers, stole upwards, not only from the chimneys, its regular vent, but from various other crevices in the roofs. Nature, in the meanwhile, always changing, but renewing as she changes, was supplying, by the power of vegetation, the fallen and decaying marks of human labour. Small pollards, which had been formerly planted around the little gardens, had now waxed into huge and high forest trees; the fruit-trees had extended their branches over the verges of the little yards, and the hedges had shot up into huge and irregular bushes; while quantities of dock, and nettles, and hemlock, hiding the ruined walls, were busily converting the whole scene of desolation into a picturesque forest-bank.

Two houses in St. Ronan's were still in something like decent repair; places essential — the one to the spiritual weal of the inhabitants, the other to the accommodation of travellers. These were the clergyman's manse, and the village inn. Of the former we need only say, that it formed no exception to the general rule by which the landed proprietors of Scotland seem to proceed in lodging their clergy, not only in the cheapest, but in the ugliest and most inconvenient house which the genius of masonry can contrive. It had the usual number of chimneys — two, namely — rising like asses' ears at either end, which answered the purpose for which they were designed as ill as usual. It had all the ordinary leaks and inlets to the fury of the elements, which usually form the subject of the complaints of a Scottish incumbent to his brethren of the presbytery; and, to complete the picture, the clergyman being a bachelor, the pigs had unmolested admission to the garden and court-yard, broken windows were repaired with brown paper, and the disordered and squalid appearance of a low farm-house, occupied by a bankrupt tenant, dishonoured the dwelling of one, who, besides his clerical character, was a scholar and a gentleman, though a little of a humourist. Beside the manse stood the kirk of St. Ronan's, a little old mansion with a clay floor, and an assemblage of wretched pews, originally of carved oak, but heedfully clouded with white fir-deal. But the external form of the church was elegant in the outline, having been built in Catholic times, when we cannot deny to the forms of ecclesiastical architecture that grace, which, as good Protestants, we refuse to their doctrine. The fabric hardly raised its grey and vaulted roof among the crumbling hills of mortality by which it was surrounded, and was indeed so small in size, and so much lowered in height by the graves on the outside, which ascended half way up the low Saxon windows, that it might itself have appeared only a funeral vault, or mausoleum of larger size. Its little square tower, with the ancient belfry, alone distinguished it from such a monument. But when the grey-headed beadle turned the keys with his shaking hand, the antiquary was admitted into an ancient building, which, from the style of its architecture, and some monuments of the Mowbrays of St. Ronan's, which the old man was accustomed to point out, was generally conjectured to be as early as the thirteenth century.

These Mowbrays of St. Ronan's seem to have been at one time a very powerful family. They were allied to, and friends of the house of Douglas, at the time when the overgrown power of that heroic race made the Stewarts tremble on the Scottish throne. It followed that, when, as our old *naif* historian expresses it, "no one

dared to strive with a Douglas, nor yet with a Douglas's man, for if he did, he was sure to come by the waur," the family of St. Ronan's shared their prosperity, and became lords of almost the whole of the rich valley of which their mansion commanded the prospect. But upon the turning of the tide, in the reign of James II., they became despoiled of the greater part of those fair acquisitions, and succeeding events reduced their importance still farther. Nevertheless, they were, in the middle of the seventeenth century, still a family of considerable note; and Sir Reginald Mowbray, after the unhappy battle of Dunbar, distinguished himself by the obstinate defence of the Castle against the arms of Cromwell, who, incensed at the opposition which he had unexpectedly encountered in an obscure corner, caused the fortress to be dismantled and blown up with gunpowder.

After this catastrophe the old Castle was abandoned to ruin; but Sir Reginald, when, like Allan Ramsay's Sir William Worthy, he returned after the Revolution, built himself a house in the fashion of that later age, which he prudently suited in size to the diminished fortunes of his family. It was situated about the middle of the village, whose vicinity was not in those days judged any inconvenience, upon a spot of ground more level than was presented by the rest of the acclivity, where, as we said before, the houses were notched as it were into the side of the steep bank, with little more level ground about them than the spot occupied by their site. But the Laird's house had a court in front and a small garden behind, connected with another garden, which, occupying three terraces, descended, in emulation of the orchards of the old Castle, almost to the banks of the stream.

The family continued to inhabit this new messuage until about fifty years before the commencement of our history, when it was much damaged by a casual fire; and the Laird of the day, having just succeeded to a more pleasant and commodious dwelling at the distance of about three miles from the village, determined to abandon the habitation of his ancestors. As he cut down at the same time an ancient rookery, (perhaps to defray the expenses of the migration,) it became a common remark among the country folk, that the decay of St. Ronan's began when Laird Lawrence and the crows flew off.

The deserted mansion, however, was not consigned to owls and birds of the desert; on the contrary, for many years it witnessed more fun and festivity than when it had been the sombre abode of a grave Scottish Baron of "auld lang syne." In short, it was converted into an inn, and marked by a huge sign, representing on the one side St. Ronan catching hold of the devil's game leg with his Episcopal crook, as the story may be read in his veracious legend, and on the other the Mowbray arms. It was by far the best frequented public-house in that vicinity; and a thousand stories were told of the revels which had been held within its walls, and the gambols achieved under the influence of its liquors. All this, however, had long since passed away, according to the lines in my frontispiece,

"A merry place, 'twas said, in days of yore;

But something ail'd it now — the place was cursed."

The worthy couple (servants and favourites of the Mowbray family) who first kept the inn, had died reasonably wealthy, after long carrying on a flourishing trade, leaving behind them an only daughter. They had acquired by degrees not only the property of the inn itself, of which they were originally tenants, but of some remarkably good meadow-land by the side of the brook, which, when touched by a little pecuniary necessity, the Lairds of St. Ronan's had disposed of piecemeal, as the readiest way to portion off a daughter, procure a commission for the younger son, and the like emergencies. So that Meg Dods, when she succeeded to her parents, was a considerable heiress, and, as such, had the honour of refusing three topping-farmers, two bonnet-lairds, and a horse-couper, who successively made proposals to her.

Many bets were laid on the horse-couper's success, but the knowing ones were taken in. Determined to ride the fore-horse herself, Meg would admit no helpmate who might soon assert the rights of a master; and so, in single blessedness, and with the despotism of Queen Bess herself, she ruled all matters with a high hand, not only over her men-servants and maid-servants, but over the stranger within her gates, who, if he ventured to oppose Meg's sovereign will and pleasure, or desire to have either fare or accommodation different from that which she chose to provide for him, was instantly ejected with that answer which Erasmus tells us silenced all complaints in the German inns of his time, *Quære aliud hospitium*;³ or, as Meg expressed it, "Troop aff wi' ye to another public." As this amounted to a banishment in extent equal to sixteen miles from Meg's residence, the unhappy party on whom it was passed, had no other refuge save by deprecating the wrath of his landlady, and resigning himself to her will. It is but justice to Meg Dods to state, that though hers was a severe and almost despotic government, it could not be termed a tyranny, since it was exercised, upon the whole, for the good of the subject.

The vaults of the old Laird's cellar had not, even in his own day, been replenished with more excellent wines; the only difficulty was to prevail on Meg to look for the precise liquor you chose; — to which it may be added, that she often became restiff when she thought a company had had "as much as did them good," and refused to furnish any more supplies. Then her kitchen was her pride and glory; she looked to the dressing of every dish herself, and there were some with which she suffered no one to interfere. Such were the cock-a-leeky, and the savoury minced collops, which rivalled in their way even the veal cutlets of our old friend Mrs. Hall, at Ferrybridge. Meg's table-linen, bed-linen, and so forth, were always home-made, of the best quality, and in the best order; and a weary day was that to the chambermaid in which her lynx eye discovered any neglect of the strict cleanliness which she constantly enforced. Indeed, considering Meg's country and calling, we were never able to account for her extreme and scrupulous nicety, unless by supposing that it afforded her the most apt and frequent pretext for scolding her maids; an exercise in which she displayed so much eloquence and energy, that we must needs believe it to have been a favourite one.⁴

We have only further to commemorate, the moderation of Meg's reckonings, which, when they closed the banquet, often relieved the apprehensions, instead of saddening the heart, of the rising guest. A shilling for breakfast, three shillings for dinner, including a pint of old port, eighteenpence for a snug supper — such were the charges of the inn of St. Ronan's, under this landlady of the olden world, even after the nineteenth century had commenced; and they were ever tendered with the pious recollection, that her good father never charged half so much, but these weary times rendered it impossible for her to make the lawing less.⁵

Notwithstanding all these excellent and rare properties, the inn at Saint Ronan's shared the decay of the village to which it belonged. This was owing to various circumstances. The high-road had been turned aside from the place, the steepness of the street being murder (so the postillions declared) to their post-horses. It was thought that Meg's stern refusal to treat them with liquor, or to connive at their exchanging for porter and whisky the corn which should feed their cattle, had no small influence on the opinion of those respectable gentlemen, and that a little cutting and levelling would have made the ascent easy enough; but let that pass. This alteration of the highway was an injury which Meg did not easily forgive to the country gentlemen, most of whom she had recollected when children. "Their fathers," she said, "wad not have done the like of it to a lone woman." Then the decay of the village itself, which had formerly contained a set of feuars and bonnet-lairds, who, under the name of the Chirruping Club, contrived to drink twopenny, qualified with brandy or whisky, at least twice or thrice a-week, was some small loss.

The temper and manners of the landlady scared away all customers of that numerous class, who will not allow originality to be an excuse for the breach of decorum, and who, little accustomed perhaps to attendance at home, loved to play the great man at an inn, and to have a certain number of bows, deferential speeches, and apologies, in answer to the G— d d — n ye's which they bestow on the house, attendance, and entertainment. Unto those who commenced this sort of barter in the Clachan of Saint Ronan's, well could Meg Dods pay it back, in their own coin; and glad they were to escape from the house with eyes not quite scratched out, and ears not more deafened than if they had been within hearing of a pitched battle.

Nature had formed honest Meg for such encounters; and as her noble soul delighted in them, so her outward properties were in what Tony Lumpkin calls a concatenation accordingly. She had hair of a brindled colour, betwixt black and grey, which was apt to escape in elf-locks from under her mutch when she was thrown into violent agitation — long skinny hands, terminated by stout talons — grey eyes, thin lips, a robust person, a broad, though flat chest, capital wind, and a voice that could match a choir of fishwomen. She was accustomed to say of herself in her more gentle moods, that her bark was worse than her bite; but what teeth could have matched a tongue, which, when in full career, is vouched to have been heard from the Kirk to the Castle of Saint Ronan's?

These notable gifts, however, had no charms for the travellers of these light and giddy-paced times, and Meg's inn became less and less frequented. What carried the evil to the uttermost was, that a fanciful lady of rank in the neighbourhood chanced to recover of some imaginary complaint by the use of a mineral well about a mile and a half from the village; a fashionable doctor was found to write an analysis of the healing waters, with a list of sundry cures; a speculative builder took

land in feu, and erected lodging-houses, shops, and even streets. At length a tontine subscription was obtained to erect an inn, which, for the more grace, was called a hotel; and so the desertion of Meg Dods became general.⁶

She had still, however, her friends and well-wishers, many of whom thought, that as she was a lone woman, and known to be well to pass in the world, she would act wisely to retire from public life, and take down a sign which had no longer fascination for guests. But Meg's spirit scorned submission, direct or implied. "Her father's door," she said, "should be open to the road, till her father's bairn should be streekit and carried out at it with her feet foremost. It was not for the profit — there was little profit at it; — profit? — there was a dead loss; but she wad not be dung by any of them. They maun hae a hottle,⁷ maun they? — and an honest public canna serve them! They may hottle that likes; but they shall see that Lucky Dods can hottle on as lang as the best of them — ay, though they had made a Tamteen of it, and linkit aw their breaths of lives, whilk are in their nostrils, on end of ilk other like a string of wild-geese, and the langest liver bruick a', (whilk was sinful presumption,) she would match ilk ane of them as lang as her ain wind held out." Fortunate it was for Meg, since she had formed this doughty resolution, that although her inn had decayed in custom, her land had risen in value in a degree which more than compensated the balance on the wrong side of her books, and, joined to her usual providence and economy, enabled her to act up to her lofty purpose.

She prosecuted her trade too with every attention to its diminished income; shut up the windows of one half of her house, to baffle the tax-gatherer; retrenched her furniture; discharged her pair of post-horses, and pensioned off the old humpbacked postilion who drove them, retaining his services, however, as an assistant to a still more aged hostler. To console herself for restrictions by which her pride was secretly wounded, she agreed with the celebrated Dick Tinto to re-paint her father's sign, which had become rather undecipherable; and Dick accordingly gilded the Bishop's crook, and augmented the horrors of the Devil's aspect, until it became a terror to all the younger fry of the school-house, and a sort of visible illustration of the terrors of the arch-enemy, with which the minister endeavoured to impress their infant minds.

Under this renewed symbol of her profession, Meg Dods, or Meg Dorts, as she was popularly termed, on account of her refractory humours, was still patronised by some steady customers. Such were the members of the Killnakelty Hunt, once famous on the turf and in the field, but now a set of venerable grey-headed sportsmen, who had sunk from fox-hounds to basket-beagles and coursing, and who made an easy canter on their quiet nags a gentle induction to a dinner at Meg's. "A set of honest decent men they were," Meg said; "had their sang and their joke — and what for no? Their bind was just a Scots pint over-head, and a tappit-hen to the bill, and no man ever saw them the waur o't. It was thae cockle-brained callants of the present day that would be mair owerta'en with a puir quart than douce folk were with a magnum."

Then there was a set of ancient brethren of the angle from Edinburgh, who visited Saint Ronan's frequently in the spring and summer, a class of guests peculiarly acceptable to Meg, who permitted them more latitude in her premises than she was known to allow to any other body. "They were," she said, "pawky auld carles, that kend whilk side their bread was buttered upon. Ye never kend of ony o' them ganging to the spring, as they behoved to ca' the stinking well yonder. — Na, na — they were up in the morning — had their parritch, wi' maybe a thimblefull of brandy, and then awa up into the hills, eat their bit cauld meat on the heather, and came hame at e'en with the creel full of caller trouts, and had them to their dinner, and their quiet cogue of ale, and their drap punch, and were set singing their catches and glees, as they ca'd them, till ten o'clock, and then to bed, wi' God bless ye — and what for no?"

Thirdly, we may commemorate some ranting blades, who also came from the metropolis to visit Saint Ronan's, attracted by the humours of Meg, and still more by the excellence of her liquor, and the cheapness of her reckonings. These were members of the Helter Skelter Club, of the Wildfire Club, and other associations formed for the express purpose of getting rid of care and sobriety. Such dashers occasioned many a racket in Meg's house, and many a *bourasque* in Meg's temper. Various were the arts of flattery and violence by which they endeavoured to get supplies of liquor, when Meg's conscience told her they had had too much already. Sometimes they failed, as when the croupier of the Helter Skelter got himself scalded with the mulled wine, in an unsuccessful attempt to coax this formidable virago by a salute; and the excellent president of the Wildfire received a broken head from the keys of the cellar, as he endeavoured to possess himself of these emblems of authority. But little did these dauntless officials care for the exuberant frolics of Meg's temper, which were to them only "pretty Fanny's way" — the *dulces Amaryllidis iræ*. And Meg, on her part, though she often called them "drunken ne'er-do-weels, and thoroughbred High-street blackguards," allowed no other person to speak ill of them in her hearing. "They were daft callants," she said, "and that was all — when the drink was in, the wit was out — ye could not put an auld head upon young shouthers — a young cowl will canter, be it up-hill or down — and what for no?" was her uniform conclusion.

Nor must we omit, among Meg's steady customers, "faithful amongst the unfaithful found," the copper-nosed sheriff-clerk of the county, who, when summoned by official duty to that district of the shire, warmed by recollections of her double-brewed ale, and her generous Antigua, always advertised that his "Prieves," or "Comptis," or whatever other business was in hand, were to proceed on such a day and hour, "within the house of Margaret Dods, vintner in Saint Ronan's."

We have only farther to notice Meg's mode of conducting herself towards chance travellers, who, knowing nothing of nearer or more fashionable accommodations, or perhaps consulting rather the state of their purse than of their taste, stumbled upon her house of entertainment. Her reception of these was as precarious as the hospitality of a savage nation to sailors shipwrecked on their coast. If the guests seemed to have made her mansion their free choice — or if she liked their appearance (and her taste was very capricious) — above all, if they seemed pleased with what they got, and little disposed to criticise or give trouble, it was all very well. But if they had come to Saint Ronan's because the house at the Well was full — or if she disliked what the sailor calls the cut of their jib — or if, above all, they were critical about their accommodations, none so likely as Meg to give them what in her country is called a *sloan*. In fact, she reckoned such persons a part of that ungenerous and ungrateful public, for whose sake she was keeping her house open at a dead loss, and who had left her, as it were, a victim to her patriotic zeal.

Hence arose the different reports concerning the little inn of Saint Ronan's, which some favoured travellers praised as the neatest and most comfortable old-fashioned house in Scotland, where you had good attendance, and good cheer, at moderate rates; while others, less fortunate, could only talk of the darkness of the rooms, the homeliness of the old furniture, and the detestable bad humour of Meg Dods, the landlady.

Reader, if you come from the more sunny side of the Tweed — or even if, being a Scot, you have had the advantage to be born within the last twenty-five years, you may be induced to think this portrait of Queen Elizabeth, in Dame Quickly's piqued hat and green apron, somewhat overcharged in the features. But I appeal to my own contemporaries, who have known wheel-road, bridle-way, and footpath, for thirty years, whether they do not, every one of them, remember Meg Dods — or somebody very like her. Indeed, so much is this the case, that, about the period I mention, I should have been afraid to have rambled from the Scottish metropolis, in almost any direction, lest I had lighted upon some one of the sisterhood of Dame Quickly, who might suspect me of having showed her up to the public in the character of Meg Dods. At present, though it is possible that some one or two of this peculiar class of wild-cats may still exist, their talons must be much impaired by age; and I think they can do little more than sit, like the Giant Pope, in the Pilgrim's Progress, at the door of their unfrequented caverns, and grin at the pilgrims over whom they used formerly to execute their despotism.

Chapter 2 The Guest.

Quis novus hic hospes?

DIDO APUD VIRGILIUM.

Ch'am-maid! The Gemman in the front parlour!

BOOTS'S FREE TRANSLATION OF THE ÆNEID.

It was on a fine summer's day that a solitary traveller rode under the old-fashioned archway, and alighted in the court-yard of Meg Dods's inn, and delivered the bridle of his horse to the humpbacked postilion. "Bring my saddle-bags," he said, "into the house — or stay — I am abler, I think, to carry them than you." He then assisted the poor meagre groom to unbuckle the straps which secured the humble and now despised convenience, and meantime gave strict charges that his horse should be unbridled, and put into a clean and comfortable stall, the girths slacked, and a cloth cast over his loins; but that the saddle should not be removed until he himself came to see him dressed.

The companion of his travels seemed in the hostler's eye deserving of his care, being a strong active horse, fit either for the road or field, but rather high in bone from a long journey, though from the state of his skin it appeared the utmost care had been bestowed to keep him in condition. While the groom obeyed the stranger's directions, the latter, with the saddle-bags laid over his arm, entered the kitchen of the inn.

Here he found the landlady herself in none of her most blessed humours. The cook-maid was abroad on some errand, and Meg, in a close review of the kitchen apparatus, was making the unpleasant discovery, that trenchers had been broken or cracked, pots and saucepans not so accurately scoured as her precise notions of cleanliness required, which, joined to other detections of a more petty description, stirred her bile in no small degree; so that while she disarranged and arranged the *bink*, she maundered, in an under tone, complaints and menaces against the absent delinquent.

The entrance of a guest did not induce her to suspend this agreeable amusement — she just glanced at him as he entered, then turned her back short on him, and continued her labour and her soliloquy of lamentation. Truth is, she thought she recognised in the person of the stranger, one of those useful envoys of the commercial community, called, by themselves and the waiters, *Travellers*, par excellence — by others, Riders and Bagmen. Now against this class of customers Meg had peculiar prejudices; because, there being no shops in the old village of Saint Ronan's, the said commercial emissaries, for the convenience of their traffic, always took up their abode at the New Inn, or Hotel, in the rising and rival village called Saint Ronan's Well, unless when some straggler, by chance or dire necessity, was compelled to lodge himself at the Auld Town, as the place of Meg's residence began to be generally termed. She had, therefore, no sooner formed the hasty conclusion, that the individual in question belonged to this obnoxious class, than she resumed her former occupation, and continued to soliloquize and apostrophize her absent handmaidens, without even appearing sensible of his presence.

"The huzzy Beenie — the jaud Eppie — the deil's buckie of a callant! — Another plate gane — they'll break me out of house and ha'!"

The traveller, who, with his saddle-bags rested on the back of a chair, had waited in silence for some note of welcome, now saw that, ghost or no ghost, he must speak first, if he intended to have any notice from his landlady.

"You are my old acquaintance, Mrs. Margaret Dods?" said the stranger.

"What for no? — and wha are ye that speers?" said Meg, in the same breath, and began to rub a brass candlestick with more vehemence than before — the dry tone in which she spoke, indicating plainly how little concern she took in the conversation.

"A traveller, good Mistress Dods, who comes to take up his lodgings here for a day or two."

"I am thinking ye will be mista'en," said Meg; "there's nae room for bags or jaugs here — ye've mista'en your road, neighbour — ye maun e'en bundle yoursell a bit farther down hill."

"I see you have not got the letter I sent you, Mistress Dods?" said the guest.

"How should I, man?" answered the hostess; "they have ta'en awa the post-office from us — moved it down till the Spa-well yonder, as they ca'd."

"Why, that is but a step off," observed the guest.

"Ye will get there the sooner," answered the hostess.

"Nay, but," said the guest, "if you had sent there for my letter, you would have learned" —

"I'm no wanting to learn ony thing at my years," said Meg. "If folk have ony thing to write to me about, they may gie the letter to John Hislop, the carrier, that has used the road these forty years. As for the letters at the post-mistress's, as they ca' her, down by yonder, they may bide in her shop-window, wi' the snaps and bawbee rows, till Beltane, or I loose them. I'll never file my fingers with them. Post-mistress, indeed! — Upsetting cutty! I mind her fu' weel when she dree'd penance for ante-nup" —

Laughing, but interrupting Meg in good time for the character of the post-mistress, the stranger assured her he had sent his fishing-rod and trunk to her confidential friend the carrier, and that he sincerely hoped she would not turn an old acquaintance out of her premises, especially as he believed he could not sleep in a bed within five miles of Saint Ronan's, if he knew that her Blue room was unengaged.

"Fishing-rod! — Auld acquaintance! — Blue room!" echoed Meg, in some surprise; and, facing round upon the stranger, and examining him with some interest and curiosity — "Ye'll be nae bagman, then, after a'?"

"No," said the traveller; "not since I have laid the saddle-bags out of my hand."

"Weel, I canna say but I am glad of that — I canna bide their yanking way of knapping English at every word. — I have kent decent lads amang them too — What for no? — But that was when they stopped up here whiles, like other douce folk; but since they gaed down, the hail flight of them, like a string of wild-geese, to the new-fashioned hottle yonder, I am told there are as mony hellicate tricks played in the travellers' room, as they behove to call it, as if it were fu' of drunken young lairds."

"That is because they have not you to keep good order among them, Mistress Margaret."

"Ay, lad?" replied Meg, "ye are a fine blaw-in-my-lug, to think to cuittle me off sae cleverly!" And, facing about upon her guest, she honoured him with a more close and curious investigation than she had at first designed to bestow upon him.

All that she remarked was in her opinion rather favourable to the stranger. He was a well-made man, rather above than under the middle size, and apparently betwixt five-and-twenty and thirty years of age — for, although he might, at first glance, have passed for one who had attained the latter period, yet, on a nearer examination, it seemed as if the burning sun of a warmer climate than Scotland, and perhaps some fatigue, both of body and mind, had imprinted the marks of care and of manhood upon his countenance, without abiding the course of years. His eyes and teeth were excellent, and his other features, though they could scarce be termed handsome, expressed sense and acuteness; he bore, in his aspect, that ease and composure of manner, equally void of awkwardness and affectation, which is said emphatically to mark the gentleman; and, although neither the plainness of his dress, nor the total want of the usual attendants, allowed Meg to suppose him a wealthy man, she had little doubt that he was above the rank of her lodgers in general. Amidst these observations, and while she was in the course of making them, the good landlady was embarrassed with various obscure recollections of having seen the object of them formerly; but when, or on what occasion, she was quite unable to call to remembrance. She was particularly puzzled by the cold and sarcastic expression of a countenance, which she could not by any means reconcile with the recollections which it awakened. At length she said, with as much courtesy as she was capable of assuming — "Either I have seen you before, sir, or some ane very like ye? — Ye ken the Blue room, too, and you a stranger in these parts?"

"Not so much a stranger as you may suppose, Meg," said the guest, assuming a more intimate tone, "when I call myself Frank Tyrrel."

"Tirl!" exclaimed Meg, with a tone of wonder — "It's impossible! You cannot be Francie Tirl, the wild callant that was fishing and bird-nesting here seven or eight years syne — it canna be — Francie was but a callant!"

"But add seven or eight years to that boy's life, Meg," said the stranger gravely, "and you will find you have the man who is now before you."

"Even sae!" said Meg, with a glance at the reflection of her own countenance in the copper coffee-pot, which she had scoured so brightly that it did the office of a mirror — "Just e'en sae — but folk maun grow auld or die. — But, Maister Tirl, for I mauna ca' ye Francie now, I am thinking" —

"Call me what you please, good dame," said the stranger; "it has been so long since I heard any one call me by a name that sounded like former kindness, that such a one is more agreeable to me than a lord's title would be."

"Weel, then, Maister Francie — if it be no offence to you — I hope ye are no a Nabob?"

"Not I, I can safely assure you, my old friend; — but what an I were?"

"Naething — only maybe I might bid ye gang farther, and be waur served. — Nabobs, indeed! the country's plagued wi' them. They have raised the price of eggs and pootry for twenty miles round — But what is my business? — They use amaisa a' of them the Well down by — they need it, ye ken, for the clearing of their copper complexions, that need scouring as much as my saucepans, that naebody can clean but mysell."

"Well, my good friend," said Tyrrel, "the upshot of all this is, I hope, that I am to stay and have dinner here?"

"What for no?" replied Mrs. Dods.

"And that I am to have the Blue room for a night or two — perhaps longer?"

"I dinna ken that," said the dame. — "The Blue room is the best — and they that get neist best, are no ill aff in this warld."

"Arrange it as you will," said the stranger, "I leave the whole matter to you, mistress. — Meantime, I will go see after my horse."

"The merciful man," said Meg, when her guest had left the kitchen, "is merciful to his beast. — He had aye something about him by ordinar, that callant — But eh, sirs! there is a sair change on his cheek-haffit since I saw him last! — He sall no want a good dinner for auld lang syne, that I'se engage for."

Meg set about the necessary preparations with all the natural energy of her disposition, which was so much exerted upon her culinary cares, that her two maids, on their return to the house, escaped the bitter reprimand which she had been previously conning over, in reward for their alleged slatternly negligence. Nay, so far did she carry her complaisance, that when Tyrrel crossed the kitchen to recover his saddle-bags, she formally rebuked Eppie for an idle taupie, for not carrying the gentleman's things to his room.

"I thank you, mistress," said Tyrrel; "but I have some drawings and colours in these saddle-bags, and I always like to carry them myself."

"Ay, and are you at the painting trade yet?" said Meg; "an unco slaister ye used to make with it lang syne."

"I cannot live without it," said Tyrrel; and taking the saddle-bags, was formally inducted by the maid into a snug apartment, where he soon had the satisfaction to behold a capital dish of minced collops, with vegetables, and a jug of excellent ale, placed on the table by the careful hand of Meg herself. He could do no less, in acknowledgment of the honour, than ask Meg for a bottle of the yellow seal, "if there was any of that excellent claret still left."

"Left? — ay is there, walth of it," said Meg; "I dinna gie it to every body — Ah! Maister Tirl, ye have not got ower your auld tricks! — I am sure, if ye are painting for your leeving, as you say, a little rum and water would come cheaper, and do ye as much good. But ye maun hae your ain way the day, nae doubt, if ye should never have it again."

Away trudged Meg, her keys clattering as she went, and, after much rummaging, returned with such a bottle of claret as no fashionable tavern could have produced, were it called for by a duke, or at a duke's price; and she seemed not a little gratified when her guest assured her that he had not yet forgotten its excellent flavour. She retired after these acts of hospitality, and left the stranger to enjoy in quiet the excellent matters which she had placed before him.

But there was that on Tyrrel's mind which defied the enlivening power of good cheer and of wine, which only maketh man's heart glad when that heart has no secret oppression to counteract its influence. Tyrrel found himself on a spot which he had loved in that delightful season, when youth and high spirits awaken all those flattering promises which are so ill kept to manhood. He drew his chair into the embrasure of the old-fashioned window, and throwing up the sash to enjoy the fresh air, suffered his thoughts to return to former days, while his eyes wandered over objects which they had not looked upon for several eventful years. He could behold beneath his eye, the lower part of the decayed village, as its ruins peeped from the umbrageous shelter with which they were shrouded. Still lower down, upon the little holm which formed its church-yard, was seen the Kirk of Saint Ronan's; and looking yet farther, towards the junction of Saint Ronan's burn with the river which traversed the larger dale or valley, he could see whitened, by the western sun, the rising houses, which were either newly finished, or in the act of being built, about the medicinal spring.

"Time changes all around us," such was the course of natural though trite reflection, which flowed upon Tyrrel's mind; "wherefore should loves and friendships have a longer date than our dwellings and our monuments?" As he indulged these sombre recollections, his officious landlady disturbed their tenor by her entrance.

"I was thinking to offer you a dish of tea, Maister Francie, just for the sake of auld lang syne, and I'll gar the quean Beenie bring it here, and mask it mysell. — But ye arena done with your wine yet?"

"I am indeed, Mrs. Dods," answered Tyrrel; "and I beg you will remove the bottle."

"Remove the bottle, and the wine no half drank out!" said Meg, displeasure lowering on her brow; "I hope there is nae fault to be found wi' the wine, Maister Tirl?" To this answer, which was put in a tone resembling defiance, Tyrrel submissively replied, by declaring "the claret not only unexceptionable, but excellent."

"And what for dinna ye drink it, then?" said Meg, sharply; "folk should never ask for mair liquor than they can make a gude use of. Maybe ye think we have the fashion of the table-dot, as they ca' their newfangled ordinary down-by yonder, where a' the bits of vinegar cruets are put awa into an awmry, as they tell me, and ilk ane wi' the bit dribbles of syndings in it, and a paper about the neck o't, to show which of the customers is aught it — there they stand like doctor's drops — and no an honest Scottish mutchkin will ane o' their viols haud, granting it were at the fouest."

"Perhaps," said Tyrrel, willing to indulge the spleen and prejudice of his old acquaintance, "perhaps the wine is not so good as to make full measure desirable."

"Ye may say that, lad — and yet them that sell it might afford a gude penniworth, for they hae it for the making — maist feck of it ne'er saw France or Portugal. But as I was saying — this is no ane of their newfangled places, where wine is put by for them that canna drink it — when the cork's drawn the bottle maun be drank out — and what for no? — unless it be corkit."

"I agree entirely, Meg," said her guest; "but my ride today has somewhat heated me — and I think the dish of tea you promise me, will do me more good than to finish my bottle."

"Na, then, the best I can do for you is to put it by, to be sauce for the wild-duck the morn; for I think ye said ye were to bide here for a day or twa."

"It is my very purpose, Meg, unquestionably," replied Tyrrel.

"Sae be it then," said Mrs. Dods; "and then the liquor's no lost — it has been seldom sic claret as that has simmered in a saucepan, let me tell you that, neighbour; — and I mind the day, when, headache or nae headache, ye wad hae been at the hinder-end of that bottle, and maybe anither, if ye could have gotten it wiled out of me. But then ye had your cousin to help you — Ah! he was a blithe bairn that Valentine Bulmer! — Ye were a canty callant too, Maister Francie, and muckle ado I had to keep ye baith in order when ye were on the ramble. But ye were a thought doucer than Valentine — But O! he was a bonny laddie! — wi' e'en like diamonds, cheeks like roses, a head like a heather-tap — he was the first I ever saw wear a crap, as they ca' it, but a' body cheats the barber now — and he had a laugh that wad hae raised the dead! — What wi' flyting on him, and what wi' laughing at him, there was nae minding any other body when that Valentine was in the house. — And how is your cousin Valentine Bulmer, Maister Francie?"

Tyrrel looked down, and only answered with a sigh.

"Ay — and is it even sae?" said Meg; "and has the puir bairn been sae soon removed frae this fashious warld? — Ay — ay — we maun a' gang ae gate — crackit quart stoups and geisen'd barrels — leaky quaighs are we a', and canna keep in the liquor of life — Ohon, sirs! — Was the puir lad Bulmer frae Bu'mer bay, where they land the Hollands, think ye, Maister Francie? — They whiles rin in a pickle tea there too — I hope that is good that I have made you, Maister Francie?"

"Excellent, my good dame," said Tyrrel; but it was in a tone of voice which intimated that she had pressed upon a subject that awakened some unpleasant reflections.

"And when did this puir lad die?" continued Meg, who was not without her share of Eve's qualities, and wished to know something concerning what seemed to affect her guest so particularly; but he disappointed her purpose, and at the same time awakened another train of sentiment in her mind, by turning again to the window, and looking upon the distant buildings of Saint Ronan's Well. As if he had observed for the first time these new objects, he said to Mistress Dods in an indifferent tone, "You have got some gay new neighbours yonder, mistress."

"Neighbours!" said Meg, her wrath beginning to arise, as it always did upon any allusion to this sore subject — "Ye may ca' them neighbours, if ye like — but the deil flee awa wi' the neighbourhood for Meg Dods!"

"I suppose," said Tyrrel, as if he did not observe her displeasure, "that yonder is the Fox Hotel they told me of?"

"The Fox!" said Meg; "I am sure it is the fox that has carried off a' my geese. — I might shut up house, Maister Francie, if it was the thing I lived by — me, that has seen a' our gentlefolk bairns, and gien them snaps and sugar-biscuit maist of them wi' my ain hand! They wad hae seen my father's roof-tree fa' down and smoor me before they wad hae gien a boddle a-piece to have propped it up — but they could a' link out their fifty pounds ower head to bigg a hottle at the Well yonder. And muckle they hae made o't — the bankrupt body, Sandie Lawson, hasna paid them a bawbee of four terms' rent."

"Surely, mistress, I think if the Well became so famous for its cures, the least the gentlemen could have done was to make you the priestess."

"Me priestess! I am nae Quaker, I wot, Maister Francie; and I never heard of alewife that turned preacher, except Luckie Buchan in the west.⁸ And if I were to preach, I think I have mair the spirit of a Scottishwoman, than to preach in the very room they hae been dancing in ilka night in the week, Saturday itsell not excepted, and that till twal o'clock at night. Na, na, Maister Francie; I leave the like o' that to Mr. Simon Chatterly, as they ca' the bit prelatial sprig of divinity from the town yonder, that plays at cards, and dances six days in the week, and on the seventh reads the Common Prayer-book in the ball-room, with Tam Simson, the drunken barber, for his clerk."

"I think I have heard of Mr. Chatterly," said Tyrrel.

"Ye'll be thinking o' the sermon he has printed," said the angry dame, "where he compares their nasty puddle of a Well yonder to the pool of Bethseda, like a foul-mouthed, fleeching, feather-headed fule as he is! He should hae kend that the place got a' its fame in the times of black Popery; and though they pat it in St. Ronan's name, I'll never believe for one that the honest man had any hand in it; for I hae been tell'd by ane that suld ken, that he was nae Roman, but only a Cuddie, or Culdee,⁹ or such like. — But will ye not take anither dish of tea, Maister Francie? and a wee bit of the diet-loaf, raised wi' my ain fresh butter, Maister Francie? and no wi' greasy kitchen-fee, like the seedcake down at the confectioner's yonder, that has as mony dead flees as carvy in it. Set him up for a confectioner! — Wi' a penniworth of rye-meal, and anither of tryacle, and twa or three carvy-seeds, I will make better confections than ever cam out of his oven."

"I have no doubt of that, Mrs. Dods," said the guest; "and I only wish to know how these new comers were able to establish themselves against a house of such good reputation and old standing as yours? — It was the virtues of the mineral, I dare say; but how came the waters to recover a character all at once, mistress?"

"I dinna ken, sir — they used to be thought good for naething, but here and there for a puir body's bairn, that had gotten the cruells,² and could not afford a penniworth of salts. But my Leddy Penelope Penfeather had fa'en ill, it's like, as nae other body ever fell ill, and sae she was to be cured some gate naebody was ever cured, which was naething mair than was reasonable — and my leddy, ye ken, has wit at wull, and has a' the wise folk out from Edinburgh at her house at Windywa's yonder, which it is her leddyship's wull and pleasure to call Air-castle — and they have a' their different turns, and some can clink verses, wi' their tale, as weel as Rob Burns or Allan Ramsay — and some rin up hill and down dale, knapping the chucky stanes to pieces wi' hammers, like sae mony road-makers run daft — they say it is to see how the world was made! — and some that play on all manner of ten-stringed instruments — and a wheen sketching souls, that ye may see perched like craws on every craig in the country, e'en working at your ain trade, Maister Francie; forby men that had been in foreign parts, or said they had been there, whilk is a' ane, ye ken; and maybe twa or three draggetailed misses, that wear my Leddy Penelope's follies when she has dune wi' them, as her queans of maids wear her second-hand claithes. So, after her leddyship's happy recovery, as they ca'd it, down cam the hail tribe of wild-geese, and settled by the Well, to dine thereout on the bare grund, like a wheen tinklers; and they had sangs, and tunes, and healths, nae doubt, in praise of the fountain, as they ca'd the Well, and of Leddy Penelope Penfeather; and, lastly, they behaved a' to take a solemn bumper of the spring, which, as I'm tauld, made unco havoc amang them or they wan hame; and this they ca'd picknick, and a plague to them! And sae the jig was begun after her leddyship's pipe, and mony a mad measure has been danced sin' syne; for down cam masons and murgeon-makers, and preachers and player-folk, and Episcopalians and Methodists, and fools and fiddlers, and Papists and pie-bakers, and doctors and drugsters; by the shop-folk, that sell trash and trumpery at three prices — and so up got the bonny new Well, and down fell the honest auld town of Saint Ronan's, where blithe decent folk had been heartsome enough for mony a day before ony o' them were born, or ony sic vapouring fancies kitted in their cracked brains."

"What said your landlord, the Laird of Saint Ronan's, to all this?" said Tyrrel.

"Is't *my* landlord ye are asking after, Maister Francie? — the Laird of Saint Ronan's is nae landlord of mine, and I think ye might hae minded that. — Na, na, thanks be to Praise! Meg Dods is baith land_lord and land_leddy. Ill enough to keep the doors open as it is, let be facing Whitsunday and Martinmas — an auld leather pock there is, Maister Francie, in ane of worthy Maister Bindloose the sheriff-clerk's pigeon-holes, in his dowcot of a closet in the burgh; and therein is baith charter and sasine, and special service to boot; and that will be chapter and verse, speer when ye list."

"I had quite forgotten," said Tyrrel, "that the inn was your own; though I remember you were a considerable landed proprietor."

"Maybe I am," replied Meg, "maybe I am not: and if I be, what for no? — But as to what the Laird, whose grandfather was my father's landlord, said to the new doings yonder — he just jumped at the ready penny, like a cock at a grosert, and feu'd the bonny holm beside the Well, that they ca'd the Saint-Well-holm, that was like the best land in his aught, to be carved, and biggit, and howkit up, just at the pleasure of Jock Ashler the stane-mason, that ca's himsell an arkiteck — there's nae living for new words in this new world neither, and that is another vex to auld folk such as me. — It's a shame o' the young Laird, to let his auld patrimony gang the gate it's like to gang, and my heart is sair to see't, though it has but little cause to care what comes of him or his."

"Is it the same Mr. Mowbray," said Mr. Tyrrel, "who still holds the estate? — the old gentleman, you know, whom I had some dispute with"——

"About hunting moorfowl upon the Spring-well-head muirs?" said Meg. "Ah, lad! honest Mr. Bindloose brought you neatly off there — Na, it's no that honest man, but his son John Mowbray — the t'other has slept down-by in Saint Ronan's Kirk for these six or seven years."

"Did he leave," asked Tyrrel, with something of a faltering voice, "no other child than the present Laird?"

"No other son," said Meg; "and there's e'en enough, unless he could have left a better ane."

"He died then," said Tyrrel, "excepting this son, without children?"

"By your leave, no," said Meg; "there is the lassie Miss Clara, that keeps house for the Laird, if it can be ca'd keeping house, for he is almost aye down at the Well yonder — so a sma' kitchen serves them at the Shaws."

"Miss Clara will have but a dull time of it there during her brother's absence?" said the stranger.

"Out no! — he has her aften jinketing about, and back and forward, wi' a' the fine flichtering fools that come yonder; and clapping palms wi' them, and linking at their dances and daffings. I wuss nae ill come o't, but it's a shame her father's daughter should keep company wi' a' that scauff and raff of physis-students, and writers' prentices, and bagmen, and siclike trash as are down at the Well yonder."

"You are severe, Mrs. Dods," replied the guest. "No doubt Miss Clara's conduct deserves all sort of freedom."

"I am saying naething against her conduct," said the dame; "and there's nae ground to say anything that I ken of — But I wad hae like draw to like, Maister Francie. I never quarrelled the ball that the gentry used to hae at my bit house a gude wheen years bygone — when they came, the auld folk in their coaches, wi' lang-tailed black horses, and a wheen galliard gallants on their hunting horses, and mony a decent leddy behind her ain goodman, and mony a bonny smirking lassie on her pownie, and wha sae happy as they — And what for no? And then there was the farmers' ball, wi' the tight lads of yeomen with the bran new blues and the buckskins — These were decent meetings — but then they were a' ae man's bairns that were at them, ilk ane kend ilk other — they danced farmers wi' farmers' daughters, at the tane, and gentles wi' gentle blood, at the t'other, unless maybe when some of the gentlemen of the Killnakelty Club would gie me a round of the floor mysell, in the way of daffing and fun, and me no able to flyte on them for laughing — I am sure I never grudged these innocent pleasures, although it has cost me maybe a week's redding up, before I got the better of the confusion."

"But, dame," said Tyrrel, "this ceremonial would be a little hard upon strangers like myself, for how were we to find partners in these family parties of yours?"

"Never you fash your thumb about that, Maister Francie," returned the landlady, with a knowing wink. — "Every Jack will find a Jill, gang the world as it may — and, at the warst o't, better hae some fashery in finding a partner for the night, than get yoked with ane that you may not be able to shake off the morn."

"And does that sometimes happen?" asked the stranger.

"Happen! — and is't amang the Well folk that ye mean?" exclaimed the hostess. "Was it not the last season, as they ca't, no farther gane, that young Sir Bingo Binks, the English lad wi' the red coat, that keeps a mail-coach, and drives it himsell, gat cleekit with Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg, the auld Leddy Loupengirth's lang-legged daughter — and they danced sae lang thegither, that there was mair said than suld hae been said about it — and the lad would fain hae louped back, but the auld leddy held him to his tackle, and the Commissary Court and somebody else made her Leddy Binks in spite of Sir Bingo's heart — and he has never daured take her to his friends in England, but they have just wintered and summered it at the Well ever since — and that is what the Well is good for!"

“And does Clara — I mean does Miss Mowbray, keep company with such women as these?” said Tyrrel, with a tone of interest which he checked as he proceeded with the question.

“What can she do, puir thing?” said the dame. “She maun keep the company that her brother keeps, for she is clearly dependent. — But, speaking of that, I ken what I have to do, and that is no little, before it darkens. I have sat claverin with you ower lang, Maister Francie.”

And away she marched with a resolved step, and soon the clear octaves of her voice were heard in shrill admonition to her handmaidens.

Tyrrel paused a moment in deep thought, then took his hat, paid a visit to the stable, where his horse saluted him with feathering ears, and that low amicable neigh, with which that animal acknowledges the approach of a loving and beloved friend. Having seen that the faithful creature was in every respect attended to, Tyrrel availed himself of the continued and lingering twilight, to visit the old Castle, which, upon former occasions, had been his favourite evening walk. He remained while the light permitted, admiring the prospect we attempted to describe in the first chapter, and comparing, as in his former reverie, the faded hues of the glimmering landscape to those of human life, when early youth and hope have ceased to gild them.

A brisk walk to the inn, and a light supper on a Welsh rabbit and the dame's home-brewed, were stimulants of livelier, at least more resigned thoughts — and the Blue bedroom, to the honours of which he had been promoted, received him a contented, if not a cheerful tenant.

Chapter 3 Administration.

There must be government in all society —

Bees have their Queen, and stag-herds have their leader;

Rome had her Consuls, Athens had her Archons,

And we, sir, have our Managing Committee.

THE ALBUM OF ST. RONAN'S.

Francis Tyrrel was, in the course of the next day, formally settled in his old quarters, where he announced his purpose of remaining for several days. The old-established carrier of the place brought his fishing-rod and travelling-trunk, with a letter to Meg, dated a week previously, desiring her to prepare to receive an old acquaintance. This annunciation, though something of the latest, Meg received with great complacency, observing it was a civil attention in Maister Tirl; and that John Hislop, though he was not just sae fast, was far surer than ony post of them a', or express either. She also observed with satisfaction, that there was no gun-case along with her guest's baggage; “for that weary gunning had brought him and her into trouble — the lairds had cried out upon't, as if she made her house a howff for common fowlers and poachers; and yet how could she hinder twa daft hempie callants from taking a start and an ower-loup?¹⁰ They had been ower the neighbour's ground they had leave on up to the march, and they werena just to ken meiths when the moorfowl got up.”

In a day or two, her guest fell into such quiet and solitary habits, that Meg, herself the most restless and bustling of human creatures, began to be vexed, for want of the trouble which she expected to have had with him, experiencing, perhaps, the same sort of feeling from his extreme and passive indifference on all points, that a good horseman has for the over-patient steed, which he can scarce feel under him. His walks were devoted to the most solitary recesses among the neighbouring woods and hills — his fishing-rod was often left behind him, or carried merely as an apology for sauntering slowly by the banks of some little brooklet — and his success so indifferent, that Meg said the piper of Peebles¹¹ would have caught a creelfu' before Maister Francie made out the half-dozen; so that he was obliged, for peace's sake, to vindicate his character, by killing a handsome salmon.

Tyrrel's painting, as Meg called it, went on equally slowly: He often, indeed, showed her the sketches which he brought from his walks, and used to finish at home; but Meg held them very cheap. What signified, she said, a wheen bits of paper, wi' black and white scarts upon them, that he ca'd bushes, and trees, and craigs? — Couldna he paint them wi' green, and blue, and yellow, like the other folk? “Ye will never mak your bread that way, Maister Francie. Ye suld munt up a muckle square of canvass, like Dick Tinto, and paint folks ainsells, that they like muckle better to see than ony craig in the haill water; and I wadna muckle object even to some of the Wallers coming up and sitting to ye. They waste their time waur, I wis — and, I warrant, ye might make a guinea a-head of them. Dick made twa, but he was an auld used hand, and folk maun creep before they gang.”

In answer to these remonstrances, Tyrrel assured her, that the sketches with which he busied himself were held of such considerable value, that very often an artist in that line received much higher remuneration for these, than for portraits or coloured drawings. He added, that they were often taken for the purpose of illustrating popular poems, and hinted as if he himself were engaged in some labour of that nature.

Eagerly did Meg long to pour forth to Nelly Trotter, the fishwoman — whose cart formed the only neutral channel of communication between the Auld Town and the Well, and who was in favour with Meg, because, as Nelly passed her door in her way to the Well, she always had the first choice of her fish — the merits of her lodger as an artist. Luckie Dods had, in truth, been so much annoyed and bullied, as it were, with the report of clever persons, accomplished in all sorts of excellence, arriving day after day at the Hotel, that she was overjoyed in this fortunate opportunity to triumph over them in their own way; and it may be believed, that the excellences of her lodger lost nothing by being trumpeted through her mouth.

“I maun hae the best of the cart, Nelly — if you and me can gree — for it is for ane of the best of painters. Your fine folk down yonder would gie their lugs to look at what he has been doing — he gets gowd in goupins, for three downright skarts and three cross anes — And he is no an ungrateful loon, like Dick Tinto, that had nae sooner my good five-and-twenty shillings in his pocket, than he gaed down to birl it awa at their bonny hottle yonder, but a decent quiet lad, that kens when he is weel aff, and bides still at the auld howff — And what for no? — Tell them all this, and hear what they will say till't.”

“Indeed, mistress, I can tell ye that already, without stirring my shanks for the matter,” answered Nelly Trotter; “they will e'en say that ye are ae auld fule, and me anither, that may hae some judgment in cock-bree or in scate-rumples, but mauna fash our beards about ony thing else.”

“Wad they say sae, the frontless villains! and me been a housekeeper this thirty year!” exclaimed Meg; “I wadna hae them say it to my face! But I am no speaking without warrant — for what an I had spoken to the minister, lass, and shown him ane of the loose skarts of paper that Maister Tirl leaves fleeing about his room? — and what an he had said he had kend Lord Bidmore gie five guineas for the waur on't? and a' the world kens he was lang tutor in the Bidmore family.”

“Troth,” answered her gossip, “I doubt if I was to tell a' this they would hardly believe me, mistress; for there are sae mony judges amang them, and they think sae muckle of themselfs, and sae little of other folk, that unless ye were to send down the bit picture, I am no thinking they will believe a word that I can tell them.”

“No believe what an honest woman says — let abee to say twa o' them?” exclaimed Meg; “O the unbelieving generation! — Weel, Nelly, since my back is up, ye sall tak down the picture, or sketching, or whatever it is, (though I thought sketchers¹² were aye made of airn,) and shame wi' it the conceited crew that they are. — But see and bring't back wi' ye again, Nelly, for it's a thing of value; and trustna it out o' your hand, *that* I charge you, for I lippen no muckle to their honesty. — And, Nelly, ye may tell them he has an illustrated poem — *illustrated* — mind the word, Nelly — that is to be stuck as fou o' the like o' that, as ever turkey was larded wi' dabs o' bacon.”

Thus furnished with her credentials, and acting the part of a herald betwixt two hostile countries, honest Nelly switched her little fish-cart downwards to St. Ronan's Well.

In watering-places, as in other congregated assemblies of the human species, various kinds of government have been dictated, by chance, caprice, or convenience; but in almost all of them, some sort of direction has been adopted, to prevent the consequences of anarchy. Sometimes the sole power has been vested in a Master of Ceremonies; but this, like other despotisms, has been of late unfashionable, and the powers of this great officer have been much limited even at Bath, where Nash once ruled with undisputed supremacy. Committees of management, chosen from among the most steady guests, have been in general resorted to, as a more liberal mode of sway, and to such was confided the administration of the infant republic of St. Ronan's Well. This little senate, it must be observed, had the more difficult task in discharging their high duties, that, like those of other republics, their subjects were divided into two jarring and contending factions, who every day eat, drank, danced, and made merry together, hating each other all the while with all the animosity of political party,

endeavouring by every art to secure the adherence of each guest who arrived, and ridiculing the absurdities and follies of each other, with all the wit and bitterness of which they were masters.

At the head of one of these parties was no less a personage than Lady Penelope Penfeather, to whom the establishment owed its fame, nay, its existence; and whose influence could only have been balanced by that of the Lord of the Manor, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, or, as he was called usually by the company who affected what Meg called knapping English, The Squire, who was leader of the opposite faction.

The rank and fortune of the lady, her pretensions to beauty as well as talent, (though the former was something faded,) and the consequence which she arrogated to herself as a woman of fashion, drew round her painters and poets, and philosophers, and men of science, and lecturers, and foreign adventurers, *et hoc genus omne*.

On the contrary, the Squire's influence, as a man of family and property in the immediate neighbourhood, who actually kept greyhounds and pointers, and at least talked of hunters and of racers, ascertained him the support of the whole class of bucks, half and whole bred, from the three next counties; and if more inducements were wanting, he could grant his favourites the privilege of shooting over his moors, which is enough to turn the head of a young Scottishman at any time. Mr. Mowbray was of late especially supported in his pre-eminence, by a close alliance with Sir Bingo Binks, a sapient English Baronet, who, ashamed, as many thought, to return to his own country, had set him down at the Well of St. Ronan's, to enjoy the blessing which the Caledonian Hymen had so kindly forced on him in the person of Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg. As this gentleman actually drove a regular-built mail-coach, not in any respect differing from that of his Majesty, only that it was more frequently overturned, his influence with a certain set was irresistible, and the Squire of St. Ronan's, having the better sense of the two, contrived to reap the full benefit of the consequence attached to his friendship.

These two contending parties were so equally balanced, that the predominance of the influence of either was often determined by the course of the sun. Thus, in the morning and forenoon, when Lady Penelope led forth her herd to lawn and shady bower, whether to visit some ruined monument of ancient times, or eat their pic-nic luncheon, to spoil good paper with bad drawings, and good verses with repetition — in a word,

"To rave, recite, and madden round the land,"

her ladyship's empire over the loungers seemed uncontrolled and absolute, and all things were engaged in the *tourbillon*, of which she formed the pivot and centre. Even the hunters, and shooters, and hard drinkers, were sometimes fain reluctantly to follow in her train, sulking, and quizzing, and flouting at her solemn festivals, besides encouraging the younger nymphs to giggle when they should have looked sentimental. But after dinner the scene was changed, and her ladyship's sweetest smiles, and softest invitations, were often insufficient to draw the neutral part of the company to the tea-room; so that her society was reduced to those whose constitution or finances rendered early retirement from the dining-parlour a matter of convenience, together with the more devoted and zealous of her own immediate dependents and adherents. Even the faith of the latter was apt to be debauched. Her ladyship's poet-laureate, in whose behalf she was teasing each new-comer for subscriptions, got sufficiently independent to sing in her ladyship's presence, at supper, a song of rather equivocal meaning; and her chief painter, who was employed upon an illustrated copy of the Loves of the Plants, was, at another time, seduced into such a state of pot-valour, that, upon her ladyship's administering her usual dose of criticism upon his works, he not only bluntly disputed her judgment, but talked something of his right to be treated like a gentleman.

These feuds were taken up by the Managing Committee, who interceded for the penitent offenders on the following morning, and obtained their re-establishment in Lady Penelope's good graces, upon moderate terms. Many other acts of moderating authority they performed, much to the assuaging of faction, and the quiet of the Wellers; and so essential was their government to the prosperity of the place, that, without them, St. Ronan's spring would probably have been speedily deserted. We must, therefore, give a brief sketch of that potential Committee, which both factions, acting as if on a self-denying ordinance, had combined to invest with the reins of government.

Each of its members appeared to be selected, as Fortunio, in the fairy-tale,⁴⁴ chose his followers, for his peculiar gifts. First on the list stood the MAN OF MEDICINE, Dr. Quentin Quackleben, who claimed right to regulate medical matters at the spring, upon the principle which, of old, assigned the property of a newly discovered country to the bucanier who committed the earliest piracy on its shores. The acknowledgment of the Doctor's merit as having been first to proclaim and vindicate the merits of these healing fountains, had occasioned his being universally installed First Physician and Man of Science, which last qualification he could apply to all purposes, from the boiling of an egg to the giving a lecture. He was, indeed, qualified, like many of his profession, to spread both the bane and antidote before a dyspeptic patient, being as knowing a gastronome as Dr. Redgill himself, or any other worthy physician who has written for the benefit of the *cuisine*, from Dr. Moncrieff of Tippermalloch, to the late Dr. Hunter of York, and the present Dr. Kitchiner of London. But pluralities are always invidious, and therefore the Doctor prudently relinquished the office of caterer and head-carver to the Man of Taste, who occupied regularly, and *ex officio*, the head of the table, reserving to himself the occasional privilege of criticising, and a principal share in consuming, the good things which the common entertainment afforded. We have only to sum up this brief account of the learned Doctor, by informing the reader that he was a tall, lean, beetle-browed man, with an ill-made black scratch-wig, that stared out on either side from his lantern jaws. He resided nine months out of the twelve at St. Ronan's, and was supposed to make an indifferent good thing of it — especially as he played whist to admiration.

First in place, though perhaps second to the Doctor in real authority, was Mr. Winterblossom; a civil sort of person, who was nicely precise in his address, wore his hair cued, and dressed with powder, had knee-buckles set with Bristol stones, and a seal-ring as large as Sir John Falstaff's. In his heyday he had a small estate, which he had spent like a gentleman, by mixing with the gay world. He was, in short, one of those respectable links that connect the coxcombs of the present day with those of the last age, and could compare, in his own experience, the follies of both. In latter days, he had sense enough to extricate himself from his course of dissipation, though with impaired health and impoverished fortune.

Mr. Winterblossom now lived upon a moderate annuity, and had discovered a way of reconciling his economy with much company and made dishes, by acting as perpetual president of the table-d'hôte at the Well. Here he used to amuse the society by telling stories about Garrick, Foote, Bonnel Thornton, and Lord Kelly, and delivering his opinions in matters of taste and vertu. An excellent carver, he knew how to help each guest to what was precisely his due; and never failed to reserve a proper slice as the reward of his own labours. To conclude, he was possessed of some taste in the fine arts, at least in painting and music, although it was rather of the technical kind, than that which warms the heart and elevates the feelings. There was, indeed, about Winterblossom, nothing that was either warm or elevated. He was shrewd, selfish, and sensual; the last two of which qualities he screened from observation, under a specious varnish of exterior complaisance. Therefore, in his professed and apparent anxiety to do the honours of the table, to the most punctilious point of good breeding, he never permitted the attendants upon the public taste to supply the wants of others, until all his own private comforts had been fully arranged and provided for.

Mr. Winterblossom was also distinguished for possessing a few curious engravings, and other specimens of art, with the exhibition of which he occasionally beguiled a wet morning at the public room. They were collected, "*viis et modis*," said the Man of Law, another distinguished member of the Committee, with a knowing cock of his eye to his next neighbour.

Of this person little need be said. He was a large-boned, loud-voiced, red-faced man, named Meiklewham; a country writer, or attorney, who managed the matters of the Squire much to the profit of one or other — if not of both. His nose projected from the front of his broad vulgar face, like the stile of an old sun-dial, twisted all of one side. He was as great a bully in his profession, as if it had been military instead of civil: conducted the whole technicalities concerning the cutting up the Saint's-Well-haugh, so much lamented by Dame Dods, into building-stances, and was on excellent terms with Doctor Quackleben, who always recommended him to make the wills of his patients.

After the Man of Law comes Captain Mungo MacTurk, a Highland lieutenant on half-pay, and that of ancient standing; one who preferred toddy of the strongest to wine, and in that fashion and cold drams finished about a bottle of whisky *per diem*, whenever he could come by it. He was called the Man of Peace, on the same principle which assigns to constables, Bow-street runners, and such like, who carry bludgeons to break folk's heads, and are perpetually and officially employed in scenes of riot, the title of peace-officers — that is, because by his valour he compelled others to act with discretion. The Captain was the general referee in all

those abortive quarrels, which, at a place of this kind, are so apt to occur at night, and to be quietly settled in the morning; and occasionally adopted a quarrel himself, by way of taking down any guest who was unusually pugnacious. This occupation procured Captain MacTurk a good deal of respect at the Well; for he was precisely that sort of person who is ready to fight with any one — whom no one can find an apology for declining to fight with — in fighting with whom considerable danger was incurred, for he was ever and anon showing that he could snuff a candle with a pistol ball — and lastly, through fighting with whom no éclat or credit could redound to the antagonist. He always wore a blue coat and red collar, had a supercilious taciturnity of manner, ate sliced leeks with his cheese, and resembled in complexion a Dutch red-herring.

Still remains to be mentioned the Man of Religion — the gentle Mr. Simon Chatterly, who had strayed to St. Ronan's Well from the banks of Cam or Isis, and who piqued himself, first on his Greek, and secondly, on his politeness to the ladies. During all the week days, as Dame Dods has already hinted, this reverend gentleman was the partner at the whist-table, or in the ball-room, to what maid or matron soever lacked a partner at either; and on the Sundays, he read prayers in the public room to all who chose to attend. He was also a deviser of charades, and an unriddler of riddles; he played a little on the flute, and was Mr. Winterblossom's principal assistant in contriving those ingenious and romantic paths, by which, as by the zig-zags which connect military parallels, you were enabled to ascend to the top of the hill behind the hotel, which commands so beautiful a prospect, at exactly that precise angle of ascent, which entitles a gentleman to offer his arm, and a lady to accept it, with perfect propriety.

There was yet another member of this Select Committee, Mr. Michael Meredith, who might be termed the Man of Mirth, or, if you please, the Jack Pudding to the company, whose business it was to crack the best joke, and sing the best song — he could. Unluckily, however, this functionary was for the present obliged to absent himself from St. Ronan's; for, not recollecting that he did not actually wear the privileged motley of his profession, he had passed some jest upon Captain MacTurk, which cut so much to the quick, that Mr. Meredith was fain to go to goat-whey quarters, at some ten miles' distance, and remain there in a sort of concealment, until the affair should be made up through the mediation of his brethren of the Committee.

Such were the honest gentlemen who managed the affairs of this rising settlement, with as much impartiality as could be expected. They were not indeed without their own secret predilections; for the lawyer and the soldier privately inclined to the party of the Squire, while the parson, Mr. Meredith, and Mr. Winterblossom, were more devoted to the interests of Lady Penelope; so that Doctor Quackleben alone, who probably recollected that the gentlemen were as liable to stomach complaints, as the ladies to nervous disorders, seemed the only person who preserved in word and deed the most rigid neutrality. Nevertheless, the interests of the establishment being very much at the heart of this honourable council, and each feeling his own profit, pleasure, or comfort, in some degree involved, they suffered not their private affections to interfere with their public duties, but acted, every one in his own sphere, for the public benefit of the whole community.

Chapter 4 The Invitation.

Thus painters write their names at Co.

PRIOR.

The clamour which attends the removal of dinner from a public room had subsided; the clatter of plates, and knives and forks — the bustling tread of awkward boobies of country servants, kicking each other's shins, and wrangling, as they endeavour to rush out of the door three abreast — the clash of glasses and tumblers, borne to earth in the tumult — the shrieks of the landlady — the curses, not loud, but deep, of the landlord — had all passed away; and those of the company who had servants, had been accommodated by their respective Ganymedes with such remnants of their respective bottles of wine, spirits, &c., as the said Ganymedes had not previously consumed, while the rest, broken in to such observance by Mr. Winterblossom, waited patiently until the worthy president's own special and multifarious commissions had been executed by a tidy young woman and a lumpish lad, the regular attendants belonging to the house, but whom he permitted to wait on no one, till, as the hymn says,

"All his wants were well supplied."

"And, Dinah — my bottle of pale sherry, Dinah — place it on this side — there's a good girl; — and, Toby — get my jug with the hot water — and let it be boiling — and don't spill it on Lady Penelope, if you can help it, Toby."

"No — for her ladyship has been in hot water today already," said the Squire; a sarcasm to which Lady Penelope only replied with a look of contempt.

"And, Dinah, bring the sugar — the soft East India sugar, Dinah — and a lemon, Dinah, one of those which came fresh today — Go fetch it from the bar, Toby — and don't tumble down stairs, if you can help it. — And, Dinah — stay, Dinah — the nutmeg, Dinah, and the ginger, my good girl — And, Dinah — put the cushion up behind my back — and the footstool to my foot, for my toe is something the worse of my walk with your ladyship this morning to the top of Belvidere."

"Her ladyship may call it what she pleases in common parlance," said the writer; "but it must stand Munt-grunzie in the stamped paper, being so nominated in the ancient writs and evidents thereof."

"And, Dinah," continued the president, "lift up my handkerchief — and — a bit of biscuit, Dinah — and — and I do not think I want any thing else — Look to the company, my good girl. — I have the honour to drink the company's very good health — Will your ladyship honour me by accepting a glass of negus? — I learned to make negus from old Dartineuf's son. — He always used East India sugar and added a tamarind — it improves the flavour infinitely. — Dinah, see your father sends for some tamarinds — Dartineuf knew a good thing almost as well as his father — I met him at Bath in the year — let me see — Garrick was just taking leave, and that was in," &c. &c. &c. — "And what is this now, Dinah?" he said, as she put into his hand a roll of paper.

"Something that Nelly Trotter" (Trotting Nelly, as the company called her) "brought from a sketching gentleman that lives at the woman's" (thus bluntly did the upstart minx describe the reverend Mrs. Margaret Dods) "at the Cleikum of Aultoun yonder" — A name, by the way, which the inn had acquired from the use which the saint upon the sign-post was making of his pastoral crook.

"Indeed, Dinah?" said Mr. Winterblossom, gravely taking out his spectacles, and wiping them before he opened the roll of paper; "some boy's daubing, I suppose, whose pa and ma wish to get him into the Trustees' School, and so are beating about for a little interest. — But I am drained dry — I put three lads in last season; and if it had not been my particular interest with the secretary, who asks my opinion now and then, I could not have managed it. But giff-gaff, say I. — Eh! What, in the devil's name, is this? — Here is both force and keeping — Who can this be, my lady? — Do but see the sky-line — why, this is really a little bit — an exquisite little bit — Who the devil can it be? and how can he have stumbled upon the dog-hole in the Old Town, and the snarling b — I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons — that kennels there?"

"I dare say, my lady," said a little miss of fourteen, her eyes growing rounder and rounder, and her cheeks redder and redder, as she found herself speaking, and so many folks listening — "O la! I dare say it is the same gentleman we met one day in the Low-wood walk, that looked like a gentleman, and yet was none of the company, and that you said was a handsome man."

"I did not say handsome, Maria," replied her ladyship; "ladies never say men are handsome — I only said he looked genteel and interesting."

"And that, my lady," said the young parson, bowing and smiling, "is, I will be judged by the company, the more flattering compliment of the two — We shall be jealous of this Unknown presently."

"Nay, but," continued the sweetly communicative Maria, with some real and some assumed simplicity, "your ladyship forgets — for you said presently after, you were sure he was no gentleman, for he did not run after you with your glove which you had dropped — and so I went back myself to find your ladyship's glove, and he never offered to help me, and I saw him closer than your ladyship did, and I am sure he is handsome, though he is not very civil."

"You speak a little too much and too loud, miss," said Lady Penelope, a natural blush reinforcing the *nuance* of rouge by which it was usually superseded.

"What say you to that, Squire Mowbray?" said the elegant Sir Bingo Binks.

"A fair challenge to the field, Sir Bingo," answered the squire; "when a lady throws down the gauntlet, a gentleman may throw the handkerchief."

"I have always the benefit of *your* best construction, Mr. Mowbray," said the lady, with dignity. "I suppose Miss Maria has contrived this pretty story for your amusement. I can hardly answer to Mr. Digges, for bringing her into company where she receives encouragement to behave so."

"Nay, nay, my lady," said the president, "you must let the jest pass by; and since this is really such an admirable sketch, you must honour us with your opinion, whether the company can consistently with propriety make any advances to this man."

"In my opinion," said her ladyship, the angry spot still glowing on her brow, "there are enough of *men* among us already — I wish I could say gentlemen — As matters stand, I see little business *ladies* can have at St. Ronan's."

This was an intimation which always brought the Squire back to good-breeding, which he could make use of when he pleased. He deprecated her ladyship's displeasure, until she told him, in returning good humour, that she really would not trust him unless he brought his sister to be security for his future politeness.

"Clara, my lady," said Mowbray, "is a little wilful; and I believe your ladyship must take the task of unharbouring her into your own hands. What say you to a gipsy party up to my old shop? — It is a bachelor's house — you must not expect things in much order; but Clara would be honoured"——

The Lady Penelope eagerly accepted the proposal of something like a party, and, quite reconciled with Mowbray, began to enquire whether she might bring the stranger artist with her, "that is," said her ladyship, looking to Dinah, "if he be a gentleman."

Here Dinah interposed her assurance, "that the gentleman at Meg Dods's was quite and clean a gentleman, and an illustrated poet besides."

"An illustrated poet, Dinah?" said Lady Penelope; "you must mean an illustrious poet."

"I dare to say your ladyship is right," said Dinah, dropping a curtsy.

A joyous flutter of impatient anxiety was instantly excited through all the blue-stocking faction of the company, nor were the news totally indifferent to the rest of the community. The former belonged to that class, who, like the young Ascanius, are ever beating about in quest of a tawny lion, though they are much more successful in now and then starting a great bore;¹² and the others, having left all their own ordinary affairs and subjects of interest at home, were glad to make a matter of importance of the most trivial occurrence. A mighty poet, said the former class — who could it possibly be? — All names were recited — all Britain scrutinized, from Highland hills to the Lakes of Cumberland — from Sydenham Common to St. James's Place — even the Banks of the Bosphorus were explored for some name which might rank under this distinguished epithet. — And then, besides his illustrious poesy, to sketch so inimitably! — who *could* it be? And all the gapers, who had nothing of their own to suggest, answered with the antistrophe, "Who could it be?"

The Claret-Club, which comprised the choicest and firmest adherents of Squire Mowbray and the Baronet — men who scorned that the reversion of one bottle of wine should furnish forth the feast of tomorrow, though caring nought about either of the fine arts in question, found out an interest of their own, which centred in the same individual.

"I say, little Sir Bingo," said the Squire, "this is the very fellow that we saw down at the Willow-slack on Saturday — he was tog'd gnostically enough, and cast twelve yards of line with one hand — the fly fell like a thistledown on the water."

"Uich!" answered the party he addressed, in the accents of a dog choking in the collar.

"We saw him pull out the salmon yonder," said Mowbray; "you remember — clean fish — the tide-ticks on his gills — weighed, I dare say, a matter of eighteen pounds."

"Sixteen!" replied Sir Bingo, in the same tone of strangulation.

"None of your rigs, Bing!" said his companion, "— nearer eighteen than sixteen!"

"Nearer sixteen, by ——!"

"Will you go a dozen of blue on it to the company?" said the Squire.

"No, d —— me!" croaked the Baronet — "to our own set I will."

"Then, I say done!" quoth the Squire.

And "Done!" responded the Knight; and out came their red pocketbooks.

"But who shall decide the bet?" said the Squire, "The genius himself, I suppose; they talk of asking him here, but I suppose he will scarce mind quizzes like them."

"Write myself — John Mowbray," said the Baronet.

"You, Baronet! — you write!" answered the Squire, "d —— me, that cock won't fight — you won't."

"I will," growled Sir Bingo, more articulately than usual.

"Why, you can't!" said Mowbray. "You never wrote a line in your life, save those you were whipped for at school."

"I can write — I will write!" said Sir Bingo. "Two to one I will."

And there the affair rested, for the council of the company were in high consultation concerning the most proper manner of opening a communication with the mysterious stranger; and the voice of Mr. Winterblossom, whose tones, originally fine, age had reduced to falsetto, was calling upon the whole party for "Order, order!" So that the bucks were obliged to lounge in silence, with both arms reclined on the table, and testifying, by coughs and yawns, their indifference to the matters in question, while the rest of the company debated upon them, as if they were matters of life and death.

"A visit from one of the gentlemen — Mr. Winterblossom, if he would take the trouble — in name of the company at large — would, Lady Penelope Penfeather presumed to think, be a necessary preliminary to an invitation."

Mr. Winterblossom was "quite of her ladyship's opinion, and would gladly have been the personal representative of the company at St. Ronan's Well — but it was up hill — her ladyship knew his tyrant, the gout, was hovering upon the frontiers — there were other gentlemen, younger and more worthy to fly at the lady's command than an ancient Vulcan like him — there was the valiant Mars and the eloquent Mercury."

Thus speaking, he bowed to Captain MacTurk and the Rev. Mr. Simon Chatterly, and reclined on his chair, sipping his negus with the self-satisfied smile of one, who, by a pretty speech, has rid himself of a troublesome commission. At the same time, by an act probably of mental absence, he put in his pocket the drawing, which, after circulating around the table, had returned back to the chair of the president, being the point from which it had set out.

"By Cot, madam," said Captain MacTurk, "I should be proud to obey your leddyship's commands — but, by Cot, I never call first on any man that never called upon me at all, unless it were to carry him a friend's message, or such like."

"Twig the old connoisseur," said the Squire to the Knight. — "He is condiddling the drawing."

"Go it, Johnnie Mowbray — pour it into him," whispered Sir Bingo.

"Thank ye for nothing, Sir Bingo," said the Squire, in the same tone. "Winterblossom is one of us — was one of us at least — and won't stand the ironing. He has his Wogdens still, that were right things in his day, and can hit the hay-stack with the best of us — but stay, they are hallooing on the parson."

They were indeed busied on all hands, to obtain Mr. Chatterly's consent to wait on the Genius unknown; but though he smiled and simpered, and was absolutely incapable of saying No, he begged leave, in all humility, to decline that commission. "The truth was," he pleaded in his excuse, "that having one day walked to visit the old Castle of St. Ronan's, and returning through the Auld Town, as it was popularly called, he had stopped at the door of the *Cleikum*," (pronounced *Anglicé*, with the open diphthong,) "in hopes to get a glass of syrup of capillaire, or a draught of something cooling; and had in fact expressed his wishes, and was knocking pretty loudly, when a sash-window was thrown suddenly up, and ere he was aware what was about to happen, he was soused with a deluge of water," (as he said,) "while the voice of an old hag from within assured him, that if that did not cool him there was another bidding him — an intimation which induced him to retreat in all haste from the repetition of the shower-bath."

All laughed at the account of the chaplain's misfortune, the history of which seemed to be wrung from him reluctantly, by the necessity of assigning some weighty cause for declining to execute the ladies' commands. But the Squire and Baronet continued their mirth far longer than decorum allowed, flinging themselves back in their chairs, with their hands thrust into their side-pockets, and their mouths expanded with unrestrained enjoyment, until the sufferer, angry, disconcerted, and endeavouring to look scornful, incurred another general burst of laughter on all hands.

When Mr. Winterblossom had succeeded in restoring some degree of order, he found the mishaps of the young divine proved as intimidating as ludicrous. Not one of the company chose to go Envoy Extraordinary to the dominions of Queen Meg, who might be suspected of paying little respect to the sanctity of an

ambassador's person. And what was worse, when it was resolved that a civil card from Mr. Winterblossom, in the name of the company, should be sent to the stranger, instead of a personal visit, Dinah informed them that she was sure no one about the house could be bribed to carry up a letter of the kind; for, when such an event had taken place two summers since, Meg, who construed it into an attempt to seduce from her tenement the invited guest, had so handled a ploughboy who carried the letter, that he fled the country-side altogether, and never thought himself safe till he was at a village ten miles off, where it was afterwards learned he enlisted with a recruiting party, choosing rather to face the French than to return within the sphere of Meg's displeasure.

Just while they were agitating this new difficulty, a prodigious clamour was heard without, which, to the first apprehensions of the company, seemed to be Meg, in all her terrors, come to anticipate the proposed invasion. Upon enquiry, however, it proved to be her gossip, Trotting Nelly, or Nelly Trotter, in the act of forcing her way up stairs, against the united strength of the whole household of the hotel, to reclaim Luckie Dods's picture, as she called it. This made the connoisseur's treasure tremble in his pocket, who, thrusting a half-crown into Toby's hand, exhorted him to give it her, and try his influence in keeping her back. Toby, who knew Nelly's nature, put the half-crown into his own pocket, and snatched up a gill-stoup of whisky from the sideboard. Thus armed, he boldly confronted the virago, and interposing a *remora*, which was able to check poor Nelly's course in her most determined moods, not only succeeded in averting the immediate storm which approached the company in general, and Mr. Winterblossom in particular, but brought the guests the satisfactory information, that Trotting Nelly had agreed, after she had slept out her nap in the barn, to convey their commands to the Unknown of Cleikum of Aultoun.

Mr. Winterblossom, therefore, having authenticated his proceedings, by inserting in the Minutes of the Committee, the authority which he had received, wrote his card in the best style of diplomacy, and sealed it with the seal of the Spa, which bore something like a nymph, seated beside what was designed to represent an urn.

The rival factions, however, did not trust entirely to this official invitation. Lady Penelope was of opinion that they should find some way of letting the stranger — a man of talent unquestionably — understand that there were in the society to which he was invited, spirits of a more select sort, who felt worthy to intrude themselves on his solitude.

Accordingly, her ladyship imposed upon the elegant Mr. Chatterly the task of expressing the desire of the company to see the unknown artist, in a neat occasional copy of verses. The poor gentleman's muse, however, proved unpropitious; for he was able to proceed no farther than two lines in half an hour, which, coupled with its variations, we insert from the blotted manuscript, as Dr. Johnson has printed the alterations in Pope's version of the Iliad:

1. *Maids.* 2. *Dames.* unity joining.
The [nymphs] of St. Ronan's [in purpose combining]
1. *Swain.* 2. *Man.*
To the [youth] who is great both in verse and designing,
. dining.

The eloquence of a prose billet was necessarily resorted to in the absence of the heavenly muse, and the said billet was secretly intrusted to the care of Trotting Nelly. The same trusty emissary, when refreshed by her nap among the pease-straw, and about to harness her cart for her return to the seacoast, (in the course of which she was to pass the Aultoun,) received another card, written, as he had threatened, by Sir Bingo Binks himself, who had given himself this trouble to secure the settlement of the bet; conjecturing that a man with a fashionable exterior, who could throw twelve yards of line at a cast with such precision, might consider the invitation of Winterblossom as that of an old twaddler, and care as little for the good graces of an affected blue-stocking and her *côterie*, whose conversation, in Sir Bingo's mind, relished of nothing but of weak tea and bread and butter. Thus the happy Mr. Francis Tyrrel received, considerably to his surprise, no less than three invitations at once from the Well of St. Ronan's.

Chapter 5
Epistolary Eloquence.

But how can I answer, since first I must read thee? PRIOR.

Desirous of authenticating our more important facts, by as many original documents as possible, we have, after much research, enabled ourselves to present the reader with the following accurate transcripts of the notes intrusted to the care of Trotting Nelly. The first ran thus:

"Mr. Winterblossom [of Silverhed] has the commands of Lady Penelope Penfeather, Sir Bingo and Lady Binks, Mr. and Miss Mowbray [of St. Ronan's], and the rest of the company at the Hotel and Tontine Inn of St. Ronan's Well, to express their hope that the gentleman lodged at the Cleikum Inn, Old Town of St. Ronan's, will favour them with his company at the Ordinary, as early and as often as may suit his convenience. The COMPANY think it necessary to send this intimation, because, according to the RULES of the place, the Ordinary can only be attended by such gentlemen and ladies as lodge at St. Ronan's Well; but they are happy to make a distinction in favour of a gentleman so distinguished for success in the fine arts as Mr. ——— residing at Cleikum. If Mr. ——— should be inclined, upon becoming further acquainted with the COMPANY and RULES of the Place, to remove his residence to the Well, Mr. Winterblossom, though he would not be understood to commit himself by a positive assurance to that effect, is inclined to hope that an arrangement might be made, notwithstanding the extreme crowd of the season, to accommodate Mr. ——— at the lodging-house, called Lilliput-Hall. It will much conduce to facilitate this negotiation, if Mr. ——— would have the goodness to send an exact note of his stature, as Captain Rannletree seems disposed to resign the folding-bed at Lilliput-Hall, on account of his finding it rather deficient in length. Mr. Winterblossom begs farther to assure Mr. ——— of the esteem in which he holds his genius, and of his high personal consideration.

"For _____ Esquire,
Cleikum Inn, Old Town of St. Ronan's.
"The _____ Public _____ Rooms,
Hotel _____ and _____ St. _____ Well,
&c. &c. &c."

The above card was written (we love to be precise in matters concerning orthography) in a neat, round, clerk-like hand, which, like Mr. Winterblossom's character, in many particulars was most accurate and commonplace, though betraying an affectation both of flourish and of facility.

The next billet was a contrast to the diplomatic gravity and accuracy of Mr. Winterblossom's official communication, and ran thus, the young divine's academic jests and classical flowers of eloquence being mingled with some wild flowers from the teeming fancy of Lady Penelope.

"A choir of Dryads and Naiads, assembled at the healing spring of St. Ronan's, have learned with surprise that a youth, gifted by Apollo, when the Deity was prodigal, with two of his most esteemed endowments, wanders at will among their domains, frequenting grove and river, without once dreaming of paying homage to its tutelary deities. He is, therefore, summoned to their presence, and prompt obedience will insure him forgiveness; but in case of contumacy, let him beware how he again essays either the lyre or the pallet.

"*Postscript.* The adorable Penelope, long enrolled among the Goddesses for her beauty and virtues, gives Nectar and Ambrosia, which mortals call tea and cake, at the Public Rooms, near the Sacred Spring, on Thursday evening, at eight o'clock, when the Muses never fail to attend. The stranger's presence is requested to participate in the delights of the evening.

"*Second Postscript.* A shepherd, ambitiously aiming at more accommodation than his narrow cot affords, leaves it in a day or two.
'Assuredly the thing is to be hired.'

AS YOU LIKE IT.

"*Postscript third.* Our Iris, whom mortals know as Trotting Nelly in her tartan cloak, will bring us the stranger's answer to our celestial summons."

This letter was written in a delicate Italian hand, garnished with fine hair-strokes and dashes, which were sometimes so dexterously thrown off as to represent lyres, pallets, vases, and other appropriate decorations, suited to the tenor of the contents.

The third epistle was a complete contrast to the other two. It was written in a coarse, irregular, schoolboy half-text, which, however, seemed to have cost the writer as much pains as if it had been a specimen of the most exquisite calligraphy. And these were the contents:—

"SUR— Jack Moobray has betted with me that the samon you killed on Saturday last weyd ni to eiteen pounds — I say nyer sixteen. — So you being a spurtsman, 'tis refer'd. — So hope you will come or send me't; do not doubt you will be on honour. The bet is a dozen of claret, to be drank at the hotel by our own sett, on Monday next; and we beg you will make one; and Moobray hopes you will come down. — Being, sir, your most humbel servant — Bingo Binks Baronet, and of Block-hall.

"*Postscript.* Have sent some loops of Indian gout, also some black hakkels of my groom's dressing; hope they will prove killing, as suiting river and season."

No answer was received to any of these invitations for more than three days; which, while it secretly rather added to than diminished the curiosity of the Wellers concerning the Unknown, occasioned much railing in public against him, as ill-mannered and rude.

Meantime, Francis Tyrrel, to his great surprise, began to find, like the philosophers, that he was never less alone than when alone. In the most silent and sequestered walks, to which the present state of his mind induced him to betake himself, he was sure to find some strollers from the Well, to whom he had become the object of so much solicitous interest. Quite innocent of the knowledge that he himself possessed the attraction which occasioned his meeting them so frequently, he began to doubt whether the Lady Penelope and her maidens — Mr. Winterblossom and his grey pony — the parson and his short black coat and raven-grey pantaloons — were not either actually polygraphic copies of the same individuals, or possessed of a celerity of motion resembling omnipresence and ubiquity; for nowhere could he go without meeting them, and that oftener than once a-day, in the course of his walks. Sometimes the presence of the sweet Lycoris was intimated by the sweet prattle in an adjacent shade; sometimes, when Tyrrel thought himself most solitary, the parson's flute was heard snoring forth Gramachree Molly; and if he betook himself to the river, he was pretty sure to find his sport watched by Sir Bingo or some of his friends.

The efforts which Tyrrel made to escape from this persecution, and the impatience of it which his manner indicated, procured him, among the Wellers, the name of the *Misanthrope*; and, once distinguished as an object of curiosity, he was the person most attended to, who could at the ordinary of the day give the most accurate account of where the Misanthrope had been, and how occupied in the course of the morning. And so far was Tyrrel's shyness from diminishing the desire of the Wellers for his society, that the latter feeling increased with the difficulty of gratification — as the angler feels the most peculiar interest when throwing his fly for the most cunning and considerate trout in the pool.

In short, such was the interest which the excited imaginations of the company took in the Misanthrope, that, notwithstanding the unamiable qualities which the word expresses, there was only one of the society who did not desire to see the specimen at their rooms, for the purpose of examining him closely and at leisure; and the ladies were particularly desirous to enquire whether he was actually a Misanthrope? Whether he had been always a Misanthrope? What had induced him to become a Misanthrope? And whether there were no means of inducing him to cease to be a Misanthrope?

One individual only, as we have said, neither desired to see nor hear more of the supposed Timon of Cleikum, and that was Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's. Through the medium of that venerable character John Pirner, professed weaver and practical black-fisher in the Aultoun of St. Ronan's, who usually attended Tyrrel, to show him the casts of the river, carry his bag, and so forth, the Squire had ascertained that the judgment of Sir Bingo regarding the disputed weight of the fish was more correct than his own. This inferred an immediate loss of honour, besides the payment of a heavy bill. And the consequences might be yet more serious; nothing short of the emancipation of Sir Bingo, who had hitherto been Mowbray's convenient shadow and adherent, but who, if triumphant, confiding in his superiority of judgment upon so important a point, might either cut him altogether, or expect that, in future, the Squire, who had long seemed the planet of their set, should be content to roll around himself, Sir Bingo, in the capacity of a satellite.

The Squire, therefore, devoutly hoped that Tyrrel's restive disposition might continue, to prevent the decision of the bet, while, at the same time, he nourished a very reasonable degree of dislike to that stranger, who had been the indirect occasion of the unpleasant predicament in which he found himself, by not catching a salmon weighing a pound heavier. He, therefore, openly censured the meanness of those who proposed taking further notice of Tyrrel, and referred to the unanswered letters, as a piece of impertinence which announced him to be no gentleman.

But though appearances were against him, and though he was in truth naturally inclined to solitude, and averse to the affectation and bustle of such a society, that part of Tyrrel's behaviour which indicated ill-breeding was easily accounted for, by his never having received the letters which required an answer. Trotting Nelly, whether unwilling to face her gossip, Meg Dods, without bringing back the drawing, or whether oblivious through the influence of the double dram with which she had been indulged at the Well, jumbled off with her cart to her beloved village of Scate-raw, from which she transmitted the letters by the first bare-legged gillie who travelled towards Aultoun of St. Ronan's; so that at last, but after a long delay, they reached the Cleikum Inn and the hands of Mr. Tyrrel.

The arrival of these documents explained some part of the oddity of behaviour which had surprised him in his neighbours of the Well; and as he saw they had got somehow an idea of his being a lion extraordinary, and was sensible that such is a character equally ridiculous, and difficult to support, he hastened to write to Mr. Winterblossom a card in the style of ordinary mortals. In this he stated the delay occasioned by miscarriage of the letter, and his regret on that account; expressed his intention of dining with the company at the Well on the succeeding day, while he regretted that other circumstances, as well as the state of his health and spirits, would permit him this honour very infrequently during his stay in the country, and begged no trouble might be taken about his accommodation at the Well, as he was perfectly satisfied with his present residence. A separate note to Sir Bingo, said he was happy he could verify the weight of the fish, which he had noted in his diary; ("D— n the fellow, does he keep a diary?" said the Baronet,) and though the result could only be particularly agreeable to one party, he should wish both winner and loser mirth with their wine; — he was sorry he was unable to promise himself the pleasure of participating in either. Enclosed was a signed note of the weight of the fish. Armed with this, Sir Bingo claimed his wine — triumphed in his judgment — swore louder and more articulately than ever he was known to utter any previous sounds, that this Tyrrel was a devilish honest fellow, and he trusted to be better acquainted with him; while the crestfallen Squire, privately cursing the stranger by all his gods, had no mode of silencing his companion but by allowing his loss, and fixing a day for discussing the bet.

In the public rooms the company examined even microscopically the response of the stranger to Mr. Winterblossom, straining their ingenuity to discover, in the most ordinary expressions, a deeper and esoteric meaning, expressive of something mysterious, and not meant to meet the eye. Mr. Meiklewham, the writer, dwelt on the word *circumstances*, which he read with peculiar emphasis.

"Ah, poor lad!" he concluded, "I doubt he sits cheaper at Meg Dorts's chimney-corner than he could do with the present company."

Doctor Quackleben, in the manner of a clergyman selecting a word from his text, as that which is to be particularly insisted upon, repeated in an under tone, the words, "*State of health?* — umph — state of health? — Nothing acute — no one has been sent for — must be chronic — tending to gout, perhaps. — Or his shyness to society — light wild eye — irregular step — starting when met suddenly by a stranger, and turning abruptly and angrily away — Pray, Mr. Winterblossom, let me have an order to look over the file of newspapers — it's very troublesome that restriction about consulting them."

"You know it is a necessary one, Doctor," said the president; "because so few of the good company read any thing else, that the old newspapers would have been worn to pieces long since."

"Well, well, let me have the order," said the Doctor; "I remember something of a gentleman run away from his friends — I must look at the description. — I believe I have a strait-jacket somewhere about the Dispensary."

While this suggestion appalled the male part of the company, who did not much relish the approaching dinner in company with a gentleman whose situation seemed so precarious, some of the younger Misses whispered to each other — "Ah, poor fellow! — and if it be as the Doctor supposes, my lady, who knows what the cause of his illness may have been? — His *spirits* he complains of — ah, poor man!"

And thus, by the ingenious commentaries of the company at the Well, on as plain a note as ever covered the eighth part of a sheet of foolscap, the writer was deprived of his property, his reason, and his heart, "all or either, or one or other of them," as is briefly and distinctly expressed in the law phrase.

In short, so much was said *pro* and *con*, so many ideas started and theories maintained, concerning the disposition and character of the Misanthrope, that, when the company assembled at the usual time, before proceeding to dinner, they doubted, as it seemed, whether the expected addition to their society was to enter the room on his hands or his feet; and when "Mr. Tyrrel" was announced by Toby, at the top of his voice, the gentleman who entered the room had so very little to distinguish him from others, that there was a momentary disappointment. The ladies, in particular, began to doubt whether the compound of talent, misanthropy, madness, and mental sensibility, which they had pictured to themselves, actually was the same with the genteel, and even fashionable-looking man whom they saw before them; who, though in a morning-dress, which the distance of his residence, and the freedom of the place, made excusable, had, even in the minute points of his exterior, none of the negligence, or wildness, which might be supposed to attach to the vestments of a misanthropic recluse, whether sane or insane. As he paid his compliments round the circle, the scales seemed to fall from the eyes of those he spoke to; and they saw with surprise, that the exaggerations had existed entirely in their own preconceptions, and that whatever the fortunes, or rank in life, of Mr. Tyrrel might be, his manners, without being showy, were gentlemanlike and pleasing. He returned his thanks to Mr. Winterblossom in a manner which made that gentleman recall his best breeding to answer the stranger's address in kind. He then escaped from the awkwardness of remaining the sole object of attention, by gliding gradually among the company — not like an owl, which seeks to hide itself in a thicket, or an awkward and retired man, shrinking from the society into which he is compelled, but with the air of one who could maintain with ease his part in a higher circle. His address to Lady Penelope was adapted to the romantic tone of Mr. Chatterly's epistle, to which it was necessary to allude. He was afraid, he said, he must complain to Juno of the neglect of Iris, for her irregularity in delivery of a certain ethereal command, which he had not dared to answer otherwise than by mute obedience — unless, indeed, as the import of the letter seemed to infer, the invitation was designed for some more gifted individual than he to whom chance had assigned it.

Lady Penelope by her lips, and many of the young ladies with their eyes, assured him there was no mistake in the matter; that he was really the gifted person whom the nymphs had summoned to their presence, and that they were well acquainted with his talents as a poet and a painter. Tyrrel disclaimed, with earnestness and gravity, the charge of poetry, and professed, that, far from attempting the art itself, he "read with reluctance all but the productions of the very first-rate poets, and some of these — he was almost afraid to say — he should have liked better in humble prose."

"You have now only to disown your skill as an artist," said Lady Penelope, "and we must consider Mr. Tyrrel as the falsest and most deceitful of his sex, who has a mind to deprive us of the opportunity of benefiting by the productions of his unparalleled endowments. I assure you I shall put my young friends on their guard. Such dissimulation cannot be without its object."

"And I," said Mr. Winterblossom, "can produce a piece of real evidence against the culprit."

So saying, he unrolled the sketch which he had filched from Trotting Nelly, and which he had pared and pasted, (arts in which he was eminent,) so as to take out its creases, repair its breaches, and vamp it as well as my old friend Mrs. Weir could have repaired the damages of time on a folio Shakspeare.

"The *vara corpus delicti*," said the writer, grinning and rubbing his hands.

"If you are so good as to call such scratches drawings," said Tyrrel, "I must stand so far confessed. I used to do them for my own amusement; but since my landlady, Mrs. Dods, has of late discovered that I gain my livelihood by them, why should I disown it?"

This avowal, made without the least appearance either of shame or *retenue*, seemed to have a striking effect on the whole society. The president's trembling hand stole the sketch back to the portfolio, afraid doubtless it might be claimed in form, or else compensation expected by the artist. Lady Penelope was disconcerted, like an awkward horse when it changes the leading foot in galloping. She had to recede from the respectful and easy footing on which he had contrived to place himself, to one which might express patronage on her own part, and dependence on Tyrrel's; and this could not be done in a moment.

The Man of Law murmured, "Circumstances — circumstances — I thought so!"

Sir Bingo whispered to his friend the Squire, "Run out — blown up — off the course — pity — d — d pretty fellow he has been!"

"A raff from the beginning!" whispered Mowbray. — "I never thought him any thing else."

"I'll hold ye a poney of that, my dear, and I'll ask him."

"Done, for a poney, provided you ask him in ten minutes," said the Squire; "but you dare not, Bingie — he has a d — d cross game look, with all that civil chaff of his."

"Done," said Sir Bingo, but in a less confident tone than before, and with a determination to proceed with some caution in the matter. — "I have got a rouleau above, and Winterblossom shall hold stakes."

"I have no rouleau," said the Squire; "but I'll fly a cheque on Meiklewham."

"See it be better than your last," said Sir Bingo, "for I won't be skylarked again. Jack, my boy, you are had."

"Not till the bet's won; and I shall see yon walking dandy break your head, Bingie, before that," answered Mowbray. "Best speak to the Captain before hand — it is a hellish scrape you are running into — I'll let you off yet, Bingie, for a guinea forfeit. — See, I am just going to start the tattler."

"Start, and be d — d!" said Sir Bingo. "You are gotten, I assure you o' that, Jack." And with a bow and a shuffle, he went up and introduced himself to the stranger as Sir Bingo Binks.

"Had — honour — write — sir," were the only sounds which his throat, or rather his cravat, seemed to send forth.

"Confound the booby!" thought Mowbray; "he will get out of leading strings, if he goes on at this rate; and doubly confounded be this cursed tramper, who, the Lord knows why, has come hither from the Lord knows where, to drive the pigs through my game."

In the meantime, while his friend stood with his stop-watch in his hand, with a visage lengthened under the influence of these reflections, Sir Bingo, with an instinctive tact, which self-preservation seemed to dictate to a brain neither the most delicate nor subtle in the world, premised his enquiry by some general remark on fishing and field-sports. With all these, he found Tyrrel more than passably acquainted. Of fishing and shooting, particularly, he spoke with something like enthusiasm; so that Sir Bingo began to hold him in considerable respect, and to assure himself that he could not be, or at least could not originally have been bred, the itinerant artist which he now gave himself out — and this, with the fast lapse of the time, induced him thus to address Tyrrel. — "I say, Mr. Tyrrel — why, you have been one of us — I say" —

"If you mean a sportsman, Sir Bingo — I have been, and am a pretty keen one still," replied Tyrrel.

"Why, then, you did not always do them sort of things?"

"What sort of things do you mean, Sir Bingo?" said Tyrrel. "I have not the pleasure of understanding you."

"Why, I mean them sketches," said Sir Bingo. "I'll give you a handsome order for them, if you will tell me. I will, on my honour."

"Does it concern you particularly, Sir Bingo, to know any thing of my affairs?" said Tyrrel.

"No — certainly — not immediately," answered Sir Bingo, with some hesitation, for he liked not the dry tone in which Tyrrel's answers were returned, half so well as a bumper of dry sherry; "only I said you were a d — d gnostic fellow, and I laid a bet you have not been always professional — that's all."

Mr. Tyrrel replied, "A bet with Mr. Mowbray, I suppose?"

"Yes, with Jack," replied the Baronet — "you have hit it — I hope I have done him?"

Tyrrel bent his brows, and looked first at Mr. Mowbray, then at the Baronet, and, after a moment's thought, addressed the latter. — "Sir Bingo Binks, you are a gentleman of elegant enquiry and acute judgment. — You are perfectly right — I was *not* bred to the profession of an artist, nor did I practise it formerly, whatever I may do now; and so that question is answered."

"And Jack is diddled," said the Baronet, smiting his thigh in triumph, and turning towards the Squire and the stake-holder, with a smile of exultation.

"Stop a single moment, Sir Bingo," said Tyrrel; "take one word with you. I have a great respect for bets — it is part of an Englishman's character to bet on what he thinks fit, and to prosecute his enquiries over hedge and ditch, as if he were steeple-hunting. But as I have satisfied you on the subject of two bets, that is sufficient compliance with the custom of the country; and therefore I request, Sir Bingo, you will not make me or my affairs the subject of any more wagers."

"I'll be d — d if I do," was the internal resolution of Sir Bingo. Aloud he muttered some apologies, and was heartily glad that the dinner-bell, sounding at the moment, afforded him an apology for shuffling off in a different direction.

Chapter 6 Table-Talk.

*And, sir, if these accounts be true,
The Dutch have mighty things in view;
The Austrians — I admire French beans,
Dear ma'am, above all other greens.*

* * * * *

*And all as lively and as brisk
As — Ma'am, d'ye choose a game at whisk?*

TABLE-TALK.

When they were about to leave the room, Lady Penelope assumed Tyrrel's arm with a sweet smile of condescension, meant to make the honoured party understand in its full extent the favour conferred. But the unreasonable artist, far from intimating the least confusion at an attention so little to be expected, seemed to consider the distinction as one which was naturally paid to the greatest stranger present; and when he placed Lady Penelope at the head of the table, by Mr. Winterblossom the president, and took a chair for himself betwixt her ladyship and Lady Binks, the provoking wretch appeared no more sensible of being exalted above his proper rank in society, than if he had been sitting at the bottom of the table by honest Mrs. Blower from the Bow-head, who had come to the Well to carry off the dregs of the *Influenzie*, which she scorned to term a surfeit.

Now this indifference puzzled Lady Penelope's game extremely, and irritated her desire to get at the bottom of Tyrrel's mystery, if there was one, and secure him to her own party. If you were ever at a watering-place, reader, you know that while the guests do not always pay the most polite attention to unmarked individuals, the appearance of a stray lion makes an interest as strong as it is reasonable, and the Amazonian chiefs of each coterie, like the hunters of Buenos-Ayres, prepare their *lasso*, and manœuvre to the best advantage they can, each hoping to noose the unsuspecting monster, and lead him captive to her own menagerie. A few words concerning Lady Penelope Penfeather will explain why she practised this sport with even more than common zeal.

She was the daughter of an earl, possessed a showy person, and features which might be called handsome in youth, though now rather too much *prononcés* to render the term proper. The nose was become sharper; the cheeks had lost the roundness of youth; and as, during fifteen years that she had reigned a beauty and a ruling toast, the right man had not spoken, or, at least, had not spoken at the right time, her ladyship, now rendered sufficiently independent by the inheritance of an old relation, spoke in praise of friendship, began to dislike the town in summer, and to "babble of green fields."

About the time Lady Penelope thus changed the tenor of her life, she was fortunate enough, with Dr. Quackleben's assistance, to find out the virtues of St Ronan's spring; and having contributed her share to establish the *urbs in rure*, which had risen around it, she sat herself down as leader of the fashions in the little province which she had in a great measure both discovered and colonized. She was, therefore, justly desirous to compel homage and tribute from all who should approach the territory.

In other respects, Lady Penelope pretty much resembled the numerous class she belonged to. She was at bottom a well-principled woman, but too thoughtless to let her principles control her humour, therefore not scrupulously nice in her society. She was good-natured, but capricious and whimsical, and willing enough to be kind or generous, if it neither thwarted her humour, nor cost her much trouble; would have chaperoned a young friend any where, and moved the world for subscription tickets; but never troubled herself how much her giddy charge flirted, or with whom; so that, with a numerous class of Misses, her ladyship was the most delightful creature in the world. Then Lady Penelope had lived so much in society, knew so exactly when to speak, and how to escape from an embarrassing discussion by professing ignorance, while she looked intelligence, that she was not generally discovered to be a fool, unless when she set up for being remarkably clever. This happened more frequently of late, when, perhaps, as she could not but observe that the repairs of the toilet became more necessary, she might suppose that new lights, according to the poet, were streaming on her mind through the chinks that Time was making. Many of her friends, however, thought that Lady Penelope would have better consulted her genius by remaining in mediocrity, as a fashionable and well-bred woman, than by parading her new-founded pretensions to taste and patronage; but such was not her own opinion, and doubtless, her ladyship was the best judge.

On the other side of Tyrrel sat Lady Binks, lately the beautiful Miss Bonnyrigg, who, during the last season, had made the company at the Well alternately admire, smile, and stare, by darning the highest Highland fling, riding the wildest pony, laughing the loudest laugh at the broadest joke, and wearing the briefest petticoat of any nymph of St. Ronan's. Few knew that this wild, hoydenish, half-mad humour, was only superinduced over her real character, for the purpose of — getting well married. She had fixed her eyes on Sir Bingo, and was aware of his maxim, that to catch him, "a girl must be," in his own phrase, "bang up to every thing;" and that he would choose a wife for the neck-or-nothing qualities which recommend a good hunter. She made out her catch-match, and she was miserable. Her wild good-humour was entirely an assumed part of her character, which was passionate, ambitious, and thoughtful. Delicacy she had none — she knew Sir Bingo was a brute and a fool, even while she was hunting him down; but she had so far mistaken her own feelings, as not to have expected that when she became bone of his bone, she should feel so much shame and anger when she saw his folly expose him to be laughed at and plundered, or so disgusted when his brutality became intimately connected with herself. It is true, he was on the whole rather an innocent monster; and between biting and bridling, coaxing and humouring, might have been made to pad on well enough. But an unhappy boggling which had taken place previous to the declaration of their private marriage, had so exasperated her spirits against her helpmate, that modes of conciliation were the last she was likely to adopt. Not only had the assistance of the Scottish Themis, so propitiously indulgent to the foibles of the fair, been resorted to on the occasion, but even Mars seemed ready to enter upon the tapis, if Hymen had not intervened. There was, *de par le monde*, a certain brother of the lady — an officer — and, as it happened, on leave of absence — who alighted from a hack-chaise at the Fox Hotel, at eleven o'clock at night, holding in his hand a slip of well-dried oak, accompanied by another gentleman, who, like himself, wore a military travelling-cap and a black stock; out of the said chaise, as was reported by the trusty Toby, was handed a small reise-sac, an Andrew Ferrara, and a neat mahogany box, eighteen inches long, three deep, and some six broad. Next morning a solemn *palaver* (as the natives of Madagascar call their national convention) was held at an unusual hour, at which Captain MacTurk and Mr. Mowbray assisted; and the upshot was, that at breakfast the company were made happy by the information, that Sir Bingo had been for some weeks the happy bridegroom of their general favourite; which union, concealed for family reasons, he was now at liberty to acknowledge, and to fly with the wings of love to bring his sorrowing turtle from the shades to which she had retired, till the obstacles to their mutual happiness could be removed. Now, though all this sounded very smoothly, that gall-less turtle, Lady Binks, could never think of the tenor of the proceedings without the deepest feelings of resentment and contempt for the principal actor, Sir Bingo.

Besides all these unpleasant circumstances, Sir Bingo's family had refused to countenance her wish that he should bring her to his own seat; and hence a new shock to her pride, and new matter of contempt against poor Sir Bingo, for being ashamed and afraid to face down the opposition of his kins-folk, for whose displeasure, though never attending to any good advice from them, he retained a childish awe.

The manners of the young lady were no less changed than was her temper; and, from being much too careless and free, were become reserved, sullen, and haughty. A consciousness that many scrupled to hold intercourse with her in society, rendered her disagreeably tenacious of her rank, and jealous of every thing that appeared like neglect. She had constituted herself mistress of Sir Bingo's purse; and, unrestrained in the expenses of dress and equipage, chose, contrary to her maiden practice, to be rather rich and splendid than gay, and to command that attention by magnificence, which she no longer deigned to solicit by rendering herself either agreeable or entertaining. One secret source of her misery was, the necessity of showing deference to Lady Penelope Penfeather, whose understanding she despised, and whose pretensions to consequence, to patronage, and to literature, she had acuteness enough to see through, and to condemn; and this dislike was the more grievous, that she felt she depended a good deal on Lady Penelope's countenance for the situation she was able to maintain even

among the not very select society of St. Ronan's Well; and that, neglected by her, she must have dropped lower in the scale even there. Neither was Lady Penelope's kindness to Lady Binks extremely cordial. She partook in the ancient and ordinary dislike of single nymphs of a certain age, to those who made splendid alliances under their very eye — and she more than suspected the secret disaffection of the lady. But the name sounded well; and the style in which Lady Binks lived was a credit to the place. So they satisfied their mutual dislike with saying a few sharp things to each other occasionally, but all under the mask of civility.

Such was Lady Binks; and yet, being such, her dress, and her equipage, and carriages, were the envy of half the Misses at the Well, who, while she sat disfiguring with sullenness her very lovely face, (for it was as beautiful as her shape was exquisite,) only thought she was proud of having carried her point, and felt herself, with her large fortune and diamond bandeau, no fit company for the rest of the party. They gave way, therefore, with meekness to her domineering temper, though it was not the less tyrannical, that in her maiden state of hoyden-hood, she had been to some of them an object of slight and of censure; and Lady Binks had not forgotten the offences offered to Miss Bonnyrigg. But the fair sisterhood submitted to her retaliations, as lieutenants endure the bullying of a rude and boisterous captain of the sea, with the secret determination to pay it home to their underlings, when they shall become captains themselves.

In this state of importance, yet of penance, Lady Binks occupied her place at the dinner-table, alternately disconcerted by some stupid speech of her lord and master, and by some slight sarcasm from Lady Penelope, to which she longed to reply, but dared not.

She looked from time to time at her neighbour Frank Tyrrel, but without addressing him, and accepted in silence the usual civilities which he proffered to her. She had remarked keenly his interview with Sir Bingo, and knowing by experience the manner in which her honoured lord was wont to retreat from a dispute in which he was unsuccessful, as well as his genius for getting into such perplexities, she had little doubt that he had sustained from the stranger some new indignity; whom, therefore, she regarded with a mixture of feeling, scarce knowing whether to be pleased with him for having given pain to him whom she hated, or angry with him for having affronted one in whose degradation her own was necessarily involved. There might be other thoughts — on the whole, she regarded him with much though with mute attention. He paid her but little in return, being almost entirely occupied in replying to the questions of the engrossing Lady Penelope Penfeather.

Receiving polite though rather evasive answers to her enquiries concerning his late avocations, her ladyship could only learn that Tyrrel had been travelling in several remote parts of Europe, and even of Asia. Baffled, but not repulsed, the lady continued her courtesy, by pointing out to him, as a stranger, several individuals of the company to whom she proposed introducing him, as persons from whose society he might derive either profit or amusement. In the midst of this sort of conversation, however, she suddenly stopped short.

"Will you forgive me, Mr. Tyrrel," she said, "if I say I have been watching your thoughts for some moments, and that I have detected you? All the while that I have been talking of these good folks, and that you have been making such civil replies, that they might be with great propriety and utility inserted in the 'Familiar Dialogues, teaching foreigners how to express themselves in English upon ordinary occasions'— your mind has been entirely fixed upon that empty chair, which hath remained there opposite betwixt our worthy president and Sir Bingo Binks."

"I own, madam," he answered, "I was a little surprised at seeing such a distinguished seat unoccupied, while the table is rather crowded."

"O, confess more, sir! — Confess that to a poet a seat unoccupied — the chair of Banquo — has more charms than if it were filled even as an alderman would fill it. — What if 'the Dark Ladye'¹⁴ should glide in and occupy it? — would you have courage to stand the vision, Mr. Tyrrel? — I assure you the thing is not impossible."

"What is not impossible, Lady Penelope?" said Tyrrel, somewhat surprised.

"Startled already? — Nay, then, I despair of your enduring the awful interview."

"What interview? who is expected?" said Tyrrel, unable with the utmost exertion to suppress some signs of curiosity, though he suspected the whole to be merely some mystification of her ladyship.

"How delighted I am," she said, "that I have found out where you are vulnerable! — Expected — did I say expected? — no, not expected."

'She glides, like Night, from land to land,

She hath strange power of speech.'

— But come, I have you at my mercy, and I will be generous and explain. — We call — that is, among ourselves, you understand — Miss Clara Mowbray, the sister of that gentleman that sits next to Miss Parker, the Dark Ladye, and that seat is left for her. — For she was expected — no, not expected — I forget again! — but it was thought *possible* she might honour us today, when our feast was so full and piquant. — Her brother is our Lord of the Manor — and so they pay her that sort of civility to regard her as a visitor — and neither Lady Binks nor I think of objecting — She is a singular young person, Clara Mowbray — she amuses me very much — I am always rather glad to see her."

"She is not to come hither today," said Tyrrel; "am I so to understand your ladyship?"

"Why, it is past her time — even *her* time," said Lady Penelope — "dinner was kept back half an hour, and our poor invalids were famishing, as you may see by the deeds they have done since. — But Clara is an odd creature, and if she took it into her head to come hither at this moment, hither she would come — she is very whimsical. — Many people think her handsome — but she looks so like something from another world, that she makes me always think of Mat Lewis's Spectre Lady."

And she repeated with much cadence,

"There is a thing — there is a thing,

I fain would have from thee;

I fain would have that gay gold ring,

O warrior, give it me!"

"And then you remember his answer:

'This ring Lord Brooke from his daughter took,

And a solemn oath he swore,

That that ladye my bride should be

When this crusade was o'er.'

You do figures as well as landscapes, I suppose, Mr. Tyrrel? — You shall make a sketch for me — a slight thing — for sketches, I think, show the freedom of art better than finished pieces — I dote on the first coruscations of genius — flashing like lightning from the cloud! — You shall make a sketch for my boudoir — my dear sulky den at Air Castle, and Clara Mowbray shall sit for the Ghost Ladye."

"That would be but a poor compliment to your ladyship's friend," replied Tyrrel.

"Friend? We don't get quite that length, though I like Clara very well. — Quite sentimental cast of face — I think I saw an antique in the Louvre very like her — (I was there in 1800)— quite an antique countenance — eyes something hollowed — care has dug caves for them, but they are caves of the most beautiful marble, arched with jet — a straight nose, and absolutely the Grecian mouth and chin — a profusion of long straight black hair, with the whitest skin you ever saw — as white as the whitest parchment — and not a shade of colour in her cheek — none whatever — If she would be naughty, and borrow a prudent touch of complexion, she might be called beautiful. Even as it is, many think her so, although surely, Mr. Tyrrel, three colours are necessary to the female face. However, we used to call her the Melpomene of the Spring last season, as we called Lady Binks — who was not then Lady Binks — our Euphrosyne — did we not, my dear?"

"Did we not what, madam?" said Lady Binks, in a tone something sharper than ought to have belonged to so beautiful a countenance.

"I am sorry I have started you out of your reverie, my love," answered Lady Penelope. "I was only assuring Mr. Tyrrel that you were once Euphrosyne, though now so much under the banners of *Il Penseroso*."

"I do not know that I have been either one or the other," answered Lady Binks; "one thing I certainly am not — I am not capable of understanding your ladyship's wit and learning."

"Poor soul," whispered Lady Penelope to Tyrrel; "we know what we are, we know not what we may be. — And now, Mr. Tyrrel, I have been your sibyl to guide you through this Elysium of ours, I think, in reward, I deserve a little confidence in return."

"If I had any to bestow, which could be in the slightest degree interesting to your ladyship," answered Tyrrel.

"Oh! cruel man — he will not understand me!" exclaimed the lady — "In plain words, then, a peep into your portfolio — just to see what objects you have rescued from natural decay, and rendered immortal by the pencil. You do not know — indeed, Mr. Tyrrel, you do not know how I dote upon your 'serenely silent art,' second to poetry alone — equal — superior perhaps — to music."

"I really have little that could possibly be worth the attention of such a judge as your ladyship," answered Tyrrel; "such trifles as your ladyship has seen, I sometimes leave at the foot of the tree I have been sketching."

"As Orlando left his verses in the Forest of Ardenness? — Oh, the thoughtless prodigality! — Mr. Winterblossom, do you hear this? — We must follow Mr. Tyrrel in his walks, and glean what he leaves behind him."

Her ladyship was here disconcerted by some laughter on Sir Bingo's side of the table, which she chastised by an angry glance, and then proceeded emphatically.

"Mr. Tyrrel — this must *not* be — this is not the way of the world, my good sir, to which even genius must stoop its flight. We must consult the engraver — though perhaps you etch as well as you draw?"

"I should suppose so," said Mr. Winterblossom, edging in a word with difficulty, "from the freedom of Mr. Tyrrel's touch."

"I will not deny my having spoiled a little copper now and then," said Tyrrel, "since I am charged with the crime by such good judges; but it has only been by way of experiment."

"Say no more," said the lady; "my darling wish is accomplished! — We have long desired to have the remarkable and most romantic spots of our little Arcadia here — spots consecrated to friendship, the fine arts, the loves and the graces, immortalized by the graver's art, faithful to its charge of fame — you shall labour on this task, Mr. Tyrrel; we will all assist with notes and illustrations — we will all contribute — only some of us must be permitted to remain anonymous — Fairy favours, you know, Mr. Tyrrel, must be kept secret — And you shall be allowed the pillage of the Album — some sweet things there of Mr. Chatterly's — and Mr. Edgeit, a gentleman of your own profession, I am sure will lend his aid — Dr. Quackleben will contribute some scientific notices. — And for subscription" —

"Financial — financial — your leddyship, I speak to order!" said the writer, interrupting Lady Penelope with a tone of impudent familiarity, which was meant doubtless for jocular ease.

"How am I out of order, Mr. Meiklewham?" said her ladyship, drawing herself up.

"I speak to order! — No warrants for money can be extracted before intimation to the Committee of Management."

"Pray, who mentioned money, Mr. Meiklewham?" said her ladyship. — "That wretched old pettifogger," she added in a whisper to Tyrrel, "thinks of nothing else but the filthy pelf."

"Ye spake of subscription, my leddy, whilk is the same thing as money, differing only in respect of time — the subscription being a contract *de futuro*, and having a *tractus temporis in gremio* — And I have kend mony honest folks in the company at the Well, complain of the subscriptions as a great abuse, as obliging them either to look unlike other folk, or to gie good lawful coin for ballants and picture-books, and things they caredna a pinch of snuff for."

Several of the company, at the lower end of the table, assented both by nods and murmurs of approbation; and the orator was about to proceed, when Tyrrel with difficulty procured a hearing before the debate went farther, and assured the company that her ladyship's goodness had led her into an error; that he had no work in hand worthy of their patronage, and, with the deepest gratitude for Lady Penelope's goodness, had it not in his power to comply with her request. There was some tittering at her ladyship's expense, who, as the writer slyly observed, had been something *ultronious* in her patronage. Without attempting for the moment any rally, (as indeed the time which had passed since the removal of the dinner scarce permitted an opportunity,) Lady Penelope gave the signal for the ladies' retreat, and left the gentlemen to the circulation of the bottle.

Chapter 7 The Tea-Table.

— *While the cups,*

Which cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each.

COWPER.

It was common at the Well, for the fair guests occasionally to give tea to the company — such at least as from their rank and leading in the little society, might be esteemed fit to constitute themselves patronesses of an evening; and the same lady generally carried the authority she had acquired into the ball-room, where two fiddles and a bass, at a guinea a night, with a *quantum sufficit* of tallow candles, (against the use of which Lady Penelope often mutinied,) enabled the company — to use the appropriate phrase — "to close the evening on the light fantastic toe."

On the present occasion, the lion of the hour, Mr. Francis Tyrrel, had so little answered the high-wrought expectations of Lady Penelope, that she rather regretted having ever given herself any trouble about him, and particularly that of having manoeuvred herself into the patronage of the tea-table for the evening, to the great expenditure of souchong and congo. Accordingly, her ladyship had no sooner summoned her own woman, and her *fille de chambre*, to make tea, with her page, footman, and postilion, to hand it about, (in which duty they were assisted by two richly-laced and thickly-powdered footmen of Lady Binks's, whose liveries put to shame the more modest garb of Lady Penelope's, and even dimmed the glory of the suppressed coronet upon the buttons,) than she began to vilipend and depreciate what had been so long the object of her curiosity.

"This Mr. Tyrrel," she said, in a tone of authoritative decision, "seems after all a very ordinary sort of person, quite a commonplace man, who, she dared say, had considered his condition, in going to the old alehouse, much better than they had done for him, when they asked him to the Public Rooms. He had known his own place better than they did — there was nothing uncommon in his appearance or conversation — nothing at all *frappant* — she scarce believed he could even draw that sketch. Mr. Winterblossom, indeed, made a great deal of it; but then all the world knew that every scrap of engraving or drawing, which Mr. Winterblossom contrived to make his own, was, the instant it came into his collection, the finest thing that ever was seen — that was the way with collectors — their geese were all swans."

"And your ladyship's swan has proved but a goose, my dearest Lady Pen," said Lady Binks.

"My swan, dearest Lady Binks! I really do not know how I have deserved the appropriation."

"Do not be angry, my dear Lady Penelope; I only mean, that for a fortnight and more you have spoke constantly of this Mr. Tyrrel, and all dinner-time you spoke to him."

The fair company began to collect around, at hearing the word *dear* so often repeated in the same brief dialogue, which induced them to expect sport, and, like the vulgar on a similar occasion, to form a ring for the expected combatants.

"He sat betwixt us, Lady Binks," answered Lady Penelope, with dignity. "You had your usual headache, you know, and, for the credit of the company, I spoke for one."

"For two, if your ladyship pleases," replied Lady Binks. "I mean," she added, softening the expression, "for yourself and me."

"I am sorry," said Lady Penelope, "I should have spoken for one who can speak so smartly for herself, as my dear Lady Binks — I did not, by any means, desire to engross the conversation — I repeat it, there is a mistake about this man."

"I think there is," said Lady Binks, in a tone which implied something more than mere assent to Lady Penelope's proposition.

"I doubt if he is an artist at all," said the Lady Penelope; "or if he is, he must be doing things for some Magazine, or Encyclopedia, or some such matter."

"I doubt, too, if he be a professional artist," said Lady Binks. "If so, he is of the very highest class, for I have seldom seen a better-bred man."

"There are very well-bred artists," said Lady Penelope. "It is the profession of a gentleman."

"Certainly," answered Lady Binks; "but the poorer class have often to struggle with poverty and dependence. In general society, they are like commercial people in presence of their customers; and that is a difficult part to sustain. And so you see them of all sorts — shy and reserved, when they are conscious of merit — petulant and whimsical, by way of showing their independence — intrusive, in order to appear easy — and sometimes obsequious and fawning, when they chance to be of a mean spirit. But you seldom see them quite at their ease, and therefore I hold this Mr. Tyrrel to be either an artist of the first class, raised completely above the necessity and degradation of patronage, or else to be no professional artist at all."

Lady Penelope looked at Lady Binks with much such a regard as Balaam may have cast upon his ass, when he discovered the animal's capacity for holding an argument with him. She muttered to herself —

"Mon ane parle, et même il parle bien!"

But, declining the altercation which Lady Binks seemed disposed to enter into, she replied, with good-humour, "Well, dearest Rachel, we will not pull caps about this man — nay, I think your good opinion of him gives him new value in my eyes. That is always the way with us, my good friend! We may confess it, when there are none of these conceited male wretches among us. We will know what he really is — he shall not wear fern-seed, and walk among us invisible thus — what say you, Maria?"

"Indeed, I say, dear Lady Penelope," answered Miss Digges, whose ready chatter we have already introduced to the reader, "he is a very handsome man, though his nose is too big, and his mouth too wide — but his teeth are like pearl — and he has such eyes! — especially when your ladyship spoke to him. I don't think you looked at his eyes — they are quite deep and dark, and full of glow, like what you read to us in the letter from that lady, about Robert Burns."

"Upon my word, miss, you come on finely!" said Lady Penelope. — "One had need take care what they read or talk about before you, I see — Come, Jones, have mercy upon us — put an end to that symphony of tinkling cups and saucers, and let the first act of the tea-table begin, if you please."

"Does her leddyship mean the grace?" said honest Mrs. Blower, for the first time admitted into this worshipful society, and busily employed in arranging an Indian handkerchief, that might have made a mainsail for one of her husband's smuggling luggers, which she spread carefully on her knee, to prevent damage to a flowered black silk gown from the repast of tea and cake, to which she proposed to do due honour — "Does her leddyship mean the grace? I see the minister is just coming in. — Her leddyship waits till ye say a blessing, an ye please, sir."

Mr. Winterblossom, who *toddled* after the chaplain, his toe having given him an alert hint to quit the dining-table, though he saw every feature in the poor woman's face swoln with desire to procure information concerning the ways and customs of the place, passed on the other side of the way, regardless of her agony of curiosity.

A moment after, she was relieved by the entrance of Dr. Quackleben, whose maxim being, that one patient was as well worth attention as another, and who knew by experience, that the *honoraria* of a godly wife of the Bow-head were as apt to be forthcoming, (if not more so,) as my Lady Penelope's, he e'en sat himself quietly down by Mrs. Blower, and proceeded with the utmost kindness to enquire after her health, and to hope she had not forgotten taking a table-spoonful of spirits burnt to *aresiduum*, in order to qualify the crudities.

"Indeed, Doctor," said the honest woman, "I loot the brandy burn as lang as I dought look at the gude creature wasting itsell that gate — and then, when I was fain to put it out for very thrift, I did take a thimbleful of it, (although it is not the thing I am used to, Dr. Quackleben,) and I winna say but that it did me good."

"Unquestionably, madam," said the Doctor, "I am no friend to the use of alcohol in general, but there are particular cases — there are particular cases, Mrs. Blower — My venerated instructor, one of the greatest men in our profession that ever lived, took a wine-glassful of old rum, mixed with sugar, every day after his dinner."

"Ay? dear heart, he would be a comfortable doctor that," said Mrs. Blower. "He wad maybe ken something of my case. Is he leevin' think ye, sir?"

"Dead for many years, madam," said Dr. Quackleben; "and there are but few of his pupils that can fill his place, I assure ye. If I could be thought an exception, it is only because I was a favourite. Ah! blessings on the old red cloak of him! — It covered more of the healing science than the gowns of a whole modern university."

"There is ane, sir," said Mrs. Blower, "that has been muckle recommended about Edinburgh — Macgregor, I think they ca' him — folk come far and near to see him."¹⁵

"I know whom you mean, ma'am — a clever man — no denying it — a clever man — but there are certain cases — yours, for example — and I think that of many that come to drink this water — which I cannot say I think he perfectly understands — hasty — very hasty and rapid. Now I — I give the disease its own way at first — then watch it, Mrs. Blower — watch the turn of the tide."

"Ay, troth, that's true," responded the widow; "John Blower was aye watching turn of tide, puir man."

"Then he is a starving doctor, Mrs. Blower — reduces diseases as soldiers do towns — by famine, not considering that the friendly inhabitants suffer as much as the hostile garrison — ahem!"

Here he gave an important and emphatic cough, and then proceeded.

"I am no friend either to excess or to violent stimulus, Mrs. Blower — but nature must be supported — a generous diet — cordials judiciously thrown in-not without the advice of a medical man — that is my opinion, Mrs. Blower, to speak as a friend — others may starve their patients if they have a mind."

"It wadna do for me, the starving, Dr. Keekerben," said the alarmed relict — "it wadna do for me at a' — Just a' I can do to wear through the day with the sma' supports that nature requires — not a soul to look after me, Doctor, since John Blower was ta'en awa. — Thank ye kindly, sir," (to the servant who handed the tea,)—"thank ye, my bonny man," (to the page who served the cake)—"Now, dinna ye think, Doctor," (in a low and confidential voice,) "that her leddyship's tea is rather of the weakest — water bewitched, I think — and Mrs. Jones, as they ca' her, has cut the seedcake very thin?"

"It is the fashion, Mrs. Blower," answered Dr. Quackleben; "and her ladyship's tea is excellent. But your taste is a little chilled, which is not uncommon at the first use of the waters, so that you are not sensible of the flavour — we must support the system — reinforce the digestive powers — give me leave — you are a stranger, Mrs. Blower, and we must take care of you — I have an elixir which will put that matter to rights in a moment."

So saying, Dr. Quackleben pulled from his pocket a small portable case of medicines — "Catch me without my tools," — he said; "here I have the real useful pharmacopoeia — the rest is all humbug and hard names — this little case, with a fortnight or month, spring and fall, at St. Ronan's Well, and no one will die till his day come."

Thus boasting, the Doctor drew from his case a large vial or small flask, full of a high-coloured liquid, of which he mixed three tea-spoonfuls in Mrs. Blower's cup, who, immediately afterwards, allowed that the flavour was improved beyond all belief, and that it was "vera comfortable and restorative indeed."

"Will it not do good to my complaints, Doctor?" said Mr. Winterblossom, who had strolled towards them, and held out his cup to the physician.

"I by no means recommend it, Mr. Winterblossom," said Dr. Quackleben, shutting up his case with great coolness; "your case is oedematous, and you treat it your own way — you are as good a physician as I am, and I never interfere with another practitioner's patient."

"Well, Doctor," said Winterblossom, "I must wait till Sir Bingo comes in-he has a hunting-flask usually about him, which contains as good medicine as yours to the full."

"You will wait for Sir Bingo some time," said the Doctor; "he is a gentleman of sedentary habits — he has ordered another magnum."

"Sir Bingo is an unco name for a man o' quality, dinna ye think sae, Dr. Cocklehen?" said Mrs. Blower. "John Blower, when he was a wee bit in the wind's eye, as he ca'd it, puir fallow — used to sing a sang about a dog they ca'd Bingo, that suld hae belonged to a farmer."

"Our Bingo is but a puppy yet, madam — or if a dog, he is a sad dog," said Mr. Winterblossom, applauding his own wit, by one of his own inimitable smiles.

"Or a mad dog, rather," said Mr. Chatterly, "for he drinks no water;" and he also smiled gracefully at the thoughts of having trumped, as it were, the president's pun.

"Twa pleasant men, Doctor," said the widow, "and so is Sir Bungy too, for that matter; but O! is nae it a pity he should bide sae lang by the bottle? It was puir John Blower's faut too, that weary tipping; when he wan to the lee-side of a bowl of punch, there was nae raising him. — But they are taking awa the things, and, Doctor, is it not an awfu' thing that the creature-comforts should hae been used without grace or thanksgiving? — that Mr. Chitterling, if he really be a minister, has muckle to answer for, that he neglects his Master's service."

"Why, madam," said the Doctor, "Mr. Chatterly is scarce arrived at the rank of a minister plenipotentiary."

"A minister potentiary — ah, Doctor, I doubt that is some jest of yours," said the widow; "that's sae like puir John Blower. When I wad hae had him gie up the lovely Peggy, ship and cargo, (the vessel was named after me, Doctor Kittleben,) to be remembered in the prayers o' the congregation, he wad say to me, 'they may pray that stand the risk, Peggy Bryce, for I've made insurance.' He was a merry man, Doctor; but he had the root of the matter in him, for a' his light way of speaking, as deep as ony skipper that ever loosed anchor from Leith Roads. I hae been a forsaken creature since his death — O the weary days and nights that I have had! — and the weight on the spirits — the spirits, Doctor! — though I canna say I hae been easier since I hae been at the Wall than even now — if I kend what I was awing ye for elickstir, Doctor, for it's done me muckle heart's good, forby the opening of my mind to you."

"Fie, fie, ma'am," said the Doctor, as the widow pulled out a seal-skin pouch, such as sailors carry tobacco in, but apparently well stuffed with bank-notes — "Fie, fie, madam — I am no apothecary — I have my diploma from Leyden — a regular physician, madam — the elixir is heartily at your service; and should you want any advice, no man will be prouder to assist you than your humble servant."

"I am sure I am muckle obliged to your kindness, Dr. Kickalpin," said the widow, folding up her pouch; "this was puir John Blower's *spleuchan*,¹⁶ as they ca' it — I e'en wear it for his sake. He was a kind man, and left me comfortable in world's gudes; but comforts hae their cumbers — to be a lone woman is a sair weird, Dr. Kittlepin."

Dr. Quackleben drew his chair a little nearer that of the widow, and entered into a closer communication with her, in a tone doubtless of more delicate consolation than was fit for the ears of the company at large.

One of the chief delights of a watering-place is, that every one's affairs seem to be put under the special surveillance of the whole company, so that, in all probability, the various flirtations, *liaisons*, and so forth, which naturally take place in the society, are not only the subject of amusement to the parties engaged, but also to the lookers on; that is to say, generally speaking, to the whole community, of which for the time the said parties are members. Lady Penelope, the presiding goddess of the region, watchful over all her circle, was not long of observing that the Doctor seemed to be suddenly engaged in close communication with the widow, and that he had even ventured to take hold of her fair plump hand, with a manner which partook at once of the gallant suitor, and of the medical adviser.

"For the love of Heaven," said her ladyship, "who can that comely dame be, on whom our excellent and learned Doctor looks with such uncommon regard?"

"Fat, fair, and forty," said Mr. Winterblossom; "that is all I know of her — a mercantile person."

"A carrack, Sir President," said the chaplain, "richly laden with colonial produce, by name the Lovely Peggy Bryce — no master — the late John Blower of North Leith having pushed off his boat for the Stygian Creek, and left the vessel without a hand on board."

"The Doctor," said Lady Penelope, turning her glass towards them, "seems willing to play the part of pilot."

"I dare say he will be willing to change her name and register," said Mr. Chatterly.

"He can be no less in common requital," said Winterblossom. "She has changed *his* name six times in the five minutes that I stood within hearing of them."

"What do you think of the matter, my dear Lady Binks?" said Lady Penelope.

"Madam?" said Lady Binks, starting from a reverie, and answering as one who either had not heard, or did not understand the question.

"I mean, what think you of what is going on yonder?"

Lady Binks turned her glass in the direction of Lady Penelope's glance, fixed the widow and the Doctor with one bold fashionable stare, and then dropping her hand slowly, said with indifference, "I really see nothing there worth thinking about."

"I dare say it is a fine thing to be married," said Lady Penelope; "one's thoughts, I suppose, are so much engrossed with one's own perfect happiness, that they have neither time nor inclination to laugh like other folks. Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg would have laughed till her eyes ran over, had she seen what Lady Binks cares so little about — I dare say it must be an all-sufficient happiness to be married."

"He would be a happy man that could convince your ladyship of that in good earnest," said Mr. Winterblossom.

"Oh, who knows — the whim may strike me," replied the lady; "but no — no — no; — and that is three times."

"Say it sixteen times more," said the gallant president, "and let nineteen nay-says be a grant."

"If I should say a thousand Noes, there exists not the alchymy in living man that could extract one Yes out of the whole mass," said her ladyship. "Blessed be the memory of Queen Bess! — She set us all an example to keep power when we have it — What noise is that?"

"Only the usual after-dinner quarrel," said the divine. "I hear the Captain's voice, else most silent, commanding them to keep peace, in the devil's name and that of the ladies."

"Upon my word, dearest Lady Binks, this is too bad of that lord and master of yours, and of Mowbray, who might have more sense, and of the rest of that claret-drinking set, to be quarrelling and alarming our nerves every evening with presenting their pistols perpetually at each other, like sportsmen confined to the house upon a rainy 12th of August. I am tired of the Peace-maker — he but skins the business over in one case to have it break out elsewhere. — What think you, love, if we were to give out in orders, that the next quarrel which may arise, shall be *bona fide* fought to an end? — We will all go out and see it, and wear the colours on each side; and if there should a funeral come of it, we will attend it in a body. — Weeds are so becoming! — Are they not, my dear Lady Binks? Look at Widow Blower in her deep black — don't you envy her, my love?"

Lady Binks seemed about to make a sharp and hasty answer, but checked herself, perhaps under the recollection that she could not prudently come to an open breach with Lady Penelope. — At the same moment the door opened, and a lady dressed in a riding-habit, and wearing a black veil over her hat, appeared at the entry of the apartment.

"Angels and ministers of grace!" exclaimed Lady Penelope, with her very best tragic start — "my dearest Clara, why so late? and why thus? Will you step to my dressing-room — Jones will get you one of my gowns — we are just of a size, you know — do, pray — let me be vain of something of my own for once, by seeing you wear it."

This was spoken in the tone of the fondest female friendship, and at the same time the fair hostess bestowed on Miss Mowbray one of those tender caresses, which ladies — God bless them! — sometimes bestow on each other with unnecessary prodigality, to the great discontent and envy of the male spectators.

"You are fluttered, my dearest Clara — you are feverish — I am sure you are," continued the sweetly anxious Lady Penelope; "let me persuade you to lie down."

"Indeed you are mistaken, Lady Penelope," said Miss Mowbray, who seemed to receive much as a matter of course her ladyship's profusion of affectionate politeness:—"I am heated, and my pony trotted hard, that is the whole mystery. — Let me have a cup of tea, Mrs. Jones, and the matter is ended."

"Fresh tea, Jones, directly," said Lady Penelope, and led her passive friend to her own corner, as she was pleased to call the recess, in which she held her little court — ladies and gentlemen curtsying and bowing as she passed; to which civilities the new guest made no more return, than the most ordinary politeness rendered unavoidable.

Lady Binks did not rise to receive her, but sat upright in her chair, and bent her head very stiffly; a courtesy which Miss Mowbray returned in the same stately manner, without farther greeting on either side.

"Now, wha can that be, Doctor?" said the Widow Blower — "mind ye have promised to tell me all about the grand folk — wha can that be that Leddy Penelope hauds such a racket wi' — and what for does she come wi' a habit and a beaver-hat, when we are a' (a glance at her own gown) in our silks and satins?"

"To tell you who she is, my dear Mrs. Blower, is very easy," said the officious Doctor. "She is Miss Clara Mowbray, sister to the Lord of the Manor — the gentleman who wears the green coat, with an arrow on the cape. To tell why she wears that habit, or does any thing else, would be rather beyond doctor's skill. Truth is, I have always thought she was a little — a very little — touched — call it nerves — hypochondria — or what you will."

"Lord help us, puir thing!" said the compassionate widow. — "And troth it looks like it. But it's a shame to let her go loose, Doctor — she might hurt hersell, or somebody. See, she has ta'en the knife! — O, it's only to cut a shave of the diet-loaf. She winna let the powder-monkey of a boy help her. There's judgment in that though, Doctor, for she can cut thick or thin as she likes. — Dear me! she has not taken mair than a crumb, than ane would pit between the wires of a canary-bird's cage, after all. — I wish she would lift up that lang veil, or put off that riding-skirt, Doctor. She should really be showed the regulations, Doctor Kickelshin."

"She cares about no rules we can make, Mrs. Blower," said the Doctor; "and her brother's will and pleasure, and Lady Penelope's whim of indulging her, carry her through in every thing. They should take advice on her case."

"Ay, truly, it's time to take advice, when young creatures like her caper in amang dressed leddies, just as if they were come from scampering on Leith sands. — Such a wark as my leddy makes wi' her, Doctor! Ye would think they were baith fools of a feather."

"They might have flown on one wing, for what I know," said Dr. Quackleben; "but there was early and sound advice taken in Lady Penelope's case. My friend, the late Earl of Featherhead, was a man of judgment — did little in his family but by rule of medicine — so that, what with the waters, and what with my own care, Lady Penelope is only freakish — fanciful — that's all — and her quality bears it out — the peccant principle might have broken out under other treatment."

"Ay — she has been weel-friended," said the widow; "but this bairn Mowbray, puir thing! how came she to be sae left to hersell?"

"Her mother was dead — her father thought of nothing but his sports," said the Doctor. "Her brother was educated in England, and cared for nobody but himself, if he had been here. What education she got was at her own hand — what reading she read was in a library full of old romances — what friends or company she had was what chance sent her — then no family-physician, not even a good surgeon, within ten miles! And so you cannot wonder if the poor thing became unsettled."

"Puir thing! — no doctor! — nor even a surgeon! — But, Doctor," said the widow, "maybe the puir thing had the enjoyment of her health, ye ken, and, then" —

"Ah! ha, ha! — why *then*, madam, she needed a physician far more than if she had been delicate. A skilful physician, Mrs. Blower, knows how to bring down that robust health, which is a very alarming state of the frame when it is considered *secundum artem*. Most sudden deaths happen when people are in a robust state of health. Ah! that state of perfect health is what the doctor dreads most on behalf of his patient."

"Ay, ay, Doctor? — I am quite sensible, nae doubt," said the widow, "of the great advantage of having a skeelfu' person about ane."

Here the Doctor's voice, in his earnestness to convince Mrs. Blower of the danger of supposing herself capable of living and breathing without a medical man's permission, sunk into a soft pleading tone, of which our reporter could not catch the sound. He was, as great orators will sometimes be, "inaudible in the gallery."

Meanwhile, Lady Penelope overwhelmed Clara Mowbray with her caresses. In what degree her ladyship, at her heart, loved this young person, might be difficult to ascertain — probably in the degree in which a child loves a favourite toy. But Clara was a toy not always to be come by — as whimsical in her way as her ladyship in her own, only that poor Clara's singularities were real, and her ladyship's chiefly affected. Without adopting the harshness of the Doctor's conclusions concerning the former, she was certainly unequal in her spirits; and her occasional fits of levity were chequered by very long intervals of sadness. Her levity also appeared, in the world's eye, greater than it really was; for she had never been under the restraint of society which was really good, and entertained an undue contempt for that which she sometimes mingled with; having unhappily none to teach her the important truth, that some forms and restraints are to be observed, less in respect to others than to ourselves. Her dress, her manners, and her ideas, were therefore very much her own; and though they became her wonderfully, yet, like Ophelia's garlands, and wild snatches of melody, they were calculated to excite compassion and melancholy, even while they amused the observer.

"And why came you not to dinner? — We expected you — your throne was prepared."

"I had scarce come to tea," said Miss Mowbray, "of my own freewill. But my brother says your ladyship proposes to come to Shaws-Castle, and he insisted it was quite right and necessary, to confirm you in so flattering a purpose, that I should come and say, Pray do, Lady Penelope; and so now here am I to say, Pray, do come."

"Is an invitation so flattering limited to me alone, my dear Clara? — Lady Binks will be jealous."

"Bring Lady Binks, if she has the condescension to honour us" — [a bow was very stiffly exchanged between the ladies] — "bring Mr. Springblossom — Winterblossom — and all the lions and lionesses — we have room for the whole collection. My brother, I suppose, will bring his own particular regiment of bears, which, with the usual assortment of monkeys seen in all caravans, will complete the menagerie. How you are to be entertained at Shaws-Castle, is, I thank Heaven, not my business, but John's."

"We shall want no formal entertainment, my love," said Lady Penelope; "*a déjeuner à la fourchette* — we know, Clara, you would die of doing the honours of a formal dinner."

"Not a bit; I should live long enough to make my will, and bequeath all large parties to old Nick, who invented them."

"Miss Mowbray," said Lady Binks, who had been thwarted by this free-spoken young lady, both in her former character of a coquette and romp, and in that of a prude which she at present wore — "Miss Mowbray declares for

'Champagne and a chicken at last.'"

"The chicken without the champagne, if you please," said Miss Mowbray; "I have known ladies pay dear to have champagne on the board. — By the by, Lady Penelope, you have not your collection in the same order and discipline as Pidcock and Polito. There was much growling and snarling in the lower den when I passed it."

"It was feeding-time, my love," said Lady Penelope; "and the lower animals of every class become pugnacious at that hour — you see all our safer and well-conditioned animals are loose, and in good order."

"Oh, yes — in the keeper's presence, you know — Well, I must venture to cross the hall again among all that growling and grumbling — I would I had the fairy prince's quarters of mutton to toss among them if they should break out — He, I mean, who fetched water from the Fountain of Lions. However, on second thoughts, I will take the back way, and avoid them. — What says honest Bottom? —

'For if they should as lions come in strife

Into such place, 'twere pity of their life.'"

"Shall I go with you, my dear?" said Lady Penelope.

"No — I have too great a soul for that — I think some of them are lions only as far as the hide is concerned."

"But why would you go so soon, Clara?"

"Because my errand is finished — have I not invited you and yours? and would not Lord Chesterfield himself allow I have done the polite thing?"

"But you have spoke to none of the company — how can you be so odd, my love?" said her ladyship.

"Why, I spoke to them all when I spoke to you and Lady Binks — but I am a good girl, and will do as I am bid."

So saying, she looked round the company, and addressed each of them with an affectation of interest and politeness, which thinly concealed scorn and contempt.

"Mr. Winterblossom, I hope the gout is better — Mr. Robert Rymar — (I have escaped calling him Thomas for once) — I hope the public give encouragement to the muses — Mr. Keelavine, I trust your pencil is busy — Mr. Chatterly, I have no doubt your flock improves — Dr. Quackleben, I am sure your patients recover — These are all the especials of the worthy company I know — for the rest, health to the sick, and pleasure to the healthy!"

"You are not going in reality, my love?" said Lady Penelope; "these hasty rides agitate your nerves — they do, indeed — you should be cautious — Shall I speak to Quackleben?"

"To neither Quack nor quackle, on my account, my dear lady. It is not as you would seem to say, by your winking at Lady Binks — it is not, indeed — I shall be no Lady Clementina, to be the wonder and pity of the spring of St. Ronan's — No Ophelia neither — though I will say with her, Good-night, ladies — Good night, sweet ladies! — and now — not my coach, my coach — but my horse, my horse!"

So saying, she tripped out of the room by a side passage, leaving the ladies looking at each other significantly, and shaking their heads with an expression of much import.

"Something has ruffled the poor unhappy girl," said Lady Penelope; "I never saw her so very odd before."

"Were I to speak my mind," said Lady Binks, "I think, as Mrs. Highmore says in the farce, her madness is but a poor excuse for her impertinence."

"Oh fie! my sweet Lady Binks," said Lady Penelope, "spare my poor favourite! You, surely, of all others, should forgive the excesses of an amiable eccentricity of temper. — Forgive me, my love, but I must defend an absent friend — My Lady Binks, I am very sure, is too generous and candid to

'Hate for arts which caused herself to rise.'"

"Not being conscious of any high elevation, my lady," answered Lady Binks, "I do not know any arts I have been under the necessity of practising to attain it. I suppose a Scotch lady of an ancient family may become the wife of an English baronet, and no very extraordinary great cause to wonder at it."

"No, surely — but people in this world will, you know, wonder at nothing," answered Lady Penelope.

"If you envy me my poor quiz, Sir Bingo, I'll get you a better, Lady Pen."

"I don't doubt your talents, my dear, but when I want one, I will get one for myself. — But here comes the whole party of quizzes. — Joliffe, offer the gentlemen tea — then get the floor ready for the dancers, and set the card-tables in the next room."

Chapter 8 After Dinner.

*They draw the cork, they broach the barrel,
And first they kiss, and then they quarrel.*

PRIOR.

If the reader has attended much to the manners of the canine race, he may have remarked the very different manner in which the individuals of the different sexes carry on their quarrels among each other. The females are testy, petulant, and very apt to indulge their impatient dislike of each other's presence, or the spirit of rivalry which it produces, in a sudden bark and snap, which last is generally made as much at advantage as possible. But these ebullitions of peevishness lead to no very serious or prosecuted conflict; the affair begins and ends in a moment. Not so the ire of the male dogs, which, once produced and excited by growls of mutual offence and defiance, leads generally to a fierce and obstinate contest; in which, if the parties be dogs of game, and well-matched, they grapple, throttle, tear, roll each other in the kennel, and can only be separated by choking them with their own collars, till they lose wind and hold at the same time, or by surprising them out of their wrath by sousing them with cold water.

The simile, though a curriish one, will hold good in its application to the human race. While the ladies in the tea-room of the Fox Hotel were engaged in the light snappish velitation, or skirmish, which we have described, the gentlemen who remained in the parlour were more than once like to have quarrelled more seriously. We have mentioned the weighty reasons which induced Mr. Mowbray to look upon the stranger whom a general invitation had brought into their society, with unfavourable prepossessions; and these were far from being abated by the demeanour of Tyrrel, which, though perfectly well-bred, indicated a sense of equality, which the young Laird of St. Ronan's considered as extremely presumptuous.

As for Sir Bingo, he already began to nourish the genuine hatred always entertained by a mean spirit against an antagonist, before whom it is conscious of having made a dishonourable retreat. He forgot not the manner, look, and tone, with which Tyrrel had checked his unauthorized intrusion; and though he had sunk beneath it at the moment, the recollection rankled in his heart as an affront to be avenged. As he drank his wine, courage, the want of which was, in his more sober moments, a check upon his bad temper, began to inflame his malignity, and he ventured upon several occasions to show his spleen, by contradicting Tyrrel more flatly than good manners permitted upon so short an acquaintance, and without any provocation. Tyrrel saw his ill humour and despised it, as that of an overgrown schoolboy, whom it was not worth his while to answer according to his folly.

One of the apparent causes of the Baronet's rudeness was indeed childish enough. The company were talking of shooting, the most animating topic of conversation among Scottish country gentlemen of the younger class, and Tyrrel had mentioned something of a favourite setter, an uncommonly handsome dog, from which he had been for some time separated, but which he expected would rejoin him in the course of next week.

"A setter!" retorted Sir Bingo, with a sneer; "a pointer I suppose you mean?"

"No, sir," said Tyrrel; "I am perfectly aware of the difference betwixt a setter and a pointer, and I know the old-fashioned setter is become unfashionable among modern sportsmen. But I love my dog as a companion, as well as for his merits in the field; and a setter is more sagacious, more attached, and fitter for his place on the hearth-rug, than a pointer — not," he added, "from any deficiency of intellects on the pointer's part, but he is generally so abused while in the management of brutal breakers and grooms, that he loses all excepting his professional accomplishments, of finding and standing steady to game."

"And who the d — I desires he should have more?" said Sir Bingo.

"Many people, Sir Bingo," replied Tyrrel, "have been of opinion, that both dogs and men may follow sport indifferently well, though they do happen, at the same time, to be fit for mixing in friendly intercourse in society."

"That is for licking trenches, and scratching copper, I suppose," said the Baronet, *sotto voce*; and added, in a louder and more distinct tone — "He never before heard that a setter was fit to follow any man's heels but a poacher's."

"You know it now then, Sir Bingo," answered Tyrrel; "and I hope you will not fall into so great a mistake again."

The Peace-maker here seemed to think his interference necessary, and, surmounting his taciturnity, made the following pithy speech:—"By Cot! and do you see, as you are looking for my opinion, I think there is no dispute in the matter — because, by Cot! it occurs to me, d'ye see, that ye are both right, by Cot! It may do fery well for my excellent friend Sir Bingo, who hath stables, and kennels, and what not, to maintain the six filthy prutes that are yelping and yowling all the tay, and all the neight too, under my window, by Cot! — And if they are yelping and yowling there, may I never die but I wish they were yelping and yowling somewhere else. But then there is many a man who may be as cood a gentleman at the bottom as my worthy friend Sir Bingo, though it may be that he is poor; and if he is poor — and as if it might be my own case, or that of this honest gentleman, Mr. Tirl — is that a reason or a law, that he is not to keep a prute of a tog, to help him to take his sports and his pleasures? and if he has not a stable or a kennel to put the crature into, must he not keep it in his pit of ped-room, or upon his parlour hearth, seeing that Luckie Dods would make the kitchen too hot for the paist — and so, if Mr. Tirl finds a setter more fitter for his purpose than a pointer, by Cot, I know no law against it, else may I never die the black death."

If this oration appear rather long for the occasion, the reader must recollect that Captain MacTurk had in all probability the trouble of translating it from the periphrastic language of Ossian, in which it was originally conceived in his own mind.

The Man of Law replied to the Man of Peace, "Ye are mistaken for ance in your life, Captain, for there is a law against setters; and I will undertake to prove them to be the 'lying dogs,' which are mentioned in the auld Scots statute, and which all and sundry are discharged to keep, under a penalty of"——

Here the Captain broke in, with a very solemn mien and dignified manner — "By Cot! Master Meiklewham, and I shall be asking what you mean by talking to me of peing mistaken, and apout lying togs, sir — because I would have you to know, and to pelieve, and to very well consider, that I never was mistaken in my life, sir, unless it was when I took you for a gentleman."

"No offence, Captain," said Mr. Meiklewham; "dinna break the wand of peace, man, you that should be the first to keep it. — He is as cankered," continued the Man of Law, apart to his patron, "as an auld Hieland terrier, that snaps at whatever comes near it — but I tell you ae thing, St. Ronan's, and that is on saul and conscience, that I believe this is the very lad Tirl, that I raised a summons against before the justices — him and another hempie — in your father's time, for shooting on the Spring-well-head muirs."

"The devil you did, Mick!" replied the Lord of the Manor, also aside; — "Well, I am obliged to you for giving me some reason for the ill thoughts I had of him — I knew he was some trumpery scamp — I'll blow him, by"——

"Whisht — stop — hush — haud your tongue, St. Ronan's — keep a calm sough — ye see, I intended the process, by your worthy father's desire, before the Quarter Sessions — but I ken na — The auld sheriff-clerk stood the lad's friend — and some of the justices thought it was but a mistake of the marches, and sae we couldna get a judgment — and your father was very ill of the gout, and I was feared to vex him, and so I was fain to let the process sleep, for fear they had been assoltied. — Sae ye had better gang cautiously to wark, St. Ronan's, for though they were summoned, they were not convict."

"Could you not take up the action again?" said Mr. Mowbray.

"Whew! it's been prescribed sax or seeven year syne. It is a great shame, St. Ronan's, that the game laws, whilk are the very best protection that is left to country gentlemen against the encroachment of their inferiors, rin sae short a course of prescription — a poacher may just jink ye back and forward like a flea in a blanket, (wi' pardon)— hap ye out of ae county and into anither at their pleasure, like pyots — and unless ye get your thumb-nail on them in the very nick o' time, ye may dine on a dish of prescription, and sup upon an absolvitor."

"It is a shame indeed," said Mowbray, turning from his confident and agent, and addressing himself to the company in general, yet not without a peculiar look directed to Tyrrel.

"What is a shame, sir?" said Tyrrel, conceiving that the observation was particularly addressed to him.

"That we should have so many poachers upon our muirs, sir," answered St. Ronan's. "I sometimes regret having countenanced the Well here, when I think how many guns it has brought on my property every season."

"Hout fie! hout awa, St. Ronan's!" said his Man of Law; "no countenance the Waal? What would the country-side be without it, I would be glad to ken? It's the greatest improvement that has been made on this country since the year forty-five. Na, na, it's no the Waal that's to blame for the poaching and delinquencies on the game. We maun to the Aultoun for the howf of that kind of cattle. Our rules at the Waal are clear and express against trespassers on the game."

"I can't think," said the Squire, "what made my father sell the property of the old change-house yonder, to the hag that keeps it open out of spite, I think, and to harbour poachers and vagabonds! — I cannot conceive what made him do so foolish a thing!"

"Probably because your father wanted money, sir," said Tyrrel, dryly; "and my worthy landlady, Mrs. Dods, had got some. — You know, I presume, sir, that I lodge there?"

"Oh, sir," replied Mowbray, in a tone betwixt scorn and civility, "you cannot suppose the present company is alluded to; I only presumed to mention as a fact, that we have been annoyed with unqualified people shooting on our grounds, without either liberty or license. And I hope to have her sign taken down for it — that is all. — There was the same plague in my father's days, I think, Mick?"

But Mr. Meiklewham, who did not like Tyrrel's looks so well as to induce him to become approver on the occasion, replied with an inarticulate grunt, addressed to the company, and a private admonition to his patron's own ear, "to let sleeping dogs lie."

"I can scarce forbear the fellow," said St. Ronan's; "and yet I cannot well tell where my dislike to him lies — but it would be d —— d folly to turn out with him for nothing; and so, honest Mick, I will be as quiet as I can."

"And that you may be so," said Meiklewham, "I think you had best take no more wine."

"I think so too," said the Squire; "for each glass I drink in his company gives me the heartburn — yet the man is not different from other raffs either — but there is a something about him intolerable to me."

So saying, he pushed back his chair from the table, and — *regis ad exemplar* — after the pattern of the Laird, all the company arose.

Sir Bingo got up with reluctance, which he testified by two or three deep growls, as he followed the rest of the company into the outer apartment, which served as an entrance-hall, and divided the dining-parlour from the tea-room, as it was called. Here, while the party were assuming their hats, for the purpose of joining the ladies' society, (which old-fashioned folk used only to take up for that of going into the open air,) Tyrrel asked a smart footman, who stood near, to hand him the hat which lay on the table beyond.

"Call your own servant, sir," answered the fellow, with the true insolence of a pampered menial.

"Your master," answered Tyrrel, "ought to have taught you good manners, my friend, before bringing you here."

"Sir Bingo Binks is my master," said the fellow, in the same insolent tone as before.

"Now for it, Bingie," said Mowbray, who was aware that the Baronet's pot-courage had arrived at fighting pitch.

"Yes!" said Sir Bingo aloud, and more articulately than usual — "The fellow is my servant — what has any one to say to it?"

"I at least have my mouth stopped," answered Tyrrel, with perfect composure. "I should have been surprised to have found Sir Bingo's servant better bred than himself."

"What d'ye mean by that, sir?" said Sir Bingo, coming up in an offensive attitude, for he was no mean pupil of the Fives-Court — "What d'ye mean by that? D——n you, sir! I'll serve you out before you can say dumpling."

"And I, Sir Bingo, unless you presently lay aside that look and manner, will knock you down before you can cry help."

The visitor held in his hand a slip of oak, with which he gave a flourish, that, however slight, intimated some acquaintance with the noble art of single-stick. From this demonstration Sir Bingo thought it prudent somewhat to recoil, though backed by a party of friends, who, in their zeal for his honour, would rather have seen his bones broken in conflict bold, than his honour injured by a discreditable retreat; and Tyrrel seemed to have some inclination to indulge them. But, at the very instant when his hand was raised with a motion of no doubtful import, a whispering voice, close to his ear, pronounced the emphatic words — "Are you a man?"

Not the thrilling tone with which our inimitable Siddons used to electrify the scene, when she uttered the same whisper, ever had a more powerful effect upon an auditor, than had these unexpected sounds on him, to whom they were now addressed. Tyrrel forgot every thing — his quarrel — the circumstances in which he was placed — the company. The crowd was to him at once annihilated, and life seemed to have no other object than to follow the person who had spoken. But suddenly as he turned, the disappearance of the monitor was at least equally so, for, amid the group of commonplace countenances by which he was surrounded, there was none which assorted to the tone and words, which possessed such a power over him. "Make way," he said, to those who surrounded him; and it was in the tone of one who was prepared, if necessary, to make way for himself.

Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's stepped forward. "Come, sir," said he, "this will not do — you have come here, a stranger among us, to assume airs and dignities, which, by G—— d, would become a duke, or a prince! We must know who or what you are, before we permit you to carry your high tone any farther."

This address seemed at once to arrest Tyrrel's anger, and his impatience to leave the company. He turned to Mowbray, collected his thoughts for an instant, and then answered him thus:—"Mr. Mowbray, I seek no quarrel with any one here — with you, in particular, I am most unwilling to have any disagreement. I came here by invitation, not certainly expecting much pleasure, but, at the same time, supposing myself secure from incivility. In the last point, I find myself mistaken, and therefore wish the company good-night. I must also make my adieus to the ladies."

So saying, he walked several steps, yet, as it seemed, rather irresolutely, towards the door of the card-room — and then, to the increased surprise of the company, stopped suddenly, and muttering something about the "unfitness of the time," turned on his heel, and bowing haughtily, as there was way made for him, walked in the opposite direction towards the door which led to the outer hall.

"D—— me, Sir Bingo, will you let him off?" said Mowbray, who seemed to delight in pushing his friend into new scrapes — "To him, man — to him — he shows the white feather."

Sir Bingo, thus encouraged, planted himself with a look of defiance exactly between Tyrrel and the door; upon which the retreating guest, bestowing on him most emphatically the epithet Fool, seized him by the collar, and flung him out of his way with some violence.

"I am to be found at the Old Town of St. Ronan's by whomsoever has any concern with me." — Without waiting the issue of this aggression farther than to utter these words, Tyrrel left the hotel. He stopped in the court-yard, however, with the air of one uncertain whither he intended to go, and who was desirous to ask some question, which seemed to die upon his tongue. At length his eye fell upon a groom, who stood not far from the door of the inn, holding in his hand a handsome pony, with a side-saddle.

"Whose" — said Tyrrel — but the rest of the question he seemed unable to utter.

The man, however, replied, as if he had heard the whole interrogation. — "Miss Mowbray's, sir, of St. Ronan's — she leaves directly — and so I am walking the pony — a clever thing, sir, for a lady."

"She returns to Shaws-Castle by the Buck-stane road?"

"I suppose so, sir," said the groom. "It is the nighest, and Miss Clara cares little for rough roads. Zounds! She can spank it over wet and dry."

Tyrrel turned away from the man, and hastily left the hotel — not, however, by the road which led to the Aultoun, but by a footpath among the natural copsewood, which, following the course of the brook, intersected the usual horse-road to Shaws-Castle, the seat of Mr. Mowbray, at a romantic spot called the Buck-stane.

In a small peninsula, formed by a winding of the brook, was situated, on a rising hillock, a large rough-hewn pillar of stone, said by tradition to commemorate the fall of a stag of unusual speed, size, and strength, whose flight, after having lasted through a whole summer's day, had there terminated in death, to the honour and glory of some ancient baron of St. Ronan's, and of his stanch hounds. During the periodical cuttings of the copse, which the necessities of the family of St. Ronan's brought round more frequently than Ponty would have recommended, some oaks had been spared in the neighbourhood of this massive obelisk, old enough perhaps to have heard the whoop and halloo which followed the fall of the stag, and to have witnessed the raising of the rude monument by which that great event was commemorated. These trees, with their broad spreading boughs, made a twilight even of noon-day; and, now that the sun was approaching its setting point, their shade already anticipated night. This was especially the case where three or four of them stretched their arms over a deep gully, through which winded the horse-path to Shaws-Castle, at a point about a pistol-shot distant from the Buck-stane. As the principal access to Mr. Mowbray's mansion was by a carriage-way, which passed in a different direction, the present path was left almost in a state of nature, full of large stones, and broken by gullies, delightful, from the varied character of its banks, to the picturesque traveller, and most inconvenient, nay dangerous, to him who had a stumbling horse.

The footpath to the Buck-stane, which here joined the bridle-road, had been constructed, at the expense of a subscription, under the direction of Mr. Winterblossom, who had taste enough to see the beauties of this secluded spot, which was exactly such as in earlier times might have harboured the ambush of some marauding chief. This recollection had not escaped Tyrrel, to whom the whole scenery was familiar, who now hastened to the spot, as one which peculiarly suited his present purpose. He sat down by one of the larger projecting trees, and, screened by its enormous branches from observation, was enabled to watch the road from the Hotel for a great part of its extent, while he was himself invisible to any who might travel upon it.

Meanwhile his sudden departure excited a considerable sensation among the party whom he had just left, and who were induced to form conclusions not very favourable to his character. Sir Bingo, in particular, blustered loudly and more loudly, in proportion to the increasing distance betwixt himself and his antagonist, declaring his resolution to be revenged on the scoundrel for his insolence — to drive him from the neighbourhood — and I know not what other menaces of formidable import. The devil, in the old stories of *diablerie*, was always sure to start up at the elbow of any one who nursed diabolical purposes, and only wanted a little backing from the foul fiend to carry his imaginations into action. The noble Captain MacTurk had so far this property of his infernal majesty, that the least hint of an approaching quarrel drew him always to the vicinity of the party concerned. He was now at Sir Bingo's side, and was taking his own view of the matter, in his character of peace-maker.

"By Cot! and it's very exceedingly true, my goot friend, Sir Binco — and as you say, it concerns your honour, and the honour of the place, and credit and character of the whole company, by Cot! that this matter be properly looked after; for, as I think, he laid hands on your body, my excellent goot friend."

"Hands, Captain MacTurk!" exclaimed Sir Bingo, in some confusion; "no, blast him — not so bad as that neither — if he had, I should have handed *him* over the window — but, by — — the fellow had the impudence to offer to collar me — I had just stepped back to square at him, when, curse me, the blackguard ran away."

"Right, vara right, Sir Bingo," said the Man of Law, "a vara perfect blackguard, a poaching sorning sort of fallow, that I will have scoured out of the country before he be three days aulder. Fash you your beard nae farther about the matter, Sir Bingo."

"By Cot! but I can tell you, Mr. Meiklewham," said the Man of Peace, with great solemnity of visage, "that you are scalding your lips in other folk's kale, and that it is necessary for the credit, and honour, and respect of this company, at the Well of St. Ronan's, that Sir Bingo goes by more competent advice than yours upon the present occasion, Mr. Meiklewham; for though your counsel may do very well in a small debt court, here, you see, Mr. Meiklewham, is a question of honour, which is not a thing in your line, as I take it."

"No, before George! it is not," answered Meiklewham; "e'en take it all to yoursell, Captain, and meikle ye are likely to make on't."

"Then," said the Captain, "Sir Binco, I will beg the favour of your company to the smoking room, where we may have a cigar and a glass of gin-twist; and we will consider how the honour of the company must be supported and upholden upon the present conjuncture."

The Baronet complied with this invitation, as much, perhaps, in consequence of the medium through which the Captain intended to convey his warlike counsels, as for the pleasure with which he anticipated the result of these counsels themselves. He followed the military step of his leader, whose stride was more stiff, and his form more perpendicular, when exalted by the consciousness of an approaching quarrel, to the smoking-room, where, sighing as he lighted his cigar, Sir Bingo prepared to listen to the words of wisdom and valour, as they should flow in mingled stream from the lips of Captain MacTurk.

Meanwhile the rest of the company joined the ladies. "Here has been Clara," said Lady Penelope to Mr. Mowbray; "here has been Miss Mowbray among us, like the ray of a sun which does but dazzle and die."

"Ah, poor Clara," said Mowbray; "I thought I saw her thread her way through the crowd a little while since, but I was not sure."

"Well," said Lady Penelope, "she has asked us all up to Shaws-Castle on Thursday, to a *déjeûner à la fourchette* — I trust you confirm your sister's invitation, Mr. Mowbray?"

"Certainly, Lady Penelope," replied Mowbray; "and I am truly glad Clara has had the grace to think of it — How we shall acquit ourselves is a different question, for neither she nor I are much accustomed to play host or hostess."

"Oh! it will be delightful, I am sure," said Lady Penelope; "Clara has a grace in every thing she does; and you, Mr. Mowbray, can be a perfectly well-bred gentleman — when you please."

"That qualification is severe — Well — good manners be my speed — I will certainly please to do my best, when I see your ladyship at Shaws-Castle, which has received no company this many a day. — Clara and I have lived a wild life of it, each in their own way."

"Indeed, Mr. Mowbray," said Lady Binks, "if I might presume to speak — I think you do suffer your sister to ride about a little too much without an attendant. I know Miss Mowbray rides as woman never rode before, but still an accident may happen."

"An accident?" replied Mowbray — "Ah, Lady Binks! accidents happen as frequently when ladies *have* attendants as when they are without them."

Lady Binks, who, in her maiden state, had cantered a good deal about these woods under Sir Bingo's escort, coloured, looked spiteful, and was silent.

"Besides," said John Mowbray, more lightly, "where is the risk, after all? There are no wolves in our woods to eat up our pretty Red-Riding Hoods; and no lions either — except those of Lady Penelope's train."

"Who draw the car of Cybele," said Mr. Chatterly.

Lady Penelope luckily did not understand the allusion, which was indeed better intended than imagined.

"Apropos!" she said; "what have you done with the great lion of the day? I see Mr. Tyrrel nowhere — Is he finishing an additional bottle with Sir Bingo?"

"Mr. Tyrrel, madam," said Mowbray, "has acted successively the lion rampant, and the lion passant: he has been quarrelsome, and he has run away — fled from the ire of your doughty knight, Lady Binks."

"I am sure I hope not," said Lady Binks; "my Chevalier's unsuccessful campaigns have been unable to overcome his taste for quarrels — a victory would make a fighting-man of him for life."

"That inconvenience might bring its own consolations," said Winterblossom, apart to Mowbray; "quarrellers do not usually live long."

"No, no," replied Mowbray, "the lady's despair, which broke out just now, even in her own despite, is quite natural — absolutely legitimate. Sir Bingo will give her no chance that way."

Mowbray then made his bow to Lady Penelope, and in answer to her request that he would join the ball or the card-table, observed, that he had no time to lose; that the heads of the old domestics at Shaws-Castle would be by this time absolutely turned, by the apprehensions of what Thursday was to bring forth; and that as Clara would certainly give no directions for the proper arrangements, it was necessary that he should take that trouble himself.

"If you ride smartly," said Lady Penelope, "you may save even a temporary alarm, by overtaking Clara, dear creature, ere she gets home — She sometimes suffers her pony to go at will along the lane, as slow as Betty Foy's."

"Ah, but then," said little Miss Digges, "Miss Mowbray sometimes gallops as if the lark was a snail to her pony — and it quite frights one to see her."

The Doctor touched Mrs. Blower, who had approached so as to be on the verge of the genteel circle, though she did not venture within it — they exchanged sagacious looks, and a most pitiful shake of the head. Mowbray's eye happened at that moment to glance on them; and doubtless, notwithstanding their hasting to compose their countenances to a different expression, he comprehended what was passing through their minds; — and perhaps it awoke a corresponding note in his own. He took his hat, and with a cast of thought upon his countenance which it seldom wore, left the apartment. A moment afterwards his horse's feet were heard spurning the pavement, as he started off at a sharp pace.

"There is something singular about these Mowbrays to-night," said Lady Penelope. — "Clara, poor dear angel, is always particular; but I should have thought Mowbray had too much worldly wisdom to be fanciful. — What are you consulting your *souvenir* for with such attention, my dear Lady Binks?"

"Only for the age of the moon," said her ladyship, putting the little tortoise-shell-bound calendar into her reticule; and having done so, she proceeded to assist Lady Penelope in the arrangements for the evening.

Chapter 9 The Meeting.

*We meet as shadows in the land of dreams,
Which speak not but in signs.*

ANONYMOUS.

Behind one of the old oaks which we have described in the preceding chapter, shrouding himself from observation like a hunter watching for his game, or an Indian for his enemy, but with different, very different purpose, Tyrrel lay on his breast near the Buck-stane, his eye on the horse-road which wended down the valley, and his ear alertly awake to every sound which mingled with the passing breeze, or with the ripple of the brook.

"To have met her in yonder congregated assembly of brutes and fools" — such was a part of his internal reflections — "had been little less than an act of madness — madness almost equal in its degree to that cowardice which has hitherto prevented my approaching her, when our eventful meeting might have taken place unobserved. — But now — now — my resolution is as fixed as the place is itself favourable. I will not wait till some chance again shall throw us together, with an hundred malignant eyes to watch, and wonder, and stare, and try in vain to account for the expression of feelings which I might find it impossible to suppress. — Hark — hark! — I hear the tread of a horse — No — it was the changeful sound of the water rushing over the pebbles. Surely she cannot have taken the other road to Shaws-Castle! — No — the sounds become distinct — her figure is visible on the path, coming swiftly forward. — Have I the courage to show myself? — I have — the hour is come, and what must be shall be."

Yet this resolution was scarcely formed ere it began to fluctuate, when he reflected upon the fittest manner of carrying it into execution. To show himself at a distance, might give the lady an opportunity of turning back and avoiding the interview which he had determined upon — to hide himself till the moment when her horse, in rapid motion, should pass his lurking-place, might be attended with danger to the rider — and while he hesitated which course to pursue, there was some chance of his missing the opportunity of presenting himself to Miss Mowbray at all. He was himself sensible of this, formed a hasty and desperate resolution not to suffer the present moment to escape, and, just as the ascent induced the pony to slacken its pace, Tyrrel stood in the middle of the defile, about six yards distant from the young lady.

She pulled up the reins, and stopped as if arrested by a thunderbolt. — "Clara!" — "Tyrrel!" These were the only words which were exchanged between them, until Tyrrel, moving his feet as slowly as if they had been of lead, began gradually to diminish the distance which lay betwixt them. It was then that, observing his closer approach, Miss Mowbray called out with great eagerness — "No nearer — no nearer! — So long have I endured your presence, but if you approach me more closely, I shall be mad indeed!"

"What do you fear?" said Tyrrel, in a hollow voice — "What can you fear?" and he continued to draw nearer, until they were within a pace of each other.

Clara, meanwhile, dropping her bridle, clasped her hands together, and held them up towards Heaven, muttering, in a voice scarcely audible, "Great God! — If this apparition be formed by my heated fancy, let it pass away; if it be real, enable me to bear its presence! — Tell me, I conjure you, are you Francis Tyrrel in blood and body, or is this but one of those wandering visions, that have crossed my path and glared on me, but without daring to abide my steadfast glance?"

"I am Francis Tyrrel," answered he, "in blood and body, as much as she to whom I speak is Clara Mowbray."

"Then God have mercy on us both!" said Clara, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Amen!" said Tyrrel. — "But what avails this excess of agitation? — You saw me but now, Miss Mowbray — Your voice still rings in my ears — You saw me but now — you spoke to me — and that when I was among strangers — Why not preserve your composure, when we are where no human eye can see — no human ear can hear?"

"Is it so?" said Clara; "and was it indeed yourself whom I saw even now? — I thought so, and something I said at the time — but my brain has been but ill settled since we last met — But I am well now — quite well — I have invited all the people yonder to come to Shaws-Castle — my brother desired me to do it — I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Tyrrel there — though I think there is some old grudge between my brother and you."

"Alas! Clara, you mistake. Your brother I have scarcely seen," replied Tyrrel, much distressed, and apparently uncertain in what tone to address her, which might soothe, and not irritate her mental malady, of which he could now entertain no doubt.

"True — true," she said, after a moment's reflection, "my brother was then at college. It was my father, my poor father, whom you had some quarrel with. — But you will come to Shaws-Castle on Thursday, at two o'clock? — John will be glad to see you — he can be kind when he pleases — and then we will talk of old times — I must get on, to have things ready — Good evening."

She would have passed him, but he took gently hold of the rein of her bridle. — "I will walk with you, Clara," he said; "the road is rough and dangerous — you ought not to ride fast. — I will walk along with you, and we will talk of former times now, more conveniently than in company."

"True — true — very true, Mr. Tyrrel — it shall be as you say. My brother obliges me sometimes to go into company at that hateful place down yonder; and I do so because he likes it, and because the folks let me have my own way, and come and go as I list. Do you know, Tyrrel, that very often when I am there, and John has his eye on me, I can carry it on as gaily as if you and I had never met?"

"I would to God we never had," said Tyrrel, in a trembling voice, "since this is to be the end of all!"

"And wherefore should not sorrow be the end of sin and of folly? And when did happiness come of disobedience? — And when did sound sleep visit a bloody pillow? That is what I say to myself, Tyrrel, and that is what you must learn to say too, and then you will bear your burden as cheerfully as I endure mine. If we have no more than our deserts, why should we complain? — You are shedding tears, I think — Is not that childish? — They say it is a relief — if so, weep on, and I will look another way."

Tyrrel walked on by the pony's side, in vain endeavouring to compose himself so as to reply.

"Poor Tyrrel," said Clara, after she had remained silent for some time — "Poor Frank Tyrrel! — Perhaps you will say in your turn, Poor Clara — but I am not so poor in spirit as you — the blast may bend, but it shall never break me."

There was another long pause; for Tyrrel was unable to determine with himself in what strain he could address the unfortunate young lady, without awakening recollections equally painful to her feelings, and dangerous, when her precarious state of health was considered. At length she herself proceeded:—

"What needs all this, Tyrrel? — and indeed, why came you here? — Why did I find you but now brawling and quarrelling among the loudest of the brawlers and quarrellers of yonder idle and dissipated debauchees? — You were used to have more temper — more sense. Another person — ay, another that you and I once knew — he might have committed such a folly, and he would have acted perhaps in character. — But you, who pretend to wisdom — for shame, for shame! — And indeed, when we talk of that, what wisdom was there in coming hither at all? — or what good purpose can your remaining here serve? — Surely you need not come, either to renew your own unhappiness or to augment mine?"

"To augment yours — God forbid!" answered Tyrrel. "No — I came hither only because, after so many years of wandering, I longed to revisit the spot where all my hopes lay buried."

"Ay — buried is the word," she replied, "crushed down and buried when they budded fairest. I often think of it, Tyrrel; and there are times when, Heaven help me! I can think of little else. — Look at me — you remember what I was — see what grief and solitude have made me."

She flung back the veil which surrounded her riding-hat, and which had hitherto hid her face. It was the same countenance which he had formerly known in all the bloom of early beauty; but though the beauty remained, the bloom was fled for ever. Not the agitation of exercise — not that which arose from the pain and confusion of this unexpected interview, had called to poor Clara's cheek even the momentary semblance of colour. Her complexion was marble-white, like that of the finest piece of statuary.

"Is it possible?" said Tyrrel; "can grief have made such ravages?"

"Grief," replied Clara, "is the sickness of the mind, and its sister is the sickness of the body — they are twin-sisters, Tyrrel, and are seldom long separate. Sometimes the body's disease comes first, and dims our eyes and palsies our hands, before the fire of our mind and of our intellect is quenched. But mark me — soon after comes her cruel sister with her urn, and sprinkles cold dew on our hopes and on our loves, our memory, our recollections, and our feelings, and shows us that they cannot survive the decay of our bodily powers."

"Alas!" said Tyrrel, "is it come to this?"

"To this," she replied, speaking from the rapid and irregular train of her own ideas, rather than comprehending the purport of his sorrowful exclamation — "to this it must ever come, while immortal souls are wedded to the perishable substance of which our bodies are composed. There is another state, Tyrrel, in which it will be otherwise — God grant our time of enjoying it were come!"

She fell into a melancholy pause, which Tyrrel was afraid to disturb. The quickness with which she spoke, marked but too plainly the irregular succession of thought, and he was obliged to restrain the agony of his own feelings, rendered more acute by a thousand painful recollections, lest, by giving way to his expressions of grief, he should throw her into a still more disturbed state of mind.

"I did not think," she proceeded, "that after so horrible a separation, and so many years, I could have met you thus calmly and reasonably. But although what we were formerly to each other can never be forgotten, it is now all over, and we are only friends — Is it not so?"

Tyrrel was unable to reply.

"But I must not remain here," she said, "till the evening grows darker on me. — We shall meet again, Tyrrel — meet as friends — nothing more — You will come up to Shaws-Castle and see me? — no need of secrecy now — my poor father is in his grave, and his prejudices sleep with him — my brother John is kind, though he is stern and severe sometimes — Indeed, Tyrrel, I believe he loves me, though he has taught me to tremble at his frown when I am in spirits, and talk too much — But he loves me, at least I think so, for I am sure I love him; and I try to go down amongst them yonder, and to endure their folly, and, all things considered, I do carry on the farce of life wonderfully well — We are but actors, you know, and the world but a stage."

"And ours has been a sad and tragic scene," said Tyrrel, in the bitterness of his heart, unable any longer to refrain from speech.

"It has indeed — but, Tyrrel, when was it otherwise with engagements formed in youth and in folly? You and I would, you know, become men and women, while we were yet scarcely more than children — We have run, while yet in our nonage, through the passions and adventures of youth, and therefore we are now old before our day, and the winter of our life has come on ere its summer was well begun. — O Tyrrel! often and often have I thought of this! — Thought of it often? Alas, when will the time come that I shall be able to think of any thing else!"

The poor young woman sobbed bitterly, and her tears began to flow with a freedom which they had not probably enjoyed for a length of time. Tyrrel walked on by the side of her horse, which now prosecuted its road homewards, unable to devise a proper mode of addressing the unfortunate young lady, and fearing alike to awaken her passions and his own. Whatever he might have proposed to say, was disconcerted by the plain indications that her mind was clouded, more or less slightly, with a shade of insanity, which deranged, though it had not destroyed, her powers of judgment.

At length he asked her, with as much calmness as he could assume — if she was contented — if aught could be done to render her situation more easy — if there was aught of which she could complain which he might be able to remedy? She answered gently, that she was calm and resigned, when her brother would permit her to stay at home; but that when she was brought into society, she experienced such a change as that which the water of the brook that slumbers in a crystalline pool of the rock may be supposed to feel, when, gliding from its quiet bed, it becomes involved in the hurry of the cataract.

"But my brother Mowbray," she said, "thinks he is right — and perhaps he is so. There are things on which we may ponder too long; — and were he mistaken, why should I not constrain myself in order to please him — there are so few left to whom I can now give either pleasure or pain? — I am a gay girl, too, in conversation, Tyrrel — still as gay for a moment, as when you used to chide me for my folly. So, now I have told you all — I have one question to ask on my part — one question — if I had but breath to ask it — Is *he* still alive?"

"He lives," answered Tyrrel, but in a tone so low, that nought but the eager attention which Miss Mowbray paid could possibly have caught such feeble sounds.

"Lives!" she exclaimed — "lives! — he lives, and the blood on your hand is not then indelibly imprinted — O Tyrrel, did you but know the joy which this assurance gives to me!"

"Joy!" replied Tyrrel — "joy, that the wretch lives who has poisoned our happiness for ever? — lives, perhaps, to claim you for his own?"

"Never, never shall he — dare he do so," replied Clara, wildly, "while water can drown, while cords can strangle, steel pierce — while there is a precipice on the hill, a pool in the river — never — never!"

"Be not thus agitated, my dearest Clara," said Tyrrel; "I spoke I know not what — he lives indeed — but far distant, and, I trust, never again to revisit Scotland."

He would have said more, but that, agitated with fear or passion, she struck her horse impatiently with her riding-whip. The spirited animal, thus stimulated and at the same time restrained, became intractable, and reared so much, that Tyrrel, fearful of the consequences, and trusting to Clara's skill as a horsewoman, thought he best consulted her safety in letting go the rein. The animal instantly sprung forward on the broken and hilly path at a very rapid pace, and was soon lost to Tyrrel's anxious eyes.

As he stood pondering whether he ought not to follow Miss Mowbray towards Shaws-Castle, in order to be satisfied that no accident had befallen her on the road, he heard the tread of a horse's feet advancing hastily in the same direction, leading from the hotel. Unwilling to be observed at this moment, he stepped aside

under shelter of the underwood, and presently afterwards saw Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, followed by a groom, ride hastily past his lurking-place, and pursue the same road which had been just taken by his sister. The presence of her brother seemed to assure Miss Mowbray's safety, and so removed Tyrrel's chief reason for following her. Involved in deep and melancholy reflection upon what had passed, nearly satisfied that his longer residence in Clara's vicinity could only add to her unhappiness and his own, yet unable to tear himself from that neighbourhood, or to relinquish feelings which had become entwined with his heart-strings, he returned to his lodgings in the Aultoun, in a state of mind very little to be envied.

Tyrrel, on entering his apartment, found that it was not lighted, nor were the Abigails of Mrs. Dods quite so alert as a waiter at Long's might have been, to supply him with candles. Unapt at any time to exact much personal attendance, and desirous to shun at that moment the necessity of speaking to any person whatever, even on the most trifling subject, he walked down into the kitchen to supply himself with what he wanted. He did not at first observe that Mrs. Dods herself was present in this the very centre of her empire, far less that a lofty air of indignation was seated on the worthy matron's brow. At first it only vented itself in broken soliloquy and interjections; as, for example, "Vera bonny wark this! — vera creditable wark, indeed! — a decent house to be disturbed at these hours — Keep a public — as weel keep a bedlam!"

Finding these murmurs attracted no attention, the dame placed herself betwixt her guest and the door, to which he was now retiring with his lighted candle, and demanded of him what was the meaning of such behaviour.

"Of what behaviour, madam?" said her guest, repeating her question in a tone of sternness and impatience so unusual with him, that perhaps she was sorry at the moment that she had provoked him out of his usual patient indifference; nay, she might even feel intimidated at the altercation she had provoked, for the resentment of a quiet and patient person has always in it something formidable to the professed and habitual grumbler. But her pride was too great to think of a retreat, after having sounded the signal for contest, and so she continued, though in a tone somewhat lowered.

"Maister Tirl, I wad but just ask you, that are a man of sense, whether I hae ony right to take your behaviour weel? Here have you been these ten days and mair, eating the best, and drinking the best, and taking up the best room in my house; and now to think of your gaun down and taking up with yon idle harebrained cattle at the Waal — I maun e'en be plain wi' ye — I like nane of the fair-fashioned folk that can say My Jo and think it no; and therefore" —

"Mrs. Dods," said Tyrrel, interrupting her, "I have no time at present for trifles. I am obliged to you for your attention while I have been in your house; but the disposal of my time, here or elsewhere, must be according to my own ideas of pleasure or business — If you are tired of me as a guest, send in your bill tomorrow."

"My bill!" said Mrs. Dods; "my bill tomorrow! And what for no wait till Saturday, when it may be cleared atween us, plack and bawbee, as it was on Saturday last?"

"Well — we will talk of it tomorrow, Mrs. Dods — Good-night." And he withdrew accordingly.

Luckie Dods stood ruminating for a moment. "The deil's in him," she said, "for he winna bide being thrawn. And I think the deil's in me too for throwing him, sic a canny lad, and sae gude a customer; — and I am judging he has something on his mind — want of siller it canna be — I am sure if I thought that, I wadna care about my small thing. — But want o' siller it canna be — he pays ower the shillings as if they were slate stanes, and that's no the way that folk part with their siller when there's but little on't — I ken weel eneugh how a customer looks that's near the grund of the purse. — Weel! I hope he winna mind ony thing of this nonsense the morn, and I'll try to guide my tongue something better. — Hegh, sirs! but, as the minister says, it's an unruly member — troth, I am whiles ashamed o't mysell."

Chapter 10 Resources.

*Come, let me have thy counsel, for I need it;
Thou art of those, who better help their friends
With sage advice, than usurers with gold,
Or brawlers with their swords — I'll trust to thee,
For I ask only from thee words, not deeds.*

THE DEVIL HATH MET HIS MATCH.

The day of which we last gave the events chanced to be Monday, and two days therefore intervened betwixt it and that for which the entertainment was fixed, that was to assemble in the halls of the Lord of the Manor the flower of the company now at St. Ronan's Well. The interval was but brief for the preparations necessary on an occasion so unusual; since the house, though delightfully situated, was in very indifferent repair, and for years had never received any visitors, except when some blithe bachelor or fox-hunter shared the hospitality of Mr. Mowbray; an event which became daily more and more uncommon; for, as he himself almost lived at the Well, he generally contrived to receive his companions where it could be done without expense to himself. Besides, the health of his sister afforded an irresistible apology to any of those old-fashioned Scottish gentlemen, who might be too apt (in the rudeness of more primitive days) to consider a friend's house as their own. Mr. Mowbray was now, however, to the great delight of all his companions, nailed down, by invitation given and accepted, and they looked forward to the accomplishment of his promise, with the eagerness which the prospect of some entertaining novelty never fails to produce among idlers.

A good deal of trouble devolved on Mr. Mowbray, and his trusty agent Mr. Meiklewham, before any thing like decent preparation could be made for the ensuing entertainment; and they were left to their unassisted endeavours by Clara, who, during both the Tuesday and Wednesday, obstinately kept herself secluded; nor could her brother, either by threats or flattery, extort from her any light concerning her purpose on the approaching and important Thursday. To do John Mowbray justice, he loved his sister as much as he was capable of loving any thing but himself; and when, in several arguments, he had the mortification to find that she was not to be prevailed on to afford her assistance, he, without complaint, quietly set himself to do the best he could by his own unassisted judgment or opinion with regard to the necessary preparations.

This was not, at present, so easy a task as might be supposed: for Mowbray was ambitious of that character of *ton* and elegance, which masculine faculties alone are seldom capable of attaining on such momentous occasions. The more solid materials of a collation were indeed to be obtained for money from the next market-town, and were purchased accordingly; but he felt it was likely to present the vulgar plenty of a farmer's feast, instead of the elegant entertainment, which might be announced in a corner of the county paper, as given by John Mowbray, Esq. of St. Ronan's, to the gay and fashionable company assembled at that celebrated spring. There was likely to be all sorts of error and irregularity in dishing, and in sending up; for Shaws-Castle boasted neither an accomplished housekeeper, nor a kitchenmaid with a hundred pair of hands to execute her mandates. All the domestic arrangements were on the minutest system of economy consistent with ordinary decency, except in the stables, which were excellent and well kept. But can a groom of the stables perform the labours of a groom of the chambers? or can the gamekeeper arrange in tempting order the carcasses of the birds he has shot, strew them with flowers, and garnish them with piquant sauces? It would be as reasonable to expect a gallant soldier to act as undertaker, and conduct the funeral of the enemy he has slain.

In a word, Mowbray talked, and consulted, and advised, and squabbled, with the deaf cook, and a little old man whom he called the butler, until he at length perceived so little chance of bringing order out of confusion, or making the least advantageous impression on such obdurate understandings as he had to deal with, that he fairly committed the whole matter of the collation, with two or three hearty curses, to the charge of the officials principally concerned, and proceeded to take the state of the furniture and apartments under his consideration.

Here he found himself almost equally helpless; for what male wit is adequate to the thousand little coquetries practised in such arrangements? how can masculine eyes judge of the degree of *demi-jour* which is to be admitted into a decorated apartment, or discriminate where the broad light should be suffered to fall on a tolerable picture, where it should be excluded, lest the stiff daub of a periwigged grandsire should become too rigidly prominent? And if men are unfit for weaving such a fairy web of light and darkness as may best suit furniture, ornaments, and complexions, how shall they be adequate to the yet more mysterious office of arranging, while they disarrange, the various movables in the apartment? so that while all has the air of negligence and chance, the seats are placed as if they had been transported by a wish to the spot most suitable for accommodation; stiffness and confusion are at once avoided, the company are neither limited to a

formal circle of chairs, nor exposed to break their noses over wandering stools; but the arrangements seem to correspond to what ought to be the tone of the conversation, easy, without being confused, and regulated, without being constrained or stiffened.

Then how can a clumsy male wit attempt the arrangement of all the *chiffonerie*, by which old snuff-boxes, heads of canes, pomander boxes, lamer beads, and all the trash usually found in the pigeon-holes of the bureaux of old-fashioned ladies, may be now brought into play, by throwing them, carelessly grouped with other unconsidered trifles, such as are to be seen in the windows of a pawnbroker's shop, upon a marble *encognure*, or a mosaic work-table, thereby turning to advantage the trash and trinketry, which all the old maids or magpies, who have inhabited the mansion for a century, have contrived to accumulate. With what admiration of the ingenuity of the fair artist have I sometimes pried into these miscellaneous groups of *pseudo-bijouterie*, and seen the great grandsire's thumb-ring couchant with the coral and bells of the first-born — and the boatswain's whistle of some old naval uncle, or his silver tobacco-box, redolent of Oroonoko, happily grouped with the mother's ivory comb-case, still odorous of musk, and with some virgin aunt's tortoise-shell spectacle-case, and the eagle's talon of ebony, with which, in the days of long and stiff stays, our grandmothers were wont to alleviate any little irritation in their back or shoulders! Then there was the silver strainer, on which, in more economical times than ours, the lady of the house placed the tea-leaves, after the very last drop had been exhausted, that they might afterwards be hospitably divided among the company, to be eaten with sugar, and with bread and butter. Blessings upon a fashion which has rescued from the claws of abigails, and the melting-pot of the silversmith, those neglected *cimelia*, for the benefit of antiquaries and the decoration of side-tables! But who shall presume to place them there, unless under the direction of female taste? and of that Mr. Mowbray, though possessed of a large stock of such treasures, was for the present entirely deprived.

This digression upon his difficulties is already too long, or I might mention the Laird's inexperience in the art of making the worse appear the better garnishment, of hiding a darned carpet with a new floor-cloth, and flinging an Indian shawl over a faded and threadbare sofa. But I have said enough, and more than enough, to explain his dilemma to an unassisted bachelor, who, without mother, sister, or cousin, without skilful housekeeper, or experienced clerk of the kitchen, or valet of parts and figure, adventures to give an entertainment, and aspires to make it elegant and *comme il faut*.

The sense of his insufficiency was the more vexatious to Mowbray, as he was aware he would find sharp critics in the ladies, and particularly in his constant rival, Lady Penelope Penfeather. He was, therefore, incessant in his exertions; and for two whole days ordered and disordered, demanded, commanded, countermanded, and reprimanded, without pause or cessation. The companion, for he could not be termed an assistant, of his labours, was his trusty agent, who trotted from room to room after him, affording him exactly the same degree of sympathy which a dog doth to his master when distressed in mind, by looking in his face from time to time with a piteous gaze, as if to assure him that he partakes of his trouble, though he neither comprehends the cause or the extent of it, nor has in the slightest degree the power to remove it.

At length when Mowbray had got some matters arranged to his mind, and abandoned a great many which he would willingly have put in better order, he sat down to dinner upon the Wednesday preceding the appointed day, with his worthy aide-decamp, Mr. Meiklewham; and after bestowing a few muttered curses upon the whole concern, and the fantastic old maid who had brought him into the scrape, by begging an invitation, declared that all things might now go to the devil their own way, for so sure as his name was John Mowbray, he would trouble himself no more about them.

Keeping this doughty resolution, he sat down to dinner with his counsel learned in the law; and speedily they dispatched the dish of chops which was set before them, and the better part of the bottle of old port, which served for its menstruum.

"We are well enough now," said Mowbray, "though we have had none of their d — d kickshaws."

"A wamefou' is a wamefou'," said the writer, swabbing his greasy chops, "whether it be of the barleymeal or the bran."

"A cart-horse thinks so," said Mowbray; "but we must do as others do, and gentlemen and ladies are of a different opinion."

"The waur for themselves and the country baith, St. Ronan's — it's the jinketing and the jirbling wi' tea and wi' trumpery that brings our nobles to nine-pence, and mony a het ha'-house to a hired lodging in the Abbey."

The young gentleman paused for a few minutes — filled a bumper, and pushed the bottle to the senior — then said abruptly, "Do you believe in luck, Mick?"

"In luck?" answered the attorney; "what do you mean by the question?"

"Why, because I believe in luck myself — in a good or bad run of luck at cards."

"You wad have mair luck the day, if you had never touched them," replied his confident.

"That is not the question now," said Mowbray; "but what I wonder at is the wretched chance that has attended us miserable Lairds of St. Ronan's for more than a hundred years, that we have always been getting worse in the world, and never better. Never has there been such a backsliding generation, as the parson would say — half the country once belonged to my ancestors, and now the last furrows of it seem to be flying."

"Fleeing!" said the writer, "they are barking and fleeing baith. — This Shaws-Castle here, I'se warrant it flee up the chimney after the rest, were it not weel fastened down with your grandfather's tailzie."

"Damn the tailzie!" said Mowbray; "if they had meant to keep up their estate, they should have entailed it when it was worth keeping: to tie a man down to such an insignificant thing as St. Ronan's, is like tethering a horse on six roods of a Highland moor."

"Ye have broke weel in on the mailing by your feus down at the Well," said Meiklewham, "and raxed ower the tether maybe a wee bit farther than ye had ony right to do."

"It was by your advice, was it not?" said the Laird.

"I'se ne'er deny it, St. Ronan's," answered the writer; "but I am such a gude-natured guse, that I just set about pleasing you as an auld wife pleases a bairn."

"Ay," said the man of pleasure, "when she reaches it a knife to cut its own fingers with. — These acres would have been safe enough, if it had not been for your d — d advice."

"And yet you were grumbling e'en now," said the man of business, "that you have not the power to gar the whole estate flee like a wild-duck across a bog? Troth, you need care little about it; for if you have incurred an irritancy — and sae thinks Mr. Wisebehind, the advocate, upon an A. B. memorial that I laid before him — your sister, or your sister's goodman, if she should take the fancy to marry, might bring a declarator, and evict St. Ronan's frae ye in the course of twa or three sessions."

"My sister will never marry," said John Mowbray.

"That's easily said," replied the writer; "but as broken a ship's come to land. If ony body kend o' the chance she has o' the estate, there's mony a weel-doing man would think little of the bee in her bonnet."

"Harkye, Mr. Meiklewham," said the Laird, "I will be obliged to you if you will speak of Miss Mowbray with the respect due to her father's daughter, and my sister."

"Nae offence, St. Ronan's, nae offence," answered the man of law; "but ilka man maun speak sae as to be understood — that is, when he speaks about business. Ye ken yoursell, that Miss Clara is no just like other folk; and were I you — it's my duty to speak plain — I wad e'en gie in a bit scroll of a petition to the Lords, to be appointed Curator Bonis, in respect of her incapacity to manage her own affairs."

"Meiklewham," said Mowbray, "you are a" — and then stopped short.

"What am I, Mr. Mowbray?" said Meiklewham, somewhat sternly — "What am I? I wad be glad to ken what I am."

"A very good lawyer, I dare say," replied St. Ronan's, who was too much in the power of his agent to give way to his first impulse. "But I must tell you, that rather than take such a measure against poor Clara, as you recommend, I would give her up the estate, and become an ostler or a postilion for the rest of my life."

"Ah, St. Ronan's," said the man of law, "if you had wished to keep up the auld house, you should have taken another trade, than to become an ostler or a postilion. What ailed you, man, but to have been a lawyer as weel as other folk? My auld Maister had a wee bit Latin about *rerum dominos gentemque togatam*, whilk signified, he said, that all lairds should be lawyers."

"All lawyers are likely to become lairds, I think," replied Mowbray; "they purchase our acres by the thousand, and pay us, according to the old story, with a multiplepounding, as your learned friends call it, Mr. Meiklewham."

"Weel — and mightna you have purchased as weel as other folk?"

"Not I," replied the Laird; "I have no turn for that service, I should only have wasted bombazine on my shoulders, and flour upon my three-tailed wig — should but have lounged away my mornings in the Outer-House, and my evenings at the play-house, and acquired no more law than what would have made me a wise justice at a Small-debt Court."

"If you gained little, you would have lost as little," said Meiklewham; "and albeit ye were nae great gun at the bar, ye might aye have gotten a Sheriffdom, or a Commissaryship, amang the lave, to keep the banes green; and sae ye might have saved your estate from deteriorating, if ye didna mend it muckle."

"Yes, but I could not have had the chance of doubling it, as I might have done," answered Mowbray, "had that inconstant jade, Fortune, but stood a moment faithful to me. I tell you, Mick, that I have been, within this twelvemonth, worth a hundred thousand — worth fifty thousand — worth nothing, but the remnant of this wretched estate, which is too little to do one good while it is mine, though, were it sold, I could start again, and mend my hand a little."

"Ay, ay, just fling the helve after the hatchet," said his legal adviser — "that's a' you think of. What signifies winning a hundred thousand pounds, if you win them to lose them a' again?"

"What signifies it?" replied Mowbray. "Why, it signifies as much to a man of spirit, as having won a battle signifies to a general — no matter that he is beaten afterwards in his turn, he knows there is luck for him as well as others, and so he has spirit to try it again. Here is the young Earl of Etherington will be amongst us in a day or two — they say he is up to every thing — if I had but five hundred to begin with, I should be soon up to him."

"Mr. Mowbray," said Meiklewham, "I am sorry for ye. I have been your house's man-of-business — I may say, in some measure, your house's servant — and now I am to see an end of it all, and just by the lad that I thought maist likely to set it up again better than ever; for, to do ye justice, you have aye had an ee to your ain interest, sae far as your lights gaed. It brings tears into my auld een."

"Never weep for the matter, Mick," answered Mowbray; "some of it will stick, my old boy, in your pockets, if not in mine — your service will not be altogether gratuitous, my old friend — the labourer is worthy of his hire."

"Weel I wot is he," said the writer; "but double fees would hardly carry folk through some wark. But if ye will have siller, ye maun have siller — but, I warrant, it goes just where the rest gaed."

"No, by twenty devils!" exclaimed Mowbray, "to fail this time is impossible — Jack Wolverine was too strong for Etherington at any thing he could name; and I can beat Wolverine from the Land's-End to Johnnie Groat's — but there must be something to go upon — the blunt must be had, Mick."

"Very likely — nae doubt — that is always provided it *can* be had," answered the legal adviser.

"That's your business, my old cock," said Mowbray. "This youngster will be here perhaps tomorrow, with money in both pockets — he takes up his rents as he comes down, Mick — think of that, my old friend."

"Weel for them that have rents to take up," said Meiklewham; "ours are lying rather ower low to be lifted at present. — But are you sure this Earl is a man to mell with? — are you sure ye can win of him, and that if you do, he can pay his losings, Mr. Mowbray? — because I have kend mony are come for wool, and gang hame shorn; and though ye are a clever young gentleman, and I am bound to suppose ye ken as much about life as most folk, and all that; yet some gate or other ye have aye come off at the losing hand, as ye have ower much reason to ken this day — howbeit!"

"O, the devil take your gossip, my dear Mick! If you can give no help, spare drowning me with your pother. — Why, man, I was a fresh hand — had my apprentice-fees to pay — and these are no trifles, Mick. — But what of that? — I am free of the company now, and can trade on my own bottom."

"Aweel, aweel, I wish it may be sae," said Meiklewham.

"It will be so, and it shall be so, my trusty friend," replied Mowbray, cheerily, "so you will but help me to the stock to trade with."

"The stock? — what d'ye ca' the stock? I ken nae stock that ye have left."

"But *you* have plenty, my old boy — Come, sell out a few of your three per cents; I will pay difference — interest — exchange — every thing."

"Ay, ay — every thing or naething," answered Meiklewham; "but as you are sae very pressing, I hae been thinking — Whan is the siller wanted?"

"This instant — this day — tomorrow at farthest!" exclaimed the proposed borrower.

"Wh — ew!" whistled the lawyer, with a long prolongation of the note; "the thing is impossible."

"It must be, Mick, for all that," answered Mr. Mowbray, who knew by experience that *impossible*, when uttered by his accommodating friend in this tone, meant only, when interpreted, extremely difficult, and very expensive.

"Then it must be by Miss Clara selling her stock, now that ye speak of stock," said Meiklewham; "I wonder ye didna think of this before."

"I wish you had been dumb rather than that you had mentioned it now," said Mowbray, starting, as if stung by an adder — "What, Clara's pittance! — the trifle my aunt left her for her own fanciful expenses — her own little private store, that she puts to so many good purposes — Poor Clara, that has so little! — And why not rather your own, Master Meiklewham, who call yourself the friend and servant of our family?"

"Ay, St. Ronan's," answered Meiklewham, "that is a' very true — but service is nae inheritance; and as for friendship, it begins at hame, as wise folk have said lang before our time. And for that matter, I think they that are nearest sib should take maist risk. You are nearer and dearer to your sister, St. Ronan's, than you are to poor Saunders Meiklewham, that hasna sae muckle gentle blood as would supper up an hungry flea."

"I will not do this," said St. Ronan's, walking up and down with much agitation; for, selfish as he was, he loved his sister, and loved her the more on account of those peculiarities which rendered his protection indispensable to her comfortable existence — "I will not," he said, "pillage her, come on't what will. I will rather go a volunteer to the continent, and die like a gentleman."

He continued to pace the room in a moody silence, which began to disturb his companion, who had not been hitherto accustomed to see his patron take matters so deeply. At length he made an attempt to attract the attention of the silent and sullen ponderer.

"Mr. Mowbray" — no answer — "I was saying, St. Ronan's" — still no reply. "I have been thinking about this matter — and" —

"And *what*, sir?" said St. Ronan's, stopping short, and speaking in a stern tone of voice.

"And, to speak truth, I see little feasibility in the matter ony way; for if ye had the siller in your pocket today, it would be a' in the Earl of Etherington's the morn."

"Pshaw! you are a fool," answered Mowbray.

"That is not unlikely," said Meiklewham; "but so is Sir Bingo Binks, and yet he's had the better of you, St. Ronan's, this twa or three times."

"It is false! — he has not," answered St. Ronan's, fiercely.

"Weel I wot," resumed Meiklewham, "he took you in about the saumon fish, and some other wager ye lost to him this very day."

"I tell you once more, Meiklewham, you are a fool, and no more up to my trim than you are to the longitude. — Bingo is got shy — I must give him a little line, that is all — then I shall strike him to purpose — I am as sure of him as I am of the other — I know the fly they will both rise to — this cursed want of five hundred will do me out of ten thousand!"

"If you are so certain of being the bangster — so very certain, I mean, of sweeping stakes — what harm will Miss Clara come to by your having the use of her siller? You can make it up to her for the risk ten times told."

"And so I can, by Heaven!" said St. Ronan's. "Mick, you are right, and I am a scrupulous, chicken-hearted fool. Clara shall have a thousand for her poor five hundred — she shall, by —. And I will carry her to Edinburgh for a season, or perhaps to London, and we will have the best advice for her case, and the best company to divert her. And if they think her a little odd — why, d — me, I am her brother, and will bear her through it. Yes — yes — you're right; there can be no hurt in borrowing five hundred of her for a few days, when such profit may be made on't, both for her and me. — Here, fill the glasses, my old boy, and drink success to it, for you are right."

"Here is success to it, with all my heart," answered Meiklewham, heartily glad to see his patron's sanguine temper arrive at this desirable conclusion, and yet willing to hedge in his own credit; "but it is *you* are right, and not *me*, for I advise nothing except on your assurances, that you can make your ain of this English earl, and of this Sir Bingo — and if you can but do that, I am sure it would be unwise and unkind in any one of your friends to stand in your light."

"True, Mick, true," answered Mowbray. — "And yet dice and cards are but bones and pasteboard, and the best horse ever started may slip a shoulder before he get to the winning-post — and so I wish Clara's venture had not been in such a bottom. — But, hang it, care killed a cat — I can hedge as well as any one, if the odds turn up against me — so let us have the cash, Mick."

"Aha! but there go two words to that bargain — the stock stands in my name, and Tam Turnpenny the banker's, as trustees for Miss Clara — Now, get you her letter to us, desiring us to sell out and to pay you the proceeds, and Tam Turnpenny will let you have five hundred pounds *instantly*, on the faith of the transaction; for I fancy you would desire a' the stock to be sold out, and it will produce more than six hundred, or seven hundred pounds either — and I reckon you will be selling out the whole — it's needless making two bites of a cherry."

"True," answered Mowbray; "since we must be rogues, or something like it, let us make it worth our while at least; so give me a form of the letter, and Clara shall copy it — that is, if she consents; for you know she can keep her own opinion as well as any other woman in the world."

"And that," said Meiklewham, "is as the wind will keep its way, preach to it as ye like. But if I might advise about Miss Clara — I wad say naething mair than that I was stressed for the penny money; for I mistake her muckle if she would like to see you ganging to pitch and toss wi' this lord and tither baronet for her aunt's three per cents — I ken she has some queer notions — she gies away the feck of the dividends on that very stock in downright charity."

"And I am in hazard to rob the poor as well as my sister!" said Mowbray, filling once more his own glass and his friend's. "Come, Mick, no sky-lights — here is Clara's health — she is an angel — and I am — what I will not call myself, and suffer no other man to call me. — But I shall win this time — I am sure I shall, since Clara's fortune depends upon it."

"Now, I think, on the other hand," said Meiklewham, "that if any thing should chance wrang, (and Heaven kens that the best-laid schemes will gang ajea,) it will be a great comfort to think that the ultimate losers will only be the poor folk, that have the parish between them and absolute starvation — if your sister spent her ain siller, it would be a very different story."

"Hush, Mick — for God's sake, hush, mine honest friend," said Mowbray; "it is quite true; thou art a rare counsellor in time of need, and hast as happy a manner of reconciling a man's conscience with his necessities, as might set up a score of casuists; but beware, my most zealous counsellor and confessor, how you drive the nail too far — I promise you some of the chaffing you are at just now rather abates my pluck. — Well — give me your scroll — I will to Clara with it — though I would rather meet the best shot in Britain, with ten paces of green sod betwixt us." So saying, he left the apartment.

Chapter 11 Fraternal Love.

*Nearest of blood should still be next in love;
And when I see these happy children playing,
While William gathers flowers for Ellen's ringlets,
And Ellen dresses flies for William's angle,
I scarce can think, that in advancing life,
Coldness, unkindness, interest, or suspicion,
Will e'er divide that unity so sacred,
Which Nature bound at birth.*

ANONYMOUS.

When Mowbray had left his dangerous adviser, in order to steer the course which his agent had indicated, without offering to recommend it, he went to the little parlour which his sister was wont to term her own, and in which she spent great part of her time. It was fitted up with a sort of fanciful neatness; and in its perfect arrangement and good order, formed a strong contrast to the other apartments of the old and neglected mansion-house. A number of little articles lay on the work-table, indicating the elegant, and, at the same time, the unsettled turn of the inhabitant's mind. There were unfinished drawings, blotted music, needlework of various kinds, and many other little female tasks; all undertaken with zeal, and so far prosecuted with art and elegance, but all flung aside before any one of them was completed.

Clara herself sat upon a little low couch by the window, reading, or at least turning over the leaves of a book, in which she seemed to read. But instantly starting up when she saw her brother, she ran towards him with the most cordial cheerfulness.

"Welcome, welcome, my dear John; this is very kind of you to come to visit your recluse sister. I have been trying to nail my eyes and my understanding to a stupid book here, because they say too much thought is not quite good for me. But, either the man's dulness, or my want of the power of attending, makes my eyes pass over the page, just as one seems to read in a dream, without being able to comprehend one word of the matter. You shall talk to me, and that will do better. What can I give you to show that you are welcome? I am afraid tea is all I have to offer, and that you set too little store by."

"I shall be glad of a cup at present," said Mowbray, "for I wish to speak with you."

"Then Jessy shall make it ready instantly," said Miss Mowbray, ringing, and giving orders to her waiting-maid — "but you must not be ungrateful, John, and plague me with any of the ceremonial for your fête — 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' I will attend, and play my part as prettily as you can desire; but to think of it beforehand, would make both my head and my heart ache; and so I beg you will spare me on the subject."

"Why, you wild kitten," said Mowbray, "you turn every day more shy of human communication — we shall have you take the woods one day, and become as savage as the Princess Caraboo. But I will plague you about nothing if I can help it. If matters go not smooth on the great day, they must e'en blame the dull thick head that had no fair lady to help him in his need. But, Clara, I had something more material to say to you — something indeed of the last importance."

"What is it?" said Clara, in a tone of voice approaching to a scream — "in the name of God, what is it? You know not how you terrify me!"

"Nay, you start at a shadow, Clara," answered her brother. "It is no such uncommon matter neither — good faith, it is the most common distress in the world, so far as I know the world — I am sorely pinched for money."

"Is that all?" replied Clara, in a tone which seemed to her brother as much to underrate the difficulty, when it was explained, as her fears had exaggerated it before she heard its nature.

"Is that all? Indeed it is all, and comprehends a great deal of vexation. I shall be hard run unless I can get a certain sum of money — and I must e'en ask you if you can help me?"

"Help you?" replied Clara; "Yes, with all my heart — but you know my purse is a light one — more than half of my last dividend is in it, however, and I am sure, John, I shall be happy if it can serve you — especially as that will at least show that your wants are but small ones."

"Alas, Clara, if you would help me," said her brother, half repentant of his purpose, "you must draw the neck of the goose which lays the golden eggs — you must lend me the whole stock."

"And why not, John," said the simple-hearted girl, "if it will do you a kindness? Are you not my natural guardian? Are you not a kind one? And is not my little fortune entirely at your disposal? You will, I am sure, do all for the best."

"I fear I may not," said Mowbray, starting from her, and more distressed by her sudden and unsuspecting compliance, than he would have been by difficulties, or remonstrance. In the latter case, he would have stifled the pangs of conscience amid the manoeuvres which he must have resorted to for obtaining her acquiescence; as matters stood, there was all the difference that there is between slaughtering a tame and unresisting animal, and pursuing wild game, until the animation of the sportsman's exertions overcomes the internal sense of his own cruelty.⁵⁵ The same idea occurred to Mowbray himself.

"By G —" he said, "this is like shooting the bird sitting. — Clara," he added, "I fear this money will scarce be employed as you would wish."

"Employ it as you yourself please, my dearest brother," she replied, "and I will believe it is all for the best."

"Nay, I am doing for the best," he replied; "at least, I am doing what must be done, for I see no other way through it — so all you have to do is to copy this paper, and bid adieu to bank dividends — for a little while at least. I trust soon to double this little matter for you, if Fortune will but stand my friend."

"Do not trust to Fortune, John," said Clara, smiling, though with an expression of deep melancholy. "Alas! she has never been a friend to our family — not at least for many a day."

"She favours the bold, say my old grammatical exercises," answered her brother; "and I must trust her, were she as changeable as a weathercock. — And yet — if she should jilt me! — What will you do — what will you say, Clara, if I am unable, contrary to my hope, trust, and expectation, to repay you this money within a short time?"

"Do?" replied Clara; "I must do without it, you know; and for saying, I will not say a word."

"True," replied Mowbray, "but your little expenses — your charities — your halt and blind — your round of paupers?"

"Well, I can manage all that too. Look you here, John, how many half-worked trifles there are. The needle or the pencil is the resource of all distressed heroines, you know; and I promise you, though I have been a little idle and unsettled of late, yet, when I do set about it, no Emmeline or Ethelinde of them all ever sent such loads of trumpery to market as I shall, or made such wealth as I will do. I dare say Lady Penelope, and all the gentry at the Well, will purchase, and will raffle, and do all sort of things to encourage the pensive performer. I will send them such lots of landscapes with sap-green trees, and mazareen-blue rivers, and portraits that will terrify the originals themselves — and handkerchiefs and turbans, with needlework scalloped exactly like the walks on the Belvidere — Why, I shall become a little fortune in the first season."

"No, Clara," said John, gravely, for a virtuous resolution had gained the upperhand in his bosom, while his sister ran on in this manner — "We will do something better than all this. If this kind help of yours does not fetch me through, I am determined I will cut the whole concern. It is but standing a laugh or two, and hearing a gay fellow say, D—— me, Jack, are you turned clothopper at last? — that is the worst. Dogs, horses, and all, shall go to the hammer; we will keep nothing but your pony, and I will trust to a pair of excellent legs. There is enough left of the old acres to keep us in the way you like best, and that I will learn to like. I will work in the garden, and work in the forest, mark my own trees, and cut them myself, keep my own accounts, and send Saunders Meiklewham to the devil."

"That last is the best resolution of all, John," said Clara; "and if such a day should come round, I should be the happiest of living creatures — I should not have a grief left in the world — if I had, you should never see or hear of it — it should lie here," she said, pressing her hand on her bosom, "buried as deep as a funereal urn in a cold sepulchre. Oh! could we not begin such a life tomorrow? If it is absolutely necessary that this trifle of money should be got rid of first, throw it into the river, and think you have lost it amongst gamblers and horse-jockeys."

Clara's eyes, which she fondly fixed on her brother's face, glowed through the tears which her enthusiasm called into them, while she thus addressed him. Mowbray, on his part, kept his looks fixed on the ground, with a flush on his cheek, that expressed at once false pride and real shame.

At length he looked up:—"My dear girl," he said, "how foolishly you talk, and how foolishly I, that have twenty things to do, stand here listening to you! All will go smooth on my plan — if it should not, we have yours in reserve, and I swear to you I will adopt it. The trifle which this letter of yours enables me to command, may have luck in it, and we must not throw up the cards while we have a chance of the game. — Were I to cut from this moment, these few hundreds would make us little better or little worse — so you see we have two strings to our bow. Luck is sometimes against me, that is true — but upon true principle, and playing on the square, I can manage the best of them, or my name is not Mowbray. Adieu, my dearest Clara." So saying, he kissed her cheek with a more than usual degree of affection.

Ere he could raise himself from his stooping posture, she threw her arm kindly over his neck, and said with a tone of the deepest interest, "My dearest brother, your slightest wish has been, and ever shall be, a law to me — Oh! if you would but grant me one request in return!"

"What is it, you silly girl?" said Mowbray, gently disengaging himself from her hold. — "What is it you can have to ask that needs such a solemn preface? — Remember, I hate prefaces; and when I happen to open a book, always skip them."

"Without preface, then, my dearest brother, will you, for my sake, avoid those quarrels in which the people yonder are eternally engaged? I never go down there but I hear of some new brawl; and I never lay my head down to sleep, but I dream that you are the victim of it. Even last night"——

"Nay, Clara, if you begin to tell your dreams, we shall never have done. Sleeping, to be sure, is the most serious employment of your life — for as to eating, you hardly match a sparrow; but I entreat you to sleep without dreaming, or to keep your visions to yourself. — Why do you keep such fast hold of me? — What on earth can you be afraid of? — Surely you do not think the blockhead Binks, or any other of the good folks below yonder, dared to turn on me? Egad, I wish they would pluck up a little mettle, that I might have an excuse for drilling them. Gad, I would soon teach them to follow at heel."

"No, John," replied his sister; "it is not of such men as these that I have any fear — and yet, cowards are sometimes driven to desperation, and become more dangerous than better men — but it is not such as these that I fear. But there are men in the world whose qualities are beyond their seeming — whose spirit and courage lie hidden, like metals in the mine, under an unmarked or a plain exterior. — You may meet with such — you are rash and headlong, and apt to exercise your wit without always weighing consequences, and thus"——

"On my word, Clara," answered Mowbray, "you are in a most sermonizing humour this morning! the parson himself could not have been more logical or profound. You have only to divide your discourse into heads, and garnish it with conclusions for use, and conclusions for doctrine, and it might be preached before a whole presbytery, with every chance of instruction and edification. But I am a man of the world, my little Clara; and though I wish to go in death's way as little as possible, I must not fear the raw-head and bloody-bones neither. — And who the devil is to put the question to me? — I must know that, Clara, for you have some especial person in your eye when you bid me take care of quarrelling."

Clara could not become paler than was her usual complexion; but her voice faltered as she eagerly assured her brother, that she had no particular person in her thoughts.

"Clara," said her brother, "do you remember, when there was a report of a bogle¹² in the upper orchard, when we were both children? — Do you remember how you were perpetually telling me to take care of the bogle, and keep away from its haunts? — And do you remember my going on purpose to detect the bogle, finding the cow-boy, with a shirt about him, busied in pulling pears, and treating him to a handsome drubbing? — I am the same Jack Mowbray still, as ready to face danger, and unmask imposition; and your fears, Clara, will only make me watch more closely, till I find out the real object of them. If you warn me of quarrelling with some one, it must be because you know some one who is not unlikely to quarrel with me. You are a flighty and fanciful girl, but you have sense enough not to trouble either yourself or me on a point of honour, save when there is some good reason for it."

Clara once more protested, and it was with the deepest anxiety to be believed, that what she had said arose only out of the general consequences which she apprehended from the line of conduct her brother had adopted, and which, in her apprehension, was so likely to engage him in the broils that divided the good company at the Spring. Mowbray listened to her explanation with an air of doubt, or rather incredulity, sipped a cup of tea which had for some time been placed before him, and at length replied, "Well, Clara, whether I am right or wrong in my guess, it would be cruel to torment you any more, remembering what you have just done for me. But do justice to your brother, and believe, that when you have any thing to ask of him, an explicit declaration of your wishes will answer your purpose much better than any ingenious oblique attempts to influence me. Give up all thoughts of such, my dear Clara — you are but a poor manoeuvrer, but were you the very Machiavel of your sex, you should not turn the flank of John Mowbray."

He left the room as he spoke, and did not return, though his sister twice called upon him. It is true that she uttered the word brother so faintly, that perhaps the sound did not reach his ears. — "He is gone," she said, "and I have had no power to speak out! I am like the wretched creatures, who, it is said, lie under a potent charm, that prevents them alike from shedding tears and from confessing their crimes — Yes, there is a spell on this unhappy heart, and either that must be dissolved, or this must break."

Chapter 12 The Challenge.

A slight note I have about me, for the delivery of which you must excuse me. It is an office which friendship calls upon me to do, and no way offensive to you, as I desire nothing but right on both sides.

KING AND NO KING.

The intelligent reader may recollect, that Tyrrel departed from the Fox Hotel on terms not altogether so friendly towards the company as those under which he entered it. Indeed, it occurred to him, that he might probably have heard something farther on the subject, though, amidst matters of deeper and more anxious consideration, the idea only passed hastily through his mind; and two days having gone over without any message from Sir Bingo Binks, the whole affair glided entirely out of his memory.

The truth was, that although never old woman took more trouble to collect and blow up with her bellows the embers of her decayed fire, than Captain MacTurk kindly underwent for the purpose of puffing into a flame the dying sparkles of the Baronet's courage; yet two days were spent in fruitless conferences before he could attain the desired point. He found Sir Bingo on these different occasions in all sorts of different moods of mind, and disposed to view the thing in all shades of light, except what the Captain thought was the true one. — He was in a drunken humour — in a sullen humour — in a thoughtless and vilipending humour — in every humour but a fighting one. And when Captain MacTurk talked of the reputation of the company at the Well, Sir Bingo pretended to take offence, said the company might go to the devil, and hinted that he "did them sufficient honour by gracing them with his countenance, but did not mean to constitute them any judges of his affairs. The fellow was a raff, and he would have nothing to do with him."

Captain MacTurk would willingly have taken measures against the Baronet himself, as in a state of contumacy, but was opposed by Winterblossom and other members of the committee, who considered Sir Bingo as too important and illustrious a member of their society to be rashly expelled from a place not honoured by the residence of many persons of rank; and finally insisted that nothing should be done in the matter without the advice of Mowbray, whose preparations for his solemn festival on the following Thursday had so much occupied him, that he had not lately appeared at the Well.

In the meanwhile, the gallant Captain seemed to experience as much distress of mind, as if some stain had lain on his own most unblemished of reputations. He went up and down upon the points of his toes, rising up on his instep with a jerk which at once expressed vexation and defiance — He carried his nose turned up in the air, like that of a pig when he snuffs the approaching storm — He spoke in monosyllables when he spoke at all; and — what perhaps illustrated in the strongest manner the depth of his feelings — he refused, in face of the whole company, to pledge Sir Bingo in a glass of the Baronet's peculiar cogniac.

At length, the whole Well was alarmed by the report brought by a smart outrider, that the young Earl of Etherington, reported to be rising on the horizon of fashion as a star of the first magnitude, intended to pass an hour, or a day, or a week, as it might happen, (for his lordship could not be supposed to know his own mind,) at St. Ronan's Well.

This suddenly put all in motion. Almanacks were opened to ascertain his lordship's age, enquiries were made concerning the extent of his fortune, his habits were quoted, his tastes were guessed at; and all that the ingenuity of the Managing Committee could devise was resorted to, in order to recommend their Spa to this favourite of fortune. An express was dispatched to Shaws-Castle with the agreeable intelligence, which fired the train of hope that led to Mowbray's appropriation of his sister's capital. He did not, however, think proper to obey the summons to the Spring; for, not being aware in what light the Earl might regard the worthies there assembled, he did not desire to be found by his lordship in any strict connexion with them.

Sir Bingo Binks was in a different situation. The bravery with which he had endured the censure of the place began to give way, when he considered that a person of such distinction as that which public opinion attached to Lord Etherington, should find him bodily indeed at St. Ronan's, but, so far as society was concerned, on the road towards the ancient city of Coventry; and his banishment thither, incurred by that most unpardonable offence in modern morality, a solecism in the code of honour. Though sluggish and inert when called to action, the Baronet was by no means an absolute coward; or, if so, he was of that class which fights when reduced to extremity. He manfully sent for Captain MacTurk, who waited upon him with a grave solemnity of aspect, which instantly was exchanged for a radiant joy, when Sir Bingo, in a few words, empowered him to carry a message to that d — d strolling artist, by whom he had been insulted three days since.

"By Cot," said the Captain, "my exceedingly goot and excellent friend, and I am happy to do such a favour for you! And it's well you have thought of it yourself; because, if it had not been for some of our very goot and excellent friends, that would be putting their spoon into other folk's dish, I should have been asking you a civil question myself, how you came to dine with us, with all that mud and mire which Mr. Tyrrel's grasp has left upon the collar of your coat — you understand me. — But it is much better as it is, and I will go to the man with all the speed of light; and though, to be sure, it should have been sooner thought of, yet let me alone to make an excuse for that, just in my own civil way — better late thrive than never do well, you know, Sir Bingo; and if you have made him wait a little while for his morning, you must give him the better measure, my darling."

So saying, he awaited no reply, lest peradventure the commission with which he was so hastily and unexpectedly charged, should have been clogged with some condition of compromise. No such proposal, however, was made on the part of the doughty Sir Bingo, who eyed his friend as he hastily snatched up his rattan to depart, with a dogged look of obstinacy, expressive, to use his own phrase, of a determined resolution to come up to the scratch; and when he heard the Captain's parting footsteps, and saw the door shut behind him, he valiantly whistled a few bars of Jenny Sutton, in token he cared not a farthing how the matter was to end.

With a swifter pace than his half-pay leisure usually encouraged, or than his habitual dignity permitted, Captain MacTurk cleared the ground betwixt the Spring and its gay vicinity, and the ruins of the Aultoun, where reigned our friend Meg Dods, the sole assessor of its ancient dignities. To the door of the Cleikum Inn the Captain addressed himself, as one too much accustomed to war to fear a rough reception; although at the very first aspect of Meg, who presented her person at the half opened door, his military experience taught him that his entrance into the place would, in all probability, be disputed.

"Is Mr. Tyrrel at home?" was the question; and the answer was conveyed, by the counter-interrogation, "Wha may ye be that speers?"

As the most polite reply to this question, and an indulgence, at the same time, of his own taciturn disposition, the Captain presented to Luckie Dods the fifth part of an ordinary playing card, much grimed with snuff, which bore on its blank side his name and quality. But Luckie Dods rejected the information thus tendered, with contemptuous scorn.

"Nane of your deil's play-books for me," said she; "it's an ill world since sic prick-my-dainty doings came in fashion — It's a poor tongue that canna tell its ain name, and I'll hae nane of your scarts upon pasteboard."

"I am Captain MacTurk, of the — regiment," said the Captain, disdaining further answer.

"MacTurk?" repeated Meg, with an emphasis, which induced the owner of the name to reply, "Yes, honest woman — MacTurk — Hector MacTurk — have you any objections to my name, goodwife?"

"Nae objections have I," answered Meg; "it's e'en an excellent name for a heathen. — But, Captain MacTurk, since sae it be that ye are a captain, ye may e'en face about and march your ways hame again, to the tune of Dumbarton drums; for ye are ganging to have nae speech of Maister Tirl, or ony lodger of mine."

"And wherefore not?" demanded the veteran; "and is this of your own foolish head, honest woman, or has your lodger left such orders?"

"Maybe he has and maybe no," answered Meg, sturdily; "and I ken nae mair right that ye suld ca' me honest woman, than I have to ca' you honest man, whilk is as far frae my thoughts as it wad be from heaven's truth."

"The woman is deleerit!" said Captain MacTurk; "but coom, coom — a gentleman is not to be misused in this way when he comes on a gentleman's business; so make you a bit room on the door-stane, that I may pass by you, or I will make room for myself, by Cot! to your small pleasure."

And so saying he assumed the air of a man who was about to make good his passage. But Meg, without deigning farther reply, flourished around her head the hearth-broom, which she had been employing to its more legitimate purpose, when disturbed in her housewifery by Captain MacTurk.

"I ken your errand weel eneugh, Captain — and I ken yourself. Ye are ane of the folk that gang about yonder setting folk by the lugs, as callants set their collies to fight. But ye sall come to nae lodger o' mine, let a-be Maister Tirl, wi' ony sic ungodly errand; for I am ane that will keep God's peace and the King's within my dwelling."

So saying, and in explicit token of her peaceable intentions, she again flourished her broom.

The veteran instinctively threw himself under Saint George's guard, and drew two paces back, exclaiming, "That the woman was either mad, or as drunk as whisky could make her;" an alternative which afforded Meg so little satisfaction, that she fairly rushed on her retiring adversary, and began to use her weapon to fell purpose.

"Me drunk, ye scandalous blackguard!" (a blow with the broom interposed as parenthesis,) "me, that am fasting from all but sin and bohea!" (another whack.)

The Captain, swearing, exclaiming, and parrying, caught the blows as they fell, showing much dexterity in single-stick. The people began to gather; and how long his gallantry might have maintained itself against the spirit of self-defence and revenge, must be left uncertain, for the arrival of Tyrrel, returned from a short walk, put a period to the contest.

Meg, who had a great respect for her guest, began to feel ashamed of her own violence, and slunk into the house; observing, however, that she tewed she had made her hearth-broom and the auld heathen's pow right weel acquainted. The tranquillity which ensued upon her departure, gave Tyrrel an opportunity to ask the Captain, whom he at length recognised, the meaning of this singular affray, and whether the visit was intended for him; to which the veteran replied very discomposedly, that "he should have known that long enough ago, if he had had decent people to open his door, and answer a civil question, instead of a flyting madwoman, who was worse than an eagle," he said, "or a mastiff-bitch, or a she-bear, or any other female beast in the creation."

Half suspecting his errand, and desirous to avoid unnecessary notoriety, Tyrrel, as he showed the Captain to the parlour, which he called his own, entreated him to excuse the rudeness of his landlady, and to pass from the topic to that which had procured him the honour of this visit.

"And you are right, my good Master Tyrrel," said the Captain, pulling down the sleeves of his coat, adjusting his handkerchief and breast-ruffle, and endeavouring to recover the composure of manner becoming his mission, but still adverting indignantly to the usage he had received — "By Cot! if she had but been a man, if it were the King himself — However, Mr. Tyrrel, I am come on a civil errand — and very civilly I have been treated — the auld bitch should be set in the stocks, and be tamned! — My friend, Sir Bingo — By Cot! I shall never forget that woman's insolence — if there be a constable or a cat-o'-nine-tails within ten miles" —

"I perceive, Captain," said Tyrrel, "that you are too much disturbed at this moment to enter upon the business which has brought you here — if you will step into my bedroom, and make use of some cold water and a towel, it will give you the time to compose yourself a little."

"I shall do no such thing, Mr. Tyrrel," answered the Captain, snappishly; "I do not want to be composed at all, and I do not want to stay in this house a minute longer than to do my errand to you on my friend's behalf — And as for this tamned woman Dods" —

"You will in that case forgive my interrupting you, Captain MacTurk, as I presume your errand to me can have no reference to this strange quarrel with my landlady, with which I have nothing to" —

"And if I thought that it had, sir," said the Captain, interrupting Tyrrel in his turn, "you should have given me satisfaction before you was a quarter of an hour older — Oh, I would give five pounds to the pretty fellow that would say, Captain MacTurk, the woman did right!"

"I certainly will not be that person you wish for, Captain," replied Tyrrel, "because I really do not know who was in the right or wrong; but I am certainly sorry that you should have met with ill usage, when your purpose was to visit me."

"Well, sir, if you are concerned," said the man of peace, snappishly, "so am I, and there is an end of it. — And touching my errand to you — you cannot have forgotten that you treated my friend, Sir Bingo Binks, with singular incivility?"

"I recollect nothing of the kind, Captain," replied Tyrrel. "I remember that the gentleman, so called, took some uncivil liberties in laying foolish bets concerning me, and that I treated him, from respect to the rest of the company, and the ladies in particular, with a great degree of moderation and forbearance."

"And you must have very fine ideas of forbearance," replied the Captain, "when you took my good friend by the collar of the coat, and lifted him out of your way as if he had been a puppy dog! My good Mr. Tyrrel, I can assure you he does not think that you have forborne him at all, and he has no purpose to forbear you; and I must either carry back a sufficient apology, or you must meet in a quiet way, with a good friend on each side. — And this was the errand I came on, when this tamned woman, with the hearth-broom, who is an enemy to all quiet and peaceable proceedings" —

"We will forget Mrs. Dods for the present, if you please, Captain MacTurk," said Tyrrel — "and, to speak to the present subject, you will permit me to say, that I think this summons comes a little of the latest. You know best as a military man, but I have always understood that such differences are usually settled immediately after they occur — not that I intend to baulk Sir Bingo's inclinations upon the score of delay, or any other account."

"I dare say you will not — I dare say you will not, Mr. Tyrrel," answered the Captain — "I am free to think that you know better what belongs to a gentleman. — And as to time — look you, my good sir, there are different sorts of people in this world, as there are different sorts of fire-arms. There are your hair-trigger'd rifles, that go off just at the right moment, and in the twinkling of an eye, and that, Mr. Tyrrel, is your true man of honour; — and there is a sort of person that takes a thing up too soon, and sometimes backs out of it, like your rubbishy Birmingham pieces, that will at one time go off at half-cock, and at another time burn priming without going off at all; — then again pieces that hang fire — or I should rather say, that are like the matchlocks which the black fellows use in the East Indies — there must be some blowing of the match, and so forth, which occasions delay, but the piece carries true enough after all."

"And your friend Sir Bingo's valour is of this last kind, Captain — I presume that is the inference. I should have thought it more like a boy's cannon, which is fired by means of a train, and is but a pop-gun after all."

"I cannot allow of such comparisons, sir," said the Captain; "you will understand that I come here as Sir Bingo's friend, and a reflection on him will be an affront to me."

"I disclaim all intended offence to you, Captain — I have no wish to extend the number of my adversaries, or to add to them the name of a gallant officer like yourself," replied Tyrrel.

"You are too obliging, sir," said the Captain, drawing himself up with dignity. "By Cot! and that was said very handsomely! — Well, sir, and shall I not have the pleasure of carrying back any explanation from you to Sir Bingo? — I assure you it would give me pleasure to make this matter handsomely up."

"To Sir Bingo, Captain MacTurk, I have no apology to offer — I think I treated him more gently than his impertinence deserved."

"Och, Och!" sighed the Captain, with a strong Highland intonation; "then there is no more to be said, but just to settle time and place; for pistols I suppose must be the weapons."

"All these matters are quite the same to me," said Tyrrel; "only, in respect of time, I should wish it to be as speedy as possible. — What say you to one, afternoon, this very day? — You may name the place."

"At one, afternoon," replied the Captain deliberately, "Sir Bingo will attend you — the place may be the Buck-stane; for as the whole company go to the water-side today to eat a kettle of fish,¹² there will be no risk of interruption. — And who shall I speak to, my good friend, on your side of the quarrel?"

"Really, Captain," replied Tyrrel, "that is a puzzling question — I have no friend here — I suppose you could hardly act for both?"

"It would be totally, absolutely, and altogether out of the question, my good friend," replied MacTurk. "But if you will trust to me, I will bring up a friend on your part from the Well, who, though you have hardly seen him before, will settle matters for you as well as if you had been intimate for twenty years — and I will bring up the Doctor too, if I can get him unloosed from the petticoat of that fat widow Blower, that he has strung himself upon."

"I have no doubt you will do every thing with perfect accuracy, Captain. At one o'clock, then, we meet at the Buck-stane — Stay, permit me to see you to the door."

"By Cot! and it is not altogether so unnecessary," said the Captain; "for the tamned woman with the besom might have some advantage in that long dark passage, knowing the ground better than I do — tamn her, I will have amends on her, if there be whipping-post, or ducking-stool, or a pair of stocks in the parish!" And so

saying, the Captain trudged off, his spirits ever and anon agitated by recollection of the causeless aggression of Meg Dods, and again composed to a state of happy serenity by the recollection of the agreeable arrangement which he had made between Mr. Tyrrel, and his friend Sir Bingo Binks.

We have heard of men of undoubted benevolence of character and disposition, whose principal delight was to see a miserable criminal, degraded alike by his previous crimes, and the sentence which he had incurred, conclude a vicious and wretched life, by an ignominious and painful death. It was some such inconsistency of character which induced honest Captain MacTurk, who had really been a meritorious officer, and was a good-natured, honourable, and well-intentioned man, to place his chief delight in setting his friends by the ears, and then acting as umpire in the dangerous rencontres, which, according to his code of honour, were absolutely necessary to restore peace and cordiality. We leave the explanation of such anomalies to the labours of craniologists, for they seem to defy all the researches of the Ethic philosopher.

Chapter 13 Disappointment.

EVANS. *I pray you now, good Master Slender's serving-man, and friend Simple by your name, which way have you looked for Master Caius?*

SLENDER. *Marry, sir, the City-ward, the Park-ward, every way; Old Windsor way, and every way.*

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

Sir Bingo Binks received the Captain's communication with the same dogged sullenness he had displayed at sending the challenge; a most ungracious *humph*, ascending, as it were, from the very bottom of his stomach, through the folds of a Belcher handkerchief, intimating his acquiescence, in a tone nearly as gracious as that with which the drowsy traveller acknowledges the intimation of the slipshod ostler, that it is on the stroke of five, and the horn will sound in a minute. Captain MacTurk by no means considered this ejaculation as expressing a proper estimate of his own trouble and services. "Humph?" he replied; "and what does that mean, Sir Bingo? Have not I here had the trouble to put you just into the neat road; and would you have been able to make a handsome affair out of it at all, after you had let it hang so long in the wind, if I had not taken on myself to make it agreeable to the gentleman, and cooked as neat a mess out of it as I have seen a Frenchman do out of a stale sprat?"

Sir Bingo saw it was necessary to mutter some intimation of acquiescence and acknowledgment, which, however inarticulate, was sufficient to satisfy the veteran, to whom the adjustment of a personal affair of this kind was a labour of love, and who now, kindly mindful of his promise to Tyrrel, hurried away as if he had been about the most charitable action upon earth, to secure the attendance of some one as a witness on the stranger's part.

Mr. Winterblossom was the person whom MacTurk had in his own mind pitched upon as the fittest person to perform this act of benevolence, and he lost no time in communicating his wish to that worthy gentleman. But Mr. Winterblossom, though a man of the world, and well enough acquainted with such matters, was by no means so passionately addicted to them as was the man of peace, Captain Hector MacTurk. As a *bon vivant*, he hated trouble of any kind, and the shrewd selfishness of his disposition enabled him to foresee, that a good deal might accrue to all concerned in the course of this business. He, therefore, coolly replied, that he knew nothing of Mr. Tyrrel — not even whether he was a gentleman or not; and besides, he had received no regular application in his behalf — he did not, therefore, feel himself at all inclined to go to the field as his second. This refusal drove the poor Captain to despair. He conjured his friend to be more public-spirited, and entreated him to consider the reputation of the Well, which was to them as a common country, and the honour of the company to which they both belonged, and of which Mr. Winterblossom was in a manner the proper representative, as being, with consent of all, the perpetual president. He reminded him how many quarrels had been nightly undertaken and departed from on the ensuing morning, without any suitable consequences — said, "that people began to talk of the place oddly; and that, for his own part, he found his own honour so nearly touched, that he had begun to think he himself would be obliged to bring somebody or other to account, for the general credit of the Well; and now, just when the most beautiful occasion had arisen to put every thing on a handsome footing, it was hard — it was cruel — it was most unjustifiable — in Mr. Winterblossom, to decline so simple a matter as was requested of him."

Dry and taciturn as the Captain was on all ordinary occasions, he proved, on the present, eloquent and almost pathetic; for the tears came into his eyes when he recounted the various quarrels which had become addled, notwithstanding his best endeavours to hatch them into an honourable meeting; and here was one, at length, just chipping the shell, like to be smothered, for want of the most ordinary concession on the part of Winterblossom. In short, that gentleman could not hold out any longer. "It was," he said, "a very foolish business, he thought; but to oblige Sir Bingo and Captain MacTurk, he had no objection to walk with them about noon as far as the Buck-stane, although he must observe the day was hazy, and he had felt a prophetic twinge or two, which looked like a visit of his old acquaintance podagra."

"Never mind that, my excellent friend," said the Captain, "a sup out of Sir Bingo's flask is like enough to put that to rights; and by my soul, it is not the thing he is like to leave behind him on this sort of occasion, unless I be far mistaken in my man."

"But," said Winterblossom, "although I comply with your wishes thus far, Captain MacTurk, I by no means undertake for certain to back this same Master Tyrrel, of whom I know nothing at all, but only agree to go to the place in hopes of preventing mischief."

"Never fash your beard about that, Mr. Winterblossom," replied the Captain; "for a little mischief, as you call it, is become a thing absolutely necessary to the credit of the place; and I am sure, whatever be the consequences, they cannot in the present instance be very fatal to any body; for here is a young fellow that, if he should have a misfortune, nobody will miss, for nobody knows him; then there is Sir Bingo, whom every body knows so well, that they will miss him all the less."

"And there will be Lady Bingo, a wealthy and handsome young widow," said Winterblossom, throwing his hat upon his head with the grace and pretension of former days, and sighing to see, as he looked in the mirror, how much time, that had whitened his hair, rounded his stomach, wrinkled his brow, and bent down his shoulders, had disqualified him, as he expressed it, "for entering for such a plate."

Secure of Winterblossom, the Captain's next anxiety was to obtain the presence of Dr. Quackleben, who, although he wrote himself M.D., did not by any means decline practice as a surgeon, when any job offered for which he was likely to be well paid, as was warranted in the present instance, the wealthy baronet being a party principally concerned. The Doctor, therefore, like the eagle scenting the carnage, seized, at the first word, the huge volume of morocco leather which formed his case of portable instruments, and uncoiled before the Captain, with ostentatious display, its formidable and glittering contents, upon which he began to lecture as upon a copious and interesting text, until the man of war thought it necessary to give him a word of caution.

"Och," says he, "I do pray you, Doctor, to carry that packet of yours under the breast of your coat, or in your pocket, or somewhere out of sight, and by no means to produce or open it before the parties. For although scalpels, and tourniquets, and pincers, and the like, are very ingenious implements, and pretty to behold, and are also useful when time and occasion call for them, yet I have known the sight of them take away a man's fighting stomach, and so lose their owner a job, Dr. Quackleben."

"By my faith, Captain MacTurk," said the Doctor, "you speak as if you were graduated! — I have known these treacherous articles play their master many a cursed trick. The very sight of my forceps, without the least effort on my part, once cured an inveterate toothache of three days' duration, prevented the extraction of a carious molendinar, which it was the very end of their formation to achieve, and sent me home minus a guinea. — But hand me that great-coat, Captain, and we will place the instruments in ambuscade, until they are called into action in due time. I should think something will happen — Sir Bingo is a sure shot at a moorcock."

"Cannot say," replied MacTurk; "I have known the pistol shake many a hand that held the fowlingpiece fast enough. Yonder Tyrrel looks like a teevilish cool customer — I watched him the whole time I was delivering my errand, and I can promise you he is mettle to the backbone."

"Well — I will have my bandages ready *secundum artem*," replied the man of medicine. "We must guard against hæmorrhage — Sir Bingo is a plethoric subject. — One o'clock, you say — at the Buck-stane — I will be punctual."

"Will you not walk with us?" said Captain MacTurk, who seemed willing to keep his whole convoy together on this occasion, lest, peradventure, any of them had fled from under his patronage.

"No," replied the Doctor, "I must first make an apology to worthy Mrs. Blower, for I had promised her my arm down to the river-side, where they are all to eat a kettle of fish."

"By Cot! and I hope we shall make them a prettier kettle of fish than was ever seen at St. Ronan's," said the Captain, rubbing his hands.

"Don't say we, Captain," replied the cautious Doctor; "I for one have nothing to do with the meeting — wash my hands of it. No, no, I cannot afford to be clapt up as accessory. — You ask me to meet you at the Buck-stane — no purpose assigned — I am willing to oblige my worthy friend, Captain MacTurk — walk that way, thinking of nothing particular — hear the report of pistols — hasten to the spot — fortunately just in time to prevent the most fatal consequences — chance most opportunely to have my case of instruments with me — indeed, generally walk with them about me — *nunquam non paratus* — then give my professional definition of the wound and state of the patient. That is the way to give evidence, Captain, before sheriffs, coroners, and such sort of folk — never commit one's self — it is a rule of our profession."

"Well, well, Doctor," answered the Captain, "you know your own ways best; and so you are but there to give a chance of help in case of accident, all the laws of honour will be fully complied with. But it would be a foul reflection upon me, as a man of honour, if I did not take care that there should be somebody to come in thirdsman between Death and my principal."

At the awful hour of one afternoon, there arrived upon the appointed spot Captain MacTurk, leading to the field the valorous Sir Bingo, not exactly straining like a greyhound in the slips, but rather looking moody like a butcher's bull-dog, which knows he must fight since his master bids him. Yet the Baronet showed no outward flinching or abatement of courage, excepting, that the tune of Jenny Sutton, which he had whistled without intermission since he left the Hotel, had, during the last half mile of their walk, sunk into silence; although, to look at the muscles of the mouth, projection of the lip, and vacancy of the eye, it seemed as if the notes were still passing through his mind, and that he whistled Jenny Sutton in his imagination. Mr. Winterblossom came two minutes after this happy pair, and the Doctor was equally punctual.

"Upon my soul," said the former, "this is a mighty silly affair, Sir Bingo, and might, I think, be easily taken up, at less risk to all parties than a meeting of this kind. You should recollect, Sir Bingo, that you have much depending upon your life — you are a married man, Sir Bingo."

Sir Bingo turned the quid in his mouth, and squirted out the juice in a most coachman-like manner.

"Mr. Winterblossom," said the Captain, "Sir Bingo has in this matter put himself in my hands, and unless you think yourself more able to direct his course than I am, I must frankly tell you, that I will be disobliged by your interference. You may speak to your own friend as much as you please; and if you find yourself authorized to make any proposal, I shall be desirous to lend an ear to it on the part of my worthy principal, Sir Bingo. But I will be plain with you, that I do not greatly approve of settlements upon the field, though I hope I am a quiet and peaceable man. But here is our honour to be looked after in the first place; and moreover, I must insist that every proposal for accommodation shall originate with your party or yourself."

"My party?" answered Winterblossom; "why really, though I came hither at your request, Captain MacTurk, yet I must see more of the matter, ere I can fairly pronounce myself second to a man I never saw but once."

"And, perhaps, may never see again," said the Doctor, looking at his watch; "for it is ten minutes past the hour, and here is no Mr. Tyrrel."

"Hey! what's that you say, Doctor?" said the Baronet, awakened from his apathy.

"He speaks tamned nonsense," said the Captain, pulling out a huge, old-fashioned, turnip-shaped implement, with a blackened silver dial-plate. "It is not above three minutes after one by the true time, and I will uphold Mr. Tyrrel to be a man of his word — never saw a man take a thing more coolly."

"Not more coolly than he takes his walk this way," said the Doctor; "for the hour is as I tell you — remember, I am professional — have pulses to count by the second and half-second — my timepiece must go as true as the sun."

"And I have mounted guard a thousand times by my watch," said the Captain; "and I defy the devil to say that Hector MacTurk did not always discharge his duty to the twentieth part of the fraction of a second — it was my great grandmother, Lady Killbracklin's, and I will maintain its reputation against any timepiece that ever went upon wheels."

"Well, then, look at your own watch, Captain," said Winterblossom, "for time stands still with no man, and while we speak the hour advances. On my word, I think this Mr. Tyrrel intends to humbug us."

"Hey! what's that you say?" said Sir Bingo, once more starting from his sullen reverie.

"I shall not look at my watch upon no such matter," said the Captain; "nor will I any way be disposed to doubt your friend's honour, Mr. Winterblossom."

"My friend?" said Mr. Winterblossom; "I must tell you once more, Captain, that this Mr. Tyrrel is no friend of mine — none in the world. He is your friend, Captain MacTurk; and I own, if he keeps us waiting much longer on this occasion, I will be apt to consider his friendship as of very little value."

"And how dare you, then, say that the man is my friend?" said the Captain, knitting his brows in a most formidable manner.

"Pooh! pooh! Captain," answered Winterblossom, coolly, if not contemptuously — "keep all that for silly boys; I have lived in the world too long either to provoke quarrels, or to care about them. So, reserve your fire; it is all thrown away on such an old cock as I am. But I really wish we knew whether this fellow means to come — twenty minutes past the hour — I think it is odds that you are bilked, Sir Bingo?"

"Bilked! hey!" cried Sir Bingo; "by Gad, I always thought so — I wagered with Mowbray he was a raff — I am had, by Gad. I'll wait no longer than the half hour, by Gad, were he a field-marshal."

"You will be directed in that matter by your friend, if you please, Sir Bingo," said the Captain.

"D—— me if I will," returned the Baronet — "Friend? a pretty friend, to bring me out here on such a fool's errand! I knew the fellow was a raff — but I never thought you, with all your chaff about honour, such a d —— d spoon as to bring a message from a fellow who has fled the pit!"

"If you regret so much having come here to no purpose," said the Captain, in a very lofty tone, "and if you think I have used you like a spoon, as you say, I will have no objection in life to take Mr. Tyrrel's place, and serve your occasion, my boy!"

"By ——! and if you like it, you may fire away, and welcome," said Sir Bingo; "and I'll spin a crown for first shot, for I do not understand being brought here for nothing, d —— me!"

"And there was never man alive so ready as I am to give you something to stay your stomach," said the irritable Highlander.

"Oh fie, gentlemen! fie, fie, fie!" exclaimed the pacific Mr. Winterblossom — "For shame, Captain — Out upon you, Sir Bingo, are you mad? — what, principal and second! — the like was never heard of — never."

The parties were in some degree recalled to their more cool recollections by this expostulation, yet continued a short quarter-deck walk to and fro, upon parallel lines, looking at each other sullenly as they passed, and bristling like two dogs who have a mind to quarrel, yet hesitate to commence hostilities. During this promenade, also, the perpendicular and erect carriage of the veteran, rising on his toes at every step, formed a whimsical contrast with the heavy loutish shuffle of the bulky Baronet, who had, by dint of practice, very nearly attained that most enviable of all carriages, the gait of a shambling Yorkshire ostler. His coarse spirit was now thoroughly kindled, and like iron, or any other baser metal, which is slow in receiving heat, it retained long the smouldering and angry spirit of resentment that had originally brought him to the place, and now rendered him willing to wreak his uncomfortable feelings upon the nearest object which occurred, since the first purpose of his coming thither was frustrated. In his own phrase, his pluck was up, and finding himself in a fighting humour, he thought it a pity, like Bob Acres, that so much good courage should be thrown away. As, however, that courage after all consisted chiefly in ill humour; and as, in the demeanour of the Captain, he read nothing deferential or deprecatory of his wrath, he began to listen with more attention to the arguments of Mr. Winterblossom, who entreated them not to sully, by private quarrel, the honour they had that day so happily acquired without either blood or risk.

"It was now," he said, "three quarters of an hour past the time appointed for this person, who calls himself Tyrrel, to meet Sir Bingo Binks. Now, instead of standing squabbling here, which serves no purpose, I propose we should reduce to writing the circumstances which attend this affair, for the satisfaction of the company at

the Well, and that the memorandum shall be regularly attested by our subscriptions; after which, I shall farther humbly propose that it be subjected to the revision of the Committee of Management."

"I object to any revision of a statement to which my name shall be appended," said the Captain.

"Right — very true, Captain," said the complaisant Mr. Winterblossom; "undoubtedly you know best, and your signature is completely sufficient to authenticate this transaction — however, as it is the most important which has occurred since the Spring was established, I propose we shall all sign the *procès-verbal*, as I may term it."

"Leave me out, if you please," said the Doctor, not much satisfied that both the original quarrel and the by-battle had passed over without any occasion for the offices of a Machaon; "leave me out, if you please; for it does not become me to be ostensibly concerned in any proceedings, which have had for their object a breach of the peace. And for the importance of waiting here for an hour, in a fine afternoon, it is my opinion there was a more important service done to the Well of St. Ronan's, when I, Quentin Quackleben, M.D., cured Lady Penelope Penfeather of her seventh attack upon the nerves, attended with febrile symptoms."

"No disparagement to your skill at all, Doctor," said Mr. Winterblossom; "but I conceive the lesson which this fellow has received will be a great means to prevent improper persons from appearing at the Spring hereafter; and, for my part, I shall move that no one be invited to dine at the table in future, till his name is regularly entered as a member of the company, in the lists at the public room. And I hope both Sir Bingo and the Captain will receive the thanks of the company, for their spirited conduct in expelling the intruder. — Sir Bingo, will you allow me to apply to your flask — a little twinge I feel, owing to the dampness of the grass."

Sir Bingo, soothed by the consequence he had acquired, readily imparted to the invalid a thimbleful of his cordial, which, we believe, had been prepared by some cunning chemist in the wilds of Glenlivat. He then filled a bumper, and extended it towards the veteran, as an unequivocal symptom of reconciliation. The real turbinacious flavour no sooner reached the nose of the Captain, than the beverage was turned down his throat with symptoms of most unequivocal applause.

"I shall have some hope of the young fellows of this day," he said, "now that they begin to give up their Dutch and French distilled waters, and stick to genuine Highland ware. By Cot, it is the only liquor fit for a gentleman to drink in a morning, if he can have the good fortune to come by it, you see."

"Or after dinner either, Captain," said the Doctor, to whom the glass had passed in rotation; "it is worth all the wines in France for flavour, and more cordial to the system besides."

"And now," said the Captain, "that we may not go off the ground with any thing on our stomachs worse than the whisky, I can afford to say, (as Captain Hector MacTurk's character is tolerably well established,) that I am sorry for the little difference that has occurred betwixt me and my worthy friend, Sir Bingo, here."

"And since you are so civil, Captain," said Sir Bingo, "why, I am sorry too — only it would put the devil out of temper to lose so fine a fishing day — wind south — fine air on the pool — water settled from the flood — just in trim — and I dare say three pairs of hooks have passed over my cast before this time!"

He closed this elaborate lamentation with a libation of the same cordial which he had imparted to his companions; and they returned in a body to the Hotel, where the transactions of the morning were soon afterwards announced to the company, by the following program:—

STATEMENT.

"Sir Bingo Binks, baronet, having found himself aggrieved by the uncivil behaviour of an individual calling himself Francis Tyrrel, now or lately a resident at the Cleikum Inn, Aultoun of St. Ronan's; and having empowered Captain Hector MacTurk to wait upon the said Mr. Tyrrel to demand an apology, under the alternative of personal satisfaction, according to the laws of honour and the practice of gentlemen, the said Tyrrel voluntarily engaged to meet the said Sir Bingo Binks, baronet, at the Buck-stane, near St. Ronan's Burn, upon this present day, being Wednesday — August. In consequence of which appointment, we, the undersigned, did attend at the place named, from one o'clock till two, without seeing or hearing any thing whatever of the said Francis Tyrrel, or any one in his behalf — which fact we make thus publicly known, that all men, and particularly the distinguished company assembled at the Fox Hotel, may be duly apprized of the character and behaviour of the said Francis Tyrrel, in case of his again presuming to intrude himself into the society of persons of honour.

"The Fox Inn and Hotel, St. Ronan's Well — August 18 —.

(Signed)

"BINGO

HECTOR

PHILIP WINTERBLOSSOM."

BINKS,
MACTURK,

A little lower followed this separate attestation:

"I, Quentin Quackleben, M.D., F.R.S., D.E., B.L., X.Z., &c. &c., being called upon to attest what I know in the said matter, do hereby verify, that being by accident at the Buck-stane, near St. Ronan's Burn, on this present day, at the hour of one afternoon, and chancing to remain there for the space of nearly an hour, conversing with Sir Bingo Binks, Captain MacTurk, and Mr. Winterblossom, we did not, during that time, see or hear any thing of or from the person calling himself Francis Tyrrel, whose presence at that place seemed to be expected by the gentlemen I have just named."

This affiche was dated like the former, and certified under the august hand of Quentin Quackleben, M.D., &c. &c. &c.

Again, and prefaced by the averment that an improper person had been lately introduced into the company of St. Ronan's Well, there came forth a legislative enactment, on the part of the Committee, declaring, "that no one shall in future be invited to the dinners, or balls, or other entertainments of the Well, until their names shall be regularly entered in the books kept for the purpose at the rooms." Lastly, there was a vote of thanks to Sir Bingo Binks and Captain MacTurk for their spirited conduct, and the pains which they had taken to exclude an improper person from the company at St. Ronan's Well.

These annunciations speedily became the magnet of the day. All idlers crowded to peruse them; and it would be endless to notice the "God bless me's"— the "Lord have a care of us"— the "Saw you ever the like's" of gossips, any more than the "Dear me's" and "Oh, laa's" of the titupping misses, and the oaths of the pantalooned or buck-skin'd beaux. The character of Sir Bingo rose like the stocks at the news of a dispatch from the Duke of Wellington, and, what was extraordinary, attained some consequence even in the estimation of his lady. All shook their heads at the recollection of the unlucky Tyrrel, and found out much in his manner and address which convinced them that he was but an adventurer and swindler. A few, however, less partial to the Committee of Management, (for whenever there is an administration, there will soon arise an opposition,) whispered among themselves, that, to give the fellow his due, the man, be he what he would, had only come among them, like the devil, when he was called for; and honest Dame Blower blessed herself when she heard of such bloodthirsty doings as had been intended, and "thanked God that honest Doctor Kickherben had come to nae harm amang a' their nonsense."

Chapter 14 The Consultation.

CLOWN. *I hope here be proofs.* —

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

The borough of — lies, as all the world knows, about fourteen miles distant from St. Ronan's, being the county town of that shire, which, as described in the Tourist's Guide, numbers among its objects of interest that gay and popular watering-place, whose fame, no doubt, will be greatly enhanced by the present annals of its earlier history. As it is at present unnecessary to be more particular concerning the scene of our story, we will fill up the blank left in the first name with the fictitious appellation of Marchthorn, having often found ourselves embarrassed in the course of a story, by the occurrence of an ugly hiatus, which we cannot always at first sight fill up, with the proper reference to the rest of the narrative.

Marchthorn, then, was an old-fashioned Scottish town, the street of which, on market-day, showed a reasonable number of stout great-coated yeomen, bartering or dealing for the various commodities of their farms; and on other days of the week, only a few forlorn burghers, crawling about like half-awakened flies, and watching the town steeple till the happy sound of twelve strokes from Time's oracle should tell them it was time to take their meridian dram. The narrow windows of the shops intimated very imperfectly the miscellaneous contents of the interior, where every merchant, as the shopkeepers of Marchthorn were termed, *more Scotico*, sold every thing that could be thought of. As for manufactures, there were none, except that of the careful Town-Council, who were mightily busied in

preparing the warp and woof, which, at the end of every five or six years, the town of Marchthorn contributed, for the purpose of weaving the fourth or fifth part of a member of Parliament.

In such a town, it usually happens, that the Sheriff-clerk, especially supposing him agent for several lairds of the higher order, is possessed of one of the best-looking houses; and such was that of Mr. Bindloose. None of the smartness of the brick-built and brass-hammered mansion of a southern attorney appeared indeed in this mansion, which was a tall, thin, grim-looking building, in the centre of the town, with narrow windows and projecting gables, notched into that sort of descent, called crow-steps, and having the lower casements defended by stancheons of iron; for Mr. Bindloose, as frequently happens, kept a branch of one of the two national banks, which had been lately established in the town of Marchthorn.

Towards the door of this tenement, there advanced slowly up the ancient, but empty streets of this famous borough, a vehicle, which, had it appeared in Piccadilly, would have furnished unremitted laughter for a week, and conversation for a twelvemonth. It was a two-wheeled vehicle, which claimed none of the modern appellations of tilbury, tandem, dennet, or the like; but aspired only to the humble name of that almost forgotten accommodation, a whiskey; or, according to some authorities, a tim-whiskey. Green was, or had been, its original colour, and it was placed sturdily and safely low upon its little old-fashioned wheels, which bore much less than the usual proportion to the size of the carriage which they sustained. It had a calash head, which had been pulled up, in consideration either to the dampness of the morning air, or to the retiring delicacy of the fair form which, shrouded by leathern curtains, tenanted this venerable specimen of antediluvian coach-building.

But, as this fair and modest dame noway aspired to the skill of a charioteer, the management of a horse, which seemed as old as the carriage he drew, was in the exclusive charge of an old fellow in a postilion's jacket, whose grey hairs escaped on each side of an old-fashioned velvet jockey-cap, and whose left shoulder was so considerably elevated above his head, that it seemed, as if, with little effort, his neck might have been tucked under his arm, like that of a roasted grouse-cock. This gallant equerry was mounted on a steed as old as that which toiled betwixt the shafts of the carriage, and which he guided by a leading rein. Goaded one animal with his single spur, and stimulating the other with his whip, he effected a reasonable trot upon the causeway, which only terminated when the whiskey stopped at Mr. Bindloose's door — an event of importance enough to excite the curiosity of the inhabitants of that and the neighbouring houses. Wheels were laid aside, needles left sticking in the half-finished seams, and many a nose, spectacted and unspectacted, was popped out of the adjoining windows, which had the good fortune to command a view of Mr. Bindloose's front door. The faces of two or three giggling clerks were visible at the barred casements of which we have spoken, much amused at the descent of an old lady from this respectable carriage, whose dress and appearance might possibly have been fashionable at the time when her equipage was new. A satin cardinal, lined with grey squirrels' skin, and a black silk bonnet, trimmed with crape, were garments which did not now excite the respect, which in their fresher days they had doubtless commanded. But there was that in the features of the wearer, which would have commanded Mr. Bindloose's best regard, though it had appeared in far worse attire; for he beheld the face of an ancient customer, who had always paid her law expenses with the ready penny, and whose accompt with the bank was balanced by a very respectable sum at her credit. It was, indeed, no other than our respected friend, Mrs. Dods of the Cleikum Inn, St. Ronan's, Aultoun.

Now her arrival intimated matter of deep import. Meg was a person of all others most averse to leave her home, where, in her own opinion at least, nothing went on well without her immediate superintendence. Limited, therefore, as was her sphere, she remained fixed in the centre thereof; and few as were her satellites, they were under the necessity of performing their revolutions around her, while she herself continued stationary. Saturn, in fact, would be scarce more surprised at a passing call from the Sun, than Mr. Bindloose at this unexpected visit of his old client. In one breath he rebuked the inquisitive impertinence of his clerks, in another stimulated his housekeeper, old Hannah — for Mr. Bindloose was a bluff bachelor — to get tea ready in the green parlour; and while yet speaking, was at the side of the whiskey, unclasping the curtains, rolling down the apron, and assisting his old friend to dismount.

"The japanned tea-caddie, Hannah — the best bohea — bid Tib kindle a spark of fire — the morning's damp — Draw in the giggling faces of ye, ye d — d idle scoundrels, or laugh at your ain toom pouches — it will be lang or your weel doing fill them." This was spoken, as the honest lawyer himself might have said, *in transitu*, the rest by the side of the carriage. "My stars, Mrs. Dods, and is this really your ain sell, *in propria persona*? — Wha lookit for you at such a time of day? — Anthony, how's a' wi' ye, Anthony? — so ye hae taen the road again, Anthony — help us down wi' the apron, Anthony — that will do. — Lean on me, Mrs. Dods — help your mistress, Anthony — put the horses in my stable — the lads will give you the key. — Come away, Mrs. Dods — I am blithe to see you straight your legs on the causeway of our auld borough again — come in by, and we'll see to get you some breakfast, for ye hae been asteer early this morning."

"I am a sair trouble to you, Mr. Bindloose," said the old lady, accepting the offer of his arm, and accompanying him into the house; "I am e'en a sair trouble to you, but I could not rest till I had your advice on something of moment."

"Happy will I be to serve you, my gude auld acquaintance," said the Clerk; "but sit you down — sit you down — sit you down, Mrs. Dods — meat and mess never hindered wark. Ye are something overcome wi' your travel — the spirit canna aye bear through the flesh, Mrs. Dods; ye should remember that your life is a precious one, and ye should take care of your health, Mrs. Dods."

"My life precious!" exclaimed Meg Dods; "nane o' your whullywhaing, Mr. Bindloose — Deil ane wad miss the auld girning alewife, Mr. Bindloose, unless it were here and there a puir body, and maybe the auld house-tyke, that wadna be sae weel guided, puir fallow."

"Fie, fie! Mrs. Dods," said the Clerk, in a tone of friendly rebuke; "it vexes an auld friend to hear ye speak of yourself in that disrespectful sort of a way; and, as for quitting us, I bless God I have not seen you look better this half score of years. But maybe you will be thinking of setting your house in order, which is the act of a carefu' and of a Christian woman — O! it's an awfu' thing to die intestate, if we had grace to consider it."

"Aweel, I daur say I'll consider that some day soon, Mr. Bindloose; but that's no my present errand."

"Be it what it like, Mrs. Dods, ye are right heartily welcome here, and we have a' the day to speak of the business in hand — *festina lente*, that is the true law language — hooly and fairly, as one may say — ill treating of business with an empty stomach — and here comes your tea, and I hope Hannah has made it to your taste."

Meg sipped her tea — confessed Hannah's skill in the mysteries of the Chinese herb — sipped again, then tried to eat a bit of bread and butter, with very indifferent success; and notwithstanding the lawyer's compliments to her good looks, seemed in reality, on the point of becoming ill.

"In the deil's name, what is the matter!" said the lawyer, too well read in a profession where sharp observation is peculiarly necessary, to suffer these symptoms of agitation to escape him. "Ay, dame? ye are taking this business of yours deeper to heart than ever I kend you take ony thing. Ony o' your banded debtors failed, or like to fail? What then! cheer ye up — you can afford a little loss, and it canna be ony great matter, or I would doubtless have heard of it."

"In troth, but it is a loss, Mr. Bindloose; and what say ye to the loss of a friend?"

This was a possibility which had never entered the lawyer's long list of calamities, and he was at some loss to conceive what the old lady could possibly mean by so sentimental a prolusion. But just as he began to come out with his "Ay, ay, we are all mortal, *Vita incerta, mors certissima*!" and two or three more pithy reflections, which he was in the habit of uttering after funerals, when the will of the deceased was about to be opened — just then Mrs. Dods was pleased to become the expounder of her own oracle.

"I see how it is, Mr. Bindloose," she said; "I maun tell my ain ailment, for you are no likely to guess it; and so, if ye will shut the door, and see that nane of your giggling callants are listening in the passage, I will e'en tell you how things stand with me."

Mr. Bindloose hastily arose to obey her commands, gave a cautionary glance into the Bank-office, and saw that his idle apprentices were fast at their desks — turned the key upon them, as if it were in a fit of absence, and then returned, not a little curious to know what could be the matter with his old friend; and leaving off all further attempts to put cases, quietly drew his chair near hers, and awaited her own time to make her communication.

"Mr. Bindloose," said she, "I am no sure that you may mind, about six or seven years ago, that there were twa daft English callants, lodgers of mine, that had some trouble from auld St. Ronan's about shooting on the Springwell-head muirs."

"I mind it as weel as yesterday, Mistress," said the Clerk; "by the same token you gave me a note for my trouble, (which wasna worth speaking about,) and bade me no bring in a bill against the puir bairns — ye had aye a kind heart, Mrs. Dods."

"Maybe, and maybe no, Mr. Bindloose — that is just as I find folk. — But concerning these lads, they baith left the country, and, as I think, in some ill blude wi' ane another, and now the auldest and the doucest of the twa came back again about a fortnight sin' syne, and has been my guest ever since."

"Aweel, and I trust he is not at his auld tricks again, goodwife?" answered the Clerk. "I havena sae muckle to say either wi' the new Sheriff or the Bench of Justices as I used to hae, Mrs. Dods — and the Procurator-fiscal is very severe on poaching, being borne out by the new Association — few of our auld friends of the Killnakelty are able to come to the sessions now, Mrs. Dods."

"The waur for the country, Mr. Bindloose," replied the old lady — "they were decent, considerate men, that didna plague a puir herd callant muckle about a moorfowl or a mawkin, unless he turned common fowler — Sir Robert Ringhorse used to say, the herd lads shot as mony geds and pyots as they did game. — But new lords new laws — naething but fine and imprisonment, and the game no a feather the plentier. If I wad hae a brace or twa of birds in the house, as every body looks for them after the twelfth — I ken what they are like to cost me — And what for no? — risk maun be paid for. — There is John Pirner himsell, that has keepit the muir-side thirty year in spite of a' the lairds in the country, shoots, he tells me, now-a-days, as if he felt a rape about his neck."

"It wasna about ony game business, then, that you wanted advice?" said Bindloose, who, though somewhat of a digresser himself, made little allowance for the excursions of others from the subject in hand.

"Indeed is it no, Mr. Bindloose," said Meg; "but it is e'en about this unhappy callant that I spoke to you about. — Ye maun ken I have cleiket a particular fancy to this lad, Francis Tirl — a fancy that whiles surprises my very sell, Mr. Bindloose, only that there is nae sin in it."

"None — none in the world, Mrs. Dods," said the lawyer, thinking at the same time within his own mind, "Oho! the mist begins to clear up — the young poacher has hit the mark, I see — winged the old barren grey hen! — ay, ay — a marriage-contract, no doubt — but I maun gie her line. — Ye are a wise woman, Mrs. Dods," he continued aloud, "and can doubtless consider the chances and the changes of human affairs."

"But I could never have considered what has befallen this puir lad, Mr. Bindloose," said Mrs. Dods, "through the malice of wicked men. — He lived, then, at the Cleikum, as I tell you, for mair than a fortnight, as quiet as a lamb on a lea-rig — a decenter lad never came within my door — ate and drank enough for the gude of the house, and nae mair than was for his ain gude, whether of body or soul — cleared his bills ilka Saturday at e'en, as regularly as Saturday came round."

"An admirable customer, no doubt, Mrs. Dods," said the lawyer.

"Never was the like of him for that matter," answered the honest dame. "But to see the malice of men! — some of thae landloupers and gill-flirts down at the filthy puddle yonder, that they ca' the Waal, had heard of this puir lad, and the bits of pictures that he made fashion of drawing, and they maun cuttle him awa down to the bottle, where mony a bonny story they had clecked, Mr. Bindloose, baith of Mr. Tirl and of mysell."

"A Commissary Court business," said the writer, going off again upon a false scent. "I shall trim their jackets for them, Mrs. Dods, if you can but bring tight evidence of the facts — I will soon bring them to fine and palinode — I will make them repent meddling with your good name."

"My gude name! What the sorrow is the matter wi' my name, Mr. Bindloose?" said the irritable client. "I think ye hae been at the wee cappie this morning, for as early as it is — My gude name! — if ony body touched my gude name, I would neither fash counsel nor commissary — I wad be down among them, like a jer-falcon among a wheen wild-geese, and the best among them that dared to say ony thing of Meg Dods by what was honest and civil, I wad sune see if her cockernonnie was made of her ain hair or other folk's. My gude name, indeed!"

"Weel, weel, Mrs. Dods, I was mista'en, that's a'," said the writer, "I was mista'en; and I dare to say you would haud your ain wi' your neighbours as weel as ony woman in the land — But let us hear now what the grief is, in one word."

"In one word, then, Clerk Bindloose, it is little short of — murder," said Meg, in a low tone, as if the very utterance of the word startled her.

"Murder! murder, Mrs. Dods? — it cannot be — there is not a word of it in the Sheriff-office — the Procurator-fiscal kens nothing of it — there could not be murder in the country, and me not hear of it — for God's sake, take heed what you say, woman, and dinna get yourself into trouble."

"Mr. Bindloose, I can but speak according to my lights," said Mrs. Dods; "you are in a sense a judge in Israel, at least you are one of the scribes having authority — and I tell you, with a wae and bitter heart, that this puir callant of mine that was lodging in my house has been murdered or kidnapped awa among thae banditti folk down at the New Waal; and I'll have the law put in force against them, if it should cost me a hundred pounds."

The Clerk stood much astonished at the nature of Meg's accusation, and the pertinacity with which she seemed disposed to insist upon it.

"I have this comfort," she continued, "that whatever has happened, it has been by no fault of mine, Mr. Bindloose; for weel I wot, before that bloodthirsty auld half-pay Philistine, MacTurk, got to speech of him, I clawed his cantle to some purpose with my hearth-besom. — But the poor simple bairn himsell, that had nae mair knowledge of the wickedness of human nature than a calf has of a flesher's gully, he threepit to see the auld hardened bloodshedder, and trysted wi' him to meet wi' some of the gang at an hour certain that same day, and awa he gaed to keep tryst, but since that hour naeboddy ever has set een on him. — And the mansworn villains now want to put a disgrace on him, and say that he fled the country rather than face them! — a likely story — fled the country for them! — and leave his bill unsettled — him that was sae regular — and his portmantle and his fishing-rod and the pencils and pictures he held sic a wark about! — It's my faithful belief, Mr. Bindloose — and ye may trust me or no as ye like — that he had some foul play between the Cleikum and the Buck-stane. I have thought it, and I have dreamed it, and I will be at the bottom of it, or my name is not Meg Dods, and that I wad have them a' to reckon on. — Ay, ay, that's right, Mr. Bindloose, tak out your pen and inkhorn, and let us set about it to purpose."

With considerable difficulty, and at the expense of much cross-examination, Mr. Bindloose extracted from his client a detailed account of the proceedings of the company at the Well towards Tyrrel, so far as they were known to, or suspected by Meg, making notes, as the examination proceeded, of what appeared to be matter of consequence. After a moment's consideration, he asked the dame the very natural question, how she came to be acquainted with the material fact, that a hostile appointment was made between Captain MacTurk and her lodger, when, according to her own account, it was made *intra parietes*, and *remotis testibus*? "Ay, but we victuallers ken weel enough what goes on in our ain houses," said Meg — "And what for no? — If ye *maun* ken a' about it, I e'en listened through the keyhole of the door."

"And do you say you heard them settle an appointment for a duel?" said the Clerk; "and did you no take any measures to hinder mischief, Mrs. Dods, having such a respect for this lad as you say you have, Mrs. Dods? — I really wadna have looked for the like o' this at your hands."

"In truth, Mr. Bindloose," said Meg, putting her apron to her eyes, "and that's what vexes me mair than a' the rest, and ye needna say muckle to ane whose heart is e'en the sairer that she has been a thought to blame. But there has been mony a challenge, as they ca' it, passed in my house, when thae daft lads of the Wildfire Club and the Helter-skelter were upon their rambles; and they had aye sense eneugh to make it up without fighting, sae that I really did not apprehend ony thing like mischief. — And ye maun think, moreover, Mr. Bindloose, that it would have been an unco thing if a guest, in a decent and creditable public like mine, was to have cried coward before ony of thae landlouping blackguards that live down at the hottle yonder."

"That is to say, Mrs. Dods, you were desirous your guest should fight for the honour of your house," said Bindloose.

"What for no, Mr. Bindloose? — Isna that kind of fray aye about honour? and what for should the honour of a substantial, four-nooked, sclated house of three stories, no be foughten for, as weel as the credit of ony of these feckless callants that make such a fray about their reputation? — I promise you my house, the Cleikum, stood in the Auld Town of St. Ronan's before they were born, and it will stand there after they are hanged, as I trust some of them are like to be."

"Well, but perhaps your lodger had less zeal for the honour of the house, and has quietly taken himself out of harm's way," said Mr. Bindloose; "for if I understand your story, this meeting never took place."

"Have less zeal!" said Meg, determined to be pleased with no supposition of her lawyer, "Mr. Bindloose, ye little ken him — I wish ye had seen him when he was angry! — I dared hardly face him mysell, and there are no mony folk that I am feared for — Meeting! there was nae meeting, I trow — they never dared to meet him fairly — but I am sure waur came of it than ever would have come of a meeting; for Anthony heard twa shots gang off as he was watering the auld naig down

at the burn, and that is not far frae the footpath that leads to the Buck-stane. I was angry at him for no making on to see what the matter was, but he thought it was auld Pirner out wi' the double barrel, and he wasna keen of making himself a witness, in case he suld have been caa'd on in the Poaching Court."

"Well," said the Sheriff-clerk, "and I dare say he did hear a poacher fire a couple of shots — nothing more likely. Believe me, Mrs. Dods, your guest had no fancy for the party Captain MacTurk invited him to — and being a quiet sort of man, he has just walked away to his own home, if he has one — I am really sorry you have given yourself the trouble of this long journey about so simple a matter."

Mrs. Dods remained with her eyes fixed on the ground in a very sullen and discontented posture, and when she spoke, it was in a tone of corresponding displeasure.

"Aweel — aweel — live and learn, they say — I thought I had a friend in you, Mr. Bindloose — I am sure I aye took your part when folk miscaa'd ye, and said ye were this, that, and the other thing, and little better than an auld sneck-drawing loon, Mr. Bindloose. — And ye have aye keepit my penny of money, though, nae doubt, Tam Turnpenny lives nearer me, and they say he allows half a per cent mair than ye do if the siller lies, and mine is but seldom steered."

"But ye have not the Bank's security, madam," said Mr. Bindloose, reddening. "I say harm of nae man's credit — ill would it beseem me — but there is a difference between Tam Turnpenny and the Bank, I trow."

"Weel, weel, Bank here Bank there, I thought I had a friend in you, Mr. Bindloose; and here am I, come from my ain house all the way to yours for sma' comfort, I think."

"My stars, madam," said the perplexed scribe, "what would you have me to do in such a blind story as yours, Mrs. Dods? — Be a thought reasonable — consider that there is no *Corpus delicti*."

"Corpus delicti? and what's that?" said Meg; "something to be paid for, nae doubt, for your hard words a' end in that. — And what for suld I no have a Corpus delicti, or a Habeas Corpus, or any other Corpus that I like, sae lang as I am willing to lick and lay down the ready siller?"

"Lord help and pardon us, Mrs. Dods," said the distressed agent, "ye mistake the matter a'thegether! When I say there is no Corpus delicti, I mean to say there is no proof that a crime has been committed."¹⁹

"And does the man say that murder is not a crime, than?" answered Meg, who had taken her own view of the subject far too strongly to be converted to any other — "Weel I wot it's a crime, baith by the law of God and man, and mony a pretty man has been strapped for it."

"I ken all that very weel," answered the writer; "but, my stars, Mrs. Dods, there is nae evidence of murder in this case — nae proof that a man has been slain — nae production of his dead body — and that is what we call the Corpus delicti."

"Weel, than, the deil lick it out of ye," said Meg, rising in wrath, "for I will awa hame again; and as for the puir lad's body, I'll hae it fund, if it cost me turning the earth for three miles round wi' pick and shool — if it were but to give the puir bairn Christian burial, and to bring punishment on MacTurk and the murdering crew at the Waal, and to shame an auld doited fule like yoursell, John Bindloose."

She rose in wrath to call her vehicle; but it was neither the interest nor the intention of the writer that his customer and he should part on such indifferent terms. He implored her patience, and reminded her that the horses, poor things, had just come off their stage — an argument which sounded irresistible in the ears of the old she-publican, in whose early education due care of the post-cattle mingled with the most sacred duties. She therefore resumed her seat again in a sullen mood, and Mr. Bindloose was cudgelling his brains for some argument which might bring the old lady to reason, when his attention was drawn by a noise in the passage.

Chapter 15 A Praiser of Past Times.

— *Now your traveller,
He and his toothpick at my worship's mess.*

KING JOHN.

The noise stated at the conclusion of last chapter to have disturbed Mr. Bindloose, was the rapping of one, as in haste and impatience, at the Bank-office door, which office was an apartment of the Banker's house, on the left hand of his passage, as the parlour in which he had received Mrs. Dods was upon the right.

In general, this office was patent to all having business there; but at present, whatever might be the hurry of the party who knocked, the clerks within the office could not admit him, being themselves made prisoners by the prudent jealousy of Mr. Bindloose, to prevent them from listening to his consultation with Mrs. Dods. They therefore answered the angry and impatient knocking of the stranger only with stifled giggling from within, finding it no doubt an excellent joke, that their master's precaution was thus interfering with their own discharge of duty.

With one or two hearty curses upon them, as the regular plagues of his life, Mr. Bindloose darted into the passage, and admitted the stranger into his official apartment. The doors both of the parlour and office remaining open, the ears of Luckie Dods (experienced, as the reader knows, in collecting intelligence) could partly overhear what passed. The conversation seemed to regard a cash transaction of some importance, as Meg became aware when the stranger raised a voice which was naturally sharp and high, as he did when uttering the following words, towards the close of a conversation which had lasted about five minutes — "Premium? — Not a pice, sir — not a courie — not a farthing — premium for a Bank of England bill? — d'ye take me for a fool, sir? — do not I know that you call forty days par when you give remittances to London?"

Mr. Bindloose was here heard to mutter something indistinctly about the custom of the trade.

"Custom!" retorted the stranger, "no such thing — damn'd bad custom, if it is one — don't tell me of customs — 'Sbodikins, man, I know the rate of exchange all over the world, and have drawn bills from Timbuctoo — My friends in the Strand filed it along with Bruce's from Gondar — talk to me of premium on a Bank of England post-bill! — What d'ye look at the bill for? — D'ye think it doubtful — I can change it."

"By no means necessary," answered Bindloose, "the bill is quite right; but it is usual to indorse, sir."

"Certainly — reach me a pen — d'ye think I can write with my rattan? — What sort of ink is this? — yellow as curry sauce — never mind — there is my name — Peregrine Touchwood — I got it from the Willoughbies, my Christian name — Have I my full change here?"

"Your full change, sir," answered Bindloose.

"Why, you should give *me* a premium, friend, instead of me giving you one."

"It is out of our way, I assure you, sir," said the Banker, "quite out of our way — but if you would step into the parlour and take a cup of tea" —

"Why, ay," said the stranger, his voice sounding more distinctly as (talking all the while, and ushered along by Mr. Bindloose) he left the office and moved towards the parlour, "a cup of tea were no such bad thing, if one could come by it genuine — but as for your premium" — So saying, he entered the parlour and made his bow to Mrs. Dods, who, seeing what she called a decent, purpose-like body, and aware that his pocket was replenished with English and Scottish paper currency, returned the compliment with her best curtsy.

Mr. Touchwood, when surveyed more at leisure, was a short, stout, active man, who, though sixty years of age and upwards, retained in his sinews and frame the elasticity of an earlier period. His countenance expressed self-confidence, and something like a contempt for those who had neither seen nor endured so much as he had himself. His short black hair was mingled with grey, but not entirely whitened by it. His eyes were jet-black, deep-set, small, and sparkling, and contributed, with a short turned-up nose, to express an irritable and choleric habit. His complexion was burnt to a brick-colour by the vicissitudes of climate, to which it had been subjected; and his face, which at the distance of a yard or two seemed hale and smooth, appeared, when closely examined, to be seamed with a million of wrinkles, crossing each other in every direction possible, but as fine as if drawn by the point of a very small needle.²⁰ His dress was a blue coat and buff waistcoat, half boots remarkably well blacked, and a silk handkerchief tied with military precision. The only antiquated part of his dress was a cocked hat of equilateral dimensions, in the button-hole of which he wore a very small cockade. Mrs. Dods, accustomed to judge of persons by their first appearance, said, that in the three steps which he made from the door to the tea-table, she recognised, without the possibility of mistake, the gait of a person who was well to pass in the world; "and

that," she added with a wink, "is what we victuallers are seldom deceived in. If a gold-laced waistcoat has an empty pouch, the plain swan's-down will be the brawer of the twa."

"A drizzling morning, good madam," said Mr. Touchwood, as with a view of sounding what sort of company he had got into.

"A fine saft morning for the crap, sir," answered Mrs. Dods, with equal solemnity.

"Right, my good madam; *soft* is the very word, though it has been some time since I heard it. I have cast a double hank about the round world since I last heard of a soft²¹ morning."

"You will be from these parts, then?" said the writer, ingeniously putting a case, which, he hoped, would induce the stranger to explain himself. "And yet, sir," he added, after a pause, "I was thinking that Touchwood is not a Scottish name, at least that I ken of."

"Scottish name? — no," replied the traveller; "but a man may have been in these parts before, without being a native — or, being a native, he may have had some reason to change his name — there are many reasons why men change their names."

"Certainly, and some of them very good ones," said the lawyer; "as in the common case of an heir of entail, where deed of provision and tailzie is maist ordinarily implemented by taking up name and arms."

"Ay, or in the case of a man having made the country too hot for him under his own proper appellative," said Mr. Touchwood.

"That is a supposition, sir," replied the lawyer, "which it would ill become me to put. — But at any rate, if you knew this country formerly, ye cannot but be marvellously pleased with the change we have been making since the American war — hill-sides bearing clover instead of heather — rents doubled, trebled, quadrupled — the auld reekie dungeons pulled down, and gentlemen living in as good houses as you will see any where in England."

"Much good may it do them, for a pack of fools!" replied Mr. Touchwood, hastily.

"You do not seem much delighted with our improvements, sir?" said the banker, astonished to hear a dissentient voice where he conceived all men were unanimous.

"Pleased!" answered the stranger — "Yes, as much pleased as I am with the devil, who I believe set many of them agoing. Ye have got an idea that every thing must be changed — Unstable as water, ye shall not excel — I tell ye, there have been more changes in this poor nook of yours within the last forty years, than in the great empires of the East for the space of four thousand, for what I know."

"And why not," replied Bindloose, "if they be changes for the better?"

"But they are *not* for the better," replied Mr. Touchwood, eagerly. "I left your peasantry as poor as rats indeed, but honest and industrious, enduring their lot in this world with firmness, and looking forward to the next with hope — Now they are mere eye-servants — looking at their watches, forsooth, every ten minutes, lest they should work for their master half an instant after loosing-time — And then, instead of studying the Bible on the work days, to kittle the clergymen with doubtful points of controversy on the Sabbath, they glean all their theology from Tom Paine and Voltaire."

"Weel I wot the gentleman speaks truth," said Mrs. Dods. "I fand a bundle of their bawbee blasphemies in my ain kitchen — But I trow I made a clean house of the packman loon that brought them! — No content wi' turning the tawpies' heads wi' ballants, and driving them daft wi' ribands, to cheat them out of their precious souls, and gie them the deevil's ware, that I suld say sae, in exchange for the siller that suld support their puir father that's aff wark and bedridden!"

"Father! madam," said the stranger; "they think no more of their father than Regan or Goneril."

"In gude troth, ye have skeel of our sect, sir," replied the dame; "they are gomerils, every one of them — I tell them sae every hour of the day, but catch them profiting by the doctrine."

"And then the brutes are turned mercenary, madam," said Mr. Touchwood, "I remember when a Scottishman would have scorned to touch a shilling that he had not earned, and yet was as ready to help a stranger as an Arab of the desert. And now, I did but drop my cane the other day as I was riding — a fellow who was working at the hedge made three steps to lift it — I thanked him, and my friend threw his hat on his head, and 'damned my thanks, if that were all' — Saint Giles could not have excelled him."

"Weel, weel," said the banker, "that may be a' as you say, sir, and nae doubt wealth makes wit waver; but the country's wealthy, that cannot be denied, and wealth, sir, ye ken" —

"I know wealth makes itself wings," answered the cynical stranger; "but I am not quite sure we have it even now. You make a great show, indeed, with building and cultivation; but stock is not capital, any more than the fat of a corpulent man is health or strength."

"Surely, Mr. Touchwood," said Bindloose, who felt his own account in the modern improvements, "a set of landlords, living like lairds in good earnest, and tenants with better housekeeping than the lairds used to have, and facing Whitsunday and Martinmas as I would face my breakfast — if these are not signs of wealth, I do not know where to seek for them."

"They are signs of folly, sir," replied Touchwood; "folly that is poor, and renders itself poorer by desiring to be thought rich; and how they come by the means they are so ostentatious of, you, who are a banker, perhaps can tell me better than I can guess."

"There is maybe an accommodation bill discounted now and then, Mr. Touchwood; but men must have accommodation, or the world would stand still — accommodation is the grease that makes the wheels go."

"Ay, makes them go down hill to the devil," answered Touchwood. "I left you bothered about one Ayr bank, but the whole country is an Air bank now, I think — And who is to pay the piper? — But it's all one — I will see little more of it — it is a perfect Babel, and would turn the head of a man who has spent his life with people who love sitting better than running, silence better than speaking, who never eat but when they are hungry, never drink but when thirsty, never laugh without a jest, and never speak but when they have something to say. But here, it is all run, ride, and drive — froth, foam, and flippancy — no steadiness — no character."

"I'll lay the burden of my life," said Dame Dods, looking towards her friend Bindloose, "that the gentleman has been at the new Spaw-waal yonder!"

"Spaw do you call it, madam? — If you mean the new establishment that has been spawned gentleman at St. Ronan's, it is the very fountain-head of folly and coxcomby — a Babel for noise, and a Vanity-fair for nonsense — no well in your swamps tenanted by such a conceited colony of clamorous frogs."

"Sir, sir!" exclaimed Dame Dods, delighted with the unqualified sentence passed upon her fashionable rivals, and eager to testify her respect for the judicious stranger who had pronounced it — "will you let me have the pleasure of pouring you out a dish of tea?" And so saying, she took bustling possession of the administration which had hitherto remained in the hands of Mr. Bindloose himself.

"I hope it is to your taste, sir," she continued, when the traveller had accepted her courtesy with the grateful acknowledgment, which men addicted to speak a great deal usually show to a willing auditor.

"It is as good as we have any right to expect, ma'am," answered Mr. Touchwood; "not quite like what I have drunk at Canton with old Fong Qua — but the Celestial Empire does not send its best tea to Leadenhall Street, nor does Leadenhall Street send its best to Marchthorn."

"That may be very true, sir," replied the dame; "but I will venture to say that Mr. Bindloose's tea is muckle better than you had at the Spaw-waal yonder."

"Tea, madam! — I saw none — Ash leaves and black-thorn leaves were brought in in painted canisters, and handed about by powder-monkeys in livery, and consumed by those who liked it, amidst the chattering of parrots and the squalling of kittens. I longed for the days of the Spectator, when I might have laid my penny on the bar, and retired without ceremony — But no — this blessed decoction was circulated under the auspices of some half-crazed blue-stocking or other, and we were saddled with all the formality of an entertainment, for this miserable allowance of a cockle-shell full of cat-lap per head."

"Weel, sir," answered Dame Dods, "all I can say is, that if it had been my luck to have served you at the Cleikum Inn, which our folk have kept for these twa generations, I canna pretend to say ye should have had such tea as ye have been used to in foreign parts where it grows, but the best I had I wad have gi'en it to a gentleman of your appearance, and I never charged mair than six-pence in all my time, and my father's before me."

"I wish I had known the Old Inn was still standing, madam," said the traveller; "I should certainly have been your guest, and sent down for the water every morning — the doctors insist I must use Cheltenham, or some substitute, for the bile — though, d — n them, I believe it's only to hide their own ignorance. And I thought

this Spaw would have been the least evil of the two; but I have been fairly overreached — one might as well live in the inside of a bell. I think young St. Ronan's must be mad, to have established such a Vanity-fair upon his father's old property."

"Do you ken this St. Ronan's that now is?" enquired the dame.

"By report only," said Mr. Touchwood; "but I have heard of the family, and I think I have read of them, too, in Scottish history. I am sorry to understand they are lower in the world than they have been. This young man does not seem to take the best way to mend matters, spending his time among gamblers and black-legs."

"I should be sorry if it were so," said honest Meg Dods, whose hereditary respect for the family always kept her from joining in any scandal affecting the character of the young Laird — "My forbears, sir, have had kindness frae his; and although maybe he may have forgotten all about it, it wad ill become me to say ony thing of him that should not be said of his father's son."

Mr. Bindloose had not the same motive for forbearance; he declaimed against Mowbray as a thoughtless dissipater of his own fortune, and that of others. "I have some reason to speak," he said, "having two of his notes for L.100 each, which I discounted out of mere kindness and respect for his ancient family, and which he thinks nae mair of retiring, than he does of paying the national debt — And here has he been raking every shop in Marchthorn, to fit out an entertainment for all the fine folk at the Well yonder; and tradesfolk are obliged to take his acceptances for their furnishings. But they may cash his bills that will; I ken ane that will never advance a bawbee on ony paper that has John Mowbray either on the back or front of it. He had mair need to be paying the debts which he has made already, than making new anes, that he may feed fules and flatterers."

"I believe he is likely to lose his preparations, too," said Mr. Touchwood, "for the entertainment has been put off, as I heard, in consequence of Miss Mowbray's illness."

"Ay, ay, puir thing!" said Dame Margaret Dods: "her health has been unsettled for this mony a day."

"Something wrong here, they tell me," said the traveller, pointing to his own forehead significantly.

"God only kens," replied Mrs. Dods; "but I rather suspect the heart than the head — the puir thing is hurried here and there, and down to the Waal, and up again, and nae society or quiet at hame; and a' thing ganging this unthrifty gait — nae wonder she is no that weel settled."

"Well," replied Touchwood, "she is worse they say than she has been, and that has occasioned the party at Shaws-Castle having been put off. Besides, now this fine young lord has come down to the Well, undoubtedly they will wait her recovery."

"A lord!" ejaculated the astonished Mrs. Dods; "a lord come down to the Waal — they will be neither to haud nor to bind now — ance wud and aye waur — a lord! — set them up and shute them forward — a lord! — the Lord have a care o' us! — a lord at the hottle! — Maister Touchwood, it's my mind he will only prove to be a Lord o' Session."

"Nay, not so, my good lady," replied the traveller "he is an English lord, and, as they say, a Lord of Parliament — but some folk pretend to say there is a flaw in the title."

"I'll warrant is there — a dozen of them!" said Meg, with alacrity — for she could by no means endure to think on the accumulation of dignity likely to accrue to the rival establishment, from its becoming the residence of an actual nobleman. "I'll warrant he'll prove a landlouping lord on their hand, and they will be e'en cheap o' the loss — And he has come down out of order it's like, and nae doubt he'll no be lang there before he will recover his health, for the credit of the Spaw."

"Faith, madam, his present disorder is one which the Spaw will hardly cure — he is shot in the shoulder with a pistol-bullet — a robbery attempted, it seems — that is one of your new accomplishments — no such thing happened in Scotland in my time — men would have sooner expected to meet with the phoenix than with a highwayman."

"And where did this happen, if you please, sir?" asked the man of bills.

"Somewhere near the old village," replied the stranger; "and, if I am rightly informed, on Wednesday last."

"This explains your twa shots, I am thinking, Mrs. Dods," said Mr. Bindloose; "your groom heard them on the Wednesday — it must have been this attack on the stranger nobleman."

"Maybe it was, and maybe it was not," said Mrs. Dods; "but I'll see gude reason before I give up my ain judgment in that case. — I wad like to ken if this gentleman," she added, returning to the subject from which Mr. Touchwood's interesting conversation had for a few minutes diverted her thoughts, "has heard aught of Mr. Tirl?"

"If you mean the person to whom this paper relates," said the stranger, taking a printed handbill from his pocket, "I heard of little else — the whole place rang of him, till I was almost as sick of Tyrrel as William Rufus was. Some idiotical quarrel which he had engaged in, and which he had not fought out, as their wisdom thought he should have done, was the principal cause of censure. That is another folly now, which has gained ground among you. Formerly, two old proud lairds, or cadets of good family, perhaps, quarrelled, and had a rencontre, or fought a duel after the fashion of their old Gothic ancestors; but men who had no grandfathers never dreamt of such folly — And here the folk denounce a trumpery dauber of canvass, for such I understand to be this hero's occupation, as if he were a field-officer, who made valour his profession; and who, if you deprived him of his honour, was like to be deprived of his bread at the same time. — Ha, ha, ha! it reminds one of Don Quixote, who took his neighbour, Samson Carrasco, for a knight-errant."

The perusal of this paper, which contained the notes formerly laid before the reader, containing the statement of Sir Bingo, and the censure which the company at the Well had thought fit to pass upon his affair with Mr. Tyrrel, induced Mr. Bindloose to say to Mrs. Dods, with as little exultation on the superiority of his own judgment as human nature would permit —

"Ye see now that I was right, Mrs. Dods, and that there was nae earthly use in your fashing yoursell wi' this lang journey — The lad had just ta'en the bent rather than face Sir Bingo; and troth, I think him the wiser of the twa for sae doing — There ye hae print for it."

Meg answered somewhat sullenly, "Ye may be mista'en, for a' that, your ainsell, for as wise as ye are, Mr. Bindloose; I shall hae that matter mair strictly enquired into."

This led to a renewal of the altercation concerning the probable fate of Tyrrel, in the course of which the stranger was induced to take some interest in the subject. At length Mrs. Dods, receiving no countenance from the experienced lawyer for the hypothesis she had formed, rose, in something like displeasure, to order her whiskey to be prepared. But hostess as she was herself, when in her own dominions, she reckoned without her host in the present instance; for the humpbacked postilion, as absolute in his department as Mrs. Dods herself, declared that the cattle would not be fit for the road these two hours yet. The good lady was therefore obliged to wait his pleasure, bitterly lamenting all the while the loss which a house of public entertainment was sure to sustain by the absence of the landlord or landlady, and anticipating a long list of broken dishes, miscalculated reckonings, unarranged chambers, and other disasters, which she was to expect at her return. Mr. Bindloose, zealous to recover the regard of his good friend and client, which he had in some degree forfeited by contradicting her on a favourite subject, did not choose to offer the unpleasing, though obvious topic of consolation, that an unfrequented inn is little exposed to the accidents she apprehended. On the contrary, he condoled with her very cordially, and went so far as to hint, that if Mr. Touchwood had come to Marchthorn with post-horses, as he supposed from his dress, she could have the advantage of them to return with more despatch to St. Ronan's.

"I am not sure," said Mr. Touchwood, suddenly, "but I may return there myself. In that case I will be glad to set this good lady down, and to stay a few days at her house if she will receive me. — I respect a woman like you, ma'am, who pursue the occupation of your father — I have been in countries, ma'am, where people have followed the same trade, from father to son, for thousands of years — And I like the fashion — it shows a steadiness and sobriety of character."

Mrs. Dods put on a joyous countenance at this proposal, protesting that all should be done in her power to make things agreeable; and while her good friend, Mr. Bindloose, expatiated upon the comfort her new guest would experience at the Cleikum, she silently contemplated with delight the prospect of a speedy and dazzling triumph, by carrying off a creditable customer from her showy and successful rival at the Well.

"I shall be easily accommodated, ma'am," said the stranger; "I have travelled too much and too far to be troublesome. A Spanish venta, a Persian khan, or a Turkish caravanserail, is all the same to me — only, as I have no servant — indeed, never can be plagued with one of these idle loiterers — I must beg you will send to the Well for a bottle of the water on such mornings as I cannot walk there myself — I find it is really of some service to me."

Mrs. Dods readily promised compliance with this reasonable request; graciously conceding, that there "could be nae ill in the water itsell, but maybe some gude — it was only the New Inn, and the daft haverils that they caa'd the Company, that she misliked. Folk had a jest that St. Ronan dookit the Deevil in the Waal, which garr'd it taste aye since of brimstane — but she dared to say that was a' papist nonsense, for she was tell't by him that kend weel, and that was the minister himsell, that St. Ronan was nane of your idolatrous Roman saunts, but a Chaldee," (meaning probably a Culdee,) "whilk was doubtless a very different story."

Matters being thus arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, the post-chaise was ordered, and speedily appeared at the door of Mr. Bindloose's mansion. It was not without a private feeling of reluctance, that honest Meg mounted the step of a vehicle, on the door of which was painted, "FOX INN AND HOTEL, ST. RONAN'S WELL;" but it was too late to start such scruples.

"I never thought to have entered ane o' their hurley-hackets," she said, as she seated herself; "and sic a like thing as it is — scarce room for twa folk! — Weel I wot, Mr. Touchwood, when I was in the hiring line, our twa chaises wad hae carried, ilk ane o' them, four grown folk and as mony bairns. I trust that doited creature Anthony will come awa back wi' my whiskey and the cattle, as soon as they have had their feed. — Are ye sure ye hae room eneugh, sir? — I wad fain hotch mysell farther yont."

"O, ma'am," answered the Oriental, "I am accustomed to all sorts of conveyances — a dooly, a litter, a cart, a palanquin, or a post-chaise, are all alike to me — I think I could be an inside with Queen Mab in a nutshell, rather than not get forward. — Begging you many pardons, if you have no particular objections, I will light my sheroot," &c. &c. &c.

Chapter 16 The Clergyman.

*A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a-year.*

GOLDSMITH'S DESERTED VILLAGE.

Mrs. Dods's conviction, that her friend Tyrrel had been murdered by the sanguinary Captain MacTurk remained firm and unshaken; but some researches for the supposed body having been found fruitless, as well as expensive, she began to give up the matter in despair. "She had done her duty"—"she left the matter to them that had a charge anent such things"—and "Providence would bring the mystery to light in his own fitting time"—such were the moralities with which the good dame consoled herself; and, with less obstinacy than Mr. Bindloose had expected, she retained her opinion without changing her banker and man of business.

Perhaps Meg's acquiescent inactivity in a matter which she had threatened to probe so deeply, was partly owing to the place of poor Tyrrel being supplied in her blue chamber, and in her daily thoughts and cares, by her new guest, Mr. Touchwood; in possessing whom, a deserter as he was from the Well, she obtained, according to her view of the matter, a decided triumph over her rivals. It sometimes required, however, the full force of this reflection, to induce Meg, old and crabbed as she was, to submit to the various caprices and exactions of attention which were displayed by her new lodger. Never any man talked so much as Touchwood, of his habitual indifference to food, and accommodation in travelling; and probably there never was any traveller who gave more trouble in a house of entertainment. He had his own whims about cookery; and when these were contradicted, especially if he felt at the same time a twinge of incipient gout, one would have thought he had taken his lessons in the pastry-shop of Bedreddin Hassan, and was ready to renew the scene of the unhappy cream-tart, which was compounded without pepper. Every now and then he started some new doctrine in culinary matters, which Mrs. Dods deemed a heresy; and then the very house rang with their disputes. Again, his bed must necessarily be made at a certain angle from the pillow to the footposts; and the slightest deviation from this disturbed, he said, his nocturnal rest, and did certainly ruffle his temper. He was equally whimsical about the brushing of his clothes, the arrangement of the furniture in his apartment, and a thousand minutiae, which, in conversation, he seemed totally to contemn.

It may seem singular, but such is the inconsistency of human nature, that a guest of this fanciful and capricious disposition gave much more satisfaction to Mrs. Dods, than her quiet and indifferent friend, Mr. Tyrrel. If her present lodger could blame, he could also applaud; and no artist, conscious of such skill as Mrs. Dods possessed, is indifferent to the praises of such a connoisseur as Mr. Touchwood. The pride of art comforted her for the additional labour; nor was it a matter unworthy of this most honest publican's consideration, that the guests who give most trouble, are usually those who incur the largest bills, and pay them with the best grace. On this point Touchwood was a jewel of a customer. He never denied himself the gratification of the slightest whim, whatever expense he might himself incur, or whatever trouble he might give to those about him; and all was done under protestation, that the matter in question was the most indifferent thing to him in the world. "What the devil did he care for Burgess's sauces, he that had eat his kouscousou, spiced with nothing but the sand of the desert? only it was a shame for Mrs. Dods to be without what every decent house, above the rank of an alehouse, ought to be largely provided with."

In short, he fussed, fretted, commanded, and was obeyed; kept the house in hot water, and yet was so truly good-natured when essential matters were in discussion, that it was impossible to bear him the least ill-will; so that Mrs. Dods, though in a moment of spleen she sometimes wished him at the top of Tintock,⁶⁶ always ended by singing forth his praises. She could not, indeed, help suspecting that he was a Nabob, as well from his conversation about foreign parts, as from his freaks of indulgence to himself, and generosity to others — attributes which she understood to be proper to most "Men of Ind." But although the reader has heard her testify a general dislike to this species of Fortune's favourites, Mrs. Dods had sense enough to know, that a Nabob living in the neighbourhood, who raises the price of eggs and poultry upon the good housewives around, was very different from a Nabob residing within her own gates, drawing all his supplies from her own larder, and paying, without hesitation or question, whatever bills her conscience permitted her to send in. In short, to come back to the point at which we perhaps might have stopped some time since, landlady and guest were very much pleased with each other.

But Ennui finds entrance into every scene, when the gloss of novelty is over; and the fiend began to seize upon Mr. Touchwood just when he had got all matters to his mind in the Cleikum Inn — had instructed Dame Dods in the mysteries of curry and mullegatawny — drilled the chambermaid into the habit of making his bed at the angle recommended by Sir John Sinclair — and made some progress in instructing the humpbacked postilion in the Arabian mode of grooming. Pamphlets and newspapers, sent from London and from Edinburgh by loads, proved inadequate to rout this invader of Mr. Touchwood's comfort; and, at last, he bethought himself of company. The natural resource would have been the Well — but the traveller had a holy shivering of awe, which crossed him at the very recollection of Lady Penelope, who had worked him rather hard during his former brief residence; and although Lady Binks's beauty might have charmed an Asiatic, by the plump graces of its contour, our senior was past the thoughts of a Sultana and a haram. At length a bright idea crossed his mind, and he suddenly demanded of Mrs. Dods, who was pouring out his tea for breakfast, into a large cup of a very particular species of china, of which he had presented her with a service on condition of her rendering him this personal good office — "Pray, Mrs. Dods, what sort of a man is your minister?"

"He's just a man like other men, Maister Touchwood," replied Meg; "what sort of a man should he be?"

"A man like other men? — ay — that is to say, he has the usual complement of legs and arms, eyes and ears — But is he a sensible man?"

"No muckle o' that, sir," answered Dame Dods; "for if he was drinking this very tea that ye gat down from London wi' the mail, he wad mistake it for common bohea."

"Then he has not all his organs — wants a nose, or the use of one at least," said Mr. Touchwood; "the tea is right gunpowder — a perfect nosegay."

"Aweel, that may be," said the landlady; "but I have gi'en the minister a dram frae my ain best bottle of real Coniac brandy, and may I never stir frae the bit, if he didna commend my whisky when he set down the glass! There is no ane o' them in the Presbytery but himsell — ay, or in the Synod either — but wad hae kend whisky frae brandy."

"But what sort of man is he? — Has he learning?" demanded Touchwood.

"Learning? — enough o' that," answered Meg; "just dung donnart wi' learning — lets a' things about the Manse gang whilk gate they will, sae they dinna plague him upon the score. An awfu' thing it is to see sic an ill-red-up house! — If I had the twa tawpies that sorn upon the honest man ae week under my drilling, I think I wad show them how to sort a lodging!"

"Does he preach well?" asked the guest.

"Oh, weel enough, weel enough — sometimes he will fling in a lang word or a bit of learning that our farmers and bannet lairds canna sae weel follow — But what of that, as I am aye telling them? — them that pay stipend get aye the mair for their siller."

"Does he attend to his parish? — Is he kind to the poor?"

"Ower muckle o' that, Maister Touchwood — I am sure he makes the Word gude, and turns not away from those that ask o' him — his very pocket is picked by a wheen ne'er-do-weel blackguards, that gae sorning through the country."

"Sorning through the country, Mrs. Dods? — what would you think if you had seen the Fakirs, the Dervises, the Bonzes, the Imaums, the monks, and the mendicants, that I have seen? — But go on, never mind — Does this minister of yours come much into company?"

"Company? — gae wa'," replied Meg, "he keeps nae company at a', neither in his ain house or ony gate else. He comes down in the morning in a lang ragged nightgown, like a potato bogle, and down he sits amang his books; and if they dinna bring him something to eat, the puir demented body has never the heart to cry for aught, and he has been kend to sit for ten hours thegither, black fasting, whilk is a' mere papistrie, though he does it just out o' forget."

"Why, landlady, in that case, your parson is any thing but the ordinary kind of man you described him — Forget his dinner! — the man must be mad — he shall dine with me today — he shall have such a dinner as I'll be bound he won't forget in a hurry."

"Ye'll maybe find that easier said than dune," said Mrs. Dods; "the honest man hasna, in a sense, the taste of his mouth — forby, he never dines out of his ain house — that is, when he dines at a' — A drink of milk and a bit of bread serves his turn, or maybe a cauld potato. — It's a heathenish fashion of him, for as good a man as he is, for surely there is nae Christian man but loves his own bowels."

"Why, that may be," answered Touchwood; "but I have known many who took so much care of their own bowels, my good dame, as to have none for any one else. — But come — bustle to the work — get us as good a dinner for two as you can set out — have it ready at three to an instant — get the old hock I had sent me from Cockburn — a bottle of the particular Indian Sherry — and another of your own old claret — fourth bin, you know, Meg. — And stay, he is a priest, and must have port — have all ready, but don't bring the wine into the sun, as that silly fool Beck did the other day. — I can't go down to the larder myself, but let us have no blunders."

"Nae fear, nae fear," said Meg, with a toss of the head, "I need naebody to look into my larder but mysell, I trow — but it's an unco order of wine for twa folk, and ane o' them a minister."

"Why, you foolish person, is there not the woman up the village that has just brought another fool into the world, and will she not need sack and caudle, if we leave some of our wine?"

"A gude ale-posset wad set her better," said Meg; "however, if it's your will, it shall be my pleasure. — But the like of sic a gentleman as yoursell never entered my doors!"

The traveller was gone before she had completed the sentence; and, leaving Meg to bustle and maunder at her leisure, away he marched, with the haste that characterised all his motions when he had any new project in his head, to form an acquaintance with the minister of St. Ronan's, whom, while he walks down the street to the Manse, we will endeavour to introduce to the reader.

The Rev. Josiah Cargill was the son of a small farmer in the south of Scotland; and a weak constitution, joined to the disposition for study which frequently accompanies infirm health, induced his parents, though at the expense of some sacrifices, to educate him for the ministry. They were the rather led to submit to the privations which were necessary to support this expense, because they conceived, from their family traditions, that he had in his veins some portion of the blood of that celebrated Boanerges of the Covenant, Donald Cargill,^[2] who was slain by the persecutors at the town of Queensferry, in the melancholy days of Charles II., merely because, in the plenitude of his sacerdotal power, he had cast out of the church, and delivered over to Satan by a formal excommunication, the King and Royal Family, with all the ministers and courtiers thereunto belonging. But if Josiah was really derived from this uncompromising champion, the heat of the family spirit which he might have inherited was qualified by the sweetness of his own disposition, and the quiet temper of the times in which he had the good fortune to live. He was characterised by all who knew him as a mild, gentle, and studious lover of learning, who, in the quiet prosecution of his own sole object, the acquisition of knowledge, and especially of that connected with his profession, had the utmost indulgence for all whose pursuits were different from his own. His sole relaxations were those of a retiring, mild, and pensive temper, and were limited to a ramble, almost always solitary, among the woods and hills, in praise of which, he was sometimes guilty of a sonnet, but rather because he could not help the attempt, than as proposing to himself the fame or the rewards which attend the successful poet. Indeed, far from seeking to insinuate his fugitive pieces into magazines and newspapers, he blushed at his poetical attempts even while alone, and, in fact, was rarely so indulgent to his vein as to commit them to paper.

From the same maid-like modesty of disposition, our student suppressed a strong natural turn towards drawing, although he was repeatedly complimented upon the few sketches which he made, by some whose judgment was generally admitted. It was, however, this neglected talent, which, like the swift feet of the stag in the fable, was fated to render him a service which he might in vain have expected from his worth and learning.

My Lord Bidmore, a distinguished connoisseur, chanced to be in search of a private tutor for his son and heir, the Honourable Augustus Bidmore, and for this purpose had consulted the Professor of Theology, who passed before him in review several favourite students, any of whom he conceived well suited for the situation; but still his answer to the important and unlooked-for question, "Did the candidate understand drawing?" was answered in the negative. The Professor, indeed, added his opinion, that such an accomplishment was neither to be desired nor expected in a student of theology; but, pressed hard with this condition as a *sine qua non*, he at length did remember a dreaming lad about the Hall, who seldom could be got to speak above his breath, even when delivering his essays, but was said to have a strong turn for drawing. This was enough for my Lord Bidmore, who contrived to obtain a sight of some of young Cargill's sketches, and was satisfied that, under such a tutor, his son could not fail to maintain that character for hereditary taste which his father and grandfather had acquired at the expense of a considerable estate, the representative value of which was now the painted canvass in the great gallery at Bidmore-House.

Upon following up the enquiry concerning the young man's character, he was found to possess all the other necessary qualifications of learning and morals, in a greater degree than perhaps Lord Bidmore might have required; and, to the astonishment of his fellow-students, but more especially to his own, Josiah Cargill was promoted to the desired and desirable situation of private tutor to the Honourable Mr. Bidmore.

Mr. Cargill did his duty ably and conscientiously, by a spoiled though good-humoured lad, of weak health and very ordinary parts. He could not, indeed, inspire into him any portion of the deep and noble enthusiasm which characterises the youth of genius; but his pupil made such progress in each branch of his studies as his capacity enabled him to attain. He understood the learned languages, and could be very profound on the subject of various readings — he pursued science, and could class shells, pack mosses, and arrange minerals — he drew without taste, but with much accuracy; and although he attained no commanding height in any pursuit, he knew enough of many studies, literary and scientific, to fill up his time, and divert from temptation a head, which was none of the strongest in point of resistance.

Miss Augusta Bidmore, his lordship's only other child, received also the instructions of Cargill in such branches of science as her father chose she should acquire, and her tutor was capable to teach. But her progress was as different from that of her brother, as the fire of heaven differs from that grosser element which the peasant piles upon his smouldering hearth. Her acquirements in Italian and Spanish literature, in history, in drawing, and in all elegant learning, were such as to enchant her teacher, while at the same time it kept him on the stretch, lest, in her successful career, the scholar should outstrip the master.

Alas! such intercourse, fraught as it is with dangers arising out of the best and kindest, as well as the most natural feelings on either side, proved in the present, as in many other instances, fatal to the peace of the preceptor. Every feeling heart will excuse a weakness, which we shall presently find carried with it its own severe

punishment. Cadenus, indeed, believe him who will, has assured us, that, in such a perilous intercourse, he himself preserved the limits which were unhappily transgressed by the unfortunate Vanessa, his more impassioned pupil:—

“The innocent delight he took
To see the virgin mind her book,
Was but the master’s secret joy,
In school to hear the finest boy.”

But Josiah Cargill was less fortunate, or less cautious. He suffered his fair pupil to become inexpressibly dear to him, before he discovered the precipice towards which he was moving under the direction of a blind and misplaced passion. He was indeed utterly incapable of availing himself of the opportunities afforded by his situation, to involve his pupil in the toils of a mutual passion. Honour and gratitude alike forbade such a line of conduct, even had it been consistent with the natural bashfulness, simplicity, and innocence of his disposition. To sigh and suffer in secret, to form resolutions of separating himself from a situation so fraught with danger, and to postpone from day to day the accomplishment of a resolution so prudent, was all to which the tutor found himself equal; and it is not improbable, that the veneration with which he regarded his patron’s daughter, with the utter hopelessness of the passion which he nourished, tended to render his love yet more pure and disinterested.

At length, the line of conduct which reason had long since recommended, could no longer be the subject of procrastination. Mr. Bidmore was destined to foreign travel for a twelvemonth, and Mr. Cargill received from his patron the alternative of accompanying his pupil, or retiring upon a suitable provision, the reward of his past instructions. It can hardly be doubted which he preferred; for while he was with young Bidmore, he did not seem entirely separated from his sister. He was sure to hear of Augusta frequently, and to see some part, at least, of the letters which she was to write to her brother; he might also hope to be remembered in these letters as her “good friend and tutor;” and to these consolations his quiet, contemplative, and yet enthusiastic disposition, clung as to a secret source of pleasure, the only one which life seemed to open to him.

But fate had a blow in store, which he had not anticipated. The chance of Augusta’s changing her maiden condition for that of a wife, probable as her rank, beauty, and fortune rendered such an event, had never once occurred to him; and although he had imposed upon himself the unwavering belief that she could never be his, he was inexpressibly affected by the intelligence that she had become the property of another.

The Honourable Mr. Bidmore’s letters to his father soon after announced that poor Mr. Cargill had been seized with a nervous fever, and again, that his convalescence was attended with so much debility, it seemed both of mind and body, as entirely to destroy his utility as a travelling companion. Shortly after this the travellers separated, and Cargill returned to his native country alone, indulging upon the road in a melancholy abstraction of mind, which he had suffered to grow upon him since the mental shock which he had sustained, and which in time became the most characteristic feature of his demeanour. His meditations were not even disturbed by any anxiety about his future subsistence, although the cessation of his employment seemed to render that precarious. For this, however, Lord Bidmore had made provision; for, though a coxcomb where the fine arts were concerned, he was in other particulars a just and honourable man, who felt a sincere pride in having drawn the talents of Cargill from obscurity, and entertained due gratitude for the manner in which he had achieved the important task intrusted to him in his family.

His lordship had privately purchased from the Mowbray family the patronage or advowson of the living of St. Ronan’s, then held by a very old incumbent, who died shortly afterwards; so that upon arriving in England Cargill found himself named to the vacant living. So indifferent, however, did he feel himself towards this preferment, that he might possibly not have taken the trouble to go through the necessary steps previous to his ordination, had it not been on account of his mother, now a widow, and unprovided for, unless by the support which he afforded her. He visited her in her small retreat in the suburbs of Marchthorn, heard her pour out her gratitude to Heaven, that she should have been granted life long enough to witness her son’s promotion to a charge, which in her eyes was more honourable and desirable than an Episcopal see — heard her chalk out the life which they were to lead together in the humble independence which had thus fallen on him — he heard all this, and had no power to crush her hopes and her triumph by the indulgence of his own romantic feelings. He passed almost mechanically through the usual forms, and was inducted into the living of St. Ronan’s.

Although fanciful and romantic, it was not in Josiah Cargill’s nature to yield to unavailing melancholy; yet he sought relief, not in society, but in solitary study. His seclusion was the more complete, that his mother, whose education had been as much confined as her fortunes, felt awkward under her new dignities, and willingly acquiesced in her son’s secession from society, and spent her whole time in superintending the little household, and in her way providing for all emergencies, the occurrence of which might call Josiah out of his favourite book-room. As old age rendered her inactive, she began to regret the incapacity of her son to superintend his own household, and talked something of matrimony, and the mysteries of the muckle wheel. To these admonitions Mr. Cargill returned only slight and evasive answers; and when the old lady slept in the village churchyard, at a reverend old age, there was no one to perform the office of superintendent in the minister’s family. Neither did Josiah Cargill seek for any, but patiently submitted to all the evils with which a bachelor estate is attended, and which were at least equal to those which beset the renowned Mago-Pico during his state of celibacy.²² His butter was ill churned, and declared by all but himself and the quean who made it, altogether uneatable; his milk was burnt in the pan, his fruit and vegetables were stolen, and his black stockings mended with blue and white thread. For all these things the minister cared not, his mind ever bent upon far different matters. Do not let my fair readers do Josiah more than justice, or suppose that, like Beltenebros in the desert, he remained for years the victim of an unfortunate and misplaced passion. No — to the shame of the male sex be it spoken, that no degree of hopeless love, however desperate and sincere, can ever continue for years to embitter life. There must be hope — there must be uncertainty — there must be reciprocity, to enable the tyrant of the soul to secure a dominion of very long duration over a manly and well-constituted mind, which is itself desirous to *will* its freedom. The memory of Augusta had long faded from Josiah’s thoughts, or was remembered only as a pleasing, but melancholy and unsubstantial dream, while he was straining forward in pursuit of a yet nobler and coyer mistress, in a word, of Knowledge herself.

Every hour that he could spare from his parochial duties, which he discharged with zeal honourable to his heart and head, was devoted to his studies, and spent among his books. But this chase of wisdom, though in itself interesting and dignified, was indulged to an excess which diminished the respectability, nay, the utility, of the deceived student; and he forgot, amid the luxury of deep and dark investigations, that society has its claims, and that the knowledge which is unimparted, is necessarily a barren talent, and is lost to society, like the miser’s concealed hoard, by the death of the proprietor. His studies were also under the additional disadvantage, that, being pursued for the gratification of a desultory longing after knowledge, and directed to no determined object, they turned on points rather curious than useful, and while they served for the amusement of the student himself, promised little utility to mankind at large.

Bewildered amid abstruse researches, metaphysical and historical, Mr. Cargill, living only for himself and his books, acquired many ludicrous habits, which exposed the secluded student to the ridicule of the world, and which tinged, though they did not altogether obscure, the natural civility of an amiable disposition, as well as the acquired habits of politeness which he had learned in the good society that frequented Lord Bidmore’s mansion. He not only indulged in neglect of dress and appearance, and all those ungainly tricks which men are apt to acquire by living very much alone, but besides, and especially, he became probably the most abstracted and absent man of a profession peculiarly liable to cherish such habits. No man fell so regularly into the painful dilemma of mistaking, or, in Scottish phrase, *miskinning*, the person he spoke to, or more frequently enquired of an old maid for her husband, of a childless wife about her young people, of the distressed widower for the spouse at whose funeral he himself had assisted but a fortnight before; and none was ever more familiar with strangers whom he had never seen, or seemed more estranged from those who had a title to think themselves well known to him. The worthy man perpetually confounded sex, age, and calling; and when a blind beggar extended his hand for charity, he has been known to return the civility by taking off his hat, making a low bow, and hoping his worship was well.

Among his brethren, Mr. Cargill alternately commanded respect by the depth of his erudition, and gave occasion to laughter from his odd peculiarities. On the latter occasions he used abruptly to withdraw from the ridicule he had provoked; for notwithstanding the general mildness of his character, his solitary habits had engendered a testy impatience of contradiction, and a keener sense of pain arising from the satire of others, than was natural to his unassuming disposition. As

for his parishioners, they enjoyed, as may reasonably be supposed, many a hearty laugh at their pastor's expense, and were sometimes, as Mrs. Dods hinted, more astonished than edified by his learning; for in pursuing a point of biblical criticism, he did not altogether remember that he was addressing a popular and unlearned assembly, not delivering a *concio ad clerum* — a mistake, not arising from any conceit of his learning, or wish to display it, but from the same absence of mind which induced an excellent divine, when preaching before a party of criminals condemned to death, to break off by promising the wretches, who were to suffer next morning, "the rest of the discourse at the first proper opportunity." But all the neighbourhood acknowledged Mr. Cargill's serious and devout discharge of his ministerial duties; and the poorer parishioners forgave his innocent peculiarities, in consideration of his unbounded charity; while the heritors, if they ridiculed the abstractions of Mr. Cargill on some subjects, had the grace to recollect that they had prevented him from suing an augmentation of stipend, according to the fashion of the clergy around him, or from demanding at their hands a new manse, or the repair of the old one. He once, indeed, wished that they would amend the roof of his book-room, which "rained in"²³ in a very pluvius manner; but receiving no direct answer from our friend Meiklewham, who neither relished the proposal nor saw means of eluding it, the minister quietly made the necessary repairs at his own expense, and gave the heritors no farther trouble on the subject. Such was the worthy divine whom our *bon vivant* at the Cleikum Inn hoped to conciliate by a good dinner and Cockburn's particular; an excellent menstruum in most cases, but not likely to be very efficacious on the present occasion.

Chapter 17 The Acquaintance.

*'Twixt us thus the difference trims:—
Using head instead of limbs,
You have read what I have seen;
Using limbs instead of head,
I have seen what you have read —
Which way does the balance lean?*

BUTLER.

Our traveller, rapid in all his resolutions and motions, strode stoutly down the street, and arrived at the Manse, which was, as we have already described it, all but absolutely ruinous. The total desolation and want of order about the door, would have argued the place uninhabited, had it not been for two or three miserable tubs with suds, or such like sluttish contents, which were left there, that those who broke their shins among them might receive a sensible proof, that "here the hand of woman had been." The door being half off its hinges, the entrance was for the time protected by a broken harrow, which must necessarily be removed before entry could be obtained. The little garden, which might have given an air of comfort to the old house had it been kept in any order, was abandoned to a desolation, of which that of the sluggard was only a type; and the minister's man, an attendant always proverbial for doing half work, and who seemed in the present instance to do none, was seen among docks and nettles, solacing himself with the few gooseberries which remained on some moss-grown bushes. To him Mr. Touchwood called loudly, enquiring after his master; but the clown, conscious of being taken in flagrant delict, as the law says, fled from him like a guilty thing, instead of obeying his summons, and was soon heard *hupping* and *geeing* to the cart, which he had left on the other side of the broken wall. Disappointed in his application to the man-servant, Mr. Touchwood knocked with his cane, at first gently, then harder, holloaed, bellowed, and shouted, in the hope of calling the attention of some one within doors, but received not a word in reply. At length, thinking that no trespass could be committed upon so forlorn and deserted an establishment, he removed the obstacles to entrance with such a noise as he thought must necessarily have alarmed some one, if there was any live person about the house at all. All was still silent; and, entering a passage where the damp walls and broken flags corresponded to the appearance of things out of doors, he opened a door to the left, which, wonderful to say, still had a latch remaining, and found himself in the parlour, and in the presence of the person whom he came to visit.

Amid a heap of books and other literary lumber, which had accumulated around him, sat, in his well-worn leathern elbow chair, the learned minister of St. Ronan's; a thin, spare man, beyond the middle age, of a dark complexion, but with eyes which, though now obscured and vacant, had been once bright, soft, and expressive, and whose features seemed interesting, the rather that, notwithstanding the carelessness of his dress, he was in the habit of performing his ablutions with Eastern precision; for he had forgot neatness, but not cleanliness. His hair might have appeared much more disorderly, had it not been thinned by time, and disposed chiefly around the sides of his countenance and the back part of his head; black stockings, ungartered, marked his professional dress, and his feet were thrust into the old slipshod shoes, which served him instead of slippers. The rest of his garments, as far as visible, consisted in a plaid nightgown wrapt in long folds round his stooping and emaciated length of body, and reaching down to the slippers aforesaid. He was so intently engaged in studying the book before him, a folio of no ordinary bulk, that he totally disregarded the noise which Mr. Touchwood made in entering the room, as well as the coughs and hems with which he thought it proper to announce his presence.

No notice being taken of these inarticulate signals, Mr. Touchwood, however great an enemy he was to ceremony, saw the necessity of introducing his business, as an apology for his intrusion.

"Hem! sir — Ha, hem! — You see before you a person in some distress for want of society, who has taken the liberty to call on you as a good pastor, who may be, in Christian charity, willing to afford him a little of your company, since he is tired of his own."

Of this speech Mr. Cargill only understood the words "distress" and "charity," sounds with which he was well acquainted, and which never failed to produce some effect on him. He looked at his visitor with lack-lustre eye, and, without correcting the first opinion which he had formed, although the stranger's plump and sturdy frame, as well as his nicely-brushed coat, glancing cane, and, above all, his upright and self-satisfied manner, resembled in no respect the dress, form, or bearing of a mendicant, he quietly thrust a shilling into his hand, and relapsed into the studious contemplation which the entrance of Touchwood had interrupted.

"Upon my word, my good sir," said his visitor, surprised at a degree of absence of mind which he could hardly have conceived possible, "you have entirely mistaken my object."

"I am sorry my mite is insufficient, my friend," said the clergyman, without again raising his eyes, "it is all I have at present to bestow."

"If you will have the kindness to look up for a moment, my good sir," said the traveller, "you may possibly perceive that you labour under a considerable mistake."

Mr. Cargill raised his head, recalled his attention, and, seeing that he had a well-dressed, respectable-looking person before him, he exclaimed in much confusion, "Ha! — yes — on my word, I was so immersed in my book — I believe — I think I have the pleasure to see my worthy friend, Mr. Lavender?"

"No such thing, Mr. Cargill," replied Mr Touchwood. "I will save you the trouble of trying to recollect me — you never saw me before. — But do not let me disturb your studies — I am in no hurry, and my business can wait your leisure."

"I am much obliged," said Mr. Cargill; "have the goodness to take a chair, if you can find one — I have a train of thought to recover — a slight calculation to finish — and then I am at your command."

The visitor found among the broken furniture, not without difficulty, a seat strong enough to support his weight, and sat down, resting upon his cane, and looking attentively at his host, who very soon became totally insensible of his presence. A long pause of total silence ensued, only disturbed by the rustling leaves of the folio from which Mr. Cargill seemed to be making extracts, and now and then by a little exclamation of surprise and impatience, when he dipped his pen, as happened once or twice, into his snuff-box, instead of the inkstandish which stood beside it. At length, just as Mr. Touchwood began to think the scene as tedious as it was singular, the abstracted student raised his head, and spoke as if in soliloquy, "From Acon, Accor, or St. John d'Acre, to Jerusalem, how far?"

"Twenty-three miles north north-west," answered his visitor, without hesitation.

Mr. Cargill expressed no more surprise at a question which he had put to himself being answered by the voice of another, than if he had found the distance on the map, and indeed, was not probably aware of the medium through which his question had been solved; and it was the tenor of the answer alone which he attended to in his reply. — "Twenty-three miles — Ingulphus," laying his hand on the volume, "and Jeffrey Winesauf, do not agree in this."

"They may both be d — d, then, for lying block-heads," answered the traveller.

"You might have contradicted their authority, sir, without using such an expression," said the divine, gravely.

"I cry you mercy, Doctor," said Mr. Touchwood; "but would you compare these parchment fellows with me, that have made my legs my compasses over great part of the inhabited world?"

"You have been in Palestine, then?" said Mr. Cargill, drawing himself upright in his chair, and speaking with eagerness and with interest.

"You may swear that, Doctor, and at Acre too. Why, I was there the month after Boney had found it too hard a nut to crack. — I dined with Sir Sydney's chum, old Djeddar Pacha, and an excellent dinner we had, but for a dessert of noses and ears brought on after the last remove, which spoiled my digestion. Old Djeddar thought it so good a joke, that you hardly saw a man in Acre whose face was not as flat as the palm of my hand — Gad, I respect my olfactory organ, and set off the next morning as fast as the most cursed hard-trotting dromedary that ever fell to poor pilgrim's lot could contrive to tramp."

"If you have really been in the Holy Land, sir," said Mr. Cargill, whom the reckless gaiety of Touchwood's manner rendered somewhat suspicious of a trick, "you will be able materially to enlighten me on the subject of the Crusades."

"They happened before my time, Doctor," replied the traveller.

"You are to understand that my curiosity refers to the geography of the countries where these events took place," answered Mr. Cargill.

"O! as to that matter, you are lighted on your feet," said Mr. Touchwood; "for the time present I can fit you. Turk, Arab, Copt, and Druse, I know every one of them, and can make you as well acquainted with them as myself. Without stirring a step beyond your threshold, you shall know Syria as well as I do. — But one good turn deserves another — in that case, you must have the goodness to dine with me."

"I go seldom abroad, sir," said the minister, with a good deal of hesitation, for his habits of solitude and seclusion could not be entirely overcome, even by the expectation raised by the traveller's discourse; "yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of waiting on a gentleman possessed of so much experience."

"Well then," said Mr. Touchwood, "three be the hour — I never dine later, and always to a minute — and the place, the Cleikum Inn, up the way; where Mrs. Dods is at this moment busy in making ready such a dinner as your learning has seldom seen, Doctor, for I brought the receipts from the four different quarters of the globe."

Upon this treaty they parted; and Mr. Cargill, after musing for a short while upon the singular chance which had sent a living man to answer those doubts for which he was in vain consulting ancient authorities, at length resumed, by degrees, the train of reflection and investigation which Mr. Touchwood's visit had interrupted, and in a short time lost all recollection of his episodic visitor, and of the engagement which he had formed.

Not so Mr. Touchwood, who, when not occupied with business of real importance, had the art, as the reader may have observed, to make a prodigious fuss about nothing at all. Upon the present occasion, he bustled in and out of the kitchen, till Mrs. Dods lost patience, and threatened to pin the dish-clout to his tail; a menace which he pardoned, in consideration, that in all the countries which he had visited, which are sufficiently civilized to boast of cooks, these artists, toiling in their fiery element, have a privilege to be testy and impatient. He therefore retreated from the torrid region of Mrs. Dods's microcosm, and employed his time in the usual devices of loiterers, partly by walking for an appetite, partly by observing the progress of his watch towards three o'clock, when he had happily succeeded in getting an employment more serious. His table, in the blue parlour, was displayed with two covers, after the fairest fashion of the Cleikum Inn; yet the landlady, with a look "civil but sly," contrived to insinuate a doubt whether the clergyman would come, "when a' was dune."

Mr. Touchwood scorned to listen to such an insinuation until the fated hour arrived, and brought with it no Mr. Cargill. The impatient entertainer allowed five minutes for difference of clocks, and variation of time, and other five for the procrastination of one who went little into society. But no sooner were the last five minutes expended, than he darted off for the Manse, not, indeed, much like a greyhound or a deer, but with the momentum of a corpulent and well-appetized elderly gentleman, who is in haste to secure his dinner. He bounced without ceremony into the parlour, where he found the worthy divine clothed in the same plaid nightgown, and seated in the very elbow-chair, in which he had left him five hours before. His sudden entrance recalled to Mr. Cargill, not an accurate, but something of a general, recollection, of what had passed in the morning, and he hastened to apologize with "Ha! — indeed — already? — upon my word, Mr. A — a — I mean my dear friend — I am afraid I have used you ill — I forgot to order any dinner — but we will do our best. — Eppie — Eppie!"

Not at the first, second, nor third call, but *ex intervallo*, as the lawyers express it, Eppie, a bare-legged, shock-headed, thick-ankled, red-armed wench, entered, and announced her presence by an emphatic "What's your wull?"

"Have you got any thing in the house for dinner, Eppie?"

"Naething but bread and milk, plenty o't — what should I have?"

"You see, sir," said Mr. Cargill, "you are like to have a Pythagorean entertainment; but you are a traveller, and have doubtless been in your time thankful for bread and milk."

"But never when there was any thing better to be had," said Mr. Touchwood. "Come, Doctor, I beg your pardon, but your wits are fairly gone a wool-gathering; it was I invited you to dinner, up at the inn yonder, and not you me."

"On my word, and so it was," said Mr. Cargill; "I knew I was quite right — I knew there was a dinner engagement betwixt us, I was sure of that, and that is the main point. — Come, sir, I wait upon you."

"Will you not first change your dress?" said the visitor, seeing with astonishment that the divine proposed to attend him in his plaid nightgown; "why, we shall have all the boys in the village after us — you will look like an owl in sunshine, and they will flock round you like so many hedge-sparrows."

"I will get my clothes instantly," said the worthy clergyman; "I will get ready directly — I am really ashamed to keep you waiting, my dear Mr. — eh — eh — your name has this instant escaped me."

"It is Touchwood, sir, at your service; I do not believe you ever heard it before," answered the traveller.

"True — right — no more I have — well, my good Mr. Touchstone, will you sit down an instant until we see what we can do? — strange slaves we make ourselves to these bodies of ours, Mr. Touchstone — the clothing and the sustaining of them costs us much thought and leisure, which might be better employed in catering for the wants of our immortal spirits."

Mr. Touchwood thought in his heart that never had Bramin or Gymnosophist less reason to reproach himself with excess in the indulgence of the table, or of the toilet, than the sage before him; but he assented to the doctrine, as he would have done to any minor heresy, rather than protract matters by farther discussing the point at present. In a short time the minister was dressed in his Sunday's suit, without any farther mistake than turning one of his black stockings inside out; and Mr. Touchwood, happy as was Boswell when he carried off Dr. Johnson in triumph to dine with Strahan and John Wilkes, had the pleasure of escorting him to the Cleikum Inn.

In the course of the afternoon they became more familiar, and the familiarity led to their forming a considerable estimate of each other's powers and acquirements. It is true, the traveller thought the student too pedantic, too much attached to systems, which, formed in solitude, he was unwilling to renounce, even when contradicted by the voice and testimony of experience; and, moreover, considered his utter inattention to the quality of what he eat and drank, as unworthy of a rational, that is, of a cooking creature, or of a being who, as defined by Johnson, holds his dinner as the most important business of the day. Cargill did not act up to this definition, and was, therefore, in the eyes of his new acquaintance, so far ignorant and uncivilized. What then? He was still a sensible, intelligent man, however abstemious and bookish.

On the other hand, the divine could not help regarding his new friend as something of an epicure or belly-god, nor could he observe in him either the perfect education, or the polished bearing, which mark the gentleman of rank, and of which, while he mingled with the world, he had become a competent judge. Neither did it escape him, that in the catalogue of Mr. Touchwood's defects, occurred that of many travellers, a slight disposition to exaggerate his own personal adventures, and to prose concerning his own exploits. But then, his acquaintance with Eastern manners, existing now in the same state in which they were found

during the time of the Crusades, formed a living commentary on the works of William of Tyre, Raymund of Saint Giles, the Moslem annals of Abulfaragi, and other historians of the dark period, with which his studies were at present occupied.

A friendship, a companionship at least, was therefore struck up hastily betwixt these two originals; and to the astonishment of the whole parish of St. Ronan's, the minister thereof was seen once more leagued and united with an individual of his species, generally called among them the Cleikum Nabob. Their intercourse sometimes consisted in long walks, which they took in company, traversing, however, as limited a space of ground, as if it had been actually roped in for their pedestrian exercise. Their parade was, according to circumstances, a low haugh at the nether end of the ruinous hamlet, or the esplanade in the front of the old castle; and, in either case, the direct longitude of their promenade never exceeded a hundred yards. Sometimes, but rarely, the divine took share of Mr. Touchwood's meal, though less splendidly set forth than when he was first invited to partake of it; for, like the owner of the gold cup in Parnell's Hermit, when cured of his ostentation,

——“Still he welcomed, but with less of cost.”

On these occasions, the conversation was not of the regular and compacted nature, which passes betwixt men, as they are ordinarily termed, of this world. On the contrary, the one party was often thinking of Saladin and Coeur de Lion, when the other was haranguing on Hyder Ali and Sir Eyre Coote. Still, however, the one spoke, and the other seemed to listen; and, perhaps, the lighter intercourse of society, where amusement is the sole object, can scarcely rest on a safer and more secure basis.

It was on one of the evenings when the learned divine had taken his place at Mr. Touchwood's social board, or rather at Mrs. Dods's — for a cup of excellent tea, the only luxury which Mr. Cargill continued to partake of with some complacency, was the regale before them — that a card was delivered to the Nabob.

“Mr. and Miss Mowbray see company at Shaws-Castle on the twentieth current, at two o'clock — a *déjeuner* — dresses in character admitted — A dramatic picture.”

“See company? the more fools they,” he continued by way of comment. “See company? — choice phrases are ever commendable — and this piece of pasteboard is to intimate that one may go and meet all the fools of the parish, if they have a mind — in my time they asked the honour, or the pleasure, of a stranger's company. I suppose, by and by, we shall have in this country the ceremonial of a Bedouin's tent, where every ragged Hadgi, with his green turban, comes in slap without leave asked, and has his black paw among the rice, with no other apology than Salam Alicum. — ‘Dresses in character — Dramatic picture’ — what new tomfoolery can that be? — but it does not signify. — Doctor! I say Doctor! — but he is in the seventh heaven — I say, Mother Dods, you who know all the news — Is this the feast that was put off until Miss Mowbray should be better?”

“Troth is it, Maister Touchwood — they are no in the way of giving twa entertainments in one season — no very wise to gie ane maybe — but they ken best.”

“I say, Doctor, Doctor! — Bless his five wits, he is charging the Moslemah with stout King Richard — I say, Doctor, do you know any thing of these Mowbrays?”

“Nothing extremely particular,” answered Mr. Cargill, after a pause; “it is an ordinary tale of greatness, which blazes in one century, and is extinguished in the next. I think Camden says, that Thomas Mowbray, who was Grand-Marshal of England, succeeded to that high office, as well as to the Dukedom of Norfolk, as grandson of Roger Bigot, in 1301.”

“Pshaw, man, you are back into the 14th century — I mean these Mowbrays of St. Ronan's — now, don't fall asleep again until you have answered my question — and don't look so like a startled hare — I am speaking no treason.”

The clergyman floundered a moment, as is usual with an absent man who is recovering the train of his ideas, or a somnambulist when he is suddenly awakened, and then answered, still with hesitation —

“Mowbray of St. Ronan's? — ha — eh — I know — that is — I did know the family.”

“Here they are going to give a masquerade, a *bal paré*, private theatricals, I think, and what not,” handing him the card.

“I saw something of this a fortnight ago,” said Mr. Cargill; “indeed, I either had a ticket myself, or I saw such a one as that.”

“Are you sure you did not attend the party, Doctor?” said the Nabob.

“Who attend? I? you are jesting, Mr. Touchwood.”

“But are you quite positive?” demanded Mr. Touchwood, who had observed, to his infinite amusement, that the learned and abstracted scholar was so conscious of his own peculiarities, as never to be very sure on any such subject.

“Positive!” he repeated with embarrassment; “my memory is so wretched that I never like to be positive — but had I done any thing so far out of my usual way, I must have remembered it, one would think — and — I *am* positive I was not there.”

“Neither could you, Doctor,” said the Nabob, laughing at the process by which his friend reasoned himself into confidence, “for it did not take place — it was adjourned, and this is the second invitation — there will be one for you, as you had a card to the former. — Come, Doctor, you must go — you and I will go together — I as an Imaum — I can say my Bismillah with any Hadgi of them all — You as a cardinal, or what you like best.”

“Who, I? — it is unbecoming my station, Mr. Touchwood,” said the clergyman — “a folly altogether inconsistent with my habits.”

“All the better — you shall change your habits.”

“You had better gang up and see them, Mr. Cargill,” said Mrs. Dods; “for it's maybe the last sight ye may see of Miss Mowbray — they say she is to be married and off to England ane of thae odd-come-shortlies, wi' some of the gowks about the Waal down-by.”

“Married!” said the clergyman; “it is impossible!”

“But where's the impossibility, Mr. Cargill, when ye see folk marry every day, and buckle them yoursell into the bargain? — Maybe ye think the puir lassie has a bee in her bannet; but ye ken yoursell if naebody but wise folk were to marry, the world wad be ill peopled. I think it's the wise folk that keep single, like yoursell and me, Mr. Cargill. — Gude guide us! — are ye weel? — will ye taste a drap o' something?”

“Sniff at my ottar of roses,” said Mr. Touchwood; “the scent would revive the dead — why, what in the devil's name is the meaning of this? — you were quite well just now.”

“A sudden qualm,” said Mr. Cargill, recovering himself.

“Oh! Mr. Cargill,” said Dame Dods, “this comes of your lang fasts.”

“Right, dame,” subjoined Mr. Touchwood; “and of breaking them with sour milk and pease bannock — the least morsel of Christian food is rejected by stomach, just as a small gentleman refuses the visit of a creditable neighbour, lest he see the nakedness of the land — ha! ha!”

“And there is really a talk of Miss Mowbray of St Ronan's being married?” said the clergyman.

“Troth is there,” said the dame; “it's Trotting Nelly's news; and though she likes a drappie, I dinna think she would invent a lee or carry ane — at least to me, that am a gude customer.”

“This must be looked to,” said Mr. Cargill, as if speaking to himself.

“In troth, and so it should,” said Dame Dods; “it's a sin and a shame if they should employ the tinkling cymbal they ca' Chatterly, and sic a Presbyterian trumpet as yoursell in the land, Mr. Cargill; and if ye will take a fule's advice, ye winna let the multure be ta'en by your ain mill, Mr. Cargill.”

“True, true, good Mother Dods,” said the Nabob; “gloves and hatbands are things to be looked after, and Mr. Cargill had better go down to this cursed festivity with me, in order to see after his own interest.”

“I must speak with the young lady,” said the clergyman, still in a brown study.

“Right, right, my boy of black-letter,” said the Nabob; “with me you shall go, and we'll bring them to submission to mother-church, I warrant you — Why, the idea of being cheated in such a way, would scare a Santon out of his trance. — What dress will you wear?”

“My own, to be sure,” said the divine, starting from his reverie.

"True, thou art right again — they may want to knit the knot on the spot, and who would be married by a parson in masquerade? — We go to the entertainment though — it is a done thing."

The clergyman assented, provided he should receive an invitation; and as that was found at the Manse, he had no excuse for retracting, even if he had seemed to desire one.

Chapter 18 Fortune's Frolics.

COUNT BASSET. *We gentlemen, whose carriages run on the four aces, are apt to have a wheel out of order.*

THE PROVOKED HUSBAND.

Our history must now look a little backwards; and although it is rather foreign to our natural style of composition, it must speak more in narrative, and less in dialogue, rather telling what happened, than its effects upon the actors. Our purpose, however, is only conditional, for we foresee temptations which may render it difficult for us exactly to keep it.

The arrival of the young Earl of Etherington at the salutiferous fountain of St. Ronan's had produced the strongest sensation; especially, as it was joined with the singular accident of the attempt upon his lordship's person, as he took a short cut through the woods on foot, at a distance from his equipage and servants. The gallantry with which he beat off the highwayman, was only equal to his generosity; for he declined making any researches after the poor devil, although his lordship had received a severe wound in the scuffle.

Of the "three black Graces," as they have been termed by one of the most pleasant companions of our time, Law and Physic hastened to do homage to Lord Etherington, represented by Mr. Meiklewham and Dr. Quackleben; while Divinity, as favourable, though more coy, in the person of the Reverend Mr. Simon Chatterly, stood on tiptoe to offer any service in her power.

For the honourable reason already assigned, his lordship, after thanking Mr. Meiklewham, and hinting, that he might have different occasion for his services, declined his offer to search out the delinquent by whom he had been wounded; while to the care of the Doctor he subjected the cure of a smart flesh-wound in the arm, together with a slight scratch on the temple; and so very genteel was his behaviour on the occasion, that the Doctor, in his anxiety for his safety, enjoined him a month's course of the waters, if he would enjoy the comfort of a complete and perfect recovery. Nothing so frequent, he could assure his lordship, as the opening of cicatrized wounds; and the waters of St. Ronan's spring being, according to Dr. Quackleben, a remedy for all the troubles which flesh is heir to, could not fail to equal those of Barege, in facilitating the discharge of all splinters or extraneous matter, which a bullet may chance to incorporate with the human frame, to its great annoyance. For he was wont to say, that although he could not declare the waters which he patronised to be an absolute *panpharmakon*, yet he would with word and pen maintain, that they possessed the principal virtues of the most celebrated medicinal springs in the known world. In short, the love of Alpheus for Arethusa was a mere jest, compared to that which the Doctor entertained for his favourite fountain.

The new and noble guest, whose arrival so much illustrated these scenes of convalescence and of gaiety, was not at first seen so much at the ordinary, and other places of public resort, as had been the hope of the worthy company assembled. His health and his wound proved an excuse for making his visits to the society few and far between.

But when he did appear, his manners and person were infinitely captivating; and even the carnation-coloured silk handkerchief, which suspended his wounded arm, together with the paleness and languor which loss of blood had left on his handsome and open countenance, gave a grace to the whole person which many of the ladies declared irresistible. All contended for his notice, attracted at once by his affability, and piqued by the calm and easy nonchalance with which it seemed to be blended. The scheming and selfish Mowbray, the coarse-minded and brutal Sir Bingo, accustomed to consider themselves, and to be considered, as the first men of the party, sunk into comparative insignificance. But chiefly Lady Penelope threw out the captivations of her wit and her literature; while Lady Binks, trusting to her natural charms, endeavoured equally to attract his notice. The other nymphs of the Spa held a little back, upon the principle of that politeness, which, at continental hunting parties, affords the first shot at a fine piece of game, to the person of the highest rank present; but the thought throbbed in many a fair bosom, that their ladyships might miss their aim, in spite of the advantages thus allowed them, and that there might then be room for less exalted, but perhaps not less skilful, markswomen, to try their chance.

But while the Earl thus withdrew from public society, it was necessary, at least natural, that he should choose some one with whom to share the solitude of his own apartment; and Mowbray, superior in rank to the half-pay whisky-drinking Captain MacTurk; in dash to Winterblossom, who was broken down, and turned twaddler; and in tact and sense to Sir Bingo Binks, easily manoeuvred himself into his lordship's more intimate society; and internally thanking the honest footpad, whose bullet had been the indirect means of secluding his intended victim from all society but his own, he gradually began to feel the way, and prove the strength of his antagonist, at the various games of skill and hazard which he introduced, apparently with the sole purpose of relieving the tedium of a sick-chamber.

Meiklewham, who felt, or affected, the greatest possible interest in his patron's success, and who watched every opportunity to enquire how his schemes advanced, received at first such favourable accounts as made him grin from ear to ear, rub his hands, and chuckle forth such bursts of glee as only the success of triumphant roguery could have extorted from him. Mowbray looked grave, however, and checked his mirth.

"There was something in it after all," he said, "that he could not perfectly understand. Etherington, an used hand — d — d sharp — up to every thing, and yet he lost his money like a baby."

"And what the matter how he loses it, so you win it like a man?" said his legal friend and adviser.

"Why, hang it, I cannot tell," replied Mowbray — "were it not that I think he has scarce the impudence to propose such a thing to succeed, curse me but I should think he was coming the old soldier over me, and keeping up his game. — But no — he can scarce have the impudence to think of that. — I find, however, that he has done Wolverine — cleaned out poor Tom — though Tom wrote to me the precise contrary, yet the truth has since come out — Well, I shall avenge him, for I see his lordship is to be had as well as other folk."

"Weel, Mr. Mowbray," said the lawyer, in a tone of affected sympathy, "ye ken your own ways best — but the heavens will bless a moderate mind. I would not like to see you ruin this poor lad, *funditus*, that is to say, out and out. To lose some of the ready will do him no great harm, and maybe give him a lesson he may be the better of as long as he lives — but I wad not, as an honest man, wish you to go deeper — you should spare the lad, Mr. Mowbray."

"Who spared *me*, Meiklewham?" said Mowbray, with a look and tone of deep emphasis — "No, no — he must go through the mill — money and money's worth. — His seat is called Oakendale — think of that, Mick — Oakendale! Oh, name of thrice happy augury! — Speak not of mercy, Mick — the squirrels of Oakendale must be dismounted, and learn to go a-foot. — What mercy can the wandering lord of Troy expect among the Greeks? — The Greeks! — I am a very Suliote — the bravest of Greeks."

'I think not of pity, I think not of fear,

He neither must know who would serve the Vizier.'

And necessity, Mick," he concluded, with a tone something altered, "necessity is as unrelenting a leader as any Vizier or Pacha, whom Scanderbeg ever fought with, or Byron has sung."

Meiklewham echoed his patron's ejaculation with a sound betwixt a whine, a chuckle, and a groan; the first being designed to express his pretended pity for the destined victim; the second his sympathy with his patron's prospects of success; and the third being a whistle admonitory of the dangerous courses through which his object was to be pursued.

Suliote as he boasted himself, Mowbray had, soon after this conversation, some reason to admit that,

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war."

The light skirmishing betwixt the parties was ended, and the serious battle commenced with some caution on either side; each perhaps, desirous of being master of his opponent's system of tactics, before exposing his own. Piquet, the most beautiful game at which a man can make sacrifice of his fortune, was one with

which Mowbray had, for his misfortune perhaps, been accounted, from an early age, a great proficient, and in which the Earl of Etherington, with less experience, proved no novice. They now played for such stakes as Mowbray's state of fortune rendered considerable to him, though his antagonist appeared not to regard the amount. And they played with various success; for, though Mowbray at times returned with a smile of confidence the enquiring looks of his friend Meiklewham, there were other occasions on which he seemed to evade them, as if his own had a sad confession to make in reply.

These alternations, though frequent, did not occupy, after all, many days; for Mowbray, a friend of all hours, spent much of his time in Lord Etherington's apartment, and these few days were days of battle. In the meantime, as his lordship was now sufficiently recovered to join the Party at Shaws-Castle, and Miss Mowbray's health being announced as restored, that proposal was renewed, with the addition of a dramatic entertainment, the nature of which we shall afterwards have occasion to explain. Cards were anew issued to all those who had been formerly included in the invitation, and of course to Mr. Touchwood, as formerly a resident at the Well, and now in the neighbourhood; it being previously agreed among the ladies, that a Nabob, though sometimes a dingy or damaged commodity, was not to be rashly or unnecessarily neglected. As to the parson, he had been asked, of course, as an old acquaintance of the Mowbray house, not to be left out when the friends of the family were invited on a great scale; but his habits were well known, and it was no more expected that he would leave his manse on such an occasion, than that the kirk should loosen itself from its foundations.

It was after these arrangements had been made, that the Laird of St. Ronan's suddenly entered Meiklewham's private apartment with looks of exultation. The worthy scribe turned his spectacled nose towards his patron, and holding in one hand the bunch of papers which he had been just perusing, and in the other the tape with which he was about to tie them up again, suspended that operation to await with open eyes and ears the communication of Mowbray.

"I have done him!" he said, exultingly, yet in a tone of voice lowered almost to a whisper; "capotted his lordship for this bout — doubled my capital, Mick, and something more. — Hush, don't interrupt me — we must think of Clara now — she must share the sunshine, should it prove but a blink before a storm. — You know, Mick, these two d — d women, Lady Penelope and the Binks, have settled that they will have something like a *bal paré* on this occasion, a sort of theatrical exhibition, and that those who like it shall be dressed in character. — I know their meaning — they think Clara has no dress fit for such foolery, and so they hope to eclipse her; Lady Pen, with her old-fashioned, ill-set diamonds, and my Lady Binks, with the new-fashioned finery which she swopt her character for. But Clara shan't borne down so, by —! I got that affected slut, Lady Binks's maid, to tell me what her mistress had set her mind on, and she is to wear a Grecian habit, forsooth, like one of Will Allan's Eastern subjects. — But here's the rub — there is only one shawl for sale in Edinburgh that is worth showing off in, and that is at the Gallery of Fashion. — Now, Mick, my friend, that shawl must be had for Clara, with the other trankums of muslin and lace, and so forth, which you will find marked in the paper there. — Send instantly and secure it, for, as Lady Binks writes by tomorrow's post, your order can go by to-night's mail — There is a note for L.100."

From a mechanical habit of never refusing any thing, Meiklewham readily took the note, but having looked at it through his spectacles, he continued to hold it in his hand as he remonstrated with his patron. — "This is a' very kindly meant, St. Ronan's — very kindly meant; and I wad be the last to say that Miss Clara does not merit respect and kindness at your hand; but I doubt mickle if she wad care a bodle for thae braw things. Ye ken yourself, she seldom alters her fashions. Od, she thinks her riding-habit dress eneugh for ony company; and if you were ganging by good looks, so it is — if she had a thought mair colour, poor dear."

"Well, well," said Mowbray, impatiently, "let me alone to reconcile a woman and a fine dress."

"To be sure, ye ken best," said the writer; "but, after a', now, wad it no be better to lay by this hundred pound in Tam Turnpenny's, in case the young lady should want it afterhand, just for a sair foot?"

"You are a fool, Mick; what signifies healing a sore foot, when there will be a broken heart in the case? — No, no — get the things as I desire you — we will blaze them down for one day at least; perhaps it will be the beginning of a proper dash."

"Weel, weel, I wish it may be so," answered Meiklewham; "but this young Earl — hae ye found the weak point? — Can ye get a decerniture against him, with expenses? — that is the question."

"I wish I could answer it," said Mowbray, thoughtfully. — "Confound the fellow — he is a cut above me in rank and in society too — belongs to the great clubs, and is in with the Superlatives and Inaccessibles, and all that sort of folk. — My training has been a peg lower — but, hang it, there are better dogs bred in the kennel than in the parlour. I am up to him, I think — at least I will soon know, Mick, whether I am or no, and that is always one comfort. Never mind — do you execute my commission, and take care you name no names — I must save my little Abigail's reputation."

They parted, Meiklewham to execute his patron's commission — his patron to bring to the test those hopes, the uncertainty of which he could not disguise from his own sagacity.

Trusting to the continuance of his run of luck, Mowbray resolved to bring affairs to a crisis that same evening. Every thing seemed in the outset to favour his purpose. They had dined together in Lord Etherington's apartments — his state of health interfered with the circulation of the bottle, and a drizzly autumnal evening rendered walking disagreeable, even had they gone no farther than the private stable where Lord Etherington's horses were kept, under the care of a groom of superior skill. Cards were naturally, almost necessarily, resorted to, as the only alternative for helping away the evening, and piquet was, as formerly, chosen for the game.

Lord Etherington seemed at first indolently careless and indifferent about his play, suffering advantages to escape him, of which, in a more attentive state of mind, he could not have failed to avail himself. Mowbray upbraided him with his inattention, and proposed a deeper stake, in order to interest him in the game. The young nobleman complied; and in the course of a few hands, the gamesters became both deeply engaged in watching and profiting by the changes of fortune. These were so many, so varied, and so unexpected, that the very souls of the players seemed at length centred in the event of the struggle; and, by dint of doubling stakes, the accumulated sum of a thousand pounds and upwards, upon each side, came to be staked in the issue of the game. — So large a risk included all those funds which Mowbray commanded by his sister's kindness, and nearly all his previous winnings, so to him the alternative was victory or ruin. He could not hide his agitation, however desirous to do so. He drank wine to supply himself with courage — he drank water to cool his agitation; and at length bent himself to play with as much care and attention as he felt himself enabled to command.

In the first part of the game their luck appeared tolerably equal, and the play of both befitting gamesters who had dared to place such a sum on the cast. But, as it drew towards a conclusion, fortune altogether deserted him who stood most in need of her favour, and Mowbray, with silent despair, saw his fate depend on a single trick, and that with every odds against him, for Lord Etherington was elder hand. But how can fortune's favour secure any one who is not true to himself? — By an infraction of the laws of the game, which could only have been expected from the veriest bungler that ever touched a card, Lord Etherington called a point without showing it, and, by the ordinary rule, Mowbray was entitled to count his own — and in the course of that and the next hand, gained the game and swept the stakes. Lord Etherington showed chagrin and displeasure, and seemed to think that the rigour of the game had been more insisted upon than in courtesy it ought to have been, when men were playing for so small a stake. Mowbray did not understand this logic. A thousand pounds, he said, were in his eyes no nutshells; the rules of piquet were insisted on by all but boys and women; and for his part, he had rather not play at all than not play the game.

"So it would seem, my dear Mowbray," said the Earl; "for on my soul, I never saw so disconsolate a visage as thine during that unlucky game — it withdrew all my attention from my hand; and I may safely say, your rueful countenance has stood me in a thousand pounds. If I could transfer thy long visage to canvass, I should have both my revenge and my money; for a correct resemblance would be worth not a penny less than the original has cost me."

"You are welcome to your jest, my lord," said Mowbray, "it has been well paid for; and I will serve you in ten thousand at the same rate. What say you?" he proceeded, taking up and shuffling the cards, "will you do yourself more justice in another game? — Revenge, they say, is sweet."

"I have no appetite for it this evening," said the Earl, gravely; "if I had, Mowbray, you might come by the worse. I do not *always* call a point without showing it."

"Your lordship is out of humour with yourself for a blunder that might happen to any man — it was as much my good luck as a good hand would have been, and so fortune be praised."

"But what if with this Fortune had nought to do?" replied Lord Etherington. — "What if, sitting down with an honest fellow and a friend like yourself, Mowbray, a man should rather choose to lose his own money, which he could afford, than to win what it might distress his friend to part with?"

"Supposing a case so far out of supposition, my lord," answered Mowbray, who felt the question ticklish — "for, with submission, the allegation is easily made, and is totally incapable of proof — I should say, no one had a right to think for me in such a particular, or to suppose that I played for a higher stake than was convenient."

"And thus your friend, poor devil," replied Lord Etherington, "would lose his money, and run the risk of a quarrel into the boot! — We will try it another way — Suppose this good-humoured and simple-minded gamester had a favour of the deepest import to ask of his friend, and judged it better to prefer his request to a winner than to a loser?"

"If this applies to me, my lord," replied Mowbray, "it is necessary I should learn how I can oblige your lordship."

"That is a word soon spoken, but so difficult to be recalled, that I am almost tempted to pause — but yet it must be said. — Mowbray, you have a sister."

Mowbray started. — "I have indeed a sister, my lord; but I can conceive no case in which her name can enter with propriety into our present discussion."

"Again in the menacing mood!" said Lord Etherington, in his former tone; "now, here is a pretty fellow — he would first cut my throat for having won a thousand pounds from me, and then for offering to make his sister a countess!"

"A countess, my lord?" said Mowbray; "you are but jesting — you have never even seen Clara Mowbray."

"Perhaps not — but what then? — I may have seen her picture, as Puff says in the Critic, or fallen in love with her from rumour — or, to save farther suppositions, as I see they render you impatient, I may be satisfied with knowing that she is a beautiful and accomplished young lady, with a large fortune."

"What fortune do you mean, my lord?" said Mowbray, recollecting with alarm some claims, which, according to Meiklewham's view of the subject, his sister might form upon his property. — "What estate? — there is nothing belongs to our family, save these lands of St. Ronan's, or what is left of them; and of these I am, my lord, an undoubted heir of entail in possession."

"Be it so," said the Earl, "for I have no claim on your mountain realms here, which are, doubtless,

——'renown'd of old

For knights, and squires, and barons bold;'

my views respect a much richer, though less romantic domain — a large manor, high Nettlewood. House old, but standing in the midst of such glorious oaks — three thousand acres of land, arable, pasture, and woodland, exclusive of the two closes, occupied by Widow Hodge and Goodman Trampclod — manorial rights — mines and minerals — and the devil knows how many good things besides, all lying in the vale of Bever."

"And what has my sister to do with all this?" asked Mowbray, in great surprise.

"Nothing; but that it belongs to her when she becomes Countess of Etherington."

"It is, then, your lordship's property already?"

"No, by Jove! nor can it, unless your sister honours me with her approbation of my suit," replied the Earl.

"This is a sorer puzzle than one of Lady Penelope's charades, my lord," said Mr. Mowbray; "I must call in the assistance of the Reverend Mr. Chatterly."

"You shall not need," said Lord Etherington; "I will give you the key, but listen to me with patience. — You know that we nobles of England, less jealous of our sixteen quarters than those on the continent, do not take scorn to line our decayed ermines with the little cloth of gold from the city; and my grandfather was lucky enough to get a wealthy wife, with a halting pedigree — rather a singular circumstance, considering that her father was a countryman of yours. She had a brother, however, still more wealthy than herself, and who increased his fortune by continuing to carry on the trade which had first enriched his family. At length he summed up his books, washed his hands of commerce, and retired to Nettlewood, to become a gentleman; and here my much respected grand-uncle was seized with the rage of making himself a man of consequence. He tried what marrying a woman of family would do; but he soon found that whatever advantage his family might derive from his doing so, his own condition was but little illustrated. He next resolved to become a man of family himself. His father had left Scotland when very young, and bore, I blush to say, the vulgar name of Scrogie. This hapless dissyllable my uncle carried in person to the herald office in Scotland; but neither Lyon, nor Marchmont, nor Islay, nor Snadoun, neither herald nor pursuivant, would patronise Scrogie. — Scrogie! — there could nothing be made out of it — so that my worthy relative had recourse to the surer side of the house, and began to found his dignity on his mother's name of Mowbray. In this he was much more successful, and I believe some sly fellow stole for him a slip from your own family tree, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, which, I daresay, you have never missed. At any rate, for his *argent* and *or*, he got a handsome piece of parchment, blazoned with a white lion for Mowbray, to be borne quarterly, with three stunted or scrog-bushes for Scrogie, and became thenceforth Mr. Scrogie Mowbray, or rather, as he subscribed himself, Reginald (his former Christian name was Ronald) S. Mowbray. He had a son who most undutifully laughed at all this, refused the honours of the high name of Mowbray, and insisted on retaining his father's original appellation of Scrogie, to the great annoyance of his said father's ears, and damage of his temper."

"Why, faith, betwixt the two," said Mowbray, "I own I should have preferred my own name, and I think the old gentleman's taste rather better than the young one's."

"True; but both were wilful, absurd originals, with a happy obstinacy of temper, whether derived from Mowbray or Scrogie I know not, but which led them so often into opposition, that the offended father, Reginald S. Mowbray, turned his recusant son Scrogie fairly out of doors; and the fellow would have paid for his plebeian spirit with a vengeance, had he not found refuge with a surviving partner of the original Scrogie of all, who still carried on the lucrative branch of traffic by which the family had been first enriched. I mention these particulars to account, in so far as I can, for the singular predicament in which I now find myself placed."

"Proceed, my lord," said Mr. Mowbray; "there is no denying the singularity of your story, and I presume you are quite serious in giving me such an extraordinary detail."

"Entirely so, upon my honour — and a most serious matter it is, you will presently find. When my worthy uncle, Mr. S. Mowbray, (for I will not call him Scrogie even in the grave,) paid his debt to nature, every body concluded he would be found to have disinherited his son, the unfilial Scrogie, and so far every body was right — But it was also generally believed that he would settle the estate on my father, Lord Etherington, the son of his sister, and therein every one was wrong. For my excellent grand-uncle had pondered with himself, that the favoured name of Mowbray would take no advantage, and attain no additional elevation, if his estate of Nettlewood (otherwise called Mowbray-Park) should descend to our family without any condition; and with the assistance of a sharp attorney, he settled it on me, then a schoolboy, *on condition* that I should, before attaining the age of twenty-five complete, take unto myself in holy wedlock a young lady of good fame, of the name of Mowbray, and, by preference, of the house of St. Ronan's, should a damsel of that house exist. — Now my riddle is read."

"And a very extraordinary one it is," replied Mowbray, thoughtfully.

"Confess the truth," said Lord Etherington, laying his hand on his shoulder; "you think the story will bear a grain of a scruple of doubt, if not a whole scruple itself?"

"At least, my lord," answered Mowbray, "your lordship will allow, that, being Miss Mowbray's only near relation, and sole guardian, I may, without offence, pause upon a suit for her hand, made under such odd circumstances."

"If you have the least doubt either respecting my rank or fortune, I can give, of course, the most satisfactory references," said the Earl of Etherington.

"That I can easily believe, my lord," said Mowbray; "nor do I in the least fear deception, where detection would be so easy. Your lordship's proceedings towards me, too," (with a conscious glance at the bills he still held in his hand,) "have, I admit, been such as to intimate some such deep cause of interest as you have been pleased to state. But it seems strange that your lordship should have permitted years to glide away, without so much as enquiring after the young lady, who, I believe, is the only person qualified as your grand-uncle's will requires, with whom you can form an alliance. It appears to me, that long before now, this matter ought to have been investigated; and that, even now, it would have been more natural and more decorous to have at least seen my sister before proposing for her hand."

"On the first point, my dear Mowbray," said Lord Etherington, "I am free to own to you, that, without meaning your sister the least affront, I would have got rid of this clause if I could; for every man would fain choose a wife for himself, and I feel no hurry to marry at all. But the rogue-lawyers, after taking fees, and keeping me in hand for years, have at length roundly told me the clause must be complied with, or Nettlewood must have another master. So I thought it best to come down here in person, in order to address the fair lady; but as accident has hitherto prevented my seeing her, and as I found in her brother a man who understands the world, I hope you will not think the worse of me, that I have endeavoured in the outset to make you my friend. Truth is, I shall be twenty-five in the course of a month; and without your favour, and the opportunities which only you can afford me, that seems a short time to woo and win a lady of Miss Mowbray's merit."

"And what is the alternative if you do not form this proposed alliance, my lord?" said Mowbray.

"The bequest of my grand-uncle lapses," said the Earl, "and fair Nettlewood, with its old house, and older oaks, manorial rights, Hodge Trampclod, and all, devolves on a certain cousin-german of mine, whom Heaven of his mercy confound!"

"You have left yourself little time to prevent such an event, my lord," said Mowbray; "but things being as I now see them, you shall have what interest I can give you in the affair. — We must stand, however, on more equal terms, my lord — I will condescend so far as to allow it would have been inconvenient for me at this moment to have lost that game, but I cannot in the circumstances think of acting as if I had fairly won it. We must draw stakes, my lord."

"Not a word of that, if you really mean me kindly, my dear Mowbray. The blunder was a real one, for I was indeed thinking, as you may suppose, on other things than the showing my point — All was fairly lost and won. — I hope I shall have opportunities of offering real services, which may perhaps give me some right to your partial regard — at present we are on equal footing on all sides — perfectly so."

"If your lordship thinks so," said Mowbray — and then passing rapidly to what he felt he could say with more confidence — "Indeed, at any rate, no personal obligation to myself could prevent my doing my full duty as guardian to my sister."

"Unquestionably, I desire nothing else," replied the Earl of Etherington.

"I must therefore understand that your lordship is quite serious in your proposal; and that it is not to be withdrawn, even if upon acquaintance with Miss Mowbray, you should not perhaps think her so deserving of your lordship's attentions, as report may have spoken her."

"Mr. Mowbray," replied the Earl, "the treaty between you and me shall be as definite as if I were a sovereign prince, demanding in marriage the sister of a neighbouring monarch, whom, according to royal etiquette, he neither has seen nor could see. I have been quite frank with you, and I have stated to you that my present motives for entering upon negotiation are not personal, but territorial; when I know Miss Mowbray, I have no doubt they will be otherwise. I have heard she is beautiful."

"Something of the palest, my lord," answered Mowbray.

"A fine complexion is the first attraction which is lost in the world of fashion, and that which it is easiest to replace."

"Dispositions, my lord, may differ," said Mowbray, "without faults on either side. I presume your lordship has enquired into my sister's. She is amiable, accomplished, sensible, and high-spirited; but yet" —

"I understand you, Mr. Mowbray, and will spare you the pain of speaking out. I have heard Miss Mowbray is in some respects — particular; to use a broader word — a little whimsical. — No matter. She will have the less to learn when she becomes a countess, and a woman of fashion."

"Are you serious, my lord?" said Mowbray.

"I am — and I will speak my mind still more plainly. I have good temper, and excellent spirits, and can endure a good deal of singularity in those I live with. I have no doubt your sister and I will live happily together — But in case it should prove otherwise, arrangements may be made previously, which will enable us in certain circumstances to live happily apart. My own estate is large, and Nettlewood will bear dividing."

"Nay, then," said Mowbray, "I have little more to say — nothing indeed remains for enquiry, so far as your lordship is concerned. But my sister must have free liberty of choice — so far as I am concerned, your lordship's suit has my interest."

"And I trust we may consider it as a done thing?"

"With Clara's approbation — certainly," answered Mowbray.

"I trust there is no chance of personal repugnance on the young lady's part?" said the young peer.

"I anticipate nothing of the kind, my lord," answered Mowbray, "as I presume there is no reason for any; but young ladies will be capricious, and if Clara, after I have done and said all that a brother ought to do, should remain repugnant, there is a point in the exertion of my influence which it would be cruelty to pass."

The Earl of Etherington walked a turn through the apartment, then paused, and said, in a grave and doubtful tone, "In the meanwhile, I am bound, and the young lady is free, Mowbray. Is this quite fair?"

"It is what happens in every case, my lord, where a gentleman proposes for a lady," answered Mowbray; "he must remain, of course, bound by his offer, until, within a reasonable time, it is accepted or rejected. It is not my fault that your lordship has declared your wishes to me, before ascertaining Clara's inclination. But while as yet the matter is between ourselves — I make you welcome to draw back if you think proper. Clara Mowbray needs not push for a catch-match."

"Nor do I desire," said the young nobleman, "any time to reconsider the resolution which I have confided to you. I am not in the least fearful that I shall change my mind on seeing your sister, and I am ready to stand by the proposal which I have made to you. — If, however, you feel so extremely delicately on my account," he continued, "I can see and even converse with Miss Mowbray at this fête of yours, without the necessity of being at all presented to her — The character which I have assumed in a manner obliges me to wear a mask."

"Certainly," said the Laird of St. Ronan's, "and I am glad, for both our sakes, your lordship thinks of taking a little law upon this occasion."

"I shall profit nothing by it," said the Earl; "my doom is fixed before I start — but if this mode of managing the matter will save your conscience, I have no objection to it — it cannot consume much time, which is what I have to look to."

They then shook hands and parted, without any farther discourse which could interest the reader.

Mowbray was glad to find himself alone, in order to think over what had happened, and to ascertain the state of his own mind, which at present was puzzling even to himself. He could not but feel that much greater advantages of every kind might accrue to himself and his family from the alliance of the wealthy young Earl, than could have been derived from any share of his spoils which he had proposed to gain by superior address in play, or greater skill on the turf. But his pride was hurt when he recollected that he had placed himself entirely in Lord Etherington's power; and the escape from absolute ruin which he had made, solely by the sufferance of his opponent, had nothing in it consolatory to his wounded feelings. He was lowered in his own eyes, when he recollected how completely the proposed victim of his ingenuity had seen through his schemes, and only abstained from baffling them entirely, because to do so suited best with his own. There was a shade of suspicion, too, which he could not entirely eradicate from his mind. — What occasion had this young nobleman to preface, by the voluntary loss of a brace of thousands, a proposal which must have been acceptable in itself, without any such sacrifice? And why should he, after all, have been so eager to secure his accession to the proposed alliance, before he had even seen the lady who was the object of it? However hurried for time, he might have waited the event at least of the entertainment at Shaws-Castle, at which Clara was necessarily obliged to make her appearance. — Yet such conduct, however unusual, was equally inconsistent with any sinister intentions; since the sacrifice of a large sum of money, and the declaration of his views upon a portionless young lady of family, could scarcely be the preface to any unfair practice. So that, upon the whole, Mowbray settled, that what was uncommon in the Earl's conduct arose from the hasty and eager disposition of a rich young Englishman, to whom money is of little consequence, and who is too headlong in pursuit of the favourite plan of the moment, to proceed in the most rational or most ordinary manner. If, however, there should prove any thing farther in the matter than he could at present discover, Mowbray promised himself that the utmost circumspection on his part could not fail to discover it, and that in full time to prevent any ill consequences to his sister or himself.

Immersed in such cogitations, he avoided the inquisitive presence of Mr. Meiklewham, who, as usual, had been watching for him to learn how matters were going on; and although it was now late, he mounted his horse, and rode hastily to Shaws-Castle. On the way, he deliberated with himself whether to mention to his sister

the application which had been made to him, in order to prepare her to receive the young Earl as a suitor, favoured with her brother's approbation. "But no, no," such was the result of his contemplation. "She might take it into her head that his thoughts were bent less upon having her for a countess, than on obtaining possession of his grand-uncle's estate. — We must keep quiet," concluded he, "until her personal appearance and accomplishments may appear at least to have some influence upon his choice. — We must say nothing till this blessed entertainment has been given and received."

Chapter 19 A Letter.

*"Has he so long held out with me untired,
And stops he now for breath? — Well — Be it so."*

RICHARD III.

Mowbray had no sooner left the Earl's apartment, than the latter commenced an epistle to a friend and associate, which we lay before the reader, as best calculated to illustrate the views and motives of the writer. It was addressed to Captain Jekyl, of the —— regiment of Guards, at the Green Dragon, Harrowgate, and was of the following tenor:—

"Dear Harry,

"I have expected you here these ten days past, anxiously as ever man was looked for; and have now to charge your absence as high treason to your sworn allegiance. Surely you do not presume, like one of Napoleon's new-made monarchs, to grumble for independence, as if your greatness were of your own making, or as if I had picked you out of the whole of St. James's coffee-house to hold my back-hand, for your sake, forsooth, not for my own? Wherefore, lay aside all your own proper business, be it the pursuit of dowagers, or the plucking of pigeons, and instantly repair to this place, where I may speedily want your assistance. — May want it, said I? Why, most negligent of friends and allies, I *have* wanted it already, and that when it might have done me yeoman's service. Know that I have had an affair since I came hither — have got hurt myself, and have nearly shot my friend; and if I had, I might have been hanged for it, for want of Harry Jekyl to bear witness in my favour. I was so far on my road to this place, when, not choosing, for certain reasons, to pass through the old village, I struck by a footpath into the woods which separate it from the new Spa, leaving my carriage and people to go the carriage-way. I had not walked half a mile when I heard the footsteps of some one behind, and, looking round, what should I behold but the face in the world which I most cordially hate and abhor — I mean that which stands on the shoulders of my right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor, Saint Francis. He seemed as much confounded as I was at our unexpected meeting; and it was a minute ere he found breath to demand what I did in Scotland, contrary to my promise, as he was pleased to express it. — I retaliated, and charged him with being here, in contradiction to his. — He justified, and said he had only come down upon the express information that I was upon my road to St. Ronan's. — Now, Harry, how the devil should he have known this hadst thou been quite faithful? for I am sure, to no ear but thine own did I breathe a whisper of my purpose. — Next, with the insolent assumption of superiority, which he founds on what he calls the rectitude of his purpose, he proposed we should both withdraw from a neighbourhood into which we could bring nothing but wretchedness. — I have told you how difficult it is to cope with the calm and resolute manner that the devil gifts him with on such occasions; but I was determined he should not carry the day this time. I saw no chance for it, however, but to put myself into a towering passion, which, thank Heaven, I can always do on short notice. — I charged him with having imposed formerly on my youth, and made himself judge of my rights; and I accompanied my defiance with the strongest terms of irony and contempt, as well as with demand of instant satisfaction. I had my travelling pistols with me, (*et pour cause*,) and, to my surprise, my gentleman was equally provided. — For fair play's sake, I made him take one of my pistols — right Kuchenritters — a brace of balls in each, but that circumstance I forgot. — I would fain have argued the matter a little longer; but I thought at the time, and think still, that the best arguments which he and I can exchange, must come from the point of the sword, or the muzzle of the pistol. — We fired nearly together, and I think both dropped — I am sure I did, but recovered in a minute, with a damaged arm and a scratch on the temple — it was the last which stunned me — so much for double-loaded pistols. — My friend was invisible, and I had nothing for it but to walk to the Spa, bleeding all the way like a calf, and tell a raw-head-and-bloody-bone story about a footpad, which, but for my earldom, and my gory locks, no living soul would have believed.

"Shortly after, when I had been installed in a sick room, I had the mortification to learn, that my own impatience had brought all this mischief upon me, at a moment when I had every chance of getting rid of my friend without trouble, had I but let him go on his own errand; for it seems he had an appointment that morning with a booby Baronet, who is said to be a bullet-slitter, and would perhaps have rid me of Saint Francis without any trouble or risk on my part. Meantime, his non-appearance at this rendezvous has placed Master Francis Tyrrel, as he chooses to call himself, in the worst odour possible with the gentry at the Spring, who have denounced him as a coward and no gentleman. — What to think of the business myself, I know not; and I much want your assistance to see what can have become of this fellow, who, like a spectre of ill omen, has so often thwarted and baffled my best plans. My own confinement renders me inactive, though my wound is fast healing. Dead he cannot be; for, had he been mortally wounded, we should have heard of him somewhere or other — he could not have vanished from the earth like a bubble of the elements. Well and sound he cannot be; for, besides that I am sure I saw him stagger and drop, firing his pistol as he fell, I know him well enough to swear, that, had he not been severely wounded, he would have first pestered me with his accursed presence and assistance, and then walked forward with his usual composure to settle matters with Sir Bingo Binks. No — no — Saint Francis is none of those who leave such jobs half finished — it is but doing him justice to say, he has the devil's courage to back his own deliberate impertinence. But then, if wounded severely, he must be still in this neighbourhood, and probably in concealment — this is what I must discover, and I want your assistance in my enquiries among the natives. — Haste hither, Harry, as ever you look for good at my hand.

"A good player, Harry, always studies to make the best of bad cards — and so I have endeavoured to turn my wound to some account; and it has given me the opportunity to secure Monsieur le Frere in my interests. You say very truly, that it is of consequence to me to know the character of this new actor on the disordered scene of my adventures. — Know, then, he is that most incongruous of all monsters — a Scotch Buck — how far from being buck of the season you may easily judge. Every point of national character is opposed to the pretensions of this luckless race, when they attempt to take on them a personage which is assumed with so much facility by their brethren of the Isle of Saints. They are a shrewd people, indeed, but so destitute of ease, grace, pliability of manners, and insinuation of address, that they eternally seem to suffer actual misery in their attempts to look gay and careless. Then their pride heads them back at one turn, their poverty at another, their pedantry at a third, their *mauvaise honte* at a fourth; and with so many obstacles to make them bolt off the course, it is positively impossible they should win the plate. No, Harry, it is the grave folk in Old England who have to fear a Caledonian invasion — they will make no conquests in the world of fashion. Excellent bankers the Scots may be, for they are eternally calculating how to add interest to principal; — good soldiers, for they are, if not such heroes as they would be thought, as brave, I suppose, as their neighbours, and much more amenable to discipline; — lawyers they are born; indeed every country gentleman is bred one, and their patient and crafty disposition enables them, in other lines, to submit to hardships which other natives could not bear, and avail themselves of advantages which others would let pass under their noses unavailingly. But assuredly Heaven did not form the Caledonian for the gay world; and his efforts at ease, grace, and gaiety, resemble only the clumsy gambols of the ass in the fable. Yet the Scot has his sphere too, (in his own country only,) where the character which he assumes is allowed to pass current. This Mowbray, now — this brother-in-law of mine — might do pretty well at a Northern Meeting, or the Leith races, where he could give five minutes to the sport of the day, and the next half hour to county politics, or to farming; but it is scarce necessary to tell you, Harry, that this half fellowship will not pass on the better side of the Tweed.

"Yet, for all I have told you, this trout was not easily tickled; nor should I have made much of him, had he not, in the plenitude of his northern conceit, entertained that notion of my being a good subject of plunder, which you had contrived (blessings on your contriving brain!) to insinuate into him by means of Wolverine. He commenced this hopeful experiment, and, as you must have anticipated, caught a Tartar with a vengeance. Of course, I used my victory only so far as to secure his interest in accomplishing my principal object; and yet, I could see my gentleman's pride was so much injured in the course of the negotiation, that not all the advantages which the match offered to his damned family, were able entirely to subdue the chagrin arising from his defeat. He did gulp it down, though, and we are friends and allies, for the present at least — not so cordially so, however, as to induce me to trust him with the whole of the strangely complicated tale. The

circumstance of the will it was necessary to communicate, as affording a sufficiently strong reason for urging my suit; and this partial disclosure enabled me for the present to dispense with farther confidence.

"You will observe, that I stand by no means secure; and besides the chance of my cousin's reappearance — a certain event, unless he is worse than I dare hope for — I have perhaps to expect the fantastic repugnance of Clara herself, or some sulky freak on her brother's part. — In a word — and let it be such a one as conjurers raise the devil with — Harry Jekyl, I *want* you.

"As well knowing the nature of my friend, I can assure you that his own interest, as well as mine, may be advanced by his coming hither on duty. Here is a blockhead, whom I already mentioned, Sir Bingo Binks, with whom something may be done worth *your* while, though scarce worth *mine*. The Baronet is a perfect buzzard, and when I came here he was under Mowbray's training. But the awkward Scot had plucked half-a-dozen penfeathers from his wing with so little precaution, that the Baronet has become frightened and shy, and is now in the act of rebelling against Mowbray, whom he both hates and fears — the least backing from a knowing hand like you, and the bird becomes your own, feathers and all. — Moreover,

——'by my life,

This Bingo hath a mighty pretty wife.'

A lovely woman, Harry — rather plump, and above the middle size — quite your taste — A Juno in beauty, looking with such scorn on her husband, whom she despises and hates, and seeming, as if she *could* look so differently on any one whom she might like better, that, on my faith, 'twere sin not to give her occasion. If you please to venture your luck, either with the knight or the lady, you shall have fair play, and no interference — that is, provided you appear upon this summons; for, otherwise, I may be so placed, that the affairs of the knight and the lady may fall under my own immediate cognizance. And so, Harry, if you wish to profit by these hints, you had best make haste, as well for your own concerns, as to assist me in mine. — Yours, Harry, as you behave yourself,

"ETHERINGTON."

Having finished this eloquent and instructive epistle, the young Earl demanded the attendance of his own valet Solmes, whom he charged to put it into the post-office without delay, and with his own hand.

Chapter 20 Theatricals.

—— *The play's the thing.*

HAMLET.

The important day had now arrived, the arrangement for which had for some time occupied all the conversation and thoughts of the good company at the Well of St. Ronan's. To give it, at the same time, a degree of novelty and consequence, Lady Penelope Penfeather had long since suggested to Mr. Mowbray, that the more gifted and accomplished part of the guests might contribute to furnish out entertainment for the rest, by acting a few scenes of some popular drama; an accomplishment in which her self-conceit assured her that she was peculiarly qualified to excel. Mr. Mowbray, who seemed on this occasion to have thrown the reins entirely into her ladyship's hands, made no objection to the plan which she proposed, excepting that the old-fashioned hedges and walks of the garden at Shaws-Castle must necessarily serve for stage and scenery, as there was no time to fit up the old hall for the exhibition of the proposed theatricals.²⁴ But upon enquiry among the company, this plan was wrecked upon the ordinary shelf, to wit, the difficulty of finding performers who would consent to assume the lower characters of the drama. For the first parts there were candidates more than enough; but most of these were greatly too high-spirited to play the fool, except they were permitted to top the part. Then amongst the few unambitious underlings, who could be coaxed or cajoled to undertake subordinate characters, there were so many bad memories, and short memories, and treacherous memories, that at length the plan was resigned in despair.

A substitute, proposed by Lady Penelope, was next considered. It was proposed to act what the Italians call a Comedy of Character; that is, not an exact drama, in which the actors deliver what is set down for them by the author; but one, in which the plot having been previously fixed upon, and a few striking scenes adjusted, the actors are expected to supply the dialogue extempore, or, as Petruchio says, from their mother wit. This is an amusement which affords much entertainment in Italy, particularly in the state of Venice, where the characters of their drama have been long since all previously fixed, and are handed down by tradition; and this species of drama, though rather belonging to the mask than the theatre, is distinguished by the name of *Commedia dell' Arte*.²⁵ But the shamefaced character of Britons is still more alien from a species of display, where there is a constant and extemporaneous demand for wit, or the sort of ready small-talk which supplies its place, than from the regular exhibitions of the drama, where the author, standing responsible for language and sentiment, leaves to the personators of the scenes only the trouble of finding enunciation and action.

But the ardent and active spirit of Lady Penelope, still athirst after novelty, though baffled in her two first projects, brought forward a third, in which she was more successful. This was the proposal to combine a certain number, at least, of the guests, properly dressed for the occasion, as representing some well-known historical or dramatic characters, in a group, having reference to history, or to a scene of the drama. In this representation, which may be called playing a picture, action, even pantomimical action, was not expected; and all that was required of the performers, was to throw themselves into such a group as might express a marked and striking point of an easily remembered scene, but where the actors are at a pause, and without either speech or motion. In this species of representation there was no tax, either on the invention or memory of those who might undertake parts; and, what recommended it still farther to the good company, there was no marked difference betwixt the hero and heroine of the group, and the less distinguished characters by whom they were attended on the stage; and every one who had confidence in a handsome shape and a becoming dress, might hope, though standing in not quite so broad and favourable a light as the principal personages, to draw, nevertheless, a considerable portion of attention and applause. This motion, therefore, that the company, or such of them as might choose to appear properly dressed for the occasion, should form themselves into one or more groups, which might be renewed and varied as often as they pleased, was hailed and accepted as a bright idea, which assigned to every one a share of the importance attached to its probable success.

Mowbray, on his side, promised to contrive some arrangement which should separate the actors in this mute drama from the spectators, and enable the former to vary the amusement, by withdrawing themselves from the scene, and again appearing upon it under a different and new combination. This plan of exhibition, where fine clothes and affected attitudes supplied all draughts upon fancy or talent, was highly agreeable to most of the ladies present; and even Lady Binks, whose discontent seemed proof against every effort that could be proposed to soothe it, acquiesced in the project, with perfect indifference indeed, but with something less of sullenness than usual.

It now only remained to rummage the circulating library, for some piece of sufficient celebrity to command attention, and which should be at the same time suited to the execution of their project. Bell's British Theatre, Miller's Modern and Ancient Drama, and about twenty odd volumes, in which stray tragedies and comedies were associated, like the passengers in a mail-coach, without the least attempt at selection or arrangement, were all examined in the course of their researches. But Lady Penelope declared loftily and decidedly for Shakspeare, as the author whose immortal works were fresh in every one's recollection. Shakspeare was therefore chosen, and from his works the Midsummer Night's Dream was selected, as the play which afforded the greatest variety of characters, and most scope of course for the intended representation. An active competition presently occurred among the greater part of the company, for such copies of the Midsummer Night's Dream, or the volume of Shakspeare containing it, as could be got in the neighbourhood; for, notwithstanding Lady Penelope's declaration, that every one who could read had Shakspeare's plays by heart, it appeared that such of his dramas as have not kept possession of the stage, were very little known at St. Ronan's, save among those people who are emphatically called readers.

The adjustment of the parts was the first subject of consideration, so soon as those who intended to assume characters had refreshed their recollection on the subject of the piece. Theseus was unanimously assigned to Mowbray, the giver of the entertainment, and therefore justly entitled to represent the Duke of Athens. The costume of an Amazonian crest and plume, a tucked-up vest, and a tight buskin of sky-blue silk, buckled with diamonds, reconciled Lady Binks to the part of Hippolyta. The superior stature of Miss Mowbray to Lady Penelope, made it necessary that the former should perform the part of Helena, and her ladyship rest contented with the shrewish character of Hermia. It was resolved to compliment the young Earl of Etherington with the part of Lysander, which, however, his

lordship declined, and, preferring comedy to tragedy, refused to appear in any other character than that of the magnanimous Bottom; and he gave them such a humorous specimen of his quality in that part, that all were delighted at once with his condescension in assuming, and his skill in performing, the presenter of Pyramus.

The part of Egeus was voted to Captain MacTurk, whose obstinacy in refusing to appear in any other than the full Highland garb, had nearly disconcerted the whole affair. At length this obstacle was got over, on the authority of Childe Harold, who remarks the similarity betwixt the Highland and Grecian costume,²⁵ and the company, dispensing with the difference of colour, voted the Captain's variegated kilt, of the MacTurk tartan, to be the kirtle of a Grecian mountaineer — Egeus to be an Arnout, and the Captain to be Egeus. Chatterly and the painter, walking gentlemen by profession, agreed to walk through the parts of Demetrius and Lysander, the two Athenian lovers; and Mr. Winterblossom, loath and lazy, after many excuses, was bribed by Lady Penelope with an antique, or supposed antique cameo, to play the part of Philostratus, master of the revels, provided his gout would permit him to remain so long upon the turf, which was to be their stage.

Muslin trowsers, adorned with spangles, a voluminous turban of silver gauze, and wings of the same, together with an embroidered slipper, converted at once Miss Digges into Oberon, the King of Shadows, whose sovereign gravity, however, was somewhat indifferently represented by the silly gaiety of Miss in her Teens, and the uncontrolled delight which she felt in her fine clothes. A younger sister represented Titania; and two or three subordinate elves were selected, among families attending the salutiferous fountain, who were easily persuaded to let their children figure in fine clothes at so juvenile an age, though they shook their head at Miss Digges and her pantaloons, and no less at the liberal display of Lady Binks's right leg, with which the Amazonian garb gratified the public of St. Ronan's.

Dr. Quackleben was applied to to play Wall, by the assistance of such a wooden horse, or screen, as clothes are usually dried upon; the old Attorney stood for Lion; and the other characters of Bottom's drama were easily found among the unnamed frequenters of the Spring. Dressed rehearsals, and so forth, went merrily on — all voted there was a play fitted.

But even the Doctor's eloquence could not press Mrs. Blower into the scheme, although she was particularly wanted to represent Thisbe.

"Truth is," she replied, "I dinna greatly like stage-plays. John Blower, honest man, as sailors are aye for some spree or another, wad take me ance to see ane Mrs. Siddons — I thought we should hae been crushed to death before we gat in-a' my things riven aff my back, forby the four lily-white shillings that it cost us — and then in came three frightsome carlines wi' besoms, and they wad bewitch a sailor's wife — I was lang enugh there — and out I wad be, and out John Blower gat me, but wi' nae sma' fight and fend. — My Lady Penelope Penfitter, and the great folk, may just take it as they like; but in my mind, Dr. Cacklehen, it's a mere blasphemy for folk to gar themselves look otherwise than their Maker made them; and then the changing the name which was given them at baptism, is, I think, an awful falling away from our vows; and though Thisby, which I take to be Greek for Tibbie, may be a very good name, yet Margaret was I christened, and Margaret will I die."

"You mistake the matter entirely, my dear Mrs. Blower," said the Doctor; "there is nothing serious intended — a mere *placebo* — just a divertisement to cheer the spirits, and assist the effect of the waters — cheerfulness is a great promoter of health."

"Dinna tell me o' health, Dr. Kittlepin! — Can it be for the puir body M'Durk's health to major about in the tartans like a tobacconist's sign in a frosty morning, wi' his poor wizzened houghs as blue as a blowr? — weel I wot he is a humbling spectacle. Or can it gie ony body health or pleasure either to see your ainsell, Doctor, ganging about wi' a claise screen tied to your back, covered wi' paper, and painted like a stane and lime wa'? — I'll gang to see nane o' their vanities, Dr. Kittlehen; and if there is nae other decent body to take care o' me, as I dinna like to sit a haill afternoon by mysell, I'll e'en gae doun to Mr. Sowerbrowst the maltster's — he is a pleasant, sensible man, and a sponsible man in the world, and his sister's a very decent woman."

"Confound Sowerbrowst," thought the Doctor; "if I had guessed he was to come across me thus, he should not have got the better of his dyspepsy so early. — My dear Mrs. Blower," he continued, but aloud, "it is a foolish affair enough, I must confess; but every person of style and fashion at the Well has settled to attend this exhibition; there has been nothing else talked of for this month through the whole country, and it will be a year before it is forgotten. And I would have you consider how ill it will look, my dear Mrs. Blower, to stay away — nobody will believe you had a card — no, not though you were to hang it round your neck like a label round a vial of tincture, Mrs. Blower."

"If ye thought *that*, Doctor Kickherben," said the widow, alarmed at the idea of losing caste, "I wad e'en gang to the show, like other folk; sinful and shameful if it be, let them that make the sin bear the shame. But then I will put on nane of their Popish disguises — me that has lived in North Leith, baith wife and lass, for I shanna say how many years, and has a character to keep up baith with saint and sinner. — And then, wha's to take care of me, since you are gaun to make a lime-and-stane wa' of yoursell, Dr. Kickinben?"

"My dear Mrs. Blower, if such is your determination, I will not make a wall of myself. Her ladyship must consider my profession — she must understand it is my function to look after my patients, in preference to all the stage-plays in this world — and to attend on a case like yours, Mrs. Blower, it is my duty to sacrifice, were it called for, the whole drama from Shakspeare to O'Keefe."

On hearing this magnanimous resolution, the widow's heart was greatly cheered; for, in fact, she might probably have considered the Doctor's perseverance in the plan, of which she had expressed such high disapprobation, as little less than a symptom of absolute defection from his allegiance. By an accommodation, therefore, which suited both parties, it was settled that the Doctor should attend his loving widow to Shaws-Castle, without mask or mantle; and that the painted screen should be transferred from Quackleben's back to the broad shoulders of a briefless barrister, well qualified for the part of Wall, since the composition of his skull might have rivalled in solidity the mortar and stone of the most approved builder.

We must not pause to dilate upon the various labours of body and spirit which preceded the intervening space, betwixt the settlement of this gay scheme, and the time appointed to carry it into execution. We will not attempt to describe how the wealthy, by letter and by commissioners, urged their researches through the stores of the Gallery of Fashion for specimens of Oriental finery — how they that were scant of diamonds supplied their place with paste and Bristol stones — how the country dealers were driven out of patience by the demand for goods of which they had never before heard the name — and, lastly, how the busy fingers of the more economical damsels twisted handkerchiefs into turbans, and converted petticoats into pantaloons, shaped and sewed, cut and clipped, and spoiled many a decent gown and petticoat, to produce something like a Grecian habit. Who can describe the wonders wrought by active needles and scissors, aided by thimbles and thread, upon silver gauze, and sprigged muslin? or who can show how, if the fair nymphs of the Spring did not entirely succeed in attaining the desired resemblance to heathen Greeks, they at least contrived to get rid of all similitude to sober Christians?

Neither is it necessary to dwell upon the various schemes of conveyance which were resorted to, in order to transfer the beau monde of the Spa to the scene of revelry at Shaws-Castle. These were as various as the fortunes and pretensions of the owners; from the lordly curricule, with its outriders, to the humble taxed cart, nay, untaxed cart, which conveyed the personages of lesser rank. For the latter, indeed, the two post-chaises at the Inn seemed converted into hourly stages, so often did they come and go between the Hotel and the Castle — a glad day for the postilions, and a day of martyrdom for the poor post-horses; so seldom is it that every department of any society, however constituted, can be injured or benefited by the same occurrence.

Such, indeed, was the penury of vehicular conveyance, that applications were made in manner most humble, even to Meg Dods herself, entreating she would permit her old whiskey to *ply* (for such might have been the phrase) at St. Ronan's Well, for that day only, and that upon good cause shown. But not for sordid lucre would the undaunted spirit of Meg compound her feud with her neighbours of the detested Well. "Her carriage," she briefly replied, "was engaged for her ain guest and the minister, and deil anither body's fit should gang intill't. Let every herring hing by its ain head." And, accordingly, at the duly appointed hour, creaked forth, the leathern convenience, in which, carefully screened by the curtain from the gaze of the fry of the village, sat Nabob Touchwood, in the costume of an Indian merchant, or Shroff, as they are termed. The clergyman would not, perhaps, have been so punctual, had not a set of notes and messages from his friend at the Cleikum, ever following each other as thick as the papers which decorate the tail of a schoolboy's kite, kept him so continually on the alert from daybreak till

noon, that Mr. Touchwood found him completely dressed; and the whiskey was only delayed for about ten minutes before the door of the manse, a space employed by Mr. Cargill in searching for the spectacles, which at last were happily discovered upon his own nose.

At length, seated by the side of his new friend, Mr. Cargill arrived safe at Shaws-Castle, the gate of which mansion was surrounded by a screaming group of children, so extravagantly delighted at seeing the strange figures to whom each successive carriage gave birth, that even the stern brow and well-known voice of Johnie Tirlsneck, the beadle, though stationed in the court on express purpose, was not equal to the task of controlling them. These noisy intruders, however, who, it was believed, were somewhat favoured by Clara Mowbray, were excluded from the court which opened before the house, by a couple of grooms or helpers armed with their whips, and could only salute, with their shrill and wondering hailing, the various personages, as they passed down a short avenue leading from the exterior gate.

The Cleikum nabob and the minister were greeted with shouts not the least clamorous; which the former merited by the ease with which he wore the white turban, and the latter, by the infrequency of his appearance in public, and both, by the singular association of a decent clergyman of the church of Scotland, in a dress more old-fashioned than could now be produced in the General Assembly, walking arm in arm, and seemingly in the most familiar terms, with a Parsee merchant. They stopped a moment at the gate of the court-yard to admire the front of the old mansion, which had been disturbed with so unusual a scene of gaiety.

Shaws-Castle, though so named, presented no appearance of defence; and the present edifice had never been designed for more than the accommodation of a peaceful family, having a low, heavy front, loaded with some of that meretricious ornament, which, uniting, or rather confounding, the Gothic and Grecian architecture, was much used during the reigns of James VI. of Scotland, and his unfortunate son. The court formed a small square, two sides of which were occupied by such buildings as were required for the family, and the third by the stables, the only part to which much attention had been paid, the present Mr. Mowbray having put them into excellent order. The fourth side of the square was shut up by a screen wall, through which a door opened to the avenue; the whole being a kind of structure, which may be still found on those old Scottish properties, where a rage to render their place *Parkish*, as was at one time the prevailing phrase, has not induced the owners to pull down the venerable and sheltering appendages with which their wiser fathers had screened their mansion, and to lay the whole open to the keen north-east; much after the fashion of a spinster of fifty, who chills herself to gratify the public by an exposure of her thin red elbows, and shrivelled neck and bosom.

A double door, thrown hospitably open on the present occasion, admitted the company into a dark and low hall, where Mowbray himself, wearing the under dress of Theseus, but not having yet assumed his ducal cap and robes, stood to receive his guests with due courtesy, and to indicate to each the road allotted to him. Those who were to take a share in the representation of the morning, were conducted to an old saloon, destined for a green-room, and which communicated with a series of apartments on the right, hastily fitted with accommodations for arranging and completing their toilet; while others, who took no part in the intended drama, were ushered to the left, into a large, unfurnished, and long disused dining parlour, where a sashed door opened into the gardens, crossed with yew and holly hedges, still trimmed and clipped by the old grey-headed gardener, upon those principles which a Dutchman thought worthy of commemorating in a didactic poem upon the *Ars Topiaria*.

A little wilderness, surrounding a beautiful piece of the smoothest turf, and itself bounded by such high hedges as we have described, had been selected as the stage most proper for the exhibition of the intended dramatic picture. It afforded many facilities; for a rising bank exactly in front was accommodated with seats for the spectators, who had a complete view of the silvan theatre, the bushes and shrubs having been cleared away, and the place supplied with a temporary screen, which, being withdrawn by the domestics appointed for that purpose, was to serve for the rising of the curtain. A covered trellis, which passed through another part of the garden, and terminated with a private door opening from the right wing of the building, seemed as if it had been planted on purpose for the proposed exhibition, as it served to give the personages of the drama a convenient and secret access from the green-room to the place of representation. Indeed, the dramatis personæ, at least those who adopted the management of the matter, were induced, by so much convenience, to extend, in some measure, their original plan; and, instead of one group, as had been at first proposed, they now found themselves able to exhibit to the good company a succession of three or four, selected and arranged from different parts of the drama; thus giving some duration, as well as some variety, to the entertainment, besides the advantage of separating and contrasting the tragic and the comic scenes.

After wandering about amongst the gardens, which contained little to interest any one, and endeavouring to recognise some characters, who, accommodating themselves to the humours of the day, had ventured to appear in the various disguises of ballad-singers, pedlars, shepherds, Highlanders, and so forth, the company began to draw together towards the spot where the seats prepared for them, and the screen drawn in front of the bosky stage, induced them to assemble, and excited expectation, especially as a scroll in front of the esplanade set forth, in the words of the play, "This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house, and we will do it in action." A delay of about ten minutes began to excite some suppressed murmurs of impatience among the audience, when the touch of Gow's fiddle suddenly burst from a neighbouring hedge, behind which he had established his little orchestra. All were of course silent, "As through his dear strathspeys he bore with Highland rage."

And when he changed his strain to an adagio, and suffered his music to die away in the plaintive notes of Roslin Castle, the echoes of the old walls were, after a long slumber, awakened by that enthusiastic burst of applause, with which the Scots usually received and rewarded their country's gifted minstrel.

"He is his father's own son," said Touchwood to the clergyman, for both had gotten seats near about the centre of the place of audience. "It is many a long year since I listened to old Neil at Inver, and, to say truth, spent a night with him over pancakes and Athole brose; and I never expected to hear his match again in my lifetime. But stop — the curtain rises."

The screen was indeed withdrawn, and displayed Hermia, Helena, and their lovers, in attitudes corresponding to the scene of confusion occasioned by the error of Puck.

Messrs. Chatterly and the Painter played their parts neither better nor worse than amateur actors in general; and the best that could be said of them was, that they seemed more than half ashamed of their exotic dresses, and of the public gaze.

But against this untimely weakness Lady Penelope was guarded, by the strong shield of self-conceit. She minced, ambled, and, notwithstanding the slight appearance of her person, and the depredations which time had made on a countenance that had never been very much distinguished for beauty, seemed desirous to top the part of the beautiful daughter of Egeus. The sullenness which was proper to the character of Hermia, was much augmented by the discovery that Miss Mowbray was so much better dressed than herself — a discovery which she had but recently made, as that young lady had not attended on the regular rehearsals at the Well, but once, and then without her stage habit. Her ladyship, however, did not permit this painful sense of inferiority, where she had expected triumph, so far to prevail over her desire of shining, as to interrupt materially the manner in which she had settled to represent her portion of the scene. The nature of the exhibition precluded much action, but Lady Penelope made amends by such a succession of grimaces, as might rival, in variety at least, the singular display which Garrick used to call "going his rounds." She twisted her poor features into looks of most desperate love towards Lysander; into those of wonder and offended pride, when she turned them upon Demetrius; and finally settled them on Helena, with the happiest possible imitation of an incensed rival, who feels the impossibility of relieving her swollen heart by tears alone, and is just about to have recourse to her nails.

No contrast could be stronger in looks, demeanour, and figure, than that between Hermia and Helena. In the latter character, the beautiful form and foreign dress of Miss Mowbray attracted all eyes. She kept her place on the stage, as a sentinel does that which his charge assigns him; for she had previously told her brother, that though she consented, at his importunity, to make part of the exhibition, it was as a piece of the scene, not as an actor, and accordingly a painted figure could scarce be more immovable. The expression of her countenance seemed to be that of deep sorrow and perplexity, belonging to her part, over which wandered at times an air of irony or ridicule, as if she were secretly scorning the whole exhibition, and even herself for condescending to become part of it. Above all, a sense of bashfulness had cast upon her cheek a colour, which, though sufficiently slight, was more than her countenance was used to display; and when the spectators beheld, in the splendour and grace of a rich Oriental dress, her whom they had hitherto been accustomed to see attired only in the most careless manner, they felt

the additional charms of surprise and contrast; so that the bursts of applause which were vollied towards the stage, might be said to be addressed to her alone, and to vie in sincerity with those which have been forced from an audience by the most accomplished performer.

"Oh, that pair Lady Penelope!" said honest Mrs. Blower, who, when her scruples against the exhibition were once got over, began to look upon it with particular interest — "I am really sorry for her pair face, for she gars it work like the sails of John Blower's vesshel in a stiff breeze. — Oh, Doctor Cacklehen, dinna ye think she wad need, if it were possible, to rin ower her face wi' a gusing iron, just to take the wrunkles out o't?"

"Hush, hush! my good dear Mrs. Blower," said the Doctor; "Lady Penelope is a woman of quality, and my patient, and such people always act charmingly — you must understand there is no hissing at a private theatre — Hem!"

"Ye may say what ye like, Doctor, but there is nae fule like an auld fule — To be sure, if she was as young and beautiful as Miss Mowbray — hegh me, and I didna use to think her sae bonny neither — but dress — dress makes an unco difference — That shawl o' hers — I daur say the like o't was ne'er seen in braid Scotland — It will be real Indian, I se warrant."

"Real Indian!" said Mr. Touchwood, in an accent of disdain, which rather disturbed Mrs. Blower's equanimity — "why, what do you suppose it should be, madam?"

"I dinna ken, sir," said she, edging somewhat nearer the Doctor, not being altogether pleased, as she afterwards allowed, with the outlandish appearance and sharp tone of the traveller; then pulling her own drapery round her shoulders, she added, courageously, "There are braw shawls made at Paisley, that ye will scarce ken frae foreign."

"Not know Paisley shawls from Indian, madam?" said Touchwood; "why, a blind man could tell by the slightest touch of his little finger. Yon shawl, now, is the handsomest I have seen in Britain — and at this distance I can tell it to be a real *Tozie*."

"Cozie may she weel be that wears it," said Mrs. Blower. "I declare, now I look on't again, it's a perfect beauty."

"It is called *Tozie*, ma'am, not *cozie*," continued the traveller; "the Shroffs at Surat told me in 1801, that it is made out of the inner coat of a goat."

"Of a sheep, sir, I am thinking ye mean, for goats has nae woo'."

"Not much of it, indeed, madam, but you are to understand they use only the inmost coat; and then their dyes — that *Tozie* now will keep its colour while there is a rag of it left — men bequeath them in legacies to their grandchildren."

"And a very bonny colour it is," said the dame; "something like a mouse's back, only a thought redder — I wonder what they ca' that colour."

"The colour is much admired, madam," said Touchwood, who was now on a favourite topic; "the Mussulmans say the colour is betwixt that of an elephant and the breast of the *faughta*."

"In troth, I am as wise as I was," said Mrs. Blower.

"The *faughta*, madam, so called by the Moors, (for the Hindhus call it *hollah*,) is a sort of pigeon, held sacred among the Moslem of India, because they think it dyed its breast in the blood of Ali. — But I see they are closing the scene. — Mr. Cargill, are you composing your sermon, my good friend, or what can you be thinking of?"

Mr. Cargill had, during the whole scene, remained with his eyes fixed, in intent and anxious, although almost unconscious gaze, upon Clara Mowbray; and when the voice of his companion startled him out of his reverie, he exclaimed, "Most lovely — most unhappy — yes — I must and will see her!"

"See her?" replied Touchwood, too much accustomed to his friend's singularities to look for much reason or connexion in any thing he said or did; "Why, you shall see her and talk to her too, if that will give you pleasure. — They say now," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, "that this Mowbray is ruined. I see nothing like it, since he can dress out his sister like a Begum. Did you ever see such a splendid shawl?"

"Dearly purchased splendour," said Mr. Cargill, with a deep sigh; "I wish that the price be yet fully paid!"

"Very likely not," said the traveller; "very likely it's gone to the book; and for the price, I have known a thousand rupees given for such a shawl in the country. — But hush, hush, we are to have another tune from Nathaniel — faith, and they are withdrawing the screen — Well, they have some mercy — they do not let us wait long between the acts of their follies at least — I love a quick and rattling fire in these vanities — Folly walking a funeral pace, and clinking her bells to the time of a passing knell, makes sad work indeed."

A strain of music, beginning slowly, and terminating in a light and wild allegro, introduced on the stage those delightful creatures of the richest imagination that ever teemed with wonders, the Oberon and Titania of Shakspeare. The pigmy majesty of the captain of the fairy band had no unapt representative in Miss Digges, whose modesty was not so great an intruder as to prevent her desire to present him in all his dignity, and she moved, conscious of the graceful turn of a pretty ankle, which, encircled with a string of pearls, and clothed in flesh-coloured silk, of the most cobweb texture, rose above the crimson sandal. Her jewelled tiara, too, gave dignity to the frown with which the offended King of Shadows greeted his consort, as each entered upon the scene at the head of their several attendants.

The restlessness of the children had been duly considered; and, therefore, their part of the exhibition had been contrived to represent dumb show, rather than a stationary picture. The little Queen of Elves was not inferior in action to her moody lord, and repaid, with a look of female impatience and scorn, the haughty air which seemed to express his sullen greeting,

"Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania."

The other children were, as usual, some clever and forward, some loutish and awkward enough; but the gambols of childhood are sure to receive applause, paid, perhaps, with a mixture of pity and envy, by those in advanced life; and besides, there were in the company several fond papas and mammas, whose clamorous approbation, though given apparently to the whole performers, was especially dedicated in their hearts to their own little Jackies and Marias — for *Mary*, though the prettiest and most classical of Scottish names, is now unknown in the land. The elves, therefore, played their frolics, danced a measure, and vanished with good approbation.

The anti-mask, as it may be called, of Bottom, and his company of actors, next appeared on the stage, and a thunder of applause received the young Earl, who had, with infinite taste and dexterity, transformed himself into the similitude of an Athenian clown; observing the Grecian costume, yet so judiciously discriminated from the dress of the higher characters, as at once to fix the character of a thick-skinned mechanic on the wearer. Touchwood, in particular, was loud in his approbation, from which the correctness of the costume must be inferred; for that honest gentleman, like many other critics, was indeed not very much distinguished for good taste, but had a capital memory for petty matters of fact; and, while the most impressive look or gesture of an actor might have failed to interest him, would have censured most severely the fashion of a sleeve, or the colour of a shoe-tie.

But the Earl of Etherington's merits were not confined to his external appearance; for, had his better fortunes failed him, his deserts, like those of Hamlet, might have got him a fellowship in a cry of players. He presented, though in dumb show, the pragmatic conceit of Bottom, to the infinite amusement of all present, especially of those who were well acquainted with the original; and when he was "translated" by Puck, he bore the ass's head, his newly-acquired dignity, with an appearance of conscious greatness, which made the metamorphosis, though in itself sufficiently farcical, irresistibly comic. He afterwards displayed the same humour in his frolics with the fairies, and the intercourse which he held with Messrs. Cobweb, Mustard-seed, Pease-blossom, and the rest of Titania's cavaliers, who lost all command of their countenances at the gravity with which he invited them to afford him the luxury of scratching his hairy snout. Mowbray had also found a fitting representative for Puck in a queer-looking, small-eyed boy of the Aultoun of St. Ronan's, with large ears projecting from his head like turrets from a Gothic building. This exotic animal personified the merry and mocking spirit of Hobgoblin with considerable power, so that the group bore some resemblance to the well-known and exquisite delineation of Puck by Sir Joshua, in the select collection of the Bard of Memory. It was, however, the ruin of the St. Ronan's Robin Goodfellow, who did no good afterwards — "gaed an ill gate," as Meg Dods said, and "took on" with a party of strolling players.

The entertainment closed with a grand parade of all the characters that had appeared, during which Mowbray concluded that the young lord himself, unremarked, might have time enough to examine the outward form, at least, of his sister Clara, whom, in the pride of his heart, he could not help considering superior in beauty, dressed as she now was, with every advantage of art, even to the brilliant Amazon, Lady Binks. It is true, Mowbray was not a man to give preference to the

intellectual expression of poor Clara's features over the sultana-like beauty of the haughty dame, which promised to an admirer all the vicissitudes that can be expressed by a countenance lovely in every change, and changing as often as an ardent and impetuous disposition, unused to constraint, and despising admonition, should please to dictate. Yet, to do him justice, though his preference was perhaps dictated more by fraternal partiality than by purity of taste, he certainly, on the present occasion, felt the full extent of Clara's superiority; and there was a proud smile on his lip, as, at the conclusion of the divertisement, he asked the Earl how he had been pleased. The rest of the performers had separated, and the young lord remained on the stage, employed in disembarassing himself of his awkward visor, when Mowbray put this question, to which, though general in terms, he naturally gave a particular meaning.

"I could wear my ass's head for ever," he said, "on condition my eyes were to be so delightfully employed as they have been during the last scene. — Mowbray, your sister is an angel!"

"Have a care that that headpiece of yours has not perverted your taste, my lord," said Mowbray. "But why did you wear that disguise on your last appearance? You should, I think, have been uncovered."

"I am ashamed to answer you," said the Earl; "but truth is, first impressions are of consequence, and I thought I might do as wisely not to appear before your sister, for the first time, in the character of Bully Bottom."

"Then you change your dress, my lord, for dinner, if we call our luncheon by that name?" said Mowbray.

"I am going to my room this instant for that very purpose," replied the Earl.

"And I," said Mowbray, "must step in front, and dismiss the audience; for I see they are sitting gaping there, waiting for another scene."

They parted upon this; and Mowbray, as Duke Theseus, stepped before the screen, and announcing the conclusion of the dramatic pictures which they had had the honour to present before the worshipful company, thanked the spectators for the very favourable reception which they had afforded; and intimated to them, that if they could amuse themselves by strolling for an hour among the gardens, a bell would summon to the house at the expiry of that time, when some refreshments would wait their acceptance. This annunciation was received with the applause due to the *Amphitryon ou l'on dine*; and the guests, arising from before the temporary theatre, dispersed through the gardens, which were of some extent, to seek for or create amusement to themselves. The music greatly aided them in this last purpose, and it was not long ere a dozen of couples and upwards, were "tripping it on the light fantastic toe," (I love a phrase that is not hackneyed,) to the tune of Monymusk.

Others strolled through the grounds, meeting some quaint disguise at the end of every verdant alley, and communicating to others the surprise and amusement which they themselves were receiving. The scene, from the variety of dresses, the freedom which it gave to the display of humour amongst such as possessed any, and the general disposition to give and receive pleasure, rendered the little masquerade more entertaining than others of the kind for which more ample and magnificent preparations have been made. There was also a singular and pleasing contrast between the fantastic figures who wandered through the gardens, and the quiet scene itself, to which the old clipt hedges, the formal distribution of the ground, and the antiquated appearance of one or two fountains and artificial cascades, in which the naiads had been for the nonce compelled to resume their ancient frolics, gave an appearance of unusual simplicity and seclusion, and which seemed rather to belong to the last than to the present generation.

Chapter 21 Perplexities.

*For revels, dances, masks, and merry hours,
Fore-run fair Love, strewing his way with flowers.*

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

Worthies, away — the scene begins to cloud.

IBIDEM.

Mr. Touchwood, and his inseparable friend, Mr. Cargill, wandered on amidst the gay groups we have described, the former censuring with great scorn the frequent attempts which he observed towards an imitation of the costume of the East, and appealing with self-complacence to his own superior representation, as he greeted, in Moorish and in Persic, the several turban'd figures who passed his way; while the clergyman, whose mind seemed to labour with some weighty and important project, looked in every direction for the fair representative of Helena, but in vain. At length he caught a glimpse of the memorable shawl, which had drawn forth so learned a discussion from his companion; and, starting from Touchwood's side with a degree of anxious alertness totally foreign to his usual habits, he endeavoured to join the person by whom it was worn.

"By the Lord," said his companion, "the Doctor is beside himself! — the parson is mad! — the divine is out of his senses, that is clear; and how the devil can he, who scarce can find his road from the Cleikum to his own manse, venture himself unprotected into such a scene of confusion? — he might as well pretend to cross the Atlantic without a pilot — I must push off in chase of him, lest worse come of it."

But the traveller was prevented from executing his friendly purpose by a sort of crowd which came rushing down the alley, the centre of which was occupied by Captain MacTurk, in the very act of bullying two pseudo Highlanders, for having presumed to lay aside their breeches before they had acquired the Gaelic language. The sounds of contempt and insult with which the genuine Celt was overwhelming the unfortunate impostors, were not, indeed, intelligible otherwise than from the tone and manner of the speaker; but these intimated so much displeasure, that the plaided forms whose unadvised choice of a disguise had provoked it — two raw lads from a certain great manufacturing town — heartily repented their temerity, and were in the act of seeking for the speediest exit from the gardens; rather choosing to resign their share of the dinner, than to abide the farther consequences that might follow from the displeasure of this highland Termagant.

Touchwood had scarcely extricated himself from this impediment, and again commenced his researches after the clergyman, when his course was once more interrupted by a sort of pressgang, headed by Sir Bingo Binks, who, in order to play his character of a drunken boatswain to the life, seemed certainly drunk enough, however little of a seaman. His cheer sounded more like a view-hollo than a hail, when, with a volley of such oaths as would have blown a whole fleet of the Bethel Union out of the water, he ordered Touchwood "to come under his lee, and be d — d; for, smash his old timbers, he must go to sea again, for as weather-beaten a hulk as he was."

Touchwood answered instantly, "To sea with all my heart, but not with a land-lubber for commander. — Harkye, brother, do you know how much of a horse's furniture belongs to a ship?"

"Come, none of your quizzing, my old buck," said Sir Bingo — "What the devil has a ship to do with horse's furniture? — Do you think we belong to the horse-marines? — ha! ha! I think you're matched, brother."

"Why, you son of a fresh-water gudgeon," replied the traveller, "that never in your life sailed farther than the Isle of Dogs, do you pretend to play a sailor, and not know the bridle of the bow-line, and the saddle of the boltsprit, and the bit for the cable, and the girth to hoist the rigging, and the whip to serve for small tackle? — There is a trick for you to find out an Abram-man, and save sixpence when he begs of you as a disbanded seaman. — Get along with you! or the constable shall be charged with the whole pressgang to man the workhouse."

A general laugh arose at the detection of the swaggering boatswain; and all that the Baronet had for it was to sneak off, saying, "D— n the old quiz, who the devil thought to have heard so much slang from an old muslin nightcap!"

Touchwood being now an object of some attention, was followed by two or three stragglers, whom he endeavoured to rid himself of the best way he could, testifying an impatience a little inconsistent with the decorum of his Oriental demeanour, but which arose from his desire to rejoin his companion, and some apprehension of inconvenience which he feared Cargill might sustain during his absence. For, being in fact as good-natured a man as any in the world, Mr. Touchwood was at the same time one of the most conceited, and was very apt to suppose, that his presence, advice, and assistance, were of the most indispensable consequence to those with whom he lived; and that not only on great emergencies, but even in the most ordinary occurrences of life.

Meantime, Mr. Cargill, whom he sought in vain, was, on his part, anxiously keeping in sight of the beautiful Indian shawl, which served as a flag to announce to him the vessel which he held in chase. At length he approached so close as to say, in an anxious whisper, "Miss Mowbray — Miss Mowbray — I must speak with you."

"And what would you have with Miss Mowbray?" said the fair wearer of the beautiful shawl, but without turning round her head.

"I have a secret — an important secret, of which to make you aware; but it is not for this place. — Do not turn from me! — Your happiness in this, and perhaps in the next life, depends on your listening to me."

The lady led the way, as if to give him an opportunity of speaking with her more privately, to one of those old-fashioned and deeply-embowered recesses, which are commonly found in such gardens as that of Shaws-Castle; and, with her shawl wrapped around her head, so as in some degree to conceal her features, she stood before Mr. Cargill in the doubtful light and shadow of a huge platanus tree, which formed the canopy of the arbour, and seemed to await the communication he had promised.

"Report says," said the clergyman, speaking in an eager and hurried manner, yet with a low voice, and like one desirous of being heard by her whom he addressed, and by no one else — "Report says that you are about to be married."

"And is report kind enough to say to whom?" answered the lady, with a tone of indifference which seemed to astound her interrogator.

"Young lady," he answered, with a solemn voice, "had this levity been sworn to me, I could never have believed it! Have you forgot the circumstances in which you stand? — Have you forgotten that my promise of secrecy, sinful perhaps even in that degree, was but a conditional promise? — or did you think that a being so sequestered as I am was already dead to the world, even while he was walking upon its surface? — Know, young lady, that I am indeed dead to the pleasures and the ordinary business of life, but I am even therefore the more alive to its duties."

"Upon my honour, sir, unless you are pleased to be more explicit, it is impossible for me either to answer or understand you," said the lady; "you speak too seriously for a masquerade pleasantry, and yet not clearly enough to make your earnest comprehensible."

"Is this sullenness, Miss Mowbray?" said the clergyman, with increased animation; "Is it levity? — Or is it alienation of mind? — Even after a fever of the brain, we retain a recollection of the causes of our illness. — Come, you must and do understand me, when I say, that I will not consent to your committing a great crime to attain temporal wealth and rank, no, not to make you an empress. My path is a clear one; and should I hear a whisper breathed of your alliance with this Earl, or whatever he may be, rely upon it, that I will withdraw the veil, and make your brother, your bridegroom, and the whole world, acquainted with the situation in which you stand, and the impossibility of your forming the alliance which you propose to yourself, I am compelled to say, against the laws of God and man."

"But, sir — sir," answered the lady, rather eagerly than anxiously, "you have not yet told me what business you have with my marriage, or what arguments you can bring against it."

"Madam," replied Mr. Cargill, "in your present state of mind, and in such a scene as this, I cannot enter upon a topic for which the season is unfit, and you, I am sorry to say, are totally unprepared. It is enough that you know the grounds on which you stand. At a fitter opportunity, I will, as it is my duty, lay before you the enormity of what you are said to have meditated, with the freedom which becomes one, who, however humble, is appointed to explain to his fellow-creatures the laws of his Maker. In the meantime, I am not afraid that you will take any hasty step, after such a warning as this."

So saying, he turned from the lady with that dignity which a conscious discharge of duty confers, yet, at the same time, with a sense of deep pain, inflicted by the careless levity of her whom he addressed. She did not any longer attempt to detain him, but made her escape from the arbour by one alley, as she heard voices which seemed to approach it from another. The clergyman, who took the opposite direction, met in full encounter a whispering and tittering pair, who seemed, at his sudden appearance, to check their tone of familiarity, and assume an appearance of greater distance towards each other. The lady was no other than the fair Queen of the Amazons, who seemed to have adopted the recent partiality of Titania towards Bully Bottom, being in conference such and so close as we have described, with the late representative of the Athenian weaver, whom his recent visit to his chamber had metamorphosed into the more gallant disguise of an ancient Spanish cavalier. He now appeared with cloak and drooping plume, sword, poniard, and guitar, richly dressed at all points, as for a serenade beneath his mistress's window; a silk mask at the breast of his embroidered doublet hung ready to be assumed in case of intrusion, as an appropriate part of the national dress.

It sometimes happened to Mr. Cargill, as we believe it may chance to other men much subject to absence of mind, that, contrary to their wont, and much after the manner of a sunbeam suddenly piercing a deep mist, and illuminating one particular object in the landscape, some sudden recollection rushes upon them, and seems to compel them to act under it, as under the influence of complete certainty and conviction. Mr. Cargill had no sooner set eyes on the Spanish cavalier, in whom he neither knew the Earl of Etherington, nor recognised Bully Bottom, than with hasty emotion he seized on his reluctant hand, and exclaimed, with a mixture of eagerness and solemnity, "I rejoice to see you! — Heaven has sent you here in its own good time."

"I thank you, sir," replied Lord Etherington, very coldly, "I believe you have the joy of the meeting entirely on your side, as I cannot remember having seen you before."

"Is not your name Bulmer?" said the clergyman. "I — I know — I am sometimes apt to make mistakes — But I am sure your name is Bulmer?"

"Not that ever I or my godfathers heard of — my name was Bottom half an hour ago — perhaps that makes the confusion," answered the Earl, with very cold and distant politeness; — "Permit me to pass, sir, that I may attend the lady."

"Quite unnecessary," answered Lady Binks; "I leave you to adjust your mutual recollections with your new old friend, my lord — he seems to have something to say." So saying, the lady walked on, not perhaps sorry of an opportunity to show apparent indifference for his lordship's society in the presence of one who had surprised them in what might seem a moment of exuberant intimacy.

"You detain me, sir," said the Earl of Etherington to Mr. Cargill, who, bewildered and uncertain, still kept himself placed so directly before the young nobleman, as to make it impossible for him to pass, without absolutely pushing him to one side. "I must really attend the lady," he added, making another effort to walk on.

"Young man," said Mr. Cargill, "you cannot disguise yourself from me. I am sure — my mind assures me, that you are that very Bulmer whom Heaven hath sent here to prevent crime."

"And you," said Lord Etherington, "whom my mind assures me I never saw in my life, are sent hither by the devil, I think, to create confusion."

"I beg pardon, sir," said the clergyman, staggered by the calm and pertinacious denial of the Earl — "I beg pardon if I am in a mistake — that is, if I am *really* in a mistake — but I am not — I am sure I am not! — That look — that smile — I am NOT mistaken. You are Valentine Bulmer — the very Valentine Bulmer whom I — but I will not make your private affairs any part of this exposition — enough, you *are* Valentine Bulmer."

"Valentine? — Valentine?" answered Lord Etherington, impatiently — "I am neither Valentine nor Orson — I wish you good-morning, sir."

"Stay, sir, stay, I charge you," said the clergyman; "if you are unwilling to be known yourself, it may be because you have forgotten who I am — Let me name myself as the Reverend Josiah Cargill, minister of St. Ronan's."

"If you bear a character so venerable, sir," replied the young nobleman — "in which, however, I am not in the least interested — I think when you make your morning draught a little too potent, it might be as well for you to stay at home and sleep it off, before coming into company."

"In the name of Heaven, young gentleman," said Mr. Cargill, "lay aside this untimely and unseemly jesting! and tell me if you be not — as I cannot but still believe you to be — that same youth, who, seven years since, left in my deposit a solemn secret, which, if I should unfold to the wrong person, woe would be my own heart, and evil the consequences which might ensue!"

"You are very pressing with me, sir," said the Earl; "and, in exchange, I will be equally frank with you. — I am not the man whom you mistake me for, and you may go seek him where you will — It will be still more lucky for you if you chance to find your own wits in the course of your researches; for I must tell you plainly, I think they are gone somewhat astray." So saying, with a gesture expressive of a determined purpose to pass on, Mr. Cargill had no alternative but to make way, and suffer him to proceed.

The worthy clergyman stood as if rooted to the ground, and, with his usual habit of thinking aloud exclaimed to himself, "My fancy has played me many a bewildering trick, but this is the most extraordinary of them all! — What can this young man think of me? It must have been my conversation with that unhappy young lady that has made such an impression upon me as to deceive my very eyesight, and causes me to connect with her history the face of the next person that I met — What *must* the stranger think of me!"

"Why, what every one thinks of thee that knows thee, prophet," said the friendly voice of Touchwood, accompanying his speech with an awakening slap on the clergyman's shoulder; "and that is, that thou art an unfortunate philosopher of Laputa, who has lost his flapper in the throng. — Come along — having me once more by your side, you need fear nothing. Why, now I look at you closer, you look as if you had seen a basilisk — not that there is any such thing, otherwise I must have seen it myself, in the course of my travels — but you seem pale and frightened — What the devil is the matter?"

"Nothing," answered the clergyman, "except that I have even this very moment made an egregious fool of myself."

"Pooh, pooh, that is nothing to sigh over, prophet. — Every man does so at least twice in the four-and-twenty hours," said Touchwood.

"But I had nearly betrayed to a stranger, a secret deeply concerning the honour of an ancient family."

"That was wrong, Doctor," said Touchwood; "take care of that in future; and, indeed, I would advise you not to speak even to your beadle, Johnie Tirlsneck, until you have assured yourself, by at least three pertinent questions and answers, that you have the said Johnie corporeally and substantially in presence before you, and that your fancy has not invested some stranger with honest Johnie's singed periwig and threadbare brown joseph — Come along — come along."

So saying, he hurried forward the perplexed clergyman, who in vain made all the excuses he could think of in order to effect his escape from the scene of gaiety, in which he was so unexpectedly involved. He pleaded headache; and his friend assured him that a mouthful of food, and a glass of wine, would mend it. He stated he had business; and Touchwood replied that he could have none but composing his next sermon, and reminded him that it was two days till Sunday. At length, Mr. Cargill confessed that he had some reluctance again to see the stranger, on whom he had endeavoured with such pertinacity to fix an acquaintance, which he was now well assured existed only in his own imagination. The traveller treated his scruples with scorn, and said, that guests meeting in this general manner, had no more to do with each other than if they were assembled in a caravansary.

"So that you need not say a word to him in the way of apology or otherwise — or, what will be still better, I, who have seen so much of the world, will make the pretty speech for you." As they spoke, he dragged the divine towards the house, where they were now summoned by the appointed signal, and where the company were assembling in the old saloon already noticed, previous to passing into the dining-room, where the refreshments were prepared. "Now, Doctor," continued the busy friend of Mr. Cargill, "let us see which of all these people has been the subject of your blunder. Is it yon animal of a Highlandman? — or the impertinent brute that wants to be thought a boatswain? — or which of them all is it? — Ay, here they come, two and two, Newgate fashion — the young Lord of the Manor with old Lady Penelope — does he set up for Ulysses, I wonder? — The Earl of Etherington with Lady Bingo — methinks it should have been with Miss Mowbray."

"The Earl of what, did you say?" quoth the clergyman, anxiously. "How is it you titled that young man in the Spanish dress?"

"Oho!" said the traveller; "what, I have discovered the goblin that has scared you? — Come along — come along — I will make you acquainted with him." So saying, he dragged him towards Lord Etherington; and before the divine could make his negative intelligible, the ceremony of introduction had taken place. "My Lord Etherington, allow me to present Mr. Cargill, minister of this parish — a learned gentleman, whose head is often in the Holy Land, when his person seems present among his friends. He suffers extremely, my lord, under the sense of mistaking your lordship for the Lord knows who; but when you are acquainted with him, you will find that he can make a hundred stranger mistakes than that, so we hope that your lordship will take no prejudice or offence."

"There can be no offence taken where no offence is intended," said Lord Etherington, with much urbanity. "It is I who ought to beg the reverend gentleman's pardon, for hurrying from him without allowing him to make a complete eclairsissement. I beg his pardon for an abruptness which the place and the time — for I was immediately engaged in a lady's service — rendered unavoidable."

Mr. Cargill gazed on the young nobleman as he pronounced these words, with the easy indifference of one who apologizes to an inferior in order to maintain his own character for politeness, but with perfect indifference whether his excuses are or are not held satisfactory. And as the clergyman gazed, the belief which had so strongly clung to him that the Earl of Etherington and young Valentine Bulmer were the same individual person, melted away like frostwork before the morning sun, and that so completely, that he marvelled at himself for having ever entertained it. Some strong resemblance of features there must have been to have led him into such a delusion; but the person, the tone, the manner of expression, were absolutely different; and his attention being now especially directed towards these particulars, Mr. Cargill was inclined to think the two personages almost totally dissimilar.

The clergyman had now only to make his apology, and fall back from the head of the table to some lower seat, which his modesty would have preferred, when he was suddenly seized upon by the Lady Penelope Penfeather, who, detaining him in the most elegant and persuasive manner possible, insisted that they should be introduced to each other by Mr. Mowbray, and that Mr. Cargill should sit beside her at table. — She had heard so much of his learning — so much of his excellent character — desired so much to make his acquaintance, that she could not think of losing an opportunity, which Mr. Cargill's learned seclusion rendered so very rare — in a word, catching the Black Lion was the order of the day; and her ladyship having trapped her prey, soon sat triumphant with him by her side.

A second separation was thus effected betwixt Touchwood and his friend; for the former, not being included in the invitation, or, indeed, at all noticed by Lady Penelope, was obliged to find room at a lower part of the table, where he excited much surprise by the dexterity with which he dispatched boiled rice with chopsticks.

Mr. Cargill being thus exposed, without a consort, to the fire of Lady Penelope, speedily found it so brisk and incessant, as to drive his complaisance, little tried as it had been for many years by small talk, almost to extremity. She began by begging him to draw his chair close, for an instinctive terror of fine ladies had made him keep his distance. At the same time, she hoped "he was not afraid of her as an Episcopalian; her father had belonged to that communion; for," she added, with what was intended for an arch smile, "we were somewhat naughty in the forty-five, as you may have heard; but all that was over, and she was sure Mr. Cargill was too liberal to entertain any dislike or shyness on that score. — She could assure him she was far from disliking the Presbyterian form — indeed she had often wished to hear it, where she was sure to be both delighted and edified" (here a gracious smile) "in the church of St. Ronan's — and hoped to do so whenever Mr. Mowbray had got a stove, which he had ordered from Edinburgh, on purpose to air his pew for her accommodation."

All this, which was spoken with wreathed smiles and nods, and so much civility as to remind the clergyman of a cup of tea over-sweetened to conceal its want of strength, and flavour, required and received no farther answer than an accommodating look and acquiescent bow.

"Ah, Mr. Cargill," continued the inexhaustible Lady Penelope, "your profession has so many demands on the heart as well as the understanding — is so much connected with the kindnesses and charities of our nature — with our best and purest feelings, Mr. Cargill! You know what Goldsmith says:—

——'to his duty prompt at every call,

He watch'd, and wept, and felt, and pray'd for all.'

And then Dryden has such a picture of a parish priest, so inimitable, one would think, did we not hear now and then of some living mortal presuming to emulate its features," (here another insinuating nod and expressive smile.)

"Refined himself to soul to curb the sense,

And almost made a sin of abstinence.

Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,

But such a face as promised him sincere;

Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,

But sweet regard and pleasing sanctity."

While her ladyship declaimed, the clergyman's wandering eye confessed his absent mind; his thoughts travelling, perhaps, to accomplish a truce betwixt Saladin and Conrade of Mountserratt, unless they chanced to be occupied with some occurrences of that very day, so that the lady was obliged to recall her indocile auditor with the leading question, "You are well acquainted with Dryden, of course, Mr. Cargill?"

"I have not the honour, madam," said Mr. Cargill, starting from his reverie, and but half understanding the question he replied to.

"Sir!" said the lady in surprise.

"Madam! — my lady!" answered Mr. Cargill, in embarrassment.

"I asked you if you admired Dryden; — but you learned men are so absent — perhaps you thought I said Leyden."

"A lamp too early quenched, madam," said Mr Cargill; "I knew him well."

"And so did I," eagerly replied the lady of the cerulean buskin; "he spoke ten languages — how mortifying to poor me, Mr. Cargill, who could only boast of five! — but I have studied a little since that time — I must have you to help me in my studies, Mr. Cargill — it will be charitable — but perhaps you are afraid of a female pupil?"

A thrill, arising from former recollections, passed through poor Cargill's mind, with as much acuteness as the pass of a rapier might have done through his body; and we cannot help remarking, that a forward prater in society, like a busy bustler in a crowd, besides all other general points of annoyance, is eternally rubbing upon some tender point, and galling men's feelings, without knowing or regarding it.

"You must assist me, besides, in my little charities, Mr. Cargill, now that you and I are become so well acquainted. — There is that Anne Heggie — I sent her a trifle yesterday, but I am told — I should not mention it, but only one would not have the little they have to bestow lavished on an improper object — I am told she is not quite proper — an unwedded mother, in short, Mr. Cargill — and it would be especially unbecoming in me to encourage profligacy."

"I believe, madam," said the clergyman, gravely, "the poor woman's distress may justify your ladyship's bounty, even if her conduct has been faulty."

"O, I am no prude, neither, I assure you, Mr. Cargill," answered the Lady Penelope. "I never withdraw my countenance from any one but on the most irrefragable grounds. I could tell you of an intimate friend of my own, whom I have supported against the whole clamour of the people at the Well, because I believe, from the bottom of my soul, she is only thoughtless — nothing in the world but thoughtless — O Mr. Cargill, how can you look across the table so intelligently? — who would have thought it of you? — Oh fie, to make such personal applications!"

"Upon my word, madam, I am quite at a loss to comprehend" —

"Oh fie, fie, Mr. Cargill," throwing in as much censure and surprise as a confidential whisper can convey — "you looked at my Lady Binks — I know what you think, but you are quite wrong, I assure you; you are entirely wrong. — I wish she would not flirt quite so much with that young Lord Etherington though, Mr. Cargill — her situation is particular. — Indeed, I believe she wears out his patience; for see he is leaving the room before we sit down — how singular! — And then, do you not think it very odd, too, that Miss Mowbray has not come down to us?"

"Miss Mowbray! — what of Miss Mowbray — is she not here?" said Mr. Cargill, starting, and with an expression of interest which he had not yet bestowed on any of her ladyship's liberal communications.

"Ay, poor Miss Mowbray," said Lady Penelope, lowering her voice, and shaking her head; "she has not appeared — her brother went up stairs a few minutes since, I believe, to bring her down, and so we are all left here to look at each other. — How very awkward! — But you know Clara Mowbray."

"I, madam?" said Mr. Cargill, who was now sufficiently attentive; "I really — I know Miss Mowbray — that is, I knew her some years since — but your ladyship knows she has been long in bad health — uncertain health at least, and I have seen nothing of the young lady for a very long time."

"I know it, my dear Mr. Cargill — I know it," continued the Lady Penelope, in the same tone of deep sympathy, "I know it; and most unhappy surely have been the circumstances that have separated her from your advice and friendly counsel. — All this I am aware of — and to say truth, it has been chiefly on poor Clara's account that I have been giving you the trouble of fixing an acquaintance upon you. — You and I together, Mr. Cargill, might do wonders to cure her unhappy state of mind — I am sure we might — that is, if you could bring your mind to repose absolute confidence in me."

"Has Miss Mowbray desired your ladyship to converse with me upon any subject which interests her?" said the clergyman, with more cautious shrewdness than Lady Penelope had suspected him of possessing. "I will in that case be happy to hear the nature of her communication; and whatever my poor services can perform, your ladyship may command them."

"I — I cannot just assert," said her ladyship with hesitation, "that I have Miss Mowbray's direct instructions to speak to you, Mr. Cargill, upon the present subject. But my affection for the dear girl is so very great — and then, you know, the inconveniences which may arise from this match."

"From which match, Lady Penelope?" said Mr. Cargill.

"Nay, now, Mr. Cargill, you really carry the privilege of Scotland too far — I have not put a single question to you, but what you have answered by another — let us converse intelligibly for five minutes, if you can but condescend so far."

"For any length of time which your ladyship may please to command," said Mr. Cargill, "provided the subject regard your ladyship's own affairs or mine — could I suppose these last for a moment likely to interest you."

"Out upon you," said the lady, laughing affectedly; "you should really have been a Catholic priest instead of a Presbyterian. What an invaluable father confessor have the fair sex lost in you, Mr. Cargill, and how dexterously you would have evaded any cross-examinations which might have committed your penitents!"

"Your ladyship's railery is far too severe for me to withstand or reply to," said Mr. Cargill, bowing with more ease than her ladyship expected; and, retiring gently backward, he extricated himself from a conversation which he began to find somewhat embarrassing.

At that moment a murmur of surprise took place in the apartment, which was just entered by Miss Mowbray, leaning on her brother's arm. The cause of this murmur will be best understood, by narrating what had passed betwixt the brother and sister.

Chapter 22 Expostulation.

*Seek not the feast in these irreverent robes;
Go to my chamber — put on clothes of mine.*

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

It was with a mixture of anxiety, vexation, and resentment, that Mowbray, just when he had handed Lady Penelope into the apartment where the tables were covered, observed that his sister was absent, and that Lady Binks was hanging on the arm of Lord Etherington, to whose rank it would properly have fallen to escort the lady of the house. An anxious and hasty glance cast through the room, ascertained that she was absent, nor could the ladies present give any account of her after she had quitted the gardens, except that Lady Penelope had spoken a few words with her in her own apartment, immediately after the scenic entertainment was concluded.

Thither Mowbray hurried, complaining aloud of his sister's laziness in dressing, but internally hoping that the delay was occasioned by nothing of a more important character.

He hastened up stairs, entered her sitting-room without ceremony, and knocking at the door of her dressing-room, begged her to make haste.

"Here is the whole company impatient," he said, assuming a tone of pleasantry; "and Sir Bingo Binks exclaiming for your presence, that he may be let loose on the cold meat."

"Paddock calls," said Clara from within; "anon — anon!"

"Nay, it is no jest, Clara," continued her brother; "for here is Lady Penelope miauling like a starved cat!"

"I come — I come, greymalkin," answered Clara, in the same vein as before, and entered the parlour as she spoke, her finery entirely thrown aside, and dressed in the riding-habit which was her usual and favourite attire.

Her brother was both surprised and offended. "On my soul," he said, "Clara, this is behaving very ill. I indulge you in every freak upon ordinary occasions, but you might surely on this day, of all others, have condescended to appear something like my sister, and a gentlewoman receiving company in her own house."

"Why, dearest John," said Clara, "so that the guests have enough to eat and drink, I cannot conceive why I should concern myself about their finery, or they trouble themselves about my plain clothes."

"Come, come, Clara, this will not do," answered Mowbray; "you must positively go back into your dressing-room, and huddle your things on as fast as you can. You cannot go down to the company dressed as you are."

"I certainly can, and I certainly will, John — I have made a fool of myself once this morning to oblige you, and for the rest of the day I am determined to appear in my own dress; that is, in one which shows I neither belong to the world, nor wish to have any thing to do with its fashions."

"By my soul, Clara, I will make you repent this!" said Mowbray, with more violence than he usually exhibited where his sister was concerned.

"You cannot, dear John," she coolly replied, "unless by beating me; and that I think you would repent of yourself."

"I do not know but what it were the best way of managing you," said Mowbray, muttering between his teeth; but, commanding his violence, he only said aloud, "I am sure, from long experience, Clara, that your obstinacy will at the long run beat my anger. Do let us compound the point for once — keep your old habit, since you are so fond of making a sight of yourself, and only throw the shawl round your shoulders — it has been exceedingly admired, and every woman in the house longs to see it closer — they can hardly believe it genuine."

"Do be a man, Mowbray," answered his sister; "meddle with your horse-sheets, and leave shawls alone."

"Do you be a woman, Clara, and think a little on them, when custom and decency render it necessary. — Nay, is it possible! — Will you not stir — not oblige me in such a trifle as this?"

"I would indeed if I could," said Clara; "but since you must know the truth — do not be angry — I have not the shawl. I have given it away — given it up, perhaps I should say, to the rightful owner. — She has promised me something or other in exchange for it, however. I have given it to Lady Penelope."

"Yes," answered Mowbray, "some of the work of her own fair hands, I suppose, or a couple of her ladyship's drawings, made up into fire-screens. — On my word — on my soul, this is too bad! — It is using me too ill, Clara — far too ill. If the thing had been of no value, my giving it to you should have fixed some upon it. — Good-even to you; we will do as well as we can without you."

"Nay, but, my dear John — stay but a moment," said Clara, taking his arm as he sullenly turned towards the door; "there are but two of us on the earth — do not let us quarrel about a trumpery shawl."

"Trumpery!" said Mowbray; "It cost fifty guineas, by G — which I can but ill spare — trumpery!"

"O, never think of the cost," said Clara; "it was your gift, and that should, I own, have been enough to have made me keep to my death's day the poorest rag of it. But really Lady Penelope looked so very miserable, and twisted her poor face into so many odd expressions of anger and chagrin, that I resigned it to her, and agreed to say she had lent it to me for the performance. I believe she was afraid that I would change my mind, or that you would resume it as a seignorial waif; for, after she had walked a few turns with it wrapped around her, merely by way of taking possession, she dispatched it by a special messenger to her apartment at the Well."

"She may go to the devil," said Mowbray, "for a greedy unconscionable jade, who has varnished over a selfish, spiteful heart, that is as hard as a flint, with a fine glossing of taste and sensibility!"

"Nay, but, John," replied his sister, "she really had something to complain of in the present case. The shawl had been bespoke on her account, or very nearly so — she showed me the tradesman's letter — only some agent of yours had come in between with the ready money, which no tradesman can resist. — Ah, John! I suspect half of your anger is owing to the failure of a plan to mortify poor Lady Pen, and that she has more to complain of than you have. — Come, come, you have had the advantage of her in the first display of this fatal piece of finery, if wearing it on my poor shoulders can be called a display — e'en make her welcome to the rest for peace's sake, and let us go down to these good folks, and you shall see how pretty and civil I shall behave."

Mowbray, a spoiled child, and with all the petted habits of indulgence, was exceedingly fretted at the issue of the scheme which he had formed for mortifying Lady Penelope; but he saw at once the necessity of saying nothing more to his sister on the subject. Vengeance he privately muttered against Lady Pen, whom he termed an absolute harpy in blue-stockings; unjustly forgetting, that in the very important affair at issue, he himself had been the first to interfere with and defeat her ladyship's designs on the garment in question.

"But I will blow her," he said, "I will blow her ladyship's conduct in the business! She shall not outwit a poor whimsical girl like Clara, without hearing it on more sides than one."

With this Christian and gentlemanlike feeling towards Lady Penelope, he escorted his sister into the eating-room, and led her to her proper place at the head of the table. It was the negligence displayed in her dress, which occasioned the murmur of surprise that greeted Clara on her entrance. Mowbray, as he placed his sister in her chair, made her general apology for her late appearance, and her riding-habit. "Some fairies," he supposed, "Puck, or such like tricky goblin, had been in her wardrobe, and carried off whatever was fit for wearing."

There were answers from every quarter — that it would have been too much to expect Miss Mowbray to dress for their amusement a second time — that nothing she chose to wear could misbecome Miss Mowbray — that she had set like the sun, in her splendid scenic dress, and now rose like the full moon in her ordinary attire, (this flight was by the Reverend Mr. Chatterly,) — and that "Miss Mowbray being at home, had an unco gude right to please herself;" which last piece of politeness, being at least as much to the purpose as any that had preceded it, was the contribution of honest Mrs. Blower; and was replied to by Miss Mowbray with a particular and most gracious bow.

Mrs. Blower ought to have rested her colloquial fame, as Dr. Johnson would have said, upon a compliment so evidently acceptable, but no one knows where to stop. She thrust her broad, good-natured, delighted countenance forward, and sending her voice from the bottom to the top of the table, like her umquhile husband when calling to his mate during a breeze, wondered "why Miss Clara Moubrie didna wear that grand shawl she had on at the play-making, and her just sitting upon the wind of a door. Nae doubt it was for fear of the soup, and the butter-boats, and the like; — but *she* had three shawls, which she really fand was ane ower mony — if Miss Moubrie wad like to wear ane o' them — it was but imitashion, to be sure — but it wad keep her shouthers as warm as if it were real Indian, and if it were dirtied it was the less matter."

"Much obliged, Mrs. Blower," said Mowbray unable to resist the temptation which this speech offered; "but my sister is not yet of quality sufficient, to entitle her to rob her friends of their shawls."

Lady Penelope coloured to the eyes, and bitter was the retort that arose to her tongue; but she suppressed it, and nodding to Miss Mowbray in the most friendly way in the world, yet with a very particular expression, she only said, "So you have told your brother of the little transaction which we have had this morning? — *Tu me lo pagherai* — I give you fair warning, take care none of your secrets come into my keeping — that's all."

Upon what mere trifles do the important events of human life sometimes depend! If Lady Penelope had given way to her first movements of resentment, the probable issue would have been some such half-comic half-serious skirmish, as her ladyship and Mr. Mowbray had often amused the company withal. But revenge which is suppressed and deferred, is always most to be dreaded; and to the effects of the deliberate resentment which Lady Penelope cherished upon this trifling occasion, must be traced the events which our history has to record. Secretly did she determine to return the shawl, which she had entertained hopes of making her own upon very reasonable terms; and as secretly did she resolve to be revenged both upon brother and sister, conceiving herself already possessed, to a certain degree, of a clew to some part of their family history, which might serve for a foundation on which to raise her projected battery. The ancient offences and emulation of importance of the Laird of St. Ronan's, and the superiority which had been given to Clara in the exhibition of the day, combined with the immediate cause of resentment; and it only remained for her to consider how her revenge should be most signally accomplished.

Whilst such thoughts were passing through Lady Penelope's mind, Mowbray was searching with his eyes for the Earl of Etherington, judging that it might be proper, in the course of the entertainment, or before the guests had separated, to make him formally acquainted with his sister, as a preface to the more intimate connexion which must, in prosecution of the plan agreed upon, take place betwixt them. Greatly to his surprise, the young Earl was nowhere visible, and the place which he had occupied by the side of Lady Binks had been quietly appropriated by Winterblossom, as the best and softest chair in the room, and nearest to the head of the table, where the choicest of the entertainment is usually arranged. This honest gentleman, after a few insipid compliments to her ladyship upon her performance as Queen of the Amazons, had betaken himself to the much more interesting occupation of ogling the dishes, through the glass which hung suspended at his neck by a gold chain of Maltese workmanship. After looking and wondering for a few seconds, Mowbray addressed himself to the old beau-garçon, and asked him what had become of Etherington.

"Retreated," said Winterblossom, "and left but his compliments to you behind him — a complaint, I think, in his wounded arm. — Upon my word, that soup has a most appetizing flavour! — Lady Penelope, shall I have the honour to help you? — no! — nor you, Lady Binks? — you are too cruel! — I must comfort myself, like a heathen priest of old, by eating the sacrifice which the deities have scorned to accept of."

Here he helped himself to the plate of soup which he had in vain offered to the ladies, and transferred the further duty of dispensing it to Mr. Chatterly; "it is your profession, sir, to propitiate the divinities — ahem!"

"I did not think Lord Etherington would have left us so soon," said Mowbray; "but we must do the best we can without his countenance."

So saying, he assumed his place at the bottom of the table, and did his best to support the character of a hospitable and joyous landlord, while on her part, with much natural grace, and delicacy of attention calculated to set every body at their ease, his sister presided at the upper end of the board. But the vanishing of Lord Etherington in a manner so sudden and unaccountable — the obvious ill-humour of Lady Penelope — and the steady, though passive, sullenness of Lady Binks, spread among the company a gloom like that produced by an autumnal mist upon a pleasing landscape. The women were low-spirited, dull, nay, peevish, they did not well know why; and the men could not be joyous, though the ready resource of old hock and champagne made some of them talkative. — Lady Penelope broke up the party by well-feigned apprehension of the difficulties, nay, dangers, of returning by so rough a road. Lady Binks begged a seat with her ladyship, as Sir Bingo, she said, judging from his devotion to the green flask, was likely to need their carriage home. From the moment of their departure, it became bad tone to remain behind; and all, as in a retreating army, were eager to be foremost, excepting MacTurk and a few stanch toppers, who, unused to meet with such good cheer every day of their lives, prudently determined to make the most of the opportunity.

We will not dwell on the difficulties attending the transportation of a large company by few carriages, though the delay and disputes thereby occasioned were of course more intolerable than in the morning, for the parties had no longer the hopes of a happy day before them, as a bribe to submit to temporary inconvenience. The impatience of many was so great, that, though the evening was raw, they chose to go on foot rather than await the dull routine of the returning carriages; and as they retired they agreed, with one consent, to throw the blame of whatever inconvenience they might sustain on their host and hostess, who had invited so large a party before getting a shorter and better road made between the Well and Shaws-Castle.

"It would have been so easy to repair the path by the Buck-stane!"

And this was all the thanks which Mr. Mowbray received for an entertainment which had cost him so much trouble and expense, and had been looked forward to by the good society at the Well with such impatient expectation.

"It was an unco pleasant show," said the good-natured Mrs. Blower, "only it was a pity it was sae tediousome; and there was surely an awfu' waste of gauze and muslin."

But so well had Dr. Quackleben improved his numerous opportunities, that the good lady was much reconciled to affairs in general, by the prospect of coughs, rheumatisms, and other maladies acquired upon the occasion, which were likely to afford that learned gentleman, in whose prosperity she much interested herself, a very profitable harvest.

Mowbray, somewhat addicted to the service of Bacchus, did not find himself freed, by the secession of so large a proportion of the company, from the service of the jolly god, although, upon the present occasion, he could well have dispensed with his orgies. Neither the song, nor the pun, nor the jest, had any power to kindle his heavy spirit, mortified as he was by the event of his party being so different from the brilliant consummation which he had anticipated. The guests, stanch boon companions, suffered not, however, their party to flag for want of the landlord's participation, but continued to drink bottle after bottle, with as little regard for Mr. Mowbray's grave looks, as if they had been carousing at the Mowbray Arms, instead of the Mowbray mansion-house. Midnight at length released him, when, with an unsteady step, he sought his own apartment; cursing himself and his companions, consigning his own person with all dispatch to his bed, and bequeathing those of the company to as many mosses and quagmires, as could be found betwixt Shaws-Castle and St. Ronan's Well.

Chapter 23 The Proposal.

*Oh! you would be a vestal maid, I warrant,
The bride of Heaven — Come — we may shake your purpose;
For here I bring in hand a jolly suitor
Hath ta'en degrees in the seven sciences
That ladies love best — He is young and noble,
Handsome and valiant, gay, and rich, and liberal.*

THE NUN.

The morning after a debauch is usually one of reflection, even to the most determined boon companion; and, in the retrospect of the preceding day, the young Laird of St. Ronan's saw nothing very consolatory, unless that the excess was not, in the present case, of his own seeking, but had arisen out of the necessary duties of a landlord, or what were considered as such by his companions.

But it was not so much his dizzy recollections of the late carouse which haunted him on awakening, as the inexplicability which seemed to shroud the purposes and conduct of his new ally, the Earl of Etherington.

That young nobleman had seen Miss Mowbray, had declared his high satisfaction, had warmly and voluntarily renewed the proposal which he had made ere she was yet known to him — and yet, far from seeking an opportunity to be introduced to her, he had even left the party abruptly, in order to avoid the necessary intercourse which must there have taken place between them. His lordship's flirtation with Lady Binks had not escaped the attention of the sagacious Mowbray — her ladyship also had been in a hurry to leave Shaws-Castle; and Mowbray promised to himself to discover the nature of this connexion through Mrs. Gingham, her ladyship's attendant, or otherwise; vowing deeply at the same time, that no peer in the realm should make an affectation of addressing Miss Mowbray a cloak for another and more secret intrigue. But his doubts on this subject were in great measure removed by the arrival of one of Lord Etherington's grooms with the following letter:—

"My Dear Mowbray — You would naturally be surprised at my escape from the table yesterday before you returned to it, or your lovely sister had graced it with her presence. I must confess my folly; and I may do so the more boldly, for, as the footing on which I first opened this treaty was not a very romantic one, you will scarce suspect me of wishing to render it such. But I did in reality feel, during the whole of yesterday, a reluctance which I cannot express, to be presented to the lady on whose favour the happiness of my future life is to depend, upon such a public occasion, and in the presence of so promiscuous a company. I had my mask, indeed, to wear while in the promenade, but, of course, that was to be laid aside at table, and, consequently, I must have gone through the ceremony of introduction; a most interesting moment, which I was desirous to defer till a fitter season. I trust you will permit me to call upon you at Shaws-Castle this morning, in the hope — the anxious hope — of being allowed to pay my duty to Miss Mowbray, and apologize for not waiting upon her yesterday. I expect your answer with the utmost impatience, being always yours, &c. &c. &c.

“ETHERINGTON.”

“This,” said St. Ronan’s to himself, as he folded the letter deliberately, after having twice read it over, “seems all fair and above board; I could not wish any thing more explicit; and, moreover, it puts into black and white, as old Mick would say, what only rested before on our private conversation. An especial cure for the headache, such a billet as this in a morning.”

So saying, he sat him down and wrote an answer, expressing the pleasure he should have in seeing his lordship as soon as he thought proper. He watched even the departure of the groom, and beheld him gallop off, with the speed of one who knows that his quick return was expected by an impatient master.

Mowbray remained for a few minutes by himself, and reflected with delight upon the probable consequences of this match; — the advancement of his sister — and, above all, the various advantages which must necessarily accrue to himself, by so close an alliance with one whom he had good reason to think deep *in the secret*, and capable of rendering him the most material assistance in his speculations on the turf and in the sporting world. He then sent a servant to let Miss Mowbray know that he intended to breakfast with her.

“I suppose, John,” said Clara, as her brother entered the apartment, “you are glad of a weaker cup this morning than those you were drinking last night — you were carousing till after the first cock.”

“Yes,” said Mowbray, “that sandbed, old MacTurk, upon whom whole hogsheads make no impression, did make a bad boy of me — but the day is over, and they will scarce catch me in such another scrape. — What did you think of the masks?”

“Supported as well,” said Clara, “as such folk support the disguise of gentlemen and ladies during life; and that is, with a great deal of bustle, and very little propriety.”

“I saw only one good mask there, and that was a Spaniard,” said her brother.

“O, I saw him too,” answered Clara; “but he wore his visor on. An old Indian merchant, or some such thing, seemed to me a better character — the Spaniard did nothing but stalk about and twangle his guitar, for the amusement of my Lady Binks, as I think.”

“He is a very clever fellow, though, that same Spaniard,” rejoined Mowbray — “Can you guess who he is?”

“No, indeed; nor shall I take the trouble of trying. To set to guessing about it, were as bad as seeing the whole mummerly over again.”

“Well,” replied her brother, “you will allow one thing at least — Bottom was well acted — you cannot deny that.”

“Yes,” replied Clara, “that worthy really deserved to wear his ass’s head to the end of the chapter — but what of him?”

“Only conceive that he should be the very same person with that handsome Spaniard,” replied Mowbray.

“Then there is one fool fewer than I thought there was,” replied Clara, with the greatest indifference.

Her brother bit his lip.

“Clara,” he said, “I believe you are an excellent good girl, and clever to boot, but pray do not set up for wit and oddity; there is nothing in life so intolerable as pretending to think differently from other people. — That gentleman was the Earl of Etherington.”

This annunciation, though made in what was meant to be an imposing tone, had no impression on Clara.

“I hope he plays the peer better than the Fidalgo,” she replied, carelessly.

“Yes,” answered Mowbray, “he is one of the handsomest men of the time, and decidedly fashionable — you will like him much when you see him in private.”

“It is of little consequence whether I do or no,” answered Clara.

“You mistake the matter,” said Mowbray, gravely; “it may be of considerable consequence.”

“Indeed!” said Clara, with a smile; “I must suppose myself, then, too important a person not to make my approbation necessary to one of your first-rates? He cannot pretend to pass muster at St. Ronan’s without it? — Well, I will depute my authority to Lady Binks, and she shall pass your new recruits instead of me.”

“This is all nonsense, Clara,” said Mowbray. “Lord Etherington calls here this very morning, and wishes to be made known to you. I expect you will receive him as a particular friend of mine.”

“With all my heart — so you will engage, after this visit, to keep him down with your other particular friends at the Well — you know it is a bargain that you bring neither buck nor pointer into my parlour — the one worries my cat, and the other my temper.”

“You mistake me entirely, Clara — this is a very different visitor from any I have ever introduced to you — I expect to see him often here, and I hope you and he will be better friends than you think of. I have more reasons for wishing this, than I have now time to tell you.”

Clara remained silent for an instant, then looked at her brother with an anxious and scrutinizing glance, as if she wished to penetrate into his inmost purpose.

“If I thought,” — she said, after a minute’s consideration, and with an altered and disturbed tone; “but no — I will not think that Heaven intends me such a blow — least of all, that it should come from your hands.” She walked hastily to the window, and threw it open — then shut it again, and returned to her seat, saying, with a constrained smile, “May Heaven forgive you, brother, but you frightened me heartily.”

“I did not mean to do so, Clara,” said Mowbray, who saw the necessity of soothing her; “I only alluded in joke to those chances that are never out of other girls’ heads, though you never seem to calculate on them.”

“I wish you, my dear John,” said Clara, struggling to regain entire composure, “I wish *you* would profit by my example, and give up the science of chance also — it will not avail you.”

“How d’ye know that? — I’ll show you the contrary, you silly wench,” answered Mowbray — “Here is a banker’s bill, payable to your own order, for the cash you lent me, and something over — don’t let old Mick have the fingering, but let Bindloose manage it for you — he is the honestest man between two d — d knaves.”

“Will not you, brother, send it to the man Bindloose yourself?”

“No — no,” replied Mowbray — “he might confuse it with some of my transactions, and so you forfeit your stake.”

“Well, I am glad you are able to pay me, for I want to buy Campbell’s new work.”

“I wish you joy of your purchase — but don’t scratch me for not caring about it — I know as little of books as you of the long odds. And come now, be serious, and tell me if you will be a good girl — lay aside your whims, and receive this English young nobleman like a lady as you are?”

“That were easy,” said Clara — “but — but — Pray, ask no more of me than just to see him. — Say to him at once, I am a poor creature in body, in mind, in spirits, in temper, in understanding — above all, say that I can receive him only once.”

“I shall say no such thing,” said Mowbray, bluntly; “it is good to be plain with you at once — I thought of putting off this discussion — but since it must come, the sooner it is over the better. — You are to understand, Clara Mowbray, that Lord Etherington has a particular view in this visit, and that his view has my full sanction and approbation.”

“I thought so,” said Clara, in the same altered tone of voice in which she had before spoken; “my mind foreboded this last of misfortunes! — But, Mowbray, you have no child before you — I neither will nor can see this nobleman.”

“How!” exclaimed Mowbray, fiercely; “do you dare return me so peremptory an answer? — Think better of it, for, if we differ, you will find you will have the worst of the game.”

“Rely upon it,” she continued, with more vehemence, “I will see him nor no man upon the footing you mention — my resolution is taken, and threats and entreaties will prove equally unavailing.”

“Upon my word, madam,” said Mowbray, “you have, for a modest and retired young lady, plucked up a goodly spirit of your own! — But you shall find mine equals it. If you do not agree to see my friend Lord Etherington, ay, and to receive him with the politeness due to the consideration I entertain for him, by Heaven! Clara, I will no longer regard you as my father’s daughter. Think what you are giving up — the affection and protection of a brother — and for what? — merely for an idle point of etiquette. — You cannot, I suppose, even in the workings of your romantic brain, imagine that the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Harriet Byron are come

back again, when women were married by main force? and it is monstrous vanity in you to suppose that Lord Etherington, since he has honoured you with any thoughts at all, will not be satisfied with a proper and civil refusal — You are no such prize, methinks, that the days of romance are to come back for you.”

“I care not what days they are,” said Clara — “I tell you I will not see Lord Etherington, or any one else, upon such preliminaries as you have stated — I cannot — I will not — and I ought not. — Had you meant me to receive him, which can be a matter of no consequence whatever, you should have left him on the footing of an ordinary visitor — as it is, I will not see him.”

“You *shall* see and hear him both,” said Mowbray; “you shall find me as obstinate as you are — as willing to forget I am a brother, as you to forget that you have one.”

“It is time, then,” replied Clara, “that this house, once our father’s, should no longer hold us both. I can provide for myself, and may God bless you!”

“You take it coolly, madam,” said her brother, walking through the apartment with much anxiety both of look and gesture.

“I do,” she answered, “for it is what I have often foreseen — Yes, brother, I have often foreseen that you would make your sister the subject of your plots and schemes, so soon as other stakes failed you. That hour is come, and I am, as you see, prepared to meet it.”

“And where may you propose to retire to?” said Mowbray. “I think that I, your only relation and natural guardian, have a right to know that — my honour and that of my family is concerned.”

“Your honour!” she retorted, with a keen glance at him; “your interest, I suppose you mean, is somehow connected with the place of my abode. — But keep yourself patient — the den of the rock, the linn of the brook, should be my choice, rather than a palace without my freedom.”

“You are mistaken, however,” said Mowbray, sternly, “if you hope to enjoy more freedom than I think you capable of making a good use of. The law authorizes, and reason, and even affection, require, that you should be put under restraint for your own safety, and that of your character. You roamed the woods a little too much in my father’s time, if all stories be true.”

“I did — I did indeed, Mowbray,” said Clara, weeping; “God pity me, and forgive you for upbraiding me with my state of mind — I know I cannot sometimes trust my own judgment; but is it for you to remind me of this?”

Mowbray was at once softened and embarrassed.

“What folly is this?” he said; “you say the most cutting things to me — are ready to fly from my house — and when I am provoked to make an angry answer, you burst into tears!”

“Say you did not mean what you said, my dearest brother!” exclaimed Clara; “O say you did not mean it! — Do not take my liberty from me — it is all I have left, and, God knows, it is a poor comfort in the sorrows I undergo. I will put a fair face on every thing — will go down to the Well — will wear what you please, and say what you please — but O! leave me the liberty of my solitude here — let me weep alone in the house of my father — and do not force a broken-hearted sister to lay her death at your door. — My span must be a brief one, but let not your hand shake the sand-glass! — Disturb me not — let me pass quietly — I do not ask this so much for my sake as for your own. I would have you think of me, sometimes, Mowbray, after I am gone, and without the bitter reflections which the recollection of harsh usage will assuredly bring with it. Pity me, were it but for your own sake. — I have deserved nothing but compassion at your hand — There are but two of us on earth, why should we make each other miserable?”

She accompanied these entreaties with a flood of tears, and the most heart-bursting sobs. Mowbray knew not what to determine. On the one hand, he was bound by his promise to the Earl; on the other, his sister was in no condition to receive such a visitor; nay, it was most probable, that if he adopted the strong measure of compelling her to receive him, her behaviour would probably be such as totally to break off the projected match, on the success of which he had founded so many castles in the air. In this dilemma, he had again recourse to argument.

“Clara,” he said, “I am, as I have repeatedly said, your only relation and guardian — if there be any real reason why you ought not to receive, and, at least, make a civil reply to such a negotiation as the Earl of Etherington has thought fit to open, surely I ought to be intrusted with it. You enjoyed far too much of that liberty which you seem to prize so highly during my father’s lifetime — in the last years of it at least — have you formed any foolish attachment during that time, which now prevents you from receiving such a visit as Lord Etherington has threatened?”

“Threatened! — the expression is well chosen,” said Miss Mowbray; “and nothing can be more dreadful than such a threat, excepting its accomplishment.”

“I am glad your spirits are reviving,” replied her brother; “but that is no answer to my question.”

“Is it necessary,” said Clara, “that one must have actually some engagement or entanglement, to make them unwilling to be given in marriage, or even to be pestered upon such a subject? — Many young men declare they intend to die bachelors, why may not I be permitted to commence old maid at three-and-twenty? — Let me do so, like a kind brother, and there were never nephews and nieces so petted and so scolded, so nursed and so cuffed by a maiden aunt, as your children, when you have them, shall be by aunt Clara.”

“And why not say all this to Lord Etherington?” said Mowbray; “wait until he propose such a terrible bugbear as matrimony, before you refuse to receive him. Who knows, the whim that he hinted at may have passed away — he was, as you say, flirting with Lady Binks, and her ladyship has a good deal of address, as well as beauty.”

“Heaven improve both, (in an honest way,) if she will but keep his lordship to herself!” said Clara.

“Well, then,” continued her brother, “things standing thus, I do not think you will have much trouble with his lordship — no more, perhaps, than just to give him a civil denial. After having spoken on such a subject to a man of my condition, he cannot well break off without you give him an apology.”

“If that is all,” said Clara, “he shall, as soon as he gives me an opportunity, receive such an answer as will leave him at liberty to woo any one whatsoever of Eve’s daughters, excepting Clara Mowbray. Methinks I am so eager to set the captive free, that I now wish as much for his lordship’s appearance as I feared it a little while since.”

“Nay, nay, but let us go fair and softly,” said her brother. “You are not to refuse him before he asks the question.”

“Certainly,” said Clara; “but I well know how to manage that — he shall never ask the question at all. I will restore Lady Binks’s admirer, without accepting so much as a civility in ransom.”

“Worse and worse, Clara,” answered Mowbray; “you are to remember he is my friend and guest, and he must not be affronted in my house. Leave things to themselves. — Besides, consider an instant, Clara — had you not better take a little time for reflection in this case? The offer is a splendid one — title — fortune — and, what is more, a fortune which you will be well entitled to share largely in.”

“This is beyond our implied treaty,” said Clara. “I have yielded more than ever I thought I should have done, when I agreed that this Earl should be introduced to me on the footing of a common visitor; and now you talk favourably of his pretensions. This is an encroachment, Mowbray, and now I shall relapse into my obstinacy, and refuse to see him at all.”

“Do as you will,” replied Mowbray, sensible that it was only by working on her affections that he had any chance of carrying a point against her inclination — “Do as you will, my dear Clara; but, for Heaven’s sake, wipe your eyes.”

“And behave myself,” said she, trying to smile as she obeyed him — “behave myself, you would say, like folks of this world; but the quotation is lost on you, who never read either Prior or Shakspeare.”

“I thank Heaven for that,” said Mowbray. “I have enough to burden my brain, without carrying such a lumber of rhymes in it as you and Lady Pen do. — Come, that is right; go to the mirror, and make yourself decent.”

A woman must be much borne down indeed by pain and suffering, when she loses all respect for her external appearance. The madwoman in Bedlam wears her garland of straw with a certain air of pretension; and we have seen a widow whom we knew to be most sincerely affected by a recent deprivation, whose weeds, nevertheless, were arranged with a dolorous degree of grace, which amounted almost to coquetry. Clara Mowbray had also, negligent as she seemed to be of appearances, her own art of the toilet, although of the most rapid and most simple character. She took off her little riding-hat, and, unbinding a lace of Indian gold

which retained her locks, shook them in dark and glossy profusion over her very handsome form, which they overshadowed down to her slender waist; and while her brother stood looking on her with a mixture of pride, affection, and compassion, she arranged them with a large comb, and, without the assistance of any *femme d'atours*, wove them, in the course of a few minutes, into such a natural head-dress as we see on the statues of the Grecian nymphs.

"Now let me but find my best muff," she said, "come prince and peer, I shall be ready to receive them."

"Pshaw! your muff — who has heard of such a thing these twenty years? Muffs were out of fashion before you were born."

"No matter, John," replied his sister; "when a woman wears a muff, especially a determined old maid like myself, it is a sign she has no intentions to scratch; and therefore the muff serves all the purposes of a white flag, and prevents the necessity of drawing on a glove, so prudentially recommended by the motto of our cousins, the M'Intoshes."²²

"Be it as you will, then," said Mowbray; "for other than you do will it, you will not suffer it to be. — But how is this! — another billet? — We are in request this morning."

"Now, Heaven send his lordship may have judiciously considered all the risks which he is sure to encounter on this charmed ground, and resolved to leave his adventure unattempted," said Miss Mowbray.

Her brother glanced a look of displeasure at her, as he broke the seal of the letter, which was addressed to him with the words, "Haste and secrecy," written on the envelope. The contents, which greatly surprised him, we remit to the commencement of the next chapter.

Chapter 24

Private Information.

— *Ope this letter;*

I can produce a champion that will prove

What is avouched there. —

KING LEAR.

The billet which Mowbray received, and read in his sister's presence, contained these words:—

"Sir — Clara Mowbray has few friends — none, perhaps, excepting yourself, in right of blood, and the writer of this letter, by right of the fondest, truest, and most disinterested attachment, that ever man bore to woman. I am thus explicit with you, because, though it is unlikely that I should ever again see or speak to your sister, I am desirous that you should be clearly acquainted with the cause of that interest, which I must always, even to my dying breath, take in her affairs.

"The person, calling himself Lord Etherington, is, I am aware, in the neighbourhood of Shaws-Castle, with the intention of paying his addresses to Miss Mowbray; and it is easy for me to foresee, arguing according to the ordinary views of mankind, that he may place his proposals in such a light as may make them seem highly desirable. But ere you give this person the encouragement which his offers may seem to deserve, please to enquire whether his fortune is certain, or his rank indisputable; and be not satisfied with light evidence on either point. A man may be in possession of an estate and title, to which he has no better right than his own rapacity and forwardness of assumption; and supposing Mr. Mowbray jealous, as he must be, of the honour of his family, the alliance of such a one cannot but bring disgrace. This comes from one who will make good what he has written."

On the first perusal of a billet so extraordinary, Mowbray was inclined to set it down to the malice of some of the people at the Well, anonymous letters being no uncommon resource of the small wits who frequent such places of general resort, as a species of deception safely and easily executed, and well calculated to produce much mischief and confusion. But upon closer consideration, he was shaken in this opinion, and, starting suddenly from the reverie into which he had fallen, asked for the messenger who had brought the letter. "He was in the hall," the servant thought, and Mowbray ran to the hall. No — the messenger was not there, but Mowbray might see his back as he walked up the avenue. — He hollo'd — no answer was returned — he ran after the fellow, whose appearance was that of a countryman. The man quickened his pace as he saw himself pursued, and when he got out of the avenue, threw himself into one of the numerous bypaths which wanderers, who strayed in quest of nuts, or for the sake of exercise, had made in various directions through the extensive copse which surrounded the Castle, and were doubtless the reason of its acquiring the name of Shaws, which signifies, in the Scottish dialect, a wood of this description.

Irritated by the man's obvious desire to avoid him, and naturally obstinate in all his resolutions, Mowbray pursued for a considerable way, until he fairly lost breath; and the flier having been long out of sight, he recollected at length that his engagement with the Earl of Etherington required his attendance at the Castle.

The young lord, indeed, had arrived at Shaws-Castle, so few minutes after Mowbray's departure, that it was wonderful they had not met in the avenue. The servant to whom he applied, conceiving that his master must return instantly, as he had gone out without his hat, ushered the Earl, without farther ceremony, into the breakfast-room, where Clara was seated upon one of the window-seats, so busily employed with a book, or perhaps with her own thoughts while she held a book in her hands, that she scarce raised her head, until Lord Etherington, advancing, pronounced the words, "Miss Mowbray." A start, and a loud scream, announced her deadly alarm, and these were repeated as he made one pace nearer, and in a firmer accent said, "Clara."

"No nearer — no nearer," she exclaimed, "if you would have me look upon you and live!" Lord Etherington remained standing, as if uncertain whether to advance or retreat, while with incredible rapidity she poured out her hurried entreaties that he would begone, sometimes addressing him as a real personage, sometimes, and more frequently, as a delusive phantom, the offspring of her own excited imagination. "I knew it," she muttered, "I knew what would happen, if my thoughts were forced into that fearful channel. — Speak to me, brother! speak to me while I have reason left, and tell me that what stands before me is but an empty shadow! But it is no shadow — it remains before me in all the lineaments of mortal substance!"

"Clara," said the Earl, with a firm, yet softened voice, "collect and compose yourself. I am, indeed, no shadow — I am a much-injured man, come to demand rights which have been unjustly withheld from me. I am now armed with power as well as justice, and my claims shall be heard."

"Never — never!" replied Clara Mowbray; "since extremity is my portion, let extremity give me courage. — You have no rights — none — I know you not, and I defy you."

"Defy me not, Clara Mowbray," answered the Earl, in a tone, and with a manner how different from those which delighted society! for now he was solemn, tragic, and almost stern, like the judge when he passes sentence upon a criminal. "Defy me not," he repeated. "I am your Fate, and it rests with you to make me a kind or severe one."

"Dare you speak thus?" said Clara, her eyes flashing with anger, while her lips grew white, and quivered for fear — "Dare you speak thus, and remember that the same heaven is above our heads, to which you so solemnly vowed you would never see me more without my own consent?"

"That vow was conditional — Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, swore the same — hath *he* not seen you?" He fixed a piercing look on her; "He has — you dare not disown it! — And shall an oath, which to him is but a cobweb, be to me a shackle of iron?"

"Alas! it was but for a moment," said Miss Mowbray, sinking in courage, and drooping her head as she spoke.

"Were it but the twentieth part of an instant — the least conceivable space of subdivided time — still, you *did* meet — he saw you — you spoke to him. And me also you must see — me also you must hear! Or I will first claim you for my own in the face of the world; and, having vindicated my rights, I will seek out and extinguish the wretched rival who has dared to interfere with them."

"Can you speak thus?" said Clara — "can you so burst through the ties of nature? — Have you a heart!"

"I have; and it shall be moulded like wax to your slightest wishes, if you agree to do me justice; but not granite, nor aught else that nature has of hardest, will be more inflexible if you continue an useless opposition! — Clara Mowbray, I am your Fate."

"Not so, proud man," said Clara, rising, "God gave not one potsherd the power to break another, save by his divine permission — my fate is in the will of Him, without whose will even a sparrow falls not to the ground. — Begone — I am strong in faith of heavenly protection."

"Do you speak thus in sincerity?" said the Earl of Etherington; "consider first what is the prospect before you. I stand here in no doubtful or ambiguous character — I offer not the mere name of a husband — propose to you not a humble lot of obscurity and hardship, with fears for the past and doubts for the future; yet

there was a time when to a suit like this you could listen favourably. — I stand high among the nobles of the country, and offer you, as my bride, your share in my honours, and in the wealth which becomes them. — Your brother is my friend, and favours my suit. I will raise from the ground, and once more render illustrious, your ancient house — your motions shall be regulated by your wishes, even by your caprices — I will even carry my self-denial so far, that you shall, should you insist on so severe a measure, have your own residence, your own establishment, and without intrusion on my part, until the most devoted love, the most unceasing attentions, shall make way on your inflexible disposition. — All this I will consent to for the future — all that is past shall be concealed from the public. — But mine, Clara Mowbray, you must be.”

“Never — never!” she said with increasing vehemence. “I can but repeat a negative, but it shall have all the force of an oath. — Your rank is nothing to me — your fortune I scorn — my brother has no right, by the law of Scotland, or of nature, to compel my inclinations. — I detest your treachery, and I scorn the advantage you propose to attain by it. — Should the law give you my hand, it would but award you that of a corpse.”

“Alas! Clara,” said the Earl, “you do but flutter in the net; but I will urge you no farther, now — there is another encounter before me.”

He was turning away, when Clara, springing forward, caught him by the arm, and repeated, in a low and impressive voice, the commandment — “Thou shalt do no murder!”

“Fear not any violence,” he said, softening his voice, and attempting to take her hand, “but what may flow from your own severity. — Francis is safe from me, unless you are altogether unreasonable. — Allow me but what you cannot deny to any friend of your brother, the power of seeing you at times — suspend at least the impetuosity of your dislike to me, and I will, on my part, modify the current of my just and otherwise uncontrollable resentment.”

Clara, extricating herself, and retreating from him, only replied, “There is a Heaven above us, and THERE shall be judged our actions towards each other! You abuse a power most treacherously obtained — you break a heart that never did you wrong — you seek an alliance with a wretch who only wishes to be wedded to her grave. — If my brother brings you hither, I cannot help it — and if your coming prevents bloody and unnatural violence, it is so far well. — But by my consent you come *not*; and, were the choice mine, I would rather be struck with life-long blindness, than that my eyes should again open on your person — rather that my ears were stuffed with the earth of the grave, than that they should again hear your voice!”

The Earl of Etherington smiled proudly, and replied, “Even this, madam, I can hear without resentment. Anxious and careful as you are to deprive your compliance of every grace and of every kindness, I receive the permission to wait on you, as I interpret your words.”

“Do not so interpret them,” she replied; “I do but submit to your presence as an unavoidable evil. Heaven be my witness, that, were it not to prevent greater and more desperate evil, I would not even so far acquiesce.”

“Let acquiescence, then, be the word,” he said; “and so thankful will I be, even for your acquiescence, Miss Mowbray, that all shall remain private, which I conceive you do not wish to be disclosed; and, unless absolutely compelled to it in self-defence, you may rely, no violence will be resorted to by me in any quarter. — I relieve you from my presence.”

So saying, he withdrew from the apartment.

Chapter 25 Explanatory.

— *By your leave, gentle wax.*

SHAKESPEARE.

In the hall of Shaws-Castle the Earl of Etherington met Mowbray, returned from his fruitless chase after the bearer of the anonymous epistle before recited; and who had but just learned, on his return, that the Earl of Etherington was with his sister. There was a degree of mutual confusion when they met; for Mowbray had the contents of the anonymous letter fresh in his mind, and Lord Etherington, notwithstanding all the coolness which he had endeavoured to maintain, had not gone through the scene with Clara without discomposure. Mowbray asked the Earl whether he had seen his sister, and invited him, at the same time, to return to the parlour; and his lordship replied, in a tone as indifferent as he could assume, that he had enjoyed the honour of the lady’s company for several minutes, and would not now intrude farther upon Miss Mowbray’s patience.

“You have had such a reception as was agreeable, my lord, I trust?” said Mowbray. “I hope Clara did the honours of the house with propriety during my absence?”

“Miss Mowbray seemed a little fluttered with my sudden appearance,” said the Earl; “the servant showed me in rather abruptly; and, circumstanced as we were, there is always awkwardness in a first meeting, where there is no third party to act as master of the ceremonies. — I suspect, from the lady’s looks, that you have not quite kept my secret, my good friend. I myself, too, felt a little consciousness in approaching Miss Mowbray — but it is over now; and, the ice being fairly broken, I hope to have other and more convenient opportunities to improve the advantage I have just gained in acquiring your lovely sister’s personal acquaintance.”

“So be it,” said Mowbray; “but, as you declare for leaving the castle just now, I must first speak a single word with your lordship, for which this place is not altogether convenient.”

“I can have no objections, my dear Jack,” said Etherington, following him with a thrill of conscious feeling, somewhat perhaps like that of the spider when he perceives his deceitful web is threatened with injury, and sits balanced in the centre, watching every point, and uncertain which he may be called upon first to defend. Such is one part, and not the slightest part, of the penance which never fails to wait on those, who, abandoning the “fair play of the world,” endeavour to work out their purposes by a process of deception and intrigue.

“My lord,” said Mowbray, when they had entered a little apartment, in which the latter kept his guns, fishing-tackle, and other implements of sport, “you have played on the square with me; nay, more — I am bound to allow you have given me great odds. I am therefore not entitled to hear any reports to the prejudice of your lordship’s character, without instantly communicating them. There is an anonymous letter which I have just received. Perhaps your lordship may know the hand, and thus be enabled to detect the writer.”

“I do know the hand,” said the Earl, as he received the note from Mowbray; “and, allow me to say, it is the only one which could have dared to frame any calumny to my prejudice. I hope, Mr. Mowbray, it is impossible for you to consider this infamous charge as any thing but a falsehood?”

“My placing it in your lordship’s hands, without farther enquiry, is a sufficient proof that I hold it such, my lord; at the same time that I cannot doubt for a moment that your lordship has it in your power to overthrow so frail a calumny by the most satisfactory evidence.”

“Unquestionably I can, Mr. Mowbray,” said the Earl; “for, besides my being in full possession of the estate and title of my father, the late Earl of Etherington, I have my father’s contract of marriage, my own certificate of baptism, and the evidence of the whole country, to establish my right. All these shall be produced with the least delay possible. You will not think it surprising that one does not travel with this sort of documents in one’s post-chaise.”

“Certainly not, my lord,” said Mowbray; “it is sufficient they are forthcoming when called for. But, may I enquire, my lord, who the writer of this letter is, and whether he has any particular spleen to gratify by this very impudent assertion, which is so easily capable of being disproved?”

“He is,” said Etherington, “or, at least, has the reputation of being, I am sorry to say, a near — a very near relation of my own — in fact, a brother by the father’s side, but illegitimate. — My father was fond of him — I loved him also, for he has uncommonly fine parts, and is accounted highly accomplished. But there is a strain of something irregular in his mind — a vein, in short, of madness, which breaks out in the usual manner, rendering the poor young man a dupe to vain imaginations of his own dignity and grandeur, which is perhaps the most ordinary effect of insanity, and inspiring the deepest aversion against his nearest relatives, and against myself in particular. He is a man extremely plausible, both in speech and manners; so much so, that many of my friends think there is more vice than insanity in the irregularities which he commits; but I may, I hope, be forgiven, if I have formed a milder judgment of one supposed to be my father’s son. Indeed, I cannot help being sorry for poor Frank, who might have made a very distinguished figure in the world.”

“May I ask the gentleman’s name, my lord?” said Mowbray.

“My father’s indulgence gave him our family name of Tyrrel, with his own Christian name Francis; but his proper name, to which alone he has a right, is Martigny.”

"Francis Tyrrel!" exclaimed Mowbray; "why, that is the name of the very person who made some disturbance at the Well just before your lordship arrived. — You may have seen an advertisement — a sort of placard."

"I have, Mr. Mowbray," said the Earl. "Spare me on that subject, if you please — it has formed a strong reason why I did not mention my connexion with this unhappy man before; but it is no unusual thing for persons, whose imaginations are excited, to rush into causeless quarrels, and then to make discreditable retreats from them."

"Or," said Mr. Mowbray, "he may have, after all, been prevented from reaching the place of rendezvous — it was that very day on which your lordship, I think, received your wound; and, if I mistake not, you hit the man from whom you got the hurt."

"Mowbray," said Lord Etherington, lowering his voice, and taking him by the arm, "it is true that I did so — and truly glad I am to observe, that, whatever might have been the consequences of such an accident, they cannot have been serious. — It struck me afterwards, that the man by whom I was so strangely assaulted, had some resemblance to the unfortunate Tyrrel — but I had not seen him for years. — At any rate, he cannot have been much hurt, since he is now able to resume his intrigues to the prejudice of my character."

"Your lordship views the thing with a firm eye," said Mowbray; "firmer than I think most people would be able to command, who had so narrow a chance of a scrape so uncomfortable."

"Why, I am, in the first place, by no means sure that the risk existed," said the Earl of Etherington; "for, as I have often told you, I had but a very transient glimpse of the ruffian; and, in the second place, I *am* sure that no permanent bad consequences have ensued. I am too old a fox-hunter to be afraid of a leap after it is cleared, as they tell of the fellow who fainted in the morning at the sight of the precipice he had clambered over when he was drunk on the night before. The man who wrote that letter," touching it with his finger, "is alive, and able to threaten me; and if he did come to any hurt from my hand, it was in the act of attempting my life, of which I shall carry the mark to my grave."

"Nay, I am far from blaming your lordship," said Mowbray, "for what you did in self-defence, but the circumstance might have turned out very unpleasant. — May I ask what you intend to do with this unfortunate gentleman, who is in all probability in the neighbourhood?"

"I must first discover the place of his retreat," said Lord Etherington, "and then consider what is to be done both for his safety, poor fellow, and my own. It is probable, too, that he may find sharpers to prey upon what fortune he still possesses, which, I assure you, is sufficient to attract a set of folk, who may ruin while they humour him. — May I beg that you, too, will be on the outlook, and let me know if you hear or see more of him?"

"I shall, most certainly, my lord," answered Mowbray; "but the only one of his haunts which I know, is the old Cleikum Inn, where he chose to take up his residence. He has now left it, but perhaps the old crab-fish of a landlady may know something of him."

"I will not fail to enquire," said Lord Etherington; and, with these words, he took a kind farewell of Mowbray, mounted his horse, and rode up the avenue.

"A cool fellow," said Mowbray, as he looked after him, "a d — d cool fellow, this brother-in-law of mine, that is to be — takes a shot at his father's son with as little remorse as at a blackcock — what would he do with me, were we to quarrel? — Well, I can snuff a candle, and strike out the ace of hearts; and so, should things go wrong, he has no Jack Raw to deal with, but Jack Mowbray."

Meanwhile the Earl of Etherington hastened home to his own apartments at the Hotel; and, not entirely pleased with the events of the day, commenced a letter to his correspondent, agent, and confidant, Captain Jekyl, which we have fortunately the means of presenting to our readers. —

"Friend Harry — They say a falling house is best known by the rats leaving it — a falling state, by the desertion of confederates and allies — and a falling man, by the desertion of his friends. If this be true augury; your last letter may be considered as ominous of my breaking down. Methinks, you have gone far enough, and shared deep enough with me, to have some confidence in my *savoir faire* — some little faith both in my means and management. What crossgrained fiend has at once inspired you with what I suppose you wish me to call politic doubts and scruples of conscience, but which I can only regard as symptoms of fear and disaffection? You can have no idea of 'duels betwixt relations so nearly connected' — and 'the affair seems very delicate and intricate' — and again, 'the matter has never been fully explained to you' — and, moreover, 'if you are expected to take an active part in the business, it must be when you are honoured with my full and unreserved confidence, otherwise how could you be of the use to me which I might require?' Such are your expressions.

"Now, as to scruples of conscience about near relations, and so forth, all that has blown by without much mischief, and certainly is not likely to occur again — besides, did you never hear of friends quarrelling before? And are they not to exercise the usual privileges of gentlemen when they do? Moreover, how am I to know that this plaguy fellow is actually related to me? — They say it is a wise child knows its own father; and I cannot be expected wise enough to know to a certainty my father's son. — So much for relationship. — Then, as to full and unreserved confidence — why, Harry, this is just as if I were to ask you to look at a watch, and tell what it was o'clock, and you were to reply, that truly you could not inform me, because you had not examined the springs, the counter-balances, the wheels, and the whole internal machinery of the little timepiece. — But the upshot of the whole is this. Harry Jekyl, who is as sharp a fellow as any other, thinks he has his friend Lord Etherington at a dead lock, and that he knows already so much of the said noble lord's history as to oblige his lordship to tell him the whole. And perhaps he not unreasonably concludes, that the custody of a whole secret is more creditable, and probably more lucrative, than that of a half one; and, in short — he is resolved to make the most of the cards in his hand. Another, mine honest Harry, would take the trouble to recall to your mind past times and circumstances, and conclude with expressing a humble opinion, that if Harry Jekyl were asked *now* to do any service for the noble lord aforesaid, Harry had got his reward in his pocket aforehand. But I do not argue thus, because I would rather be leagued with a friend who assists me with a view to future profit, than from respect to benefits already received. The first lies like the fox's scent when on his last legs, increasing every moment; the other is a back-scent, growing colder the longer you follow it, until at last it becomes impossible to puzzle it out. I will, therefore, submit to circumstances, and tell you the whole story, though somewhat tedious, in hopes that I can conclude with such a trail as you will open upon breast-high.

"Thus then it was. — Francis, fifth Earl of Etherington, and my much-honoured father, was what is called a very eccentric man — that is, he was neither a wise man nor a fool — had too much sense to walk into a well, and yet in some of the furious fits which he was visited with, I have seen him quite mad enough to throw any one else into it. — Men said there was a lurking insanity — but it is an ill bird, &c., and I will say no more about it. This shatterbrained peer was, in other respects, a handsome accomplished man, with an expression somewhat haughty, yet singularly pleasing when he chose it — a man, in short, who might push his fortune with the fair sex.

"Lord Etherington, such as I have described him, being upon his travels in France, formed an attachment of the heart — ay, and some have pretended, of the hand also, with a certain beautiful orphan, Marie de Martigny. Of this union is said to have sprung (for I am determined not to be certain on that point) that most incommodious person, Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, but as I would rather call him, Francis Martigny; the latter suiting my views, as perhaps the former name agrees better with his pretensions. Now, I am too good a son to subscribe to the alleged regularity of the marriage between my right honourable and very good lord father, because my said right honourable and very good lord did, on his return to England, become wedded, in the face of the church, to my very affectionate and well-endowed mother, Ann Bulmer of Bulmer-hall, from which happy union sprung I, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, lawful inheritor of my father and mother's joint estates, as I was the proud possessor of their ancient names. But the noble and wealthy pair, though blessed with such a pledge of love as myself, lived mighty ill together, and the rather, when my right honourable father, sending for this other Sosia, this unlucky Francis Tyrrel, senior, from France, insisted, in the face of propriety, that he should reside in his house, and share, in all respects, in the opportunities of education by which the real Sosia, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, then commonly called Lord Oakendale, hath profited in such an uncommon degree.

"Various were the matrimonial quarrels which arose between the honoured lord and lady, in consequence of this unseemly conjunction of the legitimate and illegitimate; and to these, we, the subjects of the dispute, were sometimes very properly, as well as decorously, made the witnesses. On one occasion, my right honourable mother, who was a free-spoken lady, found the language of her own rank quite inadequate to express the strength of her generous feelings, and borrowing from the vulgar two emphatic words, applied them to Marie de Martigny, and her son Francis Tyrrel. Never did Earl that ever wore coronet fly into a

pitch of more uncontrollable rage, than did my right honourable father: and in the ardour of his reply, he adopted my mother's phraseology, to inform her, that if there was a whore and bastard connected with his house, it was herself and her brat.

"I was even then a sharp little fellow, and was incredibly struck with the communication, which, in this hour of ungovernable irritation, had escaped my right honourable father. It is true, he instantly gathered himself up again; and, he perhaps recollecting such a word as *bigamy*, and my mother, on her side, considering the consequences of such a thing as a descent from the Countess of Etherington into Mrs. Bulmer, neither wife, maid, nor widow, there was an apparent reconciliation between them, which lasted for some time. But the speech remained deeply imprinted on my remembrance; the more so, that once, when I was exerting over my friend Francis Tyrrel, the authority of a legitimate brother, and Lord Oakendale, old Cecil, my father's confidential valet, was so much scandalized, as to intimate a possibility that we might one day change conditions. These two accidental communications seemed to me a key to certain long lectures, with which my father used to regale us boys, but me in particular, upon the extreme mutability of human affairs — the disappointment of the best-grounded hopes and expectations — and the necessity of being so accomplished in all useful branches of knowledge, as might, in case of accidents, supply any defalcation in our rank and fortune; — as if any art or science could make amends for the loss of an Earldom, and twelve thousand a-year! All this prosing seemed to my anxious mind designed to prepare me for some unfortunate change; and when I was old enough to make such private enquiries as lay in my power, I became still more persuaded that my right honourable father nourished some thoughts of making an honest woman of Marie de Martigny, and a legitimate elder brother of Francis, after his death at least, if not during his life. I was the more convinced of this, when a little affair, which I chanced to have with the daughter of my Tu — — drew down my father's wrath upon me in great abundance, and occasioned my being banished to Scotland, along with my brother, under a very poor allowance, without introductions, except to one steady, or call it rusty, old Professor, and with the charge that I should not assume the title of Lord Oakendale, but content myself with my maternal grandfather's name of Valentine Bulmer, that of Francis Tyrrel being pre-occupied.

"Upon this occasion, notwithstanding the fear which I entertained of my father's passionate temper, I did venture to say, that since I was to resign my title, I thought I had a right to keep my family name, and that my brother might take his mother's. I wish you had seen the look of rage with which my father regarded me when I gave him this spirited hint. 'Thou art,' he said, and paused, as if to find out the bitterest epithet to supply the blank — 'thou art thy mother's child, and her perfect picture'—(this seemed the severest reproach that occurred to him.)—'Bear her name then, and bear it with patience and in secrecy; or, I here give you my word, you shall never bear another the whole days of your life.' This sealed my mouth with a witness; and then, in allusion to my flirtation with the daughter of my Tu — — aforesaid, he enlarged on the folly and iniquity of private marriages, warned me that in the country I was going to, the matrimonial noose often lies hid under flowers, and that folks find it twitched round their neck when they least expect such a cravat; assured me, that he had very particular views for settling Francis and me in life, and that he would forgive neither of us who should, by any such rash entanglements, render them unavailing.

"This last minatory admonition was the more tolerable, that my rival had his share of it; and so we were bundled off to Scotland, coupled up like two pointers in a dog-cart, and — I can speak for one at least — with much the same uncordial feelings towards each other. I often, indeed, detected Francis looking at me with a singular expression, as of pity and anxiety, and once or twice he seemed disposed to enter on something respecting the situation in which we stood towards each other; but I felt no desire to encourage his confidence. Meantime, as we were called, by our father's directions, not brothers, but cousins, so we came to bear towards each other the habits of companionship, though scarcely of friendship. What Francis thought, I know not; for my part, I must confess, that I lay by on the watch for some opportunity when I might mend my own situation with my father, though at the prejudice of my rival. And Fortune, while she seemed to prevent such an opportunity, involved us both in one of the strangest and most entangled mazes that her capricious divinityship ever wove, and out of which I am even now struggling, by sleight or force, to extricate myself. I can hardly help wondering, even yet, at the odd conjunction, which has produced such an intricacy of complicated incidents.

"My father was a great sportsman, and Francis and I had both inherited his taste for field-sports; but I in a keener and more ecstatic degree. Edinburgh, which is a tolerable residence in winter and spring, becomes disagreeable in summer, and in autumn is the most melancholy *sejour* that ever poor mortals were condemned to. No public places are open, no inhabitant of any consideration remains in the town; those who cannot get away, hide themselves in obscure corners, as if ashamed to be seen in the streets. The gentry go to their country-houses — the citizens to their sea-bathing quarters — the lawyers to their circuits — the writers to visit their country clients — and all the world to the moors to shoot grouse. We, who felt the indignity of remaining in town during this deserted season, obtained, with some difficulty, permission from the Earl to betake ourselves to any obscure corner, and shoot grouse, if we could get leave to do so on our general character of English students at the University of Edinburgh, without quoting any thing more.

"The first year of our banishment we went to the neighbourhood of the Highlands; but finding our sport interrupted by gamekeepers and their gillies, on the second occasion we established ourselves at this little village of St. Ronan's, where there were then no Spa, no fine people, no card tables, no quizzes, excepting the old quiz of a landlady with whom we lodged. We found the place much to our mind; the old landlady had interest with some old fellow, agent of a non-residing nobleman, who gave us permission to sport over his moors, of which I availed myself keenly, and Francis with more moderation. He was, indeed, of a grave musing sort of habit, and often preferred solitary walks, in the wild and beautiful scenery with which the village is surrounded, to the use of the gun. He was attached to fishing, moreover, that dullest of human amusements, and this also tended to keep us considerably apart. This gave me rather pleasure than concern; — not that I hated Francis at that time; nay, not that I greatly disliked his society; but merely because it was unpleasant to be always with one, whose fortunes I looked upon as standing in direct opposition to my own. I also rather despised the indifference about sport, which indeed seemed to grow upon him; but my gentleman had better taste than I was aware of. If he sought no grouse on the hill, he had flushed a pheasant in the wood.

"Clara Mowbray, daughter of the Lord of the more picturesque than wealthy domain of St. Ronan's, was at that time scarce sixteen years old, and as wild and beautiful a woodland nymph as the imagination can fancy — simple as a child in all that concerned the world and its ways, acute as a needle in every point of knowledge which she had found an opportunity of becoming acquainted with; fearing harm from no one, and with, a lively and natural strain of wit, which brought amusement and gaiety wherever she came. Her motions were under no restraint, save that of her own inclination; for her father, though a cross, peevish, old man, was confined to his chair with the gout, and her only companion, a girl of somewhat inferior caste, bred up in the utmost deference to Miss Mowbray's fancies, served for company indeed in her strolls through the wild country on foot and on horseback, but never thought of interfering with her will and pleasure.

"The extreme loneliness of the country, (at that time,) and the simplicity of its inhabitants, seemed to render these excursions perfectly safe. Francis, happy dog, became the companion of the damsels on such occasions through the following accident. Miss Mowbray had dressed herself and her companion like country wenches, with a view to surprise the family of one of their better sort of farmers. They had accomplished their purpose greatly to their satisfaction, and were hying home after sunset, when they were encountered by a country fellow — a sort of Harry Jekyl in his way — who, being equipped with a glass or two of whisky, saw not the nobility of blood through her disguise, and accosted the daughter of a hundred sires as he would have done a ewe-milker. Miss Mowbray remonstrated — her companion screamed — up came cousin Francis with a fowlingpiece on his shoulder, and soon put the sylvan to flight.

"This was the beginning of an acquaintance, which had gone great lengths before I found it out. The fair Clara, it seems, found it safer to roam in the woods with an escort than alone, and my studious and sentimental relative was almost her constant companion. At their age, it was likely that some time might pass ere they came to understand each other; but full confidence and intimacy was established between them ere I heard of their amour.

"And here, Harry, I must pause till next morning, and send you the conclusion under a separate cover. The rap which I had over the elbow the other day, is still tingling at the end of my fingers, and you must not be critical with my manuscript."

Chapter 26 Letter Continued.

————— *Must I then ravel out
My weaved-up follies?* —————

"I resume my pen, Harry, to mention, without attempting to describe my surprise, that Francis, compelled by circumstances, made me the confidant of his love-intrigue. My grave cousin in love, and very much in the mind of approaching the perilous verge of clandestine marriage — he who used every now and then, not much to the improvement of our cordial regard, to lecture me upon filial duty, just upon the point of slipping the bridle himself! I could not for my life tell whether surprise, or a feeling of mischievous satisfaction, was predominant. I tried to talk to him as he used to talk to me; but I had not the gift of persuasion, or he the power of understanding the words of wisdom. He insisted our situation was different — that his unhappy birth, as he termed it, freed him at least from dependence on his father's absolute will — that he had, by bequest from some relative of his mother, a moderate competence, which Miss Mowbray had consented to share with him; in fine, that he desired not my counsel but my assistance. A moment's consideration convinced me, that I should be unkind, not to him only, but to myself, unless I gave him all the backing I could in this his most dutiful scheme. I recollected our right honourable father's denunciations against Scottish marriages, and secret marriages of all sorts — denunciations perhaps not the less vehement, that he might feel some secret prick of conscience on the subject himself. I remembered that my grave brother had always been a favourite, and I forgot not — how was it possible I could forget — those ominous expressions, which intimated a possibility of the hereditary estate and honours being transferred to the elder, instead of the younger son. Now, it required no conjurer to foresee, that should Francis commit this inexpiable crime of secretly allying himself with a Scottish beauty, our sire would lose all wish to accomplish such a transference in his favour; and while my brother's merits were altogether obscured by such an unpardonable act of disobedience, my own, no longer overshadowed by prejudice or partiality, would shine forth in all their natural brilliancy. These considerations, which flashed on me with the rapidity of lightning, induced me to consent to hold Frank's back-hand, during the perilous game he proposed to play. I had only to take care that my own share in the matter should not be so prominent as to attract my father's attention; and this I was little afraid of, for his wrath was usually of that vehement and forcible character, which, like lightning, is attracted to one single point, there bursting with violence as undivided as it was uncontrollable.

"I soon found the lovers needed my assistance more than I could have supposed; for they were absolute novices in any sort of intrigue, which to me seemed as easy and natural as lying. Francis had been detected by some tattling spy in his walks with Clara, and the news had been carried to old Mowbray, who was greatly incensed at his daughter, though little knowing that her crime was greater than admitting an unknown English student to form a personal acquaintance with her. He prohibited farther intercourse — resolved, in justice-of-peace phrase, to rid the country of us; and, prudently sinking all mention of his daughter's delinquency, commenced an action against Francis, under pretext of punishing him as an encroacher upon his game, but in reality to scare him from the neighbourhood. His person was particularly described to all the keepers and satellites about Shaws-Castle, and any personal intercourse betwixt him and Clara became impossible, except under the most desperate risks. Nay, such was their alarm, that Master Francis thought it prudent, for Miss Mowbray's sake, to withdraw as far as a town called Marchthorn, and there to conceal himself, maintaining his intercourse with Clara only by letter.

"It was then I became the sheet-anchor of the hope of the lovers; it was then my early dexterity and powers of contrivance were first put to the test; and it would be too long to tell you in how many shapes, and by how many contrivances, I acted as agent, letter-carrier, and go-between, to maintain the intercourse of these separated turtles. I have had a good deal of trouble in that way on my own account, but never half so much as I took on account of this brace of lovers. I scaled walls and swam rivers, set bloodhounds, quarterstaves, and blunderbusses at defiance; and, excepting the distant prospect of self-interest which I have hinted at, I was neither to have honour nor reward for my pains. I will own to you, that Clara Mowbray was so very beautiful — so absolutely confiding in her lover's friend — and thrown into such close intercourse with me, that there were times when I thought that, in conscience, she ought not to have scrupled to have contributed a mite to reward the faithful labourer. But then, she looked like purity itself; and I was such a novice at that time of day, that I did not know how it might have been possible for me to retreat, if I had made too bold an advance — and, in short, I thought it best to content myself with assisting true love to run smooth, in the hope that its course would assure me, in the long-run, an Earl's title, and an Earl's fortune.

"Nothing was, therefore, ventured on my part which could raise suspicion, and, as the confidential friend of the lovers, I prepared every thing for their secret marriage. The pastor of the parish agreed to perform the ceremony, prevailed upon by an argument which I used to him, and which Clara, had she guessed it, would have little thanked me for. I led the honest man to believe, that, in declining to do his office, he might prevent a too successful lover from doing justice to a betrayed maiden; and the parson, who, I found, had a spice of romance in his disposition, resolved, under such pressing circumstances, to do them the kind office of binding them together, although the consequence might be a charge of irregularity against himself. Old Mowbray was much confined to his room, his daughter less watched since Frank had removed from the neighbourhood — the brother (which, by the by, I should have said before) not then in the country — and it was settled that the lovers should meet at the Old Kirk of Saint Ronan's when the twilight became deep, and go off in a chaise for England so soon as the ceremony was performed.

"When all this was arranged save the actual appointment of the day, you cannot conceive the happiness and the gratitude of my sage brother. He looked upon himself as approaching to the seventh heaven, instead of losing his chance of a good fortune, and encumbering himself at nineteen with a wife, and all the probabilities of narrow circumstances, and an increasing family. Though so much younger myself, I could not help wondering at his extreme want of knowledge of the world, and feeling ashamed that I had ever allowed him to take the airs of a tutor with me; and this conscious superiority supported me against the thrill of jealousy which always seized me when I thought of his carrying off the beautiful prize, which, without my address, he could never have made his own. — But at this important crisis, I had a letter from my father, which, by some accident, had long lain at our lodgings in Edinburgh; and then visited our former quarters in the Highlands; again returned to Edinburgh, and at length reached me at Marchthorn in a most critical time.

"It was in reply to a letter of mine, in which, among other matters, such as good boys send to their papas, descriptions of the country, accounts of studies, exercises, and so forth, I had, to fill up the sheet to a dutiful length, thrown in something about the family of St. Ronan's, in the neighbourhood of which I was writing. I had no idea what an effect the name would produce on the mind of my right honourable father, but his letter sufficiently expressed it. He charged me to cultivate the acquaintance of Mr. Mowbray as fast and as intimately as possible; and, if need were, to inform him candidly of our real character and situation in life. Wisely considering, at the same time, that his filial admonition might be neglected if not backed by some sufficient motive, his lordship frankly let me into the secret of my granduncle by the mother's side, Mr. S. Mowbray of Nettlewood's last will and testament, by which I saw, to my astonishment and alarm, that a large and fair estate was bequeathed to the eldest son and heir of the Earl of Etherington, on condition of his forming a matrimonial alliance with a lady of the house of Mowbray, of St. Ronan's. — Mercy of Heaven! how I stared! Here had I been making every preparation for wedding Francis to the very girl, whose hand would insure to myself wealth and independence! — And even the first loss, though great, was not likely to be the last. My father spoke of the marriage like a land-surveyor, but of the estate of Nettlewood like an impassioned lover. He seemed to dote on every acre of it, and dwelt on its contiguity to his own domains as a circumstance which rendered the union of the estates not desirable merely, but constituted an arrangement, pointed out by the hand of nature. And although he observed, that, on account of the youth of the parties, treaty of marriage could not be immediately undertaken, it was yet clear he would approve at heart of any bold stroke which would abolish the interval of time that might otherwise intervene, ere Oakendale and Nettlewood became one property.

"Here, then, were shipwrecked my fair hopes. It was clear as sunshine, that a private marriage, unpardonable in the abstract, would become venial, nay, highly laudable, in my father's eyes, if it united his heir with Clara Mowbray; and if he really had, as my fears suggested, the means of establishing legitimacy on my brother's part, nothing was so likely to tempt him to use them, as the certainty that, by his doing so, Nettlewood and Oakendale would be united into one. The very catastrophe which I had prepared, as sure to exclude my rival from his father's favour, was thus likely, unless it could be prevented, to become a strong motive and argument for the Earl placing his rights above mine.

"I shut myself up in my bedroom; locked the door; read, and again read my father's letter; and, instead of giving way to idle passion, (beware of that, Harry, even in the most desperate circumstances,) I considered, with keen investigation, whether some remedy could not yet be found. — To break off the match for the time, would have been easy — a little private information to Mr. Mowbray would have done that with a vengeance — But then the treaty might be renewed under my father's auspices; — at all events, the share which I had taken in the intrigue between Clara and my brother, rendered it almost impossible for me to become a suitor in my own person. — Amid these perplexities, it suddenly occurred to my adventurous heart and contriving brain — what if I should personate the

bridegroom? — This strange thought, you will recollect, occurred to a very youthful brain — it was banished — it returned — returned again and again — was viewed under every different shape — became familiar — was adopted. — It was easy to fix the appointment with Clara and the clergyman for I managed the whole correspondence — the resemblance between Francis and me in stature and in proportion — the disguise which we were to assume — the darkness of the church — the hurry of the moment — might, I trusted, prevent Clara from recognising me. To the minister I had only to say, that though I had hitherto talked of a friend, I myself was the happy man. My first name was Francis as well as his; and I had found Clara so gentle, so confiding, so flatteringly cordial in her intercourse with me, that, once within my power, and prevented from receding by shame, and a thousand contradictory feelings, I had, with the vanity of *anamoureux de seize ans*, the confidence to believe I could reconcile the fair lady to the exchange.

"There certainly never came such a thought into a madcap's brain; and, what is more extraordinary — but that you already know — it was so far successful, that the marriage ceremony was performed between us in the presence of a servant of mine, Clara's accommodating companion, and the priest. — We got into the carriage, and were a mile from the church, when my unlucky or lucky brother stopped the chaise by force — through what means he had obtained knowledge of my little trick, I never have been able to learn. Solmes has been faithful to me in too many instances, that I should suspect him in this important crisis. I jumped out of the carriage, pitched fraternity to the devil, and, betwixt desperation and something very like shame, began to cut away with a *couteau de chasse*, which I had provided in case of necessity. — All was in vain — I was hustled down under the wheel of the carriage, and, the horses taking fright, it went over my body.

"Here ends my narrative; for I neither heard nor saw more until I found myself stretched on a sick-bed many miles from the scene of action, and Solmes engaged in attending on me. In answer to my passionate enquiries, he briefly informed me, that Master Francis had sent back the young lady to her own dwelling, and that she appeared to be extremely ill in consequence of the alarm she had sustained. My own health, he assured me, was considered as very precarious, and added, that Tyrrel, who was in the same house, was in the utmost perturbation on my account. The very mention of his name brought on a crisis in which I brought up much blood; and it is singular that the physician who attended me — a grave gentleman, with a wig — considered that this was of service to me. I know it frightened me heartily, and prepared me for a visit from Master Frank, which I endured with a tameness he would not have experienced, had the usual current of blood flowed in my veins. But sickness and the lancet make one very tolerant of sermonizing. — At last, in consideration of being relieved from his accursed presence, and the sound of his infernally calm voice, I slowly and reluctantly acquiesced in an arrangement, by which he proposed that we should for ever bid adieu to each other, and to Clara Mowbray. I would have hesitated at this last stipulation. 'She was,' I said, 'my wife, and I was entitled to claim her as such.'

"This drew down a shower of most moral reproaches, and an assurance that Clara disowned and detested my alliance; and that where there had been an essential error in the person, the mere ceremony could never be accounted binding by the law of any Christian country. I wonder this had not occurred to me; but my ideas of marriage were much founded on plays and novels, where such devices as I had practised are often resorted to for winding up the plot, without any hint of their illegality; besides, I had confided, as I mentioned before, a little too rashly perhaps, in my own powers of persuading so young a bride as Clara to be contented with one handsome fellow instead of another.

"Solmes took up the argument, when Francis released me by leaving the room. He spoke of my father's resentment, should this enterprise reach his ears — of the revenge of Mowbray of St. Ronan's, whose nature was both haughty and rugged — of risk from the laws of the country, and God knows what bugbears besides, which, at a more advanced age, I would have laughed at. In a word, I sealed the capitulation, vowed perpetual absence, and banished myself, as they say in this country, forth of Scotland.

"And here, Harry, observe and respect my genius. Every circumstance was against me in this negotiation. I had been the aggressor in the war; I was wounded, and, it might be said, a prisoner in my antagonist's hands; yet I could so far avail myself of Monsieur Martigny's greater eagerness for peace, that I clogged the treaty with a condition highly advantageous to myself, and equally unfavourable to him. — Said Mr. Francis Martigny was to take upon himself the burden of my right honourable father's displeasure; and our separation, which was certain to give immense offence, was to be represented as his work, not as mine. I insisted, tender-hearted, dutiful soul, as I was, that I would consent to no measure which was to bring down papa's displeasure. This was a *sine qua non* in our negotiation. 'Voilà ce que c'est d'avoir des talens!'

"Monsieur Francis would, I suppose, have taken the world on his shoulders, to have placed an eternal separation betwixt his turtledove and the falcon who had made so bold a pounce at her. — What he wrote to my father, I know not; as for myself, in all duty, I represented the bad state of my health from an accident, and that my brother and companion having been suddenly called from me by some cause which he had not explained, I had thought it necessary to get to London for the best advice, and only waited his lordship's permission to return to the paternal mansion. This I soon received, and found, as I expected, that he was in towering wrath against my brother for his disobedience; and, after some time, I even had reason to think, (as how could it be otherwise, Harry?) that, on becoming better acquainted with the merits and amiable manners of his apparent heir, he lost any desire which he might formerly have entertained, of accomplishing any change in my circumstances in relation to the world. Perhaps the old peer turned a little ashamed of his own conduct, and dared not aver to the congregation of the righteous, (for he became saintly in his latter days,) the very pretty frolics which he seems to have been guilty of in his youth. Perhaps, also, the death of my right honourable mother operated in my favour, since, while she lived, my chance was the worse — there is no saying what a man will do to spite his wife. — Enough, he died — slept with his right honourable fathers, and I became, without opposition, Right Honourable in his stead.

"How I have borne my new honours, thou, Harry, and our merry set, know full well. Newmarket and Tattersal's may tell the rest. I think I have been as lucky as most men where luck is most prized, and so I shall say no more on that subject.

"And now, Harry, I will suppose thee in a moralizing mood; that is, I will fancy the dice have run wrong — or your double-barrel has hung fire — or a certain lady has looked cross — or any such weighty cause of gravity has occurred, and you give me the benefit of your seriousness. — 'My dear Etherington,' say you pithily, 'you are a precious fool! — Here you are, stirring up a business rather scandalous in itself, and fraught with mischief to all concerned — a business which might sleep for ever, if you let it alone, but which is sure, like a sea-coal fire, to burst into a flame if you go on poking it. I would like to ask your lordship only two questions,' — say you, with your usual graceful attitude of adjusting your perpendicular shirt-collar, and passing your hand over the knot of your cravat, which deserves a peculiar place in the *Tietania*^{EB028} — 'only two questions — that is, Whether you do not repent the past, and whether you do not fear the future?' Very comprehensive queries, these of yours, Harry; for they respect both the time past and the time to come — one's whole life, in short. However, I shall endeavour to answer them as well as I may.

"Repent the past, said you? — Yes, Harry, I think I do repent the past — that is, not quite in the parson's style of repentance, which resembles yours when you have a headache, but as I would repent a hand at cards which I had played on false principles. I should have begun with the young lady — availed myself in a very different manner of Monsieur Martigny's absence, and my own intimacy with her, and thus superseded him, if possible, in the damsel's affections. The scheme I adopted, though there was, I think, both boldness and dexterity in it, was that of a novice of premature genius, who could not calculate chances. So much for repentance. — Do I not fear the future? — Harry, I will not cut your throat for supposing you to have put the question, but calmly assure you, that I never feared any thing in my life. I was born without the sensation, I believe; at least, it is perfectly unknown to me. When I felt that cursed wheel pass across my breast, when I felt the pistol-ball benumb my arm, I felt no more agitation than at the bounce of a champagne-cork. But I would not have you think that I am fool enough to risk plague, trouble, and danger, all of which, besides considerable expense, I am now prepared to encounter, without some adequate motive — and here it is.

"From various quarters, hints, rumours, and surmises have reached me, that an attack will be made on my rank and status in society, which can only be in behalf of this fellow Martigny, (for I will not call him by his stolen name of Tyrrel.) Now, this I hold to be a breach of the paction betwixt us, by which — that is, by that which I am determined to esteem its true meaning and purport — he was to leave my right honourable father and me to settle our own matters without his interference, which amounted to a virtual resignation of his rights, if the scoundrel ever had any. Can he expect I am to resign my wife, and what is a better thing, old Scrogie Mowbray's estate of Nettlewood, to gratify the humour of a fellow who sets up claims to my title and whole property? No, by —! If he assails me in a point so important, I will retaliate upon him in one where he will feel as keenly; and that he may depend upon. — And now, methinks, you come upon me with a second edition of your grave remonstrances, about family feuds, unnatural rencontres, offence to all the feelings of all the world, et cetera, et cetera, which you

might usher in most delectably with the old stave about brethren dwelling together in unity. I will not stop to enquire, whether all these delicate apprehensions are on account of the Earl of Etherington, his safety, and his reputation; or whether my friend Harry Jekyl be not considering how far his own interference with such a naughty business will be well taken at Head-quarters; and so, without pausing on that question, I shall barely and briefly say, that you cannot be more sensible than I am of the madness of bringing matters to such an extremity — I have no such intention, I assure you, and it is with no such purpose that I invite you here. — Were I to challenge Martigny, he would refuse me the meeting; and all less ceremonious ways of arranging such an affair are quite old-fashioned.

"It is true, at our first meeting, I was betrayed into the scrape I told you of — just as you may have shot (or shot *at*, for I think you are no downright hitter) a hen-pheasant, when flushed within distance, by a sort of instinctive movement, without reflecting on the enormity you are about to commit. The truth is, there is an ignis fatuus influence, which seems to govern our house — it poured its wildfire through my father's veins — it has descended to me in full vigour, and every now and then its impulse is irresistible. There was my enemy, and here were my pistols, was all I had time to think about the matter. But I will be on my guard in future, the more surety, as I cannot receive any provocation from him; on the contrary, if I must confess the truth, though I was willing to gloss it a little in my first account of the matter, (like the Gazette, when recording a defeat,) I am certain he would never voluntarily have fired at me, and that his pistol went off as he fell. You know me well enough to be assured, that I will never be again in the scrape of attacking an unresisting antagonist, were he ten times my brother.

"Then, as to this long tirade about hating my brother — Harry, I do not hate him more than the first-born of Egypt are in general hated by those whom they exclude from entailed estates, and so forth — not one lauded man in twenty of us that is not hated by his younger brothers, to the extent of wishing him quiet in his grave, as an abominable stumbling-block in their path of life; and so far only do I hate Monsieur Martigny. But for the rest, I rather like him as otherwise; and would he but die, would give my frank consent to his being canonized: and while he lives, I am not desirous that he should be exposed to any temptation from rank and riches, those main obstacles to the self-denying course of life, by which the odour of sanctity is attained.

"Here again you break in with your impertinent queries — If I have no purpose of quarrelling personally with Martigny, why do I come into collision with him at all? — why not abide by the treaty of Marchthorn, and remain in England, without again approaching Saint Ronan's, or claiming my maiden bride?

"Have I not told you, I want him to cease all threatened attempts upon my fortune and dignity? Have I not told you, that I want to claim my wife, Clara Mowbray, and my estate of Nettlewood, fairly won by marrying her? — And, to let you into the whole secret, though Clara is a very pretty woman, yet she goes for so little in the transaction with me, her animpassioned bridegroom, that I hope to make some relaxation of my rights over her the means of obtaining the concessions which I think most important.

"I will not deny, that an aversion to awakening bustle, and encountering reproach, has made me so slow in looking after my interest, that the period will shortly expire, within which I ought, by old Scrog Mowbray's will, to qualify myself for becoming his heir, by being the accepted husband of Miss Mowbray of St. Ronan's. Time was — time is — and, if I catch it not by the forelock as it passes, time will be no more — Nettlewood will be forfeited — and if I have in addition a lawsuit for my title, and for Oakendale, I run a risk of being altogether capotted. I must, therefore, act at all risks, and act with vigour — and this is the general plan of my campaign, subject always to be altered according to circumstances. I have obtained — I may say purchased — Mowbray's consent to address his sister. I have this advantage, that if she agrees to take me, she will for ever put a stop to all disagreeable reports and recollections, founded on her former conduct. In that case I secure the Nettlewood property, and am ready to wage war for my paternal estate. Indeed, I firmly believe, that should this happy consummation take place, Monsieur Martigny will be too much heart-broken to make further fight, but will e'en throw helve after hatchet, and run to hide himself, after the fashion of a true lover, in some desert beyond seas.

"But supposing the lady has the bad taste to be obstinate, and will none of me, I still think that her happiness, or her peace of mind, will be as dear to Martigny, as Gibraltar is to the Spaniards, and that he will sacrifice a great deal to induce me to give up my pretensions. Now, I shall want some one to act as my agent in communicating with this fellow; for I will not deny that my old appetite for cutting his throat may awaken suddenly, were I to hold personal intercourse with him. Come thou, therefore, without delay, and hold my back-hand — Come, for you know me, and that I never left a kindness unrewarded. To be specific, you shall have means to pay off a certain inconvenient mortgage, without troubling the tribe of Issachar, if you will be but true to me in this matter — Come, therefore, without further apologies or further delay. There shall, I give you my word, neither be risk or offence in the part of the drama which I intend to commit to your charge.

"Talking of the drama, we had a miserable attempt at a sort of bastard theatricals, at Mowbray's rat-gnawed mansion. There were two things worth noticing — One, that I lost all the courage on which I pique myself, and fairly fled from the pit, rather than present myself before Miss Clara Mowbray, when it came to the push. And upon this I pray you to remark, that I am a person of singular delicacy and modesty, instead of being the Drawcansir and Daredevil that you would make of me. The other memorabile is of a more delicate nature, respecting the conduct of a certain fair lady, who seemed determined to fling herself at my head. There is a wonderful degree of freemasonry among us folk of spirit; and it is astonishing how soon we can place ourselves on a footing with neglected wives and discontented daughters. If you come not soon, one of the rewards held out to you in my former letter, will certainly not be forthcoming. No schoolboy keeps gingerbread, for his comrade, without feeling a desire to nibble at it; so, if you appear not to look after your own interest, say you had fair warning. For my own part, I am rather embarrassed than gratified by the prospect of such an affair, when I have on the tapis another of a different nature. This enigma I will explain at meeting.

"Thus finishes my long communication. If my motives of action do not appear explicit, think in what a maze fortune has involved me, and how much must necessarily depend on the chapter of accidents.

"Yesterday I may be said to have opened my siege, for I presented myself before Clara. I had no very flattering reception — that was of little consequence, for I did not expect one. By alarming her fears, I made an impression thus far, that she acquiesces in my appearing before her as her brother's guest, and this is no small point gained. She will become accustomed to look on me, and will remember with less bitterness the trick which I played her formerly; while I, on the other hand, by a similar force of habit, will get over certain awkward feelings with which I have been compunctiously visited whenever I look upon her. — Adieu! Health and brotherhood.

"Thine,
"ETHERINGTON."

Chapter 27 The Reply.

*Thou bear'st a precious burden, gentle post,
Nitre and sulphur — See that it explode not!*

OLD PLAY.

"I have received your two long letters, my dear Etherington, with equal surprise and interest; for what I knew of your Scottish adventures before, was by no means sufficient to prepare me for a statement so perversely complicated. The Ignis Fatuus which, you say, governed your father, seems to have ruled the fortunes of your whole house, there is so much eccentricity in all that you have told me. But *n'importe*, Etherington, you were my friend — you held me up when I was completely broken down; and, whatever you may think, my services are at your command much more from reflections on the past, than hopes for the future. I am no speechmaker, but this you may rely on while I continue to be Harry Jekyl. You have deserved some love at my hands, Etherington, and you have it.

"Perhaps I love you the better since your perplexities have become known to me; for, my dear Etherington, you were before too much an object of envy to be entirely an object of affection. What a happy fellow! was the song of all who named you. Bank, and a fortune to maintain it — luck sufficient to repair all the waste that you could make in your income, and skill to back that luck, or supply it should it for a moment fail you. — The cards turning up as if to your wish — the dice rolling, it almost seemed, at your wink — it was rather your look than the touch of your cue that sent the ball into the pocket. You seemed to have fortune in chains, and a man of less honour would have been almost suspected of helping his luck by a little art. — You won every bet; and the instant that you were

interested, one might have named the winning horse — it was always that which you were to gain most by. — You never held out your piece but the game went down — and then the women! — with face, manners, person, and, above all, your tongue — what wild work have you made among them! — Good heaven! and have you had the old sword hanging over your head by a horsehair all this while? — Has your rank been doubtful? — Your fortune unsettled? — And your luck, so constant in every thing else, has that, as well as your predominant influence with the women, failed you, when you wished to form a connexion for life, and when the care of your fortune required you to do so? — Etherington, I am astonished! — The Mowbray scrape I always thought an inconvenient one, as well as the quarrel with this same Tyrrel, or Martigny; but I was far from guessing the complicated nature of your perplexities.

"But I must not run on in a manner which, though it relieves my own marvelling mind, cannot be very pleasant to you. Enough, I look on my obligations to you as more light to be borne, now I have some chance of repaying them to a certain extent; but, even were the full debt paid, I would remain as much attached to you as ever. It is your friend who speaks, Etherington; and, if he offers his advice in somewhat plain language, do not, I entreat you, suppose that your confidence has encouraged an offensive familiarity, but consider me as one who, in a weighty matter, writes plainly, to avoid the least chance of misconstruction.

"Etherington, your conduct hitherto has resembled anything rather than the coolness and judgment which are so peculiarly your own when you choose to display them. I pass over the masquerade of your marriage — it was a boy's trick, which could hardly have availed you much, even if successful; for what sort of a wife would you have acquired, had this same Clara Mowbray proved willing to have accepted the change which you had put upon her, and transferred herself, without repugnance, from one bridegroom to another? — Poor as I am, I know that neither Nettlewood nor Oakendale should have bribed me to marry such a — I cannot decorously fill up the blank.

"Neither, my dear Etherington, can I forgive you the trick you put on the clergyman, in whose eyes you destroyed the poor girl's character to induce him to consent to perform the ceremony, and have thereby perhaps fixed an indelible stain on her for life — this was not a fair *ruse de guerre*. — As it is, you have taken little by your stratagem — unless, indeed, it should be difficult for the young lady to prove the imposition put upon her — for that being admitted, the marriage certainly goes for nothing. At least, the only use you can make of it, would be to drive her into a more formal union, for fear of having this whole unpleasant discussion brought into a court of law; and in this, with all the advantages you possess, joined to your own arts of persuasion, and her brother's influence, I should think you very likely to succeed. All women are necessarily the slaves of their reputation. I have known some who have given up their virtue to preserve their character, which is, after all, only the shadow of it. I therefore would not conceive it difficult for Clara Mowbray to persuade herself to become a countess, rather than be the topic of conversation for all Britain, while a lawsuit betwixt you is in dependence; and that may be for the greater part of both your lives.

"But, in Miss Mowbray's state of mind, it may require time to bring her to such a conclusion; and I fear you will be thwarted in your operations by your rival — I will not offend you by calling him your brother. Now, it is here that I think with pleasure I may be of some use to you — under this special condition, that there shall be no thoughts of farther violence taking place between you. However you may have smoothed over your rencontre to yourself, there is no doubt that the public would have regarded any accident which might have befallen on that occasion, as a crime of the deepest dye, and that the law would have followed it with the most severe punishment. And for all that I have said of my serviceable disposition, I would fain stop short on this side of the gallows — my neck is too long already. Without a jest, Etherington, you must be ruled by counsel in this matter. I detect your hatred to this man in every line of your letter, even when you write with the greatest coolness; even where there is an affectation of gaiety, I read your sentiments on this subject; and they are such as — I will not preach to you — I will not say a good man — but such as every wise man — every man who wishes to live on fair terms with the world, and to escape general malediction, and perhaps a violent death, where all men will clap their hands and rejoice at the punishment of the fratricide — would, with all possible speed, eradicate from his breast. My services therefore, if they are worth your acceptance, are offered on the condition that this unholy hatred be subdued with the utmost force of your powerful mind, and that you avoid every thing which can possibly lead to such a catastrophe as you have twice narrowly escaped. I do not ask you to like this man, for I know well the deep root which your prejudices hold in your mind; I merely ask you to avoid him, and to think of him as one, who, if you do meet him, can never be the object of personal resentment.

"On these conditions, I will instantly join you at your Spa, and wait but your answer to throw myself into the post-chaise. I will seek out this Martigny for you, and I have the vanity to think I shall be able to persuade him to take the course which his own true interest, as well as yours, so plainly points out — and that is, to depart and make us free of him. You must not grudge a round sum of money, should that prove necessary — we must make wings for him to fly with, and I must be empowered by you to that purpose. I cannot think you have any thing serious to fear from a lawsuit. Your father threw out this sinister hint at a moment when he was enraged at his wife, and irritated by his son; and I have little doubt that his expressions were merely flashes of anger at the moment, though I see they have made a deep impression on you. At all events, he spoke of a preference to his illegitimate son, as something which it was in his own power to give or to withhold; and he has died without bestowing it. The family seem addicted to irregular matrimony, and some left-handed marriage there may have been used to propitiate the modesty, and save the conscience, of the French lady; but, that any thing of the nature of a serious and legal ceremony took place, nothing but the strongest proof can make me believe.

"I repeat, then, that I have little doubt that the claims of Martigny, whatever they are, may be easily compounded, and England made clear of him. This will be more easily done, if he really entertains such a romantic passion, as you describe, for Miss Clara Mowbray. It would be easy to show him, that whether she is disposed to accept your lordship's hand or not, her quiet and peace of mind must depend on his leaving the country. Rely on it, I shall find out the way to smooth him down, and whether distance or the grave divide Martigny and you, is very little to the purpose; unless in so far as the one point can be attained with honour and safety, and the other, if attempted, would only make all concerned the subject of general execration and deserved punishment. — Speak the word, and I attend you, as your truly grateful and devoted

"HENRY JEKYL."

To this admonitory epistle, the writer received, in the course of post, the following answer:—

"My truly grateful and devoted Henry Jekyl has adopted a tone, which seems to be exalted without any occasion. Why, thou suspicious monitor, have I not repeated a hundred times that I repent sincerely of the foolish rencontre, and am determined to curb my temper, and be on my guard in future — And what need you come upon me, with your long lesson about execration, and punishment, and fratricide, and so forth? — You deal with an argument as a boy does with the first hare he shoots, which he never thinks dead till he has fired the second barrel into her. What a fellow you would have been for a lawyer! how long you would have held forth upon the plainest cause, until the poor bothered judge was almost willing to decide against justice, that he might be revenged on you. If I must repeat what I have said twenty times, I tell you I have no thoughts of proceeding with this fellow as I would with another. If my father's blood be in his veins, it shall save the skin his mother gave him. And so come, without more parade, either of stipulation or argument. Thou art, indeed, a curious animal! One would think, to read your communication, that you had yourself discovered the propriety of acting as a negotiator, and the reasons which might, in the course of such a treaty, be urged with advantage to induce this fellow to leave the country — Why, this is the very course chalked out in my last letter! You are bolder than the boldest gipsy, for you not only steal my ideas, and disfigure them that they may pass for yours, but you have the assurance to come a-begging with them to the door of the original parent! No man like you for stealing other men's inventions, and cooking them up in your own way. However, Harry, bating a little self-conceit and assumption, thou art as honest a fellow as ever man put faith in-clever, too, in your own style, though not quite the genius you would fain pass for. — Come on thine own terms, and come as speedily as thou canst. I do not reckon the promise I made the less binding, that you very generously make no allusion to it.

"Thine, "ETHERINGTON.

"P.S. One single caution I must add — do not mention my name to any one at Harrowgate, or your prospect of meeting me, or the route which you are about to take. On the purpose of your journey, it is unnecessary to recommend silence. I know not whether such doubts are natural to all who have secret measures to pursue, or whether nature has given me an unusual share of anxious suspicion; but I cannot divest myself of the idea, that I am closely watched by some one whom I cannot discover. Although I concealed my purpose of coming hither from all mankind but you, whom I do not for an instant suspect of blabbing, yet it was known to this Martigny, and he is down here before me. Again, I said not a word — gave not a hint to any one of my views towards Clara, yet the tattling people

here had spread a report of a marriage depending between us, even before I could make the motion to her brother. To be sure, in such society there is nothing talked of but marrying and giving in marriage; and this, which alarms me, as connected with my own private purposes, may be a bare rumour, arising out of the gossip of the place — Yet I feel like the poor woman in the old story, who felt herself watched by an eye that glared upon her from behind the tapestry.

"I should have told you in my last, that I had been recognised at a public entertainment by the old clergyman, who pronounced the matrimonial blessing on Clara and me, nearly eight years ago. He insisted upon addressing me by the name of Valentine Bulmer, under which I was then best known. It did not suit me at present to put him into my confidence, so I cut him, Harry, as I would an old pencil. The task was the less difficult, that I had to do with one of the most absent men that ever dreamed with his eyes open. I verily believe he might be persuaded that the whole transaction was a vision, and that he had never in reality seen me before. Your pious rebuke, therefore, about what I told him formerly concerning the lovers, is quite thrown away. After all, if what I said was not accurately true, as I certainly believe it was an exaggeration, it was all Saint Francis of Martigny's fault, I suppose. I am sure he had love and opportunity on his side.

"Here you have a postscript, Harry, longer than the letter, but it must conclude with the same burden — Come, and come quickly."

Chapter 28 The Fright.

*As shakes the bough of trembling leaf,
When sudden whirlwinds rise;
As stands aghast the warrior chief,
When his base army flies.*

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It had been settled by all who took the matter into consideration, that the fidgety, fiery, old Nabob would soon quarrel with his landlady, Mrs. Dods, and become impatient of his residence at St. Ronan's. A man so kind to himself, and so inquisitive about the affairs of others, could have, it was supposed, a limited sphere for gratification either of his tastes or of his curiosity, in the Aultoun of St. Ronan's: and many a time the precise day and hour of his departure were fixed by the idlers at the Spa. But still old Touchwood appeared amongst them when the weather permitted, with his nut-brown visage, his throat carefully wrapped up in an immense Indian kerchief, and his gold-headed cane, which he never failed to carry over his shoulder; his short, but stout limbs, and his active step, showing plainly that he bore it rather as a badge of dignity than a means of support. There he stood, answering shortly and gruffly to all questions proposed to him, and making his remarks aloud upon the company, with great indifference as to the offence which might be taken; and as soon as the ancient priestess had handed him his glass of the salutiferous water, turned on his heel with a brief good-morning, and either marched back to hide himself in the Manse, with his crony Mr. Cargill, or to engage in some hobby-horsical pursuit connected with his neighbours in the Aultoun.

The truth was, that the honest gentleman having, so far as Mrs. Dods would permit, put matters to rights within her residence, wisely abstained from pushing his innovations any farther, aware that it is not every stone which is capable of receiving the last degree of polish. He next set himself about putting Mr. Cargill's house into order; and without leave asked or given by that reverend gentleman, he actually accomplished as wonderful a reformation in the Manse, as could have been effected by a benevolent Brownie. The floors were sometimes swept — the carpets were sometimes shaken — the plates and dishes were cleaner — there was tea and sugar in the tea-chest, and a joint of meat at proper times was to be found in the larder. The elder maid-servant wore a good stuff gown — the younger snooded up her hair, and now went about the house a damsel so trig and neat, that some said she was too handsome for the service of a bachelor divine; and others, that they saw no business so old a fool as the Nabob had to be meddling with a lassie's busking. But for such evil bruits Mr. Touchwood cared not, even if he happened to hear of them, which was very doubtful. Add to all these changes, that the garden was weeded, and the glebe was regularly laboured.

The talisman by which all this desirable alteration was wrought, consisted partly in small presents, partly in constant attention. The liberality of the singular old gentleman gave him a perfect right to scold when he saw things wrong; the domestics, who had fallen into total sloth and indifference, began to exert themselves under Mr. Touchwood's new system of rewards and surveillance; and the minister, half unconscious of the cause, reaped the advantage of the exertions of his busy friend. Sometimes he lifted his head, when he heard workmen thumping and bouncing in the neighbourhood of his study, and demanded the meaning of the clatter which annoyed him; but on receiving for answer that it was by order of Mr. Touchwood, he resumed his labours, under the persuasion that all was well.

But even the Augean task of putting the Manse in order, did not satisfy the gigantic activity of Mr. Touchwood. He aspired to universal dominion in the Aultoun of St. Ronan's; and, like most men of an ardent temper, he contrived, in a great measure, to possess himself of the authority which he longed after. Then was there war waged by him with all the petty, but perpetual nuisances, which infest a Scottish town of the old stamp — then was the hereditary dunghill, which had reeked before the window of the cottage for fourscore years, transported behind the house — then was the broken wheelbarrow, or unserviceable cart, removed out of the footpath — the old hat, or blue petticoat, taken from the window into which it had been stuffed, to "expel the winter's flaw," was consigned to the gutter, and its place supplied by good perspicuous glass. The means by which such reformation was effected, were the same as resorted to in the Manse — money and admonition. The latter given alone would have met little attention — perhaps would have provoked opposition — but, softened and sweetened by a little present to assist the reform recommended, it sunk into the hearts of the hearers, and in general overcame their objections. Besides, an opinion of the Nabob's wealth was high among the villagers; and an idea prevailed amongst them, that, notwithstanding his keeping no servants or equipage, he was able to purchase, if he pleased, half the land in the country. It was not grand carriages and fine liveries that made heavy purses, they rather helped to lighten them; and they said, who pretended to know what they were talking about, that old Turnpenny, and Mr. Bindloose to boot, would tell down more money on Mr. Touchwood's mere word, than upon the joint bond of half the fine folk at the Well. Such an opinion smoothed every thing before the path of one, who showed himself neither averse to give nor to lend; and it by no means diminished the reputation of his wealth, that in transactions of business he was not carelessly negligent of his interest, but plainly showed he understood the value of what he was parting with. Few, therefore, cared to withstand the humours of a whimsical old gentleman, who had both the will and the means of obliging those disposed to comply with his fancies; and thus the singular stranger contrived, in the course of a brief space of days or weeks, to place the villagers more absolutely at his devotion, than they had been to the pleasure of any individual since their ancient lords had left the Aultoun. The power of the baron-bailie himself, though the office was vested in the person of old Meiklewham, was a subordinate jurisdiction, compared to the voluntary allegiance which the inhabitants paid to Mr. Touchwood.

There were, however, recusants, who declined the authority thus set up amongst them, and, with the characteristic obstinacy of their countrymen, refused to hearken to the words of the stranger, whether they were for good or for evil. These men's dunghills were not removed, nor the stumbling-blocks taken from the footpath, where it passed the front of their houses. And it befell, that while Mr. Touchwood was most eager in abating the nuisances of the village, he had very nearly experienced a frequent fate of great reformers — that of losing his life by means of one of those enormities which as yet had subsisted in spite of all his efforts.

The Nabob finding his time after dinner hang somewhat heavy on his hand, and the moon being tolerably bright, had, one harvest evening, sought his usual remedy for dispelling ennui by a walk to the Manse, where he was sure, that, if he could not succeed in engaging the minister himself in some disputation, he would at least find something in the establishment to animadvert upon and to restore to order.

Accordingly, he had taken the opportunity to lecture the younger of the minister's lasses upon the duty of wearing shoes and stockings; and, as his advice came fortified by a present of six pair of white cotton hose, and two pair of stout leathern shoes, it was received, not with respect only, but with gratitude, and the chuck under the chin that rounded up the oration, while she opened the outer door for his honour, was acknowledged with a blush and a giggle. Nay, so far did Grizzy carry her sense of Mr. Touchwood's kindness, that, observing the moon was behind a cloud, she very carefully offered to escort him to the Cleikum Inn with a lantern, in case he should come to some harm by the gate. This the traveller's independent spirit scorned to listen to; and, having briefly assured her that he had walked the streets of Paris and of Madrid whole nights without such an accommodation, he stoutly strode off on his return to his lodgings.

An accident, however, befell him, which, unless the police of Madrid and Paris be belied, might have happened in either of those two splendid capitals, as well as in the miserable Aultoun of St. Ronan's. Before the door of Saunders Jaup, a feuar of some importance, "who held his land free, and caredna a bodle for any one," yawned that odoriferous gulf, ycleped, in Scottish phrase, the jawhole; in other words, an uncovered common sewer. The local situation of this receptacle of filth was well known to Mr. Touchwood; for Saunders Jaup was at the very head of those who held out for the practices of their fathers, and still maintained those ancient and unsavoury customs which our traveller had in so many instances succeeded in abating. Guided, therefore, by his nose, the Nabob made a considerable circuit to avoid the displeasure and danger of passing this filthy puddle at the nearest, and by that means fell upon Scylla as he sought to avoid Charybdis. In plain language, he approached so near the bank of a little rivulet, which in that place passed betwixt the footpath and the horse-road, that he lost his footing, and fell into the channel of the streamlet from a height of three or four feet. It was thought that the noise of his fall, or at least his call for assistance, must have been heard in the house of Saunders Jaup; but that honest person was, according to his own account, at that time engaged in the exercise of the evening; an excuse which passed current, although Saunders was privately heard to allege, that the town would have been the quieter, "if the auld, meddling busybody had bidden still in the burn for gude and a'."

But Fortune had provided better for poor Touchwood, whose foibles, as they arose out of the most excellent motives, would have ill deserved so severe a fate. A passenger, who heard him shout for help, ventured cautiously to the side of the bank, down which he had fallen; and, after ascertaining the nature of the ground as carefully as the darkness permitted, was at length, and not without some effort, enabled to assist him out of the channel of the rivulet.

"Are you hurt materially?" said this good Samaritan to the object of his care.

"No — no — d — n it — no," said Touchwood, extremely angry at his disaster, and the cause of it. "Do you think I, who have been at the summit of Mount Athos, where the precipice sinks a thousand feet on the sea, care a farthing about such a fall as this is?"

But, as he spoke, he reeled, and his kind assistant caught him by the arm to prevent his falling.

"I fear you are more hurt than you suppose, sir," said the stranger: "permit me to go home along with you."

"With all my heart," said Touchwood; "for though it is impossible I can need help in such a foolish matter, yet I am equally obliged to you, friend; and if the Cleikum Inn be not out of your road, I will take your arm so far, and thank you to the boot."

"It is much at your service, sir," said the stranger; "indeed, I was thinking to lodge there for the night."

"I am glad to hear it," resumed Touchwood; "you shall be my guest, and I will make them look after you in proper fashion — You seem to be a very civil sort of fellow, and I do not find your arm inconvenient — it is the rheumatism makes me walk so ill — the pest of all that have been in hot climates when they settle among these d — d fogs."

"Lean as hard and walk as slow as you will, sir," said the benevolent assistant — "this is a rough street."

"Yes, sir — and why is it rough?" answered Touchwood. "Why, because the old pig-headed fool, Saunders Jaup, will not allow it to be made smooth. There he sits, sir, and obstructs all rational improvement; and, if a man would not fall into his infernal putrid gutter, and so become an abomination to himself and odious to others, for his whole life to come, he runs the risk of breaking his neck, as I have done to-night."

"I am afraid, sir," said his companion, "you have fallen on the most dangerous side. — You remember Swift's proverb, 'The more dirt, the less hurt.'"

"But why should there be either dirt or hurt in a well-regulated place?" answered Touchwood — "Why should not men be able to go about their affairs at night, in such a hamlet as this, without either endangering necks or noses? — Our Scottish magistrates are worth nothing, sir — nothing at all. Oh for a Turkish Cadi, now, to trounce the scoundrel — or the Mayor of Calcutta to bring him into his court — or were it but an English Justice of the Peace that is newly included in the commission, they would abate the villain's nuisance with a vengeance on him! — But here we are — this is the Cleikum Inn. — Hallo — hilloa — house! — Eppie Anderson! — Beenie Chambermaid! — boy Boots! — Mrs. Dods! — are you all of you asleep and dead? — Here have I been half murdered, and you let me stand bawling at the door!"

Eppie Anderson came with a light, and so did Beenie Chambermaid with another; but no sooner did they look upon the pair who stood in the porch under the huge sign that swung to and fro with heavy creaking, than Beenie screamed, flung away her candle, although a four in the pound, and in a newly japanned candlestick, and fled one way, while Eppie Anderson, echoing the yell, brandished her light round her head like a Bacchante flourishing her torch, and ran off in another direction.

"Ay — I must be a bloody spectacle," said Mr. Touchwood, letting himself fall heavily upon his assistant's shoulder, and wiping his face, which trickled with wet — "I did not think I had been so seriously hurt; but I find my weakness now — I must have lost much blood."

"I hope you are still mistaken," said the stranger; "but here lies the way to the kitchen — we shall find light there, since no one chooses to bring it to us."

He assisted the old gentleman into the kitchen, where a lamp, as well as a bright fire, was burning, by the light of which he could easily discern that the supposed blood was only water of the rivulet, and, indeed, none of the cleanest, although much more so than the sufferer would have found it a little lower, where the stream is joined by the superfluities of Saunders Jaup's palladium. Relieved by his new friend's repeated assurances that such was the case, the Senior began to bustle up a little, and his companion, desirous to render him every assistance, went to the door of the kitchen to call for a basin and water. Just as he was about to open the door, the voice of Mrs. Dods was heard as she descended the stairs, in a tone of indignation by no means unusual to her, yet mingled at the same time with a few notes that sounded like unto the quaverings of consternation.

"Idle limmers — silly sluts — I'll warrant nane o' ye will ever see ony thing waur than yoursell, ye silly tawpies — Ghaist, indeed! — I'll warrant it's some idle dub-skelper frae the Waal, coming after some o' yoursells on nae honest errand — Ghaist, indeed! — Haud up the candle, John Ostler — I'll warrant it a twa-handed ghaist, and the door left on the sneck. There's somebody in the kitchen — gang forward wi' the lantern, John Ostler."

At this critical moment the stranger opened the door of the kitchen, and beheld the Dame advancing at the head of her household troops. The ostler and humpbacked postilion, one bearing a stable-lantern and a hay-fork, the other a rushlight and a broom, constituted the advanced guard; Mrs. Dods herself formed the centre, talking loud and brandishing a pair of tongs; while the two maids, like troops not to be much trusted after their recent defeat, followed, cowering in the rear. But notwithstanding this admirable disposition, no sooner had the stranger shown his face, and pronounced the words "Mrs. Dods!" than a panic seized the whole array. The advanced guard recoiled in consternation, the ostler upsetting Mrs. Dods in the confusion of his retreat; while she, grappling with him in her terror, secured him by the ears and hair, and they joined their cries together in hideous chorus. The two maidens resumed their former flight, and took refuge in the darksome den, entitled their bedroom, while the humpbacked postilion fled like the wind into the stable, and, with professional instinct, began, in the extremity of his terror, to saddle a horse.

Meanwhile, the guest whose appearance had caused this combustion, plucked the roaring ostler from above Mrs. Dods, and pushing him away with a hearty slap on the shoulder, proceeded to raise and encourage the fallen landlady, enquiring, at the same time, "What, in the devil's name, was the cause of all this senseless confusion?"

"And what is the reason, in Heaven's name," answered the matron, keeping her eyes firmly shut, and still shrewish in her expostulation, though in the very extremity of terror, "what is the reason that you should come and frighten a decent house, where you met naething, when ye was in the body, but the height of civility?"

"And why should I frighten you, Mrs. Dods? or, in one word, what is the meaning of all this nonsensical terror?"

"Are not you," said Mrs. Dods, opening her eyes a little as she spoke, "the ghaist of Francis Tirl?"

"I am Francis Tyrrel, unquestionably, my old friend."

"I kend it! I kend it!" answered the honest woman, relapsing into her agony; "and I think ye might be ashamed of yourself, that are a ghaist, and have nae better to do than to frighten a puir auld alewife."

"On my word, I am no ghost, but a living man," answered Tyrrel.

"Were ye no murdered than?" demanded Mrs. Dods, still in an uncertain voice, and only partially opening her eyes — "Are ye very sure ye werena murdered?"

"Why, not that ever I heard of, certainly, dame," replied Tyrrel.

"But I shall be murdered presently," said old Touchwood from the kitchen, where he had hitherto remained a mute auditor of this extraordinary scene — "I shall be murdered, unless you fetch me some water without delay."

"Coming, sir, coming," answered Dame Dods, her professional reply being as familiar to her as that of poor Francis's "Anon, anon, sir." "As I live by honest reckonings," said she, fully collecting herself, and giving a glance of more composed temper at Tyrrel, "I believe it is yoursell, Maister Frank, in blood and body after a' — And see if I dinna gie a proper sorting to yon twa silly jauds that gard me mak a bogle of you, and a fule of mysell — Ghaists! my certie, I sall ghaist them — If they had their heads as muckle on their wark as on their daffing, they wad play nae sic pliskies — it's the wanton steed that scaurs at the windle-strae — Ghaists! wha e'er heard of ghaists in an honest house? Naebody need fear bogles that has a conscience void of offence. — But I am blithe that MacTurk hasna murdered ye when a' is done, Maister Francie."

"Come this way, Mother Dods, if you would not have me do a mischief!" exclaimed Touchwood, grasping a plate which stood on the dresser, as if he were about to heave it at the landlady, by way of recalling her attention.

"For the love of Heaven, dinna break it!" exclaimed the alarmed landlady, knowing that Touchwood's effervescence of impatience sometimes expended itself at the expense of her crockery, though it was afterwards liberally atoned for. "Lord, sir, are ye out of your wits! — it breaks a set, ye ken — Godsake, put down the cheeny plate, and try your hand on the delf-ware! — it will just make as good a jingle — But, Lord haud a grip o' us! now I look at ye, what can hae come ower ye, and what sort of a plight are ye in! — Wait till I fetch water and a towel."

In fact, the miserable guise of her new lodger now overcame the dame's curiosity to enquire after the fate of her earlier acquaintance, and she gave her instant and exclusive attention to Mr. Touchwood, with many exclamations, while aiding him to perform the task of ablution and abstersion. Her two fugitive handmaidens had by this time returned to the kitchen, and endeavoured to suppress a smuggled laugh at the recollection of their mistress's panic, by acting very officiously in Mr. Touchwood's service. By dint of washing and drying, the token of the sable stains was at length removed, and the veteran became, with some difficulty, satisfied that he had been more dirtied and frightened than hurt.

Tyrrel, in the meantime, stood looking on with wonder, imagining that he beheld in the features which emerged from a mask of mud, the countenance of an old friend. After the operation was ended, he could not help addressing himself to Mr. Touchwood, to demand whether he had not the pleasure to see a friend, to whom he had been obliged when at Smyrna, for some kindness respecting his money matters?

"Not worth speaking of — not worth speaking of," said Touchwood, hastily. "Glad to see you, though — glad to see you. — Yes, here I am; you will find me the same good-natured old fool that I was at Smyrna — never look how I am to get in money again — always laying it out. Never mind — it was written in my forehead, as the Turk says. — I will go up now and change my dress — you will sup with me when I come back — Mrs. Dods will toss us up something — a brandered fowl will be best, Mrs. Dods, with some mushrooms, and get us a jug of mulled wine — plottie, as you call it — to put the recollection of the old Presbyterian's common sewer out of my head."

So saying, up stairs marched the traveller to his own apartment, while Tyrrel, seizing upon a candle, was about to do the same.

"Mr. Touchwood is in the blue room, Mrs. Dods; I suppose I may take possession of the yellow one?"

"Suppose naething about the matter, Maister Francis Tirl, till ye tell me downright where ye have been a' this time, and whether ye hae been murdered or no?"

"I think you may be pretty well satisfied of that, Mrs. Dods?"

"Trot! and so I am in a sense; and yet it gars me grue to look upon ye, sae mony days and weeks it has been since I thought ye were rotten in the moulds. And now to see ye standing before me hale and feir, and crying for a bedroom like ither folk!"

"One would almost suppose, my good friend," said Tyrrel, "that you were sorry at my having come alive again."

"It's no for that," replied Mrs. Dods, who was peculiarly ingenious in the mode of framing and stating what she conceived to be her grievances; "but is it no a queer thing for a decent man like yoursell, Maister Tirl, to be leaving your lodgings without a word spoken, and me put to a' these charges in seeking for your dead body, and very near taking my business out of honest Maister Bindloose's hands, because he kend the cantrips of the like of you better than I did? — And than they hae putten up an advertisement down at the Waal yonder, wi' a' their names at it, setting ye forth, Maister Francie, as are of the greatest blackguards unchanged; and wha, div ye think, is to keep ye in a creditable house, if that's the character ye get?"

"You may leave that to me, Mrs. Dods — I assure you that matter shall be put to rights to your satisfaction; and I think, so long as we have known each other, you may take my word that I am not undeserving the shelter of your roof for a single night, (I shall ask it no longer,) until my character is sufficiently cleared. It was for that purpose chiefly I came back again."

"Came back again!" said Mrs. Dods. — "I profess ye made me start, Maister Tirl, and you looking sae pale, too. — But I think," she added, straining after a joke, "if ye were a ghaist, seeing we are such auld acquaintance, ye wadna wish to spoil my custom, but would just walk decently up and down the auld castle wa's, or maybe down at the kirk yonder — there have been awfu' things done in that kirk and kirkyard — I whiles dinna like to look that way, Maister Francie."

"I am much of your mind, mistress," said Tyrrel, with a sigh; "and, indeed, I do in one resemble the apparitions you talk of; for, like them, and to as little purpose, I stalk about scenes where my happiness departed. — But I speak riddles to you, Mrs. Dods — the plain truth is, that I met with an accident on the day I last left your house, the effects of which detained me at some distance from St. Ronan's till this very day."

"Hegh, sirs, and ye were sparing of your trouble, that wadna write a bit line, or send a bit message! — Ye might hae thought folk wad hae been vexed enough about ye, forby undertaking journeys, and hiring folk to seek for your dead body."

"I shall willingly pay all reasonable charges which my disappearance may have occasioned," answered her guest; "and I assure you, once for all, that my remaining for some time quiet at Marchthorn, arose partly from illness, and partly from business of a very pressing and particular nature."

"At Marchthorn!" exclaimed Dame Dods, "heard ever man the like o' that! — And where did ye put up in Marchthorn, an ane may mak' bauld to speer?"

"At the Black Bull," replied Tyrrel.

"Ay, that's auld Tam Lowrie's — a very decent man, Thamas — and a douce creditable house — nane of your flisk-ma-hoys — I am glad ye made choice of sic gude quarters, neighbour; for I am beginning to think ye are but a queer ane — ye look as if butter wadna melt in your mouth, but I sall warrant cheese no choke ye. — But I'll thank ye to gang your ways into the parlour, for I am no like to get muckle mair out o' ye, it's like; and ye are standing here just in the gate, when we hae the supper to dish."

Tyrrel, glad to be released from the examination to which his landlady's curiosity had without ceremony subjected him, walked into the parlour, where he was presently joined by Mr. Touchwood, newly attired, and in high spirits.

"Here comes our supper!" he exclaimed. — "Sit ye down, and let us see what Mrs. Dods has done for us. — I profess, mistress, your plottie is excellent, ever since I taught you to mix the spices in the right proportion."

"I am glad the plottie pleases ye, sir — but I think I kend gay weel how to make it before I saw your honour — Maister Tirl can tell that, for mony a browst of it I hae brewed lang syne for him and the callant Valentine Bulmer."

This ill-timed observation extorted a groan from Tyrrel; but the traveller, running on with his own recollections, did not appear to notice his emotion.

"You are a conceited old woman," said Mr. Touchwood; "how the devil should any one know how to mix spices so well as he who has been where they grow? — I have seen the sun ripening nutmegs and cloves, and here, it can hardly fill a peasecod, by Jupiter. Ah, Tyrrel, the merry nights we have had at Smyrna! — Gad, I think the gammon and the good wine taste all the better in a land where folks hold them to be sinful indulgences — Gad, I believe many a good Moslem is of the same opinion — that same prohibition of their prophet's gives a flavour to the ham, and a relish to the Cyprus. — Do you remember old Cogia Hassein, with his green turban? — I once played him a trick, and put a pint of brandy into his sherbet. Egad, the old fellow took care never to discover the cheat until he had got to

the bottom of the flagon, and then he strokes his long white beard, and says, 'Ullah Kerim,'— that is, 'Heaven is merciful,' Mrs. Dods, Mr. Tyrrel knows the meaning of it. — Ullah Kerim, says he, after he had drunk about a gallon of brandy-punch! — Ullah Kerim, says the hypocritical old rogue, as if he had done the finest thing in the world!"

"And what for no? What for shouldna the honest man say a blessing after his drap punch?" demanded Mrs. Dods; "it was better, I ween, than blasting, and blawing, and swearing, as if folks shouldna be thankful for the creature comforts."

"Well said, old Dame Dods," replied the traveller; "that is a right hostess's maxim, and worthy of Mrs. Quickly herself. Here is to thee, and I pray ye to pledge me before ye leave the room."

"Troth, I'll pledge naeboddy the night, Maister Touchwood; for, what wi' the upcast and terror that I got a wee while syne, and what wi' the bit taste that I behoved to take of the plottie while I was making it, my head is sair enough distressed the night already. — Maister Tirl, the yellow room is ready for ye when ye like; and, gentlemen, as the morn is the Sabbath, I canna be keeping the servant queans out of their beds to wait on ye ony langer, for they will mak it an excuse for lying till aught o'clock on the Lord's day. So, when your plottie is done, I'll be muckle obliged to ye to light the bedroom candles, and put out the double moulds, and e'en show yourselfs to your beds; for douce folks, sic as the like of you, should set an example by ordinary. — And so, gude-night to ye baith."

"By my faith," said Touchwood, as she withdrew, "our dame turns as obstinate as a Pacha with three tails! — We have her gracious permission to finish our mug, however; so here is to your health once more, Mr. Tyrrel, wishing you a hearty welcome to your own country."

"I thank you, Mr. Touchwood," answered Tyrrel; "and I return you the same good wishes, with, as I sincerely hope, a much greater chance of their being realized. — You relieved me, sir, at a time when the villainy of an agent, prompted, as I have reason to think, by an active and powerful enemy, occasioned my being, for a time, pressed for funds. — I made remittances to the *Ragion* you dealt with, to acquit myself at least of the pecuniary part of my obligation; but the bills were returned, because, it was stated, you had left Smyrna."

"Very true — very true — left Smyrna, and here I am in Scotland — as for the bills, we will speak of them another time — something due for picking me out of the gutter."

"I shall make no deduction on that account," said Tyrrel, smiling, though in no jocose mood; "and I beg you not to mistake me. The circumstances of embarrassment, under which you found me at Smyrna, were merely temporary — I am most able and willing to pay my debt; and, let me add, I am most desirous to do so."

"Another time — another time," said Mr. Touchwood — "time enough before us, Mr. Tyrrel — besides, at Smyrna, you talked of a lawsuit — law is a lick-penny, Mr. Tyrrel — no counsellor like the pound in purse."

"For my lawsuit," said Tyrrel, "I am fully provided."

"But have you good advice? — Have you good advice?" said Touchwood; "answer me that."

"I have advised with my lawyers," answered Tyrrel, internally vexed to find that his friend was much disposed to make his generosity upon the former occasion a pretext for prying farther into his affairs now than he thought polite or convenient.

"With your counsel learned in the law — eh, my dear boy? But the advice you should take is of some travelled friend, well acquainted with mankind and the world — some one that has lived double your years, and is maybe looking out for some bare young fellow that he may do a little good to — one that might be willing to help you farther than I can pretend to guess — for, as to your lawyer, you get just your guinea's worth from him — not even so much as the baker's bargain, thirteen to the dozen."

"I think I should not trouble myself to go far in search of a friend such as you describe," said Tyrrel, who could not affect to misunderstand the senior's drift, "when I was near Mr. Peregrine Touchwood; but the truth is, my affairs are at present so much complicated with those of others, whose secrets I have no right to communicate, that I cannot have the advantage of consulting you, or any other friend. It is possible I may be soon obliged to lay aside this reserve, and vindicate myself before the whole public. I will not fail, when that time shall arrive, to take an early opportunity of confidential communication with you."

"That is right — confidential is the word — No person ever made a confidant of me who repented it — Think what the Pacha might have made of it, had he taken my advice, and cut through the Isthmus of Suez. — Turk and Christian, men of all tongues and countries, used to consult old Touchwood, from the building of a mosque down to the settling of an *agio*. — But come — Good-night — good-night."

So saying, he took up his bedroom light, and extinguished one of those which stood on the table, nodded to Tyrrel to discharge his share of the duty imposed by Mrs. Dods with the same punctuality, and they withdrew to their several apartments, entertaining very different sentiments of each other.

"A troublesome, inquisitive old gentleman," said Tyrrel to himself; "I remember him narrowly escaping the bastinado at Smyrna, for thrusting his advice on the Turkish *cadi* — and then I lie under a considerable obligation to him, giving him a sort of right to annoy me — Well, I must parry his impertinence as I can."

"A shy cock this Frank Tyrrel," thought the traveller; "a very complete dodger! — But no matter — I shall wind him, were he to double like a fox — I am resolved to make his matters my own, and if I cannot carry him through, I know not who can."

Having formed this philanthropic resolution, Mr. Touchwood threw himself into bed, which luckily declined exactly at the right angle, and, full of self-complacency, consigned himself to slumber.

Chapter 29 Mediation.

———— So, begone!

We will not now be troubled with reply;

We offer fair, take it advisedly.

KING HENRY IV. PART I.

It had been the purpose of Tyrrel, by rising and breakfasting early, to avoid again meeting Mr. Touchwood, having upon his hands a matter in which that officious gentleman's interference was likely to prove troublesome. His character, he was aware, had been assailed at the Spa in the most public manner, and in the most public manner he was resolved to demand redress, conscious that whatever other important concerns had brought him to Scotland, must necessarily be postponed to the vindication of his honour. He was determined, for this purpose, to go down to the rooms when the company was assembled at the breakfast hour, and had just taken his hat to set out, when he was interrupted by Mrs. Dods, who, announcing "a gentleman that was speering for him," ushered into the chamber a very fashionable young man in a military surtout, covered with silk lace and fur, and wearing a foraging-cap; a dress now too familiar to be distinguished, but which at that time was used only by geniuses of a superior order. The stranger was neither handsome nor plain, but had in his appearance a good deal of pretension, and the cool easy superiority which belongs to high breeding. On his part, he surveyed Tyrrel; and, as his appearance differed, perhaps, from that for which the exterior of the Cleikum Inn had prepared him, he abated something of the air with which he had entered the room, and politely announced himself as Captain Jekyl, of the — Guards, (presenting, at the same time, his ticket.)

"He presumed he spoke to Mr. Martigny?"

"To Mr. Francis Tyrrel, sir," replied Tyrrel, drawing himself up — "Martigny was my mother's name — I have never borne it."

"I am not here for the purpose of disputing that point, Mr. Tyrrel, though I am not entitled to admit what my principal's information leads him to doubt."

"Your principal, I presume, is Sir Bingo Binks?" said Tyrrel. "I have not forgotten that there is an unfortunate affair between us."

"I have not the honour to know Sir Bingo Binks," said Captain Jekyl. "I come on the part of the Earl of Etherington."

Tyrrel stood silent for a moment, and then said, "I am at a loss to know what the gentleman who calls himself Earl of Etherington can have to say to me, through the medium of such a messenger as yourself, Captain Jekyl. I should have supposed that, considering our unhappy relationship, and the terms on which we stand towards each other, the lawyers were the fitter negotiators between us."

"Sir," said Captain Jekyl, "you are misunderstanding my errand. I am come on no message of hostile import from Lord Etherington — I am aware of the connexion betwixt you, which would render such an office altogether contradictory to common sense and the laws of nature; and I assure you, I would lay down my life rather than be concerned in an affair so unnatural. I would act, if possible, as a mediator betwixt you."

They had hitherto remained standing. Mr. Tyrrel now offered his guest a seat; and, having assumed one himself, he broke the awkward pause which ensued by observing, "I should be happy, after experiencing such a long course of injustice and persecution from your friend, to learn, even at this late period, Captain Jekyl, any thing which can make me think better, either of him, or of his purpose towards me and towards others."

"Mr. Tyrrel," said Captain Jekyl, "you must allow me to speak with candour. There is too great a stake betwixt your brother and you to permit you to be friends; but I do not see it is necessary that you should therefore be mortal enemies."

"I am not my brother's enemy, Captain Jekyl," said Tyrrel — "I have never been so — His friend I cannot be, and he knows but too well the insurmountable barrier which his own conduct has placed between us."

"I am aware," said Captain Jekyl, slowly and expressively, "generally, at least, of the particulars of your unfortunate disagreement."

"If so," said Tyrrel, colouring, "you must be also aware with what extreme pain I feel myself compelled to enter on such a subject with a total stranger — a stranger, too, the friend and confidant of one who — But I will not hurt your feelings, Captain Jekyl, but rather endeavour to suppress my own. In one word, I beg to be favoured with the import of your communication, as I am obliged to go down to the Spa this morning, in order to put to rights some matters there which concern me nearly."

"If you mean the cause of your absence from an appointment with Sir Bingo Binks," said Captain Jekyl, "the matter has been already completely explained. I pulled down the offensive placard with my own hand, and rendered myself responsible for your honour to any one who should presume to hold it in future doubt."

"Sir," said Tyrrel, very much surprised, "I am obliged to you for your intention, the more so as I am ignorant how I have merited such interference. It is not, however, quite satisfactory to me, because I am accustomed to be the guardian of my own honour."

"An easy task, I presume, in all cases, Mr. Tyrrel," answered Jekyl, "but peculiarly so in the present, when you will find no one so hardy as to assail it. — My interference, indeed, would have been unjustifiably officious, had I not been at the moment undertaking a commission implying confidential intercourse with you. For the sake of my own character, it became necessary to establish yours. I know the truth of the whole affair from my friend, the Earl of Etherington, who ought to thank Heaven so long as he lives, that saved him on that occasion from the commission of a very great crime."

"Your friend, sir, has had, in the course of his life, much to thank Heaven for, but more for which to ask God's forgiveness."

"I am no divine, sir," replied Captain Jekyl, with spirit; "but I have been told that the same may be said of most men alive."

"I, at least, cannot dispute it," said Tyrrel; "but, to proceed. — Have you found yourself at liberty, Captain Jekyl, to deliver to the public the whole particulars of a rencontre so singular as that which took place between your friend and me?"

"I have not, sir," said Jekyl — "I judged it a matter of great delicacy, and which each of you had the like interest to preserve secret."

"May I beg to know, then," said Tyrrel, "how it was possible for you to vindicate my absence from Sir Bingo's rendezvous otherwise?"

"It was only necessary, sir, to pledge my word as a gentleman and a man of honour, characters in which I am pretty well known to the world, that, to my certain personal knowledge, you were hurt in an affair with a friend of mine, the further particulars of which prudence required should be sunk into oblivion. I think no one will venture to dispute my word, or to require more than my assurance. — If there should be any one very hard of faith on the occasion, I shall find a way to satisfy him. In the meanwhile, your outlawry has been rescinded in the most honourable manner; and Sir Bingo, in consideration of his share in giving rise to reports so injurious to you, is desirous to drop all further proceedings in his original quarrel, and hopes the whole matter will be forgot and forgiven on all sides."

"Upon my word, Captain Jekyl," answered Tyrrel, "you lay me under the necessity of acknowledging obligation to you. You have cut a knot which I should have found it very difficult to unloose; for I frankly confess, that, while I was determined not to remain under the stigma put upon me, I should have had great difficulty in clearing myself, without mentioning circumstances, which, were it only for the sake of my father's memory, should be buried in eternal oblivion. I hope your friend feels no continued inconvenience from his hurt?"

"His lordship is nearly quite recovered," said Jekyl.

"And I trust he did me the justice to own, that, so far as my will was concerned, I am totally guiltless of the purpose of hurting him?"

"He does you full justice in that and every thing else," replied Jekyl; "regrets the impetuosity of his own temper, and is determined to be on his guard against it in future."

"That," said Tyrrel, "is so far well; and now, may I ask once more, what communication you have to make to me on the part of your friend? — Were it from any one but him, whom I have found so uniformly false and treacherous, your own fairness and candour would induce me to hope that this unnatural quarrel might be in some sort ended by your mediation."

"I then proceed, sir, under more favourable auspices than I expected," said Captain Jekyl, "to enter on my commission. — You are about to commence a lawsuit, Mr. Tyrrel, if fame does not wrong you, for the purpose of depriving your brother of his estate and title."

"The case is not fairly stated, Captain Jekyl," replied Tyrrel; "I commence a lawsuit, when I do commence it, for the sake of ascertaining my own just rights."

"It comes to the same thing eventually," said the mediator; "I am not called upon to decide upon the justice of your claims, but they are, you will allow, newly started. The late Countess of Etherington died in possession — open and undoubted possession — of her rank in society."

"If she had no real claim to it, sir," replied Tyrrel, "she had more than justice who enjoyed it so long; and the injured lady whose claims were postponed, had just so much less. — But this is no point for you and me to discuss between us — it must be tried elsewhere."

"Proofs, sir, of the strongest kind, will be necessary to overthrow a right so well established in public opinion as that of the present possessor of the title of Etherington."

Tyrrel took a paper from his pocketbook, and, handing it to Captain Jekyl, only answered, "I have no thoughts of asking you to give up the cause of your friend; but methinks the documents of which I give you a list, may shake your opinion of it."

Captain Jekyl read, muttering to himself, "*Certificate of marriage, by the Rev. Zadock Kemp, chaplain to the British Embassy at Paris, between Marie de Belloche, Comtesse de Martigny, and the Right Honourable John Lord Oakendale — Letters between John Earl of Etherington and his lady, under the title of Madame de Martigny — Certificate of baptism — Declaration of the Earl of Etherington on his death-bed.*" — All this is very well — but may I ask you, Mr. Tyrrel, if it is really your purpose to go to extremity with your brother?"

"He has forgot that he is one — he has lifted his hand against my life."

"You have shed his blood — twice shed it," said Jekyl; "the world will not ask which brother gave the offence, but which received, which inflicted, the severest wound."

"Your friend has inflicted one on me, sir," said Tyrrel, "that will bleed while I have the power of memory."

"I understand you, sir," said Captain Jekyl; "you mean the affair of Miss Mowbray?"

"Spare me on that subject, sir!" said Tyrrel. "Hitherto I have disputed my most important rights — rights which involved my rank in society, my fortune, the honour of my mother — with something like composure; but do not say more on the topic you have touched upon, unless you would have before you a madman! — Is it possible for you, sir, to have heard even the outline of this story, and to imagine that I can ever reflect on the cold-blooded and most inhuman stratagem, which this friend of yours prepared for two unfortunates, without?" — He started up, and walked impetuously to and fro. "Since the Fiend himself interrupted the happiness of perfect innocence, there was never such an act of treachery — never such schemes of happiness destroyed — never such inevitable misery prepared for two wretches who had the idiocy to repose perfect confidence in him! — Had there been passion in his conduct, it had been the act of a man — a wicked man, indeed,

but still a human creature, acting under the influence of human feelings — but his was the deed of a calm, cold, calculating demon, actuated by the basest and most sordid motives of self-interest, joined, as I firmly believe, to an early and inveterate hatred of one whose claims he considered as at variance with his own.”

“I am sorry to see you in such a temper,” said Captain Jekyl, calmly; “Lord Etherington, I trust, acted on very different motives than those you impute to him; and if you will but listen to me, perhaps something may be struck out which may accommodate these unhappy disputes.”

“Sir,” said Tyrrel, sitting down again, “I will listen to you with calmness, as I would remain calm under the probe of a surgeon tenting a festered wound. But when you touch me to the quick, when you prick the very nerve, you cannot expect me to endure without wincing.”

“I will endeavour, then, to be as brief in the operation as I can,” replied Captain Jekyl, who possessed the advantage of the most admirable composure during the whole conference. “I conclude, Mr. Tyrrel, that the peace, happiness, and honour of Miss Mowbray, are dear to you?”

“Who dare impeach her honour!” said Tyrrel, fiercely; then checking himself, added, in a more moderate tone, but one of deep feeling, “they are dear to me, sir, as my eyesight.”

“My friend holds them in equal regard,” said the Captain; “and has come to the resolution of doing her the most ample justice.”

“He can do her justice no otherwise, than by ceasing to haunt this neighbourhood, to think, to speak, even to dream of her.”

“Lord Etherington thinks otherwise,” said Captain Jekyl; “he believes that if Miss Mowbray has sustained any wrong at his hands, which, of course, I am not called upon to admit, it will be best repaired by the offer to share with her his title, his rank, and his fortune.”

“His title, rank, and fortune, sir, are as much a falsehood as he is himself,” said Tyrrel, with violence — “Marry Clara Mowbray? never!”

“My friend’s fortune, you will observe,” replied Jekyl, “does not rest entirely upon the event of the lawsuit with which you, Mr. Tyrrel, now threaten him. — Deprive him, if you can, of the Oakendale estate, he has still a large patrimony by his mother; and besides, as to his marriage with Clara Mowbray, he conceives, that unless it should be the lady’s wish to have the ceremony repeated to which he is most desirous to defer his own opinion, they have only to declare that it has already passed between them.”

“A trick, sir!” said Tyrrel, “a vile infamous trick! of which the lowest wretch in Newgate would be ashamed — the imposition of one person for another.”

“Of that, Mr. Tyrrel, I have seen no evidence whatever. The clergyman’s certificate is clear — Francis Tyrrel is united to Clara Mowbray in the holy bands of wedlock — such is the tenor — there is a copy — nay, stop one instant, if you please, sir. You say there was an imposition in the case — I have no doubt but you speak what you believe, and what Miss Mowbray told you. She was surprised — forced in some measure from the husband she had just married — ashamed to meet her former lover, to whom, doubtless, she had made many a vow of love, and ne’er a true one — what wonder that, unsupported by her bridegroom, she should have changed her tone, and thrown all the blame of her own inconstancy on the absent swain? — A woman, at a pinch so critical, will make the most improbable excuse, rather than be found guilty on her own confession.”

“There must be no jesting in this case,” said Tyrrel, his cheek becoming pale, and his voice altered with passion.

“I am quite serious, sir,” replied Jekyl; “and there is no law court in Britain that would take the lady’s word — all she has to offer, and that in her own cause — against a whole body of evidence direct and circumstantial, showing that she was by her own free consent married to the gentleman who now claims her hand. — Forgive me, sir — I see you are much agitated — I do not mean to dispute your right of believing what you think is most credible — I only use the freedom of pointing out to you the impression which the evidence is likely to make on the minds of indifferent persons.”

“Your friend,” answered Tyrrel, affecting a composure, which, however, he was far from possessing, “may think by such arguments to screen his villainy; but it cannot avail him — the truth is known to Heaven — it is known to me — and there is, besides, one indifferent witness upon earth, who can testify that the most abominable imposition was practised on Miss Mowbray.”

“You mean her cousin — Hannah Irwin, I think, is her name,” answered Jekyl; “you see I am fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. But where is Hannah Irwin to be found?”

“She will appear, doubtless, in Heaven’s good time, and to the confusion of him who now imagines the only witness of his treachery — the only one who could tell the truth of this complicated mystery — either no longer lives, or, at least, cannot be brought forward against him, to the ruin of his schemes. Yes, sir, that slight observation of yours has more than explained to me why your friend, or, to call him by his true name, Mr. Valentine Bulmer, has not commenced his machinations sooner, and also why he has commenced them now. He thinks himself certain that Hannah Irwin is not now in Britain, or to be produced in a court of justice — he may find himself mistaken.”

“My friend seems perfectly confident of the issue of his cause,” answered Jekyl; “but for the lady’s sake, he is most unwilling to prosecute a suit which must be attended with so many circumstances of painful exposure.”

“Exposure, indeed!” answered Tyrrel; “thanks to the traitor who laid a mine so fearful, and who now affects to be reluctant to fire it. — Oh! how I am bound to curse that affinity that restrains my hands! I would be content to be the meanest and vilest of society, for one hour of vengeance on this unexampled hypocrite! — One thing is certain, sir — your friend will have no living victim. His persecution will kill Clara Mowbray, and fill up the cup of his crimes, with the murder of one of the sweetest — I shall grow a woman, if I say more on the subject!”

“My friend,” said Jekyl, “since you like best to have him so defined, is as desirous as you can be to spare the lady’s feelings; and with that view, not reverting to former passages, he has laid before her brother a proposal of alliance, with which Mr. Mowbray is highly pleased.”

“Ha!” said Tyrrel, starting — “And the lady?” —

“And the lady so far proved favourable, as to consent that Lord Etherington shall visit Shaws-Castle.”

“Her consent must have been extorted!” exclaimed Tyrrel.

“It was given voluntarily,” said Jekyl, “as I am led to understand; unless, perhaps, in so far as the desire to veil these very displeasing transactions may have operated, I think naturally enough, to induce her to sink them in eternal secrecy, by accepting Lord Etherington’s hand. — I see, sir, I give you pain, and am sorry for it. — I have no title to call upon you for any exertion of generosity; but, should such be Miss Mowbray’s sentiments, is it too much to expect of you, that you will not compromise the lady’s honour by insisting upon former claims, and opening up disreputable transactions so long past?”

“Captain Jekyl,” said Tyrrel, solemnly, “I have no claims. Whatever I might have had, were cancelled by the act of treachery through which your friend endeavoured too successfully to supplant me. Were Clara Mowbray as free from her pretended marriage as law could pronounce her, still with me — *me*, at least, of all men in the world — the obstacle must ever remain, that the nuptial benediction has been pronounced over her, and the man whom I must for once call *brother*. — He stopped at that word, as if it had cost him agony to pronounce it, and then resumed: — “No, sir, I have no views of personal advantage in this matter — they have been long annihilated — But I will not permit Clara Mowbray to become the wife of a villain — I will watch over her with thoughts as spotless as those of her guardian angel. I first persuaded her to quit the path of duty^{E9} — I, of all men who live, am bound to protect her from the misery — from the guilt — which must attach to her as this man’s wife. I will never believe that she wishes it — I will never believe, that in calm mind and sober reason, she can be brought to listen to such a guilty proposal. — But her mind — alas! — is not of the firm texture it once could boast; and your friend knows well how to press on the spring of every passion that can agitate and alarm her. Threats of exposure may extort her consent to this most unfitting match, if they do not indeed drive her to suicide, which I think the most likely termination. I will, therefore, be strong where she is weak. — Your friend, sir, must at least strip his proposals of their fine gilding. I will satisfy Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan’s of his false pretences, both to rank and fortune; and I rather think he will protect his sister against the claim of a needy profligate, though he might be dazzled with the alliance of a wealthy peer.”

“Your cause, sir, is not yet won,” answered Jekyl; “and when it is, your brother will retain property enough to entitle him to marry a greater match than Miss Mowbray, besides the large estate of Nettlewood, to which that alliance must give him right. But I would wish to make some accommodation between you if it were possible. You profess, Mr. Tyrrel, to lay aside all selfish wishes and views in this matter, and to look entirely to Miss Mowbray’s safety and happiness?”

"Such, upon my honour, is the exclusive purpose of my interference — I would give all I am worth to procure her an hour of quiet — for happiness she will never know again."

"Your anticipations of Miss Mowbray's distress," said Jekyl, "are, I understand, founded upon the character of my friend. You think him a man of light principle, and because he overreached you in a juvenile intrigue, you conclude that now, in his more steady and advanced years, the happiness of the lady in whom you are so much interested ought not to be trusted to him?"

"There may be other grounds," said Tyrrel, hastily; "but you may argue upon those you have named, as sufficient to warrant my interference."

"How, then, if I should propose some accommodation of this nature? Lord Etherington does not pretend to the ardour of a passionate lover. He lives much in the world, and has no desire to quit it. Miss Mowbray's health is delicate — her spirits variable — and retirement would most probably be her choice. — Suppose — I am barely putting a supposition — suppose that a marriage between two persons so circumstanced were rendered necessary or advantageous to both — suppose that such a marriage were to secure to one party a large estate — were to insure the other against all the consequences of an unpleasant exposure — still, both ends might be obtained by the mere ceremony of marriage passing between them. There might be a previous contract of separation, with suitable provisions for the lady, and stipulations, by which the husband should renounce all claim to her society. Such things happen every season, if not on the very marriage day, yet before the honeymoon is over. — Wealth and freedom would be the lady's, and as much rank as you, sir, supposing your claims just, may think proper to leave them."

There was a long pause, during which Tyrrel underwent many changes of countenance, which Jekyl watched carefully, without pressing him for an answer. At length he replied, "There is much in your proposal, Captain Jekyl, which I might be tempted to accede to, as one manner of unloosing this Gordian knot, and a compromise by which Miss Mowbray's future tranquillity would be in some degree provided for. But I would rather trust a fanged adder than your friend, unless I saw him fettered by the strongest ties of interest. Besides, I am certain the unhappy lady could never survive the being connected with him in this manner, though but for the single moment when they should appear together at the altar. There are other objections" —

He checked himself, paused, and then proceeded in a calm and self-possessed tone. "You think, perhaps, even yet, that I have some selfish and interested views in this business; and probably you may feel yourself entitled to entertain the same suspicion towards me, which I avowedly harbour respecting every proposition which originates with your friend. — I cannot help it — I can but meet these disadvantageous impressions with plain dealing and honesty; and it is in the spirit of both that I make a proposition to *you*. — Your friend is attached to rank, fortune, and worldly advantages, in the usual proportion, at least, in which they are pursued by men of the world — this you must admit, and I will not offend you by supposing more."

"I know few people who do not desire such advantages," answered Captain Jekyl; "and I frankly own, that he affects no particular degree of philosophic indifference respecting them."

"Be it so," answered Tyrrel. "Indeed, the proposal you have just made indicates that his pretended claim on this young lady's hand is entirely, or almost entirely, dictated by motives of interest, since you are of opinion that he would be contented to separate from her society on the very marriage day, provided that, in doing so, he was assured of the Nettlewood property."

"My proposition was unauthorized by my principal," answered Jekyl; "but it is needless to deny, that its very tenor implies an idea, on my part, that Lord Etherington is no passionate lover."

"Well then," answered Tyrrel. "Consider, sir, and let him consider well, that the estate and rank he now assumes, depend upon my will and pleasure — that, if I prosecute the claims of which that scroll makes you aware, he must descend from the rank of an earl into that of a commoner, stripped of by much the better half of his fortune — a diminution which would be far from compensated by the estate of Nettlewood, even if he could obtain it, which could only be by means of a lawsuit, precarious in the issue, and most dishonourable in its very essence."

"Well, sir," replied Jekyl, "I perceive your argument — What is your proposal?"

"That I will abstain from prosecuting my claim on those honours and that property — that I will leave Valentine Bulmer in possession of his usurped title and ill-deserved wealth — that I will bind myself under the strongest penalties never to disturb his possession of the Earldom of Etherington and estates belonging to it — on condition that he allows the woman, whose peace of mind he has ruined for ever, to walk through the world in her wretchedness, undisturbed either by his marriage-suit, or by any claim founded upon his own most treacherous conduct — in short, that he forbear to molest Clara Mowbray, either by his presence, word, letter, or through the intervention of a third party, and be to her in future as if he did not exist."

"This is a singular offer," said the Captain; "may I ask if you are serious in making it?"

"I am neither surprised nor offended at the question," said Tyrrel. "I am a man, sir, like others, and affect no superiority to that which all men desire the possession of — a certain consideration and station in society. I am no romantic fool to undervalue the sacrifice I am about to make. I renounce a rank, which is and ought to be the more valuable to me, because it involves (he blushed as he spoke) the fame of an honoured mother — because, in failing to claim it, I disobey the commands of a dying father, who wished that by doing so I should declare to the world the penitence which hurried him perhaps to the grave, and the making which public he considered might be some atonement for his errors. From an honoured place in the land, I descend voluntarily to become a nameless exile; for, once certain that Clara Mowbray's peace is assured, Britain no longer holds me. — All this I do, sir, not in any idle strain of overheated feeling, but seeing, and knowing, and dearly valuing, every advantage which I renounce — yet I do it, and do it willingly, rather than be the cause of farther evil to one, on whom I have already brought too — too much."

His voice, in spite of his exertions, faltered as he concluded the sentence, and a big drop which rose to his eye, required him for the moment to turn towards the window.

"I am ashamed of this childishness," he said, turning again to Captain Jekyl; "if it excites your ridicule, sir, let it be at least a proof of my sincerity."

"I am far from entertaining such sentiments," said Jekyl, respectfully — for, in a long train of fashionable follies, his heart had not been utterly hardened — "very far, indeed. To a proposal so singular as yours, I cannot be expected to answer — except thus far — the character of the peerage is, I believe, indelible, and cannot be resigned or assumed at pleasure. If you are really Earl of Etherington, I cannot see how your resigning the right may avail my friend."

"You, sir, it might not avail," said Tyrrel, gravely, "because you, perhaps, might scorn to exercise a right, or hold a title, that was not legally yours. But your friend will have no such compunctious visitings. If he can act the Earl to the eye of the world, he has already shown that his honour and conscience will be easily satisfied."

"May I take a copy of the memorandum containing this list of documents," said Captain Jekyl, "for the information of my constituent?"

"The paper is at your pleasure, sir," replied Tyrrel; "it is itself but a copy. — But Captain Jekyl," he added, with a sarcastic expression, "is, it would seem, but imperfectly let into his friend's confidence — he may be assured his principal is completely acquainted with the contents of this paper, and has accurate copies of the deeds to which it refers."

"I think it scarce possible," said Jekyl, angrily.

"Possible and certain!" answered Tyrrel. "My father, shortly preceding his death, sent me — with a most affecting confession of his errors — this list of papers, and acquainted me that he had made a similar communication to your friend. That he did so I have no doubt, however Mr. Bulmer may have thought proper to disguise the circumstance in communication with you. One circumstance, among others, stamps at once his character, and confirms me of the danger he apprehended by my return to Britain. He found means, through a scoundrelly agent, who had made me the usual remittances from my father while alive, to withhold those which were necessary for my return from the Levant, and I was obliged to borrow from a friend."

"Indeed?" replied Jekyl. "It is the first time I have heard of these papers — May I enquire where the originals are, and in whose custody?"

"I was in the East," answered Tyrrel, "during my father's last illness, and these papers were by him deposited with a respectable commercial house, with which he was connected. They were enclosed in a cover directed to me, and that again in an envelope, addressed to the principal person in their firm."

"You must be sensible," said Captain Jekyl, "that I can scarcely decide on the extraordinary offer which you have been pleased to make, of resigning the claim founded on these documents, unless I had a previous opportunity of examining them."

"You shall have that opportunity — I will write to have them sent down by the post — they lie but in small compass."

"This, then," said the Captain, "sums up all that can be said at present. — Supposing these proofs to be of unexceptionable authenticity, I certainly would advise my friend Etherington to put to sleep a claim so important as yours, even at the expense of resigning his matrimonial speculation — I presume you design to abide by your offer?"

"I am not in the habit of altering my mind — still less of retracting my word," said Tyrrel, somewhat haughtily.

"We part friends, I hope?" said Jekyl, rising, and taking his leave.

"Not enemies certainly, Captain Jekyl. I will own to you I owe you my thanks, for extricating me from that foolish affair at the Well — nothing could have put me to more inconvenience than the necessity of following to extremity a frivolous quarrel at the present moment."

"You will come down among us, then?" said Jekyl.

"I certainly shall not wish to appear to hide myself," answered Tyrrel; "it is a circumstance might be turned against me — there is a party who will avail himself of every advantage. I have but one path, Captain Jekyl — that of truth and honour."

Captain Jekyl bowed, and took his leave. So soon as he was gone, Tyrrel locked the door of the apartment, and drawing from his bosom a portrait, gazed on it with a mixture of sorrow and tenderness, until the tears dropped from his eye.

It was the picture of Clara Mowbray, such as he had known her in the days of their youthful love, and taken by himself, whose early turn for painting had already developed itself. The features of the blooming girl might be yet traced in the fine countenance of the more matured original. But what was now become of the glow which had shaded her cheek? — what of the arch, yet subdued pleasantry, which lurked in the eye? — what of the joyous content, which composed every feature to the expression of an Euphrosyne? — Alas! these were long fled! — Sorrow had laid his hand upon her — the purple light of youth was quenched — the glance of innocent gaiety was exchanged for looks now moody with ill-concealed care, now animated by a spirit of reckless and satirical observation.

"What a wreck! what a wreck!" exclaimed Tyrrel; "and all of one wretch's making. — Can I put the last hand to the work, and be her murderer outright? I cannot — I cannot! — I will be strong in the resolve I have formed — I will sacrifice all — rank — station — fortune — and fame. Revenge! — Revenge itself, the last good left me — revenge itself I will sacrifice, to obtain for her such tranquillity as she may be yet capable to enjoy."

In this resolution he sat down, and wrote a letter to the commercial house with whom the documents of his birth, and other relative papers, were deposited, requesting that the packet containing them should be forwarded to him through the post-office.

Tyrrel was neither unambitious, nor without those sentiments respecting personal consideration, which are usually united with deep feeling and an ardent mind. It was with a trembling hand, and a watery eye, but with a heart firmly resolved, that he sealed and dispatched the letter; a step towards the resignation, in favour of his mortal enemy, of that rank and condition in life, which was his own by right of inheritance, but had so long hung in doubt betwixt them.

Chapter 30 Intrusion.

By my troth, I will go with thee to the lane's-end! — I am a kind of burr — I shall stick.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

It was now far advanced in autumn. The dew lay thick on the long grass, where it was touched by the sun; but where the sward lay in shadow, it was covered with hoar frost, and crisped under Jekyl's foot, as he returned through the woods of St. Ronan's. The leaves of the ash-trees detached themselves from the branches, and, without an air of wind, fell spontaneously on the path. The mists still lay lazily upon the heights, and the huge old tower of St. Ronan's was entirely shrouded with vapour, except where a sunbeam, struggling with the mist, penetrated into its wreath so far as to show a projecting turret upon one of the angles of the old fortress, which, long a favourite haunt of the raven, was popularly called the Corbie's Tower. Beneath, the scene was open and lightsome, and the robin redbreast was chirping his best, to atone for the absence of all other choristers. The fine foliage of autumn was seen in many a glade, running up the sides of each little ravine, russet-hued and golden-specked, and tinged frequently with the red hues of the mountain-ash; while here and there a huge old fir, the native growth of the soil, flung his broad shadow over the rest of the trees, and seemed to exult in the permanence of his dusky livery over the more showy, but transitory brilliance by which he was surrounded.

Such is the scene, which, so often described in prose and in poetry, yet seldom loses its effect upon the ear or upon the eye, and through which we wander with a strain of mind congenial to the decline of the year. There are few who do not feel the impression; and even Jekyl, though bred to far different pursuits than those most favourable to such contemplation, relaxed his pace to admire the uncommon beauty of the landscape.

Perhaps, also, he was in no hurry to rejoin the Earl of Etherington, towards whose service he felt himself more disinclined since his interview with Tyrrel. It was clear that that nobleman had not fully reposed in his friend the confidence promised; he had not made him aware of the existence of those important documents of proof, on which the whole fate of his negotiation appeared now to hinge, and in so far had deceived him. Yet, when he pulled from his pocket, and re-read Lord Etherington's explanatory letter, Jekyl could not help being more sensible than he had been on the first perusal, how much the present possessor of that title felt alarmed at his brother's claims; and he had some compassion for the natural feeling that must have rendered him shy of communicating at once the very worst view of his case, even to his most confidential friend. Upon the whole, he remembered that Lord Etherington had been his benefactor to an unusual extent; that, in return, he had promised the young nobleman his active and devoted assistance, in extricating him from the difficulties with which he seemed at present surrounded; that, in quality of his confidant, he had become acquainted with the most secret transactions of his life; and that it could only be some very strong cause indeed which could justify breaking off from him at this moment. Yet he could not help wishing either that his own obligations had been less, his friend's cause better, or, at least, the friend himself more worthy of assistance.

"A beautiful morning, sir, for such a foggy, d — d climate as this," said a voice close by Jekyl's ear, which made him at once start out of his contemplation. He turned half round, and beside him stood our honest friend Touchwood, his throat muffled in his large Indian handkerchief, huge gouty shoes thrust upon his feet, his bobwig well powdered, and the gold-headed cane in his hand, carried upright as a sergeant's halberd. One glance of contemptuous survey entitled Jekyl, according to his modish ideas, to rank the old gentleman as a regular-built quiz, and to treat him as the young gentlemen of his Majesty's Guards think themselves entitled to use every unfashionable variety of the human species. A slight inclination of a bow, and a very cold "You have the advantage of me, sir," dropped as it were unconsciously from his tongue, were meant to repress the old gentleman's advances, and moderate his ambition to be hail fellow well met with his betters. But Mr. Touchwood was callous to the intended rebuke; he had lived too much at large upon the world, and was far too confident of his own merits, to take a repulse easily, or to permit his modesty to interfere with any purpose which he had formed.

"Advantage of you, sir?" he replied; "I have lived too long in the world not to keep all the advantages I have, and get all I can — and I reckon it one that I have overtaken you, and shall have the pleasure of your company to the Well."

"I should but interrupt your worthier meditations, sir," said the other; "besides, I am a modest young man, and think myself fit for no better company than my own — moreover, I walk slow — very slow. — Good morning to you, Mr. A — A — I believe my treacherous memory has let slip your name, sir."

"My name! — Why your memory must have been like Pat Murtough's greyhound, that let the hare go before he caught it. You never heard my name in your life. Touchwood is my name. What d'ye think of it, now you know it?"

"I am really no connoisseur in surnames," answered Jekyl: "and it is quite the same to me whether you call yourself Touchwood or Touchstone. Don't let me keep you from walking on, sir. You will find breakfast far advanced at the Well, sir, and your walk has probably given you an appetite."

"Which will serve me to luncheon-time, I promise you," said Touchwood; "I always drink my coffee as soon as my feet are in my pabouches — it's the way all over the East. Never trust my breakfast to their scalding milk-and-water at the Well, I assure you; and for walking slow, I have had a touch of the gout."

"Have you," said Jekyl; "I am sorry for that; because, if you have no mind to breakfast, I have — and so, Mr. Touchstone, good-morrow to you."

But, although the young soldier went off at double quick time, his pertinacious attendant kept close by his side, displaying an activity which seemed inconsistent with his make and his years, and talking away the whole time, so as to show that his lungs were not in the least degree incommoded by the unusual rapidity of motion.

"Nay, young gentleman, if you are for a good smart walk, I am for you, and the gout may be d — d. You are a lucky fellow to have youth on your side; but yet, so far as between the Aultoun and the Well, I think I could walk you for your sum, barring running — all heel and toe — equal weight, and I would match Barclay himself for a mile."

"Upon my word, you are a gay old gentleman!" said Jekyl, relaxing his pace; "and if we must be fellow-travellers, though I can see no great occasion for it, I must even shorten sail for you."

So saying, and as if another means of deliverance had occurred to him, he slackened his pace, took out a morocco case of cigars, and, lighting one with his *briquet*, said, while he walked on, and bestowed as much of its fragrance as he could upon the face of his intrusive companion, "Vergeben sie, mein herr — ich bin erzogen in kaiserlicher dienst — muss rauchen ein kleine wenig."²⁹

"Rauchen sie immer fort," said Touchwood, producing a huge meerschau, which, suspended by a chain from his neck, lurked in the bosom of his coat, "habe auch mein pfeichen — Sehen sie den lieben topf!"³⁰ and he began to return the smoke, if not the fire, of his companion, in full volumes, and with interest.

"The devil take the twaddle," said Jekyl to himself, "he is too old and too fat to be treated after the manner of Professor Jackson; and, on my life, I cannot tell what to make of him. — He is a residenter too — I must tip him the cold shoulder, or he will be pestering me eternally."

Accordingly, he walked on, sucking his cigar, and apparently in as abstracted a mood as Mr. Cargill himself, without paying the least attention to Touchwood, who, nevertheless, continued talking, as if he had been addressing the most attentive listener in Scotland, whether it were the favourite nephew of a cross, old, rich bachelor, or the aid-decamp of some old rusty firelock of a general, who tells stories of the American war.

"And so, sir, I can put up with any companion at a pinch, for I have travelled in all sorts of ways, from a caravan down to a carrier's cart; but the best society is the best every where; and I am happy I have fallen in with a gentleman who suits me so well as you. — That grave, steady attention of yours reminds me of Elfi Bey — you might talk to him in English, or any thing he understood least of — you might have read Aristotle to Elfi, and not a muscle would he stir — give him his pipe, and he would sit on his cushion with a listening air as if he took in every word of what you said."

Captain Jekyl threw away the remnant of his cigar, with a little movement of pettishness, and began to whistle an opera air.

"There again, now! — That is just so like the Marquis of Roccombole, another dear friend of mine, that whistles all the time you talk to him — He says he learned it in the Reign of Terror, when a man was glad to whistle to show his throat was whole. And, talking of great folk, what do you think of this affair between Lord Etherington and his brother, or cousin, as some folk call him?"

Jekyl absolutely started at the question; a degree of emotion, which, had it been witnessed by any of his fashionable friends, would for ever have ruined his pretensions to rank in the first order.

"What affair?" he asked, so soon as he could command a certain degree of composure.

"Why, you know the news surely? Francis Tyrrel, whom all the company voted a coward the other day, turns out as brave a fellow as any of us; for, instead of having run away to avoid having his own throat cut by Sir Bingo Binks, he was at the very moment engaged in a gallant attempt to murder his elder brother, or his more lawful brother, or his cousin, or some such near relation."

"I believe you are misinformed, sir," said Jekyl dryly, and then resumed, as deftly as he could, his proper character of a pococurante.

"I am told," continued Touchwood, "one Jekyl acted as a second to them both on the occasion — a proper fellow, sir — one of those fine gentlemen whom we pay for polishing the pavement in Bond Street, and looking at a thick shoe and a pair of worsted stockings, as if the wearer were none of their paymasters. However, I believe the Commander-in-Chief is like to discard him when he hears what has happened."

"Sir!" said Jekyl, fiercely — then, recollecting the folly of being angry with an original of his companion's description, he proceeded more coolly, "You are misinformed — Captain Jekyl knew nothing of any such matter as you refer to — you talk of a person you know nothing of — Captain Jekyl is —— (Here he stopped a little, scandalized, perhaps, at the very idea of vindicating himself to such a personage from such a charge.)

"Ay, ay," said the traveller, filling up the chasm in his own way, "he is not worth our talking of, certainly — but I believe he knew as much of the matter as either you or I do, for all that."

"Sir, this is either a very great mistake, or wilful impertinence," answered the officer. "However absurd or intrusive you may be, I cannot allow you, either in ignorance or incivility, to use the name of Captain Jekyl with disrespect. — I am Captain Jekyl, sir."

"Very like, very like," said Touchwood, with the most provoking indifference; "I guessed as much before."

"Then, sir, you may guess what is likely to follow, when a gentleman hears himself unwarrantably and unjustly slandered," replied Captain Jekyl, surprised and provoked that his annunciation of name and rank seemed to be treated so lightly. "I advise you, sir, not to proceed too far upon the immunities of your age and insignificance."

"I never presume farther than I have good reason to think necessary, Captain Jekyl," answered Touchwood, with great composure. "I am too old, as you say, for any such idiotical business as a duel, which no nation I know of practises but our silly fools of Europe — and then, as for your switch, which you are grasping with so much dignity, that is totally out of the question. Look you, young gentleman; four-fifths of my life have been spent among men who do not set a man's life at the value of a button on his collar — every person learns, in such cases, to protect himself as he can; and whoever strikes me must stand to the consequences. I have always a brace of bull-dogs about me, which put age and youth on a level. So suppose me horsewhipped, and pray, at the same time, suppose yourself shot through the body. The same exertion of imagination will serve for both purposes."

So saying, he exhibited a very handsome, highly finished, and richly-mounted pair of pistols.

"Catch me without my tools," said he, significantly buttoning his coat over the arms, which were concealed in a side-pocket, ingeniously contrived for that purpose.

"I see you do not know what to make of me," he continued, in a familiar and confidential tone; "but, to tell you the truth, everybody that has meddled in this St. Ronan's business is a little off the hooks — something of a *tête exaltée*, in plain words, a little crazy, or so; and I do not affect to be much wiser than other people."

"Sir," said Jekyl, "your manners and discourse are so unprecedented, that I must ask your meaning plainly and decidedly — Do you mean to insult me or no?"

"No insult at all, young gentleman — all fair meaning, and above board — I only wished to let you know what the world may say, that is all."

"Sir," said Jekyl, hastily, "the world may tell what lies it pleases; but I was not present at the rencontre between Etherington and Mr. Tyrrel — I was some hundred miles off."

"There now," said Touchwood, "there was a rencontre between them — the very thing I wanted to know."

"Sir," said Jekyl, aware too late that, in his haste to vindicate himself, he had committed his friend, "I desire you will found nothing on an expression hastily used to vindicate myself from a false aspersion — I only meant to say, if there was an affair such as you talk of, I knew nothing of it."

"Never mind — never mind — I shall make no bad use of what I have learned," said Touchwood. "Were you to eat your words with the best fish-sauce, (and that is Burgess's,) I have got all the information from them I wanted."

"You are strangely pertinacious, sir," replied Jekyl.

"O, a rock, a piece of flint for that — What I have learned, I have learned, but I will make no bad use of it. — Hark ye, Captain, I have no malice against your friend — perhaps the contrary — but he is in a bad course, sir — has kept a false reckoning, for as deep as he thinks himself; and I tell you so, because I hold you (your

finery out of the question) to be, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest; but, if you were not, why necessity is necessity; and a man will take a Bedouin for his guide in the desert, whom he would not trust with an aspar in the cultivated field; so I think of reposing some confidence in you — have not made up my mind yet, though.” “On my word, sir, I am greatly flattered both by your intentions and your hesitation,” said Captain Jekyl. “You were pleased to say just now, that every one concerned with these matters was something particular.”

“Ay, ay — something crazy — a little mad, or so. That was what I said, and I can prove it.”

“I should be glad to hear the proof,” said Jekyl — “I hope you do not except yourself?”

“Oh! by no means,” answered Touchwood; “I am one of the maddest old boys ever slept out of straw, or went loose. But you can put fishing questions in your turn, Captain, I see that — you would fain know how much, or how little, I am in all these secrets. Well, that is as hereafter may be. In the meantime, here are my proofs. — Old Scrogie Mowbray was mad, to like the sound of Mowbray better than that of Scrogie; young Scrogie was mad, not to like it as well. The old Earl of Etherington was not sane when he married a French wife in secret, and devilish mad indeed when he married an English one in public. Then for the good folk here, Mowbray of St. Ronan’s is cracked, when he wishes to give his sister to he knows not precisely whom: She is a fool not to take him, because she *does* know who he is, and what has been between them; and your friend is maddest of all, who seeks her under so heavy a penalty: — and you and I, Captain, go mad gratis, for company’s sake, when we mix ourselves with such a mess of folly and frenzy.”

“Really, sir, all that you have said is an absolute riddle to me,” replied the embarrassed Jekyl.

“Riddles may be read,” said Touchwood, nodding; “if you have any desire to read mine, pray, take notice, that this being our first interview, I have exerted myself *faire les frais du conversation*, as Jack Frenchman says; if you want another, you may come to Mrs. Dods’s at the Cleikum Inn, any day before Saturday, at four precisely, when you will find none of your half-starved, long-limbed bundles of bones, which you call poultry at the table-d’hôte, but a right Chitty-gong fowl! — I got Mrs. Dods the breed from old Ben Vandewash, the Dutch broker — stewed to a minute, with rice and mushrooms. — If you can eat without a silver fork, and your appetite serves you, you shall be welcome — that’s all. — So, good morning to you, good master lieutenant, for a captain of the Guards is but a lieutenant after all.”

So saying, and ere Jekyl could make any answer, the old gentleman turned short off into a path which led to the healing fountain, branching away from that which conducted to the Hotel.

Uncertain with whom he had been holding a conversation so strange, Jekyl remained looking after him, until his attention was roused by a little boy, who crept out from an adjoining thicket, with a switch in his hand, which he had been just cutting — probably against regulations to the contrary effect made and provided, for he held himself ready to take cover in the copse again, in case any one were in sight who might be interested in chastising his delinquency. Captain Jekyl easily recognised in him one of that hopeful class of imps, who pick up a precarious livelihood about places of public resort, by going errands, brushing shoes, doing the groom’s and coachman’s work in the stables, driving donkeys, opening gates, and so forth, for about one-tenth part of their time, spending the rest in gambling, sleeping in the sun, and otherwise qualifying themselves to exercise the profession of thieves and pickpockets, either separately, or in conjunction with those of waiters, grooms, and postilions. The little outcast had an indifferent pair of pantaloons, and about half a jacket, for, like Pentapolin with the naked arm, he went on action with his right shoulder bare; a third part of what had once been a hat covered his hair, bleached white with the sun, and his face, as brown as a berry, was illuminated by a pair of eyes, which, for spying out either peril or profit, might have rivalled those of the hawk. — In a word, it was the original Puck of the Shaws dramaticals.

“Come hither, ye unhanged whelp,” said Jekyl, “and tell me if you know the old gentleman that passed down the walk just now — yonder he is, still in sight.”

“It is the Naboab,” said the boy; “I could swear to his back among all the backs at the Waal, your honour.”

“What do you call a Nabob, you varlet?”

“A Naboab — a Naboab?” answered the scout; “odd, I believe it is ane comes frae foreign parts, with mair siller than his pouches can haud, and spills it a’ through the country — they are as yellow as orangers, and maun hae a’ thing their ain gate.”

“And what is this Naboab’s name, as you call him?” demanded Jekyl.

“His name is Touchwood,” said his informer; “ye may see him at the Waal every morning.”

“I have not seen him at the ordinary.”

“Na, na,” answered the boy; “he is a queer auld cull, he disna frequent wi’ other folk, but lives upby at the Cleikum. — He gave me half-a-crown yince, and forbade me to play it awa’ at pitch and toss.”

“And you disobeyed him, of course?”

“Na, I didna disobeyed him — I played it awa’ at neevie-neevie-nick-nack.”

“Well, there is sixpence for thee; lose it to the devil in any way thou think’st proper.”

So saying he gave the little galopin his donative, and a slight rap on the pate at the same time, which sent him scouring from his presence. He himself hastened to Lord Etherington’s apartments, and, as luck would have it, found the Earl alone.

Chapter 31 Discussion.

*I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespective boys — none are for me
That look into me with suspicious eyes.*

RICHARD III.

“How now, Jekyl!” said Lord Etherington, eagerly; “what news from the enemy? — Have you seen him?”

“I have,” replied Jekyl.

“And in what humour did you find him? — in none that was very favourable, I dare say, for you have a baffled and perplexed look, that confesses a losing game — I have often warned you how your hang-dog look betrays you at brag — And then, when you would fain brush up your courage, and put a good face on a bad game, your bold looks always remind me of a standard hoisted only half-mast high, and betraying melancholy and dejection, instead of triumph and defiance.”

“I am only holding the cards for your lordship at present,” answered Jekyl; “and I wish to Heaven there may be no one looking over the hand.”

“How do you mean by that?”

“Why, I was beset, on returning through the wood, by an old bore, a Nabob, as they call him, and Touchwood by name.”

“I have seen such a quiz about,” said Lord Etherington — “What of him?”

“Nothing,” answered Jekyl, “except that he seemed to know much more of your affairs than you would wish or are aware of. He smoked the truth of the rencontre betwixt Tyrel and you, and what is worse — I must needs confess the truth — he contrived to wring out of me a sort of confirmation of his suspicions.”

“Slife! wert thou mad?” said Lord Etherington, turning pale; “His is the very tongue to send the story through the whole country — Hal, you have undone me.”

“I hope not,” said Jekyl; “I trust in Heaven I have not! — His knowledge is quite general — only that there was some scuffle between you — Do not look so dismayed about it, or I will e’en go back and cut his throat, to secure his secrecy.”

“Cursed indiscretion!” answered the Earl — “how could you let him fix on you at all?”

“I cannot tell,” said Jekyl — “he has powers of boring beyond ten of the dullest of all possible doctors — stuck like a limpet to a rock — a perfect double of the Old Man of the Sea, who I take to have been the greatest bore on record.”

“Could you not have turned him on his back like a turtle, and left him there?” said Lord Etherington.

"And had an ounce of lead in my body for my pains? No — no — we have already had footpad work enough — I promise you the old buck was armed, as if he meant to bring folks on the low toby."³¹

"Well — well — But Martigny, or Tyrrel, as you call him — what says he?"

"Why, Tyrrel, or Martigny, as your lordship calls him," answered Jekyl, "will by no means listen to your lordship's proposition. He will not consent that Miss Mowbray's happiness shall be placed in your lordship's keeping; nay, it did not meet his approbation a bit the more, when I hinted at the acknowledgment of the marriage, or the repetition of the ceremony, attended by an immediate separation, which I thought I might venture to propose."

"And on what grounds does he refuse so reasonable an accommodation?" said Lord Etherington — "Does he still seek to marry the girl himself?"

"I believe he thinks the circumstances of the case render that impossible," replied his confidant.

"What? then he would play the dog in the manger — neither eat nor let eat? — He shall find himself mistaken. She has used me like a dog, Jekyl, since I saw you; and, by Jove! I will have her, that I may break her pride, and cut him to the liver with the agony of seeing it."

"Nay, but hold — hold!" said Jekyl; "perhaps I have something to say on his part, that may be a better compromise than all you could have by teasing him. He is willing to purchase what he calls Miss Mowbray's tranquillity, at the expense of his resignation of his claims to your father's honours and estate; and he surprised me very much, my lord, by showing me this list of documents, which, I am afraid, makes his success more than probable, if there really are such proofs in existence." Lord Etherington took the paper, and seemed to read with much attention, while Jekyl proceeded — "He has written to procure these evidences from the person with whom they are deposited."

"We shall see what like they are when they arrive," said Lord Etherington. — "They come by post, I suppose?"

"Yes; and may be immediately expected," answered Jekyl.

"Well — he is my brother on one side of the house, at least," said Lord Etherington; "and I should not much like to have him lagged for forgery, which I suppose will be the end of his bolstering up an unsubstantial plea by fabricated documents — I should like to see these same papers he talks of."

"But, my lord," replied Jekyl, "Tyrrel's allegation is, that you have seen them; and that copies, at least, were made out for you, and are in your possession — such is his averment."

"He lies," answered Lord Etherington, "so far as he pretends I know of such papers. I consider the whole story as froth — foam — fudge, or whatever is most unsubstantial. It will prove such when the papers appear, if indeed they ever will appear. The whole is a bully from beginning to end; and I wonder at thee, Jekyl, for being so thirsty after syllabub, that you can swallow such whipt cream as that stuff amounts to. No, no — I know my advantage, and shall use it so as to make all their hearts bleed. As for these papers, I recollect now that my agent talked of copies of some manuscripts having been sent him, but the originals were not then forthcoming; and I'll bet the long odds that they never are — mere fabrications — if I thought otherwise, would I not tell you?"

"Certainly, I hope you would, my lord," said Jekyl; "for I see no chance of my being useful to you, unless I have the honour to enjoy your confidence."

"You do — you do, my friend," said Etherington, shaking him by the hand; "and since I must consider your present negotiation as failed, I must devise some other mode of settling with this mad and troublesome fellow."

"No violence, my lord," said Jekyl, once more, and with much emphasis.

"None — none — none, by Heaven! — Why, thou suspicious wretch, must I swear, to quell your scruples? — On the contrary, it shall not be my fault, if we are not on decent terms."

"It would be infinitely to the advantage of both your characters if you could bring that to pass," answered Jekyl; "and if you are serious in wishing it, I will endeavour to prepare Tyrrel. He comes to the Well or to the ordinary today, and it would be highly ridiculous to make a scene."

"True, true; find him out, my dear Jekyl, and persuade him how foolish it will be to bring our family quarrels out before strangers, and for their amusement. They shall see the two bears can meet without biting. — Go — go — I will follow you instantly — go, and remember you have my full and exclusive confidence. — Go, half-bred, startling fool!" he continued, the instant Jekyl had left the room, "with just spirits enough to ensure your own ruin, by hurrying you into what you are not up to. — But he has character in the world — is brave — and one of those whose countenance gives a fair face to a doubtful business. He is my creature, too — I have bought and paid for him, and it would be idle extravagance not to make use of him — But as to confidence — no confidence, honest Hal, beyond that which cannot be avoided. If I wanted a confidant, here comes a better than thou by half — Solmes has no scruples — he will always give me money's worth of zeal and secrecy for money."

His lordship's valet at this moment entered the apartment, a grave, civil-looking man, past the middle age, with a sallow complexion, a dark thoughtful eye, slow, and sparing of speech, and sedulously attentive to all the duties of his situation.

"Solmes," — said Lord Etherington, and then stopped short.

"My lord" — There was a pause; and when Lord Etherington had again said, "Solmes!" and his valet had answered, "Your lordship," there was a second pause; until the Earl, as if recollecting himself, "Oh! I remember what I wished to say — it was about the course of post here. It is not very regular, I believe?"

"Regular enough, my lord, so far as concerns this place — the people in the Aultoun do not get their letters in course."

"And why not, Solmes?" said his lordship.

"The old woman who keeps the little inn there, my lord, is on bad terms with the post-mistress — the one will not send for the letters, and the other will not dispatch them to the village; so, betwixt them, they are sometimes lost or mislaid, or returned to the General Post-office."

"I wish that may not be the case of a packet which I expect in a few days — it should have been here already, or, perhaps, it may arrive in the beginning of the week — it is from that formal ass, Trueman the Quaker, who addresses me by my Christian and family name, Francis Tyrrel. He is like enough to mistake the inn, too, and I should be sorry it fell into Monsieur Martigny's hands — I suppose you know he is in that neighbourhood? — Look after its safety, Solmes — quietly, you understand; because people might put odd constructions, as if I were wanting a letter which was not my own."

"I understand perfectly, my lord," said Solmes, without exhibiting the slightest change in his sallow countenance, though entirely comprehending the nature of the service required.

"And here is a note will pay for postage," said the Earl, putting into his valet's hand a bank-bill of considerable value; "and you may keep the balance for occasional expenses."

This was also fully understood; and Solmes, too politic and cautious even to look intelligence, or acknowledge gratitude, made only a bow of acquiescence, put the note into his pocketbook, and assured his lordship that his commands should be punctually attended to.

"There goes the agent for my money, and for my purpose," said Lord Etherington, exultingly; "no extorting of confidence, no demanding of explanations, no tearing off the veil with which a delicate manoeuvre is garbed — all excuses are received as *argent comptant*, provided only, that the best excuse of all, the *argent comptant* itself, come to recommend them. — Yet I will trust no one — I will out, like a skilful general, and reconnoitre in person."

With this resolution, Lord Etherington put on his surlout and cap, and sallying from his apartments, took the way to the bookseller's shop, which also served as post-office and circulating library; and being in the very centre of the parade, (for so is termed the broad terrace walk which leads from the inn to the Well,) it formed a convenient lounging-place for newsmongers and idlers of every description.

The Earl's appearance created, as usual, a sensation upon the public promenade; but whether it was the suggestion of his own alarmed conscience, or that there was some real cause for the remark, he could not help thinking his reception was of a more doubtful character than usual. His fine figure and easy manners produced their usual effect, and all whom he spoke to received his attention as an honour; but none offered, as usual, to unite themselves to him, or to induce him to join their party. He seemed to be looked on rather as an object of observation and attention, than as making one of the company; and to escape from a distant gaze, which became rather embarrassing, he turned into the little emporium of news and literature.

He entered unobserved, just as Lady Penelope had finished reading some verses, and was commenting upon them with all the alacrity of *afemme savante*, in possession of something which no one is to hear repeated oftener than once.

"Copy — no indeed!" these were the snatches which reached Lord Etherington's ear, from the group of which her ladyship formed the centre — "honour bright — I must not betray poor Chatterly — besides, his lordship is my friend, and a person of rank, you know — so one would not — You have not got the book, Mr. Pott? — you have not got Statius? — you never have any thing one longs to see."

"Very sorry, my lady — quite out of copies at present — I expect some in my next monthly parcel."

"Good luck, Mr. Pott, that is your never-failing answer," said Lady Penelope; "I believe if I were to ask you for the last new edition of the Alkoran, you would tell me it was coming down in your next monthly parcel."

"Can't say, my lady, really," answered Mr. Pott; "have not seen the work advertised yet; but I have no doubt, if it is likely to take, there will be copies in my next monthly parcel."

"Mr. Pott's supplies are always in the *paullo post futurum* tense," said Mr. Chatterly, who was just entering the shop.

"Ah! Mr. Chatterly, are you there?" said Lady Penelope; "I lay my death at your door — I cannot find this Thebaid, where Polynices and his brother" —

"Hush, my lady! — hush, for Heaven's sake!" said the poetical divine, and looked towards Lord Etherington. Lady Penelope took the hint, and was silent; but she had said enough to call up the traveller Touchwood, who raised his head from the newspaper which he was studying, and, without addressing his discourse to any one in particular, ejaculated, as if in scorn of Lady Penelope's geography —

"Polynices? — Polly Peachum. — There is no such place in the Thebais — the Thebais is in Egypt — the mummies come from the Thebais — I have been in the catacombs — caves very curious indeed — we were lapidated by the natives — pebbled to some purpose, I give you my word. My janizary thrashed a whole village by way of retaliation."

While he was thus proceeding, Lord Etherington, as if in a listless mood, was looking at the letters which stood ranged on the chimney-piece, and carrying on a languid dialogue with Mrs. Pott, whose person and manners were not ill adapted to her situation, for she was good-looking, and vastly fine and affected.

"Number of letters here which don't seem to find owners, Mrs. Pott?"

"Great number, indeed, my lord — it is a great vexation, for we are obliged to return them to the post-office, and the postage is charged against us if they are lost; and how can one keep sight of them all?"

"Any love-letters among them, Mrs. Pott?" said his lordship, lowering his tone.

"Oh, fie! my lord, how should I know?" answered Mrs. Pott, dropping her voice to the same cadence.

"Oh! every one can tell a love-letter — that has ever received one, that is — one knows them without opening — they are always folded hurriedly and sealed carefully — and the direction manifests a kind of tremulous agitation, that marks the state of the writer's nerves — that now," — pointing with his switch to a letter upon the chimney-piece, "that *must* be a love-letter."

"He, he, he!" giggled Mrs. Pott, "I beg pardon for laughing, my lord — but — he, he, he! — that is a letter from one Bindloose, the banker body, to the old woman Luckie Dods, as they call her, at the change-house in the Aultoun."

"Depend upon it then, Mrs. Pott, that your neighbour, Mrs. Dods, has got a lover in Mr. Bindloose — unless the banker has been shaking hands with the palsy. Why do you not forward her letter? — you are very cruel to keep it in durance here."

"Me forward!" answered Mrs. Pott; "the cappernoity, old, girning alewife, may wait long enough or I forward it — She'll not loose the letters that come to her by the King's post, and she must go on troking wi' the old carrier, as if there was no post-house in the neighbourhood. But the solicitor will be about wi' her one of these days."

"Oh! you are too cruel — you really should send the love-letter; consider, the older she is, the poor soul has the less time to lose."

But this was a topic on which Mrs. Pott understood no jesting. She was well aware of our matron's inveteracy against her and her establishment, and she resented it as a placeman resents the efforts of a radical. She answered something sulkily, "That they that loosed letters should have letters; and neither Luckie Dods, nor any of her lodgers, should ever see the scrape of a pen from the St. Ronan's office, that they did not call for and pay for."

It is probable that this declaration contained the essence of the information which Lord Etherington had designed to extract by his momentary flirtation with Mrs. Pott; for when, retreating as it were from this sore subject, she asked him, in a pretty mincing tone, to try his skill in pointing out another love-letter, he only answered carelessly, "that in order to do that he must write her one," and leaving his confidential station by her little throne, he lounged through the narrow shop, bowed slightly to Lady Penelope as he passed, and issued forth upon the parade, where he saw a spectacle which might well have appalled a man of less self-possession than himself.

Just as he left the shop, little Miss Digges entered almost breathless, with the emotion of impatience and of curiosity. "Oh la! my lady, what do you stay here for? — Mr. Tyrrel has just entered the other end of the parade this moment, and Lord Etherington is walking that way — they must meet each other. — O lord! come, come away, and see them meet! — I wonder if they'll speak — I hope they won't fight — Oh la! do come, my lady!"

"I must go with you, I find," said Lady Penelope; "it is the strangest thing, my love, that curiosity of yours about other folk's matters — I wonder what your mamma will say to it."

"Oh! never mind mamma — nobody minds her — papa, nor nobody — Do come, dearest Lady Pen, or I will run away by myself. — Mr. Chatterly, do make her come!"

"I must come, it seems," said Lady Penelope, "or I shall have a pretty account of you."

But, notwithstanding this rebuke, and forgetting, at the same time, that people of quality ought never to seem in a hurry, Lady Penelope, with such of her satellites as she could hastily collect around her, tripped along the parade with unusual haste, in sympathy, doubtless, with Miss Digges's curiosity, as her ladyship declared she had none of her own.

Our friend, the traveller, had also caught up Miss Digges's information; and, breaking off abruptly an account of the Great Pyramid, which had been naturally introduced by the mention of the Thebais, and echoing the fair alarmist's words, "hope they won't fight," he rushed upon the parade, and bustled along as hard as his sturdy supporters could carry him. If the gravity of the traveller, and the delicacy of Lady Penelope, were surprised into unwonted haste from their eagerness to witness the meeting of Tyrrel and Lord Etherington, it may be well supposed that the decorum of the rest of the company was a slender restraint on their curiosity, and that they hurried to be present at the expected scene, with the alacrity of gentlemen of the fancy hastening to a set-to.

In truth, though the meeting afforded little sport to those who expected dire conclusions, it was, nevertheless, sufficiently interesting to those spectators who are accustomed to read the language of suppressed passion betraying itself at the moment when the parties are most desirous to conceal it.

Tyrrel had been followed by several loiterers so soon as he entered the public walk; and their number was now so much reinforced, that he saw himself with pain and displeasure the centre of a sort of crowd who watched his motions. Sir Bingo and Captain MacTurk were the first to bustle through it, and to address him with as much politeness as they could command.

"Servant, sir," mumbled Sir Bingo, extending the right hand of fellowship and reconciliation, ungloved. "Servant — sorry that anything should have happened between us — very sorry, on my word."

"No more need be said, sir," replied Tyrrel; "the whole is forgotten."

"Very handsome, indeed — quite the civil thing — hope to meet you often, sir." — And here the knight was silent.

Meanwhile, the more verbose Captain proceeded, "Och, py Cot, and it was an awfu' mistake, and I could draw the penknife across my finger for having written the word. — By my sowl, and I scratched it till I scratched a hole in the paper. — Och! that I should live to do an uncivil thing by a gentleman that had got himself hit in

an honourable affair! But you should have written, my dear; for how the devil could we guess that you were so well provided in quarrels, that you had to settle two in one day!"

"I was hurt in an unexpected — an accidental manner, Captain MacTurk. I did not write, because there was something, in my circumstances at the moment which required secrecy; but I was resolved, the instant I recovered, to put myself to rights in your good opinion."

"Och! and you have done that," said the Captain, nodding sagaciously; "for Captain Jekyl, who is a fine child, has put us all up to your honourable conduct. They are pretty boys, these guardsmen, though they may play a little fine sometimes, and think more of themselves than peradventure they need for to do, in comparison with us of the line. — But he let us know all about it — and, though he said not a word of a certain fine lord, with his footpad, and his hurt, and what not, yet we all knew how to lay that and that together. — And if the law would not right you, and there were bad words between you, why should not two gentlemen right themselves? And as to your being kinsmen, why should not kinsmen behave to each other like men of honour? Only, some say you are father's sons, and that issomething too near. — I had once thoughts of calling out my uncle Dougal myself, for there is no saying where the line should be drawn; but I thought, on the whole, there should be no fighting, as there is no marriage, within the forbidden degrees. As for first cousins — Wheugh! — that's all fair — fire away, Flanigan! — But here is my lord, just upon us, like a stag of the first head, and the whole herd behind him."

Tyrrel stepped forward a little before his officious companions, his complexion rapidly changing into various shades, like that of one who forces himself to approach and touch some animal or reptile for which he entertains that deep disgust and abhorrence which was anciently ascribed to constitutional antipathy. This appearance of constraint put upon himself, with the changes which it produced on his face, was calculated to prejudice him somewhat in the opinion of the spectators, when compared with the steady, stately, yet, at the same time, easy demeanour of the Earl of Etherington, who was equal to any man in England in the difficult art of putting a good countenance on a bad cause. He met Tyrrel with an air as unembarrassed, as it was cold; and, while he paid the courtesy of a formal and distant salutation, he said aloud, "I presume, Mr. Tyrrel de Martigny, that, since you have not thought fit to avoid this awkward meeting, you are disposed to remember our family connexion so far as to avoid making sport for the good company?"

"You have nothing to apprehend from my passion, Mr. Bulmer," replied Tyrrel, "if you can assure yourself against the consequences of your own."

"I am glad of that," said the Earl, with the same composure, but sinking his voice so as only to be heard by Tyrrel; "and as we may not again in a hurry hold any communication together, I take the freedom to remind you, that I sent you a proposal of accommodation by my friend, Mr. Jekyl."

"It was inadmissible," said Tyrrel — "altogether inadmissible — both from reasons which you may guess, and others which it is needless to detail. — I sent you a proposition, think of it well."

"I will," replied Lord Etherington, "when I shall see it supported by those alleged proofs, which I do not believe ever had existence."

"Your conscience holds another language from your tongue," said Tyrrel; "but I disclaim reproaches, and decline altercation. I will let Captain Jekyl know when I have received the papers, which, you say, are essential to your forming an opinion on my proposal. — In the meanwhile, do not think to deceive me. I am here for the very purpose of watching and defeating your machinations; and, while I live, be assured they shall never succeed. — And now, sir — or my lord — for the titles are in your choice — fare you well."

"Hold a little," said Lord Etherington. "Since we are condemned to shock each other's eyes, it is fit the good company should know what they are to think of us. You are a philosopher, and do not value the opinion of the public — a poor worldling like me is desirous to stand fair with it. — Gentlemen," he continued, raising his voice, "Mr. Winterblossom, Captain MacTurk, Mr. — what is his name, Jekyl? — Ay, Micklehen — You have, I believe, all some notion, that this gentleman, my near relation, and I, have some undecided claims on each other, which prevent our living upon good terms. We do not mean, however, to disturb you with our family quarrels; and, for my own part, while this gentleman, Mr. Tyrrel, or whatever he may please to call himself, remains a member of this company, my behaviour to him will be the same as to any stranger who may have that advantage. — Good morrow to you, sir — Good morning, gentlemen — we all meet at dinner, as usual. — Come, Jekyl."

So saying, he took Jekyl by the arm, and, gently extricating himself from the sort of crowd, walked off, leaving most of the company prepossessed in his favour, by the ease and apparent reasonableness of his demeanour. Sounds of depreciation, forming themselves indistinctly into something like the words, "my eye, and Betty Martin," did issue from the neckcloth of Sir Bingo, but they were not much attended to; for it had not escaped the observation of the quicksighted gentry at the Well, that the Baronet's feelings towards the noble Earl were in the inverse ratio of those displayed by Lady Binks, and that, though ashamed to testify, or perhaps incapable of feeling, any anxious degree of jealousy, his temper had been for some time considerably upon the fret; a circumstance concerning which his fair moiety did not think it necessary to give herself any concern.

Meanwhile, the Earl of Etherington walked onward with his confidant, in the full triumph of successful genius.

"You see," he said, "Jekyl, that I can turn a corner with any man in England. It was a proper blunder of yours, that you must extricate the fellow from the mist which accident had flung around him — you might as well have published the story of our rencontre at once, for every one can guess it, by laying time, place, and circumstance together; but never trouble your brains for a justification. You marked how I assumed my natural superiority over him — towered up in the full pride of legitimacy — silenced him even where the good company most do congregate. This will go to Mowbray through his agent, and will put him still madder on my alliance. I know he looks jealously on my flirtation with a certain lady — the dasher yonder — nothing makes a man sensible of the value of an opportunity, but the chance of losing it."

"I wish to Heaven you would give up thoughts of Miss Mowbray!" said Jekyl; "and take Tyrrel's offer, if he has the means of making it good."

"Ay, if — if. But I am quite sure he has no such rights as he pretends to, and that his papers are all a deception. — Why do you put your eye upon me as fixed as if you were searching out some wonderful secret?"

"I wish I knew what to think of your real *bona fide* belief respecting these documents," said Jekyl, not a little puzzled by the steady and unembarrassed air of his friend.

"Why, thou most suspicious of coxcombs," said Etherington, "what the devil would you have me say to you? — Can I, as the lawyers say, prove a negative? or, is it not very possible, that such things may exist, though I have never seen or heard of them? All I can say is, that of all men I am the most interested to deny the existence of such documents; and, therefore, certainly will not admit of it, unless I am compelled to do so by their being produced; nor then either, unless I am at the same time well assured of their authenticity."

"I cannot blame you for your being hard of faith, my lord," said Jekyl; "but still I think if you can cut out with your earldom, and your noble hereditary estate, I would, in your case, pitch Nettlewood to the devil."

"Yes, as you pitched your own patrimony, Jekyl; but you took care to have the spending of it first. — What would *you* give for such an opportunity of piecing your fortunes by marriage? — Confess the truth."

"I might be tempted, perhaps," said Jekyl, "in my present circumstances; but if they were what they have been, I should despise an estate that was to be held by petticoat tenure, especially when the lady of the manor was a sickly fantastic girl, that hated me, as this Miss Mowbray has the bad taste to hate you."

"Umph — sickly? — no, no, she is not sickly — she is as healthy as any one in constitution — and, on my word, I think her paleness only renders her more interesting. The last time I saw her, I thought she might have rivalled one of Canova's finest statues."

"Yes; but she is indifferent to you — you do not love her," said Jekyl.

"She is any thing but indifferent to me," said the Earl; "she becomes daily more interesting — for her dislike piques me; and besides, she has the insolence openly to defy and contemn me before her brother, and in the eyes of all the world. I have a kind of loving hatred — a sort of hating love for her; in short, thinking upon her is like trying to read a riddle, and makes one make quite as many blunders, and talk just as much nonsense. If ever I have the opportunity, I will make her pay for all her airs."

"What airs?" said Jekyl.

"Nay, the devil may describe them, for I cannot; but, for example — Since her brother has insisted on her receiving me, or I should rather say on her appearing when I visit Shaws-Castle, one would think her invention has toiled in discovering different ways of showing want of respect to me, and dislike to my presence. Instead of dressing herself as a lady should, especially on such occasions, she chooses some fantastic, or old-fashioned, or negligent bedizening, which makes her at least look odd, if it cannot make her ridiculous — such triple tiaras of various-coloured gauze on her head — such pieces of old tapestry, I think, instead of shawls and pelisses — such thick-soled shoes — such tan-leather gloves — mercy upon us, Hal, the very sight of her equipment would drive mad a whole conclave of milliners! Then her postures are so strange — she does so stoop and lollop, as the women call it, so cross her legs and square her arms — were the goddess of grace to look down on her, it would put her to flight for ever!"

"And you are willing to make this awkward, ill-dressed, unmannered dowdy, your Countess, Etherington; you, for whose critical eye half the town dress themselves?" said Jekyl.

"It is all a trick, Hal — all an assumed character to get rid of me, to disgust me, to baffle me; but I am not to be had so easily. The brother is driven to despair — he bites his nails, winks, coughs, makes signs, which she always takes up at cross-purpose. — I hope he beats her after I go away; there would be a touch of consolation, were one but certain of that."

"A very charitable hope, truly, and your present feelings might lead the lady to judge what she may expect after wedlock. But," added Jekyl, "cannot you, so skilful in fathoming every mood of the female mind, divine some mode of engaging her in conversation?"

"Conversation!" replied the Earl; "why, ever since the shock of my first appearance was surmounted, she has contrived to vote me a nonentity; and that she may annihilate me completely, she has chosen, of all occupations, that of working a stocking! From what cursed old antediluvian, who lived before the invention of spinning-jennies, she learned this craft, Heaven only knows; but there she sits, with her work pinned to her knee — not the pretty taper silken fabric, with which Jeannette of Amiens coquetted, while Tristram Shandy was observing her progress; but a huge worsted bag, designed for some flat-footed old pauper, with heels like an elephant — And there she squats, counting all the stitches as she works, and refusing to speak, or listen, or look up, under pretence that it disturbs her calculation!"

"An elegant occupation, truly, and I wonder it does not work a cure upon her noble admirer," said Jekyl.

"Confound her — no — she shall not trick me. And then amid this affectation of vulgar stolidity, there break out such sparkles of exultation, when she thinks she has succeeded in baffling her brother, and in plaguing me, that, by my faith, Hal, I could not tell, were it at my option, whether to kiss or to cuff her."

"You are determined to go on with this strange affair, then?" said Jekyl.

"On — on — on, my boy! — Clara and Nettlewood for ever!" answered the Earl. "Besides this brother of hers provokes me too — he does not do for me half what he might — what he ought to do. He stands on points of honour, forsooth, this broken-down horse-jockey, who swallowed my two thousand pounds as a pointer would a pat of butter. — I can see he wishes to play fast and loose — has some suspicions, like you, Hal, upon the strength of my right to my father's titles and estate; as if, with the title of the Nettlewood property alone, I would not be too good a match for one of his beggarly family. He must scheme, forsooth, this half-baked Scotch cake! — He must hold off and on, and be cautious, and wait the result, and try conclusions with me, this lump of oatmeal dough! — I am much tempted to make an example of him in the course of my proceedings."

"Why, this is vengeance horrible and dire," said Jekyl; "yet I give up the brother to you; he is a conceited coxcomb, and deserves a lesson. But I would fain intercede for the sister."

"We shall see" — replied the Earl; and then suddenly, "I tell you what it is, Hal; her caprices are so diverting, that I sometimes think out of mere contradiction, I almost love her; at least, if she would but clear old scores, and forget one unlucky prank of mine, it should be her own fault if I did not make her a happy woman."

Chapter 32 A Death-Bed.

*It comes — it wrings me in my parting hour,
The long-hid crime — the well-disguised guilt.
Bring me some holy priest to lay the spectre!*

OLD PLAY.

The general expectation of the company had been disappointed by the pacific termination of the meeting betwixt the Earl of Etherington and Tyrrel, the anticipation of which had created so deep a sensation. It had been expected that some appalling scene would have taken place; instead of which, each party seemed to acquiesce in a sullen neutrality, and leave the war to be carried on by their lawyers. It was generally understood that the cause was removed out of the courts of Bellona into that of Themis; and although the litigants continued to inhabit the same neighbourhood, and once or twice met at the public walks or public table, they took no notice of each other, farther than by exchanging on such occasions, a grave and distant bow.

In the course of two or three days, people ceased to take interest in a feud so coldly conducted; and if they thought of it at all, it was but to wonder that both the parties should persevere in residing near the Spa, and in chilling, with their unsocial behaviour, a party met together for the purposes of health and amusement.

But the brothers, as the reader is aware, however painful their occasional meetings might be, had the strongest reasons to remain in each other's neighbourhood — Lord Etherington to conduct his design upon Miss Mowbray, Tyrrel to disconcert his plan, if possible, and both to await the answer which should be returned by the house in London, who were depositaries of the papers left by the late Earl.

Jekyl, anxious to assist his friend as much as possible, made in the meantime a visit to old Touchwood at the Aultoun, expecting to find him as communicative as he had formerly been on the subject of the quarrel betwixt the brothers, and trusting to discover, by dint of address, whence he had derived his information concerning the affairs of the noble house of Etherington. But the confidence which he had been induced to expect on the part of the old traveller was not reposed. Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, as the Earl called him, had changed his mind, or was not in the vein of communication. The only proof of his confidence worth mentioning, was his imparting to the young officer a valuable receipt for concocting curry-powder.

Jekyl was therefore reduced to believe that Touchwood, who appeared all his life to have been a great intermeddler in other people's matters, had puzzled out the information which he appeared to possess of Lord Etherington's affairs, through some of those obscure sources whence very important secrets do frequently, to the astonishment and confusion of those whom they concern, escape to the public. He thought this the more likely, as Touchwood was by no means critically nice in his society, but was observed to converse as readily with a gentleman's gentleman, as with the gentleman to whom he belonged, and with a lady's attendant, as with the lady herself. He that will stoop to this sort of society, who is fond of tattle, being at the same time disposed to pay some consideration for gratification of his curiosity, and not over scrupulous respecting its accuracy, may always command a great quantity of private anecdote. Captain Jekyl naturally enough concluded, that this busy old man became in some degree master of other people's affairs by such correspondences as these; and he could himself bear witness to his success in cross-examination, as he had been surprised into an avowal of the rencontre between the brothers, by an insidious observation of the said Touchwood. He reported, therefore, to the Earl, after this interview, that, on the whole, he thought he had no reason to fear much on the subject of the traveller, who, though he had become acquainted, by some means or other, with some leading facts of his remarkable history; only possessed them in a broken, confused, and desultory manner, insomuch that he seemed to doubt whether the parties in the expected lawsuit were brothers or cousins, and appeared totally ignorant of the facts on which it was to be founded.

It was the next day after this éclaircissement on the subject of Touchwood, that Lord Etherington dropped as usual into the bookseller's shop, got his papers, and skimming his eye over the shelf on which lay, till called for, the postponed letters destined for the Aultoun, saw with a beating heart the smart post-mistress toss amongst them, with an air of sovereign contempt, a pretty large packet, addressed to Francis Tyrrel, Esq. &c. He withdrew his eyes, as if conscious that even to have looked on this important parcel might engender some suspicion of his purpose, or intimate the deep interest which he took in the contents of the missive

which was so slightly treated by his friend Mrs. Pott. At this moment the door of the shop opened, and Lady Penelope Penfeather entered, with her eternal *pendante*, the little Miss Digges.

"Have you seen Mr. Mowbray? — Has Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's been down this morning? — Do you know any thing of Mr. Mowbray, Mrs. Pott?" were questions which the lettered lady eagerly huddled on the back of each other, scarcely giving time to the lady of letters to return a decided negative to all and each of them.

"Mr. Mowbray was not about — was not coming there this morning — his servant had just called for letters and papers, and announced as much."

"Good Heaven! how unfortunate!" said Lady Penelope, with a deep sigh, and sinking down on one of the little sofas in an attitude of shocking desolation, which called the instant attention of Mr. Pott and his good woman, the first uncorking a small phial of salts, for he was a pharmacopolist as well as vender of literature and transmitter of letters, and the other hastening for a glass of water. A strong temptation thrilled from Lord Etherington's eyes to his finger-ends. Two steps might have brought him within arm's-length of the unwatched packet, on the contents of which, in all probability, rested the hope and claims of his rival in honour and fortune; and, in the general confusion, was it impossible to possess himself of it unobserved? But no — no — no — the attempt was too dreadfully dangerous to be risked; and, passing from one extreme to another, he felt as if he was incurring suspicion by suffering Lady Penelope to play off her airs of affected distress and anxiety, without seeming to take that interest in them which her rank at least might be supposed to demand. Stung with this apprehension, he hastened to express himself so anxiously on the subject, and to demonstrate so busily his wish to assist her ladyship, that he presently stood committed a great deal farther than he had intended. Lady Penelope was infinitely obliged to his lordship — indeed, it was her character in general not to permit herself to be overcome by circumstances; but something had happened, so strange, so embarrassing, so melancholy, that she owned it had quite overcome her — notwithstanding, she had at all times piqued herself on supporting her own distresses, better than she was able to suppress her emotions in viewing those of others.

"Could he be of any use?" Lord Etherington asked. "She had enquired after Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's — his servant was at her ladyship's service, if she chose to send to command his attendance."

"Oh! no, no!" said Lady Penelope; "I dare say, my dear lord, you will answer the purpose a great deal better than Mr. Mowbray — that is, provided you are a Justice of Peace."

"A Justice of Peace!" said Lord Etherington, much surprised; "I am in the commission unquestionably, but not for any Scotch county."

"O, that does not signify," said Lady Penelope; "and if you will trust yourself with me a little way, I will explain to you how you can do one of the most charitable, and kind, and generous things in the world."

Lord Etherington's delight in the exercise of charity, kindness, and generosity, was not so exuberant as to prevent his devising some means for evading Lady Penelope's request, when, looking through the sash-door, he had a distant glance of his servant Solmes approaching the Post-office.

I have heard of a sheep-stealer who had rendered his dog so skilful an accomplice in his nefarious traffic, that he used to send him out to commit acts of felony by himself, and had even contrived to impress on the poor cur the caution that he should not, on such occasions, seem even to recognise his master, if they met accidentally.³² Apparently, Lord Etherington conducted himself upon a similar principle; for he had no sooner a glimpse of his agent, than he seemed to feel the necessity of leaving the stage free for his machinations.

"My servant," he said, with as much indifference as he could assume, "will call for my letters — I must attend Lady Penelope;" and, instantly proffering his services as Justice of the Peace, or in whatever other quality she chose to employ them, he hastily presented his arm, and scarce gave her ladyship time to recover from her state of languor to the necessary degree of activity, ere he hurried her from the shop; and, with her thin hatchet-face chattering close to his ear, her yellow and scarlet feathers crossing his nose, her lean right honourable arm hooking his elbow, he braved the suppressed titters and sneers of all the younger women whom he met as they traversed the parade. One glance of intelligence, though shot at a distance, passed betwixt his lordship and Solmes, as the former left the public walk under the guidance of Lady Penelope, his limbs indeed obeying her pleasure, and his ears dinning with her attempts to explain the business in question, but his mind totally indifferent where he was going, or ignorant on what purpose, and exclusively occupied with the packet in Mrs. Pott's heap of postponed letters, and its probable fate.

At length an effort of recollection made Lord Etherington sensible that his abstraction must seem strange, and, as his conscience told him, even suspicious in the eyes of his companion; putting therefore the necessary degree of constraint upon himself, he expressed, for the first time, curiosity to know where their walk was to terminate. It chanced, that this was precisely the question which he needed not to have asked, if he had paid but the slightest attention to the very voluble communications of her ladyship, which had all turned upon this subject.

"Now, my dear lord," she said, "I must believe you lords of the creation think us poor simple women the vainest fools alive. I have told you how much pain it costs me to speak about my little charities, and yet you come to make me tell you the whole story over again. But I hope, after all, your lordship is not surprised at what I have thought it my duty to do in this sad affair — perhaps I have listened too much to the dictates of my own heart, which are apt to be so deceitful."

On the watch to get at something explanatory, yet afraid, by demanding it directly, to show that the previous tide of narrative and pathos had been lost on an inattentive ear, Lord Etherington could only say, that Lady Penelope could not err in acting according to the dictates of her own judgment.

Still the compliment had not sauced enough for the lady's sated palate; so, like a true glutton of praise, she began to help herself with the soup-ladle.

"Ah! judgment? — how is it you men know us so little, that you think we can pause to weigh sentiment in the balance of judgment? — that is expecting rather too much from us poor victims of our feelings. So that you must really hold me excused if I forgot the errors of this guilty and unhappy creature, when I looked upon her wretchedness — Not that I would have my little friend, Miss Digges, or your lordship, suppose that I am capable of palliating the fault, while I pity the poor, miserable sinner. Oh, no — Walpole's verses express beautifully what one ought to feel on such occasions —

'For never was the gentle breast

Insensible to human woes;

Feeling, though firm, it melts distress'd

For weaknesses it never knows.'"

"Most accursed of all *précieuses*," thought his lordship, "when wilt thou, amidst all thy chatter, utter one word sounding like sense or information!"

But, Lady Penelope went on — "If you knew, my lord, how I lament my limited means on those occasions! but I have gathered something among the good people at the Well. I asked that selfish wretch, Winterblossom, to walk down with me to view her distress, and the heartless beast told me he was afraid of infection! — infection from a puer — puerperal fever! I should not perhaps pronounce the word, but science is of no sex — however, I have always used thieves' vinegar essence, and never have gone farther than the threshold."

Whatever were Etherington's faults, he did not want charity, so far as it consists in giving alms.

"I am sorry," he said, taking out his purse, "your ladyship should not have applied to me."

"Pardon me, my lord, we only beg from our friends; and your lordship is so constantly engaged with Lady Binks, that we have rarely the pleasure of seeing you in what I call my little circle."

Lord Etherington, without further answer, tendered a couple of guineas, and observed, that the poor woman should have medical attendance.

"Why, so I say," answered Lady Penelope; "and I asked the brute Quackleben, who, I am sure, owes me some gratitude, to go and see her; but the sordid monster answered, 'Who was to pay him?' — He grows every day more intolerable, now that he seems sure of marrying that fat blowzy widow. He could not, I am sure, expect that I — out of my pittance — And besides, my lord, is there not a law that the parish, or the county, or the something or other, shall pay for physicking the poor?"

"We will find means to secure the Doctor's attendance," said Lord Etherington; "and I believe my best way will be to walk back to the Well, and send him to wait on the patient. I am afraid I can be of little use to a poor woman in a childbed fever."

"Puerperal, my lord, puerperal," said Lady Penelope, in a tone of correction.

"In a puerperal fever, then," said Lord Etherington; "why, what can I do to help her?"

"Oh! my lord, you have forgotten that this Anne Heggie, that I told you of, came here with one child in her arms — and another — in short, about to become a mother again — and settled herself in this miserable hut I told you of — and some people think the minister should have sent her to her own parish; but he is a strange, soft-headed, sleepy sort of man, not over active in his parochial duties. However, there she settled, and there was something about her quite beyond the style of a common pauper, my lord — not at all the disgusting sort of person that you give a sixpence to while you look another way — but some one that seemed to have seen better days — one that, as Shakspeare says, could a tale unfold — though, indeed, I have never thoroughly learned her history — only, that today, as I called to know how she was, and sent my maid into her hut with some trifle, not worth mentioning, I find there is something hangs about her mind concerning the Mowbray family here of St. Ronan's — and my woman says the poor creature is dying, and is raving either for Mr. Mowbray or for some magistrate to receive a declaration; and so I have given you the trouble to come with me, that we may get out of the poor creature, if possible, whatever she has got to say. — I hope it is not murder — I hope not — though young St. Ronan's has been a strange, wild, daring, thoughtless creature — *sgherro insigne*, as the Italian says. — But here is the hut, my lord — pray, walk in."

The mention of the St. Ronan's family, and of a secret relating to them, banished the thoughts which Lord Etherington began to entertain of leaving Lady Penelope to execute her works of devoted charity without his assistance. It was now with an interest equal to her own, that he stood before a most miserable hut, where the unfortunate female, her distresses not greatly relieved by Lady Penelope's ostentatious bounty, had resided both previous to her confinement, and since that event had taken place, with an old woman, one of the parish poor, whose miserable dole the minister had augmented, that she might have some means of assisting the stranger.

Lady Penelope lifted the latch and entered, after a momentary hesitation, which proceeded from a struggle betwixt her fear of infection, and her eager curiosity to know something, she could not guess what, that might affect the Mowbrays in their honour or fortunes. The latter soon prevailed, and she entered, followed by Lord Etherington. The lady, like other comforters of the cabins of the poor, proceeded to rebuke the grumbling old woman for want of order and cleanliness — censured the food which was provided for the patient, and enquired particularly after the wine which she had left to make caudle with. The crone was not so dazzled with Lady Penelope's dignity or bounty as to endure her reprimand with patience. "They that had their bread to won wi' ae arm," she said, for the other hung powerless by her side, "had mair to do than to soop hooses; if her leddyship wad let her ain idle quean of a lass take the besom, she might make the house as clean as she liked; and madam wad be a' the better of the exercise, and wad hae done, at least, ae turn of wark at the week's end."

"Do you hear the old hag, my lord?" said Lady Penelope. "Well, the poor are horrid ungrateful wretches — And the wine, dame — the wine?"

"The wine! — there was hardly half a mutchkin, and puir, thin, fusionless skink it was — the wine was drank out, ye may swear — we didna fling it ower our shouther — if ever we were to get good o't, it was by taking it naked, and no wi' your sugar and your slaisters — I wish, for ane, I had ne'er kend the sour smack o't. If the bedral hadna gien me a drap of usquebaugh, I might e'en hae died of your leddyship's liquor, for"——

Lord Etherington here interrupted the grumbling crone, thrusting some silver into her grasp, and at the same time begging her to be silent. The hag weighed the crown-piece in her hand, and crawled to her chimney-corner, muttering as she went — "This is something like — this is something like — no like rinning into the house and out of the house, and geeing orders, like mistress and mair, and than a puir shilling again Saturday at e'en."

So saying, she sat down to her wheel, and seized, while she spun, her jet-black cutty pipe, from which she soon sent such clouds of vile mundungus vapour as must have cleared the premises of Lady Penelope, had she not been strong in purpose to share the expected confession of the invalid. As for Miss Digges, she coughed, sneezed, retched, and finally ran out of the cottage, declaring she could not live in such a smoke, if it were to hear twenty sick women's last speeches; and that, besides, she was sure to know all about it from Lady Penelope, if it was ever so little worth telling over again.

Lord Etherington was now standing beside the miserable flock-bed, in which lay the poor patient, distracted, in what seemed to be her dying moments, with the peevish clamour of the elder infant, to which she could only reply by low moans, turning her looks as well as she could from its ceaseless whine to the other side of her wretched couch, where lay the unlucky creature to which she had last given birth; its shivering limbs imperfectly covered with a blanket, its little features already swollen and bloated, and its eyes scarce open, apparently insensible to the evils of a state from which it seemed about to be speedily released.

"You are very ill, poor woman," said Lord Etherington; "I am told you desire a magistrate."

"It was Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, whom I desired to see — John Mowbray of St. Ronan's — the lady promised to bring him here."

"I am not Mowbray of St. Ronan's," said Lord Etherington; "but I am a justice of peace, and a member of the legislature — I am, moreover, Mr. Mowbray's particular friend, if I can be of use to you in any of these capacities."

The poor woman remained long silent, and when she spoke it was doubtfully.

"Is my Lady Penelope Penfeather there?" she said, straining her darkened eyes.

"Her ladyship is present, and within hearing," said Lord Etherington.

"My case is the worse," answered the dying woman, for so she seemed, "if I must communicate such a secret as mine to a man of whom I know nothing, and a woman of whom I only know that she wants discretion."

"I— I want discretion!" said Lady Penelope; but at a signal from Lord Etherington she seemed to restrain herself; nor did the sick woman, whose powers of observation were greatly impaired, seem to be aware of the interruption. She spoke, notwithstanding her situation, with an intelligible and even emphatic voice; her manner in a great measure betraying the influence of the fever, and her tone and language seeming much superior to her most miserable condition.

"I am not the abject creature which I seem," she said; "at least, I was not born to be so. I wish I were that utter abject! I wish I were a wretched pauper of the lowest class — a starving vagabond — a wifeless mother — ignorance and insensibility would make me bear my lot like the outcast animal that dies patiently on the side of the common, where it has been half-starved during its life. But I— but I— born and bred to better things, have not lost the memory of them, and they make my present condition — my shame — my poverty — my infamy — the sight of my dying babes — the sense that my own death is coming fast on — they make these things a foretaste of hell!"

Lady Penelope's self-conceit and affectation were broken down by this fearful exordium. She sobbed, shuddered, and, for once perhaps in her life, felt the real, not the assumed necessity, of putting her handkerchief to her eyes. Lord Etherington also was moved.

"Good woman," he said, "as far as relieving your personal wants can mitigate your distress, I will see that that is fully performed, and that your poor children are attended to."

"May God bless you!" said the poor woman, with a glance at the wretched forms beside her; "and may you," she added, after a momentary pause, "deserve the blessing of God, for it is bestowed in vain on those who are unworthy of it!"

Lord Etherington felt, perhaps, a twinge of conscience; for he said, something hastily, "Pray go on, good woman, if you really have any thing to communicate to me as a magistrate — it is time your condition was somewhat mended, and I will cause you to be cared for directly."

"Stop yet a moment," she said; "let me unload my conscience before I go hence, for no earthly relief will long avail to prolong my time here. — I was well born, the more my present shame! well educated, the greater my present guilt! — I was always, indeed, poor, but I felt not of the ills of poverty. I only thought of it when my vanity demanded idle and expensive gratifications, for real wants I knew none. I was companion of a young lady of higher rank than my own, my relative however, and one of such exquisite kindness of disposition, that she treated me as a sister, and would have shared with me all that she had on earth — I scarce think I can go farther with my story! — something rises to my throat when I recollect how I rewarded her sisterly love! — I was elder than Clara — I should have directed her reading, and confirmed her understanding; but my own bent led me to peruse only works, which, though they burlesque nature, are seductive to the imagination. We read these follies together, until we had fashioned out for ourselves a little world of romance, and prepared ourselves for a maze of adventures.

Clara's imaginations were as pure as those of angels; mine were — but it is unnecessary to tell them. The fiend, always watchful, presented a tempter at the moment when it was most dangerous."

She paused here, as if she found difficulty in expressing herself; and Lord Etherington, turning, with great appearance of interest, to Lady Penelope, began to enquire, "Whether it were quite agreeable to her ladyship to remain any longer an ear-witness of this unfortunate's confession? — it seems to be verging on some things — things that it might be unpleasant for your ladyship to hear."

"I was just forming the same opinion, my lord; and, to say truth, was about to propose to your lordship to withdraw, and leave me alone with the poor woman. My sex will make her necessary communications more frank in your lordship's absence."

"True, madam; but then I am called here in my capacity of a magistrate."

"Hush!" said Lady Penelope; "she speaks."

"They say every woman that yields, makes herself a slave to her seducer; but I sold my liberty not to a man, but a demon! He made me serve him in his vile schemes against my friend and patroness — and oh! he found in me an agent too willing, from mere envy, to destroy the virtue which I had lost myself. Do not listen to me any more — Go, and leave me to my fate! I am the most detestable wretch that ever lived — detestable to myself worst of all, because even in my penitence there is a secret whisper that tells me, that were I as I have been, I would again act over all the wickedness I have done, and much worse. Oh! for Heaven's assistance, to crush the wicked thought!"

She closed her eyes, folded her emaciated hands, and held them upwards in the attitude of one who prays internally; presently the hands separated, and fell gently down on the miserable couch; but her eyes did not open, nor was there the slightest sign of motion in the features. Lady Penelope shrieked faintly, hid her eyes, and hurried back from the bed, while Lord Etherington, his looks darkening with a complication of feelings, remained gazing on the poor woman, as if eager to discern whether the spark of life was totally extinct. Her grim old assistant hurried to the bedside, with some spirits in a broken glass.

"Have ye no had pennyworths for your charity?" she said, in spiteful scorn. "Ye buy the very life o' us wi' your shillings and sixpences, your groats and your boddles — ye hae garr'd the puir wretch speak till she swarfs, and now ye stand as if ye never saw a woman in a dwam before? Let me till her wi' the dram — mony words mickle drougt, ye ken — Stand out o' my gate, my leddy, if sae be that ye are a leddy; there is little use of the like of you when there is death in the pot."

Lady Penelope, half affronted, but still more frightened by the manners of the old hag, now gladly embraced Lord Etherington's renewed offer to escort her from the hut. He left it not, however, without bestowing an additional gratuity on the old woman, who received it with a whining benediction.

"The Almighty guide your course through the troubles of this wicked world — and the muckle deevil blaw wind in your sails," she added, in her natural tone, as the guests vanished from her miserable threshold. "A when cork-headed, barmy-brained gowks! that wunna let puir folk sae muckle as die in quiet, wi' their sossings and their soopings."³³

"This poor creature's declaration," said Lord Etherington to Lady Penelope, "seems to refer to matters which the law has nothing to do with, and which, perhaps, as they seem to implicate the peace of a family of respectability, and the character of a young lady, we ought to enquire no farther after."

"I differ from your lordship," said Lady Penelope; "I differ extremely — I suppose you guess whom her discourse touched upon?"

"Indeed, your ladyship does my acuteness too much honour."

"Did she not mention a Christian name?" said Lady Penelope; "your lordship is strangely dull this morning!"

"A Christian name? — No, none that I heard — yes, she said something about — a Catherine, I think it was."

"Catherine!" answered the lady; "No, my lord, it was Clara — rather a rare name in this country, and belonging, I think, to a young lady of whom your lordship should know something, unless your evening flirtations with Lady Binks have blotted entirely out of your memory your morning visits to Shaws-Castle. You are a bold man, my lord. I would advise you to include Mrs. Blower among the objects of your attention, and then you will have maid, wife, and widow upon your list."

"Upon my honour, your ladyship is too severe," said Lord Etherington; "you surround yourself every evening with all that is clever and accomplished among the people here, and then you ridicule a poor secluded monster, who dare not approach your charmed circle, because he seeks for some amusement elsewhere. This is to tyrannize and not to reign — it is Turkish despotism!"

"Ah! my lord, I know you well, my lord," said Lady Penelope — "Sorry would your lordship be, had you not power to render yourself welcome to any circle which you may please to approach."

"That is to say," answered the lord, "you will pardon me if I intrude on your ladyship's coterie this evening?"

"There is no society which Lord Etherington can think of frequenting, where he will not be a welcome guest."

"I will plead then at once my pardon and privilege this evening — And now," (speaking as if he had succeeded in establishing some confidence with her ladyship,) "what do you really think of this blind story?"

"O, I must believe it concerns Miss Mowbray. She was always an odd girl — something about her I could never endure — a sort of effrontery — that is, perhaps, a harsh word, but a kind of assurance — an air of confidence — so that though I kept on a footing with her, because she was an orphan girl of good family, and because I really knew nothing positively bad of her, yet she sometimes absolutely shocked me."

"Your ladyship, perhaps, would not think it right to give publicity to the story? at least, till you know exactly what it is," said the Earl, in a tone of suggestion.

"Depend upon it, that it is quite the worst, the very worst — You heard the woman say that she had exposed Clara to ruin — and you know she must have meant Clara Mowbray, because she was so anxious to tell the story to her brother, St. Ronan's."

"Very true — I did not think of that," answered Lord Etherington; "still it would be hard on the poor girl if it should get abroad."

"O, it will never get abroad for me," said Lady Penelope; "I would not tell the very wind of it. But then I cannot meet Miss Mowbray as formerly — I have a station in life to maintain, my lord — and I am under the necessity of being select in my society — it is a duty I owe the public, if it were even not my own inclination."

"Certainly, my Lady Penelope," said Lord Etherington; "but then consider, that, in a place where all eyes are necessarily observant of your ladyship's behaviour, the least coldness on your part to Miss Mowbray — and, after all, we have nothing like assurance of any thing being wrong there — would ruin her with the company here, and with the world at large."

"Oh! my lord," answered Lady Penelope, "as for the truth of the story, I have some private reasons of my own for 'holding the strange tale devoutly true;' for I had a mysterious hint from a very worthy, but a very singular man, (your lordship knows how I adore originality,) the clergyman of the parish, who made me aware there was something wrong about Miss Clara — something that — your lordship will excuse my speaking more plainly — Oh, no! — I fear — I fear it is all too true — You know Mr. Cargill, I suppose, my lord?"

"Yes — no — I — I think I have seen him," said Lord Etherington. "But how came the lady to make the parson her father-confessor? — they have no auricular confession in the Kirk — it must have been with the purpose of marriage, I presume — let us hope that it took place — perhaps it really was so — did he, Cargill — the minister, I mean — say any thing of such a matter?"

"Not a word — not a word — I see where you are, my lord; you would put a good face on't. —

'They call'd it marriage, by that specious name

To veil the crime, and sanctify the shame.'

Queen Dido for that. How the clergyman came into the secret I cannot tell — he is a very close man. But I know he will not hear of Miss Mowbray being married to any one, unquestionably because he knows that, in doing so, she would introduce disgrace into some honest family — and, truly, I am much of his mind, my lord."

"Perhaps Mr. Cargill may know the lady is privately married already," said the Earl; "I think that is the more natural inference, begging your ladyship's pardon for presuming to differ in opinion."

Lady Penelope seemed determined not to take this view of the case.

"No, no — no, I tell you," she replied; "she cannot be married, for if she were married, how could the poor wretch say that she was ruined? — You know there is a difference betwixt ruin and marriage."

"Some people are said to have found them synonymous, Lady Penelope," answered the Earl.

"You are smart on me, my lord; but still, in common parlance, when we say a woman is ruined, we mean quite the contrary of her being married — it is impossible for me to be more explicit upon such a topic, my lord."

"I defer to your ladyship's better judgment," said Lord Etherington. "I only entreat you to observe a little caution in this business — I will make the strictest enquiries of this woman, and acquaint you with the result; and I hope, out of regard to the respectable family of St. Ronan's, your ladyship will be in no hurry to intimate any thing to Miss Mowbray's prejudice."

"I certainly am no person to spread scandal, my lord," answered the lady, drawing herself up; "at the same time, I must say, the Mowbrays have little claim on me for forbearance. I am sure I was the first person to bring this Spa into fashion, which has been a matter of such consequence to their estate; and yet Mr. Mowbray set himself against me, my lord, in every possible sort of way, and encouraged the under-bred people about him to behave very strangely. — There was the business of building the Belvidere, which he would not permit to be done out of the stock-purse of the company, because I had given the workmen the plan and the orders — and then, about the tea-room — and the hour for beginning dancing — and about the subscription for Mr. Rymour's new Tale of Chivalry — in short, I owe no consideration to Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's."

"But the poor young lady?" said Lord Etherington.

"Oh! the poor young lady? — the poor young lady can be as saucy as a rich young lady, I promise you. — There was a business in which she used me scandalously, Lord Etherington — it was about a very trifling matter — a shawl. Nobody minds dress less than I do, my lord; I thank Heaven my thoughts turn upon very different topics — but it is in trifles that disrespect and unkindness are shown; and I have had a full share of both from Miss Clara, besides a good deal of impertinence from her brother upon the same subject."

"There is but one way remains," thought the Earl, as they approached the Spa, "and that is to work on the fears of this d — d vindictive blue-stockin'd wild-cat. — Your ladyship," he said aloud, "is aware what severe damages have been awarded in late cases where something approaching to scandal has been traced to ladies of consideration — the privileges of the tea-table have been found insufficient to protect some fair critics against the consequences of too frank and liberal animadversion upon the characters of their friends. So pray, remember, that as yet we know very little on this subject."

Lady Penelope loved money, and feared the law; and this hint, fortified by her acquaintance with Mowbray's love of his sister, and his irritable and revengeful disposition, brought her in a moment much nearer the temper in which Lord Etherington wished to leave her. She protested, that no one could be more tender than she of the fame of the unfortunate, even supposing their guilt was fully proved — promised caution on the subject of the pauper's declaration, and hoped Lord Etherington would join her tea-party early in the evening, as she wished to make him acquainted with one or two of her *protégés*, whom, she was sure, his lordship would find deserving of his advice and countenance. Being by this time at the door of her own apartment, her ladyship took leave of the Earl with a most gracious smile.

Chapter 33 Disappointment.

*On the lee-beam lies the land, boys,
See all clear to reef each course;
Let the fore-sheet go, don't mind, boys,
Though the weather should be worse.*

THE STORM.

"It darkens round me like a tempest," thought Lord Etherington, as, with slow step, folded arms, and his white hat slouched over his brows, he traversed the short interval of space betwixt his own apartments and those of the Lady Penelope. In a buck of the old school, one of Congreve's men of wit and pleasure about town, this would have been a departure from character; but the present fine man does not derogate from his quality, even by exhibiting all the moody and gentlemanlike solemnity of Master Stephen.^{E10} So, Lord Etherington was at liberty to carry on his reflections, without attracting observation. — "I have put a stopper into the mouth of that old vinegar-cruet of quality, but the acidity of her temper will soon dissolve the charm — And what to do?"

As he looked round him, he saw his trusty valet Solmes, who, touching his hat with due respect, said, as he passed him, "Your lordship's letters are in your private dispatch-box."

Simple as these words were, and indifferent the tone in which they were spoken, their import made Lord Etherington's heart bound as if his fate had depended on the accents. He intimated no farther interest in the communication, however, than to desire Solmes to be below, in case he should ring; and with these words entered his apartment, and barred and bolted the door, even before he looked on the table where his dispatch-box was placed.

Lord Etherington had, as is usual, one key to the box which held his letters, his confidential servant being intrusted with the other; so that, under the protection of a patent lock, his dispatches escaped all risk of being tampered with — a precaution not altogether unnecessary on the part of those who frequent hotels and lodging-houses.

"By your leave, Mr. Bramah," said the Earl, as he applied the key, jesting, as it were, with his own agitation, as he would have done with that of a third party. The lid was raised, and displayed the packet, the appearance and superscription of which had attracted his observation but a short while before in the post-office. *Then* he would have given much to be possessed of the opportunity which was now in his power; but many pause on the brink of a crime, who have contemplated it at a distance without scruple. Lord Etherington's first impulse had led him to poke the fire; and he held in his hand the letter which he was more than half tempted to commit, without even breaking the seal, to the fiery element. But, though sufficiently familiarized with guilt, he was not as yet acquainted with it in its basest shapes — he had not yet acted with meanness, or at least with what the world terms such. He had been a duellist, the manners of the age authorized it — a libertine, the world excused it to his youth and condition — a bold and successful gambler, for that quality he was admired and envied; and a thousand other inaccuracies, to which these practices and habits lead, were easily slurred over in a man of quality, with fortune and spirit to support his rank. But his present meditated act was of a different kind. Tell it not in Bond Street, whisper it not on St. James's pavement! — it amounted to an act of petty larceny, for which the code of honour would admit of no composition.

Lord Etherington, under the influence of these recollections, stood for a few minutes suspended — But the devil always finds logic to convince his followers. He recollected the wrong done to his mother, and to himself, her offspring, to whom his father had, in the face of the whole world, imparted the hereditary rights, of which he was now, by a posthumous deed, endeavouring to deprive the memory of the one and the expectations of the other. Surely, the right being his own, he had a full title, by the most effectual means, whatever such means might be, to repel all attacks on that right, and even destroy, if necessary, the documents by which his enemies were prosecuting their unjust plans against his honour and interest.

This reasoning prevailed, and Lord Etherington again held the devoted packet above the flames; when it occurred to him, that, his resolution being taken, he ought to carry it into execution as effectually as possible; and to do so, it was necessary to know, that the packet actually contained the papers which he was desirous to destroy.

Never did a doubt arise in juster time; for no sooner had the seal burst, and the envelope rustled under his fingers, than he perceived, to his utter consternation, that he held in his hand only the copies of the deeds for which Francis Tyrrel had written, the originals of which he had too sanguinely concluded would be forwarded according to his requisition. A letter from a partner of the house with which they were deposited, stated, that they had not felt themselves at liberty, in the absence of the head of their firm, to whom these papers had been committed, to part with them even to Mr. Tyrrel, though they had proceeded so far as to open the parcel, and now transmitted to him formal copies of the papers contained in it, which, they presumed, would serve Mr. Tyrrel's purpose for consulting

counsel, or the like. They themselves, in a case of so much delicacy, and in the absence of their principal partner, were determined to retain the originals, unless called to produce them in a court of justice.

With a solemn imprecation on the formality and absurdity of the writer, Lord Etherington let the letter of advice drop from his hand into the fire, and throwing himself into a chair, passed his hand across his eyes, as if their very power of sight had been blighted by what he had read. His title, and his paternal fortune, which he thought but an instant before might be rendered unchallengeable by a single movement of his hand, seemed now on the verge of being lost for ever. His rapid recollection failed not to remind him of what was less known to the world, that his early and profuse expenditure had greatly dilapidated his maternal fortune; and that the estate of Nettlewood, which five minutes ago he only coveted as a wealthy man desires increase of his store, must now be acquired, if he would avoid being a poor and embarrassed spendthrift. To impede his possessing himself of this property, fate had restored to the scene the penitent of the morning, who, as he had too much reason to believe, was returned to this neighbourhood, to do justice to Clara Mowbray, and who was not unlikely to put the whole story of the marriage on its right footing. She, however, might be got rid of; and it might still be possible to hurry Miss Mowbray, by working on her fears, or through the agency of her brother, into a union with him while he still preserved the title of Lord Etherington. This, therefore, he resolved to secure, if effort or if intrigue could carry the point; nor was it the least consideration, that, should he succeed, he would obtain over Tyrrel, his successful rival, such a triumph, as would be sufficient to embitter the tranquillity of his whole life.

In a few minutes, his rapid and contriving invention had formed a plan for securing the sole advantage which seemed to remain open for him; and conscious that he had no time to lose, he entered immediately upon the execution.

The bell summoned Solmes to his lordship's apartment, when the Earl, as coolly as if he had hoped to dupe his experienced valet by such an assertion, said, "You have brought me a packet designed for some man at the Aultoun — let it be sent to him — Stay — I will re-seal it first."

He accordingly re-sealed the packet, containing all the writings, excepting the letter of advice, (which he had burnt,) and gave it to the valet, with the caution, "I wish you would not make such blunders in future."

"I beg your lordship's pardon — I will take better care again — thought it was addressed to your lordship."

So answered Solmes, too knowing to give the least look of intelligence, far less to remind the Earl that his own directions had occasioned the mistake of which he complained.

"Solmes," continued the Earl, "you need not mention your blunder at the post-office; it would only occasion tattle in this idle place — but be sure that the gentleman has his letter. — And, Solmes, I see Mr. Mowbray walk across — ask him to dine with me today at five. I have a headache, and cannot face the clamour of the savages who feed at the public table. — And let me see — make my compliments to Lady Penelope Penfeather — I will certainly have the honour of waiting on her ladyship this evening to tea, agreeably to her very boring invitation received — write her a proper card, and word it your own way. Bespeak dinner for two, and see you have some of that batch of Burgundy." The servant was retiring, when his master added, "Stay a moment — I have a more important business than I have yet mentioned. — Solmes, you have managed devilish ill about the woman Irwin!"

"I, my lord?" answered Solmes.

"Yes, you, sir — did you not tell me she had gone to the West Indies with a friend of yours, and did not I give them a couple of hundred pounds for passage-money?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the valet.

"Ay, but now it proves *no*, my lord," said Lord Etherington; "for she has found her way back to this country in miserable plight — half-starved, and, no doubt, willing to do or say any thing for a livelihood — How has this happened?"

"Biddulph must have taken her cash, and turned her loose, my lord," answered Solmes, as if he had been speaking of the most commonplace transaction in the world; "but I know the woman's nature so well, and am so much master of her history, that I can carry her off the country in twenty-four hours, and place her where she will never think of returning, provided your lordship can spare me so long."

"About it directly — but I can tell you, that you will find the woman in a very penitential humour, and very ill in health to boot."

"I am sure of my game," answered Solmes; "with submission to your lordship, I think if death and her good angel had hold of one of that woman's arms, the devil and I could make a shift to lead her away by the other."

"Away and about it, then," said Etherington. "But, hark ye, Solmes, be kind to her, and see all her wants relieved. I have done her mischief enough — though nature and the devil had done half the work to my hand."

Solmes at length was permitted to withdraw to execute his various commissions, with an assurance that his services would not be wanted for the next twenty-four hours.

"Soh!" said the Earl, as his agent withdrew, "there is a spring put in motion, which, well oiled, will move the whole machine — And here, in lucky time, comes Harry Jekyl — I hear his whistle on the stairs. — There is a silly lightness of heart about that fellow, which I envy, while I despise it; but he is welcome now, for I want him."

Jekyl entered accordingly, and broke out with "I am glad to see one of your fellows laying a cloth for two in your parlour, Etherington — I was afraid you were going down among these confounded bores again today."

"You are not to be one of the two, Hal," answered Lord Etherington.

"No? — then I may be a third, I hope, if not second?"

"Neither first, second, nor third, Captain. — The truth is, I want a tête-à-tête with Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's," replied the Earl; "and, besides, I have to beg the very particular favour of you to go again to that fellow Martigny. It is time that he should produce his papers, if he has any — of which, for one, I do not believe a word. He has had ample time to hear from London; and I think I have delayed long enough in an important matter upon his bare assertion."

"I cannot blame your impatience," said Jekyl, "and I will go on your errand instantly. As you waited on my advice, I am bound to find an end to your suspense. — At the same time, if the man is not possessed of such papers as he spoke of, I must own he is happy in a command of consummate assurance, which might set up the whole roll of attorneys."

"You will be soon able to judge of that," said Lord Etherington; "and now, off with you — Why do you look at me so anxiously?"

"I cannot tell — I have strange forebodings about this tête-à-tête with Mowbray. You should spare him, Etherington — he is not your match — wants both judgment and temper."

"Tell him so, Jekyl," answered the Earl, "and his proud Scotch stomach will be up in an instant, and he will pay you with a shot for your pains. — Why, he thinks himself cock of the walk, this strutting bantam, notwithstanding the lesson I gave him before — And what do you think? — He has the impudence to talk about my attentions to Lady Binks as inconsistent with the prosecution of my suit to his sister! Yes, Hal — this awkward Scotch laird, that has scarce tact enough to make love to a ewe-milker, or, at best, to some daggeltailed soubrette, has the assurance to start himself as my rival!"

"Then, good-night to St. Ronan's! — this will be a fatal dinner to him. — Etherington, I know by that laugh you are bent on mischief — I have a great mind to give him a hint."

"I wish you would," answered the Earl; "it would all turn to my account."

"Do you defy me? — Well, if I meet him, I will put him on his guard."

The friends parted; and it was not long ere Jekyl encountered Mowbray on one of the public walks.

"You dine with Etherington today?" said the Captain — "Forgive me, Mr. Mowbray, if I say one single word — Beware."

"Of what should I beware, Captain Jekyl," answered Mowbray, "when I dine with a friend of your own, and a man of honour?"

"Certainly Lord Etherington is both, Mr. Mowbray; but he loves play, and is too hard for most people."

"I thank you for your hint, Captain Jekyl — I am a raw Scotchman, it is true; but yet I know a thing or two. Fair play is always presumed amongst gentlemen; and that taken for granted, I have the vanity to think I need no one's caution on the subject, not even Captain Jekyl's, though his experience must needs be so much superior to mine."

"In that case, sir," said Jekyl, bowing coldly, "I have no more to say, and I hope there is no harm done. — Conceited coxcomb!" he added, mentally, as they parted, "how truly did Etherington judge of him, and what an ass was I to intermeddle! — I hope Etherington will strip him of every feather!"

He pursued his walk in quest of Tyrrel, and Mowbray proceeded to the apartments of the Earl, in a temper of mind well suited to the purposes of the latter, who judged of his disposition accurately when he permitted Jekyl to give his well-meant warning. To be supposed, by a man of acknowledged fashion, so decidedly inferior to his antagonist — to be considered as an object of compassion, and made the subject of a good-boy warning, was gall and bitterness to his proud spirit, which, the more that he felt a conscious inferiority in the arts which they all cultivated, struggled the more to preserve the footing of at least apparent equality.

Since the first memorable party at piquet, Mowbray had never hazarded his luck with Lord Etherington, except for trifling stakes; but his conceit led him to suppose that he now fully understood his play, and, agreeably to the practice of those who have habituated themselves to gambling, he had every now and then felt a yearning to try for his revenge. He wished also to be out of Lord Etherington's debt, feeling galled under a sense of pecuniary obligation, which hindered his speaking his mind to him fully upon the subject of his flirtation with Lady Binks, which he justly considered as an insult to his family, considering the footing on which the Earl seemed desirous to stand with Clara Mowbray. From these obligations a favourable evening might free him, and Mowbray was, in fact, indulging in a waking dream to this purpose, when Jekyl interrupted him. His untimely warning only excited a spirit of contradiction, and a determination to show the adviser how little he was qualified to judge of his talents; and in this humour, his ruin, which was the consequence of that afternoon, was far from seeming to be the premeditated, or even the voluntary work of the Earl of Etherington.

On the contrary, the victim himself was the first to propose play — deep play — double stakes; while Lord Etherington, on the other hand, often proposed to diminish their game, or to break off entirely; but it was always with an affectation of superiority which only stimulated Mowbray to farther and more desperate risks; and, at last, when Mowbray became his debtor to an overwhelming amount, (his circumstances considered,) the Earl threw down the cards, and declared he should be too late for Lady Penelope's tea-party, to which he was positively engaged.

"Will you not give me my revenge?" said Mowbray, taking up the cards, and shuffling them with fierce anxiety.

"Not now, Mowbray; we have played too long already — you have lost too much — more than perhaps is convenient for you to pay."

Mowbray gnashed his teeth, in spite of his resolution to maintain an exterior, at least, of firmness.

"You can take your time, you know," said the Earl; "a note of hand will suit me as well as the money."

"No, by G—!" answered Mowbray, "I will not be so taken in a second time — I had better have sold myself to the devil than to your lordship — I have never been my own man since."

"These are not very kind expressions, Mowbray," said the Earl; "you *would* play, and they that will play must expect sometimes to lose"——

"And they who win will expect to be paid," said Mowbray, breaking in. "I know that as well as you, my lord, and you shall be paid — I will pay you — I will pay you, by G—! Do you make any doubt that I will pay you, my lord?"

"You look as if you thought of paying me in sharp coin," said Lord Etherington; "and I think that would scarce be consistent with the terms we stand upon towards each other."

"By my soul, my lord," said Mowbray, "I cannot tell what these terms are; and to be at my wit's end at once, I should be glad to know. You set out upon paying addresses to my sister, and with your visits and opportunities at Shaws-Castle, I cannot find the matter makes the least progress — it keeps moving without advancing, like a child's rocking-horse. Perhaps you think that you have curbed me up so tightly, that I dare not stir in the matter; but you will find it otherwise. — Your lordship may keep a haram if you will, but my sister shall not enter it."

"You are angry, and therefore you are unjust," said Etherington; "you know well enough it is your sister's fault that there is any delay. I am most willing — most desirous — to call her Lady Etherington — nothing but her unlucky prejudices against me have retarded a union which I have so many reasons for desiring."

"Well," replied Mowbray, "that shall be my business. I know no reason she can pretend to decline a marriage so honourable to her house, and which is approved of by me, that house's head. That matter shall be arranged in twenty-four hours."

"It will do me the most sensible pleasure," said Lord Etherington; "you shall soon see how sincerely I desire your alliance; and as for the trifle you have lost"——

"It is no trifle to me, my lord — it is my ruin — but it shall be paid — and let me tell your lordship, you may thank your good luck for it more than your good play."

"We will say no more of it at present, if you please," said Lord Etherington, "tomorrow is a new day; and if you will take my advice, you will not be too harsh with your sister. A little firmness is seldom amiss with young women, but severity"——

"I will pray your lordship to spare me your advice on this subject. However valuable it may be in other respects, I can, I take it, speak to my own sister in my own way."

"Since you are so caustically-disposed, Mowbray," answered the Earl, "I presume you will not honour her ladyship's tea-table to-night, though I believe it will be the last of the season?"

"And why should you think so, my lord?" answered Mowbray, whose losses had rendered him testy and contradictory upon every subject that was started. "Why should not I pay my respects to Lady Penelope, or any other tabby of quality? I have no title, indeed; but I suppose that my family"——

"Entitles you to become a canon of Strasburgh^{E11} doubtless — But you do not seem in a very Christian mood for taking orders. All I meant to say was, that you and Lady Pen were not used to be on such a good footing."

"Well, she sent me a card for her blow-out," said Mowbray, "and so I am resolved to go. When I have been there half an hour, I will ride up to Shaws-Castle, and you shall hear of my speed in wooing for you tomorrow morning."

Chapter 34 A Tea-Party.

*Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round;
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
Thus let us welcome peaceful evening in.*

COWPER'S TASK.

The approach of the cold and rainy season had now so far thinned the company at the Well, that, in order to secure the necessary degree of crowd upon her tea-nights, Lady Penelope was obliged to employ some coaxing towards those whom she had considered as much under par in society. Even the Doctor and Mrs. Blower were graciously smiled upon — for their marriage was now an arranged affair; and the event was of a nature likely to spread the reputation of the Spa among wealthy widows, and medical gentlemen of more skill than practice. So in they came, the Doctor smirking, gallanting, and performing all the bustling parade of settled and arranged courtship, with much of that grace wherewith a turkey-cock goes through the same ceremony. Old Touchwood had also attended her ladyship's summons, chiefly, it may be supposed, from his restless fidgety disposition, which seldom suffered him to remain absent even from those places of resort of which he usually professed his detestation. There was, besides, Mr. Winterblossom, who, in his usual spirit of quiet epicurism and self-indulgence, was, under the fire of a volley of compliments to Lady Penelope, scheming to secure for himself an early cup of tea. There was Lady Binks also, with the wonted degree of sullenness in her beautiful face, angry at her husband as usual, and not disposed to be pleased with Lord Etherington for being absent, when she desired to excite Sir Bingo's jealousy. This she had discovered to be the most effectual way of tormenting the Baronet, and she rejoiced in it with the savage glee of a

hackney coachman, who has found a raw, where he can make his poor jade feel the whip. The rest of the company were also in attendance as usual. MacTurk himself was present, notwithstanding that he thought it an egregious waste of hot water, to bestow it upon compounding any mixture saving punch. He had of late associated himself a good deal with the traveller; not that they by any means resembled each other in temper or opinions, but rather because there was that degree of difference betwixt them which furnished perpetual subject for dispute and discussion. They were not long, on the present occasion, ere they lighted on a fertile source of controversy.

"Never tell me of your points of honour," said Touchwood, raising his voice altogether above the general tone of polite conversation — "all humbug, Captain MacTurk — mere hair-traps to springe woodcocks — men of sense break through them."

"Upon my word, sir," said the Captain, "and myself is surprised to hear you — for, look you, sir, every man's honour is the breath of his nostrils — Cot tamn!"

"Then, let men breathe through their mouths, and be d — d," returned the controversialist. "I tell you, sir, that, besides its being forbidden, both by law and gospel, it's an idiotical and totally absurd practice, that of duelling. An honest savage has more sense than to practise it — he takes his bow or his gun, as the thing may be, and shoots his enemy from behind a bush. And a very good way; for you see there can, in that case, be only one man's death between them."

"Saul of my body, sir," said the Captain, "gin ye promulgate sic doctrines among the good company, it's my belief you will bring somebody to the gallows."

"Thank ye, Captain, with all my heart; but I stir up no quarrels — I leave war to them that live by it. I only say, that, except our old, stupid ancestors in the north-west here, I know no country so silly as to harbour this custom of duelling. It is unknown in Africa, among the negroes — in America."

"Don't tell me that," said the Captain; "a Yankee will fight with muskets and buck-shot, rather than sit still with an affront. I should know Jonathan, I think."

"Altogether unknown among the thousand tribes of India."

"I'll be tamned, then!" said Captain MacTurk. "Was I not in Tippoo's prison at Bangalore? and, when the joyful day of our liberation came, did we not solemnize it with fourteen little affairs, whereof we had been laying the foundation in our house of captivity, as holy writ has it, and never went farther to settle them than the glacis of the fort? By my soul, you would have thought there was a smart skirmish, the firing was so close; and did not I, Captain MacTurk, fight three of them myself, without moving my foot from the place I set it on?"

"And pray, sir, what might be the result of this Christian mode of giving thanks for your deliverance?" demanded Mr. Touchwood.

"A small list of casualties, after all," said the Captain; "one killed on the spot, one died of his wounds — two wounded severely — three ditto slightly, and little Duncan Macphail reported missing. We were out of practice, after such long confinement. So you see how we manage matters in India, my dear friend."

"You are to understand," replied Touchwood, "that I spoke only of the heathen natives, who, heathen as they are, live in the light of their own moral reason, and among whom ye shall therefore see better examples of practical morality than among such as yourselves; who, though calling yourselves Christians, have no more knowledge of the true acceptation and meaning of your religion, than if you had left your Christianity at the Cape of Good Hope, as they say of you, and forgot to take it up when you come back again."

"Py Cot! and I can tell you, sir," said the Captain, elevating at once his voice and his nostrils, and snuffing the air with a truculent and indignant visage, "that I will not permit you or any man to throw any such scandal on my character. — I thank Cot, I can bring good witness that I am as good a Christian as another, for a poor sinner, as the best of us are; and I am ready to justify my religion with my sword — Cot tamn! — Compare my own self with a parcel of black heathen bodies and natives, that were never in the inner side of a kirk whilst they lived, but go about worshipping stocks and stones, and swinging themselves upon bamboos, like peasts, as they are!"

An indignant growling in his throat, which sounded like the acquiescence of his inward man in the indignant proposition which his external organs thus expressed, concluded this haughty speech, which, however, made not the least impression on Touchwood, who cared as little for angry tones and looks as he did for fine speeches. So that it is likely a quarrel between the Christian preceptor and the peacemaker might have occurred for the amusement of the company, had not the attention of both, but particularly that of Touchwood, been diverted from the topic of debate by the entrance of Lord Etherington and Mowbray.

The former was, as usual, all grace, smiles, and gentleness. Yet, contrary to his wonted custom, which usually was, after a few general compliments, to attach himself particularly to Lady Binks, the Earl, on the present occasion, avoided the side of the room on which that beautiful but sullen idol held her station, and attached himself exclusively to Lady Penelope Penfeather, enduring, without flinching, the strange variety of conceited *bavardage*, which that lady's natural parts and acquired information enabled her to pour forth with unparalleled profusion.

An honest heathen, one of Plutarch's heroes, if I mistake not,^{E12} dreamed once upon a night, that the figure of Proserpina, whom he had long worshipped, visited his slumbers with an angry and vindictive countenance, and menaced him with vengeance, in resentment of his having neglected her altars, with the usual fickleness of a polytheist, for those of some more fashionable divinity. Not that goddess of the infernal regions herself could assume a more haughty or more displeased countenance than that with which Lady Binks looked from time to time upon Lord Etherington, as if to warn him of the consequence of this departure from the allegiance which the young Earl had hitherto manifested towards her, and which seemed now, she knew not why, unless it were for the purpose of public insult, to be transferred to her rival. Perilous as her eye-glances were, and much as they menaced, Lord Etherington felt at this moment the importance of soothing Lady Penelope to silence on the subject of the invalid's confession of that morning, to be more pressing than that of appeasing the indignation of Lady Binks. The former was a case of the most urgent necessity — the latter, if he was at all anxious on the subject, might, he perhaps thought, be trusted to time. Had the ladies continued on a tolerable footing together, he might have endeavoured to conciliate both. But the bitterness of their long-suppressed feud had greatly increased, now that it was probable the end of the season was to separate them, in all likelihood for ever; so that Lady Penelope had no longer any motive for countenancing Lady Binks, or the lady of Sir Bingo for desiring Lady Penelope's countenance. The wealth and lavish expense of the one was no longer to render more illustrious the suit of her right honourable friend, nor was the society of Lady Penelope likely to be soon again useful or necessary to Lady Binks. So that neither were any longer desirous to suppress symptoms of the mutual contempt and dislike which they had long nourished for each other; and whoever should, in this decisive hour, take part with one, had little henceforward to expect from her rival. What farther and more private reasons Lady Binks might have to resent the defection of Lord Etherington, have never come with certainty to our knowledge; but it was said there had been high words between them on the floating report that his lordship's visits to Shaws-Castle were dictated by the wish to find a bride there.

Women's wits are said to be quick in spying the surest means of avenging a real or supposed slight. After biting her pretty lips, and revolving in her mind the readiest means of vengeance, fate threw in her way young Mowbray of St. Ronan's. She looked at him, and endeavoured to fix his attention with a nod and gracious smile, such as in an ordinary mood would have instantly drawn him to her side. On receiving in answer only a vacant glance and a bow, she was led to observe him more attentively, and was induced to believe, from his wavering look, varying complexion, and unsteady step, that he had been drinking unusually deep. Still his eye was less than of an intoxicated than of a disturbed and desperate man, one whose faculties were engrossed by deep and turbid reflection, which withdrew him from the passing scene.

"Do you observe how ill Mr. Mowbray looks?" said she, in a loud whisper; "I hope he has not heard what Lady Penelope was just now saying of his family?"

"Unless he hears it from you, my lady," answered Mr. Touchwood, who, upon Mowbray's entrance, had broken off his discourse with MacTurk, "I think there is little chance of his learning it from any other person."

"What is the matter?" said Mowbray, sharply, addressing Chatterly and Winterblossom; but the one shrunk nervously from the question, protesting, he indeed had not been precisely attending to what had been passing among the ladies, and Winterblossom bowed out of the scrape with quiet and cautious politeness — "he really had not given particular attention to what was passing — I was negotiating with Mrs. Jones for an additional lump of sugar to my coffee. — Egad, it was so difficult a piece of diplomacy," he added, sinking his voice, "that I have an idea her ladyship calculates the West India produce by grains and pennyweights."

The innuendo, if designed to make Mowbray smile, was far from succeeding. He stepped forward, with more than usual stiffness in his air, which was never entirely free from self-consequence, and said to Lady Binks, "May I request to know of your ladyship what particular respecting my family had the honour to engage the attention of the company?"

"I was only a listener, Mr. Mowbray," returned Lady Binks, with evident enjoyment of the rising indignation which she read in his countenance; "not being queen of the night, I am not at all disposed to be answerable for the turn of the conversation."

Mowbray, in no humour to bear jesting, yet afraid to expose himself by farther enquiry in a company so public, darted a fierce look at Lady Penelope, then in close conversation with Lord Etherington — advanced a step or two towards them — then, as if checking himself, turned on his heel, and left the room. A few minutes afterwards, and when certain satirical nods and winks were circulating among the assembly, a waiter slid a piece of paper into Mrs. Jones's hand, who, on looking at the contents, seemed about to leave the room.

"Jones — Jones!" exclaimed Lady Penelope, in surprise and displeasure.

"Only the key of the tea-caddie, your ladyship," answered Jones; "I will be back in an instant."

"Jones — Jones!" again exclaimed her mistress, "here is enough" — of tea, she would have said; but Lord Etherington was so near her, that she was ashamed to complete the sentence, and had only hope in Jones's quickness of apprehension, and the prospect that she would be unable to find the key which she went in search of.

Jones, meanwhile, tripped off to a sort of housekeeper's apartment, of which she was *locum tenens* for the evening, for the more ready supply of whatever might be wanted on Lady Penelope's night, as it was called. Here she found Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, whom she instantly began to assail with, "La! now, Mr. Mowbray, you are such another gentleman! — I am sure you will make me lose my place — I'll swear you will — what can you have to say, that you could not as well put off for an hour?"

"I want to know, Jones," answered Mowbray, in a different tone, perhaps, from what the damsel expected, "what your lady was just now saying about my family."

"Pshaw! — was that all?" answered Mrs. Jones. "What should she be saying? — nonsense — Who minds what she says? — I am sure I never do, for one."

"Nay, but, my dear Jones," said Mowbray, "I insist upon knowing — I must know, and I *will* know."

"La! Mr. Mowbray, why should I make mischief? — As I live, I hear some one coming! and if you were found speaking with me here — indeed, indeed, some one is coming!"

"The devil may come, if he will!" said Mowbray, "but we do not part, pretty mistress, till you tell me what I wish to know."

"Lord, sir, you frighten me!" answered Jones; "but all the room heard it as well as I — it was about Miss Mowbray — and that my lady would be shy of her company hereafter — for that she was — she was" —

"For that my sister was *what*?" said Mowbray, fiercely, seizing her arm.

"Lord, sir, you terrify me!" said Jones, beginning to cry; "at any rate, it was not I that said it — it was Lady Penelope."

"And what was it the old, adder-tongued madwoman dared to say of Clara Mowbray? — Speak out plainly, and directly, or, by Heaven, I'll make you!"

"Hold, sir — hold, for God's sake! — you will break my arm," answered the terrified handmaiden. "I am sure I know no harm of Miss Mowbray; only, my lady spoke as if she was no better than she ought to be. — Lord, sir, there is some one listening at the door!" — and making a spring out of his grasp, she hastened back to the room in which the company were assembled.

Mowbray stood petrified at the news he had heard, ignorant alike what could be the motive for a calumny so atrocious, and uncertain what he were best do to put a stop to the scandal. To his farther confusion, he was presently convinced of the truth of Mrs. Jones's belief that they had been watched, for, as he went to the door of the apartment, he was met by Mr. Touchwood.

"What has brought you here, sir?" said Mowbray, sternly.

"Hoitie toitie," answered the traveller, "why, how came *you* here, if you go to that, squire? — Egad, Lady Penelope is trembling for her souchong, so I just took a step here to save her ladyship the trouble of looking after Mrs. Jones in person, which, I think, might have been a worse interruption than mine, Mr. Mowbray."

"Pshaw, sir, you talk nonsense," said Mowbray; "the tea-room is so infernally hot, that I had sat down here a moment to draw breath, when the young woman came in."

"And you are going to run away, now the old gentleman is come in?" said Touchwood — "Come, sir, I am more your friend than you may think."

"Sir, you are intrusive — I want nothing that you can give me," said Mowbray.

"That is a mistake," answered the senior; "for I can supply you with what most young men want — money and wisdom."

"You will do well to keep both till they are wanted," said Mowbray.

"Why, so I would, squire, only that I have taken something of a fancy for your family; and they are supposed to have wanted cash and good counsel for two generations, if not for three."

"Sir," said Mowbray, angrily, "you are too old either to play the buffoon, or to get buffoon's payment."

"Which is like monkey's allowance, I suppose," said the traveller, "more kicks than halfpence. — Well — at least I am not young enough to quarrel with boys for bullying. I'll convince you, however, Mr. Mowbray, that I know some more of your affairs than what you give me credit for."

"It may be," answered Mowbray, "but you will oblige me more by minding your own."

"Very like; meantime, your losses to-night to my Lord Etherington are no trifle, and no secret neither."

"Mr. Touchwood, I desire to know where you had your information?" said Mowbray.

"A matter of very little consequence compared to its truth or falsehood, Mr. Mowbray," answered the old gentleman.

"But of the last importance to me, sir," said Mowbray. "In a word, had you such information by or through means of Lord Etherington? — Answer me this single question, and then I shall know better what to think on the subject."

"Upon my honour," said Touchwood, "I neither had my information from Lord Etherington directly nor indirectly. I say thus much to give you satisfaction, and I now expect you will hear me with patience."

"Forgive me, sir," interrupted Mowbray, "one farther question. I understand something was said in disparagement of my sister just as I entered the tea-room?"

"Hem — hem — hem!" said Touchwood, hesitating. "I am sorry your ears have served you so well — something there was said lightly, something that can be easily explained, I dare say; — And now, Mr. Mowbray, let me speak a few serious words with you."

"And now, Mr. Touchwood, we have no more to say to each other — good evening to you."

He brushed past the old man, who in vain endeavoured to stop him, and, hurrying to the stable, demanded his horse. It was ready saddled, and waited his orders; but even the short time that was necessary to bring it to the door of the stable was exasperating to Mowbray's impatience. Not less exasperating was the constant interceding voice of Touchwood, who, in tones alternately plaintive and snappish, kept on a string of expostulations.

"Mr. Mowbray, only five words with you — Mr. Mowbray, you will repent this — Is this a night to ride in, Mr. Mowbray? — My stars, sir, if you would but have five minutes' patience!"

Curses, not loud but deep, muttered in the throat of the impatient laird, were the only reply, until his horse was brought out, when, staying no farther question, he sprung into the saddle. The poor horse paid for the delay, which could not be laid to his charge. Mowbray struck him hard with his spurs so soon as he was in his seat — the noble animal reared, bolted, and sprung forward like a deer, over stock and stone, the nearest road — and we are aware it was a rough one — to Shaws-Castle. There is a sort of instinct by which horses perceive the humour of their riders, and are furious and impetuous, or dull and sluggish, as if to correspond with it; and Mowbray's gallant steed seemed on this occasion to feel all the stings of his master's internal ferment, although not again urged with the spur. The ostler stood listening to the clash of the hoofs, succeeding each other in thick and close gallop, until they died away in the distant woodland.

"If St. Ronan's reach home this night, with his neck unbroken," muttered the fellow, "the devil must have it in keeping."

"Mercy on us!" said the traveller, "he rides like a Bedouin Arab! but in the desert there are neither trees to cross the road, nor cleughs, nor linns, nor floods, nor fords. Well, I must set to work myself, or this gear will get worse than even I can mend. — Here you, ostler, let me have your best pair of horses instantly to Shaws-Castle."

"To Shaws-Castle, sir?" said the man, with some surprise.

"Yes — do you not know such a place?"

"In troth, sir, sae few company go there, except on the great ball day, that we have had time to forget the road to it — but St. Ronan's was here even now, sir."

"Ay, what of that? — he has ridden on to get supper ready — so, turn out without loss of time."

"At your pleasure, sir," said the fellow, and called to the postilion accordingly.

Chapter 35 Debate.

SEDET POST EQUITEM ATRA CURA —

*Still though the headlong cavalier,
O'er rough and smooth, in wild career,
Seems racing with the wind;
His sad companion — ghastly pale,
And darksome as a widow's veil,
CARE— keeps her seat behind.*

HORACE.

Well was it that night for Mowbray, that he had always piqued himself on his horses, and that the animal on which he was then mounted was as sure-footed and sagacious as he was mettled and fiery. For those who observed next day the print of the hoofs on the broken and rugged track through which the creature had been driven at full speed by his furious master, might easily see, that in more than a dozen of places the horse and rider had been within a few inches of destruction. One bough of a gnarled and stunted oak-tree, which stretched across the road, seemed in particular to have opposed an almost fatal barrier to the horseman's career. In striking his head against this impediment, the force of the blow had been broken in some measure by a high-crowned hat, yet the violence of the shock was sufficient to shiver the branch to pieces. Fortunately, it was already decayed; but, even in that state, it was subject of astonishment to every one that no fatal damage had been sustained in so formidable an encounter. Mowbray himself was unconscious of the accident.

Scarcely aware that he had been riding at an unusual rate, scarce sensible that he had ridden faster perhaps than ever he followed the hounds, Mowbray alighted at his stable door, and flung the bridle to his groom, who held up his hands in astonishment when he beheld the condition of the favourite horse; but, concluding that his master must be intoxicated, he prudently forbore to make any observations.

No sooner did the unfortunate traveller suspend that rapid motion by which he seemed to wish to annihilate, as far as possible, time and space, in order to reach the place he had now attained, than it seemed to him as if he would have given the world that seas and deserts had lain between him and the house of his fathers, as well as that only sister with whom he was now about to have a decisive interview.

"But the place and the hour are arrived," he said, biting his lip with anguish; "this explanation must be decisive; and whatever evils may attend it, suspense must be ended now, at once and for ever."

He entered the Castle, and took the light from the old domestic, who, hearing the clatter of his horse's feet, had opened the door to receive him.

"Is my sister in her parlour?" he asked, but in so hollow a voice, that the old man only answered the question by another, "Was his honour well?"

"Quite well, Patrick — never better in my life," said Mowbray; and turning his back on the old man, as if to prevent his observing whether his countenance and his words corresponded, he pursued his way to his sister's apartment. The sound of his step upon the passage roused Clara from a reverie, perhaps a sad one; and she had trimmed her lamp, and stirred her fire, so slow did he walk, before he at length entered her apartment.

"You are a good boy, brother," she said, "to come thus early home; and I have some good news for your reward. The groom has fetched back Trimmer — He was lying by the dead hare, and he had chased him as far as Drumlyford — the shepherd had carried him to the shieling, till some one should claim him."

"I would he had hanged him, with all my heart!" said Mowbray.

"How! — hang Trimmer? — your favourite Trimmer, that has beat the whole country? — and it was only this morning you were half-crying because he was amissing, and like to murder man and mother's son?"

"The better I like any living thing," answered Mowbray, "the more reason I have for wishing it dead and at rest; for neither I, nor any thing that I love, will ever be happy more."

"You cannot frighten me, John, with these flights," answered Clara, trembling, although she endeavoured to look unconcerned — "You have used me to them too often."

"It is well for you then; you will be ruined without the shock of surprise."

"So much the better — We have been," said Clara,

"So constantly in poortith's sight,
The thoughts on't gie us little fright."

So say I with honest Robert Burns."

"D— n Barns and his trash!" said Mowbray, with the impatience of a man determined to be angry with every thing but himself, who was the real source of the evil.

"And why damn poor Burns?" said Clara, composedly; "it is not his fault if you have not risen a winner, for that, I suppose, is the cause of all this uproar."

"Would it not make any one lose patience," said Mowbray, "to hear her quoting the rhapsodies of a hobnail'd peasant, when a man is speaking of the downfall of an ancient house! Your ploughman, I suppose, becoming one degree poorer than he was born to be, would only go without his dinner, or without his usual potation of ale. His comrades would cry 'poor fellow!' and let him eat out of their kit, and drink out of their bicker without scruple, till his own was full again. But the poor gentleman — the downfallen man of rank — the degraded man of birth — the disabled and disarmed man of power! — it is he that is to be pitied, who loses not merely drink and dinner, but honour, situation, credit, character, and name itself!"

"You are declaiming in this manner in order to terrify me," said Clara: "but, friend John, I know you and your ways, and I have made up my mind upon all contingencies that can take place. I will tell you more — I have stood on this tottering pinnacle of rank and fashion, if our situation can be termed such, till my head is dizzy with the instability of my eminence; and I feel that strange desire of tossing myself down, which the devil is said to put into folk's heads when they stand on the top of steeples — at least, I had rather the plunge were over."

"Be satisfied, then; if that will satisfy you — the plunge is over, and we are — what they used to call it in Scotland — gentle beggars — creatures to whom our second, and third, and fourth, and fifth cousins may, if they please, give a place at the side-table, and a seat in the carriage with the lady's maid, if driving backwards will not make us sick."

"They may give it to those who will take it," said Clara; "but I am determined to eat bread of my own buying — I can do twenty things, and I am sure some one or other of them will bring me all the little money I will need. I have been trying, John, for several months, how little I can live upon, and you would laugh if you heard how low I have brought the account."

"There is a difference, Clara, between fanciful experiments and real poverty — the one is a masquerade, which we can end when we please, the other is wretchedness for life."

"Methinks, brother," replied Miss Mowbray, "it would be better for you to set me an example how to carry my good resolutions into effect, than to ridicule them."

"Why, what would you have me do?" said he, fiercely — "turn postilion, or rough-rider, or whipper-in? — I don't know any thing else that my education, as I have used it, has fitted me for — and then some of my old acquaintances would, I dare say, give me a crown to drink now and then for old acquaintance' sake."

"This is not the way, John, that men of sense think or speak of serious misfortunes," answered his sister; "and I do not believe that this is so serious as it is your pleasure to make it."

"Believe the very worst you can think," replied he, "and you will not believe bad enough! — You have neither a guinea, nor a house, nor a friend; — pass but a day, and it is a chance that you will not have a brother."

"My dear John, you have drunk hard — rode hard."

"Yes — such tidings deserved to be carried express, especially to a young lady who receives them so well," answered Mowbray, bitterly. "I suppose, now, it will make no impression, if I were to tell you that you have it in your power to stop all this ruin?"

"By consummating my own, I suppose? — Brother, I said you could not make me tremble, but you have found a way to do it."

"What, you expect I am again to urge you with Lord Etherington's courtship? — That *might* have saved all, indeed — But that day of grace is over."

"I am glad of it, with all my spirit," said Clara; "may it take with it all that we can quarrel about! — But till this instant I thought it was for this very point that this long voyage was bound, and that you were endeavouring to persuade me of the reality of the danger of the storm, in order to reconcile me to the harbour."

"You are mad, I think, in earnest," said Mowbray; "can you really be so absurd as to rejoice that you have no way left to relieve yourself and me from ruin, want, and shame?"

"From shame, brother?" said Clara. "No shame in honest poverty, I hope."

"That is according as folks have used their prosperity, Clara. — I must speak to the point. — There are strange reports going below — By Heaven! they are enough to disturb the ashes of the dead! Were I to mention them, I should expect our poor mother to enter the room — Clara Mowbray, can you guess what I mean?"

It was with the utmost exertion, yet in a faltering voice, that she was able, after an ineffectual effort, to utter the monosyllable, "*No!*"

"By Heaven! I am ashamed — I am even *afraid* to express my own meaning! — Clara, what is there which makes you so obstinately reject every proposal of marriage? — Is it that you feel yourself unworthy to be the wife of an honest man? — Speak out! — Evil Fame has been busy with your reputation — speak out! — Give me the right to cram their lies down the throats of the inventors, and when I go among them tomorrow, I shall know how to treat those who cast reflections on you! The fortunes of our house are ruined, but no tongue shall slander its honour. — Speak — speak, wretched girl! why are you silent?"

"Stay at home, brother!" said Clara; "stay at home, if you regard our house's honour — murder cannot mend misery — Stay at home, and let them talk of me as they will — they can scarcely say worse of me than I deserve!"^{E13}

The passions of Mowbray, at all times ungovernably strong, were at present inflamed by wine, by his rapid journey, and the previously disturbed state of his mind. He set his teeth, clenched his hands, looked on the ground, as one that forms some horrid resolution, and muttered almost unintelligibly, "It were charity to kill her!"

"Oh! no — no — no!" exclaimed the terrified girl, throwing herself at his feet; "Do not kill me, brother! I have wished for death — thought of death — prayed for death — but, oh! it is frightful to think that he is near — Oh! not a bloody death, brother, nor by your hand!"

She held him close by the knees as she spoke, and expressed, in her looks and accents, the utmost terror. It was not, indeed, without reason; for the extreme solitude of the place, the violent and inflamed passions of her brother, and the desperate circumstances to which he had reduced himself, seemed all to concur to render some horrid act of violence not an improbable termination of this strange interview.

Mowbray folded his arms, without unclenching his hands, or raising his head, while his sister continued on the floor, clasping him round the knees with all her strength, and begging piteously for her life and for mercy.

"Fool!" he said, at last, "let me go! — Who cares for thy worthless life? — who cares if thou live or die? Live, if thou canst — and be the hate and scorn of every one else, as much as thou art mine!"

He grasped her by the shoulder, with one hand pushed her from him, and, as she arose from the floor, and again pressed to throw her arms around his neck, he repulsed her with his arm and hand, with a push — or blow — it might be termed either one or the other — violent enough, in her weak state, to have again extended her on the ground, had not a chair received her as she fell. He looked at her with ferocity, grappled a moment in his pocket; then ran to the window, and throwing the sash violently up, thrust himself as far as he could without falling, into the open air. Terrified, and yet her feelings of his unkindness predominating even above her fears, Clara continued to exclaim.

"Oh, brother, say you did not mean this! — Oh, say you did not mean to strike me! — Oh, whatever I have deserved, be not you the executioner! — It is not manly — it is not natural — there are but two of us in the world!"

He returned no answer; and, observing that he continued to stretch himself from the window, which was in the second story of the building, and overlooked the court, a new cause of apprehension mingled, in some measure, with her personal fears. Timidly, and with streaming eyes and uplifted hands, she approached her angry brother, and, fearfully, yet firmly, seized the skirt of his coat, as if anxious to preserve him from the effects of that despair, which so lately seemed turned against her, and now against himself.

He felt the pressure of her hold, and drawing himself angrily back, asked her sternly what she wanted.

"Nothing," she said, quitting her hold of his coat; "but what — what did he look after so anxiously?"

"After the devil!" he answered, fiercely; then drawing in his head, and taking her hand, "By my soul, Clara — it is true, if ever there was truth in such a tale! — He stood by me just now, and urged me to murder thee! — What else could have put my hunting-knife into my thought? — Ay, by God, and into my very hand — at such a moment? — Yonder I could almost fancy I see him fly, the wood, and the rock, and the water, gleaming back the dark-red furnace-light, that is shed on them by his dragon wings! By my soul, I can hardly suppose it fancy — I can hardly think but that I was under the influence of an evil spirit — under an act of fiendish possession! But gone as he is, gone let him be — and thou, too ready implement of evil, be thou gone after him!" He drew from his pocket his right hand, which had all this time held his hunting-knife, and threw the implement into the court-yard as he spoke, then, with a sad quietness, and solemnity of manner, shut the window, and led his sister by the hand to her usual seat, which her tottering steps scarce enabled her to reach. "Clara," he said, after a pause of mournful silence, "we must think what is to be done, without passion or violence — there may be something for us in the dice yet, if we do not throw away our game. A blot is never a blot till it is hit — dishonour concealed, is not dishonour in some respects. — Dost thou attend to me, wretched girl?" he said, suddenly and sternly raising his voice.

"Yes, brother — yes, indeed, brother!" she hastily replied, terrified even by delay again to awaken his ferocious and ungovernable temper.

"Thus it must be, then," he said. "You must marry this Etherington — there is no help for it, Clara — You cannot complain of what your own vice and folly have rendered inevitable."

"But, brother!" — said the trembling girl.

"Be silent. I know all that you would say. You love him not, you would say. I love him not, no more than you. Nay, what is more, he loves you not; if he did, I might scruple to give you to him, you being such as you have owned yourself. But you shall wed him out of hate, Clara — or for the interest of your family — or for what reason you will — But wed him you shall and must."

"Brother — dearest brother — one single word!"

"Not of refusal or expostulation — that time is gone by," said her stern censorer. "When I believed thee what I thought thee this morning, I might advise you, but I could not compel. But, since the honour of our family has been disgraced by your means, it is but just, that, if possible, its disgrace should be hidden; and it shall — ay, if selling you for a slave would tend to conceal it!"

"You do worse — you do worse by me! A slave in an open market may be bought by a kind master — you do not give me that chance — you wed me to one who"——

"Fear him not, nor the worst that he can do, Clara," said her brother. "I know on what terms he marries; and being once more your brother, as your obedience in this matter will make me, he had better tear his flesh from his bones with his own teeth, than do thee any displeasure! By Heaven, I hate him so much — for he has outreached me every way — that methinks it is some consolation that he will not receive in thee the excellent creature I thought thee! — Fallen as thou art, thou art still too good for him."

Encouraged by the more gentle and almost affectionate tone in which her brother spoke, Clara could not help saying, although almost in a whisper, "I trust it will not be so — I trust he will consider his own condition, honour, and happiness, better than to share it with me."

"Let him utter such a scruple if he dares," said Mowbray — "But he dares not hesitate — he knows that the instant he recedes from addressing you, he signs his own death-warrant or mine, or perhaps that of both; and his views, too, are of a kind that will not be relinquished on a point of scrupulous delicacy merely. Therefore, Clara, nourish no such thought in your heart as that there is the least possibility of your escaping this marriage! The match is booked — Swear you will not hesitate."

"I will not," she said, almost breathlessly, terrified lest he was about to start once more into the fit of unbridled fury which had before seized on him.

"Do not even whisper or hint an objection, but submit to your fate, for it is inevitable."

"I will — submit"—— answered Clara, in the same trembling accent.

"And I," he said, "will spare you — at least at present — and it may be for ever — all enquiry into the guilt which you have confessed. Rumours there were of misconduct, which reached my ears even in England; but who could have believed them that looked on you daily, and witnessed your late course of life? — On this subject I will be at present silent — perhaps may not again touch on it — that is, if you do nothing to thwart my pleasure, or to avoid the fate which circumstances render unavoidable. — And now it is late — retire, Clara, to your bed — think on what I have said as what necessity has determined, and not my selfish pleasure."

He held out his hand, and she placed, but not without reluctant terror, her trembling palm in his. In this manner, and with a sort of mournful solemnity, as if they had been in attendance upon a funeral, he handed his sister through a gallery hung with old family pictures, at the end of which was Clara's bedchamber. The moon, which at this moment looked out through a huge volume of mustering clouds that had long been boding storm, fell on the two last descendants of that ancient family, as they glided hand in hand, more like the ghosts of the deceased than like living persons, through the hall and amongst the portraits of their forefathers. The same thoughts were in the breast of both, but neither attempted to say, while they cast a flitting glance on the pallid and decayed representations, "How little did these anticipate this catastrophe of their house!" At the door of the bedroom Mowbray quitted his sister's hand, and said, "Clara, you should to-night thank God, that saved you from a great danger, and me from a deadly sin."

"I will," she answered — "I will." And, as if her terror had been anew excited by this allusion to what had passed, she bid her brother hastily good-night, and was no sooner within her apartment, than he heard her turn the key in the lock, and draw two bolts besides.

"I understand you, Clara," muttered Mowbray between his teeth, as he heard one bar drawn after another. "But if you could earth yourself under Ben Nevis, you could not escape what fate has destined for you. — Yes!" he said to himself, as he walked with slow and moody pace through the moonlight gallery, uncertain whether to return to the parlour, or to retire to his solitary chamber, when his attention was roused by a noise in the court-yard.

The night was not indeed very far advanced, but it had been so long since Shaws-Castle received a guest, that had Mowbray not heard the rolling of wheels in the court-yard, he might have thought rather of housebreakers than of visitors. But, as the sound of a carriage and horses was distinctly heard, it instantly occurred to him, that the guest must be Lord Etherington, come, even at this late hour, to speak with him on the reports which were current to his sister's prejudice, and perhaps to declare his addresses to her were at an end. Eager to know the worst, and to bring matters to a decision, he re-entered the apartment he had just left, where the lights were still burning, and, calling loudly to Patrick, whom he heard in communing with the postilion, commanded him to show the visitor to Miss Mowbray's parlour. It was not the light step of the young nobleman which came tramping, or rather stamping, through the long passage, and up the two or three steps at the end of it. Neither was it Lord Etherington's graceful figure which was seen when the door opened, but the stout square substance of Mr. Peregrine Touchwood.

Chapter 36 A Relative.

Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd.

DESERTED VILLAGE.

Starting at the unexpected and undesired apparition which presented itself, in the manner described at the end of the last chapter, Mowbray yet felt, at the same time, a kind of relief, that his meeting with Lord Etherington, painfully decisive as that meeting must be, was for a time suspended. So it was with a mixture of peevishness and internal satisfaction, that he demanded what had procured him the honour of a visit from Mr. Touchwood at this late hour.

"Necessity, that makes the old wife trot," replied Touchwood; "no choice of mine, I assure you — Gad, Mr. Mowbray, I would rather have crossed Saint Gothard, than run the risk I have done to-night, rumbling through your breakneck roads in that d — d old wheelbarrow. — On my word, I believe I must be troublesome to your butler for a draught of something — I am as thirsty as a coal-heaver that is working by the piece. You have porter, I suppose, or good old Scotch two-penny?" With a secret execration on his visitor's effrontery, Mr. Mowbray ordered the servant to put down wine and water, of which Touchwood mixed a gobletful, and drank it off.

"We are a small family," said his entertainer; "and I am seldom at home — still more seldom receive guests, when I chance to be here — I am sorry I have no malt liquor, if you prefer it."

"Prefer it?" said Touchwood, compounding, however, another glass of sherry and water, and adding a large piece of sugar, to correct the hoarseness which, he observed, his night journey might bring on — "to be sure I prefer it, and so does every body, except Frenchmen and dandies. — No offence, Mr. Mowbray, but you should order a hogshead from Meux — the brown-stout, wired down for exportation to the colonies, keeps for any length of time, and in every climate — I have drank it where it must have cost a guinea a quart, if interest had been counted."

"When I *expect* the honour of a visit from you, Mr. Touchwood, I will endeavour to be better provided," answered Mowbray; "at present your arrival has been without notice, and I would be glad to know if it has any particular object."

"This is what I call coming to the point," said Mr. Touchwood, thrusting out his stout legs, accoutred as they were with the ancient defences, called boot-hose, so as to rest his heels upon the fender. "Upon my life, the fire turns the best flower in the garden at this season of the year — I'll take the freedom to throw on a log. — Is it not a strange thing, by the by, that one never sees a fagot in Scotland? You have much small wood, Mr. Mowbray, I wonder you do not get some fellow from the midland counties, to teach your people how to make a fagot."

"Did you come all the way to Shaws-Castle," asked Mowbray, rather testily, "to instruct me in the mystery of fagot-making?"

"Not exactly — not exactly," answered the undaunted Touchwood; "but there is a right and a wrong way in every thing — a word by the way, on any useful subject, can never fall amiss. — As for my immediate and more pressing business, I can assure you, that it is of a nature sufficiently urgent, since it brings me to a house in which I am much surprised to find myself."

"The surprise is mutual, sir," said Mowbray, gravely, observing that his guest made a pause; "it is full time you should explain it."

"Well, then," replied Touchwood; "I must first ask you whether you have never heard of a certain old gentleman, called Scrogie, who took it into what he called his head, poor man, to be ashamed of the name he bore, though owned by many honest and respectable men, and chose to join it to your surname of Mowbray, as having a more chivalrous Norman sounding, and, in a word, a gentlemanlike twang with it?"

"I have heard of such a person, though only lately," said Mowbray. "Reginald Scrogie Mowbray was his name. I have reason to consider his alliance with my family as undoubted, though you seem to mention it with a sneer, sir. I believe Mr. S. Mowbray regulated his family settlements very much upon the idea that his heir was to intermarry with our house."

"True, true, Mr. Mowbray," answered Touchwood; "and certainly it is not your business to lay the axe to the root of the genealogical tree, that is like to bear golden apples for you — Ha!"

"Well, well, sir — proceed — proceed," answered Mowbray.

"You may also have heard that this old gentleman had a son, who would willingly have cut up the said family-tree into fagots; who thought Scrogie sounded as well as Mowbray, and had no fancy for an imaginary gentility, which was to be attained by the change of one's natural name, and the disowning, as it were, of one's actual relations."

"I think I have heard from Lord Etherington," answered Mowbray, "to whose communications I owe most of my knowledge about these Scrogie people, that old Mr. Scrogie Mowbray was unfortunate in a son, who thwarted his father on every occasion — would embrace no opportunity which fortunate chances held out, of raising and distinguishing the family — had imbibed low tastes, wandering habits, and singular objects of pursuit — on account of which his father disinherited him."

"It is very true, Mr. Mowbray," proceeded Touchwood, "that this person did happen to fall under his father's displeasure, because he scorned forms and flummery — loved better to make money as an honest merchant, than to throw it away as an idle gentleman — never called a coach when walking on foot would serve the turn — and liked the Royal Exchange better than St. James's Park. In short, his father disinherited him, because he had the qualities for doubling the estate, rather than those for squandering it."

"All this may be quite correct, Mr. Touchwood," replied Mowbray; "but pray, what has this Mr. Scrogie, junior, to do with you or me?"

"Do with you or me!" said Touchwood, as if surprised at the question; "he has a great deal to do with me at least, since I am the very man myself."

"The devil you are!" said Mowbray, opening wide his eyes in turn; "Why, Mr. A — a — your name is Touchwood — P. Touchwood — Paul, I suppose, or Peter — I read it so in the subscription book at the Well."

"Peregrine, sir, Peregrine — my mother would have me so christened, because Peregrine Pickle came out during her confinement; and my poor foolish father acquiesced, because he thought it genteel, and derived from the Willoughbys. I don't like it, and I always write P. short, and you might have remarked an S. also before the surname — I use at present P. S. Touchwood. I had an old acquaintance in the city, who loved his jest — He always called me Postscript Touchwood."

"Then, sir," said Mowbray, "if you are really Mr. Scrogie, *tout court*, I must suppose the name of Touchwood is assumed?"

"What the devil!" replied Mr. P. S. Touchwood, "do you suppose there is no name in the English nation will couple up legitimately with my paternal name of Scrogie, except your own, Mr. Mowbray? — I assure you I got the name of Touchwood, and a pretty spell of money along with it, from an old godfather, who admired my spirit in sticking by commerce."

"Well, sir, every one has his taste — Many would have thought it better to enjoy a hereditary estate, by keeping your father's name of Mowbray, than to have gained another by assuming a stranger's name of Touchwood."

"Who told you Mr. Touchwood was a stranger to me?" said the traveller; "for aught I know, he had a better title to the duties of a son from me, than the poor old man who made such a fool of himself, by trying to turn gentleman in his old age. He was my grandfather's partner in the great firm of Touchwood, Scrogie, and Co. — Let me tell you, there is as good inheritance in house as in field — a man's partners are his fathers and brothers, and a head clerk may be likened to a kind of first cousin."

"I meant no offence whatever, Mr. Touchwood Scrogie."

"Scrogie Touchwood, if you please," said the senior; "the scrog branch first, for it must become rotten ere it become touchwood — ha, ha, ha! — you take me."

"A singular old fellow this," said Mowbray to himself, "and speaks in all the dignity of dollars; but I will be civil to him, till I can see what he is driving at. — You are facetious, Mr. Touchwood," he proceeded aloud. "I was only going to say, that although you set no value upon your connexion with my family, yet I cannot forget that such a circumstance exists; and therefore I bid you heartily welcome to Shaws-Castle."

"Thank ye, thank ye, Mr. Mowbray — I knew you would see the thing right. To tell you the truth, I should not have cared much to come a-begging for your acquaintance and cousinship, and so forth; but that I thought you would be more tractable in your adversity, than was your father in his prosperity."

"Did you know my father, sir?" said Mowbray.

"Ay, ay — I came once down here, and was introduced to him — saw your sister and you when you were children — had thoughts of making my will then, and should have clapped you both in before I set out to double Cape Horn. But, gad, I wish my poor father had seen the reception I got! I did not let the old gentleman, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's that was then, smoke my money-bags — that might have made him more tractable — not but that we went on indifferent well for a day or two, till I got a hint that my room was wanted, for that the Duke of Devil-knows-what was expected, and my bed was to serve his valet-dechambre. — 'Oh, damn all gentle cousins!' said I, and off I set on the pad round the world again, and thought no more of the Mowbrays till a year or so ago."

"And, pray, what recalled us to your recollection?"

"Why," said Touchwood, "I was settled for some time at Smyrna, (for I turn the penny go where I will — I have done a little business even since I came here;) — but being at Smyrna as I said, I became acquainted with Francis Tyrrel."

"The natural brother of Lord Etherington," said Mowbray.

"Ay, so called," answered Touchwood; "but by and by he is more likely to prove the Earl of Etherington himself, and t'other fine fellow the bastard."

"The devil he is! — You surprise me, Mr. Touchwood."

"I thought I should — I thought I should — Faith, I am sometimes surprised myself at the turn things take in this world. But the thing is not the less certain — the proofs are lying in the strong chest of our house at London, deposited there by the old Earl, who repented of his roguery to Miss Martigny long before he died, but had not courage enough to do his legitimate son justice till the sexton had housed him."

"Good Heaven, sir!" said Mowbray; "and did you know all this while, that I was about to bestow the only sister of my house upon an impostor?"

"What was my business with that, Mr. Mowbray?" replied Touchwood; "you would have been very angry had any one suspected you of not being sharp enough to look out for yourself and your sister both. Besides, Lord Etherington, bad enough as he may be in other respects, was, till very lately, no impostor, or an innocent one, for he only occupied the situation in which his father had placed him. And, indeed, when I understood, upon coming to England, that he was gone down here, and, as I conjectured, to pay his addresses to your sister, to say truth, I did not see he could do better. Here was a poor fellow that was about to cease to be a lord and a wealthy man; was it not very reasonable that he should make the most of his dignity while he had it? and if, by marrying a pretty girl while in possession of his title, he could get possession of the good estate of Nettlewood, why, I could see nothing in it but a very pretty way of breaking his fall."

"Very pretty for him, indeed, and very convenient too," said Mowbray; "but pray, sir, what was to become of the honour of my family?"

"Why, what was the honour of your family to me?" said Touchwood; "unless it was to recommend your family to my care, that I was disinherited on account of it. And if this Etherington, or Bulmer, had been a good fellow, I would have seen all the Mowbrays that ever wore broad cloth at Jericho, before I had interfered."

"I am really much indebted to your kindness," said Mowbray angrily.

"More than you are aware of," answered Touchwood; "for, though I thought this Bulmer, even when declared illegitimate, might be a reasonable good match for your sister, considering the estate which was to accompany the union of their hands; yet, now I have discovered him to be a scoundrel — every way a scoundrel — I would not wish any decent girl to marry him, were they to get all Yorkshire, instead of Nettlewood. So I have come to put you right."

The strangeness of the news which Touchwood so bluntly communicated, made Mowbray's head turn round like that of a man who grows dizzy at finding himself on the verge of a precipice. Touchwood observed his consternation, which he willingly construed into an acknowledgment of his own brilliant genius.

"Take a glass of wine, Mr. Mowbray," he said, complacently; "take a glass of old sherry — nothing like it for clearing the ideas — and do not be afraid of me, though I come thus suddenly upon you with such surprising tidings — you will find me a plain, simple, ordinary man, that have my faults and my blunders like other people. I acknowledge that much travel and experience have made me sometimes play the busybody, because I find I can do things better than other people, and I love to see folk stare — it's a way I have got. But, after all, I am *un bon diable*, as the Frenchman says; and here I have come four or five hundred miles to lie quiet among you all, and put all your little matters to rights, just when you think they are most desperate."

"I thank you for your good intentions," said Mowbray; "but I must needs say, that they would have been more effectual had you been less cunning in my behalf, and frankly told me what you knew of Lord Etherington; as it is, the matter has gone fearfully far. I have promised him my sister — I have laid myself under personal obligations to him — and there are other reasons why I fear I must keep my word to this man, earl or no earl."

"What!" exclaimed Touchwood, "would you give up your sister to a worthless rascal, who is capable of robbing the post-office, and of murdering his brother, because you have lost a trifle of money to him? Are you to let him go off triumphantly, because he is a gamester as well as a cheat? — You are a pretty fellow, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's — you are one of the happy sheep that go out for wool, and come home shorn. Egad, you think yourself a millstone, and turn out a sack of grain — You flew abroad a hawk, and have come home a pigeon — You snarled at the Philistines, and they have drawn your eye-teeth with a vengeance!"

"This is all very witty, Mr. Touchwood," replied Mowbray; "but wit will not pay this man Etherington, or whatever he is, so many hundreds as I have lost to him."

"Why, then, wealth must do what wit cannot," said old Touchwood; "I must advance for you, that is all. Look ye, sir, I do not go afoot for nothing — if I have laboured, I have reaped — and, like the fellow in the old play, 'I have enough, and can maintain my humour' — it is not a few hundreds, or thousands either, can stand betwixt old P. S. Touchwood and his purpose; and my present purpose is to make you, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, a free man of the forest. — You still look grave on it, young man? — Why, I trust you are not such an ass as to think your dignity offended, because the plebeian Scrogie comes to the assistance of the terribly great and old house of Mowbray?"

"I am indeed not such a fool," answered Mowbray, with his eyes still bent on the ground, "to reject assistance that comes to me like a rope to a drowning man — but there is a circumstance" — he stopped short and drank a glass of wine — "a circumstance to which it is most painful to me to allude — but you seem my friend — and I cannot intimate to you more strongly my belief in your professions of regard than by saying, that the language held by Lady Penelope Penfeather on my sister's account, renders it highly proper that she were settled in life; and I cannot but fear, that the breaking off the affair with this man might be of great prejudice to her at this moment. They will have Nettlewood, and they may live separate — he has offered to make settlements to that effect, even on the very day of marriage. Her condition as a married woman will put her above scandal, and above necessity, from which, I am sorry to say, I cannot hope long to preserve her."

"For shame! — for shame! — for shame!" said Touchwood, accumulating his words thicker than usual on each other; "would you sell your own flesh and blood to a man like this Bulmer, whose character is now laid before you, merely because a disappointed old maid speaks scandal of her? A fine veneration you pay to the honoured name of Mowbray! If my poor, old, simple father had known what the owners of these two grand syllables could have stooped to do for merely ensuring subsistence, he would have thought as little of the noble Mowbrays as of the humble Scrogies. And, I dare say, the young lady is just such another — eager to get married — no matter to whom."

"Excuse me, Mr. Touchwood," answered Mowbray; "my sister entertains sentiments so very different from what you ascribe to her, that she and I parted on the most unpleasant terms, in consequence of my pressing this man's suit upon her. God knows, that I only did so, because I saw no other outlet from this most unpleasant dilemma. But, since you are willing to interfere, sir, and aid me to disentangle these complicated matters, which have, I own, been made worse by my own rashness, I am ready to throw the matter completely into your hands, just as if you were my father arisen from the dead. Nevertheless, I must needs express my surprise at the extent of your intelligence in these affairs."

"You speak very sensibly, young man," said the traveller; "and as for my intelligence, I have for some time known the finesses of this Master Bulmer as perfectly as if I had been at his elbow when he was playing all his dog's tricks with this family. You would hardly suspect now," he continued, in a confidential tone, "that what you were so desirous a while ago should take place, has in some sense actually happened, and that the marriage ceremony has really passed betwixt your sister and this pretended Lord Etherington?"

"Have a care, sir!" said Mowbray, fiercely; "do not abuse my candour — this is no place, time, or subject, for impertinent jesting."

"As I live by bread, I am serious," said Touchwood; "Mr. Cargill performed the ceremony; and there are two living witnesses who heard them say the words, 'I, Clara, take you, Francis,' or whatever the Scottish church puts in place of that mystical formula."

"It is impossible," said Mowbray; "Cargill dared not have done such a thing — a clandestine proceeding, such as you speak of, would have cost him his living. I'll bet my soul against a horse-shoe, it is all an imposition; and you come to disturb me, sir, amid my family distress, with legends that have no more truth in them than the Alkoran."

"There are some true things in the Alkoran, (or rather, the Koran, for the Al is merely the article prefixed,) but let that pass — I will raise your wonder higher before I am done. It is very true, that your sister was indeed joined in marriage with this same Bulmer, that calls himself by the title of Etherington; but it is just as true, that the marriage is not worth a maravedi, for she believed him at the time to be another person — to be, in a word, Francis Tyrrel, who is actually what the other pretends to be, a nobleman of fortune."

"I cannot understand one word of all this," said Mowbray. "I must to my sister instantly, and demand of her if there be any real foundation for these wonderful averments."

"Do not go," said Touchwood, detaining him, "you shall have a full explanation from me; and to comfort you under your perplexity, I can assure you that Cargill's consent to celebrate the nuptials, was only obtained by an aspersion thrown on your sister's character, which induced him to believe that speedy marriage would be the sole means of saving her reputation; and I am convinced in my own mind it is only the revival of this report which has furnished the foundation of Lady Penelope's chattering."

"If I could think so" — said Mowbray, "if I could but think this is truth — and it seems to explain, in some degree, my sister's mysterious conduct — if I could but think it true, I should fall down and worship you as an angel from heaven!"

"A proper sort of angel," said Touchwood, looking modestly down on his short, sturdy supporters — "Did you ever hear of an angel in boot-hose? Or, do you suppose angels are sent to wait on broken-down horse-jockeys?"

"Call me what you will, Mr. Touchwood," said the young man, "only make out your story true, and my sister innocent!"

"Very well spoken, sir," answered the senior, "very well spoken! But then I understand, you are to be guided by my prudence and experience? None of your G— damme doings, sir — your duels or your drubbings. Let me manage the affair for you, and I will bring you through with a flowing sail."

"Sir, I must feel as a gentleman," — said Mowbray.

"Feel as a fool," said Touchwood, "for that is the true case. Nothing would please this Bulmer better than to fight through his rogueries — he knows very well, that he who can slit a pistol-ball on the edge of a penknife, will always preserve some sort of reputation amidst his scoundrelism — but I shall take care to stop that hole. Sit down — be a man of sense, and listen to the whole of this strange story."

Mowbray sat down accordingly; and Touchwood, in his own way, and with many characteristic interjectional remarks, gave him an account of the early loves of Clara and Tyrrel — of the reasons which induced Bulmer at first to encourage their correspondence, in hopes that his brother would, by a clandestine marriage, altogether ruin himself with his father — of the change which took place in his views when he perceived the importance annexed by the old Earl to the union of Miss Mowbray with his apparent heir — of the desperate stratagem which he endeavoured to play off, by substituting himself in the room of his brother — and all the consequences, which it is unnecessary to resume here, as they are detailed at length by the perpetrator himself, in his correspondence with Captain Jekyl.

When the whole communication was ended, Mowbray, almost stupified by the wonders he had heard, remained for some time in a sort of reverie, from which he only started to ask what evidence could be produced of a story so strange.

"The evidence," answered Touchwood, "of one who was a deep agent in all these matters, from first to last — as complete a rogue, I believe, as the devil himself, with this difference, that our mortal fiend does not, I believe, do evil for the sake of evil, but for the sake of the profit which attends it. How far this plea will avail him in a court of conscience, I cannot tell; but his disposition was so far akin to humanity, that I have always found my old acquaintance as ready to do good as harm, providing he had the same *agio* upon the transaction."

"On my soul," said Mowbray, "you must mean Solmes! whom I have long suspected to be a deep villain — and now he proves traitor to boot. How the devil could you get into his intimacy, Mr. Touchwood?"

"The case was particular," said Touchwood. "Mr. Solmes, too active a member of the community to be satisfied with managing the affairs which his master intrusted to him, adventured in a little business on his own account; and thinking, I suppose, that the late Earl of Etherington had forgotten fully to acknowledge his services, as valet to his son, he supplied that defect by a small check on our house for L.100, in name, and bearing the apparent signature, of the deceased. This small mistake being detected, Mr. Solmes, *porteur* of the little billet, would have been consigned to the custody of a Bow-street officer, but that I found means to relieve him, on condition of his making known to me the points of private history which I have just been communicating to you. What I had known of Tyrrel at Smyrna, had given me much interest in him, and you may guess it was not lessened by the distresses which he had sustained through his brother's treachery. By this fellow's means, I have counterplotted all his master's fine schemes. For example, as soon as I learned Bulmer was coming down here, I contrived to give Tyrrel an anonymous hint, well knowing he would set off like the devil to thwart him, and so I should have the whole *dramatis personæ* together, and play them all off against each other, after my own pleasure."

"In that case," said Mr. Mowbray, "your expedient brought about the *rencontre* between the two brothers, when both might have fallen."

"Can't deny it — can't deny it," answered Scrogie, a little discountenanced — "a mere accident — no one can guard every point. — Egad, but I had like to have been baffled again, for Bulmer sent the lad Jekyl, who is not such a black sheep neither but what there are some white hairs about him, upon a treaty with Tyrrel, that my secret agent was not admitted to. Gad, but I discovered the whole — you will scarce guess how."

"Probably not easily, indeed, sir," answered Mowbray; "for your sources of intelligence are not the most obvious, any more than your mode of acting the most simple or most comprehensible."

"I would not have it so," said Touchwood; "simple men perish in their simplicity — I carry my eye-teeth about me. — And for my source of information — why, I played the eavesdropper, sir — listened — knew my landlady's cupboard with the double door — got into it as she has done many a time. — Such a fine gentleman as you would rather cut a man's throat, I suppose, than listen at a cupboard door, though the object were to prevent murder?"

"I cannot say I should have thought of the expedient, certainly, sir," said Mowbray.

"I did, though," said Scrogie, "and learned enough of what was going on, to give Jekyl a hint that sickened him of his commission, I believe — so the game is all in my own hands. Bulmer has no one to trust to but Solmes, and Solmes tells me every thing."

Here Mowbray could not suppress a movement of impatience.

"I wish to God, sir, that since you were so kind as to interest yourself in affairs so intimately concerning my family, you had been pleased to act with a little more openness towards me. Here have I been for weeks the intimate of a damned scoundrel, whose throat I ought to have cut for his scandalous conduct to my sister. Here have I been rendering her and myself miserable, and getting myself cheated every night by a swindler, whom you, if it had been your pleasure, could have unmasked by a single word. I do all justice to your intentions, sir; but, upon my soul, I cannot help wishing you had conducted yourself with more frankness and less mystery; and I am truly afraid your love of dexterity has been too much for your ingenuity, and that you have suffered matters to run into such a skein of confusion, as you yourself will find difficulty in unravelling."

Touchwood smiled, and shook his head in all the conscious pride of superior understanding. "Young man," he said, "when you have seen a little of the world, and especially beyond the bounds of this narrow island, you will find much more art and dexterity necessary in conducting these businesses to an issue, than occurs to a blind John Bull, or a raw Scotchman. You will be then no stranger to the policy of life, which deals in mining and countermining — now in making feints, now in thrusting with forthright passes. I look upon you, Mr. Mowbray, as a young man spoiled by staying at home, and keeping bad company; and will make it my business, if you submit yourself to my guidance, to inform your understanding, so as to retrieve your estate. — Don't — Don't answer me, sir! because I know too well, by experience, how young men answer on these subjects — they are conceited, sir, as conceited as if they had been in all the four quarters of the world. I hate to be answered, sir, I hate it. And, to tell you the truth, it is because Tyrrel has a fancy of answering me, that I rather make you my confidant on this occasion, than him. I would have had him throw himself into my arms, and under my directions; but he hesitated — he hesitated, Mr. Mowbray — and I despise hesitation. If he thinks he has wit enough to manage his own matters, let him try it — let him try it. Not but I will do all I can for him, in fitting time and place; but I will let him dwell in his perplexities and uncertainties for a little while longer. And so, Mr. Mowbray, you see what sort of an odd fellow I am, and you can satisfy me at once whether you mean to come into my measures — only speak out at once, sir, for I abhor hesitation."

While Touchwood thus spoke, Mowbray was forming his resolution internally. He was not so inexperienced as the senior supposed; at least, he could plainly see that he had to do with an obstinate, capricious old man, who, with the best intentions in the world, chose to have every thing in his own way; and, like most petty politicians, was disposed to throw intrigue and mystery over matters which had much better be prosecuted boldly and openly. But he perceived at the same time, that Touchwood, as a sort of relation, wealthy, childless, and disposed to become his friend, was a person to be conciliated, the rather that the traveller himself had frankly owned that it was Francis Tyrrel's want of deference towards him, which had forfeited, or at least abated, his favour. Mowbray recollected, also, that the circumstances under which he himself stood, did not permit him to trifle with returning gleams of good fortune. Subduing, therefore, the haughtiness of temper proper to him as an only son and heir, he answered respectfully, that, in his condition, the advice and assistance of Mr. Scrogie Touchwood were too important, not to be purchased at the price of submitting his own judgment to that of an experienced and sagacious friend.

"Well said, Mr. Mowbray," replied the senior, "well said. Let me once have the management of your affairs, and we will brush them up for you without loss of time. — I must be obliged to you for a bed for the night, however — it is as dark as a wolf's mouth; and if you will give orders to keep the poor devil of a postilion, and his horses too, why, I will be the more obliged to you."

Mowbray applied himself to the bell. Patrick answered the call, and was much surprised, when the old gentleman, taking the word out of his entertainer's mouth, desired a bed to be got ready, with a little fire in the grate; "for I take it, friend," he went on, "you have not guests here very often. — And see that my sheets be not damp, and bid the housemaid take care not to make the bed upon an exact level, but let it slope from the pillow to the footposts, at a declivity of about eighteen inches. — And hark ye — get me a jug of barley-water, to place by my bedside, with the squeeze of a lemon — or stay, you will make it as sour as Beelzebub — bring the lemon on a saucer, and I will mix it myself."

Patrick listened like one of sense forlorn, his head turning like a mandarin, alternately from the speaker to his master, as if to ask the latter whether this was all reality. The instant that Touchwood stopped, Mowbray added his fiat.

"Let every thing be done to make Mr. Touchwood comfortable, in the way he wishes."

"Aweel, sir," said Patrick, "I shall tell Mally, to be sure, and we maun do our best, and — but it's unco late" —

"And, therefore," said Touchwood, "the sooner we get to bed the better, my old friend. I, for one, must be stirring early — I have business of life and death — it concerns you too, Mr. Mowbray — but no more of that till tomorrow. — And let the lad put up his horses, and get him a bed somewhere."

Patrick here thought he had gotten upon firm ground for resistance, for which, displeased with the dictatorial manner of the stranger, he felt considerably inclined.

"Ye may catch us at that, if ye can," said Patrick; "there's nae post cattle come into our stables — What do we ken, but that they may be glandered, as the groom says?"

"We must take the risk to-night, Patrick," said Mowbray, reluctantly enough — "unless Mr. Touchwood will permit the horses to come back early next morning?" "Not I, indeed," said Touchwood; "safe bind safe find — it may be once away and aye away, and we shall have enough to do tomorrow morning. Moreover, the poor carrion are tired, and the merciful man is merciful to his beast — and, in a word, if the horses go back to St. Ronan's Well to-night, I go there for company." It often happens, owing, I suppose, to the perversity of human nature, that subserviency in trifles is more difficult to a proud mind, than compliance in matters of more importance. Mowbray, like other young gentlemen of his class, was finically rigid in his stable discipline, and even Lord Etherington's horses had not been admitted into that *sanctum sanctorum*, into which he now saw himself obliged to induct two wretched post-hacks. But he submitted with the best grace he could; and Patrick, while he left their presence, with lifted-up hands and eyes to execute the orders he had received, could scarcely help thinking that the old man must be the devil in disguise, since he could thus suddenly control his fiery master, even in the points which he had hitherto seemed to consider as of most vital importance.

"The Lord in his mercy haud a grip of this pair family! for I, that was born in it, am like to see the end of it." Thus ejaculated Patrick.

Chapter 37 The Wanderer.

'Tis a naughty night to swim in.

KING LEAR.

There was a wild uncertainty about Mowbray's ideas, after he started from a feverish sleep on the morning succeeding this memorable interview, that his sister, whom he really loved as much as he was capable of loving any thing, had dishonoured him and her name; and the horrid recollection of their last interview was the first idea which his waking imagination was thrilled with. Then came Touchwood's tale of exculpation — and he persuaded himself, or strove to do so, that Clara must have understood the charge he had brought against her as referring to her attachment to Tyrrel, and its fatal consequences. Again, still he doubted how that could be — still feared that there must be more behind than her reluctance to confess the fraud which had been practised on her by Bulmer; and then, again, he strengthened himself in the first and more pleasing opinion, by recollecting that, averse as she was to espouse the person he proposed to her, it must have appeared to her the completion of ruin, if he, Mowbray, should obtain knowledge of the clandestine marriage.

"Yes — O yes," he said to himself, "she would think that this story would render me more eager in the rascal's interest, as the best way of hushing up such a discreditable affair — faith, and she would have judged right too; for, had he actually been Lord Etherington, I do not see what else she could have done. But, not being Lord Etherington, and an anointed scoundrel into the bargain, I will content myself with cudgelling him to death so soon as I can get out of the guardianship of this old, meddling, obstinate, self-willed, busybody. — Then, what is to be done for Clara? — This mock marriage was a mere bubble, and both parties must draw stakes. She likes this grave Don, who proves to be the stick of the right tree, after all — so do not I, though there be something lordlike about him. I was sure a strolling painter could not have carried it off so. She may marry him, I suppose, if the law is not against it — then she has the earldom, and the Oaklands, and Nettlewood, all at once. — Gad, we should come in winners, after all — and, I dare say, this old boy Touchwood is as rich as a Jew — worth a hundred thousand at least — He is too peremptory to be cut up for sixpence under a hundred thousand. — And he talks of putting me to rights — I must not wince — must stand still to be curried a little — Only, I wish the law may permit Clara's being married to this other earl. — A woman cannot marry two brothers, that is certain:— but then, if she is not married to the one of them in good and lawful form, there can be no bar to her marrying the other, I should think — I hope the lawyers will talk no nonsense about it — I hope Clara will have no foolish scruples. — But, by my word, the first thing I have to hope is, that the thing is true, for it comes through but a suspicious channel. I'll away to Clara instantly — get the truth out of her — and consider what is to be done."

Thus partly thought and partly spoke the young Laird of St. Ronan's, hastily dressing himself, in order to enquire into the strange chaos of events which perplexed his imagination.

When he came down to the parlour where they had supped last night, and where breakfast was prepared this morning, he sent for a girl who acted as his sister's immediate attendant, and asked, "if Miss Mowbray was yet stirring?"

The girl answered, "she had not rung her bell."

"It is past her usual hour," said Mowbray, "but she was disturbed last night. Go, Martha, tell her to get up instantly — say I have excellent good news for her — or, if her head aches, I will come and tell them to her before she rises — go like lightning."

Martha went, and returned in a minute or two. "I cannot make my mistress hear, sir, knock as loud as I will. I wish," she added, with that love of evil presage which is common in the lower ranks, "that Miss Clara may be well, for I never knew her sleep so sound."

Mowbray jumped from the chair into which he had thrown himself, ran through the gallery, and knocked smartly at his sister's door; there was no answer. "Clara, dear Clara! — Answer me but one word — say but you are well. I frightened you last night — I had been drinking wine — I was violent — forgive me! — Come, do not be sulky — speak but a single word — say but you are well."

He made the pauses longer betwixt every branch of his address, knocked sharper and louder, listened more anxiously for an answer; at length he attempted to open the door, but found it locked, or otherwise secured. "Does Miss Mowbray always lock her door?" he asked the girl.

"Never knew her to do it before, sir; she leaves it open that I may call her, and open the window-shutters."

She had too good reason for precaution last night, thought her brother, and then remembered having heard her bar the door.

"Come, Clara," he continued, greatly agitated, "do not be silly; if you will not open the door, I must force it, that's all; for how can I tell but that you are sick, and unable to answer? — if you are only sullen, say so. — She returns no answer," he said, turning to the domestic, who was now joined by Touchwood.

Mowbray's anxiety was so great, that it prevented his taking any notice of his guest, and he proceeded to say, without regarding his presence, "What is to be done? — she may be sick — she may be asleep — she may have swooned; if I force the door, it may terrify her to death in the present weak state of her nerves. — Clara, dear Clara! do but speak a single word, and you shall remain in your own room as long as you please."

There was no answer. Miss Mowbray's maid, hitherto too much fluttered and alarmed to have much presence of mind, now recollected a back-stair which communicated with her mistress's room from the garden, and suggested she might have gone out that way.

"Gone out," said Mowbray, in great anxiety, and looking at the heavy fog, or rather small rain, which blotted the November morning — "Gone out, and in weather like this! — But we may get into her room from the back-stair."

So saying, and leaving his guest to follow or remain as he thought proper, he flew rather than walked to the garden, and found the private door which led into it, from the bottom of the back-stair above mentioned, was wide open. Full of vague, but fearful apprehensions, he rushed up to the door of his sister's apartment, which opened from her dressing-room to the landing-place of the stair; it was ajar, and that which communicated betwixt the bedroom and dressing-room was half open. "Clara, Clara!" exclaimed Mowbray, invoking her name rather in an agony of apprehension, than as any longer hoping for a reply. And his apprehension was but too prophetic.

Miss Mowbray was not in that apartment; and, from the order in which it was found, it was plain she had neither undressed on the preceding night, nor occupied the bed. Mowbray struck his forehead in an agony of remorse and fear. "I have terrified her to death," he said; "she has fled into the woods, and perished there!"

Under the influence of this apprehension, Mowbray, after another hasty glance around the apartment, as if to assure himself that Clara was not there, rushed again into the dressing-room, almost overturning the traveller, who, in civility, had not ventured to enter the inner apartment. "You are as mad as a *Hamako*,"³⁴ said the traveller; "let us consult together, and I am sure I can contrive" —

"Oh, d — n your contrivance!" said Mowbray, forgetting all proposed respect in his natural impatience, aggravated by his alarm; "if you had behaved straightforward, and like a man of common sense, this would not have happened!"

"God forgive you, young man, if your reflections are unjust," said the traveller, quitting the hold he had laid upon Mowbray's coat; "and God forgive me too, if I have done wrong while endeavouring to do for the best! — But may not Miss Mowbray have gone down to the Well? I will order my horses, and set off instantly."

"Do, do," said Mowbray, recklessly; "I thank you, I thank you;" and hastily traversing the garden, as if desirous to get rid at once of his visitor and his own thoughts, he took the shortest road to a little postern-gate, which led into the extensive copsewood, through some part of which Clara had caused a walk to be cut to a little summer-house built of rough shingles, covered with creeping shrubs.

As Mowbray hastened through the garden, he met the old man by whom it was kept, a native of the south country, and an old dependent on the family. "Have you seen my sister?" said Mowbray, hurrying his words on each other with the eagerness of terror.

"What's your wull, St. Ronan's?" answered the old man, at once dull of hearing, and slow of apprehension.

"Have you seen Miss Clara?" shouted Mowbray, and muttered an oath or two at the gardener's stupidity.

"In troth have I," replied the gardener, deliberately; "what suld ail me to see Miss Clara, St. Ronan's?"

"When, and where?" eagerly demanded the querist.

"Ou, just yestreen, after tey-time — afore ye cam hame yoursell galloping sae fast," said old Joseph.

"I am as stupid as he, to put off my time in speaking to such an old cabbage-stock!" said Mowbray, and hastened on to the postern-gate already mentioned, leading from the garden into what was usually called Miss Clara's walk. Two or three domestics, whispering to each other, and with countenances that showed grief, fear, and suspicion, followed their master, desirous to be employed, yet afraid to force their services on the fiery young man.

At the little postern he found some trace of her he sought. The pass-key of Clara was left in the lock. It was then plain that she must have passed that way; but at what hour, or for what purpose, Mowbray dared not conjecture. The path, after running a quarter of a mile or more through an open grove of oaks and sycamores, attained the verge of the large brook, and became there steep and rocky, difficult to the infirm, and alarming to the nervous; often approaching the brink of a precipitous ledge of rock, which in this place overhung the stream, in some places brawling and foaming in hasty current, and in others seeming to slumber in deep and circular eddies. The temptations which this dangerous scene must have offered an excited and desperate spirit, came on Mowbray like the blight of the Simoom, and he stood a moment to gather breath and overcome these horrible anticipations, ere he was able to proceed. His attendants felt the same apprehension. "Puir thing — puir thing! — O, God send she may not have been left to herself! — God send she may have been upholden!" were whispered by Patrick to the maidens, and by them to each other.

At this moment the old gardener was heard behind them, shouting, "Master — St. Ronan's — Master — I have fund — I have fund"——

"Have you found my sister?" exclaimed the brother, with breathless anxiety.

The old man did not answer till he came up, and then, with his usual slowness of delivery, he replied to his master's repeated enquiries, "Na, I haena fund Miss Clara, but I hae fund something ye wad be wae to lose — your braw hunting-knife."

He put the implement into the hand of its owner, who, recollecting the circumstances under which he had flung it from him last night, and the now too probable consequences of that interview, bestowed on it a deep imprecation, and again hurled it from him into the brook. The domestics looked at each other, and recollecting each at the same time that the knife was a favourite tool of their master, who was rather curious in such articles, had little doubt that his mind was affected, in a temporary way at least, by his anxiety on his sister's account. He saw their confused and inquisitive looks, and assuming as much composure and presence of mind as he could command, directed Martha, and her female companions, to return and search the walks on the other side of Shaws-Castle; and, finally, ordered Patrick back to ring the bell, "which," he said, assuming a confidence that he was far from entertaining, "might call Miss Mowbray home from some of her long walks." He farther desired his groom and horses might meet him at the Clattering Brig, so called from a noisy cascade which was formed by the brook, above which was stretched a small foot-bridge of planks. Having thus shaken off his attendants, he proceeded himself, with all the speed he was capable of exerting, to follow out the path in which he was at present engaged, which, being a favourite walk with his sister, she might perhaps have adopted from mere habit, when in a state of mind, which, he had too much reason to fear, must have put choice out of the question.

He soon reached the summer-house, which was merely a seat covered overhead and on the sides, open in front, and neatly paved with pebbles. This little bower was perched, like a hawk's nest, almost upon the edge of a projecting crag, the highest point of the line of rock which we have noticed; and had been selected by poor Clara, on account of the prospect which it commanded down the valley. One of her gloves lay on the small rustic table in the summer-house. Mowbray caught it eagerly up. It was drenched with wet — the preceding day had been dry; so that, had she forgot it there in the morning, or in the course of the day, it could not have been in that state. She had certainly been there during the night, when it rained heavily.

Mowbray, thus assured that Clara had been in this place, while her passions and fears were so much afloat as they must have been at her flight from her father's house, cast a hurried and terrified glance from the brow of the precipice into the deep stream that eddied below. It seemed to him that, in the sullen roar of the water, he heard the last groans of his sister — the foam-flakes caught his eye, as if they were a part of her garments. But a closer examination showed that there was no appearance of such a catastrophe. Descending the path on the other side of the bower, he observed a foot-print in a place where the clay was moist and tenacious, which, from the small size, and the shape of the shoe, it appeared to him must be a trace of her whom he sought. He hurried forward, therefore, with as much speed, as yet permitted him to look out keenly for similar impressions, of which it seemed to him he remarked several, although less perfect than the former, being much obliterated by the quantity of rain that had since fallen — a circumstance seeming to prove that several hours had elapsed since the person had passed.

At length, through the various turnings and windings of a long and romantic path, Mowbray found himself, without having received any satisfactory intelligence, by the side of the brook, called St. Ronan's Burn, at the place where it was crossed by foot-passengers, by the Clattering Brig, and by horsemen through a ford a little lower. At this point the fugitive might have either continued her wanderings through her paternal woods, by a path which, after winding about a mile, returned to Shaws-Castle, or she might have crossed the bridge, and entered a broken horse-way, common to the public, leading to the Aultoun of St. Ronan's.

Mowbray, after a moment's consideration, concluded that the last was her most probable option. — He mounted his horse, which the groom had brought down according to order, and commanding the man to return by the footpath, which he himself could not examine, he proceeded to ride towards the ford. The brook was swollen during the night, and the groom could not forbear intimating to his master, that there was considerable danger in attempting to cross it. But Mowbray's mind and feelings were too high-strung to permit him to listen to cautious counsel. He spurred the snorting and reluctant horse into the torrent, though the water, rising high on the upper side, broke both over the pommel and the croupe of his saddle. It was by exertion of great strength and sagacity, that the good horse kept the ford-way. Had the stream forced him down among the rocks, which lie below the crossing-place, the consequences must have been fatal. Mowbray, however, reached the opposite side in safety, to the joy and admiration of the servant, who stood staring at him during the adventure. He then rode hastily towards the Aultoun, determined, if he could not hear tidings of his sister in that village, that he would spread the alarm, and institute a general search after her, since her elopement from Shaws-Castle could, in that case, no longer be concealed. We must leave him, however, in his present state of uncertainty, in order to acquaint our readers with the reality of those evils, which his foreboding mind and disturbed conscience could only anticipate.

Chapter 38 The Catastrophe.

What sheeted ghost is wandering through the storm?

For never did a maid of middle earth

Choose such a time or spot to vent her sorrows.

OLD PLAY.

Grief, shame, confusion, and terror, had contributed to overwhelm the unfortunate Clara Mowbray at the moment when she parted with her brother, after the stormy and dangerous interview which it was our task to record in a former chapter. For years, her life, her whole tenor of thought, had been haunted by the terrible apprehension of a discovery, and now the thing which she feared had come upon her. The extreme violence of her brother, which went so far as to

menace her personal safety, had united with the previous conflict of passions, to produce a rapture of fear, which probably left her no other free agency, than that which she derived from the blind instinct which urges flight, as the readiest resource in danger.

We have no means of exactly tracing the course of this unhappy young woman. It is probable she fled from Shaws-Castle, on hearing the arrival of Mr. Touchwood's carriage, which she might mistake for that of Lord Etherington; and thus, while Mowbray was looking forward to the happier prospects which the traveller's narrative seemed to open, his sister was contending with rain and darkness, amidst the difficulties and dangers of the mountain path which we have described. These were so great, that a young woman more delicately brought up, must either have lain down exhausted, or have been compelled to turn her steps back to the residence she had abandoned. But the solitary wanderings of Clara had inured her to fatigue and to night-walks; and the deeper causes of terror which urged her to flight, rendered her insensible to the perils of her way. She had passed the bower, as was evident from her glove remaining there, and had crossed the foot-bridge; although it was almost wonderful, that, in so dark a night, she should have followed with such accuracy a track, where the missing a single turn by a cubit's length, might have precipitated her into eternity.

It is probable, that Clara's spirits and strength began in some degree to fail her, after she had proceeded a little way on the road to the Aultoun; for she had stopped at the solitary cottage inhabited by the old female pauper, who had been for a time the hostess of the penitent and dying Hannah Irwin. Here, as the inmate of the cottage acknowledged, she had made some knocking, and she owned she had heard her moan bitterly, as she entreated for admission. The old hag was one of those whose hearts adversity turns to very stone, and obstinately kept her door shut, impelled more probably by general hatred to the human race, than by the superstitious fears which seized her; although she perversely argued that she was startled at the supernatural melody and sweetness of tone, with which the benighted wanderer made her supplication. She admitted, that when she heard the poor petitioner turn from the door, her heart was softened, and she did intend to open with the purpose of offering her at least a shelter; but that before she could "hirple to the door, and get the bar taken down," the unfortunate suppliant was not to be seen; which strengthened the old woman's opinion, that the whole was a delusion of Satan.

It is conjectured that the repulsed wanderer made no other attempt to awaken pity or obtain shelter, until she came to Mr. Cargill's Manse, in the upper room of which a light was still burning, owing to a cause which requires some explanation.

The reader is aware of the reasons which induced Bulmer, or the titular Lord Etherington, to withdraw from the country the sole witness, as he conceived, who could, or at least who might choose to bear witness to the fraud which he had practised on the unfortunate Clara Mowbray. Of three persons present at the marriage, besides the parties, the clergyman was completely deceived. Solmes he conceived to be at his own exclusive devotion; and therefore, if by his means this Hannah Irwin could be removed from the scene, he argued plausibly, that all evidence to the treachery which he had practised would be effectually stifled. Hence his agent, Solmes, had received a commission, as the reader may remember, to effect her removal without loss of time, and had reported to his master that his efforts had been effectual.

But Solmes, since he had fallen under the influence of Touchwood, was constantly employed in counteracting the schemes which he seemed most active in forwarding, while the traveller enjoyed (to him an exquisite gratification) the amusement of countermining as fast as Bulmer could mine, and had in prospect the pleasing anticipation of blowing up the pioneer with his own petard. For this purpose, as soon as Touchwood learned that his house was to be applied to for the original deeds left in charge by the deceased Earl of Etherington, he expedited a letter, directing that only the copies should be sent, and thus rendered nugatory Bulmer's desperate design of possessing himself of that evidence. For the same reason, when Solmes announced to him his master's anxious wish to have Hannah Irwin conveyed out of the country, he appointed him to cause the sick woman to be carefully transported to the Manse, where Mr. Cargill was easily induced to give her temporary refuge.

To this good man, who might be termed an Israelite without guile, the distress of the unhappy woman would have proved a sufficient recommendation; nor was he likely to have enquired whether her malady might not be infectious, or to have made any of those other previous investigations which are sometimes clogs upon the bounty or hospitality of more prudent philanthropists. But to interest him yet farther, Mr. Touchwood informed him by letter that the patient (not otherwise unknown to him) was possessed of certain most material information affecting a family of honour and consequence, and that he himself, with Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's in the quality of a magistrate, intended to be at the Manse that evening, to take her declaration upon this important subject. Such indeed was the traveller's purpose, which might have been carried into effect, but for his own self-important love of manoeuvring on the one part, and the fiery impatience of Mowbray on the other, which, as the reader knows, sent the one at full gallop to Shaws-Castle, and obliged the other to follow him post haste. This necessity he intimated to the clergyman by a note, which he dispatched express as he himself was in the act of stepping into the chaise.

He requested that the most particular attention should be paid to the invalid — promised to be at the Manse with Mr. Mowbray early on the morrow — and, with the lingering and inveterate self-conceit which always induced him to conduct every thing with his own hand, directed his friend, Mr. Cargill, not to proceed to take the sick woman's declaration or confession until he arrived, unless in case of extremity.

It had been an easy matter for Solmes to transfer the invalid from the wretched cottage to the clergyman's Manse. The first appearance of the associate of much of her guilt had indeed terrified her; but he scrupled not to assure her, that his penitence was equal to her own, and that he was conveying her where their joint deposition would be formally received, in order that they might, so far as possible, atone for the evil of which they had been jointly guilty. He also promised her kind usage for herself, and support for her children; and she willingly accompanied him to the clergyman's residence, he himself resolving to abide in concealment the issue of the mystery, without again facing his master, whose star, as he well discerned, was about to shoot speedily from its exalted sphere.

The clergyman visited the unfortunate patient, as he had done frequently during her residence in his vicinity, and desired that she might be carefully attended. During the whole day, she seemed better; but, whether the means of supporting her exhausted frame had been too liberally administered, or whether the thoughts which gnawed her conscience had returned with double severity when she was released from the pressure of immediate want, it is certain that, about midnight, the fever began to gain ground, and the person placed in attendance on her came to inform the clergyman, then deeply engaged with the siege of Ptolemais, that she doubted if the woman would live till morning, and that she had something lay heavy at her heart, which she wished, as the emissary expressed it, "to make, a clean breast of" before she died, or lost possession of her senses.

Awakened by such a crisis, Mr. Cargill at once became a man of this world, clear in his apprehension, and cool in his resolution, as he always was when the path of duty lay before him. Comprehending, from the various hints of his friend Touchwood, that the matter was of the last consequence, his own humanity, as well as inexperience, dictated his sending for skilful assistance. His man-servant was accordingly dispatched on horseback to the Well for Dr. Quackleben; while, upon the suggestion of one of his maids, "that Mrs. Dods was an uncommon skeely body about a sick-bed," the wench was dismissed to supplicate the assistance of the gudewife of the Cleikum, which she was not, indeed, wont to refuse whenever it could be useful. The male emissary proved, in Scottish phrase, a "corbie messenger;"^{E14} for either he did not find the doctor, or he found him better engaged than to attend the sick-bed of a pauper, at a request which promised such slight remuneration as that of a parish minister. But the female ambassador was more successful; for, though she found our friend Luckie Dods preparing for bed at an hour unusually late, in consequence of some anxiety on account of Mr. Touchwood's unexpected absence, the good old dame only growled a little about the minister's fancies in taking pair bodies into his own house; and then, instantly donning cloak, hood, and pattens, marched down the gate with all the speed of the good Samaritan, one maid bearing the lantern before her, while the other remained to keep the house, and to attend to the wants of Mr. Tyrrel, who engaged willingly to sit up to receive Mr. Touchwood.

But, ere Dame Dods had arrived at the Manse, the patient had summoned Mr. Cargill to her presence, and required him to write her confession while she had life and breath to make it.

"For I believe," she added, raising herself in the bed, and rolling her eyes wildly around, "that, were I to confess my guilt to one of a less sacred character, the Evil Spirit, whose servant I have been, would carry away his prey, both body and soul, before they had severed from each other, however short the space that they must remain in partnership!"

Mr. Cargill would have spoken some ghostly consolation, but she answered with pettish impatience, "Waste not words — waste not words! — Let me speak that which I must tell, and sign it with my hand; and do you, as the more immediate servant of God, and therefore bound to bear witness to the truth, take heed you write that which I tell you, and nothing else. I desired to have told this to St. Ronan's — I have even made some progress in telling it to others — but I am glad I broke short off — for I know you, Josiah Cargill, though you have long forgotten me."

"It may be so," said Cargill. "I have indeed no recollection of you."

"You once knew Hannah Irwin, though," said the sick woman, "who was companion and relation to Miss Clara Mowbray, and who was present with her on that sinful night, when she was wedded in the kirk of St. Ronan's."

"Do you mean to say that you are that person?" said Cargill, holding the candle so as to throw some light on the face of the sick woman. "I cannot believe it."

"No?" replied the penitent; "there is indeed a difference between wickedness in the act of carrying through its successful machinations, and wickedness surrounded by all the horrors of a death-bed!"

"Do not yet despair," said Cargill. "Grace is omnipotent — to doubt this is in itself a great crime."

"Be it so! — I cannot help it — my heart is hardened, Mr. Cargill; and there is something here," she pressed her bosom, "which tells me, that, with prolonged life and renewed health, even my present agonies would be forgotten, and I should become the same I have been before. I have rejected the offer of grace, Mr. Cargill, and not through ignorance, for I have sinned with my eyes open. Care not for me, then, who am a mere outcast." He again endeavoured to interrupt her, but she continued, "Or if you really wish my welfare, let me relieve my bosom of that which presses it, and it may be that I shall then be better able to listen to you. You say you remember me not — but if I tell you how often you refused to perform in secret the office which was required of you — how much you urged that it was against your canonical rules — if I name the argument to which you yielded — and remind you of your purpose, to acknowledge your transgression to your brethren in the church courts, to plead your excuse, and submit to their censure, which you said could not be a light one — you will be then aware, that, in the voice of the miserable pauper, you hear the words of the once artful, gay, and specious Hannah Irwin."

"I allow it — I allow it!" said Mr. Cargill; "I admit the tokens, and believe you to be indeed her whose name you assume."

"Then one painful step is over," said she; "for I would ere now have lightened my conscience by confession, saving for the cursed pride of spirit, which was ashamed of poverty, though it had not shrunk from guilt. — Well — In these arguments, which were urged to you by a youth best known to you by the name of Francis Tyrrel, though more properly entitled to that of Valentine Bulmer, we practised on you a base and gross deception. — Did you not hear some one sigh? — I hope there is no one in the room — I trust I shall die when my confession is signed and sealed, without my name being dragged through the public — I hope ye bring not in your menials to gaze on my abject misery — I cannot brook that."

She paused and listened; for the ear, usually deafened by pain, is sometimes, on the contrary, rendered morbidly acute. Mr. Cargill assured her, there was no one present but himself. "But, O, most unhappy woman!" he said, "what does your introduction prepare me to expect!"

"Your expectation, be it ever so ominous, shall be fully satisfied. — I was the guilty confidant of the false Francis Tyrrel. — Clara loved the true one. — When the fatal ceremony passed, the bride and the clergyman were deceived alike — and I was the wretch — the fiend — who, aiding another yet blacker, if blacker could be — mainly helped to accomplish this cureless misery!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed the clergyman, "and had you not then done enough? — Why did you expose the betrothed of one brother to become the wife of another?"

"I acted," said the sick woman, "only as Bulmer instructed me; but I had to do with a master of the game. He contrived, by his agent Solmes, to match me with a husband imposed on me by his devices as a man of fortune! — a wretch, who maltreated me — plundered me — sold me. — Oh! if fiends laugh, as I have heard they can, what a jubilee of scorn will there be, when Bulmer and I enter their place of torture! — Hark! — I am sure of it — some one draws breath, as if shuddering!"

"You will distract yourself if you give way to these fancies. Be calm — speak on — but, oh! at last, and for once, speak the truth!"

"I will, for it will best gratify my hatred against him, who, having first robbed me of my virtue, made me a sport and a plunder to the basest of the species. For that I wandered here to unmask him. I had heard he again stirred his suit to Clara, and I came here to tell young Mowbray the whole. — But do you wonder that I shrunk from doing so till this last decisive moment? — I thought of my conduct to Clara, and how could I face her brother? — And yet I hated her not after I learned her utter wretchedness — her deep misery, verging even upon madness — I hated her not then. I was sorry that she was not to fall to the lot of a better man than Bulmer; — and I pitied her after she was rescued by Tyrrel, and you may remember it was I who prevailed on you to conceal her marriage."

"I remember it," answered Cargill, "and that you alleged, as a reason for secrecy, danger from her family. I did conceal it, until reports that she was again to be married reached my ears."

"Well, then," said the sick woman, "Clara Mowbray ought to forgive me — since what ill I have done her was inevitable, while the good I did was voluntary. — I must see her, Josiah Cargill — I must see her before I die — I shall never pray till I see her — I shall never profit by word of godliness till I see her! If I cannot obtain the pardon of a worm like myself, how can I hope for that of" —

She started at these words with a faint scream; for slowly, and with a feeble hand, the curtains of the bed opposite to the side at which Cargill sat, were opened, and the figure of Clara Mowbray, her clothes and long hair drenched and dripping with rain, stood in the opening by the bedside. The dying woman sat upright, her eyes starting from their sockets, her lips quivering, her face pale, her emaciated hands grasping the bed-clothes, as if to support herself, and looking as much aghast as if her confession had called up the apparition of her betrayed friend.

"Hannah Irwin," said Clara, with her usual sweetness of tone, "my early friend — my unprovoked enemy! — Betake thee to Him who hath pardon for us all, and betake thee with confidence — for I pardon you as freely as if you had never wronged me — as freely as I desire my own pardon. — Farewell — Farewell!"

She retired from the room, ere the clergyman could convince himself that it was more than a phantom which he beheld. He ran down stairs — he summoned assistants, but no one could attend his call; for the deep ruckling groans of the patient satisfied every one that she was breathing her last; and Mrs. Dods, with the maid-servant, ran into the bedroom, to witness the death of Hannah Irwin, which shortly after took place.

That event had scarcely occurred, when the maid-servant who had been left in the inn, came down in great terror to acquaint her mistress, that a lady had entered the house like a ghost, and was dying in Mr. Tyrrel's room. The truth of the story we must tell our own way.

In the irregular state of Miss Mowbray's mind, a less violent impulse than that which she had received from her brother's arbitrary violence, added to the fatigues, dangers, and terrors of her night-walk, might have exhausted the powers of her body, and alienated those of her mind. We have before said, that the lights in the clergyman's house had probably attracted her attention, and in the temporary confusion of a family, never remarkable for its regularity, she easily mounted the stairs, and entered the sick chamber undiscovered, and thus overheard Hannah Irwin's confession, a tale sufficient to have greatly aggravated her mental malady. We have no means of knowing whether she actually sought Tyrrel, or whether it was, as in the former case, the circumstance of a light still burning where all around was dark, that attracted her; but her next apparition was close by the side of her unfortunate lover, then deeply engaged in writing, when something suddenly gleamed on a large, old-fashioned mirror, which hung on the wall opposite. He looked up, and saw the figure of Clara, holding a light (which she had taken from the passage) in her extended hand. He stood for an instant with his eyes fixed on this fearful shadow, ere he dared turn round on the substance which was thus reflected. When he did so, the fixed and pallid countenance almost impressed him with the belief that he saw a vision, and he shuddered when, stooping beside him, she took his hand. "Come away!" she said, in a hurried voice — "Come away, my brother follows to kill us both. Come, Tyrrel, let us fly — we shall easily escape him. — Hannah Irwin is on before — but, if we are overtaken, I will have no more fighting — you must promise me that we shall not — we have had but too much of that — but you will be wise in future."

"Clara Mowbray!" exclaimed Tyrrel. "Alas! is it thus? — Stay — do not go," for she turned to make her escape — "stay — stay — sit down."

"I must go," she replied, "I must go — I am called — Hannah Irwin is gone before to tell all, and I must follow. Will you not let me go? — Nay, if you will hold me by force, I know I must sit down — but you will not be able to keep me for all that."

A convulsion fit followed, and seemed, by its violence, to explain that she was indeed bound for the last and darksome journey. The maid, who at length answered Tyrrel's earnest and repeated summons, fled terrified at the scene she witnessed, and carried to the Manse the alarm which we before mentioned.

The old landlady was compelled to exchange one scene of sorrow for another, wondering within herself what fatality could have marked this single night with so much misery. When she arrived at home, what was her astonishment to find there the daughter of the house, which, even in their alienation, she had never ceased to love, in a state little short of distraction, and tended by Tyrrel, whose state of mind seemed scarce more composed than that of the unhappy patient. The oddities of Mrs. Dods were merely the rust which had accumulated upon her character, but without impairing its native strength and energy; and her sympathies were not of a kind acute enough to disable her from thinking and acting as decisively as circumstances required.

"Mr. Tyrrel," she said, "this is nae sight for men folk — ye maun rise and gang to another room."

"I will not stir from her," said Tyrrel — "I will not remove from her either now, or as long as she or I may live."

"That will be nae lang space, Maister Tyrrel, if ye winna be ruled by common sense."

Tyrrel started up, as if half comprehending what she said, but remained motionless.

"Come, come," said the compassionate landlady; "do not stand looking on a sight sair enough to break a harder heart than yours, hinny — your ain sense tells ye, ye canna stay here — Miss Clara shall be weel cared for, and I'll bring word to your room-door frae half-hour to half-hour how she is."

The necessity of the case was undeniable, and Tyrrel suffered himself to be led to another apartment, leaving Miss Mowbray to the care of the hostess and her female assistants. He counted the hours in an agony, less by the watch than by the visits which Mrs. Dods, faithful to her promise, made from interval to interval, to tell him that Clara was not better — that she was worse — and, at last, that she did not think she could live over morning. It required all the deprecatory influence of the good landlady to restrain Tyrrel, who, calm and cold on common occasions, was proportionally fierce and impetuous when his passions were afloat, from bursting into the room, and ascertaining, with his own eyes, the state of the beloved patient. At length there was a long interval — an interval of hours — so long, indeed, that Tyrrel caught from it the flattering hope that Clara slept, and that sleep might bring refreshment both to mind and body. Mrs. Dods, he concluded, was prevented from moving, for fear of disturbing her patient's slumber; and, as if actuated by the same feeling which he imputed to her, he ceased to traverse his apartment, as his agitation had hitherto dictated, and throwing himself into a chair, forbore to move even a finger, and withheld his respiration as much as possible, just as if he had been seated by the pillow of the patient. Morning was far advanced, when his landlady appeared in his room with a grave and anxious countenance.

"Mr. Tyrrel," she said, "ye are a Christian man."

"Hush, hush, for Heaven's sake!" he replied; "you will disturb Miss Mowbray."

"Naething will disturb her, puir thing," answered Mrs. Dods; "they have muckle to answer for that brought her to this!"

"They have — they have indeed," said Tyrrel, striking his forehead; "and I will see her avenged on every one of them! — Can I see her?"

"Better not — better not," said the good woman; but he burst from her, and rushed into the apartment.

"Is life gone? — Is every spark extinct?" he exclaimed eagerly to a country surgeon, a sensible man, who had been summoned from Marchthorn in the course of the night. The medical man shook his head — Tyrrel rushed to the bedside, and was convinced by his own eyes that the being whose sorrows he had both caused and shared, was now insensible to all earthly calamity. He raised almost a shriek of despair, as he threw himself on the pale hand of the corpse, wet it with tears, devoured it with kisses, and played for a short time the part of a distracted person. At length, on the repeated expostulation of all present, he suffered himself to be again conducted to another apartment, the surgeon following, anxious to give such sad consolation as the case admitted of.

"As you are so deeply concerned for the untimely fate of this young lady," he said, "it may be some satisfaction to you, though a melancholy one, to know, that it has been occasioned by a pressure on the brain, probably accompanied by a suffusion; and I feel authorized in stating, from the symptoms, that if life had been spared, reason would, in all probability, never have returned. In such a case, sir, the most affectionate relation must own, that death, in comparison to life, is a mercy."

"Mercy?" answered Tyrrel; "but why, then, is it denied to me? — I know — I know! — My life is spared till I revenge her."

He started from his seat, and hurried eagerly down stairs. But, as he was about to rush from the door of the inn, he was stopped by Touchwood, who had just alighted from a carriage, with an air of stern anxiety imprinted on his features, very different from their usual expression. "Whither would ye? Whither would ye?" he said, laying hold of Tyrrel, and stopping him by force.

"For revenge — for revenge!" said Tyrrel. "Give way, I charge you, on your peril!"

"Vengeance belongs to God," replied the old man, "and his bolt has fallen. — This way — this way," he continued, dragging Tyrrel into the house. "Know," he said, so soon as he had led or forced him into a chamber, "that Mowbray of St. Ronan's has met Bulmer within this half hour, and has killed him on the spot."

"Killed? — whom?" answered the bewildered Tyrrel.

"Valentine Bulmer, the titular Earl of Etherington."

"You bring tidings of death to the house of death," answered Tyrrel; "and there is nothing in this world left that I should live for!"

Chapter 39

Conclusion.

Here come we to our close — for that which follows

Is but the tale of dull, unvaried misery.

Steep crags and headlong linns may court the pencil,

Like sudden haps, dark plots, and strange adventures;

But who would paint the dull and fog-wrapt moor,

In its long track of sterile desolation?

OLD PLAY.

When Mowbray crossed the brook, as we have already detailed, his mind was in that wayward and uncertain state, which seeks something whereon to vent the self-engendered rage with which it labours, like a volcano before eruption. On a sudden, a shot or two, followed by loud voices and laughter reminded him he had promised, at that hour, and in that sequestered place, to decide a bet respecting pistol-shooting, to which the titular Lord Etherington, Jekyl, and Captain MacTurk, to whom such a pastime was peculiarly congenial, were parties as well as himself. The prospect this recollection afforded him, of vengeance on the man whom he regarded as the author of his sister's wrongs, was, in the present state of his mind, too tempting to be relinquished; and, setting spurs to his horse, he rushed through the copse to the little glade, where he found the other parties, who, despairing of his arrival, had already begun their amusement. A jubilee shout was set up as he approached.

"Here comes Mowbray, dripping, by Cot, like a watering-pan," said Captain MacTurk.

"I fear him not," said Etherington, (we may as well still call him so,) "he has ridden too fast to have steady nerves."

"We shall soon see that, my Lord Etherington, or rather Mr. Valentine Bulmer," said Mowbray, springing from his horse, and throwing the bridle over the bough of a tree.

"What does this mean, Mr. Mowbray?" said Etherington, drawing himself up, while Jekyl and Captain MacTurk looked at each other in surprise.

"It means, sir, that you are a rascal and impostor," replied Mowbray, "who have assumed a name to which you have no right."

"That, Mr. Mowbray, is an insult I cannot carry farther than this spot," said Etherington.

"If you had been willing to do so, you should have carried with it something still harder to be borne," answered Mowbray.

"Enough, enough, my good sir; no use in spurring a willing horse. — Jekyl, you will have the kindness to stand by me in this matter?"

"Certainly, my lord," said Jekyl.

"And, as there seems to be no chance of taking up the matter amicably," said the pacific Captain MacTurk, "I will be most happy, so help me, to assist my worthy friend, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, with my countenance and advice. — Very goot chance that we were here with the necessary weapons, since it would have been an unpleasant thing to have such an affair long upon the stomach, any more than to settle it without witnesses."

"I would fain know first," said Jekyl, "what all this sudden heat has arisen about."

"About nothing," said Etherington, "except a mare's nest of Mr. Mowbray's discovering. He always knew his sister played the madwoman, and he has now heard a report, I suppose, that she has likewise in her time played the — fool."

"O, crimini!" cried Captain MacTurk, "my good Captain, let us pe loading and measuring out — for, by my soul, if these sweetmeats be passing between them, it is only the twa ends of a hankercher than can serve the turn — Cot tamn!"

With such friendly intentions, the ground was hastily meted out. Each was well known as an excellent shot; and the Captain offered a bet to Jekyl of a mutchkin of Glenlivat, that both would fall by the first fire. The event showed that he was nearly right; for the ball of Lord Etherington grazed Mowbray's temple, at the very second of time when Mowbray's pierced his heart. He sprung a yard from the ground, and fell down a dead man. Mowbray stood fixed like a pillar of stone, his arm dropped to his side, his hand still clenched on the weapon of death, reeking at the touch-hole and muzzle. Jekyl ran to raise and support his friend, and Captain MacTurk, having adjusted his spectacles, stooped on one knee to look him in the face. "We should have had Dr. Quackleben here," he said, wiping his glasses, and returning them to the shagreen case, "though it would have been only for form's sake — for he is as dead as a toor-nail, poor boy. — But come, Mowbray, my bairn," he said, taking him by the arm, "we must be ganging our ain gait, you and me, before waur comes of it. — I have a bit powney here, and you have your horse till we get to Marchthorn. — Captain Jekyl, I wish you a good morning. Will you have my umbrella back to the inn, for I surmeese it is going to rain?"

Mowbray had not ridden a hundred yards with his guide and companion, when he drew his bridle, and refused to proceed a step farther, till he had learned what was become of Clara. The Captain began to find he had a very untractable pupil to manage, when, while they were arguing together, Touchwood drove past in his hack chaise. As soon as he recognised Mowbray, he stopped the carriage to inform him that his sister was at the Aultoun, which he had learned from finding there had been a messenger sent from thence to the Well for medical assistance, which could not be afforded, the Esculapius of the place, Dr. Quackleben, having been privately married to Mrs. Blower on that morning, by Mr. Chatterly, and having set out on the usual nuptial tour.

In return for this intelligence, Captain MacTurk communicated the fate of Lord Etherington. The old man earnestly pressed instant flight, for which he supplied at the same time ample means, engaging to furnish every kind of assistance and support to the unfortunate young lady; and representing to Mowbray, that if he staid in the vicinity, a prison would soon separate them. Mowbray and his companion then departed southward upon the spur, reached London in safety, and from thence went together to the Peninsula, where the war was then at the hottest.

There remains little more to be told. Mr. Touchwood is still alive, forming plans which have no object, and accumulating a fortune, for which he has apparently no heir. The old man had endeavoured to fix this character, as well as his general patronage, upon Tyrrel, but the attempt only determined the latter to leave the country; nor has he been since heard of, although the title and estates of Etherington lie vacant for his acceptance. It is the opinion of many, that he has entered into a Moravian mission, for the use of which he had previously drawn considerable sums.

Since Tyrrel's departure, no one pretends to guess what old Touchwood will do with his money. He often talks of his disappointments, but can never be made to understand, or at least to admit, that they were in some measure precipitated by his own talent for intrigue and manoeuvring. Most people think that Mowbray of St. Ronan's will be at last his heir. That gentleman has of late shown one quality which usually recommends men to the favour of rich relations, namely, a close and cautious care of what is already his own. Captain MacTurk's military ardour having revived when they came within smell of gunpowder, the old soldier contrived not only to get himself on full pay, but to induce his companion to serve for some time as a volunteer. He afterwards obtained a commission, and nothing could be more strikingly different than was the conduct of the young Laird of St. Ronan's and of Lieutenant Mowbray. The former, as we know, was gay, venturous, and prodigal; the latter lived on his pay, and even within it — denied himself comforts, and often decencies, when doing so could save a guinea; and turned pale with apprehension, if, on any extraordinary occasion, he ventured sixpence a corner at whist. This meanness, or closeness of disposition, prevents his holding the high character to which his bravery and attention to his regimental duties might otherwise entitle him. The same close and accurate calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence, marked his communications with his agent Meiklewham, who might otherwise have had better pickings out of the estate of St. Ronan's, which is now at nurse, and thriving full fast; especially since some debts, of rather an usurious character, have been paid up by Mr. Touchwood, who contented himself with more moderate usage.

On the subject of this property, Mr. Mowbray, generally speaking, gave such minute directions for acquiring and saving, that his old acquaintance, Mr. Winterblossom, tapping his morocco snuff-box with the sly look which intimated the coming of a good thing, was wont to say, that he had reversed the usual order of transformation, and was turned into a grub after having been a butterfly. After all, this narrowness, though a more ordinary modification of the spirit of avarice, may be founded on the same desire of acquisition, which in his earlier days sent him to the gaming-table.

But there was one remarkable instance in which Mr. Mowbray departed from the rules of economy, by which he was guided in all others. Having acquired, for a large sum of money, the ground which he had formerly feued out for the erection of the hotel, lodging-houses, shops, &c., at St. Ronan's Well, he sent positive orders for the demolition of the whole, nor would he permit the existence of any house of entertainment on his estate, except that in the Aultoun, where Mrs. Dods reigns with undisputed sway, her temper by no means improved either by time, or her arbitrary disposition by the total absence of competition.

Why Mr. Mowbray, with his acquired habits of frugality, thus destroyed a property which might have produced a considerable income, no one could pretend to affirm. Some said that he remembered his own early follies; and others, that he connected the buildings with the misfortunes of his sister. The vulgar reported, that Lord Etherington's ghost had been seen in the ball-room, and the learned talked of the association of ideas. But it all ended in this, that Mr. Mowbray was independent enough to please himself, and that such was Mr. Mowbray's pleasure.

The little watering-place has returned to its primitive obscurity; and lions and lionesses, with their several jackals, blue surtouts, and bluer stockings, fiddlers and dancers, painters and amateurs, authors and critics, dispersed like pigeons by the demolition of a dovecot, have sought other scenes of amusement and rehearsal, and have deserted ST. RONAN'S WELL.³⁵

